



Private land project creates one of Willamette Valley's premiere wetlands

The July 1998 issue of Oregon Wetlands featured a story on a promising wetland restoration project on private lands near Baskett Slough west of Salem. Three years later, we decided to revisit the project and see how things were turning out. — Editor

Five years ago, Mark Knaupp was taking the last crop of grass seed off the wet bottomlands he owns along Mud Slough in Polk County. He had just enrolled 320 acres in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wetlands Reserve Program. Skeptics said it would

be impossible to restore a native plant community after decades of intensive agricultural use.

In June of this year, Knaupp took a small group out for an informal five-year review that left his visitors marveling at what may be the most successful wetland

restoration project in the Willamette Valley.

Blackneck stilts and Wilson's phalaropes, both uncommon breeding species in the valley, fly back and forth as Knaupp ticks off the other wildlife that has found a home on his property 10 miles west of Salem:

- Up to 10,000 Canada geese and thousands of ducks during the winter.
- Peak concentrations of dunlin and other shorebirds that number in the tens of thousands.
- Up to 10 species of ducks nesting and rearing their young in the summer.
- A variety of waterbirds and songbirds rarely

seen in the Willamette Valley during the breeding season, including yellow-headed blackbirds, pie-billed grebes, and white-faced ibis.

Four years after most of the wetland restoration work was completed, the former fescue fields now support a mix of shallow seasonal marshes and wet prairies. Broad expanses of tufted hairgrass dominate the meadows, which also support a large population of Nelson's checkermallow, a showy purple flowered plant listed as "threatened"

under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Unlike virtually every other wetland in the Willamette Valley, Knaupp's lands are almost free of reed canarygrass and other invasive non-native plant species. It's partly a result of geography – Knaupp's wetlands are near the top of a small drainage with no major up-stream sources of non-native seeds. But it's also the result of an intensive management strategy that has cleared the way for a

natural wetland to develop on its own.

The combination of dense clay soils and carefully engineered low dikes and water control structures that allow water levels to be drawn down gradually in the spring and early summer have created a diverse mosaic of native wetland plant communities.



Mud Slough Wetlands

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Oregon Wetlands Joint Venture
 1637 Laurel Street
 Lake Oswego OR 97034
 503 / 697-3889
 503 / 697-3268 fax
 Website:
wetlands.dfw.state.or.us

Executive Director
Bruce Taylor
Btaylorwet@aol.com

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Congress to boost funding for wetland conservation

Congressional budget writers are recommending a record level of funding this coming year for the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA), a federal grant program that funds major wetland habitat projects nationwide.

Three Oregon projects – two in the Willamette Valley, and one on the Lower Columbia River – are currently under consideration for NAWCA funding.

The House approved \$45 million for the program for fiscal year 2002, which begins October 1, more than triple President Bush's request. The Senate recommended \$42 million. Final numbers will be negotiated in a conference committee.

The House and Senate appropriations committees both also recommended major increases in funding for the 15 regional joint ventures. The House committee report noted that "This continues to be one of the greatest successes of the (Fish and Wildlife) Service."

Two on-going federal land acquisition projects – additions to the Oregon Coastal Refuges and the West Eugene Wetlands Project – are also under consideration for funding.

The House included \$2.1 million for additions to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's complex of national wildlife refuges on the Oregon Coast. The Bureau of Land Management's West Eugene Wetlands project was

slated for \$2.5 million in the Senate. The House recommended \$1.5 million.

In addition, the U.S. Forest Service's Pacific Northwest Streams program, which focuses on purchase of lands with important fish habitat, would receive \$6.5 million under the Senate version and \$5 million in the House proposal.

Meanwhile, funding for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wetlands Reserve Program remained unresolved. President Bush did not include any funding in his budget, but the Senate added money for the program to an emergency bill in July. Advocates were pressing to keep the program alive until Congress adopts a new Farm Bill next year.

New Farm Bill to reshape ag conservation programs

Congress is taking the first steps toward overhauling the federal government's agricultural conservation programs, setting the stage for legislative action that could have far-reaching impacts on the nation's wetlands and other wildlife habitats.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wetlands Reserve Program, by far the nation's largest wetland conservation program, is bumping up against enrollment limits established by the 1996 Farm Bill.

Conservation groups are pushing for expansion of the Wetlands Reserve Program, which is administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and other agricultural conservation programs under the new Farm Bill.

The House Agriculture Committee released an outline of its plans for the new Farm Bill in July, but final congressional action may not occur until 2002.

The House committee's proposal would extend the Wetlands Reserve Program through 2011 and allow enrollment of an additional 100,000 acres per year at a cost of \$1.5 billion over 10 years. A coalition of conservation organizations that includes Ducks Unlimited, The



More than 400,000 acres in northeastern Oregon are enrolled in USDA's Conservation Reserve Program.

Nature Conservancy and more than 35 other groups is urging enrollment of 250,000 acres per year.

The conservation coalition is also calling for expansion of the Conservation Reserve Program and the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, and creation of a new Grasslands Reserve Program. Similar to the Wetlands Reserve Program, the new program would pay farmers for permanent or 30-year easements designed to protect native prairies and other grasslands, which are under heavy pressure

for conversion to cultivated crops in many areas.

Oregon's Sen. Gordon Smith and Sen. Tom Harkin of Iowa have also introduced legislation establishing a new system of farm support funding based on environmental benefits. Under the proposed Conservation Security Act, farmers would be eligible for varying levels of federal assistance depending on the conservation practices they agree to adopt.

For more information about the 2002 Farm Bill, check out the Farm Bill Network's website at <http://fb-net.org/>. The coalition maintains an email list-serve that provides regular updates.

Columbia Land Trust to purchase Lord Island

An undeveloped 210-acre island in the Columbia River near Longview with extensive riparian and wetland habitats will soon gain permanent protection under the ownership of the Columbia Land Trust.

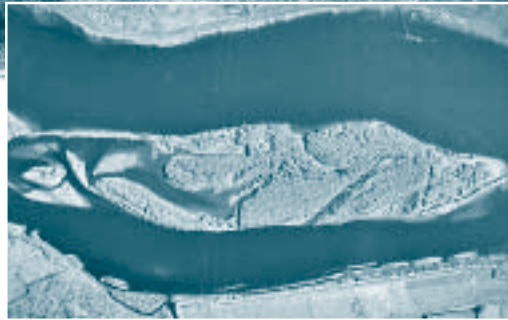
The Vancouver-based land trust expects to complete its \$165,000 purchase of Lord Island later this summer. The island, which supports mature cottonwood forests and a diverse array of wetlands, provides important habitat for a variety of fish and wildlife.

The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (\$100,000) and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (\$65,000) provided funding for the purchase. Weyerhaeuser Real Estate Co. is selling the property at a 25 percent discount below its market value.

Surrounded by more than 200 acres of shallow water with high value for migrating and rearing salmonids, the island is used by large numbers of waterfowl and other migratory birds. Lord Island is also a candidate site for reintroduction of the endangered Columbian white-tailed deer.



Columbia Land Trust



Backwater slough on Lord Island, an island in the lower Columbia River (inset).

Contact: Ian Sinks, Columbia Land Trust, 1351 Officers' Row, Vancouver WA 98661; 360-696-0131; isinks@columbialandtrust.org.

Oregon projects compete for NAWCA funding

One Oregon project is slated to receive more than \$900,000 and two other million-dollar proposals are under consideration for funding from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant program.

The River Network's \$901,000 request for a package of wetland acquisition and restoration projects in the mid-Willamette Valley is scheduled for final approval by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission in December. Most of the grant funds will be used to purchase lands and easements and restore

floodplain habitats on the Willamette River near Luckiamute Landing and along Muddy Creek and Mary's River near Corvallis.

A \$1 million proposal submitted by the City of Eugene scored one point less than the River Network project and missed out on the first round of funding recommendations by the North American Wetlands Conservation Council. The city's proposal, involving land acquisitions in the Coyote Creek area west of Eugene near Fern Ridge Reservoir, could be funded in the second round later this year.

Ducks Unlimited also submitted a request in July for \$997,000 for a package of projects on the lower Columbia River. If approved, it would be the fourth in a series of NAWCA grants Ducks Unlimited has secured for acquisition and restoration of habitats along the Columbia between Portland and the estuary. Most of the new grant money would be used for habitat acquisition and restoration work around Grays Bay (Washington), Julia Butler Hansen National Wildlife Refuge, Sauvie Island, Deer Island, and the Scappoose Lowlands.

Timber company donates easements to protect rare habitats

Willamette Industries has given The Nature Conservancy permanent conservation easements on more than 1,740 acres of sensitive habitats, including more than 250 acres of wetlands in northwest Oregon.



Linda M. Hardie / The Nature Conservancy

Other properties in the package include native oak and grassland habitats that support some of the Willamette Valley's most vulnerable species and a coastal mountain peak that is home to several rare plant species.

The donations include 469 acres in and around Gearhart Bog near Seaside, and 660 acres encompassing a series of rare high-elevation wetlands

Elegant Fawn Lily

at Fanno Meadows near the crest of the Coast Range west of Salem. Both properties include wetland types typically found only in British Columbia and Alaska.

Gearhart Bog, the largest remaining coastal wetland of its kind in Oregon, contains several rare wetland types,

including sphagnum bogs, fens, and the southernmost example of a forested swamp type dominated by pine, hemlock and cedar.

Fanno Meadows, perched on a ridge between the headwaters of the Luckiamute and Siletz rivers, supports several rare wetland plants. One species, the elegant fawn lily, is found at only four other sites worldwide.

The conservation easements permanently protect the wetlands and a forested buffer, and limit the levels and timing of timber harvest within the watershed above the two wetlands.

Willamette Industries valued its donations to The Nature Conservancy at \$1.5 million. Other conservation easements included in the package cover oak habitats and native prairies near Philomath and at two sites in the Coburg Hills north of Eugene, and the basalt outcrop of Onion Peak in the northern Coast Range.

The Coburg Ridge property supports one of only four large populations of the Fender's blue butterfly, along with its host plant, the Kincaid's lupine. Both species are on the federal endangered species list, with the butterfly listed as "endangered" and the lupine as "threatened."

Contact: Catherine Macdonald, The Nature Conservancy, 821 SE 14th Street, Portland OR 97214; 503-230-1221; cmacdonald@tnc.org

Legislature OK's new incentives for habitat conservation

Gov. John Kitzhaber has signed legislation expanding tax breaks for private landowners who dedicate their property to wildlife habitat conservation.

House Bill 3564, sponsored by Defenders of Wildlife, included a package of measures to strengthen incentives for voluntary conservation efforts by private landowners. The legislation attracted support from a diverse group of interests and won approval by wide margins in both the House and Senate.

"It establishes conservation as a legitimate land use, on the same footing as farming and forestry," said Sara Vickerman, director of Defenders of Wildlife's West Coast Office in Lake Oswego. "It also expands existing incentives for habitat conservation, eliminates some of the biggest disincentives, and sets the stage for a

more comprehensive incentives strategy in the future."

Key provisions of HB 3564:

- Make forest lands eligible for reduced property taxes under the state's Wildlife Habitat Conservation and Management Plan program. Lands managed under habitat plans approved by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife can get the same favorable tax treatment as lands devoted to farming and timber production.
- Allow forest landowners to sell or donate conservation easements to local land trusts or agencies without incurring property tax penalties.
- Establish a new framework for landowner assistance through the Oregon Watershed Enhance-

ment Board, including a flexible incentives fund that could target public and private funding to strategic investments in habitat conservation on private lands.

- Direct the state Departments of Forestry and Agriculture to report back to the next Legislature with recommendations for improvements to existing incentive programs, including the option of stewardship agreements that provide regulatory certainty to private landowners willing to manage to higher environmental standards.

For more information, see http://www.biodiversitypartners.org/Leg/conservation_legislation.htm or contact Sara Vickerman, Defenders of Wildlife, 1637 Laurel Street, Lake Oswego OR 97034; 503-697-3222; svickerman@defenders.org

New survey finds more sandhill cranes breeding in Oregon

The first comprehensive Oregon survey of sandhill cranes in almost 15 years found 1,151 pairs – an increase of more than 20 percent – at breeding sites ranging from high Cascade meadows to the deserts of southeastern Oregon.

Listed as a “sensitive” species by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the greater sandhill crane is a favorite of many birdwatchers and biologists alike.

An extensive field survey during the 1999 and 2000 breeding seasons found 204 more crane pairs than the last statewide survey in 1986. Wildlife biologists Gary Ivey and Caroline Herziger conducted the survey for ODFW.

Most of the cranes are found in central and southeastern Oregon, with Harney (442 pairs), Lake (405 pairs) and Klamath (172 pairs) counties leading the list. Almost two-thirds of the crane pairs (62 percent) were found on private lands.

Ivey and Herziger said the increase in reported crane numbers since 1986 may be attributable in part to more extensive survey efforts, but the data also suggest that the

overall population is increasing. Comparison of numbers at 19 sites found a 10 percent reduction between the 1970s and 1986 and a 20 percent increase between 1986 and the 1999-2000 surveys.

“Many of the sites with the greatest increases,” Ivey and Herziger reported, “were those where habitat is managed for wildlife (including water and vegetation manipulation) with some emphasis on cranes,” such as Malheur and Klamath Marsh national wildlife refuges and the state’s Summer Lake and Ladd Marsh wildlife areas. “Also, a predator control program to improve crane productivity at Malheur NWR contributed to a 35 percent increase in the number of pairs at this site.”

But the biologists warned that habitat loss and changes in agricultural practices and water use could still pose a threat to the sandhill crane population in the future. Low survival rates of young produced at the Malheur refuge remain cause for concern, according to Ivey and Herziger, and habitat losses continue in wintering areas in California.



Sandhill cranes near Diamond (Harney County)

Greater Sandhill Crane (*grus canadensis tabida*)

Description: Large (approaching four feet tall, with a wingspan of 90 inches), long-legged wading bird with a distinctive bald red crown and gray plumage. Flies with neck out-stretched. Significantly larger than the more abundant lesser sandhill crane subspecies that nests further north.

Range: Some sandhill cranes breed in eastern Siberia, but most are in North America, from Alaska and northern Canada south to Oregon and Great Lakes region. The subspecies that nests in Oregon, the greater sandhill crane, is part of a population that winters in California’s Central Valley.

Status: On Oregon’s sensitive species list since 1989, the greater sandhill crane is classified as “vulnerable” (“listing as threatened or endangered is not believed to be imminent and can be avoided... through adequate protective measures”).

Habitat: Nests in marshes, wet meadows, grasslands, and pastures, including irrigated hay meadows.

Reproduction: Arrives on breeding grounds about March; young fledge by August. The young remain with parents through the winter.

Source: *Atlas of Oregon Wildlife (1997)* by Blair Csuti et al. Oregon State University Press.

Top 10 Sandhill Crane sites

Oregon sites with greatest number of sandhill crane pairs

Blitzen Valley	192
Sycan Marsh	109
Silvies River Floodplain	78
Klamath Marsh	60
Warner Valley	63
Double O (Malheur NWR)	46
Upper Chewaucan	45
Summer Lake	35
Lower Chewaucan	29
Goose Lake	24

Source: *Distribution of Greater Sandhill Crane Pairs in Oregon, 1999-2000*, by Gary L. Ivey and Caroline P. Herziger. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (2000).

Farmer now grows a different crop – wetlands and wildlife (continued from page 1)



Mark Knaupp

“No maintenance? There’s no such animal,” says Knaupp, a commercial grass seed grower for more than 25 years who also has a degree in wildlife biology. “But this is a low-maintenance wetland.”

Knaupp, who still farms more than 750 acres of his 1,200-acre property, figures he and his brother spend about two weeks a year working on the wetlands.

“The key to controlling invasive non-native plants is to figure out which ones you’re going to have zero

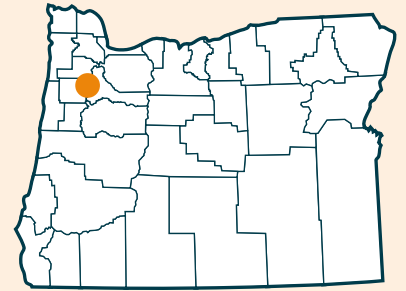
tolerance for,” says Knaupp. He carries bright orange flags with him when he walks through the wetlands and marks the location of any reed canarygrass he spots for a quick shot of Rodeo herbicide. “If you control what you don’t want, the things you do want will pretty much take care of themselves.” “I’m not a purist,” he says. “I’m managing for wildlife as well as a native plant community. I want to have good waterfowl hunting, and that’s the motivation to maintain a high quality wetland.”

Knaupp was so pleased with the results of his initial wetland restoration efforts that he put a second piece of his property into the Wetlands Reserve Program last year.

“I enjoy wetlands,” says Knaupp, who operates a duck club on his property and has also begun developing a 57-acre wetland mitigation bank. “I’m just looking for ways to

make it pay. I’m just growing a different crop on my ground – wetland plant species and wildlife instead of tall fescue.”

Mud Slough Wetlands



Location: Two miles northeast of Rickreall in Polk County.

Owner: Private

Acres restored: 400 acres

Partners: Mark and Debbie Knaupp (landowners); USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (Wetlands Reserve Program); Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ducks Unlimited.

Wood River returned to historic channel

Klamath County’s Wood River has returned to its historic channel through the deepwater marshes at the upper end of Agency Lake.

The final phase of the 2.5-mile river restoration project eliminated a bypass carved out decades ago, redirecting flows back into a 3,300-foot long channel through the marsh at the river’s outlet on the lake. The finishing touches are planned for August and September.

The river channel restoration is part of the Bureau of Land Management’s Wood River Wetland Project. Oregon Trout was the lead partner, providing design work and construction oversight. Other partners in the project include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Klamath Tribes.

Biologists say the project should improve water quality and enhance habitat for two endangered fish species, the Lost River sucker and short-nose sucker, and the Wood River’s trophy trout.



Klamath refuge wetlands face uncertain future

This year's cutback in water supplies to the Klamath Basin's drought-stricken wildlife refuges could become a fact of life in the future.

In years to come, more than 70 percent of the Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge's wetlands may be left dry during the peak of fall waterbird migration, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

An analysis prepared by refuge staff earlier this year estimated potential impacts of the current priorities for delivery of water from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's

Klamath Irrigation Project. In 1995, Reclamation changed its historic "irrigation first" priority system with a new allocation that puts needs of endangered species first, followed by tribal trust responsibilities, irrigation, and national wildlife refuges.

Under normal conditions, the Lower Klamath refuge supports the largest fall population of staging waterfowl in the Pacific Flyway. In recent years, a total of 3 to 4 million birds have passed through the refuge during the fall migration, an estimated 30-40 percent of the

flyway's total waterfowl population.

Interior Secretary Gail Norton ordered release of an additional 70,000 acre-feet of water to Klamath Project irrigators in July, but none of the additional flows are expected to reach the Lower Klamath refuge, where most wetlands had already gone dry.

Refuge officials began developing new wells earlier this year to replace some of the water held back by the Bureau of Reclamation to address requirements for endangered fish populations that include coho salmon in the Klamath River and two species of suckers that depend on habitats in Upper Klamath Lake.

But even when fully developed, the wells are expected to provide only enough water to flood 25 percent of Lower Klamath's marshes for fall migration.

For more information, see the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's environmental assessment at <http://www.klamathnwr.org/mgmt.html>.



Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge

Klamath Basin photos on CD

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has released a double CD-ROM collection of 175 public domain images that depict the natural resources and work of the Interior Department agency throughout the Klamath basin. Drawing heavily on the work of noted outdoor photographer Tupper Ansel Blake (*Balancing Water: Restoring the Klamath Basin*), the CD presents vivid wildlife and natural history images in a variety of resolution sizes that are ideal source material for newsletter and magazine editors. Single copies of the Klamath CD collection are available from the Image Library, National Conservation Training Center, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Route 1, Box 166, Shepherdstown, West Virginia 25443; e-mail: elizabeth_jackson@fws.gov



Tundra swans

Dave Menke / USFWS

Oregon Wetlands Joint Venture
1637 Laurel Street
Lake Oswego OR 97034



Visit our website at: wetlands.dfw.state.or.us

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About the Oregon Wetlands Joint Venture

The Oregon Wetlands Joint Venture is a coalition of private 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.

The 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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Executive Director

Bruce Taylor

Oregon Wetlands Joint Venture
1637 Laurel Street
Lake Oswego OR 97034
503 / 697-3889
503 / 697-3268 fax