

Sightlines

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Fall 2019

Newsletter of the Selkirk Conservation Alliance

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The Coolin Wetlands Critical Natural Area

BY ROBERT & GEORGENE BOND, SCA MEMBERS

The 60 acres of Coolin wetlands are a critical area for wildlife preservation and are likely necessary to help preserve the water quality of the south end of Priest Lake. Over a period of many years we have identified 203 species of birds in the wetland area and meadows, the immediately adjacent forest to the wetlands, and on the lake bordering the wetlands. We have identified these birds walking on the three dirt roads in the area from our cabin at the end of Warren Beach Drive to the town of Coolin and back. In addition to bird species, the area also provides habitat for deer, moose, bear, cougar, river otter and many smaller mammals, all of which we have observed.

The Priest River Mitigation Wetland Bank, an excellent area for ducks, herons, and several other species, is a totally different type of habitat than the Coolin Wetlands; it lacks much of the type of vegetation needed for many warblers, catbirds, flycatchers and other species that require a riparian habitat of trees and shrubs like those found in the Coolin Wetlands in abundance. It would not be possible for a developer to mitigate this type of wetland with a totally different habitat in a different geographic location.

Also, the Priest River Mitigation Wetlands do not provide a NEW wetland area, but merely the partial restoration of a historical wetland severely compromised by the development of a mill in the area around the turn of the 20th century. In other words, destruction of the wetland area under discus-

but not immediately obvious, factors. First is the geographic location of the Coolin wetlands, which obviously cannot be mitigated by buying credits in some other mitigation bank. The location is important because of the migration pattern of birds which are funneled up and down the entire Priest



Dr. Robert Bond and grandson Leif on Warren Beach Drive in the Coolin Wetlands. (photo by Georgene Bond)

sion near Coolin is not being replaced by any similar habitat near Priest River.

The Coolin wetlands do not appear on the surface to be of any unique quality, simply consisting of a type of vegetation that can be found in many other locations. However, the uniqueness of this property has to do with two important,

Lake/Priest River ecosystem. Second, and perhaps even more important, is the nature of the vegetation in this area. For example, certain species of birds breed here in concentrations not likely to be seen elsewhere in the state of Idaho.

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Sightlines is the newsletter of the
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providing environmental
oversight and public information
for the Selkirk Mountains.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the fall edition of *Sightlines*. I sincerely hope that you and your family enjoyed your summer and you had an opportunity to get out and explore the Selkirks - our ecological address!

First, I would like to thank SCA members who attended our annual membership meeting on August 15, 2019 at the Coolin Community Hall. It was a successful meeting and SCA members and the Board of Directors had a chance to mingle, share some great potluck food and discuss some important issues. We were fortunate to have three excellent speakers, Felipe (Phil) Cano (USFS Priest Lake District Ranger), Dr. Jan Boll (Environmental Engineering Professor at Washington State University) and Galen Kornowske (Graduate student at Washington State University) to share their expertise on the Kaniksu Community Forest Restoration Project and the Priest Lake Aquatic Vegetation Study. We appreciated these informative presentations and look forward to doing more of these sessions as a means to facilitate open dialogue with our partners and to connect with experts and decision-makers.

Second, SCA is making a concerted effort to be more transparent with our annual budget and finances. As an SCA member, you have the right to know where and how your membership dues and generous donations are being used to support our cause. Thankfully, we have a very active Finance Committee, chaired by SCA Board member Jon Quinn-Hurst, which is working with our Office Manager, Robin Maloney, to track and account for all of the funds which SCA receives and expends annually. In a nutshell, the two tables show a roll-up the relative amounts of SCA income and expenses for 2019.

As you can see, SCA operates on a very tight annual budget. There is very limited capacity for financial risk or errors. I can assure you that the SCA Board of Directors and the SCA staff are doing everything possible to manage these costs and to keep the lights on at our Priest River office.

Last, I would like to thank the Issues Committee, chaired by James Lea, for providing SCA with a clear path forward on our priorities and for being smart about maximizing our level of involvement with Priest River Basin issues.

Income Categories	Sum of Budget
Balance Forward	\$ 1,700
<i>Sightlines</i> Advertisement Income	\$ 2,000
Donation Income	\$ 69,050
Grant Income	\$ 70,000
Membership Income (Dues)	\$ 15,000
Grand Total	\$ 157,750

Expense Categories	Sum of Budget
Office Expenses	\$ 13,768
Project Expenses	\$ 73,800
Wages & Payroll*	\$ 60,000
Organization Expenses	\$ 10,182
Grand Total	\$ 157,750

* Budget projection includes \$40K for the Executive Director, but was not funded.

In 2019, SCA had a voice and a seat at the table with a multitude of projects and issues and we foresee the need to do the same in 2020, including:

Newport Silicon Smelter Proposal
Kalispel Tribe of Indians Air Quality Standards
Southern Mountain Caribou Recovery
Grizzly Bear Recovery (eg. Grouse Creek Bear Management Unit DEIS)
Bog Creek Road Project DEIS
Priest Lake Aquatic Vegetation Study
Water and Sewer District Permits
Priest Lake Cold Water By-Pass
Breakwater and Thorofare Dredging Project
Lower Priest River Flow and Temperature Issues
Bonner County Variance Proposals (eg. Cougar Creek)
Federal Policy Proposals (eg. USFWS Critical Habitat for Endangered Species, NEPA Rule)
Lakeshore Development (eg. Grandview)
Lake Dredging Proposals (eg. Kalispell Cove)
Bonner County Comprehensive Sub-Area Planning for Priest Lake
USFS Timber Sales (eg. Hanna Flats, USFS Kaniksu Community Forest Restoration Project)
Idaho Dept. of Lands Timber Sales at Trapper and Caribou Creeks
Coolin and Bear Creek Wetlands

This is not a complete list, but it paints a picture of the issues which SCA is addressing in the absence of an executive director. Please

Welcome Jon Miller to SCA Board of Directors

BY JIM BELLATTY, SCA BOARD PRESIDENT

The SCA Board of Directors and Governance Committee, chaired by Martin Stacey, approved the appointment of SCA member Jon Miller to serve on the SCA Board of Directors.

Jon first came to Priest Lake in 1969, camping with his future wife and her family in Mosquito Bay. In 1974, the family built a small cabin in Sandpiper Shores, just north of the Thorofare. He and his wife began construction of their own cabin in the summer of 2019.

Jon recently retired from the University of Idaho, where he spent the last 28

years of a 43-year academic career in the College of Business and Economics.

Jon hopes to use his expertise in economics to advocate for preservation of the Priest Lake and greater Selkirk environment. Jon's current Priest Lake interests include hiking, sailing, huckleberry picking, and introducing his young grandchildren to the unique Priest Lake sense of place.

A big welcome and thank you to Jon for taking on this new role as a member of the SCA Board of Directors.

Meet SCA Intern Paul Hurst

My name is Paul Hurst. I am a recent graduate from Gonzaga University where I received a Bachelor of Arts in Biology and a Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Studies.

Over my time at Gonzaga I was fortunate to work closely with several professors on primary research projects. Most notably I worked with Dr. Betsy Bancroft on freshwater ecology research with a focus on climate change and invasive species. Moving forward I am looking to further my education in biology, specifically with a focus on aquatic ecology, and add to the scientific community through primary research of my own.

SCA has hired me to help set up a program that will allow accurate and meaningful data to be collected across the conservation region of focus. The goal of the work is to create a Citizens Science Initiative (CSI) for SCA.

Any CSI has heavy focus on engaging the public members in the research and creating massive amounts of working hands to strengthen the amount of evidence we are finding.

Ultimately what we will be looking for is an easy-to-use system that will allow citizens to record important data as accurately as possible without encumbering them. This CSI will have a focus on surveying forest and ecosystem health through several different metrics: abiotic forest indicators, evidence of wildlife presence, abiotic stream indicators, and ease of human access.

The information gathered by citizens will then be used to help inform ecosystem management and how SCA should focus their efforts in order to best serve the Selkirk Ecosystem.

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

let us know if you are aware of other critical, high priority issues which SCA needs to be engaged.

In closing, despite our austerity, SCA is not sitting back and idly watching from

a distance. We have a very active and dedicated staff/volunteers and a Board of Directors which will guide this membership into the year 2020 and beyond. I look forward to being part of this important effort and doing my part to make sure that we are making progress with achieving our mission.

Idaho Gives

BY JIM BELLATTY



Are you inclined to support SCA with a charitable donation? If so, it is important to know that SCA is a verified 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit headquartered in Idaho. We are registered and in good standing with the Secretary of State and therefore eligible to receive your donation through Idaho Gives.

What is Idaho Gives? In short, Idaho Gives is a program of the Idaho Nonprofit Center. It is designed to bring the state together, raising money and awareness for Idaho nonprofits. The next opportunity to donate to SCA through this 24 hour day of online giving is May 7, 2020. Please mark this date on your calendar!

IdahoGives.org is an easy-to-use platform for donors to search, support and donate to over 500 organizations - including SCA!

Donations made through the Idaho Gives online portal to charitable nonprofit organizations are tax-deductible. In addition to making your donation online, you can also make donations by calling 877-434-4837. Thank you in advance for all of your generous donations!

I know we are busy people with competing priorities, but I urge you to get involved with SCA as much as possible. Above all, we sincerely appreciate your continued support. Thank you!

Jim Bellatty, SCA Board President
sca@scawild.org

Update on the Newport Smelter Proposal

BY TRACY MORGAN, SCA RESEARCH SCIENTIST

As you may recall from a previous *Sightlines*, SCA issued a position statement strongly opposing the Newport Silicon Smelter proposal in Newport, Washington. Below is an update on the status of that proposal.

In the September 2019 Newport Miner interview, CEO Jason Tymco reiterated that the proposed PacWest Silicon Smelter is still a viable and 'shovel-ready' project for Newport, WA. While many of the requirements for continuing the process for the smelter have stalled, the company states they are now waiting on Pend Oreille county to do what they promised and change the site zoning to industrial. Opponents to the project have filed suit challenging not only the validity of the purchase of the land to PacWest but also on issues surrounding the determination of no significance of the State Environmental Protection Act (SEPA) checklist for the above mentioned zoning change.

The first challenge, among other issues, involves the transfer of public land without public notification of the surplus of that property. In June, a court decided that while the transfer did not follow rules and regulations, the sale stands. This decision was quickly appealed.

The decision is now in Division III Court of Appeals in Washington state awaiting a decision. If necessary and to fully exhaust all options, Gonzaga Law Clinic estimates at least another five to seven months for a final ruling at the State Supreme Court level if need be.

The second action is an appeal with the Pend Oreille County Hearing examiner over the County's proposed zoning amendment. A hearing was conducted with parties contesting the conclusion that the county rezone, which changes at least 62% of the counties public land to another category, will not have significant environmental impact. The rezone

subsequently also changes the smelter site zoning. That decision was found in favor of the county on September 25th meaning the county commissioners are now free to end a public land category by voting in the amendment and implementing the blanket rezone for this county.

If this action is further appealed by opponents, the case will then be presented before Washington State's Growth Management Hearing Board. Although the law allows direct review by the courts, the legislature authorized that these boards "hear and determine" allegations that a city, county, or state agency has not complied with the goals and requirements of the Growth Management Act, including State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) determinations, in order to expedite disputes. More to come on the proceedings of what many consider a notable threat to the health and environmental well-being of those in our advocacy area.

Correction and Amplification

BY JAMES LEA, SCA BOARD MEMBER, CHAIR OF ISSUES COMMITTEE

In the spring edition of *Sightlines* I summarized a century of climate data from the Priest River Experimental Forest weather stations.

One conclusion of the study is that we are experiencing hotter and drier late summers contributing to forest desiccation. Another was that we are not experiencing the extreme cold snaps in the winter compared to the early and middle 20th century. Warmer winters favor the survival of bark beetles. Because of these two phenomena we can expect more and more destructive forest fires.

I had suggested that one small thing we could do is to ban all aerial fireworks. Fortunately, Jill Cobb pointed out to me that Idaho has a strong law regarding use of fireworks, Idaho Code 39-2601 entitled the Fireworks Act of 1997. This

allows non-aerial common fireworks such as spinners, sparklers, etc but bans any that fly above a height of 20 feet such as bottle rockets. The problem is that the statute is not enforced and few people know it exists.

Nonetheless, it might be of use to post flyers around our communities next summer letting people know that there is in fact a law.

And if you need to call the sheriff, you can remind the dispatcher that aerial fireworks are illegal. It's possible they might not be aware.

SCA December Board Meeting & Holiday Open House

December 5, 2019
Board Meeting | 2 pm
Holiday Open House | 4 - 7 pm
Beardmore Building

The SCA Board meets once every two months at various locations. The meeting usually lasts 2 hours and SCA members are welcome to attend and share their views and perspectives with the SCA Board.

The annual Beardmore Holiday party follows the board meeting. If you have never attended before, the food is terrific and you can enjoy an entire dinner complete with appetizers, Thai food, deserts and good company.

Charlotte Martin Foundation Grant

BY TRACY MORGAN, SCA RESEARCH SCIENTIST

We are pleased to announce that earlier in the year SCA applied for and was allocated a grant award from the Charlotte Martin Foundation. The study, "Climate Forest Assessment: Phase II" is a continuation of work begun and funded by the foundation in 2017.

This new phase will look at ground conditions and develop a model regarding climate and forest health indicators. Through use of the GIS archive, already developed in the first phase of the grant, we hope to focus in on the Selkirk basin setting while also aligning with larger corridor projects in the region to build a defense strategy for climate shifts that are even now impacting our region. Collaboration will be with the tribes and regional corridor entities such as Yellowstone to Yukon (Y2Y) project.

The grant is administered by Tracy Morgan, who formerly worked on Phase I: GIS Development and Archive project. We now welcome our new intern, Paul Hurst, a recent graduate of Gonzaga University's Biology department to the team. Paul worked closely with several professors on primary research most notably freshwater ecology with a focus on climate change and invasive species. He hopes to study aquatic ecology in graduate school.

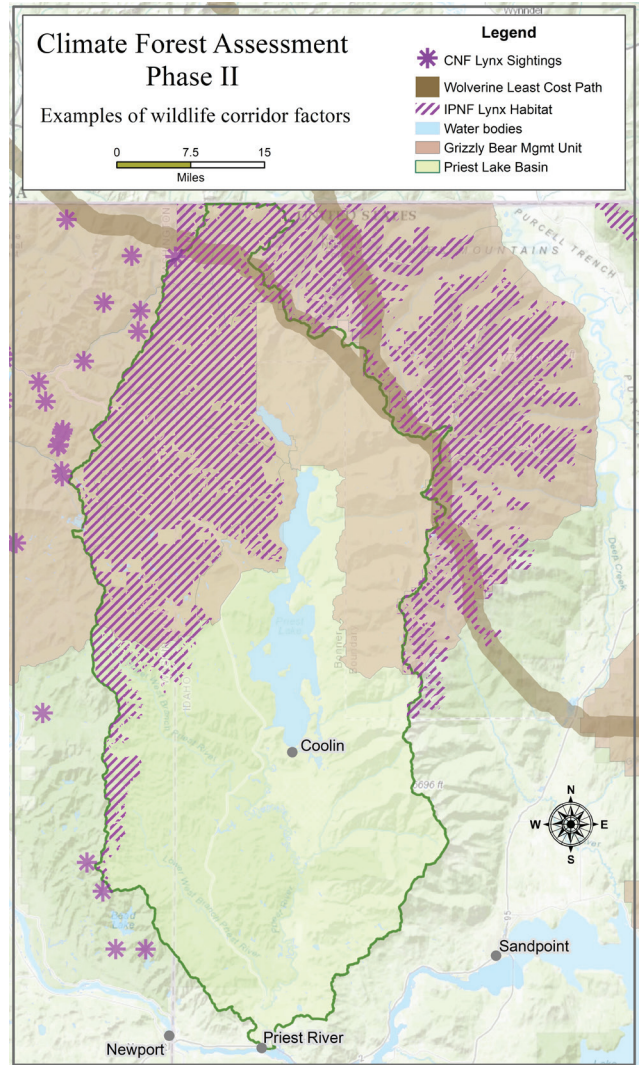
Paul will aid in developing a framework for local residents to gather important climate indicators. Also known as citizen science, the general public are invited to capture factors about nature in their 'backyards' including tree size, presence of lichen, wildlife tracks, and species sightings. This way, locals can use their intimate knowledge of the basin ecology to submit meaningful information which SCA will then use to help maintain or even improve ecosystem health. This initiative is very crucial to the work Selkirk Conservation Alliance is doing in monitoring and analysis and complements the water quality monitoring programs already being done by SCA volunteer citizen scientists.

Another component of the grant will be the revival of aerial surveys to detect tracks and den habits for Wolverine and Grizzly Bear. SCA has been conducting these surveys for years primarily for caribou inventory and tracking but after a brief hiatus will return this winter and spring. These flights are very successful in getting a bird's eye view of tracks and dens in areas where motorized surveillance is not allowed. The data collected is valuable for numerous agencies, tribes and even internationally for identifying potential wildlife corridors and projects such as wildlife overpasses (see Climate Forest Assessment map).

This research will also fund a data modeling exercise integrating large, contiguous satellite and Forest Inventory Analysis data into our already extensive existing data sets. Remotely sensed data has the advantage of being periodically recorded every year making them ideal for climate studies analysis. Using change detection techniques, the results show vegetation trends such as 'greenness', a term used to describe vegetation density which is in turn is an indicator of carbon storage. Climate studies indicate forests are currently being managed for a predictable climate setting and with significant changes, timber stand regeneration will not necessarily yield the same results. For example, Grand Fir may not come back in the quantity, quality or distribution expected 10 years prior. This component funds collaboration with a NASA center for data sharing for the satellite data.

The habitats of those species which are diminishing are primarily depen-

dent on our unique forest setting. At present, these forests are considered renewable, but only with a predictable climate and standardized forest planning. If second growth stands are not revegetating, as predicted, they are subject to erosion from larger storms, they are more susceptible to diseases and no longer flourish under standard harvesting prescriptions. The species that rely on continuity will suffer. To assure resiliency, agencies and others managing wildlands and forests will necessarily have to adapt in these times of uncertainty as much as the species who call the Selkirk Basin home. We would sincerely like to thank the Charlotte Martin Foundation and the Kalispel Tribe of Indians for ongoing support of this important program.



Selkirk Caribou Update

BY TRACY MORGAN, SCA RESEARCH SCIENTIST

As many of you know, in a desperate attempt to preserve caribou last winter, the remaining members of the Southern Selkirk Woodland Caribou herd were helivacked north to live with their Canadian cousins.

Several groups, including the Lands Council and Center for Biological Diversity, responded to the evacuation by filing a lawsuit against the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). The groups claim FWS was responsible for failing to protect the habitat on which this species rely.

The legal action prompted FWS in early October to list an additional distinct pop-

ulation segment (DPS) of the woodland mountain caribou as 'endangered' while also designating 30,000 acres of critical habitat in preparation for restoring that species. This EPA designation expands on the existing listing while also reaffirming the critical areas needed within the recovery area to someday reintroduce this cherished species back into the United States.

Yet even with recent moves to act on the problem, significant issues still face any effort to reinstate caribou. The Center for Biological Diversity is quoted as saying the critical area should be closer to 300,000 acres rather than 30,000 listed in the federal registry.

Other groups criticize British Columbia; claiming logging and management practices north of the border are even less protective of caribou and habitat than state side policies.

In addition to the reintroduction of predators, the equation for saving caribou continues to be very complex: to stave complete extinction of caribou we need a sustained, determined, and concerted effort from everyone involved.

References available on request.

COOLIN WETLANDS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

American Redstarts and Gray Catbirds, in addition to many other species. We are not sure why these nesting patterns are possible, but we are certain that this dense breeding concentration of particular species is highly unusual. There is nothing in the mitigation area near Priest River that even begins to resemble this type of habitat and we have birded in both areas as well as many other areas in Bonner County for years.

Of significant importance, bird species cannot simply be expected to break from long-standing nesting locations due to (frequently unexamined) human development plans. Many birds are programmed to return to their place of breeding in perpetuity. Miraculously, some of these birds migrate from hundreds to thousands of miles in order to breed in their native areas. The loss of breeding habitat is a great contributor to the serious decline in birding populations, which a recent study by the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies estimates at around 40%. Sixty acres may seem insignificant, but the chipping away of a few acres here and a few acres there has led to the loss of 56% of Idaho's wetlands. (<https://e360.yale.edu/digest/fifty-percent-of-the-worlds-bird-populations-are-in-decline-new-study-finds>)

In 2016 the Audubon Society reported that one third of our North American migrating birds are decreasing in populations, and a third of our birds are at risk of becoming extinct. Many people might not consider this risk a serious matter, but the death of even a few species could well amount to "the canary in the mine" warning of the approaching doom of our planet.

<https://www.audubon.org/news/thirty-percent-north-american-bird-species-face-decline-across-seasons>

Major reasons for preserving the Coolin Wetlands are:

1. Idaho Wetlands Importance and Loss: An important fact is stated on the official Idaho State Department of Environmental Quality website: "Although wetlands make up only one to two percent of the land mass in Idaho, they are critical for the survival of 80 to 90 percent of the state's species." Currently only 44% of the original wetlands in the state of Idaho remain. (https://www.aswm.org/pdf/lib/state_summaries/idaho_state_wetland_program_summary_111615.pdf)

2. Unique Area: The Coolin Wetlands provide a staging or feeding area for birds migrating up and down the lake. There is a similar area at the north end

of the Upper Priest Lake, but the Coolin Wetlands are unique for the main Priest Lake and for the entire county.

3. A colossal amount, several feet deep, of fill would be required to develop the area. Fill of this extent could present additional problems of flooding for the existing cabins. Wetlands act as giant "sponges" to help absorb and purify runoff waters and prevent flooding. Without wetlands, the water must be dispersed somewhere else. There have been a number of high water years that have seriously flooded the wetlands. In 2018 the road to the five cabins at the end of Warren Beach Drive was about 90% flooded above and beyond the wetlands! If the whole area were filled, we would anticipate even more significant flooding of the surrounding areas. There are also serious questions as to what filling this wetland would do to the water quality of Priest Lake in general.

4. The loss of this rich environment would be irreplaceable. If this area were to be developed, it would not be replaceable, certainly not with mitigated land, nor could it be returned to its natural state. The valuable Coolin Wetlands need to be preserved. We must pay attention to the needs and preservation of natural habitats and wonderful wildlife around us! Our survival may depend on it.

Too Little, Too Late...? Where Have All the Caribou Gone?

SUBMITTED BY ELEANOR HUNGATE JONES, SCA BOARD MEMBER | BY WILSON CRISCIONE, *INLANDER*

You can't really say the clock is ticking to save the southern mountain caribou occupying parts of Idaho and Washington. It's more like the clock died and has been moved to the garage for storage.

But even though the last of the mountain caribou are gone from the lower 48 states, conservation groups are holding out one last hope. Last week, they filed a lawsuit accusing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of failing to protect the species

"The last wild caribou in the lower 48 states have disappeared, but the Trump administration is still delaying the protection they desperately need to thrive in the United States again," Andrea

Santarseire, an attorney with the Center for Biological Diversity says in a statement. "If we're going to get our beloved reindeer back, they need the strong protection of the Endangered Species Act."

Other groups involved in filing the lawsuit include the Spokane-based Lands Council, the Defenders of Wildlife, and Advocates for the West.

They say the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service never finalized the designation of critical habitat to recover mountain caribou.

Until recently, the caribou occupied the Selkirk Mountains in Washington, Idaho and British Columbia. They've been protected as endangered under the Endangered Species Act since 1983, but they continued to decline in numbers until January, when the last of the caribou was taken into captivity.

But conservationists like Jason Rylander, senior counsel at Defenders of Wildlife, say there is still hope the caribou can make a comeback under the right circumstances.

"The Trump administration has the power to return southern mountain caribou to their original stomping grounds by securing protections for this imperiled spe-

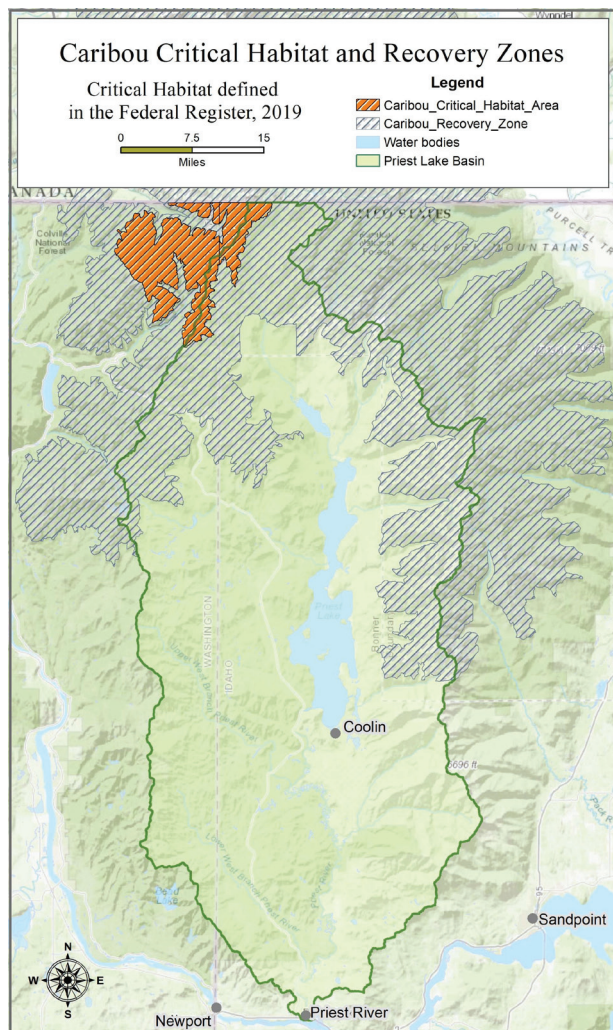


cies and its habitat," Rylander says in a statement. "We must act now before it's too late."

by Wilson Criscione, July 2019

- This article appeared in the July 18, 2019 issue of the *The Inlander* (Inlander.com), reprinted with permission by Wilson Criscione.
- The SCA perspective on the mountain caribou was reported by Cheryl Moody in the Spring 2019 edition, page 7, of *Sightlines*.
- The SCA stance on the lawsuit against the U.S. Fish and Wildlife was presented by Jim Bellatty on page 10 of that same newsletter.

In summary, SCA is cautiously optimistic that the international recovery of the southern mountain caribou will continue and we stand in support the Center for Biological Diversity lawsuit against the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



Economics and the Priest Lake Environment

BY JON MILLER, SCA BOARD MEMBER

In my 44 years as an economics professor, many asked, “What is your field of research?” or “What do you teach?” When I answered that one of my areas was environmental economics, I often detected a faint smile or quizzical look, or a statement that this field seemed like jumbo shrimp, educational TV, business ethics, devout atheist, or honest politician, an oxy-moron. Perhaps you, too, having seen economics used to justify examples of environmental degradation, think that economic arguments and environmental conservation are incompatible. In the following, I hope to show that this is not the case.

Most of standard, or mainstream, economics is about relationships among people, topics such as production and trade, and how these relationships are organized and coordinated in markets. This is the scientific side of economics, where economists attempt to refrain from value judgements about what should be and stick to explaining what is, how the economic world works. Economists also have contributed to the scientific understanding of human relationships with natural systems, such as pollution and environmental preservation, with their theory of external cost and benefit.

The “external” in external cost and benefit does not mean that environmental issues are external to the economics discipline, but rather that some human actions have effects that do not result in market transactions, and because of this, the wrong amount of these actions occur. Imagine a world where your employer did not have to pay you for your work. She would want more work from you at a wage of zero than she would at your market-determined wage. Likewise, when people use natural systems without a cost to them, they use too much of them, creating cost to others, without compensating them for that cost. For example, activities that result in sediment, nutrients, and warmer stream flows entering Priest Lake lead

to a decline in water quality. Fast, motorized boats running near shorelines create erosion and impose lower recreational quality on lakeside residents. Loud music from boat loudspeakers infringes on others’ peace and tranquility. Some extractive forest practices create ugly visual scars. The cost of these activities is borne by anyone who uses or cares about the lake and the environment around it, not the person or business who engaged in the activity itself. Economists recognize this decline in environmental quality as a “market failure,” a failure that results in too much external cost. Economists suggest government action to “internalize these externalities” through regulation or economic incentives.

Recognition of the economic causes of lower environmental quality and the generic policy prescription to reduce it, while important, is the easy part of environmental economics. More difficult for economists is the normative question, “How much environmental improvement, or prevention of environmental degradation, should we have?” To address this issue, standard economics turns to the measurement of changes in human welfare.

Perhaps you recognized in the last statement that I snuck a giant rabbit into the hat of environmental policy, one to be pulled out magically in policy analysis by economists. Standard environmental economic analysis restricts itself to measuring changes in human welfare. In standard economics, the caribou, grizzly bear, bull trout, or Priest



The Priest Lake environment, broad view from Lookout Mountain.

Lake itself, have no standing, per se. Of course, this is a big value judgement, but I will argue that it is not as negative with respect to preservation of environmental quality as you might think.

With respect to human welfare, economists try not to be judgmental about whose welfare is more important than others. Here economics is egalitarian and very weird. As much as we might wish, personally, to strangle those blasting a Metallica tune or a Verdi opera at full volume at 6:00 a.m. on the Thorofare, professionally, economists are duty-bound to realize that folks have different preferences, and effects on everyone must be counted. Likewise, changing an individual's values is not a standard economic policy prescription. This is a major difference between standard economics and what I call Green economics, but this is a topic for a future discussion.

In evaluating actions affecting the environment, economists use benefit-cost analysis. They weigh the good and bad of an action. Good is defined as an increase in human welfare; bad is a decline in human welfare. An action is economically justified if the benefits to the gainers exceed the losses to the losers. Decade upon decade of

economics research has gone into developing methods to do this evaluation. Federal and state policy analysis often codifies procedures for benefit-cost analysis in agency regulations and guidelines. This is especially true in the federal water resources establishment, e.g., the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation.

So how can an advocacy organization, such as the SCA, use economics to protect this wonderful ecosystem we all love? First and foremost, in the economic defense of environmental quality, we need to make sure that economic analysis is done correctly. Often, to defeat a destructive action, all we need to do is show that, with proper analysis, even on the narrow terms of benefit-cost analysis, the action is not justified. Beat them at their own game.

We also need to consider all benefits and costs, not just ones that are easy to measure. Easily-measured benefits and costs are usually ones that have market indicators, readily available prices. But other costs and benefits, especially non-market ones, are legitimate economic effects, as well. In a regional sense, easy-to-measure benefits, such as incomes of local merchants and households, are used to justify actions that might harm others in the Priest Lake environment. The Priest Lake timber harvest is a good example. But the negative environmental effects of a timber economy are also a cost, on the other side of the ledger. We must realize, however, that benefits and costs stem from environmental preservation, too, as road closures and other habitat

protections result in losses to motorized uses of these areas.

While spending in markets creates income to locals, recreational activities themselves are economic benefits, even if there is not a market exchange. For example, even if a canoeist doesn't pay an admission fee to paddle on the lake, or spend a dime getting there, the activity itself has value and economists have methods to measure this value. If declines in water quality or an increase in incompatible uses reduce this activity, this is a cost.

Furthermore, we don't even need to use the lake for it to have value. Economists have developed the concept of existence value to capture this effect. Mere knowledge of the existence of a rare species of wildlife, such as the lynx, has value, and actions that diminish or threaten this species result in a loss of existence value, even far from the location of the species. Likewise, knowledge of the pristine water quality of Priest Lake exists far from the lake and declines in this water quality result in losses of human welfare by nonusers of the lake. This is a cost.

Option value is another non-use value. Even if someone doesn't currently recreate in the Priest Lake environment, maintaining an option to have a high-quality experience has value. Lower water quality or increased congestion might decrease this option value.

Finally, economists use money as a metric in benefit-cost analysis. This is not because money is the only value,

but rather it provides a convenient common denominator for adding up benefits and costs. One way of thinking about the value of an action, even if one doesn't have to pay for it, is willingness to pay. How much would someone be willing to pay to preserve water quality in Priest Lake, or preserve its sandy beaches, or maintain a quality fishery, a trail free of downfall, or a convenient launch site. Alternatively, economists also consider minimum acceptable compensation as an alternative to willingness to pay. Which valuation concept we use depends on how we assign rights to the resource. Often a case can be made that because, say, pristine water quality was here first, lake users have an established right to continue with that water quality. Lowering water quality would suggest that minimum acceptable compensation would be the appropriate measure, in this case. This is important, as recent research has shown that minimum acceptable compensation can be much larger than willingness to pay, as a measure of cost and benefit.

I hope I have shown that environmental economics and its analytical measurement tool, benefit-cost analysis, can be used to advocate for preservation and conservation of the Priest Lake environment. I'm not suggesting that economics is a substitute for values or morals-based arguments for preservation. But in a world where dollars and cents have a powerful influence, economic arguments for preservation can compete effectively.

Correction to Spring *Sightlines*

BY JIM BELLATTY, SCA BOARD PRESIDENT

In the Spring 2019 edition of *Sightlines* we found a couple of errors for which we would like to apologize and correct.

On page 9 of Spring 2019 *Sightlines*, you might have had a déjà vu moment when you found the remnants of an article in the fall 2018 *Sightlines* (also on page 9) regarding the proposed New-

port Silicon Smelter. Sorry about this confusion! Please delete the bulleted items on page 9 below the article by Rosemary Yocum on Bismark Meadows.

Adding to this confusion, we had a similar mistake on page 10 of the Spring *Sightlines* where we incorrectly continued the Bismark Meadows article

with more of the 2018 Newport Silicon Smelter article! Please delete the bottom half of page 10 which was erroneously labeled as the continuation of the Bismark Meadows article.

Again, we apologize for these errors and will do a better job of editing the draft *Sightlines* newsletter before it goes to the printer in the future. Thank you.

Citizen Scientists: A Great Way to Get Kids Excited About the Natural World or Be the Curious Kid You Were Again

BY BETTY GARDNER, SCA BOARD MEMBER

Most of us have all marveled at some living thing that we come across in our travels or on the internet. If you feel like a good chuckle, take a minute and Google "Blobfish." My five-year-old grandson, Oliver and I love to cruise YouTube looking for subjects like, "Funniest creatures", "Strange things that have washed up after a tsunami," and "Amazing animals, bugs or other critters." We have found lots of incredible creatures. We love the Blobfish so much we named him Fred. If we put a pair of black horn-rimmed glasses on him, he would resemble an old fellow I knew. There are lots of ways you can get children interested in science to hopefully cultivate fascination and curiosity for the natural world by turning investigations into play time.

In May of 2019 I took a one-day class sponsored by the University of Idaho Extension to teach me how to become a Citizen Scientist. The program is titled "IDAH2O Master Water Stewards." This platform provides training for people who are interested in monitoring water quality at a specific place in a local waterbody. I have lived on the Priest River six miles north of Priest River and one mile below 8-mile rapids for 41 years. Upon completion of the class you can register a water site that you want to

monitor. You are given a handbook, pocket guides and a cool bag of tools to collect samples for checking things like the pH and oxygen content. You will learn to identify creatures in the water and near its edge and make visual observations at the place you decide to study. You can test a spot located on a stream, small river, or pond as often as you wish when the weather permits. I have checked my place on the Priest River five times over the summer. I gave my grandkids nets and buckets and we went exploring the river one afternoon. We had a blast. Everything we looked at was gathered gently and returned safely to the water. The last time I explored I found 19 different water bugs or nymphs under water in one afternoon.

After you gather data you can upload it to the IDAH2O website. Your participation supports a network of volunteers who share a common interest in becoming informed advocates for local water quality issues. The information you collect is essential for creating baseline data that can be compared if changes occur or if there is an immediate problem. On one of my investigations I found black bullhead catfish fingerlings. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game told me that my sighting of the catfish was the first to be reported

in the Priest River. I was told that these were introduced over 100 years ago and had been in the Pend Oreille River for some time. I was assured that these were not a threat to native fish. Nonetheless, this sighting is one of many changes I have seen on the Priest River. Other species that are relatively new are small mouth bass and large American bull frogs. New plants have appeared as well. The invasive species of algae, Didymo or "Rock Snot," now covers the floor of the river for miles. We also see pond lilies in the river. The handbook you will receive states that the work you do if you join this program helps "for maintaining high water quality necessary to ensure safe water sources for drinking, recreating and supporting businesses, industries, fisheries and wildlife." John Denver said the following about protecting our environment, "No one can do everything, everyone can do something." Monitoring a local waterway is one way you can be a positive player right in your own backyard.

If this interests you please contact Jim Ekins, Area Water Educator, UI Extension 208-292-1287 or jekins@uidaho.edu to find out when and where next year's classes will take place. Have fun and go "a gathering."

A banner for the Selkirk Conservation Alliance. The background features a close-up of yellow autumn leaves. A dark green horizontal band across the middle contains the text "VOLUNTEERS WANTED" in large, bold, yellow capital letters. Below this, in a smaller, white, cursive font, is the phrase "That's you!".

SELKIRK CONSERVATION ALLIANCE

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

That's you!

BOARD MEMBERS

CLEAN WATER ADVOCATES

HIGHWAY CLEANER-UPPERS

NEW MEMBERS

GRANT WRITERS

CONTACT SCA
208-448-1110
SCA@SCAWILD.ORG

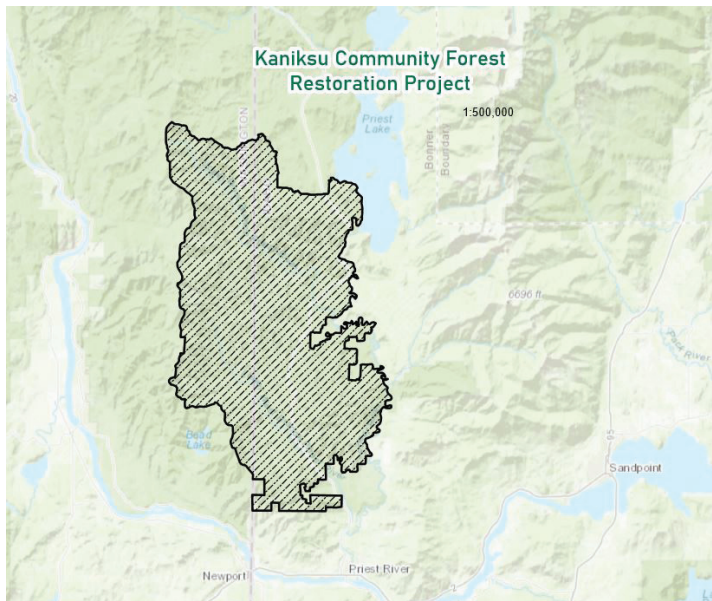
USFS Kaniksu Community Forest Restoration Project

BY TRACY MORGAN, SCA RESEARCH SCIENTIST

The US Forest Service (USFS) Idaho Panhandle National Forest has announced an upcoming project in the SCA advocacy area: The Kaniksu Community Forest Restoration Plan (KCFRP). The proposed extent of the project, while still in draft form, covers over 100,000 acres in western Idaho and eastern Washington including the USFS Experimental Forest. USFS Environmental Coordinator Karl Dekome states that the project intends to address major resource concerns now needing action. The reasons for the project are listed as follows:

- Address impaired forest composition and structure, and therefore tree species diversity, caused by a combination of root disease, blister rust, historic selective harvest and other environmental factors, in order to comply with the current Forest Plan
 - Contribute economic benefit by providing forest products to market
 - Implement prescribed burns to address potential high intensity wildfire events due to loss of species such as white pine and western larch (resulting in less fire resistance)
 - Restore and maintain recreational trails due to continued demand for access from Spokane and the greater region
 - Improve hydrologic connectivity, water quality and aquatic species through road decommissioning
- Felipe Cano, Priest Lake District Ranger, notes that this process of delineating a larger restoration bound-

ary expedites the State Environmental Policy Act process for the specific harvests and activities within the boundary. Yet the USFS will not be implementing, only overseeing the work. KCFRP is implemented through a cooperative with Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) who will do the logging and treatments under the Good Neighbor Authority which allows a state agency to contract services to the USFS when there are insufficient resources within the federal agency to do the work. This allows IDL to log within the Idaho Panhandle National Forest on both sides of the Idaho and Washington State border.



The project encompasses numerous bull trout critical habitat streams and numerous old growth stands. The proposed management also overlaps grizzly bear, caribou, lynx and wolverine migration routes, portions of recovery zones and important habitat. Increased recreational access to and harvests within sensitive areas will need thorough review and input from the constituency and residents. Due to the sheer size and breadth of the proposal, the KCFRP is of high interest to SCA and will be keeping the members informed on developments and deadlines.

SCA Issues: Important Updates

BY JAMES LEA, BOARD MEMBER, CHAIR OF ISSUES COMMITTEE

Mountain Caribou: The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on Oct 1, 2019 ruled that protection of the Southern Selkirk Mountain Caribou population should be extended to the entire population north as well as south of the US/Canada border. Currently, the caribou are considered an endangered species in the US but only threatened in Canada. The hope is that the two countries can come to an agreement to protect this unique population and its historical territory.

The move comes in response to a suit filed by the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) and Lands Council against the USFWS for failing to respond to a 2015 court order. With this new development the hope is that USFWS will be looking at a new geographic template to protect the historical environment. Even though we may not have caribou in Idaho now, we hope that by providing an appropriate environment they may return.

Bog Creek: You may recall the Bog Creek road issue. This is the washed out, overgrown road that the Customs and Border Patrol wants to resurrect in order to Aimprove@ border security. We feel rebuilding this road will make our border less secure at considerable expense plus interfere with grizzly bear and caribou habitat. Currently the road construction has not yet begun. A final biological opinion will be available in December 2019. This will give the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) time to tee up litigation. SCA signed on to the CBD's efforts last spring.

Hanna Flats: The Hanna Flats timber sale was let out for bids last month, but no bids were forthcoming. Evidently timber contractors are facing falling lumber prices and uncertainty with regard to the economy. The ball is back in the court of the US Forest Service and Idaho Department of Lands.

Water Quality Monitoring Program in Jeopardy

BY JIM BELLATTY, SCA BOARD PRESIDENT

Yes, the future of our signature SCA volunteer water quality monitoring program is at risk in 2020. Before I explain this predicament, I would like to share some well-deserved recognition to those dedicated volunteers who have been doing such an excellent job with the Priest Lake volunteer monitoring program in 2019.

At the top of this list would be SCA Board member Jon Quinn-Hurst. Jon has graciously stepped up and taken on the SCA boat captain responsibilities. Jon has also coordinated the logistics of this program in 2019. His leadership and dedication to this program has been invaluable.

Second, I would like to recognize SCA members and volunteers Cheryl Moody and Bruce Yocum for their tireless efforts to keep this program alive. Cheryl has been an outstanding proponent of this program for many years and has secured grant funding, organized monitoring trips, coached the volunteers on quality assurance and delivered samples to the lab in Coeur d'Alene.

Bruce Yocum, the ultimate boat captain, has been very generous with his time to ensure that we have a properly trained monitoring crew to follow the monitoring protocols and to maintain/operate the boat and the water quality monitoring equipment. Bruce has been our boots-on-the-ground volunteer for many years and we would not be successful without his continued effort and support.

And last, we have two very dedicated SCA Board members, Curt Wickre and Betty Gardner, who stepped up during the 2019 monitoring season to help with collecting the samples and hoisting the anchor (see photo). A very big thank you to this team of SCA volunteers for their 2019 citizen's volunteer monitoring program work on Priest Lake.

Despite this success, SCA is now faced with a water quality monitoring program fund shortfall in 2020. On September



Water quality volunteers Betty Gardner and Curt Wickre monitor Priest Lake.

15, 2019, Cheryl Moody shared a post on the SCA Facebook page which stated, in part:

"The SCA has been the only organization consistently monitoring water quality at Priest Lake for the last decade. Without new funding sources and more member support, that program is now in trouble... Won't know exactly until we see where we are at the end of the summer. But our grant dropped \$5K and our matching donation program used to bring in another \$10-12K that all went into that program. So, to maintain the same level of program (we had to cut several sites this summer) we're likely filling a \$15-20K gap."

Again, on September 26, 2019, Cheryl posted a message on the SCA Facebook page from the Idaho DEQ: "North Idaho Citizen's Voluntary Water Quality Monitoring Programs Budgets Suspended..."

"CVMP Group, we are having to identify holdback monies from the DEQ general fund allocation for operating expenses

for the current fiscal year as directed by the Governor's Office. To that effect we will not be conducting CVMP sampling for October or May and June of next year. We will see if the budget holdback gets lifted for the next fiscal year beginning July 1, 2020."

Together, a shortage of SCA grant funds combined with the uncertainty of Idaho DEQ support equates to a challenging year ahead in 2020 for the volunteer water quality monitoring program on Priest Lake. SCA will likely submit grant applications and we will pursue all avenues of funding to keep this monitoring program alive, but the scope of this effort will likely depend on member support and the success of future grant applications.

As Cheryl noted in her Facebook post, we are challenged with securing \$15 to \$20K to meet SCA's needs in 2020. We will do our best to keep you updated on the status of this monitoring program funding effort on Facebook and in the Spring 2020 edition of *Sightlines*.

2019 Aquatic Vegetation Study Expansion, Granite Creek Area

BY CHERYL MOODY, SCA MEMBER

As Dr. Jan Boll and his WSU graduate student, Galen Kornowske, have been continuing their work in Kalispell Bay, Dr. James Lea helped several SCA members and supporters start a plate study in the Copper Bay to Granite Creek Area. You may recall that in 2018 Dr. Boll obtained a grant from the Agououn Institute, administered through the SCA, to conduct a two year research project for a master's level student at WSU to study the source of the phosphorus in the groundwater and to continue

monitoring the aquatic vegetation.



Figure 2: Aquatic Plates, Fall 2019

In review, there has been concern on the part of many lakeshore property owners that there has been an increase in algae and seaweed occurring on docks, pilings

and in the nearshore lake bed in many parts of Priest Lake. The 2017 study demonstrated that there was substantial growth of aquatic vegetation in Kalispell Bay over the summer months. Moreover, the areas of greatest growth correlated with areas of known groundwater discharge. Having noticed similar increases off my dock on the northwest side of the narrows since moving here in 2015, I asked several of my neighbors if they would be willing to participate in an aquatic plate study during the summer of 2019.

As shown in Figure 1, moving north to south, we placed plates in Copper Bay (Scott and Susan French), at the junction of Copper Bay and the narrows



Figure 1: Location of 2019 Aquatic Plates in the Granite Creek Area

(Dave and Heidi Rogers), and two locations north of Granite Creek (Cheryl Moody; Doug and Sandi Toone), and at the Granite Creek Marina.

Each participating family received verbal and/or written instructions from Dr. Lea on where to place the substrate, how to sample periodically across the summer, and how to store/log the samples. The samples collected have been provided to Dr. Boll and his graduate student for analysis.

At the conclusion of the study, the plates were pulled and photographed. Figure 2 shows the 2019 plates from north to south, the blue tape indicates the relative location of Granite Creek.

The heaviest accumulations observed were off my property (3rd Arrow) and the marina (southernmost arrow, Figure 1). While we don't know the exact location of groundwater and lake interfaces here, we do know that two possible interface areas were identified during our 2017 GIS analysis of historical aerial photographs (see orange dots, Figure 3).

Additional work and studies will be needed to ascertain if these observations of increased aquatic growth are in

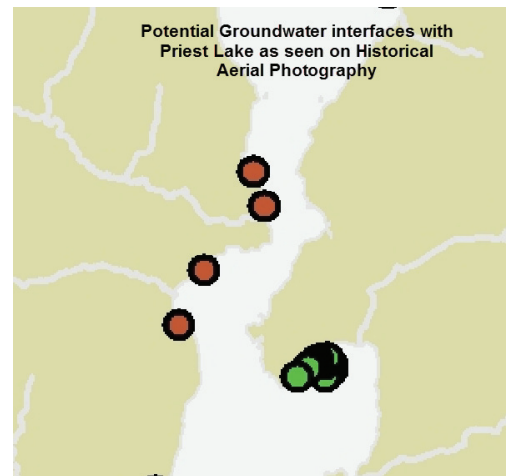


Figure 3

any way related in any way to the local sewer district's wastewater treatment area to the west.

Many thanks to the French's, the Rogers, Toones, and the Granite Creek Marina (Melissa Quilter, Matt Stevens, Scott Stanley) – and of course Dr. James Lea (SCA Board Member), for their contributions to the SCA's Aquatic Growth Plate Studies during the summer of 2019.

Forest Service Draft NEPA Rule Would Sharply Curtail Environmental Analysis and Public Review of Forest Management

SUBMITTED BY BARRY ROSENBERG, SCA MEMBER | WRITTEN BY STEPHEN SCHIMA

On June 13, 2019, the Forest Service released a proposed rule amending its National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) procedures. The agency is also revising its directives, Forest Service Manual 1950 and Handbook 1909.15, to reflect the proposed rule, with the proposed directives to be published in the Federal Register at an unspecified later date for public review and comment.

According to the Forest Service, the proposed rule is designed to “increas[e] the pace and scale of work accomplished on the ground” – with a focus on removing hazardous fuels – by “complet[ing] project decision making in a timelier manner.” The proposal, however, is much broader than its stated goals, exempting unqualified commercial timber harvest and a breathtaking range of other forest management activities from environmental analysis or public review via a suite of new and expanded categorical exclusions and other mechanisms that fundamentally undermine NEPA’s bedrock principles of government transparency, accountability, public involvement, and science based decision-making.

Rather than focusing on and addressing the actual causes of agency inefficiency in environmental decision-making (e.g., funding, staffing, training, and turnover), the Forest Service has targeted America’s “magna carta” of environmental laws with its radical proposal. Ironically, the result is likely to be increased litigation and poorer management of our shared national forests, as corners are cut, laws are broken, and the public is cut out of decision-making.

The proposed rule would:

- Adopt seven new categorical exclusions (CEs) and expand two

existing CEs 4 to shield from any environmental review or public process a wide array of projects. The Forest Service estimates that up to ¾ of decisions that currently receive public input could proceed under CEs in the future. These include, but are not limited to:

- Broadly defined “ecosystem restoration and/or resilience activities” on up to 7,300 acres, including commercial logging of up to 4,200 acres, as long as it includes at least one restoration add-on (e.g., replacing a culvert to restore fish passage). The CE could be used to authorize up to 6.6 square miles of logging with no public input or environmental analysis;
- Converting illegal off-road vehicle (ORV) routes to official Forest Service System roads or trails – contrary to decades of Forest Service travel and transportation management policy designed to make more ecologically and fiscally sustainable the agency’s bloated transportation system and ensure that any ORV route designations “minimize” impacts to resources and conflicts with other recreational uses; and
- Construction of up to 5 miles or reconstruction of up to 10 miles of Forest Service System roads – also contrary to long-standing policy that the agency is no longer in the business of building permanent system roads and that projects may be implemented via construction of only temporary roads that must be decommissioned.
- Eliminate the requirement to conduct public scoping for 98% of all proposed actions, including those covered by CEs. The agency would be required to provide notice of CE projects only in its Schedule of

Proposed Actions or SOPA, which may not be published until after the decision has been made and the project completed. Without an opportunity to weigh in on proposed CE projects, the only option for the public to have its voice heard would be to resort to the federal courts.

- Weaken the “extraordinary circumstances” backstop for CE proposals. If a proposal implicates “extraordinary circumstances,” it is ineligible for a CE, even if it would otherwise qualify. The proposed rule would eliminate the presence of sensitive species as an extraordinary circumstance. Even worse, the proposal would impose a significantly higher threshold for when extraordinary circumstances exist, requiring a “likelihood of substantial adverse effects to the listed resource condition” and allowing a Forest Service line officer to make this science-based determination without the benefit of any environmental analysis or public oversight.
- Permit the use of multiple CEs to carry out land management decisions. The Forest Service would have discretion to authorize larger, complex projects without preparing any NEPA analysis by breaking apart the various project elements and picking and choosing CEs from the agency’s expansive list to cover each element, resulting in a far greater likelihood of significant effects.
- Adopt “determinations of NEPA adequacy” 10 or DNAs, which are a mechanism that the Department of the Interior has long used to claim that an existing environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS) adequately analyzed a new/different proposed

action and so no EA, EIS, or CE is necessary. Often the existing EA or EIS is outdated and/or never contemplated or analyzed the specific impacts of the new proposed action.

- Remove Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) and potential wilderness areas from the classes of actions that normally require preparation of an EIS. The proposed rule reasons that the Roadless Area Conservation Rule provides adequate protections for IRAs. A robust body of caselaw demonstrates that damaging projects are often proposed in IRAs, despite the Roadless Rule. Moreover, the Roadless Rule itself is under significant threat. The proposed rule would similarly remove projects in potential wilderness areas (i.e., areas identified in a Forest Service wilderness inventory) from increased public scrutiny and environmental analysis.
- Embraces 'condition-based management,' which allows the Forest Service to authorize land management activities— usually including timber harvest without first gathering information about the resources that would be affected on the ground. Under this approach, the public would lose a fundamental right under NEPA— the chance to speak up for specific places or resources when they are proposed for logging.

Reach article author
Stephen Schima at
sschima@partnershipproject.org.

Take Action by Renewing Your SCA Membership

Take Action by Growing the SCA Membership Base--and Its Collective Voice

This is a great reminder for SCA members to renew their 2020 membership.

Furthermore, SCA needs to recruit more members who are passionate about Priest Lake. Let's work together to make sure our grandkids and their children still can enjoy playing in clean water in North Idaho for generations to come.

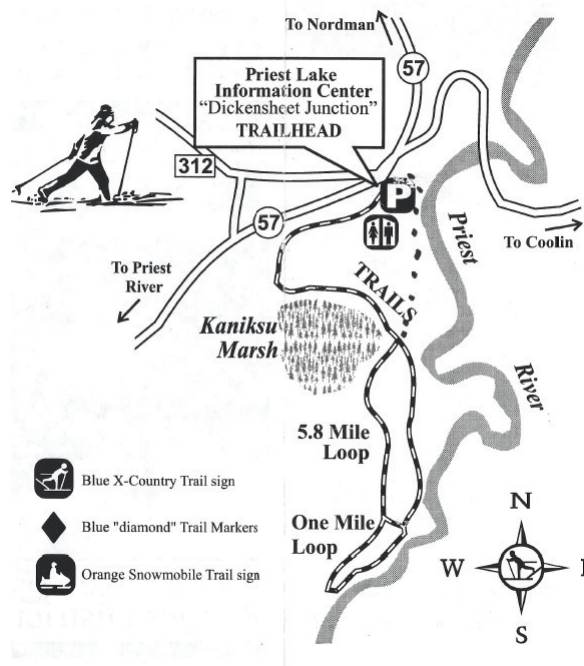
Nordic Skiing at Priest Lake

BY JAMES LEA, BOARD MEMBER, CHAIR OF ISSUES COMMITTEE

I have been cross country skiing at Priest Lake since 1984. It is a winter wonderland but many people do not take advantage of the opportunity. In part this is because groomed trails have not always been well groomed on a regular basis. Indian Creek State Park does a good job of grooming because they have had good equipment for a number of years. On the west side our equipment was not ideal until last year. Just last fall the Priest Lake Nordic Club cobbled enough money together to buy a tracked side by side UTV.

Last year Hanna Flats was groomed on a regular basis. Although there was no real advertising, word of mouth was enough to bring out many more skiers. This year will even be better. Our club was able to get a \$13,000 grant from the USFS which will be used to buy a larger pull behind groomer and a roller/compactor. This should allow us to groom for skate skiing as well as classic.

From my standpoint the best news of all is that we will be able to open up the Chipmunk Rapids trail system. Everyone has driven by these trails many times without even knowing. It is located at the Welcome Center just south of the Dickensheet Junction (see map). Thirty years ago a few USFS employees groomed these trails



with a snowmobile and a homemade groomer. I have always said this is the best cross country skiing in north Idaho. Unfortunately about 20 years ago the grooming ended because of lack of funds or interest.

The trails go through a mature mixed conifer forest, by an old oxbow of the river (which is now a marsh) and then to the river. There are great views of the river and rapids and also the Selkirk Crest. We have some work to do to brush out the trails and clear overhanging limbs, but we hope to have everything in shape by ski season.

Both Hanna Flats and Chipmunk Rapids will require a Park and Ski sticker. This is the best deal in skiing. You can get these at Hill's Resort or Tamrak. But since you might want to ski at Chipmunk first, get yours on line. Go to parksandrecreation.idaho.gov. Then at the top of the page click Registration and Permits, then Park'N Ski Annual. Fill in the form. Make sure you specify our area. That way some of the money funnels back to us for grooming expenses. Have a great time.

Priest Lake Sub-Area Comprehensive Plan Committee

Press Release

October 23, 2019

Bonner County believes comprehensive planning should be relative to the specific area it relates to. As a result of this, the Bonner County Planning & Zoning Commission has formed sub-area committees in specific locations throughout the county to create Comprehensive Plans for their respective areas.

Priest Lake has been identified as one of those areas. The committee is tasked with writing a 10-15 year Comprehensive Plan for the Priest Lake sub-area. Our sub-area plan will be added to the current County Comprehensive Plan.

This process allows more intimate community involvement and participation regarding growth and development issues within the Priest Lake area which we believe will aid in maintaining the character of the area.

The Priest Lake Sub-Area Committee is represented by the following members: Chairman Larry Bryant; Vice-Chairman Brent Guyer; Bob Mansfield; Cheryl Moody; Debby Trinen; Jim Woods; Jill Cobb; Nick Oltean; Suzie Hatfield; and alternate Teri Hill.

This Committee began meeting in June of this year. Committee meetings are open to the public and are held the first Tuesday of each month at the Priest Lake Library, starting at 1:00 pm. To date we have developed the following DRAFT Vision Statement:

Draft Vision Statement

Our vision is to preserve the unique unspoiled environment of Priest Lake by protecting our abundant natural resources, community's character, air & water quality, while promoting a strong year-round economy and a thriving local community.

The Plan's vision is founded on these principles:

1. Respecting and honoring the history and rustic aesthetics of the Priest Lake area.
2. Supporting year-round economic development that is in balance with the environment.
3. Supporting and encouraging educational & recreational experiences that favorably shape the character and growth of our community.

The purpose of the Plan's vision is to:

1. Promote responsible and conscientious stewardship of all natural resources.
2. Preserve and protect the area's native ecosystems including soil, water quality, old growth forests, viewsheds, fish and wildlife.
3. Encourage ecologically appropriate year-round access to public lands and waterways.
4. Guide development processes to align with this vision and associated principles.
5. Promote land use policies that slow the gentrification occurring around major bodies of water within the subarea boundary.

If you are interested in serving on this committee, there are two alternate positions available. You can submit a letter of interest to the Bonner County Planning Department via email, planning@bonnercountyid.gov or mail it to 1500 Hwy. 2, Suite 208, Sandpoint, Idaho 83864. You may also call the office at 208-265-1458 for information. All interested parties will be interviewed by the Planning and Zoning Commission. The Planning & Zoning Commission make the final decision and membership appointments.

For more information, contact Larry Bryant 208-661-9690

