

## WINTER 2024

### Supporter Profile

### Paul Sherman and Raven Ridge

Walking along the well-manicured paths on Raven Ridge, I noticed elements of ancient forests that once dominated the region. Towering Douglas Fir trees created an overstory for multi-layered tree species that comprised a variety of ages in a magnificent canopy. Pacific Yew and Western Red Cedars mixed with large Madrones. There were ample downed trees forming what would eventually become nurse logs retaining water and over time become part of the forest floor as they decomposed. The remaining standing trunks would also create snags, vital for habitat in what can only be described as the makings of a true old-growth forest.

Glancing down at the forest floor and I spotted the bright orange fruiting body of the delicious chanterelle mushrooms that were pushing their way through the loose soil. Paul Sherman assured me these were only one of the many edible mushrooms he and his wife Julie often foraged. Stepping carefully so as not to veer off the paths created by Paul and his wife, I felt the joy and wonder of an ecosystem that has largely gone missing in the modern world.



In 2015, Paul purchased a 40-acre property on Grizzly Mt near Gold Beach with the intention of building a home there. He quickly realized how special and remote the property was with old-growth trees both on his land and neighboring Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land plus a myriad of wildlife varieties. After careful consideration he switched gears and decided that he wanted to protect the land in perpetuity with the help of a land trust.

Paul had met Jerry Becker, the founder of Wild Rivers Land Trust (WRLT), and they spoke about the special places they'd experienced in both Eastern and Western US and how land trusts help to preserve those places. Paul appreciated the energy and passion that Jerry possessed, and he decided that Raven Ridge was destined for preservation of what can only be termed "a small slice of old-growth Pacific rainforest heaven."

So, in 2020, Paul contacted WRLT about protecting his property, which he named Raven Ridge, because the gurgles and croaks of ravens often permeate the otherwise quiet woods. With the vision of preserving a piece of land rich in natural resources, Paul and Max Beeken, then Conservation Director at WRLT, began the process of creating a conservation easement. When I asked Paul what the experience was like to work with WRLT, he said, "Max made everything tremendously easy to move the project forward. His quick responsiveness and willingness to see it through from start to finish, made the entire process simple and enjoyable." That exceptional interaction encouraged Paul to continue the path to a sustainable mechanism of preservation by donating the land to WRLT and setting up an endowment to ensure future conservation on Oregon's southern coast.

In the world of land trusts there can be many legal hoops to jump through and Paul did just that. With the help of WRLT staff, he combined the Conservation Easement and Land Donation such that WRLT could own both. The endowment will grow over time and be used to help defray future staff costs.

Paul's appreciation for Oregon coast's diverse habitats and inhabitants led him to become a hands-on conservationist and is a model that we can all learn and benefit from. In a truly wonderful turn of events, Paul first became the owner and then the donor of a prime example of coastal biodiversity. Paul says he is now "just the caretaker" of Raven Ridge. It's a role he relishes. He savors the thought that this 40-acre property will remain abundant and wild forever and will be stewarded by a local organization.

What's next? Well, if Paul were to find another outstanding piece of property to conserve, he would indeed be interested to work closely with WRLT to increase conserved land in an ever-changing world. With an open mind, a strong vision of sustainability, and a well-strategized plan, Paul has shown all of us how to make a dream become reality. Raven Ridge will always be a place for learning, hiking, meditating, and