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Prime Stretch of the Fall River is Conserved in Land Transfer to Pit River Tribe

In Northern California, Western Rivers Conservancy conveyed 270-acre parcel to the Pit River Tribe to conserve three miles of the Fall River.



Pope Jensen Ranch includes three miles of the Fall River and prime habitat for trout and birds.

Photo Credit: Val Atkinson/Western Rivers Conservancy

SHASTA COUNTY, California (October 22) — Southeast of Mount Shasta, [Western Rivers Conservancy](#) (WRC), the [Pit River Tribe](#) and the [California Department of Fish and Wildlife](#) (CDFW) have conserved the 270-acre Pope Jensen Ranch, which includes nearly three miles of California's renowned Fall River. In early September, WRC purchased and then immediately conveyed the property to the Tribe, placing ancestral lands back into the hands of their original stewards while protecting riparian and wetland habitat for fish, birds and other wildlife. The conveyance allows the Tribe to begin critically needed restoration on nearly 135 acres of freshwater wetlands.

The property is located within the ancestral lands of the Ajumawi Band of the Pit River Tribe. The reach is within the heartland of the band, and hosts areas of historical and cultural importance. The land will now be in the hands of the Pit River Tribe to be managed and stewarded for the Pit River people of the past, in the present and into the future.

“The Pit River Tribe is proud to work with Western Rivers Conservancy to protect 270 acres of riverfront along the Fall River, within the Ajumawi territory of the Pit River Tribe. This land has always been a vital part of our people's history and way of life, and its conservation ensures that the waters, wildlife and cultural values it holds will be safeguarded for generations to come. Together, we are taking important steps toward healing the land and strengthening the future for both our Tribe and all who depend on these waters,” said **Yatch Bamford, Chairman of the Pit River Tribe**.

The Fall River, one of the largest spring-fed rivers in the United States, is renowned for its cold, clean waters and abundant trout populations. The Pope Jensen Ranch lies at the heart of the Fall River Valley, where high-elevation wetlands act like a massive sponge, collecting snowmelt and rain in the winter and slowly filtering and releasing it into the Fall River and its tributaries in the summer.

Over half of the ranch is classified as wetland. The Pit River Tribe plans to restore this crucial habitat using Indigenous [Traditional Ecological Knowledge](#) to reintroduce native plants and control invasive species throughout the property. An increased number of native plants will benefit both conservation and tribal resilience, providing for the availability of natural resources used for basket making, medicines and edibles, and to promote subsistence-based uses. The plants will help stabilize riverbanks and provide shade and habitat for terrestrial species, promoting a healthy ecology that is in line with Pit River Tribe-based epistemologies and ontologies and aligned with WRC’s conservation vision.

“The Fall River Valley is a special place, with the uniquely cold, spring-fed Fall River that sustains legendary trophy trout and incredible bird life. Western Rivers Conservancy is honored to have been able to partner with the Pit River Tribe to see this important land returned to its original stewards for the sake of both the Tribe and this one-of-a-kind California river,” said **Peter Colby, WRC’s California Program Director**.

The Fall River Valley is a critical area for migratory birds traveling the Pacific Flyway—a major north-south route extending from Alaska to Patagonia—and serves as a vital stopover for millions of birds each year. In the southern Cascades, wet meadow and wetland habitats, including those found at Pope Jensen Ranch, support over six million birds, including more than 60 percent of the state-threatened greater sandhill crane breeding population in the Intermountain West.

The three-mile stretch of river running through the property supports native fish like rainbow trout and bigeye marbled sculpin, a California Fish Species of Special Concern. The ranch's grasslands and riparian vegetation also provide habitat for wildlife such as mule deer, beaver and muskrat.

Legendary among fly anglers, the Fall River is one of the [California Department of Fish and Wildlife](#)’s designated Wild Trout Waters. It is home to one of the largest populations of wild native rainbow trout and non-native brown trout of any river in California.

“On these ancestral lands of the Pit River Tribe are critical habitats that will benefit from Traditional Ecological Knowledge to advance the state’s nature-based solutions goals,” **said CDFW Director Charlton H. Bonham**. “As the state of California looks to natural processes for climate change resilience, we recognize and honor the deeply rooted spiritual, cultural and ecological resource management practices practiced by California Native American Tribes.”

WRC identified the Pope Jensen Ranch as a conservation priority in 2022 and worked to secure funding through the California Department of Fish and Wildlife’s Nature-Based Solutions: Wetlands and Mountain Meadows Grant Program to purchase and convey the property to the Pit River Tribe, which manages several thousand acres of conservation and agricultural lands in the area. Acquiring these 270 acres of ancestral lands enhances tribal resiliency and ensures the permanent conservation of prime fish and wildlife habitat. The Nature-Based Solutions Program provides funding for mountain meadows and non-coastal wetlands consistent with the state of California’s [Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy](#) and [Pathways to 30x30](#).

“The Ajumawi people of the Ajumawi/Atsugewi Nation, known as the Pit River Tribe of California, are honored to work with Western Rivers Conservancy on the Pope Jensen property. As we take care of this land and water ecosystem for our future generations, we will teach the importance of caring for the Earth, as the Ajumawi people have done since time immemorial, along with our neighbors,” said **Virginia “Mike” Amoroso, Ajumawi Cultural Representative of the Ajumawi/Atsugewi Nation**.

About Pit River Tribe

The Pit River Tribe is a federally recognized Tribe composed of Eleven Autonomous bands located in Northeastern California, since time immemorial. The Pit River Tribe is governed by the Pit River Tribal Council, the body duly elected under the Constitution of the Pit River Tribe, adopted August 16, 1987, and approved by the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs December 3, 1987, as amended. The Pit River Tribe’s ancestral lands are known as the 100 mile square that encompasses four forests and four counties. The Pit River Tribe actively engages with local, state and federal agencies regarding impacts to the environment, items of cultural patrimony, sensitive sites and sacred sites for the future of the Pit River people. pitrivertribe.gov.

About Western Rivers Conservancy

Western Rivers Conservancy’s motto is “Sometimes to save a river, you have to buy it.” WRC purchases land along the West’s finest rivers and streams to conserve habitat for fish and wildlife, protect key sources of cold water and create public access for all to enjoy. For more than 35 years, WRC has taken the lead in marrying conservation and Tribal land back outcomes, [working with Tribal Nations around the West](#) to permanently protect rivers and the lands that sustain them. WRC has created sanctuaries for fish and wildlife and secured

recreational access along 260 rivers and streams around the West. Its approach to river conservation is effective, tangible and permanent. More information can be found at westernrivers.org.

About CDFW

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife's mission is to manage California's diverse fish, wildlife and plant resources, and the habitats upon which they depend, for their ecological values and for their use and enjoyment by the public. CDFW manages natural resources throughout the state, including over one million acres of public land, and issues grants to partner organizations for conservation and restoration purposes. CDFW is committed to conserve, protect and manage the state's natural resources in consultation with California Native American Tribes, the original stewards of California since time immemorial. More information about CDFW's programs can be found at wildlife.ca.gov.