

## Legislature OKs Priest Basin Water Bills

**D**ESPITE a sluggish overall performance by the Idaho Legisla-

ture this year, the 1991 session churned out two new laws aimed at protecting waterways in the Priest Basin.

One, Senate Bill No. 1009, was an unqualified success for the Basin because it approved the Priest River Basin component of the Comprehensive State Water Plan.

The second, House Bill No. 319, which directs the Department of Health

### River, lake studies approved

and Welfare to conduct a water quality study of Priest Lake and subsequently write a management plan for the lake, was a less clear-cut victory for the Basin environment. Although the Legislature approved the bill, it appropriated no money for the study and management plan. Furthermore, House Bill 319 came about only after the Health and Welfare Board declined to recommend that the

lake be granted "Outstanding Resource Water" protection and instead offered the proposal for a lake study and management plan.

Nonetheless, SPBA Chairman Bruce Brockway said both bills are a step forward for water quality in the Basin.

Here is a look at these two bills:

- **The Priest River Basin** component of the Comprehensive State Water Plan provides varying types of protection for

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### EPITAPH FOR A PRIEST LAKE LEGEND

## Dolly Varden is Virtually Extinct

**T**HEY probably swam into the Upper Columbia Basin from primeval oceans a million years ago.

Over the millennia they adapted to the clear waters of Priest Lake, and became a brilliant symbol of the Basin's pure water.

They were food for eagles, bears, ospreys and Indians. And later, they became a prized game fish for white men, offering the finest in recreational fishing.

Now they are probably gone — extinct.

They are—or were—the bull trout of the lower lake, Priest Lake's Dolly Varden.

Asked by SPBA Director Dave Boswell if IDFG would disagree with

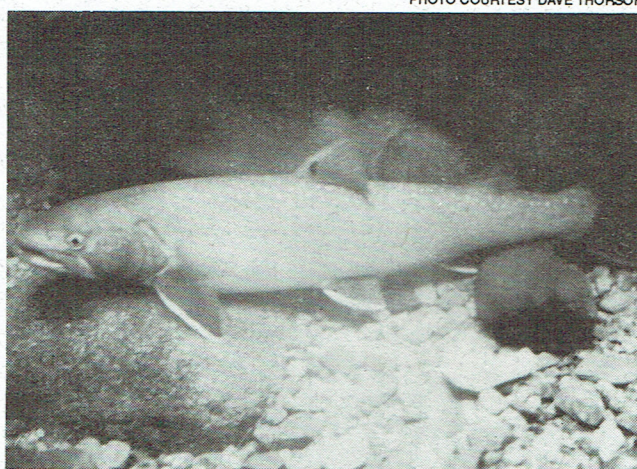


PHOTO COURTESY DAVE THORSON

**GOODBYE, DOLLY:** The dolly varden — more accurately known as the bull trout — is now gone from Priest Lake.

an article declaring the species extinct in Priest Lake, state biologist Ned Horner said simply, "No."

"They're essentially gone," he said.

Other biologists SPBA spoke with for this story were not certain the lake's bull trout are literally extinct but all agreed their existence was questionable. Their survival, if any still

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## SPBA Volunteers Scour Highway 57

**T**AKE 23 hard-working SPBA volunteers. Add two miles of litter along Highway 57. Mix in two hours of a sunny day in June, and what do you get?

A cleaner Highway 57, that's what.

Those were precisely the ingredients that went into SPBA's litter pickup June 9, as the group undertook its first-ever participation in the Idaho Adopt-A-Highway program.

SPBA Chairman Bruce Brockway initiated the group's participation when he applied to the Idaho Transportation Department to "adopt" two miles of

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### INSIDE

#### Calling All Volunteers

Chairman Brockway invites your participation. See his message, page 2. Also inside:

**4 Scholarship**  
SPBA awards its first annual scholarship

**5 Whitebark Woes**  
Denizen of Selkirk Mountains dying off in record numbers.



## Chairman's Message

# Give Back ... And Get a Map

**T**HIS COLUMN has traditionally been devoted to informing our membership of the multitude of environmental issues which keep us occupied. I want to depart from tradition a little this time around.

With this issue of *Sightlines* I want to send out an appeal for your help.

I want to invite each and every one of you, as SPBA members, to make a commitment to participation in our group's activities. We have a long list to choose from and I'm not asking for much—a few days a year will do if that's all you can give. But each of you has a demonstrated interest in our Basin and each of you, I know, has a talent or a skill to offer. We want to use it and the Basin needs it. We're going to build an army, and collectively, we're going to know every square inch of our Basin like we know our own backyards.

In return, you'll know the satisfaction of working with the most dedicated organization I've ever been involved with and you'll strengthen your understanding and appreciation for this beautiful and inspiring ecosystem. I guarantee you'll enrich a lot of lives in the process of giving.

And for each of you that respond to this call to action, we'll send a free Forest Service map of the Basin. The idea is that as you read future issues of *Sightlines*, the articles will stimulate and direct you to your map to better understand the ecology we're all working to protect.

The work to be done is varied. It could be as small as working to understand and protect the ecology of a pond or a stretch of stream. It could be as large as writing or researching histories of the entire Basin. It could be as simple as picking up litter for an hour or stuffing envelopes. Or it could be as technical as mapping lichen biomass areas, the rare mountain caribou's sole winter food.

In fact, the only limit is the imaginations, the skills and talents of our members. But each contribution is immeasurably important; it helps forge us into a cohesive unit dedicated to preserving the Basin's rare environmental heritage.

Here are some of the citizen volunteer programs we're currently pursuing:

**ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY.** The Association does a litter clean-up four times a year along a two-mile stretch of Highway 57. We just held our first-ever litter patrol. If you can volunteer for future clean-ups, call Chris Bessler at 208/263-3573.

**PRIEST LAKE MONITORS.** This group has been monitoring the lake for five years and it takes that long to determine lake water quality trends. We owe a great deal to Mr. R.G. Wright, an SPBA member and the director of this monitoring group. If you live at the lake or visit routinely, this activity can use your help for simple but extremely important water quality testing. The project provides data not even the state can afford to collect. It's all-volunteer and it's making a difference.

**ADOPT-A-STREAM.** The states of Washington and Idaho



have programs designed to fund projects which protect, enhance or restore streams. I have written to both states exploring the possibility of cooperating on a joint venture. The Adopt-a-Stream program can help clean up the water and restore fisheries habitat and its perfect for organized projects involving you. You favorite stream needs you for this program.

**STREAMWALK.** This program has been developed by the Environmental Protection Agency. Streamwalk is a stream corridor survey method designed for volunteers. It requires limited training and produces data useful at all levels — local, regional and national. EPA's objectives in developing Streamwalk are to 1) encourage citizen

commitment to protecting streams; 2) educate people about the relationship between streams and watersheds; 3) develop a screening tool to identify potential problem areas; 4) provide a standardized data collection method so trend comparisons can be made; 5) focus experts' limited resources on suspected problem areas. You might be able to help while you're taking that annual hiking trip into some of our backcountry streams or just enjoying a family picnic by the creek.

**MASTER WATERWATCHERS PROGRAM.** Currently, seven SPBA members are enrolled in this program which provides detailed information on water quality issues. The program provides excellent technical information; enrollees are required to give back 35 hours of their time each year to the program.

**ADOPT-A-WETLAND.** EPA has called for a goal of no net loss of wetlands throughout the country. Unfortunately, wetland preservation is still in its infancy. Federal, state and county agencies have just begun to agree on goals, taken steps to standardize data processing and develop volunteer programs. You can be in the forefront of protecting these valuable ecosystems and come to be an expert on the one (or more) of interest to you. And maybe it's in your backyard!

... And that's just the beginning. We can use volunteer help in many ways. Just write me with your interests and tell me the skills you can offer. Our newly formed standing committees are working on even more ambitious projects. We will have more information for you in the next issue of *Sightlines*.

In the meantime ... GET A MAP! Just write to tell what or where your interest is and how much time you think you can give. I'll send a map and add your name to our list of volunteers. My address is: Bruce Brockway, SPBA Chairman, HCR 5 Box 78, Priest River, ID 83856.

And let me welcome you, in advance, to the corps!

*Bruce Brockway*



## More Member Involvement Invited Committees Formed

**T**HE SPBA Board of Directors is streamlining the group's efficiency and paving the way for more effective member involvement with the creation of a number of new committees.

And the Board itself has undergone changes in recent months, as Director Kelly Corbin resigned his seat.

Corbin, who is a descendent of one of the first families at Priest Lake, announced his resignation in March, adding "I love the Priest Lake area, and will always be an active member of the SPBA." The Board gave Corbin "sincere thanks for the time and energy you have devoted to SPBA."

As *Sightlines* went to press, an appointment to his seat was pending.

Meanwhile, the Board has launched several new committees:

- **The Community Involvement Committee**, which aims at promoting quality of life in Priest Basin communities, is chaired by Director Kathy Sedlacek. The committee has already undertaken several major projects, among them creation of a scholarship fund, a litter cleanup and an excursion for elementary students (see stories).

- **The Water Quality Committee**, with goals of monitoring and enhancing the quality of Basin waterways, is chaired by longtime SPBA member Harry Batey. The committee expects to participate in creation of the Priest Lake management plan mandated by the Legislature. The committee also orga-

nized a raft trip for state officials down the Priest River, to familiarize them with river issues prior to a streamflow study that is to be undertaken this summer.

- **The Legal Committee** has held one organizational meeting as it prepares to undertake research into two pressing issues: A massive development at Priest Lake's Huckleberry Bay, and Idaho Department of Lands management practices in drainages on the east side of the Priest Basin. Currently, four attorneys are helping to develop the committee.

- **The Forestry Committee** is chaired by Director Barry Rosenberg and monitors Forest Service and Department of Lands activities within the Basin. Currently the committee is monitoring a cumulative effects study in the Trapper Creek drainage; the study was ordered after SPBA protested the Lower Green Bonnet timber sale, which the Association believes would endanger the westslope cutthroat habitat in the creek.

- **The Editorial Committee**, which creates *Sightlines* and executes publicity for the group, is headed in interim by Executive Director Chris Bessler. This committee's goal is simply to provide good communication within the Association and to the public at large.

The Board is considering formation of other committees. Any SPBA member who wants to play an active role in the Association is invited to apply for committee seats; call Chris Bessler for more information, at 208/263-3573. •

## Eurasian Milfoil Threatens Basin Lakes and Rivers

**A**N INSIDIOUS water weed called Eurasian milfoil is literally knocking on the door of the Priest Basin. The threat calls for constant vigilance from boaters using Basin waterways.

Eurasian milfoil is a non-native aquatic weed which grows in dense beds and chokes out native plants such as the northern milfoil. Once introduced into a river or lake, it forms thick mats that severely hamper swimming, boating and fishing, and invades spawning habitat.

And worst of all, there is no way to get rid of it.

Milfoil already flourishes in the Pend Oreille River downstream from Priest River. So far, however, the Albeni Falls Dam has served to block the spread of milfoil into the Pend Oreille and up the Priest River to Priest Lake.

That may prove only a temporary setback to the invader. Milfoil spreads by fragmenting, when a tiny piece broken off the plant forms roots and starts a new colony. One small fragment can multiply into 250 million new plants in a year.

Milfoil infestation usually occurs first at public boat ramps. Boats are the most common carriers of the weed; all it takes is one boat carrying a milfoil fragment from an infested area to begin a new colony elsewhere. Boaters are being asked to observe several precautions:

- ALWAYS remove plant fragments from your boat, propeller, motor, anchor and trailer before launching and after leaving the water.

- Dispose of plant fragments on high, dry ground.

- Clean fishing tackle and any other equipment which has touched weed beds.

- Be ESPECIALLY careful to clean your boat if you have used it in any areas of known infestation.

The Clark Fork Coalition is leading the fight against the milfoil infestation with its "Milfoil Watcher" program; for more information, call 208/263-0347. •



## Wanted: Auction Merchandise

**I**F YOU have high-quality merchandise you can't use but would like to put a good cause, give us a call.

That's because SPBA is collecting merchandise for the silent auction to be held at the Second Annual CeleBasin.

The CeleBasin — our yearly Celebration of the Basin — is set for Sept. 8 and promises an even better time than the big success of last year. It's a fun-packed day on Priest Lake, full of live entertainment, kids games, dancing, a barbecue and refreshments,

and the very popular silent auction. Last year's CeleBasin at Elkins Resort attracted 200 people and raised \$3,100.

The silent auction features new and high-quality goods. "Hot" items last year ran a gamut from golf clubs and framed art prints to computer programs, handworked wood pieces and dinners at local restaurants.

If you can make a donation to the silent auction, please call Gwen Knowles at 448-1443. We'll take it from there! •



# Water Bills

Continued from page 1

waterways within the 913-square-mile Basin. The plan classifies the Upper Priest River, Upper Priest Lake and the Thoroughfare as "state natural rivers," which prohibits construction of dams, dredging, streambed alteration and mineral extractment.

The plan also gives a less restrictive "recreational river" designation to the lower Priest River from the Priest Lake outlet to McAbee Falls, along with all or parts of Hughes Fork, Rock Creek, Lime Creek, Cedar Creek, Trapper Creek and Granite Creek. Under the recreational river designation, conditional streambed alterations are allowed, such as construction of bridges and culverts, installation of fisheries enhancement structures and construction of water diversion works.

Although the operation of the Priest Lake outlet structure in the past has focused on enhancing lake levels for recreational uses and providing hydroelectric power, the management plan mandates a study of alternatives for the structure that will also consider streamflows in the lower Priest — an important step toward rebuilding fisheries which may have been decimated in the river due to inadequate streamflows.

Cindy Robertson, a biologist with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, has already begun work on that study.

"It's time the needs of the lower Priest River ecosystem be given consideration," said Brockway. "Management of Priest Lake's outlet structure favors recreation on the lake at the expense of the lower Priest River streamflows. Hopefully, this study will tell us what we can do to enhance the river."

• **House Bill 319** came about after a turf battle between state agencies threatened to kill the Department of Health and Welfare's proposal for a lake study and management plan. After the proposal was effectively killed in the Senate, Rep. Jim Stoicheff, D-Sandpoint, resurrected it as House Bill 319.

The bill passed, but the Legislature, citing a downturn in revenues this year, failed to appropriate the almost \$900,000 that will be required for the three-year project. Now the Department of Health and Welfare will have to include the money as part of their budget to be

*Zeecha Berry receives first award*

## SPBA Creates Scholarship

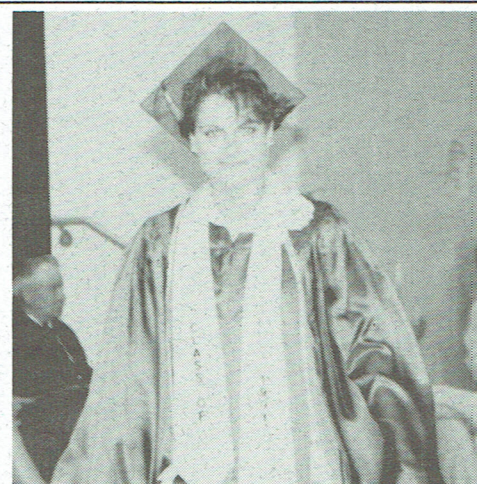
**T**HE Selkirk-Priest Basin Association is actively promoting excellence in education in the Priest Basin with the creation of an annual \$1,000 scholarship to a graduating Priest River Lamanna High School student.

And the first award has gone to Zeecha L. Berry, who was chosen from among eight applicants. Zeecha, who wants to study engineering and has been accepted to both Texas A&M and University of Idaho, is 1991 salutatorian and the daughter of SPBA members

Mike and Ellen Berry of Priest River.

The fact that Zeecha is the daughter of SPBA members was a stroke of coincidence, because the scholarship is aimed at helping any qualifying student and is awarded in a "blind selection" process in which a committee looks at applicants' qualifications but does not know their identity.

Students who seek the scholarship are asked to fill out an application and provide scholastic records. SPBA Directors who sit on the selection committee then review the applicants' college goals, academic achievement level, college aptitude test scores, history of extracurricular and community involvement, letters of recommenda-



**SCHOLAR:** Zeecha Berry on her big night as recipient of SPBA's first annual scholarship.

tion and statement of need.

The committee members then vote independently and without discussion. In Zeecha's case, she was chosen "by a large majority," said SPBA Director and Community Involvement Committee Chair Kathy Sedlacek.

The Board of Directors in April decided to create the scholarship in order to encourage students of the Priest Basin to further their education.

The Directors have created a special fund and are seeking donations dedicated to the annual scholarship. Anyone interested in donating is invited to write, or call Executive Director Chris Bessler at 208/263-3573. •

approved by the Legislature in 1992.

The proposal for a lake study and management plan comes about because Priest Lake last fall was nominated for "Outstanding Resource Water" designation. "ORW" gives the highest level of protection to water quality and prohibits activities which degrade the lake.

After holding a series of hearings around the state, however, the Health and Welfare Board declined to recommend the "ORW" status and instead offered the proposal for the lake study and plan. At that time, Board Chairman David Mead said once the lake study is completed "you could put in for an ORW anytime."

SPBA supported the ORW designa-

tion for the lake. Director Gordon West said that while the ORW designation was preferred, the lake study should provide important baseline data which will make it possible to measure water quality degradation in the future. "That's if it gets funded," he noted.

The Health and Welfare Board is forming a citizen advisory committee to oversee the study. Members of the 11-seat committee were being selected as *Sightlines* went to press. Board member Dr. Fred Marienau said the committee will begin immediately to lay the groundwork for the lake study.

The next issue of *Sightlines* will include a report on the new committee. •



# Linchpin Loose in High Selkirks

*Whitebark pine's decline threatens an entire ecosystem*

**T**HE whitebark pine, part of the "glue" that holds together high-elevation ecosystems throughout the western U.S., is dying off at alarming rates throughout its range — including the Selkirk Mountains.

In a report given last year at a symposium on whitebark pine, researchers said severe blister rust damage to whitebark pine had killed more than 90 percent of the trees in the Selkirks.

The report on the decline of the tree has prompted the SPBA to ask land managers within the Priest Basin to assess the risk to the tree here.

The whitebark pine is a linchpin in alpine ecosystems, and when it dies off a host of dependent plants and animals are affected. In but one example, the report noted that the drastic decline of the tree in the Selkirks "no doubt explains the absence of whitebark pine seed in bear scat in the Selkirks" — an indication that the demise of tree has affected the diet of bears.

Throughout the West the whitebark pine is apparently facing similar decline.

"It's the most dramatic change in an ecosystem I can think of," said Dick Krebill of the Forest Service's Intermountain Research Station.

His remarks were echoed by Glacier Park biologist Kate Kendall who said simply she was "shocked" at data showing 90 percent of the whitebark pine on the park's east side was dead or dying.

Their concerns reflect a fear that the entire high-mountain plant and animal community will suffer long term degradation with local extinctions if the species is lost.

The whitebark pine has evolved to become a cornerstone of the alpine ecosystem.

Its cone production is significantly higher than other pines and the seeds



U.S. FOREST SERVICE PHOTO

**HIGH TERRAIN ADHESIVE.** *The whitebark pine is credited with holding much of the high-elevation ecosystem together. Now it may be threatened with extinction within the Selkirks.*

contain high-quality, oil-rich proteins and carbohydrates. They are the preferred food source for a host of birds and mammals adapted to high-elevation forests—including both black and grizzly bears, whose mortality rates go up and who come into conflicts with humans more readily when whitebark cone production goes down.

Red squirrels exist almost exclusively on the pine's seeds when they are available.

And in a classic interdependent relationship, the Clark's Nutcracker buries whitebark pine seeds in caches many miles from where they were found. The nutcracker relies on the seeds to survive the winter; the whitebark relies on the nutcracker for seed dispersal.

But the whitebark's contribution to

the high-terrain ecosystem goes beyond a food source for wildlife.

The species is also credited with stabilizing snow, soil and rocks on steep slopes; providing hiding and thermal cover for wildlife; and it actually modifies the harsh alpine climate, allowing less hardy vegetation to establish.

What's causing the decline?

Biologists point the finger primarily at blister rust, mountain pine beetles and fire suppression, which allows other species to displace the whitebark.

But the Great Bear Foundation, a non-profit group which has petitioned the federal government for protection of the pine under the Endangered Species Act, has also suggested that the whitebark may be suffering from the effects of global warming and ozone depletion.

It compares the whitebark to the canary in the coal mine, saying the whitebark pine may be the first of the coniferous species to succumb to "forest dieback", the catas-

trophic death or northward migration of trees predicted by climatologists as a result of rising global temperatures.

"Dieback of loblolly pine occurs with a 12 percent increase in ultraviolet radiation (UVR) and for every 1 percent decrease in atmospheric ozone, UVR rises 2 percent," said Lance Olsen of the Foundation.

"We're already at 6-8 percent reduction in our ozone and the number is rising," he said. "We're already there and the ozone decrease we've experienced is the result of depletants put into the air 30-50 years ago; there's a delayed reaction."

SPBA Director Dave Boswell has asked Basin land managers for a status report on the whitebark pine of the Selkirks. •



# In the Wind ...

A compilation of the curious, the humorous, the noteworthy and other tidbits of interest.

## They're Back ... Maybe!

Keep your eyes (and ears) peeled for common loons at Priest Lake and Upper Priest Lake. According to USFS wildlife biologist Tim Layser, three pairs have been reported around the lake so far this year. The once-common diving birds with the hauntingly wild call all but disappeared in the 1960s but recent sightings at Ledgewood, Beaver Creek and the Upper Lake have renewed hope of the birds' return. The final event re-establishing loons' historical presence at the lake would be the confirmed discovery of a nesting pair. Keep your eyes (and ears) peeled.

## East Twin Island Donated To County — Sort Of

Two Tacoma men who own East Twin Island, the last privately owned island on Priest Lake, gifted it to Bonner County recently but when Plum Creek Timber Co. said \$30,000 was still outstanding on the mortgage the conveyance was forestalled. The gift would create a half million dollar tax writeoff for the owners and give a measure of protection to a suspected Indian burial site, if negotiations can remove the lien.

## Upper Priest Falls 1991: Are You Coming?

SPBA's annual overnight field trip to American Falls is scheduled for the weekend of June 29. The hike will follow the wild and scenic Upper Priest

River for 10 miles through, we believe, the largest remaining contiguous old growth cedar-hemlock stand in the United States. It's a chance to see, hear and feel first-hand the symphony of an ecosystem unchanged for millennia and will be guided by SPBA resource analysts. Members who want to make the trip are urged to book a reservation immediately. The trip is limited to the first 12 respondents and is free. Reservations and information can be obtained by calling Chairman Bruce Brockway at 208/448-1813.

## Lessee Payments Increased

The Idaho Land Board in early June rejected a recommendation that it dramatically increase rents paid for state-owned cottage sites on Priest Lake. The proposal would have more than doubled most annual lease payments; instead, the Board approved a 14.1 percent increase on the 1992 rental rates of leaseholders whose payments have already reached 2.5 percent of a 1987 appraised valuation of their lots. The Priest Lake Lessees Association strenuously opposed the big rate hike, warning it would simply price many longtime leaseholders off their lake-

side lots. However, Land Board members voted to obtain another lot appraisal to which future payments will be tied, and indicated there will likely be an upward adjustment.

## Geese Cooked

Four geese got cooked in May, when they were struck by lightning while flying through a hail storm. The phenomenon was witnessed by Mark Leiser, who lives in the West Settlement area of Priest River. Leiser told Idaho Conservation Officer Don Carr that he was watching the four fowl fly across a hay field when he suddenly saw them drop like stones from the sky. Although Leiser did not see an actual lightning bolt, Carr said his examination of the birds showed one had hole in its throat, with singed feathers and cooked flesh; the others were similarly cooked. Carr called the incident "bizarre."

## Poet Laureate

Remember John Miller, the Mead High School poet who penned "Hanna Flats" (see Sightlines Winter 1991), which won awards in an outdoor writing contest last December? Well, John has another laurel for his effort. "Hanna Flats" has won recognition from the national Outdoor Writers Association of America. Thanks, John, for showing how our remnant groves of ancient forest provide inspiration for generations of Americans—something lost to short-term economic interests every time one of the remaining few is cut down.

## Man Who Killed Selkirk Caribou Gets \$500 Penalty

**A**SAGLE man who shot an endangered Selkirk caribou last November forfeited a \$500 bond and will face no further penalties.

Although Charles Eugene McGuire, 32, faced maximum federal penalties of \$100,000 and a year in prison for killing an endangered species, officials cited "lots of extenuating circumstances" in agreeing to the light penalty.

McGuire claimed he shot the caribou

by accident when he was out shooting dogs that were chasing wildlife. "That story could not be refuted," said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Special Agent Dean Tresch. "There were dog tracks and he was given the benefit of the doubt.

"We would not have known of this caribou if he had not turned himself in," said Tresch. "We felt it was in the best interest of justice to handle it this way."

He said McGuire was very coopera-

tive and that the Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Attorney's office and Idaho Fish and Game Department all agreed to seek only the reduced penalty.

The caribou was killed off Wrenco Loop Road, about seven miles west of Sandpoint and at the far south of the herd's Selkirk Mountains range.

There are fewer than 60 caribou in the Selkirks, and several have been lost recently to predators and poachers. •



## Cleanup

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Highway 57, the main route from Priest River to Priest Lake. The SPBA has been assigned the stretch between mileposts 18.5 and 20.5 — that portion a mile on either side of the High Bridge which spans the Upper West Branch of the Priest River.

A sign marks the SPBA section of the highway, which the group will clean at least four times a year for two years.

The June 9 cleanup was the first since last winter's snows departed, and the SPBA litter patrol found a menagerie of items, including old anti-freeze and oil containers, tires, a broken nightstand, piece of carpeting and plenty of litter.

"This is a simple job the SPBA can do to improve the environment of the Basin



**LITTER PATROL:** Part of SPBA's Highway 57 cleanup crew posed with their litter June 9. More cleanups are planned.

and make it a nicer place," said Brockway. "Environmental excellence is not only about forestry or water quality issues, it is about things that make the Basin a better place to live."

The SPBA will prowl its two miles of highway at least two more times this summer, and more volunteers are welcome. To sign up, call Brockway at 448-1813 or Chris Bessler at 263-3573. •

## THE LETTER DROP

**Dolly Varden.** If you share SPBA's chagrin over the loss of Priest Lake's Dolly Varden and want managers to assure that its activities don't kill off other Priest Lake native fishes, like the rare adfluvial westslope cutthroat, write the Idaho Dept. of Lands (State Capital Bldg., Room 121, Boise, 83720), the U.S. Forest Service (1201 Ironwood Drive, Coeur d'Alene, 83814) and Idaho Fish and Game (600 South Walnut, Boise, 83707). Ask them for an explanation, request an end to the programs that caused their extinction, ask them their plans for restoration, and copy the letter to your state and federal delegates.

**Congressmen.** Idaho's congressmen are: Rep. Larry LaRocco, 1117 Longworth House Building, Washington, D.C. 20515; Sen. Larry Craig, 708 Senate Hart Building, Washington, D.C. 20510; and Sen. Steve Symms, 509 Senate Hart Building, Washington, D.C. 20510.

## Dolly Varden

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remain, is virtually impossible.

According to Ted Bjornn, fisheries professor at the University of Idaho who has researched the lake's bull trout for almost 40 years, the last spawning census produced only about six adults in one traditional westside spawning stream. That was three years ago.

"The way things are going, I don't see any way to reverse the decline," he said. "It might be an inaccuracy to say they're extinct right now but it's not an easily reversible situation."

Greg Mauser of IDFG, another fisheries biologist, wouldn't say outright the lake's Dolly Varden are extinct but he added, "I wouldn't contradict it either."

The Dolly Varden is etched in many Priest Lake families' memories. Even the earliest accounts of bull trout are stirring.

A.K. Klockmann, who chronicled life in the Upper Priest River country at the turn of the century, recounted in his diary the story of a giant Dolly Varden he caught at the American Falls. He estimated it was over six feet long.

"I have regreted ever since that we

did not take the time to have him stuffed. He would have been the largest and oldest specimen of his kind known to be in existence," Klockmann wrote.

The Dolly Varden were fall stream spawners but they were always selective about the streams they spawned in.

On the west side, Granite Creek was historically important spawning grounds for the Dolly. On the east side, Two Mouth, Lion Creek, Soldier Creek and Indian Creek were preferred streams. And many spawned in the Priest River.

The Dolly's demise is attributable to several causes.

Fisheries biologists have documented that the Dolly Varden is the trout (char) family's most "supersensitive" species when it comes to increased sedimentation from timber cutting practices.

Road building and clearcut logging caused the thin granitic soils around Priest Lake to erode, sending tons of fine silt into the spawning streams, where it clogged up the tiny spaces between the gravels in which the Dolly laid its eggs.

Overfishing may also have contributed to the Dolly's demise. Stories abound about poachers using pitchforks on the Dollies as they struggled upstream in

schools to their spawning sites.

And competition from introduced species such as mackinaw trout and the mysis shrimp also contributed. Biologists agree that too many species vying for the same niche in the lake's ecosystem helped force the native fish out.

With the Dolly now gone, SPBA officials are calling on state and federal land managers to recognize the consequences of past practices and to institute reforms to prevent the extinction of other native fishes like the westslope cutthroat, which faces the same fate unless a sustainable approach to timber cutting is adopted.

"The fate of the lake's Dolly Varden is compelling evidence man's interference has destroyed much of the ecology of our area," Director Bill Egolf, SPBA Wildlife Committee chairman, said.

"Species extinction is the end product of human indifference to the biological foundations of life. We've got to impress on those responsible for this tragedy that mankind has no goal which justifies the destruction of life of Earth," he said.

Egolf urged *Sightlines* readers to write state and federal officials with their views on the passing of Priest Lake's Dolly Varden. See *Letter Drop*, above. •



# Basin Students Get 'IMAXed'

**T**WENTY-ONE schoolchildren from Priest Lake Elementary School boarded the space shuttle May 23 and roared into orbit on a mission to study the effects of man-made pollution Earth.

Well, almost.

Actually, the students were guests of SPBA at Spokane's IMAX Theatre, where "The Blue Planet" is showing. The film is a dramatic documentation of man's gradual despoilation of his "only home." It was filmed largely from space and shown on a colossal 69 foot screen.

The students, between the "oohs and ahhs" of the spectacle, saw the deep blue color and richness of life on Earth contrasted with the lifeless black void of space just a few miles above the planet.

They learned the only thing separating the two is a fragile atmospheric blanket, some layers thinner than an inch, which is held together by the systems of life at work in the air, water, land, plants and animals on Earth.

Then they learned that man is destroying the system, link by link, yard by yard. And they vividly saw the destruction from space, on the ground and through high-tech computer imagery.

"It's bad," said fifth grader Benjamin Upchurch. "We burn an acre of rainforest every second."

Sixth grader Amber Slaven said she learned the Earth works like a system



**SPACE VOYAGERS.** Students and chaparones posed before seeing 'The Blue Planet' on their SPBA-sponsored trip.

and "we've hurt it really bad."

Fifth grader Kevin Behnke thinks people should take steps in their daily lives to stop the destruction. "We've polluted it and we have to stop," he said.

And sixth-grader Buck Samuel knows a way to start, saying "We can burn less carbon dioxide and get more exercise if we drive our cars less."

SPBA Director Kathy Sedlacek, chair of the Community Involvement Committee, organized the mission.

"This film has educational value beyond any available in any grade school in the country and we thought our community's children should see it," she said.

"Obviously, these kids have come away from the film with the lessons it communicated—we need to save the planet, and to do it we're going to have to start in our own homes, in our own jobs, in our own lives."

Sharon Bryson, Arly Sue Hagman, and Corran Rentfro chaperoned the trip. •

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SELKIRK-PRIEST BASIN ASSOCIATION  
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