



Staff Report

TO: Water Resources Commission
FROM: Chris Kowitz, North Central Region Manager
DATE: June 13, 2025
SUBJECT: Agenda Item H
Water Resources Commission

WALLA WALLA BASIN – STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

I. Introduction

During this informational report, staff from the Department, the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology), and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) will provide an update on the implementation of the Walla Walla Water 2050 Strategic Plan.

II. Background

Overlapping the states of Oregon and Washington, the Walla Walla Basin is a complex watershed struggling to meet water needs for rural and urban growth, and to maintain sufficient instream flows. Many of the water resources in the basin are over-appropriated and are not available during certain times of the year, even for senior water right holders. Separate adjudications, water rights, and policies in each state have complicated these issues over time.

In 2019, the Department, Ecology, and the CTUIR initiated the development of a 30-year strategic plan for the Walla Walla Basin. As part of this initiative, a Strategic Plan Advisory Committee was formed and assisted with the development of the plan's strategies and early action items. The final plan, commonly referred to as the Walla Walla Water 2050 Water Management Plan (Plan), was released in June 2021 (link below). The Department previously provided an update on the Plan to the Commission at the Commission meetings in February 2023 ([Agenda Item G](#)) and March 2024 ([Agenda Item G](#)).

III. Discussion

Since 2022, the Department, Ecology, and CTUIR have been focused on implementation, working both internally and externally to further the objectives laid out in the plan. To help bring focus to this work, an overarching strategy was developed – the Walla Walla Basin Watershed Strategy. Under this Strategy, implementation of the Plan, as well as the Bi-State Flow Study and BOR WaterSmart Basin Study, has been guided by the Walla

Walla Basin Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee). Over \$3 million have been allocated under the strategy and we expect the number of projects to increase over time.

IV. Conclusion

The Department will continue to work with Ecology and the CTUIR on these planning efforts, including the implementation of the Plan. Work will continue to move water supply alternatives forward through the planning process, including final project selection. The Department will return to the Commission to provide periodic updates on the status of these initiatives.

Attachments:

1. Walla Walla Basin Watershed Strategy

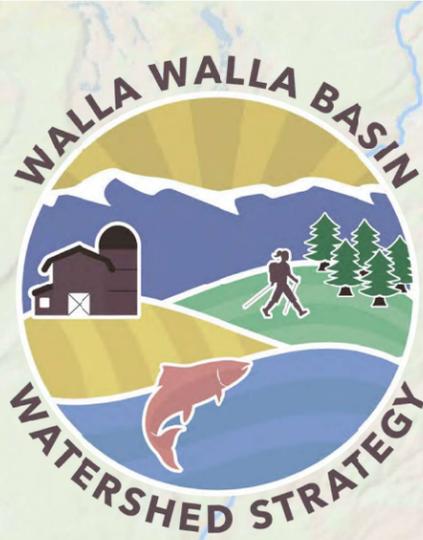
References:

1. Walla Walla Water 2050 Water Strategic Plan
(<https://www.wallawallawater.org/integratedsolutions>)

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WALLA WALLA BASIN WATERSHED STRATEGY

2020-2050



Near-Term Priority Strategies

FLOODPLAINS AND HABITAT

- Reconnect floodplain and restore channel complexity
- Improve fish passage in Mill Creek
- Protect and improve fish passage at Nursery Bridge on the WW river
- Improve flow and timing of fish passage through Hofer Dam on the Touchet

MONITORING AND METERING

- Develop an overarching monitoring strategy and adaptive management plan
- Expand and fund streamflow gages
- Improve water use metering and reporting

WATER POLICY

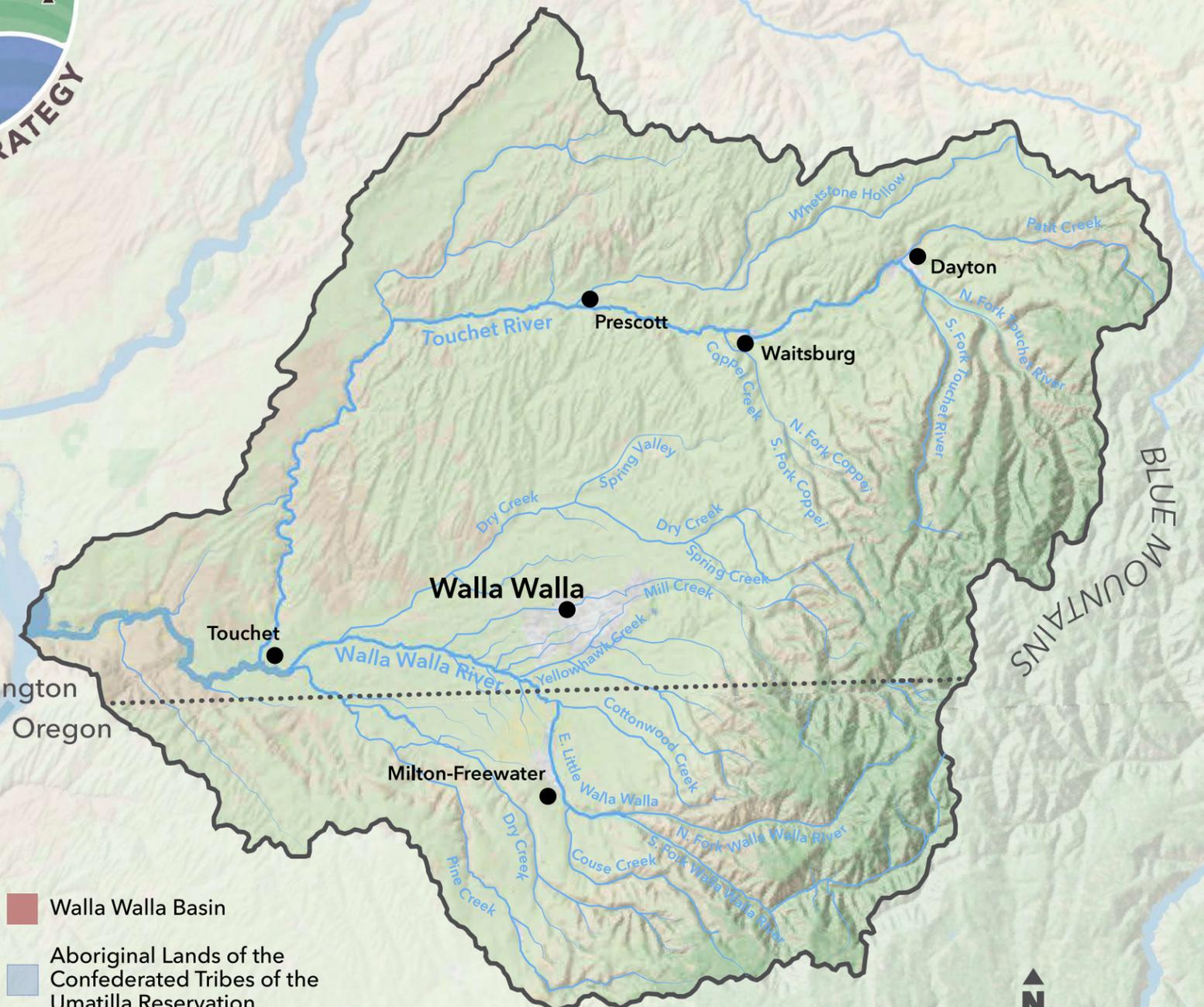
- Improve drought management
- Increase coordination of regulation and management
- Additional Bi-State coordination on water management

STREAMFLOW, GROUNDWATER AND WATER SUPPLY

- Ongoing analyses of the Bi-State Flow Study toward a preferred alternative
- Substitute for basalt wells during low flow periods
- Water rights acquisitions to restore streamflows
- Improve and expand managed aquifer recharge
- Expand and support aquifer storage and recovery

WATER QUALITY

- Increase infiltration of stormwater
- Upgrade Dayton wastewater treatment plant
- Implement conservation tillage and soil erosion Best Management Practices



- Walla Walla Basin
- Aboriginal Lands of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation