

DLT dedicates new Whychus acreage

By Craig F. Eisenbeis
Correspondent

The Deschutes Land Trust's (DLT) "Campaign for Whychus Creek" continued to gain momentum last Saturday with the dedication of newly acquired acreage that more than doubles the size of its Whychus Canyon Preserve. The addition, which was actually acquired last fall, is the product of several years of planning and negotiations.

More than 100 guests attended Saturday's ceremony in what will be one of the last public opportunities to view the area prior to restoration activities set to begin next year. However, it is anticipated that some free, guided tours of the area will be offered later this year.

Brad Chalfant, executive director of DLT and chief architect of DLT's long-range plans, was "thrilled to dedicate this new portion of Whychus Canyon Preserve.... This new part of Whychus Canyon Preserve is a significant step in completing our key acquisitions along Whychus Creek."

DLT's ambitious campaign for Whychus Creek has set a goal to protect the

stream and its extensive wildlife habitat. Acquisition of this 480-acre property completes a continuous six-mile stretch of the local stream that is now permanently under the protective umbrella of DLT.

Funding for the new preserve came from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Pelton-Round Butte Mitigation Fund, Ann & Bill Swindells Charitable Trust, James H. Stanard Foundation, Laird Norton Family Foundation, The Roundhouse Foundation, and other members and individual contributors.

At the upstream end, the new addition abuts the DLT's 2011 acquisition that initially created the Whychus Canyon Preserve. Downstream, the property nestles against Rimrock Ranch, where the

owners have granted a permanent conservation easement to DLT, thus completing the six-mile protected stream segment.

Much of Whychus Creek was channelized in the 1960s to control flooding and create farm land. In the process, many miles of fish and wildlife habitat were destroyed. Restoring the creek's floodplain to its natural meanders and wetlands is a much more difficult — and expensive — process than the initial destruction.

In a massive restoration project that drew national attention, DLT previously restored the original stream flow at its upstream Camp Polk Meadow Preserve. The process took several years, but has been judged to be a great success.



PHOTO BY CRAIG F. EISENBEIS

Amanda Egertson points out Mushroom Rock, an unusual in-stream geological feature in a new section of the Whychus Canyon Preserve.

Now that this new piece has been fitted into the picture, the DLT plans to begin the process of restoring another six miles of important habitat. Although actual on-site excavation will not begin until next year, the process has already begun.

"It's going to take about 10 years to do the whole thing," said Amanda Egertson,

stewardship director for the Land Trust. "It's going to be a little bit different from Camp Polk. We will be releasing water and doing the plantings all in the same year."

Much was learned from the Camp Polk project, and the DLT hopes to put that knowledge to use in

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