



The Clearwater DEFENDER

A publication of the Friends of the Clearwater | Spring 2023

Year in review

Stopping timber sales, questioning deadbeat dams, and hosting dance parties: a broad look at the work FOC has done in 2022.

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Annual meeting awards

It takes a village to protect the Wild. At our November Annual Membership Meeting, we celebrated volunteers, activists, and organizations that are making change happen.

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Whitebark pine gets ESA listing

A casualty of climate change or a subterfuge for chainsaw medicine? The whitebark pine is now listed under the Endangered Species Act.

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Timber sales reach 20 year high

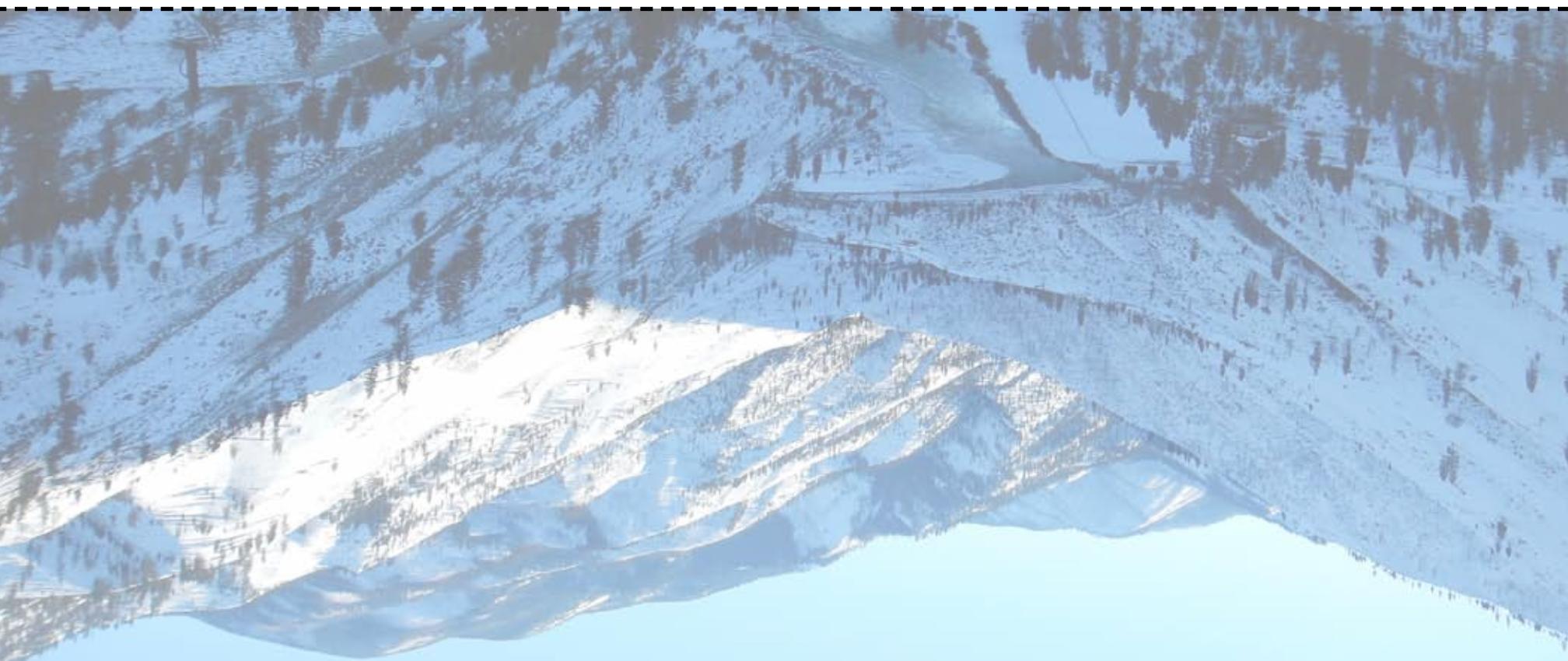
The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests push for alarming levels of logging despite climate and biodiversity crises

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Friends of the Clearwater
Keeping Idaho's Clearwater Basin Wild

Below: A view in the River of No Return Wilderness in winter. Brett Haverstick photo.



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Friends of the Clearwater
Keeping Idaho's Clearwater Basin Wild

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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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Event Calendar

April

4/22: Biodiversity Ball

Hunga Dunga Brewing in Moscow, ID
 7pm-12am. Suggested \$10 cover for bands. Dance to live music and enter the "Creature Costume Contest" as your favorite organism!

May

5/6-7: Renaissance Fair

East City Park in Moscow, ID.
 Food and craft vendors. Stop by and see us!

Summer field monitoring

May-September, locations TBD
 Email foc@friendsoftheclearwater.org if you are interested in joining us for on-the-ground look at human impacts in Clearwater Country. No vehicle necessary!

July

7/21-23 - Great Bear Campout

Wilderness Gateway Campground, Highway 12 near Lowell
 Join activists for music, presentations, and tomfoolery - all in support of grizzly bear recovery. Located on the stunning Lochsa River.



Don't miss a thing! Receive information to make it to all of our events and action alerts to comment on proposals on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests:
www.friendsoftheclearwater.org/get-e-news/

Our Year in Review

A year of remarkable wins for Clearwater country.

By Paul Busch

Editor's note: Our members and donors are the lifeblood of our work. Your support enables us to scrutinize agency actions, apply the science, monitor the existing conditions, and advocate for the wild places in North-central Idaho. Your generosity and shared love of Wild Clearwater Country continues to humble us and fill us with gratitude.

In Brief:

Advocating for wild country is like hiking in Idaho: it's pretty much an uphill battle. But even the tallest mountains get climbed, a step at a time. Here are four big wins from 2022:

- Judge pauses Hungry Ridge and End of the World projects until Forest Service completes proper analysis.
- Forest Service withdraws the Dead Laundry Project for now.
- Judge orders wolverines return candidate status for protection under the Endangered Species Act.
- Court prohibits motorized use of Fish Lake trail until Forest Service does sufficient analysis

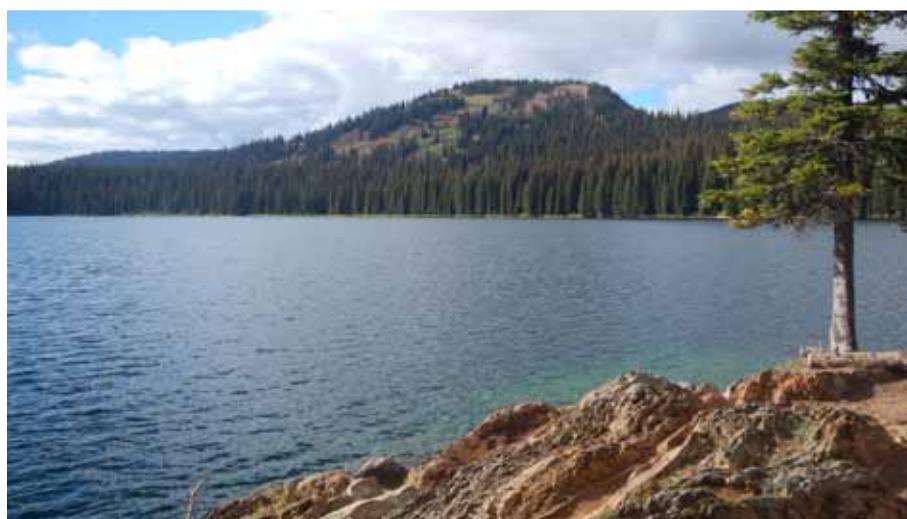
Hungry Ridge and End Of The World

Enforcing old-growth protections on the Nez Perce

Old-growth forests, if you took President Biden's 2022 Earth Day Executive Order (EO14072) at face value, are now protected. He ordered his agencies to identify, complete, and publicly release an inventory of old-growth forests within a year. On the Nez Perce and Clearwater forests, land management plans have mandated such inventories since 1987.



Jeff Juel, Katie Bilodeau, and Allison Anders in the End of the World project area.



Fish Lake nestled in the Bitterroots. Brett Haverstick photo.

Despite this requirement, the Forest Service still has not completed an inventory, and FOC sued to protect old growth. While the Forest Service nationally pushed back on the executive order, FOC protected old growth by securing an injunction from a federal judge in court to stop two massive logging projects practically next door to each other on the Nez Perce National Forest.

The judge ordered the Forest Service to properly inventory the old growth within the 80,000 acres that comprised the misleadingly named Hungry Ridge Restoration Project and the appropriately named End of the World Project (HR-EOTW). This order forces the agency to ensure that it has conserved the amount of old growth that each forest plan demands.

The HR-EOTW projects would significantly fragment and damage some of the Clearwater Basin's best wildlife habitat and largest carbon reserves.

The narrow gap between

them is also a logging project, the Doc Denny Project, and is currently being cut.

Advocates for the West represented FOC in court. Funding from members like you made this win possible.

Dead Laundry on hold

One of the "worst timber sales" for America's climate forests

We also succeeded when the Forest Service withdrew the Dead Laundry Project this year. This 3,600-acre logging project would punch intensive logging and roadbuilding into a remote part of the North Fork of the Clearwater that connects three inventoried roadless areas.

The district ranger withdrew his draft decision, citing a failure to follow the required procedure to approve supersized clearcuts, including one the size of 350 football fields. Approving such large clearcuts is an increasingly common rubber-

stamp practice that Friends of the Clearwater reported on last year in *The Clearcut Kings: The US Forest Service Northern Region and its obsession with supersized clearcuts* (<https://www.friendsoftheclearwater.org/supersized-clearcut-report/>).

In our *Dead Laundry* comments, we criticized the Forest Service's new theory for "old-growth enhancement," the details of which would allow building roads into old-growth forests and logging trees up to 25 inches in diameter to "enhance" other trees. The Forest Service has produced no peer-reviewed science to support the effectiveness of its new theory—it is simply another artificial justification to cut the largest trees that remain. We also noted the misleading characterizations and the true extensiveness of proposed roadwork. We work to keep *Dead Laundry* dead. We convinced our allies to feature this project in a national report, *America's Vanishing Climate Forests* (<https://www.climate-forests.org/worth-more-standing>) that highlights logging projects poised to destroy old growth that the Administration proclaims to protect.

Fish Lake Trail

Wilderness character protected in the northern Bitterroots

We won our litigation on motorized abuse. In 2015, a federal court held that the Forest Service could not allow motorized use where the Clearwater Forest Plan required 100 percent habitat security for elk. The agency never revised motorized allowances consistent with the order.

In 2021, we filed suit again.

We highlighted

(cont'd page 7)



Gary Macfarlane in front of a massive cedar in the Dead Laundry project area. Bilodeau photo.

WHITEBARK PINE PROTECTED UNDER THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

A celebration with a cautionary tale
By Jeff Juel

In December the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) listed the whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*), a tree found across western North America, as “threatened” under the Endangered Species Act. The USFWS published its finding in the December 15, 2022 Federal Register. We celebrate the USFWS taking this important step, a precursor to coordinating resources for preventing extinction.

A picturesque, iconic inhabitant of windy, cold, high-elevation environments across the western United States and southern Canada, the whitebark pine is found mostly above 6,000 feet elevation in northern Idaho. As a “keystone” species it promotes biological diversity and ecosystem stability. Mature pines help regulate snowmelt and reduce soil erosion in upper sub-alpine areas. The seedlings are hardy and act as nurse trees to other vegetation. Seed dispersal occurs almost exclusively by Clark’s nutcrackers, from the avian family whose members include ravens, crows, and jays. In its symbiotic relationship with the tree, the Clark’s nutcracker facilitates its regeneration, distribution and population structure through seed caching. Grizzly bears raid these seed caches for an important food source in many parts of their range, and many other species predate on these caches as well.

According to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) a “threatened” species is one likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range, whereas a species listed as “endangered” is already in danger of extinction. The USFWS is concerned

The whitebark pine (and its calorie-dense nuts) acts as a “keystone” species of the subalpine

that “loss of reproductive trees will lead to a substantial decline in the establishment of new seedlings, meaning new trees will not be able to replace lost trees sufficiently quickly given the species’ long generation time.” (The average age of the WBP’s first cone production is around 40 years.) Increasing mortality from

the white pine blister rust, an exotic fungus accidentally imported into North America from Asia in the early 20th century, is the major factor leading to its threatened status. By mid-century, this fungus—along with the logging that followed—decimated U.S. populations of another native five-needle pine, the western white pine. The USFWS also cites the harmful effects from a combination of climate change and a native insect, the western pine beetle. Before climate change, winters tended to be more severe and deep cold snaps killed most of the beetle’s larvae. According to the



A huge (and living) whitebark pine. Jeff Juel photo.

USFWS the combination of white pine beetle/climate change, blister rust, and altered fire regimes results in about half of all standing whitebark pine trees in the United States being dead, with most of the mortality happening in the last 20 or so years.

So how does a listing under the ESA lead to actions preventing extinction? Prior to a federal agency authorizing activities that might harm a listed species, the ESA requires the agency first consult with the USFWS to estimate and minimize the likelihood of “take.” For endangered species the law prohibits “take” which is defined as “harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to

engage in any such conduct.” For threatened species this prohibition is not automatic, but ESA section 4(d) authorizes the USFWS to supplement its finding with regulations that specifically identify which acts are prohibited and which are allowed.

Under the whitebark pine 4(d) rule, prohibited take depends upon location. Within the U.S., the vast majority of the species’ range (approximately 88 percent) is located on Federal lands. With exceptions described below, the 4(d) rule prohibits anyone from damaging or destroying a whitebark pine tree (and its cones,

the guise of “restoration.” Though we’ve yet to notice the Forest Service using whitebark pine restoration in particular to justify such extreme actions, based on that agency’s history of distorting science it wouldn’t come as a surprise. But it’s not just the Forest Service that needs scrutiny.

In its news release announcing the listing, the USFWS says it “looks forward to continuing engagement with the many whitebark pine conservation partners... beginning with the development of a recovery outline (which) guides the immediate implementation of urgent recovery actions and describes the process to be used to develop ... draft and final recovery plans.” The news release says, “One promising work in progress is the National Whitebark Pine Restoration Plan... being developed collaboratively between Whitebark Pine Ecosystem Foundation and American Forests, in consultation with the US Forest Service, the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, and several northwestern tribes.” Actually, the Whitebark Pine Ecosystem Foundation/American Forests restoration plan was published last year. (Tomback and Sprague, 2022. The National Whitebark Pine Restoration Plan: Restoration model for the high elevation five-needle white pines. Forest Ecology and Management 521.)

As with any “collaboratively” produced proposal for management of public lands and resources, it’s vital to examine the interests of the collaborators to see if public interest is adequately represented. We’re acutely aware of the resource extraction biases of federal agencies such as the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. But what of the Whitebark Pine Ecosystem Foundation (WPEF) and American Forests?

In looking at the current makeup of the board of directors of American Forests, we see a recently retired associate chief of the Forest Service, a director at timber giant Weyerhaeuser, and representation from several other corporations. The WPEF board has seven former Forest Service employees, including three silviculturists who promoted widespread logging in their former roles. So perspectives for dominating, controlling, and monetizing nature are well represented, but we see no obvious counterbalance from those whose perspectives include acknowledging how little we actually know about these complex forest ecosystems, perhaps based in more traditional ecological knowledge.

Adding to our alarm, a 2018 Forest Service research station publication's restoration strategies for whitebark pine include "any combination of prescribed fire, silvicultural treatments and regeneration plantings." Another states, "The lodgepole pine forest type contained more whitebark pine seedlings (35%) than any other forest type, suggesting that this forest type represents a potential management target for silvicultural treatments that

"It's important to examine the interests of the collaborators to see if public interest is adequately represented."

seek to facilitate the recruitment of whitebark pine seedlings into larger size classes." Lodgepole pine stands are routinely and aggressively targeted for clearcutting on national forests in our bioregion, under the guise of nebulous, supposedly worthy goals. In 2019 another Forest Service science article advocates for "regeneration for resilience ... to offer the best

likelihood of success in positioning stands and landscapes to support multigenerational self-sustaining pine populations in the presence of" blister rust. Given the nature of trees and forests it will be several decades, perhaps more than a century, before such methods can be demonstrated to provide the hypothesized benefits, much like dubious "old-growth enhancement" logging already being promoted on national forests. The Forest Service scientists promoting such methods have a seemingly willful blindness to the ecological shocks their colleagues in the management branch of the agency regularly inflict on forest ecosystems by zealously pursuing such dubious benefits in the absence of scientific proof.

Government agencies have also used supposed benefits to the whitebark pine to brush off impacts on other ESA-listed species, including the grizzly bear. In its Federal Register listing for whitebark pine, the USFWS acknowledges: "In 2017, we issued a biological opinion to the Idaho Panhandle National Forest for a large-scale



A dead five-needle pine (either whitebark or limber pine) near the treeline in Glacier National Park. Paul Busch Photo.

whitebark pine restoration project that was determined to 'likely adversely affect' grizzly bears in the area via the use of chainsaws, helicopters, and prescribed fire, along with the prolonged presence of humans in the work area. It was determined that although the project may have short-term adverse effects on some bears, it would provide long-term beneficial effects and would not jeopardize the continued existence of grizzly bears." That project occurs mostly in inventoried roadless areas, and along with the 2,739 acres of prescribed burning it authorized 577 acres of tree cutting in the locale of whitebark pine.

There are less invasive options to address the looming decades-long gap in natural whitebark pine seed sources. These include programs developing rust-resistant seed stock, underway for several years, for planting seeds and seedlings into whitebark pine habitat. This compliments the growing movement of native tribal programs focusing on producing culturally important plant species not already commercially produced. For example the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes have been growing whitebark pine seedlings on the Flathead Indian Reservation in Montana as part of a program to restore whitebark pine trees to tribal lands and nearby forests. Tribes aim to make culturally significant plants such as the whitebark pine more accessible to elders and youth programs,

respecting customary ways such as traditional gathering.

Finally, in its listing of the whitebark pine the USFWS commits to "use the recovery-planning process to encourage activities that address the threats and conservation needs of this species" and to that end they will be "preparing draft and final recovery plans, beginning with the development of a recovery outline" due January 2023 which "guides the immediate implementation of urgent recovery actions and describes the process to be used to develop a recovery plan."

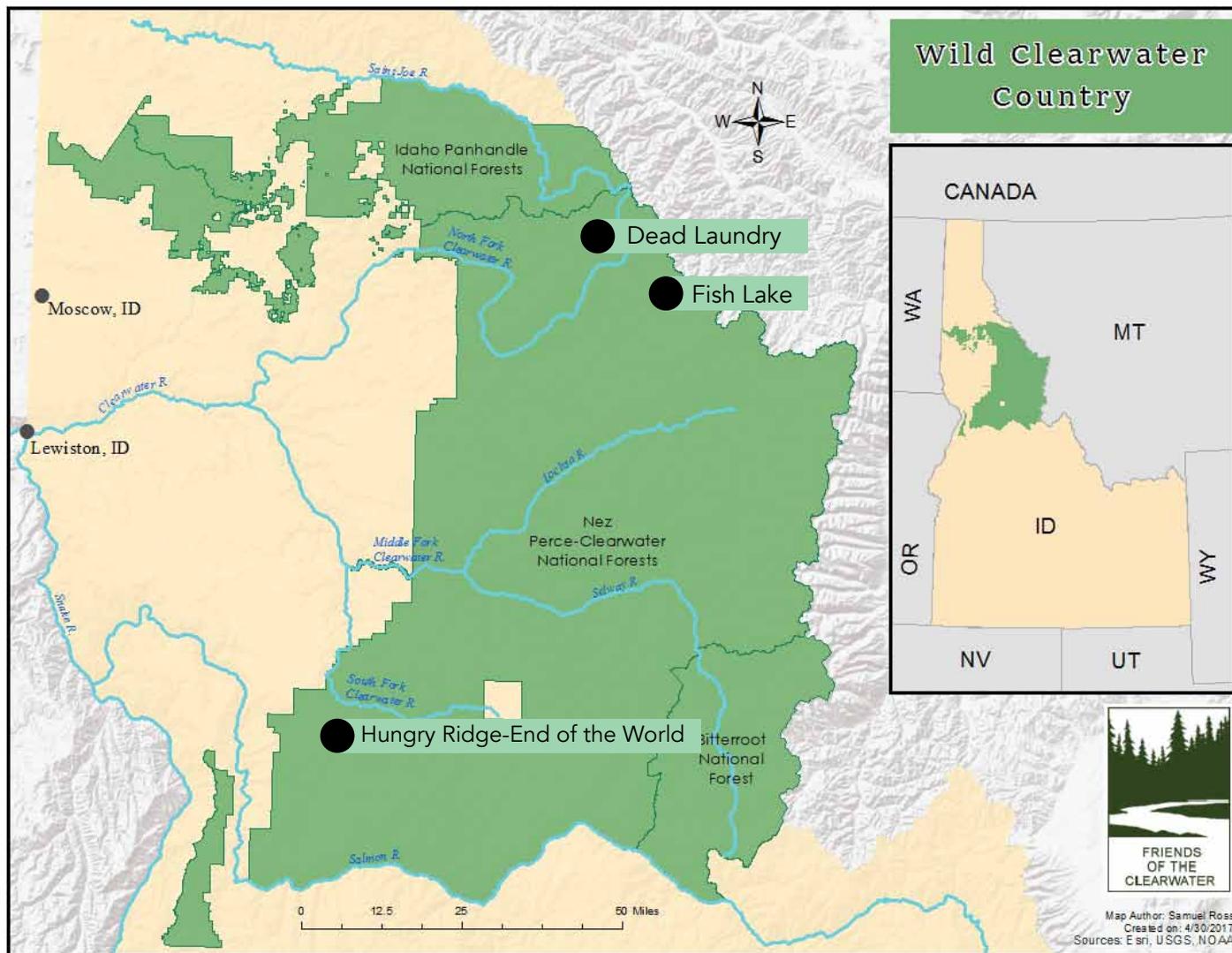
Friends of the Clearwater is committed to staying involved in this recovery planning process. We will keep you abreast of upcoming opportunities for you to voice your concerns and perspectives.



"Seed dispersal occurs almost exclusively by the Clark's nutcracker, a relative of the crow." NPS photo of a nutcracker on a whitebark taken in Lassen National Park.



Figure 1 Whitebark pine range.



A Bird's Eye View

Friends of the Clearwater's mission area stretches from the St. Joe River in the North to the Salmon River in the south, Montana to the East and Washington/Oregon to the west. Portions of three national forests, the Idaho Panhandle, Nez Perce-Clearwater, and Bitterroot national forests, as well as portions of BLM managed public forest and range, and Idaho State Lands.

Three of our victories this year were location specific, pausing or increasing the analysis of the Dead Laundry Project, Hungry-Ridge and End of the World Projects, and litigating the illegal motorized use of the Fish Lake Trail in the Great Burn Recommended Wilderness.

Much of our work this past year doesn't catch the splashy headlines that lawsuit wins do, but it provides the foundation for our advocacy: questioning the impacts of Forest Service proposals on endangered and rare species, giving the Biden Administration feedback on how to best inventory old growth and protect it, and educating the public and Congress on how to meaningfully protect inventoried roadless areas. Your funding goes day-in, day-out, to our persistent efforts to advocate for Wild Clearwater Country.

TIMBER SOLD ON NEZ PERCE-CLEARWATER NF REACHES HIGHEST LEVEL IN 20-YEARS

by Harry Jageman

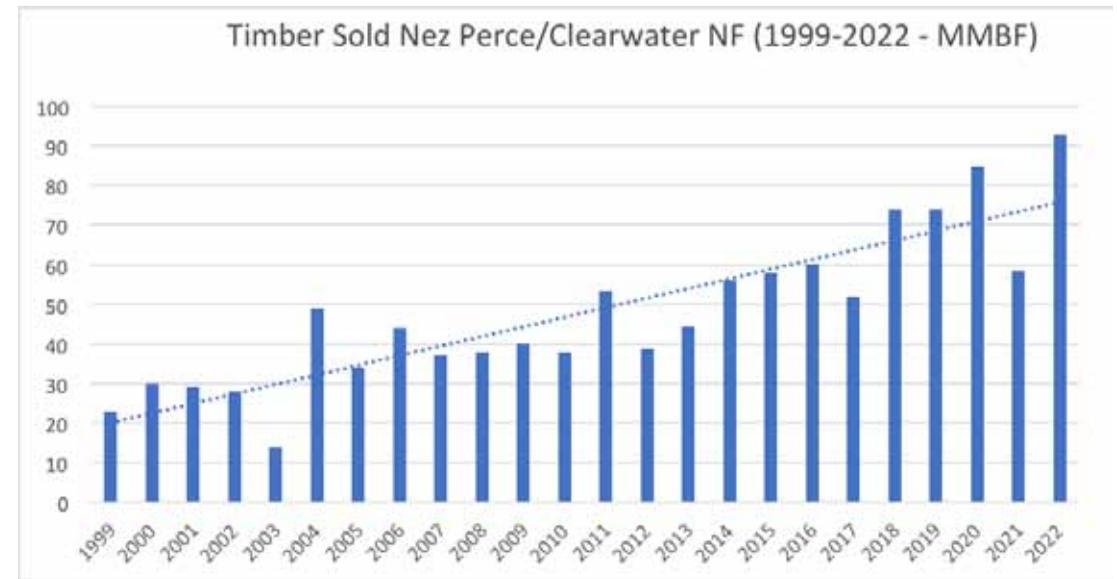
The Nez Perce-Clearwater NF sold 92.6-million board feet of timber in fiscal year 2022 (Oct 1st-Sept 30th). This is the highest level of timber sold since 1999 and is representative of increasing levels of timber harvest that have been occurring on the two Forests in recent years. This translates to approximately 18,500 log truck loads or approximately 200 log truck loads per million board feet.

Plans on the two Forests suggest that this number is likely to increase even further as numerous additional proposals are being planned. Friends of the Clearwater is aware of at least 20 projects that are

being considered which would generate a combined volume of well over 800-million board feet.

For example, the recent Hungry Ridge and End of the World projects which FOC has successfully delayed in court would harvest approximately 317-million board feet. The court has asked the Forest Service to review their analysis of old growth on these two massive projects to assure that sufficient amounts of old growth are being maintained to meet current Forest Plan standards. The current Forest Plan requires the maintenance of 10% old growth across the Forest, but this could change in the upcoming Forest Plan Revision.

Right now, the Forest Service appears to be moving toward the removal of hard standards in the Revised Forest Plan. Hard standards for maintaining water quality, fisheries habitat, wildlife habitat and old growth have allowed groups like FOC to



The graph above shows timber that has been sold on the NPCNF since 1999. It's important to note that "sold" does not mean cut. Many approved timber sales haven't been started, and active projects can take years to complete. So the current spike in sales represents a decade or more of damage yet to come to the Clearwater basin.

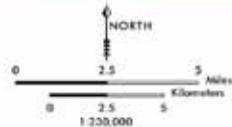
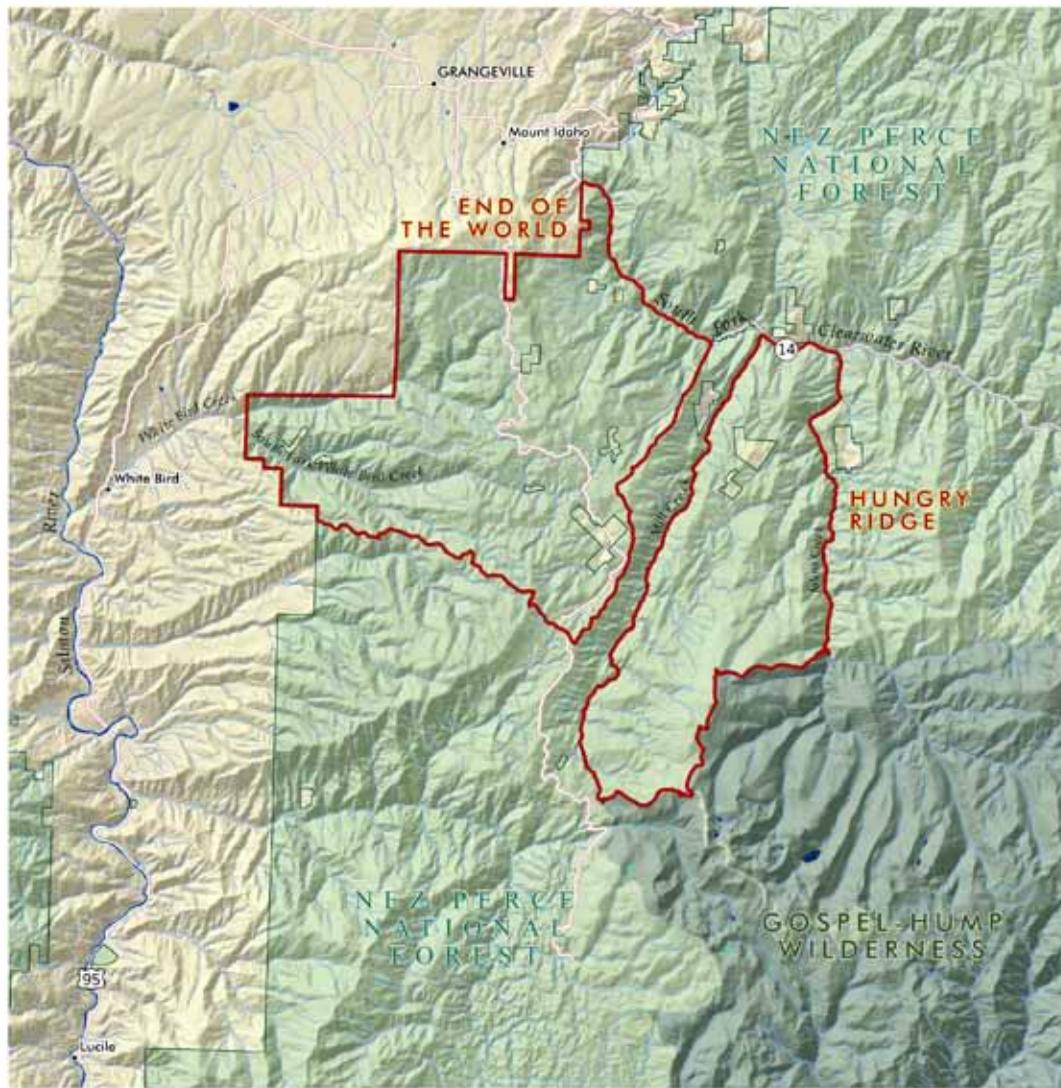
successfully challenge Forest Service projects like Hungry Ridge and End of the World. Without these standards the Forest Service would be able to act more freely on upcoming

timber sales, which appears to be their objective.

Harry is a retired employee of the Forest Service and FOC board member.



SALMON-CLEARWATER DIVIDE



Data Sources: United States Geological Survey, Landfire, Conservation Geography
 Produced by Conservation Geography for Advocates for the West © 2021
www.nwngn.org - www.advocateswest.org



The project areas, courtesy of Advocates for the West. Between the two massive projects is the current Doc Denny sale.



FOC Events. Gary MacFarlane accepts his retirement (above) and humans party as animals at the Biodiversity Ball (below)



(cont'd from page 3) motorized use on the Fish Lake Trail in recommended wilderness in the remote North Fork of the Clearwater. On December 1, the court closed the Fish Lake Trail to motorized use until the Forest Service conducted the required analysis. The Court ordered the Forest Service to follow the 2015 order, the new 2022 order, and to provide the court status updates on its progress every 90 days.

The court declined to follow the Forest Service's suggestion to wait for the revised forest plan. The Forest Service suggested the case would then be resolved because the habitat security requirement would be eliminated. A prospective watered-down forest plan represents the biggest challenge awaiting us next year.

DEADBEAT DAMS UNDER REVIEW

by Paul Busch

Mounting public pressure has changed "if" to "when" for breaching. Washington Governor Jay Inslee and Senator Patty Murray opened up to the idea of breaching the Lower Snake River Dams (LSRD) with a lengthy public comment period in summer of 2022. Thousands voiced in their support for breaching the dams and keeping our obligations to salmon, Tribes, and local communities. It's a big step when politicians in Idaho, Washington,

and the White House agree the dams have to go. FOC and membership have been advocating for this for years.

Unfortunately, the conclusions reached by the Washington delegation was one of hesitancy. They still have no official recommendation except to replace the dam and lock services - transport and electricity, largely - before breaching takes place.

That kind of pace is simply too slow for saving wild salmon and steelhead. These fish do not have a

half-century to spare. Nor do they have the wiggle room for seriously compromised proposals that throw out environmental law enforcement.

These are steps in the right direction, but our wild salmon need a leap.

**EXPLORE
 CLEARWATER COUNTRY
 THROUGH OUR WEBSITE
friendsoftheclearwater.org**

Local Leaders

Every year, Friends of the Clearwater honors activists and organizations doing great work in the Clearwater and beyond.

The following were celebrated at the November 2022 FOC Membership meeting in Idaho. For those who could not attend, this offers a broader view of what our allies in the environmental movement are accomplishing.



Attendees at the 2022 FOC membership meeting, held every year in November.

Volunteers of the Year

FOC depends on volunteers. From tabling to ground-truthing, every day people keep our grassroots organization speaking truth to power.

Talitha Jensen

Talitha began volunteering in 2022, mostly helping with mailing our newsletter. While from the area, she had little knowledge of ecology or public lands issues. But she learned quickly, asking good questions while helping us in the office.

Talitha also used her newfound knowledge to influence her community. As a local librarian, she ordered environmental literature for students and advised them to learn about issues like biodiversity and climate change.



The fisher, FS image

She continues to volunteer with FOC and spread the word on environmental issues.

Harry Jageman

Harry is a longtime member and current boardmember of Friends of the Clearwater. A retired Forest Service biologist, his knowledge and experience has been a great resource to our work.

It has also been a great resource for wildlife. Fisher (*Pekania pennanti*) are a species of weasel native to the Clearwater. Their range

and numbers have declined from trapping and habitat loss, specifically in the loss of old-growth forests crucial for denning.

Harry has been mapping the known ranges of fisher against a backdrop of logging projects on GIS. The project is tedious and technical, but the information is crucial for assessing the security of this indicator species of the forest.

Harry's time went above and beyond his role as a board member, and we are thankful for his effort to get the hard facts on such a rare species.

Activist of the Year

Talasi Brooks

Talasi is an activist who works for Western Watersheds Project. We chose Talasi because of the decade of work she has done in conservation in the Northern Rockies, as well as her recent efforts to organize grassroots opposition to wolf slaughter in the State of Idaho.

Talasi earned her J.D. from the University of Montana School of Law in 2013, along with an M.S. in Environmental Studies. She served as Managing Editor of the Public Land and Resources Law Review and Vice President of the Environmental Law Group. She also volunteered with a local public interest environmental attorney tackling timber sale cases, completed her required clinic with Western Watersheds Project, and interned with Wilderness Watch, a national nonprofit Wilderness advocacy group. After graduating, she

clerked for Justice Michael E Wheat of the Montana Supreme Court for a year. She spent four years as a staff attorney with Advocates for the West, a nonprofit environmental law firm. Her legal work has largely focused on protecting the sage-grouse, an iconic sagebrush obligate bird threatened by degradation of its sagebrush habitat, and on reining in Wildlife Services, a federal agency that kills wildlife. Talasi's interests include hiking, cycling, reading fiction, and small-scale organic farming.

In the last year, in addition to her work at WWP, Talasi has been active in the effort to protect the imperiled wolves of Idaho, newly targeted under draconian anti-predator laws. She has been instrumental in work on the Idaho Wolf Coalition, a newly-formed organization that has taken on



A white wolf in Yellowstone. CC Matthew Paulson photo

the goliath task of changing public opinion and fighting for protections for wolves in Idaho. The organization has members of other regional environmental groups, including Friends of the Clearwater.

Talasi wasn't able to make it to our November meeting because she was about to have her second child, which she and her husband welcomed

into the world that week.

Talasi's work at WWP alone is significant - fighting for the sagebrush sea is an enormous and difficult task beset by monied interests and their enablers in the BLM. But the fact that Talasi also made time to help grow a grassroots effort for wolves outside of her work is why we chose her for this award.

Organization of the Year

The Conservation Angler by Katie Bilodeau

The Conservation Angler, headquartered in Portland, advocates for a future with wild fish. This means protecting and restoring wild fish and the rivers that support them. While many factors threaten wild fish, The Conservation Angler focuses on the threats that we can control. This includes management of fish harvest and hatcheries. TCA has reviewed enough of the science to know that our best future is one with wild fish.

The Conservation Angler and Friends of the Clearwater have a history of working together that predates my time at FOC, but I first met the folks at TCA in 2018. I've continued to see them advocate for wild fish with scientifically informed positions and telling truths that can be hard for decisionmakers and constituents to hear.

If advocacy were a river system, TCA uses all the tributaries they can find to advocate for wild fish, whether that be lawsuits, science, comments, education, or petitions.

On August 1, 2022, The Conservation Angler, in cooperation with the Wild Fish Conservancy, petitioned to list steelhead in the Olympic Peninsula under the Endangered Species Act. Petitions to list species under the ESA are not simple—they are technical and science heavy. Petitions require one to apply the best science and information against the five factors NOAA (the agency that makes that decision for steelhead, salmon, and other ocean-going fish) may consider in deciding whether to protect a species under the ESA. Often times, citizen groups who petition to list a species find a resistant agency, and further action like lawsuits are required to convince the agency that ESA protection is the right move.

In 2020, the Archie Creek Fire in Oregon destroyed the Rock Creek Hatchery on the North Umpqua River, which opened discussions as to the efficacy of the hatchery program. Science suggests that hatchery fish have adverse impacts to wild fish

populations, both in terms of the physical environments hatchery fish create and the genetics they contribute when they interbreed with wild fish. TCA took part in a coalition of conservation groups convince Oregon to manage the North Umpqua for wild steelhead instead of rebuilding the hatchery, which



FOCs Paul Busch on Washington's Olympic Coast. The Conservation Angler, in cooperation with the Wild Fish Conservancy, petitioned to list Olympic Peninsula steelhead under the Endangered Species Act in August. Ned Wilcock photograph.

is what the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife intended to do. With the work of The Conservation Angler, both analyzing the policy and science, the coalition of groups convinced the OR Fish and Wildlife Commission to decide not to release the hatchery fish planned, and to permanently discontinue the summer steelhead hatchery program, making the North Umpqua a completely wild steelhead system.

Three years before the 2021 heat wave in the Pacific Northwest, TCA had started its work pushing the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife for cold water refugia, which are sanctuaries for wild salmon and steelhead where angling is restricted. When temperatures rise above 66 degrees F, fish, particularly wild steelhead, rest in these areas of cooler stream areas. Of course, those are the best places to catch steelhead, so these cooler areas end up being increased encounters between anglers and wild fish. Even though wild steelhead must be released, a fraction



of those encounters end up a delayed mortality for the fish (which means they die soon after the release from some of the physiological stress experienced).

In 2021, the Pacific Northwest experienced a heat dome, which highlighted the importance of cold water refugia for wild fish in a warming climate. TCA continues to push for rules that would protect wild fish through cold water refugia, and the Snake River salmon and steelhead with natal streams in Idaho, because they migrate up the Columbia.

This year, FOC would like to acknowledge and thank TCA for its consistent and impressive work on behalf of wild fish.

You can find out more about the Conservation Angler by visiting their website, www.theconservationangler.org



Chinook salmon, like the one pictured here, face four major roadblocks: Habitat, harvest, hydropower, and hatcheries. The Conservation Angler has consistently advocated for scientifically-sound policy on each of these issues, even when it was not politically popular. FOC file photo.

The Plank Award

The Plank Award: Sara Johnson
By Jeff Juel

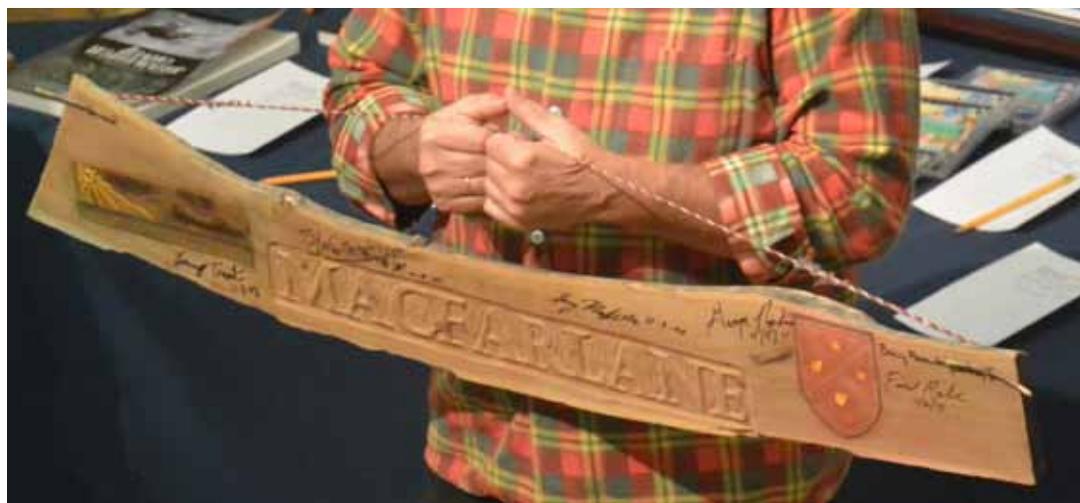
Sara Johnson was awarded the Macfarlane Plank award at Friends of the Clearwater's annual meeting in November, 2022. We present this award every year, honoring individuals who have sacrificed personally and professionally while defending wild lands, biodiversity and natural processes.

Sara is highly knowledgeable wildlife biologist. She earned her Ph.D. at Montana State University in 1974 and then served for 14 years on the Targhee and Gallatin National Forests in Idaho and Montana. She then decided her life's work would be better accomplished in the nonprofit world, and founded the Native Ecosystems Council (NEC) in 1992. Sara constantly applies her deep knowledge of wildlife and ecology, having commented on or challenged hundreds

of federal land management proposals from the Black Hills of South Dakota all across the Northern U.S. Rockies bioregion. Currently NEC is a plaintiff in a lawsuit challenging the US Fish and Wildlife Service's failure to implement its commitments for natural recovery of the Grizzly Bear in the Bitterroot Ecosystem, which encompasses portions of the Nez Perce, Clearwater, Salmon-Challis, Sawtooth, Payette, and Bitterroot National Forests in Idaho and Montana.

Sara also finds time to manage the Fielding Wildlife Preserve on 70 acres of her own land near Three Forks, Montana, which harbors a hundred or so pinyon jays, a species not often found in Montana and increasingly rare in its pinyon-juniper woodland and sagebrush, scrub oak, chaparral habitats.

Thank you for all your amazing conservation work, Sara!



The Macfarlane Plank, signed by the award recipients

Sara couldn't attend the annual meeting, so she sent this acceptance letter:

I would like to thank the Friends of the Clearwater for recognizing my work in public lands forest and wildlife protection over the years.

Strangely, the Forest Service made me what I am today. I came from the South Dakota prairie to work on the Targhee National Forest as it was just beginning a massive lodgepole pine salvage program.

It didn't take long to learn that a wildlife biologist in the Forest Service was just window dressing, with no actual impact on agency

decisions as per logging. Even if I refused to say a project would have no adverse impacts on wildlife as the grizzly bear, the agency easily found another biologist who would say otherwise. It is actually quite amazing that I survived as a biologist with the Forest Service for 14 years, after which my job on the Gallatin National Forest was eliminated.

Since then, I have been able to have a much greater effect on agency decisions regarding logging than I ever did as a Forest Service biologist. Working

with a number of other environmental groups, we have saved many thousands of acres from the chainsaw, and hopefully, will continue to do so until serious efforts to fight climate change are implemented by the Forest Service. Until that happens, I will continue to file as many objections against agency projects as time allows.

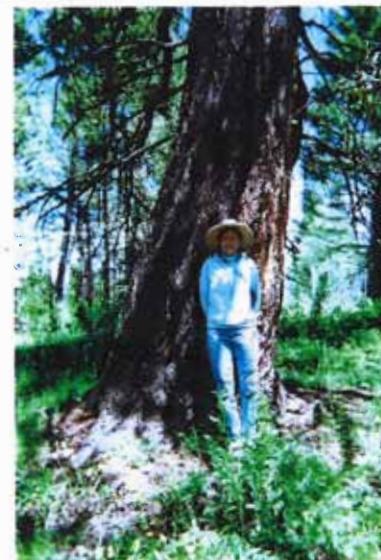
At a minimum, this slows down agency actions, and also provides standing for legal challenges, which can force the agency to actually address public issues and concerns.

ON THE PLANK

- 2006 - Gary Macfarlane
- 2007 - Stuart Brandborg †
- 2008 - Larry McClaud †
- 2009 - Barry Rosenberg †
- 2010 - Fred Rabe
- 2011 - George Nickas
- 2012 - Liz Sedler †
- 2013 - Jeff Juel
- 2014 - Karen Coulter
- 2015 - Keith Hammer
- 2016 - Janine Blaeloch
- 2017 - Louisa Willcox
- 2018 - Arlene Montgomery
- 2019 - Kristin Ruether
- 2020 - Larry Campbell
- 2021 - Al Espinosa
- 2022 - Sara Johnson

† denotes those who have since passed away

Photo of Native Ecosystems Council's Director, Sara Johnson, standing in front of an old growth Douglas-fir tree that was saved from the chainsaw by stopping this logging project on the Caribou-Targhee National Forest



FOC AND ALLIES URGE LISTING OF WOLVERINE UNDER ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

By Jeff Juel

You may recall our Summer 2022 Defender issue chronicled a timeline of efforts Friends of the Clearwater and others have taken to achieve protection for the North American Wolverine (*Gulo gulo luscus*) under the Endangered Species Act, along with a history of position shifting and resistance by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS). Our article noted the most recent success—a federal court May 2022 reinstatement of the species as a “Candidate” for listing. This reinstatement resulted in the opportunity for the public to once again show support for wolverine listing.

This opportunity was presented when in November the USFWS solicited information to update its Species Status Assessment (SSA) for the wolverine. Our December letter to the USFWS presented facts and science for consideration in the

“The government lacks a coherent conservation strategy for this rare, vulnerable, and wide-ranging mammal species.”

upcoming updated SSA, supporting our position that the wolverine requires the protections granted in being listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). We also solicited a supporting cast of 27 other groups and one individual who signed onto our letter. See the letter at www.friendsoftheclearwater.org/wolverine-letter/.

An SSA evaluates science and

other factors for considering a species’ eligibility for listing as “endangered” or “threatened”. (See the Whitebark Pine article in this edition for an explanation of the distinction between “endangered” and “threatened.”) An SSA also is updated periodically for currently listed species, and receives close scrutiny if the USFWS is leaning towards declaring a species no longer needs ESA protections to prevent extinction. During federal court reviews of listing or delisting decisions the factual accuracy and scientific credibility of the SSA are usually at issue.

Our letter places particular emphasis on evaluating “the inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms,” a factor the ESA says must be taken into account for listing considerations. In other words, if an SSA evaluates wildlife policies, laws and regulations of state agencies, and management policies of federal land managers (e.g., the U.S. Forest Service) and concludes they are robust enough to prevent extinction and recover populations, the USFWS might conclude that a species, although rare, needs no further protections that otherwise might be granted under the

ESA.

Whereas the vast majority of wolverine habitat is federally managed, our letter points out the government lacks a coherent conservation strategy for this rare, vulnerable and wide-ranging mammal species. For example, management plans for national forests, some created in the 1980s and others recently revised, feature inconsistent, fragmented and often nonexistent



A wolverine in snow, USFWS photo

protections across the wide geographical landscape spanning the multiple contiguous national forests needed to maintain a viable population of wolverines.

Other pressing issues the wolverine faces across much of its range include permissive state wildlife trapping policies. Although traps targeting wolverines are banned, traps legally set for wolves or numerous other species can result in injury or death to wolverines or other rare, non-target species such as fishers and even grizzly bears. Although federal land managers have the discretion to limit or ban trapping on the lands they manage, typically they instead defer to state policies in this highly charged political theater that is wildlife management.

Our letter also reminded the USFWS that they have ready

internet access to information on the ongoing and growing threats posed by projects proposed on federal lands in wolverine habitat, including the massive clearcutting across Northern Region national forests we identified in our 2021 Clearcut Kings report. The 2022 court opinion ordered the USFWS to publish a new final listing determination by late November of this year, however missing deadlines is common for this agency. One finding could set in place another comment period prior to a final listing. Furthermore, the controversial and political nature of ESA listings means the USFWS is often reluctant to do right by a species, so further litigation by groups such as Friends of the Clearwater may be necessary to achieve the ESA protections Gulo deserves.

Coyote’s Comics: Northwestern Ostrich

NEW SPECIES DISCOVERED!

The Northern Federal Agency Ostrich
(*Problemi Noseum*)



...and now, a word from our sponsors!

These are the businesses and individuals who donated to make our November silent auction a success. We are very grateful to their support for our work.

Businesses

Paradise Creek Bicycles
BookPeople
Intrigue
Wild@Art
Gem State Crystals
Hyperspud
NRS
Moscow Candy Company
One World Cafe
Lodgepole
North40 (in Lewiston)
Tye-Dye Everything
Tri-State Outfitters (in Moscow)
The Moscow Food Coop

Individuals

Sioux Westervelt	Bill Voxman
Lin Laughy	Diane French
Loreena Pope	Eric Jensen
Bobbi Kelly	Cathy Wilmes
Janice Ardern	Antone Holmquist
Gail Taber	Bob Barry
Steve Paulson	Michele Dieterich
Tanya Gale	Ronnie Hatley

Special thank you to Sioux Westervelt, Janet Anders, Lynne Nelson, Chris Norden, and Allison Anders for your help before the event!

Help Spread the Word!

FOC is a grassroots organization. If you are reading this, chances are you are one of our intelligent and good-looking members. We want to reach new members, people like you who care about our public lands and want to do something to protect them. Here are a few ways you can help us spread the word on wildlands:

1. Host an FOC house party.

Call our office (208-882-9755) and invite staff over to meet your wonderful (but sadly uninitiated) friends. One of our staff would love to meet your circle, talk about the issues, bring petitions to sign, and tell them how beautiful your house is.

2. Give a gift membership

Donate \$35 in the name of someone you know who cares about Clearwater Country. We'll send you a receipt and send them our newsletter for the next year. Think of it as a gift card towards being an active citizen. Go online to www.friendsoftheclearwater.org to find out more.

3. Write your opinions!

Newspapers and social media sites are full of distortions, distractions, and disinformation. Write letters to the editor, op-eds, and ~~scathing and petty~~ direct and informed tweets that present the facts to people only exposed to official government press releases.