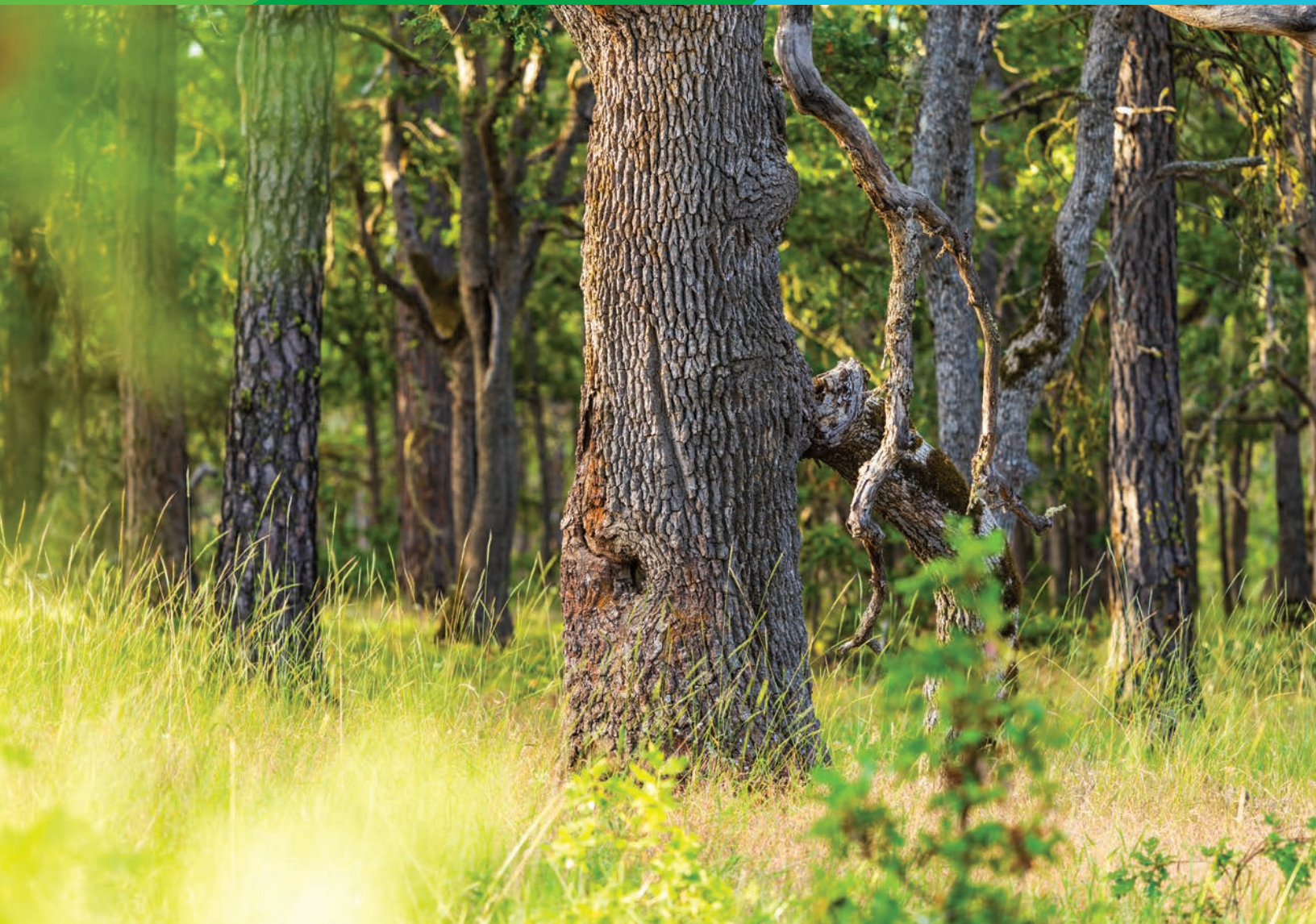


# Fieldbook

Spring 2026



Columbia Land Trust





# This Place. Our Future.

04

## Big, Bold Conservation in Klickitat County

*Two projects create connected landscapes, benefiting wildlife and waterways*

06

## It's All Connected

*Backyard Habitat celebrates 20 years*

08

## Rediscovery of Water Howellia

*A surprising wetland comeback*

11

## A Prescribed Burn, Before & After



Vol 33 / Issue 01

Cover: Oregon white oaks grow in the uplands above Rattlesnake Creek.



At my house, spring arrives with a sense of optimism and renewed energy. After months of retreat, we feel an eagerness to reconnect with the world beyond our walls. My kids are drawn outside by longer days and the joy of being with friends. Neighbors begin to reappear too, emerging from the long, dim stretch of winter ready to reconnect. Even the unfinished projects in my yard call me back, inviting me to imagine what's possible. All of it is accompanied by the steady soundtrack of birds, who seem to share in this same seasonal lift. That sense of possibility and positive energy are what makes this time of year so meaningful.

In that spirit, I'm excited to share the first Columbia Land Trust *Fieldbook* reflecting our new brand identity. Earlier this year, we introduced a refreshed look alongside a new website, designed to invite people to explore and better understand our work and its impact. If you haven't had a chance to visit yet, I encourage you to explore [columbialandtrust.org](http://columbialandtrust.org), especially the "Visit" section, where you can learn how to visit some of the places we've conserved.

This reimagining of our brand and communications sets the stage for the continued growth of our conservation movement in the Pacific Northwest. In order to meet our ambitious goals, we must grow our community of supporters—donors, volunteers, and advocates who make this work possible. Everything we do depends on people like you who care deeply about the future of the Northwest's natural landscapes. We're working to grow that circle, and if you're reading this, you're already an essential part of it.

With your support, we're accomplishing meaningful work. From securing the conservation of 4,000 acres in Klickitat County (page 4) to advancing restoration efforts in places like Rainbow, our actions are making a tangible difference for the future of this region. Now, we're focused on making sure more people know about our work and the urgency of it. The more awareness we build, the stronger our impact can be.

We hope you enjoy the new *Fieldbook*. And when you've finished reading consider passing it along to a friend or family member so they can learn about our work as well. It's the perfect excuse to reconnect with someone this spring. Each new connection strengthens this community and reinforces the belief that, together, we can care for and protect this extraordinary corner of the world.

– David Cook, Marketing Director

[ColumbiaLandTrust.org](http://ColumbiaLandTrust.org)  
[connect@columbialandtrust.org](mailto:connect@columbialandtrust.org)  
@ColumbiaLandTrust  
Columbia Land Trust  
columbia-land-trust

**MAIN OFFICE**  
850 Officers Row  
Vancouver, WA 98661  
(360) 696-0131

**ASTORIA**  
1 12th St.  
Room #203  
Astoria, OR 97103

**WHITE SALMON**  
105 East Jewett Blvd.  
White Salmon, WA 98672

**Board of Directors**  
Tim Spofford, *President*  
John Streur, *Vice President*  
Charlie Bishop, *Treasurer*  
Barbara Johnson, *Secretary*  
Lisa Amato  
Wendy Carhart  
Drew Fletcher  
Elaine Harvey  
Allison Hensey  
Molly Jones  
Laura Planck  
Rudy Salakory  
Stephen Shields  
Lindsay Thane  
Dave Walters  
Dougal Williams  
Erin Ziegler

**Leadership Team**  
Ian Sinks, *Interim Executive Director*  
David Cook, *Marketing Director*  
Amy Costello, *Chief of Staff*  
Janna Davydova, *General Counsel*  
Keely McIntyre, *Development Director*  
Nate Ulrick, *Conservation Director*

# Big, Bold Conservation in Klickitat County

## Two projects create connected landscapes, benefiting wildlife and waterways

“Conserving and restoring forests at this scale is about more than trees—it’s about sustaining entire landscapes,” said Kaola Swanson, Columbia Gorge Program Manager at The Conservation Fund (TCF), discussing two recent conservation successes Columbia Land Trust completed in the East Cascades in partnership with TCF. “Through targeted forest management that revives healthy upland forests, cold-water streams, and rich habitats, there is renewed hope that this land will thrive in ways that will benefit its watershed and ripple through the ecosystem.”

Columbia Land Trust welcomed the new year by protecting two sites totaling more than **4,000 acres** in the East Cascades, which add up to major benefits for wildlife habitat, water quality, and landscape resilience. Strategic, landscape-scale conservation projects like these are key to maintaining the biodiversity and ecological integrity of the Northwest, and conservation at this scale is not possible without strong partnerships, including TCF, Yakama Nation, and many other funders and supporters.

The newly protected site benefits at least **15 priority wildlife species**, including western gray squirrel, Lewis’s woodpecker, acorn woodpecker, mule and black-tailed deer, northern spotted owl, and golden eagle.

### KLICKITAT OAKS PHASE 1 / 2,866 ACRES

#### Rare white oak habitat above the Klickitat River

This is the first of three planned phases which the Land Trust intends to conserve over the next few years. This site is home to priority oak and pine woodland habitat and is a strategic link in wildlife migration corridors, including the Pacific Flyway. Due to its habitat quality and connectivity value, Klickitat Oaks was ranked the highest-priority habitat conservation project in Washington State in 2022.

The newly protected site benefits at least 15 priority wildlife species, including western gray squirrel, Lewis’s woodpecker, acorn woodpecker, mule and black-tailed deer, northern spotted owl, and golden eagle.

“Bringing this to a successful conclusion was a hopeful process,” said Conservation Director Nate Ulrich. “It is inspiring to witness so many partners, donors, and community leaders discover something they value in this conservation project and join in the effort to get it across the finish line. The breadth of support for Klickitat Oaks underscores the importance of this landscape.”

### RATTLESNAKE CREEK PHASE 2 / 1,420 ACRES

#### The largest fish-bearing tributary to the White Salmon River

The Land Trust conserved Rattlesnake Creek, Phase 1 in 2023, and with this second acquisition, the protection of 2,335-acre Rattlesnake Creek unit is complete. Phase 1 protected 4.35 miles of streams including 1.6 miles of the Rattlesnake Creek itself. The newly conserved land supports stream function by protecting mature Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine forest, as well as old Oregon white oaks. These mature habitats slow storm water runoff within the steep basin, facilitating ground water recharge and late season streamflow for steelhead and other fish species. Floodplain restoration work is already in progress with Yakama Nation Fisheries, to increase the creek’s water quality and water holding capacity, and improve salmonid habitat.

Wildlife is incredibly abundant across the site. “I’ve seen the full suite of native wildlife species utilizing Rattlesnake



Creek including blacktail deer, elk, cougar, bobcat, coyote, black bear, fisher, and state-endangered western gray squirrel,” said Land Trust Natural Area Manager Adam Lieberg. “The Land Trust will manage the full 2,324-acre unit with the goals of improving riparian habitat for fish and wildlife, releasing oak from conifer encroachment, and improving forest resiliency to impacts from wildfire and drought. We’ve built strong momentum over the last two years, working with Yakama Nation to enhance around a mile of stream and floodplain habitat on the mainstem of Rattlesnake Creek, and we are looking forward to expanding our restoration efforts into the upland forest and woodlands where we have opportunities to reduce fire risk while improving wildlife habitat.” ■

*Opposite and above: Protecting vast, connected habitat and oak ecosystems are conservation priorities in the East Cascades.*

## Funders Make This Possible

The conservation of Klickitat Oaks, Phase 1 was made possible by funding from the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s America the Beautiful program (subgrant awarded via Yakama Nation). Additional lead gifts provided by Atria Conservation, The Conservation Alliance, Hollis Foundation, Felburn Foundation, Marcia H. Randall Foundation, Maybelle Clark MacDonald Fund, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and Vancouver Audubon Society and Mary Ann Goodrich, in addition to generous support from other private foundations and individual contributors.

Funding for the conservation of Rattlesnake Creek, Phase 2 came from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Section 6 Endangered Species Habitat Conservation Fund and the Washington Department of Ecology’s Streamflow Restoration Program, in addition to support from the Hollis Foundation, Mills Davis Foundation, and other individual donors.

# It's All Connected

## Backyard Habitat celebrates 20 years

The beloved Backyard Habitat Certification Program began as a small pilot project in May 2006, founded in southwest Portland by a collaboration of agency, nonprofit, and municipal supporters. In the first year and a half, just over 40 participants enrolled in the program.

The current structure of co-management by Columbia Land Trust and Bird Alliance of Oregon took shape in 2009 and since then, the program has expanded into the urban/suburban areas of Multnomah, Clackamas and Washington Counties in Oregon, and Clark County in Washington.

Yard by yard, we've grown a powerful grassroots movement, (except we're replacing lawns with native plants!) Today more than 14,000 participants are enrolled in the Backyard Habitat program. That large scale matters and is critical to the program's success, demonstrating the far-reaching positive change when individuals collectively make small, positive changes. The more yards that participate, the more easily birds and pollinators can move throughout the region to find food and shelter, the more water is conserved, and the more native trees and shrubs there are shading and cooling our communities.

Collectively, these greenspaces also create links to larger conserved lands, like those that Columbia Land Trust protects and cares for from the Pacific Coast to the East Cascades. Together, we're building corridors for wildlife

### Participants Say

"Having a real live human come see my garden and discuss realistic plans, options, and habitat needs was incredibly helpful. It also built my confidence as a new gardener to have an experienced gardener educate, encourage, and guide me."  
-Kiley M.

"So much in our world feels out of my control, so when I realized I can control and make a positive difference on my little plot of land, it was freeing. Once you start naturescaping it's inspiring to see the tangible difference you are making."  
-Anonymous

"We are so grateful for this beautiful community. We learned valuable insight at our site visit, by visiting open gardens, from all the resources, and from partner nurseries like Sparrowhawk. Our garden has brought us such peace through the storms of life and we have this community to thank for it."  
-Emily K.

Yard by yard, we've grown a powerful grassroots movement.

and strengthening ecosystems across the region. We're also generating local economic activity and building community by encouraging people to spend time outdoors and get to know their neighbors.

Every participant's naturescaping journey is different and special. Some begin with a nearly blank canvas while others spend years removing ecologically harmful plants to clear space for native plants to thrive. Some thoughtfully tend to a mason bee colony of super pollinators, while others construct catios rivaling luxury apartments in design and sophistication.

Portland-Vancouver metro area communities benefit from increased air and water quality, reduced heat stress, energy savings, and the beauty and peace of additional greenspaces, including those at community sites like schools and places of worship.

"The success of the Backyard Habitat program is due to its strong partnerships and community-focused approach," said program co-manager Katherine Noble. "The program harnesses folks' individual passions for plants, birds, pollinators, etc. and transforms that enthusiasm into tangible actions, sending ripple effects through their neighborhood and beyond. We often hear how the meaningful changes participants witness in their own greenspaces inspire them to engage with conservation actions more broadly, and how the program offers a sense of hope for the future we are building together." Cheers to the next 20 years of Backyard Habitat! ■

Help us keep this program going strong: [BackyardHabitats.org/Donate](https://BackyardHabitats.org/Donate)

## Backyard Habitat by the Numbers

**14,500** households enrolled

**3,800** acres enrolled

**4,500** certified yards

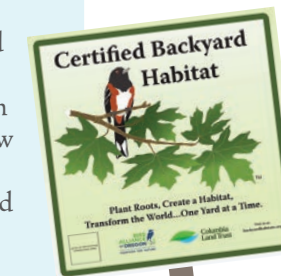
**420,000+** native plants planted

**35,000+** actions taken to manage storm-water (restoring soils, caring for large canopy trees, installing raingardens, removing impervious surfaces, conserving water)

**26,000+** actions taken to improve wildlife habitat (planting pollinator meadows, installing bird and bat nest boxes, incorporating snags and nurse logs, wildlife water features, keeping cats indoors)

**549** metric tons of carbon sequestered and

**11.2** million captured gallons of water per year estimated, according to a 2024 study



# Rediscovery of Water Howellia

(*Howellia aquatilis*) ↗

## A surprising wetland comeback

2025 was an exciting year at Columbia Stock Ranch, a 900-acre site in Columbia County, Oregon.

Thanks to financial support from the Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts, we conducted a complete botanical inventory of a large portion of the property that tallied 259 species of vascular plants. The survey led to the surprising discovery of a robust population of Water Howellia. This rare species was once thought to be extirpated from Oregon, and the discovery was even more surprising given that the plant was growing in a minor, disturbed swale.

Much of Columbia Stock Ranch is located within the Columbia River floodplain. Prior to being conserved by the Land Trust, it was diked and used as cattle pasture and hay fields. Over the last 12 years it has been grazed seasonally as a temporary strategy to manage vegetation while restoring habitat for Columbian white-tailed deer.

Jason Clinch of Three Creeks Consulting led the botanical survey team, which included expert volunteers Rick Shory and Deanna Michinski (who was the first to find the Water Howellia). “I remember getting a call from Jason, he was nearly speechless with excitement,” recalled Land Trust Natural Area Manager Austin Tomlinson. “I’m not surprised a rare plant like Water Howellia was

found at Columbia Stock Ranch, it’s a really special place!”

### The Discovery BY JASON CLINCH

“Is this Water Howellia,” Deanna asked, holding up stringy bits of pondweed that she had pulled from a mucky pool of water in the middle of a cattle pasture. It was an unusually warm day in late May, and most of the vegetation nearby was non-native grasses with some sedges and rushes mixed in. Water Howellia was not a species we anticipated finding.

With the scientific name of *Howellia aquatilis*, one can surmise it inhabits ‘aquatic’ habitats. The genus, *Howellia*, is monotypic, meaning there is only one species within the genus, and was named after the brothers Thomas and Joseph Howell, early Oregon botanists who first “discovered” the plant on Sauvie Island in 1878. More collections of Water Howellia were made from Sauvie Island, Lake Oswego, and Salem, by different botanists over the next thirty years. Its habitat was generally described as “stagnant ponds in the timber”. Then nearly 75 years went by without it being seen, and it was thought to be extirpated from the state.

“There’s no way,” I sputtered in response to Deanna’s question, even though my brain was saying “YES!”

I had seen Water Howellia before, in vastly different habitats than where we were on this day. After it was “re-discovered” in 2013 at Metro’s Peach



## About Water Howellia

### Plant Anatomy

Water Howellia is in the Bellflower family (*campanulaceae*) but lacks the broad bell-shaped flowers the family is named for. It more closely resembles species found in the Lobelioideae subfamily of *Campanulaceae* (formerly *Lobeliaceae*). Water Howellia has two types of flowers; submerged, cleistogamous (self-pollinating) flowers, and emergent, chasogamous (cross-pollinating) flowers.

Vegetatively, Water Howellia is similar to other aquatic species it sometimes occurs with, particularly *Potamogeton* (pond weed) and *Callitriche* (water starwort) species. Its leaves are typically arranged alternately along the stem, arising from a fibrous root system.

### Habitat and Life Cycle

It usually floats in or on top of the water column. As water recedes, Water Howellia begins to decompose, making it harder to identify except for its distinguishing fruits. Eventually, even these disintegrate and release their tiny seeds.

As an annual, Water Howellia seeds typically germinate in late fall or early winter on bare ground that will eventually become inundated. Seedlings over-winter underwater and mature into fertile plants by late spring as water warms and precipitation slows. Depending on weather conditions, and how fast the water recedes, Water Howellia can be found blooming generally in May and June, but sometimes as late as August.

Left: From the isotype herbarium collection (Catalog #OSC0000428) by Thomas and Joseph Howell held at the Oregon State University Herbarium. Above: Botanical survey volunteers in Water Howellia habitat at Columbia Stock Ranch. Inset: Close-up view of Water Howellia. Both photos by Deanna Michinski.



TYPE

HERBARIUM  
95460  
UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

ISOTYPE!  
*Howellia aquatilis* Gray  
From Am. Bot. 15:433, 1879  
Reference checked 5/1991, A.A. Went

*Howellia aquatilis*, Gray.

Isotype collection

Stagnant ponds in the timber, Sauvie's Island, Oregon.  
Aug 16 & 17, 1879

THOMAS & JOSEPH HOWELL

## In Memory of Thomas A. Finn

JULY 14, 1943 – FEBRUARY 24, 2025

Undeterred by wind or rain, Tom logged hundreds of hours as a Columbia Land Trust volunteer and site steward of Germany Creek, pictured below.



Over the years, Tom supported a variety of stewardship efforts throughout our service region, including planting, vegetation control, and simply picking up garbage, in addition to serving as the dedicated site steward of our Germany Creek property outside Longview, Washington. The Land Trust community remembers him for his commitment to caring for nature, as well as for his kindness and wit. He gave modestly to the Land Trust during his lifetime and left an unexpected transformational gift in his will, which will strengthen our long-term ability to steward and restore some of the most ecologically important lands and waters of this region.

“Tom was one of those great volunteers who, with passion and dedication, worked independently and thoughtfully to help care for our conservation lands,” said Stewardship Director Ian Sinks. “He tended to newly planted trees, reported on restoration projects and river flows, and even once alerted us when a wildfire started on an adjacent property! He regularly walked Germany Creek and let us know what he found, from changes in the stream channel to spawned out salmon redds, and of sightings of threatened Columbian White-tailed deer.” Tom dedicated his time and energy to many conservation causes in addition to the Land Trust, and we greatly appreciate his care for the land and contributions to our work. We are grateful for the time he spent with us and for his inspiring legacy of stewardship. ■

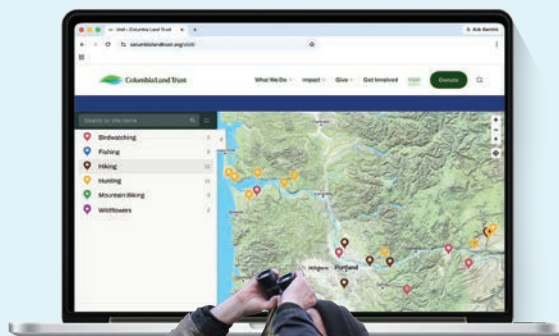
## Adventure Inspiration

Connecting people with nature is central to the Columbia Land Trust mission and we are excited to share a new resource for exploring lands we have conserved.

Our new public access map, launched earlier this year, features natural areas conserved by Columbia Land Trust that offer recreational opportunities!

From the popular Cape Horn Trail outside Washougal and several Clark County regional parks the Land Trust helped conserve, to rugged sites across our service area with beautiful landscapes but no trails or amenities, there is sure to be a place you will find inspiration and connection with the natural world. ■

View the map and explore the sites at [ColumbiaLandTrust.org/Visit](https://ColumbiaLandTrust.org/Visit) or by scanning this code.



# A Prescribed Burn, Before & After

## Before



Conifer saplings can act as ladder fuels, carrying wildfire into the crowns of mature trees.

An overabundance of woody shrubs can increase the intensity of wildfires. Ceanothus, pictured here, is especially flammable.

In the absence of fire, pine needle litter and duff accumulate on the forest floor.

Restoring the natural rhythm of fire is an important aspect of caring for fire-adapted landscapes of the East Cascades. Bringing beneficial fire back to thousands of acres of forest is a long-term priority of the Land Trust's. In 2025 we completed five successful prescribed burns with a cohort of partners, and that momentum has carried into the recent spring burn season. As of late April 2026, we've already restored more acres using fire this year than in all of 2025. The photos below demonstrate some of the individual objectives these burns accomplish, which add up to reducing the risk of future catastrophic wildfire and improving ecological health. The two images were taken a month apart last fall, before and after a prescribed fire at Bear Creek Natural Area in Klickitat County. ■

## After



Saplings were thermally thinned (killed by fire), which helps lower the risk of crown fire and reduces competition amongst trees that can damage forest health.

Most of the mature, canopy trees survived the burn, which was a goal.

Everywhere the ground is black, potential wildfire fuel was reduced.

1 month after the burn



6 months after the burn

The spring following the prescribed burn, native plants are flowering and life carries on a forest at less risk of a damaging wildfire.



Learn more about our work to restore natural rhythms to the East Cascades in a recorded Land Trust webinar.



Columbia Land Trust

Non-Profit  
US Postage  
PAID  
Portland, OR  
Permit No. 629

**MAIN OFFICE**


850 Officers Row  
Vancouver, WA 98661  
(360) 696-0131

**ColumbiaLandTrust.org**

connect@columbialandtrust.org

 @ColumbiaLandTrust

 Columbia Land Trust

 columbia-land-trust

**SAVE  
THE DATE**

**Thursday  
October 15th  
2026**

# Wild Splendor

**Columbia Land Trust's 2026 Gala**

Avenue Portland

5:30 – 9:00 pm

Join us for a celebratory evening featuring dinner, a live auction, and inspiring conservation stories about our work throughout the Columbia River region.

Tickets will go on sale in July. Keep an eye on your email and our website for details. We are welcoming business sponsors to help make this event a great success. Contact [events@columbialandtrust.org](mailto:events@columbialandtrust.org) for more information.

