Crooked River

Overview

In partnership with the City of Prineville (City), ODOT has established a 10-acre wetland mitigation bank bordering the Crooked River that will serve to restore riparian corridors, reconnect isolated portions of floodplain and support reintroduction of sensitive species. The Crooked River Mitigation Bank (CRMB) will be used to mitigate for unavoidable wetland impacts resulting from highway development projects within the Deschutes Basin. Accelerated population growth rates within the Deschutes Basin have resulted in a projected increase of highway development projects, furthering the need for wetland mitigation.

In 2003, the City set aside 30 acres of land, stretching along 2 miles of riverbank, expressly for the purpose of wetland and riparian restoration. The CRMB has been established within this restoration area. Historically, the land was used for grazing and gravel extraction, causing high levels of degradation and land alteration. Irrigation practices and the presence of cattle adversely affected land and water quality and disrupted the functionality of the river channel and floodplains. Alteration of the river channel and removal of vegetation occurred in the 1960s following a major flood, but resulted in increased erosion and loss of riparian recruitment. In this two-stage enhancement project, the uplands were excavated to expose groundwater and connect the project area to pre-existing wetlands. The bank's low-lying position, immediately adjacent to the Crooked River, lends itself to successful establishment of wetland hydrology.

The area surrounding the bank is known to provide essential food, cover, and nesting sites to several state sensitive species and federally threatened species including redband trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), Pacific lamprey (*Lampetra tridentata*), western toad (*Bufo boreas*), Oregon spotted frog (*Rana pretiosa*), bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*), and long-eared myotis (*Myotis evotis*). Rehabilitation of emergent wetlands in the CRMB will also aid the process of reintroducing native steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) which, due to a new fish passage program, will have access to the Crooked River for the first time since the construction of downstream dams in 1964. The bank will enhance water quality and stabilize water temperatures to create suitable fish habitat.