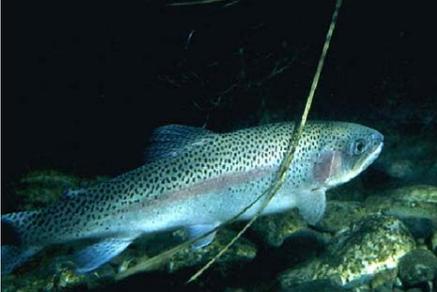




## NOAA RESTORATION CENTER



The Middle Fork John Day River near Bates, Oregon.



Steelhead Trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*)

The *Community-based Restoration Program* provides funding and technical assistance to restoration projects that benefit coastal, marine, and migratory fish habitat.



Middle Fork John Day Project Location.

## Middle Fork John Day Channel Relocation and Riparian Restoration Project

The John Day River is the second longest free-flowing river in the continental United States. It supports native Chinook salmon, steelhead, trout, and lamprey populations as well as popular recreational fisheries. Multiple segments have been designated as “Wild and Scenic.”

The Middle Fork subbasin is one of the John Day’s four major watersheds, accounting for 30% of the John Day’s steelhead production and 24% of its spring Chinook production. The summer steelhead in this basin are listed as threatened by the Endangered Species Act. Limiting factors for salmonids within the Middle Fork include high summer water temperatures, lack of habitat diversity, and lack of channel stability.

In summer 2006, The Freshwater Trust launched the Middle Fork John Day Channel Relocation and Riparian Restoration Project, a multi-phase effort to restore three miles of the Middle Fork John Day River to its historic channel. By reconnecting the currently straightened river to its remnant historic channel and replanting the riparian area, the project restored stream form and function to benefit spring Chinook and summer steelhead. On-the-ground work began in summer 2009 and was completed during the summer of 2010. NOAA Restoration Center, FishAmerica Foundation, Ecotrust, and many other partners have contributed to this project’s success.

### Restoring Habitat

During the early 1900s, the Middle Fork John Day River was straightened and diked through the project site in order to drain the wet meadow floodplain and create livestock pasture. By returning the stream to its historic meander, the project increased stream length and complexity, restored natural floodplain function to 31 acres of land, and increase riparian habitat along 3 miles of the stream. Large wood and vegetation were added to the stream banks to increase habitat diversity, slow stream energy, and provide shade to prevent high water temperatures. These features will provide spawning and rearing habitat for steelhead and Chinook salmon, in addition to other fish and wildlife species that will benefit.



US Forest Service removed fish from the site before the stream was dewatered in August 2009.

### Advancing Science

The Upper Middle Fork of the John Day River was designated as an Intensively Monitored Watershed by NOAA Fisheries in 2008. The purpose of this effort is to track watershed conditions and conduct effectiveness monitoring of restoration projects. This project is within the Intensively Monitored Watershed and is contributing data to improve restoration techniques and our understanding of fish populations and habitat use.

### Building Partnerships

The Middle Fork John Day Channel Relocation and Riparian Restoration Project involved collaboration among a variety of partners, including The Freshwater Trust, The US Forest Service (Malheur National Forest), private landowners, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation, The Nature Conservancy, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indians, Portland State University and the North Fork John Day Watershed Council. Funding was provided by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Bella Vista Foundation, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, LP Brown, NE Oregon Forests Resource Advisory Committee/Grant County, and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The NOAA Restoration Center and its partners, FishAmerica Foundation and Ecotrust, contributed a total of \$125,000 to the project.

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Reach 2 before construction. May 2009. Photo courtesy of The Freshwater Trust.



Reach 2 after realignment to historic channel. September 2009. Photo courtesy of The Freshwater Trust.

