

Oregon

Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program

Wallowa Mountains Region Habitat Priorities

Biological Description

Surrounding the Wallowa Mountains of northeast Oregon are several river valleys and diverse habitats that support important fisheries, wetlands and a host of focus species. The Grande Ronde River and its largest tributary, the Wallowa River, support bull trout, Chinook salmon and steelhead, as well as bald eagles and extensive wetlands. Adjacent to the Wallowa River Valley is Zumwalt Prairie, one of the largest remaining native grasslands in the Pacific Northwest and an area hosting more than a dozen rare plant and animal species, including Spalding's catchfly and Columbian sharp-tailed grouse. The Powder River Valley and Pine Creek on the south side of the Wallowa Mountains support bull trout, wetlands, rare plants, and sagebrush steppe uplands occupied by Greater sage grouse. Much of this area is private ranchland with irrigated agriculture along the river valleys. It is the historic home of the Nez Perce Tribe and the tribe is actively involved in restoring fisheries in this area. A diverse and proactive group of stakeholders is working in this area to restore riparian and upland habitats and protect fish and wildlife in a fashion that sustains and compliments their rural communities.

Key Resource Summary

Focus Habitats:

Riparian and Wetland Habitat Restoration
In-Stream Habitat and Fish Passage

Native Bunchgrass Prairie
Sagebrush Steppe

Focus Species:

Federally listed fish – bull trout, Chinook salmon, and steelhead;
Federally listed plants – Howell's spectacular thelypody and Spalding's catchfly;
Candidate species & species of concern – Columbia spotted frog, Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, greater sage grouse, and redband trout.

Important Factors

There are several well established locally-led groups in the Wallowa Mountains area that work actively with private landowners to plan and implement habitat restoration projects. Through our Partners for Fish and Wildlife program and other funding sources such as the Private Stewardship Grant Program, the La Grande Field Office has established partnerships with these stakeholder groups and landowners to provide technical assistance and funding. We are currently working with numerous private landowners, local watershed councils, non-profit conservation groups, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, as well as other federal agencies. The focus of our efforts within the Wallowa Mountains Focus Area are to restore instream habitat, provide fish passage and screening, restore key habitats that support rare plants and animals, and facilitate cooperative conservation with local landowners. Success in our initial efforts in this area have increased our standing among local stakeholders and opened the door to our participation in an increased number of restoration and habitat improvement opportunities. These projects have high resource benefits and typically involve a wide range of cost-sharing partners.