

FISH: Major project restoring historic conditions on creek

Continued from page 1

According to Mathias Perle of the Upper Deschutes Watershed Council, the species rescued were to include redband trout, steelhead, Chinook, brown trout and bull trout.

Rescuers included community volunteers and personnel from DLT, the

Watershed Council, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife, Portland General Electric (PGE), the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and the U.S. Forest Service.

It takes a considerable amount of engineering to make the preserve natural again after five decades.

Sarah Mowry of DLT estimates that “they’ve cut down three or four feet to get down to the creekbed level” to recreate the “braided” relic

channels.

“That really is our goal for the Land Trust,” she said. “To let nature get back to where she needs to be.”

It also required the cooperation of neighbors on the rim of the canyon.

It took two years to come up with a viable plan to remove power poles from the canyon and relocated them along the rim.

“Fifteen power poles were decommissioned — seven of which directly bisected the stream restoration project area — and replaced with nine new poles, all upland and well-removed from the restoration area,” Amanda Edgerton of DLT reported. “Our preserve neighbors deserve all the thanks. We could not have done it without them! Their willingness to explore new power pole alignment alternatives brought new meaning to the phrase ‘community support.’ The Land Trust has always relied heavily upon and been thankful for the engagement and support of our local communities. But these neighbors went far beyond the norm and because of them we now have a power-pole-free restoration area where the water can move freely across the landscape.”

The restoration project was designed by a team of hydrologists and biologists from the Deschutes National Forest working in close



PHOTO BY CEILI CORNELIUS

A “shocker” went out with each crew to help corral fish.

coordination with private consultants and staff from the Watershed Council and Deschutes Land Trust. The implementation work in 2016 is part of a larger six-mile restoration project on Whychus Creek. Phase I, the initial work on 1.5 miles of the creek at Whychus Canyon Preserve, will be done this summer and run through the fall. Then, the project area will be left alone to rest, recover, and naturally evolve and grow. Phase II, which includes the portion of Whychus Creek upstream of Phase I, is planned for 2017 or 2018.

“This has been a very complex and collaborative project,” said Brad Chalfant, executive director of DLT.

Primary funders of the project include: Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Pelton Round Butte

Fund (Portland General Electric & the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs), Deschutes National Forest, Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Laird Norton Family Foundation, Bonneville Environmental Foundation and East Cascade Audubon Society.

For more information on Deschutes Land Trust, call 541-330-0017 or visit www.deschuteslandtrust.org. For more information on the Watershed Council, call 541-382-6103 or visit www.restorethedeschutes.org.



PHOTO BY CEILI CORNELIUS

Heavy equipment is recreating historic braided channels through canyon.

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