



OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Joint Fish Screening & Passage Task Force

MEETING MINUTES

ODFW Screen Shop, The Dalles, OR

Conference Room

Wednesday – May 6, 2026 @ 0800 to ~1200 hrs.

Members	Representing	Present In Person	Present Virtually	Absent
Fish Passage Task Force				
Kelly Moore	Fishing and Conservation		x	
Denise Hoffert (<i>Chair</i>)	Fishing and Conservation			x
Jim Harbeck	Fishing and Conservation	x		
Steve Albertelli (<i>Vice Chair</i>)	Water Users		x	
April Snell	Water Users	x		
Fred Messerle	Water Users	x		
Alix Danielsen	Public-At-Large	x		
Ted Labbe	Public-At-Large		x	
Tom Iverson	Public-At-Large	x		
Fish Screening Task Force				
Harry Bither	Agriculture Interests	x		
Robert (Bob) Durham	Agriculture Interests	x		
Darin Olson	Agriculture Interests			x
Alex Hardison	Fishing or Fish Conservation	x		
Judith Barkstedt (<i>Chair</i>)	Fishing or Fish Conservation	x		
William (Bill) Freeland (<i>Vice Chair</i>)	Fishing or Fish Conservation	x		
Alexis Vaivoda	Public-At-Large	x		

ODFW Staff in Attendance*:

Mac Barr, Fish Passage Coordinator
 Greg Apke*, Fish Screens and Passage Program Manager
 Katherine Nordholm, Fish Screen and Passage Coordinator
 Sharon Crowley, Assistant Fish Passage Coordinator
 Toby Schuyler, Fish Screen Coordinator
 Joel Watts, Fish Passage Engineer
 Ali Webb*, Legislative fiscal office, ODFW
 Lindsay Powell, ODFW Assistant District Fish Biologist

Members of the Public in Attendance*:

Allen Gillette*, ODOT

*Attended virtually, *additional members of the public may have joined virtually throughout the meeting.*

Meeting Agenda

Call to Order Fish Screening & Passage Task Force Meeting and Welcome

Chair Barkstedt called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

Introductions (*all*)

Chair Barkstedt facilitated a round of introductions of everyone at the meeting.

Review & Approve Task Force Meeting Agenda (*Chair Barkstedt*)

Chair Barkstedt asked if questions or changes were needed to the draft agenda for the Combined Fish Screening and Passage Task Force meeting.

Motion: Alex Hardison motioned to approve the agenda. Bill Freeland seconded the motion. The motion was approved 13-0.

Review & Approve March 11, 2026, FPTF Meeting Minutes (*Chair Barkstedt*)

Motion: April Snell moved to approve March 11, 2026, Fish Passage Task Force meeting minutes. Alix Danielsen seconded the motion. The motion was approved 8-0.

Review & Approve April 2, 2026, FSTF Meeting Minutes (*Chair Barkstedt*)

Motion: Bob Durham moved to approve April 2, 2026, Fish Screening Task Force meeting minutes. Alexis Vaivoda seconded the motion. The motion was approved 6-0.

Task Force Member Issues, Updates & Roundtable (*Task Force Members*)

Kelly Moore wished he could be in person at the meeting to see what's happening in Fifteenmile Creek.

Ted Labbe said it was unfortunate he was unable to attend meeting in person. He is continuing to work on the South Coast to remove two fish passage barriers while also continuing to work in Portland.

Fred Messerly reflected on the notion that reality is the leading cause of stress. The South Coast had an easy winter whereas it was a hard winter on the North Coast. Spring came early on the South Coast, but the Coast won't feel as much of the drought compared to inland areas. Fred discussed the Legislative session and how Resource Oregon (rural Oregon) is not a priority at the Legislative level in the state, and until that priority changes, work on the ground is severely limited. Businesses can close and leave, but how do you replace acres of land and leave as a farmer or rancher? Fred would like a report of the status of Coastal Coho delisting at the next Task Force meeting and to discuss what the Task Force can do to help promote it because the Coast would benefit if Coho were delisted.

April Snell informed us that we are looking at some of worst water conditions on record, from Willamette Valley to Eastern Oregon. On a positive note, irrigation districts are implementing lots of good projects, including piping and instream water. These projects will enable us to better quantify the benefits this year, both water for farmers and instream, and provide examples of collaboration and infrastructure for droughts. They are working on obtaining federal cost share grants from FRIMA (Fisheries Restoration and Irrigation Mitigation Act), administered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Jim Harbeck commented on the very low snowpack around the state. He said the recent Snake River Steelhead season had very good returns and harvest, the best since the 2015-2016 return year. He heard fishing was fantastic all over this year and is thankful for the past passage work completed by our predecessors that helped salmon and steelhead to pass over 8 dams and 600 miles. Jim reported that

ODFW, two tribes, and an irrigation district are working on multiple projects in the Wallowa River with various funding sources and addressing barriers on the Statewide Fish Passage Priority Barrier List.

Steve Albertelli had no updates for today.

Alix Danielsen reported that construction season on fish passage projects has kicked off. The biggest passage concern is low flow this year, and maybe even sediment concerns which may be observed tomorrow at some restoration projects. Alix shared she is excited for everyone to see the work being accomplished in the area this week.

Tom Iverson reported on the litigation with the Columbia River System BiOp. They won a preliminary injunction for 1 year, but the federal government is appealing. More information should be received in about a month. Tom shared the fish passage issue about spill for fish at the dams. Water supply for the Columbia River is better than expected, and reservoirs are about 95% full. The Snake River is in a drought year, running at 75%, but flow from Canada is at 105%, resulting in an almost average water supply year at The Dalles. Water temperatures are elevated though, and it's going to be a long hot summer, especially for the fish. Regarding federal funding, Tom shared that although President Trump zeroed out funding for fiscal year 2026, we were able to keep federal funding in place and not lose ground. They are now working on fiscal year 2027, which has the same story – defending funding. Tom reported that OMB is holding up funding by slowly releasing it, so the Tribe is paying to run hatcheries while waiting for money. Habitat biologists have enough work backed up and funding backed up that it hasn't hit yet, but Tom is very worried about the next few years with funding not coming in on time.

Harry Bither shared there has been a little bit of rain since the last Task Force meeting. A couple reservoirs are 77% full now, which is not ideal, but better.

Bob Durham shared there is very little water flowing in the creek on his farm in Dufur, about 30 miles southwest of The Dalles. The stream flow today resembles that of mid-June, but there are numerous very good springs in National Forest land in Eightmile Canyon lower in system. Everyone is concerned about water levels. The hay season is early, and the low water is early, but everything is chugging along.

Alex Hardison said he is familiarizing himself with fish screening in Oregon and had a meeting with Josh Bailey of the North Unit Irrigation District (NUID) to learn more. Alex also reported this is the second consecutive year of strong steelhead returns to Deschutes basin.

Judith Barkstedt provided an update that the delisting of Oregon Coast Coho is still on track and agrees it is a good idea to have someone come to talk about it. There is a fish screen project on North Fork Little Butte Creek in the Rogue River basin that is under review by the NOAA fish screen engineer. Timber harvest has ramped up with the executive order on western Oregon forests. Judith is reviewing some valley reset projects, a few of which are being implemented on the West side and a couple projects on the East side. She also visited Fivemile Bell valley reset project on the western Oregon coast where lessons learned were discussed. The valley floor is covered in trees and water and is not a channel like we're used to seeing.

Alexis Vaivoda shared she is the manager of Farmers Irrigation District, and that tomorrow, the Task Force will see the headworks and diversion from a fish passage standpoint and the largest screen they maintain. Alexis wants to inform patrons that this will be a challenging year for growers, recreationists, and conservationists in Hood River area. A water challenged summer will also bring more sediment, so it will be doubly challenging.

Bill Freeland provided an update on the work in the McKenzie River basin to reconnect sloughs to the river, cleaning out from the Holiday Fire five years ago continues, and people are returning to live in the Blue River area. The watershed is coming back and starting to look greener. The Calapooia River is running low, even Thompsons Mills does not have as much water as in a typical year. There is a large population of Northern Pikeminnow that run past the mill to spawn, but they haven't seen many this year. Fishermen also haven't been catching Largemouth Bass or Northern Pikeminnow.

ODFW Passage Program Updates (*ODFW Staff*)

Greg Apke started the Fish Passage Program updates with a quick update about the Western Division American Fisheries Society conference in Portland with 700 fisheries scientists, workshops, and symposia. The conference theme is the Power of Perspective, though water and drought have also been themes thus far. The Fish Screens and Passage Program is ramping up for a busy construction season and even busier irrigation season. The screen shops are where the good work gets done to meet irrigation demands for fish screening, and it is important to make funding investments where we can provide access to cool water refugia and to make the most strategic investment on landscape. To that end, the program has submitted its proposal through OWEB to NOAA Fisheries for PCSRF, pursuing \$2.7 million for the program in addition to the ask through the agency budget. The Fish Screening and Passage Program is also asking for another \$9 million in Lottery Revenue Bond (LRB) funds for passage and screening infrastructure projects. The program currently administers \$8.75 million LRB funds in year 1, wrapping up spring 2028. An update will be provided on this at the next meeting. The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds wrap up this year. Some of the projects under review include the Wallowa Lake Dam project where a fish passage facility is being designed with critical and complex components. Construction is planned for summer 2026. A fish passage roughened channel is in design for the Mirror Pond Dam in the Deschutes River located in downtown Bend. This is a collaborative project with PacifiCorps and the Upper Deschutes Watershed Council. WaterWatch has submitted designs to remove Murphy Dam in the Applegate River in the Rogue River basin and replace the irrigation diversion with a pump screen.

Fred asked Greg for an update on Winchester Dam. Greg replied that the state of Oregon, through the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission, issued a final enforcement order. The Winchester Water Control District is seeking to appeal the order and requested a stay on the order. The order compels the Winchester Water Control District to provide passage at the dam. The agency is working through the legal process.

Mac Barr provided an update on the high number of projects seeking fish passage approval, many of which are restoration projects, and how the program is messaging the benefits of early coordination for both the applicant and program staff. Straightforward culvert projects are a quick review, but valley reset projects, channel grading, and restoration takes longer to review and approve. The Task Force can expect to hear from Mac soon regarding fish passage guidance and outreach subgroups. Pete Baki received more than a hundred comments from ODOT on the draft large bridge guidance seeking clarity and a streamlined process for both the applicant and reviewer. The program is finalizing the large bridge guidance document.

Katherine provided an update on fish passage exemptions. All exemptions are reviewed every 7 years. This year there were only 3 fish passage exemptions for review. Information was sent to the district fish biologists who review whether conditions changed and if the exemption needs to be revoked. All 3 exemptions have no change and will continue for the next 7 years. The Fish Passage website has a link to Fish Passage Exemptions and a web map that shows locations of all in the state. You can click on location and see all the information about the exemption. Alix asked what constitutes a change in

conditions to revoke an exemption. Katherine explained the conditions more and gave the example of a culvert that had received an exemption but later washed out.

Katherine provided an update on the Fish Screening Task Force needs, clarity on advisory role; enhancing Task Force involvement; improving communication from ODFW on statutes, diversion prioritization, costs, maintenance needs, efficiencies and improvements; investigating funding scenarios (what does program look like if funding is static, increases or decreases?); engagement with partners; and identifying data needed to tell the story of the screening program. Next step is to form workgroup(s) and develop a work plan between now and the October Task Force meeting. Katherine said she is committing to more frequent screening program updates with monthly emails or Teams calls throughout the summer, and participation in outreach opportunities like the Oregon Water Resources Congress meeting.

Tom had an idea for Screening funding based on the BPA's hatchery strategy management plans that look at each hatchery's components and life span of the components to calculate operations and maintenance costs. ODFW can use its screen inventory list to build an asset management plan for each screen, and then the district can provide a monthly status report on each screen. This can help with operations and maintenance funding, rather than depending only on non-recurring maintenance funds. Katherine said the screening program has been getting more BPA non-recurring maintenance funds for the screen shops, but we need to know what the program looks like with a variety of funding scenarios.

ODFW District Overview (*Lindsay Powell*)

Lindsay Powell provided a monitoring overview of the Mid Columbia district, which includes the lower Deschutes River basin, the Trout Creek habitat district, The Dalles screen shop, the ODFW East Region research programs on Hood River and Fifteenmile Creek, and a partnership with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs for fish monitoring on the Warm Springs Reservation. District staff and partners monitor Summer Steelhead, Coho, Fall Chinook, and Redband Trout, including a mark-recapture study from 1977 to the present at Sherars Falls to estimate Summer Steelhead, Coho, and Fall Chinook in the Deschutes River. There is the Round Butte Hatchery for Steelhead on the Deschutes River, and wild and hatchery steelhead have similar declining trends while hatchery releases have not changed over this time. The population decline is due to poor adult survival. Coho over the last 30 years have recolonized above Sherars Falls, and it's unknown what's driving it, presenting an interesting shift in species composition as Coho increase and Steelhead decrease. The species populations can overlap spatially, spawning times can differ, and there is a lot of rearing overlap. Almost the entire Coho population spawns on the Warm Springs Reservation, and it's hypothesized these are Coho hatchery strays that started this stock. The Tribe is exploring this theory with genetics work. There have been increasing returns of Fall Chinook and an upward trend in abundance in the Deschutes, with a 2025 estimate of 40,000. However, there has been a low abundance of Spring Chinook hatchery returns at Round Butte and the Warm Springs NFH, and wild Spring Chinook returns are on the precipice, with less than 100 adults returning. Redband trout are also monitored by boat electrofishing for density, growth, and population estimates. There are approximately 1,000 trout per mile on the Deschutes. Smallmouth Bass are seasonally present (May-September), up to river mile 26, but there is no evidence of natural reproduction in the Deschutes River. Lindsay's update prompted many questions and conversations among Task Force members on the salmon and steelhead populations in the Deschutes River basin.

Public Comment Period

None

Break

Fifteenmile Basin Overview and Screening Impacts (*Powell, Nordholm, Schuyler*)

Lindsay provided an overview of the projects on Fifteenmile Creek basin from a fisheries monitoring perspective. This is a high priority area for fish screens. The basin is very heavily irrigated and there are ESA-listed Steelhead. The district runs a rotary screw trap to monitor out-migrating Steelhead abundance, and they are seeing a decline of Steelhead in the basin. There are also Pacific Lamprey and Coho in the basin. The local hydro system management (The Dalles Dam) affects Summer Steelhead returning to Fifteenmile Creek. April and Bob discussed some of the restoration work in the area and the split season program where farmers put water instream during the summer months. The program used to be run through Water Resources Department, and now Trout Unlimited is involved. Farmers are compensated for the third season of hay they don't get by putting water back instream. The Fifteenmile Watershed Council and Conservation District are actively working on funding sources. Many farmers are on board, but it is less lucrative for farmers to participate.

Katherine and Toby gave a presentation on the long-term investment in screening and habitat and showed a map of fish screens in the basin and dams for Underhill and Lyda. There are 193 water right points of diversion, totaling 65cfs. Underhill has one of the oldest water rights on the creek. Screened water diversions total 64cfs. Many are pump screens, but some are gravity diversions. Toby talked about an initiative to replace pump screens in the basin. The local NRCS would help provide match funds to replace screens and then the farmer has an agreement with Screen Shop to maintain parts for the new screens. There is a cumulative impact of screening smaller diversions. Andrew showed the Task Force a few types of pump screens, including active screens with jet sprayers and moving parts, and passive screens, such as PumpRite screens that use sweeping velocity to stay clean. Pump screens may or may not be pulled at the end of the season based on the location within the basin and maintenance needs. Landowners will do minor maintenance; the Screen Shop does major maintenance.

Columbia Basin Restoration Initiative (*Iverson*)

Tom, a senior advisor to salmon council for the Yakama Nation, gave a presentation on the Columbia Basin Restoration Initiative (CBRI). Salmon and Steelhead were listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 1992. The first Biological Opinion (BiOp) was written in 1995 and identified basin-wide limiting factors, including all four lower Snake River dams. Columbia River Hydropower has been in litigation ever since, and the initial BiOp was thrown out by the courts. An independent group was hired by NOAA Fisheries to find a common solution for salmon, but there wasn't a common set of goals. The Columbia Basin Partnership formed in 2017 as a task force for NOAA and included all interested parties, except federal agencies. It identified qualitative and quantitative goals for salmon. In 2021, Representative Mike Simpson (ID) said the Snake River dams cannot be removed without first replacing the services they provide, which would cost around \$32 billion. About the same time, Senator Murray (WA) and Washington Governor Inslee published a report that salmon cannot be recovered without removal of the Snake River dams but agreed the services the dams provide must be replaced to maintain a resilient economy. The Biden administration adopted the 2020 BiOp, which was immediately litigated, and started government-to-government consultation with the Columbia Basin Tribes on the operation of the hydropower system to hear their concerns. NOAA also released a report with the Columbia Basin Partnership addressing the question of what it would take to rebuild? The answer had three centerpiece actions: repair the Snake River corridor, restore salmon above the blocked areas, and improve water management for irrigation and fish passage in Mid-Columbia. In 2023, the Biden administration brought in a federal mediation service to try and find a comprehensive solution to the salmon problem and the energy problem; however, Hydropower pushed back against it. The Yakama Nation reached out to the other three Tribes, Washington, and Oregon. Together they identified 4 components for a healthy, resilient, and abundant basin: urgent action, a unified approach, obligations to Tribes, and community resilience. The result is the Columbia Basin Restoration Initiative (CBRI) representing a collaborative

effort of the Six Sovereigns to use this as a roadmap to meet the objectives of 1. Restore salmon and steelhead, 2. Ecosystem health, 3. Halt the decline, 4. Quick and just clean energy transition, 5. Urgent and comprehensive action, and 6. Honor treaty and trust obligations. It's going to take a nationwide effort to restore salmon; a transparent whole-of-government approach. The Resilient Columbia Basin Agreement, a 10-year MOU, was signed in 2023 with the Biden administration, and while in effect, litigation was stayed. The MOU included investigations into how to provide services without the Snake River dams. The Trump administration ended the MOU and put hydropower operations back into the hands of the courts. The Six Sovereigns are now fighting in the judicial arena, still believe CBRI is the solution, and have confirmed commitment to it. The Six Sovereigns are starting to work with Congress and are seeking funding that is not BPA only, which drives up energy rates. They are also working with regional stakeholders and the NW Power and Conservation Council, a 4-state body (OR, WA, ID, MT), the Columbia River Fish and Wildlife Program, and the Columbia River Power Plan, which is a vision of how to double electrical generation in the next 20 years that removes pressure on the hydropower system by creating other ways to generate electricity.

Tom also provided an update on his visit to Vicksburg, Mississippi, where they have models of The Dalles Dam, McNary Dam, John Day Dam, and Lower Monumental Dam. They have a model for every dam in the Columbia R basin, including the Snake River dams, and can run simulations for different operational scenarios at each dam.

FCA Overview and Projects (*Harkema*)

Peter Harkema from FCA provided contextual background of Farmers Conservation Alliance (FCA) and FID. FCA has been around for 20 years, starting with Farmers Irrigation District (FID) after a series of floods wiped out their infrastructure including the fish screens. FCA created its own fish screen solution for FID that could also be applied elsewhere. FCA began to focus on fish screens in OR and MT. Screens ranged from 1cfs to 600cfs on Truckee R in NV to protect Lahontan Cutthroat Trout. Communities are struggling with modernizing the entirety of their irrigation infrastructure and making mainline improvements. The Irrigation Modernization Program developed by FCA is an example of long-term resilience goal setting. In the Rogue River, the City of Medford and irrigators came up with plans to find available funding streams. They're working closely with Bureau of Reclamation and NRCS for funding sources. The Energy Trust of Oregon is struggling with small scale hydro facilities and in-conduit hydro and teamed up with FCA to think about a more comprehensive modernization project. One example is in the Rogue basin where floating solar panels on a pond provide reduced rates for low-income communities in Jackson County. The Klamath district will have the first canal covered solar project in this state this year. April, Alexis, and Alix contributed to the discussion.

~ 12:01 pm * Meeting Adjourn *****

Chair Barkstedt adjourned the meeting at 12:01.

Public Comments Received:

No written public comments were received.