

## OVERVIEW

The City of Bellingham (City), American Rivers (AR), and supporting partners are working to implement a multi-benefit project on the Middle Fork Nooksack River. The project aims to improve fish passage for three ESA-listed Puget Sound threatened anadromous fish species by removing the diversion dam while maintaining water supply diversion at the site. The project is now in the construction phase, with the Notice to Proceed issued on January 2, 2020. In-water work is scheduled to begin June 1, 2020 and be completed September 30, 2020.

## THIS MONTH

- **Construction Activities**
  - Regulatory agencies completed review of the In-Water Work Plan and the Fish Handling and Relocation Plan. Authorizations to begin in-water work based on these coordinated project plans were obtained from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Washington Department of Ecology.
  - Differing subgrade conditions than those interpreted by the consultant design team during the planning phase will require a revised shoring system for further excavation of the new water intake and fish screen facilities. The project team is working closely with Walsh Construction to examine and negotiate cost and schedule impacts associated with these unanticipated conditions. The in-water work period is the critical path schedule for the project, and efforts will be made to maintain the in-water work schedule.
  - Walsh Construction mobilized additional construction equipment for upcoming in-water work.
  - A Fish Handling and Rescue (FH&R) training was held on May 27<sup>th</sup> for partner and volunteer staff. FH&R is coordinated by the City and led by West Fork Environmental. The FH&R Team includes volunteers from the Nooksack Indian Tribe, Lummi Nation, Washington Conservation Corps, City, and American Rivers. Special thanks to Bellingham Technical College for supplying key equipment. This is another great example of collaboration and multiple partners working to make the project a success.
- **Outreach**
  - A virtual meeting to discuss the project communication and media outreach plan was held with the partner communications group on May 6. All project partners were represented at the meeting. A second meeting was held on May 29 to discuss a press release and priority reporters.
  - North Fork Studios and Guenther Creative conducted reconnaissance at the project site on May 27 for filming purposes.
  - The USFWS created a project [story map](#) highlighting the ecological benefits of the project, and construction photos are hosted on the [project webpage](#).

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**June 2020**

- In-Water work begins on Monday, June 1. Cofferdam placement, dewatering of isolated work areas, and fish handling and rescue activities will be conducted through June.
- The initial phases of dam removal and water supply intake construction work are anticipated to begin in late June, shortly after final dewatering of associated work areas.
- North Fork Studios will be capturing time-lapse video footage of the in-water work period, including dam demolition and channel restoration, in partnership with BBC Productions.
- A social media toolkit and media toolkit will be hosted on a publicly accessible platform so project partners and supporters can amplify outreach on individual platforms.
- A press release is anticipated to be published in early June.