



News Release

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Prized Ranch on the Yakima River Permanently Conserved and Will Soon Open to Public

ELLENSBURG, Wash.—Last week, Western Rivers Conservancy and the Bureau of Land Management permanently conserved the 647-acre Yakima Canyon Ranch, which lies along an exquisite stretch of the Yakima River at the epicenter of some of the state’s best fly fishing.

The March 20 conveyance will allow the BLM to manage this area as part of the Yakima River Corridor for both public recreation and to preserve the property’s excellent fish and wildlife habitat. The transfer will provide permanent access to the popular Big Horn boating access site and 3.5 miles of the Yakima River, roughly between Big Horn and Umtanum Creek, downstream.

“Yakima Canyon Ranch is the kind of place that captures your heart,” said Sue Doroff, Western Rivers Conservancy’s president and co-founder. “Not only is it critical from a fish and wildlife perspective, but it boasts some of the finest scenery and recreation opportunities in the Yakima River Canyon. We are thrilled about our partnership with the BLM to ensure that this outstanding stretch of river will soon open to the public and be managed for conservation forever.”

The ranch lies within the 27-mile Yakima River Canyon, between the towns of Ellensburg and Yakima. This stretch of the canyon includes critical habitat for Middle Columbia River steelhead and bull trout, and excellent habitat for California bighorn sheep, Rocky Mountain elk, mule deer and myriad small mammals and birds. The canyon's sheer basalt walls are home to the densest concentration of nesting hawks, eagles, and falcons in the state.

The entire Yakima River is also a haven for recreationists, who float, fish, hike, hunt and watch wildlife year-round. BLM management of Yakima Canyon Ranch creates significant new opportunities for the public. The property is comprised of three blocks of land—Big Horn, Beavertail and Umtanum—and spans both sides of the Yakima River. It controls critical access and launch points along the river.

At the upstream end of the ranch, the popular Big Horn recreation site includes a boat launch, campground and prime river frontage. The downstream end includes roughly 15 acres adjacent to the Umtanum recreation site; with the BLM's acquisition of the ranch, the amount of river frontage in this popular recreation area will triple.

BLM will provide recreational public access to newly acquired lands at Big Horn and Umtanum later this spring, after staff prepare them for public use according to its interim management strategy.

BLM management of these sites will provide for visitor access, while they work with local partners and the public to evaluate long term management options. The BLM's [Yakima Canyon website](#) will provide updates as they become available.

"We are ecstatic with the opportunity to acquire this land for use by all members of the public," said Curtis Bryan, Wenatchee Field Office manager for the Spokane District. "Incorporating this property into BLM's existing landscape in the Yakima River Canyon allows us to properly manage the land for multiple uses including recreation and conservation; this also allows us to maintain the health and diversity of the landscapes along with the wildlife that call it home."

This project was made possible through funding and support from Tide SW Foundation, Giles W. and Elise G. Mead Foundation, James M. Lea Foundation, Hugh and Jane Ferguson Foundation, Washington Fly Fishing Club and additional foundation, organization and individual donors.

ABOUT

Western Rivers Conservancy

Western Rivers Conservancy acquires lands along rivers throughout the West to conserve critical habitat and to create or improve public access for compatible use and enjoyment. By cooperating with local agencies and organizations and by applying decades of land acquisition experience, WRC secures the health of whole ecosystems. WRC has protected hundreds of miles of stream frontage on great western rivers including the Hoh, Methow, Nisqually, John Day, Salmon, Snake, North Umpqua and Madison Rivers. To learn more, visit www.westernrivers.org.

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