

# Fieldbook

COLUMBIA LAND TRUST



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Conserving and caring for the vital lands, waters, and wildlife of the Columbia River region through sound science and strong relationships.



Good  
Fire

PG. 7

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Columbia Land Trust conserves and cares for the vital lands, waters, and wildlife of the Columbia River region through sound science and strong relationships.

Columbia Land Trust has earned accreditation from the Land Trust Alliance, which recognizes land trusts that adhere to national standards for excellence, uphold the public trust with rigorous ethical standards, and take steps to ensure that conservation efforts are permanent.



Cover photo: Natural Area Manager Adam Lieberg during a prescribed burn. Inside cover: View of the Columbia River from the Cape Horn Trail.

## The big picture of conservation

This April, I drove through morning fog along the lower Columbia River to reach a coastal forest. Together, with friends from Chinook Indian Nation and The Nature Conservancy, we shared a gift of smoked salmon and our viewpoints on forests and culture and science. Later that same day I visited with a man who is generously directing his money and land toward what he cares about, a place for critters and mitigating a changing climate. Earlier that week, I sat around a table at the Wahkiakum County courthouse where a group of county commissioners, legislators, and citizens worked through emerging plans for a community-owned forest. Like a sentence where the human interactions are words and nature the punctuation, here are the commas and exclamations that marked those days: a shiny wet river otter hulking across the estuary; bald eagles over the Columbia just outside the courthouse window; and Pacific wrens yelling wildly at the entrance of every forest we visited.

I share this as an illustration of the pace and character of conservation. With time, sometimes many years of time, these prosaic events add up to what you'll read about in this *Fieldbook*. Roughly 20 years ago, Columbia Land Trust undertook what seemed then like the Herculean task of raising money to buy 12 acres of land that was needed for a trail that didn't yet exist. Around that same time, we began our relationship with a family who wanted to ensure their mile of West Fork Washougal River stayed wild. Decades ago, we were developing a conservation vision for the Grays River. We understood that the health of the watershed was interconnected, from the mouth of the river to the steep-sloped forests in its upper reaches.

Near my home in Washougal, within a 1,200-acre forest the Land Trust conserved in 2020, a historic restoration is underway. Under the leadership of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, Kwoneesum Dam will be removed this summer and, after 60 years, miles of streams will summon salmon home (page 10).

Advancing enduring conservation takes time and people working together. Up and down the Columbia are people who care about rivers and forests. Caring is what we have in common. Our conservation achievements were wrought from relationships and shared values. Because of your support, you are an intrinsic part of these stories. To appreciate the pace of conservation and stewardship, it helps to see a bigger picture: a view that casts back millennia, considers the last one hundred years, and sees relationships over a generation. Most importantly, that big picture includes a promising future for all of us.

- **Cherie Kearney**, Forest Conservation Director

Our conservation achievements were wrought from relationships and shared values. You are an intrinsic part of these stories.



Cherie Kearney and her granddaughter at Cape Horn in 2012.




Columbia Land Trust

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# Get to Know Cathy Kellon

“There’s something very special about working with landowners and community members who love a place so much that they want to protect it beyond their lifetimes.”



## Columbia Land Trust’s new Conservation Director

### What sparked your interest in conservation?

I grew up in the Virginia countryside, along the Blue Ridge mountains—among farmland and woods bounded by creeks, dry stone walls, and dirt roads, but close enough to Washington, D.C. that by the 1980’s there was development happening all around. Small family farms and the fields that I used to run around in, where foxes and deer also ran, were subdivided into small parcels with big houses. Watching open spaces and wildlife habitat disappear fundamentally changed how I thought about our world. I didn’t have a name for it at the time but what I experienced is solastalgia, the longing for a landscape that you can’t return to. It was this that propelled me toward environmental conservation at a young age.

### What brought you to the Northwest?

After high school I packed my Chevy Cavalier and drove to Ashland, Oregon. No one in my family had graduated from college so I wasn’t thinking much about that; I just wanted to explore. When I got out west, I felt like I could breathe, like there were so many options for my future. I fell in love with southern Oregon and decided to go to college. When I took a geography class at Southern Oregon University, I decided I had found my people. Geography taught me how to think critically and helped me make sense of the world. I attended graduate school at Oregon State University where I narrowed my focus to western water resource management.

### What have been the highlights of your career so far?

I’ve done a lot of different things which I’m grateful for. After graduate school, I worked for the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board on a statewide monitoring strategy. Then I moved to Portland to work at the nonprofit, Ecotrust, on the State of the Salmon program, a joint venture with Wild Salmon Center. I worked on salmon conservation across the North Pacific for the next decade. I then managed two multi-agency grant programs and spent several years helping small towns in Oregon and Washington develop strategies to protect their drinking water sources, which brought me into collaborations with land trusts. After that I served as the Executive Director of the Columbia Slough Watershed Council, which was my first time working on watershed conservation in an urban setting. I missed working at a larger scale, so I got back into salmon conservation as the Fish and Wildlife Policy Analyst at the Northwest Power and Conservation Council.

Our 25-year Conservation Agenda is a bold plan for science-based, community-driven conservation and stewardship.

### How did you come to Columbia Land Trust?

All these years of working in conservation, and I had never done direct land protection! It was a major interest of mine, and Columbia Land Trust's reputation and approach were very compelling. I appreciated the strategic nature of the Land Trust's Conservation Agenda and the ability to make an on-the-ground impact. As soon as I started meeting Land Trust staff I had this feeling that I was coming home, in a sense. They are committed, smart, curious, and good-natured; people I want to be around and will always be learning from.

### You are responsible for updating the Land Trust's Conservation Agenda that outlines our plan and objectives for 25 years. Can you tell us about that?

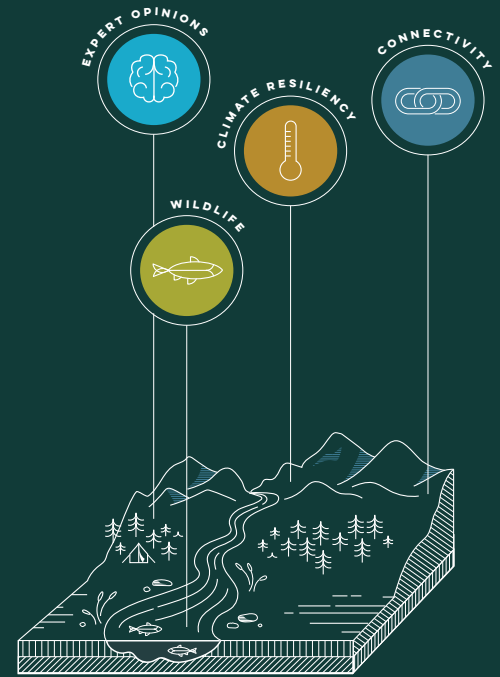
The Conservation Agenda guides our work and serves as a touchstone. It keeps us focused so that we can achieve audacious conservation goals. It is specific enough to help us prioritize when making key decisions, yet general enough that there is room to adapt as we grow as an organization, and as the world evolves around us. When I think about updates to our long-term conservation plan, I think about systemic drivers like climate change and racial and socio-economic inequalities. Our success as conservationists comes down to relationships, with the rest of nature, with each other, and with future generations.

Our Conservation Agenda outlines the Land Trust's equity and climate change commitments. Looking ahead I am excited to build on what my colleagues have already done to further operationalize our values. Ultimately, our success as conservationists comes down to our relationships; with each other, with the rest of nature, and with future generations.

### What is your favorite part about this work?

My favorite part is the relationship between people and place, and the reciprocity it inspires. Every time I visit a beautiful or wild place, I come away refreshed and inspired. There's something very special about working with landowners and community members who love a place so much that they want to figure out how to care for and protect it beyond their lifetimes. I am honored to work for the benefit of a region with amazing ecological diversity and during a dynamic time in our history. I'm learning so much from the dedicated folks at Columbia Land Trust and am thrilled for the conservation opportunities that lie ahead. 🌿

Wildflowers in the Columbia Plateau.  
Photo by Doug Gorsline.



What we consider when identifying conservation priorities:

#### Presence of Wildlife Species and Habitat

Is there existing functioning habitat, or would this be a highly impactful place for a habitat restoration project?

#### Landscape Connectivity

Does the land allow wildlife to move between habitats and allow natural ecosystem processes to take place?

#### Climate Resiliency

Are there landscape characteristics that will help buffer the impacts of climate change?

#### Expert Opinion and Local Knowledge

How do people interact with this landscape and how can we help ensure our conservation efforts are adaptive and effective over time?

Explore the full Conservation Agenda:

[WWW.COLUMBIALANDTRUST.ORG/CONSERVATION-AGENDA](http://WWW.COLUMBIALANDTRUST.ORG/CONSERVATION-AGENDA)



# Caring for the Cape Horn Trail

**T**his spring, Columbia Land Trust proudly concluded our active role in stewarding the area around the beloved Cape Horn Trail in Washougal, Washington, after conserving the land and caring for it for 23 years. Our actions ensured that this trailhead space was permanently protected and available for what was, at the time, just a dream of trail advocates. Today, it is one of the most diverse, beautiful, and popular trails in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

After this long legacy of involvement, we recently transferred 12 acres of forest to the permanent care of the United States Forest Service. If you begin your hike at the Salmon Falls Park & Ride and head counterclockwise on the loop, you are walking on land conserved by Columbia Land Trust as you start the trail.

The Land Trust had cared for this place since 2001, when we raised funds to purchase a conservation easement here to ensure connectivity for the future Cape Horn Trail. Over time, and thanks to years of collaboration and work by Cape Horn Conservancy and Friends of the Columbia Gorge, the trail became a just over 7-mile route offering unparalleled views of the Columbia River and taking visitors through a diversity of topography and flora, from oak woodlands and old conifer forests to spring wildflowers on rocky outcrops.

“Cape Horn is a very dear trail to me,” said Land Trust Forest Conservation Director Cherie Kearney. “Columbia Land Trust played a key role in creating this trail from the beginning. We conserved critical trail links and are pleased to transfer the land into the ownership and stewardship of the Forest Service.”

“The Cape Horn Trail allows hikers to experience many unique attributes of the Gorge,” continued Kearney. “It is home to nesting habitat for peregrine falcons, rare flowers, hanging waterfalls, dry talus slopes, and deep green forest. It took many years of passion and dedication to bring all the pieces of this trail together, and it is a privilege to have been a part of it.”

Connecting people with nature is at the heart of Columbia Land Trust’s conservation vision. This means helping to ensure that trails and natural spaces are within reach of all communities. We believe that experiences like witnessing the beauty of an old forest, learning to identify a bird species, or spotting an early bloom of a native wildflower positively influence how we care for the world around us. 🌱



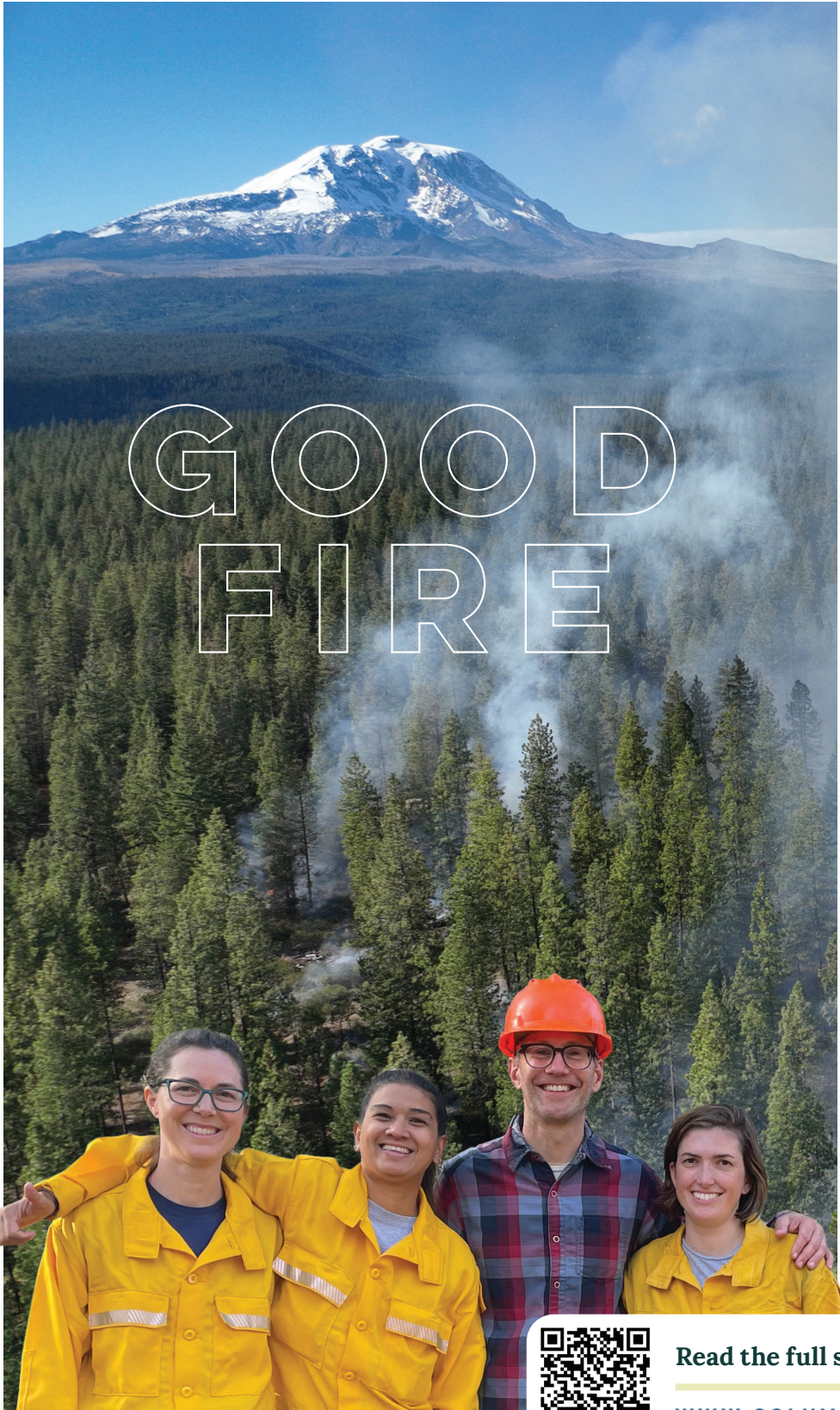
## CAPE HORN TRAIL

**Full loop: 7.2 miles**

**Elevation gain: 1,300 feet**

The trail passes through several unique zones and offers striking views. The lower segment of the trail is closed annually from **February 1st - July 15th** for peregrine falcon nesting. If you hike during this period, you can walk out and back on the upper section but cannot complete the loop.

Above: A peregrine falcon.  
Photo by Mathew Schwartz  
via Unsplash.com.



# GOOD FIRE

“As I watched the flames move across the forest floor, I considered all the learning that had brought us to this place and this moment — igniting grasses and needles for the good of the forest. My early training with fire had all been about suppression, Smokey the Bear and all that. Watching this mellow fire burn at my feet, I considered how people had this kind of positive relationship with fire for millennia, knowing and understanding its benefits and role in our ecosystems. Finding our way back to that feels really good.”

— **Lindsay Cornelius**, East Cascades Oak Partnership Manager

**L**ast fall, Columbia Land Trust staff and a team of partners implemented a successful prescribed burn at our Bear Creek Natural Area in the East Cascades. This marked a major milestone after years of working to thoughtfully incorporate prescribed fire to benefit the long-term health and resiliency of lands we manage.

Our ecological goals at Bear Creek were to reduce the number of conifer seedlings, saplings, and woody cover, and to consume litter and duff on the forest floor. Preemptively burning these surface fuels reduces the risk of high intensity fires for several years and gives overstory trees like Ponderosa pines time to mature. Like Bear Creek, many landscapes in this region are fire-adapted and require frequent, low-intensity fire to be healthy. Prescribed burning can also help the Land Trust be a good neighbor by reducing the risk of sending high intensity fire onto neighboring lands. 🌿



Read the full story and see more photos:

[WWW.COLUMBIALANDTRUST.ORG/GOODFIRE](http://WWW.COLUMBIALANDTRUST.ORG/GOODFIRE)

Above: Smoke from a prescribed burn in front of Mt. Adams. Left: Land Trust staff on burn day.

# Conservation in Key Watersheds

Successes throughout the Columbia River region



## Long-term Goals in the Grays

Conserving the forests and rivers in the Grays River watershed is a long-time priority for Columbia Land Trust. At the end of 2023, we conserved 1,103 acres along 2.5 miles of the West Fork Grays River. Securing this important parcel works toward our vision of protecting connected landscapes in the coastal region to foster salmon recovery, improve forest health and water quality, and support community goals related to flood reduction, recreation, and public access. This site helps create a corridor of habitat connecting state-managed forest lands. As the forest grows under our stewardship, we anticipate the development of new suitable marbled murrelet habitat in coming decades. This watershed also contains significant salmon habitat and stands out as the most important stronghold for chum salmon in the Columbia River basin.



## Rainbow Restoration

A habitat restoration project is underway in Washington County, Oregon at our 76-acre Rainbow Natural Area along the Tualatin River. The site includes more than a mile of Tualatin River shoreline, 20 acres of remnant native forest along the river, and a 50-acre former agricultural field in the floodplain that will be the focus of this restoration effort. Our team will restore native habitats including native prairie, oak savanna, and oak woodland, which will benefit soil health, reduce erosion risk, help restore natural watershed processes, and improve water quality in the Tualatin River. As a result, our work will benefit Chinook and coho salmon and steelhead, along with other threatened or declining species like the western meadowlark, Fender's blue butterfly, and Oregon vesper sparrow.



## Rare Old Forest

Three hundred newly conserved acres along the West Fork Washougal River are home to old forest and riparian habitat that is increasingly rare in this area. The site includes over one mile of the West Fork of the Washougal River and over a half-mile of Jackson Creek—both salmonid bearing streams. Older trees shade these waterways and cool the water, which is then carried into the mainstem Washougal River where it helps maintain a water temperature beneficial to salmon. The forest is also noteworthy for its diverse native vegetation and massive old snags created in the Yacolt Burns of the early 20th century.



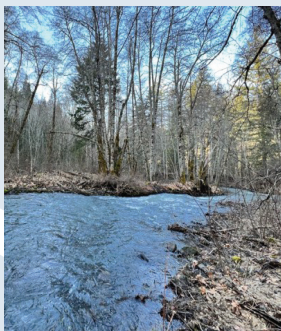
# Project Sites



## Ebbs and Flows of the Sandy River

In late 2023, Columbia Land Trust conserved four acres outside Brightwood, Oregon

on the mainstem Sandy River. These parcels are adjacent to our existing Barlow Trail site, which conserves a section of the Sandy River and its shoreline, protects riparian forest, and creates space for the river to continue to move and change within the floodplain. Even during summertime low flows, the waters that rush along the cobbly riverbank here are ice cold, fed by glacier melt at the Sandy's headwaters on Mt. Hood. Beaver, osprey, American dipper, flycatchers, deer and coyotes, and a host of other critters share the shoreline, floodplain, ponds, and forest with the neighborhood's human residents. The river and its side channels are home to endangered wild runs of winter steelhead and spring Chinook.



## Preventing Habitat Loss

Our key conservation goals for the East Cascades include conserving intact oak habitats, protecting major rivers and their tributaries, and conserving transition zones that link upland and riparian habitats.

Conserving the 915-acre Rattlesnake Creek site advances each of these objectives. Rattlesnake Creek is the largest anadromous tributary to the White Salmon River and, when combined with state owned lands, this parcel protects the entire upper four miles of Rattlesnake Creek. U.S. Geological Survey biologists found that this reach of the creek remains the coolest throughout the year, which is important for climate resilience. The site is located within the ceded territory of Yakama Nation, just south of the Tribe's Reservation, and our stewardship team is working on a floodplain enhancement project led by Yakama Nation to increase the creek's water quality, water holding capacity, and salmonid habitat.



## Steelhead Recovery

After conserving 85 acres of riparian forest in early 2024, the Land Trust has now contributed to the long-term conservation of 2.7 miles of the Wind River. This newly acquired 1.1 mile stretch is some of the most productive juvenile salmonid rearing habitat in the entire Wind River, a critical reach for young wild steelhead and salmon to feed and grow strong before migrating to the ocean. The site is also home to a remnant patch of oak habitat which, when surrounded by conifer forest as this one is, acts as biodiversity hotspot and refuge. Land Trust stewardship efforts at Wind River will protect healthy habitat and enhance forested watershed processes for long-term resilience.

### Thank you to the major funders and partners who supported these projects:

- |                                |                           |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| The Conservation Alliance      | Species Habitat           |
| The Conservation Fund          | Conservation Program      |
| Cowlitz Tribal Foundation      | Washington Department     |
| Statewide Fund                 | of Ecology and the        |
| Felburn Foundation             | City of Washougal         |
| Hollis Foundation              | Washington Salmon         |
| Norman C. Danielson            | Recovery Funding Board    |
| Foundation                     | Washington Wildlife and   |
| Oregon Wildlife Foundation     | Recreation Program        |
| Tualatin Soil and Water        | West Fork Washougal River |
| Conservation District          | neighbor family           |
| U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service |                           |
| Section 6 Endangered           |                           |

# Removing Kwoneesum Dam

## Collaborating with the Cowlitz Indian Tribe to restore fish passage

**I**n early May, the Cowlitz Indian Tribe and Columbia Land Trust celebrated the pending removal of the Kwoneesum Dam at the headwaters of Wildboy Creek in Skamania County, Washington. After years of meticulous planning and close collaboration, the removal process is now underway to restore fish passage to key spawning habitat within the Washougal River watershed and improve a critical natural ecosystem within the Cowlitz Indian Tribe's ancestral lands. A traditional tribal blessing of the site was held when the planning process for the project began in 2021.

The Kwoneesum Dam, first built in 1965 by the Camp Fire Girls organization for recreational purposes, stands at 55-feet tall by 425-feet wide and currently blocks all fish passage to 6.5 miles of spawning and rearing habitat in a headwater tributary of the Washougal River, while holding back valuable sediment and wood to starved channels downstream. Its removal will immediately restore fish passage and enhance instream conditions, benefiting coho salmon and summer steelhead —species sacred to the Cowlitz Indian Tribe's ancestral heritage and way of life.

Patty Kinswa Gaiser, Chairwoman of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, and Meg Rutledge, Executive Director of Columbia Land Trust, spoke to a crowd of project partners and elected officials representing the state of Washington about the importance of the project and the shared vision that brought the Land Trust and Cowlitz Indian Tribe together.

“Today marks a pivotal moment as we begin the journey to remove the



Kwoneesum Dam,” said Patty Kinswa-Gaiser, Cowlitz Indian Tribe General Council Chairwoman. “This project holds deep significance, not only for the benefits it will bring to our environment and fish species, but for the preservation of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe's cultural heritage. By restoring fish passage and nurturing the ecosystem within the Washougal River watershed, we're honoring our ancestors, while improving the health of a river system that our Tribe, our community, and our region depends on. The Cowlitz Indian Tribe is grateful for Columbia Land Trust standing alongside us in this shared vision, rooted in respect for our land, our shared resources, and our traditions.”

“Removing Kwoneesum Dam, which has long lost its original purpose, lives into the core values of Columbia Land Trust,” said Executive Director Meg Rutledge. “Restoring these streams to run wild honors the enduring cultural values of Cowlitz Indian Tribe, and benefits the plants, animals, and people that depend on the Washougal River system. Columbia Land Trust grounds our work in sound science and strong relationships. Bringing these values together in collaboration with Cowlitz Indian Tribe is a proud moment for our organization.” We will be sharing more about this major restoration project as it progresses. 🌿

*Cowlitz Indian Tribe General Council Chair Patty Kinswa-Gaiser. Photo courtesy of Cowlitz Indian Tribe.*



“I grew up as an outdoor enthusiast and dreamed for years of kayaking the world-class whitewater of the White Salmon River. Eventually, I moved to White Salmon, WA full time and quickly connected with Columbia Land Trust. Incredible whitewater kayaking requires thriving watersheds and healthy rivers, and I am delighted to support the Land Trust’s work to care for the stunning natural places where I love to spend time. I appreciate their holistic approach that balances the needs of wildlife, waters, lands, and people; and their commitment to developing stewardship plans based on the best available science.”

- **Tom Shwartz**

“We have been proud supporters of Columbia Land Trust for more than 15 years. Columbia Land Trust plays such a vital role in protecting habitat, preserving ecological functions on land and in streams, and ensuring that we have natural places to visit now and in the future.”

- **Aron and Lisa Borok**



## CELEBRATING OUR SUPPORTERS



“As lifelong birders and longtime members of Bird Alliance of Oregon, we were delighted to join the Backyard Habit Certification Program in 2011 and transform our Portland yard into a haven for birds, pollinators, and wildlife. We love knowing that our home is part of a huge collective effort to strengthen migration corridors like the Pacific Flyway! Supporting Columbia Land Trust in doing that same work at a much larger scale—protecting and restoring natural areas so that wildlife can flourish—was a natural next step for us. Whether we’re listening to bird calls at home, on Mt. Hood, or at the coast, we are mindful of the interconnectedness of our ecosystems and grateful for Columbia Land Trust’s mission to conserve, connect, and care for the nature of our region.”

- **Adrienne Wolf-Lockett and Bob Lockett**

*We couldn’t accomplish all that we do for nature without you!*

“Caring for and restoring my urban property helped me to realize how interconnected nature is, and fully understand the powerful impacts of Columbia Land Trust’s restoration efforts throughout the region. I joined the Board of Directors because I believed in Columbia Land Trust’s commitment to collaborating with Indigenous tribes and diverse groups of people, in rural and urban communities. I can say after nine years of board service that relationships are at the heart of our conservation work, and I am honored to support this organization.”

- **Board Member Janet Gifford**



**Want to share your story?**  
How do you connect with nature and care about conservation?

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[Connect@ColumbiaLandTrust.org](mailto:Connect@ColumbiaLandTrust.org)



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# Wild Splendor

## SAVE THE DATE

Thursday, October 17, 2024  
Avenue Portland  
631 NE Grand Ave, Portland, OR 97232

## Our beloved annual celebration returns this fall!

We heard from so many that you missed our annual celebration as a time to connect, learn, and be inspired—and we have to say, we have missed you and this special event, too!

During the pandemic, we paused the indoor gala format and instead offered outdoor nature tours as a way to safely gather together. We're delighted to be at a place now where we intend to offer BOTH our public wild-life tour series and the classic Wild Splendor gathering!

We look forward to reuniting with friends old and new this October to enjoy delicious food and drink while celebrating our collective passion for conservation. Make sure you are signed up for our Moss email newsletter, which will be the first place we share more details and ticketing information when registration opens in July. We hope to see you there!

**Want to help make Wild Splendor a success? We are looking for sponsors, volunteers, and in-kind donations.**

Email Events Manager  
Peter Condra to get involved!  
[pcondra@columbialandtrust.org](mailto:pcondra@columbialandtrust.org)

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