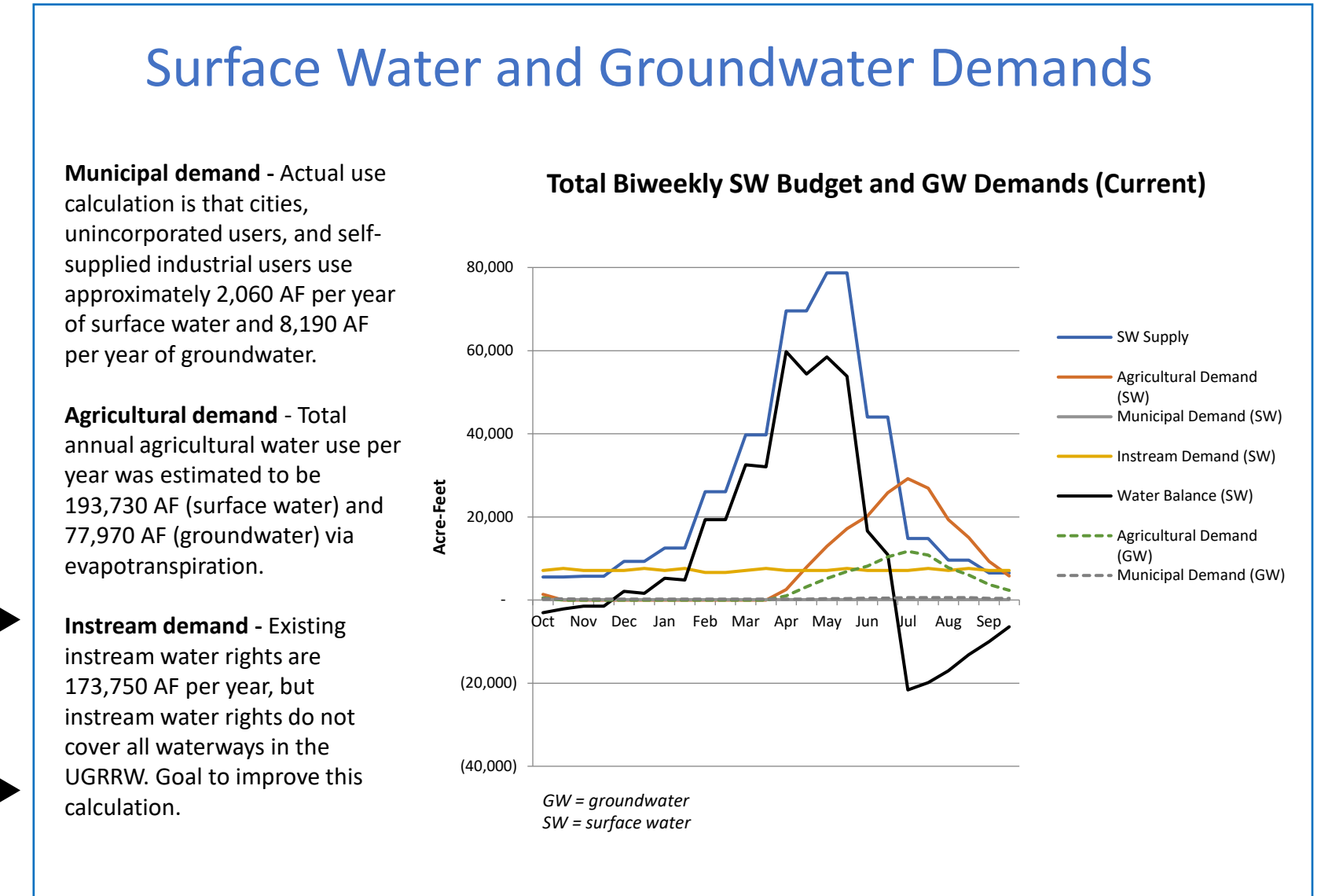


Upper Grande Ronde River Watershed Partnership Place-Based Integrated Water Resources Planning Plan to Implementation



To address concerns related to water quality and quantity for both surface water and groundwater within the Upper Grande Ronde River Watershed (UGRRW), Union County has convened a diverse partnership composed of farmers, ranchers, fish and wildlife advocates, tribes, municipal representatives, and federal and state agencies to develop and implement a place-based integrated water resources plan consistent with the State of Oregon's Integrated Water Resources Strategy.



Critical Issues

Surface water supply is limited in summer through late fall (circa July through November) when the combined demands for water instream and for irrigated agriculture and municipal uses are the highest.

There is significant uncertainty with **groundwater supply**. The UGRRW Partnership needs to evaluate groundwater supply sustainability to inform strategic groundwater resource planning. At this time, the UGRRW lacks sufficient groundwater monitoring wells, long-term trend data, pumping/use data, and data regarding surface water interactions -- all are needed to inform strategic groundwater resource planning and management.

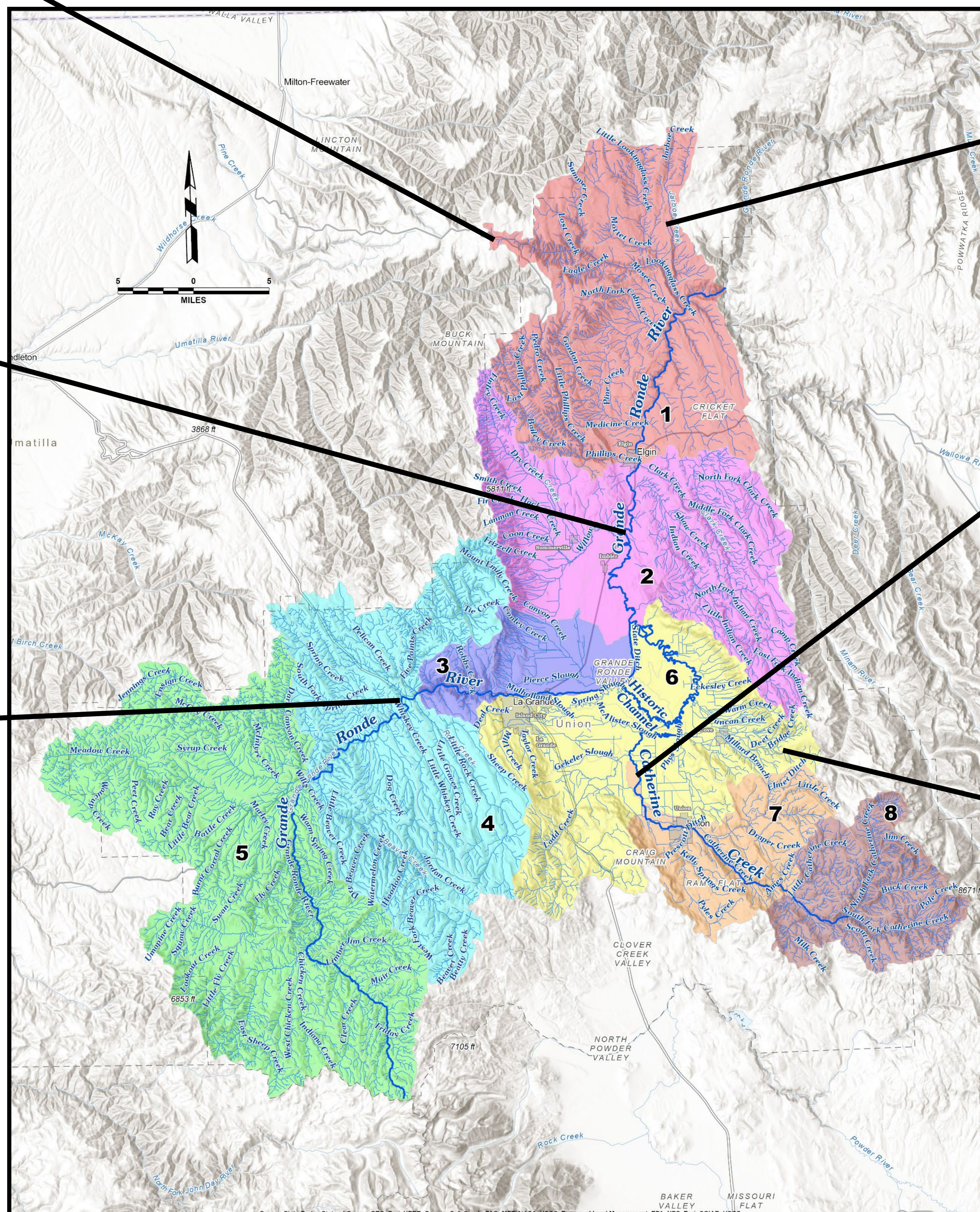
Surface water quality is below statewide standards in all eight subwatersheds at various times of the year. The water quality issues are predominantly related to high temperatures, low dissolved oxygen, sedimentation, pH, and insufficient flows.

Natural hazards like flooding, fire, and drought impact the UGRRW frequently, and the UGRRW Partnership needs a plan to mitigate and respond to these events. The climate change scenario considered by the UGRRW Partnership suggests the frequency, magnitude, and duration of these events could change within the UGRRW.

Strategies to Address Critical Issues

No.	Strategy (Implementation Lead) [Primary Beneficiaries]	Description/Purpose	Selected Milestones
1	Built Storage - Aboveground Storage and Underground Storage (Union County) (Agriculture, Instream)	Address specific instream and out-of-stream water supply deficits in each subwatershed through advancing possible built storage projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct aboveground storage and instream flow study (applied for state funds). Develop next steps for Catherine Creek underground storage (to benefit instream flows).
2	Land Management - Agricultural Land (Natural Resources Conservation Service) (Agriculture, Instream)	Conduct research and provide subsequent educational outreach to support water management actions that maintain water quality and increase water use efficiency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convene a pilot group of landowners for on-farm conservation activities. Create a shared resources list. Strategize funding for irrigation water management projects.
3	Data Collection, Monitoring, and Research (Grande Ronde Model Watershed [GRMW]) (Agriculture, Instream)	Coordinate data collection to fill data gaps, support working groups, and inform water management in the UGRRW.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritize data gaps. Study groundwater. Study water quality. Update assessment of instream flow needs.
4	Non-structural Water Storage and Habitat Management (Union Soil and Water Conservation District) (Instream)	Raise awareness of work being done and how this work addresses goals of the UGRRW Partnership; prioritize and pursue nonstructural storage projects in strategic locations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan field tour. Prioritize areas and projects (using the Ecological Atlas geomorphic potential information [GRMW, 2021]).
5	Land Management - Public Land (U.S. Forest Service [USFS]) (Instream)	Information sharing and communication between public land management agencies and stakeholders to identify potential areas of mutual support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update Partnership on USFS projects. Plan field tours.
6	Infrastructure - Land Modification (Union County) (Municipal, Agriculture, Instream)	Reduce the frequency and severity of damage due to flooding now and in the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review U.S. Bureau of Reclamation hydraulics study. Study sedimentation. Hold ditch-opening meeting. Draft hazards mitigation plan. Create outreach material for landowners and legislators.
7	Administrative Actions (CTUIR) (Instream)	Increase awareness of how administrative actions can improve water quality and quantity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey interest in administrative actions.
8	Land Management - Municipal Land (City of La Grande) (Municipal)	Improve city-to-city coordination to respond to natural hazards, increase water conservation, and support water infrastructure efficiency improvements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop shared resources agreement. Update/develop hazard mitigation plans.
9	Outreach and Education (Union County) (Municipal)	Inform the public about water quality issues and UGRRW Partnership activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribute water quality and lawn care outreach materials. Complete digital storytelling project. Update outreach plan.

Early Implementation Actions



Acquiring a stream gauge for Lookingglass Creek to measure project effectiveness for a habitat restoration/floodplain reconnection project set to be implemented by Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) in 2025.



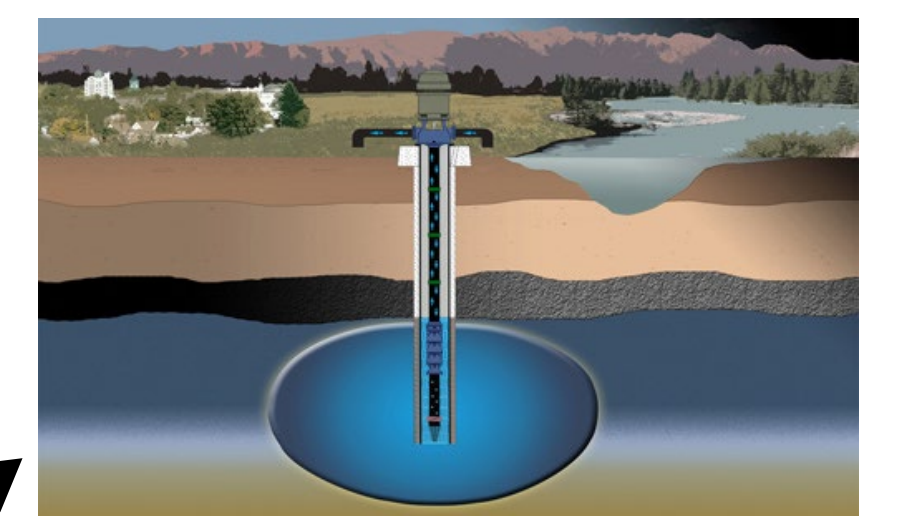
Supporting an ongoing basin-wide hydraulic study to better understand causes and locations of flooding and backwater areas and identify actions to alleviate flooding impacts in the short- and long-term (ongoing).



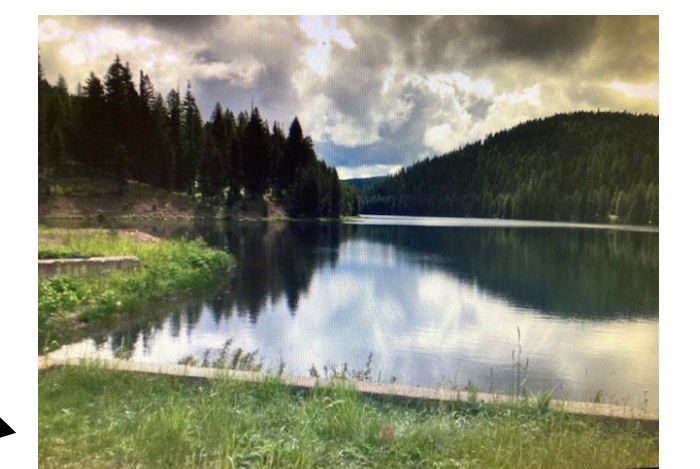
Developing instream flow targets using field-based Instream Flow Incremental Methodology in conjunction with desktop-based hydrologic analyses for the Upper Grande Ronde River. Results will aid in flow restoration and water planning efforts (fall 2022).



Planning for a field trip with the USFS to learn about the benefits of restoration and floodplain improvement projects on federal land (spring 2023).



Conducting stakeholder and agency outreach to determine if there is support to reinstate investigations into an aquifer storage and recovery project on Catherine Creek. Goal is to supplement late season surface water flows and protect and restore aquifers to benefit instream and out-of-stream needs (fall 2022).



Conducting a Storage Feasibility Study to determine if suitable locations exist in the UGRRW for aboveground water storage to benefit instream and out-of-stream needs (ongoing).

Basin-wide Actions

- Quarterly meetings
- Strategy Group meetings
- Developing materials and attending events to promote water conservation



Interested? Join Us!



Email dkurtz@andersonperry.com or visit the Union County, Oregon, webpage to learn more: <https://union-county.org/planning/place-based-integrated-water-resources-planning/>