

Community Forests: A path to prosperity and connection

STEMILT-SQUILCHUCK COMMUNITY FOREST

NOTABLE BENEFITS



RECREATION



FOREST-BASED SERVICES

ACRES: 4,010

YEAR ESTABLISHED: 2013

OWNERSHIP: Chelan County, Washington

MANAGEMENT: Chelan County with guidance from Stemilt Partnership

COMMUNITY SERVED: Stemilt-Squilchuck watershed, Washington

POPULATION: 4,000

TOTAL ACQUISITION COST: \$2,211,188

FUNDING BREAKDOWN:



Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program

Cost Share

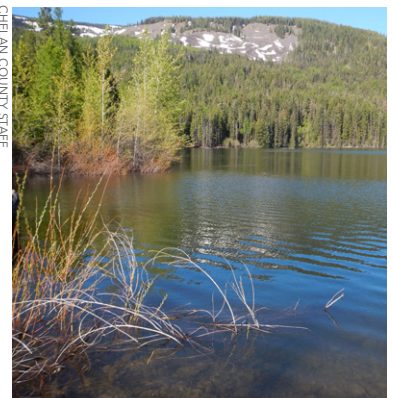
CHELAN COUNTY STAFF



In 2007, Chelan County established the Stemilt Partnership – a broad coalition of agriculture, wildlife, recreation, development, and conservation interests – in response to the proposed privatization of 2,500 acres of public land owned by the state in the Stemilt basin. The Partnership worked with Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and The Trust for Public Land to create a plan for the landscape based on the needs of the community. The community’s vision for this area included protecting the land for three main purposes: water storage, habitat, and recreation.

The first phase of the Stemilt project was completed in 2012 when Chelan County purchased about 2,500 acres in the basin from Longview Timberlands and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) purchased several sections from DNR. The second phase of acquisition protected an additional 4,010 acres in 2013. The Stemilt Partnership meets regularly to discuss management of what is now referred to as the **Stemilt-Squilchuck Community Forest**.

CHELAN COUNTY STAFF



For a comprehensive review of the community and economic benefits provided by this forest and others, go to the full report at www.tpl.org/economic-benefits-community-forests



Ensuring clean water: Close to the City of Wenatchee, the Stemilt-Squilchuck watershed extends from the Columbia River, through prized cherry orchards and subalpine forests to snowy Mission Peak. Snowpack and water storage are critical for ensuring clean and sufficient amounts of water in the reservoirs, homes, and orchards in the area.

Chelan County has 835 farms spanning almost 59,800 acres, 40 percent of which are irrigated. In 2017, these farms sold agricultural products valued at \$258 million. Orchards dominate the valley landscape; and cherries are particularly important in the Stemilt-Squilchuck watershed. There are over 1,000 seasonal jobs in the orchards, plus workers in warehouses in Chelan, Douglas, and Yakima Counties, as well as several businesses that support the industry by providing agricultural inputs, supplies, and expertise. Washington State University estimated that the orchards within the watershed produce 34 million pounds of cherries, resulting in \$76 million of economic impact to the region each year.

There are **10 irrigation reservoirs** on and around the properties protected by this community forest, and these reservoirs provide water to four irrigation districts that service 5,400 acres of farmland.

Providing habitat: In addition to protecting habitat for many listed and special status species, like the

federally threatened Upper Columbia River steelhead, this area provides essential habitat for elk and mule deer. Hunting for elk, mule deer, turkey and other wildlife is one of the most popular activities in the area. According to Herb Troxel, an avid sportsman in the region and member of the Wenatchee Sportsmen's Association, "I've been recreating here for over 70 years. It's where I caught my first fish, shot my first deer, and went camping for the first time. It's very close and convenient for people in our community— in fact it is close enough to enjoy a little quiet time after work. And, the Stemilt is prime habitat, especially for elk, which is hard to come by." There are around 300 members of the Wenatchee Sportsmen's Association. The group's work includes local fund drives for the acquisition of local habitat lands as well as the sponsoring of events to connect youth with this heritage. The Trust for Public Land estimates that the 4,010-acre community forest provides **\$48,000** in habitat value each year.

Enabling recreation: The public lands in the watershed are extensively used for hunting, snowmobiling and other winter recreation, biking, hiking, wildlife viewing, camping, fishing, and other activities. Local estimates of recreational use suggest that there are at least 34,000 recreational visits to the watershed each year. These lands are providing a benefit of approximately **\$520,000** to residents.

This project was completed in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and would not have been possible without generous support from the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities and the U.S. Forest Service.

The Trust for Public Land creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come.

www.tpl.org

For additional information: Michael Giammusso | National Lands Initiative Lead
3 Shipman Place | Montpelier, VT 05602 | (802)249-9512

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.