



# Pasco Basin Groundwater Management Efforts

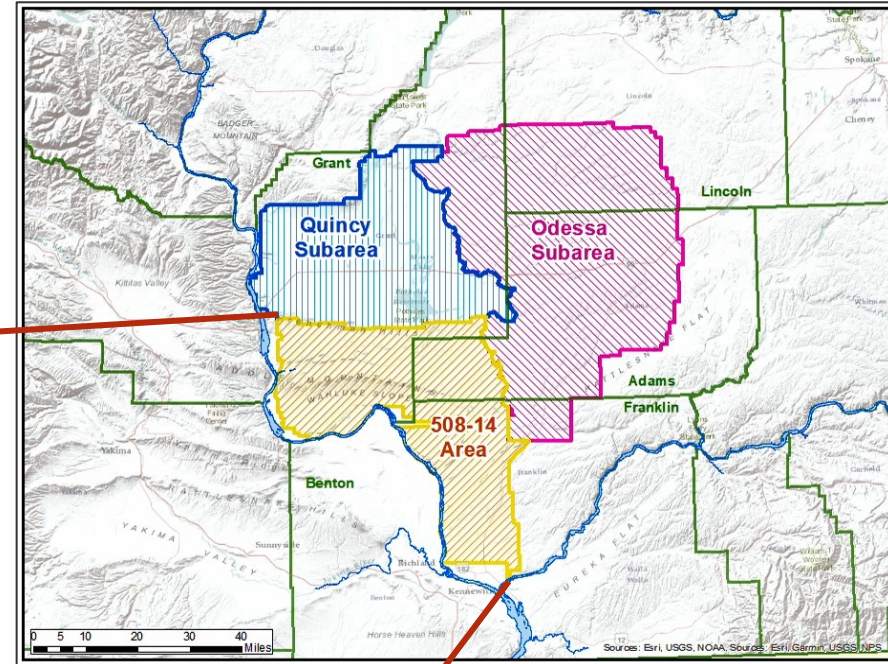
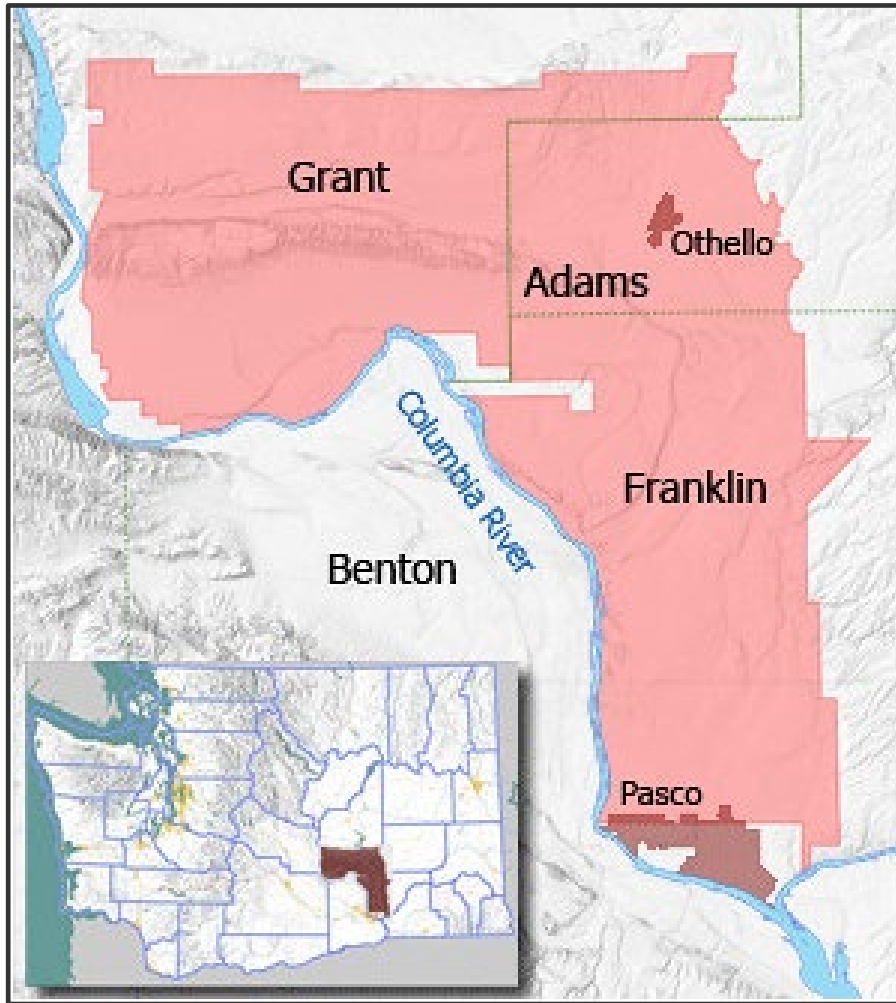
Columbia River Policy Advisory Group

July 6, 2023

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Department of Ecology

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Ephrata Field Office Manager  
Columbia Pacific Northwest  
Interior Region 9  
Bureau of Reclamation

# Pasco Basin Area



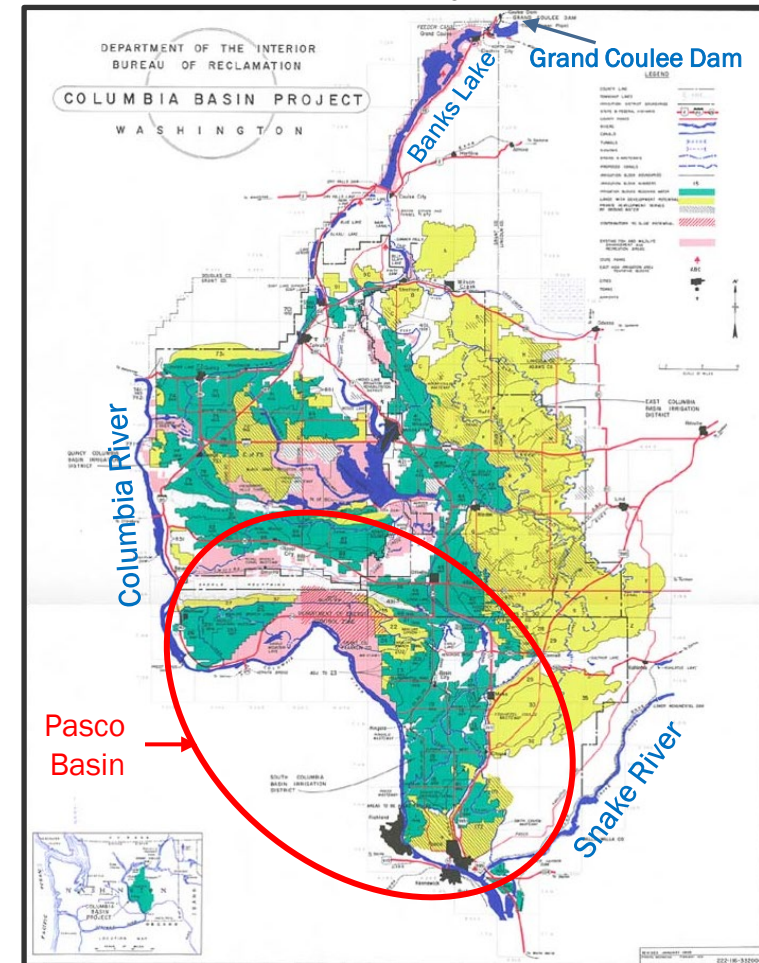


# Columbia Basin Project Irrigation

- Columbia Basin Act – early 1940s
- Irrigation in the basin relies on surface water from Federal Project (~680,000 acres)
- Return flows seep into ground and commingled with natural groundwater
- State issues withdrawal of groundwater in coordination with Reclamation, later designated as interim rule 508-14 WAC

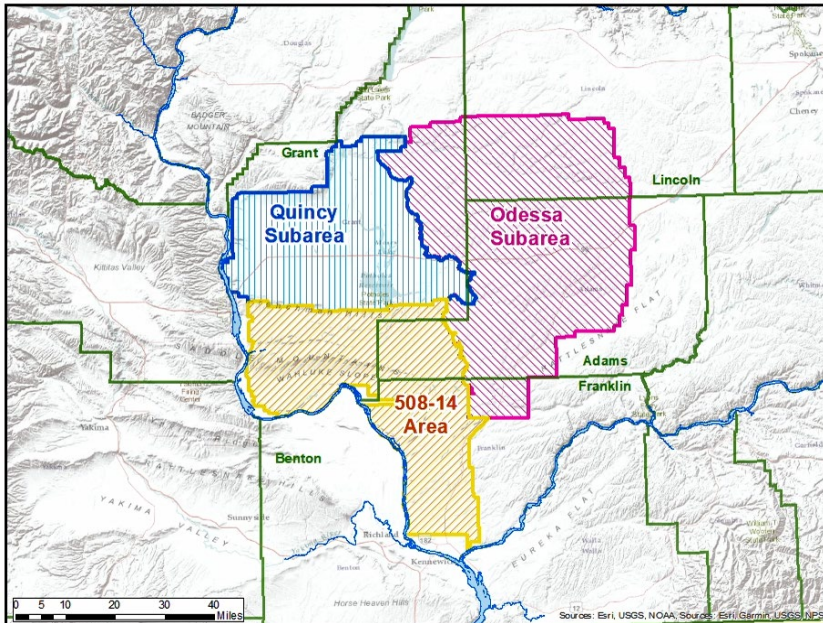


Bureau of Reclamation  
Federal Columbia Basin Project



Adapted from DOI, Bureau of Reclamation Columbia Basin Project Map

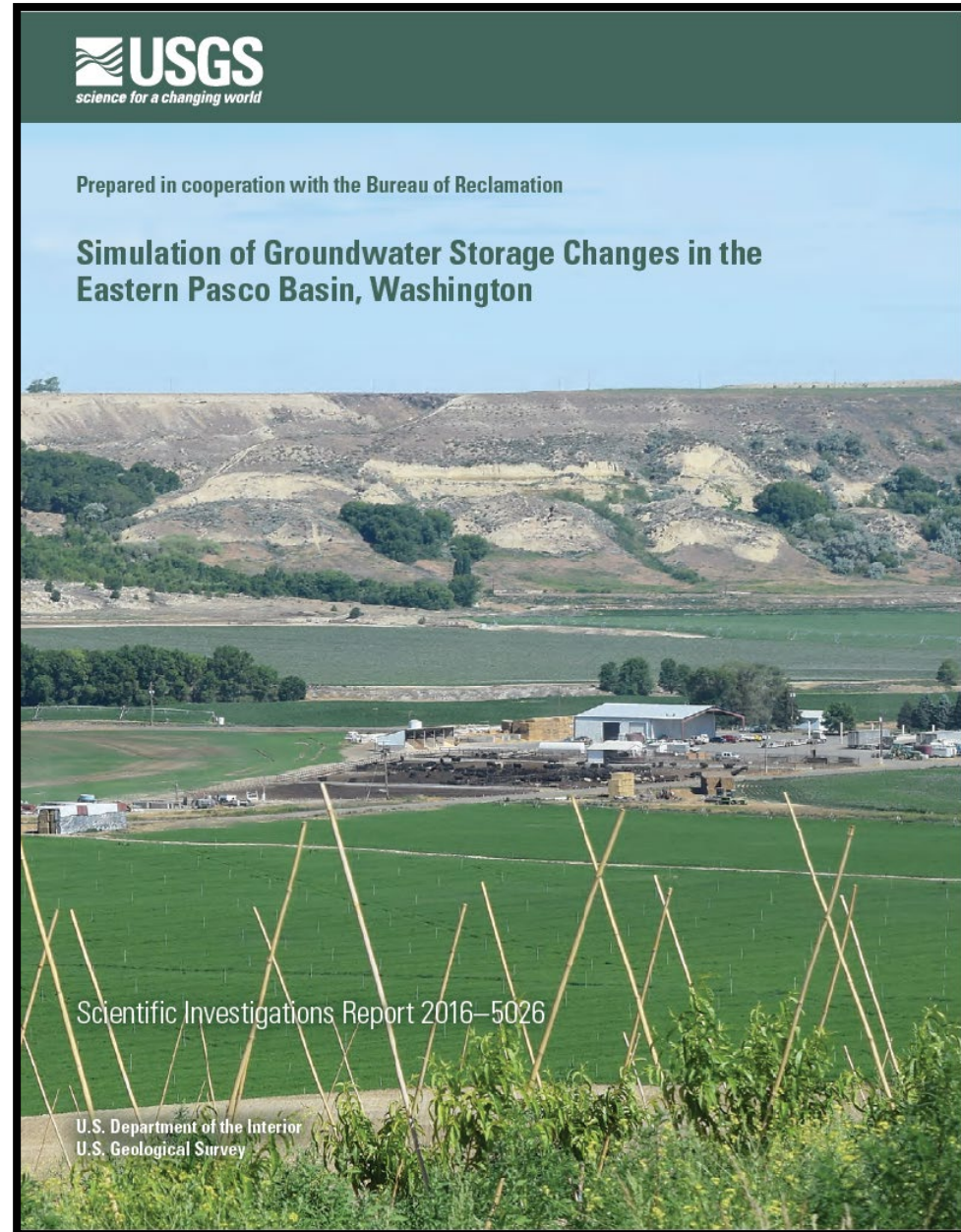
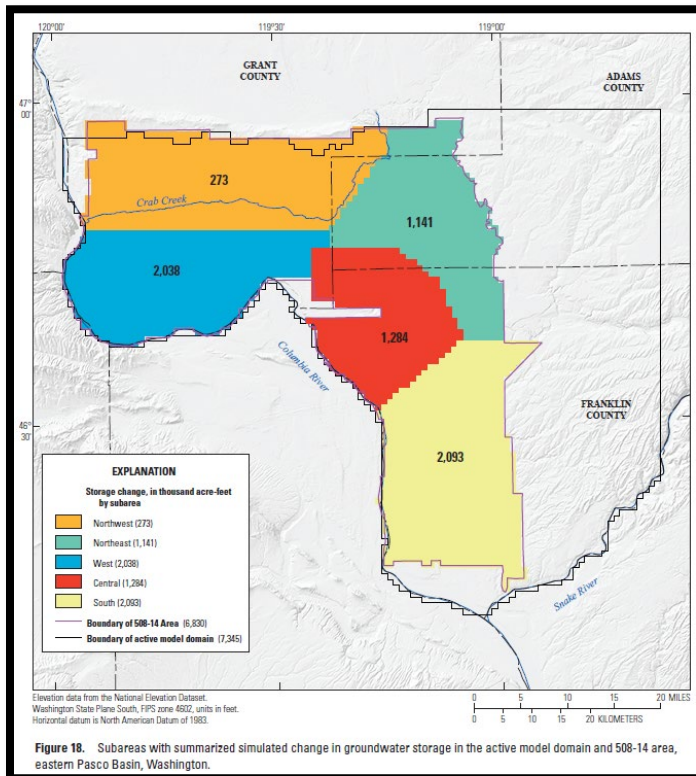
# Pasco Basin History



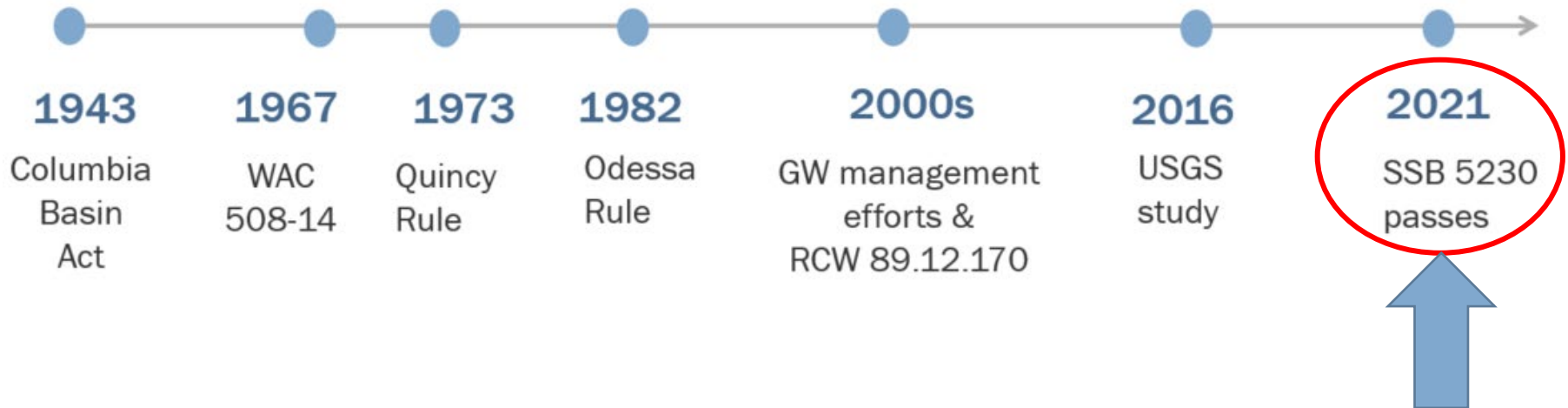


# USGS Study and Groundwater Model

- 2016 USGS Report
- Increase in Groundwater Storage
- Model Updates/Revisions
- Management Scenarios



# Pasco Basin History: 2021 Legislative Amendment



- Allocation through agreement of groundwater that exists as a result of the Columbia Basin Project
- Clarify process with subarea boundary designation under RCW 90.44.130
- Agreements fulfill requirements for groundwater availability
- Directs Ecology to conduct rulemaking including outreach

# Current Efforts and Next Steps



Outreach and Public Input



# Memorandum of Understanding

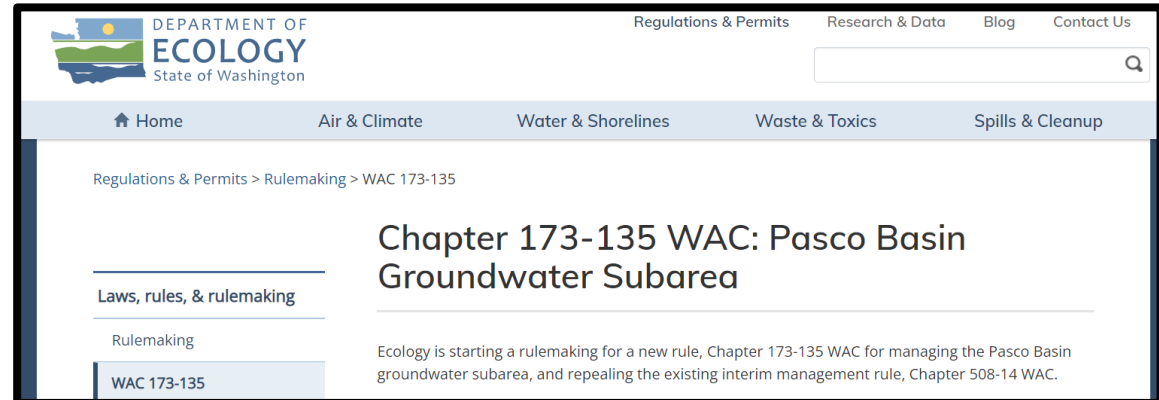
- Agreement between Reclamation and Ecology to pursue groundwater co-management strategy
- Focus on public involvement and outreach and input
- Multi-step process for Groundwater Management:
  - Ecology Rulemaking and Outreach
  - Boundary Designation for Pasco Basin Groundwater Subarea
  - Groundwater Study and Groundwater Flow Model for Pasco Basin area
  - Co-management Agreement between Ecology and Reclamation for allocating and managing groundwater under RCW 89.12.170



# Pasco Basin Rulemaking

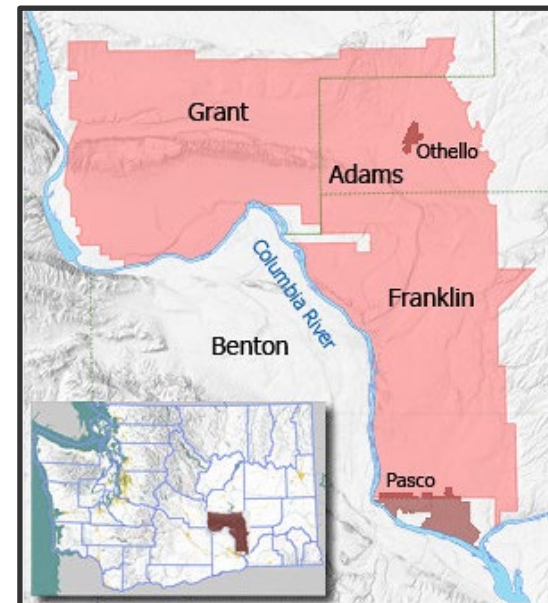
## Chapter 173-135 WAC

- RCW 89.12.170 directs Ecology to adopt a rule laying out the process for implementing the co-management agreement
- Rulemaking will result in a new rule Chapter 173-135 WAC and repeal of older interim rule Chapter 508-14 WAC
- Includes a review under State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA)
- Visit our website:



# Boundary Designation

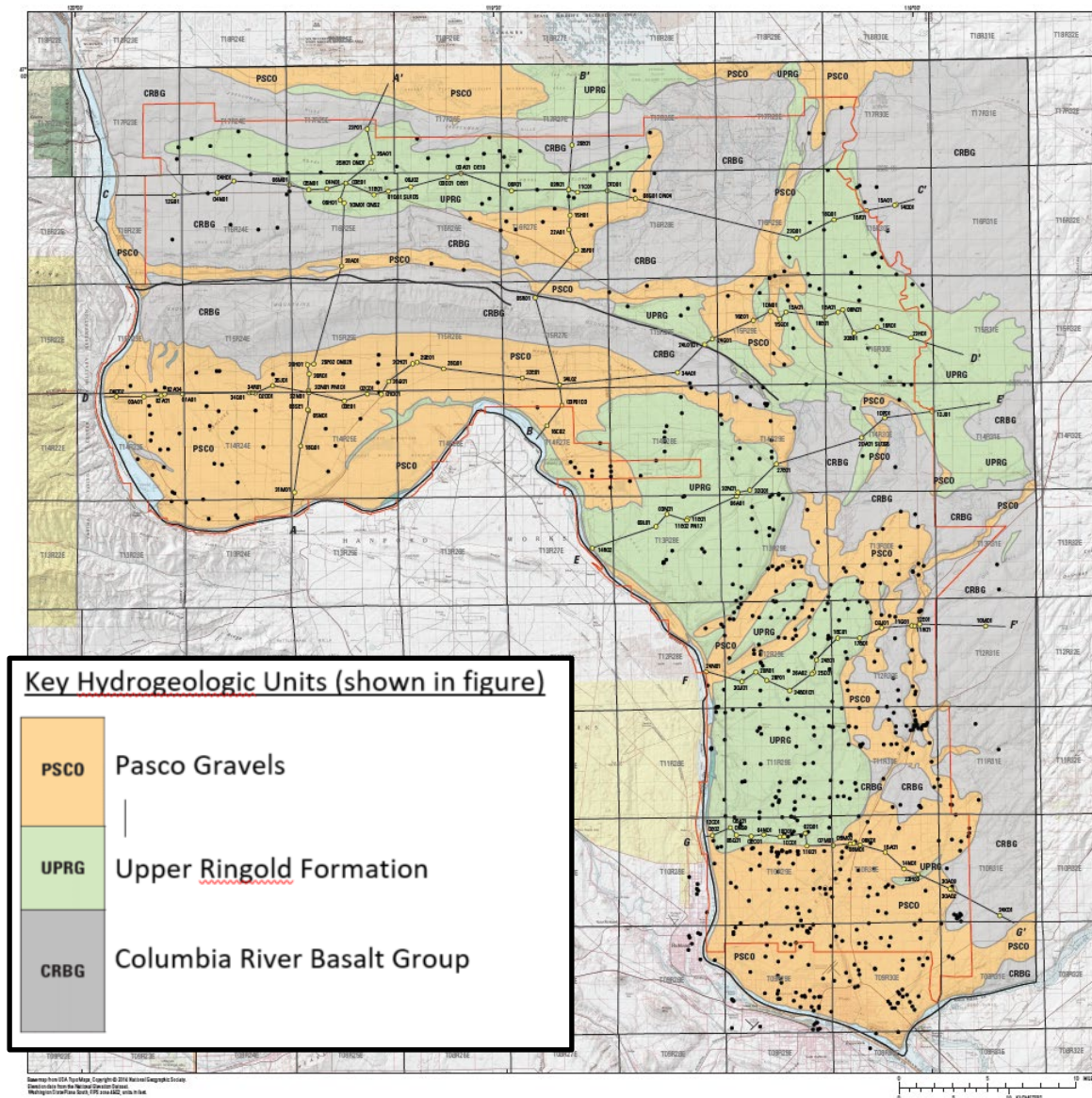
- Designate boundary under RCW 90.44.130
- Process: public notices, Ecology findings, and final order
- Boundary is defined by order, but volumes to be allocated within the boundary are determined through agreement and supported by groundwater studies



Outline of 508-14 area [filed 1986]

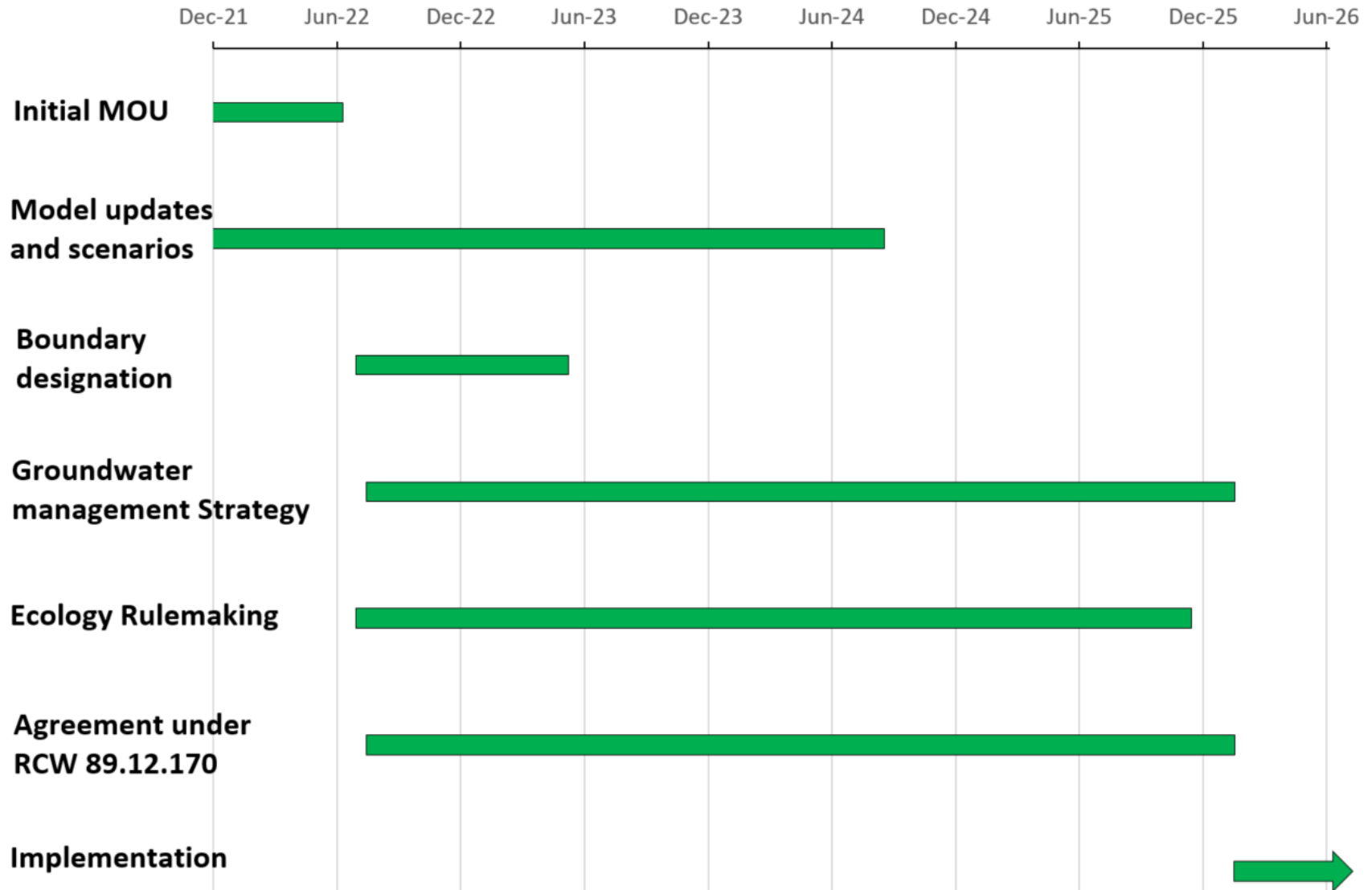
# USGS Study and Groundwater Model

- Study seeks to quantify increases in groundwater storage as result of Columbia Basin Project return flows
- Majority of mounded water in sedimentary deposits that overlie the basalts
- Revisions and recalibration underway to update model
- Next steps: peer review and modeling scenarios to:
  - support development of co-management strategy
  - help inform agreement on groundwater allocation volumes and depth/location





# Draft Schedule



# Thank you!

## Questions?

<https://ecology.wa.gov/Regulations-Permits/Laws-rules-rulemaking/Rulemaking/WAC-173-135>

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