

## News Top Stories

# The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Provides \$30,000 for Salmon River Restoration

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A collection of more than 27 Native American tribes known as the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon (Tribes) has awarded The Freshwater Trust (TFT) \$30,000 to support restoration work in northwestern Oregon's Sandy River basin.

This funding was provided through the Tribes' Spirit Mountain Community Fund, a philanthropic arm aimed at supporting "efforts that address the health, education and social needs of Oregonians." The Community Fund provides grants to organizations and other tribes. It also awards an annual fellowship to a Native American to serve as a staff member for one of Oregon's congressional delegates in Washington, D.C. Since 1997, more than 2,600 grants have been awarded totaling nearly \$78 million.

**"Every quarter, Spirit Mountain Community Fund's Board of Trustees with the assistance of the staff highlight projects that reflect our values and that provide the greatest impact to communities in our 11-county funding area," said Jesse Knight, grants coordinator with the Tribes. "Based on casino revenue from Spirit Mountain Casino, the Trustees are given a dollar amount to disburse to as many impactful projects as they possibly can fund."**

This \$30,000 grant will be combined with funding from other government agencies, nonprofits and individuals to support TFT's long standing involvement in restoring native fish habitat in the Sandy basin.

Over the coming year, TFT will install new large wood structures, add boulders to the system, and open new side channels on the Salmon River, a top restoration priority in the

"The goal with all of our work in this area is to improve the habitat so it accelerates the recovery of native fish here," said Mark McCollister, habitat restoration director with TFT.

“But it’s not just about fish. The surrounding communities benefit greatly from a watershed that’s healthier as well.”

The Sandy is the City of Portland’s backyard basin – the closest place for fishing, a hike, and swim. It also encompasses the Bull Run watershed, supplying Oregon’s most populous city with drinking water.

Historically, the Sandy River and its tributaries were chock full of large wood. Trees from the surrounding lush, old growth forests along the rivers and streams would fall into the waterways and naturally congregate, aiding in the formation of side channels and maintaining floodplain function. In the sixties, this large wood was removed from the system, due to the thought that the accumulation exacerbated flooding.

**“In actuality, this is the action that stripped the river of key elements that make it a healthy home for fish and other wildlife,” said McCollister. “It no longer functioned the way a river should. Now every year, we raise the funds to bring it back to what it once was. We’re really fortunate to have the tribes supporting our efforts.”**

Over the last decade, approximately \$4.8 million in restoration investment has been directed to 16 restoration projects on the Salmon River, Still Creek and the mainstem of the Sandy River.

More than 10,000 feet of stream function has been restored and the numbers of spring Chinook, coho and steelhead thriving has increased as result.

Between 1998 and 2016, the number of steelhead spawning has increased by 350%. Nearly every other population of winter steelhead in Oregon has declined during this period.

“Our Board of Trustees have prioritized projects involved in environmental preservation, support,” said Knight. “This project and TFT’s organizational efforts reflect the Tribe’s values in promoting responsible stewardship of all natural resources for current and future generations.”