

***** NEWS RELEASE *****

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3D VIRTUAL INTERNET TOURS SHOWCASE WATERSHED PROTECTION EFFORTS

**Web site uses top-shelf panoramic photography and
digital video to highlight wetland and habitat restoration**

ALTURAS, CALIFORNIA – Today, in the space of a just a few moments, citizens can view stands of Ponderosa pine reflected in California's Pit River, scan for migratory birds at Modoc National Wildlife Refuge, and take in the spectacular view of Goose Lake from the Sugar Hill Lookout Station. The Pit River Watershed Alliance has created a unique Interactive Watershed web site — www.pitriveralliance.net — that showcases watershed restoration efforts in this region. Using innovative 360-degree panoramic photography and digital video, the web site invites users to learn about ongoing watershed restoration activities in an engaging and interactive way.

Virtual 3D tours of many watershed areas are made possible with the use of 360-degree panoramas, which are accompanied by explanatory text outlining the restoration activities taking place there. In addition, digital terrain maps give users the choice of many sub-watershed areas, including views that span great distances or examine riverside microenvironments. Users can move the 360-degree panoramic views side to side and up and down to find additional active hyperlinks to descriptive text, photographs, and high quality audio-video sequences of people talking about watershed resource issues.

The primary watershed areas covered in the web site include Goose Lake on the Oregon-California border; Fall River Valley, Big Valley, and Warm Springs Valley; and the North and South Fork drainages. Restoration activities include efforts to improve water quality, restore upland and riparian vegetation and wetlands, and rehabilitate fish and wildlife habitats. This Interactive Watershed web site also features a Watershed Community Center, in which watershed groups and interested individuals can engage in real-time interaction about ongoing restoration work.

The web site project is just part of a larger "Interactive Watersheds" project. Across the United States, four additional watersheds are also producing similar virtual tours of their watersheds. A portal web site for these other watershed efforts can be found at www.interactivewatersheds.net.

"I do not believe there is anything on the Internet that compares to the high quality content these community watershed groups are providing—with detailed interactive terrain maps, immersive 360-degree interactive panoramas, text, images, and audio-video hot spots—to tell stories about natural resource issues," says Gary Grimm with Mountain Visions, the Boise, Idaho-based multimedia production company that designed and produced the Interactive Watersheds web sites.

Beginning in the fall of 2002, funds for the Pit River Watershed Alliance's Interactive Watershed web site have been provided by the California Bay-Delta Authority (CALFED) and the U.S.D.A. Forest Service, and a grant awarded to the National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils, Inc., from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

The Pit River Watershed Alliance is a large-scale restoration and stewardship project dedicated to protecting and restoring the land and waters of the Upper Pit River Watershed. More than two dozen local, state, federal, and private organizations have become active partners to collectively address watershed issues through the sharing of expertise and resources.

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