

Member Directed Grants Request for Proposals

Proposal Questions

Please answer the following questions about your organization and proposed project.

- Date: December 12, 2023
- Name of Organization: Inland Northwest Land Conservancy
- Mailing Address: 35 W Main, Suite 210, Spokane, WA 99201
- Phone: (509) 328-2939
- Contact Name and Title: Carol Corbin, Director of Philanthropy and Communications
- Contact Email Address: ccorbin@inlandnwland.org
- Website Address: inlandnwland.org
- Project / Campaign Name: Blossom Mountain Conservation Easement
- Project Location:
 - Latitude 47.66685
 - Longitude -116.9879
- Staff Size: 9
- Total Membership: 644
- Annual Operating Budget (for entire organization):
 - Year: 2024
 - Amount : \$1.1 million
- Amount Requested from Alliance (\$50,000 maximum): \$50,000
- Tax Status/Organization Type: 501 c 3
- Does your organization self-identify as being led by historically racially excluded people (Asian, Black, Brown, Hispanic, Indigenous, Latin American, and additional communities who identify as People of Color)? The Conservation Alliance considers "leadership" in this case as those with decision-making power on behalf of the entirety of the organization or effort. (Y/N)

Yes

- If yes, please provide details, such as the percentage of C-suite staff, leadership staff, and/or board members that identify as historically racially excluded.

Our Associate Director is of Asian descent



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Please answer the following questions about your proposed project. Please note that portions of your proposal may be shared with member company employees during the ballot process, so please provide as much detail as possible.

1. Purpose/mission statement and a brief history of the organization. (1,000 characters max)

Mission: At Inland Northwest Land Conservancy, we conserve, care for, and connect with lands and waters essential to life in the Inland Northwest. We envision a future of interconnected natural habitats throughout the Inland Northwest, supporting thriving populations of native plants and wildlife, respected and enjoyed by all who call this region home.

History: In 1991, a group of passionate future-focused citizens came together over a kitchen table to address the fact that the Inland Northwest did not have an organization dedicated to permanently protecting open space. While many similar communities in the nation had dedicated Land Trusts, Eastern Washington and North Idaho, home to pristine lakes and rivers, a healthy aquifer, mountain ranges, beautiful forests, and thriving prairies, had no objective advocate organization in the region. This group of individuals incorporated Inland Northwest Land Trust (now doing business as Inland Northwest Land Conservancy) to address issues of rapid commercial and residential growth, decreasing habitat for wildlife and native plants, and increased threat to water and air quality. Since then, the organization has permanently protected over 26,000 acres of land, including 150 miles of waterways and shoreline, primarily in Spokane and Kootenai Counties where the threat of development is highest.

2. One sentence on what final success looks like. This should include the exact number of acres, miles of rivers, climbing areas, marine reserves etc. that will be protected when your project succeeds.

Success will be a 722-acre conservation easement recorded in Kootenai County, keeping this land a healthy working forest that will benefit wildlife, store carbon, and continue to provide recreation for the public.

3. Tell us about the place you are working to protect. Detail any characteristics that impact climate resiliency and biodiversity. (2,500 characters max)

This property is a 722-acre, vibrant forest located on and around Blossom Mountain. Blossom Mountain is included in the INLC designated focus area called the Mica Peak Focus Area. The land has been well managed by its owners under a dynamic and progressive management plan and has been passed to two sisters who want to place a conservation easement on the property to protect it from encroaching housing development and allow it to remain a vibrant, working forest that provides wildlife habitat, climate resiliency, and preserves recreation opportunities for the public.

Blossom Mountain, for which the parcel is named, is a very visible and recognizable feature along the south of Interstate 90. Travelers en route from Spokane to Coeur d'Alene can look to their right and see this land's forested peak and woody draws. With huge population growth in the region and massive pressure to build more houses, Blossom Mountain would provide prime real estate for developers looking to give homeowners a house with a view of Rathdrum Prairie, along with a fleeting sense of remoteness, while being located minutes from a major interstate.

The current owner's goals align with the values and wishes of the grassroots citizen support which funds guide the work and mission of INLC, as well as with the stated objectives of the Conservation Alliance to "protect North America's cherished wild places and outdoor spaces." This land has been cherished as home since time immemorial by the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, and more recently by the two sisters who seek now to place it in conservation, as well as by countless species of plant and animal life. This parcel is a high priority target for us as it lies within our Mica Peak Focus Area, and is particularly valuable for its lush forests, pristine rivers and creeks, and abundant wildlife habitat.

In addition to its value for conservation on its own and due to its inclusion within our Mica Peak Focus Area, the Blossom Mountain parcel is adjacent to the priority areas of the Restoration Partnership, a consortium led by the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, the US Department of the Interior, the US Department of Agriculture, and the State of Idaho. This parcel's protection aligns with the conservation goals of these three governmental entities, allowing for clean air, clean water, carbon storage and functional wildlife habitat in an area highly threatened from development pressure.

Description of INLC Mica Peak Focus Area

Mica Peak is the name of two separate mountain summits located in our service area. One is in Spokane County and the other is in Kootenai County. The two peaks are located along the same ridge, which separates the Spokane Valley and Rathdrum Prairie from the Palouse. They are part of the broader Selkirk Mountain Range, which extends from northern Idaho and Washington into southeastern British Columbia, Canada. The Mica Peaks stand as two of the prominent peaks in this region, offering stunning vistas of the surrounding landscape. The peaks are characterized by lush, evergreen forests, particularly coniferous trees such as pine and fir. The mountain's slopes provide habitat for a variety of wildlife, including deer, elk, birds of prey, and smaller mammals. The area's diverse flora and fauna contribute to the region's ecological richness. Mica Peak Focus Area also has a rich cultural significance for indigenous communities in the region. It is essential that INLC acknowledges and respects the cultural and historical connections that local indigenous peoples have to this land. As we seek to conserve this land we are also growing our relationships with the Spokane and Coeur' Alene Tribes, and learning how to be supportive partners in helping them achieve their goals, as well as learning how to best work together to protect as much of their ancestral homeland as possible.

The Conservancy's ongoing work in this priority area will build on the successful conservation efforts of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, our federal and state partners, and our own successes over the past 30 years. Currently, conservation funds from the Forest Legacy Program, Community Forest and Open Space Program, the Restoration Partnership, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service provide financial support for permanent land protection in the Mica Peak Focus Area. INLC will continue to protect the very best properties in the Mica Peak area.

4. What is your strategy and timeline for achieving final success? Include relevant project goals and objectives. Detail any expected economic and recreational impacts if your project succeeds. (5,000 characters max)

- Raise funds to offset the costs of putting a conservation easement (CE) on the property, to allow INLC to use general funds to conserve other urgent priority lands.
- Write CE, baseline report and update forest management plan
- Record easement in December of 2024.

5. Identify the key decision makers you're trying to influence, the likelihood of securing their support, and your approach to interacting with them. (2,000 characters max)

We are fortunate in this case that the decision-makers are already on-board. This is a private parcel with no dissenting owners. The only limiting factors lie in securing funding to accomplish the Conservation Easement work. The current landowners are, like many others we work with, land-rich and cash-poor. The ~\$70,000 total cost of preparing and recording the Conservation Easement as well as funding the perpetual stewardship of the land is prohibitive for them. INLC and the Landowners will be donating the costs of the Survey, the baseline report, the updated forest management plan, title insurance and

recording fees. We are seeking Conservation Alliance funding for INLC project management costs and to pay for the stewardship fund.

Other funders we have approached and are developing include:

- Heart of the Rockies - \$200,000 pending, will hear back in the second qtr. of 2024.
- Restoration Partnership – in progress
- Private philanthropy – \$20,000 secured other fund raising in progress

6. How are you working with and elevating voices of historically underrepresented groups and engaging grassroots citizen action? (2,000 characters max)

INLC has representation from the CDA tribe on our Land Protection Committee (LPC approves all INLC projects). LPC unanimously supported this project in part because of the CDA Tribes support of this work. The Tribe is a voting member of the Restoration Partnership, which sets the conservation strategy for the area adjacent to the Mica Peaks Focus Area, which includes the Blossom Mountain parcel. We are excited to have the support of the Restoration Partnership as we pursue our targeted conservation projects within our focus areas.

7. What are 3-5 measurable on-the-ground outcomes (NOT activities) that you hope to accomplish over the next year? (1,000 characters max)

By the end of 2024, we plan to see the following accomplishments as a result of our work:

1. Conservation Easement developed and recorded
2. Approved Baseline Report – documents the condition of the property at the time of the easement. This document provides a baseline against which to measure future property reports, hopefully to see gains in forest health, wildlife habitat, and will limit development of the property. The property will be inspected every year.

3. Updated Forest Management Plan

The Forest Management Plan will give the landowners and INLC a roadmap for the optimal stewardship of this land for wildlife habitat, climate benefits, and public recreation, as well as for its ongoing use as a working forest.

8. How will you evaluate your progress and success? (1,000 characters max)

We will evaluate our progress at the midpoint and end of the year, as we follow the steps we take with each project (listed below; we have done 1 – 3 and 5, 6, 8). Success will be acknowledged as we accomplish the remaining steps, and once the conservation easement is recorded. We will celebrate the success of this project every year as we complete our monitoring of this property to ensure that the conservation values agreed upon for the easement are upheld.

Steps for Conservation Easements:

1. Meet with the landowners to go over their goals and expectations. At that time, we talk about property boundaries, project timeline, and transaction costs.
2. Board approval - If all parties want to move forward, INLC committees and board approval process commences.
3. Letter of Intent – Once the board approval process is complete, we will develop a letter that summarizes the process of recording the conservation easement and what we all agree to as our responsibilities
4. Title – The Landowner will order a commitment for title insurance and they and our attorney will review the documents. At closing, the landowner will pay the title premium. INLC will pay recording costs.
5. Draft Conservation Easement - INLC will draft the conservation easement for the landowner's attorney and our attorney to review.
6. Survey – the landowners paid to have the entire property surveyed for this project in 2023
7. Appraisal –If the landowners want to take the IRS tax deduction, they will have to do this and pay for it. Costs for this can be over \$10,000
8. Stewardship fund – INLC will use its “Stewardship Calculator” to figure what the cost is to protect the land in perpetuity and ask you to make a contribution to cover that expense. The contribution can be spread over several years. (Usually around 20K for a property this size.)
9. Negotiate and finalize Conservation Easement.
10. Baseline Report – INCL policy (and the IRS if there will be a tax deduction) requires a baseline report to be completed when we record the CE. INLC can prepare this report for \$5,000.
11. Execute and Record CE
12. Wrap up – After closing, we will start on annual monitoring visits to the property to ensure the conservation values are upheld. We will also draft a story for our members about why it was important to the landowners, to our financial supporters, and to the Inland Northwest Land Conservancy to see the land protected forever.

9. How do you plan to use funding from The Conservation Alliance? (1,000 characters max)

Offset the transaction costs for the landowner. Transaction costs for the landowner include INLC Project Management, INLC Stewardship Costs, a survey, an updated forest management plan, a baseline report, title insurance, recording fees, and an appraisal. INLC and the landowners will be donating the costs to survey the property, prepare the baseline report, update the forest management plan, the title insurance, and the recording fees. Once the value of the conservation easement is appraised, we estimate the value of the donation from the landowners will be over \$2 million. The \$50,000 grant request will pay for INLC project management costs, the stewardship fund, and the appraisal. This support will allow this project to move forward quickly – essential as property values in this area continue to climb as Spokane, Rathdrum, Post Falls, and Coeur d’Alene populations grow (this region saw one of the highest population explosions in the country post-pandemic, and housing shortages continue to be a severe problem for these communities).

10. Tell us about your organization’s efforts to address justice, equity, diversity and inclusion over the last year. How has this impacted your organization (e.g., demographics, processes, policies) and the work that you do? (1,000 characters max)

While INLC’s early efforts centered around working with private landowners to put legal protection from development on their land, we now intentionally seek out conservation and restoration contacts within the Spokane Tribe, and other local tribes, including the Kalispels and Coeur d’Alenes.

This has represented a journey of vulnerability as we learn all that we *don’t* know, about cultural and ecological history, as we strive to advance tribal land acquisition and conservation priorities. While the pace can be slow, we recognize the need for time in which to build camaraderie and trust with tribal partners and learn from the generations of wisdom they bring to conservation.

Partnering with Spokane Tribal Fisheries in 2021 to release 51 salmon into the Little Spokane River at our Waikiki Springs Nature Preserve was the first of many concrete steps we can take toward righting a historic wrong. More recently, in 2023 we completed two projects that benefited local tribes in our service area. The first project, INLC facilitated a relationship building between the Coeur d’Alene Tribe and a family whose 2,200-acre property. INLC was able to bring the family together with tribal leaders to consider an offer to purchase the land. This resulted in the Tribe purchasing the pristine forested property, ensuring protection from future development. The second project was our Glen Tana project (which the Conservation Supported with a \$50,000 grant. It is another example of how our programmatic priorities have shifted towards advancing tribal priorities. Conserving the Glen Tana farm was a “now-or-never” opportunity to permanently save 1,000 acres of land in the Little Spokane River Basin—the last and largest piece of land located so near an urban core in the entire state of Washington. In addition to its recreational, climate, and wildlife value, this project centers on a growing partnership with the Spokane Tribe of Indians – restoring access to ancestral homelands and allowing them to pursue long-term salmon restoration in the Little Spokane River. We’ve also taken small, initial steps towards including tribal representation in our organizational leadership, having recruited two tribal biologists to our Land Protection Committee. Our next steps need to include board leadership and staff hires.

11. Elements of your proposal may be shared with member company employees during the ballot process. If there is anything in your proposal that must be kept confidential, please indicate that here. (750 characters max)

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