



NEWS RELEASE

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Recovery plan for mid-Columbia steelhead released

SALEM, Ore. -- The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has released its plan for the conservation and recovery of Oregon's native steelhead populations in the mid-Columbia River and is seeking public comment.

Recovery plans are a federal requirement for all species listed under the Endangered Species Act. Steelhead in the mid-Columbia River were listed as threatened in 1999. Conservation plans are developed under the State of Oregon's Native Fish Conservation Policy. The Oregon Mid-Columbia Steelhead Plan serves a dual purpose as both a component of a broader federal recovery plan and as a complete state conservation plan.

"We've had a lot of success in Oregon bringing together private and public partners to work on this plan and to implement actions to enhance and restore fish populations and their habitats," said Rich Carmichael, ODFW Recovery Planning Coordinator for the Interior Columbia River Basin. "This plan builds on a lot of work that's already underway by many entities and individuals to help enhance fish populations."

According to Carmichael the Plan serves as a roadmap for conservation and recovery of listed steelhead populations in the Fifteenmile, Deschutes, John Day, Umatilla and Walla Walla subbasins. The Plan identifies goals for ESA delisting as well as an outline for rebuilding population levels well above delisting to provide significant ecological, social, cultural and economic benefits.

Key elements of the plan include identifying the current population status, major limiting factors and threats, management actions to address all threats, and an implementation plan and a monitoring program to assess success and make adaptive changes. The plan will help guide the actions of state, federal, and tribal agencies, as well as watershed councils, local governments, non-governmental organizations and landowners.

The Plan is a product of an extensive collaborative effort. Policy guidance for the plan development was provided by the Mid-Columbia Steelhead Sounding Board, whose members represent a diverse set of constituents, including many of those whose actions will be guided by the Plan.

The Oregon Mid-Columbia Steelhead Plan is the first conservation and recovery plan to be developed in Oregon to address ESA-listed steelhead or salmon. Other plans are currently under development.

The Oregon Mid-Columbia Steelhead Plan is being released at the same time that NOAA Fisheries Service is publishing its bi-state plan for recovery of mid-Columbia steelhead populations in both Oregon and Washington. The NOAA plan includes the Oregon plan as well as similar plans for Washington's steelhead populations in the Klickitat, Yakima and Walla Walla river systems. The bi-state recovery plan can be viewed at www.nwr.noaa.gov, which also details how to submit comments to NOAA during its public comment period which ends Dec. 23, 2008.

The proposed Oregon Mid-Columbia Steelhead Plan is available at <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/esa/mid-columbia/>. The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission will be considering the Plan at its Nov. 14, 2008 meeting in Salem. Public comment will be taken at the meeting. Written comments may be submitted to odfw.commission@state.or.us prior to the meeting. Written comments received by ODFW prior to or at the Commission meeting will be shared with NOAA if relevant to the bi-state recovery plan.

ODFW is planning public meetings and other opportunities for input in the months ahead. These activities will be posted at <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/esa/mid-columbia/> as details become final.

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