



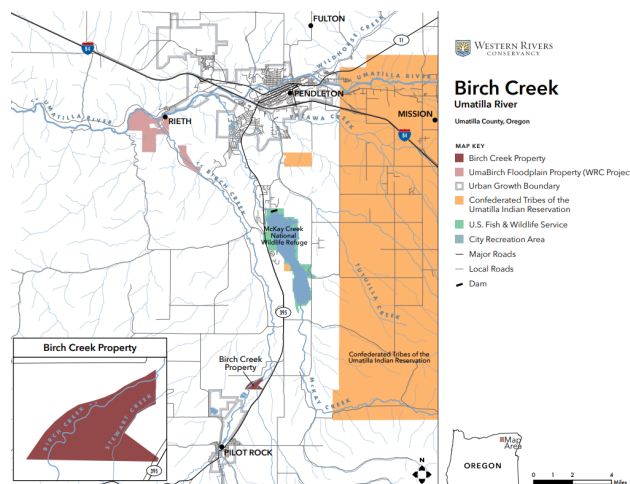
WESTERN RIVERS CONSERVANCY

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Oregon's Birch Creek: Upping the odds for salmon and steelhead in Oregon's Umatilla Basin

In late 2025, WRC conserved the 100-acre Birch Creek Ranch in northeastern Oregon by conveying it to the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR). Our effort protects a critical reach of Birch Creek—the largest producer of threatened Middle Columbia River steelhead in the Umatilla basin—while reconnecting the Tribes with ancestral homelands. Flowing southwest of Pendleton, Birch Creek is a major tributary to the Umatilla River, once one of the mid-Columbia's major producers of salmon and steelhead. Decades of water withdrawals and habitat degradation devastated these runs, but CTUIR has spearheaded restoration efforts for years, working to bring the fish runs back to health. Now, at Birch Creek Ranch, CTUIR can expand those restoration efforts across more than a mile of historic floodplain. The Tribes also plan to dedicate the ranch's substantial surface and groundwater rights to instream flows, replenishing the creek and downstream floodplain. *Tyler Roemer photo*



Idaho's St. Joe River: Protected a superb stretch of a great Idaho trout stream

In 2025, WRC signed an agreement to purchase 585 acres of forest and riverfront on Idaho's storied St. Joe River at the confluence of Fishhook Creek, just downstream of the old railroad settlement of Avery. The property lies within some of the best remaining cold-water habitat in the basin—a stronghold for the last self-sustaining bull trout population in the greater Lake Coeur d'Alene watershed and a refuge for westslope cutthroat trout, Rocky Mountain elk, Canada lynx, and even the occasional grizzly bear. The St. Joe is revered for its wild character and world-class fly fishing. Its watershed is the ancestral homeland of the Schitsu'umsh (Coeur d'Alene) Tribe, and the river helped shape early Forest Service conservation practices in the aftermath of the devastating 1910 "Big Burn." WRC acquired the property to convey it to the Forest Service. We accomplished this in early 2026, filling a key gap in the Idaho Panhandle National Forests and opening the door to habitat restoration and new public river access for generations to come. *Daniel Cronin photo*

