



# Place-Based Integrated Water Resources Planning Final Plan Recognition

Upper Grande Ronde River  
Watershed Partnership  
Union County, Oregon

Presentation to  
Oregon Water Resources Commission  
March 17, 2022





# Thank you!

## [Grande Ronde PBP on Vimeo](#)

- Thank you to all for this tremendous effort.
- Great working with individuals and agencies.
- We have a road map and are moving forward.
- We must wisely manage this precious, limited resource if we wish to meet the demands placed on it.
- Union County Farm Bureau introduction (Jed Hassinger)
- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) introduction (Anton Chiono)

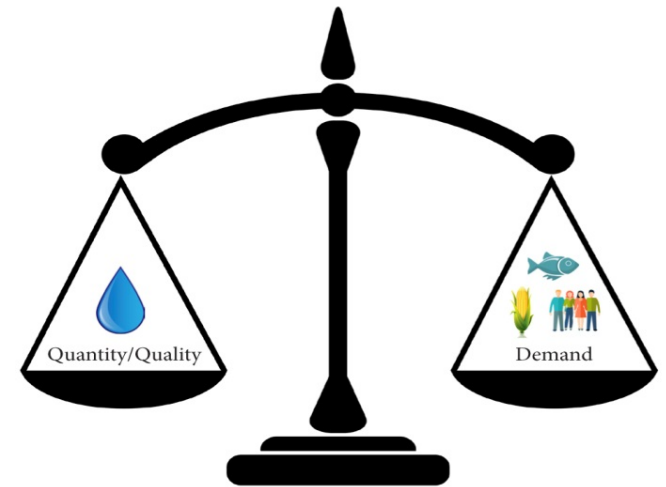






# Overview

- Upper Grande Ronde River Watershed (UGRRW) Partnership
- UGRRW Geography
- Critical Issues
- Instream and Out-of-Stream Demands
- Strategies
- Lessons Learned and Next Steps





# Our Partnership

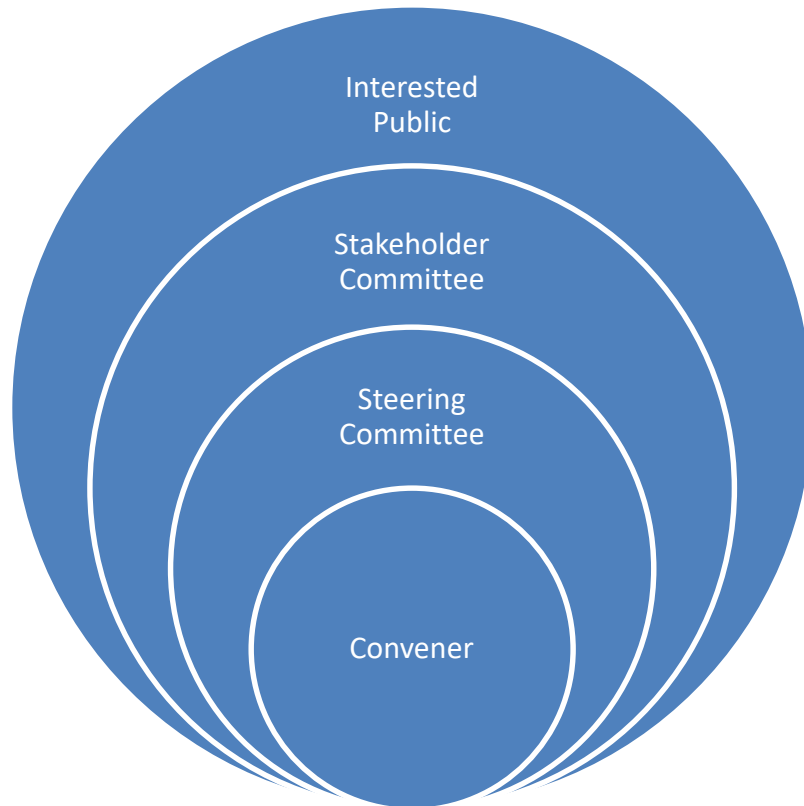
Category from Planning Guidelines	Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Signatories	Instream	Out-of-Stream	Government/Other	Voted for Plan Adoption
Local governments and elected officials	Union County			X	X
Tribal governments	CTUIR	X		X	
Municipal water and wastewater utilities	City of La Grande, City of Imbler		X		X
Major industries or employers	Agriculture and government (major employers in Union County)				
Agriculture (see also private landowners below)	Union County Farm Bureau		X		X
Forestry	U.S. Forest Service (USFS)				Non-voting
Conservation/environmental groups	Grande Ronde Model Watershed (GRMW)	X			X
Power companies	Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative				
Private landowners (many of whom are also self-supplied water users and small business owners)	Eight individual landowners		X		X
Special districts	Union County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)	X	X	X	X
State agencies	Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW)	X		X	X
	Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD)	X	X	X	X
	Oregon Department of Agriculture		X	X	X
Federal agencies	USFS, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)			X	Non-voting





# Our Structure

Must live or work in the watershed to be a voting member



**Convener** - Union County

**Steering Committee** - Administrative Team (ODFW, OWRD, Union County Farm Bureau, City of La Grande)

**Stakeholder Committee** - Local parties involved in planning who sign the MOU (voting)

**Interested Public** - Parties who are involved in the effort (non-voting)

**Ad Hoc Subcommittees** - Voluntary technical groups/work groups composed of the above four groups

All decisions through consensus vote



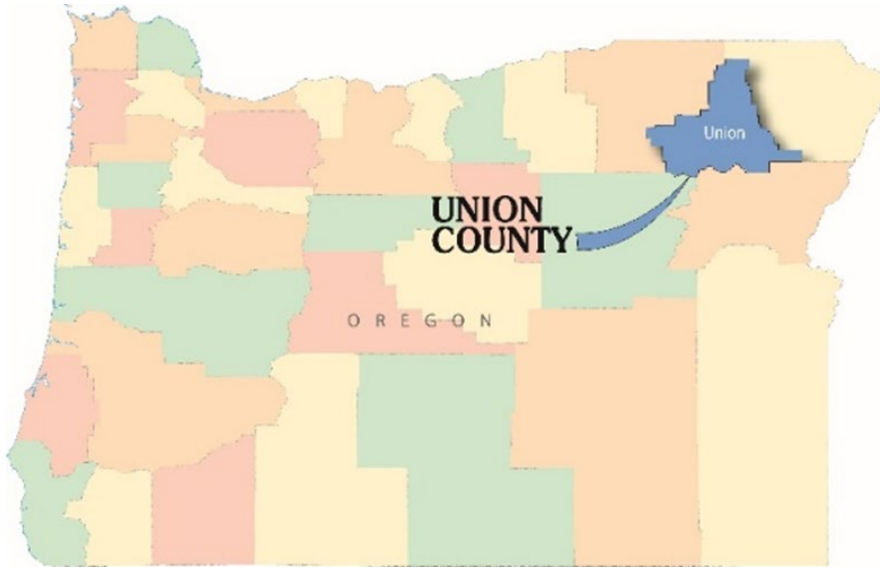
# Meetings and Outreach

- Meeting for more than five years - advertised via newspaper, County website, email listserv, occasionally radio, newspaper articles, phone calls, and presentations
- Approximately one stakeholder meeting per month and working group meetings
- More than 100 meetings to date; more than 3,000 volunteer hours contributed
- Ford Family Foundation Learning Partnership (four meetings)
- Sustainable Northwest Summits (two meetings)



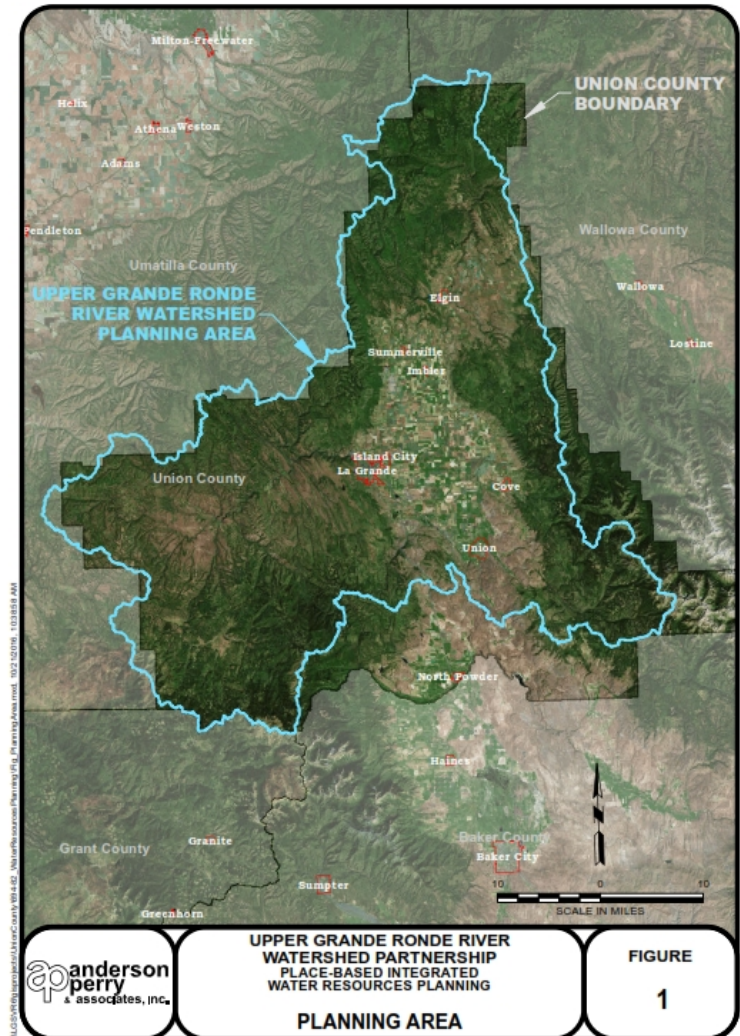


# Planning Area



The geographic boundaries of Union County very closely align with the boundaries of the UGRRW.

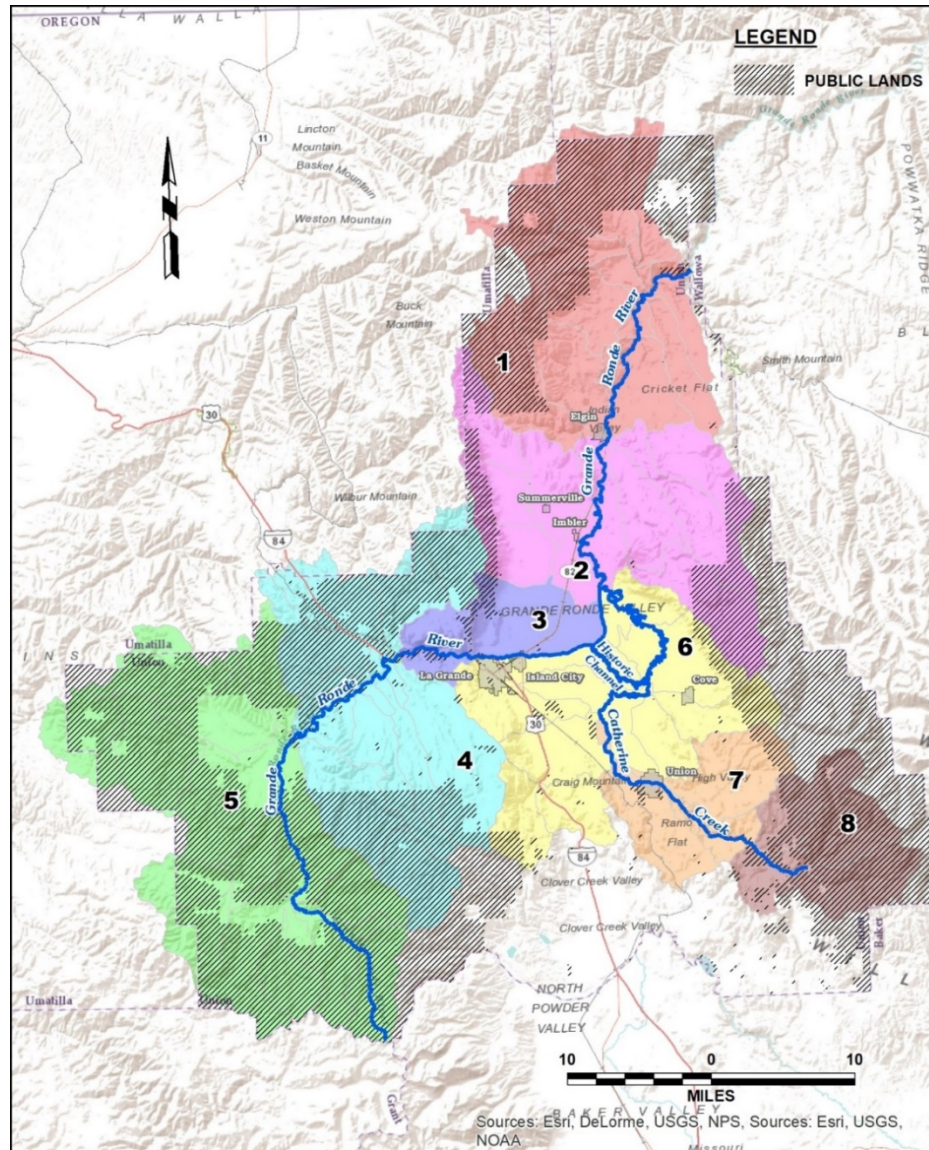
The UGRRW is a vital ecosystem that supports ranchers, farmers, urban residents, tribes, and fish and wildlife species.







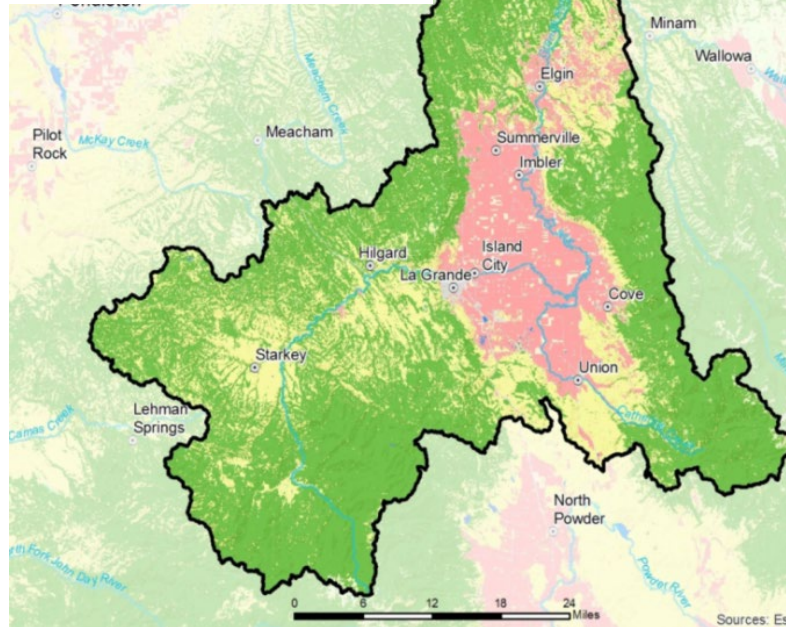
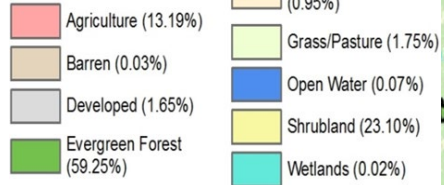
# Ownership



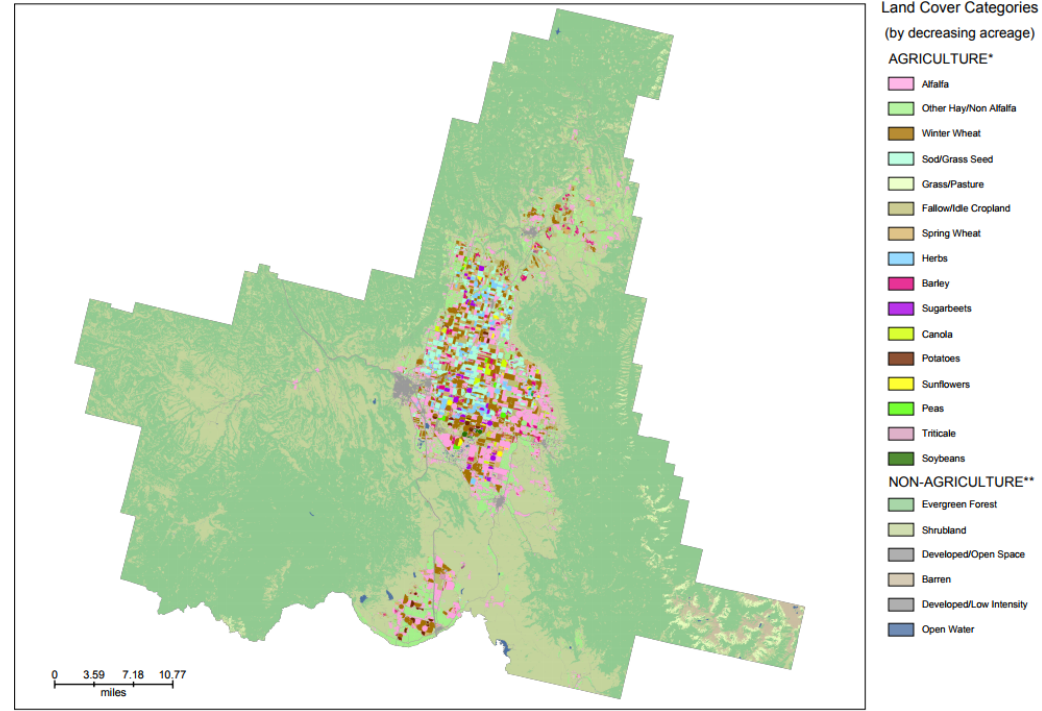


# Crops

## USDA Cropland Data (2014)



## 2016 CDL, Union County, Oregon



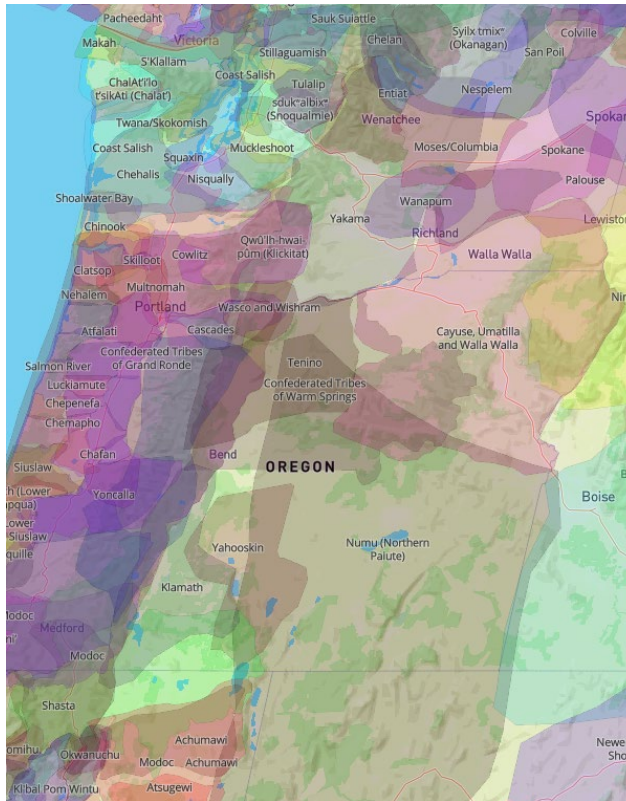
Produced by CropScape - <http://mapsanddata.grow.com/cropscape>

Top 10 agricultural categories / Top 6 non-agricultural categories listed





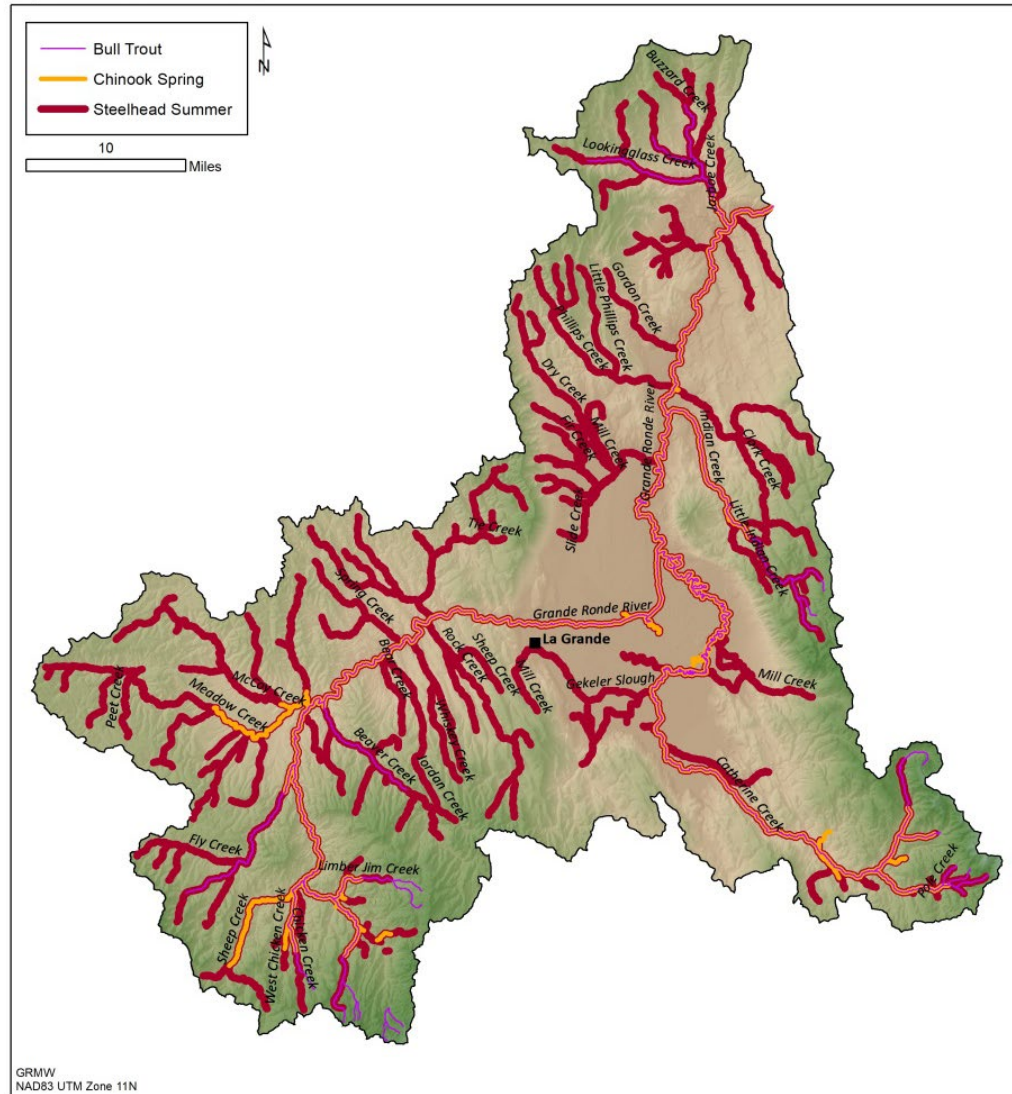
# Cities - People



- Homeland of the Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla tribes
- La Grande - 13,229
- Island City - 1,016
- Elgin - 1,756
- Union - 2,142
- Cove - 625
- Summerville - 136
- Imbler - 310



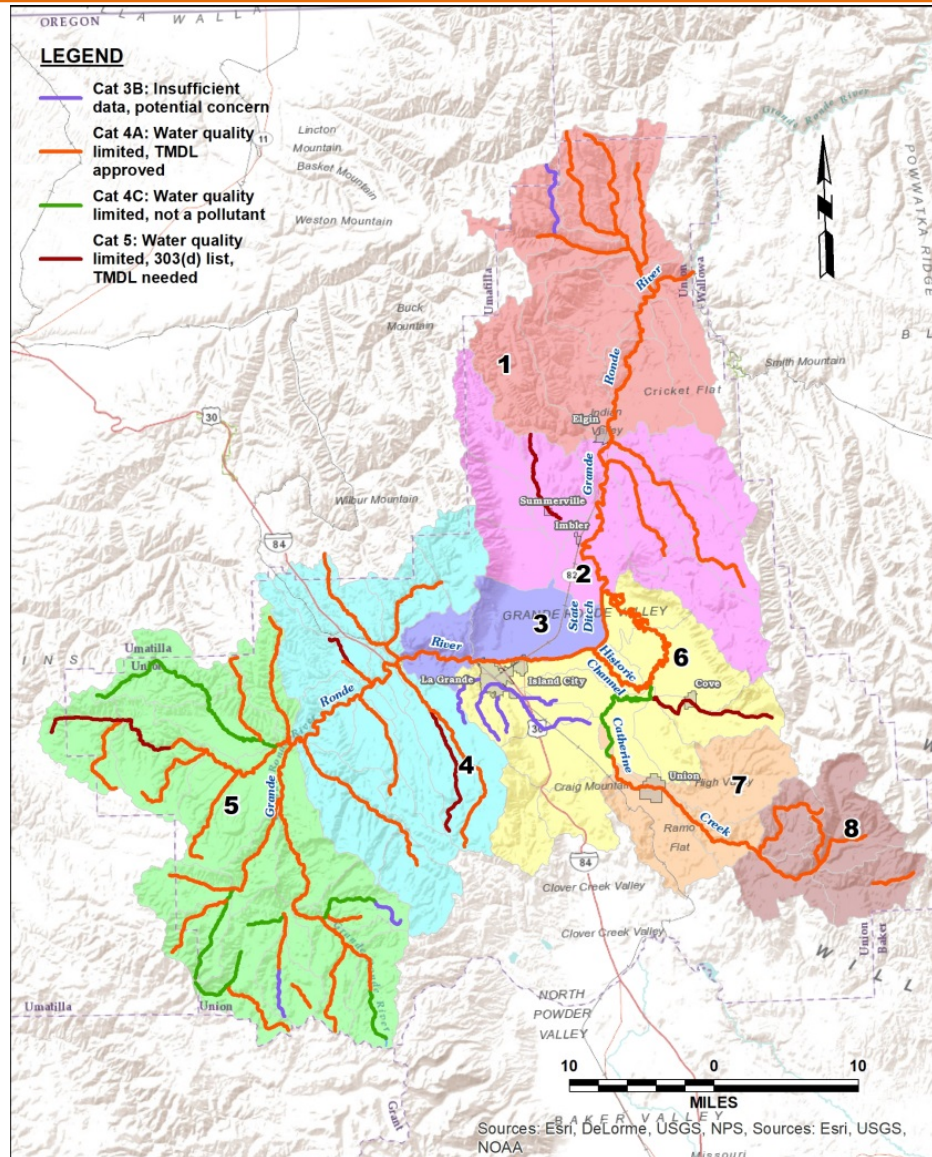
# Streams and Endangered Species Act Distribution







# Water Quality





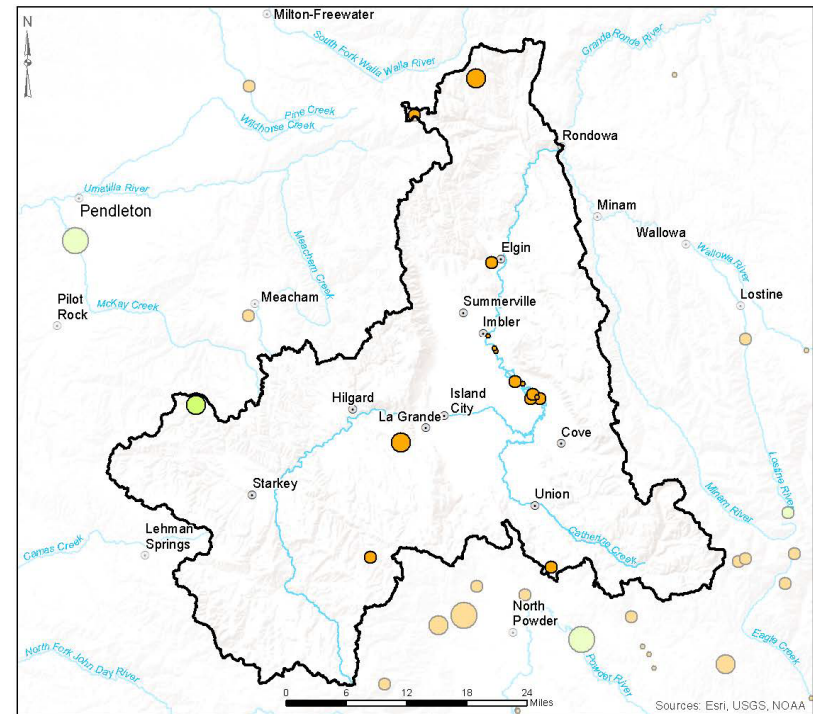


# Water Storage

- Snowmelt dominated
- Low fall flows
- Only 7,231 acre-feet (AF) of surface reservoir storage



## Upper Grande Ronde Subbasin Study Area Dams by Storage Capacity



### State Dams

#### Storage in acre feet

- < 100
- 100-1,000
- 1,000 - 10,000
- > 10,000

### Non-State Dams

#### Storage in acre feet

- < 100
- 100-1,000
- 1,000 - 10,000
- > 10,000

### Description:

The Oregon Water Resources Department maintains an inventory of Oregon dams. Information available includes dam height, storage capacity, dam name, location, permit number and hazard classification. Large dams are defined by a dam height  $\geq 10$  feet and a storage capacity of  $\geq 9.2$  acre feet. These larger dams are within the jurisdiction of Oregon Water Resource Department.

Source:  
Dams, Oregon Water Resources Department, 2016

Map produced by:  
Oregon Water Resources Department  
725 Summer St. NE Suite A  
Salem, OR 97301

Map date: October 24, 2016



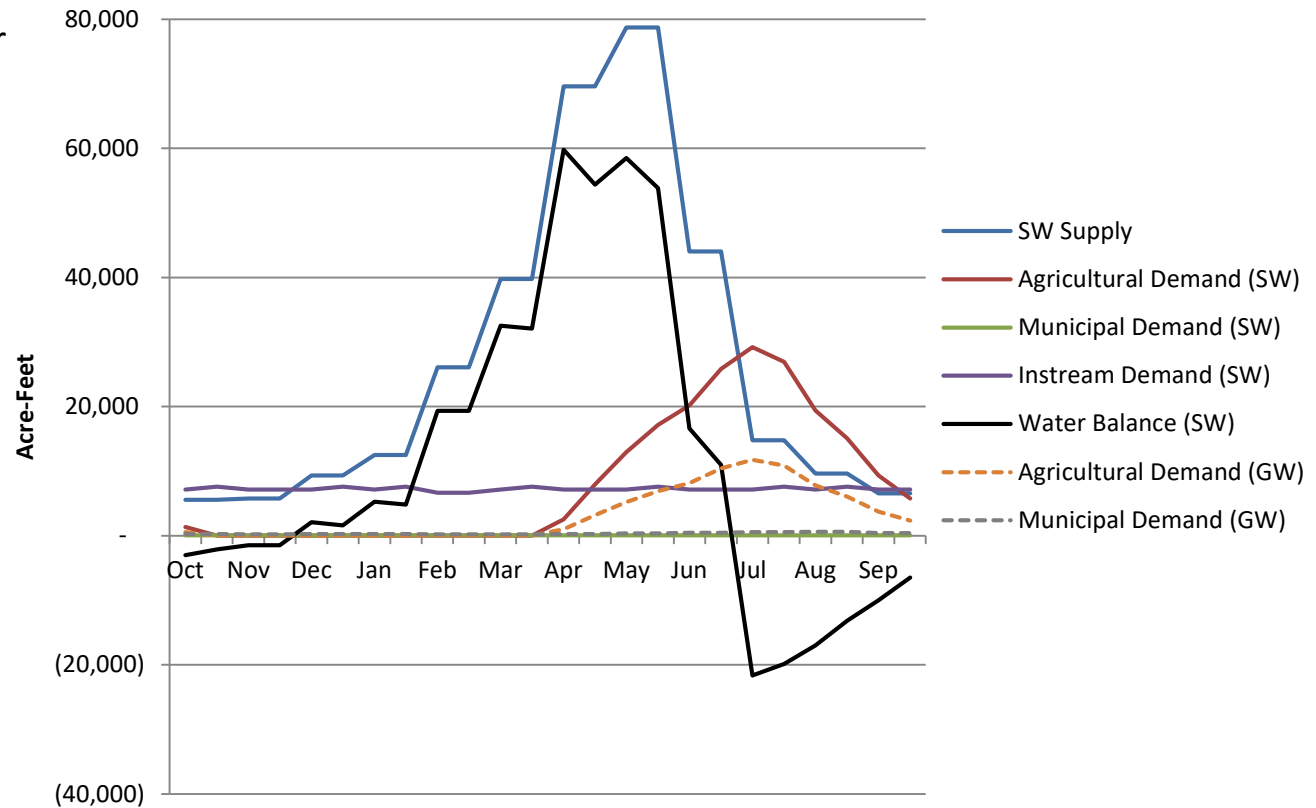
# Demands

**Municipal demand** - Actual use calculation is that cities, unincorporated users, and self-supplied industrial users use approximately 2,060 AF per year of surface water and 8,190 AF per year of groundwater.

**Agricultural demand** - Total annual agricultural water use per year was estimated to be 193,730 AF (surface water) and 77,970 AF (groundwater) via evapotranspiration.

**Instream demand** - Existing instream water rights are 173,750 AF per year, but instream water rights do not cover all waterways in the UGRRW. Goal to improve this calculation.

## Total Biweekly SW Budget and GW Demands (Current)



GW = groundwater  
SW = surface water



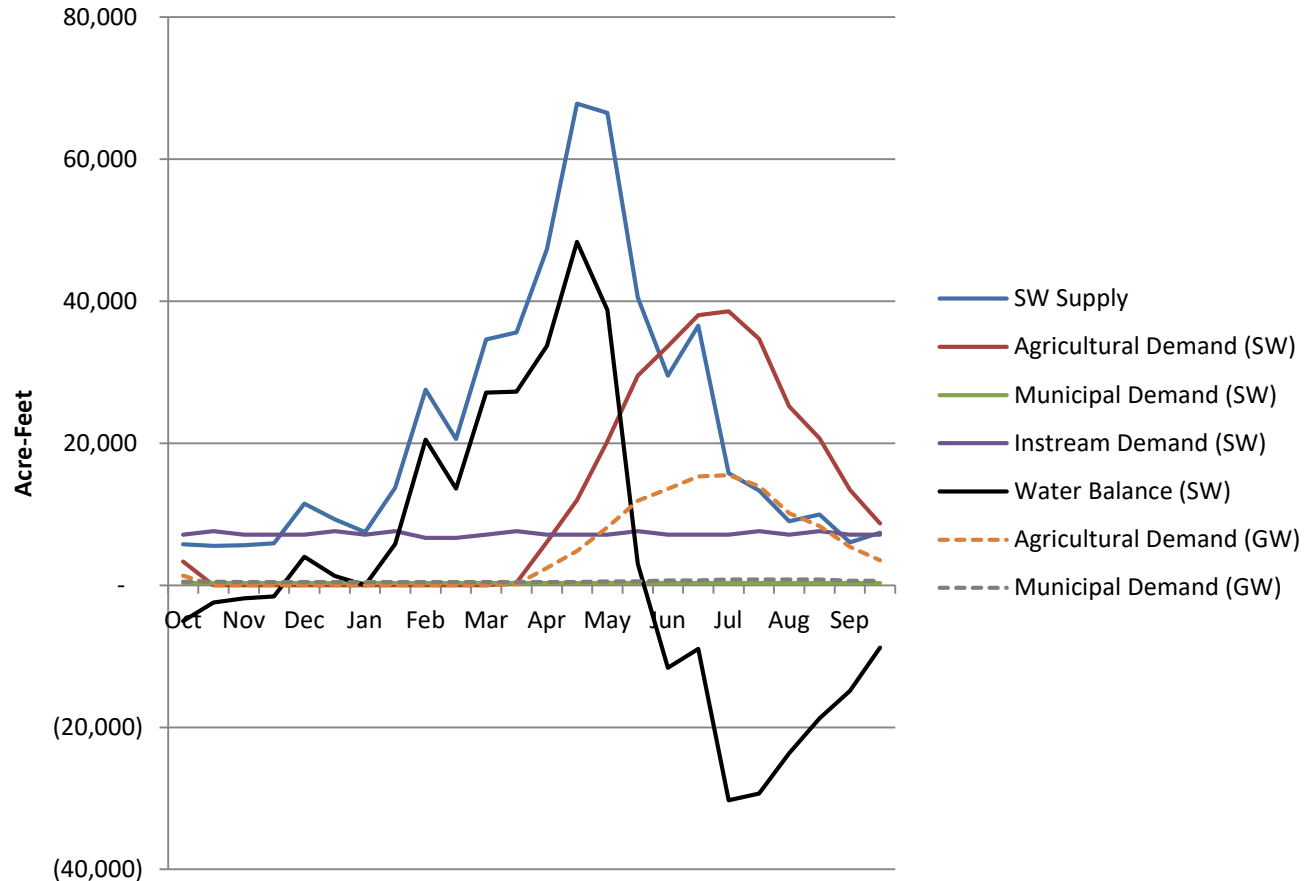
# Future Demands

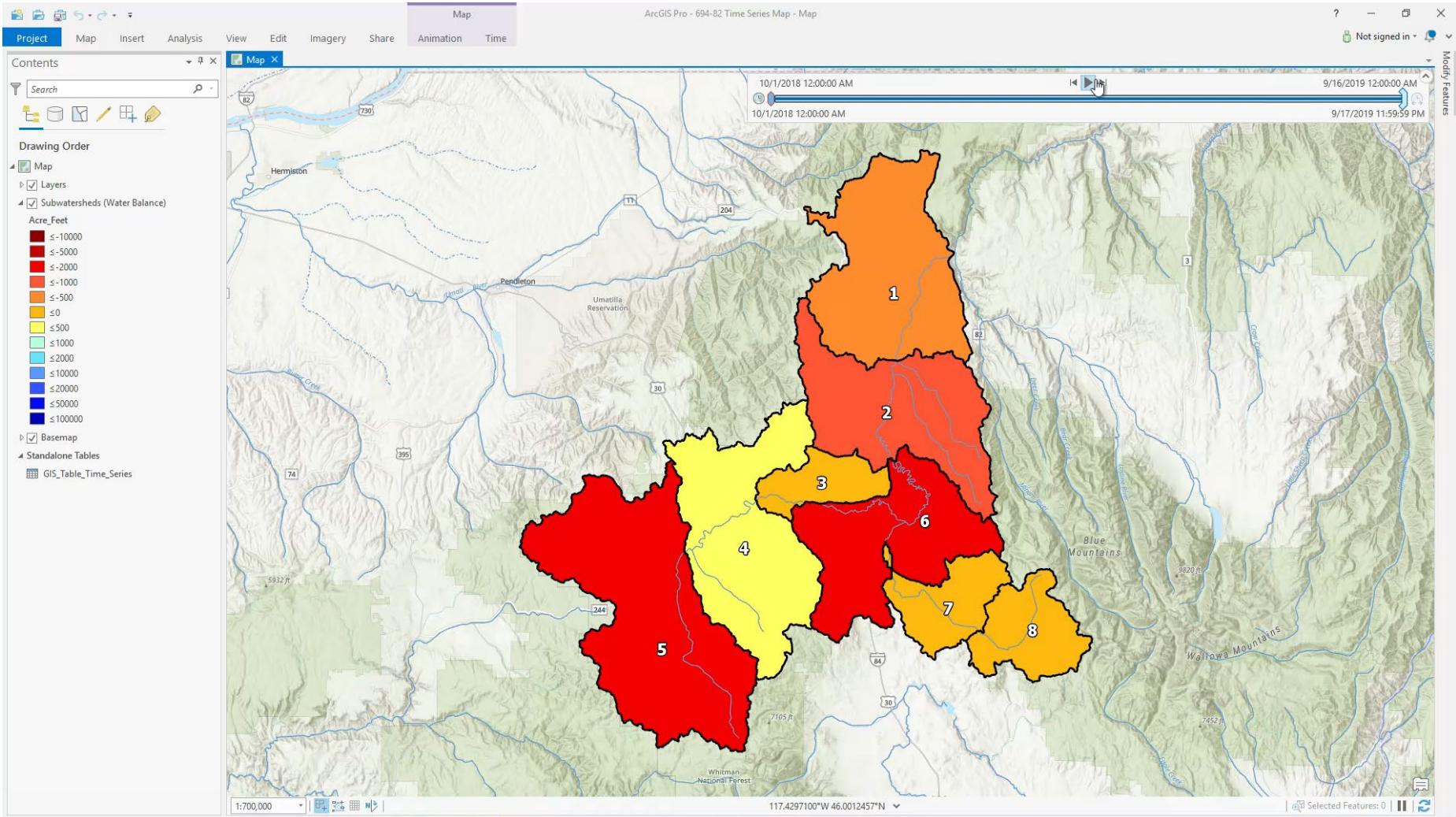
**Municipal demand** - Future use estimated at 6 percent increase over next 50 years.

**Agricultural demand** - Future use estimated with Representative Concentration Pathways 8.5 climate model and estimated conservation measures.

**Instream demand** - Changes in future demand need to be calculated.

## Total Biweekly SW Budget and GW Demands (Future)









# Critical Issues

Groundwater Uncertainty

Surface Water Quality

Surface Water Deficit

Natural Hazards/Climate Change

Data Gaps







# Strategies

Four critical issues

Nine major strategies to address group-identified critical issues

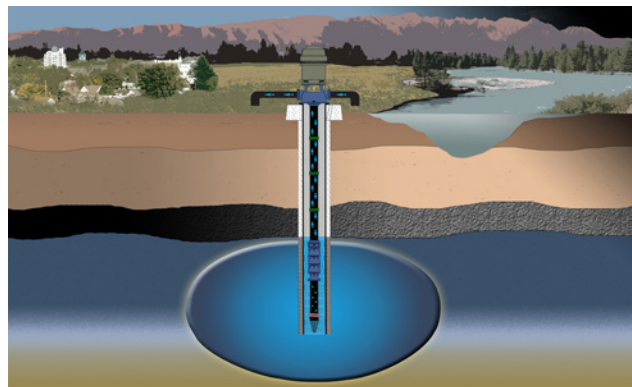




# Strategies - Built Storage

No.	Strategy (Implementation Lead) [Primary Beneficiaries] {IWRS Corresponding Strategy}	Description/Purpose	Selected Milestones
1	Built Storage - Aboveground Storage and Underground Storage (Union County) [Agriculture, Instream] {10.B Improve access to built storage}	Address specific instream and out-of-stream water supply deficits in each subwatershed through advancing possible built storage projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conduct aboveground storage and instream flow study (applied for state funds).</li><li>• Develop next steps for Catherine Creek underground storage (to benefit instream flows).</li></ul>

*IWRS = Integrated Water Resources Strategies*





# Strategies - Land Management Agricultural Land

No.	Strategy (Implementation Lead) [Primary Beneficiaries] {IWRS corresponding strategy}	Description/Purpose	Selected Milestones
2	Land Management - Agricultural Land (NRCS) [Agriculture, Instream] {10.A Improve water-use efficiency and water conservation}	Conduct research and provide subsequent educational outreach to support water management actions that maintain water quality and increase water use efficiency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Convene a pilot group of landowners for on-farm conservation activities.</li><li>• Create a shared resources list.</li><li>• Strategize funding for irrigation water management projects.</li></ul>





# Strategies - Data Collection, Monitoring, and Research

No.	Strategy (Implementation Lead) [Primary Beneficiaries] {IWRS corresponding strategy}	Description/Purpose	Selected Milestones
3	Data Collection, Monitoring, and Research (GRMW) [Agriculture, Instream] {1.A Improve water resource data collection and monitoring}	Coordinate data collection to fill data gaps, support working groups, and inform water management in the UGRRW.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prioritize data gaps.</li><li>• Study groundwater.</li><li>• Study water quality.</li><li>• Update assessment of instream flow needs.</li></ul>





# Strategies - Non-structural Water Storage and Habitat Management

No.	Strategy (Implementation Lead) [Primary Beneficiaries] {IWRS corresponding strategy}	Description/Purpose	Selected Milestones
4	Non-structural Water Storage and Habitat Management (Union SWCD) [Instream] {11.A Improve watershed health, resiliency, and capacity for natural storage}	Raise awareness of work being done and how this work addresses goals of the UGRRW Partnership; prioritize and pursue nonstructural storage projects in strategic locations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Plan field tour.</li><li>• Prioritize areas and projects (using the Ecological Atlas geomorphic potential information).</li></ul>







# Strategies - Land Management - Public Land

No.	Strategy (Implementation Lead) [Primary Beneficiaries] {IWRS corresponding strategy}	Description/Purpose	Selected Milestones
5	Land Management - Public Land (USFS) [Instream] {9.C Partner with federal agencies, tribes, and neighbor states in long-term water resources management}	Information sharing and communication between public land management agencies and stakeholders to identify potential areas of mutual support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Update UGRRW Partnership on USFS projects.</li><li>• Plan field tours.</li></ul>





# Strategies - Infrastructure - Land Modification

No.	Strategy (Implementation Lead) [Primary Beneficiaries] {IWRS corresponding strategy}	Description/Purpose	Selected Milestones
6	Infrastructure - Land Modification (Union County) [Municipal, Agriculture, Instream] {6.A Improve integration of water information into land use planning}	Reduce the frequency and severity of damage due to flooding now and in the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review U.S. Bureau of Reclamation hydraulics study.</li><li>• Study sedimentation.</li><li>• Hold ditch-opening meeting.</li><li>• Draft hazards mitigation plan.</li></ul>





# Strategies - Administrative Actions

No.	Strategy (Implementation Lead) [Primary Beneficiaries] {IWRS corresponding strategy}	Description/Purpose	Selected Milestones
7	Administrative Actions (CTUIR) [Instream] {10.D Reach environmental outcomes with non-regulatory alternatives}	Increase awareness of how administrative actions can improve water quality and quantity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create outreach material for landowners and legislators.</li><li>• Survey interest in administrative actions.</li></ul>





# Strategies - Land Management - Municipal Land

No.	Strategy (Implementation Lead) [Primary Beneficiaries] {IWRS corresponding strategy}	Description/Purpose	Selected Milestones
8	Land Management - Municipal Land (City of La Grande) [Municipal] {7.A Develop and upgrade water and wastewater infrastructure}	Improve city-to-city coordination to respond to natural hazards, increase water conservation, and support water infrastructure efficiency improvements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop shared resources agreement.</li><li>• Update/develop hazard mitigation plans.</li></ul>





# Strategies - Outreach and Education

No.	Strategy (Implementation Lead) [Primary Beneficiaries] {IWRS corresponding strategy}	Description/Purpose	Selected Milestones
9	Outreach and Education (Union County) [Municipal] {8.C Promote community education and training opportunities}	Inform the public about water quality issues and UGRRW Partnership activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Distribute water quality and lawn care outreach materials.</li><li>• Complete digital storytelling project.</li><li>• Update outreach plan.</li></ul>







# Next Steps

- Quarterly implementation meetings - to update group on individual member/strategy group process
- Update plan every five years as needed
- Strategy Groups will meet more frequently. Top items we are working on currently:
  - Reinitiating strategy group meetings
  - Developing Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) Strategic Action Plan
  - OWEB/OWRD-funded Aboveground Storage Feasibility Study and Instream Flow Study
  - Catherine Creek underground storage study for instream flow restoration - reinitiating work
  - Union County - Integrated with the cities' Federal Emergency Management Agency Natural Hazards Update Plan
  - Data gap work - Focus on instream flow calculation improvement





# Lessons Learned (1/3)

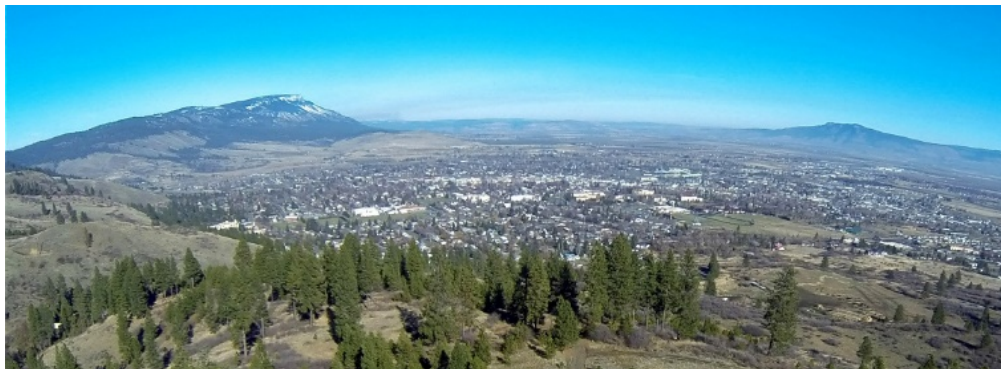
- Side meetings between those who disagreed were efficient in resolving differences.
- Value of a diverse steering committee.
- Strength of diverse interests working together on a common vision (it is possible to have a positive experience when those with competing interests work together).
- Value of completing work through technical working groups.
- Using local talent to come to conclusions for local basin.





## Lessons Learned (2/3)

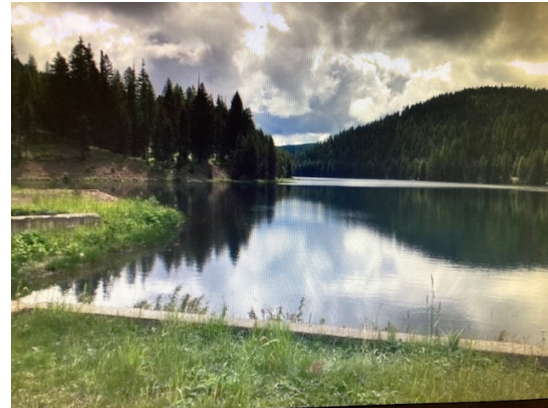
- Local individuals with competing interests have stronger relationships that help work through difficult issues.
- Each interest group had to compromise and learn about other water issues to come to consensus.
- Consistent leadership: convener, facilitators, and stakeholder/agency representatives.
- Hybrid meetings are helpful for attendance.
- Need more accessibility to agency-level data and staff resources.
- Having planning guidance available to future planning groups at the outset will be tremendously helpful.





## Lessons Learned (3/3)

- To maintain engagement with local stakeholders and be responsive to local needs, planning must be place-based and locally led. Place-based planning is most effective when all entities (local, regional, state, tribal, and federal) all work together as partners.
- Need for more input/state-level interest in each step, rather than at the end. Agencies were all represented at the local level throughout the process; some conflicting input was received from state and local staff.
- Transparency on review team and first review should include the local planning group to answer questions. Clarity on final agency review expectations and communication from the review team throughout the process will greatly streamline the review of future plans.







# Needs (1/2)

- State investment in more and better data on groundwater and surface water quality and quantity.
- Local coordination/ involvement with every state agency; emphasis on state investment in agency capacity, availability, and support for local process.
- Help to engage federal partners (especially for larger studies, permitting, and funding assistance).







## Needs (2/2)

- Prioritize state funding for projects in basins that have undergone a collaborative, place-based planning process and adopted that plan.
- Build on the success of our effort and expand state funding for place-based planning beyond just the four pilot basins.
- Find ways to integrate place-based planning efforts into OWRD's budget process, 100-year Water Vision, and the state's utilization of federal infrastructure funding.





# Thank You and Questions!

