



Friends *of the* Clearwater

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Dear FOC Members and Supporters,

As Dickens wrote, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times” The recent all-out assault on public lands by this Administration and Congress is certainly the worst of times.

The National Environmental Policy Act has, in effect, been administratively repealed by recent orders from the Departments of Interior and Agriculture (probably illegal, and it will almost certainly be challenged) by shortcutting public involvement and eliminating it altogether, instead relying on “categorical exclusions” to sidestep project analysis. The administration is also targeting wild roadless and old growth forests. Congress, not to be outdone in exploiting national forests, mandated increases in logging on the national forest system every year for the next eight years in the recent “Big, Beautiful” Bill. These are just a summary of the challenges that face us.

FOC is forging ahead in an effort to bring about the best times.

Since I retired from my staff position in 2022 and the next year we lost a key staff member, Katie Bilodeau, to a move to the Washington, DC area, there has been a void. We have searched and found the right people to step up.

I am pleased to announce that **Friends of the Clearwater has hired a new Executive Director, Kyran Kunkel**, a PhD wildlife biologist and big believer in large protected landscapes. He is a good fit for a feisty organization like FOC and would be a great asset in moving visionary legislation like the Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act.

We have also hired an Office Manager, Krystal Starkey. She works on tasks as diverse as making sure we respond to your questions and donations to keeping our filing system in order—in other words, she is the glue that holds things together. If you have the time, drop by the office and visit them.

At the same time, the FOC board has gone through an important strategic planning process to prepare us for the new challenges we face. We will remain steadfast and, where we share common goals, work with others to make change. If we have learned anything in the past months, years, or decades, is that it is up to us to initiate protection of the Wild Clearwater Country. Politicians have to be forced to do the right thing. Currently, there is immense pressure from Uber-rich elites to ravage wildlife and destroy national forests and other public lands. This direction needs to be reversed and FOC is ready to play its focused role in that endeavor.

Public pressure can work, even on an anti-wilderness, anti-wildlife, and anti-public lands Senator like Mike Lee of Utah. He was thwarted in his effort to force the sale of some public lands and national forests in the otherwise disastrous big, bad budget bill.

With new staff, over the next few months we are starting a campaign to increase our effectiveness. Aside from the new energy from Kyran and Krystal, Paul Busch will shift his focus to outreach and communication. Jeff Juel will remain steady in his excellent forest watch policy work, though with the changes in national forest policy, the scope of that work could change. All of this will involve increased outreach and fundraising. You can help this effort in many ways:

- Write letters to the editors on key issues affecting the Wild Clearwater country. The excellent Understory electronic newsletter or paper Defender that Paul produces should give you good ideas on where to start.
- Invite a friend to join FOC. Host a fundraising party among your friends. Contact the FOC office if you need help with such a party.
- Pass along FOC information, electronic or in paper form, to family and friends.
- Donate what you can over the next few months. Set up a monthly donation plan. You will be hearing more from us on programs and donation opportunities.
- Attend a field monitoring trip with FOC staff this summer and early fall. Keep an eye out for email announcements.

I have been heartened by the way the FOC board and staff have pulled together in these difficult times. Most of all, I greatly appreciate all of your support for FOC over the years. It means a lot to the Wild Clearwater and to me.

For the Wild,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Macfarlane", written in a cursive style.

Gary Macfarlane

PS Bobbi and I may be relocating out of the area, however, I intend to stay involved and contribute to FOC. Please help where you can.