Proposed Changes to Oregon's Groundwater Allocation Rules

An Overview

GSI Water Solutions, Inc.

Groundwater Allocation Goals

- With few exceptions, use of water in Oregon requires a water right.
- Water Resources Commission Goal:
  - Update groundwater allocation rules to be more sustainable and protective of existing water right holders, both instream and out of stream
- Staff Approach to Rulemaking:
  - “Potential for Substantial Interference”
  - “Reasonably Stable Groundwater Levels”

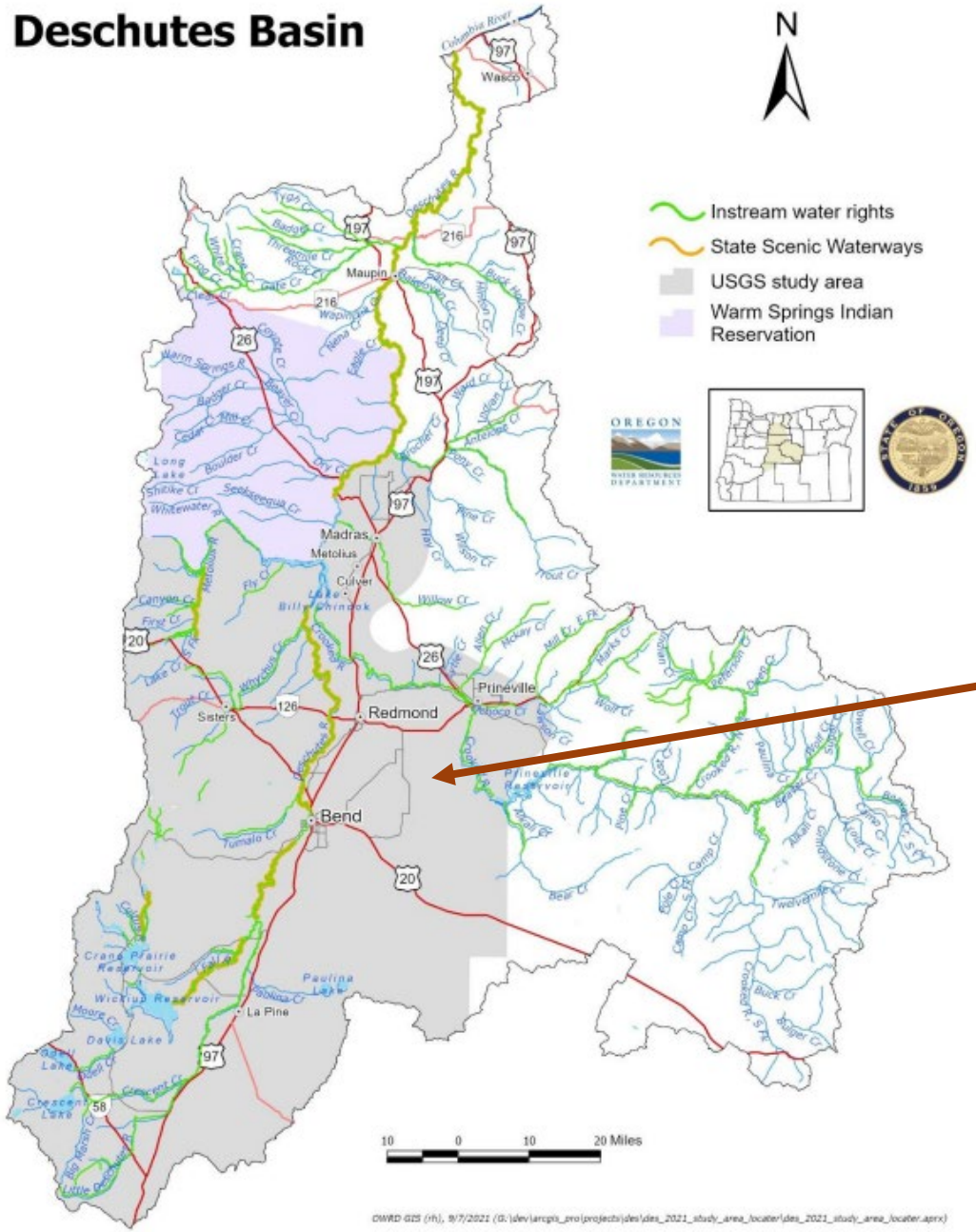
August Available Streamflow

OREGON WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

Other Notable Restrictions on Surface Water Availability

- Basin Programs
- Division 33 Review and Conditions

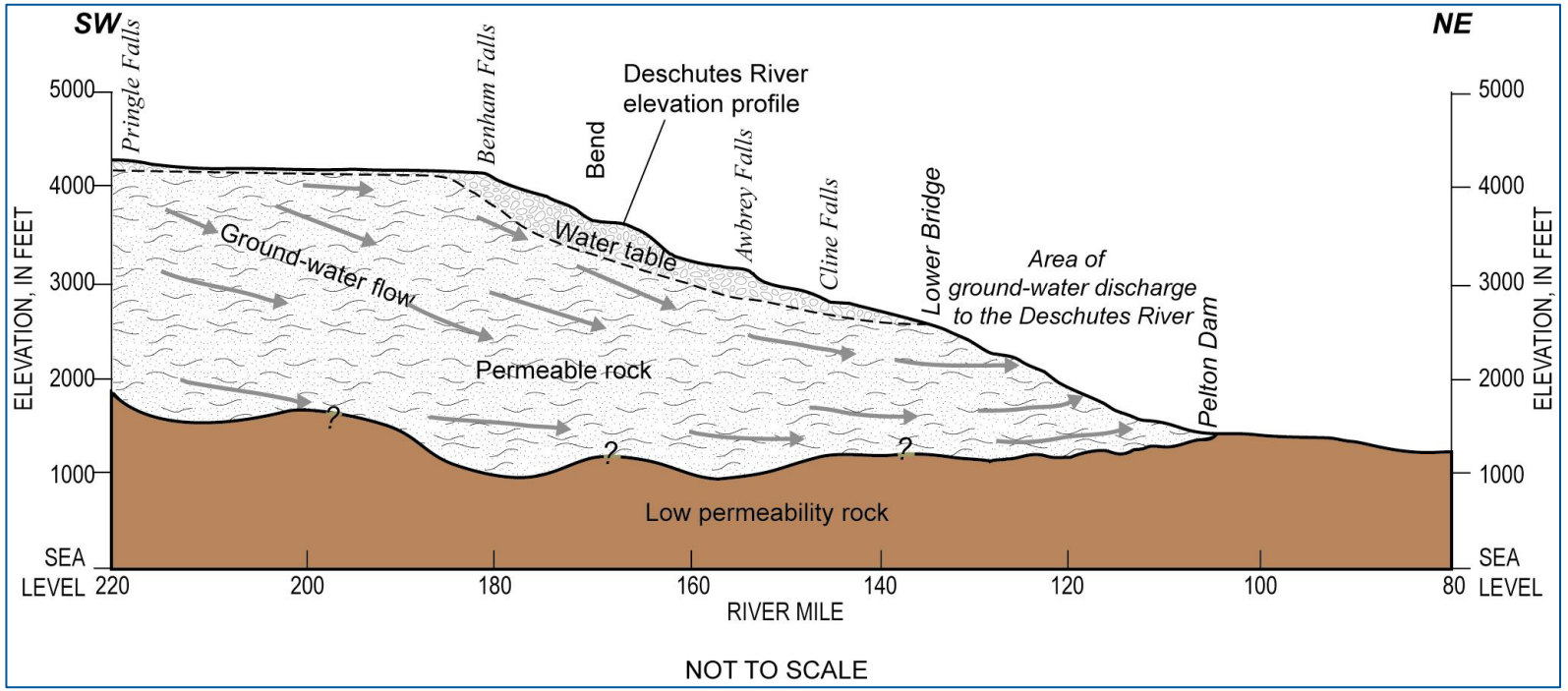
Deschutes Study Area



Everyone has PSI!

Figure 1: Deschutes Basin Groundwater Study Area

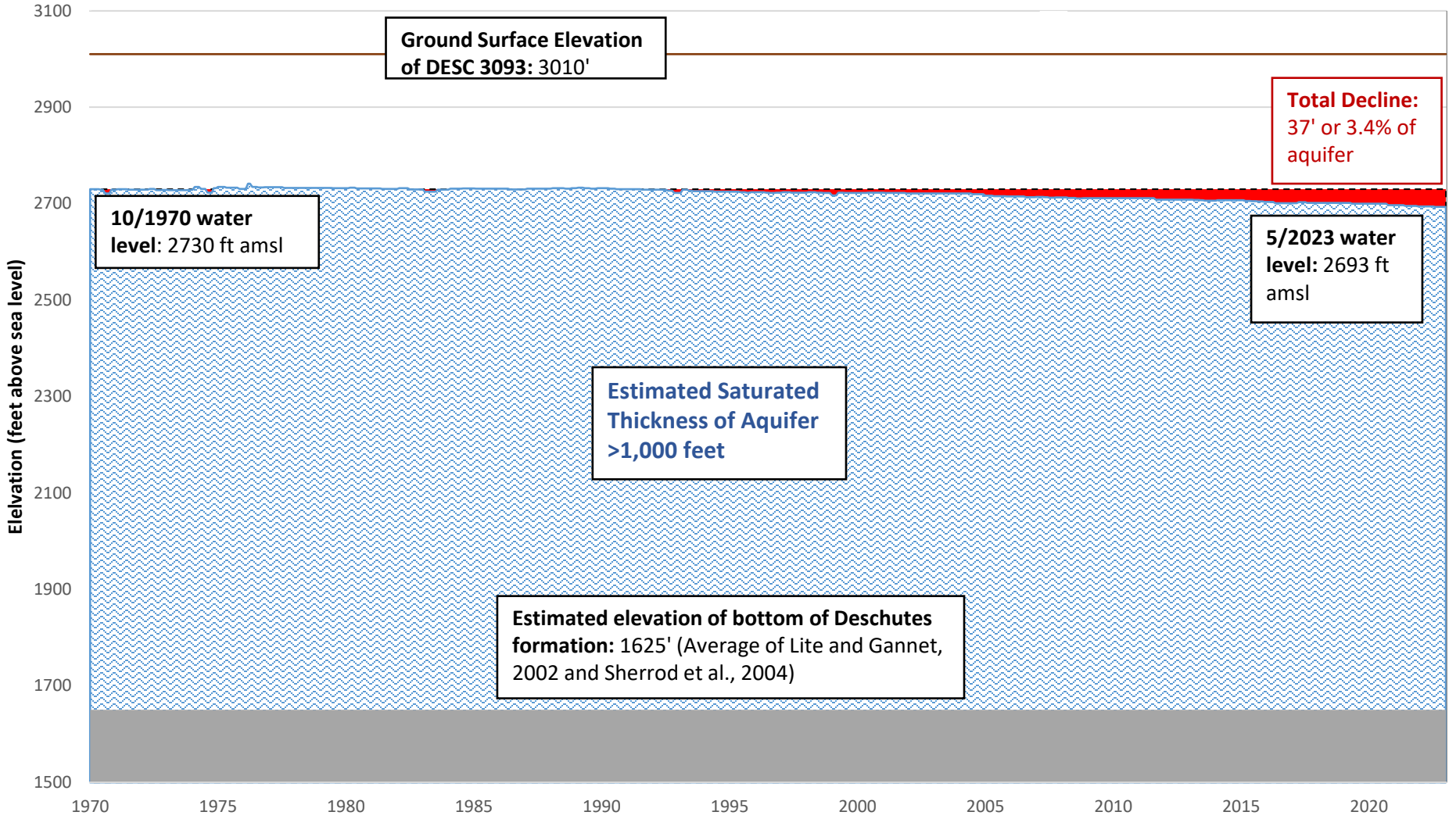
Joint USGS – OWRD Study



Groundwater Allocation Goals – Deschutes Basin Application

- Mitigation Program established in 2002.
- In the Upper Deschutes Basin, a groundwater permit can only be issued if mitigation is provided.
- OWRD's Identified Need for New Rules:
  - ~~"Potential for Substantial Interference"~~
  - "Reasonably Stable Groundwater Levels"

Estimated Saturated Thickness at Well near Redmond (DESC 3093)



To Which Applications do These Rules Apply?

- Groundwater Permits
- Limited Licenses
- Emergency Water Use Permits
- Would not apply to exempt wells.

Are there any remedies?

- Basin-specific rules.
- Basin-scale collaborative efforts.
- Conservation benchmarks?

Three Takeaways

- Basins without a formal mitigation program are in a difficult spot.
- Lots of work to be done to create more effective water movement options.
- Concerned about moratorium in the Deschutes Basin.