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Volume 15, Number 1

Grazing permit retirement and wolves

By George Wuerthner

A quick review of the western wolf recovery program demonstrates that we can restore wolves to the landscape. In places like Yellowstone National Park and Central Idaho's Wilderness, wolves are thriving.

The problem

But if you go beyond these few special areas, there is another disturbing trend—nearly all of the wolf packs whose territories significantly overlap areas with domestic livestock sooner or later wind up dead or removed. The recent killing by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of the Whitehawk wolf pack in Idaho and the Dome Mountain, Gravelly Range, and Nine Mile wolves in Montana—all in the name of livestock protection—merely highlights this problem.

While wolves in livestock-free zones like Yellowstone are thriving, the goal of restoring the ecological and evolutionary influences of a large predator across the landscape is not being realized. A few token populations in Yellowstone or the central Idaho's wilderness areas, as wonderful as they may be, do not really contribute to the long term biodiversity goal of restoring wolves as the top predator on the public lands of the West.

Although the sheep and cow losses to wolves are greatly exaggerated by the livestock industry (domestic dogs killed ten times as many domestic

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BRUCE JACKSON

An ancient juniper within the proposed Badlands wilderness area.

Persistent wilderness advocacy

Congress should advance collaborative proposals

ONDA made significant progress in building public support for wilderness protection for the Badlands and Spring Basin this year (see feature, pages 8-11). Unfortunately, the Bush administration's current effort to stoke public fears of wildfire as a pretext for lifting environmental protections and expediting public review to allow logging on Western federal forests does not bode well for wilderness legislation next year.

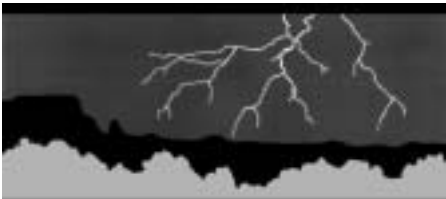


FROM THE OUTBACK
 by Bill Marlett

Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR), in a letter to President Clinton two years ago, wrote that designating the Badlands as wilderness was one his top priorities,

along with securing protection of Steens Mountain. Given the broad public support for the Badlands, it has been a mystery why this legislation hasn't moved forward under the Senator's leadership. While disappointed in the short term, we remain optimistic in the long term.

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

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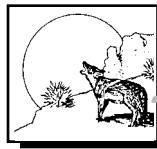
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FROM THE DEN

by Alice Elshoff

Leave a Legacy in the High Desert

If your passion for Oregon's High Desert is strong, I would like to ask you to consider joining me in making a long term commitment to ONDA's conservation efforts with a planned gift. Planned gifts can take the form of gifts of stocks, bonds, real estate, insurance, retirement accounts, charitable remainder trusts, or charitable bequests outlined in your will.

By giving to ONDA in one of these ways, you can ensure that your assets will continue to benefit Oregon's desert wildlands now and long after you are gone. And giving in these ways can lower current and future taxes owed by you and your family or friends who will inherit your estate.

To learn more about planned giving to ONDA please contact Bill Marlett at (541) 330-2638 or bmarlett@onda.org. Thank you for your support!



ANNOUNCEMENTS

ONDA Adopts Hwy 20 Near Badlands

Not only are we working hard to designate the Badlands, just east of Bend, as cow-free wilderness, but we're determined to keep the area litter-free as well! ONDA has just adopted two miles of Highway 20, and we'll be out there twice a year to keep the roadside clean. The highway marks the southern boundary of the proposed Badlands Wilderness Area, and ONDA's section includes one of the main trailheads into the area. If you have any interest in lending a hand for roadside clean-up, please contact Daniele at (541) 330-2638 or email dmckay@onda.org.

Pronghorn survival good at Hart Mountain

by George Wuerthner

Pronghorn survival rates at Hart Mountain National Wildlife Refuge in eastern Oregon were fifty-three fawns per one hundred does, the fourth year in a row where fawn numbers

exceeded the number needed to maintain the population. In the mid-1990s, fawn survival was low, and refuge managers blamed coyote predation. Never mind that coyotes and pronghorn have always coexisted. Some even blamed declining pronghorn numbers on the refuge's decision to halt grazing in 1990, maintaining that the cows "improved" the habitat for the antelope, making them less vulnerable to the coyotes. In 1996, ONDA and the Predator Defense Institute (PDI) blocked a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) plan to kill coyotes from the air. Contrary to FWS predictions, pronghorn fawn numbers have rebounded. In addition, sage grouse numbers are also up at the refuge.

New Portland office

Drop by ONDA's new digs in Portland and meet our newest staff members. ONDA's new office is located at 917 SW Oak Street, Suite 408, kitty-corner from Powell's Bookstore. Our Portland number is the same: (503) 525-0193.

Collaborative wilderness proposals await action by Congress

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Collaborative wilderness proposals

Most troubling to me has been the lack of support from Oregon legislators for collaborative efforts on desert wilderness. ONDA has been chided in the past for failing to work with other stakeholders, yet we delivered consensus legislation on the Steens Act in 2000, and have a consensus package ready to go on the proposed Badlands and Spring Basin Wilderness areas. Yet both Sen. Wyden and Rep. Walden have taken no action to move this modest bill. Our citizen's wilderness proposal for Oregon's High Desert would designate 6 million acres. Badlands and Spring Basin together total only 40,000 acres.

Central Oregonians support wilderness

Rep. Walden says the people in Eastern Oregon don't want wilderness, but he's wrong. Our recently commissioned poll of central Oregon voters (Deschutes and Crook Counties) showed 54 percent of respondents support wilderness designation for the Badlands. While we don't expect Rep. Walden to wave the flag for wilderness, we at least expect him to represent his constituents. Coupled with a unanimous endorsement from Bend's City Council, we are truly perplexed why Sen. Wyden hasn't championed the Badlands; especially in light of his "A" rating on wilderness votes in the last Congress from the American Wilderness Coalition (visit www.americanwilderness.org).

Missed opportunity

This summer, Sen. Wyden and Rep. Walden didn't blink at introducing a bill to realign the old Millican Road so that it can be used as a new highway to service the central warehouse of Les Schwab Tires (yes, I buy my tires there, too!). Located on public lands, the proposed road would pass within one mile of the proposed Badlands Wilderness boundary. As a political quid pro quo, Sen. Wyden and Rep. Walden could combine the new road alignment and wilderness in the same bill. It's not rocket science to figure that protecting the Badlands would mitigate the adverse impacts of the new highway on pronghorn, mule deer, and elk habitat. But legislation is not rocket science.

If a consensus wilderness proposal can't move forward, well, frankly, what can? The Badlands designation is not new. One of ONDA's founders and current board members, Alice Elshoff, has been working on Badlands for nearly twenty years. With support from local ranchers and landowners and other local conservation groups, one would think the Badlands should be a slam-dunk as Oregon's next desert wilderness area.

With support from ranchers, landowners and conservationists, the Badlands should be Oregon's next desert wilderness.



LORD MAITREYA

Consensus legislation afforded significant protections for Steens Mountain, including 105,000 acres of cow-free wilderness. Congress has not yet advanced similar desert protection bills.

Voluntary permit retirement

Equally perplexing is the missed opportunity to allow for the voluntary retirement of grazing permits. Sen. Wyden told the Oregon Cattlemen's Association several years ago they should support a change in law that would allow ranchers the opportunity to voluntarily retire their grazing permits (which would allow conservation groups to buy their permits in order to retire an area from further grazing). From some of the phone calls we receive, it appears many ranchers support this concept, too.

In the Badlands, ONDA has worked out a deal with the main rancher to permanently retire his allotment from livestock grazing. Though ONDA stands ready to buy his permit, federal law currently prohibits the permanent retirement of grazing permits. To resolve this technicality, we are proposing, as part of the Badlands legislation, to allow ranchers to voluntarily retire their grazing permits in other proposed wilderness areas in Oregon as a national pilot project. If enacted into law, the bill would enable any conservation group to buy-out and retire a grazing permit from a willing rancher in special areas such as wilderness and salmon habitat.

We think Sen. Wyden and Rep. Walden should be fostering opportunities for ranchers and conservation groups to collaborate. Please help us urge Sens. Wyden and Gordon Smith, along with Rep. Walden, to support these collaborative solutions for the Badlands, Spring Basin, and other wilderness areas in Oregon (see alert, back page).

Grazing permit retirement and wolves

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

animals in Montana last year as wolves), the livestock interests nearly universally oppose wolf restoration. And it is the presence of livestock, more than any other factor, that determines the fate of wolf restoration goals in the West.

Western ranchers have successfully externalized one of their costs of production—protecting their animals from predators—simply by extirpating predators. Ranchers could spend money on animal husbandry practices that reduce or eliminate most predator-livestock conflicts. These practices include options such as the use of shepherds, guard animals, lambing and calving sheds, night penning animals to reduce predator opportunities, and the rapid removal and disposal of animal carcasses that otherwise attract predators. Instead, western livestock producers have simply extirpated wolves from the landscape. But this “solution” comes at the expense of wolf supporters and the land that needs the benefits of a top predator and its evolutionary influences.

Due to the West’s aridity, livestock must roam widely to find sufficient forage. That means animals are spaced over vast acreage, often with little direct supervision from ranchers, in what some call the “Columbus” method of animal husbandry. They put their cows out on the range in the spring and come back in the fall and “discover” how many are left alive. Such lax animal husbandry gives wolves and other predators many opportunities to snatch a cow or sheep.

Even so-called “predator friendly” livestock operations can have a negative effect on overall wolf recovery in several ways. First, there is no free lunch. Currently, the majority of forage is allotted to and consumed by livestock, leaving less to support native herbivores, such as deer or pronghorn antelope. This can and often does significantly reduce the population of native prey animals available to wolves.



Wolves were extirpated in Oregon, but could return to suitable habitat on public land. Urge Oregon’s Fish & Wildlife Commission to recover Oregon’s wolf population at upcoming “town hall” meetings (see sidebar, facing page).

Second, the mere presence of domestic livestock socially displaces many ungulate species, including mule deer, elk, and antelope. Displacement can sometimes push native herbivores into habitat that is less desirable, reducing their vigor and making them more vulnerable to weather, low forage quality, and other impacts that may reduce their overall numbers.

Third, dead cattle or sheep are left lying about in the landscape and attract wolves. Wolves often get their first taste of beef or lamb through consumption of dead animals, and then later turn to killing live animals. By creating the conditions that can turn a wolf into a livestock killer, even a predator friendly producer can contribute to the death of wolves if they wind up killing livestock elsewhere.

These issues loom large in western wolf recovery efforts because livestock are found nearly everywhere except for the few livestock-free parks and preserves. Nearly 90 percent of all BLM lands are leased for livestock production, 69 percent of all U.S. Forest Service lands, and even a significant number of western wildlife

refuges and national parks. Indeed, more than 300 million acres of the West, including state and federal lands, are leased for livestock production. That is an area as large as the entire eastern seaboard states from Maine to Florida with Missouri thrown in! There are few large tracts of public land outside of Yellowstone and central Idaho’s wilderness areas where there are no livestock. Thus, livestock production remains a key barrier to the widespread restoration of wolves in the West.

The Solution

Removing livestock from public lands would significantly reduce conflicts with wolves, as well as provide many other benefits for native species from trout to bison. (However, there would still be some conflicts with livestock on private lands.) The courts and federal agencies for years have asserted that grazing permits are a privilege, not a right. However, federal land management agencies seldom reduce livestock numbers or close an allotment, even when there is clear evidence of ecological abuse or conflicts with other public values, such as wolf restoration.

In response to these realities, the National Public Lands Grazing Campaign (NPLGC)—ONDA serves on the campaign's steering committee^m—has launched a drive to implement one potential solution: a voluntary permit retirement program. Under this proposal, if approved by Congress, any rancher who volunteers to relinquish his or her public lands grazing permit would be paid \$175 for each AUM (animal unit month, a measure of the forage consumed by one cow and calf per month) they grazed on public lands. For instance, a rancher grazing two hundred cows for a year would receive a one-time payment, once the federal agency permanently closed the allotment to all future commercial livestock grazing.

Ranchers would be free to use the money any way they choose. They could invest the money and retire. They could pay off the bank. They could buy more private land to expand their ranching operations.

If all 23,000 permittees opted to retire their grazing allotments, the overall cost of this program could exceed \$3 billion dollars. Despite this cost, terminating grazing permits would still produce a saving to taxpayers. Administration of the public lands livestock program is estimated to cost a minimum of \$500 million annually. Given the current annual expenditures of the public, the permit retirement would have a payback in less than six years.

And yet this cost does not include any of the many externalized ecological costs associated with livestock production, such as destruction of riparian areas, degradation of water quality, the spread of weeds, and the loss of wildlife habitat.

A permit retirement program could be especially useful in resolving western wolf-livestock conflicts. In many cases, wolf-livestock conflicts reoccur in the same places because some places are just better habitat for wolves. If ranchers in these areas elected to terminate their grazing allotments, the major source of conflict would be removed, creating the po-

tential for greater wolf recovery throughout the West, not just in the few presently livestock-free zones like Yellowstone or central Idaho. A permit retirement program may be essential if we are ever to recover the Mexican wolf in the Southwest or reestablish wolves in places like Oregon or Colorado, which have plenty of potential wolf habitat but few large areas without livestock.

In the end everyone wins. The ranchers get a tidy windfall payout. After six years or less, taxpayers save money. And wolf supporters can see the day when wolves are not only free to roam unfettered in Yellowstone or central Idaho's wilderness areas, but perhaps across hundreds of millions of acres of the West.

For more info, see NPLGC's website: www.publiclandsranching.org.

Speak out for Wolves in Oregon!

Attend an ODFW Town Hall Meeting in your area

In June 2002, ONDA filed a petition with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) under the Oregon Endangered Species Act (ESA), asking the Fish and Wildlife Commission to comply with two mandatory duties that it has failed to perform for endangered gray wolves. ONDA first asked the Commission to develop "survival guidelines," measures required at the time of a species' listing that are "necessary to ensure the survival of individual members of the species." All state agencies must adhere to these guidelines and must consult with ODFW to ensure that agency actions are consistent with the guidelines. ONDA also asked the Commission to satisfy its duty to determine whether "state lands can play a role in the conservation" of the wolf. If, as must surely be the case, this determination is positive, the Act's endangered species management planning provisions are triggered.

The Commission has completely failed to satisfy any of the Oregon ESA's conservation requirements for the gray wolf since the Act's adoption fifteen years ago. Testifying before the Joint Legislative Natural Resources Committee in Salem in July 2002, ONDA staff attorney Mac Lacy and ecologist George Wuerthner emphasized that ONDA intends for its petition to initiate a long overdue and legally required process that will finally prepare Oregon for the inevitable return of the gray wolf. In August, Lacy appeared before the Commission to formally present the petition. Although the Chairman indicated there is no doubt "wolves are on their way," the Commission denied the petition, finding that it did not have the "authority to act as the petition request[ed]."

ODFW retains considerable discretion to deal with the issue and has planned fourteen town hall meetings in November and December around the state to solicit public comments on issues surrounding wolf migration. Please attend at the location nearest you. Let the Commission know that you want wolves back in Oregon and that plans should be made for their natural recovery, and if necessary, grazing permit retirement should occur on public lands where conflicts with cattle exist. All meetings will begin at 7 p.m. Visit ODFW's website for details: <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/>

Meetings are scheduled to be held on:

Monday, Nov. 18, in Baker City;

Tuesday, Nov. 19, in John Day;

Wednesday, Nov. 20, in Bend;

Thursday, Nov. 21, in The Dalles;

Tuesday, Dec. 3, in Medford;

Wednesday, Dec. 4, in Klamath Falls;

Thursday, Dec. 5, in Burns;

Monday, Dec. 9, in Eugene;

Tuesday, Dec. 10, in Roseburg;

Wednesday, Dec. 11, in Salem;

Tuesday, Dec. 17, in Portland; and

Wednesday, Dec. 18, in Coos Bay.

ONDA will continue to advocate for a biologically based management and recovery plan involving the public and all stakeholders, which will allow for natural reintroduction and dispersal of wolves throughout all appropriate habitat in Oregon. You can view ONDA's petition and related materials and send a comment to the Commission at www.onda.org/takeaction/wolves.html. Please attend a hear, offer testimony and/or send comments! Your actions can help bring wolves back to Oregon!

Steens Wilderness: "Cow-Free in '03"

The completion of the final two land exchanges on Steens Mountain has paved the way for the planned phase-in of the "cow-free" wilderness by Fall 2003. BLM will begin various range developments necessary to secure the "cow-free" wilderness boundary this summer on South Steens and complete the developments in Summer 2003.

Steens II Legislation?


Over the past several months, ONDA has worked to facilitate a land exchange between several Steens Mountain landowners and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The proposal, which has been dubbed "Steens II," could prompt a second round of legislation on Steens Mountain in the 2003 congressional session.

The proposal currently includes several key land exchanges and minor boundary adjustments to the "cow-free" wilderness area. The equal-value land exchanges could include the two largest private inholdings within the new Steens Mountain Wilderness, several scattered wilderness inholdings near Bone Creek, key parcels adjacent to the wilderness, the last private inholding in the wilderness study area (WSA) encompassing Mickey Basin, and several private inholdings within the Pueblo Mountain WSA south of Steens Mountain.

The boundary adjustments mentioned above are minor changes necessary to align the new "cow-free" wilderness boundaries with existing or proposed fence lines. These adjustments will enable BLM to save taxpayer dollars by avoiding the costly action of moving existing fences.

Acquisition funding update

ONDA has also been working to secure funds for the acquisition of private inholdings within the Steens Mountain Wilderness through the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). At this writing, the Senate has earmarked \$2 million from the LWCF for future land acquisition on Steens Mountain. However, the funding must still be approved by the House of Representatives, which we hope will occur in conference committee to resolve differences in the Senate and House versions of the Interior Appropriation bill. Rep. Greg Walden's office has sent a letter asking House conferees to accept the Senate position.

Please call your U.S. representative today. Urge him or her to actively support set-aside LWCF dollars for Steens Mountain this year! Thank Sen. Ron Wyden for getting \$2 million for Steens acquisitions in the Senate bill. Urge Reps. Peter DeFazio, Darlene Hooley, Ron Blumenauer, Wu, and Greg Walden to do the same. (Addresses on back page.) 

ONDA legal actions protect John Day River

Gilliam County

In a settlement of an ONDA challenge to a proposed bunkhouse on a Gilliam County ranch, the owners of the ranch and ONDA agreed that ONDA would withdraw its challenge in return for the ranch owners agreeing to do the following on obtaining a building permit:

1. That the bunkhouse will be 100 percent screened as viewed from the John Day River;
2. That no cattle will be grazed on the property unless they are fenced out of the waters and riparian areas of the John Day River;
3. That the owners will provide additional vegetative screening for an existing dwelling currently visible from the river;
4. That the owners will provide a grant of \$3,000 to benefit the BLM's native cottonwood restoration program;
5. That the owners will plant cottonwoods on the ranch in sections along the River; and
6. That the owners will initiate discussions with the BLM for a possible exchange of an isolated private parcel in the John Day Wilderness Study Area.

ONDA looks forward to working with the stewardship-minded owners on other issues of common interest on the John Day River.

Grant County: Longview Ranch Personal Use Airport

ONDA recently succeeded at the Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals (*ONDA v. Grant County*, LUBA No. 2001-158, Decision April 3, 2002) by having Grant County's approval of a controversial personal-use airport remanded back to Grant County. The already partially constructed Longview Ranch airport lies only 100 to 300 feet from the John Day River and as close as 1,200 feet from the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument.

A critical ruling by LUBA recognized that significant impacts on the National Monument by private land use activities outside the Monument are not allowed. LUBA found that the County had not addressed such impacts as vibrations affecting fragile fossil formations, night-landing lights affecting the night skies, and noise impacts of landings and take-offs on the National Monument.

In addition, LUBA directed the County to address whether the airport would significantly affect farming practices in the area, to identify the true owners of the proposed airport and their proposed uses, and to analyze the impacts of the airport on the overall land use patterns of the area.

Special thanks to Paul Dewey, ONDA's land-use attorney, who successfully represented ONDA on these cases.

ONDA wins ruling to speed species protection

By Stephanie Parent

The Ninth Circuit agreed with ONDA and other environmental organizations challenging the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's (FWS) practice of delaying, often for years, findings on petitions to list species as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The court also held that when FWS misses ESA-imposed deadlines, the court must issue an injunction ordering FWS to make the determinations. This decision will speed the listing process during which imperiled species await ESA protection.

This case involved ONDA's petition to list the Great Basin Redband Trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*, ssp.) as threatened or endangered, as well as other citizen petitions to list the Spalding's catchfly, yellow-billed cuckoo, and mountain yellow-legged frog. The ESA sets forth a detailed listing process, and integral to species protection is the opportunity for concerned citizens to petition FWS to list species. Upon receiving a petition, FWS must, within ninety days "to the maximum extent practicable," issue an initial finding as to whether the petition presents substantial information that listing may be warranted. If warranted, FWS must promptly

conduct a species status review, and, within one year of receiving the petition, determine whether the listing action is warranted, not warranted, or warranted but precluded by other pending proposals that require immediate attention. Instead of adhering to the ninety-day and twelve-month deadlines on petitions to list, FWS opined that the ESA provides the agency with unlimited discretion to delay the initial finding. The court held that any discretion on the ninety-day deadline is bound by the mandatory twelve-month deadline for the second finding. In other words, FWS must act on both the initial finding and the second determination of whether listing is warranted within twelve months of receiving a petition.

Importantly, the Ninth Circuit rejected FWS's argument that even if it fails to comply with the ESA's clear deadlines, courts have the discretion not to order FWS to make the findings by balancing FWS's other priorities and budget. The court held that Congress settled the priorities in favor of imperiled species; therefore, courts are bound to order compliance. View the court's opinion at www.onda.org.

Legal action to protect high desert

By Mac Lacy

In December 2001, ONDA, Western Watersheds Project, and Committee for Idaho's High Desert filed suit against the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), challenging the Vale District's proposal to seed over 35,000 acres of public lands with non-native plants (primarily crested wheatgrass). The lawsuit alleges violations of National Environmental Policy Act and Federal Land Policy and Management Act requirements. The project covers lands burned in August 2001 wildfires surrounding Jackies Butte in southeast Oregon, an important component of the sagebrush steppe ecosystem bordering the Owyhee Wild and Scenic River canyon. Although the federal district court's refusal to grant a preliminary injunction allowed the BLM to complete about half the seeding, the litigation succeeded in slowing the project and drawing attention to the BLM's lack of requisite baseline data necessary to make an informed decision. The parties are currently negotiating settlement of the claims.

ONDA has also recently turned its attention to several important BLM resource management plans (RMPs). An RMP is a broad-scale land use plan that provides a comprehensive framework for managing natural resources and activities on public lands. In December 2001, ONDA and seven other organizations filed a protest to the Vale District's Proposed Southeast Oregon RMP, alleging the plan fails to

recognize the impacts of livestock grazing, address the region's escalating invasive weed crisis, and protect public resources from various threats, including off-road vehicles and water pollution. The BLM denied ONDA's protest in its entirety in September, and ONDA is currently assessing potential litigation in response. The Southeast Oregon RMP charts the future of 4.6 million acres of public lands in Malheur, Harney, and Grant Counties.

In its steadfast effort to watchdog BLM grazing management practices, ONDA continues to obtain BLM documents for review via the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Unfortunately, the agency recently denied ONDA's statutorily permitted fee waiver request in several instances, forcing ONDA to appeal the most recent such decision to the BLM's Washington, D.C., office. Public interest groups like ONDA rely on the FOIA fee waiver provision to obtain agency documents that will help ONDA inform the public about agency management practices and compliance (or lack thereof) with the laws governing the public lands.

Finally, ONDA is a co-plaintiff in a lawsuit against the State of Oregon claiming that the Division of State Lands has failed to ensure that state lands grazing leases bring the highest dollar amount for the common school lands. Upon statehood in 1859, Congress granted the state the 16th and 36th sections of each township in the state for the exclusive benefit of the public schools. The State has continually charged far less than market value for its grazing leases and has allowed the state lands to fall into deplorable ecological condition. ONDA is represented by Tim Murphy and Gary Kahn of Reeves, Kahn & Hennessy.

Badlands and Spring Basin:

Could these areas become Oregon's next desert wilderness?

By Daniele McKay

Stretching 38,000 acres, just 20 miles southeast of Bend, are the Badlands – one of the most fascinating and rare geological sites in eastern Oregon. Hidden within this arid landscape are delicate desert blooms, dry river canyons, castle-like rock formations, and pictographs that speak to us of another time and culture.

Geologic riches

Like much of central Oregon, the Badlands were shaped by volcanic activity. Lava flows traveled from Paulina Mountain northeast to the Badlands, welling to the surface as a shield volcano. The flows created unique formations geologists call *inflated lava* – the most extraordinary examples are known as Badlands Rock and The Castle.

During the Ice Age, a prehistoric river flowed through the Badlands. The river carved through 300 feet of rock, creating dramatic canyons, smooth water-worn rocks, small caves, and rock faces that are now covered with pictographs.

Off-road vehicle damage

The area is now home to 1,000-year old juniper trees and other uniquely adapted desert plants. Old growth junipers provide food and protection for more than one hundred species of birds, including Townsend's Solitaire, Pinyon Jay, and Mountain Blue Bird. The Badlands also hosts a remnant native grassland that was once typical of Oregon's High Desert.

The Badlands are currently open to off-road vehicles, including dirt bikes and ATVs. While users are asked to stay off closed routes, there is no enforcement of this regulation. Ruts left by off-road vehicles traverse the landscape, even in areas that are marked



BRENT FENTY

Native balsamroot flowers in healthy remnant grassland at the proposed Badlands wilderness area outside of Bend, Oregon.

as closed. Desert grasslands can take years to heal from scars. Fragile wildflowers in thin soils cannot thrive in the wake of off-road vehicles.

Off-road vehicles also threaten wildlife. The Badlands provide important winter range for pronghorn, deer, and elk. Birds, bats, and rodents nest in the maze-like rock formations throughout the area. Prairie falcons, currently nesting in Dry River Canyon and on Badlands Rock, are extremely sensitive to human activity. Vehicles will eventually drive wildlife away. As Bend continues to grow, open spaces available for wildlife are becoming scarce, and the Badlands offers some of the last and best remaining habitat in central Oregon.

The Badlands are also threatened by cutting of old-growth juniper trees for firewood,

Volcanic activity shaped the Badlands and created unique formations called inflated lava.

defacing of unique rock features, archeological looting, and garbage dumping. These illegal activities would be eliminated or curtailed if the area could be protected as wilderness.

ONDA, in cooperation with other local conservation groups, has worked for over a decade to protect the Badlands as wilderness. Now, with the assistance of a local rancher, adjacent landowners, and local businesses, this area just might be Oregon's next desert wilderness.

ONDA and others have proposed legislation to protect the Badlands as wilderness, while allowing grazing permits voluntarily surrendered (within special management areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, and wild and scenic rivers) to be permanently retired from grazing. This would allow conservation groups, like ONDA, to "buy-out" permits directly from ranchers on a willing-

seller, willing-buyer basis. In fact, the local rancher who holds most of the grazing privileges in the Badlands has agreed to sell his permit to ONDA!

Spring Basin: A Profusion of Wildflowers and Rock

The Badlands Wilderness proposal also includes an additional 8,544 acres of wilderness located near the John Day River. The Spring Basin area encompasses rolling hills of sagebrush and rare native Bluebunch Wheatgrass. Spring Basin's western boundary is the Wild and Scenic John Day River and its eastern and southern edges are guarded by dramatic spires and colorful clay outcroppings.



BRENT FENTY

Haybotom Canyon in the proposed Spring Basin wilderness.

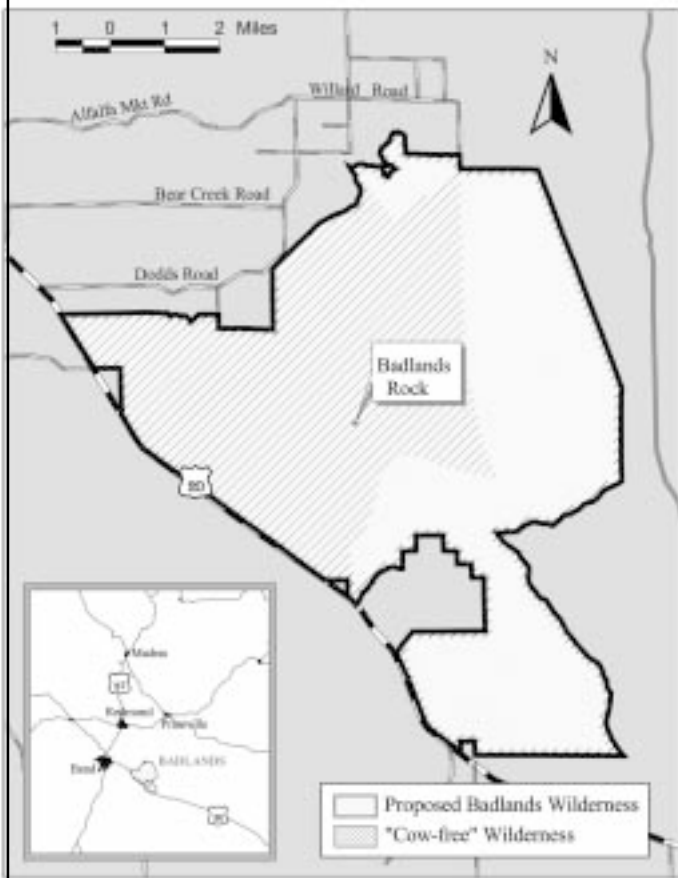
This rugged area is home to several endangered plants and animals, including the Northern Bald Eagle, Yellow-hairy Indian Paintbrush, and Transparent Milk Vetch. The basin's early-spring wildflower displays attract botany enthusiasts from throughout the Northwest.

The area also includes several archaeological sites, including a pit-house village and associated pictographs.

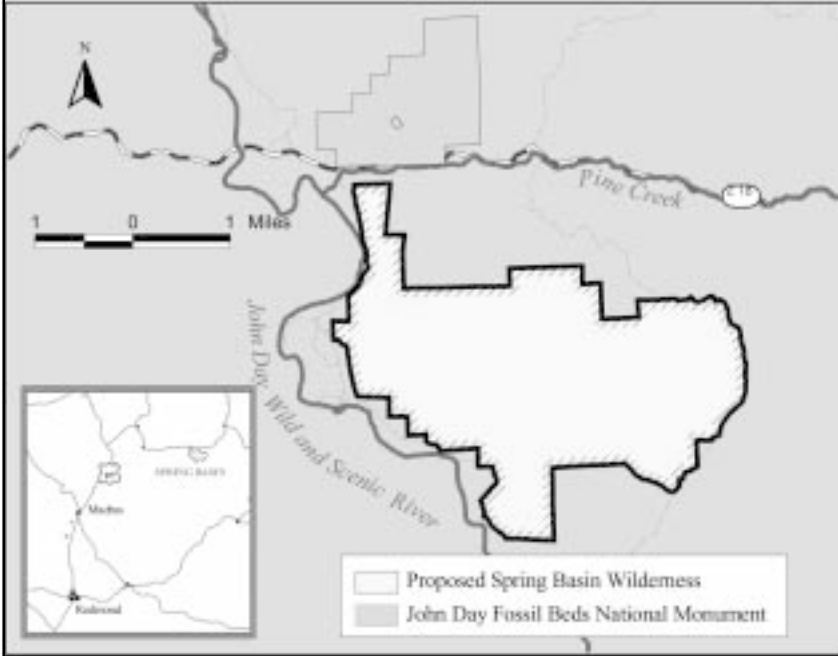
Like the Badlands, the Spring Basin wilderness proposal is a collaborative effort with several landowners. The proposal would not only designate lands as wilderness, but would consolidate lands managed by the BLM, lands owned by the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Indian Reservation, and lands owned by a local rancher. The result would provide a larger, more manageable, wilderness area than what BLM previously recommended. It would also provide critical public access to both the new wilderness area and the Wild and Scenic John Day River, as well as

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Proposed Badlands Wilderness




Proposed Spring Basin Wilderness



CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

allow for the removal of 30 miles of obsolete fencing, which now impedes wildlife movement. The proposal would also help neighboring landowners better manage their lands.

Now is the time for a Badlands and Spring Basin Wilderness designation! Call or write to your representative and senator today and urge them to get behind the effort to protect the Badlands and Spring Basin as wilderness. See the alert on the back page or visit ONDA's website at www.onda.org where we have a sample letter that you can personalize and send directly from our site. 



Pediocactus in the proposed Spring Basin Wilderness.

BRENT FENTY

Voters Favor Creation of Badlands Wilderness

In June 2002, ONDA commissioned a poll of Crook and Deschutes County voters. The poll, conducted by Grove Quirk Insight, interviewed 400 voters to determine their level of support for designating the Badlands Wilderness Area.

Central Oregonians approve of the proposal to designate Badlands as wilderness. After explaining the proposal and describing the restrictions placed upon the land as a result of wilderness designation, 54 percent of voters approved, while only 35 percent were opposed. With a 19 percentage point margin, this designation is something a majority of central Oregonians clearly want.

Wilderness supporters hold their views more strongly than opponents. Indeed, strong support outpaces strong opposition by 19 points.

Democrats, especially those under 50, and young women, are most likely to favor wilderness designation. Among wilderness designation opponents, the most strident are Republicans, those age 40 to 49, men, and Crook County voters. Nevertheless, nearly every demographic subgroup is more likely to support than oppose the wilderness designation.

Here's how the question was posed:

"Now I'd like to get your reaction to a proposal regarding the Badlands area in Central Oregon. The proposal, if approved by Congress, would designate about 37,000 acres of federal land as a wilderness area. The area is currently managed by the Bureau of Land Management or "BLM." Under this wilderness designation, all motorized vehicles such as trucks, dirt bikes, and all-terrain vehicles would not be allowed within the designated wilderness area and 10 miles of existing, year-round motorized vehicle trails would be closed. Hiking, horse back riding, and hunting would still be allowed. This arrangement is similar to other designated wilderness areas in central Oregon, such as Three Sisters and Mill Creek. Do you favor or oppose designating this area as wilderness, or aren't you sure?"

- Favor Badlands Wilderness 54%
- Oppose Badlands Wilderness 35%
- Undecided 11%

Badlands Rock and The Castle

Ramble through unique desert geology in proposed wilderness

The Badlands are known for unique formations geologists call inflated lava. The most extraordinary examples are known as Badlands Rock and The Castle. Both are large pressure ridges that rise above the desert floor to offer spectacular views of the surrounding Badlands Wilderness Study Area and the Cascade Mountains in the distance. Climb up and into the ridges to find a hidden world of maze-like rock formations, small caves, and intact native grasslands. Badlands Rock is closed seasonally to protect nesting prairie falcons, so don't forget to check in at the BLM kiosk at the trailhead.



ALICE ELSHOFF

From Badlands Rock you can enjoy a panoramic view of the Cascades Range.

- Distance: 7.9-mile loop
- Elevation Range: 3,591-3,656 feet
- Drinking Water: None
- Best Times: Year-round
- USGS 7.5' Map: Horse Ridge

From Bend, drive east on U.S. 20 for 0.9 miles east of milepost 16. Turn north (left) onto the paved road. Go 0.9 mile and park at the trailhead. Walk north on a way 0.2 mile to the intersection of two ways ("The Crossways"). The way from the west is the end of this loop exploration. Continue northerly 2.6 miles to Badlands Rock, the largest of the pyramid-shaped pressure ridges scattered throughout the area.

It is a short scramble to the top. Note the pressure ridge 1/2 mile west and slightly south. This is "The Castle," your next destination.

Take the unmapped way going west by the south end of Badlands Rock. Walk 0.7 mile (the way meanders) to the north side of the pressure ridge. As the pool of lava

cooled, it cracked with a ring fracture along the edge. Circumnavigate "The Castle" by walking the crack.

Continue walking on the unmapped way westward for 0.4 mile. It dead-ends into a mapped north-south way at the base of yet another pressure ridge. Go south along the way 3.8 miles to the originating intersection. Numerous unmapped and unmarked ways take off from your way of choice. Bear east when you have a choice. When you arrive back at The Crossways, go south 0.2 mile to return to your vehicle.

This outing description is excerpted from Oregon Desert Guide, by Andy Kerr (Mountaineers, 2000).



Desert enthusiasts explore the Dry River Canyon in a field trip to the proposed Badlands Wilderness Area.

A year of change

Transitions for ONDA

The past year has been a year of transition for ONDA. As many of you know, ONDA ecologist, Joy Belsky, lost her long fight to cancer in December 2001. It is rare for a conservation organization to be blessed with an ecologist on staff, especially of Joy's caliber. Her tenacious love of desert lands and her struggle against the paternal institution of ignorance was infectious, as was her effervescent personality. We live with her loss every day, but are reminded of Joy's youthful energy as we carry on her work.


Also, ONDA's buoyant grassroots coordinator, Gilly Lyons, moved to Washington, D.C., last spring to begin her stint as a beltway lobbyist. Gilly, who was ONDA's second staff person, served for seven short years and helped create ONDA's scrappy "brand." We were honored with Gilly's raving thoughtfulness, humor, and delightful wit that made ONDA members, staff, and colleagues thankful for her presence.

Although out of ONDA's office, Gilly is still in the desert protection corral as lobbyist for the National Public Lands Campaign (visit their website at www.publiclandsranching.org). ONDA is a member of the Campaign's steering committee, so we're still in frequent contact with Gilly on grazing issues. Fortunately, Gilly also remains a stalwart ambassador for ONDA whenever she visits any of Oregon's senators or representatives.

Welcome Tara Rae Gunter, ONDA's Communications Director

Tara Rae Gunter joined ONDA as Communications Director in August 2002. A native of Oregon, she grew up hiking, horseback riding, and exploring the forests, rivers, and valleys of the Umpqua River Basin—country which inspired her to become a founding member of her high school's first environmental club.

She received a B.A. from the University of Oregon, where she majored in English and discovered a connection between language and nature. After spending four years in Missoula, Tara recently completed her master's degree in Environmental Studies from The University of Montana with an emphasis on environmental writing. She wrote her thesis on the political process that led up to the 2000 Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Act. Her professional experience includes communications work for the Center for the Rocky Mountain West; writing and editing for *Camas*, the *Chronicle of Community*, and *Headwaters News*; and assisting with the University of Montana's Environmental Writing Institute.

Tara has enjoyed exploring much of the West by foot, canoe, horse, and ski. Her other interests include bicycling in foreign countries, knitting on cold winter nights, yoga, freelance writing, and wood-fired saunas. 



Tara Rae Gunter, ONDA's new Communications Director.

Contribute to Earth Share: Workplace Giving is Easy

For thousands of Oregonians, the advent of fall means the changing of the leaves, cooler temperatures, and the arrival of charitable fundraising campaigns in the workplace. With the help of donors in the workplace, Earth Share of Oregon's (ESOR's) seventy non-profit conservation organizations receive funds to ensure clean drinking water, preserve ancient forests, protect wildlife, restore rivers and deserts, reduce traffic congestion, and much, much more.

ONDA is a proud member of ESOR. What does this mean to you? You and your fellow employees can choose to have contributions sent automatically to your favorite Oregon conservation groups, including ONDA. Since your contribution is spread out over the course of a year, the amount deducted from your paycheck is minimal, and all gifts are fully tax deductible. You can make a huge difference!

If your workplace is not currently involved in an ESOR giving program, establishing one is easy. ESOR will work with your employer to set up a program that meets your company's needs. Oregon's natural beauty and livability is legendary. With your contribution to ESOR, you can help ensure that it stays that way. For more information, please contact Ron Shoals at ESOR: (503) 223-9015 or rrs@earthshare-oregon.org; or visit www.earthshare-oregon.org.



Interns expand ONDA's capacity

Laurel Hickok, Assistant Wildlands Coordinator

After interning with ONDA in January, Laurel started this past summer in the Bend office as the Assistant Wildlands Coordinator. Laurel recently graduated from Williams College with a B.A. in Anthropology, where she was active in the Student Global AIDS Campaign and science



education in the local elementary school. A summer resident of Bend for most of her life, Laurel has finally moved to the mountains for good! Her work will focus on the Badlands Wilderness proposal and other on-going wilderness inventory efforts.

Paul Ferro, Wildlands Inventory Specialist

With a B.S. in Environmental Geoscience from Boston College, Paul has been an environmental educator for the renowned High Desert Museum, Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, and Central Oregon Community College. Recently he combined his strong scientific background and skills in Geographic Information Systems to inventory and map Oregon's high desert wildlands for ONDA.



Kelly McMahon, Legal Intern

We were fortunate to have Kelly McMahon as a legal intern this past summer in our Portland office. Kelly had just completed her first year at Northwestern School of Law at Lewis & Clark College and worked with ONDA for ten weeks. Prior to her internship with ONDA, she was active with the Northwest Environmental Defense Center. Well-versed in public lands issues, she devoted most of her time to researching potential Endangered Species Act litigation.



WELFARE RANCHING

The Subsidized Destruction of the American West

Edited by George Wuerthner and Mollie Matteson

Published by the Foundation for Deep Ecology. Distributed by Island Press

Welfare Ranching reveals the deplorable practices that are ripping apart the ecological fabric of the arid West, where subsidized livestock grazing occurs on more than 300 million acres of publicly owned land. The book offers a graphic look at the consequences of using taxpayer dollars to turn the West into a giant feedlot for cattle and sheep — the slaughter of predators, a growing number of endangered species, polluted rivers and streams, an increase in soil erosion, and weed invasion, to name just a few.

Through dramatic photographs and scientifically supported essays, the book shows that wherever cattle are grazing at the public trough, severe and sometimes irreversible ecological damage results. Fauna of all kinds are extirpated, endangered, or driven to extinction; riparian zones are trampled and degraded; introductions of exotic grasses and foiled mitigation attempts abound. For years the true impacts of livestock grazing have gone unnoticed as the landscape has been altered slowly over time, making the changes difficult to discern.

With more than 150 powerful photographs, *Welfare Ranching* vividly illustrates the difference between lands appropriated for livestock production and the spectacular deserts, grasslands, and forests that have been protected from its shattering effects.

Essays by leading scientists, historians, and economic and policy experts — including Edward Abbey, Joy Belsky, Carl Bock, John Carter, Thomas Fleischner, Terrence Frest, T.H. Watkins, and ONDA staff Bill Marlett and Stephanie Parent — document the many costs of ranching on public lands.

Welfare Ranching is testimony to an environmental tragedy, but it is also an expression of hope that America's heritage of wild and vibrant western landscapes will be restored and renewed. It offers a clear path toward healing more than a century of reckless ranching in the arid West — towards a new West with a healthy and living landscape, the revival of extirpated species, and beautiful testimony to true human values.

TO ORDER FROM ISLAND PRESS:

Welfare Ranching by Wuerthner/ Matteson: hardcover copies @ \$75.00 each (1-55963-942-3), paperback copies @ \$45.00 each (1-55963-943-1). For inquiries or to order by phone, call 1-800-828-1302, M.-F., 8 A.M. – 5 P.M., Pacific Coast Time. Outside of the U.S. and Canada, call 707-983-6432. Order online at www.islandpress.org. Send e-mail orders to orders@islandpress.org. Send inquiries to: service@islandpress.org.

Remembering Joy Belsky

It is with tremendous sadness that we share with you that Joy Belsky passed away Friday, December 14, 2001 of breast cancer. Joy was ONDA's staff ecologist and one of the most knowledgeable, dedicated, passionate grasslands advocates in the United States. In addition to being an excellent and accomplished scientist, Joy demonstrated an amazing commitment to the meaningful protection of the West's drier landscapes. She was a true champion of underdogs, of the sometimes-charisma-challenged creatures that comprise the vital bedrock of intact, healthy, functioning arid-land ecosystems: bunchgrasses, cryptobiotic crusts, coyotes, junipers, redband trout, Washington ground squirrels. In her much-too-short but incredibly action-packed career, Joy eloquently identified and described the ecological travesty wrought by livestock grazing in the Intermountain West; her myriad peer-reviewed papers (forty five in all) helped form the scientific foundation for the need to end livestock grazing on public lands.



Joy was, in a word, remarkable. Other words that have been used to describe her during these past few months include: warm, brilliant, inspiring, tenacious, spirited, stubborn, loving, funny, openly passionate, and one heckuva role model. It was an enormous honor for all of us at ONDA to be able to work with Joy these past five years. We'll miss her very, very much. And we promise that we'll try like heck to pick up where Joy so ably left off.

Persons wishing to share their memories and thoughts can e-mail them to bfenty@onda.org and we will post them to the "Memories" section of our website. ONDA's board of directors has created the "Joy Belsky Fund" for the purposes of furthering Joy's work and to create a legacy that is tied directly to her research—research that set the groundwork for why grazing permit retirement is necessary. The fund will be used to help purchase public land grazing permits at equitable rates and thus make Joy's vision become a reality. If you wish to make a donation in memory of Joy, please use the form at the end of this newsletter, and include a note that indicates it is a memorial contribution.

Thank you, foundations!

Oregon Natural Desert Association extends our appreciation to the following foundations for supporting our desert protection efforts:

American Wilderness Coalition
Brainerd Foundation
Conservation Alliance
Foundation for Deep Ecology
Musicians United to Sustain the Environment
The Norcross Wildlife Foundation
The Peradam Foundation
Sperling Foundation

In Memory of Joy

ONDA would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their generous contributions made in the memory of Joy Belsky. Her incredible spirit will live on, thanks to your support.

Margaret Aiken
Paulette Bierzychudek
Donald & Sharon Genasci
Don Grey
Paul & Elnora Harcombe
Mary and Bob Holmstrom
Gary & Sharon Kish
John Laurence & Nancy Flynn
Dana McCullough
Andrew & Kathleen McIntosh
Sharon McIntosh
Enid Mills
Caroline Skinner
Colleen Sloan
Marilyn Swartz & Tony Swartz Lloyd
Leonard & Sylvia Weinstein
Employees of Boyce Thompson
Institute for Plant Research
Downtown Community Association
Employees of Air Quality Program,
Oregon Dept. of Environmental Quality

ONDA's New Website

ONDA has completed a major remodel of our website, which now offers an action alert system to send faxes to legislators or comments to the BLM with a click of your mouse. We've added a page where you can enroll or renew your membership or buy ONDA merchandise. You can also use the website to sign up for SageNet—our e-mail alert system. Enjoy the stunning "Desert Tour" slide show, archived newsletters, a resource library, and a search engine to help you locate information. You can visit the site at www.onda.org. Special thanks to Brent Fenty for the creation of this website.

Books

- Netting the Sun: A Personal Geography of Oregon's Desert*
by Melvin Adams \$15
- Flora of Steens Mountain*
by Donald Mansfield \$30
- The Western Range Revisited*
by Debra Donahue \$17
- Waste of the West: Public Lands Ranching*
by Lynn Jacobs \$28
- Sacred Cows at the Public Trough*
by Denzel & Nancy Ferguson \$9
- Oregon's Outback: Auto Tour Guide to S.E. Oregon*
by Donna Lynn Ikenberry \$15

- "Livestock Grazing and Weed Invasions in the Arid West"
by Joy Belsky and Jonathan Gelbard \$5

T-Shirts

- ONDA T-shirts (100% organic cotton)
Specify size (M, L or XL), style (short or long sleeve),
and color (sage or natural)
- Short sleeve \$12
Long sleeve \$15
- Women's ONDA T-shirts (white) (M, L) short sleeve \$12
- Desert Conference 2001 T-shirts (100% organic cotton)
(white or natural) (M, L, XL)
- Short sleeve \$8
Long sleeve \$12

Scientific Papers

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

Etc.

- Big Indian Gorge: stunning 18"x28" color poster ... \$10
- Road Map to OHDPA lands \$5
- "Cows Kill Salmon" bumper sticker \$1
- "Boycott Public Lands Beef" bumper sticker \$1



ONDA Marketplace Order Form

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				x	=
				x	=
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- *BADLANDS & SPRING BASIN WILDERNESS*
- *WOLVES IN OREGON*



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Help Protect the Badlands!

Now is the time for a Badlands wilderness designation! Call or write to your Representative or Senator today and urge them to get behind the effort to protect the Badlands.

You can use the contact information provided here, or visit our website at www.onda.org where we have a sample letter that you can personalize and send directly from our site.

If you live in central or eastern Oregon, it is especially important you contact Representative Greg Walden. Greg Walden was the champion of the Steens Wilderness Act, which included Oregon's first "cow-free" wilderness. When you ask Representative Walden to protect the Badlands as wilderness, be sure to thank him for his efforts on the Steens too!

Make Yourself Heard in Washington

Mailing addresses

For all senators:
The Honorable _____
US Senate
Washington DC, 20510

For all representatives:
The Honorable _____
US House of Representatives
Washington DC, 20515

Phone & Fax Numbers:

Senator Ron Wyden
Phone: (202) 224-5244
Fax: (202) 228-2717

Senator Gordon Smith
Phone: (202) 224-3753
Fax: (202) 228-3997

Rep. David Wu (1st District)
Phone: (202) 225-0855
Fax: (202) 225-9497

Rep. Greg Walden (2nd District)
Phone: (202) 225-6730
Fax: (202) 225-5774

Rep. Earl Blumenauer (3rd District)
Phone: (202) 225-4811
Fax: (202) 225-8941

Rep. Peter DeFazio (4th District)
Phone: (202) 225-6416
Fax: (202) 225-0373

Rep. Darlene Hooley (5th District)
Phone: (202) 225-5711
Fax: (202) 225-5699