Building Winning Partnerships

It Takes an Ecosystem – How and Why Conservation Coalitions Work

Conservation Chat Series Brings a Youthful Energy to WA Wild’s Work

Wild Olympics Passes House of Representatives
Notes from the Board

I grew up in Oregon and spent my summers playing in the Deschutes River, riding horses, having adventures in the wild, and creating memories with my family. This is where my appreciation for the outdoors began. These cherished memories inspire me to keep these special places wild for future generations. Once they’re gone, they’re gone.

What drew me to Washington Wild many years ago was the organization’s ability to leverage community connections to make a bigger impact. We’re a small nonprofit, but by working hard and intentionally bringing together diverse groups around a singular issue—from Tribes, to hunters, to mountain bikers—we’re able to create a loud, unified voice that gets heard and makes change. It takes some out-of-the-box thinking, but rather than push an agenda that only works for a small group, Washington Wild works to ensure that plan works for everyone.

Building a community of partners takes time and care. It’s an incredible accomplishment and is why Washington Wild has been so successful in its protections of wild lands and waters for 40 years and counting.

Harriet Bakken
Board Secretary and longtime Washington Wild supporter

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Washington Wild protects and restores wild lands and waters in Washington State through advocacy, education and civic engagement.

BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR TODAY!

Monthly giving is reliable and consistent funding for the organization and is a great way for you to provide affordable support that fits your budget.

Donate today at: wawild.org/donate

LEADING SUCCESSFUL COALITIONS

In 1979, a group of intrepid individuals gathered at a beloved watering hole in Seattle’s University District to launch a new organization, the Washington Wilderness Coalition (WWC). The organization was created to organize local communities around the state of Washington to advocate for new Wilderness protections as part of statewide legislation. The organization’s co-founders Karen M. Fant and Ken Gersten drew a line down the state to get to work. Karen owned a car and covered Eastern WA, while Ken organized in Western WA by foot, bus, and ferry, all in the name of wilderness advocacy. Within five years of organizing groups and individual supporters, the organization celebrated its first big win when Congress passed the Washington Wilderness Act of 1984, designating 19 new Wilderness Areas totaling over 1 million acres. Although we’ve since changed our name to Washington Wild to better reflect the expanded scope of our work, we remain grounded and guided by our central focus of protecting our wild places through the power of people.

Coalition building is not always easy—it’s often tough, sometimes thankless, but always essential. Today, you will still find Washington Wild leading, coordinating, or in the middle of coalition efforts to protect our wild lands and waters.

PROTECTING CRITICAL SALMON HABITAT

In 2019, Washington Wild’s Executive Director Tom Uniack attended a meeting hosted by the Snoqualmie Tribe and posed the question: what is a top priority for you? The response was an effort to reform the largely unregulated practice of motorized suction dredge mining, a prospecting method that uses a high-pressure gasoline-powered water pump to vacuum up rocks, gravel, and sediment from the bottom of rivers and creeks. This harmful practice disrupts and endangers critical habitat for salmon, which are critical to tribal lifeways and protected by treaty rights. WA Wild offered to put together a sign-on letter in support of legislation. Over the next two years, the Snoqualmie Tribe, Trout Unlimited, Fish Not Gold, and the Sierra Club were hard at work lobbying in Olympia and providing science-based evidence for the legislation, while WA Wild coordinated a coalition of 160 elected officials, Tribes, conservation, recreation groups, hunting & fishing orgs, and local businesses. The demonstration of commitment...
Working alongside Washington Tribes, and conservation groups have collectively made a billion-dollar investment toward protecting critical salmon habitat. Local governments, communities, and conservation groups have formed an International coalition of more than 200 tribes, first nations, conservation and recreation organizations, and businesses to protect landscapes such as the Skagit Headwaters.


PROTECTING THE SKAGIT HEADWATERS

Sometimes in order to keep Washington wild, you have to look beyond its borders. The iconic Skagit River begins in British Columbia, flows down through the North Cascades National Park and Mt. Baker Snoqualmie National Forest, eventually providing 30% of the fresh water to the Puget Sound. The Skagit Watershed is critical to the health and well-being of the region’s residents, Indigenous communities, and local recreation and agriculture economies. Decisions made by our neighbors to the north affect us all downstream. That’s why two years ago WA Wild formed an International coalition of more than 200 tribes, first nations, conservation and recreation organizations, and businesses including Conservation Northwest, Forterra, Seattle City Light, and Patagonia, to oppose logging and mining threats in the Skagit headwaters. Corporate partners play an important role in our conservation work. We reached out to the Vancouver-based outdoor apparel maker Arc’teryx to provide leadership on this issue in British Columbia. The Skagit headwaters has its own appeal to Canadians. The pristine forests and streams are located in a donut hole of unprotected land about the size of Manhattan surrounded by Skagit and Manning Provincial Parks. Both are destinations for residents in the Vancouver metropolitan area and around British Columbia. At Arc’teryx, our inspiration for the technical high-performance apparel and equipment we produce is rooted in the Pacific Northwest and its accessible wilderness and mountain environment,” said Dan Walker, Social Impact Lead, Arc’teryx. “We appreciate working with Washington Wild to protect landscapes such as the Skagit Headwaters.”

WORKING WITH CRAFT BREWERS TO PROTECT CLEAN WATER

In WA state, among our celebrated differences we often find two common interests: A love for wild places and quality craft beer. In 2014, WA Wild established the WA Brewshed® Alliance to connect the brewing and conservation communities in our shared interest of protecting wild waters. Craft brewers are all about ingredients. Since beer is 90% water, it’s little surprise that the reason WA beer tastes so good is because we have some of the freshest water available. That’s only true for so long as we work to protect our wild places.

From humble beginnings, the Brewshed® Alliance has grown to include more than 60 breweries, pubs, and maisters, providing 195 signatories to comment letters in 2020 alone. One such letter focused on defending the National Forest Roadless Area Conservation Rule, which protects nearly 60 million acres of breathtaking, undeveloped roadless land throughout the national forest system, including more than 9 million acres in Alaska’s Tongass National Forest. Washington Wild coordinated 38 Brewshed® partners, to sign a letter opposing the U.S. Forest Service’s rollback of roadless forest protections.

“As brewers, our beer is only as good as the ingredients we use and clean water is essential,” said Colleen Kuehl, Co-owner of Wander Brewing in Bellingham, WA and a Brewshed® Coalition member. “Washington Wild allows us to play a role in ensuring that the rivers, streams and forests that create the headwaters for our water supply remain protected for fish, wildlife, residents and better tasting beer.” Overall, the coalition has generated a list of more than 200 local elected officials, local businesses and other stakeholders who support the 2001 Roadless Rule, along with thousands of messages from individuals and more than a dozen opinion editorials, letters-to-the-editor, and articles in local media outlets on this important issue. The coalition is now working to urge President Biden to reverse the proposal and uphold the roadless protection during his administration.

“GARNERING BIPARTISAN SUPPORT FOR WILDERNESS

In 2008 after the celebrated passage of the wild sky wilderness act, the next wilderness proposal for the state of WA came from an unlikely source, republican congressman Dave Reichert.

As we had before, WA Wild led a coalition in support of the legislation comprised of conservation and recreation groups including WA Trails Association, the Mountaineers, and the Wilderness Society, to develop a proposal to add 22,000 acres to the beloved Alpine lakes wilderness and protect nearly 40 miles of wild and scenic rivers near Snoqualmie Pass.

Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell of Washington introduced S.2312, the Alpine lakes Wilderness Act of 2019, on June 11, 2019. WA Wild focused on local support, doing outreach to nearly 100 businesses in Snoqualmie valley and elected officials representing towns like North Bend, Snoqualmie, Issaquah, and Duvall.

After leading a 6-yearlong effort, WA Wild and the coalition celebrated the success of nearly 40 miles of wild and scenic river protections. Thanks to the bipartisan leadership of Dave Reichert (R-WA08), Patty Murray (D-WA), and Susan Delbene (D-WA01), the legislation was signed into law in 2014.

“Passing legislation means bringing together a whole coalition of people, building momentum and energy to get it done. Washington Wild does this uniquely and very well.” Senator Patty Murray.
Since 2012 Washington Wild has coordinated 85 sign-on letters on local conservation issues signed by over 150 diverse groups and individuals.*

*Letters signed represented by numbers in parentheses.
It takes an ecosystem – how and why conservation coalitions work

By Michelle Connor, President and CEO, Forterra

Recently, Washington Wild’s Executive Director Tom Unlack invited me to offer my response to the not infrequent question we each get from our supporters who are passionate about the Pacific Northwest and about nature, but wonder how to provide resources to support us all: “Why do we need so many environmental groups?”

The missions of Washington Wild and Forterra are driven by a commitment to protecting Washington’s ecosystems. It’s worth pausing for a moment to consider the ecosystems and niches of our environmental community. As with natural ecosystems, Washington’s conservation community is a product of the intersection of our geography, culture, and the unique challenges that we must adapt to and strive to influence. The organizations that comprise our community have evolved to address various aspects of need and to fill various ecological niches.

More than forty years ago, the founders of Washington Wild recognized that there was a need for organized advocacy to ensure that greater ecological and community benefits were achieved from lands in the public trust. Ten years later, Forterra’s founders recognized an unfulfilled need, and ever since we have focused on achieving more ecological and community benefits from privately-held properties than regulations require.

This has led us honing skills in development, real estate and land use law, negotiation strategies, finance and capital planning, policy-making, community engagement, and more. Our work often strives to secure community or public ownership of land. We pass the baton in terms of policy making for public land management and recreational access, because others are better skilled and focused on filling that niche. But, to answer our supporters, just because we don’t do that work does not mean it lacks importance. To the contrary! Forterra’s success depends entirely on the critical work of Washington Wild, and efforts led by other nonprofits, whether Washington Trails Association or Washington Native Plant Society, Conservation Northwest, Got Green, and so many others.

Forterra brings together coalitions of neighborhoods, elected officials, landowners, developers, business leaders and find paths to voluntary land conservation transactions. Washington Wild does equally critical work bringing together coalitions to advocate for the protection of federal and state lands and ensuring the management of our public lands benefits all of us. Each of these niches require focus and specialization; and one would fail to deliver what our conservation ecosystem needs to thrive in the absence of the other’s work. Even when we don’t work directly with one another.

Here’s a great example - The Skagit River.

Years ago, Forterra allowed me to take time from my day job to serve on the Skagit Environmental Endowment Commission. The reason: There were copper and gold mining interests in the British Columbia headwaters of the watershed that threaten the integrity of this magnificent river, and I had the knowledge and skills to pursue an acquisition. After more than 8 years serving on the commission it became clear that we did not have a willing seller in Imperial Metals despite efforts by this transboundary treaty entity to offer fair compensation.

Meanwhile, downstream, Forterra has begun work to purchase the upland expansion area for the town of Hamilton, which offers a long-term alternative for hundreds of families living in harm’s way along the river while occupying critical salmon habitat. Our organization is focused on creating an affordable location for local businesses and homeowners currently in the floodplain to relocate. Yet, if a mine and tailings pond are allowed to be constructed in the headwaters of the river, the efforts of many organizations and agencies will be put at untenable risk.

We are all relying on Washington Wild to lead an international coalition to oppose logging and mining threats in the Skagit Headwaters and in doing so protect the downstream investment that others, including Forterra, are making in the lower watershed. We all need Washington Wild’s specialized state-based advocacy. We work in compliment to achieve distinct and overlapping goals to keep Washington green for future generations.

Tom and I are grateful for your ongoing support of our combined efforts.

Michelle Connor is President and CEO of Forterra and is a key member of a coalition Washington Wild is coordinating to protect the headwaters of the Skagit River from logging and mining threats.

You never know where you are going to find inspiration. Jaidacyn Madrigal reached out to express her interest in Washington Wild. After a brief phone call, she left a lasting impression on WA Wild’s Executive Director Tom Unlack.

“Her youthful energy and enthusiasm was contagious,” said Unlack. “Once I saw her videos on her EcoGirl You Tube channel, I knew we had to ask her to help communicate our work to a younger generation.”

Washington Wild reached out to Jaidacyn and in November 2020, contracted with her to unveil a four-part video series, entitled “Conservation Chat,” which takes an in-depth look at conservation issues that Washington Wild is leading statewide.

Madrigal covers complex topics in just five minutes, including Washington Wild’s efforts to defend our remaining old-growth forests within National Forest Roadless Areas, protect the Skagit River Headwaters, support the Wild Olympics legislation, and review Washington Wild’s 40-year history. The video series offers a fast-paced and engaging avenue for supporters to get informed, then take action.

“Washington Wild works hard to protect and defend wild lands and rivers in order to keep them safe and thriving and address the increasing impacts of climate change,” said Madrigal. “They do a great job of making action alerts easy. You can go directly to the alert on their website and the letter is written out for you, you just write in your name and information.”

Madrigal’s EcoGirl channel is all about providing easy, everyday action to help individuals feel empowered by making conscious choices that benefit the environment. Raised in Everett, Washington Madrigal didn’t learn about climate change until taking a high school AP Environmental Science class which was “an eye-opener.” She thought there must be other young people out there who aren’t being informed about this issue.

Now as a recent college-graduate in her twenties, Madrigal is dedicated to educating not only her peers, but younger generations - “our future.” Recent projects include offering presentations to high school classes and a children’s book for grades K-second.

“A lot of high schools don’t have an environmental studies courses,” said Madrigal, “I’m lucky that mine did because if it hadn’t, I wouldn’t be here right now doing this work.”

Jaidacyn Madrigal
**WILD PROFILES**

**Rebecca Albiani & Mitchell Levy**

Longtime Washington Wild Supporters

Mitchell Levy and Rebecca Albiani, together in 2021 and beyond!

Thank you, Rebecca, for over 20 years of support. It wasn't long after that her family moved across the country from the "other Washington" and began enjoying hiking, biking, and cross-country skiing, all just a short distance from their front door.

"We never had much of a backyard so having access to all the amazing parks and public lands so close to our home was incredible." Soon after, Rebecca became a supporter of Washington Wild back when we were the Washington Wilderness Coalition after a volunteer knocked on her door.

"What I love about Washington Wild is that you are local people who so obviously love the wild public lands—and you're really effective! You've had some big wins over the past few years."

The continuous support that Rebecca has provided Washington Wild over the years has been incredibly valuable. Building strong relationships within our community by earning the trust and support of our neighbors is one of our greatest assets as a small organization. We strive to provide multiple opportunities for people to support us when they can in the ways that work best for them.

"Over the years, we gave when we had the means and tried to support as many campaigns as possible, but recently we became monthly donors and for us, that became an easy way to continue to support Washington Wild while not needing to be reminded."

Thank you, Rebecca, for over 20 years of support and we look forward to all the success we will have together in 2021 and beyond!

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**Craig Nobley & Lighthouse Roasters**

Artisan Coffeeshop

Lighthouse Roasters has been producing fine artisan coffees in Seattle since 1993. They create consistently great coffee in small batches of the freshest premium beans, roasted in their vintage cast-iron roaster each day. Lighthouse has established a following of coffee lovers through their commitment to treating coffee roasting as a craft.

Washington Wild was able to connect with Lighthouse Roasters just over one year ago in what was unknowingly our last in-person event before the pandemic unfolded. In partnership with Aslan Brewing and Theo’s Chocolate, a charity roast called “Rocket Fuel” was created and a fun evening in a packed taproom in Fremont was had.

Despite not being able to hold similar in-person events, our partnership with Lighthouse Roasters has continued to grow in unique ways. We recently held a virtual event with Lighthouse Roasters and general manager, Craig Nobley, for a morning chat called “Coffee and Conservation,” which featured a special roast specifically made for Washington Wild.

“Lighthouse Roasters recognizes the importance of healthy watersheds and their impact on our local community and economy. Building quality relationships around conservation efforts in Washington is important to us, which is why we support Washington Wild and their dedication to building coalitions and trust in our community.”

Our Brewshed Alliance partners understand the importance of quality water for a quality product. In Washington, we have some of the purest water in the country. Brewshed partners know this and raise awareness on the necessity of protecting these sources to their supporters.

Great beer starts upstream. Upstream IPA brought attention to the interconnectedness of our waterways in Washington State. Here in Seattle, we depend on fresh mountain water that flows down from the waterways of the Cascades. This beer was brewed with malt grown using Salmon-Safe® practices from Skagit Valley Malting and hops from Yakima Chief Hops. Thanks to the generous donations from Skagit Valley Malting and Yakima Chief Hops, 40% of Upstream IPA proceeds were contributed to Washington Wild.

Thank you to Big Time, Skagit Valley Malting, Yakima Chief Hops, and everyone who purchased a can.

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**Conservation Updates**

**HEAL ACT PASSES THE WASHINGTON STATE SENATE**

Where you live, your income, race, or language ability should not determine how healthy and safe you are. The Healthy Environment for ALL (HEAL) Act is a crucial effort to center those most affected by pollution and climate impacts, and ensure tribal sovereignty and rights.

The HEAL Act (SB 5141) was voted out of the Senate on March 1, in large thanks to the leadership of Front and Centered, a statewide coalition of communities of color-led groups. If passed in the house, the bill would define environmental justice in state law, direct funding with environmental benefits toward investments in and determined by communities highly impacted by pollution and climate impacts, and ensure tribal sovereignty and rights.
For over 40 years, Washington Wild has set itself apart by building successful community partnerships. Your support keeps our work moving forward in 2021 and beyond.