

#36;4-Million in lottery funds to help return salmon, steelhead to Upper Deschutes

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Lottery funds will provide economic benefits and improve water quality while bringing salmon and steelhead to their home waters. The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) allocated \$4 million in Lottery funds for the Upper Deschutes Special Investment Partnership (SIP) at meetings January 16 and 17 in Astoria. "Upper Deschutes" refers to the area above the Pelton-Round Butte Project which consists of three different dams that have been a barrier to fish since 1968. This crucial habitat, upstream of the dams, is the target of OWEB's Upper Deschutes investment of \$4 million. The SIP is a large-scale commitment to restore water quality and habitat for these returning fish as well as resident native fish. PGE and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs plan to invest more than \$121 million for fish-related projects and activities over the next 50 years throughout the region. Their work has already begun, and by 2010 and 2011, adult salmon should begin a return trip from the Pacific up the Columbia and Deschutes. They will be captured and then trucked upstream past the dams to complete their life cycles. The SIP involves multiple partners working on a long-list of projects including: the modification of existing barriers to fish passage, the removal or lowering of levees, habitat restoration projects such as native plantings, and land protection agreements. "From a local perspective, the SIP is an opportunity for organizations from Prineville, Bend and Sisters, to work together rather than compete for restoration funds. By coordinating our efforts, we accomplish even more for the quality of life in our region. Everyone wins," according to Ryan Houston, director of the Upper Deschutes Watershed Council. The Upper Deschutes Watershed Council is joined by the Crooked River Watershed Council, Deschutes River Conservancy, and Deschutes Basin Land Trust, among others, as key local groups implementing SIP projects. Beyond fish and wildlife, the SIP investment will improve water quality for those in the region, including the tribes whose drinking water comes from the Deschutes. "In tribal cultures and religions, we talk about the gifts of the creator," says Bobby Brunoe, OWEB board member. "The first gift is the water, the quality and quantity. The second gift of the creator is the fish. The cooperative effort to restore fish and the quality of water to the Deschutes is very important to us." OWEB funding for the Upper Deschutes SIP comes from Oregon State Lottery funds. State funds will leverage contributions by partners including Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Portland General Electric, and other state, local and federal resources. OWEB is a state agency led by a 17-member citizen board. OWEB provides grants and services to landowners, citizen groups, organizations and agencies working to restore healthy streams, lakes and rivers in Oregon. Funding comes from the Oregon Lottery as a result of a citizen initiative in 1998, sales of salmon license plates, federal salmon funds and other sources.

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