

# Yakima Basin Fish and Wildlife Recovery Board

## 2023 Strategic Plan for FY 2024-2027

### Vision for the Future

In our ideal future, restored habitat and abundant cold, fresh water support a healthy Yakima River watershed, thriving populations of native fish and wildlife, and productive Tribal and recreational fisheries – all of which are achieved in a manner that is strongly supported by local communities in the Basin.

### Our Mission

Conserve and restore sustainable and harvestable populations of native fish and wildlife species in close partnership with the local communities of the Yakima River Basin.

### Guiding Principles: How We Work

- **Consensus decision-making:** *The Board can speak strongly when we all agree, even as we may disagree on other topics.*
- **Collaboration:** *The Board works closely with members and partners to build shared understanding while drawing from the unique knowledge and resources of everyone involved.*
- **Voluntary measures over regulatory:** *The Board emphasizes the need to work with willing partners to achieve salmon recovery.*
- **Science-based solutions:** *The Board relies on science and monitoring to ensure that recommended actions are biologically significant and technically sound.*
- **Strong citizen engagement:** *The Board engages with local governments and citizens to ensure that recommended actions are strongly supported by the communities they occur in.*

### The Problem and Our Response

#### The Problem

Native fish species face many obstacles as they migrate, spawn, and grow in the Yakima Basin.

Ocean-going salmon and steelhead that return to the Yakima and bull trout that spawn in the Yakima's cold headwaters still face passage barriers, degraded habitat conditions, altered flows, unnatural rates of predation, and other issues that prevent their populations from thriving. We have made major investments in restoring habitat and improving survival with the goal of restoring these species to healthy, sustainable, and harvestable population levels but in recent years, we have seen concerning declines in fish numbers.

Salmon recovery is critical in the Yakima Basin. Salmon are central to the culture, history, and identity of the Yakama Nation and support valued recreation opportunities for local communities. The presence of federal mandates associated with the Endangered Species Act listings of steelhead and bull trout also directly impact local governments, communities, and businesses. The efforts of all the entities working to recover salmon in the Yakima Basin become both more urgent and more complex in the context of climate change, recent declines in salmon and steelhead abundance, and concerns about future water supply shortages.

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## Our Response

Decisions about fish recovery need to be driven by the best possible information and by bold and collective action if we want to bring the signature fish species of our region back from the brink of extinction. The stakes are high, and the time is now for collaborative, science driven strategy. An often-quoted adage says, “If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.” For the salmon of the Yakima Basin, we have to go both fast *and* far – but we must all go *together* in order to ensure that the solutions stick.

Yakima Basin Fish and Wildlife Recovery Board brings the technical expertise, the drive, and the key stakeholder relationships this Basin needs for successful salmon recovery. We make strategic use of scientific and community knowledge to direct state investment into the best projects for salmon recovery—restoring fish access and the habitat they need to thrive.

As the Lead Entity and Regional Salmon Recovery Organization for the Yakima Basin, we help coordinate many partners working to restore sustainable and harvestable populations of Mid-Columbia salmon, steelhead, bull trout, and other threatened and endangered fish and wildlife species in the Basin. Our nonprofit’s structure is designed to provide local buy-in grounded in scientific expertise: local elected officials and Tribal representatives make up our governing board of directors; an expert Technical Advisory Group (TAG) reviews proposed salmon recovery projects and ensures that they meet scientific criteria; and a Citizens Committee has final discretion over the recommendation to fund the projects.

We bring a rigorous process and serve as a technical resource for recovery efforts throughout the Basin, complementing the work of the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan. We accomplish our work through four primary strategic focus areas:

- Collaborative Structure
- Recovery Planning
- Intermediary Funding as the regional Lead Entity
- Advocacy and Outreach

## Purpose of this Strategic Plan

This strategic plan reflects the directions set by the Board of Directors through multiple conversations in the winter and spring of 2023. This high-level direction will guide the organization’s staff as they develop detailed work plans for the organization. The remainder of this plan document describes what we intend to achieve and how, over the coming years.



## Strategic Focus Areas

### 1. Collaborative Structure

**Focus:** Engage local and Tribal governments in the Yakima Basin in robust collaboration on salmon recovery and evolve our operations to make most efficient and effective use of our financial and human resources.

**Rationale:** The Recovery Board is a unique organization that brings city and county governments and the Yakama Nation together to make decisions by consensus. The Recovery Board has a small staff of three, and an all-volunteer board of busy elected and appointed leaders. Together we build a shared understanding of issues and take actions that have the support of its members and partners.

Strategies
1.1 Sustain a robust partnership between local & Tribal governments in the Yakima Basin
1.2 Increase the impact and engagement of our board of directors as organizational leaders, making effective use of their skills, networks, and political connections.
1.3 Plan for future revenue and staffing for the Recovery Board.
1.4 Maintain a well-functioning and fiscally-sound nonprofit organization.
1.5 Take every opportunity to nurture and strengthen key strategic relationships.

### 2. Recovery Planning

**Focus:** Ensure that Recovery Plans are current and provide the best possible guidance for implementation of salmon recovery projects.

**Rationale:** Recovery Plans are critical to our ability to guide project sponsors, direct funds effectively, and secure additional funding. The Yakima Basin Integrated Plan looks to our Recovery Plans for guidance as well. Outdated plans mean uncertainty as to whether we are having the desired impacts. Full-cycle recovery planning (compiling basin-level information, updating the Recovery Plans with specificity as to project priorities, and monitoring project impact) will help us understand the cost-benefit of investments, see whether we are meeting our salmon recovery goals in the Basin, and direct future investments as strategically and efficiently as possible.

Strategies
2.1 Convene a Steelhead Working Group and update the Steelhead Recovery Plan.
2.2 Convene the Yakima Bull Trout Working Group and update the Yakima Bull Trout Action Plan.
2.3 Engage with partners to promote strategic planning for other fish and wildlife species.
2.4 Work with partners to develop and support implementation of Recovery Plan priority actions.
2.5 Ensure that each Recovery Plan includes a monitoring component and coordinate and support efforts to implement recommended monitoring.
2.6 Promote data-based evaluation of the effectiveness of recovery actions.
2.7 Expand efforts to collect, curate, and share information supporting recovery activities.



### 3. Lead Entity Program

**Focus:** Fund high-quality projects that are grounded in the priorities identified in the Recovery Plans.

**Rationale:** We are the link between state Salmon Recovery Funding and getting good projects on the ground. We need to ensure that we receive the best possible proposed projects for funding, conserving the time of the Technical Advisory Group and Citizens’ Committee. With the guidance of stronger, clearer, and more current Recovery Plans, we will be able to maintain neutrality in our Lead Entity role while also encouraging high quality projects in top-priority parts of the Basin.

Strategies
3.1 Work with partners to identify good habitat and restoration projects that will achieve the goals set out by the Recovery Plans.
3.2 Conduct a competitive grant program for SRFB funding.
3.3 Directly support partner efforts to secure non-SRFB funding for priority actions.
3.4 Track and report on the status and cumulative benefits of funded projects.
3.5 Coordinate with RCO and other Lead Entities around the state to support the SRFB program.

### 4. Outreach and Advocacy

**Focus:** Promote effective local, state, and federal policy regarding salmon recovery in the Yakima Basin.

**Rationale:** With our unique board of elected and appointed public official and our technical expertise, we are uniquely positioned to make the case for salmon recovery funding to elected and agency officials, helping them understand the issues and the impact of salmon recovery work in the Basin. While other organizations in the Basin are capably fulfilling a broad “outreach” role in helping the public understand the importance of recovering salmon species, our focus will be on advocacy and education for policymakers and local government leaders. We will coordinate our advocacy with others in the Basin to amplify one another’s voices and make our communications materials available to all.

Strategies
4.1 Update our communications plan, with a focus on key audiences of decision-makers.
4.2 Develop tools that support Basin-wide information-sharing, outreach, and advocacy,
4.3 Increase our outreach and advocacy to decision-makers at all levels to ensure understanding of salmon recovery priorities in the Yakima Basin.
4.4 Engage and coordinate with the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan to advance salmon recovery efforts.
4.5 Engage in building coalitions at multiple scales to support Yakima Basin policy needs.



## PRIORITIES BY YEAR

Focus = a priority area for attention in that year; Maintain = in place and presumed in good order; Future = not a priority in that year.

#	Action	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27
<b>1</b>	<b>COLLABORATIVE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE</b>				
1.1	Sustain a robust partnership between local & Tribal governments in the Yakima Basin.	Maintain	Maintain	Maintain	Maintain
1.2	Increase the impact and engagement of our board of directors as organizational leaders.	Focus	Focus	Maintain	Maintain
1.3	Plan for future revenue and staffing for the Recovery Board.	Focus on Staffing	Focus on Revenue	Maintain	Maintain
1.4	Maintain a well-functioning nonprofit organization.	Maintain	Maintain	Maintain	Maintain
1.5	Take every opportunity to nurture and strengthen key strategic relationships.	Focus	Focus	Maintain	Maintain
<b>2</b>	<b>RECOVERY PLANNING</b>				
2.1	Convene a Steelhead Working Group and update the Steelhead Recovery Plan.	Focus	Focus	Maintain	Maintain
2.2	Convene the Yakima Bull Trout Working Group and update the Yakima Bull Trout Action Plan.	Focus on Plan Update	Focus on Plan Update	Maintain	Maintain
2.3	Engage with partners to promote strategic planning for other fish and wildlife species.	As requested	As requested	As requested	As requested
2.4	Work with partners to develop and support implementation of Recovery Plan priority actions.	Focus on plan updates	Focus	Focus	Maintain
2.5	Ensure that each Recovery Plan includes a monitoring component and coordinate and support efforts to implement recommended monitoring.	Focus on identifying actions	Focus on identifying actions	Focus on implementing	Focus on implementing
2.6	Promote data-based evaluation of the effectiveness of recovery actions.	Future	Future	Focus	Focus
2.7	Expand efforts to collect, curate, and share information supporting recovery activities.	Focus	Focus	Maintain	Maintain



<b>3</b>	<b>LEAD ENTITY PROGRAM</b>				
3.1	Work with partners to identify good habitat and restoration projects that will achieve the goals set out by the Recovery Plans.	Focus	Focus	Focus	Focus
3.2	Conduct a robust and competitive grant program for SRFB funding.	Focus	Focus	Focus	Focus
3.3	Directly support partner efforts to secure non-SRFB funding for priority actions.	Maintain	Maintain	Maintain	Maintain
3.4	Track and report on the status and cumulative benefits of funded projects.	Maintain	Focus	Focus	Maintain
3.5	Coordinate with RCO and other Lead Entities around the state to support the SRFB program.	Focus	Focus	Maintain	Maintain
<b>4</b>	<b>OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY</b>				
4.1	Update our communications plan, with a focus on key audiences of decision-makers.	Focus	Maintain	Maintain	Maintain
4.2	Develop tools that support Basin-wide information-sharing, outreach, and advocacy.	Future	Focus	Focus	Focus
4.3	Increase our outreach and advocacy to decision-makers at all levels to ensure understanding of salmon recovery priorities in the Yakima Basin.	Focus	Focus	Focus	Focus
4.4	Engage and coordinate with the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan to advance salmon recovery efforts.	Focus	Maintain	Maintain	Maintain
4.5	Engage in building coalitions at multiple scales to support Yakima Basin policy needs.	Future	Focus	Focus	Maintain

