Oregon Governorâ€™s Fund for the Environment finances $1.2 Million projects

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SALEM, Ore. â€“ This week Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski awarded eight Oregon Governorâ€™s Fund for the Environment grants during a ceremony at the Capitol. These grants will aid farmers, vintners, students, educators, and landowners in being stewards of our natural resources. â€œThis fund provides Oregonians with the resources needed to protect and restore the habitat and watershed functions that are essential to not only fish and wildlife, but also to the quality of our rivers and streams,â€• said Governor Kulongoski. â€œI am pleased that for a second year these funds focus on projects in the Willamette River Basin and will improve water quality, wildlife habitats, and the quality of life for Oregonians.â€• The fund was established two years ago with a court-ordered $2 million settlement in a criminal pollution case, and is administered by the Governorâ€™s Office, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This yearâ€™s grants total nearly $1.2 million â€“ with $310,355 from the Governorâ€™s Fund and the balance from matching grants and in-kind contributions â€œI intend to make sure that environmental criminals pay to help repair the damage they've caused to our precious resources," U.S. Attorney Karin J. Immergut explained. "Through the Governor's Fund, we can make sure criminal payments are devoted to protecting the rivers, streams, and habitat that make Oregon a great place to live.â€• The eight successful grant applicants, chosen from among 20 who applied, proposed projects which will identify, eliminate or reduce pollution, as well as restore and conserve fish, wildlife, and plant resources, and which will help to restore the quality of Oregon rivers and streams in the Willamette Basin. â€œThese grants will restore streambeds throughout the Willamette Basin, improve water quality for people and wildlife, and provide a better home for several threatened and endangered species of fish, plants and wildlife,â€• said Foundation Executive Director Jeff Trandahl. â€œBy gaining landowner cooperation in improving fish and wildlife habitat, weâ€™re creating win-win solutions that will have lasting benefits for people and the natural resources we cherish.â€• â€œI admire the wisdom shared by Governor Kulongoski and U.S. Attorney Karin Immergut by making these fines available to repair damage created by criminal environmental negligence,â€• said Ren Lohoefener, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Pacific Region. â€œI look forward to working with these new partners in making our rivers clean for everyone.â€• The grants range from $14,000 to $50,000, and total $310,355 with grant recipients contributing a total of $879,296 in matching funds from cash or in-kind contributions to their projects. The 2007 grant recipients include: WillametteRiverkeeper: Grant $14,000; Match $7,000Willamette Riverkeeper, together with landowners, six cities, and the Department of Environmental Quality, will establish riparian restoration projects and develop Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) implementation plans in order to improve habitat along the Willamette River to benefit spring chinook and other ESA listed species. This project will outreach to15 landowners in order to cultivate restoration projects and increase the level of restoration interest, as well as provide information about restoration opportunities through programs such as the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. Willamette Riverkeeper will also engage six cities in a discussion regarding their TMDL implementation planning and subsequent action in order to ascertain how the cities intend to meet their responsibility as part of a Designated Management Agency. OregonState University: Grant $27,675; Match* $0Oregon State University (OSU), together with Coast Fork Willamette, Middle Fork Willamette, and South Santiam Watershed Councils, Linn and East Lane Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and the Oregon Department of Agriculture, will develop and provide conservation training workshops for small acreage landowners in three Willamette water basin watersheds, as well as empower landowners to implement management practices on their land to improve water and soil quality. This project will enhance awareness, and intensively train up to 120 small acreage landowners about land management practices that benefit natural resources. Goals of the project are to improve water quality in three watersheds, and educate small acreage landowners to be able to identify and assess potential natural resource concerns on their properties. *This is a settlement fund; match is encouraged, but not required. MolallaRiverWatch: Grant $45,000; Match $305,256The Molalla River Watch, together with Oregon State University Extension Service, Clackamas County Water and Soil Conservation District, Granges, cities, Molalla River Improvement District, and other interested citizen groups, will develop a restoration plan for 27 miles of the Molalla River and 16 miles of Milk Creek based on aquatic and geomorphic science. Through this project, Molalla River Watch will perform an aquatic habitat inventory

using Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife protocols, evaluate bank erosion hazard index for reaches to demonstrate evidence of potential high erosion, and perform several levels of geomorphic assessments. Using the information gathered in the evaluations, Molalla River Watch will hold public meetings and community conferences to describe project goals, objectives, and proposals in order to garner community support for future project implementation. Salmon Safe: Grant $39,500; Match $39,300 Salmon Safe, partnering with Oregon wine industryâ€™s Low Input Viticulture and Enology program, Oregon Tilth, local wine vineyards, and other stakeholders, will expand on the partnership between Salmon Safe and the Oregon wine industry to reduce runoff from steep hillside vineyards and transform another 35 vineyards to fish friendly practices. The first year of this project, which was funded through the same grant program with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, successfully certified more than 80 vineyard sites in the Willamette Valley. This project seeks to provide market incentives for Willamette Valley vineyard operators to assist in the implementation of water quality and biodiversity protection practices at an additional 35 sites. This will expand Salmon Safe wine marketing, provide new retail opportunities for vineyards and certified wineries, and help develop an â€œOregon Certified Sustainableâ€• campaign. In addition, Salmon Safe intends to expand the Willamette Valley public education campaign to generate support for the habitat restoration efforts and disseminate project outcomes to inspire other Oregon agricultural sectors. South Santiam Watershed Council: Grant $50,000; Match $41,200The South Santiam Watershed Council, together with Benton County Fish Passage Improvement Program, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), Oregon State University, and volunteers, will compile existing and new fish passage barrier data in order to prioritize barriers for restoration. This project will produce a database and maps of fish passage barriers in high concern sub-watersheds of the Santiam basin. A list of fish passage barriers, and habitat restoration projects will be formulated and prioritized based on the current ODFW standards for migratory fish passage. In addition, South Santiam Watershed Council will hold a community stakeholder meeting involving relevant agencies and private landowners that have fish passage barriers identified as high priority. Friends of the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge: Grant $50,000; Match $391,900Friends of the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge, together with Raindrops to Refuge, Sherwood Middle School Refuge Club, regional school districts, General Electric, Community Educator Team, Northwest Service Academy, Metro Regional Parks and Greenspaces, Tualatin Riverkeepers, and community volunteers, will develop curriculum for a new hands-on environmental education laboratory, train volunteers and implement on-site programs for local schools. This project will develop curriculum that builds on the existing Refuge environmental education program and aligns with state and national learning requirements. This curriculum will have a watershed and wildlife conservation focus. In addition, this project will conduct teacher workshops to train educators to use the Refuge curriculum in order to provide the highest learning experiences possible. Adult and youth volunteers will be trained on how to manage and conduct environmental education activities which will be conducted for K-12 students. North SantiamWatershed Council: Grant $50,000; Match $78,000North Santiam Watershed Council, working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, will complete an analysis and restoration plan to restore spawning gravel and riparian areas for ESA-listed fish, such as spring chinook salmon and winter steelhead, in reaches below U.S. Army Corps of Engineer dams on the North Santiam River. Gravel that is currently trapped behind Big Cliff Dam, downstream of the project site, will be transported to increase spawning habitat on the North Santiam River. In addition, adjacent riparian areas that support spawning habitat will be restored to provide large wood recruitment for gravel retention and shade. Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council: Grant $34,180; Match $16,640Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council, along with U.S Army Corps of Engineers, Willamette Riverkeeper, and landowners, will develop floodplain restoration plans for five reaches of the Willamette River, and design a project in at least one priority reach in order to involve the public in state and federal conservation programs. These plans will be developed by recruiting interested landowners and conducting landowner workshops in order to promote education about floodplain restoration and incentive programs. The five reaches of the lower Coast and Middle Fork Willamette will be assessed in order to choose at least one priority reach. A two-day design session with local landowners, members of watershed councils, a professional facilitator, and experts in channel design, permitting, and vegetation plans, will formulate detailed restoration plans in the priority reach. The program outcome will be evaluated and summarized in a final report. The Governorâ€™s Fund for the Environment was established in April, 2005, with an initial contribution of $2 million in community

service payments as a result of the criminal prosecution of the Panamanian shipping company Evergreen International, which pled guilty to 25 criminal charges. Five of the alleged crimes occurred in Oregon. The United States and Evergreen reached a plea agreement that requires the company to pay $25 million â€“ the largest criminal fine ever imposed on a defendant in a vessel pollution case. The U.S. Attorneyâ€™s Office for the District of Oregon helped prosecute the Evergreen case and directed a portion of the fine to create this new fund for the state. The United States Coast Guard, the Environmental Protection Agency Criminal Investigative Division, and the Washington Department of Ecology each also played a critical role in the Evergreen prosecution. The Fund was created by Governor Kulongoski and U.S. Attorney Karin Immergut with the goal of establishing a sustainable revenue source that is dedicated to local environmental clean up efforts focused on preserving and protecting Oregonâ€™s rivers, watersheds, and fish and wildlife. The grant amounts vary each year based on the interest earned on the principal and new funds deposited through criminal fines and additional private and public donations. The U.S. Attorneyâ€™s Office seeks community service payments in all appropriate environmental criminal cases, of which more than $180,000 has been added to the Governorâ€™s Fund since its formation. The U.S. Attorneyâ€™s Office has obtained over $3.7 million in community service payments since 2004. -----

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies. For more information, visit www.fws.gov

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation is a nonprofit organization established by Congress in 1984 and dedicated to the conservation of fish, wildlife and plants, and the habitat on which they depend. The Foundation creates partnerships between the public and private sectors to strategically invest in conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources. The Foundation awarded over 8,000 grants to more than 2,600 organizations in the United States and abroad and has leveraged â€“ with its partners â€“ more than $300 million in federal funds since its establishment, for a total of more than $1 billion in funding for conservation. The Foundation is recognized by Charity Navigator with a 3-star rating for efficiency and effectiveness. Ninety-two cents of every dollar contributed to the Foundation is directed to on-the-ground conservation projects, with five cents supporting management and administration of the Foundationâ€™s multi-million dollar grants program and three cents funding partnership development and fundraising. For more information, visit www.nfwf.org.