



STEWARDSHIP TARGETS CLIMATE CHANGE IN JOHN DAY BASIN

By Ben Gordon
Stewardship Director

With strong partnerships in place and 20 years of restoration experience, ONDA's stewardship program will launch a concerted effort in the coming year to tackle what's poised to be a significant factor for the future of Oregon's high desert: climate change.

ONDA and its volunteers have a long, successful his-

tory of undertaking stewardship projects in the John Day basin. Traditionally we have sought to improve site-specific conditions on streams such as Bridge Creek and Pine Creek, where efforts to replant the streambanks and slow the flow of water have had an almost immediate positive impact on native fish habitat. While implementing these types of restoration projects will continue to be what ONDA and its volunteers do on the ground, site selection, restoration techniques and our definition of success are being reconsidered to ensure that our efforts make the greatest contributions possible toward helping the basin adapt to the impacts of a changing climate.

To develop our strategy, ONDA started by understanding the best available climate science predictions. This research suggests that within the next 50 years the John Day basin will experience warmer temperatures, decreased annual precipitation and more severe flood events that have the potential to make the basin's streams and rivers susceptible to drying up during the summer months. This forecast is exacerbated by 150 years of impacts that in some cases have already caused streams to be eroded, deeply incised and no

ONDA volunteers construct a beaver dam analogue in the John Day River Basin. Photo: Heidi Hagemeier

Native juniper trees have been expanding into areas where they previously didn't exist in the John Day basin. To counter that, ONDA volunteers cut down young juniper trees in the basin's Pine Creek Conservation Area, making way for other vegetation. Photo: Sam Frank

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STANDING UP FOR PUBLIC LANDS IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

By Brent Fenty
Executive Director

Gobsmacked. It nicely sums up how I've felt at times these last few weeks. First came the recent acquittal of the gun-toting militants who took over the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge earlier this year ... those militants who obstructed others from accessing their public lands, defaced Native American artifacts, trashed one of Oregon's most beloved

wildlife areas, and kept well-meaning public servants from doing their jobs while making others fear for the safety of their community and families.

It was quickly followed by an election that shocked the world and leaves more questions than answers about the future of our public lands. Like many of you, I am concerned that there will

Standing up, continued on Page 3

PUBLIC LANDS, COMMON GROUND

By Dan Morse
Conservation Director

Nearly 150 people from across the state came together in Bend in mid-October to discuss current and future management of our public lands at ONDA's biennial Desert Conference. While this was the 28th conference – held throughout the years to bring people together around high desert issues – this one in particular focused on how we move forward together for the future of public lands.

Themed “Public Lands, Common Ground,” the one-day gathering zeroed in on the fact that public lands are a privilege that comes with the weighty responsibility: Management must benefit all Americans. At times, agreeing on what this management looks like may seem beyond reach.

But really it boils down to developing and maintaining a social contract, which functions only with the participation of stakeholders, their ability to communicate with one another, their development of relationships. That simple idea has always been part of ONDA's Desert Conference, and it was again on prominent display at this year's event.

Keynote speaker Nancy Langston, professor of environmental history at Michigan Tech and author of the noted book “Where Land and Water Meet,” kicked off the event with an inspiring, insightful perspective. Nancy shared the storied history of the Harney Basin, the challenges of managing its public lands and the use of those lands since the 1800s. Nancy's introductory remarks were a reminder of the importance of the unprecedented collaboration that led to the most recent Malheur National Wildlife Refuge management plan. Panelists including Harney County rancher Gary Marshall, Bob Sallinger with Audubon Society of Portland and Bruce Taylor with Oregon Habitat Joint Venture discussed that planning effort and shared perspectives on why they chose to take part.

Another panel discussed the recent planning effort for Greater sage-grouse and the work required to develop plans that have broad support. Panelists including agency officials, conservationists and a rancher discussed the lengthy effort to assemble these plans, the relationships that have been built and the continuing effort to implement the plans and protect sage-grouse. The subsequent panel discussed the development of legislation to protect Sutton Mountain as wilderness while simultaneously affording economic development opportunities in Wheeler County.

The conference culminated with a panel including Charlotte Rodrique of the Burns-Paiute Tribe, Harney County Rancher Jeff Hussey, Lake County Commissioner Ken Kestner and ONDA's own Brent Fenty discussing their visions for the future of public lands in Oregon's high desert and ways in which all stakeholders can work together. The four panelists touched on similar themes of caring for the desert, the people who live, work and recreate there and wanting a healthy environment and economy for future generations.

In summarizing her vision for the future Charlotte Rodrique expressed a simple idea that many attendees shared, “If we aren't careful today, we won't have anything tomorrow.”

Throughout the day people were able to meet and discuss the issues, their differences and areas of common ground. At the end of the day, all participants came away with new and renewed relationships that will support future collaboration and motivation to move forward in managing the public lands that we all cherish. In the coming months ONDA will seek to convene smaller groups of stakeholders for conversations that build on this year's Desert Conference and we will be in touch with groups and individuals willing to work together for our public lands.

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YOUR LEGACY IN OREGON'S HIGH DESERT

Legacy giving: a simple and impactful way to support causes that have great meaning in your life

ONDA.org/legacy

Photo: © Chad Case



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CLIMATE CHANGE

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longer connected to floodplains, which historically helped store and cool water.

For 2017, ONDA and its partners considered the climate science along with firsthand knowledge of upland and riparian conditions in order to choose project sites that we believe we can make substantially more resilient. We selected six streams throughout the basin: Camp and Wiwaanyatt creeks in the upper basin in partnership with the Malheur National Forest, Muleshoe and Bridge creeks in the central basin in partnership with a private landowner and the Bureau of Land Management's Prineville District, and Pine and Hay creeks in the lower basin in partnership with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and Oregon State Parks.

We developed a plan for each site that we believe will give them the best chance to adapt to the impacts of climate change and thus begin to make the entire basin more resilient. We will employ some well-known approaches, such as planting drought tolerant native riparian plants to create streambank stability and shading, as well as removing juniper from springs and riparian areas to allow more water to seep into the ground. Other more innovative techniques include building beaver dam analogues – in-stream structures made of wooden posts and woven plant material that slow the flow of water – and induced meander structures designed to push water into sediment deposits that release over time, slowing the flow of water and enabling streams to connect to their floodplains.



ONDA volunteers work along Pine Creek in the John Day River Basin. Stewardship in the region will be enhanced in the coming years with an emphasis on making the region more resilient in the face of climate change. Photo: Allison Crotty

Making the John Day basin more resilient to climate change through restoration dovetails nicely with ongoing efforts to permanently protect places like Sutton Mountain and Cathedral Rock and Horse Heaven, which provide critical wildlife habitat. This two-pronged approach strives to keep whole what makes the basin so special; world-class rafting, rich geology, rare plants, abundant wildlife and runs of threatened native fish.

At the end of the day, ONDA's approach to improving fish and wildlife habitat by making the basin more resilient to climate change is not new at all. ONDA's 20 years of successful restoration work here has created conditions in parts of the basin that are already likely to withstand the anticipated

effects of climate change. What is new is the framework we will use to prioritize where we work and the desired outcomes of our projects. We want to take this approach and apply it to as much of the basin as we possibly can.

ONDA continues to prioritize the enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat as the driving force behind our efforts, but we understand that making the basin resilient to climate change requires a comprehensive strategy and partners invested in this holistic approach. By making sure we're taking in the big picture, we can increase the likelihood of native fish and wildlife that depend on the John Day basin continuing to thrive even as the climate changes.

STANDING UP

Continued from Page 1

be those who would seek to undermine the notion of public lands. However, I am heartened by the notes that have poured in following recent events, as well as the thousand-plus people earlier this year who signed up to restore damage to the Malheur Refuge.

I am also heartened by how far we have come. ONDA is in the midst of completing a strategic plan that will define our work for the next four years. As part of that effort, we reflect on where ONDA started nearly 30 years ago. It was a time when the vast majority of Oregon's high desert had no conservation protections. No wilderness or wilderness study areas. Instead, our public lands were prioritized for mining, livestock grazing and energy development. The good news is that times have changed thanks in large part to

our efforts. The bad news is that the work is not done and especially now we cannot take these gains for granted.

In the years ahead, we will need to stand together and boldly, passionately speak up for Oregon's high desert. We will, wherever possible, work toward common ground with diverse stakeholders for sound, science-based management solutions on our public lands. Thousands of volunteers will continue get out on the ground to steward their public lands. Thanks to their efforts, the last of the obsolete barbed-wire fence will be removed from Steens Mountain Wilderness, beaver and associated fish habitat will be reestablished on tributaries of the John Day, Malheur and Silvies rivers, and millions of acres of important Greater sage-grouse habitat will be protected.

Public opinion overwhelmingly opposed the Malheur "occupation." People value the protections that have been in place over the

past few decades and want to ensure that public lands remain open to all Americans. In the coming days we will need the voices of thoughtful public lands supporters to be more powerful than those who would attempt to sell off, give away or degrade these precious high desert areas. As part of that effort, we will ensure that those voices from across the state are heard by Oregon's elected officials in a way that leaves no doubt that the vast majority of Oregonians love their public lands and want wild places left intact for future generations.

We need your help to make this a reality. In the year ahead, I hope you will continue to back conservation in the high desert, contribute to ONDA to support that work, speak out for your public lands, and spread the word to others to get involved. If this past year has proven anything, it is that we cannot take our public lands for granted.

ONWARD FOR THE OWYHEE: TENS OF THOUSANDS SPEAK UP

By Corie Harlan
Owyhee Coordinator

As the close of 2016 draws near, it's important to recognize the giant strides made in the past few years toward permanently protecting the Owyhee Canyonlands. After decades of efforts, the dedication, passion and support of tens of thousands of Oregonians, veterans, sportsmen, health care providers, local elected officials, small business owners and conservation groups have vaulted this special part of Oregon onto the national scene. Once a relatively unknown place, the Owyhee is now a state and national conservation priority.

Over 80,000 people from Oregon and beyond have now spoken up for permanent protection for the Owyhee Canyonlands and our wild public lands. We must acknowledge this tremendous feat, achieved due to the hard work and passion of so many. As Margaret Mead said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." And we are. One public meeting, town hall, petition signature, conversation, letter to the editor and event at a time.

The need to protect this place – as well as the broad support for it – is abundantly clear: In September, Oregon's Department of Geology and Mineral Industries released a report focusing on the high mining potential for gold, uranium and bentonite (also known as cat litter) in the Owyhee Canyonlands. And just last month, over 500 people attended a public meeting in Ashland hosted by Senator Jeff Merkley and attended by Deputy Interior Secretary Mike Connor – and



People from across the state traveled to Ashland in October to share with Senator Jeff Merkley and Deputy Interior Secretary Mike Connor why they support protection for the Owyhee Canyonlands. The need to conserve the Owyhee is firmly on the national radar. Photo: Jackie Feinberg

many voiced their support for a permanently protected Owyhee. It demonstrated to our elected leaders that broad support exists for protecting this place in every part of Oregon – and it continued to remind them this is a state priority.

Over the coming months and years, it will be more important than ever to raise our voices on behalf of our public lands, waters and wildlife, including the Owyhee. We must continue to send a strong, clear message to our elected officials that protection for the Owyhee must happen now if we truly want this treasure to remain as it is for future generations.

Onward for the Owyhee!

Ready to be a champion for the Owyhee?
Contact Corie at corie@wildowyhee.org.

Though the window for permanent protection this year grows smaller and much uncertainty lies ahead, you can count on this: With your help, we will continue to push our elected leaders to champion a strong conservation approach that affords the highest degree of protection for the Owyhee. Onward! There's good, hard work to do.



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YOUR DONATIONS AT WORK IN OREGON'S HIGH DESERT

Thanks to you...

177 supporters sustain core ONDA operations and protect Oregon's wild desert lands, waterways and wildlife with a convenient monthly gift. Set up your sustaining gift at [ONDA.org/donate](https://onda.org/donate).

80,000 Owyhee Canyonlands campaign supporters made their voices heard by signing petitions to protect this incredible landscape. Advocate to protect more than 2 million acres of your public lands: WildOwyhee.org/act.

3,305 committed supporters are now active ONDA members, helping to grow our voice across Oregon and make desert conservation a state and national priority. Join us: [ONDA.org/donate](https://onda.org/donate)

13,000 data points collected across more than 500,000 acres of your desert public lands build a better understanding of whether plant communities, in their current state, are providing the habitat sage-grouse need to persist. Learn more about monitoring habitat: [ONDA.org/blog](https://onda.org/blog)

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

EFFORT TO SAVE THREATENED BULL TROUT CONTINUES



Photographed this fall, a section of Big Creek, an upstream tributary to the Malheur Wild and Scenic River, displays a diversity in composition, structure, and function of riparian vegetation. It's an area not grazed by cattle. Both beaver and river otter were observed at this site. Photo: Boone Kauffman

By Mac Lacy
Senior Attorney

Bull trout require the cleanest, coldest water of any inland native fish in western North America. The species once lived in major river systems and smaller mountain streams throughout Oregon, Washington, California, Nevada, Idaho and Montana – including about 60 percent of the Columbia River basin. However, after a century of human activities that have caused widespread damage to and loss of these habitats, bull trout today occur in less than half of their historic range. They have disappeared entirely in California.

In Oregon, one area where bull trout still exist is in the Malheur and North Fork Malheur Wild and Scenic Rivers in eastern Oregon's Blue Mountains and Strawberry Range. These rivers and a dozen of their tributaries provide spawning, rearing, and migratory areas for bull trout, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has identified them as being "essential" to the survival of the species. The service listed the bull trout as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act in 1998.

To protect these fish and other wildlife, ONDA in 2003 challenged U.S. Forest Service decisions approving livestock grazing within 39.2 miles of protected corridors along the rivers. With only a few hundred adult fish left in each river's watershed, ONDA considers this ongoing case to be more critical than ever today.

Each year, grazing authorized by the Forest Service on the Malheur National Forest continues to degrade instream and riparian



An area also photographed this fall, the incised banks along a section in a grazing allotment on the North Fork Malheur Wild and Scenic River are susceptible to further erosion and collapse. Photo: Mac Lacy

streamside habitat important to the bull trout's survival. The cattle trample stream banks and consume plants and grasses that would otherwise stabilize the banks. That in turn results in shallow, wide streams that are too warm for the fish to survive, and soil erosion that buries rocky substrates the fish need to build their nests, called "redds."

After bringing this problem to the Forest Service's attention more than 15 years ago, ONDA and co-plaintiff Center for Biological Diversity filed suit. Through this and several other related cases, ONDA has secured orders resulting in improved management of critical steelhead and bull trout populations and habitat throughout the Malheur National Forest. Now, the Wild and Scenic Rivers case will have its day in court, with briefing to be completed this winter.

In response to ONDA's legal pressure, the Forest Service has removed cattle from a few areas along the rivers. Those places have shown marked improvement, demonstrating the tremendous resiliency of these systems in the absence of grazing. But absent corridor-wide protection, bull trout will continue to suffer. These two bull trout populations are considered by both state and federal fish agencies to be at serious risk of local extinction. A strong ruling from the court next year could finally provide the impetus for the lasting protection these rivers deserve.

ONDA and the Center for Biological Diversity are represented on this case by senior attorney Mac Lacy, assisted by the Center's Portland-based attorney, Stephanie Parent.

PARTNERSHIPS POWER RESTORATION WORK ON SOUTH FORK



By Jefferson Jacobs
Wilderness Stewardship Coordinator

If you were to look for an outstanding eastern Oregon example of “collaboration resulting in significant on-the-ground ecosystem improvements,” you’d need to look no further than the Jake Place.

This 1,200-acre conservation parcel, privately owned by Otto Keller, is situated on the South Fork Crooked River and is immediately adjacent to a Wilderness Study Area, an Area of Critical Environmental Concern and several active Bureau of Land Management grazing allotments. ONDA has worked in the area for nearly a decade on small-scale projects aimed at helping reverse the degraded river conditions for the benefit of the struggling redband trout population. However, it was not until 2015 that a number of “stars aligned” allowing for the coalescing of multiple collaborative opportunities in the area.

These interactions have resulted in a plan that envisions restoring 4.5 miles of riparian habitat on the South Fork Crooked River during the next three years. The restoration work will put in place all the necessary ingredients to sustain a dam-constructing beaver population, thereby increasing climate resilience and improving habitat for redband trout.

This undertaking has required the development of many partnerships. One of which is with Bend-based nonprofit Heart of

Oregon Corps. In exchange for career mentoring and ecological education from ONDA staff, youth crew members have volunteered to cut down and stack juniper on more than two dozen acres of riparian area.

Another partnership has been formed with Oregon State University-Cascades. Professor Matt Orr has spearheaded cooperative monitoring efforts, utilizing student labor, sensor arrays and a web of transects and cross-sections to track changes in the river’s morphology, vegetation cover, planting success and water table.

The concerted effort to improve the South Fork began in 2015, when ONDA and Great Old Broads for Wilderness volunteers, in cooperation with the U.S. Farm Service Agency, planted more than 5,000 native trees and shrubs along the first half mile of creek. Exclosures were constructed from materials recycled from ONDA fence-pulls to keep out hungry deer, elk and beaver until the plants grow enough to survive browsing pressure.

This season, we have moved operations up to the next mile-long section of river: planting another 5,000 plants in exclosures, cutting more juniper, spreading 200 pounds of native seed, and building beaver dam analogues in cooperation with Eco Logic LLC to help retain the highly fluctuating water. And through cooperative efforts with the Bureau of Land Management’s Prineville District and several grazing allotment holders, property fences have been adjusted to eliminate cattle

ONDA volunteers prep for planting along the South Fork Crooked River. The plan over the next several years is to restore 4.5 miles of riparian habitat that will sustain a dam-constructing beaver population, thereby increasing climate resilience and improving habitat for redband trout. Photo: Alia Beyrer

trespass (Otto does not graze his property). Efforts this year were supported by hundreds of dedicated volunteers, including from KEEN and Cascade Crest Transitions.

In 2017, ONDA volunteers will continue to replant the banks of the South Fork and assist with the construction of a new mile-long fence, which will protect a section of the river on BLM-managed lands from feral horse impacts and allow for the potential expansion of restoration opportunities.

Thus far the result has been a broad scope of volunteer-powered, on-the-ground riparian restoration work and research that is perhaps unequalled in ONDA’s history. Work is expected to be completed by spring 2019. Then it will be a matter of letting Mother Nature take over to use the tools and systems we’ve put in motion.



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

MEMBERS

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Annette McRay lives in Beaverton and recently became an ONDA member after attending our Desert Naturalist Hike at Cottonwood Canyon State Park.

How did you first learn about ONDA?

I was always interested in hiking and went to an event at the Hollywood Theater in Portland where Sage Clegg, the first Oregon Desert Trail finisher, was speaking. I took information about ONDA and was hooked! I loved the connection between recreation and conservation.



Annette McRay

What inspired you to become an ONDA member?

I consider myself a "steward at heart" and always have wanted to take care of landscapes that I love to explore. ONDA's stewardship trips provide a way to get outside and give back at the same time. After attending events in Portland, and most recently the guided hike along the John Day River, I joined ONDA to support this cause I care deeply about.

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

I loved visiting Alder Springs in Central Oregon on a trail cleaning stewardship trip. Alder Springs has a historic connection to people

who lived on this land before us, and it was fascinating to see the pictographs and springs there.

What do you most look forward to as a new ONDA supporter?

More opportunities to get out and explore the high desert. I feel a special connection to eastern Oregon, and ONDA gives me an opportunity to experience that. I'd also love to hike the Oregon Desert Trail someday!

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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Bob DenOuden

Welcome, Bob DenOuden

Native Oregonian and longtime high desert lover Bob DenOuden recently joined ONDA's board of directors. Bob hails from Eugene and recently moved to Bend. He brings experience applying geographic information system (GIS) technology in the planning and water resource fields to the board as well as his deep knowledge of Oregon's high desert. Welcome, Bob!

SAVE THE DATE

Bend Year-End Party

Hear the great news about ONDA's successes while enjoying bevs and live music at ONDA's Year-End Party in Bend! Join us: Friday, Dec. 2, 5-8 p.m., ONDA office, 50 SW Bond St. Suite 4.



2017 Wild Desert Calendar Celebration

Check out the best imagery of Oregon's high desert on the evening of Jan. 19 in Portland! We'll celebrate the 2017 Wild Desert Calendar at KEEN Garage, 505 NW 13th Ave. Stay tuned for more details! ONDA.org

High Desert Speakers Series

Stay tuned to ONDA.org for great lineups kicking off in January in Portland and Bend!

507 volunteers contributed
9,953 hours toward:



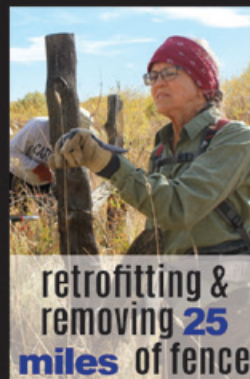
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removing juniper
from **405** acres



planting
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native
plants



retrofitting &
removing **25**
miles of fence



monitoring
589,000
acres of
public lands



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ONDA DESERT OUTING: **SPRING BASIN WILDERNESS**

Hikers looking for a terrific winter destination should consider Spring Basin Wilderness. Enjoy sunny skies during most of the winter, incredible views of the John Day River and millions of years of geology on display.

The bunchgrass and sagebrush-dotted landscape of today may give the impression that Spring Basin has always looked this way, however the fossil record tells another story.

Prior to the eruptions of the Clarno volcanoes 40 to 50 million years ago, this landscape was covered by a subtropical forest of palms and magnolias.

Many of the rock outcroppings seen today were formed by lahars, layers of ash, lava, and volcanic mudflows that solidified as they cooled, trapping plants and animals and preserving them as fossils that can be observed while hiking in the area.



Spring Basin Wilderness Area. Photo: Jim Davis

DRIVING DIRECTIONS FROM BEND

DRIVE TIME FROM BEND
2 hours

WHEN TO HIKE
Fall through spring

HIKING DISTANCE
4–9 miles

DIFFICULTY
Map and compass recommended

DRIVING DIRECTIONS FROM BEND

Follow Highway 97 42.5 miles north to Madras. Continue on Highway 97 for 17 miles, then turn right on Highway 293/Antelope Highway. After 13.5 miles, continue onto State Highway 218 E. Turn right onto Clarno Road. Proceed 3.5 miles on dirt road to the parking area.

ABOUT THE HIKE

From the trailhead, hike north cross-country for 0.4 miles until you intersect a trail. Follow it to the right to Spring Basin Canyon. At the next junction, turn right toward the canyon bottom. Follow the trail as it eventually loops back around west and it will intersect Clarno Road as the John Day River comes into view.

Alternately, turn left at the junc-

tion for Spring Basin Canyon to ascend a ridge to Horse Mountain. After enjoying gorgeous views from the remote peak, zigzag down into Hay Bottom Canyon and reconnect with a trail that ends at a southern border of the wilderness area. From there, follow the boundary westward until the John Day River comes into view and you meet Clarno Road. Head north to return to your car.