

Desert Ramblings

the newsletter of the
oregon
Natural Desert
association



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Volume 10, Number 2

ONDA wins Donner und Blitzen lawsuit

*Livestock ordered off
Wild & Scenic river corridor*

By Gilly Lyons

In yet another landmark legal decision for ONDA, a federal district court ruled in January that the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) management plan for the Wild & Scenic Donner und Blitzen River violated the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. ONDA and eleven co-plaintiffs filed suit against the BLM in December 1995 when it became apparent that the BLM's Blitzen River plan failed to protect this federally designated Wild and Scenic waterway from the adverse impacts of livestock grazing and road construction.

The decision, issued by Judge Ancer Haggerty, sets a national precedent by asserting that public land management agencies must prove that activities conducted within a wild and scenic river corridor – in particular, livestock grazing – do not degrade the “outstandingly remarkable values” for which the river was originally designated. Further, such activities must comply with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act’s mandate to “protect and enhance” those remarkable values. The burden of proof now falls on the BLM to demonstrate that streamside grazing and road building along the Blitzen will not degrade the river. Until then, the judge has prohibited all grazing within the Blitzen’s wild and scenic corridor.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3 ►



GREG BURKE

The Wild & Scenic Donner und Blitzen River will get a reprieve from livestock grazing thanks to ONDA's efforts.

Legislature funds Healthy Streams Partnership

Livestock industry fails to contribute to costs

In March, the Oregon Legislature authorized and funded the Healthy Streams Partnership (HSP), Gov. John Kitzhaber’s response to Measure 38 (The Oregon Clean Stream Initiative). Republican state legislative leaders eventually supported the \$30 million plan, and approved funds for the 1997-98 biennium. Long term funding depends on future legislatures.

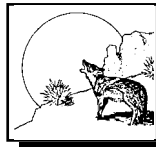
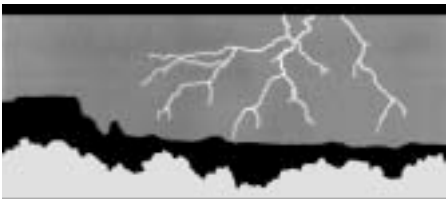


FROM THE OUTBACK
by Bill Marlett

In the end, even pro-livestock legislators backed the HSP in hopes of preventing an impending federal Endangered Species Act listing of coho salmon (for which a decision is expected April 25), and also as a response to a court-imposed timeline for cleaning up Oregon’s rivers and streams. The funds would provide staff to prepare water quality plans as well as grants to landowners to clean up the state’s 12,000 miles of polluted waterways.

ONDA supports the HSP as a first step since it will provide at least marginal

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4 ►



FROM THE DEN

by Kathi Myron

Mirrors of nature

Juniper and sage—desert strong—are storehouses of wisdom, refreshing shade and nutrients that shower the soil. ONDA's Board of Directors echoes the needle/leaf cycle of these desert elements. Some members have migrated to new positions, others are leafing out. All continue to enrich those around them, providing balance, continuity, and fresh perspectives.

Desert visionary and long-time vice-president Alice Elshoff has "retired" from that office and has taken a position on a newly-created task force to refine and clarify ONDA's mission. Rudy Clements, Stu Sugarman, Craig Miller and myself round out that team. The vice-presidency is now in the capable hands of Dave Funk, whose cartoon sketches promise refreshing humor at board gatherings. Stu Sugarman and Craig Miller now serve as secretary and treasurer, respectively.

We extend our deep appreciation to Alice, who has so passionately and faithfully served the desert through her work with ONDA. We also welcome with gratitude those taking up new roles as ONDA continues to grow and work toward protection of Oregon's desert lands! 



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Mission

The purpose of the Oregon Natural Desert Association is to promote the preservation, protection and rehabilitation of Oregon's arid-land environment and to educate the general population on the values of preserving the natural arid-land environment.

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Dave Funk, Vice President (Eugene)

Stu Sugarman, Secretary (Portland)

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Communication Strategies, Design

Elaine Rees, Board Liaison

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Desert Conference XIX

April 24-27

The 19th Annual High Desert Conference will be held at Malheur Field Station (south of Burns, OR). This year's celebration of the high desert features Brock Evans, Walkin' Jim Stoltz, fieldtrips, workshops, and the 3rd Annual Desert Poetry Festival. For more information, see pg. 5 or call Gilly at (541) 330-2638.

Evening with Nature:

An educational series

April 16 - "When Birds Can't Fly and Squirrels Can't Climb: Wildlife Rehabilitation," features slides and live birds with Jane Stevens of the Wildlife Rehabilitation Education Network (Bend) and Louise Shimmel of the Cascade Raptor Center (Eugene). Central Oregon Environmental Center, 16 NW Kansas in Bend. Refreshments at 6:30 pm, program at 7 pm.

May 21 - "Out for Blood!" Get geared up for summer with this informative, entertaining program on mosquitoes and other blood-feeding wildlife,

presented by John Anderson, Professor Emeritus of entomology at Univ. of Calif., Berkeley. Central Oregon Environmental Center, 16 NW Kansas in Bend. Refreshments at 6:30 pm, program at 7 pm.

Restoration work parties

April 11-13 ONRC's 4th Annual Willow Planting and Birding Field Trip, Klamath Marsh National Wildlife Refuge. Volunteer to help restore marsh vegetation and enjoy the spring migration. Accommodations provided. For info or to make a reservation, call Wendell Wood at (541) 885-4886.

May 31-June 1 - BLM Volunteer Work Party at Bridge Creek (near Mitchell, OR). Join BLM employees for restoration projects (including fence removal/construction, weed pulling, and spring development) and tours. Dinner and breakfast, entertainment (music, cowboy poetry), and camping facilities are provided free. Call Rick Demmer at (541) 416-6738 for more information and to register. **Please register by May 1.**

ONDA wins Blitzen River suit

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Background

Congress designated the Donner und Blitzen (which means "Thunder and Lightning" in German) as a Wild and Scenic river in 1988. Even a cursory trip to the Blitzen Valley is enough to see why this desert waterway warrants such protection. The Blitzen's headwaters originate on Steens Mountain, one of the largest fault blocks in North America. After traversing several dramatic glacier-carved gorges, the the Blitzen winds toward its terminus in the wildlife-rich marshes and basin lakes of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. Along the 75 miles designated as "wild," the river nourishes a diversity of plant life unlike anything else found in ecologically similar areas of the Great Basin, and provides critical habitat for fish and wildlife, such as native redband trout and bald eagles.

The burden of proof now falls on the BLM to demonstrate that streamside grazing and roadbuilding along the Blitzen will not degrade the river.

In 1993, the Burns District BLM prepared a comprehensive river management plan for the Blitzen that met with widespread disapproval from the conservation community. Among other things, the BLM's plan would have allowed livestock grazing to degrade habitat for rare and sensitive endemic plants, damage the river's riparian areas and impair its water quality. ONDA and other conservation groups filed a protest and a subsequent administrative appeal of the plan, arguing that the BLM had ignored the law's mandate to "protect and enhance" the river's "outstandingly remarkable values."

But these administrative actions were to no avail. A lawsuit was the only option left to force the BLM to correct the management plan's flaws.

In the lawsuit, ONDA and the other plaintiffs contended that the BLM violated the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, because its plan (1) assumed that live-stock grazing must continue in the river corridor and failed to take actions that would protect and enhance the Blitzen's outstandingly remarkable values from grazing's impacts; (2) allowed motorized vehicles in the river corridor; and (3) allowed the BLM to divert water to irrigate nearby hay fields. The suit also claimed that BLM violated the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) by merely preparing an Environmental Assessment of the plan, rather than a more comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Judge Haggerty sided with the plaintiffs on all counts. Specifically, Haggerty's order prohibits all livestock grazing within the river's wild and scenic corridor until BLM completes an EIS with the requisite NEPA documentation. This grazing halt will provide the Donner und Blitzen River corridor with a long-overdue reprieve from decades of livestock damage.

This landmark case strengthens the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act—a law designed to safeguard the nation's few remaining intact rivers systems—by requiring land management agencies to prove actions within wild and scenic river corridors will indeed protect and enhance designated waterways. Over the coming months, ONDA volunteers will closely monitor the implementation of this decision. In addition, ONDA will pursue other challenges along Wild and Scenic rivers throughout Oregon and the West.

Special thanks to our attorneys Pete Frost (National Wildlife Federation), Adam Berger (Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund), Curtis Fischer, Aron Yarmo, and Todd True.



Snowmelt from the High Steens feeds the headwaters of the Donner und Blitzen River.

MATREVA

The Blitzen River Index

Location: Southeastern Oregon
Headwaters: West slope, Steens Mt.
Terminus: Marshes and Malheur Lake in Malheur Natl. Wildlife Refuge
River miles designated: 75
Designation: "Wild" under the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act
Percentage of river corridor on public land: 94%
Primary threat to the Blitzen's plant communities: Livestock grazing
Primary threat to the Blitzen's wildlife: Livestock grazing
Primary threat to the Blitzen's wild trout: Livestock grazing
Primary source of water pollution in the Blitzen: Livestock grazing
Animal unit months (AUMs) of livestock grazing allowed by the BLM's 1993 plan within the Wild and Scenic river corridor: 29,000
Number of AUMs allowed under the 1997 permanent injunction resulting from this lawsuit: 0

Healthy Streams Partnership approved

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

benefits to water quality and salmon. Its greatest weakness is its reliance on voluntary action. The HSP naively assumes that enough polluters will volunteer time and money for clean-up efforts to help reach the state's goals. But without accountability of all polluters, the HSP amounts to ecological tokenism. Fur-

money to pay for it. The timber industry offered to pony up \$15 million through a short-term timber severance surcharge (but conditioned it on the feds not listing coho salmon!). Sport and commercial fishing industries have also made a \$1 million commitment. But the biggest polluter of all—agriculture, and particularly the livestock industry—has kept its hands in its pockets. It appears the average taxpayer will have to cover the remaining costs.

It remains a mystery why politicians feel so compelled to subsidize Oregon's biggest polluters. Gov. Kitzhaber says we are all part of the problem, but taxpayers have been pumping billions of dollars into municipal wastewater treatment plants for decades. Yet, only in recent years have livestock feed-

ONDA's success prompts industry disinformation?


By Bill Marlett

ONDA's cool, clear waters campaign has had another major success: a legal victory that will protect the Wild and Scenic Donner und Blitzen River from destructive grazing (see article, page 1). This good news comes on the heels of our landmark victory in the Camp Creek Clean Water Act case, (see *Desert Ramblings*, Winter 1997), a decision now under attack in the Oregon Legislature (see Action Alert, pg. 12).

These two national precedents, along with Measure 38, have elevated Oregonians' awareness of the problem of livestock-caused water pollution. Our success may have prompted the National Cattlemen's Association to launch a national campaign glorifying how cows are now being used to "protect" creeks. That's right, you can open *The New York Times* or the *Washington Post* and see an ad showing cows watching a flyfisherman along a stream. The caption: "Too Bad Cows Can't Fish...Because They Live by Some Great Streams." The livestock industry's misleading ads demonstrate that they feel the heat, but still deny the well-established fact that grazing along streams harms fish habitat.

All I can say is, "It's a good thing cows can't fish."

lots been regulated. Until our recent court victories, citizens had no way of holding BLM, Forest Service and ranchers accountable for public lands grazing practices that pollute the water. Citizens still have no way to regulate pollution to our public waters that originate on private lands.

As long as citizens (through taxes or worse health) and nature (through losses in ecological health and biodiversity) pay for pollution instead of the polluter, there's little incentive for a ranch, paper mill, or any other industry to clean up its operation. Therefore, it should be more expensive to pollute a stream than not. The sooner our lawmakers figure this out, the sooner we will have clean water and restored salmon runs in Oregon. 

Can we realistically count on ranchers facing red ink to voluntarily invest time and money for stream restoration?

thermore, perhaps half of Oregon's livestock operators are either just breaking even or losing money. Can we realistically count on ranchers facing red ink to voluntarily invest time and money for stream restoration? Volunteerism is great, but voluntary efforts alone are unlikely to get the job done.

In spite of these flaws, the HSP does represent an improvement over the status quo. The funds go to either state agencies for clean-up planning and water quality monitoring or to landowners in the form of grants and cost-sharing for pollution control projects, such as fencing livestock out of streams. In spite of the "Don't Fence Oregon" slogan that opponents used against Measure 38, most ranchers aren't opposed to fencing as long as they aren't forced to do it and don't have to pay for it.

Who pays?

Republican leaders rejected the Governor's bottle tax as a way to fund the HSP, but are still scrambling to secure

As long as citizens or nature pays the cost of pollution instead of the polluter, there's little incentive for a ranch, paper mill, or any other industry to clean up its operation.

Weed invasions and livestock grazing

By Jonathan Gelbard

Each day, exotic “weeds” invade over 4,600 acres of rangelands in the Intermountain West, according to the U.S. Dept. of the Interior. Why should you care? Because as a result, biodiversity and forage production are declining.

Grazing by domestic livestock is the predominant cause of this invasion of weeds on arid western rangelands, according to a review of the scientific literature. Still, government agencies and many range scientists have largely ignored the role of livestock in this major problem.

The quintessential characteristic that causes arid western grasslands to be vulnerable to weeds is that the region’s plant communities have evolved since the Pleistocene Era without large, hooved, congregating mammals (Mack 1989). As a result, its grasslands are dominated by native grasses not adapted to the presence of such large herbivores. Since European settlement, exotic invaders have displaced native grasses on millions of acres, demonstrating the land’s fragility. Even short-term or seasonal grazing is enough to result in weed invasion, according to studies.

Seed dispersal

Soil disturbance by livestock can both cause and aggravate weed invasions. Most of the scientific evidence comes from studies demonstrating that livestock spread seeds in their fur and feces. Weed seeds also may be retained in the digestive tracts of cattle and sheep for six to ten days. Researchers have found that an individual sheep can redistribute dozens of healthy seeds per day through their feces. Scientists have also found ewes can carry viable weed seeds in their fleece.

Cattle have proven no less a vector for exotic plant dispersal. One 1942 investigation found that a cow redistributed 36 weed species totaling over 900,000 viable seeds in a single season (Dore and Raymond 1942)!

Culinary preferences

Livestock also selectively eat the more palatable native grasses and forbs, leaving the less palatable weeds alone. By trampling and eating native species, livestock often render the plants unable to compete with the remaining weeds. The grasses are often left with too little leafy material for proper growth through photosynthesis. Studies examining how selective grazing aggravates invasions indicate that healthy, ungrazed stands of native grass serve as important deterrents to exotic weeds such as yellow starthistle (Roche et al. 1994), cheatgrass, and medusahead (Dahl and Tisdale 1975).

Surprisingly little research has explored the idea that trampling by livestock produces areas of bare ground that are more readily colonized by weeds. One study on this topic found that while cheatgrass and tumble mustard easily occupied a patch of



Cheatgrass, an invasive exotic grass with little forage value, has spread over millions of acres of the West, increasing fire frequency and displacing native plants.

ELAINE REES

trampled bare ground, these weeds did not colonize nearby ungrazed areas (Rickard 1985). Areas protected from grazing typically have less than half the bare ground as adjacent unprotected pasture.

Cryptobiotic crusts

Also gaining increasing scientific credibility is the role played by cryptobiotic soil crusts in helping to prevent weed invasions. These hard-to-see crusts consist of lichens, algae, and mosses that grow on the surface of desert soils. The crusts prevent soil erosion, provide critical nutrients for native plants, and act as a barrier to invader weed species, including cheatgrass and tumbleweed. However, the crusts are easily destroyed by livestock (or human) trampling.

Livestock trampling also harms beneficial soil fungi that help native grasses take up essential soil nutrients. The fungi, called “mycorrhizae,” form mutually beneficial relationships with roots of nearly all native grasses. Livestock trampling destroys soil mycorrhizae, thus hurting native species.

Preliminary research indicates that the presence of mycorrhizae may also be a key factor in preventing or slowing invasions by inhibiting the growth of weeds. In a study led by ecologist Michael Allen, two native grasses were able to outcompete tumbleweed only when mycorrhizae were present (Allen 1991). Although Allen warns that similar studies have produced contradictory results, his findings underscore the likelihood that with time, livestock impacts on below-ground ecosystem processes will prove to be even more far-reaching.

Exotic plant invasions in the arid West will continue to confound land managers as long as they ignore how livestock grazing contributes to the problem. Ecological costs include loss of native species and wildlife habitat, and reduced grassland productivity. Economically, both public and private budgets will be taxed by the status quo solution, which leads to an expensive cycle of weed invasions, followed by herbicide application, followed by livestock grazing, followed by further invasions. 🐾

Jonathan Gelbard is a Portland-based freelance field and research ecologist.

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CONNECT TO THE WILD!

Sponsor a Proposed Wilderness Area

Are you drawn to spend more time in the desert, but can't seem to justify the trip? If you need another good reason to get out under the open desert skies, become a wilderness sponsor.

Among the dozens of roadless areas included in the Oregon High Desert Protection Act (see sidebar) are many choice areas that need individual or family sponsors to explore and document their wilderness qualities and to monitor these proposed wilderness areas. When Congress takes up the issue of designating wilderness areas on Oregon's

BLM lands, you can influence the outcome by providing up-to-date, on-the-ground information on your adopted area, simultaneously lending weight to arguments for passing the Oregon High Desert Protection Act.

Below, we highlight several magnificent roadless areas on and around Steens Mountain that need sponsors. Contact Gilly at the ONDA office (541-330-2638) to inquire, sign up and get tips on how to monitor your area.



ALAN D. ST. JOHN

Kiger Gorge is one of the glacier-carved canyons that dissect Steens Mountain

North Steens

The North Steens area encompasses the Bridge Creek, Kiger Creek, Whiskey Creek, Cucamonga Creek, and McCoy Creek watersheds. The 14,500-acre Bridge Creek Wilderness Study Area (WSA) is the largest body of public land within this area. Bridge Creek and its main tributary, Mud Creek, are home to redband trout, a native fish whose populations have been dwindling since the introduction of livestock into the Great Basin. The canyon walls enclosing these two streams provide excellent nesting habitat for golden eagle and other birds of prey. Monitoring livestock use on the North Steens is crucial due to their impacts on redband trout and sage grouse, both candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act. This area is accessible mid-June through mid-October.

Alvord Desert

If you like stark white landscapes and star-filled nights, the Alvord Desert is for you. There are over 400 square miles of greasewood, saltbush, sand dunes, and alkali flats to wander in, and the spectacular Mickey Hot Springs to marvel at. Lizards abound—whiptails, horned lizards, colored lizards, just to name a few. Botanically speaking, the Alvord Desert "Area of Critical Environmental Concern" (ACEC) contains a fascinating variety of plant communities. The eastern portion of the Alvord is perhaps the last refuge of the kit fox in Oregon. Spring flooding of the playa attracts shorebirds, including the snowy plover and the photogenic American avocet. Threats include geothermal development and powerline routing. Access is year-round by paved road (east portion), all-weather road (west boundary), and by jeep trails in variable condition.



ELAINE REES

The flat, white Alvord Desert playa, formed by sediments from an ancient basin lake, contrasts dramatically with the steep, rugged east face of Steens Mountain.

High Steens

One of the most spectacular wild areas in all of Oregon is the top of Steens Mountain. At 9,000 feet, the unique subalpine wildflowers and breathtaking vistas are unparalleled in the state. Explore over a dozen cascading creeks on the east face, including Indian Creek, Pike Creek, Big and Little Alvord Creeks, Cottonwood Creek, and Willow Creek. Wildhorse Lake nestles in a glacial cirque surrounded by a meadow full of wildflowers and butterflies in the late summer. The High Steens provides prime habitat for majestic bighorn sheep and diminutive pika (a relative of the cottontail that lives in rockslides above timberline). Lower elevations of this area are accessible March through November from the all-weather road at the base of the Steens east-facing scarp. The Steens Loop Road to the high elevations usually is not passable until mid-July.



MAITREYA

Wildflowers on the east face of the High Steens.



MAITREYA

Big Indian Gorge in late spring.

Big Indian and Little Blitzen Gorges

Coursing westward through an extraordinary landscape, Big Indian Creek and the Little Blitzen River offer hiking, camping, fishing, and photographic opportunities galore. The heads of these two gorges are separated by a thin ridge, along which passes the southerly segment of the Steens Loop Road. Songbirds nest in riparian vegetation along both streams. Aspen groves offer cool shade in the summer and blazes of color in the fall. Big Indian and Little Blitzen are now free of cows (see pg. 1), so sponsors will be able to document habitat recovery under a no-grazing regime. Accessible June through October by gravel road. 

THE OREGON HIGH DESERT PROTECTION ACT

The Oregon High Desert Protection Act (OHDPA) was crafted by ONDA and a coalition of conservation groups as an alternative to the BLM's woefully inadequate wilderness proposals. In 1976, Congress mandated a review of BLM's roadless areas, and in 1991 the agency proposed that only 1.3 million acres be added to the wilderness system.

In contrast, OHDPA would protect *over* 6 million acres of public lands that together form a connected web of habitats designed to recover and sustain declining fish and wildlife

species. OHDPA still leaves 18 million acres of public land in eastern Oregon for livestock grazing and other resource uses. In addition, OHDPA protects desert streams that qualify for wild and scenic river status, includes a million-acre Steens Mountain National Park and Preserve, creates three new national monuments, and adds refuge lands in Warner Valley and at Lake Abert. OHDPA is visionary because it would phase out livestock grazing on its 6 million acres to restore water quality and ecological integrity to these heritage lands.

Come to Desert Conference

April 24-27

Malheur Field Station

By Gilly Lyons

The 19th Annual High Desert Conference is fast approaching! We hope you'll join us at the Malheur Field Station located within the 183,000-acre Malheur Wildlife Refuge. The conference will run Thursday through Sunday, April 24-27, and promises to be an action-packed, migratory waterfowl-filled, festive celebration of the High Desert. This year's conference is co-sponsored by ONDA, the Committee for Idaho's High Desert, and Friends of Nevada Wilderness.

Field Trips

Friday's field trips include Tim Lillebo's time-honored tradition of bushwhacking up Home Creek Canyon; birding with avian-identifier extraordinaire Craig Miller; and a tour of Malheur Refuge wetlands with refuge biologist Gary Ivey. Or lend a hand at one of two volunteer work parties (one on the refuge and another on BLM lands), which offer a great chance to work hard, feel good, and see beautiful places. Two special overnight trips begin Thursday evening, one at Lake Abert and one to Van Horn Basin in the Pueblo Mountains. There's something for everyone!

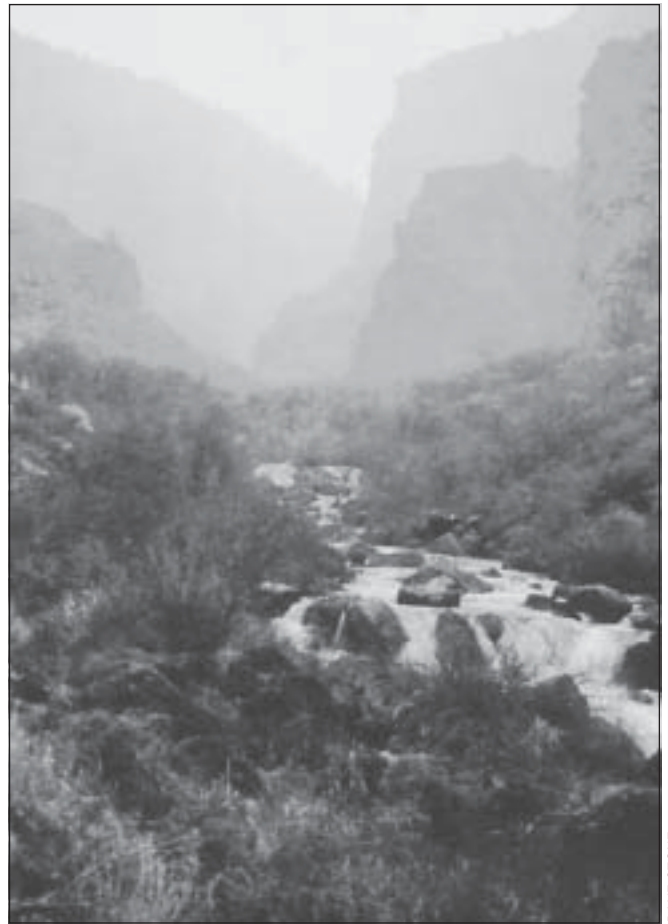
Personalities

Presenters on Saturday and Sunday will feature **Brock Evans** of the National Audubon Society; singer/songwriter/ambulator **Walkin' Jim Stoltz**; **David Dobkin** of the High Desert Ecological Institute; grazing activist **George Wuerthner**; **Ed Marston**, publisher of *High Country News*; **Mary Scurlock** of the Pacific Rivers Council; **Jon Marvel** of Idaho Watersheds Project; **Bethanie Walder** of Wildlands Center for Preventing Roads (formerly Road-RIP); **John Horning** of Forest Guardians; and others.



The gurgling, steaming Mickey Hot Springs is the destination for a special field trip/work party option as part of Desert Conference XIX.

ELAINE REES



DAVE STONE

Bighorn sheep are oftensighted on the Home Creek Canyon field trip.


Topics

Panels and plenary sessions will include "Cows, Water, and the Law," an analysis of recent court victories (including ONDA's landmark 401 suit); Wolf Reintroduction; a constructive dialogue on "Cows vs. Condos" between George Wuerthner and Ed Marston; and "Holistic Resource Management and its Impacts on Wildlife (Coming to an Allotment near You)." Three desert activists from Oregon, Idaho, and Nevada who are members of BLM Resource Advisory Councils (created under Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt's Rangeland Reform) will also share their experiences and impressions of these councils.

Poetry

Don't miss the ever-popular Desert Poetry Festival, now in its third year! Bring your odes, sonnets, free verse, haiku, and other High Desert inspirations of the muse.

Place

The Malheur Field Station is located in the heart of the Blitzen River Valley with excellent access to desert wetlands and wildlands. Views of Steens Mountain, unparalleled birding, and the scent of sagebrush all combine to make this a unique and beautiful place to spend a desert weekend. If you have not yet received a conference brochure and registration form, or want more information, call Gilly at (541) 330-2638. We look forward to seeing you at the Malheur Field Station. 



White People in Paradise

From the prologue to *Who Owns the West (Mercury House)*,
by William Kittredge, who was born and raised in eastern Oregon.
Kittredge now lives in Missoula, Montana.

Not long ago in the American West it was easy to think we were living in harmony with an inexhaustible paradise. That became, for many, a habit of mind, hard to shake.

But aspects of our paradise have been worked to death. The old-growth timber has been mostly logged; the great salmon runs have vanished; cattle and sheep tramp stream sides to dust and dust again; hard metals percolating up from mine shafts abandoned decades ago poison our mountain waters.

Aware of newcomers is moving in. Popular mythology, trying to name our circumstances, has it that we are overrun with tourists, computer companies, and good Thai restaurants—which is of course not true unless you happen to be in one of the famous resorts, like Aspen or Jackson Hole, or happening towns like Boise or Bozeman, or a chic wayside stop like Ennis, Montana, where you can also get a terrific meal (but not Thai). These new settlers are not just well-to-do citizens making a getaway from the overpopulated insanities of our cities but also refugees out of Mexico and Southeast Asia bringing the enormous energies of the dispossessed. The West is being resettled, again, by people seeking sanctuary and opportunity. Some Native Americans smile and shake their heads. “Now,” they say, “It’s happening to you.”

Again in our culture in the West is remixing and reinventing itself. It’s a process many locals, descendants of people who came west only a few generations back, have come to hate; some think they own the West because their people suffered for it, and in that way earned it. They feel that it’s being taken away from them, and they’re often right; they think they are being crowded out, and they are. They feel that nobody in greater America much cares about their well-being or dreams, and they are right.

Westerners, like most people, tend to know themselves through their work. Many mines and lumber mills are closing; ranches are being turned into hunting preserves. Small towns are dying.

The world is moving on its heedless way, and many Western people feel they are being tricked out of their natural heritage. They feel humiliated by their economic powerlessness; some have come to fear and hate strangers. Many would like to close the gate, lockdown the West, and call it their own, forever.



ELAINE REES

The West is remixing and reinventing itself.

Some have grown deeply paranoid, and band together, forming a spectrum of small political entities; the weakest pity themselves; some like to think they are warriors, defending their society; others are insane in their anger. Some sad creature—not necessarily a Westerner—was perhaps driven by feelings such as these to detonate the bomb that killed those children and adults in Oklahoma City....



Who owns the West? All of us, of course. That’s the simple answer, which is sort of beside the point when we get down to considering questions of fairness. Stay joyous under the sun and moon, in the rain and out; that’s another halfway answer.

Westerners, like everyone, must work to understand that anger looks nowhere but backward, and that this particular variety is ultimately nostalgic and pretty much useless. As anywhere, in the West people-out-of-work redneck timber-fallers and stock-brokers and lady veterinarians, laughing boys, dancing ladies, all of us—have no choice but to reimagine and embrace the future.

Etienne Scott Creates ONDA "Homepage"

Visit us at <http://www.onda.org/~onda>

ONDA has lifted off into cyberspace! Our new "Website" on the Internet, was created by Etienne Scott, one of ONDA's hardworking volunteers. Etienne began developing the website last September for the Oregon Clean Stream Initiative (Measure 38). In January, he revamped it into the "Homepage" of the Oregon Natural Desert Association. Visit us at <http://www.onda.org/~onda>.

Etienne has posted much useful and essential information about high desert, clean water and salmon issues. Also included are facts about the Governor's "Healthy Streams Partnership," (see pg. 1), info on how to contact your state legislators in Salem, and an extensive bibliography of scientific literature. "Links" provide easy access to related websites, such as the Department of Environmental Quality's website where you can view or download the list of water quality limited streams in Oregon (303d list).

The homepage allows ONDA members to access much of the same information that ONDA staff and volunteers gather and use to promote ONDA's mission. It's also a way to keep abreast of ongoing events or catch up on important desert issues.

Etienne encourages you to browse the website "... and let us know what you'd like to see on the page."

"We could still use more news stories about high desert issues of any kind from newspapers outside the Portland area," says Etienne. "I encourage ONDA members from all over the state to send relevant articles from local papers," (which can often be downloaded from the paper's own website). Scientific articles on grazing, threatened and endangered plants and animals of the desert, and other pertinent subjects are also welcome, as are literary pieces that deal with the high desert as a place, source of inspiration or insight.

Like most cyber-wizards, Etienne does not like to type. So if you would like to send news, scientific articles or essays about the desert for possible inclusion on the ONDA Website, please e-mail submissions to him at escott@onda.org or send a Mac-formatted disk to Gilly at ONDA's Bend office: 16 NW Kansas, Bend, OR 97701.

Thanks, Etienne, for contributing your considerable talent and skill to ONDA's endeavors on behalf of clean water and healthy desert ecosystems.

. . .

For members wishing to communicate with us via e-mail, note that our (relatively new) e-mail address is onda@empnet.org

Join the Clean Stream Net

Join your friends on ONDA's Clean Stream Net and get the latest info on water/livestock issues hot off the electronic press. The Clean Stream Net will provide you with immediate delivery by e-mail of updates on water quality issues, announcements of upcoming hearings and relevant meetings, action alerts, and information about upcoming legislation (such as Rep. Lundquist's "special rights for ranchers" bill—see back page Action Alert). It's easy to sign up—just call the ONDA office (541-330-2638), email us at onda@empnet.com, or return the coupon on page 11 to us.

Thank you!

ONDA gratefully acknowledges the following foundations for their generosity in recent months. Their support has bolstered ONDA's efforts to protect the High Desert!

Peradam Foundation
The Turner Foundation,
The Columbia River Bioregion
Campaign

Membership dues increase

Due to rising costs, including sharp increases in postage and printing costs, the Board of Directors raised ONDA's basic membership dues from \$25 to \$35. We ask all our members for your understanding and continued support as we seek to sustain our efforts to protect and restore desert wildlands.

Hart Mt. Restoration

In 1996, habitat restoration accomplishments on Hart Mt. National Wildlife Refuge included the removal of 10 miles of interior fences, prescribed burning of 2,000 acres, planting of 3,800 bitterbrush and 4,500 mountain mahogany seedlings, and juniper control in drainages on the west face of the mountain. These accomplishments, along with the cessation of livestock grazing, will benefit sage grouse, mule deer, and other wildlife species.

Put BLM Lands on Oregon State Map

On a recent road trip, ONDA volunteer Fred Sawyer noticed that the official map of Oregon (a.k.a. the State Highway Map) does not include many of Oregon's special protected areas or scenic byways. The map omits BLM Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), Outstanding Natural Areas, federal Wild and Scenic Rivers, and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Viewing Areas. Many of these omitted special areas are found in southeast Oregon, and deserve inclusion in the official state map.

Please write a letter to your state senator and/or representative, urging them to encourage the Oregon Department of Transportation to include these special areas on the next map issued by the state. **Send letters to:**

Sen. or Rep. _____
State Capitol
Salem, OR 97310

M ARKETPLACE

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)
Specify size (L or XL only). Color is sage only. \$12
- "Boycott Beef" T-shirt (short sleeve) \$12
- Bargain Sale!**
- Clean Stream Initiative T-Shirts (w/salmon art)
Specify size and sleeve length. Color is salmon only
- Short sleeve (L or XL only) \$5
- Long sleeve (XL only) \$8

Etc.

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



ONDA Marketplace Order Form

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YES!! I'LL JOIN OREGON NATURAL DESERT ASSOCIATION!

Annual membership levels:

- \$35
 \$50
 \$100
 \$250
 \$500

The High Desert Defense Fund Monthly Contribution Program:

Automatic bank deductions are convenient, cut down on paper use and mail solicitations, and are hassle free. Deductions from your account may be stopped or adjusted at any time by simply sending a written notice or by phoning ONDA at (541) 330-2638.

High Desert Defense Fund monthly membership levels: (enclose a signed, voided check)

- \$5
 \$10
 \$25
 \$50
 \$100

Add my name to the Clean Stream Net (for communicating to state legislators during 1997 session-see pg. 7)

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

E-mail address (for electronic action alerts) _____

Mail this form with check to ONDA, 16 NW Kansas, Bend, OR 97701

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Stop the “Special Rights for Ranchers” Bill!

At the request of the Oregon Farm Bureau, Oregon House Speaker Lynn Lundquist (R-Ontario) has introduced legislation to exempt ranchers from the Clean Water Act (see page 1). HR 2003 attempts to sidestep the recent court decision that livestock operators must obtain state certification that their livestock, when grazing on federal lands, will not degrade water quality. This certification is necessary before any federal agency (e.g. Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service) can issue a grazing permit on federal land.

What you can do

Call, write, FAX, or email your state legislators in Salem and make it clear that this kind of special exemption for ranchers is unacceptable. Here are some points you may want to make:

- 1) The legislature has recognized the impact of livestock on water quality by funding the Healthy Streams Partnership;
- 2) HR 2003 is a direct contradiction to that agreement;
- 3) HR 2003 would maintain the status quo on thousands of miles of our most severely polluted rivers and streams;
- 4) The legislature should strengthen instead of weaken clean water protections.

Contact Info:

To call your legislator in Salem, dial 1-800/332-2313, or check to see if she or he has an email address by visiting the state legislative home page at: <http://www.leg.state.or.us>.

Letters can be mailed to:

State Representative _____
State Capitol
Salem, OR 97310.

Send a copy of your letter, or call House Speaker Lundquist to express your opinion about HR 2003:

Rep. Lynn Lundquist, House Speaker
State Capitol
Salem, OR 97310
503/986-1459 lynn.lundquist@state.or.us