

On The Ground

One of the greatest challenges of working in the world of land conservation is the length of time it takes to bring a project to fruition. Then, far too often, we move right past celebrating a success to the next project because we know how long the next landowner has been waiting in line!

Our primary funding is provided by either state or federal programs intended to preserve and protect farmland, wildlife, riparian corridors, and associated habitat. Working with the departments can be both rewarding and aggravating at times but absolutely necessary if we are to succeed in fulfilling our mission.

Fortunately, we are blessed with remarkable landscapes worthy of preservation, and prime habitat capable of supporting a wide range of wildlife! But, most importantly, we are blessed with patient landowners. Over the course of the last year, we at Okanogan Land Trust have been astounded at the number of families that have come forward requesting our assistance in stewarding their land legacy. (continued on p. 2)



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A Year Full of Events and Gatherings

2018 was quite a year for OLT events, both old favorites and brand new offerings!



We're particularly proud of OkaKnowledgey, a newly launched educational speaker series held from January through April. This year, topics included:

- ◇ Northwest folk music and history with the Methow's own Hank Cramer
- ◇ Geology of the Okanogan with Dr. Ralph Dawes of Wenatchee Valley College
- ◇ Water security and scarcity with economist and writer Rachel Cardone
- ◇ "Crazy Politics" with Dr. Cornell Clayton of Washington State University

We were so inspired by the great interest and attendance that we have decided to put on another OkaKnowledgey series in 2019! We will send out details on the 2019 series as they are available. (continued on p. 2)

("On The Ground" continued)

We currently have two projects in the top fifteen for state ranchland preservation, which would protect over 3,100 acres! Plans are to wrap these up in early 2019. In addition, we are seeking federal rangeland conservation funding another 1,200-acre project. The Working for Wildlife (W4W) collaborative that we participate in is seeking to protect 1,400 acres of forest, and we just added another project into the W4W plan that will protect bird and big game habitat on another 400 acres. In addition, we are seeking farmland protection for 175 acres of ground adjacent to previously completed conservation easements and have begun discussions with a ranching family that would like to explore protecting about 2,800 acres of their spread.

All told, we are currently working on over 9,000 acres of conservation projects in Okanogan and Ferry counties!! We are delighted that so many people have called us to begin talking about conservation programs!

There are no guarantees that all of these projects will be successful, but we are confident that over time and with landowners' patience we can conserve our shared landscapes. We know that there has been a lot of misinformation spread around the county in the recent past about conservation easements. BUT, keep in mind that all of these farms, ranches, and forested land will remain on the county's tax rolls and continue to pay property taxes! The opportunity to fish and hunt on the property will still be at the discretion of the owner, as it always has been. Let's repeat: Okanogan Land Trust conservation easements do not strip water from the land, eliminate hunting and fishing, or allow anyone to stop paying property taxes, period. Easements are but one tool available to protect our legacy of open spaces and prime wildlife habitat. Stop by or give the office a call to discuss your property- we just ask that you are patient and willing to share our heritage with future generations.



("Events and Gatherings" continued)

In March and April we teamed up with the Okanogan Conservation District for workshops to assist landowners with researching and protecting their water rights.

In May we participated in the 9th annual Oden Rd Fire Study, which brings Okanogan High School science students into the field to study the effects of fire and its aftermath on a landscape.

In July we hosted a butterfly tour in the Sinlahekin with lepidopterist Caitlin LeBar. In case you missed it, we are planning another field trip (or two!) for 2019.

In addition, we put on several of our "usual" events that we've held annually in previous years:

- ◇ In March we held our 2nd annual Spring Forward event at Sitzmark Ski Lodge in Tonasket to celebrate the coming of spring and the changing of the clocks. As before, the 2018 event included a silent auction, live music by Waterfall, a potluck lunch, and local hard cider from Ole Swede.
- ◇ July brought our Ponderosa Circle event, which we held at Esther Bricques Winery in Oroville. As always, this is our best chance to connect with those whose generosity and involvement enable us to do the work we do. This year featured an engaging speech on community building by Rufus Woods of the *Wenatchee World*,
- ◇ 2018 featured the 10th annual OLT Poetry Potluck — this year, some of the poets were also featured on Spokane Public Radio's "Poetry Moment!"

2019 OLT EVENTS!

Festival of Trees for Nonprofits at the 12 Tribes Casino. Come see the trees and bid on OLT's entry, "Water is Life." **Nov 30, 2018**

OkaKnowledge speaker series **Jan-Apr 2019**. Dates, venues, and speakers TBD.

Spring Forward returns for a third year with food, fun, and music. Venue TBD. **March 9, 2019**

Ponderosa Circle event, an annual rite of summer. Location and program TBD. Please contact us if you're interested in joining.

July 20, 2019

Stay tuned for more info!

... And we're not slowing down in 2019!



Stewarding a Legacy

Every year, OLT staff monitors every property we have conserved to make sure that the terms of the conservation easement are being upheld. Currently, this means that 27 properties and over 9,000 acres need to be visited within the year. This monitoring obligation is an opportunity for staff to nourish landowner relationships. Landowners are OLT's partners in conservation. Establishing a positive working relationship with landowners helps ensure that they understand the terms and restrictions contained in their conservation easements. This results in fewer violations and concordant management practices.

Stewardship monitoring is always an adventure. During the visit, OLT staff tours the property, takes pictures, and talks to the landowner if available.



Historically, we have done our monitoring by driving or walking the property. This year, we took the opportunity to monitor one property by drone. We contracted with a local licensed drone operator who took his drone and camera out to a 1,600-acre ranch and flew it and provided us with aerial video footage of the property. This technique provides a unique and different perspective of the property. We do not plan to use this method to replace on-the-ground monitoring but may use it periodically to monitor some of the hard-to-reach locations.

These monitoring visits are so much more than an obligation. OLT staff is privileged as we get to walk the incredible properties we worked so hard to protect. We get to observe the ongoing use of the agricultural properties that are a cornerstone of our local economy. Most of all, we get to observe the care that our landowners put into their land and their livestock.

Volunteer Opportunities!

While monetary support is ALWAYS appreciated, we also highly value donations of your time and energy!

Okanogan Land Trust just ADOPTED A HIGHWAY!

Or a mile of one anyway. We have signed up to pick up litter along a stretch of Highway 97 south of Tonasket. This will entail volunteer work opportunities every six months in Fall and Spring.

Monitoring for Native Trout

Various times and locations. You'd look and feel great in waders! Help us collect stream samples as part of a project funded through Western Native Trout Initiative.

Connect with us at info@okanoganlandtrust.org or call the office at 509-557-6306 for additional information on these projects!

509-557-6306

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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 our working farms and ranches, wildlife habits, and water resources for generations to come.

our mission



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