

Fish and Wildlife

The Fish and Wildlife Department manages native fish and wildlife and their habitats to provide opportunities for sustainable cultural and recreational uses for current and future generations of Tribal members.

The management covers a broad range of actions, including replacing culverts to open up fish habitat and spawning grounds; working with the Timber and Roads Department to ensure stream protections are met; completing water quality tests and strategically placing trees in the streams; researching fish populations; and dumping salmon carcasses to enrich nutrients for different fish species.

The Tribe cooperates with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service to manage fish and wildlife in Oregon and on Reservation land.

Under the Natural Resources Division's 10-Year Management Plan, the Fish and Wildlife Department developed guidelines identified as important in achieving a high standard of natural resources management. These guidelines continue to shape the management practices on the Reservation.

In addition to Natural Resource's 10-Year Management Plan, the Fish and Wildlife Department is nearing the completion of a department-specific plan, which has outlined management goals and objectives for species found on and near the Reservation. This document will guide fish and wildlife management practices and provide structure on how to meet those goals. This is different from defaulting to the state fish and wildlife plans and is an important step in Tribal sovereignty.

Habitat Management

Habitat management is a key component in achieving a high standard of natural resources management and maintaining sustainable fish and wildlife populations.

The Fish and Wildlife Department works collaboratively with the Timber and Roads Department to ensure water resources and wildlife habitat components are protected on the Reservation. This is done through environmental compliance, assisting in timber sale planning and monitoring before, during and after cutting takes place.

Stream buffers leave trees between timber cutting and the stream and help keep water systems in good condition for aquatic life. Wildlife trees (trees left standing after harvest), snags and down logs provide structural diversity in animal and insect habitat.

Stream Health

Water quality studies are done both on the Reservation and in the surrounding Grand Ronde community. Monitoring changes in stream health helps meet fish management goals, protect recreational use and improve the overall biological and chemical health of local water systems.

Streams are sampled monthly for bacteria, nutrient, temperature, turbidity and conductivity levels. This data helps identify problem areas that need restoration, as well as monitors the before and after effects of restoration and management activities.

The Natural Resources Division has done restoration work to improve stream health. Previous to Natural Resource's 10-Year Management Plan, 10 culverts were replaced on the Reservation; the plan set a goal for another three culverts to be replaced, totaling 13 culvert replacements that have resulted in opening up 20 miles of fish habitat and spawning grounds.

Within these opened stretches, 150 logs have been placed to increase large woody debris habitat and salmon carcasses are placed seasonally to enrich aquatic nutrients for fish species.

The results of these efforts can be seen with the annual fall Coho salmon return. Agency Creek in Grand Ronde is 3/1,000th of the total Willamette sub-basin watershed and it currently receives more than 4 percent of the total returning Coho salmon to spawn. The returning salmon are counted at the Agency Creek fish weir, which monitors fall salmon and winter steelhead runs to help provide population estimates and develop fish management goals.

During the spring, a smolt trap is placed in Agency Creek upstream from the weir and is used to count fry (newly hatched fish) and smolts (year-old fish). These counts help predict future adult spawning returns as well as play a part in developing management goals.

Pacific Lamprey

Pacific lamprey is a culturally significant species to the Tribe and is also found in Agency Creek. For reasons unknown, they are in declining abundance.

The Tribe is working collaboratively with Oregon State University and Cramer Fish Sciences to conduct behavior research on the species. It is a four-year study that began in 2008.

Adult lamprey are caught below Willamette Falls, implanted with radio tags and released above the Falls into the main stem of the Willamette River. The Tribe has tagged about 120 lampreys each year from April through August and more were tagged by Cramer Fish Sciences.

The Tribe uses radio-telemetry to track tagged fish behavior and move-

Agency Creek Fish Weir



The Agency Creek Fish Weir was constructed in 2006 and began operations in 2007.

It is designed to capture migrating adult salmonids and is in operation from mid-October through early May.

The weir has given Tribal biologists the opportunity to gain valuable information on the number, health, gender composition, age structure and migration timing of salmonids in Agency Creek.

The weir is likely to remain an important tool for the long-range goals of steelhead restoration in Tribal waters.



ments within the Willamette River. Receivers that track and record the radio-tagged lamprey movements are placed throughout the main stem of the Willamette River and major tributaries.

The Tribe now manages 22 receiver sites on the main stem and tributaries from the McKenzie River in Eugene up through the Tualatin River in West Linn. The data records year-round and the sites are maintained monthly. Collaborative efforts have been made to analyze this data and develop more information on the species.

The Fish and Wildlife Department is conducting genetic studies on both Coho salmon and Pacific lamprey. The salmon study is to determine the genetic origin of Coho on the Reservation.

Genetic samples are collected during the fall salmon run at the fish weir by snipping a small section of the tail and sending it for laboratory testing.

Lamprey genetics are taken while radio tagging adults at Willamette Falls and aim to determine if they, like salmon, return to the same stream they were born in to spawn.

Big Game

Black-tailed deer and Roosevelt elk hunting are popular and active cultural and recreational pursuits on the Reservation. The Tribe has dedicated substantial resources to enhance conditions for these species.

A management goal for Natural Resource's 10-Year Management Plan was to create 78 acres of elk/deer meadow habitat. The 78 acres have been created, along with 22 acres created previous to the plan, to total 100 elk/deer acres on the Reservation.

Disease testing is done on black-tailed deer and Roosevelt elk through hunter participation. Hunters who wish to participate in the research study bring in the animal and, as an incentive, are entered into a season-end drawing for a gift card. The lymph nodes and brain stem are collected and sent to the state for Chronic Wasting Disease testing. Additionally, the lower front teeth are collected and sent in to determine the age of the animal and assist in developing population estimates.

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