

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 will continue through the summer of 2021.

Quarterly Progress (Jan-March 2021)

- **Construction Activities**
 - Construction of the water diversion facility, including diversion intake, water supply pipe extension, and fish screen facility continued. All water supply piping and major concrete work has been completed. Steel construction, fish screen installation, and mechanical/electrical/communication and site restoration work remains.
- **Outreach**
 - A [Middle Fork Nooksack River: 30 Year Conservation Story of Protection, Restoration, and Renewal](#) was featured in the March/April 2021 publication of the American Whitewater journal. A list of links to 2020 news articles is available [here](#).
 - A series of short films were produced by American Rivers and the City. The films, time-lapse of the summer 2020 construction period, and construction photos can be found on the project [webpage](#).
- **Monitoring**
 - NHC is developing a report that documents the first of several physical effectiveness monitoring surveys of the restoration channel. Draft results show the channel continues to evolve as expected by the design team, with natural changes to the restored river channel not exceeding adaptive management thresholds.
 - American Rivers, Nooksack Tribe, Lummi Nation, and WDFW staff held two meetings in January and March to discuss upper Middle Fork Nooksack River biological monitoring.

Looking Ahead (April – June 2021)

- American Rivers is coordinating with WRIA 1 fishery co-managers (Nooksack Tribe, Lummi Nation, WDFW) in developing a plan to detect Chinook and steelhead presence/absence in 2021 above the project site.
- Work on the municipal diversion system intake, water supply pipeline, and fish screen structure will continue into the next quarter.

Middle Fork Nooksack River Fish Passage Project

Update #38 - Quarterly

Jan - March
2021

- The City of Bellingham and Nooksack Tribe are continuing coordination regarding the project's Cultural Resource elements and the installation of a Cultural Significance Marker at the *Nuxwt'iqw'em* site.