

RIVERLANDS

News from Western Rivers Conservancy

Issue 11

Fall 2006

WRC Will Conserve Property on Winchuck River

OREGON COASTAL SALMON STREAM



Flowing from the Siskiyou Mountains, the East Fork Winchuck River supports an important coastal fishery.

In 2005, the U.S. Forest Service asked Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC) to take on a project along the Winchuck River in the Klamath-Siskiyou bioregion. The Winchuck valley on Oregon's South Coast is home to most of the state's last ancient redwoods. Though small by Oregon standards, the Winchuck's 71-square-mile watershed is an important coastal fishery, with healthy runs of steelhead, sea-run cutthroat trout, chinook and coho salmon.

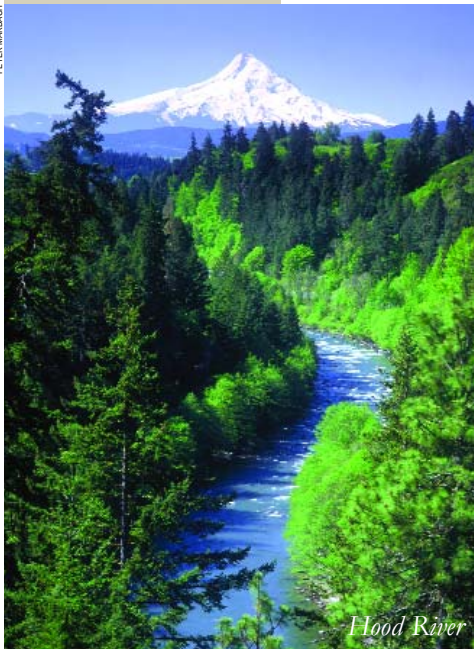
Western Rivers Conservancy is now near closing on a 43-acre property that includes critical habitat for marbled murrelets and spotted owls along the

East Fork Winchuck River. This in-holding within the Siskiyou National Forest is adjacent to the historic Ludlum House, which offers interpretive experiences and overnight stays.

The property boasts old-growth stands of coast redwood and Douglas fir, key wetland habitat and the lower reach of an important tributary, Wheeler Creek. Chinook and steelhead favor the property's mile-long stretch of stream for spawning. The land is also critical habitat for northern river otter, osprey, bald eagle, Del Norte's salamander, yellow-legged frog and four sensitive bat species. WRC is securing funding to convey the land to the Siskiyou National Forest, which is committed to preserving this beautiful example of an intact forest. ■

Dam Removal Signals New Beginning For Hood River

COLUMBIA RIVER SALMON STRONGHOLD



Hood River

On June 6, 2003, nine entities – the utility PacifiCorp, American Rivers, the Warm Springs Tribes, the Hood River Watershed Group and several state and federal agencies – gathered to sign the Settlement Agreement for removal of the only dam on the main stem of the Hood River. When the Powerdale Hydroelectric Project (just upstream from the city of Hood River, Oregon) is removed in 2010, the river will be free-flowing from the glaciers of Mount Hood to its confluence with the mighty Columbia.

The signing, concluding a long process of analysis and negotiation, signaled the rebirth of the Hood as a great western salmon and steelhead stream. After 2010, life will be easier for struggling populations of native salmonids, including spring and fall chinook, summer and winter steelhead, coho and Pacific lamprey.

Dam removal is only one element in a

comprehensive effort to restore the Hood River to health. Under the aegis of the Hood River Watershed Group, a multitude of efforts are underway to conserve irrigation water, restore wetlands, remove small dams, close roads, replace culverts and improve fish passage. The irrigation districts that serve the famous fruit orchards of the Hood River valley play a major role in making the Hood and its tributary streams better habitat for salmon, steelhead and other creatures.

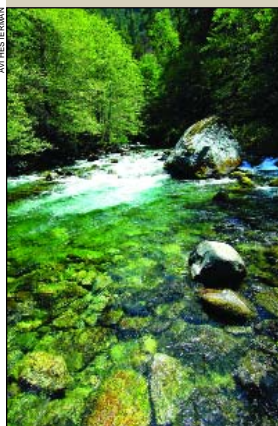
Western Rivers Conservancy has begun an initiative to acquire and conserve high-quality riparian lands in the Hood River basin. Our goal is to establish permanent sanctuaries for salmon and other at-risk species. We believe there is only a brief opportunity to protect riverlands before residential development encroaches on the riparian zone throughout the basin. Working with landowners and the many organizations already involved in Hood River restoration, we hope to accomplish results that will benefit not only salmon, but landowners and the general public as well. ■



WESTERN RIVERS
CONSERVANCY

71 SW Oak Street
Portland, OR 97204
(503) 241-0151

www.westernrivers.org



WRC protected 5,100 acres along Goose Creek, tributary to the free-flowing Smith River on California's North Coast.



With habitat protected and flows restored, the Little Sandy can be a great salmon and steelhead stream once again.

A Globally Important Bioregion

FOCUS ON KLAMATH-SISKIYOU RIVERS

Of Western Rivers Conservancy's five current priority areas, the Klamath-Siskiyou ecoregion is exceptional for its tremendous botanical diversity and abundance of wild, rushing salmon rivers. Straddling the California-Oregon border, the Klamath-Siskiyou is home to Wild and Scenic Rivers like the Smith, Chetco and Illinois that are critical refuges for wild fish populations at risk of extinction elsewhere in the Pacific Northwest.

Here are some highlights of WRC's 2006 accomplishments in the Klamath-Siskiyou region:

- In a huge achievement for California's wild fishery, WRC protected 5,100 acres along **Goose Creek**, a vital tributary to the free-flowing **Smith River**. The land – over half of the total project area – is now part of the Smith River National Recreation Area.
- WRC launched an ambitious new project on the lower **Klamath River** to conserve the watershed of **Blue Creek**, working with the Yurok Tribe to re-establish their homeland.
- On Oregon's **Deer Creek**, WRC purchased an 871-acre ranch to create a first-rate research and education center in partnership with the Siskiyou Field Institute and Southern Oregon University. Deer Creek is a tributary to the Wild and Scenic **Illinois River**.
- On California's **Trinity River**, WRC signed an agreement to purchase 160 acres along the South Fork Trinity's most productive spawning reach for winter steelhead and spring chinook.

More Habitat Protected on Little Sandy

HISTORIC STEELHEAD STRONGHOLD

WRC has signed a purchase agreement to conserve 160 acres in the Little Sandy River sub-basin. The land is located a few miles upstream from the soon-to-be decommissioned Little Sandy Dam, and it includes over one-half mile along both sides of Sievers Creek, a tributary to the Little Sandy.

It is projected that more than ten miles of high-quality salmon and steelhead habitat will become accessible to fish again once the Little Sandy Dam is removed in 2008. The Little Sandy Dam has completely blocked upstream access since 1912, and the dam totally de-waters the river below it, preventing fish from accessing the lower river.



CONTEST WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Congratulations to the winners of a rafting trip on the Sandy River! Paul Cummings, Michael Gallon and Tyler McKay won Western Rivers Conservancy's contest at New Seasons Markets.



Thanks to All Star Rafting for generously donating these guided whitewater trips.

www.asrk.com



We appreciate our supporters who purchased Sierra Nevada Beer at New Seasons Markets in August. Sierra Nevada Brewing Co. demonstrated their support for river conservation by donating a portion of sales to WRC.

Thanks, Sierra Nevada and New Seasons!



Little Sandy River

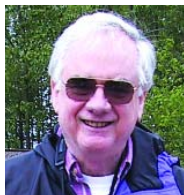
Since 2000, WRC has been acquiring land along the Little Sandy ahead of the dam decommissioning. Of the Little Sandy's sixteen-mile length, only four miles were not already in federal ownership and protected through wilderness designation. WRC has purchased over three miles of this reach, thereby ensuring that high-quality habitat will be awaiting the fish as they return to the Little Sandy for the first time in nearly a century. ■

BOARD OF DIRECTORS PROFILE

JON ROUSH

LEADERSHIP IN CONSERVATION

Jon Roush is a conservationist who thinks big and helps others to do the same. He has stocked the toolboxes of environmental organizations across the country, sharpening their strategies and helping them plan for the future.



Jon Roush

He now brings his energy and talent to Western Rivers Conservancy's Board of Directors.

Jon has been at the forefront of the conservation movement since the 1970s, when he rose to executive leadership at The Nature Conservancy. As a director on several conservation boards in the 1980s, including The Nature Conservancy and The Conservation Fund, Jon was drawn into "big-picture" planning for organizational development and strategic marketing. His success in this area led him to start his own consulting practice, Canyon Consulting. Working with a few clients at a time, Jon and his wife and partner, Joyce Chinn, have advised more than 100 nonprofits, agencies and philanthropies involved in natural resource conservation. In 2004, Jon and Joyce guided Western Rivers Conservancy in developing its five-year strategic plan, *Great Rivers of the West*.

Jon says that Western Rivers Conservancy distinguishes itself with its focus and immense leverage. People from all walks of life are drawn to rivers, and a river can be the rallying point for conserving an entire landscape.

"Rivers offer a convenient nexus for a whole lot of environmental issues," he says.

Jon's first passion is literature, which he taught as a professor at Reed College in the 1960s. He began his conservation career at The Nature Conservancy in the 1970s, eventually becoming Executive Vice President. In 1977, he left to start a small ranch in Montana, which he managed using humane and sustainable principles. It was here that he founded Canyon Consulting in 1988. From 1993-1996, he served as President of the Wilderness Society in Washington, D.C. He then returned to his consulting practice with Joyce Chinn. Jon is WRC's Board Treasurer and serves on the Development Committee. He is also on the Board of the Indian Law Resource Center. ■

Rivers offer a convenient nexus for a whole lot of environmental issues. ■



Partners Join to Celebrate Deer Creek Center's Success

RESEARCH FACILITY'S FUTURE IS BRIGHT

The land is purchased, the field courses have started and the future is bright for the Deer Creek Center (DCC).

Partners gathered in September to celebrate the success of the DCC, culminating the first summer of courses put on by the Siskiyou Field Institute at the Center.

Hosting the celebration was the Kendeda Fund, the generous donor behind a \$3 million grant that allowed Western Rivers Conservancy to purchase the 871-acre Deer Creek Ranch in January 2006. After a guided nature tour of the property on September 19, partners from WRC, the Siskiyou Field Institute (SFI), Southern Oregon University (SOU) and the Kendeda Fund celebrated with lunch on the porch of the impressive old ranch house that is the DCC's nerve center.

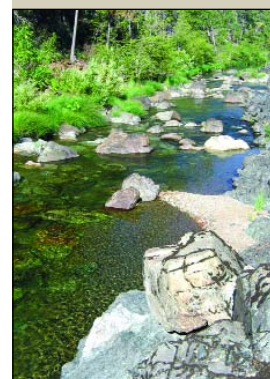
Situated on the largest tributary to the Illinois River, the Deer Creek Center is the new headquarters for courses offered by the Siskiyou Field Institute and Southern Oregon University. The property is adjacent to the Eight Dollar Mountain Botanical Area and provides convenient access to at-risk plant communities and two salmon-bearing streams, Deer Creek and Squaw Creek.

WRC will hold the property until 2007, when the SFI and SOU will take title to the lands. As southern Oregon's nature-based tourism industry burgeons, the timing is right for DCC to take root. Its ideal location and programs position the DCC to become a nationally significant research and educational facility in the heart of the Klamath-Siskiyou region, one of the planet's most important ecosystems. ■

Above: Partners from the Kendeda Fund, the Siskiyou Field Institute, Southern Oregon University and Western Rivers Conservancy stand on the expansive Deer Creek Center property.



Newly dubbed the Kendeda House, a large ranch house serves as headquarters for the Deer Creek Center.



The new research facility provides convenient access to Deer Creek, where students can study runs of Illinois River salmon as well as many at-risk species that are present.



WESTERN RIVERS CONSERVANCY

www.westernrivers.org

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.

MAIN OFFICE

71 SW Oak Street
Portland, OR 97204
(503) 241-0151
(503) 241-0374 fax

CALIFORNIA OFFICE

313 N. Main Street, Ste. C
Sebastopol, CA 95472
(707) 823-5845
(707) 823-3876 fax

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REVISITING DRIFT CREEK

AN EXTRAORDINARY COHO SALMON PROJECT

Drift Creek and the Alsea River estuary is the site of one of Western Rivers Conservancy's greatest accomplishments for coho salmon. The Alsea River including one of its main tributaries, Drift Creek, was once the most productive coho system on the Oregon Coast. After decades of declines in fish runs, WRC purchased the lower five miles of Drift Creek and two miles of salt marsh habitat along the Alsea River to create the Drift Creek Conservation Area in 2001. This 1,400-acre acquisition is now the focus of a major coho recovery effort.

In August of this year, WRC revisited the Drift Creek Conservation Area, five years after the project's completion. WRC staff, Board, family and friends launched kayaks into the Alsea River estuary near Waldport, OR. This broad estuary contains eelgrass beds and a saltwater marsh that are exceptional habitat for anadromous and marine species of fish and wildlife. We entered the North Channel of the Alsea and rode the high tide up Drift Creek.

The U.S. Forest Service is diligently restoring coho habitat in this area, re-establishing degraded riparian plant communities and punching holes in dikes along streamside pastures to return water to former wetlands. As testament to lower Drift Creek's huge restoration potential, over eighty percent of wetlands where dikes were breached were covered with water during high tides in winter 2006. These restored, seasonal wetlands are exactly the type of rearing habitat that is so critical to coastal coho salmon. The Forest Service is closely monitoring fish runs to assess the impact of these great strides in habitat restoration.

Our trip culminated with a view of Drift Creek Falls and a gentle float back downstream with the ebbing tide. Inspired and energized, the paddlers finished the day with a celebratory dinner near the beach in Waldport. The Carlton Winemakers Studio donated a selection of Oregon wines, and Dundee Bistro Chef Jason Stoller Smith graciously offered his culinary talents. A hearty thanks to supporters and friends who made this such a successful event! ■



Floating Drift Creek

GARY HAWIN



GIVE THE WORLD THE GIFT OF RIVERS!

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Our operations are made possible by a generous group of individuals, foundations, businesses and organizations. Recent gifts are listed below. We are grateful to each and every one of our contributors. Thank you!

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