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# **'Conservation and farming coexisting and proving beneficial to each other'**

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*From the [McKenzie River Trust](#)*

Private landowners Trey and Tammie Hagen are working together with two local non-profits to protect, enhance and steward more than one and a half miles of Ferguson Creek, an important tributary to the [Long Tom River](#) southwest of Monroe.

The Hagens partnered with the [McKenzie River Trust \(MRT\)](#) to protect sixty two acres of land near the Long Tom Grange with a conservation easement. The [Long Tom Watershed Council \(LTWC\)](#) played a critical role in developing the habitat enhancement project on site, which will immediately improve the stream for fish and wildlife.

"I have always felt Ferguson Creek was really special," said Trey Hagen, who grew up in the area and still has family that lives close by. The Ferguson Creek Conservation Easement protects the distinctive natural features of the Hagen family's property for future generations. "When I was a kid, this creek was our entertainment. We would spend our afternoons fishing, building miniature dams, and finding the best swimming holes. Now my son will have that opportunity, too," Hagen said.

The conservation easement will protect a creek that traverses the property. The land is within the Pacific Flyway, one of several major routes across North America for migrating waterfowl. The easement area also contains diverse native forests and emergent wetlands, habitat that may benefit declining species including greater sandhill crane, western bluebird, pileated woodpecker, northwestern pond turtle, red-legged frog, and western brook lamprey, all considered species of concern by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW). Funding for the easement was provided by the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA), a grant

program operated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service which is under threat of being cut from the federal budget.

NAWCA is one of the only funding programs to emphasize public-private partnerships and leverage federal dollars 1:1 or greater for conservation. Through this unique funding arrangement, NAWCA dollars have conserved millions of acres of habitat for birds and other wildlife, including more than 1,500 acres of land in the Willamette Valley protected by the McKenzie River Trust. Along with other domestic natural resource conservation programs, NAWCA's continued success depends on the outcome of the current negotiations over the debt limit.

"This project is a great example of how the watershed council and land trust can offer services to meet landowner goals for their property," said Dana Detrick, Watershed Coordinator for the Long Tom Watershed Council. "From technical advice to securing grants and key funding we have a great set of tools available, especially in priority areas."

The Ferguson Creek Conservation Easement showcases some of the unique qualities the watershed council and land trust bring to the table. In this case, the watershed council brought in restoration dollars, while the land trust offered tools and expertise that ensure the conservation values of the property will be protected for future generations. The landowners' goals are aided by both the land trust holding a perpetual conservation easement on the property and the watershed council supporting the landowners' on-the-ground stewardship of the conservation values identified in the easement.

"Conservation easements are increasingly popular and effective ways for landowners to preserve the natural beauty and ecological value of their properties while maintaining ownership of the land," said Ryan Ruggiero, Land Protection Manager for the McKenzie River Trust. An easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and MRT to protect a property's ecological values. Conservations easements are as unique as the land they protect.

Under the conservation easement, the Ferguson Creek property will continue to be the site of a long-term enhancement project coordinated by the LTWC. Thanks in part to grants from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Meyer Memorial Trust, and ODFW Restoration & Enhancement Program, LTWC is researching native fish populations and actively improving habitat for native fish on the Hagens' property and another private property along Ferguson Creek by removing invasive plants,

replanting native vegetation, and placing large wood in the stream. Future work will likely include enhancing the beautiful wet prairie remnants on the property.

The Ferguson Creek property is very scenic, offering a glimpse of what homesteads looked like in the early settlement days of the Willamette Valley. Along with the intact, meandering stream, the property also contains hay fields and Confluence Farms, a three acre transitional organic blueberry farm operated by the Hagens.

"Farming and conservation have both been part of our plans for this property since we bought it," said Trey Hagen. "The paradigm used to situate farming and conservation efforts on opposites sides of the spectrum. Today, property owners like us who consider land management practices for the long haul see conservation and farming coexisting and proving beneficial to each other."