



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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A NOTE TO YOU

After a very challenging year, Kettle Range Conservation Group is back on firm footing following our successful November auction fundraiser for college scholarships and our collaborative forest conservation work. Thanks to all who attended this fun event, your generosity is sincerely appreciated.

This year marks KRCG's 35th anniversary. Since 1976, we've taken on daunting obstacles, and more importantly, today progressive conservation has taken firmly hold in our public forests using a new set of collaborative communication tools. Since 1992, KRCG has played a pivotal role in safeguarding every roadless area in the national forests of the Columbia Highlands and helped the Forest Service find nearly 70,000 acres of previously un-inventoried roadless forests to their official inventory.

In our early years, the "Last Chance" hikes became a standard summer activity that morphed into a summer trails program that now includes construction of the new Gibraltar Trail just outside of Republic. Our Project Scholarship program established an endowment and granted nearly \$40K to local college-bound students. KRCG co-founded the Wild Washington Campaign that helped lead to President George W. Bush signing the Wild Sky Wilderness Act into law in 2008, and in 2002, we co-founded the collaborative Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition that in 2009 was noted by Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack as "a model for the nation."

In the early 1990's, KRCG gathered petition signatures, put on street theatre in Spokane and otherwise promoted wolf re-occupation of Washington. We are therefore very pleased that the Washington Fish & Wildlife Commission has adopted a wolf recovery plan. Thanks to all of you who sent in comments! (see *Latest News* below)

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

LATEST NEWS: WA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION ADOPTS WOLF PLAN

The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission unanimously adopted a plan December 3 guiding state conservation and management of gray wolves in Washington. The plan establishes recovery objectives for wolves in three regions in WA, along with procedures for addressing predation on livestock and impacts on wildlife.

Gray wolves are currently classified by the state as endangered throughout. They are also listed under federal law as endangered in the western two-thirds of the state. Currently there are five wolf packs in WA including one in Kittitas, one in Okanogan and three in Pend Oreille County.

This plan establishes recovery objective of 15 breeding pairs of wolves that are present in the state for at least three years, including four in Eastern Washington. The plan approved by the commission also allows WDFW to initiate action to de-list gray wolves if 18 breeding pairs are documented during a single year.

The plan provides a variety of management measures - from technical assistance to landowners to lethal removal - to control wolves that prey on livestock. The plan also establishes conditions for compensating ranchers who lose livestock to wolf predation. The plan allows WDFW to use lethal and non-lethal measures to manage wolf predation on at-risk deer, elk and caribou populations if wolf numbers reach or exceed the recovery objective within a region where predation occurs. All wolves currently in the WA state have naturally migrated from British Columbia, Idaho and Oregon.

For more information go to: www.wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/gray_wolf



There seem to be a number of lingering questions regarding KRCG's merger and "un-merger" with Conservation Northwest. Let me try to explain.

In 2004, KRCG merged part of its program with Northwest Ecosystem Alliance which then became Conservation Northwest. However, KRCG continued to exist and an active Board of Directors continued to manage the Project Scholarship program.

The merger part seemed, well, after nearly three decades of mind-numbing work, like a gamble worth taking to gain permanent protection for Kettle, Okanogan and Selkirk roadless wild areas of the Columbia Highlands. All the right ingredients had been assembled and a merger would gain more boots on the ground. Unfortunately, that gamble didn't work in part because of a failure in strategy. The Board of Directors and I take full responsibility for what was an error in judgment.

May 1, Conservation NW closed what had been KRCG's Republic office since 1998, due in part to financial constraints, and I was laid off. So now like KRCG's all-volunteer board, I too am its volunteer executive director.

The most valuable lesson KRCG has learned between merger and un-merger over the last 7 years is that an Eastside grassroots group like ours has equal political power as does a well-healed Westside group. And, perhaps the best part of all of this is that relocating the Kettle Range office to my backwoods home means the dishes are always done and house is clean and tidy.

At this time KRCG has refocused on our mission to defend and protect biodiversity of the upper Columbia River Basin. We will continue to invest in community collaboration that supports local agriculture, forestry jobs and preserves special places like the Kettle Crest for future generations. The Columbia Highlands Initiative has something for everybody, which is why it's supported by citizens across the region, Vaagen Brothers and hundreds of NE Washington businesses.

History warns us threats to our wild public forests will return as they have in the past. KRCG was

founded as a citizen watchdog group. Today, we turn our attention to illegal all-terrain vehicle trespass, water quality issues, improved forest management, range improvements and standing strong against a uranium mine in the Kettle Crest.

Consider that even after nine years of cooperation between forest conservation and timber industry a whisper campaign on the streets is "enviros" want to destroy the timber industry and designate everything as wilderness. At this time, petitions can be found in some Ferry County businesses opposing wilderness that are laced with factual inaccuracies and outright lies. KRCG can point to a plethora of science and economic research supporting wilderness, but on the "not one acre of wilderness" side, there isn't a shred of evidence to support their claims. Still, fear is a powerful motivator regardless of whether it is based in fact or not. The petition thing happened in the mid-90's, too – history repeats – and some people will never support preserving the last wild places.

The "not one acre" crowd should take a clue from their own strategy. NO! can be just as easily applied to their favorite pastime, be it off-road vehicle use or subsidized public grazing privileges, etc. NO! is a dead-end street in a democratic, pluralistic society and it most certainly is contrary to the multiple-use code to which the anti-preservation clings.

Less than 3 percent of the Colville Forest is permanently protected. Even if every national forest roadless area in Ferry, Stevens, Pend Oreille and eastern Okanogan County was designated as Wilderness, that would still only equal about 3 percent of the total land area. That's not much, but then that's all that's left after a century of development. What will future generations think of us for letting the last of the Creator's wild forests be destroyed?

"Our duty to the whole, including the unborn generations, bids us to restrain an unprincipled present-day minority from wasting the heritage of these unborn generations. The movement for the conservation of wildlife and the larger movement for the conservation of all our natural resources are essentially democratic in spirit, purpose, and method."
- President Theodore Roosevelt



Late in 2002, Vaagen Bros. Lumber announced closure of its Republic mill. Ferry County Commissioners blamed KRCG (e.g. Tim Coleman) for its demise. What they failed to acknowledge then as now, is the culpability commissioners and some political extremists play in the game of forest management. The politics of "NO!" have much to do with eviscerating scarce human and financial resources that could otherwise go into collaborative agreement and supporting local economies.

Even after 9 years and over 30 successful forestry projects in the Colville National Forest -- all without a single project being held up -- commissioners, a couple of cattlemen and Tri County Motorized Recreation Association (TCMRA) belittle and belie the highly successful Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition (NEWFC) which was formed in 2002 to resolve conflicts over forestry projects that led up to the Vaagen Mill closure.

Ferry County commissioners have often been a hindrance to resolving community conflicts be they Rail Trail, Growth Management Act, ATV/OHV travel on county roads and recreation or forestry management of our national forests. Commissioners have always opposed NEWFC because of its support for balanced forest management includes new Wildernesses, even though the NEWFC proposal includes 800,000 acres in active wood product management and forest restoration. Given the timber industry is in dire straits due to a lackluster housing market, one would think the commissioners would bend over backwards to support NEWFC's balanced management proposal.

Consider motorized recreation opposition to NEWFC. Only one area, Twin Sisters Inventoried Roadless Area, out of 16 roadless areas proposed by NEWFC to be managed as Wilderness, is currently open to motorized access. NEWFC has publicly stated its willingness to compromise regarding Twin Sisters if TCMRA would withdraw its opposition to any new Wilderness. After four years of attempts to collaboratively resolve this situation, TCMRA is more entrenched than ever in opposing new

Wilderness. TCMRA leader and former county commissioner Mike Blankenship wants areas currently off-limits to all-terrain vehicles in the Kettle Crest opened to their use and connected to his private ATV resort in the Deadman Creek watershed.

Most cattlemen are honest and caring people who stay out of the limelight. Ranching has always been a fiercely independent but competitive business, though, and profit margins are often thin as a spider's web.

Ferry County ranchers Len McIrvin and Gordy Strandberg, who graze cows on national forest lands in the Kettle Crest, have teamed up with TCMRA to oppose any new wilderness and bash NEWFC. This coalition tried to get county commissioners to issue a joint letter opposing Forest Service wilderness recommendations in their revised Forest Plan that were announced in June. Those recommendations include three areas within Ferry County, one in Pend Oreille and one that overlaps both Pend Oreille and Stevens County. Ferry County Commissioner Brian Dassel led the effort, but due in part to timber industry lobby against it, in the end each country decided to write its own letter. Stevens and Ferry counties both opposed any new wilderness in the Colville National Forest, but Pend Oreille commissioners did support Forest Service recommendations.

If county commissioners were in charge of bringing the community together to build a building, what we'd likely end up with is pile of lumber nailed together in a wall formation – kind of like the incomplete Republic Recreation Center. The public hires public servants to help the community manage its affairs, not to shore up divisions that have been shown as job killers and wasteful of county resources. Growth Management Act fights alone have cost Ferry County \$750K , mostly just fighting in the courts, loss after loss after loss. Ferry County lost the Vaagen Mill and could just as easily lose Columbia Cedar Mill thanks to the commissioner's shortsighted rift-making. It's time to put an end to this generation of waste by demanding accountability from county commissioners.



WILDERNESS ON THE EDGE IN EAST OKANOGAN NATIONAL FOREST

By Aaron Theisen,
avid hiker and volunteer



In perhaps the quietest nook of the quietest region of Washington, the southern extension of the Midway chain of mountains separates the eastern Okanogan Highlands from the western Columbia Highlands.

Here, four spectacular, and spectacularly wild, roadless areas—Mount Bonaparte, Bodie Mountain, Clackamas Mountain and Jackson Creek—lie at the intersection of Conservation Northwest's work in southern British Columbia, the Columbia Highlands, and the Okanogan grasslands.

Sculpted by the Ice Age floods and maintained by regular, low-intensity wildfires, the western Columbia Highlands represent a complex interplay of habitats. Therefore, each of these four roadless areas is unique.

Dominated by open, park-like stands of enormous, deeply furrowed Douglas-fir growing atop ridges whose sides plunge down steep, rocky canyons, Bodie Mountain is known to but a few sportsmen and the white-tailed deer they pursue.

The peaceful parklands of old-growth ponderosa, western larch and Douglas-fir in Clackamas Mountain form critical lynx habitat, and the high density of lightning-cleaved snags provides a home for a cacophony of cavity-nesting critters. In late spring, massive rocky escarpments shimmer with the pinkish-white of Okanogan fameflower, electric pink of bitterroot and yellow of biscuitroot.

Bordering wild lands in southern British Columbia, Jackson Creek is some of the most remote country in the state. Here mingles a confluence of wet and dry aspects, with sagebrush, cedar, swamp and steppe. Trails plied by Prohibition-era bootleggers and modern-day hunters follow the lush drainages of Cedar and Jackson Creeks.

A pine-, fir- and larch-adorned island in a sea of agricultural lands, Mount Bonaparte towers more than three thousand feet above the surrounding orchards and wheat fields and is both year-round

home and way station to a variety of wildlife. Its namesake lake is a popular recreational spot for human travelers too.

The land here is surprisingly lush, a remnant of the receding Ice Age glaciers thousands of years ago. Numerous seasonal and permanent ponds dot the landscape from Bodie Mountain to Clackamas Mountain. Pristine lakes, from Bonaparte Lake to Beth Lake to Lost Lake, provide a home for fish and waterfowl. Clear-running creeks and wetlands lace the lower reaches of Jackson Creek. These streams, swamps, creeks and lakes are oases for people and wildlife.

Because these lands are a biological crossroads, they represent the edge of many plant species' distributions. Numerous rare and sensitive plants have found niches here. For example, the velvet-leaved blueberry (*Vaccinium myrtilloides*), more common in the boreal forests of British Columbia, is known to grow in only one spot in the entire state of Washington, in a spruce forest in the Cougar Creek drainage of Clackamas Mountain. Of a half-dozen known populations of the state-sensitive northern golden carpet (*Chrysosplenium tetrandrum*) in Washington, most occur in the seeps and swamps of Jackson Creek. And, although the Okanogan Highlands endemic, the beautiful Okanogan fameflower (*Talinum sediforme*), is more common north of the border, a few stringer populations inhabit the thin, rocky soils of Clackamas Mountain and Jackson Creek.

These wild lands provide feeding and breeding habitat for many year-round residents, including the great gray owl, northern goshawk, three-toed woodpecker, mule deer, black bear, cougar and snowshoe hare. Although other large carnivores such as grizzly bear and wolverine are unlikely to take up residence here, they still use these swaths of undisturbed land as safe-houses as they move across the landscape. Individually, none of these roadless areas is massive, but they provide crucial links to larger areas of habitat. And, for people, they provide links to a past that has been plowed or paved over in so much of the rest of the region.

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While the human population has exploded in so many other parts of the state, there are arguably even fewer human inhabitants in this pocket of Washington than one hundred years ago, when the lure of gold and the opening of the northern half of the Colville Indian Reservation brought a rush of European settlement.

From the Ghost towns of Bodie, Sheridan and Wauconda, to the traces of old tie-cutting mills and Prohibition-era bootlegger trails deep in the forests of Jackson Creek, to the remains of camps left by sheepherders and Native American hunters, nature is slowly reclaiming these places.

Even many of the area's trails have been abandoned, although local groups including the Backcountry Horsemen of Washington are working to restore some of them. Mount Bonaparte boasts over twenty miles of trails, and an amazing network of trails in Clackamas Mountain, once abandoned but since reclaimed by the Forest Service, is being maintained by locals. Still, solitude is almost guaranteed out here. These wild lands also represent a geopolitical boundary, the governing policies of the United States and Canada separated by a forty-foot-wide clearcut along the international boundary. Plants and animals

don't respect international boundaries, of course, so the western Columbia Highlands host animals that travel across the border from provincial parks in the north.

This is wilderness on the edge in other ways, too. Passed over for Wilderness designation in the 1984 Washington Wilderness Act, development has slowly nipped away at the edges of these wild lands. And in many ways, these areas remain the most threatened wild lands of the Columbia Highlands.

Plans submitted by Kinross Gold Corporation to expand its Buckhorn Mountain mining operation include the construction of over seventy miles of new drilling roads and 24-hour-a-day operation of up to twenty drill rigs, all within shouting distance of Jackson Creek roadless area.

Although several of the trails in Clackamas Mountain roadless area are open to motorcycles, scofflaws find the open rocky summits too tempting to resist, damaging the delicate, hard-won territory of steppe plants.

It'd be a shame to let indifference threaten these areas any further.

WINTER WILDERNESS PHOTO CONTEST

KRCG is sponsoring a photo contest with great prizes. Share your view of our winter paradise. Any subject, era, or location on the Colville National Forest is encouraged. Send your favorite pictures, even if you aren't a pro or a member of KRCG. Send as many images as you want!

Deadline: January 20

Notification of winner: January 30

Two prizes will be awarded:

- Most "likes" on Facebook wins a classic KRCG t-shirt.
- Top Prize winner receives a one year membership to KRCG valued at \$25, a KRCG Wilderness t-shirt, & your photo framed & displayed at the Republic Visitor's Center.

This year's judge is Aaron Theisen. Aaron studied journalism at Gonzaga University and is following his bliss working as a photographer and writer in Spokane, WA. He is chief editor of Columbia Highlands website, soon appearing in InlandNW magazine and is currently participating in "Lasting Heritage" an exhibit at the Museum of Arts and Culture.

Send your digital image(s) with your contact information and location of your picture to: **picken.e@gmail.com** with *Winter Wilderness* in the subject line.

We'll then post the photos on the KRCG Facebook page.

PLEASE CONSIDER JOINING KRCG

You can more effectively advocate for wilderness when your voice joins other KRCG members calling for permanent protection. When you join KRCG, you tap into a source of what's happening on environmental issues affecting our community. Plus you're provided with e-mail action alerts to help you stay involved on the issues you're passionate about and help shape positive change in our little corner of the world. KRCG is also on Facebook with interesting updates and news.

If you're reading this newsletter and support our programs but are not a member, I'm asking you now, please consider becoming a part of Kettle Range Conservation Group. Nothing happens by itself. Together we can make a difference. KRCG is powered by people like you and I. Please use the form included in this newsletter or join using our secure website. www.kettlerange.org

Thank you for your continued support.
Steve Anthes, President



Beginning in the late 80's, Washington Fish and Game officials witnessed drastic changes in the Kettle River and knew something had to be done. To document these changes they utilized local fly fishermen to catch, tag and release trout in section of Ferry and Stevens County. Then, skin divers did sweeps of these same sections and conducted fish counts per mile. Based upon numbers generated by these methods plus creel counts from fishermen, Washington Fish and Game recommended both seasonal closures and selective fishing regulations to improve and sustain the Kettle River fishery.

Selective fishing regulations basically means the use of single, barb-less hooks with no live baits on spinners, flies, jigs and lures on a fly or pole fishing device.

Since 1991, according to Washington Fish and Game data, selective fishing regulations which provided extra protection to the Kettle River resulted in a 3 to 4 fold improvement to the fishery in some areas. This same recovery period saw increased use of the river both in fishing and other recreation, increased irrigations and withdrawals of water from the immediate watertable streamflow, increased clearing of brush and trees from the banks and increased sediments and chemical runoff from ranching and farming.

In addition, increased housing development has led to greater septic inflows against a backdrop of increasing climate and temperature driven water fluctuations. In spite of all these counter currents, fish per mile and fishermen success rates have shown improvement.

New users including non-local fishing clubs and guide services have been drawn to a scientifically managed resource resulting in enhanced economic impacts to the local economy. A river with virtually self-sustaining populations of brook, german brown, whitefish and native redband rainbows helps sustain everything from kingfishers to ducks, to river otters, minks, raccoons, osprey and eagles. All in all, more opportunities for wildlife and sportsman alike.

Despite these impressive gains there are those who would say, "Let's go back to the good old days" of barbed hooks, live bait and kids with cane poles when locals could catch and keep more fish in a year-round open season river. This short-sighted roll-back of science based management would equal a loss for the river, today's fishermen and not the least those future fishermen and sportsmen.

What better message to give the next generation than the advantages of selective fishing to conserve and preserve this jewel of a waterway right here in Ferry County.

This non-scientific, local control issue is being led by, of all groups, the Kettle River Advisory Board, Stevens County Commissioners and Mr. Gary Douvia, a northeast Washington commissioner in Washington Fish and Game. Even Mr. Douvia and KRAB members agree the Kettle River fishery has improved but counter that current participation is "pretty low."

Kids can fish with spinners, flies, jigs and lures, even under a bobber, if taught so by conservation minded adults. Local lakes provide ample opportunity for bait fishing with barbed hooks. Please come to the defense of those who can not speak. Keep the Kettle River fishery in its current healthy condition...
...for now and forever.

Take Action:

Please take a moment to write the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife regarding their proposal to open Kettle River fishing to live bait and barbed hooks.

Please send comments by December 31:

Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife
Ms. Lori Preuss, Rules Coordinator
600 Capitol Way N.
Olympia, WA 98501

Via email: Lori.Preuss@dfw.wa.gov



For most people, wilderness is a noun meaning a wild place where wild things exist and that's reason enough to like it. But what drives some of us to swim against a rising tide of environmental degradation to advocate for its protection?

To understand wildness is to understand it is vanishing and recognize that to do nothing is to be a participant, however unwilling, in its disappearance.

A law to protect wild places was envisioned by women and men as far back as the early 19th Century. A passionate lot, these men and women fought to preserve wild places from rapacious corporate leaders and inept bureaucrats whose profit motive was to log, mine, drill, dam and otherwise develop every acre of the planet.

Teddy Roosevelt campaigned against corporate control of forestlands, establishing public ownership of national parks, grasslands and forests across the United States. Still, over time the conservation of resources, particularly federal forests, were again compromised by mismanagement of the U.S. Forest Service and other federal land managers.

In Washington State with passage of The Wilderness Act on September 3, 1964, Congress forever protected portions of Mount Adams, Glacier Peak and Goat Rocks. More importantly, the law gave citizens the ability to go straight to Congress to petition for preservation of other equally unique tracts of federal public lands, and thus bypass bureaucrats that all too often were beholden to corporate interests.

Every few years after the Act's passage, Washington's Congressional Delegation would legislate more wildernesses and each time it became a little harder to get from bill introduction to it being signed by the President. In 1968 the Pasayten Wilderness was established, 1976 Alpine Lakes Wilderness, and in 1978 the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness was the first to be designated east of the Cascade Mountains (in WA state). During the latter, a statewide wilderness movement began to take shape, first at the grassroots level and later as a coalition of groups calling itself the Washington Wilderness Coalition. This coalition helped preserve over 1 million acres under the 1984 Washington Wilderness Act.

As impressive as the accomplishments of the 1984 Act were, it would take another 25 years for Congress to designate another acre of wilderness in Washington. The Act had other consequences as well, the most notable of

which was the release of millions of acres of wild roadless forests to logging and road development, particularly in eastern Washington's drier ponderosa, larch and Douglas fir forests. Forest management plans developed in the mid and late 1980's were prohibited from recommending additional wilderness and called for huge increases in logging that led to a sea of clearcuts from Mount Rainer to the Colville National Forest.

From enactment of forest plans up through the early 2000's, the timber industry and Forest Service believed the issue of wilderness had reached finality and that all forests in the future would be managed to produce timber and other resources. But again, citizens rose up, forming Forest Watch groups across the region to protect wild and old growth forests.

Perhaps no other area of the state has fought so long and hard to protect its primeval forests than the citizens of northeast Washington who know and love the Colville, Kaniksu and Okanogan National Forest. Groups there worked tirelessly to add lands to the 1984 Act, only to get the 40,000 acre Salmo-Priest Wilderness designated. By Forest Service estimates, 50,000 acres of the Colville's roadless areas proposed for wilderness fell to the chainsaw in just 8 years following passage of the '84 Act and another 100,000 acres were planned but stopped by appeals and litigation.

In 1996, the group Eastern Washington Wilderness Activists was formed to organize public support for legislation to protect the eastside's estimated 2 million acres of unprotected wilderness. After a short time this coalition joined with western Washington activists to form the Wild Washington Campaign that led to designation of the Wild Sky Wilderness in 2008. But of course, Wild Sky is not in eastern Washington.

Perhaps in the future, the unprotected wilderness of the Kettle Range, Selkirk, Blue and eastern Cascades will get their due? Grizzly bear, wolverine, mountain caribou, elk, lynx and other critters big, small and rooted inhabiting these Columbia Highlands are dependent on us to protect their last refuge and safe passage between the Cascade and Rocky Mountains that science says is critical to their survival. Unfortunately, history repeats itself. Who fights future threats to unprotected wild public forests? And, what if Congress kills environmental laws that provide current, though limited, safeguards for them? Can you help?

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Kettle Range Conservation Group
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35 Years Protecting Northeast Washington Forests



Please support community collaboration work. Your annual membership supports protecting clean water, wildlife, special places while promoting healthy forests in the Colville National Forest. *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 fill out this form, include your check and mail it back to:

Kettle Range Conservation Group
 P.O. Box 150, Republic, WA 99166

We're rebuilding our member list. Please send us the names of those you think would like to be members. Email or USPS is OK.

Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____ I prefer Email newsletter only
 (We'll never sell or share your email address)

- \$25 Basic annual membership \$50 Wilderness supporter annual membership
- \$75 Wilderness Defender annual membership \$100 Wilderness Champion annual membership
- Other amount: \$ _____ One time donation: \$ _____

I'd like to volunteer doing: _____