

Inside the O&C Debate

PRC is deeply involved in the debate over the future of over 2.6 million acres of federal lands currently managed under the Oregon and California Lands Act (O&C). The majority of this public land is managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and is located in southwestern Oregon. O&C lands comprise significant portions of some of Oregon's best remaining rivers and watersheds, such as the Umpqua, Rogue, and Siuslaw. What happens to these lands will have a substantial effect on the health of our rivers and fisheries.

Historically, the O&C Act was designed, in part, to generate revenue for rural county governments and the lands and waters were subjected to industrial logging practices until the adoption of the Northwest Forest Plan. Some time after that Senator Ron Wyden and others created a direct federal payment to these counties under the Secure Rural Schools Act (SRS) to replace the county revenues once generated by timber production. However, the future of SRS is uncertain and coupled with the poor economic conditions in many rural counties have created intense political pressure to go back to the practices of logging federal lands to produce needed county revenue.



In response to the economic woes of counties and the timber industry, Governor John Kitzhaber has created a task force comprised of county, timber and environmental interests. PRC has been selected as one of the representatives. The consistent pressure on lands that are crucial to river health continually threatens the interests we hold dear. We believe that a compromise must be achieved and are committed to working toward that goal.



DELVING INTO THE SIERRAS

PRC is pleased to announce the recent publication of our new policy paper, "Conservation of Freshwater Ecosystems on Sierra Nevada National Forests: Policy Analysis and Recommendations for the Future." This report is intended to inform conservation advocates and Forest Service regional and forest-planning teams and advance the conservation of aquatic resources in future forest plan revisions, which are slated to begin in 2013 on the Sierra, Inyo and Sequoia National Forests. PRC, working with our partners in the Sierra Nevada Alliance, will work hard to ensure the protection and restoration recommendations are implemented. The full report can be found on our website. Key aquatic recommendations include:

Recognize reserves and restoration as guiding principals for aquatic conservation in future forest plans

Designate meadow reserves

Prohibit headwater impoundments

Recognize and manage springs as refugia for biological diversity

Establish "Aquatic Diversity Management Areas"

Direct assertion of federal reserved water rights

Restrict salvage logging

Reintroduce prescribed fire and allow wildfires to burn in riparian management areas

Protect the Best Restore the Rest

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PRC's LATEST LEGAL VICTORIES

Over the last year, PRC has had a number of important legal victories and outcomes:

Wyoming v. U.S. Department of Agriculture

In October of 2011, the 10th Circuit upheld the validity of the Roadless Rule after a lower court in Wyoming struck it down. Our attorneys at Earthjustice did a great job explaining to the 10th Circuit why the protection of roadless areas on our national forests is well within the authority of the Forest Service. The 10th Circuit decision is in alignment with a 2009 decision from the 9th Circuit also upholding the Roadless Rule.

Pacific Rivers Council v. U.S. Forest Service

PRC's attorneys Brian Gaffney and Babak Naficy successfully argued to the 9th Circuit that the Bush Administration had failed to adequately analyze the impacts to fish that would result from its Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendments. The 9th Circuit ruled in our favor in an opinion published this past February. PRC is now working to secure a substantial remedy that will protect fish as the Forest Service adjusts its Sierra Nevada forest management to comply with the 9th Circuit decision, although the Forest Service has indicated it may seek Supreme Court review.

Pacific Rivers Council v. Bureau of Land Management

PRC successfully put the final nail in the coffin of the BLM's extremely misguided Western Oregon Plans Revision, with expert representation by Earthjustice. The "WOPR," developed by the Bush Administration, would have significantly reduced aquatic protections on BLM timber lands in Western Oregon, threatening the progress that has been made to protect and restore rivers since the adoption of the Northwest Forest Plan in 1994. Further, the BLM failed to consult under the Endangered Species Act on the Revisions' effects on listed species. The U.S. District Court of Oregon agreed in March of 2012, and struck down the WOPR as unlawful. BLM still plans to revise the plans for Western Oregon, and PRC will be tracking the matter closely to make sure aquatic protections remain strong.

Rock Creek Alliance v. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

PRC and its attorneys at Earthjustice also put up a good fight to protect Montana's Rock Creek from mining impacts, but in November of 2011 the 9th Circuit upheld the Fish and Wildlife Service's sign-off under Endangered Species Act consultation that mining would not adversely modify bull trout critical habitat. Rock Creek, one of our Legacy Rivers, remains an important focus for us as we continue to work toward greater protections of Montana rivers.



Update on Oregon's Coastal Species Plan

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) has undertaken a process to develop a Coastal Multi-Species Conservation and Management Plan which will address hatchery programs, harvest and, to a lesser degree, predator management. The goal of the process is to reduce the risk created by hatchery programs on coastal stocks of wild salmon and steelhead and increase harvest opportunities, including wild fish, in select rivers. ODFW has established four stakeholder-working groups to correspond to species stratum comprising the Coastal Species Management Unit: North Coast, Mid-Coast, Umpqua and Mid-South Coast. PRC is represented on the Umpqua stratum group and we are tracking the recommendations coming from the other stratum groups. The process will precede and inform the formal public participation connected with adoption of a Coastal Species Plan by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission, likely in April of 2013.

PRC applauds ODFW for establishing wild fish management zones by reducing and, in some cases, eliminating hatchery programs. Wild stocks of salmon and steelhead deserve this type of management. However, despite our objections, the Umpqua stratum group is recommending a limited harvest of wild winter-run steelhead from the mainstem Umpqua. There are several problems with this proposal. First, many of these fish are destined for spawning grounds in tributaries of the North Umpqua, the primary production area for these incredible fish. Reducing escapement, potentially by up to 2000 fish, risks compromising the diversity and overall strength of the run. Second, ODFW has limited data on which to estimate the overall return, which calls into question whether harvest is even appropriate. Third, assuming the run can absorb some limited harvest doesn't mean it makes sense to harvest these fish. Many anglers, guides and local residents understand how special, and valuable, wild winter-run steelhead in the Umpqua are. Steelhead anglers come from around the country to fish the North Umpqua run of wild steelhead and they generate a significant amount of economic activity in the surrounding communities. Oregon has always been progressive when it comes protecting its wild stocks through catch and release fisheries. Instituting even a limited harvest on Oregon's premier steelhead fishery is contrary to this tradition.

Conservation of Portland's Backyard Playground

In every season Portlanders flock to Mt. Hood National Forest to enjoy the wealth of recreational activities it has to offer, but most people in the region also get their drinking water from this



Forest, with the Bull Run and Clackamas Rivers providing water to over a million people. The Forest's rivers also support threatened species like coho and chinook salmon, steelhead, and bull trout. PRC recently produced a suite of recommendations for the Forest Service to better protect Mt. Hood's water resources.

These recommendations include establishing significant no-cut buffers along all streams and screening criteria for timber management along these buffers in order to ensure that adverse impacts do not outweigh perceived restoration benefits of forest thinning or other treatments. Thinning near streams can impact water temperature, dead wood recruitment, and sediment delivery, all of which are key factors in salmon and steelhead habitat quality. PRC also recommends road density reductions and a moratorium on road-building near streams and in key watersheds.

Mt. Hood National Forest includes two of our Legacy Rivers, the Clackamas and the Sandy, but all of the Forest's rivers need continued and increased protection to ensure cold, clean water far into the future. To read PRC's Mt. Hood recommendations, visit our website.

THANK YOU!

A special thank you to our supporting foundations

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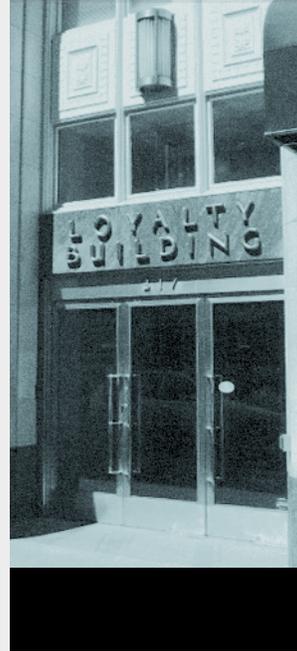
What's Next for PRC?

PRC has begun to organize an ambitious river campaign in Montana based on the model of our Legacy River program-instituting watershed scale conservation for Montana's most climate resilient rivers and native fish strongholds.

The Campaign for Montana's Headwaters will seek to protect these watersheds through legislation and will require creating a network of allies and advisors to support this effort as well as establishing strong political champions in the state.

To that end, PRC has joined with American Rivers, the Clark Fork Coalition, the Greater Yellowstone Coalition and American Whitewater in formal partnership on this campaign.

**Stay tuned for updates
on this ambitious effort!**



Come Visit Our New Office!

PRC recently led the effort to secure a new collaborative workspace in downtown Portland the organization shares with partner organizations American Rivers and Salmon Safe.

We're in Suite 900
at 317 SW Alder Street.

**Stop in and say
hello if you're in
the neighborhood!**



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**PROTECTING
& RESTORING
RIVERS
FOR 25 YEARS**