

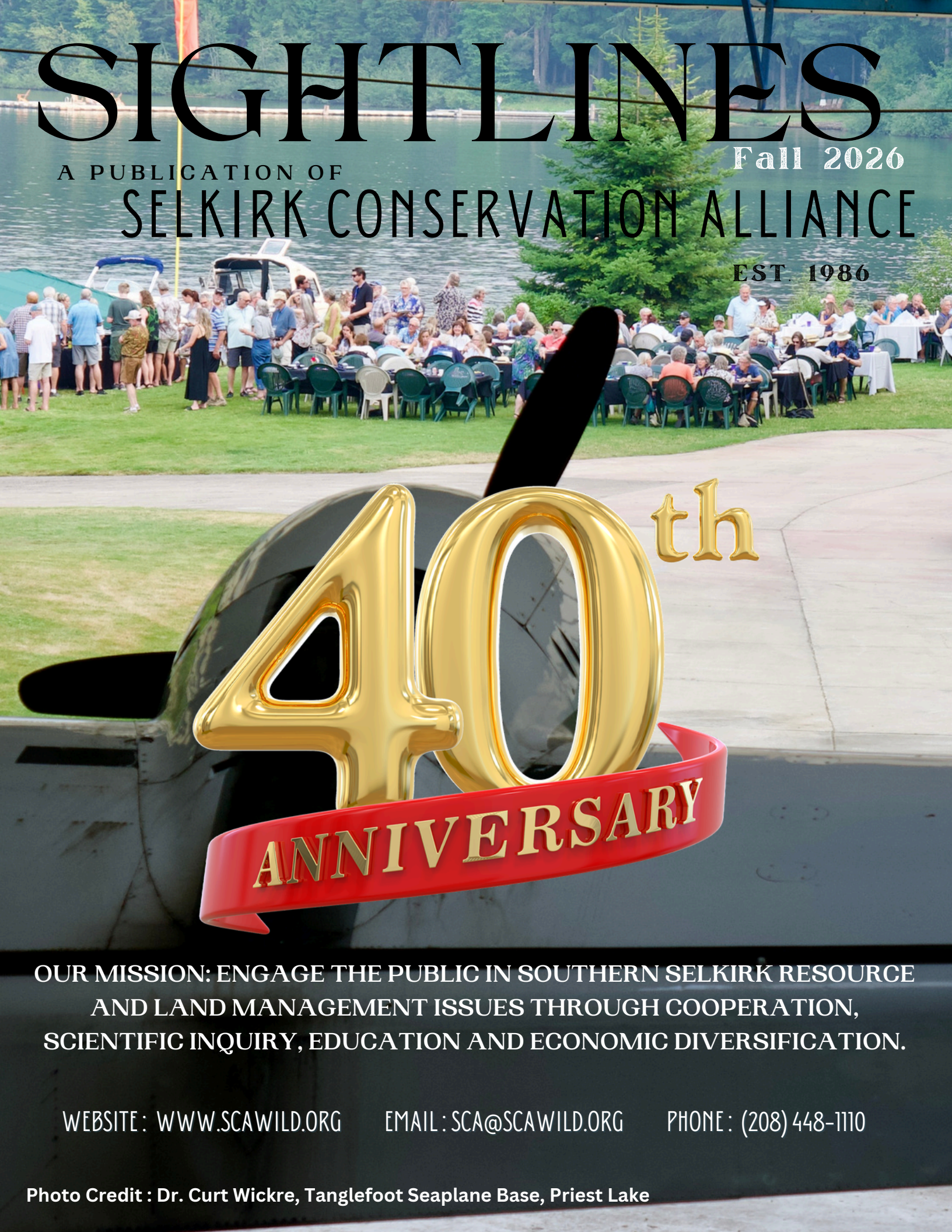
SIGHTLINES

A PUBLICATION OF

SELKIRK CONSERVATION ALLIANCE

Fall 2026

EST. 1986



40th
ANNIVERSARY

OUR MISSION: ENGAGE THE PUBLIC IN SOUTHERN SELKIRK RESOURCE
AND LAND MANAGEMENT ISSUES THROUGH COOPERATION,
SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY, EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION.

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Photo Credit : Dr. Curt Wickre, Tanglefoot Seaplane Base, Priest Lake

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3 - President's Message
- 4 - Recap on the 2026 CeleBasin
- 5 - Dave Boswell CeleBasin Speech
- 7 - Why protect a SWAMP
- 9 - Society for Science Grant
- 10 - SCA Priest Lake water monitoring
- 12 - Boswell Letter to the Editor
- 15 - Follow up to Boswell Letter

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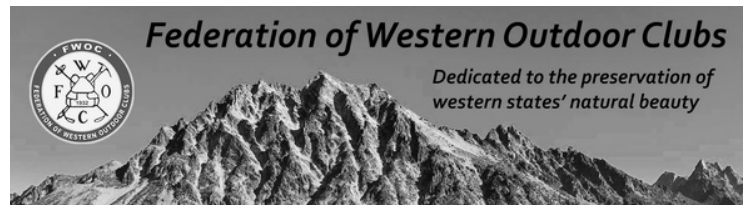
East Priest Lake Cabin Owners Association (Now called Preserve Priest Lake)!

&

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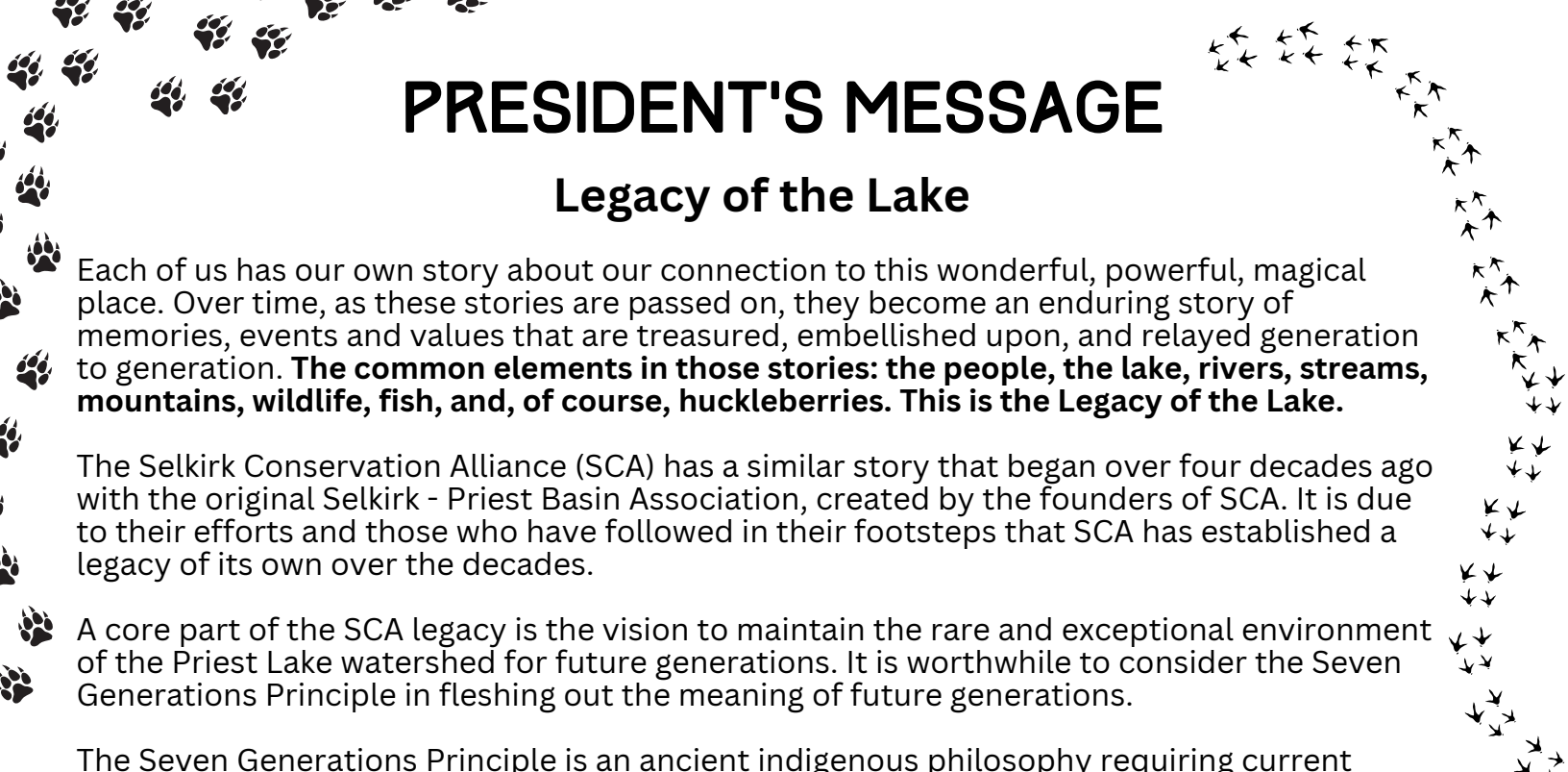
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Legacy of the Lake

Each of us has our own story about our connection to this wonderful, powerful, magical place. Over time, as these stories are passed on, they become an enduring story of memories, events and values that are treasured, embellished upon, and relayed generation to generation. **The common elements in those stories: the people, the lake, rivers, streams, mountains, wildlife, fish, and, of course, huckleberries. This is the Legacy of the Lake.**

The Selkirk Conservation Alliance (SCA) has a similar story that began over four decades ago with the original Selkirk - Priest Basin Association, created by the founders of SCA. It is due to their efforts and those who have followed in their footsteps that SCA has established a legacy of its own over the decades.

A core part of the SCA legacy is the vision to maintain the rare and exceptional environment of the Priest Lake watershed for future generations. It is worthwhile to consider the Seven Generations Principle in fleshing out the meaning of future generations.

The Seven Generations Principle is an ancient indigenous philosophy requiring current leaders and community members to weigh how their choices today will impact descendants seven generations into the future. Core to the principle is that humans are temporary caretakers who borrow the Earth from those not yet born, and their actions must safeguard clean water and the environment. A generation is roughly 25 years, so looking forward to seven generations includes 175 years of planning.

Imagine if current land use planning and decisions were guided by a forward thinking stewardship model when considering development of precious wetlands, shoreline, rivers, and streams.

Protecting this precious watershed requires a great deal of attention in continuing the advocacy, scientific research and environmental education, the core mission of the Selkirk Conservation Alliance. With your ongoing financial and public support, the Selkirk Conservation Alliance can continue to be the organization with legal standing to protect and preserve the Priest Lake watershed for generations, perhaps seven of them.

JON QUINN HURST, SCA PRESIDENT
JQUINNHURST@GMAIL.COM



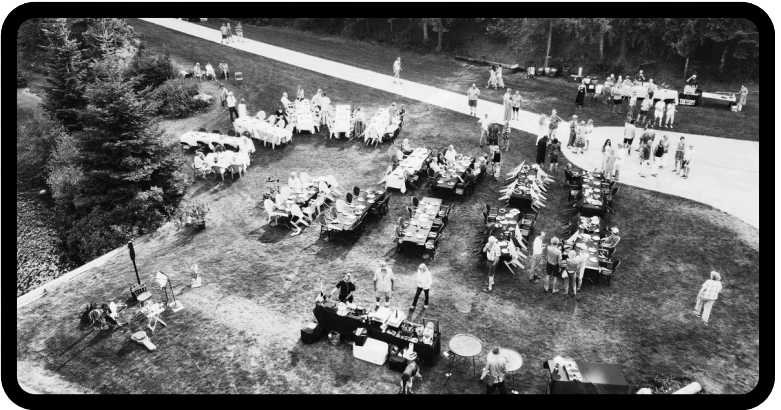
SCA Fall 2027 Member/Donor Drive

It's that time of year again! Time for the FALL SCA MEMBER/DONOR DRIVE! **We don't badger you all year long for money, this is the only time of year we ask humbly that you please renew your SCA membership for 2027 and donate to the cause.** See member/donation form inside this newsletter! Please, please consider increasing your membership level and or donation amount in 2027 if you support the work SCA does!

SCA memberships and individual donations amounted to a whopping 69% of the FY26 income. It is **only through your support** that all of SCA's Pillar Programs; Environmental Education, Scientific Research and Environmental Advocacy will continue to keep running strong in 2027.

Recap on the 2026 SCA CeleBasin & 40th Anniversary!

BY: AMY ANDERSON



Selkirk Conservation Alliance held our 40th anniversary CeleBasin event on July 23, 2026 at the Tanglefoot Seaplane Base in Coolin Idaho, south Priest Lake. The use of this venue was graciously donated to SCA by Loel Fenwick. Over 155 dedicated members and supporters carpooled and boat-pooled in to support SCA on this very special occasion.

Grassroots, frontlines, environmental nonprofits are becoming what one might call an endangered species. This is most especially true in rural northern Idaho.

SCA has had our ups and downs over the years but I am proud to report that the organization is currently on strong footing with a robust donor and supporter base and superb Board of Directors. The SCA Finance Committee has been working to establish what we are calling the SCA “mini-endowment” with the goal of supporting the organization long into the future!

Special, special, very special thank you to SCA member Matt Rudolf who stepped up to match donations of \$1000 and helped us raise \$12,000 in total with his generous match offer!

Also worth mentioning, thanks to all of our reusable dishes (please let us know if you would like to borrow them for your event, serves up to 200!) we had only two bags of trash for the entire night! The 40th anniversary CeleBasin was almost a zero-waste event!

HUGE THANK YOU to all of the event volunteers; Charlotte Dodge, Elisabetta Bosa, Todd & Karen Higns, Ed Buzbee, Mary & Jon Quinn Hurst, Nancy & Curt Wickre, Hank Jones & Jon Miller!

Big thanks as well to Scott & Vicki Jones and Nancy & Curt Wickre for donating funds to cover the wine! Thank you as well to Tieton Cider Works for donating & serving their amazing hard cider!

Because of our members, partners, volunteers, and supporters like you, SCA has accomplished great things over the last four decades.

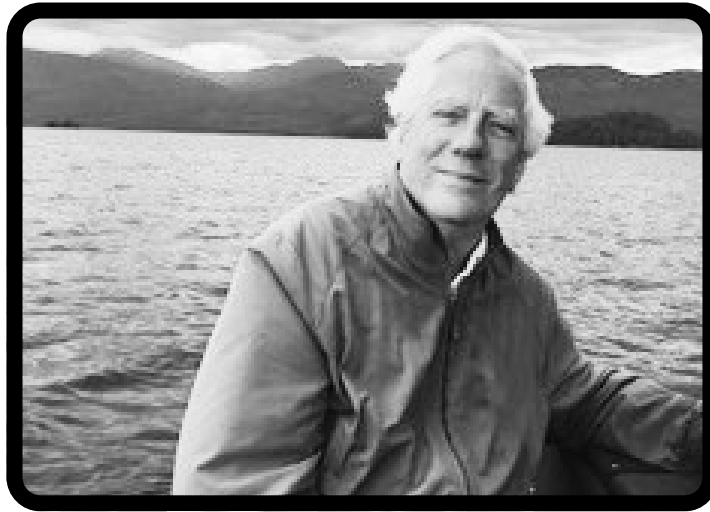
You all have shown up when it mattered, and spoken up for the issues we have been fighting for together for the last 40 years.

Thank you for your commitment to a future of healthy lakes & rivers, clean water, wildlife conservation, wetland conservation, local environmental education, scientific research, common sense land use advocacy, and MORE in the lower Selkirk’s – Priest Basin.

You all should be proud of the work we have accomplished! With your help, SCA will continue to be the leading voice for conservation in the Priest Basin!

I have no doubt that we will continue to work together for the next 40 years keeping the WILD in the Selkirk ecosystem! - THANK YOU!!!

Founding Member Dave Boswell 2026 CeleBasin Speech



Mr. Boswell was one of Selkirk Conservation Alliance's (formerly SPBA) founding members and signers of the 1987 Articles of Incorporation AND a long-time staunch defender of the Priest Basin and all of her woods, waters and wildlife.

Selkirk Conservation Alliance – 40th Anniversary CeleBasin Remarks, July 23, 2026

Hi, I'm Dave Boswell,

Thanks to Amy and the Board for inviting me to speak. And many thanks to Loel and Olsen Fenwick for hosting this great event.

I want to speak briefly on two subjects today – SUPERLATIVES and GENERATIONAL IMPACTS.

Back in the early 1970s there was not a lot of conservation or preservation sentiment going on in the Selkirk-Priest Ecosystem (SPE). And a lot was wrong. A few of us began to realize that the more we saw of the Selkirk Priest Basin, the more we hiked it and travelled around it, and the more we learned about it, the more we found ourselves thinking and speaking of it in terms of superlatives. Despite what was wrong, the Selkirk Priest Basin could only be discussed or experienced in terms of superlatives.

For example, did the SPE have the most beautiful lakes in the American West? Yes, we did. Of course. Priest Lake and Upper Priest Lake are by far the most beautiful mountain lakes in all the American West. They are known as the Crown Jewels. And that's correct. They're superlative. Then we learned that their waters were oligotrophic, that's the cleanest, clearest category of lake water known to limnologists. It's superlative water. It's right here.

And then, right up there (point to the high Selkirks) was the last population of caribou anywhere in the lower 48 states, the mountain caribou. At that time there were only a couple hundred of them left, as I recall. Talk about superlatives! These were the rarestmammals in the contiguous United States. Right here in our SPE. And way up there (point to the Upper Priest Lake) we learned was the last genetically pure strain of westslope cutthroat trout in Idaho. Think about that superlative for a moment --the last genetically pure strain.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5 - BOSWELL CELEBASIN SPEECH

Did the SPE have the fullest complement of native species that make up a truly wild, western land -- truer and wilder even than some of our great National Parks? Yes, we did. Grizzly bears, lynx, wolverine, marten and fishers and lions and wolves and deer and elk and moose and everything else -- the fullest complement of native, western wildlife species. We had a superlative biological ecosystem here. Intact.

And we had the Upper Priest River which, eventually, our group would successfully nominate for Wild and Scenic River status. And way up there, up on Jackson Mountain, we also had one of the oldest, western red cedar trees ever found, a tree that sprouted when Ramses the Second was pharaoh of Egypt, a 3,000-year-old specimen. Talk about rare and superlative.

And, there are unique fens and bogs and rare coastal disjunct species like the Polypodium Fern, the Creeping wintergreen and small cranberry in our SPE. And we've got whitebark pines and pikas, and I'm here to tell you that one of you might be the first to document the existence of willow ptarmigan high up the Selkirk Crest. I know they are up there. There are still superlatives to discover in our SPE.

Whenever I speak or think about the SPE I think and speak in terms of superlatives -- the most, the best, the cleanest, the last, the rarest, the purest, the finest, the oldest, the fullest.

It's just all so magical. It had to be saved. So, we formed the group. We took action. We aimed to make a generational impact. The SPE had to be saved. Now, I say this to myself a lot, and to others. And today I'm going to say it to all of you: Life is a little tougher for people who care than it is for people who don't. But Life is ten times fuller and richer for people who care than it is for people who don't.

And all of you care! All of you care about the SPE or you wouldn't be a member of SCA or be here tonight.

But I want you to recognize that all of you are the front line of defense of this superlative, wild ecosystem -- and maybe the last line of defense -- to preserve and protect and re-wild it. And that brings me to the subject of generational impacts. We've already made some, and there will be more.

Among other things, our group won permanent protection for the entire Upper Priest River drainage by stopping a decades-long proposal to clear-cut the entire thing -- all of it. We stopped an English financier from building a monstrous recreational and ski resort around Huckleberry Bay and up in the Selkirk's. We got the mountain caribou listed under the Endangered Species Act and sued the Idaho Land Board all the way to the state Supreme Court for the wanton, rapacious destruction of the productivity of its school lands (point up saying just look what they've done).

And SCA continues to make generational impacts -- with independent water quality monitoring, political activism, necessary litigation, forest and ecosystem monitoring and protection, and more. There's a lot to protect and preserve, and the group has done a lot of good work over the last 40-odd years, and continues to.

So, when the Board comes to you, as I hope they soon will, soliciting pledges for the Selkirk Conservation Alliance's Endowment Fund, I want to ask all of you to make a generational impact. Have an impact that passes this superlative ecosystem onto our children, and theirs, and theirs. Make a pledge that says you know it's true, that in wildness is the preservation of the world (Thoreau), and you, and we, are all going to make that generational impact for this superlative place, our Selkirk-Priest Ecosystem. When you leave here tonight, take those two words home with you in your head -- generational impact. - Thank you.

Why Protect a SWAMP?

BY: JON QUINN-HURST & AMY ANDERSON

It has been interesting to research the history of wetlands in the western United States. Wetlands were mostly considered areas to be filled, drained, or “fixed” in some manner during the late 1800’s through 1960’s. It wasn’t until the disastrous and unintended results of filling, draining, or “fixing” were realized beginning in the 1960’s that things began to change. What can we learn from past mistakes to enforce the protection of the valuable wetlands of the Priest Basin?

Consider the vast wetland adjacent to the University of Washington on Lake Washington. Historically, the area was a rich shallow cattail marsh and wetland. Duwamish people used the area for food and transportation for centuries, portaging canoes over the low isthmus on a route named “carry a canoe”. The wetland became a waste dump for the City of Seattle and the University from 1926 to 1966 after construction of the Montlake Cut (connecting Lake Washington to Lake Union) lowered Lake Washington by 9 feet. Beginning in 1966 the difficult reclamation of the 200 acre Montlake Dump began, starting with capping the gigantic mounds of garbage with clay and soil then allowing the land to “settle”. Now a portion of the area is named the Union Bay Natural Area (74 acres) it is a shadow of what was once a vital wetland. The reclamation has been ongoing for 60 years, has been extremely expensive, and can reclaim only a portion of the wetland as it originally existed. The water quality damage is permanent.

I was a student at U of W during reclamation in the early 1970’s. Parking lots were built over a portion of the reclaimed area, and methane gas leaks developed from the decaying garbage underneath the pavement. The University placed burners over the larger leaks, burning a blue flame 24/7. There was an urban legend that cars parked in the lots would explode when started due to the gathered methane. The University will neither confirm or deny these events. I never parked there.

Closer to home, Lake Coeur d’Alene has been a target of wetland loss since the 1800’s. 65% of wetlands within Coeur d’Alene Reservation boundaries

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The Chase Lake & Sandpiper Shores-Mosquito Bay Wetlands have been identified in the IDFG Conservation Strategy for Idaho Panhandle Wetlands (2004) as two of only eight Class I wetland systems out of almost 200 wetlands assessed throughout north Idaho. Class I sites are the most outstanding, irreplaceable wetlands of highest conservation priority.

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alone have been lost or altered due to non-tribal settlement, farming, or drainage projects. Mining impacts (heavy metal/silt runoff from the Silver Valley), and water level management on Lake Coeur d’Alene have coupled to change former shoreline meadows and wetlands into shallow water or mudflats. Reclamation efforts are extremely difficult and massively expensive. The wetlands will never be the same.

At Priest Lake, there are several wetlands that work to keep Priest Lake water clear and cold. The big three are the Coolin-Chase Lake Wetlands (Idaho Fish & Game Conservation Data Center (IDCDC); Class I, 65 acres), Bear Creek Wetlands (IDCDC; Class II, 312 acres), and Sandpiper Shores-Mosquito Bay Fen (IDCDC; Class I, 72 acres). The Chase Lake & Sandpiper Shores-Mosquito Bay Wetlands have been identified in the IDFG Conservation Strategy for Idaho Panhandle Wetlands (2004) as two of only eight Class I wetland systems out of almost 200 wetlands assessed throughout north Idaho. Class I sites are the most outstanding, irreplaceable wetlands of highest conservation priority. Sites are ranked by 4 factors: richness, rarity, condition, and viability.

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7 - WHY PROTECT A SWAMP

Our beloved Priest Lake wetlands outrank 99% of the top priority panhandle wetlands! Interestingly, of those 8 Class I wetlands, half are now permanently protected under USFS Research Natural Areas (RNA) and or private Conservation Easements (CE)



These intact and functioning wetlands provide highly valued and economically important ecosystem services to Priest Basin citizens, including; Water filtration (As flood waters slowly percolate through wetland soils and substrates toxins such as; gas, oil, pesticides, herbicides, trash, excess nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorous), etc. are removed and filtered from the water by wetland soils), Groundwater recharge, Irrigation/domestic water supply, Base flow support for springs, streams, and rivers (wetlands help to extend streamflow during drought), Flood minimization, Wastewater treatment, Sediment and shoreline stabilization, Water quality improvement, Carbon storage (Wetlands are among the world's largest carbon sinks and we now know they can store up to 10 times as much carbon as the same area of land-based forest) & Production of food and fiber including culturally important fish, waterfowl and plants species to name a few!

Further, our beloved Priest Basin wetlands are mega hotspots for biodiversity in north Idaho! Wetlands are among the most productive ecosystems in the world,

comparable to rain forests and coral reefs. An immense variety of species of microbes, plants, insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds, fish and mammals can be part of a wetland ecosystem. Wetlands provide habitat for thousands of species of aquatic and terrestrial plants and animals including many rare and endangered species. More than one-third of the United States' threatened and endangered species live only in wetlands, and nearly half use wetlands at some point in their lives.

More than half of the 800 species of protected migratory birds in the U.S. also rely on wetlands. And, according to IDFG wetland and riparian habitats are essential for many of Idaho's fish, wildlife, invertebrate, and plant species. These habitats support numerous economically valuable game and fish species from native trout, waterfowl, moose and beaver as well as up to 50% of Idaho's wildlife species of "Greatest Conservation Concern" and rare plants. Sadly, in Idaho, wetlands make up only 2% of the land mass yet they are critical for the survival of 80-90% of the state's species.

The bigger picture is the important function of wetlands for the entire Priest Basin. The Idaho Department of Water Resources Priest River Basin Plan highlights that public lands within the planning area contain over 60,000 acres of mixed high-value habitats, including exemplary wetland zones. The importance of these functioning intact wetlands cannot be overemphasized.

The most immediate threat is to the Coolin Wetlands. Due to short sighted planning, lack of oversight, and the desire of a developer who is intent on filling and building on a functioning and delicate wetland for short term, once in a generation, financial gain.

Why protect a SWAMP? Chip Corsi (retired Regional Supervisor Panhandle Region IDFG) put it best.... "Where habitats are high functioning and unique, such as the Coolin Wetlands, the science is unambiguous: you cannot fill a high-value peat bog and expect the surrounding ecosystem to absorb that loss. Once it's gone, it's gone. No mitigation credit, no restoration project, no amount of money can bring it back."

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The Selkirk Conservation Alliance is actively collaborating with the newly formed Preserve Priest Lake (PPL), local HOA's, Cabin Owners Associations and Sewer Districts to preserve and protect Priest Basin wetlands so future generations (Seven Generations from now!) will be able to enjoy the crystal clear and cold water of the Crown Jewel of Idaho.

There are MANY, MANY moving parts to proactively conserving these irreplaceable wetland systems including watchdogging the systems by submitting and reviewing monthly Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests to the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) and Public Records Requests (PRR's) to the county for permits needed to develop them. **SCA does this for all three systems still hydrologically connected to Pries Lake; Sandpiper Shores-Mosquito Bay Wetlands, Bear Creek Wetlands and the Coolin-Chase Lake Wetlands.** Since this property was awarded to the developer in April 2021 SCA has submitted Motions for Reconsideration to the County and requests for Stop Work Orders to the Feds concerning this property. We have watchdogged it since 2021 flagging the Corps to any illegal actions and unpermitted development.

SCA is also actively working to assist PPL in protecting the Coolin-Chase Lake system through litigation. SCA worked to establish the Coolin Sewer District moratorium on new hookups in addition to our original work discovering and calling public attention to the fact that the land had been subdivided using a series of 57 boundary line adjustments (circumventing all county code governing major subdivisions). None of those records were publicly available and only found via a records request to the county! The above is just a taste of the various and unceasing push back SCA has engaged in to protect this small but extremely important wetland system from being permanently destroyed.

In most recent Selkirk Basin wetland conservation news, SCA has begun talks with the Kalispel Tribe and Kaniksu Land Trust to potentially proactively conserve the Mosquito Bay Sandpiper Shores Wetlands in a permanent Conservation Easement or other form of permanent conservation. This work is just in the VERY preliminary stages so stay tuned!

Without your ongoing support, SCA would not be able to proactively work to protect these critical and finite wetland systems from permanent destruction! THANK YOU!

SCA in top 15% to receive Society for Science STEM grant!

In 2026 SCA was honored to receive the Society for Science; Science Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) action grant! SCA was 1 of only 61 nonprofits chosen out of almost 400 total applicants to receive funding support. This funding helped SCA to facilitate STEM based outdoor "Living Classrooms" for 19 schools which included Home School Co-Ops, Charter Schools, District Schools and the Kalispel Tribal School.

Funding to support STEM education is very hard to come by in rural, low income north Idaho yet the need could not be greater. Without funding support from the Society for Science SCA would not be able to do the work we do to bring FREE, outdoor, hands on STEM education to our local students, the environmental stewards of the future!



SCA CITIZEN SCIENCE WATER QUALITY MONITORING PROGRAM UPDATE – PRIEST LAKE WATER QUALITY 2026

BY: STAN MILLER



SCA's citizen volunteer monitoring program routinely collects data at 14 sites in the main lake and one in Upper Priest. Fourteen tributary streams are examined regularly, with as many as 18 in our entire network. Lake sites are sampled in June July, August, and September. In order to complete the sampling run in one day only half the sites are visited each year.

In addition, to reduce boat operating time and fuel use, samples north of the narrows are done one year and those south the next. Samples are sent to Tschimakain Creek labs for analysis of total nitrogen, total phosphorus and chlorophyll a. In the field we do a dissolved oxygen / temperature profile. A Secchi depth and a few other field parameters are measured.

Temperature is the most extensive water quality parameter data set accumulated by SCA. In 2023, A statistical analysis of lake surface temperatures, was conducted. Temperatures collected by IDEQ in the 1990's and SCA data from the mid-2000's to 2023 was used. The most robust data set at that time was for the PLNO site in July. The data here showed a temperature increase of about 0.14 degrees C per year in the top meter of the lake at a high level of significance. This is about 4.5 degrees C or 8 degrees F over the 30+ year period (1990 to 2023).

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”

Looking at all 14 sites examined by SCA a lake-wide increase in temperature of about 2.8 degrees C or 5 degrees F has occurred. There is a fairly low level of significance for the lake wide estimates because of the large, up to 20 years, data gaps at many sites.

The lake surface (top meter) temperature at PLNO this July was 22.7 degrees C (72.9 degrees F). Based on IDEQ data from the 1990's the average temperature at PLNO was about 18 degrees C (64 degrees F) in July. This year was 4.7 degrees warmer than the 90's right in line with the predicted 0.14 degrees per year.

The lake temperature 1 to 2 meters from the bottom was 6.2 degrees C or 43.1 degrees F. This July's surface temperature is consistent with the estimated 4.7-degree C increase since the 90's. The 6.2-degree temp at depth is not significantly different than the 5.2 degrees in the 90's. In recent years, the peak summer temperature at PLNO has been as high as 24 degrees C (75 degrees F).

Nutrient Level and Trophic Status

As of the writing of this Report, only three of the four lake sampling runs have been completed. Based on these three runs on the North Lake sites and the seven South Lake sites done last year, the lake is still highly oligotrophic. Total P averages about 5 µg/L, Chlorophyll a averages less than 2 µg/L and Secchi Depth is greater than 6 meters – often reaching 10 meters. The criteria for oligotrophy are: TP less than 20µg/L, chlorophyll a less than 8 µg/L and Secchi depth greater than 6 meters.

Factors Limiting Algal Growth

At this point in SCA’s data collection we have accumulated enough data to suggest which nutrients limit algal productivity in the lake. The “Redfield Ratio” is one tool for doing this. In 1934 Alfred Redfield examined the ratios of the major elemental building blocks of marine algae. After examining thousands of samples from dozens of research trips, he found the elemental ratios of Carbon to Nitrogen to Phosphorus in algae to be 106:16:1. Since our analytical results are in mass units, µg/L, we need to convert the ratios to mass units: 4 to 7 to1. As carbon is ubiquitous in natural waters, both from atmospheric CO2 and dissolution of carbonate rocks it is unlikely that carbon will limit productivity in natural systems.

While the original work was done on marine organisms, the ratio is also used to assess the limiting factors for algal growth in both salt and fresh water. If the Nitrogen to Phosphorus ratio is less than 16 it is likely that the water body needs nitrogen to support algae growth. If it is greater than 16, algal growth is probably limited by phosphorus.

Before 2023, most of the SCA’s citizen volunteer monitoring nutrient data was tested by a lab which could not detect total Phosphorus below 0.0035 mg/L. For Priest Lake with its good water quality, many samples were reported as less than 0.0035 mg/L. It is not possible to calculate a N/P ratio with this data. When SCA changed labs to get a detection limit of 0.002 mg/L we began to accumulate N/P data useful for calculating ratios.

When Glen Rothrock conducted his work in the 90’s all of his phosphorus data was suitable for calculating ratios; a good number of sites had low, 16 or less, N/P ratios. This suggests that many sites on the Lake were nitrogen limited in the 90’s.

The table below summarizes N/P ratios from the 90’s and recent SCA data. As the IDEQ work in the 90’s sampled as many as 8 times per year, and SCA only goes out 4 times, the IDEQ data in the table only averages June, July, August and September data so the same time period are used in both data sets. Though the table suggests that only 1993 was nitrogen limited, at least one month at each site in ’94 and ’95 had a ratio of 16 or less.

It is even more obvious that in recent years, phosphorus has been limiting in the entire lake during the summer months. In the intervening years since the 90’s nitrogen has accumulated in the lake making phosphorus limiting.

The large population growth and the shift to longer residence times at the lake has undoubtedly increased the amount of nitrogen containing wastewater generated in the basin and subsequent leaching into the lake. Recent studies have shown that much less mobile phosphorus from wastewater reaches the lake. It is logical then that the much more mobile nitrogen (also found at higher concentrations in wastewater) is also being carried into the lake. Given the lake’s current higher background of nitrogen we can expect localized algal “blooms” where spikes of phosphorus reach the lake.

TN/TP RATIOS FOR SELECTED PRIEST LAKE MONITORING SITES					
	TN/TP 1993	TN/TP 1994	TN/TP 1995	TN/TP 2025	TN/TP 2026
Priest Lake North (PLNO)	9	22	28	40	50
Kalispel Bay (KALI)	11	14	28	36	33
Huckleberry Bay (HUCK)	13	23	27	32	27
Priest Lake South (PLSO)	7	19	20	59	39
Outlet Bay (OUTL)	8	N/D	N/D	18	20
Coolin Bay (COOL)	N/D	16	N/D	34	29
Mosquito Bay (MOSQ)	N/D	24	N/D	33	28
Granite Creek Narrows (GNAR)	N/D	N/D	27	21	33

Letter to the Editor

SCA fall 2025 Sightlines newsletter “Who benefits from the school endowment fund, is it Idaho schools or the Forest Products Industry of Idaho?”

Dear Editor,

Many thanks and kudos to former SCA President Jim Lea for his sage comments and critique of Idaho’s school trust lands on the eastside of Priest Lake (Sightlines, Fall 2025, see below for link). I’d like to add my two cents’ worth to this endlessly vexatious issue.

My answer to Jim’s headline question is, of course, that Idaho’s big timber interests are the beneficiaries of school trust lands. I could argue further that Idaho’s big timber interests are the de facto owners of Priest Lake’s school trust lands. The state Land Board abrogated its fiduciary duties to the schoolkids long ago, as Jim points out, but the Land Board is also destroying something larger and more precious – an entire wild land ecosystem.

Keep in mind that SCA’s advocacy area is the whole of the Selkirk-Priest Basin, the drainage from the crest of the Selkirk Mountains along the east side of Priest Lake, up to Canada, and including parts of Washington along the lake’s west side, like the Salmo-Priest and the Shedroof Divide. The USFS controls most of the west side of Priest Lake; Idaho controls (sic) the east side. That’s the vexatious problem.

Our single Priest Lake ecosystem, the one we now need to protect more than ever -- and begin the process of re-wilding -- is governed by two, separate, sovereigns. “Management” (I use the term informally) of the entire ecosystem is bifurcated. That’s not working; it’s destroying the whole. This has been the big, big problem for our small group for a long, long time – and still is, as our new eastside landowners must now achingly realize, and as Jim’s article insightfully describes.



On the west side, SCA has generally been able to talk respectfully and deal openly with federal authorities whose statutory mandates include the National Forest Management Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Water Act, and many others, which can constrain the amount and degree of environmental degradation federal agencies cause.

On the eastside, however, there are no enforceable constraints; the lands are controlled by Idaho’s big timber interests for one single purpose – cutting forests down. Period. Full stop. Jim’s article intelligently explains this.

Over 35 years ago, SCA, then the Selkirk-Priest Basin Association (“SPBA”), tried to rectify our ecosystem’s bi-polar management problem and forge some sense of unity in the “management” of the two sides of Priest Lake.

CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

SPBA (Selkirk Priest Basin Association, now SCA) sued the Land Board in 1995 along with the five most preeminent politicians in Idaho. The argument was simple, really:

The state's constitution required it to govern (say "manage") its school trust lands for the "maximum long term economic benefit" of the state's school children, and that was not happening.

For one thing, it's pathetic how little Idaho's schoolchildren benefit. As Jim points out, as little as \$200 per student is distributed to them annually. Idaho was then, and is now, ranked last in the country in spending on its schoolchildren. I checked. Pathetic.

Even way back then it was obvious that Idaho's Land Board had given over the school children's' trust lands to big timber – the cutting was relentless, wanton and rapacious. The effects were devastating to the ecosystem, but specifically ruinous to the trust lands' productivity, discussed below. And now it's gotten worse.

SPBA wanted to make certain that all eastside lands maintained the ability to grow high-value timber sustainably for our school kids, and make certain that its long term productivity was not being destroyed, as constitutionally mandated. As Jim's article discusses, the thin, granitic soils underpinning state forestlands were being washed down into the rivers and streams, thence into the lake. That sediment was filling up the interstices of the gravels and pebbles in which native fish laid their eggs. Soil loss and the loss of forest habitat was destroying diversity, an essential component of ecosystem health.



Wild animals were being extirpated. Logging roads were carving up the lands, inviting pests, poachers and profiteers. Regeneration was left simply to Nature or tree-farmed transplantations. Now, as I learned from Jim's piece, it's even worse, thanks to some industry computer algorithm developed in Oregon which effectively green-lighted a doubling of the logging (and denuding) of the schoolkids' trust corpus.

“

As expert Jerry Franklin said, that could be important in saving ...us. Ecosystem health, diversity and resilience is just as critical to long-term productivity as soils and water.

”

In 1995, SPBA brought trial experts into its case, including a host of editorial contributors to that Holy Writ of Pacific Northwest forest management, "Maintaining the Long Term Productivity of Pacific Northwest Forest Ecosystems" (Timber Press, 1989) -- experts like Jerry Franklin, author of the chapter called "Importance of Ecological Diversity in Maintaining Long-Term Site Productivity." Jerry could testify that long term productivity is ultimately dependent upon ecosystem complexity and resilience ("...sustainable forestry is supported by three legs: ecological diversity, genetic diversity and soils.").

But Idaho would not listen. The trial court in Sandpoint threw SPBA out of court summarily. The group appealed to the Idaho Supreme Court, which upheld the lower court's ruling saying that nobody had standing to contest what big timber and its captured agency, the Land Board, was doing to the kids' school trust lands. Nobody.

In fairness, **one Idaho justice dissented saying (correctly) that the majority was wrong in identifying "school districts" as the beneficiaries of trust lands. "The trust beneficiaries," he said, "are those who benefit from the state's constitutional duty to maintain common schools – the students", not some school district organized purely for "administrative convenience."** I'm not sure that honest men could arrive at a different conclusion – but Idaho's Supreme Court did. SPBA lost the case.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13 - LETTER TO THE EDITOR

As it stands today, no person or entity anywhere has standing in court to challenge Idaho's big timber industry, or the Land Board it controls, over "management" of the kids' lands. The Idaho Supreme Court won't allow it. The Land Board won't have it. Idaho's single-minded Legislature won't have it. Let me say it again: Big timber is the de facto owner of state lands on the east side of Priest Lake. That's my answer to Jim's headline question.

Now, 35 years later, Idaho is intensively high-grading and logging off the kid's trust lands and, in the process, has extirpated native species of wildlife (like our Mountain Caribou), despoiled our eastside streams and rivers, supplanted wild fish with introduced aliens (westslope cutthroat trout are losing out to bass and crappie and Mackinaw), and much, much more, not to mention the most important part, that the state's school trust lands have lost the ability to produce high value forest trees sustainably over the long term –its constitutional mandate to maintain long term productivity; that requires the preservation and protection of ecological diversity and resilience. As expert Jerry Franklin said, that "could be important in saving ...us." Ecosystem health, diversity and resilience is just as critical to long-term productivity as soils and water.

We need to set right the power structure governing state school trust lands; there's a trust obligation here that needs to be scrupulously enforced. We need a large, unified grassroots voice, with economic and political power to make it happen. And we need a new paradigm – a single, coordinated paradigm – for the governance of these public lands, and for the re-wilding of the peerless Priest Lake ecosystem. All of us need to do this, including the two sovereigns. The children need us to do this.

-Dave Boswell

Read SCA Vice President Dr. Jim Lea's article; "*Who benefits from the school endowment fund, is it Idaho schools or the Forest Products Industry of Idaho?*" HERE:

<https://scawild.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/FINAL-Fall-2025-SCA-Newsletter.pdf>

Read the full Idaho Supreme Court ruling, *Selkirk Priest Basin Association vs STATE of Idaho* HERE:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MfWdyDp_VGt3RKc0lRtNAGYRVosGrn8Y/view?usp=sharing



Follow up to Boswell Letter to the Editor

BY: AMY ANDERSON

“As Dr. Lea and Mr. Boswell point out in their respective article’s; with all of the rampant deforestation occurring on Idaho state endowment lands, individual students only realize ~\$200 each (2024 numbers) annually.”

Trust lands of one kind or another make up a whopping nearly 70% of all state lands in the US, with the clear majority of large holdings being in the West. Nevada has ~56.3 million acres and 80.1% is state land. Idaho has ~32.8 million acres and 61.9% is state land. State trust lands are administered under the public trust doctrine. The basic framework for the modern trust doctrine says that: 1. sales and leases on trust land must be at full market value, and 2. trust lands must be managed for maximum economic productivity.

The use of these lands is determined by what land managers consider to be the most lucrative revenue-generating activity for that particular unit of land. This generally makes them what should be considered dominant –use-resource-extraction lands.

For the most part, conservation explicitly occurs only when it is the use that can generate the most revenue (a lease for hunting land, for example). The fact that the ecological health and productivity of land are explicitly tied to its long term economic value has been an idea very, very slow to catch on in the modern management realm. However, states like Colorado and Washington are gradually redefining the public trust on state lands.

When Colorado voters in 1996 amended the state constitution to put a tenth of the state's trust lands into a stewardship trust, it also changed the language of the fiduciary obligation for all trust holding from generating the "maximum possible amount" of revenue to "providing for prudent management", further stating "economic productivity of all lands held in public trust is dependent on sound stewardship, including

protecting and enhancing the beauty, natural values, open space, and wildlife habitat thereof for this and future generations".

The importance of this amendment is that it has opened the door within the trust doctrine to incorporate alternative forms of valuation and time horizons, implying that maximizing short term revenue can sometimes have bad long-term consequences, including to generate future revenue. Washington has also brought a refreshing new orientation to trust land management, with its legislature adding protection of wildlife habitat to the list of obligations.

Over time, some states have come to recognize that the public purpose of state lands transcends just maximizing annual receipts from grazing or mining or timber harvest. They’ve defined the longer term benefits as more sustainable, contributing to improved water quality, wildlife habitat, viewsapes, and public recreation. These states have come to know and understand, thanks to modern science, that good stewardship can actually enhance the value of the land and thus it does not necessarily violate the trust doctrine.

As Dr. Lea and Mr. Boswell point out in their respective article’s (Fall 2025 & Fall 2026 Sightlines newsletters) with all of the rampant deforestation occurring on Idaho state endowment lands, individual students only realize ~\$200 each (2024 numbers) annually.

So, in reality, this long-standing, enormous, complex, and elaborate system of land management and resource extraction/production has evolved to serve a distinctly minimal and subordinate role in modern school financing, most especially in Idaho. In 2026 we can do better.

TIME LAPSE GOOGE EARTH LINK – Watch the Selkirk Basin forests (especially the east side IDL Endowment Lands) disappear before your eyes!

<https://earthengine.google.com/timelapse/#v=47.43488,-116.68174,8.461,latLng&t=3.09&ps=50&bt=19840101&et=20181231&startDwell=0&endDwell=0>



Dodge family and other CeleBasin attendees!



Parker & Sarah Rice!



Betty & Todd Gardner at the CeleBasin!



Kalispel Tribal School students at an SCA "Living Classroom" field trip!



Janet Torline
2026 Water Festival



Vicki & Scott
Jones



SCA 2026 Annual HWY57 Clean-Up Volunteers!



Students at an SCA "Living Classroom" field trip!