Data Submitted (UTC 11): 9/22/2021 7:00:00 AM
First name: Alex
Last name: Farrand
Organization: Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Title: Assistant District Fish Biologist
Comments: RE: Comments to the Elkhorn Creek River Values Report

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Mid-Willamette District Fish Management Team appreciates the opportunity to comment on the River Values Report for Elkhorn Creek, a tributary to the Little North Fork Santiam River. We can suggest a few minor additions to the section on fisheries values based on personal knowledge of the system and based on surveys conducted on Elkhorn Creek as well as in similar systems within the North Santiam basin.

In general, I agree with the values assessments made, in particular to the section pertaining to fisheries resources. Elkhorn Creek is an important spawning and rearing stream for ESA-listed Upper Willamette winter steelhead. It may be worth mentioning the in-stream large wood placement that occurred in the section below the bridge within the last ten years. As I understand it, this work was done under the guidance of former BLM biologist Bruce Zoellick. ODFW conducts annual winter steelhead spawning surveys on Elkhorn Creek in that section and most of the large wood pieces were still functioning as of spring 2020.

To the fish species mentioned in the report I would also add that native mountain whitefish likely occur seasonally in this creek, and it is possible there may be western brook lamprey in some of the smaller tributaries and the headwaters of Elkhorn Creek.

Impacts to fisheries resources from the Beachie Creek fire may be significant in the short-term. These are likely to include higher summer maximum temperatures based on stream aspect (east-west) and higher solar inputs. In addition, we would expect to see increased scour induced by higher bedload transport from hillslope erosion in the confined reaches. On the other hand, wood inputs are likely to increase in the short-term as well, which may allow for some sedimentation to accumulate in the alluvial reach in the bottom 0.6 miles, which can provide important habitat benefits for fish, such as increased amounts of spawning gravel, cover for juvenile fish, and groundwater mixing and recharge.

Thanks again for the opportunity to comment.

Alex Farrand

Assistant District Fish Biologist

ODFW, South Willamette Watershed District

Corvallis, OR