



Annual Report

2023

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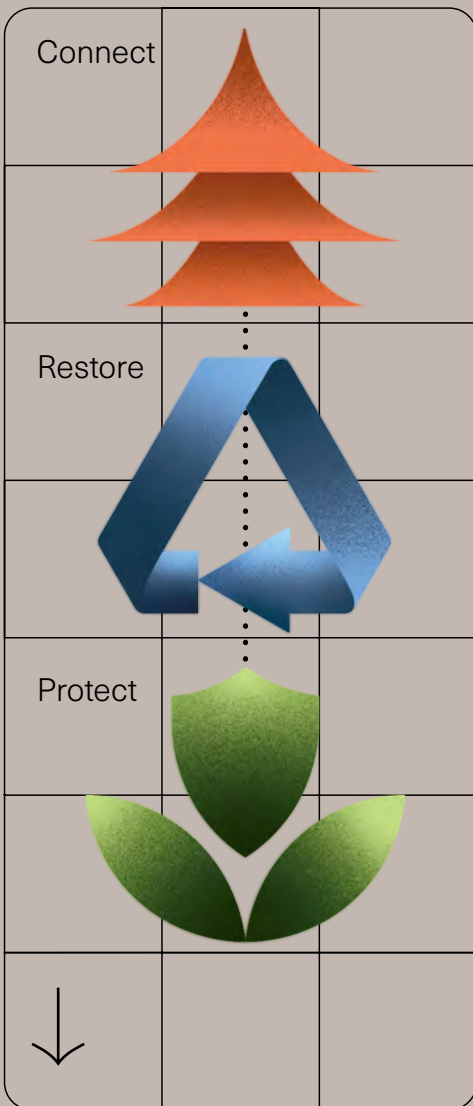
FROM MITCH



Last November I was privileged to help trap a Canada lynx. We caught her east of Kelowna, B.C., so she could be released on the Colville Indian Reservation to help restore the lynx population of the Kettle Mountains. She was one of 26 we have helped move so far. I was the first to come upon her in the cage trap, and I got to witness the whole process.

In March, the U.S. government released a final plan for restoring the North Cascades grizzly bear population. Both events mark years of effort. We have pushed for that grizzly bear plan since our first day, 35 years ago. And we have pushed for lynx recovery since shortly after.

Thankfully, not every conservation need takes over three decades. Many things we have accomplished quickly. Last year we invested heavily in field work needed to inform the design and location of structures to enable wildlife to cross Interstate 5 in two locations between Olympia and Vancouver, Washington. This effort is advancing at lightning speed. I have hope that elk and wolves have a crossing structure to use perhaps as soon as 2030. With each conservation challenge, no matter how long it takes, we at Conservation Northwest stay focused and engaged. With your continued help, we are keeping the Northwest wild.



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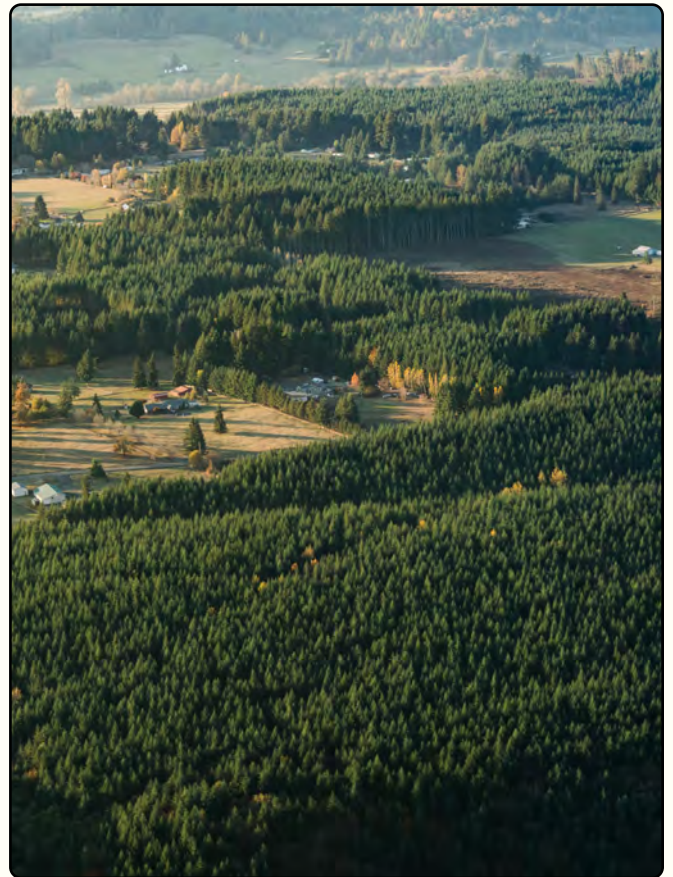
CASCADES TO OLYMPICS

Safe Passage I-5

In spring 2023, we launched the Safe Passage I-5 campaign, a coalition effort that includes WDFW, the WA Department of Transportation (WSDOT), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Tribes, community members, and non-profits.

The last two viable connectivity pathways across the I-5 corridor to link the Olympic and Cascades mountain ranges are threatened by rapid development. I-5 is a multi-lane ecological barrier disrupting free movement of elk, cougar, deer, black bear, fisher and western gray squirrel. The window to address this critical issue is rapidly closing.

Our goal is to give WSDOT the data it needs to secure federal funds to build wildlife crossing structures on I-5 and have the first crossing in place by 2030.



▲ Wildlife crossing on I-5 near Castle Rock could be key to some wildlife species' survival. © CNW

Feasibility Study

In 2023, we commissioned a Southwest Washington I-5 Wildlife Crossings Alternative Analysis Report. This feasibility study collected monitoring and engineering data to determine where crossing structures are needed and the types of structures that will best support wildlife attempting to migrate or adapt on either side of I-5.

After a series of interviews, workshops, visits to 12 possible crossing sites, and analysis of wildlife monitoring data, 11 options were recommended. These are a mix of retrofits to existing sites like bridges on the Toutle and Cowlitz rivers, removal of fish passage barriers and replacing them with larger structures for both aquatic and terrestrial species, and new crossing structures over I-5 adjacent to undeveloped forest.

Special thanks to the Connell family for funding support!

Next Steps:

- Ensure that key habitats and movement corridors are protected.
- Install new wildlife monitoring cameras at proposed crossing sites.
- Continue to coordinate four working groups with agencies, Tribes, and other non-profit organizations.
- Narrow down the options for crossings with studies on soil, light and sound impacts to wildlife, fish passages, and wildlife genetics.
- Prepare a “shovel-ready” project for state and federal grant applications.



“

The answer to the plight of our species is all around us if we choose to give our time and knowledge to the youth for outcomes we will not be around to see. We will usher in a generation of problem solvers, thinkers, listeners, and innovators capable of tackling the grand challenges of our time.

BRIAN STEWART

Cascades to Olympic Program Senior Manager



▲ By tracking species movements (or lack there of) like elk, we have identified two key wildlife corridors for I-5.



▲ A Toutle Middle School student envisioning what a future I-5 crossing structure could look like.

Toutle Middle School Student Conservationists

In the fall, a group of 7th and 8th graders from Toutle Middle School in southwest Washington joined staff from Conservation Northwest, WSDOT, the Department of Natural Resources, and UC Davis to learn about the science and vision of getting wildlife across I-5.

Students learned how to install and maintain wildlife cameras; identify signs of wildlife and species in photographs; and analyze and record wildlife data. The students are responsible for four wildlife cameras throughout the academic year. They learned how to assess the strengths and weaknesses of multiple wildlife crossing structures, including what types of structures would be needed for different animals, considering size, line of sight, and prey.


SAGELANDS HERITAGE PROGRAM

SHP protects and connects shrub-steppe landscapes of the Columbia Plateau in eastern Washington. We are improving ecosystem resilience and habitat connectivity by monitoring wildlife, removing derelict fencing and installing wildlife-friendly fencing, virtual fence projects, planting sagebrush in burned areas, and constructing climate-smart structures to restore floodplains.

2023 Highlights

- Provided staff and volunteer assistance to species specific projects including building pygmy rabbit breeding enclosures, leopard frog translocations, post-fire sage grouse shrub plantings, sharp-tailed grouse recovery, reducing wildlife vehicle collisions with mule deer on Hwy 97, removing barbed wire fences for elk and deer migration corridors, and monitoring bighorn sheep interactions with domestic sheep.
- Jordan Ryckman began working with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) pygmy rabbit team to set up a Classroom Wildlife Monitoring pilot program using wildlife insights and getting students involved to help tag wildlife camera photos.
- The SHP team supported WDFW in assessing the state population of burrowing owls and we advocated for increasing the protection status in Washington to 'threatened' or 'endangered'. We also created a regional partnership of stakeholder advocates from the tri-cities to British Columbia and assisted the Colville Confederated Tribes in locating potential recovery sites.

Priority Species



Badger Bighorn sheep Mule Deer

Pygmy Rabbit Sage Grouse Sharp-tailed Grouse

Virtual Fencing Update

800,000 ACRES COVERED

1,900 COLLARED COWS

500 MILES OF OLD OR BURNED FENCE REMOVED

23 BASE STATIONS

13 RANCHES USING VIRTUAL FENCE IN THE SHP REGION

In my 45 years working to help farmers and ranchers improve their operations to benefit wildlife, I have never seen or could have imagined such a game-changing technology as virtual fencing. We can reinvent range management, which will have unimaginable positive effects on the ability of multiple wildlife species to move safely across the landscape. Ranchers win, habitat connectivity wins, communities win, and the wildlife we all love wins.

“ JAY KEHNE
Sagelands Heritage Program Associate Director



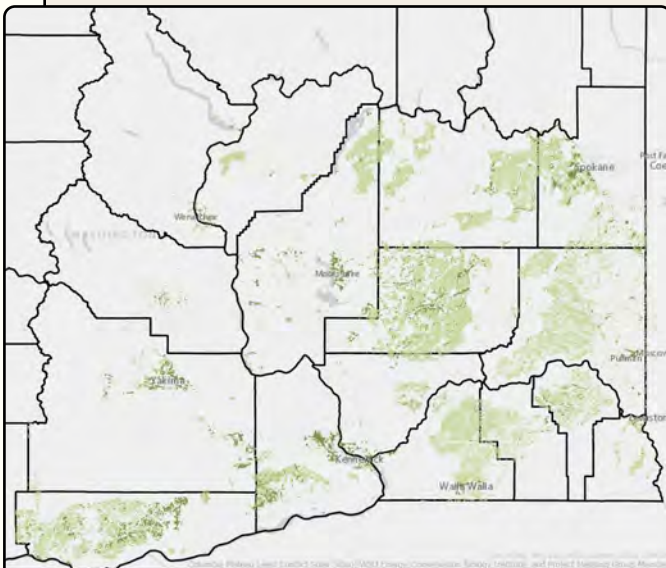
Farm Bill Lobbying



Jay Kehne joined a delegation to Washington, D.C. with 19 other National Wildlife Federation affiliates to advocate for the inclusion of wildlife and habitat protections in the 2023 Farm Bill. The delegation contacted over 60 legislative offices and pushed to:



- Protect \$20 billion in conservation funding.
- Improve programs that support farmers and landowners to establish wetlands, grasses, and trees.
- Continue the cover crop program to improve carbon sequestration.
- Include wildlife corridors and connectivity benefits as criteria for cost share payments to landowners.

Renewable Energy Siting



Least Conflict Solar Siting in the Columbia Plateau

Lands Suitable for Solar Development and

-  Low Conflict for Conservation, Farmlands, and Ranchlands
-  Low Conflict for Conservation, and Moderate Conflict for Farmlands and Ranchlands

Conservation Northwest is engaged in policy, mapping, and oversight to place renewable energy production **only** in places with the least impact on wildlife and habitat.

- Staff served on the environmental, rangelands, and farmlands technical committees and working groups for Washington State University's Least Conflict Solar Siting Report.
- Provided comments on the Washington Department of Ecology's Utility Scale Solar and Onshore Wind Programmatic Environmental Impact Statements and added connectivity language to House Bill 1216.
- Provided comments on the Bureau of Land Management's Update to the Western Solar Plan.
- Worked with National Wildlife Federation staff to pass a Wildlife Responsible Solar Resolution, calling for nationwide support for policies that protect or avoid critical wildlife habitats, value connectivity corridors, evaluate cumulative impacts of projects on wildlife, and prioritize early and meaningful Tribal consultation.

COMMUNITY WILDLIFE MONITORING PROGRAM

For more than 15 years Conservation Northwest has engaged community science volunteers in snow tracking and remote camera monitoring of wildlife to help us better understand the presence of rare and sensitive species across Washington. State agencies use the data to help inform the planning and recovery of a variety of species in important wildlife habitat corridors and critical protected areas. Monitoring enables us to seek government support and funding for wildlife crossing maintenance and new structures that connect genetically isolated wildlife populations.

Volunteer Apprentice Project

In 2023, we launched the Volunteer Apprentice Project to support diverse learners in the conservation field. Tanner Humphries, Community Wildlife Monitoring Program Senior Coordinator, worked with seven enthusiastic volunteers. Over 10 days in the fall and winter, the cohort received field training; ongoing mentorship, access to conservation and wildlife professionals; community engagement skills; professional growth and career development, all while supporting the field work of our Community Wildlife Monitoring Program. We encouraged applicants from historically underrepresented groups in the environmental and conservation field, including BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and English as a second language communities.



2023 Highlights

- 240,611** PHOTOS CAPTURED
- 140** TOTAL VOLUNTEERS
- 87** CAMERA STATIONS
- 51** SPECIES RECORDED
- 37** SNOW TRACKING SURVEYS
- 10** NEW STATIONS
- 10** PARTNERS RECEIVED DATA

CANADA LYNX

Lynx in the Kettle Range

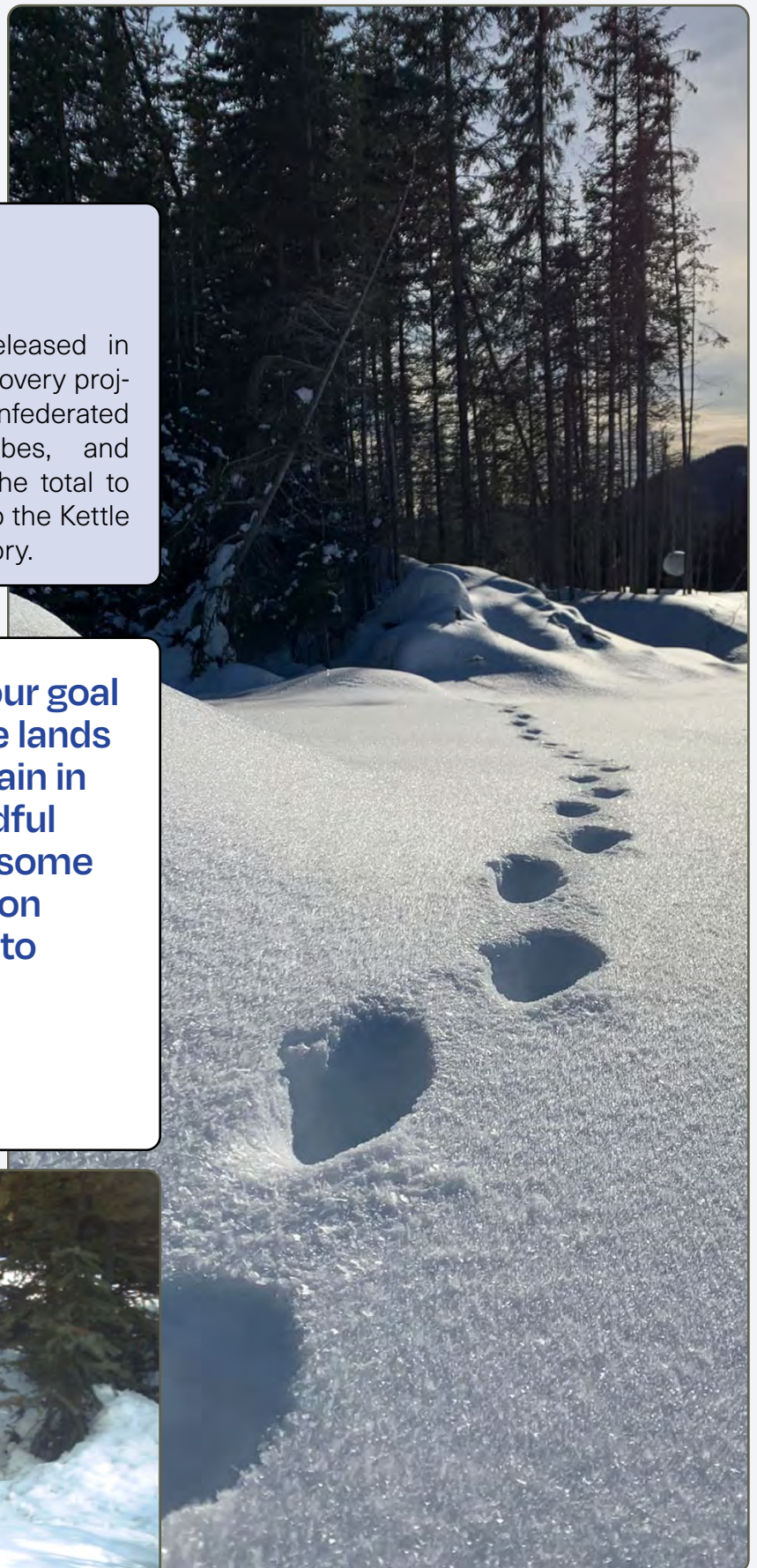
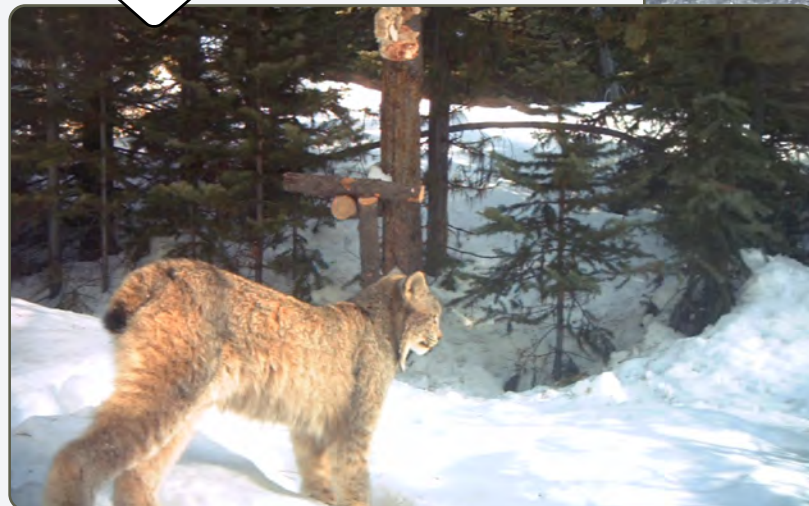
Seven more Canada lynx were released in Washington in the third season of our recovery project in partnership with the Colville Confederated Tribes, Upper Columbia United Tribes, and Okanagan Nation Alliance. This brings the total to 26 lynx relocated from British Columbia to the Kettle Range, which is part of their historic territory.

We're about halfway toward our goal of releasing 50 lynx on Colville lands in the Kettle Range. Most remain in the Kettles, and from the handful that have traveled north (and some south again) we've learned a ton about connectivity pathways to other lynx populations.



DAVE WERTZ

Science and Conservation Senior Director



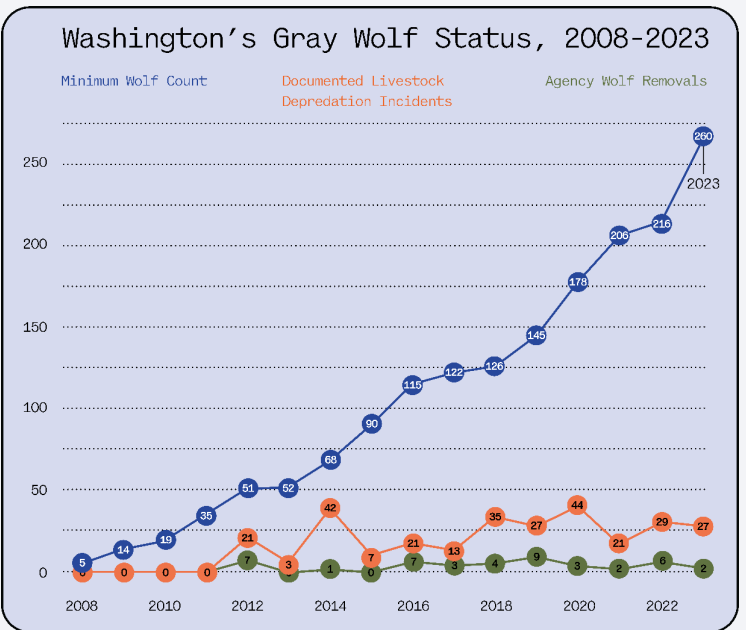
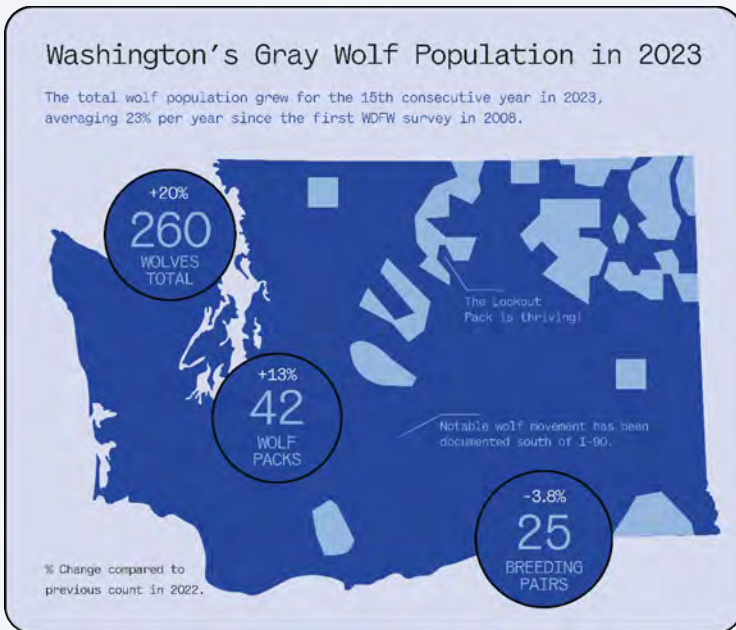
▲ Lynx tracks. © David Moskowitz

GRAY WOLVES

Non-lethal conflict deterrence measures have successfully minimized livestock depredation and reduced wolf mortality, helping the state wolf population grow at an average of 23% per year since 2008. Washington's wolf recovery efforts have redefined conservation success for this iconic wildlife species and makes it the most successful in the nation.

Wolves are doing well in Washington as the 2023 WDFW Annual Wolf Report indicates. Numbers related to population health are generally up or holding steady. This has been accomplished with the hard work of cattle producers, state and federal agency staff, and many non-profit folks. Under this continued trajectory and through collaborative conservation efforts, we are optimistic that it is only a matter of time before we witness the presence of wolf packs across the state.

JAY SHEPHERD, Ph.D.
Wolf Program Senior Manager



GRIZZLY BEARS

Our work on grizzly bear recovery is on two fronts: the Coast to Cascades program in British Columbia and supporting recovery efforts in the North Cascades.

1 Coast to Cascades Program

We continued to advance our initiative to protect grizzly bears and their habitats and increase habitat connectivity from the British Columbia Coast Range to the North Cascades. This included partnering with communities to reduce human-bear conflicts by helping people manage foods that attract bears, closing roads in key watersheds, and facilitating bear transplants into the critically endangered Stein-Nahatlatch population.

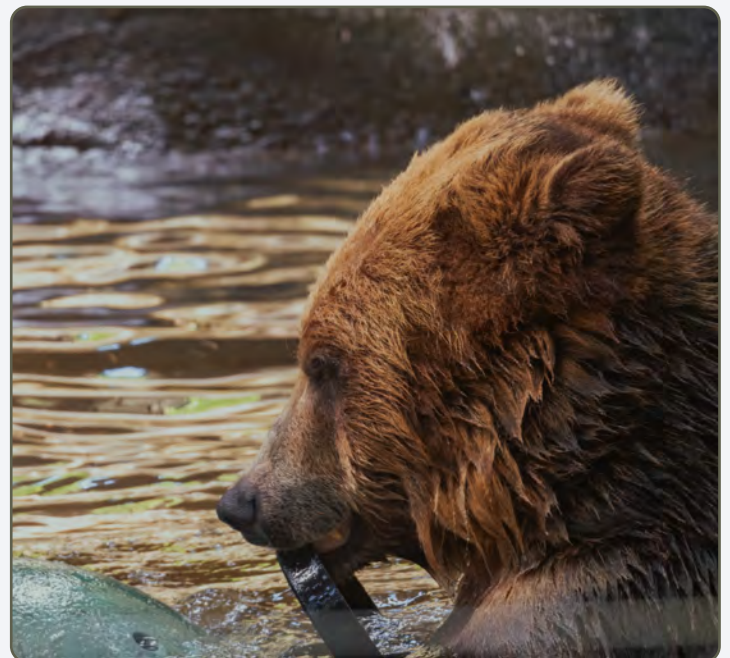
- Added six more electric fences securing commercial crops from bears in the Pemberton Valley, critical core and connectivity grizzly bear habitat between two threatened populations. Bears, livestock, and humans have now coexisted through several seasons without conflict.
- Started a series of discussions with N'Quatqua First Nation to establish an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area for their traditional territories.
- Funded a detailed genetic analysis of grizzly bear population across the Kettle-Granby region in British Columbia using hair samples.
- With Okanagan Nation Alliance laid the groundwork for a public campaign to restore grizzly bears to the B.C. side of the North Cascades.



2 North Cascades Grizzlies

Last year we supported the Environmental Impact Statement process to begin grizzly bear recovery efforts in the North Cascades ecosystem, one of only six grizzly bear recovery zones. In April, the federal government (National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) made a formal decision to actively restore this grizzly population.

The agencies will seek to move three to seven grizzly bears per year for five to ten years to establish an initial population of 25 bears. Release sites will be remote, roadless, wilderness areas in North Cascades National Park or Stephen Mather wilderness, Pasayten, and Glacier Peak wilderness areas. After an initial population of 25 grizzly bears is established, it could take 60-100 years for the population to reach 200.



- ▲ Top: Grizzly at Northwest Trek Wildlife Park. © CNW.
- ◀ Left: Installing electric fencing in B.C. © Taylor Green

CENTRAL CASCADES WATERSHED RESTORATION

Upper Green Watershed Strategy

The 93-mile long Green/Duwamish River watershed, stretching from the Cascade crest to Elliott Bay, sees substantial investments in its lower and middle sections, while the upper section, covering 231 miles, has not received the same amount of attention.

The upper watershed is the source of high-quality drinking water for nearly one million residents, an important ecological connector for wildlife, and retains some of the last and best salmon habitat in King County.

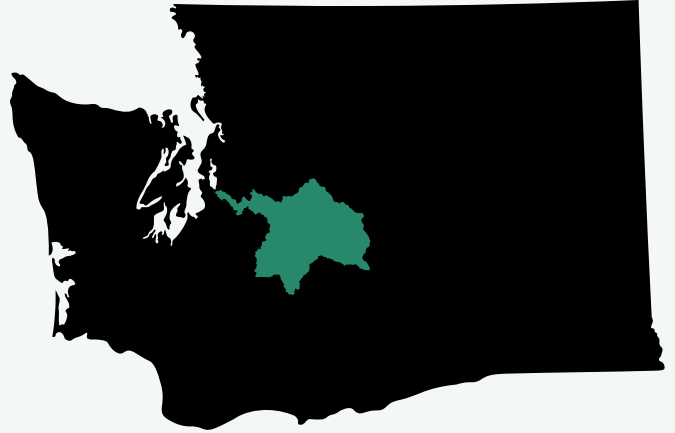
Conservation Northwest launched a collaborative stewardship and restoration strategy which aims to:

- Remove sensitive lands from industrial production.
- Develop a plan for restoration on those lands.
- Coordinate working forestland activities with habitat restoration needs that will better prepare the headwaters for the anticipated return of salmon in 2031.

These actions will increase ecosystem resilience, protect and connect wildlife habitat, continue to ensure the supply of high-quality drinking water, mitigate the effects of climate change through carbon storage and fire refugia, and support affected industries through any transitions.

So far, we've helped Tacoma Water secure funding from King County to purchase 597 acres of private land along the Green River. We're investing in ecological and ecosystem services assessments and landowner management, both set to be completed in summer 2024.

We'll continue to leverage new partnerships, significant state and federal funding, existing recovery and conservation plans, and the imminent return of salmon to execute our vision of a resilient and restored watershed in Washington.



▲ Laurel Baum working to restore a dispersed campsite riverbank with new plants. © CNW



These “non-project action” cases can be tough to win, and we’ve added precedent to similar cases in Washington. The Snoqualmie Pass corridor – including Mardee Lake – has irreplaceable ecological and connectivity significance that deserves special attention and consideration. The decision ensures that the values of this critical area will be thoughtfully considered before potential land use changes, and we hope it sets us up for good conservation practices moving forward.



JEN SYROWITZ

Conservation Programs Senior Manager



Mardee Lake: A legal win to protect a critical wildlife corridor

In summer 2023, Conservation Northwest had a major legal victory to protect wildlife, fish habitat and wetlands near Snoqualmie Pass. We filed a lawsuit to try to protect the threatened wildlife corridor encompassing Mardee Lake, a major area of focus in our work improving the ability of wildlife to cross Interstate 90 safely.

Our Central Cascades Watersheds Restoration program has worked for years to restore habitat on public lands north and south of I-90 that are vital to wildlife movement between Mount Rainier National Park and the Alpine Lakes Wilderness. Within this region is the Gold Creek Critical Wildlife Corridor and the Mardee Lake property.

The lawsuit, filed on our behalf by Crag Law Center, challenged a rezone that would open 150 acres of sensitive habitat and migration corridor to dense development. The State Board ruled that rezoning the property without a proper environmental review violated the Washington State Environmental Policy Act and state laws protecting wetlands. This victory means the land is safe from development, at least for now.



▲ Aerial closeup of Copper Mountain mine. © Benjamin Drummond

Copper Mountain Mine Update

In 2023, Conservation Northwest continued the Healthy Watersheds campaign to secure mining policy reform in British Columbia to reduce threats to the Similkameen River and other transboundary rivers at risk due to British Columbia’s lax mining regulations.

- We supported the Similkameen Indian Bands and the Colville Tribes to send letters of concern for the health of the Similkameen River to officials, including President Biden and Prime Minister Trudeau.
- We sponsored the Upper Columbia United Tribes to host a second conference on the impact of Canadian mining to the health of transboundary rivers.

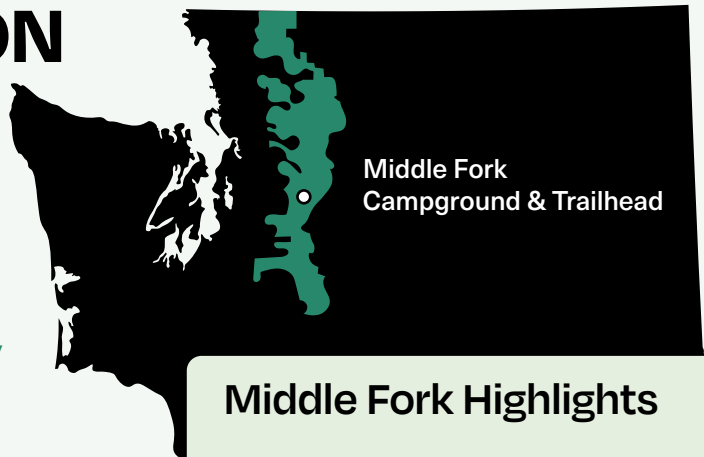
WILDLIFE-RECREATION COEXISTENCE

Our Wildlife-Recreation Coexistence program entered its third year, and for the first time we took our work directly into the field. In summer 2023, we launched a pilot Wildlife Ambassador Project with the U.S. Forest Service and Snoqualmie Tribe. The goal is to give the public the information they need to recreate with respect to wildlife and habitat, guiding them toward mindful recreation practices.

Our approach was to connect with the community right where they were – at trailheads and campgrounds. We picked the Middle Fork Snoqualmie Valley, a highly visited and wildlife-rich area that frequently struggles with human-wildlife coexistence.

Over ten weekends, Conservation Northwest staff and volunteers engaged with more than 2,000 recreationists. Our toolkit included wildlife quizzes, coloring pages for kids, photographs of various species, informative pamphlets, wildlife bandanas, and wildlife ambassador pins and stickers to spread the word. This collective effort culminated in the launch of our Recreate with Respect campaign.

The pilot was a huge success, and we're expanding the project in summer 2024 with a goal of engaging 5,000 recreationists at three sites, and positively impacting millions of acres of public lands that serve as amazing places for both wildlife and humans.



Middle Fork Campground & Trailhead

Middle Fork Highlights

2000+ IN-PERSON ENGAGEMENTS

2 BEAR-PROOF DUMPSTERS INSTALLED AT CAMPGROUNDS

0 BEAR-HUMAN CONFLICTS ON SITE THROUGHOUT 2023 PILOT



▲ Bandana designed by the Snoqualmie Tribe's Ancestral Lands Movement in collaboration with CNW.

RECREATE WITH RESPECT



FOREST FIELD PROGRAM

Throughout 2023, the Forest Field team focused on four key objectives for the Colville, Okanogan-Wenatchee, and Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forests: landscape resilience including forestry and prescribed and cultural burning, road removal to improve habitat connectivity, habitat restoration, and coalition building. Our field time shaped input, ideas, and strategies for protecting lynx habitat in

the Kettle Range, improving restoration project outcomes, and building Tribal relations.

We cultivated and promoted two major federal policies that will shape mature and old-growth forest protection and restoration in the region and across the nation: The Northwest Forest Plan Amendment and the National Old-Growth Amendment.

1 National Old-Growth Amendment

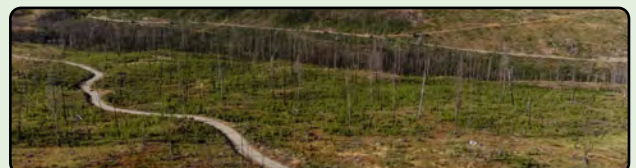
In April 2023, President Biden issued an Executive Order directing the Forest Service to develop policies to protect mature and old-growth forests on federal land. These forests are crucial for storing large amounts of carbon, boosting biodiversity, reducing wildfire risks, and enhancing climate resilience.

The Forest Service proposed amending 128 forest plans nationwide to safeguard remaining old-growth forests from industrial logging, prevent activities that degrade these forests, promote measures to enhance climate resilience, and lower the risks of severe wildfires. We collaborated with other conservation organizations to tackle challenges to these policies, support field reviews, and recommend strategies like the Okanogan-Wenatchee Restoration Strategy to secure these protections. During the comment periods, we mobilized our members and supporters to advocate for clear guidelines to restore and maintain the full range and abundance of mature and old-growth forests across America, including the Tongass National Forest. We also pushed for updated scientific definitions of old-growth forests, robust monitoring and accountability measures, and enhanced engagement with Tribal communities.

2 Northwest Forest Plan Amendment

Work began on updating the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) to enhance the conservation of mature and old-growth forest habitats and support community sustainability. The NWFP, covering 24 million acres of national forest in Washington, Oregon, and California, is the world's first ecosystem management plan. It has successfully improved river habitats, protected native and rare wildlife, and supported the biodiversity of old forest habitats.

Climate change has increased the frequency of fires, droughts, and floods. Additionally, we now have more scientific and monitoring data. Tribal partners, previously underrepresented, should have the opportunity to co-create management strategies and actions. We engaged our members and supporters to advocate for protecting mature and old-growth forests to mitigate climate change impacts, reduce road density to protect streams from climate-induced flooding, increase prescribed, managed, and cultural burning, and incorporate Indigenous knowledge and practices.



FIRST FOODS INITIATIVE

Conservation Northwest's First Foods Initiative aims to work with Indigenous communities and other partners to protect the "first" plants, animals, and habitats that are the food systems Indigenous peoples have relied on for generations. We see local food systems and traditional management as a core component of revitalizing resilient landscapes. Our primary objective is to increase the awareness, abundance, and protection of First Foods for both cultural and ecological conservation.

In 2023, we received a grant from the Canadian Commission for Environmental Cooperation to address environmental and human health vulnerabilities in eastern Washington Tribal communities. Working with Tribal non-profit partners Spokane Tribal Network and PNW LIGHT Foundation (Colville Tribal members), our goal is to strengthen cultural and climate resilience and mobilize community members in revitalizing Indigenous land stewardship practices.



▲ Cultural burning workshop led by the Spokane Tribal Network and CNW staff. © The Nature Conservancy

- Collaborated with the PNW LIGHT Foundation to create a list of traditional plants, animals, and pollinators from Traditional Ecological Knowledge Keepers.
- Created a Cultural Burning network with The Nature Conservancy.
- Completed design of a nursery greenhouse and started construction on the Spokane Reservation.
- Hosted a garlic planting workshop.
- Hosted two gathering workshops with the local school districts.
- Hosted Indigenous Birth Justice, a seed harvesting workshop in partnership with Eastern Washington University.
- Hosted two cultural burn workshops and three cultural burns with the University of Idaho and The Nature Conservancy.
- Worked with the Spokane Language House to develop a Salish language calendar to document the traditional names of plants and how they would be harvested and utilized.



NATURAL CLIMATE SOLUTIONS & FORESTS

Conservation Northwest, along with our partners Washington Conservation Action and Center for Responsible Forestry, successfully lobbied the Washington State Legislature to spend \$83 million to conserve mature carbon dense forests on the Department of Natural Resource's (DNR) lands, acquire replacement working forest lands, increase thinning of forest plantations and conduct restoration in areas that are targeted for spotted owls habitat. Paula Swedeen, Ph.D., was directly involved in negotiating the deal and drafting the budget proviso language.

The Climate Commitment Act, passed in 2021, includes a Natural Climate Solutions Account. Funds from the auction of permits to emit greenhouse gases are to be used solely to protect and manage terrestrial and aquatic lands to draw down and store CO₂, and to make ecosystems more resilient to the impacts of climate

change. The 2023 legislative session was the first time that lawmakers could make decisions about how to spend those funds.

The budget proviso requires protection of 2,000-acres of these biologically diverse forests.

The Department of Natural Resources must acquire forests to replace the protected acres, based on the timber value of the stands. Because the timber value of mature forests is much higher than younger plantations, DNR will be able to purchase 12,000-15,000 acres of forest from private timber companies to sustainably manage. The proviso requires that these lands be managed for improved carbon storage, so our work results in dual benefits: conserving mature stands so the carbon stays in the ground and transforming short rotation plantations into

longer rotation working forests, both of which will result in better climate outcomes for Washington.

I honestly think this kind of creative solution is the future of forest management. This approach is good for everyone: cutting down our most carbon-dense forests makes no sense for our climate, and purchasing more working forest to replace encumbered lands in rural counties has been long overdue.

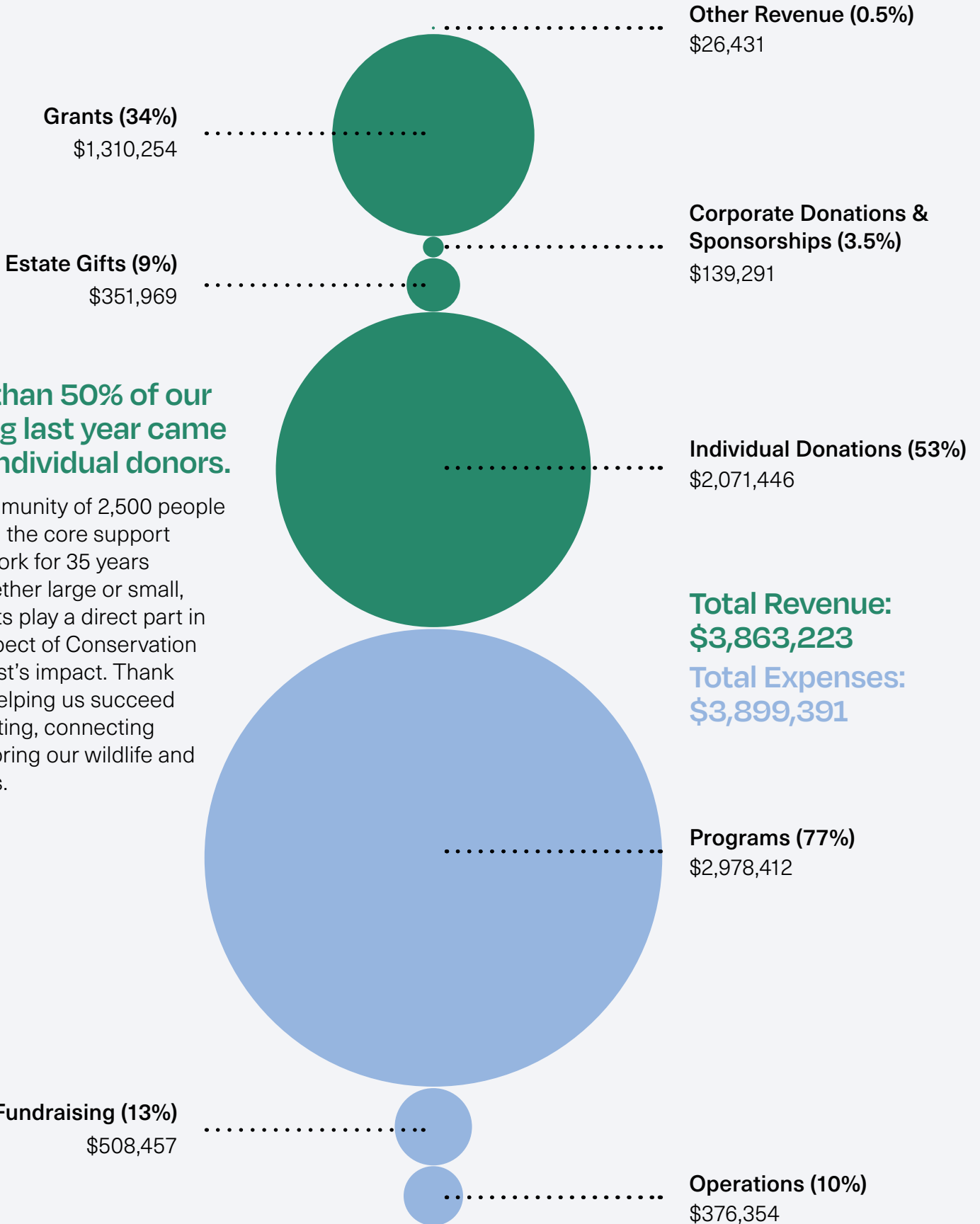
“ PAULA SWEDEEN, Ph.D.
Senior Policy Director



Protect our air and water, forests and farmland, jobs and transportation investments. Vote NO on Initiative 2117: <https://no2117.com>

FINANCE OVERVIEW

APRIL 2023 - MARCH 2024



More than 50% of our funding last year came from individual donors.

This community of 2,500 people has been the core support for our work for 35 years ago. Whether large or small, these gifts play a direct part in every aspect of Conservation Northwest's impact. Thank you for helping us succeed in protecting, connecting and restoring our wildlife and wildlands.

THANKS TO OUR DEDICATED DONORS.

SPECIAL THANKS

Daryl and Michelle Connell
 Robert Girard and Phoebe Cowles
 Paul and Peggy Butler
 Lenore Hanauer Foundation
 Dennis and Jean Moore
 David Knox
 Linda S. Park
 Ellen Bennett Godsall
 Peter Mason

GRANTS, CORPORATE GIVING AND SPONSORS

Roughly 35% of our funding last year came from grants, businesses and workplace giving programs. These partners are essential to our work. Thank you for helping us keep the Northwest wild!

GRANTS

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 Commission for Environmental Cooperation
 Community Foundation of North Central Washington
 CREOI
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 Head and Heart Foundation
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protect, connect, restore



**wildlife &
wildlands.**