

How to Submit Your Comments

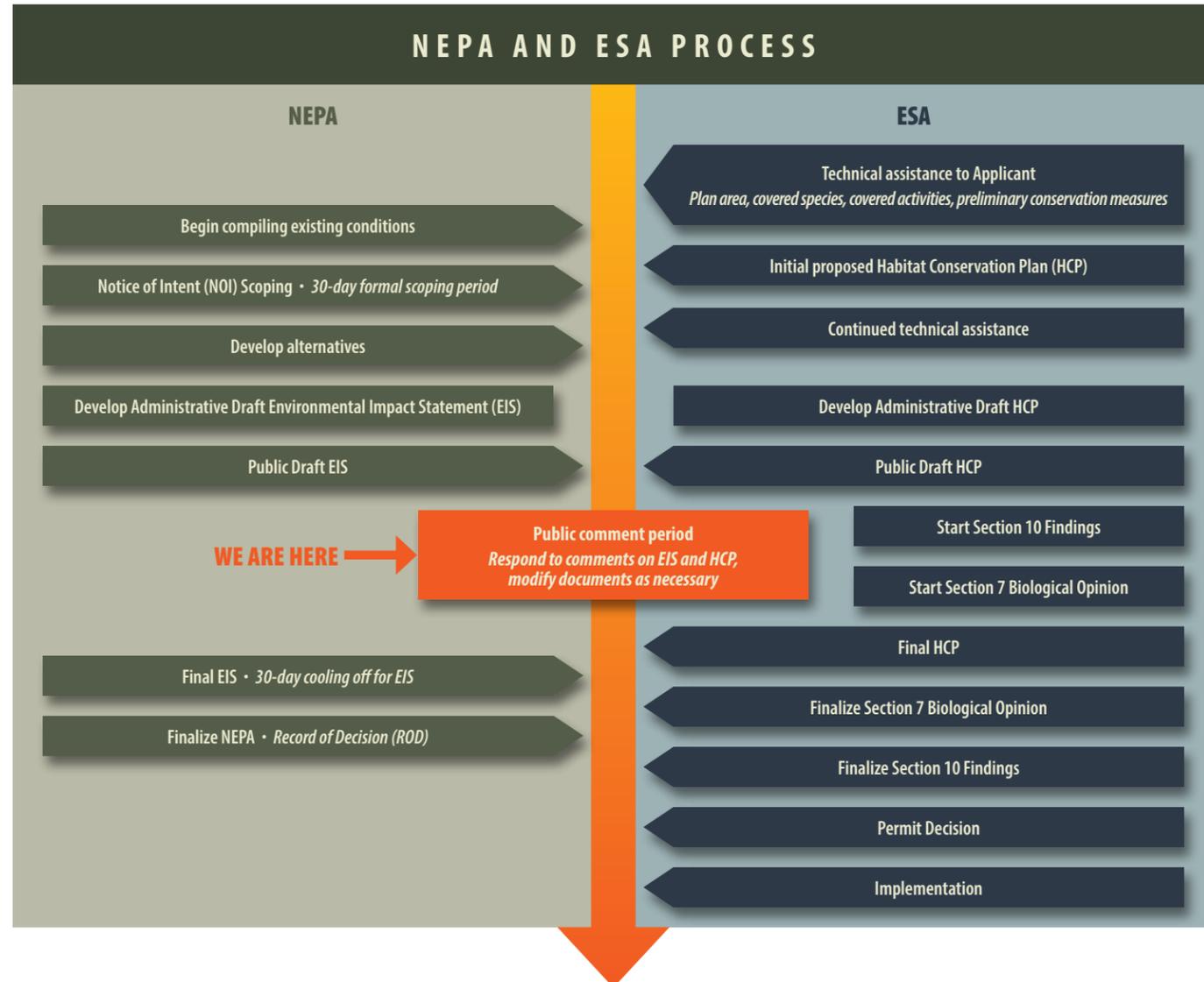
FWS is seeking comments on both the Draft HCP and Draft EIS. Please be clear to which document your comments apply. FWS will consider all comments received during the public comment period on the Draft HCP and Draft EIS. The Final EIS will include responses to substantive comments received on the Draft EIS. All comments must be submitted online, at the two public meetings, or in hard copy to the address below. **We will not accept email or faxes. We will post all comments to <http://www.regulations.gov>.**

- **Online:** Visit <https://www.regulations.gov>. Follow instructions for submitting comments on Docket No. FWS-R1-ES-2019-0091. Comments submitted online

must be received by 8:59 p.m. Pacific Time (11:59 p.m. Eastern Time) on **November 18, 2019**.

- **Public Meetings:** A computer will be available at the two public meetings on October 15 and 16, 2019, to allow attendees to submit comments online.
- **Hard Copy:** Submit by U.S. Mail or hand deliver to Public Comments Processing, Attn: Docket No. FWS-R1-ES-2019-0091; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 5275 Leesburg Pike, MS: JAO/1N; Falls Church, VA 22041-3803. Hard copy comments must be postmarked or received by **November 18, 2019**.

For More Information: Contact Bridget Moran at 541-383-7146, or by email at bridget_moran@fws.gov. To stay updated on the process, go to <https://www.fws.gov/Oregonfwo/articles.cfm?id=149489716>.



Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Deschutes Basin Habitat Conservation Plan



Header Photo: FWS

Background

- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), referred to collectively as the Services, are evaluating incidental take permit (ITP) applications under the authority of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), as amended.
- An ITP authorizes incidental take of a listed species. Incidental take occurs when otherwise-lawful activities take a listed species.
- The ITP applicants are the Deschutes Basin Board of Control's (DBBC) eight member irrigation districts—Arnold, Central Oregon, Lone Pine, North Unit, Ochoco, Swalley, Three Sisters, and Tumalo—and the City of Prineville.
- The applicants submitted applications for 30-year ITPs to FWS for Oregon spotted frog and bull trout and to NMFS for steelhead trout, Chinook salmon, and sockeye salmon—the covered species.
- If granted, the ITPs would authorize take of the covered species resulting from the covered activities: the storage, release, diversion, and return of irrigation water by the irrigation districts and groundwater withdrawals, effluent discharges, and surface water diversions by the City of Prineville.
- The applicants prepared the Deschutes Basin Habitat Conservation Plan (Deschutes Basin HCP) to address incidental take of the covered species likely to be caused by the covered activities.

What are HCPs?

Habitat conservation plans (HCPs) are planning documents required as part of an application for an ITP. They describe the anticipated effects of the proposed taking, how those impacts will be minimized or mitigated, and how the HCP is to be funded. HCPs can apply to both listed and non-listed species, including those that are candidates or have been proposed for listing. Conserving species before they are in danger of extinction, or are likely to become so, can provide early benefits and possibly prevent the need for listing.

What is NEPA?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies, including FWS, to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) that considers the following factors when a proposed action has the potential to result in significant impacts:

- Input from public, agency, tribal, and other affected entities
- A reasonable range of alternatives
- Direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts on the human environment

The Draft EIS considers potential impacts resulting from issuance of the ITPs, as well as the effects of alternatives, including a no-action alternative, on the human environment.



Photo: FWS

Alternatives

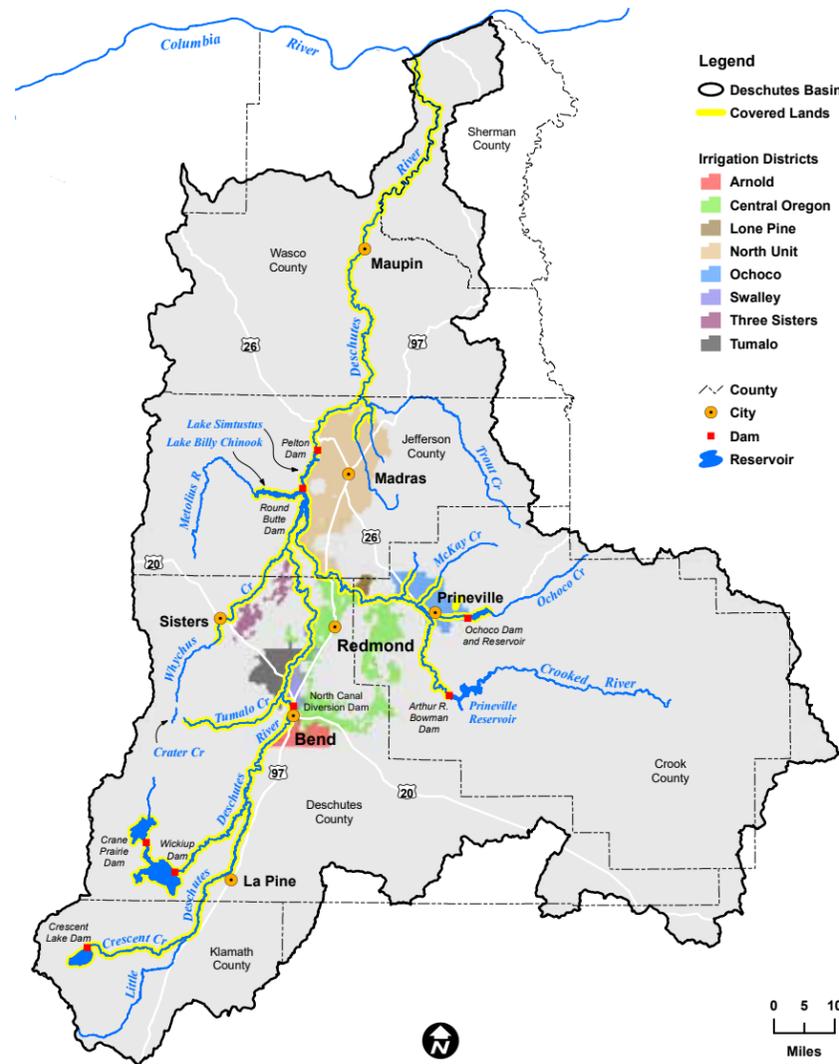
The Draft EIS analyzes four alternatives in detail:

- Alternative 1—No Action
- Alternative 2—Proposed Action (Draft Deschutes Basin HCP)
- Alternative 3—Enhanced Variable Streamflows
- Alternative 4—Enhanced and Accelerated Variable Streamflows

Under Alternative 1, the no-action alternative, no ITPs would be issued. The analysis of the no-action alternative assumes the following:

- Existing water management operations as of the date of the NEPA Notice of Intent (July 21, 2017)
- Ongoing programs adopted before or during the early stages of development of the EIS
- Relevant projects that were permitted, constructed, or had completed environmental review

The table to the right compares key components of Alternative 2 (Draft Deschutes Basin HCP), Alternative 3, and Alternative 4.



Resource Impacts Considered in the EIS

The covered activities consist mainly of storage, release, and diversion of water, and the conservation strategy consists mainly of modifications to these activities. Therefore, the EIS analysis focuses on resources that would be affected by these activities and changes to these activities.

- Surface water
- Groundwater
- Water storage and supply
- Water quality
- Biological resources
- Land use and agricultural resources
- Recreation
- Aesthetics
- Cultural resources
- Tribal resources
- Socioeconomics and environmental justice

Comparison of Key Components of Alternatives 2, 3, and 4			
Component	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Covered species	<p>Covered species are those species for which the applicants are seeking incidental take coverage (Draft Deschutes HCP Chapter 3). They include the following.</p> <p>Three species listed as threatened under ESA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oregon spotted frog (<i>Rana pretiosa</i>) • Middle Columbia River steelhead trout (<i>Oncorhynchus mykiss</i>) • Bull trout (<i>Salvelinus confluentus</i>) <p>Two nonlisted species:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle Columbia River spring Chinook salmon (<i>O. tshawytscha</i>) • Sockeye salmon (<i>O. nerka</i>) 		
Covered lands and waters	<p>The covered lands and waters are the areas where the covered species are present and the covered activities have effects. Specifically, these include the aquatic, wetland, riparian, and floodplain habitats associated with Crane Prairie, Wickiup, Ochoco, and Crescent Lake Reservoirs and the Deschutes River, Crescent Creek, Little Deschutes River, Tumalo Creek, Whychus Creek, Crooked River, Ochoco and McKay Creeks, and several other small tributaries (Draft Deschutes HCP Chapter 3).</p>		
Covered activities and facilities	<p>Covered activities are the activities with the potential to result in take of covered species for which the applicants are applying for incidental take coverage. These include the storage, release, diversion, and return of irrigation water by the DBBC member districts and groundwater withdrawals, effluent discharges, and surface water diversions by the City of Prineville (Draft Deschutes HCP Chapter 3). The covered facilities include 4 dams and reservoirs and 25 water supply diversion structures, pumps, and intakes.</p>		
Permit term	30 years	30 years	20 years
Conservation Strategy: a series of conservation measures implemented to reduce and offset the adverse effects of covered activities on the covered species (Draft Deschutes HCP Chapter 6)			
Deschutes River	Increases fall and winter Deschutes River flows based on schedule of flow increases (see table below)	Accelerates increases of fall and winter Deschutes River flows (see table below)	Further accelerates increases of fall and winter Deschutes River flows (see table below)
Crooked River	Supplements releases of uncontracted storage from Prineville Reservoir	Same as Alternative 2, but also protects the releases of uncontracted Prineville Reservoir storage to Lake Billy Chinook for fish and wildlife	Same as Alternative 3 but increases releases of uncontracted Prineville Reservoir storage to 80 cfs
Conservation Fund	Provides for Crooked River and Whychus Creek Conservation Funds	Same as Alternative 2, but also includes Upper Deschutes Basin Conservation Fund	Same as Alternative 3
Other measures	Provides other conservation measures to modify operation and maintenance of water facilities to enhance flows on the Deschutes River, Crescent Creek, Little Deschutes River, Whychus Creek, Crooked River, Ochoco Creek, and McKay Creek.		

Minimum Fall/Winter Flow Releases (cubic feet per second) from Wickiup Reservoir				
Years	No Action	Proposed Action	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
1-5	100	100	200	300
6-10	100	200	300	400-600 ^a
11-15	100	300	400-500 ^a	400-600 ^a
16-20	100	300	400-500 ^a	400-600 ^a
21-30	100	400 ^a	400-500 ^a	

^a Flow levels at full implementation