



DESCHUTES RIVER CONSERVANCY

Deschutes River Conservancy Comments on Recommendations to Amend the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's *Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program*

Submitted on June 10, 2008 by
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The Deschutes River Conservancy (DRC) welcomes the opportunity to submit comments on the recommendations provided by the Columbia Basin Water Transaction Program (CBWTP) and the Deschutes Basin Board of Control (DBBC). The DRC is a federally authorized, consensus-based organization with a board of directors comprised of the key public and private stakeholders interested in restoring water quality and quantity in the Deschutes Basin. Also, the DRC is a qualified local entity (QLE) of the CBWTP and one of the largest private implementers of watershed restoration projects in the Columbia Basin.

In the Deschutes Basin, the DRC strongly recommends that the Council maintains its investments in water acquisitions through the CBWTP and complements this work with new investments in water conservation projects proposed by nearly all of the irrigation districts in Central Oregon. The DRC supports the recently negotiated tribal MOAs, but recognizes that these landmark agreements are only a beginning. There is a substantial number of irrigation district projects not included in the MOAs that are critical to the success of the overall restoration efforts in the basin.

The CBWTP has contributed greatly to the success of watershed restoration in the Deschutes Basin. As you heard in November from Jared Hardner, the independent evaluator of CBWTP, the program is working well and is an effective model for water acquisitions throughout the Columbia Basin. The DRC suggests that the Council recognize this success, follow Hardner's recommendations to make this an even stronger program, and increase funding to the CBWTP in the 2010-2012 funding cycle.

Another important step for the Council and BPA to take is the explicit recognition of the entirety of the Deschutes Basin as an anadromous subbasin. The reintroduction of Mid Columbia Steelhead is underway and these fish are now present in the upper Deschutes Basin for the first time in forty years. Furthermore, NOAA's salmon recovery plan specifically highlights the importance of restoration of both westside and eastside tributaries throughout the Deschutes Basin.

The reintroduction of salmonids in the upper basin has galvanized the broadest and strongest coalitions and partnerships found anywhere in the Northwest, an opportunity that should not be underestimated nor overlooked. Where else in the Columbia Basin do the Council and BPA have such a ripe opportunity to partner with Tribes, Federal and

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State agencies, local governments (including irrigation districts and soil & water conservation districts, and the private sector) to conduct integrated habitat restoration activities on a massive scale – an initiative that will certainly push Mid Columbia steelhead closer to recovery if not accomplish that goal altogether.

In the 2010-2012 funding cycle, the DRC hopes that the Council and BPA will direct more funding to the Deschutes and to take advantage of the rare opportunity to get high leverage from its investment. Unlike many areas in the Columbia Basin where BPA is looked to as the dominant funder of projects, the Deschutes only needs a 25-30% BPA investment as match to state, federal, and local investment.

Most of this investment is needed to finance large-scale water conservation in irrigation districts. The DBBC has developed and is refining a water conservation plan that will describe the priorities for this funding. Over the next decade these projects can restore 200 cfs of streamflow to Central Oregon's rivers and streams while increasing the reliability of water deliveries to farmers.

In addition to fish restoration, the BPA ratepayers in the Deschutes Basin also care about energy conservation and hydroelectric power generation. The same projects that will conserve water for fish will also conserve large amounts of energy by pressurizing the water deliveries and reducing or eliminating the pumping requirements on farms. A few of the irrigation district canal piping projects even have the potential to produce significant amounts of hydroelectric power.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment of the recommendations to amend the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's *Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program*. We look forward to our continued work with you to restore stream flows and improve water quality in the Deschutes River Basin.