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National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Oregon Governor's Fund for the Environment Awards More Than \$290,000 in Grants**

Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski today awarded seven grants to aid farmers, vintners, students, local governments and landowners in being stewards of our natural resources. The grants are funded by the Governor's Fund for the Environment, which is supported by pollution penalties. Since its inception in 2005, polluters have been ordered to pay more than \$4.5 million to the fund.

The grants were awarded in a ceremony at Willamette Valley Vineyards in Turner.

"These funds continue to provide important resources for projects that restore habitats, improve water quality, and enhance wildlife and watershed functions," said Governor Kulongoski. "With continued investment in the Willamette Basin, we can build on past restoration work towards our goal of a clean and healthy basin that will benefit all Oregonians."

Governor Kulongoski and U.S. Attorney Karin Immergut created the fund with the goal of establishing a sustainable revenue source that is dedicated to local environmental clean up and restoration efforts focused on preserving and protecting Oregon's rivers, watersheds and fish and wildlife. Established in April 2005 with a court-ordered settlement in a criminal pollution case, the Governor's Fund for the Environment is administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The grant amounts vary each year based on the interest earned on the principal and new funds deposited through criminal fines and additional private and public donations.

"Criminal polluters must be held accountable – and must pay for the harm that they cause," stated U.S. Attorney Karin Immergut. "Through our partnership with the Governor's Fund, polluters who are convicted of criminal activity will pay to protect Oregon's rivers, streams and habitat."

This year's seven successful grant recipients, chosen from among nineteen applicants, proposed projects that will identify and reduce pollution as well as restore and conserve fish, wildlife and plant resources and help enhance the quality of Oregon streams and habitats in the Willamette Basin. The grants range from \$15,000 to \$50,000, and total \$292,207, with an additional \$826,636 from matching funds and in-kind contributions.

“These grants will restore streambeds throughout the Willamette Basin, improve water quality for people and wildlife, and provide a better home for several threatened and endangered species of fish, plants and wildlife,” said Foundation Executive Director Jeff Trandahl. “By gaining landowner cooperation in improving fish and wildlife habitat, we’re creating win-win solutions that will have lasting benefits for people and the natural resources we cherish.”

Governor Kulongoski and Ms. Immergut created the Governor's Fund for the Environment in 2005. In the past five years, criminals prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Oregon have paid over \$7 million to fund local environmental projects as part of their criminal convictions -- including over \$4.5 million to the Governor’s Fund.

“Both natural resources and citizens in the Willamette Valley will benefit from this leadership shared by Governor Kulongoski and U.S. Attorney Karin Immergut,” said Robyn Thorson, Regional Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Pacific Region. “This year’s grants truly reflect the partnership aspect of the Fund. Only through working together will we improve the health of aquatic and wildlife habitats and the species that live in them.”

The 2009 recipients of the Oregon Governor’s Fund for the Environment grants are:

**Scappoose Bay Watershed Council: Grant \$48,000; Match \$200,000**

**Project: Scappoose Bottomlands Channel Reconnection Assessment**

The Scappoose Bay Watershed Council will conduct an assessment of the historic tidal channel network connecting Scappoose Bay with Multnomah Channel and develop a design concept to reconnect and enhance these waterways. The Scappoose Bottomlands are a rare, fresh water tidal system near the confluence of the Columbia River and Multnomah Channel with intrinsic habitat value for its resident species of fish, wildlife, and plants (including threatened & endangered species) and broader habitat value for the salmon and bird species that migrate through the Columbia and Willamette River Basins and the Pacific flyway. The Scappoose Bay Watershed Council is currently working with the Natural Resource Conservation Service, the property owner, and other partners including the Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership and the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board on restoration of a large property in the Scappoose Bottomlands (Hogan Ranch), where wetland habitat is being negatively impacted by hydrologic alteration and cattle grazing. The Council is interested in determining if similar project work could be conducted on the adjacent property (Scappoose Landing) owned by Oregon Parks and Recreation Department and if reconnecting historic side channels would improve the exchange of water flow between Multnomah Channel and Scappoose Bay, creating much needed off-channel habitat for migrating salmon.

**Salem Keizer Watershed Councils Association: Grant \$15,000; Match \$121,866**

**Project: Luckiamute Watershed Fish Passage Restoration**

The Salem Keizer Watershed Councils Association will restore native fish passage at four sites in the Luckiamute River watershed by replacing existing culverts that act as barriers to fish passage. The culverts, which are found on Waymire Creek and Grant Creek, tributaries to the Little Luckiamute River, and the Middle Fork and North Forks of Berry Creek, tributaries to the Luckiamute River, were professionally surveyed, prioritized by an expert panel, and described in the Luckiamute Watershed Fish Passage Action Plan. Existing culverts will be replaced with steel pipe arch culverts sized to match stream widths and meeting both Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and Oregon Department of Forestry criteria. Addressing these barriers will reduce erosion and open approximately 1.1 mile of spawning and rearing habitat for steelhead, coho salmon, and cutthroat trout. Partners include the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Oregon State University Research Forests, Weyerhaeuser, and ODFW.

**Yamhill Soil and Water Conservation District: Grant \$50,000; Match \$416,020**

**Project: Yamhill-Polk Riparian Restoration Partnership**

The Yamhill and Polk Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) will develop 30 plans to USDA Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) standards and assist in maintaining 54 CREP projects that are in active restoration on private lands. Yamhill and Polk SWCDs will use funds to employ a riparian specialist in each of the two counties to complete riparian buffer plans, develop outreach materials, actively recruit new landowners, and follow-up on referrals from partnering agencies, including Farm Service Agency, Oregon Department of Forestry, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Oregon Department of Agriculture, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and local watershed councils. The planners will develop restoration plans according to Natural Resources Conservation Services standards as well as implement and follow-up on project maintenance. The resulting 30 new riparian restoration plans will result in 12+ miles and approximately 100 acres of new forested buffers, and technical assistance will continue on 54 buffer projects which are in active restoration. The 84 restored buffers will provide a variety of ecological functions including filtration of nutrients and sediment, recruitment of large woody debris and modification of solar heating. The improved water quality and reduced solar heating will greatly benefit a number of threatened and endangered species within the counties including Chinook salmon, coho salmon, steelhead and cutthroat trout. The forests will also provide for additional upland wildlife habitat which is severely lacking in this fragmented agricultural landscape.

**Salmon-Safe, Inc.: Grant \$45,500; Match \$47,500**

**Project: Salmon-Safe Willamette 2009**

Salmon-Safe will expand a pioneering partnership that has helped 144 Willamette Valley vineyards to adopt water quality and biodiversity protection practices to other key sectors, including hops, hazelnut & nursery industries. Since 1996, Salmon-Safe has focused on inspiring landowners to protect water quality and habitat while building marketplace presence for ecologically sustainable Oregon farm products, most notably wine from the Willamette Valley. Salmon-Safe's flagship project has been an innovative partnership with the Oregon wine industry to transition the majority of the Willamette Valley's wine growers to ecological sustainability. Efforts have focused on outreach, technical assistance and site assessment with a particular emphasis on reducing runoff from the watershed's 400 vineyards, mostly located on steep hillside vineyards above the Yamhill River and other tributaries. With support from the Oregon Governor's Environmental Fund since 2006, Salmon-Safe has helped transition 144 Willamette Valley vineyards, representing half of the valley's wine grape acreage, to farming practices that protect water quality and native biodiversity. This project builds on this track record of market-based conservation success by applying this collaborative model in several of the Willamette Valley's other most vital agricultural sectors including hops, Christmas trees, hazelnuts, and the nursery industry.

**Scappoose Bay Watershed Council: Grant \$38,000; Match \$10,000**

**Project: North & South Scappoose Creek Confluence Restoration**

The Scappoose Bay Watershed Council will develop a restoration project design to address degrading creek conditions and disconnection from the floodplain at the confluence of North and South Scappoose Creeks. A 5-mile stretch of South Scappoose Creek, which flows through the City of Scappoose past the confluence of North and South Scappoose Creeks, was determined to be high priority for further assessment and development of a restoration plan to guide future enhancement work. This proposed project was identified during development of the South Scappoose Restoration Plan (Restoration Plan). The results of the Restoration Plan indicate that past land use impacts, including filling of historic floodplains and secondary channels, straightening and realignment of the channel, loss of riparian corridors, and floodplain constriction at road crossings have profoundly altered the functions and values of South Scappoose Creek. One of the primary recommendations to improve channel and floodplain function on South Scappoose Creek is to increase the frequency with which high flow accesses overbank areas by creating and/or expanding floodplain area and complexity. The proposed technical assistance project on the Conard Property seeks to address both the issue of a functional alluvial fan at the site as well as the influx of fine sediment inputs at

the confluence of North and South Scappoose Creeks. The project design will focus on reconnecting an existing side channel; placing large wood to encourage pool formation and development of complex aquatic habitat; and reducing sediment inputs from eroding banks using bioengineering techniques and revegetation.

**Willamette Riverkeeper: Grant \$50,000; Match \$10,000**

**Project: Bowers Rock Reconnection Project**

Willamette Riverkeeper will meet with stakeholders, engineer a reconnection plan to restore side channel, floodplains and wetlands, and reach out to landowners interested in restoration on land adjacent to Bowers Rock State Park. Bowers Rock State Park lies along the Willamette River near its confluence with the Calapooia River. An abandoned gravel pit is located in the southwest corner of the park, and man-made and natural embankments along the Willamette have disconnected side channels, sloughs and alcoves, cutting-off year-round flow to the park's floodplains. Willamette Riverkeeper is developing a hydraulic model of the system using recent LiDAR and hydroacoustic data. The completed model will show reconnection potentials within the park. Outreach to stakeholders will determine the best balance between reconnection/restoration, recreation and other activities at the site, as well as connections between reconnection activities at the park and on nearby public and private lands. With agreements from stakeholders in place, Willamette Riverkeeper will proceed to engineer and permit the project, which will increase the complexity of the Willamette by returning side channels, alcoves, floodplains and wetlands to the river system, restore natural hydraulic and riverine functions, provide refugia and habitat to native salmonids, and increase habitat for native terrestrial species and neo-tropical migratory birds. Integrated pest management will remove invasive species and replace them with natives. The project will also provide graduate students with educational opportunities and provide long-term, scientifically-valid monitoring data to help in engineering future reconnection projects.

**Calapooia Watershed Council: Grant \$45,707; Match \$21,250**

**Project: Calapooia-Santiam Outreach for Restoration Implementation**

Calapooia Watershed Council will work one-on-one with 15 landowners to assist them in enrolling in and implementing a U.S. Farm Bill Program to improve watershed health. The Calapooia Watershed Council will work with 10 landowners to begin design for in-stream projects and add capacity and value to the current 3-watershed council regional recruitment program to capture full restoration potential on high priority streams beyond riparian buffers. The councils will recruit and assist landowners in enrollment and implementation of landowner incentive programs designed to conserve and improve natural resources. These programs have great potential, but are currently under-utilized due to a lack of landowner awareness and frustration when navigating the process. The project will increase the awareness of farm bill program opportunities, recruit landowners to participate in landowner incentive programs and instream restoration projects, and assist them with implementation, thereby resulting in 15 successful projects and 10 successful preliminary designs for in-stream projects. By completing landowner incentive programs, watershed health will be improved through removing invasive weeds, establishing native vegetation, providing fish and wildlife habitat, and improving water quality. By recruiting landowners to do prioritized in-stream projects, the councils will be able to create preliminary designs that address restoration needs and can be used to secure permits and funding for project implementation. In-stream projects will enhance and improve habitat and stream conditions for fish and wildlife.

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