



Lower Columbia projects awarded \$999,000 grant

Wetland habitat projects along the lower Columbia River will benefit from an infusion of almost \$1 million in federal grant money, thanks to a partnership spearheaded by Ducks Unlimited and a Vancouver-based land trust.



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service awarded \$999,000 this spring to the Columbia Land

Trust for the third phase of a habitat conservation effort initiated by Pacific Coast Joint Venture partners in 1995. The grant was funded under the agency's North American Wetlands Conservation Act program, which awarded grants totaling almost \$1.7 million in 1995 and 1999 for the first two phases of the Lower Columbia initiative.

The new grant will help fund a package of projects assembled by Ducks Unlimited that includes land acquisition and habitat restoration partnerships on both sides of the lower Columbia River. The ten projects will protect more than 1,900 acres and restore or enhance more than 4,500 acres of habitat at sites extending from the Portland-Vancouver area down to the Columbia River estuary.

Partners in the projects include a diverse group of federal, state, and local agencies, conservation organizations, and private landowners.

The federal grant will be matched by more than \$6.1 million in spending and in-kind contributions from the partners. Partner contributions include \$2 million from the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service, and almost \$1.7 million from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Other major contributors include Clark County, Washington Department of Natural Resources, Metro, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,

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Wildlife finds a place among valley vineyards

by Jeannie Heltzel

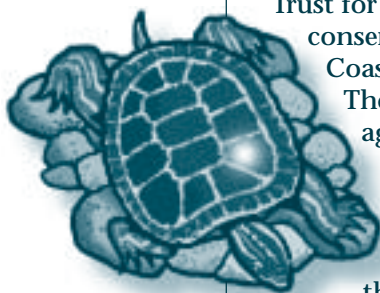
After four generations in the family, the Buchanan century farm in Benton County still has more than 100 acres of its original forested bottomlands, a habitat that has virtually disappeared from much of the Willamette Valley.

Now, with the help of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wetlands Reserve Program, the Buchanans are adding to that legacy, setting aside nearly 250 acres of habitat for thousands of migratory birds and other wildlife that take refuge in the forests and wetlands along Muddy and Beaver Creeks.

It's not the first conservation-oriented change on the family farm south of Corvallis. When Dave and Margy Buchanan took over in 1974, they planted the farm's first wine grapes. Tye Wine Cellars produced its first vintage in 1985.

Later, the Pacific Rivers Council contacted the Buchanans about joining its Salmon Safe program. Following the group's

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Snag Boat Bend heading toward refuge status

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is moving ahead with plans to add a key 341-acre property on the Willamette River in Linn County to its network of Willamette Valley wildlife refuges.

The proposal to add the Snag Boat Bend property to the nearby William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge drew strong support from conservation interests but sparked controversy in the local agricultural community.

The site, located on a big bend in the Willamette River south of Peoria, encompasses about 140 acres of wetlands, including floodplain forests, marshes, backwater sloughs, and wildlife food plots established by the previous owner. The wetlands attract thousands of ducks, geese and swans during the fall, winter, and spring. Riparian forests provide habitat for songbirds, a heron colony, and nesting hawks. The sloughs support western pond turtles and red-legged frogs, both considered sensitive species.

The Fish and Wildlife Service's regional director approved the Snag Boat Bend proposal in late April. An initial public review period early this year attracted little opposition, but a public hearing in March at the local grange drew 120 people, with most of the 25 speakers



Snag Boat Bend

Steve Caicco/USFWS

opposed to the proposal. Following the hearing, the Fish and Wildlife Service reopened the public comment period. Of the 98 new comments received, 91 supported the refuge proposal. Governor Kitzhaber and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife were among the supporters.

Snag Boat Bend has been a focal point for controversy since the mid-1990s, when the former owner offered to donate a portion of the property to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife if the state would prohibit waterfowl hunting on the area. Faced with vocal opposition from some hunters, the state Fish and Wildlife Commission declined the offer.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service expressed interest at that time, and the owner agreed that the property should become part of the Finley refuge. The Nature Conservancy purchased the site for \$920,000 in 1998, and has been holding the property pending completion of the federal agency's planning and review processes.

Contact: Jim Houk, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 26208 Finley Refuge Road, Corvallis OR 97333-9533; 541-757-7236.

Updates / Westside

Coquille River Estuary. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service completed its acquisition of a 407-acre property on the lower Coquille River near Bandon earlier this year. The former Philpott Ranch, now officially the Ni-les-tun Unit of Bandon Marsh National Wildlife Refuge, includes forested wetlands and more than 300 acres of diked pasturelands that could eventually be restored to tidal wetlands. Restoration efforts are expected to provide major benefits for wintering waterfowl, shorebirds, salmon, and the overall health of the estuary. The property also includes important archaeological sites with special significance for the Coquille Tribe.

The Archaeological Conservancy helped facilitate the transfer of the property to refuge status. Additional properties are being appraised for acquisition.

Crook Point. A prominent headland in Curry County became the second mainland unit of the Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge in early May when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service acquired 134 acres at Crook Point. The Nature Conservancy purchased the property in 1998 to block development on the headland, which supports 19 "special status" plant species, pristine beaches and extensive rocky intertidal habitats. The adjacent offshore rocks harbor large seabird colonies, includ-

ing Oregon's second largest breeding colony of Leach's storm petrels, estimated to number 87,000 birds. Members of Oregon's congressional delegation secured \$2.3 million from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund to pay for the purchase.

Tualatin River. Metro's Greenspaces program has purchased more than a mile of river frontage adjacent to the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge. The 91-acre property, which includes wetlands and a mature cedar grove, supports red-legged frogs – a sensitive species – and a variety of other wildlife. To date, Metro has acquired 430 acres on the Tualatin River with funding from a bond measure approved by voters in 1995.

Salmon research highlights habitat in tidal wetlands

Fish researchers on Oregon's south coast are coming up with dramatic new findings about the importance of tidal wetlands as habitats for juvenile salmon.

On-going studies at the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve on Coos Bay have documented extensive use of tidal marshes and off-channel rearing ponds by young coho salmon. Fish biologists have traditionally discounted the importance of estuarine habitats for coho, which are listed as "threatened" under the federal Endangered Species Act. That view was based on the assumption that young coho salmon paused only briefly in their migration from their natal streams to the ocean.

But trapping of juvenile fish coming out of South Slough's Winchester Creek revealed a more complex pattern of life histories within the coho population. A portion of the coho population moved down into tidal areas almost immediately after they hatched, with some spending up to a year in upper estuarine habitats. Other young fish remained in the upper watershed for 8-12 months before beginning their downstream migration. Those fish lingered in the upper estuary for periods ranging from a week to as much as six months.

"Juveniles fish that move into tidal areas early in their life grow almost twice as fast as fish that rear in the upper watershed."

Juvenile fish that move into tidal areas early in their life grow almost twice as fast as fish that rear in the upper watershed, according to researchers Steve Sadro of South Slough and Bruce Miller of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Their findings could provide one of the keys to improving salmon productivity, since scientists have already established a direct link between the size of out-migrating juvenile fish and their early ocean survival rates. Put simply, the bigger the fish is as it enters the ocean, the better chance it has of surviving to return at the end of its life-cycle and spawn a new generation of young salmon.

But after more than a century of diking, filling and development, tidal wetlands have been dramatically reduced in many of Oregon's estuaries. In effect, juvenile salmon have been cut off from much of what would historically have pro-

vided some of their most productive habitat.

Restoration of diked former pastures along South Slough in recent years has opened up about 50 acres of tidal marshes, a rich source of food for young salmon.

"The juveniles we trap in the marshes, their stomachs are just completely full," says Sadro, the South Slough research biologist. "They weigh substantially more than the same population we trap in tidal channels. It's directly attributable to their foraging in the marshes."

"Ten years ago, these areas weren't open to fish. Now, they're providing great habitat," Sadro said.

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\$999,000 grant (continued from page 1)

Ducks Unlimited, and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Oregon projects slated for funding include:

Smith and Bybee Lakes. Construct a new water control structure at the lakes' outlet to the Columbia Slough to improve 1,800 acres of wetlands in North Portland. The new structure will allow managers of Metro's wildlife area to manipulate lake levels to maximize habitat benefits for migratory waterfowl and resident wildlife, including painted turtles and pond turtles, both sensitive species. Smith and Bybee Lakes support the largest known population of the western pond turtle on the lower Columbia River and traditionally received heavy use by wintering waterfowl. A dam installed in the early 1980s eliminated seasonal fluctuations in water levels and dramatically reduced the diversity and productivity of the lakes' wetlands.

Burlington Bottoms. Install a new fish-friendly water control structure for 75 acres of wetlands along Multnomah Channel north of Portland.

Sauvie Island. Restore 40 acres of wetlands on the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's wildlife area and extend water delivery system to serve 40 acres of wetlands restored under an earlier project.

Deer Island. Enhance 350 acres of privately owned wetlands in the floodplain north of St. Helens.

Youngs Bay. Restore 100 acres of forested and tidal

wetlands along a tributary to the bay near Astoria.

On the Washington side of the river, projects include:

Shillapoo Wildlife Area. Restore 50 acres of wetlands on Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife lands in the Vancouver lowlands.

Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge. Enhance 240 acres of wetlands on the refuge near Ridgefield.

Woodland Bottoms. Purchase 279-acre Eagle Island and restore wetlands on the East Fork Lewis River.

Julia Butler Hansen Refuge for the Columbian White-tailed Deer. Improve habitat values on 2,000 acres on the national wildlife refuge near Cathlamet. Refuge managers will be able to manage water levels to control reed canary grass and promote reestablishment of native forest and marsh communities.

Grays Bay. Purchase 112 acres to compliment nearby acquisitions by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and The Nature Conservancy.

Chinook River. Purchase 900 acres at the river's mouth and restore tidal wetlands in one of the largest estuarine restoration efforts on the West Coast.

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Check Joint Venture website for projects, SE Oregon plan

Trying to get a feel for the scope of wetland habitat conservation efforts in Oregon? Recent updates to the Oregon Wetlands Joint Venture's website (<http://wetlands.dfw.state.or.us>) include capsule descriptions of more than 40 projects undertaken by Joint Venture partners around the state.

The project summaries include descriptions of wetland restoration and acquisition efforts in areas ranging from coastal estuaries to the high mountain valleys of eastern Oregon. To view a list of projects, click on the "Projects" button found on the Joint Venture's home page. Each



capsule description provides an overview of the project, major partners, habitat benefits, and a contact for further information.

Also newly available on the

website is the Oregon Wetlands Joint Venture's draft plan to help guide its partners' future conservation efforts in southeastern Oregon's Lake and Harney counties. The draft plan provides an overview of habitat conservation needs and opportunities in an area known as the "Oregon Closed Basin" because of its isolation from any river systems that drain to the Pacific Ocean.

The draft plan for the Closed Basin can be accessed through the "Oregon Wetlands Plan" button

on the Joint Venture's home page. Also available are the Joint Venture's existing plans for the Oregon coast and lower Columbia River, which were completed in 1994.

Wildlife finds a place among valley vineyards (continued from page 1)

suggestions, the family stopped using herbicides on their vineyard and hand-sewed a low-growing grass between the vines to reduce soil erosion and protect the native cutthroat trout in Beaver Creek, just downslope from the vineyard.

"As a fisheries biologist and farmer this made sense to me," says Dave Buchanan, who recently retired after 30 years studying Oregon's native trout for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. "Spawning areas can be ruined and small salmon and trout can choke if sediment from the hillsides gets into the creeks."

Now the Buchanans are restoring wetlands along the two creeks that run along the borders of the farm.

Two years ago, they enrolled a portion of the 450-acre farm in the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Wetlands Reserve Program. The Wetlands Reserve Program reimburses the Buchanans for 75 percent of the restoration costs. In exchange for a conservation easement protecting the wetlands for 30 years, they also receive a payment equal to 75 percent of the agricultural land value.

"It's worked really well with what we wanted to do with the farm. The best part has been seeing all of the changes on the land in the past two years," says Dave Buchanan.

The Buchanans kept their filbert orchards and wine grapes, but took 115 acres of grass seed out of production. Another 130 acres of forested bottomlands along the creeks – never farmed – anchor the entire restoration project. "My great-grandfather left those the way he found them, and it has made restoring the rest of the property much easier," says Dave Buchanan.

The first spring that the Buchanans didn't plant ryegrass in the low-lying areas along the creeks, they were curious to see how Mother Nature would respond.

"We were lucky to have a wet spring that first year – it flooded out almost all of the ryegrass and brought back the native plants," says Buchanan. With the help of his partners, Buchanan only had to spot-spray the fields to remove the remaining ryegrass.

Native wetland plants like water plantain and sloughgrass emerged from the long-dormant seed bank in fields that had been plowed for more than 50 years.

Now small flags mark off test plots where Buchanan

has planted tufted hairgrass, another native wetland plant. "I'll see how these plots respond, and we'll decide what other plantings we need to do then."

Along Beaver and Muddy Creeks, forested riparian areas are being expanded. "We want at least 50 feet of forest along the creek – right now it's only about 10 feet wide, so I've got some work to do," Buchanan says with a smile.

It's obvious he enjoys the work, and Buchanan points out with pride the thriving black cottonwood and Oregon ash seedlings he planted along the edges of the fields. He hand-wrapped the stems with foil to protect them from gnawing voles.

For the most part, restoration is taking care of itself – no bulldozers, permanent impoundments, or expensive water pumps are needed. The only exception is correcting an old mistake – Beaver Creek was straightened years ago when the road was constructed. With the help of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, an old meander on the Buchanan's property will be re-excavated and restored.

It's an evolving project. "Working with the NRCS has been a really positive experience. Gary Briggs (of the NRCS) has been really flexible

with us. Part of the plan allows us to design the restoration work as we go. We need to see how these areas respond to not being farmed, and then we'll know what we need to do next," says Buchanan.

Visitors to Tye Wine Cellars can walk along a trail that winds through ash forests and along a beaver pond. In winter the ash swales flood and red-legged frogs lay their eggs in the cool waters. This spring a pair of wood ducks is nesting in the forest.

But the biologist in Buchanan can't resist the temptation to restore more native habitat: "Next I'd like to try to establish some Kincaid's lupine in the wet prairie areas and support some Fender's Blue butterflies," an endangered species that depends on lupine and native valley wet prairie, a rare habitat.

Contact: Dave Buchanan, 26335 Greenberry Road, Corvallis, OR 97333; (541) 753-8754. Gary Briggs, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Tangent Field Office, Tangent, OR; (541) 967-5925.



Buchanans wetlands

Jeannie Heltze

Spring migration in the Klamath Basin

Waterfowl surveys / March 27-28, 2000

Observer: Jim Hainline, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Klamath Basin survey totals

• Geese	474,650
• Ducks	719,010
Total Waterfowl	1,282,500

Oregon highlights

Most...

• tundra swans	Klamath Marsh NWR	310
• snow/Ross geese	Klamath Wildlife Area	32,100
• white-front geese	Klamath Wildlife Area	24,000
• mallard	Swan Lake	1,500
• gadwall	Swan Lake	3,500
• wigeon	Swan Lake	14,000
• green-wing teal	Wood River Wetland	20,000
• shoveler	Swan Lake	15,300
• pintail	Klamath Marsh NWR	44,100
• ringneck	Swan Lake	8,000
• bufflehead	Agency Lake Ranch	5,700
• ruddy duck	Upper Klamath/Agency lakes	22,000
• sandhill cranes	Sycan Marsh	192

Source: Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuges website (www.klamathnwr.org). See "Recent sightings and surveys" for complete results.

Updates / Eastside

Ladd Marsh. Ducks Unlimited and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife have completed the latest in an on-going series of wetland restoration projects on the state wildlife area near LaGrande. The project converted about 160 acres of cropland back to seasonal and semi-permanent wetlands and enhanced approximately 40 acres of existing wetlands. The Natural Resources Conservation Service's Wetlands Reserve Program and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife program helped fund the restoration work. Wildlife area managers hope to begin construction this summer on the 500-acre Tule Lake restoration project, which includes lands pur-

chased by The Nature Conservancy. **Wanaket Wildlife Area.** The Oregon Duck Hunters Association has committed \$18,000 to help pay for improvements to the water delivery system and removal of non-native trees on the Umatilla Tribe's wildlife area east of Umatilla. Water system improvements will allow tribal managers to enhance several additional wetlands in the McNary Potholes portion of the wildlife area. Biologists hope to reestablish native willows and cottonwoods in more than 20 acres of riparian habitats invaded by Russian olive trees.

Logan Valley. The Burns Paiute Tribe is the new owner of a 1,760-acre property in southern Grant County with extensive wet meadows

and riparian habitats that support some of the Blue Mountains' most sensitive fish and wildlife species.

The Bonneville Power Administration's wildlife mitigation program funded the purchase from The Nature Conservancy, which acquired the property for transfer to the tribe. Logan Valley provides important habitat for upland sandpipers and sandhill cranes, as well antelope, mule deer, and Rocky Mountain elk. Streams on the property support bull trout and redband trout. The acquisition is the Burns Paiute Tribe's first since the tribe's reservation was re-established in 1972. The tribe plans to dedicate the property in June.

Nature Conservancy expands Klamath Basin preserve

The Nature Conservancy has dramatically expanded the scope of its ambitious project to restore Upper Klamath Lake's vast historic marshes at the mouth of the Williamson River.

The conservancy added more than 3,700 acres to its holdings earlier this year and now owns all of the diked lands along both sides of the lower six miles of the Williamson River. Current plans are to continue farming on the south side of the river for the next three years pending development of wetland restoration plans for about 2,700 acres of the new additions. The remainder of the property will be sold for continued agricultural use.

Wetland restoration work is already well under way on 3,600 acres on the north side of the river, where The Nature Conservancy purchased the former Tulana Farms property in 1996 with the help of a half-dozen major partners.

The conservancy's recent \$4.8 million purchase of the farmlands along the south side of the river delta consolidated the lower Williamson River into a single ownership and opened the door to a

comprehensive restoration strategy. Until now, The Nature Conservancy and its partners have been working with a puzzle that came with only half of its pieces.

"Restoring an active river delta is an extraordinary challenge," says Mark Stern, The Nature Conservancy's Klamath Basin project manager. "You really need both sides of the river to make it work."

Located 20 miles north of Klamath Falls, the Williamson River delta was once a network of marshes that supported a rich array of fish and wildlife until farmers channelized the Williamson River and drained the delta lands for agriculture in the 1950s. The river is now contained by large levees throughout its six-mile course across the delta to Upper Klamath Lake.

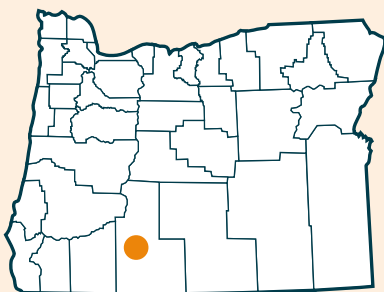
Although the seasonally flooded farmlands continued to draw large numbers of migratory waterfowl, the conversion to agriculture eliminated critical marsh habitat for two species of fish that were a staple of the Klamath Indian Tribe's traditional culture. The shortnose sucker and Lost River sucker are now both on

the federal endangered species list. The loss of the marshes also removed an important natural filtering system for the river's nutrient-rich flows, contributing to serious water quality problems in Upper Klamath Lake.

Initial restoration work undertaken by the The Nature Conservancy has restored seasonally flooded marshes within the dikes on a large portion of the northern part of the Williamson River delta. Partners include the Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Klamath Tribes, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, PacifiCorp, Cell Tech International, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

The conservancy hopes to open up the river levee to reconnect a small portion of the floodplain on the north side of the Williamson River later this summer. If the initial work looks promising, a two-mile long oxbow cut off by the levee on the south side of the river could be reopened in the future.

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Williamson River delta

Stephen Anderson/TNC

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About Oregon Wetlands Joint Venture

Oregon Wetlands Joint Venture is a coalition of private conservation, waterfowl, fisheries and agriculture organizations working with government agencies to protect and restore important wetland habitat.

The Joint Venture helps put together partnerships for a variety of wetland-related projects, including habitat restoration and enhancement on private and public lands, acquisition of key areas for permanent protection, and development of educational and interpretive programs.

Oregon Wetlands Joint Venture coordinates state-level activities for two regional partnerships under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, an international effort to conserve wetland habitat for waterfowl and other fish and wildlife. The ***Pacific Coast Joint Venture***, created in 1991, includes all of western Oregon, as well as coastal British Columbia, Washington and northern California. The ***Intermountain West Joint Venture***, started in 1995, covers eastern Oregon and portions of nine other western states.

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