



**Western
Watersheds
Project**

Watersheds Messenger

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Summer 2006

The Big Lost River and a Lost Way of Life

by Jen Nordstrom

Terry Tempest Williams writes "If the desert is holy, it is because it is a forgotten place that allows us to remember the sacred. Perhaps that is why every pilgrimage to the desert is a pilgrimage to the self. There is no place to hide, and so we are found."

I remember kneeling on the wet ground, the reddish-brown earth painting circles on the knees of my favorite jeans. Dew was everywhere and the smell of wet sagebrush seemed to soak into every pore. We sat watching the sun slowly begin to rise, sending streams of orange and pink light cascading over the Lost River Range. Then we heard it, the first "boom." I remember being so disappointed with that sound. There had been all of this hype over the "booming" the night before at the dinner table, and now it just sounded like my brother had popped his knuckles.

Then my dad handed me the binoculars. As a ten year old somewhat prissy girl, even I was impressed. Three or four male sage grouse were strutting back and forth on the lek in the distance. They would puff up the sacs on their throats and chest, and I just knew that if they had arms they would start beating their chests like King Kong atop the Empire State Building. Instead, they would kind of bob their heads and a hollow sounding "Pop! Pop!" could be heard. Their tail feathers were fanned out in a magnificent array, looking almost like black spears against their reddish bodies, the same color as the circles on my knees. I watched the hens peeking out of the sagebrush seeming to hide just like us, not wanting to interrupt the magnificent display.

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**Working to
protect and
restore
western
watersheds
and wildlife
through
education,
public policy
initiatives and
litigation.**



What remains of
the Big Lost River
photo © Ralph Maughan

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This is the same desert where my dad would turn my brother and me loose, and we'd spend hours looking for arrowheads among the chips of obsidian that was everywhere you stepped. On a year with good rain, the bunchgrasses would sometimes be taller than we were, and in places the sagebrush was as tall as my father. When I was young, the Big Lost River even made its way out to the desert to run through steep and narrow basalt canyons, feeding lush vegetation that provided the perfect hiding place from the scorching summer sun. We would jump from the cliffs after catching a limit of a trout, and return home to mom red from the sun, covered in mosquito bites, and smelling like the river. For us, unlike most of the people we knew, the wild places we visited didn't provide us with a place to feed our livestock or harvest trees; these places were home.

I never really knew how much the desert defined me until I returned in my early twenties seeking solace from a broken heart. I hadn't been to our place in the desert for years, but I thought that it could bring back the parts of me I had lost over the years. I knew I could find peace and solace there in the midst of my memories.

Even though I knew there would be no water in the river, I was not prepared for what I found.

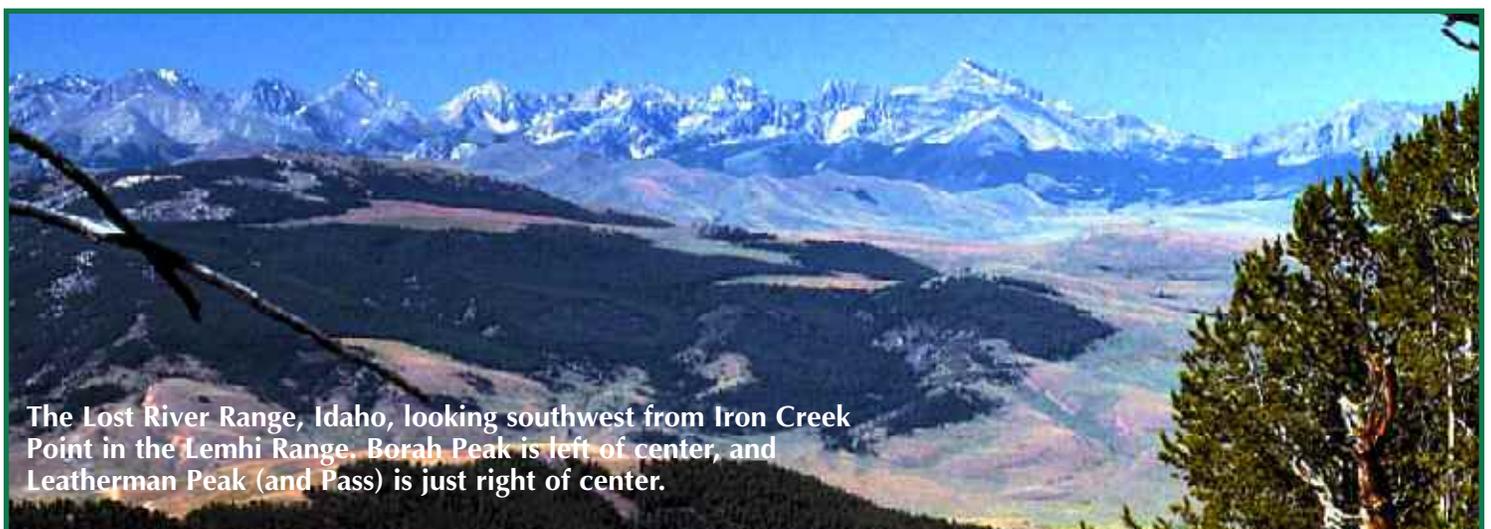
There was no tall, shiny, green grass, no sego lilies, and the lupines were chewed to stubs. A few cacti remained huddled to the desert floor, blooming in spite of the devastation. But there was no purple, no white, and not even the skeleton of a willow remained along the river bed. Every step I took resulted in a poof of dust that covered my toes and open sandals. Pooch dust, everywhere, and cow dung, and silence. I stopped to listen for the tanagers and the crickets; nothing. I walked around the dry river bed, over a small hill to a sheltered cove in the lava rocks. My dad had taken me

here years ago to show me where ancient people had sat and chipped the obsidian to make arrow heads. Round rocks had been hauled up from the river bed and lay among bleached bones that had been broken with those rocks to access the marrow within. I crested the hill and hopped down into the dent in the rocks. Everything was smashed, the ground littered with cow pies.

I felt anger surge within me, then I sat down in the dust, looked around me, and cried. I cried because I had come to this place to be reminded of what it was in myself that I was trying to save, what I was trying to heal, but it was gone. I found out later that the lek where we used to go sit on spring mornings had been abandoned, along with almost all of the others in the valley. In a meager ten years, everything was gone. I sat and wondered where my daughter would go to remember herself. Where would I take her to find the things I remembered so vividly? Where would she find solace when so much had been taken away?

That is the day that I realized the silence of the desert was an echo of the silence we as a people had embraced by failing to stand up for the places and things that cannot speak for themselves. I vowed to not be quiet anymore. I knew I could be viewed as a radical by most of the people I had grown up with if it meant saving what remained of this place. I found my voice that day and a direction. I have spent the last seven years trying to keep the livestock industry from ruining other places, and I am thankful that groups like the Western Watersheds Project refuse to remain silent, taking on the fight for protecting the west's last great places for those of us that are unable to do so.

Jen Nordstrom is an Idaho native living in Idaho Falls who works for WWP writing comments, protests and appeals of Forest Service and BLM grazing decisions and planning documents.



The Lost River Range, Idaho, looking southwest from Iron Creek Point in the Lemhi Range. Borah Peak is left of center, and Leatherman Peak (and Pass) is just right of center.



Report from California

by Todd Shuman

The WWP California Office continues its efforts to extend WWP influence throughout California. During the last two and a half years, WWP has monitored and contested numerous allotment and regional

livestock grazing proposals promoted by the US Forest Service and the BLM. We have engaged in appeal resolution efforts with the Modoc, Klamath, Sequoia and Eldorado National Forests concerning allotment-specific proposals. We have commented upon and protested BLM efforts to continue or expand livestock grazing on lands administered by the Ridgecrest and Hollister BLM Field Offices. We also continue to participate in broader collective efforts to transform livestock grazing management on the Carrizo Plain National Monument and statewide.

Currently, we are focusing our energy on efforts to extend the reach of favorable recent judicial decisions. We are prodding the Forest Service to conduct meaningful capability analyses through recent comments and an appeal of an Eldorado National Forest decision concerning the Pardoe Grazing Allotment, near Lake Tahoe. A WWP protest of a BLM Hollister FO proposal to significantly expand allowable stocking rates on a number of large grazing allotments is imminent. In an effort to compel the BLM Ridgecrest FO to conduct a much more extensive assessment of potential and likely impacts, we will likely file future protests concerning BLM Ridgecrest FO livestock grazing proposals for the western Mojave Desert.

The WWP California Office continues as a voluntary operation, and any further volunteer help is most welcome. We especially need people who are willing to help keep track of agency proposals and help develop informed responses to such proposals. We could also use help from anyone who would like to assist with public education and fundraising. Anyone who has such interest in helping in any of these areas should feel free to contact me at todd@westernwatersheds.org.

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He lives in Tehachapi, California.*

Join Western Watersheds Project

**September 29 -
October 1, 2006
for the
Fourth Greenfire Revival!**

The Revival features good food, good cheer and surprise performances and speakers. Show your support for WWP, enjoy the the great Idaho outdoors, have fun and get together with new and old friends.

Costs for two nights camping on the Preserve and four meals is \$40 for WWP members and \$60 for non-members.

Reservations accepted until September 20 or until full. A very limited number of inside bedroom reservations will be accepted. Please call for availability.

**Call WWP at 208-788-2290
to reserve your spot.**

See You There!

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Federal Land Managers; Where is Your Moral Compass?

by Jonathan Ratner

It's summertime and the fruits of corrupt and spineless land management are everywhere.

Back in 2004 a short paragraph was inserted into the Fiscal Year 2005 federal Consolidated Appropriations Act which granted authority to the Forest Service to categorically exclude (CE) from environmental analysis, grazing allotments that met a few broad loophole (i.e. semi truck sized). This tiny "rider", inserted into a massive, must-pass bill, without any debate, allows the Forest Service to bypass the bed-rock environmental law of the land including the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). While the Forest Service is expert in circumventing both the spirit as well as the letter of NEPA, by churning out bogus and fictional Environmental Analyses (EA's) and Environmental Impact Statements (EIS's), they were not satisfied with this level of obfuscation, so our dear friend, former timber industry lobbyist and now boss of the Forest Service, Mark Rey, got this tidbit slipped in the bill to get rid of even that layer of accountability.

While most National Forests have been slow to make use of this new loophole, there must have been a call from the Washington Office over the winter for Forests to get on the ball and start pushing as many allotments as possible through this exemption because, all of a sudden, the Bridger-Teton National Forest has announced their intention to exclude from NEPA analysis close to half of the all of the Forest's allotments



The BLM 'manages' for healthy aspen stands by controlling excessive utilization on the Gold Creek allotment within the Rock Springs Field Office.

over the next few months.

I have been scrambling to cover as much of the areas on which the Forest Service proposes to use their CE authority. Besides making observations of current conditions, I have also been analyzing water samples to determine if current management is meeting Forest Plan and state water quality standards. What I am finding is not pretty: down-cut streams, collapsing stream-banks, degraded fisheries habitat and water teaming with pathogens and silt with elevated temperatures approaching lethal levels for fish and macroinvertebrates. Most of the sites sampled fall below state water quality standards for fecal coliform by 10+ times, exceed temperature standards by 5+ degrees and exceed turbidity standards by 5 to 50 times.

Documents that I have obtained through FOIA are replete with descriptions such as "heavily trampled", "excess sediment", "blown out streambeds", "numerous head-cuts", "gully is down to bedrock", "excessive surface erosion and rilling", "rapid incising", "this



This spring and the riparian meadow just below, on the Gold Creek allotment, have been destroyed under the watchful eye of the BLM and the fine stewardship of the permittee.

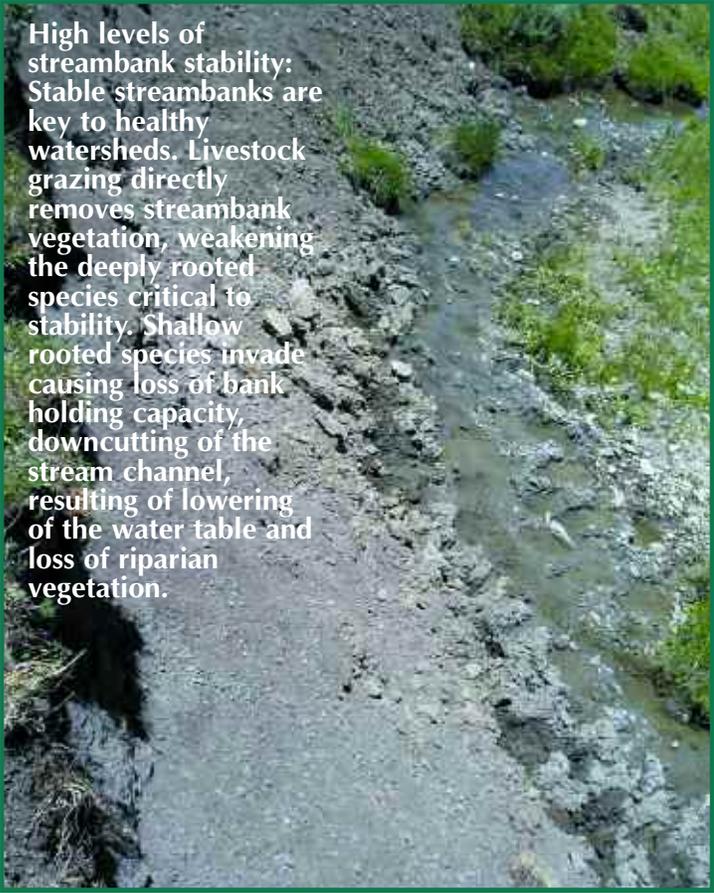
“Rampant trespass under the watchful and condoning eye of your faithful public servants..”

to the Ranger Districts involved as well as to the Supervisors Office, the Regional Office, the Washington Office, the EPA and the press in the hope that the decision-makers involved will be embarrassed into upholding their public trust responsibilities over the wishes of a few permittees.

I was out on the BLM's Gold Creek allotment for the first time a few weeks back, I noticed large numbers of cattle roaming about nearly all of the pastures of this allotment. When I called to report this trespass (and utilization levels that violated the AMP) the BLM could not even tell me in which of the pastures cattle we supposed to be in and which pastures they were not.

Well if that were not a good enough introduction to BLM “management” on the allotment, it just so happened that the BLM was scheduled to be out on the allotment doing PFC stream assessments the following week, so I joined them for 2 days. We were also joined by the permittee's daughter and the same 200-300 cows and calves in trespass that had been there the week before. It seems that the BLM did not even bother calling the permittee about the previously observed trespass, nor did the permittee, knowing that the BLM was coming to inspect the allotment, even make an attempt to cover up this massive level of trespass by moving his cattle to the correct pasture.

As the day progressed and we passed 50, 75, 100, 125, 150 then 200+ pair in trespass, the BLM folks



High levels of streambank stability: Stable streambanks are key to healthy watersheds. Livestock grazing directly removes streambank vegetation, weakening the deeply rooted species critical to stability. Shallow rooted species invade causing loss of bank holding capacity, downcutting of the stream channel, resulting of lowering of the water table and loss of riparian vegetation.

stream is hammered”, “this place needs help” and most descriptive “YIKES !!” So at least there are a few honest people in the Forest Service who tell it like it is. It is too bad the higher ups have lost such moral clarity and professional integrity.

Included with this article are a few photographs of conditions that the Forest Service thinks are meeting Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines and thus, can be categorically excluded. I have sent copies of these photos and others as well as WWP's water quality data



This once-productive spring has been destroyed by the 'current management' that the Forest Service seems to think is "meeting, or satisfactorily moving toward" Forest Plan Objectives



This allotment reflects the Forest Service plans to continue 'current management' through the use of a Categorical Exclusion (CE) to eliminate meaningful environmental analysis.

were strangely silent on this bit of basic range management. And it was not until I was about to leave that there was even a brief discussion among the group that utilization was estimated at 70% throughout most of the areas toured. No mention was made of the fact that the AMP specifies a maximum utilization rate of 40% or that utilization was nearly double what was permitted. Why bother mentioning such inconvenient

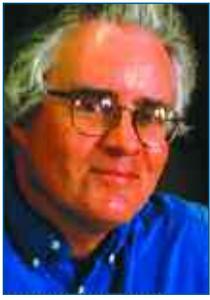
facts when the BLM is too "cowed" to even mention to the permittee that something is amiss, let alone actually take permit action for the flagrant trespass and the violation of the AMP.

Filled with admiration and respect for the moral and professional integrity of the BLM (not to speak of the permittee), I was then off to the half million acre Green Mountain Common allotment, where I was met by a similar high moral fiber and long-term management perspective. On this allotment, trespass as usual had mowed every riparian area down to less than half the minimum in the AMP long before cattle were even legally allowed to be there. With all the riparian areas already grazed to below 2' with 'just' 200-300 pair in trespass, you can just imagine what they will look like once the rest of the 1,400 pair show up during the allotted time. Here again, the BLM thanked me for my documentation of 210 pair in trespass and the excessive utilization and promptly when back to 'business as usual'.

*Jonathan Ratner is Wyoming director of WWP.
He lives near Dubois, Wyoming.
Photos in this article ©Jonathan Ratner*



Got Silt? Your National Feedlot fulfills its mission of "Caring for the Land and Serving People" This stream had fecal coliform levels well over 15 times state water quality standards.



Important Legal Actions And Wins Continue For WWP

by Jon Marvel

Since the last Watersheds Messenger Western Watersheds Project has been working overtime to cope with the continuing assault on public lands across the west by the current administration in Washington. The result of these thousands of collective hours of staff, board and WWP's lawyers' time has been some very significant victories for WWP.

On August 11, 2006 federal District Court Judge B. Lynn Winmill awarded WWP a preliminary injunction blocking parts of the Bureau of Land Management's revised livestock grazing regulations. The parts enjoined by the Court are the major reductions in BLM's obligations to involve the public in its decision-making process for grazing actions on public land. The new regulations sought to create enormous difficulties for all members of the public in seeking to influence BLM grazing management for the better across the west. The injunctive relief will prevent those from taking effect at least until the litigation is decided by the court.

WWP continues to seek additional injunctive relief for other provisions of the BLM grazing regulations that will effectively privatize water rights and livestock fencing, pipelines and related installations on the public lands and that would also allow the BLM up to ten years to modify livestock grazing if the agency determines that cattle or sheep are damaging public land.

In his decision partially granting injunctive relief, Judge Winmill stated: "The Court finds that WWP has a strong argument that the FEIS violates NEPA and FLPMA by (1) improperly minimizing the detrimental effects of the changes on public input, and (2) failing to contain information from which the Court and public could evaluate the limitations on public input contained in the new regulations. Moreover, WWP has shown the necessary possibility of irreparable harm. The public input of groups like WWP will be limited, as discussed above, and irreparable harm could result from the BLM making decision(s) without the full public input mandated by NEPA."

WWP believes that the outcome of the entire litigation looks favorable for our side, but the court case will take another several months to unfold.

On July 14, 2006 WWP filed litigation to overturn the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's decision not to list the greater sage grouse under the protections of the

Endangered Species Act. The Fish and Wildlife Service's denial was made in January 2005, and since then the conditions for sage grouse across the west have continued to decline.

On June 14, 2006 WWP filed a petition to list the Big Lost River Whitefish as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. This isolated native fish no longer is found in over 60% of its historic habitat in the Big Lost River watershed in central Idaho (please see Jen Nordstrom's article in this newsletter for more about the Big Lost River watershed) and its numbers have been diminished by an estimated 97% from historic levels. Most of the damage to the habitat of this fish has been caused by livestock production causing sedimentation of spawning streams and dewatering of tributaries as well as the mainstem of the Big Lost River through irrigation diversions.

Also in June, Judge Winmill granted WWP's injunction request preventing domestic sheep grazing on more than 2/3 of central Idaho's Smiley Creek grazing allotment in 2006. The allotment is located in the Sawtooth National Recreation Area and includes stream habitat for three listed fish species (chinook salmon, steehead and bull trout). It also provides a home for Rocky Mountain Goats and wolves a potential recovery habitat for Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep.

In other WWP legal news WWP is still awaiting a decision in another important administrative appeal of a BLM decision in Owyhee County, Idaho affecting the 70,000 acre Nickel Creek allotment. The allotment is a critical area for sage grouse habitat and has numerous streams and springs that have been badly abused by cattle over many years. The Phoenix-based administrative law judge in the appeal provided thoughtful oversight to the weeklong hearing in Boise last year, and WWP is anticipating a favorable decision in the case.

WWP has settled its litigation against the Salmon-Challis National Forest over the management of the Spud Creek grazing allotment near WWP's Greenfire Preserve in the East Fork of the Salmon River watershed in central Idaho. The case claimed the Forest service

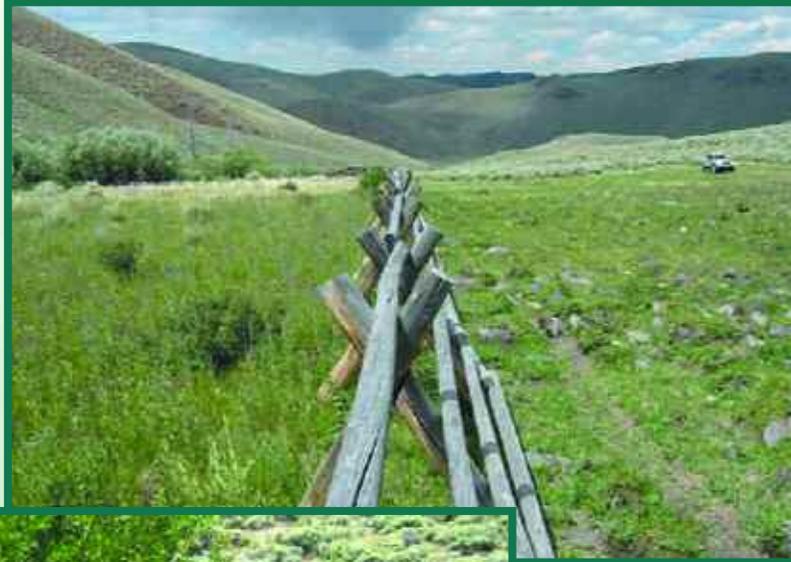
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To join WWP's Online Messenger simply send an email to wwp@westernwatersheds.org with the word subscribe in the subject line.

The Mo S A A “G

▼ Stark Fence line contrast at Boulevard Springs Enclosure (installed in 1988) North Fork Sage/Road Creek Unit



Remarkable fence line contrast at Lower End of Boulevard Springs Enclosure, North Fork Sage/Road Creek ▼



◀ Fecal Coliform Heaven, Dry Canyon Unit

The Mountain Springs
largest BLM livestock
central Idaho with all
public

The allotment is permitted to the Mo
Hewlett-Jaffe of Portland, Oregon th
Packard, William Hewlett and one of t

The allotment has a long history of p
BLM grazing permit terms and cond
apparent in 2006 as the pho

Western Watersheds Project
management of this allotment
press the BLM and Ms. Hewle
public



Mountain Allotment: Big Impact and Zero.”

Mountain Springs Allotment is the largest grazing allotment in the West, covering almost 100,000 acres of public land.

Mountain Springs Ranch owned by Mary Kay Jaffe, the daughter of co-founder of Hewlett-Packard, is one of the richest women in the United States.

Despite her efforts, the ranch is failing to meet even the very modest grazing conditions, and problems continue to be documented in photographs in this essay show.

Mary Kay Jaffe has been involved in the fight for public land since 1993 and continues to pressure the government to stop the abuses of grazing on public land.



Main cattle herd crowds remaining water in Dry Canyon Unit ▶

▼ Cow-bombed water crater near head of Dry Canyon



▼ Stock tank location destroys all vegetation, Dry Canyon.



Continued from page 7

failed to comply with its Land and Resource Management Plan by issuing an annual operating instruction to the permittees on the allotment without requiring them to maintain the fences and livestock watering systems on the allotment. WWP brought this case because our subsidiary Valley Sun L.L.C. is the majority grazing permittee (as a preferred applicant) on the Spud Creek allotment. Valley Sun is not currently grazing livestock on the allotment, but the Forest Service was requiring that Valley Sun carry out numerous onerous maintenance work on the allotment without requiring the same level of compliance from the other cattle permittee on the allotment, Wayne and Melodie Baker.

The settlement, negotiated successfully by Advocates For The West attorney Judi Brawer for WWP, requires a new analysis of grazing on the allotment and mandates that the Forest Service determine if there is sufficient water in one unit of the allotment, the Joe Jump pasture, to permit any livestock grazing at all. In the meantime that unit will be rested from livestock use.

WWP attorney Todd Tucci has successfully settled an Endangered Species Act lawsuit against the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for failing to comply with the law's requirements for a 90 day finding on a listing petition for the Columbia Sharp-Tailed Grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus columbianus*) filed by WWP and several other conservation groups. The Service has now agreed to a timetable that will be court-enforced for the 90 day finding and a later 12 month determination of qualification for listing under the ESA.

The largest remaining population of this charismatic upland bird species is in Idaho. It formerly was abundant in many other western states but has declined greatly in numbers. The Columbian Sharp-tailed grouse was first reported by the Lewis and Clark expedition in May of 2006 in what is now Oregon.

Finally, in an apparently unprecedented decision from the Department of the Interior's Office of Hearings and Appeals, Judge James Heffernan of Salt Lake City awarded WWP over \$42,000 in attorneys fees in WWP's appeal win over the Nevada BLM in the Spanish Ranch-Squaw Valley allotments northwest of Elko.

Those funds will go to the hard working WWP attorneys at Advocates For The West (www.advocateswest.org) in Boise: Laird Lucas, Judi Brawer, Laurie Rule and Todd Tucci WWP would like to extend a special thanks to all of them for their hard work !

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



Convergence by Louise Wagenknecht

As of this writing, we don't know whether Congressman Simpson's CIEDRA bill, which would — among other things — designate a Boulder-White Clouds Wilderness, will become law. The motorized off-road and snowmobiler constituencies seem to oppose it as now written. Several ranchers who were hoping that the final package would include a buyout of range allotments have been disappointed. (Frankly, I thought they had more clout than that. Perhaps they did, too.) Custer County salivates at the thought of several thousand acres of public land to privatize and tax. The city of Stanley is said to be considering using some of its added real estate to construct affordable housing.

Much of the conservation community of Idaho appears to have decided that any amount of newly protected wild land is a good thing, and that the perfect should not become the enemy of the good. However, considering the current administration's penchant for dealing with laws by either ignoring them or by promulgating regulations that skirt the intention of those laws, perhaps such optimism is premature.

I understand why people who think they ought to be able to ride their four-wheelers everywhere in the Boulder-White Clouds dislike CIEDRA. It would close some trails to them. But what in the name of Exxon Mobil makes them think that they'll be able, five or ten years down the road, to even afford the gasoline or diesel to pour into the pickup trucks that pull the trailers that haul their four-wheelers and snowmobiles to the trailheads? We all know what motor fuel costs now, but perhaps the riders of snowmobiles and four-wheelers and motorbikes haven't heard that three-dollars-a-gallon is just the beginning.

Much of the world's supply of oil comes from a handful of giant fields. For example, one of the largest fields in the world is Mexico's Cantarell. Pemex, the state-owned oil monopoly, recently announced that this year's production ~ 1.86 million barrels a day ~ will be 8% less than last year's. Cantarell is now in decline.

The very largest oil field in the world is Ghawar, in Saudi Arabia. Depending on which reports one believes, production at Ghawar is somewhere between 3 and 5 million barrels per day. We do know that Ghawar is over sixty years old and is now receiving heavy injections of sea water to maintain pressure in the wells. In the past few months, total oil production from Saudi Arabia has declined by 400,000 barrels a day. The Saudis are now hiring every spare drilling rig

in the world, even stripping rigs from the Gulf of Mexico that managed to survive the 2005 hurricane season. Where have we seen something similar before? In Texas, after 1973, when oil had tripled in price. The new Texas wells produced a lot of oil, true, but never again did production reach the levels of 1971, when Texas — and the lower 48 states as a whole — produced more oil than they ever had before or ever would again. All oil wells, all oil fields, all oil-producing countries see their production rise to a peak and then decline. Technology can sometimes slow that decline, but it cannot reverse it. In 1971 the lower 48 states produced over 9 million barrels of oil a day. Today they produce about 5 million. The problem? We consume almost 22 million barrels a day, a quarter of world production.

World oil discoveries peaked in the 1960s. New finds are smaller — think of your back yard where you always step in the biggest pile of dog poop first. If Ghawar is indeed beginning its long decline, then so is the world. Mind you, hitting the peak of production — some oil analysts think it happened in 2005 — doesn't mean "running out" of oil. What it does mean is that production will no longer grow. It also means that the only remedy for rising prices is falling demand. Oil consumption in the U.S. now grows at 2% a year. At that rate, in 35 years we would be using 44 million barrels a day.

Gasoline broke the three dollar barrier in Salmon a couple of weeks ago. At the station where I usually fill up, the owner just got a scare — his Montana distributor tells him that his next delivery may be late — he's having trouble lining up supplies himself.

On hot summer nights in Leadore, an open window brings the roar of a neighbor's diesel pump, turning an irrigation center pivot. The energy expended far outweighs the food energy in the harvested crop. At the moment, the rancher can afford to do this because he

has a large outside income. He would like to switch to electricity, but Leadore is at the end of a power line, and the electricity coursing through the lines is finite, too, and even now sometimes doesn't carry enough power to turn all the pivots on all the ranches.

Ranching as practiced in Idaho today requires large amounts of imported electricity, diesel, gasoline, herbicides, pesticides, and fertilizer. Only 50,000 Americans own more than 50 cows. Most beef growers use off-farm income or inherited wealth to support their herds. As fuel costs rise, and as all other materials made with fossil fuels rise in proportion, ranchers will try to reduce their energy use, but overall they face a convergence of circumstances that will make raising a northern European animal in the arid West less and less attractive.

As for Custer County, what will high fuel costs do to the demand for vacation homes and to the tourist trade in general? The existence of the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness and the Sawtooth NRA, far from being a drag on economic development, has attracted new residents and prevented Custer County from being depopulated a la eastern Montana. But with continued planetary warming, winter snowpack will decline, water resources will diminish, and large forest fires will increase, even as the cost of maintaining the highways that bring people to Custer County becomes prohibitive.

(As I finished writing this, word came of the shutdown of the Prudhoe Bay pipeline. Replacing that 400,000 barrels a day will be expensive and will involve lots of ocean-going tankers at a time when strong world demand has caused a tanker shortage. We are about to find out just how much of a cushion the world's oil producers have.)

Louise Wagenknecht is an author, activist and WWP Board Member. She lives in Leadore, Idaho.



photo ©NPS



Two Wrongs do Not Make a Right

by Rick Hobson

The Idaho Department of Lands (DoL) is charged with raising state funds from public lands in Idaho. Not wanting to balance failing funding by curtailing state subsidies for public lands ranching, they appear ready to consider making other mistakes.

On the 4th of August, I received an email update from Nate Helm, Idaho Director of Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife, stating that he has received questions regarding methods by which state lands could generate revenue. He was apparently pleased to announce that, and I quote, that "two proposals have indeed been made to the DoL to lease property for confined hunting operations. One proposal was from the McCall area and the other in Eastern Idaho."

"Hunting operations" is a euphemism for what is, in my opinion, a sad abuse of animals; canned hunting. A large enclosure contains tame or semi-tame animals, and these animals are conditioned to be comfortable around people and are often trained to appear at feeders regularly, at specific times. Clients of these facilities pay to shoot these animals, often at the feeders, providing themselves with a "trophy" without much effort. In some cases, operators can often offer a "no kill-no pay" guarantee.

Regardless of your thoughts on hunting in the classical sense, I would hope that we could all agree on an abhorrence of shooting animals behind fences. Quoting from the U.S. Humane Society's website on the issue, "'Fair chase'-a concept central to the philosophy of many in the hunting community-doesn't exist in canned hunts. The self-described ethical hunting community (including groups like Boone & Crockett, Pope & Young, and the Izaak Walton League) is becoming increasingly vocal in its opposition to canned hunting."

There are concrete reasons to ban canned hunting. Chronic Wasting Disease, which can destroy deer and elk herds in the wild, can incubate in game farms. The largely unregulated canned hunting industry artificially contains animals in concentrated areas, possibly increasing the likelihood of disease transmission.

In an effort to protect animals and the public, Wyoming, Montana, and California have outlawed game farms. Idaho should too.

In his update, Nate Helm suggested that the Department of Lands is apparently doing serious research on the proposed canned hunt operations; "The local regional offices for the Idaho Department of Lands are collecting input regarding the requests. They are coordinating their efforts with the Idaho

Departments of Agriculture and Fish and Game. Additionally, they have solicited information from other states currently managing lands in a similar fashion. Mike Murphy, Chief, Surface & Minerals Resources, has been tasked with collecting all of the data and providing the Land Board with a report/recommendation." I learned recently that the Department of Lands has turned down one of the proposals, but continues to struggle with funding.

Western Watersheds Project has tried for years to increase revenues to the Idaho School Endowment Trust by competing for State land leases but those efforts have been rejected because WWP opposes livestock grazing on public lands.

Since such proposals affects lands on which we all pay taxes, I would hope that the Department of Lands also consults with the public, through a comment period or public hearing. If they are indeed consulting with other states in our region, I sincerely hope they reach the same conclusion Montana, Wyoming and California already have.

We should say no to canned hunts in Idaho. For more information on canned hunting and its affects on animals, please visit The U.S. Humane Society's website at

http://www.hsus.org/wildlife/stop_canned_hunts/.

As for the Department of Lands, the answers to their funding problems are simple and direct. Accept bids from groups other than ranchers for the use of land which is supposed to be held for the public. Moreover, end the costly and destructive practice of free-range grazing on public lands.

Rick Hobson helps to produce WWP's newsletter and printed materials, and is active with following wolf issues and letter writing. He lives in Boise.



WWP Annual Meeting a Great Success

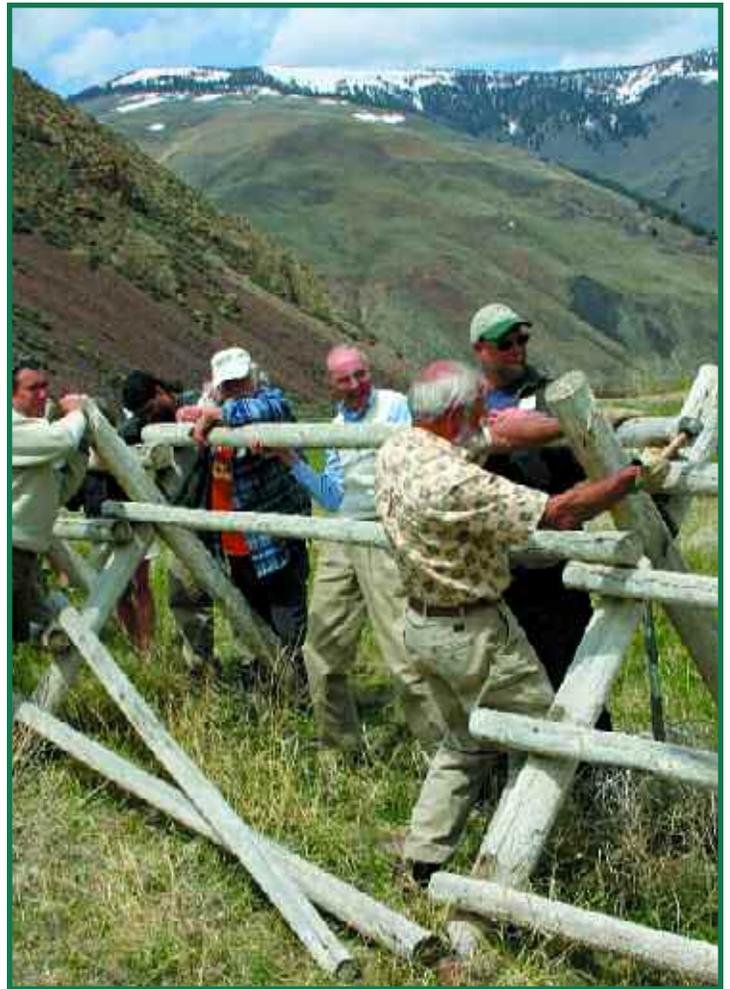
The annual Western Watersheds Project members and board meeting was held at WWP's Greenfire Preserve on May 6, 2006. Attendance was quite good with about 45 in attendance including a number of new members and excellent food and drink was available. The weather cooperated with beautiful spring weather. All 12 members of the Greenfire wild horse band attended across the river from the Greenfire House. Some visitors enjoyed a trip to the Bowery Hot Springs for a soak.

Appreciation plaques were awarded by WWP Board President Kelley Weston to retired and retiring board members Dr. Don Johnson and Gene Bray for twelve and thirteen years of service to WWP. Thank you Don and Gene !

At the afternoon annual WWP board meeting new board members Dr. Bruce Hayse of Jackson, Wyoming, Dr. Erin Anchustegui of Boise, Idaho and Dr. Ralph Maughan of Pocatello, Idaho were voted onto the WWP board along with returning member Dr. John Carter of Mendon, Utah.

Be sure to join us for the Greenfire Revival, September 29th through October 1st, 2006. The Revival features good food and good cheer. Show your support for WWP, enjoy the the great Idaho outdoors, have fun and get together with new and old friends.

Call WWP at 208-788-2290 for costs, specifics and to reserve your spot.



Retiring long-term WWP Board member Gene Bray leads the fence repair team at the May Board meeting at WWP's Greenfire Preserve

Some of the participants at the May WWP Board Meeting at Greenfire



**Front row seated or kneeling
left to right:**

Bob Dargatz,
Dr. John Carter,
Louise Wagenknecht, Katie Fite,
Jerome Rovnak, Brian Ertz

Standing left to right:

Bob Wagenknecht, Barbara Dargatz, Teri Stewart-Curtis, Gene Bray, Laird Lucas, Irene Wright, Stefanie Marvel, Lynne Stone, Dr. Ralph Maughan, Kelley Weston, Dr. Don Johnson, Jon Marvel

Canine participants in front:

Xuma, Mesa and Dobe



Finding Direction by Brian Ertz

Having been fortunate enough to be reared with the experience of Idaho's vast public lands I have grown to appreciate the unique contributions they have made to my life.

Backpacking into numerous mountain lakes of Payette National Forest gave rise to my first introspective thoughts about the nature of the world, humanity, and my own character. Enjoying hot-springs within Boise National Forest I proposed to Luna, my fiancee, and along the South Fork of the Payette River I baptized my second son. These experiences and so many more are gifts whose existence and integrity is due to conservationists of the past and present. I'd like to be a part of that.

Being at Boise State afforded me the opportunity to participate in Professor Anchustegui's enlightening 'Environmental Ethics' course. Given an objective explanation of anecdotal experiences I have witnessed including degraded stream banks, unpalatable spring water and seemingly scorched tracks of land and watersheds I resolved to become more aware of our public lands mismanagement. I asked Professor Anchustegui for advice upon which she readily gave

me a list of organizations based upon my aspirations for law school and wish that my contributions would be meaningful on the ground. Listening to and speaking with Jon Marvel representing WWP during one of his visits to BSU I learned of the ambition, integrity, and results that Western Watersheds has contributed to the conservation community. Through research I became aware of WWP's remarkable legal portfolio. Reading a few court decisions and press releases convinced me that Western Watersheds is as resolved to conserve and enforce the legal mandate of the sustainable management of our land as adversarial interests are intent to exploit it.

Katie Fite sealed the deal concerning my involvement with WWP. Her pronounced passion for wildlife, 'boots on the ground' niche, unquestionable knowledge, and warm-hearted encouragement continues to contribute to my understanding and comfort.

My hope is that my sons will know a world of diverse wildlife, pristine water sources, and a general character which recognizes the difference between 'use' and 'abuse'. Western Watersheds' service, and my involvement, is one of the best ways I know of showing them that.

*Brian Ertz attends Boise State University
He lives in Boise, Idaho.*

WWP extends special thanks to the following supporters, each of whom contributed \$100 or more to our efforts since the last newsletter. This generous assistance helps to preserve and restore habitat for many species.

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^ The U.S. uses one-quarter of the world's oil supply, while only having a fraction of the world's population. Much of this gluttony stems from the livestock industry. (Story, Page 10)

