

Paulina Creek Preserve Community Vision



DESCHUTES
LAND
TRUST

Deschutes Land Trust
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Introduction

The Deschutes Land Trust purchased and created Paulina Creek Preserve in 2022. Located north of La Pine, this 1,100 acre former ranch was at risk of residential development and beloved by the local community as wildlife habitat and for its open scenic views. The Land Trust collaborated with neighboring land managers, local communities, Tribal partners, and a philanthropic lender to quickly purchase and protect Paulina Creek Preserve. The purchase launched a multi-phase effort to convert the property into a public nature preserve and accessible recreation area, and raise the funds necessary to protect Paulina Creek Preserve forever.

Paulina Creek Preserve protects 3.7 miles of Paulina Creek, wet and dry meadows, and ponderosa and lodgepole pine forest that provide habitat for a wide range of wildlife. The Preserve's proximity to the 54,000-acre Newberry National Volcanic Monument enhances wildlife migration corridors, regional trail connections, and will soon help connect the local community to the outdoors.

In 2023, the Land Trust embarked on an effort to bring southern Deschutes County communities together to develop a shared vision for Paulina Creek Preserve. We sat down for dozens of cups of coffee with community leaders, Tribes, organizations, and residents. More than 100 people completed our community survey. We convened dozens of people for facilitated conversations to define community's values regarding Paulina Creek Preserve. Volunteers then signed up to further discuss these values and how the Land Trust can uphold them as we move forward managing Paulina Creek Preserve. This document, the Paulina Creek Preserve Community Vision, is the result of that process.

The Vision is a key tool for the Land Trust as we develop and implement a plan for future management of Paulina Creek Preserve. It will inform our future strategies for restoration, access, and the ways in which the Preserve can meet the needs of the communities it serves.

As a locally based, nationally-accredited organization serving Central Oregon for more than 25 years, the Land Trust knows that private land conservation can have a transformative impact on communities. Building trust, positive working relationships, and a reputation for excellence in caring for the land are the core strategies that have helped us conserve more than 18,742 acres throughout our region and we are proud to have added Paulina Creek Preserve to our network of Community Preserves.

Partners and Participants

The following groups and individuals contributed to the creation of this document:

Deschutes Land Trust, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Klamath Tribes, Central Oregon Trail Alliance, Oregon Department of Forestry, La Pine Chamber and Visitor Center, United States Forest Service – Deschutes National Forest, Deschutes County, Dirty Freehub, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Deschutes Trails Coalition, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Newberry Regional Partnership, Sunriver Homeowners Association, Deschutes Historical Society, Sunriver Nature Center, Upper Deschutes Watershed Council, City of La Pine, Discover Your Forest, Deschutes River Conservancy, and the Sunriver Area Chamber of Commerce.

Values

Recreation and Access

Definition: We value accessible and safe recreation for our community and visitors.

How Can We Uphold This Value?

- Focus on creation and inclusion of universally accessible recreation infrastructure.
 - Build trails and trail infrastructure that is welcoming and accessible to people of all abilities and is sensitive to seasonal migratory movements of wildlife in the area.
 - Provide clear maps and information to allow visitors to feel prepared.
 - Consider transportation limitations for people with disabilities and those dependent on public transit.
- Develop interpretive infrastructure that includes voices and perspectives from marginalized communities.
- Consider low-impact, diverse, varied and year-round types of recreational access.
- Create management plans that simultaneously enable multi-use recreation, mitigate user conflict, and limit negative ecological impact.
- Pursue common-sense connections, fill gaps and add value to existing and neighboring infrastructure.
- Promote responsible and sustainable recreation.
- Consider ecologically sustainable fishing access.
- Create infrastructure (seating, viewing, parking) for wildlife watching.
- Enhance visitor safety through use of volunteer ambassadors and stewards.
- Partner with US Forest Service to align, where appropriate, visitor experience and safety across Forest Service and Land Trust managed lands.

Indigenous and Cultural Heritage

Definition: We value the cultural importance of historic, sacred, and indigenous lands, and we prioritize opportunities where land can connect communities to their histories.

How Can We Uphold This Value?

- Work with Tribal Partners to implement acquisition and management strategies which allow for greatest recognition of treaty hunting, fishing, and gathering rights.
- Design interpretive materials in partnership with Tribal partners which highlight pre-European history of the property.
 - Support and uphold Tribal discretion related to cultural sites and place names.
- Explore management and stewardship planning with the inclusion of Traditional Ecological Knowledge.
 - Prioritize incorporating culturally important plant species into restoration designs,
 - Seek guidance from Tribes to align restoration activities with Tribal management priorities.
- Work with local history organizations to interpret and share recent history of Paulina Creek Preserve.
 - Opportunity to share agricultural history in La Pine.

Habitat for Plants and Animals

Definition: We value the protection of plant and animal species and their natural habitats.

How Can We Uphold This Value?

- Maximize ecological function in this rare and vital wetlands/wet meadows in the East Cascades Ecoregion.
 - Design and implement stream and meadow restoration that improves habitat quality and diversity for fish, amphibians, birds, invertebrates, and other animals.
 - Seek opportunities to aid in recovery of threatened Oregon spotted frog.
 - Integrate Paulina Creek Preserve Restoration with Land Trust Monarch and Pollinator Conservation efforts.
- Protect key elk and deer migration areas and winter range by restoring habitat and minimizing disturbance.
 - Improve forage through thinning and diversifying forest where necessary.
 - Design trails to minimize disturbance.
 - Reduce incidents of poaching through monitoring and cooperation with law enforcement.
 - Conduct public education related to responsible recreation.
 - Allow responsible dog access.
 - Educate visitors as to best practices to reduce introducing and spreading weeds.
- Monitor and treat non-native invasive weeds.
- Address impacts to wildlife caused by fencing.
- Consider potential increases in mosquito populations resulting from restoration efforts.

Thriving Local Economy

Definition: We value the management of renewable and sustainable resources to contribute to our community's economic vitality and livability.

How Can We Uphold this Value?

- Work with local and regional tourism organizations to include Paulina Creek Preserve as a tourism asset for La Pine.
- Position Paulina Creek Preserve as a recreation amenity for businesses, individuals considering relocation to La Pine.
- Partner with City Government to address growth and resource concerns.
 - Provide access to much needed groundwater mitigation credits to City of La Pine through transfer of water rights.

Water Protection

Definition: We value the protection of groundwater and restoring creeks and rivers that provide ecological and climate benefits for people and nature.

How Can We Uphold This Value?

- Realign Paulina Creek to historic flow paths, restore ecological function and connect the stream to the floodplain.
- Protect water levels in Paulina Lake.
- Pursue opportunities to maximize downstream ecological benefits to the Little Deschutes River.
- Protect restored creek by limiting recreation disturbance of banks and riparian areas.

Opportunities for Youth

Definition: We value opportunities to empower our youth through connection to nature and career opportunities in the natural resource sector.

How Can We Uphold This Value?

- Provide volunteer and opportunities for youth.
 - Provide opportunities for local and regional youth crew programs to participate in ecological restoration and other stewardship activities.
 - Provide recreational and program experiences designed for families with children.
 - Engage with school groups to access Paulina Creek Preserve for STEAM field trips.
 - Work with partners to develop site-based curriculum.
 - Connect with high school natural resource program.

Wildfire Risk Mitigation

Definition: We live in a fire adapted ecosystem, and we value a community wide approach to wildfire mitigation, prevention and response.

How Can We Uphold This Value?

- Align wildfire risk mitigation strategies with neighboring land management agencies.
 - Explore opportunity for cross-boundary fuel reduction projects.
- Practice restoration through active management to promote resilient forests and restore natural conditions.
 - Promote diversity of species composition and enhance stand vigor.
 - Limit/prevent the spread of invasive species/disease.
 - Consider prescribed fire as a tool for landscape resiliency.
 - Work with Tribes to implement traditional burning practices where possible.
- Encourage and educate surrounding neighborhoods about fire resiliency.
- Encourage wildfire prevention through responsible recreation.
 - Manage recreational use to minimize wildfire risk.
 - Align fire-related restrictions with neighboring public lands.

Conclusion

The findings of this shared community visioning process bring to light the community's passion and commitment to the future of Paulina Creek Preserve. Going forward, the Deschutes Land Trust and our many partners will not only endeavor to uphold these values but will continue to refine them, add new voices, and approach our conservation efforts with integrity, transparency, and collaboration.

We owe tremendous thanks to all the individuals and organizations who helped create the Paulina Creek Preserve Community Vision. Their time and expertise were invaluable, and the collaboration and relationship building that resulted from our work together will no doubt be long lasting. Thank you!