



WATERWATCH

PROTECTING NATURAL FLOWS IN OREGON RIVERS

MEMBER UPDATE DECEMBER 2007

Stream of Consciousness

By John DeVoe, Executive Director

Shortly after you receive this Member Update, there may be an announcement touting a “settlement” in the Klamath Basin. The only two Oregon based state conservation groups participating in these negotiations - WaterWatch and Oregon Wild – were involuntarily kicked out of these negotiations by the Bush Administration and irrigation interests in April of 2007. Why? WaterWatch and Oregon Wild refused to pledge allegiance to an inadequate deal “framework” and also objected to specific terms in the framework, the secret process of setting federal and state policy without public participation and the deviation from agreed upon consensus operating procedures for the negotiation. WaterWatch was at all times willing to continue to negotiate to see if an acceptable settlement could be reached. Below is a joint editorial from WaterWatch and Oregon Wild that summarizes the lens through which any “settlement” should be evaluated. We hope you will demand that the elements of any deal pass scientific muster and also think critically about the elements of this deal and any related media.

Durable Solutions for the Klamath River Basin

The relicensing process for PacifiCorp’s Klamath River Hydropower Project presents a unique opportunity to remove the project’s lower four dams and bring Klamath salmon back home to Oregon. Removing these dams is the most effective method of opening access to over 300 miles of salmon and steelhead habitat, eliminating toxic algae, and improving water quality. Dam removal will be a critical element of any Klamath Basin solution.

However, dam removal alone will not restore the river and its salmon, or bring an end to the Klamath’s conflicts. A sustainable solution will only come when water demands are brought back into balance

with actual supply and wetlands are restored for improved habitat, water quality, and natural storage. Leasing of National Wildlife Refuge land for commercial farming must be phased out, and the needs of fish, national wildlife refuges, Tribes, and downstream communities must be given equal footing with the needs of agriculture.

Unfortunately, it appears the Bush administration has hijacked the Klamath’s confidential relicensing negotiation in order to deliver a sweetheart water and power deal for politically connected agribusiness interests. This deal would come at the expense of fish, wildlife, National Wildlife Refuges, and the U.S. taxpayer.

A large commitment of public funds will be necessary to pay for needed restoration and mitigation during dam removal in the Klamath, but the deal will fail if it is laden with costly and unwarranted subsidies for special interests.

Moreover, secret negotiations about dam relicensing should not be used to lock in a program allowing 22,000 acres on Lower Klamath and Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuges to be leased for commercial farming. This harmful program has led to serious declines in two of the crown jewels of America’s National Wildlife System, and should be phased out. If this land were managed for wildlife purposes rather than for growing potatoes and onions, it could reduce irrigation season water demand, increase water supply through natural storage, provide greatly needed wetland habitat, and improve water quality. Farming has its place in the basin, but is certainly inappropriate on the public’s National Wildlife Refuges.

Finally, a settlement that includes guaranteed water for irrigators – but not for fish – will not restore salmon runs, or comply with the Endangered Species Act. Even with dam removal, fish will still need water. It makes no sense to open up hundreds of miles of salmon habitat just to kill fish with low flows, the root cause of the catastrophic Klamath River salmon kill in 2002. Just before that tragic kill, Oregon's and California's U.S. Senators championed a federally-funded, voluntary program to purchase land and water from willing sellers in the Klamath to address the problems created by too many interests

chasing too little water. Sadly, the proposal was blocked by agribusiness interests. It's time to again bring such a program forward.

The Klamath has long suffered from political manipulation and backroom deals. A comprehensive settlement is needed that achieves our shared goals of sustainable communities, abundant fish and wildlife, clean water, and a lasting natural heritage for our children and grandchildren.

WaterWatch's 2007 Accomplishments

Progress for Rivers and Water Policy in Oregon's Capitol: WaterWatch led the successful battle to defeat a Columbia River water grab misleadingly dubbed the "Oasis Project." This special interest legislation attempted to direct Oregon to allocate 500,000 acre-feet of Columbia River water during the dry season. If passed, the bill would have gutted Oregon's Sensitive Stock rules and mitigation policies that protect streamflows in the Columbia for threatened and endangered salmon and steelhead.

WaterWatch successfully prevented municipal water developers from eliminating or weakening the new fish protection standard that requires these water developers to "maintain the persistence" of imperiled fish species when they attempt to develop certain municipal water rights.

WaterWatch worked with diverse coalitions of water users to boost state funding for improved water management and to push for groundwater reform and water measurement legislation. Our work in the budgeting process helped fund five new field staff and a permanent water measurement specialist for the Water Resources Department as well as groundwater studies, a long-range planning study and a study of statewide water conservation opportunities.

WaterWatch elevated the profile of water and river conservation in the Legislature and in the Governor's office. Our work in Salem helped secure an important groundwater protection component in Measure 49 and helped convince the Governor to make water policy a priority for the remainder of his term through his emerging Headwaters to the Ocean (H2O) Initiative.

Freeing the Rogue River: In 2007, WaterWatch and the Grants Pass Irrigation District worked with the Bush Administration, the Oregon delegation, Governor Kulongoski and Congress to preserve a \$15,000,000 budget request to fund the removal of Savage Rapids Dam, an outdated irrigation diversion dam that does not store water, control floods or generate hydropower, but does kill salmon and steelhead by the thousands. After many years, construction of the pumps that will replace the dam is underway and the dam is on schedule for removal in 2009. Benefits of dam removal include an estimated 114,000 additional salmon and steelhead in the Rogue, unimpeded access to 500 miles of upstream fish habitat, \$5,000,000 annually injected into the local economy, elimination of a barrier to boating and transfer of 800 cubic feet per second (cfs) of water rights associated with the dam to instream water rights to protect flows in the Rogue River in perpetuity. The removal of Savage Rapids Dam is arguably the most important dam removal project in the nation.

WaterWatch's Free the Rogue Campaign also assisted on the project to remove the City of Gold Hill Diversion Dam, scheduled for removal in the summer 2008, worked with Jackson County to explore the feasibility of removing the defunct Gold Ray Hydroelectric Dam and helped secure the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers commitment to notch the uncompleted Elk Creek Dam on an important Rogue tributary in 2008.

Restoring the Sandy River: In 2007, Portland General Electric removed the Marmot Dam from the Sandy River. In the removal process, WaterWatch negotiated for the transfer of 600 cfs of water rights associated with the dam to an instream water right to protect streamflows in the Sandy for fish, recreation and future generations.

Protecting Rivers and Aquifers in the Deschutes Basin from the Effects of Rapid Growth: WaterWatch challenged inadequate mitigation proposals in the basin and secured more mitigation water from destination resorts and growing cities in order to protect streamflows in the Deschutes River and its tributaries.

The Everglades of the West – the Klamath Basin: WaterWatch secured a final decision from Oregon stopping a proposal by the Klamath Drainage District to appropriate 149,000 acre feet of public water from the Klamath River. The District sought a windfall by proposing to sell some of that same water, at taxpayer expense, to the government to supplement streamflows in the Klamath River.

Through an injunction, WaterWatch and others obtained more water for threatened coho salmon in the Klamath River.

WaterWatch was a strong voice for sound water policy and adequate water for fish, rivers and the basin's National Wildlife Refuges in the media and in relation to ongoing multi-party negotiations over the PacifiCorp's Klamath Hydroelectric project.

Peak Flow Guidance – Recognizing the Importance of Ecological Streamflows for Oregon's Waterways: WaterWatch's advocacy on the importance of peak flows helped push Oregon to develop "Peak Flow Guidance" to shape the allocation of wet season water in Oregon. The Peak Flow Guidance recognizes the importance of a variety of higher flow events on fish migration and the health of aquatic and riparian habitat. The Peak Flow Guidance is a critical first step towards protecting ecological flows beyond minimum streamflows in our waterways.

In the Trenches - Protecting Streamflows Across Oregon: WaterWatch protected streamflows and advocated for balanced water policies across

Oregon. WaterWatch protected streamflows for threatened Lahontan cutthroat trout in a small but critical desert stream in southeastern Oregon, challenged decisions to reduce streamflows needed for fish on the Chetco, Clackamas and Willamette Rivers, monitored and challenged proposed groundwater withdrawals in the Klamath Basin, pushed Oregon to regulate the water withdrawals associated with coal bed methane mining, and assisted with efforts to stop gravel mining operations on the Applegate River that could have interfered with streamflows and threatened fish species.

Annual Fundraising Event a Success!

By Stacy Webb, Development Director

A Celebration of Oregon Rivers was held in Portland on October 20th raising more than \$48,000 for WaterWatch programs.

This was the fifth annual dinner and auction for WaterWatch and it has continued to grow every year.

More than 100 businesses, organizations and individuals contributed items, sponsorship funds and their personal time to make the event possible.

This event is a wonderful opportunity for WaterWatch members to get together and enjoy an evening of great food, Oregon wines, live music and of course excellent live and silent auction items.

A Special Thank You...

The staff and board of directors for WaterWatch would like to thank everyone who attended and contributed to this year's fundraising event.

Auction Sponsors

Stoll, Stoll, Berne Lokting & Shlachter, P.C.
ClackaCraft Drift Boats
KEEN Footwear
Confluence Consulting
Rogue Fly Fishers
Black Bear Diner in Beaverton
J. Christopher Wines
Business Telephone Solutions

Auction Item Donors

Anne Marie Anantha	Vic Anantha
Alder Creek Kayak	Norma Adams
Aikido Yoshokai	Mark Bachmann

Auction Item Donors Continued

Patti Barnes	Lisa Brown	Sean McGinty	Andy Nichols
Blue Sky Rafting	Black Bear Diner	New Belgium Brewing	Bill Nootenboom
Steve Berman	Bijou Café	Cass Nicolson	Larry Olson
Bryan Bates	Bruce Belles	Ousterhout Vineyard	Old Wives' Tales
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Deschutes Canyon Fly Shop	John DeVoe	Rich's Pour House	Dave & Hazel Russell
David Davies	Ned Duhnkrack	Bob Rees	Resort at the Mountain
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McKenzie Outfitters	John MacDiarmid		
Julie MacDiarmid	Fred & Pam Miller		
Dave McCann	David Moskowitz		

If you would like to contribute to next year's event, please contact WaterWatch Development Director, Stacy Webb at (503) 295-4039.

Thank You!

We would like to thank all of you who continue to support our important mission! We also would like to thank the many foundations that have awarded grants to WaterWatch of Oregon in the past year:

The Boyer Family Foundation

The Bullitt Foundation

Flintridge Foundation

The Harder Foundation

Jubitz Family Foundation

New Belgium Brewing Foundation

The Penney Family Fund

The Burning Foundation

Earth Share of Oregon

The George Gund Foundation

The Hugh & Jane Ferguson Foundation

The Lazar Foundation

Norcross Wildlife Foundation



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Visit us online at www.waterwatch.org

Questions or Comments? You can reach us by phone at (503) 295-4039
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WaterWatch of Oregon is a not-for-profit, 501(c)(3), river conservation organization. We work in the courts, the legislature, with state and federal agencies and through the media to ensure enough water is left in our rivers to sustain native fish, wildlife and the people who depend on healthy rivers.