

City of Walla Walla Watershed Resiliency Plan



Background: Surface water from the upper Mill Creek watershed provides 90 percent of the City of Walla Walla’s municipal drinking water to over 34,000 people. The watershed is closed to public access and is primarily forested. Fire suppression has been the dominant forest management strategy over the last century, which has altered the species composition to favor less fire-resistant trees and increased the risk of high severity fire in the future. A high severity fire could increase sedimentation into Mill Creek, reduce the quality and quantity of water supply, and increase treatment costs for the City of Walla Walla.¹

Project Summary: The City of Walla Walla recently received a grant from FEMA to develop a watershed resiliency plan. The purpose of the project is to develop a resiliency strategy to ensure that the City of Walla Walla can continue to provide high quality water and protect valuable ecological and community resources in the Mill Creek Watershed.

A stakeholder technical committee will guide and provide feedback on the plan throughout the project. The stakeholder technical committee will be comprised of partner agencies, CTUIR, and interested stakeholders. The Watershed Resiliency Plan will conduct a hazard and risk assessment, articulate goals, objectives, and capabilities, and identify mitigation actions and evaluate them based on ability to meet multiple benefits, cost-effectiveness, and resiliency to climate change impacts.

Project Area: The study area includes the Mill Creek Watershed and will focus on the portion of the watershed that provides drinking water for the City of Walla Walla, including the area downstream of the municipal watershed boundaries.

Project Timeline: Approximately Spring 2024 - December 2025.

WW2050 Basin Advisory Group Discussion

- This project directly relates to several strategies in the WW2050 Strategic Plan:
 - Strategy 2.01 Manage forested portion of the Walla Walla watershed to maximize snow/water retention and inundation
 - Strategy 2.11 Develop a detailed forest management plan for water supply in the upper Mill Creek Watershed
- Is the BAC interested in forming a separate workgroup that could serve as the stakeholder committee for the City’s Watershed Resiliency project? Periodic updates would also be available to the BAC and the stakeholder committee would be open to interested BAC members.

¹ USFS Storymap 2024: <https://arcg.is/14j9Cn0>