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FOREST
TRUST**



FOREST LIFE

WINTER 2026

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

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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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Hope in Challenging Times

Miracles can happen.

This October, after a century, salmon returned to spawn up the newly undammed Klamath River.

Their return is the result of decades of hard work, determination, and faith by people committed to restoring the river, their heritage, and our shared natural foundation. Across cultures, interests, and generations, those dedicated to reviving the Klamath and its iconic salmon finally succeeded – with help, of course, from the salmon themselves. What once seemed impossible became reality, thanks to enduring partnerships and the quiet persistence of many unnamed leaders.

Even as this miracle of renewal unfolded, we lost one of conservation's great leaders, Bill Hutton. A founding Board member of PFT, Bill was an extraordinary person: at once an idealist and a curmudgeon, a tax attorney devoted to conservation and fishing. At the height of his career, he met with Connie Best and me to hear our audacious idea of founding an organization that would conserve private forestlands through an innovative approach to Conservation Easements on working forests – one that guided management, not simply stripping development – and new approaches to financing conservation. Conservation easements were his specialty, and though our proposal was unconventional, he generously shared his wisdom to help PFT launch. Bill took a chance on us because he saw the potential to make a difference.

Many of us feel we are swimming against the tide now, just as salmon must to get upstream. The climate crises we face and the loss of our natural heritage – fish, wildlife, forests – can feel daunting. But with determination, passion, persistence, and the wisdom of many partners, we can prevail. With the inspiration of the salmon, and Bill's example, we will.

Returning a piece of Yosemite to the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation

Overlooking Yosemite Valley and both forks of the Wild and Scenic Merced River, Hennes Ridge is a place of extraordinary beauty and profound cultural and ecological significance.

Sitting atop a strategic ridgeline that bridges Yosemite National Park and Sierra National Forest, the nearly 900-acre property has now been returned to the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation – restoring a piece of Yosemite’s ancestral homeland to its original caretakers.

This transfer, completed in November 2025 with funding from the California Natural Resources Agency Tribal Nature-Based Solutions Program, represents a landmark achievement for both cultural restoration and conservation. For the Southern Sierra Miwuk people, who were expelled from Yosemite with the establishment of the park, it re-establishes a presence in their homeland and provides a base for self-governance, cultural revitalization, and community healing. For PFT, which acquired the property to restore and conserve the extraordinary natural forest, prevent development and protect it forever, it fulfills a vision decades in the making.

From the outset, PFT saw Hennes Ridge as an irreplaceable landscape at risk. It contains conifer forests

with sugar pine, cedar and fir, oak woodlands and meadows, and many springs, including the headwaters of two tributaries of the South Fork Merced. It also holds evidence of long use by the Southern Sierra Miwuk: an ancient trail traverses the property, linking the oak woodlands of the Central Valley to Yosemite Valley.

“When we were first approached to purchase the property, which was actually included in the proposed boundary for Yosemite National Park and is now the boundary limiting the Yosemite West development, we knew it’s protection was integral to Yosemite’s ecology and history. Protecting it was essential,” recalls Laurie Wayburn, PFT’s President.

PFT initially sought to add Hennes Ridge to Yosemite National Park, aligning with John Muir’s vision of the integrity of the landscape, and in 2014, PFT transferred a portion of the property to the park. But congressional opposition to expanding public lands blocked efforts to bring the remainder into the park, despite universal,



“This land will be a sanctuary for our people and a place to reconnect with our ancestors,”

— Sandra Chapman,
Tribal Council Chair and elder of the
Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation

bipartisan support within California. At that turning point, PFT began to consider another future, one that would prove even more fitting.

After learning that the lands were within the ancestral territory of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation’s and supporting their effort to become federally recognized, PFT opened discussions with the SSMN to see if they might be interested in owning it. They were – a number of the SSMN had a vision of again being on the land, restoring both the land and their cultural roots. Now, with years of effort, that has come to pass. “Returning Henness Ridge to the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation restores not only ecological integrity but also justice. It gives the tribe back a piece of Yosemite.”

For the SSMN, the return of Henness Ridge is both practical and spiritual. “This land will be a sanctuary for our people and a place to reconnect with our ancestors,” says Sandra Chapman, Tribal Council Chair and elder of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation. “It allows us to restore cultural practices, bring our community together, and ensure a healthy legacy for our children and grandchildren.”

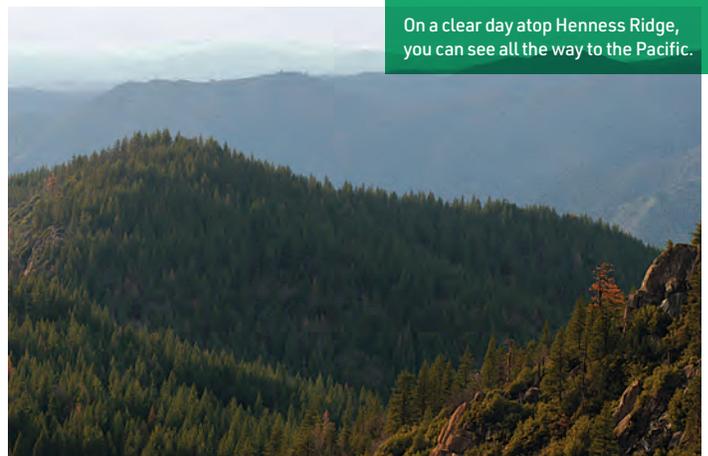
SSMN envisions Henness Ridge as a living classroom, where they can relearn and revitalize traditional practices – restoring natural forest structure, eradicating invasive species, cultivating significant native plants, and reintroducing cultural fire – and pass

this knowledge on to new generations. These practices will not only enhance biodiversity, water quality, and climate resilience but also renew the traditions that sustained the land for millennia.

The transfer also underscores PFT’s long-standing commitment to working in partnership with tribal nations. More than two decades ago, PFT partnered with the InterTribal Sinkyone Wilderness Council to establish the first-ever conservation easement with a Tribal entity in the United States. That precedent helped pave the way for projects like Henness Ridge, where conservation and cultural restoration go hand in hand.

The return of Henness Ridge brings full circle a journey that began with risk of private sale and ends with renewal. It reconnects the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation to their ancestral Yosemite lands, strengthens the ecological web of one of the world’s most iconic landscapes, and affirms a future rooted in stewardship, resilience, and justice.

On a clear day atop Henness Ridge,
you can see all the way to the Pacific.



States Embrace Natural Climate Solutions

As climate-driven disasters like wildfires and severe storms increase, states are intensifying restoration and conservation efforts to help nature help us. In October, Oregon's Governor Kotek announced an executive order (EO 25-26) focused on nature conservation and restoration for climate resilience.

The goal is to conserve 10% more of the states critical lands and waters as "climate resilient anchors" And California took another major step advancing natural climate solutions with Governor Newsom's signature of SB 840 (Limón), extending the state's Cap-and-Invest program and directing the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to develop alternative methodologies for in-state offset projects which meet broader criteria of helping fulfill the Nature Based Solutions Targets and 30x30 goals . The legislation does not name these as Nature-Based Climate Credits (NBCCs) per se, but the focus on a broader suite of climate benefits, and specifically towards meeting the conservation goals of 30x30 is clearly reflective of the NBCC goals. (see ForestLife Summer 2025). This law elevates nature's role in climate action and signals that the state is linking climate action with conservation and resilience.

This approach will expand cost-effective compliance options under the Cap-and-Invest system while delivering benefits far beyond carbon alone. Unlike existing offset projects – nearly half of which are sourced outside California – NBCCs are rooted in in-state conservation and restoration projects that are permanent, additional, verifiable, and quantifiable. That credibility ensures results Californians and companies alike can see and trust. Permanently conserving forests while managing to enhance carbon storage and overall ecosystem resilience gains measurable emissions reductions, greater wildfire resilience, secure water supplies, preserved habitat, timber products and sustained rural economies. At \$10-15 per ton, this far more affordable than other reductions.



PFT's Laurie Wayburn (right) with former CARB chair, Liane M. Randolph, who led CARB through this legislation.

The potential is enormous. Conserving and improving management on even a fraction of California's 12 million acres of privately owned conifer forests could yield 150–300 million tons of additional and resilient carbon storage in the next 10 years. Equally important, NBCC projects deliver multiple benefits for adaptation: healthier, more stable watersheds, fire resistant and resilient landscapes, biodiversity and habitat protection, and many rural resource jobs.

This achievement has been years in the making. Beginning with AB 1757 (2022), which established the Natural and Working Lands Expert Advisory Committee, PFT was instrumental in shaping the targets and strategies for natural and working lands to play a larger role in climate action. The 1757 explicitly did not focus on carbon offsets, rather it focused on wholistic climate solutions that would accelerate both climate resilience overall and increase net carbon sequestration while supporting the state's broader environmental and resource conservation goals. These included meeting the states 30x30 targets for biodiversity, protecting and restoring watersheds and supporting rural economies and frontline communities. SB 840 delivers on these recommendations by instructing CARB to evaluate and develop methodologies that recognize the unique value of in-state projects that support the state's AB1757 and 30x30 targets – exactly the type of approach that NBCCs represent. Including this directive in the legislation is a major win and signals a clear policy direction for California.



Governor Gavin Newsom and other state leaders, including Senator Limón and Assemblywoman Jackie Irwin, were key to this sweeping climate legislation.

PFT's work now enters a critical new phase, working with CARB, the Natural Resources Agency and other stakeholders to ensure the new offset methodology lives up to its promise. This legislation underscores California's recognition that nature must be at the center of successful climate action; by advancing approaches like NBCCs the state is not only strengthening its Cap-and-Invest program but also setting a model for how natural and working lands can deliver climate solutions at scale.

With years of persistent advocacy, California and now Oregon are taking bold steps to align climate policy with watershed protection, landscape resilience and biodiversity protection, while supporting rural communities in sustained conservation management.

12m

Even a fraction of California's **12 million acres of privately owned conifer forests** could yield **150–300 million tons of additional and resilient carbon storage in the next ten years—while still maintaining commercial harvest.**

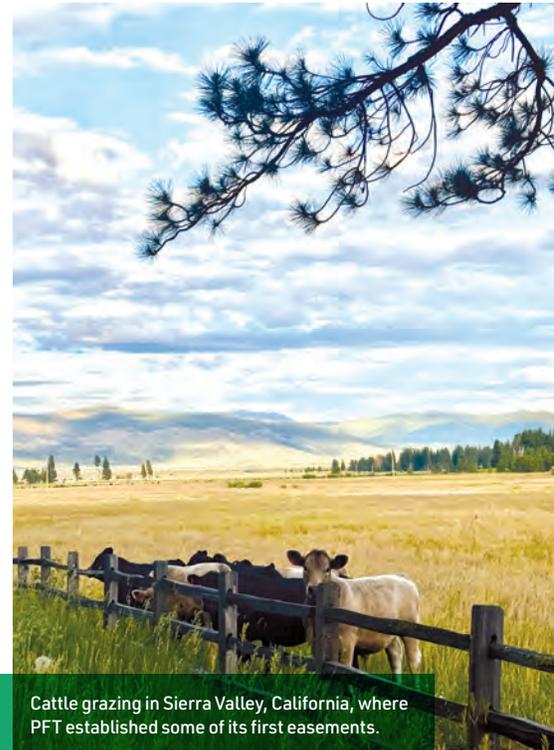
STEWARDSHIP

Looking back over the past year, can you share a moment or project during stewardship or easement monitoring that really stood out to you – something that made you feel proud of the impact we're having on these forests?



Shay Brown, Stewardship Manager: I feel proud of our ongoing stewardship work when we start to work with new landowners of conservation easements that we have held for a long time. For example, earlier this year I met with Jennifer Kun – the new landowner of Calpine Meadow Ranch, located in the Sierra Valley area. PFT has held a conservation easement on the Property since 2010, and it has been exciting to not only witness a new landowner's

excitement over the special Conservation Values on the Property (including the Property's mixed-conifer and aspen forests, scenic wet meadows, and sprawling rangeland), but also to work with a landowner who is already experienced in and committed to sustainable land management. Ms. Kun has periodically shared joyful stories with me of wildlife sightings – such as various, grazing black bears – and peaceful moments watching the sunset over the rolling meadows.



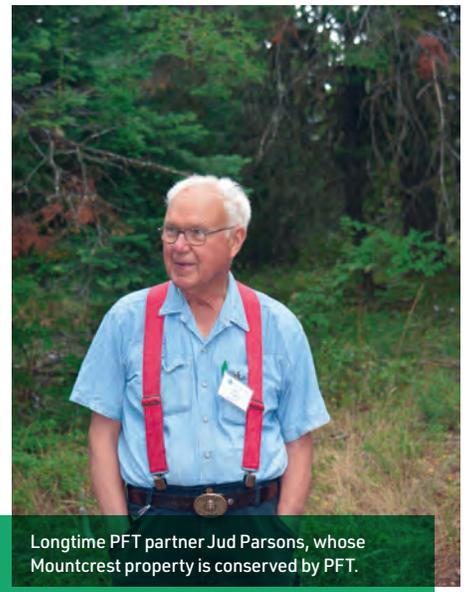
Cattle grazing in Sierra Valley, California, where PFT established some of its first easements.

What aspect of our stewardship work or the impact of our easements inspires you the most and keeps you motivated every day?



Lyndia Hammer, Stewardship Associate: What inspires and motivates me about our stewardship work is the knowledge that the targets for forest management have been developed and informed by the best possible knowledge and science about forests, wildlife, and wildlife habitat needs, ensuring that forest management not only yields wood, and protects water sources, but actively conserves and protects wildlife habitat for a huge range of species as well.

What inspires me about the impact of conservation easements is that it allows someone like Jud Parsons (right) to secure his legacy of wholistic forest management for generations to come.



Longtime PFT partner Jud Parsons, whose Mountcrest property is conserved by PFT.



What is one area of stewardship that you find particularly interesting?

Jack Singer, Stewardship Director, RPF #3247: One area of stewardship that I find particularly interesting is restoration management. I still think our work with broadcast burning – both on forests we manage directly and on forests where we hold conservation easements – is the neatest aspect of PFT’s stewardship role. It’s been exciting to see our landowners increasingly rely on fire as an ecological management tool, and to watch these practices evolve so quickly. PFT is really positioned as a leader in this movement among forest conservationists, landowners, and managers in both states.

That said, anadromy and large predator conservation will always feel like the most important outcomes of our work to me. To get a little romantic about it, I think of this as a kind of framework for the greatest ecological questions facing the nonhuman inhabitants of the western hemisphere this century: Can we maintain and coexist with populations of anadromous fish and large carnivores in North America? Whenever I get to live my life in service of helping our species answer “yes” to either point – salmon and steelhead trout, or large carnivores – it feels deeply gratifying.

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STEWARDSHIP

Diversity on the Siskiyou Crest

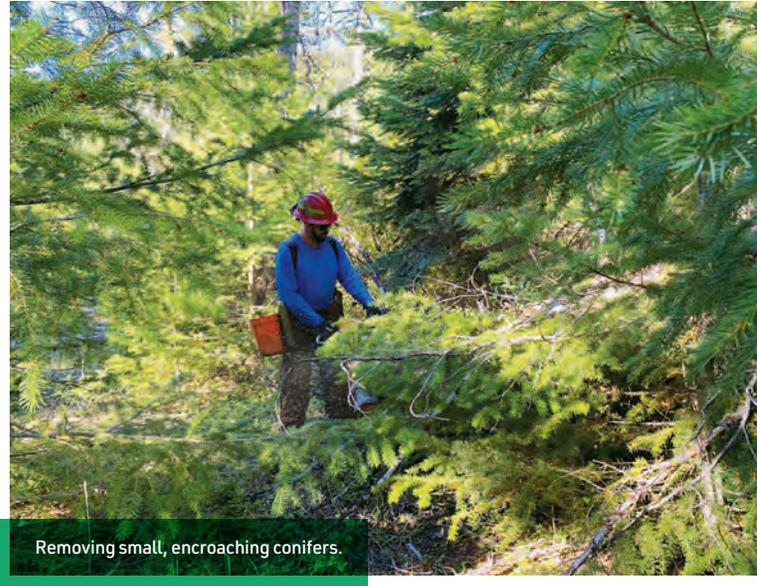
PFT's Mount Ashland Demonstration Forest (MADF) is a remarkably diverse mosaic of forest and meadows, both wet and dry.

Fire historically maintained this complex and biodiverse system, but between fire suppression and historic logging, much of this was lost. As part of our restoration work on MADF, we are preparing for the return of "good fire" by implementing the initial fuels reduction this Fall. We plan to have a prescribed burn in 2026; therefore, reducing the large fuels build up from years of fire exclusion was essential to having a safe burn.

Our initial burn will focus on a large natural meadow near the Crest, including the surrounding conifer forest. It will take place on a north-south ridgeline that extends into the Neil Creek basin. The flat, accessible terrain here makes it both the safest and most strategic place to begin returning fire.

Crews pruned the lower limbs of large conifers around the meadow to protect them from fire climbing into their crowns and felled many of the smaller encroaching conifers

Removing lower limbs keeps fire on the ground and out of the canopy.



Removing small, encroaching conifers.

and dead trees to keep the burn contained within established control lines. Particular care was taken around the forest's rare large trees and snags. These provide important habitat for species like woodpeckers, owls, and martens – a threatened species. These precautions ensure that the burn restores and strengthens, rather than jeopardizes, the ecological richness of the forest.

The purpose of this burn is threefold: restoring the benefits of good fire (reducing pests, enriching the soils, etc); maintaining fire adapted diverse dry meadows and wet meadows and removing fire-intolerant conifers; and demonstrating how other private forest owners can safely and effectively use fire as a tool for resilience.

Equally important is community involvement. Earlier in the year, PFT hosted a neighborhood meeting, inviting nearby residents and agency partners to learn about the burn, ask questions, and share concerns. These conversations build trust and collaboration – an essential foundation for expanding the use of prescribed fire across the region. With experienced leadership, careful preparation, and community partnership, this forthcoming burn will set the stage for healthier, more resilient forests on the Siskiyou Crest.

A Bright Spot in a Divided Time: Advancing Forest Conservation through Bipartisan Leadership

In today's polarized political climate, the *Forest Legacy Management Flexibility Act* represents a rare point of agreement – and a meaningful way forward for private forestland forest conservation.

Introduced in the Senate by Senators Alex Padilla (D-CA) and Tim Sheehy (R-MT), this bipartisan amendment builds on momentum from the House version of the bill (H.R.2771), first introduced in April by Representatives John Garamendi (D-CA) and Ken Calvert (R-CA). Together, this growing coalition demonstrates that conserving America's private forests remains a shared national priority.

Pacific Forest Trust is proud to support – and have helped shape – this commonsense legislation, which strengthens the Forest Legacy Program (FLP) by allowing states to designate accredited, non-profit land trusts to hold the conservation interests purchased in part with FLP funding. Under current law, only government entities may do so. The amendment provides states with new flexibility to achieve their conservation goals more efficiently and effectively by partnering with accredited land trusts to ensure enduring stewardship, ease administrative burdens, and work directly with landowners who prefer non-governmental partners.

"Our bipartisan bill would improve the conservation of private forests to mitigate wildfire risk while protecting important forest resources and habitat and expanding access to outdoor recreation," said Senator Padilla (D-CA).

"I'm proud to be part of this bipartisan effort to streamline coordination between federal, state, and local governments and provide landowners the support they need to ensure proper forest management and reduce wildfire risk across the country," said Senator Sheehy (R- Mont.).

With federal advances on conservation stalled, this legislation offers a pragmatic model for collaboration and progress. Amid uncertainty in Washington, the *Forest Legacy Management Flexibility Act* shines as a bright spot – proof that bipartisan leadership can still deliver solutions to sustain America's forests, and the communities, water, wildlife, and climate stability they support.



Ensuring Forest Futures

PFT has incredible partners and supporters. We spoke with Susie Schroll, a longtime supporter, about why she works with PFT. She has supported us for over 20 years, as a contributor, an easement Grantor, and a partner managing her forestland.

Why do you love forests?

I grew up in northern California, experiencing the magnificent forests of the Sierra, and the coastal redwoods, as well as forests in Oregon. The beauty of these forests was simply awe inspiring. I knew from a young age that these forests and all the creatures that live in them were incredibly important to me. I had a sense of belonging in the forest from the beginning.

How did you come to be involved with PFT?

My family has been involved in forestlands for several generations, but the model of forest management the family followed seemed short-sighted to me. I learned of Connie and Laurie's work initially working with them to conserve a redwood forest I owned in Anderson Valley. I was intrigued by their approach of managing for both conservation and investment with long-term, whole forest management.

You decided to include PFT in your estate plan in addition to making annual gifts – why?

I worked with PFT to acquire forestlands in northern California; PFT now manages that forest, based on the approach I saw on the van Eck forests. I also wanted to help guarantee the organization's strong future, and included PFT in my estate plan. Now, I plan to make that gift during my lifetime. It makes sense, because once I am gone, I won't be able to see how my efforts make a difference. By making that gift during my lifetime, I will. Especially now, I think we all need to step up and do more to make a difference for our forests, our futures and the planet.



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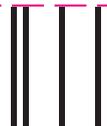
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