On February 9, 2001, The Board of Directors of Idaho Watersheds Project adopted a change in the name of our organization to Western Watersheds Project (WWP). The Board also adopted a slightly modified mission statement to reflect the change in geographic emphasis of WWP. The new mission statement is: “Working to protect and restore Western watersheds by educational outreach, public policy initiatives, litigation, and by ending incompatible uses of public lands.”

This change is a reflection of the public lands work WWP has taken on in states outside Idaho as well as a broader focus on public policy related to the use of public lands. As part of these efforts WWP is entering into long-term partnerships with the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance and Willow Creek Ecology in Utah; Sinapu in Colorado, and the Gallatin Wildlife Association in Montana to influence and perhaps litigate the management of public lands ranching in those states. WWP is assisting the Utah Environmental Congress in their Utah State School Trust Land lease acquisition initiative.

WWP is joining with several western regional groups including the Oregon Natural Desert Association headquartered in Bend, Oregon; Forest Guardians of Santa Fe, New Mexico; the Center for Biological Diversity headquartered in Tucson, Arizona; the Committee for Idaho’s High Desert of Boise, Idaho; the American Lands Alliance of Washington, D.C.; and Andy Kerr of Ashland, Oregon. With these groups WWP is joining in a National Public Land Grazing Campaign to support federal legislation to permit the voluntary retirement of grazing permits with federal funding.

WWP is also assisting another coordinated effort to establish a protocol for permanently retiring federal grazing permits with private or public financing. Recently WWP has been contacted by several federal grazing permittees who are willing to give up their grazing permits in return for a transition payment, and we will be pursuing the successful retirement of those permits this year.

These initiatives along with our management of Greenfire Ranch, on the East Fork of the Salmon River, our ongoing litigation actions in three states carried out by Laird Lucas and the Land and Water Fund of the Rockies under the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, the Federal Land Policy Management Act and the Idaho Constitution as well as WWP’s assumption of the RangeNet website as a special project of WWP are a full plate of actions all of which are geared toward ending public lands ranching and recovering the health of all Western watersheds. Thanks to all our members and allies for supporting this remarkable work.
The favorite accusation of a district ranger I seem to particularly annoy is that I somehow have “a hidden agenda”. So in a departure from the technical I proffer to you this conservationist’s confession:

My passion for the living world blossomed long ago — as a child growing up in the austere beauty of the Mojave Desert and at the feet of my beloved Sierra Nevada Mountains. How I loved the ever-changing sunsets, the violent thunderstorms of summer, the silver storm clouds of winter. I loved the birds that waxed and waned with the seasons, scurrying residents seen by moonlight, lizards dashing about under summer sun. I gathered rocks, a dried bird cage bush, fossils, a coyote’s skull and packrat’s teeth on desert forays. Shoving most of my child’s things into shopping bags in a closet, I kept my treasures displayed on my bookshelves and windowsills. I taped signs to my door announcing “Natural History Museum” and charged 5 cents admission.

As a teen I roamed for miles over the desert below the canyons and foothills of the Sierras on horseback. I knew where badgers lived and ravens nested. I followed the s-curves of sidewinder’s tracks, discovered the dens of Desert Tortoises. While other students were cruising Main Street, I recorded thousands of pages of observations of resident and migratory birds and mammals — simply for the joy of learning more about the captivating world of wildlife. And yet, this isn’t to say that the mainstream of life went one way and I another — oblivious.

I went to college and studied biology, range science, and education. I married and had children. I divorced a violent man and traded my Sierra granitics for southeastern Idaho’s volcanics. I went back to school to fulfill a second childhood dream and became a nurse — only to lose the dream to Multiple Sclerosis. But the carefully woven strands of the land and plants and animals I love so dearly have always held together whenever everything else came apart. Turning my passion for the outdoor world into a “career,” I have been able to provide services to the BLM and Forest Service. I became a volunteer rehabilitator for Idaho’s Department of Fish and Game — an opportunity to utilize extensive medical training for the benefit of injured wildlife. In short — I have always been a conservationist. . . I am still a conservationist. . . and I will always be a conservationist. I don’t think that a love and passion for our living world constitutes a hidden agenda. I have come to realize that what my ranger critic (or other environmentally underprivileged folks) really means is simply that they don’t agree with a conservationist/preservationist point of view and they are uncomfortable in the presence of another’s commitment.

It was this passion for wildlife and the search for assistance with a number of forest conservation issues that resulted in my acquaintance with Idaho Watersheds Project Executive Director Jon Marvel and other delightful; hard-working members of Idaho Watersheds Project. And what wonderful opportunities that chance meeting has brought. Thank you, Jon, and a thank you to everyone at IWP, for allowing me to become a part of Idaho Watersheds Project and to assist with the mission, a chance to expand and continue a lifelong passion. My New Year’s Resolution: I promise to work even harder to bring the plight of our native plants and animals to the awareness of the American public and to do my part to protect and preserve the watershed, fisheries, and wildlife values of Idaho and our neighboring west!

**Bromus tectorum**

(An Ode to Cheat Grass) By Miriam L. Austin

Spread like tawny blankets across the valley floor . . .

Spilling over skylines . . . on beyond and more.

Spawned by drought . . . disturbance . . . hungry hoofs or fire.

Brought through ignorance . . . illogic . . . mastery. . . desire.

By accident. . . design . . . to manage or to tame.

For the loss of all that’s native — such causes bear the shame.

A word from the poet: I penned this after a late afternoon trip to Boise near the end of last summer — saddened by the price we’ve paid for decades of greed and biologically unfounded livestock “management” activities.
We extend special gratitude to the following members who made significant contributions this season:

Anonymous (2)  Pete and Melissa deLisser
Katelyn Ferguson  Ginger Harmon
Elizabeth & Harry Poll  Kathy Troutner
Paul & Linda Schutt  Ralph & Shirley Shapiro
Kelley Weston  Susan Wensell
Johanna & Michael Wald  Bob & Sharon Phillips
Jane Watkins  FL Key Foundation
Len & Carol Harlig  Bob Bartlett
Roger & Marilyn Browning  Doug & Ann Christensen
Ted Chu  John Carter
Herb Beattie  Mary Sargent (for)
Sheldon Bluestein & Mary Hamerly  Matt Wells and Tina Cole
Roger Crist  Doug Nilson
Richard & Dawn Christensen  Michael T. Rasch
Richard Kolbrener  Joe & Trina McNeal
Rich Howard  Walt Minnick
James Johnston  Ray & Carol Nelson
Mike Quigley & Bonnie Olin  Arthur Benson II
Doug Nilson  Jan Edelstein
Marty Lukes  Don and Dolores Chapman
Mary Sargent (for) Matt Wells and Tina Cole  Walt Minnick
Mark Snow  Ray & Carol Nelson
John Suria  Walt Minnick
Arthur Benson II  Royce & Elaine Ward
Ken & Annie Jackson  Connelly Family
Mike & Irene Healy  Rabin & Missie Dargatz
John & Jocelyn Wasson  John Carter
Don & Paige Francis  David Harrison
Debra Ellers & Dale Grooms  Bob and Barbara Dargatz

Our Vanishing Wildlife
By Miriam Austin

What will the world do some day
When all the wild animals
are gone away.
Will anyone wonder why they aren’t there?
Or will anyone even care?
How will other generations
know the thrill
of listening to a wolf’s howl or a mocking bird’s trill,
or listen to a coyote’s yelp.
We can preserve our wildlife
If everyone would
do their best to HELP!

News Briefs

Babbitt Finally Gets It Right

Parting Words from outgoing Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, reported in the Wyoming Star-Tribune: Speaking at Yellowstone National Park. Babbitt stated that the American public won’t stand for ranchers forcing wolves and bison from public lands where they graze their cattle. And if the beef industry forces a confrontation, it will lose.

“Livestock will not have priority,” Babbitt told a crowd of about 75 people at the Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel.

“The grazing of livestock will and must be subordinated to the natural values, including the bison and the predators, who will and must have first place in the ecosystem.”

IWP and CIHD File First ESA Lawsuits Against Ranchers Over Water Diversions in Upper Salmon River Watershed

On December 20, 2000 Idaho Watersheds Project and the Committee for Idaho’s High Desert filed three lawsuits with the federal district court in Boise challenging water diversions in salmon, steelhead, and bull trout habitat near Challis, Idaho. The cases charge violations of The Endangered Species Act and seek a halt to irrigation practices which trap fish in ditches, block migration, and de-water sections of streams.

The groups sent out over 50 notices of intent to sue to irrigators, the Forest Service, BLM, and Idaho Department of Lands in October. The groups are represented by Laird Lucas and the Land and Water Fund of the Rockies.

Salmon, steelhead, and bull trout in Idaho are protected under the Endangered Species Act. The Act prohibits “take” of protected species, which includes killing or harming them by modifying habitat.

In many Idaho streams, irrigation diversions are not screened, and fish become trapped in ditches and ultimately die. Some diversions dry up streams entirely, or pose impassable barriers to fish migration.

“These are just the first three of many cases that we expect to file challenging these antiquated diversion methods,” said Jon Marvel of Idaho Watersheds Project. “If ranchers and farmers are not willing to begin protecting endangered fish from the impacts of their water diversions, they can expect to face similar ESA enforcement cases from us.”

The cases target diversions on Mahogany Creek (in the Pahsimeroi River basin), Lake Creek (in the East Fork Salmon River drainage), and Otter Creek (tributary to Panther Creek and the Main Salmon River). In each case, individuals and corporations are named as defendants. One case also targets the Forest Service for failing to protect bull trout in Otter Creek.

“These three cases each involve very clear violations of the Endangered Species Act,” said attorney Laird Lucas, “as well as ‘problem ranchers’ who do not want to admit they are part of the problem. Our hope is that other ranchers will see that it’s in their best interest to work with us, not against us, and do what’s right for the fish.”

As part of a continuing legal campaign to end dewatering of critical habitat for listed fish species Idaho Watersheds Project and the Committee for Idaho’s High Desert filed a motion for a preliminary injunction today which, if granted, could have far-reaching impacts in determining whether the Endangered Species Act can trump state water law.

please turn to Page 9
Major Losses

Longtime IWP member Paul Fritz, 71, of Boise, died Sunday, December 24 in Missoula of cancer. After a distinguished career in the National Park Service, Paul’s second career began, as an environmental activist. He was instrumental in many groups, including the Hells Canyon Preservation Council, the Alliance for the Wild Rockies, Greater Yellowstone Coalition, Committee for Idaho’s High Desert and the Craters of the Moon Development Corp. He attended numerous environmental conferences every year. Paul also had a big hand in getting Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument protected by sponsor Sen. James McClure. In 1997 Paul bought a second home in St. George, Utah, where he began spending the winters.

Whether working for the National Park Service or volunteering with conservation groups, Paul’s entire life was devoted to protecting the national treasures in the West. He will be missed by his many friends and everyone he worked with on environmental issues.

Paul Fritz Memorial Potluck

Under the leadership of Ed Robertson of Boise, a memorial potluck and remembrance of Paul Fritz will be held on Saturday, May 12, 2001. The memorial will be at Craters of the Moon National Monument. Readers interested in attending should plan on meeting at the Monument Visitors Center south of U.S. Highway 20, at noon. The Monument is located about 20 miles west of Arco, Idaho.

Ed Robertson is planning to charter a bus for the occasion which will leave Boise earlier that day. Readers interested in signing on for the bus transport to Craters from Boise should contact Ed at: iwm3@home.com.

The memorial is a celebration of Paul’s active and remarkably varied life and his support and encouragement of dozens of groups working for positive change in the management of all public lands but especially those administered by the National Park Service. Everyone is invited to bring Paul stories and some healthy libations to help warm the day and our memories.

David Eugene Chism, 49, of Ketchum, Idaho and Taos, New Mexico, who piloted WWP’s Public Land Air Force in the summer of 2000 died November 30, 2000, in a plane crash in the mountains near Taos. David was born December 6, 1950, in Casper, Wyoming.

David loved the outdoors and his passions were flying and skiing. He was also a fine, precision craftsman.

Most recently he ran a construction crew in Ketchum and volunteered his time and plane for conservation groups including the Boulder-White Clouds Council and Idaho Watersheds Project.

David moved to Taos in early November for a construction project and was planning to return to Stanley, Idaho in late spring to spend the summer flying for WWP in Idaho’s backcountry.

He will be greatly missed by a wide circle of friends in New Mexico, Idaho and Alaska. His energy, wonderful smile, spirit of adventure and love of life made him a magnificent friend. His friends and especially the conservation community of central Idaho grieve his loss.

Some “new verses” for an old song, Woody Guthrie’s “This Land’s My Land,”

by writer Stephen Lyons of Pullman, Washington:

CHORUS
This land was our land, now this land is their land, from Bonners Ferry to the Treasure Valley.

As I was walking in old growth cedars, I saw before me another clear-cut. And all around me were slides and washouts, This land’s become a tragedy.

Chain saws are singing, the trees are falling, Loaded on boats for the coast of China. Mills are closing, but malls are booming. Thank god for the world economy.

Over in Salmon they don’t want grizzlies, Or wolves and owls or Earth First! hippies.

Just guns and ammo and federal handouts, This land is full of hypocrisy, Mountains and rivers are her saving graces, For the right price, you can buy them. But we have Wal-Mart, Starbucks and Costco, Who needs sustainability?

Welfare is working, the poor are leaving. And if they don’t we will arrest them. We built more prisons to house them. That’s the way we’ve solved poverty.

I had a dream that I was living In a land of tolerance and forward thinking. Then I awoke to Larry speaking; This state scares the hell out of me.

CHORUS
Co-Opted by Cowboys

by Bob Phillips

Cooperation is normally a good thing, but not always. Not when you become a partner in practices harmful to the environment. That is what has happened to Trout Unlimited, The Izaak Walton League of America, and the Wildlife Management Institute, organizations one usually thinks of as environmental or conservation groups. Those named have joined with the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association, the Public Lands Council, and the American Farm Bureau Federation in a coalition called “Summit II.” Among Summit II’s guiding principles is: “Properly managed livestock grazing is a legitimate use of public lands.” Presumably, this will enable ranchers to thrive economically, thereby maintaining open space by discouraging conversion of private lands to ranchettes and condominiums.

First, one has to define “suitable” lands for grazing. To ranchers, every bit of forage — grass, forb and shrub — is suitable if it is accessible to livestock. Debra Donahue maintains in her 1999 book “The Western Range Revisited” (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman) that lands averaging less than 12 inches of precipitation annually are unsuitable because of the impact on biodiversity. When one factors in administrative and economic considerations, they are clearly unsuitable. Here’s why. Arid lands have low capability of growing vegetation. And because of annual variation in precipitation, forage production varies by a factor of 10, as determined by studies at the Northern Great Basin Research Station some 30 miles west of Burns, Oregon.

Grazing levels are usually set for average forage production. What happens in a drought when forage is only 15% of average? Currently, what usually happens is the BLM and Forest Service land managers violate management plans and allow ranchers to abuse the land by excessive grazing. When a conscientious agency person tries to adhere to the plan, he soon hears from Washington DC to “get along” with the ranchers.

Arid lands comprise much of the Intermountain West. Cow-calf operations predominate where calves born in winter and spring are sold in the fall. Proper grazing is impossible because herd numbers have to be set in the summer BEFORE the next spring-summer grazing season begins. And forage production depends on precipitation during fall and winter months BEFORE grazing begins. Even if herds are sized for minimum forage levels, cattle congregate along streams during the hot summer months (July-September) thereby overgrazing streambanks. Heavy additional taxpayer expenditures would be needed to protect them. There is insufficient forage on the home range, especially in a drought, and there are no reserve lands for pasture. Of course the coalition could ask taxpayers to buy hay, but why should taxpayers increase their subsidy of welfare ranching?

A basic question: Are ranchers really preserving open space, or waiting for the right price before selling? What about developments like Black Butte Ranch west of Sisters, Oregon? These lands were once grazing lands, and now there is a golf course surrounded by condos. Was the owner trying to preserve open space but was forced to sell against his wishes? Or was the price right?

Environmental and conservation groups that are serious about protecting arid public lands should avoid entanglements like Summit II. This kind of cooperation means that you have legitimized livestock grazing on lands that are unsuitable for such use. You’ve been diverted from your original objective and become a partner with ranchers in grazing public lands. When you join this kind of coalition, you’ve been had, mister. You’ve been co-opted.

IWP/WWP member Bob Phillips is a retired Forest Service fisheries biologist who has been trying to get the cows out of the creek for more than 30 years. He applauds and supports IWP’s success in this endeavor.

Conservation is Conservative

by Becca Wiegand

During the course of the winter I’ve spent a lot of time at home. And I’ve been doing a lot of thinking. I’ve noticed a strange turn in the political climate that is quite perplexing. And I’ve come to the conclusion that we democrats got a bum rap.

I’m getting ahead of myself. It all started on a trip to Thunder Mountain last summer. Before I worked for Idaho Watersheds Project I was monitoring wolf packs in Central Idaho. And gardening to pay the bills. The packs I was investigating for the summer were the Landmark, Bear Valley Trio, Jureano Mountain (who barely existed), Moyer Basin, and Thunder Mountain packs. Not just the packs themselves, but also the social factor. Humans living in areas where a wolf family sets up a home. While planning my trip to the Thunder Mountain area, the goals I had set for myself were mostly biological... Where did the pack call home? What was the topography? Flora? Fauna? Had there been depredation problems?

After I left the Cascade Ranger Station, I excitedly drove into the mountains. Past Warm Lake, where, in 1935, Molly Kessler lit a fire in the middle of the lake in order to help guide a lost airplane into Cascade. Through Landmark, an old CCC Camp, Forest Ranger Station, and now a Work Camp. Down Johnson Creek running clean, cold, and clear. Up Old Thunder Mountain Road. Then an encounter with big rocks blocking the way, forcing a U-turn. Down Old Thunder Mountain Road. Further up Johnson Creek. Why is it that some of the most beautiful places are cursed with landing strips? Up the East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon through a tight, rugged, and rocky canyon. Past Stibnite, where nature is reclaiming what man hasn’t even cleaned up. And on, to Thunder Mountain, beautiful, perfect, cow-free, a worthy part of the Wolf Holyland. A wolf sanctuary, as they say. My trip was a success. But then, as I drove out, mulling all I had learned, the final lesson arrived. Around the corner, a couple of men with
What Have We Lost: Memories of an Idaho Childhood

Photos by Veldon Lauder

Member Veldon Lauder is a former resident and often visitor to Idaho. He is now retired and spends his summers in Yellowstone, Wyoming photographing wildlife and his winters in Palm Springs, California, golfing. Veldon remembers his youthful visits to the St. Anthony sand dunes and occasional dips in Camas Creek, where he originally learned to swim, as it meanders along the red road between Parker and Kilgore, Idaho. His friend's father was a big sheep rancher in the area. He recalls Camas Creek at that time to be much narrower, deeper and cattle free — young children could actually swim in the creek!!

Veldon's recent photos shown here show the disgraceful condition of Camas Creek in Clark County, Idaho in the summer of 2000.
I was hired as a summer intern to help with the monitoring of riparian areas by Idaho Watersheds Project. I was in charge of three allotments within the Challis National Forest. Pictures and notes were taken while I was in the field. Both close-up and overview pictures were taken of the degraded areas. It quickly became apparent that all of the degradation could not be photographed. There is just too much. Contrary to popular agency thought there are not just “hot spots,” instead the whole range is being pillaged by livestock. The only parts of the stream that were not degraded were the inaccessible parts of the streams. If the access to the stream was too hard then the stream wasn’t degraded. In all other cases the stream showed serious signs of overgrazing.

**Why protect the riparian zones?** The riparian zones in the west are extremely important to the quality of life for most of the species in the area. It is estimated that around 90% of the species in the arid west are totally dependent on riparian habitats. The aquatic life in the streams have an especially hard time surviving when cows are overgrazing. The cows tend to congregate around riparian zones and feed until the grass and shrubs are too short to eat. This makes erosion greater. The juvenile overstory gets eaten and the shade cover of the stream decreases. The banks slough off and also get sheared off by the cows. This makes the stream wider, shallower and hotter.

The banks become laid back and the geomorphology of the stream changes. The stream becomes less sinuous, which means that it becomes steeper and faster. (The water doesn’t stay in the uplands as long.) In turn the stream loses its ability to retain its water table throughout the hot dry summer months.

The stream also has more of a tendency to down-cut in the channel due to the increased erosional forces. This means that the stream isn’t capable of reaching its natural floodplain in many places. When the stream is reaching its floodplain the riparian area gets much needed sediment, nutrients and water. But when the stream is down-cut, none of these benefits can occur. Many of the streams that I looked at were down-cut to the point where they had no chance of reaching the floodplain.

In the spring the stream’s fast, steep and denuded features lead to runoff speeding over the compacted and bare riparian land, if it can reach the floodplain, which adds to the erosional effects of the stream. The stream bottom gets scrubbed free of fish habitat, the stream’s banks get washed away, and the ever important water isn’t around long enough to fill the water table.

What are people doing to curb this downward trend in the Challis National Forest’s riparian areas? There are two groups that have the power to help right now — the ranchers and the agency people (BLM and Forest Service). The short answer to the proposed question is easy. The people who can change things are doing very little.

The ranchers can’t afford to curb their public grazing numbers for one year, let alone the fifteen or infinite number that it might take to rejuvenate the area. The allotments that I looked at couldn’t possibly sustain the number of cows that are presently allowed. There isn’t enough grass, or acreage, to sustain them. The grazing has gone way past sustainable grazing. There is little effort to keep the cows where they should be. There are fences, but the fences do little to keep the cows where they are supposed to be. There were numerous instances where I found cows where they weren’t supposed to be this summer. The fences are just expensive eyesores (taxpayer subsidy) that don’t really work when they aren’t being constantly maintained.

The other way to keep the cows where they should be is to hire a rider. There are two riders that are designated for the Wildhorse Allotment. These two riders are supposed to be able to keep the 1,780 cows with calves where they are supposed to be. It just isn’t possible. Riders are also directly subsidized by the taxpayer. The ranchers don’t pay the whole salary of the rider, so the taxpayer gets stuck with yet another direct subsidy to the livestock industry. The agencies help out the ranchers in more ways than just monetary ones.

The agencies are the other group of people who could give immediate beneficial effects to the public lands. But, there are a lot of problems with the ways that the agencies are managing their resources.

**First**, the allotments contain different types of land. There are BLM, National Forest, and State land on all of the allotments that I monitored. That is not the problem; the problem is that the agencies in this area do not have a common ground for regulations. Example: the BLM has different stubble height regulations (6 inches) for key areas than the Forest Service does (4 inches). Yet, there are very few fences that separate the National Forest from the BLM land. This creates a problem because there is no way to regulate cows differently on one side of an imaginary line than on the other side of the line.

**Second**, the agencies that I dealt with didn’t have the staff or support to monitor their rangeland. The Lost River Ranger District (Forest Service), until this year, had only one Range Conservationist. Now they have two. Two is better than one, but it still isn’t even close to enough. When I met with the range conservationists they had a lot of excuses about the...
quality of the degraded riparian area including their lack of staff. Since there is lack of staff within the agencies, some of the important work, like monitoring, gets overlooked.

Obviously, the shortage of people in the field leads to a greater chance of overgrazing. But the range conservationists are so busy that they don’t have time to set up key areas where the riders can measure stubble height and decide when to move the cows. This means that the cows get moved whenever the rider sees fit to do so. There is no objectivity in the matter. What some ranchers see as “sustainable use” others might see as overgrazing. This is just another testament to what the agencies are doing, or not doing.

The lack of staff is starting to mean that the ranchers have more obligations when it comes to measuring stubble height too. There were many monitoring workshops given this year around the state. The monitoring workshop taught the permittees, and anyone else who wanted to learn, how to measure stubble height. There are a plethora of problems with this approach.

The monitoring is only on the greenline, and only on hydric species. That means that sedges and rushes count, but Kentucky bluegrass doesn’t get measured. This is a problem because most of the greenlines that I saw in this area were Kentucky bluegrass. The less palatable sedges and rushes don’t get eaten with such vigor. The four inch stubble height regulation is in place in order for the banks to trap sediment and hold the banks in place during spring runoff. If the Kentucky bluegrass doesn’t count when the stubble height is being measured then the majority of the streambank isn’t being measured for stubble height.

Another problem with this approach to greenline monitoring is the way that the measuring takes place. During the monitoring meeting in Fairfield, Idaho this summer the instructor told the permittees that if there wasn’t a key species at the front of the foot when a measurement was supposed to be taken then nothing should be written down; another stride (two steps) should be taken and measured there instead. With this measurement technique it could be possible to have a bank with one small clump of tall grass, say six inch rushes, and a dirt bank everywhere else and it would still be considered six inch stubble height. There must be a better way to portray what the stream banks actually look and function like on paper.

The third problem with the agencies is that the agencies would rather be friends with the ranchers than have to tell them what to do. I had a case where I pointed out a violation of the permittees’ agreement. (The salt lick was placed too close to the stream, which leads to cattle congregation in the critical riparian area.) There should have been a written warning sent out to the permittees by the range conservationist. Instead he said that he would talk to the rancher. From what I understand this is common practice for the agency people. This way the range con doesn’t have to document in writing what the ranchers are doing wrong.

Later in the summer I found a fence down, which is another violation of the permittees’ agreement. In this case a “show-cause” letter should have been sent out. To the best of my knowledge nothing has been sent out. I wrote a FOIA (Freedom of Information request) letter to the Lost River Range District requesting a copy of the written letters that should have been sent out and I received nothing back.

My conclusion is that the agencies are unfit to carry out their obligations. The mixture of lack of staff, regulations and dedication leads to a serious problem on our public lands. Our lands are being ruined by the overgrazing that is taking place. The critical riparian areas are taking the brunt of the assault. The agency people are not protecting the wildlife, resources and riparian areas; they are protecting politics, people and the “western way of life.” The agencies are trying to keep these marginal ranching operations afloat in order to satisfy their superiors. At the same time the public lands and their natural inhabitants are not to matter, and they definitely don’t seem as important as the cows. The public land doesn’t vote, and therefore must not matter. However, people are becoming wise to the fact that overgrazing is pillaging our lands.

There is no way that a person can hike in the same places that I did this summer without seeing how terrible our lands are becoming. There are numerous examples of how our lands are being destroyed by the current grazing practices. It is easy to see that the land is being ruined in these areas because there are too many cows on the land for too long. It shouldn’t be that hard to fix. Solution: Significantly reduce the number of cows and the time that they spend on the range. It’s not that hard; it can happen overnight.

Patrick Casey of Ketchum, Idaho is one of the top nordic sprint ski racers in the country and is currently training in Utah for the 2002 Winter Olympics.
Conservationists Seek to Halt Irrigation Diversion to Protect Bull Trout

On February 16, 2001 Idaho Watersheds Project and the Committee for Idaho’s High Desert filed for a preliminary injunction in federal court to bar irrigation diversions on Mahogany Creek in the Pahsimeroi Valley under the Endangered Species Act.

The motion names Judd Whitworth, a rancher in the Pahsimeroi area, as responsible for killing bull trout, a fish species which is protected under the Endangered Species Act. The conservationists state that Whitworth operates a diversion on Mahogany Creek that kills fish both by dewatering the stream and by having no fish screen on the diversion. The court filings include photographs showing water running into a road from a ditch operated by Whitworth, while the streambed is completely dry.

"Bull trout and other fish are killed every year across central Idaho by irrigation diversions that are not screened and that dry up streams and rivers. That violates the Endangered Species Act, and cannot continue if we are going to save these fish," said Pam Marcum, chairperson of Committee for Idaho’s High Desert.

"Judd Whitworth and his partners have been killing bull trout for years by taking all the water out of Mahogany Creek," said Jon Marvel, executive director of Idaho Watersheds Project. "Wasting water and not screening diversions violates Idaho laws; and killing bull trout in the process violates the ESA. Our lawsuit intends to hold these private parties responsible for their flagrant disregard of federal and state law."

The motion is the first in a series of lawsuits brought by the conservation groups under the Endangered Species Act to improve stream flows and fish populations in the Upper Salmon basin. The injunction motion will be heard in Boise on May 3 by U.S. District Judge B. Lynn Winmill.

The groups are represented by attorney Laird Lucas and the Land and Water Fund of the Rockies.

Bull Trout By Chase Dougherty Age 8

continued from Page 5 Conservation

a teenage son were unloading horses. They flagged me down and asked if I could give one of them a lift into Yellow Pine. The other two could then keep the truck for when they returned from their pack trip. “No problem,” I said.

As we drove on, we started talking about the area. He was a visitor but knew the locale well. The conversation got around to wolves and wolf re-introduction. I explained I was interested in the local’s perspective. Knowing the local tavern owner, he invited me in to repay me for the ride. While waiting for lunch we were joined by a middle-aged man and the tavern owner. A little later, a local woman, who happened to write for the local paper, stopped in. Conversation was lively about our friend Canis lupus. All parties were frank about their opinions.

Then the moment arrived. The woman said that she had always considered herself “conservative.” Well, at first, I was a little confused about what she meant. Then she went on to say that she always recycled and bought used and such. And then came the brilliant epiphany, she said conservation was conservative!

Well, let me tell you, this was Big. At first I didn’t realize just how big. Now, this was all during that great election we just had. And I was one of the few who was watching the debates and paying attention to the issues. And, lo and behold, the Democrats were being the fiscal conservatives — “lock box” for Social Security and paying down the national debt. Sounds pretty conservative to me.

And then this recent nonsense in the Middle East and the renewed interest in Star Wars. I wouldn’t say Bush is being very internationally conservative. How can we let the Republicans get away with this? Environmentally, fiscally, and internationally more conservative. Why do they keep calling democrats “liberals”? Now, I know it takes some getting used to. I even had chills down my spine the first time I realized the truth, but think about it. Conservation is conservative.

Biologist Becca Wieand works on wildlife and wildlands issues from her home in Lowman, ID.
Quality of life resources are the engines that are driving modern economic activity in the changing West of today.

—Thomas Power
Economist, University of Montana

We cannot solve the problems that we created with the same thinking that created them.

—Albert Einstein
Hailey, Idaho artist Tom Teitge, at 54 years of age, described the historic timing of his life, "As a youth, I experienced the last of the best of a pristine American West; then my generation saw shockingly fast destruction. Like millions, I have a passionate desire to save nature's wonder. As an artist I express this passion visually."
Watersheds Messenger

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Working to protect and restore Western watersheds by educational outreach, public policy initiatives, litigation, and by ending incompatible uses of public lands.

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