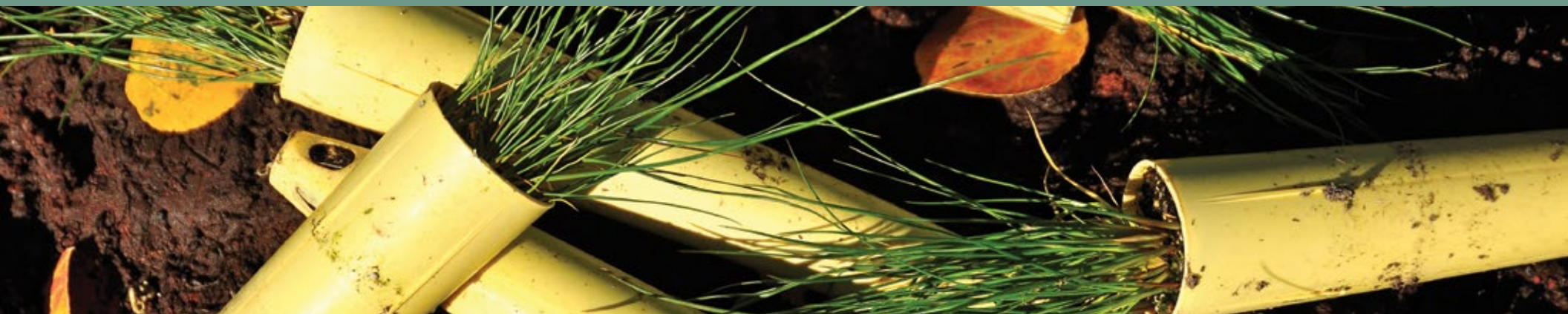
COALITION OF OREGON LAND TRUSTS

State of the Lands 2014

How land trusts are helping conserve Oregon's character



19 land trusts. 582 projects. 307,465 acres.

170
full-time employees

39,052
supporters

4,849
active volunteers

81,865
acres open to the public

44,757
acres restored

33
counties served

22,766
people attending outreach events

Figures from 2013

Dear friends,

Oregonians have a long legacy of conserving the beauty and rural character of our state: the rugged coast, the wild rivers, the vast high desert, and also our important farms, forests and ranches. Our collective love for this landscape makes Oregon the wonderful state it is.

Land trusts have become a key part of this conservation story. They help protect special places against many modern threats – invasive species, air and water pollution, suburban sprawl and loss of fish and wildlife habitat – and they restore lands and waters that suffered past damage.

From a small working farm on the outskirts of Corvallis to a magnificent grassland prairie near Enterprise, Oregon land trusts have worked with willing landowners and community partners to conserve, restore and steward more than half a million acres all over the state – that's over 2-½ times the size of Crater Lake National Park.

The Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts serves as the central voice and an advocate for 19 of the state's land trusts. We've assembled this report so you can see the collective impact of our coalition. If you examine these statistics and read the stories, I think you'll come away as proud as I am of their remarkable accomplishments to our Oregon way of life, accomplishments that will benefit future generations.

Sincerely,

Kelley Beamer

Kelley Beamer, COLT executive director

On the cover: Wallowa Lake by David Jensen (top), native plant plugs by Lisa Bagwell (bottom)

Our collective impact around Oregon

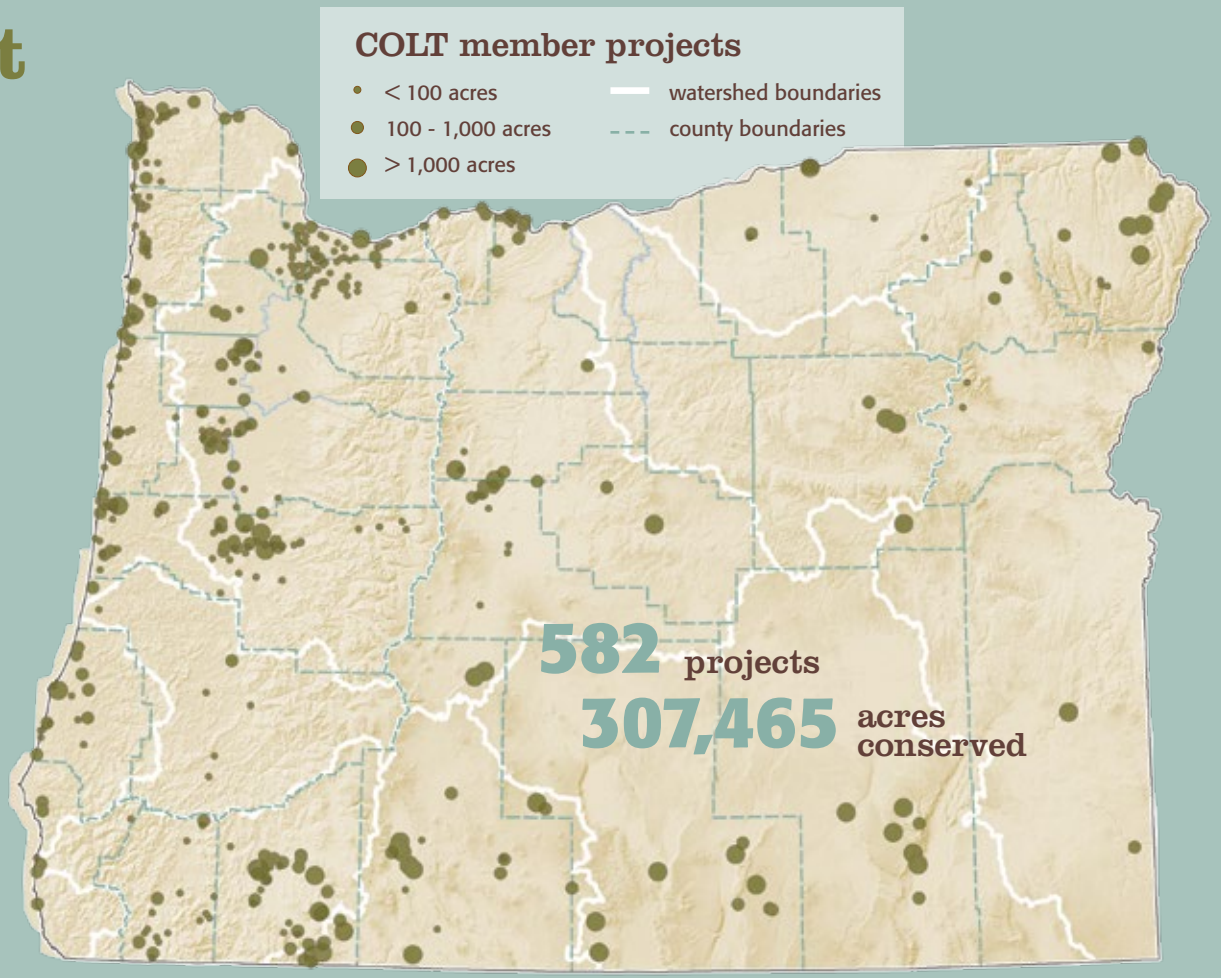
COLT member land trust projects by type

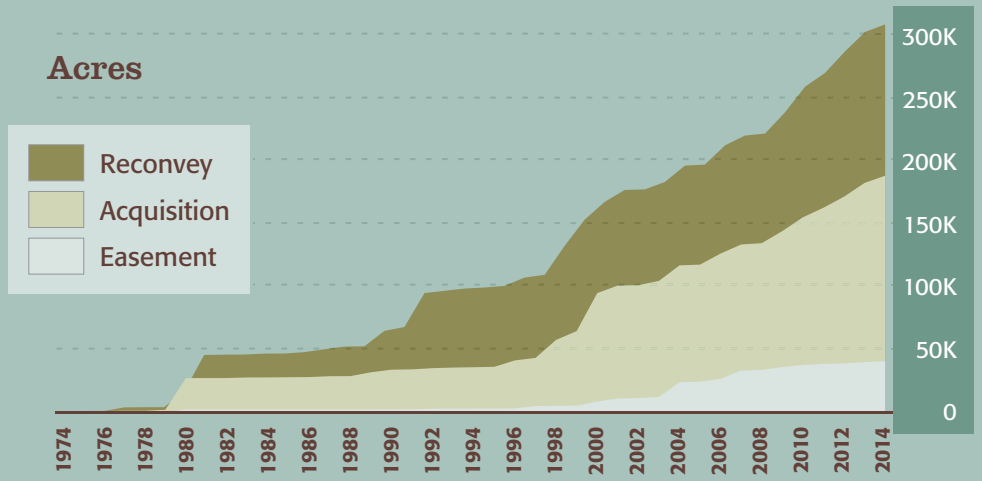
Land trusts use three main tools on project properties.

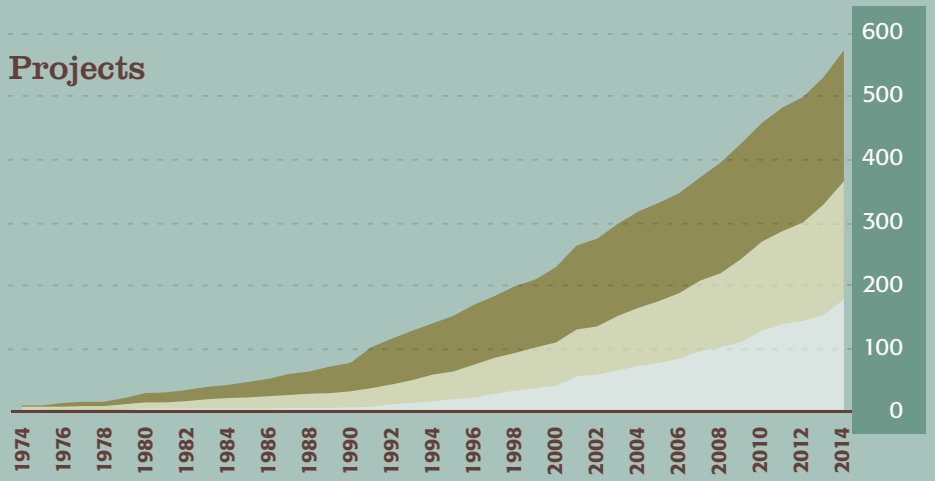
179 **conservation easements**
(40,590 acres)
A conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust that allows the landowner to permanently restrict how his or her property may be used.

191 **acquisitions**
(146,855 acres)
A fee acquisition means a land trust owns a property outright, through donation or purchase, with the intent of long-term ownership and management.

212 **reconveyances**
(120,020 acres)
A reconveyance means a land trust owns the land or easement temporarily, with the property eventually transferred to another entity, such as a public agency or non-profit partner.







Wolfe Ranch
Wallowa Land Trust
Enterprise, Oregon

The Wolfe Ranch has been in Woody Wolfe's family for six generations. Until 1878, a Nez Perce fishing village stood on the site. Comprising 454 pastoral acres and rich Native American history, the ranch sits near the confluence of the Lostine and Wallowa rivers in Wallowa County.

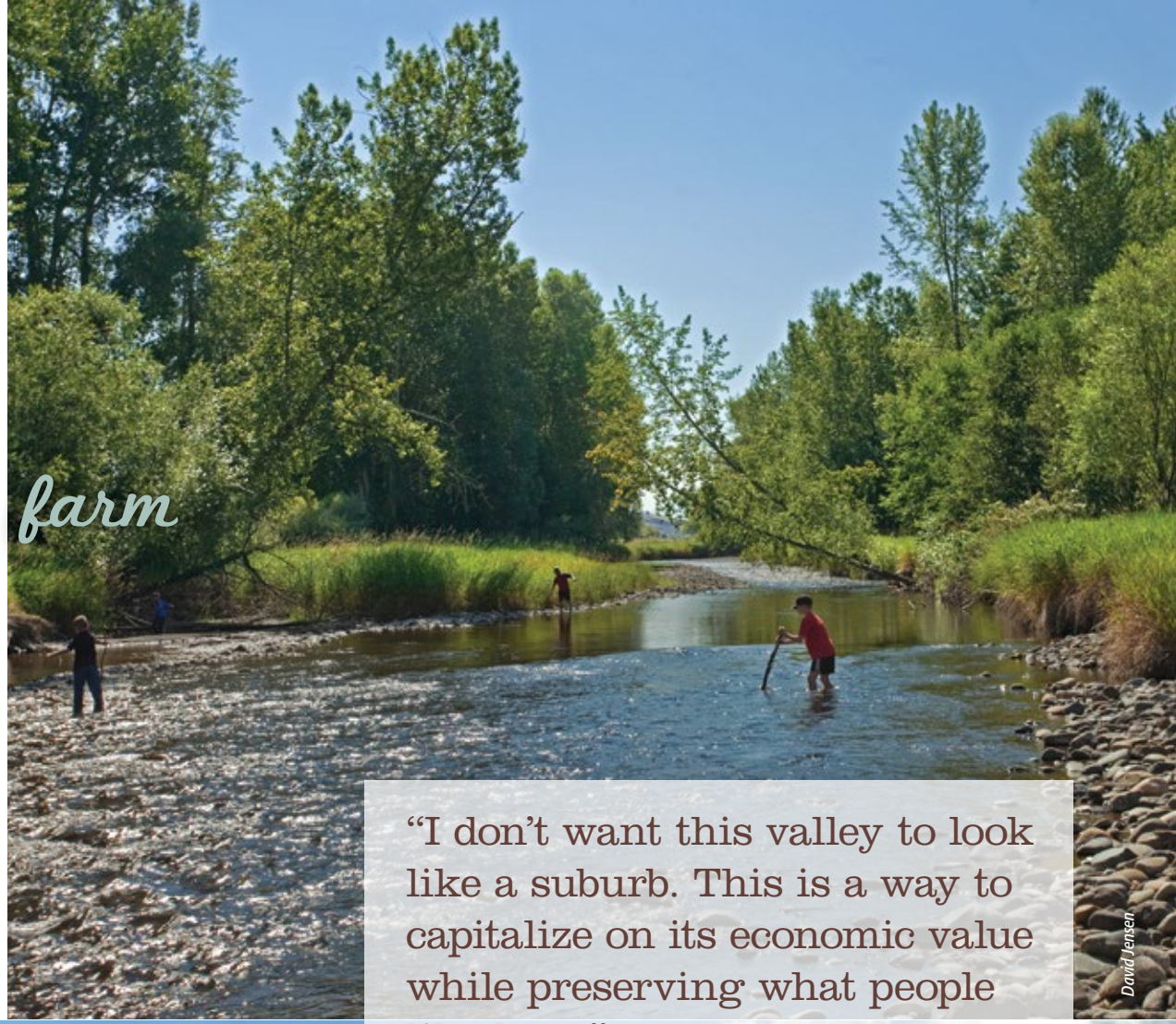
Residential developers had their eye on the picturesque property. But the Wolfes wanted the ranch's agricultural character preserved, even long after they are gone. So in 2008, Woody approached Wallowa Land Trust.

Protecting a historic farm from development

With the support of the local community, the land trust secured grant funding to purchase a conservation easement on 197 acres of the ranch in 2011. The easement allows the Wolfe family to continue to own and farm their land, while knowing it will be conserved as open space forever.

The easement also helps improve water quality and habitat for salmon and other fish and wildlife populations.

The project underscores Wallowa Land Trust's commitment to working farms and ranches. It delivers economic, environmental and historical benefits to rural Wallowa County.



David Jensen

> "I don't want this valley to look like a suburb. This is a way to capitalize on its economic value while preserving what people like here." – Woody Wolfe

Abby Seethoff

© Rick McEwan

Camp Polk Meadow Preserve
Deschutes Land Trust
near Sisters, Oregon

Reviving Whychus Creek

Whychus Creek flows from mountain glaciers, through open meadows and desert canyons, where it joins the Deschutes River. Once a productive steelhead stream, almost 150 years of homesteading, irrigation withdrawal, flood control and residential development reduced habitat for wildlife, salmon and steelhead.

For 15 years, the Deschutes Land Trust has worked with local landowners to bring Whychus Creek back to life. Through acquisitions and easements, the land trust has permanently conserved 2,200 acres along the creek.

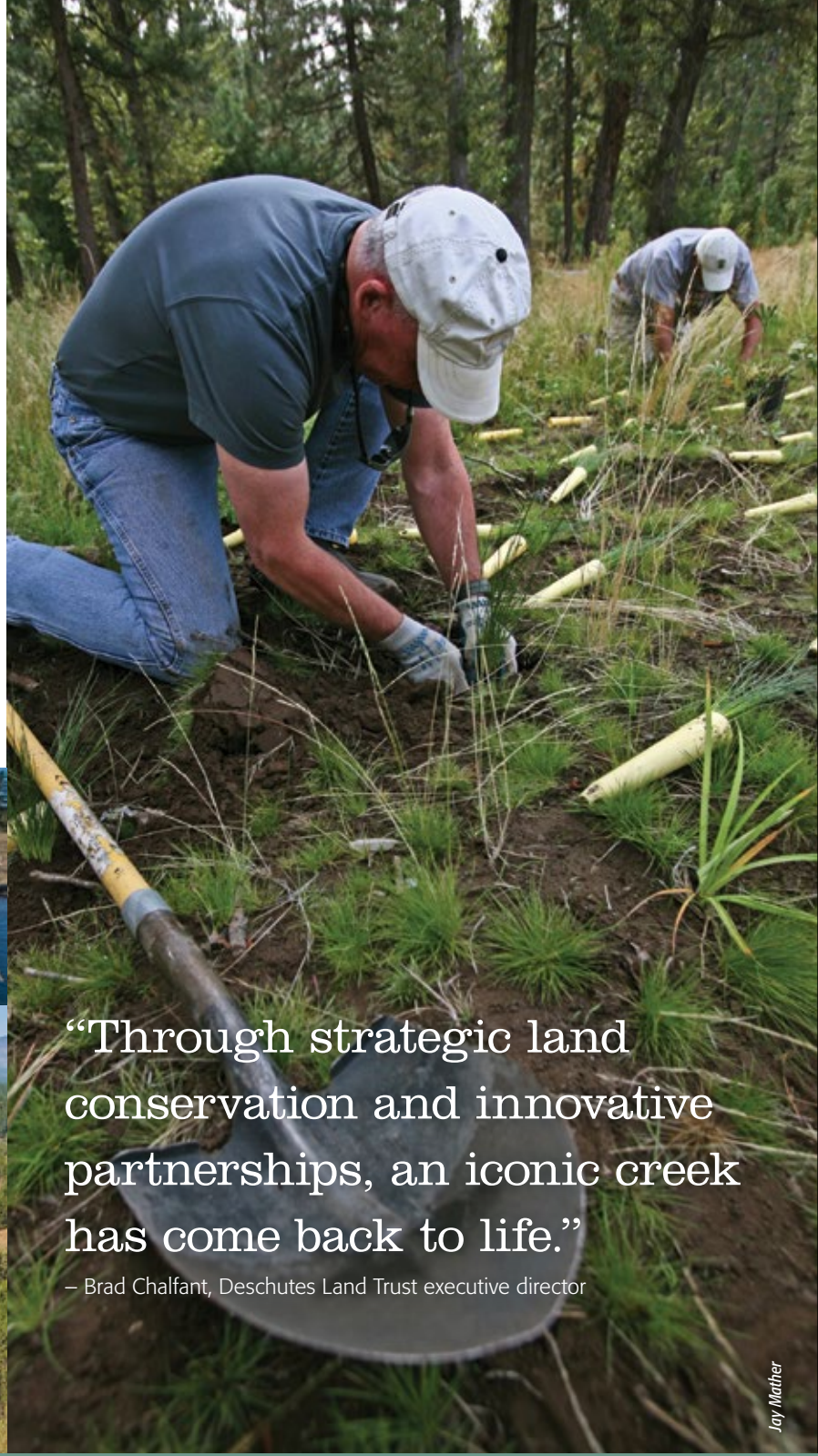
One of these is Camp Polk Meadow Preserve, a prime example of how a land trust can benefit not only fish and wildlife, but also its local community. The land trust, community volunteers and diverse partners worked for a decade to improve habitat, culminating in a massive restoration of the creek, returning it to its meandering path through the meadow.

The project brought together the local community, a watershed council, a regional water trust, a federal agency and local irrigators. The result: improved wildlife habitat and a community dedicated to caring for a place. Today, Camp Polk Meadow Preserve serves as a national model for collaborative stream restoration and the Deschutes Land Trust continues to bring Whychus Creek back to life through strategic conservation and community engagement.

Lisa Bagwell

Jay Mather

Russ McMillan



"Through strategic land conservation and innovative partnerships, an iconic creek has come back to life."

– Brad Chalfant, Deschutes Land Trust executive director

Jay Mather

The Oregon chub recovery
McKenzie River Trust
Lower McKenzie River

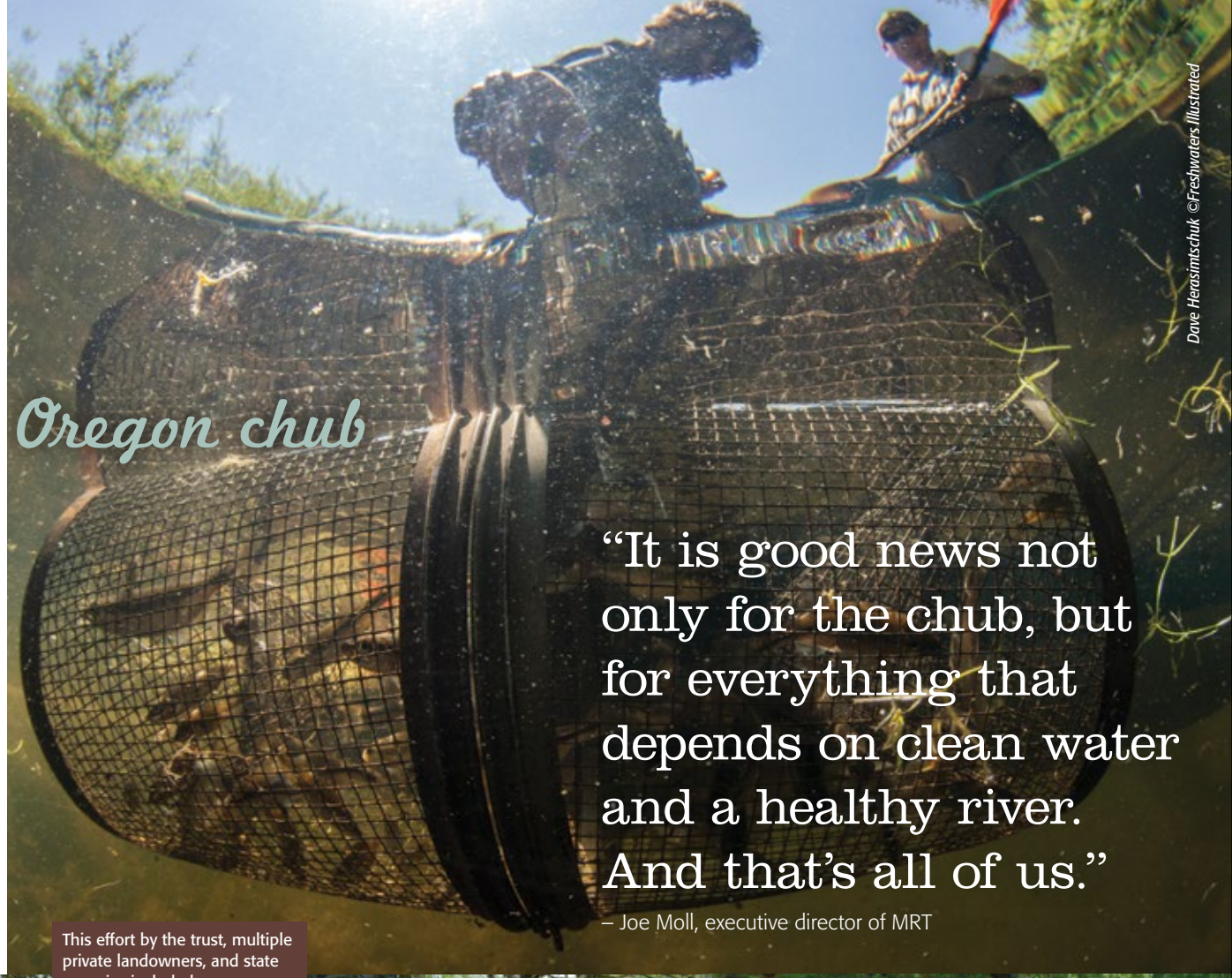
The Oregon chub, an unassuming minnow-like fish, was listed as a federally endangered species in 1993. Biologists thought it was long extinct in the McKenzie River because it hadn't been seen in the basin for a century – until one day in 2001. A fish biologist happened to spot one during a routine survey of property protected by the McKenzie River Trust.

The comeback of the Oregon chub

It turned out the land trust's existing work protecting Eugene and Springfield's source of drinking water and restoring lost habitat for salmon in the McKenzie, had also unknowingly benefitted the chub.

The discovery added new urgency to the trust's work, ramping up collaboration with private landowners, nonprofits and public agencies to permanently protect chub habitat on multiple properties.

Voluntary conservation, spurred by long-term work with the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife to promote recovery, caused the Oregon chub to make a historic comeback. On Feb. 4, 2014, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed removing the chub from the endangered species list. If finalized, it would be the first fish ever to have recovered after being listed under the federal Endangered Species Act.



Dave Herasimtschuk ©Freshwaters Illustrated

"It is good news not only for the chub, but for everything that depends on clean water and a healthy river. And that's all of us."

– Joe Moll, executive director of MRT

McKenzie River Trust

This effort by the trust, multiple private landowners, and state agencies included surveys, habitat restoration, and a good deal of collaboration.

Dave Herasimtschuk ©Freshwaters Illustrated

McKenzie Watershed Council

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Bald Hill Farm
Greenbelt Land Trust
Corvallis, Oregon

A sustainable farm, a recreation hotspot and an educational hub

A few miles outside of Corvallis, at Bald Hill Farm, joggers, horseback riders and mountain bikers explore three miles of scenic public trails, while cows graze just a few feet away.

Former owners Andrew and Lauralee Martin saw the farm as a critical link in a network of rural properties around Corvallis. The property includes important upland and prairie habitat, with populations of three federally listed plant species: Willamette daisy, Nelson's checkermallow, and Kincaid's lupine. They approached Greenbelt Land Trust with a proposition to conserve this special place. With strong community support and a generous contribution from the landowners, Greenbelt secured state and federal grants to purchase the nearly 600 acre property in 2013.

Now, the farm serves as a living classroom. Greenbelt Land Trust hosts restoration workdays, hikes and tours for area residents and local students. Part of the property continues to be leased as farmland to operate a grass-fed livestock business.

A multi-purpose rural propery nestled within an urban environment, Bald Hill Farm is an intersection of sustainable agriculture, ecological conservation, recreation and community education – and it will remain that way for generations to come.

"People are used to living separate from where their food is raised. Bald Hill Farm is an opportunity for people to live and recreate right next to the farm that produces the food they buy from the grocery store or local restaurants."

– Michael Pope, Greenbelt Land Trust

Through workdays, tours and recreation, people come to explore and learn about this working farm.

North Coast Floodplain Restoration Project

North Coast Land Conservancy

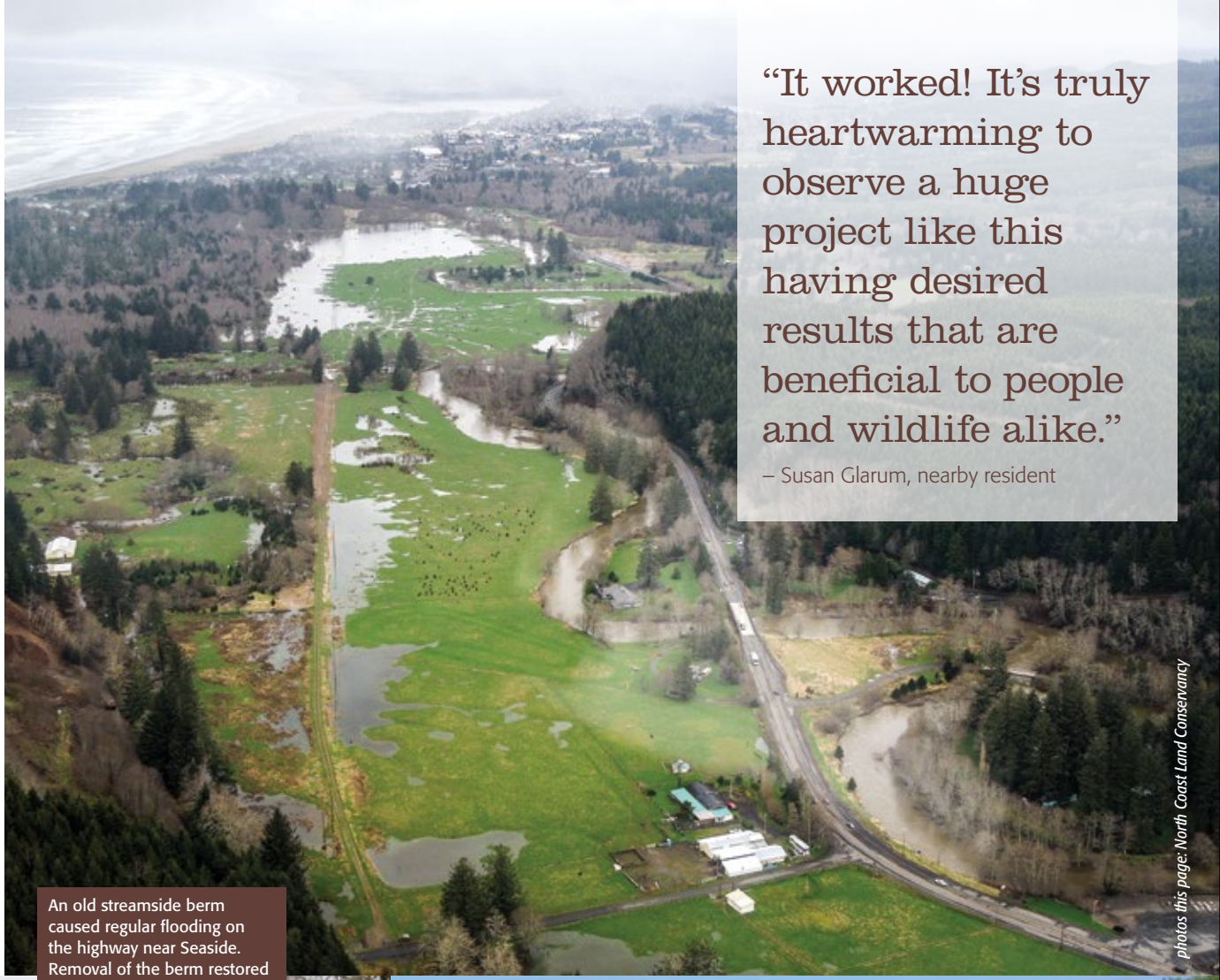
Circle Creek Habitat Reserve near Seaside, Oregon

Restoring habitat and helping a highway

For more than 40 years, the Necanicum River flooded Highway 101 just south of Seaside, causing dangerous driving conditions, delays and road closures. People were sometimes cut off from work, school and even the hospital.

In June 2013, with help from Clatsop County, ODOT and local cities, the North Coast Land Conservancy removed a 1.5-mile long berm on their 364-acre Circle Creek Habitat Reserve along the river. The berm was installed generations before to prevent flooding on the property, only to push the water onto the highway. NCLC and others believed that allowing the river to flood naturally onto its original floodplain would not only stop highway flooding, but also restore habitat for coastal wildlife.

When the first heavy rains of the season hit in late September 2013, coastal residents joined NCLC staff to cheer as river waters reconnected with the floodplain for the first time in decades, leaving the highway open for safe passage.

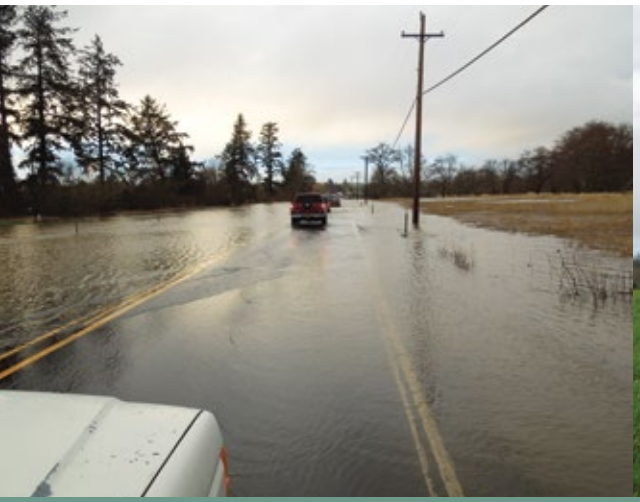


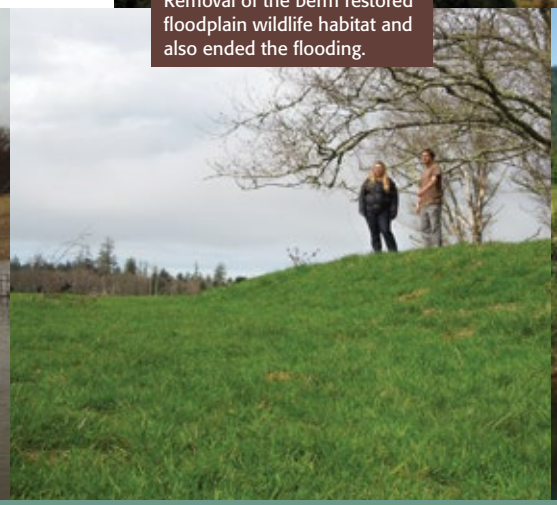
"It worked! It's truly heartwarming to observe a huge project like this having desired results that are beneficial to people and wildlife alike."

– Susan Glarum, nearby resident

An old streamside berm caused regular flooding on the highway near Seaside. Removal of the berm restored floodplain wildlife habitat and also ended the flooding.

photos this page: North Coast Land Conservancy





The Table Rocks
The Nature Conservancy
north of Medford, Oregon

Rising 800 feet above the Rogue River Valley, Table Rocks stands as a flat-topped, natural monument formed 7 million years ago from lava flows. Atop these mesas are wetland mosaics that host a spectacular diversity of spring wildflowers, including one, the dwarf woolly meadowfoam, that only grows on the top of the Table Rocks, nowhere else on Earth.

For at least 15,000 years, the Takelma Indians inhabited the area around Table Rocks. But during European settlement, the Takelma were forcibly relocated to the Siletz and Grand Ronde reservations.

Reconnecting a landmark to its history

Eventually, the Bureau of Land Management and The Nature Conservancy came to cooperatively manage this 4,864-acre property, providing educational tours and conserving special biologic, geologic and scenic values.

In 2011 and 2012, the Conservancy and the BLM signed Memorandums of Understanding with the Confederated Tribes of the Grande and the Cow Creek Band of the Umpqua Indians to include the tribes in the conservation and management of the Table Rocks, reconnecting them to their ancestral homeland. The Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians also maintain their deep cultural and natural resource ties to these landmarks.

Now, the Rocks are the recreational heart of the Rogue Valley with a 3.7-mile trail system and more than 45,000 annual visitors. Additionally, the BLM and the Conservancy provide a Table Rocks Environmental Education Program and a free public weekend hike series in the spring for 4,600 school children and hundreds of hikers each year.

© Rick McEwan

Bureau of Land Management

Bureau of Land Management

Bureau of Land Management

Backyard Habitat Certification Program
Columbia Land Trust
Portland, Gresham and Fairview within Multnomah County and Lake Oswego

A few years ago, Portland homeowner Janet Gifford started thinking about creating a new garden in her backyard. But she wanted more than a pretty place. She wanted it to provide habitat for birds and pollinators, too.

Then she discovered the Backyard Habitat Program, which works to restore native wildlife habitat bit by bit, in residential backyards throughout the Portland metro region. Columbia Land Trust and Audubon Society of Portland had teamed up in 2009 to start the program in response to increasing loss of critical native habitat.

Improving habitat, one backyard at a time

The program offers assistance from Backyard Habitat Technicians, as well as incentives such as wholesale prices for soil and coupons for native plants. Homeowners can have their yards certified by completing five requirements: invasive weed removal, native plant naturescaping, pesticide reduction, stormwater management and wildlife stewardship.

Today, more than 2,500 enrolled properties have restored more than 490 acres in the metro area. With the addition of Gresham and Fairview, more homeowners are joining every day, helping create stronger urban habitat corridors and broadening the understanding that our backyard gardens have a role to play in conservation work in Oregon. Learn more: backyardhabitats.org.

"I'm experiencing a dramatic increase in the number of bird species who frequent my garden. This makes me think about how, if more people on a larger scale do what I'm doing on a small scale, we will expand the native habitat throughout the Columbia River region." – Janet Gifford

Lupin Hipp

other photos this page: Gaylen Beatty and program volunteers

What you can do

We hope this report gives you a better understanding of how land trusts are working with local partners and landowners all over Oregon to conserve open space; connect people to the land; restore habitat for native species; and ensure the continued vitality of our Oregon way of life.

Individually and collectively, land trusts are making a difference – for the land, for local communities and for all of Oregon, both now and in the future. **And yet – there is still much work to be done.** We encourage you to learn more and help us spread the word. Here's how:

- Meet your local land trust: attend an event, arrange a tour or stop in and meet the staff.
- Explore our website and contact COLT with questions and ideas.
- Share what you've learned with landowners and leaders in your community.

Thank you.

Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts

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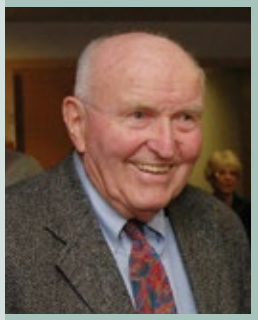
Investing in Oregon's land trusts

John Gray's legacy to Oregon's land trusts

John Gray always knew Oregon was a special place. As a leading resort developer in the Northwest (Sunriver, Salishan, and Skamania Lodge), he was committed to using his success to create a legacy to benefit everyone. John saw that the conservation work of Oregon land trusts was a vehicle to make this possible.

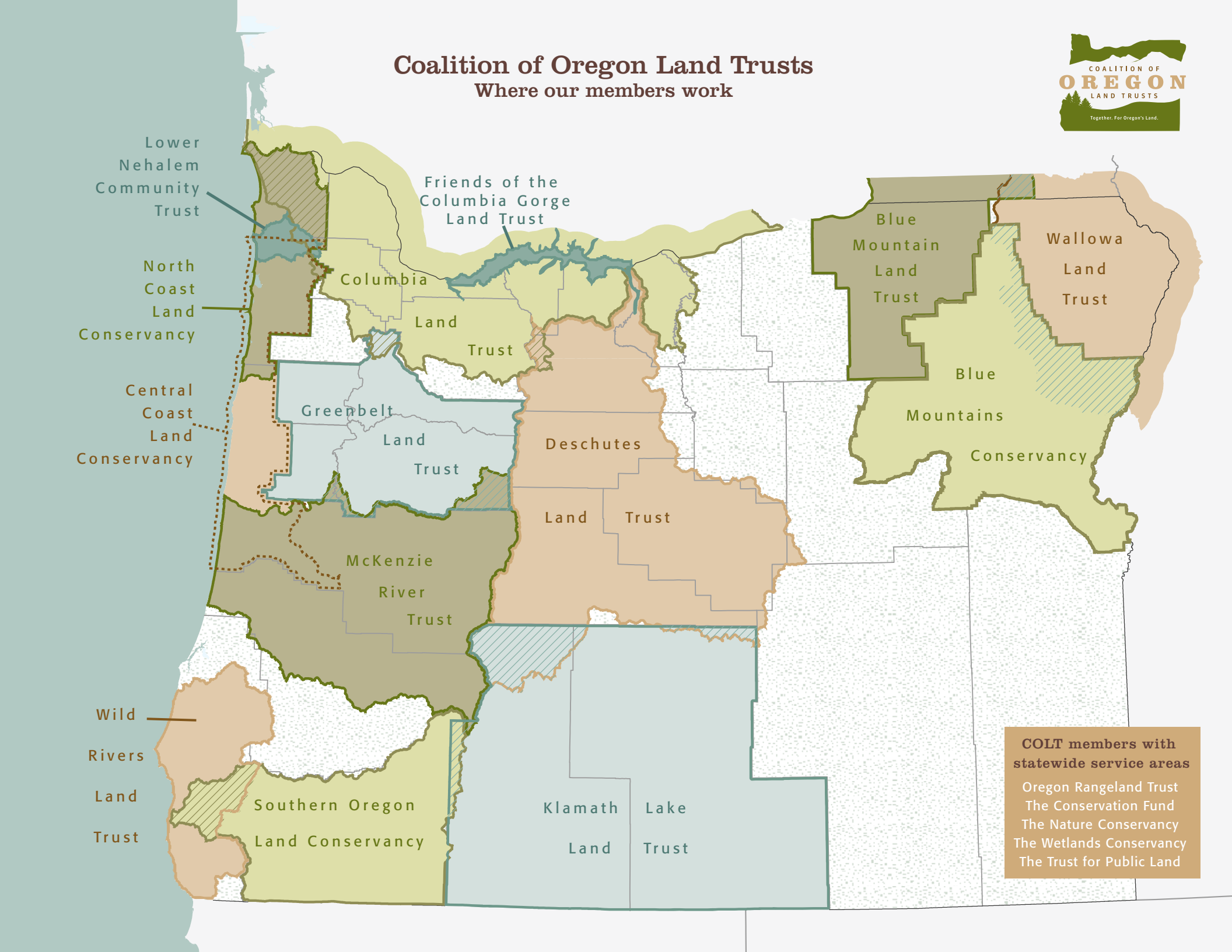


In 2011, the Gray family made a 10-year, $10 million commitment to grow the capacity of Oregon's land trust community. Land trusts across the state have benefited greatly from this gift.

"I want Oregonians to take an active role in being stewards of this land, and to join my family in committing to funding conservation and restoration. Our gift is only a slice of the pie – we need more people to take a stand for Oregon."

OWEB is a key partner in conservation funding

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) is a leader in the conservation of Oregon's natural resources. Using a percentage of the state's lottery revenues, the agency provides grants to help Oregonians protect and restore healthy watersheds and natural habitats that in turn support healthy communities and strong economies. To date, OWEB has awarded approximately $40 million in land acquisition grants that are leveraged multiple times over, to protect approximately 60,000 acres throughout Oregon.

Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts

Where our members work