



Oregon Administrative Rules  
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Draft Rules for Implementing the Oregon Mid-Columbia Steelhead Plan

635-500-6500

Conservation and Recovery Plan for Oregon Steelhead Populations in the Middle Columbia River Steelhead Distinct Population Segment

(1) Policy. The Conservation and Recovery Plan for Oregon Steelhead Populations in the Middle Columbia River Steelhead Distinct Population Segment (Oregon Mid-C Steelhead Plan) (State of Oregon 2010, available at Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife offices) implements the State's strategy for protecting and enhancing Oregon populations of steelhead in the Middle Columbia, in cooperation with other federal and local partners, including Oregon Plan natural resource agencies and NOAA Fisheries. This rule describes the Commission's contribution toward this collective effort and directs the Department's implementation of the Oregon Mid-C Steelhead Plan. The Oregon Mid-C Steelhead Plan is based on the following general premises: first, that habitat management and improvement is the key to protecting and enhancing Mid-C steelhead; second, that much of the most important steelhead habitat is on private land; third, that habitat improvement on private land is most likely to occur through incentive-based cooperative partnerships with landowners; and fourth, that the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds provides the best vehicle for securing these partnerships and implementing habitat improvements. This rule describes the Department's role in implementing the Oregon Mid-C Steelhead Plan consistent with the Department's statutory authorities and the Native Fish Conservation Policy (OAR 635-007-0502 thru 635-007-0505). The rule is not intended to be a rigid recipe but rather to identify the range of opportunities the Department should pursue and how the effectiveness of those opportunities should be evaluated, following the template first established in the Native Fish Conservation Policy.

(2) Description of Species Management Unit and Populations. The Species Management Unit (SMU) for Oregon Mid-C steelhead is the Oregon portion of the Middle Columbia Distinct Population Segment (DPS) that is comprised of component major population groups (MPGs) and independent populations, as described by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Interior Columbia Technical Recovery Team (ICTRT) reported in ICTRT in 2003 and 2005. The Department adopts the definitions of steelhead populations proposed by the NOAA ICTRT. These include all significant Oregon streams flowing directly into the Columbia River from, and inclusive of, Fifteenmile Creek east to, and inclusive of, the Walla Walla River. To avoid confusion and because the SMU is the same as the federal DPS designation, the term DPS will be used to designate the SMU for Oregon Mid-C steelhead.

(3) Desired Status. The desired status goal for Oregon populations of Mid-C steelhead is two-tiered such that:

(a) Initial improvements in steelhead survival from actions implemented for habitat, hydrosystem and hatcheries so that:

(A) The DPS-level criteria, based on the Viability Criteria for Application to Interior Columbia Basin Salmonid ESUs as described by the NOAA ICTRT in 2007, are met for long-term persistence of the DPS; and

(B) Those independent populations identified in the MPG Recovery Scenarios in Section 5 of the plan as needing to be viable achieve the level classified as viable, based on the Viability Criteria for Application to Interior Columbia Basin Salmonid ESUs, as described by the NOAA ICTRT in 2007.

(b) Eventual improvements in steelhead survival from management actions provide for all independent populations to be sufficiently abundant, productive, and diverse (in terms of life histories and geographic distribution) so that they provide significant ecological, social, cultural, and economic benefits.

(c) This broad sense recovery goal for the DPS shall be achieved when all Oregon independent Mid-C steelhead populations pass all of the measurable criteria for highly viable and reintroduction efforts are underway for extirpated populations.

(d) The seven measurable criteria for desired status of Oregon Mid-C steelhead independent populations are:

(A) Abundance;

(B) Productivity;

(C) Spawning distribution;

(D) Life history, phenotypic and genotypic variation expression;

(E) Natural spawner composition;

(F) Habitat occupancy; and



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**(G) Habitat integrity and selective mortality.**

**(e) The above measurable criteria are defined in Section 5 of the Oregon Mid-C Steelhead Plan. While criteria for survival rate to each critical life history stage can not yet be developed with the available information and monitoring, staff shall establish such criteria for these biological attributes when adequate information and monitoring is available.**

**(4) Current Status. The current status of the Oregon Mid-C steelhead DPS at the time of the adoption of this rule is described in Section 6 of the Oregon Mid-C Steelhead Plan. This assessment describes the biological attributes, criteria and metrics used to assess the status of the DPS. Those biological attributes, criteria, and metrics are adopted by reference into this rule. The Department shall update current status periodically consistent with timelines described in Section 12 of the Oregon Mid-C Steelhead Plan, Implementation and Adaptive Management, but these updates do not require rule modification of current status, but rather will serve as a measurement of progress toward desired status.**

**(5) Primary Limiting Factors.**

**(a) Numerous factors contribute to the gap between current and desired status of populations comprising the Oregon Mid-C Steelhead DPS. Marine survival of steelhead associated with ocean conditions is the largest single factor regulating steelhead productivity and abundance. Marine survival is not considered a primary limiting factor for steelhead because management has little influence on marine survival.**

**(b) The factors generally causing the gap between current and desired status for the Oregon Mid-C Steelhead DPS that can be managed are:**

**(A) Impaired mainstem Columbia River and tributary fish passage;**

**(B) Stream habitat complexity including riparian condition;**

**(C) Water quality;**

**(D) Water quantity;**

**(E) Altered sediment routing;**

**(F) Blocked access to historical habitat;**

**(G) Hatchery impacts; and**

**(H) Predation.**

**(c) Primary and secondary limiting factors are identified for each population within the Oregon portion of the DPS in Section 8 of the Oregon Mid-C Steelhead Plan. Staff will continue to help revise and identify new management actions addressing these factors to aid in reaching desired status. Staff may analyze the limiting factors at a finer, more localized scale when selecting or prioritizing management actions for specific areas. These analyses may find primary and secondary factors different at a local scale than what was found at the DPS or population scale.**

**(6) Management Strategies. Staff shall consider and attempt to implement these management strategies designed for the DPS as a whole, and for constituent populations as applicable, as mechanisms to reach the desired status.**

**(a) Short-term Strategies (1 to 5 years):**

**(A) Provide technical support to local watershed groups to inform them of the primary and secondary limiting factors at local scales within populations.**

**(B) Educate and inform watershed groups and co-managers of the highest priority tributary management actions. Facilitate implementation of the highest priority tributary habitat actions.**

**(C) Continue implementing the Reintroduction and Conservation Plan for Anadromous Fish in the Upper Deschutes River.**

**(D) Facilitate the implementation of the adaptive management strategy and framework identified in Section 12 of the Oregon Mid-C Steelhead Plan.**

**(E) Implement actions to reduce the abundance of stray hatchery origin steelhead in the Deschutes River populations.**

**(F) Continue to support improvement in flow and passage conditions in mainstem Columbia River hydrosystem operations.**

**(b) Additional Long-term Strategies (1 to 25 years):**

**(A) Manage hatchery steelhead programs in a manner that will contribute to fisheries and attainment of the desired status goal.**

**(B) Continue to manage for low impact recreational and commercial fisheries to manage harvest impacts to naturally produced steelhead consistent with the US vs OR Columbia River Management Agreement.**



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- (C) Provide monitoring data and conduct analyses for applicable annual and periodic reviews to assess action effectiveness and support the desired status goal for the Oregon Mid-C Steelhead DPS.
- (D) Provide technical support to, and coordinate with, federal, state and local agencies and groups to protect existing high quality steelhead habitat.
- (E) Provide technical support to, and coordinate with, federal, state and local agencies and groups to create additional high quality steelhead habitat.
- (F) Provide technical and outreach support to willing landowners that will enhance the maintenance and/or creation of high quality steelhead habitat.
- (G) Restore sustained natural steelhead production to blocked areas in the upper Deschutes Basin.
- (H) Reduce the abundance of stray hatchery steelhead in the John Day River populations.
- (I) Improve the quality of abundance, productivity, spatial structure, and diversity information for select populations in the Oregon Mid-C Steelhead DPS.
- (7) Adaptive Management. The Department shall employ adaptive management principles within its statutory authority in support of achieving the desired status goal for the DPS by participating in the adaptive management and implementation processes defined in Section 12 of the Oregon Mid-C Steelhead Plan. The Department's contribution to adaptive management of the DPS by the state of Oregon will include five elements: research; monitoring; evaluation; a feedback loop; and reporting.
- (a) Research. The Department shall support high priority research identified in the Plan that addresses uncertainties related to management strategies and actions needed to achieve desired status. Research needs identified in the Oregon Mid-C Steelhead Plan at the time of adoption (but which are not intended to be the exclusive research projects to be pursued) are:
- (A) The effectiveness of hatchery supplementation to enhance natural production in the Umatilla River population.;
- (B) The relative importance of limiting factors to steelhead throughout freshwater and estuarine residence;
- (C) The survival and productivity benefits provided by tributary habitat, mainstem hydrosystem, hatchery, estuary and predation control management actions;
- (D) The methods to maintain, enhance, or promote high quality steelhead rearing and spawning habitat;
- (E) The impact of predation (from marine mammals, birds, and exotic fishes) on Oregon Mid-C steelhead;
- (F) Effectiveness of the re-establishment of a naturally producing steelhead in the upper Deschutes River Basin;
- (G) Improved methodologies to determine population abundance and productivity; and
- (H) The impacts of stray hatchery steelhead on the viability of Deschutes River populations.
- (I) Future research needs shall be identified during periodic assessments of the effectiveness of the Oregon Mid-C Steelhead Plan.
- (b) Monitoring. The Department shall continue to identify, implement, and support monitoring needed to assess the status of the DPS and steelhead populations relative to desired status criteria, evaluate habitat status trends in the Oregon Mid-C steelhead DPS, and evaluate the effectiveness of management actions.
- (A) The Department shall immediately enhance implementation of annual juvenile steelhead, adult steelhead and habitat monitoring, as funding allows and under the guidance of the Mid-C Technical Team, at levels that provide estimates at the scale of independent populations and MPG's.
- (B) Monitoring needs identified in the Oregon Mid-C Steelhead Plan at the time of plan adoption include the monitoring of habitat restoration projects, abundance of hatchery origin spawners, life stage specific survival rate, and harvest rates.
- (C) Future monitoring needs shall be identified during periodic assessments of the effectiveness of the Oregon Mid-C Steelhead Plan.
- (c) Evaluation. The Department shall identify and support evaluation needed to determine the effectiveness of management strategies and actions in achieving their intended outcomes.
- (A) Evaluation needs identified in the Oregon Mid-C Steelhead Plan at the time of adoption are the evaluation of effectiveness of habitat protection, management and restoration programs in the Oregon Mid-C Steelhead DPS.
- (B) Future evaluation needs shall be identified during periodic assessments of the effectiveness of the Oregon Mid-C Steelhead Plan.
- (d) Feedback Loop. The Department shall review the results of assessments identified in 635-500-6500(7)(e) and modify management strategies and actions as appropriate and within its statutory



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authority based on the review results. The Department shall implement the Adaptive Management processes identified in the Oregon Mid-C Steelhead Plan and recommend to the Oregon Mid-C Recovery and Oregon Plan Core Teams and other agencies or entities, as necessary, appropriate modifications to management strategies and actions needed to support attainment of the desired status goal for the DPS. This feedback shall include refinement of management actions, research, monitoring and evaluation programs and desired status criteria based on the best available scientific information.

(e) Reporting. Monitoring and evaluation data analyzed for the annual and periodic evaluation of DPS status and Plan implementation shall be made available to the public. As part of the Mid-C Technical and Recovery Teams, the Department shall participate in the preparation of a report summarizing the results for the 5-year (2014) status update and each subsequent 5-year assessment, or additional assessments called for by the Oregon Recovery Team, of the effectiveness of the Oregon Mid-C Steelhead Plan.

(f) Modifications to the Oregon Mid-C Steelhead Plan are required if the fish become listed as endangered under the federal ESA or by the direction of the Oregon Mid-C Recovery Team in periodic Oregon Mid-C Steelhead Plan status reports. These reports by the Recovery Team will serve as an early warning system that will direct additional monitoring, evaluation, or management actions, if needed, based on annual review of monitoring data.

(8) Impact on Other Native Fish Species. Management strategies identified in the Oregon Mid-C steelhead Plan are likely to be beneficial to other native fish species present in the DPS because they focus on restoring natural processes. New or modified actions shall consider impacts to other native species, as appropriate, to minimize harm and optimize benefits.

Stat. Auth.: ORS 496.138, 496.146, and 506.119

Stats. Implemented: ORS 496.162, 506.109 and 506.129