

## **Status/Risk/Opportunity Summary Lower Grande Ronde Subbasin Review**

### **Grande Ronde/Rondowa Watershed**

#### **Water Quality:**

**Status:** poor. The Grande Ronde River is included on Oregon 303d list for temperature, sediment, habitat modification; severe flow modification problems also exist. Grossman Creek is on ODEQ's concern list for temperature.

**Risk:** moderate. Debris avalanche problems. Higher rainfall and higher intensity rainfall on west side of watershed than in eastern 2/3 of subbasin.

**Opportunity:** low. Most problems associated with the Grande Ronde River are inherited from upstream subbasins.

#### **Hydrologic Function:**

**Status:** poor. High road density (2.87 mi/sq mi). Substantial reduction in forest basal area from timber harvest. Estimated 25%/40%/25% flow reduction in July/August/September, respectively, due to effects from upstream subbasins.

**Risk:** moderate. Higher rainfall and higher intensity rainfall on west side of watershed than in eastern 2/3 of subbasin. High density road system improves rainfall routing efficiency; substantial forest basal area reduction in roaded areas may affect snowmelt timing. 55% non-federal ownership.

**Opportunity:** moderate. Nothing can be done about flow reduction problems in Grande Ronde River. Routing effects can be reduced on federal lands on plateaus where road density is high; most roads may be closed instead of obliterated. Boise Cascade Corp., is planning to improve its road system.

#### **Road Condition/Risk Assessment:**

**Status:** poor. High road density (2.87 mi/sq mi).

**Risk:** low. Most commercial timberlands on plateaus are already heavily roaded. The potential for additional roads is low because most unroaded timberlands are located on steep slopes (economics problem) or are in protected roadless areas on federal lands. 55% non-federal land.

**Opportunity:** low. Most roaded commercial timberlands are in private ownership. The Umatilla NF has already closed a large percentage of its road system.

### **Soil Condition:**

**Status:** poor. High road density (2.87 mi/sq mi). Most detrimental soil conditions (DSCs) are located on the plateaus and are associated with roads, landings and skid trails.

**Risk:** high. High percent forestland. High probability that additional timber harvest entries will increase untreatable shallow DSCs. 55% non-federal land.

**Opportunity:** low. Low percent federal ownership of roaded commercial timberlands. Few severe DSCs will be treated because few roads, landings and skid trails will be subsoiled. It is not environmentally desirable or economically feasible to treat shallow compaction.

### **T,E,S Fish:**

**Status:** moderate. High stream temperatures in summer, migratory corridor primarily, stable habitat conditions, Wild & Scenic River corridor, four sensitive species, portions draining from the north are heavily roaded and experience high precipitation levels.

**Risk:** moderate. High road densities in headwaters, unstable bull trout populations in northern drainages, well vegetated and stable river corridor, Wild & Scenic River status.

**Opportunity:** moderate. High road densities in headwaters on large federal ownership, steep slopes to river corridor.

### **Forest Stand Condition:**

**Status:** fair. Based on composite of conditions based on evidence of insects, stand density, and variance from historic range of variability for stand structure.

**Risk:** moderate. Based on moderate rating for stocking based on canopy closure, high rating for having large % of dry and moist forest versus cold forest, high based on insects and disease, and moderate based on fire/fuel complex with moderate-high fuels, moderate for ground steepness, and moderate for stand structure conditions prone to create ladder fuels.

**Opportunity:** moderate. Lots of previous harvest, steep ground, high % of private forestland.

### **Range Vegetation Condition:**

**Status:** fair. Overall, low amount grass cover type compared to forestland. Approximately 15,000 acres vacant allotment status. Moderate amount of steep ground that somewhat limits grazing impacts.

**Risk:** high. High risk because of noxious weeds, moderate level of steep ground, and lots of private land.

**Opportunity:** moderate. Moderate opportunity because of moderate levels of steep ground, and three vacant allotments, and need for AMP updates.

### **Noxious Weeds:**

**Status:** Ranking was based on the amount of infestation by population size and/or species number.

**Risk:** Ranking was based on the current population, species type and aggressive nature of species, dispersal potential, and vegetative health.

**Opportunity:** Ranking was based on the continued efforts of collaboration with all landowners for weed treatment success (contain or control), and the ownership patterns of the watershed.

### **Economic Benefit:**

**Status:** medium for all watersheds. Sparsely populated, low growth rate, low job diversity, low income. Average poverty rate, evidence of recent economic recovery and increasing economic diversity, growth in service sector. High percentage of transfer payments (social security, interest, dividends) offsetting low income. Economic resiliency rated medium by ICBEMP.

**Risk:** low for all watersheds. Few anticipated changes in management actions that would further significantly affect area. Evidence of recovery present. Low population and no trade centers within project area.

**Opportunity:** low except for Grande Ronde/Rondowa and Grande Ronde/Troy, which were ranked as moderate. Revenue-producing dispersed uses such as timber harvest and hunting are not likely to increase in the near future. Recreation use associated with the river is more likely to increase and bring economic benefit to the area. River corridor is largely in federal and state ownership with possibilities for more cooperative management. Recreation is an “export industry” capable of bringing new dollars into the area.

### **Recreational Value:**

**Status:** medium for all watersheds. Large number of public acres for recreation; relative small number of users. Recreation participation for this area was rated medium by ICBEMP. Recreation resources are good, but not outstanding for multiple uses.

**Risk:** medium for all watersheds. Mitigation for T&E species may affect recreation use. Much land is in federal and state ownership with anticipated flat or declining recreation budgets. Some resource degradation can be expected. The most popular activity, hunting, is expected to decline due to tag availability. Scenic quality may be somewhat affected by noxious weed spread. Large amount of public land, relative few numbers of visitors, and rugged topography will reduce many problems.

**Opportunity:** low except for Grande Ronde River-Rondowa and Lower Grande Ronde-Menatchee (Troy) ranked medium. Boating and fishing interest is high and growing. Pressure from other permitted river systems can be expected to affect the unpermitted Grande Ronde. Large percentage of public ownership. Chance for more cooperative management between and among the feds and state. Fee collection and partnership possibilities.

### **T,E,S Wildlife:**

**Status:** poor. High levels of past and continuing harvest, highly fragmented.

**Risk:** high. Presence of bald eagles, peregrine falcon, probably lynx, several sensitive neotropical migrant bird species. High disturbance levels from harvest and associated roads.

**Opportunity:** moderate. Large area of Federal land should facilitate habitat restoration and retention. Presence of listed species gives some ESA protection. There may be funds available for monitoring/enhancing neotropical bird habitat.

### **Old Forest:**

**Status:** fair. Old forest has been significantly reduced in availability, but still relatively more abundant than in most lower portions of the subbasin. Patches highly fragmented.

**Risk:** high. Continued fragmentation/outright loss of habitat as a result of new harvest.

**Opportunity:** moderate. Relatively large acreage in Federal ownership, Dedicated Old Growth network could be re-worked to further the restoration of old forest habitats (see issue section).

### **Big Game/Carnivores:**

**Status:** poor. Big game herds below Management Objectives for total numbers and recruitment of young. Area is highly roaded, lacks adequate blocks of unroaded cover.

**Risk:** high. Causal factors for population declines not well understood, will probably continue for the near future. Road densities will remain high for the immediate future.

**Opportunity:** moderate. Relatively large acreage in Federal ownership, opportunity for continued/expanded cooperative road closures. Restoring herd productivity is tied to habitat restoration as well as to higher numbers of surviving young.