



BLUE

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A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT

Blue Mountain Land Trust acquires ecologically important property in its first land purchase

Amanda Martino, Conservation Director

The Middle Fork of the John Day River Basin has long been a favorite place to spend time in eastern Oregon. The tall ponderosa pines, the crisp, clear water of the Middle Fork John Day River, and the mountain landscape provide some of the most beautiful and ecologically important habitat in the John Day basin. It's an area in which the land trust has kept a close eye in the last few years, looking for opportunities to conserve critical fish and wildlife habitat, grazing land, water resources, and beautiful landscapes.

In June, with the support of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon (CTWSRO) and financing through Craft3, BMLT acquired its first land trust owned property, Phipps Meadow.

Located outside of Prairie City, Oregon, Phipps Meadow is an ecologically diverse 278-acre property surrounded by U.S. Forest Service land. The property has incredible views of the Elkhorn Mountains and is composed of 100 acres of wet meadow and 178 acres of ponderosa pine and lodgepole forest. Numerous springs and small creeks run into and through the property.

The property's biggest and most important ecological feature is the 1.58 miles of the John Day River that flows through it, in the headwaters of the Middle Fork of the John Day River.

“Phipps Meadow is a remarkable property in the headwaters of the Middle Fork John Day River. The John Day River basin contains one of the last entirely wild runs of salmon and steelhead in the Columbia River Basin. This section of the river provides critical habitat for wild spring Chinook salmon, Mid-Columbia summer steelhead, bull trout, redband trout, pacific lamprey and a host of other native non-salmonid fishes,” said Amy Charette, Watershed Restoration Coordinator with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs John Day Basin office.

In addition to its incredible freshwater resources, the property is home to many other species, including Rocky Mountain elk, mule deer, black bear, cougar, upland and migratory birds, and a resident population of beavers.

We were excited to discover seven beaver dams on the property when our conservation staff conducted its first site visit this spring. The beaver have been extremely active, damming a series of springs and parts of the Middle Fork, creating a small wetland area and some deep pools. They've already begun the first steps towards property restoration.

The John Day Basin Partnership (JDBP) is a 30-organization collaborative of state and federal agencies, Tribes, soil and water conservation districts, watershed councils, and

conservation organizations focused on basin-wide restoration initiatives. JDBP has long highlighted the Phipps Meadow property as having high benefits from proposed restoration on critical salmonid habitat. Its ecological goals for the Middle Fork John Day include a decrease in instream water temperature and an increase in summer instream flow.

“The John Day Basin Partnership’s unifying purpose is to bring together stakeholders from across the basin with the common interest of restoring and maintaining our watersheds to maximize their ecological, economic, and cultural benefits. The permanent protection and management of Phipps Meadow will ensure that actions on the property promote healthy and resilient native habitats for fish and wildlife, are protective of past and future restoration efforts, and allow for long-term restoration planning and monitoring. The Partnership is excited to be a part of BMLT’s first acquisition in the John Day Basin and looks forward to future collaborations,” said Kristen Walz, John Day Basin Partnership Coordinator.

BMLT’s vision for Phipps Meadow is one where conservation, agriculture, education and recreation will meet and work together in one of our region’s most beautiful landscapes. Over the next few years, we will work with our partners, supporters and our communities to plan for the future of the land trust’s first property.

One of the components of this plan will be to undertake river restoration on this critical section of the Middle Fork John Day River. With partners CTWSRO and other JDBP organizations and in conjunction with existing restoration projects, we will improve habitat for freshwater species.

“The upper Middle Fork John Day River provides a truly unique opportunity for comprehensive watershed restoration. Most

of the watershed is owned by the U.S. Forest Service. The remaining private land is minimal with much of it already in conservation ownership including properties owned and managed by the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. Acquisition and conservation management of Phipps Meadow is critical to the maintenance of this stronghold for wild salmonids. We are excited that BMLT was able to purchase this property and are looking forward to partnering on future restoration actions,” Charette said.

The property’s forested uplands and meadow ground also provide BMLT with the opportunity to partner with a local producer for limited grazing. Guided by a holistic grazing plan, a grazing plan designed to improve soil health and increase the health and abundance of native plants, forbs and shrubs, BMLT is excited to continue the property’s history of agricultural use. Phipps Meadow provides BMLT with the opportunity to showcase the ability of agriculture and conservation to complement and enhance one another.

In the future, we plan to open the property to the public and host education events that celebrate the beautiful natural resources of the area. We also plan to work with the BMLT Blues Crew to build trails on the property for recreational access, hiking and birding.

We are excited to take the next steps in our conservation work journey through the ownership of our first property. Over the next few years, we hope you will join us as we plan and implement a vision that protects Phipps Meadow and its incredible natural resources.

Photo by Genevieve Perdue of one of the many beaver dams on the property



Photo courtesy of Whitney Land Company



SAVING IDAHO'S SALMON

Congressman Mike Simpson's plan to protect a species from extinction

Tim Copeland, Executive Director

For decades, the salmon runs in the Columbia and Snake Rivers have suffered from decreasing numbers despite the investment of over \$17 billion to ease their passage from Pacific Northwest inland spawning grounds to the Pacific Ocean and back again.

The key impediments to spawning salmon in the Pacific Northwest are eight hydroelectric dams - four on the Columbia River and four on the Snake River. These dams present a labyrinth of obstacles that smolt must negotiate on their trip downriver to the Pacific and, one to seven years later, back to their spawning grounds as adults. Fish ladders, generators, and huge pools of too-warm slack water all make both journeys difficult and often deadly.

With few positive results from best intentions, billions of dollars and enormously hard work, many scientists now believe the only chance Snake River salmon have for survival is the breaching of the four lower Snake dams.

The Columbia and Snake River dam system began with the construction of the Rock Island dam near Wenatchee in 1933. It was followed by the Bonneville Dam in 1938 and the Grand Coulee Dam in 1941. Grand Coulee is the northern-most dam on the Columbia within the United States. Six other dams are on the upper reaches of the Columbia above the point at which it joins the Snake close to Burbank, Washington.

On the upper Columbia, fish passage is provided at five dams: Priest Rapids, Wanapum, Rock Island, Rocky Reach, and Wells. Fish cannot pass at the Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams. However, salmon can migrate from the Columbia into the Wenatchee and Okanagan Rivers below Chief Joseph.

The lower part of the Columbia River has four large dams: McNary, John Day, The Dalles, and Bonneville. All of these dams provide some level of fish passage.

Dams in the upper Snake River are the Brownlee, Oxbow and Hells Canyon. These dams have no fish passage.

The lower Snake River has four large hydroelectric dams: Lower Granite, Little Goose, Lower Monumental and Ice Harbor. These dams attempt to provide fish passage but the large slack-water reservoirs behind each one creates difficult water for smolt to navigate, and is especially lethal during summer months when water temperatures are excessively warm.

Environmental organizations and fish protection groups have sought the breaching of the lower Snake River dams for decades. Unlike their downstream Columbia River cousins, the dams of the lower Snake were constructed with two types of materials – concrete and earth. The earthen dam sections were installed so they could be removed, and the Snake restored to its natural flow if that proved necessary. Many scientists now believe that time has come.

The breaching of the dams has been controversial for decades and is largely divided along party lines. Many Republicans believe that the hydroelectric power, irrigation, barge transportation and recreation that the dams support are more valuable than the environmental damage they cause. Many Democrats disagree. That has been settled and unchanging politics since the Reagan Administration.

But change may be at hand. Congressman Mike Simpson of Idaho, a conservative Republican, has concluded that the Snake River salmon, as a species, will become extinct unless the four lower Snake dams are breached within the next 10 years. He reasons that the Pacific Northwest public, especially in the large population areas of western Washington and Oregon, simply won't allow the extinction of Idaho salmon to happen. Rather than have a "salmon solution" imposed on Idaho by Seattle and Portland voters, he believes it's wise for officials on his side of the political aisle to offer creative and thoughtful ideas that could save Idaho's salmon. This was the origin of the Simpson plan.

Here's a look at the major dams on the Columbia and Snake Rivers.



The Columbia Basin Initiative

In February 2021, Simpson released his Columbia Basin Initiative framework, a \$33.5 billion infrastructure proposal that would direct federal funds to the energy, transportation, agriculture, recreation, and tourism industries of the Pacific Northwest. The initiative's goal is to restore abundant, wild salmon and steelhead to the Snake River and other areas of the Columbia River Basin, while benefiting the stakeholders who depend on the region's system of hydroelectric dams.

The most divisive component — breaching four dams along the lower Snake River — is one of its least expensive components. At \$1.6 billion, breaching comprises only 5% of the plan's total investment. The rest of the proposed funds are dedicated to these purposes:

- **Energy:** \$16 billion to develop carbon-free energy throughout the region, modernize the Northwest's energy transmission system, and connect new generation facilities.
- **Agriculture and Transportation:** \$5 billion to help farmers, shippers, handlers, and ports transition from shipping wheat by barge to shipping by train. Included is funding to modify irrigation systems in the Ice Harbor reservoir, develop an intermodal shipping hub in the Tri-Cities, and improve navigation locks on the lower Columbia River.
- **Clean Water:** \$4.6 billion to improve water quality and use throughout the Northwest via watershed partnerships and university research programs.
- **Fish and Wildlife:** \$3.3 billion to reintroduce salmon and steelhead into blocked areas above Grand Coulee Dam and Hells Canyon Complex, resolve a backlog of salmon recovery projects, and improve conditions for sturgeon and lamprey.

- **River Restoration:** \$2.3 billion to restore the lower Snake River in southern Washington, replant streamside areas, control sediment and erosion, and protect cultural resources in the area.
- **Communities:** \$2.3 billion to help industries transition to operating with a restored river, revitalize Snake River waterfront properties and enhance the Lewiston-Clarkston area as a recreational destination. This includes \$1.25 billion to establish the Snake River Center for Advanced Energy Storage, a new research group to be co-located in Lewiston and the Tri-Cities.
- **Recreation:** designation and funding for the Lower Snake River National Recreation Area, which would cover the 140+ mile long river corridor.
- **Moratorium:** Establish a 35-year moratorium on dam-related lawsuits and a 25-year moratorium on agriculture-related lawsuits. The proposal would also give agriculture a bigger role in watershed improvement and transfer fish management responsibility from the Bonneville Power Administration to a joint council of states and tribes. The remaining major dams in the Columbia River Basin would get license extensions of 35 to 50 years.

Eighteen groups representing Western water and environmental interests, signed a letter urging Sens. Maria Cantwell, Patty Murray, Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley to oppose the Simpson plan because of the moratorium's provisions. The groups believe this would be harmful to the enforcement of the Clean Water and Endangered Species Act. Signers included representatives of the Blue Mountains Biodiversity Partnership, Deschutes River Alliance, Oregon Wild, Spokane Riverkeeper and Wild Fish Conservancy.

Jerry White, the Spokane Riverkeeper, said the moratorium on lawsuits would hamstring his work. "Any rollbacks of these environmental regulations like the Endangered Species Act or the Clean Water Act are nonstarters for us," he said, adding, "We use the Clean Water Act almost daily."

Other environmental and tribal groups support Simpson's plan including the Idaho Conservation League, Trout Unlimited, the Nez Perce Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation and the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakima Nation.

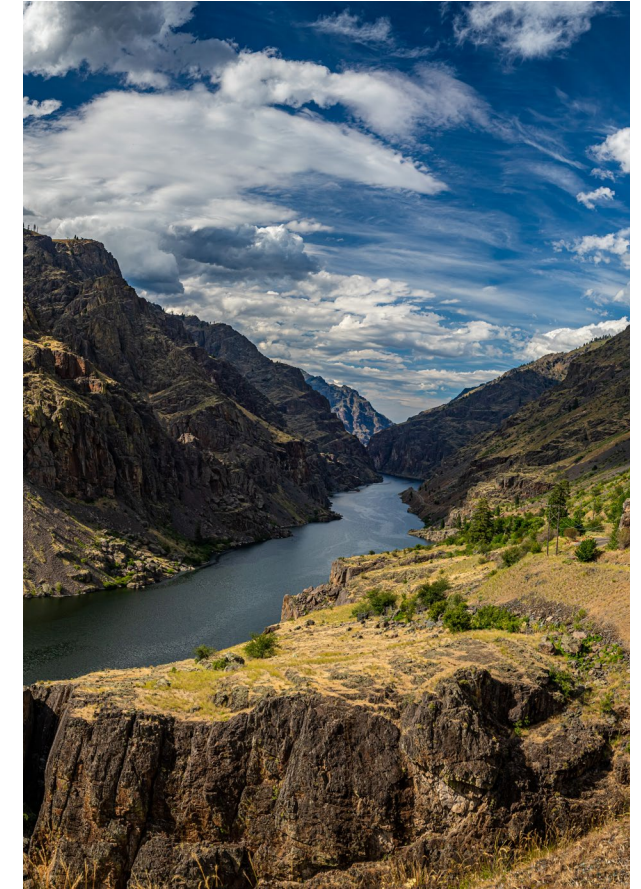
Kat Brigham, Chair, Board of Trustees, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation said: "Rep. Simpson's proposal is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to set aside past differences and chart a new course for the survival of the Columbia River Basin — including salmon, farmers and many others."

The Land Trust's Review

The Blue Mountain Land Trust's Leadership and Advocacy Committee has been carefully studying Simpson's proposal since its introduction. The proposal is lengthy, expensive, complex, massive and there's no guarantee that it will succeed. In spite of its many challenges, Simpson believes that his proposal's actions must be taken or Snake River salmon will become extinct. Gone. Forever.

Two members of our Advocacy committee have been students of Snake River salmon recovery for many years.

Don Schwerin, a Land Trust board member is chair of the Advocacy Committee. He is also chair of the Washington State Ag and Rural



Caucus. In that capacity, Don has led many dozens of discussions to identify the extent to which the lower Snake River dams' breaching would be harmful and how that damage could be avoided or mitigated. Don's column, which follows, discusses the political dynamics and difficulties of saving lower Snake River salmon.

Ormand Hilderbrand, who is also a member of the Land Trust board and the Advocacy Committee, is the owner and manager of a wind farm in Sherman County, Oregon. His wind farm is one of the few locally-owned renewable energy facilities. He is well-versed in the economics of power generation by wind, solar, hydroelectric, and fossil fuels. His column discusses the electricity-generation capabilities of the four lower Snake River dams and their diminishing role in providing Pacific Northwest power.



THE SIMPSON PLAN: FROM STASIS TO DISRUPTION

By Don Schwerin, Blue Mountain Land Trust Director

The fault lines on the lower Snake River dams have long been well-defined. On the side of removing the dams are fish biologists, environmental advocates, fishermen, and the Tribes. On the other side are farmers, barge operators, port authorities, grain handlers, BPA, and Republican congressmen. Democrats have been in the middle, saying that they created the dams and they would decide their fate.

No lobby dared to break rank. Stasis was reinforced by silos. No one defied conformity. Now comes the Simpson Plan, otherwise known as the *Columbia Basin Initiative*. The Plan is straight-forward: breach the dams but make sure that you fix all foreseeable problems before you do it, at a cost of \$33.5 billion. The plan only foresees changes to the lower Snake dams. Grand Coulee and the

other mainstem Columbia River dams are off-limits.

Congressman Mike Simpson's proposal exploded the fault lines in the lower Snake River dams standoff. At first, only the Tribes broke rank, coming out in support of the Plan. Then Trout Unlimited joined the tribes and Idaho Conservation League is leading the advocacy for the Simpson Plan. Other lobbies were more predictable. Environmentalists sputter about the Plan's moratorium on legal challenges to the other federal dams and have declared the Plan dead. The Wheat Growers and the Grains Commission and other stakeholders oppose the Plan, using time-tested arguments against removing the dams. (I use "stakeholders" below to refer to the business interests opposed to changing the dams.) Congressmen Cathy McMorris Rodgers

and Dan Newhouse have lined up with the stakeholders on the rejectionist side.

Now comes news that McMorris Rodgers and Newhouse are publicly outraged that Simpson had talked with Oregon Governor Kate Brown – a Democrat – and that Brown supports the plan. Further evidence of Simpson's perfidy came with endorsement from Congressman Earl Blumenauer, another Oregon Democrat. Newhouse's split with Simpson seems personal: "stay out of my region and I will stay out of yours."

Avista and Clearwater Paper, major stakeholders, are breaking rank by saying that they are not taking a position but are following the debate.

Meanwhile, Washington Democrats are staying quiet. Simpson's Plan requires infrastructure dollars but Simpson has not paid his dues to the Democrats in Congress and does not have a place at the infrastructure table. Washington Democrats are waiting for leadership to evolve in eastern Washington.

The rupturing fault lines obscure an evolving discussion about salmon recovery and the dams. Simpson acknowledges that breaching the dams does not guarantee salmon recovery. Just a couple of years ago the dominant image of the dams coming from the fish advocates was that smolt were being chewed in the dam turbines. The Corps has consistently countered with documentation that the fish passage meets standard. The Corps installed fish by-pass fixtures, adopted an innovative spill agreement to assist down river passage, and modified operations. The Columbia River System Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), released last spring, is a major place marker in assessing the role of the dams. The Corps datum of 96% smolt passage with 88% through the four dams was accepted. Juvenile fish are successfully making it down river, and returning adults successfully use fish ladders to return to spawning grounds.

The fault of the dams has evolved to the "latent mortality" attributable to the effects of the slack water pools behind each dam. Attention is now on the transit time for smolts to make it to the Pacific above Bonneville Dam.

The hypothesis is that the slack pools delay the smolt's passage and adversely affects their eventual survival in the Pacific. Breaching the dams may be necessary to salmon recovery but still may not be sufficient to restore healthy runs. Climate change may have compromised conditions in the North Pacific past the point where salmon can recover.

This is convergence on the science. We have shifted from lethality due to the turbines to latent mortality arising from the slack water ponds. Even if the political fault lines are not completely disrupted, argumentation has moved as well as the science. When the environmental groups issued their rejection of the Simpson Plan, they chose to underline overreach of the Plan's moratorium on litigation under federal laws. Their complaint is reasonable, but negotiable. The Simpson Plan wants to assure the PUDs and the Columbia Basin Project beneficiaries – most of central Washington – that this is not about them.

In exchange for winning on the dams, environmental activists should be able to join Simpson in somehow blocking the slippery slope from Ice Harbor to Grand Coulee without suspending all environmental regulation.

Negotiable, too, has been the timeline. Simpson projects ten years for dam breaching. The environmental groups have quietly compromised on deferral from immediate to half a generation. This is promising.

Stakeholders surprisingly elected to appeal to climate change for their argument against breaching the dams. Instead of talking about the increased transportation cost to wheat growers, the stakeholders complained that truck and rail alternatives would increase greenhouse gas emissions.

Convergence most importantly is on the concept of ex ante (before the event)

mitigation. Ex ante mitigation means that you identify negative consequences prior to taking action and that you put in place acceptable alternatives to offset the foreseeable negative effects. In other words, you identify and offset the damage breaching will do prior to starting the bulldozers.

Environmental groups accepted the application of ex ante mitigation when they elected not to contest the ten-year delay in breaching the dams.

The stakeholders groups have traditionally rejected even considering ex ante mitigation. They called it “sneaky” in that it would inevitably lead to dam removal. This time the stakeholders seem to acknowledge ex ante mitigation; they just do not believe the guarantees.

Simpson guarantees that the power grid will be secure, affordable alternatives to river barging will be in place, and that businesses dependent on the river will be made whole. The Plan says that guarantees must be satisfied before the dams are breached. These are the guarantees that the stakeholders do not find credible, even with the expenditure of \$33.5 billion to make them good.

The concurrence is that both the environmental activists and the stakeholders acknowledge the need for ex ante mitigation. This is progress.

Power usually flows to the status quo and stakeholders are happy with the status quo. The problem is that the status quo is neither easy nor stable.

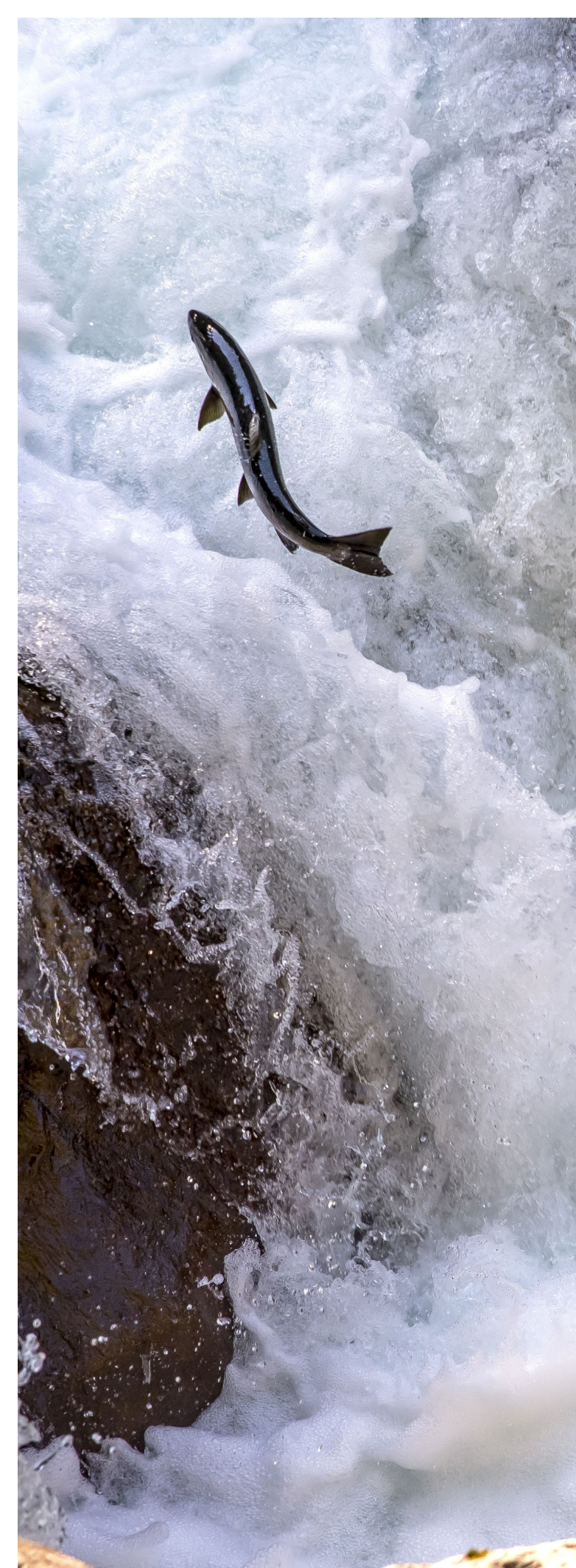
Litigation puts at risk current operation of the dams. We are today the product of the 1974 Boldt decision. The courts more recently required a redo of the Columbia River System EIS to evaluate the removal of the lower Snake

River dams. The revised EIS argued that keeping the dams with further adjustments to operations is the best balance and is consistent with salmon recovery. If the EIS is mistaken – if salmon runs fail to recover – the courts will call for breaching the dams even if removal may not be “sufficient.” And this breaching would not wait for ex ante mitigation. The litigation risk is breaching without mitigation.

Political risk came knocking loudly three years ago when the southern resident orca pods were thought at risk of starvation. Governor Inslee appointed the Southern Resident Killer Whale state task force, and it delivered a call to action against the lower Snake River dams. Inslee temporized and appointed a Snake River Stakeholders Engagement group. About the same time ECO Northwest issued a study showing that Puget Sound residents would pay hefty surcharges on their power bills to remove the dams and restore the salmon to save the orcas. Puget Sound voters ultimately will decide the fate of the dams – if the courts do not do it first – and, absent a plan, mitigation will not be on the agenda.

Litigation risk and political risk make for a bumpy and ultimately unhappy future for the status quo.

Stakeholders have reason to be proud of the dams as a political and engineering triumph. The dams deliver power, irrigation, and transportation. They are economic giants. Leadership for stakeholders, though, means planning for an alternate future. It is simply responsible to assess alternate paths of development in eastern Washington and take the necessary steps for the success of a smart Plan B in the event the status quo is taken away. Citizens, you and me – the real “stakeholders” – deserve this leadership.





PACIFIC NORTHWEST POWER AND THE LOWER SNAKE RIVER DAMS

By Ormand Hilderbrand, Blue Mountain Land Trust Director

Supporters of retaining the lower Snake River dams (LSRDs) cite four reasons they need to stay: Energy, transportation, irrigation, and recreation. Representative Simpson's plan offers a vision and a framework to mitigate these concerns. And the Simpson Plan offers us a chance to shape our energy future for the region.

Let's look at some of the existing developments that alleviate, if not eliminate, the negative effects of the LSRD breaching on our region's energy supply. In other words, can we live without the energy produced from the LSRDs?

This is not a new question. A RAND Corporation study in 2002 concluded that

we could replace the energy from the LSRDs with wind and solar renewable energy. At the time this flew in the face of conventional thought. A February 2009 Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) Fact Sheet states that the LSRDs are an important part of the region's power supply.

BPA in 2009 depended heavily on the LSRDs energy benefits in terms of Average Generation and Peak Capacity, Grid Stabilization, and Renewable Energy Balancing Requirements.

Peak capacity is the ability to supply the needed power when we all turn our toasters on at the same time on a cold January morning or if there is a generator that might be down for maintenance.

The LSRDs can supply 3,400 MWs for several hours and up to 2,650 MWs for up to 10 hours per day for 5 consecutive days, according to BPA. The average generation in which the dams normally operate is about 1,000 aMWs (average megawatts). The LSRDs average generation is about 3-5% of the Pacific Northwest's present energy requirement. What would it take to replace the LSRDs 1,000 aMWs of power per year?

Since 2009, the Pacific Northwest has added almost 5,000 MWs of wind generation capacity. This is five times the power produced by the lower Snake River dams.

Solar power systems produce less energy in the Pacific Northwest than wind but its growth rate curve is steeply up. One indicator of this growth is the set of solar generation projects awaiting approval by the Oregon Energy Facility Siting Council. These projects will produce approximately 2,500 MWs electricity. This is 2 1/2 times the power produced by the lower Snake River dams.

Other forms of renewable energy are just getting off the ground. On March 1, 2021 the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission approved Oregon's first, utility scale and testing wave energy facility (20 MWs) off the coast of Newport, Oregon. And in Wenatchee, the first commercial scale, renewable hydrogen facility becomes operational this spring.

In Oregon there are serious legislative efforts to support renewable hydrogen studies for I-5 and the I-84 corridors. The energy supply for the electrolysis of water to split the hydrogen and oxygen could be provided by wind, solar, and wave energy. Although Europe is far ahead of us in renewable hydrogen development the future is in front of us.

The Pacific Northwest renewable energy sector is moving to meet the peak capacity issues and grid stability voltage regulation by developing storage. Storage at the present will be batteries through flow batteries, lithium-ion batteries, and Pumped Storage Hydro (PSH). PSH is taking excess renewable energy and pumping water to a higher elevation in a closed loop system. The water then is released when needed to run through turbines at a lower elevation to re-generate power.

PSH is moving forward with Swan Lake outside of Klamath Falls (400 MW of Peak Capacity), Goldendale Pumped Storage just north of the John Day Dam in the Klickitat hills (1,200 MW of peak capacity), and Banks Lake Pumped Storage, near Grand Coulee Dam (500 MW of peak capacity).

Swan Lake is expected to break ground in 2022 and the other projects are going through the various stages of local, state, federal and Tribal permitting. New storage technologies, although still in the development phase, are truly exciting such as thermovoltaic storage systems.

Often it is mentioned that wind and solar power requires renewable energy balancing services provided by the LSRDs. As the old saying goes “the wind doesn’t always blow, and the sun doesn’t always shine.” In 2009, the dams acted as a giant battery and when required would “balance” out the variable supply from wind and solar.

However, now we have independent operators who are offering “balancing services.” Many of these balancing providers and generators are joining the California Independent System Operator Energy Imbalance Market (EIM). Instead of having numerous independent balancing areas in the Pacific Northwest, Montana and California, these regions will be interconnected and managed together to provide enhanced grid stability and renewable generation – even when the wind does not blow in the Columbia Gorge – because it probably will be windy in Montana. In 2019, BPA, realizing EIM was an important part of the region’s future, agreed to consider joining EIM by 2022.

What about the cost of all of the renewable energy along with enhanced grid stabilization and management? Surely it is going to be more expensive than hydro-electric power?

In reality, the cost of wind and solar renewable energy generation in the Pacific Northwest has dropped below the price of BPA’s hydroelectricity. That is a problem for BPA’s customers including many rural electric cooperatives and Public Utilities Districts.

In the past, BPA provided low-cost energy power to the PUDs and rural electric cooperatives by selling excess power to California. But with California’s explosion of solar power generation, the rates BPA can charge for excess power has dropped precipitously. Rates for energy to the PUDs and cooperatives have increased to \$35



per MWhr. By contrast, long-term renewable energy supply agreements from wind and solar are going for \$20 to \$25 per MWhr. In the last 10 years capital costs for wind and solar generation have dropped by 30-50 percent.

When the BPA long-term supply contracts with the PUDs and cooperatives expire in the next 7 to 8 years, many of these customers will look for cheaper sources of supply – wind and solar power. Some fear that BPA then will be forced to raise its rates again and drive more customers away, precipitating a BPA death spiral.

Can we live and thrive without the energy produced from the lower Snake River dams? Yes, we can. Representative Simpson’s plan offers us an opportunity to craft a new vision for the region’s energy requirements. This is exciting.

NEXT STEPS: WHERE BLUE MOUNTAIN LAND TRUST GOES FROM HERE

By Tim Copeland, Executive Director

There are many things the Advocacy Committee’s members like about the Simpson plan. But some parts of it stop us cold. It’s likely the committee will recommend to the Land Trust board a hybrid of support for what we support and options for those we don’t. The board will then determine the role the Land Trust will play in advocating for or against this proposal. Its decision is not a foregone conclusion, but it will be wisely made.

As we continue to reach better understandings of this issue, the Land Trust will share lessons learned with our members and many other

constituents. We also want to learn what you know and how you feel about preserving Snake River salmon.

Historically, land trusts have avoided weighing in on politically controversial topics. In this time when climate change reversal and species protection are at the top of our conservation imperatives list, ducking controversy is no longer an option. To be effective conservationists, we have to be courageous. Please help us and our many partners save the Idaho salmon — a keystone species that defines the Pacific Northwest.

TWO SIDES OF WILDFIRE

Virtual education programming starts off with prescribed fire film and panel series

Katy Rizzuti, Blue Mountain Land Trust, Jessica Brothers, Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition, Lindsay Chiono, PhD, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

Each summer smoke permeates the West from wildfires burning near and far. Time outdoors becomes limited, and concern grows for the health of loved ones and the wilderness.

What practices and tools are available to manage fire while allowing fire to play its ecologically vital role as an agent of disturbance?

A number of regional partners that collectively strive to protect the region got together and asked this question. Through a two-part event series, they explored the importance of prescribed fire and how the historical use of fire ties to the work moving forward. Forests in the northern Blue Mountains have a complex relationship with fire, but the exclusion of indigenous burning over the last 150-200 years and widespread fire suppression during the last century have altered this relationship rather dramatically. During these conversations, the contribution of past forest management to the growth of megafires was discussed and how different approaches can better prepare and protect communities. It was a good reminder that all members of the community need to be fire aware.

The West is Burning, a documentary that reveals the scale of the wildfire issues facing the Western United States, kicked off the series. This film tells the story of fire in the West and

of the unlikely partnerships coming together across divides which address fire risk across the landscape. These unique relationships help make the work of restoring fire-adapted ecosystems happen.

Panelists followed the film with thoughtful dialogue and an open Q&A session led by moderator John Panches, Extension Forester with Oregon State University. Panelists included Walla Walla Emergency Manager, Liz Jessee; private landowner, Mark Klicker; and Forest Ecologist with The Nature Conservancy, Dr. Kerry Kemp.

Fire management isn't only about protecting communities and forested lands from megafires. Fire plays a vital role in maintaining the natural resources upon which we depend. Native people have long understood this, and now some land management agencies and communities are partnering with local tribes to restore fire to ecosystems.

Indigenous people across the west applied fire as a management tool to accomplish many objectives, from reducing fire risk near dwellings to improving conditions for hunting and for favored plant species like huckleberry. Their techniques were based on knowledge acquired through long and direct experience with the natural world, and their practices shaped ecosystems. Excluding native people

from natural resource management decision making processes has dramatically altered western forests. As there are now tens of millions of acres in need of fire, traditional knowledge offers a way forward.

The second film selection in the series was *Catching Fire: Prescribed Burning in Northern California*. This film shows a small yet diverse group of private landowners and tribal and federal land managers who are bringing back prescribed burning as a tool to protect communities and ecosystems in Northern California. The film examines the use of fire by the Karuk Tribe, offering insight into how a more constructive relationship with fire can be restored through the knowledge and traditional practices of the people who are native to a given place.

As before there was a panel discussion following this film screening. John Panches continued as moderator, tying together themes from both films in the series. Panelists included Andrew Addressi and Wenix Red Elk, Supervisory Forester and Education & Outreach Coordinator (respectively) for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation; Jeff Casey, Bureau of Indian Affairs' Fire Management Officer; and Kathy McCovey, Archaeologist, Karuk Basketweaver, & Cultural Practitioner.

If you missed any portion of this series, you can view the recordings on the BMLT website at bmlt.org/rxfire.

This event couldn't have happened without the time and dedication of regional partners. Groups and organizations involved in the planning process included Blue Mountain Land Trust, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, My Blue Mountains Woodland Partnership, Oregon State University Extension, Northern Blues



Cohesive Strategy Partnership, Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition, The Nature Conservancy, Wallowa Resources, and the Umatilla National Forest, part of the Forest Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

This series served as a kick-off to BMLT's new **Learning on the Land Online (LOLO)** programming. Traditionally, the **Learning on the Land (LOL)** series has been held in-person, on-site, and hands-on. Moving with the current trends in online content and accessibility, BMLT is developing a series of videos that offer the same quality and quantity of education.

Bringing LOL online has the added benefit of a wider geographical reach than ever before and the variety of topics covered may expand out of the Walla Walla Valley. This means you can discover the mystery behind the Apple Detective in Steptoe Butte, follow the mighty Blues Crew task force as they make a profound impact on Horseshoe Prairie, and imagine the lives of the wolves in the Blue Mountain region all from the comfort of your own home.



TRANSFORMING TRAILS WITH THE NEXT GENERATION

Blue Mountain Land Trust & Whitman College Outdoor Program partner with the Umatilla National Forest to restore the North Fork John Day River Trail

Alyssa Martinez Neumann, Communications and Marketing Specialist

Last fall, Brien Sheedy and Stuart Chapin took a trip to the North Fork of the John Day River in Northeast Oregon. As leaders of the Whitman College Outdoor Program, the duo scouted the area for new recreation opportunities to share with students and found a beautiful trail system in need of extensive work. This was the beginning of a collaborative effort to give back to our region's wilderness areas and share outdoor skills with a new generation.

Fast forward to summer 2021. A group of students and leaders from the Whitman College Outdoor Program joined BMLT Blues Crew volunteers, and employees of the Umatilla National Forest (John Day Ranger District) on a five day work party with the goals of improving trail conditions and fixing safety concerns. It also was an opportunity to learn new skills and forge meaningful connections around conservation.

“We wanted to provide a volunteer opportunity for Whitman students to learn about trail work. I love getting students out into the outdoors where they can connect with nature and others away from technology,” said Sheedy. “Many of the students did not know each other at the beginning, but became friends during the trip.”

While some student volunteers had a few trail miles under their belts, this was the first wilderness experience for many. Linda Herbert—dedicated BMLT Blues Crew volunteer and board president—joined the excursion and left deeply inspired by the work ethic of all involved.

“I was so impressed by the unwaning energy and the ownership of completing the work by this young group on these long days, especially considering the hot weather,” said Herbert. “It was an ambitious undertaking, and we needed to triage our priorities since there was no

way we could get that entire stretch of long-neglected trail totally rehabbed in such a short amount of time.”

During the five days, the group of 12 volunteers improved 4.5 miles of the trail from the confluence of Granite Creek and the North Fork John Day River. Volunteers split into three working groups, each tackling different sections and jobs. The trail had a number of safety issues to address including blocked trail access from downed logs, brushwork, gradient repair, and tread reconstruction. A section even required a river crossing for access.

“River crossings can be tricky. While the water level here was not dangerously high, it would be more challenging due to carrying heavy tools,” said Herbert. “Stuart and Brien are very experienced in this and taught us the ‘train method’ of safe crossing with a group. Their expertise was appreciated.”

Staff from the John Day Ranger District made this work party possible by planning and executing trip details, hauling heavy gear to the site using horse support, and working directly with the volunteers. The work was incredibly rewarding, but the unique perspectives and expertise shared around the campfire contributed to some of the most memorable moments.

“Every trip is always different and an opportunity to learn. Everyone was open to sharing and working hard together and it really felt like the group developed a wonderful sense of camaraderie,” said Sheedy.

While this is just the beginning of trail work in the area, the group shared a clear sense of accomplishment from their efforts. This new partnership will continue to work collaboratively together on future volunteer opportunities to empower the next generation of trail stewards.

“Trail work is not only transformative, but serves the greater good. There is great energy that comes from working together towards a common goal,” said Herbert. “One student asked if it would be possible to arrange a similar trail work party with his fraternity brothers. It always feels good to me when people come away from their first trail experience and are eager to go again.”

“Volunteer service work enables everyone involved to help give back and support wilderness areas,” said Sheedy. “People also develop an appreciation of the area in the process and a desire to see it protected. Everyone hopefully becomes an advocate of that area in the future.”



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LEARNING ON THE LAND RETURNS

This fall, we embrace the region by rediscovering our favorite places outdoors. Ame Doyle takes us on the trails to open our eyes to the vast diversity of plants and lichens. Tap into your creative side with Joyce Anderson, Susan Bauer, and Bill Rodgers with painting and photography.

Later in the year, we will feature the on-the-ground work that supports wildlife and local ecosystems online via webinars and film screenings.

Together with our partners, we invite you to tour the varied landscapes, acquire knowledge of flora and fauna, and instill a sense of wonder at the Blue Mountains’ vast biodiversity and beauty. We look forward to seeing you out on the land.

For the most up to date events information, see our website, bmlt.org/events.

Photo by Alyssa Martinez Neumann



Events Calendar

August 22

Oregon Butte, Guided Hike

August 29

Umatilla Rim, Family Hike

September 10

Deciphering the Night Sky

September 11

EXPLORE: Stand-up Paddleboard

September 12

Botany in the Blues, Umatilla Rim

September 18

Nature Painting

September 24

Ag Museums of Pomeroy

September 25

Nature Photography with an iPhone

October 2

Botany in the Blues, Tiger Creek

October 23

Falltography

The cover photo was taken by Bill Rodgers of the Elkhorn Mountains in Baker County.

PLANNED GIVING

By making a legacy gift to the Blue Mountain Land Trust, you will have an important role in the protection of our region's land, water, and habitat for generations to come. You and your heirs may also receive significant tax and financial benefits.

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For more information about planned giving, go to our website bmlt.org/plannedgiving or contact Development Specialist Jess Portas at (509) 525-3136 or jessica@bmlt.org.

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Blue Mountain Land Trust is a nonprofit organization that collaborates with communities and landowners to conserve the scenic, natural, and working lands that characterize the Blue Mountain region.

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