



Hells Bells - February 2021

The Lower Snake River and its Northeast Oregon Tributaries

The biggest news impacting the Greater Hells Canyon Region in February has taken the Pacific Northwest by storm. Following on the heels of the River Democracy Act, our Oregon Senators' inclusive effort to designate more wild and scenic rivers across this state, [Idaho Representative Mike Simpson unveiled an ambitious, holistic proposal to breach the four dams on the lower Snake River](#). This is historic.

As we shared in an Action Alert that went out earlier this month, Simpson's proposal is not yet a bill, but rather it's an invitation to Simpson's colleagues in the Pacific Northwest delegation, along with Tribes, governors, and community stakeholders, to work together on a comprehensive vision for the Snake River Basin. It is a bold first step toward creating a bill that would bring billions into our region for fish and wildlife, renewable energy and grid resilience, economic development, irrigation and watershed stewardship, in addition to breaching the four dams on the lower Snake River.

Northeast Oregonians have a big stake in what happens on the mainstem Snake. To ensure we're represented in the work to come, [we need your help asking Oregon's senators to engage](#) with their colleague across the aisle to turn his proposal affecting all of our region's waterways into the comprehensive salmon solution we've been asking for.

Headway on the Blue Mountains Trail



On Wednesday, February 17, [Oregon Wild](#) hosted a presentation of the work developing the [Blue Mountains Trail](#) with Whitney La Ruffa, Naomi Hudetz, Mike Unger, and Renee Patrick, the four thru-hikers who completed variations of the new route in fall 2020. The presentation was attended by over 300 people. [You can catch a replay of the presentation on Oregon Wild's YouTube Channel.](#)

So much more than a new address

GHCC was in the same office space in La Grande for over 20 years, and a formidable amount of "stuff" accumulated during that time. Taking turns (to follow our COVID-19 protocol), we spent the better part of five months cleaning out the office and moving to a smaller space a few blocks away.

Danae Yurgel, our Office Administrator, led the effort. In the process, she spent a lot of time wading through the physical flotsam and jetsam of the history of this organization, and thinking about all that it entails. In a recent blog post, she seeks to answer the question: "All of these invisible forgotten fights, were they worth the grinding hard work, tears, frustrations, and suffering?"

[Read the full blog post here.](#) And when the time is right, we look forward to reopening office hours at our new location on 1119 Washington Avenue in La Grande.

Other news you may have missed...

Keeping trees in the ground slows climate change

A succinct and well written article by Beverly Law, Professor Emeritus at Oregon State University, and William Moomaw, Professor Emeritus at Tufts University, makes the case that big trees kept growing or left in a forest after a fire offer a simple way to reduce climate emissions. "Live and dead trees, along with forest soil, hold the equivalent of 80% of all the carbon currently in Earth's atmosphere." It helps explain the urgency of our work on maintaining the 21-inch rule. [Read the full article in The Conversation.](#)

Senator Wyden's Op-Ed on the River Democracy Act

Following the introduction of the River Democracy Act, Senator Ron Wyden [published this opinion in the Mail Tribune](#) explaining the importance of the Act's protections for Oregon's waterways and clarifying the misconceptions that the Act will have negative impacts on the ability to fight wildfires or in any way impact private property rights.

Boardman to Hemingway goes to court

The Stop B2H Coalition, which includes GHCC, took the BLM to court to compel the agency to conduct a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on the B2H powerline or kill the project outright. Oral arguments in the case were heard on Monday, February 22. Issues included the imperiled Greater Sage Grouse, the viewshed at the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center in Baker County, and the impacts, such as noise pollution, of new routes near La Grande--which were not adequately studied and which the public never had an opportunity to comment on a violation of the public's rights under NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act). [Read the full article in the Capital Press.](#)

Thank you Six Moon Designs!



In February, [Six Moon Designs](#), an Oregon-based ultralight outdoor gear company, joined GHCC's [revamped business sponsorship program](#). We have loved the tremendous support the company has shown to us, especially given how their gear was put to the test on the Blue Mountains Trail. In announcing the sponsorship, Whitney La Ruffa, Six Moon Design's VP of Marketing and Sales, said: "As one of the first thru hikers of the new Blue Mountains Trail, I am thrilled that Six Moon Designs is the first business partner with GHCC. Our love of exploring wild places and our company's deep ties to Oregon make this the perfect project for us to support, and we're looking forward to doing more trail work with GHCC this summer.

Please join us in extending a hearty welcome and thank you to Six Moon Designs. You can read the full announcement [here](#).



GHCC works to protect, connect, and restore the lands, waters, native species, and climate resiliency of the ecologically magnificent Greater Hells Canyon Region.

[Join us](#) in protecting the Greater Hells Canyon Region today and for future generations!

Darilyn Parry Brown, GHCC Executive Director

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