

# RIVERLANDS

News from Western Rivers Conservancy

Issue 10

Summer 2006

## Five-Year Milestone for Hoh River Conservation

**W**estern Rivers Conservancy (WRC) is excited to announce that the first phase of the Hoh River Recreation and Conservation Area is complete, culminating five years of land acquisition along this important Olympic Peninsula stream. WRC conveyed to the Hoh River Trust the final 1,050 acres along the Hoh that were owned by forest products company Rayonier, Inc. The land contains a broad floodplain known as the "Hoh Oxbows," and includes an important put-in and take-out site for boaters and anglers. Also conserved is the confluence of the South Fork Hoh

River, an important spawning reach for bull trout, salmon and steelhead. This brings the emerging conservation area to nearly 4,500 acres – a vast

### RECREATION AND CONSERVATION AREA



accomplishment toward protecting this globally important stronghold for salmon and steelhead.

Our long-term vision for the Hoh River is an entire river conserved forever, anchored by the river's pristine headwaters in Olympic National Park. Downstream from the park, we are acquiring land along the thirty-mile lower stretch of the river, all the way to the Pacific

*Please see Hoh River, page 2*

## Western Rivers Conservancy's Work Moves Into Upper Sandy River

### CONNECTING INTACT HABITAT

**T**hirty acres of prime fish habitat will be protected along the upper Sandy River as the result of a purchase agreement Western Rivers Conservancy has signed with the landowners.

This reach of the Sandy, which includes the communities of Brightwood, Wildwood, Wemme and Zigzag, is heavily developed with homes, with more subdivisions being constructed. The thirty-acre property boasts over a half mile of Sandy River frontage with mature riparian forest. It also contains a large wetland and an entire off-stream channel of the Sandy. Nearly two-thirds of the land is in the 100-year

floodplain, while the upland portions harbor mature stands of Douglas fir and western hemlock. Sandy River fisheries biologists have designated this reach as Primary Anchor Habitat for winter steelhead and spring chinook, both listed as threatened species.

Building more homes would deal a blow to these irreplaceable aquatic and terrestrial habitats critical to restoring runs of Sandy River fish. It is important to the long-term recovery and health of Sandy River salmon and steelhead that the few remaining pieces of intact habitat in this reach be protected to serve as stepping stones between the large expanses

*Please see Sandy River, page 3*



*Our vision for the Hoh River includes a mature floodplain forest blanketing the river bank from source to mouth.*



*The Sandy is a wild river gem on Portland's doorstep. WRC will conserve its first tract on the upper Sandy River, complementing 2,700 acres already protected downstream.*



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# WRC will Purchase Eel River Estuary Property

CALIFORNIA NORTH COAST

Where a river meets the ocean, the estuary, is the place of its greatest biological productivity. But like many of California's coastal rivers, the Eel River estuary has lost many of its natural processes and diversity of habitats through the building of levees and the draining of wetlands for agriculture.

The Eel, California's third largest river system, once had one of the region's strongest fisheries, supporting habitat for coho and chinook salmon and coastal cutthroat trout.

Western Rivers Conservancy is bringing its land-buying expertise to a growing partnership to restore the Eel River by acquiring a large portion of its estuary along a lower tributary called Salt Creek. In July, WRC entered into an agreement to purchase Riverside Ranch, a 400-acre dairy farm with immediate restoration potential.

This project to restore the lower Eel River enjoys the support and involvement of a broad partnership including the California Department of Fish and Game, the California Coastal Conservancy, the California Wildlife Conservation Board, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Service and the Humboldt Resource Conservation District.



An aerial view of the Eel River estuary.

Once the property is acquired, WRC will likely transfer the land to the Department of Fish and Game as a permanent conservation steward. Simple modifications to the levees and tidegates will restore the tidal influence to the lower Eel and Salt Rivers, rejuvenating historic freshwater wetland and salt marsh habitat. At the same time, upland portions of the property will continue to accommodate agricultural activities that are compatible with the restoration efforts. The result will be restored rearing habitats for salmon, cutthroat trout and the tidewater goby. Migrant and resident waterfowl and shorebirds, including the Western yellow-billed cuckoo and marbled godwit, will benefit from reestablished feeding and nesting sites. Moreover, this acquisition will catalyze other restoration projects in the basin in a larger effort to regain the Eel's status as a great California salmon river. ■



Habitat restoration in the Eel River estuary will benefit a host of coastal dependent and migratory birds such as the marbled godwit (top) and the yellow-billed cuckoo.



The Hoh River supports an unusually high diversity of salmon and char species.

## Hoh River, Continued

Ocean. The Recreation and Conservation Area will provide access for boating and fishing on this legendary stretch of river, while preserving habitat for the endangered marbled murrelet and a host of other fish and wildlife species.

WRC's objective is to acquire an additional 3,000 acres in the valley, conveying the land to the Hoh River Trust as a permanent owner and steward of the lower river.

Thanks to the support of U.S. Representative Norm Dicks, and Doug Sutherland, Washington DNR Commissioner of Public Lands, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Service awarded a \$2.24 million grant to the project in 2005. This grant, from the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund, allowed the Hoh River Trust to purchase the 1,050 acres from Western Rivers Conservancy and complete this phase of conservation.

The Hoh River Trust was founded in 2003 by a partnership of Western Rivers Conservancy and the Wild Salmon Center to create a permanent conservation steward along the Hoh River. The mission of the Hoh River Trust is to conserve salmon and wildlife habitat along the lower Hoh while ensuring public access for the many people who love to visit and fish this river. ■

## LEAVE WILD RIVERS AS YOUR LEGACY



There are many ways to make a legacy gift to Western Rivers Conservancy.

- Include WRC in your will.
- Create a Charitable Remainder Trust or Charitable Lead Trust.
- Name WRC as a beneficiary of your life insurance policy.
- Choose WRC as a beneficiary of your retirement plan.

For more information or a brochure, call 503-241-0151 or e-mail [dwilkins@westernrivers.org](mailto:dwilkins@westernrivers.org).

THEN & NOW:

# BIG CHICO CREEK

A SUCCESS STORY IN THE NORTHERN SIERRAS

Big Chico Creek flows west from the foothills of the northern Sierra Nevada, carving a 1,400-foot deep canyon before flowing through Chico to join the Sacramento River. Connecting the stream to Chico is Bidwell Park, donated in 1905 by Annie Bidwell as a conservation legacy along ten miles of Big Chico Creek.

In the 1990s, Big Chico Creek was threatened by explosive residential growth in the direction of the foothills. With Big Chico one of only four streams supporting significant populations of threatened spring chinook, there was an urgent need to conserve this stream for the entire Sacramento River system.

Western Rivers Conservancy stepped in to purchase two ranches totaling 4,000 acres in 2000-2001, spanning the creek for five miles directly upstream from Bidwell Park. WRC acquired the land with funding from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the State of California and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, among others. California State University (CSU) Chico offered to manage the land for habitat preservation and research, and the Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve was born. Taken together with Bidwell Park, the Reserve spans fifteen miles of Big Chico Creek, a significant accomplishment protecting this critical ecosystem.

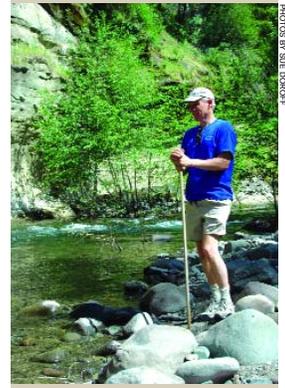
Today, the Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve is a



WRC Board, staff and their families explore the oak meadows and basalt cliffs of the Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve in May.

thriving example of conservation management. It is home to more than 175 species of birds and 140 species of wildlife, including the East Tehama herd of black-tailed deer, the only migratory herd in California. Supported by an on-site manager and staff, CSU-Chico students utilize the Reserve to research Scotch Broom removal, salmon migration and the erosion impacts of roads, among many other studies.

Though the threat to Sacramento spring chinook is still imminent, this project offers the ability to study and protect these dwindling salmon runs while conserving a treasured northern California ecosystem. ■



WRC President Phillip Wallin, who grew up in Chico, stands beside his hometown stream.



A rough-skinned newt living on the Reserve.

## Here's to Rivers!



WRC's Board of Directors.



Thanks to Board Treasurer Ken Grossman for hosting WRC's May Board meeting in Chico. After a creekside meeting at his home, Ken led a tour of his world-famous Sierra Nevada Brewery, including a large new bottling line and fuel cells that generate clean power.

[www.sierranevada.com/environment.html](http://www.sierranevada.com/environment.html)

### Sandy River, Continued

of high-quality habitat both upstream and downstream.

By purchasing this property, preventing development and putting the land into permanent conservation stewardship, Western Rivers Conservancy is expanding

its efforts in the Sandy basin. Until now, WRC has focused its efforts on the middle Sandy and Little Sandy Rivers. This agreement marks our commitment to acquire and conserve high-quality stream reaches across the entire Sandy River basin. ■



The Sandy



## 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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## Remembering a River Hero

JIM COMPTON LEGACY

River conservation lost its patron saint earlier this year when Jim Compton passed away. As long-time president of the Compton Foundation in the Bay Area of California, Jim gave precious financial support to just about every river conservation organization in the country. He was instrumental in creating Western Rivers Conservancy's River Protection Fund that has allowed us to sustainably fund river conservation projects for the long haul.

Jim was a true river lover. He took up whitewater kayaking at the age of 70 and went forth to paddle, his hard-shell on the roof of a car whose bumper sticker proclaimed "I stop at river crossings." Jim made up for in fearlessness what he lacked in skill, traumatizing a legion of paddling partners who feared that Jim would drown on their watch. (Jim survived Iwo Jima as a Marine and after that, he said, nothing scared him.) On a Rogue River float in 1992, Jim came



SUE DOROFF

*Jim Compton overlooks Idabo's Middle Fork Salmon River during a rafting trip in 1993.*

out of his kayak repeatedly but refused my entreaties to ride in the raft. "I'll be fine," he said, shivering. Finally, I asked the trip leader to order Jim into the raft. Like a good Marine he followed orders, but he didn't like it.

Jim had a pure and simple love for rivers that inspired all of us, made us feel that rivers are worth our very best efforts. His legacy lives on in a whole generation of river conservationists who were supported by Jim, both financially and personally, when the going got tough. None of us will ever forget his big smile, his rippling laugh and his hand clapping us on the back.

-Phillip Wallin ■



## GIVE THE WORLD THE GIFT OF RIVERS!

Support the Work of Western Rivers Conservancy

Our operations are made possible by a generous group of individuals, foundations, businesses and organizations. Recent gifts of \$50 or more are listed below. We are grateful to each and every one of our contributors. Thank you!

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