

50TH YEAR OF THE **WILDERNESS ACT** AND **DESERT CONFERENCE** OFFER TIME TO REFLECT



Spring Basin Wilderness. Photo © Jon Muyskens

By Dan Morse
Conservation Director

Wilderness. The word itself is powerful, evocative and loaded with implications and assumptions. For some it brings to mind freedom, natural order and tranquility. For others, isolation, survival and a lack of so-called civilization. Yet at some fundamental level each of us is compelled by the idea of Wilderness – the power of a place untouched by mankind. And it is that ability to compel the human spirit and refresh a connection to our past that imbues Wilderness with such power.

From these primeval roots grew the American Wilderness movement: the notion that we have a duty to preserve some of the wild places that remain after centuries of effort to tame the continent. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, charismatic, thoughtful leaders recognized the dramatically changing character of the

nation and its transition from frontier to settlement. This group, from Henry David Thoreau to Teddy Roosevelt and on through John Muir, Arthur Carhart, Aldo Leopold, Howard Zahniser, Bob Marshall and many others, assembled the American idea of Wilderness. As Marshall put so well, “As society becomes more and more mechanized, it will be more and more difficult for many people to stand the nervous strain, the high pressure, and the drabness of their lives. To escape these abominations, constantly growing numbers will seek the primitive for the finest features of life.” His reflection on strain, pressure and drabness becomes truer with each passing moment. And so does the necessity of Wilderness.

Today, we’re celebrating their contribution to our nation. Fifty years ago in September, Congress passed the Wilderness Act, leading to the permanent protection of some of the places across the

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INSIDE DESERT RAMBLINGS:

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Defend: ONDA keeps pressure on Steens Mountain wind power project. Page 5.

Restore: Stewardship expands with new Wilderness monitoring efforts. Page 6.



There is More Wilderness Ahead

By Brent Fenty, Executive Director



Brent Fenty

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act. It was a landmark bill when passed, yet the march of time perhaps obscures its importance or uniqueness. This law represented a growing awareness that the Industrial Age was quickly changing the world around us and -- for ourselves, future generations and other species that depend on wild places -- that we would therefore set aside some lands and rivers to be enjoyed in their natural state.

The follow-up question to this effort was and continues to be: How much is enough? The answer is clearly different for each of us. As someone who was raised in a church-going home, I've always admired the idea of tithing, and in my mind setting aside at least 10 percent of our world as Wilderness is a form of tithing. Others can argue for less or, I would hope, more, but what I am confident of is that Oregon has not protected enough Wilderness yet.

As you have likely heard me say before, Oregon lags far behind our neighbor states in the amount of Wilderness it has protected. Only 4 percent of the state is protected as Wilderness; this is less than half of what Washington and Idaho have protected and nearly four times less than what California has protected. We clearly have a Wilderness deficit. What is also clear is that most of Oregon's Wilderness is in our forests. Less than 1 percent of Oregon's high desert is currently protected as Wilderness and that is because nearly 3 million acres of public lands known as Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) have sat in limbo for over three decades because of Congressional inaction.

I have heard some suggest that the remoteness of Oregon's high desert will ensure that areas like the Owyhee Canyonlands will remain wild. It's simply not true. It is obvious that there is no place on land, and perhaps now even in our oceans, where development cannot reach. I recently had the opportunity to raft down the Grand Canyon. As I floated through Marble Canyon, I was startled to see bore holes that were drilled in preparation for a dam, as well as spray paint marking where the walls of concrete were to be poured. It reinforced for me that our natural treasures only still exist because some have had the foresight to fight for their protection. As Teddy Roosevelt proclaimed upon creating Grand Canyon National Monument, *"I want to ask you to keep this great wonder of nature as it now is. I hope you will not have a building of any kind, not a summer cottage, a hotel or anything else, to mar the wonderful grandeur, the sublimity, the great loneliness and beauty of the canyon. Leave it as it is. You cannot improve on it."*

In this 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, I encourage you to celebrate the desert Wilderness we have and the wonderful people who had the foresight to come together to protect these areas – Steens Mountain (14 years old), the Oregon Badlands (5 years old) and Spring Basin (5 years old). But we also need you to make your voice heard for the areas that still need to be protected. Start today by adding your name to the petition to protect the Owyhee Canyonlands.

Add your name to the
Owyhee Canyonlands
petition at:
WildOwyhee.org

Your Donations at Work in Oregon's High Desert

Thanks to you ...

More than 6,000 supporters of the campaign to protect the Owyhee Canyonlands made their voices heard when they signed the petition to protect this incredible landscape. Advocate to protect 2 million acres of your public lands when you visit the new campaign website at WildOwyhee.org.

Two short films posted to ONDA's YouTube channel, YouTube.com/OregonDeserts, showcase the beauty of and work in Oregon's desert.

48 breeding areas of the imperiled Greater sage-grouse and 75 pages of comments on the BLM plan to save the bird represent ONDA's recent wildlife conservation efforts. Do your part to protect the sage-grouse at ONDA.org/takeaction.

100-plus volunteers planted 2,500 trees in a single day to restore a vital stream in the John Day River basin and encourage the return of beaver to the Pine Creek Conservation Area.

... and so much more, all made possible because of you!

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U.S. that are most important to wildlife and most dear to our hearts. This anniversary is an opportune time to reflect on the past and envision the future, and this year ONDA is doing so with the 27th biannual Desert Conference (See article at right for information).

With the theme of the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, we invite you to join some of the best minds in conservation, science, art and history for inspiring, thoughtful panels and discussions. Participants will also journey into the field on guided hikes. We'll confer on how we can follow the example of those early Wilderness leaders and protect desert places before pressures from development, industrial activity and motorized use overwhelm them. The ideas and energy from this gathering are important to developing effective, workable solutions for desert conservation.

This momentum is critical for Oregon, which is fortunate to have areas along our coast, in our forests and on top of our mountains that have been protected during the last 50 years. But Oregon's least populous and most isolated region – the high desert – has seen little in the way of Wilderness protection. Experience over the last 50 years has shown that the number of wild areas worthy of protection shrinks with every passing moment. And as the number of wild areas decreases the complexity of protecting the remaining few increases all the more. Some areas of the West have witnessed this phenomenon and have responded with thoughtful efforts to identify the places best suited for Wilderness protection, while other areas have allowed – even welcomed – overdevelopment and suffered from it.

The best of those efforts have worked to protect Wilderness and ensure economic sustainability at the same time.

Oregon's opportunity is to determine how Wilderness protection for our most important and ecologically significant desert areas can be a part of an overall mix of land uses and economic activities that will ensure a viable and sustainable economy now and for future generations.

A case-in-point example of the type of opportunity facing Oregon is the Owyhee Canyonlands. The Owyhee is one of the largest expanses of federal land left in the American West without permanent protection. The Owyhee offers millions of acres of high-quality Greater sage-grouse habitat, incredible canyons with opportunities for solitude and recreation, and a lack of human development across a significant landscape that is hard to match. Yet because the area has no permanent protection, threats like mining, unmanaged ATV use and even the prospect of oil and gas development loom on the horizon. Before these new pressures take hold in ways that preclude the designation as Wilderness, we have a tremendous opportunity to protect this region and ensure that its economy can thrive.

The Owyhee Canyonlands is just one of the opportunities in Oregon's high desert. The 2014 Desert Conference will also include discussions of possible new Wilderness designations in the John Day River basin, protections for wildlife habitat in the Greater Hart-Sheldon Region and important campaigns to protect several areas of Central Oregon. Fifty years from today ONDA will be proud to have played a role in helping protect areas like Sutton Mountain, Beatys Butte and Hidden Springs and to have done so in a way that fosters the economy and ensures that Oregon's high desert has remained a place where nature compels the spirit. We are excited by the thought that future generations will have the opportunity to know the wild places that we are working now to protect.

DESERT CONFERENCE 2014

Celebrating Wilderness at 50!



Owyhee Canyonlands. Photo © Tyson Fisher

SEPTEMBER 19–20, 2014 | BEND, OREGON

Desert Conference brings together, inspires and educates more than 200 attendees who care about the high desert. We'll focus on the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act with two days of compelling panel discussions, presentations and keynote speakers. Panels will range from how to capture amazing high desert images to tips for desert exploration, and from the significance of Greater sage-grouse to the economics of Wilderness and conservation. Then on Saturday, Sept. 20, participants may choose from an array of guided hikes showcasing Central Oregon's dry-side beauty.

Keynote speakers are:

- **John Leshy**, Harry D. Sunderland Distinguished Professor of Law, U.C. Hastings College of the Law, San Francisco
- **Roderick Nash**, author of *Wilderness and the American Mind* and Professor Emeritus of History and Environmental Studies | University of California, Santa Barbara
- **Jarold Ramsey**, Central Oregon award-winning essayist, playwright and poet
- **Ellen Waterston**, Nature of Words founder and award-winning author and poet

Tickets for the two-day event cost \$60 and are available at:

ONDA.org/2014desertconference

Registration includes an all-access pass to all keynote speakers, panel sessions, hikes and Desert Conference activities. Area hotels are also offering discounted rates for Desert Conference attendees; see the ONDA website link for attendance and activity details.

WILDERNESS WEEKEND

Desert Conference is a part of ONDA's Wilderness Weekend, honoring the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act. Events:

- Thursday, Sept. 18: the **Wild & Scenic Film Festival**, which features the best films about the natural world.
- Saturday, Sept. 20: free **WilderFest Block Party** in honor of Wilderness 50. It will feature three bands, food, beverages, and more.

Information: **ONDA.org/WildernessWeekend**

The Campaign to Raise Awareness of the Owyhee Canyonlands



Volunteers Tim Halloran, left, and Ernie Jones pose outside the federal building in Portland recently. They delivered signatures to Sen. Ron Wyden's office urging him to permanently protect the Owyhee Canyonlands. Photo: Chris Hansen

By Chris Hansen
Owyhee Coordinator

Over the course of one calendar year, ONDA's campaign for the Owyhee Canyonlands has been like the fleet-footed pronghorn that dot the landscape near Anderson Crossing – curious, seeing in many directions and diligently running. The effort to protect the Owyhee has pushed into the hearts and minds of Oregonians, from coastal towns to Portland to the eastern desert. And we've been able to do it by building a story about a place.

It started with an understanding that both the word and landscape "Owyhee" was literally a blank slate to those living west of the Cascades. It's easy to understand why: When you look at 1960s highway maps, the legend covers nearly all of Malheur County.

So this past year, we've built awareness of the Owyhee by using our strengths: great supporters and volunteers who have spent countless hours there. Committed desert rats and

Sign the petition to protect the Owyhee Canyonlands:

WildOwyhee.org

photographers like Jim Davis and Greg Burke, whose images transport a person to the edge of the canyon. Local knowledge of hiking, camping and rafting from Bob DenOuden, Brian Sykes and Tim Davis. Such individuals contributed knowledge and passion, and although the results might look as simple as a website, a blog and a Facebook page, they are actually our commitment to building a story about a deep love of place.

And story inspires action. At a sporting goods store in Salem, a kayak club in Tualatin and a public library in Bandon, we asked people to join with us in urging Senator Wyden to act on behalf of the Owyhee. Noted Oregon outdoors author William Sullivan called for the Owyhee Canyonlands to be protected in *The (Eugene) Register-Guard* and *Salem Statesman Journal*. Our audience is growing.

Canvassers knocked on doors in Portland and leaned in to show people images of Leslie Gulch and Three Forks. They chatted with folks about these public lands. Through this and other efforts we've gathered petition signatures from thousands of Oregonians who care about the Owyhee and want action.

During a sunny day in June, Owyhee supporters met outside an imposing marble building in northeast Portland. They hefted heavy boxes filled with postcards addressed to the office of Ron Wyden. After clearing security and being ushered upstairs, our volunteers spread out thousands of letters onto the wooden conference table, a symbolic gesture on behalf of a unique landscape.

The campaign for the Owyhee has run some distance over the past year, and its story will continue being written by the people who visit and love the desert country.

Help us keep the momentum going. Sign the petition and make the Owyhee part of your story.

From 'Why' to 'How' – Sutton Mountain Effort Evolves

By Ben Gordon
John Day Coordinator

Between the renowned John Day River and the Painted Hills sits a little-known wonderland. Sutton Mountain is a 29,650-acre plateau adorned with all of the trappings of a world-class recreation destination and conservation hotspot: ancient fossil records, painted hills of its own, abundant wildlife, breathtaking wildflowers, expansive views and opportunity for true solitude. What's more, this public treasure is only a two-hour drive from Bend and four hours from Portland.

ONDA began a campaign to permanently protect Sutton Mountain and nearby BLM lands named Pat's Cabin Wilderness Study Area, Sand Mountain and Dead Dog Canyon more than 10 years ago. When we started, we

Support permanent protection for Sutton Mountain by signing the petition:

ONDA.org/takeaction

began with **why?** On their own, these lands, which total more than 58,000 acres and encircle the Painted Hills, possess strong conservation and recreation value. When considered as part of the bigger landscape, they serve to close one of the few gaps in the map along the John Day River corridor.

The intrinsic **why** is a great place to start, but it is not the only piece of the equation that matters when it comes to Congress being willing to designate new Wilderness. Of equal importance is broad-based local and statewide support. For this reason we sought out the **why** of local stakeholders.

Through meetings with

Sutton, continued on Page 5

LEGAL DOCKET

By Mac Lacy
Senior Attorney

Steens Mountain

Echanis Wind Project: In 2013, ONDA petitioned the Secretary of the Interior to revoke the 2011 decision approving a 45-mile transmission line and associated right-of-way for a large-scale wind project on Steens Mountain. ONDA cited the collapse of the project's technical and financial undergirding since 2011:

- The developer lost the interconnection agreement required to get electricity to the grid, and Southern California Edison cancelled the contract to buy any electricity generated from the project.
- BLM revoked its Notice to Proceed with the project and refunded the developer's project bond.
- The county land use permit might now be void based on the developer's failure to proceed with the project.
- New scientific research continues to illustrate the negative effects of large-scale wind projects on eagles and Greater sage-grouse.
- The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has described as an "exceptional error" the fact that one of Oregon's most prolific sage-grouse leks was not evaluated as a core habitat area in the project analysis.

While ONDA awaited an answer from the Secretary, a federal district judge last November approved BLM's project decision. ONDA appealed to the Ninth Circuit and tried to resolve the dispute with the assistance of a court mediator. Although the project is effectively dead, Interior speculates that the developer might successfully market this ill-conceived project to a new buyer and so far refuses to settle the appeal. The project is now so far back in the regulatory queue – rightfully behind truly green, appropriately sited renewable energy projects that deserve to be built – that ONDA is confident Steens Mountain is safe for now. ONDA will, however, keep up the pressure for as long as Interior and the developer continue to push to develop Steens Mountain.

Comprehensive Recreation Plan: The "CRP" is the last of BLM's triumvirate of plans intended to satisfy Congress's requirement for "comprehensive" land management planning on Steens Mountain. It proposes a host of new trails and recreation facilities. ONDA is concerned with the proposal's potential impacts to roadless areas and Wilderness, wildlife habitat and other resource values. While parts of the proposal could be consistent with the Steens Act with improved and expanded analysis, our overarching concern is that BLM's plan, the so-called "Full Development" alternative, is contrary to the letter and the spirit of the Steens Act. At its core, the Act seeks to keep Steens Mountain in its relatively undeveloped condition. That will

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landowners, residents, business owners, user groups and local elected officials, we learned that many of these stakeholders share our **why**: They want the public lands that border their homes to remain wild. They want to hunt, fish and hike there and to know that they will have these opportunities forever. Of equal importance are the economic opportunities that protected public lands can create for the local communities of Fossil, Mitchell and Spray, the three incorporated towns in Wheeler County.



Steens Mountain Wilderness, view from Mickey Butte. Photo © Tyson Fisher

preserve the mountain's "long-term ecological integrity" for present and future generations. In a letter earlier this spring, ONDA outlined concerns and asked BLM to consider changes – such as closing impassable and naturally reclaimed routes, and complying with visual resource management objectives – that will preserve rather than fundamentally remake Steens Mountain.

Primitive Route Maintenance: This case asks whether BLM violated NEPA and other laws when it issued a series of decisions authorizing more than 500 miles of mechanical route maintenance slicing through large blocks of sagebrush habitat essential to the Greater sage-grouse. BLM adopted its decisions through a truncated "Categorical Exclusion" checklist rather than through a more probing environmental review. In so doing, ONDA argued, the agency failed to adequately evaluate effects to the sage-grouse. In April, the district judge extended great deference to BLM's interpretation of its regulations and to the agency's descriptions of the scope and magnitude of the categorical exclusion decisions.

As suggested by the court, ONDA will be watchful so that maintenance will only be to existing roads and that no new roads or upgrade of roads will occur. ONDA will continue to inventory and document routes known or suspected to be obscure or nonexistent to help ensure irreplaceable roadless habitats are not destroyed.

Other Areas

Horseshoe Meadow: In March, a magistrate judge recommended that the court either dismiss ONDA's case or defer to BLM on every disputed issue in this case challenging BLM's proposal to graze an important wet meadow the agency itself determined had been damaged by decades of overgrazing. The parties filed objections to the recommendation and the court will make a final decision this summer.

Over the past two years, the Sutton Mountain campaign has evolved from a campaign of **why** to a campaign of **how**. With the help of a great group of local stakeholders, the path toward congressional support has been illuminated, and it is one that pairs conservation with local economic development.

Through an open, inclusive process, ONDA and everyone who dreams of seeing the Sutton Mountain Wilderness Proposal enacted by Congress has every reason to be hopeful that we will achieve permanent protection for this little known wonderland.

WILD LANDS

WILD

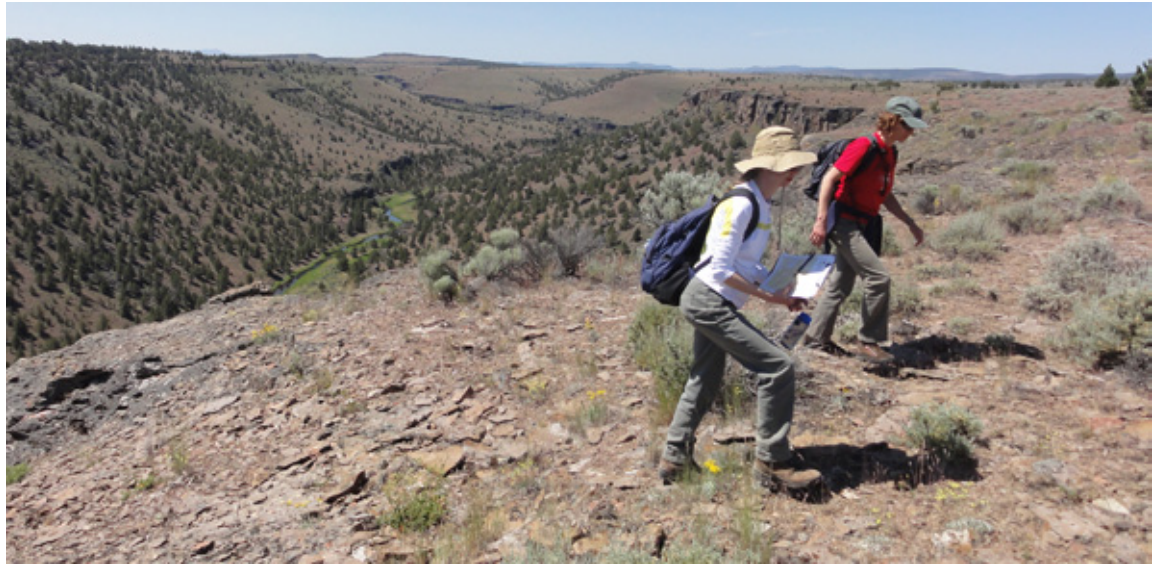
By Jefferson Jacobs
Stewardship Coordinator

Here at ONDA, we work tirelessly to gain Wilderness designation for public lands in eastern Oregon. But despite being the highest level of public lands protection, Wilderness designation is far from the end of the story. Maintaining Wilderness character requires constant vigilance and hard work by ONDA volunteers, members and others who love eastern Oregon's high desert. That is why we conduct Wilderness monitoring trips as part of our land stewardship program. And this year, we're taking on some exciting new monitoring efforts.

This work stems from several decades ago, when the federal government inventoried its public lands for Wilderness character. Lands fulfilling these criteria were then given temporary candidate designation of Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs). In many cases, ONDA has found places missed in this candidate process that we refer to as "citizen-proposed Wilderness." But the idea was to assess each study area and for Congress to either designate it or remove it from the list.

That, sadly, was decades ago. In the meantime life goes on out in the high desert, and these WSAs aren't just sitting there preserved, waiting patiently: weeds grow, motorized vehicles trespass, development of natural resources looms and public use varies. All of these actions can change a WSA for better or for worse. In many cases there are constant threats to the wild character of public lands, but also in some cases the Wilderness character of a landscape can improve with age. The latter usually happens when routes that were once considered roads, and therefore precluded designation, become overgrown or impassable.

The problem with these WSAs is 1) keeping track of changes and 2) managing for all of them. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) isn't funded or staffed adequately to do #1. In addition, the BLM wasn't really forced to consider Wilderness character in the management of public lands until 2010. The result was that WSAs were being degraded, possibly to a level where they may



Volunteers help monitor the South Fork Wilderness Study Area recently as part of a new effort for ONDA's stewardship program. Photo: Michael O'Casey

no longer be good Wilderness candidates, and there were other less carefully managed landscapes improving to a condition where they could be Wilderness candidates. And no one was really any the wiser. This all isn't just theoretical: Burnt Car Road, in which the BLM had a road bulldozed through a WSA and into Wilderness, is a powerful example. An ONDA member discovered the situation.

While it would be great if the BLM were able to increase funding and staffing to address these issues, we don't want to sit idly by while potential Wilderness is degraded or ignored. So ONDA has decided to pick up the slack and protect what we love. To this end we have carefully worked out an official memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the BLM's Prineville District that allows ONDA volunteers to

conduct the monitoring of WSAs. The signing of a MOU is remarkable, and hopefully it's indicative of a confluence of values and a realization that what we all want can't be accomplished alone. The Prineville District deserves much praise for the hard work staff put into developing the MOU and for daring to break ground in this way. Already in 2014, volunteers have scoured the Gerry Mountain, Cougar Wells, Hampton Buttes, Sand Hollow and South Fork WSAs. A trip is planned out to Sutton Mountain WSA later this fall. Other BLM districts will also have some of their WSAs monitored this year as part of a demonstration project that we hope will convince them to join in.

So what does this mean for volunteers? Lots of great exploring. This is one of those wonderful situations where important

work is also incredibly enjoyable. Volunteers are organized into teams to cover the WSA and report back on specific pieces of infrastructure (signs, roadblocks) that should be present and keep an eye out for issues that could be of concern (vehicle trespass, construction), all while documenting and enjoying the beauty and wildness of the area. So far the MOU relationship with BLM has been excellent. They have appreciated the work we have done, and we have appreciated their quick action on issues we have found.

We hope this model continues and expands to the remaining districts in Oregon (and the West!) and is carried through to allow systematic monitoring, protection and informed management of these areas after they are finally designated as Wilderness.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Lawrence Messerman joined ONDA in December 2011 and went on his first stewardship trips this year. Here he shares what he's learned.

What attracted you to ONDA?

A good friend first told me about ONDA's work. We got our first Wild Desert Calendar and the pictures were breathtaking. My wife, Jessica, and I moved up from California just over five years ago and we didn't know a lot about Oregon's high desert environment. Looking at the calendar, we just knew we had to do some exploring!

What's your favorite place in Oregon's high desert?

I have to confess that there is still so much I have not seen. My favorite place so far is the Oregon Badlands Wilderness because of proximity to our home in Bend. I've had the great pleasure of watching the sun rise over the open country of Hart Mountain and experienced the breathtaking views down the Owyhee canyon from Rinehart Ranch, but the Badlands is so accessible! We like nothing better than to take our camp chairs, find a particularly ancient-looking juniper, and just sit for a while. There is something so peaceful and nourishing about high desert landscapes.

"... what really moves me is the opportunity to get out on the land and really feel a connection to it. Words – even pictures – fail to do it justice!"

– LAWRENCE MESSERMAN



Photo: Heidi Hagemeier

What would you say to existing and future supporters about ONDA's community?

Only how grateful I am that the organization exists and how welcome I have been made to feel as I have gotten involved. ONDA's advocacy work, in combination with a solid foundation in environmental science and a keen understanding of the political and administrative nuances to Wilderness protection, is critical if we are to help preserve Oregon's fragile high desert ecosystems. The volunteer restoration work certainly benefits the land, and it's a brilliant way to get folks like me to witness the great beauty of these places. The calendar pictures are great, the advocacy work is essential, and yet what really moves me is the opportunity to get out on the land and really feel a connection to it. Words – even pictures – fail to do it justice!

What would you like to see ONDA accomplish in the year ahead? Five years from now?

I would really like to see Oregon begin to approach our neighbors in California – let alone Idaho and Washington – in terms of percentage of our lands that have a Wilderness designation. We at least need to double the current figure, and since it covers about half the state, the high desert country would be a great place to start!

Are you a proud, dynamic member like Lawrence? Support ONDA's mission and grow our community with a gift membership to a friend or loved one. ONDA.org/donate

ONDA is a member of EarthShare of Oregon, which brings support to environmental endeavors in local communities, across Oregon and around the world.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Lindsay Jones



In February, ONDA welcomed Lindsay Jones to the team as our development assistant. Lindsay realized a passion for Wilderness while earning her degree in environmental studies at University of California Santa

Barbara. Now, she's thrilled to be exploring the high desert and helping connect people to place. Contact her at lindsay@onda.org.

Allison Robbins Mace



Portland resident Allison Robbins Mace joined ONDA's board of directors in November. She has worked in energy efficiency program development for almost a decade, including with a nonprofit, a foundation and government agencies. She loves the diversity of Oregon's natural areas and can usually be found hiking, trail running or skiing whenever possible.



Fond Farewell, Chris Hansen

After five years at the helm of the Owyhee Canyons campaign, Chris Hansen bid a fond farewell to ONDA in June in search of new adventures. Chris, a native Idahoan, worked tirelessly on behalf of the Owyhee from Ontario, Bend and Portland over his tenure, introducing many to one of Oregon's least-known wonders. Many thanks to Chris for his passion and hard work toward conserving the largest unprotected stretch of the American West.

SAVE THE DATES

Mark your calendar now for these two great ONDA events:

NOVEMBER

14

Portland Year-end Party

DECEMBER

5

Bend Year-end Party



**OREGON
NATURAL
DESERT
ASSOCIATION**

Oregon Natural Desert Association
50 SW Bond Street, Suite #4
Bend, Oregon 97702

WILD UPDATES

ONDA DESERT OUTING: HART MOUNTAIN



Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge. Photo © Jim Davis

CLOSEST TOWN	Plush
DRIVE TIME	4–5 hours from Bend
WHEN	Spring through fall
FEATURED HIKE	Warner Peak
DISTANCE	Varies from 5 to 11 miles
DIFFICULTY	Difficult. Cross-country travel requiring navigation skills
LEARN MORE	Nick Dobric at nick@onda.org

Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge and the surrounding region are a mecca for wildlife, including pronghorn antelope, mule deer, bighorn sheep and Greater sage-grouse. Being up high offers great views and wildlife; however, if you are not up for the steep hike you can still enjoy exploring Petroglyph Lake, Rock Creek or numerous other places. To cap off any hike, relax in the hot springs at the main campground.

DIRECTIONS FROM PLUSH

- From the rustic hamlet of Plush, which offers a combination store/cafe/tavern/gas station, continue straight north through town .8 mile
- Turn right on road 3-12 (Hart Mt. Road) and continue for 24 miles (the last 10 on good yet steep gravel)
- Follow signs to the campground

WARNER PEAK HIKE

- Start from either the Hot Springs Campground or the shorter option, Barnhardi Meadow, when the 4x4 road is open (Aug. 1 – Dec. 1)
- Walk (or drive) up Barnhardi Road, veer left at first junction and drop into Barnhardi Meadow (if driving, park here)
- Hike west past the historic cabin and choose a slope to ascend to the ridge – this is the most challenging part of hike
- Once on top of the ridge, you will see the radio tower to the south. That is Warner Peak.

Central Oregon Gets Chance for Input

Central Oregonians interested in offering their take on the values and places most deserving of protection along Whychus Creek and the Middle Deschutes River will get an opportunity to comment during two meetings in September.

The Friends and Neighbors of the Deschutes Canyon Area, or FANs, will put on two public events with the intent of discussing and gathering input on the future of the area. Mark your calendars now, with more details to come.

- Thursday, Sept. 25 at 6 p.m. in Sisters
- Tuesday, Sept. 30 at 6 p.m. in Terrebonne

For more information, contact FANs at www.fansofdeschutes.org/contact-us.

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