



ADVOCATES for the WEST

2021 Spring/Summer Case Notes

Middle Deschutes, Three Sisters – Mike Putnam



CAN SAGE-GROUSE SAVE THE WEST?

Laird J. Lucas, Executive Director (Boise Office)



Spring is finally here in Boise, and I know that driving just a couple hours down to the Owyhees would let me once again enjoy the early morning mating displays of greater sage-grouse. Males strutting with their chests puffed out and their spiky tails spread, hoping to attract females and breed with them, is an unforgettable sight!

Unfortunately, sage-grouse mating dances are getting harder to witness, as grouse numbers drop. In March, the U.S. Geological Survey published its latest report documenting the continued decline of sage-grouse populations, lasting more than a century now. And our board member Amy Haak—a geographer and ecologist who is focusing on climate change impacts—just circulated a draft analysis showing cumulative losses of sage-grouse habitats during the four years of the Trump Administration, including from oil and gas leasing as well as wildfires.

Human impacts to the sagebrush biome are the biggest problem—agricultural conversions,

energy development, roads and powerlines, pipelines, fences, noise, livestock grazing, all of these contribute to loss and fragmentation of sagebrush habitats. And thus loss of sage-grouse populations.

Over the last decade, scientists have learned much more about how sensitive sage-grouse are to impacts from human activities—and where the remaining sage-grouse habitats and populations are that need to be conserved. With about two-thirds of remaining grouse strongholds on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Forest Service lands, the fate of the species is inextricably linked with how western public lands are managed.

Simply put, conserving the sage-grouse requires protecting the best remaining habitats on the western public lands—and keeping those lands intact will benefit not only sage-grouse, but over 350 other fish and wildlife species that use the same native habitats. So, can sage-grouse save the West? I believe so—and

we at *Advocates for the West* are working hard to make that happen!

Under the Trump Administration’s “energy dominance” agenda for public lands management, the BLM and Forest Service moved to allow fossil fuel development and fracking throughout the public lands, even in priority sage-grouse habitats. But *Advocates for the West* has fiercely opposed these efforts in the courts, and we are continuing to keep the legal pressure on even as we hope the Biden Administration changes course. Our current efforts include the following:

- **Oil and gas leases in sage-grouse habitat:** Under the Trump Administration, BLM violated bedrock environmental laws in approving thousands of oil and gas leases in prime sage-grouse habitats from 2017 to 2020. BLM also slashed transparency, public participation, and environmental reviews before oil and gas leases are auctioned. But our team pushed back hard and won several victories

already, with the Idaho federal court in February 2020 voiding hundreds of leases on a million acres of sage-grouse habitats and reinstating public participation in oil and gas leasing decisions.

We are now defending those rulings on appeal while challenging hundreds more leases in priority sage-grouse habitats, against vigorous opposition from states and the oil and gas industry. The new Biden team at BLM, Department of Interior, and Department of Justice is just getting into place, so we still don’t know how the new administration will respond in court. But we are hopeful that they will agree with us to sweep aside Trump policy reversal and bad leasing decisions through settlements. Stay tuned!

- **Sage-grouse land use plans:** We won another major court victory in October 2019, blocking Trump Administration efforts to weaken BLM land

use plans for sage-grouse and promote energy development across 51 million acres. We are now pushing for the Biden Administration to disavow the Trump rollbacks and adopt more protections for key sage-grouse habitats and protections across the West—particularly from threats of industrial development and fracking. Again, it is too early to know exactly how the new Biden team will respond to our litigation pressure, but early indications are that the BLM and Interior agree in principle that tightened land management protections are needed for the most important grouse habitats.

- **Mining threats:** In February 2021, we won a court victory against Trump rollbacks when an Idaho court ruled BLM unlawfully cancelled a plan to withdraw 10 million acres of the highest priority sage-grouse habitats from mining claims. The mining industry is vociferously opposing our

effort to expand protections in the sage-grouse range to reduce mining threats, and we expect to defend this victory against their appeals even as we hope to negotiate a resolution with the Biden Administration to move forward with withdrawing the most important grouse habitats from new mining threats.

- **Wyoming sage-grouse and Path of the Pronghorn:** We are now briefing our challenges to Trump BLM’s approval of 3,500 new oil and gas wells in southwestern Wyoming—a massive project that intersects critical sage-grouse wintering habitat and the “Path of the Pronghorn” migration corridor, the second-longest mammal migration in the lower 48 states. The State of Wyoming and oil and gas industry again are defending this massively damaging project—but we are hopeful the Biden Administration will be open to reevaluating

this project and considering ways to permanently protect these crucial habitats for sage-grouse, pronghorn and other species.

In addition to these cases, we are looking to file additional lawsuits in coming weeks and months, to “tee up” other bad Trump era decisions that threaten irresponsible development of oil and gas and other resources within key sage-grouse habitats. The Biden Administration has so many important priorities to address, that we believe active litigation is one way to help prioritize and focus its attention on threats to the public lands and their sagebrush habitats.

So, can sage-grouse save the West? Yes, they sure can – but they need your help. Thanks for your support of our work for sage-grouse and so many other fish and wildlife species!

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NEW LAWSUIT TARGETS OPEN-PIT PHOSPHATE MINE IN SOUTHEAST IDAHO

Sarah Stellberg, Staff Attorney (Boise Office)

Advocates for the West filed a new lawsuit this spring challenging the Caldwell Canyon phosphate mine project in Southeast Idaho.

The Trump Administration approved the mining project in 2019 over the objections of environmental groups and the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, whose reservation is northwest of the mine.

The lawsuit challenges the Bureau of Land Management’s (BLM’s) decision to approve the Caldwell Canyon project without addressing the impacts from selenium pollution to Idaho waterways; increased radioactive and heavy metal pollution resulting from the processing of phosphate ore; and harm to critical sage-grouse habitats.

WHAT’S AT STAKE

If allowed to move forward, the Caldwell Canyon project would entail construction of two giant open pits, each several miles in length. Phosphate ore would be scraped from the ground, visually scarring the landscape and destroying habitat for a

high-risk population of greater sage-grouse. Sage-grouse habitat is under threat across the West and populations have continued to plummet in recent years. High levels of noise due to blasting and heavy equipment use are expected to disturb some of the area’s few remaining sage-grouse breeding grounds, called leks.

The Caldwell Canyon mine will further result in plumes of toxic selenium-contaminated groundwater. Selenium pollution has already caused extensive damage to surface and groundwaters in the region, and is linked to the declines in Yellowstone cutthroat trout populations and deformities and death to numerous other wildlife species. Selenium-bearing dust from the mine pits is also projected to contaminate the nearby Blackfoot River, a waterbody already listed under the Clean Water Act as “impaired” for selenium.

In addition to impacts from the mine itself, the phosphate ore will be processed at the nearby Soda Springs Plant, which was listed as a Superfund site in 1990 for,

among other things, selenium and heavy-metal contamination of groundwater. Nearly two decades later, groundwater contamination at the Soda Springs Plant still extends beyond the property boundary and is contributing to surface-water contamination that violates Idaho water-quality standards.

ORE DESTINED FOR ROUNDUP PRODUCTION

The Caldwell Canyon developer is a subsidiary of Bayer, the giant multinational company that recently acquired Monsanto. Phosphate ore from the mine will be used to manufacture glyphosate, the active ingredient in the controversial herbicide Roundup.

The World Health Organization considers glyphosate a probable carcinogen, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recently determined that glyphosate is likely to “adversely affect” 93% of all federally threatened or endangered species.

The phosphate currently used to produce Roundup is sourced from another southeastern Idaho

mine that will soon be depleted.

IDAHO’S SUPERFUND ALLEY

The Caldwell Canyon mine sits in Southeast Idaho’s phosphate patch, an area rich in phosphorus ore. Idaho is the nation’s second largest producer of phosphate ore, after Florida.

Past phosphate mining in this region has come at a significant cost. Today, Southeastern Idaho is home to over a dozen Superfund sites still requiring cleanup, thanks to companies such as Simplot and Monsanto. During the last century, these legacy mines have contaminated the region’s water sources with toxic substances such as selenium, arsenic, uranium, radium, and radon.

Advocates for the West will be fighting to halt the Caldwell Canyon project until BLM complies with its obligation to study the environmental impacts and implement measures to protect regional wildlife and water sources. Expect to hear more about his case in the coming months.



CONTINUING OUR FIGHT TO PROTECT CONSERVATION LANDS

Todd Tucci, Senior Attorney (Boise Office)

While we are elated to be working under a Biden Administration in the coming years rather than a continuation of Trump party politics, *Advocates for the West's* work remains essential to helping restore balance and reason into public lands management. The Biden Administration brings a host of friendly faces to the land management agencies and we can expect better decisions moving forward. My work over the past few months has been primarily focused on forcing a re-evaluation in Trump-era land management decisions, injecting sound science and advocacy into public lands management.

RED CLIFFS NORTHERN CORRIDOR HIGHWAY, UT

As expected, as the Trump Administration neared its expiration date, then-Secretary of Interior Bernhardt approved a right-of-way over public lands for the 4-lane Northern Corridor Highway through the Red Cliffs National Conservation Area and critical habitat for the Mojave

desert tortoise. Although this decision is now final, and Secretary Bernhardt simultaneously changed the governing land use plans to allow for Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) to punch the highway through a National Conservation Area, there appears to be no immediate threat of construction or other ground disturbing activities in the right-of-way. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has yet to issue a Notice to Proceed, which is necessary to permit UDOT to begin pre-construction clearance and construction activities, and we are working with our clients to ensure that no implementation activities occur within the right-of-way.

Advocates for the West continues to work with the Red Cliffs Conservation Coalition to elevate this decision for reconsideration within the Biden Administration, and at the same time prepare to formalize our opposition to the decision through federal court litigation, if needed. The Biden Administration now owns this decision, and any authorization or

permission to move forward with the Northern Corridor Highway will be vigorously contested.

CONGLOMERATE MESA, CA

In 2018, BLM authorized a plan of operation for gold mine exploration in California Desert National Conservation Lands on Conglomerate Mesa, which lies on the western shoulder of Death Valley National Park. In August 2020, the operator completed its initial exploration, which entailed helicopter access only to four drill sites across Conglomerate Mesa, over the opposition of our partners Friends of the Inyo, Conservation Lands Foundation, and others.

Now, the operator K2 Gold, a Canadian mining corporation, is targeting Conglomerate Mesa for additional gold mine exploration. This time it is proposing far more extensive and expansive exploration, including constructing roads and punching up to 120 wells at 30 different sites across Conglomerate Mesa, including within or around an Area of Critical Environmental

Concern, the Malpais Mesa Wilderness, and within earshot of Death Valley National Park.

We are working with our partner groups to oppose expanded gold mine exploration, and we will be investing time and resources into this fight in the coming months.

Conservation Lands Foundation, Conserve Southwest Utah, Red Cliffs Conservation Coalition, The Wilderness Society, Friends of the Inyo

Partners

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FIGHTING BIG OIL AND BPA

Andrew Missell, Staff Attorney (Portland Office)

BATTLING BIG OIL

In February 2020, *Advocates for the West* won big in our sage-grouse oil and gas case when a federal court voided five oil and gas lease sales encompassing 677 parcels located in sage-grouse habitat in three states. That victory—the product of hard work by Staff Attorney Sarah Stellberg and others in our Boise office—was so impressive and consequential that it brought several oil and gas companies out of the woodwork. These companies, most of them represented by high-priced lawyers from big law firms, argued that they should be allowed to worm their way into the case and inundate us with briefs and motions, despite the fact that they had been sitting on the sidelines for two years without making a peep. These companies essentially want to gum up the works and force us to expend excessive time and effort responding to their arguments.

We persuaded the district court

to deny Big Oil’s attempts to intervene in the case, but several of the companies have appealed to the Ninth Circuit. We recently completed briefing in two of those appeals, and I will be presenting oral arguments before the Ninth Circuit this summer. Winning these appeals is important not only in the short run—we don’t want to waste time responding to several different oil and gas companies’ repetitive arguments—but also in the long run: we want to make sure that deep-pocketed interests can’t sit around and wait for “bad” (for them) court decisions, then storm in with an army of high-priced lawyers in an attempt to frustrate justice and overwhelm our side with court filings.

POKING THE BPA HORNET’S NEST

I am leading two separate proceedings involving the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and its role in failing to protect salmon and steelhead in the

Columbia River basin as required by the “equitable treatment” mandate of the Northwest Power Act.

The first is a lawsuit brought under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) seeking to force BPA to publicly disclose information related to its fish and wildlife program, finances, and business plans. BPA did not timely respond to multiple FOIA requests, so we sued to speed things up. In March 2021, a federal court ordered BPA to disclose many of the records to us by the end of July 2021. These records will help us (and our allies) scrutinize BPA’s recent and upcoming decisions regarding its operations.

In addition to the FOIA case, we have intervened in BPA’s biannual “rate case” — an administrative proceeding in which BPA sets its power and transmission rates for the next two years. A larger-than-expected revenue forecast has left BPA in the position of being able to lower power rates for the

first time in years, but BPA wants to keep rates flat and use the “extra” money to ameliorate its debt crisis. BPA’s customers, on the other hand, want lower rates. We are arguing that the law requires consideration of a third option: that BPA comply with the “equitable treatment” mandate by using some of the surplus revenue to improve its fish and wildlife program, which is woefully underfunded.

Our proposal has provoked pushback from both BPA and a group of utilities, which would rather forget about BPA’s obligations to fish and wildlife. But we will not let them forget. On the contrary, we will keep reminding BPA about its failure to live up to its obligations to fish until BPA decides to listen — or a court orders it to do so.



WORKING TO PROTECT WASHINGTON'S BIGHORN SHEEP FROM CATASTROPHIC DIE-OFFS

Lizzy Potter, Senior Attorney (Portland, OR Office)

Advocates for the West is continuing its long-standing efforts to protect bighorn sheep through a new case in Washington state.

The greatest threat to the survival and expansion of bighorn sheep in Washington state is a pathogen, *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae*. Domestic sheep carry this pathogen but are immune to its effects, unlike bighorn sheep that contract deadly pneumonia from it.

Domestic sheep and bighorn sheep are related and gregarious species that are attracted to each other. When grazing the same range, the species often come into contact, transmitting disease from domestic sheep to bighorns. Infected bighorn sheep return to and spread disease within their herds, which leads to all-age die-offs and chronic lamb mortality and recruitment problems. Die-offs often happen

quickly—within weeks or months—which can kill most or all of a herd.

This has been a particular problem in and around the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest—5 of the 7 bighorn herds there have suffered or are suffering from disease outbreaks. In 2013, a major die-off within the Tieton herd near Yakima occurred just a few months after disease was first reported. The state was forced to cull the entire herd to prevent disease from spreading to the nearby Cleman Mountain herd.

These herds and three others have a core home range less than 10 miles from domestic sheep grazing allotments on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. Good connectivity and habitat conditions between these areas presents a high risk that bighorn sheep will foray from their core range onto allotments, which the Forest Service's own modeling

confirmed. Domestic sheep straying from the allotments—a common occurrence in past years—further increases the risk that the species will come into contact.

Despite admitting for nearly a decade that it must do something about these serious risks, the Forest Service has continued to authorize domestic sheep grazing on several high-risk allotments within this National Forest. Only one permittee—who owns the largest domestic sheep business in the state—benefits from this grazing, which puts nearly half of all bighorn sheep in the state and two-thirds of all bighorn sheep on the National Forest at serious risk of die-offs.

The risk is particularly acute this year—disease was detected for the first time in the Cleman Mountain herd toward the end of 2020. The Forest Service's former National Bighorn Sheep Biologist has warned that any further contact between

that herd and domestic sheep threatens to extirpate the herd. Disease in that herd is also likely to spread to the nearby Quilomene herd that is already suffering from chronic disease issues. The loss of those two herds—which are the only remaining ones in the meta-population that inhabits the Yakima area—would be devastating.

To prevent such a catastrophic result, *Advocates for the West* filed suit last fall. Our case also seeks to stop grazing on these allotments while the Forest Service finishes a long overdue environmental analysis of and updated management plan for conflicts between these species.

This spring, Lizzy is relocating to Bend, Oregon, where she will continue her critical work with *Advocates for the West* while her husband, Dylan, furthers his career as a public defender. She looks forward to building deeper connections with our great base of supporters and partners in the Central Oregon area. Lizzy is thrilled to return to the high desert and the Deschutes River Basin to live, work, and play.

Western Watersheds Project, WildEarth Guardians

Partners



PROTECTING OREGON'S RIVERS AND FISH

Laurie Rule, Senior Attorney (Portland Office)



WILLAMETTE RIVER

Advocates for the West is nearing the finish line in our district court challenge against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers over operation of numerous dams in the Upper Willamette River Basin of Oregon. These dams severely harm Upper Willamette salmon and steelhead, species listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), by cutting off upstream spawning habitat and degrading habitat and water quality downstream. We have been fighting for more than three years to try and force the Corps to adjust the operation of its dams and reservoirs to improve fish passage past them and habitat below them.

We won a significant summary judgment ruling in August finding the Corps is violating the ESA in numerous ways through its operation of these dams, and have been litigating over the remedy for those legal violations since last fall. We have proposed multiple operational changes to the dams that would benefit the fish and their habitat in four key tributaries of the Willamette River, focusing primarily

on improving fish passage and water quality. The Court appointed a neutral expert to assess the risk to human health and safety if the Corps implements our measures. The expert noted concerns with a few of our measures due to potential impacts on flood control but most measures were rated as low or no risk. The parties filed written responses to the neutral expert's report at the end of April and a final hearing was conducted in early May. The judge indicated he would be issuing an injunction so we are cautiously optimistic that conditions for the fish will improve.

A ruling can't come soon enough, as these fish continue to struggle from impacts of the dams and reservoirs combined with ongoing drought and climate change. A favorable court order would be a lifeline for these species until the Corps adopts a long-term plan to ensure the species' survival and recovery.

CROOKED RIVER

Advocates for the West has been working to protect rivers and fish in central Oregon as well, including

the Crooked River—a tributary of the Deschutes River. The Crooked River provides habitat for bull trout, steelhead, and Chinook salmon but is also used heavily for irrigation. This case is one piece of our work in central Oregon to protect fish and the threatened Oregon spotted frog that reside in the Deschutes River Basin.

Advocates for the West has been working with WaterWatch of Oregon to improve instream flows in the Crooked River below Bowman Dam, which is operated by the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR). Under the 2014 Crooked River Act, BOR was required to provide a certain amount of instream flows for fish below Bowman Dam by releasing that amount of water from the dam and obtaining an instream water right that would ensure those flows remain in river and are not diverted by irrigators. BOR, however, never applied for the secondary water right.

Waterwatch sought documents from BOR under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) related

to this issue. When BOR failed to release the documents, *Advocates for the West* initiated a FOIA lawsuit against the agency. The lawsuit triggered the release of documents by BOR and, after negotiating over documents BOR originally withheld under FOIA exemptions, the parties reached an agreement to settle the suit.

But that is not the end of the story. Realizing *Advocates for the West* was involved in the matter and would likely follow-up the FOIA lawsuit with a lawsuit challenging BOR's failure to obtain the water right, BOR decided to submit an application for an instream water right and is currently in that process. We will continue to track this with WaterWatch to make sure BOR obtains the water right and implements it properly.



PROTECTING IDAHO'S FORESTS – FROM END OF THE WORLD TO HUNGRY RIDGE

Bryan Hurlbutt, Staff Attorney (Boise Office) | Rebecca Strauss, Legal Fellow (Boise Office)

Advocates for the West just launched a new case to stop two massive logging projects in northern Idaho's Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests. The Forest Service approved the two projects, “End of the World” and “Hungry Ridge”—yes, that's really what they're called—based on the misguided notion that to save the forest and its wildlife, you have to log the heck out of it.

Each a massive timber sale, together End of the World and Hungry Ridge would result in logging more than 25,000 acres of public land on the Salmon-Clearwater Divide to harvest more than 300 million board feet of timber over the next ten years.

The Salmon-Clearwater Divide is the mountainous, forested ridge rising between the Salmon River and the South Fork Clearwater River. Located between Grangeville, Idaho, and

the Gospel Hump Wilderness, the Divide provides habitat for fisher, salmon, steelhead, grizzly bear, and other at-risk species.

Science tells us that the biggest driver of extreme fire is the moisture content of the forest—not the quantity of “fuels” in the forest. Science also tells us that the biggest factor determining whether private property will safely withstand a high, medium, or low intensity fire is what is done on the private property itself to make it fire-wise—not how the neighboring forest is “managed.” But the Forest Service ignored the science and relied on false assumptions and fear about fire to justify huge amounts of logging for End of the World and Hungry Ridge.

Under the guise of restoring forests and fighting fire, the Forest Service authorized old-school clearcuts that would completely level 6,785 acres of the Salmon-Clearwater Divide. It

also authorized 41 “super-sized” clearcuts, each of which exceeds the normal (and already very large) 40-acre limit, including clearcuts over 400 acres in size. The Forest Service also approved logging in nearly 1,000 acres of old growth Forest, more than half of which will be destroyed by clearcutting.

In the face of mounting biodiversity and climate crises, protecting old growth forests is more important than ever. Old growth forests are biodiversity hotspots, are naturally resilient to fire, fight climate change by sequestering carbon, and are refugia for species facing a changing climate. After logging, old growth forests take 150 years to regrow.

The Forest Service has standards in place to protect minimum amounts of old growth from logging. But the agency ignored its own standards when it

approved End of the World and Hungry Ridge. As a result, even more of the already depleted old growth forests on the Salmon-Clearwater Divide will be lost for generations to come, jeopardizing the chances for fisher and other wildlife species that rely on old growth to continue living on the Divide, especially in the face of climate change.

End of the World and Hungry Ridge are also a major blow to grizzly bear recovery. The Salmon-Clearwater Divide is located within the greater Bitterroot Recovery Area. Previously extirpated from this area, it is now recognized by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as critical to the species' recovery. And for the first time in decades, grizzly bears have finally been returning to the Bitterroot, including on the Salmon-Clearwater Divide. But the Forest Service ignored grizzlies when it approved both

projects and failed to implement any measures to protect them.

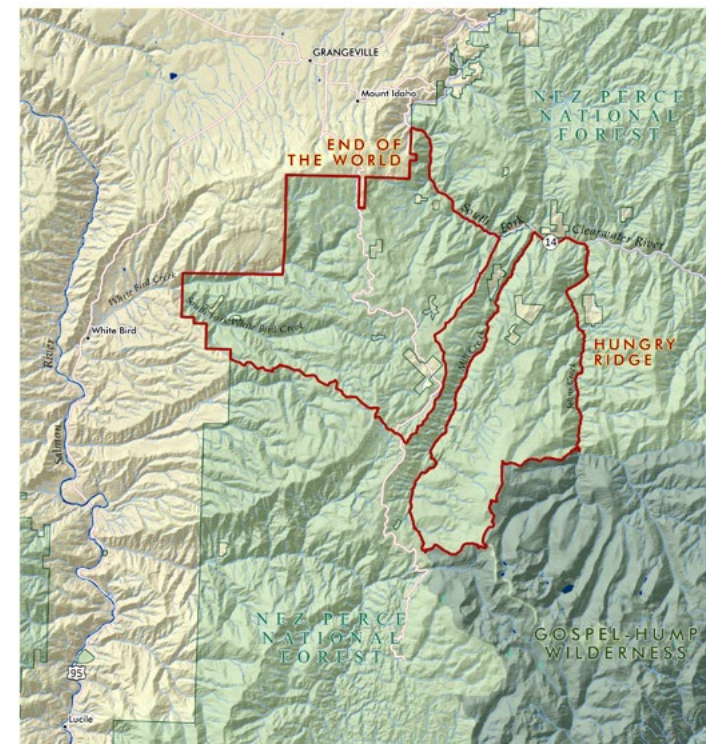
While the Forest Service sings along to R.E.M.—“It's the end of the world as we know it, and I feel fine”—we are singing a different tune. *Advocates for the West* has been fighting to protect the biodiversity of the Clearwater for two decades. We won victories to halt other misguided logging projects, and thwarted Big Oil's scheme to turn Wild and Scenic Highway 12 into an industrial corridor for “mega-loads” of refinery equipment headed to the Alberta tar sands. We have a case underway now for the Idaho Conservation League to stop rampant and unregulated suction dredge mining on the South Fork Clearwater River.

Our fight to protect the Clearwater continues. When we stop End of the World and Hungry Ridge, we'll feel fine.

Friends of the Clearwater

Partner

SALMON-CLEARWATER DIVIDE



Map showing the Salmon-Clearwater Divide, including the End of the World and Hungry Ridge logging projects. The map includes labels for Grangeville, Mount Idaho, Nez Perce National Forest, Gospel Hump Wilderness, and the Clearwater River. A scale bar and north arrow are also present.



“We consider ourselves lucky to be able to support *Advocates for the West* and are happy to share here our thoughts about how we arrived at deciding to support their work.

We grew up primarily in the East and lived many places in this country before settling in the West. But our experience living in all those other places formed our clear-eyed decision to settle in the West....first in Northern California and then Idaho.

We were and still are drawn to the openness of the sky, the abundance of wildlife, the scale of the natural features....vast forests and sagebrush steppe, soaring mountains and rushing rivers.

But the need to protect public lands and all the features of nature and how they provide us the joys of recreation and indeed the sustenance for life became

increasingly clear to us over the years. We were drawn to invest in environmental organizations.

Now the climate crisis has made that need for protection even more urgent — especially as we have contemplated what the future environment may be like for our children and grandchildren and all future generations.

We have more recently realized that much of the work to protect nature must take place through legal means. *Advocates for the West* has impressed us with the skill of their attorney staff and the victories they have achieved in the courtroom. Their ability to identify and focus on a wide range of issues gives us confidence that no threat will go unanswered. We will continue to support their work as they fight the good fight!”

– John and Elaine French



Alpine Bouquet – Mike Putnam

BOARD NEWS

PAUL HILDING – GOODBYE, AND ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING HUB

It is with tremendous appreciation that we bid adieu to Paul Hilding. Since 2008 Paul brought his wealth of legal experience and environmental passion to our organization, most notably serving on our Board of Directors for nearly 13 years, including multiple terms as Secretary. Paul also served as a loyal supporter, enthusiastic booster and gracious party host. Along with Paul’s commitment to *Advocates for the West* came that of his wife, Stephani. Thank you!

Each year we host a cohort of law students from around the country who temporarily join us to gain some of the experience they will need as future environmental defenders. In honor of Paul’s exemplary service, his passion for protecting the environment through the use of law and science, and his commitment to mentoring the next generation of environmental leaders, we have named the cohort’s shared learning space in our Boise office as the Paul Hilding Environmental Learning Hub.

Thank you, Paul!

PAUL HILL – WELCOME

Paul retired in 2002 after a 36-year career in law, commercial banking and consulting in the Southeastern U.S. During 10 years in private practice with an Atlanta law firm, specializing in corporate and finance law, Paul



helped rewrite the Georgia Securities Law and served in leadership positions with both the Georgia and American Bar Associations. Following this, he held a range of executive positions, including General Counsel, Chief Financial Officer and Chief Executive Officer, with two leading Southeastern Banks. His activities during this 23-year period included helping negotiate the country’s first interstate banking laws and co-founding the Georgia Affordable Housing Corporation. While in Atlanta, he also served as an Officer and Director with several community organizations including Atlanta’s Midtown Alliance and the Atlanta Botanical Garden. Paul spent his final three working years as a consultant to financial institutions and a Board member of Enterprise Community Investment) one of America’s leading affordable housing finance agencies.

In 1997, Paul and his wife, Ann, built their primary home in Stanley, Idaho where they now spend over half the year; the rest of the year they live in Hailey. Since retiring, Paul has remained active in community and conservation organizations in both Idaho and Oregon (where he spent 15 winters), with particular emphasis on environmental and educational issues. In Idaho, he has served as Treasurer and President of the Sawtooth Society, Treasurer of the Sawtooth Interpretive & Historical Association (he remains a Director of both groups), a Director of the Idaho Dark Sky Alliance, and a member of the Northern Rockies Advisory Board of The Trust for Public Land. In Oregon, he served as an Officer and Director of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the Ashland Family YMCA, and as a Trustee of the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy.



SPRING/SUMMER LAW CLERKS & INTERNS



ZACH JOHNSON
Spring Intern (Boise Office)

Zach is an entering student at UC Davis School of Law. After graduating from Arizona State University in 2013 with a degree in Marketing, he worked as a wine educator and beverage director at James Beard Award-nominated wine bars and restaurants across the country. His studies of viticulture and his time living in New Orleans have driven him to pursue a career practicing public interest environmental law. In his free time Zach enjoys hiking with his dog, reading, cycling, twirling a wine glass, and daydreaming about future travels.



LIZ FORSTER
Summer Law Clerk (Boise Office)

Liz Forster is entering her third year of her J.D. and Master of Public Administration at the University of Montana. In law school, she has written for the Public Lands and Resources Law Review, served as president of the university's Environmental Law Group, and worked as a law clerk for a state district judge in Colorado. Her legal interests include the public trust doctrine, forest law, and tribal sovereignty. Prior to law school, Liz was an environmental journalist in Colorado. She earned her bachelor's degree in environmental policy at Colorado College, where she focused on the history of public lands and Indigenous removal. In her free time, Liz enjoys writing, skiing, biking, and pressing plants.



STEPHANIE HANAWALT
Summer Law Clerk (Boise Office)

Stephanie is entering her third year at the University of Utah S.J. Quinney College of Law. While in law school, Stephanie has worked for the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, the Wallace Stegner Center for Land, Resources and the Environment, the Utah Supreme Court, and the U.S. Forest Service. Originally from southern California, Stephanie graduated with an English degree and sociology minor from San Diego State University in 2017. In her free time, Stephanie enjoys long road trips, camping, hiking, exploring public lands, learning new languages, traveling, and anything that involves being outside.



MAGGI SZELES
Summer Intern (Boise Office)

Maggi is entering her fourth year as an undergraduate student at Boise State University, where she studies political science and environmental studies. She was born in Boise and raised to appreciate Idaho's natural landscape and opportunities, which instilled in her from a young age a passion for environmental advocacy. While at Boise State, she focused her research on water, fire and climate change. Previously in school, she gained experience interning with the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, an Idaho political party and performing research for Conservation Voters of Idaho. Outside of her studies, she can be found playing percussion for the Boise State drumline, running and working for a local Idaho non-profit.



JULIA HOMAECHEVARRIA
Summer Law Clerk (Boise Office)

Julia is entering her second year at the University of California, Davis, School of Law. During her first year, Julia has served as the 1L Environmental Justice Board Member for the Environmental Law Society at King Hall as well as served as a Bluebook Editor for the Environs Journal. Prior to law school, Julia worked at Biomark, Inc. in marketing and advertising. Julia completed her B.S. at Colorado State University, majoring in Ecosystem Science and Sustainability. During her undergraduate studies, Julia conducted research on the environmental impacts of tourism in Bocas del Toro, Panama as well as aided research on vegetation and land restoration in South Dakota and Colorado. Originally from Boise, Idaho, Julia enjoys hiking, rock climbing, watercolor painting, and baking in her free time.



REBECCA CONWAY
Summer Law Clerk (Portland Office)

Rebecca is entering her fourth year as a dual JD/MS student at the University of Michigan Law School and School for Environment and Sustainability. Originally from Virginia, she has a B.A. in environmental science and English from the University of Virginia, an M.A. from the University of Iceland, and experience working as an archaeological field technician. While pursuing her dual degree, she has worked with Salmon Valley Stewardship in Salmon, ID, as a law clerk with the Environment and Natural Resources Division at the U.S. Department of Justice, and as a student attorney in the University of Michigan's Environmental Law and Sustainability clinic. In her free time, she enjoys watching ice hockey and any activity that involves being on a mountain.

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FEATURED ARTIST: **MIKE PUTNAM**

Mike Putnam is a fine art landscape photographer whose work celebrates the beauty of the American West. Most of Mike's photographs are captured with large format film cameras, allowing him to create prints with a distinct look and feel. He strives to capture fleeting moments of elegant light and optimal environmental conditions in an attempt to honor the natural world that he cherishes. To view his complete portfolio and learn more about his work, please visit his website at: www.mikeputnamphoto.com