



Conservation Northwest

Keeping the Northwest Wild

INTERCONNECTED

CELEBRATING OUR PARTNERSHIPS

Some of my most fulfilling personal moments in conservation have been with our Tribal partners. I think of the meaningful ceremony held by Colville Tribal leadership last October to celebrate the thousands of acres of habitat, formerly the Figlenski Ranch, that we returned to the Tribes. Another was the solemn joy of Nisqually Tribal members at the first release of fishers into Mt. Rainier National Park. And the honor I had of being present for the release of Timxw, a male lynx, onto the Colville Reservation last year. These are just a few.

Conservation Northwest's partnerships with indigenous communities and governments stretch to our beginnings and the work to protect ancient forest and salmon habitats. Joe Scott's efforts and relationships with BC First Nations to recover grizzly bears are as deep and long-running as mine are with the Bands of the Similkameen.

For us, there are dimensions of meaning and social justice to this work. But it's also pragmatic to advance our conservation mission. Tribes and First Nations are, of course, present and invested almost everywhere we seek to protect habitat and wildlife. They have sovereign rights (often including titles), traditional knowledge, capacity, commitment, and clout that we respect.

Despite hundreds of years of oppression and trauma, these communities are rooted in place and determined to stay. Many are getting stronger and reviving ancient lifeways. And their commitment to and dependence on a healthy landscape is paramount. The futures of a wild Northwest and its native peoples are inseparable. Working for one means working for both.

For the wild,

Mitch Freedman
Executive Director and Founder



Over on the eastern plateaus of Washington, Alishia Orloff looks towards the future of our First Foods program. She partners with the Colville, Spokane, and Kalispel Tribes to advance nursery and restoration efforts, conduct Traditional Foods Assessments, and promote traditional prescribed burning for native plant conservation. Alishia strives to reaffirm local food systems and traditional management as a core component of her position as our Colville forest lead. She collaborates with the Forest Service and Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition, seeking novel ways to improve forest management and leverage tribal interests.

November 2022

CONSERVATION NORTHWEST
1829 10TH AVE. W, SUITE B
SEATTLE, WA 98119 - 2947

COLVILLE CONNECTIVITY

Recently, Conservation Northwest partnered with Western Rivers Conservancy to help buy and conserve 727 acres known as the McLoughlin Falls Ranch. This purchase and expansion of Colville land will strengthen protection for a critical portion of the wildlife corridor that connects the western Cascade Mountains to the Kettle River Range in the east. This addition to our purchase of the Figlenski ranch last fall returns roughly two miles of culturally significant land along the Okanogan River to The Confederated Tribes of Colville Reservation.

7 HIGHWAY 97
Following the success of the first phase of our Safe Passage 97 project that renovated Janis Bridge as a wildlife crossing, we have secured funding for 1-2 additional crossings. A major north and south route from Canada through Okanogan County, Highway 97 has the highest vehicle-to-deer collision rate of any 12-mile stretch of highway in Washington State. The current crossing and one mile of wildlife fencing have reduced collisions by 91% after only two years of use. Trail cameras have captured thousands of animals utilizing this crossing, including mule deer, cougar, bobcat, coyote, and pheasant.

We will partner with the Okanogan Land Trust (OLT) to secure conservation easements on properties further south of the current crossings and all planned future structure locations – 6 in total! We will ensure that future development does not become a barrier to wildlife migrating through this connectivity corridor and improve traffic safety for Central Washington's local communities and visitors. This next step will increase landscape permeability in this critical migratory wildlife corridor.

3 P I M - NSƏLXCIN WORD FOR BITTERROOT.
The two-inch bitterroot thrives in gravelly soil at low elevations in this area. As a First Food, the squishy roots were gathered, the bitter skin removed, and then boiled, roasted, or dried. Many recipes boil the root with ingredients like saskatoon berries or eggs to create a custard that can be served savory or sweet.

6 NOT DONE YET
Our work continues with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation on obtaining adjacent lands to add additional paths of connectivity for Okanogan wildlife and restore lands previously lost.

1 RESTORATION TO WAYS OF LIFE
An ancestral trading, hunting, and fishing route, this property and region provide an opportunity for the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation to return to former ways of life on land they once resided and thrived.

2 KEEP IT COOL
This property includes key strands of riparian forest that shade the Okanogan River that passes through. This forest is crucial to keeping water temperatures low as the river supports one of only two remaining self-sustaining runs of sockeye salmon in the entire Columbia Basin.

4 GREETINGS FROM ANCESTORS
Many ancient native petroglyphs have been found in this area. Images carved and painted onto rocks provide direct communications from Colville's ancestors of their experiences and how they viewed the world. Imagery includes bear paws, mothers with children, and medicine wheels as part of its storytelling.

5 SX ƏX L ÁM - NSƏLXCIN WORD FOR SHARP-TAILED GROUSE.
Recognized as an endangered species in Washington state, sharp-tailed grouse is native to this now protected area. They share the space with migrating mule deer and elk, cougars, and a recovering population of Canada lynx.

Figlenski



Photo caption blurb explaining what this image is of.

TRANSITIVE RELATIONS Wildlife Comes Home

The land that makes up the Colville region is home to wolves, lynx, and grizzly bears. Animals take a fresh step on the land of their ancestors.

As we've reached the 14th year of our Pacific fisher reintroduction effort, it's easy to see now the success of what can be a complicated process. Here in Washington, fishers had all but disappeared by 2020, with the last wild sighting nearly 30 years prior. Working with many state and private agencies, Conservation Northwest has assisted in the steady and continued effort of the revival of this species. As of 2022, CNW and our partners have released 90 fishers in Olympic National Park, 81 in the South Cascades, and 89 in the North Cascades.

Fishers relocated to Washington are trapped in B.C. and Alberta. Once trapped, our team has professionals check their overall health, provide vaccines and

antiparasitics, and implant small radio transmitters before quickly coming across the border for release. More than 50 percent of relocated fishers survived their first year in Washington. Half established dens near the release site, and a confirmed kit arrival soon followed. Fishers can travel in huge stretches in a single day and lately have been using wildlife crossings on I-90. What had been reduced to only a transitive connection to our state for fishers has now grown into a thriving presence.

The success of fishers lead us to other relocations. In 2021 we began our work on reintroducing Canadian lynx to our region. Observing the extensive habitat loss from fire in the Okanogan region, we began to look toward restoring lynx to the Kettle River Mountain Range for regional benefits. The range is an excellent habitat for supporting lynx. We brought together a team of committed trappers and wildlife biologists from the Colville Confederated Tribes and the Okanogan Nation Alliance (ONA) to release ten lynx yearly over the 5-year project.

This year we have strengthened our partnership with ONA to focus on threatened grizzly bear populations.



Native names: ki lawna - Nsalxcin for "grizzly."
Nsalxcin is the language of Okanogan, Methow, Nespelem, San Poil Lakes, Colville, and Syilx Tribes.

For the Syilx people, ki?lawna? (grizzly bear) plays a significant part in their laws and protocols. Grizzly bears appear in Syilx creationism stories and serve as a reminder of our responsibilities to the land. An ecosystem with grizzlies is a healthy one. Persistent population declines demonstrate that the security and health of those landscapes are out of balance.

Going forward we will continue work with our tribal and other partners to plan for improvements to habitat security and quality, as well as efforts to re-establish local reproduction in these important species. By collectively working with land stewards, recreational users, and hunters we hope to restore the balance once lost.



Good Smoke

Building resiliency in the dry forests of the Inland Northwest includes regular naturally occurring fires. What does it mean to have good smoke?

Over the past few months, we've had sweeps of smoke filling the Seattle region. We watched air quality plummet, and masks return. While a nuisance to our sinuses and lately the worrisome result of dry landscapes and extended hot weather, fire can have vast benefits in our region. Long before present day, tribes learned that fire plays a critical role as a natural catalyst to transform and shape landscape functionality. Tribes not only didn't extinguish fires started by lightning but also meticulously used fire to maintain habitats and value ecological resources. This method was previously written off as "primitive." In 1850, before establishing statehood, the U.S. Act for the Government and Protection of Indians outlawed intentional burning in the west. Today, many tribes advocate using this ancestral practice in contemporary settings to address issues of wildland megafire.

Small wildfires in the west previously burned a few thousand acres a year on average, but by our present century, megafires now destroy hundreds of thousands of acres nearly every year in the U.S. The key to prescribed burning is low severity, consistent fire management. While controlled burning contributes to a positive ecological function, megafires do the opposite. One example is that small wildfire contributes to naturally occurring small landslides, a necessary function to replenish salmon habitats.

Megafire creates massive, problematic landslides that wipe out ecosystem diversity en masse—leaving few options for healthy restoration.



Reducing the risk of megafires is only part of the extensive benefits of prescribed burns. Recently it's been more broadly understood that many animals in our ecosystem are fire-dependent and unable to adapt to thick, unchanging forests and landscapes. White-headed woodpeckers nestle in hollowed-out trees, feasting on the harvest of wood-eating insects that thrive in the transformed space. In the high country, fire renews stands of lodgepole pine trees that are too tall and too old to provide shelter and forage for hares that munch on its bark and low-hanging needles. Low-hanging branches are a necessary defense against Canada lynx that hunt them as preferred prey.

Native name: qí-tin - Tito-qatímt for "smoke."
Tito-qatímt is the language of Nez Perce and Palus Tribes

But what happens when hare or other small game leave a landscape that can no longer support them? Their predators follow. However, this is not

exclusive to hare and lynx. Many animals need an evolving collection of habitats within the landscape to meet their needs. At the correct scale, fire and other disturbances are the reason for that variegation.

Interconnectedly, where fire has been excluded, the lack of new forest affects traditional practices like basket weaving. Dependent on younger, more malleable trees, basket weaving is a product of a renewing forest. Foraging opportunities become replenished as traditional foods like bitterroot grow low to the ground and require a good sight line to pluck them up in spring before developing their flowers. Restoring more normal cycles of fire to the landscape reduces dangerous megafires. It facilitates eco-cultural revitalization, meaning Indigenous culture is resurrected as ecology is restored.

We first presented prescribed burning methods in a newsletter nearly 23 years ago, and the evidence of its benefits continues to grow. It's hard to appreciate the sting in your eyes on particularly dense days, but smoke can be *good*—a familiar siren of a healthy, self-regulating ecosystem.

DEPTH OF FIELD

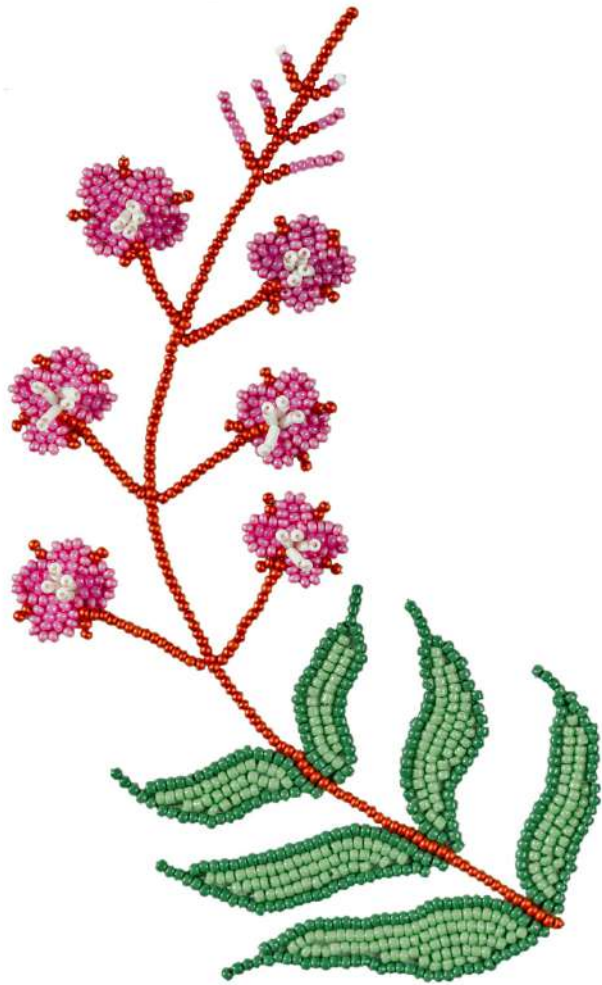
Our work in focus

WILDLIFE RECREATION CO-EXISTENCE (WREC)

WREC Program lead Kurt Hellmann has worked with local Snoqualmie and Tulalip tribes to raise awareness of widespread year-round recreation and its adverse impact on culturally important activities and Tribal treaty rights. Many of our region’s wild areas and public lands are essential for First Foods, hunting, fishing, gathering, and other traditional ceremonial uses by tribal residents. Collaborative discussions with our Tribal partners influenced the creation of

Conservation Northwest’s own Wildlife and Recreation in Washington report, synthesizing the complex science related to recreational and wildlife dynamics. This report lays the groundwork for understanding how best to address specific wildlife concerns stemming from recent increases in motorized and non-motorized outdoor activity in Washington.

Native Name: ǰáč tac
– Dx lǽšucid word for “Fireweed.”
Dx lǽšucid (Northern Lushootseed) is the language of the Tulalip, Skagit, Swinomish, Sauk-Suiattle, Stillaguamish, and neighboring peoples.



SAGELANDS HERITAGE PROGRAM

As part of our Sagelands Heritage Program’s Students in Shrub-Steppe Project, CNW engages youth in conservation efforts to spark curiosity and interest in local wildlife and wildlands. SHP team members Jordan Ryckman and Keith Watson lead field trips with students, deliver curated lessons specific to local communities and habitats and create greenhouse programs with schools to grow native plants for local restoration efforts. They are creating generations of people connected with wild spaces while supporting students in building lifelong skills they can share with others. The project focuses on underserved students to ensure equal access to the outdoors. On a recent field trip, four out of nine students had to stay behind because they did not have hiking footwear. Financial and resource restrictions of local schools, programs, and families prevent students from participating or engaging fully in field trips because of a lack of proper outdoor gear. Students in Shrub-Steppe hope to remove this barrier.

Support conservation today and tomorrow

One of the questions often asked in my culture is “if you spoke to your great grandparents, would they understand you?” Usually, in relation to the preservation of language, this question has much bigger implications than just conversation. Can the world be recognized as it once was? I often think of this in our conservation efforts. Will my great-grandchildren be able to walk on the same path I did? Will they drink from freshwater streams and taste blueberries the way I have? Will summer breezes carry the same scents of western red cedar as they do now? It’s never really guaranteed, but here at Conservation Northwest, we’re making our best effort to ensure that our Northwest stays wild for generations beyond today. Your support has reconnected corridors to support native wildlife. You’ve helped contribute to the return of Canada lynx and Pacific fishers and the restoration and social acceptance of gray wolves in our region. Ensuring that future occupants, human and wild, can feel the restorative

power of fireweed, dip their toes in clean streams and experience a healthy and thriving Pacific Northwest.

Being part of the community of Pacific Northwest conservationists comes with making lands available for all. Righting wrongs as we come upon them. All your support so far has helped us achieve these goals. Being part of this collaborative effort makes us forever interconnected with lands we don’t even need to step foot on. You create restorative justice and environmental resiliency by combining contemporary science with long-established methods used by those on the lands long before us. With that, we ensure the lands will flourish long after us. Thank you for playing this necessary part in the future of keeping our Northwest wild.

Gunalchéesh, (Lingít word for Thank You. Lingít is the language of the Tlingit tribe),

Saankat’aa - Membership and Events



Saankat’aa is wearing a beaded medallion that was a gift to Mitch Friedman from a member of the Colville Tribe during the Figlenski land ceremony in Fall 2021.



Donate today to keep the northwest wild!
give.conservationw.org/fall | (206) 675-9747

Follow us:

Find other ways to support and maximize your impact at conservationnw.org/join-us. Learn how to double your impact with workplace matching, give donations of stock and IRAs, or commit a legacy gift through our partners at Freewill. A free online tool for creating a will bequest, life insurance policy or retirement fund beneficiaries, and gifts of property.