



News Release

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Washington's Newest Community Forest Established at Nason Ridge

LAKE WENATCHEE, Washington—Washington's newest community forest was brought to life on Thursday, April 14 when Western Rivers Conservancy transferred the 3,714-acre Nason Ridge property on Lake Wenatchee to Chelan County. This historic achievement is the result of a four-year effort by Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC), Chelan-Douglas Land Trust (CDLT), Chelan County and local community members.

“This project is an incredibly important win for the community and sets an example for the entire state of what it means to keep our forests standing, healthy and utilized,” said Curt Soper of CDLT. “We’ve been working with the community for over two decades to conserve this property and support public access. We could not be more excited to see this prized forest, the very fabric of our community, forever protected.”

Nason Ridge is a highly visible, forested mountainside above Lake Wenatchee that is used year-round for recreation and forms a dominant part of the Lake Wenatchee viewshed. The property provides important fish and wildlife habitat and includes over two miles of Nason Creek, a critical salmon spawning stream and a key source of cold water for the Wenatchee River.

CDLT and the Lake Wenatchee community had long sought to conserve the property, which was formerly owned by Seattle-based timber company, Weyerhaeuser.



Media photos can be found at: <https://www.westernrivers.org/nason-ridge-image-gallery>

In 2018, WRC negotiated a deal with Weyerhaeuser to purchase the property. It then joined forces with CDLT, Chelan County and the local community to raise funds to permanently protect Nason Ridge by conveying it to a steward that could keep the property intact and in public hands forever.

Following WRC's purchase of Nason Ridge, the partners needed to raise \$6 million to pay for the conveyance of the property to Chelan County, and to underwrite its stewardship as a community forest and public recreation area. Together, CDLT, WRC and local community

members raised over \$1 million in private funds. The partners then spearheaded an effort to raise the remaining funds through a variety of public and private sources, including \$3 million from the Washington State Community Forest Program and the remainder from the Salmon Recovery Funding Board, the Chelan PUD Tributary Fund, the Grant PUD Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee, the Washington Department of Ecology, private foundations and others.

Once the \$3 million was approved by the Washington State Legislature, a new future was locked in for the property: The Nason Ridge Community Forest.

“Thanks to the inspiration, leadership and commitment of the local community, the Nason Ridge Community Forest is now a reality,” said Nelson Mathews, vice president of WRC. “Nason Ridge is a shining example of what a community forest can be. It’s rooted in the community and a place where people can hike and ski, where salmon and steelhead can spawn in clean, cool water, and where the forest will be managed to meet the needs of fish, wildlife and people alike.”

The project builds on the momentum of a robust and successful restoration effort on Nason Creek and the Wenatchee River, where millions of dollars have been invested to restore and improve habitat for salmon and steelhead. Nason Creek provides habitat for eight cold-water fish species, including spring Chinook, summer steelhead, bull trout, sockeye, cutthroat trout, rainbow trout and mountain whitefish.

Now that WRC has conveyed the property to Chelan County, the county can start an exciting new chapter for Nason Ridge, ensuring the forest will be prioritized for fish, wildlife and sustainable forestry, while working with Washington State Parks to ensure recreational access.

“Keeping this property intact for the sake of a healthy, maturing forest will have immeasurable benefits that will reverberate throughout the community,” said Chelan County Commissioner Bob Bugert. “We’re proud to have worked with Western Rivers Conservancy and Chelan-Douglas Land Trust to become the steward of this new community forest, which will no doubt serve as a model for others like it across the state.”

This effort was made possible by the Washington State Community Forest Program, the Washington State Salmon Recovery Funding Board, the Chelan County PUD’s Tributary Fund, Grant County PUD’s Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee and the Washington Department of Ecology. Over \$1 million was raised through private contributions from local community members. The James M. Lea Foundation, The Conservation Alliance, Horizons Foundation, Washington Fly Fishing Club and Olympic Fly Fishers of Edmunds all contributed to this effort. Support for the Nason Ridge Community Forest was also provided by the Columbia River Fund, a grantmaking fund created by Columbia Riverkeeper and administered by the Rose Foundation for Communities and the Environment.

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Western Rivers Conservancy acquires lands along rivers throughout the West to conserve critical habitat and to create or improve public access for compatible use and enjoyment. By cooperating with local agencies and organizations and by applying decades of land acquisition

experience, Western Rivers Conservancy secures the health of whole ecosystems. WRC has protected hundreds of miles of stream frontage on great western rivers, including the Hoh, Skagit, Snake, Salmon, North Umpqua, John Day, Rio Grande, Klamath and Madison Rivers. To learn more, visit www.westernrivers.org

Chelan-Douglas Land Trust works with local organizations, businesses, and individuals to protect what we all hold dear: beautiful natural areas, a strong economy, clean air and water, abundant wildlife, and access for all to enjoy. The Chelan-Douglas Land Trust started in 1985 as a volunteer organization made up of Wenatchee Valley residents with a vision of a healthy and prosperous future for Chelan and Douglas Counties. Since then it has grown to over 2,500 members committed to preserving the region's natural areas. Learn more at cdlandtrust.org.

Chelan County Chelan County has been a leader in the state in the development of community forests. The Nason Ridge Community Forest is the second successful community forest effort in Chelan County. Established in 2013 just south of Wenatchee, the Stemilt-Squilchuck Community Forest is a 4,010-acre project that cost \$2.2 million. The forest is managed by Chelan County with guidance from the Stemilt Partnership, a broad coalition of agriculture, wildlife, recreation, development and conservation interests. The project was recently highlighted as a success story in "Community Forests: A Path to Prosperity and Connection."

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