



Sustainable Northwest

THE WORKING LANDSCAPES ALLIANCE

– Working together to create a sustainable future for the Western landscape –

The Working Landscapes Alliance (“WLA”) is an interdisciplinary team and growing learning alliance of individuals from government, the non-profit and the private sectors, and ranching, united by long-standing relationships, shared values, a focus on practical, voluntary solutions, and a shared PURPOSE to:

Support the emergence of sustainable working ranches and landscapes through restoration and conservation of ecological health, creation of dynamic local and regional economic opportunities, and honoring and engaging the full diversity of people and cultures that share the Western landscape.

Western ranches are “working landscapes” that under good stewardship can “work” to provide many important public and private values:

- ❖ Working lands control much of the water in the West, and critical lower elevation wildlife habitat – in particular, the riparian areas key to so many endangered species.
- ❖ As the connectors between people and species, species and habitat, and public and private ownerships, ranches are an essential focus for landscape-scale conservation.
- ❖ Well-managed ranches are essential for the safe and reliable provision of services and products (food and water, recreation, etc.) for hundreds of urban communities.
- ❖ Ranches are a cornerstone of cultural identity for thousands of rural communities, and for the families and individuals who call them “work” and “home.”



Ranches, rural communities, and natural systems face severe challenges in an increasingly complex world of mature commodity markets, globalization, and widespread development. The WLA is aware of the challenge but optimistic about the potential for those who have the tools and capacity to manage and embrace change. Our **VISION** is that of:

People living in restored natural systems; maintaining and protecting resources and functions; being valued for their products, services, stewardship and experience; providing a healthy future and meaningful work for children and grandchildren; while growing the sense of shared community and common values with those of other cultures and backgrounds.

While the WLA is focused on developing and providing solutions to technical problems, with an approach grounded in basic ecological principles and economic awareness, the group is distinguished by its attention to people, relationships and PRINCIPLES, which include:

- ❖ integrity
- ❖ valuing diversity and working through conflict
- ❖ listening with respect
- ❖ supporting voluntary action
- ❖ continuous self-evaluation and improvement
- ❖ engaging ranchers as core partners



The WLA's core **APPROACH** focuses on growing the capacity of the landscape, the community, and the individual to provide sustainable futures. The WLA's services and expertise focus on four areas: a) **Natural Capital** (the capacity of the landscape to provide the resources and functions necessary for life to thrive); b) **Human Capital** (the capacity of individuals to tackle challenges and develop strategies for sustainability); c) **Social Capital** (the networks of communication, trust, and reciprocity among diverse elements of a community necessary to constructively address systemic conflict); and, **Financial Capital** (revenue and investment used to re-invest in land, family, and community wellbeing).

The WLA's **TOOLS & SERVICES** break into five categories:

- ❖ **Adaptive Management Based on Ecological Principles** – Creating a “common vocabulary” with land managers about ecosystem function, and management plans that restore proper function and sustain natural values.
- ❖ **Increasing Value** – Adding value to traditional ranch products, and diversifying the economic uses of working landscapes.
- ❖ **Collaboration and Conflict Resolution** – Working constructively with diverse stakeholders, and fostering dialogue and trust as a basis for innovations that meet the needs of all.
- ❖ **Access to Financial Capital** – Developing ways to address the growing disconnect between high real estate values and low agricultural income, and identifying capital to invest in sustainable ranch systems.
- ❖ **Policy** – Recognizing the common barriers and opportunities in state and federal policies that affect the potential of a sustainable working landscape.

The WLA will address whole landscapes, working across the boundaries of institutions, ownerships, and technical disciplines to reveal the ecological, economic, and social connectivity of a functioning system. The WLA will **WORK** at two levels:

Community Assistance & Capacity-Building – Medium or long term (3-5 year) investments in specific places, where interdisciplinary WLA **Action Teams** address inter-related issues affecting working landscapes. The composition of an Action Team will be dictated by the specifics of community or catchment (watershed) needs. The WLA will seek places where it can apply the proven expertise of its members (especially in resource management and conflict resolution), but also research and develop new incentives and financial tools.

A Learning Organization – Lessons learned in one ranch, catchment or community can be packaged and shared with others to accelerate progress. As its **Alliance** with new ranchers and communities grows, the WLA will: a) facilitate dialogue and gather feedback to refine its strategies; b) support communication and mutual assistance between isolated rural leaders; c) sponsor peer-to-peer training; d) offer topic-specific workshops (easements, collaboration, etc.); and, e) contribute to policy discussions. The Alliance will seek to coordinate and share resources with other emerging and existing regional and national action and policy networks.



For further information:

James Honey, Sustainable Northwest

Telephone: (503) 221-6911

jhoney@sustainablenorthwest.org