**Grande Ronde Land Purchase**

The Inland Empire Fly Fishing Club (IEFFC) is working with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and Wild Steelhead Coalition (WSC) to purchase an 8-acre parcel of land on the lower Grande Ronde River. The land, next to a couple of very popular steelhead angling spots - the Shadow Hole and Turkey Run - is currently being used by hundreds of steelhead anglers each year for access to the river and for parking/camping. Every steelheader who regularly fishes the lower Grande Ronde is familiar with this area and has most likely used it. Due to the generosity of the land owner, he has not posted the land however he has now decided he would like to sell it. He would prefer that it remain open for public use rather than having a private entity purchase it and then potentially block public access.  The WDFW owns the shoreline easement so there would always be a narrow trail available but no parking/camping area that users have become accustomed to.

For political reasons, WDFW cannot buy it themselves (plus they have major budgetary issues). They asked IEFFC to work with someone to purchase it and then gift it over to the State to manage forever for public use.  Club bylaws do not allow for the IEFFC to purchase the land, however the WSC can. The WSC is a 501.C.3 organization so anyone donating money for this project can get credit for a charitable contribution. The land owner is offering an extremely favorable price to IEFFC and we want to take advantage of it as soon as possible. The first step is to get an earnest money agreement with the land owner to lock in the price and to establish procedural steps to assure him that the State will ultimately receive the land.  We have drafted a purchase/sale agreement (PSA) which the WSC is reviewing. Once they are ready to sign and send it to the landowner, the IEFFC will provide the earnest money ($2000). As soon as the land owner has signed the PSA we can begin requesting donations for the land purchase.

The State will do an environmental impact study (EIS) for this action which may up to a year to complete. Hopefully the land purchase will move quickly which will leave some amount of time when the WSC will be the new landowners and can then donate it to the WDFW. The state has offered to lease the property from the WSC until such time as they can receive the land donation in order to cover the WSC in the interim for liability issues and operating expenses.

We need to raise at least $30,000 to cover the land purchase, closing costs, and the WDFW environmental evaluation. We also plan to install a memorial to honor everyone who contributed to the project. Along with the IEFFC contribution for the earnest money, we have already received commitments from individuals. We would like to have FFI support this project, including a donation. Also, we would like Board members who are members of other clubs to work within their organizations to get support and donations. I will contact as many clubs and other groups with an interest in steelhead fishing as possible but it would be more effective for their own members to work directly with them. This is an ambitious project with an optimistic schedule but we have received very enthusiastic support from everyone who has become aware of what we are trying to do.