

landscapes

The Deschutes Land Trust works cooperatively with landowners to conserve land for wildlife, scenic views, and local communities.

THE NEWSLETTER OF DESCHUTES LAND TRUST { VOL 17, SPRING 2013 }

In This Issue

THE ROLE OF FIRE IN RESTORATION:
Improving forest health and wildlife habitat

INTEGRATING CONSERVATION & RECREATION:
Finding a balance that works

2013 WALKS + HIKES:
Get outside and explore your protected lands!



INTEGRATING CONSERVATION & RECREATION

When you think of a Deschutes Land Trust Preserve, what comes to mind? Birds, fish, forests, meadows, or scenic canyons? Great places to hike or walk? A Land Trust Preserve can be all those things, but it requires a delicate balancing act of habitat protection and public access.

The Land Trust's priority is to protect land for wildlife. That means when we establish a preserve, we manage all other uses—recreation included—to support that goal. With each new Preserve, we develop strategies for protecting and enhancing key natural resources, then plans for education, and, if appropriate, recreation.

Why recreation? The Land Trust is also here to serve local communities, and new recreational opportunities are always in demand. When people visit a Preserve—whether as part of a formal tour or for a last-minute weekend afternoon hike—they experience our work in ways not possible using maps, websites, and presentations. This connection can provide a tangible, lasting impression and convey the importance of conserving land for future generations.

In the past few years the Land Trust has devoted increasing attention to connecting communities to their natural surroundings. We now offer more than 100 Walks + Hikes a year. We've built new trails and kiosks at the Metolius Preserve and Whychus Canyon Preserve, and are planning additional trail construction for the coming field season.

Finally, we're looking at ways to make larger connections between local communities and our protected lands. Imagine one day riding your mountain bike from Shevlin Park to Sisters, all on single track. Or, envision hiking from Whychus Canyon Preserve to Alder Springs along the rugged canyon rims of lower Whychus Creek. Such connections will strengthen our communities, our organization, and ultimately our ability to conserve important natural resources. ➤

LAND TRUST

THE ROLE OF FIRE IN RESTORATION

Fire can play an important role in restoring habitat, and the Land Trust has been working for many years to re-integrate fire at our Preserves. Historically, frequent, low-intensity fires helped shape our Central Oregon landscape. Over time, without these fires, plant communities shifted and less fire-resistant species now encroach on those that tolerate fire well. One of the Land Trust's restoration priorities is to return fire to our properties in areas where it makes sense and is safe to do so. This, in turn, helps restore forest resiliency, improves wildlife habitat, and helps protect neighboring communities.

In January, we burned slash piles on 100 acres of the steep canyon slopes at Whychus Canyon Preserve. These piles of juniper limbs, trunks, and tops were thinned in 2012 to benefit the remaining ponderosa pine and aspen at the Preserve. Later this year, students and volunteers will seed the burn pile sites with native grasses and flowers.

At the Metolius Preserve, we've been preparing for the reintroduction of fire by thinning overcrowded stands of ponderosa pine and grinding slash, shrubs, and small grand fir. This spring we hope to complete a prescribed burn in partnership with the Sisters Ranger District. This burn across boundaries will return fire to approximately 200 acres in the southern section of the Preserve and on neighboring Deschutes National Forest land. Students in Matt Orr's OSU-Cascades course will provide pre- and post-burn monitoring support. A burn team from the Sisters Ranger District will lead the project. ➤

Many thanks to the Deschutes National Forest, Pacific Stewardship, Weyerhaeuser, and Title II for helping return fire to the Metolius Preserve.

Learn more about the role of fire in restoration on a tour with Stewardship Director Amanda Egertson.
Details: deschuteslandtrust.org/events



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