



2020-2021
Annual Report

Siskiyou Land Trust




The Vision: Working in Watersheds



Siskiyou County



 SLT Holdings and Conservation Easements

 SLT Active Projects to close by 2024

Headwaters Vision: In 2020/21 Siskiyou Land Trust significantly expanded our conservation work in the headwaters of the Sacramento and Scott Rivers. With our current projects and opportunities on the horizon, we'll be bringing land conservation into the Shasta and Fall River headwaters. ***We're able to do this thanks to our community, partners, supporters and staff.*** Read on to learn about our fabulous accomplishments and vision for the future.

Cover photo by Bubba Suess: Shasta Valley ranchland, Whaleback and Mount Shasta.

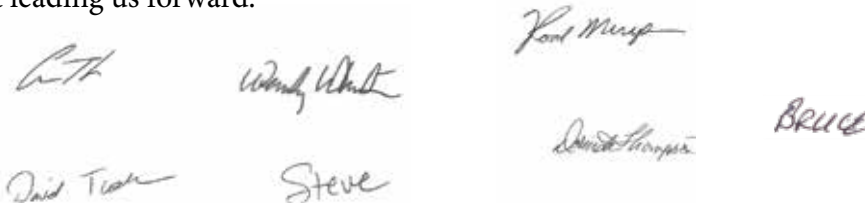
Message from the Board

Dear SLT Community,

This past year has been filled with unprecedented challenges for all of us. Our staff, volunteers, donors, board and partners have struggled with the effects of fires, drought, and pandemic. The disconnection, fear and uncertainty from the threats to our homes, livelihood and health wear on us every day.

Fortunately, we at SLT have an antidote to what may feel like dark times: **working to forever preserve our open spaces and wildlands**. Our work provides a bright light of hope and guided by our Headwaters Vision. We believe that the earth can heal when it is protected and stewarded with love and intention. We find inspiration and encouragement in this time of political and social division in the impactful work we have done **in partnership with public agencies, other non-profits, ranchers and land stewards**.

Yes, it has been a hard year in so many ways, but it has also been a year in which we've preserved more of our precious Siskiyou County than ever before and built momentum that will enable us to do even more in the future. The hard times can make the beauty of hope shine brighter, and we're proud that SLT can be a beacon of light leading us forward.



Handwritten signatures of board members: Rod Merys, Wendy Whitson, David Tucker, Steve Bollock, Dorinda Thompson, and Bruce Berlinger.

Board of Directors

Rod Merys, *President*
Mt. Shasta

Dorinda Thompson, *Vice President*
Gazelle

David Tucker, *Treasurer*
Lake Shastina

Gareth Plank, *Secretary & Land*
Acquisition Committee Chair, Etna

Steve Bollock, *Mt. Shasta*

Wendy Whitson, *Mt. Shasta*

Bruce Berlinger, *McCloud*

Stacy Smith, *Mt. Shasta*

Staff

Renee Casterline,
Executive Director

Kathleen Hitt,
Conservation Director

Laura Bradley,
Stewardship & Administration

Ed Stanton,
Conservation Project Manager

Kim Solga,
Outreach Coordinator

Mandy Twitchell,
2021 Summer Mapping Intern

Looking to the horizon, inspired by what we see

As we look back on our last year of work, board and staff are inspired by where we stand and what the future holds. Our *headwaters-focused accomplishments* in 2020 and 2021 have put us in an unprecedented place in this organization's history, as well as the broader conservation landscape in Siskiyou County.

Since our last annual report to you in October 2020:

- SLT went from nearly 7,000 acres under conservation easements (CEs) to ***just over 36,000 acres under CE***, protecting critical landscapes from fragmentation
- Our CE portfolio grew to include ***three projects on working forest lands***
- With the boost in capacity from hiring our new Conservation Project Manager in August 2020, we ***secured a \$6 million grant*** that provides resources to help us preserve an additional 5,000 acres of agricultural land by 2026
- ***Our small staff is managing the largest active project slate we have ever had***, with two agricultural CEs aiming to close soon, two working timberlands CE projects underway, four additional ag CE projects being developed to secure funding and fee title acquisition projects that will protect the endangered Yreka phlox

Siskiyou Land Trust's founders understood that landscape-scale protection comes from looking at watersheds as a whole. They saw that if a river's headwaters are not protected from degradation, preserving sections downstream is less effective. We've honed this original insight into a headwaters vision focused on the major basins since these areas provide so many benefits that travel downstream, some all the way to the sea. In the headwaters, we find essential habitat for wildlife and rare plants, the possibility for climate change resilience, and communities that are home to our rural way of life.

Our work has been well-established in the Scott and Upper Sacramento River watersheds and it was a milestone achievement to close conservations easements on over 28,000 acres high in the headwaters of the Scott River and its tributaries last December. In 2021, we've launched projects that expand our work into the Shasta and Fall River watersheds, setting anchor points that will ripple out into future opportunities.

"This is an inspiring time, as we grow fully into our founders' vision for what Siskiyou Land Trust can accomplish. We're poised to embrace our potential as we're looking to the horizon with a long vision for land conservation and stewardship."

– Kathleen Hitt, Conservation Director

Working lands are often home to rare plant species. ►



2020/21 Conservation Accomplishments

Over the last two and half decades, SLT has chosen projects in strategic locations in headwater basins. We've set anchor points in valley bottoms and leveraged existing protections by selecting projects higher in the basin adjacent to public lands.

Much of our work has been along the Scott River, and the projects that closed in 2020 made it possible to link timber lands high in the headwaters to agricultural lands along the river on the valley floor. The Wildcat and Whiskey conservation easements with Ecotrust Forest Management and the Bouvier Ranch CE with Western Rivers Conservancy reach to elevations that abut the Russian and Marble Mountain Wilderness areas and the Klamath National Forest.

These lands contain critical waterways that supply cold water for salmon habitat and riparian corridors that provide connectivity for wildlife moving up and down these drainages. Partnering with working forest owners means that we can place protections on large tracts of land, amplifying the benefits to species of all kinds by preventing fragmentation.

This is the embodiment of SLT's conservation vision: connecting lands, waters, wildlife, plants and communities across elevations in a watershed to preserve resiliency and connectivity. We believe those linkages make us all healthier and stronger.

SLT's Conservation history:

1993 to 2010:

5,800+ acres conserved

2011-2021:

30,300+ acres conserved

◀ *Aspen grove Big Meadows on the EFM Shackleford block*



Poised to craft long-term impacts

Land conservation and stewardship require looking to a distant horizon: we are committed to our projects forever. As we anticipate the changing needs and pressures on our landscapes, SLT's conservation strategy is rooted in our headwaters. Every river in Siskiyou County is important and our accomplishments have positioned us to significantly expand land protection into new basins and to link conserved lands at different elevations.

Our project slate for the next three years is as varied as the landscape. We will complete the last 12,000 acres of Scott River Headwaters working forests CEs with Ecotrust Forest Management and work with ranches along the Scott River and its tributaries to link the valley to forests. New projects include working in areas of serpentine soil to protect the endangered Yreka Phlox, our first agricultural CEs in the Shasta Valley, a working forest partner in a headwaters basin that's new to SLT and exploring the potential for water conservation to protect imperiled species and working ranches.

We're inspired by our monumental achievements and we have a big vision for conservation that benefits Siskiyou County and the world beyond.

SLT's Conservation vision:

The next five years -
60,000 acres protected by 2026

SLT's contribute to 30x30* -
100,000 acres protected by 2030

**look into US and CA 30x30 conservation goals*

Protecting habitat for the endangered Yreka Phlox ►



Growing professional capacity

In the past year our staff has grown in numbers and effectiveness: Ed Stanton joined SLT as our Conservation Project Manager, Kim Solga shifted from a volunteer to Outreach and Communication staff, and in 2021 we had our first summer intern, Mandy Twitchell, a Master's student at Oregon State University focused on mapping.

These additions are possible thanks to a Department of Conservation grant and private foundation gifts. The increase in capacity made it possible to secure a \$6 million grant from NRCS's Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). The RCPP grant will create significant growth for SLT as we launch in early 2022 with the purpose of placing CEs on at least 5,000 acres of ranches with critical fish and wildlife habitat over the next five years. As our conservation work becomes more complex and nuanced, staff have stretched to develop new skill sets and expand their knowledge.

We added two new Board members, Wendy Whitson and Bruce Berlinger, who bring fresh skills and perspectives to SLT. The board is focused on charting a path as SLT matures, our vision broadens and our impacts expand.

"It is critical to the Land Trust and Siskiyou County that we hold on to the talent, skill and vision present in the workforce. Adding Ed was the next step in deepening our staff's skill and knowledge, and we're looking forward to adding more high caliber people to the organization."

– Gareth Plank, Board Secretary

Leadership for our future

SLT's founders had a grand vision, and as we've been guided by it we've grown into a capable organization. We're poised to make greater contributions to preserving our irreplaceable wildlands and keeping working agricultural and forest lands free from subdivision. It is clear that SLT needs an expanded skill set and visionary leadership to support our growth. In the summer of 2021, SLT began actively recruiting for a new Executive Director (ED), while our current ED began shifting into a stewardship and grantwriting role.

It's a critical time for preserving landscapes in Siskiyou County, and we simply can't meet the need with our current small staff. We need additional conservation and stewardship staff so we can embrace the opportunities on the horizon, while stewarding the lands and CEs we hold. The growth of capabilities of both staff and board is critical to ensure SLT is agile and adaptive.

As we chart our course, we intend to hold the long view of land conservation while being deliberate about growth. SLT will continue to carefully add new staff and board members as we grow deeper into the vision of what a local land trust can achieve in Siskiyou County.

"I grew up on my family's ranch outside of Gazelle, and I love the diverse landscapes of Siskiyou County. It is so rewarding to work with people dedicated to preserving the land and our way of life. I'm excited to be part of the next era of expansion for SLT."

– Renee Casterline, Executive Director



Financial vibrancy and sustainability

The 2020/21 fiscal year brought much opportunity to SLT and saw us reach an important milestone. The Department of Conservation grant and unexpected private foundation grants funded a third staff member whose focus is purely on conservation projects. The much needed capacity is deeply appreciated and opened the conversation around an expanded executive director role.

The legacy of Thamar Wherrit changed the Land Trust in many ways, including pushing SLT over the milestone of having more than \$1,000,000 invested in our Stewardship Fund. Stewardship donations are made by landowners when a project closes, and these investments provide the long-term capability to have staff monitor and uphold the conservation easements in our portfolio. Reaching that milestone was an important point in our growth and provides a solid base to build a stewardship staff.

"The Land Trust has grown a lot during my time on the board - we've taken on big projects and closed them, increasing our financial resources. We've really expanded what we think is possible."

— Rod Merys, Board President

Our support from donors mirrors the spectrum of our work: just as we have large and small projects, we have donations of various amounts. Every one of those donations supports our impact and is key to our success.

◀ *Looking across the Wildcat CE towards Mount Bolivar in the southern Scott Valley.*

Forging a new era of fundraising

The slate of agricultural and forest CEs, land acquisition and easement monitoring is loaded with opportunities for impact on the land and the organization. While the RCPP grant provides 50% of CE purchase funds, it also requires that we raise an additional \$6 million - a challenge we're excited to meet. SLT is entering a new era that can bring some stability to the feast or famine character of our financial history.

Conservation staff consistently secure funding for projects through grant writing, just as donors support projects with their financial gifts. Starting in 2022, our supporters will see their gifts amplified by the funds in the RCPP grant. Every dollar you give supports our ability to carry out projects to prevent subdivision of what are today wide open pastures.

SLT's Board of Directors is focusing its energy on expanding our major donors program and taking fundraising to a new level. It's impossible to not be excited by our current and upcoming projects. The Board is building on that excitement to raise funds for both the short and long term to fill in the places that grants don't cover. It's a great time to support SLT as our long-lasting impact in Siskiyou County is expanding rapidly.

"We're focused on creating relationships and tapping into resources we have not previously reached out to. SLT has entered a new era of impactful work and the fundraising to support that work must follow."

— Wendy Whitson, Board Member

Sunflowers in the community garden at the Garden Greenway in Mt. Shasta ►



Financial Summary: FY 2020/2021

Total Revenue: \$1,081,825

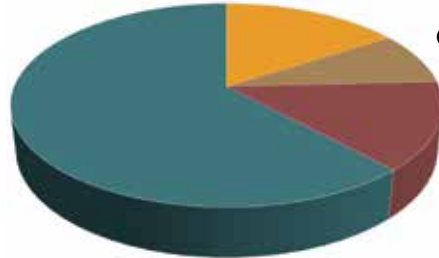
Revenue minus CE donations: \$545,225

Acquisition 62%

Stewardship 16%

Operations & Admin 8%

Fundraising 14%



Total Expenses: \$456,986

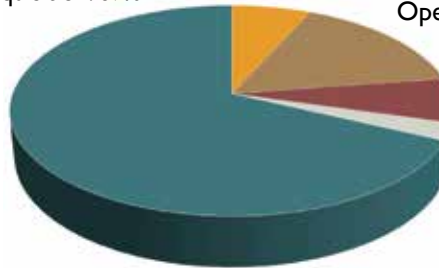
Acquisition: 67%

Stewardship: 7%

Operations & Admin 16%

Development 7%

Education & Outreach: 3%



Revenue explained: CE stewardship

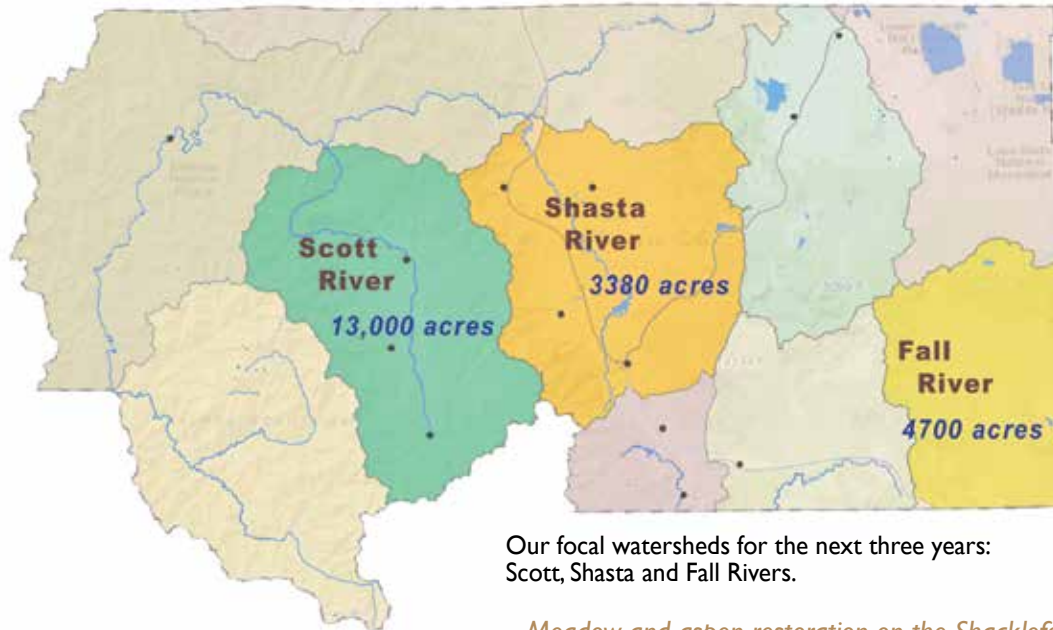
After the close of three CEs in December 2020 the landowners donated \$536,600. These funds have been invested into our Stewardship Fund and the interest income will support ongoing monitoring and stewardship of the CEs.

Stewardship Fund contributions do not support staff's work in developing conservation projects to meet our goals for protecting this County's critical resources. We rely on your support to keep land conservation moving forward.

Landscape-scale impacts

Looking at the county, we see our ability to protect lands in perpetuity reaching out from the well-established anchor point in Scott Valley into watersheds to the east. Currently Siskiyou Land Trust has 36,159 acres of protected lands.

The map below shows watershed areas with projects poised to close by 2024, adding another 21,117 acres to SLT conserved lands.



Our focal watersheds for the next three years: Scott, Shasta and Fall Rivers.

Meadow and aspen restoration on the Shackelford CE ►



Your legacy: supporting the earth, forever

Because our conservation commitments literally last forever, when you financially support the work of SLT, you can be sure that your donation will have a lasting impact. With this long time horizon in mind, our preservation of huge chunks of land enables us to give the earth a better shot at the resilience it needs to adapt to climate change and other environmental stresses. We create these landscape-scale protections both by placing conservation easements on large swaths of land that might otherwise be subject to subdivision and development and by identifying smaller parcels that connect with large publicly managed tracts.

“We've always had the think globally, act locally mentality. So we chose the Land Trust because of what they do, how they do it and the people who do that work for them... It was an easy discussion for the Baxter family to put it in the Baxter Family Estate.”

- Sam Baxter, former SLT board president

When you consider your legacy, look to SLT as an organization that can carry forward your intentions to care for the earth well beyond your own lifetime. We are committed to stewarding lands in perpetuity. When you make a legacy gift to SLT, you plant a seed for land conservation that will grow for generations to come.

◀ *New growth in the Englemann Spruce habitat zone on the Wildcat CE property.*

All the ways you can help

Even as SLT increases the grant funding we secure for projects, we continue to have a financial gap that we rely on our donors to help us bridge. Grants don't cover all of the costs of any one project. While some staff time and acquisition costs may be covered by grant funding, there are always general operating costs and project development staff time for which we must look to our donors. Your donations cover those critical expenses that grants do not and provide a stable and reliable source of funding between grant payments. Your gifts and investment in SLT really matter.

Ways you can help:

- Become a monthly donor
- Make an annual gift
- Make a splash on Giving Tuesday
- Include SLT in your estate plans
- Donate cash or real assets
- Make a gift through your business or family foundation

“Having reached the age that we have a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) from retirement accounts, we changed how we donate. We now donate directly from the accounts. There is no tax liability on the withdrawals and allows us to control our annual taxable income.

It's a win win for SLT and us!”

*- Belinda and Gary Sanda,
longtime SLT supporters*



Making big impacts with a small staff

Siskiyou Land Trust has been able to achieve big things with a small staff by strategically leveraging funds and investing in long-term partnerships that simply make more possible. Projects slated for the next few years will rely on working with partners - landowners, agencies, local non-profit organizations, jurisdictions and volunteers - to place CEs, purchase lands and work on collaborative efforts to protect water.

Highlights of projects that will leverage funds and partnerships:

- Working with staff and receiving funding from US Fish and Wildlife Service and CA Department of Fish and Wildlife to purchase land to protect the Yreka Phlox
- Partnering with Ecotrust Forest Management, with funding from Cal Fire and the USDA, to finish the third Scott River Headwaters CE, protecting a total of 39,000+ acres
- Joining forces with the Scott River Water Trust, Scott River Watershed Council and local landowners to evaluate projects and tools to support family ranches while keeping more water in stream for critical habitat for Coho salmon
- Making use of the NCRS Regional Conservation Partnership Program that funds up to half the purchase price of agricultural CEs to apply for the remaining portion of dollars needed to place five CEs over 5,000 acres of working lands in Siskiyou County



Thank you Stacy, for over 11 years of service

Stacy Smith stepped down from the Land Trust board in the summer of 2021 after more than 11 years of service. SLT has a lot to be thankful for: her steadfast dedication to protecting lands, thoughtful contributions and leadership in strategic planning and offering a valued perspective as an outdoor lover and from her position as Lands and Special Uses Officer on the Shasta McCloud Management Unit of the Shasta-Trinity National Forest.

Stacy joined the SLT board in 2009 and helped steer the organization through a decade of tremendous growth. She contributed to the Land Trust's health by working on internal policies, bringing sensible questions to guide project selection and exploring the nature of how SLT functions and funds its work. She also served as Secretary for most of her tenure.

Stacy, thank you for your years of passionate, dedicated service! Your work with SLT is appreciated by many people and left lasting impacts on the landscape of Siskiyou County.

Core volunteers keep up stewardship during Covid

Covid-19 eliminated most of our volunteer work days in 2020 and 2021; nevertheless, a small core of volunteers has been quietly maintaining lands and projects. SLT is deeply grateful to these individuals who continue caring for lands and engaging in the ways they can. We're thankful to our dedicated stewards Jane Seeley (SLT Garden), Glenn Harvey (Garden Greenway, Sisson Meadow, Rotary Trail), John Brennan (Hammond Pond), Jack Moore (Hammond Pond and Garden Greenway), Cara Saunders and the Bear Wallow Herbs crew, as well as folks who have joined in where they could with limited opportunities.

Volunteers, including Stacy Smith (far left), on the Garden Greenway. ►



Thank You Land Trust Supporters

For 28 years, Siskiyou Land Trust has been focused on long-term stewardship of agricultural, forest and wildlands in Siskiyou County. Every one of our donors has made this possible. We're deeply grateful for each of you.

*Cheers to our monthly donors indicated with *. Their regular and dependable gifts are so very helpful to the Land Trust!*

Joan Adams
Dorian Aiello
Sharon Allen
Amy Allis
Regan Anderlini
Florence Anderson
Bill & Jean Anderson
Sherry Anderson
Kevin & Michelle Andras
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Jennifer Arneson
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Lee Benda
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Berryvale Grocery
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Barbara & Steven Zlotowski

Legacy gifts in memory of
Shantam Sheptow and Myr Skipper

28 Years of Conservation
all thanks to you!

Support SLT on November 30th
for North State Giving Tuesday.

6am to 8pm

NorthStateGives.org/SLT

This year help us raise \$50,000
needed to match the RCPP
grant funds.

Photo of Hammond Pond by Steve Bollock.

*Your support on Giving Tuesday
and throughout the year means
so much to us. Thank you!*



Siskiyou Land Trust

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