



# 2021 ANNUAL **REPORT**





WELCOME TO THE **CASCADE** FOREST CONSERVANCY  
2021 ANNUAL **REPORT**

Thanks to the continued involvement and generosity of volunteers, donors, and supporting foundations, 2021 was a year in which the Cascade Forest Conservancy (CFC) made substantial progress in its work in the heart of Cascades. CFC remains a strong, effective, and financially sustainable organization, well-equipped to stand as a committed steward for the region while helping to advance science and restoration initiatives that the region relies on.

As we navigated our way through the global pandemic, we also experienced some of the most dramatic climate change impacts to our region, including a record-breaking heatwave, an ongoing megadrought, and worsening outlooks for several iconic Northwest species. CFC’s staff and community rose to meet each challenge from a place of actionable hope.

What is actionable hope? It is the necessary alternative to resignation or comfortable head-in-the-sand optimism. It’s the perspective demonstrated by CFC’s work in 2021. It is engaged, thoughtful, analytical, and rooted in science and research. It is active, creative, and generative rather than passive and inert. It envisions better alternatives and then takes steps to make them a reality. It is an optimistic perspective that is powerful because it is rooted in tangible, measurable action. It acknowledges the gravity of our tasks while trusting that together we can, and already are, making a real and meaningful difference.

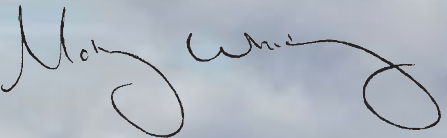
How does that look in action? Last year, after many months without a shared workspace, we moved into a new office in

downtown Vancouver, WA. We built and launched a new website to engage more effectively with wider audiences. We launched a major new campaign called the Green River Valley Alliance which brings together organizations, businesses, and individuals to secure a legislative mineral withdrawal that will prevent mining near Mount St. Helens once and for all. Further, our community of science and restoration volunteers made up for trips that were canceled in 2020 by accomplishing an incredible amount of work in a single field season.

We completed and approved a detailed 5-year strategic plan that will serve as a roadmap toward improving the health of the entire region by guiding our work to ensure this part of the Cascades remains a place where native life thrives in healthy biodiverse ecosystems made resilient to the effects of climate change that can sustainably support flourishing human communities for centuries to come.

In this year’s annual report, you’ll read about examples of CFC’s many innovative programs, effective advocacy campaigns, and collaborative projects that made a positive impact in 2021. These stories demonstrate how new approaches to aquatic restoration are working, that collaboration leads to sustainable land management solutions benefiting ecosystems while supporting rural economies, and that degraded habitats can be restored and made resilient to climate change through the work of multi-agency partnerships. Each story also illustrates the passion of our staff, board, and supporters, who make our work possible. I hope you find them as inspiring as I do.

Molly Whitney  
Executive Director





# COLLABORATION AND ACTION: SAFEGUARDING MATURE AND OLD-GROWTH FORESTS

## OUR APPROACH: ADVOCATING FOR SUSTAINABILITY IN TIMBER SALE PLANNING PROCESSES



### CONVERSATION & COLLABORATION

Cascade Forest Conservancy is a founding member of two forest collaboratives. These groups bring together Tribes, agencies, conservationists, timber companies, and community members to discuss forest management. Being a part of Forest Collaboratives allows CFC to express concerns, advocate for conservation, and to influence plans for timber sales starting from the initial planning stages.



### STUDYING THE IMPACTS OF PROPOSED ACTIONS

We look closely at each stand within proposed timber sales to evaluate impacts to the health of the forest. We use our first-hand knowledge of the region, mapping software with data about the approximate age and structure of individual stands, and information gathered by staff and volunteers during ground truthing expeditions.



### SPEAKING UP FOR CONSERVATION

Sometimes, our concerns about timber projects are successfully addressed through conversations in forest collaboratives. In instances when a plan proceeds without addressing our concerns, we work to raise public awareness about potential threats, submit comments at various points of the NEPA process, object if our concerns are not adequately addressed, and bring legal actions when needed.

*This stand, a mature forest that regenerated naturally after a wildfire moved through the area more than 100 years ago, was included in the initial plans for the upcoming Yellowjacket timber sale. CFC fights to ensure complex mature and old-growth forests like this are conserved and maintained.*

**Bryn Harding** | *Communication Manager*

Cascade Forest Conservancy advocates for conservation concerns at every stage of planning processes for timber sales within the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. We work to verify that land management actions are carried out sustainably and that critical habitat areas are protected and restored. In 2021, we looked closely at a number of proposed sales.

Initial scoping plans for one, the upcoming Yellowjacket Timber Sale, contained some aspects we found concerning. Specifically, a number of mature stands were targeted for aggressive management by the Forest Service.

Data, including information from GIS mapping layers we use to estimate forest age and structure, suggested that these stands contained a number of old, large trees and also indicated the possible existence of a small unmapped waterway.

These stands had grown back naturally after a major wildfire swept through more than 100 years ago. Similarly-aged stands in the National Forest, specifically areas planted in homogeneous rows following previous clear cuts, could benefit from some smart thinning. However, the information we had suggested that the area in question was a very different kind of forest.

Compared to monoculture stands, a naturally regenerated forest contains excellent, varied, and structurally-complex habitat. These mature stands were well on their way to becoming much-needed old-growth in just a few short decades.

Drawing on what we already know, we expressed our opposition to these aspects of the planned sale in comments responding to the Forest Service’s scoping plans—but we still wanted to see these areas for ourselves.

So in the late summer, I headed into the forest with Shiloh Halsey, CFC’s Director of Programs, to observe and document

these stands. The evidence of the century-old fire was evident even from the gravel forest road. Huge charred snags still stood among a thriving forest of Douglas-fir, western hemlock, and big leaf maples. An unexpectedly steep slope, waning daylight, and an unfortunate flat tire prevented us from getting as far into those stands as we’d hoped.

However, when I came back a few weeks later, I was able to find the unmapped waterway! Independent volunteers provided even more insight by ground truthing the makeup of the stands—providing data about the mix of species present and trees’ sizes and ages. Based on these very findings, the stands were removed from the plans for the timber sale and will now be able to continue growing and developing into old growth.

Another project we addressed in 2021, the Upper Wind Timber Sale, is an upcoming action planned in west side stands of the forest, located northwest of the Indian Heaven Wilderness. We were worried about plans for aggressive thinning in complex

forest stands—a strategy meant to create more early seral habitat (forest stands in the early stages of regrowth following a stand-replacing event). Fires in the area have already created more of this kind of habitat, and we expect future burns to create even more.

Using data analysis and more ground truthing outings, we confirmed that these stands were vibrant and complex habitat areas. In meetings with the South Gifford Pinchot Collaborative, we clearly opposed clear-cutting these areas, and committed to use every tool we had to prevent that from occurring.

Through our participation in the forest collaborative, we were able to successfully negotiate the removal of the concerning aspects of the timber sale from the plan—without having to object to the plan or take legal actions.



# CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION: BUILDING THE INSTREAM WOOD BANK



*A drone’s eye-view of a stretch of the Washougal River—a previous instream wood placement project site and current wood bank log storage area*

## Shiloh Halsey | Director of Programs

Here in southwest Washington and across the Pacific Northwest, many fish populations are struggling. Iconic species have been pushed to the brink by compounding challenges, including the impacts from dams, warming water temperatures, and degraded habitats lacking in complexity.

To support their recovery, agencies, Tribes, and professionals working to restore waterways and improve aquatic habitats are reintroducing woody debris and logjams back into the system. Before streamside logging and efforts to straighten channels and clear obstacles, instream wood provided complex habitats that supported fish throughout their life cycles by slowing flows, creating shallow gravel beds and deep pools, and cooling water temperatures. Aquatic ecosystems are healthier—and more resilient to the impacts of climate change—when these habitat features are restored.

Sadly, some of our partners often face difficulties sourcing the wood needed for restoration projects, due to expense or availability. They also had to weigh the benefits of aquatic restoration projects against impacts to wildlife and the climate that arise from logging trees necessary to move forward with aquatic restoration.

With all this in mind, I began to explore a possible way to address these seemingly disjunct issues.

In 2019, CFC’s Instream Wood Bank Network (IWBN) was a far-off idea—a program that would collect non-lumber wood that would otherwise be discarded or processed into pulp, and store these logs in temporary staging areas, known as ‘wood banks’, or have them sent directly to river restoration project areas. Connecting these wood sources with various restoration efforts, we are able to provide affordable and sustainably-sourced wood materials for restoration projects across southwest Washington.

At first, we feared the Wood Bank might turn out to be an impractical concept, but we did feel it was worth exploring. We began by meeting with potential partners to gather feedback and gauge interest. We also met with a number of people who understood the ins and outs of the various logistics involved with this type of work, including individuals in the timber business, local lumber hauling companies, and river restoration practitioners from across the region. The reactions ran the spectrum. Some were excited and gave the idea an enthusiastic thumbs up. Others replied with variations of “that’s going to be impossible.”

Thankfully, we decided to move forward. Only two years after the idea began to take shape, the project is up and running. The Instream Wood Bank has become a functioning new enterprise that is helping put wheels in motion for salmon recovery projects across southwest Washington. It represents a rare win-

win for conservationists, timber companies, local communities, and most of all, for fish.

By the end of 2021, the Instream Wood Bank supplied \$48,500 worth of wood materials to various partners (at a cost of \$9,700), saving restoration teams \$38,800 over what they would have otherwise paid. And, through all of this, the new initiative reduced the number of intact trees being logged while simultaneously advancing aquatic restoration projects across the region.

The Instream Wood Bank is a highly collaborative program. It functions as a set of partnerships focused on finding scenarios where we can help supply wood for restoration projects by providing a use for trees that can’t be sold as lumber (such as deeply knotted or twisted trees or trees that have fallen on roadways)—logs that would otherwise become wood chips, cut for firewood, or burned on-site.

For sourcing and hauling, we developed working relationships with a wide variety of landowners, contractors, businesses, and agencies. We have set up agreements with Weyerhaeuser, Port Blakely, and other timber groups to find a new use for their “low quality” wood. We are currently developing plans with the Washington Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Forest Service, and various local municipalities to find similar wood sourcing opportunities. We hire local haulers to bring these unsellable trees to ‘wood banks’ or directly to river restoration sites.

These materials provided by the Wood Bank are intended to complement and help advance the large-scale instream wood placement projects being managed by our various restoration partners, including the Lower Columbia Fish Enhancement Group, the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, Friends of East Fork Lewis, the U.S. Forest Service, and others. Some instream projects have large budgets and viable wood sources, but many others do not.

We also work with partners who are excited about the idea of having extra or less expensive wood materials for their projects, allowing them to expand the footprint or habitat density of their project by increasing the amount of habitat features they can build. In short, the Wood Bank allows our restoration partners to do more work for less money.



In addition to helping advance the work of our partners, the Wood Bank is also focused on getting new, small-scale projects off the ground. CFC has been working with river restoration professionals, such as Inter-Fluve, a local engineering firm, to develop new designs that can impart big impacts using smaller wood pieces, which we have an abundance of due to what is most often available through the Wood Bank’s opportunistic sourcing process.

2021 was a year of exciting growth for the Instream Wood Bank Network, and this growth is continuing into 2022. The program is a powerful example of the important role CFC continues to play as an innovator and a convener in our region and an encouraging example of what mutually-beneficial partnerships can accomplish even in a short time.







# DOING MORE TOGETHER: HABITAT RESTORATION AT YELLOWJACKET CREEK WITH THE COWLITZ INDIAN TRIBE

CFC staff and volunteers were responsible for replanting riparian forests at the confluence of the Cispus River and Yellowjacket Creek, where the Cowlitz Indian Tribe had overseen the installation of new logjams to support salmon recovery

Amanda Keasberry | Science & Stewardship Manager

Cascade Forest Conservancy fills a much-needed niche in the wider conservation landscape as a convener and long-term collaborator on a number of large initiatives. By working closely with partners, pooling resources, blending knowledge bases, and engaging directly with a strong community of volunteers, we achieve far more for our region than would otherwise be possible.

In 2021, one of the projects that demonstrated the effectiveness of this approach was CFC’s riparian planting work along the banks of the Cispus River. This effort was part of a much larger multi-phase and multi-million dollar project that is restoring aquatic habitat at the confluence of the Cispus River and Yellowjacket Creek. A regional Recovery Plan identified this confluence as a priority for habitat restoration. It was chosen both because of the extent to which past human activities had degraded the area and for its potential to be successfully restored.

Our primary partner in this work is the Cowlitz Indian Tribe. They secured funding for the project and worked with restoration-focused engineers to design a construction plan to increase the quality and amount of habitat for Chinook salmon, winter steelhead, and coho salmon during each stage of their life cycles. The Cowlitz Indian Tribe worked with construction crews, the U.S. Forest Service, and other partners to make these engineered designs come to life.

From 2020 to 2021, construction crews used heavy machinery to install 27 log jams along the banks and in the middle of the waterways. The effects of the newly added structures were instantaneous. The water slowed and pooled behind the new

structures and fall precipitation created new, sinuous side channels.

Without helpful intervention, these stretches of Cispus River and Yellowjacket Creek would have taken hundreds of years to regain the features needed to serve as ideal habitat. But now it is already becoming a stronghold that will improve the health and resilience of many different species. Soon, this will be a place where salmon and steelhead will find new pockets of refugia within which to raise their young and where wetland-loving amphibians and land-roaming mammals will find new pockets of life.

The next phase of the project was to re-establish a healthy riparian ecosystem. The tops of the new log jams had been backfilled with dirt and cobble but had no vegetation, and the stream banks had been affected by the equipment used during the installation. CFC was the partner responsible for revegetating the log jams and surrounding areas to increase biodiversity, soil stability, and future shade.

Volunteer planting trips had been planned across four weekends in order to tackle the large tasks of planting 7,275 trees. The amazing work that our community of volunteers was able to accomplish in this project (and many others) is a huge asset to us and all of our partners who are working to improve trajectories for wildlife and ecosystems.

The first two trips were in April. That month, we successfully planted 3,600 Douglas-firs and western redcedars on the log jams that had been completed at the end of 2020. For the October trips,

we were met with weeks of torrential rain. We were concerned it could be difficult to get to some of the planting locations because of high streamflows. Once we arrived on-site for the first fall-weekend planting trip, the reality sunk in that we were not able to traverse the project site to get to all the planting areas.

Luckily by Sunday, the water levels went down enough that we were able to plant a portion of the trees in our care. Despite the wet and challenging conditions, the 16 volunteers who joined us rose to the occasion and accomplished more than we could have expected. Together with CFC staff, they put an incredible number of new trees into the ground. But there were still more to plant and even more torrential rain on the horizon.

Looking at this forecast, we knew we had to cancel the following weekend’s trip. There was only one day ahead when water levels would be low enough to finish the job before winter. We still had 700 trees to plant and three logjams in need of vegetation. With no time to organize a new mid-week volunteer trip, we would need to head out to forge the waters and tackle the remaining work on our own.

I was joined by CFC’s Director of Programs, Shiloh Halsey, and our partner, Eli Asher (the project manager with the Cowlitz Indian Tribe), who generously stepped in to lend a hand. Together, we were able to finish the job! Tired and damp, we headed back to town as the rains began their multi-day downpour. Soon, the high flows of winter would fill the newly-formed river channels—part of a yearly cycle that will repeat over and over as the small saplings grow into a mature riparian forest.



CFC staff and volunteers planting Douglas-firs and western red cedars



Cowlitz Indian Tribe project manager Eli Asher helped CFC staff finish planting before winter flows made the area inaccessible



An aerial view of some of the many instream features installed at the project site

Thanks to the hard work of CFC’s staff, dedicated volunteers, and outstanding partners, we accomplished what we set out to do despite the unknowns and challenging weather. We can now look forward to seeing positive changes unfold for the variety of animals that are already living in and exploring these new areas of life and refuge.

As the new trees mature, the roots will grow vertically and horizontally to help stabilize the soils and the shade they provide will help keep waters cool, even as temperatures across the region continue to warm. Because of the various strengths and resources each organization contributes, this multi-partner project is kickstarting the recovery process and bringing complexity back to this critical aquatic system, giving salmon and many other species a place to survive and thrive.





# ORGANIZING AND ENGAGING: PROTECTING MOUNT ST. HELENS AND THE GREEN RIVER VALLEY

Sean Roome | Campaign Coordinator

The energy in the room was palpable. I had just finished presenting at our first in-person event in support of our revitalized campaign to protect the Green River Valley and Mount St. Helens from the threat of a proposed open-pit mine, and we were in the middle of our question & answer portion of the evening. The audience was fully engaged. Supporters had traveled from up to an hour away to join us at a brewery in downtown Vancouver, WA, and you could tell from their passion and from the quality of their questions that this issue had touched people in a profound way.

Members of the audience wanted to know more about the local geology, the current political landscape in relation to mining, the impacts of a potential mine to wildlife and recreation, and more.

After months of foundational work, it was inspiring to feel the enthusiasm from the crowd. Each person was there for their own reasons, but regardless of what brought them to the event that night, it was evident that they wanted to get involved and were willing to do whatever they could to help spread the message that the Green River Valley is no place for a mine.

This was all made possible because of a generous grant from the Cowlitz Indian Tribe that allowed CFC to create a new Campaign Coordinator position which I was hired into in March of 2021. I lead the creation and implementation of campaigns to help support CFC's policy goals. My focus so far has been helping to protect the Green River Valley from the threat of mining through a grassroots campaign to secure a legislative mineral withdrawal for the area.

A mineral withdrawal is a federal land management tool, secured through an Act of Congress, that would prohibit mining activities within a given boundary without impacting existing rules regulating recreation, trail maintenance, timber harvests, or other permitted activities.

A major step in the process to secure a mineral withdrawal is gathering strong support at the local and regional levels. To do so, we launched a new initiative called the Green River Valley Alliance (GRVA). The GRVA is a growing coalition of individuals, businesses, organizations, and



Artist Lindsey Fox creating a watercolor painting (above) to support CFC's efforts to protect Mount St. Helens and the Green River Valley from mining development



**Clockwise from upper left:** CFC's Campaign Coordinator, Sean Roome, answering audience questions at an event held to build public support for a legislative mineral withdrawal | Mine runoff and groundwater pollution would threaten the Green River; a waterway eligible to be a Wild and Scenic River candidate, a critical gene bank for wild steelhead, and a source of drinking water for communities throughout southwest Washington | The Green River Valley Alliance is a coalition founded by CFC that is working to secure a mineral withdrawal to end the threat of mining here once and for all | The Goat Mountain Trail is one of many world-class hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding trails that bring visitors from around the world to enjoy the Green River Valley

policymakers with a shared objective: protecting the Green River Valley and Mount St. Helens from the threat of mining once and for all. The GRVA will act as the central hub of our campaign as we move forward, and will allow us to collaborate with a wide variety of partners coming from a range of different backgrounds and interests.

We know that this approach and style of campaign can be a winning strategy. The GRVA was modeled after a similar effort that successfully secured a legislative mineral withdrawal for the Methow Valley in northern Washington in 2019.

Last year, we created a petition, started an ongoing letter writing campaign, created a sign on letter for businesses and organizations to formalize their support, began meeting with local elected officials, and developed a dedicated website for this new campaign.

The timing couldn't have been better. Just a few months into 2022, a ruling was issued in our lawsuit challenging the latest set of prospecting permits federal agencies had issued to a mining corporation. We had won our fourth legal victory against mining since 2010! Now, thanks to all the Green River Valley Alliance campaign achieved in 2021, we have good reasons to be optimistic that CFC may never have to take the issue to court again.

To make that happen, we intend to keep up the momentum and ramp up the campaign! CFC and the GRVA will continue hosting monthly in-person events, adding partners to our coalition, and engaging decision makers. We are extremely excited about the direction we are taking with the Green River Valley Alliance and are motivated by the passion and engagement of our supporters to continue the pursuit of permanent protections for this incredible part of southwest Washington. Thank you for your continued support. Onwards!



# STEADY AND SECURE : 2021 FINANCES

CFC's financial position in 2021 remained strong and stable, ensuring that we had the resources necessary to achieve our program goals and act as effective environmental advocates while supporting our staff and maintaining a healthy cash reserve. We ended 2020 with a significant surplus because we received several large grant disbursements that provided funding for multi-year projects, so we expected expenses to exceed income in 2021.

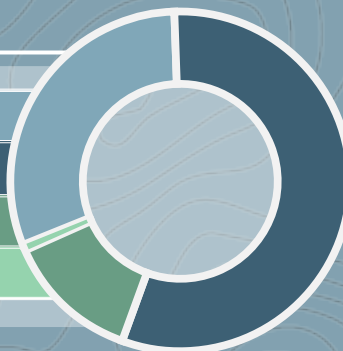
Our work continues to benefit from the strong support of individual donors who together gave more than \$170,000 (30% of our total income) to support ongoing conservation and advocacy in Washington's Cascades.

We are grateful to the many partners, Tribes, foundations, businesses, and individuals who made the many stories and successes highlighted in this report possible.

	2020	2021
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	\$730,639	\$554,943
<b>TOTAL EXPENSE</b>	\$538,737	\$610,682
<b>DIFFERENCE</b>	+ \$191,902	- \$55,739

## TOTAL INCOME: \$544,943

INDIVIDUAL GIVING:	\$170,612
GRANTS UNRESTRICTED:	\$311,281
GRANTS RESTRICTED:	\$70,840
OTHER:	\$2,211



## TOTAL EXPENSE: \$610,682

PROGRAMS:	\$439,671
ADMINISTRATIVE:	\$146,229
FUNDRAISING AND EVENTS:	\$23,869
LOBBYING:	\$913



**SUPPORT  
OUR WORK  
TODAY!**

