



WESTERN RIVERS
CONSERVANCY

www.westernrivers.org

OUR MISSION

Western Rivers Conservancy acts to protect outstanding river ecosystems in the western United States.

We acquire land to conserve critical habitat, provide public access for compatible use and enjoyment, and cooperate with other agencies and organizations to secure the health of whole ecosystems.

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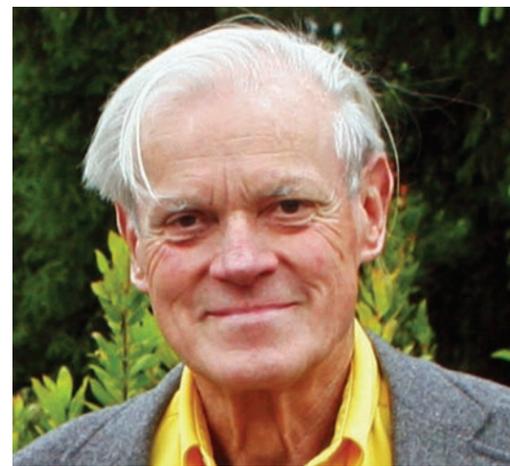
Remembering Jack Mills

1930 - 2011

Western Rivers Conservancy lost a great friend when Jack Mills passed away on September 12, 2011. Jack and his wife Kate were major supporters of WRC's campaign to buy and conserve Punch Bowl Falls at the confluence of the West and East Forks of the Hood River.

Jack left his mark on so many causes in the lower Columbia region: Timberline Lodge, the Mt. Hood Scenic Railroad, the Oregon Arts Commission and Foundation, the Urban League of Portland, 1000 Friends of Oregon—the list goes on and on. He accomplished more during his retirement in the Hood River Valley than most men do in their entire lives.

The Punch Bowl Falls project is important because it is a place where rivers come together,



and a river confluence is marked by richness and diversity and beauty. Jack Mills' whole life was a confluence, equally rich, a confluence of commitment to the arts, the environment, the community, social justice and his own family. We will never see another man like Jack. ■



Thank you for your support!

We'd like to thank the generous individuals, foundations, businesses and organizations that make our work possible. Recent gifts are listed below. For a complete list, visit www.westernrivers.org

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RIVERLANDS

NEWS FROM WESTERN RIVERS CONSERVANCY

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Dawn of a New State Park on the John Day River

JOHN DAY RIVER, OREGON

Conservationists and recreationists alike are rejoicing with the news that Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC) and the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) have forever conserved 16 miles of exceptional habitat along the lower John Day River. After three years of hard work, the former Murtha Ranch is officially on its way to becoming Oregon's largest state park, Cottonwood Canyon.

When this important property came up for sale in 2008, WRC recognized the property's potential for fish, wildlife and people, and purchased the 8,114-acre ranch, along with its 8,000-acre BLM grazing lease. WRC has been conveying the land to OPRD since 2009. The final installment of 3,329 acres was conveyed October 13.

Continued, page 3



Internationally Important Bird Refuge Expanded

UTAH'S GREAT SALT LAKE ECOSYSTEM

As of September 30, geese and swans on the Central Flyway have a more secure stop-over on the Great Salt Lake. On that date, WRC conveyed 580 acres of critical waterfowl habitat to the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge.

The marshes at the mouth of the Bear River are the largest freshwater component of the Great Salt Lake ecosystem and among the top producers of waterfowl in the United States. This freshwater oasis is a phenomenal gathering place for birds to rest, feed, nest and rear their young. Set aside by the public in 1929, the 74,000-acre Refuge sees more than 200 species and millions of birds throughout the year.

WRC purchased the Lucky Seven-Pintail Club property this spring with major support from the Stephen Bechtel Fund. Under the stewardship of the USFWS and the Friends of Bear River Refuge, these lands will be restored to even greater health for species like geese, tundra swan, American pelican and snowy plovers.

In 2009 and 2010, WRC conveyed 696 acres to the Refuge. Together, these properties allow the Refuge to grow its protected habitat, expand its environmental education opportunities and enhance its overall visitor experience. ■



The marshes of Bear River are among the greatest producers of waterfowl in the country.



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Elk River provides critical salmon and steelhead habitat.

An Exceptional Salmon Stream Protected

ELK RIVER, OREGON

Western Rivers Conservancy is pleased to announce the protection of critical salmon habitat on the magnificent Elk River, on Oregon's south coast. Four years ago, WRC bought the property to save it from development. In early October, WRC conveyed it to the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest for permanent conservation.

With its cold waters, old-growth forests, and designated wilderness areas, the Wild and Scenic Elk River is recognized as one of the best salmon and steelhead fisheries in the Northwest. The 170-acre property that WRC conveyed contains the lower reach of Rock Creek, an important coho-spawning tributary, along with nearly 500 feet of Elk River frontage. The Elk has some of the highest densities of spawning coho of any stream on the Oregon Coast, and this very stretch of Rock Creek is critical to maintaining these strong populations.

Federal acquisition of the Rock Creek property helps protect two federally-listed species and their critical habitat. Along with coho salmon, the property also provides suitable old-growth habitat for Threatened marbled murrelets. Development, logging and mining were real threats to the property. Acquiring and incorporating it into the National Forest protects water resources, preserves habitat connectivity and improves recreational opportunities on adjacent public lands and wilderness areas. ■

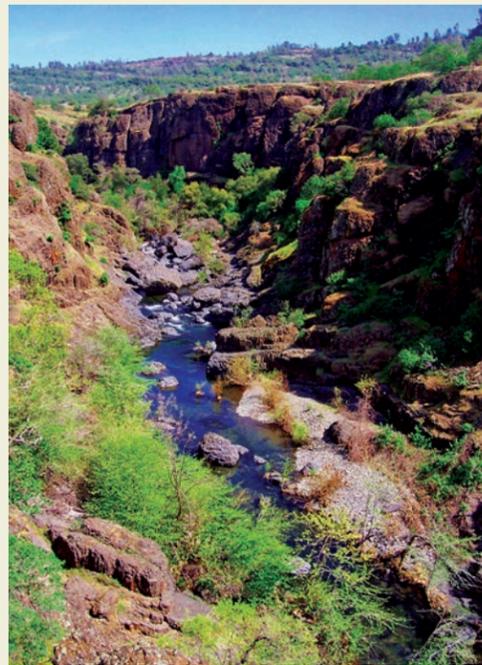
Creating a Magnificent Nature Reserve

BIG CHICO CREEK: A RETROSPECTIVE

Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve, a magnificent 3,950-acre tract of land in the Sierra Nevada foothills east of Chico, was Western Rivers Conservancy's first California acquisition. In 2000 and 2001, WRC acquired five miles of Big Chico Creek and conveyed it to California State University, Chico for education, research and natural resource protection.

Big Chico Creek flows out of the foothills of the northwestern Sierra Nevada, carving a 1,300-foot-deep canyon before flowing through Chico to join the Sacramento River. The Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve is a nearly pristine cross-section of a Sierra foothills watershed, from ridgeline to ridgeline. With the pristine creek, lush riparian forests, grassland meadows and basalt cliffs, the Reserve offers habitat for more than 140 fish and wildlife species, including many threatened and endangered. As a stronghold for a recovering run of wild Sacramento River spring Chinook and winter steelhead, Big Chico Creek is a study area for species restoration.

Today, the Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve is managed primarily for education and research. The Reserve provides opportunities for hands-on learning by students from CSU and local schools. Visitors are welcome to hike, view wildlife, fish and hunt. ■



Big Chico Creek is a stronghold for recovering spring Chinook and winter steelhead.



The John Day River boasts healthy runs of wild summer steelhead, fall and spring Chinook and bull trout.

JOHN DAY RIVER, CONTINUED

As the Pacific Northwest's longest undammed river and the nation's longest Wild and Scenic River corridor, the John Day River is truly extraordinary. The river boasts not only the healthiest run of wild summer steelhead in the Columbia basin, where they are listed as Threatened, but also runs of wild fall and spring Chinook and bull trout. The acquisition includes the bottom three miles of Hay Creek, a tributary that summer steelhead depend on to spawn and rear because it runs cold and clear year-round.

Since purchasing the land, WRC has been working with OPRD, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, local volunteers and school groups to eradicate noxious weeds, replant native grasses and close riparian areas to grazing. Restoring native shrub-steppe habitat will benefit a number of rare native species, including ground-nesting birds like the grasshopper sparrow and burrowing owl, birds of prey like the ferruginous hawk and loggerhead shrike, and reptiles like the sagebrush lizard.

Conserving the ranch is an important step in protecting the John Day River fishery and opening the canyon to low-impact recreation, including fishing, boating, hiking and hunting. OPRD is an ideal long-term steward, sharing WRC's vision to protect sensitive and diverse habitats while providing public access. The new Cottonwood Canyon State Park is scheduled to open in 2013. ■



Preserving the Heart of the Sandy River Fishery

SANDY RIVER BASIN, OREGON

In September, Western Rivers Conservancy successfully conveyed 245 acres of Oregon's lower Boulder Creek, a tributary to the Salmon River in the Sandy River basin, to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Flowing off the west glaciers of Mount Hood, the Sandy River is one of the most productive salmon and steelhead systems in the lower Columbia River. Boulder Creek lies within the Salmon Wild and Scenic River corridor, at the very heart of this important habitat for spring Chinook, winter steelhead and coho (all listed Threatened species). After a comprehensive 2006 study, a team of fisheries biologists designated Boulder Creek as an Anchor Habitat for all three species.

WRC has been buying lands within the Sandy River basin since 1999, preserving more than 3,000 acres including 13 miles on the Sandy River, Little Sandy River, Salmon River and other tributaries. Boulder Creek is one of the final pieces of an impressive assemblage of conservation lands and restoration projects. ■

Boulder Creek features the best salmon and steelhead habitat in the Sandy River Basin.