



OREGON FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION TOUR

TOUR:

Thursday August 13, 2026- 8:00 AM
ODFW Headquarters Classroom
4034 Fairview Industrial Dr SE
Salem, OR 97302

MEETING:

Friday August 14, 2026- 8:00 AM
ODFW Commission Room
4034 Fairview Industrial Dr SE
Salem, OR 97302

**A Landscape-Scale Approach to Recovering Salmon, Steelhead
and Lamprey in the Willamette Basin:
Improving Fish Passage, Flow Management, and Habitat through Partnership
Thursday August 13, 2026**

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/D6cRi8gzmmGgTBjD6>

The Willamette River Basin—Oregon’s largest—supports nearly 70% of the state’s human population, productive farmland, and a valuable timber industry. It also provides critical migratory corridors and spawning and rearing habitat for salmonids and lamprey throughout the mainstem river and its tributaries. These species are not only vital ecologically, but also support local economies through commercial, recreational, and cultural fisheries that depend on their continued survival.

Historically, the Basin was a dynamic system of complex, braided channels and seasonal floods. For over a century, dams and other developments have simplified the river network, altered natural flows, and prevented salmonids from reaching their most productive spawning habitat. In 1999, Upper Willamette spring Chinook and winter steelhead were listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act. Today, these populations persist at only a small fraction of their historic abundance, underscoring the urgency of protecting and restoring what remains.

This tour will show how the Basin has changed, the challenges of working in a densely populated landscape, and the collaborative efforts underway to shift the trajectory of spring Chinook, winter steelhead, and Pacific lamprey toward recovery.

- 8:00 AM Welcome and Introductions (Headquarters Classroom)
- Jennifer Ringo, South Willamette Watershed District Manager, ODFW
- 8:20 AM Stage Setting: Today’s tour focuses on key locations in the North Santiam watershed. Each stop serves as a case study illustrating both the challenges of achieving landscape-scale recovery and the ways ODFW and partners are working toward that goal. In this introductory presentation, you will hear about how the Willamette Basin once functioned as a dynamic, interconnected system; how more than a century of development has reshaped its rivers and habitats; and the resulting challenges of recovering native fish populations within today’s highly altered landscape.
- Luke Whitman, Fisheries Biologist and Project Leader, Willamette Spring Chinook and Winter Steelhead, ODFW

- 9:00 AM Load vans in HQ parking lot. Depart by 9:15 AM.
- 9:45 AM Chahalpam: Between 2013 and 2018, The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde (CTGR) acquired 462 acres through the Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program (WWMP). The Tribe renamed these culturally important lands *Chahalpam*, which means “place of the Santiam Kalapuya people.” This stop will highlight the Tribe’s vision for the area and how they are stewarding habitat for future generations.
- Stop One: Significance of Salmon, Cooperative Partnerships, WWMP
- Kathleen George, The Grand Ronde Tribal Council, CTGR
 - Colby Drake, Natural Resources Department Manager, CTGR
 - Kelly Dirksen, Fish & Wildlife Program Manager, CTGR
 - Lindsay McClary, Restoration Ecologist, CTGR
 - Owen Cass, WWMP Restoration & Monitoring Biologist, ODFW
- Stop Two: Natural & Working Lands Project
- The Lower North Santiam landscape is defined by a patchwork of small, fragmented landholdings. Restoring habitat at a meaningful scale in this setting requires an iterative, long-term approach—one that works parcel by parcel while keeping a larger vision in focus. This stop will highlight how the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and ODFW collaborate to complete early-stage restoration actions that set the foundation for future floodplain reconnection, improved habitat connectivity, and broader ecological recovery across the basin.
- Lindsay McClary, Restoration Ecologist, CTGR
 - Hilary Doulos, Natural & Working Lands Coordinator, ODFW
- 11:00 AM Depart for Gates Fire Hall.
- 11:30 AM Lunch at Gates Fire Hall.
- After a long absence, primarily due to fire suppression, large, stand-replacing wildfires have returned to the Willamette Basin. In particular, the 2020 fires brought home to all of us, that we live in a fire-formed landscape. The fires, while consistent with historical precedent, dramatically changed local watersheds and riparian areas by decreasing canopy cover that heated streams, and the introduction of sediments. This changed habitat conditions for fish. Over lunch, you will hear how researchers and land managers are learning from these events to understand their impacts on salmon, steelhead, and lamprey, and how this knowledge can guide future restoration and help build more resilient habitats in a changing climate.
- Becky Flitcroft, PhD, Research Fish Biologist, Pacific Northwest Research Station, United States Forest Service
- 12:45 PM Depart for Detroit Dam.

- 1:00 PM Detroit Dam: One of the most transformative changes to the Willamette Basin was the construction of the 13 dams that make up the Willamette Valley flood control system. These structures dramatically altered natural river processes and cut off access to a large portion of the historic spawning and rearing habitat used by spring Chinook, winter steelhead, and other native species. At Detroit Dam—one of the largest of these projects—we will examine how this loss of connectivity has shaped current population trajectories and explore the complex, multi-agency efforts underway to restore passage, improve river function, and support long-term recovery.
- Elise Kelley, PhD, Mid-Willamette Fish District Biologist, ODFW
 - Kathryn Tackley, Willamette Integration Program Manager, USACE
 - Dustin Bengtson, Operations Project Manager for the Willamette and Rogue Valley, USACE
 - Ben Clemens, PhD, Statewide Lamprey Coordinator, ODFW
- 2:00 PM Restroom and Snack Break.
- 2:15 PM Depart for Minto Fish Facility.
- 2:30 PM Minto Fish Facility: Across much of the Willamette Basin, wild salmon and steelhead populations are now so reduced that hatchery programs play a critical role in supporting reintroduction efforts. The Minto Fish Facility is a key part of this work. Originally built in the 1950s to collect returning adults for the Marion Forks Hatchery and to mitigate the effects of Detroit and Big Cliff dams, the modernized facility now enables the trapping and hauling of adult spring Chinook so they can be released upstream to spawn naturally—helping rebuild populations where access to historical habitat has been lost. The upgraded fish ladder was designed to also provide passage for other native species, including lamprey and trout, making Minto an essential tool in the broader effort to support recovery across the North Santiam.
- Chris Boyd, Hatchery Manager, ODFW
 - Ryan Couture, Hatchery Coordinator, ODFW
- 3:30 PM End of Tour/ Return to ODFW Headquarters in Salem by 4:15 pm

