

Oregon
Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program
John Day Basin Habitat Priorities

Biological Description

The John Day River is the second longest free-flowing stream in the United States, running nearly 300 hundred miles. The country is characterized by steep basalt canyon walls, juniper, and sagebrush dotted hills, and mixed ponderosa pine forest. This is one of the most culturally rich river corridors in the state with human presence in the system spanning more than 10,000 years. Much of the basin is relatively healthy, however focal points for restoration projects include systematically addressing passage barriers and stream reaches that have been degraded. Efforts in these reaches will provide suitable habitat for wild fish to thrive and recover.

The John Day has historically diverse fish runs of Steelhead and is famous for Columbia River chinook salmon which reached over 100lbs. The system has one of the last all-wild runs of anadromous fish east of the Cascade Mountains. It has no major dams and supports one of the largest and most viable runs of wild steelhead in the Northwest. Bulltrout , redband trout, and westslope cutthroat trout are also important fish resources on the John Day. This river is a particularly important resource for the recovery of wild salmon runs since it has never had any hatchery operations.

Key Resource Summary

Focus Habitats:

Riparian and Wetland Restoration
Fish Passage

In-Stream Habitat

Listed and Species of Concern Fish
Migratory birds

Focus species: listed bull trout and steelhead, species of concern redband trout, Pacific lamprey, westslope cutthroat trout, Chinook salmon, Columbia spotted frog, and riparian dependent migratory birds and at-risk amphibians and reptiles.

Important Factors

The existing Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) program in the John Day basin is part of a well-developed, locally led restoration initiative that incorporates numerous private landowners annually as well as effective collaborations by local conservation districts and other agencies. PFW staff are involved with broad stakeholder groups including locally led watershed councils, non-profit conservation groups, SWCD's, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), private landowners, as well as other federal agencies. The focus of our efforts within the John Day River Basin are to restore instream habitat, provide fish passage, reduce entrainment in irrigation ditches, improve wetland and riparian habitats, and use a landscape scale approach to enhance watershed health. Our efforts in this area yield multiple high quality restoration projects each year with high resource benefits and excellent cost share value.