



Land Steward News

Spring 2024

To conserve, protect, and restore ecologically significant lands within the Chehalis River Basin.



Join us to help protect over 4,500 acres of land in the Chehalis basin. We are a small number of local volunteers who are asking you to share some time in support of conservation.

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Board of Trustees:
Pete Hammer, President
Jan Robinson, Vice President
Shirley Kook, Treasurer
Don Watt, Secretary
Donna Albert

2024 Annual Board Retreat by Pete Hammer

Martin Luther King Jr. Day 2024 was a cold and sunny day at the Lucky Eagle Hotel and Casino. The board of the Chehalis River Basin Land Trust gathered to reflect on the past year and to plan and set goals for the coming year. Fortunately, the Chehalis Tribe offered us an excellent meeting space for our annual retreat.

We had a full agenda to tackle, and the five of us got down to the business of the day. As usual, we started out by reviewing all of our bylaws and other policies. It's a good time to read and discuss all of the documents that guide our organization and revise them for clarity and relevance. We also discussed our 5 year Strategic Plan (2022-2027). This was a good time to evaluate and assess our progress and priorities. The consensus of the group overall was the need for outreach. We need to increase our visibility in the community with the hope of increasing participation in our activities. Whether it's planting trees, attending annual events, CRBLT needs more boots on the ground.

Of course this led to brain-storming fundraising and increasing membership. The outcome was a renewed commitment to regular contact with our supporters, both old and new. You or someone you know may be hearing from one of us in the near future.

Our annual election of officers didn't yield any changes, but we did enthusiastically welcome Donna Albert as a newly minted board member.

As part of our outreach effort, we discussed the creation of new general information brochures and updating brochures and signage for the Discovery Trail to reflect changes there since the last flood; be on the lookout for these.

The retreat then found us setting important dates, signing on to our core functions, and going over the proposed draft budget.

We look forward to a year of growth, success, and positivity as we do the necessary work to keep the Chehalis River Basin Land Trust moving in the right direction.

Discovery Trail Update by Don Watt

It's been a busy fall and winter at the Chehalis River Discovery Trail, near Centralia this year. We've had a productive series of work parties resulting in about 250 healthy new native trees and shrubs taking root along the north end of the trail.



The work parties at the trail involved youngsters from several local schools and continued a tradition of more than 20 years of community involvement with the trail project. These efforts have helped to restore habitat in the riparian zone along the Chehalis River as it flows northward from Lewis County into Thurston County, on its way to the Pacific Ocean.

This year we planted a mix of nine species of native trees and shrubs in limited areas along the trail in hopes of restoring a diverse riparian ecosystem that would provide habitat for bird and wildlife species native to our region.

The "Tiny Forests" movement

A more rigorously planned approach to this type of planting is practiced in a movement to establish "tiny forests", often in areas where native vegetation has long since been damaged or removed. These tiny forests, often referred to as Miyawaki forests, in recognition of the Japanese plant ecologist who pioneered the technique, have now been established around the world, to help lower temperatures in urban areas and provide other benefits.

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A well-planned tiny forest can grow much more quickly than conventional plantings and provide a habitat refuge for native wildlife while sequestering carbon and helping to retain groundwater.

Our plantings along the Discovery Trail may not qualify as a tiny forest, but we will happily accept the benefits of having a healthy riparian zone forest along our river as this year's plantings grow.

And we are pleased with the new kiosk at the Discovery Trail parking site; we installed the new informational kiosk in early November.

The kiosk now gives clear directions to the trailhead for visitors not familiar with the area. It also gives more information about the trail and about CRBLT's activities.



It was a cold and windy morning....but the project was quickly finished. Volunteers with the Land Trust were on hand to place the maps and documents. They are Don W, Jan R, Stella and Donna A, and Pete H. We also thank the City of Centralia staff for allowing the kiosk and helping with the placing of the structure.

We're turning 30 ! Yes, this Land Trust will turn 30 in May. Over the years we have worked to acquire and protect over 4,500 acres in the Chehalis River basin.

We will continue to protect lands that contribute to habitat for mammals, fish, and birds. These lands also contribute to clean air and water for communities in the basin.



We'll be celebrating all year long !

More Lands Saved Forever by Shirley Kook

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During 2023 the Land Trust saved three parcels which will be protected in perpetuity. There was one fee simple parcel and two conservation easements.

The fee simple parcel was deeded to the land trust by Forterra (a land trust sited in Seattle). Forterra has been partnering with CRBLT, Wild Fish Conservancy and the Quinault Indian Nation since 2015 to acquire and restore this 28.5 ac floodplain parcel located near the Wyman Creek confluence with the Wishkah River. Although the parcel was logged in the 1980s, it supports a complex wetland that is densely vegetated with mostly native shrubs. There are 850 ft of shoreline along the Wishkah River, and 900 ft of Wyman Creek channel meandering in and out of the parcel. The parcel is subject to tidal variations with five ft of water elevation fluctuation, and backwatering of the creek throughout the parcel. Not ideal for human habitation, but ideal for other habitats. Fall Chinook, winter steelhead, coho, chum, cutthroat and bull trout have been documented using the Wishkah River; and coho spawning has been verified in Wyman Creek. And where fish find favorable habitats, there are surely mammalian, avian and amphibious creatures using the same habitat.

The next property easement abuts the Capitol State Forest and has a small stream that feeds into the Black River. The owners of an actively managed forest placed a conservation easement on 28 acres. They have cleared invasive species, and restored upland and riparian zones with the goal to develop old coniferous forest conditions to enhance carbon sequestration. Their efforts have been ongoing for several years and will now continue for generations with their conservation easement with CRBLT.

CRBLT also worked with the owners of a parcel near Olympia. We were approached by the owners several years ago about our interest. They had the parcel for about 65 years but now had to sell yet wanted to preserve the old trees and dense understory forest. The potential purchasers also wanted to place a conservation easement on 17 of the 19 acres. The 17 acres were mapped for a homesite and access. When the original owners got an interested purchaser, we were able to work out an agreeable easement and lot configuration that satisfied everyone.

This process of working with two parties and subdividing the parcel in a short time was unusual, but we had a lot of things working for us in this situation. One, the owner was knowledgeable and earnest about protecting the forest after caring for it 65 years. Two, the owners had surveying, legal and other services available to work with a purchaser immediately. And three, the owners met with CRBLT and made efforts to keep us informed as their sale proceeded.

Would we do it again? Yes. The idea is to conserve lands with a water course and contiguous with other large forested and protected lands. Those types of property are becoming rare. This conservation easement may be the best compromise with our need to protect excellent habitat lands and the owners' need to get the most value.

We learned a lot from our land acquisition projects in 2023, and we're looking forward to working with property owners to protect and restore more lands in the Chehalis River Basin!



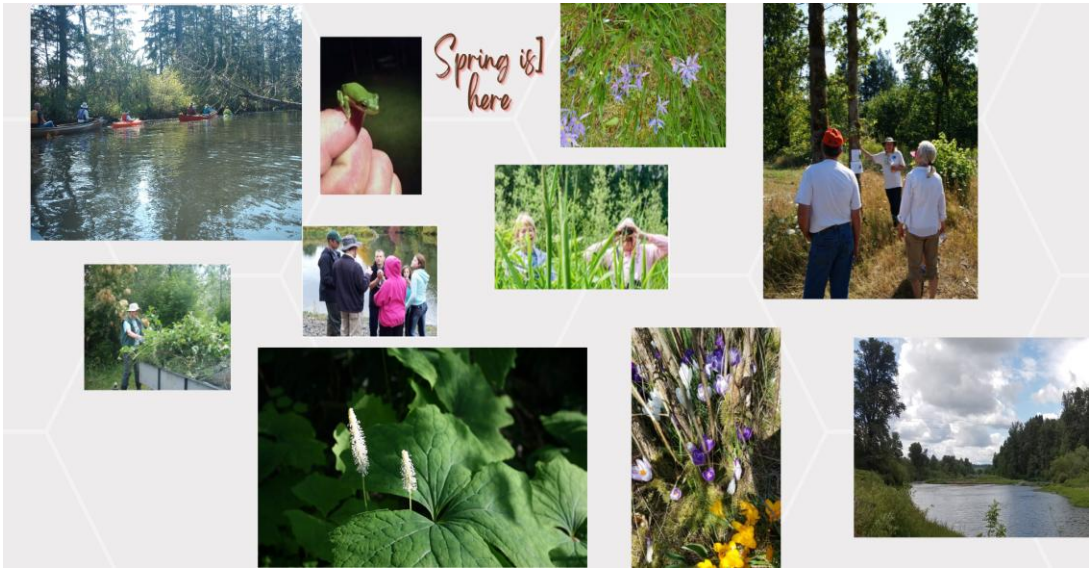
Typical old growth forest

To see great pictures of wildlife across the world and in many habitats follow this link

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/auSo1MyWf8g?rel=0>



Meet our newest director, Donna Albert. She is a Professional Civil Engineer, retired from 27 years working for the State of Washington. When my husband was stationed at Fort Lewis, we fell in love with the rain forest, rivers, mountains and ocean beaches of western Washington. We stayed here when he retired from military service. We have two grown sons and five grandchildren. I am a musician and a climate advocate. I am naturalizing our backyard to attract native insects, and I enjoy taking photos of them



Annual membership dues are a key part of our financial support and are used to manage conservation easements and to develop future projects. To join or to renew your membership, please complete this form, enclose check and mail. Or you can pay online at <https://www.chehalislandtrust.org/membership>. Thank you!

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