

Key Willamette Basin Dates

1955 Minimum Perennial Stream Flow Act (MPSF)

In the early 1960s, the Oregon State Game Commission (now Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife) studied and recommended instream flow levels needed to support native fishes in major streams.

1964 Earliest Priority Date of Willamette MPSF which include stored water

Over a period of about ten years, the Game Commission reported the results of these investigations to the Oregon Water Resources Board (now Water Resources Commission) in a series of 19 Basin Environmental Investigation Reports.

1987 Instream Water Right Act (including conversions of MPSF)

In 1987, the Oregon Legislature adopted legislation authorizing instream water rights. The law included the ability to maintain water levels that support public uses within natural streams or lakes. The Water Resources Department (Department) holds these instream water rights in trust to support public uses such as recreation, pollution abatement, navigation, and maintenance and enhancement of fish and wildlife. The act required minimum perennial streamflows to be converted to instream rights.

1992 Willamette Basin Program Adopted

The Water Resources Commission adopts basin programs to set policies for managing river basins. A river basin includes all the land area, surface water bodies, aquifers, and tributary streams that drain into the major namesake river. Basin programs include water-use “classifications” that describe the types of new water right applications that may be considered by the Department.

1993 Oregon Chub listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA)

The Oregon chub was listed as endangered in 1993. A recovery plan was published in 1998. Critical habitat was designated on March 10, 2010. The species' status has recently improved, and on April 23, 2010, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) changed the Endangered Species Act classification of the Oregon chub from endangered to threatened.

1994 Willamette Reservations for Agriculture and Municipal uses submitted

Reservations of water for economic development are established to ensure sufficient surface water will be available in the future to meet expected needs.

1996 Willamette Reservoir Study initiated

The Willamette Reservoir Study is a cooperative cost-shared study with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Funding for the study has been provided by the federal government, the State of Oregon and more than 60 cities, special districts, organizations and commercial and industrial firms. The study will determine if operational changes or modifications in the allocation of stored water would better serve present and future resource needs in the basin.

1999 winter steelhead and chinook salmon under ESA

The ESA requires the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to develop recovery plans for all listed marine species. Two species of salmon and steelhead in the Upper Willamette River are listed as threatened under the ESA, the upper Willamette River chinook and the upper Willamette River steelhead.

2000 Willamette Reservoir Study suspended

In April of 2000 it was decided to delay completion of the Reservoir Study while the USACE consulted with NMFS and USFWS regarding the affects of continued operation of the Willamette River Projects on fish, wildlife and plant species listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA.

2001 Changes to statute regarding conversions of MPSF

In 2001 the Instream Water Rights Statute (ORS 537.346) was modified replacing the Water Resources Commission as the action entity with the Department and placing a requirement to show a methodology to for the flows being requested for protection.

2008 Willamette Basin Biological Opinion

NMFS has issued guidelines and timetables for the three federal agencies involved in the management of 13 dams in Willamette River Basin that will allow the dams to be operated and maintained without threatening the continued existence of winter steelhead and chinook salmon, or harming their critical habitat.