Biden-Harris Administration Announces More Than $51 Million from the President's Investing in America Agenda to Restore and Protect Rivers and Watersheds

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to fund 18 projects in eight states that will improve aquatic habitats

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WASHINGTON — The Department of the Interior today announced more than $51 million in funding from President Biden's Investing in America agenda for 18 projects in eight states that will restore and protect aquatic ecosystems.

Crucial funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law for the Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART program will support the study, design and construction of collaboratively developed ecosystem restoration projects that provide widespread regional benefits and improve the health of fisheries, wildlife and aquatic habitat through restoration and improved fish passage.

"Through President Biden's Investing in America agenda, we are advancing nature-based solutions that benefit local water supplies, and the wildlife and habitats that support them," said **Secretary Deb Haaland**. "The Interior Department continues to advance water solutions that are environmentally and economically sound for the American West."

“The benefits of these projects are far-reaching in terms of climate resilience and ecosystem restoration benefits,” said **Reclamation Commissioner Camille Calimlim Touton**. “The work to restore and protect the habitat for fish and wildlife also helps to improve water quality and mitigate impacts of drought and potential flood events.”

Commissioner Touton made the announcement during a visit to the Las Vegas Wash project outside Henderson, Nevada. As part of today’s announcement, the Southern Nevada Water Authority will receive $20 million to create a wetland and other habitat within the Lake Mead National Recreation Area. The project will improve water quality and help protect the spawning area for the endangered razorback sucker in Las Vegas Bay. The Wash is a crucial link in the Las Vegas Valley watershed, channeling more than 200 million gallons of urban runoff, highly treated effluent and shallow groundwater to Lake Mead.

President Biden’s Investing in America agenda represents the largest investment in climate resilience in the nation’s history and is providing much-needed resources to enhance Western communities’ resilience to drought and climate change. Through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Reclamation is investing a total of $8.3 billion over five years for water infrastructure projects, including rural water, water storage, conservation and conveyance, nature-based solutions, dam safety, water purification and reuse, and desalination. Over the first two years of its implementation, Reclamation has selected 421 projects to receive over $2.9 billion.

The projects selected under this round of the Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Program are:

California

East Bay Municipal Utility District, Mokelumne River Floodplain Project: Improving Conditions for California’s Central Valley Anadromous Fisheries (Task A: Study and Design)

Reclamation Funding: $650,000

The East Bay Municipal Utility District will work with local landowners to complete the study and design of two 25-acre floodplain restoration projects which, once constructed, will inundate roughly 50 acres of off-channel rearing habitat benefitting federally listed, Fall-run Chinook salmon and steelhead trout.

Sonoma County Water Agency, Eel River at Cape Horn Dam Fish Passage Improvement Project (Task A: Study and Design)

Reclamation Funding: $2,000,000

The Sonoma County Water Agency will study and complete design for fish passage enhancements at the Eel River's Cape Horn Dam and explore options for continued trans-basin diversions from the Eel

River into the neighboring Russian River. The Cape Horn Dam is part of the Potter Valley Project, located in Mendocino County, California, which has been diverting water from the Eel River into the Russian River watershed for more than a century. The Potter Valley Project has played a crucial role in supplying water for agriculture, consumptive use, and instream flows for aquatic ecosystems, however, native populations of federally listed Chinook and Coho salmon and winter Steelhead in the Eel River have declined substantially.

Colorado

Blue River Watershed Group, Blue River Habitat Restoration Project (Task A: Study and Design)

Reclamation Funding: $1,857,570

The Blue River Watershed Group, working in partnership with the Town of Silverthorne, will complete the engineering and design for a project to repair degraded aquatic habitat in the Blue River, downstream of the Dillon Reservoir in Summit County, Colorado. This reach of the Blue River is impacted by its proximity to the outflow of the Reservoir, which has contributed to an un-naturally low flow regime, below average water temperatures due to cold-water releases from the bottom of the Reservoir, and a lack of natural sediment and nutrient transport.

Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, Kawuneeche Valley Ecosystem Restoration Project (Task A: Study and Design)

Reclamation Funding: $761,000

The Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, in collaboration with the Kawuneeche Valley Ecosystem Restoration Collaborative (KVERC), will study and design a suite of restoration projects within the Kawuneeche Valley aimed to return the landscape to a natural beaver-willow ecosystem. The Kawuneeche Valley is located in north-central Colorado, along the headwaters of the Colorado River within the boundaries of Rocky Mountain National Park. Over the past three decades, elk and moose browsing has reduced the density and area of the valley's native tall willow stands, severely limiting material for beaver dam construction, leading the species to leave the area. As a result, the valley landscape has changed from one of the most significant wetlands in Colorado into an unnatural grassland ecosystem.

Montana

Trout Unlimited, Upper Clark Fork Basin Fish Passage Improvement Project (Task A: Study and Design)

Reclamation Funding: $594,306

Trout Unlimited, in partnership with the Montana Natural Resource Damage Program (NRDP) and the Clark Fork Coalition, will design a suite of infrastructure improvements to provide fish and recreational boat passage, screen ditches, and improve water delivery at ten irrigation diversion sites within the Upper Clark Fork River Basin located in western Montana. This project extends across two subbasins encompassing the Upper Clark Fork River Basin, the Flint Rock and Upper Clark Fork. The Clark Fork is home to imperiled populations of native threatened bull trout and West slope cutthroat trout. Currently, irrigation diversion structures are fragmenting habitat, entraining fish and posing hazards to floaters and anglers on public waterways along the Upper Clark Fork River.

Nevada

Southern Nevada Water Authority, Erosion Control Structure at the Las Vegas Wash: Completion of Weir 5 (Task B: Construction)

Reclamation Funding: $20,000,000

The Southern Nevada Water Authority will implement erosion control measures and create in-stream habitat in the lower Las Vegas Wash within Lake Mead National Recreation Area in Clark County, Nevada. Serving as the crucial final link in the Valley's watershed, the Wash channels more than 200 million gallons of highly treated effluent, urban runoff, and shallow groundwater to Lake Mead each day, and carries stormwater to the lake during rain events. Wetlands in the Wash help to filter impurities from these flows and provide important animal habitat in the desert climate of Southern Nevada. The project will create additional wetlands for the benefit of water quality and wildlife and will involve the removal of invasive tamarisk and revegetation with native shrubs, trees, and grasses. The project will improve habitat conditions for wildlife, including the federally endangered southwestern willow flycatcher and Yuma Ridgway's rail, and the threatened, yellow-billed cuckoo, and improve spawning habitat for the razorback sucker.

New Mexico

Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority, Southside Wastewater Reclamation Plant Outfall Restoration Project (Task B: Construction)

Reclamation Funding: $3,014,481

The Albuquerque-Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority (Water Authority) will reconnect approximately 11 acres of floodplain habitat along 1,900 linear feet of the Rio Grande approximately

five miles south of downtown Albuquerque, New Mexico. The Water Authority operates the Southside Wastewater Reclamation Plant, which treats approximately 55 million gallons of wastewater per day. The land surrounding the outfall is part of the Rio Grande Valley State park and is jointly owned by Middle Rio Grande Conservancy district and the Bureau of Reclamation. High-quality treated effluent is then released to the Rio Grande via an outfall channel on the east bank of the river. The project will reconnect the Rio Grande to its floodplain by excavating the banks, allowing water to stretch across the floodplain, restoring the river's natural hydraulic processes and enhancing and adding 2.2 acres of expanded floodplain habitat for the endangered Rio Grande Silvery Minnow

Oregon

Deschutes River Conservancy, Restoring Upper Deschutes River Aquatic Habitat for Oregon Spotted Frog and Other Native Species (Task A: Study and Design)

Reclamation Funding: $651,542

The Deschutes River Conservancy (DRC), in partnership with the Deschutes Basin Board of Control (DBBC), will complete the study and design of habitat restoration projects that will benefit the Oregon spotted frog, listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act and the native Redband trout designated by the state as a sensitive species, on the Deschutes River in central Oregon. Habitat for these species has been degraded in this section of the Upper Deschutes River between the Wickiup Reservoir and the City of Bend, which includes Reclamation's Deschutes Project, through the storage and release of water for irrigation. The DRC and DBBC will conduct site studies and analysis to prioritize projects to restore the stream channel through regrading the riverbanks and reconnecting the active channel to its floodplains to allow flows to inundate wetlands and riparian areas adjacent to the river channels, providing habitat for the Oregon Spotted Frog and improving in-stream habitat.

North Unit Irrigation District, Fish Screen Replacement at Bend Headworks (Task B: Construction)

Reclamation Funding: $5,965,809

North Unit Irrigation District will replace the existing, rotary drum fish screens with upgraded, flat plate screens and a traveling screen cleaning system at the Bend Headworks, located at the district's main canal intake on the mainstem of the Deschutes River, in Bend, Oregon. The Deschutes River is home to brown and rainbow trout, the rare brook trout, whitefish, and transient fingerling coho and kokanee from Wickiup Reservoir, a Bureau of Reclamation Project. The design of the new screens will slow the approach velocity, shrink the mesh size of the screen, and provide a safe path for fish to the fish ladder.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Restoring Ecosystem Function and Fish Habitat in the Hood River Watershed (Task A: Study and Design)

Reclamation Funding: $500,000

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and Hood River Watershed Group will complete the study and design of five stream restoration projects across the East Fork Hood River, Neal Creek, and Baldwin Creek sub-watersheds in north-central Oregon. Funding will be used to develop 100 percent designs to remove two fish passage barriers and restore at least 3.5 miles of fish habitat, which will improve wetland function, increase stream complexity, restore riparian habitat, and connect the floodplain to the main channel. The projects will advance the recovery of Endangered Species Act listed Lower-Columbia River Salmon and steelhead.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Reconnecting Fish Passage to Recover Oregon Coast Coho in the Nehalem and Tillamook Watersheds (Task B: Construction)

Reclamation Funding: $3,000,000

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and local partners will complete a suite of high-priority fish passage and habitat restoration actions in the Lower Nehalem Watershed, in coastal, Northwest Oregon. The project will include the removal of 4 dams and culverts and will replace 5 tide gates, which are fish passage barriers that also restrict floodplain connectivity with two muted tidal regulator gates, which will result in 22 miles of coho spawning and rearing habitat reconnected and 381 acres of floodplain wetlands reconnected.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Restoring Habitat Connectivity for Lower Columbia River Salmonids in the North Fork Klaskanine River Watershed (Task B: Construction)

Reclamation Funding: $3,175,089

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife will restore fish passage in the North Fork Klaskanine River by providing fish passage at the Ogee Dam. The project builds upon progress made in previous phases of a watershed-scale effort, that included the removal of one dam and installation of a fish passage structure at a second dam upstream of the proposed project location at Ogee Dam. Once installed, the fish passage feature at Ogee Dam will provide access to 12 full miles of critical spawning and rearing habitat in the upper reaches of the North Fork Klaskanine River for the benefit of ESA-listed coho salmon. The project will also benefit several non-listed, but culturally significant species, including coastal cutthroat trout, Pacific lamprey, and Western brook lamprey.

Washington

Chelan County, Peshastin Creek Historic Channel and Floodplain Reconnection and Design Project (Task A: Study and Design)

Reclamation Funding: $768,587

Chelan County will complete the study and design of a comprehensive restoration project to relocate and reconnect the Peshastin Creek channel with its historic floodplain and build two highway bridges across the rerouted creek in Chelan County, Washington. Aquatic habitat within Peshastin Creek was severely degraded by the construction of State Route 97 in the 1950's, which reduced and straightened the stream channel and disconnected it from the historic channel footprint and floodplain. The County will complete a hydrology and hydraulic assessment of existing and proposed conditions, perform an alternatives analysis seeking input from fish biologists, local landowners, and other stakeholders, and conduct a bridge study and risk analyses, to produce a 60% design package.

Confederated Tribes of the Yakama Nation, Pom Pom Road at Toppenish Creek Habitat Restoration and Fish Passage Project (Task B: Construction)

Reclamation Funding: $3,020,000

The Yakama Nation will restore aquatic habitat and fish passage on Toppenish Creek, a tributary to the Yakima River in Yakima County, Washington. Irrigation diversions, roads, bridges, and agriculture have disconnected the creek's main channel from its historic floodplain. As a result, federally-listed salmonid species have been cut-off from healthy floodplain spawning habitat, and groundwater recharge from the floodplain has been eliminated. When completed, the restoration project will provide 2.4 miles of complex high-quality rearing and spawning habitat for the federally threatened Columbia River steelhead and culturally important Pacific lamprey by routing stream flows back into of the historic channel. Installation of a new bridge and three box culverts will increase flow conveyance width by 270%, the creek will be reconnected to 100 acres of floodplain forests, restoring natural stream processes, and increasing flood water storage.

Confederated Tribes of the Yakama Nation, Nason Creek Floodplain (DOT-N1) RM 3.2 to 4.6 Floodplain Project (Task A: Study and Design)

Reclamation Funding: $500,000

The Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (Yakama Nation), in partnership with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and in coordination with the Wenatchee Subbasin Watershed Action Team (WAT), will complete final construction designs for a large-scale salmon habitat restoration project along Nason Creek near the City of Leavenworth in Chelan County, Washington, within the Northern Treaty Territory of the Yakama Nation. The project will develop final construction designs to remove, and subsequently re-route, a problematic 0.65-mile-long segment of State Route 207 away from the Nason Creek floodway to restore stream habitat for Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed spring Chinook salmon, steelhead, and bull trout.

Confederated Tribes of the Yakama Nation, Wapato Diversion: Improvements for Anadromous Fish Passage (Task A: Study and Design)

Reclamation Funding: $2,000,000

The Yakama Nation, working in partnership with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, will develop alternatives for the passage of anadromous fish species at the Wapato Diversion on the lower Yakima River in Central Washington State. Following an alternatives analysis, the selected project concept will be advanced to a 60% level of design. The purpose of the design alternatives is to restore fish passage for fish within the Yakima Major Population Group of federally-threatened, Middle Columbia River (MCR) Steelhead, spring and summer run Chinook, Coho, and Sockeye salmon, and juvenile and adult Pacific Lamprey.

Confederated Tribes of the Yakama Nation, Prosser Diversion: Improvements for Anadromous Fish Passage (Task A: Study and Design)

Reclamation Funding: $2,000,000

The Yakama Nation will study, select, and design alternatives to improve fish passage and avoid entrainment at the Prosser Diversion on the lower Yakima River of Central Washington State. The Prosser Diversion supplies irrigation water through the Chandler Canal serving the

Kennewick Division of Reclamation's Yakima Project. The dam can divert more than 50% of Yakima River flow at times, creating very dangerous fish passage conditions. A large proportion of the Yakima basin's smolts get entrained in the canal and suffer high mortality. Removal or modification of the dam and headworks will create safer passage conditions for all anadromous species. These improvements will benefit all four populations comprising the Yakima Major Population Group of federally-threatened Middle Columbia River Steelhead juveniles and adults; juveniles and adults from the entire Yakima populations of spring and summer run Chinook, naturally-spawning fall Chinook, Coho, and Sockeye salmon; and juvenile and adult Pacific Lamprey.

Wyoming

City of Casper, Study and Design North Platte River Restoration (Task A: Study and Design)

Reclamation Funding: $567,117

The City of Casper will complete the study and design of a project to restore approximately 3-miles of the North Casper and Knife River Reaches of the North Platte River in Natrona County, Wyoming. Widespread colonization of the invasive Russian olive, entrenchment of upstream dams and reservoirs, bank erosion, channel widening, and poor riffle and pool complexity from upstream sediment inputs have reduced the ecosystem function of the riparian and aquatic habitats. The project has the potential to restore over three miles of river channel, improve adjacent riparian health, create various types of new wetlands, create an Audubon Important Bird Area, protect adjacent critical infrastructure, and improve recreational opportunity along the river.

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