



The Future of the Gateway to the Skyline Forest

A briefing on threats to the Tumalo Natural Area

The Facts

- The **Tumalo Natural Area** is about 27 square miles of critical **Deer Winter Range** that connects to the **Skyline Forest**.
- All but 930 acres are in Federal and State land ownership with strong protections for wildlife.
- **Bull Flat**, the 930 acres in question, is currently managed by **Tumalo Irrigation District (TID)**.
- On May 19, 2016, a Deschutes County Hearings Officer found TID excavation of 16,000 cubic yards of material to be in **violation of county mining codes**.
- **Peck's Milkvetch**, a rare and threatened plant, grows here and in only one other county in the world.



Photo: Gary Halvorson, Oregon State Archives

Our Progress

- Friends of FOTWC is working with BLM to establish a travel management plan for the Tumalo Natural Area.
- Central Oregon LandWatch has appealed TID partition of Bull Flat to LUBA.
- Discussions with DSL Director Jim Paul about purchasing Tract #30 and transferring to a conservation organization.
- Intense Public Interest: 250 petitions to protect the area and sold out educational event.
- Meeting with Richard Whitman resulted in communication between Governor's office and DSL, ODFW, and ODWRD.

Solution: The Tumalo Natural Area is a beautiful landscape with critical importance for plant and wildlife habitat. We request the Natural Resources Department develop an actionable plan to address the inconsistencies in management by returning land owned by TID in Bull Flat to its rightful protected status and transferring ownership of Tract #30 to a conservation organization.

History: The Friends of Tumalo Wildlife Corridor works cooperatively with the BLM to manage the Tumalo Natural Area in accordance with Upper Deschutes Resource Management Plan (UDRMP 2005). The BLM land is managed for no shooting (except for legal hunting in the season), no off-road vehicle use (other than Sisemore Rd.), and it is open to visitors for hiking, bicycling and horse back riding.

A portion of the Tumalo Natural Area, Bull Flat, was deeded to TID by the State of Oregon in 1988 under certain conditions, including that the land remain as a wildlife refuge and any changes to the use of the land had to be approved by TID patrons/community members. There is a revisionary clause that ownership reverts to the Oregon Water Resources Department if the conditions are not followed.

Threat: In recent years, TID has neglected its responsibilities toward managing the Bull Flat area adjacent to the reservoir. In fact, it has actively damaged the area by illegally surface mining, including driving hundreds of trucks through the area during deer winter season, even after three code violation complaints. It allows year-round motorized vehicle access and has no management plan for the winter feeding area or for the population of threatened Peck's Milkvetch.

TID is also attempting to partition the land in order to exchange a parcel with the DSL for Tract #30, a portion of Bull Flat in DSL ownership. A previous attempt to exchange land was foiled when the DSL discovered the parcel TID was offering for exchange is owned by the BLM, not the irrigation district. If TID succeeds in acquiring the entire perimeter of the Upper Tumalo Reservoir, the concern is that the district plans to mine the area, then attempt to develop a 'lakeside' resort.