

Letter from the President

Dear Community,

Siskiyou Land Trust is an organization committed to caring for the lands we protect, literally, forever. With a timeline like that, we have to keep a tight hold on the big picture and recognize that the various eras of our work will come and go.

As we wrapped up the 2024/25 fiscal year, we closed on one era of land trust leadership and prepared to usher in the next. The incredible growth of our portfolio of conserved properties and staff expansion led by Kathleen Hitt has paved the way for the focus on long-term sustainability. As we search for our next Executive Director, we'll be looking for a leader with not only a strong conservation background, but also deep skills in fundraising and relationship building.

Likewise, with the heartbreaking passing of our friend and fellow SLT Board member, Gareth Plank, we celebrate the legacy of his leadership while gratefully embracing the fresh perspectives brought by new Board members.

Forever is a very long time. Long enough to grapple with change and come out the other side stronger than ever, all while recognizing that more change will always be around the corner. We're grateful for your support in the effort to be sustainable, flexible, and creative enough to embrace the opportunities and face the challenges that "forever" brings.

Wendy Whitson, President



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A young naturalist sketches the landscape on a Nature Walk with SLT

Siskiyou Land Trust is a community based non-profit organization that permanently conserves and stewards the irreplaceable wild places, watersheds, and working lands that are the heart of Siskiyou County. SLT's office and conserved properties are located on the ancestral lands of the Shasta, Winnemem Wintu, Karuk, Modoc, Yurok, Klamath, Okwanuchu, and Wintu peoples.

It is essential to protect and honor the history and people of these places. Siskiyou Land Trust is committed to building a culture of inclusion to amplify and value indigenous voices as we steward these conserved lands.

Welcome Onboard! SLT's Newest Board Members



John Vona

John is a California Registered Professional Forester and brings over 30 years of experience managing natural resources for private landowners in the Pacific Northwest and the US South. As regional manager for F&W Forestry Services, he oversees the management of private timberlands situated in Siskiyou, Shasta and Trinity Counties. John resides in Mount Shasta and spends much of his free time exploring the beautiful landscapes that the region has to offer.



Greg Francois

A lifelong outdoors enthusiast, Greg's background includes sustainable development, wildlife biology, education, and communications. Now a proud resident of Mt. Shasta, Greg is a freelance creative producer with an entrepreneurial edge, leading strategies for public outreach and education campaigns across the US and California. Specializing in video production, he uses visual storytelling to unite people and convey complex ideas.



Jen Thackeray

Jen is a lifelong resident of Scott Valley. She and her husband, Sam, steward the SLT conserved Spencer Ranch and operate Thackeray Livestock in Etna where they have raised their 5 children. In addition to being a respected voice in the Siskiyou County Ag community, Jen is the Finance Director for the Siskiyou Economic Development Council and a Scott Valley Unified School District Board member.



Woolsey McKernon

Woolsey has a career that has spanned technology, construction, development, climate, finance, and natural capital assets. Being from VT, his rural roots run deep. While he's made his career in global cities, he's come full circle to SLT where he's been a Mt. Shasta property owner since 2003, abutting the Wherrit Demonstration Forest on Rainbow Ridge. As an avid outdoorsman, you'll find Woolsey and his family on the trails, lakes, and rivers throughout Siskiyou County.

The Siskiyou Land Trust Team



(L-R, back to front) Laura Bradley - Stewardship Manager | Kristin Davis - Operations Manager | Jessica Matthews - Acquisition Project Manager | Alexis Robertson - Acquisition Director | Simbala Desilles - Conservation Coordinator | Hannah Link - Stewardship Project Manager | Sara Cowan, Administrative Assistant | Emily Williamson - Fund Development Coordinator | Erica Harris - Stewardship Director | not pictured: Peter Townley - Stewardship Manager

What makes Siskiyou County unique?

Conserving Biodiversity

Siskiyou Land Trust's work protects biodiversity by conserving vital habitats and corridors. Thanks to its unique geography and climate, Siskiyou County stands out as one of California's most biologically diverse regions. The county is home to a wide array of ecoregions, including high volcanic peaks of the Cascades, and the rugged Klamath mountains known for endemic species found nowhere else on Earth. The Klamath Mountains, which acted as a refuge during periods of glaciation, are a world-renowned amphibian hotspot also known to hold one of the richest conifer assemblages on Earth.

Siskiyou County continues to provide refuge to innumerable migratory species. While global bird populations are decreasing at an alarming rate, SLT conserved rangelands and wetlands provide a stronghold of critical breeding grounds and migration stopovers along the Pacific Flyway. Local headwaters feed both the Sacramento and Klamath Rivers, which support endangered fish species like Coho and Chinook salmon.



Siskiyou County Landscape Connectivity

Conserving Connectivity

One of the core conservation values Siskiyou Land Trust works to protect is landscape connectivity - the degree to which the landscape enables, or hinders, the movement of wildlife, water, and ecological processes.

Siskiyou County's unique geography naturally supports this connectivity, helping to sustain healthy, functioning ecosystems. When evaluating potential conservation projects, Siskiyou Land Trust prioritizes opportunities that enhance these vital connections.

SLT's conserved lands safeguard working farms and ranches, forests, and open spaces that link mountains and wilderness areas to valley floors, protecting essential wildlife corridors. Together with our landowner partners, we protect the headwaters, springs, seeps, and wet meadows that feed the Klamath and Sacramento Rivers all the way to the Pacific Ocean.

These protected places connect more than wildlife and waterways, they link viewscapes, rural livelihoods, and the cultural heritage that make Siskiyou County the extraordinary place it is, bringing us together to protect the land that holds us.

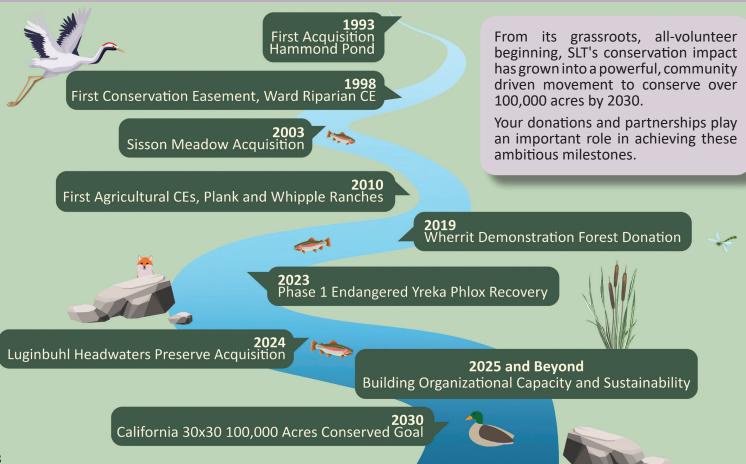
"Working in partnership with willing landowners, Siskiyou Land Trust is committed to facilitating landscape-scale conservation that will keep these connections alive for generations to come."

- Alexis Robertson, Acquisition Director

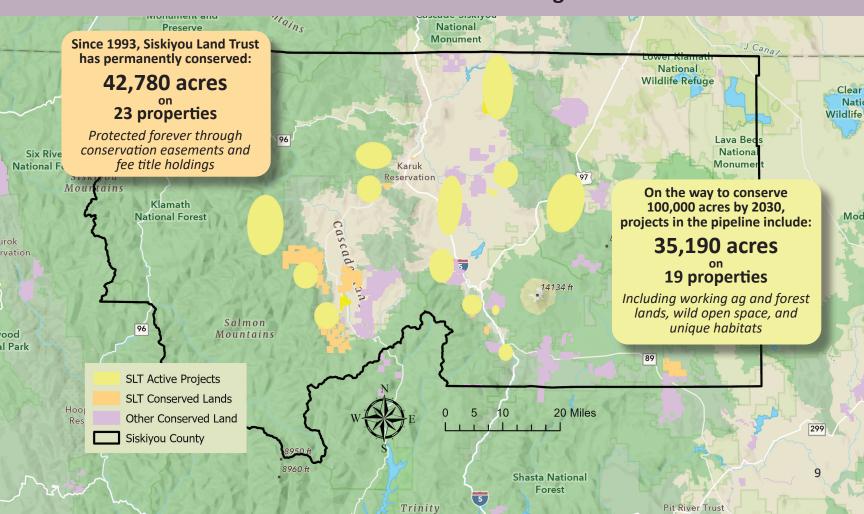


Cascades, Mt Shasta, Bubba Suess

Milestones of Siskiyou Land Trust



Reaching our Conservation Goals



California Climate Action Corps

CCAC Fellows Lead Climate Resiliency

Siskiyou Land Trust welcomed its first California Climate Action Corps (CCAC) Fellows in 2024. CCAC is a service program that engages emerging professionals in climate mitigation and community resilience through projects such as wildfire resiliency, habitat restoration, and community education.

This year, CCAC Fellows engaged with over 100 volunteers, stewarded Sisson Meadow, Wherrit Forest, and the Garden Greenway, and lead workshops for all ages. Through these activities, they inspired and educated community and the next generation of conservationists and climate advocates.

"Our most gratifying contribution has been working with the youth, ensuring a brighter future through climate related learning and workshops, and sparking their drive towards making a difference within their own community."

- Simbala Desilles, 2025 CCAC Fellow

Thank you to Steve and Andrea Suttell, whose generous multi-year grant supports the mentorship of the Fellows. As we welcome a new cohort of Fellows, we look forward to building upon the projects and momentum of the inaugural team.







2024-25 CCAC Fellows Stacey Revel, Erin Solloway, Reilly Herndon, Simbala Desilles

Partnerships for Forest Health

Stewardship and Community

Siskiyou Land Trust recognizes that the areas where we now steward are the ancestral lands – the homes – of many Indigenous Peoples since time immemorial. SLT is building relationships with local Tribes to incorporate Indigenous stewardship into our conservation goals. We are committed to building meaningful tribal relationships centered in reciprocity.

Like most California forests, those at Luginbuhl Headwaters Preserve have succumbed to management practices in the past 200 years that included resource extraction and fire suppression. This has allowed for the overgrowth of hazardously dense small diameter conifer stands which experience increased competition for resources and susceptibility to pests and pathogens. Recent drought conditions and warmer air temperatures make vulnerable overcrowded forests increasingly receptive to high severity wildfire.

As forest stewards, SLT protects conservation and community values by embarking on forest health and community wildfire resiliency projects. SLT is proud to be a part of landscape scale fire resiliency work by completing 780 acres of forest health work at Wherrit Forest and Luginbuhl Preserve. In partnership with Shasta Valley Resource Conservation District, these forest health projects are part of the larger West Mount Shasta Forest Resiliency Project, which grew from community involvement and aims to complete over 12,750 acres of fuel reduction west of Mount Shasta.



Partnering for Habitat Enhancement

Habitat Improvement in Our Backyard

Siskiyou Land Trust is grateful to have received our first major wildlife habitat improvement grant from Point Blue Conservation Science. The grant funds invasive plant removal, the creation of pollinator gardens, waystations, buzzways, and habitat enhancements to help declining species find safe places to thrive.

Stewardship Manager and cavity-nesting bird expert, Laura Bradley partnered with Conservation Easement landowners to install bat and bird boxes for Kestrel, Barn Owl, Tree Swallow, Bluebird and Wood Duck populations.

The properties in the project are all blossoming into fire resilient, biodiverse habitat for pollinators and wildlife. This is a living example that conservation can begin in our own backyard.





Thanks to Point Blue and our volunteers, SLT has tracked:

1,500+ Volunteer & CCAC Hours
80 Bat & Bird Box Installations
1,100 Native Plantings
150 Cubic Yards of Invasive
Species Removed
1200 Project Staff Hours

Through the Lens of our Volunteers



Volunteers Making a Difference

Volunteers are the heart of Siskiyou Land Trust. This year, over 25 nature walks and educational experiences brought over 600 participants into the field to explore mushrooms, dragonflies, moths, butterflies, raptors, rare plants, and even the night sky. These outings are led by generous volunteer experts who share their knowledge and passion, deepening connections to the landscapes and biodiversity we protect together.

One shining example of volunteer dedication is Steve Huckabone, an avid birder, photographer, and tireless supporter of SLT. Steve co-leads birding events, contributes his stunning photos for use in SLT publications, and rarely misses a weekly workday.

We are grateful for Steve and all of our incredible volunteers whose generosity with their skills and time fuel our mission and vision to connect people to nature and care for the land.

"I really enjoy volunteering at the Siskiyou Land Trust. Whether it be pulling invasive weeds, helping out at the garden or taking photos during the field trips. I'm forever grateful for the Siskiyou Land Trust."

- Steve Huckabone



Western meadowlark, S. Huckabone 13

Our Guiding Lights



Gareth Plank

A guiding light is someone or something that provides direction and serves as a beacon to keep us moving forward. Although we lost our beloved friend and SLT Board member, Gareth Plank, much too soon, the light of his legacy shines on.

In 2010, together with his wife's family, the Whipples, Gareth was at the helm of SLT's first agricultural conservation easements - nearly 5,700 acres of prime ag land, riparian corridor, and wildlife habitat outside Etna, CA, protected forever. In subsequent years, three of Gareth's upriver neighbors would follow suit, voluntarily protecting nearly 8,000 acres of family ranches and ecosystems vital to the rural integrity and biodiveristy of northern California.

Gareth helped recruit more than half of the Board and staff. Through his singular mixture of passion, energy, and charm, we found ourselves working alongside him and volunteering to step up and lead.

He was our organization's champion of respect through fair pay, equity, appreciation, and opportunity. He was also always willing to show up and work even harder than those he enlisted to help.

Gareth had the ability to lead while making space for the rest of us to bring our gifts and talents to the table. He lifted us all up with his generosity, inspiring us to be the best version of ourselves and reach the full potential of our organization. He will be missed deeply and honored daily as Siskiyou Land Trust continues to blossom.

Gareth Plank at Scott River Ranch Conservation Easement

Kathleen Hitt

After 15 trailblazing years at Siskiyou Land Trust, Kathleen Hitt stepped away from her role as Executive Director. We know our supporters join us in wishing her all the best as she begins this next chapter. Kathleen's guiding light has set the foundation for SLT and will always be part of the land trust family. Landowner partner and Emeritus Board President, John Brennan, reflects on the legacy she leaves behind:

"Kathleen's unswerving dedication to protecting lands vital to agriculture, water, wildlife, open space, and recreation can be understood in one simple metric: about 150 acres protected in 2010; more than 36,000 acres conserved by 2025 - an average of 2,400 acres per year during her tenure. Aldo Leopold would surely be pleased.

Kathleen has a rare skill for bringing together differing land-use philosophies, engaging all stakeholders, finding common ground, and moving projects forward in agreement. That's good practice.

She also worked exceptionally well with governmental partners beyond conservation, from appraisers and lawyers to fiscal staff, earning their respect along the way.

We humans, and the trees, waters, fish, birds, and four-legged creatures will miss her devotion and attendance to our needs for respected place."

- John Brennan, Emeritus Board President

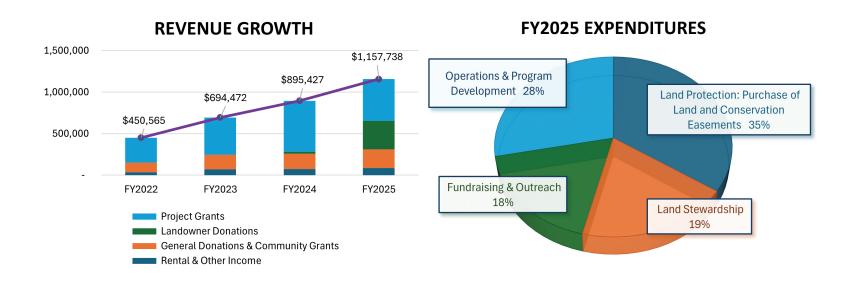


Kathleen Hitt at Altar Rock, Wherrit Forest

Financial Report

Your Donations at Work

For each dollar you invest, Siskiyou Land Trust generates over \$20 in grants and other funding for conservation right here in Siskiyou County. Last year, SLT leveraged \$225,000 in community support into over \$5 million in conservation work. Siskiyou Land Trust provides a fantastic return on your investment.



Legacy Giving in Action

A lasting gift for the land

Eve and Jay Thompson have been spreading joy in our community for decades. As a professor of English at College of the Siskiyous for nearly 24 years, Eve guided generations of young people as they found their voices and their place in the world. Now, she and Jay are assuring that the places they treasure most will be protected for future generations through their generous support of Siskiyou Land Trust.

Eve has opted to donate the entirety of her required minimum distribution (RMD) from her retirement account to SLT. Gifts like Eve and Jay's provide lasting impact and support for SLT's mission to permanently protect the wild and working lands that are the heart of Siskiyou County.

"My spirit soars whenever I'm privileged enough to see a soaring eagle, a lumbering bear, a dashing fox, a herd of deer...open spaces untouched by development and progress - the list goes on. Wildlife and open space are why my husband and I have made Siskiyou County our home for the past 42 years."

- Eve Thompson

There are many ways to give:

- Make a one-time or monthly recurring gift
- Donate through your retirement account or with stock transfers
- Leave a legacy gift in your estate plan
- Double your impact through your employer's matching gift program
- Support our mission as a business sponsor and gain valuable community visibility

Every contribution, large or small, helps protect the lands, waters, and wildlife that make Siskiyou county home - for all of us, and for future generations.

SLT's youngest Nature Walk attendee discovering wild mushrooms



Thank You Land Trust Supporters!

For over 30 years, Siskiyou Land Trust has worked to preserve agricultural, forest, and wild lands in far northern California. Your donations make this possible. We are deeply grateful for each of you!

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Shooting Star Flower, Steve Huckabone

