

From the Badlands to the Owyhee, Sage Clegg hikes the entire **OREGON DESERT TRAIL**



*Sage Clegg at (location) on her six-week journey to hike the entire Oregon Desert Trail.
Photo: © photographer.*

By Heidi Hagemeier
Communications Coordinator

Oregon's high desert enchants first-time visitors. They marvel at the soaring vistas, cool rivers and earthy scents that promise discovery around every bend.

While ONDA's members and supporters have long known of the high desert's wonders, many even within Oregon aren't aware of this landscape. Now, three years of work at ONDA is culminating in a new way to introduce this special place to the world.

This past summer, 33-year-old Bend resident Sage Clegg, an experienced through-hiker and wildlife biologist, spent roughly six weeks becoming the first person to travel the entirety of an ONDA creation called the Oregon Desert Trail. The trail, estimated at between 750 and 850 miles, stretches across some of the state's most scenic and critical desert landscapes, including the Hart-Sheldon region, Steens Mountain and the Owyhee Canyonlands.

ONDA Executive Director Brent Fenty, who conceived the idea several years ago and has completed the Pacific Crest Trail himself, believes the Oregon Desert Trail presents an opportunity to grow outdoor recreation in eastern Oregon and thereby endear others to the landscapes ONDA is working to protect.

"Long-distance trails like the Pacific Crest Trail, and now the Oregon Desert Trail, capture the imagination," Brent said. "Even if someone never hikes the whole thing, there is a magic to knowing one could continue on and on for 800 miles."

To that end, ONDA followed Sage's journey with a blog. It garnered a devoted audience that read about the petroglyphs, hot springs, wildlife and views Sage encountered.

Ultimately, ONDA is working toward official recognition of the trail from land management agencies, which would result in its addition to maps and would draw in more outdoor enthusiasts. Jeremy Fox, ONDA's coordinator of the Oregon Desert Trail, or ODT, is finalizing the presentation for various agencies this summer. He is also working on maps and

Oregon Desert Trail,
Continued on Page 3



Sage Clegg recorded her experiences on the Oregon Desert Trail with a blog at ONDA's website. Find it at:

[onda.org/where-we-work/
oregon-desert-trail/blog](http://onda.org/where-we-work/oregon-desert-trail/blog)



Camp at (location). Photo: © photographer.

INSIDE DESERT RAMBLINGS:

Protect: ONDA volunteers undertake a wilderness inventory in the Lakeview District Page 4.
Defend: ONDA and Western Watersheds Project secure protections for grouse. Page 5.
Restore: Desert restoration projects benefit from cooperative efforts. Page 6.

Heeding the call of history

By Brent Fenty, Executive Director, and Helen Harbin, Board President



Brent Fenty

Several months ago in a speech before the National Press Club, President Clinton's Interior Secretary and former Governor of Arizona Bruce Babbitt issued a bold public challenge to his fellow Democrat in the White House: Permanently protect 4 million acres of public land, President Obama, to secure a true conservation legacy.

Why would Babbitt call upon the President publicly in this way? It's in the numbers. The current administration has so far opened up 7.5 acres of public land to industry for every acre it has set aside for conservation. The Obama presidency presently has protected less land than that of George W. Bush, and it's far below the work of Ronald Reagan or George H.W. Bush.

Granted, President Obama has faced obstacles. Twenty-five wilderness bills languished in the last congressional session, which ended in January, making the 112th Congress one of the first in decades not to protect a single acre of wilderness.

Meanwhile, lawmakers introduced myriad bills that would have stripped protection for or damaged protected lands.

History has shown that Babbitt is on the right track. We need more wilderness, both for posterity and – it's been proven – the economy. A 2012 study called "West Is Best: How Public Lands in the West Create a Competitive Economic Advantage" looked at four decades worth of data. It found that national parks and wilderness areas are drivers for job growth and higher per capita income. Rural counties with 100,000 acres of protected public lands had on average \$4,360 higher per capita income than similar counties with no protected public lands. These are the places, the study says, where lucrative tech and health sector jobs blossom and where people come to and stay for a highly prized quality of life.

Here in Oregon, there is ample opportunity for the Obama administration to foster such economic growth by protecting public land, particularly in the high desert. Roughly 8 million acres of wilderness-quality land exists in Oregon's desert. Today only about 200,000 acres are permanently protected, less than 1 percent of Oregon's high desert. The state as a whole also lags behind its neighbors in the amount of wilderness designated. Washington and California, for instance, have preserved 10 percent and 15 percent of their land respectively, while Oregon stands at a mere 4 percent.

Calling attention to desert land deserving protection is critical. The evolving story of the Oregon Desert Trail does just that. ONDA has linked existing routes together to create a proposed trail that winds its way for roughly 800 miles through the high desert's most spectacular – and ecologically significant – places. We hope that eventually the trail will not only share the quiet beauty of the high desert with recreationists, but also the economic bounty that land protection and outdoor recreation can bring to the eastern Oregon communities along its path.

The time to start on Babbitt's call to action is now. A bill that would protect as wilderness two areas along the John Day River, Cathedral Rock and Horse Heaven, is now in Congress. And in the southeast corner of the state lies the spectacular, 2.1-million-acre Owyhee Canyonlands, which in one fell swoop would nearly double the amount of land protected by the Obama administration.

A legacy is within reach. We hope that the next four years provide us with conservation successes that protect wild areas, grow the economy and leave our children and grandchildren with a sense of gratitude for the foresight of this generation.

Your Donation at Work in Oregon's High Desert

THANKS TO YOU...

15 work trips to restore waterways, count Greater sage-grouse and perform other critical tasks have taken place. Seven more are slated through October. Sign up at ONDA.org/volunteertrips.

Word about ONDA got out to hundreds of people at 16 different events across Oregon, including in Portland, Eugene and Fossil.

The Oregon Treasures Act, which would designate Cathedral Rock and Horse Heaven as wilderness, passed unanimously out of the U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee in June and as of late July awaited consideration by the full Senate. ONDA recently delivered more than 400 petition signatures to Sen. Ron Wyden in support of John Day wilderness proposals. Add your voice at: ONDA.org/takeaction.

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Oregon Desert Trail, Continued from Page 1

guide material that ONDA will make available to the public.

From Bend to Idaho

The trail began as a line on a map – a dream route through the best scenery of the high desert. Then over the last two summers, Jeremy led ONDA volunteer trips and made dozens of solo journeys to assess existing trails and water sources in the high desert.

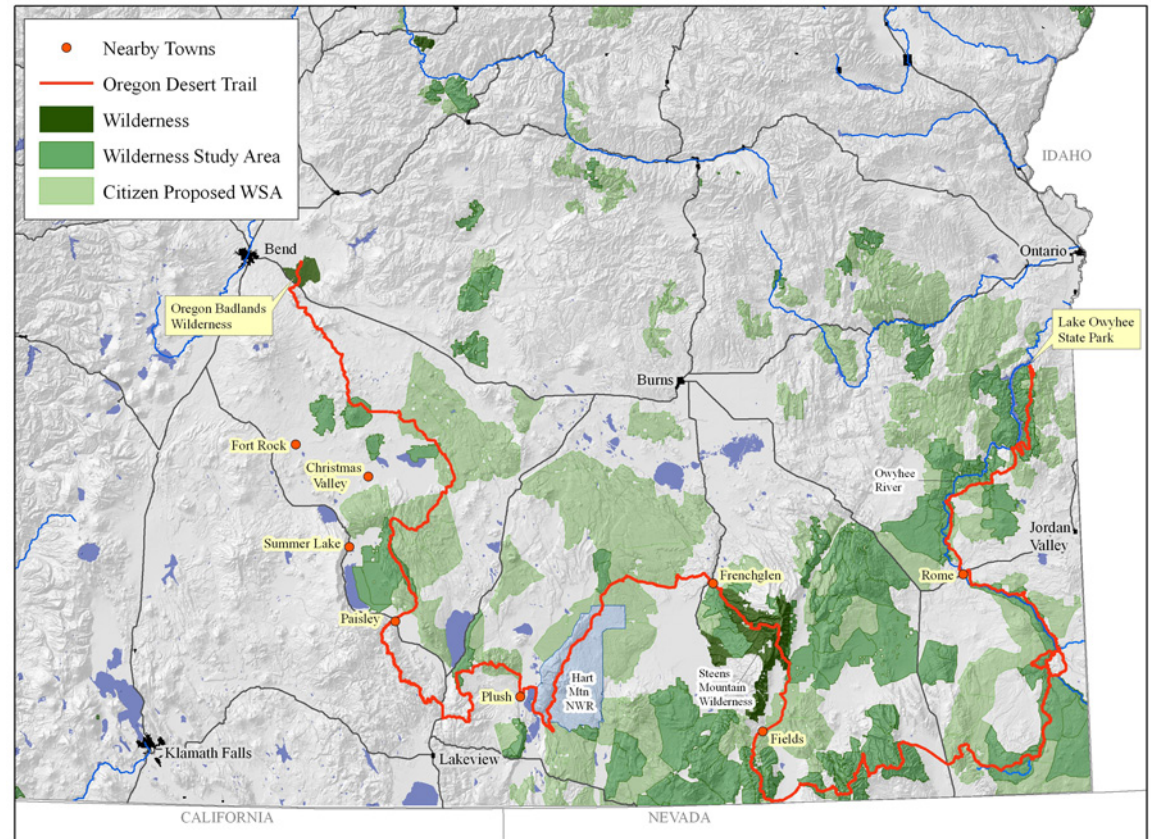
The resulting route stretches from the near-center of Oregon, at the Tumulus Trailhead in the Oregon Badlands Wilderness, to nearly the Idaho border at Lake Owyhee State Park. It meanders through vital wildlife habitat and wilderness-quality land.

No new trail was built in order to create the ODT. Instead, Fox and others linked together existing trails, roads, wagon routes and cross-country navigation to wind through Oregon's outback.

"Existing roads and trails already impact the landscape, so it was important to use those instead of creating new trails in order to minimize the overall footprint of the ODT," Jeremy said. "Many of the four-wheel-drive roads are little more than two rough single-track trails next to each other – perfect for hiking or biking. And the miles of cross-country travel were important to allow for a wild, undeveloped route in some sections, where a hiker can choose a unique path."

While ONDA has documented nearly every mile of the ODT, Sage's journey provided critical information for the effort. She checked out water sources, since this year is much drier than the previous two years. She has also tested out the ONDA-developed hiking maps and trail narrative.

"Having Sage be the first to through-hike the ODT was critical to ensure that the maps and guide we put together are accurate and make sense on the ground," Jeremy said. "While the two years of inventory captured



data on each of the trail's 26 sections, it was important to have someone look at the trail from the through-hiker's perspective. Sage's background in biological monitoring and experience with many long-distance trails made her the perfect candidate for the 'trail trial.'

A nonmotorized route

The ODT's variety of trail and topography means that at various points it creates hiking, biking and horseback riding recreation possibilities.

Sage tackled the ODT on both foot and bicycle. Bikes are only appropriate for some sections of the ODT due to the nature of the terrain or the land management regulations of a particular area.

ONDA recommends checking in advance either with us or the relevant public agencies before planning a trip. For instance, backcountry camping permits are required within the Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge.

Fostering nonmotorized recreation is positive for the high desert and its communities.

Such use influences land management planning and decisions. It brings economic benefit to towns along the trail, like Rome and Plush, as hikers and bikers make purchases.

And the ODT will provide entry points into the high desert, making it seem more accessible to old-timers and newcomers alike. People can hop on and off sections of trail in day trips.

The hope is those explorers will then understand and support ONDA's work to protect the high desert.

"Although Oregon has a proud tradition of protecting public land, it actually has fewer acres of designated wilderness than any of its neighbors," said Dan Morse, ONDA's conservation director. "Just a tiny fraction of those existing acres are in the high desert. We call it the wilderness deficit. We hope that by introducing people to the beauty of this region, they will understand why more of the high desert deserves permanent protection."

A lasting contribution

Soon, high desert lovers and

newbies alike will be able to launch their own adventure on the ODT.

"The report to the land agencies will basically say, 'Here is what we've been working on, here is where the trail goes, we've done our research and the trail is logical, scenic and tested,'" Jeremy said. "We hope that in the long run the ODT can be recognized as an official trail."

"The really great product to come out of the ODT project will be the map and guide resources that will enable people to have their own ODT experience, whether that be a through-hike like Sage's or a small day hike along the trail," he added.

Sage's story will also live on. In addition to the blog, ONDA followed Sage on film as she trekked the ODT. That video is now in post-production and will be used in presentations and film festivals to share ONDA's work.

By next summer, we hope that more people be able to experience and share their stories of the Oregon Desert Trail, bringing them together in support of the high desert.

A visit to Owyhee's Anderson Crossing will affirm your belief in wilderness

**By Chris Hansen,
Owyhee Coordinator**

Anderson Crossing is the one campsite in the Owyhee Canyonlands that I hope all ONDA members someday visit. A small gap in an otherwise unbroken canyon, Anderson Crossing can only be reached after spending hours sailing along in the sagebrush sea, far from pavement. When you unravel the bedroll and lie on your back at night, the Milky Way stretches over you like an incandescent blanket; frogs come out and accompany the trickling of the West Little Owyhee River; nighthawks sound boom notes while diving for food. A night spent at Anderson Crossing helps reaffirm our obligation to protect this landscape.

There are three wilderness study areas in the southern portion of the Owyhee Canyonlands, and you must pass through Anderson Crossing to reach each one. Upper West Little Owyhee, Lookout Butte and Owyhee River Canyon all contain vast expanses of open plateau, incised with drainages and deep canyons. Scientists and land managers



*The night sky at Anderson Crossing.
Photo © Jim Davis.*

recognize southern Owyhee country as one of the largest contiguous blocks of intact sagebrush steppe remaining west of the Continental Divide. That means when you take a look at one of those "United States at night" maps, the whole area is wonderfully dark. The BLM estimates that fewer than 100 people visit the area per year.

Thanks to ONDA's determination to remove cattle from the river, the willows have returned to Anderson Crossing, and a quick hike up or down canyon reveals the deep pools that form during the summer. Beaver are once again building dams, which in turn support the native redband trout that flit through the clearer, colder water. The rhyolite canyon walls provide nesting sites for golden eagles, prairie falcons, kestrels and red-tailed hawks. And the plateaus host pronghorn antelope on the order of hundreds. Native plant enthusiasts will appreciate the subtly different shades of buckwheat growing, oftentimes near edible plants like biscuitroot, camas, wild onion and bitterroot. And no amount of archeological work could inventory all the petroglyphs and lithic scatters throughout the dry washes.

Visit Anderson Crossing in late May-early June when the roads are dried up, or late September-early October before the winter precipitation comes.

For better protection, volunteers take inventory of wilderness quality lands in Lakeview District

**By Nick Dobric
Hart-Sheldon Coordinator**

This field season, ONDA volunteers and staff are once again on the ground braving wind, rain and temperature extremes, navigating some seriously rocky and degraded "roads," in order to inventory proposed wilderness areas on public land in the BLM Lakeview District.

We are inventorying places that ONDA identified back in 2004 as potential wilderness areas but that the agency is not managing for wilderness resources. A successful lawsuit by ONDA in 2008 challenged the agency's lack of consideration for addressing additional wilderness land in its planning process. As a result, the BLM must do a land use plan revision taking into account Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (LWCs). The decision is affecting BLM districts nationwide.

A good portion of the Lakeview District is within the Greater Hart-Sheldon Landscape, and ONDA is working for greater protection of its incredible resources. The area is one of the best large, intact sagebrush-steppe ecosystems left in the West. It hosts one of the highest densities of Greater sage-grouse in the U.S. and is critical habitat for pronghorn antelope and numerous other wildlife species.

The unique wildlife, cultural resources and wilderness characteristics of the region have been degraded by inconsistent land management and face potential for further problems if left unaddressed.

The inventory work from this summer will be used to contest the BLM's assertion that certain roads should be used as boundaries during wilderness evaluations, therefore dividing up ONDA's larger units into smaller ones. The "roads" do not meet that definition set by the agency and our documentation shows that. We know that the wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities are better off with larger landscapes of intact land – and that's what we hope to achieve.

Volunteering on a wilderness inventory trip is a great way to get out and experience eastern Oregon and contribute to future land protection. One such group of ONDA volunteers spent a weekend in mid-May documenting the conditions of the "roads" and land between the Hart Mountain and Sheldon refuges. ONDA Wilderness Stewardship Assistant Michael O'Casey remarked, "We encountered the full spectrum of spring weather in the desert and watched in awe as the clouds changed forms and flowed constantly across the landscape."



Caption © Photo credit.

To get there:

- Take a day to travel (300 miles and 7 hours from Bend)
- Head east on Highway 20 from Bend towards Burns
- At Burns, turn southeast towards Burns Junction on Highway 78
- Turn south along Highway 95 towards McDermitt and Winnemucca
- At milepost 40, take a left at the sign saying Antelope Flats
- Follow the road 34 miles over Jackson Summit to Anderson Crossing

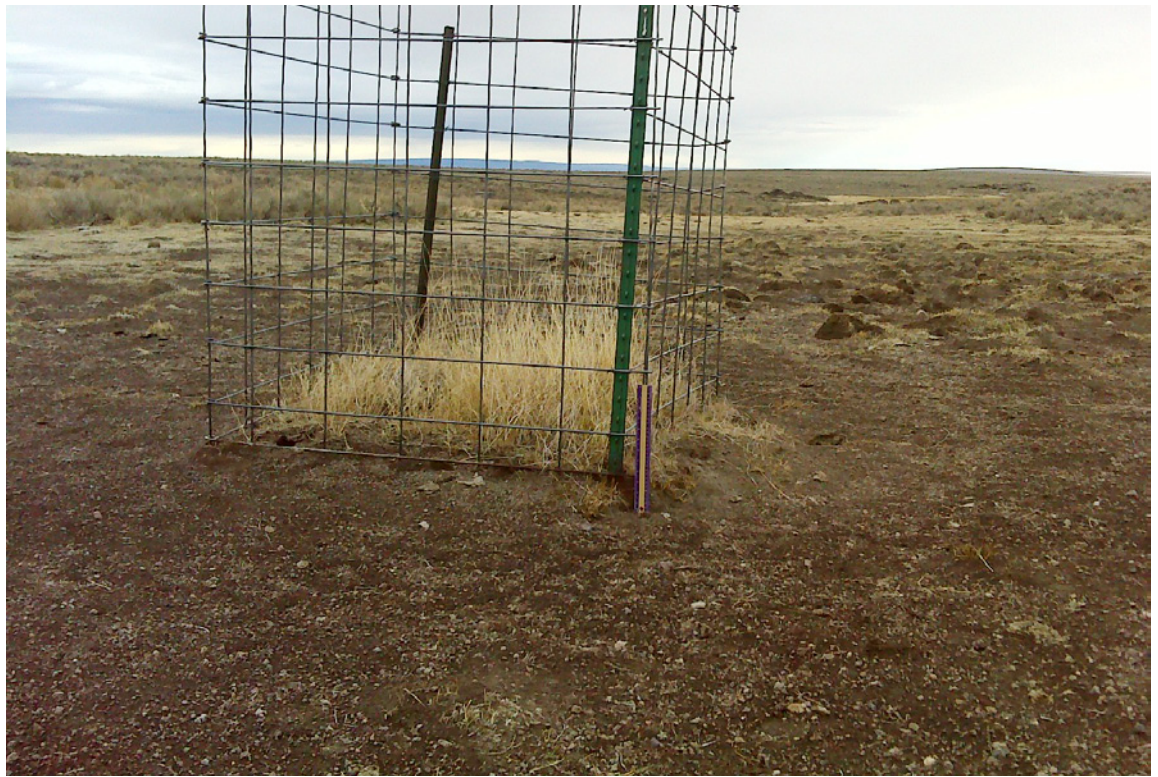
LEGAL DOCKET

ONDA v. Freeborn: After a decade of dogged legal action, including two trips to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and back, ONDA and partner Western Watersheds Project have secured important protections for the Greater sage-grouse following successful litigation over BLM's plans for Louse Canyon in the West Little Owyhee River uplands. This half-million-acre landscape is at the heart of one of two remaining habitat strongholds for the imperiled bird.

This case came to a successful close this earlier spring following several significant milestones along the way.

In 2008, in direct response to our lawsuit, BLM formally recognized 112,000 acres of citizen-inventoried wilderness areas. The agency noted that these areas contained "some of the largest contiguous blocks of intact sagebrush steppe remaining west of the Continental Divide."

In 2012, the district court agreed with ONDA that BLM's cattle grazing decisions were illegal because the agency had failed to study new information on sage grouse, including a scientific monograph that the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Department of the Interior's expert wildlife agency, relied upon to determine that the sage grouse is "warranted" for protection under the Endangered Species Act. The court ordered BLM to complete additional environmental review considering effects to sage-grouse and to issue a new plan. To protect essential sage grouse habitat



This "exclosure" cage shows the typically heavy cattle use surrounding one of Louse Canyon's limited spring and wet meadow areas. This November 2012 photograph illustrated how the natural vegetation would have provided much more food and cover for sage-grouse, were it not consumed by cattle. Photo by Katie Fite/Western Watersheds Project

from further damage, the court enjoined BLM from building 36.5 miles of barbed-wire fences, 12 miles of water pipelines, nine cattle troughs and several spring development projects until the agency completes its new study.

In 2013, the Ninth Circuit clarified that the new plan must be in place prior to Feb. 28, 2016, when the current grazing permits expire.

ONDA had filed this case in 2006, challenging BLM's grazing plan for Louse Canyon. The plan was BLM's belated effort to address cattle damage to springs and wet meadows throughout

the area. Rather than reduce the grazing, BLM proposed to erect a network of fences and pipelines – and even to mow sagebrush to create more grass for cattle to eat – in order to prop up otherwise unsustainable cattle grazing.

In 2011, the district court dismissed ONDA's case as moot following BLM's issuance of "new" decisions largely identical to the prior ones. The Ninth Circuit reversed the dismissal and directed the district court to consider the merits of ONDA's case and to issue appropriate relief.

On remand, the district court granted summary judgment to ONDA in February 2012. Lightning strikes in July and August 2012 ignited several wildfires, which quickly burned more than 1 million acres of sage-grouse habitat in and around Louse Canyon.

In September 2012, the district court issued its relief order, setting aside the grazing decisions, ordering BLM to prepare additional review and enjoining the

BLM from building any more range projects until the additional analysis and new decisions were issued.

ONDA appealed the relief ruling, concerned that the court's decision not to place a deadline on the new review would allow grazing – and therefore damage to seasonal sage-grouse habitats – to continue indefinitely. In March 2013, the Ninth Circuit clarified that the grazing can only continue pursuant to permits set to expire in February 2016. BLM thus has three years to complete its study. During that time, Interior will also be issuing a final decision on whether to protect the sage grouse as an endangered species.

Now, ONDA looks forward to tracking BLM's progress toward complying with the courts' orders. We will continue to monitor conditions and do everything we can to ensure BLM arrives at a scientifically defensible plan for managing the vastly important landscapes of Louse Canyon.

“ONDA had filed this case in 2006, challenging BLM's grazing plan for Louse Canyon. The plan was BLM's belated effort to address cattle damage to springs and wet meadows throughout the area. Rather than reduce the grazing, BLM proposed to erect a network of fences and pipelines – and even to mow sagebrush to create more grass for cattle to eat – in order to prop up otherwise unsustainable cattle grazing.

Partnerships in Restoration



At the Annual General Meeting, ONDA members ... Pine Creek Conservation Area

By Jefferson Jacobs Wilderness Stewardship Coordinator

ONDA volunteers are amazing. By the time you read this newsletter, they will have already accumulated an impressive list of accomplishments for the year (see inset box). The constantly growing Wilderness Stewardship Program has already drawn in 29 new members since spring, and we enjoyed seeing the new faces from last year return again this season.

And yet ask any ONDA volunteer, and they will say, "There is so much more to be done!" Over the past 25 years, ONDA has had great success in showing what volunteers are truly capable of. They have accomplished amazing things, such as removing more than 250 miles of fence from Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge. They are nearing completion of the same goal for Steens Mountain Wilderness and Pine Creek Conservation Area.

At the time ONDA volunteers

started working towards these goals they perhaps seemed like "pie in the sky" ambitions. Now that we are finishing them, we realize we can do even more. We are seeking new partnerships that we hope will provide more restoration opportunities than ever before. The result will be a large-scale transformation of eastern Oregon even more unbelievable than a fence-free Hart Mountain seemed a decade ago.

Land managers have taken notice of the consistently impressive work of ONDA volun-

teers, and budget shortfalls in many agencies have provided an opportunity to approach them about officially partnering on projects, including giving us a seat at the table in prioritizing restoration needs, planning large-scale efforts and then carrying them out.

This is a dramatic change from how restoration projects have been planned in the past. With the support of the Bureau of Land Management state director, ONDA is entering into a formal Cooperative Management

Agreement with the Prineville District. Under this agreement, we will help the district do the required annual monitoring of high desert wilderness study areas and wilderness areas. This is a critical first step, since this is the information used to identify restoration needs and help prioritize them. After a season of monitoring, we will be able to use the data to help plan work projects that repair and prevent ecological damage to these areas. It sounds simple, but it hasn't been done before and if ONDA didn't do it, it might be left undone.

The Pine Creek Conservation Area serves as a model of cooperation that we would like replicate in other areas. There, ONDA staff, volunteers and other partners (such as the Heart of Oregon Corps and Oregon Hunters Association) help prioritize and conduct restoration projects with the manager's approval. We have developed this relationship over

Partnerships,
Continued on Page 8

As of July 1, ONDA volunteers had achieved the following accomplishments this year:

- Reinventoried half a million acres of public land in support of wilderness proposals
- Planted 13,000 trees in critical high desert riparian areas
- Monitored 26 leks in support of proper management of Greater sage-grouse
- Removed and helped repair three and a half miles of fence at Malheur National Wildlife Refuge
- Mapped out the final 60 miles of the Oregon Desert Trail
- Written dozens of enthusiastic letters directly from the field to Congress in support of active wilderness proposals.



E2Solar caption

Member Spotlight

A local, family-owned business since 2005, E2Solar has deep roots in our Central Oregon community. As a dedicated ONDA Business Member, E2Solar supports and recognizes the vital connection between the health of Oregon's deserts and the health of Oregon's economy. Over the past four years, E2Solar has become a key partner in helping ONDA bring the Wild & Scenic Film Festival to Bend and continues to be a local leader in growing an industry that makes a healthy environment a priority.

What inspired you to become an ONDA supporter?

At E2Solar, our vision nurtures the wild and beautiful places that we love. It is a vision that offers smart and attractive options for mitigating damages posed by greenhouse gases and climate change. It is one that offers financially sound alternatives to increased energy costs.

The work ONDA does to protect, defend and restore Oregon's high desert is part of our vision to provide a solution for today, and a promise for a thriving tomorrow.

Why do you care about Oregon's wild deserts?

E2Solar's mission is to deliver quality and innovative renewable energy solutions while using business to support and enhance the communities in which we serve.

Many of the communities we serve are in the rural eastern and southern Oregon – many of the same places ONDA works to protect. Our deserts are an integral part of our state's landscape, offering a flora and fauna unique to our region.

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

ONDA is a great way to learn about our wild desert and participate in restoration by volunteering for a work trip.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Get wild October 3 – Mark your calendars for the 2013 Wild & Scenic Film Festival!

Join us Thursday, October 3 at The Old Stone in Bend for one of the nation's premiere environmental and adventure film festivals! Hosted by ONDA, this year's films combine stellar filmmaking, beautiful cinematography and first-rate storytelling on topics including nature, community activism, adventure, conservation, water, energy and climate change, and wildlife. These films hope to inform, inspire and ignite solutions that will ensure a positive future for the next generation. Tickets go on sale in September!

ONDA's community outings

We're in the midst of a summer and fall full of awesome events and outings! We'll be out and about in Oregon communities meeting new people, greeting old friends and sharing up-to-date information about ONDA and the important work we're doing to protect, defend and restore Oregon's wild desert. Check out the entire event calendar at www.onda.org/events. Other events might be added throughout the summer – please let us know if there is a local event we should be at! See a great volunteer opportunity you're interested in? Contact Ben at griffin@onda.org or 541-330-2638.



Nick Dobric



Heidi Hagemeyer

Nick Dobric, ONDA's new Hart-Sheldon coordinator, brings with him a passion for open and wild country. He came from Wyoming, where he was a wilderness hunting guide for elk, deer, antelope and bighorn sheep and also conducted raptor surveys for the Wyoming Game & Fish Department.

Nick received his Bachelor of Science degree from Northland College in northern Wisconsin. Shortly after he moved to Nevada, working on protection for Gold Butte and the Desert National Wildlife Refuge. Contact Nick at: nick@onda.org.

A native Montanan, ONDA Communications Coordinator **Heidi Hagemeyer** grew up with wild places embedded in her DNA. It was when she moved to Central Oregon in 2001 that she fell for the quiet beauty of the high desert.

Heidi joined ONDA after nearly two decades in journalism, most recently at The Bulletin in Bend. She also freelanced during two-and-half years in Switzerland, working for organizations like Fodor's and the International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation. Contact Heidi at: hhagemeyer@onda.org.

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

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Public Land Access: Cathedral Rock and Horse Heaven Wilderness



Alice Elshoff, left, and Jess Wenick, habitat ecologist for the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, build a new section of fence recently during a project to fix and replace fence along the refuge boundary. The new fence allows wildlife to pass through and is less susceptible to fire damage. It will prevent cows from trampling birds' nests in the refuge and causing habitat damage. The effort was a collaboration between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and ONDA.

Partnerships, Continued from Page 6

the past few years leading to great results as we test various restoration techniques. The latest involves planting bundles of willow twigs to create sediment-trapping, anti-erosion dikes on the badly incised Pine Creek. Successful implementation of this technique and others at the area provides us further opportunity to showcase what ONDA volunteers are truly capable of accomplishing.

Other steps toward expanding cooperation are more tentative, such as our first restoration project on the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in nearly two decades and our first-ever work projects in the Malheur National Forest.

As ONDA and high desert management agencies continue to get to "know each other," we hope to work toward the system we are starting with the Prineville District. The end result would be similar cooperative agreements with other high desert BLM districts, refuges and major private landowners. Just imagine what we will be able to accomplish.

ONDA presses efforts to oppose Steens project because developer has not quit despite obstacles

ONDA continues efforts to prevent the negative impacts of a proposed wind energy project on Steens Mountain. Earlier this year ONDA asked the Secretary of the Interior to withdraw approval for the project based on new developments that would make the ill-advised proposal unlikely or impossible. Unfortunately the Department of the Interior has not yet responded to ONDA's request. Still, the circumstances indicating that the project is on its last legs continue to become clearer. The project proponents have officially stated that the agreement to connect to the Bonneville Power Administration grid has been cancelled at their own request. This move suggests that even the developer doesn't think the project continues to be viable. In addition, ONDA has confirmed that the agreement to sell the power was recently cancelled by Southern California-Edison. With official confirmation of these changes, ONDA is even more convinced that the proposal is no longer viable.

Despite clear evidence that the Steens Wind proposal has come to an end, the developer continues to claim that the project will go forward and is forcing continued litigation and public expense. The company could simply withdraw its proposal and relinquish its permits but claims that it has been approached by alternate investors and can continue the project. Without any details about how the developer will actually proceed with the proposal, the company, along with the Bureau of Land Management, is proceeding to defend the project in court. ONDA will continue to urge a halt to this needlessly harmful proposal as we continue our legal efforts this summer and fall.