



CLEARWATER DEFENDER

NEWS OF THE BIG WILD

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BY AMY STEELE



Looking up John's Creek, photo Will Boyd

John's Creek: The Second Attempt

Alan Schonefeld

When the first try to hike John's Creek with Friends of the Clearwater was rained out, we finally got good weather for the reschedule in June. The group was small but in good spirits and determined to have a fun time. John's Creek is an unroaded island on the South Fork of the Clearwater surrounded by Forest Service multiple abuse.

Having been there many times I knew what to expect; this is a cool place to be sure. Our destination was Gilmore Ranch, a small inholding located on a big meadow with the Gospels in the background-- a very scenic setting. Usually you can expect to see elk in the meadow, and this day was no exception. We started hearing them long before we saw them. Luckily we had the "Elk Man of Moscow Mountain" with us so we could talk back to them. He really did have a good cow call. We encountered 20 to 30 elk total, some only a few days old. We watched wildlife for quite a while, adding a moose to our count.

After lunch we hiked out the other trail coming to the meadow, which afforded us a loop trip, making it nice. It was a long walk, but definitely worth the effort. As usual on FOC hikes, the best part was visiting with old friends and making new ones. □



Deer near Porcupine Creek, Photo from motion-detecting camera

The Strategy to Privatize the Public Domain

Bill Willers

Editor's Note: This article is Part I of a three-part series by Bill Willers. The essay in its entirety can be found at www.wildrockies.org/foc. It was originally published under the same name on the now defunct website of The Liberal Slant published April 21, 2003.

"The organizing principle of this paper is one of ascending radicalism from reform through volunteerism and privatization of services to the outright abolition of public ownership and the transfer of the parks to private parties."

- James P. Beckwith, Jr., 1981.

"Virtually everything President Bush is doing to America is, at some level, related to privatization of our commons. Today we are witnessing the middle game portion of the Corporate Takeover of Everything Agenda. It scares me to imagine what the end-game will look like."

- Scott Silver, 2003

The coordinated and decades-long effort to privatize the public lands of the United States, nearly a third of the nation, is now bearing fruit. The Sagebrush Rebellion of the 1970s that sought to transfer power to states and local units, and that provided the Reagan Administration with James Watt as Interior Secretary, morphed into the Wise Use Movement that sprinkled antigovernment grassroots organizations across the nation. Wise Use, in turn, has given rise to so-called "free-market environmentalism" that consists largely of a network of corporations and conservative foundations and think tanks intent on gaining control of the public domain.

This collective is using all of its political clout, every legal loophole, every economic argument, and all of the public relations and media spin its billions can buy. Privatization, the word, is frequently avoided in favor of code terms such as "public - private partnerships", "competitive outsourcing" and "stewardship contracting". Platoons of Bush appointees, right out of industry, are now rewriting regulations to move the privatization agenda rapidly forward.

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Friends of the Clearwater, a recognized non-profit organization since 1987, defends the Idaho Clearwater Bioregion's wild lands and biodiversity through a Forest Watch program, litigation, grassroots public involvement, outreach, and education. The Wild Clearwater Country, the northern half of central Idaho's Big Wild, contains many unprotected roadless areas and wild rivers, and provides crucial habitat for countless rare plant and animal species. Friends of the Clearwater strives to protect these areas, restore degraded habitats, preserve viable populations of native species, recognize national and international wildlife corridors, and to bring an end to commodity extraction and industrialization on our public lands.

Friends of the Clearwater is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All contributions the Friends of the Clearwater are tax-deductible.

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Citizen Scientists Study the Coeur d'Alene Salamander with FOC

Amy Steele

Friends of the Clearwater is doing its part for scientific research on the Coeur d'Alene salamander population in Idaho. This summer, volunteer citizen scientists organized by FOC took three trips to the North Fork Clearwater River to observe and collect data on the suspected imperiled species.

The Coeur d'Alene salamander can be found in the wet forests of North Idaho, southern BC, and western Montana. Monitoring trips this summer focused on the Clearwater drainage, where periodic data has been collected since the 1950s. The groups for each trip consisted of about four Moscow citizens who were interested in observing wildlife and gathering scientific data.

"It's fascinating and enlightening when you see that a species is worth saving and knowing more about."

Adrienne Boland, an intern with FOC, became interested in the project when she began work with the organization in the beginning of June this year. Since the species is considered sensitive by the U.S. Forest Service, Boland wanted to attain some reliable and complete research on the mysterious salamander.

"There have only been about four or five studies in the Clearwater region" Boland said. "And the research to date has lacked cohesion and vision."

The species, found in waterfalls, spring seepages and streamsides, breathe through their moist skin. Egg masses have never been found in the wild, but adult mating rituals have been observed above ground. Boland hopes she's able to capture the act on video during mating season on one of the next trips in late summer and fall.

The project was designed to determine if the number of salamanders is, in fact, declining and to observe their habitat. Although the groups were able to monitor salamanders at Skull Creek during the first trip and at several more sites during the

second, Boland would like to see the project develop into something bigger.

"Once a month isn't enough to correctly assess if they are extinct at a certain site or just hiding out," she said.

The area of study is a low elevation canyon with rainforest-like characteristics-warm weather and high precipitation. Will Boyd, Education Director for FOC, said that coastal disjunct areas, like the Aquarius RNA, are deep canyons that were far enough south to avoid the most recent glaciation. They remained mild and wet enough to preserve species that may have otherwise been lost during the drying of the interior west.

"Coastal disjunct is thought to be a pocket of refuge for species in climate change," he said.

Not only are the unique disjunct forests home to the Coeur d'Alene salamander, but also to other coastal life like red alders, western red cedar and rare ferns known as moonworts.

"The area almost reminds me of a rainforest, especially in the spring," Boland said.



*Coeur d'Alene salamanders found during the mid-July trip
Photos by Adrienne Boland*



Her goal is to live in the area for a long period of time to study the species every day in order to constantly monitor their activity.

"I want to really research everything so I can get an accurate representation for future groups," Boland said. "It's fascinating and enlightening when you see that a species is worth saving and knowing about." □

Privatization

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Beckwith, 1981

The architects of free market environmentalism have been candid. The quotation above, from an essay written by law professor James P. Beckwith, Jr. and published in the *Cato Journal* in 1981, dealt with the privatization of public parks, but its principles are applicable to all public lands. In brief, the stepwise strategy has been to begin the privatization process with volunteerism, and then to transfer to the private sector positions now held by government employees. Finally, public ownership would simply become a memory.

Beckwith argued that public ownership of parks is a “monopoly [that allows for] suboptimal pricing”. He acknowledged that low fees exist because federal law requires that they be “fair and equitable” but claimed this is simply a political ploy by legislators to win votes from “voters who consume recreation.” Parks should not belong to all of the people, he argued, but only “to those who use them, and that is only some of ‘the people’”. His plan to privatize was simple: “Existing public parks could either be given away or sold to the highest bidder.” Without doubt, major corporations and the very wealthy would quickly become the new owners. In the world Beckwith set forth, we who are presently the owners of the land, become known variously as “customers”, “clients” and “consumers”.

Beckwith understood that a sudden takeover of public land would quickly trigger reaction and proposed that privatization be introduced by degrees, with the “most tentative step” being recruitment of volunteers and later “the contracting out of support services to private firms operating for profit”. Governmental bureaucrats, he argued, have no incentive to economize, and with low-bidding private companies providing services, the system would function with maximum economic efficiency.

A shift in this direction is now advancing rapidly in the Department of Interior. Just a year ago Interior Secretary Gail Norton reported that some 3,500 positions in the U.S. Park Service would be marked for privatization. Now, as of January, 2003, Interior, after hiring (for a reported \$5 million) the firm CH2MHill to produce a “competitive sourcing” plan, has expanded the plan to privatize 11,807 of the 16,470 positions in the U.S. Park Service - nearly 72%. According to Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER), the contract was simply given without any bidding process to CH2MHill, a company that is anything but neutral, since it does billions of dollars in business by maintaining federal facilities. CH2MHill is free to bid on positions that have been privatized through its recommendation.

In the system Beckwith prescribed, where market demand is all-powerful and cloaked as Liberty herself, if “customers” are not willing to pony up what managers charge, what then? In such a scenario, lands “*might even cease to be parks at all because recreationists might not be willing to pay enough to bid away the land from alternative purposes.*” What “*alternative purposes*”? Toward what kind of future could this lead Yellowstone and the rest of what are now the public’s lands? Where profit is king, one need only give free rein to the imagination.

And the situation with the National Parks is just a beginning. In the February 5 issue of the *Washington Post*, Christopher Lee cites President Bush as wanting federal agencies to compete out as many as 850,000 federal jobs.

Charging For The Sky

There is an eerie quality to the mechanical cold-heartedness with which Beckwith deals with our

See **Privatization**, next page

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Privatization

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land. It's as if he were considering the fate of plastic widgets or writing a doomsday scenario. "The gate fee", he wrote, "could cover such hard-to-charge-for amenities as the sky, broad vistas, and fragrant flowers." Specific fees would be charged for other services and activities such as hiking, bird watching, and the like.

There is irony in that privatization of public domain would be pressed so strongly at this particular time, just as the nation has been given examples not only of rampant corporate fraud but also of the spectacular failure of airport security as a for-profit enterprise, its employees incompetent, ill-trained and underpaid for profit's sake, this making it necessary for the government of the people to step in. Former Forest Service supervisor Gloria Flora, writing for *Headwater News*, put it this way: "What will our experiences be like when services, professionalism and even wildlife are managed for profitability? Can you picture former airport security guards stuffed into Park Service uniforms -- disgruntled, unqualified, and underpaid -- in charge of our national treasures? Will carnival rides be installed next to Old Faithful to augment the income stream?"

Beckwith's essay, prepared for a 1980 conference titled "Property Rights and Natural Resources: A New Paradigm for the Environmental Movement", was sponsored by the Cato Institute and the Center for Political Economy and Natural Resources of Montana State University at Bozeman. He acknowledged the editorial assistance of Terry Anderson and John Baden, both of whom now, two decades later, have become leaders of the privatization agenda. Anderson is public lands adviser to President George W. Bush. □



Exploring High Mountain Lakes, by Fred Rabe

Book Review

"Exploring High Mountain Lakes in the Rockies: A Story of their ecology and natural history"

by Fred Rabe

F.W. Rabe. 2006.

Chris Norden

It may come as no surprise that the two main reasons most people are attracted to high mountain lakes--fishing opportunity and scenic value--are poor reasons indeed. Fred Rabe makes a strong case for the ecological importance of alpine lakes in his exciting new book "Exploring High Mountain Lakes in the Rockies: A Story of Their Ecology and Natural History," suggesting that they are both unique and increasingly rare habitat types, while at the same time serving as "sentinels or early warning systems to atmospheric change."

A retired biology and ecology professor at the University of Idaho, Rabe has spent a lifetime hiking and studying high altitude lakes in the north, middle, and southern provinces of the Rockies, paying particular attention to interactions between geology, water, and biota in lakes where winter may account for well over half of a given calendar year.

That there is any life at all in the lakes Rabe writes about in this lavishly illustrated work is testament to the vigor of natural selection, and likewise testament to the amazing adaptability of the fish, macroinvertebrates, plants, and birds which populate lakes nestled in the high country of Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, northern New Mexico, and Rabe's first outdoor laboratory, the remote and seldom visited Uintas of northeast Utah.

High, cold, and mostly nutrient-poor, the ecology of these lakes is in large part determined by geology: nutrient levels are to a great degree determined by the rock & mineral substrate surrounding a given lake. Calcareous watersheds, made of calcium-rich limestone and volcanic rock, tend to produce high pH, nutrient-rich lakes, while granitic and quartz-dominant watersheds more often

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Pinchot Marsh, a roadless gem of the Panhandle, photo Will Boyd

Exploring

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result in nutrient-poor and pH neutral waters. Be that as it may, Rabe details the array of living communities which are found in these waters, all the more amazing given the extreme conditions, characterized by intense cold, very long winters, wind, altitude, and relative lack of nutrients.

Rabe also provides a strongly motivational model for upcoming conservation biologists, modeling a clearly written and factually coherent synthesis of geology, hydrology, soil science, field biology, and public policy, all culminating in a highly ethical vision of science with a conscience. When, for example, he questions whether aggressive development of gas, oil, and hard rock mining in the Rocky Mountain Front of Montana is a wise or ecologically defensible course of action, he provides a thumbnail biography of early 20th century conservationist Bob Marshall, namesake of the Bob Marshall Wilderness, along with a quote from Aldo Leopold: “Obligations have no meaning without conscience, and the problem we face is the extension of social conscience from people to land.” This could well be the motto of Fred Rabe’s excellent new book, and he offers a fine example of how one can be both citizen, scientist, and wildlands buff at one and the same time, and without compromise.

“Exploring High Mountain Lakes in the Rockies: A Story of Their Ecology and Natural History” can be purchased at your local bookstore (ISBN 1-59152-022-3), or you can order it direct for \$29.95 from Aquatic Ecosystems, P.O. Box 3281, Moscow ID 83843-1909. □

Intern Monitors Wildlife with Wildlands CPR

Amy Steele

Friends of the Clearwater has given Adrienne Boland, a new intern with the organization, just the hands-on experience that she needs as a conservation social sciences student at the University of Idaho. Since joining the FOC crew and Americorps in late May, Boland has been getting as involved as she can in finding solutions for local environmental issues.

She monitors a decommissioned road near Porcupine Creek, about 45 miles east of Moscow, for the majority of her research this summer. The area was decommissioned as an attempt to restore the unneeded forest road to its natural state by reviving the original wildlife. By observing plants and animals through motion-detected photography, video recordings and weekly visits to the site, Boland has been able to monitor wildlife like elk, deer, moose and coyotes.

The decommissioning process was a part of ecological restoration, which strives to return natural conditions and ecosystem structure to an area. Boland is testing the assumption that the restoration process has been positive for native species.

“The goal of this project is to see if wildlife are using the roads again and if plants are coming back,” she said.

The site is one of many monitored by Wildlands CPR, an national conservation group based in

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Decommissioning

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Missoula, Montana that targets off-road vehicle abuse of public lands. Anna Holden, a University of Montana graduate student working with the group, has organized several volunteers, including Boland, to conduct monitoring.

Boland visited the sites with several volunteers to set up the monitoring system, which includes two track stations and three digital cameras, one of which takes video. The track stations, composed of sheet metal, contact paper and cat food to attract animals, are observed by cameras 15 to 20 feet away. Animals track a paint-like substance, Sight Black, onto the contact paper. Boland then saves the contact paper in plastic sheets and sends it to Wildlands CPR for further assessment.

She will continue her weekly trips until hunters occupy the area beginning October 10. For more information on this volunteer opportunity, please contact her at (775) 830-8373.

Boland has also kept the idea of a local natural education program in mind. With FOC she hopes to gain support and involvement from other environmentally-minded organizations.

“The purpose is connecting kids and adults with where they live so they can make informed decisions,” Boland said. “It will be an education program that benefits everybody.”

One of the main goals involves planning events with other groups and posting schedules in one place in order to avoid overlapping and conflicting schedules. The other main goal is for knowledgeable individuals to be a presence in the classroom as educational tools for young students.

“There are so many educational opportunities for non-profits in Moscow,” Will Boyd of FOC said. “We can provide curricula so teachers can talk about cedar groves or salmon issues, and kids can have a local place to associate with them.” □

THANKS TO THE CHARLOTTE MARTIN
AND MAKI FOUNDATIONS FOR THEIR
GENEROUS SUPPORT OF MONITORING
PROJECTS CRUCIAL TO THE PROTECTION
OF THE WLD CLEARWATER COUNTRY.

Thank you!

Around the Clearwater Update

Gary Macfarlane

Forest Plans— or how to waste a lot of money by changing rules mid-stream

The Forest Plan revisions for the national forests in the wild Clearwater country (the Idaho Panhandle, Bitterroot, the Clearwater and Nez Perce National Forests) are plodding along. The comment period ended for the Bitterroot on September 7 and the Panhandle on September 9. Even though all of these plans were in the works for some time, all are now being revised under the Bush regime’s new regulations which make it very difficult for forest plans to provide needed protection and which no longer look at alternative courses of action. The older (and better) regulations would have saved tax dollars and likely resulted in better plans. The new regulations are such a drastic departure from normal planning processes that the Forest Service has to do much more work which results in delay and a waste of resources.

We citizens had expected a draft plan this fall but that time frame will likely slip due to internal Forest Service review processes. Seems like Washington DC politics are slowing down (and probably weakening) any positive things (very few) that the local Forest Service personnel may have proposed. Didn’t the Bush junta promise something about local control and decision-making? Wasn’t there also something about changing horses in mid-stream?

FOC is already in a lawsuit against the new planning regulations. It appears these new plans will have to be challenged as well.

One thing the forest plans actually do is make recommendations for wilderness. It is here we may have some influence on the Forest Service, though we need a massive showing of support. Keep your pencils sharp, and look for an alert in the mail box when the Clearwater/Nez Perce plans come up for revision.

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Update

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BLM is also undergoing a planning process. BLM has chosen to follow the model of unaccountable plans but at least that agency looks at alternative courses of action. The Coeur d'Alene Resource management plan (much of Grandmother mountain) is expected out in final form soon and a draft of the Cottonwood Plan is now out (scattered parcels in and near the Nez Perce and Clearwater national Forests).

More Zombies—or the assault on the South Fork is renewed

The US Forest Service and BLM were slowed down somewhat in their assault on the South Fork by successful lawsuits. (See past newsletters for more information). One of the worst of those yet to be approved, Red Pines, was supposed to have been killed internally by the Forest Service because it made no economic or policy sense. Seems politics got in the way so this sale will be another zombie haunting the water quality in the South Fork.

Some Good News—the forest service finally closes Grandmother Mountain to all-terrain vehicles (ATVs)

For years, conservationists have been trying to get the US Forest Service and BLM to close the trails in Grandmother Mountain to vehicles. This is the closest unroaded area to Moscow of any size and vehicle use here is not appropriate in the wildland setting. While BLM has yet to act, waiting for the completion of their plan, the US Forest Service closed a few critical trails to the ATVs that have been causing serious erosion and trail damage. The ban doesn't extend to motorcycles, which have also been a problem. Nevertheless, the ban is a good step in that these ATVs have been the main culprit in trail damage.

A big thanks goes to the Palouse Group of the Sierra Club who took a leadership role in this effort. The Palouse Group and Friends of the Clearwater hosted a meeting in Moscow and sent a letter to the Forest Service that finally resulted in needed action.

Off-Road Vehicle and Another Bad idea Surfaces

The Forest Service is also engaged in the preliminary process of preparing travel plans to determine what areas would be open or closed to vehicles. The Clearwater and Nez Perce national Forest officials have been negligent in their duties as this was supposed to have been done years ago (only the Palouse Ranger District has done much on this issue, and that only dealt with ATV use). Unlike BLM, which was smart in folding these decisions into its resource management plans, the Forest Service, despite promises to the contrary, is not making these decisions in the new forest plan revisions. Rather, the agency is engaging in a separate and expensive process that is taking place at the same time.

The new rules regarding how to make decisions where vehicles can and can't go are worse than the ones the Forest Service had previously—the ones that the Clearwater and Nez Perce national Forest failed to implement. There is one exception, however, and that is the new regulations require the Forest Service to have completed the process by a supposedly firm deadline. We shall see if that is the case. Years of negligence have changed the status quo from one where there was almost no motorized use in the backcountry to one where it is a problem in some areas. The starting point should not be the current situation, which is an incomprehensible mishmash of contradictory decisions (and non-decisions). Rather the slate should be wiped clean. We will keep you updated when public comment periods are opened.

As for bad ideas, one has surfaced that would build an ATV trail through the Selway country, from near Elk City to the Lochsa. Details are sketchy, but a group of noisy, promoters of industrialization of our public lands approached the Forest Service and Senator Crapo with the idea. Originally, it was thought this trail proposal was very different in that it would probably not go on the national forests (or other public land) but between small towns. We will keep you updated.

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Clearwater Country for Canines

Eric Martin

This June, I did three short backpacks in Clearwater country with three members of Moscow's canine community. Here are a few highlights of these trips:

In early June, I hiked the lower eight miles of Meadow Creek with Friends of the Clearwater and one of Moscow's senior canines, Hoops the Beagle-something-or-another. Hoops is ten plus years old and enjoys sleeping, eating and lying in the sun as hobbies. The name Meadow Creek, like many "creeks" in Clearwater country, does not really describe the amount of water flowing out of this drainage. Anywhere else this would be called a river, and in early June there were several fast flowing chutes and rapids to watch. One of the pleasures of hanging out with an old dog in the woods is that she has seen all this before and was not tempted to try going for a swim in unsuitable waters.

The hike started with a relatively flat three miles though a beautiful cedar grove encompassing both sides of the creek. Then an incline began that went on for the next four or five miles until it dropped on the other side of the junction with Indian Creek. When asked later about this second portion of the hike, Hoops responded: "It was a very beautiful area and I enjoyed fol-

lowing the scent of the wildlife; but I was told this was going to be a flat hike for old dogs." She continued her hike commentary, "The humans were determined to camp at Indian creek, but I tried to tell them a closer spot on a hillside near a lovely water source where the trail crosses Pea creek would have been better for a quick overnighiter. After all, I am over seventy dog years old. Hey, you said treats would be available during this interview. Where are the treats?"

This year in Clearwater Country June meant rain, and our Meadow Creek hike was a good test for wet weather gear, wilderness know-how, and luck. One of the best memories of the hike was on the way out. Sheets of rain dropped out of the sky on us as we hiked a ridge portion of the trail, when we turned the corner to find a large rock overhang to keep dry while waiting for the storm to subside. Hoops found it a good place to sleep. Unfortunately for Hoops, it never did stop raining and we eventually had to leave the shelter of the rock to hike to the trailhead, much to her chagrin. "I like being in the Wilderness with the humans; it gives me energy and new life," Hoops said when questioned further about the hike, "but my raingear wore out a few years ago. And those puddles are pretty big when you weigh just 40 pounds. I am only good for a couple of hours of getting soaked these days. Beyond that and I want to be in the tent or the car. Where are the treats?"

See **Canines**, next page



Columbia spotted frog, photo Will Boyd

Canines

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In mid-June I hiked up Boulder Creek with Finn the Chesapeake. Finn is almost a year old and the trip was full of new sights, sounds and smells including horses and swift running water. I had done this hike once in the winter, but had forgotten how scenic the Wilderness Gateway to Boulder Creek trail was. The plan was to go up to the Seven Lakes area, but rainy weather made sticking around Stanley Hot Springs sound like a better option. Both humans and Finn enjoyed the warmth of a good warm soak in the midst of the rain.

If you have done this hike lately then you know there is no longer a bridge across Boulder Creek. The crossings' difficulty rating depends on the season and ranges from "no problem" to "forget about it". The "creek" had lost a lot of its power, but was still running strong enough in mid-June to deserve a great deal of respect. Someone had tied a shoulder level rope over a ten foot high suspended log to cross the creek. This was an easy set up for the humans, but the log was quite thin and new canine wilderness enthusiast Finn wanted no part of it. "The Humans put me out on that skinny log and I said 'no way.' But maybe I better figure this log walk stuff out because one of the humans had to ford the waist deep creek and carry me across. But hey, I am just a 50 pound puppy right?"

If you or your canine friend is uncomfortable or inexperienced fording water, this is probably a hike to do in July or late summer. On the way back to Wilderness Gateway we ran into a crew of Forest Service folks who told us that because Stanley is within a designated wilderness, there are no plans to rebuild the bridge over Boulder Creek— probably a good thing for wilderness.

Finally, in late June I hiked the upper part of fish creek with Lyra – the almost two-year-old rottweiler. The upper part of Fish creek is accessed off of the Lolo Motorway. The first night we arrived late and camped about a mile from the trail head. "Elk crashed around in the creek near our camp site at night," Lyra said about the first night. "And when we woke up in the morning there were deer all around us. We slept in the middle of a wildlife highway. But the humans just wanted to watch. Why they wouldn't turn

"Our Meadow Creek hike was a good test for wet weather gear, wilderness know-how, and luck."

me loose, as I repeatedly requested, is beyond my comprehension." Lyra continued to describe the trip in the interview, "The second night we camped about a mile and a half further in and had a very nice swim hole all to ourselves, complete with swarming mosquitoes. I hid from the bugs under the humans' raingear."

The upper part of Fish creek is not a hike for those who wish to fly down the trail, because the Elk are the only trail crew that has been up there in a while. About a mile past the trailhead the trail would simply disappear for sizable distances or if visible, the trail was covered with downed trees. But the trail follows the creek and even an inexperienced bushwhacker should have no problems working their way down. Upper Fish Creek does not appear to ever have been grazed by cattle and is a good hike for those who would like to pack in for an hour, maybe two, and be alone with the wilderness.

We are very fortunate to have so many dog-friendly, no reservations required, no hassle wild places in Clearwater country. Wild areas are magical for both human and canines. The woods gave old dog Hoops a fresh jolt of puppy energy. And the magic of the woods seemed to mellow out the youngsters Finn and Lyra; it was like they had slipped into the unrequested best behavior mode expected of an old timer. Think about taking your canine friend into the woods soon; you both could benefit from the magic of the wilderness. □



Hike near Elk River, photo Lindsay Myron

Citizens Request Protected Status for Giant Palouse Earthworm

Steve Paulson

On August 30, a coalition of individuals and groups from the Palouse bioregion of northern Idaho and Eastern Washington filed a formal petition with the U.S. Department of Interior to protect the Giant Palouse Earthworm under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

By order-of-law, the petition begins a specific procedure, with precise time-lines, for a series of decisions regarding the fate of the Giant Palouse Earthworm. Within 90 days from receiving the petition, the agency is required to respond. The group requests that the Secretary of the Interior expedite the process of protecting this rare and unusual earthworm. Under the Endangered Species Act, the Secretary may designate an emergency listing for the species and may designate emergency critical habitat to protect it from the threat of immediate extinction. Currently, there is no regulatory mechanism that protects the Giant Palouse Earthworm or its habitat, the native Palouse Prairie.

The Giant Palouse Earthworm (*Driloleirus americanus*) is a native of the fertile deep soils of the Palouse and is found only in the few remnants of the native Palouse Prairie grasslands of northern Idaho and Eastern Washington.

Once considered abundant, this worm has been reported only three times since 1987. On May 27, 2005, a graduate student from the Uni-

sity of Idaho, Yaniria Sanchez-de Leon, unearthed one specimen of this earthworm, while studying earthworm populations and carbon dynamics in a rare prairie habitat. Prior to her sighting, the species was thought to be extinct.

The Giant Palouse Earthworm is described as the largest and longest-lived earthworm on this continent (attaining the length of three feet). It is reported to have a peculiar flowery smell (*Driloleirus* is Latin for lily-like worm) and to be cream-colored or pinkish-white. It lives in permanent burrows, as deep as 15 feet. It has been reported to spit at attackers and move quickly through the soil to escape predators. Steve Paulson claims that, "This worm is the stuff that legends and fairy tales are made of. What kid wouldn't want to play with a 3 foot-long, lily-smelling, soft pink worm that spits? A pity we are losing it."

Groups signing the petition are the Palouse Prairie Foundation, Palouse Audubon Society, and the Friends of the Clearwater. Individuals signing the petition are O.Lynne Nelson, David Hall, and Steve Paulson. Dirk Kempthorne, Idaho's former Governor will decide the fate of the Giant Palouse Earthworm and its habitat. Kempthorne is now serving as the Secretary for the Department of the Interior, which administers the Endangered Species Act.

O. Lynne Nelson, who helped write the petition states, "The native Palouse ecosystem is precious for those who live here. It represents beauty, heritage, wildlife habitat, drinking water and a clean, simple quality of life, yet this ecosystem is one of the rarest on earth. Listing the Giant Palouse Earthworm may be the only salvation for the Palouse Prairie"

The extreme destruction of its prairie habitat is the main reason that the native earthworm is rare. Less than one percent of the Palouse Prairie remains in its natural form. The native Palouse Prairie is considered to be the rarest ecosystem in Washington. The worms also suffer from competition with non-native earthworms. These non-native earthworms, such as the worms that appear in your garden, were introduced from other continents.

Earthworms have well-known positive effects on soil and plant growth, and are necessary for proper soil function.

□

More information can be found at <http://palouse-prairie.org/invertebrates/palouseworm.html>

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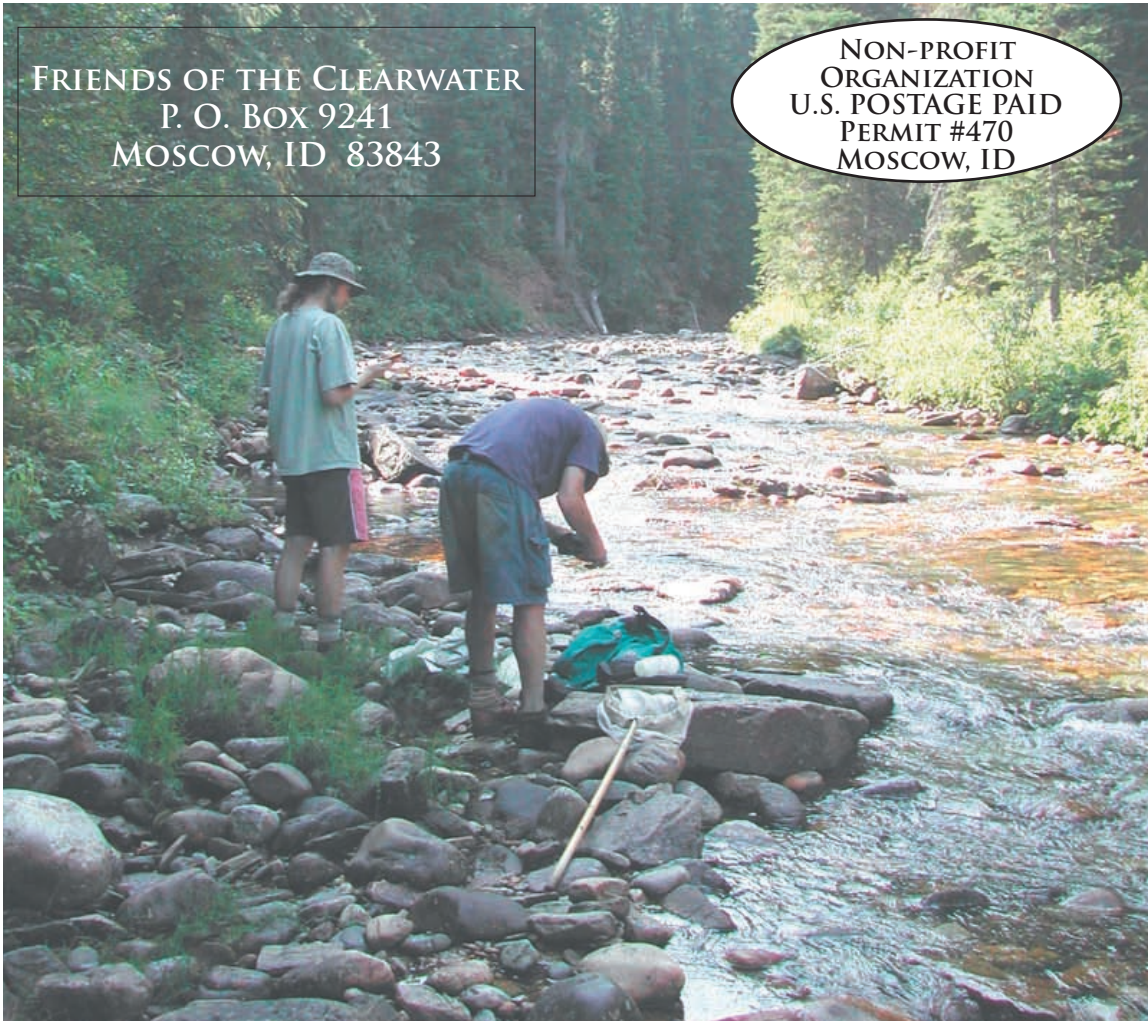
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Aquatic sampling on the Little North Fork Clearwater, photo Will Boyd

FRIENDS OF THE CLEARWATER CALENDAR OF EVENTS
FALL 2006

SEPTEMBER 26: POTLUCK

Wild Rockies Rendezvous follow-up. Tall tales and lessons learned at the home of Chris Norden & Karen Laitala (428 E. 7th St., Moscow), 6:30 p.m. Bring food and a friend!

OCTOBER 7: HIKE

Meet at Rosauers at 6:00 a.m. to hike the Buffalo Hump, in the Gospel Hump Wilderness, via Wild Horse campground. Co-sponsored by Palouse Group Sierra Club. This hike will be strenuous. Return approx. 7:00 p.m.

OCTOBER 10: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Nicolas Barbier, UI doctoral student and filmmaker from France, will present his research into Idaho natural resource issues. (UI College of Law, Room 105, 7:00 p.m.)

**NOVEMBER 3:
FOC ANNUAL MEETING**

1912 Building in Moscow (412 East 3rd St.) 6:30-10:00 p.m. Silent auction, potluck dinner, year in review, live music, and more!