

# Covington Water District Thanks Washington State Congressional Delegation and Applauds \$220 Million Award in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Funds for the Howard Hanson Dam Green River Fish Passage Project

April 5, 2022



**(Covington, WA)** – The Covington Water District applauds the recent announcement of a \$220 million federal investment of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds for the Howard A. Hanson Dam Green River Fish Passage Project. The White House announced this funding on March 29, 2022.

## **Covington Water District Board President, Kevin Fuhrer**

“This critically important water infrastructure project will help ensure a reliable, safe, and clean water supply for our entire region,” said Covington Water District Board President Fuhrer. “We cannot express our gratitude enough to our Congressional Delegation for their support and advocacy for this project—especially to Senators Patty Murray, Maria Cantwell, and Congresswoman Schrier who have worked tirelessly to get this across the finish line.”

## **Covington Water District General Manager, Thomas Keown**

“Not only will this project help us maintain flood risk management and increase water supply for our communities, but it will also reopen miles of prime salmon and steelhead habitat on the Green River,” said Covington Water District General Manager Keown. “This project began in the late 1990’s, but stalled out over the Great Recession, permitting/construction methodology changes and recently due to a lack of funding. Thanks, in large part to our Congressional Delegation, this funding appropriation will now allow the project to get back on track.”

## **Members of Washington State’s Congressional Delegation Said the Following about the Recent Funding Announcement:**

### **Senator Patty Murray**

“This funding will go a long way in our fight to save the salmon, opening up miles of critical habitat. Not only will this money make an important difference as we work to recover our iconic salmon runs and honor our tribal treaty obligations, it will help get clean drinking water to people across Puget Sound and help protect the region from flooding,” said Senator Murray. “This is a big victory for the Muckleshoot Tribe, our salmon and orca, the entire Puget Sound, and all of Washington state.”

### **Senator Maria Cantwell**

“\$220 million for the Howard Hanson Dam fish passage facility is a huge down payment for a project that will reopen at least 60 miles of prime salmon and steelhead habitat above the Dam, nearly doubling the amount of habitat that is available. Constructing this fish passage facility will help restore endangered salmon and steelhead, including Chinook,” said Senator Cantwell.

### **Congresswoman Kim Schrier**

“I am thrilled to hear that the downstream fish passage project at Howard Hanson Dam is slated for a whopping \$220M in infrastructure funding. I’ve been working with stakeholders across the 8th district to ensure this critical project be included in funding from our infrastructure package,” said Rep. Schrier. “This stands to do more for Chinook salmon populations than any other project to date. And that is something Washingtonian care deeply about.”

## **Project Background**

This \$220M authorization is the first positive development in decades to help solve several known problems.

Fish passage impacts started in 1912. To meet the primary drinking and industrial water needs of residents in the South Puget Sound region, the City of Tacoma built a diversion dam on the Green River necessary to divert water into its pipeline. Consequently, this dam blocked all upstream passage of migrating salmon and steelhead spawning and rearing habitat in the undeveloped watershed.



Due to severe flooding concerns in the lower Green River area, Congress passed the Flood Control Act of 1950 which authorized construction of a flood control dam three miles upstream of Tacoma’s Diversion Dam. The Howard A. Hanson Dam (HAHD) is an earthen dam 21 miles east of Auburn and was constructed by the Army Corps of Engineers and completed in 1962. Because Tacoma’s diversion dam blocked fish passage below Howard Hanson, fish passage was not considered at the time of HAHD’s construction.

The project to solve fish passage on the Green River began as part of a Federal Decree in 1999. For over twenty years the project started and stalled due to technical and financial roadblocks. A February 15, 2019 biological opinion issued by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) requires a downstream fish passage facility at HAHD be constructed by the US Army Corps of Engineers and operational by the year 2030.

The City of Tacoma and its partners (Covington Water District, City of Kent, Lakehaven Water District) have to date invested more than \$400 million in drinking water system improvements and salmon habitat restoration on the Green River, including the construction of a trap and haul facility to move spawning fish above HAHD.

Once this downstream fish passage facility is operational and put to use in tandem with the trap and haul facility, more than 100 miles of prime spawning and rearing habitat previously blocked for more than century will be opened to returning salmon and steelhead. Additional storage volume for municipal water supply will be available for our growing communities. Finally, this project will produce more salmon than the much-acclaimed Elwha Dam removal effort and will help mitigate impacts to the southern resident Orca Whales which depend on salmon for their food.

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