Ecotrust

Ecotrust is powered by the vision of a world where people and nature thrive together. Since 1991, we have partnered with local communities from California to Alaska to build new ways of living and doing business. From forestry to finance, food access to green building, we work to advance social equity, economic opportunity, and environmental well-being. Together, we are making this place we live a home that we love.

Ecotrust began by surveying temperate rain forests as a distinct ecoregion, an analysis that led the organization to identify British Columbia’s Kitlope River as the largest intact temperate rain forest watershed in the world. Beebe and others from Ecotrust visited the region and engaged the Haisla First Nation, whose traditional territory included the Kitlope. The organization supported the Haisla in launching a Rediscovery Program for cultural education and, four years later, in securing provincial government recognition for over 750,000 acres (3,000 km2) of temperate rain forest as Huchsduwachsdu Nuyem Jees (the Kitlope Heritage Conservancy Protected Area).

A source of inspiration for the organization has been Wendell Berry’s quote, “The answers, if they are to come, and if they are to work, must be developed in the presence of the user on the land; they must be developed to some degree by the user on the land.” In addition to Ecotrust’s work in the Kitlope region, the organization’s support of local leadership and communities has included Pribilof Islands, Alaska; Prince William Sound / Copper River, Alaska; Clayoquot Sound, British Columbia; Willapa Bay, Washington; and the Klamath region, Oregon / California.

In 1992, seeking to find greater financial resources for entrepreneurial efforts in these communities, Ecotrust initiated discussions with ShoreBank Corporation, the Chicago-based leader in community development banking. In 1995, the two partnered in founding ShoreBank Enterprise (now ShoreBank Enterprise Cascadia), a non-profit community development financial institution (CDFI), and in 1997 ShoreBank Pacific, the nation’s first environmental bank. In 1995, Ecotrust also helped to create Ecotrust Canada, an independent affiliate, based in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Ecotrust is headquartered in the LEED-certified Natural Capital Center, in Portland. Another emphasis for the organization has been an effort to characterize the region, based on its human / nature interrelationships. Ecotrust published the first distribution and status maps of temperate rain forests and Pacific salmon of North America, as well as a series of books that include The Rain Forests of Home: Profile of a North American Bioregion and Salmon Nation: People, Fish and Our Common Home.

Later in the 1990s, with advice from board member Jane Jacobs, Ecotrust expanded its attention to urban markets. The organization redeveloped a Portland warehouse into the Jean Vollum Natural Capital Center, the first historic restoration in the country to earn a Leadership in Environmental and Energy Design (LEED) gold award, and launched what has become one of the nation’s leading programs for sustainable food and farming.

Recent extensions of Ecotrust’s work include: honoring native leaders through the Buffett Award for Indigenous Leadership; promoting regional economies through a series of cartoon-filled newspaper inserts in the Portland and San Francisco dailies and weeklies; creating decision support tools for ecosystem-based management; launching Ecotrust Forests LLC, a private
equity fund to manage forestland for long-term regional health, as well as financial returns; and bolstering bioregional identity through the idea of Salmon Nation. W

**External links**

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