

# RIVERLANDS

NEWS FROM WESTERN RIVERS CONSERVANCY

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## Big Gains on Blue Creek, the Klamath's Cold-Water Lifeline



*Blue Creek is the single most important cold-water refuge for salmon and steelhead on the lower Klamath River and the cornerstone of Western Rivers Conservancy's work in the Klamath-Siskiyou ecoregion.*

### KLAMATH RIVER, CALIFORNIA

In one of the earth's biodiversity hotspots, Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC) is taking an exciting step forward in an effort to create a cold-water salmon sanctuary and save one of the West's greatest salmon streams. This month, WRC will close on an 8,489-acre land acquisition that will conserve 13 square miles of California's temperate rainforest, including the easternmost reach of the lower Blue Creek watershed.

Blue Creek is the single most important cold-water tributary on the lower Klamath River and a lifeline for returning salmon and steelhead. To ensure the Klamath's anadromous fish survive as the main-stem warms, Blue Creek—and its life-giving cold water—must be protected.

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## WRC to Open New Access on a Coveted Stretch of the Upper Yampa River

### SARVIS CREEK, COLORADO

In Colorado, Western Rivers Conservancy recently purchased a small but critical piece of property at the confluence of Sarvis Creek and the upper Yampa River. The acquisition will open new public access to a coveted stretch of trophy trout water and to prime elk hunting grounds only 13 miles from Steamboat Springs. Acquisition of the 43-acre property, called Hubbard's Summer Place, also conserves the only unprotected land within an area that is otherwise safeguarded by wilderness, parks and wildlife areas.

WRC acquired Hubbard's Summer Place in August and is now working to place the lands into public ownership with the Bureau of Land Management and US Forest Service.

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*WRC's purchase of the Hubbard's Summer Place opens access to a prime stretch of trout water along a coveted tail-water fishery, upstream of Steamboat Springs, Colorado.*

DAVE JENSEN

DAVID DIERFROH

## WRC Adds More Land to National Conservation Area

### GUNNISON RIVER, COLORADO

*The lower Gunnison River is a popular boating destination. WRC is consolidating public ownership of lands along the river to protect habitat and improve access.*

This September, in an ongoing effort to conserve land along the lower Gunnison River, Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC) purchased another mile of prized river frontage. The land, called the Hallock Homestead, lies directly across the Gunnison from a property WRC conserved last year. Also in September, WRC conveyed a 160-

acre upland property known as Gibbler's Gulch to the BLM, protecting a half-mile of frontage along a small tributary. Combined, these recent acquisitions will add 295 acres to the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area (DENCA).

Created in 2009, the DENCA protects 210,000 acres of red-rock canyons, sandstone bluffs, pinyon-juniper forests, archeological sites and nearly 30 miles of Gunnison River frontage. It is spectacular country, home to bighorn sheep, Rocky Mountain elk, cougar, black bear, river otter and bald eagle. Since 2008, WRC has worked with the BLM to conserve unprotected inholdings along the Gunnison and ensure the river's riparian habitats remain intact.

The lower Gunnison is home to four species of endangered warm-water fish, which depend on healthy, intact habitat for survival. Acquisition of the Hallock Homestead also opens new access to terraces above the river that offer excellent primitive camping for river floaters. ■



RICH DURMAN

### KLAMATH RIVER - BLUE CREEK, CONTINUED

This acquisition is the first in a series of purchases along Blue Creek that will together conserve the entire lower watershed. Working in partnership with California's Yurok Tribe, WRC has already conserved 22,237 acres along the main-stem Klamath, immediately upstream of Blue Creek. We are now moving into the heart of the project: creation of a cold-water refuge for salmon and steelhead.

To create a salmon sanctuary of this scale, WRC is pioneering new approaches to conservation finance. Through the federal New Markets Tax Credits Program, designed to spur revitalization in low-income communities, WRC is tapping a significant—and nontraditional—source of private funding. Combined with donor and foundation support, including generous funding from the Wyss Foundation and a grant and low-interest loan from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, WRC will purchase the first 8,489 acres in December.

WRC will pay off the loan through the sale of carbon offsets and sustainable forestry practices that will rejuvenate old-growth habitat and improve the overall health of the Blue Creek watershed. To accomplish this, WRC created a supporting nonprofit, which will hold the land until it can be conveyed to the Yurok Tribe for permanent stewardship. From

the outset, the Tribe will manage the lands on behalf of WRC and in line with our conservation vision.

Our goal is to conserve Blue Creek and create a salmon sanctuary that will forever protect the only cold-water safety net for salmon on the lower Klamath River. Once WRC conveys the land to the Tribe, the Yurok people will regain ancestral homelands that have been sacred since time immemorial. Then, Blue Creek will be safeguarded by a community whose greatest cultural, spiritual and economic interests are healthy forests, healthy habitat and healthy returns of wild salmon and steelhead. ■



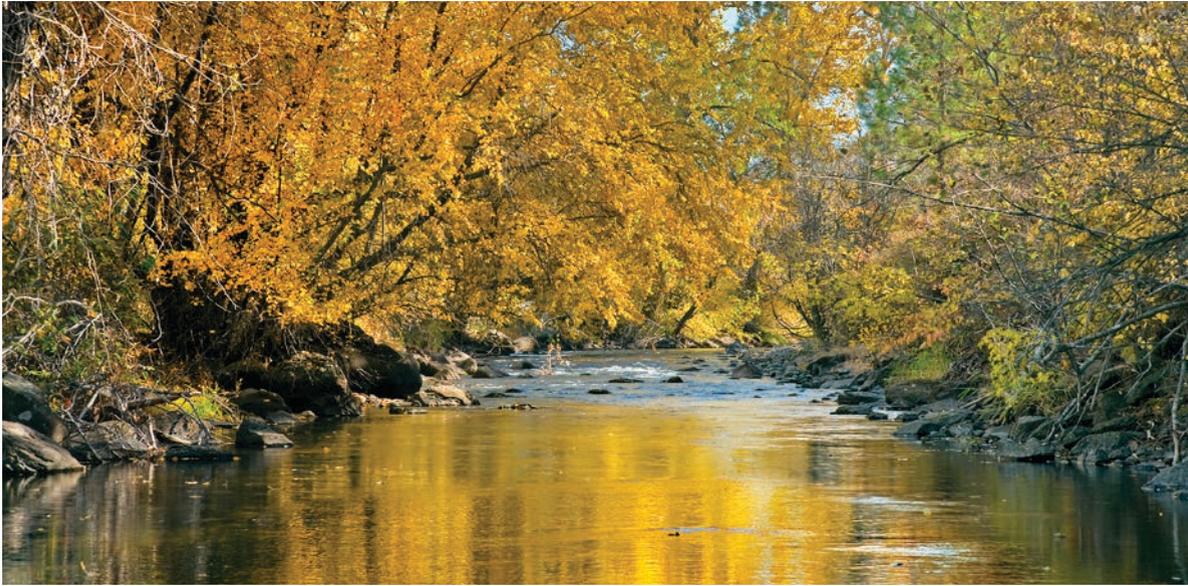
THOMAS DUNELIN

*Nearly every Chinook salmon that returns to the Klamath holds in Blue Creek, lowering its body temperature by an average of eight degrees Fahrenheit. Without this critical cool-down period, most would die before reaching their spawning grounds in the upper Klamath.*



DANNY PALMERLEE

*Yurok tribal member, Per-gish Carlson, prepares a traditional salmon bake on ancestral lands WRC is working to conserve along Blue Creek.*



DAVE JENSEN

*Catherine Creek is a priority focus for Columbia River fisheries recovery. The stream reach that WRC has committed to purchase provides important spawning and rearing habitat for spring Chinook, summer steelhead and bull trout. All three species are listed under the Endangered Species Act.*

## A New Project for Snake River Salmon and Steelhead

### CATHERINE CREEK, OREGON

Western Rivers Conservancy took an exciting first step this fall to conserve a critical reach of salmon and steelhead habitat on Oregon's Catherine Creek. A tributary to the Grande Ronde River, Catherine Creek harbors important spawning and rearing habitat for Snake River-stock anadromous fish. Of all the Columbia River's salmon and steelhead stocks, Snake River fish are especially at risk.



DAVE MCCOY

*Slope River salmon and steelhead are the most imperiled of their kind in the Columbia River system. Catherine Creek, particularly the area where WRC is working, harbors critical habitat for these fish.*

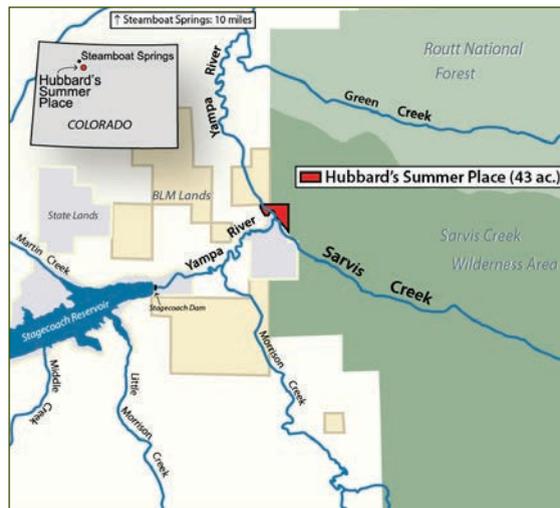
The stream section that passes through the 545-acre property also provides habitat for imperiled bull trout. For these reasons, Catherine Creek is a priority focus for fisheries restoration and is key to the long-term survival of Snake River-strain salmon and steelhead.

It is rare for a Catherine Creek property of this size to come up for sale, and WRC jumped at the opportunity to conserve such an expansive reach of the stream. Catherine Creek flows 32 miles from the Wallowa Mountains to the Grande Ronde, a tributary of the Snake River. WRC plans to convey the property to the Umatilla Tribe, which wants to restore side-channels and stream complexity to enhance spawning habitat and improve survival rates for over-wintering smolts. ■

### SARVIS CREEK, CONTINUED

The property is both an inholding and an edge-holding in the Routt National Forest and is adjacent to the Sarvis Creek Wilderness Area, BLM lands and the Sarvis Creek State Wildlife Area. Once the project is complete, all land surrounding the confluence will be in public hands and free from the risk of development.

The project will enhance ongoing efforts to restore habitat for rainbow trout, brown trout and mountain whitefish. It will also conserve stands of lodgepole pine and Engelmann spruce and protect habitat for black bear, cougar and Rocky Mountain elk. A small riverside cabin remains on the property, a quaint reminder that this was once Hubbard's Summer Place, and the river here will soon be open to all. ■



DAVID DETRICH

*WRC's acquisition on the upper Yampa improves access to an area that is known for its outstanding elk hunting.*



## WESTERN RIVERS CONSERVANCY

www.westernrivers.org

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*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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## Celebrating Oregon's Newest State Park: Cottonwood Canyon

In 2008, when the WRC Lands Team first visited Murtha Ranch on the John Day River, it saw an extraordinary opportunity: the chance to conserve a vast expanse of shrub-steppe habitat surrounding 16 miles of the West's longest free-flowing river. This fall, after five years of hard work and a solid partnership with Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, that vision became a reality.

With an outpouring of local community support, Cottonwood Canyon State Park opened to the public in September. The park conserves a spectacular stretch of the John Day, where basalt cliffs tower over the river and the scent of sagebrush fills the air. It also protects prime spawning and rearing habitat for wild summer steelhead, which return each year to the John Day in some of the healthiest numbers in the Pacific Northwest.



PETER MARRBACH



## 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, please visit [www.westernrivers.org](http://www.westernrivers.org).

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