

OLT Protects 1,400 Acres along Tunk Creek

A conservation effort more than six years in the making came to fruition in September 2019, resulting in the permanent protection of 1,403 acres in the Tunk Valley east of Riverside, WA. The Okanogan Land Trust (OLT) has secured a conservation easement (CE) on the property that focuses on forest stewardship and wildlife habitat preservation. As with all CEs held by OLT, the property remains in private ownership and on the county tax rolls.



Since 2013, OLT has worked with a consortium of partners (including the Okanogan Conservation District, the Okanogan Chapter of the Mule Deer Foundation, Conservation Northwest, the Colville Confederated Tribes, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the US Forest Service, and others) on the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's "Working for Wildlife" initiative. This initiative aims to protect habitat for Mule deer, Canadian Lynx, and Sharp-tailed grouse, and to maintain and restore habitat connectivity.

The final stage of the protection effort brought together the Conservation Fund, Conservation Northwest, OLT, and a private buyer. Stacy Shutts, Executive Director for OLT, explained, "The Conservation Fund provided a bridge loan that Conservation Northwest supplemented with donated

dollars, NFWF brought Working for Wildlife funding to the transaction, and OLT was able to negotiate a reduced price for the project and provide conservation easement stewardship. The private buyer entered the picture late in the timeline but has proven to be deeply committed to protecting the resource." (continued on p. 2)

Homestead and Habitat Protected on Marias Creek

In June 2019, OLT acquired a conservation easement which permanently protects 58 acres along Marias Creek near its confluence with Toroda Creek. While the property contains some remnants of the "Wheaton Homestead" built in the early 20th century, the primary purpose of the CE is to protect wildlife habitat and riparian ecosystems.

OLT was granted the CE from Crown Resources, who acquired the property, along with several others, to fulfill habitat mitigation requirements associated with the Buckhorn Mine. Crown Resources retains ownership of the property and continues to perform fence maintenance, weed control, and other mitigation obligations in accordance with the mine's permit requirements.

While most of OLT's CEs do not allow public access, the Lower Marias Creek contains a picnic table for public use and enjoyment. Anyone using this area does so at their own risk, and of course, is asked to leave no food or garbage behind.



("Tunk Creek CE" continued)

The buyers— who now own the land subject to the CE terms— are also excited about the outcome, stating, "We are so pleased to be able to make a contribution to conservation and habitat protection in our beautiful state. We hope to be good stewards and to leave the land for the next generation in better health than we found it!"

The CE limits future development of the property to two residential homesites and provides for active management of the timberlands. The Tunk Valley lies in the heart of the Working for Wildlife focus area and provides prime habitat for many species of wildlife.



Endowment Fund Supports OLT Staffing and Operations



An incredibly generous anonymous donor gifted an endowment fund to OLT in August 2019! The principle of this gift will remain intact and invested for balanced growth and income, while investment proceeds will be used to offset staff salaries allowing OLT to flourish. Investment policies adopted by the OLT Board of Directors will dictate how the money is invested and managed.

"We are extremely grateful for this gift!" said Stacy Shutts, OLT's Executive Director. "By helping to stabilize our operational funding, this endowment will expand our capacity to carry out our land protection and educational programs."

Your donations are just as valuable! Contact the Okanogan Land Trust to learn how you can contribute to conservation in the Okanogan region.

OkaKnowledgy Speaker Series Heads into 3rd Year

"OkaKnowledgy" is OLT's educational speaker series which focuses on naturalist topics and social history of Washington presented in an entertaining light. 2019 ushered in the series' 2nd year:

- In February we heard state climatologist, Nick Bond, discuss climate change and its effects on salmon at the Okanogan Grange
- In March, author and historian Jack Nisbet presented his research on the adventures of John and Carrie Leiberg across the Inland Northwest at the turn of the 20th century, also at the Okanogan Grange
- In April, writer and producer Feliks Banel presented on historical weather in the Evergreen State, at the Community Cultural Center in Tonasket
- In October, we held a photography-based field trip to The Nature Conservancy's Barker Mountain Preserve near Tonasket

...Looking Forward to OkaKnowledgy 2020, 3rd Wednesdays of the Month

OLT is lining up presenters on geology, salmon restoration, climate-friendly ranching, and regional history. We're also planning another OLT field trip!

Mark your calendars for OkaKnowledgy 2020: dates are Jan 15th, Feb 19th, Mar 18th, and Apr 15th



MORE OLT EVENTS in 2020

Spring Forward returns for a 4th year in March 2020 with food, fun, and music. Venue TBD.

Ponderosa Circle is an annual rite of summer every July. Venue TBD. Please contact us if you're interested in joining or hosting.

Meet OLT's New Executive Director!

It has been a privilege to meet supporters of the Okanogan Land Trust over the last three months. From the large volunteer group at the highway cleanup to the poetry potluck for OLT donors, you have shared stories that show your connection to this place. I have heard about wildlife on your property, questions about how to manage your forestland for ecological benefit, and some of you even shared that you are preparing to donate a conservation easement!

I returned to land trust work because conserving land is the foundation that allows ecological and social values to thrive. On more than one occasion, I have heard landowners remark that their land owns them. It makes sense, since we rely on the same basic ecology that applies to wildlife— clean water, clean air, and enough space to allow natural processes to perform these services.

I am excited to work with you on conserved land throughout the Okanogan region, and I hope to meet more of you at the 2020 OkaKnowledgy series. Let's continue building community around conservation.



Stacy and Bryan with OLT swag, atop Maple Pass!

UCSRB Funds Okanogan Land Trust Salmonid-Based Outreach

In September, OLT received funding from the Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board (UCSRB) to perform education and outreach around salmon recovery. OLT's goal with this funding is to increase awareness of conservation easements as a strategy to improve salmonid habitat in the Okanogan River and its tributaries. Controlling erosion using riparian vegetation is another method to restore streams; roots hold sediment and stream banks in place, preventing it from building up within waterways where it can fill in the pools and side channels that fish use as refuges from strong current and high flows (Recovery Plan, Appendix N).

WHAT YOU CAN DO: OLT is seeking a landowner adjacent to a riparian area (a river or stream) to participate in a riparian planting in Spring 2020. The purpose of this effort is to demonstrate a method for reducing erosion or incision along waterways that support anadromous salmon.

Contact OLT if interested in a small riparian planting on your property.

WHY: Too much sediment can smother fish eggs and bury spawning gravel. Vegetation can also decrease water temperature by providing shade, improving water quality for threatened and endangered salmonids.

WHAT ELSE YOU CAN DO: Learn more about salmon recovery in the Upper Columbia Basin at www.ucsr.org.

Volunteer with the Okanogan Land Trust!

ADOPT A HIGHWAY Clean-Up

OLT has adopted a stretch of Highway 97 south of Tonasket. We need volunteers every six months in Fall and Spring.

Conservation Easement Monitoring

Annual monitoring of easements takes place between May and October.

Riparian Planting

Help us to help the salmon by restoring a streamside bank with native plants in Spring 2020. As part of this event, we are also seeking a landowner interested in having restoration work performed along their riparian property.

Contact us (info@okanoganlandtrust.org or 509-557-6306) for additional information on these projects!





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Mission

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

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