

OVERVIEW

The City of Bellingham (City), American Rivers (AR), and supporting partners have implemented several elements of a multi-benefit project on the Middle Fork Nooksack River. The project provides fish passage to 16 – 26 miles of critical habitat for three ESA-listed Puget Sound threatened anadromous fish species by removing the diversion dam while improving the reliability of the City's water supply. In-water work was completed in early fall 2020, restoring volitional fish passage to upstream habitat through dam removal and channel restoration. Upland work related to City water supply elements continues into the summer of 2021.

Quarterly Progress (Oct – Dec 2020)

- ***Construction Activities***
 - In-water and upland work continues for the water diversion facility, including diversion intake, water supply pipe extension, and fish screen facility.
 - An extension of the in-water work window to October 31, 2020 was granted by regulatory agencies for in-water work at the intake structure. Final bank restoration at the intake was completed, and cofferdam materials were removed from the river channel within this extended in-water work period.
- ***Outreach***
 - The project was [featured](#) in the September/October 2020 publication of the AWC Cityvision Magazine. A list of links to 2020 news articles is available [here](#).
 - A fresh set of project construction [photos](#) were uploaded to the project webpage in December.
- ***Funding***
 - [Pacific Salmon Treaty \(PST\) funding](#) of ~\$2M was awarded by NOAA through RCO to the City in an amendment to the current PSAR grant for the project. The City Council approved receipt of funding in October. This key funding completes the anticipated external funding for the project, and we thank the project partners that enabled this funding to be secured.
- ***Monitoring***
 - The first of several physical effectiveness monitoring surveys to be performed over a 10-year period were conducted utilizing Terrestrial Laser Scanning (TLS) and Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) overflights in November.
 - The channel has adjusted well in response to fall and early winter high flow events. Before and after photo comparison slides, as well as more recent photos of the evolving channel are available for viewing [here](#).
 - American Rivers, Nooksack Tribe, and Lummi Nation staff held a planning call to discuss Middle Fork Nooksack River biological monitoring and available funding on October 27.

- WRIA 1 fishery co-managers held a planning meeting to identify co-manager priorities and Middle Fork Nooksack River biological monitoring and evaluation needs on December 16. Monitoring of Chinook population is a priority, with the addition of steelhead escapement as existing funding allows.

Looking Ahead (Jan – March 2021)

- American Rivers and WRIA 1 fishery co-managers (Nooksack Tribe, Lummi Nation, WDFW) staff will advance biological effectiveness monitoring of upstream habitat and target fish population utilization of newly available habitat.
- Work on the municipal diversion system intake, water supply pipeline, and fish screen structure will continue throughout the next quarter.
- A series of short films are being produced by American Rivers and the City. Final production should occur in early 2021.