

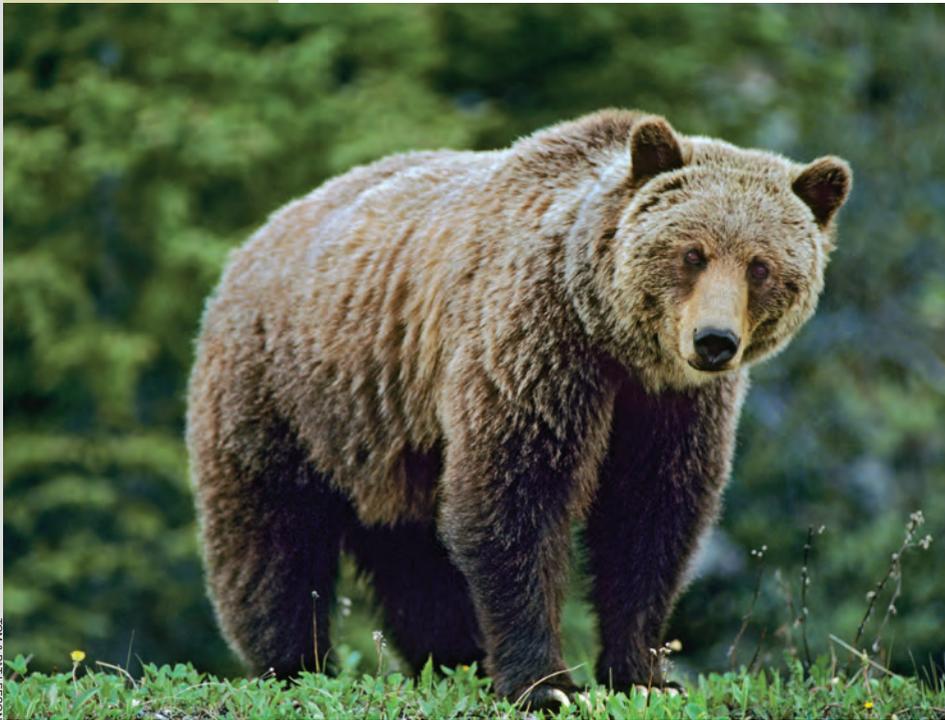
RIVERLANDS

NEWS FROM WESTERN RIVERS CONSERVANCY

Issue 30

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Big Mammals, Rare Trout and a National Scenic Trail



The grizzly bears documented near Big Sheep Creek are believed to make up 50 to 75 percent of Washington's recovering grizzly population.

BIG SHEEP CREEK, WASHINGTON

In the remote northeast corner of Washington, Big Sheep Creek snakes its way out of the Monashee Mountains and winds through a wide valley of conifer forests, meadows and wetlands rich with wildlife. Rare redband and bull trout inhabit the creek, and the gentle, fertile terrain of the river valley makes it the region's prime migration route for large mammals moving north and south between Canada and the United States. Moose, caribou, grizzly bear, Rocky Mountain elk, mountain goat and bighorn sheep all move regularly through the area. The valley is also home to rare predators like Canada lynx and wolverine.

With the goal of restoring and preserving over four miles of high-quality wetlands and riparian habitat in the Big Sheep Creek

Continued on page 3

WRC Expands "Chahalpam" for Imperiled Fish and Wildlife

NORTH SANTIAM RIVER, OREGON



This spring, Western Rivers Conservancy continued an exciting project on Oregon's North Santiam River that will complete an assemblage of protected riverlands for the benefit of salmon, steelhead and other imperiled Willamette Valley wildlife. In March, we committed to purchase another crucial property along the North Santiam that will add a unique expanse of closed-canopy riparian forest and rare wetlands to the much larger "Chahalpam" property that WRC conserved last year. When combined with an adjacent BLM-managed property, these lands will compose the largest, most important riverland forest on the lower North Santiam.

Formerly a family farm, the 92-acre property includes an exceptional mix of bottomland forest, main-stem frontage, side-channel habitat and wetlands. It also has good potential for wet prairie and floodplain restoration. Willamette

Continued on page 2



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Oregon's North Santiam River is one of the most important salmon and steelhead streams in the Willamette River Basin.

Recovery Efforts Continue on Key Salmon Stream

CATHERINE CREEK, OREGON

Oregon's Catherine Creek has been identified as one of the highest priority streams in the Columbia River Basin for salmon and steelhead recovery.

This February, in an effort to restore some of the highest-priority salmon and steelhead habitat in the Grande Ronde, Snake and Columbia River basins, Western Rivers Conservancy purchased a unique reach of Oregon's Catherine Creek. Flowing 32 miles from the Willowa Mountains to the Grande Ronde, Catherine Creek is particularly important for threatened spring Chinook, which spawn in the upper reaches of the creek, where

we are focusing our efforts. The stream reach that passes through the 545-acre property also provides critical habitat for bull trout and summer steelhead.

Catherine Creek has been identified as one of the highest priorities for recovering threatened fish species within the Columbia River basin. Yet extensive restoration of the creek is difficult because much of it flows through private land. When this one-of-a-kind property came up for sale, we jumped at the opportunity.

Now that we own the parcel, we are working to convey it to the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, which received funding to restore the stream for the sake of imperiled fish. The Tribe plans to place large woody material in-stream, replant riparian zones, stabilize stream banks and restore deep pools, stream-meanders and side channels. The work will practically recreate the original stream along a reach that was rechanneled decades ago.

While Catherine Creek is a relatively small stream, its importance to the Grande Ronde, Snake and Columbia Rivers is enormous. Restoring this key reach will improve the overall health of the creek and improve odds for some of the most imperiled fish in the Columbia River basin. ■



DAVE JENSEN

Western pond turtles (right) are imperiled throughout the West and will benefit from WRC's conservation efforts on Oregon's North Santiam River. So will Chinook salmon (below), which are threatened or endangered throughout much of their range.

NORTH SANTIAM, CONTINUED

Valley wetlands and wet prairies are some of the most endangered habitat types in Oregon, yet within the Willamette Basin, little of this habitat is managed for conservation. In addition to the benefits this project will have for fish, it offers a great opportunity to restore a small but important swath of this rare ecosystem.

Despite the tremendous habitat values associated with the property, the land was slated for gravel mining. Once WRC completes the project, the lands will be managed for the sake of fish and wildlife, especially the recovery of rare and imperiled species like spring Chinook, winter steelhead, Oregon chub, red-legged frog and western pond turtle.

WRC plans to convey the property to the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, which already cares for the larger "Chahalpam" property that WRC conveyed to the Tribe last year. With its natural resource expertise and cultural connections to the river, the Tribe makes the perfect conservation steward. Once conveyed to the Tribe, the land will become part of "Chahalpam." The name means "Place of the Santiam Kalapuya people." With the Tribe as a steward, the lands will also be a place conserved—a refuge for salmon, steelhead and the diverse wildlife that makes the North Santiam a remarkable western stream. ■



ADAM CLAUSE



THOMAS DUNKLIN

One Step Closer to Re-watering the “Little Cim”

LITTLE CIMARRON, COLORADO

Since 2012, Western Rivers Conservancy has been working to reestablish year-round flows in the Little Cimarron River, an outstanding Colorado trout stream and tributary of the Gunnison River. Our efforts on the “Little Cim” began when we purchased a farm with senior water rights on the McKinley Ditch, which draws from the Little Cimarron. This January, WRC took a major step forward when we conveyed the farm’s water rights to Colorado Water Trust (CWT) with the goal of dedicating them in-stream during the low flows of late summer and early fall.

The Little Cimarron is a gem of a stream. It flows 25 miles from the Uncompahgre Wilderness to the main-stem Cimarron, which meets the Gunnison River at the spectacular Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. The upper 13 miles have all the qualities of a wild trout stream. Its waters are cold and clear and teem with naturally reproducing rainbow and brook trout. Once the river reaches the irrigation ditches of the lower Cimarron Valley, though, it often flows only intermittently from late summer to early fall.

When the farm became available for purchase in 2012, WRC and CWT identified a unique opportunity to put water back into the Little Cimarron. WRC purchased the farm with plans to work with CWT


RUSS SCHNITZER

to dedicate the water “in-stream” during the driest months of the year. Now that we have conveyed the water rights to CWT, the Trust and WRC can pursue an irrigation plan that will allow for continued agricultural operations while keeping water in the river when the river needs it most.

If successful, the project will reestablish perennial flows, reconnect vital fish habitat, reduce water temperatures in the lower river and allow trout to repopulate the formerly de-watered reach of the stream. For WRC, it’s a unique and exciting project—and one with potential to serve as a model for stream conservation not just in Colorado, but throughout the West. ■

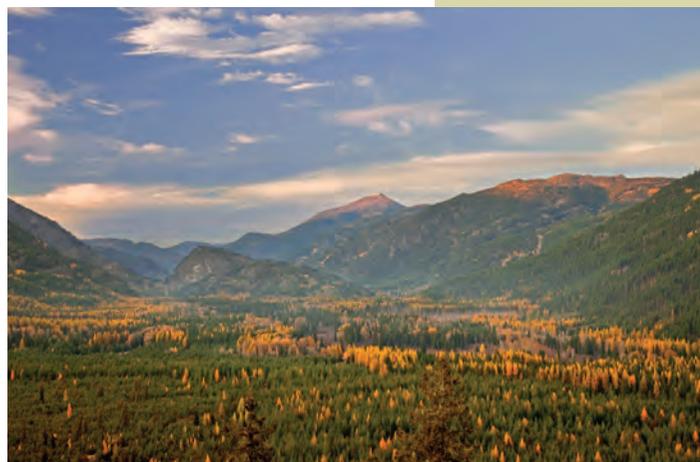
WRC is working to reestablish perennial flows on Colorado’s Little Cimarron River, an outstanding trout stream in its upper reaches.

BIG SHEEP CREEK, CONTINUED

drainage, Western Rivers Conservancy is working to purchase 2,400 acres of land along Big Sheep Creek and American Fork Big Sheep Creek. This spring, we took the first step, signing an agreement to purchase the initial 1,000 acres.

The land we are working to conserve, known as the Bennett Meadows Tract, is surrounded by Colville National Forest and provides essential habitat connectivity for imperiled Canada lynx moving between British Columbia’s Kettle Mountains and the Washington Cascades. The parcel also includes home range for over half the grizzly population in Washington. The area’s small streams, ponds and wetlands offer prime habitat for carnivores both large and small, making the property essential to these animals and their movement throughout the region.

In addition to its importance for fish and wildlife, the land also includes a stretch of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail, which runs through the southern area of the property. Acquiring the remaining 1,400 acres will place a unique section of this scenic trail into public hands. It will improve wildlife viewing opportunities and help ensure this recreational treasure remains intact and open to the public forever. ■


DAVE JENSEN

WRC is working to purchase 2,400 acres along Big Sheep Creek to protect priority habitat for redband trout and rare carnivores.



WESTERN RIVERS CONSERVANCY

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OUR MISSION

Western Rivers Conservancy protects 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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Ten-Year Anniversary of the Hoh River Project

HOH RIVER, WASHINGTON

The Hoh River is one of the most beautiful and biologically diverse river corridors in the country. Ten years ago, WRC set out to purchase and conserve all the unprotected riverlands between Olympic National Park (which protects the headwaters and upper river) and the Pacific Ocean. The result is a nearly unbroken riverland sanctuary for fish, wildlife and people reaching from the headwaters to the coast. In partnership with the Wild Salmon Center, WRC created the Hoh River Trust, which now manages the land to ensure this majestic river remains healthy for fish and wildlife and open to the public. Here's to another 10 years!



SMITH HSOI



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Thank you for your support!

We'd like to thank the generous individuals, foundations, businesses and organizations that make our work possible. Recent gifts of \$120 and above are listed below. For a complete list, please visit www.westernrivers.org.

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