



# **FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN**

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SEPTEMBER 2021 - SEPTEMBER 2026

UPDATED 2024



## **OUR MISSION:**

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THE CASCADE FOREST CONSERVANCY  
**PROTECTS AND SUSTAINS** FORESTS,  
STREAMS, WILDLIFE, AND COMMUNITIES  
IN THE **HEART OF THE CASCADES**  
THROUGH **CONSERVATION, EDUCATION,**  
**AND ADVOCACY.**

## **OUR VISION:**

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Our vision is one where native flora and fauna thrive in healthy biodiverse forests and aquatic ecosystems. We strive for a region made resilient to the effects of climate change — one that is sustainably managed and supports local communities, recreation and tourism, so it may continue to inspire and nourish for centuries to come.

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# VALUES & GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

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## **Acknowledgment of Indigenous Peoples**

Land within the area we work, now referred to as the southern Washington Cascades, is the home of diverse and unique Indigenous communities. There are, and were, numerous Tribes and Bands with ties to the area, some of which include the Mishalpan, Táytñapam, Słpúlmx (Lower Cowlitz); Cathlamet, Multnomah, Cascades, Chinook, Nisqually, Puyallup, Squaxin Island and Steilacoom, Wasco, Wishram, Xwátxwaypam (Klikitat), Wayám, Skínpah, Q'mitpah, and Yakama.

Many of these groups were displaced and consolidated, and few received federal recognition. Some descendants of these groups are today citizens of federally recognized Tribes, including the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, Nisqually Indian Community, and the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation.

Indigenous traditions of land and resource management fostered iconic landscapes and rich species abundance.

Recognizing these stewards and their deep ecological knowledge—while acknowledging the historic and continuing injustices committed against them—is an important part of ensuring our work is conducted in an equitable manner.

As we join in the work of stewarding this land, we appreciate the history, resilience, and persistence of Indigenous communities and the important role they continue to play in our region.

## **DIVERSITY, EQUITY, JUSTICE & INCLUSION**

Cascade Forest Conservancy believes ecological justice and social justice are two sides of the same coin, and achieving one will require achieving the other. As an organization, we continue investigating how the conservation movement, including CFC, has historically fallen short by failing to notice or even perpetuating harmful systems and ideas. We are committed to continued learning, growth, and improvement. In this spirit, CFC has created our organization's first official Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) plan.

Our vision is to create an inclusive environment where everyone is welcome and feels comfortable joining us in our work to defend, restore, and protect the southern Washington Cascades. Our DEIJ plan outlines steps toward our vision, recognizing this work is ongoing and will require continual learning. Our plan is organized into subject areas of Operations, Fundraising, Communications, and Programs, with associated goals and strategies for each, including challenges we will strive to overcome. Some of these challenges are short-term, and some provide the basis for longer-term goals and strategies. CFC intends this Plan to be a living document. We recognize that we won't get everything right in this initial draft, and there are many outlying questions. However, we are committed to learning, receiving feedback, modifying our plan, and growing.



# OUR WORK

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## WHERE WE WORK

We work in the forests, watersheds, and communities of southwest Washington's Cascade Range, including the Gifford Pinchot National Forest (GPNF) and surrounding state and private forest lands.



## WHAT WE DO

- We apply the best available science, informed in part by indigenous practices, to manage forests and watersheds.
- We work toward ecosystems that are resilient to the effects of climate change.
- We advocate for policies and plans that conserve and sustain resources to support the long-term health of human communities in and around the southwest Washington Cascades.
- We collaborate with local community members, federal, state, local and tribal governments, and partner non-profits to address conservation issues and meet our organizational priorities.
- We connect people to nature by engaging them in conservation science and policy-making, and introducing them to the unique and beautiful places in the southern Washington Cascades.
- We protect and advance biological diversity, abundant native fish and wildlife populations, fully functioning forest ecosystems, clean water, prosperous local communities, access for all, and inspiring outdoor experiences.
- We strive to create an organizational community that is reflective of the people with whom we partner, serve, and engage.
- We efficiently and wisely use the financial resources entrusted to us as we work to protect our natural resources.

# OUR STORY:

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## **Foundation**

By the mid-1980's, it was increasingly evident to a growing number of people that aggressive timber harvests on public lands were unsustainable and that remaining old-growth forests in the Pacific Northwest, and the species that depended on them, would be irreversibly lost without action. In January 1985, a group of environmentalists, scientists, concerned community members, and forest activists from southwest Washington took it upon themselves to speak out. They came together and formed an organization they named the Gifford Pinchot Task Force (changed to Cascade Forest Conservancy in 2016).

From its founding and many years after, the Task Force served as an influential public voice for conservation in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest while functioning as an entirely volunteer-operated organization. The Task Force participated in forest management decisions, advocated for the conservation of critical habitats and natural resources, and protected the newly created Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument. The early members of the Task Force were instrumental in safeguarding significant areas of old-growth, streamside, and mature forests during an era of rampant, reckless timber harvests.

## **Moving beyond the “timber wars”**

Members of the Task Force helped lead the way forward following the creation of the Northwest Forest Plan and the end of the “timber wars.” The Task Force was a founding member of the two forest collaboratives that are now active in the Gifford Pinchot National Forests; the Pinchot Partners, which operates in the Cowlitz Valley Ranger District, and the South Gifford Pinchot Forest Collaborative, which operates in the Mount Adams Ranger District.

Forest Collaboratives foster conversations about land management policies between representatives from the Forest Service and other agencies, local and Tribal governments, conservation groups, timber companies, and local communities. They serve as places to gain understanding, find areas of agreement, and resolve conflicts. Good-faith negotiations held in collaboratives have frequently resulted in better outcomes for forests and communities while reducing the need for lawsuits.

Over the following decades, the Task Force evolved from a fully volunteer-led group into an increasingly effective and professional organization. The Task Force incorporated as a non-profit, hired paid staff, and, through a combination of negotiation, coalition-building, advocacy, and legal action, successfully safeguarded thousands of acres of old-growth and mature forests and blocked repeated attempts to prospect a location for an open-pit mine among the foothills of Mount St. Helens.



## **Becoming Cascade Forest Conservancy**

The Task Force took on new roles; helping guide on-the-ground restoration efforts; providing information and building support for conservation causes; and offering opportunities for students and volunteers to learn and make a difference in the field.

The Task Force was renamed the Cascade Forest Conservancy in 2016 to reflect its expanding focus and impact. Cascade Forest Conservancy remained effective as advocates and watchdogs, while continuing to take on new science, stewardship, and restoration projects and priorities and concurrently developing a robust volunteer program.

## **Working for a climate change resilient future for Southwest Washington**

Cascade Forest Conservancy conducted a thorough investigation to assess the ways projected climate impacts would affect local wildlife and ecosystems. It found that urgent action was needed to support climate resiliency in ecosystems badly degraded by bad land management practices going back more than a century. The findings were published as *The Wildlife and Climate Resilience Guidebook: A Conservation Plan for the Southern Washington Cascades*, which identified priorities and strategies to help local populations of wildlife and key habitats adapt to climate impacts.

A second publication, the *Conservation Guidebook for the Southern Washington Cascades: A Plan to Conserve Habitats and Build Climate Resilience*, was shared in 2024. The 2024 Guidebook provides updated analysis and strategies and discusses in-depth proposals to protect and enhance carbon-storing mature and old-growth forests.



# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES IN SUPPORT OF OUR VISION:

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The CFC has established the following eight equal strategic priorities to accomplish our mission and support our vision:

1. *PROTECT ECOSYSTEMS*
2. *CONSERVE KEY HABITATS AND SPECIES*
3. *ADVOCATE FOR IMPROVED POLICIES AND MANAGEMENT*
4. *COLLABORATE IN CONSERVATION*
5. *ADVANCE SCIENTIFIC UNDERSTANDING*
6. *PROMOTE RURAL ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY*
7. *ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY*
8. *SUSTAIN THE ORGANIZATION*





# STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: **PROTECT ECOSYSTEMS**

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## **OUR GOAL:**

*Protect critical forest and river habitats to provide connectivity and ecosystem resilience, setting species and habitats on a path towards climate resilience.*



## **ACTIVITIES TO MEET THIS GOAL:**

- Author and publish a new Guidebook to outline local conservation priorities and designations.
- Review timber sales and management actions on the GPNF and on state and private forest land in the southern Washington Cascades.
- Advance aquatic and riparian protection and restoration.
- Support and advance forest road decommissioning and culvert removal/redesign.



# STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: **CONSERVE KEY SPECIES & HABITATS**

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## **OUR GOAL:**

*Conserve, advocate for, and help recover native wildlife and plant species so they trend toward resilience.*

## **ACTIVITIES TO MEET THIS GOAL:**

- Monitor huckleberry productivity after restoration thinning treatments.
- Carry out wildlife camera surveys.
- Conduct beaver reintroduction and on-the-ground monitoring.
- Promote diverse plant communities through surveys and mapping, native seeding and planting, and invasive species management.
- Review opportunities for Endangered Species Act (ESA) petitions & habitat protection for at-risk species.

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: **ADVOCATE FOR IMPROVED POLICIES AND MANAGEMENT**

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## **OUR GOAL:**

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*Improve policies and management plans so that they lead to sustainable forests, streams, and wildlife.*

### **ACTIVITIES TO MEET THIS GOAL:**

- Defend against proposed actions in critical habitats that threaten ecosystem integrity: Spirit Lake Road; Green River Valley mine; High Lakes development.
- Oppose new dam development and relicensing; promote removal of dams.
- Develop an internal strategy for the Northwest Forest Plan rewrite.
- Review and provide comments on NEPA to challenge rollbacks, improve protections, and increase transparency.
- Contribute to practical application of ESA Policy within our focus area.



# STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4: **COLLABORATE IN CONSERVATION**

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## **OUR GOAL:**

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*Collaboratively conserve the landscapes and species of the region by serving as a leader, convener, and partner in conservation efforts alongside local communities, agencies, tribes, and other nonprofits.*

## **ACTIVITIES TO MEET THIS GOAL:**

- Work with partners and concerned parties on designation campaigns such as Mineral Withdrawal, Wilderness, Outstanding Resource Waters, and similar initiatives.
- Develop and promote the Instream Wood Bank Network.
- Implement programs to increase habitat connectivity and awareness of connectivity needs.
- Maintain a lead role in the function and implementation of the two GPNF forest collaboratives to galvanize collaborative support for sustainable forest practices.



# STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5: **ADVANCE SCIENTIFIC UNDERSTANDING**

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## **OUR GOAL:**

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*Contribute to scientific research, promote environmental literacy, and apply best available science in all initiatives.*

## **ACTIVITIES TO MEET THIS GOAL:**

- Use on-the-ground findings and recommendations from the Guidebook to develop and inform conservation actions.
- Work with partners such as agencies, universities, tribes, and volunteers to advance our understanding of species and habitat needs in the areas we work.
- Serve as a resource for other organizations working to develop a better understanding of how on-the-ground actions can enhance the health and resilience of ecosystems.
- Engage community members in the collection of on-the-ground data.



# STRATEGIC PRIORITY 6: **PROMOTE RURAL ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY**

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## **OUR GOAL:**

*Establish a balance between conservation needs and economic needs in local communities, that is driven by community, cultural, and environmental values.*



## **ACTIVITIES TO MEET THIS GOAL:**

- Working with the two GPNF collaboratives, to advocate for sustainable timber management, habitat protection and restoration, and climate change mitigation in ways that promote long-term rural economic opportunities.
- Ensure programs we develop, such as the Instream Wood Bank Network, promote local economies as they advance habitat restoration objectives.
- Partner with local businesses for increased exposure, engagement, and economic benefit.



# STRATEGIC PRIORITY 7: ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY

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## OUR GOAL:

*Foster a lasting sense of stewardship by engaging a diverse array of community members to realize conservation outcomes.*

## ACTIVITIES TO MEET THIS GOAL:

- Ensure external communications and organizational messages for the community are timely, consistent, and on-brand.
- Develop and implement field-based volunteer opportunities.
- Host community events to engage existing supporters and recruit new ones.
- Provide field science and restoration opportunities for youth.
- Diversify and increase partnerships with historically marginalized and undeserved communities.



# STRATEGIC PRIORITY 8: **SUSTAIN THE ORGANIZATION**

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## **OUR GOAL:**

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*Sustain the Cascade Forest Conservancy as a stable, resilient, and diverse organization that can successfully achieve strategic priorities.*



## **ACTIVITIES TO MEET THIS GOAL:**

- Ensure effective organizational structures, policies, and procedures in place.
- Recruit skilled staff to new positions as programs and funding allow.
- Integrate Diversity, Equity, Justice and Inclusivity principles throughout our organizational strategy, structure, and programs.
- Increase funding streams for organization and programming that ensure achievement of our mission, goals, and resiliency of the organization.
- Ensure suitable office space for staff and equipment.
- Strengthen the Board of Directors' capacity to support CFC as advisors, advocates, and funders.
- Retain existing staff and expand compensation to match the market.