

OREGON NATURAL DESERT ASSOCIATION
Desert Ramblings
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BEND, OREGON 97701

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Fall 1999

Desert Ramblings

the newsletter of the
Oregon
Natural Desert
association

Inside:

SPECIAL FEATURE:

• CELEBRATING ONDA'S
FIRST DECADE ... 5-12

ALSO:

• GEOGRAPHY OF HOPE
WALLACE STEGNER .. 13

Volume 12, Number 4

INSIDE:

- **ONDA CELEBRATES ITS FIRST DECADE**
- **USFWS SPINS PRONGHORN FAWN DATA**

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ACTION ALERT

Wyden takes lead in protection of federal lands

Good news! Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR) sent a letter to President Clinton in early August expressing his support for increased protection of unique federal lands in Oregon. He specifically noted the Badlands Wilderness Study Area (WSA), which is just east of Bend, as meriting formal wilderness protection. Wyden also indicated in his letter that the permittee with the largest grazing allotment in the Badlands WSA is seeking to voluntarily retire his grazing permit and that such a maneuver could take place in conjunction with wilderness designation.

ONDA is working with Sen. Wyden's staff to craft a solution that will allow the above permittee to "donate" his permit back to the federal government in exchange for its permanent retirement. It is possible that legislation designating a Badlands Wilderness Area, along with language allowing for the permanent retirement of federal grazing permits here, could help pave the way for a permit retirement pilot program for Oregon.



© DAVE STONE

Contact Sen. Wyden!

Please take a moment to thank Sen. Wyden for his support of desert wilderness and to encourage him to pursue a legal mechanism for voluntary permit retirement.

Sen. Ron Wyden
U.S. Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
(202) 224-3121 (Congressional Switchboard)
e-mail: senator@wyden.senate.gov

FWS spins data to advance coyote shoot

By Joy Belsky

Although we don't normally think of ourselves as investigative reporters, ONDA has unearthed some shocking information about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) four-year campaign to kill coyotes on Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge (NAR). This campaign began in 1995, following that year's record low pronghorn fawn survival rate (less than one fawn per 100 does). Since the Refuge's current management plan prohibits predator control, Hart Mountain managers proposed new plans that would have allowed them to shoot coyotes from planes (in 1996) or introduce coyote hunting (in 1998). ONDA's legal action stopped both questionable plans. Our 1998 lawsuit, filed with the Predator Defense Institute, may be one of the shortest in history; the FWS canceled their hunt within 24 hours of our filing.

The Refuge is once again attempting to kill coyotes – this time by writing a pronghorn management plan that will give them full discretion to kill predators. ONDA has been investigating their claims and has found that their arguments for coyote control were bogus from the start.

Hart Mountain NAR has consistently claimed that coyote predation was the main cause of the low fawn survival rate in 1995. However, antelope fawns in 1995 "were born during a spring snow-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4 ►



ELAINE REES

Shown is a view of the proposed Pronghorn Area of Critical Environmental Concern, which would protect lands linking Oregon's Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge with Nevada's Sheldon Refuge. The Pronghorn ACEC is one of many proposals ONDA has advanced to protect desert lands in its first decade.

ONDA Celebrates Ten Years

ONDA challenges status quo to conserve desert

Looking back over the last ten years is instructive and rewarding. We have had many successes and have learned from our setbacks. Looking ahead to the next decade suggests our work has only just begun, and we enter the new millennium with exciting possibilities ahead of us.

Desert wilderness

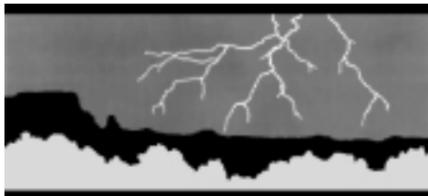
Although we've made significant progress on ONDA's primary goal of passing federal legislation designating desert wilderness in Oregon, passage of such a bill remains unrealized. Millions of acres of public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) deserve such designation, but for

years have been in legislative limbo. Unless the Republican-controlled Congress has an unexpected change of heart, passing any wilderness bill is as likely as a cow jumping over the moon.

For an Oregon wilderness bill to be introduced, the Democrats would at least need to win control of the House of Representatives in the next election. That would

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3 ►





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ONDA exists to protect, defend and restore forever the health of Oregon's native deserts.

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FROM THE DEN
 by Dave Funk

Celebrating ONDA's first decade

ONDA, born of a collaboration between Don Tryon and Alice Elshoff, had its humble beginnings somewhere in the vicinity of Bend's Pine Tavern. About twenty people showed up for what proves to have been ONDA's first meeting. Now we are over 1500 strong and have two offices and a staff of five, including an attorney. We also have a strategic plan and the will to accomplish its goals (see p. 11). This issue celebrates our first decade and looks forward to the next.

The West is changing and will continue to change, but we must keep the pressure on. As a result of our efforts, Gov. John Kitzhaber has established the Healthy Streams Partnership (see p. 10), and since 1991 cattle no longer roam Hart Mountain National Wildlife Refuge. We have won important court victories. We have raised public awareness of the damage cattle inflict on our arid lands. We have dogged the BLM every step of the way, demanding compliance with the laws that protect our public lands. The BLM no longer bows automatically to the will of big ranchers.

And we will keep pushing until there are no more cattle degrading our public lands. As a board we have agreed not to compromise this position. It is our dream that our children will see the fruits of our labors; that they will enjoy free-flowing, clean streams full of trout; that they will hear the howls of wild wolves. And they will thank Don and Alice, and, seeing no more need for this organization, will disband ONDA and spend their time hiking and fishing rather than meeting, politicking, and fundraising.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Desert Conference XXII

April 27-30, 2000
 Malheur Field Station
 Malheur National Wildlife Refuge

Planning has already begun for next year's Desert Conference. Stretch your legs in a high desert wonderland on one of our renowned outings on Friday. Birds, canyon country, or wildflowers are among the topics for the hikes. Settle in for some thought-provoking discussions on Saturday and down-home entertainment Saturday night.

It's always a treat to be in Oregon's Great Basin country, which is rich in natural and pioneer history. Of course, the spring bird migration makes this desert oasis a sight to behold.

Look for more information in your mailbox, or contact Gilly at glyons@onda.org or 503-525-0193.

Desert Poets!

Rick Demmer is planning to compile a booklet of your poems from Desert Conference. Send your stuff to:

Rick Demmer
 P.O. Box 51
 Prineville, OR 97754
 E-mail: rdemmer@bendnet.com

Congratulations...

...to ONDA vice president and treasurer **Craig Miller**, who tied the knot with **Marilyn Mason** in an August ceremony atop Steens Mountain!

Also best wishes to longtime ONDA supporters and Desert Conference Hospitality Room hosts **Emily Thomas** and **Jason Seivers**, who married in September.

All of us at ONDA extend the warmest of wishes to the newlyweds.

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
- Oregon's Outback: An Auto Tour Guide to Southeast Oregon*
 by Donna Lynn Ikenberry \$15

Scientific Papers

- "Survey of Livestock Influences on Stream and Riparian Ecosystems in the Western United States"
 by Joy Belsky, A. Matzke, and S. Uselman \$5
- "Effects of Livestock Grazing on Stand Dynamics in Upland Forests of the Interior West"
 by Joy Belsky and Dana Blumenthal \$1 (for postage)

T-Shirts

- ONDA T-shirts (short sleeve only)
 Specify size (L or XL only) and color (sage or natural) . \$12
- Desert Conference 1999 T-shirts with petroglyph logo
 (100% organic cotton by Patagonia. Natural color only.)
 Specify size (L or XL only) and style (short or long sleeve)
 Short Sleeve \$12
 Long sleeve \$15
- "Boycott Beef" T-shirt (short sleeve only) \$12

Etc.

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



ONDA Marketplace Order Form

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Automatic Withdrawal Option:

Automatic bank deductions are convenient and cut down on paper use and mail solicitations. Deductions from your account may be stopped or adjusted at any time simply by sending a written notice or by phoning ONDA at (541) 330-2638. Please enclose a voided check or deposit slip. **Monthly amount to deduct: \$ _____**

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- Add my name to the Clean Stream Net** (for communicating to state legislators)

Name _____
 Address _____
 City, State, Zip _____
 E-mail address (for electronic action alerts) _____

Mail this form with check (or voided check for automatic withdrawals) to ONDA, 16 NW Kansas, Bend, OR 97701



Daniele McKay helps keep ONDA in touch with our membership.

Welcome, Daniele!

In May, Daniele McKay joined the ONDA staff as our new part-time membership coordinator. Even though she never imagined herself working in an office, Daniele finds that she really enjoys being in ONDA's Bend office. She enjoys the challenge of the job and finds the issues that ONDA deals with very interesting, "especially Steens Mountain and wolves."

Daniele is a native Oregonian, having been raised in Klamath Falls. She attended Central Oregon Community College in Bend and graduated with an Associate of Arts degree. For much of the last eight years she has traveled extensively in Europe and South America.

ONDA warmly welcomes Daniele to the ranks, and we hope she finds working on behalf of a cow-free Steens, wild wolves, and a natural desert worthwhile and rewarding.

Thanks, Mac!

By Stephanie Parent

ONDA was very fortunate to have Peter "Mac" Lacy as legal intern this summer. Mac began this job with a love of the desert and is now a committed desert activist. Mac contributed on many fronts, including ongoing efforts on Steens Mountain, the Owyhee and John Day Wild and Scenic Rivers, and our upcoming challenge of the Taylor Grazing Act. He drafted legal documents, prepared analyses, submitted Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests and reviewed responses, and performed many other duties—all with a quiet smile.

Mac is in his second year at Northwestern School of Law of Lewis and Clark College where he will continue assisting ONDA through the Pacific Environmental Advocacy Center.

Thanks for all your hard work, Mac!

Oregon Legislative Round-Up

By Gilly Lyons

The Oregon Legislature was stymied in its efforts to weaken the state's implementation of the federal Clean Water Act. Two anti-clean-water bills, Senate Bills 675 and 1166, both of which would have compromised enforcement of the Clean Water Act in Oregon's streams and rivers, passed the House and Senate but were stopped in their tracks by a pair of vetoes from Gov. John Kitzhaber.

SB 675 would have stripped the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality of its authority to regulate agricultural water pollution, rendering water quality standards virtually unenforceable on Oregon's federal lands. Meanwhile, SB 1166 aimed to narrow the definition of "outstanding resource waters," a critical part of the Clean Water Act's anti-degradation policy. These two bills figured prominently in the Oregon Cattlemen's Association's 1999 legislative agenda—one that is apparently hostile to this state's most precious natural resource: clean water. The governor may wear cowboy boots, but he still exercised common sense on these bills which would spelled bad news for our state's rivers.

Congress may exempt grazing from environmental laws

As *Desert Ramblings* went to press, Congress was preparing to vote on an omnibus spending bill that might contain a host of anti-environmental amendments or "riders" that probably would never pass as stand-alone bills.

A rider promoted by Sen. Pete Domenici (R-NM), a loyal friend to the livestock industry, would allow the BLM to renew thousands of expiring federal grazing permits without environmental review or public participation. The Domenici rider would effectively suspend most environmental laws (including the Clean Water Act and the National Environmental Policy Act) while the BLM attempts to catch up on a deluge of permit renewals that the agency has seen coming for years. This utterly transparent gift to the livestock industry would set an appalling precedent that expiring grazing permits need not be subject to legal or environmental scrutiny.

Sen. Durbin (D-IL) has offered an alternative amendment that requires the BLM to establish a schedule for permit renewal through 2001, ensures proper environmental review for permit renewals during the interim period, and would require permittees whose permits expire to comply with the standards and conditions of their current permits until they are renewed. ONDA urges our legislators to oppose the Domenici rider and, in the absence of a better alternative, to support the Durbin amendment.

Looking ahead: ONDA's second decade

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

put us in an excellent position to pass an Oregon wilderness bill, since Rep. Peter DeFazio, an Oregon Democrat and cow-free wilderness supporter, will be a senior member of the Public Lands Committee, which holds hearings on wilderness bills.

However, if Congress remains in Republican hands, Oregon conservationists might have to secure sponsors for a wilderness bill from other receptive members of Congress. This might be feasible if Oregon's suitable lands were included as part of a multi-state, Great Basin Desert or West-wide wilderness bill.

Short-term objectives

For the remainder of this Congress (which adjourns at the end of 2000), ONDA is moving forward on several fronts to advance desert protection. The first is to work with the "Clinton Land Legacy," which will include the designation of several areas throughout the West as national monuments. In Oregon, Steens Mountain and Alvord Desert, the Owyhee Canyonlands, and Soda Mountain (in southern Oregon) are under consideration. Under the Antiquities Act, a President can bypass a reluctant Congress to designate national monuments to protect areas possessing scientific or historical significance. President Clinton's designation of Utah's Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in 1996 was made under the authority of this Act.

In addition, ONDA, in coalition with 30 other groups, will continue to urge President Clinton to expand the Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge to the west and south, connecting it with Nevada's Charles Sheldon Wildlife Refuge (located on the Oregon border). ONDA would also like to see a John Day Wild Salmon Refuge to protect spawning and rearing habitat for salmonids in the upper John Day basin. The President has executive privileges to create or enlarge national wildlife refuges.

Our second goal over the next 18 months is to secure designation of the Badlands Wilderness Study Area. This



Proposed Badlands Wilderness in winter.

ELAINE REES

32,000-acre expanse of sculpted sand and lava is a mere 20 miles east of Bend. We have been working with Sen. Ron Wyden's staff and the rancher who has the largest allotment within the WSA to craft a proposal that would not only designate the area as wilderness but allow for the voluntary retirement of the grazing permit. Given that the Wilderness Act "grandfathers in" livestock grazing, allowing for the voluntary retirement of this permit is critical to the long-term restoration of these areas. ONDA has been advocating for this option for several years as a bridge between ranchers and conservationists. The Badlands thus provides an important precedent that hopefully can be expanded to include any grazing permit in Oregon. Recent examples of this successful approach include Nevada's Great Basin National Park and the Escalante National Monument.

Enforcing environmental laws

ONDA will also continue to watchdog the BLM and, where necessary, use the courts to force accountability. We will soon file a lawsuit under the 1934 Taylor Grazing Act to force the Secre-

tary of Interior to fulfill that law's directive to identify lands "chiefly valuable" for production of livestock—no doubt far less than what is currently leased for grazing (see *Desert Ramblings*, Winter 1999).

In the next decade

We may initiate new litigation under the Wild and Scenic (W&S) Rivers Act. We have already won cases in federal district court on the Donner und Blitzen, Owyhee, and John Day W&S Rivers. Now we want the BLM to clearly explain to the public how its plan to allow livestock grazing will "protect and enhance" the outstanding values of these rivers. We will also consider litigation to protect salmon habitat in the Columbia Basin and to protect the Pueblo Mountains from grazing abuses.

By the end of the next decade, I believe public lands grazing will be in sharp decline. Many areas will be closed to livestock as a result of voluntary retirements coupled with mandatory reductions resulting from listings under the Endangered Species Act (e.g., sage grouse and redband trout). Adding to the pressure to reduce grazing will be an increasing demand for recreation and wilderness opportunities, as well as the realization that invasive weed problems will, in many places, require the elimination of grazing. ONDA will be involved on all these fronts.

We also are likely to see a call to end subsidized ranching on our public lands. Ranchers should not be surprised if Congress passes a "freedom to ranch" bill similar to the recently passed "Freedom to Farm" law which phased out government price supports and other subsidies to agriculture.

Yes, we're making progress in our collective efforts to define community on our public lands and, in doing so, help define our part in the broader community that Aldo Leopold envisioned. ONDA members can be proud to belong to one of the handful of groups in the West challenging the status quo, refuting the dogma of the past, standing up to the cowboy myth, and fighting for ecological justice. 

Pronghorn fawns

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

storm and most literally froze to the ground,” said Hart Mountain Refuge Manager Dan Alonso in *The Oregonian* (January 22, 1996). This information was never again mentioned to the public or press.

Recent research on the Refuge concludes that weather and diet quality, not coyote predation, limit pronghorn numbers.

Both in interviews with reporters and in the Hart Mountain NAR newsletter, Refuge staff has repeatedly reported that their research showed that newborn pronghorn fawns in subsequent years



Killing coyotes contradicts the purpose of a wildlife refuge (coyote skeleton on Refuge fence).



Hart Mt. National Antelope Refuge has been cow-free since 1991. The current pronghorn (antelope) population is among the highest recorded since the refuge's creation.

(1996, 1997, and 1998) were “in excellent health,” with “no nutritional deficiencies, diseases, or parasites that predisposed fawns to predation.” Surprisingly, the same spokesmen had earlier told reporters that, “a fair percentage of the pronghorn fawns in 1996 were well below the normal range for protein,” adding that protein deficiency “prevents fawns from lying still and hiding from predators.” They also reported that the fawns in 1996 had low blood levels of copper and selenium, a deficiency that causes cattle “to deliver weakened babies” (*The Oregonian*, November 1996).

Later, a Hart Mountain biologist admitted in agency Technical Report 99-01 that pronghorn fawns in 1998 had significantly low blood values of hemoglobin, albumin, total protein, blood urea, nitrogen, selenium and vitamin E. “These fawns were not in excellent health,” the

author concluded. Earlier statements to the public were never corrected.

This information suggests that Refuge personnel knew from the beginning that coyotes were not the cause of the low fawn survival in 1995 or afterwards. In fact, all recent research on the Refuge concludes that weather conditions and diet quality, not predation, limit pronghorn numbers. This new research has also never been released to the public.

Even without coyote control, fawn survival has been high two of the last four years (see sidebar). If ONDA and the Predator Defense Institute had not prevented the refuge from implementing its plans, valuable scientific information on the factors controlling pronghorn numbers at Hart Mountain would have been lost. And worse, the refuge would have concluded their control efforts had been successful. **f**

Pronghorn fawn survival triples without predator control

Pronghorn fawn survival has more than tripled, from 12 fawns per 100 does in 1998 to 38 fawns per 100 does in 1999 *without any kind of predator control!* (The long-term average is 29 fawns per 100 does.) During the same period, total pronghorn numbers increased from 882 to 1378 animals, one of the highest pronghorn populations ever recorded on the Refuge. ONDA released this story to the press in August. It appears that the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service released pronghorn data only when numbers are low, allowing them to promote their campaign to kill coyotes. This is a strange way for a National Refuge – with a mission to manage the entire ecosystem – to behave.

LITERARY CORNER

BY WALLACE STEGNER

Below is an excerpt from a letter Wallace Stegner wrote to David E. Pesonen of the University of California in 1960, when the idea of preserving wilderness in America's remaining public lands was being contemplated. This letter has been reprinted many times, including under the title of “Geography of Hope.”

What I want to speak for is not so much the wilderness uses, valuable as those are, but the wilderness idea, which is a resource in itself. Being an intangible and spiritual resource, it will seem mystical to the practical-minded — but then anything that cannot be moved by a bulldozer is likely to seem mystical to them.

I want to speak for the wilderness idea as something that has helped form our character and that has certainly shaped our history as a people. It has no more to do with recreation than churches have to do with recreation, or than the strenuousness and optimism and expansiveness of what historians call the “American Dream” have to do with recreation....

Something will have gone out of us as a people if we ever let the remaining wilderness be destroyed; if we permit the last virgin forests to be turned into comic books and plastic cigarette cases; if we drive the few remaining members of the wild species into zoos or to extinction; if we pollute the

last clear air and dirty the last clean streams and push our paved roads through the last of the silence, so that never again will Americans be free in their own country from the noise, the exhausts, the stinks of human and automotive waste. And so that never again can we have the chance to see ourselves single, separate, vertical and individual in the world, part of the environment of trees and rocks and soil, brother to the other animals, part of the natural world and competent to belong in it. Without any remaining wilderness we are committed wholly, without chance for even momentary reflection and rest, to a headlong drive into our technological termite-life, the Brave New World of a completely man-controlled environment. We need wilderness preserved — as much of it as is still left, and as many kinds — because it was the challenge against our character as a people was formed. The reminder and the reassurance that it is still there is good for our spiritual health even if we never once in ten years set foot in it. It is good for us when we are young because of the incomparable sanity it can bring briefly, as a vacation and rest, into our insane lives. It is important to us when we are old simply because it is there — important, that is, simply as idea....

Americans still have that chance, more than many peoples; for while we were demonstrating ourselves the most efficient and ruthless environment-busters in history, and slashing and burning and cutting our way through a wilderness continent, the wilderness was working on us. It remains in us as surely as Indian names remain on the land. If the abstract dream of human liberty and human dignity became, in America, something more than an abstract dream, mark it down at least partially to the fact that we were in subtle ways subdued by what we conquered. **f**



GEOGRAPHY OF HOPE

A solid foundation of support

We extend our deep appreciation to the diverse foundations that have supported ONDA in our first decade.

- The Brainerd Foundation
- The Bullitt Foundation
- Carizma Foundation
- Center for Respect of Life and Environment
- Columbia River Bioregion Campaign
- Outdoor Industry Conservation Alliance
- Environmental Support Center
- The Flow Fund
- Foundation for Deep Ecology
- Fund for Wild Nature
- Further Foundation
- Gund Foundation
- Harder Foundation
- William C. Kenney Watershed Protection Foundation
- Kirby Foundation
- Kongsgaard-Goldman Foundation
- Lazar Foundation
- Max and Anna Levinson Foundation
- Mazamas
- McKenzie River Gathering Foundation
- National Rivers Coalition
- Northwest Fund for the Environment
- Oregon Community Foundation
- Oregon Jewish Community Foundation
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- The Rockwood Fund
- Rogue Wave Foundation
- Sperling Foundation
- The Strong Foundation
- Temper of the Times Foundation
- True North Foundation
- Turner Foundation
- Wilburforce Foundation

Volunteer board leads ONDA to success



ELAINE REES

ONDA's volunteer board of directors developing the Strategic Plan at a recent meeting. The board charts the course for the organization, raises funds to achieve its goals, and pitches in to get conservation work done.

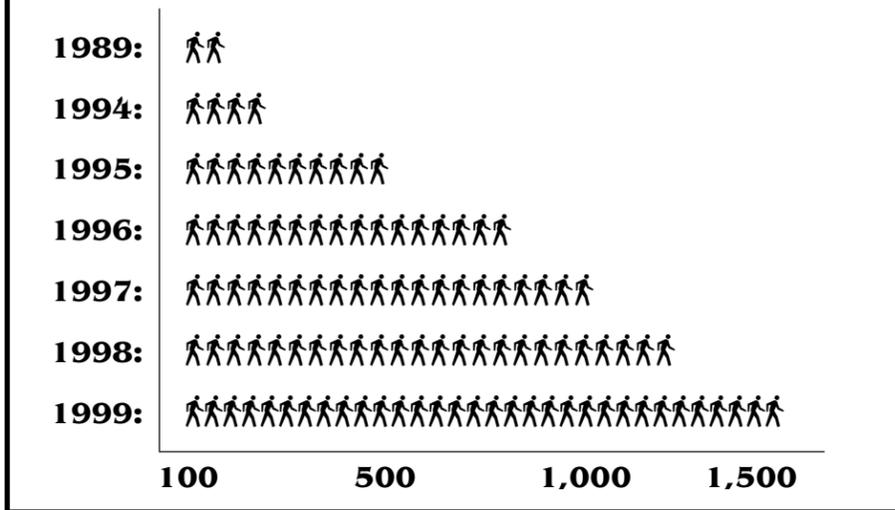
Thank you, board members

Our current board of directors and previous boards have been instrumental in ONDA's accomplishments. Below are the solid people who are currently serving on our board.

Dave Funk, President
Craig Miller, Vice President and Treasurer
Stu Sugarman, Secretary
Phil Conti
Lee Christie

Rudy Clements
Alice Elshoff
Craig Lacy
Connie Lonsdale

Membership growth through the first decade



ONDA's FIRST DECADE

A personal retrospective

By Alice Elshoff

It has been quite a journey looking back through ten years of newsletters to augment my own recollections of these momentous years. I won't be able to do justice to all the people who have helped nurture this organization into the dynamic force it is today, but I can say that every single person who has contributed in whatever way to ONDA's work is a gem in my book!

It all began in 1980 when the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) was preparing to send Congress a list of Oregon roadless areas for consideration as wilderness. The list included only about half of the lands identified in the original inventory. A wise Don Tryon, later to become one of ONDA's founders, thought someone besides the BLM ought to take a look at these lands, so he took it upon himself to explore most of eastern Oregon's public lands. This effort led to the realization that desert lovers would need to prepare an alternative wilderness proposal that included all the spectacular wild lands the BLM had left out in their recommendation to Congress.

I became interested in joining Don's "movement" after I asked the BLM why the Badlands



DAVID STONE

Wilderness Study Area near my home (then in Bend) failed to include an interesting slot canyon containing water-smoothed rocks from an ancient river as well as caves and rock art. When they asked "What canyon?" it seemed clear they weren't really that serious about their inventory. (Sen. Wyden is now advocating for designation of the proposed Badlands Wilderness; see back page.)

After a few years of walking the lands and drawing maps, it became obvious to Don and myself that we needed to organize. In 1988 ONDA was born with Matt Holmes as its first chairman. We immediately began an ambitious

A view from Steens Mountain down the precipitous east slope. Steens Mountain is one of the many spectacular places ONDA has worked to protect.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

ONDA TIMELINE: THE FIRST DECADE

<p>1989</p> <p>ONDA incorporates as a tax-exempt nonprofit organization.</p> <p>Alice Elshoff succeeds Matt Holmes as chairperson.</p>	<p>1990</p> <p>ONDA and other interested environmental and conservation groups begin meeting to forge desert wilderness legislation.</p>	<p>1991</p> <p>ONDA receives first grant supporting "Adopt-a-Wilderness" program.</p> <p>ONDA supports a public lands beef boycott.</p>	<p>ONDA occupies new office at Central Oregon Environmental Center.</p> <p>ONDA, others secure grazing suspension on Hart Mt. National Antelope Refuge.</p>
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PREVIOUS PAGE

program of field trips to eastern Oregon's public lands. By late summer Matt had moved away and I took over as chairperson. Soon Mike Sequeira took on our fledgling newsletter and turned it into a handsome publication.

In 1989, we officially incorporated as a nonprofit organization and received our 501(c)3 status. By year's end, we had over 100 members, had co-hosted the 11th Annual Desert Conference, had influenced off-road vehicle decisions in Millican Valley, and were making progress cataloging the lands of the Sage Proposal (which by 1991 evolved into the Oregon High Desert Protection Act).



Lone Mountain, Rincon Wilderness Study Area.

ELAINE REES

We also, however, had to bid a sad farewell to Don and Mimi Tryon, who moved to Salt Lake City.

Cyanide mining rears its ugly head

In 1990, Newmont Mining's proposed cyanide heap leach gold mine in the Owyhees and a planned geothermal power plant at Borax Lake in the Alvord Desert made it clear that

we needed interim protection for certain special places. For example, ONDA and others successfully sued the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to terminate grazing on Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge. We soon began, and continue today, the joyful work of removing old fencing from the Refuge. Seven years since the removal of livestock, the land has responded with quaking aspen and tall waving grasses, and increasing pronghorn populations.

By 1992, Bill Marlett joined our board of directors and we took another leap forward. The Sage Proposal had transformed into the Oregon High Desert Protection Act, a visionary proposal to designate six million acres of cow-free wilderness on public lands in eastern Oregon. We produced a slide show and printed a 12-page tabloid to promote high desert wilderness. We introduced the world to our terrific new lightning-emblazoned logo designed by Signe Mason.

This was also the year when we began our

MEMBERS REMEMBER.

"I remember how gung-ho people were to adopt an area within OHDPA to watch over and perhaps to be designated as wilderness. I also remember all the years of going to meetings, conferences, festivals and informing people about what ONDA was doing and what public land was. I was amazed at that question! We got a lot of new members this way."

- Connie Lonsdale

ONDA TIMELINE: THE FIRST DECADE

<p>1992</p> <p>Oregon High Desert Protection Act announced at Desert Conference.</p> <p>ONDA wins appeal, blocking BLM's plan to pave Steens Mt. Loop Road.</p>	<p>Mary Garrard and Alice Elshoff begin leading field trips to Oregon's High Desert through the Portland Parks and Recreation Department.</p> <p>1993</p> <p>ONDA hires Bill Marlett as first executive director.</p>	<p>ONDA stages first Hart Mt. Barbed Wire Roundup (fence removal) outing.</p> <p>Newmont Mining Co. announces poisonous cyanide gold mine plan for Grassy Mountain.</p>
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ONDA Strategic Plan: Ten years out

By Dave Funk

I have another life besides ONDA. I am a partner in a marketing design firm with offices in Portland and Eugene. In that capacity I've been involved in enough business and marketing plans to know that things never work out as planned, and that they rarely work out at all if not planned. A plan is necessary to start down a road. Once on the journey, circumstances down that road affect how you implement your plan.

In the first decade of its existence, ONDA worked from a shared vision and a strong mission. The board and staff, composed of desert activists, decided, on a case-by-case basis, how we were going to respond to various abuses of our treasured public lands. Ours was a very natural evolution. A group of citizens responded to a threat. Then another. Then yet another. No one really had time to plan comprehensively for the long haul. Until last year.

Aided by a grant from The Wilburforce Foundation, we began working with TREC (Training Resources for the Environmental Community) to fine-tune our shared vision and turn it into a long-term plan of action. Two days of work in a room at Camp Hancock near the John Day River, just seconds away from great desert hiking, was like conducting an AA meeting in a distillery, but the TREC facilitator kept us in line and forced us to define goals and objectives for the next decade. And now we're on the journey. We are forming committees, organizing our fundraising, and improving communication with our members.

If the plan goes as well as we want it to, Oregon will, in ten years, have a dwindling number of cows on the public lands as ranchers retire their permits. Willow and cottonwood will once again shade desert streams, keeping the water cool and fresh for the native trout. The BLM will be aggressively working to eradicate alien species of plants and to restore the complex high desert ecosystem. The howls of wolves will be heard in the Wallowas and the Blue Mountains. We will have a strong Oregon High Desert Protection Act in place to protect our wild roadless areas. There will be no cattle in wilderness areas.

Will all of this really happen in ten years? I doubt it. Plans never go exactly as you want them to, no matter what. For this vision to work we need to do the yeoman's task of increasing our membership to include all who treasure the Or-

egon desert. We need to approach potential donors for funds to hire attorneys and more staff to support our increased activity. We need to be educating, to be talking to people and showing them the benefits of a new way of looking at the desert, even though we'd rather be out in the desert ourselves. We need to recruit more volunteers for every manner of task.

We thought creating the plan was tough. It turns out that that was the easy part. Let's look back in ten years and see what we accomplished. Because if any of our dreams come true, it will be because everyone who reads this and believes in the dream did something to make it happen.

Strategic Plan Highlights

GOAL 1: DESIGNATE DESERT WILDERNESS IN OREGON

- Organizational Goals:
 - Prepare a Great Basin Desert map.
 - Investigate the viability of multi-state desert bill by 2000 Desert Conference.
- Legislative Goals:
 - Introduce a Desert Wilderness Bill by 2001.
 - Pursue heritage initiative executive order option.
- Educational Goals:
 - Build public support through media coverage and products.

GOAL 2: RESTORE NATIVE DESERT ECOSYSTEMS AND CLEAN WATER

Objective A. Restore Water Quality

- Organizational Goals:
 - Encourage tribal and BPA projects that enhance fish habitat.
 - Conduct a sage steppe ecological assessment.
- Legislative Goals:
 - Consider Nov. 2000 state initiative petition and campaign for clean streams.
 - Consider tax initiative for endowment of watersheds.
 - Encourage legislature to force NRCS to allocate CREP monies for water cleanup.
- Educational Goals:
 - Build public awareness of desert through media coverage and products.

Objective B. End Public Land Grazing

- Organizational Goals:
 - Conduct a sage steppe ecological assessment.
 - Build alliances with funders.
 - Build alliances with other groups.
- Legislative Goals:
 - Get permit retirement bill introduced in Congress.
 - Pursue executive order for Owyhee Canyonlands National Monument.
- Educational Goals:
 - Publicize George Wuerthner's grazing book.
 - Publicize Joy Belsky's research paper on weeds.

Measure 38 produces results

By Jim Myron and Ashley Henry

One of ONDA's most challenging projects undertaken in the past decade was the Oregon Clean Stream Initiative (Measure 38). This citizen initiative would have required the livestock industry in Oregon to comply with state water quality standards and the federal Clean Water Act.

While the ballot measure did not pass, it did show the citizens of Oregon that the environmental community can successfully undertake a grassroots effort to place an initiative on the ballot. It also raised the level of awareness of the general public to the problems associated with the grazing of domestic livestock.

Response: Progress on water quality

Measure 38 also produced a useful political response, stimulating Gov. John Kitzhaber to foster his Healthy Streams Partnership as an alternative. By doing so, the governor directly, if gently, acknowledged that livestock cause water pollution and offered a different, albeit weaker, solution. As part of the "Partnership," the Governor persuaded agricultural leaders, and later the Oregon Legislature, to support additional funding so the state could begin to address water quality problems. The 1997 Legislature allocated sufficient funding for the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality and the Oregon Department of Agriculture to establish Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) allocations for all of Oregon's water-quality limited streams.

Another direct result of Measure 38 was the implementation (finally) of SB1010, a plan to create water quality management plans on all agricultural lands. Passed by the 1993 Oregon Legislature, SB1010 was never seriously implemented. Together, the implementation of SB1010 and the Healthy Streams Partnership should lead to water quality management plans on all agricultural lands, as well as establish maximum pollutant levels on all Oregon streams which violate federal clean water standards. For years, such important plans had been stalled. These actions may never have occurred without the threat of Measure 38.



GREG BURKE

Measure 38 (the Clean Stream Initiative) sought to address water pollution caused by livestock. Pollution from livestock grazing is a prime reason that some 9000 miles of Oregon's rivers fail to meet federal clean water standards.

Lessons learned

ONDA also learned some very important lessons from waging the campaign. Among these lessons: 1) you need to have a lot of money to carry out a successful initiative campaign, 2) you need to know who your supporters are, and 3) expect some underhanded and sometimes even illegal actions from the opposition.

In the final analysis, the Oregon Clean Stream Initiative prompted new legislative and agency efforts to clean up Oregon's rivers. It has also changed the way the state of Oregon views non-point source pollution (like grazing pollution). We only hope that the long-term benefits of the Measure 38 campaign and the efforts of hundreds of dedicated volunteers will be cleaner streams and restored habitat for native fish and other aquatic life. 🐟



ONDA FILE PHOTO

"Streamcleaner" Ashley Henry campaigns for Measure 38 in the Eugene Celebration parade.

MEMBERS REMEMBER...

"I met with Don Tryon to get the lowdown on adopting an area for wilderness designation. There were so many areas that beckoned, so I asked Don which one needed the most help. He said Hawksie Walksie (BLM now calls it Hawk Mountain WSA) was a fantastic area that was liable to get overlooked, so I decided that one was for me. Don then educated me on all the fine points of the BLM wilderness review process, which nearly put me to sleep, but his devotion to the idea of wilderness on the high desert of Oregon inspired me."

- Elaine Rees

ongoing attempt to protect Steens Mountain. We opposed the liquid asphalt upgrade of the summit road. BLM backed off and in the end only applied gravel. We argued against snowmobiling on the mountain and unsuccessfully protested the Steens Summit fence, the BLM's uninspired answer to inappropriate livestock grazing in an alpine Research Natural Area - at a cost to the taxpayers of \$17,000. The fence still stands today, an eyesore that intersects two Wilderness Study Areas.

First staff hired

In 1993, ONDA took another leap forward by hiring Bill Marlett as our executive director (and first paid staff). One of our major battles that year was our fight to block Newmont Mining Co.'s proposed cyanide gold mine at Grassy Moun-

tain in Malheur County. We relied heavily on the knowledge and good work of board member Gary Brown in this fight. Eventually, the company decided mining Grassy Mountain was not economically feasible.

Catlow redband trout (which ONDA petitioned for listing as a threatened species in 1998) began to make news in 1993. New owners at Roaring Springs Ranch convinced the BLM to allow cattle back on the South Steens allotment, through which ran three redband-bearing streams, one year earlier than an agreement with the previous owner would have allowed. ONDA member Eric Schulz assisted in conducting surveys of these streams under the direction of ODFW's southeast region biologist, Wayne Bowers, who noted that the last surveys were 20 years old and that habitat conditions were "the same or worse" and that "livestock continue to hammer all three drainages."



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Barbara Butler began tracking the trapping and poisoning of wildlife by the federal government's Animal Damage Control program. She had hoped to take part in a program to have two women accompany field agents to observe and document their "control" methods on public lands. They were denied access, but this attempt did put the glare of publicity on the predator-killing agency.

A volunteer at ONDA's annual Barbed Wire Roundup at Hart Mt. National Antelope Refuge.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

1994			
ONDA files Clean Water Act lawsuit against Forest Service to reduce livestock pollution into the John Day River.	ONDA helps convince the State Land Board to open bidding on state grazing leases.	ONDA appeals BLM's decision to grant Beaty Butte grazing permit without proper environmental assessments/process.	
ONDA joins effort to pass an initiative to strengthen Oregon's mining laws.	1995		
	ONDA hires Gilly Lyons as Grassroots Coordinator.	ONDA sues BLM to protect Donner und Blitzen Wild and Scenic River.	

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Both 1994 and 1995 were roller coaster rides for desert activists. Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt's Rangeland Reform effort raised hopes for long-overdue improvements in the management of public lands grazing. These hopes were dashed by administrative back-pedaling and eventual capitulation to the livestock industry, leaving public lands owners even more disenfranchised. Another avenue looked promising when the State of Oregon proposed a plan to allow competitive bidding for state-owned rangelands. The change would have allowed conservation

groups to bid on leases, and if successful, to restore wildlife habitat rather than graze livestock. ONDA prepared to bid on (and then restore) 10,000 acres of scenic Owyhee Canyonlands. But newly-elected Gov. John Kitzhaber reversed this policy and final resolution of the issue has been put on hold pending resolution of subsequent lawsuits.

In 1995 it became obvious that we needed another staff person. By some rare and wonderful alignment of planets, we were able to find Gillian Lyons, who had just completed her master's degree in Environmental Studies at the University of Montana. She not only had the exact mix of skills needed but, well, she was "Gilly." Those who know her understand that I need say no more. So what if the old Sagebrush Rebellion anti-federalists had re-emerged under the banner of their so-called "Wise Use" movement. We now had Gilly on our side. It was probably no

MEMBERS REMEMBER...

"The idea of OHDPAs intrigued me. I volunteered to spread the word, and from 1992 to 1997 I made 16 presentations of the OHDPAs slideshow to nearly 1000 people. Alice Elshoff's wonderful, rich voice narrated the story. Working on the Clean Stream Initiative was a good experience - from gaining support for a page in the Voters' Pamphlet to debating issues with Oregon Farm Bureau hatchetmen in Corvallis and at the coast."
- Homer Campbell



ONDA worked to protect the scenic Owyhee Wild & Scenic River from grazing related impacts.

SANDY LONSDALE

ONDA TIMELINE: THE FIRST DECADE

<p>1996</p> <p>ONDA launches Clean Stream Initiative (Measure 38).</p> <p>Gov. Kitzhaber crafts Healthy Streams Partnership.</p> <p>ONDA blocks bid to lengthen state grazing leases.</p> <p>ONDA petitions to list Great Basin redband trout under Endangered Species Act.</p>	<p>1997</p> <p>ONDA wins Clean Water Act suit against USFS to protect John Day River from grazing pollution.</p> <p>ONDA hires staff ecologist Dr. Joy Belsky, Ph.D.</p> <p>ONDA wins Donner und Blitzen Wild & Scenic River lawsuit.</p>
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coincidence that we launched our first annual Desert Poetry Festival at Desert Conference that very year.

The Clean Stream Initiative

The next year found us consumed by our Clean Stream Initiative (see pg. 10), a ballot measure campaign which highlighted the ugly truth about grazing damage to our rivers and streams to a whole new contingent of citizens. Membership grew during this period. Lies and a well-financed ad campaign by the livestock industry along with some strange twists of fate conspired to keep this initiative from passing, but the groundwork was laid for the next major attempt to free the desert from the tyranny of over a century of abusive grazing. It was for his work on behalf of cow-free waters that Bill Marlett received the "Outstanding Grassroots Grazing Reform Organizer" award from the Alliance for the Wild Rockies.

Since 1997, we have added Dr. Joy Belsky, Ph.D. as staff ecologist; George Wuerthner, a nationally published nature writer and anti-grazing activist, as our national outreach coordinator; and Stephanie Parent as staff attorney, all enhancing ONDA's effectiveness and credibility. We also have hired a part-time membership coordinator and an administrative assistant.

In its first decade, ONDA evolved from a scrappy volunteer group to a lean, established and



ONDA FILE PHOTO

Rudy Clements, Warm Springs tribal member and ONDA board member, educates Eugene citizens about the cultural importance of salmon during the campaign to pass Measure 38.

effective watchdog of our public desert lands with nearly 2000 members supporting our work. Today, we await the outcomes of numerous ONDA-initiated court cases, the possibility of special designation for the Steens, and the protection of several desert species under the federal Endangered Species Act. All these actions are part of fulfilling our mission to restore native ecosystems and water quality on the public lands of eastern Oregon. In 2010, I look forward to reading the second ten-year retrospective to see what we have accomplished during the first decade of the new millennium.

Alice Elshoff is a founding member of ONDA.

MEMBERS REMEMBER...

"Back in the early 1990s I volunteered to digitize the OHDPAs maps into the GIS system. It was a rewarding experience, something I will remember for the rest of my life. I really enjoyed working with Bill Marlett. It's great to work with someone who is unwavering in his vision."
- John Howell

<p>1998</p> <p>ONDA files Owyhee Wild & Scenic River lawsuit.</p> <p>ONDA hires George Wuerthner as National Outreach Coordinator.</p> <p>ONDA wins lawsuit to prevent coyote hunting on Hart Mt. National Antelope Refuge.</p>	<p>1999</p> <p>ONDA wins petition for listing of Great Basin redband trout under the ESA.</p> <p>ONDA hires Stephanie Parent as first staff attorney.</p> <p>ONDA wins suit against BLM regarding the Millican Valley Off-Road Vehicles Recreation Area which impacts adjacent wild lands.</p> <p>ONDA publishes peer-reviewed research on livestock impacts on Western rivers.</p>
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