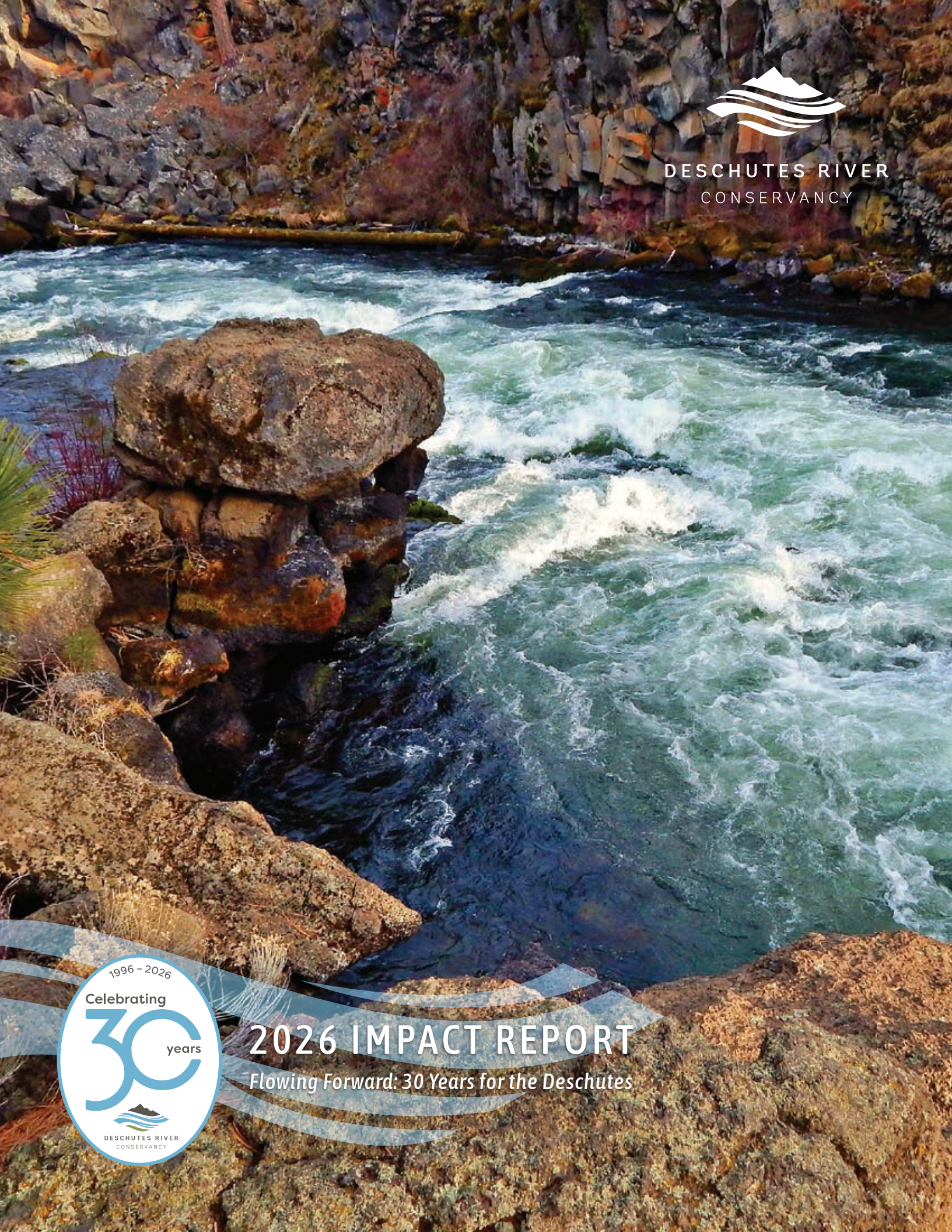


DESCHUTES RIVER
CONSERVANCY

1996 – 2026
Celebrating
30
years
DESCHUTES RIVER
CONSERVANCY

2026 IMPACT REPORT

Flowing Forward: 30 Years for the Deschutes



DESCHUTES RIVER
CONSERVANCY

Crooked River at Smith Rock
Photo: Zack Frank

MISSION

Restore streamflow and improve water quality in the Deschutes River Basin.

VISION

The Deschutes Basin is thriving with healthy watersheds, partnerships, and communities.

VISION COMMITMENTS

1. Abundant cool clean water supports fish and wildlife habitats and promotes resilience to a changing climate.
2. Water is collaboratively balanced for rivers, tribes, irrigators, and municipalities.
3. Community members are engaged and empowered as stewards of the rivers who connect us all.

Cover: Dillon Falls on the Upper Deschutes, *Photo: Hills Outdoors*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Deschutes Land Trust

Bobby Brunoe – (CHAIR) TRIBAL
Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs

Phil Fine – IRRIGATION
North Unit Irrigation District

Steve Forrester – LOCAL GOVERNMENT
City of Prineville

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Grant Traynor – *Program Manager*
Maggie Anderson – *Project Manager*
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Cline Falls on the Deschutes River
Photo: Hills Outdoors

FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Thirty years ago, the Deschutes River Conservancy began with a simple idea: the people who depend on the rivers of the Deschutes Basin could solve its water problems together. Today, that collaborative spirit continues. Persistence has allowed for steady progress, restoring streamflow and bringing hope back to our rivers and streams.

2026 put this progress to the test. The high desert of Central Oregon faced the lowest snowpack and the most severe drought in recorded history. In past decades, a year like this would have left stretches of river bone dry. Yet this summer, cool water remained protected instream. This was made possible by decades of planning for dry years together, instead of fighting over a limited resource.

Drought has become our persistent reality, and the pressure on our waters will keep growing. While we celebrate 30 years of progress, we remain focused on where the Basin needs to go next.

We envision a region in balance. The Upper Deschutes flows at healthier levels through the winter, giving redband trout and Oregon spotted frogs the habitat they need. Steelhead find cold, connected water in Whychus Creek, Trout Creek, and McKay Creek. Family farmers have more certainty, even in dry years, because water can move to where it is needed most. Growing cities have the supply they need.

We know this future is within reach because we are already building it. Conservation projects are restoring winter flows in the Upper Deschutes. Natural flows are being restored to McKay Creek to support reintroduced steelhead. Market-based incentive programs catalyze the voluntary and flexible movement of water to where it is most needed. Through collaborative efforts, partners across the Basin are walking a shared path forward.

None of this work happens without people who care about this place. Your support funds the quiet work that drives this progress forward: building trust, bringing partners together, and finding solutions that hold up in hard years. Thirty years in, I am more convinced than ever that a healthier, more balanced Basin is possible.

Thank you for being part of this community. The next thirty years of the river's story are ours to write together.

With gratitude,

Kate Fitzpatrick

KATE FITZPATRICK
Executive Director, Deschutes River Conservancy

A RIVER ASKED TO GIVE EVERYTHING

For thousands of years, the Deschutes River and its tributaries carried cold water from springs and snowmelt across the high desert. These rivers were home to abundant salmon, steelhead, and redband trout. They sustained the people of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and their ancestors thousands of years before anyone drew a map of the basin.

Beginning in the late 1800s, settlers began to use water, diverting stream-flows through hundreds of miles of canals to support farming across the arid region. Claim by claim, water was removed, shrinking our rivers and sometimes draining them dry.

Today, the basin's water remains over-committed **and our rivers continue to struggle.**

Upper Deschutes, *Photo: Marisa Chappell Hossick*

MORE THAN 86% OF THE BASIN'S SURFACE WATER IS TAKEN OUT OF THE RIVERS TO BE DELIVERED TO IRRIGATED AGRICULTURE. **THIS MAKES WORKING WITH IRRIGATORS THE RIVER'S GREATEST OPPORTUNITY FOR RECOVERY.**

86%



COID canal
Photo: Marisa Chappell Hossick

2 OUT OF 3 YEARS
THE CREEK RAN DRY

"If there's water in that [Whychus] creek you're not doing your job!"
Call received by Marc Thalacker, *then Three Sisters Irrigation District Manger*



Early board members standing in cool water that was restored in partnership with basin stakeholders
Photo: Deschutes River Conservancy

In 1996, irrigators, Tribes, conservation groups, and community leaders came together around a new idea. The river needed help, and **the path forward would be voluntary, collaborative, and non-litigious partnership.**

THE RIVER IS COMING BACK

For thirty years, water has been steadily returning to the rivers of the Deschutes Basin. Through voluntary, collaborative, and non-litigious partnerships, the DRC works alongside Tribes, irrigators, cities, agencies, and conservation groups to give the river a voice at the table.

The results are showing up in the river itself.

Steelhead Falls on the Deschutes River
Photo: Bob Wick



Whychus Creek
Photo: Marisa Chappell Hossick

WHYCHUS CREEK FLOWS AGAIN

Whychus Creek, near Sisters, once ran dry in late summer. Today the creek flows through every season, and **steelhead and salmon are returning to spawn** in waters they were missing from for decades.

Learn more about Whychus Creek →



Upper Deschutes River
Photo: Wirestock Creators

WINTER WATER FOR THE UPPER DESCHUTES

Below Wickiup Reservoir, the river once dropped to **20 cfs** in winter. Irrigation district projects across the basin are on track to **triple current winter flows by 2030** restoring year-round habitat for redband trout and the Oregon spotted frog.

Learn more about the Upper Deschutes →



McKay Creek
Photo: Marisa Chappell Hossick

NEIGHBORS RESTORING McKAY CREEK

Fourteen landowners have come together to voluntarily restore the critical steelhead habitat of McKay Creek near Prineville, OR. This partnership with Ochoco Irrigation District will restore the creek's natural flow for the first time in over 100 years.

Learn more about McKay Creek →

FLOWING FORWARD IN 2026

Basin progress through partnership and community action

100% OF WATER
in the Middle Deschutes below Bend is there because water rights holders **chose to keep it in the river** by engaging in water conservation programs.

Working together for a **healthy river**

396 CFS
(CUBIC FEET PER SECOND)
of water flowing back into rivers & streams through **DRC & partner projects**.

Enough water to fill an Olympic swimming pool about **every four minutes**

8,000+ FISH
rescued and returned to flowing water by **90 volunteers**.

90 volunteers in **3** days

72 CFS
(CUBIC FEET PER SECOND)
kept instream in 10 rivers or streams through **annual leasing**.

Supporting **healthy ecosystems** and adaptive agriculture

285 NEIGHBORS
across the basin **voluntarily kept water in the river** rather than diverting it for irrigation.

Community **in action**

Learn more about getting involved →

DESCHUTES RIVER CONSERVANCY | deschutesriver.org | 541.382.4077 | info@deschutesriver.org

WHERE THE RIVER FLOWS FROM HERE

The next thirty years will test our basin in new ways. The glaciers and snowpack that feed the basin are shrinking, and hot, dry years are becoming more common. Central Oregon continues to grow, with more people depending on the already stressed water system.

A balanced basin is still within reach. Imagine rivers that flow with the water they need in every season, including the dry years. Farms have dependable water through drought, and growing towns have a clear path to water security. Voluntary water markets will make it easer to move water to the places and seasons that need it most. Improved water quality will support vibrant fish and wildlife habitat.

This is the river we are working toward.

Cline Falls on the Deschutes River, *Photo: Sanjana Sachdeva*



The glaciers that feed the rivers and streams of the Deschutes Basin have been gradually shrinking
Photo: Riley Smith

WHAT A BALANCED BASIN LOOKS LIKE

Abundant cool clean water **supports fish and wildlife** habitats & **promotes resilience** to a changing climate.

Water is **collaboratively balanced** for rivers, Tribes, irrigators, and municipalities.

Community members are engaged and empowered as **stewards of the rivers** who connect us all.

> “Our choices now will determine what kind of river our grandchildren inherit. The tools are in place and the work ahead is ours to do together.”
>
> Kate Fitzpatrick, *Executive Director, Deschutes River Conservancy*



DRC Board Chair and Wasco Tribal Member, Bobby Brunoe explains the importance of water to the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs
Photo: Marisa Chappell Hossick



Angler fishing for steelhead on the Lower Deschutes River
Photo: Arian Stevens



Tumalo Falls
Photo: Nicholas Klein

THE POWER OF COMMUNITY GIVING

A community protects what it values. You have the power to keep the river flowing. Your generosity fuels the streamflow restoration, that keeps the Deschutes alive and thriving for current and future generations.

When you give to the river, you join a community that:

1. **RESTORES** river flows to critical streams across the Deschutes Basin.
2. **INSPIRES** learning, understanding, engagement, and positive action.
3. **CREATES** the foundation for lasting, community-led restoration and stewardship.

Help keep our rivers flowing

 Right: Fish swimming in cool clean water, *Photo: Arian Stevens*

2025 FINANCIAL REVIEW

October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2025

The Deschutes River Conservancy remained financially strong in 2025, sustained by the continued generosity and investment from our community.

REVENUE BY SOURCE

Federal Grants	37.5%	$894,049
State Grants	30.8%	$735,542
Foundations & Corporations	13.6%	$324,770
Consulting & Other	9.8%	$233,5094
Individuals	8.3%	$198,2017

Total Revenue $2,385,672

EXPENSES BY CATEGORY

Instream Projects	60.0%	$1,415,277
Basin Planning	21.3%	$501,629
Administration	14.6%	$338,345
Fundraising	4.3%	$102,130

Total Expenses $2,357,381

THANK YOU!

While grants drive much of our 'on-the-ground' restoration, the foundation of this work lies in the unseen effort—the hours spent building trusted partnerships, collaborating across diverse stakeholders, advancing common sense water policy, and engaging our community. **This essential, behind-the-scenes work makes streamflow restoration possible, and it is sustained by the generosity of people like you.**

94 New Donors

743 Total Gifts

$558 Average Gift

Please see our website for our donor list and form 990s.

DESCHUTES RIVER
CONSERVANCY
805 SW Industrial Way, Suite 5
Bend, Oregon 97702

GET INVOLVED

Help us create a more resilient water future for the Deschutes Basin.



DONATE

SUPPORT our mission to restore streamflow and improve water quality in our local rivers and streams.

JOIN

Join our **E-NEWS** list to keep up with what's happening in the Deschutes Basin. Scan the code or visit **DESCHUTESRIVER.ORG**

ATTEND

Stay tuned for upcoming DRC events. Visit the **'EVENTS'** page on our website to make sure you don't miss a thing.