

“The statewide system of natural areas is critical to the long-term persistence of our unique natural heritage.”

STATE OF WASHINGTON
NATURAL HERITAGE
PLAN



ELK RIVER NRCA



STUDENTS AT
CHEHALIS RIVER SURGE PLAIN NAP



VOLUNTEERS AT
TABLE MOUNTAIN NRCA



HERON NESTS
AT WOODARD BAY NRCA



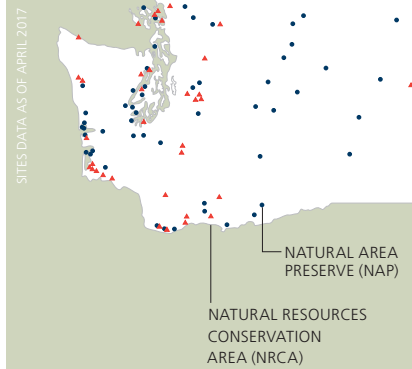
LOOMIS NRCA



KENNEDY CREEK NAP

▲ Wetlands at Klickitat Canyon NRCA provide habitat for the state endangered **Greater Sandhill crane** (*Grus canadensis tabida*). Natural Areas Program managers are working with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Conboy National Wildlife Refuge to monitor the birds and their breeding, nesting and foraging habitat needs.

GERALD AND BUFF CORSI © CALIFORNIA ACADEMY OF SCIENCES



▲ The estuary at **Kennedy Creek NAP** provides key feeding, resting and wintering habitat for migrating and resident shorebirds and waterfowl. Natural areas provide excellent opportunities for outdoor environmental education and research—from primary grade levels to post-graduate studies.



Some sites require DNR permission to visit because features are sensitive to human disturbance.

UPDATED APRIL 2017

Become a Volunteer

Take part in conservation and nature study. Volunteer stewards, interpreters, data collectors and other helpers are always needed.

Contact the DNR Natural Areas Program

Natural Areas Program
Washington State Department of Natural Resources
PO Box 47014
Olympia, WA 98504-7014

Phone: 360-902-1600
Email: information@dnr.wa.gov

If you need this information in an alternative format, call (360) 902-1600 or TRS: 711

See photos and descriptions of natural areas at our website.



NATURAL AREAS ARE PLACES FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND EDUCATION



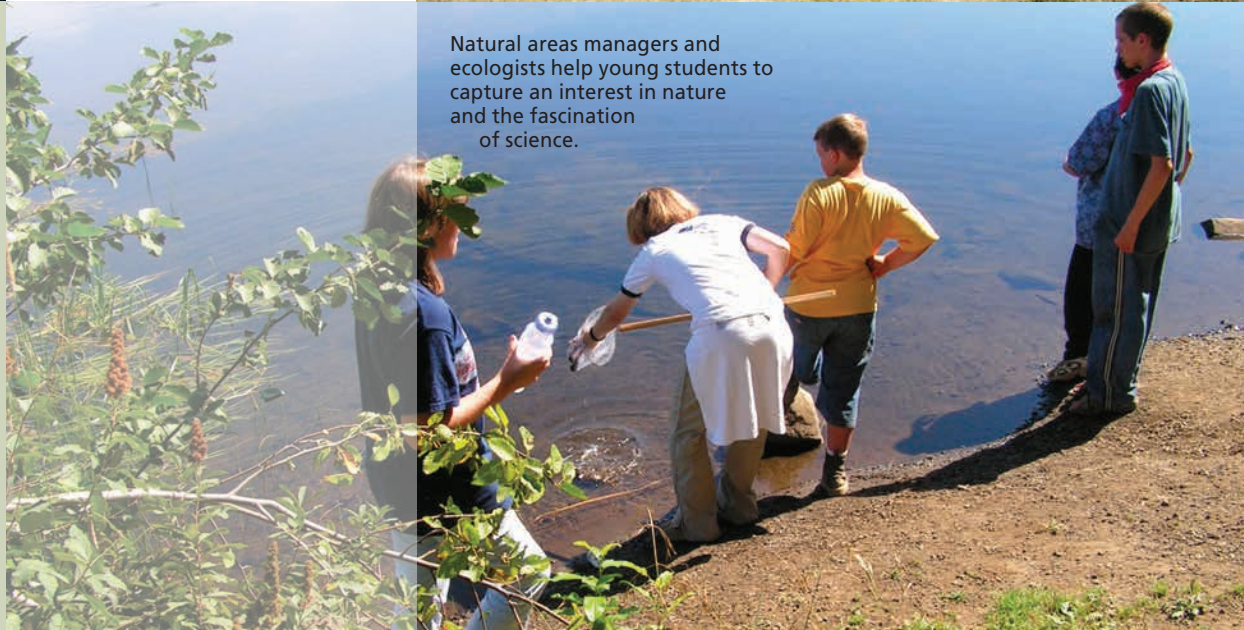
▲ During an annual monitoring foray, a DNR biologist searches the waters of **Trout Lake NAP** for eggs of the endangered Oregon spotted frog (*Rana pretiosa*).

Natural areas are places that have been mostly undisturbed by human activities. DNR manages these unique areas so scientists, students, volunteers and the public can see ecological processes in action. Natural areas provide information for long-term scientific study and they serve as controls for research studies and as living laboratories for education.

By studying these areas we improve our understanding of the natural world. Because natural areas are some of the best, most intact ecosystems left on the landscape, we can monitor them to better understand the impacts of many issues facing conservation today, including climate change and invasive species.



A researcher collects soil samples at Kahlotus Ridgetop NAP for a study assessing pre-historic vegetation conditions



Natural areas managers and ecologists help young students to capture an interest in nature and the fascination of science.

Explore the natural areas that protect Washington's most unique ecosystems



Natural Areas

Keeping Washington's Natural Lands Safe and Sound



WASHINGTON'S NATURAL AREAS

Natural areas are managed by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR). They come in two varieties: Natural Area Preserves (NAPs) that protect priority species and high quality ecosystems, and Natural Resources Conservation Areas (NRCAs) that often contain priority species or ecosystems, but also offer access to low-impact public uses. Both types of areas provide opportunities for education and research. Both contain vital components of Washington's ecological, natural and cultural heritage.

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.

COVER PHOTO: MOUNT SI NRCA BY KELLY HEINTZ. CYPRESS ISLAND NRCA/NAP BY CHRIST THOMSEN. CALIFORNIA MOUNTAIN KINGSSNAKE: W.F. LEONARD

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

◀ The California Mountain Kingsnake (*Lampropeltis zonata*) can be found in the southernmost 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 PROTECT PLANTS, ANIMALS AND ECOSYSTEMS

So far, nearly 130,000 acres of state-owned land is conserved forever in the Natural Areas Program. These lands provide priceless habitat for native fish and animals, endangered native plants and diminishing natural landscapes. 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 as 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

▼ **Canada lynx** (*Lynx canadensis*) is a wide-ranging species and sensitive to human activity. The Loomis NRCA contributes to its home range. Their large, snowshoe-like paws enable them to inhabit snowy areas often avoided by coyotes and cougars. There have been many recorded lynx sightings in the Loomis NRCA.



CAMAS MEADOWS NAP

TABLE MOUNTAIN NRCA

RESEARCHER AT KINGS LAKE BOG NAP

GOLDEN PAINTBRUSH

▲ **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 helps select and nominate lands for protection. This 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 use for conservation purposes. Decisions to select natural areas are made by the Natural Heritage Advisory Council whose voting members include scientific experts 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.



▲ **Taylor's checkerspot** (*Euphydryas editha taylori*) is in danger of extinction. Only 14 populations are known in Washington and Oregon.

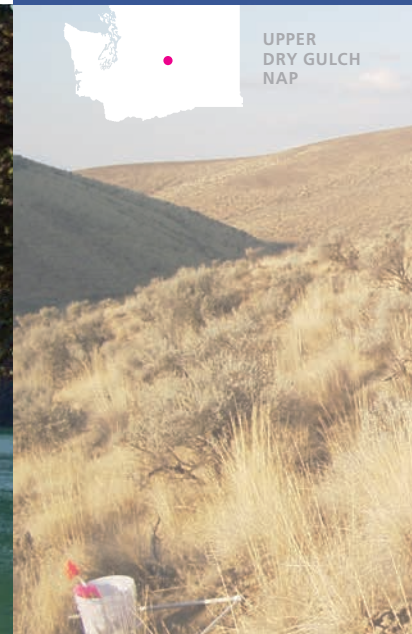
Working together with staff and resources provided by DNR, this council takes an objective, scientific approach to identify the best candidate sites for the special protection of Washington's natural areas system.

“Establishing clear priorities for species and ecosystems is critical to successful conservation.”

STATE OF WASHINGTON
NATURAL HERITAGE PLAN



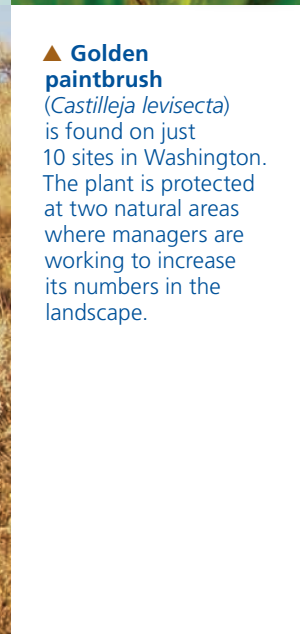
CYPRESS ISLAND NRCA/NAP



UPPER DRY GULCH NAP



A graduate student collects data on Whited's milkvetch (*Astragalus sinuatus*), an endangered native plant at Upper Dry Gulch NAP.



CASTLE ROCK NAP

TAYLOR'S CHECKERSPOT PHOTO BY DANA ROSS