



# landscapes

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DESCHUTES LAND TRUST NEIGHBOR NEWS {SPRING 2019}

DESCHUTESLANDTRUST.ORG/NEIGHBOR-NEWS

## NEIGHBOR NEWS: WHYCHUS CANYON PRESERVE

*Spring is finally here and with it comes a flurry of activity at Deschutes Land Trust Preserves. As a neighbor of Whychus Canyon Preserve, we wanted to give you an update on some current projects that you may hear about this spring and summer.*

As you may know, Whychus Canyon Preserve is home to a portion of the historic Santiam Wagon Road. Several years ago the Land Trust installed interpretive signs along the wagon road to tell the story of one of the main paths of commerce and settlement for Central Oregon.

In case you have yet to make it out to the Preserve, the Santiam Wagon Road was built in the 1860s to connect the Willamette Valley, across the mid-Cascades and through Eastern Oregon, to the Idaho border. Its history is that of enterprising men, entrepreneurs of the Willamette Valley, who envisioned a crossing of the mid-Cascades that would create a link between the rich farmland in the Valley and the quite different riches of Central and Eastern Oregon. The Wagon Road served as a livestock trail and the only freight route over the mid-Cascades for most of the 74 years (1865-1939) it was in use. It spanned a distance of almost 400 miles on today's roads and provided passage for around 5000 wagons during the first 15 years of its existence.

At another nearby Land Trust Preserve, Camp Polk Meadow Preserve, we are installing more interpretive signs to help expand the story of the Wagon Road and one of the original stopping places along the Wagon Road, Hindman Station. Hindman Station at Camp Polk Meadow was established by Samuel Hindman between 1868 and 1870. For travelers, the Station was the place where they made their final preparations for trips east across the high desert or west across the Cascades. The Station offered a store for replenishing goods, a post office, and a place to rest cattle and horses.

Today, the posts and beams from the Hindman Barn are all that remain of the once flourishing Hindman Station. The barn is the only remaining structure from the Santiam Wagon Road era and is one of Deschutes County's oldest structures. You can visit the historic barn and learn more about history of Central Oregon via our new interpretive signs. **Learn more:** [deschuteslandtrust.org/camp-polk-history](https://deschuteslandtrust.org/camp-polk-history)



THE HINDMAN BARN IN 1970. PHOTO: ED BARNUM.



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### JOIN US FOR AN OUTING!

*Join the Land Trust on a guided nature walk! Each year volunteers lead free walks and hikes at Land Trust Preserves including Whychus Canyon Preserve.*

*Whether it's fairy houses for kids, a wildflower hike, or a nature journaling class, you are guaranteed to learn a little more about your backyard!*

*Land Trust Walks + Hikes are offered through October. Details: [deschuteslandtrust.org/hikes](https://deschuteslandtrust.org/hikes)*



JAN MATHER

## WHYCHUS CREEK RESTORATION UPDATE

*In 2016, Whychus Canyon Preserve was the site of a massive creek and meadow restoration project designed to improve habitat for fish and wildlife.* Work focused on the northernmost mile of creek at the Preserve, dramatically changing a straight creek and dry meadow to a multi-channeled creek with much better habitat for fish and wildlife. Today the meadow is quiet and we wanted to share a behind-the-scenes look at how the project began.

The Land Trust worked with a team of restoration partners to design and implement the restoration at Whychus Canyon Preserve. To start a project like this, the team studied recent restoration work at Camp Polk Meadow Preserve and other regional restoration sites where the streams were functioning more naturally. They looked at what was working, what was not working, physical factors and existing constraints (like power poles), and many other variables. Then the restoration team started work on transitioning the simple, single-channel, straight creek to a vastly more complex multi-threaded system of water, islands, and native plants.

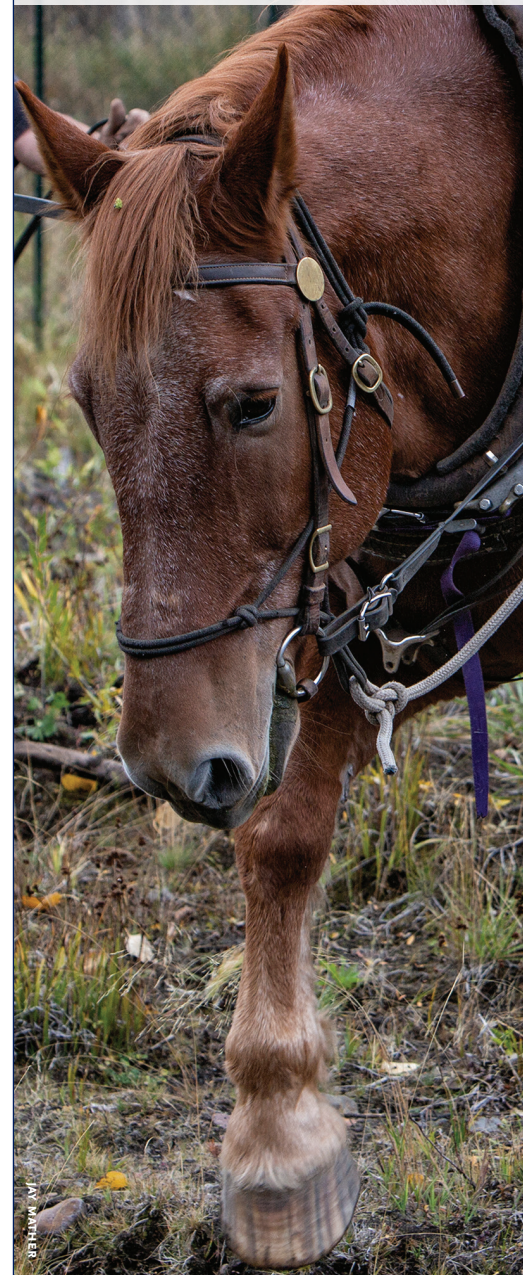
The goal was to return Whychus Creek to as close to its natural state as possible. With power poles removed and no structures in the meadow floodplain, the restoration team had lots of room to spread out the creek and plant native vegetation. Today if you visit the Preserve, you'll see water taking many different courses across the width of the old dry meadow. Some channels are narrow and deep, others wide and shallow. You'll see grasses, sedges, wildflowers, willow, and alder sprouting all over the place. You'll also see a transition happening in the streamside forest community: pine and juniper, which tend to prefer drier areas, are giving way to cottonwood and aspen that thrive in healthy streamside plant communities. All of this change provides incredibly robust and diverse fish and wildlife habitat.

In the coming years, Whychus Creek will continue to evolve. Future high-water events will reshape the current channel configuration. Streambanks will erode in places, new sandbars will form in others, trees will fall and provide important fish habitat, and new plants will grow all around the creek. These are all positive signs of a naturally functioning stream system that will be an important place for fish and wildlife to take refuge in the face of a changing climate. —



NEW GROWTH ALONG WHYCHUS CREEK. PHOTO: LAND TRUST

Last fall, the Land Trust worked with our restoration partners to add more woody debris to the Whychus Creek restoration. Huge thanks to Bob Platt and his draft horse Harry for helping us improve the restoration in a low-impact way! **Learn about the importance of wood in streams: [deschuteslandtrust.org/wood-is-good](https://deschuteslandtrust.org/wood-is-good)**



JAN MATHER



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