

PacifiCorp conserves more elk habitat in S.W. Washington

Purchase of two key tracts ensures long term protection

PORTLAND, Ore. -- Nearly 1,000 acres of forest lands near the North Fork of the Lewis River in Washington have now been protected from potential development and will be managed to enhance wildlife habitat.

PacifiCorp, working closely with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, purchased land in late December 2010 from Longview Timber to help fulfill terms of its Lewis River Hydroelectric Relicensing Settlement Agreement. The lands were identified as an important acquisition by multiple state and federal agencies and stakeholders including the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Cowlitz Tribe that oversee PacifiCorp's management of more than 11,000 acres near the Lewis River.

Two tracts, both just under 500 acres and southwest of Mount St. Helens, are involved in the latest purchase. The first, north of PacifiCorp's Swift Reservoir and west of Marble Mountain, adjoins Gifford Pinchot National Forest. The second lies along the Lewis River between Yale Reservoir and Lake Merwin in an area near other PacifiCorp holdings.

Both tracts also are in areas of residential and recreational development. The recent purchase ensures that these properties remain as open space for the future and will be managed to enhance the existing habitat for many species of wildlife, but particularly elk. PacifiCorp has habitat management plans that allow for forestry, but include larger buffers for streams and wetlands, permanent forage areas for deer and elk, wetlands, old growth forests and protecting other unique habitats.

The lands are open to the public (non-motorized access) and law enforcement is enhanced to protect these areas and enforce regulations through contracts with state and county enforcement agencies.

Both tracts are used year-round by a significant number of Roosevelt's elk—crucial habitat in a region where Mount St. Helens' national monument designation, management restrictions and overgrown forests are causing the decline of a once-productive elk herd. PacifiCorp will manage both tracts, with input from a committee of state, federal, tribal and private individuals to emphasize intermediate-succession habitat and increased forage for elk and black-tailed deer. Black bears and cougars, along with species of concern such as bald eagles, bats, salamanders and turtles, also inhabit the area.

Kirk Naylor, principle scientist of wildlife and forestry for PacifiCorp, said, "The tract near Yale Reservoir is only 490 acres of mostly second growth timber, but it lies adjacent to one of our most heavily used and well-established elk foraging areas within the Lewis River Wildlife Habitat Management Area, which now totals over 11,000 acres. Had these 490 acres been developed or even logged aggressively as private timberland can sometimes be, it would have been a loss to a far greater area."

"Conserving and managing this habitat on the southwest slopes of Mt. St. Helens, where elk are threatened by forage loss from forest succession and habitat loss to

development—all within 50 miles of Portland and Vancouver—is a major accomplishment,” said Bill Richardson, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation lands program manager for Oregon and Washington.

PacifiCorp also worked together with these same parties in 2009 to acquire and conserve 52 acres in the same area. The land is meadow habitat that also helps support Roosevelt’s elk from the Mount. St. Helens herd.

The Lewis River Hydroelectric Relicensing Settlement Agreement was approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which granted new hydroelectric operation licenses in 2008. The licenses provide for 50 years of continued operation of four dams and hydroelectric facilities along the Lewis River. Included are plans to re-open up to 174 miles of potential salmon habitat, improve local flood management and boost recreational opportunities. Negotiators representing PacifiCorp, Native American tribes, federal and state resource agencies, three counties and several conservation groups signed the agreement.

About PacifiCorp

PacifiCorp is one of the lowest-cost electricity producers in the United States, providing approximately 1.7 million customers in the West with reliable, efficient energy. Celebrating 100 years of service to customers and communities, PacifiCorp began in 1910 as Pacific Power. Today, PacifiCorp operates as Pacific Power in Oregon, Washington and California, and as Rocky Mountain Power in Utah, Wyoming and Idaho. With a generating capability of more than 10,400 megawatts from coal, hydro, gas-fired combustion turbines and renewable wind and geothermal power, the company works to meet growing energy demand while protecting and enhancing the environment.