

# Whole Watershed Restoration Initiative

An innovative model for  
investing in people and place



*By coordinating investments in watershed restoration, a dynamic group of partners created a new model for building healthy communities, economies, and environments.*

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## **WHY WHOLE WATERSHED RESTORATION?**

After decades of largely uncoordinated efforts to restore watersheds throughout the Pacific Northwest, land management agencies and collaborative organizations were ready to try a new strategy to deliver clean water to communities and restore salmon habitat.

With Ecotrust as the hub since 2005, five state and federal agencies partnered to pool their funding, agree on priority areas, and grant more than \$10 million to community organizations working to restore the watersheds in their backyards.

## **PAVING THE WAY FOR A NEW MODEL**

When the Whole Watershed Restoration Initiative (WWRI) launched, it was a pioneering example of interagency collaboration: Thanks to the cooperation of the USDA Forest Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Bureau of Land Management, Oregon Watershed Enhancement

Board, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and Ecotrust, more than 160 projects have been funded, bringing an estimated additional \$1 million a year over the course of 10 years to salmon recovery efforts in the region.

By pooling funding from state and federal agencies, more than 6,500 acres of habitat and 900 miles of streams have been restored, with more than \$10 million dollars going directly to fund local jobs in rural areas.







This strategy for coordinating investments earned several awards for our partnership, including the 2010 Honor Award from the Chief of the USDA's Forest Service, and a 2014 Classy Award for Excellence in Social Innovation. Our model was designed to accomplish meaningful work in places that need it most and continues to inspire strategic collaboration and priority-setting.

## **BUILDING A RESTORATION ECONOMY**

A 2010 study by University of Oregon's Ecosystem Workforce Program titled *Economic and Employment Impacts of Forest and Watershed Restoration in Oregon* found that a \$1 million investment in restoration creates between 16 and 24 jobs.

**“We’re building the long-term resilience here. And we’re creating diversity in the jobs market with new opportunities in restoration. Being part of this work gives us hope for the long term.”**

**—AMY CHARETTE, WATERSHED RESTORATION COORDINATOR, CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF THE WARM SPRINGS**

The \$10 million our partners awarded to WWRI projects has helped create up to 240 jobs, primarily to rural communities.

These projects also attracted community members to lend a hand: 12 percent of total project hours over the life of the program were donated by volunteers. That's a value of more than \$560,000 directly invested by individuals interested in seeing their community watersheds restored.

### **BUILDING ON SUCCESS**

The Whole Watershed Restoration Initiative works on the idea that meaningful progress can be made through coordinated investments in mutually agreed-upon priority areas. The WWRI partners proved the model, but more needs to be done.

In an age of climate change, when both record droughts and fire seasons are becoming the status quo, continued investments in whole watershed restoration will be key to ensuring that people and fish continue to thrive in our bioregion.



**“I think when they write this chapter of conservation, it will be one not of what iconic individuals did, like Aldo Leopold, or Gifford Pinchot, or Rachel Carson. It will be about what iconic groups did together.”**

**—MARY WAGNER, ASSOCIATE CHIEF,  
USDA FOREST SERVICE**

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*For more information contact Brent Davies, VP Forests and Ecosystem Services, Ecotrust | [brent@ecotrust.org](mailto:brent@ecotrust.org) | 503-467-0761*



A lush green forest scene with moss-covered tree trunks and a large fallen log in the foreground. The image is divided into four quadrants by a white crosshair.

**\$10.3  
million**

**INVESTED IN  
160 PROJECTS**

**6,500+  
acres**

**OF HABITAT  
RESTORED**

**900+  
miles**

**OF STREAMS  
OPENED & IMPROVED**

**150+  
miles**

**OF ROAD REMOVED  
OR IMPROVED**



