

# **Addendum to Chapter 14L**

## **Showcase of Contributions to the Oregon Plan**

This addendum to Chapter 14L contains contributions from:

- Oregon Farm Bureau
- Pacific Rivers Council
- Oregon Water Trust

### **Oregon Farm Bureau**

The Oregon Farm Bureau Federation is the largest general agriculture organization in the state of Oregon. The Oregon Farm Bureau is a "grass roots" organization, representing over 22,000 families, with a mission to protect and promote agriculture and related industries in the State of Oregon. The Farm Bureau represents over four and one-half million members in the U.S. and is also the largest general agriculture interest group in this country and internationally.

Agriculture is one of Oregon's most important and most stable industries. Currently, Oregon agriculture adds over 5 billion dollars to the economy and provides over 140,000 jobs. For the industry to remain healthy and productive, it is absolutely necessary that it carries on with business in a way that protects the environment and the natural resources it needs.

Clean water is absolutely necessary for the production of food and a healthy, productive environment which provides the resources necessary for the industry to prosper, and provide the quality of life everyone needs and wants in our state. The Oregon Farm Bureau is committed to helping make the Oregon Plan, a plan to enhance the quality of the waters of our state and recover important fish and wildlife resources, a reality and a success.

The Oregon Farm Bureau was actively involved in the process that developed Oregon's strategy to enhance our state's waters, coho salmon populations, and this proposed steelhead supplement. It is a strategy based on local, incentive based and mostly voluntary management planning and activity. The Oregon Farm Bureau is committed to the success of this program because it not only reflects our state policy, but provides an opportunity for agriculture to prove that the Oregon Plan is the right way to provide permanent sustainable use of our natural resources, while enhancing all components of our environment.

The Oregon Farm Bureau is actively encouraging their members, partners and others in the agriculture community to become involved and provide leadership in local efforts to implement all portions of the state's strategy. Farm Bureau members, leadership, and staff

have prepared, sponsored and participated in both formal and informal informational programs to help producers understand and play a role in planning and applying the strategy on the ground when they can. The Oregon Farm Bureau will develop and be a part of such programs in the future.

County Farm Bureau members and leaders are actively involved in the development of watershed councils in many parts of the state. They are working to help the Oregon Department of Agriculture's area coordinators begin and carry out the Area Water Quality Management Planning process. Staff time has been allotted to support and help local watershed councils get organized. The state leadership is actively monitoring regional progress to guide staff and volunteers in their efforts to help develop and coordinate the cooperative efforts needed to put the program in action.

Oregon Farm Bureau members, leaders, and staff are and will continue to be active participants on state committees, work groups, and task forces formed to oversee and provide coordinated efforts to solve problems and remove barriers that may slow or block plan implementation, and to enhance our waters and environment.

The members and leaders of the Oregon Farm Bureau are determined to be partners in and where necessary, in the effort to enhance the quality of the water in our state and, in turn, our environment and natural resources which include salmon, steelhead and other fish and wildlife.

## **Oregon Water Trust**

The Oregon Water Trust (OWT) is a nonprofit, private group that uses a market-based approach to help maintain and restore surface water flows in rivers and streams of Oregon. OWT works cooperatively with willing water right holders to acquire all, or part, of their existing out-of-stream water rights and convert them to instream flows.

Changes in Oregon Water Law in 1987 allow OWT to acquire instream water rights through two strategies: 1) water right holders can donate, lease, or sell all, or a portion, of their water right to OWT and 2) water right holders can develop a more efficient water delivery system, and can convert their "conserved water" into an instream water right. When these rights are converted, either temporarily or permanently, they retain the original priority date.

Since 1993, OWT has targeted its water right acquisition strategy to four Oregon River Basins, the Rogue, Deschutes, John Day and Umatilla (including the Oregon portion of the Walla Walla). Within these basins, emphasis has been placed on small tributaries that provide important spawning and rearing habitat for anadromous and resident fish. Beginning in 1998, the Umpqua Basin will become one of OWT's priority basins. Within these priority basins, OWT works closely with watershed councils, local, state and federal natural resource management agencies, native american tribes, and other private groups to

identify those stream reaches that would benefit from increased instream flows, and to develop and implement cooperative projects that will protect and restore salmon, steelhead and trout. Outside of the priority basins, OWT is willing to work with individuals and groups that express an interest in increasing instream flows through water right acquisitions.

OWT has successfully worked with a number of willing landowners to increase instream flows in streams with significant late season low flow problems. OWT concluded its first purchase of an instream water right in Sucker Creek, a tributary to the Illinois River in the Rogue Basin. Sucker Creek is a core area for coho, and an important stream for fall chinook and winter steelhead. OWT's instream right will help rearing conditions in lower Sucker Creek, which suffers from natural low flows and extensive irrigation withdrawal. On Evans Creek, OWT worked with two landowners to create the first instream water right through the Conserved Water Program. The project, funded through the Oregon Watershed Health Program, converted the landowner's systems from a ditch and flood irrigation to pump and sprinkler irrigation, and the resulting water savings became an instream water right. A second project is now underway to convert the remaining landowners on the ditch to pump and sprinkler and to create another instream water right from the saved water. Once completed, the diversion structure for the ditch can be modified or removed. Also in the Rogue Basin, OWT has worked with several landowners and an irrigation district to increase instream flows in Little Butte Creek and South Fork Little Butte Creek. Both Evans and Little Butte Creeks are important anadromous fish streams that experience low flow problems during the irrigation season.

In the Deschutes Basin, OWT has been leasing the only active irrigation water right in Buck Hollow Creek for 4 years. When the irrigation right was in use, Buck Hollow Creek was often dry from the point-of-diversion to the mouth. The instream water right has preserved connectivity of flow from Buck Hollow to the Deschutes River. This allows for movement of rearing steelhead between the creek and the Deschutes. Also in the Deschutes Basin, OWT has concluded a permanent instream water right acquisition on Squaw Creek. Extensive diversion of water for irrigation reduces streamflow through a major portion of Squaw Creek, and de-waters the stream for approximately three miles, below which naturally occurring springs begin to discharge into the creek. OWT is pursuing agreements with the other landowners who hold water rights on the same ditch. The goal is to transfer all the rights from the ditch to a permanent instream water right and remove an intrusive diversion from Squaw Creek. Removal of the diversion structure will reduce the amount of stream impact and improve ability of juvenile trout to move up and down in the creek without hindrance.

In the John Day Basin, OWT has acquired several instream water rights on tributaries to the Middle Fork John Day River. These tributaries support summer steelhead and spring chinook, and the acquired water rights were the only diversions on the tributaries. All of

the flow in these tributaries is now available for summer rearing and there are no passage barriers created from irrigation diversions to effect adult or juvenile passage.

In the Umatilla Basin, OWT is working with a wheat and pea farmer who irrigates using water from Couse Creek. Summer steelhead spawn in Couse Creek from February through May. The irrigation diversion is a passage barrier for steelhead, creating problems for late adults migrating upstream to spawn. When irrigation is occurring, the stream is almost completely diverted, leaving very little water in the creek from the point-of-diversion to the mouth. OWT and the farmer are developing an innovative dry-year option where the water right is donated instream during wet years and leased instream in exchange for compensation during dry years when he would need to irrigate. The lease will allow all the water to stay in Couse Creek, preserving the continuity of flow between the creek and the Walla Walla River.

Outside of the priority basins, OWT will soon have a permanent instream water right on Courtney Creek, a tributary to the Grande Ronde River. This is the only water withdrawal on Courtney Creek, and conversion to an instream right will protect important rearing habitat in the lower reaches for trout, chinook and steelhead.

In addition to acquiring instream water rights, OWT actively monitors its instream flows to ensure they are protected consistent with their priority dates and Oregon Water Law. Working closely with the Oregon Water Resources Department, OWT measures and evaluates streamflow in those reaches with an instream water right. These efforts have served to both increase the amount of "wet water" in streams and to help advance public understanding and institutional support for instream water rights.

OWT is also monitoring and observing ecological conditions on several streams with an instream water right. One example is Sucker Creek, where OWT is part of a collaborative effort that includes the U.S. Forest Service, the Siskiyou Regional Education Project, private consultants and others. This effort addresses questions regarding fish distribution, fish habitat, and water quality/quantity in Sucker Creek. The information gathered will help OWT to evaluate the ecological benefit of its current acquisitions, as well as determine future priorities for additional instream acquisitions.

### **Pacific Rivers Council's Salmon Safe Program**

In May 1997, Pacific Rivers Council successfully launched Salmon-Safe, our cooperative agricultural program, in the Pacific Northwest. The program assists Oregon farmers in adopting a stream ecosystem conservation plan and marketing their products. Based on voluntary compliance with conservation guidelines, the Salmon-Safe label is placed on food and beverage products, signifying that they were produced using farming practices that restore and protect critical salmon habitat.

The goal of the Salmon-Safe campaign is to reward Oregon's farming community for installing conservation practices that benefit water quality and native salmon by providing growers with a competitive advantage in the marketplace. Our other objective is to create broad public awareness of the need to purchase products produced by Oregon farms, orchards, dairies, and vineyards that use good stream conservation practices. By educating the public about the importance of supporting farming practices that restore and protect critical salmon habitat, Salmon-Safe is helping to convince Oregonians that they have a personal stake in watershed restoration.

### **Salmon-Safe Certification**

Working with farmers and scientists, Pacific Rivers Council created a comprehensive certification program that provides a structured and reproducible procedure for recognizing those farm operations that are doing their part in contributing to the recovery of native fish and stream ecosystem health. The focus of the program is on management practices and the degree to which a farm operation's practices are compatible with best management practices for avoiding harm to watercourses located within or near the farm. Salmon-Safe certifications are conducted by qualified, independent, and credible consultants who evaluate the extent to which a candidate farm's management practices impact water quality and stream ecosystem health.

To date, Pacific Rivers Council has certified almost three dozen farms, orchards, and vineyards, primarily in Oregon's Willamette and Hood River valleys. Salmon-Safe growers include both organic and conventional operations. For vineyards, certification primarily involves erosion prevention measures and soil management, fertilizer usage, and integrated pest management practices. Dairy industry efforts are focused primarily on riparian area management, erosion and sediment controls, and manure management. Irrigation practices, erosion control and cover crops, and minimizing pesticide demand are critical issues in our work with fruit, vegetable, and rice growers.

### **Salmon-Safe Public Education Campaign**

While the salmon crisis has been highly visible in Oregon for a decade, many Oregonians do not associate the impacts of agriculture with the decline in native salmon. The Salmon-Safe public awareness message communicates to Oregonians that their food purchasing behavior can make a difference in restoring Oregon watersheds and wild salmon stocks.

In May 1997, Pacific Rivers Council launched Salmon-Safe in Oregon with a press event at Sokol Blosser Winery and the start of our public education campaign at selected natural food and specialty retailers in Oregon and Washington. Food stores across Oregon have been enthusiastic about Salmon-Safe program participation and the opportunity to educate consumers about ecologically sustainable agriculture. In the most significant expansion of our public education campaign to date, retail giant Fred Meyer launched the Salmon-Safe promotion in January 1998.

## **Summary of Pacific Rivers Council Contributions**

Pacific Rivers Council now is poised to dramatically expand Salmon-Safe on both the agricultural and public awareness fronts. The challenge for Salmon-Safe as we expand our certification efforts and public education campaign across Oregon is translating the enthusiasm generated by our program launch into broad statewide awareness among Oregonians of the need to change agricultural practices and our own personal behaviors to restore Oregon's watersheds and imperiled wild salmon.

Based in Eugene, Pacific Rivers Council is one of the nation's leading river and native fish conservation organizations with programs in the Northwest, California, and Northern Rockies. More information about Salmon-Safe is available on the web at [www.pacrivers.org](http://www.pacrivers.org) or by calling PRC's Portland office at 503-294-0786.