

Buffalo Flats Floodplain Planning

The USWCD and Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) are working with Buffalo Peak Land & Livestock, LLC to explore ways to improve fish and wildlife habitat while maintaining a viable farming and ranching operation. The Buffalo Flats Floodplain project site is located east and adjacent to the city of Union, Oregon and includes over 300 acres of historic floodplain of Catherine Creek and Little Creek as they enter the Grande Ronde Valley. The project area is in private ownership and has been managed for farming for over a century. The Catherine Creek channel once occupied a larger portion of the valley floor with a set of complex, meandering channels within a lush riparian forest, but is now confined between State Highway 203 and the southern valley edge.

Catherine Creek supports Chinook salmon, steelhead, and bull trout populations that are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. For Chinook salmon, 20 years of collected data indicates that spawning areas are focused in Catherine Creek from the city boundary of Union, Oregon upstream to the confluence of the North and South Forks, with the highest density of spawning within the Hall Ranch (ODFW Research). A majority of the creek surveyed upstream of Union in the 2011 was found to be in poor condition for fish because it is dominated by riffle habitat and lacking pools and cover. The lack of flow downstream of Union also limits salmon from spawning as discharge is reduced by as much as 76% for irrigation use. The Buffalo Flats project area is located in a portion of Catherine Creek deemed the most critical reach for fish habitat restoration (GRMW ATLAS Process).



Buffalo Flats Planning Area