

Owyhee Watershed Council



Watershed Action Plan April 2015

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Watershed Action Plan Development

Watershed Restoration Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

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INTRODUCTION

I Purpose

This document is an outline of a process to fulfill the vision and mission of the Owyhee Watershed Council. The Council will use this document to guide our actions, to pick priority projects from priority areas that address priority issues.

Council Vision: Watershed issues resolved through coordination, cooperation, and education resulting in enhanced watershed health, function, and use.

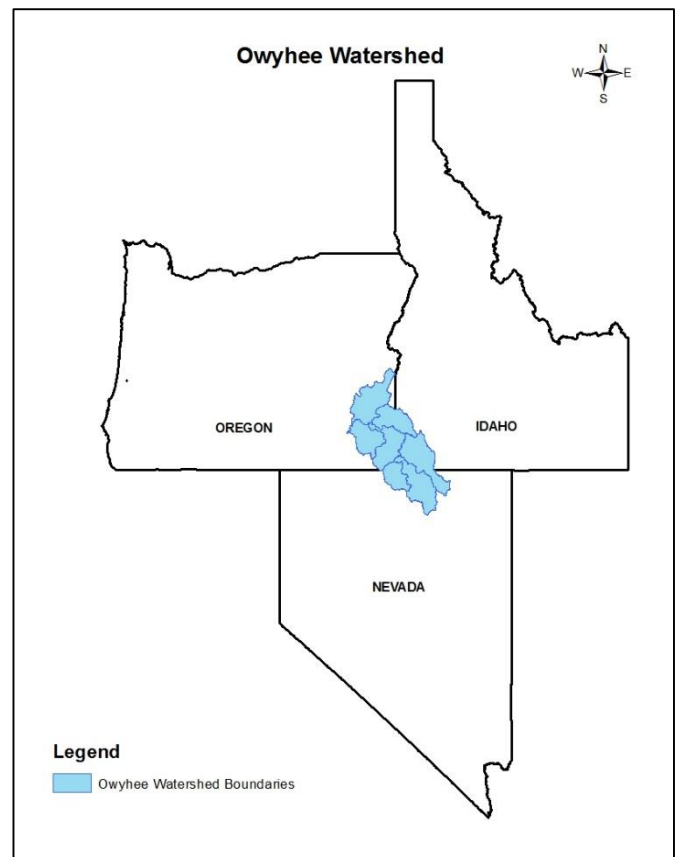
Council Mission: To lead the effort in ensuring sustainable, responsible, and productive stewardship of all land and water resources for the economic and environmental benefit of the Owyhee Watershed.

II Scope

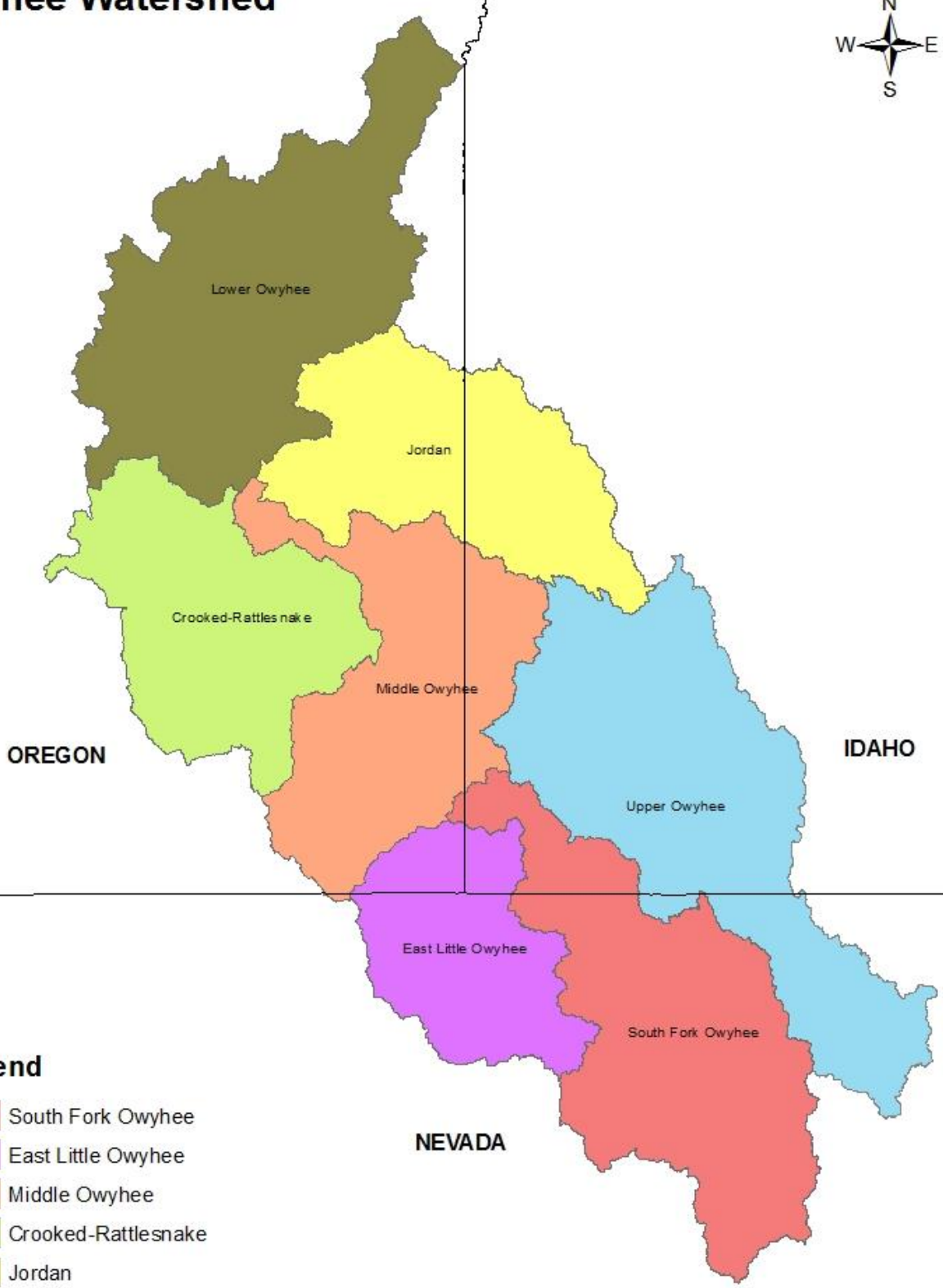
The geographic scope of this action plan is the entire Owyhee River watershed from ridgetop to ridgetop, headwaters to mouth. The scope of the issues to consider include all watershed processes and biological components with an emphasis on issues of critical concern. This includes social, economic and political realities.

III Description of the watershed

The Owyhee River rises in northern Nevada, flows northwesterly through a small portion of Idaho, and enters Oregon near the southeast corner of the state. Thereafter, it flows mostly to the north until it joins the Snake River just upstream from Nyssa, Oregon. The total length of the Owyhee River is 280 miles, and it drains approximately 11,000 square miles; 6,200 of which are in Oregon. Major tributaries are the North, South and Middle Forks of the Owyhee, the Little Owyhee and Jordan Creek. The mean annual discharge is 995 cubic feet per second with a maximum of 50,000 cu ft/s recorded in 1993 and a minimum of 42 cu ft/s in 1954.



Owyhee Watershed



Legend

- South Fork Owyhee
- East Little Owyhee
- Middle Owyhee
- Crooked-Rattlesnake
- Jordan
- Lower Owyhee

III Current Conditions

Published watershed assessments/plans are as follows:

- Owyhee Sub-basin Plan 2004
- Crooker-Rattlesnake, Jordan, and Middle Owyhee Sub-basins 2005
- Lower Owyhee Assessment 2007
- Upper Owyhee Assessment 2011
- NRCS-Malheur County Long Range Plan
- Oregon Conservation Strategy 2006. ODFW
- Snake River/Hells Canyon TMDL 2004. DEQ
- Integrated Water Resources Strategy. 2012. WRD
- Malheur County Weed Plan
- ODA Weed Plan
- Northern Malheur Ground Water Management Plan

WATERSHED ACTION PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The Owyhee Watershed Council Action Plan is a long term planning document to help guide and prioritize restoration efforts throughout the Owyhee Basin. This Action plan will be reviewed and updated every 5 years to reflect changes in local and regional natural resource restoration priorities. The OWC Action Plan document was compiled using the following elements: regional and local long/short term restoration priorities, landowner, partner and agency input, current restoration priorities within the OWC work plan, and Owyhee Watershed Council member input/review.

WATERSHED LIMITING FACTORS

Water Quality

Some rivers and streams in the Owyhee River Basin do not meet water quality standards for the following parameters:

- water temperature
- bacteria
- toxics (arsenic, mercury, DDT, dieldrin)
- chlorophyll a
- sediment



Rangeland Health

- Juniper invasion
- Weedy annual grass invasion
- Priority noxious weed species

Fish And Wildlife

- Sage Grouse
 - Juniper invasion
 - Annual grass invasion
 - Wild fire
- Redband trout
- Lahontan cutthroat trout
- Big game species



WATERSHED RESTORATION GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

GOALS

I Maintain and Improve Water Quality

Objectives:

- Reduce Irrigation Induced Erosion
- Enhance soil condition
- Maintain and Improve Riparian Conditions
- Control Noxious Weeds and restore to desirable conditions



II Maintain and Improve Upland Habitats

Objectives:

- Improve Sage Grouse Habitat
- Control Juniper encroachment
- Improve riparian areas
- Control noxious and invasive weeds and restore to desirable conditions
- Improve sagebrush steppe habitat
- Protect and enhance aspen stands
- Follow Oregon's Conservation Strategy

III Outreach and Education

Objectives:

- Engage local youth and community in watershed issues
- General outreach to residents of the basin

IMPLEMENTATION

Goal 1: Maintain and Improve Water Quality

Objective	Strategy	Action	Priority	Status
Reduce irrigation induced erosion	Implement irrigation improvement projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the 5 key irrigation drains that deliver tail-water to the Owyhee River • Implement Lower Owyhee Rehabilitation Project • Coordinate with NRCS, ODA, SWCD, landowners and irrigation districts to implement projects • Solicit funding from multiple sources 	High	Ongoing
	Identify priority areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OWC will work with the irrigation district, NRCS and Malheur SWCD, and landowners to implement irrigation improvement projects within priority areas 	High	Ongoing
	Promote the use of Polyacramide (PAM), straw mulch, filter strips, and other water quality improvement techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OWC will work with OSU Extension, NRCS, SWCD, landowners and irrigation districts on outreach, to encourage the implementation of BMPs that enhance soil quality 	Medium	Ongoing

Objective	Strategy	Action	Priority	Status
Maintain and Improve Riparian Conditions	Implement riparian restoration projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install fencing to establish riparian pastures, assist in developing off-stream watering sources that will help improve livestock distribution and protect riparian areas 	High	Ongoing
	Promote the use of riparian pastures, off-stream water and other techniques to protect riparian areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OWC will work with OSU Extension, NRCS, SWCD on outreach 	Medium	Ongoing

Objective	Strategy	Action	Priority	Status
Control noxious weeds both in the uplands and in the riparian areas	Work through Jordan Valley Cooperative Weed Management Area (JVCWMA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spray Days with land owners and volunteers • Continue active treatment of noxious and invasive weeds • Regular meetings • Sprayer calibration with individual land owners • Solicit funding from multiple sources • Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) 	High	Ongoing
	Promote weed control both on private and public lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winter Weed Seminar • Owyhee Field Day • Tours and workshops and educational videos • One on one ranch weed management planning and control issues • Partners: Private landowners, Malheur County, Oregon Dept of Ag, Vale BLM, ODOT, Oregon Dept of State Lands, The Nature Conservancy <p>Examples of weed species of concern:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leafy spurge • Russian knapweed • Perennial pepperweed • Rush skeletonweed • Yellow starthistle • Diffuse knapweed • Spotted knapweed • Hoary cress • Scotch thistle • Jointed goatgrass • Salt-cedar • Russian-olive 	High	Ongoing

Goal 2: Maintain and Improve Upland Habitats

Objective	Strategy	Action	Priority	Status
Maintain and improve Sage-Grouse, big game and other wildlife habitat: promote rangeland health	Control juniper invasion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify priority areas • Recruit interested landowners • Partner with NRCS Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI) and the Malheur SWCD • Clean equipment to prevent spread of noxious weeds 	Medium	Ongoing
	Control invasion of annual grasses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement projects to control Medusahead and Ventenata • Work with partners to increase awareness of invasive annual grasses • Promote beneficial species restoration and vegetative re-seeding 	High	Ongoing
	Assist in improving livestock management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install fencing to establish pastures, • Assist in developing off-stream watering sources that will help improve livestock distribution, which leads to improved wildlife habitat 	Medium	Ongoing
	Control priority noxious weeds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leafy spurge • Russian knapweed • Perennial pepperweed • Rush skeletonweed • Yellow starthistle • Diffuse knapweed • Spotted knapweed • Hoary cress • Scotch thistle • Jointed goatgrass 	High	Ongoing

Goal 3: Outreach and Education

Objective	Strategy	Action	Priority	Status
Engage local youth and community in watershed issues	Conduct Owyhee Field Days <i>(Annual Event)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OWC will host an annual 2 day field day event for over 500 area 5th grade students to promote awareness and understanding of what a watershed is, the multiple uses of a watershed, and the role that watersheds have on their daily lives. • OWC will work with area businesses and individuals for funding sponsorship and event volunteers • Promote Future Farmers of America (FFA) leadership opportunities 	High	Ongoing
	Hydrology Camp <i>(Annual Event)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OWC partner with Northwest Watershed Research Center, Reynolds Creek Experimental Watershed (USDA-ARS) to provide 11th grade students from Nyssa and Adrian schools with a 2 day watershed research experience 	High	Ongoing
General outreach to residents of the basin	Town hall meetings presentations to local groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OWC will work with OSU Extension NRCS and SWCD on outreach • Conduct monthly Council meetings with educational speakers when appropriate • Engage with the community to increase participation in Council activities • Participate in partner’s outreach activities • Distribute Action Plan after completion • Working with local FFA 	Medium	Ongoing

Original Board Adoption Date: February 12, 2015

Plan updates and revisions: