

# PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Work in progress: Audit description

## Assessing Success of the Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership Pilot

The Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership (the Partnership) is a 10-year pilot project approved by the state Legislature in 2009. Designed to improve streamflow in the Walla Walla River, the pilot allows collaborative management of water use in the Walla Walla Basin. Historically, the river often dried up during the summer, threatening both the region's largely agricultural economy and endangered trout that spawn in the river. Three large irrigators in the basin began working together in the early 2000s to improve water conservation and avoid federal action to preserve the trout. Through such efforts, the concept of local, collaborative, water resource management in the region was born.

The pilot empowered local stakeholders to collaborate on flexible strategies to manage water-use decisions and improve water conservation without the regulatory oversight typically administered by the state's Department of Ecology. The Partnership's 2018 report to the Legislature revealed that although it had successfully completed a number of strategies, it had not measurably improved streamflow.

The pilot was scheduled to sunset in June 2019. However, the 2019 Legislature passed a bill extending it for another two years to allow participants to explore how the Partnership should evolve, based on their experiences. This legislation requires the Partnership to undergo performance and financial audits to help participants determine how best to frame the new, long-term collaborative effort.

### Preliminary scope and objectives

This audit will examine whether the Partnership met its statutory obligations over the 10-year pilot, including whether it followed leading practices in strategic planning and collaborative watershed management to structure the pilot and manage its efforts. To do this, the audit will answer the following questions:

- Did the Partnership meet the intent of the legislation that created it?
- Did the Partnership achieve its strategic goals and meet its defined targets?
- Are there opportunities for the Partnership to improve its chances for achieving its desired outcomes in the future?

### Timing

We plan to publish the audit results in spring 2020.



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