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FOREST  
TRUST**

# FOREST LIFE

**FALL 2023**

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Pacific Forest Trust's mission is to sustain America's forests for all their public benefits of wood, water, wildlife, and people's well being, in cooperation with private landowners and communities.

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## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

# Endurance and Ambition

Approaching the close of our 30th year, it's a time of reflection. This ForestLife features stories of both major accomplishments and new horizons in our work.

Some of these stories, like the completion of the Shasta Timberlands Conservation Easement, mark the culmination of years (5, actually) of work and expand the impact of another 25 years of work. Others, like launching our efforts to both demonstrate and vastly scale the use of beneficial fire on our own managed forests as well as in our core focal area of the Sacramento River Headwaters Region and Siskiyou County, are new.

But the old and the new are inextricably linked. Having conserved well-managed landscapes that benefit from fire rather than suffering it reduces risk for people and forests while restoring forest ecosystem health and function. At the end of our first 30 years, we are building on the past and launching PFT into new territories of work, engagement, and cooperation.

You will also see the essential role of PFT's many and varied partners in advancing this work. From our landowners to our loggers, academics to agencies, funders and friends, none of our success would be possible without these partnerships.

In this season of gratitude, we thank you, our essential partners, for all your generous support and engagement. We have an extraordinary opportunity to double a generous match to raise a total of \$300,000 for PFT's 30th by year-end, so please, take a moment to reflect on the impact of your support—every dollar you invest in PFT has over \$100,000 of impact on the ground in conservation. We hope you will help us meet our match, and celebrate the year-end with a huge hurrah!

Wishing you all the best for the holidays and year end.



# Shasta Timberlands: Reweaving Nature's Tapestry for Wildlife, Climate and a Sustained Forest Economy

The project encompasses Table Rock Meadow, spanning 425 acres and comprising a diverse landscape of wet meadows and old-growth red fir forest.

Nestled amidst the rolling, forested ridges along the northeastern slopes of Mount Shasta, a remarkable conservation effort on 7,500 acres of uniquely diverse forest is completed!

Its conservation also marks a significant step in building a resilient, well-managed landscape across ownerships, providing connectivity with the adjacent Shasta Trinity and Klamath National Forests as well as another PFT conserved Property, Butte Creek Ranch. Thanks to a generous investment by California's Wildlife Conservation Board at its November 2023 meeting, the project will be completed at year's end. The Shasta Timberlands Working Forest project, a conservation collaboration between Pacific

Forest Trust, landowner TC&I Shasta, LLC, and its forest manager, Campbell Global, LLC, provides an extraordinary opportunity to protect essential wildlife habitats for at least 250 animal species, as well as protecting watersheds that feed into the McCloud River and the Klamath basin.

"We are proud to partner with PFT on this working forest conservation easement, which has lasting public benefits for wildlife, water flows for people and fish,

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# 2030

**The conservation easement establishes nearly 2,700 acres for the sole purpose of supporting habitat values, helping California reach its "30x30" goals, which seek to protect 30% of the state by 2030!**



and climate change mitigation—all while maintaining jobs in the woods and enhancing recreational opportunities.” says John Gilleland, Chief Executive Officer of Campbell Global.

The Shasta Timberlands Working Forest Conservation Easement demonstrates active conservation of working forests, providing much more than a picturesque panorama; it is a key connecting piece in the grand tapestry of northern California’s natural world and part of sustaining myriad life services to all of California’s inhabitants, from people to imperiled fish, frogs, and mammals. This span of diverse forest and alpine meadows play an essential role as watersheds, habitats and places for people to work and earn a sustainable livelihood in forest management as well as recreate. The decision to protect this ecological treasure through a Working Forest Conservation Easement is a rare opportunity: one that allows for the strategic integration of public and private working lands, including the 42,000 acres that PFT has already conserved in in the Mt. Shasta Headwaters.

Promoting climate resiliency is also a key goal of the project. The forest will be actively managed to ensure that it will not only adapt to a changing climate, but also improve its essential functions as carbon sinks and watersheds. Increasing the carbon stocks of its diverse conifer forests: Shasta red fir, white fir, ponderosa pine, among others, is a specific goal, and can be achieved through management that focuses on the restoration of a more natural forest structure, species composition and age range. This management will also help reduce the risk of large and catastrophic wildfires.

Unlike other regions facing intense climate change stress, Shasta Timberlands and the larger Klamath-Cascade region are projected to remain cooler and wetter than much of California, thus providing continuity of the habitats and mentioned watershed functions. The gray wolf, Pacific fisher, and Pacific marten are but a few of the imperiled animals that call this land home. The conservation easement establishes nearly 2700 acres for the sole purpose of supporting their habitat values, helping California reach its ambitious and wide-reaching “30x30” goals, which seek to protect 30% of the state by 2030!

As Pacific Forest Trust celebrates its 30th year, Shasta Timberlands conservation project is a symbol of our organization’s unyielding commitment to collaborative and tangible climate and conservation solutions. It contributes significantly to PFT’s enduring efforts to reweave a crucial ecosystem despite its fracturing from diverse ownership across multiple private and public lands ownership boundaries. Its completion guarantee both the longevity of private and the public benefits of well managed private forestlands connectivity of the roughly 10 million acres that surround the working forest on all sides.

## STEWARDSHIP

# Restoring Natural Fire Regimes for a Safer Future: PFT's Fire Management

The West's forests are naturally fire-adapted, but a century of fire suppression has inadvertently led to more fire risk rather than lowering it. Pacific Forest Trust has been at the forefront of advocating for restoration of safer, more natural fire regimes in our forests and landscapes overall, seeking to enhance community safety and forest's resilience and ecological health.

We are now seeing a shift toward more fire management rather than suppression only. PFT's pioneering efforts in fire span building coalitions, science-based advocacy, policy initiatives, community engagement, and now, "walking the talk" by putting "good fire" back on the landscapes we manage to help advance the art, science, and practice of managed fire in three very different landscapes.



Pile burning on van Eck in preparation for 2024's broadcast burn.

### The van Eck Forest, California

The van Eck California Forest, a 2,200-acre working redwood forest in Humboldt County, is where PFT has pioneered many new approaches to managing forests to restore their full vitality and ecological productivity. Our goal is to show how we can transform forest management from one of simplification and depletion, to one that restores natural forest diversity, function and complexity, while still earning financial returns.

From canopy restoration (see ForestLife Fall 2022) to demonstrating a new approach to meeting the goals of the Endangered Species Act to being the state's first forest carbon-offset project, we are now adding the use of fire (pyro-silviculture) in commercial, private redwood forests. With support from the California Coastal Conservancy, we've developed and begun implementing a burn plan for 93 acres, with the main burn planned for next Spring. A community meeting with nearby residents and communities was held in October to explain and discuss how the burn is a key way to increase both fire safety and forest health, engaging and enlisting community support.

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PFT teams up with CAL FIRE.



# 1,350

**Prescribed fire will revitalize  
1,350 acres.**

## McCloud Soda Springs, California

The McCloud Soda Springs Working Forest spans 1,350 acres of ponderosa pine-mixed conifer forest in Northern California bordering the town of McCloud. PFT both conserved and manages these highly productive and diverse forests, which are home to numerous species as well as myriad springs that feed into the McCloud River, world renowned for its native trout fishing. Years of industrial management and fire suppression have altered these rich forests significantly, reduced their health and carbon stocks as well as the ability to store water in its wet meadows.

With careful restoration management to re-establish more open stands, remove small trees while favoring larger, more fire-resistant trees, PFT is now ready to reintroduce fire as a management tool. We were delighted to receive a grant of \$1.8 million from California's Wildlife Conservation Board to conduct a large, prescribed burn—the largest on private property in the last 20 years. This burn aims to enhance the property's fire resilience and habitat values, addressing the impacts of intense drought, intensive forest management, climate change, and fire suppression over the past century.

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“Demonstrating how to restore fire safely in fire-prone forests is critical for the health of the nation. PFT has been able to demonstrate how this can be done in an ecological and economically effective manner.”

— Ann Bartuska, Member, Wildfire Commission

### Mount Ashland Demonstration Forest, Oregon

The Mount Ashland Demonstration Forest, covering 1,120 acres on Oregon’s Siskiyou Crest, plays a strategic role in connecting large natural landscapes. It provides a refuge for hundreds of resident and migratory species, and links the Cascade Siskiyou National Monument to the Rogue Siskiyou National Forest. PFT’s acquisition of this property in 2021 underscored its enduring efforts to conserve the globally outstanding biodiversity of the region, creating continuous, connected, conserved corridors for wildlife on the move under climate change.

The Indigenous people of the region historically employed low-intensity, relatively frequent burning to maintain the larger forest landscape and the many food species derived from it. Historic industrial logging changed the forest dramatically, leaving a simplified, young, and highly flammable forest as well as damaged meadows and streams. Fire suppression has led to significant fuels build up, making this forest a remarkable opportunity to demonstrate climate resilient restoration management and learn how we can safely reintroduce fire to the region. Building on the expertise of a world-class Scientific Advisory Group (see Forest Flash August 2023), PFT’s recently completed Forest Management Plan includes the reintroduction of fire in 2025, following appropriate preparations and approval by OWEB, a key funder of the Demonstration Forest.

The Mount Ashland Demonstration Forest is a unique opportunity to incorporate fire as a tool for climate resilience.





# PFT Partners with the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation

Sitting on Hennes Ridge, just above the Yosemite Valley, with magnificent views of the Wild and Scenic Merced River and across the Central Valley to the California coast, is a land of enormous cultural as well as natural significance. John Muir envisioned it as part of a National Park. But before that, this place was part of the treasured ancestral homelands of the Southern Sierra Miwuk people.

With the advance of European settlement and private land ownership, these magnificent sugar pine forests stewarded by the Miwuk and celebrated by Muir were logged by the Yosemite Lumber Company (YLC) and the lush native grasslands and oaks became fodder for cattle and firewood. The Southern Sierra Miwuk were expelled from their homes here and in the Valley as well. When almost a thousand acres of these lands were going to be sold yet again, Pacific Forest Trust stepped up to buy and protect them. After transferring a portion of these to the Park in 2014, PFT is now partnering with the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation (SSMN) to return some 900 acres to their ownership with the goal of re-establishing the tribe in a portion of their Yosemite homelands. PFT and

the SSMN are jointly fundraising to complete this historic project, aiming to complete the return of the lands to tribal stewardship by the end of 2024.

“We need to have this significant piece of our ancestral Yosemite land back to bring our community together and benefit our children and grandchildren. It will be a sanctuary for our people,” says Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation’s Tribal Council Chair and elder Sandra Chapman.

Bridging a gap between Yosemite National Park and the Sierra National Forest, the property is also home to significant biodiversity, lush forests, meadows, springs, and an ancient trail leading from the oak woodlands of the Central Valley to the high country of Yosemite. The

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project will permanently conserve and connect habitats across public-private boundaries on Henness Ridge, facilitating movement across this strategic location for plants and animals adapting to climate change.

Deeply committed to a caring relationship with the land, the Tribe envisions Henness Ridge as a place of healing for both people and nature. Tribal stewardship will restore and enhance natural climate resilience using traditional practices such as cultivating culturally significant plants and eradicating non-native invasives, restoring more natural forests (characterized by well-spaced large, older trees), fire-adapted habitats (including by the use of cultural fire), and protecting water quality and flows from the headwaters of two tributaries on the property that flow into the wild and scenic South Fork Merced River. The project's easy access and proximity to the highly visited National Park also provides a unique platform for public education on the multiple benefits of indigenous "climate-smart" land stewardship.

In addition to re-establishing of Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation as the stewards of Henness Ridge, this project promotes the revitalization of indigenous knowledge and cultural practices. Another goal of the project is to support and strengthen the Tribe's case for federal recognition, an ongoing pursuit since 1982, as a land base supports concrete historical and cultural ties, enables self-governance, supports economic and resource management, preserves cultural practices, fosters government-to-government relations, and enhances political and legal standing.



Tara Fouch-Moore (L), secretary for the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation, and Jazzmyn Gegere-Brochini (R), the tribe's cultural resource preservation manager.

## DONOR HIGHLIGHT: THE VAN ECKS



Jan van Eck (L), PFT president, Laurie Wayburn (M), and Cynthia van Eck (R) at the NYC screening of *Beyond the Trees*.

PFT's collaboration with the van Eck family began with Fred van Eck on the van Eck Demonstration Forests and now extends through the next generation with Jan and Cynthia van Eck. In addition to their generous financial support, Jan and Cynthia have sponsored *Beyond the Trees*, the award-winning documentary about PFT's work centered on the van Eck forests.

### Why did you want to make BEYOND THE TREES? What was your goal?

CvE: For me, part of making this film was to educate people. The more people that we educate, the more people we will have to advocate for forests.

JvE: I felt that the story of how the van Eck Forests were being managed by PFT deserved to be better known and understood. It is such a practical, efficient, and financially effective way for us to improve forest conditions and ensure that our children and grandchildren benefit from forests that I wanted more people to have the opportunity to learn about this and support it.

### Why do you support PFT?

the van Ecks: The work that you're doing is compelling – you are actually making a difference! You are showing others how one can bring a forest back to its natural state while still utilizing the resource income.

Conserving and restoring California's diverse natural lands, from forests to grasslands and wetlands, is critical to meeting the state's climate, biodiversity and water goals. Photo by Sundry Photography.

# *From Victim to Savior?* Forests and other Lands as Natural Climate Solutions

There is a saying that as “California goes, so goes the nation.” This is certainly true of the state’s pioneering climate policies and actions.

California is again leading in climate action, developing a new approach to reducing carbon emissions through leveraging the power of forests and other biological sinks to help meet its ambitious climate goals. Doing so will both reduce net carbon emissions and promote climate adaptation and resilience overall. It will transform nature from being a victim of climate change to one of our most powerful tools in the fight against it.

Called for by AB1757 (Rivas, 2022), California launched a first-in-the-nation effort to establish implementation targets for actions in the natural and working lands (NWL) sector, the basis of our carbon sequestration, to help meet its carbon reduction and climate goals. AB1757 called for an Expert Advisory Committee (EAC) that would develop target recommendations for actions to promote carbon sequestration gains from these biological sinks. Comprised of academics, community members, tribes, and practitioners, the EAC is chaired by PFT President Laurie Wayburn (Forest Flash September 2023). Consideration of this sector is crucial, as forest loss and degradation are the second-

largest source of anthropogenic CO2 emissions globally. The loss and degradation of California’s forests, too, have been serious emissions sources, in the billions of tons of CO2. Uniquely for carbon emissions sectors, though, these biological sinks can reabsorb carbon from the atmosphere, not just reduce emissions to the atmosphere.

Recognizing that, the EAC’s recommendations call for very significantly increased conservation and restoration of the state’s natural and working lands – the basis of sequestration. They also call for combining short-term restoration actions with conservation to ensure gains are actually maintained over time. In the forest sector alone, changing management through voluntary working forest conservation easements of privately owned forests could achieve at least 150-300 million tons of CO2 emissions reductions in 10 years – more than what the state estimates will be gained through electrification in the transportation sector overall. The final report of this phase of the Committee’s work was issued in mid-November, with another year of work in 2024.

## STEWARDSHIP

# Demonstrating a New Relationship with Fire to Benefit Forest Ecosystems and Communities

It's one thing to advocate for managing for more fire resilient landscapes and communities—it's another to actually do it. Now, thanks to a generous grant from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, Pacific Forest Trust is doing just that.

We are embarking on an ambitious journey, working with a range of experts, to map out how we can move the large majority of catastrophic fires in Siskiyou County and its adjacent watersheds of the Sacramento River Region to being beneficial fires (see Forest Flash September 2023).

PFT is honored to have Mike Bradley, former Northern Region Chief for CalFire, working with us to lead this work on the ground.

"This work is at the forefront of reimagining the future for Siskiyou County and its adjacent HUC-8 watersheds. Beneficial fire, a cornerstone of ecological health, should be harnessed strategically, fostering communities that are not only resilient but symbiotically tied to the environment. With a shared commitment to safeguarding our landscapes, we're laying the foundation for a future where both nature and communities flourish side by side," says Bradley.

The Pilot Area, encompassing millions of acres, was chosen because it is characteristic of fire-prone western states where managed forests, grazing and agricultural economies, as well as recreation and tourism, are the dominant economic drivers and populations are relatively low. It encompasses a great variety of natural landscapes, from forest to high desert, with farms,

"The foundation's Wildfire Resilience Initiative aims to support and accelerate a transformation in the role that fire plays and is perceived, with an outcome of healthy fire-adapted ecosystems and resilient fire-prone communities."

— Genny Biggs, the Initiative's Program Director



ranches and wilderness areas and parks as well, and is home to the world's most diverse conifer forests and critical wildlife habitats. The Department of Fish and Wildlife identifies that more species will move to this increasingly vital region than any other in the state as climate change advances. Its watersheds supply water to 32 million people across the state, nearly 85% of the freshwater for the San Francisco Bay, and most of the water for irrigated agriculture.

The project will both restore wildfire resiliency within the region and serve as a learning model for how states in the American West—and beyond—can positively impact fire regimes to restore safer and healthier forests and communities.



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