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NCW salmon 2219 projects win \$3 million in state funding

BY MICHELLE MCNIEL
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WENATCHEE — The state has awarded nearly \$3 million to salmon recovery projects in Chelan and Okanogan counties.

The money will pay for restoration and protection work along the Wenatchee, Entiat, Twisp and Methow rivers.

"We've put together a lot of community plans that point toward restoration, and we're excited to be getting money to now carry out these projects," said Mike Kaputa, natural resources director for Chelan County.

The state Salmon Recovery Funding Board handed out more than \$60 million statewide for salmon projects in its eighth year of distributing grants. The funded projects range from planting trees along streams to cool water to restoring entire flood plains.

In North Central Washington, Chelan County and the Cascadia Conservation District received a combined \$1,987,395 and the Methow Conservancy in Okanogan County will get \$762,605.

Kaputa said the money will be used to implement the goals of the Wenatchee and Entiat watershed plans, which are community-based plans for improving the two river systems.

The easy, quick-fix projects in the river systems were completed years ago, and "the ones we are doing now are more complex, on a larger scale and require more design work," he said.

The biggest project in Chelan County will recon-

Please see SALMON, Page A9

Salmon: River needs 'complexities'

From Page A1

nect a relic side channel and floodplain to the Entiat River. The county will remove a levee, excavate the channel to allow the river to flow into it and add logs to provide shelter for fish. A diversion structure will also be placed in the main stem of the Entiat River to redirect the river toward the side channel.

Kaputa said the channel, about five miles up the river, was cut off from the river after the Corps of Engineers dredged and straightened the river following the 1948 flood.

"The Corps came through and made the river more efficient, taking out oxbows and dredging it with a bulldozer, essentially making it a stormwater channel," he said. "We want to bring back some of the complexities, the pools and oxbows."

Another project funded by the salmon board will breach a levee near Dryden and allow the Wenatchee River to flow into nearly two acres of floodplain that will serve as fish habitat.

Kaputa said there are several areas along the Wenatchee River that were disconnected from the river during construction of Highway 2 in the 1950s.

"The work made the river a lot more uniform, which is great for moving water but not a good idea for fish habitat," he said. "We're trying to undo some of that past work."

The county will also receive money to work with the Peshastin Irrigation District and convert 1.8 miles of its irrigation canal near Brender Creek from an open ditch to a pipeline.

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