

From the
Outback

Secretary Norton's assault on America's wilderness heritage

by Bill Marlett

Before I delve into the nuances of Secretary Norton's recent attack on America's wilderness heritage, I want to personally thank ONDA's members. With your support, I passed the ten-year mark as ONDA's first (and certainly not last) executive director. This is not a fork in the trail, but a simple need to publicly acknowledge all of you who have made ONDA a part of your life over the years. It is only because of you, our supporters, and your passion for cow-free wildlands, that ONDA is going strong today.

While our accomplishments have been great and successes many, the trail ahead is long, strewn with new obstacles and opportunities. Yet our destination is clear. In my ecological shorthand, I measure success one acre at a time: How much land did we protect from the ravages of livestock grazing? How much land did we permanently protect as wilderness? Of course, there are many variations on these simple notions. But underpinning both is a fundamental understanding that protecting or restoring a piece of ground as unfettered Nature is a biological imperative in no

see Outback page 3



Philip Bullock

Leslie Gulch receives interim protection through wilderness study area status.

Permit buyout bills in the works

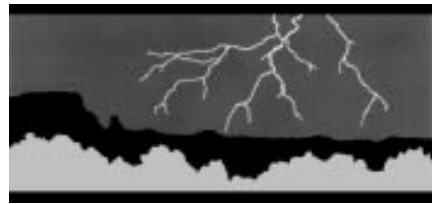
by Gilly Lyons

Long-time readers of *Desert Ramblings* may recall that conservationists, including folks here at ONDA, have been vigorously discussing the concept of voluntary grazing permit buyout since the mid-1990s. It appears that those years of discussion may soon come to fruition. Perhaps by as soon as this September, we anticipate that two bills will be introduced in Congress authorizing voluntary permit buyout in the form of two pilot projects.

The first of these bills will be co-sponsored by Representatives Christopher Shays (R-CT) and Raul Grijalva (D-AZ), and would establish a program that allows federal grazing permittees to voluntarily relinquish their permits and/or leases in exchange for \$175 per animal unit month (or AUM, which is the amount of forage required to feed a cow and her calf for one month). The land management agency in charge of the relinquished permit or lease (usually

**VOLUNTARY
RETIREMENT OF
GRAZING PERMITS
ANTICIPATED**

see Permit page 4



Oregon Natural Desert Association

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

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Newsletter

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From the Den

by Lee Christie, President

Who said it couldn't get worse? Only two-and-a-half years have passed, but a whole lot of hard environmental work and legal protections have gone since Bush became President. Add that to the mix of a poor economy and you'll know why we need your support. Over a year ago, many non-profits, like ONDA, were warned of the upcoming scarcity of funds—from the corporate and foundation world to individual giving.

Some, but too few, far-sighted and very generous members have chosen to set up trusts, planned giving programs, and estate designations to help lessen ONDA's hardships in these times. This yearly, committed giving is the future hope for the continued financial health of ONDA. The time is now to give as much as you can: work, volunteer, give, and experience the wildness of the desert.



Announcements

Protection needed for the pygmy rabbit

A coalition of six conservation groups, including ONDA, has petitioned the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to list pygmy rabbits in the Intermountain and Great Basin regions of the West as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Scientific studies show that these diminutive, sagebrush-dependent mammals face extinction without ESA protection. The geographic range of pygmy rabbits has declined from 100 million acres to fragmented portions of 8 million acres. Dire threats to pygmy rabbits include livestock grazing; prescribed fires; gas and coalbed methane exploration and production; geothermal exploration and production; and road-building and OHV use.

Forest Service sued over grazing fee

ONDA and seven other citizen groups are suing the U.S. Forest Service for failing to reform the fee charged for grazing livestock on National Forests in the western U.S. The 2003 grazing fee of \$1.35 per month for a cow and her calf is one tenth of market rates and is the minimum allowed by regulation. In

October 2002, the Center for Biological Diversity released a report showing that the federal grazing program costs taxpayers \$124 million at a minimum, and likely as much as \$1 billion annually in subsidies and other costs after subtracting fee receipts.

Help pull fence in Steens Mountain Wilderness

Join ONDA and the BLM for a fence pull and work party at Steens Mountain, August 18th–23rd. We will be backpacking in, camping out, and taking down fence and water developments in the new cow-free wilderness. This is a great opportunity to experience the Steens and give something back to native wildlife. Contact Tara for more information at 503-525-0193 or trgunter@onda.org.

Celebrate High Desert art

Learn how Oregon's High Desert inspires artist Nancy Pobanz' work on "First Friday," September 5th, 5:30-6:30 p.m. at the Central Oregon Environmental Center in Bend. We'll see a slideshow and presentation by Nancy and then walk over to the Mirror Pond Gallery for the opening of her new show. For more details please call the Bend office at 541-330-2638 or email us at hsterling@onda.org.

Outback *continued from page 1*

need of defense. Which points to an immediate need for securing unaltered landscapes and restoring others where we can. In the final analysis, future generations will surely measure our success by the quality and quantity of biological heritage they are privileged to inherit.

I only wish our Secretary of Interior held such feelings. Gale Norton's campaign to shut the door on additions to our wildlands heritage has been a huge success...so far. On April 11, 2003, a day that will be sorely remembered by wilderness advocates for many years, Sec. Norton eliminated interim wilderness protection for 2.87 million

"Norton, sadly, sees dollar signs where she should see a soaring human spirit—where she should see hope."

ARIZONA DAILY STAR
May 9, 2003

acres of public land in the West, including 61,000 acres in Oregon. In signing an out-of-court settlement with the Governor of Utah, she personally foreclosed potential wilderness protection to 220 million acres nationwide, including thirteen million acres in Oregon. Norton also rescinded what is known as the "Wilderness Handbook," which provides guidance to citizens on how to conduct new inventories. (Please see map on page 5 and ONDA's website at www.onda.org/nowild/index.html to see which areas in Oregon are affected by the settlement.)

I predicted in our last newsletter that Norton wouldn't rescind the "Wilderness Handbook." I was wrong. Norton has dealt wilderness advocates a near knockdown blow. Coupled with her new grazing initiative that further vests ranching interests on our public lands, it will be years before we get back to where



Breathtaking views abound at Sutton Mtn.

we were at the end of the Clinton administration (and that is not saying much).

Hiding behind the shield of a back-room legal settlement with the State of Utah, (see summary of settlement on page 5), Norton seized the opportunity to not only do the bidding of a state whose political majority is hostile to wilderness, but also to foreclose new wilderness study areas across the West. This wasn't mere appeasement to one state. This was an attack on America's wilderness heritage.

However, Sec. Norton wasn't acting alone. She was goaded on by Oregon Senator Gordon Smith and thirteen other Senators hostile to new opportunities to grow

our National Wilderness System. In an April 9th letter to Sec. Norton, these Senators requested that Norton immediately suspend any new wilderness reviews on public lands. Why? Because, "further wilderness review serves no beneficial purpose and frustrates current efforts to identify and open lands for energy production."

After signing the Utah settlement, and without skipping a beat, Secretary Norton announced her "Take Pride in America" campaign to highlight volunteers who promote conservation on public lands. I wonder if it even crossed her mind that hundreds of volunteers throughout the West (including Oregon) have spent thousands of hours helping BLM update its aging wilderness inventory?

In response to the Norton-Utah settlement, there have been several actions to thwart this attack on our

"Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton recently decided that 250 million acres of public land will not be considered for wilderness preservation. There's only one problem: She forgot to ask the landowners—the American people—about it."

ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION
May 7, 2003

wilderness heritage. First, a coalition of conservation groups are trying to pull the settlement back in to court. Led by the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (SUWA), the groups are challenging the legal basis of the settlement in an attempt to expose its illegal underpinnings (visit SUWA's web site to read the press release www.suwa.org/).

Also on the legal front, ONDA is challenging BLM's failure to properly maintain an inventory of wilderness resources on its lands in the Vale District's Southeast Oregon Resource Management Plan (SEORMP), which encompasses the Owyhee River country. (See the article on our SEORMP lawsuit on page 8.) This lawsuit addresses the essence of the Norton-Utah settlement by asking the court to require BLM to maintain an on-going inventory of wilderness-quality lands, and protect these



Sutton Mtn. loses its protected status through the DOI settlement.

Brent Fenty

lands as required by law.

In stark contrast to Senator Smith and his colleagues, several wilderness champions in Congress have come to the defense of unprotected wilderness. Led by Oregon Rep. Earl Blumenauer, Rep. Hinchey (NY), and Rep. Udall (CO), over one hundred members of Congress recently sent Norton a letter asking her to ensure that all potential uses of public lands, including wilderness, are protected. The letter was also signed by Oregon Reps. Wu

“Secretary Norton and President Bush just cut off one of the public’s options, and that is what is not acceptable. It’s just wrong.”

IDAHO STATESMAN

May 1, 2003

and DeFazio (see the complete list at SUWA’s web site www.suwa.org/). They all deserve your thanks. If you get a chance, please let Reps. Blumenauer, Wu, and DeFazio know you appreciate their defense of the West’s and Oregon’s unprotected BLM wildlands. Too, you can let Sen. Smith know how disappointed you are in his efforts to undermine citizen efforts to expand wilderness on our public lands.

Unlike her mentor, former Sec. Watt under President Reagan, Norton has figured out how to cloak her agenda in the patina of green double speak. Where Watt didn’t hide his abhorrence of Nature, in contrast, Norton claims an affinity for the outdoors. Perhaps. But she has a clear affection for industrial use of our public lands. Consistent

“There is no doubt that the law gives the Secretary of the Interior the right to identify potential wilderness areas and manage them accordingly. The only question is whether he or she wants to use that authority. And Ms. Norton, to our great dismay, clearly does not.”

NEW YORK TIMES

May 4, 2003

with the Bush administration agenda of catering to development interests, Sec. Norton is isolating her Department from what the American public considers part of our biological heritage. With your help, we’ll rein her in, but it’s going to be a long ride.



the BLM or the Forest Service) would then be required to permanently retire the associated grazing allotment and reallocate that allotment’s forage to wildlife and watershed health.

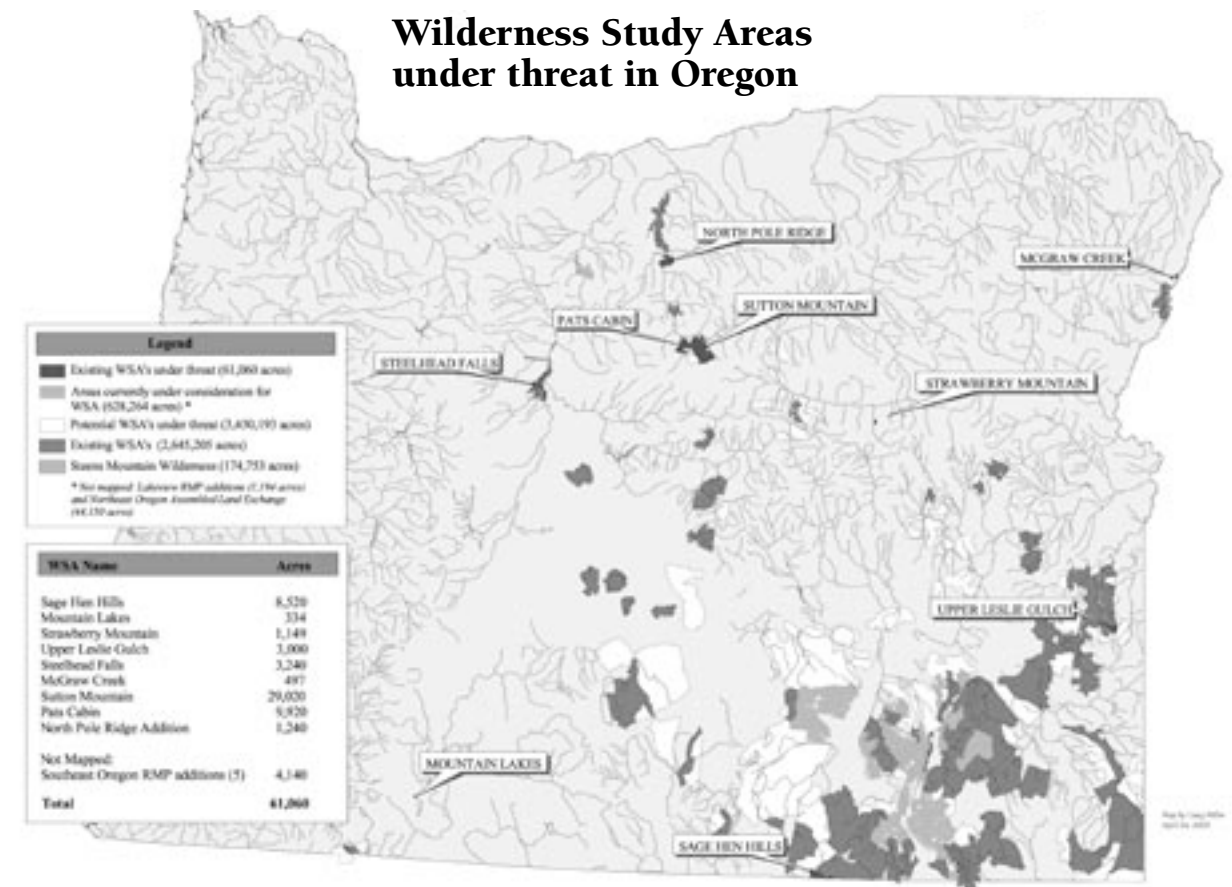
The proposed legislation differs from existing permit buyout efforts in that it would use federal funding, rather than private dollars, to retire the relinquished permits. If each of the West’s 27,000 or so federal grazing permittees were to opt for a voluntary buyout, the proposal would cost just under \$3 billion. Since the federal grazing program drains the U.S. Treasury to the tune of \$500 million each year, taxpayers would recoup the cost of a west-wide buyout in about six years.

However, because a program of this ilk has never been implemented, the Shays-Grijalva proposal would initially set aside a significantly smaller source of federal dollars to fund a pilot project-style buyout program. The program would remain open to all federal permittees in the West until the funding is spent in full. Keen interest on the part of permittees could result in larger pools of funding in the future.

In addition to this west-wide proposal, Rep. Grijalva will also introduce a bill creating an Arizona-specific permit buyout program. Like its west-wide counterpart, the Arizona proposal will allow ranchers holding permits and/or leases on federal lands within the Grand Canyon State to relinquish those permits in exchange for \$175/AUM. In what could be a harbinger of things to come in other parts of the arid West, the Arizona voluntary permit buyout effort is being spearheaded by an unprecedented coalition of public lands ranchers and conservationists. The members of this unique alliance endorse voluntary permit buyout for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is Arizona’s four-year-long-and-counting drought. With several Forest Service and BLM allotments under mandatory drought closures, public lands ranchers are seeking a way to rescue their stranded investments, while conservationists hope to alleviate the ecological pressures associated with cattle grazing in the desert Southwest. Rep. Grijalva’s Arizona permit buyout bill could be a way to achieve both of these goals equitably and efficiently.

Stay tuned to *Desert Ramblings* for late-breaking updates as these two forward-looking proposals make their way through the congressional gauntlet this fall. To learn more about both pieces of proposed legislation, please visit www.publiclandsranching.org or www.azbuyout.net. And for information about the National Public Lands Grazing Campaign’s second annual Autumn Stampede on Capitol Hill lobby week, scheduled for September 15-18, 2003, zap an e-mail to glyons@onda.org.

Wilderness Study Areas under threat in Oregon



What are the impacts of the Department of Interior’s anti-wilderness settlement?

Affects over 220 million acres of BLM lands in the West and Alaska.

Renounces the BLM’s authority to conduct wilderness inventories, as it has done in the past, or to establish new Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), on over 10 million acres of BLM land in Oregon’s High Desert. Currently, about 2.8 million acres of BLM land in eastern Oregon currently have WSA status.

Rescinds the BLM’s “Wilderness Inventory and Study Procedures Handbook,” which provides citizens and land managers with administrative procedures and guidelines to work together to secure wilderness study area protection for areas identified as having wilderness characteristics.

Retracts all post-1993 BLM inventories of wilderness-quality lands and any interim protection given those lands, including fourteen WSAs in Oregon totaling 61,060 acres. The largest is the 29,020-acre Sutton Mountain WSA located on the Wild and Scenic John Day River.



Sutton Mtn. is the largest WSA in Oregon to lose protection.

Disallows study or designation of WSAs on lands that have come into BLM ownership since 1993 (or will in the future). In Oregon, this will preclude wilderness consideration on 45,000 acres of land the BLM recently acquired along the Wild and Scenic North Fork of the John Day River.

by Mac Lacy

PACFISH LAWSUIT FILED

ONDAs and the Center for Biological Diversity filed suit in March against the Forest Service, alleging that the agency has failed to comply with legal requirements to protect federally listed salmonid species on two Malheur National Forest grazing allotments. Despite the adoption of the Pacific and Inland Native Fish aquatic conservation strategies nearly a decade ago, the Forest Service continues to authorize

temperatures. [See the Complaint online at www.onda.org/library/decisions/index.html]

FOIA APPEAL VICTORY

Over the winter, ONDA appealed the BLM's denial of a statutorily permitted fee waiver request under the Freedom of Information Act for agency documents related to grazing and resource management on the Lakeview BLM's Beaty Butte Allotment in southeast Oregon. In February, based on ONDA's appeal, the Lakeview BLM and the Office of the Solicitor in Washington, D.C. determined that the fee waiver denial was, in fact, unjustified and granted ONDA's fee waiver request. ONDA has since received,

and previous seedings; (2) to participate in a USGS-led collaborative research project analyzing the potential for native seeding in cheatgrass-infested rangelands; (3) to rest the seeded lands from grazing for a minimum of two grazing seasons and provide Plaintiffs all information used to consider re-opening those areas to grazing; and (4) to conduct with Plaintiffs two field tours this summer to observe and discuss this and other re-seeding efforts in the District. ONDA is pleased to have substantially reduced the scope of this massive project and to have raised the BLM's awareness of the public's desire to see burned public lands successfully re-seeded with native species.

[View litigation docs, settlement, maps, etc. online at www.onda.org/library/decisions/index.html]



West Gulch Flat, July, 2002.



West Gulch Flat, July, 2003. The damaging effects of livestock grazing are readily apparent at Beaty Butte.

livestock grazing practices that cause severe riparian and aquatic damage along numerous fish-bearing streams on the Forest.

The aquatic conservation strategies require the Forest Service to modify or eliminate grazing practices that adversely affect native fish and their habitat. Both ONDA's monitoring, as well as that of the Forest Service and other agencies, indicates that livestock grazing has heavily degraded a large majority of the Forest's riparian areas, reducing grasses to stubble and stunting or virtually eliminating the hardwood component of these streamside plant communities. Grazing has also caused severe stream bank damage, soil erosion and compaction, and elevated water

and is reviewing, the first batch of responsive documents, which concern grazing management, weed infestations, post-fire recovery, and surveys for vegetation trends and the presence of microbiotic crusts.

[View FOIA-obtained documents and summaries online at www.onda.org/library/foia/index.html]

JACKIES BUTTE LAWSUIT SETTLED

In April, ONDA and co-plaintiffs Western Watersheds Project and Committee for the High Desert settled a lawsuit filed against the BLM in December 2001. The suit targeted the Vale District BLM's proposed seeding of 55-square miles of wildfire-burned public lands

on the Jackies Butte Allotment in southeast Oregon with a seed mix that included the non-native species crested wheatgrass. ONDA alleged that the BLM failed to comply with legal requirements to provide basic baseline information and a reasoned environmental analysis of the proposal, as well as with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act's requirement to manage the public lands for "multiple uses" and to "prevent unnecessary or undue degradation of the lands."

Despite failing to obtain a preliminary injunction from the federal court to stop the project altogether, ONDA did succeed in stopping about half the proposed seeding. In addition, the settlement agreement requires the BLM: (1) to provide Plaintiffs with maps and baseline information on this

OREGON FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION APPOINTS WOLF ADVISORY COMMITTEE

by Heather Sterling

As part of the process of developing a state wolf management plan, a Wolf Advisory Committee was appointed by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission in June. The Committee's task is to provide recommendations about the management plan through a consensus-based process. The council is made up of representatives from a variety of interest groups—many of them opposed to wolf restoration—and includes: a rancher, a hunter, a trapper, an eastern Oregon county commissioner, an economist, a rangeland conservationist, an educator, a wildlife biologist, a rural Oregon resident, a public land manager, a tribal representative, an Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife representative, a wolf advocate, and two at-large representatives. Sharon Beck, former president of the Oregon Cattleman's Association, will fill the "rancher" slot of the committee and has already provoked questions about her



George Wuertlmer

Canis lupus

ability to participate in a consensus process by openly stating her anti-wolf stance. Beck was quoted in the Eugene

Register Guard on June 7, 2003, as saying she would stand firm against allowing wolves into Oregon, adding, "Oregon Fish and Wildlife has said if they (wolves) harm cattle, they'll ask U.S. Fish & Wildlife to take them back. U.S. Fish & Wildlife has guaranteed us they will. That's a kind of management plan, isn't it?"

ONDA will continue to advocate for a science-based management and recovery plan that promotes viable wolf populations throughout all appropriate habitat in Oregon. Look for updates on our website about Wolf Advisory Committee meetings, which will be open to the public and held in various locations throughout the state. Once a draft management plan has been approved by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission, it will be released for public review and comment. For more information, visit ONDA's web site at www.onda.org/projects/wolves/index.html.

BLM's failure to protect wilderness resources in southeast Oregon

by Mac Lacy



Mariposa lily (top) & shooting stars.



Leslie Gulch in the Owyhee Canyonlands.

Philip Bullock

Brent Fenty (both)

“What does the desert mean?” asked Edward Abbey. “It means what it is. It is there, it will be there when we are gone. But for a while we living things—men, women, birds, that coyote howling far off on yonder stony ridge—we were a part of it all. That should be enough.”

This was how I felt as I came up to the edge of the ridge overlooking the hot spring-fed waterfalls that pour from Warm Springs Canyon into the Owyhee River, a couple miles southwest of Three Forks in southeast Oregon's Owyhee Canyonlands. It was so unexpected to find an actual waterfall in the middle of this remote area of high desert. I felt I had stumbled across an absolute Eden. And I felt—all in an instant—the permanence, the solitude, the vast silence,

the stunning beauty, of the desert. And that I was, indeed, a part of it all.

This part of the Owyhee Wild and Scenic Rivers has been off limits to livestock for several years now, following ONDA's 1999 legal victory in a challenge to the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) failure to “protect and enhance” the outstanding values of the river corridor. After so many years of grazing abuse in these national treasures, a long-overdue rest from grazing is finally allowing these riparian areas to recover.

Now, ONDA has broadened its focus in southeast Oregon. After over six years of planning, the BLM has issued its final decision on the Southeast Oregon Resource Management Plan, known in acronym-speak as the “SEORMP.” ONDA, the Committee for the High Desert (CHD), and the Western Watersheds Project (WWP) filed suit in federal court in July against the BLM over the agency's adoption of this new resource

management plan, which covers 4.6 million acres of public lands in southeast Oregon. The lawsuit claims that the BLM's newly adopted plan is rife with substantive and procedural violations of federal environmental law, and alleges violations of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), and the Taylor Grazing Act (TGA).

The SEORMP is intended to guide the BLM's management of this vast swath of public lands for the next fifteen to twenty years. Despite more than six years of planning and public input, the Plan largely passes on making any difficult decisions, essentially retaining the status quo for land uses such as livestock grazing and off-highway vehicle use. All of the SEORMP's decisions are tainted by a lack of baseline resource information. The BLM failed to conduct the legally

mandated inventories of several key resources and land uses, including the distribution and role of microbiotic crusts in these unique desert landscapes and the suitability of previously non-recommended wilderness study areas (WSAs) for potential



ONDA file photo

California bighorn.

Having participated at all stages of the public participation process, ONDA has been left with no choice but to use litigation.

designation as wilderness. The SEORMP fails, for example, to offer any real baseline information or analysis on the effects of grazing on crusts or the spread of invasive plant species. Having participated at all stages of the public participation process, and having had its protest denied in its entirety last September, ONDA has been left with no choice but to use litigation to try to compel the BLM to adhere to the various statutory duties it has thus far spurned.

FLPMA's Resource Inventory Requirement

One day, having been lost in quiet contemplation while walking along an old, overgrown two-track path through the sage, I found myself atop one of those vast, windswept uplands one seems to emerge onto without knowing it. I realized something. As I scanned the horizon, for as far as the eye could see, I was alone. The so-called “imprints of man”

see SEORMP next page

BIGHORNS IN THE DESERT



by George Wuerthner

For most desert ramblers, the sight of a wild bighorn sheep is one of the greatest thrills experienced. Bighorn sheep were once widely distributed in eastern Oregon, as the numerous Native American petroglyphs found throughout the region testify.

Ancestors of today's wild bighorn sheep evolved in the arid mountains of Asia and migrated to North America via the Bering Sea Land Bridge during the last Ice Ages. Once in North America they spread southwards, colonizing mountains from British Columbia and Alberta south to Mexico—encompassing eastern Oregon and east into the Badlands of western North Dakota.

Oregon is home to two bighorn subspecies—Rocky Mountain bighorn and California bighorn. The Rocky Mountain subspecies has slightly larger bodies and horns and is native to the Blue Mountains of northeast Oregon. The smaller California bighorn variety is commonly found in southeastern Oregon's desert ranges.

All North American sheep are adapted to arid climates, including the cold sagebrush desert that dominates eastern Oregon. In the northern parts of their range, wild sheep can survive temperatures of 40 to 50 degrees below zero quite easily, so long as they have sufficient food. In winter, despite the wind chill, bighorns will frequent blustery ridges to find sparse pickings of food blown clear by the wind or will migrate to lower terrain where snow depths are minimal.

Bighorns have a number of adaptations to living in the arid West.

see Bighorn next page

SEORMP continued from previous page

were absent. Nothing but the gentle undulation of sage-covered hills, perhaps the hint of a small canyon over the next gentle swale in the landscape. Nothing but the staccato ebb and flow of a swirling wind, announcing its arrivals and departures with a soft swish as it wound its way through the grasses and shrubs around me. Occasionally, a horned lark would catch my gaze as it dipped and dived in the distance. *This, I thought, is wilderness, desert-style.*



Wild iris.

Nancy Peterson

FLPMA requires the BLM to “prepare and maintain on a continuing basis an inventory of all public lands and their resource and other values (including, but not limited to, outdoor recreation and scenic values), giving priority to areas of critical environmental concern.” The BLM must ensure that the inventory is “kept current so as to reflect changes in conditions and to identify new and emerging resource and other values.”

Despite ONDA's urgings and protestations, the BLM simply did not make any systematic effort to gather any inventory information on a number of key resources. This is in stark contrast, incidentally, to ONDA's highly successful efforts to inventory wilderness values on the public lands in the Steens-Andrews area during the summer of 2002, and in the Owyhee Canyonlands this summer.

A particular issue of concern to ONDA is the nature of the BLM's inventory duty with respect to non-recommended wilderness study areas. When Congress enacted FLPMA in 1976, the law directed the BLM to conduct an initial inventory, within fifteen years, of all roadless areas of 5,000 acres or more identified as having wilderness characteristics. The BLM completed this initial effort by 1991 and issued an “Oregon Wilderness Final Environmental Impact Statement” and final decision. The agency recommended to Congress which of those areas in Oregon should and should not be designated as wilderness. Certain of these wilderness study areas were determined by the BLM to be “non-suitable” or only partially suitable for wilderness designation. The reasons given were usually things like a “lack of topographic or visual screening” or a “moderate potential for geothermal development or mining” or proposed utility corridors or range improvements (livestock watering troughs, pipelines, reservoirs, and so forth).

ONDA asked simple questions: Have these projects that were contemplated over a decade ago materialized? What has happened on these public lands in the time since then? Have public perceptions and priorities changed since 1991? Are the original justifications for non-recommendation still valid today? At the root of these questions is the fact that the BLM is under a continuing duty to keep its inventory information current. In

Bighorn continued from previous page

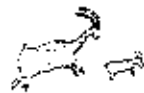
They are efficient in their water use, allowing them to live in dry places where livestock would never survive without numerous water developments. In many areas they are migratory, seeking different seasonal food and water sources. Additionally, bighorns consume a wide variety of foods, including shrubs and forbs. Grass, however, is their bread and butter.

SHEEP HORNS—MORE THAN A PRETTY ORNAMENT

Both rams and ewes have horns, but only the males have well-developed, spiraling curls, which are retained until the animal dies—growing larger with each season. A full curl ram is typically five to eight years old.

Ironically, despite the large size of the animal's horn, they are not particularly effective defensive weapons. Bighorns' main defense against predators is steep terrain. Once I watched a trio of coyotes surprise five bighorn rams out on a flat some distance from any hillside. The coyotes gave chase as the bighorns raced for a rocky outcrop. The coyotes nearly closed the gap, but the sheep reached the rock pile where they stopped and confidently faced their pursuers. As if a switch had been thrown, the coyotes abruptly halted the chase. They knew they could never catch the sheep in such rugged terrain.

Horns function in bighorn society like fancy cars do in human society—they are a form of status. The larger-horned animals tend to dominate the herd. Indeed, rams are famous for their horn bashing tournaments. The winner of these clashes gets to dominate other sheep in the herd hierarchy and usually



winds up breeding with most of the females. But the advantages of herd master are short lived. Upon reaching dominant stature, most rams expend more energy on breeding than on seeking nourishment, and they often die the following winter. For dominant rams, it's a short but presumably happy life.

LIVESTOCK AND BIGHORNS DON'T MIX

Wild sheep numbers across the West were once estimated to number several million, yet over-hunting, combined with livestock-induced population declines, led to significant reductions. By 1915, there were no wild California bighorn sheep left in

Bighorn restoration on our public lands is given second priority to domestic livestock grazing.

southeast Oregon, and the last wild Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep herds in northeast Oregon disappeared by 1945. Once hunting was controlled by the turn of the century, the main threat to wild bighorn sheep came (and continues to come) from domestic livestock.

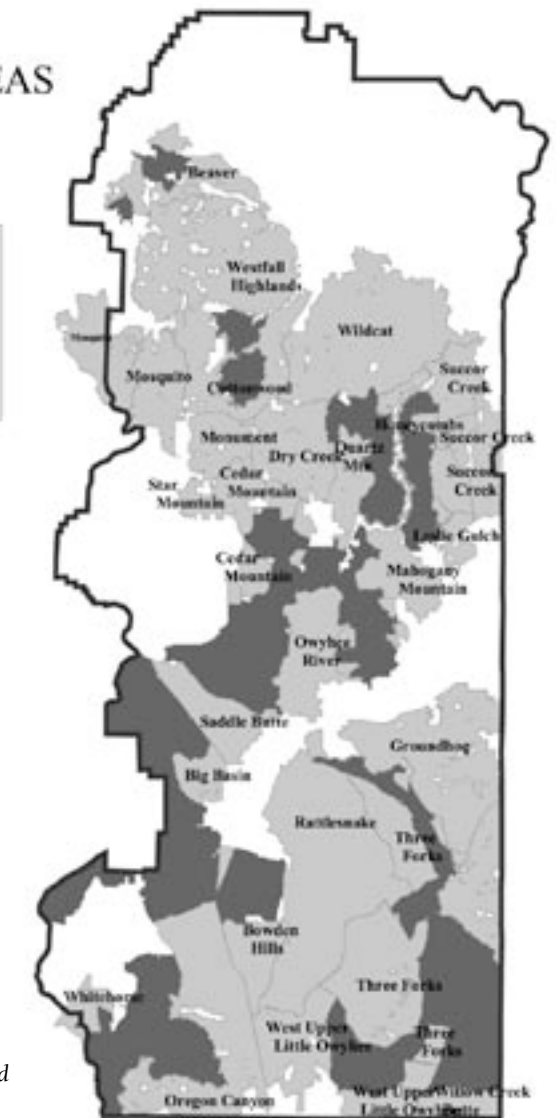
First, domestic animals compete directly with wild sheep for forage—particularly in drought years. A reduction of available forage can weaken wild sheep, leading not only to starvation but also to greater susceptibility to domestic animal-borne diseases.

Secondly, domestic animals can and do transmit disease and parasites to the wild bighorns, often disseminating the herds.

Third, overgrazing by domestic

continued next page

VALE DISTRICT INVENTORY AREAS



Areas inventoried by ONDA and affected by the SEORMP.

other words, the agency must—and particularly in the context of a long-term management plan such as the SEORMP—continue to assess and re-assess resource values, including the wilderness resource. The Department of the Interior has so far denied that the BLM is under any obligation to do any further inventory under FLPMA of wilderness resources. As a result, this issue will feature prominently in the SEORMP litigation.

“Life is gaunt and spare in the desert; that's what old time desert rats like best about it. They feel they cannot breathe properly without at least a cubic mile of unshared space about them.”

In front of my laptop back in Portland, I reflect on Abbey's words. My urban growth-densified lot leaves me with a bit less than the cubic mile of unshared space so revered by Ed. But knowing that those spaces exist, and that they will continue to exist when I'm long gone—and that ONDA is working to make sure they do so in an untrammled state, where horned larks and desert winds greet the occasional desert traveler as they have for centuries—makes me breathe easy. ✪

continued from previous page

livestock has converted many parts of the west from grass-forbs-shrub mixtures into landscapes dominated by shrubs, particularly sagebrush. This has favored the increase in mule deer populations, providing an additional prey base for mountain lions. In some places where sheep have a precarious hold, even modest increases in

however, the continued presence of domestic livestock hinders full recovery of the species. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, after having failed at many attempts to establish herds in areas grazed by domestic livestock, will no longer reintroduce bighorns anyplace where the potential habitat of wild and domestic animals overlap. Indeed, even a 25-mile-wide buffer is not sufficient to guarantee that wild sheep won't suffer, since bighorn rams sometimes wander widely during the breeding season and often contract disease from domestic animals.

In some states, wild bighorns are being killed to keep them apart from domestic animals. As a mechanism to protect grazing privileges of ranchers using public lands, Montana's Beaverhead National Forest recently required that the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks sign an agreement that MANDATES the shooting of any wild bighorn sheep that moves from established transplant sites on the forest. Just this year alone, four wild sheep from a recent



Steve Bly

Bighorn in their natural habitat.

mountain lion predation can lead to declines or even the extirpation of a local herd.

Fourth, overgrazing has sometimes led to a reduction in fine litters that once carried fires, allowing trees like pinyon pine to invade bighorn habitat. Since bighorns avoid forested locations (in part because mountain lions like to jump down on them from trees), the invasion

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife no longer reintroduces bighorns anyplace where the potential habitat of wild and domestic animals overlap.

by trees has led to a shrinkage in bighorn habitat or sometimes the closure of ancient migration routes.

In 1954, restoration of wild bighorn populations began with reintroductions into some of their historic ranges. The first successful transplant took place at Hart Mountain National Wildlife Refuge. Today there are 3,700 California wild bighorn scattered around southeast Oregon.

BIGHORN RECOVERY IS UNCERTAIN

As encouraging as this population growth may sound, bighorn restoration on our public lands is given second priority to domestic livestock grazing. There is still much unoccupied California bighorn habitat in southeast Oregon;



Philip Bullock

The first successful bighorn transplant in Oregon took place at nearby Hart Mtn.

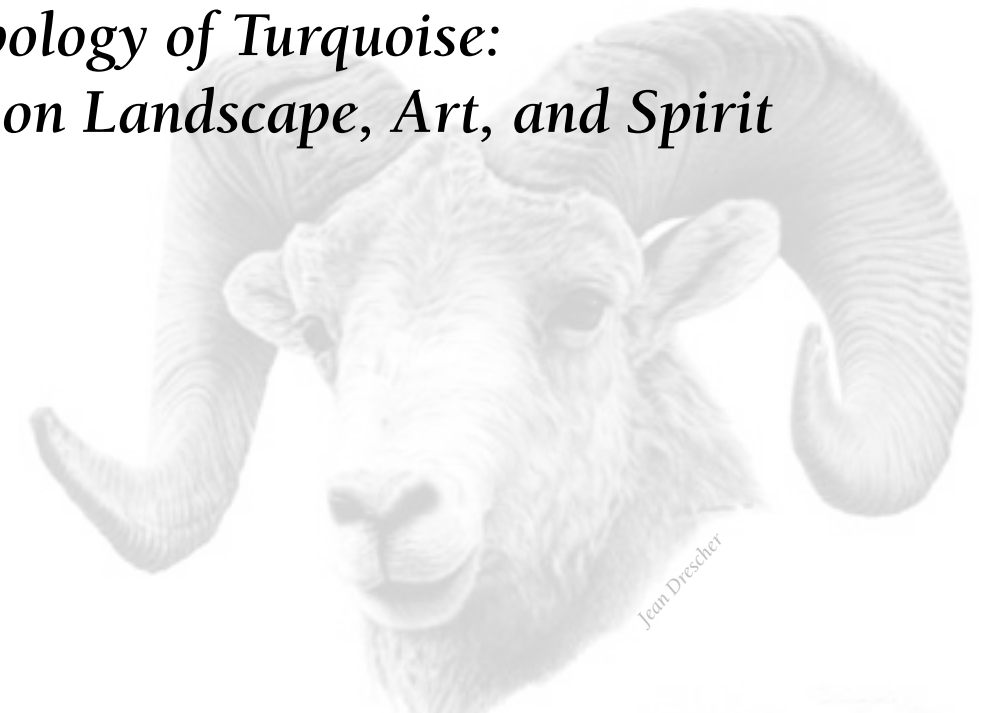
transplant in the Greenhorn Mountains wandered from the recovery area and were shot to satisfy ranchers.

Read ONDA's comments on ODFW's Bighorn sheep-Rocky Mountain goat management plan at www.onda.org.

Literary Corner

The Anthropology of Turquoise: Meditations on Landscape, Art, and Spirit

by Ellen Meloy
Copyright 2002
Pantheon Books



Excerpt

Look into the eyes of a domestic sheep and you will see the back of its head. Look into the eyes of this bighorn, the black, curiously horizontal irises set in amber orbs, and you will see a lost map to place, a depth that we may extinguish before it touches us. The bighorns' tenacity to this paltry remnant of wildland inspires as well as frightens me, for like them I cannot abandon the geography that feeds my every breath. The creative process, too, can be nothing less than an indestructible fidelity.

Between the sheep and me, our prospects diverge radically: my mortality, their extinction. If the sheep fall below the numbers needed to replace themselves, biologists would bring in desert bighorns from game farms or different stock. Nevertheless, there would be an extinction, though not of the desert bighorn. This band's ancestral fiber of desert woven into living tissue—hundreds of years of wild faith to this wild place beneath their hooves—would shred, unraveling the seams of time.

Welcome Heather Sterling, ONDA's new Associate Director



Delighted to have arrived in the sage juniper country of Bend, Heather joined ONDA in April 2003 after fleeing southern California where she was with Patagonia, Inc. She began work as ONDA's Associate Director after a few months volunteering for the Yellowstone Wolf Project and exploring the canyons of southern Utah. Heather's job focuses primarily on working with the amazing collection of folks who make up ONDA's members and donors.

A native of the lush, deciduous forests of the Blue

Ridge Mountains in western Virginia, Heather grew up with a love of all critters and a passion for wild places. She migrated down the Appalachians to western South Carolina for her college years and studied philosophy, world religions, and wildlife biology at Presbyterian College and Clemson University.

Heather's life and work experiences range from hiking the Colorado Trail, inventorying wilderness in Nevada, and collecting invertebrates in Grand Canyon to building houses in the Dominican Republic, rehabilitating injured raptors, surveying non-native plants in California, and showing hunter/jumper horses. Her passions include backpacking and backcountry skiing with her husband, bluegrass music, grizzly bears, and her dog, Kenai.

ONDA welcomes four summer interns

Kade Spears

Kade Spears is currently a junior at Washington and Lee University in Virginia and hails from Houston, Texas. Kade is a recipient of the A. Paul Knight Scholarship,



which was developed to provide students with an opportunity to gain a better understanding of conservation and its importance through a hands-on internship with an environmental organization. Kade will spend nine weeks this summer conducting inventory work through ONDA's

Wilderness Research and Rescue project in the Owyhee Canyonlands region. On his days off, Kade is looking forward to flyfishing on the Deschutes River and climbing at Smith Rock.

Alison Williams

Alison Williams is interning at ONDA to complete her B.S. in Outdoor Recreation/Natural Resource Management at Arizona State University. She spent the first two years of college as an Engineering major, but decided that Natural Resources Management might allow for more fresh air. She has worked for a city parks and recreation department, the Maricopa County Park System, the BLM, and Bryce Canyon National Park. Alison grew up among the forests and lakes of Michigan, but now calls Arizona home and is thrilled to be spending her summer conducting wilderness inventory work throughout the Owyhee Canyonlands.



Liz Braun

Liz Braun comes to us from Purdue University as an Ecology and Evolutionary Biology senior seeking experience in conservation. She will be spending her summer focused on the Badlands Wilderness Proposal as well as conducting some wilderness inventory work for ONDA.



Although residing in Indiana for the past three-and-a-half years, she is an Oregonian at heart, having

grown up in La Grande and thrived in the arid west. She is thrilled to learn more about the wonders of the high desert and to be working for an organization dedicated to its preservation.

Kelly O'Brien, Legal Intern

ONDA is fortunate once again to have Kelly return for a second summer as a legal intern in the Portland office. Kelly has completed her second year of law school at



Northwestern School of Law at Lewis & Clark College. Over the past year, she has served as the Northwest Environmental Defense Center's Lands & Wildlife project coordinator for eastside issues, focusing on grazing and timber sale issues, as well as the bull trout recovery plan.

This summer, Kelly is working primarily on ONDA's Malheur wild and scenic rivers and Southeast Oregon Resource Management Plan lawsuits.

Do you have Earth Share of Oregon at your workplace?



Market research has shown that 98 percent of Oregonians are concerned about the environment, which helps explain why contributions made through Earth Share of Oregon's (ESOR) annual fundraising campaign have been increasing almost every year since 1989. However, only a small percentage of Oregonians have the ability to support conservation organizations like ONDA through a payroll deduction contribution at their workplace. Wouldn't you like a simple, easy, and convenient way to support ESOR and its seventy member groups through your own workplace giving campaign? If your workplace doesn't have an ESOR campaign, we invite you to look

into starting one. It's an easy way to make a difference for the earth and our community, and your co-workers will appreciate the expanded giving options. If your employer currently offers ESOR, spread the word to friends at other workplaces about ESOR and how they too can make a positive impact on our environment.

To find out more about adding ESOR to your company's giving campaign contact Ron Shoals at ESOR: 503-223-9015 or rrs@earthshare-oregon.org; or visit www.earthshare-oregon.org. It's a great way to leverage your own commitment to the earth!

Marketplace

CLOTHING

ONDA T-shirts Specify size (M, L or XL) and color (sage or natural)
(short sleeve)\$12
(long sleeve)\$15

OTHER ITEMS

"Boycott Public Lands Beef" bumper stickers\$1

BOOKS

Netting the Sun: A Personal Geography of Oregon's Desert
by Melvin Adams\$15

Flora of Steens Mountain
by Donald Mansfield\$30
Sacred Cows at the Public Trough
by Denzel and Nancy Ferguson\$9
Oregon's Outback: Auto Tour to Southeast Oregon
by Donna Lynn Ikenberry\$15

ITEM DESCRIPTION	COLOR (1st & 2nd Choice)	SIZE	QTY	ITEM PRICE	TOTAL
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			X		=
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				GRAND TOTAL	=

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Email address: _____

Mail this form with check (or voided check or deposit slip for monthly giving) to ONDA, 16 NW Kansas, Bend, OR 97701

Owyhee inventory a success

Over a dozen volunteers participated in ONDA's Owyhee Canyonlands Wilderness Inventory trip in May and completed wilderness inventories on nearly 300,000 acres of public land. These intrepid folks survived a few

cold nights but were rewarded with spring wildflowers, butterflies, lizards, songbirds, pronghorn, and spectacular vistas throughout the week. Photos from the trip are available on ONDA's website at www.onda.org/events. If you are feeling independent and interested in adopting your very own wilderness area, please contact Brent Fenty via email bfenty@onda.org or phone at 541-330-2638.



Many Thanks!!

Connie Battaile	Julian Battaile	Pamela Carpenter	Jeremy Chignell
Alia Dietsch	Art McEldowney	Joe Hessler	Jeff Merrick
Craig Miller	Ann Sexton	Bob Speik	Tommie Speik
Tom Sedgwick	Phil Warner	Dave Worthington	

A special thanks to Craig Lacy for providing equipment for the trip.

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Action Alert

Thank members of Oregon's delegation for standing up for wilderness and urge Governor Kulongoski to do the same!

On May 23rd, members on both sides of the aisle of Congress answered back to the Bush administration's attack on wilderness throughout the West (see the front page article of this newsletter for details). An impressive one hundred members, in a bipartisan showing of support for protection of wilderness, signed onto the Hinchey, Udall, Blumenauer Wilderness Letter to Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton. The letter makes it very clear that a significant portion of Congress is strongly opposed to the back door deals and sneak attacks made recently on our public lands, and a firm recommendation is made to Sec. Norton that she reconsider her anti-wilderness actions and fulfill her responsibility as chief steward of our public lands with responsible public lands management policies.

Please thank Representatives Blumenauer, Wu, and DeFazio for signing on to the Wilderness Letter and taking a firm stand against the Bush administration's sneak attacks on our public lands. Our representatives' leadership in protecting Oregon's natural heritage is invaluable.

Contact Rep. Blumenauer:

www.house.gov/blumenauer/contact.html or call 503-231-2300 (Portland) or 202-225-4811 (Washington D.C.)

Contact Rep. Wu:

www.house.gov/wu/ci.htm or call 503-326-2901 (Portland) or 202-225-0855 (Washington D.C.)

Contact Rep. DeFazio:

www.house.gov/defazio/ContactMe.shtml or call 541- 465-6732 (Eugene) or 202-225-6416 (Washington D.C.)

It is also vitally important that, like our delegation, Oregon's governor take a stand. Please contact Governor Kulongoski and request that he write a letter asking Secretary Norton to withdraw the anti-wilderness settlement with Utah. Remind him that over 13 million acres of wilderness in Oregon are at stake.

Contact Gov. Kulongoski:

www.governor.state.or.us/contact.htm or call 503-378-4582.