



WESTERN RIVERS CONSERVANCY

July 16, 2020

John Pynch
The Flyfisher Foundation
2748 SE Market Street
Portland, OR 97214

Dear John,

Western Rivers Conservancy is grateful for The Flyfisher Foundation's \$5,000 grant we received for the Williamson River Project. With your support, we successfully conserved the 2,200-acre Timmerman Ranch along the Williamson River, conveyed it to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and it is now part of the expanded Klamath Marsh National Wildlife Refuge. We are pleased to provide this final report.

Williamson River Project

Legendary for its trophy native trout, Oregon's Williamson River is on many flyfisher's lifetime list. The Williamson is one of the finest rivers to fish for big native rainbows in the US and has earned a healthy respect among fishermen around the world. It rises from a large spring on the north side of Fuego Mountain, in the Fremont-Winema National Forest, and sweeps a great arc through the Cascade Mountains before entering the 40,000-acre Klamath Marsh National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Located 15 miles east of Crater Lake, the National Wildlife Refuge is one of Oregon's natural treasures.

Support from The Flyfisher Foundation helped WRC seize the opportunity to expand the Klamath Marsh National Wildlife Refuge. The centerpiece of the Klamath Marsh NWR is the Williamson River, legendary for its large, native redband rainbow trout, which thrive on the river's exceptionally high density of bottom-dwelling insects. In late spring and early summer, a prominent black drake mayfly hatch draws anglers from across the West to catch these trophy fish, which often exceed 20 inches and can sometimes reach over 30 inches. The lower Williamson and its marshes are also home to the federally endangered Lost River sucker, the federally endangered shortnose sucker, the state-sensitive Miller Lake lamprey, as well as non-native brown and brook trout.

Project Accomplishments

In the heart of this diverse and important landscape, WRC permanently protected the 2,200-acre Timmerman Ranch located on the northeastern edge of the National Wildlife Refuge. Three miles of the Williamson River meanders through the property, a reach known not only for its trout, but also excellent habitat for waterfowl, and habitat for threatened Oregon spotted frog.

WRC purchased the ranch in November 2019. The Flyfisher Foundation's grant provided critical funding to help WRC remove old structures and complete environmental remediation on the century-old cattle ranch to ensure ecosystem health. We are pleased to report that in April 2020, WRC conveyed the land and its senior water rights to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for inclusion in the adjacent Klamath Marsh National Wildlife Refuge. WRC secured funding from the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund to make the conveyance possible.

The project conserved 2,200 acres of prime wetland habitat for waterfowl, raptors, songbirds and shorebirds on the Pacific Flyway, as well as three miles of the Williamson River's exceptional native trout habitat. At the same time, this effort ensured 1,500 acres of very senior water rights would be used to improve water quality and quantity across the Upper Klamath ecosystem.

The project has increased the size of the 40,000-acre refuge by approximately five percent. Now that we've conveyed the ranch to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the agency can begin restoring the stretch of the Williamson that runs through the property, sending more and better water into the marsh. This will help heal the Klamath system from the top down, at the crucial moment that dams are poised to come out on the lower river.



Support from The Flyfisher Foundation helped WRC achieve the following outcomes.

- Expanded the Klamath Marsh National Wildlife Refuge with vital wetlands and water sources.
- Protected three miles of the upper Williamson River, a haven for native trout and imperiled wildlife.
- Conserved 2,200 acres of prime habitat on the Pacific Flyway for waterfowl, raptors, songbirds and shorebirds.
- Returned critical water rights to the Williamson River and Klamath Marsh, improving the quantity and quality of water across the Upper Klamath River ecosystem.
- Created new public recreational access for fishing, waterfowl hunting, wildlife viewing, paddling, hiking and educational programs.

Conclusion

WRC was honored to be selected as the recipient of the 2020 Keith Hanson Memorial Conservation Paddle Raise. Like many, we were disappointed the annual Flyfisher Foundation auction was canceled, and we are especially grateful to receive the \$5,000 grant for this project. Your contribution enabled WRC to preserve and enhance one of Oregon's natural treasures, the Klamath Marsh, while simultaneously boosting the greater Klamath ecosystem as a globally important stronghold for biodiversity. Please let us know if you have any questions. Thank you.

Sincerely,


Sue Doroff
President