

Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

PRESS RELEASE



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CTUIR Selected for Federal Investment Pilot Program

MISSION – The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) learned Sept. 3 that it is one of 12 communities around the country chosen for a pilot program designed to invest federal dollars in small or economically disadvantaged communities.

Michael L. Connor, Army for Civil Works assistant secretary, announced the communities during a visit to the Navajo Nation in northeastern Arizona, which will receive an investment to reduce flood risk to access roads and residential structures.

The CTUIR's federal investment will be up to \$10 million to improve fish passage along Mill Creek in southeastern Washington by notching 63 grade control sills to create a low-flow channel.

Mike Lambert, Habitat Program supervisor for CTUIR's Department of Natural Resources (DNR), said the notching entails constructing a river low-flow channel within each sill so juvenile and adult fish can move within the flood control channel.

"Mill Creek supports populations of Endangered Species Act-threatened middle Columbia River distinct population segment summer steelhead and bull trout, as well as reintroduced spring Chinook salmon and other culturally important First Foods fish species," Lambert said. "These fish transit the Mill Creek Flood Control Project on their upstream migration to spawning habitat in the headwaters of Mill Creek and on their downstream migration to the Pacific Ocean and mainstem Columbia River habitats."

The Mill Creek Flood Control Project is the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) certified flood control reach meant to protect the city of Walla Walla and residents along Mill Creek.

The [12 communities](#) that were chosen will not directly receive the federal funds. Instead the funds will go to local USACE districts that will work with project sponsors and communities to move these projects into their planning, design and construction phases.

"It's a project the CTUIR Fisheries Program has been advocating for decades and anticipates working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on," DNR Intergovernmental Affairs Coordinator Audie Huber said.

The CTUIR's long history in the Columbia Plateau includes the Kennewick, Pasco, Richland and Walla Walla areas. In its 1855 Treaty with the U.S. government, the CTUIR ceded 6.4 million acres in Oregon and Washington. In exchange, its aboriginal rights to hunt, fish and gather were reserved. While the Umatilla Indian Reservation is in Oregon, the CTUIR has nearly 12,000 acres of trust land in southeastern Washington. Its Aboriginal Title lands also stretch into Washington's Asotin, Benton, Columbia, Franklin and Walla Walla counties.

The pilot program was authorized as part of the Water Resources Development Act of 2020, which uses USACE existing authorities to pursue small civil works projects at 100% federal funding that would normally require local cost sharing. These authorities help communities address various water resources issues.

"Investing in small, historically neglected communities, including tribal nations, has been a priority for the Biden-Harris Administration," said Connor. "We need to ensure all communities across the United States are treated equally, have the same access to funding, and receive the same consideration for critical infrastructure projects."

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation is comprised of the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla Tribes, and formed under the Treaty of 1855 at the Walla Walla Valley, 12 Stat. 945. In 1949, the Tribes adopted a constitutional form of government to protect, preserve and enhance the reserved treaty rights guaranteed under federal law.

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Caption: A map shows the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation's (CTUIR) proposed project area in Mill Creek near Walla Walla, Washington. A federal investment up to \$10 million will allow the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer and CTUIR to improve fish passage along the creek by notching 63 grade control sills to create a low-flow channel. CTUIR/Department of Natural Resources