



WESTERN RIVERS  
CONSERVANCY

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**DATE: January 20, 2015**

**Contacts**

---

Sue Doroff  
President  
Western Rivers Conservancy  
[sdoroff@westernrivers.org](mailto:sdoroff@westernrivers.org)  
503-241-0151

Siobhan Taylor  
Public Affairs Director  
Confederated Tribes of Grand  
Ronde  
[Siobhan.Taylor@grandronde.org](mailto:Siobhan.Taylor@grandronde.org)  
503-879-1920

Laura Tesler  
Wildlife Mitigation Coordinator  
Oregon Department of Fish &  
Wildlife  
[Laura.Tesler@state.or.us](mailto:Laura.Tesler@state.or.us)  
(503)947-6086

Danny Palmerlee  
Communications Director  
Western Rivers Conservancy  
[dpalmerlee@westernrivers.org](mailto:dpalmerlee@westernrivers.org)  
503-241-0151; by cell, all hours:  
503-720-6686

**Conservancy, Tribe Conserve More Habitat on the North Santiam River  
for Imperiled Willamette Valley Fish and Wildlife**

STAYTON, Oregon—Western Rivers Conservancy and the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde completed “Chahalpam,” an assemblage of land that conserves an outstanding stretch of the lower North Santiam River, southwest of the town of Stayton.

The project prevents development of a permitted gravel mine on the banks of the North Santiam River and sets the stage for one of the most significant floodplain restoration projects in the Willamette Valley.

Bonneville Power Administration and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife were partners in the effort.

“We are thrilled to conserve these riverlands with the Tribe,” said Josh Kling, Assistant Program Director at WRC. “There are fewer and fewer places like this left, especially within the Willamette Valley. Knowing this rare habitat is in good hands and protected in perpetuity gives us a great sense of accomplishment.”

The land, a 91-acre farm formerly owned by Bill and Dianne Tucker, lies adjacent to a larger, 338-acre property that WRC conveyed to the Tribe in 2013. The Tribe had christened the larger property “Chahalpam,” meaning “Place of the Santiam Kalapuya people” in Kalapuyan. Addition of the Tucker farm completes the project.

“The Tribe has a strong connection to this landscape and to the North Santiam River,” said Tribal Chairman Reyn Leno. “We have the natural resource expertise to manage the lands for the benefit of fish and wildlife and to ensure this remarkable stretch of the river stays healthy.”

By adding the Tucker property to the existing protected lands, WRC and the Tribe have now conserved the most significant assemblage of intact fish and wildlife habitat along the lower North Santiam River.

“Conserving the Tucker farm is another meaningful step in our effort to protect the best remaining fish and wildlife habitat in the Willamette Valley,” said Kling. “And the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde are the perfect partner for this project.”

Like the adjacent properties, the Tucker farm includes a mix of bottomland forest, main-stem river frontage, side-channel habitat and wetlands. It also includes frontage along lower Dieckman Creek, a major side-channel with important spawning and rearing habitat for salmon and steelhead. Adding the farm to the assemblage creates the opportunity to reestablish significant side-channel habitat across the two Chahalpam properties.

WRC purchased both properties for their increasingly rare habitat values and to prevent gravel mining along the banks of the North Santiam River. Rich deposits of gravel lie beneath the forest floor and were proposed for mining.

The North Santiam River drains a large portion of the Central Oregon Cascades into the Willamette River. At one time, it produced two-thirds of the Willamette River’s winter steelhead and a third of its spring Chinook. These runs have declined steeply and today are listed as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act, primarily due to population growth and development in the Willamette Valley. Conservation and restoration of these properties will improve habitat for these imperiled fish.

The riparian features are also important to Pacific lamprey and Oregon chub. The Chahalpam lands themselves are home to six species of concern: pileated woodpecker, hood merganser, American kestrel, little willow fly-catcher, western pond turtle and red-legged frog.

In addition to the benefits the project will have for fish and wildlife, it offers the opportunity to restore an important swath of wetland, wet prairie and floodplain habitat. Willamette Valley wetlands and wet prairies are some of the most endangered habitat types in Oregon, yet within the Willamette Basin, little of this habitat is managed for conservation.

Funding for the project was provided by BPA through the Willamette Wildlife Habitat Agreement. This 15-year agreement, fashioned with the state of Oregon, was signed in 2010 and provides funding for wildlife habitat acquisitions in the Willamette Valley to offset the impacts of federal dams on the Willamette River and its tributaries.

“Everyone benefits from this project,” said Kling. “The Tribe, local communities, anglers, boaters, you name it. Most importantly, the Willamette Valley’s fish and wildlife benefit. The habitat we have conserved in partnership with the Tribe is priceless.”

**About Western Rivers Conservancy**

Western Rivers Conservancy is a Portland, Oregon based 501(c)(3) non-profit that protects outstanding river ecosystems in the western United States. Western Rivers Conservancy acquires lands along rivers to protect critical habitat and to create or improve public access for compatible use and enjoyment. By cooperating with local agencies and organizations and by applying decades of land acquisition experience, Western Rivers Conservancy secures the health of whole ecosystems. Western Rivers Conservancy has protected hundreds of miles of stream frontage on great rivers like the John Day, the Hoh, the Gunnison, the Salmon, the Yampa, the Snake and the Madison. Founded in 1988, Western Rivers Conservancy is the Nation's only conservation program dedicated solely to the protection of riverlands. To learn more, please visit [www.westernrivers.org](http://www.westernrivers.org).

### **About the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde**

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde is a federally-recognized Indian Tribe made up of over 27 tribes and bands of western Oregon, southwest Washington, and northern California. Signers of seven ratified Treaties covering most of western Oregon, the Tribe maintains its ancestral connections to its treaty homelands through government-to-government consultation, traditional practices, partnerships with governmental and non-governmental organizations, and management of native species and habitats. The mission of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde staff is to improve the quality of life for Tribal people by providing opportunities and services that will build and embrace a community rich in healthy families and capable people with strong cultural values. Through collective decision making, meaningful partnerships and responsible stewardship of natural and economic resources, we will plan and provide for a sustainable economic foundation for future generations. Please visit the Tribal website at [www.grandronde.org](http://www.grandronde.org).