

HighlandsNEWS

JOURNAL OF KETTLE RANGE CONSERVATION GROUP

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Mission

Our mission is to defend wilderness, protect biodiversity, and restore ecosystems of the Columbia River Basin.

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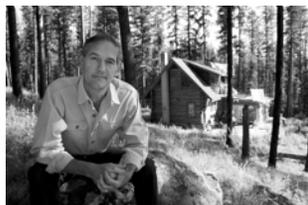
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A NOTE TO YOU by Timothy Coleman, Executive Director

“When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.” -- *John Muir*



In the world of politics what makes all the difference – in a word – is what you call it. I’ve heard environmentalists are “winning” but so far it’s hard to discern what it is we’ve won. Perhaps it’s treading water like the proverbial frog in a rapidly heated pan of it?

As noted author and activist Bill McKibben recently opined “environmentalists never win permanent victories.” With the evidence rising like late winter temperatures in the Midwest – into the 80+F degree range in mid-March – conservationist’s work to save the last remaining wild lands, restore healthy watersheds, conserve wildlife and motivate sustainable natural resource use sometimes seems about as productive as planting seeds on frozen ground.

But, I’m an optimist at heart and I trust that spring warmth will germinate seeds that have lain dormant, like basic biological cause and effect relationship, our bodies are a product of photosynthesis, carbon, water and oxygen, wired to a brain that has evolved over millions of years. Healthy oceans and forests are the primary sources of atmospheric oxygen – the air we breathe – and conversely are major uptake processors of atmospheric carbon.

All plants and animals share circadian rhythms – even bacteria do – synchronizing and cycling emotions, feeding, sleeping, hormones and body temperature. We are manifestations of the world around us - innate, intrinsic and spiritual. So too, our need to connect to nature at the most fundamental level is in our DNA.

Science research findings tell us that landscapes fundamentally shape our sense of place and belonging to it. Urban residents, for instance, tend to bias everyday decisions such as where to live, jog, walk and relax by the presence of trees. Trees have been shown to be positively associated with human stress reduction. Who hasn’t enjoyed respite from a hot summer afternoon sidled up to a big old tree?

Research by economist Geoffrey Donovan of the Pacific Northwest Research Station found that pregnant women who live in houses with more trees around them were less likely to have underweight babies. His research also found a positive correlation between larger sized trees and a reduction in the rate of property crime.

A NOTE TO YOU (continued)

How often I wonder why in the Columbia Highlands - land of big trees, rivers and mountains - that we find such polarized and positional politics virtually strangling the ability of communities to resolve important issues. Talking with individuals supposedly on the other side of the table from me politically I almost always find that we hold very similar views and interests. I think this is fundamentally rooted in biological connections.

During the Forest Service-led collaborative Forest Plan Summit (March 2006 – January 2007) the future management of our Colville National Forest was debated by an eclectic group of 80 people. Summit participants agreed to the protection of all roadless areas, restoration of big tree forests and more intensive commercial forestry near our homes and communities to reduce wildfire risk. In principle and fundamentally participant agreements were the same save for one word: “wilderness.” You see even though consensus agreement was preservation of roadless areas – off-limits to logging, mining and road developments – some people absolutely would not support calling that wilderness.

Apparently all that separates “us” from “them” is a word. The wilderness word is also enmeshed in a hornet’s nest of conspiracies aggravated by its detractors as the end of life as we know it. But peel away that onion skin and you’ll find that people appreciate the benefits of roadless wild forests, their beauty, clean water, wildlife and solitude. Wilderness designation by Congress of course would permanently protect those values but for some fear of the word has in their minds changed its real meaning.

So the preservation of few roadless wild forests in the Colville National Forest that are remnants of a once vast American wilderness hinges on a name. Fundamentally, we are all hard-wired to appreciate what wilderness really means: freewill. And in a word, that’s really what it’s about.

Errata

In the December issue of Highlands News, Page 1, President Barack Obama was incorrectly listed as having signed the Wild Sky Wilderness Bill in 2009, when in fact it was President George W. Bush who signed that bill into law in 2008.

HIGHLANDS NEWS – COLOR OR NOT?

Most newsletters, newspapers, magazines and other materials are printed in full color. The world around us is an artist’s pallet of myriad pigments and color arrangements. Publishers strive to bring nature in all its beauty as close as your fingertips to enliven your connection to it. But there is a downside.

Color inks contain all sorts of nasty chemicals from petroleum distillates to cadmium, titanium, aluminum and other heavy metals, to formaldehyde, butanal, propylene glycol, propyl alcohol, toluene or glyco-ethers used in their production to disperse, preserve and dry ink.

If paper printed with color ink is burned it has the potential to release toxic substances. Burning garbage in your woodstove not only threatens to clog your chimney it also sends toxic gases containing heavy metals up the chimney and into the environment.

State departments of health, the U.S. Energy Department and Center for Disease Control warn against low-temperature burning of catalogs, colored newspaper and other printed documents.

Although we strongly urge readers of Highlands News to *reduce, reuse and recycle* paper products including this newsletter, we know at least of few members who cook and/or heat with wood that might use this newsletter to literally light their fire.

That’s why we don’t use colored inks in our newsletter.

If you’d like a full-color version of our newsletter, please subscribe to our electronic version by sending our editor an email (santhes@kettlerange.org) or go to our website where you can view and download a color version.



Snow Peak in the Kettle Range. Photo by Tim Coleman

SUMMER HIKES

NEW! HIGHLANDS AFTER WORK - JOIN US FOR A SUMMER OF EXPLORATION

Throughout our 35 year history KRCG has offered hikes to some of the best and least visited areas of the Okanogan Highlands, Kettle and Selkirk mountains of Washington. The “Last Chance” hike held in the late 1970’s and 80’s offered an opportunity to see Kettle River Range wild forests caught up in assembly line clearcutting that leveled centuries old forests and wasted watersheds.

This year we will offer “Highlands after Work” hikes on select Fridays from 5:30 to 7:30 PM. These will be shorter hikes of about 2 hours in length.

We’ll also be re-instituting our annual Big Lick Trail work day in June and will help organize work parties for continued construction of the Gibraltar Trail.

Hikes are a great way to meet people, get a bit of exercise and SEE the beauty of wild forests. Hikes are free and open to everyone – **but require advance registration.** For more information and to register for hikes visit www.KettleRange.org or email tcoleman@kettlerange.org

Kettle River Range Hikes

- May 18 -- Ten Mile Trail – Highlands after Work. Starts and ends at the campground off SR 21 San Poil River / Ten Mile Campground and ascends a few hundred feet and then follows the beautiful Ten Mile Creek Canyon. Easy to moderate difficulty.
- June 8 -- Fir Mountain – Highlands after Work. Start at SR 20 across from Sweat Creek Campground. Hike is to the top of Fir Mountain. Strenuous difficulty.
- June 30 -- Clackamas Mountain Trail. Easy to moderate approximately 8 miles one/way.
- **July 14 & 15 -- 10th Annual Kettle Range Rendezvous** – Hikes include Hoodoo Canyon, Kettle Crest – Wapaloosie to Jungle Hill, Sherman Peak Loop and White Mountain. Camping, a potluck dinner, barbecue and live music will follow the hikes on Saturday.
- July 21-- Bodie Mountain Trail – 6 miles one-way. Moderate difficulty.

Selkirk Mountain Hikes

- June 9 – Abercrombie-Hooknose – moderate to strenuous difficulty
- June 23 -- Grassy Top / Hall Mountain – all-day hike, strenuous difficulty.

Trail Work Parties

Trail work on a new or old trail, includes moving downed trees, clearing brush, and scraping off vegetation to improve trail tread.

- June 16 – Big Lick Trail work party. Help restore this historic trail in N. Fork St. Peter Creek watershed that connects to the Kettle Crest National Scenic Trail.
- Gibraltar Trail Construction – various dates are planned. Please contact us for more information and to sign up for a work party. It’s fun!



Gibraltar Trailhead in the Kettle Range. Photo by Tim Coleman



Kettle Range Rendezvous. Photo by Leif Jacobson

BUGS AND YOUR FORESTS

What are otherwise natural biological and physiological forest ecosystem processes are many times attributed to a failure of human managers to do enough managing, while “natural” takes a backseat. Budworm and mountain pine beetles are native to our forests. Climate change has apparently extended seasonal temperatures that has allowed both species to thrive.

Fire research has shown the fire danger from dying trees is short lived, declining significantly once needles fall off trees – in the case of lodgepole 1-3 years. Scientists studying Colorado fire behavior found bark beetle outbreak did not affect the extent or severity of wild fire (Kulakowski and Veblen 2007). A modeling study of the Intermountain Rocky Mountain region predicted a reduced risk of active crown fire from 5 to 60 years after beetle outbreaks (Jenkins et al. 2008).

Spruce budworm moths spread into NE Washington over the last two years from the eastern Cascade Mountains. Budworm activity at first appears as swarming dime-sized beige-colored moths in the canopies primarily of fir and spruce trees. The moths lay eggs that hatch into larval that form protective web hibernation tents and emerge the following spring to consume needles starting from branch tips and progressing inward towards tree boles. It then chrysalises into moths and begins its life cycle anew.

Tree mortality from spruce budworm is typically limited to sapling and pole-sized conifers - plantations of fir and spruce being particularly susceptible - though years of continual defoliation can kill larger ones. The US Department of Agriculture calls spruce budworm “the most widely distributed and destructive defoliator of coniferous forests in Western North America.”

Historically and throughout most of its range, the spruce budworm life-cycle from egg to adult has been about 12 months. The first budworm infestation arose in 1909 on Vancouver Island, B.C. In 1914 it first appeared in Oregon and by 1922 it had spread to the Rockies. Budworms are preyed upon by several groups of insects and other arthropods, small mammals, and birds. There are more than 40 species of insect parasites (small wasps and flies) of the western spruce budworm.

In the mid 1990’s a Okanogan Highlands budworm outbreak lasted about 3 years but killed few larger trees. In response to this outbreak the Forest Service proposed a spraying program to combat the bug but before it could

carry out its plan budworm parasites that typically keep it in check virtually wiped it out. Because budworms are in the same family as butterflies and moths (spp. lepidoptera) insecticides that might be applied to kill them will also broadly kill other members of this family.

For more information:

www.na.fs.fed.us/spfo/pubs/fidls/westbw/fidl-wbw.htm

Mountain pine beetle is another tree predator that has been killing forests from central British Columbia – where this epidemic started more than a decade ago – to the Colorado Rockies. The beetle is currently attacking mostly mature lodgepole pine forests in the Colville and Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest.

Once red needles start showing up on pine trees the beetle is beyond control and will run its course. Even in British Columbian forests clearcutting entire sub basin watersheds could not stop beetles from spreading. Drought and heat are the beetle’s friend but wet and sub-zero temperatures are its enemy. Forest ecologists have warned that logging dying and dead forests may actually set back forest health for many decades because removal of large woody debris reduces dead wood that feeds soil organisms critical to new forest regrowth.

Continued on Page 5



Owl Mountain in the Kettle Range. Photo by Tim Coleman

Human history becomes more and more a race
between education and catastrophe.
- HG Wells

BUGS AND YOUR FORESTS (continued from Pg.4)

Like budworms, mountain pine beetles go from egg to mature adult normally over a period of one year. However, this can vary due to temperature and elevation and in warmer climates beetles have been known to experience two generations a year but in colder climates only one generation every two years. Research indicates the current beetle outbreak has seen two generations being produced in some years.

The beetles are a natural forest tree predator, helping to recycle forest nutrients while providing a food source for myriad bird and insect species. As this clip from Parks Canada notes, when viewing beetles as part of an ecological process – rather than effecting wood products production – one comes away with a different perspective:

“It’s hard to imagine how a tree killed by mountain pine beetle could be good for a forest. However, to be truly healthy and support all the wildlife that depends on it, there must be a variety of young, old and dead trees in a forest ecosystem. At “endemic” or normal levels, mountain pine beetles help maintain this diversity by colonizing and killing old or damaged trees, therefore kick-starting the invaluable process of decomposition. Decomposing wood returns nutrients to the system while providing shelter and food for many plants and animals. Standing dead trees host a diversity of organisms that would not be present without them.”

Source: Parks Canada

PROJECT SCHOLARSHIP



Scholarship awardee Sarah Kliegman celebrating the successful completion of her PhD...with the help of KRCG Project Scholarship

This year marks KRCG’s 16th year of giving grants to college-bound high school graduates to help cover their tuition and book costs. With your help, we’ve built a scholarship endowment of over \$20,000 that we draw from and add too each year and that is committed long-term to supporting student needs. The demand for

grants is always greater than our available resources and competition between students is high. KRCG is a 501(c)(3) federal non-profit charity. Your contributions to Project Scholarship are tax-deductible depending on your tax situation. Please consider making a contribution to Project Scholarship and help rural students achieve their dream of a college education. To make a contribution you can use the secure PayPal form on our website.

KRCG FIRST ANNUAL PHOTO CONTEST

Announcing the winners for our first annual Winter Wilderness Photo Contest.

- Rein Atteman wins Best in Show for his mysterious skiers on Sherman Pass.
- Paul Laak wins most popular for his candid shot of Janine Summy traversing the snow berm on Sherman Pass elevation 5575 feet.

Check out these great pictures on Kettle Range Conservation Group's FaceBook page or at the Republic Visitor's Center on Clark St.



Photo: Rein Atteman



Photo: Paul Laak

A great photograph is one that fully expresses what one feels, in the deepest sense, about what is being photographed.

- Ansel Adams

WORD ON THE STREET by Timothy Coleman

In May 2002, Duane Vaagen arranged to meet with me at Esther's Restaurant in Republic where he proposed a new way of doing business called collaboration. A month later and with a diverse group of stakeholders invested the Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition, or NEWFC, was born.

Duane and I actually began our discussion years beforehand at a hearing chaired by state Senator Bob Morton regarding land use management at which Duane and I provided testimony. Afterwards, I told Duane that the timber industry wasn't the enemy and that our fight was with the U.S. Forest Service. He told me if he collaborated with me that he feared being run out of business by well-financed big mills like Plum Creek and Boise-Cascade. At that time, Vaagen Bros. Lumber was making a transition from a large-diameter log milling structure to small-diameter log milling.

The Vaagen's Republic mill closure in January 2003 was a business decision made by its owners. Ferry County commissioner Brian Dansel recently alleged local "extreme environmentalists" closed the mill and he opposes NEWFC because they are part of it. Consider the facts. The Republic mill was designed to mill large-sized trees of which it had to compete with Boise-Cascade's Kettle Falls mill for supplies. In addition, at that time, Canada was dumping government subsidized lumber on the U.S. at below market value. Perhaps the key challenge to the mill or any other that might replace it is the distance from Kettle River / San Poil River valleys to markets, access to cost-effective rail service, and in particular, mountain passes that significantly increase transportation costs to those markets.

In late fall 2002 (when the Vaagen Republic mill closure was announced) the facts were:

- KRCG had been actively collaborating with Vaagen's since May 2002
- Vaagen's lost a bid war with Boise-Cascade for a Lone Ranch Creek timber sale auction that would have kept the mill open for many months
- There were several state timber sales that received no bids
- The Republic mill needed a multi-million dollar upgrade of its facility
- At the time Canadian lumber imports were flowing into the U.S. and driving down the market price for dimensional lumber

- Mt. Leona Fire salvage that Vaagen said it had to have had been delayed by the Forest Service for over a year and a half
- An economic study of the mill closure by ECO Northwest concluded log supply wasn't the problem, it was market competition.

In the years since that time and formation of NEWFC a collaborative partnership between industry, conservation and the Forest Service has resulted in cutting edge forestry and community cooperation that has safeguarded unprotected wilderness and other essential wildlife habitats, restored healthy forests and reduced forest wildfire risk. What Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack called "model for the nation." NEWFC's role in development of the Columbia Highlands Initiative was first to create a "blueprint" of active, restoration and wild land management zones, vetted those with the public through a series of breakfast and lunch forums, production and showing a video about it, personal communication, and in-field testing working with the U.S. Forest Service.

A decade or more ago forest conservationists were filing appeals, sitting in trees and going to jail to protect our national forests. Today there are few people that would disagree that changes to our publicly-owned forest management has been significant because of that struggle and the work of NEWFC.

Some important changes include:

- clearcutting is a thing of the past
- a commitment from industry and the Forest Service to focus on forest restoration
- two-thirds of the Colville National Forest is either in a restoration or preservation status
- a commitment to retain the largest 20 trees per acre within timber sale projects

After nearly a century of intensive national forest logging and exclusion of natural fire that historically helped maintain healthy forests, there is a lot of restoration work that is needed. The recent announcement by the Agriculture Department that nearly a million dollars in restoration funds would be coming to the Colville will provide for an estimated 258 jobs and help restore over 120,000 acres of forest watersheds in Ferry and Stevens County.

We are gratified to know that wildlife will benefit from NEWFC's collaboration and that future generations will inherit big trees and wild places.

A SMALL DAM BLOCKS A BIG RIVER. WILL ENLOE DAM EVER COME DOWN?

by Jere Gillespie

Enloe Dam on the Similkameen River could be licensed to resume power production after 50 years of inactivity, sometime in 2012. The Okanogan PUD is nearly finished with its required reports to FERC, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. FERC has issued a final Environmental Assessment greenlighting the project.

Conservation Groups, including American Rivers, American Whitewater, Sierra Club, CELP, and Columbiana, working together as the Hydropower Coalition, are official parties to the FERC licensing procedure.

A final permit, the 401 for water quality, has just received the last round of scoping comments, and could be issued by the WA State Dept of Ecology. Two major issues await resolution. The 54 foot Enloe Dam completely blocks fish passage for steelhead, salmon and lamprey into the upper portion of the 3,600 sq. mile Similkameen Basin. Fish passage on the Similkameen has been proposed as mitigation for fish habitat losses incurred with Grand Coulee Dam since 1941. Enloe Fish Passage was authorized by Congress in 1976. In particular the endangered Upper Columbia River Steelhead would benefit from the large increase in upstream spawning and rearing habitat. Given the recent decision by Judge Redden that more habitat must be secured for listed stocks, fish passage at Enloe Dam is the best opportunity in the upper Columbia River region to secure the wild native steelhead stock. Spring Chinook salmon and Pacific Lamprey are also at extreme risk and would gain significant habitat opportunities above Enloe Dam.

The second major issue is loss of scenic values in the canyon which holds Enloe Dam and the Similkameen Falls. This site is now a destination viewpoint for the new Similkameen River Trail, a segment of the PNT, Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail.

The design of the new facilities calls for diverting the Similkameen from its riverbed, piping into turbines to make electricity, then returned to the riverbed below Similkameen Falls. A 400 foot section of the river, referred to as the “by-pass” reach, will be dewatered for eight months of the year; reducing flows from median 500 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 30 and 10 cfs.

Conservation groups are calling for more water over Similkameen Falls, citing the requirements of the Clean Water Act to protect aesthetic uses of a river.

This license for Enloe Dam is the 4th request by the Okanogan PUD since Enloe was taken out of operation in 1958, because costs of continued operation outweighed the economic benefits of producing power at the dam. Three previous licenses have been rejected by FERC because the dam would have not been economically viable, especially given the requirements of fish passage.

In January, Conservation Groups sponsored an economic evaluation of the PUD’s costs and benefit statement for Enloe, which was produced in 2007. The analysis, by Rocky Mountain Econometrics (RME), shows that Enloe Dam will be an economic loss for the PUD. It will not be possible to produce power at Enloe for less than the costs, and for less than the open market price for power. RME’s analysis also pointed out the potential loss of tourism revenue from scenic viewing of Similkameen Falls on the new Similkameen River Trail.

Enloe Dam is 90 years old. It has not produced power in 50 years. If PUD does not license and build this time, BLM, which owns the land Enloe sits on, wants a study of dam removal.

If the dam comes down, the Similkameen River will run free its entire 320 mile length – and welcome home the native fish.

Visit www.columbiana.org for more information & pictures of the Similkameen River.





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All contact information is strictly confidential and is never shared or published.

Kettle Range Conservation Group is a 501(c)3 non-profit, community charity founded by a concerned group of citizens in Republic, Washington in 1976. Your membership dues are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

Please use the secure PayPal form on our website or fill out this form, include your check and mail to:

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