



*Connecting Central Oregon's Water, Land & Environment*

## Spring 2019 | **Deschutes Basin Habitat Conservation Plan Update**

### **Overview**

The City of Prineville and the Deschutes Basin Board of Control (DBBC), made up of eight irrigation districts in Central Oregon, are working with local, state, and federal agencies to improve conditions in the Deschutes River and its tributaries by conserving water, enhancing fish and wildlife habitat, and generating clean energy.

The irrigation districts and their partners have committed the past decade and \$7 million to developing a multi-species Deschutes Basin Habitat Conservation Plan (DBHCP), which represents a proactive, collaborative approach to balance fish and wildlife conservation with water use in the Deschutes Basin through innovative, science-based solutions. The DBHCP is the responsible conservation strategy for fish and wildlife, while providing regulatory certainty for Deschutes Basin farmers, ranchers, and communities.

During the ten-year process, over 20 stakeholders participated in public meetings held in Madras, Portland, Prineville, Redmond, Bend, and Sisters.

The collaborative conservation strategy will protect and restore habitat in 340 miles of rivers and streams.



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### **Current Status**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is presently taking steps to complete the final environmental analyses and review of the DBHCP, in compliance with the federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). For large and complex actions like the DBHCP, the NEPA requires the completion of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The DBHCP EIS is being prepared by an independent third-party consultant under the direction of USFWS, concurrent with completion of the DBHCP.

Some of the measures outlined in the proposed DBHCP, including several measures involving reservoir operations designed to benefit the Oregon spotted frog, are already being implemented. Other measures build off decades-long efforts by the Districts and City to conserve water and enhance instream flows.

**The nine applicants for the DBBC represent over 150,000 acres of farms, ranches and the City of Prineville.**



**Conservation measures will be included for five species; Oregon spotted frog, bull trout, steelhead, sockeye salmon, and spring-run Chinook salmon.**



## **Collaborating for Conservation**

The irrigation districts and the City of Prineville are working collaboratively with stakeholders across environmental and farming communities to implement proactive modern conservation measures that benefit everyone, including the farmers and fish that rely on the Deschutes River.

Modern water management practices are focused on long-term solutions that balance the needs of a healthy environment while ensuring reliable and sustainable water is available to basin farmers and citizens.

Over the next five years, the Districts, through water delivery modernization projects, are expected to pipe more than 400,000 feet of open canals across Central Oregon, generating nearly 94 cubic feet per second in water savings. On-farm conservation by patrons, through piping private deliveries and converting to sprinklers, will result in using water more efficiently.

## **Implementation**

Once approved, the Districts, City of Prineville, and the USFWS will begin implementation of the DBHCP. The DBHCP will result in long-term benefits to Deschutes River-dependent species, the region's water resources, and the social and economic health of communities. The DBHCP will also provide Endangered Species Act-related liability protection to the districts. The total estimated cost to develop the DBHCP is expected to be approximately \$7 million (\$3.3 million federal and \$3.4 million District/City cost-share). Implementation costs are anticipated to run upward of several hundred millions of dollars or more.

Conservation initiatives will help the Districts and City of Prineville:

**Increase water reliability for farmers and fish**

**Improve fish and wildlife habitat**

**Decrease energy costs**

**Reduce operations and maintenance costs**

**Achieve system-wide results in less time**



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