All westslope cutthroat trout in Oregon exist in the John Day River Basin. These populations are disjunct from the greater contiguous distribution in the Upper Missouri and Columbia basins of Montana and Idaho.

The Westslope Cutthroat Trout SMU consists of 17 population in the upper mainstem John Day River Basin. Three naturalized populations also exist in the North Fork John Day Basin; however these were established through stocking activities and are not evaluated in this review. The SMU meets three of the six interim criteria, and is classified as ‘at risk’. Limited data sets and inferences from other information for populations in this SMU provide a qualified level of confidence in the assessment of the interim criteria.
• Distribution is highly fragmented and limited to headwater streams and the upper mainstem of the John Day River.

• The John Day Complex is the only population to pass the distribution criterion. This population occupies over 50% of the historical distribution, is distributed over 90 km, and is suspected to express a migratory life history strategy. The remaining populations fail the distribution criterion either because they occupy less than ten km of stream distance or 50% of the historical distribution.

• Apart from the John Day Complex, most populations are isolated from others during the summer months due to elevated water temperatures and low flows. Functionally these populations are isolated from each other due to the lack of movement, seasonal connectivity, and distance between populations.

Productivity - Pass

• Bear, Birch, and Belshaw populations are reduced and declining in abundance. These populations fail the productivity criterion.

• All other populations are considered to be depressed relative to historical levels of abundance, but appear to be maintaining stable levels of abundance. Degraded habitat, presence of non-native fish, and limited expression of a migratory life history are factors that influence productivity of westslope cutthroat trout.

Additional Information

• Populations of westslope cutthroat trout in the upper John Day basin are native. Only two documented stocking events are known; one in Deardorff Creek (Upper John Day Complex) and one in Strawberry Lake, both prior to 1935. Neither of these events likely impacted westslope cutthroat trout, thus all populations pass the reproductive independence criterion.

• ODFW is conducting research to obtain a genetic description of the populations, and to determine the extent of hybridization between cutthroat trout and rainbow trout.