



# SOUND SCIENCE & STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

Our commitment to sound science helps us determine which of our region's lands and waters are most vital to wildlife. Strong relationships guide us in understanding the ecological, cultural, historical, and economic contexts in which these places exist.

## CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITY AREAS

The conservation agenda presents geographic priorities and establishes both 25-year and four-year objectives for the lower Columbia's five ecoregions: Coast Range and Estuaries, Willamette Valley and Puget Trough, West Cascades, East Cascades, and Columbia Plateau. Conservation Opportunity Areas represent

our best chances to collaboratively protect vast swaths of land, which provide vital wildlife habitat and benefits like clean and plentiful water, economic opportunities, local food, and unparalleled natural beauty. Maps on the following pages identify Conservation Opportunity Areas in each ecoregion.

## CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITY AREAS WERE DEVELOPED THROUGH THE FOLLOWING CONSIDERATIONS:

- PRESENCE OF WILDLIFE SPECIES AND HABITAT**
- LANDSCAPE CONNECTIVITY**  
how well lands allow wildlife to move between habitats and allow natural processes, such as river flow, to take place
- CLIMATE RESILIENCY**  
the presence of landscape characteristics that buffer against the impacts climate change will have on wildlife
- EXPERT OPINION AND LOCAL KNOWLEDGE**





Photo by: Brian Chambers Photography





# CONNECTING PEOPLE & NATURE

Within each of our five ecoregions, we've identified ways in which partnerships can strengthen local conservation, along with objectives for engaging with communities to connect people to nature. We have also begun to identify opportunities to more equitably share the benefits and burdens of conservation and land management practices. Across all ecoregions, our objectives are to:

## **REMOVE SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC BARRIERS TO LAND CONSERVATION**

We are committed to being responsive to local concerns regarding our lands. We will support pro-conservation policies and ensure that conservation and stewardship work benefits local communities, including allowing access to land, considering economic opportunities, and communicating clearly.

## **ENGAGE THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE IN LOCAL CONSERVATION**

The Land Trust will increase public awareness around the benefits of conservation and build relationships with diverse interest groups. We'll expand opportunities for people to deepen their connection with nature through field trips, tours, volunteer activities, the Backyard Habitat Certification Program, and by partnering with park providers to create new natural areas.

## **ALIGN PARTNERS AND COMMUNITIES AROUND THE IMPROVEMENT AND PROTECTION OF CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITY AREAS**

We will work with the agricultural community and forest landowners to advocate for common ground policies and funding approaches. We're committed to initiating collaborative restoration projects with groups including tribes and county governments. Lastly, we will lead by example as attentive, proactive, and responsive land managers who share information and expertise.

## **SUPPORT A SHARED CONSERVATION VISION**

The Land Trust will offer its conservation agenda as a framework to other conservation and community groups so that we may leverage our collective power to change our lands for the better. We've made it a core organizational priority to identify and engage in opportunities for greater equity and inclusion, both internally and with culturally diverse partners and stakeholders.

We are at the outset of a long journey, but we are committed to developing meaningful partnerships with people of color-serving organizations to strengthen on-the-ground conservation work, and to ensure that the agenda advances an inclusive vision and equitable conservation outcomes. This work includes changing from within; providing training for our staff and board; and developing an equity lens through which we examine policies and practices.

## COAST RANGE AND ESTUARIES

On the Pacific Coast, rivers, estuaries, coastal dunes, & old-growth forests overlap, supporting wildlife along with local fishing, forestry, and recreation industries.

### REGIONAL OBJECTIVES

**GIVE** rivers room to move and flood naturally, enabling them to support healthy salmon runs and riverside habitat without threatening communities and infrastructure.

**PROTECT** older forests, ensuring that large expanses are managed in ways that connect critical habitat areas, set the stage for more old forests, and support the survival of endangered species.

**INCREASE** the prevalence of tidal wetlands in the Columbia River Estuary and continue managing invasive species.

**CONSERVE** and restore the last remaining large, undeveloped properties containing coastal interdunal wetlands and lakes, associated forests, and beaches.

**STRENGTHEN** local economies and expand public awareness of conservation benefits by providing healthy and functional natural areas.



### COAST RANGE ECOREGION

Conservation Opportunity Areas | Overview Map

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>PRIORITY ONE</b>   | Columbia River Estuary   Grays River   Willapa Hills                        |
| <b>PRIORITY TWO</b>   | Chehalis River Headwaters   Elochoman River   Northern Long Beach Peninsula |
| <b>PRIORITY THREE</b> | Other Important Areas   |

*“River systems are complex, dynamic, and intrinsically about people living and interacting within their environment.”*

—CAITLIN ALCOTT, Wetland Hydrologist with Inter-Fluve

Photo by: Rollin Bannow



### PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

The engineering and design firm Inter-Fluve has partnered with Columbia Land Trust on numerous wetland restoration projects throughout the Columbia River Estuary.

Multiple rivers drain into Grays Bay in Wahkiakum County, Washington, where historic tidal floodplains have been fundamentally altered to the detriment of threatened salmon species, migratory birds, and other wildlife.

In the years to come, the Land Trust plans to acquire 200 acres, and work with various partners to restore natural tidal wetland conditions to 400 acres, throughout the Grays Bay area. This objective supports a broader, headwaters-to-estuary strategy to protect river systems across the region.

*“Nature is always changing. It reminds us that we need not fear change.”*

—LORENA O’NEILL, Backyard Habitat Technician



## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

O’Neill draws daily inspiration from wildlife in her naturescaped backyard in Portland’s West Haven-Sylvan neighborhood. Since 2009, more than 3,600 households across the Portland metropolitan area have helped support local wildlife while becoming environmental stewards in their own communities through the Backyard Habitat Certification Program.\*

In the years ahead, we’ll connect an additional 5,000 households and 12 community institutions to nature through the program while also supporting local partners in adding to the metro region’s system of parks and natural areas.

\*THE BACKYARD HABITAT CERTIFICATION PROGRAM IS RUN IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE BIRD ALLIANCE OF OREGON

## WILLAMETTE VALLEY & PUGET TROUGH

Nestled between the Coast and Cascade Ranges, these fertile valleys are home to more than two million people, who enjoy the parks and green spaces crucial to wildlife.

### REGIONAL OBJECTIVES

**RESTORE** the health and function of the floodplains, riverside forests, and wetlands associated with our rivers.

**PROTECT**, maintain, and restore oak and prairie habitats.

**MAKE** urban areas more conducive to wildlife through thousands of nature-scaped properties that allow pollinators, resident and migrating birds, and other wildlife to move across the landscape.

**BUILD** strong partnerships between agriculture and conservation communities to benefit wildlife habitat, movement, and migration.

**PROVIDE** meaningful opportunities for people to connect to nature throughout cities and natural areas.



## WILLAMETTE VALLEY ECOREGION

Conservation Opportunity Areas | Overview Map

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>PRIORITY ONE</b>   | Columbia River Lowlands   Tualatin River  |
| <b>PRIORITY TWO</b>   | Forest Park   Clackamas River & Tributaries   Pudding River   Dundee Oaks   Molalla River |
| <b>PRIORITY THREE</b> | Other Important Areas   |

## WEST CASCADES

Rivers flow west from iconic Cascade peaks, providing world-class habitat, drinking water, and recreation. Verdant forests support wildlife and forestry.

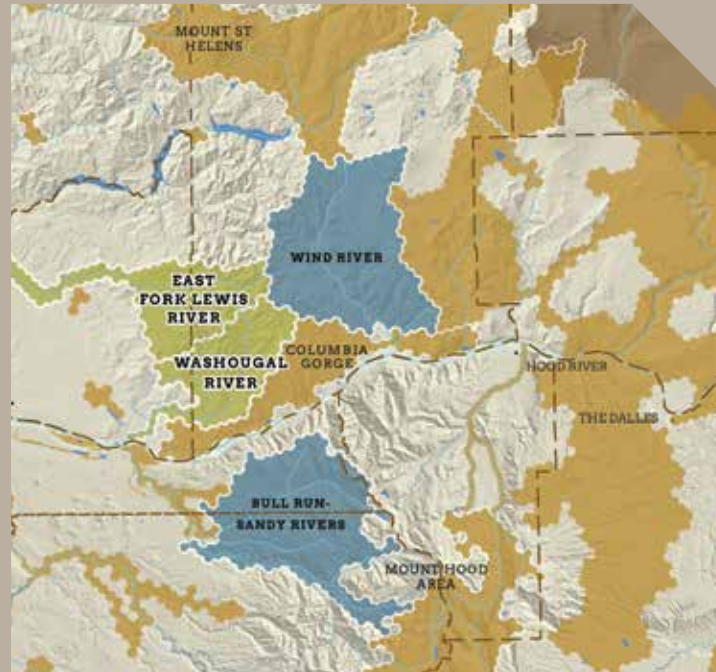
### REGIONAL OBJECTIVES

**ENSURE** large swaths of both public and privately owned forestland are intact and functional, connecting habitat for migratory species.

**HALT** the net loss of older forests and increase the number of forested acres managed toward old-growth forest habitat.

**PROTECT** important rivers for salmon and steelhead habitat by removing barriers to migration, improving river conditions, and restoring floodplains.

**CULTIVATE** local and regional public support for conserving working forest lands by demonstrating their economic and recreational value.



### WEST CASCADES ECOREGION

Conservation Opportunity Areas | Overview Map

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>PRIORITY ONE</b>   | East Fork Lewis River   Washougal River |
| <b>PRIORITY TWO</b>   | Wind River   Bull Run-Sandy Rivers      |
| <b>PRIORITY THREE</b> | Other Important Areas                   |

*“If we don’t prioritize conservation now, we risk losing everything—our history, our culture, our curiosity, and the simple wonders of nature.”*

—HANNAH CLARK, Executive Director, Washington Assoc. of Land Trusts

Photo by: Doug Gorsline



### PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Clark spends her weekends backpacking and her weekdays advocating for funding and policies that support healthy forests.

As the executive director of the Washington Association of Land Trusts, Clark has collaborated with the Land Trust to protect thousands of acres of timberland south of Mount St. Helens. Today, we’re working with local foresters to set these lands on a course toward becoming our region’s next great old-growth forest. In the coming years, the Land Trust will build coalitions to conserve the vast forests of the West Cascades—tens of thousands of acres—that are vital to wildlife while still allowing economic opportunities in forestry.



Photo by: Doug Gorsline

*“We’ve got to find ways to work within these systems rather than apart from them.”*

—ROBIN DOBSON, Ecologist, U.S. Forest Service



## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Robin Dobson has spent decades studying the unique ecosystems of the East Cascades, where Oregon white oak woodlands support a diverse array of wildlife.

Mounting development pressures in the area prompted Columbia Land Trust and conservation group Pacific Birds to establish the East Cascades Oaks Partnership in 2016. The nascent partnership, which includes Yakama Nation, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, state and federal agencies, conservation districts, and scientists like Dobson, is building a collaborative strategy for conserving and restoring vital oak habitats.

## EAST CASCADES

On the dry side of Mount Hood & Mount Adams, oak woodlands and rivers boast a unique diversity of wildlife, while forestry, agriculture, and recreation support local communities.

### REGIONAL OBJECTIVES

**PROTECT** and restore major eastside rivers and key tributaries.

**PRESERVE** oak woodland habitat systems and opportunities for wildlife migration and movement.

**MAINTAIN** the integrity of unique transition zones between riverside and upland habitats, high and low elevations, and wet and dry climates.

**COLLABORATE** with local stakeholders and increase public awareness about the benefits of oak woodlands, sustainable forestry, river conservation, and ecological processes.

**SUPPORT** community leaders in championing conservation strategies and leading implementation.



## EAST CASCADES ECOREGION

Conservation Opportunity Areas | Overview Map

|                       |                                |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>PRIORITY ONE</b>   | Klickitat River   Wasco Oaks   |
| <b>PRIORITY TWO</b>   | Trout Lake Valley   Hood River |
| <b>PRIORITY THREE</b> | Other Important Areas          |

## COLUMBIA PLATEAU

Hills of prairie and shrub-steppe make up a striking landscape punctuated by wild rivers. Ranching and agriculture support the local economy.

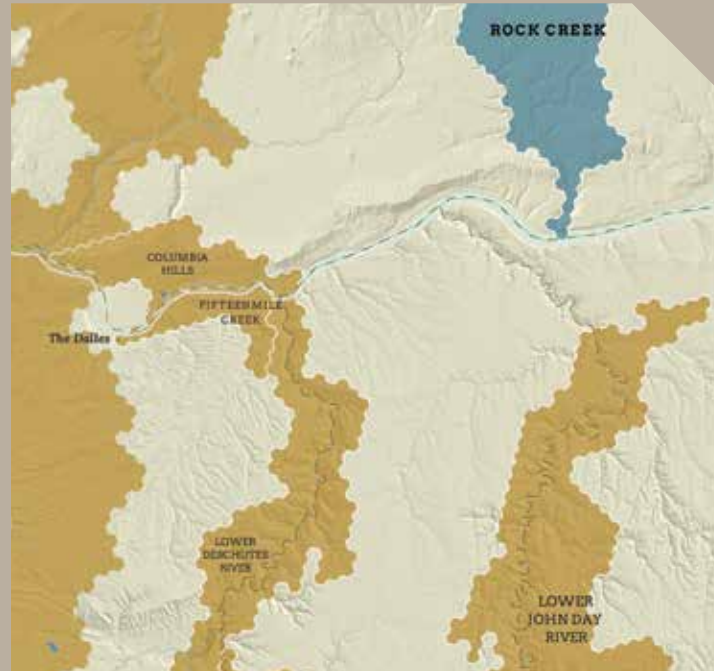
### REGIONAL OBJECTIVES

**PROTECT** intact and functional prairie and shrub-steppe habitat from land use conversion and degradation.

**RESTORE** native plant species, habitat functions, and ecological processes on affected lands.



**RAISE** awareness of the benefits of conservation in prairie and shrub-steppe landscapes.

**INVEST** time in the area to learn more and build relationships to determine how we can be most helpful in local conservation efforts.



### COLUMBIA PLATEAU ECOREGION

Conservation Opportunity Areas | Overview Map

|   |                       |                       |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
|  | <b>PRIORITY TWO</b>   | Rock Creek            |
|  | <b>PRIORITY THREE</b> | Other Important Areas |

*“We’re tied to the Columbia Plateau through our foods. They take care of us and in return we’re supposed to take care of them.”*

—ELAINE HARVEY, Biologist, Yakama Nation Fisheries



### PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Few people know the nature of Washington’s Rock Creek watershed better than Elaine Harvey, biologist with Yakama Nation Fisheries. In the next four years, the Land Trust will learn from experts like Harvey and engage with individuals and communities who are connected with this landscape, such as tribal members and ranchers, to better understand local opportunities and develop conservation strategies together.

Moving forward, we’ll identify highest-priority in-stream, riverside, native prairie, and shrub-steppe habitat and determine Columbia Land Trust’s role in the Rock Creek watershed.

# THE TIME TO CONSERVE LAND IS ALWAYS NOW.

At Columbia Land Trust, we reject false barriers predicated on fear and uncertainty. We have the courage to listen to new perspectives and ideas. We find solutions by building on goals we all share: clean water, a healthy environment, and prosperous, nature-rich communities. Guided by our conservation agenda, we have the science, the vision, and the resolve to protect our region's most important places. We are poised to accomplish more meaningful conservation in the next four years than in our entire history. To succeed in protecting nature—in neighborhoods, on working lands, and as wilderness—we need more people to band together. We ask that you fearlessly contribute your gifts—your time, your passion, your support—to this remarkable corner of the world.

**JOIN US IN CREATING A NORTHWEST THAT IS VIBRANT, THRIVING, AND WILD.**



# TAKE ACTION

## GIVE A GIFT

Whether you make your first gift, become a monthly donor, or increase your annual giving, you can move our ambitious agenda forward. You can also give stock, donate land, or leave a legacy gift.

[COLUMBIALANDTRUST.ORG/WAYS-TO-GIVE](https://COLUMBIALANDTRUST.ORG/WAYS-TO-GIVE)

## GET INVOLVED

Join us for immersive tours and events, or support local restoration efforts at volunteer days or through the Backyard Habitat Certification Program.

[COLUMBIALANDTRUST.ORG/GET-INVOLVED](https://COLUMBIALANDTRUST.ORG/GET-INVOLVED)

## CONNECT

We're always looking for passionate advocates for conservation—photographers, artists, advisors, community groups, local businesses—to lend their unique talents and insights. Reach out today.

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