

# RiverVoice

WINTER 2015 VOL.9 NO.1

NEWSLETTER OF THE **DESCHUTES RIVER CONSERVANCY**



## Mike Tripp

DRC Board Member and  
President of the Deschutes  
Chapter of Trout Unlimited

“I think the key to success is just people getting to know each other and being willing to listen to each other openly instead of with bias. It’s what happens when people start trusting each other.”  
Mike Tripp, DRC Board Member

Marisa Chappell/Hossick

## Making a difference in the Upper Deschutes

Flow management in the Deschutes River is such a complicated process that it seems impossible for one person to make a difference. But DRC board member Mike Tripp found a way to do so.

In October of 2013, thousands of fish became stranded as flows in the Deschutes River drew down in the fall. With another low-water year predicted in 2014, Mike began a series of informal meetings to see if there was a way to bring diverse water interests together to try a different approach. He partnered with Jeff Wieland of the Upper Deschutes River Coalition and Oregon Water Resources Department Watermaster Jeremy Giffin to organize an experimental ramp down of the streamflow releases out of Wickiup Reservoir at the end of the irrigation season.

Meetings with Oregon Water Resources Department, North Unit Irrigation District, Central Oregon Irrigation District and U.S. Forest Service personnel led to an agreement for a slower staged reduction of the streamflows out of Wickiup Reservoir during the fall ramp-down. This would

allow a study of river function at different flow levels while reducing the impact on wildlife. In the past, this annual flow change occurred over a comparatively shorter period of time.

North Unit and Central Oregon Irrigation Districts are sensitive to river health and were enthusiastic about the proposed ramp down concept. The plan also resulted in an additional release of 2,100 acre feet of water from Wickiup.

“We wanted to show our support by working with this diverse group of river supporters from the local community,” said Mike Britton, General Manager of North Unit Irrigation District. “Given what happened last year, we felt it was important to try a different approach this year.”

Drawing down flows more moderately allowed the U.S. Forest Service to gather important data on the function of the river at different flow levels.

The slower ramp down also allowed the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to lead an effort involving the U.S. Forest

Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, volunteers from Trout Unlimited, Bend Casting Club and other community members to rescue nearly seven thousand fish from shallow waters in the Lava Island side channel.

The fish salvage efforts brought the community together, and the data gathered from the study was invaluable.

It’s important to understand that both the experimental ramp down and fish salvage efforts are temporary measures in a much larger and complex water management process – one that will help us find long-term solutions to the flow issues facing the Upper Deschutes. This will involve study, compromise and changing the way we all think about the river.

“I think the key to success is just people getting to know each other and being willing to listen to each other openly instead of with bias,” Mike Tripp said. “It’s what happens when people start trusting each other and thinking about doing something different.” 

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USDA, Deschutes National Forest

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Jefferson County

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At Large

**Arya Behbehani**  
Hydroelectric

**Bob Bell**  
At Large

**Bruce Bischof**  
At Large

**Linda (Bo) Bonotto**  
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**Mike Britton**  
Irrigation

**Bobby Brunoe**  
The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs

**Mark Capell**  
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US Department of the Interior

**Nancy Gilbert**  
US Fish and Wildlife Service

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**Tara Macmillan** Staff Accountant

**Kelsey Wymore** Program Associate

## Together we make a difference

From the desk of the Executive Director, Tod Heisler

DRC is committed to bringing the Deschutes River back to health. We represent the interests of all with a stake in the river – environmental, recreational, agricultural, tribal, and municipal.

With so many different interests at the table, consensus can be elusive. That's why this year's change to the ramp-down process in the Upper Deschutes, and the resulting fish salvage, was so remarkable. It represented a consensus between the various interests made possible by the efforts of state and federal agencies, local irrigation districts, and dozens of volunteers

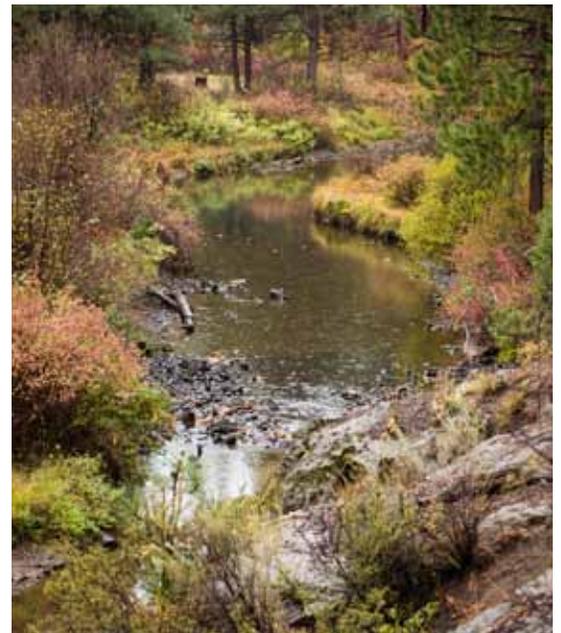
from the community.

At the same time, it's important to remember that this approach isn't sustainable over the long term. Carrying fish in buckets is an interim step. The goals of maintaining healthy winter streamflows in the Upper Deschutes – and healthy summer flows in the middle – remain before us.

A step at a time, we're making progress. And your continued support is vital in helping us reach that goal. 



## WORKING TOGETHER ON THE DESCHUTES



Photos: Marisa Chappell Hossick

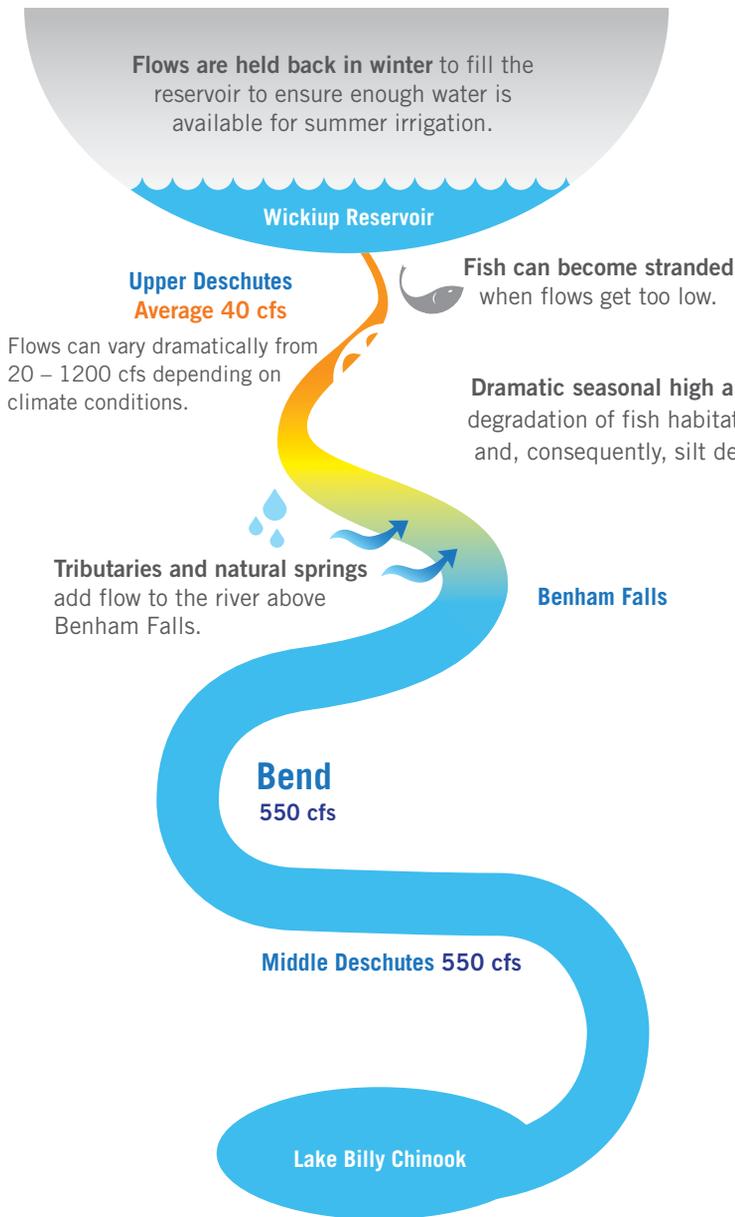
LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS AT [DESCHUTESRIVER.ORG](https://www.deschutesriver.org)

# Deschutes River Average Seasonal Flows

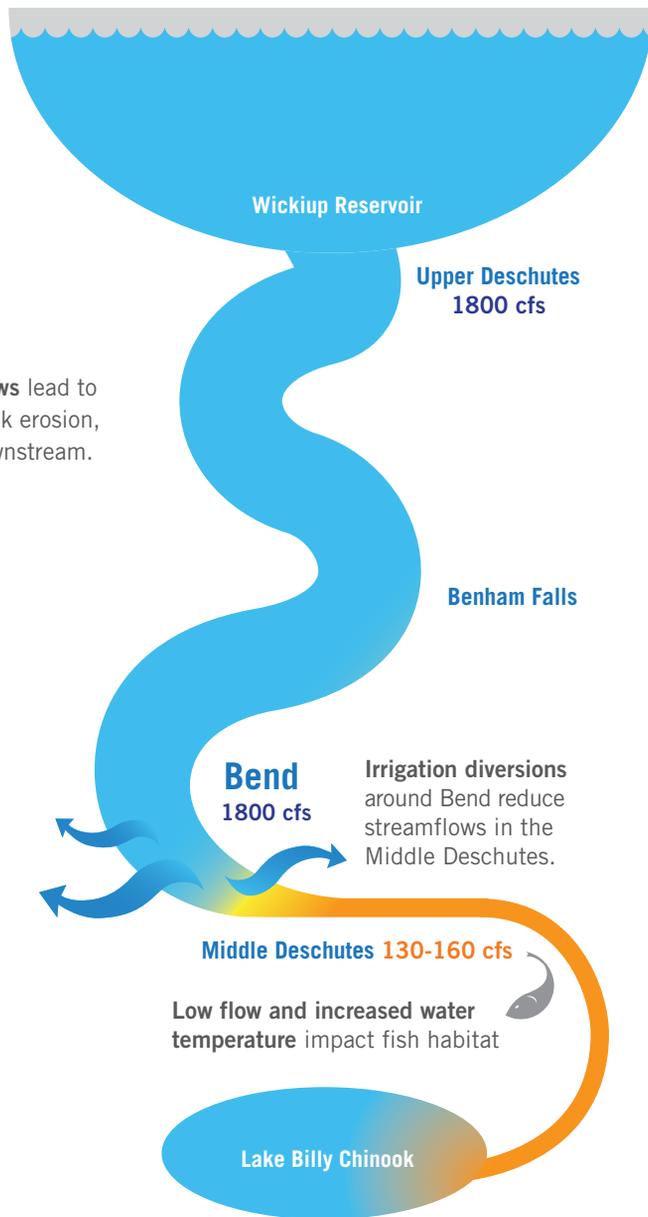
DRC STREAMFLOW GOALS *	
Upper Deschutes Winter Flows	300 cfs
Middle Deschutes Summer Flows	250 cfs

\*Based on Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife instream water rights.

## WINTER



## SUMMER



## Healthy communities need healthy rivers

Why do we find ourselves in this situation? When large-scale agriculture began in Central Oregon a century ago, the Deschutes River was thought to be a nearly unlimited resource. We now know that isn't the case. But in many ways, the way we manage the river traces back to those early days – and pressure on the river grew as more people moved to the area.

The Deschutes River remains vitally important. To some, it's the center of the spirit. To others, it's economic livelihood or a source of recreation and rejuvenation. There is enough water for all, provided that we re-think the way we manage the river. We're making progress and with your help we'll continue to do so.

### What does cfs mean?

A cubic foot per second is how the flow of a river is measured by quantity over time. To visualize this, it takes 24.4 cfs to fill an Olympic-sized pool in one hour.



**DESCHUTES RIVER  
CONSERVANCY**

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**Make a Difference!**

There's a reason you love Central Oregon. The quality of life in this region is hard to match. The beauty and allure of the Deschutes River and its tributaries probably played a role in attracting you here. Despite the beauty of our local rivers and streams, they require ongoing restoration efforts to return them to health and vitality.

When you make a donation, you are ensuring that innovative projects will continue to revitalize the rivers of Central Oregon. Your support also allows us to continue to develop balanced strategies that benefit the river and all those who love and depend upon it.

Thank you for giving back to the river you love. To make a donation, please visit us at [www.deschutesriver.org](http://www.deschutesriver.org) or call 541.382.4077 x23.

**SAVE THE DATE - MAY 9, 2015**



**TIGHT LINES AUCTION & BBQ**

Artist: Susan Luckey Higdon