

Figure ES-1  
Willamette River Basin and Reservoir Projects

## The Willamette River Basin



# Willamette Project Reallocation Update

House Committee on Water

February 22, 2021

Niki Iverson, City of Hillsboro

Adam Sussman, GSI Water Solutions

# U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)

- 13 dams and reservoirs in the Basin
- Combined storage capacity of 1,590,000 acre-feet
- Authorized for multiple purposes
- Water rights to store water for irrigation
- Storage space has not been allocated
- Irrigation contracts under U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (aprox. 75,000 acre-feet)



Lookout Point Dam and Reservoir, USACE







# Why Are Water Providers Interested?

## Setting The Stage For The *Long-Term*



- Responsibility to plan for and serve our growing communities



- Limited future water supply options




- Long-term climate change impacts to existing supplies



- Improve federal partnerships for water supply needs/advocacy



A photograph of the Detroit Dam, a large concrete structure with multiple spillways, set against a backdrop of forested mountains. In the foreground, a high-voltage electrical transmission tower stands on the right side, with power lines stretching across the scene. The water is turbulent as it flows through the dam's spillways.

## How Could Water Providers Use Stored Water?

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- Future peak season supply
- Supplemental supply for operations, emergencies, and resiliency
  - *Fish persistence conditions, climate change, drought, wildfire and water quality impacts, etc.*
- Proactive mitigation (e.g., temperature requirements)



United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 17, 2014

The Honorable Jo-Ellen Darcy  
Assistant Secretary of the Army  
108 Army Pentagon  
Washington DC



JOHN A. KITZHABER, MD  
GOVERNOR

April 9, 2012

Colonel John W. Eisenhauer, P.E.  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers District Office  
1125 NW Couch Street  
Portland, OR 97209

Re: Willamette Basin Federal Storage Project

Dear Colonel Eisenhauer,

As you know, water stored in the Willamette Basin Federal Storage Project is essential to meeting future needs for irrigation, municipal water supply, and economic development, ecological restoration and species recovery in Oregon's most populous river basin.

Recognizing the importance of this resource, starting in 1996, the State of Oregon, through the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), began working cooperatively to develop a coordinated water resources plan for the Willamette River populations of salmon and steelhead as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), until the issuance of a related biological opinion from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). Although NMFS issued the biological opinion for the State of Oregon and 2008, the dialogue began with the Reservoir Study has not been reinstated. The time is ripe to begin these efforts anew.

As an Action Agency under the 2008 Biological Opinion, I understand that the USACE must take steps to protect water instream for protection and recovery of important fish resources. While I support efforts needed to protect and recover ESA-listed species, the potential actions required to fulfill this obligation raise a number of questions for the State of Oregon and stakeholders in the Willamette Basin. These questions include:

- How much of the 1.64 million acre feet of water stored in the Willamette River Basin Project is needed to implement the Biological Opinion and on?
- How will the "remaining" stored water be allocated among competing uses?
- How will the stored water that is released and protected in-stream impact existing water rights?

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## I. Background

The federal storage projects in the Willamette Basin reservoirs that store 1.64 million acre-feet of water generated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) issues contracts for storage space for water.

Control Acts of 1938 and 1950 authorized Basin projects. Congress authorized the generation, for generation of hydroelectricity, potable water supply, and flood control and recreation.

Users in the Willamette Basin for growth and economic development remaining water supply. The Willamette Basin Project is essential to meeting future needs for irrigation, municipal water supply, and economic development, ecological restoration and species recovery in Oregon's most populous river basin.

The Honorable Peter DeFazio  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515  
Congressman DeFazio:

I am asking for your assistance in taking advantage of a unique opportunity to address water resource needs within Oregon's Willamette Basin. With more than 70 percent of Oregon's population located in the Willamette Basin, this effort could have a profound economic, social, and environmental effect for decades to come. Your leadership in encouraging the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to re-engage along with stakeholders in a state/federal water resources planning effort in the Willamette Basin is critically important to this process.

The Willamette Basin contains 13 federal storage reservoirs that comprise the Willamette Basin Federal Storage Project. Combined, the storage reservoirs have capacity to hold 1.64 million acre feet of water that is needed for irrigation, municipal use, economic development, ecological restoration and fish recovery opportunities in Oregon.

Congress authorized the Willamette Basin Federal Storage Project for numerous uses, including irrigation, hydropower, navigation, recreation, water quality, potable water supply, and fish and wildlife purposes. However, to date, only contracts for irrigation water use have been issued. In recognizing the need for a state/federal partnership, the State of Oregon and the USACE are working cooperatively on a "Willamette Basin Reservoir Study," which was intended to evaluate the listing of Willamette River stocks of salmon and steelhead under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Reservoir Study was "put on hold" in 2000.

As Governor, I made funding of the Willamette Basin Reservoir Study a high priority in 1996 and a significant investment of the State's general fund budget was dedicated to this effort. Now, over fifteen years later, as Oregon finalizes its first-ever Integrated Water Resources Strategy, it is time to renew this process and discuss allocation of the Project's stored water. This effort in the Willamette is essential to meeting the Strategy's intended outcomes of integrating management of water quantity, quality, and habitat as well as the instream and extractive interests tied to them.



Support HB 3103  
Equal Access to Stored Water

Users in the Willamette Basin have been working with the and other state is management on needs, and te the storage few remaining

ation in the 2020. Now the is the stored requirement

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# Seeking Access to Stored Water Long process, slow results

# USACE – Willamette Basin Project

## Timeline Overview

**1954/1968**

– USBOR filed  
water right  
applications

**1994** –

“Reservation”  
request

**2000** –

Study put  
on hold due  
to ESA  
listing

**2008** –

First  
Biological  
Opinion  
(BiOp)  
issued

**1992** –

*Willamette  
Basin  
Program  
begins*

**1996** –

*Storage  
certificates  
issued to  
USBOR &  
Willamette  
Basin  
Reservoir  
Study  
initiated*

**2008** –

*Southern  
Willamette  
Municipal  
Water Plan  
Report*





# Willamette River Basin Review Feasibility Study

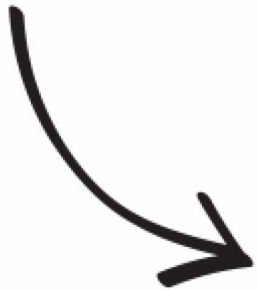
- USACE and Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) initiated Reallocation Study
- Study took three years and approximately \$3 million
- 50/50 cost share between USACE and OWRD
- Extensive demand studies for fish, agricultural irrigation, and municipal uses
- Tentatively Selected Plan in 2017 followed by public comment period



# Where Did We Start and End?

**ACOE Tentatively Selected Plan**

Use	Volume (AF)	Percent
F&W	962,800	61%
M&I	73,300	5%
AI	253,950	16%
Joint Use	299,950	19%



**Final Allocation Approach in ACOE Plan**

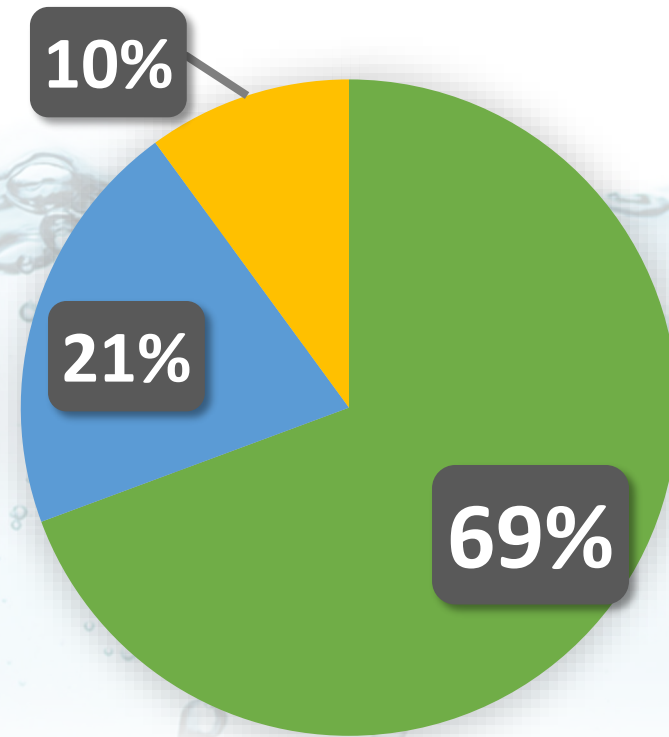
Use	Volume (AF)	Percent
F&W	1,102,600	69%
M&I	159,750	10%
AI	327,650	21%
Joint Use	0	0%



# Final Allocations of The *Willamette River* *Basin Review Feasibility Study*

## Reallocated Storage Proposed

■ Fish and Wildlife ■ Agricultural Irrigation ■ Municipal and Industrial



Total = 1,590,000 acre-feet  
or  
518,103,090,000 gallons



# National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) – BiOp Reasonable and Prudent Alternatives (RPA)

Biological Opinion (BiOp) concluded that Reallocation would “jeopardize UWR Chinook salmon and UWR steelhead.” Five measures to avoid jeopardy:

1. USACE will retain authority to modify reallocation without Congressional action
2. M&I contracts limited to 11,000 AF until specified instream flow protection actions are implemented (State of Oregon water rights)
3. New M&I contracts must include provisions to protect fish
4. Reservoir operations must be managed to meet flow objectives, including curtailment if needed
5. *Willamette Basin Year in Review Report* and annual coordination meeting with NMFS



Steelhead Salmon, CRITFC;  
Middle Fork Willamette  
River, Beautiful Oregon



# WRDA 2020 Language Added

(d) WILLAMETTE RIVER BASIN REVIEW REALLOCATION STUDY.—  
The Secretary shall carry out the project for water supply,  
Willamette Basin Review Reallocation, Oregon, authorized by  
section 401 of this Act, substantially in accordance with terms  
and conditions described in the Report of the Chief of Engineers,  
dated December 18, 2019 with the following modifications: (1)  
The Secretary shall meet the obligations of the Corps of  
Engineers under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 by  
complying with the June 2019 NMFS Willamette Basin Review  
Study Biological Opinion Reasonable and Prudent Alternative  
until such time, if any, as it is modified or replaced, in whole or in  
part, through the consultation process under section 7(a) of the  
Endangered Species Act of 1973 (2) **The Secretary may reallocate  
not more than 10% of overall storage in the joint conservation  
pool, as authorized by this Act and without further congressional  
action, if such reallocation is consistent with the on-going  
consultation under section 7(a) of the Endangered Species Act of  
1973 related to Willamette Valley System operations. (3) The  
Secretary shall ensure that the revised reallocation is not  
reallocated from a single storage use, does not seriously affect  
authorized project purposes, and does not otherwise involve  
major operational changes to the project.**



A large, colorful fireworks display is shown against a dark night sky. The fireworks are in various stages of explosion, with bright yellow and orange trails leading to large, multi-colored bursts of red, blue, and white. In the foreground, the silhouettes of a crowd of people are visible, some holding up phones to capture the event. The overall scene is festive and celebratory.

Reallocation  
Officially  
Passed in  
WRDA 2020!

Fireworks Celebration, Courtesy of Some People Partying





# Willamette Project Reallocation Next Steps

Where Do We Go From Here?



# Reallocation Implementation

- Water Right Transfer
- Adequate OWRD staff and budget
- Municipal Stored Water Contracting Program
- Reallocation Bi-Op RPAs
- Willamette Project Biological Opinion – Update
- Open, collaborative, thoughtful





QUESTIONS?

