

May 7, 2019

## Pelton Round Butte Fish and Wildlife Newsletter — May 2019



Photo submitted by  
Teighlor Glavin

Snowfall delayed spring fieldwork and resulted in high flows throughout much of April. This kept our Pelton Round Butte fisheries staff busy this month, catching up on important studies and keeping up with the side-effects of increased streamflow. We collected thousands of migrating juvenile fish at the Selective Water Withdrawal, installed and operated screw traps on Whychus Creek and the Crooked River, partnered with the US Geological Survey to measure and monitor the river substrate moving downstream and gave tours of the project to interested school groups. We also wrapped up our Bull Trout Blowout contest and loved seeing all the beautiful and creative photos submitted by Lake Billy Chinook anglers.

This newsletter and past issues can be found at [PortlandGeneral.com/DeschutesUpdates](http://PortlandGeneral.com/DeschutesUpdates).

### DATE CHANGE: 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Fisheries Workshop

Portland General Electric and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs invite you to join us for the 25th annual Pelton Round Butte Fisheries Workshop. Please note that we have rescheduled our event this year to July so we can share the complete results of our multi-year Water Quality Study.

**When:** July 17-18, 2019

**Where:** The Riverhouse Convention Center  
2850 NW Rippling River Ct,  
Bend, OR 97703

**RSVP:** [Register](#) for the workshop.

- ◆ Registration is open now through July 5th to our partners and stakeholders, including members of the public. Click on the blue “register for the workshop” button on the top left. We encourage early registration as space is limited.
- ◆ The Riverhouse Hotel has a room rate of \$179 for the night of July 17th and is holding a block of 10 rooms until June 17th. Please mention that you are attending the Fisheries Workshop when contacting the hotel. The venue is centrally located with additional lodging options nearby.

Photo from jetsetter.com



### Smolt Acclimation in Whychus Creek



Along a scenic stretch of Whychus Creek, tucked away near Camp Polk, two large wire cages sit submerged in the cold stream. They're fairly unremarkable from the outside – wooden frames rising a few feet above the abnormally broad and fast-flowing stream. But if you could peek under the frigid surface, between gaps in the wire, you would see thousands of juvenile steelhead, swimming happily inside their temporary homes. These fish are in the process of smolt acclimation – a system being implemented throughout the Deschutes basin over the next few years in order to help improve returns.

#### How does smolt acclimation work?

Young fish are held in wire cages called “live cars” submerged in the stream. The smolts remain in place for ten to fourteen days, adjusting to their surroundings and becoming familiar with the stream's unique chemical traits. When fish are finally released downstream, they are more likely to migrate quickly and safely, having already acclimated to the water's natural conditions. Additionally, these fish are better at finding their way back when returning from the ocean as adults. When more fish successfully locate their natal stream, using their sense of smell, we get a more even distribution of fish throughout the Deschutes basin.

#### What changes are being made?

Over the next few years, ODFW is expanding its use of smolt acclimation, phasing out fry stocking in favor of acclimating and releasing older fish. Compared to fry, smolts are less likely to stay in the tributaries and compete with native redband trout populations. Unfortunately, snows caused a delay in the original plan, so only steelhead smolts were acclimated this year. Next year, Chinook will go through the acclimation process as well. Additionally, live cars will be replaced with larger tanks, increasing our capacity to acclimate thousands of fish at a time.





## Juvenile Fish Update

Juvenile Species	March 2019	Yearly Total (through March 2019)
Chinook	2944	3865
Steelhead	60	60
Sockeye	4608	4868

- In March, 11,477 fish from six species of salmonids were processed at the Fish Transfer Facility.
- Chinook, steelhead and sockeye that were collected were transported and released downstream into the Deschutes River.
- Thanks to high flows, juvenile fish numbers are up at the SWW compared to this time last year.

## Adult Fish Update

Adult Species	April 2019	Yearly Total (hatchery, wild and upper basin)
Summer Steelhead	12	1,604 (Sep 2018 - May 2019)

- Only 12 total steelhead were collected at the Pelton Trap this April, most arriving early in the month.
- 36 steelhead have been tagged and released above the project this season. We are tracking their movements throughout the upper tributaries.
- We are patiently awaiting the return of the first spring Chinook, expected to arrive sometime in May.
- Complete daily fish counts (including identifying tags and hatchery vs. wild origin) can be [found online](#).

## Save the Date: Water Quality Study Open Houses

In February 2015, we kicked off an extensive multiyear water quality study to learn more about conditions and potential changes in the Lower Deschutes River, the reservoirs and the major tributaries. We will share the results of the study at three upcoming open house events. More information to come shortly.

**Central Oregon:** July 17th after the fisheries workshop, Riverhouse on the Deschutes

**Portland:** July 23<sup>rd</sup>, Ecotrust – Billy Frank Junior Conference Center

**Maupin/The Dalles:** TBA

## The Plain Facts

### Announcements, News, and Events

- Thanks to heavy snow in February, Central Oregon's snowpack is in good shape for the upcoming seasons. More details on [KBND](#).
- Spring Chinook returns are expected to be low throughout the Columbia River Basin this year. Read more in the [Columbia Basin Bulletin](#).
- Several areas along the Lower Deschutes River flooded in mid-April. More on [KTVZ](#).
- An irrigation modernization project in Central Oregon is moving forward with help from an \$11.2 million grant from the federal Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program. Learn more about the plans in the [Capital Press](#).
- Local nonprofits and companies are using cleanups and restoration projects to engage Central Oregon residents and visitors. Learn more about Central Oregon "voluntourism" in [The Bulletin](#).

**We recently updated our Plain Facts document, which addresses some of the common concerns and misconceptions we hear about the Pelton Round Butte Project. For example...**

### Question:

Why doesn't PGE do more to improve the Deschutes basin?

### The plain fact is...

Although PGE is a utility, not a public management agency, we are deeply invested in the health of the entire Deschutes basin.

- PGE and the Tribes contribute significantly to habitat restoration efforts throughout the Deschutes watershed through the Pelton Round Butte Fund. We've supported more than 45 projects to date, with 13 million awarded so far. We are on track to award a total of \$21 million by 2020.
- We have earmarked \$10 million for projects that improve water quantity and quality.
- PGE does not have power or jurisdiction beyond the areas described in our license, so we collaborate with the Tribes and with dozens of agencies and non-governmental organizations to advance initiatives throughout the basin that complement our work at the Pelton Round Butte Project.

### Thanks for reading our May newsletter!

Read more by downloading the [Plain Facts](#).

Visit our [website](#) to find more information about the Deschutes, including informative videos, fact sheets, and reports.

- ◊ Have suggestions for what you'd like to see in the next newsletter? Want to schedule a tour? Please contact us at [deschutes.passage@pgn.com](mailto:deschutes.passage@pgn.com).
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