

2024 ANNUAL **REPORT**



OUR MISSION:

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

OUR TEAM:

- Molly Whitney | Executive Director
- Shiloh Halsey | Director of Programs
- Ashley Short | Policy Manager
- Amanda Keasberry | Science & Stewardship Manager
- Suzanne Whitney | Grants and Restoration Manager
- Katie Aiello | Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator
- Bryn Gray Harding | Communications Manager
- Mona Lindsey | Accountant
- Nathan Reynolds | Board Chair through Feb. ‘25
- Susan Jane Brown | Board Vice Chair
- Don Lloyd | Board Treasurer
- Mark Soutter | Board Secretary through Feb. ‘25
- Jennifer Gilden | Board Director
- Heather Godron | Board Director
- John Miller | Board Director
- Allen Poole | Board Director
- Bob Robison | Board Director
- Michael Sulis | Board Director as of Feb. ‘25

Welcome to Cascade Forest Conservancy’s 2024 Annual Report! As the work highlighted in this report shows, 2024 was a year when CFC made significant progress towards conservation goals locally and nationally.

I often use the phrase “small but mighty” to describe the work and impact of Cascade Forest Conservancy. That was true in 1985 when we were a newly formed, all-volunteer group of committed forest advocates who saved thousands of acres of old-growth forests and helped create the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument—and it’s still true today!

A lot has changed in the last 40 years, but we are still making an outsized impact for ecosystems and communities in southwest Washington.

Our accomplishments last year were achieved due to our talented and passionate team; our committed and generous community of volunteers and supporters; and the unique niche we occupy within the conservation landscape as a modestly scaled environmental non-profit focused on a wide variety of conservation and restoration priorities to benefit diverse ecosystems within a single geographic area.

Because we’re a small team, we are able to be nimble and adaptable while remaining focused on our mission and goals. We’re able to act as conveners and collaborators who make big things happen; to speak about a wide variety of issues impacting our region with the expertise that comes from our intimate familiarity of our forests, watersheds and communities; and to build and strengthen authentic relationships with other NGOs, government officials, tribes, timber industry representatives, and other stakeholders—even if we don’t see eye to eye on many important issues. These are the foundations to real and lasting local change.

CFC reached a new level of success last year. I’m so proud of what our team, partners, and supporters accomplished. We couldn’t have done it without you! We appreciate each person who donated, volunteered, and took action to help us protect and defend the heart of the Cascades.


Molly Whitney | Executive Director

Staff and volunteers surveying future beaver release sites in the shadow of Mt. Adams.



Volunteers were important partners for on-the-ground aquatic restoration projects, including work at Stump Creek.

**COLLABORATION
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ACROSS THE
SOUTHERN
WASHINGTON
CASCADES.**

The creeks and rivers of the Pacific Northwest weave life into the region, sustaining forests, wildlife, and communities. Yet in southwest Washington, as in many areas, these lifelines are also among the most degraded and vulnerable to the impacts of logging, development, and a changing climate. Today, a number of factors—including the legacy of historic streamside logging and the loss of keystone species like beaver—have contributed to the decline of high-quality aquatic habitat throughout our watersheds.

Many streams and rivers lack habitat features that local wildlife evolved to depend on, including the presence of woody debris and logjams, healthy and biodiverse stream-side forests, and cool waters, especially during the hottest and driest parts of the year. The negative impacts resulting from these realities will become more severe as climate change raises temperatures, alters normal patterns of precipitation and snow melt, and increases the frequency and severity of drought and floods.

The health of watersheds have far-reaching impacts for aquatic and non-aquatic species—including human communities. That is why CFC is focused on aquatic habitat restoration and why we restored more aquatic habitat in 2024 than ever before!

We’ve carved out a niche in regional aquatic habitat restoration efforts by successfully designing and implementing medium and small-scale in-stream restoration projects that complement larger initiatives undertaken by some of our partner organizations. By improving and diversifying habitats in the small streams and tributaries of southwest Washington’s watersheds, we are making a lasting difference for aquatic species, including salmon, steelhead, and lamprey—in addition to the many other species that depend on them!

In addition to our work building in-stream structures, we continued to relocate the original and best aquatic habitat engineers—beavers! CFC released more beavers in 2024 than ever before, and we’ve become some of southwest Washington’s leading beaver experts.

We didn’t do this alone. Partnerships and collaboration have been the keys to our growing impact for aquatic ecosystems. As the projects described on the next page demonstrate, our ability to unite people and organizations around a common goal was the key to our success in 2024.



Over 300 large pieces of wood are improving and diversifying salmon habitat at Camp Creek.

HABITAT RESTORATION AT CAMP CREEK
Project partner: U.S. Forest Service

We oversaw the installation of more than 300 logs into Camp Creek, a tributary of the Cispus River in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest that offers salmonids important off-channel habitat.

Our partnership with the Forest Service made it possible for CFC to execute this large woody debris restoration project for a fraction of what a similar project would cost elsewhere. Camp Creek has gained habitat features that support spawning and juvenile fish (and the other plants and animals that depend on them) and has re-engaged its side channels!

NEW PROJECT FOR FISH & LOCAL COMMUNITIES
Project partner: Vader and Castle Rock water utilities

While our restoration efforts focus on improving habitat for salmonids and other aquatic species, improving habitat and water quality also benefits downstream communities! Conversations with Castle Rock and Vader water utility workers revealed that high turbidity levels (from sediment) accelerates equipment wear and increase the costs, labor, and chemicals needed to supply clean and safe drinking water.

Salmon Creek, a tributary of the Cowlitz River, is highly turbid, incised, and lacking woody debris—unfavorable conditions for fish and downstream communities. With support from local utilities, we completed a watershed assessment and identified priority locations for interventions, including the installation of woody debris to capture sediment. Instream restoration will begin in 2025.



Partners helped plan for restoration to benefit fish and human communities.



Volunteers supported salmon habitat improvements on privately owned land.

PROCESS BASED RESTORATION AT CRYSTAL CREEK
Project partner: Community science volunteers and private landowners

CFC worked with private landowners and timber companies, including Port Blakely, to improve aquatic habitats in locations that don’t benefit from the protections that exist in places like National Forests.

Along a reach of Crystal Creek within Port Blakely’s property, CFC worked with community science and stewardship volunteers to build 13 instream structures and plant willows to create ideal spawning and rearing habitats for salmon, other aquatic species, and the life they support.

RETURNING NATURE’S WETLAND ENGINEERS
Project partner: Beavers, Mark Smith, Washington DNR, and others

Beavers are a keystone species that create a cascade of positive ecological impacts for both aquatic and forest habitats. In 2024, CFC relocated more beavers than ever before! Some were released at the Eco Park Resort in Toutle, WA, where landowner Mark Smith has been working with CFC to help create resilient ecosystems through natural processes.

By supporting CFC’s beaver relocation program, partners like Mark Smith are helping make our region more resilient to climate impacts like droughts, floods, and wildfires, and creating high-quality habitats that benefit fish, amphibians, insects, birds, and more.



A beaver release at Mark Smith’s Eco Park Resort.



Crystal Creek



Yellowjacket Creek



Beaver habitat survey



Volunteers protecting Douglas firs



Invasive species management



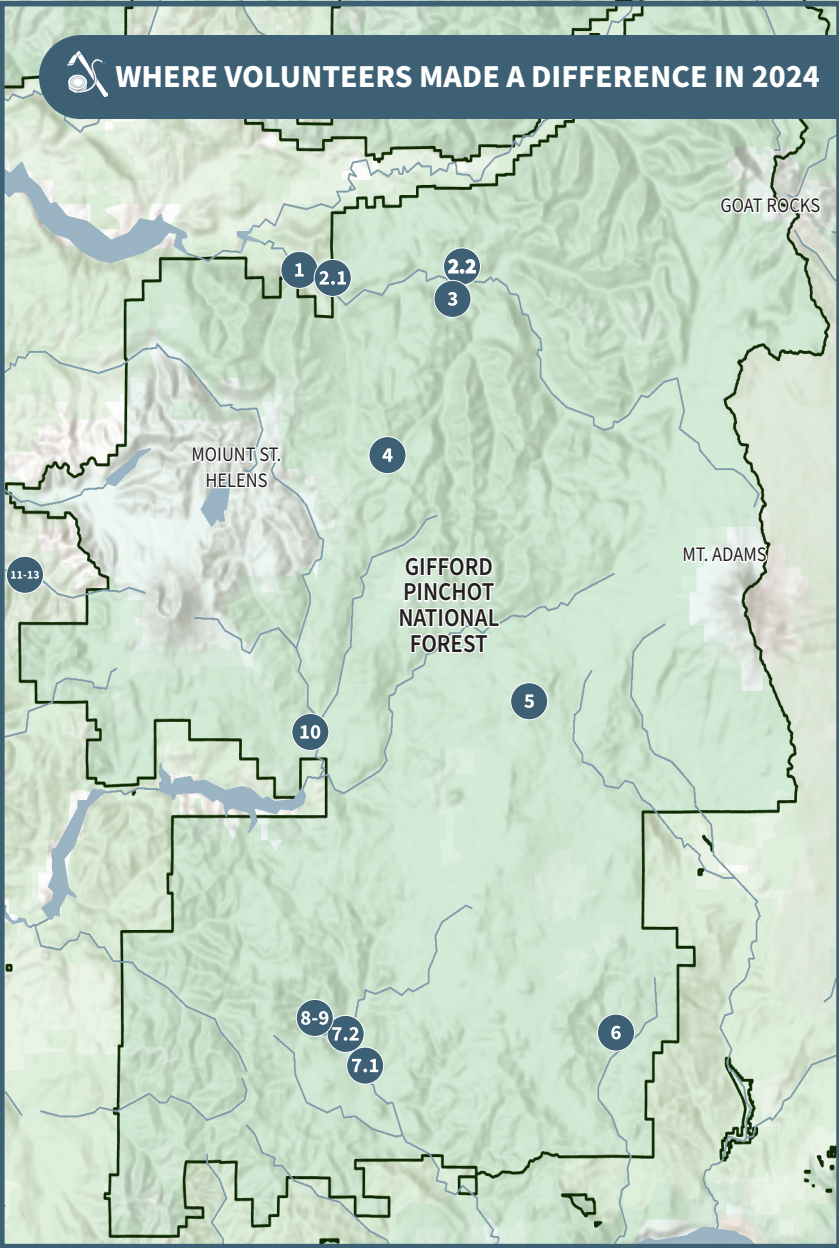
Stump Creek

TRIP		HOURS	PROJECT NOTES
1	SALMON HABITAT IMPROVEMENT AT CRYSTAL CREEK	18	Volunteers added slash to 13 log structures to improve habitat for salmon.
2	RIPARIAN PLANTING AT CRYSTAL CREEK & CAMP CREEK	54	Volunteers at two sites harvested and planted 450 willow and maple stakes to improve and stabilize stream sides along salmon habitat restoration sites.
3	RIPARIAN PLANTING AT YELLOWJACKET CREEK	74	Volunteers worked over two days to plant nearly 1,000 native trees around large woody debris installations that are improving salmon spawning habitat at Yellowjacket Creek.
4	HUCKLEBERRY MONITORING NEAR PINTO CREEK	126	Volunteers collected data on the impacts of restoration efforts in 40 huckleberry plots, which were last surveyed in 2018, and enjoyed snacking on berries along the way.
5	BEAVER HABITAT SURVEYS AND MONITORING NEAR BIG MOSQUITO LAKE	116	Volunteers surveyed 3 sites to assess suitability for future beaver reintroduction and assisted in post-release monitoring at previous reintroduction locations.
6	STREAM SURVEY AT LUSK CREEK	40	Volunteers surveyed 1.5 stream miles of stream along Lusk Creek and upper Little White Salmon River for low-tech process-based restoration suitability.
7	INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT NEAR THE WIND RIVER	33	Volunteers removed 225 gallons of herb Robert from the Wind River access trail at Beaver Campground and 75 gallons near the Government Mineral Springs Guard Station.
8	PROTECTING OLD-GROWTH DOUGLAS FIRS NEAR TRAPPER CREEK WILDERNESS	149	Volunteers and Government Mineral Springs Cabin Association members protected 150 old-growth Douglas firs from insect damage by installing 480 pheromone caps.
9			
10	INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT AT CEDAR FLATS RESEARCH NATURAL AREA	72	Volunteers removed 400 gallons of herb Robert and other invasive species from Cedar Flats Research Natural Area and the parking area at Ape Cave.
11	SALMON HABITAT IMPROVEMENT AT STUMP CREEK	203	Over three trips, volunteers worked to stabilize previously installed low-tech, process-based structures in Stump Creek, planted 350 conifers and willows, and collected data to demonstrate impacts and help CFC plan for additional upcoming work. 381 juvenile coho salmon were counted in restored stretches compared to only 6 in untreated areas—dramatic evidence suggesting our work is having a transformative impact!
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SCIENCE AND STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS MADE LASTING IMPACTS FOR LOCAL ECOSYSTEMS.

Cascade Forest Conservancy’s 2024 volunteer season brought people together and into areas of the forest that few see. We provided hands-on opportunities to learn about local ecology and conservation, fostered deeper connections to the natural world, and enabled members of our communities to give back to the landscapes that support and inspire us. The hard work generously provided by CFC’s community of science and stewardship volunteers enabled us to accomplish far more for watersheds, forests, and wildlife than would otherwise be possible!

In 2024, 75 volunteers contributed more than 880 hours of work to a range of projects. They monitored and protected old-growth Douglas firs, built low-tech instream restoration structures to improve spawning and juvenile salmon habitats, planted hundreds of trees, helped manage the spread of invasive plant species, surveyed locations for future beaver reintroductions, and much more! Thank you to everyone who volunteered in 2024!

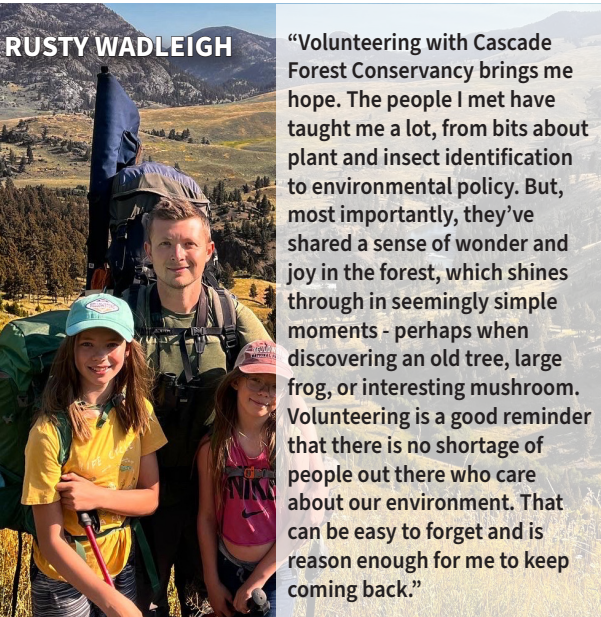


2024 VOLUNTEER REFLECTIONS



ABBEY SCHOLE

“Volunteering with CFC over the years has given me insight into environmental issues and the valuable work that volunteers do in our forests. CFC provides unique and exciting opportunities that allow me to follow my passion of environmental science and wildlife conservation in my own backyard. Every experience has been inspiring and rewarding; I can’t wait for the next chance to volunteer!”



RUSTY WADLEIGH

“Volunteering with Cascade Forest Conservancy brings me hope. The people I met have taught me a lot, from bits about plant and insect identification to environmental policy. But, most importantly, they’ve shared a sense of wonder and joy in the forest, which shines through in seemingly simple moments - perhaps when discovering an old tree, large frog, or interesting mushroom. Volunteering is a good reminder that there is no shortage of people out there who care about our environment. That can be easy to forget and is reason enough for me to keep coming back.”

“I live in Edmonds, WA, and volunteered for the first time with my friend, Misty Mesaga. I work as a wetland and stream ecologist, so beavers are close to my heart, and I love getting out with groups like CFC when I can. We surveyed potential beaver relocation habitat and checked existing relocation sites for evidence of beavers. It was so much fun, and we saw truly stunning places and some great beaver signs. Everyone, from staff to the other volunteers were so kind, helpful, and caring toward each other, and we all had a blast nerding out together.”



JOIE GOODMAN

OUR CONSERVATION GUIDEBOOK PROVIDED A ROAD MAP TO PRESERVE HABITATS AND BUILD CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN THE SOUTHERN WASHINGTON CASCADES AND BEYOND.

In 2024, we released a new publication called the **Conservation Guidebook for the Southern Washington Cascades: a Plan to Conserve Habitats and Build Climate Resilience**. The Guidebook explores, in detail, the threats facing wildlife and ecosystems in our region. It also outlines specific strategies that conservationists, land managers, and members of our communities can employ to protect key habitats, restore degraded landscapes, safeguard threatened species (and those that are expected to come under threat from worsening climate impacts), and achieve a future where our region is more connected, more wild, and more resilient.

Compiling the Guidebook was a team effort that involved intense research, writing, and design. We pored through the science and applied recent findings and analysis to understand implications for local wildlife populations, forests, and aquatic ecosystems. We created new models for forest areas currently vulnerable to logging and where heightened conservation measures could be applied to protect older forests and improve habitat connectivity. Our models were also featured in a scientific article published in the international journal *Forest Ecology and Management*. In other parts of the Guidebook, we outlined several additional innovative and achievable policy and conservation strategies that we can use to safeguard mature forests.

We studied the watersheds that are the lifeblood of our region and compiled a list of stream reaches that are priorities for habitat restoration and others that are ideal candidates for enhanced protections through state and federal-level policies. We compiled and analyzed strategies that can preserve and enhance our forests’ incredible ability to capture and store carbon while sustainably producing forest products to support local timber-dependent communities.

The Conservation Guidebook is providing CFC with a detailed vision for the future of the places we love and work to steward, and it contains practical, achievable strategies to reach this vision. Although our analysis and recommendations are focused on the southern Washington Cascades, the tools and strategies we present are helpful for conservationists and land managers throughout the Pacific Northwest. Our hope is that others will benefit from the insights we gained working on the Guidebook, which we made freely and easily accessible as a PDF that can be found at cascadeforest.org/our-work/guidebook.



WE OUTLINED DATA-DRIVEN STRATEGIES TO PRESERVE & PROTECT WATERSHEDS



We gathered data from maps, scientific papers, and field observations to inform priorities for conserving and restoring local waterways.

After reviewing current scientific literature on expected climate impacts on local fish populations, we analyzed many miles of streams to inform conservation advocacy and habitat restoration priorities that can protect, improve, and expand areas of critical habitat for at-risk species.

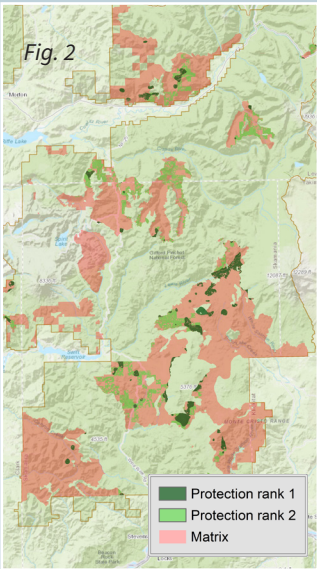
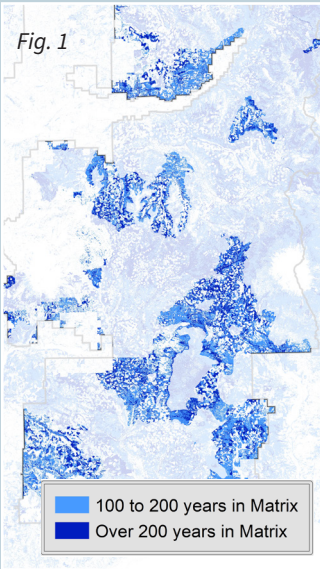
We researched and recommended sections of three rivers, the Upper Lewis River, the Wind River, and the Washougal River, as excellent candidates for Outstanding Resource Waters protections. Additionally, we identified waterways that we recommend be prioritized for Wild and Scenic consideration.

The Conservation Guidebook also highlighted 26 potential low-tech, process-based restoration sites based on a number of factors, including fish presence and each site’s potential for habitat uplift. We have already begun to investigate on-the-ground conditions at a number of these sites to further refine our restoration priorities.

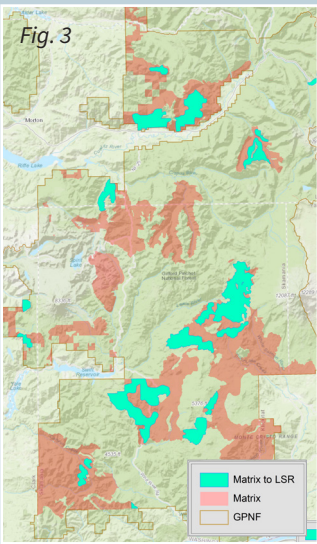
WE DEVELOPED NEW TOOLS USED TO IDENTIFY CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

We developed new tools to identify priorities for new and enhanced protection in national forests that will lead to more abundant and more connected mature and old-growth forests. Protecting, enhancing, and connecting these rare and critical habitats can help slow climate change by capturing and storing carbon while providing critical refugia for wildlife populations, making our region more resilient to climate impacts.

We first identified mature and old-growth forests on Matrix lands—areas where timber production is a primary management objective. (fig. 1) We then identified core habitat areas—areas of dense old-growth and mature forest stands—and connectivity corridors between them. By analyzing areas of old forest in Matrix lands with potential connectivity corridors, we identified priorities for new and enhanced protections. (fig. 2)



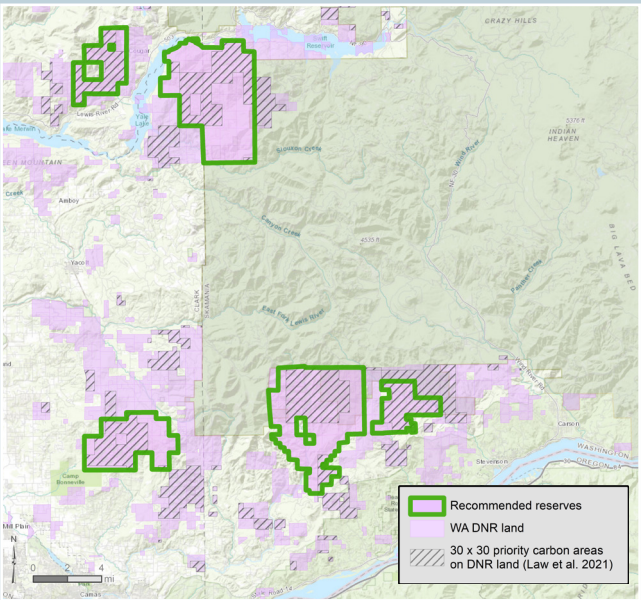
After refining the data, we recommend areas of forests in Matrix land to transfer into Late Successional Reserves (LSRs)—areas where maintaining and enhancing mature and old-growth forests is a primary management objective. (fig. 3) We also describe other management tools to protect these areas, including coining and creating new Climate Resilience and Mitigation Areas. With this data, CFC is pursuing advocacy and action to protect, connect, enhance, and expand critical old forest habitats.



WE RECOMMENDED STATE FOREST AREAS FOR LONG-TERM PROTECTION



As the satellite image above shows, the majority of forests on privately and state-owned lands are less protected and more fragmented than those in national forest. However, only focusing on federal lands cannot achieve climate resilience. The management of the roughly two million acres of state forest lands is largely tilted toward extraction, with less emphasis on habitat needs and the role that these forests can play in mitigating climate change through carbon storage.



We identified areas we will advocate to conserve through the state’s Trust Land Transfer Program or a future carbon storage project by overlaying three datasets in order to highlight areas that would bring multiple benefits, including protection of mature forest habitat, connectivity, and carbon storage. The layers we used were: 1) a recently completed scientific analysis showing priority areas for carbon storage, 2) a forest age layer, and 3) our connectivity model.

WE ACHIEVED GREATER **IMPACTS, INFLUENCE, AND RECOGNITION** ON **BIGGER STAGES** THROUGH EFFECTIVE **ADVOCACY** BUILT ON A FOUNDATION OF **EXPERIENCE, RELATIONSHIPS, AND COOPERATION**.

Whether in Olympia, Washington DC, or in the field with agency officials and community leaders, we understand that the relationships and partnerships we cultivate are the foundation of successful advocacy for the southern Washington Cascades.

In 2024, we continued to advocate for and watch over ecosystems and communities here in volcano country. We stepped onto bigger stages, joined new coalitions, and continued to hold leadership roles in several collaborative organizations.

Successful environmental advocacy is often achieved following a long process involving research, relationship and coalition building, and, critically, persistence. While we achieved significant wins last year, our efforts laying the groundwork for several long-term conservation priorities are equally significant.



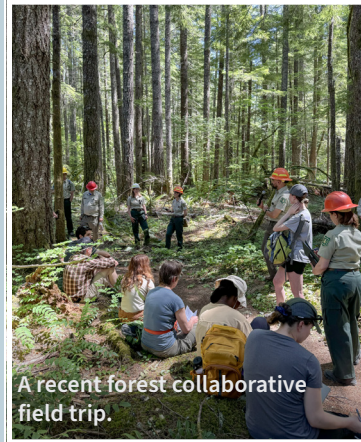
CFC's Executive Director, Molly Whitney, was part of a field trip with U.S. Representative Marie Gluesenkamp Perez to discuss local resource management.

WE CONTINUED TO SERVE AS EFFECTIVE AND IMPACTFUL ADVOCATES FOR CONSERVATION IN LOCAL LAND MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

Land management collaboratives are organizations that facilitate dialogue between agency officials, the timber industry, conservationists, Tribes, and local business and community leaders. These collaboratives play a major role in planning processes for projects like timber sales in the national forest. Collaborating with members of these organizations enables CFC to raise and address conservation concerns from the early stages of land management planning, helping avoid lawsuits and producing better results for all involved.

Two forest collaboratives help guide land management in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. **The Pinchot Partners** focus on the Cowlitz Valley Ranger District in the northern half of the forest, while the **South Gifford Pinchot Collaborative** focuses on the Mt. Adams Ranger District in the southern half of the forest. Cascade Forest Conservancy is a founding member of both collaboratives and serves in active leadership roles.

We also participate in the **Spirit Lake/Toutle-Cowlitz River Collaborative**, which facilitates discussions about projects impacting the aquatic habitats and watersheds in the Toutle and Cowlitz River watersheds and the communities living within them.



A recent forest collaborative field trip.

2024 Collaborative Impacts

- 1) We successfully worked with members of the South Gifford Pinchot Collaborative to adopt language supporting the protection of complex mature forests in recommendations the collaborative submitted to the Forest Service about plans for the Little White Salmon timber sale.
- 2) We worked with volunteers to conduct surveys of historic berry patches to support a Pinchot Partners initiative to test the effectiveness of land management approaches intended to support huckleberry production.
- 3) We encouraged SLTCRC members to create a work group focused on long-term planning for a large upcoming project that will impact the future of Spirit Lake, near Mount St. Helens, and habitats and communities living downstream.

WE HELPED SHAPE CONSERVATION PRIORITIES IN WASHINGTON STATE



Stopping for a selfie in Olympia.

CFC has focused on state-level advocacy to secure conservation priorities, including stronger protections for fish-bearing streams and mature forests on state and privately owned timberlands in Washington.

We met with state officials, including the former Governor's staff, to gain support for a federal mineral withdrawal to permanently protect the Mount St. Helens area from mining.

We also recently joined the Washington Forest and Fish Conservation Caucus, a group of conservation-minded organizations and scientists working within the state's Adaptive Management Program to update forestry rules to protect fish and water quality from the impacts of logging on private and state timber lands.

WE MADE PROGRESS FOR MOUNT ST. HELENS WHILE IN WASHINGTON, DC

In 2024, members of our team traveled to Washington, DC, and held a series of meetings with federal decision-makers and stakeholders, including officials from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), as well as staffers from Washington's Congressional delegation and Senator Ron Wyden's office.



Stopping for a selfie in Washington, DC.

During our time in the Capitol, we found that being physically present in DC is critical to gaining recognition and support from legislators and decision-makers. Although we were not able to introduce legislation in 2024, the relationships built are already having an impact, and we have good reasons to be optimistic that persistent efforts to protect Mount St. Helens from mining will be successful in the future.

OUR 2024 FINANCES WERE **STRONG AND SUSTAINABLE**

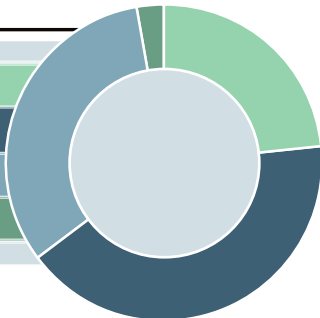
Cascade Forest Conservancy continued to grow and remained financially sustainable. In 2024, our income exceeded our expenses. This was primarily due to receiving funding for projects that will be spent over multiple years.

We completed more work, invested more in programs, and invested in our staff while maintaining stable expenses, even as some operating costs rose.

Giving from individual donors continued to provide critical resources, keeping us nimble and enabling us to respond quickly to new challenges and opportunities. We depend on the generosity of granting organizations, supporting businesses, and thousands of individuals across the Pacific Northwest to continue protecting and restoring habitats across the southern Washington Cascades.

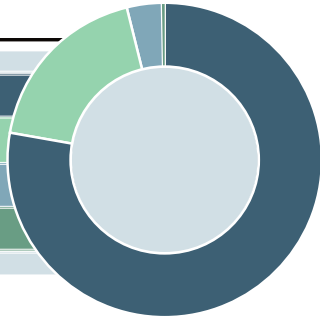
TOTAL INCOME: \$941,847

INDIVIDUAL GIVING:	\$221,346
GRANTS UNRESTRICTED:	\$389,854
GRANTS RESTRICTED:	\$307,000
OTHER:	\$23,646



TOTAL EXPENSE: \$892,062

PROGRAMS:	\$694,226
ADMINISTRATIVE:	\$164,057
FUNDRAISING AND EVENTS:	\$33,638
LOBBYING:	\$142



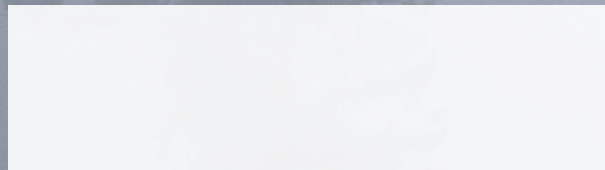
SUPPORT OUR WORK

Cascade Forest Conservancy makes a difference for forests, streams, and wildlife because of people like you. Join us by becoming a sustaining monthly donor or giving a one-time gift today by using the remit envelope in this report or by visiting us online at www.cascadeforest.org/donate



CASCADE FOREST CONSERVANCY

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