



# SIGHT LINES

Summer 2007

## NEWSLETTER OF THE SELKIRK CONSERVATION ALLIANCE

### Myrtle Creek HFRA

By Liz Sedler, Forest Programs Director

*SCA, along with several other environmental organizations, has filed a formal "Objection" with the Forest Service regarding the Myrtle Creek Timber Sale. The proposal is to log over 2,086 acres in the Myrtle and Snow Creek watersheds south of Bonners Ferry under the guise of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act. The HFRA was passed by Congress in order to expedite fuel reduction logging projects on national forest lands. The Act eliminated certain elements required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), including the Appeals process, which was replaced by the Objection process, in order to speed things up and make it more difficult for conservationists to mount challenges to fuels reduction logging projects.*

In 2003 there was a major fire in Myrtle Creek, which is the municipal watershed for Bonners Ferry. The fire burned about 3600 acres and subsequent rains caused flooding that washed sediment into the creek, fouling the city's water for several weeks. This prompted local officials to encourage the Forest Service to design a major fuels reduction project in Myrtle Creek based on fears that the watershed is wildfire prone and that the town's drinking water source is therefore at risk.

A local collaborative group of various interests was formed to work with the FS in designing the timber sale. Environmental interests were invited and members of the local ICL chapter participated as well as representatives of The Lands Council, who attended some of the meetings. Unfortunately, and inexplicably, the fact that some of

the proposed timber sale units were located in the two Inventoried Roadless Areas that are within the project area was not disclosed until the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was published. Conservationists who had been participating in the "collaborative" process protested the withholding of this important information regarding the timber sale, to no avail.

Some of the roadless area units would be very heavily  
— continued on page 8



Waterfall on Two Mouth Creek • photo by Harly Drum



## SCA STAFF

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*Newsletter*

## A Message from the Executive Director — by Mark Sprengel

I've noticed over the years that most hikers seldom venture off-trail. This is unfortunate since I've found some of my most interesting hikes have been when I ventured off the beaten path. The waterfall pictured in this issue of SightLines for instance was discovered when a friend and I were bushwhacking in a remote area of the Selkirks well away from any established routes.

Another memorable experience occurred some time back when I was exploring in a remote area on the side of a mountain not far from where I live. The terrain was quite steep and I was trudging head-down up the mountain when I almost kicked an old white enamel cooking pot. This was surprising since I was quite a distance from any road or trail. The pot was obviously very old since it had moss growing on it and was deeply embedded in the surrounding soil and vegetation.

It wasn't long before I noticed other enamel pots and pans scattered among the pines. Some were gray, some blue, some white. Several were dented and rusted through where the enamel had chipped off. All had clearly reposed unmolested for many years.

My first thought was I must have stumbled into an old campsite though the amount of abandoned cookware seemed excessive for that purpose. Since the enamelware appeared to be scattered in a fan pattern, I headed uphill to the apex of the fan on a flat grassy bench. There was a small spring trickling across the bench and I followed it to its source on the side of the mountain. A peaceful and restful spot and easy to understand why someone would want to spend time there.

Surveying the site from above, I noticed an odd rectangular clump of brush and after kicking around in the thicket I booted an old iron double bedstead with elaborate wrought flowers and designs on it. A good size tree was growing through the badly twisted headboard and the foot was entangled in brush and vegetation. The mangled metal was obviously the result of exposure to a very hot fire sometime in the past. More exploration turned up a twin bedstead of similar design and then an old cast iron woodstove that lay broken in pieces and engulfed in vegetation. The mystery deepened.

Digging through the duff layer uncovered what I took to be the charcoal outline of an old cabin. After considering the situation, I guessed that the cabin had caught fire and the residents had tried to save their belongings by

— continued on next page

### SCA IS MOVING!

*As of June 25, the  
Selkirk Conservation Alliance  
will have moved to its new  
office in Sandpoint.*

#### NEW LOCATION:

*123 S. Third, Suite 20  
Sandpoint, Idaho 83864*

#### NEW PHONE NUMBER:

*208-265-9670*

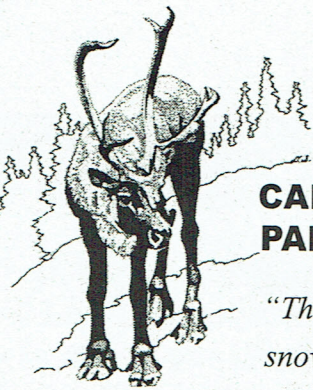
#### SAME MAILING ADDRESS:

*123 S. Third, Suite 20  
Priest River, Idaho 83856*



K. Drum





## CARIBOU LITIGATION PART II: VICTORY!

*"The court finds that  
snowmobiling in the vicinity  
of caribou . . . jeopardizes*

*the survival and recovery of the woodland  
caribou . . . Snowmobiling in prime winter  
habitat dislocates caribou from normal feeding  
in a time of nutritional deficit and contributes to  
their already depleted physical condition. The  
evidence clearly supports a finding that interaction  
between snowmobiles and caribou is harmful to the  
animals. At this population level, any harm even to  
a single animal could place the entire population in  
jeopardy."*

— Chief U.S. District Court Judge Robert H. Whaley

On February 26<sup>th</sup> of this year, Judge Whaley granted the Selkirk Conservation Alliance's, and our co-plaintiff's, claims under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and ordered an injunction precluding snowmobile activity in crucial winter habitat within the United States portion of the Woodland Caribou Recovery Area. The judge's order included additional snowmobile restrictions applied to an earlier injunction including allowances for a snowmobile-free caribou migration corridor south of the Canadian border to prime caribou winter habitat east of Priest Lake.

SCA won on two very important legal claims and these victories, coupled with strong precedential language in the order, will yield big dividends in the future as our struggle to protect caribou in the Selkirk Mountains continues.

Our court victory represents the fruit of over four years of work including a critically important aerial monitoring program that employed sophisticated high-resolution cameras and geographic positioning systems technology. Thanks to coordination from LightHawk, and volunteer pilot Dick Walker, SCA compiled scores of aerial photographs which provided irrefutable evidence of the

impacts of snowmobiles in the caribou recovery area.

With compelling written declarations and oral testimony on the stand, Keith Simpson and Jon Almack, two of the foremost woodland caribou research biologists in North America, buttressed our scientific claims while our attorneys, Laurie Rule and Mike Leahy, shredded the government's weak defense arguments.

As a follow-up to the litigation, the Forest Service is constructing a winter recreation strategy for the Selkirk Mountains. Preliminary information indicates that agency planners will once again try to circumvent the law and prioritize snowmobiling to the detriment of highly endangered mountain caribou. If so, SCA will be ready. ☹

Caribou and small graphics throughout newsletter were drawn by Deborah Stafford

### Director's Message — continued from page 2

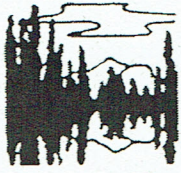
frantically pitching them out the door. Since none of the pots appeared to be distorted or damaged by intense heat, this seemed a reasonable guess.

But why were they just left there to molder among the trees? Someone had gone to a lot of trouble to haul in two iron beds, an iron cook stove, numerous pots and pans and presumably other household goods. There was no old skid trail or discernible pathway into the site and the surrounding terrain was very steep though at one time the trees were likely less dense and perhaps accessible by mules or horses.

Sitting in the grass, high on a mountainside overlooking a beautiful valley, I wondered why someone had gone to the trouble to build a cabin on this remote and almost inaccessible site. Who were they and what happened to them after the fire that burned down their cabin? I'll likely never have the answers but I'll always treasure the mystery.

There are often rich rewards for those who venture off the beaten path. Take the time to do a little exploring this summer. ☹





## PRIEST LAKE PROJECTS

### East Twin Island

#### Development Scheme; Round Two

The battle over tiny East Twin Island continues. In November, the Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) denied approval of owner/developer Jeff Weimer's application to install approximately 2,500 feet of carrier pipe with underwater sewer line and electrical and phone cables on the lakebed of Priest Lake. SCA vigorously opposed this scheme after reviewing documents obtained after filing Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests with several state and federal agencies.

Weimer's development proposal was criticized by the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, Idaho Department of Fish & Game and the US Army Corps of Engineers as well as numerous Priest Lake residents and others concerned about potential detrimental impacts to water quality.

After IDL rejected the application, Weimer, the owner of JD Lumber Company, filed for a reconsideration hearing which was held at IDL offices in Coeur d'Alene on March 30. SCA Executive Director Mark Sprengel attended the rehearing and spoke out against the proposal. After pointing out that Weimer submitted an altered proposal at the rehearing without advance notice to the public, SCA requested an extended comment period to allow interested parties an opportunity to review and comment on the changes. IDL's deciding officer agreed with our request and granted a 30 day comment period. SCA subsequently submitted additional written comments pointing out the technical flaws in the project design and emphasizing the proposal's noncompliance with Idaho Rules regarding encroachments upon or in navigable lakes.

As we go to press, IDL has yet to render a decision on Weimer's newest proposal.

## Highway 57 Clearing Proposal

*By Roberta Ulrich*

The Idaho Transportation Department, Priest Community Forest Connection and the Forest Service are discussing a proposal to clear trees and shrubs from the right-of-way on each side of Highway 57. The clearing was proposed as an effort to improve safety along the highway, the major route between Priest River and Priest Lake. No plan has been developed.

The State built and maintains the highway from about milepost 7 to its northern end under an easement from the Forest Service. In most areas the easement covers about 66 feet from the center line on both sides of the highway, but in some areas it is wider and in some narrower. The Forest Service retained only some requirements for erosion control to protect waterways and for retention of scenic values. Although the state generally controls the land in the right-of-way, the Forest Service owns the trees.

The discussions about the clearing proposal have considered cutting trees and shrubbery higher than two feet for about 25 feet from the edge of pavement on both sides of the highway. Outlining the proposal in its publication in April 2006, the Forest Connection said the clearing would alleviate safety problems such as trees falling across the road, especially, in winter, and wildlife and livestock emerging suddenly onto the road from heavy cover. The publication said that the heavy timber along the highway also keeps out sunlight and retards snow and ice melting in winter. Others have said the timber close to the highway would be a hazard if a major forest fire swept through the area because Highway 57 would be the main evacuation route.

The Forest Connection, a spin-off from the Priest River Development Commission, has taken over the Lakeface-Lamb Stewardship Project at Priest Lake from PRDC. As a 501-C organization the Connection is eligible to receive grants and is looking into such financing for the Highway project. The Connection also is investigating the possibility of obtaining Forest Service funding as a stewardship project or federal National Fire Plan money.



# Take A Hike!

The Selkirk Conservation Alliance is again offering a schedule of Summer Hikes in 2007.

Because of weather and/or other considerations, we suggest that you call SCA (208-265-9670) or email us at [sca@scawild.org](mailto:sca@scawild.org) Monday-Friday between 8:00am and 4:00pm to verify and enroll for each hike. You can also leave a message on our answering machine. This will also let us know how many hikers to expect.

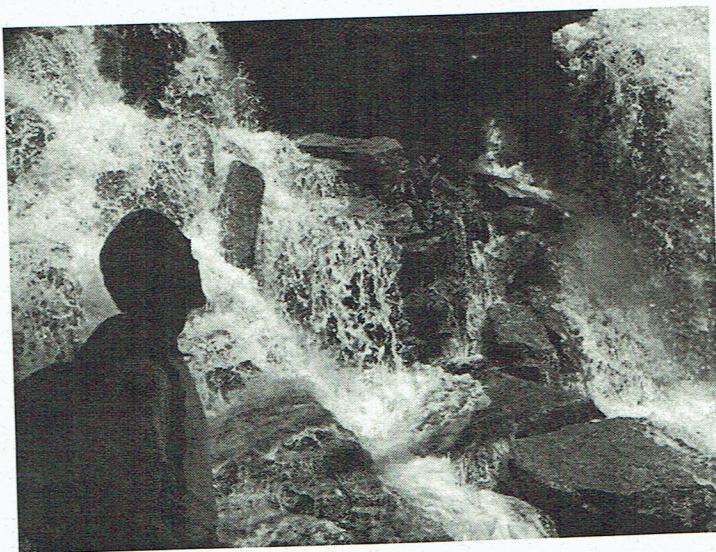
Date	Trail	Miles	Difficulty	Description/Attractions
7/14	The Mollies Lake Trail	5RT	Difficult	Mountain lake; fabulous views
7/21	Canoe/kayak trip #1	6RT	Moderate	Thorofare to Geisinger cmpgrnd on Upper Priest Lake
7/28	Beehive Lakes Trail	9RT	Difficult	Spectacularly beautiful mountain lakes; rugged peaks
8/04	Upper Pr. River Trail 308	11SH	Moderate	Old growth forest and a waterfall
8/11	Two Mouth Creek	5-12RT	Easy-diff	Scenic with old growth
8/18	The Wigwams	4RT	Difficult	High mountain views
9/1	Harrison Lake	4.6RT	Moderate	Mountain lake and rugged peaks
9/8	Canoe/kayak trip #2	6RT	Moderate	Thorofare to Geisinger cmpgrnd on Upper Priest Lake
9/15	Standard Lakes	9RT	Moderate	Mountain lakes and old growth
9/22	Lookout Mountain	6RT	Difficult	Spectacular views
9/29	Rockside Lion Creek	3.5RT	Easy	Cascading waterfall
10/06	Halliday Trail 522	8.4RT	Moderate	Beaver ponds, wetlands, wildlife

**Rendezvous at 8am** at the west end of Mitchell's grocery parking lot in Priest River. Mileage listed is round-trip or shuttle and hike back.

RT=Round Trip SH=Shuttle

## BE SURE TO BRING:

Extra clothing such as raingear and extra socks  
 Food – snacks and/or lunch  
 Water – canteen, water bottle, or other hydrating system  
 Bear spray (if you have it and are familiar with its use)  
 Sunglasses                      Camera  
 Sunblock                        First aid kit  
 Insect repellent                Toilet paper  
 Whistle                         Headgear; hat, visor . . .



Hiking around the waterfall on Two-Mouth Creek • H.Drum



## Grapes on Ferns?

By Robert Harwood

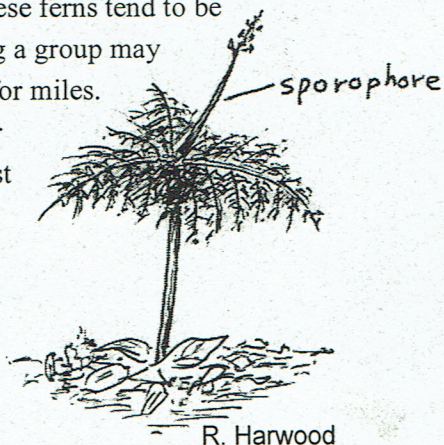
Most people know ferns are green to brownish plants with lacy or feathery leaves. They don't flower and produce seeds, rather the mature plants reproduce from tiny spores in little cases (sporangia) on the under side of leaves. The spores become wind-borne by their millions and a few germinate to develop in generally specific environments.

Now consider grape ferns which are rather rare or easily overlooked. The scientific name for the genus is *Botrychium*, derived from the Greek term *botrys* for grape. The plant structure reveals how they got their name. Their sporangia are in clusters (grapes) at the tip of a single stalk (sporophore) that rises above the plane of a single lacy leaf. In common grape ferns this leaf is generally bright green, large and roughly triangular, divided into leaflets with no sporangia on the under sides. These ferns appear in early summer and soon wither.

I'm aware of a group of some thirty grape ferns growing near the Thoroughfare, the channel connecting Priest and Upper Priest Lake. This placid waterway is favored by canoeists and kayakers seeking its forested serenity. Here there are photo opportunities to record moose, beavers, various water fowl, and more wildlife.

Now I propose a challenge to *SightLines* readers. The grape ferns I've found are about 8-14 inches tall. I've read that about 30 species of *Botrychium* exist in North America and about twice that number worldwide. Some have a main leaf only an inch or two in length. If any of you see grape ferns in our area, please phone your sighting in to the SCA office (208-265-9670). These ferns tend to be disjunctive, meaning a group may not be found again for miles. I've read they prefer shady, rich and moist woodland soils. Apparently they also favor disturbed sites.

Challenge on? ☯



R. Harwood

— **Myrtle Creek**, continued from front page

logged. The Forest Service is proposing to log 424 acres in the Selkirk IRA and approximately 650 acres in the Kootenai Peak IRA. The proposal also includes logging 83 acres of designated dry site old growth and 159 acres of potential dry site old growth in order to reduce fuels.

In addition, the project is located in grizzly bear habitat and will adversely impact bears due to the disturbance from proposed helicopter logging in grizzly bear "core" (security) areas.

While admitting that it will adversely effect bears, the Forest Service says it's okay to ignore the impacts of the intrusion of helicopter logging in core because it would be "short-term." Short term meaning two to four years! Their expectation is that grizzlies that may be displaced from the core for 2 to 4 years due to the disturbance from helicopter logging will immediately return to the areas as soon as the helicopters are gone. There is no scientific foundation for this assumption.

Local officials are pushing very hard to get this proposed timber sale implemented. Sadly, their concerns about what will harm the city's water source are misplaced — the assumption that the forest can be fireproofed via logging is unsupported by the scientific research.

Furthermore, seven square miles of the Myrtle watershed are owned by Forest Capital Inc. Due to the industrial logging in those sections, most of the forest has been clearcut and road densities are very high. In fact the only intact portions of the watershed are the roadless areas; logging them will wreak havoc on what's left of the hydrological stability in the watershed. ☯





Another Way To Help Out  
The Environment

My fellow members  
of the Selkirk Conservation Alliance —

I know we are sometimes inundated with requests for support of so many worth endeavors. However, I also know that we are already committed to supporting SCA in our efforts to protect the environment in the region of the Idaho Panhandle. SCA is our organization and it is darned effective. Our membership fees go a long ways toward paying the bills but now, we have a way to help out financially even more that is pretty easy to do and pretty easy on the pocketbook.

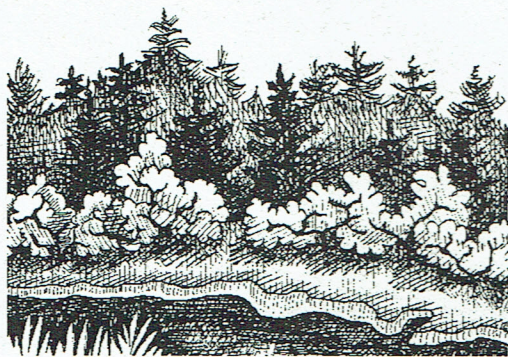
I may have been the first member to sign up for this but I hope I'm not the last. You can (as did I) sign up to donate as little as \$10/month to SCA to help support its work. This includes your annual membership but allows you to help out a little more in a really painless way. For a lot of us, this is about equal to one movie ticket or 2-3 mochas. Once you sign up, it's automatically taken out of your account and all but a small amount (around 40 cents) is put into SCA's bank account.

If you're interested, please go to the [www.scawild.org](http://www.scawild.org) website and click the "Join SCA" along the top, then go to the PayPal Subscribe box in the upper left-hand corner.

It really is easy and PayPal is a very secure way to handle this transaction. You can see from the Projects list that SCA is more involved than ever in projects to conserve the natural resources of this part of the Northwest. We need the funds and I hope you'll help out even more than you are doing now.

Thanks from the Staff and Board.

Jerry R. Boggs



K. Drum

Join the SCA!

Please support the Selkirk Conservation Alliance  
by becoming a Member.

Our newsletter, funded entirely by member contributions, keeps you informed of natural resource issues within the Inland Northwest, and offers regular updates on the efforts of the SCA to promote environmental excellence. Now is the time to give to the environment that sustains us all.

Make a contribution and keep *SightLines* coming regularly. Dues and donations are tax-deductible.

Enroll me as a member of the SCA. Enclosed are my dues.

	Individual	Family
Regular	<input type="checkbox"/> \$30	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35
Limited Income (living lightly)	<input type="checkbox"/> \$15	<input type="checkbox"/> \$20
Organizations	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100	

To help more, I'm enclosing an additional contribution:

☐ \$10 ☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$500 ☐ other \_\_\_\_\_

TSHIRTS & MUGS \$15 each + \$3 shipping/handling

☐ SCA mug ☐ SCA t-shirt

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Winter address (dates) \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ to : \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Summer address (dates) \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ to : \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: SELKIRK CONSERVATION ALLIANCE  
PO BOX 1809 PRIEST RIVER, IDAHO 83856



Just Some of Our Ongoing Projects

- 1. Boundary Dam FERC Relicensing Project
- 2. Myrtle Creek
- 3. Grizzly Bear Access Standards lawsuit
- 4. Mountain Caribou Project
- 5. East Twin Island
- 6. Lakeview-Reeder Fuel Reduction
- 7. Idaho Dept. of Lands Project
- 8. Priest Lake Milfoil Monitoring Project
- 9. Priest Lake Water Quality Monitoring Project
- 10. Selkirk Winter Travel Plan
- 11. Growth and Development Monitoring
- 12. Monitoring Forest Service Timber Sales on Bonners Ferry, Sandpoint, Priest Lake, Sullivan Lake and Newport Ranger Districts



Lady Slipper by Karen Jurasin



PO Box 1809  
Priest River, Idaho  
83856

Don't Miss CELEBASINI!  
SCA's Annual Membership Meeting & Potluck  
Saturday, August 25, 1:30  
Coolin Grange, Idaho

Sighlilnes is the newsletter of the SELKIRK CONSERVATION ALLIANCE, 123 S. Third, Suite 20, Sandpoint, Idaho 83864 / 208-265-9670. Mailing address: PO Box 1809, Priest River, ID 83856 sca@scawild.org. Copyright 2003 by SCA. A non-profit corporation providing environmental oversight and public information for the Inland Northwest. Third-class postage paid at Priest River, Idaho. Permit No. 27. POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to the address below.

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