



# **HighlandsNEWS**

JOURNAL OF KETTLE RANGE CONSERVATION GROUP

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## **WE'RE BACK!**

But wait! We never left – really. Kettle Range Conservation Group, a powerhouse of grassroots forest protection in NE Washington since 1976, has been in a state of hibernation for several years – 6 years and 10 months to be exact – and after such a long sleep we're, well rested, excited about the future and anxious to continue our work.

KRCG never stopped giving college scholarships to local high school seniors every year since 1996 - to the tune of over \$38,000 so far - and our activist Board of Directors maintained the KRCG website and our 501(c)3 federal non-profit status. And seriously, we never stopped working to protect fish, wildlife, promote recreation and save the last roadless forests areas in northeast Washington. Conservation Northwest decided to close its (and KRCG's former) Republic office in May. As such, it is time for KRCG to reengage.

In June of 2004, KRCG completed a partial merger with Northwest Ecosystem Alliance that then became Conservation Northwest. This was not an organizational merger, however, but rather a transfer of some assets. KRCG's Board purposefully did not do a total merger because it anticipated at some future time it would return to its mission. KRCG's program will support the Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition which it co-founded in 2002, collaboratively resolve social & environmental challenges, restore healthy forests, and rededicate our principles and passion to protect wildlands and wildlife of the Columbia Highlands.

And besides could there be a better time to re-engage than Kettle Range Conservation Group's 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary? It's an auspicious time for change.

The work of a natural resource conservationist is to oversee and insure the wise stewardship of our public lands, water and wildlife with the goal of passing on a healthy planet to future generations.

At KRCG the work started by Dick Slagle and other cofounders will now continue in earnest and with a passion for the land that we all know and love. Expect to hear a lot more from us in the coming months and years.

Peace be with you, *Timothy J. Coleman, Executive Director*

## **ANNUAL KETTLE RANGE RENDEZVOUS**

— Mark your calendars: July 9-10 —

KRCG has been leading hikes into threatened wilderness for 35 years and among the best of them is the annual Kettle Range Rendezvous. This year's event will be held a few weeks later than traditionally, July 9-10, because of the large snow pack in the Highlands that looks to persist for weeks longer than normal. On top of that, the peak of wildflowers is typically in early July. We hope you can join us and participate in one of the many

hikes and trail work parties to be conducted. There will be a potluck and barbecue the evening of the 9<sup>th</sup> – grab your favorite dish to share and join us for some poetry and songs around the campfire.

For more information contact Tim Coleman:  
tcoleman@kettlerange.org or call 509-775-2667

## **WORD ON THE STREETS**

The headlines in the Republic News Miner blared: “Cattleman’s Association Opposes Wilderness.” Duh, is that news? I mean, for about half a human lifetime – 35 years to be exact – wilderness has been proposed for some still wild roadless areas in the Columbia Highlands and some Ferry County cattlemen have always opposed it, especially the four of them who comprise the Ferry County Cattleman’s Association.

What seems weird as cow flop in a pristine mountain stream is that a couple of guys who *lease* our Colville National Forest to feed their cows apparently believe they *own* the land and can tell anybody else what to do with it. Federal grazing lease permit holders get to graze a cow and calf (AUM) for about \$1.35 per month – \$1 less than it was in 1980 -- from about June 1 through October. Evidently for a several hundred bucks you too could tell the rest of America how YOU want the National Forests managed?

The Colville National Forest is owned by all Americans. You and I complaining about cows damaging trails, illegal use by ATVs by ranchers who spreading noxious weeds and foul wetlands and streams does deserve public airing. But vocal opposition to protecting our last wild roadless forest by a couple of cowboys who lease federal lands and who are already receiving taxpayer subsidies seems, well, like hose job.

## **THE RUB**

Few people are aware that during the past 6 years, the Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition, KRCCG and other conservation groups and the US Forest Service have met with local ranchers to discuss national forest range management policy, including a line by line discussion of federal wilderness grazing policy. Conservationists even offered to sign on the dotted line an agreement to help livestock interests but not a single rancher was willing to sign.

What is clear is this: The Wilderness Act does not preclude or dictate national forest range management – the Forest Service does. Section 4(d)(4) of The Wilderness Act says:

*“Within wilderness areas in the national forests designated by this Act, (2) the grazing of livestock, where established prior to the effective date of this Act, shall be permitted to continue subject to such reasonable regulations as are deemed necessary by the Secretary of Agriculture.”*

The fact: by law cattlemen have guaranteed access to wilderness including the use of water resources, fencing and motorized equipment. The reality: no other business interest is given such a pass. Yet cattlemen seem oblivious to this reality and are more stridently opposed to wilderness than any other group save for perhaps motorized recreation with whom they now coalition. Following on the Cattleman’s Association announced

opposition to any new wilderness, association members joined with Tri-county Motorized Recreation Coalition and county commissioner Brian Dandel to force county commissioner Brad Miller to support a Ferry County resolution opposing all new wildernesses.

One has to ask: what business do county commissioners have regulating federal lands?

### **NATIONAL FOREST MANAGEMENT PLANNING**

In 2009, the Forest Service released a preliminary list of roadless areas likely to get allocated to wilderness management in a plan including many areas in the Kettles and Salmo-Priest area. A draft forest plan supplement is expected to be released in June and will include wilderness recommendations across these forests. Stay tuned for more info.

### **HELP BUILD THE GIBRALTAR TRAIL**

Building the new Gibraltar Trail south of Republic in the CNF was a dream of KRCCG's for over a decade. The Forest Service approved trail construction last fall and about a mile of new trail was built by volunteers. This year several trail construction work parties are planned. To get involved contact Tim Coleman, 775-2667 or Steve Anthes, 779-4117

#### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

- Kettle Rendezvous July 9 & 10
- Member meetings
- Summer Hikes
- Gibraltar Trail building
- November Auction

Kettle Range Conservation Group was formed in 1976 by Northeast Washington citizens seeking to protect the last remaining wild places in the Kettle River Range Mountains.