



Kittitas Reclamation District

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My name is Urban Eberhart and I am the Secretary/Manager of the Kittitas Reclamation District (KRD), an irrigation district serving 60,000 acres of prime farmland in the Yakima River Basin in the vicinity of Ellensburg, Washington. I was raised on our family farm near Ellensburg growing apples, pears and hay in the Badger Pocket area of the Kittitas Valley. The Yakima River Basin is one of the most productive concentrated irrigated agricultural areas in the Nation, producing more than \$4.5 billion in crops and food processing sales and supporting more than 44,300 jobs annually.

The Yakima River Basin is also home to significant fish and wildlife resources, including bull trout, anadromous steelhead and salmon runs. These fish runs are part of the important recreational and tribal resources in our basin.

Over the last decade, a unique and diverse collaboration has emerged in the Yakima Basin focused on developing a collective vision for the future of water in the watershed; a future where there is water for farming, water for fish, and water for families. Even when we have years of less than adequate water supplies. We call it the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan.

The Yakima Basin Integrated Plan is a balanced approach agreed upon by a diverse coalition of farmers, environmental and outdoor groups, local, state and federal governments, and the Yakama Nation. It is designed to sustainably meet the needs of water users and abundant salmon and steelhead runs, improve habitat for fish and wildlife, and allow our communities to grow into the future.

Through our efforts, we have seen substantial progress on meeting the Plan's goals through partnerships and collaboration, when in the past we were in conflict.

Through these types of collaborative partnerships, we have made the ESA work, but only if the Federal agencies involved are fully engaged and willing to work with us on the ground. Recent efforts to improve fish habitat through significant investments in water conservation, improved water management, water marketing, habitat restoration and fish passage have seen success. In fact, Reclamation estimates that on average approximately 130,000 acre-feet per year has been conserved in the basin since the 1990's.

The Integrated Plan leverages federal, state, and local partnerships and funding to accomplish what one single stakeholder could not. We have found areas where we can improve endangered fish runs without harming irrigated agriculture. But it takes buy-in from federal and state agencies and staff, irrigators, tribes and the public. While these collaborations may be rare, especially in areas where the ESA has been used to limit or stop irrigation of farms and ranches, we have seen success. I believe that any improvements to the ESA can enable and promote partnerships like the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan in implementing ESA protections and recover endangered fisheries while protecting our agricultural heritage and economy.

Thank You,

Urban Eberhart
Secretary Manager
Kittitas Reclamation District