

Reducing Litter on the Yakima River Through an Educational Outreach Program and River Clean-up

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Introduction

To help solve the problem of litter affecting the Yakima River and encourage both current and future community residents to clean up after themselves and others, a public education outreach program was developed. This has been accomplished through informational pamphlets provided at Outdoor Pursuits and Rentals for vessel renters. Additionally, on the water action to remove litter after the summer months will be implemented with the help of the Outdoor Pursuits and Rentals to provide support floating the river and collecting accumulated trash off the riverbanks and riparian zone.

The Yakima River

The Yakima River is one of the most popular destinations in the West to fish for wild trout (Figure 1) and provides year-round recreation opportunities for the community and unique habitats home to wildlife such as bighorn sheep, mule deer, river otters, mountain lions, and one of the densest concentrations of nesting eagles, hawks and falcons. Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed bulltrout reside in the Yakima River, and the Yakima also hosts run of spring chinook salmon and ESA listed steelhead (Figure 2).



Figure 1. A drift boat floats the Yakima River near Ellensburg. Source: American Rivers



Figure 2. Yakima River wild steelhead (left) and resident rainbow trout (right).

The Problem

- The popularity of the river for recreational use brings crowds, and crowds bring vast amount of trash that accumulate along the river
- Summertime madness- tubers and the "epic float" and "Perkins float"
- Insufficient trash collection and dead ends on the state/fed level
- Introduction of litter into habitat and microplastics
- Possible ending of public access/use



Figure 3. Crowds participating in the annual summer "Epic Float" staging at the Teanaway River North of Ellensburg. Source: Ellensburg Daily Record.

The Solution

Informational pamphlets will be provided for renters of rafts and other river equipment from Outdoor Pursuits and Rentals. These pamphlets will educate the public on best practices while on the water, such as how to ensure your trash doesn't end up in the river while going over rapids or in the event of a flipped raft or other vessel. The importance of cleaning up their own and others trash will also be on the pamphlet, highlighting how we can ensure public resources stay open for our collective enjoyment and the detriment litter has on wildlife and habitat. Additionally, on the water action will be taken in the fall when flows of the Yakima are dropped. Action includes floating the rivers most popular summer-time stretches to collect trash accumulated on the river to fill rafts equipped with frames (figure 4) before disposing of the litter properly.



Figure 4. Raft with frame cleaning up trash from a river. Source: Cody WY Enterprise

Clean up Area

- Yakima River between Teanaway River and Thorp
- Yakima River Canyon between Ringer Loop South and Roza
- These are the most popular and used stretches of river
- On the water surveys will determine where efforts are most concentrated in the fall based on amounts of litter observed

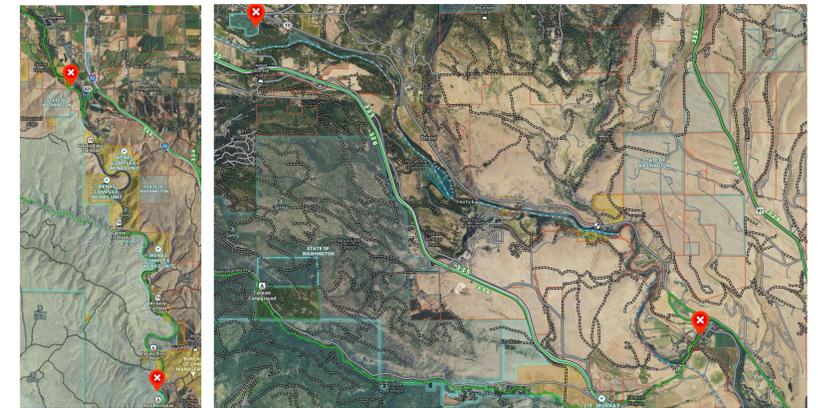


Figure 5. Maps displaying areas of Yakima River targeted for removal of litter between the marked pins. Source: OnX maps

Summary

This project will help sustain future recreational and commercial use of the Yakima River for the Ellensburg community. Education for Central Washington University students who use the river will help lead a shift towards stewardship of the resource in the busy summer months. Purpose driven floats on the Yakima in the most popular and trash inundated areas will further help to remove litter left along the riparian zone in the fall when the discharge is dropped. These floats will be lead by Central Washington University and the Outdoor Pursuits and Rentals who will provide support with equipment and personnel. These cojoined efforts will ensure that access, aesthetics and habitat on the river remain preserved.

This Project Supports UN Sustainable Development Goals:



Acknowledgements

Dr. Susan Kaspari
Logan Scully
Outdoor Pursuits and Rentals