



# WATERWATCH

PROTECTING NATURAL FLOWS IN OREGON RIVERS

**December 2012**

Thanks to your support, WaterWatch achieved many truly important victories for Oregon's rivers in 2012. Recent successes have been dramatic and remarkable. Here is a sampling:

## **Protecting and Restoring Streamflows and Rivers**



Crooked River through Smith Rock State Park



McKenzie River Photo: Doug Heiken



Grave Creek Photo: John Craig/BLM



Chetco River Photo: Ken Morrish



Columbia River

On the **Crooked River**, WaterWatch worked closely with Oregon's Senators Merkley and Wyden, the Warm Springs Tribes, and other interests to craft historic federal legislation that calls for the release of nearly half the water captured in Prineville Reservoir to benefit downstream fish, including reintroduced steelhead.

WaterWatch won an important legal victory against speculative water development on the **McKenzie River** that sought almost 22 million gallons of water per day from the McKenzie at the expense of Oregon chub and steelhead.

WaterWatch continued groundbreaking projects to remove fish-killing, obsolete dams and improve streamflows in the **Rogue Basin**. WaterWatch built on the successful removal of four major dams on the Rogue River through the Free the Rogue Campaign by collaborating with an irrigation district to solve fish passage and water diversion issues at a major irrigation diversion dam on the mainstem Rogue. Our veteran staff helped shape a landmark upper Rogue Valley water agreement intended to provide cooler, cleaner water in streams, more reliable water supplies for farmers, and better habitat for salmon and steelhead.

WaterWatch successfully challenged attempts by a mining concern to develop groundwater for a 126-acre open-pit mine adjacent to **Grave Creek**, the iconic tributary marking the start of the Rogue River's famed wild and scenic section.

On the **Chetco River**, WaterWatch challenged and then resolved a water development proposal that would have increased pressure on the Chetco's prized fish runs. This settlement protects streamflows and fish runs on the Lower Chetco while allowing for reasonable water development by the City of Brookings.

## **Providing a Voice for Streamflows and Balanced Water Policies in Salem and Washington D.C.**

In Salem, WaterWatch stopped a bill that would have taken water from the **Columbia River** without considering the needs of fish. WaterWatch supported concepts to provide reliable funding to the Water Resources Department through a water right administrative fee. WaterWatch also continued to influence the state budget process to ensure that the Water Resources Department retains important water management capacities that benefit rivers.



Klamath Basin

In Washington D. C., WaterWatch worked to protect water for fish and wetlands in the **Klamath Basin** by advocating for changes to the costly and controversial Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement. WaterWatch also worked with allies to urge the Obama administration to save dying waterfowl at the Klamath National Wildlife Refuges, helping to bring much-needed water to the parched Lower Klamath and Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge marshes during the spring and fall waterfowl migrations.



Oregon State Capital

**Oregon’s Integrated Water Resources Strategy: Planning for Oregon’s Water Future.** In August, Oregon adopted its first Integrated Water Resources Strategy. WaterWatch’s advocacy in this state water planning process resulted in fair and equitable treatment of instream values in the Strategy. WaterWatch served on the Policy Advisory Group for the Strategy and organized concerned citizens to ensure that the blueprint for Oregon’s water future addresses Oregon’s instream needs.

### **Protecting Rivers across Oregon from the Effects of Growth**



NF MF Willamette Photo: Larry Olson

On the **Clackamas, McKenzie, Row, Nestucca, Chetco and Willamette Rivers**, WaterWatch went to court to protect imperiled fish populations and to hold cities to rational and defensible water demands. These cases will help define the steps cities and the state must take to maintain troubled fish populations as cities demand more water from our rivers. These issues in these cases affect many ecologically significant rivers across Oregon, including the **Rogue, Chetco, Kilchis and Willamette.**



Clackamas River

On the Coast, WaterWatch protected critical summer streamflows on **Horn Creek**, tributary to the Nestucca. Horn Creek supports multiple runs of anadromous fish and was threatened by proposed municipal water development.

***WaterWatch remains the only conservation group monitoring all decisions of the Oregon Water Resources Department.*** This watchdogging work protects the public interest in water and increases accountability, legal compliance, and the transparency of the state’s decisions about water.

After more than a quarter century, WaterWatch continues to play a unique and essential role for Oregon’s rivers. ***WaterWatch is the only organization in Oregon focused solely on protecting and restoring streamflows in Oregon’s rivers for fish, wildlife, and the people who depend on healthy rivers.*** The staff and Board of Directors of WaterWatch thank you for your continuing investment in our shared passion for Oregon’s waters.

