



2024 State Legislative Platform

The Washington Association of Land Trusts (WALT) unites 33 land trusts and conservation organizations across the state to advance voluntary, collaborative conservation. The Association connects and leverages the work of its members to protect and restore the lands and waters that sustain us.

Land trusts partner effectively with communities across the state to conserve land for future generations – but success hinges on robust public funding and effective policy tools. In the face of increased development, population growth, and a changing climate, WALT supports policies and programs that will ensure our farms, forests and shorelines continue to contribute to Washington’s economy, culture and landscape. Our priorities include:

1) Advance Community-Based Forestry and Working Forest Protection

WALT supports continued investment into community-based forestry and urges the State Legislature to allocate \$5.78 million in the Supplemental Budget still needed to fully fund RCO’s Community Forest Program this biennium. Community-based forestry, in which residents are actively included in the development, governance, management and use of working forest land, can bring substantial benefits to health and wellbeing, generate local jobs and economic activity, enhance wildlife habitat, increase recreational access, and support climate resilience and mitigation. This \$5.78 million in supplemental funding would ensure that two remaining projects recommended by the Recreation and Conservation Office in Hoquiam and Whidbey Island could advance this year. Without funding this year, these special forested lands are at risk of being converted and lost to our state forever.

2) Increase Funding for Salmon Recovery, Stewardship, and Restoration

WALT urges the state to allocate additional dollars to the Salmon Recovery Funding Board and the Estuary and Salmon Recovery Program, both of which were underfunded in the 2023-2025 Capital Budget, as well as other natural resource programs. Our land trusts lead on efforts to protect and restore critical salmon habitat throughout our state and we see how much work remains to promote truly healthy ecosystems. There are projects in the pipeline for these programs that could make immediate progress for both climate resiliency and healthier habitats. Additionally, investing funding in stewardship of protected habitat will help save on costs for larger restoration needed in the long run.

3) Ensure Climate Commitment Act (CCA) Funds Invest Wisely in Natural Climate Solutions

WALT urges the legislature to invest additional revenue dedicated to the Natural Climate Solutions Account from CCA revenue to be invested as directed in RCW 70A.65.270. Investing funds in Washington’s existing natural resource programs that meet the directives of RCW 70A.65.270 is one of the most immediate ways to make an impact in combating climate change, including acquisition and restoration projects. These funds should be additive to address our extraordinary needs due to climate change and not supplant historical funding levels that have supported conservation of our lands and waterways.

The Washington Association of Land Trusts supports the following funding priorities in the 2023-2025 State Supplemental Budget:

WA Recreation & Conservation Office

- Community Forest Grant Program (\$5.78M Capital)
- Salmon Recovery Funding Board (\$20M Capital)
- Estuary and Salmon Recovery Program (\$11.2M Capital)
- Washington Coast Restoration and Resiliency Initiative (\$7.56M Capital)

WA Conservation Commission

- Regional Conservation Partnership Program State Match (\$3M)

WA Department of Natural Resources

- Wildfire and Forest Health (\$24.09M Operating)

WA Department of Fish and Wildlife

- Forest Health (\$2M Operating)
- Coastal Salmonids Management (\$3.1M Operating)
- Salmon Reporting Tool Replacement (\$515K Operating)
- Transformational Chinook Recovery in Whidbey Basin Watersheds (\$13.1M Operating Federal Funding Adjustment)
- Post-Wildfire Habitat Recovery (\$1.6M Operating)

WA Department of Ecology

- Federal Spending Authority for Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act Grants (\$27M Operating)

Support/Oppose Bills

- **Support**
 - [HB 1585](#) - Apply the Landscape Conservation and Local Infrastructure Program to Affordable Housing
 - [HB 1818](#) - Exclusion of Compensating Tax for Forestland
- **Oppose**
 - [SB 5083](#) - Strict Liability for Conservation Easements