Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

2015 Local Government Excellence Awards Program
Program Excellence Awards Nomination Form

(All programs nominated must have been fully operational for a minimum of 12 months, prior to January 31, 2015)

Deadline for Nominations Extended to March 30, 2015

Complete this form (sections 1 and 2) and submit with your descriptive narrative.

SECTION 1: Information About the Nominated Program

Program Excellence Award Category *(select only one)*:

- ☐ Community Health and Safety
- ☒ Community Partnership
- ☐ Community Sustainability
- ☐ Strategic Leadership and Governance

Name of program being nominated: Issaquah Creek Integrated Fish Passage Project

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: City of Issaquah, WA

Jurisdiction population(s): 33,000

Please indicate the month and year in which the program you are nominating was fully implemented. (Note: All Program Excellence Award nominations must have been fully implemented for at least 12 months prior to January 31, 2015, to be eligible. The start date [on or before January 31, 2014] should not include the initial planning phase.)

Month: Dec Year: 2013

Name(s) and title(s) of individual(s) who should receive recognition for this award at the ICMA Annual Conference in Seattle, Washington, September 2015. (Each individual listed MUST be an ICMA member to be recognized.):

Name: Bob Harrison

Title: City Administrator Jurisdiction: City of Issaquah

Name: _____

Title: _____ Jurisdiction: _____

Name: _____

Title: _____ Jurisdiction: _____

SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

Name of contact:	Autumn Monahan		
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CITY OF ISSAQUAH WASHINGTON

Issaquah Creek Integrated Fish Passage Project
2015 ICMA Local Government Excellence Awards

The Challenge

Issaquah Creek, along with the 75-year-old salmon hatchery that bears its name, are cherished by the City of Issaquah's residents, as well as visitors throughout Washington state. The creek starts on the heavily-forested Tiger and Squak mountains, and flows through rural lands and downtown Issaquah before entering the southern end of Lake Sammamish.

The Issaquah community has gone to great lengths to preserve the natural values of the stream and surrounding basin, which is home to several species of anadromous (sea-run) salmon and trout.

The Issaquah Salmon Hatchery is operated by the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and produces 2.5 million Chinook and coho salmon fry to benefit recreation and tribal fisheries, as well as the ecosystem. It is the most visited of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's hatcheries, with thousands of visitors every year. A Lake Sammamish kokanee supplementation program is also run out of the hatchery,

Issaquah Salmon Hatchery

producing tens of thousands of kokanee fry to help re-establish kokanee in nearby Lake Sammamish.

Hatchery Water Supply Intake Dam

In addition, it is a popular sightseeing destination and educational facility. Return of salmon to Issaquah Creek in the fall is the focus of Issaquah Salmon Days**,** a two-day festival that attracts more than 150,000 people to celebrate the region's history, culture and ethnic diversity.

The hatchery was built in 1936 and was extensively upgraded to modern standards in the late 1990s. However, rebuilding the hatchery didn't address a 12-foot high water diversion dam located a half-mile distance upstream that supplied water to the hatchery. In recent years, it was recognized that the fish ladder at the dam was obsolete, and blocked fish passage to more than 11 miles of valuable habitat for migrating salmon. Plus, the structural integrity of the dam was very poor, and urgently needed replacement.

While the replacement of the dam was widely endorsed by local, state and federal officials; agencies; and tribes – the project needed a champion. The City of Issaquah recognized this need, and took a leadership role to ensure

Salmon attempting the old fish ladder

one of the largest – and most significant – habitat restoration projects in the region was completed.

Program Implementation and Costs

In 2007, the City of Issaquah started this long and visionary process by conducting a feasibility study to find the best way to replace the hatchery dam. The study evaluated many options, and concluded that removing the existing dam and replacing it with a series of boulder weirs and a new water intake structure would best meet the project goals.

The project is very innovative: Once the dam was removed, it was replaced with a series of rock weirs to stabilize the channel. Juvenile and adult salmonids are then able to readily pass upstream and downstream through the weirs. To provide a continued supply of water to the hatchery for years to come, a new water intake system was installed that guarantees an ample supply of reliable, inexpensive and sediment-free water to the Issaquah hatchery.

The City of Issaquah didn't tackle this massive project alone. Instead, it leveraged partnerships to make it happen. First, there was finding the funds, which the City started by acquiring grants.

The catalyst was a $400,000 grant from the Washington State Salmon Recovery Funding Board and a $172,375 grant from NOAA Open Rivers Initiative. These grants allowed feasibility and design to occur, paving the way for funding of construction by the state legislature through the State of Washington 2012 Jobs Now Act.

After $4 million in funding was provided by the state legislature in 2012, the design was completed and construction – which was managed by the state with technical assistance from Issaquah – began in late spring 2013. The contractors showed they were very capable of bringing in the right crews

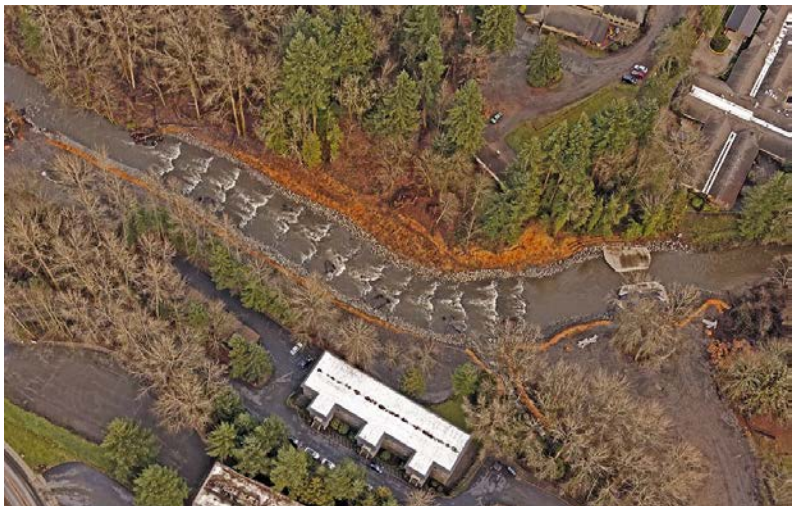
and equipment to install the stream diversion pipe around the project site, demolish the dam, re-grade the channel and construct 13 grade-control weirs to replace the 12-foot drop that the dam created, and construct a new concrete water intake structure for the hatchery water supply.

Lessons Learned

Even when the project is large scale – such as removing a massive dam in your community – partnerships pay off.

And when a project includes many partnerships (in the City's case – local, state and federal officials; a variety of nonprofit agencies; and tribes) it needs a champion. While the City of Issaquah didn't have the funds (or even own the state-run hatchery), it did have the vision and dedication by both elected leadership and staff to guide the project through grants, study, design and permits.

When setting your timeline, plan ahead for delays and unexpected challenges. Construction crews did encounter challenges because it was a very difficult site. Excessive groundwater was encountered in the intake structure that required extreme dewatering measures, and the wettest September on record flooded the site two times (and then again in October and November). The end result was that the project continued into late November 2013 before it was completed.



Credit: Jerry Klein

The new fish passage system

Tangible Results

The City of Issaquah heavily invests in preserving and restoring natural areas along streams to enhance our natural environment. To meet our region's sustainability objectives, this innovative project also found a way to replace the dam, which was impacting salmon runs, with a solution that still supported a necessary economic and environmental cause – fisheries enhancement.

The project was completed in late 2013, and the fish passage benefits of the project were immediate. The weirs opened up 11 miles of high-quality spawning and rearing habitat above the dam that were underutilized by salmon. Community members report seeing massive Chinook salmon reaching upstream areas of Issaquah Creek that haven't been home to adult salmon in more than 80 years.

The project also ensures the continued operation of the Issaquah Salmon Hatchery, which sustains healthy recreational and tribal salmon fisheries and provides the public with a unique educational opportunity to enjoy this important resource.