

Currents

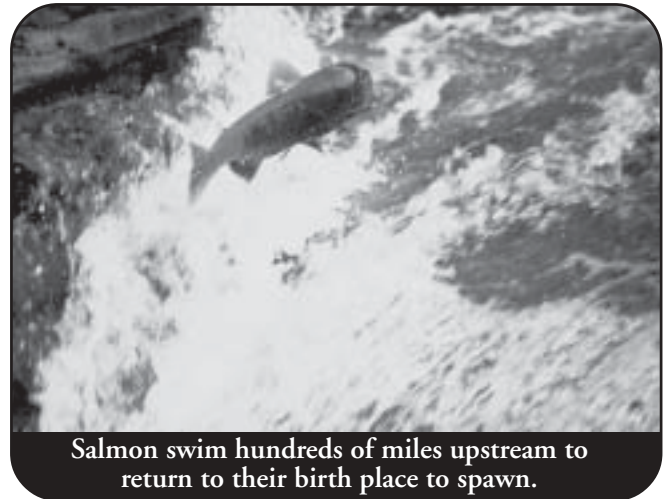


The newsletter of the McKenzie River Trust ♦ Summer 2006

Fish Out of Water

Private Land Protection Efforts Critical to Salmon Recovery

By the time an adult Chinook salmon has returned to spawn in the spring waters of the Cascade Mountains, it has navigated hundreds of miles of freshwater, through the Columbia, Willamette, and McKenzie Rivers. Its offspring make the same journey downstream, spending more than a year in the rivers' currents, side channels and meanders. Do you ever wonder if along the way the fish can sense when they are passing close by farm fields, city streets, an area of timber harvest, or other intensively managed lands? This question explains to a great extent why the McKenzie River Trust is now participating in the development of the state and federal Recovery Plans for salmon and steelhead in the Upper Willamette River.



Salmon swim hundreds of miles upstream to return to their birth place to spawn.

Recovery Plans for species listed as *threatened* or *endangered* under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) are the management agencies' road maps for reducing the risk of extinction. The forthcoming salmon and steelhead plan will include goals for population size, distribution, and rates of growth over time, as well as descriptions of threats to these populations and suggested methods for reducing or even eliminating those threats. While many of these methods rely on technical fixes, the ultimate success of the recovery effort depends on the willingness of landowners, especially private landowners, to take the needs of salmon into consideration. Protected federal lands at rivers' headwaters are a strong start for these fish but without private landowners participation, recovery efforts are like a puzzle missing half the pieces. Land trusts have a strong track record of both helping landowners think about these needs, and providing incentives and guidance on how to put these thoughts into practice.

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Join us on September 17, details on page 3.

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*Protecting Special Lands in
Lane & Douglas Counties*

President's Message

—Rolf Anderson

Green Island is a stunning visual definition of what the McKenzie River Trust is all about. Visiting the Island brings the Trust's mission to "protect special lands" to life.

Our tours always include formal presentations and, equally important, pauses to observe and appreciate what's happening in the natural world around us. Steve Gordon, local dragonfly expert and critical force behind the West Eugene Wetlands, might identify newly emerged dragonflies flitting among us in their trademark stop-and-go flight. Or we might watch a great blue heron work his way in lumbering flight along the treetops, flop-landing in the very top branches of a huge cottonwood directly across from us.

Roger Robb or Kit Larsen, two accomplished birders on the Trust's Board, may describe the Island's bird-life, identifying them by sight or often just by song. We might see an active osprey nest, totally exposed on the highest most cross-arms of a transmission tower in the middle of a field, and a great horned owl nest, hidden deep in the sheltering arms of a black cottonwood.

Mid-way along the Island we stand close to the bank of the Willamette River, pulsating powerfully, now joined by the McKenzie. What a sight! This muscular river, racing downstream between banks shaded by trees and shrubs in varying hues of green overlain with the scars and debris from last winter's floods. Our Conservation Director, Andy Reasoner may point out a small school of native cutthroat trout, holding fast in a backwater near shore.

It's a treasure to visit this Island. We are very fortunate the Green family chose to share it with us and we are honored to help protect and restore this gem of habitat. **Now, rather than read about it, you can experience it. We are going to celebrate the heritage of our river places at Green Island September 17th and you are invited! I hope you can join us for an afternoon of live music, food, and fun activities honoring our vital waterways and your and the Trust's role in protecting them.**

Meanwhile, back at the office, I want to recognize some changes in key roles for the Trust. We will greatly miss Jessica Neff, our Stewardship Coordinator for the past year, who is returning to complete her graduate degree at the University of Oregon. We will miss her competency and can-do personality very much. Also, we welcome Roger Robb, our newest Board Member who has already taken on and participated in major Trust projects in his short time with us.

I hope you are enjoying our area's natural treasures with family and friends this summer. I look forward to seeing you on Green Island this September! Please remember, none of our critical work would be possible without your support.

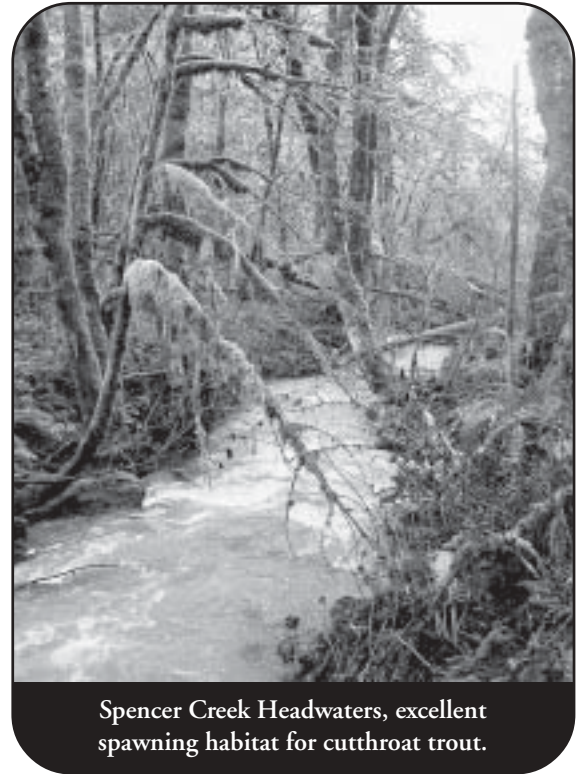
Best wishes,



Donated Easement to Protect Spencer Creek Headwaters & Family's Legacy

I vividly remember the car ride from my grandma's house on Polk Street in Eugene up over the hill and along the winding road that followed a creek through the woods. It was a path that our family took often to visit family and friends who lived south of Eugene. Along that ride, there was one place that caught my attention, even as a young child. It was a magical piece of land with an old house and giant trees among the younger forests of nearby lands. I remember the awe that that property inspired in my young mind like it was yesterday.

Twenty years ago, I wished to meet the people that lived on this incredible piece of land and to explore the wonders of it. I have always been amazed how the circle of life can bring one back to the places they belong. The McKenzie River Trust has the honor of partnering with this family to permanently protect their land through a donated conservation easement. The magical nature of this property, which I felt as a child, has been validated by our assessment of the conservation values on this 90-acre property, which contains the headwaters of Spencer Creek. Just beyond the Eugene City limits, the property is mostly dominated by large growth Douglas Fir and Grand Fir. Remnant Oaks still have a hold next to the meadows and near the bottomland hardwood stands on both sides of Spencer Creek. This Creek is a stronghold for spawning cutthroat trout.



ANDREW REASONER

Spencer Creek Headwaters, excellent spawning habitat for cutthroat trout.

Breaking News...

Federal Law Gives Better Tax Break for Donated Conservation Easements

Congress recently passed a law to enhance the tax benefits of protecting your land by donating a conservation easement. These new incentives make it easier for many landowners, including working family farmers and ranchers, to donate land. The legislation allows:

- ❖ A conservation agreement donor to deduct up to 50% of their adjusted gross income in any year (up from 30%);
- ❖ Qualifying farmers and ranchers to deduct up to 100% of their adjusted gross income; and
- ❖ Donors to take deductions for their contribution over as many as 16 years (an increase from 6 years).

These changes allow many modest income landowners to deduct much more than they could under the old rules, bringing increased fairness to the tax code. This expansion of benefits currently applies only to easements donated in 2006 and 2007. The land trust community is working hard to make these changes permanent.

Pileated woodpecker foraging scars dot the forest, which is within a breeding pair's core nesting area.

This property is one of several in the Long Tom watershed that the McKenzie River Trust hopes to protect in the near future. Protecting this specific property ties in well with regional conservation planning efforts by the City of Eugene, the Nature Conservancy, and the Long Tom Watershed Council. Protecting a property that is so high in the watershed will also protect water quality for their many downstream neighbors.

Just as important as protecting this property's biological richness is protecting *that feeling* one gets walking the well cared for path through the forest. This path was created by the landowners' father. A man who deeply cared for this land. A man who believed that people should not own land, that land owns people. A man that left a conservation ethic in his children stronger than the trees. I am thankful to him for teaching his children to appreciate the simple things in life. I am thankful to his children for carrying out his wishes to protect this magical place.

I look forward to future conversations with these wonderfully visionary and generous people. I look forward to sitting down with them and signing a conservation easement soon that will protect their magical place for their father, for them, and for all of the children who will follow that appreciate special places. ❖

Our supporters make our work possible. Below are listed the generous individuals and businesses who between April 20 and August 1, 2006 supported the McKenzie River Trust. *Thank you!!!*

Please contact us if you feel you have been omitted or if your name is misspelled.

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**In Honor of
Jim Salerno**

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**In Memory of
John Bruce Duncan**

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**In Memory of
Lawrence Moe**

David and Michele Moe

*Thank you to the following
businesses for donating their goods
and services to the Trust!*

Capella Market
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M.E.C.C.A.
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Dave Stone, *Wildlands Photography*
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Dan Terrell, *Law Office of Bill Kloos*

In Memory of

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YOU ARE
INVITED
TO A

*McKenzie River
Celebration*

Sunday, September 17th 2006
from 1:00 to 5:00 PM

on Green Island near Coburg, Oregon

Hayride Tours, Refreshments and MUSIC:

Ashleigh Flynn, Doug Smith,
Swing Shift, and
Bob Parker
& Friends

RSVP: mrt@mckenzieriver.org
More info: 541.345.2799



Mark your calendars for September 17th...
it's celebration time!

Volunteer Profile — Roger Robb



SARA CHIEFFO

Roger (right) and Andrew Reasoner helping with a recent marbled murrelet survey.

Roger Robb has volunteered with the Trust for the past five months, first as a volunteer bird monitor and now as a Board member. Since his days as a Boy Scout in New York, Roger has had a lifelong interest in birding. After receiving a Bachelor's degree in wildlife biology from Cornell University, Roger entered the business world but always kept birding as a hobby. After he and wife, Betty, moved to Oregon in the early eighties, Roger received his MBA from the University of Oregon and worked 22 years for PW Eagle, Inc. He maintained his connection to birding as a Board member of the Oregon Field Ornithologists.

Since April, Roger has spent over 100 hours surveying birds on Green Island. Conducted two to three times per month, these time-intensive surveys are valuable tools to help track over time how the Trust's restoration activities affect

bird populations. Birds that use properties like Green Island fall into three general categories – breeding, migrating or over-wintering. Restoration activities, which impact things like under story coverage, could influence bird populations in each category.

Roger conducts both point count and general surveys. A point count survey involves 5 minute stops at 34 fixed sites around Green Island where the type and number of birds seen or heard are noted. The less regimented general surveys are aimed at learning more about breeding birds, which can be difficult because of the secretive behavior they adopt to protect their young.

We are very thankful that Roger has fostered this passion for birding because it is what led him to the McKenzie River Trust. Roger, thank you for lending us your time, passion, and expertise. ❖

You can join Roger on a birding tour of Green Island on Saturday, October 7th — more details on page 8.

Partner Feature — Interview with TNC's Ed Alverson

Jessica Neff (Stewardship Coordinator) and Ann Salminen (Director of Operations) recently caught up with Ed Alverson, The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) Willamette Valley Stewardship Ecologist for the last 15 years.

MRT: *Willow Creek and the West Eugene Wetlands recently celebrated their 25th anniversary. What makes the West Eugene Wetlands (WEW) partnership work so well?*

Ed: The success of the WEW partnership is pretty unique: first, we have institutional support from the City of Eugene and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and, second, there are great personalities involved. Those involved always figure out a way to keep going and surmount barriers.

MRT: *What do you see as The Nature Conservancy and MRT's relationship?*

Ed: Because of MRT's small size and focus only in Lane and Douglas counties, MRT has many local ties. TNC is larger and thus partnering with MRT is very beneficial to us. I see it as a strong partnership that is complimentary, especially because our approaches are similar so we can exchange ideas.

MRT: *Thank you for helping on our recent easement monitoring visit near Fern Ridge. What were the most interesting things you observed that day?*

Ed: Rare plants exist in this general vicinity, and since the late 1970s there has been interest in protecting this area. Surrounding land parcels are suspected to have the rare Bradshaw's desert parsley, a native prairie species, so I was excited to see what was growing on that particular easement. This bottomland floodplain habitat site is wetter than surrounding areas, which has caused a variation in plant communities, including some plants we do not have in other Eugene sites.

MRT: *What are your hopes and goals for the future of the Willamette Valley ecosystem?*

Ed: My job is not just about saving native plants, but about protecting this area for future generations. Having a natural setting like the WEW in an urban environment gives children a chance to explore the natural environment, without having to travel far. I like the idea of spontaneous exploration for kids in wild places because all kids need unstructured time. We must also recognize the uses of land—protecting important habitat and also supporting economic development. We need to continue to come up with creative solutions for working together. ❖

Education Eddy — What is a Conservation Easement?

Many of the lands — forests, wetlands, farms, ranches — that are critical to the quality of our air and drinking water, open space, and endangered species recovery are privately owned. Conservation easements provide a vehicle for protecting these lands' conservation values for the benefit of human communities and fish and wildlife habitat while retaining private ownership.

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a qualified conservation recipient, such as a land trust or a government agency, that permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect its conservation values. Each easement's restrictions are tailored to the conservation values of a particular property and to the interests of the individual landowner. An easement runs with the land and all subsequent landowners are bound by its restrictions.

A conservation easement allows the landowner to continue to own and use his or her land, to sell it, or to pass it onto heirs. It is one of the most effective and cost efficient tools that land trusts can use to protect special lands and natural resources for present and future generations. Between 1998 and 2003, the amount of land protected by conservation easements in the US tripled to total 5 million acres. Once an easement is signed, the land trust assumes the role of conservation partner. In this role, the land trust regularly monitors the parcel to ensure that the terms of the easements are upheld in perpetuity. A land trust may also help landowners learn about management options, partner organizations with restoration expertise and even funding opportunities.

If you know of any special lands and landowners that may be interested in donating a conservation easement to MRT please contact our Conservation Director, Andrew Reasoner at andy@mckenzieriver.org.
Article Compiled with the assistance of the Land Trust Alliance (www.lta.org).

Reasons to Donate a Conservation Easement

- ❖ Permanently protects land while maintaining private ownership and private access;
- ❖ Flexible and tailored to each landowner's interests;
- ❖ Can provide tax benefits, if donation qualifies as a tax-deductible charitable donation under IRS requirements;
- ❖ Can enable a family to pass land onto heirs by lowering estate taxes.

Volunteers Help Remove Scot's Broom on Green Island



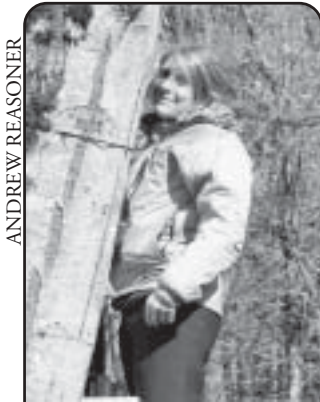
Enjoying the sight of their success volunteers gather around a large pile of Scot's Broom they cleared on Green Island, June 3rd.

On a sunny Saturday at the beginning of June, we had an excellent turnout of volunteers who worked hard removing the pesky invasive plant, Scot's Broom, on our Green Island property, near Coburg. With the volunteers' help, we were able to clear a section of the Island near the Willamette River. Thank you!

We want to recognize two star volunteers who have been at both of our restoration volunteer events on Green Island: **Brian and Maddie Thompson**, way to go! Also, a big thank you to the City of Eugene for graciously letting us borrow weed wrenches and to *Capella Market* and *Organically Grown* for their donations of fruit and juice.

We have an exciting new program starting soon called "Restoration Regulars." This team of volunteers will meet once a month on Green Island or Big Island to work on a variety of activities—from invasive removal to tree planting. Please contact the Land Steward at 345-2799 or mrt@mckenzieriver.org if you're interested in joining our new team and having a great experience!

Staff News: Thank You and Good Luck to Stewardship Coordinator Jessica Neff



ANDREW REASONER

Jessica installing water-level monitors.

In the blink of an eye, nearly a year has passed since Jessica Neff joined the MRT staff as our first Stewardship Coordinator. We knew we'd have her skills and energy for only a one-year appointment through the University of Oregon's Resource Assistance for Rural Economies (RARE) Program. But, we had no idea just how fast this past year would fly by. Thanks to her hard work, the Trust now has updated and organized project files, a functioning water level monitoring program, an active volunteer corps, a plethora of functional maps and GIS layers, happy landowners with whom she's worked, and let's face it- a much higher level of smiles than before. We'll certainly miss Jessica's presence in the office and in the field, but we are also not completely letting go. Jessica will help our new Land Steward (who will be joining us this fall) get acquainted with the Trust and establish a new Stewardship Committee to complement our Lands Committee.

And then of course there is her schoolwork, Jessica is returning to UO to complete her master's degree in planning through the Department of Planning, Public Policy & Management. Her thesis will focus on, you guessed it, collaborative protection efforts by land trusts! We all wish Jessica the best of luck with her studies and know that in the years to come there will be many more successful conservation projects with her name on them. ❖

Species Recovery Depends on Collective Effort

(...continued from page 1)

Widen the streamside forest buffer zones. Grow riparian forests to provide cooling shade and woody debris for the stream to generate rearing habitat. Protect and re-open side-channels and meanders of the river. Water and feed livestock away from the stream. Keep gravels in-stream for spawning habitat.

All of these straightforward land management prescriptions depend completely on the willingness of local citizens to carry them out. In the recovery planning process,



GUS VAN VLIET

MRT's work helps many species, including the threatened marbled murrelet pictured here feeding in near-shore coastal waters.

Recently, staff and Board members participated in a marbled murrelet survey in several Oregon coastal watersheds, including in Tenmile Creek where the Trust is working on a 440 acre land protection project. These impressive birds fly up to 60 m.p.h from their nests perched on moss-covered, old-growth tree branches to feed in coastal waters.

the McKenzie River Trust will have its toolkit open and on display: landowners can maintain a productive farm or a timber operation and protect sensitive habitat with a conservation easement in place; opportunities to protect large areas like Green Island can greatly increase habitat; through partnerships between private landowners, conservation groups, government agencies, and other private landowners we can collectively reduce our negative impact on salmon habitat.

We'll be spending the next year and a half exploring and testing many questions as the recovery plan matures. And we'll be spending at least the next few decades applying these practices on the ground. If we are truly successful, the salmon will all-the-while continue their cyclical journey, and more and more, they will be welcomed by a growing richness of habitat, never noticing what goes on beyond the edge of the water. ❖

For more information on this planning effort visit the following website: <http://www.nwfsc.noaa.gov/trt/index.cfm>

The Upper Willamette Spring Chinook Salmon and Steelhead Recovery Plan is a joint effort co-lead by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW).

The Stakeholder Planning Team includes representatives from a broad spectrum of groups, from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. A completed recovery plan is expected in the fall of 2007.



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Let's head outside...



We have a little bit of everything over the next few months - tours, parades, celebrations, oh my! We hope to see you soon. Please contact Sara at 345-2799 or schieffo@mckenzieriver.org to RSVP or for more details.

Field Tours

ForestCare Tour — Sept. 24 (9am – 2pm)

Come walk this 90-acre diverse second-growth coastal “working forest” near Lorane. MRT has forever protected this property, which is home to the headwaters of the Siuslaw River. Please RSVP by Sept. 9.

Green Island Bird Walk — Oct. 7 (7:30 – 10 am)

Calling all birders (experienced or aspiring) for a fun morning bird walk on Green Island. MRT Board member, Roger Robb, will be on hand to help identify birds. Please RSVP by Oct. 4.

Coastal Salmon Spawning Trip — Nov. 4 (9am – 3pm)

Come see salmon spawning in Deadwood Creek, an area critical for threatened Oregon coastal Coho salmon. MRT has protected 100 acres on this important Siuslaw tributary. Transportation and snacks will be provided. Please RSVP by Nov. 1.

Events

Eugene Celebration Parade

(Saturday, Sept. 9th, 9am – noon)

Help us promote land conservation by walking with MRT and carrying a salmon puppet. Please let us know if you can join us by September 4th.

Thank you to M.E.C.C.A. for helping us design colorful salmon puppets from almost all recycled materials.

River Celebration

(Sunday, Sept. 17th, 1 – 5pm)

Join MRT for an afternoon of live music, food, and to celebrate our waterways! Musicians include Ashleigh Flynn, Doug Smith, Swing Shift and Bob Parker & Friends. Kid friendly activities and a raffle too!