

*The Freshwater Trust*

● QUARTERLY

# WATER

REPORT

Q3   
2019

Photo Credit: Richie Graham Photography



HELLO

## It's about connection.

Friends of The Freshwater Trust,

Similar to the way a river shapes a landscape, rivers have long shaped who I am.

I grew up alongside one, watching its banks rise each year with the rain, catching salamanders in the creeks that fed into it, swimming, and exploring with my older brothers. While I no longer have the Nehalem River out my window, I'm guaranteed to stay connected to the beauty and importance of rivers through The Freshwater Trust (TFT).

Earlier this summer, I traveled to several of TFT's project sites to witness their work firsthand. I'm not sure what I expected, but it wasn't to be moved in such a deep way. Watching helicopters pick up large pieces of wood and transport them to places where they'd make a huge difference for native fish, and then actually seeing massive Chinook taking refuge under them was more than special, it was invaluable.

Witnessing the impacts of nonprofit support first hand can be challenging. It's not every day that you can track the dollars you give to such concrete outcomes. This is what I love about TFT. They're consistently drawing the lines between those that support them to why it matters – through field trips or the production of this quarterly report. I admire this commitment so much.



After reading this, you might not have your hair blown back from the wind of a helicopter, but I can guarantee you'll feel more deeply connected to TFT. I'm thrilled to be the one to deliver you news of new staff, additional grants won for more flow restoration work in the John Day, and more.

**Thank you for your continued support of this organization.**

**Stasia Brownell**

*Sr. Manager 3Degrees  
Headwaters Council*



## **Bella Vista Foundation supports restoration program for the John Day basin**

A three-year, \$360,000 grant from the Bella Vista Foundation will help The Freshwater Trust (TFT) use data-driven, science-based approaches to prioritize and fund high-quality restoration projects in northeastern Oregon's John Day basin.

The funding will bolster TFT's goal of improving conditions to better support the basin's native fish species in the face of climate change impacts. The John Day houses a significant portion of the last remaining populations of wild Columbia basin Chinook and steelhead.

The Bella Vista Foundation's "Ecosystem Restoration Program" focuses on protecting, restoring and revitalizing five watershed ecosystems in California and Oregon.



"Climate change will continue to decrease summer streamflows and increase water temperatures statewide – including the John Day Basin," said Spencer Sawaske, hydrologist and project manager in the basin. "All of this makes it harder for cold-water fish to survive. Our goal is to provide them with valuable refuge from conditions that will only become more challenging."

Between now and 2022, TFT will build, refine, and employ optimization and administrative tools to ensure the most beneficial projects to protect and restore fish populations happen in the right places throughout the John Day. In addition to identifying needed actions, TFT will explore new, outcomes-based funding approaches that ensure ecological goals are met.

These tools will also help to more easily identify targets and evaluate the costs and benefits of different actions, so that funders can efficiently choose to support restoration and conservation projects that have the greatest possible outcomes.

"Securing the survival of these species means working collaboratively and strategically," said Sawaske.

**"With this award, we'll be advancing systems and performing analyses that will ensure that everyone involved in restoring this basin, from those doing the work to those funding it, can be more knowledgeable and integrated in their actions."**

Giving fish here the greatest chance of survival means addressing issues of both water quality and quantity.

TFT will work with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs (CTWS) to identify the best places for new streamside planting projects along the Middle Fork John Day.

"We know replanting native trees and vegetation is one of the most cost-effective and 'ready to implement' actions to protect against temperature extremes in the Middle Fork," said Sawaske. "Native vegetation here goes a long way toward creating shade, reducing erosion, and preventing nutrient runoff from nearby farms and ranches."

# BELLA VISTA

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TFT will also partner with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and CTWS to identify water temperature and instream flow targets, based on juvenile Chinook and steelhead needs in the Upper John Day. This will inform future water rights leasing, irrigation efficiency upgrades and other methods of improving flow.

“We will be able to accomplish a lot with this grant, and all of it is built around devising systems and tools that make it easier to choose the best combinations and sequences of actions to protect these fish,” said Sawaske.

**“In the face of a changing climate, we need to act with urgency and precision to make sure these species are around for decades to come. TFT is at the heart of bringing people, tools and actions together to guarantee that it happens.”**



Above: John Day basin from above

Left: Hydrologist Spencer Sawaske talks with landowner partner Pat Voigt. Our partnerships with landowners like Pat have helped keep thousands of gallons of water flowing through the basin every year.

Credit: Richie Graham Photography



# Growing a team

Over the last quarter, The Freshwater Trust has added several new staff in Portland, Sacramento and San Francisco.

These are scientists, analysts, fundraisers and business development professionals. TFT is thrilled to be growing its team in new geographies and building the capacity needed to go after our mission with more intention and fervor. This growth is thanks in large part to the support we receive from individuals across the West.



**Jen Metes**  
Conservation Programs Administrator  
Home River: Merced River, California

## What will you be doing for TFT?

As Conservation Programs Administrator, I manage several of TFT's California programs, ensuring effective collaboration and communication among our diverse project teams.

## Why were you interested in working with The Freshwater Trust?

TFT's contribution to developing novel, multi-benefit projects collaboratively with growers, public agencies, and other conservation practitioners really piqued my interest. Fifty years from now, I hope to experience a resilient Delta and want to know that I helped steward projects that truly benefited the region. I feel confident that working with The Freshwater Trust is a path towards achieving this vision.



**Courtenay O'Connor**  
Freshwater Fund Associate Director,  
San Francisco  
Home River: Narrow River, Rhode Island

**Why were you interested in working with The Freshwater Trust?**

I was drawn to The Freshwater Trust's bold mission, well-defined scope, and innovative, measurable impact. Today's environmental challenges require audacious, systems-change solutions. When it comes to addressing the root causes of some of our most intractable freshwater challenges, TFT truly walks the walk, seeking out actionable, market-based incentives to move the conservation needle.

**What will you be doing for The Freshwater Trust?**

TFT's California program is taking off, and I will be helping to build out our revenue runway, seeking flexible philanthropy that will help shape go-to-market solutions for better freshwater management. California has experienced the acute pressures that arise from managing water resources, and, I believe, will be an informed partner in rethinking how we address the root causes of the challenges.

**What are you most excited about?**

I am most excited about sharing TFT's bold message for systems change with California audiences. At the epicenter of the "disrupt economy," I believe that Silicon Valley will be a natural partner in advancing bold solutions to our seemingly intractable challenges managing freshwater resources. I welcome the opportunity to serve as TFT's ambassador to the Bay Area!



**Evelyn Cheng**  
Ecosystem Services Analyst  
Home River: Colorado River, Texas

**What will you be doing for TFT?**

As an Ecosystem Services Analyst, I will be analyzing data to build models and extract insights about how to most efficiently maximize the benefits of our freshwater ecosystems, while also keeping sustainability front and center.

**What are you most excited about?**

I'm most excited about having permission to engage my creativity and come up with innovative ways to solve problems. I'm grateful for this opportunity to work with the amazing team of analysts.

**Why were you interested in working with The Freshwater Trust?**

I've spent most of my career collecting and analyzing data on natural resources and sustainability at institutions such as the United States Geological Survey and other public institutions. I wanted to incorporate my experience into a position where I could help others make data-driven decisions. I knew about some of the impressive and innovative work that The Freshwater Trust has done in the past, but when I met the team of talented, creative, and kind people, I was completely sold!



We held our first major fundraiser in California this past quarter. We were the beneficiaries of Cerro Pampa Polo Club's 2019 Oyster Cup Tournament and were able to raise friends and funds to continue supporting our freshwater restoration and conservation efforts in the state.



**attend** | The next Fly Fishing Film Night at Pro Photo Supply on November 13

**check out** | Our latest Streamside blogs

**purchase** | A YETI tumbler, and proceeds will help us fix more rivers

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