

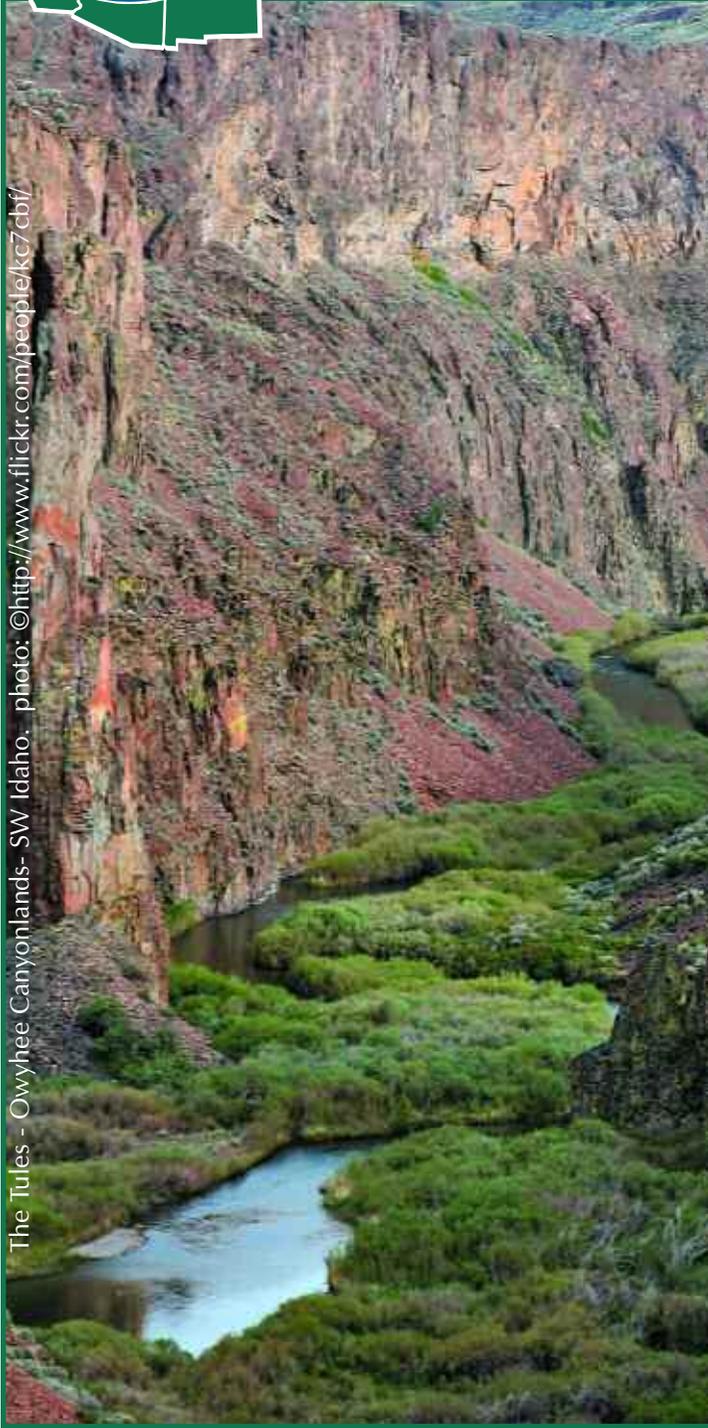


M Watersheds MESSENGER

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The Tules - Owyhee Canyonlands- SW Idaho. photo: ©http://www.flickr.com/people/kc7cbf/



Western Watersheds Project Ruby Pipeline Agreement Marks a New Milestone for Voluntary Conservation by Debra Ellers

Western Watersheds Project (WWP) ventured in a new direction with an agreement reached with Ruby Pipeline LLC, ("Ruby"), a subsidiary of natural gas energy company El Paso Corporation. This agreement, which was effective June 29, 2010, ended WWP's opposition to Ruby's proposed 676.5 mile buried natural gas pipeline. With the pipeline's route starting in Opal, WY, running west through northern Utah and Nevada, and ending in Malin OR, it connects the producing areas of Wyoming with West Coast energy consumers. Construction on the pipeline started in late July, 2010, with completion planned for Spring, 2011.

In exchange for WWP agreeing not to delay or litigate over the pipeline, Ruby agreed to pay \$15 million over ten years into a separate fund, the Sagebrush Habitat Conservation Fund (the "Fund"). The Fund's mission is to engage in voluntary conservation of sage-steppe habitat by such methods as funding grazing permit retirements, acquiring conservation easements or base properties, all strictly on a willing buyer-willing seller basis. Essentially, the Fund is envisioned as mitigation to lessen the pipeline's impact on sagebrush habitat and sensitive sage-obligate species such as sage grouse, pygmy rabbit and pronghorn antelope.

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Western Watersheds Project: Working to protect and restore western watersheds and wildlife through education, public policy initiatives and litigation.

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The Fund is organized as a separate, non-profit corporation under Idaho law. Three directors manage the Fund—one appointed by WWP, one by Ruby and the third mutually agreed upon by the other two directors. In the first five years of existence, the Fund's focus is on conservation and mitigation efforts in the counties in the vicinity of the Pipeline's route. However, the Fund is not required to take any measures in any particular county.

After five years, the Fund may seek permit buyouts or other voluntary conservation methods anywhere in the American West with sagebrush habitat. Up to \$1.5 million of the Fund is reserved for federal grazing permit buyouts or other conservation measures in the Greater Hart

Mountain-Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge area of Eastern Oregon and Northern Nevada. (Furthering the conservation opportunities to protect and restore the Greater Hart Mountain-Sheldon ecosystem, Ruby and the Oregon Natural Desert Association, WWP's sister organization, entered into a similar agreement for an additional \$7 million fund known as the Greater Hart-Sheldon Conservation Fund).

Significantly, the money from the Fund can't be used as a war chest for WWP. Funds must go directly to the Fund in support of its conservation mission, not to WWP. Moreover, the Fund is prohibited from prosecuting litigation to accomplish its goals.

With the Fund in start-up mode, one of its first steps is putting together a strategy plan for conservation priorities, with the focus expected to be on habitat that offers high value for wildlife. An example might be a large allotment with key sage grouse mating and chick-rearing grounds, which a permittee is willing to voluntarily retire in return for compensation. Another initial step is to develop an Advisory Panel who share the Fund's voluntary conservation goals and have expertise in

science, agency regulations, industry background or other areas that can assist the Fund.

A voluntary, free market approach to conservation would typically seem uncontroversial regardless of one's political or ecological perspective. However, a frenzy erupted after the Fund agreement was announced. County commissioners in places such as Elko County, Nevada and Lincoln County, Wyoming held public events denouncing the deal as the death knell for public lands grazing. (This despite economic statistics showing the pipeline would bring many

jobs, tax revenues, and money to the area while agricultural jobs and revenues make up a minimal percentage of these counties' economic base).

Environmental

blogs raged with

debates about whether WWP was "selling out." This blogging battle and unsubstantiated speculation from all sides of the spectrum brought to mind various Shakespearean phrases, such as the one from Hamlet's soliloquy "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing" or the title of the play "Much Ado About Nothing."

The reality is that voluntary grazing permit buyouts have been used successfully in many areas to remove conflicts between livestock grazing and other values such as conservation or recreation. Examples of past successful permit retirements include buyouts in the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, Great Basin National Park, the Mojave National Preserve, and in a number of National Forests around Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks.

In Idaho, through federal legislation sponsored by Senator Mike Crapo, allotments wholly or partially within the Owyhee Wilderness Areas are eligible for statutory retirements. The proposed Central Idaho Economic Development and Recreation Act, which has been spearheaded by Congressman Mike Simpson of Idaho, would designate wilderness areas in the Boulder-White



Clouds and create a voluntary grazing permit waiver and retirement program for allotments in those areas.

As those familiar with permit buyouts know, one of the main concerns associated with federal grazing retirements is that, absent congressional statutory authorization, permanency is not guaranteed. In the absence of congressional authorization for retirement, waiver of the permit back to the federal land management agency (typically, the BLM, Forest Service or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) is subject to that agency's resource or land management plan. These plans vary widely in such aspects as how long conservation non-use of a grazing permit can occur, how the agency administers waivers, and other pitfalls that can jeopardize the permanency of permit retirements. Consequently, to ensure that permit retirements would be assured, the Fund agreed to seek statutory authorization consistent with its mission.

Entering into this agreement was subject to much thoughtful debate and soul-searching among WWP board and staff. The pipeline is expected to disturb about 14,000 acres during the course of construction. After its underground installation, the pipeline will continue to have impacts from roads, pumping stations and associated maintenance. It was tough for dedicated conservationists to accept this disturbance, some of which is in previously intact sage-steppe habitat. But in the end, WWP's board decided that the Fund's potential benefits of protecting and restoring many more acres for wildlife outweighed the environmental trade-offs associated with the pipeline.



*Antelope are one of the many native species that will benefit from the voluntary retirement of federal grazing permits by the Sagebrush Habitat Conservation Fund.
photo ©Brian Ertz*

After two decades of working to conserve native wildlife and wildlands, I accepted this new assignment for WWP as its appointed director of the Sagebrush Habitat Conservation Fund with the hope of bringing increased emphasis on conservation values to public lands' management in the West. My goal is for the Fund to be a demonstration project on how conservationists and industry can work together in ways that will both enhance wildlife habitat on public lands, and give permit or property owners a voluntary incentive for changing their operations to benefit wildlife. Whatever the outcome, based on the Fund's first few months, the experience is sure to be interesting and challenging.

***Debra Ellers is WWP's Western Idaho Director and President of the Sagebrush Conservation Fund
She lives near McCall, Idaho.***



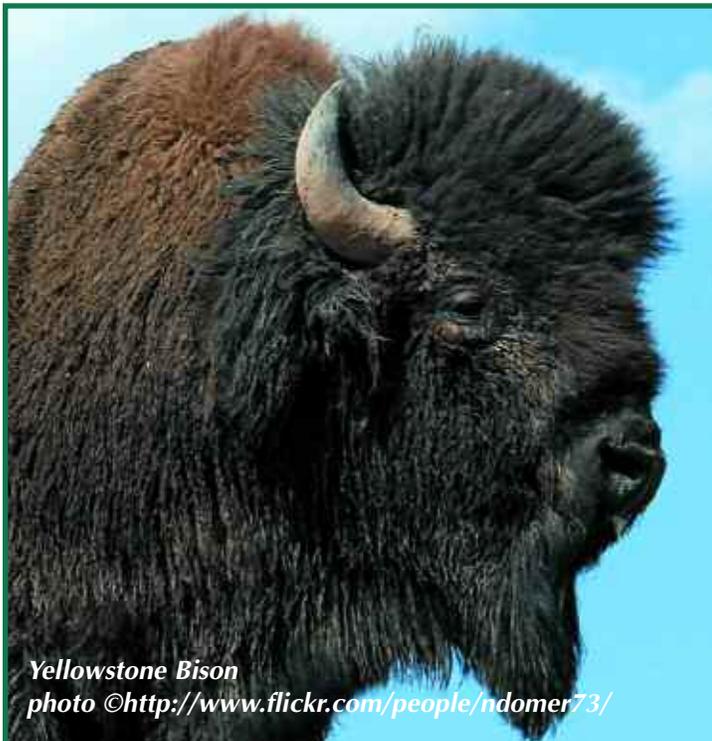
*Lamoille Canyon, Ruby Mountains Nevada
photo ©<http://www.flickr.com/people/tonyapoole/>*



**Bison Past and Future:
A Balance Finds Itself**
by Tom Woodbury

It never fails. Every time I find myself driving across the immense open space and undulating landscape of the front range in Montana, I puzzle over the absence of bison. And each time I hear about the threat posed to livestock by wolves, I wonder how different it would be if bison were out there. Just today, I was speaking to Chief Jimmy St. Goddard of the Blackfeet Nation about restoring balance to nature (versus plopping species down onto landscapes), and he stated “wolves will go where the bison are.” Humans, being lazy by nature, tend to think that given the choice between cows and bison, wolves would favor the slow, dumb ones. But we’ve never given them that choice. Since wolves co-evolved with bison, I tend to think Chief Jimmy knows what he is talking about.

Last year, WWP’s Montana office premiered “Lords of Nature” in Montana, a film documenting the importance of top predators like wolves to healthy ecosystems. Scientists were surprised to learn after reintroducing wolves into Yellowstone that there was a dramatic improvement in riparian ecosystems, benefitting fish and birds and creating



Yellowstone Bison
photo ©<http://www.flickr.com/people/ndomer73/>

a cascading beneficial effect on the food chain. Then we had a lively panel discussion that included Montana Wolf Coordinator Carolyn Syme. In arguing for management authority in federal court, Montana emphasized how “all species fit together”, with the wolf being an “integral part” of the ecosystem. But when asked why bison should not then be welcomed back to Montana, Syme refused to answer pretending the question was a matter of opinion not science.

This year we are presenting two films with a panel discussion. We’re excited to show the new High Plains Films documentary on bison, “Facing the Storm.” According to the filmmakers, the film shows that “the American bison is not just an icon of a lost world but may very well show us the path to the future.” In a second theatre, we will be showing a film that premiered at the Wildlife Film Festival last year, “The Wolf that Changed America.” It’s a remarkable story about a wolf bounty hunter named Ernest Seton who was hired in 1893 to kill America’s last wolf, a notoriously crafty and elusive wolf named Lobo, and was so changed by the ordeal that he became a global advocate for wolves and helped spearhead America’s wilderness movement. It premieres on PBS in November. Afterward, there will be a panel discussion with George Wuerthner, author of “Welfare Ranching”, Richard Manning, author of “Rewilding the West”, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commissioner Ron Moody and Chief Jimmy. Buffalo Field Campaign Spokesperson Stephany Seay will moderate the discussion.

According to recent scientific studies by independent experts, wild bison present almost no risk whatsoever of transmitting brucellosis to livestock. So the kind of balanced wildlife management approach we intend to discuss in this public forum is socially feasible, scientifically justified, morally compelling, and economically smart. Please join the dialogue.

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/episodes/the-wolf-that-changed-america/introduction/4260/>

http://www.highplainsfilms.org/fp_bison.html

**Tom Woodbury is WWP’s Montana Director
He lives in Missoula**



Paradise Regained: San Bernardino National Forest Closes Paradise Allotment

By Michael J. Connor

Western Watersheds Project's California Office is pleased to announce that the San Bernardino National Forest has released its final decision closing Paradise Allotment in California's San Jacinto Mountains to protect the endangered Quino checkerspot butterfly and its habitat. The Forest's action followed the successful appeal, spearheaded by Western Watersheds Project with our allies, Sierra Club and Center for Biological Diversity, of a prior decision to reauthorize cattle grazing on designated Quino checkerspot butterfly critical habitat on the allotment. The September 24, 2010 decision ends cattle grazing on the entire 500 acre allotment and slates the range improvements for removal.

WWP is delighted that the Forest Service responded to public concern and has acted to end cattle grazing on Paradise Allotment to better protect important habitat for this endangered species. The Quino checkerspot butterfly has disappeared from 75% of its range and protecting what is left of its habitat is the key to its survival.

The Forest agreed to revisit its prior decision during the informal resolution process triggered by

Western Watersheds Project's appeal. In this case, the Forest Service Supervisor listened to our concerns and agreed to give closer scrutiny to the Forest's obligation to conserve this endangered species. Although this is a small allotment, the result confirms that engaging in administrative appeals of grazing decisions can result in resource protection when both sides negotiate in good faith.

The Quino checkerspot is now found only in Riverside and San Diego counties in the United States. The once widespread butterfly has not been seen in its historic range in Orange, Los Angeles, or coastal San Diego counties for nearly 30 years and is extirpated from San Bernardino County. Wildfires in 2003 burned 27 percent of known occurrences in Southern California and in 2005 even more occupied habitat burned. Quino checkerspot butterfly populations have shifted northward and upward in elevation due to climate change, making the allotment lands in the San Jacinto Mountains above Palm Springs important refugia for this rare species. Livestock trample and consume the host plants on which the eggs, pupae, and caterpillars live, reduce the plants that provide nectar for the adult butterflies, and spread invasive plants that degrade the habitat and increase the risks for catastrophic fire.

***Dr. Michael J. Conner is WWP's
California Director. He lives in Reseda, CA***



*Habitat now Free to Recover
photo ©Mike Connor*



The Endangered Species Act is Broken, but Who is Going to Fix It?

by Larry Zuckerman

Recent decisions in the Northern Rockies by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)

concerning the imperiled fishes, Montana fluvial grayling and Big Lost River mountain whitefish, may have made the writing on the wall large and very legible – “EXTINCTION”.

The Congressional intent of ESA appears to be forgotten, at least by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the “recipe” for rescuing species appears lost.

After repeated ESA listing petitions and Federal lawsuits by Western

Watersheds Project and its conservation partners, the Obama Administration could have righted some wrongs made by the previous administration but did nothing and failed miserably. Instead of doing the biologically right thing of including the Montana fluvial grayling and the Big Lost River mountain whitefish under the protective Federal “wing” of the Endangered Species Act, they “cow-towed” to the political pressures of Western politicians and the influence wielded by cattlemen and irrigators. Clearly the Washington Belt Way remains distant from the Public Trust resources of the American West.

Rather than utilizing some of their own biological expertise, Department of the Interior decision-makers lean heavily on relatively obscure “rules” for prioritizing ESA species listings and critical habitat designation actions, which have little to do with ecological reality. In the case of the Montana fluvial grayling, which used to range throughout the Upper Missouri River Basin, including such fly fishing meccas as the Madison, Jefferson, Gallatin, Beaverhead, Upper Missouri

River, and the entire Big Hole River in enormous numbers noted by Lewis and Clark, the FWS conceded in the September 8th Federal Register that the Montana fluvial grayling was indeed once again considered by the Federal government to be a Distinct Population Segment (“DPS”) and indeed it warranted listing as threatened or endangered under ESA. However, because it is considered a DPS, no matter how imperiled it is, according to the FWS’s ESA Handbook, it automatically has a lower priority than “subspecies”, “species” and the highest ranked “monotypic genus” or genera (i.e., a genus that has only one species in it).



Fluvial Grayling
photo ©<http://www.flickr.com/people/leavell-ashton/>

After more than twenty years of legal wrangling, the colorful, high-finned salmonid is right where it was originally; that is, except that numbers, range, and available flows continue to shrink; squeezing this stunning fish towards extinction.

All are wringing their collective hands as fluvial grayling go belly-up and fade into memory.

It looks like the genetically unique and geographically isolated Big Lost River mountain whitefish is destined to follow the Montana fluvial grayling downstream into oblivion. In April 2010, the FWS announced their decision not to list this endemic Idaho whitefish even though they conform to previous listing decisions claiming that they don’t even constitute a DPS and therefore are not listable.

The last time a type of fluvial Arctic grayling went extinct (the Michigan fluvial grayling) a new conservation organization Trout Unlimited, arose like a Phoenix from its ashes. I hope I don’t have to see what new groups form in response to the demise of the Montana fluvial grayling and Big Lost River mountain whitefish; rather, I pray for a healthy and functioning Endangered Species Act and their conservation and recovery.

**Larry Zuckerman is the Central Idaho Director for Western Watersheds Project
He lives in Salmon, Idaho**

The Public Trust

An Editorial Published October 3, 2010
The New York Times

Editor's Note: The following editorial is about two of Western Watersheds Project's recent court victories.

The Interior Department's Bureau of Land Management oversees about 250 million acres of public land in the West. Much is leased out, some to energy and mining companies, but mostly to ranchers for grazing cattle and sheep. The bureau is supposed to find a balance between the public interest and the interest of the leaseholders - upholding the public interest whenever conflicts arise.

In the 1990's, the bureau took this responsibility seriously, requiring ranchers to observe sensible grazing practices that protected the environment. Then came the George W. Bush administration, which eased the regulations to please the ranchers, many of whom had begun to think of the land they were only renting as their own.

Two recent court decisions have now reasserted the public interest. A panel of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled last month that the Bush regulations violated environmental laws by limiting public participation in bureau decisions and weakened the ability of federal and state agencies to prevent harmful grazing practices and manage rangelands in an environmentally sound way.

Two weeks later in Idaho, United States District Court Judge Candy Dale ruled that the bureau must end its policy of withholding the names and addresses of people with grazing permits on 160 million acres of its land.

This is one way, she wrote, of "understanding the scope of the grazing and rangeland program," its environmental impact and its costs.

The Forest Service does not withhold the names of the ranchers who lease its lands, and neither should the Bureau of Land Management. These lands do, after all, belong to the public.

Some holders of the bureau's grazing leases have been excellent stewards of the land. Some have not. The government's job is to make sure that all of them are, by ensuring transparency in its leasing

operations, upholding environmental laws and reminding leaseholders that they hold their leases in trust for the rest of us.



Western Watersheds Now On Facebook

For a look at a more irreverent and personal take on public lands, watersheds, and wildlife issues by a few dedicated WWP authors, check us out on Facebook! Comments are always welcome.

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Western-Watersheds-Project/187046332910>



Western Watersheds Project: Removing Fences and Restoring Watersheds

Six hardy volunteers recently trekked into Big Canyon, a remote part of Hells Canyon about 6 miles north of Pittsburg Landing, Idaho. Their goal for the week of September 19-25, 2010: to remove old wire fencing that presented hazards to wildlife, hunters and hikers. This project was part of WWP's Western Idaho office's focus on bighorn sheep restoration because Big Canyon is home to bighorn sheep. Big Canyon's upland bunchgrasses are an important source of bighorn sheep forage and its rocky cliffs and steep terrain provide the wild sheep's preferred habitat.

The fence removal project was organized in collaboration with Hells Canyon National Recreation Area (HCNRA), which is administered by the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, and was located on an old ranch known locally as the "Walters Ranch," now part of the HCNRA. According to HCNRA staff this ranch ran domestic sheep starting in the 1940's and eventually switched to cattle but was abandoned in the 1970s. A maze of sheep wire and barbed wire fences encircled the abandoned ranch's former pastures, presenting risks to unsuspecting wild sheep and other animals as they roamed and foraged.

Working in difficult conditions including thorny hawthorne and wild rose thickets, rain (rare in Hells Canyon) and intense sun (common in Hells Canyon), the fence removal team successfully pulled, rolled, stomped, and otherwise rid the land of about three miles of unwieldy sheep fencing and barbed wire.

Highlights of the trip included a sighting of a glossy black bear, which frequented the old ranch's apple trees to gorge on fruit, a symphony from songbirds and crickets in the thickets of native shrubs and trees, and the full moon gleaming silver on the steep slopes of Big Canyon.

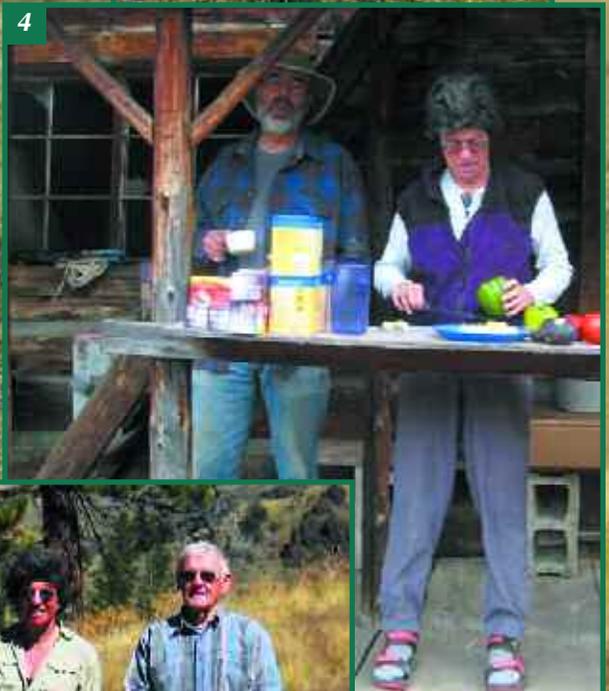
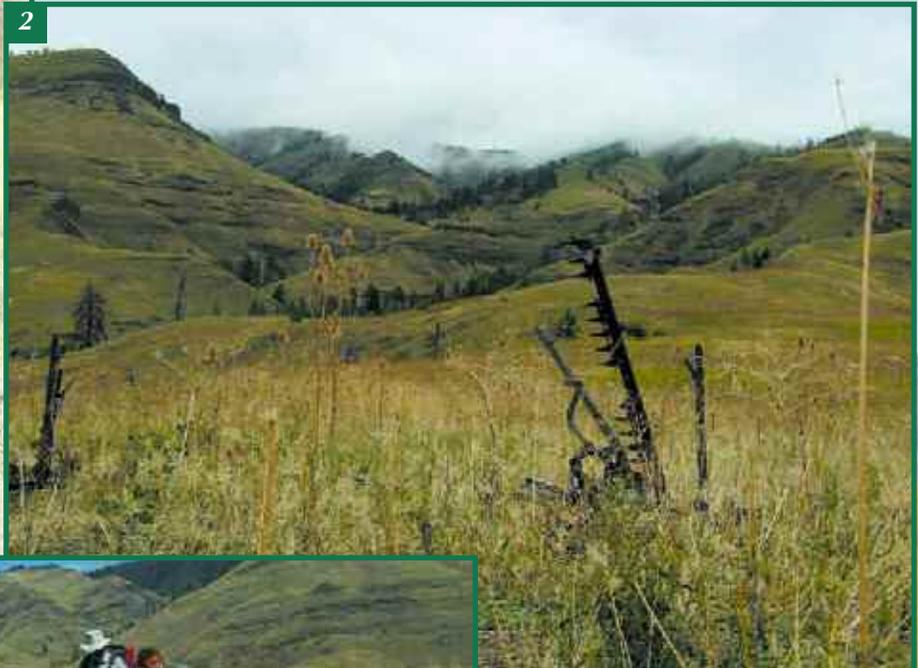
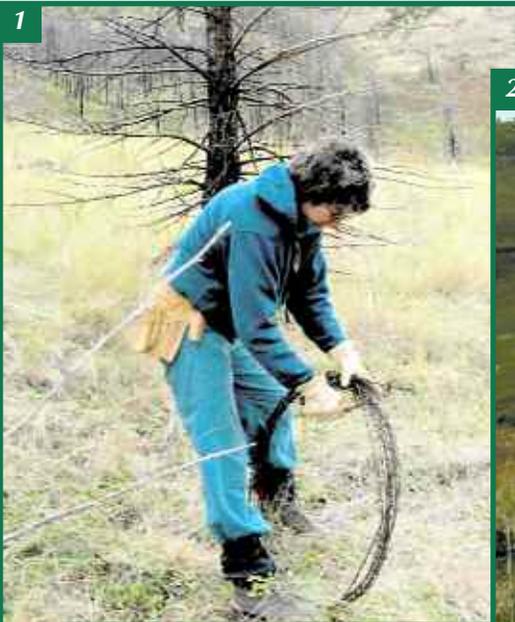
Western Idaho Director Debra Ellers and Western Idaho Data Specialist Dale Grooms handled the trip's logistics and also participated as volunteers. Additional volunteers were Don Clarke, Scott Murdock, Mary Kay Netolick and Tom Pringle. WWP thanks these volunteers for their hard work and willingness to restore western public lands and wildlife. WWP also thanks HCNRA staff Cathy Conover for her support in packing in the group's supplies and for developing this beneficial project.

Because of this project's success, the Western Idaho office has been invited to do another fence removal project in Hells Canyon in spring of 2011. WWP looks forward to removing more old fencing to benefit native wildlife and restore the wild landscapes of this special area, the deepest canyon in North America!

Photos:

- 1) WWP's Debra Ellers bundles barbed wire, an environmental hazard, for removal.
- 2) Long after cattle, ranching infrastructure continues to harm habitat and wildlife.
- 3) One of the 19 piles of wire removed by Western Watersheds Project.
- 4) Hard work demands hardy grub. Debra Ellers prepares food.
- 5) WWP's Big Canyon fence removal volunteers: L to R: Dale Grooms, Tom Pringle, Mary Kay Netolick, Scott Murdock, Debra Ellers, Don Clarke.

All photos ©Dale Grooms unless otherwise noted.





Welfare Ranchers, Wolves, and the Externalization of Costs

By George Wuerthner

Cows are routinely left to forage without any supervision, making them vulnerable to predators.

We continuously hear the livestock industry talking about “problem” wolves—those animals that attack untended livestock. Yet the real issue is “problem ranchers” who externalize one of the costs of doing business—namely operating a livestock operation in a manner that reduces or eliminates predator opportunity.

To make an analogy think of how we used to let polluting industries use our rivers as open sewers, often resulting in fish kills and polluted waters that were unfit for swimming and domestic water use. Thankfully, we passed legislation that made many of these industries internalize the cost of production by making it illegal to dump pollutants in our waterways.

Thus far, however, we have not applied the same legal requirements upon ranchers who have successfully transferred one of the legitimate business costs of livestock production—namely animal husbandry practices that result in a reduction of predator opportunity—on to the public at large, and on to the backs of predators.

For several hundred years, livestock producers have enjoyed a largely predator-free landscape. Typically they had the public fund their war on predators. Starting with the Massachusetts Bay Colony that in 1630 put a bounty on wolves,

livestock producers have succeeded in getting others to pay to exterminate predators. The eradication of wolves from the landscape continued with settlement of the West. In 1843 one of the very first political action by Oregon settlers was creation a tax on all citizens, not to pay for things like roads or schools, but rather a wolf bounty. Similarly, some 80,730 wolves were killed in Montana for taxpayer-funded bounty between 1883 and 1918.

The common assumption was that what was good for ranchers was good for society as a whole, much as the old saw suggested that what was good for General Motors was a benefit to the country as a whole. At least that is how the livestock industry has successfully sold the idea that taxpayers should subsidize their business operations.

When bounties did not completely eliminate predators like wolves, the livestock industry successfully lobbied to have the federal government (you know the hated feds) create the Biological Survey in 1914. At its height of predator control efforts, the Biological Survey had more than 200 agents hired whose chief duty was to track down and kill the last predators, including extirpation of wolves from national parks like Yellowstone.

Today ranchers continue to enjoy taxpayer funded federal predator control. This federal subsidy has allowed the West’s welfare ranchers to avoid one of the costs of production—namely practicing good animal husbandry practices that reduce predator opportunities and losses. Indeed, the livestock industry has externalized this cost on to the public at large and grown so used to federal predator control that they now consider a predator free environment a “right”.



Wyoming Cowboys rope a Wolf in the early 1900's
U.S. Library of Congress photo



Government-subsidized Eating Machines
Photo ©<http://www.flickr.com/people/turbotoddi/>

Keeping in mind that most predators routinely avoid preying on livestock even when there are numerous opportunities to do so, it behooves ranchers to implement practices that can and do reduce livestock losses to predators. However nearly all these practices require some additional time and effort by livestock operators-thus translates into additional costs for ranchers. It is well established that predators like wolves often get their first taste of domestic livestock by feeding on a carcass. Thus rapid and proper disposal of dead animals greatly reduces the likelihood of future predation losses. A study in Europe found that failure to remove carcasses increased the chances for future depredation by 55 times.

Another study of wolf predation on domestic sheep in the French Alps found that confining and/or simply gathering sheep at night in the presence of 5 livestock-guarding dogs prevented most kills (94% and 79%, respectively) that would have occurred in similar conditions but with free-ranging sheep.

These are only a few of the practices that greatly reduce predator opportunity and thus the presumed "need" for predator control. It's clear that it's possible to run livestock with fewer predator losses if proper animal husbandry practices are implemented.

However, since ranchers have convinced the public, including far too many environmental organizations, that they have a "right" to a predator free existence, the livestock industry has no incentive to change its ways. Instead livestock are routinely placed out in distant pastures with little or no oversight and supervision for months at a time, providing predators an easy meal. When

ranchers treat their animals with such a cavalier attitude, who can blame a predator for being tempted by a beef or lamb dinner?

Payment for livestock losses, as was done until recently by Defenders of Wildlife, while it may mollify some rancher opposition, only legitimizes the idea that ranchers have a right to be compensated for losses that result from their own poor animal husbandry practices. This is not much different than the government practice of providing "disaster relief" to people who unwisely build homes in a flood plain of a river, then demand the government assist them after a flood destroys their home. Such "disasters" are easily avoided, just as most predator losses are avoidable if ranchers were forced to utilize proper animal husbandry practices.

However, animal husbandry is not the only way that livestock producers are to blame for many of their own problems. Ironically, predator control, as well as sport hunting as advocated by state wildlife agencies, often leads to greater livestock losses by disrupting predator social ecology of predators.

A study by Hayes and Harestad found evidence that packs experiencing control and/or hunting had higher mortality rates as a direct consequence of reductions, thus pack sizes are smaller, home ranges were less stable and occupied at variable times and more young are produced in the population. Wolf populations dominated by younger animals with less stable territories are far more likely to attack domestic livestock.

Younger animals may breed earlier, and in exploited populations produce more young. Young growing pups consume more biomass (meat) than adults, creating a greater need to obtain food.



Photo ©<http://www.flickr.com/people/wsk/>

Typically in exploited populations, pack size is smaller, with only the breeding adults to raise pups, putting greater pressure on adults to obtain easily available meat. Plus young pups reduce the mobility of the pack, limiting the area where adults can seek prey. Thus predator control and indiscriminate hunting puts increased pressure on the few adults to obtain meat, often by attacking livestock.

The effects of lethal control and/or hunting on pack stability can lead to social disruptions and loss of territory. A study which pooled data on 148 breeding wolf packs showed that the loss of adult breeders (from any causes including natural mortality) often leads to the dissolution of the pack, loss of pack territory and/or limited breeding in the following season. For instance, in 47 of 123 cases (38.2%), groups dissolved and abandoned their territories after breeder loss. Of dissolved groups, territorial wolves became reestablished in 25 cases (53.2%), and in an additional 10 cases (21.3%) neighboring wolves' usurped vacant territories.

Thus any increases in mortality caused by human hunting and/or lethal control may disrupt social interactions between packs, and lead to the loss of social/cultural knowledge including knowledge of prey habitat use, migration routes, and so forth that long time residency by family lineages may provide. Again this increases the chances that wolves will turn to livestock as a food source.

While almost no one would begrudge the occasional and surgical elimination of a chronic livestock killer, the indiscriminate killing of predators as part of a systematic predator control program and/or as a consequence of sport hunting, only exacerbates conflicts between livestock producers and predators.

Finally, there are the indirect effects upon wolf prey created by the mere presence of domestic livestock. There is no free lunch. When the bulk of forage in any given area is allotted to domestic livestock, there is less plant production to support elk, deer, and other wolf prey. On many public lands, the vast majority of all forage is consumed by domestic livestock, leaving far less of the forage pie for wild herbivores like elk, deer, and pronghorn. Even in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, which harbors the greatest concentration of wild ungulates (deer, elk, etc.) in the United States, the majority of all forage on public lands is allotted to domestic animals.

Many studies have demonstrated that wild animals tend to avoid domestic livestock. Thus when cattle and sheep are moved on to public rangelands, the wild ungulates move elsewhere. If, for instance, there were a wolf pack dened in that area, the wolves are left with little to eat in the immediate area of the den other than domestic livestock-again creating a conflict that would not occur in the absence of domestic livestock.

Ironically while hunters and state wildlife agencies lobby to kill more wolves, they totally ignore that fact that domestic livestock grazing in effect "gets" more elk and deer by displacing them from favorable terrain and/or eating forage that would otherwise support far larger ungulate populations than are ever killed by predators.

In the end, the best way to reduce human conflicts with predators, as well as realize the ecological benefits associated with having top predators widely distributed across the landscape, is to require better animal husbandry practices from livestock producers, and to eliminate the predator control and/or sport hunting that disrupts predator social ecology. It's time that livestock producers are forced to internalize one of their real production costs which in turn would mean slightly higher costs for consumers who ultimately should bear any additional costs of producing livestock without placing the burden upon predators and/or a landscape denied the positive influences of large predators.

George Wuerthner is a noted author, photographer and naturalist and is a member of WWP's Advisory Board. He lives in Vermont.

A Farewell to Friend and Activist Tim Lengerich by Greta Anderson

At the end of August, our friend and ardent supporter, Tim Lengerich, passed away at his beloved Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge in Arizona. A resident of Tucson but a denizen of wild deserts, Tim was sixty years old. He was a “desert song-catcher,” having written and recorded dozens of songs about the beauty of wild places and the institutionalized mismanagement of public lands. In particular, he hated the federal livestock grazing program; he was extremely proud to be a member of WWP. His support for the Arizona office came whenever he saw a win posted on RangeNet, where he had also been a member for many years.

Never a “professional” enviro, he was nonetheless a highly-motivated activist, filling the “Letters to the Editor” sections of local papers with his concerns about land management issues. Apparently, when he lived in Ajo, Arizona, the “Ajo Copper News” didn’t just publish Tim’s letters, but letters from other people about Tim’s letters. His ideas were often the talk of that small town.

He also wrote many letters to the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, filling inboxes with eloquent descriptions and photographs of cowpies, flies, carcasses and urine puddles. He liked to brag about the federal investigators that were sent to his house because he was making the Forest Service nervous with his verbal fury.

Tim’s fury was often channeled through his wit, and he was also known for his great sense of humor. Exhibit A, sent to the Arizona BLM in June, 2010:



Tim Lengerich

*The BLM
E'er ranchers
They're behind
While here am I
A wonderin' why
They don't kiss mine
Sometime.*

His concern for the environment wasn't restricted to livestock issues, and Tim took on topics such as development, off-road vehicles, and the border fence. Tim did more than simply complain about environmental problems. He also spent a lot of time admiring “Mother Nature” and documenting natural beauty through photographs. In the summer of 2010, he uploaded many photos of flowers, butterflies, mushrooms, and landscapes to his Picasa website. His love and reverence for the land is apparent in his photos.

Tim is probably best known for his songs. He wrote prolifically about the desert, the mountains, women, and what he wanted from his life (“Out there, anywhere, all the time”). Some of you may remember Tim from his visit to the Greenfire Preserve, a visit memorialized in the song, “Greenfire Revival.” This and others of Tim’s songs and a couple of videos are housed on the RangeNet website. Unfortunately, in recent years, Tim was unable to sing due to recurring and severe gastric reflux disorder.

Tim’s creative responses to the joy and the pain of the world were much appreciated by all those who knew him, and he will be deeply missed. He leaves behind his extended family in the Midwest, and WWP extends our condolences to them.

Tim's family designated WWP as a recipient of memorial donations. In this way, Tim's support for our work continues.

See Tim’s Photos and hear his music at <http://wildwolves.homeip.net/tim.html> .



Photos ©Tim Lengerich



Return to WWP's Lake Creek Conservation Lease

The photo was taken at Lake Creek on October 2, 2010. The trip to the lease from Greenfire was to observe the recovery of the riparian area after 12 years without cattle. Lake Creek is a tributary of Herd Creek which flows into the East Fork of the Salmon River in central Idaho. Herd Creek is one of the most important salmon and steelhead spawning areas in central Idaho. This 640 acre Idaho State lease is Idaho public school endowment land that was the very first grazing lease applied for by WWP in 1993. We can say that the lease is the reason for the creation of WWP! In 2010 the lease was converted from a grazing lease to a conservation lease for riparian and fisheries habitat protection.

The conditions on the riparian area have improved dramatically since 1993. You can see comparison photos from 1994 and 2007 on the WWP web site here: <http://www.westernwatersheds.org/issues/public-lands-ranching/lake-creek>

From Left to Right: Ken Cole, WWP NEPA Coordinator; Louise Wagenknecht, WWP Board; Ralph Maughan, WWP Board; Jackie Maughan, WWP member; Louise Lasley, WWP Advisory Board; Jon Marvel, WWP executive director; Debra Ellers, WWP Western Idaho Director; Dale Grooms, WWP Western Idaho Data Specialist; Natalie Havlina, attorney at Advocates For The West; Kristin Ruether, attorney at Advocates For The West; Summer Nelson, WWP Montana Legal Counsel; Jonathan Ratner, WWP Wyoming Director. Foreground: Reggie the Dog

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

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^ "...the Fund is to be a demonstration project on how conservationists and industry can work together in ways that will both enhance wildlife habitat on public lands, and give permit or property owners a voluntary incentive for changing their operations to benefit wildlife." - Page 1