



WESTERN RIVERS
CONSERVANCY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

DATE: April 25, 2017

Contacts:

Josh Kling
Assistant Program Director
Western Rivers Conservancy
503-241-0151
jkling@westernrivers.org

Max Yager
Swiftwater Field Manager
Roseburg BLM
541-464-3388
myager@blm.gov

Danny Palmerlee
Communications Director
Western Rivers Conservancy
503-241-0151
dpalmerlee@westernrivers.org

Two-Year Effort Conserves a Mile of Oregon's North Umpqua River— Swiftwater Park Property to Stay Open For Good

Douglas County, Oregon— Thanks to a joint effort by Western Rivers Conservancy, the Bureau of Land Management and Douglas County, the Swiftwater Park property spanning a mile of the North Umpqua River and the western entrance to the 79-mile North Umpqua National Recreation Trail, has been permanently conserved and will remain open to the public forever.

The BLM acquired the property from WRC last week and will now manage it for conservation and public access within the North Umpqua Wild and Scenic River corridor.

“BLM is very happy to play a role in keeping these lands public and ensuring this stretch of the North Umpqua River, and the forests that keep it cool, stay healthy for fish and wildlife,” says Max Yager, BLM’s Swiftwater Field Manager.

Formerly owned and operated by Douglas County, the 211-acre Swiftwater Park is used year-round by Douglas County residents and other anglers, mountain-bikers, hikers and outdoor enthusiasts from around Oregon, the country and the world.

WRC purchased the park in 2016 after Douglas County concluded it needed to sell the property for financial reasons. In doing so, the county was able to generate income while WRC, BLM and the county were able to realize their shared goals of keeping the property open to the public and permanently protected.

“The North Umpqua is an exceptional western river, and its importance to fish and wildlife is impossible to overstate,” says Josh Kling, Assistant Program Director for WRC. “Now that we have conserved this crucial, mile-long stretch of the river, people from southern Oregon and around the world have a place they can always return to for a spell on a healthy, free-flowing river.”

The North Umpqua River is internationally known for its fly fishing and is a designated Wild and Scenic River from immediately below Swiftwater Park to Soda Springs Dam, 33.8 miles upstream. This same stretch is designated fly-fishing-only and is accessible along its entire length by the North Umpqua Trail on one side, and the Rogue-Umpqua National Scenic Byway (Hwy 138) on the other.

The Umpqua and the Rogue are the only two coastal streams in Oregon that originate from snowmelt in the Cascade Range. All other coastal streams rise in the lower-elevation Coast Range. This anomaly is what gives the North Umpqua its cold, emerald-green water and keeps the river cool, even in summer, when other regional streams can slow to a trickle and warm significantly.

The North Umpqua's clean, cold water is of paramount importance to anadromous fish. The river supports some of the healthiest runs of wild spring Chinook, threatened coho salmon and winter and summer steelhead remaining in Oregon. The river also has good numbers of resident rainbow and cutthroat trout.

In addition to its status as a world-class fly fishing destination, the North Umpqua has become nationally recognized for its mountain biking, whitewater paddling and hiking. The North Umpqua Trail is an International Mountain Bike Association designated "EPIC Ride," one of only 71 in the world.

Zane Grey, the famous author and sportsman, maintained a camp along the North Umpqua in the 1930's and was a strong advocate for protection of the river's fisheries. Since then, a strong ethic of conservation and river courtesy has evolved alongside recreation on the North Umpqua, making it one of the West's truly unique river destinations.

Today, over 250,000 people visit the North Umpqua every year, experiencing the wonders of the river and contributing to local economies.

"If the Swiftwater Park property had gone to a private buyer," says Kling, "it is entirely likely that it could have been harvested, developed or closed to the public. Thanks to our partnership with BLM and Douglas County, we have guaranteed that a mile of this incredibly important river will be forever protected and open to all."

Now that public access has been permanently secured at the Swiftwater Park property, people are free to visit this stretch of the North Umpqua just as they always have.

As Frank Moore, one of the North Umpqua's most legendary fly fishermen and river guardians told WRC last year, "Once you see and spend some time on the North Umpqua, it's in your heart forever. WRC's work at Swiftwater will help ensure future generations are as blessed as I've been since I first discovered the secrets and remarkable beauty of this great river over 70 years ago."

###

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.

About Bureau of Land Management

The BLM manages more than 245 million acres of public land, the most of any Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The BLM also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of America's public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. In Fiscal Year 2015, the BLM generated \$4.1 billion in receipts from activities occurring on public lands. www.blm.gov