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Secretary Haaland Travels to Washington to Announce \$16 Million from President Biden's Investing in America Agenda for Drought Resilience in the Yakima River Basin



Multi-day trip highlights investments in Tribal communities, climate resilience

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TOPPENISH, Wash. — Secretary Haaland today concluded a multi-day visit to Washington to celebrate major progress in implementing President Biden's Investing in America agenda to safeguard communities from increased threat of wildland fire and severe drought, restore ecosystems, and strengthen Tribal communities. During her visit, Secretary Haaland met with Tribal leaders from the Confederated Tribes of the Yakama Nation, Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, and Puyallup Tribe, as well as Bureau of Indian Education-funded staff and personnel. On the heels of the devastating 1980 Slide Ranch Fire in late June, Secretary Haaland also met with more than 50 Yakama Nation firefighters to express the Biden-Harris administration's commitment to sharing resources, investing in resilience efforts, and prioritizing permanent pay reforms and increases for Tribal firefighters.

Secretary Haaland spent much of today celebrating the incredible work being done by federal, state, Tribal and local partners through the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan, including through the Department's Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Reclamation, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Yakima River Basin is home to over 400,000 people, a \$4.5 billion agriculture growing and processing industry and supports habitat for salmon and other fish relied on for Tribal subsistence.

Secretary Haaland joined Governor Jay Inslee and state, local, and Tribal leaders to celebrate the opening of almost 30 miles of critical habitat for salmon and steelhead populations above Cle Elum

Dam and Reservoir. The recent completion of a juvenile fish facility through the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan and today's groundbreaking on the adult collection facility will provide significant benefits to the region by restoring the river, safeguarding subsistence and boosting local economies. This historic and transformational project – in what was once one of the most prolific sockeye salmon runs in the Basin – will open up habitat to spring Chinook salmon, sockeye salmon, and steelhead and bull trout that have not been able to swim or spawn in these waters for almost 100 years.

In her remarks, Secretary Haaland announced a \$16 million investment for drought resilience in the Yakima River Basin through the Inflation Reduction Act – the largest climate investment in history – which included a total of \$500 million for conservation efforts along with ecosystem and habitat restoration for basins experiencing long-term drought. The Biden-Harris administration has already invested \$40 million in the Yakima River Basin from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, including \$7 million to raise the Cle Elum reservoir's capacity and further expand fish passage in the region.

“The Biden-Harris administration is committed to making communities more resilient to the impacts of climate change. These historic investments will support fish, farms and families who rely on this vital river, building resiliency and safeguarding future generations,” said **Secretary Deb Haaland**. “We continue to make smart investments through President Biden's Investing in America agenda to safeguard water resources, invest in innovative water conservation strategies and increase overall water efficiency throughout the West.”

The funding announced today will provide \$6 million to the Yakama Nation for the Fan Shallow Aquifer Recharge project. The project will improve flows in the Toppenish Creek for mid-Columbia steelhead and other fish. Once complete, the project is expected to result in 748 acre-feet of conserved water and 5,400 acre-feet of recharged water. Today's announcement also includes \$5 million for the Washington State Department of Ecology, \$3.4 million for the Roza Irrigation District, and \$1.6 million for the Kittitas Reclamation District to increase drought resilience. A description of projects receiving funding is available on [Reclamation's website](#).

The Yakama Nation hosted Secretary Haaland, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science Michael Brain and Reclamation Deputy Commissioner Roque Sanchez for a visit and briefing at the Wapato Irrigation Project – the largest irrigation project in the Yakima River Basin – which has received \$3.74 million from the [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#) to improve fish passage and benefit local irrigation and harvest needs.

“The Yakima Basin is the model for collaboration and cooperation for water management for the American West,” said **Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science Michael Brain**. “I'm proud of the strong partnerships within the basin that fund strategic water conservation, ecosystem system restoration, and a robust agricultural community in the face of aridification and climate change.”

Earlier this week, Secretary Haaland was in Olympic National Park. She participated in a seed gathering project being funded by \$365,000 from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to support restoration of whitebark pine and other threatened conifer species in Washington State, part of the Department's [National Seed Strategy Keystone Initiative](#). Secretary Haaland also visited Hurricane Ridge and was briefed on the Service's efforts to restore Hurricane Ridge Day Lodge, which was destroyed in a structural fire in May 2023. Joined by the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, Secretary Haaland

traveled to the Elwha River to honor the tenth anniversary of the removal of the Glines Canyon Dam, which represented the last step in the largest dam removal in U.S. history in 2014.

Across the park, more than \$28 million from the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) is being used to rehabilitate recreational spaces and visitor access. The GAOA established the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF), a historic bipartisan investment that improves visitor experiences, bolsters climate resilience and invests in the economy by creating good-paying jobs in recreation areas, national parks, wildlife refuges and Bureau of Indian Education-funded schools. Since 2021, the Department has leveraged more than \$8 billion in GAOA funding for nearly 400 projects across all 50 states, DC, Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, and Midway Islands. These projects have supported an average of 17,000 jobs and generated an average of \$1.8 billion for local economies annually. GAOA's LRF funding sunsets after fiscal year 2025 and would need to be reauthorized by Congress to continue the efforts underway to address significant infrastructure needs across public lands.

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