

Oregon





Water Resources in the State of Oregon

Oregon has seven major river basins — Willamette, Lower Columbia, Middle Columbia, Snake, Oregon Interior, Klamath, and Oregon Coast. The Lower Columbia, Willamette and Coast basins are in the rainy, heavily forested area west of the Cascade Mountains; the others are in much drier eastern Oregon.

The Cascade Range, about 5,000 feet high, is the climatic barrier between western and eastern Oregon.

The Columbia River, flowing for 300 miles along Oregon's northern boundary, drains most of the Pacific Northwest including four of Oregon's major river basins: the Lower Columbia, Middle Columbia, Willamette, and Snake. The Willamette River enters the Columbia about 100 miles upstream from the ocean.

The boundary between the Lower and Middle Columbia River basins is at Bonneville Dam on the Columbia, about 145 miles from the ocean. The mouth of the Snake River, in Washington, marks the boundary between the Middle and Upper Columbia River basins, the latter being entirely in Washington, Idaho, Montana, and Canada. The Snake River drains the easternmost one-fifth of Oregon; most of Idaho; and smaller parts of Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming. The Snake and Willamette rivers are the Columbia River's two largest tributaries.

More than two-thirds of Oregon's population is concentrated in the Willamette and Lower Columbia basins. Portland, Oregon's largest city, is at the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia rivers. Much of the work accomplished by the Army Corps of Engineers in Oregon has directly furthered the economic development of the region.

The Klamath Basin includes the part of Oregon drained by the Klamath River. The Klamath drains to the Pacific Ocean in Northern California. The Klamath and the Columbia are the only two rivers that breach the Cascade Range in their courses to the sea.

The Oregon Coast Basin includes those rivers entirely in Oregon which drain directly to the Pacific Ocean. The Oregon Interior Basin includes those areas in southeastern Oregon which have no drainage outlet to the sea.

Corps activities in the various river basins are discussed in the following chapters. In each chapter, a general map of the basin is included, together with a small location map showing that basin's position in Oregon. No projects have been constructed by the Corps in the Klamath Basin, which is within the boundaries of the San Francisco District, or in Goose Lake Basin, an interior basin within the Sacramento District area.