

# “Drought Planning Never Stops”

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2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Water Law in Eastern Washington Conference  
May 21 and 22, 2025  
Spokane, Washington



# Looking Back and Looking Ahead

- OCR mission & current drought status
- Yakima Basin drought response
- Looking ahead - *Design with Nature...*



# Looking back at OCR...

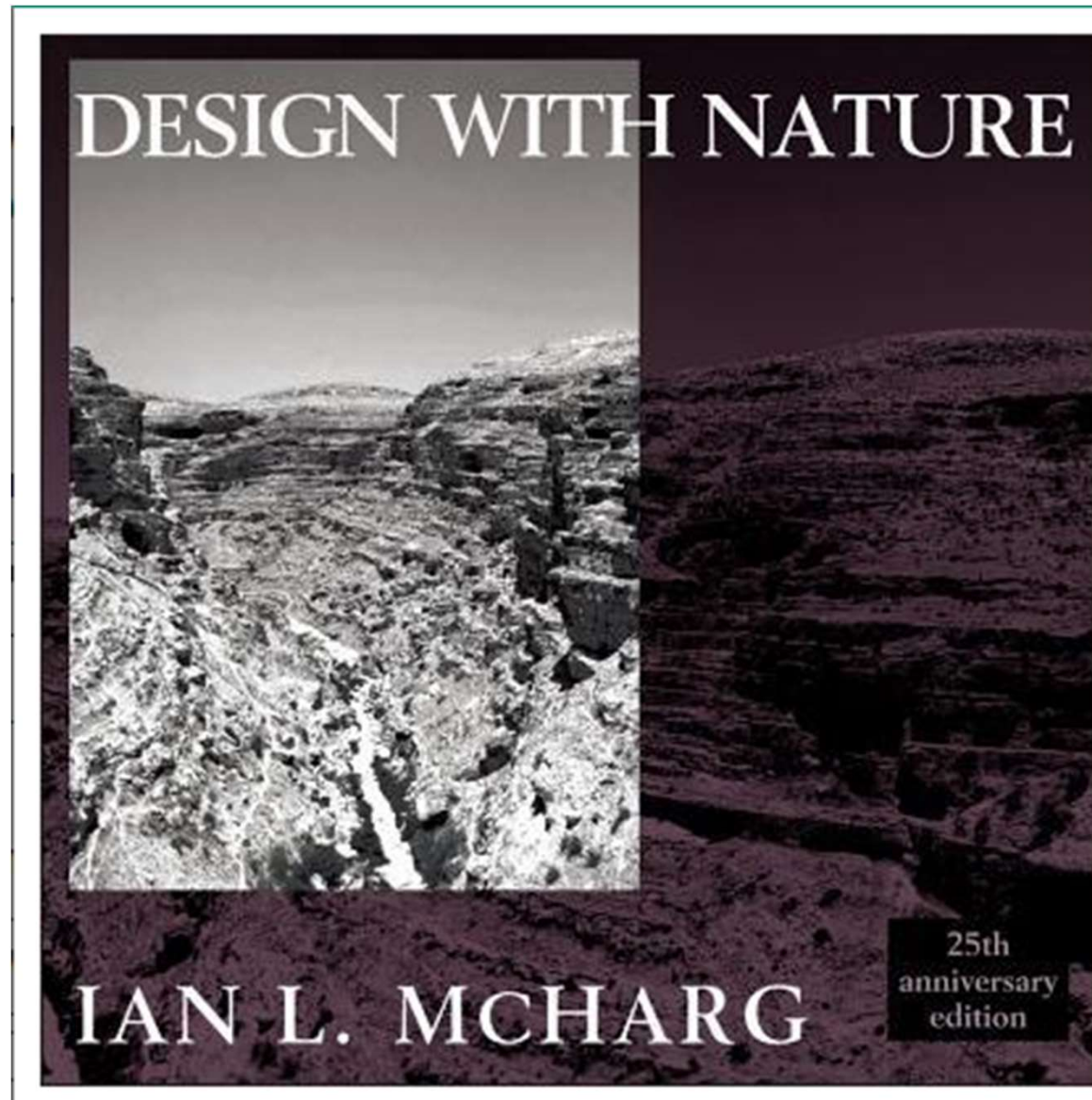
## Prior OCR Director Success Factors

- Creativity
- Drive
- Diplomacy

‘Science alone doesn’t solve our resource problems’ – Michael Kern



# Looking forward by looking back...



Office of Columbia River:

# MANDATE AND FOCUS

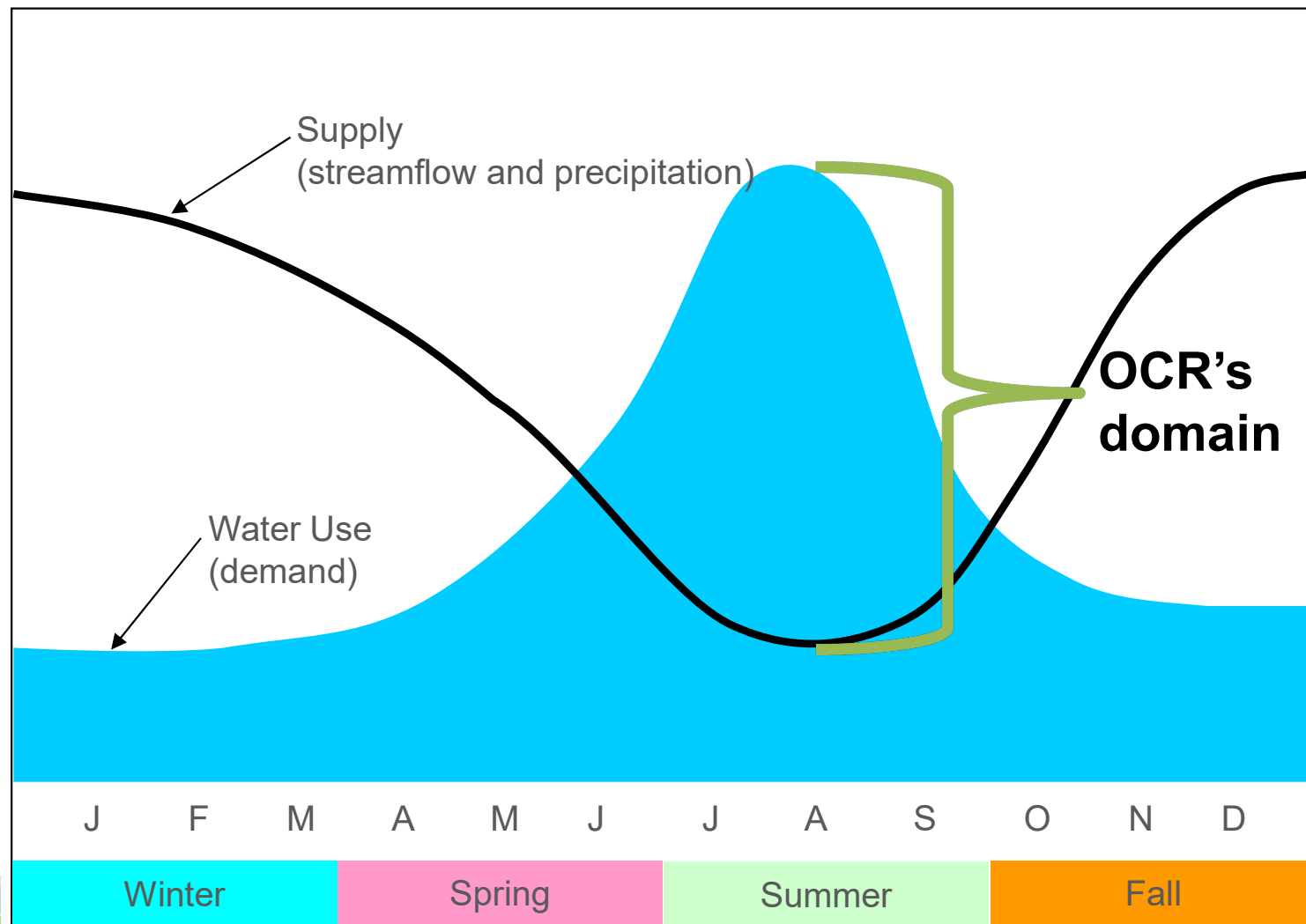
# OCR's Mission....

“Aggressively pursue” water supply development for both instream and out-of-stream uses.



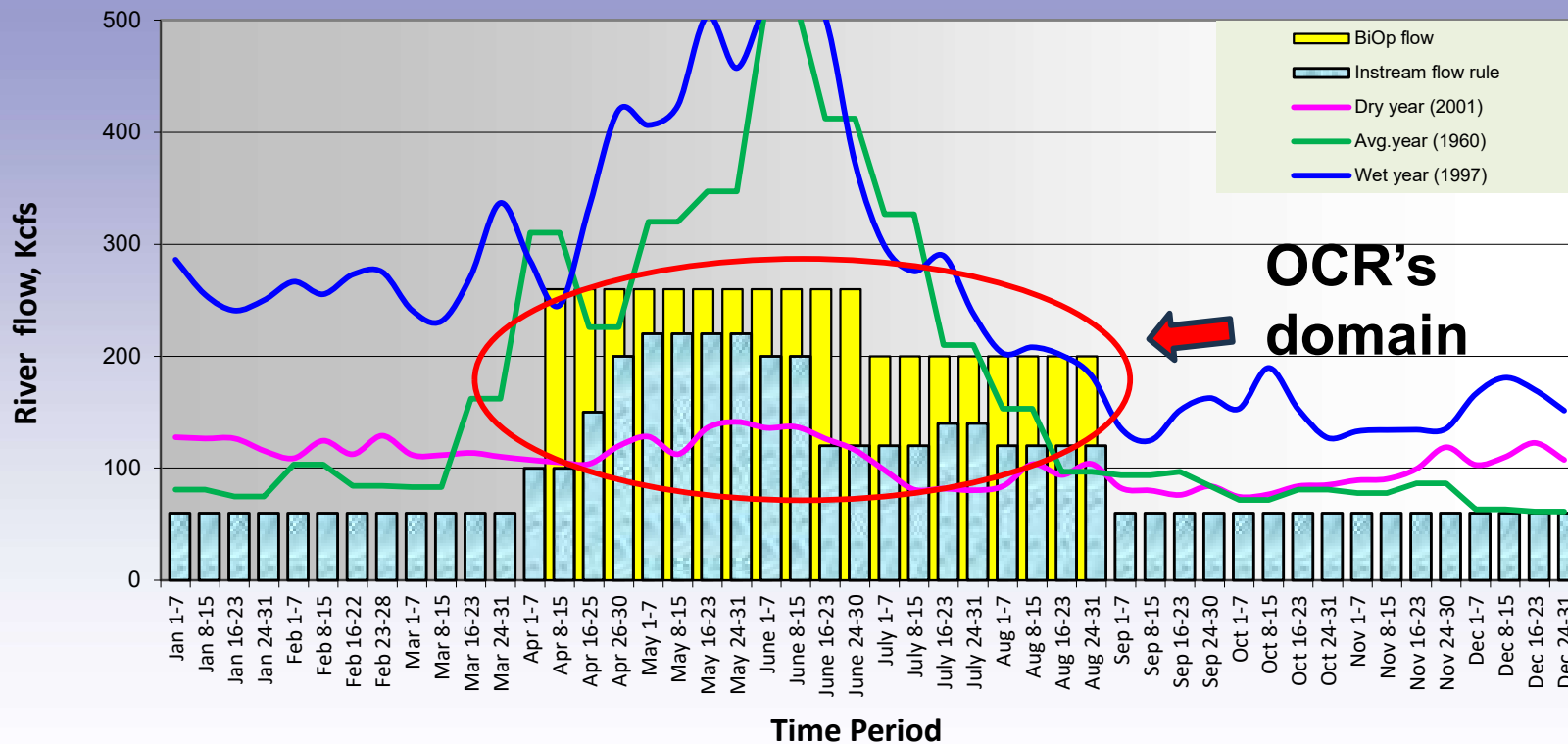
Phot courtesy of Washington State Wine Commission

# The General Eastern Washington Water Supply Situation



# Columbia River Instream Flows

Comparison of Dry, Average, Wet Year Flows to Instream Flow Rule  
(Columbia River at McNary Dam)





# Our changing snowpack in Washington State



News / Northwest

## Washington state drinking water, hydropower at risk as Pacific Northwest snowpack shrinks

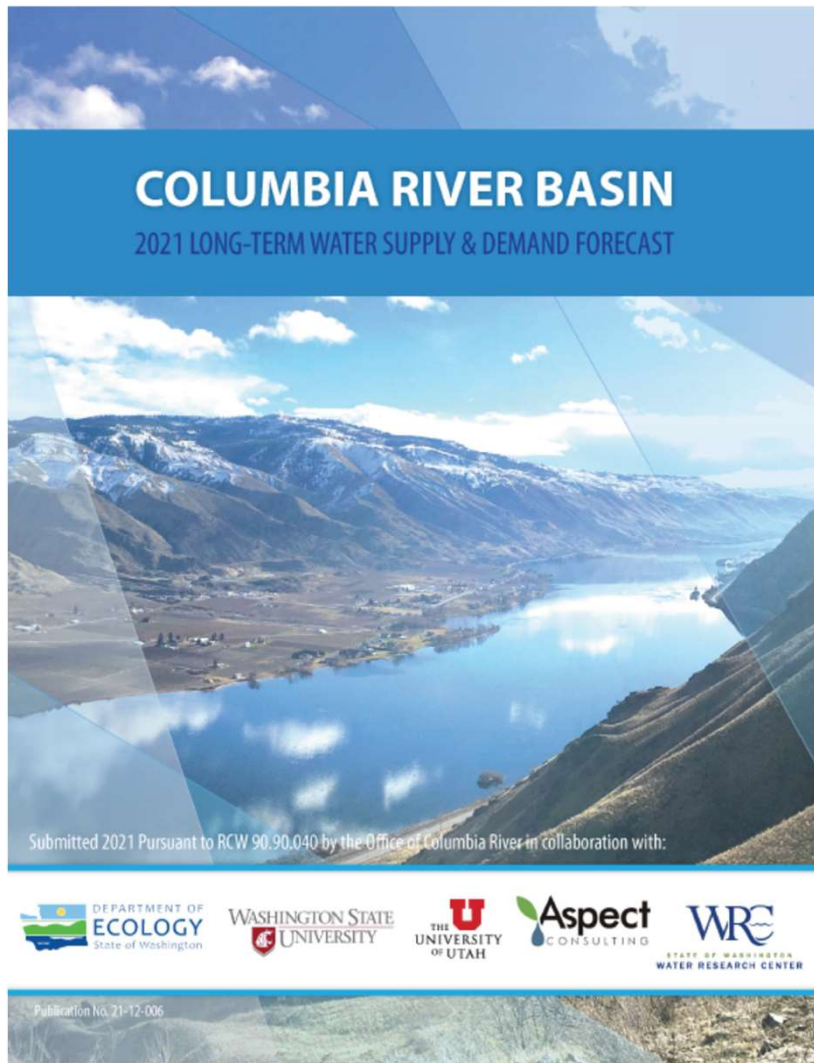
By Conrad Swanson, The Seattle Times

Published: February 12, 2024, 6:00am

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# 2021 Long Term Water Supply and Demand Forecast



- The Forecast suggests that eastern Washington is vulnerable to:
  - More extremes in water supply from year to year;
  - Declining low flows, affecting important fish species;
  - Some watersheds with increases in out-of-stream demands.
- **Next forecast published in 2026**



# Water Supply Development Tools



- **Surface Storage**
- Structural & Operational Changes
- Pump Exchanges
- **Aquifer Storage and Recovery**
- Shallow Aquifer Recharge (aka Passive Rehydration)
- **Water Right Acquisition & Leases**
- Conservation/Piping/Lining
- **Water Banking**







# COLUMBIA RIVER DROUGHT INSURANCE PROGRAM

*An Initiative of The Office of Columbia River*

May 21, 2025

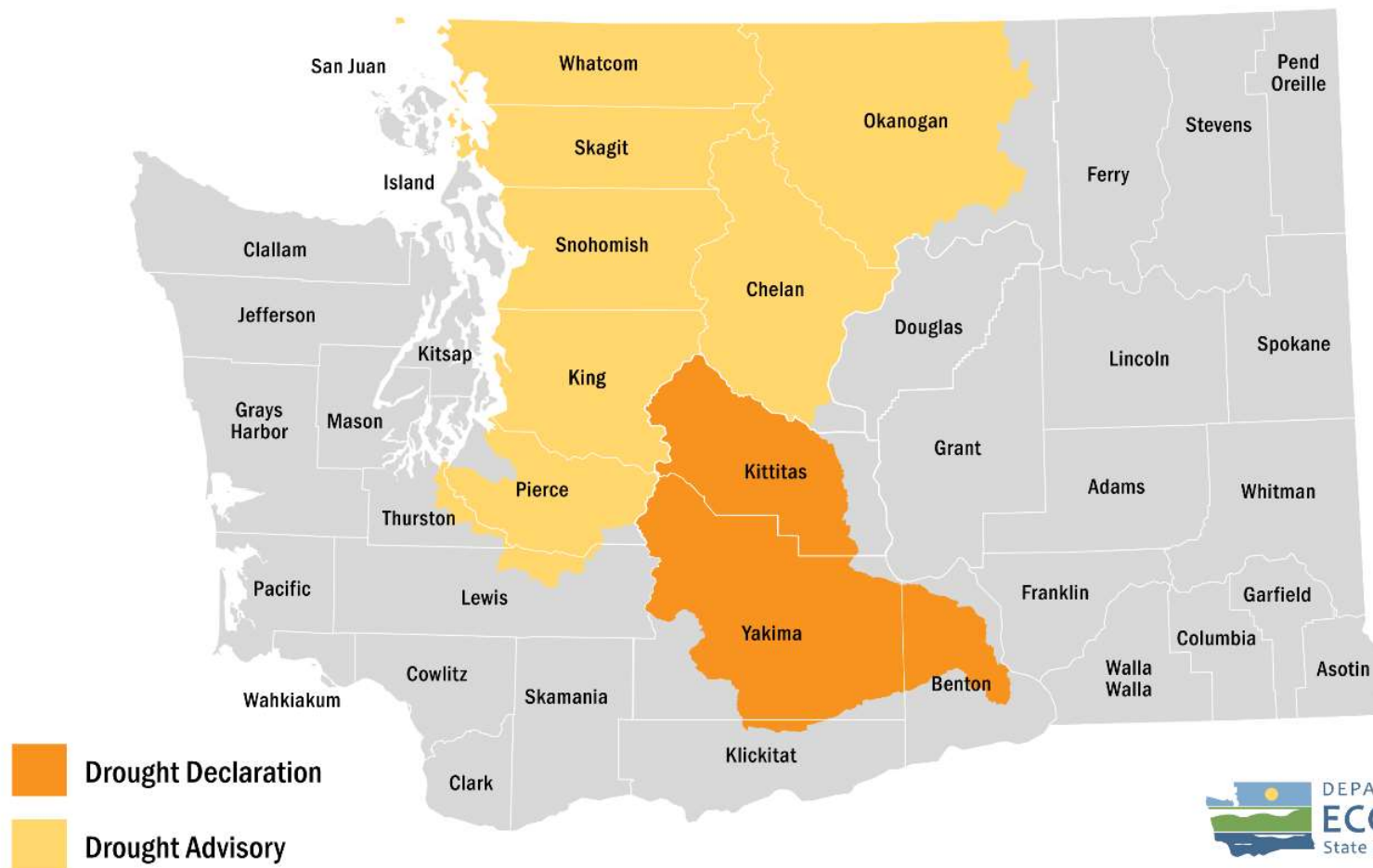
Dan Haller, Aspect Consulting  
Scott Turner, Department of Ecology

Washington State:

**CURRENT DROUGHT STATUS**

# Drought Declared April 8, 2025

## Washington Drought Declaration



Yakima Basin Irrigators:

# DROUGHT PLANNING & RESPONSE



# Roza Irrigation District





# Drought prep at Roza NEVER stops!

Since the 2015 Drought:

- ✓ Piped 70+ miles of canals (\$19M Roza funds)
- ✓ New re-regulation reservoir on-line in 2017 (\$31M)
- ✓ \$2.5M+ in sealant applied to concrete lined canal sections
- ✓ 7,000+ acres of on-farm drip irrigation conversions added



# Takeaways



- ✓ Confront the brutal facts early...plan like crazy before the crisis hits, but be flexible
- ✓ Relationships matter most when the chips are down!
- ✓ Continuity is priceless
- ✓ Communicate, communicate, communicate! (water users, media, internally, USBR/State)...we have more detail on the website if you would like it!
- ✓ Get on the Roza email list!
- ✓ 2026 Could be worse...





# Selah-Moxee Irrigation District



# Water Conservation Program



- \$100 million in necessary infrastructure upgrades
- Canal Lining
- Canal Piping
- Automation





# Enhanced Conservation Program

- \$3.5 million in upgrades
- 1,200 AF Conserved Water





# Naches-Selah Irrigation District

# Selah Valley Canal



2013



2015





# Number 3 Lateral



2021



2022





**SPEAKING OF CHANGE...**

# Change – The one constant

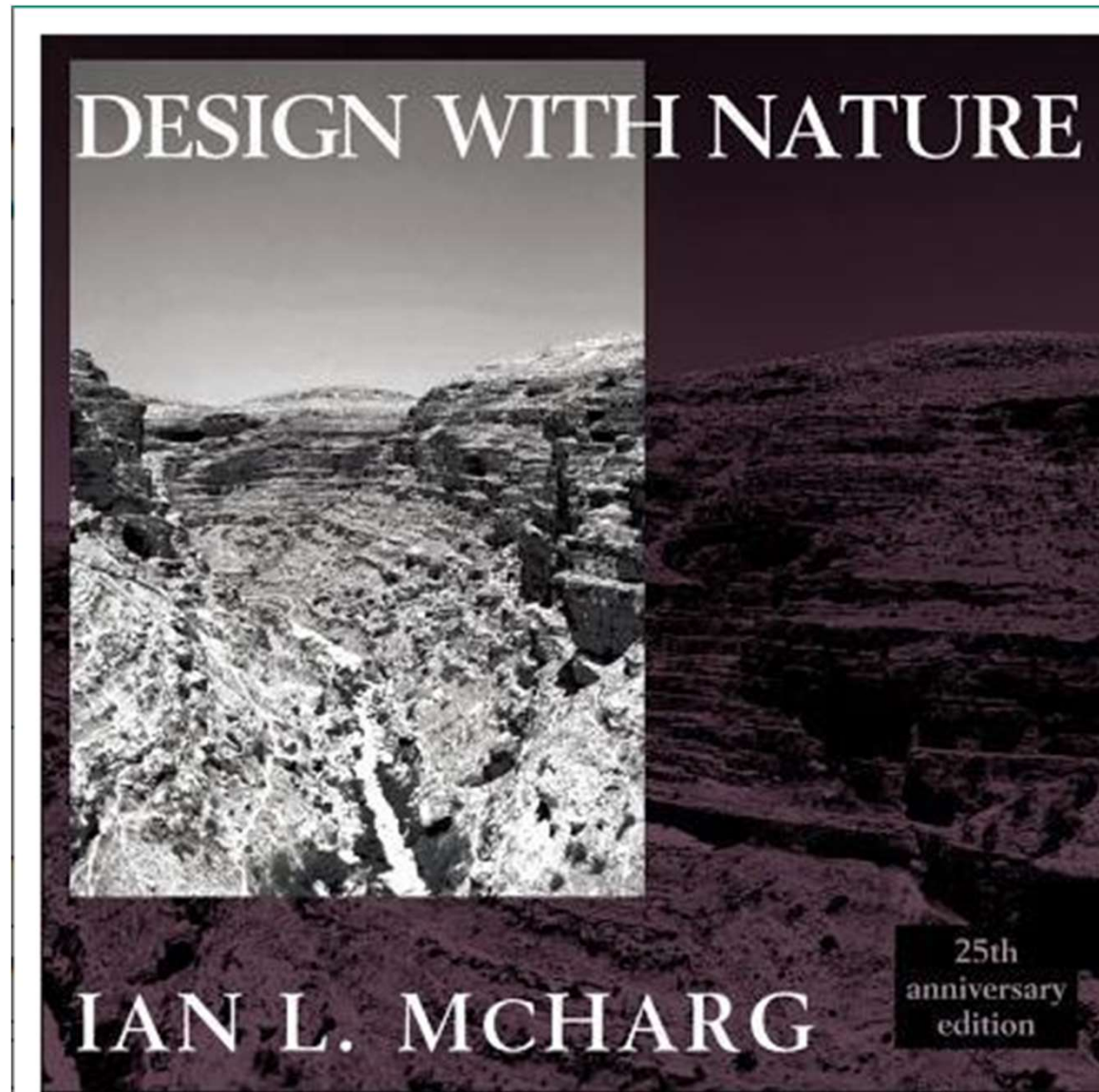
- Washington State
  - Governor
  - Ecology Director
  - OCR Director
- Federal Agencies
  - 2-3 *DRP* waves, and...
  - *Reduction-in-force? Budget cuts?*
- Presidential Administration



Eastern Washington Water:

# LOOKING FORWARD... BY LOOKING BACK

# Looking forward at design...



# Known by other names...

- Context Sensitive Design
- Floodplains by Design
- Biomimicry
- Occam's Razor...



**FLOODPLAINS BY DESIGN** is an ambitious public-private partnership working to reduce flood risk, improve working lands, and restore habitat along Washington's streams and rivers.

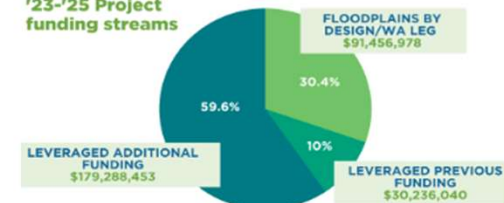
#### A LOCALLY-DRIVEN, COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

By transforming how floodplains are managed on a **landscape scale**, Floodplains by Design supports thriving communities and a healthy environment. **The heart of this approach is the idea that the most complex problems are solved by helping people work together.** Trust is built through structured conversations that give voice to the values of each interest group, and coordinating investments toward local solutions.

#### DIVERSE FUNDING STREAMS

FbD project proposals are funded by a diverse set of public-private partners who collaboratively develop a suite of integrated projects that move everyone closer to their goals.

#### '23-'25 Project funding streams



#### MEANINGFUL IMPACT

**For each acre of floodplain reconnected, an average of 2.6 homes or structures have reduced flood risk.\***



**Over 3,000 families in Washington now live with decreased risk of devastating flooding.**

**Floodplain projects are a local economic stimulator.**

**\$1 million in watershed health =**



**16.7 local jobs on average, and**



**\$2.2-\$2.5 million in total economic activity, roughly 80% stays in the project county.**

\*Calculation based on outcomes from previously funded FbD projects.



# Key Attributes

- **Avoids over-design or over-engineering**
- **‘Reads’ the landscape**
- **Reduces complexity & risk**
- **Lowers capital costs**
- **Minimizes O&M costs**



# Conclusions

- **Surface storage: Base hits, not home runs?**
- **Opportunities at the nexus of hydropower production, water, & renewable energy?**
- **More aquifer storage & recovery?**







# Thank you

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