

# Timber firm enters conservation deal with land trust

Agreement ensures greater access for tribes

By **KATIE FRANKOWICZ**  
The Astorian

A new agreement between Clatsop County's largest landowner and the Columbia Land Trust will conserve a productive acreage between Astoria and Seaside for forestry work and ensure access for local tribes.

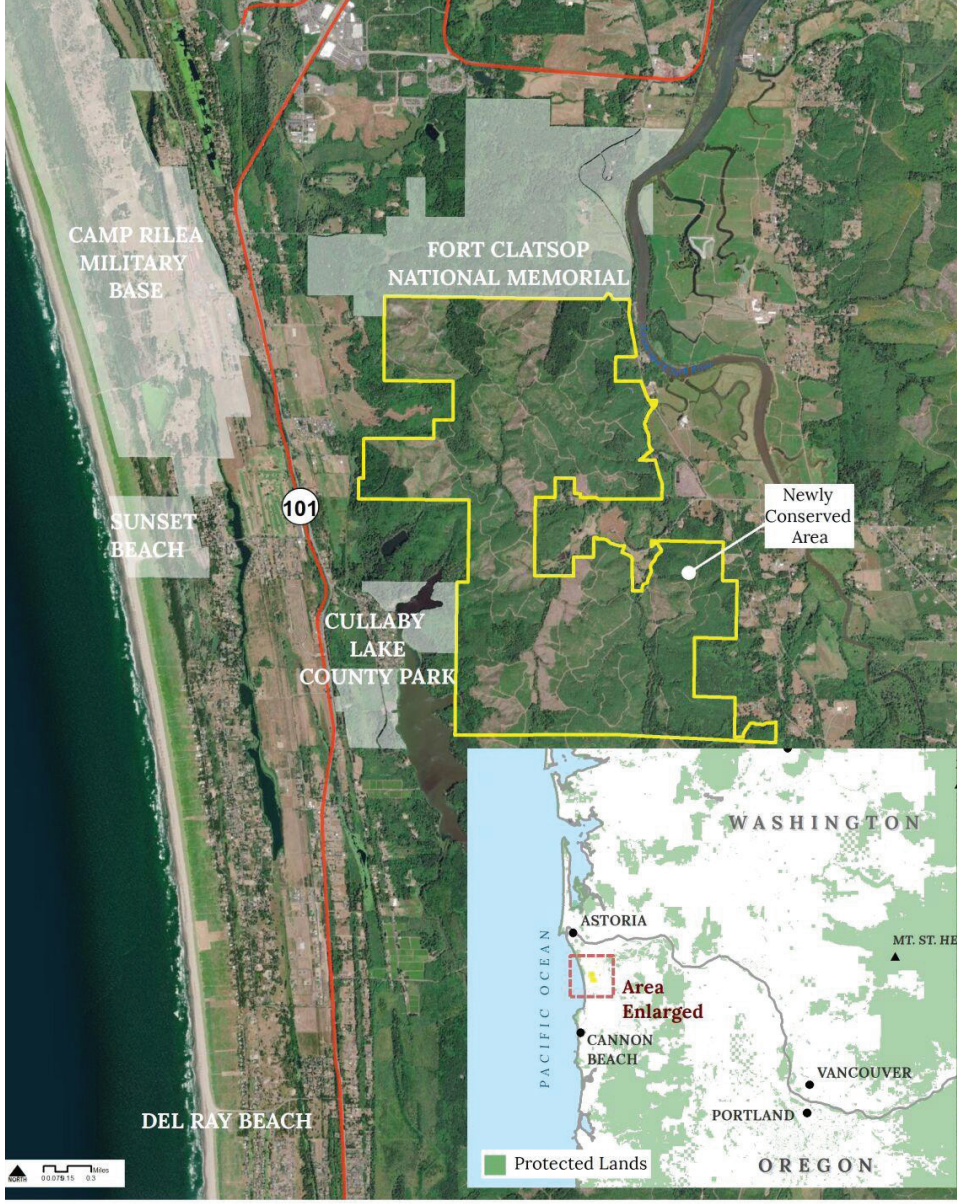
Under the conservation easement, Greenwood Resources — a timber investment company that manages lands previously owned by Weyerhaeuser and other timber companies — will continue to own the more than 2,500 acres of forestland off U.S. Highway 101 and harvest trees.

But the agreement will prevent future fragmentation of the land, no matter who owns the property, said Dan Roix, the conservation director with Columbia Land Trust.

A conservation easement that continues to allow logging may not be an approach people typically associate with land trusts and conservation, Roix acknowledged. But he believes the easement will aid other, more familiar conservation goals, as well as preserve a traditional economical use in local forests.

The easement requires increased tree buffers along streams where fish are present and establishes a 50-year minimum stand rotation, giving trees a longer time to grow on the land.

For local tribes, the easement ensures access to an area where their ancestors gathered food and materials, and the right to



**Clatsop Ridge Forest Conservation Area.**

do larger-scale collecting and harvesting activities not permitted on other land Greenwood owns.

## Clatsop Ridge

The property, referred to as Clatsop Ridge, already sees a high amount of recreational use. Located across U.S. Highway 101 from Camp Rilea, its borders touch Lewis and Clark National Historical Park to the north and Cullaby Lake County Park to the southwest.

Under the easement, the property must remain open to the public and hunting for deer and elk will be allowed. Native families in the Clatsop-Nehalem Confederated Tribes have considered the area part of their traditional fishing grounds.

The Clatsop-Nehalem, like the Chinook Indian Nation tribes based around the mouth of the Columbia River, is not federally recognized. Access to traditional gathering

and hunting areas is not guaranteed. The allowance to harvest and gather plants and native foods at Clatsop Ridge may be a small portion of the conservation easement, but for Dick Basch, the Clatsop-Nehalem vice chairman, it was an important inclusion.

"To have this is recognition that we're still here," he said.

The Clatsop Ridge property has been logged routinely over the years

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and many older tree stands were knocked down during the 2007 windstorms that raked through the region. But the smells and the sounds Basch's ancestors would have experienced and that he experienced as a child remain: the sweet, earthy smell of moss and ferns, the salty tang of the ocean below. You can hear the sounds of the forest and the ocean waves crashing, Basch said.

"It provides us the opportunity to go where our families, our ancestors, would go to harvest items," Basch said. "To breathe the same air."

## 'Seed effort'

Columbia Land Trust's purchase of the conservation easement was funded through more than \$2 million obtained by the North Coast Land Conservancy. The land conservancy, already involved in a major funding campaign for its Rainforest Reserve project farther south, invited Columbia Land Trust to the Clatsop Ridge project.

GreenWood has collaborated frequently with the North Coast Land Conservancy on other types of land conservation projects in the past and sees this new conservation easement as an invitation to other landowners to consider similar partnerships.

"I see this almost as a seed effort," said Mark Morgans, director of North American forest operations for Greenwood. "Where else can we do this, not only us at Green-

Wood, on our footprint of the forest?"

The easement also nods to goals finalized earlier this month by the Clatsop Plains Elk Collaborative.

That group, with the support of Gov. Kate Brown and state Sen. Betsy Johnson, signed off on a unified approach to dealing with growing urban elk herds on the North Coast.

Increased development was identified as one of the drivers for an uptick in undesirable elk and human interactions in the Clatsop Plains area. One of the action items identified by the group was to look at establishing wildlife habitat buffers and transition areas and, through partnerships, keep some land undeveloped.

While it isn't the same as conserving land for habitat or old growth trees, the easement at Clatsop Ridge does ensure the land will only continue to be used for forestry, not development, said Katie Voelke, the executive director of the North Coast Land Conservancy.

"No highway is going to be built through the middle of it," Voelke said. "No gated community is going to be built on top of it."

The additional protections that come with the easement — like increased stream buffers — are important considerations as land stewards consider climate change and a landscape's resiliency in the face of major climate shifts, Voelke and Roix said.



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