

Desert Ramblings

the newsletter of the
Oregon
Natural Desert
association



Inside:
OFF ROAD VEHICLES 5
FEATURE SECTION:
SAGE GROUSE 6-8
VAN DYKE: <i>THE DESERT</i> 9
REMEMBERING PAUL FRITZ 12

Volume 14, Number 1

Implementing the Steens Protection Act

By Brent Fenty

After months of intense political activity, the dust is finally beginning to settle in the Steens. On October 30, then-President Clinton signed into law the Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Act (CMPA). This Act protected over a million acres from mining and geothermal development, created a redband trout reserve, added almost 30 stream miles to the Wild and Scenic River system, and designated nearly 175,000 acres of desert wilderness, including over 100,000 acres which are off-limits to livestock grazing (see map on page 4).

Unfortunately, approval by Congress does not automatically translate overnight into on-the-ground protections. Instead, ONDA and many other groups and individuals will be working in the coming years to assist with and shape the implementation and management process.

Initially, an interim committee of BLM staff, congressional aides, and stakeholders will address the immediate mandates of the Act. The committee's primary concern will be implementation of the new "no-livestock grazing area." This will include removing some range developments (such as fences, water troughs, etc.), building others, relocating livestock, and disbursing payments for pending land exchanges.

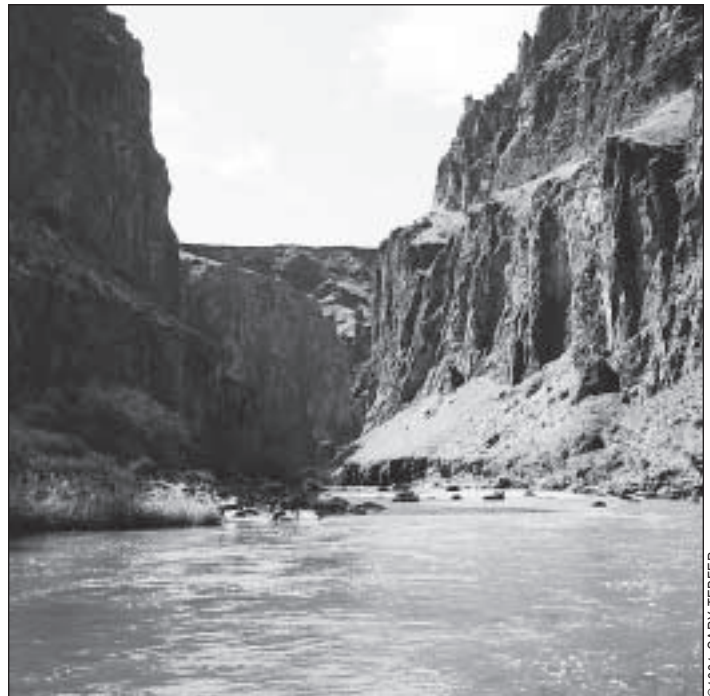
Steens Mountain Advisory Council

In the coming months, the new Secretary of Interior will appoint an advisory council based on nominations from the BLM, Governor's office, Burns Paiute Tribe, and the Harney County Court. The Steens Mountain Advisory Council (SMAC) will consist of twelve members representing a variety of interests including native plants and wildlife, tribal interests, recreation, and livestock grazing. The SMAC will help the BLM develop and implement a management plan for the Steens. This plan will address those issues not specifically outlined in the legislation, including transportation, recreation, and grazing. The Act states that the management plan shall be completed within four years.

More wilderness acquisitions

The Act also authorizes the appropriation of \$25 million

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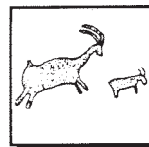
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The spectacular Owyhee River Canyon in southeast Oregon.

ONDA's Wilderness Agenda

Focus on Steens, Owyhee, Badlands and permit retirement

With a divided Congress and a new administration likely to be hostile to public land preservation, it's clear than any wildlands legislation introduced over the next couple of years

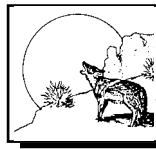


FROM THE OUTBACK
by Bill Marlett

will succeed only with bipartisan support. With that reality in mind and our goal of building on the success of last year's Steens-Alvord legislation (see article at left), ONDA has identified three high priority wilderness designation areas to seek in this session of Congress: Steens Mountain (phase II), the Badlands (east of Bend) and the Owyhee Canyonlands.

In all three cases, we are working with ranchers who are willing

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3 ►



FROM THE DEN

Norton confirmation casts shadow

Prospects for Western public lands—particularly BLM lands—under the new Bush Administration got off to an ominous start when President Bush nominated pro-industry Gale Norton for Secretary of Interior. Norton is a protégé of James Watt, President Reagan’s anti-environmental Interior Secretary. The Senate’s confirmation of Norton sets the tone for the public land debate of the next four years.

Special thanks go to Oregon Senator Ron Wyden for his strong opposition to Norton’s nomination; during the confirmation hearings, a direct question from Sen. Wyden put Norton on record asserting that public lands grazing is indeed a privilege and not a right. Wyden was one of 24 U.S. senators who voted against Norton’s confirmation, a record and twice the negative votes that James Watt garnered in 1981.

Hopefully, the far from unanimous vote will dampen the Administration’s enthusiasm for liquidating wild lands, but don’t count on it. ONDA and other public lands advocacy groups across the country must be more vigilant, focused and effective than ever to ensure our public lands and their extraordinary natural heritage is still intact when Bush leaves office. We look forward to working with you, our members, to keep Oregon’s deserts healthy and whole.



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

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Environmental Lobby Day March 13 • Salem, OR

Join hundreds of conservation-minded Oregonians from around the state for a day of friendly lobbying at the state capitol in Salem. The Oregon Conservation Network will arrange meetings with legislators. Lobby training, lunch, and parking included. Contact Gilly Lyons at (503) 525-0193 or glyons@onda.org

Pine Creek Ranch Volunteer Work Weekend April 6-8 (near Clarno, OR)

Help the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs restore riparian and grassland habitats, and repair/remove fences.

Meals and lodging provided at discounted prices, with a salmon bake on Saturday. For information or to register, contact ONDA at (541) 330-2638, or call Mark Berry, Habitat Manager at (541) 763-4020.

Oregon Wild Conference April 27-29 • Lane Community College, Eugene, OR

Join wilderness advocates from throughout Oregon for strategizing, networking and camaraderie. Panels will focus on crafting wilderness legislation, the science of wildlands protection, and organizing successful campaigns. Contact Susan Ash at Oregon Natural Resources Council: sa@onrc.org or (503) 283-6343.

Desert Conference XXIII

September 27-30 • Malheur Field Station (near Burns, OR)

Holy cow! Desert Conference in the fall? We’re trying something different this year and, for the first time, we plan to offer field trips to the High Steens—home to America’s first official cow-free wilderness. Please join us for this early autumn gathering in the desert; visit with old friends and new, recite a poem at the Desert Rat Poetry Festival, and greet migrating birds as they make their way south instead of north. Contact Daniele McKay in ONDA’s Bend office at (541) 330-2638 or dmckay@onda.org.

Wilderness agenda

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

to support permanent protection of these areas as wilderness. At the same time, we will continue to update and refine the Oregon High Desert Protection Act, conservationists' 7-million-acre wilderness proposal for Oregon's high desert.

Owyhee Canyonlands

We are especially excited about locking in our recent legal victory on the Wild & Scenic Owyhee River (see *Desert Ramblings*, Spring/Summer 2000) which eliminated livestock from most of the river canyon. The court-ordered ban on grazing in the canyon followed several days of fruitless negotiations with Owyhee-area ranchers. Presiding Judge James Redden was forced to render his own decision, which addressed most of ONDA's concerns except for one major concession that allowed water developments to be built in the Saddle Butte Wilderness Study Area (WSA), an action that under any other circumstances would be prohibited.

We decided not to appeal the matter to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals because the federal government changed its position to support ONDA's assertion that, under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, livestock are not compatible

with the outstanding values of the Owyhee River. This significant reversal would have assured our victory in the Ninth Circuit had the ranchers appealed the case. They chose not to appeal, no doubt because of the government's change in position. Consequently, Judge Redden's decision—which prohibits livestock from much of the Owyhee River canyon but allows the water development in a WSA—still stands.

Securing the wilderness


With the success of the litigation sealed, ONDA will now focus on making permanent the cow-free status of the Owyhee River canyon through wilderness designation by Congress. In the last session, Rep. Greg Walden (R-OR) and Owyhee-area ranchers expressed interest in legislation that would designate wilderness, if, in turn, conservationists would support the ranchers' request to federally fund the Saddle Butte WSA water development and the direct buy-out of certain grazing permits. While water development projects in wilderness study areas tie our stomachs in knots, the national precedent of a federal buy-out of grazing permits—leaving the affected lands permanently cow-free—is certainly reason to keep talking. Like the controversial land exchanges in the Steens-Alvord legisla-

tion, this type of compromise may be the only way we can do business in this divided Congress, not to mention within Oregon's delegation.

Grazing lease buy-outs

If approved by Congress, a successful federal buy-out of grazing permits in the Owyhee Canyonlands would establish a new national precedent of a non-confrontational approach that addresses the critical ecological need to eliminate livestock grazing from Western public lands.

Within the next few years, we anticipate that leaders in Congress will introduce national permit retirement legislation that will lead to the thoughtful voluntary retirement of grazing permits from our public lands. This would be a major change in the prevailing winds on the sagebrush sea, but one that respects ranchers' legitimate concerns while honoring the clear legal and ecological mandate to restore our public wildlands for watersheds, wolves, sage grouse, and salmon.

Of course, we will continue to use the courts to enforce the law. It is only because of our litigation that we'll be able to find a place at the table to engage in the meaningful discussions that we hope will take place in the 107th Congress. 

Grazing activists gather in Reno

By Gilly Lyons

Many people spend the week after Thanksgiving recovering from an overdose of turkey, tryptophan and extended family. But for 100 grazing activists from across the country, the Flamingo Hilton in Reno, NV, was the place to be during the last few days of November 2000.

These public lands advocates gathered in the heart of the Great Basin for RangeNet 2000, a three-day symposium dedicated to exploring the possibility of ending public lands grazing. Speakers such as Debra Donahue (author of "The Western Range Revisited") and long-time cow critic, naturalist and ONDA staffer George Wuerthner helped articulate the legal, scientific, and policy underpinnings of a campaign to end domestic livestock grazing on federal lands. Stephanie Parent, ONDA's staff attorney, participated in a panel on grazing-related litigation (where she updated attendees on the status of our Taylor Grazing Act challenge), while Gilly Lyons, ONDA's grassroots coordinator, moderated a panel on grazing permit retirement.

Perhaps the most significant outcome of RangeNet 2000 was a commitment by symposium participants to launch an "End Public Lands Grazing Campaign." A dedicated sub-set of participants burned the midnight oil to draft a declaration that states, among other things, "that we view the cessation of public lands grazing as an essential first step in the restoration and re-wilding of our magnificent heritage of western public lands." While the campaign is still young, it's quickly picking up steam, and has already caught the attention of the livestock industry and the public lands ranching magazine, "Range" (one of our favorite periodicals, actually). To learn more about the End Public Lands Grazing Campaign, or to endorse the campaign as an organization or individual, please visit: <http://www.egroups.com/database/eplg>

Many thanks to RangeNet coordinator Larry Walker for hosting an inspiring and informative symposium.

Steens Protection Act

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) for land acquisition, land exchanges, and conservation easements. ONDA will be busy working with local landowners and the BLM to investigate and evaluate land exchange and acquisition opportunities that will result in additional wilderness and protections (through purchase) of lands threatened by development. Several land exchanges (mostly to eliminate private inholdings within wilderness boundaries) which would result in more wilderness designations had already been researched during 2000 but were not included in the legislation due to a lack of time. We hope that these exchanges will be completed in 2001 in order to expand wilderness and cow-free lands on Steens Mountain.

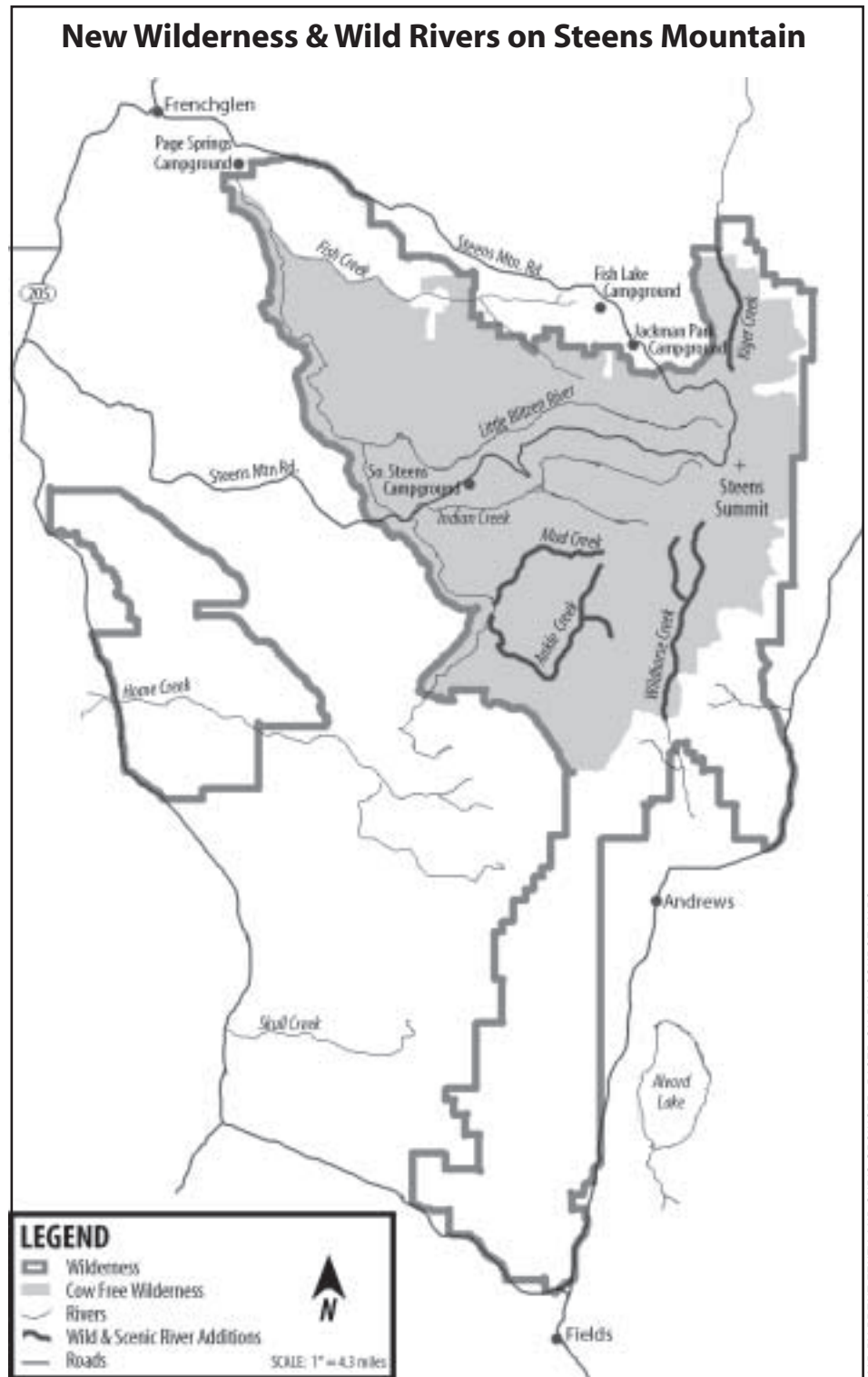
The CMPA is an important step towards protecting the Steens and sets a critical precedent by establishing the first cow-free wilderness in the West. However, much work remains. ONDA is committed to expanding protection of the Steens, and we look forward to the challenges and opportunities of the coming years.



Thank you, Senator Smith!

ONDA wishes to thank Sen. Gordon Smith (R-OR) for co-sponsoring and facilitating passage of the Steens Protection Act in the Senate last fall. Through an editorial oversight, the efforts of Sen. Smith and his staff were omitted from the acknowledgements in the Fall 2000 *Desert Ramblings*.

New Wilderness & Wild Rivers on Steens Mountain



MAP BY BRENT FENTY AND CHRIS ORSINGER. BASED ON BLM SOURCE MAPS.

LUBA reversal prohibits "school" on Steens Mountain

The Land Use Board of Appeals (LUBA) recently reversed a decision by Harney County commissioners to allow a "school" on the west slope of Steens Mountain. The owners' original request to build a resort on land zoned for "exclusive farm use" was rejected four years ago. They returned to the Commissioners with a license from the Oregon Department of Education. Their plan for a career school included 19 permanent cabins and a 14-room lodge with restaurant. Schools are allowed on "exclusive farm use" land.

This would have been the first commercial development on these pristine and rugged lands. Worried that a "school" would set a precedent for a continuing onslaught of inappropriate requests, ONDA, represented by Paul Dewey, petitioned LUBA to review the permit. The Board agreed that the proposed career school did not qualify as a "private school" as defined by state land use statutes and therefore was prohibited.

The land owners plan to appeal LUBA's decision. We'll keep you posted!

BLM's Off-Road Vehicle "Strategy"

A Colossal Disappointment

By Gilly Lyons

If the drone of a two-stroke engine sets your teeth on edge, or if the eroded soil left behind by a Yamaha three-wheeler gets your blood boiling, the Bureau of Land Management's National Off-Highway Vehicle Management Strategy will do little to calm your nerves.

In early December, the BLM released its long-awaited draft document. However, this so-called "management strategy" fails to set any limits on the widespread, escalating damage caused by off-road vehicles (ORVs) to the West's most fragile deserts, canyons, streams, and wilderness study areas.

After a year-long process, 49 public hearings (including two in Oregon), and thousands of public comments that called for protecting federal lands from ORV damage, the draft plan offers nothing but inconclusive "guidance" should the BLM decide to prepare future ORV plans.

The weak plan comes despite the agency's admission that damage caused by ORVs is exploding across the West. A mere 5% of the 264 million acres managed by the BLM outside of Alaska is protected from off-road vehicles. Meanwhile, on the remaining 95%, ORVs are virtually free to erode soils, shred plants, destroy cryptobiotic crusts, harass wildlife, degrade wilderness values, and pollute fragile streams. In Oregon alone, the BLM predicts a 200% increase in ORV use over the next two decades. Yet, instead of providing enforceable, on-the-ground solutions to this westwide problem, the BLM's draft plan leaves ORVs as unregulated as ever.

The BLM concedes that its draft ORV strategy does not even attempt to meet the agency's legal responsibilities to protect public lands from ORVs. Indeed, the plan—which amounts to a colossal missed opportunity—lacks any clear guidance for setting limits as to where ORVs should be permitted or prohibited. In some cases, the strategy articulates conflicting goals that could actually exacerbate the impact of ORVs on BLM lands.

In an effort to salvage the draft strategy, conservationists strongly urged the BLM to incorporate the following three management directives as part of the agency's approach to ORV management.


1. Wilderness Study Areas, inventoried roadless areas, and all other wilderness-quality lands must be closed to off-road vehicles.



Evidence of soil erosion and the contempt of ORV drivers for a posted closure.

RICHARD WILHELM

2. On lands outside WSAs and roadless areas, BLM must do more to control and limit ORV use. Specifically:
 - a) On all BLM lands, off-road vehicles must limit travel to routes where the BLM has determined that environmental damage can be minimized.
 - b) These authorized routes should be clearly marked with signs indicating they are open to off-road vehicles.
 - c) Off-road vehicles should be prohibited on any routes that are not posted as "open."
3. ORVs should be permitted only where the BLM can demonstrate that it can monitor the impacts of ORVs and enforce rules protecting the land from ORV damage.

If the BLM ever hopes to seriously address the intensifying problems caused by ORV use, the agency must acknowledge the starring role that ORVs play in the degradation of our public lands. Then it must act accordingly by prohibiting these machines from our most treasured wildlands. The next time the BLM undertakes an off-road vehicle planning effort, it's ONDA's sincerest hope that they get it right. 

ORVs are virtually free to erode soils, shred plants, destroy cryptobiotic crusts, harass wildlife, degrade wilderness values, and pollute fragile streams on 95% of BLM lands.

The Embattled Sage Grouse

By Mark Salvo
Grasslands Advocate,
American Lands*

The stately sage grouse has experienced an unnatural decline for decades, mostly due to habitat degradation. Many factors are to blame for diminished sage grouse populations with live-stock grazing among the most culpable.

Sage grouse history

Sage grouse have inhabited the western United States and southern Canada since the Pleistocene epoch, two million years ago. The sage grouse was discovered by Lewis and Clark in 1806 and was given its scientific name, *Centrocercus urophasianus* (Latin for "spiny-tailed pheasant"), in 1831. Huge flocks of sage grouse were reported to "blacken the sky" before 1900 (see sidebar, pg. 7). Prior to the arrival of white settlers, American Indians utilized the sage grouse for food and created dances and costumes to mimic their strutting behavior.

Their historic range closely conformed to the distribution of tall and short sagebrush on the prairie sagebrush steppe covering what became sixteen western states and three Canadian provinces. However, since 1900 the distribution of sage grouse has been reduced with eradication of populations at the edges of their range (see map). Sage grouse no longer live in Arizona, British Columbia, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, and Oklahoma.

Physical characteristics

The sage grouse is a beautiful, charismatic bird. Both males and females are a mottled, brownish-gray with only subtle differences between the sexes during nonbreeding periods. The males weigh up to six pounds and the females weigh fifty percent less. White chest feathers and specialized head feathers distinguish cocks during the March-through-May breeding season. Cocks also sport long black tail feathers with white tips, while female tail feathers are mottled black, brown, and white.



A male sage grouse in courtship display.

COURTESY OF MARK SALVO

Mating ritual at the "Lek"

The sage grouse mating ritual is fascinating to observe. In the early spring, the more colorful males congregate each dawn at "leks," ancestral strutting grounds that are clear of large sagebrush and tall debris. Leks vary in size from one to forty acres and may be located up to fifty miles from wintering areas.

To attract a hen, cocks strut, fan their tail feathers and swell their breasts to reveal bright yellow air sacs. The progression of wing movements and inflating and deflating air sacs elicits an acoustic "swish-swish-coo-oo-poink!" Sage grouse often gather at leks again in the evening and cocks will strut throughout the night when the moon is bright. All together, the sage grouse mating ritual is among the most stirring and colorful natural history pageants in the West.

Seasonal habitat requirements

Sage grouse are dependent on sagebrush and are an indicator species for the sagebrush steppe ecosystem. The bird derives not only its name, but food, shelter and cover from the shrub.

Sage grouse require different seasonal habitats throughout the year consisting of sagebrush, grasses, forbs, and other desert flora. Ideal nesting habitat has two components: a sagebrush overstory and a thick grass/forb understory. Both the over- and

*American Lands is leading a campaign to conserve sage grouse and restore their habitat throughout the West. ONDA is a partner in this campaign.

Sage grouse are dependent on sagebrush and are an indicator species for the sagebrush steppe.

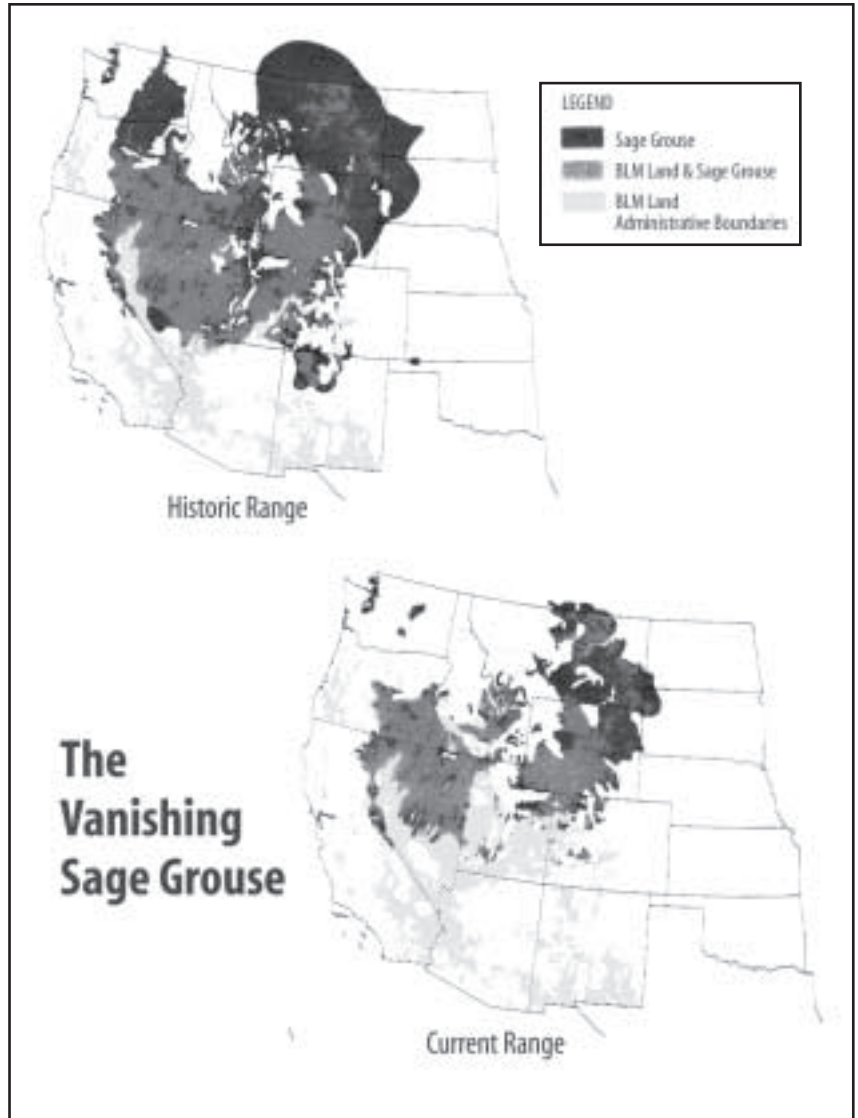
understory provide food, shelter from the wind and sun, and cover from ground predators and raptors. Newly hatched chicks also feed on abundant insects found in the grasses and forbs.

Summer range consists of sagebrush stands interspersed with forb-rich areas, including wet meadows and riparian areas. Good winter range provides sage grouse with access to sagebrush, its only winter food source, under all snow conditions. Throughout the year, sage grouse will range widely between leks, loafing and feeding areas, brood rearing areas, wintering habitat, wet meadows and riparian zones, sometimes covering over one hundred miles of terrain. Subsequently, vast expanses of intact sagebrush habitat and functioning hydrologic systems are necessary to support healthy sage grouse populations.

Human impacts

Human activities in sagebrush habitat have decimated sage grouse populations in the past decades. Livestock grazing, agricultural and urban conversion, application of herbicides and pesticides, altered fire regimes, oil and gas development, mining, off-road vehicle use, and the placement and construction of utility corridors, roads and fences have fragmented, degraded and eliminated sage grouse habitat throughout its range. Sage grouse are also hunted in nine states.

Since 1980, the sage grouse population is estimated to have declined between thirty-five to eighty percent. The present size of the breeding population is estimated at 140,000 individuals scattered in two Canadian provinces and eleven



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

“Sage chickens...clouded the sky”

From an interview on March 31, 1964, with Sid Tremewan, the first Forest Supervisor of the Humboldt National Forest. From U.S. Forest Service historical records.

"Sage chickens were so plentiful in the 1890's when I was on the Evans Place [the ranch on which Tremewan grew up in northern Nevada] they clouded the sky. I can remember killing them with a stick on many occasions. When returning home from school, all I had to do was gallop my white horse through a stretch of natural meadow. The birds were always thick on those meadows. They would be eating white clover and other vegetation. As I passed by, they would raise up like a bunch of blackbirds. When I was pretty near home I would get a stick about four feet long and three quarters of an inch thick. As I galloped along, I would start slapping the stick from one side to the other. In a short time, I would have five or six sage chickens to take home for supper.

"Another way I got sage chickens without a gun was by using a stick while raking hay. We used a one horse rake, and I generally had a long stick with a little brush on it to keep the flies off the horse. In the late afternoon,

when it began to get dinner time, the chickens would walk way from in front of the horse and just outside of the wheel. I would just reach out and rap them over the head with the stick. Oh, they were thick!

"Sheep bands destroyed a lot of nests in the early days. I watched as many as seven bands in a day go by the Tremewan Ranch. They would be so thick that they had to have an extra man out riding between the bands to keep them from mixing together. Years of this type of destruction to the nests are what started to thin out the sage chickens.

"Also hunting cut the numbers in some areas. During the 1890s, parties used to come out in wagons from Elko. They would camp for weeks at a time just hunting and fishing. When they were ready to go home, they usually had one last shoot. A dead-axe wagon wouldn't hold the birds they killed. They would just leave them on the ground in big piles to rot. It was a contest to see who could kill the most. "

western states. A second species of sage grouse, the Gunnison sage grouse (*Centrocercus minimus*), has also declined throughout its relatively small range in southwestern Colorado and southeastern Utah.


Livestock grazing impacts

Although some wildlife biologists seem loathe to admit it, livestock grazing harms sage grouse. Livestock can degrade or eliminate nesting habitat by eating and trampling the grasses and forbs around sagebrush. Nests that are exposed to the wind, sun and predators are less productive than nests in healthy habitat. Without the forbs, insects, an important food source for sage grouse, are also less prolific.

Thirsty livestock often severely overgraze riparian areas and meadows important to sage grouse. They also eat and trample sagebrush, the sole winter food supply for sage grouse. Wandering livestock can stress sage grouse and other wildlife, and their grazing opens the vegetative cover, exposing sage grouse to predators. Livestock grazing also introduces and spreads unpalatable weeds into an area, reducing native food sources for all wildlife.

Other detrimental factors

Range developments harm sage grouse as well. Raptors perch on fence posts and telephone poles to spy and prey upon sage grouse. Water developments may artificially increase predators or competitors for sage grouse. And the conversion of sagebrush to crested wheatgrass or other forage for cattle effectively eliminates sage grouse habitat.

Despite its immense expanse, the West's sagebrush steppe is often referred to as the "forgotten ecosystem." Historically, western developers and extractive industries have enjoyed little governmental oversight in their use of these lands. Neither the public land management agencies nor conservation groups have spent adequate resources to protect them. The resulting degradation of millions of acres of sagebrush habitat and the decline of the sage grouse, a key indicator species, should serve as notice that past land management policies have failed and reforms are in order. 

For a version of this article with complete scientific references, contact the author at mark@sagegrouse.org or call Mark Salvo at 503-978-1054.

Beatys Butte: A Great Sage Grouse Hike

What to Expect: A relatively easy climb to one of the most prominent points in southeast Oregon, with commanding views in all directions

Distance: 6.4 miles round trip

Elevation Range: 5,300-7,918 feet

Drinking Water: No

Best Times: Late spring, summer, fall

USGS 7.5' Map: Beatys Butte

Oregon Map Starting Point: Adel

Approximately 25 miles east of Adel (0.4 mile east of milepost 53) is a stop sign, just before OR 140 turns south and steeply upward. Go north on the Beatys Butte Road approximately 29 miles to the turnoff to Willow Spring. A house trailer marks the spot. Backtrack 0.3 mile and park on public land. Beatys Butte stands before you 3.2 miles to the south-southeast. The north side of Beatys Butte is a checkerboard of public and private land (so please be extra respectful). The latter is not posted as of this writing. Return as you came.



COURTESY OF MARK SALVO

Sage grouse strutting.

Viewing Sage Grouse:

You can view sage grouse strutting their stuff—and if you are lucky, actual sex (don't blink) – during April and May. The best time to see them is between first light and sunrise. Eighty birds once were commonly observed. Now it's twenty to thirty at most viewing leks. **It is taboo to get out of your vehicle!** If you want to take a picture and you don't have the lens for it, tough feces. Go buy one and come back later.

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The Desert

from *The Desert* by John C. Van Dyke (1856-1932)
Charles Scribner & Sons, N.Y., 1901

What is it that draws us to the boundless and the fathomless? Why should the lovely things of earth - the grasses, the trees, the lakes, the little hills - appear trivial and insignificant when we come face to face with the sea or the desert or the vastness of the midnight sky? Is it that the one is the tale of things known and the other merely a hint, a suggestion of the unknown? Or have immensity, space, magnitude a peculiar beauty of their own? Is it not true that bulk and breadth are primary and essential qualities of the sublime in landscape? And is it not the sublime that we feel in immensity and mystery? If so, perhaps we have a partial explanation of our love for sky and sea and desert waste. They are the great elements. We do not see, we hardly know if their boundaries are limited; we only feel their immensity, their mystery, and their beauty.

And quite as impressive as the mysteries are the silences. Was there ever such a stillness as that which rests upon the desert at night! Was there ever such a hush as that which steals from star to star across the firmament! You perhaps think to break the spell by raising your voice in a cry; but you will not do so again. The sound goes but a little way and then seems to come back to your ear with a suggestion of insanity about it.

A cry in the night! Overhead the planets in their courses make no sound, the earth is still, the very animals are mute. Why then the cry of the human? How it jars the harmonies! How it breaks in discord upon the unities of earth and air and sky.



PAINTED HILLS, JOHN DAY FOSSIL BEDS NATIONAL MONUMENT.

BOB SPERTUS

Join SageNet

ONDA's E-mail Alert List

Volunteer activists are a critical component in the struggle to protect Oregon's desert wildlands. SageNet, ONDA's electronic listserv, makes it easier than ever for wilderness supporters to get involved and make a difference. E-mail alerts are the fastest way for us to reach our members when we need to quickly mobilize our grassroots network to act on urgent issues. These alerts also keep you informed on breaking news, cut down on paper consumption, and help us save money on mailings.

SageNet subscribers receive periodic updates on Oregon's desert issues and occasional requests to make phone calls or write letters. You'll typically receive 4 to 6 messages per month, although there may be more when things heat up in Congress. If you have an e-mail address and aren't already a subscriber, please sign up now. If you change your mind, it's quick and easy to unsubscribe. Plus, we never share your e-mail address with other organizations. Simply send an e-mail to info@onda.org and let us know what e-mail address(es) you'd like us to add to SageNet.



CAREY DIXON

Brent reels in a fish story.

Welcome Brent!

ONDA hires Steens-Alvord advocate

Protecting more wilderness in the Steens Mountain-Alvord Basin region will be no easy task, but ONDA has found just the person for the job in Brent Fenty, ONDA's newest employee and Steens Wildlands Coordinator.

Brent is a native of Central Oregon and graduated from Willamette University in 1996 with a degree in Environmental Sciences and International Studies. His life and work experiences have run the gamut, ranging from working for the United Nations to hiking the entire Pacific Crest Trail, and from furthering community development at the Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council to spending a year in Mali specializing in Natural Resource Management for the Peace Corps.

His past work with collaborative efforts and knowledge of natural resources, combined with his passion for Oregon's desert and its wildest corners, makes Brent an ideal spokesperson for ONDA in the Steens wilderness work ahead (see article, pg. 1). As an avid skier, flyfisher, and backpacker, Brent has spent plenty of time on and around Steens Mountain over the past decade, and looks forward to working with local landowners, Oregon's Congressional delegation, and the BLM in an effort to expand cow-free wilderness in this magnificent area.

An Easy Way to be Heard in Salem

You can make your voice heard in Salem from the comfort of your own home! Just sign up for the Oregon Conservation Network's (OCN) E-mail Action Network, a great way to respond to the most urgent conservation issues being debated in the Oregon Legislature.

Every couple of weeks, OCN's E-mail Action Network will send you an e-mail with a sample letter and background

information about a pressing environmental issue. You can then personalize the letter (or send it as is) and e-mail it back. The technology we're using will transform it into a fax letter and send it to the targeted lawmaker. The network provides you with up-to-date information about the most critical environmental decisions being made in our state, along with a great tool for communicating with lawmakers on those decisions.

To sign up for OCN's E-mail Action Network, just send your name, e-mail address, street address (so that we can determine who your legislators are), city, and zip to: glyons@onda.org.

NOTE: OCN's E-mail Action Network differs from ONDA's listserv, SageNet (see article above) in that it is used for statewide action alerts only. Topics will vary, based on legislative activities in Salem.

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Paul Fritz Remembered

The West's National Parks lost one of their most passionate defenders when Paul Fritz, longtime wilderness and parks advocate and ONDA Advisory Council member since 1994, passed away on December 24, 2000, at the age of 71.

Paul was something of a public lands superhero. He spent his childhood on the streets of Yonkers, New York, but his understanding of western landscapes—and their natural limitations—was remarkable. Between 1954, when he graduated from Utah State University with a degree in Environmental Planning, and 1980, when he retired from the National Park Service as a park superintendent, Paul gained intimate knowledge of the workings of the Forest Service, BLM, and Park Service and the vast lands they managed.

While at California's Lassen National Park in the 1960s, Paul contributed extensively to congressional hearings on the establishment of nearby Redwood National Park. While researching boundaries for the new park, Paul and friend Martin Litton discovered the tallest (367.8 feet) redwood tree in the world. Paul remained involved with the management of Redwood National Park and Utah's Natural Bridges National Monument, as well as in the creation of other parks and preserves across the West.



Paul Fritz.

Despite a series of illnesses, Paul's commitment never waned, nor did his feistiness. He supported dozens of forward-thinking public lands advocacy groups throughout the West—as a founder, board member, donor, advice-dispenser, and rabble-rouser.

There's so much about Paul that we will miss. Two things stand out in particular: the pleasure of catching up with him on the opening day of the Desert Conference (his conference attendance record was spotless), and the envelopes that would arrive about twice monthly, filled with relevant, timely, conservation-oriented newspaper clippings—all collated and labeled by Paul for ONDA's files. These packets from Utah and Idaho reminded us regularly that Paul was out there, with his ready, round laugh and keen sense of humor, keeping watch over the wildlands he loved so much.

Thanks, Paul, for being a role model, stalwart supporter, and true believer in wild places. You'll always be remembered and greatly missed.