



**WESTERN RIVERS
CONSERVANCY**

www.westernrivers.org

OUR MISSION

Western Rivers Conservancy acts to protect 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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Our heartfelt thanks to Norb Wellman

I was first introduced to Norb Wellman in 2002 through Bill Brod, a wonderful Portland guy who helped Western Rivers Conservancy protect the Sandy River. Bill told me that Norb was a dedicated angler whose heart was in river protection. Shortly thereafter, Bill passed away.

Bill passed the torch to Norb, and Norb held it high as he joined WRC's Board of Directors, served as Chair for two years, shaped our investment and fiscal policy, helped us assess the risk of high-stakes land transactions and attended



every meeting of the Development Committee. A longtime investor and baseball star with the 1952 College World Series team at Oregon State University, Norb introduced WRC to many of his fishing friends and business associates and contributed tremendously to Western Rivers Conservancy as an organization.

Though Norb is leaving the Board of Directors after his long tenure, he has agreed to remain inside the WRC family as a Director Emeritus. Others will come forward to carry the torch, helping us accomplish our mission of conserving the great rivers of the West. No one, however, will ever replace Norb Wellman.

- Phil Wallin, *President* ■



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 and above are listed below. For a complete list, visit www.westernrivers.org

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RIVERLANDS

NEWS FROM WESTERN RIVERS CONSERVANCY

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The Minam Store is located at the picturesque confluence of the Minam and Willowa Rivers.

Plans on Track to Buy Minam Store Put-in

GATEWAY TO THE GRANDE RONDE RIVER

Many boaters are familiar with the Minam Store, the put-in for one of the most beautiful river floats in Oregon.

This is an extremely important access point for river users, including anglers, hunters and especially boaters, who use it as a launch for spectacular multi-day family floating trips on the Wild and Scenic Willowa and Grande Ronde Rivers. The Store sits on a two-acre property immediately downstream from the

picturesque confluence of the Minam and Willowa Rivers, adjacent to the Minam State Recreation Area.

The State has long sought to bring the property and its 350 feet of river frontage into public ownership, and Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC) has stepped in to help. In September, WRC signed a contract to purchase the property, with plans to convey it to the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department.

Acquisition of this site will improve access to the majestic river canyon and complement the hiking, fishing and camping opportunities available in the Minam State Recreation Area.

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Nason Creek provides habitat for Chinook, steelhead and bull trout.

Protecting a Vital Wenatchee Tributary

NASON CREEK, WASHINGTON

Western Rivers Conservancy is once again working to protect critical portions of the Wenatchee River system in central Washington.

In January, WRC signed an agreement with Longview Timber to purchase 648 acres of forested land in the Nason Creek watershed. Nason Creek is a Wenatchee River tributary that provides habitat for spring Chinook salmon, steelhead and bull trout. With steep, forested slopes adjacent to the Alpine Lakes Wilderness Area, the parcel contains two tributaries that contribute to Nason Creek's water quality.

An important fisheries restoration project is already underway on Nason Creek. Several agencies, including the U.S. Forest Service, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Chelan County and others, are working to move Nason Creek back into its original channel by reconnecting oxbows just downstream from this property. This will improve the stream's hydrology and provide enhanced

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The lower Gunnison River sweeps past rocky bluffs and riparian greenways en route to its confluence with the Colorado River.

Gunnison River Frontage Conserved

COLORADO PLATEAU

The Gunnison is a major branch of the Colorado River system, and a new area of focus for Western Rivers Conservancy. With its free-flowing length and habitat for rare flora and fauna, the Gunnison is a thread of life flowing through desert and rocky mountain canyonlands.

In the past several months, WRC has made its first land purchases along the Gunnison from two private owners. The properties, totaling 214 acres, are among several inholdings within the Bureau of Land Management Bangs Canyon Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA), just outside of Grand Junction.

Conserving these lower reaches of the Gunnison River will help ensure the survival of four species of endangered warmwater fish: Colorado pikeminnow, humpback chub, bonytail chub and razorback sucker.

Western Rivers Conservancy will convey these properties to the BLM to be included in the adjacent SRMA, protecting habitat for wildlife and rare desert plants. These acquisitions will also enhance recreational access to backcountry trails and beautiful red rock canyons.

Farther upstream on the Gunnison, we plan to purchase 396 acres of outstanding river frontage within the newly designated Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area. Threatened with gravel mining, this parcel is the BLM's number one national priority for acquisition. The property includes several miles of Gunnison River frontage, and will extend the National Conservation Area to a public boating takeout at Highway 141.

Taken together, these land purchases will help conserve a critically important river landscape for endangered species, desert habitat and public enjoyment. ■



Minam River

Minam River, Continued

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department's stewardship of the Minam Store property will emphasize continued public access, protection of the scenic waterway and conservation of native fish and wildlife habitat.

Western Rivers Conservancy is working to lease the Minam Store to a rafting outfitter so that services remain in full swing, including rentals, shuttles and supplies.

This is an exceptional opportunity to bring this river access point into public ownership and help ensure that future generations will be able to experience one of Oregon's most pristine riverscapes. ■



One of two tributaries to Nason Creek that will be conserved for water quality and fish habitat.

Nason Creek, Continued

salmon and steelhead habitat in channels that have been severed from Nason Creek since the construction of the Great Northern Railroad in the 1800s.

Purchasing the Nason Creek property, an inholding of the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, will help maintain aquatic habitat adjacent to the channel restoration efforts while also conserving a vulnerable hillside adjoining the Alpine Lakes Wilderness Area. Without the land purchase, the ecological integrity of Nason Creek and the Wilderness would be threatened. The acquisition will also preserve scenic views from State Highway 2 and provide the opportunity for new trail access into the Wilderness, where popular activities include hiking, camping, fishing, wildlife viewing and cross-country skiing.

The purchase agreement is exciting news, as WRC's work to preserve habitat in the larger Wenatchee system spans two decades. Our previous projects on the Little Wenatchee River and Icicle Creek, two other tributaries, contributed to the protection of critical spawning grounds for the only healthy sockeye salmon run remaining in the Northwest. ■



Klamath Awarded Clean Water Loan

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE YUOK TRIBE

Western Rivers Conservancy's partnership with the Yurok Tribe received a major boost in December when the California State Water Resources Control Board approved a loan to purchase more than 22,000 acres on the lower Klamath River.

Citing the project as extremely important for Klamath River water quality, the Board authorized a loan of \$18.75 million from the Clean Water State Revolving Fund for the Tribe to buy the land.

By April, we will complete purchase of the property from Green Diamond Resource Company and transfer it into the stewardship of the Yurok Tribe, which has long sought to regain this ancestral territory. The Yurok's sustainable forestry management approach will enhance the protection of salmon, improve aquatic habitat and restore meadows that once supported subsistence hunting. The Tribe will limit road-building, widen stream buffers, set aside carbon reserves and enforce its no-herbicide-use policy. These practices meet the State Board's objectives to improve the quality of water pouring into the Klamath from three major tributaries on the property: Pecwan, Ke'pel and Weitchpec Creeks.

Next, WRC and the Tribe will acquire 25,000 acres to protect Blue Creek as a salmon sanctuary. Blue Creek is one of the best salmon streams remaining in the Klamath basin and renowned for its water clarity and coldness, vital when main-stem temperatures heat up. ■

COLDWATER REFUGE

An outstanding tributary in the Klamath basin, Blue Creek (pictured) is the most frequented thermal refuge for salmon on the lower Klamath, according to a recent journal article.

Amazingly, Chinook that stop over for several hours at Blue Creek are able to decrease their body temperatures up to eight degrees. Learn more by reading the article at: westernrivers.org/bluecreek