



## State makes final purchase for land to create Cottonwood Canyon State Park

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The Western Rivers Conservancy conveyed the final phase of land to the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department to create Cottonwood Canyon State Park. The latest purchase—3,829 acres for \$4.05 million—brings the park’s total acreage to 7,735 and was funded by Oregon Lottery dollars dedicated to state parks by voters in 1998 and 2010. The purchase includes several parcels riverside and upland parcels along the lower John Day River near Highway 206.

In fall 2008, the Western Rivers Conservancy, a nonprofit river protection organization based in Portland, launched a long-term effort to conserve 16 miles of exceptional wildlife along the lower John Day and purchased the Murtha Ranch.

“The Murtha Ranch is a breathtaking piece of Oregon,” said Sue Doroff, Western Rivers Conservancy’s Executive Vice President. “Conserving this property fills a huge gap in the 148-mile-long lower John Day Wild and Scenic River Corridor, opens the land for recreation and protects important fish and wildlife habitat.”

“In the entire Columbia river basin, precious few corridors remain as wild, unfragmented habitat at the scale of the Murtha Ranch,” Doroff said.

The John Day River is the longest free-flowing river west of the Continental Divide, and the nation’s longest Wild and Scenic River Corridor. It also has the healthiest run of threatened wild summer steelhead in the Columbia Basin.

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department is investing in Cottonwood Canyon as the most significant new state park in a generation. While it will be one of the largest state parks in acreage, the department’s draft plan focuses on low-key recreation that will be compatible with its resource restoration goals. The park plan has already been approved by the Oregon State Parks and Recreation Commission, and will be considered by Sherman and Gilliam County land use offices in November.

“This park will benefit both our neighbors and visitors,” said Tim Wood, Director, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. “We are ready to roll up our sleeves to work on weeds, restore the native riverside hardwood forest and improve the area for light camping, hunting, hiking, riding and enjoyment of the river.”

The park is scheduled to open in 2013.

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