

BLUE

JOURNAL OF THE BLUE MOUNTAIN LAND TRUST
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CONSERVATION | EDUCATION | RECREATION



Photo by Bill Rodgers

COMMITMENT TO CONSERVATION EXCELLENCE

Blue Mountain Land Trust is re-accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission

One thing that unites us as a nation is land: Americans strongly support saving the open spaces they love. Since 1999, the Blue Mountain Land Trust has been doing just that for the people of Southeastern Washington and Northeastern Oregon.

In August, the Land Trust Accreditation Commission renewed the Blue Mountain Land Trust's accreditation – proving again that, as part of a network of accredited land trusts across the nation, it is committed to professional excellence and to maintaining the public's trust in its conservation work.

“There are over 1,300 land trusts in our nation, but only 443 have achieved accreditation from the Land Trust Accreditation Commission,” said Land Trust President Linda Herbert. “I am proud of Blue Mountain Land Trust's re-accreditation, building on the hard work of earlier board and staff members, including Tara Lord and Tom Riley. It speaks to our diligence, transparency, and professionalism as we work to preserve and protect the lands of the Blue Mountain region.”

The Blue Mountain Land Trust provided extensive documentation and was subject to a comprehensive third-party evaluation prior to achieving this distinction. The Land Trust Accreditation Commission awarded renewed accreditation, signifying its confidence that

the Blue Mountain Land Trust's lands will be protected forever. Accredited land trusts now steward almost 20 million acres – the size of Denali, Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, Glacier, Everglades, and Yosemite National Parks combined.

“It is exciting to recognize the Blue Mountain Land Trust's continued commitment to national standards by renewing this national mark of distinction,” said Melissa Kalvestrand, executive director of the Commission. “Donors and partners can trust that more than 400 accredited land trusts across the country are united behind strong standards and have demonstrated sound finances, ethical conduct, responsible governance, and lasting stewardship.”

INTRODUCTION

THE DRAWDOWN REVIEW

An update of *Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming*

Tim Copeland, Executive Director

Since *Drawdown* was published in 2017, we have reprinted selected chapters of the book in every issue of BLUE. In the last three years, our readers have learned how regenerative agriculture, managed grazing, silvopasture, tree intercropping, perennial cropping, reduced food waste and other practices decrease the emission of greenhouse gases (largely carbon dioxide) into the atmosphere or draw these gases out of the atmosphere and store it.

In April, an update to *Drawdown* was published titled *The Drawdown Review - 2020*. This new publication is available as a PDF document at drawdown.org. *The Review* makes clear that global warming will be reversed only by reducing carbon emissions **and** increasing carbon sequestration. “Reduce the sources and increase the sinks” is a way to say it.

The Review begins with a discussion of the 10 key insights that now guide Project Drawdown’s climate work. We are pleased to share this section with you.



DRAWDOWN REVIEW:

10 KEY INSIGHTS

Reprint from *Drawdown Review: Climate Solutions for a New Decade*.
Edited by Dr. Katharine Wilkinson.

Our first body of work in 2017 put a spotlight on a vast array of climate solutions, each with its own compelling story and possibility. As the saying goes, it can sometimes be a challenge to “see the forest for the trees,” and that’s certainly true with climate solutions.

1 We can reach Drawdown by mid-century if we scale the climate solutions already in hand.

Drawdown is a bold goal but an absolutely necessary one, given that global emissions are still rising each year—not declining as they need to. Our new analysis shows the world can reach Drawdown by mid-century, if we make the best use of all existing climate solutions. Certainly, more solutions are needed and emerging, but there is no reason—or time—to wait on innovation. Now is better than new, and society is well equipped to begin that transformation today. If we pursue climate solutions with purpose and determination, our analysis shows we could reach Drawdown as early as the mid-2040s—or not until the 2060s, depending on our level of ambition. (See more on scenarios below.)

2 Climate solutions are interconnected as a system, and we need all of them.

The notion of “silver bullets” has persistent appeal—“what’s the one big thing we can do?”—but they simply don’t exist for complex problems such as the climate crisis. A whole system of solutions is required. Many climate

solutions combine and cooperate, leveraging or enabling others for the greatest impact. For example, efficient buildings make distributed, renewable electricity generation more viable. The food system requires interventions on both supply and demand sides—e.g., better farming practices and reduced meat consumption. For greatest benefit, electric vehicles need 100% clean power on which to run. We need many, interconnected solutions for a multi-faceted, systemic challenge.

3 Beyond addressing greenhouse gases, climate solutions can have “co-benefits” that contribute to a better, more equitable world.

Climate solutions are rarely just climate solutions. For example, those that curb air pollution are also health solutions. Others that protect and restore ecosystems are also biodiversity solutions. Many can create jobs, foster resilience to climate impacts such as storms and droughts and bring other environmental benefits such as safeguarding water resources. Climate solutions can advance social and economic equity if utilized wisely and well—with attention to who decides, who benefits, and how any drawbacks are mitigated. The how really



matters, as the same practice or technology can have very different outcomes depending on implementation. It takes intention and care to move solutions forward in ways that heal rather than deepen systemic injustices.

4 The financial case for climate solutions is crystal clear, as savings significantly outweigh costs.

Unfounded arguments about the economic infeasibility of climate action persist but are patently false. Project Drawdown analyzes the financial implications of solutions: How much money will a given solution cost, or save, when compared with the status quo technology or practice it replaces? That financial analysis looks at the initial implementation of a solution, as well as the use or operation of that solution over time. Overall, net operational savings exceed net implementation costs four to five times over: an initial cost of \$23.4–26.2

trillion versus \$96.4–143.5 trillion saved. If we consider the monetary value of co-benefits (e.g., healthcare savings from reduced air pollution) and avoided climate damages (e.g., agricultural losses), the financial case becomes even stronger. So long as we ensure a just transition for those in sunset or transitioning industries, such as coal, it's clear that there is no economic rationale for stalling on climate solutions—and every reason to forge boldly ahead.

5 The majority of climate solutions reduce or replace the use of fossil fuels. We must accelerate these solutions, while actively stopping the use of coal, oil, and gas.

The use of fossil fuels for electricity, transport, and heat currently drives roughly two-thirds of heat-trapping emissions worldwide.² Of the 76 solutions included in this Review,

roughly 30% reduce the use of fossil fuels by enhancing efficiency and almost 30% replace them entirely with alternatives. Together, they can deliver almost two-thirds of the emissions reductions needed to reach Drawdown. Alongside accelerating these vital solutions, such as solar and wind power, retrofitting buildings, and public transit, we must actively stop fossil fuel production and expansion—including ending billions of dollars in subsidies and financing and, ideally, directing those funds to climate solutions instead. Reaching Drawdown depends on concurrent “stop” and “start” paths of action. A similar stop-start dynamic exists within food, agriculture, and land use: ending harmful practices (e.g., deforestation) and advancing helpful ones (e.g., methods of regenerative agriculture).

6 We cannot reach Drawdown without simultaneously reducing emissions toward zero and supporting nature's carbon sinks.

Imagine the atmosphere as a bathtub overflowing, as the water continues to run. The primary intervention is clear: turn off the tap of greenhouse gases by bringing emissions to zero. In addition to curbing the source of the problem, we can also open the drain somewhat. That's where nature plays a vital role: absorbing and storing carbon through biological and chemical processes, effectively draining some of the excess out of the atmosphere. Human activities can support natural carbon sinks, and many ecosystem- or agriculture-related climate solutions have the double benefit of reducing emissions and absorbing carbon simultaneously. It takes stemming all sources and supporting all sinks to reach Drawdown. (See further exploration of sources and sinks below.)

7 Some of the most powerful climate solutions receive comparably little attention, reminding us to widen our lens.

Many climate solutions focus on reducing and eliminating fossil fuel emissions, but others are needed too. Among the top solutions assessed by Project Drawdown, we find some “eye-openers” that are on par with solutions that often get the spotlight, such as onshore wind turbines and utility-scale solar photovoltaics:



- Food waste reduction and plant-rich diets, which together curb demand, deforestation, and associated emissions;
- Preventing leaks and improving disposal of chemical refrigerants, which are potent greenhouse gases, the use of which is projected to grow significantly;
- Restoration of temperate and tropical forests, which are powerful, vast carbon sinks;
- Access to high-quality, voluntary reproductive healthcare and high-quality, inclusive education, the many ripple effects of which include climate benefits.

These results are a reminder to look beyond the obvious, to a broader suite of solutions, and beyond technology, to natural and social systems.

8 Accelerators are critical to move solutions forward at the scale, speed, and scope required.

It goes without saying: solutions do not scale themselves. We need means of removing barriers and accelerating their implementation and expansion. Key “accelerators” can create the conditions for solutions to move forward with greater speed and wider scope. Some, such as changing policy and shifting capital, are closer in and have more direct impacts; others, such as shaping culture and building political power, are further out and more indirect in their effect. Accelerators are heavily dependent on social and political contexts and work at different scales, from individuals to larger groups to entire nations. As with solutions, they intersect and interact; none are singularly effective, and we need them all. (See more on accelerators below.)

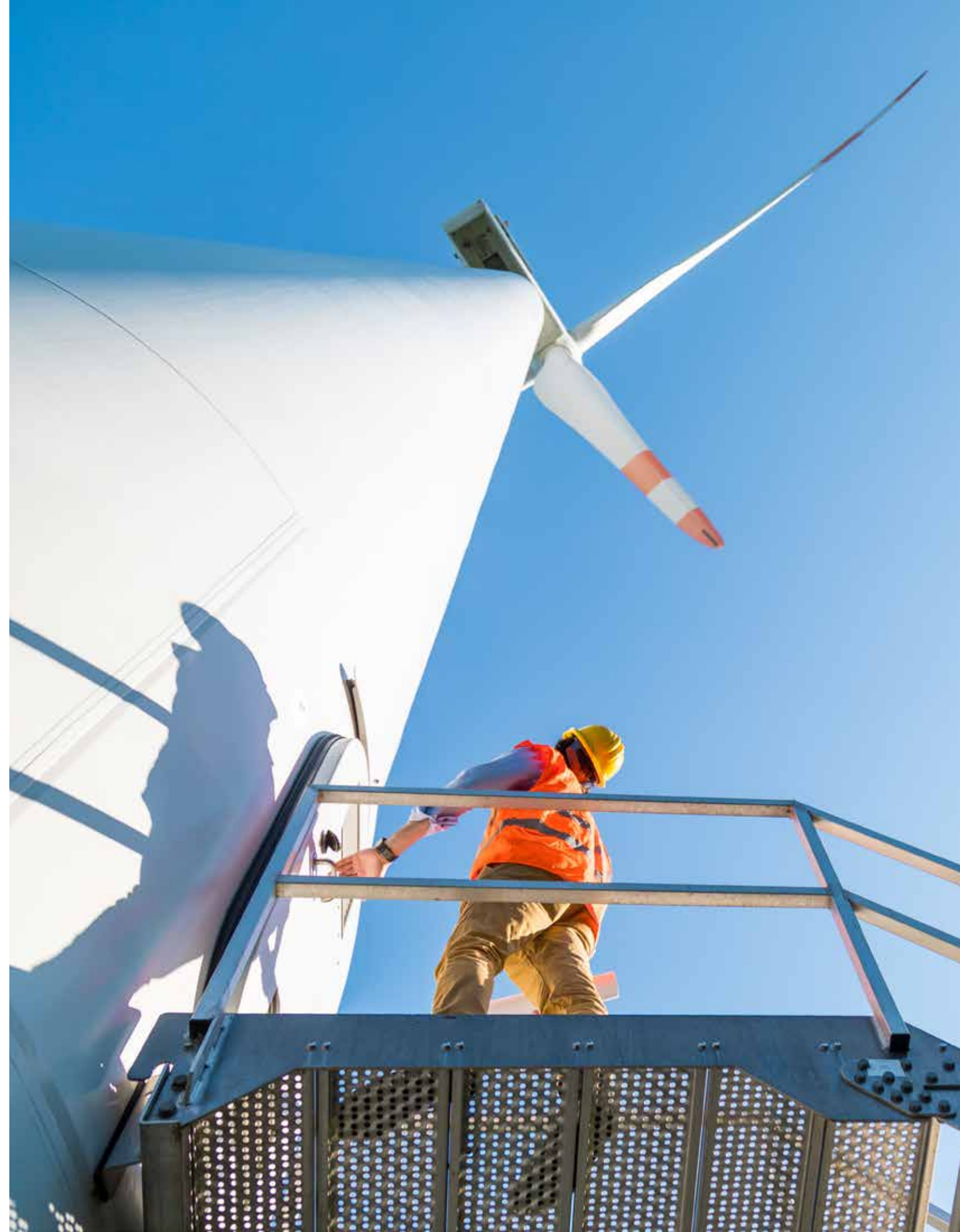
9 Footholds of agency exist at every level, for all individuals and institutions to participate in advancing climate solutions.

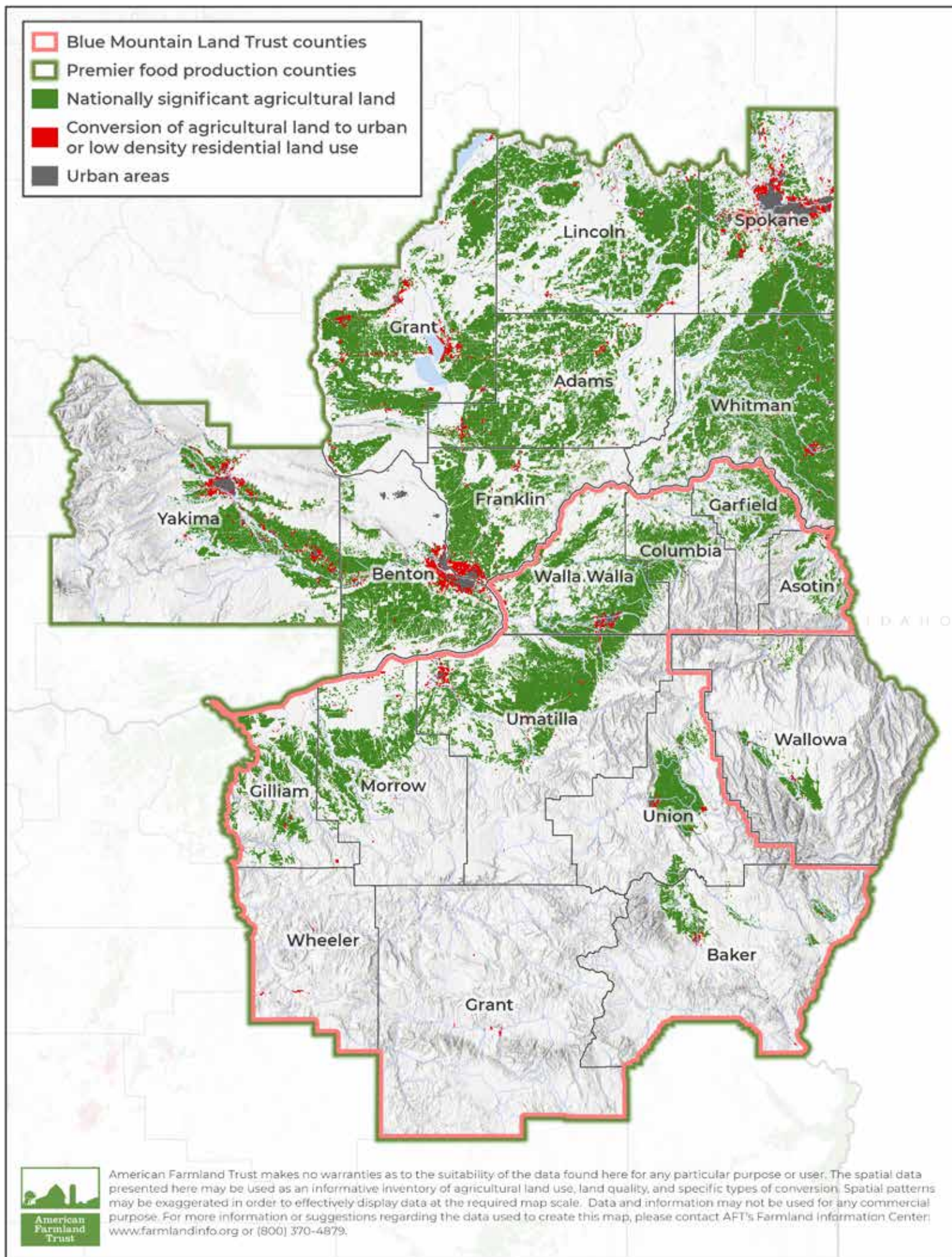
The climate crisis requires systemic, structural change across our global society and economy. The reality of intervening in a complex system is that no one can do it all, and we all have an opening to show up as problem-solvers and change-agents and contribute in significant ways—even when we feel small. The range of climate solutions illuminates diverse intervention points across individual, community, organizational, regional, national, and global scales. The necessary accelerators expand that array of action opportunities even more. It will take a whole ecosystem of activities and actors to create the transformation that’s required.

10 Immense commitment, collaboration, and ingenuity will be necessary to depart the perilous path we are on and realize the path that’s possible. But the mission is clear: make possibility reality.

In September 2019, Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg testified before the U.S. Congress. “You must unite behind the science,” she urged. “You must take action. You must do the impossible. Because giving up can never ever be an option.”³ In four short sentences, she articulated exactly the task and challenge at hand. Project Drawdown’s mission is to help the world reach Drawdown as quickly, safely, and equitably as possible. That could also be humanity’s mission in this pivotal moment for life on Earth. The current path we are on is beyond dangerous, and it’s easy to be paralyzed by that perilousness. Yet possibility remains to change it. Together, we can build a bridge from where we are today to the world we want for ourselves, for all of life, and, most importantly, for generations yet to come.

To download *Drawdown Review*, visit drawdown.org





FARMS UNDER THREAT

The state of farmland in Washington and Oregon

Tim Copeland, Executive Director

In 2018, our friends at the American Farmland Trust (AFT) launched a study titled *Farms Under Threat: The State of America's Farmland* that identified the most productive farmland in the country and the extent to which it is being threatened by non-farm development. The study was motivated by deep concerns that the U.S. was losing important food-production lands to commercial and residential development. It noted that 11 million acres of farmland has been lost between 2001 and 2016, a rate that equals 2,000 acres per day.

This year, AFT released a companion study that looked deeper at land threats on a state by

state basis. *Farms Under Threat: The State of the States* included detailed analyses on land loss threats in Washington and Oregon.

FARMLAND CONVERSION IN THE BLUE MOUNTAIN REGION

In Southeastern Washington, the premier food-production lands are in the Palouse, the Walla Walla and Touchet (Columbia County) Valleys, and the irrigated fields of Benton, Franklin, Yakima and Grant counties. The map illustrates these areas on shades of dark green. AFT describes these areas as nationally significant farmland to identify it as the most productive, versatile, and resilient (PVR) land for sustainable food and crop production.

Photo by Bill Rodgers



Overlaying these farmlands are orange identifiers of acreages that have been converted to non-agricultural use. This conversion—largely to low-density housing—is occurring most frequently in the Tri-Cities.

The most valuable food-production areas in Northeastern Oregon are Morrow, Umatilla and Union counties. Further south, the landscape supports mostly grasslands or is not arable. At present, the threat of conversion is low except in the Hermiston area.

PROTECTING FARMLAND

AFT has identified six factors that can slow or stop the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use:

- **Land-use planning policies** that manage growth and stabilize the land base.
- **Purchase of agricultural conservation easement (PACE) programs** permanently protect working farmland and ranchland.
- **Property tax relief** for agricultural land that improves farm and ranch profitability.
- **State leasing programs** that make state-owned land available to farmers and ranchers.
- **Agricultural district programs** that encourage landowners to form areas to protect farmland.
- **Farm Link programs** that connect land seekers with landowners who want their land to stay in agriculture.

New Jersey ranks at the top of the farmland protection overall scorecard. Arkansas is dead last. Washington and Oregon are in the top quartile tied at 9th place.

Land use planning

Oregon ranks number 1 in the nation for its land use planning laws followed by Washington at number 2.

Purchase of conservation easements (PACE)

Conversely, neither Washington nor Oregon score well for conservation easements. Both fall in the lowest quartile with ranks of 25 and 29 respectively out of 32. These low rankings reflect very limited state funding for conservation easements. On a per-capita basis, many states appropriate double or triple the amount of easement funding that's provided in the Pacific Northwest. Oregon's per-capita easement funding rate is one of the lowest in the nation.

This is a strong argument for expanding federal funding of conservation easements. Presently, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, can fund only 50% of a conservation easement. Total Agricultural Conservation Easement Program - Agricultural Land Easements (ACEP-ALE) easement funding nationwide is limited to \$450 million per year. Proposals to increase the funding amounts to 75% and tripling the overall funding to \$1.2 billion per year have been made by Oregon U.S. Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley.

Property tax relief

Almost all states provide some tax relief for agricultural properties. Oregon's and Washington's relief policies for farmland are relatively robust, ranking them at number 4 and number 10 respectively nationwide.

State leasing

State leasing of farmland can make it available to a new generation of producers. Hawaii has one of the most active farmland leasing programs relative to its size. Oregon ranks number 8. Washington comes in at 14th place.

Agricultural districts and Farm Link

Both Washington and Oregon have no



Photo by Bill Rodgers

agricultural districts. Nor do they have Farm Link programs, so they score 0 in both categories.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FARMLAND PROTECTION IN THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

While Washington and Oregon score very well for their land use policies, their low levels of funding for conservation easements make them a challenging environment for our traditional conservation work. Given the limited easement funds available, we should focus on those areas that have the most productive food-growing lands and especially those lands that are under threat of conversion.

This suggests that Walla Walla, Columbia, and Umatilla Counties should continue to be areas of strong focus.

We should also consider land protection opportunities in Benton and Franklin counties. Yakima and Grant counties should not be ignored. None of these counties have resident land trusts experienced in farmland protection.

Another important consideration is how to protect farmland in ways beyond conservation easements. Regenerative agriculture holds much promise in this area. The reversal of global warming is also critically important. In the low-rainfall environments of eastern Washington and eastern Oregon, rising average temperatures would have devastating effects on food production.

We extend our thanks to the American Farmland Trust and the NRCS for their contributions to this enormously important information.



Photo by Bob Wick,
Bureau of Land Management

THE CONSERVATION FUTURE OF THE BLUE MOUNTAIN LAND TRUST

A summary of the 2020-2024 Conservation Plan

Amanda Martino, Conservation Director

The Blue Mountain Land Trust recently completed Part One: Conservation Easements of our 2020-2024 Conservation Plan. This plan will guide the Land Trust's work for the next five years by identifying important conservation resources and critical landscapes. As we considered our growing service area, that now includes four counties in southeastern Washington and seven counties in eastern Oregon, we knew our goals needed to be as big as the territory we serve.

Our plan identifies five conservation imperatives upon which we will focus our work:

1 **Climate**
Climate change mitigation requires the management of land so it absorbs atmospheric carbon dioxide and holds it in storage in the soils. We can advance using land

as carbon sinks by preventing natural carbon-storing landscapes from converting to uses that store less carbon, such as forests becoming housing developments.

2 **Soil**
Soil is one of the most important elements for plant and animal survival. By permanently protecting land with high-quality soils, we can protect land critical for food production and plant and animal habitat. Managing these lands for the improvement of soil health is an important stewardship goal.

3 **Food**
Protecting our region's farms and ranches through conservation easements is key to contributing to the preservation of our local, regional and national food systems and agricultural economies.

4 Water
As populations grow and our climate changes, water for humans, fish and wildlife, plant life, livestock and agriculture is rapidly becoming a scarce resource. Through the use of conservation easements, Blue Mountain Land Trust can preserve and enhance the quantity and quality of water resources in our region.

5 Species
The Blue Mountains are home to a wide variety of plant and animal life. Preserving and enhancing habitat, migratory

corridors, and breeding and spawning grounds for our region's species is a top priority for the diversity of life in our region.

To complete this Conservation Plan, our staff and FloAnalytics developed maps of areas of high conservation value in our service region. These maps are included in the Conservation Plan document you can download at www.bmlt.org. We encourage you to learn more about the Blue Mountains' resources and our work toward preserving and enhancing these natural and working systems.



Celebrate the Blues

Thursday, October 29, 2020

6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

bmlt.org/celebrate2020

Please join us for an evening of good friends and plenty of fun. . . online! We'll share this year's conservation, education, and recreation successes, and what's to come in 2021. Together, we will celebrate the outstanding accomplishments of 2020 and the people who helped achieve them.

Register now for the event at bmlt.org/celebrate2020.

For any questions, please contact Jess Portas by phone at 509-525-3136 or email at jessica@bmlt.org. We hope you will join us and be part of the celebration!



Photo by Sarah Cohn

GROWING A KNOWLEDGE OF THE LAND

Bringing children together to explore the farm

Emily Asmus, Welcome Table Farm

“The outdoors is not closed” has become something of an anthem for adults feeling closed in by COVID restrictions. We went about making this true for children this summer at “Farm Kids.” For three weeks, children in small groups of five to seven kids led by two Whitman College students had the opportunity to explore the wild and cultivated spaces of Welcome Table Farm.

Highlights included making bouquets and garlands during “Florabundance” week. Catching cabbage looper moths, identifying scat with the “Who Pooped This?” displays, and building critter homes were favorite activities during the “Who Lives Here?” week. Down in the field, picking beans and collecting potatoes during “Growing the Food We Eat” week delighted our inspiring farmers.

Every day ended with playtime in Yellowhawk Creek. Under the shade of the big willows, alders, and cottonwoods, the children created forts from branches and debris left by the flood, stacked rocks to form new wading pools, watched dragon and damselflies, and splashed their friends. They would emerge reluctantly, cool, and happy.

Many of these children had not left their family circles in nearly five months. One dad said after forgetting the backpack and lunch on the first day, “We’re out of practice! We haven’t gone anywhere since March.”

Bringing children together during the COVID pandemic was a stretch for all of us. As organizers, we emphasized small groups, spacing outside, lots of handwashing, and hand sanitizer. The families of participants should be commended for the intention and practice of mask-wearing that preceded camp attendance. Kids kept masks on and had a good time for five hours a day.

With no school, parents working from home, and limited face-to-face social time with peers, time outside is critical for our children. Getting outside doesn’t have to mean extended backpacking or raft adventures. Our backyards, parks, fields, and farms contain whole worlds within. Hopefully, after their time at Welcome Table Farm, the 2020 campers will engage with the insects, gardens, and waterways in their neighborhoods on a daily basis in the Walla Walla Valley. Or quite possibly, a good number of these campers might keep showing up at the farm until I offer them jobs as farmhands.



Opposite photo by Emil Doyle, Glacier fleabane (*Erigeron glacialis*)
Top photo by Emil Doyle, Thick-stemmed aster (*Eurybia integrifolia*)

THE LAST ASTER

Spring blooms aren't the only beauties in the Blues

Emil Doyle, Volunteer and Botany in the Blues Presenter

Most people generally do **not** take to the mountains from mid-September through the onset of the first snowfalls to look at plants, since the big wildflower and pollinator shows have long passed. During this period, up on 5,500-foot Sawtooth Ridge, one of the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness Areas north-south running crests, winter comes early and with a big, cold, windy punch. Prior to that, its visitors are more likely to be the horse-pack hunters taking advantage of the various game seasons for as long as there are unused tags and access remains feasible.

However, for those of us afflicted with a hunter's passion for exploring plants, we get out our orange knit caps and head for the trails in search of that "last of the last" asters – you know, the ones that can stun us as we round a corner, making us say out loud "what are you still doing here?"

Most of those daisy-like plants that we colloquially refer to as "asters" are more technically referred to today as the "fleabanes" and are among the latest bloomers you are likely to encounter in our northern Blue Mountains. Up on Sawtooth, you might still find either **glacier fleabane** (*Erigeron glacialis*) or **thick-stemmed aster** (*Eurybia integrifolia*), holding out in a sheltered microhabitat. These iconic purple and yellow flowers are actually two types of flowers arranged on a platform: the yellow disc florets packed in the center, with the purple petal-like ray florets ringing the circumference. The species differ slightly in foliage, but the latter stands out with reddish, sticky stems, right up to the base of the flower heads, due to thousands of glandular-tipped hairs that may play a role in discouraging herbivores. For autumn plant seekers such as myself, the "last" aster is sometimes all that is needed to put the outdoor field season to bed, and initiate the

indoor, wintertime ‘field season’, where I catch up on my reading, studying and photo-editing.

But there is more good news, more treasures to find during this border season. Some of our prettiest “wildflowers” have evergreen leaves, which will endure many feet of snowpack, and still be there the instant that it melts away in the spring.

The stems of **twinflower** (*Linnaea borealis*) have tiny, shiny opposite leaves, trailing across soil and logs on forest edges. The fleshy, toothed leaves of **pipsissewa**, (*Chimaphila umbellata*) and the plant’s persistent flower stems now bearing 5-part seed capsules, are sheltered at the base of conifers where they are best able to associate with soil fungi. The orchid **rattlesnake-plantain** (*Goodyera oblongifolia*), with its fleshy, toothed leaves, each with a central white stripe, hug shady forest soils in a star pattern. Twinflower and

pipsissewa are actually shrubs (or ‘sub-shrubs’) with woody stems. All three, including the rattlesnake-plantain orchid, have various distributions throughout parts of the northern hemisphere, adding for this plant hunter a sense of connectedness to our backyard and those of others in farther away lands.

Lastly, there is a ‘trickster’ you should know about. **Pearly everlasting** (*Anaphalis margaritaceae*), another member of the aster family with narrow, woolly leaves, has what appears to be white petals, but which are actually persistent, modified papery leaves called “bracts,” which surround the yellow central disc florets.

This year has been unusual in so many ways, for all of us, but take stock that spring will arrive again, and with it, all of nature’s displays to delight in once more.

Below left photo by Emile, Doyle, Twinflower (*Linnaea borealis*)
Below right photo by Emile Doyle, Pipsissewa (*Chimaphila umbellata*)



Top photo by Emile Doyle, Rattlesnake-plantain (*Goodyera oblongifolia*)
Bottom photo by Emile, Doyle, Pearly everlasting (*Anaphalis margaritaceae*)





A CALL FOR CELEBRATION

Congress passes a landmark bill that doubles conservation funding nationwide and helps protect thousands of acres in Oregon and Washington.

Alexandra James, Conservation Specialist

This year has brought many challenges associated with the pandemic along with much needed attention to the social inequity crisis affecting millions of Americans. As we continue to adapt to these challenges, we must call on our elected officials to foster unity through bipartisan legislation that uplifts the livelihood of every American.

This year American communities asked Congress to pass the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA), a landmark piece of legislation that provides a targeted solution to maintain and enhance our national parks and public lands and that includes permanent, dedicated funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).

And, they did.

With historic, bipartisan support, the Senate (S.B. 3422) and House of Representatives (H.R. 7092) passed their respective bills in support of the GAOA on June 17 and July 22, respectively. The bill was signed into law by President Trump on August 4. The passage of the Great American Outdoors Act marks a

new era for conservation that will benefit every single American.

The act creates two critical funding sources:

1. The act will direct non-taxpayer funds already being deposited in the Land and Water Conservation Fund to be spent only and fully on their intended purpose. The fund was first passed by Congress in 1965 to reinvest a portion of the proceeds from offshore oil and gas drilling into conservation of our nation's natural, recreational and cultural resources. This fund quickly became the nation's most important tool for conservation and public recreation access. However, since its inception, LWCF has seen billions of dollars diverted to other uses over the life of the program. The GAOA ensures these funds will go towards their intended conservation purposes with specific language that protects congressional oversight of LWCF spending through the appropriations process. The fund is set to receive \$900 million annually.

2. The act will establish the National Parks and Public Lands Legacy Fund, which will direct up to \$9.5 billion in non-taxpayer monies over five years to address priority repairs in national parks and on other public lands. Deteriorating infrastructure, exacerbated by increasing visitation pressures and inconsistent annual funding, has led to a \$12 billion backlog in repair needs in America's national parks, including a \$127 million backlog in Oregon and a \$507 million backlog in Washington. The newly established fund will generate equitable access to our most treasured lands for generations to come.

By creating these new sources of funds, the GAOA will secure the future of America's public lands legacy, protect visitor safety and recreation access, and sustain thriving local communities. America's outdoor recreation economy supports over five million jobs, contributes \$778 billion in annual economic output, and serves as the lifeblood for countless communities across the country – including our rural communities across the Blue Mountain region. Permanent funding for the LWCF will ensure that these economic benefits reach all communities across both states.

Blue Mountain Land Trust championed the passage of the GAOA because of its significant support for sustaining the natural

resources across the Blue Mountain region and for its broad conservation implications for land trusts across the nation. The LWCF and the programs it supports help regional land trusts, like the Blue Mountain Land Trust and their partners, secure vital conservation victories. Such victories invest resources in local communities and provide public benefits that extend far beyond recreational enjoyment – think fresh air, clean water, healthy foods, and sustainable livelihoods.

We express our gratitude to Senators Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Patty Murray (D-WA), Jeff Merkley (D-OR) and Ron Wyden (D-OR) for their leadership and enduring support for the Act. We also thank Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA-5) and Representative Greg Walden (R-OR-2) for their support in a clean passage of the House Bill. With bipartisan support and President Trump's signature, the vision of the LWCF has at last been realized.

In conclusion, we extend our deepest gratitude to the people who really drove this legislation: people like you who love and depend on our natural and working lands.

For more information on the Act and its benefits, visit lwcfcoalition.com.

Photo by Bill Rodgers



Photo by Chris Lueck

PUTTING TRASH IN ITS PLACE

Blues Crew adds road cleanup to its endeavors

Nancy Kress, Volunteer

Turning off Foster Road, we hit Reser Road on our bicycles and enjoyed cruising down the downhill stretch towards town through the lush rolling farmland and twists of that Le Mans style road. For a few minutes, we stopped at the “party place” -- a wide spot in the road that had clearly earned its nickname -- for a visit before we continued onto the end of our ride. Standing there with our bikes, we commented on the mess of trash around us. Why do people intentionally litter the area that they come out to enjoy?

In 1960, “Suzy Spotless” launched an anti-litter campaign, which trained many of us to use trash cans. A young girl encouraged her father to Keep America Beautiful by using trash cans for every bit of litter instead of dropping it on the road, sidewalk, or in the park. A few years later, First Lady, Lady Bird Johnson, launched a national beautification campaign that had wide-reaching influence. What has happened in the 60 years since then to educate the public that we owe it to our country and ourselves to help Keep America beautiful?

Our area is more than a quaint downtown and surrounding wineries. It’s a valley of landscapes rich with recreational opportunities and visual beauty, but ugly litter mars the roadsides and pollutes the view. Littering says a lot about a person but allowing the litter to stay where it is also says something about us. The one who tosses cans, bottles, sacks, and garbage out a car window may be villain number one. Still, those of us who pass by and recognize how ugly it is but do nothing to undo the eyesore are also complicit in the existing pollution.

Thanks to the ambitious efforts of the Blue Mountain Land Trust and its enthusiastic board chair, Linda Herbert, change has arrived!

The Land Trust recently formed a new arm of its Blues Crew, the Road Patrol, that focuses attention on county roads around the valley popular with recreationists. Volunteers are organized by BMLT to spend time on these roads picking up litter section by section. On the day I volunteered, we worked on

cleaning up Reser Road, the road I had most recently biked. At a brief meeting before the pickup, each volunteer received the necessary equipment and directions on our assigned road segments. Once at our designated one-half mile section, we picked up the trash, moving down one side of the road and back up the other, always facing oncoming traffic. When I was out, several cars stopped, and the drivers thanked me for cleaning up what they may have been driving past for months. Not surprisingly, it did not take long to fill two garbage sacks. Because Walla Walla County is a partner with BMLT on this project, we each left our filled bags beside the roadway for the County to pick up and dispose.

Beautification. Recreation. Pollution. They all affect our well-being and are part of the tangle

of influences we absorb. As a cyclist, walker, runner, or someone simply driving around the valley, you may feel the enhanced beauty of the environment when you are not disturbed by the annoyance of trash on the roadside. If you are one of the dozens of cyclists who cruise the county roads, why not volunteer a couple of hours to beautify your routes by helping the Road Patrol pick up the litter?

Hopefully, litterers will begin to recognize that a clean environment feels better to them, and they may start to use a trash can instead of an open car window. Until then, Road Patrol will continue to pick up the roadsides instead of being complicit in the pollution by ignoring eyesores.

Photo by Linda Herbert





Opposite photo by Bill Rodgers

THE BLUES CREW TACKLES UMATILLA NATIONAL FOREST'S TRAILS

The Crew has its sights set on clean, enjoyable trails for all

Beka Compton, Reprint from Waitsburg Times

Clearing brush and fallen trees is a task that makes most people shake their heads. For Blues Crew volunteers, though, it's an excuse to head to the mountains and explore the Umatilla National Forest while making the trails enjoyable for all.

The Blues Crew came to be in 2018 after an outdoor recreation initiative went through at the Blue Mountain Land Trust (BMLT). Coordinator Greg Brown said he thought about getting a group together to clear already-established trails from winter overgrowth and do minor repairs like fixing small washouts

throughout the trail system of the Umatilla National Forest.

"I thought, 'what can we do to participate?'" Brown said. "I love the trails, I love to go out on them, but a lot of the trails need help."

The group is currently in its third season, but the interest within the communities has exploded.

"We have a core group of about 30 people who are very passionate about the trails and want to participate in every project," Brown said. "But

our mailing list covers nearly 300 people that are interested in the work parties."

The extensive volunteer list has people from all walks of life. Some members are hobby hikers who have never used the tools or equipment before. Still, others, like Kyle McFarley of Walla Walla, are passionate about outdoor recreation and recognize the potential positives from building and maintaining trail systems around the area and the resulting trail tourism.

"Trail work is fun," McFarley said. "The people we work with are good people. This is a great way for me to take a percentage of my energy and disperse it amongst a few different projects."

McFarley said he got involved after spending time on various outdoor recreation boards in Walla Walla, including the Community Council Implementation Task Force (ITF) and YMCA Outdoor Recreation programs.

"Getting involved with the Blues Crew has given me the opportunity to transition from an outdoor consumer to an outdoor producer," he said. "I am making a tangible difference."

McFarley also recognizes the economic impact that clean, accessible trail systems and solid outdoor recreation programs can have. From birdwatching or nature viewing to snowshoeing or Nordic and cross-country skiing, outdoor recreation has zero limits.

"Nature viewing, like bird watching, has potential to be ADA accessible," McFarley said. "You'd be amazed at the economic impact birdwatchers can have."

Strong outdoor recreation programs attract visitors who are buying pizza from local, family-owned restaurants or are visiting area wineries, renting out area Airbnb's, and more.

Based on his observations, McFarley said he foresees a significant boost in trail and outdoor tourism in our area, and he is excited to play a part in building and repairing attractive trail systems.

Trail work isn't just for the guys. Blues Crew Volunteer Eileen Settle, of Walla Walla, was also looking for a way to discover trails in the Umatilla National Forest when she discovered the Blues Crew.

"I saw a work party announcement to do some trail maintenance, and I thought 'these people probably know where the trails are, it's probably a good place to start,'" Settle said. "So, I signed up for the work party and ended up meeting some incredible people, and just had a really good time. I enjoyed being out there and doing the work."

Settle, who moved to the area twelve years ago, was invited to be a part of the Blues Crew planning committee after participating in several work parties. She also serves as a trail leader and has attended several training sessions to help her safely lead parties through the wilderness.

"At the end of the day, to look back and see what you've done, and how much better the trail looks is very rewarding," Settle said. "Plus, we are out in the fresh air and getting some great exercise." The progress has been great, and Settle said the most rewarding part of being a Blues Crew volunteer is the friendships she has made.

Even Land Trust President Linda Herbert, originally from Waitsburg, hits the trails with the Crew. One of the original volunteers, Herbert says she really enjoys the camaraderie and community that she has experienced while cleaning up the trails, and she especially values the relationship with the Forest Service.

“Right off the bat, we approached the Forest Service and said ‘hey, we’d like to do trails,’” Herbert said. “And they’re going ‘yeah, sure, here’s the rules and you have to do this, this, and this.’”

The Blues Crew was not the first group to step up and want to clean up the trails. Still, the Crew has kept things going for three seasons, and they are implementing protocols, training, and more, building a safe, sustainable group that has ‘totally exceeded’ expectations.

Herbert said that their volunteers all bring something special to the group, but a couple of Crew volunteers, Barbara Hetrick and Tim Sampson have offered an unusually valuable tool for the crew: a team of mules to use for packing heavy objects.

“We have used the mules once, so far,” Herbert said. “To haul rock that was needed to rebuild a trail.”

Sampson played a key role in remodeling the Blues Crew tool trailer, and Hetrick has been a huge help with the paperwork side of things.

The Blues Crew hasn’t escaped the effects of COVID-19, even being an outdoor volunteer group. Settle estimated that without the pandemic, they would already have thousands of volunteer hours on the books. Work parties are limited to small groups of five, which means the Crew is having to turn volunteers away. The Buck Mountains trail work party, for example, filled its spots in less than two hours.

The Crew has work parties planned for various trails throughout the Umatilla National Forest.

Photo by Darby Williams



SECRET LIFE OF THE FOREST: THE NORTHERN BLUE MOUNTAINS

Welcome to the online premiere of Blue Mountain Television’s **Secret Life of the Forest: The Northern Blue Mountains** created by writer/narrator Mike Denny and editor/photographer Daniel Biggs. This 13-part series explores the natural history of the northern Blue Mountains of Southeastern Washington and Northeastern Oregon.

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Blue Mountain Land Trust is a nonprofit organization that collaborates with communities and landowners to conserve the scenic, natural, and working lands that characterize the Blue Mountain region.

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