

## Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission

September 24, 2013

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Agenda Item: 11a

Action

Topic: Natural Areas Registration  
Klamath Lake Wildlife Refuge and Sycan Marsh Additions

Presented by: Jim Morgan

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**Background:** 2011 Senate Bill 58 transferred the State Natural Areas Program from the Department of State Lands (DSL) to the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD). OPRD is now responsible for processing nominations/petitions received to voluntarily add lands of a variety of ownerships to the register of State Natural Areas.

“Registration” and “dedication” are two vehicles for inclusion of properties on the register, with dedication being the more permanent arrangement. Privately owned lands that are registered or dedicated receive a waiver of land use conversion property taxes. Publicly-owned lands are registered because of ecological value without receiving a tax benefit. In all cases of registration or dedication, the subject properties are required to be of high or unique ecological value. The types of habitat that are eligible for inclusion on the register are described and cataloged in the State Natural Areas Plan as “ecosystem elements”. When enough examples of a particular ecosystem element are registered, that type is considered adequately represented and further registrations are no longer allowed for that element.

Per legislation, the steps in processing registration nominations are as follows: OPRD Stewardship staff and the Oregon Biodiversity Information Center (or a convened review board, at OPRD discretion) collaboratively review petitions for meeting the requirements of the State Natural Area Plan. If the subject property meets the requirements and intent of the Plan, OPRD Stewardship staff bring the proposal for registration to the Parks Commission for final decision regarding registration.

In August of 2013, OPRD staff received a petition to register two Nature Conservancy parcels in Lake and Klamath Counties. A brief description of the properties, their ecological value, context, and reasons for registration are included as an attachment (Exhibit A). Staff has reviewed the petition and has concluded that the subject property is of high ecological value and meets the intent of the State Natural Areas Plan.

**Prior Action by the Commission:** None.

**Action Requested:** Staff recommend that the Commission approve the addition of the two Natural Areas into the registry of State Natural Areas.

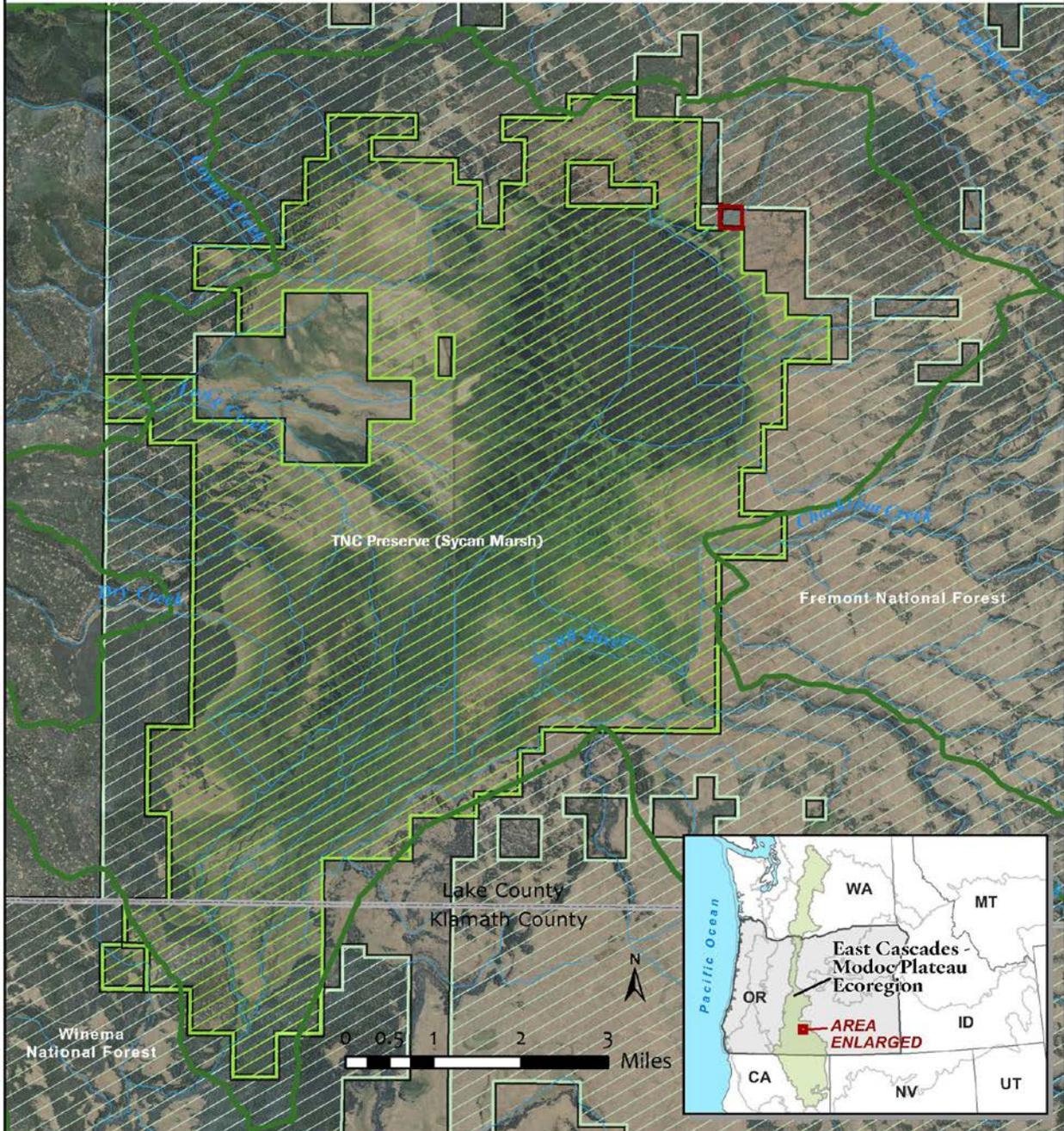
**Attachments:** Exhibit A –registration summary forms

**Prepared by:** Noel Bacheller

EXHIBIT A

NATURAL HERITAGE ADVISORY COUNCIL  
OREGON REGISTER OF NATURAL HERITAGE RESOURCES  
SUMMARY FORM

1. NATURAL AREA NAME: Sycan Marsh, Brattain-4 Addition
2. LOCATION: Lake County, near the Klamath County border about 20 miles west of Summer Lake. Township 31S Range 14E, part of Section 27.
3. SIZE: 40 acres. (This is an addition to the > 30,000 acre registered site).
4. OWNERSHIP: The Nature Conservancy
5. CONSENT OF OWNER (PRIVATE), DATE: 22 July 2013
6. REGISTER CATEGORY: Natural Heritage Conservation Area
7. PRINCIPAL NATURAL HERITAGE RESOURCES: East Cascades, Palustrine, # 73, Creeping spikerush meadow, # 74, Cusick or Nevada bluegrass meadow, # 75, Tufted hairgrass meadow, with lodgepole pine and sedge at the margin, 79. Silver sagebrush/Nebraska sedge-Cusick bluegrass playa, # 92. Lodgepole pine-quaking aspen/Douglas spiraea woodland. (2010 Natural Areas plan p. 118-119).
8. SPECIAL SPECIES: Animals: *Bartramia brevirostris* (upland sandpiper).
9. EVALUATION OF CRITERIA FOR REGISTRATION
  - A. PRIORITY IN PLAN: Cells 68, 73, 74, and 75 are already filled at Sycan Marsh. Cells 79 and 94 are Medium priority, partially filled cells, and this registration helps expand their coverage at the preserve.
  - B. ADEQUATE REPRESENTATION: Cells 79 and 92 are partially filled at Bluejay RNA. The designation of this site will allow both of these cells to be adequately filled.
  - C. DEGREE OF DISTURBANCE: The site shows light disturbance, but is in good shape.
  - D. VIABILITY: The site is very large and viable.
  - E. UNIQUE GEOLOGICAL VALUES: none.
  - F. PRIORITY FOR SPECIAL SPECIES: The upland sandpiper is on List 2, threatened or endangered in Oregon but more common elsewhere.
  - G. SPECIAL SPECIES PROTECTION CAPABILITY: The population of upland sandpipers at Sycan is currently very small.
  - H. MANAGEABILITY: The site is managed by the Oregon Office of The Nature Conservancy for its natural values.
10. SPECIAL REMARKS OR COMMENTS: The area has been poorly surveyed for natural habitats, and may contain other ecosystem elements. It was recently acquired as an addition to a large preserve.
11. SOURCE OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: The Nature Conservancy, 821 SE 14th Ave, Portland, OR 97214.
12. VALUE OF SITE IN LAY TERMS: Sycan Marsh is one of the largest natural areas in Oregon. The 40 acre addition is a donation from the Brattain family, who owned a number of small tracts adjacent to the TNC preserve. The addition makes the site easier to manage, reduces fencing, and will improve the montane meadow habitats present. Overall, the site provides important habitat for many wildlife species, and is a critical component in the restoration of the Sycan River and Upper Klamath Basin ecosystem.



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|----------------------------|---------------------|
| Tract (40 acres)           | U.S. Forest Service |
| TNC's Sycan Marsh Preserve | County Boundary     |
| Conservation Area          | Creeks              |

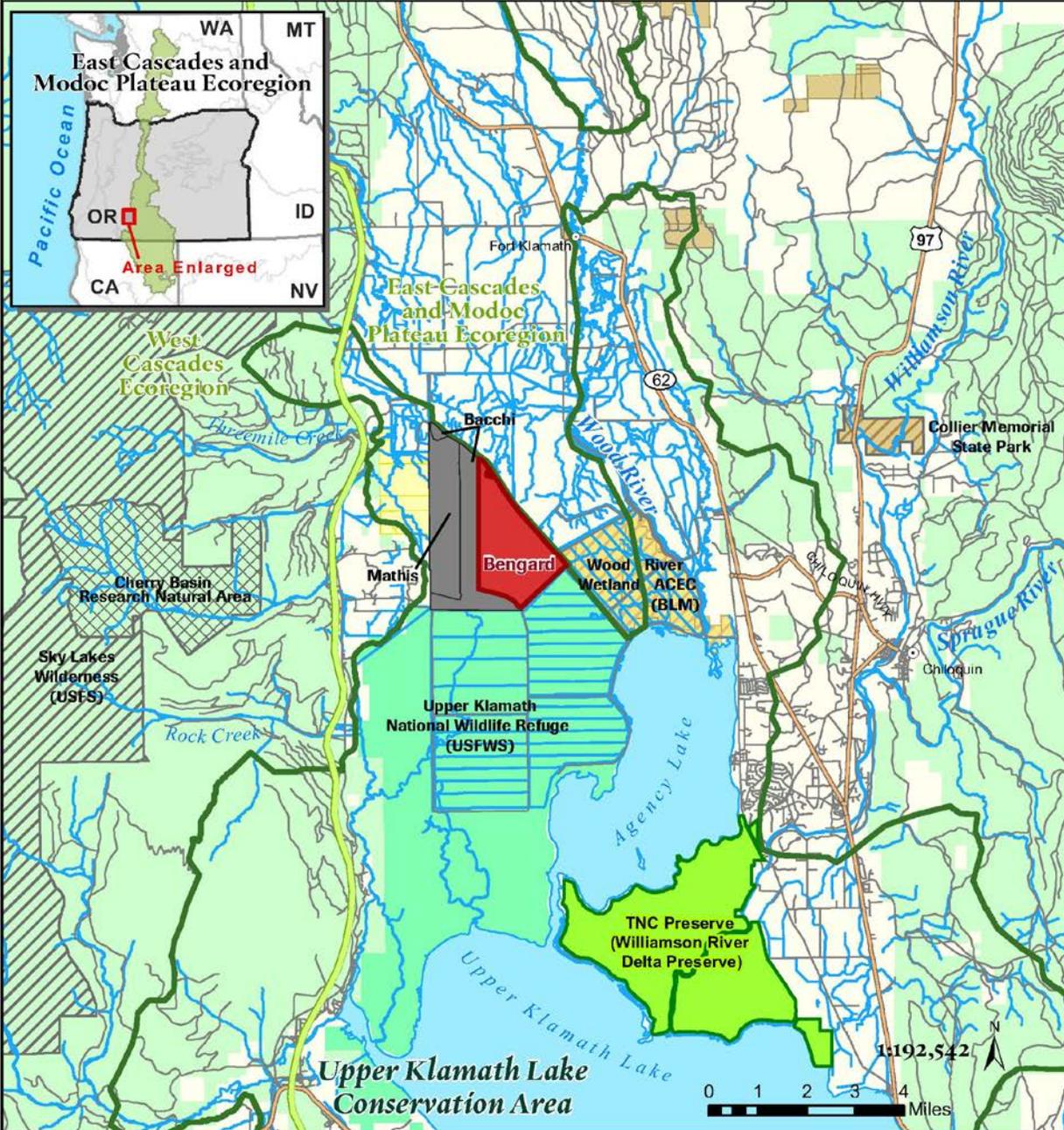


January 23, 2013  
 Map Created by :  
 Aaron Jones, Oregon Field Office, Oregon  
 Data Sources:  
 Preserve Boundary, Easements, TNC (2007);  
 Managed Lands ORNHIC (2005);  
 County Boundary, Creeks  
 Oregon Geospatial Enterprise Office (2007)  
 Map Projection: NAD\_1983\_Oregon\_Statewide\_Lambert  
 OR\_SycanMarsh(Brattain4)\_20130123.pdf

NATURAL HERITAGE ADVISORY COUNCIL  
OREGON REGISTER OF NATURAL HERITAGE RESOURCES  
SUMMARY FORM

1. NATURAL AREA NAME: Upper Klamath Lake Wildlife Refuge addition (Bengard Tract)
2. LOCATION: Klamath County, 13 miles north of Klamath Falls, just west of U.S. Hwy. 97. Township 34s, Range 7.5E, all or parts of Sections 5, 8, 15, 17, 20 and 21.
3. SIZE: 1,888.11 acres.
4. OWNERSHIP: The Nature Conservancy
5. CONSENT OF OWNER (PRIVATE), DATE: July 22, 2013
6. REGISTER CATEGORY: Natural Heritage Conservation Area
7. PRINCIPAL NATURAL HERITAGE RESOURCES: Aquatic Ecosystems, East Slope Oregon Cascades (ESOC), Palustrine Cell # 15, Bulrush/cattail marsh with aquatic beds (ONHP p. 65).
8. SPECIAL SPECIES: Lost River sucker (*Deltistes luxatus*, G1S1), shortnose sucker (*Chasmistes brevirostris*, G1S1). These two are listed as endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act and occur in the aquatic environments surrounding the tract. Also occurring in the aquatic environments are three other fish species: slender sculpin (*Cottus tenuis*, G3S3), Klamath largescale sucker (*Catostomus snyderi*, G3S3), both of these being Federal Species of Concern, and, Klamath Lake sculpin (*Cottus princeps*, G3S3).
9. EVALUATION OF CRITERIA FOR REGISTRATION
  - A. PRIORITY IN PLAN: This cell is filled elsewhere, although the endangered species can not be protected anywhere else.
  - B. ADEQUATE REPRESENTATION: The cell is filled elsewhere, but could become an excellent example of the cell.
  - C. DEGREE OF DISTURBANCE: The area is currently diked pasture, used for livestock grazing. TNC and the USFWS intend to restore the property and create natural wetlands and endangered species habitat.
  - D. VIABILITY: High. The tract is immediately adjacent to the Upper Klamath Lake National Wildlife Refuge, and the Department of Interior will manage the entire 1,888.11 acre tract, flooding the area in the winter months, and releasing the water to Upper Klamath Lake in late spring and early summer. Based on other sites, wetlands are likely to rapidly develop on the property, and the entire property will ultimately be transferred to the Department of Interior as an addition to the Refuge and will be managed to benefit fish and wildlife.
  - E. UNIQUE GEOLOGICAL VALUES: None
  - F. PRIORITY FOR SPECIAL SPECIES: High. ONHP priority 1, page 93; Oregon Natural Heritage Data Base, Endangered Throughout Range; US Fish and Wildlife Service and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Listed Endangered.
  - G. SPECIAL SPECIES PROTECTION CAPABILITY: High. The protection of this site is important to the maintenance of both endangered fish species. The National Academy of Sciences identified restoration of wetland habitats along Upper Klamath and Agency Lakes as a key strategy for recovering listed endangered fish in the Klamath Basin.
  - H. MANAGEABILITY: Excellent, due to ownership and size, although it will be expensive.
10. SPECIAL REMARKS OR COMMENTS: This property is adjacent to one of the largest natural wetland complexes remaining in Oregon, in an area which has lost tremendous wetland areas to agriculture and development. The restoration is part of the Recovery Plan for the Lost River and Short Nosed Suckers.
11. SOURCE OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Oregon Biodiversity Information Center, Institute for Natural Resources, Portland State University, PO Box 715, Mailstop: INR, Portland, OR 97207. The Nature Conservancy, 821 SE 14th Ave., Portland. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Klamath Basin Ecoregion Office, Klamath Falls.
12. VALUE OF THE SITE IN LAY TERMS: Upper Klamath

Lake is Oregon's largest lake, and the wetland complex surrounding this lake was historically Oregon's largest and most important wetland. Over the years, many of parts of this wetland were converted to agriculture. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages the Upper Klamath Lake Wildlife Refuge to conserve some of the largest and best examples of these wetlands, which include large sedge meadows and tule marsh. This property is immediately adjacent to the wildlife refuge, and will be transferred to the USFWS, the dikes will be removed and the natural wetlands restored. This restoration will also improve habitat for two endangered fish species, the Lost River sucker and the short nosed sucker, which spend time when young in the wetlands around the lake. It is hoped that these wetlands will also assist in the improvement of the water quality of Upper Klamath Lake.



- Tract
- Neighboring private tracts (Bacchi, Mathis)
- TNC's Williamson River Delta Preserve
- Conservation Area
- Ecoregional Boundary

**Managed Lands**

- US Forest Service (USFS)
- Wilderness (USFS)
- Research Natural Area (USFS)
- US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC, BLM)
- State
- State Park

- River
- Creek
- Ditch
- State Highways
- Roads

August 22, 2012  
Map Created by:  
Aaron Jones, Oregon Field Office  
Data Sources:  
Ecoregions Boundaries - TNC (2007)  
Preserve Boundaries - TNC (2007);  
Managed Lands - ORNHIC (2005);  
Roads - Census TIGER (2000);  
Rivers/Creeks - NHDPlus;  
USGS/USEPA (2005)

Map Projection: NAD\_1983\_UTM\_Zone\_10N,  
GEOGCS\_North\_American\_1983