



ONDA played a lead role in making iconic Steens Mountain Oregon's first high desert wilderness area. President Bill Clinton signed the bill into law in 2000, and ONDA presented the president this image in the Oval Office. Photo: Bruce Jackson

CELEBRATING
30
YEARS
OF CONSERVATION
IN OREGON'S
HIGH DESERT

By Heidi Hagemeier
Communications Coordinator

It's been more than three decades since a Bend resident took out a newspaper ad and spread the word among like-minded friends: Come by Thursday night if you're interested in protecting Oregon's high desert.

At that time, few were paying attention to the more than 13-million-acres of high desert public land, says that resident, Alice Elshoff. By order of Congress, Bureau of Land Management staff were assessing this land in order to report on which swaths still retained the character of wilderness. But concerns abounded that critical areas were being left out.

"We felt the desert needed a voice," Alice says.

About a dozen people showed up for that first meeting in 1987. At the next get-together, the small band decided on a name for a new group – the Oregon Natural Desert Association.

Fast-forward 30 years and the fledgling nonprofit organization, also known as ONDA, has grown to

encompass 10,000 members and supporters. And their efforts have led to significant strides for conservation in eastern Oregon, from the designation of the state's first three desert wilderness areas to the removal of roughly 2,400 tons worth of obsolete barbed wire fence at Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge.

"It just shows that there was a need," Alice says. "It was time we started thinking about Oregon's high desert, and people have responded."

Pioneering conservation in the high desert

ONDA's early days were of a small, scrappy group that still managed to have an impact. The organization hired its first employee five years after its start – Bill Marlett served as executive director until 2007.

"No other group in Oregon was focused on desert wilderness and related issues," Bill says.

From water quality concerns to public lands protection, ONDA raised critical issues about our public lands in the 1990s. Legal advocacy led to the

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For years, ONDA volunteers worked to pull obsolete barbed wire fence from Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge in order to allow wildlife to move freely across the landscape. The last of the fence was removed in 2011. Photo: Jesse Laney

PLANNING A PATH FOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS

By Ray Hartwell
Board President

Milestones present ample opportunity for reflection. And looking back at three decades of ONDA, I'm immensely proud of the work accomplished by our community of members and supporters for conservation in Oregon's high desert. Together, we've made significant strides toward ensuring that the beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of Oregon's dry side remain intact, from leading the charge to create the state's first three desert wilderness areas to preventing ill-advised development on Steens Mountain.

Passion and commitment have definitely made our achievements possible. But so has planning. This past year, ONDA embarked on a process to craft a new strategic plan. It's a deliberate effort we engage in every four years to ensure ONDA's work is values-driven and mission-focused, even as we maintain the ability to act nimbly in unforeseen circumstances. The ONDA Board of Directors adopted this new plan in February.

In crafting this document, we reached out for one-on-one discussions with a variety of stakeholders – ranging from ONDA members to decisionmakers to residents in Oregon desert communities – to gain perspective on our effectiveness and potential directions for future work. A core planning team convened talks over the months to develop a vision that captures the goals for our work and prioritizes them, taking



The result is a vision that represents a bright future for our high desert public lands, no matter what the political climate of the day. ... we will keep striving to permanently protect treasures like the Owyhee Canyonlands and Sutton Mountain, continuing to broaden support among diverse interests.

— RAY HARTWELL, BOARD PRESIDENT



into account today's economic, political, ecological and social realities. We were also careful to ensure that our mission, vision and belief statements are an accurate reflection of who we are and who we want to be as an organization.

The result is a vision that represents a bright future for our high desert public lands, no matter what the political climate of the day. Under this vision, we will keep striving to permanently protect treasures like the Owyhee Canyonlands and Sutton Mountain, continuing to broaden support among diverse interests.

We will target stewardship efforts that improve wildlife habitat, addressing the realities presented by climate change. We will focus these efforts in locales where our involvement clearly makes a difference, as we have for the fence-free Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge and nearly fence-free Steens Mountain Wilderness.

We will reach out to diverse voices, believing that love for public lands can be the common ground that brings us together. Part of this effort will be a continued mindfulness of the deep history of Native American Tribes in Oregon's high desert and the critical role they play in the future of these treasured places.

We will persist in our belief that to know Oregon's high desert is to love it, conveying that wonder through initiatives like the Oregon Desert Trail. Opportunities to learn about and get out into the high desert will remain a critical component of our outreach.

We will stand firm as champions for our public lands, resolute in the value and richness they offer to all Americans. As part of that effort, we will share stories of why public lands and waterways in Oregon's high desert are a critical piece of the unique natural heritage we all share. And we will be guided by science in where and how we do our work.

We have no crystal ball that will perfectly predict the road ahead. Our new strategic plan, however, serves as a carefully considered map, ensuring we are steadfastly doing our best to protect, defend and restore these amazing landscapes we all love. We're so pleased you are with us for this journey and welcome your input as it unfolds. Together, we will log significant achievements for ONDA's next 30 years.



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30 YEARS

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removal of livestock from the Donner und Blitzen and Owyhee Wild & Scenic River corridors, as well as to improved salmon and steelhead habitat on the John Day River.

And ONDA played a lead role in rallying support for permanent protection of Steens Mountain. Until its designation as wilderness in 2000, there was not a single acre of wilderness in Oregon's high desert among the more than 2 million acres of wilderness statewide.

"ONDA is recognized as a leader among grassroots conservation organizations on public lands," says John Sterling, a longtime ONDA board member and executive director of The Conservation Alliance. "Other people pay attention to the work ONDA does."

By the early 2000s, it had been roughly 20 years since land management agencies had assessed public lands in Oregon's high desert for their wilderness quality. So ONDA decided to inventory the region to craft an up-to-date, on-the-ground assessment.

That data-driven approach helped draw Helen Harbin – now a longtime board member – to ONDA around that time. She recalls using methodology that was at the forefront for its time on survey trips into the desert: clock the precise locale with a GPS unit, snap a picture with a camera, record the information into a three-ring binder.

She also liked how ONDA's staff approached issues creatively to get the work done. She recalls how, in working toward getting the Oregon Badlands Wilderness designated in 2009, ONDA built broad support with local businesses, neighboring property owners and others.

"I felt like if I gave them \$20, they might squeeze \$23 out of it," she says.

Working creatively has meant posing solutions. When ONDA objected in 2009 to an industrial wind turbine proposal in critical wildlife habitat at Steens



TOP: With the gnarled junipers of the Oregon Badlands behind him, Sen. Ron Wyden announced in 2008 that he would introduce legislation to permanently protect the area as wilderness. President Barack Obama signed legislation that did so in 2009. **Photo: Bruce Jackson. BOTTOM:** The Owyhee Canyonlands vaulted onto the national stage as a conservation priority starting in 2014, thanks in large part to ONDA supporters. Here, KEEN launched its Live Monumental campaign, which featured the Owyhee as one of five areas nationally deserving of permanent protection. **Submitted photo.**

Mountain as "right approach, wrong place," the organization also pulled together a report that pinpoints sites in eastern Oregon for such development that would be less impactful on landscapes and wildlife.

And initiatives like the 750-mile Oregon Desert Trail have introduced the state's high desert

to others, expanding appreciation of the need to preserve the best of this spectacular region.

A growing community

Today, 30 years since the beginning, the presence of ONDA's members and supporters is felt across the state. Hundreds of volunteers each year contrib-

Anniversary parties

ONDA will host a 30th anniversary party June 30th in Bend and TBD in Portland. Keep up-to-date by making sure you get ONDA's emails:

ONDA.org/Email

ute thousands of hours toward improving the health of public lands throughout eastern Oregon. Passionate supporters through thousands of calls, letters and emails sent to our leaders have urged for permanent protection of the Owyhee Canyonlands, making it a state and national conservation priority.

For all that has been achieved, ONDA still has work left to do. Nearly 3 million acres of Wilderness Study Areas in the high desert lack permanent protection, and national politics have put the very notion of public lands in jeopardy. ONDA is working to bring people together to keep public lands in public hands, and there remains optimism that places like Sutton Mountain and the Owyhee Canyonlands will finally get the protection they deserve.

"I'm extremely proud that ONDA has brought such broad support and diverse voices together on behalf of places like Sutton Mountain," says Brent Fenty, ONDA's executive director since 2007. "These efforts are a perfect illustration that common ground can be found in the future of public lands management. These successes don't come easy but leaving these places intact for future generations is worth the effort."

The continuously growing community that is ONDA is evermore critical today, John Sterling says.

"Every generation or so, we have to renew our commitment to public lands," he says. "And we are at that juncture right now. Part of that is connecting to organizations like ONDA – which continues to be a strong voice for a place we all love."

PROTECTING OUR PUBLIC LANDS IN AN UNCHARTED ERA

By Dan Morse
Conservation Director

Over the decades, efforts that would harm or even undermine the very concept of public lands have arisen with unfortunate regularity. The Sagebrush Rebellion in the 1970s is an example. What's new today, however, is that these attacks are now more virulent, uninformed and widespread than ever before.

This, then, is our new era and reality for one of the most cherished parts of our democracy. We must steel ourselves for a series of battles in the struggle to preserve what is left of our natural wonders. For Oregon's high desert, a handful of these battlefronts are already apparent, and ONDA is monitoring them, advocating for the best possible outcomes for our public lands.

Public lands takeover

The first salvo in this new era has been the flimsy effort to "dispose of" 3.3 million acres of public land in a piece of legislation known as H.R. 621, sponsored by Rep. Jason Chaffetz of Utah. The identified lands are brimming with important reasons not to sell them off – historical and cultural artifacts, important wildlife habitat, new and used recreation sites, and access to hunting, fishing, camping and other uses on the public lands beyond.

Beyond the flawed list of lands, the process suggested in H.R. 621 ran contrary to law and logic and we are relieved the bill is unlikely to see further action due to widespread public outcry and opposition. But we are not naïve to the likelihood of continued and more nefarious attempts to sell off our public lands. ONDA is actively monitoring new efforts on this front and will reach out to our thousands of members and supporters to help stop these bad ideas before they gain momentum.

We've also seen how the state of Oregon is susceptible with a recent bill, HB 2365, in the Oregon House of Representatives. HB 2365 proposes a study to examine the idea of giving public lands to the state. The reality of this bill is actually much more concerning. Extended to a natural conclusion, the bill would be the beginning of the eventual sale of public lands and a loss of access for recreation and a host of other land uses. ONDA recognized this as an ill-conceived idea and testified against the bill in February. Many ONDA supporters voiced opposition to the bill, and one of the bill sponsors, Rep. Gene Whisnant, subsequently withdrew his support for and sponsorship of the bill.



A camper enjoys the wide-open vistas and solitude of the Owyhee Canyonlands this past fall. Efforts will continue to protect public lands in the days ahead. Photo: Dan Holz

Media coverage documented widespread opposition for the legislation.

Greater sage-grouse

A massive effort has been underway across the West to ensure the survival of the Greater sage-grouse. Despite broad collaborative efforts for the past decade that created robust plans to conserve and restore the sage-grouse and its habitat, some Western governors and members of the U.S. House and Senate think they know better. As a result, legislation has been introduced to turn management of sage-grouse habitat on public lands over to individual states.

Not only would the legality of such a move be questionable, the resulting efforts would certainly fail. State-based plans for sage-grouse do not address the same areas or issues as the BLM plans, nor do the state plans create adequate mechanisms to ensure sage-grouse recovery. The bottom line is that the bulk of sage-grouse habitat is on federal public lands and we must have strong landscape-scale management plans for those places if we hope to see any degree of sage-grouse recovery. Deferring to the state plans would be an exercise in extinction.

Secretary Zinke and the new administration

Like many people, ONDA is eager to better understand how the new Trump administration will address a range of public lands

Keep up on ONDA's latest efforts to stand up for our public lands:
[ONDA.org/keepitpublic](https://onda.org/keepitpublic)

issues. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has a limited and mixed record on public lands protection that merits scrutiny and vocal opposition when he or the president adopts anti-conservation positions. Many other appointed positions in our land management agencies will also have significant influence on conservation. ONDA will carefully track these appointments and provide information to you to help oppose those who would threaten our public lands.

Appointees, though, are not the only story in the Trump administration. There are many thousands of dedicated and knowledgeable career land managers at work. These professionals now face the unenviable task of implementing conservation when administration appointees are working to achieve the exact opposite. The public can best support these agencies by loudly and visibly opposing decisions that impact our environment and, just as importantly, supporting agency decision-makers when they do the right things.

Our public lands face unprecedented trials. While we don't relish the challenge, ONDA remains stalwart in our efforts to protect our country's natural heritage.

EFFORT TO BLOCK ROADS IN STEENS TO MOVE FORWARD

By Mac Lacy
Senior Attorney

To protect dwindling sagebrush habitat on Steens Mountain, ONDA in 2009 challenged the Bureau of Land Management's plan to designate as roads about 538 miles of routes – many of which exist on paper only – within the mountain's half-million acre Cooperative Management and Protection Area in southeastern Oregon's high desert. This year, the case appears poised to move forward.

ONDA has been tracking BLM travel planning on Steens Mountain for 15 years. The plans at issue in the case, the agency's Travel Management Plan (2007) and Comprehensive Recreation Plan (2015), together designate routes available for motorized use and levels of maintenance that BLM can perform to keep — or make — them passable. But a substantial number of the roads shown on the agency's maps are difficult or impossible to find on the ground. ONDA is concerned that allowing motorized use and mechanical maintenance will destroy roadless areas and unfragmented sagebrush habitat.

During the environmental review process, ONDA voiced concern that BLM's extensive proposed road network threatened to carve up important roadless areas with irreplaceable wildlife and wilderness values – including 120,000 acres of Wilderness Study Areas and another 81,000 acres of citizen-inventoried (but not recognized by BLM) roadless areas. The Steens Act prohibits off-road driving and the establishment of new roads on the mountain.

ONDA proposed that BLM close or limit to agency and permittee use only a targeted set of nonexistent or resource-damaging vehicle routes, and that BLM authorize limited or no mechanical maintenance on other, seldom-



This is considered a road for off-road vehicles under a plan that is supposed to guide vehicle use throughout the Steens Mountain region on public lands. ONDA has challenged some of these findings to prevent critical roadless areas from being developed. Photo: Craig Miller

used routes that run through important sagebrush habitat. To support its proposal, ONDA provided detailed information on hundreds of miles of the routes. This included spatial analyses and maps, hundreds of ground-based photographs, field narratives describing the routes, and information identifying which routes fall within areas with wilderness character or essential habitat for the Greater sage-grouse.

When BLM refused to close any of those routes – even ones the agency admitted it could not find on the ground – ONDA filed suit in 2009.

Despite delays in the case, ONDA has secured important interim protections for Steens Mountain. In 2015, a federal judge ordered BLM not to allow motorists to drive on 36 miles of routes shown on agency maps that do not actually exist on the ground. The injunction augmented a 2012 order prohibiting BLM from conducting

maintenance that would have upgraded about 90 other miles of primitive routes on the mountain. The court agreed with ONDA that if motorists were allowed to set off in search of these routes, they would create new paths through the sagebrush, introducing weeds and carving up roadless areas.

This year the parties will submit court briefs setting out their positions on ONDA's claims under the Steens Act and other federal environmental laws that govern BLM's management of Steens Mountain. If ONDA wins one or more of its claims, the court may set aside the travel plan and order BLM to undertake a lawful environmental review process, supported by adequate, field-based evidence, and to issue a new plan.

ONDA is represented on this case by senior attorney Mac Lacy, assisted by Tom Buchele of the Portland-based Earthrise Law Center.

WILD UPDATES

What's next for the Owyhee

Tens of thousands of Oregonians over the past few years have called upon our elected officials to safeguard Oregon's Owyhee Canyonlands for future generations. We will continue to work to permanently protect this high desert gem so it remains as it is today.

The reasons for such efforts are simple: This place remains amazingly intact – and under threat. Over 170,000 acres of natural gas leases are active just to the north of the proposed Owyhee Canyonlands Conservation Area. Just last fall, the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries found high mining potential for gold, uranium, silver and bentonite (also known as cat litter) throughout the Owyhee's pristine sagebrush steppe and canyonlands. The uncharted political

climate in Washington only exacerbates this threat.

That's why all options to permanently protect the Owyhee Canyonlands – including Wilderness, National Conservation Area, Wild & Scenic River and National Monument designations – have always been and will remain on the table as we seek to forge common-sense protections.

No matter what happens in the days ahead, know this: Together, we've made the Owyhee Canyonlands a state and national conservation priority. We remain steadfast and unwavering in our efforts and commitment to ensuring public lands like the Owyhee Canyonlands stay in public hands and are protected for future generations.

ONDA LAUNCHES OREGON DESERT TRAIL STEWARDSHIP PROJECTS

By Renee Patrick
Oregon Desert Trail Coordinator

For the first year since the Oregon Desert Trail's (ODT) inception, ONDA will offer stewardship trips along the trail corridor in 2017. Because the ODT was designed to tie into existing infrastructure across the high desert, the 750-mile route links trails, old two-track roads and cross-country sections to introduce those hiking or pursuing other forms of quiet recreation to the incredible landscapes of eastern Oregon.

Existing trail tread makes up just over 11 percent of the overall mileage, but many of those sections haven't seen consistent trail maintenance over the years. By tapping into the active ONDA volunteer base, the new stewardship trips will help the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management clear these trails and improve the corridor for all users, not just those on the Oregon Desert Trail.

Beginning in June, volunteers will partner with the BLM and Friends of Oregon Badlands Wilderness to establish a new trail near the Larry Chitwood Trailhead, not only expanding the trail network in this important landscape close to Bend, but replacing a short cross-country section of the ODT with a cairn-marked route. Volunteers will gather lava rocks and build cairns to mark new sections of the Mazama Ash Trail and add cairns to the existing Sand Lilly Trail to aid navigation.

In late June volunteers will head to the Fremont National Forest to maintain a section of Oregon Desert Trail that ties into the larger Fremont National Recreation Trail system found along the ridges between Paisley and Lakeview. The group will work with a trained sawyer to clear downed trees and maintain the trail corridor, and will use



The Blitzen River Trail follows this scenic river in the iconic Steens Mountain Wilderness. Photo: Renee Patrick

a variety of tools to brush and maintain the tread to Forest Service standards.

In August two projects will take place in the Steens Mountain Wilderness. Early in the month volunteers will backpack into one of the most spectacular sections of the ODT in Big Indian Gorge. In a backcountry camping setting 2,000 feet below the Steens summit, the group will use crosscut saws to clear trail and also work to maintain and brush the route.

The second Steens Mountain Wilderness trip will be along the Donner und Blitzen River just out of Page Springs Campground in late August. This section of trail isn't along the Oregon Desert Trail's original route but offers an interesting alternate for those looking for a little more trail or access to water in the section. Volunteers

will backpack into a scenic spot along the river to set up basecamp and spend the next few days working to brush and maintain the trail. The trip concludes on August 20, leaving time for volunteers to find an ideal spot in the high desert to watch the solar eclipse on August 21.

The new stewardship projects along the Oregon Desert Trail this year are an exciting step forward for the route. Thousands of people head to the Badlands Wilderness, Fremont National Recreation Trail and Steens Mountain Wilderness trails each year, and the stewardship projects will not only create a better trail experience for ODT users, but for everyone recreating in eastern Oregon. ONDA's hardworking stewardship volunteers will certainly put a dent in some overdue trail maintenance.

Updates to Oregon Desert Trail Resources

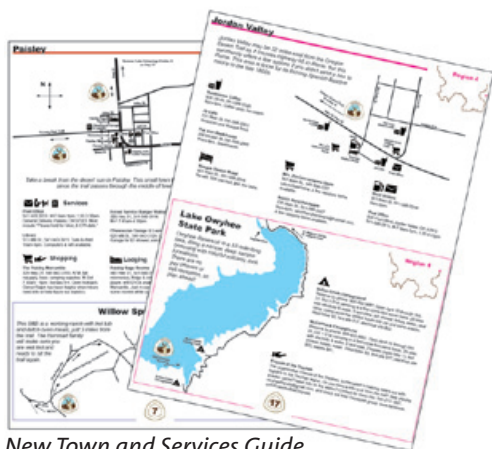
Following a successful 2016 season, Oregon Desert Trail resources are getting updated just in time for the spring. Based on the feedback from the five hikers who completed the entire route last year and countless others who hiked sections, the route and materials continue to be refined.

New this year will be a Town & Services Guide that will outline the amenities and resources hikers can expect to find along the route such as lodging, restaurants, laundry, showers, and a much-deserved beer. This guide will serve trail users well as they plan for and

execute their adventures along the ODT.

The ODT wouldn't exist without public lands, and it is more important than ever to advocate for their continued protection, understand how these lands are managed, and consider recreationists' roles to play in their future. The updated materials will highlight important areas along the route and suggest activities for hikers to help ONDA in efforts to protect, restore, and defend our public lands in Oregon's high desert.

New and revised materials are due to be released in early April.



New Town and Services Guide

MEMBERS

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Taylor Goforth lives in Olympia, Wash., and has been an ONDA member for about 20 years. She and her husband support ONDA regularly through our monthly giving program. For more information, visit ONDA.org/donate.



Taylor Goforth

What inspired you to become an ONDA member?

I moved to Washington from rural Colorado in 1998 and felt a pull toward the high desert ecosystem while adjusting to my new life along the I-5 corridor. Being out in the high desert to volunteer and explore made the Pacific Northwest feel more like home, and ONDA gave me the opportunity to connect with that feeling. I support ONDA on a monthly basis as a way I can keep in touch with the root of my conservation ethic and allow for their strong advocacy work to keep going. I count on them!

What is your favorite place in Oregon's high desert and why?

I've always felt a special connection to the eastern slopes of Steens Mountain and the Alvord Desert. There is so much expansive landscape that provides a space for inner contemplation. I make it a point to resonate with the emptiness and quiet out there.

What was your first experience with ONDA?

I attended the Desert Conference when it was held at Malheur Field Station. There, I got a sense of the community of advocates who were as passionate as I am about conserving Oregon's high desert. Through that community, I began volunteering on restoration sites, taking hikes and doing surveys, including monitoring sage-grouse leks and advocating to protect Steens Mountain as wilderness.

What would you like to see ONDA accomplish in the next year?

Life without wilderness would be barren, so I'd like to see ONDA keep up the advocacy work to protect our public lands and wild spaces, particularly the Owyhee right now. This land should be left undeveloped for wildlife and for us to explore, when and where appropriate. I am grateful ONDA is here to speak up for it!

Are you a proud, dynamic member like Taylor? Support ONDA's mission and grow our community with a gift membership to a friend or loved one. ONDA.org/donate

YOUR DONATIONS AT WORK IN OREGON'S HIGH DESERT

Thanks to you...

11 town hall meetings attended alongside hundreds of public lands supporters help ensure Oregon's elected leaders hear from you that our lands must remain in public hands. Speak up now: ONDA.org/TakeAction.

1 legacy gift plus matching funds from members launched an effort to assess 1 million acres of vital sage-grouse habitat. Learn more: ONDA.org/ElliottsLegacy

23 presentations about the Oregon Desert Trail in 2016 drew more than 1,000 attendees. Hit the trail: ONDA.org/OregonDesertTrail

200 people with diverse perspectives who share a love of Oregon's high desert convened in Bend to identify common ground and conservation solutions. Watch the video: ONDA.org/CommonGroundVideo

...and so much more, all made possible because of you!

SAVE THE DATE

High Desert Speaker Series

There are still two more great opportunities to enjoy ONDA's High Desert Speaker Series. The series continues in April in Bend and Portland, with registration opening at the end of March.

Portland, April 24

In Portland, join ONDA Conservation Director Dan Morse on Monday, April 24 for "Lesser Known Public Lands in Eastern Oregon," an exploration of hidden gems in the high desert.

Bend, April 25

Then on Tuesday, April 25, the series finale in Bend is "Finding Artistic Inspiration in the High Desert," a panel of four artists who will share their stories of inspiration: Nancy Pobanz, artist-in-residence at the Rimrock Draw Rock Shelter archaeological site; Janet Matson, a ceramicist and member of the Clay Guild of the Cascades; Deborah Ford, photographer and executive director of Playa; and Carla Fox, a metalsmith and founder of Art in the High Desert. ONDA Public Lands Coordinator Gena Goodman-Campbell will moderate.

Learn more now at:

ONDA.org/HighDesertSeries



Wild Desert Calendar Submissions

Use your talent to support conservation! We're now seeking submissions for the 2018 Wild Desert Calendar. Every year, this all-volunteer effort showcases spectacular high desert public lands worthy of protection. Learn more:

ONDA.org/2018CallForPhotos



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ONDA is a member of EarthShare of Oregon, which brings support to environmental endeavors in local communities, across Oregon and around the world.



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ONDA DESERT OUTING: **DEGARMO CANYON**

In contrast to the often open, rolling hills of the eastern two-thirds of the Hart Mountain refuge, DeGarmo Canyon offers hikers a chance to get their feet wet and dive into the amazing geology of this towering fault block ridge.

The perennial stream and diverse plant life make DeGarmo a great spot for wildflower and wildlife lovers alike.

Extending from the floor of Warner Valley to the top of the Hart Mountain ridgeline, this deep cut through the heart of Hart Mountain propels hikers into a seemingly parallel world.

From the tight meandering turns of the lower canyon, to the more open U-shaped portions of the upper reaches, DeGarmo offers a variety that is hard to find in any landscape.



*Hikers enjoy the waterfall in DeGarmo Canyon, a diverse hike at Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge.
Photo: Jeremy Austin*

OVERVIEW

DRIVE TIME FROM BEND

4 hours

WHEN TO HIKE

April–November

HIKING DISTANCE

2–10 miles

DIFFICULTY

Easy to moderate, with opportunity for difficult

DRIVING DIRECTIONS FROM BEND

From the small town of Plush, drive north less than one mile and turn right onto County Hwy 3-12 towards Hart Mountain.

Stay on road 3-12 for 8.6 miles to a sign on the right side of the road for DeGarmo Canyon. Park here and walk or continue on this dirt two-track road if you have a high-clearance vehicle. **Go right** at the first fork and left at the second fork, after .5 miles you will come to a primitive parking area.

ABOUT THE HIKE

Follow the creek into the mouth of the canyon. Scramble over a rock outcropping at the beginning, then cross the creek to the north side. Climb up the bank and follow a single-track trail as it meanders along the bottom of the canyon through rose, willow and aspens.

The trail stays on the north side of the creek from here on, twisting and turning between the hillside and creek. After about one mile, stop at the DeGarmo waterfall for a pleasant reprieve from the desert sun or continue on for a more rigorous hike up the canyon.