



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.

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A Look Back at Three Dollar Bridge, Montana

“Anglers are on the front lines in the fight to protect our rivers and the wild fish that inhabit them. In this effort, we have a natural friend in an organization like Western Rivers Conservancy.” – Craig Mathews, owner Blue Ribbon Flies, West Yellowstone, MT

River access is precious and rare along the Madison River in Montana. That’s why access is prized at Three Dollar Bridge, where a \$3 fee gains you entry to a world-class wild trout fishery along an impossibly scenic stretch.

Mat Millenbach, Western Rivers Conservancy’s Director of Stewardship, recently returned to Three Dollar Bridge to assess the results of a project we completed in 2002. At that time, real estate development threatened access and open space at Three Dollar Bridge. WRC purchased a crucial 100-acre portion of a private ranch, including three miles of Madison River shoreline centered on Three Dollar Bridge. We conveyed the land to the Montana

COMPLETED PROJECT (2002)



Madison River

Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. WRC also facilitated purchase of the remaining 4,300 acres of the ranch by a conservation buyer and the subsequent donation of a conservation easement to the Montana Land Reliance to protect habitat and maintain public access to this special area.

The fly fishing community rallied around this project and made it a success, led by Trout Unlimited, Blue Ribbon Flies and Orvis.

Today, Three Dollar Bridge continues to be one of Montana’s premier fishing spots, and a metal box still collects \$3 on the honor system to help maintain the site. ■



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

We’d like to thank the generous individuals, foundations, businesses, agencies and organizations that make our work possible. Recent gifts are listed below.

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Protecting Outstanding River Ecosystems in the Western United States

RIVERLANDS

News from Western Rivers Conservancy

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The lower John Day River, Oregon.



The lower Klamath River near Weitchpec, California.

State Park Planned Along John Day

CONSERVING SIXTEEN RIVER MILES

Western Rivers Conservancy has taken the exciting first steps toward creating the largest State Park in Oregon along the lower John Day River, in partnership with the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department.

In September, Western Rivers Conservancy conveyed the first 2,403-acre portion of the Murtha Ranch to Oregon Parks and Recreation, which plans to acquire the remaining 5,711 deeded acres over the next three years.

The new park will ultimately conserve both banks along 16 miles of the John Day River – the longest free-flowing river west of the Continental Divide – and offer extraordinary recreation on the river and in the surrounding canyon. Western Rivers Conservancy purchased the 8,114-acre Murtha Ranch, together with its 8,000-acre Bureau of Land Management grazing lease, in September 2008.

Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski hailed the project as a significant conservation opportunity. “This is a rare opportunity to create a park that will

Continued, page 3

Initial Purchase Made on the Klamath

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE YUOK TRIBE IN CALIFORNIA

The Klamath, a great salmon river of Oregon and California, is well known for controversy: water wars, fish-kills and a plan to remove four hydropower dams. Meanwhile on the lower Klamath, Western Rivers has worked quietly with the Yurok Tribe to create a major salmon sanctuary and help brace the Klamath for the changes and challenges that lie ahead. We are excited to announce that in September, Western Rivers Conservancy and the Tribe closed the first installment of a 47,000-acre purchase from Green Diamond Resource Company on California’s North Coast.

There is still much work to do in this initiative to restore to the Yurok – California’s largest Tribe – a portion of its historic homeland along the lower Klamath River. The first 22,000 acres acquired, including the 5,500 acres just acquired in September, will be managed by the Tribe for watershed protection, fish and wildlife habitat, cultural resources and sustainable forestry. The remaining 25,000 acres, including the lower watershed of Blue Creek, will be managed as a Yurok Tribal Park for salmon, wildlife, cultural site protection and ecotourism. Blue Creek will be protected as a coldwater haven where fish can survive when Klamath River water temperatures go up and flows go down.

The next installments of this purchase are expected to close within the coming year. Bit by bit, the Yurok Tribe’s role as steward of the lower Klamath River will grow, complementing efforts to remove dams in the upper basin. ■

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THANKS FOR YOUR LETTERS OF SUPPORT!



ISTOCK PHOTO (DAVIDHIES)

Thanks to your letters of support to Congress, Western Rivers Conservancy's projects on the **Sandy River** in Oregon and the **Bear River** in Utah received significant appropriations from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).

This fall, Congress appropriated \$2.1 million from the LWCF for the Sandy River, and \$1.3 million for the Bear River.

The Oregon Congressional delegation once again recognized the importance of the Sandy as a free-flowing gem of Oregon. The LWCF funding will allow Western Rivers Conservancy to convey to the Bureau of Land Management 48 acres within the Wild and Scenic Corridor of the **Salmon River**, which is the most important fish-producing tributary in the Sandy basin.

On the Bear River, Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC) is purchasing nearly 700 acres that will be incorporated into the adjacent **Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge**, a globally important stop for millions of waterfowl, located adjacent to the Great Salt Lake. Thanks to the leadership of the Utah Congressional delegation, WRC will convey an initial 120 acres to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which manages the Refuge. ■

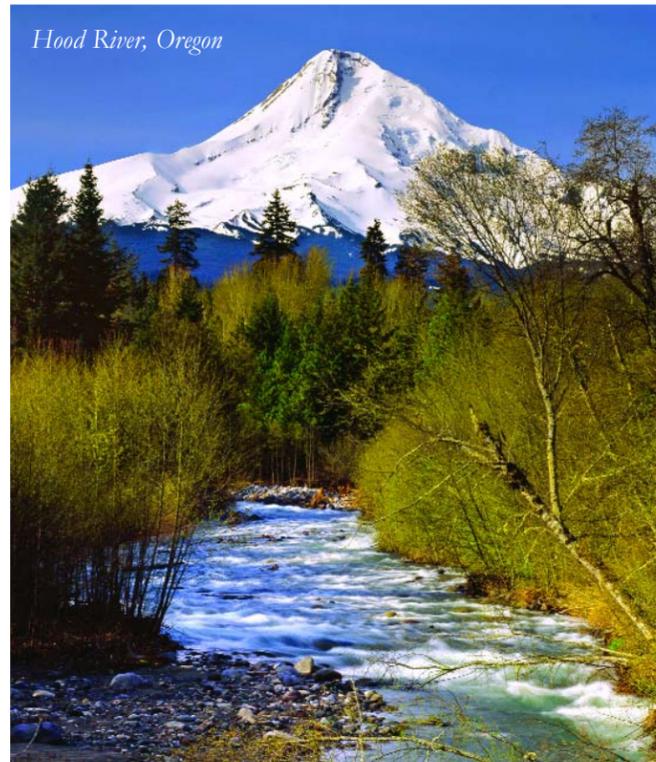
Sandhill cranes frequent the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge in Utah.



The Wild and Scenic Salmon River, Oregon.



Tundra swans are annual visitors to the marshes at the mouth of the Bear River.



Hood River, Oregon

DAVE BRINEN

Second Hood River Purchase Slated

CRITICAL CONFLUENCE POINT

A short drive south of the town of Hood River, Oregon, is a scenic riverscape that soon will be a community treasure.

The site is the confluence of the West and East Forks of the Hood River, including Punch Bowl Falls, where the water takes a short drop into a deep hole surrounded by beautiful cliffs of columnar basalt.

Western Rivers Conservancy purchased a property at Punch Bowl Falls in 2006 from Longview Fibre to protect the southern half of the confluence. It soon became clear that to conserve the other half, we needed to purchase an adjacent property owned by PacifiCorp. Together, the two tracts will become a significant stretch of protected habitat that includes Punch Bowl Falls, access to trails, scenic overlooks and a sandy beach at the river confluence. In total, 102 acres and two river miles will be preserved. This past July, we signed an agreement with PacifiCorp to purchase the northern property.

This stretch of river encompasses rich and highly complex habitat for fall and spring Chinook and winter and summer steelhead.

These acquisitions mark the first steps in a larger effort Western Rivers Conservancy is undertaking to conserve all three forks of the Hood River, an important salmon stronghold in the lower Columbia River system. ■

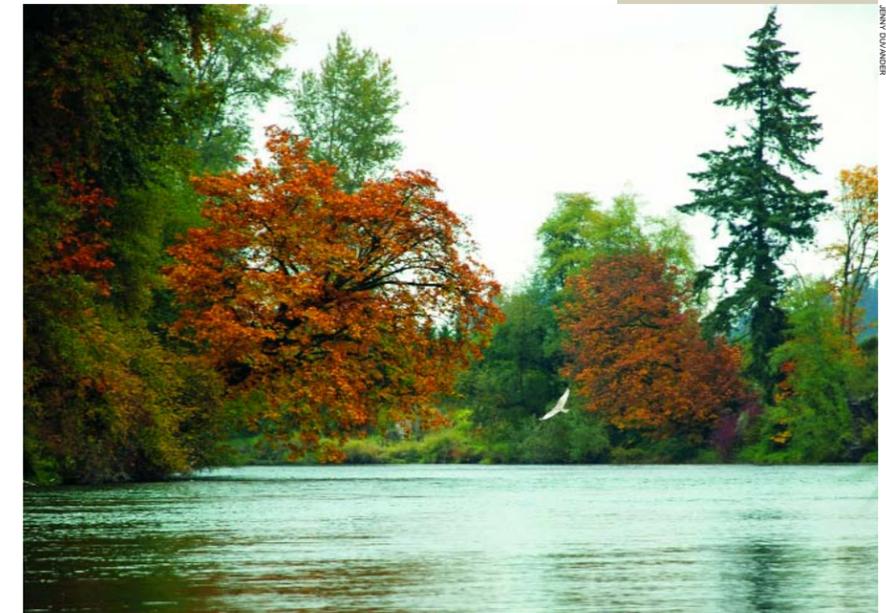
Stretch of Cowlitz River Preserved as Open Space

LOWER COLUMBIA BASIN, WASHINGTON

Washington's Cowlitz River flows from glaciers on Mount Rainier and craggy peaks in the Goat Rocks Wilderness Area to the lower Columbia River at Longview. While the Cowlitz has been impacted by dams, levees and industrial development, some good habitat and wild salmon runs remain.

Western Rivers Conservancy saved a piece of that remaining high-quality habitat this past summer with purchase of a 17-acre property downstream of the last dam and just upstream from the developed lower reach. The property contains nearly 1,000 feet of Cowlitz River frontage, portions of a functioning side channel and a small forested wetland and beaver pond. A mature stand of red alder, black cottonwood and willow lines the banks and extends well back from the river. The interior of the property is pasture, presenting a good opportunity to replant an upland forest.

The habitat found on the property is in good condition and locally very rare, adding to its importance. Fisheries biologists working on the Cowlitz / Lower Columbia Watershed Recovery



Plan identify this property as a Tier One conservation priority.

Western Rivers Conservancy conveyed the property to the Capitol Land Trust this fall, utilizing mitigation funding from the Cowlitz Falls Dam. Additional partners include the Lewis County Public Utility District, National Park Service and Washington Department of Ecology. The Capitol Land Trust and their capable staff will be long-term stewards of the property. ■

A rare piece of excellent habitat along the lower Cowlitz River has been set aside as a natural area.

John Day River, Continued

aim to preserve and enhance the quality of the John Day River, the salmon runs it supports and the surrounding landscape," Kulongoski said. Improving habitat along this stretch will benefit the John Day's runs of wild summer steelhead, the strongest in the entire Columbia basin, as well as fall and spring Chinook and bull trout.

The project will also conserve the lower three miles of Hay Creek, a rare John Day tributary that runs cold year-round, ideal for summer steelhead.

The Murtha Ranch has some of the best native grassland and sagebrush shrub-steppe habitat remaining on the Columbia Plateau. Western Rivers

Conservancy has begun an aggressive restoration program to eradicate noxious weeds, restore native plant communities and protect sensitive riparian areas. Taking these steps will help heal the landscape in preparation for the the new State Park's grand opening slated for 2013. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is also an important partner in the restoration of the land.

Conservation of the Murtha Ranch fills a 16-mile gap in a 148-mile-long protected reach within the lower John Day Wild and Scenic River Corridor.

This is an extraordinary opportunity to secure the health of this important stretch of the John Day while creating a public recreational treasure for future generations. ■



The Murtha Ranch

BOB WATSON