



WESTERN RIVERS CONSERVANCY

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Western Rivers Conservancy and Colville N.F. Conserve Prime Wildlife Corridor and National Scenic Trail Access at Big Sheep Creek

COLVILLE, WA – Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC) is pleased to announce the successful conservation of 2,392 acres of wetlands, meadows and riverlands along Big Sheep Creek, a key Columbia River tributary in remote northeast Washington. Colville National Forest became the long-term steward of the lands when WRC conveyed them to the agency this week.

Acquiring the property, known as the Bennett Meadows Tract, was a top priority for the U.S. Forest Service, which received funding for the acquisition through the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The effort secured public access to over two miles of the newly created Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail, a 1,200-mile trail running between the Continental Divide and the Pacific Ocean.

Named for its extensive meadow and wetland habitat, the Bennett Meadows Tract lies within the Colville National Forest, immediately south of the Canadian border. It includes some of the richest habitat within “The Wedge,” a major wildlife corridor for large mammals moving north and south between Canada and Washington.

“This was an incredible opportunity to protect cold water, trout habitat, rare meadows and some of the best big-game habitat in Washington,” says WRC President, Sue Doroff. “At the same time, we were able to do something great for recreationists by guaranteeing access to one of the country’s newest National Scenic Trails.”

Big Sheep Creek flows from the Monashee Mountains of British Columbia into a broad valley of conifers meadows and wetlands. The Bennett Meadows Tract lies in the middle of the valley and within the home range of over half of Washington’s recovering grizzly bear population. The area is home to Canada lynx, wolverine, moose, Rocky Mountain elk, mountain goat and bighorn sheep. The cold, clear water of Big Sheep Creek holds rare redband rainbow trout and bull trout.

In addition to trail access, the property offers fishing, hunting, hiking, wildlife viewing and dispersed camping. WRC's conveyance of the property ensures that outdoor enthusiasts from Washington and beyond will have permanent access to this unique natural area.

“By focusing our efforts on one crucial property,” says Doroff, “we were able to protect some truly outstanding habitat while guaranteeing public access to this unique piece of the West for generations to come.”

Conservation of the Bennett Meadows Tract was made possible through generous support from The Vital Ground Foundation, Conservation Northwest, Horizons Foundation and the Charlotte Martin Foundation.

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About Western Rivers Conservancy

Western Rivers Conservancy is a nonprofit organization that protects outstanding river ecosystems in the western United States. WRC acquires lands along rivers to protect critical habitat and to create or improve public access for compatible use and enjoyment. By applying decades of experience in land acquisition, WRC is able to effectively secure the health of whole ecosystems. It has protected hundreds of miles of stream frontage on great rivers like the Yampa, Gunnison, Salmon, Hoh, Snake, Madison, Klamath and John Day. Founded in 1988, WRC is the nation's only conservation program dedicated solely to the acquisition of riverlands. To learn more about WRC, visit www.westernrivers.org.