

KS WILD NEWS

The Journal of the Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center

SUMMER 2021



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NOTES FROM THE TRAILHEAD

Last week, members of our staff wrapped up a 5-day raft-supported hiking trip along the Rogue River Trail with about a dozen KS Wild supporters. Aside from the fun time spent together outdoors, it was an important milestone for us too. After a long hiatus and uncertainty in 2020 around in-person gatherings, our recent Rogue River hiking trip was the first hike and event we hosted in a long while.

We are so happy and excited to once again invite friends and supporters to join us along the trails, on the rivers, and in the forests this summer. That's where you'll be seeing a lot of us on staff, reconnecting with the forests, rivers, and supporters that make this bioregion so special.

We encourage you to learn more about the issues affecting the Klamath-Siskiyou's public lands and wildlife as you explore this latest summer edition of the KS Wild News. In addition to the usual updates from staff and volunteers, we are so happy to be offering a few select hikes and stewardship events to explore the region with some of our staff. Even if you can't make one of our offered hikes, we hope you make time this summer to enjoy the botany, wildlife, geology, and natural history of the Klamath-Siskiyou on your own time.

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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If you're taking small steps towards public events, you can keep engaging with us online as we host our virtual Love Where You Live webinars throughout the summer.

When you finish reading through this summer edition of the KS Wild News, we dig into the issue of wildfire and climate change deeper in our new podcast, One Foot in the Black. Our new six-part podcast series provides insight from firefighting professionals, scientists, ecologists, activists, and tribes addressing the impacts and issues related to wildfire and climate change impacts to communities throughout the Klamath-Siskiyou.

You don't have to wait for all of our podcast episodes to air in order to prepare for this upcoming fire season. We offer some helpful tips in this issue about home hardening and other home safety measures, but head over to our website and check out the Forest and Fire Toolkit at www.kswild.org.

Michael Dotson is the Executive Director for KS Wild.

KS WILD STEPS INTO ITS FIRST PODCAST

KS Wild's Climate program has released a new podcast exploring the root causes and solutions to living with wildfire in the era of **climate change**. One Foot in the Black is a six-episode podcast, which tells the story of fire in the West—how the landscape has been shaped by fire, how climate change is remaking the rules, and how our future of living with fire is tied to the past.

Hosted by Alexi Lovechio and Joseph Vaile, and produced by Jessica Klinke, this podcast features voices from the front lines—cultural fire practitioners, wildland firefighters, fire scientists, and policy makers—as we write the story of our fire future together.



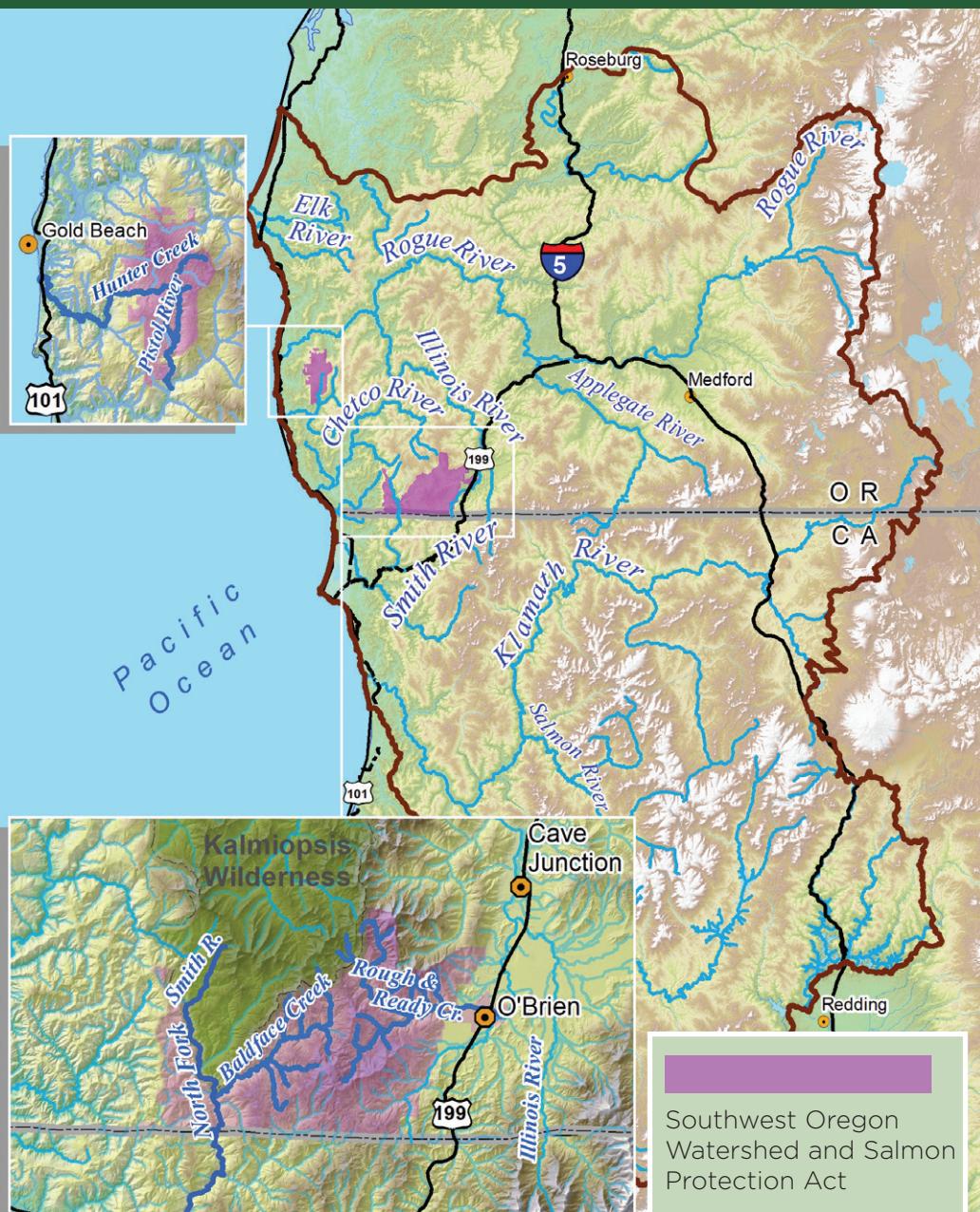
"One foot in the black" is a term used by wildland firefighters, referring to the area on the fireline that has already burned—"the Black". It is simultaneously the most dangerous place, being closest to the flames, while also being the safest place, being closest to escape. **Climate change is forcing our communities to live with one foot in the black.**

You can listen and subscribe to One Foot in the Black wherever you listen to podcasts including: Apple Podcast, Stitcher, Spotify, Google Podcast, and YouTube. It can be as easy as saying, "Alexa, play podcast One Foot in the Black."

More information, resources, and links to each episode at [kswild.org/podcast](http://www.kswild.org/podcast).

WATER IS LIFE: RIVERS OF THE KLAMATH-SISKIYOU

The Southwest Oregon Watershed and Salmon Protection Act (SOWSPA) protects the Illinois River watershed and the adjacent North Fork Smith River, as well as added protections for Hunter Creek near Gold Beach, Oregon.





AN ACT TO PROTECT A GEM

Tucked in the wild Siskiyou Mountains, the Illinois River's sparkling emerald water flows through forested canyons to the Pacific ocean. The rivers of the Klamath-Siskiyou are important fish and wildlife habitat and provide clean drinking water that local communities depend on.

The Southwest Oregon Watershed and Salmon Protection Act would protect the Illinois River watershed with a permanent mineral withdrawal making it a no-go area for large-scale mining. It would also protect the adjacent North Fork Smith River and Hunter Creek near Gold Beach, Oregon. These wild and pristine watersheds are worth more than a nickel mine. This year Representatives Peter DeFazio (OR) and Jared Huffman (CA) reintroduced legislation to protect the headwaters of the wild rivers of southwest Oregon, against the threat of nickel strip mining. Just recently, the House voted to include the Southwest Oregon Watershed and Salmon Protection Act as part of a new public lands bill.

In addition to advancing protections for these headwaters, southwest Oregon wild rivers got another boost this year with the introduction of the River Democracy Act by Senators Wyden and Merkley. This bill recognizes that the outstanding remarkable values of many Oregon rivers deserve protection under the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Under consideration for Wild and Scenic designation is Sucker Creek, a major tributary to the Illinois River and one of the most important Coho salmon bearing streams in the Rogue Basin. The cool, clear water is produced in the upper reaches of the Red Buttes Wilderness and provides important contributions to the fisheries in the Illinois River's lower reaches and to downstream communities.

KS Wild is focused on permanently protecting these wild places we love. Join us for a 'Hike & Write' through old growth forests along Sucker Creek. Sign up for this event and get involved with these important campaigns to defend the wildlands of the Klamath-Siskiyou region. Visit kswild.org/events to register, space is limited.

Allee Gustafson is KS Wild's Community Organizer in Josephine County.

WHAT'S GOING ON WITH THE SLATER FIRE?

Started by a powerline that should have been shut off during an extremely windy “red flag” day, the 2020 Slater Fire blasted through the town of Happy Camp, up the Indian Creek Watershed over the Siskiyou Crest and then down the Althouse Creek Watershed. Within the span of 24 hours lives had been lost, homes had been destroyed, and vast swaths of old-growth forests ceased to function as late-successional habitat.



The Klamath National Forest, where the fire originated, has a long and infamous history of exploiting wildfire as a mechanism to log otherwise protected old-growth reserves and streamside forests. Indeed, KS Wild and our allies have a lawsuit pending in federal district court challenging the Klamath National Forest practice of clearcutting forest reserves and logging next to streams following wildfires.

Post-fire roadside logging at the Page Mountain Snow Park on the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest.

While Klamath timber sale planners have been less than forthcoming about their logging plans following the Slater Fire, it appears that they intend to pretend that the fire is still burning (which it is not) and rely upon tax dollars allocated for fire suppression to advance a logging agenda that excludes public input and avoids environmental analysis.

The Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest has proposed extensive post-fire roadside logging within the Slater fire footprint that is not going to be pretty. Thousands of old-growth snags are going to be removed on both sides of priority roads in the forests above Takilma Oregon.

To their credit, unlike the Klamath National Forest, timber planners on the Rogue did conduct a public “scoping commenting” process and adopted some of the conservation recommendations that were submitted to the agency. In particular, the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest is not going to log along “level one” closed roads, is going to keep equipment out of riparian reserves, and is going to retain at least 10 large snags or down logs per acre as legacy forest structure. It is unlikely that the Klamath National Forest will adopt any of these conservation measures.

Most of the forest roads within the Slater Fire perimeter are currently subject to Forest Service closure orders. That may change as the summer progresses. Check the Forest Service web pages or call the District Offices before attempting to access the area.

MEDFORD BLM WILLFULLY INCREASES FIRE HAZARD



The future of BLM public lands? Another cooked second-growth timber farm.

Given the loss of life, homes and businesses from the 2020 fire season, it seems inconceivable that BLM timber planners and their cheerleaders in the timber industry would continue pushing logging practices that increase fire hazard and decrease fire resiliency—but that's exactly what they are doing.

CONVERTING OLD-GROWTH INTO TIMBER PLANTATIONS

Big Timber never liked the Northwest Forest Plan, in their view it's protections for old-growth forests and its focus on thinning (as opposed

to clearcutting) were a jarring shift from the “timber first” days when entire watersheds were slicked off. So, at the behest of the timber industry the BLM withdrew from the Northwest Forest Plan with the explicit goal of increasing “regeneration harvesting” in which old-growth forests are converted into tree farms.

Currently the BLM is pushing “regeneration” or “gap creation” clearcutting in almost every one of its timber sales throughout southern Oregon. It remains undisputed that turning old-growth forests into tree farms dramatically increases fire hazard while decreasing the fire resiliency of forest stands. Even the BLM admits that the establishment of dense young second-growth timber stands after logging increases fire hazard for approximately 50 years.

WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

There is a two-fold solution to the BLM’s old-growth logging obsession:

- 1) Create federal policy that both reflects the disproportionate value of ancient forests in sequestering carbon and recognizing the comparative fire resiliency of old-growth trees.
- 2) Give BLM planners something better to do. Namely, get them to finally engage with local communities and stakeholders with a focus on thinning second-growth timber plantations and implementing prescribed fire to truly increase forest health and resiliency on public lands.

George Sexton is KS Wild’s Conservation Director.

PROTECTING BLACK BEARS ON THE WILD & SCENIC ROGUE

The Wild & Scenic Rogue River is famously known for its multi-day, wilderness rafting and fishing trips. And the season is here! Yet this well known river canyon is more than just a “river trip.” It’s home to endemic tree and plant species, wilderness trails, traditional cultures, history, and a multitude of birds and wildlife. Eagles, otters, salmon, and that charismatic megafauna, *Ursus americanus*, the black bear all call this place home.



If you’re recreating out along the Wild & Scenic Rogue River, you may be lucky enough to see black bears wandering along the banks of the river or lumbering up the hillside. The Wild & Scenic Rogue River canyon provides important habitat for these omnivorous creatures as it hosts plenty of remote, dense forests and thick understory. Black bears hibernate during the winter months and forage for food during the summer.

RECREATING IN A BEAR’S HABITAT

The Wild & Scenic Rogue River is a favorite summer river trip destination. People from all over the world come to float it’s Class III rapids, fish for salmon and steelhead or hike the 41 mile Rogue River Trail. While this canyon is a hotspot for recreation and adventure, we must remember that we are visitors and, as stewards, we must help protect the abundant wildlife that live within the Wild Rogue canyon.

Because of the Rogue’s popularity, some bears have become habituated to the presence of humans in the canyon. Bears have been known to visit camps and get into rafts, coolers, and garbage in search of food. These bears often get tagged as “problem bears” and are often euthanized when their behavior becomes a nuisance. Any bear that associates food with humans will pass that knowledge to its cubs, creating a multi-generational cycle that is difficult to interrupt. As the saying goes, “A fed bear is a dead bear.”

PROBLEM PEOPLE, NOT PROBLEM BEARS

Humans pose the greatest threat to black bears. People who haven’t spent much time in the wilderness, don’t have the appropriate equipment, or who are uninformed

can't adequately protect wildlife or themselves while they're out recreating. With the proper information, we can all do our part to enjoy our Wild and Scenic or Wilderness adventures responsibly while protecting the wildlife who call these places home. Here are a few ways YOU as a river runner or hiker can protect black bears and other wildlife while recreating along the Wild & Scenic Rogue River:

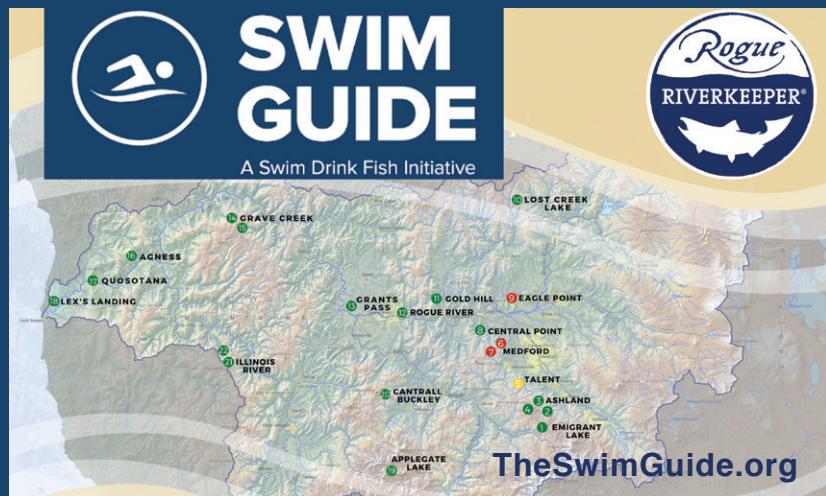
- **Read** through information on wildlife safety on the BLM and Forest Service's Wild Rogue River websites.
- **Educate** everyone in your group about bear deterrent protocols.
- Keep a clean camp! Pick up all debris and trash anytime you stop, store your garbage in a locking box or bear proof food storage container, clean surfaces after use.
- **Store** food in bear proof containers (locking coolers for rafters, bear canisters for hikers) and use bear fences or boxes when available.
- **Remove** all coolers, dryboxes, and other food storage containers from your rafts and stack them together on shore to protect your equipment.
- **Eliminate** odors. Store all toiletries and anything that smells in bear proof storage containers at night.
- **Deter** bears from entering camp or associating camps with food. Scare any curious bears away.

Education, awareness, and best practices to protect black bears along the Wild & Scenic Rogue River corridor will help preserve this unique landscape and its wildlife now and for future generations.

Robyn Janssen is Rogue Riverkeeper.

SET TO LAUNCH!

Rogue Riverkeeper is set to launch summer water quality monitoring with a renewed emphasis on recreation! For the past ten years, we have worked with interns and volunteers to collect water samples at popular recreation sites across the Rogue Basin to test for *E. coli* bacteria and let you know where it is safe to get in the water. In 2021, we are back with a full summer water quality program! Find out where it's safe to recreate at TheSwimGuide.org. *Sara Mosser is Outreach Coordinator for Rogue Riverkeeper.*



PREPARING COMMUNITIES FOR WILDFIRE

For millennia, wildfires have shaped the forests of the western US, including those in the Klamath-Siskiyou region. Forests in this region are “fire-adapted,” existing for millenia with both lightning-sparked and Indigenous fires regularly burning through the landscape prior to European colonization. Historic fire severity varied, but fires often acted within the ecological system, clearing thinner trees and underbrush while maintaining older, larger trees. Burn patterns created a variety of habitat patches, contributing to a high level of biological diversity in the region.

FIGURE 1 | Fire Severity, Type and Regime.



Today, the West is experiencing warmer summer temperatures, frequent droughts, and residential development into forest land. These factors create a greater risk of wildfires leading to serious impacts on our communities. Throughout the Klamath-Siskiyou, communities are learning how to better adapt and live with more frequent wildfires. **There is no future free from wildfire, but there are actions we can take to help prepare for the next one.**

THINGS YOU CAN DO TO PREPARE FOR WILDFIRE

DEFENSIBLE SPACE

Those who live and work in communities on the edge of forests, often called the “wildland urban interface,” need to protect their homes from the threat of wildfire. Being ready for wildfire starts with maintaining an adequate defensible space. Defensible space is the buffer you create by removing dead plants, grass, and weeds from around your home. This buffer is needed to slow or stop the spread of wildfire and it helps protect your home from catching fire—either from direct flame contact or radiant heat.

ACTION: Regularly clean your roof, gutters, decks, and the base of walls to avoid accumulation of leaves, needles, and other flammable materials.

HOME HARDDENING

Hardening your home means using construction materials that can help withstand flying embers, which can result in your house catching fire. Embers will seek out any opening or weak spot in your home's construction to get inside. Taking the necessary measures to harden your home can help increase its chance of survival when wildfire strikes.

ACTION: Use an eave closure to block spaces between your roof covering and sheathing.

FIRE-RESISTANT LANDSCAPING

A fire-resistant landscape isn't necessarily the same thing as a well-maintained yard. A landscape that resists fire uses plants that are naturally slow-burning strategically planted to decrease the spread of fire to your home. Proper placement and on-going maintenance of fire-resistant trees, for example, can help protect your home by blocking intense heat.

ACTION: Choose fire-retardant plant species that resist ignition such as rockrose, ice plant, and aloe.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Before a wildfire, it is important to prepare yourself and your home for the possibility of having to evacuate.

ACTION: Create a Wildfire Action Plan.

An evacuation plan:

- Designate an emergency meeting location outside the fire or hazard area.
- Know different evacuation routes from home and community.
- Sign up for local emergency notifications.
- Check for road closures: <https://www.tripcheck.com>
- Have an evacuation plan and emergency kit for pets and large animals.

Always have a 'Go Bag' packed:

- Face masks or coverings and a change of clothing
- Non-perishable food and three gallons of water per person
- Can opener and utensils
- Map marked with at least two evacuation routes
- Prescriptions or special medications
- Extra eyeglasses or contact lenses
- An extra set of car keys, credit cards, cash or checks
- First aid kit and sanitation supplies
- Cell phone chargers and backup batteries
- Flashlight
- Copies of important documents (e.g. birth certificates, passports)
- Don't forget pet food and water!



As part of KS Wild's ongoing efforts to support community adaptation to wildfires and a changing climate, we released our *Forest & Fire Toolkit*. The toolkit provides information on how to prepare your family, home, and community for a wildfire emergency. To learn more or to download a free copy of the toolkit, visit: www.kswild.org/forest-fire-toolkit.

BEAVERS: HELP RECOVER NATURE'S ENGINEERS

As we look forward, the Climate Program is focused on advocacy at the state and as part of KS Wild's efforts to advance natural solutions to climate change, we are advocating for the recovery of beaver.

Beaver are one of the most widely distributed animals in North America, but were trapped to near extinction by early colonizers in the 1800s. Before extensive trapping, populations in the Northwest were estimated in the tens to hundreds of millions.



Beaver are large aquatic rodents in the genus *Castor*. They have stout bodies with long teeth, webbed feet, and flat, scaly tails. They consume bark, grass, and other plants. They live in monogamous pairs with offspring that help build dams and lodges. They are known as a keystone species; their life cycle allows other species to thrive.

HOW BEAVERS HELP STREAMS AND SALMON

Small dams created by beavers create side channels that salmon rely on for spawning and protection. These dams also increase ground water recharge, raise the water table and create cooler, cleaner waterways.

Unfortunately, beaver are still considered “predatory animals” in Oregon and are often trapped and killed. From 2000 to 2018, over 58,000 beaver kills were reported in Oregon. This past year, the Oregon legislature missed an opportunity to remove the trapping threat and to reclassify this species from “predatory” status. There are now many programs and solutions, rather than trapping, for when beaver do become a nuisance.

One visible example of beaver helping local streams is along Bear Creek by Phoenix, Oregon. The beaver ponds here lead to more water later in the dry seasons, helping with climate-induced drought. Once beaver get re-established, their ponds, wet soils, and meandering streamside habitat can even provide fire breaks and improve wildfire safe zones, desperately needed along Bear Creek and the many other streams in our region.

The fight is not over to protect beavers. KS Wild continues to work with our allies to advance beaver awareness and protection. To learn more about beavers, check out the Beaver Coalition at: www.beavercoalition.org.

Joseph Vaile is KS Wild’s Climate Director.

KS WILD'S FAMILY IS GROWING: NEWCOMERS AND EMERITUS

WELCOME TO THE KS WILD BOARD, MANUEL DE AQUINO

Manny worked as a firefighter/paramedic and eventually fire captain in El Dorado County, California from the 1980s until 2011. A deep connection with the outdoors, the environment, and ecology took root while hiking with friends in the Sierra Nevada and backpacking there with his wife, Martha. After moving to Ashland in 2016, he didn't know a great deal about the natural history of the area but could tell it had distinct and special qualities. Getting to know the Klamath-Siskiyou region has been one awe-inspiring trek after another. Manny joined the KS Wild board in 2021.



THANK YOU, JOE FLAHERTY!

If you look up the word "hero" in the dictionary it may very well refer you to Joe Flaherty. Whether it's mentoring the next generation, leading hikes, volunteering, or watching out for wildlands, Joe is a force of nature and a force for good. Joe served on the KS Wild Board of Directors for XX years, and while his presence on the KS Wild Board will be sorely missed, Joe isn't going away—he is a beloved KS Wild lifer. We love you Joe!



WELCOME EMILY BOWES!

We are excited to welcome Emily Bowes as the new Rogue Riverkeeper Conservation Director for Rogue Riverkeeper.



THANK YOU JAMES GARLANT

Thanks to James Garlant for completing his law school externship with KS Wild with style and grace. James' research skills, hard work, and positive energy were a shining bright spot in a very challenging year.

Thank you **KATIE JORGENSEN** for your service on our Board of Directors!

LOCAL BUSINESSES KEEP THE KLAMATH-SISKIYOU WILD!

Local businesses have helped KS Wild thrive over the last two decades, with financial support, community partnerships, and in-kind gifts. Big thanks to all the businesses that have helped protect and restore the Klamath-Siskiyou!

Our business supporters understand the values intrinsic to the natural areas in our region. Promoting stewardship of public lands that reduces fire risk, while increasing protections for wild places, wild rivers, and wildlife is good for tourism and great for the local economy.

HOW YOUR BUSINESS CAN SUPPORT KS WILD:

- **Become** a KS Wild Business Member Today with a tax deductible donation. With your gift of \$300 or more we will list your business as an official supporter in our next newsletter, share your logo on the KS Wild website, and you will also receive a decal to use at your place of business.
- **Sponsor** a KS Wild or Rogue Riverkeeper event (very limited in 2021)
- **Host** a fundraiser through your business
- **Donate** in-kind donations (very limited in 2021)
- **Host** a house party for your customers

To learn more about supporting KS Wild through your business: brandy@kswild.org.

Brandy MacDonald is KS Wild's Development Associate.





Shane Stiles

Join us online as we host some of the episodes in our year-long, **Love Where You Live** webinar series, and join us in-person as we safely lead hikes again. For more info and to sign up for an event go to www.kswild.org/events.

WEBINARS: LOVE WHERE YOU LIVE

On Facebook and Zoom

Bridging the Gaps: Traditional Knowledge and Contemporary Science Thursday, June 24, 6-7pm

Learn about the diversity, ecology and cultural importance of the Pacific Lamprey with guest speaker, Keith Parker, Yurok Tribe Senior Fisheries/Molecular Biologist.

Serpentine Rocks! (Part 1: Serpentine Plant-Soil Relations: A World View) Thursday, July 15, 6-7pm

Serpentine Rocks! (Part 2: Serpentine's Surprising Side Trips) Wednesday, August 25, 6-7pm

IN-PERSON GUIDED HIKES

10-person limit each hike; following all current distancing and safety protocols

Friday, July 2, 4pm-7pm: [Hike & Write at Sucker Creek](#)

Join us in the old growth forests of Sucker Creek, a major tributary to the Illinois River. Find out how this creek and other Oregon waterways will be protected by the Southwest Oregon Watershed and Salmon Protection Act and the River Democracy Act.

Sunday, June 27, 8:30am-4pm: [South Fork Rogue River Hike](#)

The South Fork of the Rogue weaves through a beautiful mixed conifer forest and is currently one of a handful of upper Rogue River tributaries that is being considered for Wild & Scenic status. On this moderate 6-7 mile hike, you'll learn about Senator Wyden's River Democracy Act, while we venture to a small grove of giant, ancient sugar pines.

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www.rogueriverkeeper.org

www.kswild.org

Cover: Views of the Siskiyou Crest from the Mule Mountain Roadless Area, Upper Applegate, Oregon. Photo by Lesley Adams.