



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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Completed: Beaver Creek!

OLYMPIC PENINSULA WETLAND

A decade-long effort on Beaver Creek, Lake and Marsh has come to fruition! A long list of threatened species will benefit forever from the protection of this beautiful wetland system, which includes a lake, creek, marsh, waterfall and surrounding old-growth forest habitat.

Western Rivers Conservancy has conveyed the final 420 acres of the project to become part of the adjacent Olympic National Forest, providing protection for the entire lake and marsh. This most recent phase of land joins 213 acres that Western Rivers Conservancy protected in 1998.

Our thanks goes to everyone who made this project possible, including Congressman Norm



A tranquil float on Beaver Creek is a great way to experience this beautiful wetland and wildlife area, with easy access off the Burnt Mountain Highway.

Dicks, Senator Patty Murray, the Bullitt Foundation, Horizons Foundation and Wiancko Charitable Foundation. ■



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 \$100 or more are listed below. For a complete list of supporters, visit www.westernrivers.org

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Protecting Outstanding River Ecosystems in the Western United States

RIVERLANDS

News from Western Rivers Conservancy

Issue 16

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Above: Tundra swans on the refuge. Left: Bear River marsh lands.



Expanding the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge

UTAH'S GREAT SALT LAKE SYSTEM

On its journey to the Great Salt Lake, the Bear River's 350-mile length takes one of the most circuitous rivers routes in America. Its giant, inverted "U" shape begins in Utah's Uinta Mountains, then snakes north into Wyoming and Idaho, and back south into Utah to become the largest source of fresh water for the Great Salt Lake.

Here, the marshes at the mouth of the Bear River are among the top producers of waterfowl in the country. In the middle of the desert, 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 as the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, this area sees more than 200 species and millions of birds throughout the year, much to the delight of visitors.

Now, we have an exciting opportunity to protect additional Bear River marsh land, adding to the Refuge. In December 2008, Western Rivers Conservancy purchased 120 acres, the first piece of a nearly 700-acre property that soon will be conserved as part of the adjacent 74,000-acre Refuge. We plan to purchase the remainder of the property over the next two years.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been trying to acquire this property for the Refuge for many years. The land has excellent and diverse wetland habitat, including open water and upland areas. This project will conserve feeding, nesting and rearing areas for a tremendous array of waterfowl, including ducks, geese, egrets, avocets, tundra swan, American Pelican and black-necked stilts. ■

Renewing the Redwood Creek Estuary

CALIFORNIA'S NORTH COAST

Western Rivers Conservancy has purchased a 77-acre property on California's North Coast to help restore the Redwood Creek Estuary to its historically healthy salmon habitat.

Redwood Creek meets the Pacific Ocean.

Redwood Creek flows dam-free from California's coastal mountains and through protected redwood forests to meet the Pacific Ocean near Orick. Levees installed in the 1960s to protect Orick from floods have all but eliminated the natural flow and function

of the estuary. What once was rich and complex habitat for salmon, birds and wildlife has become a shallow, warm and unsheltered environment. Redwood Creek still provides for runs of Chinook and steelhead, and it has one of the better coho runs in the state, but the habitat is nothing near what it once was. As a result, the State of California has prioritized restoration of the Redwood Creek Estuary and the modification of the levees.

In February, Western Rivers Conservancy purchased the 77-acre property, a former dairy farm adjacent to the estuary.

Continued, page 3



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Main Office: 71 SW Oak Street, Ste. 100 Portland, OR 97204 (503) 241-0151

California: 1418 20th Street, Ste. 100 Sacramento, CA 95811 (916) 930-0279

Montana: 302 N. Last Chance Gulch, Ste. 404 Helena, MT 59601 (406) 449-6556

Stronghold of the Sandy River Fishery

WILD AND SCENIC SALMON RIVER

Western Rivers Conservancy is working to purchase and protect 352 acres of forested land in the Wild and Scenic corridor of the Salmon River, the primary fish-producing stream for the Sandy River basin. The entire Sandy River fishery relies on the Salmon River and its tributary Boulder Creek as anchor habitat for salmon and steelhead.

In 2008, we purchased 39 acres from Clackamas County, and conveyed the land to the Bureau of Land Management with an appropriation from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. We plan to purchase the remainder of the 352 acres over the next two years.

These lands will connect to a 5,000-plus-acre wild river sanctuary that Western Rivers Conservancy is assembling along the Sandy and Little Sandy Rivers. To date, Western Rivers Conservancy has protected more than 2,939 acres in the basin, securing healthy habitat and expanding recreation opportunities along this urban river gem. This habitat is being protected just as Portland General Electric has removed two dams in the past two years to make the Sandy and Little Sandy Rivers completely free-flowing for migrating fish. ■



The Salmon River is a glacial tributary to the Sandy.

Another Milestone on Oregon's Deer Creek Ranch

BIOLOGICAL GEM OF THE SISKIYOU

In 2006, Western Rivers Conservancy's President, Phil Wallin, stood on the courthouse steps in Josephine County, Oregon, and bid to purchase the Deer Creek Ranch. This 870-acre property is a hotspot for biological diversity in the Siskiyou Mountains of southern Oregon.

Western Rivers Conservancy's 870-acre acquisition protects fish-bearing stretches of Deer and Squaw Creeks, critical streams in the Wild and Scenic Illinois River Valley.

For two years, Western Rivers Conservancy held the property while our partner, the Siskiyou Field Institute, established a new headquarters for its outstanding field courses and community outreach programs.

Now, the time has come for the Siskiyou Field Institute to call this creekside property its very own.

In December 2008, Western Rivers Conservancy conveyed the property to the Institute. A former ranch house is now the Deer Creek Center, with course offerings in partnership with Southern Oregon University.



The Illinois River Valley is home to fascinating geology, rare plants and very healthy salmon streams.

The Deer Creek Center is strategically located adjacent to rare plant communities, serpentine geology and the Eight Dollar Mountain Botanical Area. The research and educational opportunities at Deer Creek will benefit students, community members and visitors alike for years to come.

Conservation of Deer Creek was made possible by a generous \$3 million challenge grant from a private foundation. ■

BOARD OF DIRECTORS Q&A

JACK WILLIAMS

CLIMATE CHANGE AND OUR NATIVE FISHERIES

Jack Williams is the Chief Scientist for Trout Unlimited's national program and one of the nation's leading fisheries biologists. He has served on Western Rivers Conservancy's Board of Directors since 2007.

■ How do you see Western Rivers Conservancy's work addressing the uncertainties of climate change?

First, Western Rivers Conservancy protects the highest quality rivers. Watersheds that are healthy are more resilient to drought, flood and wildfire, which are all going to increase as a result of climate change.

Second, Western Rivers Conservancy often works at the scale of entire river systems, focusing its acquisition efforts on private lands. Around much of the West, the headwaters of rivers are protected by federal land management, but downstream, rivers flow onto private lands. When Western Rivers protects lands in these lower valleys, we provide areas for floodwaters to spread and dissipate. This, in turn, creates prime fish habitat as channels expand and become braided. Downstream cities also are major beneficiaries when upstream rivers have the capacity to control their own floods.



Jack Williams

■ How do stronghold rivers support fish diversity and strengthen salmon and steelhead populations?

Already in the U.S., we have lost almost 30 percent of the genetic diversity of Pacific salmon and steelhead. We need to save stronghold populations and their habitats — the best of the best — but we also need to conserve populations on the edge, the ones adapted to marginal habitats. This biodiversity provides the building blocks our native fishes need to survive the rapid climate change that now is confronting all of us.

■ What are some of the rivers you cherish most?

Our whole family is fish centric. I met my wife, Cindy, [also a fisheries biologist] while working on the Virgin River in Utah. Our son Austin works for Trout Unlimited in Wyoming, while our son Josh just finished his degree in Fish and Wildlife Biology from Oregon State University.

I am kind of a high desert freak, so just put me along the Donner und Blitzen River in the Steens, or up along the Wenaha and I am a happy camper — add Cindy, our kids, and our springer spaniels and you will have to pry me out. ■



Redwood Creek, Continued

With the lands in conservation ownership, state agencies can move forward on long-term plans to modify the levees and rejuvenate tidal wetlands, meandering side-channel habitat and deep pools. Estuary restoration will be an important step for the health of the entire watershed and its runs of Chinook and coho salmon and steelhead trout, and will also benefit an array of shorebirds and waterfowl.

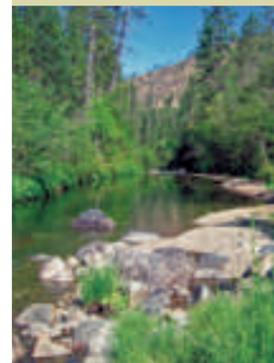
A grant from the California Coastal Conservancy will fund purchase of the property, which will be conveyed to the Northcoast Regional Land Trust. The project has the support of the California Department of Fish and Game, National Park Service, National Marine Fisheries Services and Army Corps of Engineers. ■

Redwood Creek still has one of the better coho runs in California.

A complex and healthy estuary at Redwood Creek, circa 1910. Levees were installed in the 1960s.



A former ranch house is now the Deer Creek Center.



Critical salmon habitat at the confluence of Deer and Squaw Creeks.