



It has certainly been an eventful couple of months for us at Pelton Round Butte (and around the world for that matter)! The ongoing coronavirus pandemic has forced us to adapt our procedures in the field to protect the health and safety of our employees. Heavy storms at the beginning of June wreaked havoc across Central Oregon, including at our parks. Pelton Dam Road suffered a mudslide and dozens of trees fell at Round Butte Overlook park. The damage has since been cleared at both sites, and we look forward to seeing visitors again. Meanwhile, it's our busy season for fisheries fieldwork, and our studies on the river continue. Learn more about what we're up to on the Deschutes in the story below.

Busy Days on the Deschutes



Visitors passing by the Lower Deschutes River during the last few months may have been surprised to see our staff out on the water. What are biologists doing on a boat in the middle of a pandemic? PGE provides an essential service to our customers, and in order to generate electricity, we are obligated to perform certain environmental protection measures, including much of our fisheries work. These efforts are more than just license requirements to us – they're also important to the ecological function of the Deschutes River.

What work is taking place on the lower river this spring and summer?

We are currently working on the second phase of our Lower River Gravel Study. This seven-year project involves multiple smaller studies on the Deschutes, including the following efforts taking place this spring.

- **Polychaete Sampling** – Polychaete worms are an intermediate host for *Ceratanova shasta* (*C. shasta*), a parasite that affects salmonids on the Pacific coast. Polychaetes release spores that can infect fish on contact. Like many viruses that affect people, *C. shasta* has variable impacts on the individuals it touches. Some fish may be infected without exhibiting any symptoms, while others will contract disease. There is still a great deal we don't know about how the parasite gets transmitted or when it becomes fatal. That's why every other year, PGE and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife participate in a one-day effort to sample these worms. This ongoing study helps us learn more about the prevalence and spread of *C. shasta* in the Lower Deschutes.
- **Snorkel Surveys** – Biologists are snorkeling several locations featuring underwater dunes and an area where we placed gravel last year. These snorkel surveys help us learn more about how fish and wildlife utilize gravel in the Lower Deschutes. Surveys began in May and will conclude later this month.
- **Redd Surveys** – Every other week from mid-October through June, our biologists look for redds (salmon and trout nests) on the Lower Deschutes River. We identify and map fall Chinook, redband trout and steelhead redds at specific locations, including sites where we've placed gravel.



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Why are these projects important?

All of these efforts are part of the Phase II Lower River Gravel Study. This multi-year project has involved monitoring, the placement of gravel, boulders, and trees, and extensive data collection on the Lower Deschutes. Ultimately, the study will help us evaluate whether we need to implement a long-term gravel augmentation program. Dams block gravel from naturally flowing downstream, so it's fairly common for dam operators to augment for gravel loss (as we do below our hydropower project on the Clackamas River). Unlike the Clackamas, the Deschutes has an unusually steady flow, resulting in less gravel movement. Our gravel study has been a massive undertaking and will provide fisheries managers with valuable information about gravel dynamics and uses in the Lower River, helping us make science-based decisions for the benefit of the river.

What precautions are we taking on the river to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

We have been using individual pontoon boats whenever possible to keep employees six feet apart. When maintaining this distance isn't possible, we wear face coverings, eye protection and gloves. While conducting fieldwork, our staff maintain physical distance and continue to follow our standard safety procedures.

Juvenile & Adult Fish Passage Updates

Juvenile Species	Apr. 2020	May 2020	Yearly Total (Jan. - May)
Chinook	7,667	16,418	26,439
Sockeye	14,917	14,199	32,426
Steelhead	1,269	10,980	12,280

- Juvenile fish passage through the SWW is still taking place. We're averaging between 600-2,000 fish each day.
- This time of year, most of the fish coming through are summer steelhead. This year is our largest juvenile steelhead run since fish passage began at the project, likely due to the high number of smolts acclimated and released upstream.
- Fish seem healthy this year, with low rates of injury and mortality.

Adult Species	Apr. 2020	May 2020	Yearly/Run Total
Steelhead	27	0	1,045 (Aug. 2019 - May 2020)
Spring Chinook	0	39	39 (Jan. - May 2020)

- While waiting for the spring Chinook migration to begin, April brought many rainbow trout, suckers and whitefish to the Pelton trap.
- The first spring Chinook arrived on May 8. It was given a radio-tag and released above Round Butte Dam. We have released four Chinook above the project in total this year.
- Through June 5, 63 Chinook have been transported to Round Butte Hatchery as part of their broodstock program. Two were wild and subsequently released back into the lower Deschutes.
- The forecasted Chinook return to Round Butte Hatchery is only 150 fish – far fewer than the 300 pairs needed to meet broodstock goals. Fisheries managers throughout the Columbia River Basin are expecting similar low returns.

Check out complete daily adult fish counts on [our website](#).

Discover PGE Parks



Round Butte Overlook park and the surrounding roads suffered damage from storms in early June. Our staff worked hard to clear mudslides and debris, and the park was able to reopen on June 11.

Thank you for being patient while our parks were temporarily closed this spring. We look forward to seeing you again this summer back on the water, playing cards at a picnic table or sleeping under the stars.

- Pelton, Promontory and Trojan parks opened May 22nd.
- PGE parks located within national forests, including Perry South, Monty and Balancing Rocks Overlook, opened on May 29th.
- We ask that visitors avoid congregating in large groups, maintain a safe distance from others and be mindful of their actions.
- Find the latest updates on our [website](#).

JULY 23
9 AM
TO 1 PM

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Lights, Camera... Action!

Several PGE biologists recently found themselves in the spotlight in new videos about our fisheries work at Pelton Round Butte. The first two are "virtual tours" of downstream fish passage facilities, created so viewers like you can experience our hydropower project from the comfort of home. The third video is an interview with fish biologist Terry Shrader about experimental pulse flows to the Crooked River, featured on Central Oregon Daily News' "Great Outdoors" segment.



Transporting juvenile fish in the Deschutes River

A step-by-step tour of the Selective Water Withdrawal facility and our downstream fish passage process, hosted by biologist Rich Madden. Watch on [Youtube](#).



Passing fish through the Selective Water Withdrawal

A quick peek at how the SWW works, filmed by our fish technicians at Pelton Round Butte. Watch on [Facebook](#).



Restoring salmon & steelhead to the Upper Deschutes

Brooke Snavelly from the "Great Outdoors" and PGE's Terry Shrader discuss experimental pulse flows to the Crooked River that took place in May.

Watch on [Central Oregon Daily](#).

Announcements & News

- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, NOAA Fisheries, Bureau of Reclamation and ODFW – with support from PGE – released additional water from Bowman Dam to the Crooked River to test the effects on migrating salmon smolts.**
 - [Central Oregon Daily News](#)
 - [Columbia Basin Bulletin](#)
- PGE and CTWS participated in an invasive species response exercise alongside other state, federal and local agencies, helping prepare the region for rapid response in the event of a mussel introduction to Lake Billy Chinook.**
 - [KTVZ](#)
 - [Madras Pioneer](#)
- Swalley Irrigation District and Deschutes River Conservancy recently completed a canal piping project in the Middle Deschutes.** → [KTVZ](#)
- Poor marine survival likely the cause of this year's historically low Columbia Basin spring Chinook returns.**
 - [Columbia Basin Bulletin](#)
- Researchers at Oregon State University completed a study suggesting salmon may use the magnetic field to aid in navigation.**
 - [Science Daily](#)



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