

Wild Juniper Journal

A Publication of the Sierra Club Juniper Group

Fall 2008

Join Sierra Club's Effective Team Protecting Eastern Oregon's Forests & Wildlife

by Asante Riverwind

Fall 2008 Volunteer Opportunities

Local "Friends of the Forest" Groups
Sierra Club volunteers, staff, and regional allies have and continue to bring many conservation changes to the region's public lands projects, protecting forests, wildlife, and fish for generations to come. Recent Sierra Club volunteer and allied efforts have brought significant initial changes to a number of planned fire-risk reduction thinning-logging projects, and have helped achieve a closure of the McKay Creek area in the Ochoco to OHVs to prevent harm to area forests and allow for steelhead fish recovery. Similar volunteer community efforts are happening in the Sunriver, Sisters, and Skyliner area of the Deschutes, addressing forest restoration and old growth protection as well as OHV issues. In the aftermath of our successful fall lawsuit Settlement protecting the postfire forests of Black Crater in the Deschutes, we are now involved in two lawsuits also in the Deschutes: Five Buttes, to protect old growth forests and wildlife including spotted owls, and GW to protect ecologically sensitive recovering burned forests and creeks. Collaborative group involvement in the Malheur NF is helping ensure developing projects protect and restore old growth forests and salmonid waterways. Malheur efforts have benefited by a recent spring landmark agreement protecting many thousands of acres of old growth forest wildlands from logging. Volunteers in the Umatilla NF are helping address harmful roads, OHV abuse, and harmful logging.

As Sierra Club members and conservationists, we all enjoy the wonders of wild beautiful nature. By joining in efforts in the forests of your region bringing Sierra Club members together into local volunteer "Friends of the Forest" groups, we can effectively assist conservation efforts, hiking and photo-surveying proposed projects and influencing agency actions. Visit our website or contact me for a list, by National Forest and Ranger District, of volunteer opportunities covering current projects of concern across central and eastern Oregon. Please check the brief list below for projects in areas where you live, work, & play that are important to you!

Sierra Club Resources

As Sierra Club members, we have access to resources and educational materials on important global, national, and regional issues. Books, publications, DVDs, informed speakers, and resources on topics from global climate change, energy, public lands, forests, fires, wildlife, waterways, population, OHVs, toxins, and proactive ecological solutions to the problems of today are available for use in your community, workplace, school, group, friends and family. Ongoing volunteer community outreach and educational presentations help increase conservation awareness, changing the world for the better, person by person. Sierra Club resources include DVD movies and CD power point presentations on important conservation issues from global to local, ready for public viewing. For resources and help in reaching people in your community contact us!

Oregon Chapter & Juniper Group Resources

Oregon Chapter Sierra Club *Conifer & Wild Juniper Journal* newspaper distribution has increased throughout Oregon's eastside, with venues (stores, cafes, offices, libraries, etc) in the following communities: Bend, Sisters, Sunriver, Redmond, Madras, Prineville, Powell Butte, Mitchell, Spray, Dayville, John Day, Prairie City, Burns, Pendleton, and other locations as possible. Regional and local volunteer help distributing the *Conifer* and *Wild Juniper Journal* in areas near you (including needed local volunteers in many of the above and additional communities) can help increase community awareness and effective involvement in conservation issues. If you can help distribute papers in your area, please contact me, thanks!

The Juniper Group welcomes member articles and letters on subjects of ecological importance. Articles should be about 800 words maximum, letters between 300 to 500 words (shorter is ok), and are most useful if in electronic Word document format. Photos and/or art accompanying articles are appreciated.

Area members also lead regular hikes and field trips from the greater Bend area, and there is renewed interest in bringing members together in other parts of the eastside for hikes, "get togethers," and events.

Regional Sierra Club Staff

Help "Explore, Enjoy, & Protect" the wild lands near you; to join in effective ongoing Oregon Sierra Club efforts, contact: Asante Riverwind, Eastern Oregon Forest Organizer, Oregon Chapter Sierra Club PO Box 5534, Bend, Oregon 97708, (541)322-4065
asante.riverwind@sierraclub.org

Oregon Chapter & Eastside Juniper Group Websites

Visit Oregon Chapter and Juniper Group websites at: <http://oregon.sierraclub.org/groups/index.asp>
Our website has detailed information on area field trips, hikes, events, lawsuits, and current public lands projects, including:

Umatilla National Forest:

Heppner Ranger District: Wildcat timber sale, West End OHVs.

North Fork John Day Ranger District: Farley timber sale.

Walla Walla Ranger District - Oregon portion: Loon "Fuels Reduction" & Cobbler timber sales.

Malheur NF:

Blue Mountains Ranger District: Blue Mountains Forest Partners (BMFP) - Damon Scotty Restoration Projects, Starr HFRA, Thorn EIS postfire timber sale.

Prairie City Ranger District: Blue Mountains Forest Partners - Dads Creek Restoration Project, Crawford, Big Creek Aspen, Canyon Creek, 16 Road, Dans Creek Blowdown, & Knox timber sales.

Emigrant Creek Ranger District: Egly postfire timber sale, Oregon Solutions/Harney County group, Black Rock.

Ochoco NF:

Lookout Mountain Ranger District: East & West Maurys, Spears, & Harvey Gap timber sales, McKay OHV closure, Snowshoe Fuels, Maury Mountains Grazing.

Paulina Ranger District: Willow Pine & Beaver Creek timber sales.

Deschutes National Forest:

Sisters Ranger District: Black Crater Fire, GW Fire, Sisters Area Fuels Reduction Project, & Three Creeks timber sales, Glaze Meadows restoration project, Whychus Creek Wild & Scenic River.

Bend/Ft. Rock Ranger District: Lava Cast, Snow Fuels, South Bend and Sunriver, West Tumbull "Fuels Reduction" timber sales, Anne's Butte OHVs, Oz Research Logging Project.

Crescent Ranger District: Five Buttes & BLT timber sales.

Additional Deschutes/Ochoco projects include developing area OHV/Travel Management Plans.

Central Oregon BLM: La Pine HFRA, Newberry Geothermal Exploration Project, John Day Resource Management Plan, OHVs/Travel Management Plans.

Other regional public lands projects include: volunteer efforts addressing livestock grazing, invasive plant management, and travel management plans/OHVs, on public lands throughout the region.

Winema & Fremont National Forests/Lakeview BLM: lack of volunteers and limited resources continues to hamper effectively addressing conservation efforts - volunteers are still very needed and very much appreciated in these areas.

Wallow-Whitman National Forest: Allied Hells Canyon Preservation Council helps cover conservation issues and agency projects in this area. It would be very helpful to bring the area's Sierra Club members together into a local volunteer "friends of the forest" group, here and elsewhere, assisting conservation efforts and surveying/monitoring agency actions.

Many thanks for your continued interest, membership, and involvement; helping protect the natural heritage of our region for those here today, and the generations yet to be.

County Hearing to Decide on Destination Resort Adjacent to Whychus Creek

by Merry Ann Moore

Career county planners say it's a non-starter. The County Planning Commission voted resoundingly to reject the proposal. Deschutes County's lawyer and the state Department of Land Conservation and Development say it would violate local and state planning law. Now a September 17 hearing before the county Board of Commissioners will determine whether to give the green light to convert a housing subdivision in rural Sisters to a resort.

Developers of Aspen Lakes Golf Estates may be the first in the state to attempt to convert an existing golf course gated community to a destination resort. To get the go-ahead, they need to persuade two of three county commissioners that text amendment 07-7—a change to county planning guidelines written by the developer specifically to open a back door for this project—would be legal, good policy, a fair deal for the public, and benign to natural resources.

The development plan would have serious ramifications for land use policy and Whychus Creek's fragile natural resources. First, a "yes" vote would be the latest example of granting "applicant-driven" exceptions to county zoning, rather than firmly applying established laws to all development. The proposal violates Deschutes County Code, which states, "It is not the intent of DCC 18.113 to site developments that are in effect rural subdivisions, whose primary purpose is to serve full time residents of the area." The

text amendment also conflicts with DCC Title 18, which requires overnight lodging to be built "prior to closure of sales, rental or lease of any residential dwellings or lots." Aspen Lakes has already sold in excess of 115 lots, and many homes have been built. Allowing the text amendment would therefore create a precedent for subdivisions with no existing overnight lodging to convert to resorts. It would also allow a developer to build on open space previously set aside as a requirement

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for an earlier residential development, which is now built out.

And the environmental consequences are grave. The preliminary resort plan would quintuple the number of housing units at the existing subdivision, with an additional 300 private home sites, 100 detached central units, a 150-room hotel and several artificial lakes. It would add the equivalent of a new city with roughly the population of Sisters a few miles outside the town, in an area zoned rural residential.

A resort in this location would likely violate state planning guidelines by resulting in a net loss of habitat for native fish, and by exceeding the carrying capacity of local resources. The Aspen Lakes resort footprint would come within .16 miles of Whychus Creek, where steelhead trout (a federally-listed threatened fish species) and Chinook salmon were reintroduced in 2007 and 2008. The source of water for the hundreds of new housing and lodging units proposed will be the aquifer which recharges Whychus Creek, a federally-designated Wild & Scenic River upstream. Whychus Creek has been identified by local, state, and federal entities as a priority watershed within the Deschutes Basin. The reach adjacent to the proposed resort is state-listed as impaired, and temperatures are too warm NOW to support anadromous steelhead and Chinook populations. It's logical that any additional impairments—such as reduced in-stream flow or higher temperatures—will mean failure of reintroduction efforts.

Camp Polk Meadow is also located in close proximity to the Aspen Lakes resort site. It contains 1.4 miles of Whychus, a section that fish biologists say is one-third of the available spawning and rearing habitat in the upper Deschutes basin. A U.S. Forest Service watershed analysis says this reach of Whychus is "almost unique in its combination of gravel for spawning, room for the stream to slow and meander, and natural springs that refresh the stream."¹ The effects of extensive groundwater pumping to meet the needs of the resort are unknown, but detriment to these springs could damage efforts to keep creek surface water cold enough to support new fish.

Newly-reestablished native, anadromous fish populations are unlikely to survive other, additional habitat stresses which would come with large-scale development near Whychus: increased access to fragile riparian areas by new residents, anglers and recreational visitors...storm-water runoff from more streets, parking lots, rooftops, lawns and golf course acreage, resulting in pollutants such as oil and grease, sediment, pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers, bacteria and heavy metals finding their way downhill into the creek...erosion from construction activity resulting in the downstream sedimentation of fish habitat.

And current mitigation practices may be insufficient to assure that Whychus fish and fish habitat will really be protected. "Under Oregon Water Resources Department mitigation rules, cold springs that feed waterways could actually legally be dried up," environmental attorney Paul Dewey has noted. An OWRD report² this year states it will be difficult to mitigate

groundwater withdrawals near Whychus Creek. And the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife has acknowledged there has been a net loss of fish and wildlife habitat from all destination resorts in the state, in part due to lack of follow-through by developers in their mitigation plans.

Those are only the beginning of the many concerns raised by the project:

(1) The effect of large-volume groundwater pumping on existing residents' wells is a real issue, especially considering potential drought effects from a changing climate. The U.S. Geological Survey is currently doing a study of dropping well levels in the Deschutes basin and OWRD and USGS are studying cold water springs.

(2) The Aspen Lakes resort would be sited on and adjacent to big game habitat, including winter range for mule deer. Elk, mountain lions and coyotes are known to inhabit the area, and many animals cross Camp Polk Road land where resort housing would go. Bald and golden eagles have nested within 1.5 miles of the planned resort. Marmots live in the canyon walls bordering Whychus across from the resort site, and badger holes are located in meadows there.

(3) The area may be in a resort exclusion zone, because it is situated within three miles of high-value crop farming operations.

(4) No adequate study has been done of basin-wide cumulative impacts on water supply of the more than one dozen destination resorts in the pipeline in our region.

(5) Resorts shift substantial costs to the public and municipalities by being sited outside urban growth boundaries, or causing impacts across county lines. For example, the city of Redmond requested that Crook County help with road improvements related to the added traffic the city expects once three or four new resorts near Powell Butte are built. Their request was denied, and the cost—an estimated \$750,000—will likely fall on either Deschutes County or Redmond taxpayers. The single county road serving the proposed Sisters resort is Camp Polk Road, which would need costly improvements to its sharp curves, narrow bridge over Whychus Creek and steep grades to safely accommodate the traffic of a new "city" at Aspen Lakes.

There has been no objective economic analysis of these and other costs the county will bear as over one dozen planned Central Oregon resorts come on line. How much revenue does road cycling tourism on rural roads bring to the county? Will cyclists stay away if these roadways become dangerously crowded? Will there be revenue losses from reduced fishing, hunting and birding tourism? What are the added pollution control costs of managing storm-water runoff in such widely dispersed population centers? What are the additional public health costs we can expect as a result of air pollution from sprawl development? What is the value of a nighttime sky that is visibly filled with stars and owls?

JUNIPER GROUP LEADERSHIP DIRECTORY

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The Juniper Group Sierra Club is one of five regional groups of the Oregon Chapter of the Sierra Club. The Sierra Club, originally formed by John Muir in 1892, now contains 65 Chapters nationwide. Its purpose: To restore the quality of the natural environment and to maintain the integrity of ecosystems; to educate the public to the need to understand and support these objectives; and to study, explore a the wildlands.

JUNIPER GROUP CONTACT INFORMATION

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<http://oregon.sierraclub.org/groups/index.asp>

UPCOMING EVENTS AND PROGRAM NIGHTS

Juniper Group Program Nights take place on the Second Tuesday of the months February, March, April, October, November, and December at the Central Oregon Environmental Center, starting with food, beverages and social time at 6:30; programs starting at 7:00. Program Nights are free and open to the public, you do not need to be a Sierra Club member to attend. Our next program night is planned for October 14th. For more information please contact Gretchen Valido at 541-389-0785, gvalido@yahoo.com.

Sunday, Sept. 7 - Juniper Group Picnic, 2:00 pm - Bring the family to a fun Sunday afternoon picnic at Shevlin Park. Enter the south entrance and meet in the picnic area. Bring your own meal and a dessert to share. Juniper Group will provide cookies.
Tuesday, October 14, Recreational Needs and Threats to Public Lands
Central Oregon Environmental Center 16NW Kansas (at Lava St.) Bend
Speaker and topic details to be announced in the monthly email newsletter and elsewhere in public media. The November and December dates have not yet been set. December will be the annual Juniper Group Holiday party.

JUNIPER GROUP OUTINGS

For all hikes, wear comfortable broken in boots, and clothing appropriate to weather conditions. Bring plenty of water and your lunch. We meet at a designated location and voluntarily carpool to the trailhead. Our trip officially starts at the trailhead. Call leader Alison Hamway 382-2035 for meeting location and to confirm attendance. No dogs.

Saturday, September 6, Devils Lake to Wickiup Plain Loop Hike

Meet 9:00 a.m. Loop hike in Cascades; from Devils Lake across Wickiup plain to Le Conte Crater and back down the South Sister Trail (possible side trip to Moraine Lake); approx 9 miles, more elevation gain, difficult.

Saturday, September 27, Clear Lake Loop Hike

Meet 9:00 a.m. Clear Lake Loop; hike goes by source of MacKenzie River. If we are lucky we may see great fall color. Approx 7 miles;relatively level, easy/moderate.

Saturday, October 25, Flatiron Rock in the Badlands

Meet 9:00 a.m. Approx 6 miles, easy.

What You Can Do

Development proposals in Deschutes County become very difficult to stop once they have the approval of the Board of Commissioners. Now is the time to act! Attend the public meeting, Thurs., Sept. 17, 5:30 p.m., in the Barnes and Sawyer Room (1st floor), County & State Offices building, 1300 NW Wall, Bend and tell the commissioners your concerns in person. Wear blue, the color of our waterways!

If you cannot attend, write to the three commissioners and

1. Urge a no vote on TA-07-7;
2. Request that lands within three miles of Whychus Creek be removed from the destination resort overlap map during the upcoming county Comprehensive Plan revision. (Deschutes County is beginning a multi-year process to update its Comprehensive Plan, a document that guides development in the region.);
3. And urge commissioners to put a moratorium on approval of any new resorts until after the state legislature has a chance to

address critical reforms in early 2009. Major reforms for destination resort requirements have been recommended by both the Dept. of Land Conservation & Development and OR Fish & Wildlife for the upcoming session.

Letters: Tammy Melton, Dennis Luke, Mike Daly, Deschutes County Board of Commissioners, 1300 NW Wall St., Bend, OR 97701-1960
Email: board@deschutes.org

Related link:

Summary of public comments & county process on Aspen Lakes resort TA-07-7
<http://www.deschutes.org/index.cfm?objectid=6027E131-BDBD-57C1-9D5E8BB775344A07>

Footnotes:

¹Biography of a Place
by Martin Winch, 2006, p. 215.
² Deschutes Ground Water Mitigation Program, Five-Year Program Evaluation Report (February 29, 2008)
³ Memo from Bob Rindy, Dept. of Land Conservation & Development to the Land Conservation & Development Commission, 3/6/07

Update on Invasive Plants in Oregon Wilderness

by Fred Tanis

The invasion of Eurasian weeds in Eastern Oregon is extensive and weeds are now beginning to appear in our wilderness. If unabated weeds may ultimately change wilderness diversity and function. We cannot afford to lose this battle and so far weeds are still gaining ground. Much of the public seems to be complacent when it comes to dealing with weed problems. As in their own backyards they see the problem as non-threatening and controllable. Not until you enter the battle trenches with expert botanists and come to know more about this menace do you realize the magnitude of the problem and how ineffective our efforts are even when we apply chemicals and biological controls. Weeds have all sorts of survival and battle gear. Enormous seed heads, multi-year seed banks, deep tap-roots, and rhizomes to help assure a vigorous regeneration. In Oregon time lost without effective abatement is our enemy. Travel to Grant and Wheeler Counties along HWY 26 and see for yourself the outcomes from county weed control programs that are slow to take action and fail to educate ranchers who let the invasion continue unabated.

The Forest Service is slow to fight invasive weeds in wilderness and elsewhere on National Forest lands. They are understaffed and hampered by reliance on old marginally effective chemical and bio-controls permitted under early approved weed control measures. The Forest Service Region 6 decision in 2005 allows National Forest weed managers to use new but possibly harmful methods to control weeds on all forest lands including

wilderness. A plan must be developed within each National Forest to treat specific weed sites with the minimum harm to the environment. Most National Forests on the eastside have now developed site inventories and plans in the last two years to use all newly developed and approved herbicide chemicals and biological control methods. These National Forest weed control plans are now working their way through the NEPA EIS process. If you talk with forest service staff they don't want to apply herbicides in the wilderness but may have no choice. Some invasive weeds just don't respond to pulling. The Forest Service plans generally describe a fifteen year weed reduction program. In many cases total eradication is not feasible so the objective becomes control with minimum maintenance. The Forest Service is planning to use mostly chemical and biological methods. There is a pathetic small portion of sites identified in their plans where mechanical or manual methods will be used. The Forest Service talks about more public involvement but has done little thus far to make it a significant part of their plans. Change in these plans is essential if the Forest Service is to have a successful weed control strategy.

Manual methods should be given priority and staffed by volunteers, especially in wilderness areas. Any herbicide application should emphasize wicking and spot spraying as the most effective methods for preventing impacts on non-target native plants, water, wildlife, and soils. Boom broadcast and aerial spraying are the most

indiscriminate methods and should not be used on Forest Service lands and especially in the wilderness.

Our best opportunity to control weeds is at wilderness these entry points. Certified weed free hay is required for pack animals in the wilderness. It will soon be a requirement for use of stock on all Forest Service lands. These prevention steps are a good start and preventative measures should be expanded and emphasized is any long term plan to control invasive plants entering and spreading in the National Forest.

To minimize the use of chemical herbicides at wilderness sites more public involvement is needed leading to self-regulation and community weed control activities. The Forest Service and BLM land agencies need to promote community education and engage the public to take part in controlling weeds in the wilderness and heavily used forest areas.

Currently many environmentalists are strongly objecting to use of chemical herbicides largely because the Forest Service has failed to properly demonstrate the effectiveness of these herbicides and has not fully assessed the near and long-term ecological impacts. The quality assurance on effectiveness and potential harms comes from the underlying research expertise resident at Forest Service and agricultural research laboratories. I remain suspect of these new chemicals and bio-controls and cannot support the general use of these methods in our Oregon



Scotch Thistle, Grant County

wilderness. We need clear guidance on toxic herbicides that have real danger to the ecosystem and those that can be applied safely with minimal ecological impact. Without guidance we can do nothing but object to all plans that use herbicides. Stalling the weed control projects because of general concerns does little to help find a resolution and may ultimately make the control project more difficult. There is no best solution to the wilderness weed problem. We cannot expect the Forest Service to hand us one rather we must work together to find one that is comprehensive and acceptable to both sides.

Juniper Group members and volunteers from the Hells Canyon Preservation Council have recently been conducting wilderness weed surveys and weed pulls with the Forest Service weed managers at trailhead parking lots and along nearby trails. If you would like to volunteer to help with these activities please contact Fred Tanis, 541-385-3144, tanisfred@hotmail.com.

Local Election Endorsements

by Gretchen Valido

If Election Season hasn't gripped you in the past, it probably has this year. Could the stakes be any higher? Here are the Sierra Club's picks for November's ballot.

Deschutes County Commissioner – Alan Unger (D)

District 53 State Representative – Conrad Ruel (D), Sunriver, Redmond, Tumalo, Sisters

District 54 State Representative – Judy Stiegler (D), city of Bend

District 59 State Representative – Mike Ahern (D), Jefferson, Wasco, Wheeler, Sherman, Gilliam Counties

District 27 State Senator – Maren Lundgren (D), Redmond, Bend, Sisters

Oregon Secretary of State – Kate Brown (D)

Oregon Treasurer – Ben Westlund (D)

Oregon Attorney General – John Kroger (D)

Oregon Commissioner of Labor & Industry – Brad Avakian (D)

U.S. Senator – Jeff Merkley (D)

President – Barack Obama

There are two candidates running in Congressional District 2 who are stronger choices than Greg Walden on sound environmental, energy, war and healthcare policies whose views on legislation are people driven, not corporate driven. They are Noah Lemus (D) and Tristin Mock (Green). Take a look at what they have to offer.

You'll have an opportunity to speak directly with some of these local candidates at our Member Picnic on September 7th at 2:00 in Shevlin Park (south entrance). Bring food for your family and a dessert to share—barbecue available. Chairs or a blanket to sit on are a good idea.

These are solid, well-qualified, energetic candidates—please vote in November! For a better direction, for thoughtful decisions! The Juniper Group Political Committee invites you to help them work for our candidates and for current issues such as Enough Destination Resorts Already. Contact Gretchen Valido at junipecgrp@yahoo.com.

Adopt-A-Forest

by Gretchen Valido

You recycle your plastic and newspapers. You minimize driving. You bring reusable bags to the grocery store. Good job! Now here's another right-thing-to-do that can make a life-spanning contribution to our planet's health. The Juniper Group has partnered with the Adopt-A-Forest program to make it possible for every one of us to proactively tackle climate change... by planting and growing trees!

Incredibly, the loss of natural forests around the world contributes more to greenhouse gases than the transportation sector. In addition to regular timber harvests, millions of acres of forests are taken out of production every year, cut down by wildfire, disease, development and global warming. Every person in this country on average consumes in paper and wood products the equivalent of one old-growth tree, year after year.

With the Adopt-A-Forest program, we can start replacing the trees we've been consuming. Order a native tree seedling and you'll receive a Certificate of Ownership for it. Then your tree is fed, watered and protected by Adopt-A-Forest for a year to give it a better chance of survival, to eventually become an old-growth giant.



At the end of the growing period (12 to 18 months depending on optimum planting conditions) you'll receive your tree and can start your own forest. OR you may dedicate your tree to local conservation, forest and watershed restoration planting projects, and it will be planted for you. Each tree absolutely makes a difference and that's why your participation is important!

Trees cost \$5 each, and you can choose a Ponderosa Pine, Aspen, Alder or Cottonwood tree. It's Juniper Group's goal to adopt 1,000 trees and to have as many of you and your friends participate as possible. Please, join our effort to reach that goal! Send a check payable to Adopt-A-Forest, using the Order Form below. We'll send you a Certificate of Ownership, and contact you again a few weeks before the tree is ready to plant. Why not get a tree for each family member? Order Forms are available on our website, too, at <http://oregon.sierraclub.org/groups/juniper/index.asp>. Adopt-A-Forest is easy, and it's the right thing to do!

Wildlife and Environment Never Benefit by Increased Exposure to Humans

by Roberta Vandehey

With a total of 458 miles of road within the 91,000-acre West End of the Heppner Ranger District of the Umatilla National Forest, there are far too many roads. We do not need a new one! Wheeler County, in partnership with the Umatilla National Forest, Heppner Ranger District, is four years into an attempt to build a new access road into the Umatilla National Forest, a road that is about a mile from another well-maintained county road access. This new Notch Road, a purported "historical" logging road, represents a totally redundant new entry into the National Forest. Initially built, maintained and used by the Kinzua Logging Company until about 25 or 30 years ago, after which it was abandoned. The road soon became unusable because of its steep and erodable grade (see photo #1 below).

Because of its proximity to a 1904 survey for a county road, Wheeler County claimed ownership of the old roadbed through what they called a legalization process in 2007. The old logging road does not coincide with the survey, but is close in some places. This new Notch Road duplicates and parallels a second, well-maintained, well contoured Wheeler County Road known as Williams Lane. Williams Lane is located only about a mile to the East of Notch Road and goes to the same place. They both go to Forest Road 025. Notch Road is longer than Williams Lane, has a steep contour that gains 1400 feet in about 4.75 miles while Williams Lane gains 800 feet in about 4.5 miles. Notch Road tops out at about 4,600 feet, as compared to Williams Lane at 4,000 feet. This allows year round use of Williams lane, while Notch Road is sometimes buried under 5 or 6 feet of snow in the winter.

In Wheeler County with a population of only 1500 people, roads are few and far between. Correspondingly, no two Forest accesses should ever be only a mile apart.

Roads that are not needed and pose a threat to the forest, should not be built into the forest. Title II funds should not be dedicated to encourage the building of such roads. Notch Road cuts through the pristine, heretofore roadless headwaters of Alder Creek, a protected steelhead-spawning stream. The harm caused thus far by the attempted construction of Notch Road, including the blockage of salmonid fish passage and sedimentation to a 303(d) listed salmonid waterway are inestimable (see photo #2 below).

If completed, Notch Road will be a "high-maintenance" environmental nightmare. The county indicates already that they cannot afford to maintain the roads that they have, so Notch Road will become a long-term, unmaintained environmental threat.

Wheeler County's Notch Road is already in non-compliance with the Oregon Department of State Lands and the Army Corp of Engineers for failed culverts, wetland violations, lack of flood control, silt-loading of wetlands and waterways, and fish blockage. The DEQ has yet to assess damages. Damages are currently being assessed by those agencies and are not yet available.

Heppner Ranger District of the Umatilla National Forest has aided and supported this negatively impactful project since 2004, when it sponsored an application to RAC for \$68,823 to assist Wheeler County in its proposal to build and open a new road into the Umatilla National Forest. The Title II grant application was submitted to use the grant money for the placement of USFS rock on the "New" Notch Road that Wheeler County proposed to build to connect private land to the USFS Road 040. The Title II Grant application errantly indicated that the county road already existed, which it did not and still does not. Contractually

that road was to be completed by late 2005, which it still is not. First off, the old roadbed referenced in the grant application was not a legal county road and it had been impassable for 25 or 30 years. To date, that road still remains impassable to even ATV's due to failed culverts, wash-outs, hazardous grades, etc., that happened soon after the road construction in late 2007. (See Photo # 3 below)

The "county" road that Wheeler County "claimed", was in fact only the remnants of a road that had been merely a private logging road through private land and had never been touched by county equipment. The road was impassable and had been so for 25 or 30 years. The 20 year-old Ponderosa pines growing in the old roadbed testified to the road's successful attempt to heal during the restful years of non-use. Now, those testimonials have been shoved out by the county, along with all other vegetation, leaving a gaping wound in a highly erodable area along Alder Creek, a steelhead spawning, protected stream. With all vegetation removed, no ditches, floodwater control, or proper culverts, the road is just one huge ditch that is and will continue to load tons of mud into the adjacent streams and wetlands.

The Notch Road is now purported to be seasonal (un-enforceable) and limited to 4-wheel drive trucks only. Sadly it has already been incorporated into the Umatilla National Forest's West End ORV Proposal, so is highly favored by 4-wheelers. With the 458 miles of road within this 91,000-acre West End of Heppner Ranger District, most of which ORV's can currently travel, plus miles of dedicated trails, Notch Road need not be added to the list. These are highly destructive and intrusive types of roads that lend themselves to poaching, fire and other unpreventable Forest damages. As such,

these roads should be aggressively opposed for the protection of our National Forest and its inhabitants. Notch Road construction should be halted and the land returned to nature.

This Title II sponsored "new" access into our Umatilla National Forest, will introduce poaching, fires, vandalism, stream- and watershed-degradation, habitat loss, wildlife harassment and relocation, as well as fisheries issues to the Forest. If this new access road is allowed to be completed, it will set a dangerous precedent for other counties to push through similar damaging access roads into our national forests, thus overloading the Forests with unacceptable levels of human intrusions. This Notch Road Project still can and should be stopped.

The private landowners have petitioned the County to return the roadway to private ownership. Those private landowners would assist in repairing road construction damages and have offered easements for fire and emergency vehicular access. The \$63,317 in Title II funds that were granted to Wheeler County are supposed to be dedicated by definition to the improvement of the environment, protection of streams, watersheds, and habitats. Sadly, those funds are, in reality, being misdirected to encourage and aid a misrepresented project that endangers the very resources those funds are supposed to protect.

Such an unprecedented use of Title II funds, if it is allowed to happen, might encourage other counties to initiate similar detrimental new roads into our National Forests, using Title II funds. This needs to be stopped. **Wildlife and Environment is never benefited by increased exposure to humans.**



PHOTO #1: Eroded logging road before being "legalized" in 2007 by Wheeler County as a county road.



PHOTO #2: Fish Blockage of Alder Creek at 1st culvert on "New" Notch Road.



PHOTO #3: Winter wash-out of 2nd Notch Road culvert shortly after installation in fall of 2007.