



Neighbor News

Your Connection to Ochoco Preserve

Ochoco Preserve Project Update

The Land Trust wrapped up the first phase of the Ochoco Preserve Project last fall. Crews finished active construction work on the new McKay Creek channel at the end of September, and then nearly 40,000 native grasses, flowers, shrubs, and trees were planted. What's next? The Land Trust continues to work diligently to raise funds for the next phase of restoration and community access, with the goal of continuing active construction efforts in 2024. **This year we'll be focusing on:**

- **Letting the restoration area rest, recover, and evolve.** We know the Preserve looks a bit raw at the moment. But those thousands of native plants are doing their part to help hold the soil in place and grow in and fill that space. Growth will be slower at first as the plants establish roots, but it will take off in the coming years. We like to say the plants will sleep the first year, creep the second, and then leap the third!
- **Managing weeds.** Anytime we disturb large swaths of ground like we did at Ochoco Preserve, nonnative weeds are a major concern. Land Trust staff will be working diligently to manage weeds so new native plants can thrive.
- **Bringing fish back.** The new acclimation pond we built at Ochoco Preserve last year is already in use! Local fish and wildlife agencies released the first batch of young steelhead in March. They lived in the pond for a couple of weeks, before being released into McKay Creek.
- **Sharing the Preserve with the community.** We are excited to once again offer tours of Ochoco Preserve for the community this spring-fall. Join us to see the Preserve in person, learn about future plans, and see the transformation underway.
- **Planting more native plants.** We'll be adding more native grasses, flowers, shrubs, and trees around McKay Creek this fall and we'll need lots of volunteer help. Stay tuned for more details!

Stay up-to-date on Ochoco Preserve: deschuteslandtrust.org/neighbor-news



Visit Ochoco Preserve!

Join the Land Trust on a guided tour of Ochoco Preserve! Each year volunteers lead free walks and hikes at Land Trust Preserves, including our Ochoco Preserve.

Learn more about the Preserve and the Land Trust's vision for healthy streams, flourishing native plants and wildlife, and new connections for the community.

Details:
deschuteslandtrust.org/hikes

48 Wood structures

We built 48 wood structures at Ochoco Preserve as part of the McKay Creek restoration in 2022. These new structures will help provide habitat for fish and wildlife in and along the creek.



All About Acclimation

The Land Trust participates in a collaborative, long-term effort to support the reintroduction of salmon and steelhead in the upper Deschutes River region. This year we were able to once again help with steelhead reintroduction efforts at Ochoco Preserve.

The Land Trust built a new acclimation pond at Ochoco Preserve as part of last year's restoration efforts. Acclimation is when smolts are placed in a holding facility (in this case the pond) that contains water from the stream or river the fish would naturally return to for spawning. When fish are smolts, or one year old fish, they 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. This process is called imprinting, and it helps them find their way back to the same area to spawn as an adult.

At Ochoco Preserve, 17,500 summer steelhead acclimated in our new pond in March and then released directly into McKay Creek. Wildlife officials track some of the young fish once they have been released via a PIT (passive integrated transponder) tag. The PIT tag is somewhat similar to a microchip for your pet. PIT tag monitoring stations, located at certain points along fish migration routes, record the unique tag number as the fish passes by. This is how officials are able to monitor the fish's progress as they head out to the ocean, then hopefully return again to spawn. We look forward to tracking the progress and celebrating the fish that return to the waters of McKay Creek!

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Volunteer!

Donate your time indoors or out to help conserve and care for the land in Central Oregon. Together, we can restore our streams and forests, ensure we have clean air and water, and provide habitat so wildlife can thrive. Join us today!

Learn more:
deschuteslandtrust.org/volunteer



CONSERVATION. COMMUNITY. CARING FOR THE LAND.

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