



WASHINGTON STATE
Recreation and
Conservation Office

Community Forests Program

Recreation and Conservation Office

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Who May Apply?

- Local governments
- Nonprofit nature conservancies
- Special purpose districts
- State agencies
- Tribes

Typical Projects

- Land acquisition
- Land acquisition with forest health or other restoration activities
- Land acquisition with recreation facility development

Funding Source

Funding comes from the sale of general obligation bonds.

Leveraging State Dollars

Grant recipients may receive up to \$3 million for a project and must contribute least 15 percent in matching resources.

Conserving Washington's Working Forests

Washington has a rich legacy of communities coming together to protect important values. When forests are divided and developed, it can put communities at risk from wildfire, displace wildlife, and reduce access to recreational opportunities. Community forests are a way for a community to have a voice in how its local forests are managed. Community forests are owned and managed for the benefit of the people who have a cultural, economic, or geographic connection to the land.

The Legislature created the Community Forests Program as an opportunity for communities to preserve working forests for the many benefits forests provide, such as a place to recreate, a source of sustainable timber, a home for wildlife, a buffer against climate and environmental changes, an outdoor classroom, a place for cultural enrichment, and so much more.

Program History

In 2020, the Washington State Legislature directed the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) to establish eligibility criteria and a list of community forest projects for funding consideration. RCO used these criteria to create the Community Forests Program, which the Legislature has continued to fund.

Program Need

As Washington's population continues to grow, forests increasingly are fragmented and developed, putting communities at greater risk of wildfires and climate change. It also robs communities of the economic, environmental, cultural, recreational, and educational opportunities intact forests provide.

The Community Forests Program provides grants to help communities protect and enhance their surrounding forests by allowing them to buy the land and supporting the development of collaborative models of community-based forest management and use.

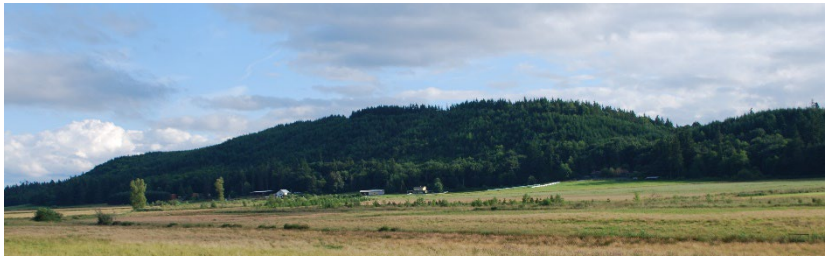
Highlighted Community Forests

Nason Ridge

Chelan County used a \$3 million grant to buy Nason Ridge near Lake Wenatchee and Leavenworth. The purchase protected 3,714 acres of forestland for habitat, recreation, and sustainable forest management. The area includes 2.5 miles of Nason Creek, a tributary to the Wenatchee River and habitat for salmon and steelhead. Visitors can hike, mountain bike, cross-country ski, and hunt in the forest and on nearby public lands. Chelan County contributed more than \$2.2 million. More information is at RCO's online [Project Snapshot](#).



Chimacum Ridge Community Forest



The Jefferson Land Trust is used a \$3 million grant to buy 853 acres of commercial forestland to create the Chimacum Ridge Community Forest. Located near the community of Chimacum, the ridge is a local landmark surrounded by farms and forests. It is home to nineteen tributaries of salmon-bearing Chimacum Creek. The purchase

opened ten miles of new trails for hiking, biking, and birdwatching. In addition, the forest provides resources to nonprofit and entrepreneurial endeavors for carpentry, woodworking, wooden boat building, botanical and berry harvests, guided experiences, and traditional food and tree harvests by local tribes. The Jefferson Land Trust contributed \$897,500. More information is at RCO's online [Project Snapshot](#).

Nisqually Community Forest

The Nisqually Indian Tribe used a \$2.8 million grant to add 1,042 acres to the Nisqually Community Forest. The land is along Busy Wild Creek, which is the highest priority for protection in the Nisqually Chinook salmon and steelhead trout recovery plans. Both species are listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act. While preserving a working forest, the purchase also extended a network of cross-country skiing trails. The Nisqually Indian Tribe contributed more than \$1.5 million. More information is at RCO's online [Project Snapshot](#).



Montesano Community Forest

Forterra used a \$1.6 million grant to conserve 240 acres in Montesano to expand the City's community forest, the Chaplin Collins Memorial Forest. The forest is managed to sustainably harvest timber. Forterra will contribute \$284,550. More information is at RCO's online [Project Snapshot](#).