Fall 1995

Desert Ramblings
the newsletter of the
oregon Natural Desert association

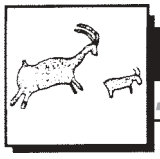
Volume 8, Number 3

Inside:

Clean Stream Initiative fights livestock pollution

Government inaction prompts citizen response

Oregonians take pride in our relationship to the land. We want to protect our environment for future generations. Like other Americans, we recognize water pollution as perhaps the most important environmental and public health issue facing the world today. Consequently, we have passed laws to protect our water from industrial point-source pollution, but we have not yet effectively addressed the enormous problem of non-point pollution sources, that is, effluents not obviously pouring into a river from an outlet such as a pipe.



FROM THE OUTBACK
by Bill Marlett

Oregon's rivers and their waters are public property, regulated by the state for its citizens. Most industries must obtain a permit to discharge pollutants into our public waters. Yet every year, the livestock industry—directly and indirectly—"dumps" 650 million pounds of manure into Oregon streams,[1] free from any form of regulation. In addition, cattle loiter along streams, trampling and grazing off vegetation, increasing erosion, sedimentation, and water temperatures. Salmon and trout populations suffer, water becomes unfit for swimming, and drinking water is fouled.

For years, the State has failed to control this biggest source of non-point pollution in our rivers. Our elected representatives are supposed to pass laws to protect public health. But in Washington, D.C., the Republican-controlled Congress is using industry lobbyists to draft bills to weaken the federal Clean Water Act (see back page). In Oregon, our legislators and government agencies have repeatedly backed away from meaningful reforms after being pressured by the cattle industry.

The time has come to seek relief through a grass roots ballot measure. Three out of four Oregonians say they would support a measure to prevent livestock from fouling our rivers and streams.[2] The Oregon Clean Stream Initiative, introduced by a citizen group with the same name, would do just that (see pg. 5-8 for details).

The Clean Stream Initiative will phase out grazing in riparian areas, drastically reducing water pollution from livestock. It will help restore thousands of river miles degraded by livestock, thereby improving fisheries, drinking water quality, wildlife populations and water recreation. In addition, the restored watersheds will benefit agriculture by increasing stream flows, reducing peak flooding, extending the irrigation season, and augmenting forage production.

Because of the many benefits the measure would produce, ONDA calls on members, conservationists, hunters, anglers and public health organizations to help place it on the ballot and pass it in 1996. Consider these facts:

Livestock foul over half the state's rivers, but government agencies have failed to act.

More than half the river miles in Oregon (inventoried in 1992 by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality) do not meet minimum water quality standards required by the federal Clean Water Act. More than half the river miles in the Deschutes, John Day, Umatilla, and the Grande Ronde watersheds are in need of restoration. On Bureau of Land Management lands, most of which are leased for grazing, only one of every five miles of riparian areas is functioning well enough to sustain water quality. Although regulations are in place to correct these situations, there is little enforcement.

Livestock "dump" 650 million pounds of manure annually into Oregon streams and degrade riparian zones, increasing erosion, fouling drinking water, impacting fisheries, and making water recreation unsanitary.

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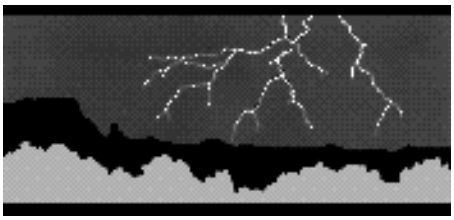


Oregon Natural Desert Association

FROM THE DEN

by Alice Elshoff

Join us at ONDA's Annual Meeting

October 14-15 • Hancock Field Station, Wasco County

If you liked the field trips at Desert Conference, if you enjoyed the open mike for conservation strategy, but wished it had lasted longer, we have something for you! ONDA's informal, fun-filled and informative Annual Meeting will take place on October 14-15 at Hancock Field Station, near Antelope, OR. If you can't find the registration form we sent in September, call ONDA at (503) 385-6908.

Highlights include field trips to Sutton Mountain, Spring Basin, and the John Day River. On Saturday evening, ONDA will premier an evocative slide presentation featuring the desert images of eight Oregon photographers. Please bring along slides and stories you want to share.

We look forward to seeing you at Hancock Field Station.

© ELAINE REES

Participants in our second annual volunteer work party at Hart Mountain Wildlife Refuge in August celebrate another successful fence removal. The refuge looks more beautiful than ever after several seasons without livestock grazing.

ONDA seeks listing of Desert Redband Trout

In April, ONDA, seven other conservation organizations and one individual petitioned the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to list the Desert Redband Trout as an endangered species under the federal Endangered Species Act. Desert Redband Trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss* ssp.), which inhabit the Snake River drainages of southeastern Oregon, southern Idaho, and northwestern Nevada, are severely threatened by streamside habitat degradation, primarily caused by livestock grazing and prolonged drought conditions.

State agencies and private organizations alike have long considered the Desert Redband a species of "special concern," as does USFWS, which has already designated it as a Category II candidate for federal listing.

Although Desert Redband trout are uniquely adapted to thrive in the arid environment, they simply cannot survive in streams stripped of vegetation and muddied and polluted by livestock. Listing under the ESA would mandate a recovery plan to save the fish from extinction. Under law, the USFWS must decide within one year whether or not to propose listing.

Lament of the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout

Livestock exclosures work best, but BLM still allows grazing in streams

by Kathleen Simpson Myron

The Lahontan cutthroat trout, a federally threatened species, is found in southeastern Oregon where grazing is the only significant impact on its stream habitat. The author has been actively involved in saving this fish from extinction. -Ed.

Water flows swiftly past willow-clad banks. Young willow wands dance in the golden light of late afternoon. Bird song and wildflowers delight the senses. The desert's stillness is a welcome balm to the spirit. It is June and all may seem well in the heart of the Trout Creek Mountains, home of the Lahontan cutthroat trout.

But is it?

Meandering downstream from the nearly 7,000-foot high spring meadows to the 4,000-foot valley floor, one sees the tell-tale signs of grazing: actively eroding meadows, downcut streams, hillside gullies, sediment bars, headcuts, and altered plant communities. Little Whitehorse Creek, says Bureau of Land Management (BLM) hydrologist Jack Wenderoth, "is functioning at risk."

"At risk" is not an encouraging description of a stream which supports one of the rarest trout species in North America. The Willow / Whitehorse Creek cutthroat is the only one of 14 subspecies of native trout in the Intermountain West that has completely escaped hybridization with exotic trout.

© KATHI SIMPSON MYRON

A "headcut" extends an eroding gully upstream until blocked by a solid object, like the basalt in this photograph.

Of the 100,000 acres in the Whitehorse Creek and Willow Creek watersheds in the Trout Creek Mountains, a full 91,000 acres are public lands. They have been intensively grazed by livestock for over a century. In 1971 the BLM, in cooperation with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Whitehorse Ranch, initiated a Habitat Management Plan for the Willow / Whitehorse cutthroat. A major problem was identified: excessive livestock grazing.

The plan called for willow plantings and "trash catcher" dams to slow erosion and sedimentation, along with some fenced exclosures. Thousands of tax dollars were spent, but the newly-planted willows either did not "take" or were grazed off by cattle. Only about twenty of the dams lasted more than a couple of years, and less than half of those actually created any pool habitat for trout. Some caught so much sediment that pools filled in.

In striking contrast, "...cattle exclosures were a remarkable success," reports Patrick Trotter in *Cutthroat: Native Trout of the West.* "Regrowth of streamside vegetation was excellent compared with outside the exclosures. Dense new growth was providing shade and cover, which was in turn cooling the water." (Warm waters make salmon and trout more susceptible to disease and reproductive failure.)

Despite the success of the exclosures, BLM continues to permit grazing along the majority of the riparian zones in the Trout Creeks. And while present management prescriptions have reduced grazing by almost 25% on 135,000 acres in the Whitehorse Butte Allotment, the adjacent Fifteen Mile and McCormick allotments still lack formal management plans.

© SANDY LONSDALE/WILD OREGON IMAGES

Where cattle have been excluded, densely vegetated banks create overhangs, shading the stream and keeping it cool enough for the threatened Lahontan cutthroat to survive.

Cattle are permitted to graze everywhere except the few miles of streams within fenced exclosures. Only a few ranch-hands are responsible for keeping cattle out of the approximately 64 miles of perennial streams in the Whitehorse Butte Allotment alone.

The value of eliminating grazing is evident in the handful of high elevation spring meadows that have been temporarily fenced. The improved vegetation surrounding springs and increased water retention in soils dramatically illustrate the potential of even severely degraded spring systems to recover upon removal of livestock. Unfenced meadows in the Willow and Whitehorse Creek watersheds continue to suffer from soil erosion and the gullying which accompanies rapid runoff due to soil compaction and lack of vegetation.

No, all is not well in the Trout Creek Mountains. The abundance of eroding slopes and downcut stream channels throughout the Willow and Whitehorse Creek watersheds will take decades to heal. If we are going to restore our desert fisheries, cows must not be allowed in or near critical fish habitat or near streams and rivers at all.

Clean Stream Initiative

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The State Legislature has failed to curb water pollution from livestock.

In 1991, the Senate Interim Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources acknowledged that regulations were needed to curb water pollution from livestock grazing and related agricultural activities. When the committee introduced such a bill in the 1993 Legislature, pressure from the Oregon Cattlemen's Association prevented it from ever reaching the floor for debate. The 1995 Legislature again failed to address the problem.

The State Land Board prevented conservationists from leasing state lands to protect fish-bearing streams and wildlife habitat.

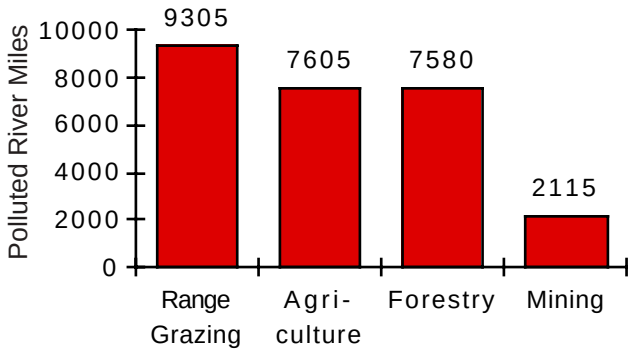
Three out of four Oregonians say they will support a measure to prevent livestock from fouling Oregon's rivers.

In 1994, conservation groups persuaded the State Land Board to lease state grazing lands to the highest bidder, rather than only to ranchers at bargain basement prices. Many of these lands contain sensitive fish and wildlife habitat in need of restoration. Conservationists wanted to bid on these lands, remove livestock, and allow streams to heal. However, in June, under pressure from ranchers, the Board reversed its decision, keeping the lands locked up for grazing. Conservation groups willing to pay top dollar for the right to improve water quality on cow-damaged streams were shut out of the process.

Interior Secretary Babbitt's "Rangeland Reform" fails to address water pollution caused by livestock on federal lands.

Babbitt's proposed "Rangeland Reform" allows livestock to continue grazing in streams and other sensitive wildlife habitat. Conservationists may defend Babbitt's modest reforms (which are strenuously opposed by ranchers), but we cannot accept the continued degradation of water quality and fisheries by livestock and their wastes.

Livestock: #1 Source of Non-point Pollution in Rivers



Source: "Oregon's 1994 Water Quality Assessment Report [305(b)]." April, 1995. Oregon Dept. of Environmental Quality.

Rep. Wes Cooley (R-OR) is attempting to make grazing the primary use of federal lands and eliminate our right to participate in decisions affecting public lands.

Cooley's pro-industry legislation (see back page) would effectively gut even Interior Secretary Babbitt's modest reforms. Cooley's legislation would eliminate citizen input into grazing management decisions (a hard-won right) and make grazing the dominant use on Forest Service and BLM lands. So much for the pretensions of "multiple use."

The continued failure of local, state and federal governments to act on this severe yet preventable source of water pollution is irresponsible. Whether it is the disproportionate influence of the cattle industry, budget cuts designed to hamstring enforcement, or other actions which favor livestock interests, the time has come for Oregonians to correct this injustice with the Oregon Clean Stream Initiative. It is unconscionable to continue squandering our water resources.

Let's make our streams and rivers run clean again. Our children and grandchildren will thank us for the swimming holes, the pure drinking water, the steelhead, trout, and salmon they'll catch, and the clean streams they'll inherit.

[1] USDA Soil Conservation Service, 1994.

[2] Scientific public opinion poll conducted by Bardsley & Neidhart, Inc., 1995.

ONDA Office Robbed

During the early morning hours of Sept. 18, burglars broke into the Central Oregon Environmental Center in Bend and made off with computer apparatus worth $8,000. It appears ONDA may have been targeted by the burglars, since all of our computer equipment was stolen, while only a few items were taken from other easily accessible offices. The perpetrators of the crime gained entrance by forcing open a ground-floor window.

No arrests have been made in connection with the robbery, but it appears possible that we were targeted by persons hostile to ONDA's mission to restore high desert ecosystems. (ONDA Executive Director Bill Marlett noted, however, that during the investigation no cow manure was detected in or around the Environmental Center.)

If you would like to help ONDA rebound from this assault by donating equipment (Macintosh computers, Laser printers, modem) or by making a finacial contribution, please contact our office at (503) 385-6908.

Livestock foul West's precious waters

How the cattle industry degrades our rivers

by Denzel Ferguson

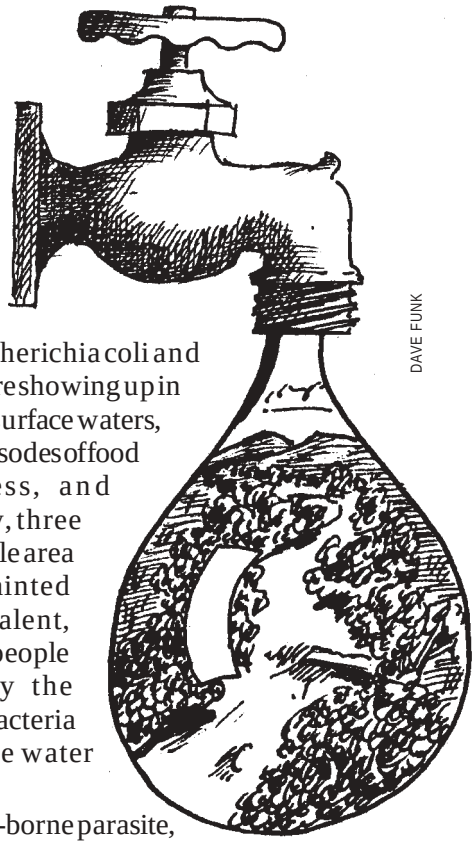
In the arid West, water is a vital and limiting resource—perhaps the most important commodity in our lives. We take it for granted: turn on the faucet, out comes a clean, pure, safe and dependable flow of water. But can we be assured of a continued abundant and safe supply?

The 17 Western states account for over four-fifths of water consumption in the U.S., and the primary use of water in the West is for raising livestock and growing livestock feed. According to the University of California Agricultural Extension Service, an average of 5,214 gallons of water is required to produce o*ne pound* of California beef. In Oregon, as in most Western states, public waters are used to water livestock and to irrigate vast acreages of cow pasture and hay fields.

Cows pollute our water

Strict laws govern acts of human waste and industrial pollution. In contrast, livestock are free to wade, urinate, defecate, and die in our waterways—even in designated wild and scenic rivers. Cattle produce nearly a billion tons of organic waste each year in the western half of the United States; cattle and feedlots alone account for more than half the toxic organic pollutants found in fresh water.[1] Because much of this water is ultimately destined for home use, crop irrigation, and food preparation, livestock pollution represents a serious threat to human health.

A cow produces about 50 pounds of manure and 20 pounds of urine a day—and a large portion of that is deposited directly into streams or reaches streams by overland flow after rains. Dead cattle, urine, and feces produce high bacterial counts in surface waters—especially bacteria belonging to the coliform, fecal coliform, and fecal streptococcal groups.



DAVE FUNK

Today new and more virulent strains of bacteria (e.g. Escherichia coli and cryptosporidium) are showing up in meat, livestock and surface waters, causing shocking episodes of food poisoning, illness, and fatalities. Recently, three children in the Seattle area died after eating tainted hamburgers. In Talent, Oregon, nearly 100 people were made ill by the cryptosporidium bacteria introduced into the water supply by livestock.

Giardia, a water-borne parasite, infects humans and animals and can cause severe illness and long-term debilitation. Outbreaks have affected many thousands of people in recent years. Giardia's spread was once attributed to beaver and other rodent. However, recent studies show the organism is commonly found in the manure of range cattle and surface waters on rangelands are highly contaminated. Any person drinking surface water in areas used by cattle is taking an enormous risk.

GEORGE WUERTHNER

Strict laws govern acts of human waste pollution and most industrial wastes. In contrast, livestock are free to wade, urinate, defecate and even die in our waterways.

Cows harm salmon, steelhead & trout

Salmon and steelhead populations once numbered around 16 million in the Columbia River. Now, less than half a million fish return from the sea. The John Day River in eastern Oregon was once home to an estimated 100,000 chinook salmon. Today it supports about 3,000 wild spring chinook, and the fall run appears to be extinct. Hydroelectric dams and logging are the best known culprits, but livestock grazing in riparian areas also kills salmon, steelhead and trout.

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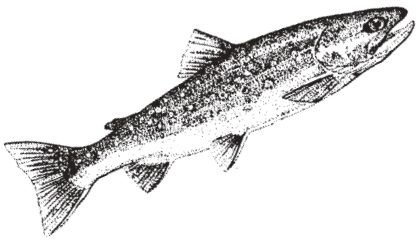
Why allow livestock to pollute our streams?

DAN SHERMAN

Forty percent of bird species associated with riparian habitat are in decline. The yellow warbler, shown here, is one of the many species suffering from riparian habitat loss.



Bull trout, a species at risk

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In hot arid areas, cattle congregate in the lush riparian zones and devour herbaceous vegetation, which normally would filter sediments and other pollutants from being washed into streams. Because heavy cows walking on small hooves compact the soil, water fails to infiltrate and runs off, frequently causing the water table to drop. This drop encourages the stream to excavate its channel into a gully. When that happens, streamside plants like willow and alder are replaced by invading upland shrubs, such as sagebrush and exotic weeds.

Cattle trample vegetation and break down stream banks. Spring flood waters erode the exposed banks, causing the channel to widen. These wider, unshaded streams are exposed to more sunlight, causing their temperatures to rise. Warm, oxygen-depleted waters are unhealthy for salmon, trout and other cold-water fish.

Furthermore, increased sediments from eroding stream banks (and from overgrazing in the uplands) bury the gravel spawning beds in silt. The silt often suffocates the fish eggs, or kills the fish as they hatch.

Wildlife losses

Degraded riparian areas affect more than just fish. Many terrestrial animals and birds depend on streamside habitat for food and cover. Songbirds nest in the trees and shrubs, while frogs and other amphibians need moist soils and abundant insects to survive. A full 75 percent of the wildlife species in eastern Oregon use riparian areas at least part of the time.

When livestock damage riparian areas, water tables drop, rich streamside vegetation is lost, and wildlife suffers. For example, bird populations in ungrazed riparian areas on Oregon's Malheur National Wildlife Refuge were five to seven times more numerous than on grazed streamside areas. Forty percent of bird species associated with riparian habitat are in decline, including bald eagle, willow flycatcher, yellow warbler, calliope hummingbird, northern oriole, and short-eared owl.[2]

As a consequence of widespread grazing, riparian communities in the West are the most severely altered ecosystems in the nation: 70 to 90 percent have been lost.

— BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Cattle degrade stream health

The damage livestock inflict on riparian areas highlights the irresponsibility of allowing livestock unfettered access to rivers and streams. All the effects described above degrade the overall health of our streams. The two biggest losers are water quality and habitat for fish and wildlife.

As a consequence of widespread grazing in the West, riparian communities are the most severely altered ecosystems in the nation—70 to 90 percent have been lost.[3] Of what remains, 80 percent is in unsatisfactory condition. Livestock grazing is the most significant cause of deterioration of riparian areas in 11 river basins in eastern Oregon, according to a 1987 Oregon Environmental Council report.[4] Riparian zones in the West are in the worst condition in history.[5]

THE SOLUTION:

Keep cattle out of our streams

We have known for a long time what must be done to protect western water supplies and critical riparian habitat. Between 1965 and 1974, pioneering scientist Harold Winegar convinced the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and the BLM to fence four miles of the highly degraded Camp Creek. Due to livestock grazing, Camp Creek had become nothing more than a gully carrying water only during spring runoff.

But after livestock were removed, Camp Creek became a permanently flowing stream. Dense vegetation returned, stabilizing banks and preventing erosion and sedimentation. Plant species increased from a pre-fencing 17 species to 45 species, including willow and sedges. Animal species increased three-fold, with an accompanying increase in wildlife populations. The stream became narrower, deeper, and cooler. Eventually beaver and waterfowl returned as well.

Unquestionably, complete exclusion of livestock was the most effective habitat restoration management strategy observed.

— BONNEVILLE POWER ADMINISTRATION

Experts employed by the Bonneville Power Administration evaluated millions of dollars of recent stream restoration efforts in the Grande Ronde and John Day River basins. Their conclusion: "Unquestionably, complete exclusion of livestock was the most effective habitat restoration management strategy observed in [these] basins."

For safer, cleaner, more abundant water, for the return of our salmon, and for the health of our wildlife populations, the solution is clear: Keep livestock away from streams and out of our waters.

Livestock had denuded Ramsey Creek.

Stream recovery: Four years after livestock removal.

The lower photo, taken from the same point as the upper photo, illustrates the amazingly rapid recovery many streams will undergo after removing livestock. The increased vegetation helps control erosion, trap fish-killing sedimentation and other pollutants, as well as lower water temperatures, enhancing conditions for salmonids.

[1] Jeremy Rifkin, 1992. *Beyond Beef: The rise and fall of the cattle culture.* Dutton, New York.
[2] National Wildlife Federation, 1994.
[3] Bureau of Land Management. 1994. Rangeland Reform '94 Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Washington, D.C.
[4] Hanson, M. 1987. "Riparian zones in Eastern Oregon." Oregon Environmental Council, Portland, OR.
[5] Chaney, E., W. Elmore, and W. Platts. 1990. Livestock grazing in western riparian areas. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Denver.

THE OREGON CLEAN STREAM INITIATIVE DESERVES YOUR SUPPORT!

"The waters of the state of Oregon shall be protected from water pollution caused by livestock."

- Sec. 1, Oregon Clean Stream Initiative

The Oregon Clean Stream Initiative:

- **Targets Oregon's most polluted streams,** those so dirty you would not dare drink from them, fish from them, or let your kids swim in them;
- **Establishes stream buffers** where livestock grazing cannot occur;
- **Provides tax incentives** to livestock operators who protect streams;
- **Allows transition time for ranchers to make changes.** The law will be phased in over ten years. Streams on most private lands will not be affected until 2007, or 2002 at the earliest if they contain salmon, steelhead or trout habitat. Streams on public lands will be regulated starting in 2002, or in 1997 if they contain salmon, steelhead or trout habitat; and
- **Creates an incentive** for agencies to develop water quality management plans.

To obtain more information, such as the complete text of the initiative, or to volunteer to collect signatures or help in other ways, contact: The Oregon Clean Stream Initiative, 16 NW Kansas Ave., Bend, OR 97701. Or call (503) 389-8367. Contributions, which qualify for an Oregon state tax credit of $50 per individual or $100 per couple, should be made payable to "Oregon Clean Stream Initiative" and sent to the same address.

Benefits of passage:

- **Cleaner water** for other beneficial uses, such as municipal drinking water, water recreation, and fisheries;
- **Increased salmon, trout and steelhead populations,** creating better angling opportunities. Healthier streams mean more fish;
- **Enhanced wildlife habitat,** as critical streamside areas become healthier;
- **Improved hunting opportunities,** as game populations increase due to improved riparian habitats;
- **Increased forage production** on arid rangelands. Restored streams will have higher water tables, enlarging grassy meadows adjacent to streams;
- **Greater water supplies and longer irrigation season.** Improved stream health will increase stream flows and restore year-round flows to smaller streams, providing water for irrigation later in the season;
- **Higher property values** associated with clean streams and healthy riparian areas; and
- **A sense of pride** in caring for Oregon's outstanding rivers and passing this heritage on to future generations.

In the coming months, when the Oregon Clean Stream Campaign asks you to collect signatures or make a donation, please do so. Our children and grandchildren will thank us for the clean swimming holes, for the steelhead, trout, and salmon they will catch, and for the pure drinking water they will inherit.

LITERARY CORNER

These poems were read at Desert Conference last spring as part of the First Annual Desert Poetry Festival.

FISH LOVE

by Ashley Henry

Her riparian zone had taken a serious pounding
She was overgrazed and her life-giving
cryptogamic crusts were all but shattered.
Her banks were caving in.

Temperatures ran so high, there was little chance
of survival once you entered her waters.
No slow velocity pools for a rest stop,
just highly silted runoff flowing fast on smooth bedrock.

Degraded as she was, her status was heavily subsidized
by sweet talkin' family values types
who tried to convince her that with a few in-stream structures,
a little native revegetation and a daily prayer
she'd be poppin' out smolts in no time.

When this dusty cowboy came along, she examined
her condition and thought, "Well, perhaps I am within the historic
range of variability." She found herself tempted
to just blurt out, "Go ahead, channelize me! So what
if I never regain complexity, never reconnect with my floodplain!
There's always the hatcheries."

But this was no ordinary cowboy,
so she took a deep breath and prepared herself
for a period of long-term restoration.
Oh, how she dreaded the days when the scientists
would haul their gauges and tapes to her banks
and measure her width-to-depth ratio
and other assorted plan form features.
She knew she was lacking in point bars and it would be years
before willow seedlings would take hold.

But she had no choice. For this cowboy was really
no cowboy at all, but a wild salmon boy
who needed the comfort of knowing
that even during drought years, there'd be enough
groundwater storage to keep him afloat.
So away she went, nurturing her hyporheic zone
like there was no tomorrow,
patiently waiting for the day she could exclaim,
"OK, salmon boy,
I got my cobbles all sorted out now."

SALMON BOY RESPONDS

by Ashley Henry

How kind of you, Miss Perenniality
to commit yourself to a life
of restoration on my behalf.
How generous that you would so willingly
subject your fragile banks to the scrutiny
of peer reviewed science.
And all for the sake of giving me
a place to thrive.

You know, Miss Perenniality, I've never quite
understood what all those people see
in me—why they're making such a fuss.
I mean, I'm just a fish, for God's sake.

I realize that I've got those economic
and cultural values that everyone
from men in suits to patchouli-wearin' women
love to espouse, but with
all due respect Miss Perenniality, I'm not quite
sure how much time you should dedicate to recovery
on my behalf.
I may be too far gone, I'm afraid,
and I may be out of yours and everyone's reach.

Here I am in the spawning time of my life,
I've worked so diligently swimming upstream
and yet none of the gravel beds seem adequate.
I feel inclined to find a cozy pool,
a decent feeding riffle and settle in alone.

It really surprises me no one has ever
held me accountable for the evolutionary corner
I've backed myself into.
I guess, being a fish and all, people never expected me
to consider a little adaptation.
But I'm a lot wiser than I let on.
I could have agreed to a bit of change along my journey
but given everything my ancestors and I
have been through recentl
I'm a tad averse.

So please pardon me, Miss Perenniality,
as I ask you to let me go.

Artwork by Phyllis Burks

CHATS WITH DESERT RATS

George Wuerthner

ONDA Advisory Council member

George Wuerthner joined ONDA's Advisory Council in 1993, bringing to our ranks a level of expertise on public lands livestock grazing matched by few in the nation. By George's reckoning, he has spent more time on the public lands than most land managers and range scientists.

As an undergraduate, George studied range science himself, along with wildlife biology and botany. The more he learned, the more he realized that livestock grazing has had a major impact on the biodiversity of the West. Now George is convinced that livestock production "is fundamentally incompatible with the protection of biodiversity in all its forms."

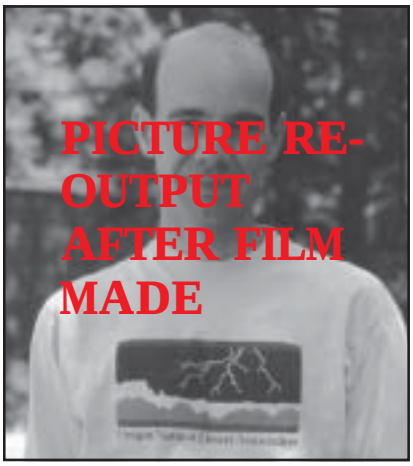
George is a writer and photographer with 18 books to his credit. He is currently working on his Ph.D. in geography at the University of Oregon in Eugene where he lives with his wife, Mollie Matteson and their year-old daughter, Summer. (George is also the president and sole member of the National Wolf Growers Association.)

George Wuerthner

Why did George decide to join ONDA's advisory Council? "ONDA has a visionary scale and the courage to challenge the dominant paradigm that livestock grazing is compatible with preserving native plants and animals," George says. "There aren't many groups like that."

John Howell, mapping specialist

ONDA's heartiest thanks go to volunteer John Howell of Sunriver, who has conducted extensive mapping and invaluable ground-truthing of wilderness area boundaries contained in the proposed Oregon High Desert Protection Act (OHDPA). John's work created the basis for the Smithsonian and Hewlett-Packard award of a Geographic Information System (GIS) computer mapping system. The GIS system will allow ONDA to produce maps of wild areas in OHDPA and keep track of boundary and ownership changes. John spent an incredible amount of time driving backroads, meeting with BLM wilderness specialists, and transferring the information he gleaned to maps by hand. Thanks, John, for your dedication to our desert lands.



ELAINE REES

John Howell

ONDA goes to D.C.

by Dave Stone

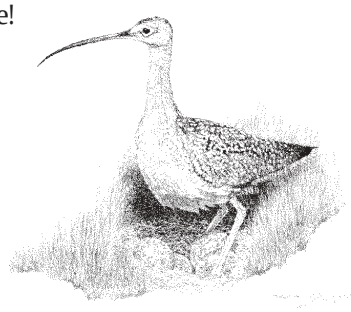
While back East visiting family and friends, I took time to visit Washington, D.C. to educate legislators about the Oregon High Desert Protection Act (OHDPA). I'd packed some OHDPA literature, a lobbying letter, and an attention-getting "Virtual Desert" (a baggy full of sagebrush with instructions to: "Just inhale...it's legal!").

I arrived in D.C. and headed for the Capitol, where I saw more suits and white marble than I'd ever seen in one place. Once on the Hill, I visited the offices of 30 representatives and senators likely to be receptive to OHDPA, based on their previous support of the California Desert Protection Act (information gleaned from a League of Conservation Voters' Scorecard). Each prospective OHDPA supporter received one of my educational packets and a "Virtual Desert."

Before leaving for D.C., I had made appointments with as many of the Oregon delegation as possible, and spoke with key aides to Rep. Peter DeFazio and Sen. Mark Hatfield. I told them that Oregonians are serious about desert wilderness—real wilderness without cows.

The Republican control of Congress is a major obstacle to OHDPA's progress. With education and persistence, this visionary proposal will become a reality.

So, if you have the opportunity to visit Washington, D.C.—or to meet with your representative or senators when they are in your home district—tell them that you support OHDPA and want desert lands protected from the heavy hoof of the cattle industry. Citizens can make a difference!



MARKETPLACE

Books

The Sagebrush Ocean: A Natural History of the Great Basin
by Stephen Trimble $24

Waste of the West: Public Lands Ranching
by Lynn Jacobs $28

Sacred Cows at the Public Trough
by Denzel & Nancy Ferguson $9

Hole in the Sky
by William Kittredge $20

T-Shirts/Sweatshirts

ONDA T-shirts (short sleeve) $12
ONDA Sweatshirts (long sleeve) $22
Specify size (S, M, L, XL) and color (Grey, navy, sage or white).
"Boycott Beef" T-shirt (short sleeve) $12

Etc.

Stunning 18"x 28" color poster of Big Indian Gorge ... $10
"Cows Kill Salmon" bumper sticker $1
Road Map to OHDPA lands $5



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ACTION ALERT
by Gilly Lyons

Two dirty river bills

Congress is deliberating upon two bad bills that, if passed, would further foul our rivers: The "Reauthorization of the Clean Water Act" (H.R. 961) and the "Livestock Grazing Act" (S. 852 and H. R. 1713). Both proposals would ease regulations designed to keep industrial and agricultural pollution in check, while opening more of our public lands to development. If passed, their combined effect would wreak havoc on our public lands and waterways, especially in the arid West, where rangeland health and water quality are intertwined.

Gutting the Clean Water Act

H.R. 961, the brainchild of Rep. Bud Shuster (R-PA) and industry lobbyists, has been described by *The New York Times* as "legislation that stops a quarter-century of progress in its tracks." It would allow agricultural run-off to go untreated, substantially reduce protection for wetlands, and abolish the current permit system for control of polluted storm run-off. In short, this bill represents a full-scale gutting of one of the most effective, indispensable and popular environmental laws on the books.

H.R. 961 has passed the Republican-controlled House, but without enough votes to override a possible Presidential veto. The more moderate Senate will probably put forward a less insidious version, but the Clean Water Act as we know it will undoubtedly still be at risk.

Livestock Grazing Act

The Livestock Grazing Act (LGA), sponsored by Rep. Wes Cooley (R-OR), is gaining notoriety as the most comprehensive Congressional effort to hand over America's public lands to the livestock industry. The LGA would free ranchers using federal land from having to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act, eliminate citizen (non-rancher) participation in public land management decisions, and establish livestock grazing as the dominant use of Forest Service and BLM lands! The potential impacts on fish, water quality, wildlife and ecological health are ominous.

ONDA is working to defend our laws—and our natural heritage—through letter-writing campaigns and public education, as well as mounting efforts to strengthen state law (such as the Clean Stream Initiative).

SANDY LONDSDALE/WILD OREGON IMAGES

Some 30 placard-bearing constituents expressed outrage at U.S. Rep. Wes Cooley's pro-industry Livestock Grazing Act at an August "Town Meeting" in Bend. ONDA organized the peaceful rally. Inside, Cooley discussed his Livestock Grazing Act only when questioned by audience members.

Raise a ruckus! Tell your legislators to:

1) Support Secretary Babbitt's Rangeland Reform;
2) Oppose the Livestock Grazing Act (HR 1713), and
3) Strengthen, don't weaken, the Clean Water Act. Oppose HR 961.

Write:

Rep. Wes Cooley
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington DC, 20515

Sen. Mark Hatfield
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Or call the Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121. We thank you!

CHECK MAILING LABEL FOR YOUR MEMBERSHIP EXPIRATION DATE

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