



Community Forest Training Program: Principles & Benefits of Community Forests

November 4, 2025

Connecting everyone to the outdoors™

Welcome!

Please introduce yourself in the chat with:

- Your name
- Your city, county, or town
- Your organization
- What drives your interest in community forests?



Agenda

- Program Overview & Goals
- Principles & Benefits of Community Forests
- Framework for Success
- Case Study: Mt. Adams Resource Stewards
- Reflection Exercise & Discussion
- Next Steps



Trust for Public Land is a national nonprofit, working to create parks and protect land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come.

**We believe in
OUTSIDE FOR ALL**



Community is at the center of all we do.

Communities that place a high value on outdoor access for all are



HEALTHIER



MORE RESILIENT



MORE EQUITABLE



Community Forests

A path to prosperity and connection



Connecting everyone to the outdoors™

U.S. Forest Service Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program

The Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program (Community Forest Program) offers a unique opportunity for communities to acquire and conserve forests that:

- provide public access and recreational opportunities;
- protect vital water supplies and wildlife habitat;
- serve as demonstration sites for private forest landowners; and
- provide economic benefits from timber and non-timber products.



Our Goals

By the end of this program, you will...

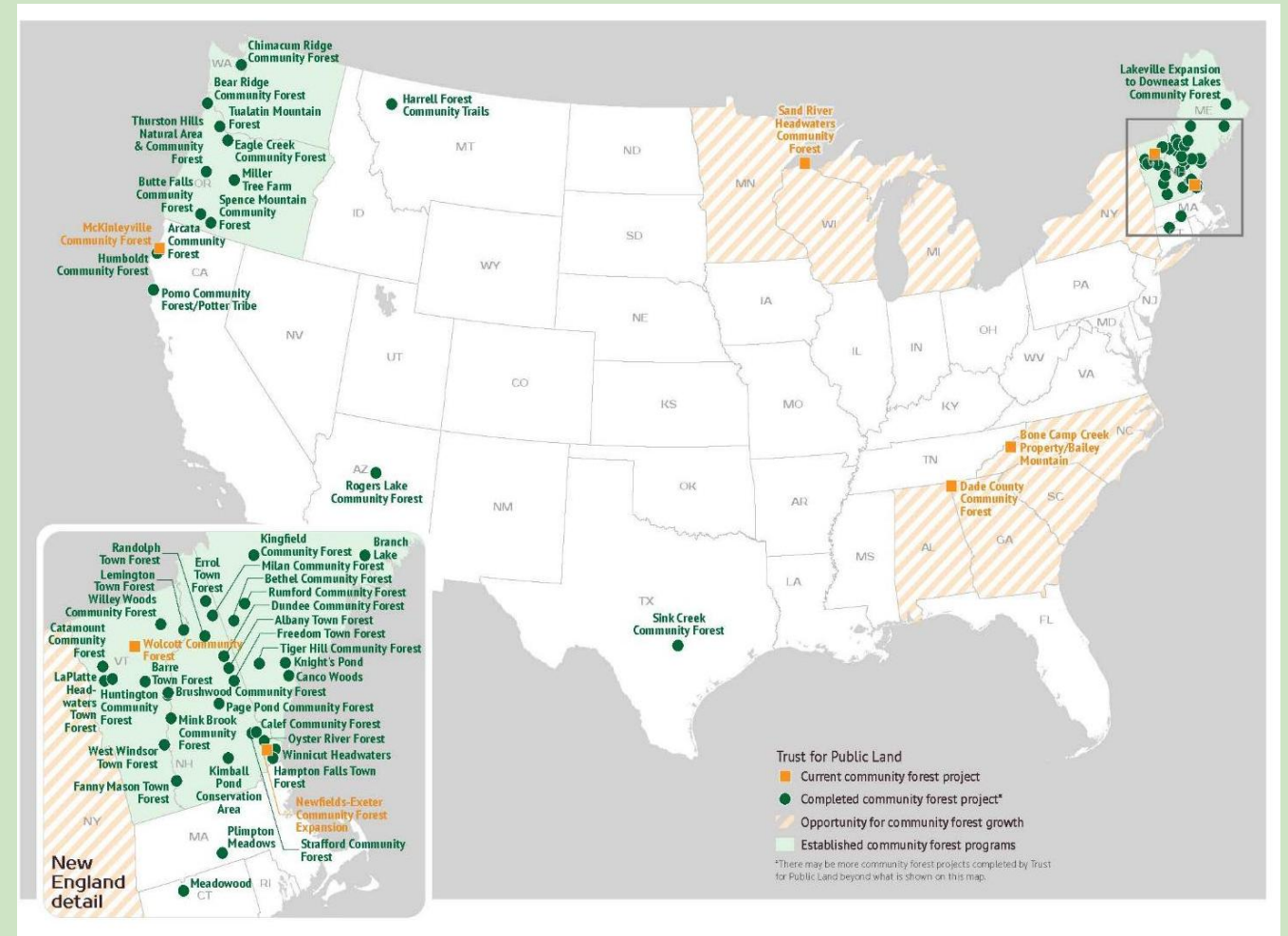
1. Understand the **key principles and strategies** for successful creation of a community forest.
2. Recognize the **role of community and other stakeholders** in creating, governing, and sustaining a community forest.
3. Have a **roadmap for implementation** of a community forest in your own community, including funding and technical assistance opportunities.



Why Community Forests?

Community forests...

- Provide **employment** and **economic development** opportunities
- Provide **outdoor recreation** opportunities and **attract visitors**
- **Reinvest revenues** back into the community
- Raise nearby **property values**
- Provide key **ecosystem services**
- & more!



Community Forest Training Program: Series Overview

5-month, virtual workshop series designed to provide land managers with the **strategies, skills, and resources** needed to create and sustain community forests.

Session Dates:

- November 4: Principles & Benefits of Community Forests
- December 2: Governance, Ownership, and Funding
- January 6: Community Engagement and Visioning
- February 3: Management and Stewardship
- March 3: Project Implementation





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PUBLIC
LAND®

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J.T. Horn
Senior Director,
National Trails Initiative



Defining Community Forests

What makes a community forest different than other forms of conservation land?

1. Community ownership
2. Community participation in management
3. Benefits flow back to the community
4. Permanent protection

Defining Community Forests

What makes a community forest different than other forms of conservation land?

1. Community ownership

Municipal or county ownership, land trust NGO ownership

2. Community participation in management

Stakeholder committees, governmental commissions, facilitated public meetings, town votes, etc.

3. Benefits flow back to the community

Community benefits tied to community priorities: economic (timber or drinking water), social (recreational access or outdoor education), ecological (wildlife corridors or wetlands)

4. Permanent protection

Conservation easement, deed restrictions, or grant agreements

Benefits of Community Forests

For the forest...

- Local stable ownership
- Long-term sustainable stewardship
- Habitat protection and connectivity
- Water quality protection
- Slowing fragmentation
- Conserved forever

For the community...

- Open access & recreation
- Environmental wellbeing
 - Wildfire resilience
 - Drinking water protection
 - Flood mitigation
- Economic vitality
 - Recreation
 - Tourism
 - Timber
- Preserve local character
- Build community
- Outdoor classroom
- Improve public health

Community Forest vs. Other Conservation Models

Federal Lands and State Lands:

- Decision making is vested in leaders who may not be connected to local communities.
- Federal or state approvals can slow community driven initiatives like trail building or events like trail races
- Acquisition limitations dictated by Congress or state legislatures (proclamation boundary)

Conservation Easements:

- Retain the benefit flow to a private party landowner (i.e. timber revenues to a timber company)
- Often do not include recreational access

Land Trust Ownership:

- Vests decision making with a private board of directors
- Benefit flows retained by a private entity
- Land trusts can own community forests if they open up decision making and share benefit flows

Setting the Table for Success

- ❑ **Be intentional about how you engage citizens and experts.** Community forests require a participatory process that's different from a traditional land protection process. The more you're intentional about inviting people in and blending community input with rigorous expertise, the better result you will get.
- ❑ **Expect a longer timeline.** These projects do not happen fast – if you've never been through the process, the idea that it could take 18-36 months might seem surprising.
- ❑ **Pick a compelling property.** The land should have unique value to the people that live in that place. It's one of the ways you get people to show up and go through a longer process.
- ❑ **You don't need a piece of land to start this process.** Know that your starting point can be different depending on where your community is.
- ❑ **Identify a local champion.** Every project needs someone or some group of people that live in the community and have this as their priority. Outside orgs can help with the real estate piece, but longevity and long-term success requires sustained community leadership.
- ❑ **Establish a mechanism for effective community leadership.** This process can't be owned or led by a municipal agency or professionalized staff alone. Community members must have a voice and authority in the process. A committee or other volunteer board that fits within your municipal structure is key.

Pause & Reflect

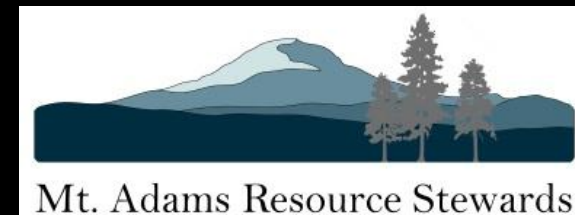
What are your community's greatest needs?
Which needs can community forests help you meet?

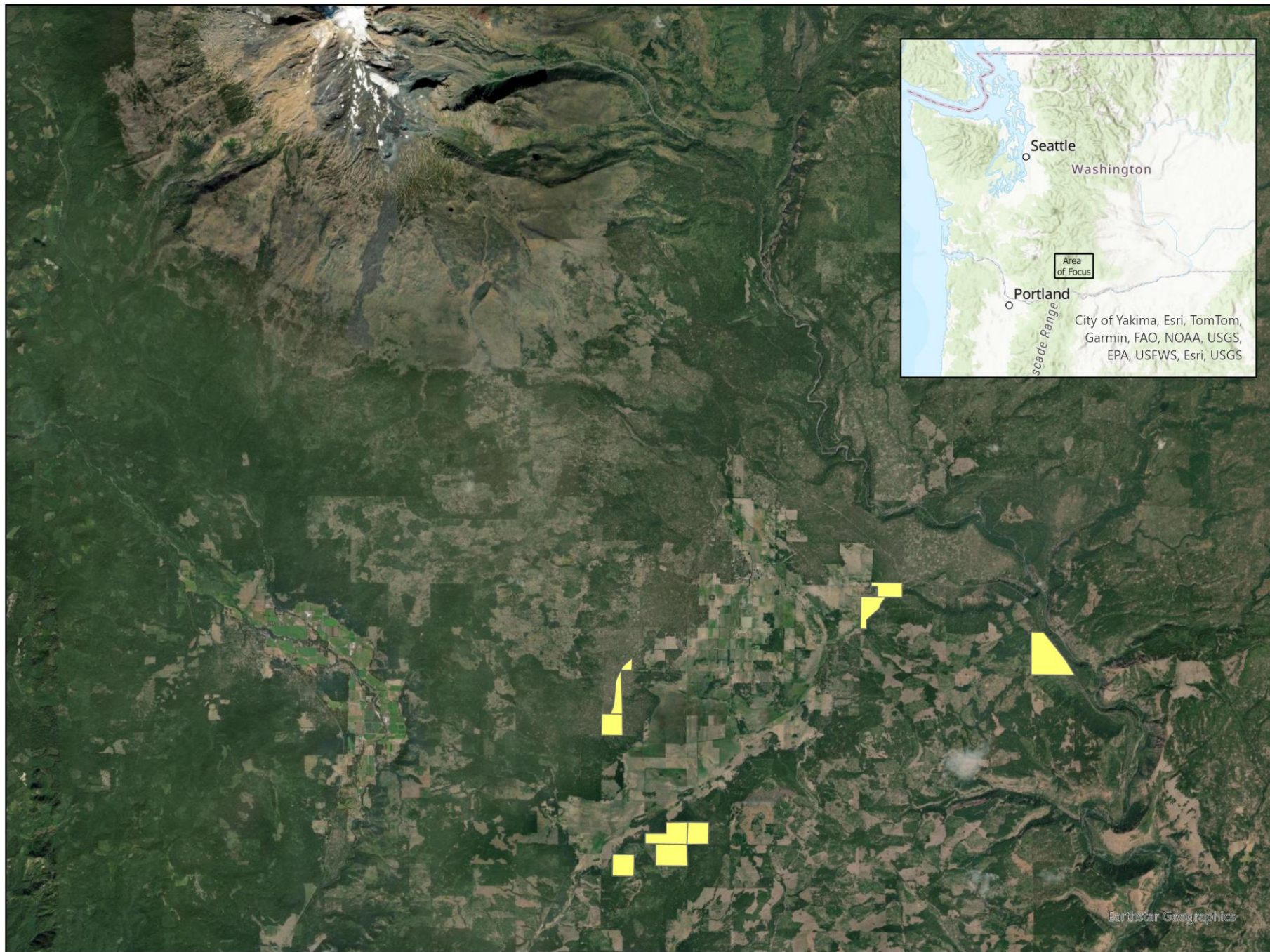


The Mt. Adams Community Forest Case Study



Jay McLaughlin, Executive Director
Mt. Adams Resource Stewards





Mount Adams Community Forest, Washington

Forest Management Context

RX Fire Lumin WX Billing IQS Felling Fire protection distr... Purchases / Stores Documents

Google Earth Engine Platform Datasets Noncommercial Commercial Timelapse In Earth Case Studies FAQ Sign Up

61.09757, -147.05437

Private Industrial Forest

Glenwood

Trout Lake

Gifford Pinchot National Forest

Private Industrial Forest

Trout Lake Glenwood

Google Map Data Terms of Use

1984

2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 1985 1986 1987 1988 1989 1990 1991 0.5x

A screenshot of the Google Earth Engine web interface. The main view is a satellite image of a forested area. Several labels are overlaid on the map: "Private Industrial Forest" in the upper center, "Glenwood" to its right, "Trout Lake" below "Private Industrial Forest", and "Gifford Pinchot National Forest" on the left. A search bar at the top left shows the coordinates "61.09757, -147.05437". At the bottom, a timeline slider is visible, with the year "1984" selected and highlighted in blue. Other years shown include 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, and 1991. A "0.5x" zoom level is indicated on the right side of the timeline. In the top right corner, there is a small inset map showing the location of the main view within a larger region, with labels for "Trout Lake" and "Glenwood". The Google Earth Engine logo and navigation links are visible at the top.



The background of the entire image is a large, intense fire with bright orange and yellow flames. In the upper left, a helicopter is silhouetted against the fire, dropping a firebomb that is falling towards the bottom center. The overall tone is dramatic and urgent.

A LANDMARK STORIES DOCUMENTARY

THE WEST IS BURNING

Community-based forestry

- “Community-based forestry builds on the assumption that people closest to and most dependent on forest resources are competent and knowledgeable about forest and resource management, and have a right and responsibility to manage forests carefully. As forest resources become local assets...rural communities increase their resilience and their capacity to add value, improve livelihoods, and retain a sense of belonging with the land.”
- -Growth Rings: Communities and Trees by The Aspen Institute

Mt. Adams Resource Stewards

- 501(c)(3) non-profit organization established in 2004
- Mission: “Working to enhance the resilience of forests and communities through stewardship, collaboration, and innovation.”
- Governed by a nine member board that reside in our operating area
- 2025: 32 staff (9 full-time staff, 23 seasonals)



Mt. Adams Resource Stewards



Mt. Adams
Community
Forest

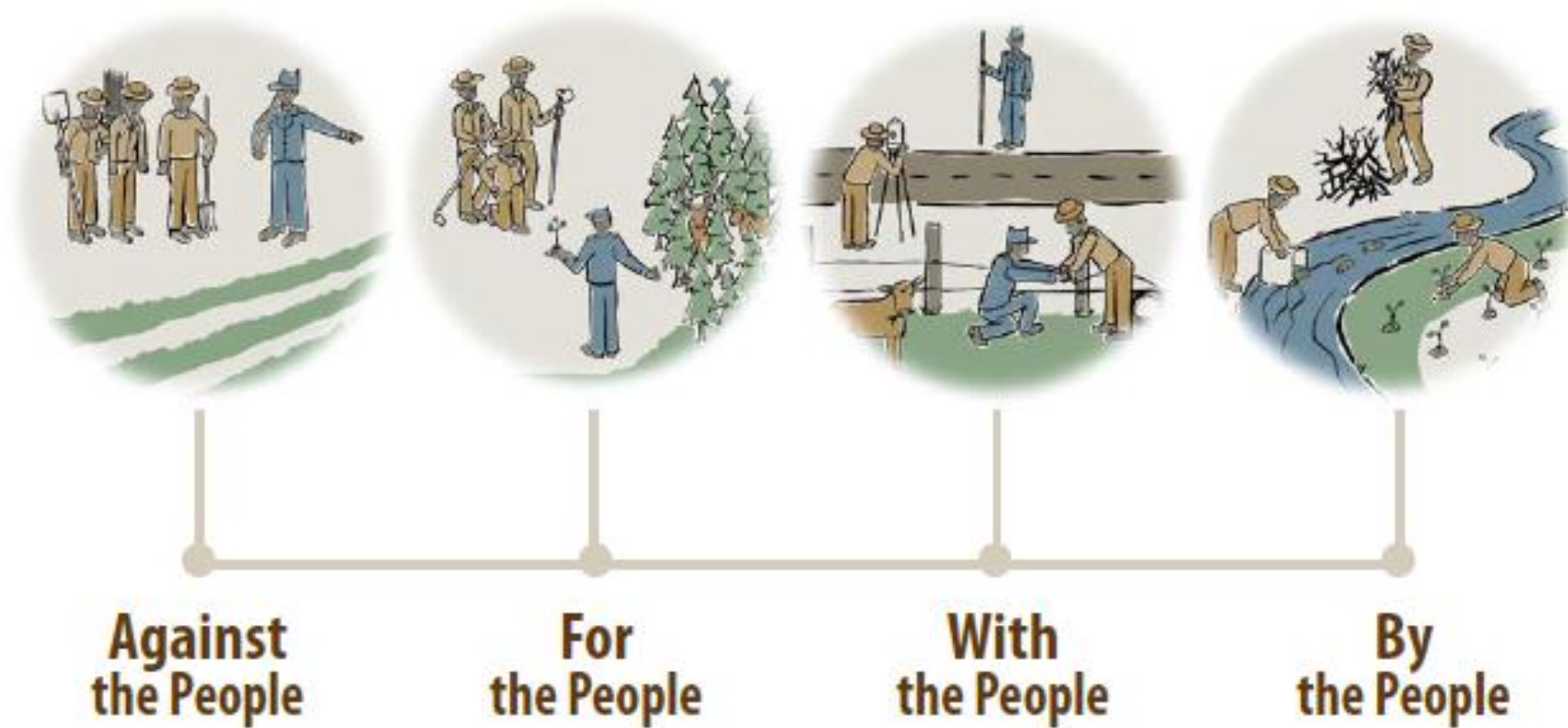


Collaborative
Land
Stewardship



Invasives
Control and
Native
Species
Recovery





Conservation Spectrum

adapted from Marshall Murphree, CASS – University of Zimbabwe

Graphic courtesy of Nils Christoffersen/Wallowa Resources



Mt. Adams Community Forest Vision (adopted in 2010)

The Mt. Adams Community Forest (MACF) is a "working forest" managed in exemplary fashion to provide a sustainable flow of wood products to the local economy, maintaining traditional land uses, providing local employment, and exploring other compatible uses of forest land. The traditional uses include timber management, recreation, education, wildlife management, livestock grazing, aesthetics and research.

Lands will be open for public use while concurrently protecting natural resources. State-of-the-art practices in addition to customary practices will be employed to responsibly manage the forest. The forest management will be certified by a recognized forest certification organization.

The community forest will be managed by Mt. Adams Resource Stewards with local community input. Strategic and tactical decision making will be more independent than federal and state lands. The community forest management will be complimentary to adjacent private and public land management



Mt. Adams Community Forest Project Strategy

Year	Phase	Steps	Cost	Status
2008-2012	1. project development	strategic planning landscape analysis community outreach build network	\$150K	complete
2011-2013	2. demonstration model	100-1000 acre purchase(s) stewardship demonstration	\$1M	ongoing
2013-2016	3. capacity buildout	development staff administration staff	\$300K	planning
2014-2024	4. forest acquisition	capital campaign acquisition of ~5000 acres	\$10M	planning
2011-	5. longterm stewardship	resource revenue of \$500-700K/year funds organizational capacity stewardship/restoration	\$0	ongoing







Management Comparison

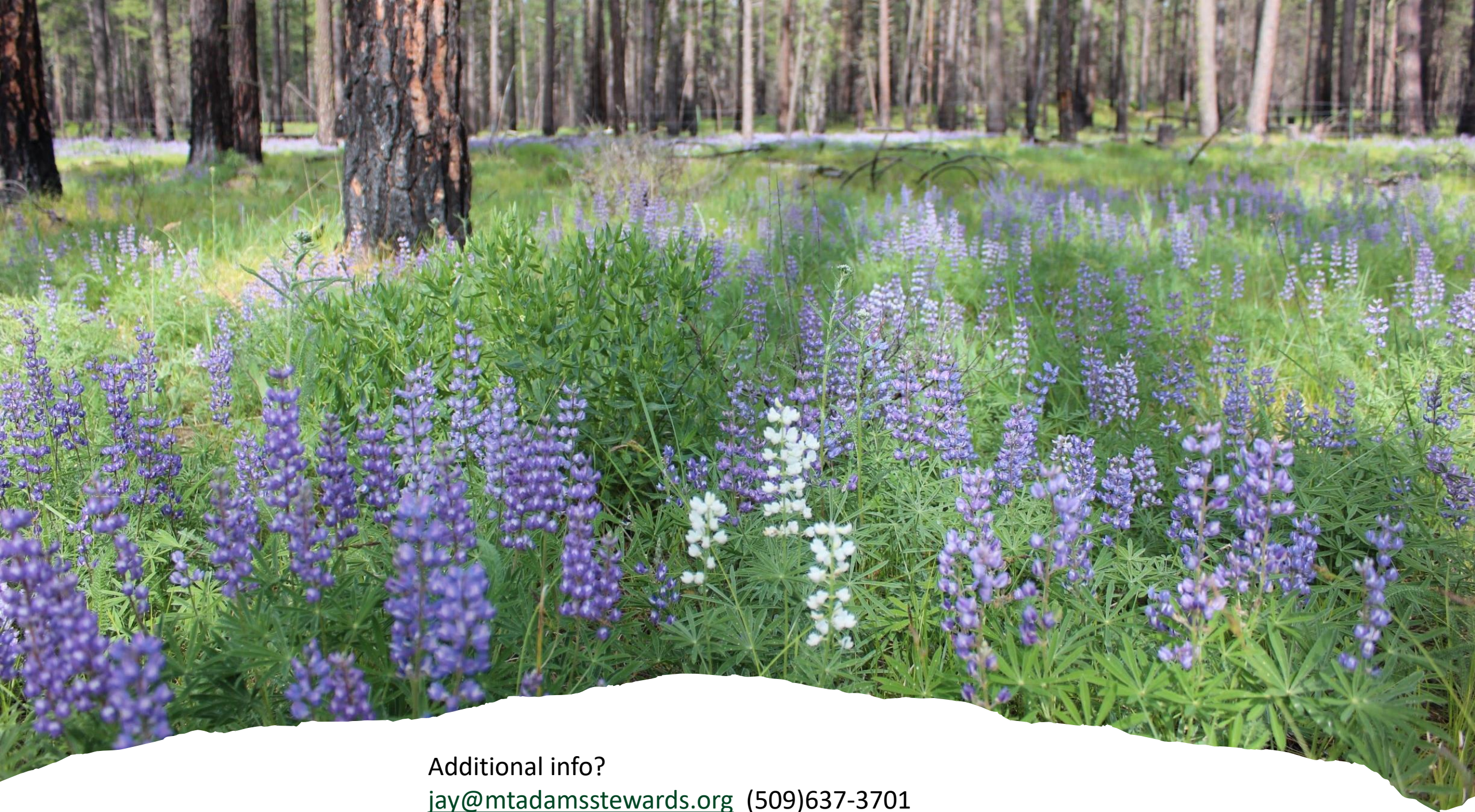


A new era for natural resource leadership by communities through collaborative, place-based management

- Local knowledge
- Nimbleness
- Balanced approaches
- Social license
- Enduring outcomes







Additional info?

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Q&A

Please share your questions in the chat!



Exit Ticket

Please complete a brief, 2-minute exit ticket to help inform future sessions!

Scan the QR code or click here:

<https://forms.office.com/r/R17iPZxqTy>

Community Forest Training Program: Session 1 Exit Ticket





Since 1972, TPL has protected 4 million acres of public land; created 5,364 parks, trails, schoolyards, and iconic outdoor places; raised \$100 billion in public funding for parks and public lands; and connected nearly 9.4 million people to the outdoors.

To learn more, visit [tpl.org](https://www.tpl.org).

Connecting everyone to the outdoors™

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Next Steps

- Complete the Exit
Ticket: <https://forms.office.com/r/R17iPZxqTy>
- Series Invitations
- Report-Out Slides & Recording
- **Session 2: December 2, 2025**
Governance, Ownership, & Funding

Thank You!