

Memo on Regional Prioritization and Regional Ranking of 2026 Fish Barrier Removal Board Applications for the Yakima Basin

Prepared by Alex Conley, April 20, 2026

This memo provides a response by the Yakima Basin Fish and Wildlife Recovery Board staff to requests from WDFW staff administering the Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board's 2026 grant evaluation process. We provide information on: A) which projects under consideration are eligible for the Regional Priority match waiver, and B) the Recovery Board ranking of projects with its focal watershed.

A) ELIGIBILITY FOR THE REGIONAL PRIORITY MATCH WAIVER

In 2020 through 2022, the Yakima Basin Fish and Wildlife Recovery Board developed a regional prioritization of fish passage barriers, which is available as a working draft while we secure resources to complete remaining quality control work on barrier data needed to finalize the prioritization. In order to evaluate which projects qualify for the new regional prioritization match waiver for the FBRB grant program, we:

- 1) Used the prioritized barrier data available here:
<https://ybfwrp.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=b2039cf4164e45fd88fa731f4ac44914>
- 2) Removed sites on 2 creeks that are not identified as restoration targets for anadromous fish (the North Fork Cowlitz Creek and Robinson Canyon) and then ordered all remaining barriers by their steelhead priority score.
- 3) Identified the top 20% (48 projects) and then continued down through all projects with the exact same score as the last two projects above the cutoff (as given their identical scores there was no way to determine which belonged above or below the cutoff) for a total of 50 projects.
- 4) Reviewed where on the list the projects under consideration by the FBRB fell. We found that:
 - a) **Project #26-1057, the Naneum at EWC Project** (FPDSI barrier #600616) ranks as #8, well within the top 20% (at top 3.2%), making it clearly eligible for the regional prioritization match waiver.

- b) **Project 26-1058, the Naneum Creek 3.2 Project** (FPDSI barrier #602345) is ranked at #56 (top 22%) in the 2020 prioritization, just outside of the initial top 20% despite being downstream of the higher ranked Naneum at EWC project. Its lower prioritization is due to the barrier passability being marked as unknown in the 2018 survey and its location just below the I-90 crossing (marked as unknown passability due to lack of a level B survey but presumed to be passable to adults in all subsequent discussions). Had #602345 been rated at either 33% or 66% passable and its upstream gain not cut at I-90 it would have ranked within the top 20%. This project should qualify for the coordinated projects match waiver; should it not we ask that you consider including it under the regional prioritization match waiver on the presumption that an updated assessment of passability would clearly rank it within the top 20%. Note that we would welcome Level B surveys for both these barriers if survey capacity is available.
- c) **Project 25-1363, the Cooke Creek RM 4.25 & RM 3.86 Passage & Screen Project** includes two barriers that were fully surveyed and added to FPDSI in 2021 and 2023 after data was compiled from FPDSI for our prioritization. They crosswalk well to two barriers that were included in our prioritization based on local input and approximate locations; these barriers (Unnamed Cooke Creek 2 and Unnamed Cooke Creek 3) ranked at #19 (top 7%) and #45 (top 18%), both within the top 20% even with a rating of unknown. Were our prioritization updated with the passabilities of 0% now in FPDSI for both sites 602342 and 960500, both would have ranked yet higher. The Cooke Creek barriers are clearly eligible for the regional prioritization match waiver.
- d) The barriers in **Project #26-1065 Salmon Creek Culvert Design** were included in the evaluation but did not rank in the top 20% (ranked #118, the top 47%). We do note that while the total potential upstream habitat is limited in extent, which impacted its prioritization, the upstream habitat is of high quality and fully accessible once the proposed project is completed.
- e) **Project 26-1076 and 26-1075 on Agency and Simcoe Creeks** are located on the Yakama Reservation, which was not included in the Board's prioritization, and hence would not be eligible for the match waiver. The Yakama Nation maintains a separate database and prioritization modeled on the FPDSI system which identify these as high priority projects. Both these projects provide access to significant steelhead habitat used by the Toppenish Steelhead population and

are identified as high priorities for passage restoration in the Yakima Basin Steelhead Recovery Plan.

- f) **The Middle Creek barrier on the Teanaway Road** did not rank in the top 20% (ranked #86, the top 34%). *This was proposed locally for FBRB, but I do not think a final application went in.* Again, we note that while the total potential upstream habitat is limited in extent, which impacted its prioritization, it is of high quality and fully accessible once the proposed project is completed.

If any other applications have been received that are under consideration for the regional prioritization match waiver, please do contact us so we can add them to this evaluation.

B) RANKING OF PROJECTS IN REGIONAL FOCAL WATERSHED

The 2009 Yakima Steelhead Recovery Plan prioritizes restoration of access to the upper portions of the Wilson and Naneum Creek watersheds, which include 30+ miles of high-quality steelhead habitat that are currently inaccessible (See Upper Yakima Action #7). For this reason we rank the two Naneum Creek projects above the Cooke Creek project. Within Naneum Creek we give top rank to the downstream project (noting that the lower score in our original barrier prioritization resulted from it not having a passability score and having its upstream habitat cut at the passable I-90 crossing). We prioritize the downstream project in order to provide full passage to upstream projects and ensure that unscreened surface water diversions are addressed prior to anadromous fish use at and above the project site (the project will remove an unscreened diversion in Naneum Creek and replace it with an alternate water source, eliminating the entrainment risk). This results in the following ranking:

- 1) **Project 26-1058, the Naneum Creek 3.2 Project**
- 2) **Project #26-1057, the Naneum at EWC Project**
- 3) **Project 25-1363, the Cooke Creek RM 4.25 & RM 3.86 Passage & Screen Project**

Please do contact us if you have any questions about this ranking.

Thank you for soliciting and making use of our input; we appreciate the Fish Barrier Removal Board's ongoing efforts to work in close partnership with the state's Regional Salmon Recovery Boards.

Sincerely,

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