

2025/2026 Crooked River Release Schedule – 08/01/2025

Reclamation's operation of the Crooked River Project (Project) is guided by the original Project Authority(s) and the Crooked River Collaborative Water Security and Jobs Act of 2014 (CRA) as well as by provisions provided in Reclamation's Biological Assessment (BA) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) subsequent 2020 Biological Opinion (BiOp) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS – NOAA Fisheries) 2022 BiOp. The CRA requires Reclamation to consult with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service (Services) to develop an annual release schedule for the stored uncontracted water and the City of Prineville's groundwater mitigation storage account (CoP) in Prineville Reservoir. In addition, relevant Reasonable and Prudent Measures (RPMs) and Terms and Conditions (T&Cs) in the Services' BiOp include several actions that Reclamation must also consider when developing the annual release schedule for the uncontracted and CoP storage accounts.

The 2025 water year's day of allocation for Prineville Reservoir was determined by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) to be May 24, 2025. Reclamation received the final flow recommendation for the stored uncontracted water and the CoP account from the USFWS and NMFS on June 30, 2025 (attached).

In 2025, Prineville Reservoir filled to 100 percent capacity of 148,633 acre-feet. After subtracting estimated reservoir losses (including sedimentation, evaporation, and seepage) proportionally across all storage accounts, the total allocated uncontracted storage was 59,996.5 acre-feet and the total allocated storage for the CoP account was 4,894.2 acre-feet.

Release Schedule

Reclamation's 2025/2026 A.R. Bowman Dam Release Schedule is consistent with the Services' 2025/2026 recommendations:

- Reclamation will maintain a release of approximately 20 cfs from the City of Prineville groundwater mitigation account until it is exhausted on approximately September 29, 2025, regardless of what the NUID storage release is.
- Reclamation will aim to maintain at least 80 cfs at the CAPO gauge through October 14, 2025. This will be through a combination of the 20 cfs City of Prineville storage release, NUID storage release, and uncontracted storage release.
- Reclamation will release approximately 100 cfs from uncontracted storage from approximately October 15, 2025 to April 14, 2026.
- In cooperation with the Services and OID, Reclamation will support and help to coordinate pulse flow releases during the 2025/2026 season that are beneficial, logistically possible, and will not interfere with essential project operations.

Protocols and Caveats

As in years past, Reclamation will make efforts, within the confines of legal and logistical constraints, to meet the 2025/2026 flow schedule. Some variation is expected due to logistical constraints including, but not limited to, regulation gate precision, unexpected real-time diversionary changes, and typical gage accuracy/error. Reclamation reserves the discretion to make any necessary changes to flow rates from A.R. Bowman Dam to be consistent with required project operations such as releases for flood risk management.

Throughout the duration of these scheduled releases, the monthly Prineville Reservoir status call will be continued. When necessary, these calls will include discussions regarding releases and operations to assess potential hydrologic changes, etc. These situations may provide opportunities for changes in winter flows or operations that could enhance short or long-term benefits to fish and wildlife resources and/or operations. The 2025/2026 release schedule may be modified in this way with consultation between Reclamation, the Services, and OID based on:

- Considerations for flows that benefit fish and wildlife that can also promote system flexibility and irrigation efficiency
- Changes in release schedule that have additional benefits for specific life stages of fish species that do not adversely affect operation of the facility
- Any emergency or necessary changes to the releases schedule to accommodate safe and appropriate operation of the facility

Attachments

USFWS and NMFS Crooked River Act Recommendation for 2025 to 2026

Letter to OWRD: Request for Protection – City of Prineville Mitigation Water _Secondary Instream Water Right – Application No. S-88402, Certificate No. 94149 – U. S. Bureau of Reclamation

USFWS and NMFS Crooked River Act Recommendation for 2025 to 2026

This document provides the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Crooked River flow recommendation for 2025 to 2026, pursuant to the consultation requirement under Section 4 of the Crooked River Collaborative Water Security and Jobs Act of 2014 (CRA). The FWS and NMFS (collectively the Services) are submitting this draft proposed annual release schedule for the Uncontracted Storage account and the contracted City of Prineville Groundwater Mitigation account per the CRA. The CRA requires the US Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) to consult with the Services to develop an annual release schedule that "...maximizes, to the maximum extent practicable, benefits to downstream fish and wildlife."

In addition to the Services' obligation under the CRA, the FWS and NMFS concluded their Deschutes Basin Habitat Conservation Plan (DBHCP) development and approval process on December 31, 2020, and October 18, 2022, respectively, and issued Incidental Take Permits^{1,2} to the City of Prineville and eight Central Oregon irrigation districts (collectively the Permittees). The DBHCP was designed to work with the CRA and we have considered the applicable elements of the DBHCP while drafting our CRA recommendation.

Reclamation has determined that the Day of Allocation for Prineville Reservoir occurred on May 24, 2025.³ After accounting for sedimentation and reservoir losses resulting from evaporation and seepage, Reclamation concluded that the total active storage in Prineville Reservoir for 2025 was 142,633 acre-feet (af). Accordingly, Reclamation adjusts all storage accounts pro rata resulting in a total volume of 59,996 af of uncontracted storage and 4,894 af of Prineville groundwater mitigation storage, for a total storage volume of 64,890 af for fish and wildlife purposes.

USFWS and NMFS 2025 to 2026 Instream Flow Recommendation

For the 2025-2026 irrigation and storage season, the Services consider that the following recommendation most effectively achieves the CRA's goal of maximizing, to the maximum extent practicable, the benefits to downstream fish and wildlife. We recommend that Reclamation maintain a flow of approximately 80 cfs as measured at the CAPO gauge near the City of Prineville until irrigation ends (on or about October 15) and then maintain approximately 100 cfs at CAPO during the storage season (roughly October 16 through April 14). We recognize that the recommended flow volumes and timing may slightly change as the irrigation/storage season progresses, and the Services may recommend in-season adjustments per Reclamation's weekly schedule for storage releases.

¹ <https://www.fws.gov/project/deschutes-river-basin-habitat-conservation-plan>

² <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/west-coast/habitat-conservation/habitat-conservation-plans-west-coast>

³ Final 2025 storage allocation table is available at:

<https://www.usbr.gov/pn/ccao/projects/PrinevilleResStorage/WaterYear25/PrinevilleResStorageWY25.html>

Irrigation Season

During the irrigation season, Crooked River instream flow will be maintained by releases from the Prineville mitigation storage account and uncontracted storage account. In combination with North Unit Irrigation District's (NUID) call for releases from their contracted storage account, these flow releases are intended to maintain a flow of approximately 80 cfs at the CAPO gauge. The Services recognize that NUID storage releases may vary during the 2025 irrigation season and that Reclamation's guidelines for requesting flow changes may require minor adjustments to start dates for our recommended flows. We recommend that Reclamation adjust releases from the uncontracted storage account as needed to maintain the recommended target flow of 80 cfs at CAPO.

Prineville Mitigation Account

Reclamation has been releasing 20 cfs from the Prineville mitigation account since about May 29. The Services recommend that this release continue until this account is fully depleted which we estimate will occur on September 28.

Uncontracted Storage Account

NUID typically exhausts its 10,000 af contracted storage account in Prineville Reservoir in mid-August. The Services recommend that when NUID's storage account is finished, Reclamation release up to 60 cfs from the uncontracted account to maintain 80 cfs at CAPO until the Prineville mitigation account is depleted and from September 29 through October 15, release up to 80 cfs from the uncontracted account to maintain a flow of 80 cfs at CAPO. Beginning October 16, release 100 cfs from the uncontracted account until the start of the 2026 irrigation season on April 15. This is expected to leave roughly 15,965 af of carryover storage in the uncontracted account.

Smolt Outmigration and Adult Migration Flow Enhancement

The Services will determine what smolt outmigration or supplemental instream flows will maximize the benefits to steelhead, bull trout, spring Chinook, and other native fish species in the Crooked River after consulting and coordinating with the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs (CTWS), the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), and the Pelton Round Butte Project Fish Committee. Flows could either be supplemented to increase storage season flows and/or provide water to perform "pulse flows" to assist spring Chinook and steelhead smolts migrating out of the Crooked River system in the Spring of 2026. It may also be possible to release additional flow during the adult spring Chinook migration and spawning season. The specific details of these releases will consider the best available real-time information on river conditions, smolt out-planting dates, and other habitat and climate conditions at the time. The Services and our partners will seek to educate the public regarding these flow changes using existing public outreach strategies.

Flood Control Operations

If Reclamation conducts flood control operations during the 2025 to 2026 period addressed by this recommendation, the Services request that Reclamation cease all releases from uncontracted storage until flood control operations are concluded. This is because flood control releases will already be meeting the Services' recommended 100 cfs instream flow for fish and wildlife. It is our understanding that there can be intermittent periods of flood control followed by a return to normal storage season operations. During these periods of normal storage season operations, we recommend that Reclamation release 100 cfs from uncontracted storage.

Rationale for USFWS/NMFS 2025 to 2026 Recommendation

Our recommendation is based on the following rationale.

- 1) Our recommendation will allow storage season flows to be maintained at higher levels. During the winter storage season flows from Prineville Reservoir are needed to support fish species from Bowman Dam at river mile 70.5 to the river's confluence with Lake Billy Chinook, since at this time of the water year there is no irrigation flow to augment fish and wildlife instream flows. During the storage season the approximately 26 miles of the Crooked River from Bowman Dam to the confluences of Ochoco and McKay Creeks are almost entirely dependent on Prineville Reservoir fish and wildlife flows.
- 2) Our recommendation will provide about 15,965 af of uncontracted storage carryover for the 2026 to 2027 water year.
- 3) Our recommendation will provide spring Chinook, steelhead, redband trout habitat during the irrigation and storage seasons.



United States Department of the Interior

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IN REPLY REFER TO:

CCA-1000
2.2.4.23

VIA ELECTRONIC, FEDEX AND/OR U.S. MAIL

Mr. William Nashem
Watermaster
Oregon Water Resources Department
231 Scalehouse Loop, Suite 103
Bend, OR 97702

Subject: Request for Protection – Secondary Instream Water Right – Application No., S-88402,
Certificate No. 94149 – U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

Dear Mr. Nashem:

The Bureau of reclamation is the holder of Certificate No. 94149. Each calendar year Reclamation receives the entirety of the City of Prineville's mitigation water storage in Prineville Reservoir. The day of allocation for Prineville reservoir was May 24, 2025. Based on current interpretations and estimates of reservoir losses, 4,894.2 acre-feet of the total 5,100 acre-feet of the City of Pineville's mitigation water was allocated for release in 2025.

Reclamation intends to release the total allocated storage for the City of Prineville's mitigation water account during this calendar year (2025). Based on preliminary flow recommendations from the USFWS and NMSF, Reclamation is requesting the following amounts and durations of releases of the City of Prineville's mitigation water as follows: Reclamation intends to release approximately 20 cubic feet per second from the City of Prineville's mitigation water until it is exhausted, which is estimated to be approximately September 29, 2025.

Reclamation is requesting that OWRD protect these releases from diversion of from A. R. Bowman Dam to Lake Billy Chinook as provided for by Certificate No. 94149's secondary (instream) water right.

Please let me know if you have any questions or need additional information.

INTERIOR REGION 9 • COLUMBIA-PACIFIC NORTHWEST

IDAHO, MONTANA*, OREGON*, WASHINGTON

* PARTIAL

If you have any questions, please contact Mr. David Weidinger, Bend Field Office Manager, at (541) 408-8343.

Sincerely,

**DAVID
WEIDINGER**

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David Weidinger,
Bend Field Office Manager.

cc:

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