



## Metolius ACSC and HB 3100 Support – May 26, 2009

Our organizations support protecting the Metolius basin and the land-surfacewater-groundwater web that sustains its fish and wildlife habitats. The Metolius Area of Critical State Concern (ACSC) and House Bill 3100 achieve the needed protection for the natural treasures of the Metolius.

**Summary** – The Metolius treasures include spring-fed streams, federally-listed endangered bull trout, critical winter range for elk and deer, native redband trout, pure and rare genetic reserves for the redbands, outstanding bird habitat, Chinook and sockeye salmon currently being restored at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars, as well as essential spawning and rearing habitat in the tributaries. Pristine forests, Native American cultural resources and wildland recreation are also very important. The Forest Service concluded the Metolius Basin was at full capacity for recreational use in the mid-1990s.

**Jobs and Revenue** - Construction of destination resorts in the Metolius will not generate enough jobs to significantly alter our region's economy. The costs to the public of allowing this construction and the return to a boom and bust housing cycle far outweigh the benefits. In the long run, destination resorts seriously compromise the destinations. New resorts are luxury second-home subdivisions. They would create a small amount of revenue and don't justify sacrificing the Metolius Basin.

**Streamflow** - Even small flow reductions in the main Metolius River are unacceptable, but the small tributaries such as Lake and Fly Creeks are where the most serious problems would emerge because of the dependence of Metolius fish on the tributaries for spawning and rearing. Native bull trout, for example, spend up to eight months as eggs and alevins in tributary gravel, so lower flows that expose the spawning-rearing areas during dry years and seasons would have serious consequences.

A significant portion of the water used by both resorts as originally proposed would come from cold groundwater that would have eventually discharged to the Metolius River and its tributaries. Reduced flows would result from direct groundwater pumping and indirect groundwater use through the diversion of small Metolius tributaries that recharge the aquifer during critical, low water periods.

No field data was provided to support the reliability and validity of the Metolius's proposal to divert and store spring runoff as a source of water. According to Mark Yinger, RG, a majority of the water diverted would have percolated to the shallow aquifer, which discharges to spawning-rearing tributaries such as Lake Creek when stream flows are low in late summer and fall. In drought conditions the resort would likely rely on wells, with the same significantly adverse impact on small spawning-rearing tributaries.

The Ponderosa Land & Cattle Company (PLC) originally proposed pumping 2422 acre-feet per year, which is 3.7 times the highest annual water use by the City of Sisters. This would reduce spring discharges to the Metolius River, and particularly its tributaries upstream of Jefferson Creek and northwest of the property. Such pumping would also reduce groundwater discharge to Fly Creek and lower Whychus Creek, a major destination for reintroduced steelhead.

**Native Fish** - Fly Creek often goes dry near Lake Billy Chinook so there is little connectivity or intermingling of hatchery-raised fish with the wild fish. As a result Fly Creek redbands are one of the best sources of pure and rare native-redband DNA in the Upper Deschutes. The middle reaches are fed by groundwater that maintains survival pools during dry periods for the native redbands. ODFW stated

in 12/08 " *Trout Creek and Fly Creek are two streams that harbor small redband populations and have never been stocked. Therefore, from a purity standpoint they are probably the best.*"

The native bull trout also depend on the tributaries. Most of the spawning by reintroduced Chinook salmon will likely take place in the mainstem of the Metolius, but research done in conjunction with the reintroduction effort identifies Lake Creek as one of the big producers. Sockeye, reverted from the existing, native kokanee/sockeye will heavily use small tributaries such as Lake Creek.

**County Planning** - Most of Jefferson County's planning was done in 1981. In 1997 the County updated its inventory of riparian corridors, wetland areas and bird habitat. Deer, elk and pronghorn habitat and other Goal 5 resources have not been updated since the original inventory in 1981.

**ACSC Process** - The ACSC process used updated resource information in a sound-science manner, including the application of the USGS groundwater model released in 2004 and the 2006 Forest Service elk and deer winter range maps. ODFW elk and deer winter range maps are available and confirm that the PLC and DP properties are within elk winter range. PLC lands are also within deer winter range.

In conclusion, the following organizations oppose building destination resorts in the Metolius Basin and support the protection provided by the Metolius ACSC and House Bill 3100.

---

American Rivers Brett Swift, Northwest Regional Director	Native Fish Society – Oregon Bill Bakke, Executive Director	Trout Unlimited – Oregon Council; Tom Wolf, Chair
Audubon Society of Portland Bob Sallinger Conservation Director	Native Fish Society Tom Davis, Upper Deschutes	WaterWatch John DeVoe, Executive Director
Central Oregon Flyfishers Dennis Rockwell, President	Northwest Steelheaders Thomas M. Smoot, President	Western Environmental Law Center, Gregory Costello, Executive Director
Lane County Audubon Society Debbie Schlenoff, Conservation Chair	Pacific Rivers John Kober, Executive Director	Wild Salmon Center Jay Nicholas, Program Manager
National Wildlife Federation Matt Little, Regional Representative	Sierra Club Ivan Maluski, Conservation Coordinator	Wolfree, Blake Lowrey, Program Manager
	Trout Unlimited - Deschutes Ted Brownrigg, Chair	

---