



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

Great Northwest Forests & Protecting Public Lands

Applying Organization	Methow Valley Citizens Council	Application Date	5/14/2026
Applying Contact	Nancy McKinney Milsteadt	Status	Submitted
Record Type	Member Collective	Created By	Nancy McKinney Milsteadt Milsteadt, 5/13/2026, 4:21 PM
		Create Account	<input type="checkbox"/>

Project Overview

Project Name	Great Northwest Forests & Protecting Public Lands	Requested Amount	\$50,000.00
Project/Campaign Name	Great Northwest Forests & Protecting Public Lands		
Type of Project	Defense	Project Multiple Locations	Washington, Oregon, California
Project Location (State or Territory)	Other	Longitude	NA
Latitude	NA		

Organization Details

Organization Name	Methow Valley Citizens Council	Primary address for organization	PO Box 774 Twisp, Washington 98856 United States
Contact Name	Rebekah Phillips	Contact Title	Executive Director
Contact Email Address	mvcc@mvcitizens.org		
Annual Operating Budget	\$556,915.00	Tax Status/Organization Type	501c3 Organization
Staff Size	6	Main Phone	509-997-0888
Total Membership	700	Organization Website/Social Media Feed	https://mvcitizens.org/
BIPOC-led	No	C-Suite Staff	

Grant Details

Awarded Amount		Awarded Date	
Funding Program			
Primary Project Type		Secondary Project Type	
Term Start Date		Term End Date	

Proposal Questions

Mission/History Of Organization	The mission of the Methow Valley Citizens Council (MVCC) is to raise a	Location Details	As a comprehensive strategy for managing federal lands in the Pacific
--	--	-------------------------	---

strong community voice for the protection of the Methow Valley's natural environment and rural character. Established in 1976, MVCC has since garnered strong community support as advocates for progressive land use and environmental values in the Methow Valley. In 2019, MVCC led the Methow Headwaters campaign (supported by Conservation Alliance), which led to the permanent protection of over 340,000 acres from industrial mining in the upper Methow Watershed. The healthy rural character of this community – with low-density development, considerable open space, and clean air and water – has been preserved in significant part through our advocacy on land use planning and public land issues. Today, MVCC maintains its role as a watchdog organization, while lending its expertise in distilling complex issues and convening constructive dialogue to local and regional coalition-building efforts.

Northwest, the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) was designed to protect old-growth forests and dependent species, while also supporting social and economic sustainability across 24.5 million acres of federally managed lands in Washington, western Oregon, and northwestern California.

The Plan area encompasses 17 National Forests, 7 Bureau of Land Management districts, and 6 National Parks. Some of the notable forests included are the Olympic (WA), Mount Hood (OR), Rogue River-Siskiyou (OR/CA), Klamath (CA), and Shasta-Trinity (CA) national forests. Many of the included forests directly border national parks and regional scenic areas, from North Cascades National Park (WA) to Redwood National Park (CA).

The NWFP region is characterized by its diverse ecosystems, ranging from coastal rainforests to mountainous terrains. Key features include:

- Old-growth forests: Home to ancient trees (some between 200–1,000 years old), old-growth forests support unique ecosystems and provide critical habitat for threatened species like the northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet.
- Aquatic ecosystems: The NWFP includes an aquatic conservation strategy to protect rivers, streams, and wetlands, ensuring healthy habitats for fish and other aquatic species.
- Biodiversity: The region supports a wide variety of plant and animal species, over 400 of which are endemic, while more are rare, threatened, or endangered.

The NWFP integrates land-use categories and management guidelines to balance conservation efforts with sustainable resource use. This includes timber harvesting, recreation, and other key drivers of the local economy while preserving ecological integrity.

After a process informed by an advisory committee of Tribal representatives as well as environmental and timber representatives, the Forest Service recognized the need to adapt the NWFP to mitigate the effects of climate change on Pacific Northwest forests, and launched an update in 2023 aimed at improving forest resiliency and protecting mature forests on federal lands. As of March 2026, the Forest Service, under the Trump Administration, is anticipated to shift its priorities away from decades-old conservation policies toward increased commercial timber production, reduced protections for old-growth forests, and the repeal of the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule.

Final Success

Working through an effective, efficient, regional coalition, we are working to advocate for and secure a climate-smart amendment to the NWFP to ensure

Impact on Climate and Biodiversity

The Pacific Northwest contains some of the most biodiverse and carbon-dense forests outside the tropics. These ecosystems are critical to carbon

ecologically resilient forests across 24.5 million acres of federally managed lands in Washington, western Oregon, and northwestern California.

sequestration, climate resiliency, and biodiversity conservation. Old-growth forests in particular function as major carbon sinks, absorbing and storing substantial amounts of atmospheric carbon dioxide in tree biomass and forest soils. Their exceptional sequestration capacity is tied to the presence of large, long-lived trees that also provide habitat for numerous threatened and endangered species. Biodiversity is further supported by complex ecological communities of lichens, mosses, fungi, and other flora and fauna that depend on the region's relatively intact forest conditions and clean air.

These forests are increasingly threatened by climate change. Prolonged drought and rising temperatures have contributed to mortality among culturally and ecologically significant species such as western red cedar. Climate vulnerability is compounded by logging, road construction, and decades of fire suppression, all of which reduce ecosystem resilience and fragment habitat.

In response to these threats, the U.S. Forest Service initiated revisions to the NWFP in 2023 to improve forest resiliency and strengthen protections for mature and old-growth forests on federal lands. The revisions followed extensive consultation with Tribes, advisory committees, scientists, and the public. However, as of March 2026, the Forest Service is expected to adopt a substantially different direction aligned with Trump Administration priorities emphasizing commercial timber extraction in mature and old-growth forests. Such changes could further endanger already vulnerable wildlife species and undermine climate mitigation goals.

The NWFP currently represents a landscape-scale approach to federal land management intended to protect at-risk species while supporting long-term social and economic sustainability across the region. Adopted in 1994, it established an ecosystem-based framework designed to be scientifically credible, socially responsible, and legally defensible. Subsequent climate impacts and ecological changes prompted modernization efforts that could have advanced U.S. carbon-reduction goals by 2030. Anticipated policy shifts now threaten sensitive ecosystems, biodiversity, and climate resilience. Broad coalitions of affected communities, conservation organizations, and Tribal governments remain essential to ensuring ecologically responsible forest management and meaningful public participation in federal decision-making.

Expected Economic & Recreational Impact

If our coalition is successful in ensuring meaningful public involvement in the NWFP update, it could have major positive impacts on local economies and recreation. The original goal of the NWFP amendment was to balance conservation needs with predictable timber harvests that supported rural jobs and resources. The current revision comes alongside a 16% reduction in Forest Service workforce by 16% (nearly 6,000 employees in total), and a shift from state-based management to regional hubs in far-away cities like Salt Lake City. Public lands are already under severe strain. Reducing on-the-ground support for trails, campgrounds, and service roads while eliminating local representation threatens forests, rural communities, and the quality of life of those who live and recreate there. Outdoor recreation is now an even larger economic driver than timber, generating more than \$33 billion annually in Washington alone. An effective NWFP update is essential to protecting both conservation of resources and recreational access. However, the proposed 2026 updates, combined with continued federal staffing and funding cuts, would lead to increased temporary or long-term closures of trails and campgrounds due to “active management” and climate-related events, reduced access to roadless areas, worsening conditions at trailheads and campgrounds because of reduced maintenance, and aesthetic and ecological damage from biodiversity loss. The original NWFP amendment would have addressed climate impacts (including more frequent wildfires), and may have ensured that recreation sites were swiftly restored and reopened after climate-related events. The public must be informed about the irreversible risks the latest amendment will likely pose to scenic landscapes, wildlife, recreation, and rural quality of life, and be given meaningful opportunities to engage throughout the process.

Strategy & Timeline For Final Success

The Forest Service began the amendment process for the NWFP in 2023 following years of public engagement, scientific review, and recommendations from a 22-member Federal Advisory Committee (FACA). The committee delivered recommendations in 2024 focused on wildfire resilience, mature and old-growth forest conservation, and elevating Tribal co-stewardship and Indigenous priorities in land management. The Forest Service released a draft environmental impact statement in late 2024, but the amendment timeline slowed in 2025 following the federal transition and broader administrative changes affecting public lands management. In 2026, however, the Forest Service has announced an updated timeline to advance the amendment process. At the same time, the amendment is unfolding amid significant threats to public lands management capacity, including a 16% reduction in the Forest Service workforce, restructuring that shifts decision-making away from local offices to regional hubs, and ongoing proposals to weaken long-standing public lands protections. These changes increase the importance of coordinated public engagement and advocacy to ensure the amendment reflects sound science, community priorities, climate resilience, and continued recreational access.

For the past six years, Methow Valley Citizens Council (MVCC) has worked in close partnership with a regional coalition that includes The Wilderness Society, Sierra Club, Conservation Northwest, Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center, and Cascade Forest Conservancy. Together, these organizations have coordinated public outreach, policy advocacy, scientific engagement, and communications efforts across Washington, Oregon, and California to support a climate-smart and community-centered NWFP amendment. Our strategy for 2026-2027 focuses on ensuring robust public participation in the amendment process while defending public lands protections more broadly. MVCC's role will be to organize and mobilize local and regional stakeholders, elevate rural and Tribal voices, coordinate advocacy with coalition partners, and engage recreationists and local communities in public comment opportunities and public lands campaigns.

Our campaign has four primary objectives during the coming year:

- I. Ensure broad public engagement in the NWFP amendment process. MVCC and coalition partners will organize outreach and education efforts to increase participation in future public

comment periods, administrative review opportunities, and community engagement events. We will prioritize outreach in rural communities and work to elevate Tribal perspectives and local voices that are often excluded from federal land management decisions.

II. Advocate for science-based, climate-resilient forest management.

We will continue working with scientists, recreation advocates, conservation organizations, and policy experts to support amendment provisions that protect mature and old-growth forests, improve habitat connectivity, reduce wildfire risk through ecologically appropriate management, and maintain recreational access to public lands.

III. Defend public lands protections and access.

In addition to the NWFP amendment itself, MVCC will continue participating in regional and national coalitions responding to ongoing federal threats to public lands, including efforts to weaken the Roadless Rule, reduce environmental review, transfer or sell public lands, and diminish local management capacity. Building on successful 2025 campaigns (including advocacy that helped prevent public lands selloffs in the federal reconciliation package and generated significant public engagement around Roadless Rule protections) we will continue coordinating communications strategies, public education, and mobilization efforts.

IV. Expand communications and community engagement efforts.

Public support for Northwest forests and recreation remains strong, but continued outreach is essential as federal staffing reductions and shifting management priorities create uncertainty for local communities. MVCC will use digital communications, earned media, storytelling, and partnerships with recreation and community groups to educate the public about the implications of the amendment and broader public lands policies. We will continue elevating the economic and cultural importance of outdoor recreation, healthy forests, and accessible public lands to rural communities across the region.

Potential challenges include shortened federal timelines for public review, reduced agency staffing and capacity, political pressure to weaken environmental protections, and uncertainty regarding implementation and enforcement under the current administration. These barriers make strong coalition coordination and public participation especially important.

The Forest Service is expected to continue advancing the amendment process through 2026, including additional public engagement opportunities and administrative review

steps prior to implementation. MVCC and coalition partners will remain actively engaged throughout the process to ensure the final amendment reflects climate science, community priorities, Tribal engagement, and long-term protection of Northwest forests and public lands.

Key Decision Makers

The key decisionmakers for the NWFP amendment include high-level staff at the U.S. Forest Service, BLM, and the Departments of Agriculture and Interior. We are in direct contact with policy leads in Washington, D.C. working on the revision process and meet with them regularly. Ultimately, the Trump Administration will have the final say, but support from congressional leaders, whose staff we brief regularly, will be important as well.

Working With Business Community

Engagement from the business community is critical to demonstrating the broad economic importance of healthy public lands and sound conservation policies. Outdoor recreation businesses, tourism operators, guide services, retailers, hospitality providers, and forest-dependent industries rely on resilient public lands and healthy ecosystems. Business voices can help show policymakers that protecting forests, maintaining recreation access, and supporting climate-smart land management are not only environmental priorities, but economic ones as well. This approach was recently seen with Alt National Park's organizing efforts around the Boundary Waters, in which over 400 outdoor brands publicly advocated long-term protections. Similar engagement in support of the NWFP and broader public lands protections in the Pacific Northwest would help elevate public awareness, strengthen bipartisan support, and reinforce the importance of these landscapes to rural economies and recreation communities.

Elevate Voices

MVCC's work is on the ancestral, unceded lands of the Methow and Sylix People, constituent tribes of the Colville Confederated Tribes, who have lived in what is now called the Methow River and Okanogan Valleys from time immemorial. MVCC is committed to strengthening relationships with tribal citizens of the Colville Confederated Tribes to protect and restore the land, air, and water on which we all depend, as well as supporting the tribe in asserting tribal sovereignty in their traditional territory. Currently three members of our Board of Directors are Indigenous, two of whom are employees of the Traditional Territories for the Colville Tribes; with their guidance, we are learning to grow as an organization to be better allies for the Indigenous community. Through the FACA committee, our coalition worked with tribal members to develop a set of new tribal standards and guidelines to include in the original Forest Plan Amendment. These had broad support on the committee and would make powerful new additions to the NWFP. Additionally, many of the local, rural organizations in our coalition have spent the last few years forming relationships with a diverse array of organizations representing new voices working on forest issues, and

Measurable On-Ground Outcomes

- 1.) A decision by the end of 2026 for a climate-smart NW Forest Plan amendment that protects mature and old-growth forests in the Pacific Northwest.
- 2.) Strong public participation among rural and tribal communities exceeding previous public process engagement on the NW Forest Plan. This will be accomplished through a robust Okanogan County outreach and education campaign once the amendment is announced, including public comment primers, action alerts and social media pushes.
- 3.) Strengthened regional partnerships and continuation of coordinated long-term strategies among coalition members. This will include broadened awareness of the importance of the NWFP among regional recreation groups, which have historically been less represented within the coalition.
- 4.) Two pro climate-smart NWFP amendment op-eds in the Methow Valley News and Omak Chronicle newspapers.

representing historically underrepresented groups (especially among the Latinx and tribal communities). We have invited these groups to join the various forums we engage in, such as forest collaboratives, and we share our comment guides and forest reports so that there is better sharing of information and access to public comment opportunities for agency projects and processes.

TCA Funding Plan

Funding from the Conservation Alliance will be administered by Methow Valley Citizens Council for the benefit of the whole coalition. We will use Conservation Alliance funds to support the salaries and expenses of rural organizers who will be engaging the community through outreach and education to demonstrate strong rural support of a climate-smart NWFP amendment. We will also use funds to organize science forums for the public to cement the case for protecting mature and old-growth trees as part of a climate strategy for Northwest forests. Lastly, we will use funds to convene up to two in-person strategy sessions for our coalition over the course of the year. Given the broad geography of our coalition member-organizations, in-person meetings are critical but can be costly; providing financial assistance to the smaller groups will ensure full participation.

Confidential Items

Other Relevant Application Details

