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Pacific Cascade Region Natural Areas Manager

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Natural Areas are Places for Scientific Research and Education

Explore the natural areas that protect Washington’s most unique ecosystems
Keeping Washington’s Natural Lands Safe and Sound

WASHINGTON’S NATURAL AREAS

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You’ll find protected natural areas in every corner of the state—from a coastal surge plain to the shrub steppe of eastern Washington, from lynx habitat at the Canadian border to scenic vistas along the Columbia River.

The California Mountain Kingsnake (Lampropeltis zonata) can be found in the southemmost areas of Skamania and Klickitat counties, but not easily. Its primary range is in Oregon and California. Research is needed on the numbers, condition and habitat needs of this harmless snake.

Natural areas offer many opportunities to take part in scientific conservation and nature study.

So far, nearly 190,000 acres of state-owned land is conserved forever in the Natural Areas Program. These lands provide pristine habitat for native fish and animal, endangered native plants and diminishing natural lands. Sites become candidates for natural areas when they are discovered to be either in remarkably good ecological condition or extremely important to the survival of a rare species of plant or animal.

Conservation-minded citizens, scientists and others help preserve Washington’s natural heritage by conducting research, inventories, monitoring and restoration of special sites. Natural areas are designated based on scientific research and by innovative cooperation:

- With land trusts, conservation organizations and other partners
- With citizens who volunteer at stewards of these lands
- With local governments, tribes and other agencies
- With willing landowners who sell or donate their lands
- Through innovative land transfer programs and legislative funding

Natural areas protect plants, animals and ecosystems

Canada lynx (Lynx canadensis) is a wary-ranging species and sensitive to human activity. The Loomis NRCA contributes to its home range. Their large, carnivorous-like paws enable them to inhabit areas often avoided by coyotes and cougars.

There have been many recorded lynx sightings in the Loomis NRCA.

The California Tiger Salamander (Ambystoma tigrinum) is critically endangered in the state and often avoided by humans.

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Golden paintbrush (Castilleja levisecta) is found on just 10 sites in Washington. The plant is protected at two natural areas where managers are working to increase its numbers in the landscape.

The Natural Heritage Program takes a scientific approach to protection

The Natural Heritage Program has helped and nominated lands for protection. The program was created by the legislature to identify and list priority native species and ecosystems in a database that scientists, students, local governments and others can use for conservation purposes.

Decisions to select natural areas are made by the Natural Heritage Advisory Council, whose members include representatives from state and federal agencies, tribes and others appointed by the state’s elected Commissioner of Public Lands. The Council also includes non-voting members who represent state agencies involved in managing and protecting natural landscapes and the environment.

The knowledge we gain from these precious lands leads us to make informed, science-based decisions to protect and restore Washington’s natural heritage.

PETER GOLDMARK
Commissioner of Public Lands
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Natural areas managers and ecologists help young students to capture an interest in nature and the fascination of science.

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