

DESCHUTES BASIN HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN COMPLETE

On December 31, 2020, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) announced the completion of the Deschutes River Basin Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and the issuance of *incidental take permits* specific to Bull Trout and the Oregon Spotted Frog.

The HCP is a collaborative strategy to share water resources in the Deschutes Basin, covering irrigation and related water management operations while enhancing fish and wildlife habitat. The eight DBBC irrigation districts (Districts) and the City of Prineville all signed agreements with USFWS that carries a term of 30 years and protects the Districts and City from ESA prosecution.

In return, the Districts and City agreed to minimize and mitigate impacts to the ESA listed species to the maximum extent practicable. The executed agreement details the 21 measures agreed upon. These measures include active water management of flows in the Deschutes River and reservoir storage levels at Wickup, Crane Prairie and Crescent Lake during the year, along with increased funding for environmental conservation projects, in-stream leasing programs, support for on-farm water conservation and maintenance of fish screens to better align the water management operations with the life-history needs of the covered species.

This effort involved twelve years of hard work and collaboration among a large group of diverse stakeholders - the Districts, City, Tribes, recreationists, and federal and state agencies. The HCP achieved a viable set of solutions that will provide long-term water certainty and protect wildlife in the Deschutes Basin.

A similar HCP with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is anticipated to be released in early 2022 with Incidental Take Permits issued to cover Steelhead Trout.

Related web links:

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<https://medium.com/usfwspacificnw/balancing-water-the-first-year-implementing-the-deschutes-habitat-conservation-plan-3da30e3642cb>