



Working Forest Conservation Easements and Climate Adaptation



A POWERFUL TOOL TO HELP FOREST LANDOWNERS

Wildlife need a network of conserved lands to help them adapt to climate change.

According to the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, one the most important things we can do to help fish, wildlife and plants adapt to changing climate is to conserve the range of habitats they depend on.

And, scientists tell us, it's not only the habitats, it is the scale and the connections among them across the landscape that is important. Large blocks of natural lands that are unbroken with development are essential to provide options for wildlife—including pathways for migration and strongholds for refuge.

It's smart to conserve already resilient areas, like the Klamath Cascade

Where should we focus our scarce resources to make a difference? Of particular importance are regions where habitats are already very diverse and show resilience to the impacts of climate change, such as California's Klamath-Cascade region. Here, some of the most biodiverse forests in the world mingle with meadows, lakes and alpine tundra in an almost unbroken expanse of 10 million acres. This region arcs across northern California, in a patchwork of public and private forestlands, connecting the northern Sierra through the Cascades to the Klamath mountains.

Conserving privately owned forests is key

The privately owned forests that make up half of this region are most at risk of being broken up and developed -- especially as California's population grows. If these forests and their habitats are damaged and lost, the public forests become disconnected and lose value, too. Conservation of key private forests can make an out-size difference if they can connect and enhance large blocks of public lands.

Even in the relatively rural Klamath-Cascade, forestland is increasingly being split into small parcels and sold for rural retreats and retirement homes. Paved roads, new buildings, fencing, water diversions and domestic animals degrade the natural habitats, create new barriers to movement and limit options for wildlife. Rural development also threatens the forest products economy that is the mainstay of regional employment.

Working Forest Conservation Easements:

- 1 Knit together the forest landscape across public and private boundaries.
- 2 Keep working forests as forests while still allowing timber harvests and other uses.
- 3 Protect water supplies and wildlife habitat
- 4 Compensate landowners for their conservation commitment.



Working Forest Conservation Easements

Working Forest Conservation Easements (WFCEs) are a tool that can be used to keep privately owned forests as forests, managed for wildlife and for a sustainable economy. These voluntary, lasting agreements have the power to permanently knit the forest landscape together across public and private boundaries in a way that we, and wildlife, can depend on.

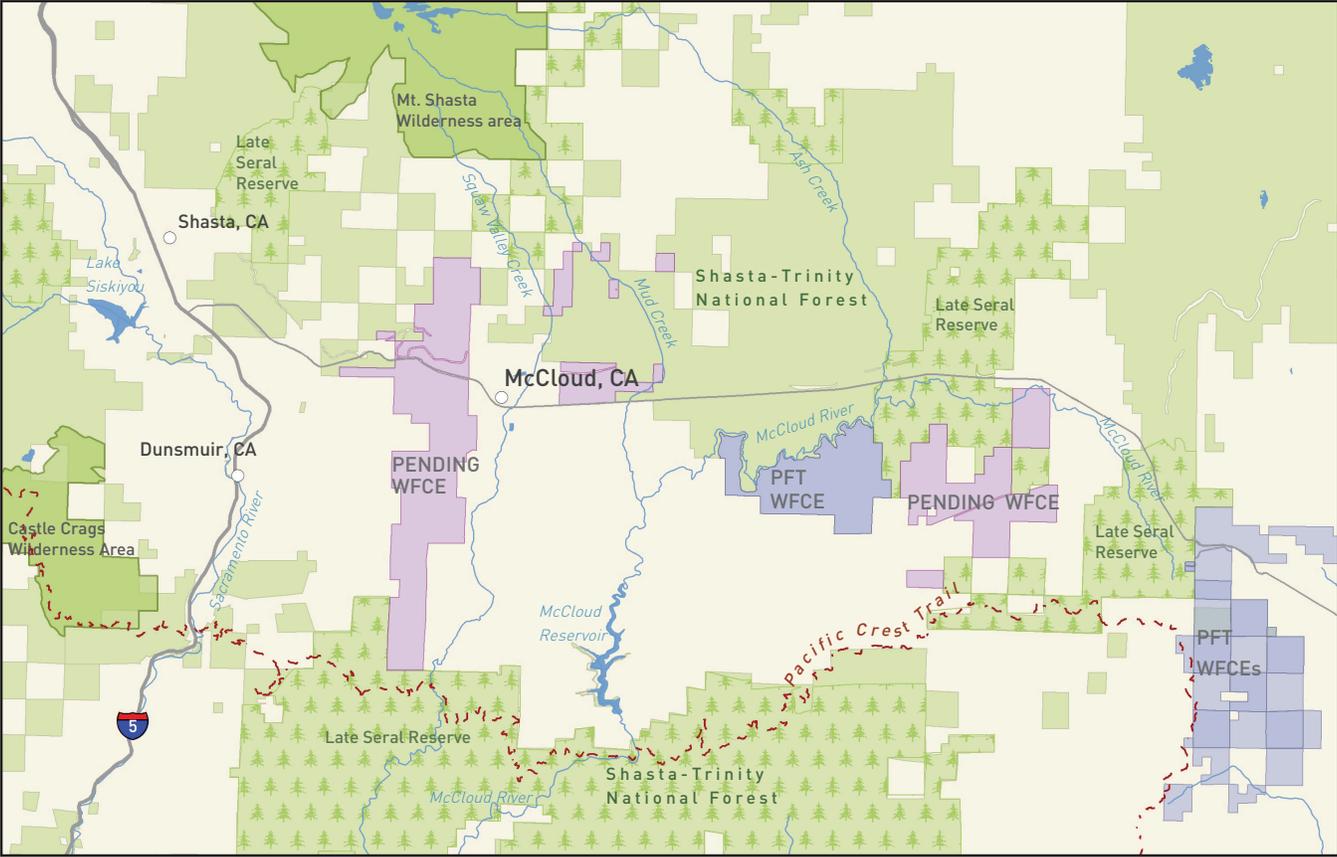
A Working Forest Conservation Easements (WFCE) is an agreement between a forest owner and a non-profit conservation organization (land trust) or government agency. The landowner who grants a WFCE is compensated for their conservation commitment. Once the easement is in place, it is binding on all future owners of the property. The land stays in private ownership and productive use, subject to the WFCE limits. The WFCE terms guide forest management

and prevent damaging land uses better supporting the needs of fish, wildlife, and plants in changing times.

How WFCEs can aid wildlife

Each WFCE is site specific and based on the characteristics of the property and the goals of the project. There are four main ways WFCEs can be designed to achieve climate adaptation goals:

- Assure the property stays in one piece and isn't converted from its natural condition to other uses. Prevent mining and other damaging land uses.
- Identify and protect rare, fragile or otherwise important habitat types, such as riparian areas, wet meadows, aspen groves or oak stands. Find and conserve cold springs and watercourses. Promote adaptive management to help sustain these habitats.



PFT IS PARTNERING WITH PRIVATE FOREST OWNERS TO USE WFCEs TO CREATE KEY LINKS AMONG PUBLIC LANDS AROUND THE STRATEGIC MT. SHASTA CROSS-ROADS REGION. THIS INTERCONNECTED NETWORK OF CONSERVED FORESTS—OR SUPER WILD-WAY—WILL AID CREATURES LOOKING FOR SAFE HAVEN FROM CLIMATE STRESS.

A POWERFUL TOOL TO HELP FOREST LANDOWNERS



- Where the property is managed for commercial forest products, assure that large diameter trees, trees with large limbs or broken tops, standing dead trees, large down logs, meadows or open shrubby patches and similar forest features are maintained or restored across the forest, over time. These are key habitat elements for wildlife.
- Limit timber harvest to sustainable levels. When logging removes less than the forest is re-growing, this allows for recovery from the impacts.

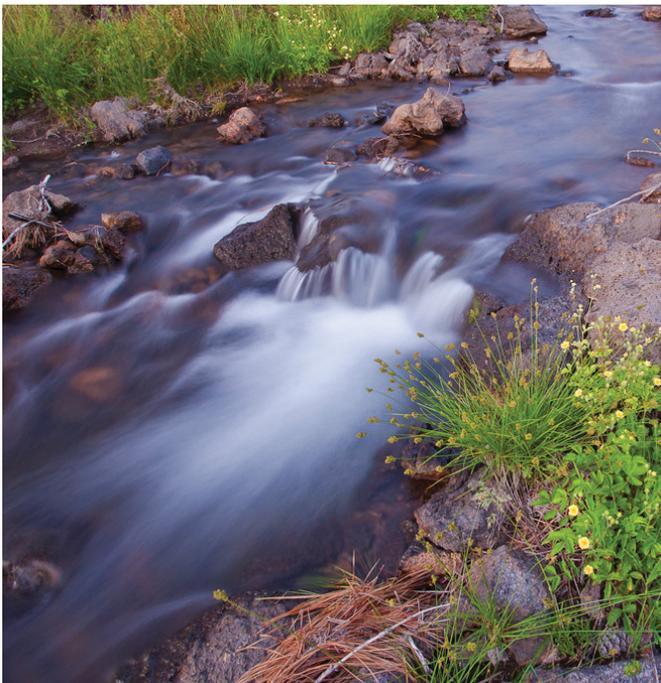
With climate changing, successful conservation requires active forest management

Working forest conservation easements recognize that forests and their habitats are in flux and likely to be more stressed in years to come. In the future, extreme weather related events like drought and wildfires will be more common in California, and probably more intense. To survive, wildlife will have to adapt to variability and uncertainty. We can give wildlife tools to withstand change—and be resilient—by ensuring tomorrow's forests are healthy, diverse and connected.

Why should you, as a landowner, consider placing a WFCE on your forest?

A WFCE protects the land you value. By placing your land under a WFCE you can set the long term goals for your property, protecting both the ecological and economic benefits that well-managed forests provide you and the public. This legacy will be invaluable to fish, wildlife and plants that need options as their habitats shift.

State and federal programs provide compensation for the commitment a WFCE represents: the economic impact of your conservation easement can be appraised and the gift of that value can reduce your income or estate taxes; sometimes easements can be purchased using special government funds. The added financial return of a WFCE can help you fund habitat enhancement or other forest stewardship needs—and can also help you achieve greater resilience yourself.



WORKING WITH WILLING LANDOWNERS, PFT IS CONNECTING LANDSCAPES IN THE MCCLOUD RIVER BASIN. MANY OF THESE FORESTS INCLUDE SPECIAL HABITATS LIKE WET MEADOWS, ASPEN, AND OAK.



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THE PRESIDIO
1001-A O'Reilly Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94129
www.PacificForest.org