



Western Rivers
CONSERVANCY

Riverlands

News from Western Rivers Conservancy

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The mission of Western Rivers Conservancy is to protect outstanding river ecosystems in the western United States by acquiring and protecting critical habitat. Western Rivers Conservancy is the nation's foremost specialist in the field of riparian land conservation.

Celebrating the first year of Western Rivers Conservancy!

Last December, after operating for fourteen years as a program of River Network, Phil and Sue and their staff created a new, independent organization to conserve outstanding Western rivers.

With our headquarters in Portland, Oregon, Western Rivers Conservancy is conserving high-quality river ecosystems by buying land and assembling refugia for fish and wildlife. Rivers like the Hoh in Washington, Oregon's Illinois, the Madison River in Montana and hundreds of other outstanding rivers need to be protected now, before it's too late. We believe that land acquisition, using a variety of funding sources, is the strongest, most practical approach to protecting critical habitat.

Agreement is signed for removal of Sandy River dams and creation of a wild salmon refuge.

It's official—the Sandy River near Portland will become wild and free-flowing, all the way from the glaciers of Mt. Hood to the Columbia River Gorge, with removal of Marmot Dam. On October 24, Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC) and twenty-two other agencies—federal, state and private—gathered in Portland to sign the Settlement Agreement. Under the Agreement, Portland General Electric will not only remove dams and the Sandy and Little Sandy Rivers but will turn over its lands along the two rivers to WRC. For our part, WRC is buying up other privately-owned lands to create an eleven-mile conservation corridor on the Sandy and a five-mile corridor on the Little Sandy. Western Rivers Conservancy is turning the lands over to the Bureau of Land Management to be managed as an “Area of Critical Environmental Concern.”

The result will be protected habitat for wild salmon and steelhead and access to the river for anglers, boaters and hikers. Removal of the Little Sandy Dam

will allow water to flow down that classic steelhead stream for the first time in ninety years. We give tremendous credit to Portland General Electric for taking the lead in dam removal. They have been great partners in this initiative.



Marmot Dam on the Sandy River.

New land purchases on the Sandy and Little Sandy.

On September 30, the last day of our first fiscal year, we completed a major and very complex transaction on the Sandy and Little Sandy Rivers. WRC purchased 800 acres on the south side of the Sandy River along Wildcat Creek from a timber company called the Winters Group. WRC split off and held out 200 acres along Wildcat Creek, thus completing a north-south corridor for wildlife between the Bull Run Watershed Management Area on the north and the Salmon-Huckleberry Wilderness Area on the south. The remaining 600 acres of Winters Group land we exchanged to the Longview Fibre Company for 187 acres of land on the Sandy River near Marmot Dam plus 120 acres on the Little Sandy River and 20 acres in the Bull Run Watershed. Simultaneous with this purchase and exchange, we sold the Longview Fibre land on the Sandy River to the Bureau of Land Management. When the dust settled, we had added a critical link in the new eleven-mile long refuge on the Sandy River, a similar link on the five-mile long refuge on the Little Sandy and established a vital north-south migration corridor between two great wildlife habitat areas.



The Little Sandy River.

Partnering with timber companies in the Pacific Northwest.

Some of our greatest conservation successes have come through partnering with forest products companies in the Northwest. The Longview Fibre transaction described above is an example. Earlier this year, Western Rivers Conservancy completed our fourth land purchase from the Simpson Timber Company, headquartered in Seattle, and began work on a fifth (and very significant) joint venture in northern California. Other companies we have worked with successfully are Crown Pacific, Hancock Timber, Rayonier Timber, Plum Creek Timber and Davidson Industries.



The North Channel of the Alsea River, our fourth purchase from Simpson Timber Company.

We give these companies a way to carry out their stewardship of sensitive riverlands, at the same time generating money through our purchase that they can invest in productive timberlands elsewhere. It's a win-win approach that has protected hundreds of miles of salmon streams in the Northwest.

WRC's second major land purchase on the Hoh River.

In mid-December, Western Rivers Conservancy will close its purchase of 1,362 acres of land along four miles of the Hoh River, a legendary salmon and steelhead stream in the coastal rainforest of Washington's Olympic Peninsula. This tract, called Spruce Creek Bottom, includes the confluence of the Hoh with four tributary streams. The Paul Allen Forest Protection Foundation provided funding for earnest money payments.

This purchase from Rayonier Timber marks the second installment in a long-term effort by Western Rivers Conservancy to purchase the entire thirty-one-mile reach of the Hoh that is still in private ownership, between Olympic National Park and the Pacific Ocean. We are partners in this project with...(continued on page 3)



Big leaf maples along Spruce Creek Bottom.

(continued from page 2)...the Wild Salmon Center, Ecotrust and the Olympic National Forest, which will manage the river corridor.

In December of 2001, Western Rivers Conservancy made its first major purchase on the Hoh. We bought 757 acres and two and a half miles of river at Schmidt Bar, where two important spawning streams, Elk and Winfield Creeks, flow into the Hoh. Both that purchase and the Spruce Creek Bottom purchase were made possible by loans from the David & Lucile Packard Foundation.

Schmidt Bar's red alder floodplain forest.



Smith River, California.

One of Western Rivers Conservancy's top priorities is the Smith River on California's north coast, the only major undammed river in California. We are working on a major transaction that we hope to be able to announce early next year.



Coho salmon making their way to spawning beds.

Peter Moyle, a prominent fisheries biologist at UC Davis, has stated the case for conserving high quality river ecosystems like the Smith:

"There is no question that the Smith River is an important refuge for salmonid fishes: cutthroat trout, steelhead, chinook salmon, coho salmon, even chum salmon, all with populations of national, regional, and local significance... It is critical that the Smith River and its watershed continue to be managed as a refuge for our declining native fishes. There are many reasons for doing this from aesthetic to practical but one way to view the Smith is as an insurance policy, a source of wild fish for restoration of other watersheds. In the Klamath watershed, for example, large scale restoration efforts are needed to correct the flow and temperature problems and to restore the habitat needed for healthy runs of salmon and steelhead. Healing will take a long time and recovery will be slow, with wild populations in danger of extinction in the early stages of the recovery process. I will feel much more assured about the success of recovery if we have the Smith River as the backup system and as a giant learning laboratory to contrast with more degraded systems."

Deer Creek, California.

Another outstanding California stream is Deer Creek, flowing from the foothills of Mt. Lassen National Park west to the Sacramento River. With support from the Weeden Foundation, Western Rivers Conservancy has begun a project to acquire and protect critical habitat along this stream. Deer Creek is one of the few remaining strongholds for threatened Sacramento River Chinook salmon and steelhead, and other endangered aquatic life forms as well.



Recovery efforts are underway for Sacramento River chinook salmon.

New Board Members for Western Rivers Conservancy.

John McGlenn has joined our Board to give us a stronger presence in the Puget Sound region. John is a Principal in the engineering firm of Tetra Tek/KCM, Inc. in Seattle. John is an avid angler who has served with the Washington Fish & Wildlife Commission, the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition and the Washington Wildlife Federation.

Ken Grossman has come on our Board to give us an “anchor” in northern California as we become more active in that region. Ken is the founder and owner of Sierra Nevada Brewing Company in Chico, CA. As owner of a large property on Big Chico Creek that includes the principal holding pool for chinook salmon, Ken is dedicated to the stewardship of river ecosystems. He is a Trustee of Sacramento River Partners and a strong supporter of numerous environmental groups.

Restoring the Great Confluence.

As mentioned in our last issue, Western Rivers Conservancy bought 1,100 acres at the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers, just north of St. Louis. This month, we will turn this land over to Missouri State Parks and the Metropolitan Park & Recreation District to begin restoring the wetland ecosystem and to provide public access. For the first time, Americans will be able to stand at the point where the great river of the West meets the great river of the East. The closing comes just in time for the Bicentennial of the Lewis & Clark expedition, which began at this point.



The Nation’s focal point: the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers.

Learn more about Western Rivers Conservancy at our Website.

The website has been improved recently, and we urge you to visit www.westernrivers.org. Be sure to click on the “Accomplishments” and “Campaigns” menu tabs for great success stories, photos and descriptions of Western Rivers Conservancy’s current efforts.

Give the World a Gift of Rivers! Support the work of Western Rivers Conservancy.

Our first year of operations has been made possible by the people and foundations listed below. They are funding our work on the Hoh River, the Sandy River, the Smith River and other great Western streams. They are getting real, tangible results for their investment. We are grateful to each and every one of them.

Foundations

- The Johnson Family Foundation
- Bullitt Foundation
- Paul G. Allen Forest Protection Foundation
- Compton Foundation
- Norcross Foundation
- Russell Family Foundation
- Peter J. Sharpe Foundation

Major Donors

- Bill Sweet
- Louise Gund
- Si Foote
- Clarke Bingham
- Norb Wellman

Corporate Donors

- Portland Gas and Electric

Please consider giving to Western Rivers Conservancy so that we can accelerate our efforts in river conservation. Tax-deductible donations can be sent to our office in Portland. Please visit our website or call Hannah Davidson, Director of Administration (503-241-0151 x10), for more information.