

HELLS CANYON FALCON



JOURNAL OF THE HELLS CANYON PRESERVATION COUNCIL

VOLUME 11 #1
February 2002

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CONFLICT AND SOLUTION: INCREDIBLE BUT BESEIGED HELLS CANYON

By Min Lee

In 1975, Congress passed the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area (HCNRA) Act, recognizing and mandating protection for Hells Canyon's historical, cultural and ecological values. Yet with all the acknowledgement of its beauty and the scientific validation of its ecological significance, the Act's intent to preserve the area has not been realized. U.S. Forest Service managerial negligence has placed all the unique attributes that inspired Hells Canyon's protection in imminent jeopardy.

This tragedy has inspired HCPC to seek further statutory protection by designating the Hells Canyon-Chief Joseph National Preserve, whereby Forest Service authority is replaced with National Park Service stewardship (see sidebar on page 9). In this effort, we reiterate the critical national importance of this incredible place and share new scientific information that has shed additional light on the importance of the Hells Canyon-Wallowa Mountain Ecosystem.

Hells Canyon itself, the massive middle Snake River Gorge, is identified as the deepest canyon in North America and perhaps on Earth. Yet it is only the centerpiece of the vast Hells Canyon-Wallowa Mountain Ecosystem. Surrounding features include bisected rimrock gorges, forested plateaus, snowcapped peaks and grassland, semi-arid river valleys. Dramatic elevation changes and wildly varied slope aspects create an interface of amazingly diverse habitats within a concentrated area. This panoply of stunning beauty was molded 300 million years ago when extreme geologic stress, volcanic eruptions, tectonic collisions, and glacial and water erosion worked their magic.

The Ecosystem is not only a scenic and recreational Mecca, nor is its uniqueness due to its status as one of America's last great wild places. Its central geographic location has inspired scientists to refer to it as the "linchpin" for biological diversity within the Pacific Northwest. Its location at the heart of the Columbia River Basin makes it a unique

ecological pathway, receiving and disbursing biological components within its varied seedbed habitats.

The Hells Canyon-Wallowa Mountain Ecosystem connects islands of ecological integrity within the vast western frontier that includes the Blue, Cascade and Rocky Mountains, the Great Basin and Selkirk Region. Its ability to facilitate connectivity is strong because of its inherent ecological diversity. Federal scientists have long identified it as a "hotspot" of species rarity and endemism.

Continues page 9



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FROM THE EDITOR

September 11 and the Protection of Our Homeland

By Ric Bailey

In the wake of September 11, I've begun to feel the profound connection of HCPC's work to the public efforts addressing the tragedy. At first consideration, it seems a reach to regard protecting America's land as contributing to the prevention of war and terrorism.

Yet the deeper I consider it, the more the connection becomes clear. In addition to being staunch advocates, HCPC attempts to join individuals of diverse beliefs and backgrounds to find common ground. We emphasize that each person, each town, each nation of people have one thing in common: We all depend on this one fragile life-support system-- the Earth.

HCPC has promoted the national interest in protecting the Hells Canyon-Wallowa Ecosystem, discouraging provincialism. And one of the positives in the aftermath of September 11 is that provincialism has subsided. Seeing "I Love New York" placards in the windows of a rural western America that used to express disdain for urban "outsiders" is heartening.

The environmental advocacy community has lost two good friends who spent much of their lives ensuring the natural systems of our planet are respected. Joy Belsky and Mort Brigham will be missed.

Dr. Joy Belsky believed, and proved, that out-of-control livestock grazing has upset the delicate balance of water, native plants and wildlife in the interior West. As the author of 45 peer-reviewed papers and book chapters on African and North American grasslands, Joy gained the grudging respect of academics, federal land managers and even ranchers. They understood when Joy raised an issue, she had strong science to support her position, and she was fearless in presenting her information as an advocate. Joy was also a determined

Taking it a step further, HCPC's work is about protecting freedom, which is really what America is about. Ecological sage Aldo Leopold once said: "What good are 40 freedoms without a blank spot on the map?" To many, freedom emanates from the guarantee of privacy and retreat from civilization. The existence of places one can be assured of freedom from surveillance and to find respite from the chaos of our ever-increasing urbanization is essential to the existence of freedom. Our private homes and our public lands provide such respite.

Our self-sufficiency is in essence shelter from oppression. And it comes largely from our land, its open spaces, its inspiring beauty and productive diversity. If we take care of our land, respecting what it needs, it will forever provide not only sustenance, but also a measure of freedom and independence.

There is freedom simply in having public lands, places that are not solely controlled and exploited by the wealthiest. There is freedom and also justice in having laws that protect our land and the health of the planetary life-support system-- and the ability of citizens to enforce them. The ability to drink the water from your local creek without fear of being poisoned ought to be as inalienable a right as freedom of religion.

As each of us deal with the tragedy and the fear of further attack, as we make our various contributions to protecting

our freedom, we should explore freedom. In the places where the magic of the natural world survives, where we can walk at will amid silence and beauty, we are comforted by the recognition that the Earth always embraces us and inspires us with its generosity.

There is comfort in knowing that the often-dubious deeds of human beings are not the hands that alone turn the wheels of fate, nor dictate the balance of life. Keeping a perspective of our place in the world will help us to more effectively cherish our freedom and succeed against oppression. Wild places provide that perspective.

Our love and respect for our homeland is a reflection of our love for freedom. Many cultures identify themselves with symbols of their land and their wildlife. Many have shed blood upon the soil of their motherland in its defense and buried their dead in the fertile fields. And thus, the cycle of a people and their land is sealed.

Friend Dana Lyons wrote a song called "I Will Fight for My Country." It's about a kid who joined the Scouts when he was 10 and put on a uniform. He camped in the mountains and forests and fell in love with his home. And he vowed that should oppressors threaten it, he would fight for his country.

So will I.

advocate for women in the sciences. She worked to ensure female colleagues were considered as panelists in forums discussing public policy. Joy was respected for her indomitable spirit and sense of integrity that would not allow her to compromise what she thought was right. At the time of her death in December 2001, she was employed with the Oregon Natural Desert Association.

Mort Brigham was a native Idahoan with a background in agriculture and wood products yet was a vigorous proponent of protecting Idaho's wild places. Mort was a founding member of the Hells Canyon Preservation Society (now Council). Thanks in large part to Mort and others he inspired, we have permanently protected places such as the pristine Selway River and the River of No Return Wilderness. Mort was particularly passionate about preserving the free-flowing streams of Idaho. He was one of the first to publicly oppose construction of

the lower Snake dams, which, as he predicted, have decimated the anadromous fish populations of the Snake system. In 1997 the Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, Idaho Conservation League and Idaho Environmental Council presented him with an award for a lifetime of service to conservation and wilderness preservation.



PERSPECTIVES ON HELLS CANYON

From Frontier-Era Accolades...

In 1933-34, Captain Benjamin L.E. Bonneville traveled extensively through the west following mainly the Snake River from Wyoming to Oregon. He remarks that Hells Canyon was the most impressive of sights:

The grandeur and originality of the views presented on every side beggar both the pencil and the pen. Nothing we had ever gazed upon in any other region could for a moment compare in wild majesty and impressive sternness with the series of scenes which here at every turn astonished our senses and filled us with awe and delight.

An unknown historian and writer, to whom Bonneville gave his journals and sold his manuscripts, paraphrased Bonneville:

At times, the river was overhung by dark and stupendous rocks, rising like gigantic walls and battlements; these would be rent by wide and yawning chasms that seemed to speak of past convulsions of nature. Sometimes the river was of a glassy smoothness and placidity; at other times it roared along in impetuous rapids and foaming cascades. Here, the rocks were piled in the most fantastic crags and precipices; and in another place, they were succeeded by delightful valleys carpeted with green sward. The whole of this wild and varied scenery was dominated by immense mountains rearing their distant peaks into the clouds.

Robert Stuart, a trapper for the Hudson Bay Trading Company, traveled along the Snake into Hells Canyon in 1812 and wrote in his journals:

Immediately below this it enters the mountains which become gradually higher to the end of 150 miles where the whole body of the River does not exceed 40 yards in width and is confined between precipices of astonishing height. Cascades and Rapids succeed each other almost without intermission, and....give a tolerable idea of its appearances were you to suppose the river to have once flowed subterraneously through these mountains and that in process of time, immense bodies of rock were detached occasionally from the ceiling until at length the surface of the heights descended into the gulf and formed the present bed of this tumultuous water course.

To Modern-Day Political Battles...

Efforts to protect Hells Canyon's magnificence began in the 1940's with the onset of the dam building era and logging of the national forest. Here's some choice quotes:

Washington is not in a spending mood right now unless the spending pertains to national defense, and Hitler can hardly be said to have Freezeout Saddle [on the west rim of Hells Canyon] as his next objective.

Future U.S. Senator Richard Neuberger (D-OR) in Consideration of designating a Hells Canyon National Park, January 1945

In this day of rapidly growing industrial development it is no longer possible to take a "wait and see" position on the wilderness situation- to wait and see how it looks a few years hence....At this time, the wilderness of the Snake River area is in critical danger of being lost to road development. The area involved is that land between the Imnaha and Snake Rivers...This area contains the best elk habitat in the state.

Don Neal, Hunter and Editor/Publisher of Oregon Sportsman Magazine, September 1966

Mr. President, one of the great national treasures of this world is on the verge of being destroyed. I refer to that area of the United States known as Hells Canyon. This gorge, the deepest in

the world, is located in some of the most rugged country in the West.

U.S. Senator Bob Packwood (R-OR), Congressional Record, April 14, 1971

I use wilderness. I use it instead of tranquilizers, alcohol or drugs. When I go there, I mean to get as close as possible to the beginning of things. I want to know how it was before man got so smart.

La Grande Grandmother Verna Slane, testimony on the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area Act, December 4, 1973

We do not protect the rim [of Hells Canyon]? We are going to have all kinds of honkytonks on the rim.

Rep. Marge Fenwick (R-NJ), in the House floor debate over the language of the HCNRA Act, November 1975

...As we look ahead in this age when we display such arrogant pride in man's work, it is a welcome thing once in a while to celebrate the preservation of god's work.... and I believe that our grandchildren and great-grandchildren will have cause to look back upon this day and say to all who were involved: it was good work you did to preserve this majestic canyon and to keep it in such a state that all generations of Americans might know and love it. It has been a good work.

Idaho Senator Frank Church at the July 20, 1976 dedication of the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area



The spectacular Imnaha River is an integral component of the Hells Canyon-Wallowa Mountain Ecosystem

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A HISTORY OF U.S. FOREST SERVICE OPPOSITION TO PROTECTING HELLS CANYON

By Brett Brownscombe

Present U.S. Forest Service mismanagement (see page 5) of the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area (HCNRA) follows on the heels of the agency's initial opposition to designating the area. Following are statements of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (Forest Service) on legislation to create the HCNRA. All quoted language is from actual testimony before the House of Representatives Subcommittee on National Parks and Recreation of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs during the 94th Congress.

In his testimony on legislation that eventually became the HCNRA Act, Robert W. Long, the Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, recognized that:

[t]he purposes of the area would be to preserve the natural beauty and historical and archeological values and to enhance recreational and ecologic values and public enjoyment.

With the popularity of legislation to protect Hells Canyon increasing, the USDA, which had opposed it, recommended a "substitute bill." This would have provided National Wild and Scenic River status to 68 miles of the Snake River. But that was it. It proposed no special protection or change in management for the adjacent national forest lands. In addition to its desire to insulate ongoing logging and livestock grazing from any restrictions, the USDA viewed mining and hydropower development--activities that the HCNRA Act clearly prohibits--as appropriate future uses of Hells Canyon. Mr. Long stated:

[t]he river has a substantial potential for power development... limiting the designation to the recommended 68 miles would maintain the potential for power development at the presently authorized Asotin [dam] site.

We do not favor the complete withdrawal of the area from application of the mining and mineral leasing laws. We believe that a mineral leasing system which gives the Secretary [of Agriculture] discretionary authority to control mineral activity affecting the surface resources within the area is essential.

The USDA was also particularly resistant to the idea of designating wilderness. Mr. Long stated:

We urge that within the Hells Canyon-Middle Snake River area no wilderness be designated at this time. Management of an area as wilderness restricts management of the same area for other resource values.

The USDA's approach was an outright attack on the principal resource protection measures proposed by the HCNRA Act. Long continues:

We object to a number of the major provisions of H.R. 30 [which along with S. 322, became the HCNRA Act] including the extension of the river designation for 33 miles downstream and the inclusion of the Rapid River; the designation of wilderness areas without detailed study and review; the inclusion within the national recreation area of the Upper Imnaha River drainage...; and the withdrawal of the recreation area from the application of the mining and mineral leasing laws.

At every opportunity, the USDA attempted to reduce the physical geography of Hells Canyon to a 68-mile segment of the Snake River and the adjacent canyon walls. The USDA's reductionist approach to Hells Canyon flew in the face of ecosystem considerations. It purported that the spectacular forest wildlands outside the immediate gorge were not worthy of any of the protections contemplated by the HCNRA Act. As Mr. Long put it:

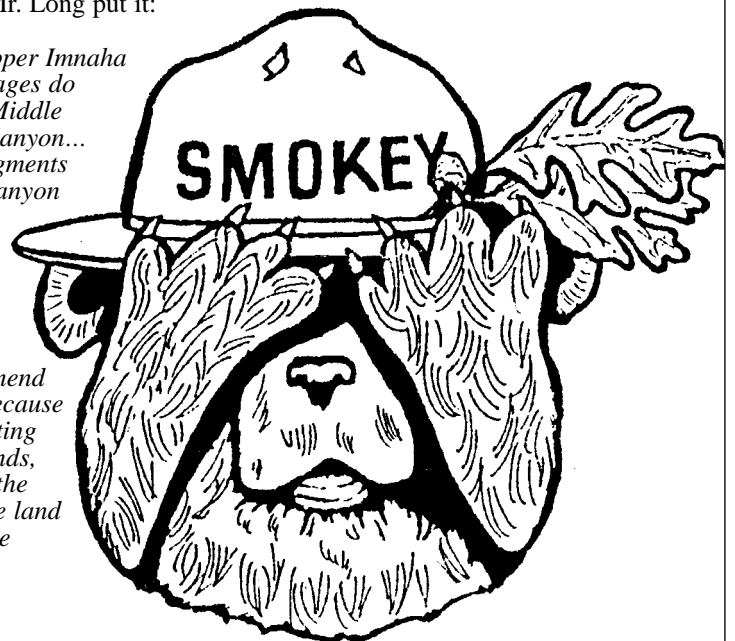
The lands in the Upper Imnaha and Rapid River drainages do not directly affect the Middle Snake River or Hells Canyon... The lands and river segments upstream from Hells Canyon Dam including North Pine Creek are not an integral part of the Hells Canyon area. Private lands would constitute a minor part of the areas we recommend for the designation...because we generally have existing authority to acquire lands, we do not believe that the promulgation of private land use standards would be necessary.

To sum it up, the USDA opposed the creation of the HCNRA. It opposed legislative direction that prioritized the preservation and enhancement of natural beauty and ecological health over extractive uses. And when it sensed the tide of public opinion against it, the USDA attempted to reduce the Hells Canyon Ecosystem to a minimal size in order to fit its resource extraction agenda.

We do not believe that it is necessary to designate the larger canyon area or other adjacent lands as a national recreation area...These lands... are managed as part of the National Forests. We believe this [the existing] management pattern is sufficient to meet public objectives for the area.

From its inception, the legislative history and Congressional testimony show that USDA Forest Service refused to support any reduction or alteration of extractive uses within the HCNRA. Not surprisingly, the agency had recently initiated a major escalation of logging and road building within the proposed protected area. Little change in those activities occurred after passage of the HCNRA Act, despite its ecosystem and wilderness protection provisions. For 25 years, the Forest Service has managed the lands within the HCNRA no differently than they would have if they had never been "protected."

Brett Brownscombe is HCPC's Conservation Director



A SHAMEFUL LEGACY

....to assure that the natural beauty, and historical and archeological values of the Hells Canyon area...are preserved for this and future generations, and that the recreational and ecologic values and public enjoyment of the area are thereby enhanced, there is hereby established the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area.

....the Secretary shall administer the recreation area...in a manner compatible with the following objectives... conservation of scenic, wilderness, cultural, scientific, and other values...preservation...of all features and peculiarities believed to be biologically unique including rare and endemic plant species, rare combinations of aquatic, terrestrial, and atmospheric habitats, and the rare combinations of outstanding and diverse ecosystems...protection and maintenance of fish and wildlife habitat.

Public Law 94-199; The Hells Canyon National Recreation Area Act

In 1975, Congress passed this special law to protect a singular place. So, how has the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area (HCNRA) been managed by the U.S. Forest Service in the 25 years since this law was passed? Following are some examples of continuing Forest Service mismanagement:

- Repeated, continuing mass dieoffs of wild Bighorn Sheep from diseases spread by domestic sheep occupying Forest Service livestock allotments.
- Herds of cattle trampling sensitive riparian areas and defecating directly into the Imnaha Wild and Scenic River and other streams designated as critical habitat for endangered salmon.



Herds of cattle defecate directly into the Imnaha River

- Reckless neglect for federal rules governing livestock grazing; for example one permittee continues to pile up dozens of permit violations, yet the Forest Service still allows this operator to graze cattle within the HCNRA.

- Logging of more than 160 million board feet of timber including old growth, mostly from HCNRA roadless areas, further depleting important, diminishing habitats.

- Repeated clearcutting despite the HCNRA Act's mandate of timber harvest by selective cutting only, and that logging activities must be compatible with the Act's protection objectives.

- Reconstruction of the Kirkwood Trail to accommodate increasing off-road vehicle traffic, carried out in defiance of federal regulations and promises made to the public, resulting in increased spread of noxious weeds.

- Reconstruction of the Gumboot Creek section of the Wallowa Loop Road in direct violation of federal NEPA guidelines, resulting in degradation of critical native salmon and steelhead habitat.

- Allowing motor vehicle use within the Hells Canyon Wilderness Area on the Lord Flat Trail, a primitive track that crosses inside the designated Wilderness boundary in several places, in violation of the Wilderness Act.

- Construction of more than 100 miles of logging roads and failure to close many that the Forest Service itself said it would close after completion of logging.

- Failure over 19 years to regulate jet boat use on the Snake Wild and Scenic River despite a clear legislative mandate to do so, resulting in a fivefold increase in their use and resultant destruction of wilderness values.

- Failure to promulgate rules to regulate jet boat speed and wakes, or to ensure the safety of swimmers and other non-motorized users. Safety threats and conflicts



Illegal Forest Service clearcutting

attributable to jet boats persist on the Snake River.

- Defacement of the most significant native American archaeological site in Hells Canyon via construction of a paved road, parking lot and interpretive signs at the formerly primitive place, and resultant vandalism of petroglyphs at the site.

- Proposed paving of ten miles of road on the canyon rim in critical wildlife habitat via the Overlook II project (which was terminated after litigation).

- Failure to promulgate special regulations for protecting public and private lands within the HCNRA even after a court order to do so, resulting in damage to the riparian area of the Imnaha River from dozens of unfenced cattle feedlots.

- Placement of degrading activities in sensitive and unique areas despite the absence of surveys to identify unique ecosystems and habitats or rare botanical components which are required to be protected under the HCNRA Act.

How is the Forest Service responding to reverse this legacy of lawbreaking, corruption and resource degradation?

Even though more than 1,000 people commented on the new HCNRA Comprehensive Management Plan and expressed support for ecosystem and wilderness protection, the Plan proposes no meaningful management changes in controlling destructive uses, nor restoration programs to address known and ongoing ecosystem deterioration.

PROJECTS UPDATE: ECOSYSTEM PROTECTION PROGRESS AND PERSEVERENCE

By *Brett Brownscombe*

As winter's blanket spreads over the Hells Canyon-Wallowa Mountain and Blue Mountain Ecosystems, their plants and wildlife settle into the season of rest. Appealing as it sounds, this natural rhythm does not quite run through the HCPC office. Much work remains in the effort to protect these public lands, and so it is that the Brock Evans mantra of "endless pressure, endlessly applied" knows no season. Following is a summary of HCPC's recent work to protect these national treasures from the U.S. Forest Service:

Big Mining Victory

Federal Judge Jelderks has ruled for HCPC in our challenge of the issuance of mining permits by the Forest Service for eight mining operations. We claimed that issuance of Plans of Operation for mining first requires full environmental analysis. Prior to proceeding to court, HCPC attorney Jennifer Schemm notified the Forest Service and the miners of the violation of federal law. But the agency refused to comply and we were obliged to file suit. Because of this legal victory affecting mines along Oregon's Burnt River, the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest (WWNF) has been compelled to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement to comprehensively evaluate and regulate mining actions and their impacts to native trout and other public values. HCPC will monitor and influence the Forest Service's actions regarding all mining operations on the WWNF.

Getting Cows Out of the Imnaha River

For 26 years since the passage of the HCNRA Act, the Forest Service has done virtually nothing to address the problem of cattle feedlots and the associated trappings and defecation along the Imnaha River. Private lands along the Imnaha River are within the HCNRA boundary and thus subject to federal private land use regulations to protect fish and wildlife habitat. The Imnaha is also designated critical habitat for spring/summer chinook salmon and is a national wild and scenic river. HCPC filed a lawsuit in May 2000 challenging the Forest Service's failure to

regulate livestock grazing on the Imnaha. Since the suit was filed, we have enjoyed two successful rulings, one that denied a Forest Service motion to dismiss the case. HCPC and its attorneys Jamie Jefferson and Julia Olson will appear in federal court in Portland for oral arguments in February 2002.

Forest Service Twice Corrupts the Kirkwood Trail

HCPC is looking into recourse for the Forest Service's illegal reconstruction of the old Kirkwood Trail that descends to the Snake River from the east rim of Hells Canyon (see article in January 2000 Falcon). The agency reconstructed the trail in the spring of 2000 without any public notification or environmental analysis. We have objected to the reconstruction because its primary purpose was to accommodate all-terrain vehicle use, which results in the spread of weeds, destruction of rare native plants and wilderness values, and soil erosion. After ignoring our concerns and illegally reconstructing the trail once, the Forest Service turned around and did the same thing again in November 2001! The second reconstruction perpetuates the Forest Service's refusal to analyze the overall resource impacts of motorized use on Kirkwood Trail. HCPC does not intend

to let the Forest Service get away with such chronic violation of federal law and resultant destruction of Hells Canyon's biodiversity. We have filed a complaint with the Department of Agriculture's Inspector General and are investigating other legal recourse at this time. We'll keep you posted....

....And Also Corrupts the Lord Flat Trail

As if it wasn't enough for the Forest Service to illegally reconstruct the Kirkwood Trail to accommodate all-terrain vehicles, the agency insists on allowing the old Lord Flat Trail on the west rim of Hells Canyon to be open to motor vehicles. This despite the fact that the trail appears to cross into the designated Hells Canyon Wilderness boundary, where motorized use is prohibited. HCPC and other allies such as hunters and the Nez Perce Tribe have repeatedly asked that the Lord Flat Trail be closed to motorized use particularly to protect elk habitat within the largest primitive, unroaded tract of land in the state of Oregon. The Forest Service insists on keeping the trail open to motorized use and has gone to ridiculous lengths to keep it open. HCPC is investigating possible violations of the wilderness act and will continue efforts to end motor vehicle use on the Lord Flat Trail.



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The Path Toward Wolf Restoration

Natural wolf recovery in Oregon and Washington remains hung-up on the fences of the resistant livestock industry and the government officials who are trying their best to pretend wolves are still extinct in these states. Since three wild wolves migrated to Oregon in 1999 and 2000, the State of Oregon has yet to begin development of a wolf recovery plan as required under the Endangered Species Act. The Oregon Cattleman's Association has stamped onto the scene with its "zero tolerance for wolves" position. HCPC is working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the State of Oregon to encourage a wolf-friendly wolf recovery plan. We are seeking protection of wolves by law from loose cannons bent on shooting wolves, as occurred near Ukiah, Oregon in October 2000. We have also hired a private investigator to look into the killing of the Ukiah Wolf.

Scrutinizing the Blue Mountain Demonstration Area

The Blue Mountain Demonstration Area (BMDA) is a 3 million acre expanse in northeast Oregon where a state/federal effort was initiated to showcase forest ecosystem restoration. It was conceived by Oregon Governor Kitzhaber and the Forest Service in 1998. However, the intended visionary "new management techniques" have failed to materialize and restoration in the language of the Forest Service still appears to be synonymous with commodity-based logging, the very activity that caused forest health

deterioration to begin with. HCPC has joined with a number of advocacy organizations to develop a set of "restoration principles" based on scientific information toward ecologically sensitive policy. HCPC continues to closely monitor BMDA projects to ensure compliance with federal law and scientific restoration principles. Our findings will be published and shared with the political establishment and media.

Sprinkle Timber Sale Appealed

HCPC has appealed the "Sprinkle Restoration Project," a timber sale on the La Grande Ranger District of the WWNF. The appeal focuses on the lack of consideration for the ecological impacts of the four miles of road construction planned in the sale. On the WWNF, there are 10,000 miles of roads within its 2.2 million acres, which cause soil erosion, stream sedimentation and disruption of wildlife habitat. Any proposal to build more roads is both fiscally and environmentally ludicrous. The Sprinkle Project is an example of the Forest Service's disregard for its own road density standard, which exists to protect wildlife, fish, and water quality from the erosion and motor vehicle disturbance caused by roads. We should receive word on the determination of the appeal by February 2002.

California Timber Sale Appealed

This timber sale on the Unity Ranger District of the WWNF proposes to log an area already scarred by past timber sales, mining, and livestock grazing. The sale

would further deteriorate already impaired water quality, perpetuate excessive road densities, compact soil and reduce wildlife habitat. With this project, the Forest Service has failed to follow its own forest plan direction. This timber sale would also affect the endangered lynx. At the national level, the Forest Service has decided to minimize protection for existing habitat for lynx, spurring scientific controversy. At the local level, in decisions such as the California Sale, the agency has decided to undertake heavy-handed logging in and adjacent to identified lynx habitat in defiance of the Endangered Species Act. The determination on our appeal is expected in March 2002.

Saving the Snake River's Rapids

A small notice in the Saturday September 29, 2001 Lewiston Morning Tribune notified readers that an individual would be removing rocks from McDuff Rapid on the Snake River, at the Oregon-Washington border. The action was scheduled for Monday, October 1. With only 48 hours notice, there was little HCPC and river protection allies could do to stop it. The first good news is that the individual who took a large track hoe down to the river did not succeed in removing the rock from the rapid that he claimed was a hazard to jet boats. The second good news is that the Army Corps of Engineers, which approved the project, was spanked in the local media and by a collection of river outfitting companies and river protection groups via a strongly worded letter of protest. It is doubtful the Corps will repeat its mistake. The bad news is that during the transport of the track hoe, a fire was started that spread to 2,000 acres across land owned by the Nature Conservancy, which had given the rapid-defiler permission to use a road on its property to access McDuff Rapid.



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HELLS CANYON ECOSYSTEM'S PLACE IN THE BIODIVERSITY PICTURE

By *Katie DeNiro*

While early explorers and 1960s Hells Canyon protection advocates lauded the beauty and ruggedness of the Hells Canyon Country, these days the ecological value of the area has moved to the forefront. The rise of conservation biology and advances in science have revealed the Hells Canyon-Wallowa Mountain Ecosystem's ecological importance and uniqueness.

While it remains significant that Hells Canyon is the deepest canyon on Earth, the entire Ecosystem's role as a pathway for the dispersal of plants and animals region-wide deserves more attention. It is the "hub of the wheel" among Pacific Northwest ecosystems and wilderness complexes and its rich, diverse habitats are critical to the propagation of genetic diversity. It is directly connected to the central Idaho wilderness complex (Northern Rocky Mountains), the Blue Mountains and the Oregon High Desert (Northern Great Basin) with few minor developmental impediments to the travel of wildlife and dispersal of genetic material.

The Hells Canyon-Wallowa Mountain Ecosystem is also a rare bastion of concentrated ecological diversity due to its geographic position on the continent and its wild variety of landforms and subsequently, microclimates. In contrast to the average 10 inches of rain that falls annually in the bottom of Hells Canyon, precipitation in the high Wallows reaches as high as 50 inches a year. Alpine lakes, wetlands and springs remain important sources of water emanating from the mountains, yet small streams in the warm lower canyons often dry out completely. Winter snows are severe in the Wallowa and Seven Devils Mountains, but are relatively mild in the canyon bottomlands.

The Ecosystem experiences great variations of rainfall caused partly by dramatic elevation changes (four miles west from the 9,400-foot He Devil on Hells Canyon's east rim, one drops 7,900 vertical feet to the Snake River) and topographical variation over a limited horizontal area. Its diverse geologic substrate and their water-retaining capabilities and the varied climatic regimes create the great diversity of habitats and, consequently, a wide array of resident plant and animal life.

The topographically and climatically varied landscape creates a high diversity of biomes and ecotones. The Hells Canyon and Wallowa Mountain regions have been identified by federal scientists as top focal points of plant and animal species biodiversity, endemism and rarity in the Columbia Basin. Plant communities range from alpine, sub-alpine herb, wetland and spruce/fir habitats in the mountain regions down to ponderosa pine, native bunchgrass, wheatgrass and sagebrush in lower elevations. Thousands of individual plant species, many rare and endemic to the region, have been documented.

Within the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area alone, over 350 wildlife species occupy the area, including 239 known species of birds, 69 mammals and numerous reptile and amphibian species. Large carnivores, most notably bear and cougar, thrive because of the relatively large remaining tracts of undeveloped land that serve as unfragmented habitat. Over one million acres of the Ecosystem is roadless and undeveloped.

The astonishing diversity of plant and animal life combined with the Ecosystem's location between the American Northwest's most dominant eastern and western mountain ranges makes it one of the most ecologically important regions for conservation today. Its sub-alpine and forest habitats provide refuge for species that are normally found only in the Rocky Mountains, the Cascade Mountains or in boreal habitats further north. The hot, dry canyon bottoms contain plants and animals commonly found in the Great Basin. But most importantly, the Ecosystem's central location provides a transition zone and a path of ecosystem connectivity for migrating species of birds and animals.

From the high mountain lakes to the big serpentine river low in the canyon, the Hells Canyon-Wallowa Mountain Ecosystem is a land of great topographical diversity and high ecological integrity. Without this wild and undisturbed enclave, a crucial biological link between ecosystems throughout the West would be lost.

Katie DeNiro honored HCPC with three months of dedicated internship during the summer of 2001



The Hells Canyon-Wallowa Mountain Ecosystem -- Where you will find:

- Deepest canyon in North America and perhaps on Earth
- The most intact, undisturbed remnants of Interior Columbia Basin native grasslands
- Largest free-roaming elk herd in North America
- Rare plants found nowhere else, including McFarlane's four o'clock and limber pine
- The best winter hiking, cross-country skiing and year-round mountain biking in the Pacific Northwest
- Over 1,000 archaeological sites from native cultures, the oldest dating back 7,100 years
- Rare wildlife found nowhere else, including the Wallowa Grey-Crowned Rosy Finch
- Largest expanse of unroaded backcountry in the state of Oregon
- Largest river in North America with Class 4 whitewater
- Eastern edge of the second-largest volcanic basalt flows on Earth
- Endangered salmon including the Imnaha River stocks, among the world's largest salmon
- Plant and Animal Tally-- 41 species of fish; 3 species of salamanders; 9 species of frogs and toads; 9 species of lizards; 14 species of endemic fungi; 1,038 species of plants; 150 species of endemic plants; 381 species of wildlife; 239 species of birds; 114 species of neotropical migrant birds; 69 species of mammals; 13 species of bats, 8 listed as sensitive; 9 species of forest owls (these figures for plants and animals pertain only to the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area and do not include those within the Wallowa Mountains)

Continued from page 1

The history of the Ecosystem's native human inhabitants is as rich as its habitats. Also due to its central location within the Columbia River Basin, Hells Canyon was a pathway of exchange among many native tribes, including the Nez Perce, Umatilla, Shoshone, Flathead and Cayuse. Native history in the area has been documented to 5,100 BC; ancient dwellings and petroglyphs still stand today as markers of a distant human past.

European occupation began in 1803 with the arrival of Lewis and Clark. Later the British Hudson Bay Trading Company began to send expedition teams to the inland Northwest in search of economic opportunity. The wonder of Hells Canyon was noted by early explorers (see page 3). Robert Stuart, a trapper for the Hudson Bay Company, remarked: "Mountain appears as if piled on Mountain, and after ascending incessantly for half a day, you seem as if no nearer the attainment of the object in view than at the outset."

After the explorers came the homesteaders. Grace Jordan, author and one-time inhabitant of the Kirkwood Bar Ranch, described Hells Canyon as "that deepest scar on North America's face, through which the river is not navigable and where even foot travel stops." Hells Canyon's wildness suffered only bold adventurers, and intoxicated everyone who ventured there. Both culturally and ecologically, the Hells Canyon Ecosystem is a place of dynamic interaction, but its integrity is now aggressively threatened.

Modern-day America has acknowledged Hells Canyon's ecological significance and beauty by passing special laws to protect it. Yet tragically, the cause of continuing ecological deterioration lies at the hands of the area's appointed steward, the U.S. Forest Service. Its livestock grazing, logging, motorized recreation and road construction institutions have incised deep scars (see story on page 5). Weed invasions caused by livestock and off-road vehicle use are ruining grasslands while fire suppression and logging have unraveled the forest ecosystem. Roads have fragmented habitats and facilitated weed spread.

Positive encouragement and public pressure directed at the Forest Service to change management to comply with the HCNRA Act have consistently been ignored, most notably evidenced in the Forest Service's tragically unprotective new management plan. It is clear the Forest Service has no intention of changing course.

It is clear that we must move forward immediately to protect the Hells Canyon legacy forever. When the HCPC family came together last August at Buckhorn Overlook to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the passage of the HCNRA Act, we shared success stories of perseverance and determination in the long history of efforts to preserve Hells Canyon. But more importantly, we all spoke of the future and the idea of new legislation to designate a Hells Canyon-Chief Joseph National Preserve. Today we look forward, toward creating a vision for the protection and restoration of this embracing, beloved place.

Min Lee is HCPC's Westside Coordinator, working out of our Portland office to generate public involvement and support for the Hells Canyon-Chief Joseph National Preserve

NEW STAFF

HCPC is honored to welcome four new staff. **Min Lee**, a graduate of Greencorps, is our Westside Coordinator and staffs our new Portland office. Min is conducting research for the Hells Canyon-Chief Joseph Project and mobilizing public support for the National Preserve. **Lisa Dix** is our new Ecosystem Defense Coordinator and comes to HCPC after spending two years with the American Lands Alliance in Washington, D.C. A graduate of the University of Utah, Lisa oversees monitoring of Forest Service activities within the Hells Canyon and Blue Mountain Ecosystems. **Kathleen Ackley** is our new Development Director. Kathleen comes to HCPC from the Pacific Biodiversity Institute and coordinates our special fundraising activities and member outreach. **Darilyn LeGore** is our new office manager; she has organized an environmental club at La Grande's Eastern Oregon University while coordinating special publications. Long-time Executive Director **Ric Bailey**, Outreach Director **Juanette Cremin** and Conservation Director **Brett Brownscombe** round out our effective, dedicated team. All of us welcome your inquiries!

The evolution of protective legislation....

In light of the unrelenting threats to the Hells Canyon Ecosystem and the obstinate unwillingness of the U.S. Forest Service to protect it, HCPC is developing a new legislative solution to provide the permanent protection that the Ecosystem, and those who love it, deserve. Over the next two years, prior to seeking introduction of a Bill into Congress, HCPC will collaboratively fashion the boundary and legislative details of the Hells Canyon-Chief Joseph National Preserve while generating a diverse base of public support. The Preserve designation will be fashioned based on the following five general objectives:

- 1) Appoint a new management agency, the National Park Service, that will respect the protection mandate, restore degraded lands and guard the integrity of the Hells Canyon-Wallowa Mountain Ecosystem.
- 2) Combine existing protected areas (the HCNRA, Hells Canyon and Eagle Cap Wilderness Areas) and expand the protected area boundary to include public lands within the full Ecosystem.
- 3) Establish a legislative mandate that emphasizes protection of the Ecosystem from damaging human activities and enables comprehensive restoration programs.
- 4) Guarantee Native American treaty rights and the direct involvement of tribes in management decisions affecting the Ecosystem.
- 5) Change the name from the deceptive and misused "recreation area" title to "National Preserve," thus highlighting the ecological and cultural significance of the region.

Details of the new preserve proposal will materialize as HCPC builds support through collaborative outreach to a variety of constituencies, all of which will have a say in the composition of the legislative language and the boundary. Future editions of the *Falcon* and special publications will showcase the new proposal.

HELLS CANYON CHAMPIONS CELEBRATE THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE HCNRA ACT



Bill Meadows, President of The Wilderness Society, gave an excellent presentation at the celebration

By Juanette Cremin

What a day! On August 24, 2001, leaders of the environmental movement, the funding community, tribal members and HCPC members gathered at Buckhorn Overlook to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the designation of the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area (HCNRA).

Youth and experience came together not only to celebrate a place, but to honor and thank those insightful individuals who long ago identified the threat posed by the unfettered movement to log every forest and dam every free-flowing stream in America. They said "not in Hells Canyon." And we have an undammed river and national recreation area as a result. Speaker Brock Evans, who initiated the organized effort to save Hells Canyon in 1967, still refers to passage of the HCNRA Act as the "lost cause that was won."

Months of preparation went into planning this extraordinary event. Many veterans of the Hells Canyon wars, who we somehow located, rearranged busy work and personal schedules to make the trip to this very remote corner of Oregon. Others had died, leaving a legacy for which we and generations to come are eternally grateful.

At the dawn of the day of the event, Louie Dick of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Nation (whose grandmother was three years old when her family joined Chief Joseph on the long march that initiated the Nez Perce war) orches-

trated the raising of the traditional longhouse on the ancient lands of the Nez Perce. It stood behind us as we gazed at the breathtaking vista of Hells Canyon and listened to our mentors voice their sentiments about the past, present and future of the area.

The audience at once was struck by a universal sentiment: The incredible and unforeseen success they thought they achieved was short-lived. In the words of emcee and long-time river outfitter John Barker: "We thought we finished the job. But we have discovered we did not apply enough protection against the so-called protecting agency." A new commitment to making the Hells Canyon Ecosystem one of the top priorities for the next addition to America's national parks system was cemented.

Attendees enjoyed the insights of many long-time Hells Canyon protection leaders. In addition to patriarch Brock Evans, Bill Meadows, president of The Wilderness Society, gave a keynote address. We also witnessed the announcement of the Hells Canyon Hall of Fame, the leaders whose vision and sacrifices have helped to save Hells Canyon.

Dinner followed. The fare was simple, but wonderful. We shared in the generosity of the Confederated Tribes who provided and prepared sacred Columbia River salmon. James Monteith procured and barbequed buffalo steaks. A local farmer provided fresh corn on the cob. Salads, breads

and dessert came from local restaurants. Following dinner those assembled in the longhouse heard Louie Dick share tales of the history of his people and reflections on their place in the web of life.

As the sun set and the stars twinkled overhead, attendees gathered in small groups or retired to their tents with their private reflections. The symphony of the canyon song ended a perfect day.

The sweat, tears and arduous labors of the activists who 25 years ago stopped the proposed Snake River dams and initiated a singular ecosystem protection mandate through the HCNRA Act shall not be wasted. We will rekindle the flame for the great living river; the incomparable forests, grasslands and wildflower meadows; the salmon, elk and peregrine falcon; the ancient home of the Nez Perce people and the deep majesty of the grandest of canyons.

Many thanks to our generous members and our allies in the environmental community whose support of this event made it possible. Special thanks to the following businesses who donated their products and services. Remember them! Blue Mountain Trading Company-- La Grande, Oregon; Helvetia Vineyards-- Hillsboro, Oregon; Terminal Gravity Brewery-- Enterprise, Oregon; Salmon River Dories River Outfitting Company-- Deary, Idaho

Juanette Cremin is HCPC's Outreach Director. She and interns Katie DeNiro and Lisa Doolittle did most of the organizing for this wonderful event



BENEFIT RIVER TRIPS 2002

The Hells Canyon Preservation Council and Northwest Ecosystem Alliance cordially invite you to join us on one of our 2002 benefit river trips. These are fully outfitted and guided trips with reputable companies. HCPC and NWEA will receive from 20 to 60 percent of the total trip cost to fund our conservation programs.

To sign up, or for additional information, contact HCPC Development Director Kathleen Ackley at (541) 318-5963.

River	Trip Operator	Trip Date	Price	Deposit	Deposit Due
A. Grande Ronde River	Hells Canyon Whitewater	May 17-19	\$595	\$250	March 15
B. John Day River	Hells Canyon Whitewater	May 24-27	\$795	\$250	March 15
C. Snake River/Hells Canyon	OARS	June 2-6	\$1,056	\$300	Feb 15
D. Snake River/Hells Canyon	Hells Canyon Whitewater	June 16-20	\$1,000	\$300	April 1
E. Lower Salmon River	Salmon River Dories	July 14-19	\$1,082	\$300	April 1
F. Lower Salmon River	ROW	Aug 27-31	\$1,291	\$350	March 15

See the Show!

HCPC's Westside Coordinator Min Lee is hitting the road with our excellent Hells Canyon slide show. The show presents beautiful images of the Hells Canyon-Wallowa Mountain Ecosystem from professional photographers. It highlights issues and opportunities associated with the Hells Canyon-Chief Joseph National Preserve.

Presentations are available to organizations and groups at official or informal meetings. If your group is interested in a viewing and presentation, contact Min at (503) 827-5255.

If you haven't already... PLEASE JOIN HCPC!

Your contributions are tax-deductible!

Our members are our life blood. Their financial and other contributions enable visionary and dedicated activism toward protection of America's incomparable Hells Canyon and Blue Mountain Ecosystems.

- \$250 (or more annually) William O. Douglas Society
- \$100 Benefactor
- \$50 Contributor
- \$35 Family
- \$25 Individual
- \$15 Student/Senior
- The Legacy Club*

*Join the Legacy Club!

For just \$10 or more per month, automatically withdrawn from your account, you can make a hassle-free contribution to HCPC. This gives you the comfort of knowing you are helping us every month and gives us the luxury of spending more time on issues and less on fundraising! Check our website at www.hellscanyon.org for details.

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Mail all contributions to: HCPC; P.O. Box 2768 La Grande, OR 97850
 Phone: (541) 963-3950 Fax: (541) 963-0584 E-Mail: hpc@hellscanyon.org

