Skookumchuck Water Rights Acquisition

- ✓ Phase 1 - 2024 Complete
- ❑ Phase 2 - 2026 Funded

Targeted Acquisition Approach



WDFW: Flickr

2026 Streamflow Restoration Competitive Grant

Water Rights Acquisition

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Addendum to the Chehalis Watershed Plan (WRIA 22/23)

Project: SK-00 – TransAlta Water Right Acquisition (***2,898 AFY or 4 cfs***)

TransAlta Water Bank – 26,631 acre-feet/year (AFY) available.

- Phase 1: 2024 Ecology Streamflow Restoration Grant (800 AFY)
  - ✓ Fulfilled WRIA 22/23 Minimum Offset for PE Wells (505 AFY)
    - Offsets PE well buildout 2018 – 2038, required under RCW 90.94
  - ✓ Provided additional water for "uncertainty" (295 AFY)

- Phase 2: 2026 Ecology Streamflow Restoration Grant (~636 AFY)
  - ✓ Dedicates ALL water for Instream Flow (~636 AFY)
  - ✓ Targets months of lowest flow (May – September)
    - Combined Phases = ~1,436 AFY or 50% of Project SK-00

Skookumchuck River

Riverbend Ranch, Thurston County

April 2025

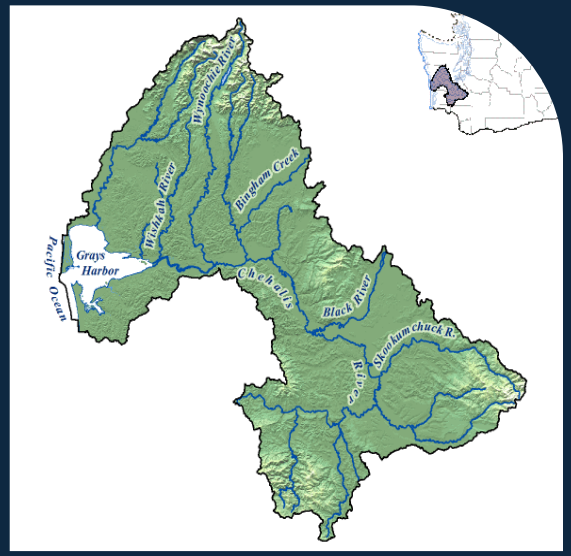
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Where is water identified in the watershed?

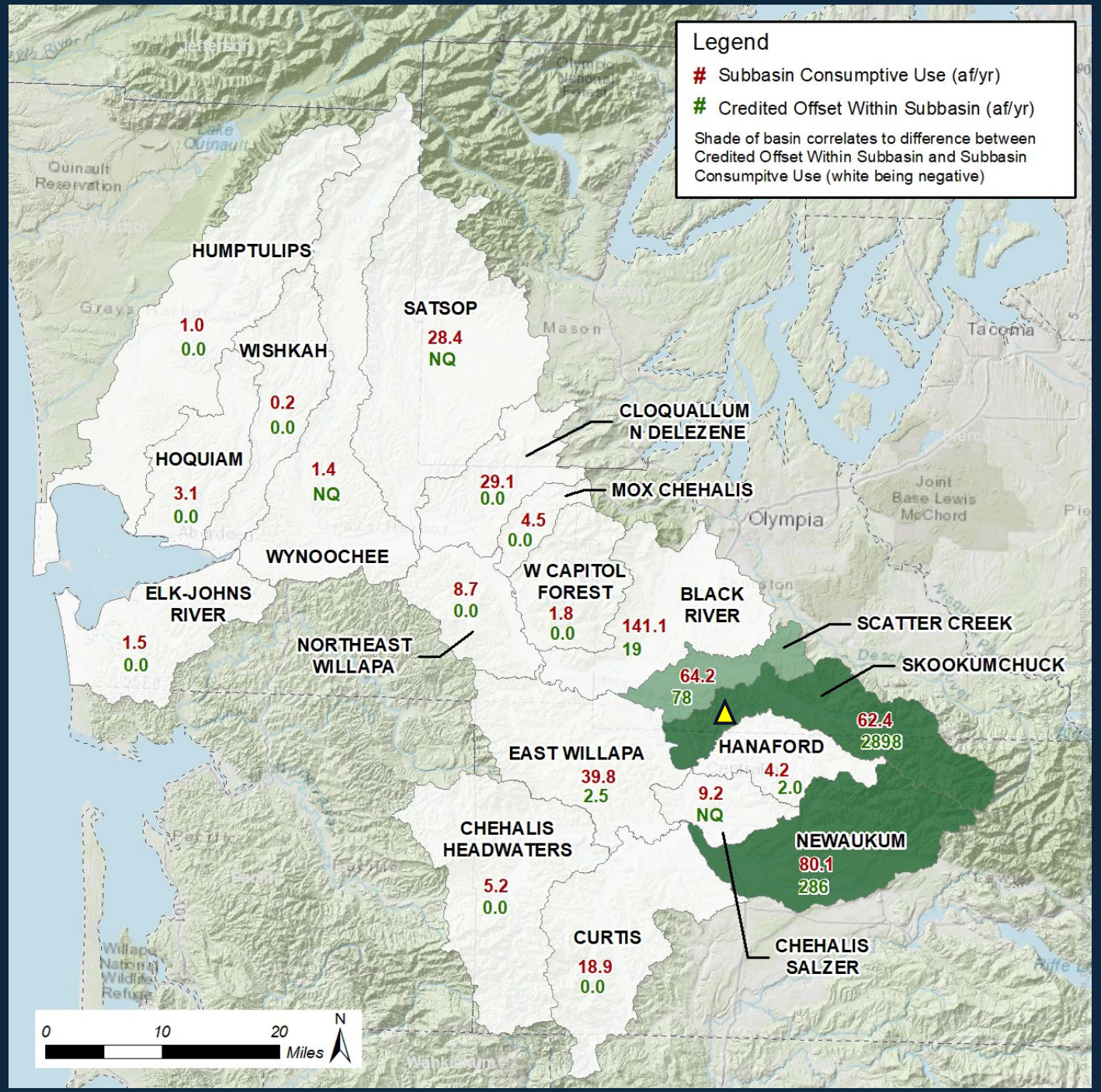
Addendum - Projects of High Certainty

Projected PE well consumptive use (red)

Identified Offset water projects (green)



Skookumchuck Subbasin – 2,898 AFY

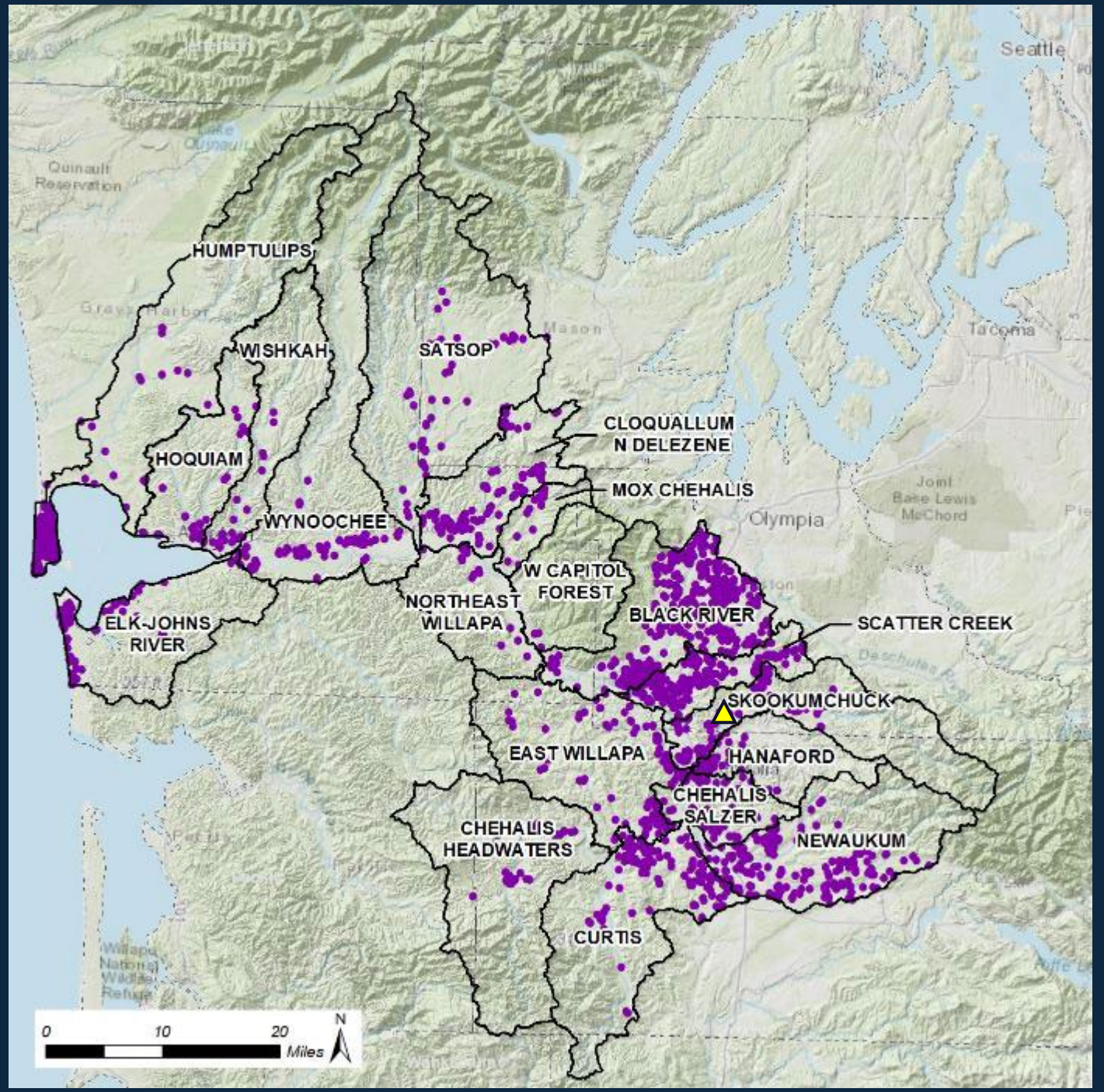


Where is growth occurring?

PE Wells Installs 2008-2018



Upper Subbasins – mainstem Chehalis

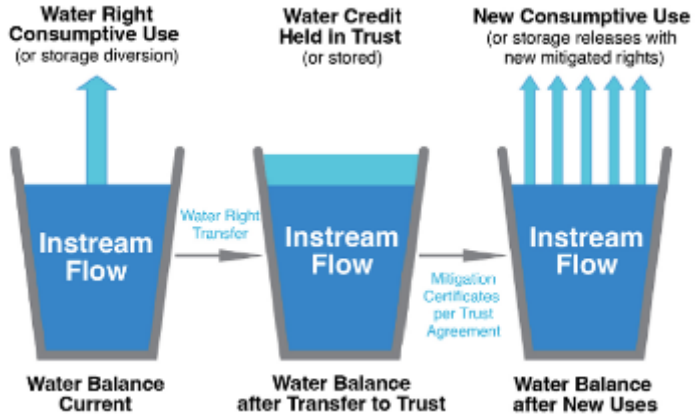


What is a TransAlta Water Bank Right?

2021 – TransAlta Water Bank is established

2nd Largest water bank in WA: 26,631 AF

- Senior water right – priority date 1966
- Predates instream flow rules established by WAC 173-522 - not subject to curtailment
- TransAlta/Ecology manages sales from the bank
- Ecology enforces downstream junior water rights holders.



https://geosyntec.com/practices/water-and-natural-resources/water-rights

Important Points

- Does not require water releases from Skookumchuck Reservoir. Streamflow gains accrued from NOT extracting water for other consumptive uses.
- Future instream flows will diminish as consumptive mitigation credits are purchased.
- Provides a mechanism to legally ensure that water is reserved for instream flow.

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Purpose of the TransAlta Water Bank

- from Trust Water Right Agreement

> "The reason that Ecology is willing to accept the Trust Water Rights in the Trust Water Rights Program is to *improve instream flow function*, and to *promote agriculture, economic, and municipal and residential development* in the Chehalis Basin"

Dual mandate requires careful consideration:

- Pre-application outreach to Chehalis and Centralia to avoid conflict in planned acquisitions.
- Instream flow acquisitions limit future water development rights – from place of diversion downstream through the Chehalis mainstem.
  - Bank is large, but not inexhaustible
  - Lowest months of availability are April, May and June
  - Highest availability in July, August, September, October
- Goal is to ensure strong ecological benefit without undue conflict to future purchasers.

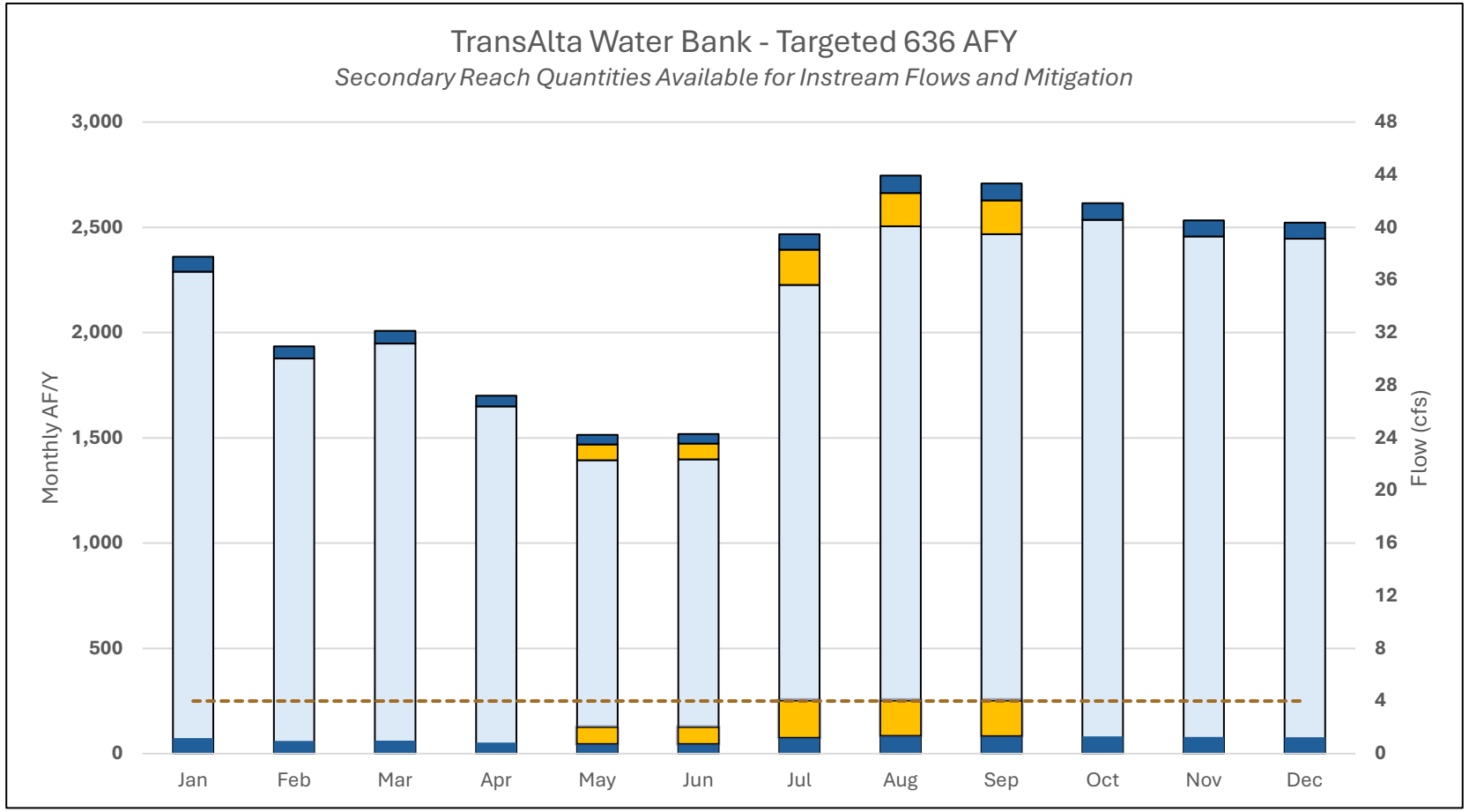
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TransAlta Water Bank – *26,631 AFY*

– Acquisitions for Instream flow

2024 – 800 AFY in blue

2026 – 636 AFY in orange

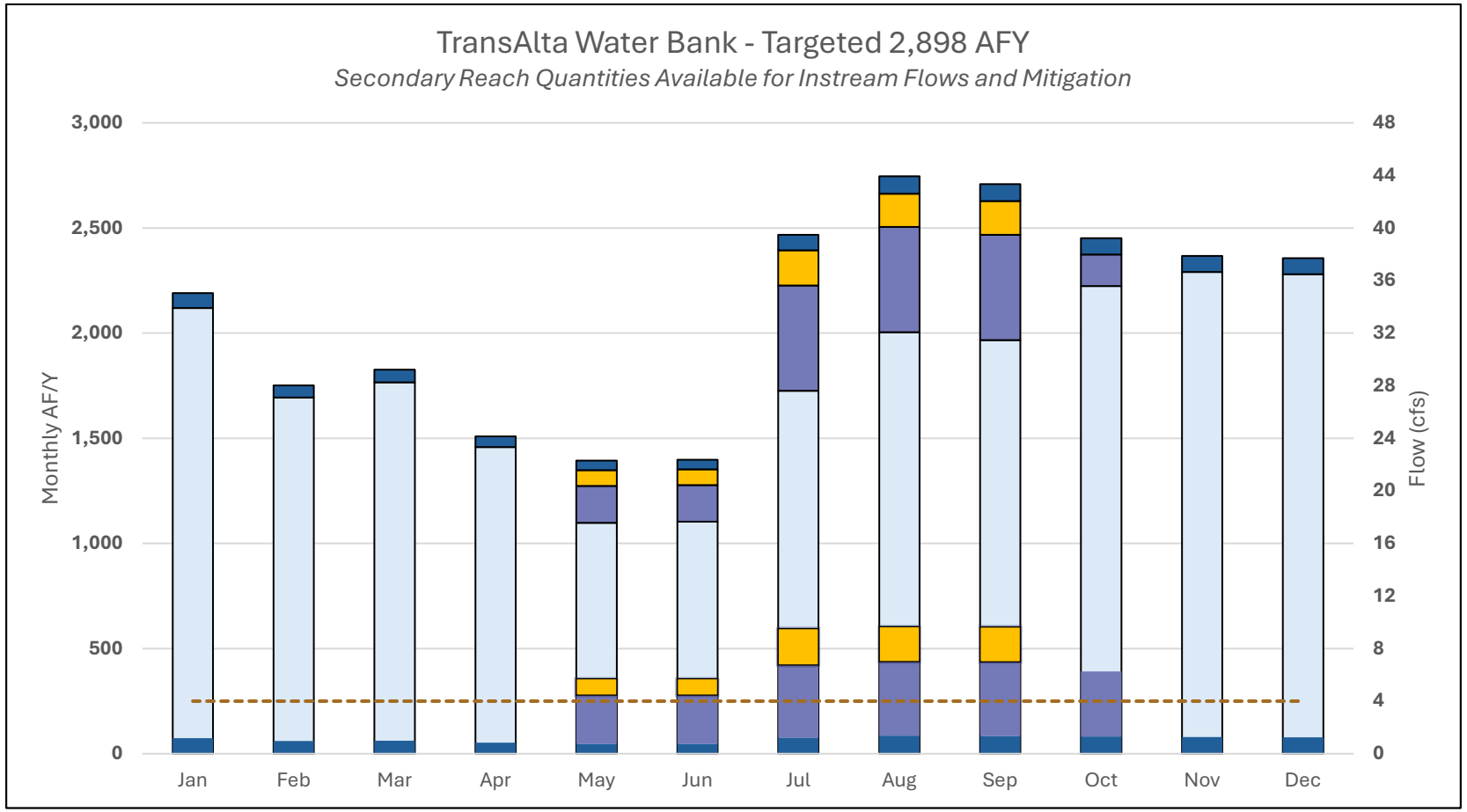


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TransAlta Water Bank – *26,631 AFY*

– Acquisitions for Instream flow

Hypothetical buildout to 2,898 AFY or 11% of Bank



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Summary

TransAlta Water Bank (*Project SK-00*) identified as the most impactful acquisition in WRIA 22/23 with the highest degree of certainty.

- Thurston County seeks to fulfull project goal of 2,898 AFY (Phase 2 reaches ~50%).
- Foundational watershed benefit as other projects are developed and initiated.
- Phase 2 targets low-flow months - future phases may adapt with CBP input.
- Cost efficient strategy to ensuring instream flow is protected in perpetuity.
  - Larger acquisitions may be more cost effective.
  - Exceeding project SK-00 quantities should be considered for long-range planning.

Thank you for the support in two Streamflow Restoration Grant Rounds!

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