Oregon WaterTrust™

A program of The Freshwater Trust.

Every summer, many streams across Oregon go dry or nearly dry. Often, more water is authorized for out of stream uses than naturally flows in the stream. As water becomes scarce, the stream's temperature increases and oxygen and water quality decrease. More importantly, less water means less habitat.

As the nation's first water trust, Oregon Water Trust restores stream flows for healthier watersheds by using a variety of cooperative solutions.

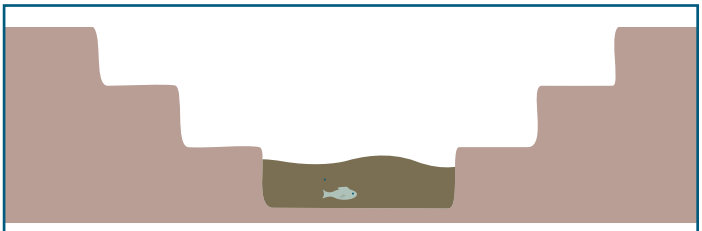
A Cooperative Solution

As the nation's first water trust, Oregon Water Trust restores stream flows for healthier watersheds by using a variety of cooperative solutions (see toolbox for examples). By providing a variety of incentives – including market-based compensation, technical assistance and expert advice – Oregon Water Trust restores freshwater habitat and improves water quality. By working with landowners, Oregon Water Trust keeps their lands productive and streams healthy – while connecting communities to the fundamental relationship between people, land and water.

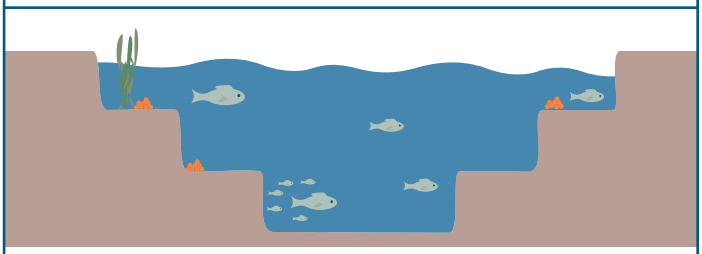
HIGHLIGHTS

- First water trust in the U.S. established in 1993
- Helped establish water trust movement in the West
- 11.8 billion gallons of water protected in 2008

What is Restored Flow?



Low Flow = Limited Habitat, Poor Water Quality



Restored Flow = Robust Habitat, Improved Water Quality

How to Improve Stream Flow

Oregon Water Trust helps water users utilize water more efficiently to improve watershed health. Working with the water users, Oregon Water Trust uses the following tools to achieve ecological benefit, supports sustainable communities and provides water users the tools to maintain their livelihoods.

TOOLBOX

Some of the ways Oregon Water Trust works with landowners to increase stream flow

1. Modified land management – water users switch to crops that use less water, plant trees or change irrigation practices. Changes can include focusing water use on their most productive land or during the most productive time of year.

2. Conservation – water users improve irrigation systems to save water and increase productivity.

3. Water use agreements – water users agree to shorten the length of their irrigation season or withdraw water only when there is a certain level of water in the stream.

4. Point of diversion change – water users withdraw from a downstream location leaving more water in the driest stretches of stream.

Landowner and Fish: Win-Win

The John Day Basin hosts some of the most important wild fish runs in the Columbia River System, providing critical habitat for summer steelhead and spring Chinook salmon. However, low summer stream flow partly caused by diversions limit fish populations. As third generation ranchers on the Middle Fork John Day River, Pat and Hedy Voigt wanted to do the right thing for the river's habitat, but they also wanted to keep their land productive. Oregon Water Trust proposed shortening the Voigt's irrigation season and compensating them for keeping the late summer water instream. Though the shortened irrigation season reduces their grazing by around 20 percent, the water rights compensation more than makes up for that discrepancy. What's more important is the agreement significantly increases available fish habitat – extending some 70 miles downstream – and improves water quality.

> "Oregon Water Trust worked with me to craft an arrangement ideally suited to my needs, They compensated me fairly for my water rights, and the benefit to fish is apparent."
>
> *— Pat Voigt, rancher, Prairie City*

The Freshwater Trust™

65 SW Yamhill Street, Suite 200
Portland, OR 97204

503.222.9091
www.thefreshwatertrust.org