

Restoring a Free-Flowing River Along the Oregon Trail



Portland General Electric

BLM Awards Western Rivers Conservancy, Portland General Electric for work on the Sandy River

Sandy Partners Celebrate 40th Anniversary of the Land and Water Conservation Fund

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(SANDY, Oregon) – Five years of work that will create a nearly 5,000-acre conservation corridor in the Sandy River basin was honored by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) today. BLM National Director Kathleen Clarke was out on the Sandy River to present the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Four Cs award to Western Rivers Conservancy and Portland General Electric (PGE) for their joint effort to remove dams and protect habitat along the Sandy for the benefit of salmon, wildlife and people.

The BLM Four Cs Award recognizes PGE and Western Rivers Conservancy for exemplifying the Department of the Interior’s Four Cs philosophy of “consultation, cooperation and communication, all in the service of conservation.”

“This has been an extraordinarily positive and dynamic partnership and I am proud to give this award to the Western Rivers Conservancy and Portland General Electric for all of their fine work,” Clarke said. “This partnership guarantees that Oregonians will be able to continue to enjoy the national treasure that is the Sandy River.”

Western Rivers Conservancy is assembling the land that will comprise the Sandy River conservation corridor. PGE is donating approximately 1,500 acres to the project, and will remove two hydroelectric dams, opening up portions of the Sandy and Little Sandy rivers to salmon and steelhead migration. The land will go into BLM hands, with a special management designation, similar to wilderness status but with emphasis on public access, to protect the Sandy’s many resources.

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“The Bureau of Land Management is doing a great job of land conservation on the Sandy River,” Western Rivers Conservancy Vice President Sue Doroff said. “We are proud to be partners with them and with Portland General Electric.”

Peggy Fowler, CEO and president of PGE, thanked the BLM for the honor. “PGE is leaving an environmental legacy in the Sandy Basin,” Fowler said. “Our company is proud to contribute to a resource that will be enjoyed for many generations on one of western Oregon’s most scenic rivers.”

The event also celebrated the 40th birthday of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), which has made possible BLM’s purchase of lands from Western Rivers Conservancy. The federal program, enacted in 1964, provides funding for government to acquire land across the nation for public use.

The Oregon Congressional delegation, led by Sen. Gordon Smith and Sen. Ron Wyden, has played an essential role in securing \$8.1 million in LWCF appropriations thus far to protect the Sandy River. “The Sandy River project continues to be a major success story for the Land and Water Conservation Fund and for Oregon,” Sen. Smith said. “Over the years, the Oregon delegation has been highly effective in bringing home funding from the Land and Water Fund to support this partnership to set aside critical portions of two beautiful rivers, the Sandy and Little Sandy, for people, fish and wildlife.”

Senator Ron Wyden echoed Smith’s praise of the Sandy project. “Funding to create recreation sites for the public and refuges for wildlife through the Land and Water Conservation Fund has been a bipartisan priority for years, and one that Senator Smith and I have been proud to continue,” Sen. Wyden said. “The land acquisition along the Sandy River continues this tradition of protecting the jewels of our state for the public to enjoy.”

At the event, Western Rivers Conservancy announced that it has protected another 420 acres of land along the Sandy and Little Sandy rivers. This brings the total acquired lands to 2,204 acres and 7.5 river miles of high-quality habitat in the Sandy River basin. With the funds from the LWCF, these lands are being conveyed to the BLM to be managed as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The ACEC designation, akin to a “Wilderness” designation but with a focus on public use, allots special management to protect sensitive fish and wildlife habitat, and uphold the area as a public resource for hikers, floaters and anglers.

“It’s wonderful to have the community come together to celebrate milestones such as this,” Oregon Congressman Earl Blumenauer said of the event. “Neighbors of the Sandy River, and all Oregonians, will benefit from this public-private partnership between Western Rivers Conservancy, the BLM and PGE. Because of their work, a magnificent new conservation area is taking shape right before our eyes, with enormous benefits for outdoor enthusiasts, salmon and wildlife.”

The Sandy River Basin is located on the eastern edge of the Portland metro area, with scenic, deep gorges, spectacular whitewater and runs of wild salmon and steelhead. In the summer of 1999, Western Rivers Conservancy, PGE and the BLM formed a partnership to restore and conserve the Sandy and Little Sandy rivers. In addition to the land donated by PGE, Western Rivers Conservancy has committed to acquire an

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Sandy Basin Award, page 3 of 3

additional 3,400 acres of private lands in order to assemble continuous river corridors along 13 miles of the Sandy River and four miles of the Little Sandy.

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About Land and Water Conservation Fund: Enacted by Congress in 1964, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) “provides funding to federal, state and local governments to acquire land, water and conservation easements on land and water for the recreational benefit of all Americans.” The LWCF uses off-shore oil lease receipts to pay for land purchases. The program authorizes up to \$900 million each year to purchase these lands for public recreation. On the Sandy River, Congress has appropriated \$8.1 million from the LWCF since 2001. These funds have allowed the BLM to acquire Sandy River lands to be managed as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern.

About Western Rivers Conservancy: Western Rivers Conservancy’s mission is to conserve the most outstanding river ecosystems in the western United States. Since 1988, we have protected over 45,000 acres along critical stretches of high-quality rivers throughout the West. Western Rivers Conservancy is headquartered in Portland, and also has an office in northern California. More information: www.westernrivers.org

About Portland General Electric: PGE is a recognized leader in the utility industry with more than 115 years of experience delivering safe and reliable electricity. Serving more than 755,000 retail customers in northwest Oregon the company supports the community through a variety of innovative philanthropic, volunteer and environmental stewardship efforts. Visit PGE on the Web at PortlandGeneral.com.

About BLM: The BLM, an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior, manages more land — 261 million surface acres — than any other federal agency. Most of this public land is located in 12 western states, including Alaska. The Bureau, with a budget of about \$1.9 billion and a workforce of some 10,000 full-time, permanent employees, also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM’s multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural and other resources on the public lands. www.blm.gov