

2017 Q3
**Quarterly
Impact
Report**



The
Freshwater Trust®



FRIEND,

We all remember what report card day felt like, no matter how many years have passed since sitting in a classroom.

A few weeks ago, The Freshwater Trust (TFT) got grades back from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) for work on Neil Creek. I'll admit I'm more thrilled to share this news with you than I ever was to share a report card with my parents.

In 2015, TFT partnered with one of the oldest private properties in the area, to replant the streamside with native vegetation and build large wood structures on roughly a mile of stream through the ranch. Today, we have powerful, quantified proof that these actions have made a difference.

ODFW snorkels through key streams across the state, counting fish annually. This year, while fishing around in a stretch of Neil Creek we've restored, 169 juvenile coho were spotted. That's up from one counted in 2002.

For a lifelong fisherman, a restoration professional, and citizen of the Rogue River Valley, I'm excited to see such a strong biological response from our work. But I'm not sharing this update with you in hopes of receiving a gold star. It's to say thank you.

Projects don't get put in the ground, monitored, or maintained without supporters. It takes tremendous dedication at all levels, from donors to the boots on the ground, to actualize impact.

So whether it's an increase in fish counts or a decrease in pollutants, all of our results can be attributed to a deep commitment from our community. We invite you to revel in each of these reports like a proud parent, knowing your support plays a key role in our success.

EUGENE WIER

*Restoration Project Manager
Ashland, Oregon*

A 16,000% increase in fish. Really.

There are worse ways to spend a day than in a dry suit and snorkel, counting fish.

It's part of the job for some Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) employees.

In western Oregon, fish surveys have taken place annually since 1998. The department tracks the number of fish they spot year after year, providing valuable data about habitat available and water quality. This past year, data were collected in more than 60 places in the Rogue Basin. One of them was a reach of Neil Creek, a snowmelt-fed tributary of Bear Creek.

The part of the creek surveyed by ODFW overlaps with a mile-long stretch where The Freshwater Trust (TFT) has planted native vegetation, installed dozens of large wood structures, and fenced out livestock since 2015.

"We knew what this creek could become long before we started work here," said Eugene Wier, Ashland-based habitat restoration project manager for TFT. "It's one of the coldest in the watershed, and it has a low gradient that's perfect for rearing. It's just the right place for coho and steelhead."

But its potential to be a fish refuge had long been marred.

Invasive weeds choked banks, which meant there wasn't adequate shade, and native plants couldn't thrive. There was a dearth of large wood, which helps create the refuge and complexity fish need to spawn and rear. Livestock had access to the water, causing an offload of nutrients and sediment, smothering redds and interfering with juvenile feeding.



Knowing this, TFT began a conversation with the Healy Family, owners of the Historic Dunn Ranch on the outskirts of Ashland.

"The ranch runs along Neil Creek, and it has some of the oldest water rights in the state," said Wier. "We knew opening the doors to collaborate with this landowner could yield big results. It's the way we get the vast majority of our projects done here in the Rogue."

In early August, when ODFW employees masked up and dove in, as they have for the past 15 years at this location, they validated Wier's prediction of big results.

Fish counts had jumped more than 16,000 percent after \$1.5 million was spent, 14 acres of native vegetation were planted, more than two miles of livestock fence was built, a network of off-channel livestock watering troughs was established, and 47 large wood structures were installed.

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KATELYN DETWEILER

Project Coordinator & Monitoring Lead

Katelyn brings extensive botanical experience to The Freshwater Trust. Prior to joining our team, she worked for The Klamath Network Inventory and Monitoring Program and Green Diamond Resource Company. Katelyn holds a bachelor's degree in environmental studies with a concentration on ecology and conservation. As the Project Coordinator and Monitoring Lead based in Ashland, Oregon, she heads up the vegetation monitoring and large wood monitoring efforts in southern Oregon. When not in the field for work, Katelyn stewards her small farm, gardens, rides horses, hikes and explores new swimming holes.

A 16,000% INCREASE

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One juvenile coho was counted more than a decade before restoration began. This year, there were 169. And nearly 80 Chinook were spotted when one had never been recorded.

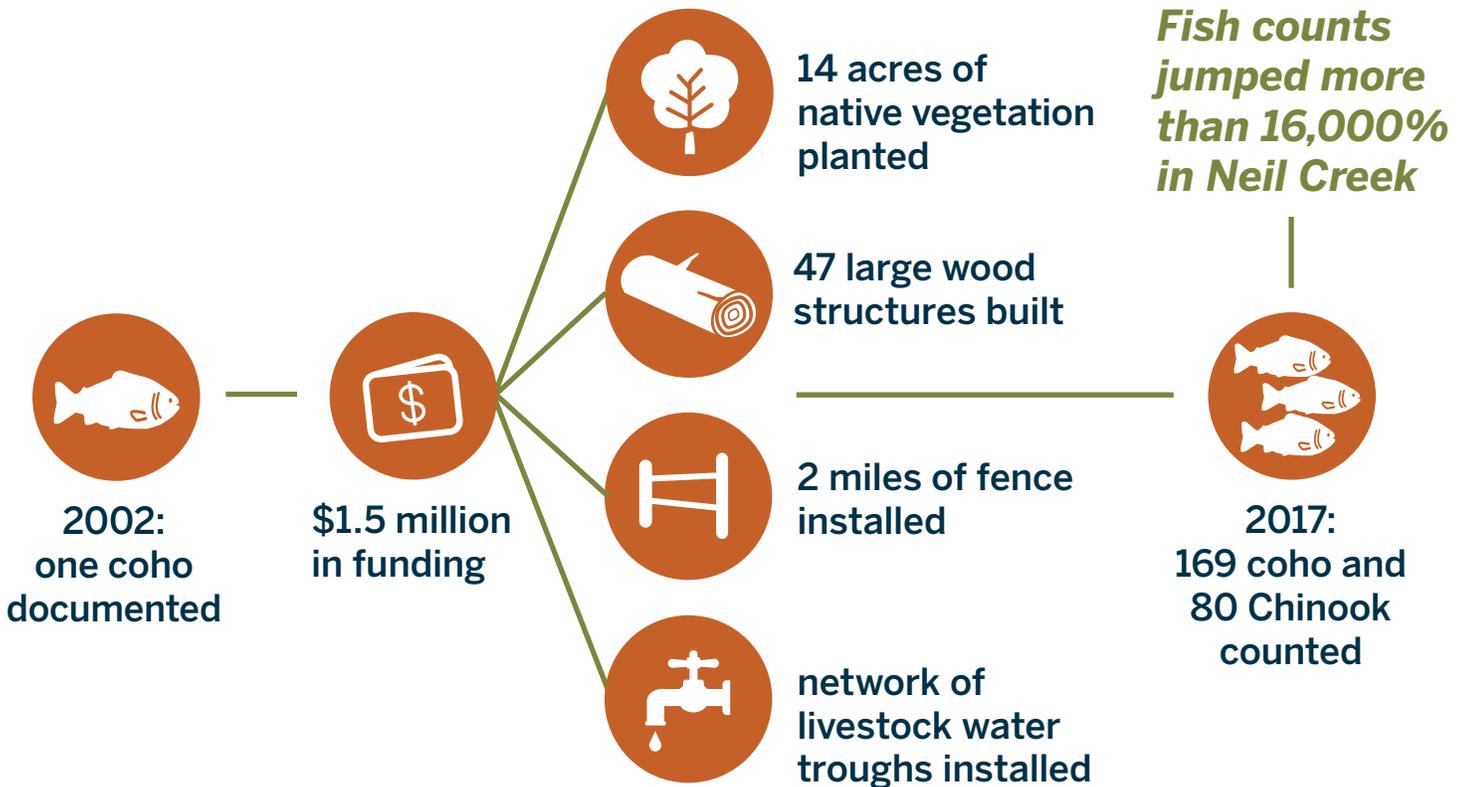
"It's a remarkable return," said Wier. "When we identify the locations best suited to sustain native fish and we invest there, we see meaningful results."

But scientists don't rest on laurels after one test.

"Consistency is important," said Ron Constable, project leader with ODFW. "This is a good sign, but I'll be more excited if we see numbers like this in future years. Generally though, I'll admit that this was a pretty good year to stick your face in the water and see some fish."

TFT works year-round to make connections with new landowners in the basin and open doors for more restoration projects.

CREATING HABITAT FOR FISH



LOOKING FORWARD

● SNAKE RIVER BASIN, IDAHO

Over the next several months, we'll add two new staff to our Idaho office. A new program manager and analyst will increase TFT's presence and capacity for more projects on the Snake in partnership with Idaho Power Company. Right now, we're working with landowners on streamside restoration projects along the river's key tributaries as well as on irrigation upgrades with agricultural operations to reduce sediment. Our monitoring staff will also spend a portion of the fall collecting data on vegetation planted a year ago.

● SACRAMENTO & SAN JOAQUIN RIVER BASIN, CALIFORNIA

Staff will continue helping landowners meet compliance under Senate Bill 88, a bill making it mandatory for those diverting more than 10-acre feet of water per year to install meters. Instead of meters, which are often unreliable, irrigators can meet the requirement of the law by working with TFT to combine real crop and water management data with state-of-the-art models and remote sensing technology to create a more accurate picture of water use. In the final months of this year, TFT will enroll new participants in this alternative compliance program.

● ROGUE RIVER BASIN, OREGON

In the fourth quarter, Ashland staff will design and find funding for new planting projects and large wood installations along the Rogue and its tributaries. Alongside key partners in the basin, our team works year-round to make connections with more landowners willing to collaborate on projects to improve habitat and water quality. For projects already planted or built, we'll collect more data and monitor their success.

● LOSTINE & JOHN DAY BASINS, OREGON

This fall, project managers will meet with landowners to develop new projects to increase water quantity in select streams throughout eastern Oregon. These projects can take many forms, from a split-season lease of water rights, to a minimum flow agreement, to a conserved water project. Each deal is based on two tenets: good data and collaboration. Several deals will build on past partnerships, including a new 10-year lease in the John Day with the Burns Paiute Tribe and the renewal of a 13-year minimum flow agreement in the Lostine with more than 100 irrigators.

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COMING SOON

Quantified
results in our
2016 Uplift
Report