

# CENTRAL CASCADES FOREST: MANAGEMENT PLAN OVERVIEW

## VISION

In December 2014, The Nature Conservancy purchased 47,921 acres of forestland from Plum Creek Timber Company in Kittitas County for the purpose of safeguarding clean water, wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation.

These lands are intermingled with extensive federal and state ownership in

a checkerboard pattern that is a legacy of the 19th Century.

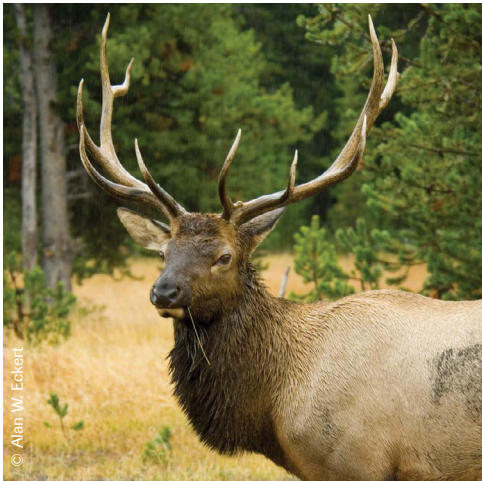
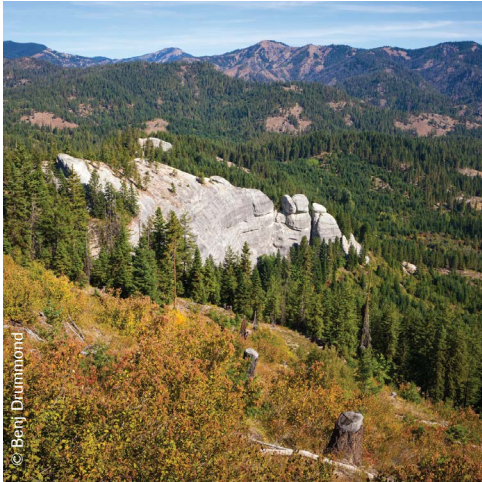
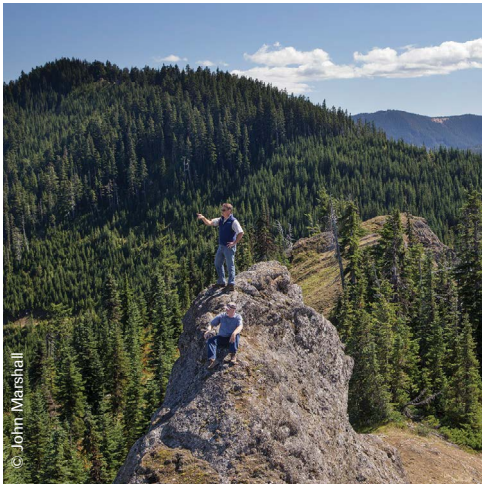
We envision an expansive forest landscape for the future that is healthy and resilient to environmental changes, supports strong wildlife and fish populations, produces a sustainable supply of wood and clean water, and is recognized for its contribution to community vitality. The forest

ecosystem should clearly be seen for its conservation significance and the value it brings to local communities through access to recreation, clean water, safety from catastrophic fire, and jobs.

These lands are irreplaceable habitat, with more than 1000 species of plants and wildlife, including iconic Pacific salmon, towering Ponderosas pines, wolverines, elk and 200 species of birds,







including the northern spotted owl and many neo-tropical migrant species which use these forests as they migrate between the southern and northern hemispheres. Communities locally and across Washington State cherish these lands for the diverse array of recreational opportunities and iconic landscapes.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The Conservancy hosted four community public meetings with more than 300 attendees, presented to more than 35 clubs, groups, committees and associations, worked with local, county, state and congressional government leaders, received more than 1,200 survey responses, hired a community outreach coordinator in Cle Elum, and engaged in hundreds of additional conversations. While our primary purpose for the acquisition is conservation, we have learned of the importance that local and regional communities place on these lands for recreation and economic vitality and have strived to incorporate these values into our management framework wherever possible.

## CONSERVATION GOALS

Containing a significant portion of the Yakima River headwaters and connecting large, intact wilderness areas to the north and south, the Central Cascades Forest knits together an enormous landscape of tremendous conservation value. However, wildfire suppression, intensive timber harvesting, mining and grazing throughout the 20th century have led to dramatic changes in these forests, contributing to increases in wildfire and insect and disease mortality, and amplifying risks to local communities, their water supply, timber production, wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunity. Our efforts to restore long-term forest health in an environmentally safe and economically sound manner will include selective harvest and thinning, tree-planting, brush control, and stream habitat improvement, all guided by the best available science and implemented

in collaboration with tribal, public agencies, and community partners. The Conservancy's primary management goals include:

- 1.** Improve landscape health and resiliency through active management, restoration, and stewardship of forest and stream habitats in a manner consistent with the objectives of the Tapash Sustainable Forest Collaborative ([www.tapash.org](http://www.tapash.org)) and in coordination with landscape partners.
- 2.** Increase habitat suitability and connectivity for fish and wildlife, and improve their ability to respond and adapt to a changing climate.
- 3.** Improve the Upper Yakima Watershed's ability to store and deliver clean water for fish and wildlife, and downstream municipal and agricultural users.
- 4.** Sequester carbon in growing forests, and reduce carbon emissions through decreasing the risk of uncharacteristically severe fire.
- 5.** Produce income from sustainable forest harvesting to offset costs associated with land management and restoration.
- 6.** Support a locally-sustainable natural resource based economy consisting of forest management and forest products, landscape restoration, and diverse recreation industries.
- 7.** Improve human well-being in neighboring communities by providing outdoor recreational opportunities that are consistent with conservation objectives, reducing the risk of uncharacteristically severe fire, and maintaining access to resources that are important for sustaining tribal cultures.
- 8.** Earn respect as exemplary land stewards from local communities and resource management partners, while also maintaining Forest Stewardship Council certification and Land Trust Accreditation Status.
- 9.** Seek long-term ownership and management solutions for the forest that enhance conservation and community values.

## FOREST MANAGEMENT

The Conservancy's goal is to restore the forests of the Central Cascades to be more resilient to fire, disease and a changing climate.

The forest comprises a wide range of forest types, from the moist western hemlock and silver fir forests near the Cascade crest to dry ponderosa pine forests in the eastern foothills and rich riparian forests growing along mountain streams. The majority of these forests are young plantations less than 40 years old. Older forests, greater than 80 years old, are found scattered across almost 20 percent of the area in riparian areas and other pockets where past harvesting was lighter and more selective.

Ecological forestry uses the structure, composition, and landscape pattern created by natural disturbances and other forest development processes as guide posts for management. It relies on the basic assumption that natural forest ecosystems provide and sustain the broad array of ecological functions that people currently want from many forests. Widely distributed large, old trees, provide a critical ecological backbone for forested landscapes. The goal is to restore and sustain core ecological functions while also providing for economic benefits and other social goods and services.

Working with partners in the Tapash Sustainable Forest Collaborative,

The Conservancy's ecologists and foresters will follow the principles of ecological forestry to develop on-the-ground harvest prescriptions and restoration treatments. The Central Cascades Forest will be managed under a certificate of the Forest Stewardship Council,

which ensures that our practices meet an international standard of sustainable forest management. Under agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service all forest management will also meet or exceed the requirements of a federal Habitat Conservation Plan designed to conserve a suite of threatened or endangered fish and wildlife species.

## RECREATIONAL ACCESS

The Central Cascades Forest is a haven for year-round recreation. With nearly 49,000 acres of land in six different geographic regions and 124 miles of designated summer and winter trails, there is ample opportunity for a diverse array of non-motorized and motorized activities. Recreation on Conservancy-managed land includes,

but is not limited to, hiking, bird watching, horseback riding, off-road vehicle riding, mountain biking, skiing, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, dog sledding, and other activities such as hunting, fishing, subsistence gathering, nature and wildlife viewing, and spiritual ceremonies.

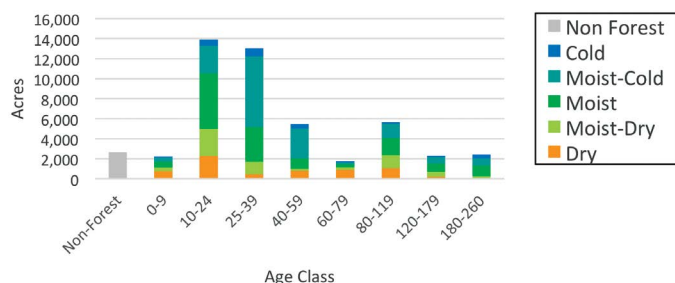
The Conservancy has been working with local communities and partners since the acquisition to develop a shared vision for the future of the landscape—a vision that protects nature and supports sustainable recreation. The Conservancy believes that well-managed recreational activities and responsible use can be consistent with the primary objectives of the Central Cascades Forest.

There is no fee for recreational access. Hazards exist, however, so recreationists must use caution and enter at their own risk. In particular, the Central Cascades Forest is a working forest with ongoing logging and land management activities that may pose a danger to recreational users. Recreationists must pack out all garbage and follow Leave No Trace practices across the landscape to protect natural resources, fish, and wildlife.

### Activities Permitted:

1. Non-motorized use on all lands, throughout the year, unless otherwise posted. The Conservancy encourages non-motorized users to stay on roads and trails unless the activity involves cross country travel such as hunting, collecting forest products, or winter travel with adequate snow cover.
2. Mountain bikes must stay on designated trails and roads to reduce impacts to soil, vegetation, and wildlife.
3. Wheeled motorized use only on open roads and trails authorized for their use. Off-road and off-trail use damages natural resources and disturbs wildlife and is strictly prohibited. Access is prohibited beyond a closed road or trail, even if a gate or sign has been vandalized.
4. Snowmobiles and other over-snow vehicles on groomed trails authorized for their use and cross country with adequate snow cover, unless otherwise posted.

### FOREST TYPE AND AGE ON THE CENTRAL CASCADES FORESTS



To restore the current landscape of dense and young forests active management will be used to develop a healthy and more resilient ecosystem that contains larger trees, more complex and variable habitats, and productive streams flowing with clean water. Active management is expected to include thinning in dense forest stands, logging to create openings and diverse forest structure, prescribed fire and management of forest fuels, planting to build forest diversity, repair of damaging roads and trails, and restoration of stream habitat complexity.

The forest management approach follows the principles of ecological forestry as originally developed by Jerry Franklin at the University of Washington and expanded upon by forest ecologists working throughout the Pacific Northwest.





## ABOUT THE NATURE CONSERVANCY IN WASHINGTON

The Nature Conservancy is the world's leading conservation nonprofit organization, working in all 50 states and more than 60 countries. In Washington a 25-member volunteer Board of Trustees works with 65 staff members who are implementing innovative solutions to the most pressing conservation needs at a meaningful scale so that nature and people can thrive.

- 5.** Hunting and fishing in accordance with relevant state laws.
- 6.** Dispersed camping, following Leave No Trace parameters, consistent with policies of the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest.
- 7.** Campfires in accordance with local and state fire restrictions and in compliance with policies outlined by the Conservancy.
- 8.** By permit only—noncommercial collection of firewood and non-timber

- I.** 73.5 miles of groomed snowmobile trails. These trails are open to non-motorized users as well.
- II.** 1.4 miles of a groomed dog sled trail system that falls within an area that is voluntarily non-motorized.
- III.** 3.4 miles of groomed cross country ski trails that are open to non-motorized users. Dogs aren't permitted on these trails.

- B.** 46.1 miles of summer trails

motorcycle trails. These trails are open to non-motorized users as well.

- IV.** 2.2 miles of a regional jeep trail in Little Naches that has historical significance. This trail is open to ATV's, motorcycles, and non-motorized users as well. It is the only trail or road on the Conservancy property that is open to ATV's.

### Activities Not Permitted:

- 1.** Target shooting and trapping is prohibited year-round.
- 2.** Wheeled motorized use will continue to be prohibited on Cle Elum Ridge. Exceptions to this closure are Forest Service roads 4305, 4305-118 and Forest Service Trail #1340/Sasse Mountain Trail.
- 3.** Permanent and semi-permanent camping structures or cabins (e.g., hunting or camping cabins) are prohibited from being constructed within the Central Cascades Forest and if found will be removed.

## Communities locally and across Washington State cherish these lands for the diverse array of recreational opportunities and iconic landscapes.

forest products like mushrooms or cones.

Recreationists can access 124.4 miles of authorized summer and winter trails. This includes the following:

- A.** 78.3 miles of groomed winter trails

- I.** 1.8 miles of hiking only trails.
- II.** 12.6 miles of user-made non-motorized trails on the Cle Elum Ridge, including the popular Rat Pac mountain bike trail.
- III.** 29.5 miles of single track

**The Nature Conservancy**   
Protecting nature. Preserving life.

To learn more, contact us:

**WASHINGTONNATURE.ORG/CENTRALCASCADES**

206.343.4344 | [washington@tnc.org](mailto:washington@tnc.org)

**CONSERVING THE LANDS AND WATERS ON WHICH ALL LIFE DEPENDS**