

SOMETIMES, LESS IS MORE *by Dee Riggs*

For decades, sagebrush has been crowding out other native plants in the shrub-steppe terrain at the trailhead of the Land Trust's Jacobson Preserve.

Two CDLT supporters knew the situation was dire. Without thinning of the sagebrush and reduction of weeds, the area was ripe for fire—one that would burn hot and badly damage the ecosystem.

"As a daily user of the trail, I really worried that we were going to lose that area of the Wenatchee Foothills to fire," says Susan Ballinger, a master's level biologist. "The trailhead area was very crowded with old sagebrush with very few native plants underneath. The sagebrush was shading out everything that grows underneath and favoring non-native grasses, such as cheatgrass.

Al Murphy is a retired Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management forester with special training in fire ecology and wildfire management. Together, he and Ballinger formulated a plan.

"The idea was to create a sustainable shrub-steppe ecosystem," he says. "There will be a fire there in the future but we wanted to help the area be able to recover on its own."

About three years ago, the two started a multi-partnership project that would reduce heavy fuels along the roadway and up the hill about 200 feet.

The trailhead for Jacobson Preserve is off Skyline Drive near the Wenatchee Swim & Tennis Club. Thirty-five acres were donated to the Land Trust in 2000 by former Wenatchee doctor John Jacobson. In 2016, sixteen additional acres were added thanks to a donation by members James and Judy Jensen.

The problem at the lower part of the property, with too many large clumps of sagebrush and too many weeds, began in the late 1800s with overgrazing.

"There was a small farm at the base of No. 2 Canyon that used the hillside for grazing," Ballinger



High school students planted over 20 species of fire-tolerant native shrubs, wildflowers and grasses. They will provide very little fuel for wildfire and quickly re-sprout due to their deep underground root systems.

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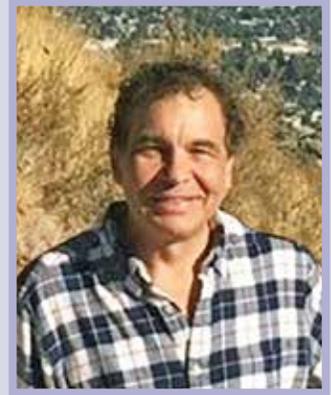
...AND THAT'S A
GOOD THING!

Curt Soper
Executive Director

35 YEARS!

photo: Frank Cone

Since the creation of the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust 35 years ago in 1985, there have been profound changes in our region. Land conservation has become one of the keystones of our community. The commitment to conservation is embraced by a broad spectrum of people and as in nature, our diversity strengthens us.



Curt Soper
Executive Director

You have built the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust into a strong and robust organization that delivers on its promise to conserve, care for, and provide access to the lands and waters that sustain North Central Washington. And our work has never been more important or more vital than in this year of 2020. Having places close to home where we can recreate and connect with nature has proven essential for all of us. I know my health and well-being have benefitted – and I'm sure yours has too.

*...as in nature,
our diversity strengthens us.*

We have been humbled by the many calls and emails we've received this year expressing gratitude for the work we do and the places we are protecting. And we've also been humbled by your steady and continuing support of CDLT. New trailheads that provide access to protected lands, native plants restored around creeks and rivers and new lands protected for wildlife and people – all of these are *only* possible because of you.

We look ahead with energy and optimism about the future. Your ongoing support, the passage of the *Great American Outdoors Act*, the commitment our community continues to place on conserving and caring for nature—these things add up to more successful Land Trust projects, benefitting current and future generations. If the “past” 35 years is “prologue” to the next 35, we are in good shape! Thank you for making it all possible—and here's to the next 35 years!

Gratefully yours,

A handwritten signature of Curt Soper in black ink.



Thank you to Cascade Autocenter for our high-clearance, safe and stylish Land Trust Subaru!

LESS IS MORE (continued from page 1)

says. “The livestock reduced the native grasses and wildflowers, then the sagebrush outcompeted many of the other natives. In recent decades, installation and maintenance of telephone poles further compacted the soils.”

Decades of overuse has created a problem on all the local foothills, Murphy says, but he and Ballinger wanted to concentrate their improvement efforts on the Jacobson area because it is the healthiest local shrub-steppe area. A big reason for that is that it is on a north-facing slope.

“It’s less harsh and more forgiving,” Murphy says. “It’s a little more moist and has less direct sunlight so the native plants survived better.”

Ballinger noted that 91 different flowering plants grow on the preserve.

Over the past couple of years, Ballinger and Murphy helped the project come to fruition by coordinating the efforts of Land Trust volunteers, along with volunteer youth from the Wenatchee High School Interact Club, WestSide High School, and SkillSource.

Firefighters with Chelan County Fire District 1 also helped by using chainsaws to cut down sagebrush. They chipped the woody material, which was later laid down on the trail by volunteers to reduce erosion.

“We’re trying to foster this idea of a fire adapted community so we can prepare for, respond to, and recover from wildfire,” says Jon Riley, community wildlife liaison for the fire district.

After all the thinning, volunteers planted native bunchgrasses and wildflowers that are expected to thrive in the area.

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Before restoration, dense woody shrubs could fuel an intense wildfire, with a potential to spread fire to nearby structures.



The long taproots of native plants - like this lupine - help them reach moisture and survive wildfire.



BEFORE:

High quality shrub-steppe with over 91 species of native plants.

Jacobson Preserve Trailhead
Fall 2017

After decades of human disturbance, crowded stands of big sagebrush with understory weeds have replaced many native plants.

Weeds (mostly cheatgrass & bulbous bluegrass) dominate this 30 ft buffer along Skyline Dr. These highly flammable weeds allow fire to spread.

When wildfire comes, it will spread slowly and with low intensity across the landscape. Native plants will re-grow quickly, keeping weeds out.



AFTER:

Jacobson Preserve Trailhead
June 2019

3,000 lbs. of woody sagebrush removed reducing fuel for fire. 20 species of native grasses & wildflowers planted.

30 ft. fuel break next to Skyline Dr. Woody shrubs removed, seeded with native grasses (low fuel source for fire).

OUTINGS, TOURS & VOLUNTEERING

While we can't offer group outings right now, there are still ways to get outside to discover and explore our natural areas! Listed below are some ideas and resources.

Visit our website for maps and self-guided tour info:
www.cdlandtrust.org/outings-events/self-guided-tours

Seeing Salmon-12 spots from Leavenworth to Oroville

Find out where the best spots are for salmon viewing.

White River Auto Tour

A 21-mile loop along this glacial-fed river with stops to learn about the history and ecology of the area.

Ice Age Floods Tour

Learn about the incredible ice age floods in the Wenatchee Valley area.

Horan Natural Area

Stroll among the fall foliage watching birds and wildlife along the confluence of the Wenatchee & Columbia Rivers.

Leavenworth Fish Hatchery

Tour the hatchery grounds and learn about the salmon lifecycle. There is also a 1-mile trail along Icicle Creek.

Reach 1 Trail at the Chelan River

A 3-mile trail with interpretive signs about hydropower, local Native American Tribes, wildlife and geology.

Icicle Gorge Trail

A 4.2-mile loop with interpretive signs along the beautiful Icicle River near Leavenworth.

White River Trail at Tall Timber Ranch

Beautiful interpretive signs about the cultural, geologic and natural history of the White River valley.

We are hoping to lead some socially-distanced outdoor volunteer work parties this fall when conditions are right.

If you are interested in being contacted for those, please update your volunteer preference info here:

www.cdlandtrust.org/volunteerinterests

LESS IS MORE *(continued from page 3)*



Fire crew chipped 3,000 lbs. of sagebrush and woody trimmings to lay on the trail and help protect it from erosion and damage.

Before the thinning, a fire would have burned hot and deep into the soil under all the sagebrush, killing the root systems of what native plants were there. Now, Murphy and Ballinger say, a fire will burn hot just under small clumps of sagebrush but leave open areas for fire-adapted native plants to rejuvenate.

Photos on display a few yards up from the trailhead show the huge difference the improvement project made in the area.

It's not just native plants that will thrive because of the project. A healthy environment means life for hundreds of animals.

"There are 350 different species that depend on the shrub-steppe habitat in the Western U.S.," Murphy says. Those include birds, reptiles, rodents, and large mammals and predators like coyotes.

The two are optimistic about the success of the project, which ended in June. Because the area is along a busy roadway, fire there is inevitable, they say, but all the work by volunteers should make the damage less severe.

"We've helped maintain the natural system in our foothills, which is one of the primary reasons people live here," Murphy says. 🌿

Contributing writer Dee Riggs is a longtime local journalist & a Land Trust volunteer.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

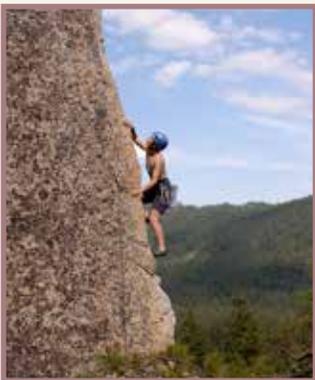
March 2020 through August 2020, these individuals & businesses have joined the Land Trust. Thank you for your generous support!

David & Eloise Barshes
Van Brinkerhoff
Michael Bromund
Theo Burgoon
Amanda Tuggle Burrell
Chelan Basin Conservancy
Gale Courtney
Ann Diamond
Michelle & Jacob Didesch
Stephen Easley

Edward Grudowski
Lindsay Henning
Clement Jackson
Amy Jennings
Lahoucine & Massin Agouram
Ryan Madison
Sharon McGivern
Juan Ojendiz
Anna O'Neill
Diane Owen

Joan Peckham
Rotary Club of Wenatchee
Leslie Savina
Thom Schroeder
Paul & Cinda Steinbroner
Nathan Wilhite
Marina Williams & Mitchell Darlington
John Yale
Adrienne Young

A NEW OWNERSHIP FOR SAM HILL

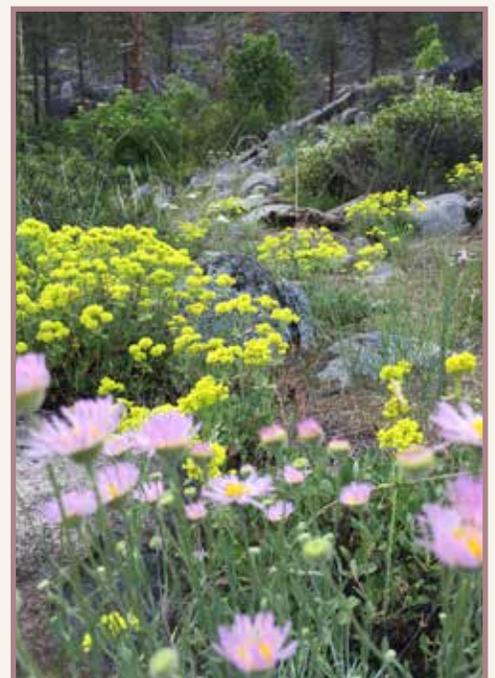


Those of you who have visited the Sam Hill property on Icicle Road likely have marveled at the glorious wildflowers, expansive views and popular climbing routes. In the early 2000's, the U.S. Forest Service acquired property up Icicle Road for recreation,

but could not acquire the adjacent Sam Hill property due to its privately-held mineral rights. CDLT agreed to own and steward the property, until such time as the Forest Service might be able to own and manage it along with its adjacent pieces.

That time has come! The next time you visit, you will see that the property is now owned by the Forest Service. This is thanks to the generous donation of the mineral rights to CDLT by the Bevis Family. The Land Trust, in turn, was then able to donate the Sam Hill property to the Forest Service. This is part of a Forest Service effort to increase the amount of protected property on Icicle Road for recreation.

CDLT has enjoyed making this property, with its beautiful hikes, spectacular views, and alpine wildflowers, accessible and known to our members and the public at large. A successful partnership and a happy ending for Sam Hill! 🍷



ENTIAT RIVER UPDATE

Over the last several years the CDLT has supported several salmon habitat improvement projects. Many of them have taken place in the “Still-waters” section of the middle Entiat River where we have protected hundreds of acres, piece by piece, over the last 20 years. Not only is CDLT property along this 5-mile long section of river considered the “the best of what’s left” in terms of salmon habitat, it’s also a fantastic place for people to come and enjoy the river and nearby forests, hillsides, meadows, and wetlands.

Some of our properties simply needed to be kept as-is. Others needed an active approach to restore them to what they once were.

- We removed a house a few years ago and recently restored the floodplain to the complex maze of side channels that preceded the house. These kinds of places are essential for baby fish to hide and grow until they are big enough to survive in the main river channel.
- Another location that once had a damaged bridge received similar treatment.
- At a third nearby location we removed a levee so that the river can naturally carve new habitat like it used to across its broad, undeveloped floodplain.



- In other places, log jams have been added in key locations to simulate the natural accumulations of wood removed long ago, but now recognized as necessary to sustain high-quality fish habitat for salmon, steelhead, and many other species.

CDLT will continue to partner with organizations to control weeds and fully revegetate the areas disturbed by construction. We are taking this opportunity to add interpretive signs about our habitat restoration efforts, and to create small parking areas with short paths to provide new swimming and floating opportunities. We will soon have four river access locations with modest improvements for you to come and enjoy. Be on the lookout for fish, plants, and wildlife that call this area home. 🍃

A FOND FAREWELL



CDLT’s longtime Stewardship Director Neal Hedges, has retired – for the second time! After a full career at the Bureau of Land Management, the Land Trust was fortunate enough to benefit from Neal’s considerable knowledge and experience for the last 12 years.

Our landscape and environment are truly better off because of Neal’s oversight. He has done great work building and strengthening the stewardship program of the Land Trust, forging good relationships with landowners and developing policies and guidelines that will help care for the lands in our protection for years to come.

We will all miss Neal’s quiet, humble demeanor and vast knowledge of the natural world (*and his love of bats, snakes, reptiles and birds*). We hope you’ll all wish Neal well on his next adventure! 🍃

RARE PLANT FOUND IN UNLIKELY PLACE

by Susan Ballinger,
Conservation Fellow

This spring, the coronavirus changed a lot of what was possible for our staff when it comes to trail maintenance and monitoring – but these changes also led to a new discovery.

When Stewardship Assistant Rebecca Frank realized that she wouldn't be able to keep as close an eye on the Castle Rock trails as she usually does due to the Stay-at-Home order, she had to get creative. Since I could walk from my home to Castle Rock on a daily dog-walk, she asked me to walk the trails to determine usage issues and assess any trail repair needs.

On May 1st, I was super surprised to find multiple small populations of fuzzy-tongued penstemon (*Penstemon eriantherus* var. *whitedii*) growing on the trail edge at a switchback. This plant is found only within a narrow geographic range in Chelan and Douglas County. It's on the state Rare Plant list. To date, this plant had not been documented at Castle Rock.



fuzzy-tongued penstemon

How could a rare plant be thriving here? Castle Rock Natural Area has experienced much higher levels of disturbance compared to other areas in the Wenatchee Foothills. Wildfires, many social trails, and machinery used for the high-tension power lines all result in an area that does not support a high level of plant diversity. On top of all this, the south-facing slopes are baked by the sun, so recovery after fire and human disturbance is difficult, and annual weeds thrive.



photos: Mark Eggers

But this rare plant should give us hope that protecting and caring for this land is working. Castle Rock was protected using funds from CDLT's Wenatchee Foothills Campaign. Over the years, with help from members, volunteers, and Eagle Scouts, sensible trails were built and social trails closed off, greatly reducing disturbance. Each spring, CDLT Trails staff lead maintenance parties to keep the trails in good shape and to solve any new erosion or off-trail damage. CDLT Stewardship staff conduct regular spring weed control on the property, hand-pulling and spraying weeds.

When Walter Fertig, Natural Heritage Program Rare Plant Biologist for the WA Department of Natural Resources, confirmed that this was indeed the fuzzy-tongued penstemon, he was thrilled. "It is exciting to see it doing so well and getting some protection.... [It] reminds people that rare and unusual species can be found in their community - and are not just at Yellowstone or Madagascar."

Protecting and caring for this land has resulted in protecting a population of endemic plants that only grow in a very small geographic area, centered around Wenatchee WA. What a comfort to know that our actions are making a difference! 🍷

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MONTHLY GIVING A CONVENIENT WAY TO PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE SUPPORT

“As users of the local trails, we appreciate the mission of the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust. The pandemic reminded us to lean into community and things that bring us joy. Monthly giving reinforces our renewed focus on supporting valuable, natural spaces.”

– Rich & JoEllen Colson



Rich and JoEllen Colson on the trail.

It means a lot to us to know that monthly donors like the Colsons are right beside us in this work, month in and month out. Plus, we’ve heard from many monthly donors that it’s easier on their budgets to give a set amount each month, rather than once a year. They’ve told us that they feel like they’re able to make a bigger impact on the land, water and trails that they care so much about.

Interested in giving monthly? Learn more and become a monthly donor at cdlandtrust.org/givemonthly, or contact Hillary at hillary@cdlandtrust.org.

TRAIL NEWS

We are so glad to see that many more people are enjoying time outside, as we saw all through the Wenatchee Foothills this spring. The production of a new and updated Foothills trail map (available on our website currently), and a new digital interactive map and app developed by our partner, Wenatchee Valley TREAD, enhance users’ recreation experience and confidence exploring the Foothills. Our work to provide appropriate public access to and generate appreciation for open spaces and natural lands is more important than ever, it seems!

In that vein, CDLT has been making progress on developing public access at the Cashmere Canyons Preserve this year. With the trailhead currently under construction and work underway to complete the trail system, we expect to welcome you to enjoy a hike (*without your dog, please!*) among the wildflowers on this stunning ridgeline in spring 2021. If you have questions or want specific updates about this project, please contact Hanne Beener, Trails Program Manager: hanne@cdlandtrust.org. *Happy Trails!*