

# *The Clearwater* DEFENDER

A publication of the Friends of the Clearwater | Spring 2025

Spring  
2025

## **The Forest Plan Is Here**

After years of drafts, debate, and debacle, the Nez Perce-Clearwater Land Management Plan is officially signed.

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## **Gold Mine at the edge of the Big Wild**

The Stibnite Gold Project is approved for development by the Forest Service on the boundary of the Frank Church-River of No Return.

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## **USFWS changes direction on grizzly bears - with a catch**

The USFWS opens up a comment period on grizzly recovery, creating a new Northern Rockies DPS and loosening regulations for moving and killing bears.

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## **Tools for Tyranny**

How can we act in a time of disaster?

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**Friends of the  
Clearwater**

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# Friends of the Clearwater

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Friends of the Clearwater, a recognized non-profit organization since 1987, defends the Clearwater Bioregion’s wildlands and biodiversity through a Forest Watch program, litigation, grassroots public involvement, 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.

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

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

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## Thank you to the following foundations and organizations for their generous support:

Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs, Charlotte-Martin Foundation, New-Land Foundation, The Horne Foundation, The Robert L. Crowell Fund of the New Jersey Community Foundation, Network for Good, The Leiter Family Foundation, Clif Bar Family Foundation, Maki Foundation, Fund for Wild Nature, Mary and Charles Sethness Charitable Foundation, New York Community Foundation, Elbridge and Evelyn Stuart Foundation, and the Latah Wildlife Association!

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### “Join Or Die” Film - May 13th

Documentary about the decline of community in the United States, and how grassroots organizations and social clubs can turn the country around. Organized by Indivisible Moscow. Kenworthy theater, Moscow, ID.

### Fred Rabe Life Celebration - May 24th

A celebration of the long and wonderful life of Fred Rabe (see next page). 3pm-6pm at the 1912 Center in Moscow, ID.

### Wellness For All Fair - June 24th

An event to promote wellbeing for individuals, our community, and the Earth. 4pm-7pm. in downtown, Moscow, ID. Organized by a local coalition of community groups.

### Fish Lake Trail Work - August 3rd-9th

Backpack, maintain trails, enjoy good company, learn about Wild Clearwater Country on a five-day backpacking trail work with Idaho Trail Association, FOC, and Great Burn Conservation Alliance. Apply to join online at the Idaho Trail Association website.

### Free the Snake, Save the Salmon - August 15th/16th

Show your support for salmon, treaty rights, and a free-flowing Snake River. Organized by Nimiipuu Protecting the Environment. Hells Gate State Park, ID.

### Save the Date: FOC Annual Meeting - Nov 1st

FOCs big event. 1912 Center in Moscow, ID.

## THE UNDERSTORY

Email Updates from  
Friends of the Clearwater

Don't miss a thing! Receive information to make it to all of our events and action alerts to comment on government projects:  
[www.friendsoftheclearwater.org/](http://www.friendsoftheclearwater.org/)



## ***IN MEMORIAM: DAVID MATTSON (1954-2025)***

By Gary Macfarlane

I first met David Mattson in the 1990s in Moscow, Idaho. He was finishing his PhD or working with USGS at the University of Idaho. He was the opposite of bombastic while commanding respect. His passion and brilliant intellect were evident from the time we first met. He was the grizzly scientist in our area and he was not afraid to stand up for bears.

I attended a presentation or two that he and Troy Merrill did on grizzly research and mapping. I got to know his research and eventually got to know David as well.

I remember fondly when he and fellow grizzly activist Louisa Willcox, his wife, visited Moscow a few years ago to give a presentation for Friends of the Clearwater (FOC) at the University of Idaho. The FOC presentation was to a packed room. A few weeks ago, a retired Idaho Fish and Game (IDFG) biologist who values predators told me how he loved that presentation—unfortunately it seems only retired IDFG staff speak out because of Idaho's oppressive political climate.

## ***IN MEMORIAM: FRED RABE (1927-2025)***

By Brett Haverstick

I think I met Fred for the first time in 2009 in the Pot Mountain Roadless Area. I was interning with FOC, and we teamed up with Fred to conduct an aquatic workshop on a stream. Little did I know that I would go on to work closely with Fred over the next decade, and help him publish a handful of roadless area education booklets.

Wild Clearwater Country lost one of its greatest champions when Fred passed last winter. He was 98. Besides being a tireless advocate for permanently protecting the 1.5 million acres of roadless wildlands in the Clearwater, Fred was also very involved in getting Research Natural Areas (RNAs) designated in the Northern Rockies. FOC staff and board worked very closely with Fred and the

As the years went by, I got to know David as friend, mentor, and hero. His incisive intellect and eclectic interests were nothing short of mind-boggling.

His AllGrizzly website presented reports that placed creativity above stulted orthodoxy. I was astounded when I learned from this website that one function of peer-review—gate-keeping—has its origins in Papal censorship. Instead, David promoted an empirical rather than ritualistic approach to research, which entailed looking at all of the scientific evidence that touched on grizzly ecology and human interactions and then using his creativity and experience to come up with hypotheses.

The credibility of his approach is evidenced by the successful lawsuits against delisting grizzly bears from the Endangered Species Act. Further, the fact that the US Fish and Wildlife Service now, as of this writing, explicitly recognizes the need for a large interconnected grizzly population in the US Northern Rockies and has proposed that it be considered one population (see article on page 8 of this newsletter), is largely due to David's argu-

Forest Service to designate 49 Meadows as an RNA near the Little North Fork.

Fred did everything you could imagine to help FOC defend Clearwater Country. He volunteered in the office to help with mailings, responded to action alerts and submitted public comments, wrote letters to the editor, attended events, offered financial support, and more. Fred also won the Plank Award, FOC's highest honor for activists that have dedicated many years to protecting the Clearwater.

Above all else, Fred was a great friend and mentor. We spent a lot of time together, both in and out of the office, and I will forever hold dear our time together.

Please consider attending a celebration of Fred's life on Saturday, May 24, 3:00 – 6:00pm in the 1912 Center in Moscow.

ments.

Based on his and others' research, David promoted the Wild Clearwater and surrounding wildlands as the Grizzly Bear Promised Land. His report is must reading for anyone interested in the history of grizzlies in this area and prognosis for their future. As with everything David did, this report is a comprehensive diagnosis of what we must do to recover grizzlies in this area. And, as Louisa has said, grizzlies are using their paws to recover themselves in the Wild Clearwater.

The last time I saw David was at the Spring Great Bear gathering at Lubrecht, the University of Montana's Experimental Forest. I spoke with him several weeks ago about the oftentimes difficult landscape of conservation organizations, all of which profess to want to help grizzlies. With the recent election of an anti-wildlife administration, we need to be smart and aggressive in protecting the great bear.

My heart goes out to Louisa Willcox and to the rest of his friends and family. I mourn too but take some comfort in the fact that his work for grizzlies lives on.



*Fred Rabe and Kathy Wilmes dancing. FOC file photo.*



## FOREST PLAN REVISION UPDATE: IT'S DONE

By Jeff Juel

On January 10, 2025 the U.S. Forest Service signed the Record of Decision for the Revised Land Management Plan (Forest Plan) for the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests. This concludes the revision process Friends of the Clearwater (FOC) has been following closely since its inception in 2004.

Since our last Clearwater Defender the Forest Service also issued its written response to all formal Objections to the Forest Plan—a response that fails to address to public concerns. Such is to be expected from a federal bureaucracy dominated by extractive industries and other consumptive users who don't value public lands for their inherent natural qualities including habitat for native species and space for quiet recreation and spiritual renewal.

The revised Forest Plan hardly complies with regulatory mandates to constrain management activities and conserve of our forests' ecological integrity.

*"The revised Forest Plan hardly complies with regulatory mandates to constrain management activities"*

However, a major problem is that the language of the Forest Plan is written to be so vague that it will be more difficult than ever for citizens and the courts to hold agency managers accountable for the environmental damages caused by extractive industries and other consumptive users.

We find ourselves in an uncertain era when it will be harder for FOC to carry out our mission to protect the wildness found on public lands, for which we have advocated so strongly with the unwavering support of our members. Still, our vision—including what we can imagine for the future of our forests—remains strong. Along with our members, FOC will continue to advocate for our shared values and find ways to fight for and defend the Clearwater country.



Gary Macfarlane before a massive cedar in the Dead Laundry project area. Old growth is at greater risk in the new forest plan. Katie Bilodeau photo.

## STILL FIGHTING FOR THE WILD: FOREST WATCH AND POLICY UPDATE

By Jeff Juel

No Trump executive order or DOGE decree can keep Friends of the Clearwater from pushing back on bad federal policy. Here's what we've been up to in recent months.



Lichen-covered hemlocks in the Mallard-Larkins Roadless Area. This area is being targeted for large-scale intentional fires and logging. Haverstick photo.

### IDAHO PANHANDLE NAT'L FORESTS

#### Granite Fuels prescribed fire project

*St. Joe Ranger District portion of the Mallard-Larkins roadless area*

We along with other groups filed an administrative (pre-decisional) objection earlier this Spring, challenging a proposal that would burn as much as 10,000 acres per year for up to 10 years, in the absence of site-specific analysis or specifics on locations, an approach that sidesteps legal procedure for NEPA.

Agency higher-ups have told the District Ranger how to patch up his failure to follow the law before signing his decision likely sometime this Spring.

#### Forestwide Prescribed Fire Project

*All districts*

It's apparently not enough to blindly plan burning up the Mallard-Larkins—the Forest Service wants to set fire to most of the rest of the IPNF in the absence of even minimal public involvement or analysis. The comment period began second week of April.

Lacy Lemoosh timber sale project

*(cont'd next page)*

### *St. Joe Ranger District*

Over 2,600 acres of logging—mostly supersized (>40 acres) clearcuts—along the Palouse Divide—which would also involve building over 25 miles of new roads. FOC and others filed an administrative objection on March 31, which means the Forest Service is in the process of patching up the failures to follow the law.

## **NEZ PERCE-CLEARWATER NAT'L FORESTS**

### Longleaf timber sale project

#### *Palouse Ranger District*

Nearly 1,800 acres of logging—mostly supersized clearcuts—and also building over 26 miles of new roads. FOC and others filed an administrative objection late July 2024, and in November the Forest Service made its final decision.

### End of the World and Hungry Ridge timber sale projects

#### *Salmon River Ranger District.*

These are the two huge and highly destructive timber sales featuring supersized clearcuts and new road building that FOC successfully fought off with a lawsuit filed in April of 2021, along with expert legal representation from Advocates for the West (see also Early Summer 2024 and Summer 2022 issues of the Clearwater Defender). After the Forest Service wrote new environmental analyses and subsequent legal wranglings, the Federal Court lifted the injunction on March 26, 2025. We are contemplating our next options for maintaining these large tracts of native forest in their natural condition.

### Section 16 timber sale project

#### *Lochsa-Powell Ranger District*

“Intermediate” harvest on approximately 380 acres and a little more than a half-mile of new system road construction, a few miles north of the river in the upper

Lochsa River watershed.

FOC filed an administrative objection in June 2024, and in December the Forest Service made a final decision.

### Dixie Comstock timber sale project

#### *Red River Ranger District*

Over 4,320 acres of logging, (mostly supersized clearcuts) and building about 15 miles of new roads. Over 440 acres of logging and one mile of road building would occur in the Gospel-Hump Inventoried Roadless Area.

FOC filed comments in March of 2024, and under an arbitrary Forest Service “EMERGENCY” declaration there was no opportunity for the public to file an administrative objection, so the Decision was signed June 2024. This was the last of a series of eight medium and large timber sale projects authorized under the old (1987) Forest Plan prior to the new Plan being signed in January of 2025.

### Dead Laundry timber sale project

#### *North Fork Ranger District*

Up to 1,801 acres of logging—mostly supersized clearcuts—and also building over 34 miles of new roads. After withdrawing a tentative decision in response to the first round of objections, the Forest Service converted 1,462 acres originally proposed as clearcuts to “non-commercial mechanical and hand treatment” and dropped the 140 acres of proposed “Old Growth Enhancement” logging. Decision was signed December 23, 2024 in the absence of the required Biological Opinion from USFWS, so implementation is paused.

## **BITTERROOT NAT'L FOREST**

### Amendment 40 to the Land Management Plan

#### *All districts*

FOC joined Friends of the Bitterroot, Native Ecosystems Council and WildEarth Guardians to challenge the 2023 decision

eliminating restrictions on road retention and motorized use, while not adequately considering the resulting impacts on grizzly bears and bull trout. We are represented by Earthjustice, which filed a complaint in federal court in December 2024. The Forest Service has largely agreed to not implement any actions relying on the Amendment, and briefing is likely to commence later this spring or summer.

## **ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT (ESA)**

### Gray wolf listing

#### *Western U.S. Distinct Population Segment*

A legal challenge to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s determination that the Western United States distinct population segment of the wolf does not warrant listing as an endangered or threatened species under the ESA. FOC and nine other organizations are being represented by Western Environmental Law Center. A hearing is scheduled in Federal District Court for June 18, 2025.



*A gray wolf in Yellowstone. Peaco/NPS photo.*



# CLEAN WATER VS. GOLD: THE STIBNITE GOLD PROJECT

By Sydney Anderson, Mining and Policy Manager at Idaho Rivers United

The South Fork of the Salmon River holds a unique and vital place in Idaho's ecological and cultural landscape. Despite the impacts of historical mining, the river and its watershed remain critical to the survival of salmon and steelhead, iconic species that define the region's natural heritage. This area has been the focus of decades of intensive restoration efforts, substantial investments, and significant projects aimed at revitalizing its ecosystem. Flowing into the main stem of the Salmon River, the health of this waterway directly affects Idaho's broader salmon restoration efforts and the survival of species that migrate thousands of miles to spawn in its waters. In fact, the Salmon River Basin has been touted as a cold-water refuge for salmon and steelhead because of its high elevation and resistance to increasing water temperatures from climate change.

*"The area at risk encompasses critical spawning habitat for bull trout, Chinook salmon, and steelhead, all of which are protected under the Endangered Species Act."*

However, at the headwaters of the South Fork of the Salmon River lies the proposed Stibnite Gold Project, an open-pit mining operation brought to us by Perpetua Resources. Situated in the Payette National Forest, just 14 miles from Yellow Pine, Idaho, this project will exploit more than 10,000 acres of land in the historic Stibnite mining district to extract gold and antimony.

On January 3, 2025, the U.S. Forest Service released its Final Record of Decision (ROD) approving Perpetua's controversial mining plan. The plan entails constructing three massive open pits and employing cyanide vat leaching to process ore, effectively doubling the size of the disturbed area compared to the historic

mine. Over 70% of the degradation will occur on public lands—lands supported and maintained by taxpayers. Alarming, this project is situated in the headwaters of the South Fork of the Salmon River, a place



View of the South Fork from Harpster Grade. Roger Inghram photo.

of profound ecological, recreational, and cultural importance.

The area at risk encompasses critical spawning habitat for bull trout, Chinook salmon, and steelhead, all of which are protected under the Endangered

*"Protecting the South Fork of the Salmon River means safeguarding the lifeblood of Idaho's waterways"*

Species Act (ESA). Beyond the ecological stakes, the region offers extensive recreational opportunities and holds deep cultural significance and treaty-reserved rights for the Nez Perce Tribe. The approval of this project jeopardizes these values, with long-lasting consequences for both the

environment and local communities.

One of the most troubling aspects of the approved mining plan is the creation of vast waste rock dumps and tailings storage facilities, which will remain on the landscape indefinitely. Acid mine drainage, a persistent and well-documented issue

associated with such operations, poses a significant risk. Even with proposed water treatment systems, these facilities will require maintenance in perpetuity, creating an enduring burden for taxpayers and an ongoing threat to the environment.

In addition to potential heavy metal contamination and increased stream temperatures, the project will restrict public access to over 14,000 acres of land during its 20-year operational lifespan and the subsequent restoration period. Despite Perpetua's assurances about their restoration plans, these measures pale in comparison to the irreversible damage the proposed large-scale mining will inflict on the region's ecosystems and cultural values.

The Forest Service's Final ROD ac-  
*(cont'd next page)*



knowledges these risks, stating that “the No Action Alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative” (p. 37). The Forest Service further explains that even with mitigation measures and efforts to reclaim the area, doing nothing would be less environmentally damaging than proceeding with the project. Perpetua’s claim that their operations offer the only viable solution to legacy pollution at Stibnite is disingenuous, as their plan risks leaving the site in worse condition than it was before.

Open-pit gold mining near sensitive waterways poses well-documented dangers, including water contamination, acid drainage, and catastrophic tailings dam failures. Research shows that such operations often degrade water quality and disrupt ecosystems. In this case, the proposed mining activities threaten not only the South Fork of the Salmon River but also the entire Salmon River watershed, endangering downstream wildlife and communities.

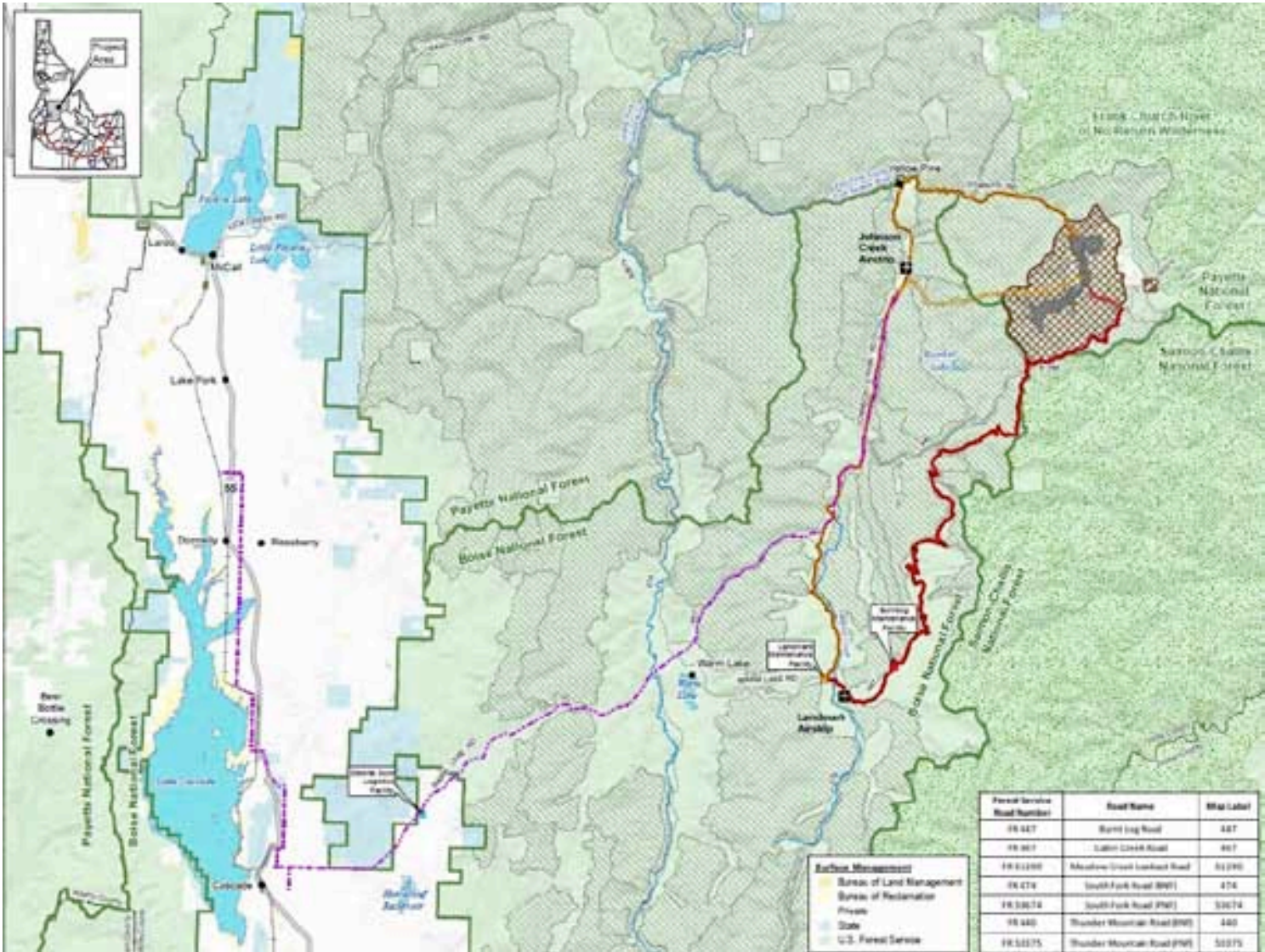
The approval of the Stibnite Gold Project represents a troubling step backward in the stewardship of Idaho’s public lands and waters. It places short-term profits above the long-term health of ecosystems and communities that depend on them. In the face of this threat, it is more important than ever to advocate for sustainable solutions that prioritize ecological restoration, public access, and the preservation of our natural heritage for future generations.

While it is important to recognize

the need for minerals for modern infrastructure and technology, we must also realize that certain areas are too environmentally sensitive for mining. The Stibnite Gold Project poses significant environmental risks and has no place in the critical South Fork Salmon watershed. Protecting the South Fork of the Salmon River means safeguarding the lifeblood of Idaho’s waterways—and standing firm against projects that threaten to undermine the value of healthy rivers.

Idaho Rivers United and our partners are continuing to moni-

tor the remaining permits Perpetua will need before the mine is fully approved. Additionally, we will continue to assess any potential challenges to these permits if we believe that they place our rivers and fisheries at undue risk.



General view of the project area. IRU image



A Chinook salmon in Alaska. Ryan Hagerty/USFWS Photo.



## ***KNOW YOUR WILDLANDS: RACKLIFF GEDNEY***

By Paul Busch

One of the many joys of Clearwater Country are the diverse landscapes that allow for year-round adventure. While the granite peaks of the Selway Craggs are still bound in snow, the canyon below is warm and inviting—if overflowing with spring runoff.

Such is the case with this edition’s “Know Your Wildlands” pick, a new series for the Defender: Rackliff-Gedney.

You may not have heard of the “Rackliff-Gedney” roadless area, but many of you have been there, or at least driven past. This roadless area is one of the largest possible additions to the Selway-Bitterroot wilderness, located just west

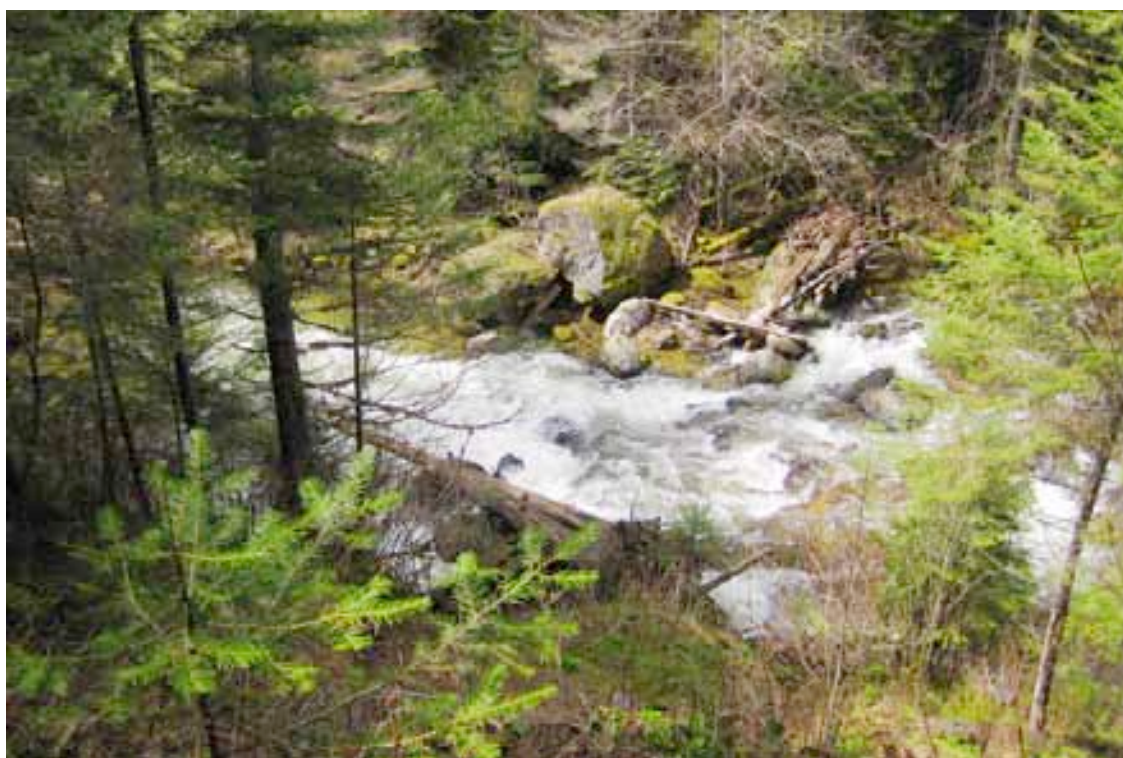
of the wilderness boundary, bound to the north by Highway 12 (along the Lochsa) and to the south by Forest Service Road 223 (along the Selway). It really should be called “Selway-Lochsa Divide” or “Middle Fork Confluence” roadless area.

The roadless area is about 90,000 acres or 140 square miles. The area is extremely steep, rising from 1,480 feet at Lowell to just under 7,000 feet atop Coolwater Mountain. This terrain creates enormous differences in weather; the valley bottom is warm and wet, dominated by cedar forest, while the top is park-like, supporting subalpine fir and the threatened whitebark pine. These high areas may have snow until late July. The Coolwater Ridge and Big Fog roads which cherry-stem the roadless area are not accessible until mid-summer.

The area is abundant in large wildlife, including elk, moose, whitetail deer, and black bears. Migratory birds are returning to the area in great numbers, and



*Lake at the top of Coolwater Ridge. The Lochsa Canyon can be seen in background. Paul Busch photo.*

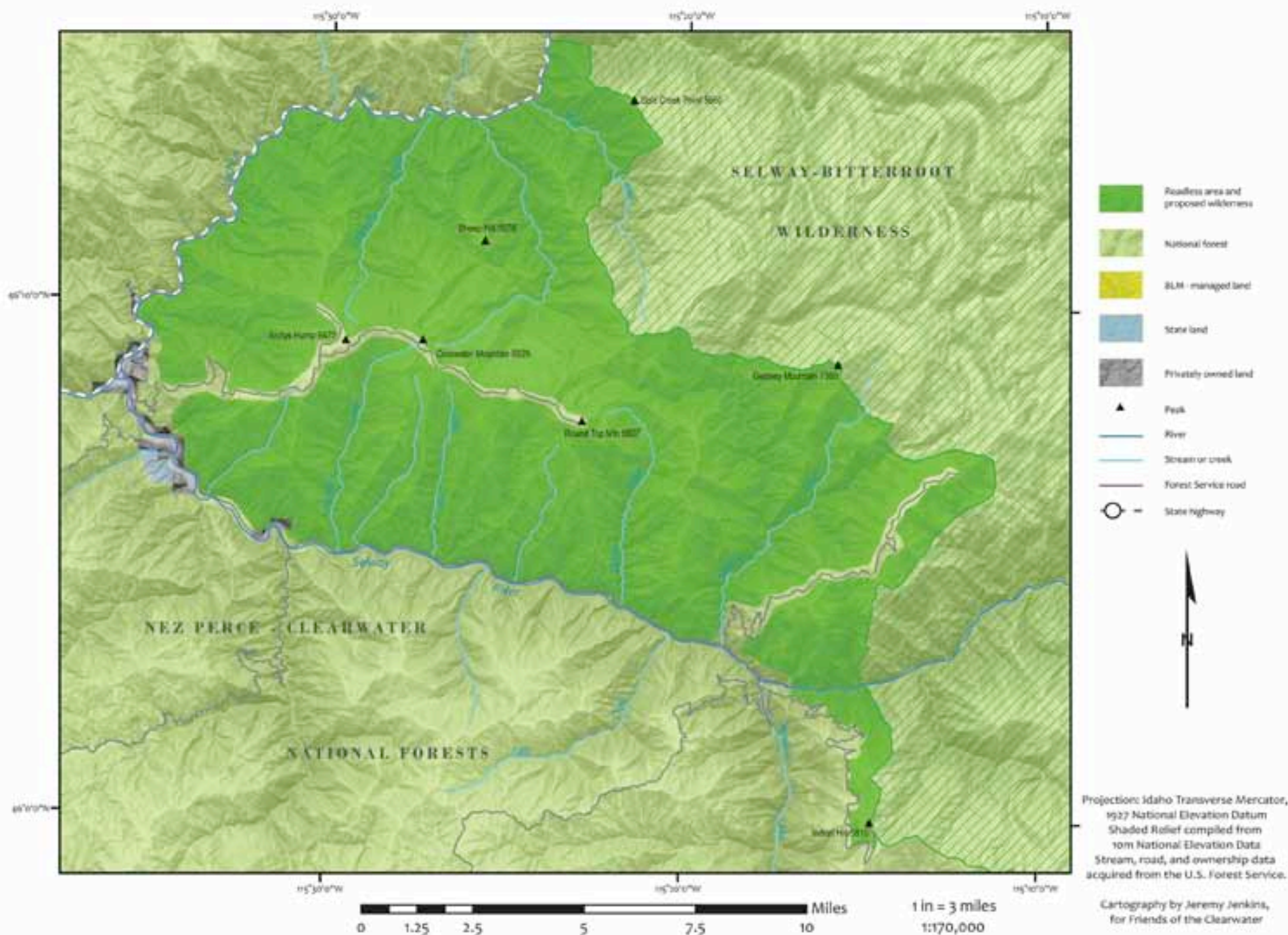


*Lower Gedney Creek (above) and a waterfall in the roadless area (right). Teresa Baker photos.*





# SELWAY-BITTERROOT ADDITION, RACKCLIFF GEDNEY



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riparian species like common mergansers, osprey, belted kingfishers, and even harlequin ducks can be seen along the rivers.,

Visitors this time of year are encouraged to explore the canyon bottoms—keep an eye out for the rare Pacific dogwood's white flowers. The more intrepid recreationist may want to float the Lochsa, which is beginning to swell with melted snow. The lucky angler may catch a spring Chinook or west-slope cutthroat.

Remember to practice Leave No Trace principles on public lands, let your friends know where you are going, and give wildlife plenty of space. This article and map are no substitute for a high-quality map; visitors are encouraged to contact the Forest Service to check road closures and local conditions.

If you'd like to learn more about the diverse roadless areas and Wildernesses of Clearwater Country, check out our website.



## UPDATES TO GRIZZLY BEAR MANAGEMENT

By Jeff Juel and Lynne Nelson

The year 2025 could be a turning point for grizzly bears. Pending policy moves stand to influence prospects for growing a thriving population of the Great Bear in the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests (NPCNF), in the Northern Rockies, and beyond.

### USFWS Rulemaking

One huge factor is the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) January 15 formal response rejecting petitions from the states of Wyoming and Montana that sought to strip Endangered Species Act (ESA) protections from grizzly bears in the Northern Rockies. The agency rightly acknowledged that grizzlies are not recovered and that removing protections would be premature.

However, the agency is also undertaking a rulemaking process with potentially severe implications for the species. If adopted as proposed, the new listing rule would remove all ESA protections for grizzly bears existing outside a small, geographically defined Distinct Population Segment (“DPS”). That DPS excludes most of the grizzly bear’s original range before extermination began with expansion of the colonial American empire. The federal government would essentially be foregoing protection of areas beyond the DPS that might become crucial for grizzly

bears to avoid extinction due to the growing effects of climate change.

This proposed rule would also extend loopholes to states and private citizens for situations in which grizzly bears are perceived as a threat and thus could be killed without presenting an actual or likely danger to people or property. The proposed rule would excuse greater human intolerance for this native species on its native lands. This rule would make biological recovery of grizzly bear population in the lower 48 states even less likely.

The opportunity for public comment on the proposed rule extends through May 16. See the Friends of the Clearwater website under “News and Updates” to find suggestions on writing your comments.

And finally on the listing front, members of Congress hostile to grizzly bears (including Representatives Harriet Hageman and Cynthia Lummis (WY), Senators John Barrasso (WY), Steve Daines and Tim Sheehy (MT) and Mike Crapo and Jim Risch (ID)) introduced bills into Congress this past January aiming to delist grizzly bears in all or portions of their current range. If any such bill advances, our News and Updates will assist you in voicing opposition.

Another recent development affecting grizzly bear habitat is the conclusion of the forest plan revision for



A grizzly bear in Yellowstone. Creative commons/Lamsa photo

the NPCNF (see Forest Plan Revision Update in this issue). Sadly, the Forest Service ignored best available science and failed to incorporate meaningful constraints on human activities that currently depress grizzly bear security on the NPCNF. Instead the Forest Plan allows for (and even recommends) a massive surge in commercial and recreational exploitation of the Great Bear’s native habitat. A bright ray of hope shines for the grizzly bear on the Flathead National Forest (FNF) where a 2024 court ruling recognized the failure of the Forest Service to justify the weakening of habitat protections in the revision of the FNF forest plan. FOC extends gratitude to our conservation partners Swan View Coalition and Friends of the Wild Swan for taking this precedent setting legal action.

### Grizzly Bears in the Bitterroot

Another possible influencing factor is the USFWS recovery initiative for the Bitterroot Ecosystem (BE). The BE encompasses central Idaho, including much of the NPCNF and a sliver of western Montana. In the 1990s, the USFWS developed a recovery plan that deemed the BE necessary for grizzly survival. The BE was one of six “recovery zones” delineated in the 1993 Recovery Plan for grizzly bears in the lower 48 States. In 2000 the USFWS made a controversial decision, authorizing artificial augmentation via transporting of grizzly bears from elsewhere into the BE, while designating these bears as “experimental, non-essential” under the 10j clause of the ESA. The 10j status was invoked to appease political interests opposed

*(cont’d next page)*



to bears in the BE. This status assigned weaker protections than a fully “Threatened” status would provide. Even so, due to political maneuvers the USFWS never implemented the 2000 decision—not even provisions requiring common sense “bear aware” outreach efforts to educate hunters, outfitters, and community members on how to coexist with grizzlies. In 2023 a federal court ordered the USFWS to update their out-of-date 2000 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for grizzly bear recovery. FOC is grateful for conservation partners Native Ecosystem Council and Alliance for the Wild Rockies who engaged in this successful legal fight. This past No-

vember the USFWS announced the updated EIS will prefer “Natural recolonization with... actions to provide education and conflict reduction.” FOC and our grassroots partners have long supported this natural recolonization with full protection under the ESA. Yet while natural recolonization, education and conflict reduction would be good steps, bears need secure habitat to survive. It remains to be seen if the USFWS recovery initiative will include pushing back on the NPCNF revised forest plan, which stacks the odds against grizzly bear recovery with drastic logging and road-ing in crucial areas that could otherwise provide habitat connectivity. Under a court

mandated schedule, the FWS will release its draft EIS this summer (2025), initiating the next round of public comment.

Regardless of the political or policy landmines lurking for grizzly bears in the NPCNF and surrounding lands, FOC will strategize, organize and advocate on behalf of their recovery and keep you informed when opportunities arise to advocate on behalf of the grizzly bear.

*The USFWS comment period on grizzly bears end May 16th. You can learn more by visitng our website under “News and Updates”*

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## WHAT ARE OUR TOOLS FOR TYRANNY?

By Lynne Nelson

Several weeks ago, I was in the kitchen making dinner, listening to music as I commonly do. It is a relaxing process, creating a meal with playlists of my favorite artists. Occasionally similar songs get sifted into the sound mix. Stirring the pot with no particular thought in mind, Nick Lowe’s acoustic version of “What’s So Funny ‘Bout Peace, Love and Understanding” drifted soulfully onto the airwaves. I had not heard this rendition of the song before. I immediately began to sob—right into my spaghetti sauce! I hadn’t realized how badly I needed to mourn what is happening to our people, our country, and our planet.

Attending to the news every day is jarring and stunning. Flurries of executive orders are ordering the dismantling of democracy and hard-won civil processes. Mean-spirited attacks toward innocent human beings are the norm. I have friends and colleagues who have lost their long-term federal careers, or who have had the programs or units they supervise eliminated. They fear they are next to go. When we witness the great upending and suffering of our society, we hurt. The feeling of sadness runs very deep to our core being. It’s ok to mourn. Grieving is not a show of weakness; it means that we have compassion and heart. Only hardened hearts that

have been taught to tolerate cruelty shed no tears. It is easy to give in to despair and feel powerless, but remember:

“The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don’t have any.”- Alice Walker

We will stand up to tyranny because it is right. If we shrink and stay quiet, we are teaching power what it can do. We all have tools within us to fight tyrannical rule. Here are a few I am putting in my toolbox.

*The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don’t have any.” — Alice Walker*

### 1. INVESTIGATE AND DEFEND TRUTH.

It has been said that to abandon facts is to abandon freedom. Investigate things for yourself. Spend time with details and data, know your sources. Look for hidden agendas.

### 2. CONTRIBUTE TO GOOD CAUSES.

Pick organizations that align with your views. Set up autopay. These choices are your votes for freedom and a just society. Help them do the work we desperately need.

### 3. LISTEN FOR MALICIOUS WORDS.

Be alert to the words terrorism, extremism, exception, and emergency. If we can be silenced by fear, then power can proceed with its agenda. Take back the word “patriotic.” It has been corrupted to value greed and hate, and to refute love and respect.

### 4. REMAIN CALM.

When disaster strikes remember that authoritarians use crises to consolidate their power, roll back checks and balances and eliminate freedoms. Don’t fall for this trick. Refer to 1 and 3.

### 5. BE COURAGEOUS.

Become an active member of a group. Don’t wait for someone else to step up or wait until some other time. The time is now. Stay true to your values. Set a good example with your actions. We need good examples.

After my dinner, I sat down with my guitar to pick out the chords of Nick Lowe’s beautifully executed piece of music. I vowed to learn to play this tune. I vowed to sharpen my tools. I encourage you to do the same.

Where are your tools for tyranny? Pick up your guitar. Pick up your pen. Use your voice. Stand up. Be seen. We need you. We need each other.



## 2024 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING RECAP

By Paul Busch

Thank you to everyone that attended our annual meeting on November 2nd, 2024. We had great turn out and record fundraising in the silent auction.

FOC presented awards to three regional activists for their under-valued work:

### ***Volunteers of the Year – Lin Laughy and Borg Hendrickson***

Many of our members know and love Lin and Borg. They have been part of FOC for over ten years, and active on local environmental issues for decades. They literally wrote the book on Clearwater Country, a mile-by-mile guide to the remarkable Highway 12 corridor and the deep social and natural history of the area. Borg and Lin organized during the mega-load campaign in the 2010s, fighting back with energy, truth, and moral clarity against Big Oil's plans to industrialize that corridor. They are longstanding supporters of Advocates for the West, and grassroots efforts to save the natural world in general.

In the last year, Borg and Lin have been providing their time, expertise, and guidance to Friends of the Clearwater more directly. Both Borg and Lin presided over a team to develop a fundraising and operations plan for FOC, which met for months and developed step-by-step approaches to expand our reach and deepen our impact. The group was made up of FOC members and community leaders, all motivated by Borg

and Lin's deep love of Clearwater Country and FOC's commitment to protecting it.

Already, we have had some meaningful changes to the organization, including a new website, logo, tools for fundraising, and connections to likeminded organizations. The many fruits of this plan will only be realized in the years to come as we act on the multi-stage plan that Borg and Lin cultivated.

Neither their help nor



FOC supporters at the 2024 annual meeting. Busch photo.

their love of this region can be overstated.

We are deeply thankful for their work, vision, and generosity and proud to celebrate them as volunteers of the year.

### ***Plank Award – Denise Boggs***

The Macfarlane Plank award began as a way to acknowledge the unsung heroes of the Northern Rockies—folks who you may not know but have dedicated much of their lives to the wild places of our region.

The 2025 recipient of the award is Denise Boggs. Denise Boggs has been a feisty and effec-

tive national forest and wildlife activist for decades in the Northern Rockies, Utah, and California. She started an email list serve for visionary grassroots activists, appropriately named bad kitty, to aid in networking small organizations like FOC with others regionally and nationally.

She has done everything from on-the-ground direct action, starting grassroots groups, to advising foundations on grassroots support. Denise was active in Cove-Mallard and many other campaigns in our bioregion.

She is currently the executive director of Conservation Congress, an organization dedicated to protecting the wildlife and state and national forests primarily in northern California. Conservation Congress also advocates for wildlife in the Northern Rockies, especially wolves, grizzly bears, and bison. She says, "I've spent my life trying to defend wildlife and their habitat and I have no regrets."

While she could not attend the meeting, she did write us a thank you, which is printed below in its entirety:

*"When Gary called me to say I had won FOC's Plank Award*

*I was stunned. Then I wondered what the Plank Award was - for those who want to hit the Forest Service upside the head with a plank of wood? If so, I definitely qualified. Then I read FOC's website about the Plank Award; what it is and who it is for and I was deeply honored to be given this award and am sincerely thankful.*

*"It's likely most people in this room know how difficult it is to protect wild environments and species. The cards are definitely stacked against us and it takes tenacity, dedication, and it doesn't hurt to be an old Earth Firster!"*

*"You will never get rich monetarily doing this work, or even thanked, but you will be richer for doing it. Nothing can take the place of seeing a grizzly or gray wolf in the wild. Not much compares to a walk through a true old growth forest ecosystem hearing the hoot of an owl. I've spent my life trying to defend wildlife and their habitat and I have no regrets. I love the quote, "Fate whispers to the warrior, you cannot withstand the storm. The warrior whispers back, I am the storm." We here in this room are all the storm!"*

*"FOC is an incredible group that has accomplished so much, so this award coming from them means that much more. I'd like to thank FOC and everyone here for their efforts to protect the last of the wild. We need you like never before. I wish I could have been here in person to see all of you, but I had a prior commitment and I'm basically a hermit anyway. I am truly grateful for the Plank Award and would like to thank everyone at FOC for this honor. And a special hello to Steve Paulson whom I haven't seen in over 30 years! I hope you are well*

*(cont'd next page)*



and I wasn't surprised to see that it was you who created this award. Have a wonderful night everyone."

Typical to Denise's sense of humility, when we asked for a photo of

her to share with everyone, she insisted we share a photo of the late great grizzly bear 399 instead, who had died only a week before the meeting. "You can give a toast to her," Denise said.

If you would like to support Denise's work, search "Conservation Congress California" online.

## FOC UP AND RUNNING

By Gary Macfarlane

With only two staff members, FOC has accomplished a lot this past year, as is reported in this newsletter. But the election has produced profound challenges for all things wild and citizen efforts to protect wildlands, waterways, and wildlife. We are meeting these unprecedented challenges in the following ways:

### Strategic Planning:

FOC is finishing a strategic planning process about how to best meet the changing regulatory landscape and the less than democratic operation of the new administration. This will include more field visits with members to threatened areas. Keep an eye out this summer for field trip opportunities via FOC's email list—you can sign up at the bottom of our website.

### Hiring Staff

Hiring new staff, specifically an Executive Director, to guide the organization is a prime goal of the Board this year. In spite of the committed staff, we need more than two people. In this time of transition, we are interviewing some excellent candidates and hope to have an announcement soon.

### Board Organization

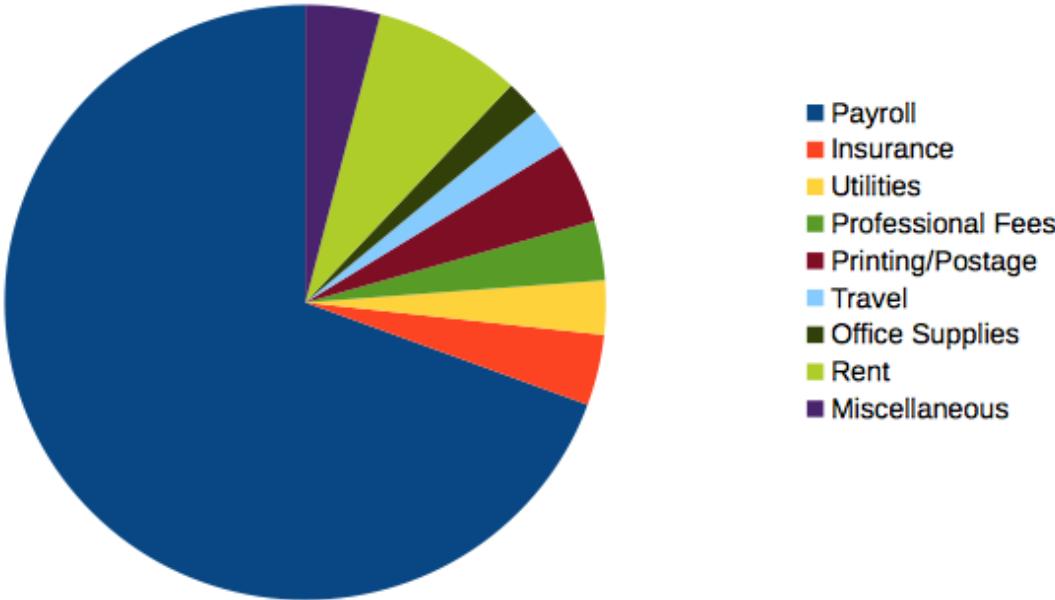
The board has organized itself into four key teams—relationship with members, organizational leadership, outreach and public image, and conservation policy—until an Executive Director is hired.

We are very excited and energized. The board is taking an expanded role in the absence of more staff, at least for the short term. In order for us to be successful, we will need your help in engaging with others and letting them know about FOC, helping out in the office or the field, and financially. Together, let's keep the Clearwater wild in these difficult times.

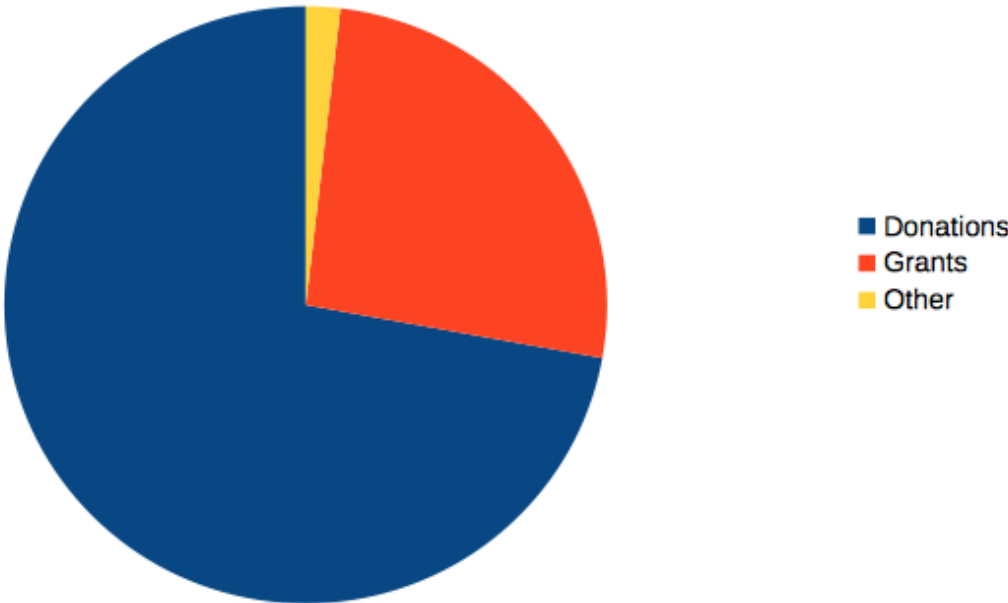
Speaking of how busy FOC has been, the pie

charts below give an accounting of our income and expenses this past year. FOC spent about \$134,730 and in 2024 and brought in about \$144,050. The numbers have not yet been fully reconciled by our accountants who will file our 990 non-profit report later this year. The numbers do demonstrate that FOC is a lean and mean organization. They also reflect that we are, unlike many organizations, primarily funded by the generosity of members like you.

Friends of the Clearwater Expenses 2024



Friends of the Clearwater Income 2024





# ***SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: THE FISHER***

By Paul Busch

Old timers might call this Defender's Species Spotlight the fisher cat. But the fisher (*Pekania pennanti*) is not a cat, nor does it eat fish. It might better be called the porcupine-eating weasel, and is one of the rarest carnivores in the Clearwater Basin.

## ***Species Description***

Fishers are cat-sized carnivores closely related to pine martens and wolverines, adapted to the northern forests of North America. They are adept at climbing trees in search of prey or to escape larger predators. Fishers are solitary generalists, roaming the forest in search of any prey they can get their paws on, primarily squirrels, rabbits, hares, mice, and porcupines.

Porcupines are the most infamous of fishers' prey. Fishers seem to be the only common predator of the needle-armored rodents, so much so that timber companies have re-introduced fishers to reduce porcupine impacts on saplings. Fishers aggressively target the porcupine's face—the only exposed part of its body without quills—until it dies and can be dismembered. For large prey, fishers will store pieces of their prey in caches to finish eating later.

Fishers live in closed-canopy forests. They tend to live in lower elevations than pine martens or wolverines. Like other wild carnivores, their presence is an indicator of ecological health. While fishers in the American Northeast seem to be expanding, populations in the Pacific ranges and Northern Rockies are in decline.

## ***Life Cycle***

Fishers are solitary except during mating season in spring. Gestation, however, is delayed until the next February, nearly a whole year. After a 50-day gesta-

tion, females give birth to one to four kits. Like other weasels, fishers use two dens, giving birth in one and moving the kits to a different den to raise their young. Dens are usually in hollow trees, so older forests are key for denning habitat. Kits are altricial, born blind and wholly dependent on their mother. After about seven weeks, kits open their eyes. They feed only on



*A Pacific fisher in a tree. USFWS photo*

milk for eight to ten weeks before weaning. At five months old, juveniles are forced out on their own.

## ***Evolution***

Wolverines and the Latin American tayra are the fisher's closest relatives; they are all part of subfamily Gulonidae, which includes martens and sables. Fossil records seem to show that American mustelids evolved in Eurasia and dispersed several times over land bridges to North

America.

The earliest conclusive fisher fossil was found in the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument in Oregon. That fossil, a portion of an upper jaw and several teeth, is around 7 million years old.

## ***Conservation***

Trappers and farmers killed off most fishers in the 19th and 20th centuries, the former to sell fur and the latter to protect poultry. Prior to White American settlement, fishers occupied the boreal forests of Canada, the Pacific Coast forests, the Northern Rockies, and the Eastern hardwood forests as far south as Georgia. However, they were extirpated in the US south and had dramatic range reductions elsewhere. According to some researchers, fisher populations are now growing in New England and Eastern Canada, where some mature hardwood forests have recovered. In the early 2000s, fishers were reintroduced into Tennessee.

On the West Coast, the Pacific subspecies of fisher is at risk of extinction. Old-growth logging continues to reduce their habitat and rodenticide (both legal, as used on tree farms, and illegal, as used on marijuana farms) has led to increased mortality. The Pacific fisher used to roam from western Washington south into California; today two isolated populations exist in the Klamath-Siskiyou region and the southern Sierras (see map, next page). Reintroductions have taken place in Olympic and Mount Rainier National Parks in Washington State.

Fishers in the Northern Rockies do not have the protections of their West Coast counterparts. Fishers are one of the most elusive carnivores of the Clearwater, and their exact population in the Northern Rockies is uncertain. For decades, it was believed all fishers in North Idaho and northwest Montana were descended from reintroduced animals; genetic research in 2006 showed that there was a small population of fishers in the Clearwater and

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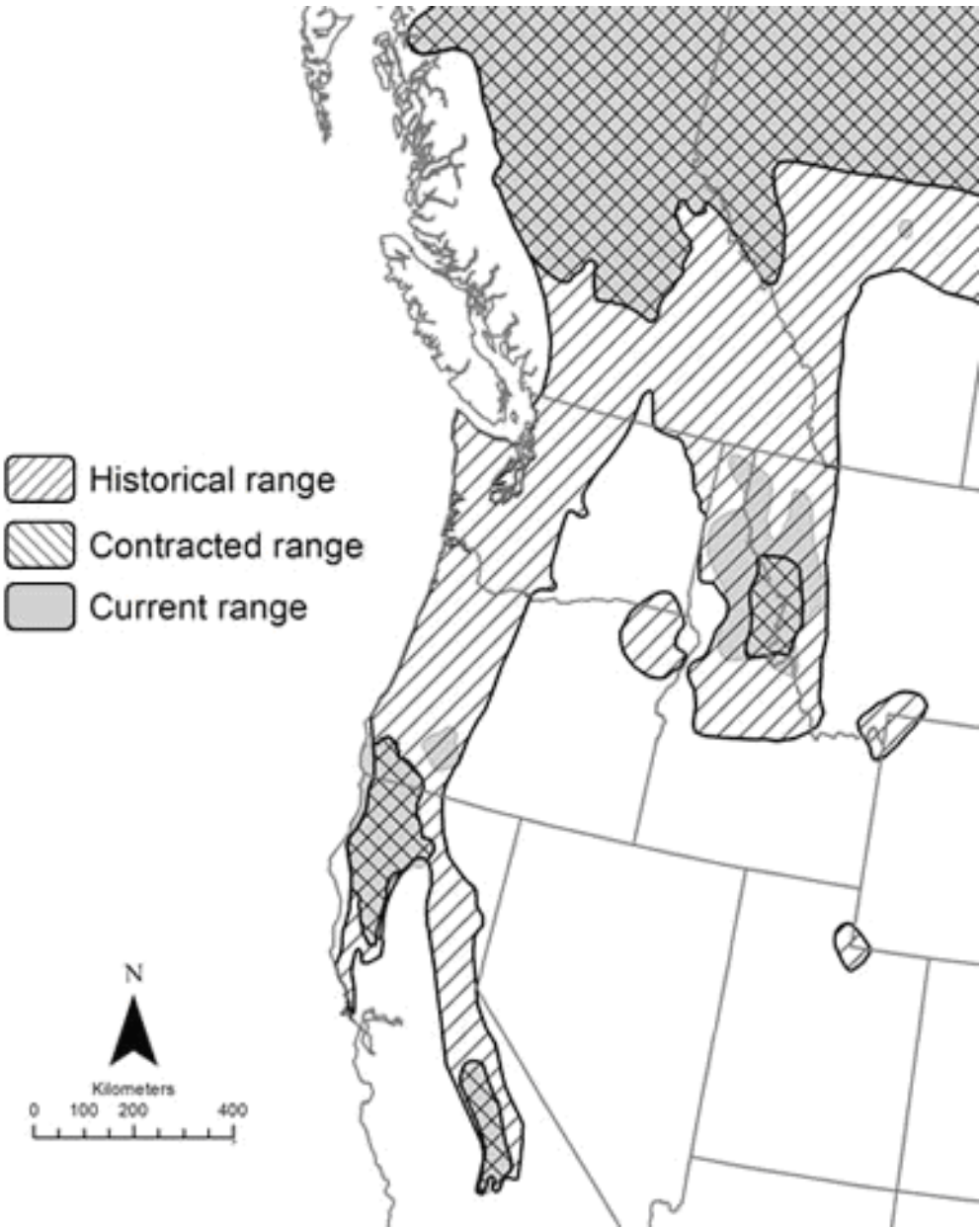
Bitterroot mountains that was never extirpated. That genetic group, or haplotype, is unique to Clearwater country.

Research in Idaho in 2019 shows that those fishers in the Clearwater and Bitterroot are isolated from fishers in the Cabinet and Purcell ranges further north. A larger hair-trap study by Idaho Fish and Game and Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks assessed fisher habitat occupancy in Idaho and Montana in 2020 .

Habitat loss is the primary threat to Idaho’s fisher population, due to logging in mature and old-growth forests. The U.S. Forest Service overarching goal to clearcut North Idaho’s mesic pine-fir forests and replace them with ponderosa-larch plantations is not compatible with fisher survival, based on fisher’s preference for older, taller, structurally complex forests. Rodenticide use, especially on private timberlands, may be a problem as well. Incidental trapping of fishers in Idaho as well as vehicle collisions have been documented.

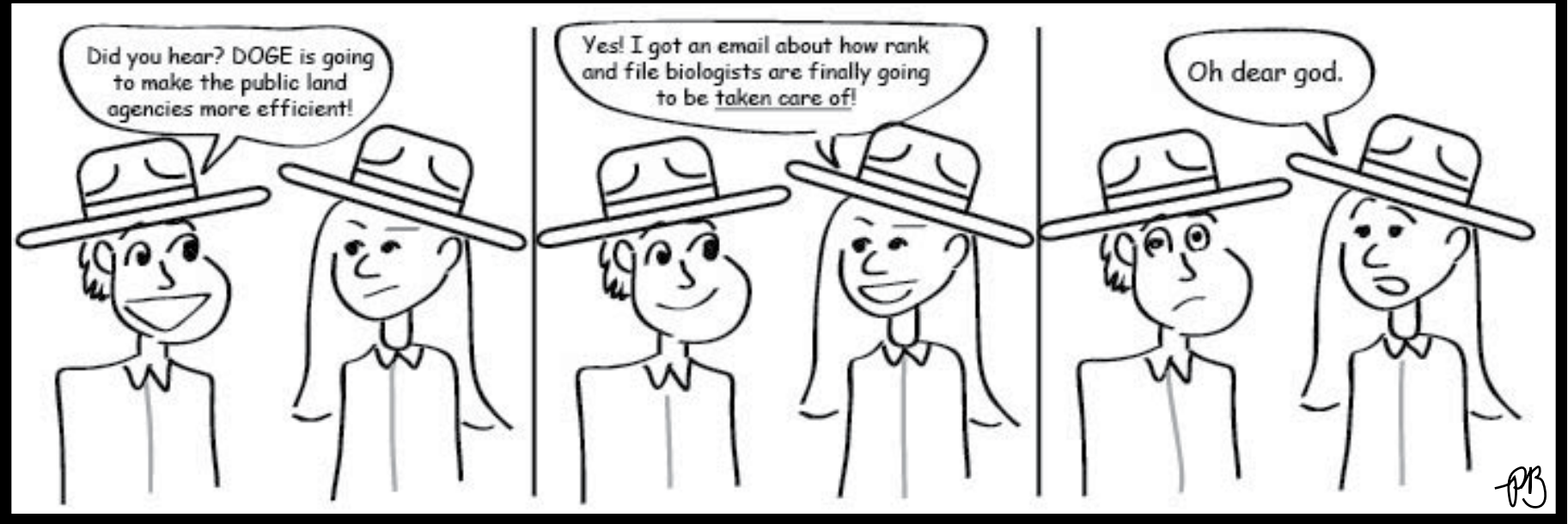
The Center for Biological Diversity petitioned the US Fish and Wildlife Service to list the Northern Rockies fisher as endangered in 2009 and 2013 (supported by Friends of the Clearwater and other groups). The USFWS declined to list both times. As of 2025, fishers can still be legally trapped in Montana, and their habitat continues to be targeted for clearcutting across the region.

You can read this article (with more pictures and related science) on our website.



Fisher range map, WDNR image

Coyote's Comics: "DOGE"





# DISORDERS FROM ABOVE: TRUMP VS. PUBLIC FORESTS

By Paul Busch and Jeff Juel

The beginning of the second Trump administration is a moment of commotion and upheaval in the federal bureaucracy unseen in decades, maybe ever. As of this writing, Trump has signed over 100 executive orders with varying levels of imminent effect, although some are quite ominous for our Wild Clearwater bioregion.

Most directly relevant is Executive Order 14225, “Immediate Expansion of American Timber Production,” which aims to increase timber production from federal public land in part with its direction to “suspend, revise, or rescind” regulations that impose an “undue burden on timber production.” It also seeks to

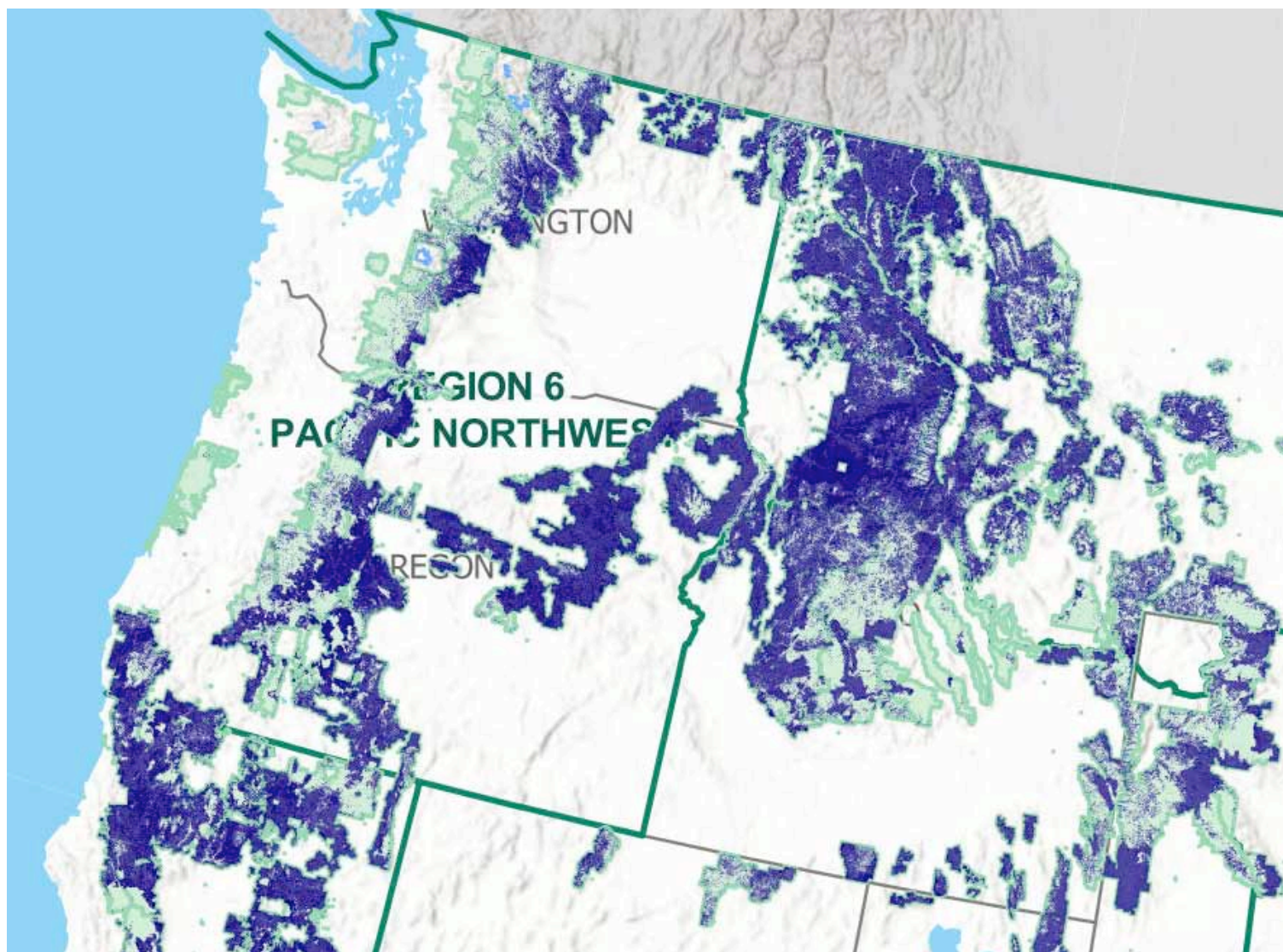
expand “categorical exclusions” for logging, which means exempting more actions from directly engaging the public in the kind of dialogue that attempts to respect the multitude of values represented in our national forests.

This Order even seeks to exempt or fast-track some projects from the Endangered Species Act. It’s too early to tell how all that will play out, but it’s almost certain to make our job more difficult.

Perhaps more alarming, a directive from the Secretary of Agriculture exempts logging on 176,000 square miles of national forests from the administrative objection process and narrows the National Environmental Policy Act’s mandate to consider alternatives for Forest Service proposals. This follows from a narrower “Emergency Situation Determination” created under the Obama administration (“for which

immediate implementation of a decision is necessary to achieve one or more of the following: relief from hazards threatening human health and safety; mitigation of threats to natural resources on National Forest System or adjacent lands; avoiding a loss of commodity value sufficient to jeopardize the agency’s ability to accomplish project objectives directly related to resource protection or restoration”) which was further expanded under the Biden administration under the fog of the Covid epidemic.

While the Trump administration’s steps to erode public participation in public land management are nothing new, the scale and ferocity raise the stakes even higher for wildlife, native forests, fish, and recreational values on our national forests.



*The map at left is a cropped version of one produced by the USDA in their announcement. Blue areas are targeted for logging. While we can’t say exactly what decided the regions selected, there are some patterns.*

*Wildernesses, which are federally protected from logging, are included. This is blatantly illegal and pushes agency leaders to follow suit.*