



Fall 2025



Jay Shepherd
Wolf Program Sr. Manager

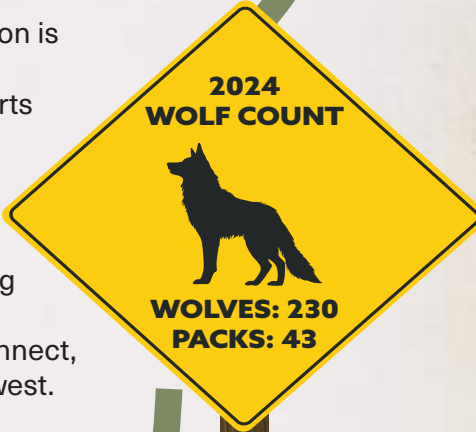
At Conservation Northwest, our work spans the entire state of Washington because conservation doesn't begin or end at county lines. From the coastal rainforests of the Olympics to the rugged Kettle Range, these places and the people who live in them are all part of one interconnected landscape. We show up where we're needed, because conservation is at its best when it's rooted in community.

That's especially true for our wolf coexistence work in northeast Washington, where we founded a long-running Range Rider Project. "Our range riders specifically are looking for cattle and they're staying with cattle," explained Jay Shepherd, Conservation Northwest Wolf Program Senior Manager. "It's 'eyes on cattle,' that's kind of our motto." The goal is to reduce conflicts between wolves and livestock through non-lethal deterrence, communication, and community relationships.

Jay lives in Chewelah, the heart of wolf country, and has built trust with local ranchers over years of working together. "If we're going to ask people to be tolerant of wolves, then we have to help them find a way to live with them," he says. "You end up caring just as much about the community as the conservation outcome, because it has to follow the other, or it doesn't work."

That approach defines our work across Washington. Whether we're restoring forests, building wildlife crossings, or supporting the recovery of native species, we listen first and collaborate for the long haul.

To show what this work looks like on the ground, our team recently hit the road—bringing you to the far-reaching corners of central and eastern Washington to visit sites where conservation is making a difference. From fire recovery efforts near Omak to virtual fence installations in Ellensburg each stop reflects our commitment to working with local people and partners to protect, connect, and restore the Northwest.



PRESENT IN 11 COUNTIES IN WA

AVG GROWTH OF 20% PER YEAR
SINCE 2008

CNW HELPS SUPPORT 15 RANGE RIDERS
THAT MITIGATE WOLF-CATTLE
CONFLICT

CHEWELAH, WA

Methow Restoration, Methow

Our Sagelands Heritage team is working to improve mule deer habitat and connectivity across 10,000 acres in the Twisp Uplands of central Washington, thanks to a new grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Over the next three years, we'll partner with the Methow Okanogan Beaver Project and Methow Salmon Recovery Foundation to address habitat, landscape, and water quality degradation caused by livestock overgrazing, wildfire, and other factors impacting the Methow mule deer herd. This isn't just about helping one species—it's about rebuilding the interconnected web of life that makes healthy landscapes possible. Our plan includes ambitious but achievable goals to transform this degraded landscape:

Restore Native Plants: We'll plant over 2,000 native shrubs and grasses along 4.5 miles of shoreline, creating vital winter forage for mule deer and supporting pollinators and other wildlife.

Bring Water Back to the Land: To restore natural water flow and improve habitat, we'll install 15 rock structures, 7 floating treatment wetlands, and 20 beaver dam analogs. This will re-establish the plant communities and water pools necessary to support the recovery of beavers.

Utilize Technology for Wildlife: We're expanding virtual fencing across all 10,000 acres of the project area—replacing over 20 miles of barbed wire that fragments migration corridors.

Engage the Next Generation: Local high school students will help design, plant, and monitor progress. This empowers youth as future conservation leaders, giving them real-world experience in solving today's environmental challenges.

Build Wildlife Resilience: Located at a critical junction of summer and winter ranges for the Methow mule deer herd, we'll restore the shrub-steppe habitat vital for winter survival and creates cool, water-rich summer refuges—boosting resilience to climate change.



Beavers, Methow

Fur trading decimated beavers in the Okanogan by the 1830s. Our projects are now trying to undo the damage that caused to the landscape. Beavers are ecosystem engineers: their dams create ponds, expand wetlands and meadows, increase the vegetation, and store water. They create ecosystems with more diverse habitats for semi-aquatic mammals, fish, amphibians, birds and insects; increase resilience to fire and create healthier and more diverse plants. Our projects to restore and mimic beavers dams will create wetland systems that can support the return and recovery of beaver populations. When the Beavers come back, other species follow them.



What Happens After a Fire? Lessons from Okanogan's Forests, Okanogan/Wenatchee

For thousands of years, fire has played a vital role in shaping our ecosystems. But today's fires are burning hotter, faster, and with greater consequences. Matthew Danielson, our Okanogan Forest Senior Coordinator, was born and raised in the Okanogan Valley he's spent decades in these forests. He's seen firsthand what happens both during and after a wildfire. The immediate aftermath of a wildfire is often devastating; scorched trees, blackened soil, destroyed homes. Matt has seen catastrophic flood events that followed a major fire in the region near Bonaparte Lake. "So much burnt in one day," he explained, "and then we had a rainstorm follow it, the ground that rain could not infiltrate just ran off." This resulted in flash floods, landslides, and creeks that overflowed with sediment. "Those are ten-thousand-year sorts of events. They make it harder for nature to rebuild itself." Despite the destruction, there is hope, and it lies in returning fire to the land. Matt shared, "Prescribed fire is really the answer to all our problems. It's what nature played with. We're just putting that tool back in the toolbox."



Matthew Danielson
Okanogan Forest Senior Coordinator

The U.S. Forest Service has developed a strong prescribed burn program that aims to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire while restoring ecosystems. Matt emphasized that prescribed fire is best when paired with smart logging, thinning, and habitat management.

It's about maintaining a mosaic of landscapes: dense forests, open sagebrush, grassy meadows. These can support biodiversity, resist disease and pests, and recover from fire. "For a long time, this landscape burned regularly," he explained. "Fires would start from dry lightning, but there were also Indigenous people here who burned intentionally." Bringing fire back into the forest also means bringing Indigenous knowledge, practices, and leadership into modern forest management. And it means communities—loggers, ranchers, conservationists, tribes, and government agencies—need to work together to shape a healthier future.



Saving the Sage, Omak

Washington's shrub-steppe is a vast, open landscape rich in wildlife, cultural history, and ecological value. Yet today, it's one of the most threatened ecosystems in the Pacific Northwest. Our Sagelands Heritage Program has been working for eight years to change that by protecting this underappreciated region and keeping it connected for wildlife and people. Sagebrush country may seem harsh or barren to some, but to Associate Program Director Jay Kehne and many others who live and work there, it's a place of quiet beauty and deep significance. "To me, it's as valuable as any tall forest," said Jay. The shrub-steppe is home to mule deer, bobcats, badgers, cougars, sage grouse, raptors, and pygmy rabbits; species that rely on intact, connected habitat to survive.

However, this landscape is increasingly fragmented by development, fencing, roads, and energy infrastructure. Even well-intended renewable energy projects like solar farms can threaten critical habitat when not thoughtfully placed. Conservation Northwest is advocating for smarter planning that balances clean energy goals with wildlife needs. The Sagelands Heritage Program is also about restoring and maintaining landscape connectivity: allowing wildlife to move safely between habitats across eastern Washington. This includes identifying key corridors and working with agencies, tribes, landowners, and local communities to build solutions together. From wildlife crossings to conservation easements, the goal is to preserve the ecological function of this iconic landscape for generations to come. This is about more than saving a species—it's about honoring the land, respecting rural communities, and ensuring that the wide-open spaces of Washington's interior remain wild, healthy, and whole. Conservation Northwest's work in the sage lands remind us: not all important places are forests and peaks.



How Virtual Fencing is Revolutionizing Wildlife Conservation, Ellensburg

Where miles of rusted barbed wire once carved up the terrain, creating deadly obstacles for migrating wildlife, a new technology is literally removing barriers and reconnecting fragmented habitats. Virtual fencing is proving to be more than just a ranching innovation—it's a powerful tool for wildlife conservation and habitat restoration. Barbed wire fences have been the standard tool for managing livestock across the American West. But when maintenance is neglected or wildfires sweep through the region—as they do annually in central Washington—they quickly become obstacles scattered across the landscape.

"If these are left on the ground, it becomes a huge hazard for wildlife, especially elk, mule deer, and pronghorn," explained Sagelands Heritage Senior Coordinator Jordan Ryckman. Sharp-tailed grouse, a critically endangered bird, frequently collide with fence lines during flight. Virtual fencing offers a solution while also addressing ranchers' bottom-line concerns. According to Jay Kehne, Sagelands Heritage Associate Director, this new approach is transformational, "In my 31 years working to help farmers and ranchers improve their operations to benefit wildlife I have never seen or could imagine such a game-changing technology as virtual fencing."

With GPS-enabled collars on cattle, signal towers covering up to 10,000 acres, and fence lines are drawn on a computer the benefits are wide ranging: barb wire fencing can be removed from the landscape; cattle movement can be better controlled leading to both landscape restoration and 25% less costs in herd management; and ranchers save money (installing a new physical fence can cost up to \$50,000 per mile). Cattle become a restoration tool rather than a source of environmental degradation. The pilot project in Central Washington has already removed dozens of miles of fencing, with a goal of eliminating 200 miles of barriers from the region. This removal is creating corridors that allow wildlife to move freely across the landscape, facilitating natural migration patterns and enabling animals to quickly escape wildfire threats.



Jordan Ryckman
Sagelands Heritage Senior Coordinator



Jay Kehne
Sagelands Heritage Associate Director

EPHRATA, WA
Pygmy Rabbits

Pygmy Rabbits, Ephrata

Several hundred active burrows were detected this year with over 750 scat samples collected through hiking and drone surveys, marking the highest count ever documented. These efforts are crucial for understanding rabbit dispersal, tracing family lineage, and ongoing monitoring of the recovery for this endangered species. Semi-wild breeding enclosures provided safety for young kits until they were ready to leave their burrows, receive vaccinations for Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease, and ultimately be released back into their natural habitat to rejoin the recovering population.



Lynx Update, Kettle Range

We're in the final year of our 5-year project to recover Canada lynx in the Kettle Range (in partnership with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation). 36 lynx have been relocated from British Columbia to their historic range on the reservation, and trapping for the final 10 began in October. In 2025 we had a historic win- lynx kittens were confirmed in the Kettles, meaning lynx are successfully establishing home ranges and reproducing!



Renewable Energy and Wildlife

Over the past 20 years, over 90% of wind and solar projects in Washington have been in the Columbia Plateau in Central Washington. As Washington intentionally shifts to rely on and build out renewable energy resources to combat climate change, this area is facing a new and significant challenge: the infrastructure and resources required for clean energy distribution, generation, and storage are beginning to pose a threat to fragile wildlife habitats and migration corridors.

For the last year, our Sagelands Heritage Program and policy staff have been closely monitoring and engaging with energy infrastructure planning and deployment in the region. To achieve responsible renewable energy and transmission infrastructure development, we advocate for early consultation and collaboration between all stakeholders – state agencies, Indigenous communities, counties, community members, landowners, and developers. Our objective is to ensure that clean energy wins don't come at the cost of vulnerable wildlife.



Okanogan Sagebrush



Wild Horse Wind Farm
Ellensburg, WA

A big focus of this work is a Build-Ready Solar Pilot Project, which prompts responsible development in least-conflict wildlands-meaning putting renewable energy in the places where they will have the least impact on wildlife. The program pre-screens locations with spatial data analysis, active community collaboration, and boots on-the ground to provide stakeholders with maps of where solar infrastructure will avoid negative impacts to the environmental, cultural resources, and communities.

We're supporting the Washington Department of Ecology in assessing potential adverse environmental impacts; collaborating with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to development guidelines that avoid and minimize impacts to fish, wildlife, and habitat; and participating in the Washington Environmental NGOs Coalition to accelerate the clean energy transition while ensuring environmental assessments, equitable access, and community benefits. Conservation Northwest is also part of multiple state and national coalitions or planning groups working to provide data, research, and policy support for sustainable, clear energy that also protects wildlife and their habitats.

A Smarter Way to Fuel Conservation

Every day, Conservation Northwest works to ensure that our wildlife and wildlands are protected, connected and restored. And you can help—without spending a dollar from your bank account.

By donating appreciated stock, contributing cryptocurrency, giving from your IRA, or recommending a Donor-Advised Fund grant, you can make a tax-smart gift that increases your impact, powers our work, and keeps the Northwest wild.

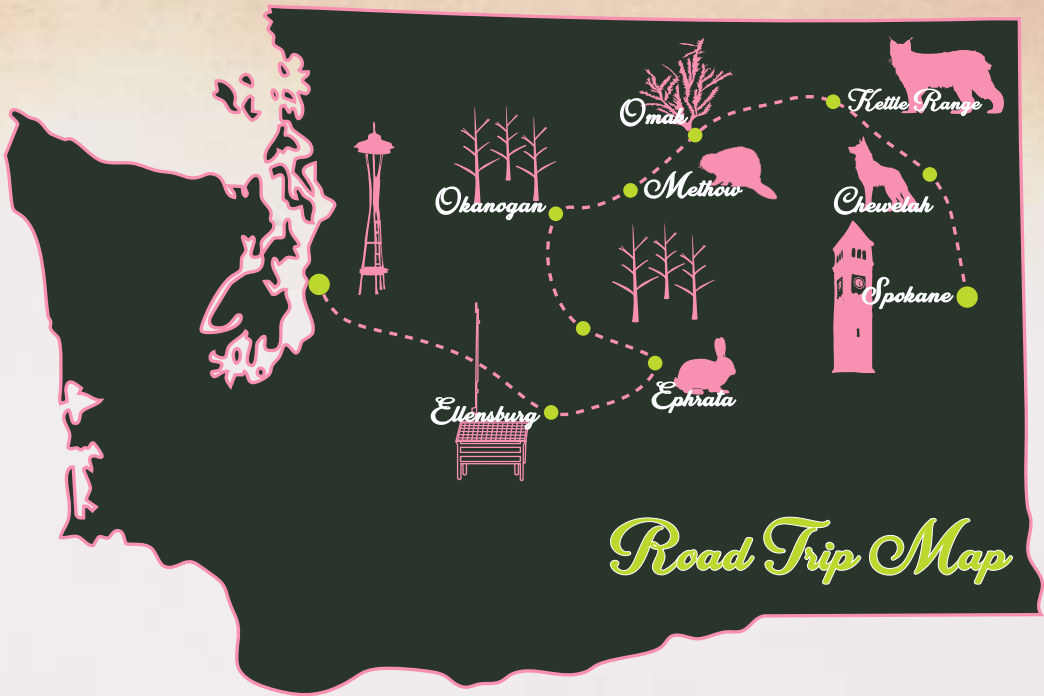
IRAs: If you over 70.5, you're eligible to make a tax-free donation from your IRA that helps meet your Required Minimum Distribution.

STOCK: You can avoid capital gains tax and get an income tax deduction by donating appreciated stock directly to us.

DAFs: A gift from your Donor Advised Fund helps you make donations with funds already set aside, and has tax benefits.

CRYPTO: Gifts of appreciated crypto help you avoid capital gains and gives you an income tax deduction.

Visit <https://conservationnw.org/join-us/otherwaystodonate/> for more information on how to give.



Road Trip Map



Dan Wilson
Community Partnerships Manager

The Connections that Make the Difference

I've often told folks that if they want to see how conservation gets done, a full tank of gas and some coffee money is where it starts. Of course, it takes more to deliver meaningful outcomes, but it all begins with a conversation. Across this state, in small towns, grange halls, diners, or trailheads, there are people who care about our natural world. We just need the curiosity, courage, and commitment to meet them where they are, both philosophically and physically.

At Conservation Northwest we talk a lot about connectivity, and it's not just about habitats. The relationships we build with people are what make our mission possible- from ranchers and Tribal partners to timber producers, county officials, agency staff, and community leaders. What sets us apart is our ability to turn these diverse and sometimes disparate partnerships into lasting conservation outcomes.

Your support makes these connections and the work that follows possible. Because of you, forests are healthier, wildlife thrives, and communities are stronger. Together, we can keep the Northwest intact for the landscapes we love, the creatures that rely on them, and the people who call them home. From a cup of coffee to a wildlife crossing, your support makes it all possible.