

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Contacts:

Lindsay Cornelius, Columbia Land Trust, Natural Area Manager,

360.921.1073 lindsayc@columbianlandtrust.org

Mary Bushman, East Cascades Oak Partnership Coordinator,

503.860.9689 oaks@columbianlandtrust.org

Media: Keith Daly, Advancement Director, 503.961.3142 kdaly@columbianlandtrust.org

Conservation Partnership Announces Strategic Action Plan for Protecting White Oak Landscapes.

Columbia Land Trust Heralds Landmark Conservation Effort for the Decade Ahead.

Columbia Land Trust and East Cascades Oak Partnership (ECOP) have launched a new strategic plan to save Oregon white oaks (*Quercus garryana*) and their habitats in the East Cascades of Oregon and Washington.

White oak habitats are home to a wide range of birds, wildflowers, and culturally significant foods of indigenous peoples. But in the face of development pressures, a changing climate, grazing practices, and other daunting challenges, there is an urgent and growing need for landscape-scale conservation over the next ten years across private and public lands.



The strategic plan details the many ways people in the East Cascades can adapt their behaviors to mitigate the stressors on oak systems—and ensure our natural and built communities thrive in the future.

Today's announcement follows three years of in-depth partner learning and stakeholder engagement. Convened in 2017 by Columbia Land Trust, with the support of Pacific Birds and the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, the partnership grew to include state and federal public agencies, tribes, nonprofits, watershed councils, conservation districts, small businesses, private landowners, interested citizens, and other area stakeholders who know and love the Columbia Gorge and the East Cascades.

The landmark plan will help guide decision-making in oak conservation, build support for protecting these beautiful landscapes, and ensure a healthy, sustainable future for the woodlands, wildlife, and communities of the East Cascades.

"East Cascades Oaks Partnership inspires me because we're advancing conservation while addressing key human needs in the landscape," said Lindsay Cornelius, Natural Area Manager, Columbia Land Trust. "We can improve the condition and access to first

foods, and we can improve grazing forage for livestock, all while increasing native biodiversity in the oak woodland understory. We can also restore oak systems damaged by fire suppression while reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire in the urban-wildland interface."

"I feel connected to Oaks Partnership through a shared community of oak enthusiasts," said Jeremy Thompson, District Wildlife Biologist, Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife. "For years, I felt like a lone voice within my networks, advocating for oak habitat protection and enhancement. With the formation of the partnership, we can amplify each other's voices as we make a case for oaks in the East Cascades." h

"The East Cascades Oak Partnership sits in the center of this magical Venn diagram of science, community, passion, and drive," said Michelle Sager, Conservation + Volunteer Coordinator Ekone Ranch. "I'm amazed at how much effort has gone into understanding so many perspectives on the issues, and the care that's being taken to account for the broad swath of needs and goals."

"This partnership has over the past four years dramatically increased our collective understanding of the state white oak habitats east of the Cascades," said Brad Nye, Conservation Director, Deschutes Land Trust. "While we've known for years that these habitats are among the most diverse and important pieces of our landscape, we haven't until now had a sufficient understanding of how to protect and steward them as a regional resource."

"The collaborative efforts of this partnership will enable us to work towards conserving and restoring white oak systems and the wildlife that depend upon them," said Shilah Olson, District Manager, Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District. "And it will benefit the landowners we serve and the greater public, too."

For more information on the Strategic Plan and other initiatives by East Cascades Oak Partnership to conserve the Pacific Northwest's iconic oak landscapes, visit:
<https://www.columbialandtrust.org/ecop/>

About East Cascades Oak Partnership

East Cascades Oak Partnership is a group of individuals and organizations committed to protecting vulnerable oak habitats and encouraging more sustainable human interactions with these important resources and improving outcomes for people, oaks and wildlife.

About Columbia Land Trust

Columbia Land Trust is a non-profit organization dedicated to conserving and caring for the vital lands, waters, and wildlife of the Columbia River region through sound science and strong relationships.

###