

FCRPS BiOp Implementation

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Location

Grand Ronde River, Oregon

Biological Objective

Increase spawning and rearing habitat for listed and non-listed fish

Species

- Snake River spring/summer Chinook
- Snake River Steelhead
- Bull Trout

Partners

- U.S. Forest Service
- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reserve
- Grand Ronde Model Watershed
- Bonneville Power Administration

References

- Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS) 2008 Biological Opinion
- Draft Snake River Salmon & Steelhead Recovery Plan

FCRPS RPA #34

For more information:
www.salmonrecovery.gov

Upper Grande Ronde River Mine Tailings Project

The Grande Ronde River of Northeast Oregon traverses forest and grazing lands eventually draining into the Snake River. Scenic and accessible, this river is a popular destination for hunting, fishing, rafting and hiking enticing not only visitors but many local residents to recreate along this river.

Besides being a recreation hotspot, it is also biologically important to anadromous fish populations. The river provides habitat for Snake River spring/summer Chinook, steelhead, and bull trout all of which are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and for redband trout which is listed as a sensitive species. Past land-use activities such as mining and timber harvest have resulted in a simplified habitat with little habitat complexity for aquatic species, in particular the endangered and sensitive fish species.



Overhead view of the mine tailings restricting the floodplain.

Floodplain Rehabilitation



The purpose of Upper Grande Ronde Mine Tailings project is to restore the form and function of aquatic and riparian habitat in order to improve habitat for threatened fish species while providing recreation opportunities and mining access for claimants. Project objectives are to:

- Improve floodplain connectivity
- Improve water capture, storage, and safe release within the floodplain
- Increase quantity and quality of pools
- Increase fish cover and spawning gravel recruitment
- Improve habitat complexity, forage availability, stream shading
- Increase the number of large and medium pieces of large woody structure in streams

The complex nature of this project required a collaborative partnership between the U.S. Forest Service, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reserve (CTUIR), Grande Ronde Model Watershed (GRMW) and the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA). In addition to their planning, implementation and monitoring efforts, CTUIR, BPA and the Forest Service provide the funding support for this project.

This project has been divided into two phases.

Phase One: July 1 through August 11, 2009. Removal of approximately 50,000 yards of mine tailings along 2.5 miles of the Upper Grande Ronde River.

Phase Two: October 2009 through 2011. In October 2009 the area will be seeded and mulched. Large wood structure additions are to be installed during the instream work window July 1- 31st in 2010. The stockpiles and floodplain will be planted with native vegetation (estimate 5,000 conifers and 5,000 deciduous shrub species) during 2010 and 2011.

Project Area History

In the early 19th century, the river valley was inhabited by Nez Perce, Umatilla, Walla Walla and Cayuse tribes. Euro-American settlement began in the late 1860s. At this time, farms and ranches were established near the river. Irrigated and non-irrigated agriculture, logging and mining also began around this time. Located in an upper tributary, Camp Carson was established as a mining camp. In the 1940s, dredge mining began along the river. Dredge mining created tailing piles that covered the valley floor and in places piled up to 8 feet high. These tailings simplified the river channel, disconnecting the river from its natural floodplain. Reshaping of the river by timber harvest, grazing, mining, irrigation and channel engineering in the river valley continued through the 1970s. Today there are still a number of active mining claims in the area.

For more information:
www.salmonrecovery.gov