Section 1
Introduction and Background

Watershed planning provides a method to help balance competing demands upon water resources. Given a limited resource and a range of potentially competing demands for water, it has historically been difficult for citizens, businesses and public agencies to make water-resource management decisions without some controversy. The State of Washington's Watershed Planning program offers a tool that is designed to allow for local guidance in identifying, prioritizing and developing solutions to water resource management issues within the state's watersheds. This document presents the local Watershed Management Plan for Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA) 35 along the Middle Snake River.

1.1 Overview of Watershed Planning

1.1.1 Planning Objectives & Scope

Watershed planning in WRIA 35 provides a method to help achieve a balance among competing water resource demands. Water demands for commercial, industrial, residential and agricultural activities (e.g. out of stream uses) have to be balanced with Tribal cultural and instream fish habitat needs. Demands such as irrigated agriculture, recreation, fishing and hunting provides an important economic base for the WRIA. Critical habitat for fish species listed under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) as well as a diversity of non-listed fish and wildlife are also dependent upon water resources. The WRIA's surface water resources also offer recreational opportunities and natural beauty for residents and visitors.

1.1.2 Legal Basis for Watershed Planning

In 1998, the Washington State Legislature passed the Watershed Management Act (Chapter 90.82 Revised Code of Washington [RCW]; Engrossed Substitute House Bill [ESHB] 2514) to provide a framework for citizens, interest groups, and government organizations to join together to develop a management plan for water resources in each of the State's major watersheds as described in Chapter 173-200 WAC. The Watershed Management Act (WMA) enables, but does not require, local groups to form for the purpose of conducting watershed planning. WMA identifies a group of "initiating governments" that are empowered to select a lead agency, apply for grant funding, determine the overall scope of planning, and convene a "Planning Unit." The initiating governments include all counties within the WRIA, the government of the largest city or town (if applicable), the water supply utility obtaining the largest quantity of water from the WRIA, and Indian tribes with reservation lands within the management area. Funding is provided through the WMA for areas in Washington State that wish to undertake planning and specifies ground rules for use of the funding. Initiating governments for WRIA 35 are discussed in Section 2, along with additional Planning Unit representation, as described below.

The WMA identifies the Planning Unit as the group that develops and approves the watershed plan. It calls for either a consensus approval by all members of the Planning Unit, or a consensus of the governmental members and a majority vote by remaining members of the Planning Unit.

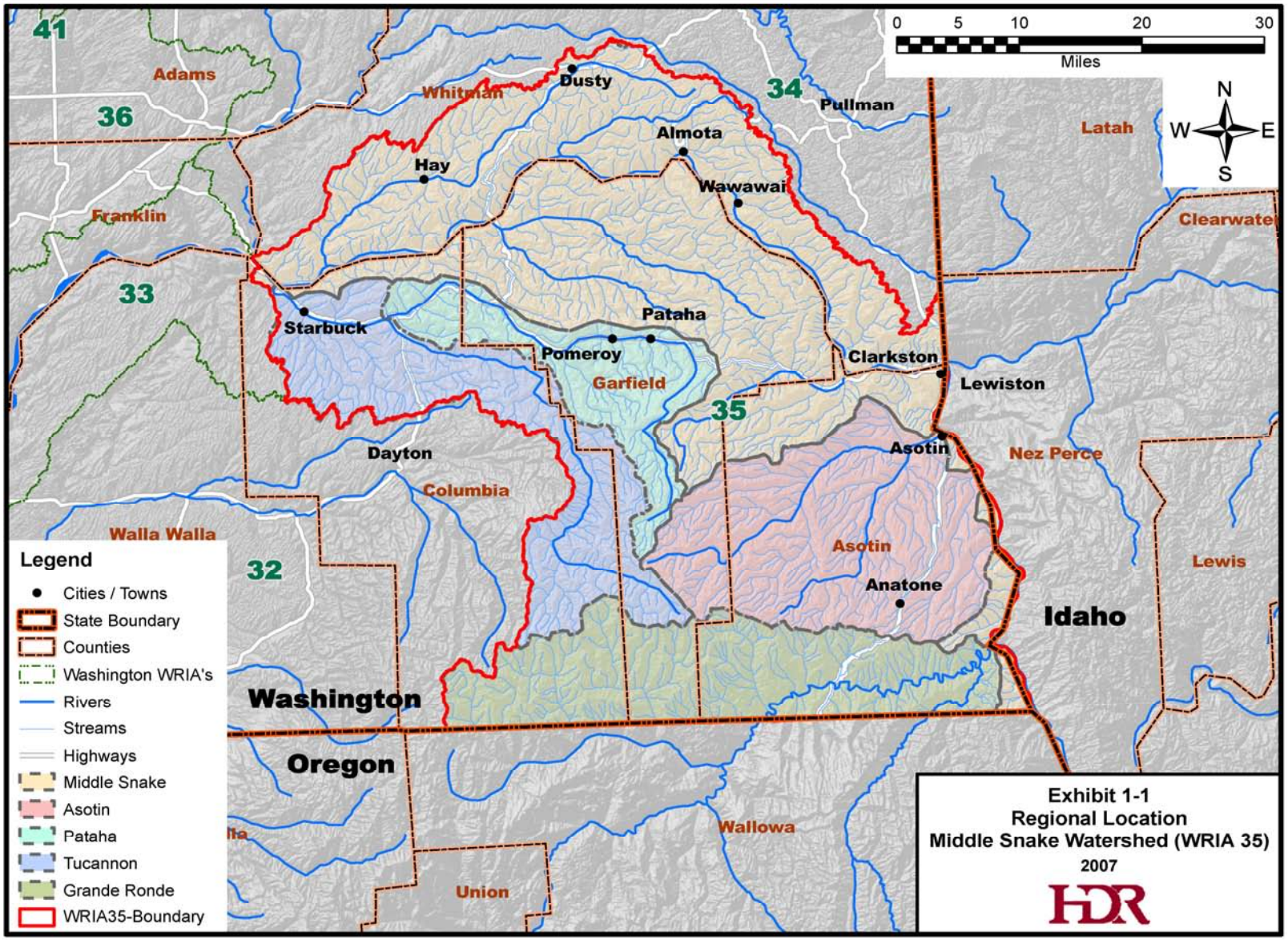
Following approval by the Planning Unit, and a requisite public meeting held by each county legislative authority, the WMA calls for a joint session of the legislative bodies of all counties in the watershed to consider the plan. The authority of the county legislative body(s) is limited to approval or rejection of the watershed plan. If the county legislative body(s) reject the plan as submitted, they can send the plan back to the Planning Unit with recommended changes, but are prohibited from making changes to the plan themselves. Once the plan has been approved by adopted in the Planning Unit and joint session of county legislative bodies, it requires counties and State agencies to implement plan elements which they agreed to be obligated to in the approved and adopted Watershed Plan.

1.2 Description of WRIA 35 Planning Area

1.2.1 Planning Area Boundaries

The Middle Snake River Watershed (WRIA 35) occupies approximately 2,250 square miles in southeastern Washington along the Idaho border to the east and Oregon border to the south. The Palouse Watershed (WRIA 34) lies to the north, and the Walla Walla Watershed (WRIA 32) and Lower Snake Watershed (WRIA 33) lie to the west. Exhibit 1-1 shows the regional location of the WRIA 35. The Middle Snake Watershed encompasses portions of Whitman and Columbia and all of Asotin, and Garfield Counties within Washington. Diamond Peak, located in the headwaters of the Tucannon River, is the highest point in the basin with an elevation of 6,380 feet, while the confluence of the Snake and Tucannon Rivers is the lowest point at approximately 540 feet. The City of Clarkston and towns of Starbuck, Pomeroy, and Asotin are also located within WRIA 35.

The Middle Snake River Watershed is within the Columbia Basin and Blue Mountain ecoregions and is nearly 1.5 million acres in size. Land use is approximately 50 percent rangeland, 33 percent agriculture, 15 percent forestland and 1 percent urban. The population is less than 25,000. Population growth projections for the area are expected to reach 33,000 by 2020, which is low given the extent of the geographic area, yet nonetheless represents a future need.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Asotin
Nez Perce
Lewis
Latah
Clearwater
Wallowa
Union
Dusty
Pullman
Almota
Hay
Wawawai
Starbuck
Pataha
Pomeroy
Clarkston
Lewiston
Dayton
Asotin
Anatone
Washington
Oregon
Idaho
Legend
Cities / Towns
State Boundary
Counties
Washington WRIA's
Rivers
Streams
Highways
Middle Snake
Asotin
Pataha
Tucannon
Grande Ronde
WRIA35-Boundary
Exhibit 1-1
Regional Location
Middle Snake Watershed (WRIA 35)
2007
HDR

1.2.2 Planning Topic Opportunities

Despite the limited population, previous studies in the basin have identified both water quantity issues with flow limited streams (e.g. in the Tucannon River and ground water in the Clarkston area), and water quality issues to be of concern in the basin. Based on the available surface water quality data, improvements can be made in reducing elevated temperatures and sediment in Pataha Creek, the Tucannon River and Snake River; while elevated fecal coliform levels per 303d listings have been identified as a concern in Asotin and Pataha Creeks.

The WRIA 35 planning area includes federally-listed salmonid Endangered Species, including fall Chinook, spring/summer Chinook, steelhead, and bull trout. Known and presumed presence (which includes spawning, rearing and migration habitat) for key species are indicated in the Table 1-1.

Table 1-1 Listed Fish Species in WRIA 35			
Species	**Federal Status**	**State Status**	**Known and presumed presence within WRIA 35**
Snake River Spring/Summer Chinook Salmon	Threatened (Listed April 1992)	Species of concern	Tucannon River, Asotin Creek, Snake River and Grande Ronde River
Snake River Fall Chinook Salmon	Threatened (Listed April 1992)	Species of concern	Mainstem Snake River and the mouths of Tenmile-Couse, Tucannon River, Asotin Creek, and Grande Ronde subbasins.
Steelhead Trout	Threatened (Listed June 1998)	Species of concern	Tucannon River (*includes Pataha, Penawawa, Alkali Flat, Deadman, and Meadow creeks, Palouse River) Asotin Creek (Almota, Tenmile, Steptoe, Couse, Alpowa and Wawawai creeks), Grande Ronde River (Joseph, Rattlesnake, Cottonwood, Menatchee, Wenachete Creeks)
Bull Trout	Threatened (Listed June 1998)	Species of concern	Grande Ronde, Asotin Creek, Tucannon River, mainstem Snake River

(Snake River Salmon Recovery Plan [SRSRP] Final 2006)

* Based on Populations for De-Listing

1.2.3 WRIA and Implementation Areas

For the purposes of watershed management, the following five distinct Implementation Areas (IA) make up WRIA 35:

- Asotin Creek Implementation Area
- Middle Snake River Implementation Area
- Pataha Creek Implementation Area
- Tucannon River Implementation Area
- Grande Ronde Subbasin Implementation Area

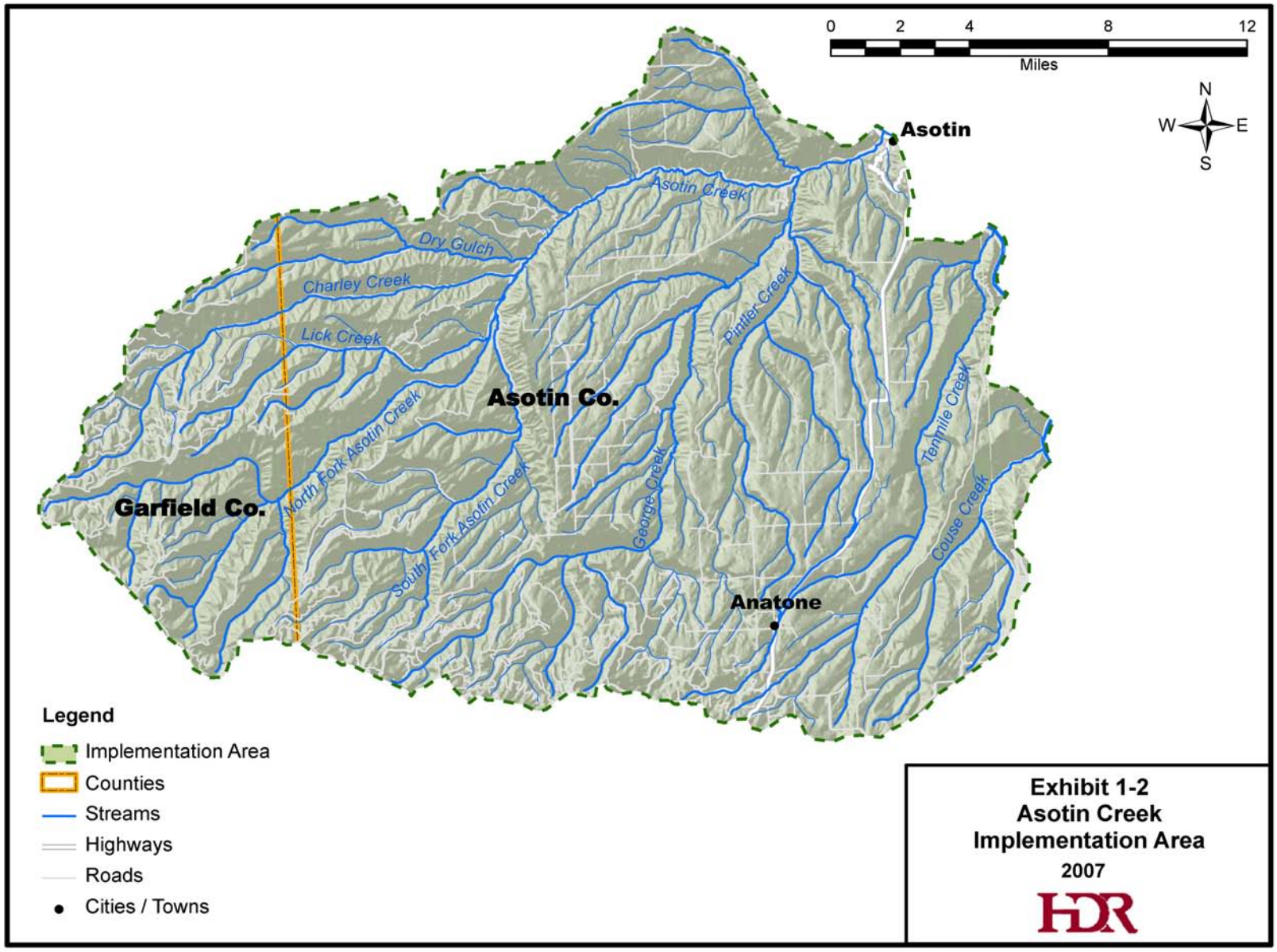
Implementation Areas were formed based on variations in land use, habitat, and hydrologic characteristics within the WRIA. See the Level I Technical Assessment (HDR-EES 2005) and Grande Ronde Addendum (HDR-EES 2005) for more complete implementation area descriptions.

Asotin Creek Implementation Area

The Asotin Creek Implementation Area is located in Asotin and a portion of Garfield Counties as shown in Exhibit 1-2. The major stream reaches located within this area include Asotin Creek, Tenmile Creek, and Couse Creek. Asotin Creek is a third order tributary to the Snake River with its headwaters originating in the Blue Mountains, continuing east into the Snake River at Asotin, Washington. Asotin Creek has two major drainages, the mainstem and George Creek. The mainstem drains 119,000 acres and flows into the Snake River at the City of Asotin. Major tributaries to the mainstem include Charley Creek, North Fork of Asotin Creek, South Fork of Asotin Creek, and Lick Creek. George Creek drains 89,000 acres and its major tributaries include Pintler Creek, Nims Gulch, Ayers Gulch, Kelly Creek, Rockpile Creek, and Coombs Canyon. Tenmile and Couse Creeks both drain into the Snake River south of Asotin. Pasture and rangeland, cropland, and forestland are the predominant land uses. The City of Asotin is the primary population center.

The Asotin Creek Implementation Area is part of the ceded lands of the Nez Perce Tribe. In the Treaty of 1855, the Nez Perce retained total fishing rights on all streams and rivers within the boundaries of the original 13.4 million acre reservation that extended outward to "all usual and accustomed places," including the mainstem Columbia River. Tribal ancestors maintained these rights because the once abundant salmon runs were vital to their way of life and future generations.

ESA listed fish species most actively targeted for habitat protection and restoration are spring and fall Chinook salmon, summer steelhead and bull trout. Asotin Creek provides adult spawning and juvenile rearing for the four species listed above. In recent years fall Chinook redds have been identified in the lower mainstem of Asotin Creek.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Miles
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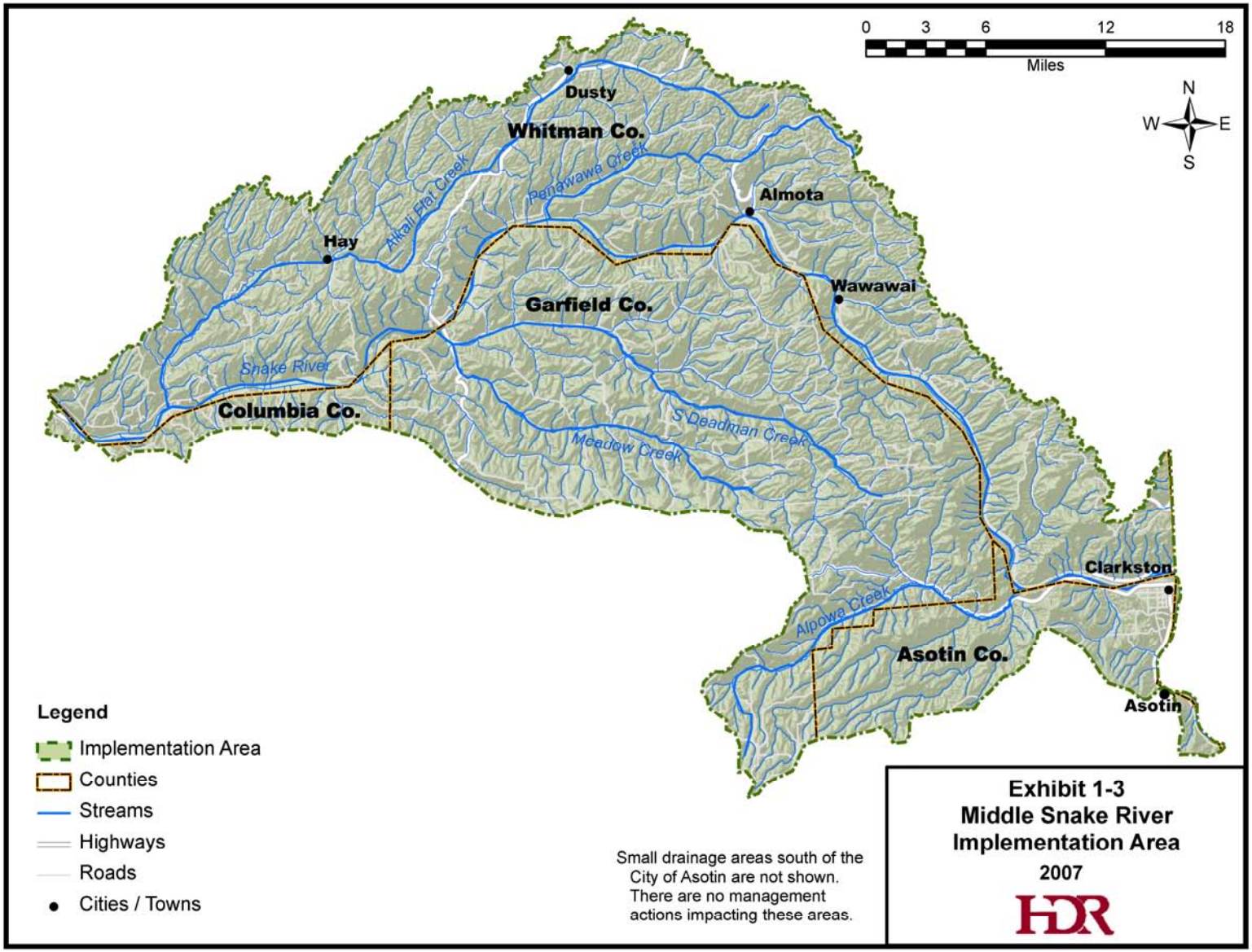
Asotin
Asotin Creek
Dry Gulch
Charley Creek
Lick Creek
Pintler Creek
Asotin Co.
Garfield Co.
North Fork Asotin Creek
South Fork Asotin Creek
George Creek
Tenmile Creek
Couse Creek
Anatone
Legend
Implementation Area
Counties
Streams
Highways
Roads
Cities / Towns
Exhibit 1-2
Asotin Creek
Implementation Area
2007
HDR

Middle Snake River Implementation Area

The Middle Snake River implementation area is composed of portions of Columbia, Whitman, Garfield and Asotin counties as shown in Exhibit 1-3. The Middle Snake lies within a canyon cut through the Columbia Plateau. Several small tributaries with perennial water flow are included in this subbasin. The streams that drain the north side of the Snake River in Whitman County cover approximately 449 square miles (287,500 acres) and include Alkali Flat Creek, Penawawa, Almota, Wawawai and Steptoe Canyon creek. The streams that drain from the south, primarily in Garfield County cover approximately 563 square miles (360,400 acres) and include Alpowa, Deadman and Meadow Creek. The two dams on the Middle Snake River include Lower Granite (River Mile [RM] 107) and Little Goose (RM 70.3). Both of these dams are 'run of the river' facilities, in that they have limited additional storage capacity in their reservoirs and pass water through the dam at about the same rate as it enters the reservoir. Only a relatively small amount of runoff occurs along the Middle Snake River downstream of the Clearwater River confluence with contribution primarily from the Tucannon River. This implementation area includes the City of Clarkston, the largest population center in the watershed. The Lewiston-Clarkston area represents the majority of industrial, commercial, and residential development in the watershed. There is minimal other development in the implementation area. Agriculture in the implementation area is dominated by non-irrigated farming in the uplands, irrigated farming in the lower valleys, and cattle ranching. Little forestry activity occurs in this area.

ESA listed fish species most actively targeted in tributaries for habitat protection and restoration are summer steelhead. The mainstem of the Snake River above Asotin, Washington has some of the best spawning habitat for fall Chinook on the mainstem of the Snake River. The Snake River below Asotin is mainly a migration corridor for spring and fall Chinook, summer steelhead, bull trout and sockeye salmon.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Dusty
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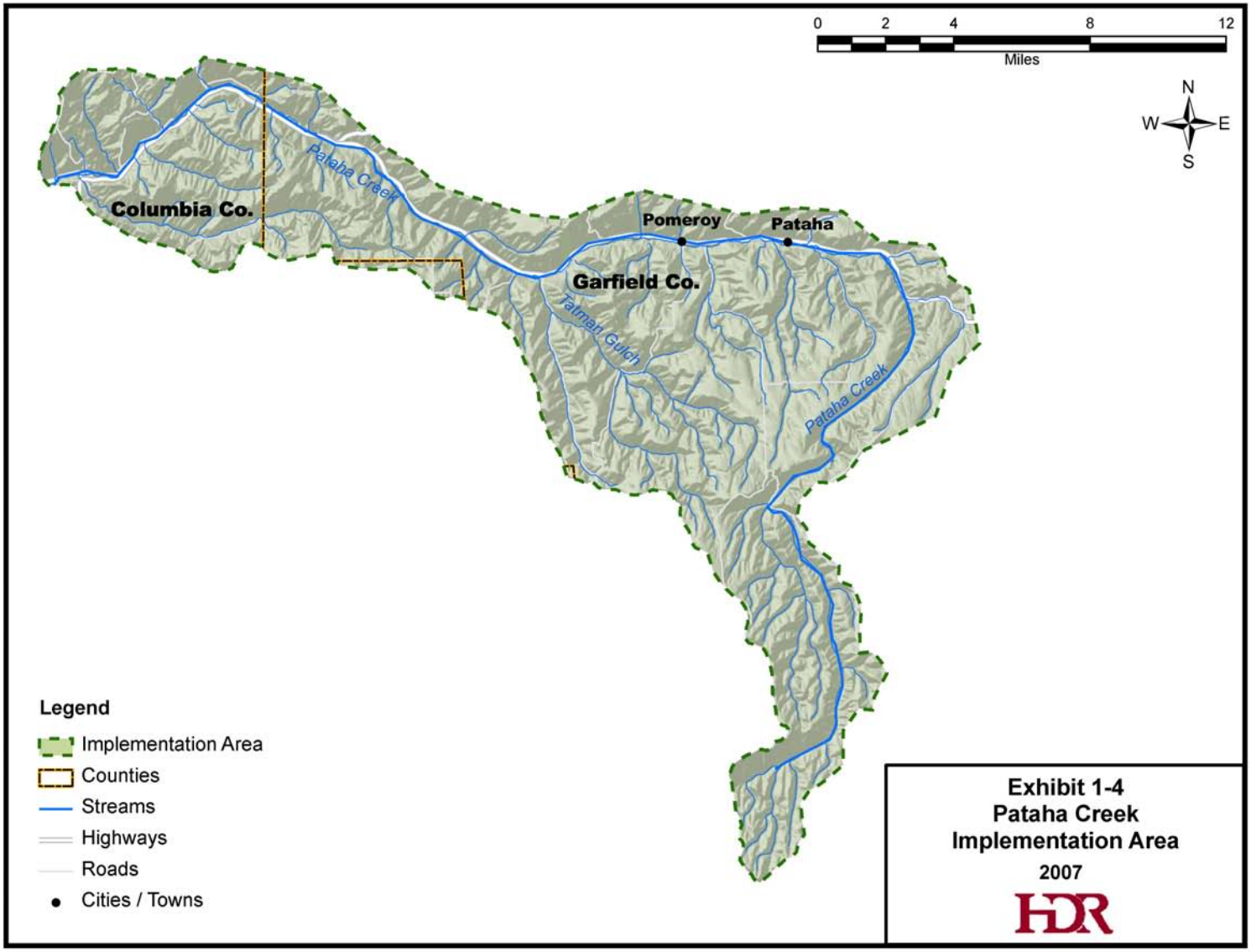
Pengawawa Creek
Alkali Flat Creek
Almota
Hay
Wawawai
Garfield Co.
Snake River
Columbia Co.
S Deadman Creek
Meadow Creek
Clarkston
Alpowa Creek
Asotin Co.
Asotin
Legend
Implementation Area
Counties
Streams
Highways
Roads
Cities / Towns
Small drainage areas south of the City of Asotin are not shown. There are no management actions impacting these areas.
Exhibit 1-3
Middle Snake River
Implementation Area
2007
HDR

Pataha Creek Implementation Area

The Pataha Creek implementation area is located mainly in Garfield County and partially in Columbia County as shown in Exhibit 1-4. Pataha Creek, the major stream in this area, drains into the Tucannon River at River Mile 11.2. Pataha Creek drains 114,166 acres (185 square miles). Major tributaries of Pataha Creek are seasonal streams that include Dry Pataha Creek, Sweeney Gulch, Balmaier Gulch, Linville Creek, Tatman Gulch, and Dry Hollow. The primary land use is agriculture, mainly non-irrigated cropland farming and livestock production. The primary city is the City of Pomeroy, located on Pataha Creek in the northeastern portion of the sub-basin.

ESA listed fish species most actively targeted for habitat protection and restoration are summer steelhead and resident redband trout.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Pomeroy
Pataha
Garfield Co.
Tatmah Gulch
Pataha Creek
Legend
Implementation Area
Counties
Streams
Highways
Roads
Cities / Towns
Exhibit 1-4
Pataha Creek
Implementation Area
2007
HDR

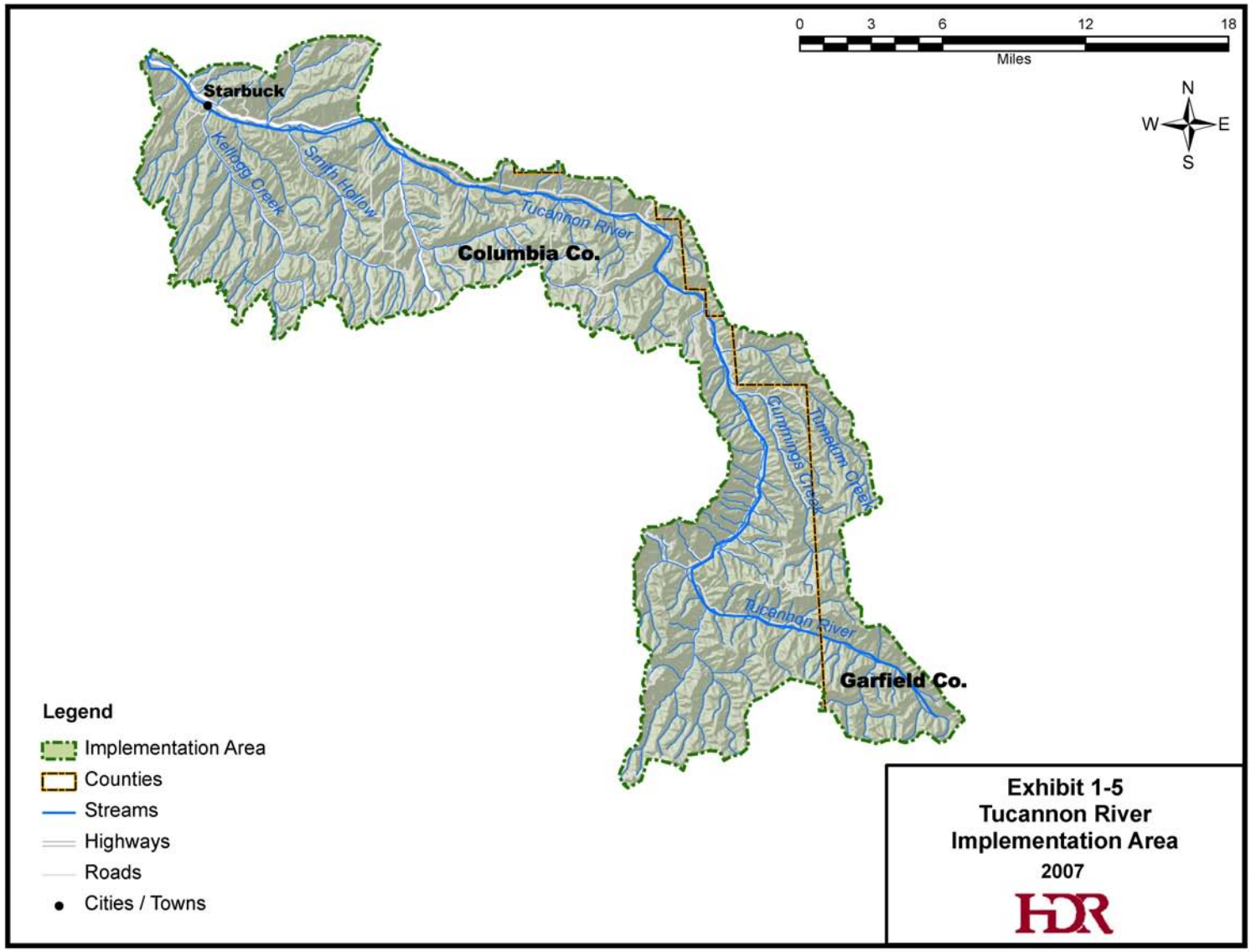
Tucannon River Implementation Area

The Tucannon River implementation area is located within Columbia and Garfield counties as shown in Exhibit 1-5. The Tucannon River has two major drainages, the mainstem and Pataha Creek. The mainstem drains 207,734 acres (318 square miles) and flows into the Snake River at RM 62.2, three miles upstream of Lyons Ferry State Park, near the mouth of the Palouse River and 20 miles upstream of the Lower Monumental Dam. Major tributaries to the mainstem Tucannon (besides Pataha Creek) include Willow Creek, Kellogg Creek, Cummings Creek, Little Tucannon River, Panjab Creek, Sheep Creek, and Bear Creek.

The major land uses in the Tucannon River watershed are related to agricultural purposes, with 75 percent of the subbasin in private ownership, primarily in the mid to lower reaches. Crop, forest, rangeland, pasture, and hay comprise over 90 percent of the watershed, with grazed rangeland being the majority of the land use. Dry and irrigated cropland is used to produce spring and winter wheat, barley, and alfalfa. Significant areas of the mid-reaches of the river are managed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). The Tucannon River drains the Blue Mountains in its headwaters where most of the upper third of the implementation area is forest covered and managed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). The Tucannon River sub-basin has a significant elevation change ranging from 540 feet at the confluence of the Tucannon, near Starbuck, and Snake Rivers to 6,400 feet at Oregon Butte in the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness located in the Umatilla National Forest. The steep topography limits cultivation to the non-forested land with slopes of 45 percent in the middle to lower portions of the subbasin.

The Tucannon River valley has a long history of Native American usage and homesteading. The Tucannon River Subbasin is within the treaty territory of the Nez Perce Tribe and Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation is protected as a usual and accustomed area via the treaty of 1855. The Nez Perce Tribe maintains a co-management authority with the State of Washington and the United States Government over the tribes' treaty reserved resources. Currently, the Tucannon River Subbasin provides hunting, fishing and gathering opportunities for tribal members.

ESA listed species most actively targeted for habitat protection and restoration are spring and fall Chinook salmon, summer steelhead, and bull trout. The Tucannon provides adult spawning and juvenile rearing for the four species listed above.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Smith Hollow
Tucannon River
Columbia Co.
Cummings Creek
Tumalum Creek
Tucannon River
Garfield Co.
Legend
Implementation Area
Counties
Streams
Highways
Roads
Cities / Towns
Exhibit 1-5
Tucannon River
Implementation Area
2007
HDR

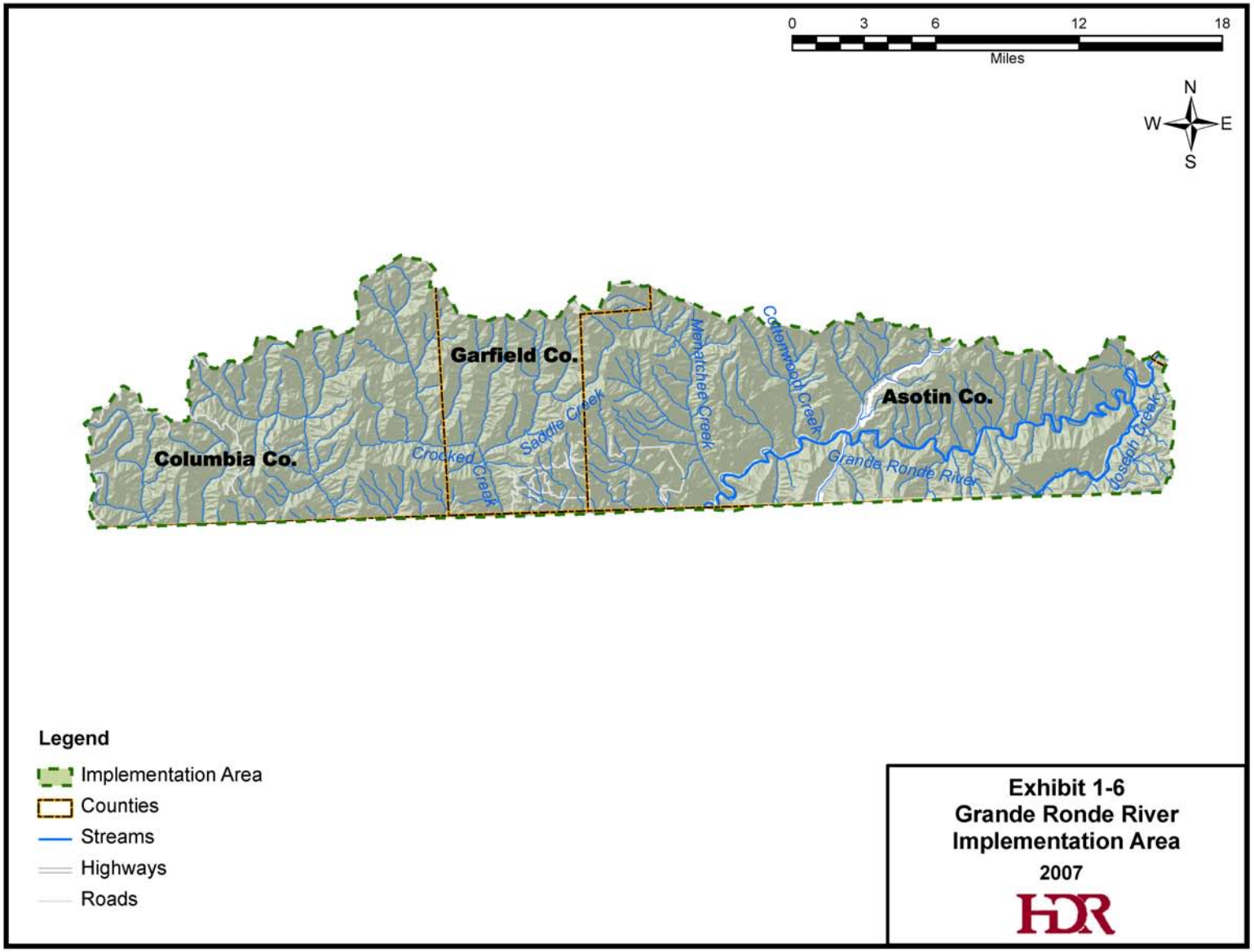
Grande Ronde Subbasin Implementation Area

The entire Grande Ronde subbasin encompasses an area of about 4,000 square miles in northeast Oregon and southeast Washington and drains 341 square miles of southeast Washington as shown in Exhibit 1-6. The portion of the implementation area for WRIA 35 includes portions of Asotin, Columbia, and Garfield counties. The Grande Ronde River begins in the Blue Mountains near the Anthony Lakes recreation area and it crosses into Washington at RM 38.7 before joining the Snake River at RM 169. The primary Grande Ronde River tributary located within Washington is Joseph Creek and includes other smaller tributaries. Joseph Creek flows in a general northerly direction and enters the Grande Ronde River at RM 4.3. The other major tributaries are located in Oregon. Peaks in the Wallowa Mountains approach 10,000 ft. and serve as the source of many of the Grande Ronde's tributary streams. The Blue Mountains reach elevations of 7,700 ft. and are the source of the Grande Ronde River and other tributary streams. There are no urban centers within the implementation area; human water consumption is assumed to be for rural domestic, agricultural uses, and wildlife management[1].

The Nez Perce Tribe, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Bureau of Land Management, and natural resource agencies are responsible for managing, protecting, and enhancing treaty fish and wildlife resources and habitats for present and future generations in the Grande Ronde River subbasin. The Nez Perce Tribe individually and/or jointly implements restoration and mitigation activities throughout their areas of interest and influence in co-management with WDFW and USFS.

ESA listed fish species most actively targeted for habitat protection and restoration are spring and fall Chinook, summer steelhead, and bull trout. The mainstem of the Grande Ronde provides adult spawning and juvenile rearing for spring and fall Chinook, summer steelhead and bull trout. Major tributaries provide adult spawning and juvenile rearing for spring Chinook, summer steelhead and bull trout.

[1] Personal Communication, Dave Karl, WDFW, January 2006.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Columbia Co.
Asotin Co.
Crocked Creek
Saddle Creek
Menatchee Creek
Cottonwood Creek
Grande Ronde River
Joseph Creek
Legend
Implementation Area
Counties
Streams
Highways
Roads
Exhibit 1-6
Grande Ronde River
Implementation Area
2007
HDR

1.3 Relationship to Other Water Resource Programs and Plans

In virtually every basin around the State, a variety of regulatory programs, ongoing water resource management activities, and past or ongoing studies must be factored into watershed planning. A watershed plan under the WMA does not supersede other federal, state, or local requirements, but rather can provide a framework for state, local, and even federal agencies to modify and coordinate existing or pending actions to reflect documented findings and local management direction in each watershed. If there is clear definition and broad support of planning recommendations, state and federal agencies may view the watershed plan as an expression of the public interest, lending significant credibility and support for consistent and complementary agency actions. For example, forming water quality improvement strategies in line with State Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) requirements can improve coordination between local initiatives and state and federal requirements. In addition, coordinating between regional strategies and actions developed through the Snake River Salmon Recovery Board's planning process (see Section 1.4.1) and local watershed plans can enhance opportunities to leverage funding for shared priorities. Establishing similar formal and informal linkages between the watershed planning process and other programs can be valuable in coordinating planning and management.

Table 1-2 lists a variety of programs at the local, tribal, state, and federal levels that are relevant to watershed planning within the WRIA. A few of the most important are also discussed briefly below. In some cases, programs may be viewed as a direct input to watershed planning, such as the parameters established by county or city land use planning documents. In other cases, existing programs may constrain available options for watershed management, or provide valuable data sources. In the long-term, the planning unit may wish to consider how implementation of the watershed plan can dovetail with other planning activities that are funded as part of routine government operations.

Table 1-2
Relationship of Existing Programs to Watershed Planning

Government Level	Programs	Relationship to Watershed Planning			
		Data Availability	Constraint on Mgmt Options	Potential Funding Sources	Implementation Tools
Local	County-wide Planning Policies				X
	Comprehensive Plans	X			X
	Drinking Water Source Protection Plans			X	X
	Shoreline Master Plans			X	X
	Salmon Recovery Plans/Documents	X	X		X
	Nonpoint Source Control Plans	X		X	X
	Stormwater Plans	X		X	X
	Onsite Septic System Inventory	X			
	Critical Areas Ordinance				X
	Water System Plans	X			X
	Water Conservation Plans				X
	Wastewater Plan	X		X	X
	Groundwater Management Plans	X			X
Tribal	Fishing Rights		X[2]		
	Reserved Water Rights		X		
	Hatchery Plans				X
	Local Government Planning Functions	(See Local)			X
State	Water Rights Records	X	X		
	Instream Flow Regulations/Studies	X	X		
	Salmon Recovery Plans	X	X	X	X
	Wastewater Permit Life Cycle System	X	X		X
	TMDL Studies/Water Quality Plans	X	X		X
	WQMA Needs Assessment	X			
	Designated Use Regulations	X			X
	Water Quality Program	X		X	X
	Drinking Water Grants/Loans			X	X
	Water Quality Grants/Loans			X	X

[2] In this context, 'constraint' is meant to signify that projects/programs will be limited to the extent that tribal fishing rights and tribal reserved water rights take precedence in determining management objectives and proposed outcomes.

Table 1-2 (continued)					
Government Level	Program	Relationship to Watershed Planning			
		Data Availability	Constraint on Mgmt Options	Potential Funding Sources	Implementation Tools
State (cont.)	Forest Practices Watershed Analysis	X	X		
	Hatchery Plans	X	X		
	DOT Fish Passage Grant Program				X
	Water Resources Program	X	X	X	X
	Salmon Recovery Planning	X		X	X
	Conservation/Efficiency Program	X		X	X
Regional/ Federal (BPA/NPCC; NOAA; Fisheries; USFWS; Reclamation; ACOE; FERC	ESA Listings/ Documentation	X	X		
	Irrigation Projects	X	X		
	Flood Control	X	X	X	X
	Wetlands		X		
	Hydropower	X	X		
	Subbasin Planning	X			X
	Salmon Recovery Planning	X		X	X

1.3.1 Salmon Recovery and Subbasin Plans

WRIA 35 watershed planning efforts are being closely coordinated with state-sponsored salmon recovery planning for the Snake River Basin and Bonneville Power Administration (BPA)/Northwest Power and Conservation Council (NPCC) -sponsored subbasin planning efforts within the WRIA.

The recovery strategy and associated actions developed as part of the draft and final Snake River Salmon Recovery Plan is the habitat component of this watershed plan along with subbasin plans (Snake River Salmon Recovery Board [SRSRB] 2005). The development of State and federal recovery plans has been anticipated, tracked, and integrated into the watershed planning process in the assessment, plan development and plan implementation stages.

Snake River Salmon Recovery Planning

The Washington State Legislature passed the Salmon Recovery Act ([SRA]; RCW 70.46; ESHB 2496), during the same session as the WMA (1998). The 1999 Statewide Strategy to Recover Salmon, developed under the SRA, identified and funded six salmon recovery regions across the state for the purpose of developing recovery plans.

The Salmon Recovery Funding Board funded six regional efforts to develop recovery plans. Each group coordinated a multitude of plans across watersheds into a regional plan, and helped connect local social, cultural, and economic needs and desires with science and ESA goals. "Lead Entities" were organized as precursors to regional recovery organizations. The Lead Entities are locally-based committees reliant upon citizen volunteers to provide a framework for restoration of salmon habitat; the Snake River Lead Entity developed habitat protection and restoration strategies in 1999 that form the basis for the recovery plan. For the Snake River region, the Lead Entity currently is the SRSRB with local Conservation District's acting as local county leads (SRSRB, 2006).

The SRSRB is responsible for addressing SRA issues in the Snake River Basin, which includes WRIA 35. The SRSRB released a draft recovery plan in 2005 that is consistent with the State Model for Recovery Plans, and Federal Register notice process and approved by federal government (NFMS) as the recovery plan for those populations which it addressed. This plan is now being integrated with Idaho and Oregon recovery planning processes. The recovery plan addresses the following federal ESA-listed and Washington State Species of Concern: bull trout, steelhead trout, Chinook (spring, summer and fall) salmon, and sockeye salmon.

By addressing these species, the plan meets the requirement for recovery plans under section 4(f) of the ESA. Meeting ESA section 4(f) requirements does not mean that the SRSRB, or its individual members and jurisdictions, will receive federal regulatory assurances that limit liability under the ESA upon adoption of the plan by the federal agencies. The draft recovery plan does, however, lay the foundation for development of these assurances over time.

The SRA also specifies a process for prioritizing habitat restoration projects in a "habitat projects list" for each region of the State. The SRA requires a "critical pathways methodology" for

development of the habitat projects list. One component of this methodology is a "limiting factors analysis" addressing habitat conditions for salmon in each region. The Washington State Conservation Commission (WSCC) is responsible for developing the limiting factors analysis for each WRIA. The SRA is directly linked with the WMA that requires "where habitat restoration activities are being developed under [the SRA], such activities shall be relied on as the primary non-regulatory habitat component for fish habitat." The WRIA 35 Limiting Factors Analysis was published by the WSCC in March 2002.

Salmon recovery planning is part of a larger array of planning taking place within the region. The recovery plan developed by the SRSRB is based primarily on the subbasin plans developed by local entities in partial response to the NPCC Fish and Wildlife Program. Plans which may affect or be affected by the recovery plan include Habitat Conservation Plans and other documents developed under the ESA, USDA-FSA/

State of Washington habitat preservation programs, conservation reserve enhancement programs, watershed plans, and harvest management plans. In addition, master plans and comprehensive plans developed by communities, as well as land and water use plans for communities and counties.

Subbasin Planning

The WRIA 35 planning effort also integrates portions of the Bonneville Power Administration/NPCC Subbasin Plans developed for the Asotin, Middle Snake, Tucannon and Grande Ronde.

Under the Northwest Power Act, Congress charged the NPCC with developing and periodically amending a fish and wildlife program for the Columbia River Basin to protect, mitigate and enhance fish and wildlife affected by the development and operation of hydroelectric facilities while assuring the Pacific Northwest an adequate, efficient, economical and reliable power supply.

In 2000, the Council reorganized the fish and wildlife program around a comprehensive framework of scientific and policy principles. The fundamental elements of the revised program framework are desired accomplishments regarding fish and wildlife; basinwide biological objectives; implementation strategies; and a scientific foundation. Adoption in 2003 of a coordinated plan for the mainstem Columbia and Snake rivers was the second step in the comprehensive revision of the program. The third step in the reorganization was the development of subbasin plans, which was completed in 2004.

The subbasin plans include specific actions and projects recommended by the NPCC for BPA funding and implementation, and provide the context for the review of proposals for funding by the Independent Scientific Review Panel and the Council.

Subbasin plans include three elements: a technical assessment, an inventory of past and current efforts, and a management plan of objectives and strategies. The objectives and strategies have been identified for specific priority geographic restoration areas to improve habitat conditions for

salmonid lifestages. Management strategies address stream, riparian and upland practices in both urban and rural settings within the priority restoration areas.

Subbasin plans were completed in 2004 for each of the geographic areas encompassing WRIA 35 (Asotin - May 2004; Grande Ronde - Dec 2004 with Supplement Jan 2005; Tucannon - May 2004; Lower Snake – May 2004). Development of the sub-basin plans have been supported by the WRIA 35 Planning Unit and, as indicated in the discussion above, have also been used to develop the Draft Snake River Salmon Recovery Plan.

1.4 Conformance with SEPA

The State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) was enacted to ensure that state and local agencies consider the likely environmental consequences of proposed actions during their decision-making processes. Under the SEPA Rules (Chapter 197-11 WAC), nonproject actions such as decisions on policies, plans, or programs, are included under SEPA authority. Therefore, a SEPA review is required for both the State's Watershed Planning Program and this WRIA 35 Watershed Management Plan.

On July 18, 2003, the Washington State Department of Ecology (DOE/Ecology) produced the Environmental Impact Statement for Watershed Planning (statewide EIS) under Chapter 90.82 RCW. The statewide EIS was produced by Ecology at the request of the 2001 State Legislature to serve as a "template" for environmental review under SEPA for local approval of watershed plans. The intent was for Ecology to develop a statewide EIS that could be adopted in whole or in part by SEPA lead agencies as part of local watershed plan approval processes. This statewide EIS is intended to assist local decision makers in meeting SEPA requirements, but does not eliminate the need for local decision makers to comply with SEPA.

In order to conform with SEPA, this WRIA 35 Watershed Management Plan must be evaluated under the SEPA rules established by the appropriate SEPA lead agency, prior to approval of the Plan. Based on the lead agency's determinations as to the environmental effects of the plan, the lead agency may adopt the statewide EIS in lieu of preparing a plan-specific EIS, adopt the statewide EIS and prepare a supplement or addendum that addresses plan-specific issues, or prepare a plan-specific EIS. Individual actions and projects recommended within the plan may require further review under SEPA and other federal, state, and local regulations prior to their actual implementation.

An appendix is being prepared in support of adoption of the statewide EIS as part of the SEPA review of the WRIA 35 Watershed Management Plan. Appendix A briefly describes the Proposed Action (e.g., the WRIA 35 Watershed Management Plan) and provides an assessment of the adequacy of the statewide EIS to address the environmental issues associated with implementing the actions in the WRIA 35 Watershed Management Plan. The Addendum, provided in Appendix A, includes:

- A brief description of the Plan.
- A summary of the WRIA 35 affected environment.

- A brief description of the statewide EIS and a comparison of the WRIA 35 Plan's proposed actions to the actions evaluated in the statewide EIS.

1.5 Plan Limitations

It is recognized that the documents used in the formation of the watershed plan may not provide complete and detailed information for all water resource management strategies or water quality actions. The collection of existing data has been subject to time and budget constraints. Despite the limitations, the Middle Snake Watershed Plan has been based upon the best information available in WRIA 35 and is consistent with the requirements of RCW 90.82.120. Nothing within this plan shall:

- Conflict with existing state statutes, federal laws, or tribal treaty rights;
- Impair or diminish in any manner any existing water rights;
- Modify or require the modification of any waste discharge permit issued under Chapter 90.48. RCW;
- Modify or require the modification of activities or actions taken or intended to be taken under a habitat restoration work schedule developed under Chapter 246, Laws of 1998; or
- Modify or require the modification of activities or actions taken to protect or enhance fish habitat if the activities or actions are consistent with the parameters and requirement of RCW Chapter 90.82.120(1)(g); and

The identification and estimation of surface and groundwater rights for various entities and persons referenced within this watershed plan are for the singular purpose of estimating water availability and demand, as well as to provide a general understanding of water resource and management issues throughout WRIA 35. The estimations of water rights are neither an admission nor an opinion on the validity or extent of any respective water rights by Ecology or any participant in the planning process, or any other entity or person identified.

Furthermore, it is important to note that this Plan is based upon a date in time as a result of information and events from completed and currently implemented planning processes. Being a living document, it is subject to change as events, circumstances and new information dictate. The Planning Unit intends that no rules adopted in the future as a result of this plan shall take place for a period of five (5) years in order to allow for further instream flow and ground water studies in determining the extent of such rules. These rules need to take into account the time and resource commitment made by local citizens during the development and adoption of the Middle Snake Watershed Plan. Planning Unit members need to be active participants in the rule making process to help insure draft rule language accurately reflects the intent of the WRIA 35 Watershed Plan.