

Beyond Condit: Fish Habitat Restoration in the White Salmon River Watershed

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Abstract:

Established in 1940, Underwood Conservation District has since been a source of community-based conservation work throughout Klickitat and Skamania Counties. UCD is a non-regulatory, special purpose district which engages landowners and resource users in the conservation, enhancement and the sustainable use of natural resources through voluntary stewardship. Priority natural resource issues for UCD include aquatic and riparian habitat, along with conservation of forest lands, farm and ranch lands, control of invasive species, and enhancement of upland wildlife habitat.

UCD is working to enhance upland and water resources to provide resiliency to a changing environment, as well as to empower land managers to acquire and implement the best available science and best management practices to conserve natural resources. UCD serves as a source of assistance, where landowners are willing, to improve natural resources. Specifically, since the removal of Condit Dam at river mile 3.3 on the White Salmon River, UCD has been working with landowners throughout the White Salmon River watershed to restore access to and enhance the quality of habitat available to native salmon, steelhead and residential fish species.

In 2009-2010 UCD completed the White Salmon Fish Passage Inventory in the potentially anadromous fish streams of the Lower White Salmon River watershed. As a result, over 200 potential riparian and instream habitat restoration projects were identified and 33 instream barriers were assessed for fish passage. UCD has been diligently pursuing the highest priority projects identified in this inventory, including the Indian Creek Fish Passage Project, the Mill Creek Fish Passage Project, the Buck Creek Fish Passage and Irrigation Screening Project, and a number of other habitat restoration and enhancement projects throughout the watershed. Together, with willing landowners and partners, we aim to restore the White Salmon River watershed to a fully-accessible and functional stream system.