

Tualatin River Watershed Fact Sheet

Compiled by the Tualatin Riverkeepers, October 1997

GENERAL FACTS

- Length of river: 79.3 miles.
- Location of headwaters: The east slope of the northwestern portion of the Coast Range of Oregon, west of the town of Cherry Grove, in Washington County.
- The mouth of the Tualatin River at river mile (RM) 0.00 enters the left bank of the Willamette River at RM 28.5 in West Linn.
- Rain water (as opposed to snowmelt) is the primary source of water for the river.
- Typical flow in summer is 150 cubic feet per second (cfs), rarely dropping to less than 50 cfs. Flow is maintained by the Unified Sewerage Agency (USA) releases from Hagg Lake.
- Typical flow in winter ranges from 2,000 to 3,500 cfs, with peaks of 7,000 cfs.
- Peak flow during February 1996 flood: 30,000 cfs.
- Up to 50% of the Tualatin's summer flow can be attributed to water treated at USA treatment plants.
- Flow in the Tualatin is sometimes augmented by releases from Barney Reservoir on the upper Trask River.
- The water is brown in the lower Tualatin because of small suspended soil particles.
- The elevation drop in the lower Tualatin River is 0.08 feet/mile (or 1 inch per mile).
- The elevation drop in the headwaters of the Tualatin is 72 feet/mile.
- The Tualatin River Watershed drains 712 square miles (455,680 acres).
- The Chehalem and Parrot Mountains are the southern boundary of the Tualatin River Basin.
- 34 named tributaries feed directly into the Tualatin River. These creeks are: Fields, Tate, Wilson, Shipley, Pecan, Athey, Saum, Hedges, Fanno, Chicken, McFee, Burris, Christensen, Butternut, Gordon, Rock, Beaverton, Davis, Dairy, McKay, Gales, Carpenter, Dilley, Johnson, O'Neil, Scoggins, Wapato, Black Jack, Hering, Roaring, Lee, Patten, Sunday and Maple.
- The largest subbasin of the Tualatin River Watershed is Dairy Creek, draining 231 square miles.
- The Tualatin River is the northernmost major tributary to enter the Willamette River from the west.
- Four known waterfalls exist along the river: Little Lee Falls (RM 69.42), Lee Falls (RM 71.01), Haines Falls (RM 73.28) and Ki-A-Cut Falls (RM 77).
- The Tualatin River Watershed includes 6 counties: Yamhill, Washington, Multnomah, Clackamas, Tillamook and Columbia. The main stem of the river runs through Yamhill, Washington, Multnomah and Clackamas.
- The Tualatin River is a source of drinking water for over 30,000 households in Washington County, including portions of Hillsboro, Forest Grove, Cornelius, Beaverton and Aloha.
- Dams on the river and its tributaries include: Lake Oswego Corp. Diversion Dam (RM 3.45), Scoggins Dam on Scoggins Creek.

HISTORY

• Geologic History

- Columbia River basalt flowed across what is now the Tualatin River Basin millions of years ago.
- As the Juan de Fuca plate is forced under the North American plate, sediment is scraped off and mixed with basalt, creating the Coast Range.
- 12,000 to 15,000 years ago, during the last ice age, the Clark Fork of the Columbia River was dammed by a huge glacier in Montana. As the weather warmed, 500 cubic miles of water broke free and drained, displacing 50 cubic miles of soil from eastern Washington and placing it in the Columbia River Gorge. The floodwater flowed up the Willamette and into the Tualatin Basin, where more of the sediment and debris settled out. These floods, known as the Bretz Floods, re-occurred approximately every 50 years for 2,000 years.

• Human History

- First known human inhabitants of the Tualatin River Basin: up to 30,000 Atlatl (also called Twality or Tualiti) Indians.
- Historic uses of the river included log transport and steamboat traffic for transportation of goods and people.
- Historic land uses in the watershed: trapping, logging, farming.
- Current uses of the river: irrigation, drinking water, recreation, treated effluent disposal, commercial crawfish harvest.
- Current land uses in the watershed: logging, farming, mining, residential, urban.
- 93% of the land within the Tualatin River Watershed is privately owned.

VEGETATION, FISH AND WILDLIFE

- Common trees along the river: Oregon ash, Vine maple, Pacific dogwood, Western hemlock, Western red cedar, White oak, Bigleaf maple, Douglas fir, Filbert, Black cottonwood
- Common non-native plants along the river: Himalayan blackberry, Scotch broom, Reed canary grass, English holly, English ivy, Purple looserstrife.
- Known aquatic wildlife include: beaver, nutria, muskrat, mink, crawfish, river otter.
- Known amphibians in the watershed include: pacific tree frog, rough-skinned newt, northwestern salamander, red-legged frog, bullfrog, Dunn's salamander, pacific giant salamander, and the long-toed salamander.
- Known reptiles in the watershed include: northwestern garter snake, common garter snake, painted turtle, western pond turtle.
- Fish found in the Tualatin River and its tributaries include: fall chinook salmon, coho salmon, winter steelhead trout, cutthroat trout, largemouth and smallmouth bass, bluegill, warmmouth bass, black and white crappies, yellow and brown bullheads, yellow perch, squawfish, coarse scale suckers, carp, reidsided shinner, dace and sculpins.
- Birds found in the watershed: refer to pamphlet entitled Birds of the Lower Tualatin River.

The information listed above was provided by the following people, publications and organizations: Rob Baur, Sue Marshall and Rick Banton, Tualatin Riverkeepers; Jacqueline Dingfelder, Tualatin River Watershed Council; *Glimpses of the Tualatin River*, Unified Sewerage Agency; Ralph Webber, Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge; Wally Otto, Tualatin Valley Irrigation District; *Tualatin River Canoe Trail Interpretive Pamphlet*, Pacific University; *Land of Tuality*, Washington County Historical Society.