

Help is at Hand

for the Warner Sucker and Warner Redband Trout

An innovative partnership that improves stream habitat for these imperiled species also assists ranchers.

Through this collaboration, unique new fish passage designs show encouraging success.



Water is the Key to Survival in the Oregon Outback

The Warner Lakes Watershed is an environment of extremes. In spring, rain and snowmelt surge into raging torrents that dwindle into a trickle by late summer. Stream flow is a challenge for resilient fish, as well as for basin farmers and ranchers—all whom are dependent upon the precious water flow.

Water diversions built for the working landscape have had unintended consequences for once-abundant native fish. Numbers have particularly declined for two species native to the Warner Basin. The Warner sucker was listed as Threatened on the Endangered Species list in 1985, while the Warner redband trout is listed as a federal and Oregon Sensitive species.



The Warner Basin Aquatic Habitat Partnership

But unlike extreme conditions, water diversions are something that people can change. Diversion dams and unscreened ditches have blocked historical fish passage in the Warner Basin.



The partnership was formed to improve connectivity and stream habitat. Six organizations have joined forces with local landowners and irrigators to establish a plan that will assist ranchers and help with the recovery of the Warner sucker and Warner redband trout. Success of the program depends on the willing participation of landowners and water users who manage the land.



Stage One: *Honey, Deep and Twentymile Creeks*

The partnership took aim at three creeks blocking fish passage. With investments in new research, unique designs were developed. Not only would these updated diversions improve fish passage, but they would also replace old, rusted and leaking structures with ones that are safer and easier to maintain.

As of January, 2019, two new fish passage projects were installed on Honey Creek. Deep Creek adaptations include a rock-ramp fishway and irrigation structure replacements. Along Twentymile Creek, improved fish passage was developed at multiple locations.

Data monitoring the projects already show that the fish passage improvements are working.



Strategic Action Plan and Success

Based on the results thus far, ten additional projects are planned over the next six years on the three creeks. The Warner Basin Aquatic Habitat Partnership's 2018 Strategic Action Plan sets a course to meet the recovery criteria for the fish. It is important that the fish can pass through diversions that formerly were barriers. Recovering imperiled species is a challenge, but for these two fish, and Warner Basin stakeholders, success is well on its way.



Warner Basin Aquatic Habitat Partners

