



Western Watersheds Project

Watersheds Messenger

Vol. X, No. 2

Summer 2003

Helping Hands: Wilderness Volunteers Give Time, Toil to Greenfire Preserve By Debra Ellers

"Stunning area."

"A wonderful project."

"Harder work than I expected."

These comments came from a crew of hard-working volunteers who devoted a week of their time and energy in May to a vital restoration project at Western Watersheds Project's Greenfire Preserve.

The project required intense physical labor. Ten volunteers planted 2,200 native plants as part of the uplands restoration effort at Greenfire.

The week of work was broken up with free time for hiking, wildlife viewing and relaxing

in the spring sun on the deck of the main Greenfire property. The volunteers also learned about WWP's activities to protect western wildlife and landscapes.

The participants came to Greenfire through Wilderness Volunteers, a nonprofit group that organizes volunteer projects on public lands and conservation properties. WWP member Dale Grooms and I led the Greenfire effort, which was coordinated with WWP preserve manager Stew Churchwell.

WWP member Bob Wagenknecht also pitched in for a couple days of hard labor, which included a tough stint operating a mechanical hole digger generously loaned by WWP board member Gene Bray.

The participants came to central Idaho from far-flung points, including Florida, Virginia, Texas, Illinois and Oregon. Two



Collaborative effort: (standing, l. to r.) Stew Churchwell, Donna Havens, Mike Fitzgerald, Norma Matson, Jim Nelson, Linnea Matson, Nancy Chase, Jackie Ellers, Larry Rose, Dale Grooms; (kneeling, l. to r.) Wonder Dog Willow, Robert McAuley, Rex Gresham, Debra Ellers, Wonder Dog Kaz

Working to protect and restore western watersheds

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participants, Rex Gresham from Texas and Norma Matson from Illinois — ages 81 and 78, respectively — had twice the energy of folks half their age, and were dynamos at planting and cutting mats.

Rex had already shown an affinity for WWP's mission by noting on his trip application: "I don't eat beef as a protest against welfare ranchers!"

The work site was at the east end of the Greenfire property. There, the volunteers planted vegetation along a half-mile strip next to a dry wash and road. Currently bare ground, the area is intended to provide a wildlife corridor and forage from the White Cloud Mountains to the East Fork of the Salmon River.

A bonus of the location was its proximity to the nesting site of peregrine falcons, which the group saw and heard as the raptors flew about the nearby cliffs!



Jackie Ellers carefully plants a chokecherry bush.

The group faced the daunting task of getting 2,200 bare-root plants into the ground and covered with protective matting in just four work days. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game provided the plants and matting as part of the first installment of a 10-year grant to WWP.

The plant species included serviceberry, chokecherry, hawthorn, wild rose, basin big sage, four-winged saltbrush and juniper. Some of the serviceberries, chokecherries, roses and hawthorns were already 2 to 3 feet high, with roots up to 2 feet long, requiring wide and deep holes.

Most planting holes were dug by hand, so the volunteers were well-acquainted with their shovels by the week's end. Everyone also came to know Greenfire's rocky clay soil, but they

Watersheds Messenger is published quarterly by
Western Watersheds Project
P.O. Box 1770 • Hailey, ID 83333
208-788-2290 • wwp@westernwatersheds.org

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Donna Havens and Mike Fitzgerald dig two of many holes during four days of planting.

persevered steadily, hour after hour, through weather that ran the gamut from hot sun to snow, rain and wind.

In the middle of the week, after two days of strenuous shoveling, planting, and cutting and placing mats, the volunteers enjoyed a well-deserved day of leisure. Exploring nearby areas, including Herd Lake and Bowers Hot Springs along the Upper East Fork of the Salmon River, the group saw lots of wildlife, including golden-eyed ducks, a mother moose and calf, and pronghorn.

The snowy white Boulder Mountains presented stunning vistas along the Upper East Fork, which were marred by cow manure-dotted meadows and trampled streams. Unmistakable damage from domestic livestock grazing in this otherwise gorgeous area gave the volunteers a firsthand lesson in why WWP is working to end abusive grazing in this area.

The group continued its work for the remainder of the week. The final plant went into the ground at 4:10 p.m. on the last day of the project.

The Wilderness Volunteers celebrated their successful project with a salmon barbeque and reflections on a week of hard work, camaraderie and education about domestic livestock grazing on public lands. Each participant also left with a copy of "Welfare Ranching: The Subsidized Destruction of the American West."

WWP thanks these volunteers for their energy and dedication, and looks forward to another Wilderness Volunteers project next year on uplands restoration at Greenfire.

For more information about Wilderness Volunteers, visit www.wildernessvolunteers.org

Debra Ellers is president of WWP's board of directors. She lives in Boise, Idaho.



Natural Selection: Wolves In, Grazing Permits Out by Mark Salvo, George Wuerthner and Andy Kerr

The greatest and in most places the only impediment to wolf reintroduction in the American West is opposition from the livestock industry, including public lands grazing permittees.

Wolf restoration is favored by a majority of Americans and livestock predation by wolves is greatly exaggerated by ranchers (and often politicians and the media. Domestic dogs killed 20 times more cattle in Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho than did wolves in 2001.)

Nevertheless, livestock interests almost universally oppose the federal wolf recovery program.

The opposition of livestock interests to the federal wolf program is pressuring the government to restrict the species' reintroduction to a few national parks, national forests and wilderness preserves in the West. A trapper recently (and unintentionally) captured the first confirmed wolf to reside in Utah in 70 years. Instead of releasing it back into the wild, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service returned it to Yellowstone National Park.

A federal voluntary grazing permit buyout program could help to resolve wolf-livestock conflicts quickly, efficiently and without litigation or further harm to wolves. Such a program would allow public lands ranchers to waive their grazing privileges back to the federal government in exchange for generous compensation. The permits would be cancelled, and the associated allotments would be permanently retired from domestic livestock grazing, creating new livestock-free zones where wolves and other predators could roam free from persecution.

Without forage competition from domestic livestock, elk and deer herds would likely increase, providing a greater prey base for wolves and potentially attracting wolves away from remaining public and private grazing lands. Increased elk and deer herds would also improve opportunities for sport hunting.

The proposed permit buyout program differs from other permit retirement projects sponsored by various conservation organizations in the past, including the National Wildlife Federation's recent agreements with permittees in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem to compensate them to modify or end their public lands grazing. In one case, NWF paid a permittee not to end his grazing but to move his operation off public lands used by bison near Yellowstone National Park to other public lands in the area.

Like most third-party permit retirement projects, the NWF deal did not permanently retire the previous allotment from grazing use where the bison conflicts occurred. (Under current law, the Forest Service has the option to reopen the allotment to grazing in the future.) And, in this case, the permittee's livestock were merely relocated to other federal public lands where they will continue to cause harm to public resources.

In another deal, NWF and other organizations paid a permittee \$250,000 to end her public lands grazing on 137 square miles of wolf and grizzly bear habitat near Grand Teton National Park. Again, while this deal demonstrates the utility of voluntary permit buyout, it is not permanent under current law and no conservation group can continually pay a quarter million dollars for each grazing permit "retired" in wolf country.

Only the federal government has a budget large enough for this task.

The proposed federal buyout program is not one that would reimburse ranchers for individual livestock lost to wolf depredation. The conservation organization Defenders of Wildlife currently reimburses ranchers for livestock that are confirmed killed (and "probable kills") by wolves. Defenders has spent more than a quarter million dollars on this program since 1987.

Congress also recently developed a public wolf depredation compensation program for ranchers in Idaho, except that it is unusual because the \$100,000 appropriated is intended to compensate ranchers who have lost livestock to unconfirmed wolf kills since 2000. With the Defenders and federal programs, ranchers in Idaho are now insured against livestock lost to confirmed, probable and unconfirmed wolf kills.

The money spent by conservation organizations on compensation for dead livestock or permit retirement is not purely private, as they are tax-exempt organizations and contributions they receive are tax-deductible to the giver. Consequently, whether compensation for lost livestock or permit buyout comes from a conservation organization or the federal government, the taxpayer still pays.

Meanwhile, the enormous subsidies that support public lands grazing justify the creation of a permit buyout program. The federal grazing program costs the federal taxpayers at least \$500 million annually, but the federal treasury only receives \$7 million annually in grazing fees.

Rather than continue to pay for dead livestock or impermanent permit retirement, it would be a better deal for the taxpayers to pay willing-seller federal grazing permittees to end their grazing and permanently retire their allotments from grazing use.

The need for a permit buyout program is becoming critical. Since reintroducing Mexican gray wolves in the Southwest, the FWS, to appease the livestock industry, agreed to limit the species' restoration within the designated recovery area. When wolves roam outside the boundaries, they are recaptured and hauled back. A Mexican wolf recovery program director recently called this concession "a mistake," but it is unlikely the FWS can rescind this policy without a relief program such as voluntary federal permit buyout being available to public lands ranchers.

Meanwhile, wolves are attempting to disperse to Washington, Oregon, Utah and Colorado. A permit buyout program would help dilute opposition to the wolves' return to those states.

There are already dozens of scientific reports on the many positive effects of reintroducing wolves to the intermountain West, and wolf-related tourism is pumping \$20 million per year into Idaho, Montana and Wyoming. Permit buyout could help to reduce grazing conflicts associated with wolf restoration, and hasten the day when wolves will be restored as a major evolutionary agent in the West.

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Soil Crusts: Micro-communities, Macro-impacts

By George Nibler

An often overlooked component of rangeland ecosystems is the minuscule assemblage of plants and animals that covers the ground between the more obvious vascular plants such as grasses and shrubs.

This biotic community, variously known as the organic or biological soil crust, microbiotic soil, or cryptogamic soil, is present in many environments but is especially important in the arid rangelands of the western United States.

People fortunate enough to have walked through an undisturbed, healthy sagebrush-steppe landscape may have noticed the sparse and patchy distribution of vascular plants, and that the soil surface between the plants is not bare ground but is covered with a mat of tiny vegetation. This biological soil crust can cover up to 75 percent of the total ground surface in some areas, and it plays a vital role in the overall health of the rangeland, controlling soil erosion, preventing the invasion of noxious weeds and promoting soil fertility.

Biological soil crusts are composed of a community of organisms that live on, or within a few centimeters of, the ground surface. They include mosses, lichens, algae, fungi and bacteria. Some, such as mosses and lichens, may be up to a few millimeters in size and are visible to the naked eye, while most of the algae and bacteria are only visible with a hand lens or microscope.

Within this organic matrix live numerous animals, from microscopic protozoans and nematodes to macroscopic arthropods such as mites, springtails and centipedes.

This organic community forms a textured, porous layer a few centimeters thick above the ground surface, with a “root zone” (actually fungal hyphae, bacterial filaments, etc.) that may extend many centimeters below ground. In the sagebrush-steppe environment of the Great Basin, the biological crust commonly develops to cover essentially the entire ground surface between the vascular plants, except in rocky areas, steep or unstable slopes, or disturbed areas.

For all practical purposes, biological crusts are the soil surface where they are present, and so control erosion and affect the infiltration of precipitation. The mosses and lichens, fungal and bacterial filaments, and associated organic materials form a protective cover that limits soil erosion from both wind and water. In many areas the crust acts like a sponge, soaking up precipitation and snow melt and slowly releasing it to the underlying soil, reducing runoff and increasing infiltration and soil moisture.

Biological crusts are very effective at controlling the spread of noxious weeds. A healthy crust presents a near-continuous surface cover that seeds must penetrate in order to germinate.

While native plants have evolved mechanisms to penetrate the crust, exotic weeds generally cannot. Cheatgrass, skeleton weed and many others will rarely germinate and become established in areas with a healthy crust. This corresponds directly to the susceptibility and response of the land to fire. Healthy, weed-free rangeland does not ignite as readily as weed-infested areas, and fires that do start generally burn slower, less hot, and do not spread as rapidly as in degraded, weedy land.

Biological crusts are integral parts of the soil food cycle, and are important contributors to soil fertility. Crusts may cover a significant fraction, if not the largest part of the ground surface, and cycle the majority of organic matter, especially organic carbon, to the soil where it acts as a food source for soil micro-organisms. Many crust organisms are photosynthetic, converting atmospheric carbon to organic carbon and adding it to the soil. Other organisms are decomposers that break down complex organic matter and convert it to forms usable by plants. Some bacteria and lichens are nitrogen-fixing, and transfer nitrogen from the atmosphere to the soil in a usable form.

Although soil crusts are a ubiquitous part of western rangelands, they are quite sensitive and susceptible to disturbance. The sagebrush-steppe ecosystem has evolved in the presence of relatively low populations of large animals such as elk and antelope, compared with the Midwest prairie and its until-recently vast herds of bison. The sagebrush ecosystem, soil crust organisms as well as vascular plants, did not develop adaptations to intensive trampling as did the sod-forming grasslands of the Midwest. Consequently soil crusts are poorly-equipped to survive where they are heavily trampled, crushed, mashed, pulverized and buried due to intensive cattle grazing.

Disturbance results in a crust that is reduced in species diversity and nutrient production and cycling, as well as a degradation of each of the benefits just mentioned. Infiltration of precipitation is reduced while runoff and erosion increase. Bare ground exposed where the crust is destroyed is often quickly colonized by noxious weeds, and the potential for hot and fast-burning range fires is greatly increased. Organic carbon and soil nutrient levels are diminished and the overall productivity of the land decreases.

Of course, nature is resilient and the organic crust may recover, depending on the timing and intensity of grazing and the recovery period. Damage can be minimized by allowing only low livestock levels on the land in winter or early spring when the ground is frozen. Since most crust organisms are actively growing only through the late spring when the ground is still moist, cattle should be off the land before then to allow a period of growth and recovery.

The time required for re-establishment of a healthy organic crust following disturbance is quite variable due to the complexity of the crust community and the range of differences in site-specific conditions, but is clearly on the order of at least few decades. In areas that become infested with noxious weeds and are subject to recurring range fires, the organic crust may

recover, though on a time frame best appreciated by a geologist. Land managers have been slow to recognize and incorporate organic crust health in land-management “planning,” but a healthy rangeland cannot exist without a healthy organic soil crust.

George Nibler is an environmental geochemist who lives in the desert outside Boise, Idaho.



Wildlife in Disfavor

By Kent Fothergill

In 1929 the state of Pennsylvania passed a law placing a \$5 bounty on Northern goshawks. Even in the early 1960s ranchers in several Western states would pay a \$25 bounty on golden eagles shot from aircraft, and “sportsmen’s” magazines ran articles on “eagling” as both sport and profession. Thomas Burleigh notes in “Birds of Idaho” (1972): “Unfortunately it is considered rather destructive to the young of such species as deer, antelope and mountain goat, so it is shot at every opportunity.”



*Golden Eagle
photo©US Fish and Wildlife Service*

In 1962, President Kennedy signed into law a resolution adding golden eagles to the Eagle Protection Act, but 10 years later they were still being killed. The protection of golden eagles was so threatening to Texas livestock interests that U.S. senators from the state tacked an amendment on the bill signed by Kennedy: “. . . on request of the Governor of any State, the Secretary of the Interior may authorize the taking of golden eagles for the purpose of seasonally protecting domesticated flocks and herds”

Even Hawk Mountain, a legendary raptor migration site, is described by the Massachusetts Audubon Society in “The Birdwatchers Companion” as follows: “This famous flyway was once the site of an annual ‘varmint shoot’ by ignorant farmers and ‘sportsmen.’”

Before we judge too harshly, consider the following excerpt from an article by W. Raine in Volume 2 of the 1890 Wilson Bulletin, a journal of Ornithology that is still extant: “Eagles are destructive but not cruel birds, for although they deprive many birds and beasts of their lives, they effect this purpose with a single blow, sweeping down upon the doomed creature and striking it so fiercely with its death-dealing talons that the victim is instantaneously killed by the shock. The eagle never uses its beak for the purpose of killing its prey .”

Prof. Raine tells a touching story of a golden eagle descending and carrying off an infant, whose mother had laid it beside a haycock while she was working in the harvest field close by. The eagle was traced to its eyrie in the precipice some distance off, and the poor mother, blind to all danger in her efforts to recover her babe, safely scaled the precipice, high up in which the nest was placed, though no man, however skillful a cragsman, had ever dared attempt the ascent. There the mother, found her child alive and unhurt, and clasping it to her arms, she descended again—a more perilous feat still; reached the ground in safety and then swooned away.

Raptors in general and eagles in particular now hold a place of esteem and worth in society’s collective mind. Who among us would deny the value of the ecological services provided by these noble apex predators of the sky?

Now, in the enlightened 21st century, our past treatment of raptors seems shameful.

Yet we still have the “frontier mentality” dictating policy toward apex predators on public lands. The ecological benefits and services provided by wolves and grizzly bears are real and just as important as the services provided by raptors. All manner of wildlife from marmots to Mormon crickets are deemed injurious and slated for extermination without so much as a cost/benefit analysis.

Often these decisions are based on “research” very much like that of the Wilson Bulletin above. As we examine our attitudes toward wildlife and habitat, we find that not much has changed.

Kent Fothergill is a professional biologist and WWP member from Buhl, Idaho.



White Poplar, Black Locust By Louise Wagenknecht

Editor's note: The following excerpt is from Louise Wagenknecht's new book, "White Poplar, Black Locust," adapted by permission of the University of Nebraska Press. Available at bookstores and at nebraskapress.unl.edu. Information: 800-755-1105.

(Grandmother) was born Martha Kristiane Vilhelmine Dittmar, a mouthful of a name that I used to recite to myself, enchanted by its rhythms. She came from Denmark to Iowa with her parents at the age of two and grew up in Clinton, a Mississippi River town full of immigrants – Germans, Swedes, Danes. She left school after the eighth grade and went to work in a Danish bakery, where on delivery days the men who drove the freight wagons unloaded hundred-pound sacks of flour onto her shoulders. She learned to mix and knead and bake pastries and to wait on customers. She worked ten hours a day for ten cents an hour.

Forty years later, as she pounded and chopped and kneaded food for us, the patter of the bakery counter seemed to come back to her, as she told us stories of Jule Nisse, who left presents in the shoes of good children on Christmas Eve and received in turn a dish of clabbered milk sweetened with cinnamon and sugar, set out beside the hearth. She sang little songs in Danish to us, taught to her by her own mother Anna, an orphan who had been farmed out to a series of grudging relatives, then put to work as a goosegirl at the age of four. She told fewer stories about Niels, her father, a hot-tempered man who once horsewhipped a barber for shaving off his prized handlebar mustache as he slumbered in the barber's chair.

In Iowa, Niels was a carpenter and bricklayer in the summer. In winter he worked for an ice company, cutting great blocks of ice from the Mississippi, loading them onto sledges, and stacking them between layers of sawdust in insulated sheds. Anna raised chickens and geese, sold goose down and eggs and dressed birds, and had two more children – Sophie and Andrew.

Our grandmother Martha grew up in a world where safety razors and sanitary pads were miracles. Books were expensive and cherished. As she began the work of raising us, the flood of postwar consumer goods, rising higher and higher year by year, worried her. Everything had a price, she believed, and must be paid for in the end.



Photo 1

Sometimes, as she built the morning fires with wads of newspaper and kindling and slabs of rough firewood, she mused about her mother's life.

"The people Mama lived with," she said once, "used to send her into the woods with a big basket, to pick up branches and bring them home. We waste so much wood in this country, but sometimes it took her a long time to fill up the basket. All the poor people went into the woods in those days, picking up everything that fell, even little twigs. Someday we'll have to do that, too."

Grandfather came into the room and laughed, waving his arm as if to encompass all the vast forest outside, all around us. "Right, Martha, right," he said, drawling out the words sarcastically. Grandmother stared at him for a moment, then turned away, struck a wooden match on the rough surface of the stove door, and lit the fire.

Hilt Creek was a seasonal stream, born in a draw far up the steep slope we called Skunk's Peak. Swollen by winter rains, it hurried across a dry, eroded flat, slid under a fence and through a galvanized culvert, and emerged into a meadow below the new school, where it meandered through sedges and grasses, past a few scrubby willows and swathes of red curly dock, and relaxed for a little while.

Here, the creek could meander thanks to a buildup of sediment washed down from the soft shale hills. Twenty inches of rain a year were not enough to flush the sediment off the flat, and so deep soil built up here. Above the fence on the steeper ground, twenty inches of rain a year were just enough to ensure continued gullying, for throughout the spring, until the annual grasses dried up, the cattle of the SS Bar Ranch grazed there, trampling and denuding the streambanks.

The foothills and valleys around Hilt are an ecological extension of the great Central Valley – a savanna, in effect. Since the 1860s, the dominant plant communities have been based on introduced grasses and forbs from the Mediterranean basin – wild oats, filaree, cheatgrass, annual bromes and fescues. During that decade, a years-long drought coupled with the unrelenting assault of millions of cattle, horses and sheep completed what the early colonists from Spain and Mexico had begun.

By midsummer, Hilt Creek was a dying series of stagnant pools, but in the first warm days of April, it was still a stream, and long strands of black toad eggs, strung together by lengths of transparent jelly, appeared along its banks. Clinging to

rushes beneath the overhanging banks, blobs of Pacific tree frog eggs floated. Western toads clasped each other in catatonic affection in the shallows; gravid female tree frogs hopped through the wet grass, pursued by much smaller males. Meadow larks rocketed up from the



Photo 2

dead grass or trilled from fence posts; red-winged blackbirds celebrated their territory on every willow. Water skippers fled across the quiet waters, and ripples gurgled, the color of rum pudding sauce, in the wet and fecund California spring.

In the plunge pool below the culvert, foothill yellow-legged frogs hid on the muddy bottom, perfectly camouflaged. The meadow became a cacophony of peeping and croaking, which grew silent as I passed up the creek, then resumed behind me. I caught the singers, picked them up, let them go again. I scooped up their eggs and tadpoles in coffee cans and took them home and attempted to raise them, with varying degrees of success. The best way was to empty them into an old dishpan sunk in the mud below the faucet on the east side of the house. Algae colonized the sides; the toad eggs became little black commas, then tadpoles with quickly flicking tails, growing larger, and finally sprouting legs in August. Their mouths widened and their eyes popped up, until finally one morning they sat on the big rock in the middle of the pan, absorbing their own tails. The tree frog tadpoles turned green, the toads a mottled brown, before they climbed out and hopped away into the iris beds.

Below the meadow, Hilt Creek flowed across the alley and slid into a long series of cedar culverts that carried it through the middle of town and under the railroad tracks, disgorging it on the west side of town, into a deep sluggish swamp of cattails that eventually drained into Cottonwood Creek. Here, in an inaccessible morass of mud and algae, bullfrogs lived, squeaking and leaping away into the safety of the deep slime at the first sign of movement along shore. Bullfrogs are not native to the West Coast states, but they adapted happily to the ponds left by gold dredging along the Klamath River and migrated up the creeks in the wet season.

The gold miners who followed Cottonwood Creek to its sources in the 1850s found little gold. The richer deposits lay beyond the granite peaks that separated Cottonwood from the vast Beaver Creek drainage. The soil of Hilt was not disturbed, for it had no gold or mercury or copper like that of the serpentine formations of Red Mountain or the folded blue schists of Condrey Mountain. Here there were only shale and sandstone. In Hilt, we looked up at the alpine slopes below Mount Ashland, where rich meadows and groves of timber waited for the spring and its onslaught of range cattle and chainsaws. In our arid little valley, spring brought cattle to roam the streets and vacant lots for a few days, before they were driven past the barbed-wire fences at the edge of town. So the little meadow was mostly undisturbed by hooves and teeth, and the frogs flourished.

Daddy always packed his .44 revolver in the car or truck, in the glove compartment or under a coat on the seat. One Sunday morning as we drove along a logging road west of Hilt



Photo 3

on our way to a patch of blackcap raspberries that Daddy had found, the car stopped suddenly, and I found myself looking into the eyes of a coyote pup standing by the side of the road. Perhaps three months old, it still had the big paws and silly expression of babyhood, and its mouth was stained red from the

thimbleberries it had been pulling down and eating, one at a time. Slowly, Daddy reached over and opened the glove box, pulled the revolver out, and slid it free of the holster. Slowly, he extended it forward, until it rested on the frame of the lowered window. The pup was staring at me and seemed not to notice the movement.

I had been riding with my window down and my chin resting on my crossed arms. Now, as I heard the hammer clicking back and realized what Daddy was about to do, I slapped my palms hard against the car body. "Shoo!" I shouted. The pup melted into the thimbleberry stalks and was gone. Daddy let the hammer back down. Without a word, he put the revolver away and the car in gear and drove on.

Later that day, sated with blackcaps, the trunk loaded with buckets of them, we picnicked on the West Fork of Beaver Creek. Chipmunks peered at us around enormous tree trunks, and as I held out a crust of bread, one of them made a dash for me and stood up on his hind legs to snatch it out of my fingers. Daddy made a mock lunge at the little rodent, and it squeaked in fright and retreated. "Shoo," he said, looking at me.

I felt my face getting hot, but I stared back at him. "He was just a pup," I muttered, my heart hammering. "He wasn't hurting anything."

I knew he was displeased, but I also knew, somehow, that even Daddy wouldn't hit me for scaring the pup away from his gun. Now he only shook his head. "You have got to get over this complete sympathy for animals," he said, and turned his attention to the fried chicken.

My appetite was gone. I was learning, at the age of nine, just how inconvenient a thing a conscience could be.

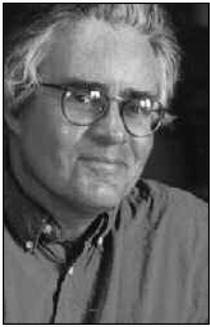
Photo 1: Louise in front of her grandparents' house in Hilt.

Photo 2: Louise's grandmother with Klamath River steelhead

Photo 3: Louise with her mother Barbara and grandmother Martha on the Klamath River near Hilt

Louise Wagenknecht is a WWP Board Member. She lives in Leadore, Idaho.





Director's Notes By Jon Marvel

As many of you know, Western Watersheds Project, through our subsidiary Valley Sun LLC, is the preferred grazing applicant for the 660-acre Obsidian Allotment nestled in the middle of the Sawtooth Valley and bordering the Salmon River.

In the early 1970s the allotment was the "townsite" of Obsidian which had been subdivided into more than 70 one-acre lots with a dirt airstrip and a number of roads. The roads and airstrip have revegetated with sagebrush, and WWP does not graze the land with livestock.

The property was condemned and acquired by the Forest Service in 1974 as part of various land-management changes that occurred with the creation of the Sawtooth National Recreation Area in 1972. Since then it has suffered through several management schemes, including irrigation of large areas by the U.S. Forest Service in the late '70s to increase grass for cows.

The allotment has not been grazed by livestock for four years (except for trespass by cattle last year for three days), and I noticed during visits this summer that there has been a significant increase in wildlife on the area.



There are at least seven antelope, including three fawns, from this spring. Groups of elk are along the river, and the sage-steppe vegetation has made great advances in ground cover and plant diversity. There are also increasing numbers of microfauna, including ground squirrels and insects.

This location also provides improving habitat for the remnant population of Sawtooth Valley sage grouse, though I have not seen any.

I also visited Fourth of July Creek in the Sawtooth Valley to inspect the three diversions WWP has been working on for the past two years to provide connectivity to the Salmon River for bull trout, steelhead and chinook salmon. All three diversions now have headgates and fish screens and modified diversion weirs, and the water-rights owners have informally agreed not to dewater the creek as was routinely done in the past.

Two of the water-rights owners have also stopped leasing their land for cattle grazing, thereby reducing the need to divert water.

On my visit, I was surprised to find, above the new weir at the topmost diversion, one of the largest bull trout I have ever seen in such a small creek. It was at least 24 to 26 inches long!

*Jon Marvel is executive director of WWP.
He lives in Hailey, Idaho.*

FWS Bows to Pressure, Delays Listing Peppergrass

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in July delayed again a decision to list slickspot peppergrass, a rare Idaho plant, as an endangered species.

Last year the FWS settled a lawsuit filed by Western Watersheds Project and the Committee for the High Desert for the agency's failure to list the plant under the Endangered Species Act. The federal-court settlement required the FWS to make a final decision by July 15 on listing slickspot peppergrass under the ESA.

Instead, the agency postponed further action for another six months, citing "substantial disagreement" among a group of six "experts," or peer reviewers.

According to Jeff Foss, supervisor of FWS' Snake River Basin Office, five of the peer reviewers supported the "sufficiency and accuracy" of the science used to arrive at a final rule to list slickspot peppergrass as endangered. The lone dissenting opinion came from Terry Bashore, chief ecologist and range liaison at Langley Air Force Base in Virginia.

Training operations at Mountain Home Air Force Base would be severely affected if slickspot peppergrass were listed under the ESA. The Air Force comments included Bashore's review and a set of comments from six other Air Force participants.

"This is one of the most blatant examples of political tampering with agency decision-making that we have seen," said Todd Tucci, an attorney with Advocates for the West representing WWP and CHD. "For years, FWS scientists have carefully detailed the threats of livestock grazing, fire and habitat fragmentation that are causing slickspot peppergrass to go extinct."

"As soon as possible, we intend to file a 60-day notice to overturn this violation of law," added Jon Marvel, executive director of WWP.

The FWS noted as early as 1999 that slickspot peppergrass qualified as a "candidate species" for ESA listing. The agency noted that "federal regulations currently do not provide sufficient protection" for slickspot peppergrass from "road developments, livestock watering tank placement, military activities, off-road vehicle use, or other potentially damaging activities."

In April 2000, the FWS concluded: "We have carefully assessed the best scientific and commercial information available regarding past, present, and future threats faced by (slickspot peppergrass). . . . Based on our evaluation, the preferred action is to list (slickspot peppergrass) as endangered."

The agency went so far as to say that the rate of disappearance of slickspot peppergrass is "the highest known of any Idaho rare plant species."

Slickspot peppergrass (*Lepidium papilliferum*) is a flowering plant unique to Idaho. It is threatened with extinction by non-native weeds caused by livestock trampling and grazing, road construction and off-road vehicles in the Snake River Plain, Owyhee Plateau and adjacent foothills of southwestern Idaho.



Report From Wyoming: Expanding WWP's Reach

By Jonathan Ratner

Since this is the first report from the new Wyoming office of Western Watersheds Project, I think it would be good to tell the story of how it all started.

Some years ago, I, like most folks, was concerned with the highly visible environmental issues - clear-cuts, drilling rigs, sprawl - but considered the impacts of livestock grazing as just part of the scenery. Then I got involved in some nasty grazing abuses in the Wind River Range and started educating myself on grazing impacts.

What I found was a real eye-opener. I discovered that most threatened and endangered species are listed because of the impacts of livestock grazing: soil compaction, erosion and siltation, lowering of the water table, species community changes, desertification. I also found out that American taxpayers are footing the bill for public lands ranching to the tune of at least \$500 million a year in direct and indirect subsidies.

So I started connecting with various conservation groups working in Wyoming. I was shocked to find that the public lands grazing issue wasn't even figured into the conservation strategy for the state. No organization could or would touch it.

After trying to inspire various groups to action, and having no success at it, I started to look west-wide for organizations who were successfully addressing the livestock grazing issue. I found only a handful. Of the three groups working regionally, only WWP wanted to expand into Wyoming.

As I checked into WWP more thoroughly, I discovered an incredibly powerful and successful organization - a group that, despite a small staff and limited resources, had made a major impact in Idaho, Utah and other states in the interior West.

WWP supporters may not fully realize just how remarkable the group's nearly 100 percent litigation success rate is. Few organizations come close to this kind of accomplishment. Jon Marvel's dynamic drive, combined with the expertise of a legal team headed by Laird Lucas, has created a powerful force of change. WWP's profile is truly national. Land managers everywhere know of WWP's success and understand that the organization means action.

WWP is at the forefront of a major paradigm shift in how our public lands are managed.

Now on to news. In truth, a major part of the impetus to open an office in Wyoming is the result of desperate pleas from federal agency personnel with professional integrity. They are getting ground up between the proverbial rock and hard place by pressure from Washington, D.C. to do all manner of illegal activities on our public lands. The saga of rancher Frank Robbins and the Worland office of the Bureau of Land Management is a particularly egregious case, but not an isolated one. (See Story, p. 12)

Through the NEPA process, we are also working on the Wyoming Range Allotment Complex, a group of allotments covering much of the northern half of the Wyoming Range. The complex is stocked with 5,000 sheep. The U.S. Forest Service wants to continue to expand grazing in this area even though it contains one of the last few pockets of Colorado River cutthroat trout; has grizzlies moving back into the area; is suffering from massive erosion; and overlaps with the Jackson bighorn sheep herd. The district ranger pushing this project has a history of bold defiance of federal statutes and agency regulations, in part because no one has overseen his activities. With a presence in Wyoming, WWP can now monitor his actions and prevent him from operating outside the law with impunity.

On the other side of the state, WWP is diving into issues of rogue ranchers who are abusing the Big Horn National Forest.

In the fall, WWP will begin a major public education campaign to encourage whistle-blowers within the public lands agencies who want to do the right thing. Most of the illegal activities that occur on public lands are known only to those within the agencies.

In early August, an 87,500-acre section of the northern end of the Bridger-Teton National Forest was permanently closed to grazing through a privately funded grazing permit buyout. As we move forward, we will be working on similar permit buyouts for other major conflict allotments to provide protection to endangered species in crucial areas.

To do all this, we will need your assistance to build WWP membership in Wyoming that can provide financial resources, lend expertise in various ecological sciences, volunteer to monitor public lands and provide useful contacts. We encourage you to go to your address book or e-mail program and contact all of your friends in and around Wyoming who are concerned about environmental issues in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and the rest of the state. Invite them to become WWP members and have them contact me directly to let me know their area of expertise and what they want to see WWP accomplish in Wyoming.

I look forward to hearing from them and seeing you at the Greenfire Revival Sept. 12-13 at Greenfire Preserve.

Jonathan Ratner is Wyoming director of WWP. He lives in Pinedale. Contact Information is:

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**Report from Greenfire:
Summertime, and the
Livin' Ain't Easy
By Stew Churchwell**

The workload for this summer was ambitious. Though the schedule has been hectic, nearly everything has been accomplished according to plan.

Fieldwork and planting were completed by the end of June. The work began with a great boost: a Wilderness Volunteers project organized and led by Western Watersheds Project members Debra Ellers and Dale Grooms. (*See Story P 1.*)

Shortly after that project, we planted grasses and forbs over almost 100 acres on the southern end of the property. Since then, we have been irrigating in an effort to coax the seed to germination.

Still left to plant is sagebrush seed. The plan is to sow the sagebrush by hand on top of the snow when it arrives in late fall. We hope to put together another volunteer group for this project.

The Shoshone-Bannock tribes put in a streamside incubator on the property and hatched out about 8,000 steelhead eggs. These fish will travel about 900 miles to the ocean, where they will stay for two or three years. Those that survive will return as wild fish to spawn at Greenfire.

There is good news to report about the peregrine falcons at Greenfire. Nesting activities were successful, and two chicks were fledged. The pair nested in a different location this year, on cliffs at the south end of the preserve.

Central Idaho projects are moving along as well. In late July we filed a lawsuit against the Bureau of Land Management for its negligence on the Burnt Creek grazing allotment. We have been watching this important bull trout habitat closely since the summer of 2000, and year after year Challis Resource Area personnel have failed to complete their obligations for fence construction and maintenance.

Meanwhile, they continue to deny the resulting degradation and disregard their own Resource Management Plan. Our attempts to work with the agency seldom brings any response. When someone does respond, is it in the form of denial. It's time to call the legal authorities.

The most exciting event at Greenfire this summer was our intern project. In the spring, WWP board secretary-treasurer Gene Bray, with matching funds from generous contributors, acquired a McNeil sediment core sampler. Two students from the University of Idaho, Subit Chandran and Jonathan Suk, spent eight weeks working as interns at Greenfire, using the sampler to quantify imbedded sediment levels in the watersheds of the Challis National Forest. (*See Story P. 11*)

Stew Churchwell is central Idaho director and Greenfire Preserve manager for WWP. He lives at the preserve near Clayton, Idaho.

**WWP Sues BLM to Protect
Burnt Creek Wilderness Study Area**

Western Watersheds Project has sued the Bureau of Land Management for violating federal environmental laws and the Challis Resource Management Plan on the Burnt Creek allotment in east-central Idaho.

The allotment is part of the Burnt Creek Wilderness Study Area. WWP contends that the BLM issued livestock grazing permits and made grazing management decisions for the allotment without conducting a sufficient environmental assessment required by federal law.

The lawsuit alleges that the BLM failed to consider alternatives to livestock grazing before issuing permits and took action before environmental reviews were completed. The agency also failed to comply with the Challis Resource Management Plan, adopted in 1999, by allowing livestock turnout on Burnt Creek when range improvements were not functional or properly maintained.

“Challis Resource Area personnel are derelict in their duties and are disregarding their own management plan,” said Stew Churchwell, Central Idaho director Western Watersheds Project. “Year after year, this has resulted in the degradation of rare and valuable resources, yet the BLM continues to deny it. Far worse, they have attempted to blame the public for their negligence.”

During the 2001 grazing season, the agency determined that livestock grazing on Burnt Creek had violated the terms of the permit by exceeding stubble height standards and by livestock trespass within the Burnt Creek enclosure. WWP, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the BLM have documented the same violations for several years.

Earlier this summer, Churchwell provided the agencies with detailed reports of livestock trespass in the enclosure and poor ecological conditions within the allotment. The reports supplemented findings Churchwell has filed since the 2000 grazing season.

“The BLM’s actions are unacceptable and are postponing the resolution of problems,” he said.

The Burnt Creek allotment is in the heart of the Salmon River Basin. The area is critical spawning habitat for threatened bull trout.

Burnt Creek Wilderness Study Area, which contains all of the allotment, borders the 116,000-acre Borah Peak Roadless Area, which the U.S. Forest Service has recommended as wilderness.

The BLM’s own Idaho Wilderness Study Report states: “The primitive nature of the recommended area adds a spectacular example of sagebrush- and grass-covered hills with pockets of timber giving way to awesome, rugged mountains... Both areas are dominated by the 12,655-foot Borah Peak, the highest point in Idaho.”



Requiem for the Fish?

By Subit Chandran

The past two months at Greenfire Preserve have been eventful for Jonathan Suk and me as summer interns for Western Watersheds Project.

We used a McNeil sediment core sampling device to document the percent fines in anadromous and resident salmonid spawning habitat. We sampled 31 sites in seven watersheds in the Challis National Forest lands.

Work days were long and labor-intensive, but we were rewarded with invaluable data. Invaluable for two reasons: first, WWP now has access to real-time data on the level of depth fines in the streams on the Challis National Forest. Second, the numbers and figures give an accurate account of the prevailing conditions in the streams sampled in the forest.

During our training session with Thomas Herron from the Department of Environmental Quality, we were pleasantly surprised to stumble upon a few dozen fish eggs in one of the sieves. A few of the eggs seemed alive and viable, while the majority seemed unviable for fry emergence even before we sieved the sample containing the eggs.

Even in that unfortunate moment, it was beautiful to have witnessed the near-beginning of this important life cycle. To have witnessed it in such a natural setting is an experience that few people will have in their lifetimes, seeing the start of a life cycle that culminates in an arduous migration.

On a more somber note, the data we collected doesn't bode well for the fish spawning in the streams that we sampled. The data showed a disturbing trend in the conditions of the streams managed by the Challis National Forest.

One-third of the sites sampled this summer were below the level requiring immediate action by Challis National Forest for salmon protection. Of these 11 sites, eight violated levels that require action to protect bull trout and other fish.

This is a clear warning signal for the health of fish in the Challis National Forest. If additional data follows the trend we discovered this summer, I am certain that management methods in the forest will have change drastically in the direction of conservation.

We all know the challenges that lie before us in this endeavor, given the policies of the current Administration. However, we also know that Western Watersheds Project is more than capable of changing the policies of resource management in order to provide the required stewardship of the lands we have been given.

Jonathan and I appreciate the opportunity to work with such a distinguished organization, and we wish WWP the best of luck in all its projects.

Subit Chandran is an undergraduate in Environmental Studies at the University of Idaho



Join
Western Watersheds Project
for a live outdoor concert,
wolf benefit and great food
at the

Greenfire Revival III



- Sept. 12th Film "Cost of Freedom"
Wolf update by Dr. Ralph Maughan.
- Sept. 13th WWP update by Jon Marvel
Music Jam with Kate & Jeff
Play Cow Pie Slide and more
Preserve and Area tours
"Cowzilla and The Wild Things"
- Evening *Kate and Jeff Bennett live outdoor concert*
- Sept. 14th Breakfast and area tours.

Get out, visit the Greenfire Preserve and support the dedicated work of your organization. The anti-wolf coalition is hard at work trying to remove the wolves from Idaho. Show your support for wolves by coming to Revival III. Enjoy the beautiful outdoors, have fun, make new friends and meet old ones.

\$35 (members) \$55 (non-members) reserves you a spot for camping, the Kate Bennett live concert, 4 meals, film and games. Reservations accepted until September 8th or until full. Call Teri at (208) 788-2290 weekdays 9-5 MDT or online www.westernwatersheds.org to reserve your spot and order your Preserve T-shirt (\$20). Kate and Jeff are members of M.U.S.E. (Musicians United to Sustain the Environment) and are donating their time and talent to WWP for this event.



Report From Utah: Watersheds and Wolves By John Carter

After the previous issue of Watersheds Messenger, WWP received comments from some people about our emphasis on wolves. They wanted to know if we were abandoning our mission to protect watersheds?

It is important for Western Watersheds Project members to understand the relationship between wolves and watersheds. Simply put, if WWP manages watersheds to support wolves, bears and other large mammals, it means we will have healthy plant communities to support the prey base for wolves and vegetation for bears. (Did you know that 97 percent of a bear's diet is plants?)

Healthy plant communities mean a diverse assemblage of grasses, flowers, shrubs and trees, all providing for insects, birds and mammals. They mean healthy streams and riparian areas with clean water, good habitat and fish populations. Large mammals require large areas to survive. Protection of watersheds over these large areas and their connecting links to other habitats is crucial to their survival.

Livestock grazing, clear-cutting, roads, snowmobiles and ORVs are anathema to these values. They are what we are working to diminish in order to protect wildlife such as wolves and the healthy watersheds that support them.

What gets lost in the West's fight over water and worries about drought is the mismanagement of public lands that results in water depletion. Livestock grazing, roads and timber harvest in inappropriate locations are three glaring examples.

Did you know that most of the drinking water in the West is filtered through cow manure before it reaches groundwater aquifers?

During the past few months, WWP has inspected millions of acres of Bureau of Land Management lands in Utah, Idaho, Wyoming and Colorado. We have appealed U.S. Forest Service plan revisions for the Wasatch-Cache and Caribou national forests as well as the Curlew National Grassland, where all semblance of protection from livestock, prescribed fire, logging, roads, snowmobiles and ORVs has been diluted to such an extent that the Forest Service will be able to continue abusive levels of these uses without effective challenge.

The Bush Administration is gutting environmental protections to such an extent that, unless Congress takes action, the public soon will have no voice in management of their public lands.

WWP has contributed its scientific expertise to the Southern Utah Land Restoration Project, which is developing a conservation alternative to the upcoming grazing EIS for 2 million acres of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. Our model for determining livestock grazing capacity will be submitted this fall to a peer-reviewed journal.

WWP has surveyed numerous allotments to assist our attorneys with scientific evidence and testimony for our lawsuits in Idaho and Utah. We will be back in the Uinta Wilderness this fall to survey more watersheds and oppose continued sheep grazing of this unique ecosystem.

WWP is conducting research into ecological issues in order to challenge BLM and Forest Service myths and mismanagement with peer-reviewed science. This information is also being used in our court cases and hearings.

John Carter is Utah director of WWP. He lives in Mendon, Utah.



Wyoming Hobby Rancher in Hot Water

Ever since rogue rancher Frank Robbins moved to Thermopolis from northern Alabama and traded the rubber flooring business for public lands ranching, he has run afoul of the local Bureau of Land Management.

After nine years of livestock grazing violations culminating in a controversial settlement brokered by Bush-appointed Interior Department officials, Robbins is now in trouble with Western Watersheds Project.

In July WWP filed a 60-day notice of intent to sue the BLM over the Robbins settlement. The notice was sent to the agency and Interior Department Secretary Gale Norton.

Beginning in 1994, Robbins acquired three large ranches near Thermopolis and Worland, Wyo. He has been in trouble with the local agency officials ever since.

The rancher's record with the Worland BLM, documented in BLM files and reported in the Billings Gazette, includes dozens of trespass notices, cancellation of grazing permits, charges of unauthorized use of public land, attempts to block BLM workers from monitoring the land, alleged violations of cease-and-desist orders and defiance of emergency closures to protect the environment during drought.

According to WWP sources, Robbins used his close ties to U.S. Sen. Richard Shelby (R-Alabama) to force a remarkable and allegedly illegal settlement of his grazing violations with Norton and BLM Director Kathleen Clarke.

"This [settlement] undermines sane range management throughout the West," said Jeff Ruch, director of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, in a story published in the Casper Star-Tribune. "Once it is known these kinds of deals can be gotten, there's going to be a long line at the door to get them. The public interest has been sold out."



WWP Board Member Profile

Name: Dr. John Carter

WWP affiliation: Board member, Utah Director

Residence: Mendon, Utah

Family: Akitas Kiesha, Toqi and Niki. ("No humans measure up.")

Occupations: Consulting engineer; research and applied ecologist. Work focused on determining physical, chemical and biological relationships in arid ecosystems in order to apply appropriate restoration strategies; cleaning up Superfund sites; investigating abandoned uranium mining and milling sites for continuing contamination; assisting industry with environmental compliance.

Other conservation affiliations: Audubon, Center for Biological Diversity, Committee for the High Desert, Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics, Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Oregon Natural Desert Association, Sierra Club National Grazing Committee, Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, Wildlands Center for Preventing Roads, Wildlands Project.

Memorable conservation experience: As chairman of Logan chapter of the Sierra Club in 1970s, helped get wilderness designation for the Wellsville Wilderness next to my home in Mendon by obtaining support from local city councils for wilderness designation.

Spectacular wildlife encounters: Every time I am able to observe wildlife in a natural, undisturbed setting, whether it is a jackrabbit, weasel, goshawk, bear, coyote or chickadee. I am waiting to see wolves on my place in Paris Canyon, Idaho. That will be the top!

Other interests: Preserving my land in Bear Lake County, Idaho, for wildlife; music; backpacking and camping with my dogs; watching and photographing wildlife when the opportunity arises.

Favorite places in the West: Uinta Wilderness, Utah; southern Utah desert; Wind Rivers until they became overrun with people.

Conservation heroes: Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, Sigurd F. Olsen and Edward Abbey.

Books recently read: "Runes of the North" (Sigurd Olson), "Singing Stone: A Natural History of the Escalante Canyons" (Tom Fleischner), "First Man in Rome" (Colleen McCullough), "Desert Solitaire" (Edward Abbey, 10th time).

Quotes to live by: Thoreau: "In wildness is the preservation of the world"; Aldo Leopold: "One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds." Leopold: "I know a painting so evanescent that it is seldom viewed at all, except by some wandering deer. It is a river who wields the brush, and it is the same river who, before I can bring my friends to view his work, erases it forever from human view. After that it exists only in my mind's eye."

Three wishes for the planet: That humans become less self-centered and more carefully considerate of the environment that sustains us physically and spiritually. That the human population declines to a self-sustaining balance with nature, and that wild places are left wild. That we are able to preserve enough of the wild places and wild things for that time when humans are gone and the rest can live as nature intended for the remainder of time — without our exploitation, meddling and destruction.

RangeNet Comes to the Colorado Rockies

RangeNet 2003, sponsored by Western Watersheds Project, is slated for Nov. 5-7 at the University of Colorado in Boulder, Colo. The full agenda is nearly set, and the guest list of speakers includes Jim Baca, former director of the Bureau of Land Management.

Two days of presentations and panel discussions will be capped by Baca's keynote address Nov. 6. A reception and slide presentation by George Wuerthner, co-editor of "Welfare Ranching: The Subsidized Destruction of the American West," will open the conference on Nov. 5.

For more information and to register online, visit WWP's website at www.westernwatersheds.org

RangeNet 2003 Agenda

University of Colorado Museum of Natural History

Wednesday, Nov. 5

6:00-7:00 p.m. Conference reception. No-host bar.

7:00-8:00 p.m. Slide presentation and book-signing by George Wuerthner, co-editor of "Welfare Ranching: The Subsidized Destruction of the American West"

Thursday, Nov. 6

8:00-9:00 a.m. Conference registration

9:00-9:15 a.m. Welcome by Jon Marvel

9:15-10:00 a.m. "Public Lands Ranching: The Subsidized Destruction of the American West"

George Wuerthner, National Public Lands Grazing Campaign
10:00-11:20 a.m.: *panel*, "Counting the Losses of Public Lands Ranching"

11:20-11:45 a.m. Q & A

11:45 a.m.-1:15 p.m. Lunch break

1:15-2:30 p.m.: *panel*, "Endangered Species: Sage Grouse"

2:30-3:00 p.m. Q & A

3:10-4:30 p.m.: *panel*, "Dollars and Sense: The National Public Lands Grazing Campaign"

4:30-5:00 p.m. Q & A

5:15-6:30 p.m. Reception and dinner

7:00 - 7:15 p.m. Edward Abbey Memorial Hooved Locust Award

7:15 - 8:30 p.m. Keynote Address: Jim Baca

Friday, Nov. 7

8:15-9:00 a.m. Conference registration

9:00-10:00 a.m.: *panel*, "Carnivores, Not Cows"

10:00-10:25 a.m. Q & A

10:35-11:35 a.m.: *panel*, "Re-Wilding the West"

11:35-12:00 Q & A

12:00-1:15 p.m. Lunch break

1:15 - 3:00 p.m.: *panel*, "Beyond Federal Lands"

3:00-3:20 p.m. Q & A

3:20-4:20 p.m.: *panel*, "How the West Will Be Won"

4:20-4:30 p.m. Q & A

4:30 p.m. End of conference



Babbitt on the Rampage . . . Finally

Bruce Babbitt, former Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior, recently visited the University of Montana, bringing with him an environmental message that, though late to his political game, bears repeating. Speaking at the university's 26th annual Public Land Law Conference,

Babbitt said the country's grazing, mining and land-use policies are anathema to the 21st century. Preservation, he said, should be the priority in the management of public lands and the wildlife that inhabit them.

Laws designed in the 1800s to promote settlement in the West are unacceptable, Babbitt said. And the damage done by those policies must stop.

Here are a few excerpts of his speech:

"I am now convinced that livestock do not belong in arid deserts. . . . I am here to say the presumption that grazing is the dominant use of our public lands is the artifact of a distant past and must be replaced."

"The Forest Service was set up on the model that the forests were meant to be cut. The Forest Service came up with a concept called 'multiple use' to justify the logging of any landscape. . . . 'Be our guest. Take an acre. A homestead. Bring in the loggers. Graze your sheep. Maybe the miners can work around the trees.' Don't you see the problem? The land has limits. We have to set priorities."

"Where does the public interest lie? I say it lies in the beauty of these grand landscapes and in the ecological and biological diversity of the land."

"You had automatic entitlement to the mineral deposits you found. In the 21st century, though, shouldn't there be some limits? Isn't there a higher value on the land itself?"

"National forests are not about multiple use. They are about the dominant public use. The community has the first priority for wilderness, for water, for the integrity of these beautiful forests. If we could protect the remaining old-growth forests, it would be a start toward protecting the integrity of creation."

Grants and Thanks

The American Bird Conservancy (www.abcbirds.org) has awarded Western Watersheds Project a grant of \$25,000 to protect and restore habitat for native sage-steppe bird species.

The conservancy's mission is to conserve wild birds and their habitat throughout the Americas. It is the only U.S.-based group solely dedicated to overcoming threats to birds throughout the Western Hemisphere.

The grant is for one year and applies specifically to WWP's new office in Wyoming.

WWP has also received a grant for \$8354 from Ducks Unlimited, an international conservation group dedicated to preserving wetlands, waterfowl and wildlife, awarded WWP

\$8,354. The Peradam Foundation gave WWP \$8,500.00 and the Sperling Foundation \$5,000.

Many thanks to all of these groups for their generous support of our efforts.

WWP would also like to thank Board Member Gene Bray for the donation of a 1990 Isuzu Trooper and very generous funding for the acquisition of the McNeil Core Sampler.

WWP extends special thanks to the following WWP supporters, each of whom contributed \$100 or more to our efforts since the last newsletter.

Alliance Packaging	Steve and Gail Kearns
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Membership Policy Change

To streamline administration, many organizations have moved to a calendar-year membership system. We, too, see the sense in simplifying this part of our daily work, and we hope the new system will be easier for our members as well. Beginning Jan. 1, 2004, WWP will move all membership renewals to a calendar year. In the transition this year, members who join in November or December 2003 will be given a two-month grace period, with memberships extended until the end of 2004.

Watersheds Messenger is published quarterly for members, friends and supporters of Western Watersheds Project. Changes of address, renewals, new submissions, undelivered copies and ideas for articles should be sent to:

Western Watersheds Project • P.O. Box 1770 • Hailey, ID 83333

Phone: (208) 788-2290 Fax: (208) 788-2298

Please visit our website: www.westernwatersheds.org

Yes!

I want to become a member of *Western Watersheds Project* and help protect and restore all western watersheds. Enclosed is my tax-deductible membership donation.

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Remit checks to : WWP, P.O. Box 1770, Hailey, ID 83333. For credit card orders, fax this form to (208)788-2298 or visit the WWP website for online credit card orders. Checks drawn on U.S . funds only, please.

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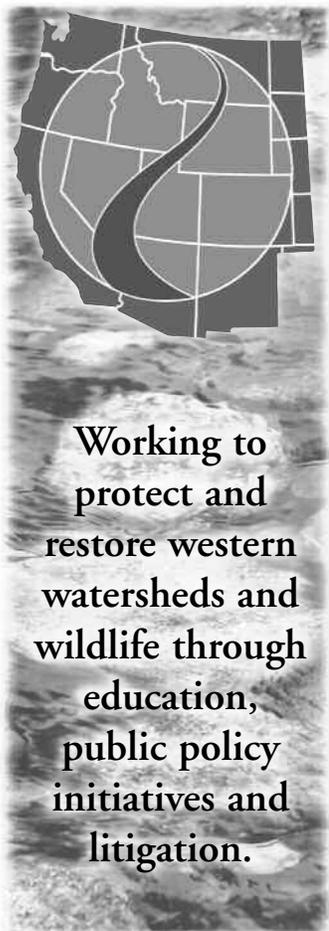
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Babbitt on the Rampage - p. 14*



◀ *Greenfire gathering: (sitting, l. to r.) Wonder dog Willow, Fabiola Urena, Gene Bray, Judy Hall, Dale Grooms, Wonder Dog Kaz, Debra Ellers, Katie Fite, Judi Brawer; (standing, l. to r.) Stew Churchwell, Kristin Ruether, Margo Nelson, John Carter, Keith Raether, Laird Lucas, Jon Marvel, Louise Wagenknecht, Bob Wagenknecht, Ann Down, Rick Hobson.*