



# CLEARWATER DEFENDER

## NEWS OF THE BIG WILD

A PUBLICATION OF  
FRIENDS OF THE CLEARWATER

ISSUED QUARTERLY  
SUMMER 2017, NO.2

### Adios National Forests?: Increasing Cuts, Roadless Assault and Agency Funding

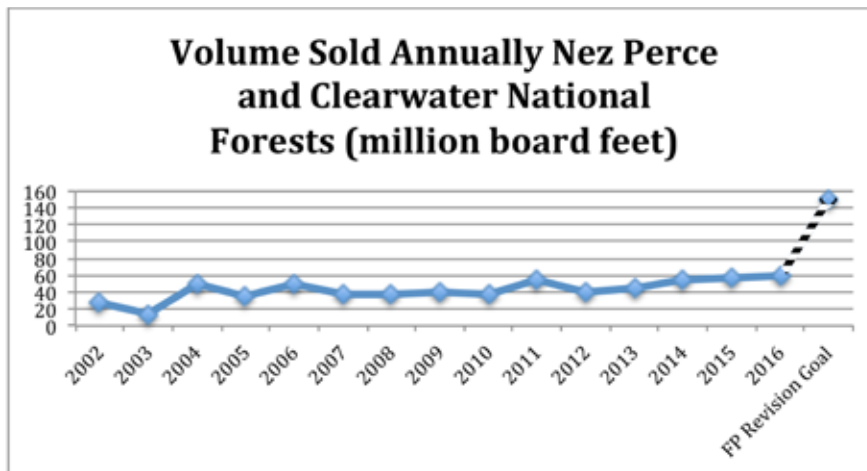
Gary Macfarlane

A little over twenty years ago, historian Paul Hirt wrote a book entitled *The Conspiracy of Optimism* which described how the Forest Service overestimated what national forests could yield, especially logs. Forest Service data shows that prior to 1940, volume cut averaged about one billion board feet a year between World War I and World War II. (NOTE: Before 1940, volume cut and sold were not reported separately.) A board foot is a plank one foot long, one foot wide and one inch thick. Laid end to end, 1.3 billion board feet would reach from the earth to the moon. In 2016, nearly 3 billion board feet were sold, enough to go to the moon and back again, with plenty to spare. Thus, sales on the national forests went from about 1 billion board feet to highs of around thirteen billion board feet, according to Forest Service data. (In 1969, the volume sold was nearly twenty billion board feet, but 8 billion board feet of that was canceled). The annual amount sold between 1970 and 1988 ranged between ten to thirteen billion board feet.

According to Forest Service historians, the post-war increase in volume was 90% due to logging old growth (ancient forests) in the western US. These areas, for the most part, were wild, roadless lands eligible for wilderness designation. By the late 1980s, it was evident, even to the Forest Service, that the level of sales and cutting was not sustainable. The volume cut decreased in 1991 below ten billion board feet and sales decreased around 2000 to what it had been in the early 1940s, about 2 billion board feet. (NOTE: While both the amount sold and cut from national forests varies from year

to year, factors such as economics and varying amounts in timber under contract tend to create a lag time in comparing volume sold versus volume cut. Thus, volume sold tends to be a better gauge of foreseeable future trends.) Since the early 2000s, sales have been on the rise to about 3 billion board feet per year.

Also since World War II, the official road mileage on the National Forests has increased four fold (this doesn't count many spur roads used for logging or some roads built for mineral exploration). The road system is now around 10x that of the Interstate Highway system. All of this has come at a tremendous cost to watersheds and wildlife, not to mention loss of wild (roadless) areas.



On the Nez Perce and Clearwater National Forests, the chart to the left shows what has happened the past fifteen years in terms of timber sales. The recent increase in sales is significant, as is the goal in the Forest Plan revision process. Bear in mind the Forest Service is not meeting its water quality or fish habitat objectives in the existing forest plans on the two national forests.

The Forest Service has also targeted roadless areas on the Nez Perce and Clearwater National Forests for its logging program. This is, as the late Yogi Berra would say, déjà vu all over again. Indeed, *High Country News* on Dec. 12, 1992 ran a piece about the pressure to increase logging on the Clearwater National Forest. The article pointed out that the focus of the logging program would be on roadless areas. At that time, current FOC board member Al Espinosa was a fish biologist for the Forest Service trying to hold the watersheds together for this amazing place. The then Forest Supervisor Win Green blamed lawsuits and appeals, but the *High Country News* article reported that he candidly admitted the watersheds were not recovering well from the effects of past logging. Twenty-five years later, the problems are the same. The watersheds still have not recovered from past high logging levels. The levels now, though much reduced, are still too high and currently increasing.

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FRIENDS OF THE CLEARWATER

THE CLEARWATER DEFENDER  
IS A PUBLICATION OF:

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Friends of the Clearwater, a recognized nonprofit organization since 1987, defends the Clearwater Bioregion’s wildlands and biodiversity through a Forest Watch program, litigation, grassroots public involvement, outreach, and education. The Wild Clearwater Country, the northern half of central Idaho’s *Big Wild*, contains many unprotected roadless areas and wild rivers and provides crucial habitat for countless, rare, plant and animal species. Friends of the Clearwater strives to protect these areas, restore degraded habitats, preserve viable populations of native species, recognize national and international wildlife corridors, and bring an end to industrialization on public lands.

Friends of the Clearwater is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All contributions to Friends of the Clearwater are tax-deductible.

The *Clearwater Defender* welcomes artwork and articles pertaining to the protection of the *Big Wild*. Articles in the *Clearwater Defender* do not necessarily reflect the views of Friends of the Clearwater.

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**Future of grizzly bear recovery**

FOC staff thanks the Palouse Environmental Sustainability Coalition and the Environmental Law Society of the University of Idaho Law School for working with FOC to host a panel discussion about the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem Grizzly Bear population, and the future of grizzly recovery in the Bitterroots. Thank you to all the panelists who participated. We would like to extend an extra note of appreciation to large carnivore policy expert Louisa Willcox (pictured below), who traveled all the way from Montana to spend a few days with our staff!

This fall we are teaming up with the Great Bear Foundation for a screening of “Walking Bear Comes Home: The Life and Work of Chuck Jonkel.” Stay tuned for details!



Tom Hansen Photo Credit

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## Through the lens with Gerry Snyder

### Ashley Lipscomb

My goal was to conduct an interview with an out-of-state member of ours. After all, public lands in Idaho belong to all U.S. citizens! Gerry's current location in Kansas made him a prime candidate. Little did I know, he has quite a history of protecting roadless areas in the Clearwater Basin. FOC's "Gerry Snyder" file is filled with epic photos of the Basin, too. Here is a snapshot of his connection to north-central Idaho's *Big Wild*:

**Ashley:** Thanks for agreeing to this interview Gerry! Let's start with a basic question. When did you first discover the Clearwater Basin?

**Gerry:** I came to the University of Idaho [U of I] when the College of Natural Resources was still the College of Forestry. I lived on the Palouse for 20 years and worked at the U of I running a multimedia lab. In 1976, when the National Forest Management Act was implemented, I saw an opportunity to make sure other uses, besides timber extraction, were a priority in the Clearwater Basin. Dennis Baird was my mentor at the time. I still consider the Clearwater Basin as "home." Some people wonder why I ever left for Kansas!

**Ashley:** There were a few groups fighting for roadless areas in the Clearwater Basin in the 90s. You were part of the Clearwater Forest Watch. What were some of your experiences with this group?

**Gerry:** We worked with many of the locals on proposed timber sales. Often we had to appeal them, along with many other groups, including Friends of the Clearwater. I participated in the "prime-time players" meetings hosted by the Forest Service. However, there was too much compromise during the meetings to really be productive or provide necessary protections. So we kept successfully appealing timber sales, like other groups, and staved off some big extraction projects. Much of the Clearwater remains the same today because of that work.

**Ashley:** The "prime-time players" group seems like a precursor to the collaborative groups we see today. You've rambled around north-central Idaho as evidenced by your photos, including Weitas Creek. When you hear about prescribed burning, thinning, and logging projects in Weitas Creek, Pot Mountain, or the Mallard-Larkins Roadless Area, what is your initial reaction?

**Gerry:** I remember when the Forest Service logged the west side of Weitas Creek in the early 90s. I just don't buy the reasons for the prescribed burns, thinning, and logging



Weitas Creek RA is 260,000 acres of wild country

Gerry Snyder Photo Credit

in the area now. The Weitas Creek Roadless Area needs to be protected. You can find coastal disjunct species and low elevation habitat for many unique and special species in there, and most of it still remains much the same when Lewis and Clark traveled through that country. The proposed Cayuse Creek project is fairly close to the Great Burn, too, an area currently under consideration for Wilderness protection.

**Ashley:** You're a photographer. How have you used photography to protect wild places?

**Gerry:** I used to go on photo safaris with Dr. John Osborn, founder of the Inland Empire Public Lands Council. We would take photos of the carnage in the backcountry. For example, we took pictures in Isabella Creek, just outside of the Mallard-Larkins Pioneer Area, after it was logged. It never grew back as the Forest Service promised. Photo documentation is so important to stop projects like this in the future or to at least document the negative effects afterwards.

You could also see the carnage looking into Idaho's Flood Wood State Forest from the west side of the Mallard-Larkins Pioneer Area. Potlatch, Plum Creek, the Forest Service and the State of Idaho consolidated these lands to remove some of the checkerboard pattern for easier management. The photos really reveal how private industry decimated the landscape when it should've been part of the public lands system.

If you want to see some photos, particularly around the Mallard-Larkins area, and learn more about the management history, check out "Railroads and Clearcuts: A Photographic Essay," compiled by Dr. Osborn. It makes a great case for returning lands once usurped by railroad companies back to their rightful owners—the American people.

**Ashley:** What is your favorite place in the Clearwater Basin?

**Gerry:** The North Fork Clearwater country is my favorite place on Earth. Places in the Clearwater Basin are so wild, scenic and free. You just don't see people like you would if you were hiking in Colorado for example. Much of it is still just as remote when Lewis and Clark went through the area in 1805.



logging cont. page 1

Furthermore, the agency is again looking to begin logging roadless areas.

Roadless logging was off the table in national forests while the 2001 Roadless Rule, a policy on how to ostensibly protect the remaining undeveloped areas in national forests, was being formulated. Roadless logging stayed off the table until after the Idaho Roadless Rule, which replaced the 2001 policy in 2008, had been completed. The Idaho Roadless Rule was falsely sold as being more protective than the 2001 policy, which is better, though far from adequate and currently governs national forests outside of Idaho and Colorado. Roadless logging is being proposed because of, rather than in spite of, the Idaho roadless policy.

**In 2016, the Forest Service logged 3 billion board feet across all National Forests.**

**The Moon**

**This is enough board feet to travel from the Earth to the Moon and back!**



A "temporary road" in West Fork Crooked Roadless Area

FOC File Photo

By way of background, the Bush Administration allowed state governments to petition the Forest Service to come up with a separate policy from the 2001 rule that governs national forest roadless areas in other states for national forest roadless areas in that state. While the Idaho policy went through the public involvement process under the National Environmental Policy

Name	Roadless Area	Description
1- Orogrande	West Fork Crooked	Gospel-Hump Wilderness addition. Includes 2 miles of road building and logging over 200 acres in roadless land. Unfortunately, FOC's court case was not successful and the sale is going forward.
2- Lowell WUI	Rackliff-Gedney	Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness addition. Includes 100 acres of roadless logging and some logging in the wild and scenic river corridor near the confluence of the Selway and Lochsa Rivers. About 1/2 mile of new road.
3- East Saddle	Weitas Creek, Kelly Creek and Moose Mountain	This proposal previously included extensive logging in the Weitas Roadless Area. 440 acres of logging in remote land that might have some roadless characteristics near the 581 road. 8,500 acres of burning, or possibly some kind of undefined mechanical treatment (tree cutting? and how would that differ from logging?) in the three roadless areas.
4- Windy/Shingle	Salmon Face	Addition to Hells Canyon Wilderness. Some logging in the roadless area.
5- Cold Mush	Pot Mountain and Mallard-Larkins	1400 acres of logging (helicopter?) in Pot Mountain and Mallard-Larkins. It would effectively reduce the 50,000-acre Pot Mountain Roadless Area by about 10,000-acres and chop off some 2,000-acres of the Mallard-Larkins. The most extensive current proposal and very destructive. Remote country where logging is inappropriate.
6- Lolo Bugs	Eldorado	An earlier proposal was to log 300 acres in this roadless area. A new proposal is expected.
7- Hungry Ridge	Gospel-Hump Addition	This proposal is in wildlands that are not currently in the Idaho Roadless Rule Inventory. Proposed logging is in land contiguous to the Gospel-Hump Wilderness and within the corridor of Johns Creek, an eligible wild river.

*Project numbers in the chart correspond to the map locations on the facing page.*

Act, and the Forest Service oversaw that part, it was largely a pro-forma exercise. This kind of state-by-state policy is a prime example of devolution of public lands to local special interests, a step toward privatization of national forests. Sadly, some conservationists supported this bad deal.

The Forest Service, aside from its tepid commitment to protecting roadless areas in the late 1990s and early 2000s, has not changed what it wants to do: log the last remaining intact roadless watersheds. The only difference is now the agency claims, against all logic, that logging is usually consistent with maintaining undeveloped roadless areas. That is because it has a 2008 policy in Idaho to ostensibly protect roadless areas. Before the policy, the agency claimed logging destroyed roadless areas and rendered them unfit for wilderness consideration for the foreseeable future.

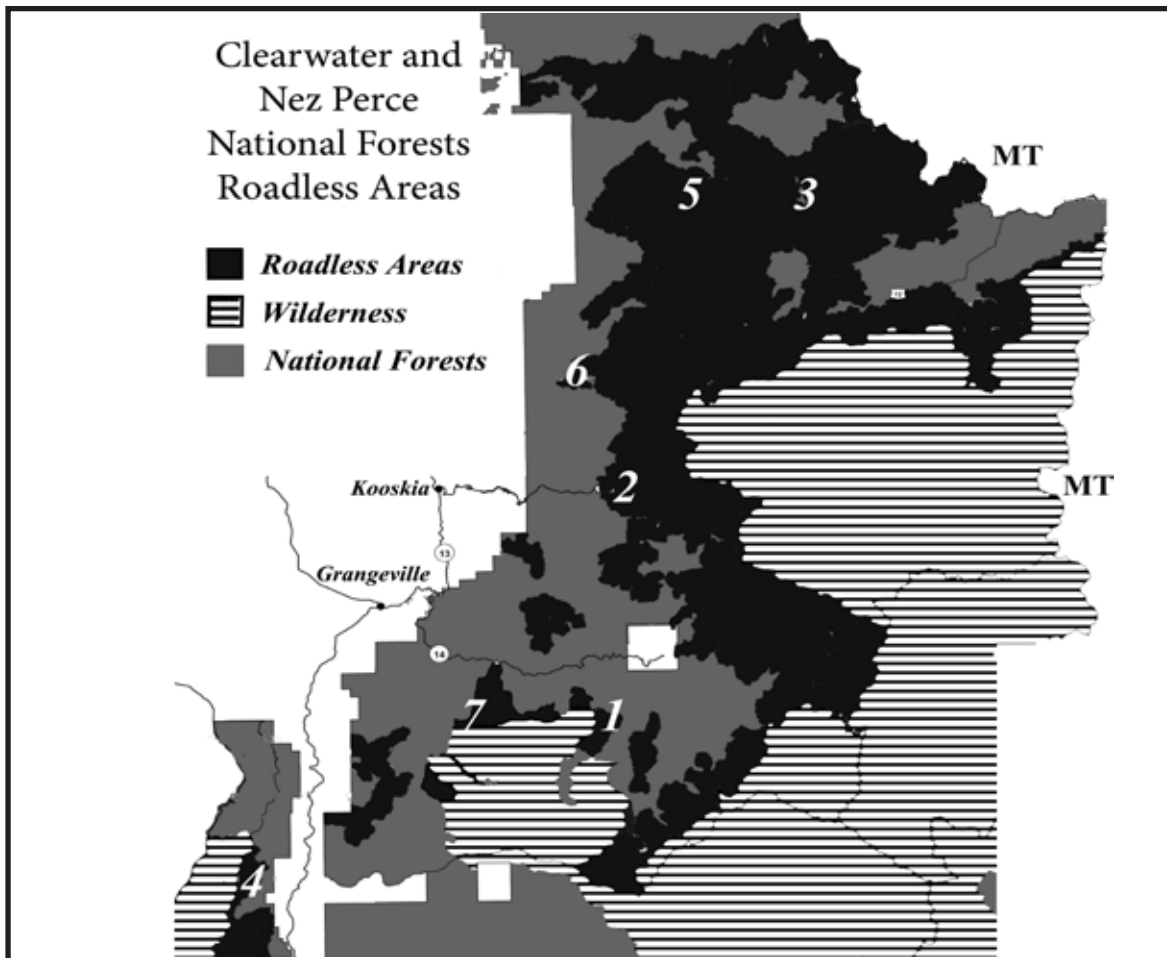
Currently, there are five timber sales that would involve logging in identified roadless areas, another that is on the border of two roadless areas in very remote and sensitive country (and was previously proposed to go into roadless country), and one that involves roadless logging in uninventoried roadless and contiguous lands to the Gospel-Hump Wilderness on the Nez Perce and Clearwater National Forests. (See map below and chart on page 4).

The fire fighting program has further targeted roadless areas. In 2015, the FS cut dozens of miles of dozer line into roadless areas. The area worst hit was Cove-Mallard, an addition to the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness. Of course, under this emergency situation, there was plenty of time for the agency to make sure the logs in the way of the dozer were carefully handled so they could be stacked and sold later. The dozer line in Cove-Mallard was miles from the fire and upwind of the prevailing wind direction. The Forest Service had completed a thinning project around private inholdings in Dixie not long before. This demonstrates that the agency uses the firefighting program to get the cut out and doesn't believe its own rhetoric about thinning to prevent fires.

There are other issues of concern with the way the Forest Service operates on a national and local level. The Forest Service routinely complains about the lack of an adequate budget. While there is a grain of truth in this, the real question isn't the money per se, but what the Forest Service does (or doesn't do) with our tax dollars.

One overriding national problem is that the agency is not accountable on how it spends money. Its accounting process is inscrutable. A Government Accountability Office

*Project numbers on the map correspond to the chart on the previous page.*



report from the 2000s documented this failing. Little has changed.

The agency could be called the “Fire Service” since its budget in the past few years is largely driven by fire. Unlike the Interior agencies, the Forest Service has historically had a blank check on fire spending. Recently, the Forest Service has borrowed from (dipped into) its regular budget to cover fire fighting costs in certain years, as it did in 2015.

In January of 2017, the Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics (FSEEE) (see <https://www.fseee.org/2017/01/11/throwing-money-at-fires/>) blog was about the Forest Service and fire fighting. FSEEE notes,

*In 2015, there were 7,040 fires on land managed by the Forest Service, a number that's close to the 10-year average. In 2016, according to the National Interagency Fire Center, there were 5,855 fires on Forest Service-managed land.*

*Those numbers are in keeping with a broader trend: The total number of fires on national forests has been decreasing in recent years. From 1994 to 2002, there were an average of 10,398 fires on national forests each year. Since then, the average number of fires on Forest Service-managed land has been 6,858.*

*... In 2015—that record year for wildfires—the Forest Service spent an average of about \$887 for each acre burned on land it manages. It spent about \$241,000 for each fire on its land. Last year, those numbers rose to \$1,284 per acre and \$273,000 per fire.*

*Why would those numbers go up? Maybe it has something to do with the fact that Congress allotted the agency an extra \$600 million for firefighting for fiscal year 2016.*

*Twenty years ago, firefighting accounted for about 16 percent of the Forest Service's budget. Now it's more than 50 percent.*

*... In the years since [1991], the agency has struggled to forge a new mission [replacing Getting Out the Cut]. Fighting wildfires, and thinning forests to make them more “resilient,” seems to be that new mission. (The efficacy of both efforts is dubious at best, but that's a subject for another day.)*

FSEEE concludes the blog by stating, “Letting more fires burn on national forests ... doesn't just make fiscal sense. It would also represent a big step toward allowing our public forests to return to a more natural state.” If the other agencies can spend far less on firefighting even though some have more acreage burned, it would make sense that the Forest

Service could do the same. (NOTE: As FSEEE points out, the acreage burned on national forests is a fraction of what is actually burned each year.)

Indeed, the dubious nature of the current Forest Service fire-fighting and logging/thinning programs are tied to the agency's past. This raises a question. Since every timber sale we see is now ostensibly based upon fuel reduction, are funds appropriated for fire used for timber sales and vice versa? Timber sale volumes are increasing, nationally and locally. It would seem the old “Get Out the Cut Service” and the new “Fire Service” are, in reality, no different.

It is not just that fire consumes (pun intended) so much of the agency's budget. The Forest Service has no problem finding money to increase logging levels. The agency also commodifies the national forests through charging the public fees in some areas just to be on the national forest, a more dangerous privatization step because it has been implemented and gone largely unopposed. This is the opposite of what needs to be done. There is another, much better, path. The Forest Service should use the tax dollars it receives for the public good such as opening and maintaining campgrounds and trails and conducting the monitoring it promised the public it would do. Congress should eliminate money for the wasteful Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program. And, in a better world, the Forest Service would also charge the special interests that benefited from the overly extensive road system to pay for removal of unneeded and damaging roads. Simply put, the Forest Service could get by with much less money and do a much better job, because it is currently doing expensive things that cause severe damage. It is a matter of the wrong priorities.

Locally, the Forest Service has erroneously used sediment-reducing projects (road decommissioning), paid for by mitigation money for the lower Snake River dams, to meet forest plan standards and objectives. The purpose of the mitigation money is not to meet forest plans, which have to be met regardless, but to improve the condition above and beyond forest plan requirements as mitigation for the dams. This is an issue that has been raised in some project-level objections filed by Friends of the Clearwater. Not only is the Forest Service good at creative accounting, it is using mitigation money to do what the Forest Service should be paying for in terms of watershed restoration. This unethical double-counting enables the Forest Service to increase logging levels by claiming that it is finally meeting the forest plan standards. Maybe this is mere incompetence on the part of the agency, but it sure smells fishy.

### **Around the Clearwater**

The Forest Service recently proposed the Johnson Bar II salvage sale along the Selway and Middle Fork



Clearwater Rivers. Idaho Rivers United (IRU) and FOC filed an objection. By way of background, IRU and FOC went to court in 2016 after the Forest Service failed to address our concerns. Advocates for the West won an impressive victory for the two organizations, and the Forest Service withdrew the decision after the preliminary injunction victory. As provided for in the objection process, we engaged in discussions with the Forest Service on our formal objection to the Johnson Bar II Salvage Sale proposal. In this process, we were able to reduce logging acreage to about 40% of what had been proposed in the first decision. There will be no logging in the Selway or Middle Fork Wild and Scenic River Corridors. While not perfect, the result of the objection process will avoid the risk of a bad court precedent (going back to court a second time on a project is even more risky). A bad court precedent could also have a negative precedent on future Forest Service proposals in sensitive watersheds. We will be monitoring the area carefully over the next two years.



**Forest Service now claims that road building and logging are consistent with maintaining roadless character**

FOC File Photo

On a related note, Representative Labrador (ID) blamed the earlier successful Johnson Bar lawsuit on a mill closure in a hearing in Washington D.C on June 8. What makes this story so dubious is that Johnson Bar was a salvage sale after a fire. Most of the area was not planned for future timber sales, so no mill could have had long-term plans based upon the fire. Thus, it is wrong to suggest the mill was closed because it couldn't get logs from Johnson Bar. It is far easier to scapegoat than to look at real factors such as global eco-

nomics, technological changes or management issues. Sadly, the Forest Service stained its credibility by being complicit in this falsehood.

In other news, we lost our preliminary injunction on the Orogrande Timber Sale in roadless land contiguous to the Gospel-Hump Wilderness. While the sale will log only a portion of the roadless land next to the Gospel-Hump, it is sad to lose any roadless land. After consulting our legal counsel, we decided not to pursue an appeal to the Ninth Circuit to avoid potential bad precedent in case the Ninth Circuit upheld the decision. Two hundred acres will take only a short time to log. Between May 31, when the court issued its decision and June 22, the contractor had already constructed most of the temporary road. Also, if the Forest Service continues to develop projects that log in roadless areas, this issue will probably be back in court. Current national forest roadless policy, which is to ostensibly protect roadless lands, is a jumble of contradictions.

Travel planning on the Nez Perce and Clearwater National Forests is in a holding pattern. It seems the Forest Service has the money and staffing to rush through timber sales in sensitive terrain, but it can't seem to fully commit to the process to fix the Clearwater National Forest Travel Plan, as directed by Judge Lodge in our lawsuit victory in 2015. The Forest Service alleges that since it has officially announced it will prepare a supplemental EIS, it is indeed moving forward to fulfill the Court's order. That is no assurance at all. By way of analog, the Forest Service came out with a formal announcement to expeditiously revise the Clearwater National Forest Plan, in 1994, and that effort has not been completed. Do we have to wait until at least 2038 for the Forest Service to follow the Court's order? The Nez Perce National Forest Travel Plan is expected to be released in final form soon. That has been the case for months.

Speaking of revising the the Forest Plan, the revision is still a long way in the future. The Forest Service has apparently decided to use the Idaho Roadless Rule as the inventory for the Forest Plan revision's analysis of potential wilderness. That decision doesn't seem to be in line with agency policy, though it is still early in the process and could be changed. The new Forest Service wildlife biologist assigned to the forest plan revision team is in the process of reviewing a list of sensitive species, now called species of conservation concern. The earlier list was deemed inadequate. Though still in the early phase, the new effort seems to be an improvement upon what had been done up until now. It remains to be seen whether the future forest plan, if and when it is completed, will be as good as the existing Nez Perce and Clearwater National Forest Plans, both of which contain standards to protect water quality, fish habitat and wildlife.

## Catastrophic logging threatens National Forests

Brett Haverstick

*The following was originally published in the Idaho Statesman on March 25, 2017.*

National Forests across the West are facing dire threats from politicians, the timber industry and the Forest Service. The public is currently being misled into thinking that our forests are “unhealthy”, and that they need to be “treated” due to “beetle infestations” and “insect and disease.” All of this is euphuism to drastically ramp up logging on the forests.

America’s National Forests are not unhealthy. Some people may want forests to look a certain way, but that desire or perception ignores scientific research, which suggests that fungi, bacteria, insects, disease and wildfire are key components of forest function and resiliency. If you want a healthy forest, these natural processes must be allowed to play out.

Efforts to “thin the threat” and use thinning for “fire hazard reduction” across Western landscapes is largely unsubstantiated in scientific literature. Recent studies suggest forests with stands of “dead trees” are at no more risk of burning—and possibly less—than thinned forests. Dead trees generally burn slower because they do not have oil-rich needles or resins. To the contrary, thinning places fine fuels like needles and cones on the ground, and opens the forest canopy to wind and greater solar penetration, resulting in drier forest conditions and flammability.

The Forest Service is currently identifying “priority areas” on the National Forests that need to be treated (read logged). A provision of the 2014 Farm Bill gives them the ability to expedite logging projects, including in roadless areas, designed to reduce fuels and prevent the chance of large and “uncontrollable wildfires.” Public involvement is simultaneously being minimized, and environmental analysis is being short-changed.

Fire frequency and intensity in the West are predominantly climate and weather driven. An overwhelming amount of scientific evidence shows that drought, warm temperatures, low humidity and windy conditions drive wildfire behavior. Tree-density and beetle infestation does not drive fire intensity and behavior.

The predominantly mixed-conifer forests of the West have evolved with fire. Wildfires are not “catastrophic”, but rather necessary for nutrient cycling, soil productivity and providing habitat for numerous insects, birds and mammals. Wildfire is a natural disturbance event critical to forest function and resiliency. A more accurate term for Western landscapes may be “fire-scapes.”



**Post-fire landscapes are rare and need to be protected from road building and logging**

FOC File Photo

Building roads and logging in a post-fire landscape is also unnecessary and harmful. “Salvage logging” impedes forest succession, and can increase soil erosion, and impair streams, fish habitat and water quality. Scientists are discovering that “snag forests” are one of the most biologically rich and diverse habitat types, rivaled only by old growth.

Politicians and the timber industry are once again assaulting America’s National Forests. Managed forests are neither healthier, nor more resilient to wildfire. Beetle infestation and fire behavior are mainly climate and weather driven. Fungi, bacteria, insects, disease and fire are natural processes important for forest function and evolution. The real catastrophe in all of this is that the Forest Service continues to lead its century-old war on wildfire by supporting commercial logging and fire suppression to the detriment of the American taxpayer and forest ecosystems.

**Editor’s Note: Below are some references pertaining to recent peer-reviewed research by fire ecologists.**

Baker WL (2015) Are high-severity fires burning at much higher rates recently than historically in dry-forest landscapes of the Western USA? PLoS ONE 10(9): e0136147. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0136147

DellaSala, D. (2014) Do mountain pine beetle outbreaks increase the risk of high-severity fire in western forests? A summary of recent field studies.

DellaSala, D., Hanson, C. (2015) The ecological importance of mixed-severity fires: nature’s phoenix. Elsevier, Boston.

Hart, S., Schoennagel, T., Veblen, T., Chapman, T., (2015) Area burned in the western United States is unaffected by recent mountain pine beetle outbreaks. PNAS, April 7, 2015. Vol. 112, No. 14., 4375 - 4380.



## Monitoring in Meadow Creek

### Ashley Lipscomb

Neon pink and orange flagging, and a bright yellow order sign spanning the Meadow Creek Bridge announced “Road closed due to landslide.” Anticipating the closure beforehand, our summer intern Clare and I contacted the Moose Creek District Ranger for permission to traverse the bridge. We peddled our bikes up to the crossing and snapped the obligatory first monitoring photo to document the official order and the brown #443 road sign.

Not more than half a mile further up the road, we came upon a massive jam, at least five logs high, mortared together with dried up mud. A simple dozer could never clear this landslide. Surveying the area, we climbed up and around 19-inch diameter trees and found the Clearwater Basin’s newest enlarged water feature. Gushing water flowed past large exposed boulders and rocks where tree and plant roots once kept Falls Point on the straight and narrow.

The culvert, generally the only structure one step away from saving any dirt road from a blowout, was impenetrable with mud, rerouting the creek. We climbed up into the landslide and found a large mud field completely void of any vegetation. It was as if someone just flattened the forest. As we scrambled around, I wondered, “What would have it been like to experience that powerful rumble, tumble, rip-roarin’ slide?”

Road density may have played a role in the wash-out; the FS also recently completed a portion of a roadside salvage sale along the #443 road above the slide. This road leads up to Elk City, a remote town in the heart of Clearwater country. A brown plastic flexible traffic stake was stuck in the mud above the non-existent road but still within the landslide shoot. This might be an indication the slide started up around Falls Point.

A permanent road closure may serve this area well. I know a few people who wouldn’t mind a few extra-miles hike up Meadow Creek! One thing is for certain, this 215,000 acre roadless area, and its resident wildlife, fish, and plants, will get a much needed reprieve from our cars, camping pursuits, foot and hoof traffic this summer.

## Clearwater Country Report

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FOC File Photo



FOC File Photo



FOC File Photo



FOC File Photo

## Groups achieve temporary ban on M-44s in Idaho

Brett Haverstick



Predator Defense Photo Credit

In April 2017, the United States Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services announced that it has temporarily ceased the use of M-44 cyanide bombs on all private, state and federal lands in Idaho. The agency claims to have also removed all devices previously deployed in the state. The government will also notify the public 30 days in advance of any future placement of the devices in Idaho.

M-44s are spring-activated sodium cyanide ejectors (they look like sprinkler-heads) that deliver a dose of deadly poison when pulled on. They are a "predator control" management tool of Wildlife Services, a federal agency that consistently makes the news for all the wrong reasons.

Earlier this spring, a young teenage boy in Pocatello, Idaho innocently triggered an M-44 near his home while hiking with the family dog. The boy was sprayed with the poisonous gas, knocked off his feet and fortunate to survive. His dog was less fortunate, and died within minutes of the explosion. The incident was picked up by media outlets around the country.

Soon thereafter, Western Watersheds Project, along with FOC and other conservation and animal welfare groups, filed a petition with the government agency seeking an end to the use of M-44s in Idaho, as well as the removal of any devices currently on the landscape. Within weeks of the petition, Wildlife Services announced the temporary ban. We will continue to keep our membership apprised of this situation.

In related news, the lawsuit challenging the aerial gunning program of wolves in the Clearwater Basin by Wildlife Services is proceeding. Briefing by both parties has been completed, and a decision is expected soon. Plaintiffs are seeking the completion of an Environmental Impact Statement to adequately assess the cumulative impacts of this predator killing program. Western Watersheds Project, Predator Defense, Center for Biological Diversity, Wild Earth Guardians and FOC are being represented by Talasi Brooks of Advocates for the West and Kristin Ruether of Western Watersheds Project.

## NREPA introduced in House and Senate! Function of biological connecting corridors

Brett Haverstick

The Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act (NREPA) has been introduced into the 115th Congress, H.R. 2135. For the first time, NREPA has been introduced with companion legislation in the Senate, S. 936. The "wildest bill on the hill" would permanently protect over twenty million acres of roadless wildlands in the Northern Rockies Bioregion, designate over 1,700 miles of rivers and streams as wild and scenic, and preserve biological connecting corridors in the region to ensure species have the necessary space to migrate to other larger protected areas like Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks. There is also a restoration component of NREPA that would restore areas that have been heavily roaded and logged in the past. Please contact your elected officials and ask them to co-sponsor and support this legislation. Visit [senate.gov](http://senate.gov) and [house.gov](http://house.gov). Learn more about NREPA at [friendsoftheclearwater.org/description](http://friendsoftheclearwater.org/description). Another great resource is [allianceforthewildrockies.org](http://allianceforthewildrockies.org)



This spring, staff from the Greater Hells Canyon Council (formerly Hells Canyon Preservation Council) and Friends of the Clearwater spent a day in Hells Canyon with students from Lewis-Clark State College enrolled in the Hells Canyon Institute. Kirsten and I spoke about the crucial role of biological connecting corridors and genetic resilience, with a specific focus on species dispersal between the Greater Salmon-Selway Ecosystem and the Greater Hells Canyon Ecosystem. An excellent example is the natural dispersal of gray wolves from the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness in central Idaho to the vast public wildlands of northeastern Oregon. We expanded the concept of natural corridors by including the further dispersal of gray wolves across the state of Oregon and into northern California. It's amazing what animals can teach us! A huge thank you to Professor Dr. Marlowe Daly-Galeano for including us in the week-long field trip!



FOC File Photo



## 3rd Annual Free the Snake Flotilla Saturday September 9 Brett Haverstick

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Gabe Parr Photo Credit

Circle your calendar on Saturday, September 9! FOC is excited to once again work with Save our Wild Salmon, Nimiipuu Protecting the Environment, Idaho Rivers United, Earthjustice, Patagonia and many others for this year's family-friendly paddle! The entire event, including the boat launch, will take place at Chief Timothy Park in Clarkston, WA. Kayaks, canoes, rafts, stand-up-paddleboards, motorboats and other watercraft are welcomed.

We have also reserved the Chief Timothy campground for Friday and Saturday night so that people have the option of camping both nights. Food, live music and guest speakers will also be part of the program! Please visit the flotilla website for updates at [freethesnake.com](http://freethesnake.com).

**Editor's Note: The 2017 Hot Water Report tracks water temperatures, salmon survival and climate related developments in the Columbia-Snake River Basin. Contact Sam Mace to subscribe at [sam@wildsalmon.org](mailto:sam@wildsalmon.org)**

## KRFP Full Power Project: Adopt A Watt Brett Haverstick

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FOC staff is incredibly fortunate to have a weekly radio program on our progressive community radio station, KRFP Radio Free Moscow. To my knowledge, there are not many conservationists in the country that have access to the airwaves on a regular basis to talk about public land issues.

KRFP is currently raising money for its "Full Power Campaign," which would enable the station to purchase and install a new transmitter to broadcast at 1100 watts from Paradise Ridge in Moscow. Please consider supporting this effort to transmit a strong and consistent progressive radio signal into Pullman and outlying areas of the Palouse. You can learn more about the campaign at [krfp.org](http://krfp.org)

The *Wild Clearwater Country* show airs every Wednesday at 4pm PT. Just turn your dial to 90.3 FM or stream it from the web at [krfp.org](http://krfp.org). Many thanks to the staff and volunteers at KRFP for providing us a platform to broadcast weekly during the past decade. Here's to another decade and beyond!



FOC File Photo

## Hello from Clare Eigenbrode

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Since I'm endemic to Moscow, Friends of the Clearwater and their work in the area was always in my periphery while I was growing up here. Today, the opportunity for a summer internship with FOC is giving me the best possible glimpse into exactly what the organization is doing for the wilderness and communities of the Clearwater region.

This internship feels like a natural continuation of the volunteer experience in sustainability and environmental advocacy that I gained through the Moscow High School Environmental Club, with the encouragement of Lee Anne Eareckson, a teacher who's been a critical influence to generations of club members.

That influence has led me to pursue a major in environmental justice and citizenship at Beloit College, a small liberal arts school in Wisconsin where I just finished up my freshman year. I'm also minoring in journalism and Spanish, playing the cello, plus I am a news editor for Beloit's student newspaper. I'm sticking to my roots by staying active in the campus's environmental advocacy and sustainability club.

With my education, I'm hoping to become a feature journalist covering the intersections between environmental and social issues. These intersections include the privilege associated with sustainable living, and environmental racism like the kind we've witnessed at the Standing Rock reservation during the past year and a half.

I'm so grateful to Friends of the Clearwater for the opportunity to gain outreach and environmental policy experience with them this summer (and I don't mind the hiking and camping this internship entails, either). I'm planning to collaborate with MHS Environmental Club members this summer, too, and I like how full-circle that feels.

I'm looking forward to the season ahead!





Thank you to the Palouse Broadband-Great Old Broads for Wilderness for co-sponsoring our spring field trip!

FOC File Photo

FRIENDS OF THE CLEARWATER CALENDAR OF EVENTS

CAMPING W/ PALOUSE - SIERRA CLUB

**July 21 - 23**

HIKING AND RELAXING ON THE N. FORK CLEARWATER  
FOREST SERVICE STAFF MAY BE PRESENT FOR PART OF THE TRIP

ANNUAL HOT SUMMER DAYS COMMUNITY BARBECUE

**Friday August 25, 5:30 - 7:30 pm**

EAST CITY PARK PICNIC SHELTER, MOSCOW  
BURGERS AND VEGGIE BURGERS PROVIDED, BRING A DISH

**Friends of the Clearwater**  
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