

The Inside Story on Protecting Nature in

Oregon



A view of Northeast Oregon's spectacular Imnaha River canyon from one of 27 parcels of land recently purchased by The Nature Conservancy. Located primarily in the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area, the properties will transfer to the U.S. Forest Service, protecting fish and wildlife and ensuring public access. © Rick McEwan

Haven in Hells Canyon

27 properties destined for public ownership within national forest

Coffee was essential. After three hours of wildlife counts from a Robinson R44 helicopter (starting at sunrise), it's no surprise that Vic Coggins and the pilot beelined to coffee while the chopper refueled. Coggins has been surveying the craggy landscape of Hells Canyon for over 40 years and, this spring, saw bighorn sheep, mule deer, white-tailed deer and some elk on the morning count. All before that coffee.

In a monumental land deal in Northeast Oregon, The Nature Conservancy recently bought 27 parcels of land — more than 10 square miles — primarily in the heart of the rugged Hells Canyon National Recreation Area. It's land Coggins flew over. And where he even spotted a surprising resident that morning: a mountain goat.

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Special Insert:

2009 Volunteer Newsletter

Doris Duke foundation gives \$7 million for wildlife habitats

What if there was a master plan for conservation in Oregon — one we could rest assured would protect healthy fish and wildlife populations for future generations? Who would create such a plan, and how would Oregonians carry it out?

Well, it already exists. Known as the Oregon Conservation Strategy, it was developed by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife with help from a host of experts and stakeholders, including The Nature Conservancy, other organizations, forest owners, hunting and fishing groups, and farmers.

Recognizing its value, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation has stepped forward to help make sure it doesn't sit neatly on a shelf, but gets out on the ground where smudges and mud spatters will testify that it's been put to work.

The Duke foundation has given \$7 million to the Conservancy to be spent over three years in Oregon, Washington and Idaho in support of each state's wildlife action plan. In 2000, Congress required each state to develop a statewide plan for wildlife conservation. The foundation sees these plans as strategic to achieving a broad conservation vision that transcends state lines. And they've funded several similar grants in other regions of the country.

"The action plans were developed with scientists, conservationists, hunters, anglers and others all working together," said Dr. Mark Shaffer, director of Duke's Environment Program. "If we can now implement the plans with that same collaborative, proactive and solution-oriented approach, the benefits for wildlife and people alike will be enormous."

The Conservancy has enlisted partners to help identify the priority land conservation projects — including Defenders of Wildlife in Oregon, Lava Lake Land and Livestock in Idaho, and Wilburforce Foundation in Washington. Land trusts and other land managers can apply to the Conservancy for funding. Matching requirements will ensure that the \$7 million invested by the Doris Duke Charitable Trust will leverage at least \$38 million for conservation across the Northwest.

"I'm proud of the way Oregonians from all walks of life came together to produce a strategic vision for wildlife conservation statewide," said Marla Rae, chair of the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission. "This grant will go a long way toward making the Oregon Conservation Strategy an effective blueprint that drives conservation investments and shapes our legacy of healthy wildlife for future generations."

Explore the Oregon Conservation Strategy on the Web at dfw.state.or.us/conservationstrategy/.

... in Hells Canyon



Fourteen key fish and wildlife species, including Oregon's largest Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep herd, occupy the recently acquired Hells Canyon properties. The parcels are considered, by many, as the gateway to hundreds of thousands of acres of biologically important lands. © Vic Coggins/ODFW

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The 27 parcels are private inholdings surrounded by national forest, concentrated mainly along seven miles of the Imnaha River and six miles of tributary creeks. Public ownership ensures public access for fishing, hunting and hiking on lands previously closed to the public.

These parcels are where the wildlife concentrates and are considered, by many, as the gateway to hundreds of thousands of acres of biologically important lands.

The U.S. Forest Service has sought them to protect important fish and wildlife habitat, consolidate its management and ensure public access. When a complex land exchange aiming to bring these lands into public ownership fell through in 2007, and the properties came on the market, the Service asked the Conservancy to help acquire them.

"I just can't overstate the importance," said Coggins, Wallowa District biologist for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. "[This purchase] is valuable from a wildlife perspective, for future generations and for the national forest."

For a man who's walked the canyon hundreds of times, following bighorn sheep and patrolling from an old ranch cabin, he sees protection of the lands for the public as critical for the Wallowa community. "For my grandkids, and lots of other kids in this county, there is heritage in the canyon and creeks," Coggins said. "It's where we all fish, hunt and go hiking."

Already this spring people are out on the river, escaping the snow. From the helicopter, Coggins flew right over steelhead anglers, who waved to Coggins and crew.

The streams and their floodplains on the 27 parcels provide habitat for Snake River steelhead, Snake

River Chinook salmon and bull trout, all federally listed as threatened species. They also harbor rare plants and at-risk bird species including the yellow breasted chat, mountain quail, Lewis' woodpecker and willow flycatcher.

"This purchase will consolidate ownership, enabling the Forest Service to control weeds, manage fire and provide access more effectively on public lands. It also prevents these properties from being divided into multiple ownerships and developed," said Derek Johnson, director of protection for the Conservancy in Oregon. "We worked hard to listen to community leaders and took their interests and concerns into account as we shaped this land purchase over many months."

The Conservancy will work cooperatively with the Forest Service to manage the properties during the ownership transition. Management will include biological surveys and weed control efforts. The Conservancy will also continue leasing the lands to current grazing permittees.

The purchase price was \$739 million, covered by a loan from the Conservancy's internal revolving fund. The Forest Service proposes to acquire the property from the Conservancy over several years. The Conservancy will raise other funds to help cover property taxes, loan interest, closing costs and land management activities. A grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation to support protection for important lands identified in the state's Oregon Conservation Strategy is helping to make this landmark purchase possible.

See a slideshow of these breathtaking canyonlands on our Web site, nature.org/oregon.

What lies beneath?

Scientists go underwater to explore Southern Oregon's diverse near-shore habitats

With last month's widely reported launch of *Google Earth: Ocean*, a cutting edge, seafloor mapping tool, you'd think humans already know what's going on under the salt water that blankets 70 percent of our planet. But that's not the case — and offshore Oregon is no exception.

Dick Vander Schaaf is working to change that.

"Very little is known about Oregon's coastal and marine habitats, so a key first step to protecting them is understanding what's there in the first place," said Vander Schaaf, marine and coast conservation director for the Conservancy in Oregon. "Historically, preservation efforts have focused on the tropics, leaving temperate and polar marine areas, such as the North Pacific, the least protected of all coastal regions. But they're also some of the world's most productive and diverse."

That's why The Nature Conservancy is studying near-shore habitats off Oregon's southern coast.

The Port Orford Ocean Resource Team (POORT) — a local, nonprofit fishermen's group dedicated to "fishing smarter, not harder" — has proposed a state marine reserve at Redfish Rocks, a 2.6-square-mile reef complex south of town. Their proposal is one of



Divers sample giant kelp off the California coast. Similar techniques were used with seaweeds in Southern Oregon. © Richard Herrmann

two recommended by the Governor in response to a public process for establishing a marine reserves network in Oregon. Marine reserves are areas of the sea off-limits to extractive activities.

The Nature Conservancy joined POORT and other partners to study undersea life at Redfish Rocks, starting with seaweeds and the animals that rely on them. Seaweeds are a primary food source and provide habitat for numerous fish, birds and mammals.

Last summer, scientists in scuba gear (with cameras in waterproof casings) jumped in at Redfish Rocks, shooting video and collecting samples of seaweeds.

They found more than 60 species, 12 of which had never been recorded in Oregon, and one that's possibly new to science.

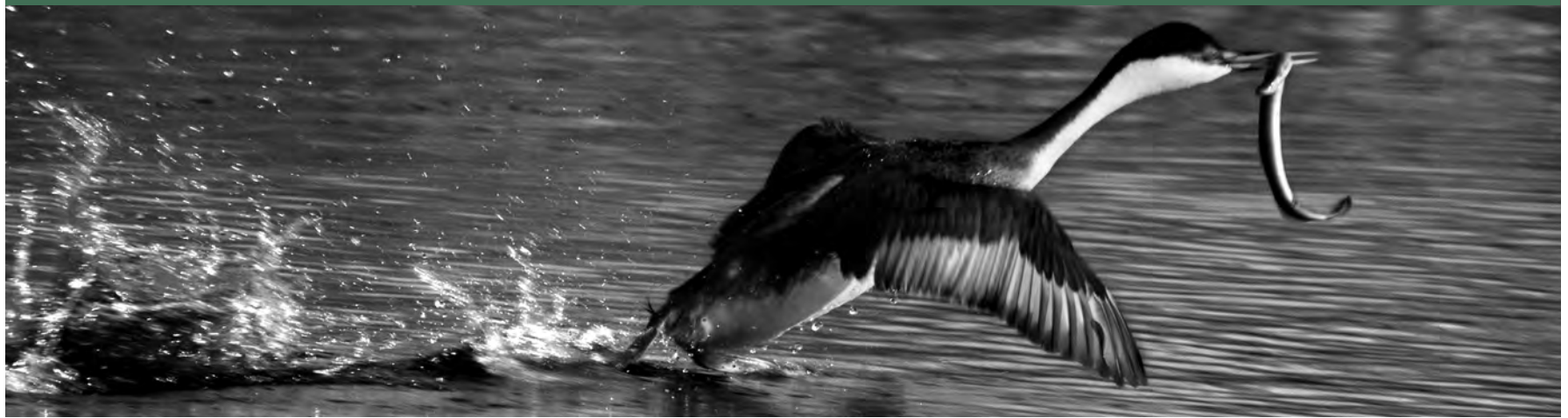
"The path toward healthy oceans requires using sound science and innovative approaches," said Vander Schaaf. "With partners like POORT, we're working to determine the most important places to protect in Oregon. I think we've got a great start at Redfish Rocks."

Watch video of the research dive and see a slide show of the spectacular Oregon coast on our Web site, nature.org/oregon. Explore the world's oceans via *Google Earth* at earth.google.com/ocean/.

Your state tax refund can help

Remember you can help protect Oregon's ecologically important lands and waters this season by donating some or all of your state tax refund to The Nature Conservancy. Just follow the steps on the Oregon Personal Income Tax Forms and inside the instruction booklet. Your refund can be a gift to future generations. Questions? Call us at 503 802-8100. Thank you!

It's your gift ... for you and for nature



Western grebe at Williamson River Delta Preserve, Oregon © Rick McEwan

By making a life-income gift with The Nature Conservancy, you can provide yourself and/or another beneficiary with dependable income for life. You may also benefit from significant tax savings. Best of all, your gift will help ensure our natural world will be protected for future generations. Benefits include:

Reliable Income Stream: Elect to receive a fixed income and, in some cases, an income that seeks to index inflation.

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Advance Conservation: Make a lasting difference for nature and people.

For more information, please contact Wes Milligan, director of planned giving, at 503 802-8100 or wmilligan@tnc.org — or fill out this coupon and mail it in the enclosed envelope. You can also learn more about planning your legacy on our Web site at giftplanning.nature.org/lp-welcome.php.

Please send more information on:

- Gifts that provide income
- Including The Nature Conservancy in my estate plan
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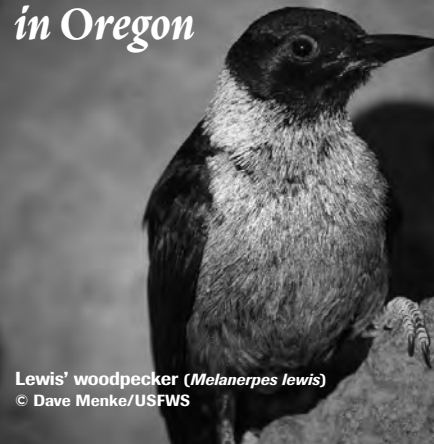


Protecting nature. Preserving life.™

The Nature Conservancy is a leading conservation organization working around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people.

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The Nature Conservancy in Oregon



Lewis' woodpecker (*Melanerpes lewis*)
© Dave Menke/USFWS

Member Households
22,918

Last Great Places
Society Members
66

Acres protected
501,265

Acres managed
140,660

Preserves and cooperatively
managed areas
46

Last Great Places Society

We extend our deep appreciation to members of Oregon's Last Great Places Society – and to others listed here who have contributed gifts of \$10,000 or more since December, 2007 – for maintaining The Nature Conservancy's capacity to preserve the diversity of life on Earth.

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* of The Oregon Community Foundation

Netarts Bay volunteers sow the seeds of hope

When native Olympia oysters once again flourish in Netarts Bay, they'll have several dedicated volunteers and partners to thank — and Mark and Brenda Wittwer are no exception. For the past several years, this longtime oyster harvesting couple has generously donated their professional expertise and time to planting, growing and monitoring these small creatures in the bay. Once restored, a healthy native oyster population will improve water quality by filtering the water and building shell reefs. Encouraging results in Netarts have inspired the Conservancy to expand the effort into Yaquina Bay.



Professional oyster grower and
Nature Conservancy volunteer
Mark Wittwer seeds native
oysters into Netarts Bay.
© Stephen Anderson/TNC

“Without Mark and Brenda, the Olympia oyster restoration project would never have been accomplished,” said Dick Vander Schaaf, coast and marine conservation director for the Conservancy in Oregon. “They’ve supplied incredible energy, have inspired community support, and have freely shared much-needed advice we’ve used every step of the way. They’ve earned all the thanks we can give.”

For more information about how you or your team can help protect Oregon's ecologically important lands and waters, please see our 2009 Volunteer Newsletter, inside.



Protecting nature. Preserving life.™

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