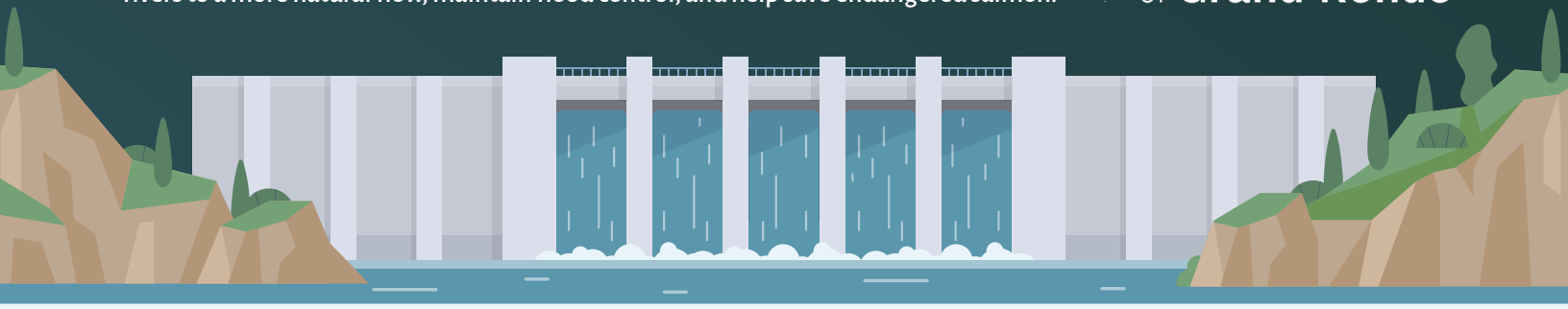
A GUIDE TO

Deep Reservoir Drawdowns

IN THE WILLAMETTE RIVER BASIN

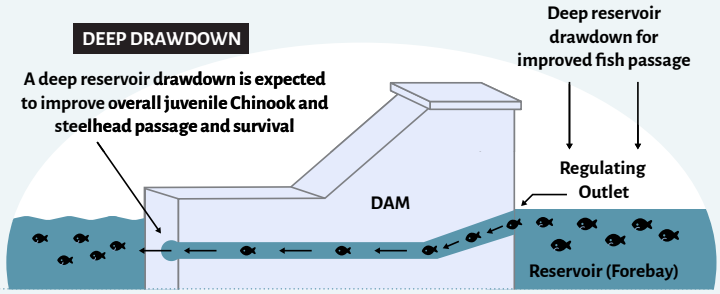
For the third consecutive fall, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will conduct deep drawdowns at Lookout Point and Green Peter dams. This will temporarily restore our rivers to a more natural flow, maintain flood control, and help save endangered salmon.

Confederated Tribes of **Grand Ronde**



How do these drawdowns help salmon?

Deep drawdowns **allow juvenile fish to migrate through the dams more successfully** by reducing reservoirs temporarily. Drawdowns also allow juvenile salmon to access lower outlets through the dams, avoiding dangerous turbines.



Why do we need to save salmon? Native Chinook salmon and steelhead face extinction. Scientists predict that some wild salmon runs in our Willamette Basin **may vanish by 2040** unless we take urgent action now.

How did we get here? **Very few juvenile salmon survive the treacherous trip** through the dams on their journey to the ocean. After failing to address this problem for decades, the Corps will now conduct drawdowns to improve fish passage and restore populations.

How do we protect drinking water? All Oregonians deserve clean and reliable drinking water, and we are committed to working with leaders to find the best solution. This is not a choice between drinking water or fish – we can protect both. This is about **preserving our natural heritage and ecological balance**.

Have similar drawdowns worked?

All dams are different and scientists are working to adjust the drawdown methods for specific dams. Studies indicate that deep drawdowns at Fall Creek led to a **98-99% survival rate for out-migrating juvenile Chinook salmon** and resulted in roughly a **ten-fold increase**[5] in returning adult salmon. This low-cost solution does not require dam removal and has successfully increased juvenile passage and survival through Fall Creek Dam.



Sources: [1] National Library of Medicine | Short-term reservoir draining to streambed for juvenile salmon passage and non-native fish removal (July 2019) https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6853229/; [2] National Marine Fisheries Service West Coast Region | 2024 5-Year Review: Summary & Evaluation of Upper Willamette River Steelhead Upper Willamette River Chinook Salmon (June 2024); https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/s3//2024-07/uwr-steelhead-chinook-5yr-review-2024.pdf; [3] Hamilton SK, Murphy CA, Johnson SL, Pollock A. | Water quality ramifications of temporary drawdown of Oregon reservoirs to facilitate juvenile Chinook salmon passage (January 2022) https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10402381.2021.2017082#abstract; [4] U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Willamette Valley Project | Fall Creek Deep Drawdown (November 2011) https://www.nwp.usace.army.mil/Media/Images/igphoto/2001879238; [5] https://www.nwd.usace.army.mil/Media/News-Stories/Article/475716/corps-sends-fall-creek-reservoir-to-the-bottom-to-make-fish-passage-the-tops/