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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### *775 Acres of Southern Oregon Ranchlands Permanently Protected by Wahl Family and Wild Rivers Land Trust*

**Port Orford, OR** – Wild Rivers Land Trust (WRLT) and the Wahl Family have partnered to permanently protect 775 acres of ranchlands in Southern Oregon, safeguarding wildlife habitat, watershed health, and agricultural heritage for generations to come.

The easement was made possible through funding support from the **USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** and the **Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP)**, a program of the **Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB)**, with partnership and technical assistance from **The Conservation Fund**.

“This project holds deep personal meaning for me,” said Amy Knapp Pettit, Executive Director of Wild Rivers Land Trust. “I have known the Wahl Family my entire life and I have seen firsthand their commitment to steward the land with care and integrity. To be able to partner with them to protect their ranch for future generations is both an honor and a joy.”

Pete Wahl, representing the Wahl Family, shared: “We see the conservation easement as the best way for our ranch to stay permanently in its current combination of agricultural production and wildlife habitat. We are grateful for the federal and state programs that make conservation easements possible for ranch and farm families, and for the land trust community that has long been the backbone of these efforts. The easement tool may not work for all agricultural family businesses, but it’s a remarkable option for those who choose to protect both production and habitat in this way.”

Sara O’Brien, Executive Director of the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), which oversees the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program, sees the Wahl Ranch Conservation Easement as a powerful investment in Oregon’s working lands and wildlife habitat. The project illustrates how these two important values can coexist.

“The easement will support fish and wildlife habitat and watershed health in a rare landscape on the Southern Coast while ensuring the area remains under working lands management. OWEB is

proud to partner with Wild Rivers Land Trust and the Wahl family to protect some of Oregon's treasured lands and those that depend on them," O'Brien said.

Gates Watson, Vice President of Mountain and Northwest Regions at The Conservation Fund, said this project marks another step forward in what he hopes will be a growing legacy of conservation and stewardship in the region.

"We're grateful to Wild Rivers Land Trust, the Wahl Family, and to the committed funders who made this project possible. By protecting Southern Oregon's coastal ranchlands and vital watersheds, we're not only conserving the landscape, but supporting regenerative ranching practices that sustain both the land and the agricultural heritage central to this community," Watson said.

Amy Knapp Pettit added: "This project would not have been possible without the Wahl Family's determination and patience. They stayed committed to seeing this vision through, and that persistence is what made permanent protection possible. We are also deeply grateful for the collaboration of our funding partners, whose support was essential every step of the way. Together, we look forward to building on this momentum and taking on the next conservation project in Southern Oregon."

### **About Wild Rivers Land Trust**

WRLT's mission is to conserve and sustain the natural, scenic, working, and culturally significant lands of Southern Oregon through collaboration with communities and landowners.

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