

Grande Ronde Basin

Description

The Grande Ronde basin, part of the Blue Mountains ecoregion, occupies the far northeastern corner of Oregon, encompassing nearly all of Wallowa County, a large portion of Union County and parts of Baker and Umatilla counties. The rugged Blue and Wallowa mountain ranges, high elevation plateaus and the Grande Ronde and Wallowa river valleys, and the spectacular river canyons including Hells Canyon characterize the topography of the basin. Elevation differences are extreme – ranging from 2500 feet in the valleys to over 10,000 feet in the Wallowas – and contribute to the great variety of natural diversity found in this basin. Roughly 60% of the basin is in public ownership.

Major streams in the basin include the Wallowa, Grande Ronde, and Imnaha rivers. The Grande Ronde originates in the Blue Mountains; flows are highest in spring and early summer and low the rest of the year. Fed by snowmelt from the higher elevation Wallowa Mountains, the Wallowa River sustains flows until late in the season. The Imnaha is directly tributary to the Snake River. Low flows occur throughout the basin from late summer through the fall, interfering with the movement, spawning and rearing of several sensitive fish stock.

Some of the highest concentrations of at-risk species in the Blue Mountain ecoregion are found in the Wallowa Mountains, in areas already within the existing conservation network. The Oregon Biodiversity Project identified the Joseph-Imnaha plateau, which includes the Zumwalt Prairie, as a conservation opportunity area based on its native grasslands, high raptor concentration and aquatic diversity.

Bull trout, spring chinook salmon, and summer steelhead are listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act. In addition, the Joseph-Imnaha plateau area provides habitat for other at-risk species such as wolverine, lynx, Columbia sharp-tailed grouse and ten at-risk plant species.

Lower elevation riparian forest and shrubland ecological systems are of high importance in the Grande Ronde basin, as are several wetland and grassland types.

Priority Ecological Systems

- Alkaline wetlands
- Black greasewood
- Columbia Basin grassland
- Foothill and canyon dry grassland
- Foothill and lower montane riparian woodland
- Freshwater emergent marsh
- Lowland riparian forest and shrubland
- Montane riparian forest and shrubland
- Montane riparian woodland and shrubland

Semi-desert grassland
Subalpine or montane wet meadow

Rare or At-Risk Plant Communities

Basin big sagebrush / basin wildrye
Basin big sagebrush / needle-and-thread
Basin wildrye bottomlands
Black cottonwood - white alder
Black cottonwood / black hawthorn
Black cottonwood / coyote willow
Black cottonwood / pacific willow riparian
Black hawthorn - common snowberry
Black hawthorn - common snowberry / Idaho fescue
Black hawthorn - woods rose
California oatgrass - Idaho fescue
Coyote willow - pacific willow
Idaho fescue - (common snowberry)
Mockorange
Mountain alder - western birch
Needle-leaf navarretia - Kellogg knotweed vernal pool
Quaking aspen / mountain alder - birch - currant
Red alder / lady fern
Red alder / pacific ninebark
Sculer willow
Tufted hairgrass - Douglas' sedge alkaline prairie
Western birch - black hawthorn
Western birch - creek dogwood
Western birch - mockorange
White alder / chokecherry
White alder / hackberry
White alder / mockorange
White alder / water birch
White alder / woods rose

Grande Ronde – Priority Species

<i>Fish</i>	<i>Birds</i>	<i>Mammals</i>	<i>Amphibians and Reptiles</i>	<i>Invertebrates</i>	<i>Plants</i>
Inland Redband Trout Steelhead Chinook Salmon Bull Trout	Bobolink Ferruginous Hawk (nest sites only) Lewis's Woodpecker Long-Billed Curlew Sharp-tailed Grouse Willow Flycatcher Wilson's Phalarope	Western Small- Footed Bat White-Tailed Jackrabbit	Columbia Spotted Frog	<i>Fisherola nuttalli</i> (Shortface Lanx)	<i>Pleuropogon oregonus</i> (Oregon Semaphore Grass) <i>Silene spaldingii</i> (Spalding's Campion)