

Title: Fox Creek Habitat Restoration: Restoring Function on Century-Old Working Lands

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Abstract:

Fox Creek, a tributary of the North Fork of the John Day River, is home to one of relatively few truly wild populations of steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) left in the Mid-Columbia DPS. The majority of stream length perennially occupied by steelhead lies within a high-elevation valley (~4,000ft ASL), which has been mostly been used for agricultural purposes for over 100 years. Following settlement, Fox Creek has been manipulated in various ways over decades in effort to maximize agricultural production. These manipulations have resulted in reduced ecological function, and reduced steelhead numbers throughout the catchment has come about as a result. However, over the last 20 years, local ranchers have begun to recognize the agricultural impacts that accompany a stream with reduced ecological function; particularly in the form of a lower water table, and minimal flood control resulting in even further incised channels. In 2016, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs began working with landowners to identify opportunities to both improve ecological function, as well as provide landowners with a stream functioning in a way that benefits working-land practices. This presentation covers current evaluations of steelhead distribution and ecological function, and how this information is used to inform past and future work conducted by the CTWS in effort to restore these functions to Fox Creek.