A considered fisheries restoration action as a part of the Umatilla Basin Water Rights Settlement is the reintroduction of steelhead into the McKay Creek Drainage (Figure 9). The CTUIR has prioritized the McKay Creek drainage for the reintroduction of endemic Umatilla River summer steelhead (CTUIR 2017). The McKay Creek drainage currently produces resident trout and makes up 23 percent of the suitable salmonid tributary rearing habitat in the entire Umatilla River Subbasin (by area, CTUIR 2017). The potential for the 126 stream miles of McKay Creek to produce steelhead is significant when compared to similar adjacent basins. McKay Creek offers similar spawning and rearing habitat as found in Birch, Isquulktpe, and Meacham Creeks which have abundant anadromous steelhead populations (Contor 2015). For example, in the lower 6.7 miles of Isquulktpe Creek, CTUIR has documented an average of 70 steelhead redds per year (range 10-134) since 1985 (Contor 2019). On average Birch Creek produces 44,000 steelhead smolts annually (1995 through 2018, Hanson et al. 2019). Meacham Creek produces an average of 41,000 smolts annually (2006-2018, Contor 2019). Reintroducing steelhead into the 126 stream miles of the McKay Creek drainage is consistent with existing ESA recovery plans. Reintroduction would specifically benefit adult abundance and currently limited spatial diversity for the Umatilla/Walla Walla major population group (NOAA Fisheries 2009).

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