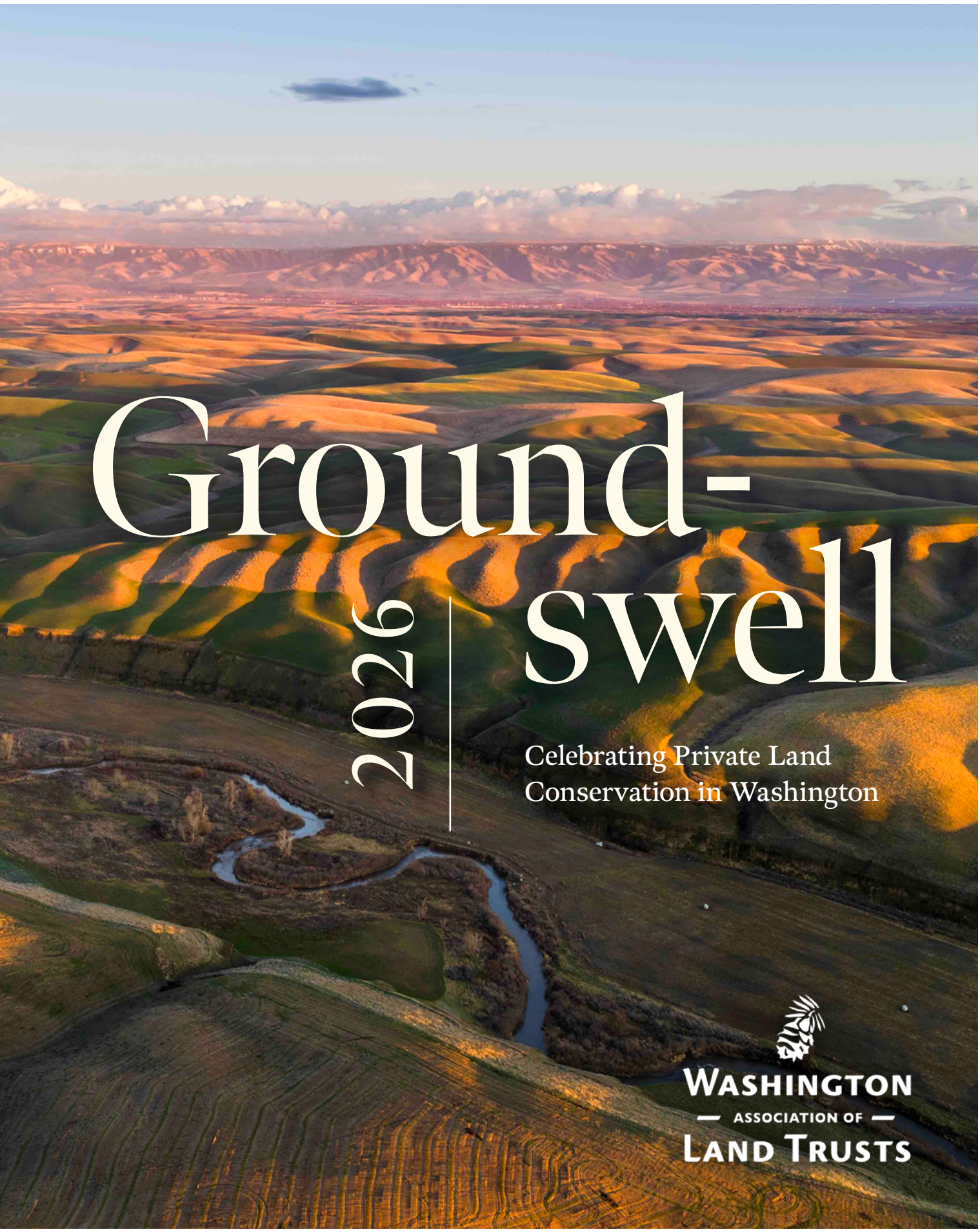


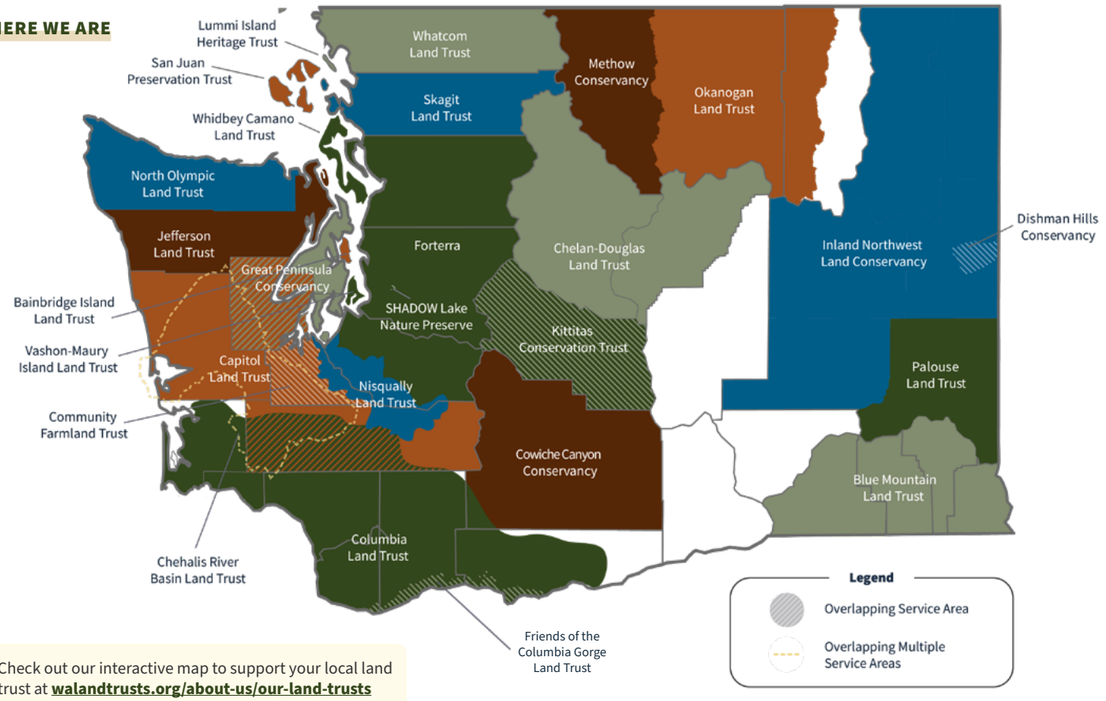
Ground-swell

2026

Celebrating Private Land Conservation in Washington

Washington Association of Land Trusts

WHERE WE ARE



Check out our interactive map to support your local land trust at **walandtrusts.org/about-us/our-land-trusts**

Regional Organizations

- Bainbridge Island Land Trust
- Blue Mountain Land Trust
- Capitol Land Trust
- Chehalis River Basin Land Trust
- Chelan-Douglas Land Trust
- Columbia Land Trust
- Community Farm Land Trust
- Cowiche Canyon Conservancy
- Dishman Hills Conservancy
- Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust
- Great Peninsula Conservancy
- Inland Northwest Land Conservancy
- Jefferson Land Trust
- Kittitas Conservation Trust
- Lummi Island Heritage Trust
- Methow Conservancy
- Nisqually Land Trust
- North Olympic Land Trust
- Okanogan Land Trust
- Palouse Land Trust
- San Juan Preservation Trust
- SHADOW Lake Nature Preserve
- Skagit Land Trust
- Vashon-Maury Island Land Trust
- Whatcom Land Trust
- Whidbey Camano Land Trust

Statewide Organizations

- American Farmland Trust
- Center for Natural Lands Management
- The Conservation Fund
- Forterra
- Ducks Unlimited
- The Nature Conservancy in Washington
- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
- Trust for Public Land
- Washington Farmland Trust
- Western Rivers Conservancy

WELCOME TO GROUNDSWELL

On behalf of all our members from across our beautiful state, we're excited to share with you the 2026 edition of Groundswell, our annual State of the Lands report from the Washington Association of Land Trusts (WALT).

As the central advocacy voice for 36 land trusts working across Washington, WALT is proud to highlight the many ways that land trusts are working together to make a positive impact on our communities. They aren't just experts in acquiring and protecting land. Land trusts use innovative practices to steward and restore protected lands. They act as advisors and partners to cities, landowners, and Tribes while facilitating recreational access and environmental education to train the next generation of leaders.

Despite the challenges of recent years, our land conservation movement remains strong thanks to the hard work of land trusts, local partners, Tribal governments, community donors, and critical government funding programs. From shorelines to forests to farmland, your support has yielded big results for our communities, wildlife, and climate.

We hope reading about these conservation wins will fill you with optimism about what we can accomplish together. Once you're done reading, please reach out to get involved in your local land trust! We're always here to connect you.

With gratitude,

The WALT Team

WALT Facts & Figures

36
Land Trust Coalition Members

1M+
More than 1 Million Acres Protected

300+
Over 300 Land Trust Practitioners Convened by WALT Annually

854,119
Visits Annually to Publicly Accessible Lands

45%
Increase in Lands Protected Since 2010

WHAT ARE LAND TRUSTS?

Land trusts, also known as land conservancies, are community-based, nonprofit organizations dedicated to the permanent protection and stewardship of land for the public good. Simply put, they work with landowners to voluntarily conserve open lands located within their service area.

WHY DO LAND TRUSTS MATTER?

Across Washington, land trusts are at the forefront of work to safeguard beloved natural landscapes and habitat, support vibrant working lands economies, and address historical inequities in land access. Chances are some of your favorite places to hike in Washington were protected due to the diligent work of one or more of our member land trusts.

WHO WE ARE

The Washington Association of Land Trusts (WALT) has been the unified hub for Washington's voluntary private land conservation movement since 2008. Our 36 land trusts have conserved well over a million acres of vital open space, and represent a community of staff, board members, supporters, and volunteers over 60,000 strong.

Photos of the Year

We asked our land trusts to share some of their favorite photos of the year. From prescribed burns to work parties to protecting majestic landscapes, we hope you will enjoy a snapshot of the exciting work land trusts do year-round.

Aerial view of Bainbridge Island Land Trust's Little Manzanita Estuary. *Photo Credit:* Philip Hutcherson

Land trusts bring communities together to protect, restore, and steward the places we love and help people get outside to enjoy them.







CENTER FOR NATURAL LANDS MANAGEMENT

The Center for Natural Lands Management (CNLM) conducts a prescribed burn for prairie restoration at the Tenalquot Prairie Preserve in Thurston County.

Photo Credit: Eliza Soczka



DISHMAN HILLS CONSERVANCY

Dishman Hills Conservancy recently debuted the Ponderosa Springs Trail, giving hikers a fresh journey on a new connector trail through diverse landscapes and sweeping views.

Photo Credit: George Strattman

CAPITOL LAND TRUST

Capitol Land Trust staff and volunteers plant native species to improve the biodiversity of Little Skookum Inlet Preserve.

Photo Credit: Bruce Livingston



SHADOW LAKE NATURE PRESERVE

A Western Columbine flower in bloom at the **SHADOW Lake Nature Preserve**.

Photo Credit: SHADOW Lake Nature Preserve

WHATCOM LAND TRUST

On Orca Recovery Day, 115 volunteers joined staff at **Whatcom Land Trust** to plant 712 native trees and shrubs along Lower Kenney Creek.

Photo Credit: Whatcom Land Trust



FORTERRA

A misty moment at **Forterra's** Morse Wildlife Preserve.

Photo Credit: Forterra

Forests for our Communities



COLUMBIA LAND TRUST & THE CONSERVATION FUND

Collaborating for Rattlesnake Creek

When 2,335 acres went up for sale along **Rattlesnake Creek** near White Salmon, Washington, it sparked a multi-year partnership between **Columbia Land Trust** and **The Conservation Fund**.

First, The Conservation Fund purchased the entire property in 2021, creating time for Columbia Land Trust to raise funds to purchase and conserve the land in two phases.

The first phase was purchased in 2023, and since then, Columbia Land Trust and Yakama Nation Fisheries have been hard at work completing stream restoration to improve the creek's water quality and holding capacity, and to enhance salmonid habitat.

In early 2026, Columbia Land Trust purchased phase two of Rattlesnake Creek. This newly conserved upland portion includes mature Douglas fir, ponderosa pine, and Oregon white oaks that support stream health.

"We've built strong momentum over the last two years, working with the Yakama Nation to enhance around a mile of stream and floodplain habitat on the mainstem of Rattlesnake Creek," said Columbia Land Trust Natural Area Manager Adam Lieberg.

"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." *Text adapted from Columbia Land Trust.*

> *"Preserving Rattlesnake Creek is part of The Conservation Fund's broader effort to protect nearly 100,000 acres around the Columbia Gorge. By collaborating with local partners like Columbia Land Trust, our impact in restoring and stewarding these landscapes grows exponentially. Through their stewardship, we're seeing the power of this partnership in action — benefiting wildlife, waterways, and the ecosystem as a whole."*
>
> **Kaola Swanson**
>
> *Columbia Gorge Program Manager, The Conservation Fund*

SAN JUAN PRESERVATION TRUST

Connecting Conserved Lands: Mt. Ben West Preserve

For more than 20 years, the **San Juan Preservation Trust** (SJPT) has held a simple but ambitious vision: to connect public lands from the shoreline of the Salish Sea to the summit of Mt. Ben on San Juan Island. In 2026, SJPT supporters came together to raise $1.84 million to permanently protect the final piece of this conservation puzzle: the 30-acre **Mt. Ben West Preserve**.

Thanks to the new preserve, once-disconnected conserved lands now form a continuous corridor stretching from sea to summit. The project protects unique island habitat (including Garry oak savannah), expands opportunities for public access, and ensures that this extraordinary landscape will remain healthy and accessible—for people, plants, and wildlife—for generations to come.

SJPT's attention will now turn to restoration and planning, including removing existing structures, restoring habitat, supporting forest health, and designing a trail that connects with neighboring public lands. SJPT staff are looking forward to opening the preserve in 2028. *Text adapted from San Juan Preservation Trust.*



Page 6: Top: Rattlesnake Creek's mature, diverse forest provides valuable wildlife habitat. *Photo Credit:* Paloma Ayala/Columbia Land Trust. *Left:* Lupine in the forest understory of Rattlesnake Creek's forest. *Photo Credit:* Paloma Ayala/Columbia Land Trust. *Page 7: Bottom-left:* SJPT staff stand in front of a majestic Garry oak on Mt. Ben West Preserve. *Photo Credit:* San Juan Preservation Trust. *Top-right:* A woodpecker in the 300 acres of unbroken forestland now preserved in Greenbank. *Photo Credit:* Whidbey Camano Land Trust.



WHIDBEY CAMANO LAND TRUST

Whidbey Island's New Community Forest

Something exciting is happening in a quiet corner of Greenbank. **Whidbey Camano Land Trust** (WCLT) purchased the capstone properties of the Lagoon Point Community Forest, completing a four-year effort to protect 300 acres. Preserving this future public recreation area involved seven landowners and securing more than $6.5 million in funding.

The **Lagoon Point Community Forest** protects the vital natural services of island forests and wetlands, promotes climate resilience, and provides a new multi-use recreation area to support Whidbey's thriving outdoor tourism sector. A public trail system will balance human enjoyment with large blocks of wildlife habitat. This exciting project sets a new model of what community forestry looks like in an island environment.

Funders included Island County Conservation Futures, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Navy, and the Washington Recreation and Conservation Office's Community Forest Program via funds from the state's Climate Commitment Act Natural Climate Solutions Account. WCLT is excited to open this treasured place to the public in Spring 2028. *Text adapted from Whidbey Camano Land Trust.*

> *"This forest sits right in an important wildlife corridor that can remain a haven for people and wildlife for many generations."*
>
> **Jessica Larson**
>
> *Stewardship Director, Whidbey Camano Land Trust*

Recreation & Access

COWICHE CANYON CONSERVANCY

Flower Power in Cowiche Canyon

Cowiche Canyon Conservancy (CCC) manages over 70 miles of trails across 8,500 acres of sagebrush, meadows, oak woodlands, and basalt cliffs. The trails have seen an influx of visitors after being featured in National Geographic's 2025 article, "**The best wildflower hiking trails in the U.S**."

More visitation has created more opportunities for people to connect to a special region of shrub-steppe ecosystem. However, it has also required additional staff time and resources to ensure trails and lands stay safe, healthy, and enjoyable for visitors.

In response, CCC has increased monitoring, maintenance, and communications to help create positive trail experiences. In addition to installing trail counters at trailheads, CCC has continued to support and grow a volunteer-powered Trail Ambassador program to encourage socially and ecologically positive behavior on trails.



With CCC's community-centered approach and strong network of staff and volunteers, they're adapting to the changes in trail usage and are excited to continue helping locals and visitors explore these vital and beautiful lands. *Text adapted from Cowiche Canyon Conservancy.*

Page 8: Top: Carey's Balsamroot on the Wildflower Trail, Snow Mountain Ranch. *Photo Credit:* David Hagen. *Right:* Hikers descending Cowiche Mountain on the Cowiche Mountain Trail West. *Photo Credit:* David Hagen.

TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND

Closing the Loop at Pearrygin Lake

Nestled in the foothills of the North Cascades sits one of Washington's most beloved state parks, **Pearrygin Lake**. Since 1964, people have visited the park to camp beneath open skies, glide across snowy trails, play in the water, and take in the expansive landscapes that define this special corner of Washington.

When the owners of one of the last remaining privately owned properties on Pearrygin Lake decided to sell, **Trust for Public Land** stepped in to buy the 24-acre property until Washington State Parks could secure funding.

The newly protected property includes the previously missing section needed to complete the trail around the lakeshore. Now, the land is forever protected, expanding recreational opportunities, improving shoreline access, and enhancing habitat connectivity in the existing 1,200-acre park.

In a region where the local economy depends on outdoor access, healthy ecosystems, and scenic beauty, protecting this landscape is an investment in long-term community stability. *Text adapted from Trust for Public Land.*

> *"This project is a testament to what's possible when individuals, non-profits, and agencies unite for the benefit of everyone."*
>
> **Mitsu Iwasaki**
>
> *Associate VP & NW Director, Trust for Public Land*



Page 9: A view of Pearrygin Lake Park. *Photo Credit:* Erica Schmitz.

Water Connects Us

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

Shale Creek Restoration at Clearwater Reserve

The Nature Conservancy, in partnership with the **Quinault Indian Nation**, the **Department of Natural Resources**, and **Trout Unlimited**, reached a significant milestone in 2025 with the completion of a decade-long project to restore Shale Creek, a tributary to the Clearwater River on the Olympic Peninsula.

More than a century of industrial logging practices led to repeated log removal from the stream, causing habitat degradation and separation from surrounding floodplains, making conditions difficult for juvenile and spawning salmon who rely on the stream. With funding from NOAA's Transformational Habitat and Coastal Resilience program, this partnership successfully installed 25 engineered log jams, bringing the total number to 59 strategically placed on Shale Creek since 2020. These structures not only enhance habitat for salmon and other wildlife, but restore the natural stream flow and complexity that are crucial for a healthy ecosystem. *Text provided by The Nature Conservancy.*





PALOUSE LAND TRUST

Decade-Long Project Reaches New Milestone

The 112-acre **Maple K Forest** has been described as the best wildlife habitat remnant in Whitman County. The good news is that **Palouse Land Trust** (PLT) and the property owners not only permanently protected this property but have been working with multiple partners on a large-scale project to restore the wetlands and over a mile of Palouse River shoreline.

Early phases of the project involved approximately 20,000 cubic yards of excavation to improve flood storage capacity on the property, extending riverine wetlands and installing a well to support the 19,000 plants installed along the river frontage.

The project was funded through the Pullman-Moscow Regional Airport Realignment Project as mitigation for wetland loss caused by the airport's expansion. After a decade of work on this project, PLT recently received official confirmation that all mitigation requirements have been met, a milestone marking ten years of successful restoration, monitoring, and stewardship of a vital landscape. *Text adapted from Palouse Land Trust.*

VASHON-MAURY ISLAND LAND TRUST

Where the Bluff Meets the Sea

Vashon and Maury Islands are home to 90% of King County's unarmored shoreline and offer rare fish-spawning habitat in an otherwise urban region.

In February of 2026, the **Vashon-Maury Island Land Trust** (VMILT) closed on 51 acres of hemlock forest and shoreline, creating its newest preserve, the **North Maury Wildlands**.

The Wildlands are home to about a third of a mile of pristine shoreline. Preserving this stretch of unarmored beach is vital to the Salish Sea food web. Bulkheads prevent forage fish like surf smelt, sand lance, and herring from spawning. The north-facing beach is ideal for surf smelt, with overhanging vegetation that shades and protects their eggs at low tide.

A natural feeder bluff continuously replenishes the fine gravel and sand that smelt need to spawn. This erosion is essential — replenishing the beach substrate that surf smelt depend on. These forage fish are critical prey for larger fish, seabirds, and endangered Chinook salmon, and now their crucial spawning habitat is protected in perpetuity.

As the communities on these islands and beyond experience the increasing impacts of climate change, preserving vital forests, creeks, and shoreline habitat becomes all the more important. Every parcel protected is a testament to the generosity of Land Trust donors and the partnership between VMILT, King County, and the Conservation Futures Committee. *Text provided by Vashon-Maury Island Land Trust.*

Page 10: Bottom-left: Building engineered log jams to restore Shale Creek. *Photo Credit:* Kyle Smith. *Top-right:* The Palouse River running through Maple K Forest Property. *Photo Credit:* Palouse Land Trust. *Page 11:* A view from the beach at the North Maury Wildlands. *Photo Credit:* Jenny Stamper.



Collaborating *for* Conservation

Conservation is rarely a solo effort. When we work together, the results for wildlife and communities can be extraordinary.



GREAT PENINSULA CONSERVANCY, JEFFERSON LAND TRUST, BAINBRIDGE ISLAND LAND TRUST

Listening Up for Birds Together

Studies show that 50% of Western forest birds are in significant decline due to habitat loss and degradation. In response, **Great Peninsula Conservancy**, **Jefferson Land Trust**, **Bainbridge Island Land Trust**, **Northwest Natural Resource Group**, **Point No Point Treaty Council**, **Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe**, and **Kitsap County Parks** came together to form the Listen Up Collaborative. With funding from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Land Trust Bird Conservation Initiative, the seven partners embarked on an expansive monitoring and restoration mission.

Together, they have installed acoustic monitoring devices on 40 conserved properties and collected more than 350,000 recordings so far to monitor 58 species of birds. Additionally, partners are taking measures to improve bird habitat, such as creating brush piles and selectively thinning forests across 4,533 acres of forestland. Last year, the collaborative was recognized for its incredible work in The New York Times' "**50 States, 50 Fixes**" series and **NPR's All Things Considered**.

The collaboration has already shown promising results, with recent data showing the Swainson's Thrush vocalizations increased dramatically in the restored forest patches, demonstrating that intervention and habitat improvements on forest lands help birds thrive. *Text adapted from Great Peninsula Conservancy, Jefferson Land Trust, and Bainbridge Island Land Trust.*

NISQUALLY LAND TRUST

Hope in an Unexpected Discovery

Once thought extinct, the wild Nisqually Chinook salmon has made an unprecedented comeback. Two decades ago, the Nisqually Indian Tribe's salmon research found that wild fish had been extirpated from the Nisqually River due to past habitat impacts and the introduction of Green River hatchery fish.

As part of the Nisqually Chinook Recovery strategy, the **Nisqually Indian Tribe**, **Nisqually Land Trust**, and partners have protected over 10,000 acres including 78% of the Nisqually River's salmon-producing shorelines.

Recently, the Tribe discovered that the **true Nisqually Chinook salmon was never fully extinct** – the population had simply dropped so low that it was undetectable. But they are coming back now thanks to a combination of habitat restoration and hatchery and harvest management changes!

"The 'discovery' of this true wild stock is absolutely remarkable," said David Troutt, director of the Tribe's Department of Natural Resources. "And the lesson is clear: Habitat restoration in the watershed and harvest changes in the river and Puget Sound have reversed their slide toward extinction."

"It's been incredible to actually watch these wild Nisqually Chinook spawning on our protected lands," said Jeanette Dorner, Nisqually Land Trust Executive Director. "Their return is a visible testament to the power of partnership." *Text adapted from Nisqually Land Trust.*



Page 12: Great Peninsula Conservancy Stewardship Director Adrian Wolf hangs an Audio Moth at the edge of The Divide Community Forest. *Photo Credit:* Samantha Hale. *Page 13: Top-left:* A group photo of the Listen Up Collaborative. *Photo Credit:* Samantha Hale. *Bottom-right:* A wild Nisqually Chinook salmon in the Mashel River on Nisqually Land Trust protected land. *Photo Credit:* Jake Pool.

Supporting Farms & Farmers



NORTH OLYMPIC LAND TRUST

Buy-Protect-Sell to Save a 112-year-old Farm

North Olympic Land Trust has purchased the **Big Red Barn Farm**, ensuring a path to keep one of the region's oldest working farms in agricultural production.

In early 2025, the landowner approached the Land Trust seeking a full-market-value sale to prevent the 112-year-old farm from being converted into 27 new developments. With a year-end deadline, the Land Trust assembled financing using three-year seller financing, a Washington State Farm Protection & Affordability Investment (Farm PAI) loan, a Farmland Protection and Land Access (FPLA) grant, Clallam County Conservation Futures funds, a pending grant from the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, and community contributions.

The purchase is the first step in a "Buy-Protect-Sell" strategy: North Olympic Land Trust will place agricultural conservation easements on the property, permanently restricting it to farmland use. This reduces the property's market value, making it more affordable for future farmers. The current operator, who has farmed the land for four decades, will continue until retirement. North Olympic Land Trust will then resell the land at a more affordable price to a historically underserved farmer, a requirement of the FPLA grant program. *Text adapted from North Olympic Land Trust.*

> *"This is a rare opportunity to protect a farm of this scale and history. I'm delighted the Land Trust can honor the current and previous farmers who established this productive farm while giving our community a chance to ensure this farm continues to serve the region for generations to come."*
>
> **Julie Knobel**
> *Board President, North Olympic Land Trust*

WASHINGTON FARMLAND TRUST

Delivering Flood Relief for Farmers

In December 2025, powerful atmospheric rivers caused catastrophic flooding throughout the Puget Sound region and beyond, taking a devastating toll on local farms. In response, **Washington Farmland Trust** (WFT) worked quickly to develop a **relief fund** to support farmers in impacted counties and coordinated with partners on communication and outreach. With the support of their community, WFT raised $120,000 to support flood recovery.

WFT received nearly 100 applications over two months, and distributed funds to 53 eligible farmers in nine disaster-declared counties. The relief efforts served farmers on both conserved and non-conserved land. WFT coordinated with partners to maximize the impact across the state, referring 35 farmers to other opportunities as needed.

It's clear that community members care about disaster relief for farmers. In addition to donations, people interacted with WFT's flood relief landing page 3,500 times, and their educational post about flood impacts on social media was shared by more than 300 people. *Text provided by Washington Farmland Trust.*



> *"Natural disasters aren't going anywhere. At WFT, we will continue to work in partnership with communities, farmers, and landowners who are most impacted by extreme weather events and look for ways to continue to support their evolving needs."*
>
> **Melissa Campbell**
> *Executive Director, Washington Farmland Trust*



COMMUNITY FARM LAND TRUST

Connecting Farms and Communities

Community Farm Land Trust's Fresh from the Farm Guide is a vital regional resource connecting community members with local farms, farmers' markets, CSAs and direct farm sales across the South Sound. The guide also works to support people facing food insecurity with resources on local food banks and nutritional incentive and matching programs. This free resource strengthens regional food systems and supports the long-term viability of working farms, an important part of preserving farmland for future generations. The 2026 edition features 126 farms across 80 pages, with 14,000 copies distributed to more than 230 locations throughout the South Sound. *Text provided by Community Farm Land Trust.*

Page 14: Aerial view of Big Red Barn Farm in Sequim, WA. *Photo Credit:* John Gussman. *Page 15: Bottom-left:* Community Farm Land Trust delivers the 2026 edition of Fresh From the Farm. *Photo Credit:* Community Farm Land Trust. *Top-right:* Aerial view of Skylight Farms in the December 2025 floods. *Photo Credit:* Petrina Fisher.

Land & Justice

Across the state, land trusts continue to learn how their time and tools can support Indigenous priorities and address past injustice.

INLAND NORTHWEST LAND CONSERVANCY

A Promise to the Future

The Little Spokane River bends through a deep, forested valley north of Spokane, carrying cold water, birdsong, and the tracks of animals that have moved through this place for millennia. Along a half-mile stretch of the river, private landowner Gary Verbrugge, the **Kalispel Tribe of Indians**, and **Inland Northwest Land Conservancy** joined forces to ensure this land remains protected forever for wildlife, clean water, and Tribal cultural connection.

The **newly protected 280 acres** expand an existing 605-acre conservation area along the Little Spokane River. The property includes wetlands, rivers, and forests, and is home to moose, elk, wolves, cougars, and bears. Now, 885 acres are protected forever.

This conservation partnership ensures the land remains intact for generations to come. The Kalispel Tribe will become the long-term owner and steward — reconnecting Tribal members to an ancestral landscape for hunting, fishing, gathering, and cultural connection. *Text adapted from Inland Northwest Land Conservancy, written by Cara Carlton.*





Cover Story

BLUE MOUNTAIN LAND TRUST

Partnering to Protect the Touchet River

Blue Mountain Land Trust completed the **Túuši Wána Conservation & Restoration Easement**, permanently protecting 439 acres along the mainstem of the Touchet River in partnership with the **Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation** (CTUIR). Now, with the easement in place, this stretch of the Touchet River is protected for good. The land and water will continue to provide for salmon, wildlife, and Tribal First Foods far into the future. *Text adapted from Blue Mountain Land Trust.*

> *"The strength of the Tribe is that we're not going anywhere. The connection to the land is forever."*
>
> **Tod Morrish**
>
> *Director of Wildlife & Terrestrial Resources, Kalispel Natural Resources Department*

Page 16: Bottom-left: Two cougars running through the property. *Photo Credit:* Gary Verbrugge. *Top-right:* Wána Conservation & Restoration Easement. *Photo Credit:* William Frohne / Blue Mountain Land Trust.



SKAGIT LAND TRUST

Restoring Access and Honoring Legacy

On March 17, 2026, **Yudwasta Big Rock Park** officially opened as a Skagit County Park. Known to the Upper Skagit People as Yudwasta, meaning "of the heart," Big Rock has been a place where generations have formed lasting connections with the land.

The top of Big Rock was protected in 1996 by **Skagit Land Trust** (SLT) and private landowners, but park access was lost 15 years ago due to surrounding private property. When 63 acres adjacent to the park went up for sale, SLT and **Skagit County Parks** acted quickly to protect a beloved, culturally and ecologically significant landscape.

The Upper Skagit Indian Tribe supported the project, educating potential funders about the deep connection between the Upper Skagit People and Yudwasta. The future park will honor this legacy by highlighting Indigenous history and the continued relationship with the land.

SLT covered the $1.8 million purchase with organizational funds and a loan from the Washington Opportunity Fund. Other funding included a $1 million grant from the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program and donations from individuals and partners. *Text adapted from Skagit Land Trust.*

> *"In all the years we have partnered with Skagit Land Trust in preserving lands for the public, this is perhaps our greatest success story."*
>
> **Brian Adams**
>
> *Former Director, Skagit County Parks*



Page 17: Top: Scott Schuyler, Policy Representative for the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe's Natural & Cultural Resources, shares with his daughter the gorgeous view from Yudwasta Big Rock. *Photo Credit:* Skagit Land Trust. *Bottom-right:* Volunteer & Education Programs Coordinator Stacy Dahl on a field trip with students from the Triumph Teen Center, an after-school support center for local teens, particularly those from low-income, Latiné, and Mexican Indigenous backgrounds. *Photo Credit:* Skagit Land Trust.

Engaging Community

Land trusts serve as community connectors, bringing many groups together to achieve big conservation projects and increase public access to the outdoors.



LUMMI ISLAND HERITAGE TRUST

Encouraging Residents to Rewild

Lummi Island Heritage Trust's Personal Preserve Program (PPP) encourages residents to rewild their backyards and other outdoor spaces by increasing native plants and creating habitat for pollinators, birds, and other wildlife. The program recognizes that private lands can play an important role in supporting biodiversity and strengthening ecological connections across the island.

The PPP offers educational events and resources to help participants learn about ecology-based landscaping and habitat stewardship through grassroots methods. Participants can connect with volunteer mentors, attend garden gatherings, visit local rewilding projects to exchange ideas, share experiences, and learn from one another. *Text adapted from Lummi Island Heritage Trust.*



METHOW CONSERVANCY

Farms to Neighbors in the Methow Valley

In 2020, the Methow Valley Farmers Market was temporarily shut down, but the livestock, vegetables, and grains missed the memo. They continued to grow on local farms as an emergent pandemic rattled the Methow Valley's small community. Farmers needed outlets, and the demand for nutritious food at the local food bank rose. In response, the **Methow Conservancy** built the **Farms to Neighbors Program**.

The program raises funds annually to purchase food at market rates directly from local farmers. The farmers then deliver the food to **The Cove Food Bank**, which distributes food to approximately 80 families weekly during the growing season. The Farms to Neighbors program has directly supported local farms with more than $70,000 in revenue, while thousands of pounds of heirloom tomatoes, peppers, peaches, pears, milk, beef, and more have nourished the community along the way. *Text provided by the Methow Conservancy.*

Page 18: Bottom-left: Dal Neitzel presents his native plant photography during the PPP launch at the Otto Resource Center. *Photo Credit:* Lummi Island Heritage Trust. *Top-right:* Refugia Farm tomatoes ready for delivery to the Cove Food Bank. *Photo Credit:* Refugia Farm.





WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF LAND TRUSTS

NW Land Camp 2026

In June 2026, the **Washington Association of Land Trusts** and the **Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts** co-hosted **Northwest Land Camp**, a preeminent networking and training event for Northwest land trust leaders and conservation partners.

The conference was held in Florence, Oregon, at the Florence Event Center, with more than 300 people joining from across Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana. Participants engaged in 36 sessions, discussions on state and federal policy, four field trips to local land trust projects, inspiring plenaries, bird watching, and more!

Attendees explored issues of land justice and the healing power of nature with keynotes from Chief Doug Barrett, Tribal Chief of the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians and Chad Brown, photographer, filmmaker, Navy veteran, and founder of Soul River Inc. and Love is King.

Page 15: Top: 2026 Northwest Land Camp participants. *Photo Credit:* Stephanie Ford. *Top-right:* Chief Doug Barrett and Joe Buttafuoco in conversation. *Photo Credit:* Stephanie Ford. *Middle-right:* Field trip to haich ikt'at'uu. *Photo Credit:* K Smolin. *Bottom Right:* Hacky sack break. *Photo Credit:* K Smolin







Restoration & Renewal

CHELAN-DOUGLAS LAND TRUST

Prescribed Burns Restore Habitat

One crisp spring morning, smoke rose from two **Chelan-Douglas Land Trust** (CDLT) properties at the same time.

On the slopes of Chelan Coulees, CDLT partners from the U.S. Forest Service and **The Nature Conservancy** carefully applied prescribed fire across the hillsides. 155 acres of CDLT land were treated as part of a broader effort to restore resilient shrub-steppe habitat. Using prescribed burns helps these special ecosystems by removing invasive vegetation, supporting increased soil health, and stimulating the rapid regrowth of native plants.

Simultaneously, community volunteers and trained burn crews with the Cascadia Prescribed Burn Association and Cascadia Conservation District worked together on Mountain Home Ridge, near Leavenworth, lighting piles left from years of forest thinning.

It was a powerful reminder that restoration doesn't happen in a single moment—it happens through many hands, many partnerships, and sometimes, many fires.

Fire once again played its natural role by reducing wildfire risk, improving healthier shrub-steppe and forest habitats, and helping these lands begin their next chapter of renewal. *Text provided by Chelan-Douglas Land Trust.*



FRIENDS OF THE COLUMBIA GORGE LAND TRUST

Volunteers Aid Fire Recovery

In the summer of 2025, the Columbia Gorge was impacted by two major wildfires: the Rowena Fire (~3,700 acres) and the Burdoin Fire (~11,000 acres). While fire is essential to the health of landscapes, these fires caused significant damage to private lands and communities. Following the fires, **Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust** (Friends) and the Forest Service quickly engaged the public in **post-fire stewardship efforts** to support restoration and provide opportunities to learn about fire ecology.

Across eight work parties, more than 100 volunteers helped spread over 2,000 pounds of native grass and wildflower seed mixes specific to east Gorge ecosystems. The efforts focused on high-priority areas such as bulldozer containment lines, areas with moderate-to-high severity fire impacts, and heavily used trails. The goals of this quick response were to supplement the native seed bank, compete with invasive weeds, and better understand fire resiliency in oak and grassland systems through observation.

Volunteer contributions proved essential, as the recovery efforts coincided with the government shutdown, which meant limited staffing and resources. Friends and their partners at the U.S. Forest Service are committed to continuing to engage volunteer participation in both fire response and restorative conservation efforts in the years ahead. *Text provided by Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust.*





KITTITAS CONSERVATION TRUST

Saving Gold Creek's Bull Trout

Kittitas Conservation Trust (KCT) is working with federal, state, Tribal, and community partners on a large-scale project to **restore wetland habitat in Gold Creek Valley**. Before breaking ground, KCT and their partners have been hard at work to mitigate impacts on fish populations residing in Gold Creek Pond.

Restoration is planned for the next three to ten years. The completed project will restore the wetland to enhance habitat for a genetically distinct bull trout population and other salmonids, and will include a new ADA interpretive trail highlighting the unique biodiversity of the Snoqualmie Pass region.

In advance of the restoration work, at least 12 species and more than 7,300 fish have been removed from the pond, including endangered bull trout. Substantial efforts have also been made to ensure that fish will not re-enter the pond during the years restoration actions are in progress. *Text adapted from Kittitas Conservation Trust and the US Forest Service.*

Page 20: Top: CDLT staff working on the pile burn at Mountain Home. *Photo Credit:* Lorena Lilian. *Bottom:* Pile burn at Mountain Home. *Photo Credit:* Lorena Lilian. *Page 21: Bottom-left:* Volunteer plants Lupinus latifolius in a white oak stand within the Burdoin Fire scar. *Photo Credit:* Sarah Skelly. *Top-right:* Protecting fish in Gold Creek before restoration begins. *Photo Credit:* Kittitas Conservation Trust. *Below:* Seeding native grasses at Friends' Mt. Ulka Preserve. *Photo Credit:* Sarah Skelly.



About WALT

OUR WORK

What We Do

Advocacy: The **Washington Association of Land Trusts** (WALT) leads coalition efforts to advocate for policies that affect conservation work statewide, and provides trusted expertise from practitioners to policymakers and government agencies. Through connections to statewide partners and donors, we help establish new funding tools so land trusts can protect the places we love across Washington.

Convening and Education: WALT provides educational programs, including our Northwest Land Camp conference, regional retreats, expert-led trainings, Tribal engagement workshops, and regular opportunities for land trusts to learn from and collaborate with each other.





Page 22 Left: Land Trust Advocacy Day in Olympia, WA, 2026. *Photo Credit:* Vanessa Kritzer. *Below:* Lupine in the forest understory of Rattlesnake Creek's forest. *Photo Credit:* Paloma Ayala/Columbia Land Trust. *Top-right:* Students of Great Peninsula Conservancy's Land Labs pose while exploring Curley Creek during the Land Labs Field Trip. *Photo Credit:* Samantha Hale.

GET INVOLVED

How You Can Support Land Conservation in Washington:

Protecting our state's wild and working lands takes all of us. Here are some ways you can be part of this work.

- **Donate** to a land trust near you and contribute to WALT to support statewide impact.
- **Volunteer** with your local land trust to care for trails, habitat, farmland, and more.
- **Make your voice heard!** Tell state, local, and federal lawmakers why land conservation and access to greenspace matters to you, and ask for their support.
- **Most importantly, bring others with you to get outside and explore.** Whether it's your kids, neighbors, or friends, getting more people to appreciate outdoor recreation and what our lands give back to us is key in this work. Take a hike, paddle on a river or lake, watch the salmon run, or buy fresh food from a local farm. Share how conserved lands make our communities stronger and maintain the beauty of life in Washington.



Thank you to the funders who supported this publication

- The Suquamish Tribe and Suquamish Foundation
- The Burning Foundation
- The Hugh and Jane Ferguson Foundation
- Weyerhaeuser Family Foundation
- Wildlife Forever Fund
- Tide SW Foundation
- Ned and Sis Hayes Family Fund of Oregon Community Foundation

Special Thanks

This publication was produced in 2026 by Kate Dolan, Alison Driver, Vanessa Kritzer (Former Executive Director), Raven Maier Bell, Signe Stroming, and design firm August Creative.

Page 23: WALT Staff and board members. *Photo Credit:* WALT.

WHO WE ARE

Our Staff & Board

We are a tight-knit team with a dedicated board of directors and an incredible statewide reach through our diverse membership.

Our Staff

Erik Kingfisher, Executive Director

Kate Dolan, Community Engagement Manager

Brynn Brady, Contract Lobbyist

2026 UW Evans School Harrison Environmental Policy Fellows

Raven Maier Bell

Signe Stroming

Board Members

Cullen Brady, President

Jeanette Dorner, Vice President

Celisa Hopkins, Treasurer

Kate Godman, Secretary

Meg Rutledge

Melissa Campbell

Mitch Long

Nathan Daniel

Randi Shaw

Ryan Elting

Sarah Brooks

WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF LAND TRUSTS

We believe land is a foundational asset and defines our Northwest way of life. Together, we work with local voices to ensure our farms, forests, waterways, trails, and habitat provide for all people and wildlife forever.



Want to help us do more to conserve the lands we love?

Donate today to protect our lands forever. Visit **walandtrusts.org/donate** to help power our collective conservation work.

Front Cover: Túuši Wána Conservation & Restoration Easement along the mainstem of the Touchet River. *Photo Credit:* William Frohne / Blue Mountain Land Trust. *Back Cover:* A beaver swimming at a Whatcom Land Trust preserve. *Photo Credit:* Emily Segura Maze.

WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF LAND TRUSTS

P.O. BOX 2001, SEATTLE, WA 98111
(425) 477-9054
INFO@WALANDTRUSTS.ORG
WALANDTRUSTS.ORG

WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF LAND TRUSTS