

# Winter steelhead stage comeback on Willamette River

## Killing sea lions a factor

By KALE WILLIAMS  
The Oregonian

A controversial plan to kill sea lions in the hopes of bolstering an endangered run of fish on the Willamette River appears to be working, officials said, with winter steelhead showing their best returns in three years.

As of Wednesday, more than 2,400 winter steelhead had traversed Willamette Falls to the upper section of the river to spawn, according to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Officials predict a total run of around 3,200 fish. That's up from 1,829 steelhead last year and just 822 in 2017.

The uptick, according to Shaun Clement, a senior policy analyst for the agency, is due, at least in part, to the state killing 16 sea lions, which prey on the fish at the horseshoe shaped falls in Oregon City.

"We're encouraged by the fish numbers and by the success in implementing the sea lion removal program," Clement said in a statement. "We've definitely been able to reduce predation this year and provide some relief to the fish."

Winter steelhead were thought to be one of the most imperiled species on the upper Willamette with wildlife managers estimating that up to 25 percent of the run was being preyed upon by California sea lions. The pinnipeds had been



AP Photo/Don Ryan

A California sea lion trapped at Willamette Falls in 2018.

congregating at the falls in growing numbers in recent years, where steelhead are forced into a bottleneck and become easy prey for the voracious marine mammals.

The state tried removing the animals, who assemble at the falls by the dozen, but the sea lions often returned to Oregon City within days.

Sea lions are safeguarded under the federal Marine Mammal Protection Act so, in 2017, the state

applied for a special permit to kill animals that were seen habitually preying on steelhead and other endangered species of fish.

The permit was approved and trapping began in late December. In January, the state began using lethal removal to try to bolster the chances of endangered fish migrating upriver.

By March 11, officials said, the state had killed 11 sea lions and the river was free of the pinnipeds for

six days, during which steelhead passage increased to triple digits.

The respite didn't last, though, and more sea lions were seen at the falls within a week.

The theory, according to Sheanna Steingass, marine mammal program lead for the state, is that the animals that are removed won't be able to pass along their problematic behavior to future generations. It will likely take a few years, but wildlife managers hope to break

the yearly cycle of sea lions returning to the falls every spring to feast on steelhead and salmon.

"As a pinniped biologist, it's better for the salmon," Steingass said soon after program got underway, "but it's better for the pinnipeds too because we won't have hundreds of other animals learning this behavior."

The permit allows for the removal of up to 93 California sea lions, though Steingass estimated that no more than 40 or 50 animals would be killed. To kill the sea lions, wildlife biologists use the same traps that were unsuccessfully used in their relocation efforts. The animals are taken to a location offsite, anesthetized and euthanized using a combination of chemicals.

Travis Williams, executive director of Willamette Riverkeeper, doesn't explicitly oppose the sea lion removal program. The winter steelhead run has teetered on the edge of extinction in recent years and he recognizes that something had to be done. What gets lost in the conversation, he said, is all the factors that led to such a small population of fish where predation by sea lions became a breaking point for a whole species.

"There are big systemic problems," he said, noting that many of the Willamette's tributaries have flood control dams with inadequate measures to help fish migrate past them. "We address the issue as if sea lions are the only factor."

## Judge finds national monument expansion lawful

### The move did not preclude logging

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press

The expansion of Oregon's Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument did not unlawfully preclude logging on public land dedicated to timber production, according to a federal judge.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Mark Clarke has recommended the dismissal of a timber company's claim that President Barack Obama lacked the authority to enlarge the monument in 2017 by adding 40,000 acres of Oregon & California Railroad Lands reclaimed by the federal government.

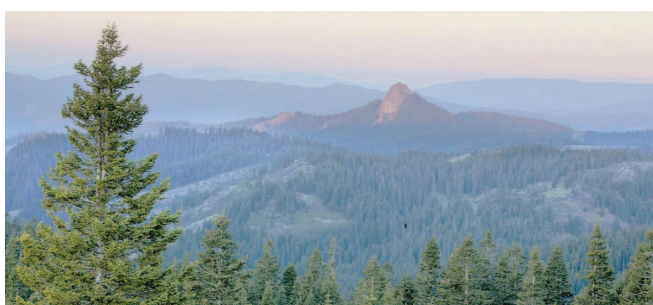
The Murphy Co., which relies on so-called O&C Lands for its log supply, argued that Congress devoted that acreage to timber harvest, which meant it couldn't be included in the national monument any more than a federal prison or military base.

"What the president has done here is vacate the purpose of those lands that Congress designated them for," said Mike Haglund, the company's attorney, during oral arguments last month in Medford.

Commercial logging is greatly restricted within the national monument, which was originally established in 2000 with 53,000 acres, but local ranchers are also worried about grazing curtailments within the expanded boundaries.

The Obama administration increased its size by 48,000 acres consisting mostly of O&C Lands shortly before leaving office. The decision has been defended in court by the Trump administration even as it's pared down other national monuments.

The federal government was joined by an environ-



Bureau of Land Management

The Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument in southern Oregon.

mental group, the Soda Mountain Wilderness Council, in arguing that O&C Lands can lawfully be managed for multiple uses, such as creating reserves where timber can't be harvested.

"Not every tree on every acre of O&C Lands needs to be cut. If not every tree needs to be cut, why can't the president set aside those 48,000 acres?" argued Coby Howell, attorney for the government.

The judge has determined the Obama administration was within its authority under the Antiquities Act — which allows presidents to create national monuments — in adding the O&C Lands to its footprint.

Although the statute governing O&C Lands repeals conflicting federal laws, it's not entirely incompatible with the expansion of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, according to Clarke.

"Although there may be tension between the dominant purpose of the O&C Act and the conservationist purpose of the Antiquities Act, there is no irreconcilable conflict between the two acts," he said.

The dominant purpose of O&C Lands is timber harvest, but the law's requirement of a "sustained yield" does not mean logging must be maximized — "the principle merely ensures that the

timber resource is managed in perpetuity while providing the BLM with discretion in how to achieve that objective," Clarke said.

The Murphy Co. has two weeks to file objections to Clarke's recommendation before a U.S. district judge who will issue a binding decision in the case. The government and the Soda Mountain Wilderness Council will have two weeks to respond to any objections.

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With sincere gratitude, we would like to say "Thank You" to our friends & family for your caring and thoughtful expressions of sympathy for the passing of our dear mother, and wife, Shirley Cadei. Your loving messages, memories that were shared, prayers, generous donations, lovely flowers, gifts, and beautiful cards have touched our hearts and helped tremendously to ease our sorrows and loss. We feel blessed for the support and friendship which will always be remembered and appreciated.

A special thank you to Father Oruko for the memorial masses said in Shirley's memory.

Sincerely, Vince Cadei and Family