



ROGUE BASIN
PARTNERSHIP

Rogue River Watershed, Oregon

More than 124 miles of the Rogue River are federally designated Wild and Scenic. Located in the southwest corner of Oregon, the Rogue River main stem is now free-flowing for more than 150 miles following the removals of Gold Hill Dam (2008), Savage Rapids Dam (2009), and Gold Ray Dam (2010).

Despite this progress, hundreds of known barriers remain in the 3.3 million acre Rogue River Basin. These structures inhibit fish passage and sediment transport, which in turn impact the long-term viability of the fisheries in the Basin. This is especially critical as climate change drives the need to ensure key spawning and rearing habitat in the face of increased water temperatures and decreased summer streamflows. For these reasons, removing fish passage barriers on Rogue River tributaries are a high priority conservation activity that will benefit native spring and fall Chinook salmon, threatened coho salmon, winter and summer steelhead, cutthroat trout, and rainbow trout, among other native fishes.

In May 2016, the Rogue Basin Partnership, a coalition of conservation organizations, water districts, and tribes working to protect the Rogue River Basin, with support from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, released the Rogue Basinwide Priority Barrier Removal Analysis. This report identified 38 high priority barriers for removal and set forth an effective programmatic plan for removing those barriers to increase access to habitat for adult and juvenile salmonids and other aquatic species that will lead to improved ecosystem health in the Rogue River Basin. The Rogue Basin Partnership is coordinating efforts of its members to remove these barriers over the next 10 years. The initial fish passage barrier removal effort will be the Beeson-Robinson Dam.

Benefits of Removing the Beeson-Robinson Dam

- The Beeson-Robinson diversion completely blocks upstream fish movement from April through October. Although stop logs are removed during adult steelhead and coho salmon migration, a 3-foot high leap through high velocity water limits successful passage under most flow conditions outside of the irrigation season. The project includes removing the small dam and installing a reprofiled stream channel (often referred to as a “roughened channel” or “roughened ramp”) to maintain the irrigation water point of diversion.
- The Rogue River Watershed Council has applied for funding for the project from several sources (the largest of which is the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board). The Rogue River Watershed Council has entered into agreements allowing work on the project with the landowner on whose property the dam is located as well as all 19 irrigators who receive water from the diversion.
- This project will improve the ability of adult steelhead and salmon to access approximately three miles of spawning habitat and will make upstream movement of juvenile steelhead and coho salmon possible during the warmest months of the irrigation season when juvenile fish often move upstream seeking cool water.

Steelhead are known to use the reaches upstream of this diversion and both NOAA Fisheries and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife concur that coho salmon are likely to inhabit Wagner Creek, though currently that use is low.

- While fish passage restoration on a small waterbody like Wagner Creek will only modestly enhance fishery populations when considered at the scale of the Rogue's recreational fishery, improved access to several miles of habitat will translate to enhanced juvenile survival and improved availability of steelhead and salmon to fisheries on the Pacific and within the Rogue. It is precisely the type of project needed on numerous tributary streams through the Rogue River Basin to allow fish access to habitat now that the main stem dams have been removed.

Partners –

- [Rogue River Watershed Council](#)
- [Rogue Basin Partnership](#)
- [Bonneville Environmental Foundation](#)
- [WaterWatch of Oregon](#)
- [Cow Creek Band of the Umpqua Tribe of Indians](#)
- [Laird Norton Foundation](#)
- [Ashland Fly Shop](#)
- [FlyWater Travel](#)
- [Momentum River Expeditions](#)

Initial ORF projects

Resources Legacy Fund's Open Rivers Fund, which is supported by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, will provide \$115,000 to build the Partnership's project management and communications and outreach capacity RLF will provide \$75,000 to the Rogue River Watershed Council to expand capacity to engage landowners, design and permit projects, and improve habitat in the Rogue River Basin. RLF also will provide the Council \$25,000 for the removal and upgrade of the 5.5-foot high Beeson-Robinson diversion dam on Wagner Creek in the Bear Creek Subbasin, near Talent, Oregon; total cost of the project is estimated at approximately \$160,000.