Forest Land along Little Sandy River
Conserved for Habitat Protection

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(Sandy, Oregon) – Western Rivers Conservancy and the Bureau of Land Management announced today the conservation of 160 acres of forestland along the Little Sandy River for scenic and habitat protection just east of Portland.

Western Rivers Conservancy, a nonprofit river protection organization based in Portland, purchased the property from Harlan Halvorson and Pamela Strauss and transferred the land to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for habitat protection. Protecting this property is an important step in conserving the entire length of the Little Sandy River, a primary tributary in the Sandy River basin.

“With the removal of the Little Sandy Dam in 2008, conserving the Little Sandy River is both important and timely,” said Sue Doroff, Western Rivers Conservancy’s Vice President. “It’s an exceptional opportunity to protect the Little Sandy’s habitat just as fish passage is restored after a century of blockage.”

Though the 16-mile-long Little Sandy is largely in public ownership, some key reaches are unprotected. To date, Western Rivers Conservancy and BLM have conserved three miles of Little Sandy frontage, leaving only one mile and a few key tributaries of the Little Sandy unprotected. The Halvorson property contains one of those fish-bearing tributaries, called Sievers Creek. The property is also adjacent to the Mt. Hood National Forest’s Bull Run Watershed Management Unit.

This land adds to a 5,000-acre natural area that Western Rivers Conservancy is assembling along the Little Sandy River and the main-stem Sandy upstream from Dodge Park. The BLM will take title to most of these lands, combining them with existing BLM holdings to create a larger 9,000-acre conservation and recreation area that will expand recreational opportunities in the Sandy River Basin. This area includes two federally designated Wild and Scenic River segments, and the Barlow Road portion of the Oregon National
Historic Trail. To date, Western Rivers Conservancy has purchased or signed agreements to purchase 2,900 acres in the basin.

Located within 25 miles of more than one-third of Oregon’s citizens, the Sandy River basin is a scenic and recreational treasure. Nearly a quarter million visitors each year are drawn to its scenic deep gorges, adventurous whitewater, runs of wild salmon and steelhead and the Oregon Trail tracing the ridge that divides the Sandy and Little Sandy sub-basins.

In 1999, Western Rivers Conservancy, Portland General Electric (PGE) and the BLM formed a partnership to restore and conserve the Sandy and Little Sandy Rivers and create a natural and recreation area along the river. PGE will remove Marmot Dam later this year and the Little Sandy Dam in 2008, opening up portions of the Sandy and Little Sandy rivers to salmon and steelhead migration. PGE is also donating 1,500 acres to Western Rivers Conservancy.

The Conservancy’s commitment is to acquire approximately 3,500 acres of private land in order to assemble continuous river corridors along thirteen miles of the Sandy River, four miles of the Little Sandy and the lower portion of the Salmon River. Together with the PGE land donations, Western Rivers Conservancy’s assemblage will total approximately 5,000 acres.

“We are proud to partner with the BLM to conserve these sensitive riverlands,” said Sue Doroff.

“This is a great example of a conservation organization working together with the local and federal government to assemble a beautiful new natural area and retain the public’s access to scenic trails and fabulous recreation opportunities,” said Aaron Horton, BLM Salem District Manager.

The Oregon Congressional delegation, led by Senators Gordon Smith and Ron Wyden, has played an essential role in securing $10.7 million in appropriations since 2001 from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).

With the funds from the LWCF, these lands will be conveyed to the BLM to be managed to protect sensitive fish and wildlife habitat, and uphold the area as a public resource for hikers, floaters and anglers.

#### BACKGROUND:

**About Western Rivers Conservancy**: Western Rivers Conservancy acts to protect outstanding river ecosystems in the western United States. We acquire land to conserve critical habitat, provide for compatible public use and enjoyment and cooperate with other agencies and organizations to secure the health of the whole ecosystem. [www.westernrivers.org](http://www.westernrivers.org)

**About the Bureau of Land Management**: The BLM, an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior, manages more land — 261 million surface acres — than any other federal agency. The BLM’s multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. [blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov)

**Land and Water Conservation Fund**: Created by Congress in 1964, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) provides funding to federal, state and local governments to purchase lands for open space and recreation purposes. The LWCF uses off-shore oil lease receipts to pay for land purchases, authorizing up to $900 million each year.