



# CLEARWATER DEFENDER

## NEWS OF THE BIG WILD

A PUBLICATION OF  
FRIENDS OF THE CLEARWATER

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### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Page 1* HIGHWAY 12 UNDER ATTACK  
*Page 3* THE OUTREACH CORNER  
*Page 5* LOCHSA EXCHANGE ANALYSIS  
*Page 7* 1910 FIRES BOOK REVIEW  
*Page 9* EARTHWORM AWAITS FATE  
*Page 11* CLEARWATER RNA'S  
*Page 12* EVENT CALENDAR

### Clearwater Valley Residents Say No! Linwood Laughy & Borg Hendrickson

*Few special places lie hidden in America, left much as they have been for centuries. Among them are the mountains, meadows, forests and streams of Clearwater Country.*

This introduction to the principal guidebook to north central Idaho echoes both the national recognition given to Clearwater Country and the song in many hearts of those who live in and visit the area.

Poised to invade this special place and quell that song is corporate greed as big as the 646,000-lb loads now sitting on the dock at the Port of Lewiston ready to be transported through the Northwest Passage Scenic Byway and All American Road, through the Clearwater and Lochsa Wild and Scenic River Corridor, along and across the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail and Nez Perce National Historic Trail, beside the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, and through the Devoto Memorial Cedar Grove. These massive loads will shake the ground within 50 feet of fragile buildings on the National Register of Historic Buildings, and will pass within yards of Nez Perce National Historic Park geologic formations that are icons of local history and sacred to the Nez Perce people. The behemoth loads will rumble by Clearwater National Forest campgrounds at the highway's edge in the middle of the night—500 foot-long caravans of noise and bright flashing lights. They will pass within inches of fragile highway shoulders immediately above the Lochsa River, strain bridges over spawning streams of endangered fish, and claim turnouts beside the public highway as their own.

And this is just the beginning, claim officials at the Port of Lewiston, whose website announces, "If one oil company is successful, many more will follow."

According to Forbes Magazine, ExxonMobil posted net profits in 2007 of \$42 BILLION. In 2008, their net profits climbed to \$45 BILLION. And as ExxonMobil spokesperson Ken Johnson publicly admitted in Kooskia on June 29, 2010, a single reason exists for the choice of



***Big Oil Threatens the Clearwater Basin  
Northern Rockies Rising Tide Photo***

**See Mega Loads page 4**



*N. Fork Clearwater Spring Run Off*  
Brett Haverstick Photo

**Thank You  
New-Land Foundation  
&  
River Odyssey West  
For Helping FOC Defend the  
Wild Clearwater Country!!**



*Pacific Dogwood*

### **Happy Wedding Wishes**

We would like to extend our heartfelt congratulations to FOC members Jill Johnson and Craig Watt. The two tied the knot this past June on the Middle Fork of the Clearwater River. Jill is a dedicated FOC Board member as well.

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## **FRIENDS OF THE CLEARWATER**

THE CLEARWATER DEFENDER

IS A PUBLICATION OF:

### **Friends of the Clearwater**

P.O. Box 9241, Moscow, Idaho 83843

208-882-9755

foc@friendsoftheclearwater.org

www.friendsoftheclearwater.org

Friends of the Clearwater, a recognized nonprofit organization since 1987, defends the Clearwater Bioregion's wildlands 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 bring an end to commodity extraction and industrialization on public lands.

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

The Clearwater Defender welcomes artwork and articles pertaining to the protection of the Big Wild. Articles in the Clearwater Defender do not necessarily reflect the views of Friends of the Clearwater.

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### **Publication**

Layout and Design: Brett Haverstick

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Copy Editor: Bill Bonney, Jim Tarter

## Reaching Out To You Brett Haverstick

What a summer it has been for our Outreach & Education program! We have been tabling at the Farmer's Market in Moscow, participating in wildland monitoring on the Clearwater National Forest, conducting outdoor ecology workshops on the St. Joe National Forest, and rafting on the Lochsa River. Throw in the work we do on the Wild Clearwater Radio show, the efforts that go into our Big Wild Bi-Weekly newsletter, and our interactions with members, volunteers, and community activists, it's no wonder time is flying by.

Every Saturday morning from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm Friends of the Clearwater (FOC) sets up an outreach table at the Moscow Farmer's Market in the non-profit section adjacent to the parking lot. With a vibrant atmosphere and eclectic mix of folks, the market offers us a great opportunity to connect with the community and share free information about wildland issues on our public lands. At our table you can find up to date information on the Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act and Highway 12 transportation proposals, place-based booklets about roadless areas on the Clearwater National Forest, and literature on wildlife and wildfire management. If you are at the market please stop by and say hello.

For the last few years, FOC has been working with Wildlands CPR to restore local watersheds and connect fragmented habitat in wild Clearwater country. Through monitoring wildlife movement and decommissioning damaging roads on our national forest, our goal is to improve water quality for local communities and provide productive habitat for native fish and wildlife populations. With a \$10 billion national road maintenance backlog, the Forest Service estimates they need to remove 185,000 miles of roads to make the system more manageable. With pilot projects on the Clearwater National Forest leading the way, so far over 700 miles have been reclaimed and more is on the way. Please go to <http://www.wildlandscpr.org> to learn more.

In June, FOC continued its proud tradition of working with University of Idaho professor emeritus Dr. Fred Rabe to engage wildland lovers in aquatic ecology principles and research methods. Our inquiry-based workshop at 49 Meadows on the St. Joe National Forest provided community members the opportunity to study this rare and sensitive sub-alpine peatland ecosystem and explore the diversity of the Little North Fork of the Clearwater River. With the field studies portion of our workshop complete, Fred and myself are preparing a report to the Forest

Service, which will propose the area as a Research Natural Area. Please read Dr. Rabe's article in this newsletter to learn more about the history and objectives of this important wildland designation.

When I began work with FOC in April, one of my ideas was to begin an annual rafting trip in wild Clearwater country to raise funds for our organization and celebrate the incredible landscape we work so hard to protect. On Saturday June 17th Laura Earles, Gary, and myself traveled down to the River Dance Lodge and took a rafting trip with River Odyssey West (ROW) on the Middle Fork of the Clearwater. With ROW donating a portion of the proceeds back to our group, the 1st annual FOC River Rendezvous was a success and provided us with ideas and inspiration to make it bigger and better in the future. With greater participation from our membership and community, I am hoping to turn this annual pilgrimage into a full weekend of rafting, hiking, camping and celebrating a place we all love so dearly. Dates, details, and plenty of advance notice will be coming your way sometime this winter.

If you are interested in volunteering or doing an internship with FOC, please give me a call at (208) 882-9755 or email me at [foc@friendsoftheclearwater.org](mailto:foc@friendsoftheclearwater.org). As a grassroots, bottom-up advocacy group we rely on the public to help us with field monitoring and data collection, community outreach and tabling, research and policy analysis, and just getting things done around the office. And don't forget to check us out on Moscow Community radio every Wednesday from 4:00 to 5:00 pm on 92.5 FM KRFP.

Stay Wild Ya'll!



**1st Annual Clearwater River Rendezvous  
FOC File Photo**

## Mega Loads cont. from page 1

Idaho's U.S. 12 as the route of choice for these shipments — "It's the cheapest route."

Can some of the largest international corporations in the world simply decide to trample Idaho roads and values? Probably not without help. But in Idaho that help is readily at hand. Idaho's governor pledged Idaho's support for this invasion — that is, he pledged YOUR support. The Idaho Transportation Department appears willing to ignore their own regulations, Idaho statutes and citizen safety and convenience in issuing overlegal permits for these transports. The Idaho State Police are lending their support. Meanwhile, many Idaho residents are angry and feel betrayed by their own public servants.

Millions of Americans have watched *Avatar*, the story of what happens when corporate greed entwines itself with government institutions. *Avatar* has now come home to Clearwater Country, to our place and our time. But like the story of David and Goliath, the movie *Avatar* ended well, though not without commitment and action and sacrifice. We believe both Clearwater Country and American democracy are worth the price.

*Borg Hendrickson and Linwood Laughy are long-time Idaho residents who live in the upper Clearwater Valley. Co-authors of Clearwater Country! The Historical and Recreational Guide—Lewiston, Idaho—Missoula Montana. For more information on the Big Rig fight, visit their website at [www.fightingoliath.org](http://www.fightingoliath.org).*



*State Supreme Court Hearing Oct 1st*  
Rifka Helton Design

## Remembering Wally Steve Paulson

Wally Brown passed from our world in early May. He had been troubled with serious non-recoverable health issues for the last few years, and chose to end his own life. His work history of environmental and Native American campaigns were many, mostly un-paid, grassroots, against-all-odds, under-funded, risky, and non-violently civil disobedient.

Wally came to Idaho to cook for the Cove Mallard Campaign in 1992, along with the group, Seeds of Peace, but he always did much more than was asked. He was arrested on the infamous Jack Road as part of a group of non-violent protesters. Wally locked himself to the bumper of a law enforcement vehicle to prevent road building equipment from extending Jack Road. Since the Forest Service and Idaho County sheriff did not have the tools to cut the lock, they had to remove the bumper instead with him still attached. As you can imagine the officers had a very hard time fitting him and the bumper into a police car.

Wally was front page news throughout most of the kangaroo-style trial at the Moscow Federal Court for wearing a blue high-school prom dress with matching white northern Idaho snow boots, an orange Stihl chainsaw ball cap, and dark glasses. The furious Judge Lodge told Wally that he did indeed have the right to wear whatever he wanted in court, but that he did not have the right to wear dark glasses in his courtroom and ordered him to take off the dark glasses. When the good justice noticed that Wally had written some obscenities on his own eye-lids, the good judge ordered Wally to put his dark glasses back on. In this outfit, Wally spoke eloquently about biodiversity of species and the values of wild places.

Wally wrote the first draft of the Articles of Incorporation and By-laws for FOC, and served a term as one of the four founding board members, mostly by default, and to the chagrin of several local activists of that time period, as well as some people within the Forest Service, and local Law Enforcement.

Life was never easy for Wally, or for people close to him, but he distained blind authority and believed ardently in the First Amendment, native rights, and the natural world.

**We would like to thank Dahr Jamail for being one of the first journalists in the country to call attention to the Highway 12 mega-load proposal. He writes for [truthout.org](http://truthout.org).**

## And the Lochsa Exchange Lumbers On Chuck Pezeshki Guest Opinion

*Copyright Moscow-Pullman Daily News  
July 14, 2010*

The Lochsa's been in the news lately. What people are trying to do to the Lochsa – first with the monster trucks, and second with a potential land exchange or purchase – is a decidedly mixed bag if you consider survival of the river.

For those not in the know, the Lochsa River is one of the primary tributaries of the Clearwater River. With headwaters in Idaho off Lolo Pass, along US 12, the Lochsa is one of the most beautiful, wild and accessible rivers in the country. Its pools still harbor wild salmon, and much of the headwaters are in protected National Forest lands.

But part of it isn't – and that's the rub. Part of the headwaters also pass through land known as 'the checkerboard', because of the ownership pattern bequeathed by the 1864 Northern Pacific Railroad Land Grant Act. Alternating square mile sections have been in private ownership for the last 150 years, originally granted to sell to homesteaders to pay for railroad construction. But anyone who has ever walked across the Lolo Trail can tell you that it's hungry country up there. No one has homesteaded the upper Lochsa.

Making a long story short, the checkerboard ended up in the hands of Plum Creek Timber Company, a spin-off of the railroad, who stripped off the timber in the '70s and '80s, in one of the largest environmental crimes of the century. The destruction was so bad you can still see its legacy from space. Get on Google Earth and see what I'm talking about.

Upon clearcutting all the timber, Plum Creek turned into a real estate company, which then tried to sell the stripped-off sections back to the U.S. government, who should have been the owners in the first place. When that failed, they found another buyer, Western Pacific Timber Company, another land investment company that sells virtually no timber – about enough to keep a mill occupied for a week or two, per year. The owner, Tim Blixseth, had developed quite a reputation as a land speculator/potential fraud candidate through previous shakedowns of the U.S. Treasury with Montana land exchanges.

Blixseth wants to dispose of the land in the Upper Lochsa because he's in a pickle right now. He was also the owner of the notorious Yellowstone Club, and it's now bankrupt. And that's what his holding company does – buy

land that is appraised at some market value but is environmentally sensitive, and then use the threat of environmental destruction to get an inflated price from the Feds.

Enter Senator Mike Crapo. If there's any senator bought by the banking industry, it's Crapo. Credit Suisse, a huge Swiss bank, has donated over \$50K to Crapo's election fund the last year, and is Crapo's main campaign donor. Blixseth is currently on the hook for owing Credit Suisse \$375 million. Land exchanges have to go through Congress.

We really can't know why Credit Suisse gave Crapo the dough, since we have legalized bribery in the U.S., otherwise known as campaign contributions. But Credit Suisse understands a good hedge when it sees one, and \$50K is a small price to pay to make sure its million dollar interests are taken care of with taxpayer dollars.

What's the upshot of all this? Sometimes, stories like this even confuse land management policy junkies like me. But one thing for sure – until we resolve the issue of the checkerboard lands, they're going to be a poker chip for graft. They have been since they migrated out of the public domain 150 years ago. If I had my druthers, I wouldn't trade an acre for Blixseth's lands; instead I'd have the Feds buy the acres, and then make sure that Blixseth didn't get a dime until the money came back to the U.S. Treasury after tracking how Credit Suisse got their share of the TARP bailout.

Now who's dumb enough to hold their breath on that one?



*The Public Weighs in On the Exchange  
Moscow Cares Photo*

## Around the Clearwater Basin

### Gary Macfarlane

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It would be quite a task just to report on all the important issues in which we have been involved over the past few weeks. Please read other articles in this newsletter about the threat of big loads on the Lochsa and Highway 12, and the proposed Lochsa Land exchange.

#### Species Protection

FOC joined with the Xerces Society to petition two rare species of aquatic stoneflies—the little critters that trout like to eat. These particular species go by the names of Strait Snowfly and Idaho Snowfly. They are found in streams in Latah County that drain into the Potlatch River, though logging, roads, grazing and other development have seriously depleted the populations. Many thanks to the Xerces Society, a professional organization concerned with invertebrate biodiversity, for allowing us to work with them on this petition.

Of course, the big news is that wolves have been relisted under the Endangered Species Act. A big thanks goes to the attorneys that represented FOC and others, Doug Honnold and Jenny Harbine from EarthJustice.

#### Mining

There is good news to report. FOC, represented by the excellent attorneys Roger Flynn and Jeff Parsons of Western Mining Action Project, was ready to file an administrative appeal on the Record of Decision on suction dredge mining for Lolo Creek and Moose Creek on the Clearwater National Forest. However, the Forest Service actually agreed with our concerns and clarified the Record of Decision to require compliance with the Clean Water Act and other protective measures before any suction dredge mining could move forward. Thanks Roger and Jeff for your great work on this issue!

Perhaps due to the price of gold, there have been several mining proposals from the Clearwater and Nez Perce National Forests and the BLM. Most have been small exploration projects but it could be a harbinger of things to come. Mining has serious impacts on water quality and if those projects move to development there will be significant harm to our water.

The big proposal is the Buffalo Gulch, currently in a holding pattern, near Elk City. Aerial reconnaissance by the mining company has taken place but it appears that progress on preparing an environmental impact statement has stalled.

On another mining front, the state of Idaho issued a long-term lease for the construction of a feldspar processing facility near Bovill. However, the proposed open-pit mine, which would destroy over 1/2 mile of stream, has yet to go through any environmental analysis and it seems questionable that such a proposal can meet clean-water laws. The positive news in the processing plant can't be built until the mine itself is approved. It remains to be seen whether the company will be able to raise the funds to mine for this low-value mineral, a constituent of clay.

#### A Rose By Any Other Name . . .

For the past ten to twenty years, the Forest Service has increasingly justified logging for supposed forest health reasons. Furthermore, logging sales are often accompanied by watershed restoration work. In essence, watershed restoration is held hostage to logging, a robbing Peter to pay Paul scheme. The Roboelk project near Elk River, yes that's its name, is the biggest of these sales. The stupidest is Powell Divide, proposed to protect Missoula and other communities, most of which are many, many miles away. This project also incorporates agency-ignited fire.

Speaking of fire, the Forest Service has no overall plan for this expanded program. From ecological and economic standpoints, it would be far wiser to let natural fire burn in the backcountry. FOC has challenged the agency to come up with a long-term plan that allows natural fire to play its role through an appeal of the Coolwater Ridge fire project.

The Forest Service has been in the habit lately of categorically excluding (CE) major projects from the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Furthermore, when the agency actually prepares environmental assessments (EAs) on projects that are not categorically excluded from analysis, they are often cursory. So much for careful analysis or public involvement.

But that is not all. The agency seems to have really lost it on some small but weird proposals. The strangest example is the approval of a private entity to build a "city park" on the national forest near Dixie. This was done without an assessment of the need of such a facility. Supposedly this park would be open to everyone for free and the Forest Service would have no liability. Really!?

#### Towering Over

Moscow Mountain and its cedar groves are threatened with a giant tower ostensibly for homeland security. While Congress exempted "Homeland Security" from most environmental laws, there needs to be some public accountability. Stay tuned for more on this debacle.

## Book Reviews: Fire History, Ecology and the Fires of 1910

Gary Macfarlane

One hundred years ago, large fires burned across much of the US Northern Rockies. The stories of the fires of 1910, at the very least, are an integral part of how the citizens of the Northwest view themselves and their history, if not the entire nation. Two recent books, Stephen Pyne's *Year of the Fires* and Timothy Egan's *The Big Burn* along with a book about Yellowstone's fire history, Rocky Barker's *Scorched Earth* are highly interesting. (NOTE: another authoritative book on the 1910 fires published in 1956 is Betty Goodwin Spencer's *The Big Blowup*). All three books purport to trace early fire policy, scientific errors in that policy, and implications for today. The conclusions are perceptive and fascinating. There are also ideas in each book that I find incorrect because they are not well supported in the existing scientific literature, but they are mostly minor quibbles.

I received Egan's book as a gift a few months ago and read it immediately. Egan is a thoughtful journalist who now writes for the *New York Times*. I was fascinated by the premise that the US Forest Service and most importantly, our current concept of federal public lands, were saved by the fires of 1910. Egan lays out a compelling argument that had the fires not happened and heroes been developed, the Forest Service, national forests and other public lands owned by all Americans could have vanished or been replaced with a much weaker system.

Pyne's book looks broadly at the social landscape of the US and Northwest in 1910 and is more comprehensive than other books about the great fires. Interestingly, it suggests intentional human-ignited fires by Americans of European descent were common in the US in the late 1800s and early 1900s in many if not most forested landscapes. Pyne's view is contrary (though probably accurate) to what most people think today was the attitude of Americans to forest fires one hundred years ago. The month-by-month description of 1910 is a very effective way to present the issues.

Rocky Barker is the environmental reporter for the *Idaho Statesman* in Boise. His book traces fire policy in Yellowstone back to the army. He contends with considerable evidence that it was the Army, not the Forest Service, who first developed and integrated the systematic organization and tactics to fight forest fires. Barker also reveals that Aldo Leopold was an early heretic in the Forest Service regarding fire, believing that fire was important in many ecosystems rather than a scourge to be eliminated. The personal accounts of the fires of 1988 in Yellowstone

are also interesting because many of us have vivid memories of that time and the people who were involved.

All three books discuss a visionary forester and wildlands advocate who had an important personal history in this region, Elers Koch. Besides being recognized as one of the heroes of 1910, he believed the Nez Perce Trail traveled by Lewis and Clark and surrounding lands should be managed as a wilderness and questioned the Forest Service's fire-fighting policies as misguided.

The main concern I have with all three books is that they all overstate, to varying degrees, the historic/ecological significance of milder fires and pre-European anthropogenic burning in this part of the Rockies, at least according to the most current science. This provides a good segue, from the history to fire ecology. Three recent books are very illuminating and help correct some of the misperceptions about fire in this part of the Rockies.



**Wildfire Is A Part Of The Clearwater  
FOC File Photo**

The first by William L. Baker, *Fire Ecology in Rocky Mountain Landscapes* (2009) is a well-argued and scientifically supported book from a professor of fire ecology at the University of Wyoming. Dr. Baker shows how even some researchers have misinterpreted fire history data and that has led to errors being made in subsequent fire research and management. He concludes that the large and infrequent high-severity fires, far from being unnatural, were and are crucial in shaping the ecology of this region.

The second book, *Wildfire: A Century of Failed Policy* is edited by George Wuerthner, a noted author, ecologist and wildland advocate. It includes contributions from many eminent fire ecologists including the University of Idaho's own Dr. Penny Morgan. As a compilation, it may be fair to say that not every one of the contributors would agree with every conclusion. However, the book is easy to read and it corrects common misperceptions.

**See Book Review page 8**

## Book Review cont. from page 7

The last of the three scientific books, edited by Thomas Vale is *Fire, Native Peoples and the Natural Landscape* and it is somewhat controversial. It includes considerable scientific data and comes to a more nuanced view on the role of pre-European anthropogenic burning. According to this book, the wildlands in the Rockies were little influenced by native people lighting fires whereas some other areas of the US were more influenced.

Finally, a book *The Seasons of Fire* by David J. Strohmaier is an absolutely beautiful reflection on fire. Strohmaier writes knowledgeably from his experience in working as a firefighter for the Forest Service and BLM. He recognizes the value of wildfire in the backcountry. Interestingly, the author holds graduate degrees in the Philosophy of Religion from Yale and in Environmental Studies from the University of Montana. Above all, however, this is a poetic book about life, loss, death, and renewal.

### Palouse Earthworm Fan Club Steve Paulson

On July 28, 2010, nearly four years after the submission of our first petition to list the Giant Palouse Earthworm under the Endangered Species Act, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has finally issued the second 90-day Decision (the decision mandated by law to occur within 90 days from the submission date of our second petition; which, ironically was submitted approximately one year ago). This 90-day Decision by the agency moves the worm one step closer to protection. That next step is the Status Review, a period of one year used by the agency to actively study the worm, after which they will issue a 12-Month Petition Finding. This finding will determine if the species is rare enough to qualify to be listed on the Endangered Species list.

This may well be a monumental step towards the protection of the Palouse Prairie's most charismatic megafauna, *Driloleirus americanus*. It comes after a monumental series of steps by individuals representing Friends of the Clearwater, Palouse Prairie Foundation, Palouse Audubon, Palouse Group of the Sierra Club, the Center for Biodiversity, and many others.

Our first petition was ignored by the Bush administration until we pressed a lawsuit; the agency then declined to act under the guise of other priorities. A second lawsuit forced the agency to claim that the petition did not have adequate information to warrant a listing, even though that petition had listed every single piece of data ever written concerning the species. A third lawsuit under a Bush appointed judge ruled that the agency did indeed have the authority to make whatever decision it deemed appropriate.

After new research, a second petition, and a fourth lawsuit, an appeals court sided with the conservation groups. The USFWS under the Obama administration then moved the second petition forward to where we are today. All of this can be accessed in detail at <http://palouseprairie.org/invertebrates/palouseworm.html>.

In the meantime, the academic community has become active, in an academic way. After at least one failed attempt, researchers at the University of Idaho have designed a non-lethal capture technique and are keeping several of these worms alive in captivity. A world-renowned worm expert, Sam James of the University of Kansas, has submitted compelling arguments to the USFWS in support of listing.

Our job at this time is to simply monitor that the USFWS does actually make that 12-Month Petition Finding by July 20, 2011, and be prepared to push them to make the correct decision with another lawsuit, if needed. We will be particularly watching to see that the agency grants protection to the worm's habitat, the few remaining native Palouse Prairie remnants, and that steps are made towards stabilizing the declining population and its genetics.

Most importantly, I want to thank each one of you who has donated time and work for this project. Out of fear of omitting anyone's name, I will just say, you know who you are! It seems to me that this group meets Margaret Mead's description for agents of change: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. In fact, it's the only thing that ever has."

### Miss You Jerry Sally Perrine

Peace activist, Jerry Swensen, died on May 24th, but leaves behind a powerful legacy. Journalist Dahr Jamail called him "a friend of the earth." He was that and more.

Jerry was a strong supporter of many peace, justice, and environmental organizations, including FOC. When asked how he was able to accomplish so much, Jerry's response was "I do what I can."

Now it's up to us to "do what we can." Rest in peace, dear friend.

***Make a difference today!!!***

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## **As Big N' Wild As It Gets** **Brett Haverstick**

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*Facts Gathered from Howie Wolke's  
Big Wild Action Report Number 4 July 2005*

Roughly nine percent of U.S. public lands south of Alaska remain roadless. Less than three percent of U.S. public lands, excluding Alaska, are designated Wilderness. Quick math tells you that if all the roadless country left in the Lower 48 were designated Wilderness, the National Wilderness Preservation System would contain just over ten percent of our contiguous land mass.

The National Forest System has jurisdiction over approximately one hundred-ninety million acres in the continental U.S. With over fifty percent of it being roaded and trammled by humans, and less than twenty-five percent of it designated as Wilderness, there is approximately twenty percent still undeveloped that could qualify for inclusion into the National Wilderness Preservation System. At roughly one quarter of a million acres, and home to an array of sensitive plant and wildlife species, the Weitas-Bighorn roadless area on the Clearwater National Forest deserves strong consideration.

In July I had the great fortune of hiking close to eighty miles in the Weitas Creek drainage. Equipped with topographical maps, food rations, and a rain fly, I set out in search of why this place is considered by wildlife biologists to be the most important elk calving grounds in north-central Idaho. My first trip took me across the 4th of July pack-bridge, over Bear Butte, around Buck Ridge, along Weitas Creek, up Bugle Point and back down to the North Fork of the Clearwater. My second trip took me up Sand Creek, across Johnny Creek, around Cook Mountain, down Windy Creek, and back to the Weitas Guard Station. Did I see any elk? Yes.

The Forest Service recently published a map outlining where they consider crucial elk calving habitat to be located on the Clearwater National Forest. The two trips that I described above took me through the heart of these calving grounds and left me with some strong impressions. First, elk herds are active throughout Weitas this time of year and are probably found in even greater concentrations during the winter when they seek low-elevation habitat and abundant forage. Second, I came across evidence suggesting that wolves, black bear, cougar, coyote, white-tailed deer, moose, badger, snakes, frogs, and songbirds inhabit this drainage as well. Third, the amount of motorized access permitted to off-road vehicles in this mecca of solitude is incredibly inappropriate for the

myriad of biodiversity that this place shelters. Until you hear the motors, a Wilderness spirit permeates the air.

Just about the entire length of the number twenty trail, which parallels Weitas Creek to Twelve Mile Saddle, is open to motorized madness. If you have not hiked this lovely stretch of old growth cedar, majestic Douglas fir, and soggy-bottom river ferns, I strongly suggest you do. While some of the trail hikes you up terraces and offers sweeping views of a wild river in all its grandeur, other parts of the trail closely hug the water's edge, and make you feel as if you are surfing its currents and soft ripples. However, for reasons hard to comprehend, the Forest Service permits motorcycles and four-wheelers to tear through the silence and scar the land with its muddy trenches and screaming motors.

On the last day of my second trip, I found myself dripping wet, sore and in need of a rest. The rains had finally passed, the skies had begun to darken and it was time for a hot meal. Sure enough, I was not the only one with food on my mind. About fifty yards below the trail, my eyes honed in on a bull moose feeding in one of the lush pools adjacent to the river. Minutes later a bull elk and cow emerged from the west bank of Weitas Creek and peacefully crossed the waters into a meadow of grasses and wildflowers. I remember thinking how special it all was and how there are not too many places left in the lower 48 where you can feel such wildness on the winds and freedom in your soul. No, I was not in Alaska, but instead smack dab in the middle of wild Clearwater country. The Forest Service needs to keep the motors out of this place and the Bighorn-Weitas roadless area needs to be designated Wilderness. It's as big and wild as it gets!



***Bull Moose Feeding Along Weitas Creek***  
**Brett Haverstick Photo**

## Research Natural Areas Fred Rabe

Research Natural Areas (RNA) are lands within the National Forest System that are permanently protected as places to conduct research and monitoring, maintain biological diversity and foster education. Hundreds of these sites occur in 11 western states. Think of RNA's as a library and each individual natural area as a book. Here, we can read the lives of trees, wildflowers, soils, animals, fish and landforms to learn more about nature. RNAs then provide a reference library to help us answer questions about our wild lands.

The RNA program has existed for more than 70 years, its sites representative of different ecosystems, communities and processes existing on National Forest lands. In 1935, Tepee Creek RNA on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest was established as the first RNA in the state. Since then over 200 established and 20 proposed areas have been added to the Northern Region, north Idaho and western Montana and intermountain Region, south Idaho and Utah. Gaps still exist in the network but with new knowledge and persistence, we are attempting to fill them.

Classifying and cataloging natural diversity and identifying sites suitable for designation as natural areas occurred at a rapid rate in the 70's and 80's primarily through the activities of Charles Wellner, a Forest Service employee now deceased. During that span of time, agency people and university personnel worked with the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, The Nature Conservancy and other organizations to establish a network of these reserves in Idaho. Lack of funding has significantly slowed the process so it's important for us to keep the RNA concept visible and in people's minds so it doesn't vanish.

In addition to Research Natural Areas established by the Forest Service, other types of natural areas in the network include Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) managed by the BLM and Nature Conservancy preserves.

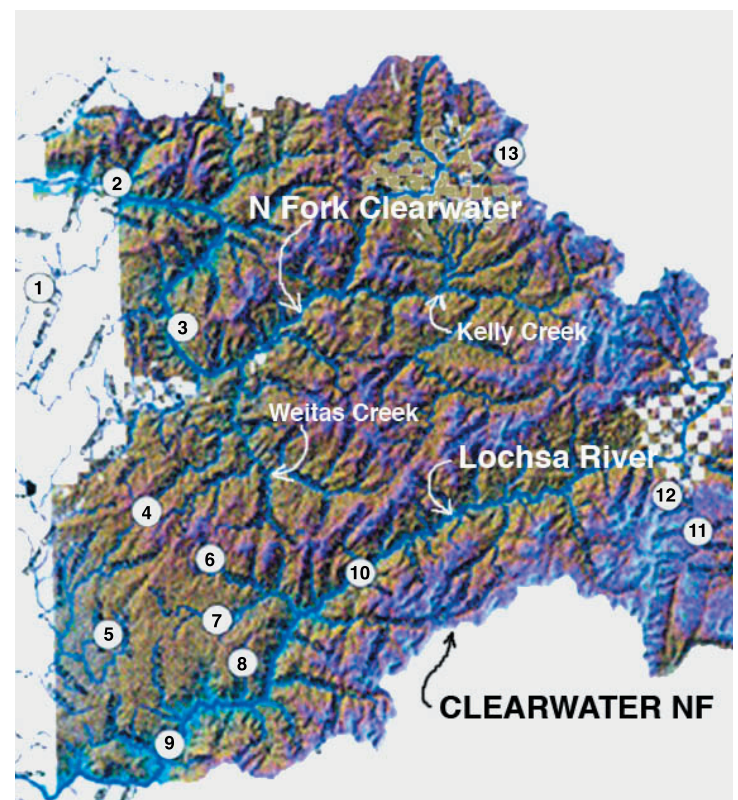
Classification of aquatic features has lagged behind that of terrestrial sites because community characteristics are not readily apparent to the observer. Furthermore, classification of aquatic resources in western states is often based on single use such as fishery value, aesthetic uniqueness, recreation importance and wild and scenic river status.

RNA's have an intrinsic value due to their natural beauty and unique habitats and ecosystems. In addition, they have many practical purposes. As pristine relatively undisturbed natural systems, they are ideal to use as

research and reference areas, educational laboratories and biotic preserves.

### Research

Natural areas serve as outdoor labs. Glacial lakes are located off the beaten path and due to their remoteness are relatively undisturbed by the public. However, they are also less accessible to the researcher. Steve Crumb, an M.S. candidate, studied size-selective predation in Steep Lakes RNA in the Clearwater National Forest where one of the lakes was stocked with golden trout (*Salmo aguabonito*). Bacon Lake RNA was among a group of ten lakes surveyed in the Five Lakes Butte Area by two graduate



*Stream ecosystem RNA's in the  
Clearwater National Forest*

**RNA stream legend:** 1. Bull Run Creek RNA\*, 2. Aquarius RNA streams, 3. Chateau Creek RNA streams, 4. Upper Hemlock Proposed RNA, 5. Four Bit Creek RNA, 6. Upper Hungry Creek -under consideration, 7. Upper Fish Creek - under consideration, 8. Bimerick Meadows - under consideration, 9. Lochsa RNA streams, 10. Dutch Creek RNA, 11. Sneakfoot Meadows RNA, 12. Grave Peak RNA streams, 13. Steep Lake RNA streams.

\*outside forest boundary but administered by Clearwater NF.

students. A prescription for salvage logging following a fire on managed forest land came directly from studying the natural fire conditions in the Elk Creek RNA on the Nez Perce Forest .

Reference Areas

Natural Areas may provide baseline or reference areas. These enable us to better understand our impact on the world by investigating natural systems and then comparing them with systems that have been affected by human activities.

Several RNAs on the Salmon and Challis National Forests provide permanent plots for monitoring lichens and mosses. Information of this kind has contributed to our understanding of atmospheric chemistry and global climate. Baseline data from Upper Steep Lake RNA in the Hoodo Roadless Area enabled investigators to measure any impact of ash on lake biota from the eruption of Mount St. Helens.

The Aquarius RNA on the Clearwater River is a relict rain forest from a wetter, warmer area. It serves as a control area for monitoring the effects of timber harvest on rare plant populations elsewhere in northern Idaho. Biologists contrast the birds within Tepee Creek RNA with those in adjacent logged forests on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest. This information helps managers consider the effect of habitat fragmentation when planning timber harvests in the region.

Classrooms

Natural areas serve as teaching sites or outdoor laboratories where one can learn more about the natural world. Belvidere Lakes RNA on the Payette National Forest was the setting of an ecology class where students collected and analyzed data from several high lakes. The data was passed on to the Forest Service. In 2009, FOC held a stream monitoring workshop at Chateau Falls RNA and Larson Creek in the Pot Mountain Roadless Area.

Biotic Preserves

Natural areas may act as preserves for biotic diversity and processes. The sites contain both representative and rare species of plants and animals along elevation gradients from alpine to lowlands. As with libraries, our understanding of ecological systems is enhanced when we have a catalog of native flora and fauna together with a description of their habitat.

The Forest Service in collaboration with other agencies has established a national network of natural areas that represent terrestrial, wetland, stream and lake ecosys-

tems across the country. It is now possible to cross reference information in RNAs, Wilderness Areas, National Parks, private nature preserves, botanical areas and state heritage areas. This library of knowledge will grow as we acquire new sites and study them more thoroughly.

Fortynine Meadows

Presently, FOC is proposing Fortynine Meadows, headwaters to the Little Nork Fork Clearwater River, as an RNA since twenty three years ago Chuck Wellner was not able to provide RNA protection to this subalpine peatland. The narrow 400-acre meadow contains a low-gradient, meandering stream fed by side inlets of spring origin. Periodically, beavers have occupied the site, at which times they have rebuilt dams, raised the water level and exhausted the food supply. Moose are commonly seen together with wolf sign. The site is one of the best examples of peatland ecology in the Northern Rocky Mountains where mild, wet winters prevail. Due to its easy accessibility, Fortynine Meadows provided an excellent opportunity this summer for research and teaching.



*49 Meadows Near Avery, Idaho*  
**Brett Haverstick Photo**

***Attention Volunteers & Interns***

***This fall we have community tabling, media relations, legal research and administrative processing opportunities. Please join our team. Call (208) 882-9755.***



*Post-Prescribed Fire Monitoring in Weitas Creek*  
 Brett Haverstick Photo

FRIENDS OF THE CLEARWATER CALENDAR OF EVENTS  
 FALL 2010

10/10/10 A DAY OF GLOBAL ACTION  
 W/PALOUSE CHAPTER SIERRA CLUB  
 PARK YOUR VEHICLE FOR THE WEEK  
[WWW.350.ORG/MOSCOWPARKIN](http://WWW.350.ORG/MOSCOWPARKIN)  
 MORE DETAILS COMING

PUMPKIN CARVING POTLUCK  
 FOC DOWNTOWN OFFICE  
 TUESDAY OCTOBER 26TH 6PM  
 BYO PUMPKIN  
 WE SUPPLY FOOD & DRINK

FOC ANNUAL MEETING & GATHERING  
 1912 CENTER 412 EAST THIRD STREET  
 SATURDAY NOVEMBER 13 530PM  
 AWARDS, FOODS, MUSIC  
 & SILENT AUCTION

HOLIDAY CHEER POTLUCK  
 FRIENDS, FAMILY AND CHILDREN  
 LOCATION TBA  
 FRIDAY DECEMBER 17TH 6PM  
 EGG NOG, COOKIES & CAKE

**Friends of the Clearwater**  
**P.O. Box 9241**  
**Moscow, Idaho 83843**

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