



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Okanogan Watershed Plan is the result of five years of work by the Okanogan Watershed Planning Unit, which was formed in response to the 1998 Watershed Management Act (RCW 90.82). This statute provided the framework for locally-based watershed planning with a shared governance goal of giving local interests a voice and forum for collaboration on water resource issues. Through the process the stakeholders in the Okanogan Watershed have reached common ground in creating recommendations and strategic actions that address water quantity, water quality, instream flows, habitat, and multi-purpose water storage. It is expected that the early action items and recommendations presented in this Plan will be further refined in the implementation phase (Phase IV) of the watershed planning process.

This Watershed Plan has been prepared for Water Resource Inventory Area 49. The Okanogan River Watershed occupies about 2,600 square miles (1,650,000 acres) in the State of Washington and 6,300 square miles within British Columbia. The Pasayten and Ashnola Rivers in northwestern Okanogan County, which drain approximately 300 square miles into the Okanogan river watershed, are not included in WRIA 49 but are considered in this Plan. The watershed is unique in that a significant portion of the watershed lies within British Columbia. The Canadian portion but is covered minimally in the Plan due to the fact it is outside of the jurisdiction of the Planning Unit. Also, because the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation formally opted out of participation in the planning process, the area within the reservation is minimally covered in the plan.

The Okanogan Watershed lies in the rain shadow on the east side of the North Cascades. With cold winters and hot summers, geology, climate, and topography combine to create a semi-arid region whose residents depend upon snowmelt to replenish the aquifers and streams to provide water for this land and its residents.

The mission of the Okanogan Watershed Planning Unit is to develop water management strategies that reflect the social framework and nature of the Okanogan Watershed. In keeping with this mission, a primary objective of this Plan is to keep water rights within the Okanogan Basin to be utilized in a wise and productive manner for the benefit of its residents.

During the assessment phase (Phase II) of watershed planning, the Okanogan Watershed Planning Unit hired a consultant to conduct a Level 1 technical assessment to provide a summary of existing knowledge and data along with recommendations for additional scientific studies. Subsequently, the Planning Unit decided to conduct additional



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assessments on water quality, multi-purpose water storage and instream flows. Instream flow work was an assessment of ground and surface water interactions in four key subwatersheds. These technical assessments can be found in the appendix.

The recommendations in this Plan focus on the most challenging water-related issues in the watershed as determined through the Planning Unit meetings. These challenges are organized under six central components: water quantity, instream flows, habitat, multi-purpose water storage, water quality, and miscellaneous goals. Under these components are goals with numerous strategic actions. The Planning Unit prefers these actions be implemented through community collaboration rather than regulatory enforcement.

### **Plan Organization**

This Plan contains the following sections:

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Glossary & Acronyms

Executive Summary

Chapter 1: The Planning Process – The introduction of the watershed planning process.

Chapter 2: Watershed Overview – Background information describing the physical aspects of the watershed and six water related components identified by the planning unit.

Chapter 3: Early Action Items and Recommendations – In the beginning of the Recommendation section are the Early Action Items the Okanogan Watershed Planning Unit would like to be implemented. The recommendations are in the form of goals with strategies to accomplish these goals.

Chapter 4: Water Budget Qualifications and Limitations

Maps

Appendices: Level 1 Technical Assessment (ENTRIX 2006); Okanogan River Erosion Survey (Pacific Hydraulic Engineers & Scientists 2008); WRIA 49 Water Storage Assessment (MWH and ENTRIX 2009); Revised Water Budget (ENTRIX 2009, based upon ENTRIX 2006, Section 2.4, Water Balances, pp. 2-26 through 2-28 and The Water Balance of the Okanogan River Watershed, Basin analysis (James A Lutz, PhD, 2009); Reasons for Category 5 non-attainment of Water Quality Standards