

# KS WILD NEWS

The Journal of the Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center

Fall 2019



# CONNECTING COMMUNITY

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# GET OUTSIDE



## **PUBLIC LANDS DAY STEWARDSHIP EVENT** **EIGHT DOLLAR MOUNTAIN BOTANICAL AREA** **Saturday, September 21, 10am-3pm**

Join us to celebrate Public Lands Day! The workload will be easy to moderate, and includes photo monitoring, trash clean-up, seed collecting, and plant identification.

## **ROGUE RIVER TAKELMA GORGE HIKE** **Sunday, October 27, 9am-3pm**

View the spectacular fall colors on this moderately easy hike along a steep river canyon.

## **SALMON VIEWING HIKES**

Every autumn Chinook salmon swim back up the Rogue River to their birthplace in nearby river valleys. Join us as we look for them in the rivers and streams that flow through the towns that we also call home. Learn about where they live, their behavior, and ways we can help them along their journey to spawn a new generation.

**Rainie Falls with Rogue Riverkeeper**  
Sunday, September 29, 9am-5pm

**Bear Creek @ TouVelle with Rogue Riverkeeper**  
Thursday, October 10, 10am-12pm

**Rogue River in Medford with Rogue Riverkeeper**  
Sunday, October 13, 10am-12pm

**Bear Creek in Talent with KS Wild**  
Monday, October 14, 10am-12pm

**Bear Creek in Talent with Rogue Riverkeeper**  
Saturday, October 26, 10am-12pm

**Applegate River with KS Wild**  
Saturday, November 2, 10am-12pm

**Illinois River Salmon Hike with KS Wild**  
Sunday, November 10, 1-3pm

Once you sign-up online you will receive details including carpooling locations and what to bring. [kswild.org/events](https://kswild.org/events)



# WILDLIFE AND WILDLANDS

## FINDING COMMUNITY IN THE KS



# NOTES FROM THE TRAILHEAD



## BIG NEWS

### NEW CHAPTER BRINGS A NEW PROGRAM ON CLIMATE CHANGE

I joined the KS Wild staff shortly after its founding more than 20 years ago. Back then we were based out of a small, canvas yurt in Williams, Oregon. I have been fortunate to be part of some of the greatest conservation success stories in our region: the expansion of the Oregon Caves National Monument, designation of hundreds of miles of Wild and Scenic Rivers, and protection of many of our last remaining ancient forests and wild places.

After 20 years at KS Wild, and nearly seven years as the Executive Director, I have decided to step out of this role, but stay on in a new role—building and directing a new Climate Program for KS Wild and continuing to shape our conservation campaigns. I know that with climate change and an administration hostile to our public lands, we have much more work ahead.

To fill the role of Executive Director, KS Wild went through an open, internal hiring process for the past several months to see if the next Executive Director was already within the organization. We solicited input from our staff and board, and the Board of Directors found a great fit with Michael Dotson.

Michael has served as KS Wild's Development Director for six years, helping to double our support base to nearly 3,500 members and 10,000 supporters. He is a passionate defender of wild places and knows how we tick. KS Wild is in the most able hands, with Michael helping take KS Wild to the next level. With our incredible staff of organizers, legal and policy experts, and ecologists, KS Wild continues to protect and restore the forests, waters, wildlife, and communities that depend on this special region.



KS Wild has grown so much in the past six years, nearly doubling in size and impact. We are now a staff of thirteen talented individuals and hundreds of volunteers. Our organization is committed to inclusivity, so we are taking this opportunity of transition to establish a leadership team that will help chart organizational direction and distribute leadership to more of our staff.

As you read this edition of *KS Wild News*, you will see how important community is to our work and to the goals of our organization. Today, I know that KS Wild is ready to reach new heights of conservation advocacy, which is so desperately needed in this region. This takes a community of people that want to protect our community of life. It takes people like you. Please read on to learn more about our important work and join our efforts.



*Joseph Vaile served at KS Wild's Executive Director for almost seven years and now leads KS Wild's new Climate Program, which focuses efforts on adapting and mitigating the impacts of climate change on the wild nature and communities of the Klamath-Siskiyou region.*

## WORKING TOGETHER, PROTECTING THE ROGUE PACK AND LIVESTOCK

You might remember the wolf OR-7, the first documented wolf in southern Oregon and California in nearly a century. After a 1,000 mile journey, OR-7 and a mate established the Rogue Pack south of Crater Lake National Park in southern Oregon. In the past few years, the Rogue Pack has been in trouble, entering a nearby ranch and taking out cattle.



KS Wild and the Department of Fish & Wildlife teamed up with the affected rancher to determine the best way to deter the Rogue Pack from taking out cattle—by building a tall fence. Through a successful GoFundMe effort, KS Wild raised the remaining \$6,000 needed for the project to keep the wolves out and protect the cattle.

This effort provided a rare opportunity for collaboration between groups often seen at odds—ranchers, environmental conservationists, and federal agencies. The rancher was not against wolf recovery, he just needed to protect his livestock and his livelihood. There are many forces aimed at keeping communities divided. Working together for a common cause brought a positive solution for all involved.

And, it worked! We raised the money and are ready to chip in and help keep the Rogue Pack away from livestock and in the wild where they will be safe. Thanks to everyone that chipped in!



# CLIMATE CHANGE IS COMMUNITY CHANGE

KS Wild was founded in 1997 to defend and restore the biological diversity, wild places, and at-risk species in the Klamath-Siskiyou region. Since then, climate change has emerged as the leading threat to KS Wild's mission. In response, we are launching a Climate Program to engage policy makers and land managers to take action to prevent the worst impacts of a changing climate.

Climate change is already happening. Even if we stopped pumping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere tomorrow, climate change would still be with us. For the west coast of the U.S., nearly all of the hottest summers on record have been in the last five years. While it is critical that we transition away from a carbon-based economy, we need to also adapt our natural and human communities to the changes already happening. Our Climate Program will help build policies and engage with managers to prioritize the following climate strategies:

**Keep Carbon in the Forest:** Just like fossil fuels in the ground, forests store carbon. Forests in our region have some of the largest stores of carbon in the world. Even after wildfires, our forests store more carbon than is emitted from fires, so keeping carbon in the forest and out of the atmosphere is smart management.

**Manage for Climate Resiliency:** By focusing active management on forests that are ripe for severe wildfire, such as tree plantations, and putting controlled fire back on the ground, we can start to create more resilient forests. But fire will come, and we must ensure that fuels reduction is carried out near communities. We also need to buffer our waterways to keep our streams cool.

**Reduce Existing Threats to Natural Areas:** The most important action land managers can take is to stop damaging activities including water pollution, increasing presence of invasive species, livestock overgrazing, and destruction of natural habitats. An already stressed ecosystem is highly susceptible to the impacts of climate change.

To learn more, visit [kswild.org/climate-change](https://kswild.org/climate-change) and take action.

# ADAPTATIONS BRING A DISTINCT CHARACTER TO THE ILLINOIS VALLEY

The Illinois Valley in southern Oregon is full of rare and contrasting landscapes consisting of harsh serpentine soils that support a plant community just as distinctive as the rural communities who live there. Residents of the Illinois Valley share a love for the natural beauty that surrounds them. These communities remain committed to finding a balance of conserving the environment while developing a stable economy.

From conversations with community members, reducing the risk of high severity wildfires is crucial to the livelihood of those who call this valley home. Businesses and tourism in the area depend on healthy forests for economic prosperity. Historically supported by the logging and mining industries, these communities are now shifting towards a more recreation-based economy.

The ecosystems of the Kalmiopsis Wilderness, like Eight Dollar Mountain, are home to some of the most compelling botanical sites in Oregon. Serpentine environments create a particular flora that thrive in low-nutrient soils loaded with heavy metals such as nickel and chromium. With limited resources, these plant communities depend on a relationship with underground fungi to facilitate the uptake of nutrients. This mycorrhizal relationship gives life to a botanical wonderland worth protecting!

The Illinois Valley will face new challenges as the Forest Service begins its revision process of the land management plan encompassing the National Forests that surround the region. Community members have made it clear, reducing fire hazards and restoring the forest's health are main priorities. Citizens and land managers are tasked with finding a way to meet these objectives in a way that preserves the integrity of the land and the economies that depend on it. Much like the plants that thrive here, the people of the Illinois Valley continue to adapt to changing conditions.



FLOWERS OF THE ILLINOIS VALLEY: LILIUM PARDALINUM AND DARLINGTONIA CALIFORNICA.



# BEAR CREEK COMMUNITIES

In the heart of the Rogue Valley runs a waterway that is of vital importance to our region. Si-ku-ptat, better known as Bear Creek, threads the communities of Ashland, Talent, Phoenix, Medford, and Central Point together as it makes its way toward the Rogue River.

Si-ku-ptat is the original valley home for many of the Takelmas, Latgawas, and Shasta peoples who used the waterway for food, water, and other resources. Native salmon and steelhead have been inhabitants for centuries, and surprisingly, given that it's one of the most polluted waterways in the Rogue River Basin, they still return to their birth place in the creek every fall. Today, residents who live in neighboring towns don't access the waterway as much as use the Greenway bike path for commuting and recreation and some, who've fallen on hard times, find shelter along its shores.



Bear Creek has long been ignored, neglected, diverted, overused, abused, and nearly forgotten altogether. Due to the location of the I-5 freeway, it has been covered over in some spots, hiding its wonders and insinuating its unworthiness. But, this mentality is beginning to change.

Communities along the Bear Creek corridor are beginning to turn toward its waters, recognizing that this important waterway has much to offer. Beyond water for irrigation, it is a focal point for our communities and a place for recreation, discovery, wildlife, and peace. Every fall, huge chinook salmon swim up its 29 miles to return to their place of birth to spawn and die. Join one of Rogue Riverkeeper's fall hikes to see these amazing creatures on their journey home. Visit our website for info on hikes, dates, and locations.

Because of its prominent place in most of the towns in the Rogue Valley, Bear Creek has a long history of poor water quality. How we use the land directly impacts the health of our rivers and streams. In the case of Bear Creek, polluted runoff from agricultural fields and irrigation return flow adds bacteria, sediment, and high levels of nutrients to the water. When it rains, water that isn't absorbed into streets, parking lots, or rooftops instead picks up pollutants and flows into Bear Creek.

The good news is that we've made a lot of progress since Bear Creek was first listed as polluted by the state in 1998. Changes to irrigation practices, green infrastructure projects that capture rainwater where it falls to reduce polluted runoff, and upgrading the Ashland Wastewater Treatment Plant have all played a role in improving water



quality in Bear Creek. At Rogue Riverkeeper, we are working to strengthen stormwater permits and build a coalition of municipalities, NGO's, social justice groups, and local citizens to focus on restoring Bear Creek and the communities that depend on it, including growing homeless populations.



Many are gaining a new appreciation for Bear Creek. In the 1970s, the Bear Creek Greenway Foundation formed to create a multi-user greenway along the creek. Envisioned as “an emerald necklace” of parks stretching from Emigrant Lake to the Rogue River, the Bear Creek Greenway currently boasts 20 completed miles of Class I trail. It parallels the creek for much of that distance, offering users an opportunity to interact with the creek.



At Rogue Riverkeeper, we hope to focus more on this important and neglected waterway. By fostering relationships with local partners and our communities, we hope to build on efforts to restore Si-ku-ptat's, or Bear Creek's, clean water, native fish, and healthy communities. We hope you will join us. [www.rogueriverkeeper.org](http://www.rogueriverkeeper.org)





# WITH DIVERSITY, COMES STRENGTH AND RESILIENCE

The Klamath-Siskiyou Mountain Range is one of the most biologically diverse hotspots in the world. Biodiversity is defined as the variety of life in a particular habitat or ecosystem. A greater amount of species diversity ensures natural sustainability for all life forms because each contributes differently to the health of the ecosystem or habitat. In forest ecosystems, each species has its own niche to fill, just like in our own communities.

The arrival of settlers in the early 1800s negatively impacted the natural biodiversity of our region. More than 90% of Oregon's pre-settlement oak woodlands and savannas were cleared to make way for farms and housing. In addition to the removal of Oregon's oak woodlands, clearcuts have moved us toward an industrial timber farm regime. These timber farms are not forests any more than a wheat field is a meadow.

The world is an ever-changing place, with natural disturbance events like fire, disease, wind, or insects impacting and altering forests; trees evolved to help each other survive. In order to develop into an old growth forest, defined characteristics need to be present. The acronym O.W.L.S. identifies attributes that pertain to old growth forests:

**O** - Old trees ( >80 years)

**W** - Woody debris on the forest floor providing nutrients to the soils beneath them

**L** - Layered canopy consisting of diverse tree species at different heights

**S** - Standing dead trees also known as snags.

The characteristics present in an old growth forest provide habitat for diverse creatures—from the underground root structure to the forest floor to the canopy—helping forests develop resiliency to natural disturbance events. For instance, during intense forest





PLANTATIONS ARE NOT A FOREST COMMUNITY.

THE DENSE YOUNG TIMBER FARM PROVIDES LITTLE WILDLIFE HABITAT  
AND IS AT GREATER RISK FOR WILDFIRE.

fires, high canopies are harder for flames to reach; therefore, tree tops from older and taller trees survive unscarred, continuing to photosynthesize energy for the tree. Older tree trunks often survive with minimum damage, since their protective bark has time to develop into a thick protective layer from the heat.

Beneath old growth forests lies a root system that is far more extensive than one would expect. Roots soak up water and send nutrients up the trees. These roots also share soils with miles of fungus filaments, which connect trees to each other, forming complex webs of nutrient cycling.

Trees provide sugars photosynthesized from the sun to the network of underground fungi. In return, the fungi provide trees with minerals as a direct trade, known as symbiosis. This process provides trees with a connected network to share messages with one another. By sending distress signals through the fungi neighboring trees alter their behavior to share resources. Similarly, mother trees, the biggest and oldest trees in the forest, can use the network to share water, nutrients, and sugar into the roots of young saplings, increasing their chances of survival.

Alternatively, a homogenous timber farm does not contain any of these characteristics, resulting in a weaker defense against natural disturbance events. Timber farms are one age-class of one type of tree species, planted on the same day with equal distance from its neighbor. These farms do not have woody debris or standing dead trees, since the trees never live long enough to die naturally; they are harvested on a 40 year rotation clearcut schedule. Timber farms lack the ability to develop into multi-layered canopies since they are planted at the same time and grow at the same rate, providing absolutely no opportunity for complexity.

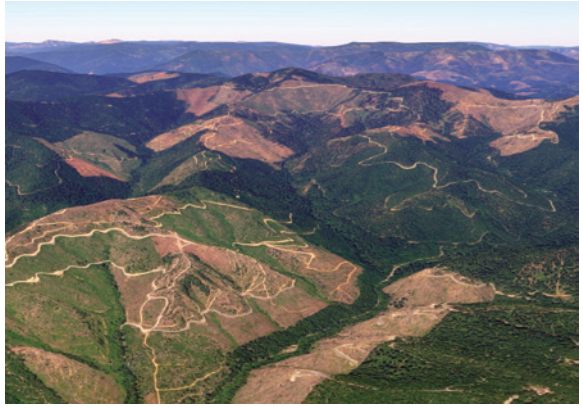
Diversity strengthens a community—human communities, plant communities, and animal communities. Our communities can take a lesson from trees in, how they adapt, share resources, and help each other out in times of need.



# "POOR WINDY" TIMBER SALE

## BLM HAMMERS THE LANDSCAPE, AGAIN

The BLM is proposing one of the largest timber sales in recent memory that targets the few remaining native forests along the I-5 corridor in the Jumpoff Joe, Middle Cow Creek and Graves Creek Watersheds. For decades industrial timber companies and BLM timber planners have hammered these watersheds with vast clearcuts and extensive logging roads. The landscape looks like a patchwork quilt of destruction. Now the BLM is doubling down by proposing to remove much of the mature forest canopy that still remains.



A PATCHWORK QUILT OF DESTRUCTION: INDUSTRIAL FORESTRY IN THE "POOR WINDY" PROJECT AREA.

### **Ecological and Human Communities Need Restoration**

The last thing that rural towns like Merlin, Wolf Creek, and Glendale need is more old-growth logging. Trashing watersheds and creating even more timber plantations benefits a few timber barons while leaving workers and wildlife in the dust. It is well past time to invest in long-term sustainable restoration of our forests and rivers.

There are hundreds of thousands of acres of existing young tree plantations in the "Poor Windy" planning area that could provide thinning jobs for the foreseeable future while decreasing fire hazard. Yet the timber industry continues to manage private lands for maximum fiber production by clearcutting, planting, and herbicide spraying like there is no tomorrow. BLM timber planners have already slicked off most of the old-growth in these watersheds and now have their eyes on the remaining native forests.

Climate change is accelerating. Fire season is becoming longer and more onerous. Streams are heating up. Communities are recognizing that our public lands must provide more than clearcuts, tree plantations, and logging roads—we must start thinking about sustainability, carbon sequestration, and clean, cold water when managing forests.

Unfortunately the BLM's decision to log the remaining old-growth forests in "Poor Windy" is pre-ordained. BLM timber planners believe that immediate timber volume is the only value these forest stands should provide. The Poor Windy Environmental Assessment is designed to support a logging agenda that is set in stone rather than to lead to an informed management decision.

Human and ecological communities deserve better than this. As has happened throughout the agency's history, it is likely that the BLM's single-minded logging agenda is going to run head-on into climate change, fire hazard, ecological and economic sustainability, and popular resistance.

## SMALL SERMON IN THE RED BUTTES BY ERICH REEDER

*In May 2019, KS Wild hosted our first **Love Where You Live Writing Contest**. We appreciate all the submissions we received, and are delighted to share with you the winning story:*



The afternoon summer meadow was pulsing green in the sunlight and abloom with wildflowers vibrating with the wing-buzz of bees, dragonflies, and other happy insects under a dome of clear blue.

After dropping my backpack and spending some time in joyful contemplation, I set about the tasks of getting ready for the night, including finding a place to hang my food away from my tent. Having located a high limb off a suitable tree, I tied a rope to a stick for weight and tossed it over. After dinner I would return with my food in a bag, tie the bag to the rope and hoist it up; the idea being to hang the bag too high for a bear to jump up and grab, and far enough away from the trunk for a bear to climb up and snatch.

Back at my tent, I mixed whiskey and spring water in a tin cup and sat looking over the meadow. Shadows grew as the sun lowered to the west, and the blessed meadow was still abuzz with bees, along with many kinds of butterflies fluttering about. Bears were on my mind, though. I'd read they were not really a threat—especially in wild places far from people. Still, bears. I ate chunks of sourdough bread with some rehydrated lentil soup, then packed up the rest of my food, went across the meadow, and hung the bag from the tree limb. Back, I mixed some more whiskey and spring water and sat on a log looking across the meadow as the sun set and bats began looping through the purpling sky. This would be my first night alone in a wilderness.

Suddenly the tranquil scene was shattered by a scrambling rushing sound with something like coughing barks behind me. Whirling off the log, hair on end, I faced my assailant—a charging golden-mantled ground squirrel, tail raised high, chittering excitedly. He stopped, stamped his feet, and then froze, staring at me. “Take heart,” his whole presence seemed to say, “you’re in the wilds now!”

## THANK YOU, JACQUELINE!

KS Wild thanks Jacqueline O’Keefe for serving as our Law Clerk this summer, where she worked on comments for the Jordan Cove LNG Export Project and post-fire timber sales. Jacqueline became motivated to pursue an environmental law degree during her five summers working as a wildland firefighter, where she saw the impact that law and policy have on the lands she loves. She currently attends Lewis & Clark Law School in Portland, Oregon.

# KS WILD VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY



Have you ever gone out to your garden, or compost and found a volunteer vegetable plant? Does this make you feel a spark of joy? It is humbling to feel gratitude over an unexpected bounty of nourishment. This feeling translates directly to the gratitude felt by KS Wild staff when volunteers engage in community efforts joining value together.

What these individuals may not know is the ripple effect their efforts have on our community. An engaged volunteer spending two hours entering names into our database of concerned community members helps streamline our communications efforts ten-fold. It may not seem like an expected volunteer task at KS Wild, but it is invaluable to our overall efforts.

By becoming part of our database, those concerned community members can be moved up a ladder of engagement by taking action through emails, signing petitions, showing up for phone banking to notify others of important actions, and so much more. Suddenly one volunteer's data entry turns into dozens of community members speaking out to protect our public lands. With volunteer help, our capacity for mobilizing community members into action grows and bears fruit like a volunteer zucchini plant.

Sometimes the work of protecting our public lands can feel endless and impossible. Federal hits to our environmental protection laws, devastating changes to forest management at local agencies, and illegal use of public lands all make for a mountain of attacks against the places we love.

But, volunteers bring hope, capacity, and possibility to this work. When we see volunteers show up to restore fragile wildflower meadows, to be our eyes and ears on the ground, build protective fences around sensitive botanical areas, suddenly the work is not impossible. KS Wild volunteers unify our community into action, protecting and restoring the wild places of the Klamath-Siskiyou. Our success depends on you!

## Thank You!

On behalf of the staff and board at KS Wild, we would like to thank two long-time supporters for their volunteer service as KS Wild board members. We are grateful for the time that Laurel Samson and Greg Walter spent with us and wish them all the best as they retire from the KS Wild board in 2019.





## *Celebrate Community with KS Wild on Oct. 5th*

What began more than a decade ago as a small celebration of the Klamath-Siskiyou bioregion has transformed into one of KS Wild's largest events. **We invite you to join us on Saturday, October 5th for the 15th Annual Dinner for the Wild!**

Kick-off the evening with a drink while Sage Meadows Band plays live during happy hour. Browse an assortment of exceptional auction items from river trips to lodging to artwork donated from local businesses and artists to benefit KS Wild's forest and river conservation efforts. This year, we are excited to work with Marquam Auctions to bring you an engaging live and silent auction experience!

Visit to [kswild.org/annualdinner2019](https://kswild.org/annualdinner2019) to buy your tickets online.

Tickets include appetizers, a three-course meal, beverages from southern Oregon breweries and wineries, as well as live music and presentations from KS Wild staff. Tickets are \$95/adult and \$45/children (under 13). Group/table discounts are also available.

### **KS WILD MISSION**

*KS Wild's mission is to protect and restore wild nature in the Klamath-Siskiyou region of southwest Oregon and northwest California. We promote science-based land and water conservation through policy and community action.*



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Cover Photo: Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, 2014 pup of the Wenaha wolf pack.