

# RIVERLANDS

NEWS FROM WESTERN RIVERS CONSERVANCY

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*The north channel of the Alsea River flows into Alsea Bay. The estuary provides essential habitat where young salmon forage and take shelter.*

## New Alsea River Purchase Will Help Restore Coho

### OREGON COASTAL SALMON

Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC) has committed to purchase land on the Alsea River estuary that will complete an effort to restore some of the best coho salmon habitat remaining in Oregon.

WRC will buy 287 acres that straddle Drift Creek and the North Channel of the Alsea, a backwater area with saltwater marsh and healthy eelgrass beds that serves as a nursery for young fish and spawning grounds for marine species. The property will merge with an adjacent 1,400-acre tract that WRC purchased in 2002, which is now the focus of a large coho recovery effort as part of the Siuslaw National Forest.

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## Another Critical Step on the Bear River

### GREAT SALT LAKE ECOSYSTEM

Where the Bear River flows into the Great Salt Lake, a vast wetland attracts a diverse gathering of birds unlike any other in the West. Here, the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge protects more than 100 square miles of vital nesting and feeding habitat for millions of feathered visitors.

As a premier stronghold for western birds, the Bear River Refuge is in need of further protection. Western Rivers Conservancy is seizing several opportunities to purchase land in the Bear River delta, expanding the refuge's sheltered habitat for more than 200 species of migratory birds, waterfowl and shorebirds.

In April, Western Rivers Conservancy committed to purchase a 580-acre private property within the refuge boundary

and just down the road from the James V. Hansen Wildlife Education Center. This adds to a 696-acre property, located near the entrance to the refuge, which WRC began acquiring in 2009. The lands will be conveyed to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, expanding the refuge and enhancing the visitor experience.

Together, these properties 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.

The Bear River begins high in Utah's Uinta Mountains, then snakes through Wyoming and Idaho and back into Utah to become the largest source of fresh water for the Great Salt Lake. ■



*A great blue heron takes off from the project area.*



WESTERN RIVERS  
CONSERVANCY



CARY BRASCH

Nearly 7,000 acres managed by the Hoh River Trust are open for public recreation.

## Three More Properties Conserved on Hoh River

### WASHINGTON'S OLYMPIC PENINSULA

A decade into our work on the Hoh River, we reached a major milestone with nearly 7,000 acres protected. However, Western Rivers Conservancy is still working to protect strategic properties and habitat along the Hoh River, which supports the most diverse native salmon and steelhead runs in the lower Forty-Eight.

In April, WRC conserved three properties totaling 60 acres and conveyed the land to the Hoh River Trust. These acquisitions preserve open space, floodplain forests and healthy side channels where young salmon rear. They are adjacent to previous acquisitions, creating a larger block of conserved habitat in the ownership of the Hoh River Trust.

These conveyances were made possible by a grant from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund and our grant partners at the Washington Department of Natural Resources. Washington Congressman Norm Dicks has played a major role supporting this project and fostering its success.

With our partners, Western Rivers Conservancy will continue to acquire critical habitat in the Hoh River valley, working with landowners and the Hoh River Trust, which is a capable and committed long-term steward of the lands. ■



JOSH KLING

*A formerly diked pasture.*

### Restoring Drift Creek and the Alsea River

WRC's conveyance of these lands to the Siuslaw National Forest has set the stage for extensive restoration of coho habitat, including:

- Planting trees and restoring historic vegetation
- Removing dikes, culverts and channel blockages
- Reconnecting wetlands and side channels

Groups involved with the restoration include the Siuslaw National Forest, Alsea Watershed Council, Midcoast Watersheds Council, Audubon Society Ten-Mile Creek Chapter, National Marine Fisheries Service, Lincoln Soil and Water Conservation District, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Port of Alsea, City of Waldport, Cascade Pacific RC&D, Oregon State University, the Wetlands Conservancy and Waldport High School.

### Alsea River, Continued

The project area follows Drift Creek along its last five miles before it flows into Alsea Bay. Drift Creek slows into a meandering pattern that feeds wetlands and sloughs, ideal for juvenile coho. Acquiring the land has set the stage for extensive restoration, including removing dikes and plugs that separated wetlands and side channels from the main stream. Lands once cleared for pastures are being replanted while preserving open meadows for elk. Our current acquisition, which fronts some of the last unprotected salt marsh in the bay, will be included in the restoration plan. The cumulative effect will be dramatic improvement of coho salmon habitat.

This project is one of the highest priority acquisitions at the federal level for anadromous habitat in the Pacific Northwest. In addition to coho, Drift Creek supports fall Chinook, spring Chinook, winter steelhead, cutthroat trout and other species. Combining these two properties into a greater conservation strategy will be a huge win for the recovery of coastal coho salmon runs in Oregon. ■



Our next purchase traces several miles of the Gunnison, surrounded by the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area.

The lower Gunnison is one of few places where four species of Colorado Basin warm-water fish still survive, including the razorback sucker.



## Gunnison River Project Moves into National Conservation Area

### COLORADO PLATEAU

The Gunnison is a major tributary to the Colorado River, and is remarkable for its free-flowing length, beautiful deep canyon and habitat for endangered warm-water fish.

Below dams in its upper reaches, the Gunnison carves one of the most impressive gorges in the West at Black Canyon. Downstream, the river flows many dam-free miles, including nearly 30 miles through the newly designated Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area (NCA). The lower Gunnison slows to a gentler gradient, feeding a rich riparian corridor and sweeping past tall desert bluffs en route to its confluence with the Colorado River at Grand Junction.

Western Rivers Conservancy is taking its efforts on the lower Gunnison into the Dominguez-Escalante NCA, where we have committed to purchase approximately 400 acres of spectacular canyon country that trace

the river for several miles.

This lower stretch is one of few places where Colorado pikeminnow, humpback chub, bonytail chub and razorback sucker still survive. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has designated this corridor as critical habitat for these four species of Colorado Basin warm-water fish.

Once the property is acquired, Western Rivers Conservancy will convey it to the Bureau of Land Management for inclusion in the NCA, helping to ensure the health of the lower river and the endangered fish it supports.

Just downstream, Western Rivers Conservancy is also purchasing riverfront inholdings within the BLM-managed Bangs Canyon Special Recreation Management Area.

Together, these acquisitions will enhance what is already recognized as a critically important river landscape worthy of protection for endangered species, habitat and public enjoyment. ■



### The Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area

In 2009, historic legislation designated the 210,000-acre Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area (NCA). This wild sanctuary is home to diverse wildlife, ancient fossil beds, red rock canyons and rare desert flora like the Uinta basin hookless cactus.

A recreational paradise for boating, hiking and other outdoor pursuits, the NCA follows 30 miles of the Gunnison River. Western Rivers Conservancy is acquiring critical inholdings in the river canyon that will help preserve this important landscape.



## 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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# Enjoy Great Beer, Save Great Rivers

Once again this summer, we're kicking off our **Wild Rivers** partnership with Sierra Nevada Brewing Co.

For every 12-pack of Pale Ale and Sierra Nevada seasonal beer purchased in the western states from **August 1 through September 17**, Sierra Nevada will donate a portion of proceeds to Western Rivers Conservancy.

Sierra Nevada is an environmentally responsible company that brews superb craft beer. Our thanks to owner Ken Grossman and Sierra Nevada Brewing Co. for their unwavering support of healthy rivers! ■

AUGUST 1 - SEPTEMBER 17



ANNE TATTAM



## Thank you for your support!

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

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