

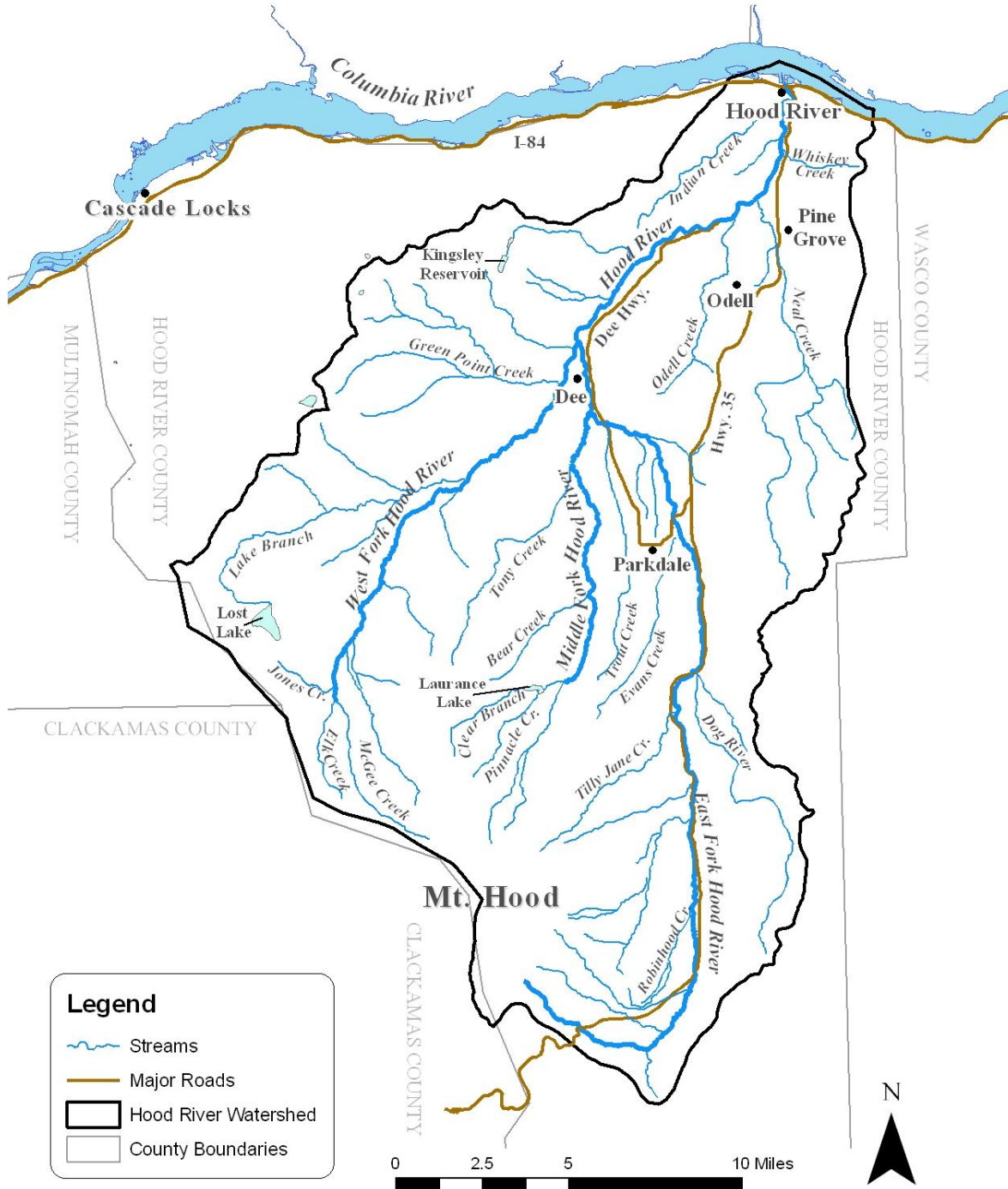
Hood River Watershed Group

"to sustain and improve the Hood River watershed through education, cooperation, and stewardship"

You are living in a watershed...

A watershed is the land area that drains to a particular lake, stream, or river. The Hood River watershed covers 339 square miles between Mt. Hood and the Columbia River. There are three main branches of the Hood River, the West Fork, Middle Fork, and East Fork.

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About the Hood River Watershed Group

Watershed Councils are locally organized, voluntary, non-regulatory groups established to improve the condition of watersheds in their local area. The Hood River Watershed Group (HRWG) is one of 89 watershed councils in Oregon. The Watershed Group was formed in 1993 and is recognized by the Hood River County Board of Commissioners. The HRWG is not a government agency or environmental organization, but is a non-regulatory, grassroots forum of local landowners, irrigation and water districts, fruit growers, sport fishermen, businesses, tribal agencies, and local, state, and federal agencies. The Watershed Group's mission is "to sustain and improve the Hood River watershed through education, cooperation, and stewardship."



Membership in the Hood River Watershed Group

Membership in the Watershed Group is open to any individual or organization interested in supporting the group's mission. Everyone who has attended at least one meeting is a member of the HRWG.

Organizational Structure

Watershed Group staff members work within the bylaws and processes developed by the HRWG and under the policies and legal requirements of the Hood River Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). The SWCD is a legal subdivision of the state of Oregon. Watershed Group staff members are employees of the Hood River SWCD. The SWCD is overseen by a five member, locally-elected board of directors.



The Watershed Coordinator works with numerous government agencies, businesses, groups, and individuals to champion the HRWG's mission. The Coordinator and Chair discuss and determine group activities and tasks on a regular basis. The Chair is elected by consensus. The Watershed Coordinator is held accountable to both the Hood River SWCD and the Watershed Group membership.

As well as providing staff management, the Conservation District acts at the Watershed Group's fiscal agent because the HRWG is not a standalone 501(c)3. Funding for the Watershed Group comes from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation, local irrigation districts, and grants.

There are three committees within the HRWG. The Executive Committee is composed of 14 individuals selected from a variety of groups and interests. They represent the Watershed Group to outside agencies, organizations, and interest groups. The Technical Committee is composed of representatives from a range of natural resource agencies and provides technical advice and assistance to the HRWG membership and Executive Committee. The Operations Committee is composed of the HRWG Chair, SWCD Manager, and a representative for the Confederated Tribes of

Warm Springs, the irrigation districts, and the general membership. This five member committee provides Watershed Group involvement in staff supervision, input into and oversight of fiscal management, and assistance in developing work plans. The Watershed Group Chair generally acts as a conduit from the Operations Committee to the Coordinator.

Group Functions

The Watershed Group prioritizes respect for ideas and open communication between all members of the group. Decisions are made through a dual consensus process. In this process, any action undertaken by the membership must be approved over the course of two regular meetings. Approval of proposals is through consensus (general agreement), as opposed to majority voting.

The Hood River Watershed Action Plan identifies Watershed Group goals and priorities. Additionally, projects that are consistent with the HRWG mission can be identified by any Watershed Group member. The Action Plan represents the main planning document for Watershed Group work prioritization. Projects in the Action Plan were identified through existing federal, regional, and state assessments and management plans, as well as public and Watershed Group member input. The plan prioritizes protection and restoration actions throughout the watershed based on expected project results, Technical Committee input, and general Watershed Group input. Projects are managed by Watershed Group staff or project partners. Through planning, funding, and outreach assistance, the HRWG strives to facilitate projects, including empowering project sponsors to take the lead role.



How to Get Involved

All individuals, groups, or agencies interested in Hood River natural resources are encouraged to attend meetings. Meetings are held monthly, from 7:00-9:00pm on the 4th Tuesday of the month at the OSU Extension Office, 2990 Experiment Station Road in Hood River. No meetings are held in August and December. Our mailing address is 3007 Experiment Station Road, Hood River, OR 97031. Please contact the HRWG Coordinator at 541-386-6063 or hoodriver@gorge.net for further information.

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Description of the Hood River Watershed

Approximately, 65% of the Hood River basin is publicly owned, with about 50% of land in the watershed within the Mt. Hood National Forest. The main economic activities in the watershed are agriculture, forestry and tourism. The Hood River valley is the largest fruit growing region in Oregon, with approximately 15,000 acres of pears, cherries, and apples under management. Roughly one quarter of the land in the basin is managed as industrial forest.



The Hood River watershed lies in the transition zone between the wetter marine climate on the west side and drier continental climate on the east side of the Cascades. The largest proportion of land cover is conifer forests dominated by Douglas fir and ponderosa pine. Six fish "runs" have been declared threatened in the basin, including spring Chinook, fall Chinook, bull trout, winter steelhead, summer steelhead, and Coho. The watershed also contains the ESA listed northern spotted owl.

The Hood River watershed has a number of limiting factors for fish. Various sections of the basin have elevated water temperature, turbidity, pesticides, metals, and/or nutrient levels. Stream flows throughout the basin are diminished due to irrigation, hydropower, and municipal water diversions. There are numerous partial or complete fish passage barriers within the watershed. Additionally, development activities within the valley have altered floodplain processes by reducing large woody debris recruitment, pool frequency, spawning gravel retention, and in-stream habitat complexity.



Projects Completed by the Watershed Group

Cooperative projects are being conducted by a variety of interests to improve watershed health. The Watershed Group works with private landowners, irrigation districts, agriculturalists, foresters, and agencies to complete assessment, monitoring, planning, education, technical assistance, and restoration projects. Work includes water quality monitoring, fish screening at water diversions, irrigation system upgrades, fish passage barrier removal, stream and riparian habitat restoration, and improved irrigation and pest management practices. The goal is to strengthen local fish populations, improve water quality, promote sustainable agriculture and natural resource use, and maintain the high quality of life in the Hood River valley.



The Watershed Group values implementing on-the-ground restoration projects to improve basin conditions. The HRWG provides planning, funding, and/or implementation assistance for restoration projects.

The Watershed Group has a strong focus on education. Through the Field Series, an annual set of classes led by natural resource professionals, the Watershed Group works to educate community members about stewardship efforts and natural processes in the basin. Watershed Group staff members also educate students through service learning projects, resource and ecology lessons, and by connecting teachers with appropriate resource experts.

The HRWG is involved in planning processes locally and regionally. In addition to the Hood River Watershed Action Plan, the Watershed Group has been active in the creation of new assessments and plans including the Hood River Watershed Assessment, Hood River Subbasin Plan, USFS Aquatic Habitat Restoration Strategy, Hood River Agricultural Water Quality Management Plan, and Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Plan.

