



- [Close Window](#)
- [Print This Page](#)
- [Expand All](#) | [Collapse All](#)

## Klickitat Oaks, Phase 1

<b>Application Date</b>	5/28/2024		
<b>Applying Organization</b>	Columbia Land Trust	<b>Grant Type</b>	Member Directed
<b>Requested Amount</b>	\$50,000.00	<b>Project Name</b>	Klickitat Oaks, Phase 1
<b>Contact Name</b>	Keely McIntyre	<b>Project Location (State or Territory)</b>	WA
<b>Contact Title</b>	Grants Manager	<b>Project State/Province</b>	WA
<b>Contact Email Address</b>	kmcintyre@columbialandtrust.org	<b>Project Multiple Locations</b>	
<b>Notes</b>		<b>Status</b>	Submitted
		<b>Created By</b>	Keely McIntyre, 5/23/2024, 6:08 PM

### Organization Details

<b>Organization Name</b>	Columbia Land Trust	<b>Annual Operating Budget</b>	\$7,606,081.00
<b>Applying Contact</b>	Keely McIntyre	<b>Tax Status/Organization Type</b>	501c3 Organization
<b>Staff Size</b>	43	<b>Main Phone</b>	360-696-0131
<b>Total Membership</b>		<b>Website Address</b>	https://www.columbialandtrust.org/
<b>BIPOC-led</b>	No	<b>Address</b>	850 Officers Row Vancouver, Washington 98661 United States
<b>C-Suite Staff</b>			

### Proposal Questions

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>1. Purpose/History Of Organization</b></p> <p>Columbia Land Trust is dedicated to conserving and caring for the vital lands, waters, and wildlife of the Columbia River region, through sound science and strong relationships. Since our inception in 1990, we have grown from an all-volunteer nonprofit to one of the largest and most respected land trusts in the Northwest. Over the last three decades, we have conserved more than 58,000 acres of land in Oregon and Washington, in a focus area that stretches from east of the Cascades, along 250 miles of the</p> | <p><b>2. Final Success</b></p> <p>More than 2,600 acres of high-quality, climate resilient Oregon white oak habitat and associated pine woodlands are permanently protected, benefitting myriad wildlife species, resident and migratory birds along the Pacific Flyway, the priorities of Yakama Nation, and public access to nature.</p> |
|--|--|

Columbia River, to the Pacific Ocean. Our team, recognized nationally as leaders in adaptive land management, stewards more than 37,000 acres throughout the region. The Land Trust is building an inclusive, community-driven conservation movement on a landscape scale by implementing a 25-year Conservation Agenda that advances strategies rooted in the best available science and leverages collaborative partnerships to maximize effectiveness, impact, and equitable outcomes.

### 3. Location Details

In 1922, J. Neils Lumber Company began operating a lumber mill above the Klickitat River in Washington State and, over the ensuing decades, pieced together an ownership of more than 200,000 acres to supply it. The mill sustained valuable jobs, but its need for wood depleted the landscape of old-growth forests and fostered active conversion of oak habitat into timber plantations. After the mill closed in 1994, the forestland was bought and sold six times, diminishing, sale-by-sale, to ~100,000 acres and facilitating conversion of the forest to development—undermining the region’s forestry economy, as well as habitat quality and connectivity. When the land went up for sale again in 2021, a unique consortium stepped in to purchase it and create the opportunity for Columbia Land Trust to protect its most productive forests and important habitat through phased transactions over several years.

The 2,666-acre Klickitat Oaks, Phase 1 project is located above the Wild and Scenic Klickitat River and hosts high-quality oak and pine woodland habitat. The river drains a 90-mile-long watershed, stretching from the Goat Rocks Wilderness to the Columbia River, and is the latter’s longest undammed tributary in the state. The Oregon white oak ecosystems at the heart of this project are one of 11 priority habitats in Washington; approximately 90% of what remains is in the Klickitat watershed, where oaks are anticipated to expand under climate change, contributing to the region’s resilience.

Oak habitats are naturally fire resilient and sequester carbon above and below ground at a 1:1 ratio—significantly more than other tree species—due to extensive root networks and symbiotic relationships with ectomycorrhiza that trap carbon-based matter below ground. This soil-based sequestration, along with oaks’ dense wood, long life span, and drought tolerance, contributes to the habitat’s reliability as a stable carbon sink.

The project site is a strategic link that

### 4. Strategy & Timeline For Final Success

Without action, the quality and extent of these Oregon white oak habitats are at risk from multiple stressors—including development, fragmentation, fire suppression, and conifer encroachment. Landscape-scale conservation is the only solution to maintain the carbon sequestering potential, biodiversity, and ecological integrity of this vital habitat type. Columbia Land Trust plans to conserve the Klickitat Oaks, Phase 1 project area through fee simple acquisition by the end of 2025. As a conservation strategy and natural climate solution, this will essentially avoid conversion, or loss, of critically important oak and woodland habitat. The project is built on the foundational ecological principle to “conserve the best...and restore the rest.”

Once fundraising is complete, hopefully by Q4 of 2024, acquisition due diligence will begin, focused on ensuring that there are no environmental liabilities or neighboring encroachments and that culturally important resources are identified and protected. At the same time, a contracted appraisal and appraisal review will be completed to determine fair market value for the property. Once these steps are complete, Land Trust conservation and legal staff will work with the sellers to clear the title of any unacceptable encumbrances, set up escrow, and proceed with closing—at which point the avoided conversion strategy and proposed grant cycle will be complete. After closing, the Land Trust’s stewardship staff will work in close collaboration with Yakama Nation partners to design a long-term stewardship plan. This process takes many months, to ensure the time necessary to develop management strategies that meet legal, cultural, and organizational requirements. Once that is complete, the project will enter the natural forest management phase of work, which will continue in perpetuity.

The proposed project is the first of three phases that will ultimately protect a total of 8,000 acres of priority oak habitat in the Klickitat River watershed. This 2,666-acre phase rises to the scale of action

connects terrestrial migration and dispersal corridors relied upon by 15+ priority species. It is also a key stopover on the international Pacific Flyway that neo-tropical migratory birds have depended on for millennia. Oregon white oaks, with their deep-furrowed bark and persistent cavities, host over 300 species, including caterpillars and other invertebrates that are a critical source of strength-building protein on migrating birds' long journey from the rainforests of Central America to the temperate/boreal

required to meet the "3 Billion Birds" national call-to-action ([www.3billionbirds.org](http://www.3billionbirds.org)) by linking together a network of state, federal, and tribal conserved lands to ensure the viability of the Pacific Flyway at a continental scale. In 2019, a couple of years prior to the large-scale sale of this forestland, researchers and conservationists had sounded the alarm that North American bird populations have plummeted by 3 billion since 1970—that is one-in-four birds, lost. Without action, these dramatic declines are anticipated to accelerate as the effects of habitat loss and climate change increase. Neo-tropical migratory birds—a class that includes cherished songbirds such as warblers, tanagers, and vireos, as well as hummingbirds and even some hawks and owls—depend on the Oregon white oak habitats along the Flyway. According to the 3 Billion Bird report, preventing habitat loss is the most important action for preventing further losses to North American bird populations: "habitat loss is the biggest overall driver of bird declines and... occurs when land is converted for agriculture, development, resource extraction, and other uses." The next most significant contributor to bird declines is habitat quality degradation. This project responds to both of these core stressors identified in the report: it prevents loss of habitat now and enables land stewardship that will improve habitat quality over time—enabling land conserved today to increase habitat provision in the long run.

This project is also a high priority for the communities of south-central Washington. In addition to carbon sequestration, biodiversity preservation, climate and fire resilience, and neo-tropical migratory bird habitat conservation, Klickitat Oaks, Phase 1 advances the goals of local communities by conserving open space, protecting public access to large forest tracts, and preserving land management contracting opportunities for local businesses. The Land Trust works closely with a network of foresters and natural resource management contracting businesses and is committed to maintaining those relationships through habitat enhancement. Economic benefits are also anticipated from new public access to the site. U.S. Forest Service economists expect that wildlife viewing, especially birdwatching, will see the largest percentage increase among all outdoor activities in the Columbia River Gorge region, except for skiing, in the period between 2008 and 2030 ([fs.usda.gov/research/treesearch/53247](https://fs.usda.gov/research/treesearch/53247)). Bird watching in particular enjoys a long season, relative to other outdoor

activities—and the economic impact of this tourism is a core component of the local economy in the Columbia River Gorge. The Klickitat River watershed is cited as one of the state’s most popular birding destinations by Washington Audubon and is along the Great Washington State Birding Trail. Of the state’s approximate 500 bird species, 305 species

**5. Key Decision Makers**

This project has broad planning, funding, and scientific support from: American Bird Conservancy, American Whitewater, East Cascades Oak Partnership, Klickitat County, Mt. Adams Resource Stewards, Pacific Birds Habitat Joint Venture, The Conservation Fund, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Vancouver Audubon, and Yakama Nation.

It was the highest ranked project in the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program’s Critical Habitat category for the 2022-2023 biennium. It was also funded through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s inaugural America the Beautiful Challenge grant round in 2021, via Yakama Nation—making it among the highest priority projects in the country. Additional private match funding is critical to unlocking these awards and achieving conservation success. The Land Trust has already successfully negotiated pre-contract purchase and sale terms with the landowner: we are contractually bound to work together over the next 24 months to conserve this property and the P&S template will ensure timely transactions as soon as fundraising is complete.

**6. Elevate Voices**

This project is a collaboration with the Confederated Tribes and Bands of Yakama Nation. In its Treaty of 1855 with the U.S. government, Yakama Nation reserved for itself 1,399,000 acres (its Reservation) and ceded 12 million acres that stretched from Canada south to Oregon. The ceded territory to the south, between the Reservation and the Columbia River, is known as the “Southern Ceded Territories”. Yakama Nation retains its usual and accustomed rights in this region and deploys natural resource programs to advance its priorities in this landscape, guided by the Nuknuwi chi t’icham ku chuush-pa Habitat Strategy.

Conservation of this priority landscape will provide opportunities for members of the Yakama Nation to access the site for traditional uses. Yakama Nation, Columbia Land Trust, Friends of the Columbia River Gorge, The Nature Conservancy, and local conservation groups are working together to turn the tables on historic exclusion of Yakama people by ensuring that tribal members are leading and implementing conservation priorities within their ceded lands. This work is built on long-term relationship building, listening, and shared power. Columbia Land Trust and Yakama Nation have worked together for over 25 years to identify and implement priority habitat conservation and restoration goals.

Permanent protection of the Klickitat Oaks, Phase 1 property is core to the Tribe’s long-term strategy to reconnect the Reservation to the River. We were honored by Yakama Nation’s contribution of \$1.55M to this project, through its 2022 America the Beautiful Challenge grant award from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. A core deliverable for the Tribe’s grant is the development of a model for collaborative management of Columbia Land Trust conserved lands, which will include traditional use access, proactive and cooperative decision making, shared financial and professional resources, and active stewardship, including prescribed fire, to foster landscape

**7. Measurable On-Ground Outcomes**

- Permanent protection of 2,666 acres of priority oak and pine woodland habitat

**8. Evaluate Your Progress**

Project performance and success will be measured by the metric of acres of

within the Pacific Flyway, benefitting resident and migratory birds and other wildlife;

- Landscape connectivity with 16,000 acres of Land Trust conserved lands, 14,000 acres of Washington Fish and Wildlife lands, thousands of additional acres of Washington DNR and Yakama Nation lands, and Washington State Parks' 15-mile "Klickitat River to Trails" corridor;
- Climate and fire resilience in the East Cascades, through avoided conversion and active land stewardship; and
- Development of a land management plan that prioritizes Yakama Nation leadership and expertise, wildlife habitat, and tribal and public access.

habitat permanently conserved. This straightforward metric will be achieved upon completing the acquisition. Because the project site functions as a critical bridge between thousands of acres of conserved Washington DNR lands and Yakama Nation lands, and tens of thousands of acres of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and Columbia Land Trust conserved lands, measurable outcomes will also include acres of habitat connectivity within this vital landscape corridor. Over the long term, additional indicators of performance will be the strength of relationships and integrity of collaboration with Yakama Nation, as well as the quality and resilience of conserved habitat, which we seek to improve over time through ongoing habitat restoration and enhancement work.

**9. TCA Funding Plan**

Funding from The Conservation Alliance would support the staff-time and due diligence required to bring the Klickitat Oaks, Phase 1 land acquisition to completion. This could include transaction costs, like an appraisal review or cultural survey, and time spent on project implementation or collaboration by our Conservation Lead(s), Forest Conservation Director, General Counsel, or relevant stewardship staff.

**10. JEDI Efforts and Impact**

Our staff has been pursuing learning opportunities on multiple fronts around tribal history and issues in the region. That has informed our work with: the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, to prepare for the removal of Kwoneesum Dam; Chinook Indian Nation, to develop a formal memorandum of understanding, to guide all future collaboration in land conservation; and Yakama Nation, to plan and implement cross-ownership land management, priority conservation projects, and habitat restoration. Last summer, our entire staff participated in a facilitated workshop entitled "Anti-Racist Nuances", which provided a refresher on fundamental concepts, supporting the learning of newer staff, and an opportunity for reflection on what it means to work in a dominant culture, land-based organization. Our staff DEI Committee built on that learning throughout the year, providing new staff orientation and all-staff discussion opportunities on topics like Land Acknowledgements, Place Naming, Diversity in Contracting

**11. Confidential Items** n/a

**Other Relevant Application Details**

Please see attached version of the application for full responses.