

The Clearwater DEFENDER

A publication of the Friends of the Clearwater | Autumn 2025

Autumn
2025

Roadless Forests: A Brief History

The Trump administration opened a 3-week comment period to axe the 2001 Roadless Rule. How did we get here?

Pg. 3

New Staff!

Meet Kyran and Krystal, our newest staff at FOC!

Pg. 10

Know Your Wildlands: The Great Burn

Learn about one of the largest wildlands in the Northern Rockies, the vast, rugged Great Burn.

Pg. 8

Annual Meeting Soon!

See you on November 1st at the 1912 Center in Moscow.



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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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UPCOMING EVENTS

Palouse Choral Society Event - Oct. 17th (7:30pm) and 18th (3pm)

Enjoy a night of local choir music by the Palouse Choral Society. All the pieces will focus on the theme of water, with FOC as co-sponsor. At Simpson United Methodist Church in Pullman.

FOC Annual Meeting - Nov 1st

Join us for our annual FOC membership potluck and silent auction! The event is free to all (not just members, bring your friends!) and will be held at the Great Room in the 1912 Center in Moscow Idaho.

Doors open 5:30pm. Presentations at 7 pm.

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!

LETTER FROM THE NEW DIRECTOR

From Kyran Kunkel

I am excited to join the great FOC team and its long successful history.

My background is working in big landscapes in the West and building reserves for those landscapes and restoring species and processes to them. I have been lucky enough to be a part of building big conservation lands in the West.

I love the northern Rockies, conservation, big wild lands, and making a big impact. I love focusing on a place and securing and rewilding those places. I love building things and restoring things.

I have through my career continually asked myself, where are the big places that need big work to build on past successes. The big three of the northern Rockies—the Yellowstone, Glacier, and central Idaho Wildlands—of course are always in mind and critical for the West, but one of those is so relatively little known and so compelling. I started my career long ago in Idaho and it has always held an important place in my heart and I am excited to make new big plans and impacts with FOC in Idaho.

The new era of threats and losses we have now arrived in calls for new ways of thinking, acting, and fighting. I love embarking on new adventures together with a great team. I relish a good fight. This is the place and the time and it will be exciting big work ahead.

Here is what we are planning and doing. Our board and staff are discussing how we build on our history to create anew and more in this critical era; defend but also create and rewild. We are listening to our history, to each other, to our partners, and to the

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greater conservation world and beyond to guide us ahead.

We are designing a campaign for securing and restoring one of the biggest wildest places left in the West, one that will compel and inspire us all forward. This campaign, because of its audacity and importance and place will become widely known and it will compel people to support protections and new actions for this place and conservation. We will create and rewild and secure and connect lands, wildlife and people.

We will soon be calling on you all for ideas and support. I'd love to meet you all at the annual meeting on November 1st. See you soon!

- Kyran



A creek in the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness, once part of the Idaho Primitive Area.
Brett Haverstick photo.

ROADLESS NATIONAL FORESTS: A BRIEF POLITICAL HISTORY

By Gary Macfarlane

For at least the last century, many people have recognized the importance of protecting wild areas—places free of major developments like roads, permanent buildings, and mechanized and motorized transport. Wild areas are important as control groups in ecological research, as habitat for wildlife, as intact ecosystems that support human health, and as places of intrinsic value.

In August of 2025, the Trump administration announced a comment period to rescind the 2001 Roadless Rule, an imperfect policy, but one that has largely kept more than 40 million acres of wild areas free from development. FOC has long advocated for the full protection of America's roadless country through citizen advocacy, agency rule-making, and congressional action. Neither the weak Idaho Roadless Rule nor the Colorado Roadless Rule are being considered for rescission.

While various federal public land conservation laws and policies have been enacted over the years, the Wilderness Act in 1964 is the law specifically designed to protect wildlands.

Finding Wilderness

The Wilderness Act of 1964 designated some areas of the National Forest System as Wilderness, including the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, from the areas the US Forest Service (USFS) had administratively called Wilderness, Wild, or Canoe Areas. Furthermore, almost all of the areas designated as Wilderness in 1964 had come from a pool of Primitive Areas, an even older administrative classification. As of 1964, not all of those older Primitive Areas had been reclassified as Wilderness, Wild, or Canoe by the Forest Service.

Indeed, one factor that contributed to the citizen's movement for the Wilderness Act was the reclassification of the older Primitive Areas in the late 40s to the early 60s. Routinely, the Forest Service would reduce the size of a Primitive Area when reclassifying it under the one of the three newer classifications. This and the fact that the Primitive Areas themselves

were being slowly developed, influenced wilderness advocates to seek congressional protection rather than mere administrative action that could rather easily be undone.

In passing the Wilderness Act, Congress set up a system whereby new Wildernesses must be designated in laws passed by Congress and then signed by the President. The Wilderness Act also set up a process to evaluate all "roadless areas" of the National Park and National Wildlife Refuge Systems and then make recommendations for their protection to Congress. Likewise, the USFS was to evaluate the remaining Primitive Areas on the National Forest System and then make recommendations on which roadless areas should be preserved as Wildernesses by Congress.

In short, roadless areas were all the places on public land that federal agencies identified that *could be protected as wilderness*. This inventory process, required by the Wilderness Act, would be a source of controversy for more than a generation.

(NOTE: Until Congress passed the Federal Land Policy Management Act of 1976, the wildlands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) were not considered for designation as Wilderness.)

A Useful Scapegoat

After the Wilderness Act, the Forest Service largely opposed wilderness designation on lands outside of already established Primitive Areas. This was not unusual, as the agency had also opposed the Wilderness Act when first introduced. It was almost certainly not lost on some USFS leaders that the focus on individual Primitive Areas, unlike a comprehensive national roadless inventory, would keep most wild lands from wilderness consideration. Grassroots citizen pressure changed that.

Since at least the early 1960s, activists in Montana had advocated for what was known as the Lincoln Backcountry, a vast wildland on the Rocky Mountain front northwest of Helena.

(cont'd page 12)

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: THE DIPPER

By Paul Busch

“Did that bird just go underwater?” If you’ve ever asked this after spotting a slate-gray songbird high on a mountain stream, you may have seen the dipper. And yes, it may have! This edition’s Species Spotlight is on the dipper, what John Muir called the “humming-bird [sic] of blooming waters.”

Species Information

As the only swimming songbirds, dippers are as comfortable in the air as under the water. They are highly specialized for life in fast, clear, cold-water streams where it forages for insects, snails, and small fish.

The American dipper (*Cinclus mexicanus*), is a peculiar bird. About 7 ½ inches long, it looks like a large gray wren, but with slightly longer, pink-grey legs and a white “eyelid”. One can find dippers along streams and rivers throughout the Wild Clearwater.

They live in the mountains in the western half of North America, from Alaska all the way to Panama. They don’t migrate, but may fly to lower elevations when streams freeze over.

Dippers make their nests in cliffs, logs, and bridges over waterways. Dippers raise one or two broods of two to four chicks each summer.

Dipper or ouzel?

Old-timers may call this bird the water ouzel or simply ouzel (pronounced ooh-zull). Ouzel is a very old name (used until about the 1600s) for the common blackbird of Europe (*Turdus merula*). Europeans saw some kind of blackbird swimming (the closely-related White-throated dipper) and named it the “water ouzel”, which eventually caught on for the American species.

Life in the Water



The American dipper. USFW photo. Dippers are the only swimming songbirds.

Dippers have several adaptations for life in and out of the water. One of the obvious ones is their body structure. Short, strong wings can act as flippers underwater, like auks and murres. Long legs grip rocks along the streambed; they often walk on the bottom of the waterway looking for food.

Some adaptations are harder to see. Dippers have denser bones than most birds to reduce their buoyancy. Their feathers are dense, with a bumpy microsurface that repels water.

According to researchers, a “lower-than-usual metabolic rate and extra oxygen-carrying capacity in its blood” help manage body temperature in cold water.

Conservation

Dippers, as a habitat specialist, are an indicator of waterway health. Dippers only live along free-flowing streams (although they are occasionally seen on mountain lakes and even meadows); dam-



The American dipper’s native range.

ming and waterway channelization eliminate their habitat.

In 2020, researchers in the UK reported white-throated dippers consuming hundreds of pieces of plastic daily, which they fed to their chicks. Plastic pollution is a serious problem facing wildlife of all kinds, even in the most remote areas of the world.

The American dipper’s population is considered declining by the American Bird Conservancy.

Old Growth

A poem by Al Poplawsky

Deeply furrowed columns
Stretching to the sky
Uninterrupted for a hundred feet
Pillars of the forest community
Then branches
Some As large as lesser trees

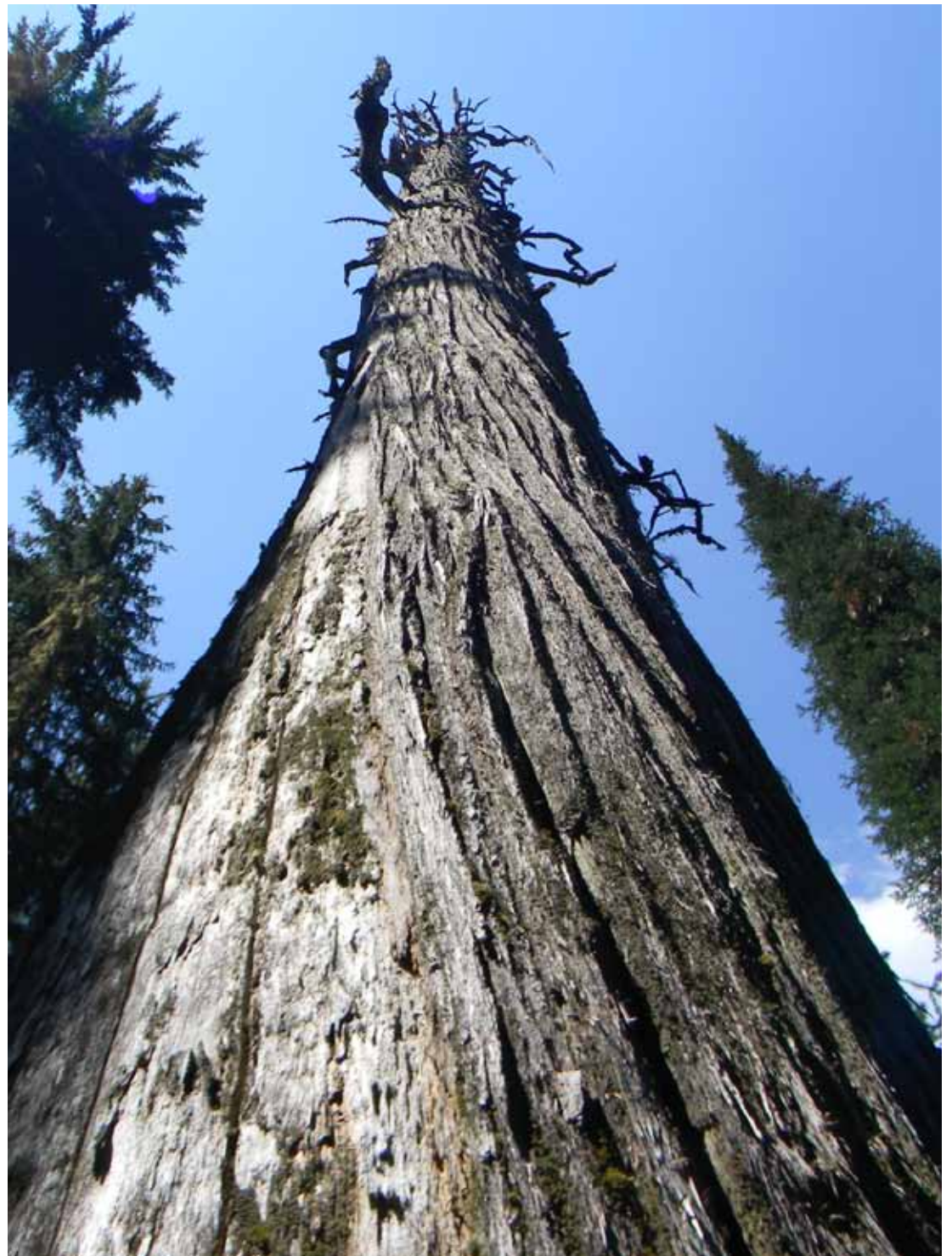
Bright green epiphytes
Waving in the fresh breeze
Seemingly phosphorescent
In the morning sun

Forked tongue cones
Carpeting the ground
Beneath which
Fungi provide
Essential connections

A gnarled broken top
Testament to the centuries
Of struggle
Of ebb and flow
Growth and decay

Silent
Immutable
Nature's magnificence

A community of organisms
Ultimately unknowable
Irreplaceable
Irreplicable



A massive Western red-cedar snag. FOC file photo.

If you would like to submit photos, artwork, or poetry to the Defender, email your work to paul@friendsoftheclearwater.org and we will include you in the next publication.

*Email Updates
from Friends of
the Clearwater*

THE UNDERSTORY

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/

ENDANGERED SPECIES UPDATES

By Jeff Juel

Columbia Basin dams lawsuits to resume

In 2023, a proposal from the Nez Perce Tribe and three other tribal governments and the states of Oregon and Washington led to a pause in litigation against the federal government over threatened and endangered fish. Legal actions over many years have challenged the management of the four Snake River dams, which have contributed to the near extinction of salmon and steelhead populations that return to the Columbia Basin from the Pacific Ocean to spawn. The disruption of fisheries has also threatened traditional tribal cultural relationships with the fish. The migrating fish runs include those that spawn in the headwaters of the Wild Clearwater country.

But this past June, President Trump backed out of the federal government's support for the agreement, prompting a September 11 article that appeared in the Oregon Capital Chronicle with the headline, "Lawsuits against federal government over Columbia Basin dams to resume". The article quotes the Oregon governor and attorney general, and also an Earthjustice representative on behalf of several environmental organizations, indicating their plans to resume lawsuits against the federal management of the Snake River dams.

Grizzly Bears

Our Spring issue of the Clearwater Defender provided a detailed update on grizzly bears, discussing the Endangered Species Act listing status, the Bitterroot Ecosystem Recovery Plan, the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests' failure to provide meaningful habitat protections in its newly revised Land Management Plan, and Friends of the Clearwater's joining other organizations on a legal challenge of Amendment 40 to the Land Management Plan of the Bitterroot National Forest, which weakened protections for grizzly bears.

While we have no new developments beyond what we reported then, we continue to network with other organizations and grizzly bear advocates to find ways to force the federal government to better protect habitat for the great bear. When there are updates to report on, we will keep you abreast with emails alerts via The Understory, for which you can sign up on our website if you don't already receive them.

CUTTING THE PUBLIC FROM PUBLIC LAND

By Jeff Juel

Just this September, an article appeared in the Missoulian concerning early implementation of a project on the Lolo National Forest ("Blue paint at Blue Mountain offers preview of logging, prescribed fire work"). Two things especially caught my eye in this article.

The first was a quote from reporter Sam Wilson: "In a change to long-standing policy, local Forest Service employees have been forbidden from speaking publicly about their work in nearly all circumstances under the administration of President Donald Trump." Since the article was published I've seen no correction or retraction, so the agency at least tacitly accepts this emerging public relations quagmire. Time will tell what that means for citizen interaction with public servants who manage our national forests. Of note, in late June we received an email from the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests telling us we would have to re-subscribe on their project website to continue to receive updates starting in August. But as of this writing, their website still does not provide a way to re-subscribe.

The second notable item is

that a member of a collaborative group, the Lolo Restoration Committee, was quoted speaking on behalf of the apparently muzzled Forest Service officials. He is someone "who has worked with forest planners and others on the project's nearly decade-long development." Based on Friends of the Clearwater's experiences with collaborative groups, plus what I know about this "Wildfire Adapted Missoula" project after writing extensive comments during the public participation process, conserving biological diversity and its components such as wildlife habitat are far below timber production in the list of project priorities. Private parties do not insert themselves into Forest Service project planning to simply get free muffins at the meetings. More lucrative rewards subsidized by us taxpayers are the prize. The Trump administration's recent expansion of the Good Neighbor Authority, which already recruits state timber agencies such as Idaho Department of Lands and Montana Department of Natural Resources into national forest timber sale implementation, is another example of the further disempowerment of U.S. citizens from influencing national forest manage-

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Chinook salmon. USFWS/Tabor photo.

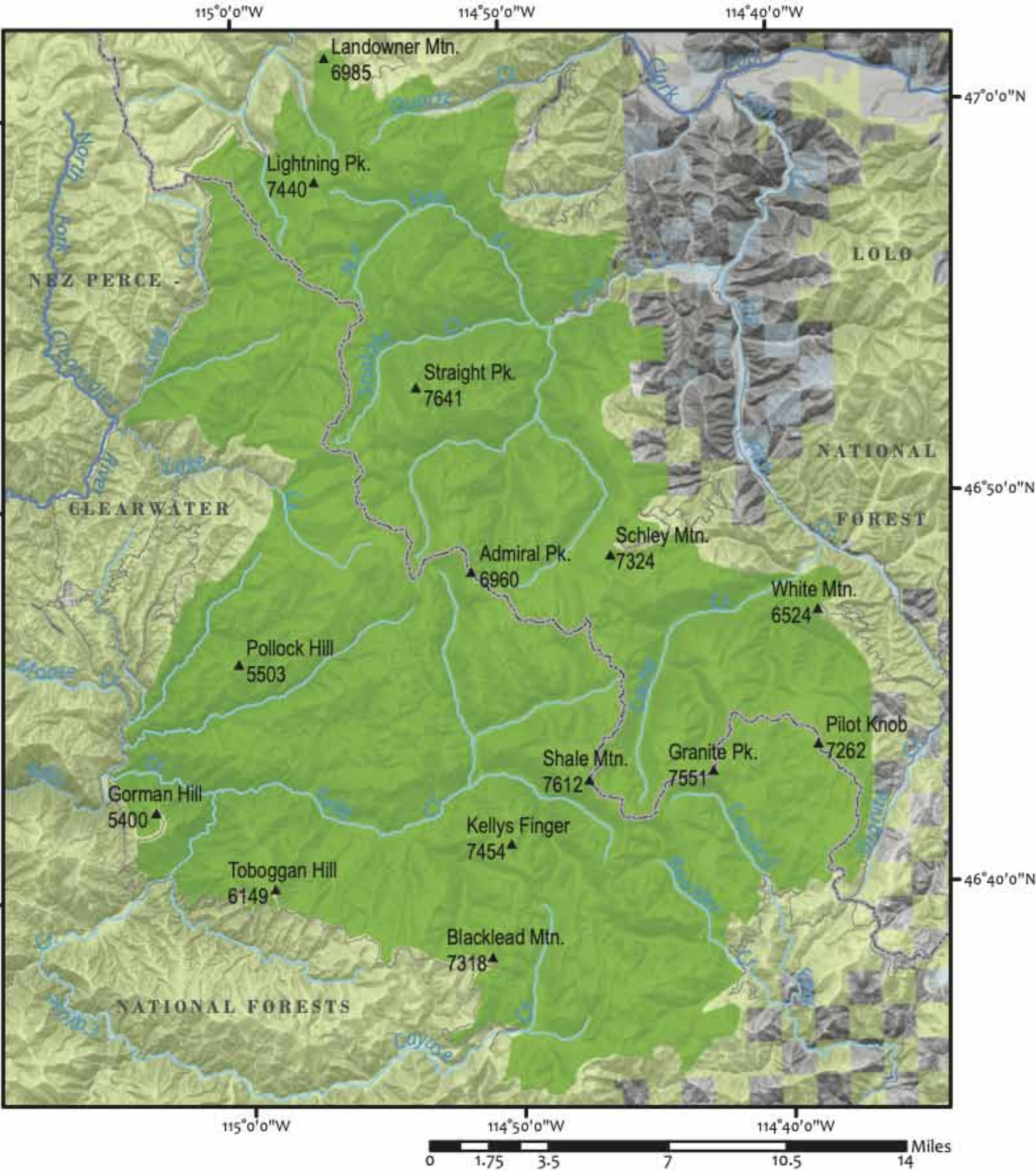
ment.

More troubling developments for public participation are evident with recent efforts to weaken the National Environmental Policy Act. Known as “NEPA”, this decades-old law was written to formalize the procedures allowing citizens to participate in federal decision-making. This is the main avenue for citizens to influence management of our shared wild spaces and the wildlife and other resources found there. Early this year a court struck down federal regulations, also decades old, put in place to implement NEPA. Since then, the Trump administration has adopted interim NEPA regulations that make it harder for citizens to challenge destructive federal lands projects in court, increasing the influence of money and private interests above the public’s interest.

Even further, as I write this I received an email from a colleague noting draft Trump administration language to be inserted into a must-pass Continuing Resolution that would, among other clauses problematic for national forests, raise the allowable size of timber sales excluded from normal NEPA procedures from the already excessive 3,000 acres up to 10,000. That bypass of NEPA arose from a Bush-era law (the “Healthy Forest Restoration Act”) which cracked open the door for the subsequent “Good Neighbor” authorities.

Friends of the Clearwater will increase our diligence, doing whatever is necessary to protect our public forests. And we urge you, dear members, to watch for our alerts on how you can assist. In the meantime, if you run into a bureaucratic roadblock feel free to email me at jeffjuel@wildrockies.org.

KELLY CREEK - GREAT BURN



KNOW YOUR WILDLANDS: THE GREAT BURN

By Paul Busch

Few of the Wild Clearwater's roadless areas are as well loved and well-known as the Great Burn. And yet, 115 years after the fires that gave the place its name, and nearly 40 years since President Reagan pocket vetoed its designation as wilderness, the area remains as "roadless". It is a magnificent wildland of epic mountains, rushing rivers, and abundant wildlife.

The Area

The Great Burn (also called Kelly Creek in Idaho or the Hoodoo Roadless Area) is a proposed wilderness on the Idaho-Montana border just north of US Highway 12 near Lolo Pass. The Great Burn is about 250,000 acres, with about 150,000 acres in Idaho's Clearwater National Forest, and 100,000 on Montana's Lolo National Forest. It is one of the largest contiguous unprotected areas in America. The landscape is dominated by mountains, some heavily forested, others still bare from epic fires more than a century ago. It is the source of Kelly, Cayuse, and Crooked Fork Creeks in Idaho (which run to the North Fork Clearwater) and Fish and Trout Creeks in Montana (which run to the Clark Fork River). The region was nearly protected as wilderness in the 1980s, but a pocket veto by Ronald Reagan dashed the prospect. The only bill that has included the Great Burn for wilderness designation since then is the Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act, or NREPA, which was reintroduced into Congress in 2025.

With high mountain lakes, scenic views, and many trails, the Great Burn is practically designed for backpacking. Many Missoullians day hike to Montana's Heart Lake or backpack in from Clearwater Crossing up Fish Creek. For Idahoans, getting to the Great Burn is a project in itself, requiring a long drive up the 250 Road along the North Fork, or a circuitous

trip to the I-90 in Couer d'Alene, then south to Superior and in. Hoodoo Pass, on the Idaho-Montana border, offers a great entry to the Stateline Trail without too much elevation to hike.

The Big Blowup of 1910

The Great Burn takes its name from the fires of 1910. That summer, unusually hot and dry conditions gripped the landscape. By July, dozens of fires (many from lightning, many human-caused) burned in the Northern Rockies from Canada to the Selway. Most of these fires were small; this would not last.

In August, 60 mile-per-hour winds fanned the many fires of the Bitterroots into unstoppable conflagrations. Firebrands ignited more fires across mountain ridges. Smoke billowed into thunderheads that started even more ignitions. As one forester said, "the mountains roared". In just a few days, some 3 million acres of forests in three states had burned. Smoke

darkened the skies in New York City. It remains one of the largest fires in American history.

Remnants of this epic fire remain even today. Some areas that burned have remained treeless for a century, like Hanson Meadows. The perceptive hiker can still find the stone-gray boles of trees from the fire, standing like turrets. Some cedars living in Cayuse creek predate the fire. Even colossal fires don't burn everything.

Wildlife

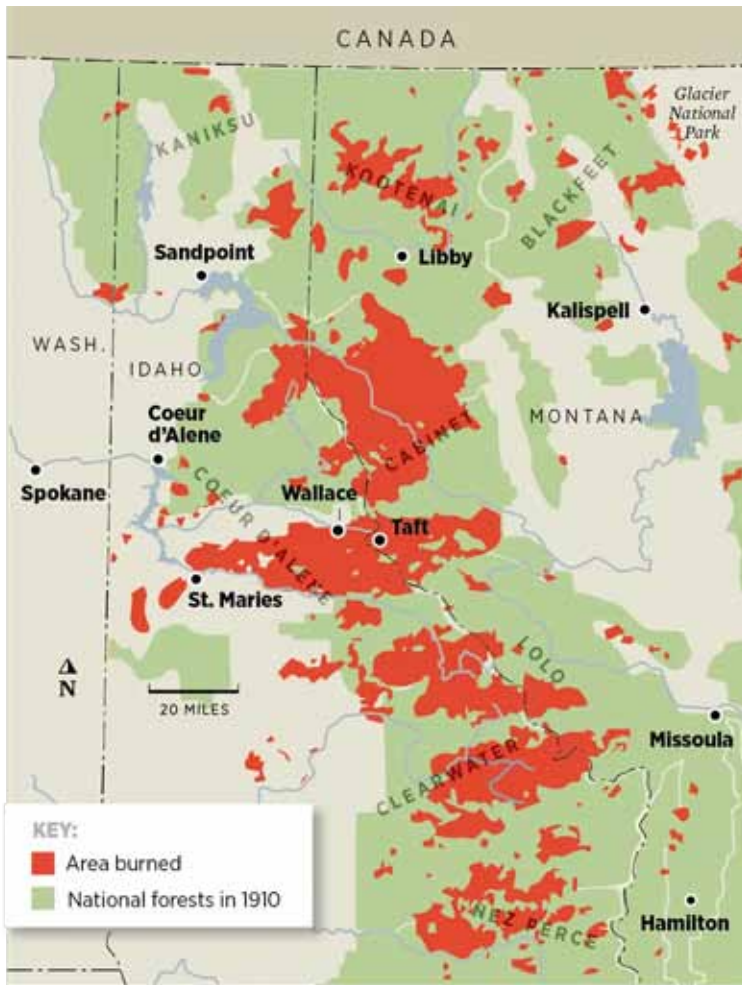
The Great Burn is an important place for wildlife, especially carnivores. Wolverines, black bears, mountain lions, lynx, pine martens, fishers, and wolves inhabit the area.

The area has excellent habitat for grizzly bears, though it is uncertain if they currently live there year-round. Indeed, in 2007, a grizzly bear was shot and killed in Kelly Creek—one of the first in the Clearwater basin seen since the 1940s.

The Great Burn is one of the easiest
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A lake in the Great Burn. Brett Haverstick Photo.



A map of the 1910 Fires. USFS image.



Hanson meadows in the Great Burn. Notice the cedar snags from 1910. Chuck Pezeshki photo.

places to see mountain goats in the Wild Clearwater. Snowmobile use can significantly stress goat populations. The Stateline Trail, which runs the length of the area, sees frequent snowmobile use, an issue that is likely to continue barring change in Forest Service policy and enforcement.

Cold-water fish abound in the Great Burn. Kelly Creek is nationally known as a trout fishery, and has been catch-and-release only since the 1970s. It harbors healthy populations of west-slope cutthroat, bull trout, and red-band trout (a native subspecies of rainbow trout). Steelhead used to run up the waterways of the North Fork, but were blocked by the building of Dworshack Dam.

Conservation

Because of its location, the Great Burn is affected by wildland policy in both Idaho and Montana; it is managed as two

separate roadless areas. In Idaho, the main threat has come from the Nez Perce-Clearwater Forest Plan, signed in January of 2025. That plan has altered the boundaries of what the Forest Service recommends as wilderness by cutting out Fish Lake and the headwaters of Cayuse Creek. The plan also seems to permit mechanized and/or motorized use on the Stateline Trail. Such uses harm mountain goat herds and denning grizzly bears, but would also make the protection of a “whole” Great Burn (as opposed to two pieces with a motorized trail between them) less certain.

In Montana, the roadless area is governed by the 2001 Roadless Rule. That Rule is not perfect (see the 2020 Roadless Report on our website), but has largely prevented development of wildlands in Montana. The Trump administration seems set on rescinding this rule, pushing for greater timber production and road-building (see “Roadless” article on page 3).

All of the Great Burn is included in the Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act, or NREPA, a visionary bill that would protect all the roadless areas of our region as wilderness. It was recently reintroduced by Senator Sheldon Whitehouse and Representative Madeleine Dean in 2025.

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wildclearwater.bsky.social

MEET OUR NEW STAFF!

Dr. Kyran Kunkel

Executive Director

Dr. Kyran Kunkel has led large and successful multi collaborator wildlife conservation, restoration, and management programs in the western US for over 30 years. He directs the Conservation Science Collaborative that he founded in 2003. Kyran is an Affiliate Professor in Wildlife Biology at the University of Montana and a Research Associate at the Smithsonian Institution. He is a National Geographic Explorer. He is a board member for Northern Plains Resource Council.

Kyran served as American Prairie (AP) founding Director of Wildlife Restoration and Science working to create the largest wildlife reserve in the contiguous US and the largest restoration science program in the ecoregion, directing innovative research and conservation including initiating the largest bison restoration program in North America. Kyran served as one of the founders of WWF's Great Plains program. He was senior biologist for Turner Endangered Species Fund and the regional biologist for the Alaska Region of the National Park Service.

Kyran has co-led dozens of successful conservation science collaborations including the first top carnivore (cougar) research in the Great Plains, swift fox reintroductions, desert bighorn sheep and cougar restoration, the first large scale and long term study of wolves and other top predators and prey in the western US, and a wolf-grizzly-livestock conflict prevention program in seven western states. The latter project is a coproduction with watershed groups and ranchers merging with my long time range rider work with ranchers in Montana. Kyran prides himself in trusted relationships with farmer, rancher, and indigenous partners.

For over a decade, Kyran has collaborated with a Nepalese team in eastern Nepal that has built community based conflict mitigation projects for dholes and



Kyran Kunkel, Executive Director

snow leopards. He works on similar projects large mammals in Kenya, Cameroon, Botswana, and South Africa.

In addition to large scale conservation and restoration, Kyran's work also has a strong emphasis on building local conservation capacity with communities and students. Kyran believes in the potential for conservation innovation and use of conservation incentives. He also focuses on private working lands. His team at AP created one of the only "wildlife friendly" ranching programs in North America (Wild Sky) securing conservation actions on thousands of acres of private lands.

To achieve large scale and long lasting conservation, expansive and inclusive collaboration is critical. Processes, equity, and outcomes require and are greater with multiple, diverse, inclusive communities and partnerships.

The challenges ahead for conservation are immense and need all our best work, biggest and boldest ideas, commitment, teams, hope, and care. Kyran is excited to join the amazing and successful FOC team and learn from all of you and work hard to build and implement a great vision forward for conservation.

Kyran is impassioned by wild places and does all he can to get out into



Krystal Starkey, Office Manager

them.

His family has farmed for 5 generations in South Dakota.

Krystal Starkey

Office Manager

Krystal grew up on the Palouse since they were a small child, graduating from Moscow High School. They recently moved back from Portland, Oregon and before that lived in Newport, Oregon on the beautiful coast. Krystal has had a strong love for the environment since they can remember and are an avid lover of the forests and oceans. They've spent a lot of their time advocating for stricter protections for the world's oceans and its inhabitants and are excited to bring that same drive and enthusiasm to the majestic Clearwater Basin they grew up loving and exploring. Krystal loves cats, sharks and can often be found relaxing in local parks. They bring over a decade of administrative experience with them and are SO incredibly excited to be with FOC and contribute to helping protect our public lands for everyone to continue to enjoy for years to come. We're excited to have their expertise onboard and welcome them to the FOC team!

BOOK REVIEW: *THIS AMERICA OF OURS*

By Lynne Nelson

This America of Ours: Bernard and Avis DeVoto and the Forgotten Fight to Save the Wild by Nate Schweber chronicles the story of one of conservation's greatest (and most successful) battles to save our national parks and oppose the privatization of public lands. I read this book with awe and respect for someone who devoted and ultimately gave his life to conservation, and surprise that I had not known the history of this powerful man and his wife. How had their fight been forgotten?

Bernard DeVoto was born in Ogden, Utah, studied writing at Northwestern University and worked at Harvard as a part-time instructor. He made most of his living by writing novels, history, and freelancing for journals, and wrote a series of Pulitzer-Prize-winning popular histories of the American West. He also wrote an influential column called *The Easy Chair* in Harper's Magazine. Bernard met and married one of his writing students, Avis, and together they became powerful activists and a literary force for the wild.

“Powerful voices alleged that selling public lands and exploiting national parks was critical to the United States economy and the fight against Communism. Is this sounding familiar?”

Beginning in the 1930s, Bernard lamented in his writings that public lands were being exploited by resource extraction and cattle grazing. When the proposed Echo Park Dam project (in a national park) came to light, DeVoto shouted from the highest mountain top. He penned several articles that roused the Nation such as “Shall We Let Them Ruin Our National Parks?” He proposed that national parks be closed to people and left undisturbed for wildlife and natural forces if they were not going to be properly protected. His writings inspired immense public outcry that eventually killed the dam proposal and increased funding to national parks by Congress. Stopping Echo Park Dam is usually credited to David Brower. While he

played a major role, in this book Schweber makes the case that Bernard DeVoto was an equal, if not bigger, player in this fight.

Traveling through the West with Avis, Bernard got wind of a secret deal between stock growers and western congressman to sell off western public lands. This backdoor deal was flying under the public radar until DeVoto exposed the scam to the entire country in *The Easy Chair*. Again, outcry killed this insidious plan.

Bernard's success brought enemies, including not only the powerful Senator Pat McCarran from Nevada, but Joe McCarthy, and J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI. Bernard DeVoto wasn't silenced by their intimidation efforts however, quite the opposite. He delivered a stinging attack on the corrupt government-backed witch hunts of the American people titled, “Due Notice to the FBI”. The FBI was indeed ‘stung’ by his condemnation and launched a public counterattack. Bernard was ‘blacklisted’ by many news and journal outlets, smeared as a Communist. Powerful voices alleged that selling public lands and exploiting national parks was critical to the United States economy and the fight against Com-

munist. Is this sounding familiar?

Bernard ultimately gave his life for the environmental movement. He died in 1955 at the age of 58, the same night he delivered a powerful television interview on CBS regarding Western public land threats. It's no doubt that the stress of a difficult, high-profile life took its toll. He died of an aneurysm in a local hospital. This was one of the few times in travel where Avis was not with him.

In 1962, Avis, Bernard's sons, Montana senator Lee Metcalf, and others gathered in a favored cedar grove in the Clearwater National Forest on the Idaho border and dedicated it to Bernard. Bernard's visits to this grove served as an inspiration for his writings, making such



Nate Schweber speaking in Moscow, ID

an impression that he asked for his ashes to be scattered amid the 2000-year-old cedars. The DeVoto Memorial Cedar Grove is truly a magical place worth a visit.

Readers will also be inspired by a deeply personal story—Avis's relationship with her best friend Julia Child. Avis never sought the limelight but staunchly supported and edited Bernard's writings as well as other book projects. Avis and Julia became pen pals after Julia wrote to Bernard, stirred by an essay in *The Easy Chair*. The relationship between these two women grows into something so beautiful and soulful that they seem more like reunited sisters. Avis served as an editor for Julia's first book.

Schweber makes a compelling case that the rise of the environmental movement of the 1960s and '70s is largely due to Bernard DeVoto's voice and unrelenting activism. I am left wishing he were here to tackle some of the same issues today that he so effectively addressed in the '40s and '50s. How could this fight have ever been forgotten? Is that why this frightening history is currently repeating? Reading this book gives one historical insight into the public land conservation challenges we are facing today. My biggest hope is that the rise of another environmental movement is soon to usher in. This America IS ours. Let us not forget.

To see photos of the DeVotos and their namesake grove, check out the online version of this article on our website!

(cont'd from "roadless" pg 3)

In 1972, the battle to protect the Lincoln Backcountry in Montana, led by the late great Cecil Garland, culminated in designation of the first Wilderness on the National Forest System that was not formerly a Primitive Area after passage of the Wilderness Act, named the Scapegoat Wilderness for the large mountain within the area.

In the Clearwater, some local citizens had been pushing since the 1950s to add Meadow Creek to the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness (then the Selway-Bitterroot Primitive Area). Mort Brigham and other local conservationists had proposed an Upper Clearwater Wilderness in the Mallard-Larkins and Upper North Fork roadless areas. Other areas like Kelly Creek/Great Burn have had long-standing proposals as have additions to the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, Cove-Mallard (additions to the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness) and others.

At the federal level, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in 1969, signed by President Nixon on New Years Day 1970, required evaluation prior to action of major federal actions. NEPA didn't formally protect roadless areas, but it de facto required analyzing impacts to roadless areas as part of the public engagement process. Citizen pressure, which often involved lawsuits and members of Congress, influenced the Forest Service to evaluate roadless areas under NEPA before developing them.

Largely in response to efforts like these, the Forest Service started what it called the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation, or RARE, in 1971. Since another evaluation followed, this process is now known by its acronym, RARE I.

RARE I

RARE I turned out to be a disaster. The Forest Service often arbitrarily split up roadless areas to make them appear smaller and less desirable as a Wilderness recommendation. Of the roughly 56 million acres of national forests studied, the agency only recommended 12 million for further study. In addition, there was more

roadless land that was missed by sloppy Forest Service inventories.

Grassroots mapping projects, lawsuits by environmental groups, grassroots activism, and congressional pressure from the likes of Senator Lee Metcalf from Montana led to RARE II in the late 1970s.

RARE II

While RARE II came to be in the ashes of a bad RARE I, there was also an expressed a desire by the Forest Service and the timber industry to once and for all decide what roadless areas would be recommended as Wilderness. The process was improved, but the final inventory still missed areas. Of the 62 million acres studied under RARE II, only 15 million were recommended for Wilderness, including 5 million acres in Alaska. The RARE II decision also recommended 11 million acres for further planning and 36 million acres were planned for immediate development.

RARE II, in the minds of some conservationists, was a repeat of the mistakes in RARE I. Nonetheless, the largest conservation organizations were afraid that any lawsuit would backfire. These groups tried to convince others not to file them.

Luckily, the State of California challenged RARE II in court. California's lawsuit proved the timidity of the large conservation groups was unfounded. The Court's decision found that the NEPA analysis was inadequate, pointing out that the Forest Service had prejudiced further analyses that were expected to be done to develop those areas. It also addressed the skewed range of alternatives, which were heavily weighted against wilderness recommendations or further planning.

While RARE II proved to be another debacle for the Forest Service, it did, however, do two things: Its aftermath cemented the forest planning process as being the only way, short of any congressionally mandated studies, the Forest Service would recommend roadless areas for future wilderness designation. Its aftermath also pushed Congress to act, resulting in state-wide wilderness bills for national forest wildlands in most western states, except the two states in the West with the largest roadless acreage—Idaho and Montana.



A stream in the Cove-Mallard area. Endless lawsuits and occasional direct action pushed the USFS to develop a national roadless policy in the 1990s. FOC file photo.

(NOTE: In Alaska, the comprehensive legislation for public lands was already ongoing, resulting in Congress passing the Alaska National Interest Land Conservation Act (ANILCA) in 1980. Thus, RARE II didn't necessarily spur legislation there as in other states).

Forest Plans: From RARE II to the Roadless Rule

With the passing of the Resources Planning Act in 1974 and the National Forest Management Act in 1976, forest plans became the main battleground of roadless inventories and protections.

The Forest Service completed the first iteration of forest plans for the Nez Perce, Clearwater, and Idaho Panhandle

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National Forests in 1987. The Forest plans recommended a paltry amount of Wilderness—small portions of roadless areas in the Clearwater and Idaho Panhandle National Forests, and none of the Nez Perce National Forest. The individual forest plan roadless inventories were largely based on RARE II, with a few more refinements. Again, roadless land was missed. For example, the Forest Service refused to analyze the roadless lands adjacent to the Gospel-Hump Wilderness.

After these north Idaho forest plans were completed, the agency undertook a series of environmental impacts statements (EISs) in order to develop roadless areas, which were tiered to the new plan. Portions of the Mallard-Larkins, Weitas Creek, Weir Creek, Middle Fork Face, and especially Cove-Mallard roadless areas were logged in the late 80s and early 90s in spite of public opposition. So was “uninventoried” roadless land contiguous with the Gospel-Hump Wilderness. Other areas had smaller intrusions on the boundaries such as Clear Creek, additions to the Selway-Bitterroot (Sneakfoot Roadless Area) near Goat Roost to access private land logging (in the Sneakfoot Roadless Area), and Siwash.

Timber sales and proposed logging in roadless areas throughout the country in the 80s and 90s inspired conservationists to organize. Environmental groups and even individual citizens litigated dozens of projects in Idaho, Oregon, and California. A direct action campaign against the infamous Cove-Mallard timber sales on the Nez Perce Forest eventually stopped one of the largest roadless development projects ever proposed.

“By the 1990s, public sentiment, litigation, and direct action had made the Forest Service reconsider their policy on roadless areas nationwide.”

The Roadless Rules

By the 1990s, public sentiment, litigation, and direct action had made the Forest Service reconsider their policy on roadless areas nationwide. In addition, the sheer volume of national forest roads

(the USFS is the largest road manager on Earth, with more than 350,000 miles of system roads, roughly seven times the length of the whole US interstate system) and the outlandish taxpayer costs of maintaining them was a financial problem that timber sales were not balancing. The Clinton administration led the development of a national roadless policy—the roadless rule—in the late 1990s.

Conservationists had high hopes the roadless rule would provide needed protection. Those hopes were jolted when the draft EIS came out and it looked like the actual proposal would provide minimal protection. For example, the Forest Service didn’t plan on protecting roadless areas from off-road vehicles like motorcycles, something that has not changed. The roadless rule process was largely based on the RARE II and forest plan inventories with a few changes (mainly deletions due to logging). The EIS failed to look at truly protective alternatives and the decision left loopholes.

The final rule EIS and decision in 2001 were slightly better than the draft EIS. The conservation community writ large praised the rule, in spite of its problems. Again, the final EIS failed to look at truly protective alternatives and the decision still had some loopholes, though not as significant as the most favored alternative in the draft EIS. Larry Dawson, a former Clearwater Forest Supervisor, commented to me on a hike that he thought the roadless rule was full of loopholes big enough to drive a bulldozer through, loopholes he had no intention of exploiting. The rule mainly prohibited roadbuilding for timber sales, although a slew of presumably rare exceptions were provided for building roads for other reasons. Logging skid trails were allowed, however. The rule also expected that logging, mainly of small diameter trees, would be infrequent in roadless areas. In north central Idaho and many other places as well, very few timber or road projects took place in the first 5 to 10 years after the rule was implemented.

The Idaho and Colorado Rules

The 2001 rule was challenged in court, put on hold, and eventually upheld.

In the interim, the Bush Administration came up with a policy to allow states to petition the Forest Service to create state-specific rules to further weaken protections. Only Idaho and Colorado asked. The Forest Service created two separate rules that applied to national forests in those two states. Both were considerably less protective than the national rule. To quote from the paper that Katie Bilodeau and I wrote about the roadless policy in Idaho (citations omitted):

In 2005 the Bush Administration developed a state-petition process where states could petition to create their own roadless rules for federal roadless areas within that state. In 2006 Idaho’s then-governor, Jim Risch, petitioned the Forest Service for an Idaho-specific roadless rule, which the agency issued 2008. The next year, the Ninth Circuit struck down the state-petition process for lacking the requisite environmental analysis under that National Environmental Policy Act and lacking proper consultation under the Endangered Species Act. But, the Idaho roadless regulation that emerged from this unlawful process survived.

The same 9th Circuit upheld the weak Idaho Rule, which permits just about everything everywhere, with some restrictions. It is also a regulatory “ceiling”; the Idaho Rule says that individual forest plans cannot approve stronger protection standards for roadless areas. The 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule is a regulatory “floor”, allowing forest plans to provide stronger protections for these areas.

Moving the Goalposts

The 2001 Roadless Rule shifted roadless policy from one of “analyzed development” under NEPA to “limited protection”. In response, the Forest Service simply changed the definition of protection to include roadless logging even though in the past, the agency maintained that logging disqualified that area from being considered as roadless.

The agency has increasingly argued since the 2001 Roadless Rule that logging can enhance roadless area characteristics,

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which are essentially the same as those in Wilderness. Their argument has largely rested on an elaborate mythology about wildfire, namely that logging will protect roadless forests from “uncharacteristic” wildfire and thereby preserve them. This position allows the Forest Service to talk out of both sides of its mouth, simultaneously removing logged areas from roadless inventories (as if logging harms them) while simultaneously proposing that more logging projects in roadless areas will help them (as if logging is “restoring” them).

Put another way, the agency’s apparent about face and inconsistency can be understood when looking at the agency culture. The Forest Service was doing more extensive site-specific EISs prior to developing roadless areas before the 2001 Roadless Rule. Perhaps people in the agency realized that if the Forest Service changed its view and decided to purport that roadless logging was only a temporary impact or the impact unknown, it could legally get away with a lesser analysis under NEPA. Of course, when it came time to do the forest plan roadless inventories for the purpose of wilderness recommendation, it could do another about face and disingenuously claim an area that had been logged no longer had wilderness or roadless characteristics anymore even though it said the opposite when the logging was approved. There is one constant, however, The Forest Service has always wanted to log and develop roadless areas.

The roadless report Katie Bilodeau and I did also reveals another fact. According to Forest Service data we obtained while writing the report, the projections in the EISs for both the 2001 National and Idaho Roadless Rules for logging in roadless areas for the period between about 2008 and 2019 were greatly exceeded by what actually happened on the ground. Data we obtained from the Forest Service for a couple of years after we finished the report, shows an even greater divergence from what was projected in the EISs, especially for Idaho.

Into the Future

Rather than a coherent policy, Forest Service current roadless policy is a



Looking into Fish Lake. Great Burn Roadless Area. Paul Busch photo.

contradictory mess. Roadless areas were identified precisely because they have potential for wilderness designation. Now, the Forest Service does not even use the term “roadless” anymore to define the forest plan inventories of roadless areas for purposes of wilderness recommendation. Thus, the static inventories of areas ostensibly protected under the Idaho Roadless Rule or the better but still inadequate 2001 Roadless Rule, are gradually losing their wild integrity while areas that are indeed roadless, but missed by earlier and sloppy Forest Service inventories that formed the basis of the roadless rules, will likely remain without any protection, even though those areas may have been identified in a recent forest plan as actually being roadless.

Now, the current government is proposing to eliminate the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. Instead, the Forest Service should greatly improve the 2001 Rule and again put the national forests in Idaho and Colorado under a new and improved rule. As always, citizen activism is needed to truly protect roadless areas (see also Jeff’s Juel’s article about

NREPA in this Defender).

The idea of the roadless area inventory processes, as noted above, was that these lands’ eligibility for adding to the National Wilderness Preservation System be evaluated prior to allowing industrial development to forever destroy their wild character. Today, pressure to develop public lands seems ever intensifying. Friends of the Clearwater has long advocated for taking the next step and conserving all roadless lands in our region as wilderness. The Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act, introduced into Congress, does just that and more. Please visit the Alliance for the Wild Rockies website today, and urge Congress do the right thing!

Authors Note: For those who want a bit of a deeper dive, here is a link to FOC’s report entitled [The Roadless Report: Analyzing the Impacts of Two Roadless Rules on Forested Wildlands](#), by Katie Bilodeau and Gary Macfarlane, 2020. Those who want to go even deeper, I can provide a list of references, with which I am familiar, that provide considerable background.

FISH LAKE, REVISITED

By Paul Busch

When my friend (and FOC member) Annette told me about upcoming trail work with the Idaho Trails Association (ITA) in the Clearwater, it sounded fun. Still, I was hesitant. To be honest, I didn't think I could physically do it. I work a desk job, and a week of cutting logs and brushing trails sounded pretty hard. When she told me it was at Fish Lake, I changed my mind.

There are many "fish" lakes in Idaho. ITA project lead Clay Jacobson worked on three "Fish Lakes" this summer—two of which have a "Lake Creek" flowing out of them!

But I knew this one, the largest natural lake in the Wild Clearwater, tucked into the Bitterroots in the Great Burn Roadless Area (*see page 8 of this Defender*). It is the site of Lake Creek Trail #419, the story of which is longer than the trail itself. You can read about that conflict, and our

repeated defense of the wild character of the area, in older editions of the Defender. To Annette, this was more than a chance to work on a trail, this was a chance to share FOCs vision of conservation in the area to like-minded folks.

To make that long story short, the trail to Fish Lake is now motorized, opening more of the backcountry to off-road vehicles. That was another reason for my trepidation as we drove to the trailhead on Saturday.

Getting There

Or at least, we tried to drive there. We got stuck behind a horse trailer on the 250 road, caught on its back axle, near the Hidden Creek campground. It turned out this was not "a" horse trailer, but "the" horse trailer. The owners were the volunteers that planned to pack our food and cooking gear up to base camp. It took a tow truck from Orofino to get them unstuck. In the meantime, we camped at Hidden Creek with a few of the other volunteers.

we and the other volunteers arrived at the Fish Lake trailhead. I took a short walk to see the creek, breathe in the cedars, and have a meditative moment. I was joined by a pine marten that slipped out of the bushes, stood up to see me, and darted away. An auspicious sign.

There were about ten of us humans. Some were employed by public lands advocacy groups, some were retired, and some worked in other fields but were taking a week "off" to do physical labor. We started the hike up, backpacks laden with Pulaskis, crosscut saws, shovels, loppers, and folding saws.

Fish Lake Trail is indeed motorized now. We passed about six OHVs on the hike up, including large side-by-sides that are still not permitted. ITA, though, takes a non-mechanized approach to trail work, something I greatly admire. With over 10,000 miles of trails in Idaho, it is a cultural achievement that wilderness values, pioneering skills, and traditional tools are still in use.

It was a luxurious week,

in some ways. The packers brought food and cooking gear up to base camp. A volunteer named Jay acted as camp chef for the whole week. Waking up to huckleberry pancakes in the Bitterroots is a treat to which little else can compare!

Trail Work

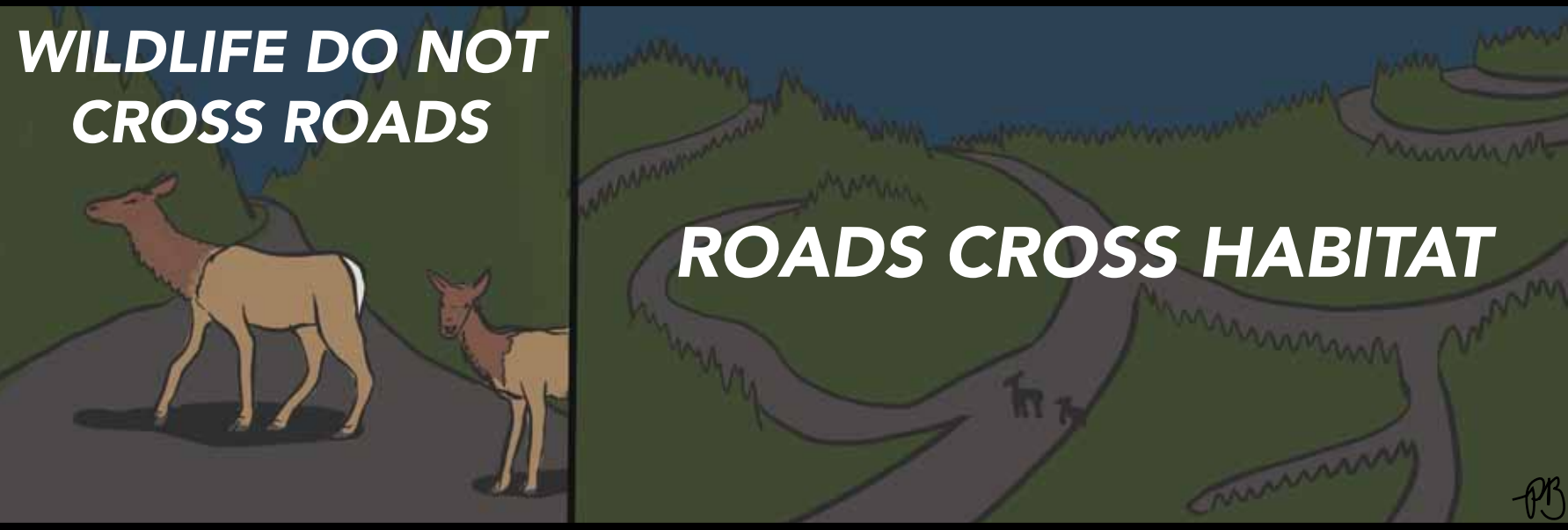
Our work began Monday, marching up the Bruin Hill Trail, through Englemann spruce, subalpine fir, and hemlock forests replete with verdant understories of snowberry, bear grass, grouse whortleberry, rayless coneflower, and false hellebore. Some sections of old burned areas were overflowing with ripe huckleberries (and some bear sign). Alders had filled in much of the trail, bending in big loops toward the sun.

While beautiful, for the better part of the week these plants were our opponents. Brush clipped, logs sawed, trail dug, rocks hefted. It was hard work, but we were reminded to take it slow.

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Coyote's Comics: "Crossings"

On Sunday morning,



Using a crosscut saw requires patience, too. While the masculine urge to rip through logs is real, it turns out precision is a lot more important. “Slow is smooth and smooth is fast,” one volunteer said. That mantra can apply to many things.

The work was such fun. It was nice to see the impact we had on the trail, especially getting huge logs out of the way. Miles of trail were better for people and horses.

Plus, it was nice to work with great volunteers. The whole team was filled out with kind, unassuming, hardworking people. Getting hours on the trail to chat with everyone was a delight, learning their life stories, their views on public lands, where they’ve hiked and the places they love. Despite different backgrounds and hometowns, we were all united in one thing: we loved Idaho’s wild places.

On Thursday, we took a day off. It turned out to be a good idea. We were pelted with cold rain, blowing wind, and even hail. We huddled under a tarp, scarfed down soup, and ducked into bed. A good day to be off the trail and inside a book.

That day, in between deluges, I hiked off trail up to a lookout over the lake. I wanted to see if I could find mountain goat sign. No goats, but I did see some threatened whitebark pine trees. Some looked young and healthy, others seemed to be struggling. I don’t know if they had pine beetles or blister rust, but it seemed to be only a matter of time until they were choked out by subalpine fir and western hemlock ascending the ridge, adapting to a new climate a few feet up the mountain at a time. The alpine world is moving heavenward, in more ways than one.

Hidden between the foliage, I saw a flash of light. It was plastic. Specifically, a deflated party balloon, crumpled but basically the same as it would have been the day it took flight. It read, “You’re so special!,” a poignant symbol of human hubris, even at 7,000 feet in the wild.



Paul Busch and Annette Bridges cross-cutting a downed tree. Hailey Brookins photo.

Going Home

Friday was a slow, cold morning, but by the evening fire we were all in good spirits. Jay made a peach and huckleberry cobbler that was worth writing home about.

That night, a man camped nearby visited our site to ask where the outhouse was—after clearly walking past it. He was armed with an assault rifle. After that bizarre encounter, some of our group members left their tents in alarm and slept in a field instead. The next morning I found out his camp-mate had an assault rifle too. I couldn’t help but wonder why they felt like they needed to bring them. Was it for “defense” from bears? Was it for fun?

Saturday we packed up and walked out. I left feeling uneasy. On the one hand, I had had a beautiful experience in the woods. On the other, I felt a lot of sadness about the state of our wildlands.

Is there a future where the whitebark pine can withstand blister rust? Is there a future where grizzly bears can survive encounters with hikers armed

with AR-15s? Is there a future where federal agencies view wilderness as a gain for wildlife rather than a loss for people? Is there a future where plastic pollution gets under control? How do I fit in with people when all I see is Leopold’s “world of wounds”?

Annette and I chatted on the way down. She offered a slightly different experience, noting the warmth of the people, the beauty of the lake, the splendor of the forest. She also sees the nuance in things. The “militia” guys told her they preferred when the trail wasn’t motorized; several of the volunteers who worked for public agencies (of which FOC is often at odds) were advocates within their organizations for wilderness. In the end, we all care about this place.

Maybe the world isn’t some puzzle waiting to be perfectly “solved.” It’s a landscape, a network of trails that disappear and reappear, crisscross and diverge, open and close. Maybe we can’t get the world exactly how we want it, but we can do our part to make a few trails a little better for the walking.