

**Crooked River basin water operations  
Frequently Asked Questions  
July 2022**

**Q1. How has the multi-year extreme drought conditions affected the Crooked River basin?**

A1. Multiple years of drought have resulted in an extremely limited water supply in the Crooked River basin this season. The Crooked River basin received one of the lowest snowpacks on records dating back to the early 1980s.

Due to the drought conditions in prior years, Prineville Reservoir ended 2021 at a record low level. The reservoir reached a peak physical content of only 32% of capacity (47,331 acre feet) on May 17. This is the lowest maximum fill for Prineville reservoir on records dating back to 1974.

**Q2. Why are we still in drought when April received significant precipitation?**

A2. The cooler wetter weather since April extended the available supply, but not been enough to make up for the lack of snowpack earlier in the season.

**Q3. What about uncontracted water storage?**

A3. The uncontracted storage account in Prineville Reservoir, managed in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and utilized for fish and wildlife purpose, was fully exhausted during the winter of 2022 to maintain a minimum winter streamflow of 50 cfs. Due to the extreme drought conditions, this account did not receive any new storage allocation this year.

The water currently stored in Prineville Reservoir is allocated to contract holders that pay for that water storage to meet irrigation purposes. Those contract holders are not receiving their full allocation of storage water this year; most are receiving only around 60% of their normal allocation.

In a normal year, the tailwater fishery below A.R. Bowman Dam benefits from contractor's storage water released from the reservoir for irrigation purposes during the summertime. Due to the limited water supply this season, it is anticipated the irrigation season will end early this year, possibly in September.

**Q4. Why does Reclamation have to maintain a minimum release of 10 cubic feet per second from A.R. Bowman Dam?**

A4. Per legislative authority, Reclamation must maintain a minimum release of 10 cfs from A.R. Bowman Dam. When the irrigation supply ends, releases out of the dam are reduced to a base flow of 10 cfs. This is less than what we would normally see in the late summer/early fall months due to lack of irrigation supply.



Reclamation will maintain a 10 cfs release until higher natural flow begins or when Deschutes Basin Habitat Conservation Plan winter releases start. The DBHCP is an agreement between the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the permittees. Reclamation supports the DBHCP but is not a party to that agreement.

**Q5. Why can't Reclamation release more water for fish and wildlife?**

A5. Per the Crooked River Collaborative Water Security and Jobs Act of 2014, Reclamation cannot release contracted storage for fish and wildlife purposes unless it is voluntary from the contract holder(s).