

This is Google's cache of <http://www.methowvalleynews.com/story.php?id=7674>. It is a snapshot of the page as it appeared on Apr 11, 2012 15:50:44 GMT. The [current page](#) could have changed in the meantime. [Learn more](#)

[Text-only version](#)

# Methow Valley News

## Online

[Close Window](#)

## The economics of salmon

### Recovery efforts support local jobs and businesses

By [Marcy Stamper](#)

Fish recovery happens in the water – people in waders installing fish traps, anglers fishing for steelhead, and the millions of juvenile salmon released each year by hatcheries are among the obvious manifestations of local fish recovery efforts.

But on paper, there is a less evident tally, which shows salmon recovery and habitat restoration supporting 150 jobs in the Methow Valley, according to recent estimates by people tracking recovery efforts.

Precise numbers for the extent of the local economic impact are difficult to tease out, in part because the money circulates throughout the economy, with biologists and anglers buying food and gas and attending community events, according to Derek Van Marter, associate director of the Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board, who has begun to quantify the economics of local recovery efforts.

Counted in these 150 people are 68 biologists, hydrologists and other scientists, and 82 others involved in habitat restoration – doing construction, operating heavy equipment and supplying materials such as concrete and woody debris, said Van Marter. The total does not include the outside consultants who provide design and engineering services, government agency staff who work here part of the year, or fishing guides and equipment.

While these numbers certainly point to a big infusion of cash, fish recovery has impacts on the other side of the balance sheet as well. Regular increases in the cost of electricity have been attributed to the amount the Bonneville Power Administration is required to spend on mitigation for the impacts of its Columbia River dams on endangered and threatened salmon.

BPA puts these expenses at one-third of its wholesale power costs, about \$800 million annually (half spent on mitigation and half from loss of power generation when water is instead spilled over the dams). BPA has set an 8.5 percent rate increase in wholesale power costs for the coming fiscal year, which is passed on to local utility customers.

Accords between BPA and the Colville Confederated Tribes and Yakama Nation provide \$3 million annually for the Colvilles and \$6 million for the Yakamas for habitat projects through 2018, said Van Marter.

“People still say salmon recovery is driving up the cost of power,” said Okanogan County commissioner Bud Hover, who also serves on local and state salmon recovery boards. “But mitigation is mandated by the courts – it’s a cost of doing business, like labor at the dams.”

Hover initially ran for county commissioner because he was frustrated after some irrigation ditches were shut off for several years. After his election, he became the county representative to the Upper Columbia board, and was appointed by Gov. Chris Gregoire to the Washington State Salmon Recovery Funding Board, where he is the current chair.

### Adding up the effects

After receiving anecdotal reports about the impact of restoration on the tourist economy, Van Marter began trying to analyze the overall effects. In 2010, beyond regular salaries, \$12.7 million in federal, state and local funds was spent on habitat work, acquisition and related

feasibility projects, more than half of the \$22.5 million available for mitigation and recovery in the Upper Columbia each year, said Van Marter. That coincides with the 82 jobs he tallied.

Jennifer Molesworth, Methow Subbasin Liaison for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, helped Van Marter gather numbers for local scientists. Using an average annual salary of \$50,000, Molesworth calculated \$3.25 million in local wages for the 68 biologists and other scientists she counted.

Based on research by economists at the University of Oregon on habitat-restoration projects in that state, Van Marter estimates that each dollar of wages associated with restoration accounts for \$2.30 in economic activity, as local business owners and employees spend the money again and again. Using these figures, the 82 jobs generated an estimated economic benefit of \$11.5 million in the Methow watershed in 2010 alone, he said.

Much work on fish recovery takes place indoors. The Riverbank Building in Twisp has become a hub of fish and river projects, housing offices for 19 people from 10 agencies and nonprofits dedicated to salmon recovery and river restoration, according to Molesworth.

Federal agencies with local staff involved in fish recovery include the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (two in habitat project design and planning), the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (seven working on a hatchery program and restoration) and the U.S. Forest Service (four in habitat management), according to Molesworth. The U.S. Geological Survey has three people working on fish projects in Methow rivers.

On the state level, there is the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (24 people operating the Methow Hatchery, managing wildlife areas and habitat, overseeing watershed stewardship and permitting, and managing fisheries for anglers). The Yakama Nation Fisheries have nine people working on habitat restoration and coho reintroduction.

Nonprofits in the local fish world include the Methow Salmon Recovery Foundation (nine staffers in habitat restoration and land acquisition) and Trout Unlimited (six focusing on water conservation). The Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board has two staffers in the Methow. Molesworth also counted three plant specialists from Methow Natives who assist with revegetation.

On the habitat side, area contractors do considerable work on restoration projects and have specialized equipment for work in the river environment. Lloyd Logging has worked on restoration projects for the past decade, ranging from small jobs worth \$1,000 to major projects worth half a million and employing a dozen people, said secretary/treasurer Bob Lloyd. The firm has held contracts from both government agencies and nonprofits to place woody debris in rivers, install culverts and stabilize banks. Another regular contractor is Boulder Creek Contracting, which has worked on floodplain restoration and irrigation projects.

#### **Benefits to sportfishing**

Another effect of a healthy river and fish population is the contribution to the local economy from sportfishing, much of that from tourists. WDFW calculates a \$58 contribution to the local economy per angler (for food, lodging and gas). The agency tallied more than 9,000 steelhead fishers on the Methow River in each of the past two years, bringing another \$530,000 annually into the local economy, according to district fish biologist Bob Jateff. The Columbia River attracts another 4,000 to 5,000 anglers, which Hover said accounts for \$1.5 million to \$2 million tourist dollars in Brewster and Pateros.

While restoration projects inject a lot of cash in the short term, as the projects are completed or funding dries up, Hover said he sees sportfishing and tourism as an important long-term economic generator in the county.

**File photo by Marcy Stamper: U.S. Geological Survey biological science technician Grace Eger maneuvers part of a rotary screw trap into the Methow River in Winthrop, where it is placed in the water by biological science technician Kyle Koger and fisheries biologist Wes Tibbits. The scientists use the trap to study of the effects of habitat restoration on fish populations in the Methow River.**

*April 4, 2012*