



## **#FridaysOnTheFarm: Commitment to Habitat Renewal**

Each Friday, visit local farms, ranches, forests, and resource areas through our [#FridaysOnTheFarm](#) stories. Meet farmers, producers, and landowners who are working to improve their operations with USDA programs.

This Friday meet the Burns Paiute tribe in Oregon. One of the state's smaller tribes, the Burns Paiute has established itself as an active conservation partner in eastern Oregon.

The tribe worked with the Bonneville Power Administration to purchase two off-reservation properties through the Wildlife Mitigation Program. These properties include Logan Valley in Grant County and Jonesboro in Malheur County. They also purchased property in Beech Creek in Grant County working with a traditional mortgage through Indian Land Tenure Foundation.

### **Vision for the Land**

Lake Creek chatters in the background as Eric Hawley, Burns Paiute tribal chair and Logan Valley manager, shares his vision for the land.

"We come to stewardship from such a variety of perspectives," said Eric. "Culturally we look at concerns based on heritage, tribal sovereignty and a search for independence. Our land management incorporates these ideas and seeks management to protect and enhance wildlife and fisheries. Our Council is also interested in economic sustainability. It is truly a balancing act."

Even so, it's an act the Burns Paiute perform well in partnership with USDA's [Farm Service Agency](#) and [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#).

### **Enhancing the Land**

The tribe's relationship with USDA began in 2007 in Logan Valley, where they own over 1,700 acres of wet meadow, upland and forest.

Enrolling in the [Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program](#), a part of the [Conservation Reserve Program](#), the tribe partnered with FSA and NRCS to develop a plan that would enhance waterways and wet meadows. Through this program, the tribe was able to address streambank erosion on approximately 345 acres along Lake Creek, Big Creek and various tributaries.

Establishing native plant species conducive to the site was one of the key components of the CREP project in Logan Valley. On the streams, this includes species, such as Booth's Willow, Geyer's Willow, Western Dogwood, Wild Rose, and Golden Currant. In the tributaries, it includes stands of Quaking Aspen.

While electric and lay down fences are used to protect some plantings from cattle and elk, a short-growing season, browsing elk and incised banks have left Lake Creek with marginal populations of desired species. On Big Creek, willow and wild rose grow lushly along the stream banks that are bristling with a variety of native grass.



CREP is also being used on their Jonesboro property, on the Malheur River, helping to eliminate weeds and provide habitat for big game and birds.

### **Important Local Investment**

To manage the grassy meadows, the tribes lease grazing to area ranchers, enrollment in the [Conservation Stewardship Program](#) enables the tribes to use a planned rest/rotation grazing system, which also includes photo monitoring. In the forest, it allows for brush management and thinning of timber stands.

“The various cost-share programs offered by NRCS provide an important local investment,” said Calla Hagle, wildlife program manager for the tribe. “They significantly expand what we’re able to do and are a primary source of conservation funding in Logan Valley.”

The Beech Creek property has a strong management focus as agricultural working-land. Through CREP, stream-corridor fences are being added to protect the riparian area from overgrazing and degradation. With the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#), through the Northside Mule Deer Winter Habitat Initiative, they enhance winter habitat by removing invasive western juniper, while CSP provides enhancements for crop, pasture and range management.

Once off the flood plain, the land rapidly becomes steep and stark, and includes over 6,000 acres of tribally owned uplands and 38,000 acres of federal and state grazing allotments. This is prime greater sage-grouse country, where the tribe entered its first EQIP contract in 2013 through the national [Sage Grouse Initiative](#), removing juniper to enhance the sagebrush steppe habitat to aid in the recovery of this iconic bird.

“There are a lot of moving parts with each of these projects,” notes Erica Maltz, director of natural resources for the tribe. “When I took over as director last year I had a steep learning curve. NRCS was very supportive during the transition, helping me to understand the programs and the tribes’ responsibilities. They’ve been a great partner, enabling us to strike that balance between economic, cultural and natural resource management.”

### **Culture of Conservation**

Renewing that cultural connection between their people and the land is as important to Eric, Calla and Erica as restoring the land itself. Logan Valley, with its lush wet meadow forbs, sedges, rushes and abundant grasses, trickling streams, and towering pines provides land of true adventure for tribal youth.

The tribe holds its annual week-long culture camp, which involves a variety of activities for youth, from grade school through high school, to gather with tribal elders and staff from the natural and cultural resources department for a hands-on learning experience.

“I can’t emphasize enough the importance of engaging our youth with native values,” says Hawley. “Connecting them with our land and our elders for a week provides depth of experience that isn’t reached any other way.”



## More Information

USDA offers a variety of risk management, disaster assistance, loan, and conservation programs to help agricultural producers in the United States. [Learn about additional programs.](#)

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