

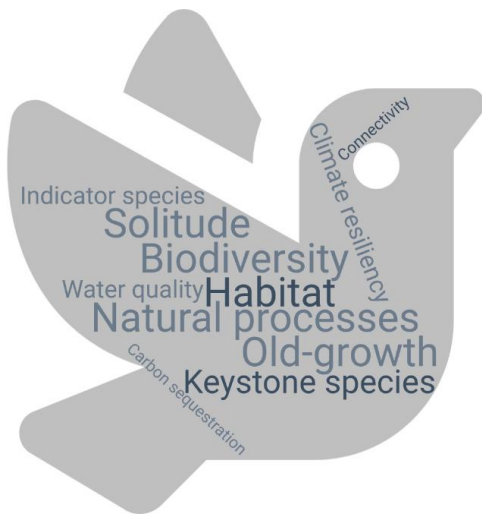


# Friends of the Clearwater



## BOARD BASICS

Welcome to the FOC board! We trust you have already taken some time to study the Friends of the Clearwater website and familiarize yourself with our [mission, vision, and values](#), [our by-laws](#) and our [board policy statements](#).



This introduction is intended to offer you a sense of our organization's history and culture, to which you will now be contributing! FOC operates on the basis of egalitarian principles and the assumption that all participants' voices have equal value. We welcome you to what we like to think is a feisty collective of kindred spirits, united by love of publicly owned wildlands, advocacy for the intrinsic value of wild nature, and rejection of the ["multiple-use"](#) paradigm.

Friends of the Clearwater began in 1987 as a grassroots response to large-scale logging operations in the Clearwater Basin. In the 1990s, the Cove-Mallard Coalition's work attracted people from all over to the Nez Perce National Forest to participate in non-violent direct action. You can get a sense of what forest activism in that era looked like, and of the joy, sense of community, and trauma of the Cove-Mallard encampment, by watching "[Bear People](#)," a documentary featuring FOC's long-time Ecosystem Defense Director Gary Macfarlane, or Missoula Community Access Television's "[Cove Mallard: Two Timber Sales Too Terrible To Ignore](#)."



The very best way to learn about Friends of the Clearwater is to read past issues of *The Clearwater Defender* (known from 1994-1998 as *The Salmon-Selway Defender*). We've got paper copies in a filing cabinet, or you can find the whole archive online at <https://www.lib.uidaho.edu/digital/friendsclearwater/about.html>. Reading older *Defenders* is also a great way to learn about other key local efforts that were often closely intertwined with FOC's work, such as the Grey Wolf Committee (founded by Steve Paulson, who also founded FOC), which in the 1990s sought full protection for wolves in Idaho under the Endangered Species Act.

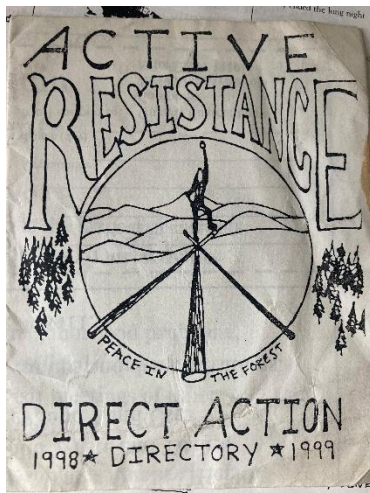


An excerpt from a past issue of the *Clearwater Defender*

Several foundational aspirations continue to shape FOC's work, foremost among them the visionary [Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act](#) (NREPA), first proposed in 1993 by the Alliance for the Wild Rockies (AWR), of which FOC was a part, for consideration by Congress. This [Yellowstonian article](#) provides an excellent introduction to NREPA and in particular to legendary songwriter Carole King's ongoing advocacy for this legislation that would protect all the wildlands of the northern Rocky Mountains.

## Situating FOC within the broader environmental movement

In the late 1990s, FOC joined with The Wilderness Society, the Idaho Conservation Alliance and several other local and regional groups to form the Wild Clearwater Coalition, which challenged multiple major timber sales (a total of 118 million board feet of timber, some of it from roadless areas) including the White Sands, White Pine, Fish Bate and North Lochsa Face projects. This coalition prevailed against the [1987 Clearwater National Forest Plan](#) based on threats to water quality, fish, habitat and old growth forests. The coalition's goal was to "secure a wild and sustainable future for Clearwater Country in north-central Idaho." These defense efforts planted the seeds of our current vision for landscape-scale protection of the [Big Wild](#).



As an advocacy organization, FOC uses citizen science, peaceful protest, and direct action when necessary. We believe strongly in the rule of law, and have spent four decades commenting, appealing and litigating to ensure the U.S. government follows its own bedrock environmental laws, especially the [National Environmental Protection Act](#) (NEPA). FOC's [public lands primer](#) provides an overview of these laws, the responsibilities of federal agencies, the vital significance of documents like Environmental Impact Statements (EIS), and other important information.

FOC's history is closely linked with that of other local and regional grassroots organizations. We have a strong affinity with other forest defense organizations like the [Blue Mountains Biodiversity Project](#) in northeastern Oregon or the [Swan View Coalition](#) in northwestern Montana. We are pleased to be affiliated with coalitions like [Anthropocene Alliance](#) (A2) and [Pacific Northwest Forest Climate Alliance](#) (PNWFCA) that do the hard work of developing and compiling communication resources about complex issues, like PNWFCA's recent [messaging guide about wildfire](#).



Direct action has been and will no doubt continue to be among FOC's strategies.

FOC is also philosophically aligned and partners with nationally active groups that share our values, like [WildEarth Guardians](#), [John Muir Project](#), [Great Old Broads for Wilderness](#) and [Wilderness Watch](#). Reading the quarterly [Wilderness Watcher](#) newsletter is a good way to stay abreast of regional and national wilderness issues.



Local volunteers with Great Old Broads for Wilderness at a native-plant work party on Paradise Ridge in 2023.



Working with tribal groups, and in particular the Nez Perce Tribe, is an especially important priority for FOC. Joint advocacy with members of the Tribe has taken various forms over the decades. FOC and other groups like Save Our Wild Salmon work side by side with Nimiipuu Protecting the Environment, which organizes the annual [Free the Snake Flotilla](#).

Another Nimiipuu-led action, summarized well in [this Indigenous Environmental Network article](#), took place in 2013, when members of the Nez Perce Tribe and other activists blocked the Highway 12 Lochsa River corridor to protest transport of oversized industrial equipment (“mega-loads”) to the Athabasca tar sands.



Finding new ways to connect with different demographic groups, such as rural Idahoans, academics, or agency insiders, is one of FOC’s ongoing challenges, especially as we seek to strengthen the outreach component of our work. This could, for example, mean intensified partnerships with pro-nature agency employees through groups like [Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics](#) (FSEEE), or [Firefighters United for Safety](#).

[Ethics and Ecology](#) (FUSEE). Cultivating allies both new and old is always key to speaking with clarity about the issues, standing up to agencies and adversaries, educating the public, and articulating our concerns to potential supporters.

FOC maintains a more circumspect relationship with national “Big Greens” like Sierra Club, The Nature Conservancy, The Wilderness Society or even the Idaho Conservation League. We often take issue with those organizations’ strategies, priorities and political compromises and/or their top-down structures. However, we greatly value our strong relationships with regional and local conservation-group chapters, especially the Palouse Group of Sierra Club.

Given the changing judicial and legislative climate in the U.S., we strive to constantly re-evaluate the success of all our strategies, including outreach and partnerships.

## Issues, words, emotions, and related nuances

Generally speaking, activists seek to work together toward a shared goal. In other words, they *collaborate* (from the Latin for “to labor together”). But words take on different meanings depending on standpoint and context. In the context of forest defense work, so-called “collaboratives” (made up of governmental, industry and environmental groups) have served to greenwash pre-determined outcomes that inevitably serve extractive and other economic interests.

One prime example was the [Clearwater Basin Collaborative](#) (CBC), convened in 2008 purportedly in order to “enhance and protect the ecological and economic health of the forests, rivers, and communities within the Clearwater Basin by working across a diversity of interests.” Friends of the Clearwater rejected this project from the beginning. One can gain an understanding of what a bitter taste the verb “collaborate” has within the forest defense community by reading [this chapter](#) about the CBC from Christopher Ketcham’s book *This Land: How Cowboys, Capitalism and Corruption Are Ruining the American West*.

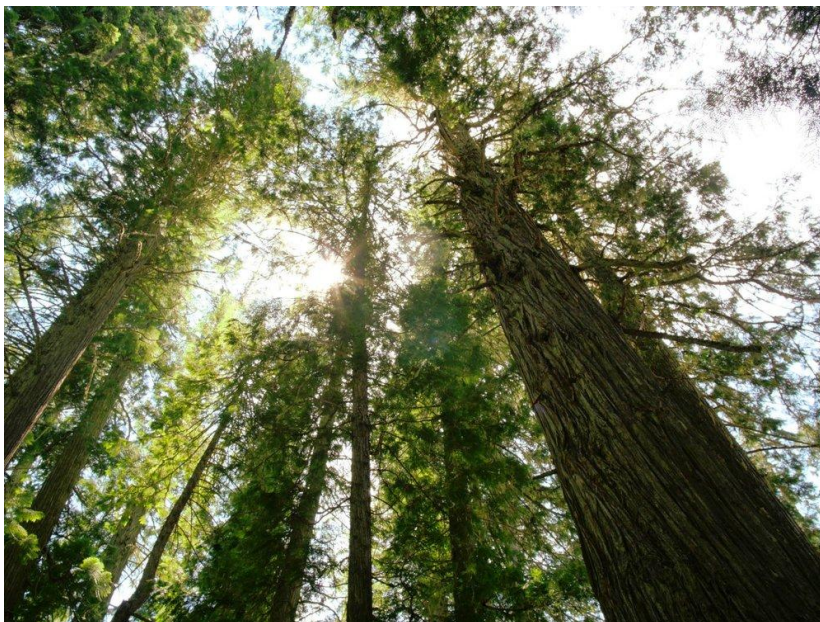
Our word choices (i.e. partnership, alliance, coalition rather than collaboration) reflect our awareness of the ease with which terms can be co-opted and turned into “triggers” for activists. At FOC, we strive to be sensitive to the power and the nuances of words.

The 1980 Earth First! slogan, “No Compromise in Defense of Mother Earth,” expresses well FOC’s spiritual and ethical commitment to wild nature. FOC bases its priorities and positions on the best available science and fundamental ecological axioms: habitat fragmentation and destruction decrease biodiversity and cause extinction; ecosystems are

complex and all species inter-related; logging, weather and climate change cause forest fires; grazing, logging and roads cause erosion and harm water quality.

However, many of the terms used in the policy world to talk about wildlands, such as “forest health,” have been co-opted and used to paint a simplistic and misleading picture of forest conditions as well as agency and industry activities, often persuading people that forests “need” active management. One important early example of such misleading rhetoric can be found in a 2000 article by Keith Hammer entitled “[Ponderosa Poster Child](#).”

FOC’s anti-extractivist values obviously imply a rejection of decision-making based on economic factors. But following the best available science may also involve drawing attention to myth-busting economic research, such as [this report](#) from the Center for Sustainable Economy showing that national-forest logging is a money-losing proposition for the owners of our public lands (the people of the United States).



In addition to misconceptions about science or economics, the issues we care about are often complicated by emotions like fear of fire or generational suspicion of environmentalists from the [timber wars](#) era of the 1990s. FOC works to replace such feelings with the powerful emotions of reverence for and connectedness with the natural world.

The awe-inspiring DeVoto Cedar Grove in FOC’s mission area. Photo from FOC partner, [Old-Growth Forest Network](#).

## Organizational culture

FOC board members' greatest commonality is probably the need to know that wild places exist, and the need to experience "the joy, wonder, and even (at times) fear that one can experience in wild country," as one board member put it. Some members even recall the days when meetings were held outdoors, around a campfire; decisions were made by consensus by a small group of like-minded activists, without the constraints of Zoom meetings, fundraising, and hyper-busy schedules.

In those days, FOC had no paid employees; once staff did begin receiving modest compensation, Gary Macfarlane provided them with years of continuity as well as guidance and mentorship. As one member points out, "FOC has largely been blessed by a staff that required very little direct oversight by the board." Upon Gary's departure, however, the board needed to take a more active role in day-to-day activities, including fundraising and hiring as well as operational tasks.

Finding the right balance for board-member involvement – appropriate amount of oversight, appropriate amount of operational support – is an ongoing concern for the group. As an avowedly non-hierarchical organization, we try to be aware of and communicate about potential tacit power imbalances, for example between veteran and new board members or between board and staff. In contrast to many non-profit organizations, FOC has no term limits for board members, and staff members generally attend board meetings.

In other words, we constantly negotiate the tension between our grassroots activist identity and our formal status as a 501(c)(3) organization and employer. Some of us harbor nostalgia for the pre-Internet era, for a time when unpaid activists had to do the work. Philosophically, some of us share the rejection of professionalization, first articulated by civil rights and feminist activists in the 1960s and 1970s, that has been well documented in books like [\*The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-profit Industrial Complex\*](#). On the other hand, we recognize the need to pay people for their work, and the need for of structure that sociologist that Jo Freeman described in [\*The Tyranny of Structurelessness\*](#): "For everyone to have the opportunity to be involved in a given group and to participate in its activities the structure must be explicit, not implicit. The rules of decision-making must be open and available to everyone, and this can happen only if they are formalized."

FOC's bylaws and policy statements provide a sound basis for our formal decision-making processes, even as we continue to seek the right balance between being a grassroots "anarchist collective" and ensuring that our practices align with our values. Many problematic areas still require ongoing reflection and a collective thinking effort – whether the issue is how important it is to be "liked" by the community, how and whether to work with recreation interest groups, whether to apply for corporate foundation funding, or how much organizational structure we need.

One thing, in any case, is absolutely clear (see next page)....

# HEALTHY SENSE OF OUTRAGE AND GOOD SENSE OF HUMOR REQUIRED OF **ALL** STAFF AND BOARD MEMBERS!!!

United States Forest  
Department of Service  
Agriculture

All  
Regions

File Code: 19-15-19  
(Personnel)

Date: August 23, 1995

Dear Forest Service Employee:

Beginning Immediately, the following checked position are terminated:

- ✓ Engineering
- ✓ Fisheries
- ✓ Hydrology
- ✓ NEPA
- ✓ Planning
- ✓ Public Affairs
- ✓ Recreation
- ✓ Soils
- ✓ Timber
- ✓ Wildlife
- ✓ Writing/Editing

We are terribly sorry for any inconvenience this may have caused, but as the Agency is no longer obligated to disclose its actions to the public, or to conduct effects analyses of its projects, there is no longer any need for technicians, scientists, NEPA specialists, or writers.

If in the future the public again burdens us with regulations and requires us to justify and disclose our actions to them, we'll let you know. In the meantime, we wish you luck in a new career, and extend our thanks to you for being compliant while we usurp the public's lands.

We also hope very much you enjoy your donut.

Sincerely,  
\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$

Timber Corp./U.S. Forest Service Cooperative

Logging the Land and Getting Very Rich  
In case you were wondering, this is not an official Forest Service document

This 1995 spoof shows a) that environmentalists' current grievances with the Forest Service have been building for a long time, and b) that a sense of humor is the very best antidote to despair!

## Board member job description

So, you may now wonder, what exactly is my job description as a board member? In general, our main tasks are as follows:

- Staying informed on the issues facing the forests and waterways of the Big Wild;
- Thinking critically about how FOC can most effectively (in terms of time, money, and morale) address those issues; and
- Building a community of grassroots support for FOC and bringing our own networks and connections to the organizations.

Contributing in some way to FOC's fundraising work is an important part of being on the board. And of course, each member brings their own strengths, from strategic thinking to expertise in wildlife, federal agency operations, or law, to skills in writing, editing or facilitating communications, both internally and externally. Our board officers are responsible for organizing meetings and votes.

Above all, board members seek to communicate respectfully and contribute thoughtfully to organizational decision-making. We invite you to listen with care to ongoing conversations and to learn about our institutional history; at the same time, we hope you feel immediately comfortable and confident enough to voice your own observations and questions. As you think about how and where you can best contribute, we look forward to your new ideas as well as your help with existing activities, fundraising, and operational tasks such as publications, tabling, or membership and outreach.

We are excited to welcome you to the FOC board of directors, and appreciate your participation in this informal introduction to our organization. We all look forward to working (and hanging out) with you!



Left to right: Current FOC Board President Lynne Nelson, long-time Forest Defense Director and current board member Gary MacFarlane, supporter and Wilderness Watch Executive Director Dana Johnson, and current Executive Director Kyran Kunkel hang out at one of FOC's semi-regular get-togethers in Moscow.