



# Chicken Creek Restoration at Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge

## Returning to a Natural System

At Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge, we actively restore and maintain healthy native habitats for the benefit of wildlife, while offering people the opportunity to experience native plant and wildlife species close to home. One of the primary habitats you'll see when visiting, are the wetlands of the Refuge's Atfalat'i Unit. While attractive to people and wildlife alike, these wetlands are far from the natural system that once occurred here. In fact, they've been intensively managed by Refuge staff since the Refuge's creation in 1992.

Chicken Creek once followed a sinuous (curvy) path before connecting to the Tualatin River. It was diverted to a straight channel when the land we now call the Refuge was converted for agricultural use throughout most of the 20th century. Through the Chicken Creek Restoration Project, we will restore the historic curves of the Creek, welcoming a greater variety of native plant and wildlife species while benefiting visitors and the surrounding communities with cleaner water and new trail experiences.



## Benefits for Wildlife and People

A restored Chicken Creek means increased and improved wetland and riparian habitat (vegetation along rivers) - and that means more diverse wildlife. Those that particularly stand to benefit are aquatic species like Western brook lamprey and cutthroat trout, as the slower flow of the Creek provides resting and rearing opportunities. These species will also benefit from an increase in Creek habitat, from 1/2 mile currently, to 2 miles once the project is complete, as well as access to areas upstream of the Refuge.

A slower flow also means more sediment stays in the Creek and out of the Tualatin River, helping to improve its water quality. Visitors will also enjoy a new section of seasonal trail and more diverse wildlife viewing.



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## Chicken Creek Restoration Project Details

- The project will create a 280-acre connected, naturally functioning wetland system on the Refuge's Atfalat'i Unit.
- Chicken Creek will be reoriented to a sinuous (curving) flow, replacing the straight channel that was created when the land was converted for agricultural use over a century ago.
- The construction portion of the project will begin in July 2019 and is estimated to conclude in the Summer of 2020.
- Reconfiguration of the Wetland Seasonal Trail will increase its length by 1/2 mile.
- Increased beaver activity, resulting in the ponding of water, will lead to more plant and wildlife diversity.



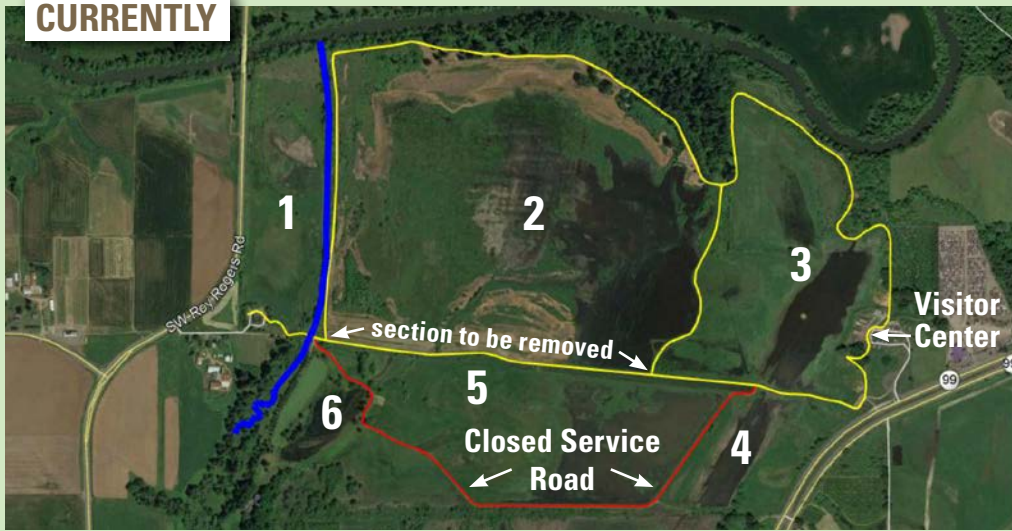
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*While aquatic species enjoy additional resting and rearing space in the Creek, other wildlife, like birds and mammals, will find more hunting, nesting, and protection opportunities among the riparian vegetation and open waters of the 280-acre wetland.*

## How will restoring Chicken Creek impact the Refuge?

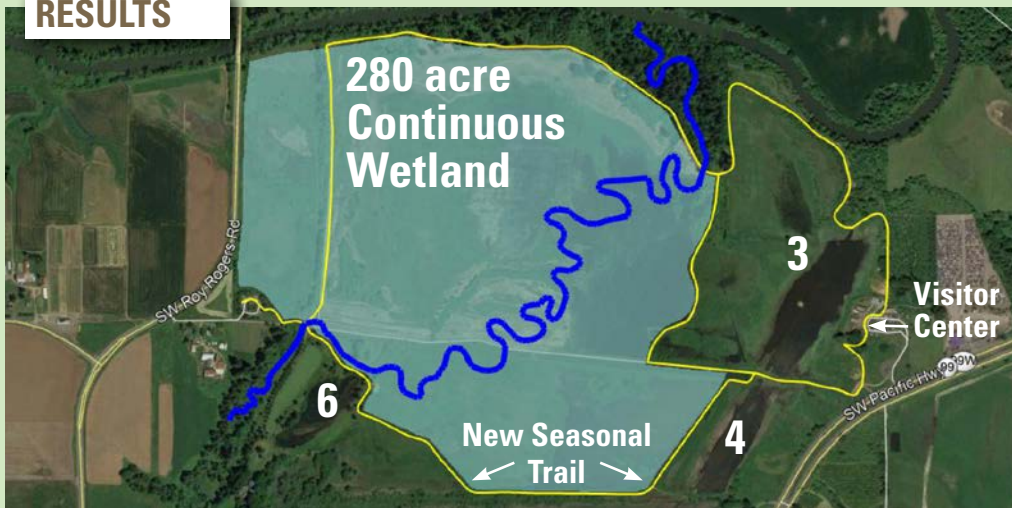
- **Short Term:** Refuge staff have been preparing the site for the last year by eliminating invasive vegetation. Starting July 2019, heavy equipment, like excavators, will be visible in the wetlands, digging the Chicken Creek channel. New native vegetation will be planted along the channel. A section of the current Wetland Seasonal Trail will be re-routed. This will increase the overall trail length by 1/2 mile.
- **Medium Term:** Connected wetland cells will allow water to flow more freely, especially during the winter rainy season. Beaver will come into the site, building dams that will pond water in the continuous 280-acre wetland.
- **Long Term:** Native wetland and riparian vegetation will take hold and flourish, attracting a more diverse collection of wildlife. As vegetation matures, visitors will enjoy summer walks immersed in dynamic habitat.

**CURRENTLY**



The Refuge currently manages six independent wetlands on the Atfalat'i Unit. This is done with water control structures operated and maintained by staff.

**RESULTS**

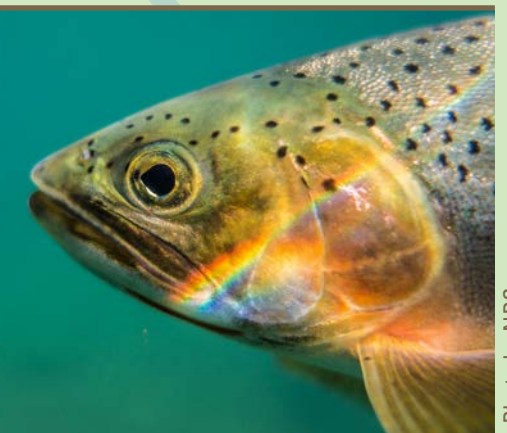


At the end of the construction portion of the project, the Atfalat'i Unit will contain one 280-acre connected floodplain and only three managed wetlands.

A section of the Wetland Seasonal Trail (near #5 above) will be removed and re-routed to a new section of trail that was previously a closed area of the Refuge. The overall trail length will increase by 1/2 mile.



Left: Expected beaver activity will cause water to pond, leading to a lush, diverse wetland and riparian habitat along Chicken Creek.



Right: Aquatic species, like the cutthroat trout, will see expanded and improved resting and rearing habitat in the realigned Chicken Creek.

**The Power of Partnership**

From research, to know-how, to financial support, a project of this size could only happen by working closely with community partners:



For more information about this project, visit:

**Web:** [www.Refuge2020.info](http://www.Refuge2020.info)

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