



OVLC News

Dedicated to maintaining the unique qualities of the Okanogan Valley,
Okanogan Highlands and Western Ferry County

Okanogan Valley Land
Council

April 2010

eNewsletter

A Gathering in Seattle

Article contributed by Todd Thorn

On March 4th, the Okanogan Valley Land Council returned to Seattle following our previous gathering at Pike Place. This time around, we met in historic Pioneer Square to present the case for land and habitat conservation in the Okanogan. 52 people attended to connect with the Land Council and discuss our work in the Okanogan. With the group including Okanogan landowners and ranchers, state agency and conservation leaders, a veritable cloud of conservation dialog occurred during the time spent together! Perfect for the Rainy City.

The event provided a chance to say hi to several of our easement donors, to introduce OVLC to new acquaintances, and to share a short time together with conservation partners based “on the coast.” More friends, growing recognition and support for our mission, will result in more land conservation in Okanogan. One might imagine our landscape is forgotten by the rest of the state. It isn’t so.



Friends gather at Jones and Jones Architects to enjoy Okanogan products and discuss conservation in the Okanogan Valley. Photos contributed by Heather Findlay



A gathering like this demonstrates the great interest and support from a wider community for our vision of the Okanogan.

Many thanks to the corps that galvanized to carry out this event and especially to Grant Jones and staff at Jones & Jones Architects and Landscape Architects for hosting us in their distinctive office in Pioneer Square. A great setting for talk about open space protection across our landscape.



Music provided by Monarch Duo, Eli Rosenblatt and Cameron Peace
Photo contributed by Heather Findlay

President’s Message

Between recent snow showers, our beautiful Okanogan wildflower season has begun. Buttercups, spring beauty, balsamroot, phlox and others are splashing color across the shrub steppe. It’s a show our entire community enjoys, and an attraction drawing visitors to our area.

While admiring the bloom, I also find myself considering the open space where the flowers grow. Will this land remain open? Who owns it and what are their goals for it?

What does the community envision for our landscape? What future is desired for farm and forest lands? Will we maintain land, habitat and watershed function?

For a rural area, our community is incredibly diverse, including land and resource managers, workers in service and information sectors, conservative and liberal mindsets, Native Americans, Latinos, and others! Given this diversity, consensus regarding my landscape questions seems unlikely. But opportunities abound to work common ground together. That’s where the Land Council is focused. We collaborate with lots of different folks to protect resource and working lands.

The Okanogan Valley Land Council is a group of people dedicated to preserving the region’s rural way of life by protecting working land, open space and wildlife habitats. Through voluntary conservation easements and local community action, we’re helping to improve the economics of open space so we can all continue to enjoy the values it provides. Including the wildflowers.

-Todd Thorn

Paths Between Neighbors

The OVLC is excited to announce the start of its work on the first phase of a program called “Paths Between Neighbors.” This program, which is funded by a grant from the Brainerd Foundation, is an innovative way to get local residents who have not yet been involved in land conservation excited about and active in land preservation.

OVLC currently holds eight easements totaling 1690 acres of protected land and has 7 easements pending to protect another 1600 acres. But these easements and protected acres are scattered over a very large landscape. By identifying potential pathways between their properties, private landowners and their neighbors can work together to establish private conservation networks. These networks can help stitch together public and private land conservation.

The pilot process began by picking two pieces of land owned by friendly and committed landowners separated by a distance of about 8 miles and 2500’ elevation. The goal is to create an informal path or walking route between these two properties, creating the route through the most interesting parts of the landscape and utilizing public land or land with conser-

vation easements. Potential routes are identified using the extensive local knowledge of staff and members of OVLC and the land planning and GIS modeling capabilities of OVLC’s project partner, Jones & Jones Architects.

Jones & Jones have developed maps that identify trail corridor opportunities and potential trail partners. These maps provide an important tool for visual communication and discussion connecting individual property owners with conservation partners, forming linkages with protected public lands, and fostering a conservation community of neighbors.

Once involved, the neighbors will be invited to join an annual or biannual walk across the path. Those participating in the walk will be limited to those who live along the path, and a small number of members of OVLC. Landowners will be given a topographic map of their property for reference.

The path will not be a marked trail or constitute permission for public access. It will be the basis on which to create an informal group of neighboring landowners who will also get to know others beyond their nearest

neighbors. The walks and the discussions will be a time and a forum to share knowledge about the land and stewardship thereof, including information about open space preservation, conservation easements.

It is our hope that over time, those who live along this path will become more knowledgeable and engaged in land conservation. As some portion of the private land along the path becomes stewarded or better yet protected, the path will become not only the focus of an affinity group, but also will enhance connectivity for wildlife in the area. While there are wide swaths of public land and easement land in the Okanogan Valley for habitat, these mostly run North South and parallel to the Okanogan River. Our project will help create valuable East-West cross links within this landscape.

Beyond this “pilot effort” it is expected that this program will become an example or catalyst for development of other “Paths Between Neighbors: in the Okanogan, other areas of Washington State, and other areas in the U.S. and Canada.



OVLC Launches Volunteer Program

While volunteers have supported OVLC's work in various ways ever since the beginning of the organization more than 8 years ago, no formal program for recruiting, retaining, and recognizing volunteers has been in place until now. Recognizing the importance of volunteers to help meet the increased interest in the growing work of the OVLC, we are excited to begin building a solid volunteer program. We aim to provide good support for our volunteers, timely communication and coordination, and recognition of the time and skills that are generously donated. We believe that volunteering is a powerful way to share in the stewardship and care of the landscape we love, and we hope that our volunteers find their work satisfying and rewarding.

If you are interested in supporting the work of the organization in this way, take a look at our volunteer application and volunteer job descriptions online, or call the OVLC office at 486-2765 or 1(877)486-2765.



Spring Birding in the Okanogan Highlands

Members of the North Central Washington Audubon Chapter and other bird enthusiasts will have the opportunity May 23rd to get out into the Okanogan Highlands to enjoy the spring birds. A great opportunity not only to observe but to count various species, the route will include varied terrain and habitats. Two stops along the way will also provide opportunity to learn about recent OVLC conservation efforts in this area. Folks are invited to meet at the OVLC office in Tonasket at 7:30 a.m. to team up and get a brief orientation. Participants will need to provide their own transportation and lunch.

The OVLC office is located at 416 1/2 South Whitcomb Ave., Suite 3, which is the corner office on the back side of the green building next to Subway. The phone is (509) 486-2765.

OVLC • By the Numbers

Land protected by the efforts or assistance of Okanogan Valley Land Council

Total Easements	8	Pending Easements	7
Total Acres	1690	Pending Total Acres	1600

Fire in our Future: Sustaining Wildlands and Communities

Join the OVLC, Okanogan Conservation District and Colville Confederated Tribes on May 18, 2010 at 7pm in the Okanogan Grange Hall for a presentation by Jim Agee, Ph.D. about wildland fires and living in a fire dominant environment.

Jim Agee is Professor Emeritus of Forest Ecology at the University of Washington. He taught forest and fire ecology over a 30-year career at UW and his 1993 book, *Fire Ecology of Pacific Northwest Forests*, remains the most widely cited reference in this discipline. In Summer 2007, University of California Press published his newest book: *Steward's Fork: A Sustainable Future for the Klamath Mountains*. Professor Agee has served as a Washington trustee and as a member of the Leadership Council for The Nature Conservancy and served two terms on the Washington Natural Heritage Council. Dr. Agee retired from active teaching at the university in 2007. In 2009, he was awarded the Harold Biswell Lifetime Achievement Award in Fire Ecology and Management from the Association for Fire Ecology.



Photo by Dale Swedberg

Tuesday, May 18, 2010
7 p.m.
Okanogan Grange Hall
305 Tyee Street, Okanogan (off
2nd Ave.)
Okanogan, Washington 98840

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Donate Now!

The mission of The Okanogan Valley Land Council is to enhance wildlife, fish, agricultural, and forestry values in the Okanogan by accepting and overseeing conservation easements from private landowners, creating educational opportunities and projects for people interested in land conservation issues, and assisting private landowners who wish to preserve family land for future generations.

We are a community based, non-profit and rely on your support.

Become a volunteer or member, send this newsletter to a friend or two, make a donation, find out more or call with ideas and comments!

Contact us at PO Box 293, Tonasket, WA 98855 or (509) 486-2765.