



Paulina Creek Preserve Conservation / Trail Connectivity

Proposal Questions

Mission/History Of Organization

The mission of the Deschutes Land Trust (DLT) is to conserve and care for the lands and waters that sustain Central Oregon, so that local communities and the natural world can flourish together for generations to come. In support of this conservation mission, our organization embraces and practices core values of integrity, diversity, quality, adaptability,

JEDI Efforts and Impact

The Deschutes Land Trust engages in continuous efforts to address justice, equity, diversity and inclusion both through the conservation priorities we set as well as our day-to-day operations. An important aspect of our philosophy for justice, equity, diversity and inclusion are considerations and respect for all species, flora and fauna, in addition to

and collaboration with our public agency and tribal neighbors. DLT was founded in 1995 and acquired its first preserve, Indian Ford Meadow in 1996. Since then the Land Trust has grown to conserve more than 18,742 acres (29.2 square miles) and is actively expanding public access to an extensive system of hiking trails on our preserves. Central to this effort is preserving and protecting high value wildlife habitat at risk of private development, and creating public access opportunities that connect to public lands trail networks.

Final Success

Success for this project will be permanent protection and creation of public access for the 1,099 acre Paulina Creek Preserve, restoring 550 acres of open meadow ecosystems, 549 acres of surrounding forests, a 3.2 mile section of Paulina Creek, and creating more than 10 miles of publicly accessible trails linking to hundreds of miles of public recreation trails and adventure opportunities.

Location Details

human interests. Accordingly, the Deschutes Land Trust believes in an inherent connection between all living beings and the natural world. Since the founding, we have prioritized the urgent need to protect natural areas and recognize that conservation is social justice. During the past years our Equity Council has maintained oversight of our organizational policies and strategic plan to ensure diversity, equity and inclusion are fully integrated in operations and goal setting. Most recently we are developing a trail accessibility upgrade at one of most visited preserves to ensure recreational opportunities for all ability levels.

Deschutes Land Trust (DLT) is nearing final stages of purchase for the Paulina Creek Preserve, a 1,099 acre property located in Central Oregon. The purchase would represent the first phase in a multi-year effort to protect and convert this former cattle ranch into a nature preserve and publicly accessible recreation area.

Paulina Creek Preserve encompasses 3.2 miles of Paulina Creek, 550 acres of open meadow, and 549 acres of Ponderosa and Lodgepole pine forested areas. The property is located 25-miles south of Bend, and 3-miles north of the City of La Pine. It borders the Deschutes National Forest and is situated along the western gateway to the 54,000-acre Newberry National Volcanic Monument (NNVM). Paulina Creek Preserve also serves as a critical source to confluence link between Paulina and East Lakes, and the Little Deschutes River located 1.6 miles directly northwest of the western Preserve boundary.

The Land Trust will restore Paulina Creek, transfer primary irrigation water rights associated with the property to in-stream use, improve water quality, thereby significantly improving wildlife habitat. In addition, the Land Trust will cancel the supplemental Paulina Lake water associated with the property, increasing lake levels up to 2.75 feet and further supporting ecological water stewardship goals.

The vision for the property is a protected riparian and restored wet meadow ecosystem surrounded by a network of accessible trails with interpretive materials highlighting its cultural and ecological significance. This amazing habitat is the final link for continuous source to confluence waterway protection from Paulina Lake to the Deschutes River. The project is supported by multiple agencies, communities, and tribal partners.

As Central Oregon continues as one of the fastest growing regions in the nation, recent studies estimate a 37% increase in trail use in our region by 2040. Preservation of Paulina Creek Preserve presents a unique opportunity to integrate and expand the regional trails system while balancing ecological stewardship with recreational access.

We intend to develop over 10 miles of accessible multi-use trails on the property which will connect with the larger NNVM trails network. With its proximity to Hwy 97 and a heavily visited national monument, we anticipate high levels of usage from both local residents and visitors to the region.

Biodiversity in Project Area

Permanent conservation for Paulina Creek Preserve will improve climate resiliency in two primary ways. First, the wet meadows at the Preserve will play an important role in mitigating the impacts of climate change: they act as a carbon sink, removing carbon from the atmosphere helping buffer local impacts from a warming climate. Aspects of the project that expand and restore wetlands and floodplains will also improve downstream water temperature and quality, which increase climate resiliency by providing critical cold water habitat in the summer months for aquatic species.

Secondly, the forest restoration aspects of our project will reduce the potential for high severity wildfire impacts to both natural ecosystems and the human environment. Importantly, the reduction in potential wildfire severity that result from forest stewardship activities will also increase forest health and climate resiliency.

With regard to biodiversity, this project will dramatically improve ecological diversity in this area by providing habitat for aquatic and terrestrial wildlife including frogs and fish, native bees and monarch butterflies, songbirds and bats, and ungulates.

Notably, the Preserve provides critical winter range for deer and elk. Equally important are its connections to vital large species migration corridors in the Deschutes National Forest and Newberry National Volcanic Monument.

By effectively expanding public access to protected lands westward by 2.5 miles, for Paulina Creek Preserve will dramatically improve connectivity to other protected lands. Examples of this include intriguing opportunities to connect the Newberry National Volcanic Monument and Deschutes National Forest to public lands and waterways

Expected Economic & Recreational Impact

Economic Impacts:
The Paulina Creek Preserve project can be expected to increase property values in the nearby community of La Pine by establishing an entirely new recreational amenity. While this is not a fundamental motivation for the project, it will produce a beneficial economic impact. This assumption is based on analysis demonstrating that proximity to parks and protected lands has been increasingly recognized as a valuable selling point for housing and real estate. Notably, the benefits of increased property values will extend beyond individual owners to also generate corresponding increases to the local jurisdiction's tax base. Additionally, the establishment of public access to this newly protected preserve will also support local food and lodging establishments, and retail outlets specializing in recreational gear. Accordingly, this project has the support from the La Pine Chamber of Commerce, who recognize the positive impacts.

Outdoor Recreational Impacts:
With regard to recreational impacts, during the community engagement stages, the Paulina Creek Preserve project received strong and positive support emphasizing its value as a safe-recreation opportunity. In terms of active recreation, the Preserve is expected to be a popular site for walking, trail running, photography, cross-country skiing, and mountain biking. It will also provide a safe trailhead for extended hiking and backpacking excursions in the neighboring Deschutes National Forest and Newberry National Monument. Equally important recreation values are the passive recreational opportunities the Preserve will create. The open and expansive central meadow presents a pristine perspective of snow-capped peaks to the west, making it a

west of Hwy 97 including Paulina Meadows Preserve (Western Rivers Conservancy), Bureau of Land Management, the Deschutes and Little Deschutes Rivers, and La Pine State Park.

remarkable location for wildlife viewing, sunsets, and star-gazing.

Strategy & Timeline For Final Success

With the support of funding from The Conservation Alliance, our goal is to accomplish full ownership of Paulina Creek Preserve in 2026. Current funding to acquire the property comes from a bridge lender and therefore is not a permanent funding source. Deschutes Land Trust is currently in year three of a four-year funding plan to secure funds for outright ownership of the property and complete associated restoration activities.

Up to this point funding has come from a variety of federal, state and private sources. Secured and anticipated funding has or will come from the United States Forest Service through Land and Water Conservation Funds, and also the Deschutes Trail Coalition, City of La Pine, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Bend Sustainability Fund, and private land trust donors. The Deschutes Land Trust serves as the center of this partnership and is on track to reach our 2026 goal with support from The Conservation Alliance.

In addition to securing funding for the property, a two-phase work plan began in 2022 and is slated for completion in 2028. A description of activities from each phase is provided below:

PHASE 1: (completed, 2022-2024)

- Completed acquisition of the Paulina Creek Preserve through a partnership with a philanthropic bridge lender.
- Completed a Community and Stakeholder Engagement Process with La Pine community and Klamath Tribes.
- Completed baseline site documentation.
- Completed site establishment work (removal of structures/infrastructure).

PHASE 2: (current and projected, 2025-2028)

- Finalize fundraising campaign to secure funds to assume full ownership of Paulina Creek Preserve.
- Develop restoration conceptual design, including aquatic and upland restoration, trail system concept and connectivity plan.
- Construct and implement restoration work. This includes forest stewardship, floodplain and wetlands restoration.
- Native plantings conducive to aquatic, riparian, and pollinator habitat.
- Trail construction. Installation of trail markings, interpretive signage, trailhead infrastructure.

Key Decision Makers

Broadly speaking, the mission of the Deschutes Land Trust is to conserve and care for the lands and water that sustain Central Oregon, so local communities and the natural world can flourish together for generations to come. Key decision makers we are trying to influence include both the environmental community and also the general community who may not yet be fully engaged in environmental protection but may be influenced to do so in the future.

As part of this campaign, in 2023 the Land Trust embarked on an effort to bring southern Deschutes County communities together to develop a shared vision for Paulina Creek Preserve. We chatted over cups of coffee with community leaders, Tribes, organizations, and residents. More than 100 people completed our community survey. We convened dozens of people for facilitated conversations to define community's values regarding Paulina Creek Preserve. Volunteers then signed up to further discuss these values and how the Land Trust can uphold them as we move forward managing Paulina Creek Preserve. This community input was vital in establishing the project vision and expanding the number of voices supporting and promoting it.

Our strategy for continued expansion of support includes offering additional and new opportunities for people to experience and appreciate nature by protecting it and making it accessible. On this goal we are extremely confident of success, because opening public access to the lands and habitats we work to protect generates an irresistible positive momentum and continually expanding support.

Therefore we view our role as protectors of special places, and facilitators for their enjoyment and appreciation. We welcome and gratefully appreciate support from the business community towards these goals.

- Open public access.
- Issue press releases and thank and recognize donors.

Elevate Voices

All phases of our process have engaged with community voices to ensure that we are creating a resource that prioritizes access and inclusion for marginalized communities. The region of Central Oregon extending from Newberry National Volcanic Monument to Crater Lake National Park (Mount Mazama) represents incredible historical and cultural significance for indigenous communities. This is a story and perspective spanning over seven thousand years and yet has not been represented fully in current interpretive infrastructure.

Paulina Creek Preserve sits at a central location between Bend, Newberry Caldera, and Crater Lake National Park, it therefore provides a unique opportunity to inform and communicate native historical perspectives about this amazing landscape.

Going forward this effort will remain emphasized on engagement with tribal communities. Our goal throughout this project will be for under-represented groups to feel connected with these lands, and to appreciate and enjoy them far into the future.

Included in these efforts will be invitations to tribal communities and historically underrepresented groups to participate in the Preserve Master Planning process. And beyond the planning timeframe, we allow access for tribal communities to Paulina Creek Preserve for cultural purposes and exercise of treaty rights. This also includes open invitations for educational workshops organized by tribal representatives on the native perspective on ecosystems, culturally significant places, and traditional foraging practices at the Preserve. Input on naming, signage and culturally sensitive language/wording for interpretive materials sourced from multiple perspectives will be constantly considered and prioritized.

As an additional effort at engaging multiple perspectives we will continue to involve local communities through educational tours and stewardship work parties that invite school age field trips, local athletic teams, and a full range of constituencies.

TCA Funding Plan

The Conservation Alliance maintains a remarkable prestige within the environmental community and therefore the support your organization provides carries a reputational value which

Measurable On-Ground Outcomes

The Deschutes Land Trust hopes to accomplish the following outcomes during the next 12-months:

- Outcome 1: Unencumbered ownership completed. This vital milestone will enable all subsequent efforts and goals. This outcome is in reach thanks to diligent effort and gracious funding support from partners including the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and Deschutes Land Trust supporting members.
- Outcome 2: Paulina Creek Preserve Master Plan committee formed, including invitations to tribal representatives, La Pine Chamber of Commerce, City of La Pine, Deschutes National Forest, Newberry National Volcanic Monument. The purpose is to establish a conceptual blueprint to guide stewardship and recreational access work.
- Outcome 3: Paulina Creek Preserve Master Plan adopted. This outcome involves presenting the Preserve Master Plan to the Deschutes Land Trust Board for discussion, refinement, and adoption.
- Outcome 4: Engage over 100 community members for visits and guided tours.

How long it took to complete application

extends benefits far beyond the funding support itself.

And with the Conservation Alliance consisting of an incredible network of ecologically minded and recreationally focused businesses and professionals, TCA's simple awareness of our organization and our various conservation projects is an honor and provides a major value to our organization.

As for funding support, this request to the Conservation Alliance Membership Collective represents what would be a critical contribution to the protection of the Paulina Creek Preserve and expedite development of public access and trail connectivity elements. This project and vision is only possible because of dedicated community support from local and national contributors like TCA.

Confidential Items

Please feel free to openly share all aspects of our proposal.

Other Relevant Application Details

Sincere thanks for your consideration of our request. We will be glad to provide more information if it would be helpful.

