



Fish-Barriers: A Comprehensive Approach

In 2001, twenty-one Washington State Tribes filed suit in Federal District Court seeking to compel the State of Washington to repair or replace culverts that acted as barriers to fish migration.

Dissatisfied with the state’s progress, the tribes sought and won a permanent injunction in 2013 that was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2018, forcing the state to replace all offending culverts under state-owned roads in the case-area by 2030.

This case area includes an estimated 800 state-owned barriers within fourteen counties surrounding Puget Sound. The state has estimated costs in excess of \$2 billion to address the 800+ barriers under state roads.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife’s (WDFW) inventory lists over 3,200 known county-owned fish barriers in the case area, with an estimated potential for 10,000 county owned barriers statewide. The cost to replace county-owned barriers in the 14-county case area is currently estimated at \$7.7 billion.

No counties possess resources to address a problem of this magnitude. On average, counties can afford to upgrade 2-4 barriers per year.



Counties support a coordinated approach to fish passage barrier removal.

Now is the time to develop a coordinated program that removes state, local, and private barriers that completely open habitat throughout a watershed.

1:7

“For every WSDOT barrier, on average, there are two other (non-WSDOT barriers) downstream and five upstream.” July 2012 WDFW study

\$7.7B

The cost to replace the **3,200** county-owned barriers in the fourteen-county case area is currently estimated at \$7.7 billion.

3,200

3,200 county-owned barriers in the fourteen-county case area which will need to be made passable.

What Counties Need:

- Adequate funding and a long-term commitment from the state to remove county-owned fish barriers;
- A reduction of elimination of project match requirements;
- Funding for the monitoring & maintenance of passable culverts, continued efforts to identify & inventory new barriers;
- Streamlining project permitting; and
- Tools that assist in speeding up project delivery.

