

Two Vital Properties Conserved!

Wildlife Corridor Conservation Easement

Okanogan Land Trust (OLT) has secured protection of nearly 100 acres in a critical location for wildlife movement! AJ and Michelle Engebretson have worked slowly over a number of years to both improve the habitat on their land and provide for safe passage of wildlife across U.S. Highway 97. “We have always watched the wildlife move across our land from the river to the east of us or from the mountains to the west. We love seeing the animals on our place,” said AJ.

The 2,000-acre Carter Mountain Wildlife Area lies immediately west of the Engebretson parcels. It provides for mule deer wintering habitat, and supports a variety of wildlife including black bears, migratory birds, cougars, bobcats, and golden eagles. OLT board member Allisa Carlson, who also serves on the Working for Wildlife coalition, noted, “One of the best aspects of this conservation project was the additional funding efforts provided by the Okanogan Trails Chapter of the Mule Deer Foundation. It’s a great example of partnership!”



The property is primarily sagebrush steppe habitat with a mix of trees in the southwest corner. The Engebretsons have worked diligently to eradicate invasives and plant native species throughout the landscape. “I enjoy seeing all of the flowers in the spring, the smell of the sage, and I have pulled a whole lot of weeds over the years!” said Michelle. (continued on p. 2)

Meadow Mouse Conservation Easement



Lightning Creek tumbles down through a forested hillside on its way to the confluence with Bonaparte Creek. That creek corridor and forested hillside is now permanently protected thanks to the generosity of Cheryl McGinley and Anne MacDonaugh. Cheryl and Ann began acquiring contiguous parcels in the mid-90s, built their beautiful home in 2002, and made plans to retire in peace. Over time, they have acquired nearly 300 acres of forest that they tend on a daily basis using holistic practices intended to create a rich mosaic of healthy trees and open meadows. The easement calls for the property to be forever managed for forest health and wildlife habitat. “We have seen probably one of everything from our kitchen window: moose, elk, deer, cats and critters of all types. And the birds seem to get more plentiful and varied each year!” Cheryl proudly explained.

As the land trust worked at assessing the property for the easement baseline report it became readily apparent how correct her observations were. “Signs of wildlife, and wildlife, were spotted often during site visits. It is just a very nice mix of open stands of timber, a deep little creek ravine, and some very lush meadows,” described Jerry DeBacker in his report to the board. (continued on p. 2)

OLT Welcomes New Conservation Associate!

We are happy to announce that Anna Burica joined OLT's staff in July 2017. As Conservation Associate, Anna assists OLT in acquiring conservation easements and conducts community outreach with a focus in the Okanogan River watershed.

Growing up in rural McCall, Idaho, Anna enjoyed hiking and camping in summer and skiing in winter. In the splendor of the outdoors she started on a path towards conservation work.

Anna earned a B.S. in Natural Resources Management and a B.A. in Sociology from Colorado State University (CSU), and a J.D. from the University Of Denver. After graduating she developed additional skills in GIS/GPS, drafting conservation easements, stewardship of conserved properties, record keeping, fundraising, and policy development.



("Wildlife Corridor CE" continued)

The conservation easement does not provide for public access. There is a public trailhead and a parking lot across the highway that provides for access to Carter Mountain. The easement language accommodates the building of a wildlife underpass under Route 97 if that much-discussed potential project should come to fruition. The potential for an underpass alone raises the importance of conserving this land and the Engebretsons have pledged to assist in that effort. The conservation easement is but one element of long range plans to protect both human life and wildlife in the highway corridor. The Engebretsons are to be commended for having such a deep commitment, and the necessary patience, to see the preservation of their land accomplished.

("Meadow Mouse CE" continued)

As the couple chose to donate the conservation easement, it now provides a great deal of leverage to assist in securing future conservation projects in the form of a charitable match. DeBacker explained, "This doesn't happen very often, where you have landowners willing to choose conservation and donate the value of their property to the common good. It is extremely generous of them!"

Avid birders, wild plant enthusiasts, and community volunteers, the couple have worked hard and given much to secure their little slice of our shared landscape. Anne reflected, "There are days where it is a load and a half of hard work to keep this place up, but I get great joy out of seeing one the plants we've been nurturing begin to take off with a new season, great joy." They continue to devote their time to restoring an old homesteader cabin and a small pond on the property. Our hope is that they find time to share a bird tour or plant survey as they continue to care and nurture their conserved ground.

OLT EVENTS!

2017 events recap

March: Spring Forward

celebration at Sitzmark Ski Lodge in Tonasket.

April: History lecture and Open House at OLT's office.

June: Birding in the Highlands w/ Okanogan Highlands Alliance.

July: Ponderosa Leadership Circle catered dinner and journalist/author reading.

And we're not slowing down in 2018!

What's on tap for 2018

Dec 1, 2017: Holiday Open

House. Ring in the holidays and learn more about OLT. As always, enjoy our rotating Okanogan County Artists exhibit.

Dec 2017: Festival of Trees for Nonprofits at the 12 Tribes

Casino. Come see the trees and bid on OLT's entry, "Feathered Friends of the Forest."

March 10, 2018: Spring Forward.

It was so much fun last year, we're doing it again! Join us for food, fun, and music at Sitzmark Ski Lodge for the 2nd annual event!

July 15, 2018 : The Ponderosa Leadership Circle event will take

place at Ester Bricques Winery. Please contact us if you're interested in joining the Circle and attending the event.

Welcome to Our Two Newest Board Members!

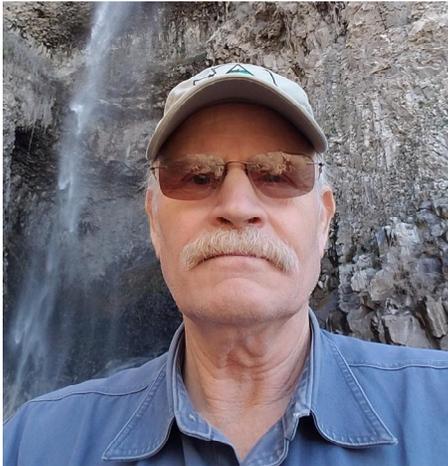
Noreen Olma joined OLT's Board of Directors in summer 2017. She grew up as a farmer's daughter and has been ranching in the Tonasket area with her husband, Derek, since 1985.

In 2013, the Olmas began the process of placing a conservation easement on much of their deeded land. "I believe in conservation easements because they give ranching families such as ours opportunities for growth, while also maintaining the integrity of the land forever." With the conservation easement now in place, the Olma family has continued to grow and expand their cow calf operation to support three families on the ranch.

Noreen received a degree in Medical Laboratory Technology from the British Columbia Institute of Technology. She works as the Laboratory Manager at North Valley Hospital in Tonasket. Noreen is a past president of the Okanogan County Cattlewomen's Association and maintains membership in the state and national Cattlewomen's organizations. She is also a proud supporter of the Tonasket Future Farmers of America and agricultural education.



Dale Swedberg grew up near Ellensburg, WA, on a dairy farm that also raised beef cattle, grain and hay. He attended Washington State University, receiving a B.S. in Wildlife Biology in 1972 and an M.S. in Environmental Science in 1981.



Dale worked for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife from 1976 until he retired in 2016. During his tenure with WDFW, Dale held six different positions; the most fulfilling was managing the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area for 16 years. Dale came to realize that the wildlife habitat was fire dependent and that fire would be needed to manage it.

Dale is married to a very supportive wife, Kathy, who knows more about wildlife management, wildlife control, fire and prescribed fire than she cares to admit. They have two grown children and three grandchildren.

Dale helped found Okanogan Land Trust, North Central Washington Prescribed Fire Council, and Washington Prescribed Fire Council. He has served on the Citizen's Committee for Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Foundation and currently serves on the Board of Trustees for the Okanogan Historical Society.

Introducing "OkaKnowledgey"!

Try saying that 5 times fast! OLT is planning a series of educational programs exploring all sorts of Okanogan-centric themes with an emphasis on the natural world, history, literature and the like.

For the first *OkaKnowledgey* series, which will take place in early 2018, we are bringing speakers from the Speakers Bureau at *humanities Washington* to the region. The times and locations are yet to be worked out but we've got our dates set.

SAVE THE 2018 DATES!

February 21st, March 21st, April 18th, and May 16th

And that's only the beginning. We are seeking ideas for future topics and presenters that you, our members, would like to hear and see at local venues. Share your ideas for speakers, films, and topics with us at info@okanoganlandtrust.org or call the office and share *your OkaKnowledgey* with us!

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From the Cascades to the Kettles, Canada to the Columbia, Okanogan Land Trust is a local nonprofit organization connecting people to the land and conserving and sustaining our working farms and ranches, wildlife habits, and water resources for generations to come.

our mission

PLACE
STAMP
HERE



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