

# Yainix Ranch Project

## Building Capacity for Collaborative Stewardship

**Location:** Far West Region: Oregon

**Project Summary:** A working lands conservation easement and a conservation investment model supports sustainable approaches for ranch management and collaborative conservation solutions.



Collectively developing understanding and agreement will build the ownership required for successful outcomes in the Sprague River valley.

### Resource Challenge

The Klamath Basin is an ecological jewel. Nearly 80% of the waterfowl on the Pacific Flyway over-winter there. The river was also once the third most productive salmon system in the U.S. The Sprague, a major tributary, provides habitat for endangered Lost River and shortnose suckers (and historically, salmon).

Listing of suckers and salmon has strained relationships between Tribes, fishermen, and agriculture. In 2001, the Department of Interior shut off water to the Klamath Irrigation Project to protect fish. In 2002, a large salmon kill (over 35,000) further escalated conflicts.

The Klamath Tribes seek the return of reservation lands, and hold a senior water right in the un-adjudicated Basin. Meanwhile, rising land values and low commodity prices imperil agriculture. Resulting conflicts pit farmer against farmer, and irrigators against environmentalists and Tribes, resulting in years of expensive lawsuits.

### Examples of Key Partners

Becky and Taylor Hyde, Yainix Partnership, Sustainable Northwest (SNW) & Working Landscapes Alliance, Klamath Tribes, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), National Riparian Service Team (NRST), USDI Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), Klamath Basin Ecosystem Foundation (KBEF).

### Results and Accomplishments

The Yainix Ranch is a microcosm of the Basin. Its owners are working against an economic tide, while regulatory oversight adds pressure, as does the Klamath Tribes' claim to water and wildlife. Yainix brings together diverse interests to demonstrate options for the sustainability of agriculture and ecological function in the Basin.

To address the financial impact of restoration, SNW created a group of urban investors who made financial contributions to bridge the income gap between historical stocking rates and what the ranch could produce at a sustainable level.

The Yainix owners, agencies and Tribes agreed to a multi-party grazing management and monitoring strategy designed by SNW and the NRST to restore Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) of the river. The Tribes hold a conservation easement based on the agreement. It passes funds between the Tribes, government, and the landowner, assuring economic sustainability of the ranch to protect resource values.

Strong relationships between the landowner and the Tribes have facilitated solutions elsewhere. Recently, the owners of a ranch on the Williamson River reached an out of court water rights settlement with the Tribes. The Tribes have agreed to use PFC as a minimum ecological condition and communication tool when dealing with water and river restoration issues. The Working Landscapes Alliance, a team of resource specialists, is working with KBEF's Watershed Assessment to educate landowners in basic watershed function (PFC) and opportunities for compatible river restoration and to share model in other communities.

**Innovation/Highlight**

**A working landscapes conservation easement and a “stewardship investment” model provide incentives and capital to support sustainability.**

**Project Contact**

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