



**SPRING 2024**



*Photos by Chris Corbin, Brian O'Keefe, and Michael Peterson*

Deschutes River Alliance supporters share a common goal: to see a thriving and healthy lower Deschutes River. By harnessing the power of our voices, we can transform this vision into a tangible reality.

The Selective Water Withdrawal Tower began operations in 2010. Throughout most of the year, the tower discharges warm, polluted water from Lake Billy Chinook's surface into the lower Deschutes, resulting in dirtier, warmer water. These changes are corroborated by the rigorous scientific work of the DRA, and also in reports published by PGE.

The DRA upholds a commitment to delivering top-tier research, of such high quality, it's put to use by state and federal agencies. When DEQ submits water quality reports to the Environmental Protection Agency, the data it submits originates at the DRA.

Specialized equipment known as datasondes, which continuously monitor crucial water quality metrics including pH, temperature, and dissolved oxygen, tell the story of the compromised health of the river. Last year, the DRA's monitoring station just below the dams was in the water for 157 days. On 133 of those days the pH standard was violated.

The deteriorating water quality threatens aquatic life. OSU and ODFW have reported the amount of the *C. shasta* parasite is far beyond what's considered lethal to spring Chinook. The result is the looming extinction of spring Chinook in the lower river. This is not a casual observation; it's an urgent call to action.

Despite these challenges, there is a solution. Night Blend, outlined in a 2019 report funded by PGE, presents a common-sense solution to improve the river's conditions. By altering the water release

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**SARAH CLOUD**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**NEW TO THE TEAM**

Meet our new Water Quality Coordinator and our newest board member.

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**OUR LETTER TO THE EPA**

We explained our objections to the DEQ's proposed new rules. Now we wait.

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**WHAT IS A DATASONDE?**

Each spring we install our monitoring equipment—learn how it works.

*Pages 8-9*

# New to the Team



## HANNAH CAMEL

WATER QUALITY  
COORDINATOR

Born and raised in Bend, Oregon, Hannah grew up flyfishing and rafting on the lower Deschutes River. She has spent the last two years working in fisheries and aquatics at the Forest Service and recently graduated with a B.S. in Environmental Science and Applied Ecology from Oregon State University. Now, she's committed to preserving Oregon's rivers and safeguarding the diverse species that call these places home. Off the river, Hannah loves to explore Central Oregon, rock climbing, skiing, and hunting.



## ALEX GONSIEWSKI

NEWLY ELECTED  
BOARD MEMBER

Alex spent his childhood on Oregon rivers, lakes, and beaches with a rod in hand and a camera around his neck. In 2008 he graduated from Oregon State University with a B.S. in Environmental Science and Ecology. He has worked as a guide full-time since 2012—dividing his year between the lower Deschutes and the Oregon Coast. Alex has published photographs and photo essays in multiple outdoors publications. When not guiding he's exploring the great outdoors.

## Events Calendar ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

- April 27** River Clean-Up, Deschutes River Fly Shop, Warm Springs
- May 18** DRA staff attend Maupin Daze
- May 22** Rainbow Bend Brew Launch Party @ Steeplejack Hillsboro with Casting Competition by Royal Treatment Fly Shop
- May 31-  
June 2** Troutfest with Dutch Oven Cook-Off, Vendors, Presentations, Live Music, Food, Beer, and River Clean-Up, Maupin
- July 9** Portland Premiere of *The Last 100 Miles* documentary. 7:15p @ Cinema 21, 616 NW 21st



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503.224.0657

## Board

Pat Becker, President  
Rick Pay, Treasurer  
Dan Ellis  
Alex Gonsiewski  
Rick Hafele  
Amy Hazel  
John Hazel  
Larry Marxer  
Steve Pribyl  
Jenny O'Brien  
Brian Silvey  
Kelly Sjolander  
Louis Taylor

## Staff

Sarah Cloud  
Executive Director  
Peter Anderson  
Development Manager  
Steve Hawley  
Communications Manager  
Hannah Camel  
Water Quality Coordinator  
Thomaida Hudanish  
Outreach Coordinator

## Mission

The Deschutes River Alliance is a science-based advocacy organization seeking collaborative solutions to the threats facing the Wild and Scenic Deschutes River and its tributaries. We advocate for **cooler, cleaner water**, a healthy ecosystem, and the recovery and protection of robust populations of resident and anadromous fish.

## Vision

A lower Deschutes River that is the confluence of a healthy ecosystem, sustainable economy, and vibrant community.



# New Board President

At our annual auction, we thanked Dan Ellis for three years of service as our board president. Dan navigated us through an important phase of our development as an organization with calm, good humor, and generous mentorship to others. We're grateful to have Dan continue as a valued member of our board.

In February the board elected a new president, Pat Becker Jr. Pat is the CEO of Becker Capital Management, a Pacific Northwest investment advisory firm with offices in Portland, Bend and Seattle. Pat serves on several nonprofit boards and committees including Edison High School, University of Portland, St. Andrew Nativity School, and LifeWorks NW. When not working or volunteering, you can find Pat and his wife, Tabitha, at their home on the Deschutes with their German Sheperd.

Pat is passionate about ensuring a healthy Deschutes for future generations, including his grown children and granddaughter. ❖



**PAT BECKER**  
BOARD PRESIDENT

## Remembering Dale Madden

On April 17th, Dale Madden passed away leaving a huge hole in the lives of many and in the heart of Maupin. Dale was a champion of both the lower Deschutes River and Maupin—the town loved and cared for him as much as he did for them. His generosity of spirit was vibrant until the very end—the day before his passing he bought Freebridge pizza for the nursing crew and spent the afternoon joking around with them. We encourage all that met Dale for even a brief moment to raise a glass in his memory and spread his generous spirit wherever you are.



### *continued from Front Page*

pattern to prioritize bottom reservoir flow for the majority of the year, a positive impact on the lower Deschutes could be swiftly achieved.

Your support for the DRA provides an excellent opportunity for all of us to make a difference. Come July, we'll premiere a feature-length documentary—a narrative of beauty, challenge, and hope that I hope you all will witness.

We want to build the momentum you created last year when over 200 of you persuaded DEQ not to relax pH standards on the Crooked River. The DRA now has a presence in Salem. Your voice will be important as we pressure policy makers to enforce the Clean Water Act.

Thank you for your commitment, your support, and your belief in a brighter tomorrow for the lower Deschutes River. Together, let's make that dream a vivid and lasting reality. ❖

# DEQ PROPOSES, DRA OPPOSES LOWER WATER QUALITY STANDARDS

by Steve Hawley

## FALLING DOWN ON THE JOB

The DRA recently asked the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to review the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality's proposed new rules for water quality on rivers in the state of Oregon.

A letter sent in mid-February to Region 10 EPA Acting Director Mike Szerlog pointed out that the proposed new standards fail to provide adequate protection for salmon, steelhead and trout in all Oregon rivers, particularly the lower Deschutes. "DEQ's new Fish and Aquatic Life Use rules," the letter states, "fall short of the DEQ's duties to protect, maintain and improve the quality of water for their beneficial uses, and fail to make decisions based on the best information currently available."

Quick review: The DEQ's Rule-Making process was at issue last year, when a critical mass of DRA supporters delivered over 200 comments to DEQ to hold the line on a proposed change to the pH standard in the Deschutes Basin. But other new proposed rules came through unscathed by the public comment process. Hence the EPA letter.

The letter also points out that the new standards overlook existing data and assign less protective minimum standards than are currently in place, and asks EPA to reject the proposed rule changes and instruct DEQ on how to modify them to better protect trout, salmon, steelhead and bull trout.

## HALF THE TROUT LEFT OUT

The proposed new rules would institute a single, state-wide end-date of either May 15th or June 15th for trout spawning in all Oregon rivers. The earlier calendar date would apply to designated "Salmon and Trout Migration,"

waters; the later date to "Core-Cold Water Habitat." The Deschutes would fall under the latter, less stringent category. But as several studies, including extensive data collected by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), have documented, trout spawning in the Deschutes takes place under a much longer period of time. One investigation found trout spawning from February through August. The proposed DEQ rule changes, according to this report, would ignore half the trout population in the Deschutes.

***Designating the lower 84 miles of the Deschutes River for 'cool water species'— i.e, habitat not primarily used by salmon, steelhead and trout— completely ignores the reality of the fish community in the river.***

The rules would also mistakenly lump trout and steelhead spawning into the same, narrower time frame. On the Deschutes, while some overlap occurs between trout and steelhead spawning and egg incubation timing, the same study found that the two species' spawning periods have only 14% of their respective spawning days in common.

## DOWNGRADE FOR THE DESCHUTES

For the Deschutes, one of the most dire consequence of DEQ's rule change would be its designation as "core cold water habitat," meaning, under prescribed management protocols laid out by DEQ, that the Deschutes

would be managed for non-salmonid species. “Designating the lower 84 miles of the Deschutes River for ‘cool water species’-i.e, habitat not primarily used by salmon, steelhead and trout-completely ignores the reality of the fish community in the river,” the letter contends. “The river guides who make hundreds of trout fishing trips annually down the Deschutes are not fishing for suckers, chubs or sculpins. Put another way, it would be hard to find another stream in Oregon more famous for its trout fishing than the lower 100 miles of the Deschutes River...”

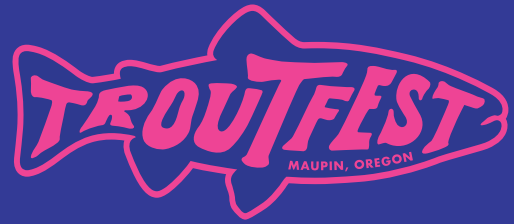
While the DRA awaits a response from the EPA, Executive Director Sarah Cloud is calling for better cooperation between the two state water management agencies. “What’s frustrating is that ODFW has the maps and the data,” says Cloud. “DEQ is playing loose with the data, so the water quality standards are easier to meet around the state. The Clean Water requires that standards error on the side of protecting aquatic life, not under-protecting it.” ❖

This update on our advocacy work was initially published on our blog and via our weekly e-mail newsletter.



Subscribe at [deschutesriveralliance.org](https://deschutesriveralliance.org), or via the QR code, to receive timely updates straight to your inbox.

CALLING ALL CAMPFIRE COOKS, GUIDES,  
CAMP HOSTS, HOBBYISTS, AND  
CULINARY PROFESSIONALS!



WE'RE KICK STARTING THE WEEKEND WITH A  
**DUTCH OVEN COOK-OFF**

FRIDAY, MAY 31ST

SIGN-UP AT [DESCHUTESROUTFEST.ORG](https://deschutestroutfest.org)



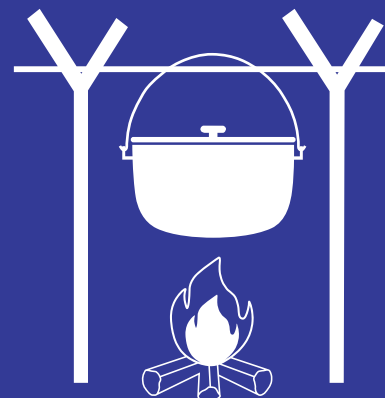
PAY \$5 TO SAMPLE ALL THE DISHES  
AND SUBMIT YOUR VOTES

WINNERS AWARDED FOR  
MAIN DISH, SIDE, AND DESSERT

**BEER GARDEN**

BY FREEBRIDGE BREWING AND PFRIEM  
FAMILY BREWERS

**LIVE MUSIC**  
BY JENN GRINELS



# UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

by Steve Hawley

Literally and figuratively, Steve Pribyl has spent a lot of time on the Deschutes. For the bulk of his 30-year career at the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Pribyl was assigned to the lower river. But for him, a day job managing his favorite body of water wasn't enough. He and his wife Jacky spent many weekends floating the river from Pine Tree to the mouth. He estimates he's floated the lower river at least 250 times.

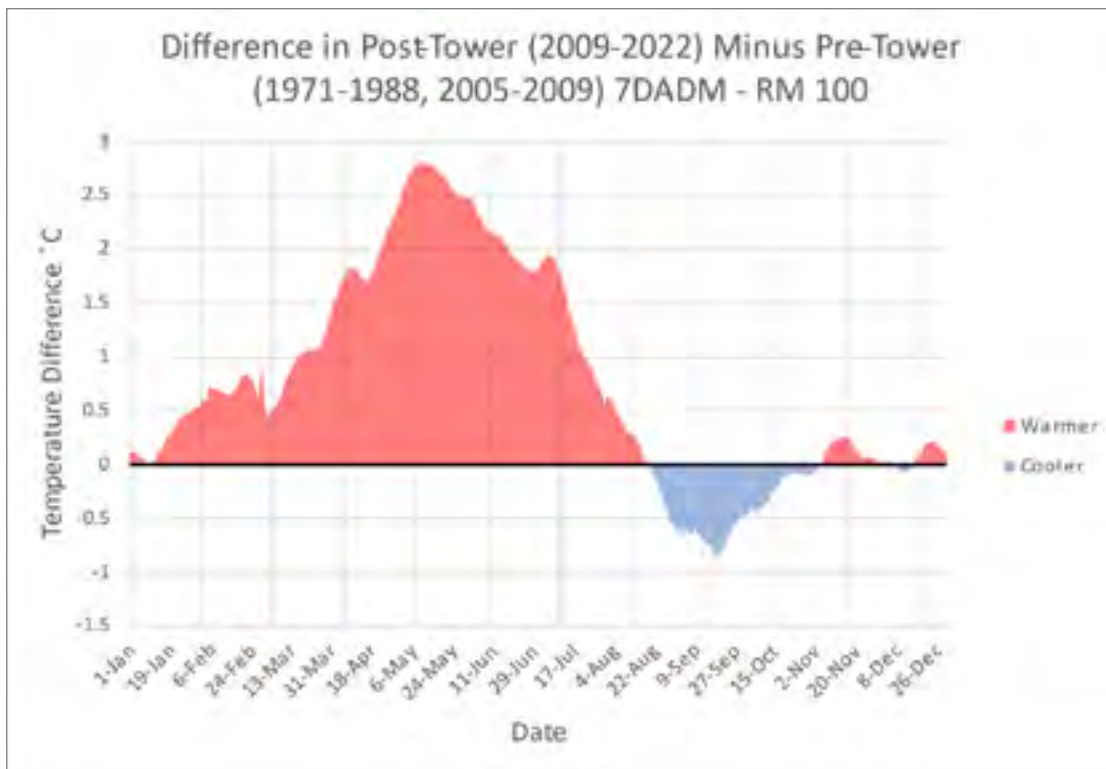
Since retiring, Pribyl has continued to love and defend the Deschutes. He's a founding board member of the DRA. When PGE began making claims that their management of the river—warming it for eight months out of the year, and cooling briefly in the fall—was for the benefit of fall Chinook, Pribyl was skeptical. Greg McMillan, before his passing, prodded Pribyl to research and write a paper that would thoroughly vet PGE's claims.

“Greg wanted a Master's thesis type of project,” said Pribyl. “At first I was reluctant to take that on. But the further into the research I got, the more off-base PGE's ideas started to look.”

The result of Pribyl's diligence is a 69-page white paper that thoroughly examines, describes and explains what has happened to the river in the 14 years since operation of the Selective Water Withdrawal Tower began.

“PGE has kept claiming that they are managing temperature to benefit fall Chinook,” Pribyl summed up, when asked why he took on this project. “According to what I know from my training and experience, that's not true.” ❖

You can find the Executive Summary and complete white paper on our website: [deschutesriveralliance.org/water-quality-monitoring](https://deschutesriveralliance.org/water-quality-monitoring)





# 2024 AUCTION RECAP



Nearly 300 people gathered in support of the lower Deschutes River in SE Portland on the afternoon of Saturday, February 24th. It was all smiles as people greeted friends, enjoyed a beverage from Freebridge Brewing, Lange

Winery, or Crater Lake Spirits, and perused auction items. We honored Michael McLucas as our 2024 River Champion and watched a preview of the upcoming film, *The Last 100 Miles*. Thanks to your generosity

we raised \$95,000 during the paddle raise. We've locked in next year's date—see you back at The Redd for fun raffles, fabulous auction packages, good food, and strong community. ❖

*Photos by Jennifer Harris.*

## SAVE THE DATE: FEB 22, 2025





*We monitor river conditions with datasondes in three locations on the lower Deschutes—Warm Springs, Maupin, and at the mouth, where it flows into the Columbia River.*





# What is a DATASONDE ?

BY HANNAH CAMEL

Our commitment to restoring colder, cleaner water in the lower Deschutes River includes a scientifically rigorous water quality monitoring program. This program involves collecting long-term water quality measurements at several locations along the river utilizing a monitoring device known as a datasonde.

In simple terms, a datasonde is a sophisticated device designed to collect water quality data. It is equipped with sensors that measure various parameters including temperature, pH levels, dissolved oxygen, and turbidity. These sensors are linked to a data logger, enabling real-time data collection and transmission. The datasondes used by the DRA are calibrated in accordance with DEQ standards and protocols, ensuring the data collected meets the highest level of data accuracy.

Once deployed in the river, the datasondes collect data every hour from spring through the fall. The sondes are continuously monitored while deployed, and are routinely checked against handheld meters.

These independent field measurements, called audits, verify that the sensors are functioning properly and confirms that the data being collected is accurate and of high quality. During winter, when cold temperatures pose risks, the sondes are temporarily removed and sent in to the manufacturer for maintenance to ensure they are accurately calibrated.

The DRA has two datasondes deployed—near Madras and Maupin—and a third going in at the mouth of the river. By monitoring key indicators at these sites, such as changes in temperature or fluctuations in pH, we are able to better understand ecosystem impacts resulting from SWW tower operations and monitor for water quality violations.

In short, datasondes allow for the real-time monitoring of rivers, providing comprehensive data that can be used to assess the ecological health of a system. By detecting changes and potential threats to water quality, they help us to make informed and scientifically-based decisions to safeguard the lower Deschutes River for both current and future generations. ❖

# THE BEST SCIENCE AVAILABLE

by Steve Hawley

Since its inception in 2014, The Deschutes River Alliance has been utilizing the best available science to monitor the health of the lower Deschutes River. The DRA's scientifically rigorous water quality monitoring program has been continually reviewed, re-calibrated, refined and expanded. The data produced is of such high caliber that the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality uses it when submitting its reports to the Environmental Protection Agency.

The science team, Rick Hafele, Larry Marxer, and Steve Pribyl, between the three of them, have more than a century of experience producing and analyzing data as state agency fisheries and aquatic scientists.

Recently, the DRA invited this august trio to answer questions about the DRA's science program. Answers have been edited for clarity and length.

**DRA: What's the thing you'd point to as the biggest accomplishment of the DRA's science program?**

Rick Hafele (RH): DRA is the only entity—state, federal, corporate, or private—that is collecting continuous real-time in-depth water quality data at multiple sites on the lower Deschutes River. We have state-of-the-art equipment, and follow the same quality control/quality assurance procedures used by DEQ and implemented by a retired professional (Larry Marxer) with over 30 years of water monitoring experience.

This data is critical in understanding the type and extent of changes occurring in the lower Deschutes. Without it we'd be as Steve Pribyl likes to say, "Just another guy on the street with an opinion." Our "opinions" are based on the hard data we've collected for almost

***DRA is the only entity collecting continuous real-time, in-depth water quality data at multiple sites on the lower Deschutes River. We follow the same quality assurance procedures used by DEQ...***

ten years, as well as the data collected by PGE and DEQ.

**DRA: When did it become clear to you that a rigorous water quality monitoring program was needed on the Deschutes?**

Larry Marxer (LM): In June 2013, I received a phone call from Greg McMillan, inviting me to join the board of the DRA. I did join, and participated in further conversations on how best to communicate with PGE staff and advocate for operations changes at the Tower. At that point, it was clear to everyone that the most effective starting point was to develop a solid, science-based and defensible water quality program in order to demonstrate our concern.

RH: In 2014, we put out temperature probes at multiple spots along the river and left them through the season. That same summer, Larry Marxer helped organize a survey of the river with multiple crews spread out along the Deschutes with equipment to sample dissolved oxygen, pH, turbidity, and temperature at regular intervals over a 24 hour period. From that data, we decided it would be best to get a datasonde in the river so we could sample those parameters every hour from spring through fall. Larry Marxer again provided the



*Our Science Team, from left to right: Larry Marxer, Steve Pribyl, and Rick Hafele, is featured in upcoming documentary about water quality on the lower Deschutes River, The Last 100 Miles. Image credit: Peterson Hawley Productions.*



expertise in writing the audit procedures so the data would pass the highest level of quality based on DEQ’s own methods.

**DRA: Is PGE’s management of the lower Deschutes River based in sound science?**

Steve Pribyl (SP): Based on my training, experience and observations, I would offer that PGE’s science is probably good. But their application of that science is lacking, to, first, recognize the problems SWW operations are causing, and second, use that science to guide meaningful changes to benefit the lower river.

LM: I do not believe that their management of the Lower Deschutes River has ever been science-based but, rather, more economics-based. There is PGE’s continued claim that water quality conditions in the lower river are just fine, and that Tower operations have indeed improved and enhanced anadromous fish populations in the upper watershed [above the dams]. Then there’s their absolute refusal to consider altering the SWW mix formula to benefit water quality or the biological community in the lower river.

**DRA: What is “adaptive management,” and has PGE practiced it on the Deschutes?**

LM: Adaptive management means when the results of initial on-the-ground corrective actions show little or no improvement to the environmental conditions, revisions to the original action plan can and should be made that will result in improvement and enhancement of environmental conditions.

RH: It’s the exact opposite of what happened. Put simply, adaptive management was supposed to mean operations would be adapted to meet water quality requirements. Instead, water quality requirements were adapted to meet operations of the Tower. Adaptive management in the WQMMP [water quality permit, required by the Clean Water Act] is described as a process by which the “management of the Tower” would be adjusted—adapted—based on the data collected. When the data showed conditions in the lower Deschutes weren’t meeting the requirements of the WQMMP, management of the Tower would be changed. Instead, the water quality requirements in the plan were adjusted (lowered) so the operations of the Tower could continue unchanged.

SP: The concept of adaptive management was heavily stressed in [PGE’s] relicensing documents. The DRA was hopeful that as PGE learned about downstream water quality and ecological impacts from SWW operations that they would adapt their management to address these changes. That is not happening. ❖



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In December we launched a

**NEW WEBSITE** 

[deschutesriveralliance.org](https://deschutesriveralliance.org)



Take a look!

**FRIDAY & SATURDAY  
MAY 31 & JUNE 1**  
OASIS RIVERVIEW CAMPGROUND



**Dutch Oven Cook-Off  
Casting Lessons & Competition  
Live Music - Food, & Beer Garden  
Sunday River Clean-Up**

PRESENTED BY



**FREE & OPEN  
TO ALL AGES**  
[deschutes troutfest.org](https://deschutes troutfest.org)

THE DESCHUTES RIVER ALLIANCE PRESENTS  
AN EXCLUSIVE DOCUMENTARY EVENT



A PETERSON HAWLEY PRODUCTION

**THE LAST 100 MILES**

THE FIGHT FOR THE DESCHUTES RIVER

PREMIERING 07.09.2024 CINEMA 21 - 616 NW 21ST AVE, PORTLAND