

Hood River Basin

Description

The Hood River Basin is one of the smallest drainages in Oregon, covering just 482 Square miles or 1% of the state's land area. Located in the transitional zone between the influence of the Pacific Ocean and the drier continental climate of Eastern Oregon, it is also one of the most ecologically diverse. Land use in the basin is divided roughly equally between agricultural and forest uses, with about 25% of the basin devoted to cropland. Forested, mountainous terrain and the Hood River Valley dominate the western side of the basin, while range and dryland farming dominate the east. Over 60% of the basin is in private ownership.

Hood River and Fifteenmile Creek drain directly from glaciers on Mt. Hood and are the primary Oregon waterways entering the Columbia River Gorge. Many streams in the western portion of the basin maintain good flows throughout the summer months, while on the east side flows tend to be more erratic, with streams running quite low by late summer. Anadromous fish species present in the basin include winter and summer steelhead, spring and fall chinook salmon, coho and a remnant run of sea-run cutthroat. Pacific lamprey are present in the lower river. Resident species include rainbow, cutthroat, bull and a small distribution of brook trout.

The Hood River Watershed Action Plan identifies as a top priority the prevention of damage or loss of stream habitat already in good condition, and supports incentive-based, voluntary actions to protect and restore wetlands, riparian areas and other important or unique habitats. The plan also notes that undeveloped valley bottom and lower elevation lands are limited. Other key conservation issues in the basin include fish passage, water quality, and flow restoration.

According to the draft Hood River Subbasin Planning Summary (2000) prepared for the Northwest Power Planning Council, little land is protected or managed specifically for wildlife in the basin. Half the remaining winter range for deer and elk is on private land, and development has displaced low-elevation conifer habitat for birds and small mammals. In many areas, riparian vegetation is the last stronghold of native plant form and function.

Priority attributes for OWEB acquisition projects reflect the small size of the Hood Basin, the extent of development in the Hood River Valley, and the relative lack of occurrences of species of concern. Most of the priority ecological systems are wetland types. Remaining distribution of most types is fragmented in the basin, so project viability will be an important consideration.

Priority Ecological Systems

Big sagebrush steppe
Deciduous swamp

Basin Ecological Priorities
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Foothill and lower montane riparian woodland
Freshwater emergent marsh
Hardpan vernal pool
Inland dune
Lowland riparian woodland and shrubland
Montane riparian forest and shrubland
Oak woodland
Palouse prairie grassland
Ponderosa pine woodland
Semi-desert shrub steppe

Rare or At-Risk Plant Communities

Annual hairgrass - branched popcorn flower vernal pool
Bitterbrush / Idaho fescue - (bluebunch wheatgrass)
Bitterbrush / needle-and-thread
Black cottonwood / black hawthorn
Black cottonwood / pacific willow riparian
Black hawthorn - woods rose
Bluebunch wheatgrass - Sandberg bluegrass Palouse
Chokecherry
Coyote willow - Pacific willow
Idaho fescue - (houndstongue hawkweed)
Inland shrub dunes
Mountain alder - western birch
Needle-leaf navaretia - Kellogg knotweed vernal pool
Ponderosa pine - Oregon white oak / arrowleaf balsamroot
Slender-branched popcorn-flower - purslane speedwell vernal pool
White oak / blue wildrye
White oak / bluebunch wheatgrass
White oak / poison oak / blue wildrye

Hood Basin – Priority Species

<i>Fish</i>	<i>Birds</i>	<i>Mammals</i>	<i>Amphibians and Reptiles</i>	<i>Invertebrates</i>	<i>Plants</i>
Bull Trout Chinook Salmon (Summer & Fall Runs) Coastal Cutthroat Trout Coho Salmon Pacific Lamprey Steelhead – (Lower Columbia Winter & Summer Run) Steelhead (Middle Columbia Winter Run)	Ash-Throated Flycatcher Lewis’ Woodpecker Nashville Warbler Peregrine Falcon	Pallid Bat Townsend’s Big-Eared Bat Western Gray Squirrel	Red-Legged Frog Western Toad	<i>Monadenia fidelis minor</i> (Dalles Sideband) <i>Oreohelix variabilis variabilis</i> (Dalles Mountainsnail) <i>Vespericola columbianus</i> <i>depressa</i> (Columbia Gorge Hesperian)	<i>Artemisia campestris</i> var. <i>wormsioldii</i> (Northern Wormwood) <i>Meconella oregana</i> (White Meconella) <i>Ranunculus reconditus</i> (Dalles Mt. Buttercup)