



landscapes

CONSERVING LAND FOR WILDLIFE, SCENIC VIEWS, AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES.

DESCHUTES LAND TRUST NEIGHBOR NEWS {SPRING 2020}

DESCHUTESLANDTRUST.ORG/NEIGHBOR-NEWS

BEAVERS HELP GUIDE RESTORATION

Last spring the Land Trust reported on plans for stream restoration at Willow Springs Preserve. Our goal is to restore the meadow and Whychus Creek to a more natural state by taking a cue from nature's master engineer, the beaver.

Beavers play an important role in our streams and rivers. Their ponds help slow water flow, improve water quality, and create new side channels. As part of the planning for stream restoration at Willow Springs Preserve, the Land Trust and our partners decided to pilot beaver engineering as a low-tech model for creek restoration at nearby Camp Polk Meadow Preserve.

Last fall, volunteers and staff gathered at Camp Polk Meadow to mimic beavers by building several dam-like structures in Whychus Creek. On smaller side channels of the creek, crews built seven mini-dams out of woven willow and alder, along with rocks and mud (see photo below). Some of these dams were held in place with vertical wooden posts. These mini-dams have helped create slow-water ponds and fill dry side channels, offering different kinds of habitat for fish and wildlife. They also have encouraged the beavers themselves to use the human-created ponds by offering the deep water they need for predator avoidance, food storage, and den entrance tunnels.

Our hope is that these structures will help jumpstart some of the natural stream processes that will, in turn, build the healthy habitat fish and wildlife will need into the future. These structures are not intended to be permanent and instead will change and evolve as those natural processes take over. In fact, the Camp Polk Meadow Preserve beaver population has already begun changing and making these dams their own! What we learn here will help with the design of the larger restoration effort at Willow Springs Preserve that we hope will begin in 2021. ➤

Learn more about the benefits of beaver: deschuteslandtrust.org/beneficial-beavers



BRINGING THE OUTDOORS AND NATURE TO YOU

Are you missing the nature of Central Oregon during this time of physical isolation? Never fear, the Land Trust is here! We are working to bring the outdoors and nature to you. Check our website, join our e-newsletter, and follow us on social media for what's blooming, flying, growing, and happening in and around Central Oregon!

Learn more: deschuteslandtrust.org/nature-bytes



DESCHUTES LAND TRUST NEIGHBOR NEWS {SPRING 2020}

KRIS KRISTOVICH

HELPING FISH RETURN HOME

The Land Trust has been a long-term partner in the effort to reintroduce salmon and steelhead to Central Oregon. We've hosted fish releases at our Preserves and completed miles of restoration projects to improve fish habitat. Now we are working with our partners at Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to host young fish called smolts in a large acclimation tank at Camp Polk Meadow Preserve.

Acclimation is when smolts are placed in a holding facility that contains water from the stream where the fish would have historically spawned. At Camp Polk Meadow Preserve, ODFW is using water from Whychus Creek in the acclimation tank, which helps young salmon and steelhead connect or imprint with the creek. Smolts are particularly sensitive to the smell of the water from their home creek and use this time in their lives to store the smell in their brain. Then, they use this clue to help find their way back to Whychus Creek to spawn as adults. The hope is (as the research has shown) that these smolts will be better at surviving and returning to Whychus Creek than the tiny fry that were released previously.

At Camp Polk Meadow Preserve, we have three groups of smolts that are being acclimated and released. Each group is kept in the acclimation tank for around three weeks. After that, a screen is removed so that the fish can swim out of the tank and into the creek on their own. The first group of spring Chinook salmon were put in the acclimation tank in March and released in early April. Then, two batches of steelhead were acclimated and released in April and early May.

We are hopeful this new method will help bring more salmon and steelhead back to Whychus Creek! Stay tuned for more details in future neighbor newsletters. —



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GARY MILLER



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CAMP POLK MEADOW PRESERVE RESTORATION CONTINUES

Native plant restoration continues this year in the Hindman Springs portion of Camp Polk Meadow Preserve. Our clear plastic will return to kill weeds over the summer, and then this fall we will remove the plastic to plant native vegetation. The good news: it's working! Native plants are beginning to thrive in areas we have restored in the last few years.

Learn more: deschuteslandtrust.org/hs-restoration