



Annual Report

2024



A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MITCH FRIEDMAN

During a recent lunch with a friend who is prominent in Washington politics, he commented that “Conservation NW is the most effective group that nobody knows about.” I think you will see this annual report as confirmation of the breadth and depth of our impact, from wolf recovery to wildlife crossings to forest protection and restoration, from wet habitats to dry, low elevation to high. Conservation Northwest is having incredible impact and making real progress in keeping the Northwest wild.

About the second part of his comment: If our program work is so strong, why are we unsung? I have long struggled with this and at times invested in trying to change it. But perhaps our impact and our volume cannot be reconciled. We choose collaboration over conflict, common ground over polarization, competence over bombast.

This is not to say that we are passive or don’t hold the line for wild nature. But when there is a trade-off between habitat and hype, we will always choose the former. We have learned that this better serves nature and, I think, also society. I am proud of our team, our record, and our style. Thanks for being among the few who recognize our worth and allow us to thrive.

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- Alishia Orloff, Forest Field Program
- Alycia Scheidel, Wildlife Recreation Coexistence Program
- Andrea Wolf, Communications
- Brian Stewart, Cascades to Olympics Program
- Dan Wilson, Communications
- Dave Werntz, Science and Conservation
- Deia Zalez, Communications
- Jay Kehne, Sagelands Heritage Program
- Jay Shepherd, Wolf Program
- Jen Syrowitz, Conservation Programs
- Jennifer Moog, Finance
- Joe Scott, Internation Programs
- Jordan Ryckman, Sagelands Heritage Program
- Kai Toh, IT
- Katy Wicks, Philanthropy
- Keith Watson, Sagelands Heritage Program
- Kurt Hellmann, Wildlife Recreation Coexistence Program
- Laurel Baum, Central Cascades Watershed Restoration
- Matthew Danielson, Forest Field Program
- Meghan Madden, Philanthropy
- Mitch Friedman, Executive Director
- Nadine Nadow, Policy
- Paul Bannick, Philanthropy
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WILDLIFE



Photo by Scott Melnick

WILDLIFE RECREATION COEXISTENCE PROGRAM

In June, Conservation Northwest was honored by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife as Organization of the Year. This award highlights partners that help WDFW advance its mission to preserve and protect Washington’s habitats and fish and wildlife species, while also offering sustainable recreation opportunities for all who call Washington state home.

WDFW praised the WREC program and highlighted our literature review of science on recreation and wildlife, the Wildlife Ambassador project conducting trailhead education, elevating concerns of Tribes about the impact of recreation, and bringing extensive media coverage and attention to this growing issue.



“This program was years ahead of other nongovernmental organizations’ work on this topic and provides important leadership that influenced WDFW’s 10-year recreation plan for Department lands, as well as other science and policy making.”
- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

WILDLIFE AMBASSADOR PROJECT

The second season of our recreation outreach project was wildly successful. Last summer, the project focused on encouraging trail users to stay on the trail, keep pets leashed, give wildlife space, and secure food or garbage, especially when camping. It also equipped trail users with specific “dos and don’ts” during possible encounters with bears or cougars.

3
TRAILHEADS
52
OUTREACH DAYS
14,000
ENGAGEMENTS
30
VOLUNTEERS
NO CLOSURES
NO BEARS REMOVED
OR EUTHANIZED



“Hikers and backpackers who engaged about cougars and bears left with a deeper understanding of species’ biology and behavior – all of which can aid in the dismantling of misinformation around predator species and help better inform recreationists on best practices like food storage while camping and staying on trail.”

Alycia Scheidel
Wildlife-Recreation Specialist



COMMUNITY WILDLIFE MONITORING PROGRAM

The Community Wildlife Monitoring Program organizes community-scientist volunteers to monitor and document wildlife using remote cameras where state and federal agencies don't have the resources to go.



PRIORITY SPECIES



FISHER



WOLVERINE



CASCADE RED FOX



GRAY WOLF



CANADA LYNX

CANADA LYNX

Ten lynx were captured in British Columbia and released in the Kettle Range in eastern Washington. This brings the total to 36 lynx in the first four years of the five-year recovery project with Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Okanagan Nation Alliance, and Upper Columbia United Tribes.



WOLVERINE

Wolverine are now officially listed as "Threatened" under the Endangered Species Act. Conservation Northwest has been advocating for increased protections for wolverines for decades, including a federal lawsuit in 2020, and collecting wildlife camera data as part of the Cascades Carnivore Monitoring Program.



GRIZZLY BEARS



COAST TO CASCADES GRIZZLY BEAR RECOVERY

We supported the Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) in organizing a successful Joint Nations grizzly summit in Manning Park. It was attended by all First Nations project partners, including leaders and staff from ONA, Stó:lō/STSA, St’át’imc, Nlaka’pamux, Secwépemc Nations, BC government staff, and independent scientists.

FEDERAL ECOLOGICAL CORRIDORS PROGRAM

We partnered with ONA and Biodiversity Pathways on a funding proposal to Canada’s Ecological Corridors program. This supports a visionary approach to ONA-led habitat connectivity and restoration work.

GRIZZLY BEAR INITIATIVE WEBSITE AND STEWARDSHIP PLAN

The Joint Nations Grizzly Bear Initiative website launched. Conservation Northwest played a key role in conceptualization, content development, and funding. Visit the website here: <https://www.coasttocascades.org/>

JOINT NATIONS GRIZZLY SUMMIT SUPPORT

Conservation Northwest’s Coast to Cascades Grizzly Bear Initiative in Canada focuses on recovering at-risk grizzly bear populations across British Columbia’s south Coast Ranges. The program targets five critical Grizzly Bear Population Units, including the North Cascades. Our strategy protects recovering populations and promotes policies that support population recovery in historic habitats. This comprehensive approach aligns with Conservation Northwest’s mission to maintain wildlife connectivity across the transboundary landscape, promoting grizzly bear recover on both sides of the US-Canada border.

GRIZZLY BEAR MONITORING AND CONFLICT PREVENTION

We advocated for permission to trap and collar grizzly bears in Pemberton Meadows to prevent human-wildlife conflict and monitor habitat use. DNA monitoring projects launched in two communities with regular grizzly bear presence.

“The grizzly bear is a critical part of the ecological and cultural fabric of the North Cascades. They belong here. Without them, our wild areas are diminished, less diverse, and sanitized.”

Joe Scott, *International Programs Associate Director*



E-FENCING AND HUMAN WILDLIFE MITIGATION

We expanded our e-fencing efforts in response to an increased grizzly bear presence near human communities. This approach has proven effective at mitigating conflict between bears, livestock, and humans.

LOOKING FORWARD

With strong First Nations partnerships, community support, and expanding connectivity assessments, Conservation Northwest continues advancing grizzly bear recovery across this critical transboundary landscape. Success depends on maintaining social acceptance of bears while protecting and restoring the habitat connections essential for long-term population viability.

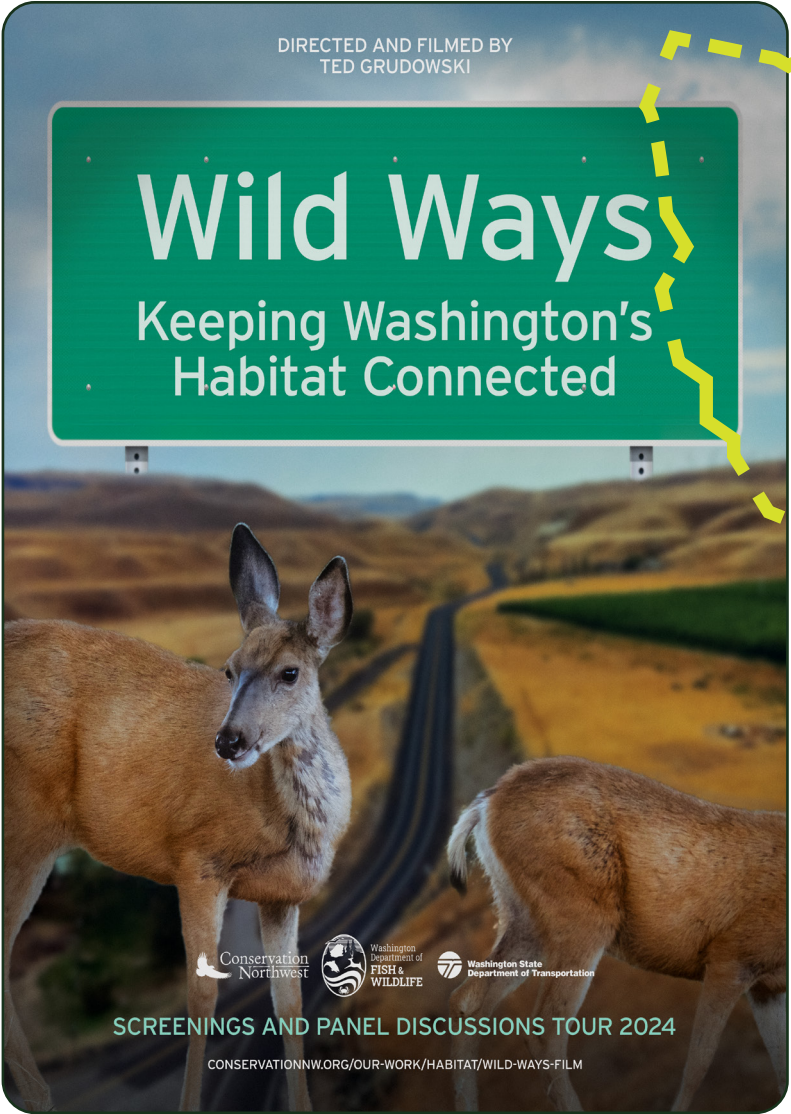
NORTH CASCADES GRIZZLY BEAR RECOVERY

In 2024, Conservation Northwest marked a pivotal year in its decades-long campaign to restore grizzly bears to Washington’s North Cascades Ecosystem. After years of advocacy, planning, and coalition-building, federal agencies officially approved a plan to reintroduce grizzlies to this remote and ecologically rich region. The goal is to translocate three to seven bears annually over the next 5 to 10 years, aiming to establish an initial population of 25 grizzlies.

WILDWAYS FILM TOUR

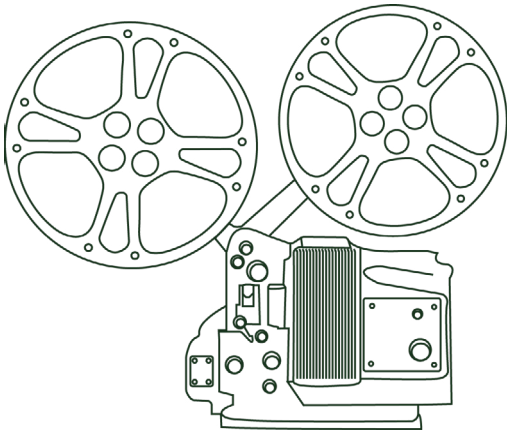
Throughout the summer of 2024, Conservation Northwest brought our wildlife connectivity film Wild Ways to communities located in some of Eastern Washington's most challenging and high-conflict connectivity zones. With screenings in Roslyn, Cle Elum, and Wenatchee, we engaged hundreds of residents, ranging from hunters and conservationists to educators and elected officials, for meaningful conversations about the impacts of habitat fragmentation and the growing risk of wildlife-vehicle collisions.

Each event featured panel discussions with experts from Conservation Northwest, the Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT), and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), all of whom have hands-on experience in advancing solutions to restore and protect wildlife movement corridors. These discussions offered valuable insight into current efforts and inspired dialogue on what more can be done at the local level.



WENATCHEE

By bringing communities together around shared concerns and offering tangible examples of successful collaboration, the Wild Ways film tour helped build social and political momentum necessary to make our travel corridors roads safer for people and wildlife, while ensuring critical habitat connectivity is preserved for generations to come.



ROSLYN

CLE ELUM

WILDLANDS



FIRST FOODS

2024 was the second year of our collaborative project funded by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation. We worked with partners to address environmental and human health vulnerabilities in eastern Washington tribal communities. Our goal was to support our Indigenous partners in strengthening cultural and climate resilience through land stewardship. Working with the Spokane Tribal Network and LIGHT Foundation, this project:



PEOPLE TRAINED ON HARVESTING CULTURAL PLANTS & CULTURAL BURNS

1,300+

PLANTS PLANTED IN THE FOOD FOREST & GARDEN

1,100

WORKSHOPS HOSTED

40+

CULTURAL BURNS CONDUCTED

8

GREENHOUSES CONSTRUCTED FOR NATIVE PLANTS

2

CENTRAL CASCADES WATERSHED RESTORATION

We continued habitat restoration projects in the core of the Cascades. These popular recreation sites are also critical areas for wildlife. Highlights from 2024 include:

1 LION'S GULCH

We coordinated restoration work at Lion's Gulch campground to block an illegal motorized creek crossing, improve creek-side and fish habitats, restore the natural water system process, and maintain appropriate recreational use campsites away from the creek.

2 LITTLE NACHES

Working with a Youth Conservation Crew, we installed over 800 feet of fencing to protect four sensitive meadow locations. New signage now informs recreationists about the sensitive plants in meadows and provides a barrier to keep motorized users on established roads and trails.

3 GREENWATER

We led Greenwater Recreation Corridor restoration efforts to enhance recreation opportunities while minimizing the impact on the surrounding habitat. This included improvements to eight dispersed camping sites along Midnight Creek and Greenwater River, 1,400 native plants planted by CNW staff and volunteers, graveling parking areas to reduce mud and sedimentation from reaching the river, and picking up over 3,600 pounds of trash.



FOREST FIELD PROGRAM - WILDLIFE HABITAT TOURS

Our Forest Field Team led 3 habitat tours last year with a goal of uniting diverse partners to protect vital species and their habitats. These tours exemplify our commitment to hands-on conservation and building strong partnerships for wildlife.

KETTLE MOUNTAIN RANGE focused on federally threatened Canada lynx and snowshoe hare. In partnership with the Three Rivers Ranger District of the Colville National Forest and Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, stakeholders learned about collaborative habitat management. As we've reintroduced lynx back into the Kettle Mountain Range, forest and wildlife managers need to understand how to manage the landscape (and food chain) to support them.

BONAPARTE MOUNTAIN highlighted federally threatened whitebark pine. This tree is at risk from bark blister rust (fungal pathogen from Europe), bark beetles, wildfire, and climate change. But it serves a critical role in the ecosystem as a high value pine nut producer for wildlife such as grizzly and black bears, and as culturally significant food source for Indigenous communities. The discussion with the Tonasket Ranger District of the Colville National Forest focused on convening forest professionals to come up with ideas to protect and perpetuate it.

WENAS WILDLIFE AREA explored white-headed woodpecker and flammulated owl (a tiny, reddish owl, the size of a small juice can). These habitats in ponderosa pine forests demonstrate how forest management can benefit wildlife and promote wildfire resilience. We hosted the tour in a habitat area jointly managed by WA Department of Natural Resources and WA Department of Fish and Wildlife to discuss how different forest management techniques (thinning, burning, or sometimes doing nothing at all) can create and maintain the habitat features these animals rely on.



CASCADES TO OLYMPICS

In 2024, Conservation Northwest made significant strides in reconnecting vital wildlife corridors between the Cascades and the Olympic Peninsula, strengthening both ecological resilience and community partnerships across southwest Washington.



—

 CONSERVATION EFFORT

—

 ROAD

—

 WATER

CHEHALIS RIVER BASIN

CITY MARKER

HIGHWAY MARKER

INTERSTATE MARKER

CASCADES TO OLYMPICS REGION

CONSERVATION NORTHWEST

On-the-Ground Habitat Restoration

We continued habitat restoration on the Satsop River beneath the bridge and at the Highway 12 crossing, removing invasive species, planting native vegetation, and clearing debris to support wildlife passage and local engagement. These actions improve ecological health while enhancing the area’s accessibility and safety.



Securing Forests for the Future

We pursued large-scale funding to protect and manage older, complex forests critical to wildlife movement. Using cutting-edge modeling, we identified core habitat and connectivity corridors for targeted land conservation. We also championed the use of Natural Climate Solutions funding in Olympia to support permanent protection of these climate-critical lands.



Scaling Up Basin-Wide Impact

We expanded the model of the Satsop Bridge project across the broader Chehalis Basin and took a leadership role in the Chehalis River Alliance. Together with coalition partners, we advocated for the LAND alternative to prevent a new dam and support sustainable floodplain restoration.



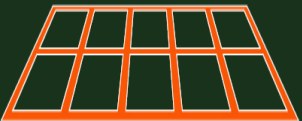
Advancing I-5 Wildlife Crossings

We completed the I-5 crossing structure feasibility study—an essential step toward reconnecting habitat split by Washington’s busiest highway. In tandem, we finalized a detailed land use analysis for wildlife corridors intersecting I-5, and launched strategic planning with partners to minimize development in these areas and build local support for long-term connectivity solutions.



Supporting Tribal Conservation

We purchased a 10-acre property for the Chehalis Tribe and placed an additional 95-acre property under contract. Our objective is to sustain the habitat so that someday a wildlife overpass will span I-5 in this location.



Building Regional Momentum

We hosted the 2024 Southwest Washington Connectivity Summit, uniting conservationists, scientists, tribal partners, and decision-makers to chart a shared vision for habitat connectivity from the Cascades to the Olympics.



SAGELANDS SPECIES WILDLIFE ACTION PLANS

As Washington prepares to update the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) for the first time in a decade, our Sagelands Heritage team has remained focused on recovering the critical species and ecosystems identified in the 2015 Plan. Many priority species, including burrowing owls, pygmy rabbits, and sharp-tailed and greater sage grouse, are habitat specialists that depend entirely on Washington's shrinking shrub-steppe.

Recovering these species requires strategic investment in habitat connectivity and restoration, as well as hands-on care for vulnerable populations. In partnership with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and local landowners, the Sagelands team advanced key SWAP actions in 2024 built on decades of investment:

MONITORING



Burrowing owls maintained a 75% occupancy rate in artificial burrows, demonstrating the success of adaptive conservation while we continue efforts to recover their natural burrow partners, like the American badger.



Habitat restoration, strategic translocations from British Columbia, and favorable weather supported a strong brood year for greater sage and sharp-tailed grouse.

While visiting restoration projects, and conducting surveys, Sagelands staff experienced rare sightings of wildlife including white-tailed jackrabbits, mink, beavers, golden eagles, and pronghorn.



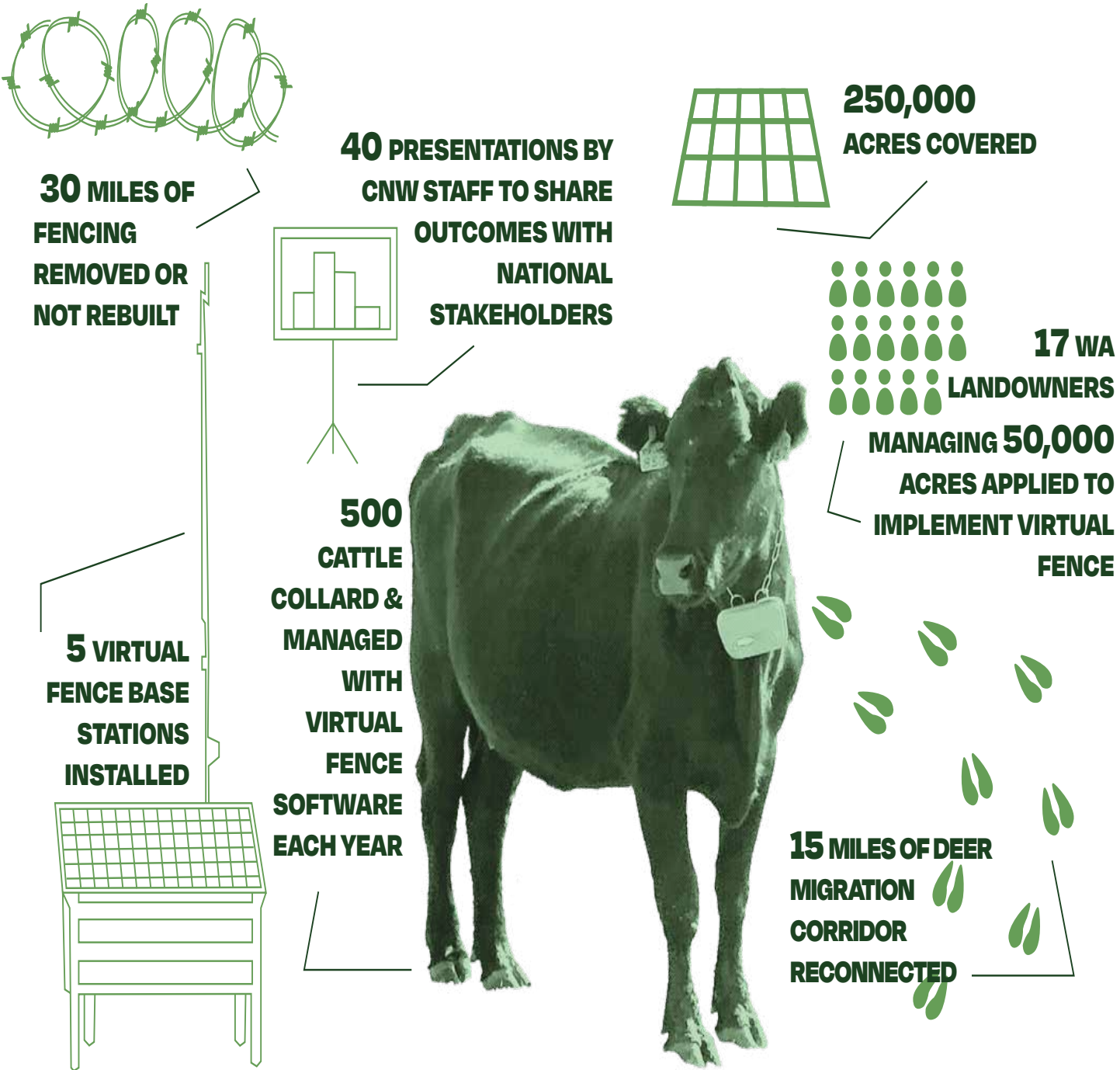
IMPLEMENTATION

Expanded tracking and vaccination efforts for endangered Columbia Basin pygmy rabbits led to a notable increase in new burrow sites, reflecting progress toward population recovery.



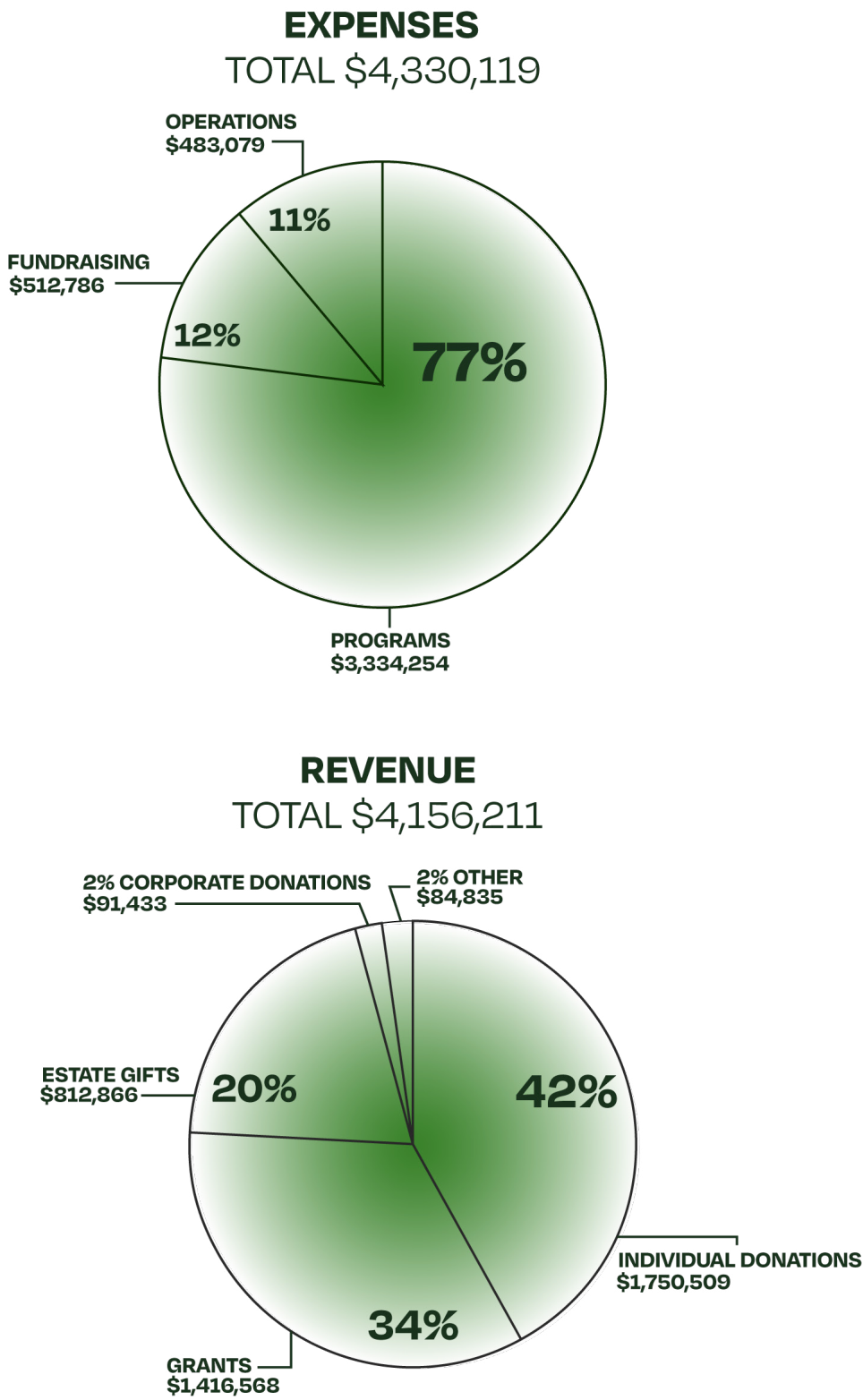
VIRTUAL FENCE UPDATE

We neared completion of our 3-year project (funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation) to pilot virtual fence technology in Washington. CNW has been a catalyst for technology that is changing how cattle are grazed, which has tremendous benefits for fish and wildlife in Washington and beyond.



WILDLANDS

FINANCIALS



GRANTS

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Commission for Environmental Cooperation
Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
CREOi
Dudley Foundation
East Seattle Foundation
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Your generous support has made it possible for us to protect, connect, and restore the wildlands and wildlife that define the Pacific Northwest. From advancing wildlife crossing structures on I-5 to supporting lynx restoration in the Kettle Mountains, every conservation victory this year reflects your commitment to keeping the Northwest wild. Whether you’ve been with us since our founding 35 years ago or joined our mission recently, your partnership enables us to tackle both urgent challenges and long-term goals with the persistence and focus that true stewardship requires. As we look toward the future—from grizzly bear restoration in the North Cascades to connecting vital habitat corridors—we remain deeply grateful for your trust and investment in our shared vision of thriving wildlands and wildlife for generations to come. Thank you for being essential partners in this work that matters so much to our region’s natural heritage.

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