

Upper Deschutes River Coalition

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JANUARY 28, 2014

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Our Mission:

To protect Upper Deschutes River Communities by restoring and sustaining healthy fire-resistant forests, pure and abundant river flows and wildlife habitat.

Please review our 2013 Annual Report and 2014 Operations Plan at: www.udrc.org

Click Who We are and Our History for a map of our service area

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President's Message:

Fellow UDRC Stakeholders:

Note our first business/partners meeting is February 11 at 12:30 noon at the Sunriver Public Library. We intend to approve our 2014 Operations Plan with a focus on several new projects. Everyone is invited to participate in providing input for board approval.

One significant result this holiday season was a receipt of \$2,000 from Portland General Electric Company matching funding from Jerry Hubbard, a PGE retiree. This has been a regular year end source of UDRC funding from PGE based on Jerry's employment and his volunteer work for the Coalition. I encourage any of you to call me or Jerry regarding similar matching programs you may be eligible.

During recent months we have faced a serious problem with the Deschutes River water flows. Please review the comments below. Our Watershed committee is working with all of our water related partners to support efforts to resolve this serious water flow problem.

Carl Jansen, President

A UDRC letter for the Bend Bulletin – In My View:

The Future of the Upper Deschutes

The Officers of the Upper Deschutes River Coalition (UDRC) support and applaud the efforts of the irrigation districts in helping to restore flows within the Crooked River Basin as outlined in their January 16 letter to the Bulletin, "Irrigation Districts Collaborate for Positive Change."

The UDRC's mission is to protect Upper Deschutes River Communities by restoring and sustaining healthy fire-resistant forests, pure and abundant river flows and wildlife habitat.

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2014 Meeting Schedule:
www.udrc.org

Please attend our Board and Partner meetings at :

Next General Meeting is
Feb. 11, 2014, 12:30 noon,
Sunriver Public Library.

**Communities represented
by the Upper Deschutes
River Coalition:**

Beaver Road District

Caldera Springs

We see the collaboration among all stakeholders via the Deschutes Basin Study as opportunities to continue this positive momentum into areas affecting the Upper Deschutes which suffers from a chronic lack of water in winter and severe fluctuation of flows in the summer.

The October 2013 fish kill at Lava Island Falls and the return to 35 cfs of winter flow (typical summer flow ranges from 1,000 to 1,500 cfs) in the Upper Deschutes are grim reminders that there is much work yet to be done. The UDRC recognizes the importance of water from the Deschutes for summer agricultural uses. The economic impact of agriculture in Central Oregon is significant and the water rights supporting this activity are long established. By anyone's definition, however, the water within the Upper Deschutes River is "over allocated" and the last on the allocation list has always been the River itself.

The 35 cfs allowed to escape Wickiup Dam in winter is really a trickle which falls well short of the 300 cfs typically identified as the minimum flow necessary to sustain the Upper Deschutes as a viable fishery and habitat through winter. The UDRC is committed to working with all stakeholders in exploring options and implementing changes that will provide a sustaining year-around base flow of water in the Upper Deschutes, whatever the latest science says that flow should be.

But how do we get there? The Deschutes River Conservancy (DRC) has already identified several areas of opportunity. They accomplish their mission to restore stream flow and improve water quality by employing the following tools:

Deschutes Basin Study - The DRC launched the Deschutes Water Planning Initiative in 2012 to tackle this complex water management issue. It is a collaborative stakeholder process with the goal of restoring streamflows in the Upper Deschutes River while simultaneously meeting the water needs of irrigators and municipalities.

The DRC's streamflow goal is to restore 300 cubic feet per second to the Upper Deschutes River, meeting the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's minimum in-stream water right and flow target for a healthy, thriving fishery and ecosystem. Lasting solutions will not occur unless all basin stakeholders, including all water right holders, are invested in a collaborative process to develop an integrated water management plan.

The DRC and partners hope that this plan will provide the basis for water management agreements to consistently restore streamflows in the Upper Deschutes River while meeting agricultural and municipal needs. As the next critical step in this process, the DRC, the Deschutes Water Alliance and other instream interests have formed a Basin Study Work Group to obtain a Bureau of Reclamation Basin Study. This study will provide the modeling and empirical data needed to move forward with streamflow restoration in the Upper Deschutes River.

Water Rights Transfers - The purpose of the Transfers Program is to acquire and transfer water rights for dedication to permanent instream use. Instream transfers may be for restoration or mitigation purposes, serving to meet instream flow targets and the needs of farmers, cities and other new groundwater uses. To date, the DRC has acquired and transferred 713 acres of water rights in 18 separate transactions, for a total instream flow restoration benefit of 13 cfs.

Cougar Grove
 Crosswater
 Deschutes River
 Recreational Home sites
 1-5; 6; 8; & 9.
 Fall River Estates
 Gate House
 Haner Park
 Lazy River West
 Lazy River East
 Oregon Water Wonderland
 # 1 & 2
 Pinewood Country Estates
 River Forest Acres
 River Meadows
 Spring River Fire & Safety
 Assn.
 Sun Country Estates
 Sunriver Business Park
 Sundance – Sunriver
 Thousand Trails
 Upper Fall River
 Vandevort Acres Road
 District
 Vandevort Ranch
 Whispering Pines
 Wild River Assn.

**Jake Keller
 Awards:**

2012 Awards:

**Volunteer of the
 year:**

Mick McMicken
 Fall River

**Partner of the
 Year:**

Katie Lighthall
 Project Wildfire

Water Rights Leasing - The DRC works with districts and landowners to lease water rights that are not currently being used. When water is leased instream, it is protected with the same priority date as the original water right – providing significant instream benefits. In addition to the instream benefit, the lease satisfies state beneficial use requirements that the landowner or district needs to prevent the water right from being forfeited.

Water Conservation - The porous, volcanic soil characteristic of the high desert region causes approximately 50% of the water diverted from the River to seep into the ground before it reaches the farm. As a result, irrigation districts need to divert twice the amount of water actually needed from the Deschutes. By piping or lining prioritized canals (as is being done in the Crooked River Basin), the water loss can be reduced and more water allowed to remain instream.

The Upper Deschutes River Coalition believes, as the irrigation districts have so ably demonstrated in the Crooked River Basin, there are opportunities to re-establish the Upper Deschutes as BOTH a healthy stream corridor and a source of irrigation. The Deschutes River Basin Study plus the Deschutes River Conservancy’s water rights transfer, water rights leasing and water conservation are among the many tools that can make a difference.

The Upper Deschutes River Coalition is committed to collaborating with all stakeholders to design and implement a strategy that rebuilds the health of a River that once was THE premier brown trout fishery in the U.S.

It’s time for positive change in the Upper Deschutes.

Please note the Upper Deschutes River Coalition and the Deschutes River Conservancy are separate organizations with separate missions and Boards of Directors who work together in various issues facing the Deschutes River Basin.

Prepared by Shaun Pigott and Jerry Hubbard. Approved by UDRC Leadership team and submitted under the President’s signature.

Upper Deschutes River Coalition – Leadership Team:

Carl Jansen, President
 John Moore, Treasurer

Jerry Hubbard, VP and Executive Director
 Jim Larsen, Secretary

Irrigation districts collaborate for positive change

Bend Bulletin: Published Jan 16, 2014 at 12:09AM

There’s a trend underway in Central Oregon, one built on cooperation and collaboration. And the result is that Oregon is becoming a national leader in river restoration and renewable energy.

2013 Awards:

Volunteer of the year:

Jim Larsen
Cougar Grove

Partner of the Year:

Stu Otto, Oregon
Dept. of Forestry

In a surprising twist, some of the leading institutions driving this positive change are among our state's oldest irrigation districts. Central Oregon irrigation districts are taking unprecedented steps to conserve water, improve habitat for fish and wildlife and, at the same time, generate carbon-free, renewable hydropower. And they're doing it without constructing large, new dams.

North Unit Irrigation District, located near Madras, is beginning the first stages of the largest streamflow restoration initiative in Oregon's history. During the winter of 2011 and 2012, with the support of the Deschutes River Conservancy and others, the district began the first phase of the project by lining five miles of its main irrigation canal with concrete. The newly lined canal conserved Deschutes River water that would otherwise have been lost to seepage. The conserved water will be used to irrigate productive farmlands that historically relied on water pumped from the Crooked River.

When this innovative project, which will include additional phases of canal lining and other conservation efforts, is complete, up to 220 cubic feet per second of water will be restored to the Crooked River north of Smith Rock State Park, benefiting salmon, steelhead and other fish and wildlife.

North Unit and the Central Oregon Irrigation districts are also working together with the state and private interests. With the support of Oregon's Department of Fish and Wildlife and its Water Resources Department, as well as private companies, construction is underway on the first of several smaller "in-canal" hydropower projects. These small hydropower projects, placed inside historic irrigation canals, will generate clean, renewable electricity by harnessing the normal flow of water through these canals. Hydropower projects offer the promise of a remarkable new synergy between irrigation deliveries and the generation of clean energy.

Five miles north of Bend, the Central Oregon Irrigation District recently completed the Juniper Ridge Hydropower Project and the Swalley Irrigation District completed the Ponderosa Hydropower Project. These new projects include nearly 7.5 miles of pipe, most of which was manufactured in Portland, now buried at the bottom of 100-year-old canals. During the six-month irrigation season, new turbines spin 24 hours per day, generating nearly 4.25 megawatts of electricity — or enough renewable energy to power 1,850 homes for an entire year. By placing pipe in the older dirt and rock canal to convey water to local farmers and ranchers, the districts are able to conserve water previously lost to seepage. In an average year, the projects will return nearly 58 cubic feet per second of water — or more than 20,000 acre-feet of water — to the Deschutes River. This is an incredible amount of water and will benefit salmon, steelhead and other fish and wildlife, as well as recreation values.

Many of Central Oregon's irrigation districts date back to the late 1800s. Their canals, built out of the black basalt that defines this region, convey life-sustaining water to farmlands, pastures, schools and parks. But the districts are now driving a change to responsibly manage their water resources for multiple benefits. Their conservation projects and fishery restoration activities are some of the most innovative measures underway in the West.

For Oregon's economy and environment, the results are stunning. These projects will strengthen agricultural productivity in one of our state's most important farming regions, generate renewable electricity and enhance conditions for salmon, steelhead, other fish and wildlife and improve recreation. These are real, meaningful accomplishments and illustrate the very best of collaborative conservation.

— *Steve Johnson is the general manager of the Central Oregon Irrigation District and the president of the Deschutes Basin Board of Control, which represents all seven major irrigation districts in Central Oregon.*

A MERE SHADOW OF ITS FORMER SELF A 40-year look back at the Upper Deschutes

By Bruce Bischof
(Written for the Deschutes River Conservancy)

In June 1971, I had the privilege of launching a canoe from the Sunriver Marina for a fly fishing and scenic float on the Upper Deschutes. The lush river was strikingly beautiful, awash with aquatic insects and rising trout. This experience led to an affinity with the Upper Deschutes now spanning 42 years.

In the 1970's and 80's, the Upper Deschutes was still considered one of the finest blue ribbon trout streams in the Western U.S. The 1973 April issue of Fly Fisherman Magazine featured an article depicting the unique attributes of the Upper Deschutes. The photojournalist describes in detail the vibrancy of the river, ripe with prolific caddis, may and salmon fly hatches showcasing an abundance of trout rising to dry flies, a lush riparian zone and significant stretches of gravel bottom.

Summarizing the extraordinary experience of the three day float, the author concludes the article with:

"We both expressed a silent thanks and prayer to the Gods of all outdoorsmen that there would always be rivers like the Upper Deschutes."

Sadly, the Upper Deschutes is not the same river today. Over time, the river has been slowly degraded to the point that silt and sediment have replaced gravel, mud flats have replaced riparian areas, and the synergy between aquatic insects, rising trout and ospreys no longer exists.

Having floated the Upper Deschutes numerous times each year since 1971, I have had the opportunity to observe firsthand the changes in the health of the river. I now see a river virtually devoid of any visible aquatic insects or rising trout. Although during peak summer flows, the river is beautiful by visual standards, it is virtually sterile by healthy stream standards.

Since the construction of the Wickiup Dam and reservoir in 1949, the river has been managed primarily for irrigation purposes. Historical records indicate, prior to the dams, the average natural stream flow ranged between 700 – 900 cubic feet per second (cfs). Today, the Wickiup Dam controlled flow regime ranges between 30 and 1800 cfs. In order to fill the reservoir for summer uses in dry years, winter flows are restricted to a low of 20 cfs, resulting a river channel exposed down to mud.

This low water flow, in great part was the primary cause of the recent fish kill. In order to sustain a healthy river and fishery, the State of Oregon recommends a minimum flow of 300 cfs, 90% more than is currently flowing in the Upper Deschutes. Conversely, the start of the irrigation season in April begins an unnatural rate of water release from 30 cfs to 1800 cfs or higher over the course of the irrigation season.

This large fluctuation in flow results in channel erosion, loss of healthy riparian areas, high turbidity levels, loss of fish spawning habitat, increased sediment and higher silt levels. To be fair, a number of other factors also add to the complexity of the problem including drought conditions, extreme snow packs, land development, wildfires, logging, and increased recreational use.

Fortunately, the Deschutes River Conservancy, comprised of board members and supporters representing the irrigation community, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, federal, state and local governmental agencies, conservation groups and recreational users, have banded together to collaboratively seek solutions to these complex issues despite differing interests. This collaborative effort has become a national model.

In my lifetime, unfortunately, I will not likely witness the restoration of the river to its former self, but my prayer to the Gods of all outdoorsmen is that my grandchildren and yours will someday see this national treasure as I did 40 years ago.

Bruce Bischof is a Deschutes River Conservancy Board Member at Large, a Former President of Oregon Trout and the Author of *Reflections of the Middle Fork of the Salmon River*. Reprinted with permission of Bruce Bischof and the Deschutes River Conservancy.

Who We Are!

The UDRC is a multi-issue, project-based nonprofit coalition representing a broad range of interests among its 26 member communities, Federal, State, County and other stakeholders.

Our UDRC's Twenty Year Vision Statement: *Communities and partners aware of the issues, engaged, collaborating and acting together to create and maintain a healthy, scenic and sustainable environment where everyone is able to live with their core values.*

UDRC's Mission Statement: To protect Upper Deschutes River Communities by

restoring and sustaining healthy fire-resistant forests, pure and abundant river flows and wildlife habitat.

UDRC's Primary Role: The Upper Deschutes River Coalition is the lead organization in its 69,000 acre Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) to catalyze and coordinate its stakeholder's, community neighbors, public, nonprofits and partners. For example, of primary importance is to first educate, and advocate, gather factual information and be the voice of reason in ongoing wildland fire, water rights, and native habitat issues.

Friends of the Coalition 2014 Contributions

Please support the Coalition's 2014 efforts in partnering with stakeholders to restore the Upper Deschutes River by joining The Friends of the Coalition.

[Donate to the UDRC Today](#)

- Lodgepole Pine \$100
- Cranebow Trout \$250
- Rainbow Trout \$500
- Brown Trout \$1,000
- Ponderosa Pine \$2,500
- Redband Steelhead for \$5,000
- Bull Elk \$10,000
- Another Amount \$_____

To Donate Click here: [Donate to the UDRC Today](#)

Gifts are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law.

Please make your check payable to "Upper Deschutes River Coalition"

Our Tax ID Number is 03-0557393

Appreciated Stock Gifts are Welcome!

For more information call 541-390-9798 or visit www.udrc.org

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Thank You!





