

KS WILD NEWS

The Journal of the Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center
SUMMER 2023



Ray Payne Earth Day '23

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Notes From the Trailhead

Twenty years ago this spring, forest defenders descended upon southern Oregon to fight for biodiversity and wild places as part of the Biscuit protests. In response to federal land managers targeting post-fire forests for industrial logging around the Kalmiopsis Wilderness, hundreds of individuals set up a direct-action camp at the Green Bridge spanning the Wild & Scenic Illinois River. In the ensuing year, it soon became the site of tense confrontations where local community members and forest defenders took a stand against the timber industry and the second Bush Administration's secretive logging policies.

The spirit of non-violent protest and direct action is still alive and well today in communities across the Pacific Northwest. Partners like 350 Eugene, 350 Portland, and Siskiyou Rising Tide are leading the way in training the next generation of forest defenders in direct action all along the West Coast. Closer to home in the Klamath-Siskiyou, groups like the Williams Community Forestry Project have been showing up in Medford at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) office to protest and speak out against the Penn Butte and Late Mungers timber sales that are proposed for public forests in the Applegate valley. On a recent trip out to visit supporters in Williams, I had the pleasure of meeting Ray Pague and his partner Linda, both of whom are active volunteers and supporters of various conservation groups in southwest Oregon. Our cover art was drawn by Ray and is a part of a series of vignettes depicting forest defenders and their signs from recent protests at the BLM offices.

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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What I love about working for KS Wild is that I get to meet community members, partner organizations, and supporters that engage in “forest defense” across a spectrum. While our ForestWatch staff specializes in legal defense in courts these days, our Climate Program engages with a wide range of partners to advance policy and rule-making to protect old-growth and mature forests to combat climate change. Supporters like Ray, Linda, and others representing their community on the front lines bolster the organization’s climate defense efforts.

You won’t necessarily find us leading sit-ins or protests at the Green Bridge these days, but you will find us nearby, working with volunteers and land managers to restore unique and degraded landscapes, litigating against destructive timber sales, offering resources to our fellow community members in the face of a changing climate, and monitoring the use of public land in our definition of forest defense.

Michael Dotson, Executive Director



Joan Norman sitting on the Green Bridge above the Illinois River. Photo credit: Lesley Adams

FIRST EVER NATIONAL INVENTORY OF MATURE AND OLD-GROWTH FORESTS

What is in the new inventory of mature and old growth forests?

The US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) released the first ever national inventory of mature and old-growth forests. The inventory and associated maps will help guide the management and protection of old-growth forest and trees into the future.



What are mature and old-growth forests?

The Klamath-Siskiyou bio-region is composed of towering conifer trees such as Douglas

KS Wild's Climate Director, Joseph Vaile, standing below a Douglas fir tree in an old-growth forest of southern Oregon. Photo credit: Joseph Vaile

fir and Ponderosa pine that can live for hundreds of years. In an old forest, layered tree canopies allow sunlight to filter through to the forest floor supporting a diverse host of plants and wildlife. Large snags, or standing dead trees, and large down wood are common in old-growth forests. Mature forests contain many of these same characteristics and are on the way to becoming old-growth if given time.

Why are these forests important?

The term old-growth dates back many decades to when foresters distinguished fast-growing, young forests from slow-growing, old forests. In the 1970s, people became concerned with the rampant pace of clearcut logging that leveled vast areas of old-growth. Studies have since found that old-growth ecosystems are essential for wildlife, watershed protection and are a key natural solution to climate change.

How much old forest did the inventory find?

The nation-wide inventory determined that while only 18% of the federal forest landscape contains old-growth forests, 45% contains mature forests. Mature forests can turn into old-growth if they are not logged or succumb to severe disturbance such as extreme wildfire. More than 100 million acres of old-growth and mature forests are still standing on public lands, despite decades of industrial logging, wildfires and climate threats.

What is included in the rulemaking?

In addition to an inventory, the announcement will also kick off an “advanced notice pro-

posed rulemaking” that asks for input to create a rule addressing mature and old-growth forests. Rules could further direct the conservation and management of older forests across both BLM and U.S. Forest Service lands.

What are the threats to old forests?

The agencies found that climate change, drought, and other stressors threaten older forests. While inappropriate management is mentioned as a threat, the agencies have been slow to acknowledge ongoing threat posed by mature and old-growth timber sales. Instead, the focus is on management, such as fuels reduction, to reduce climate stress. They released an interactive “Climate Risk Viewer” that maps forest climate impacts.



A massive clear cut in Josephine County, Oregon.
Photo credit: George Sexton

Will the rule protect local forests from logging?

How the inventory and rulemaking will ultimately impact logging plans in mature and old-growth forests is unknown. Many local old-growth forests on BLM managed lands are threatened with logging. It is very important for the public to send a clear message to the Biden administration that we need strong protections from logging.

What about protecting forests that are currently threatened?

While the inventory and rule do not immediately offer protections for older forests, the U.S. Forest Service recommitted to ensuring that old-growth conservation is prioritized in upcoming forest management projects and sent direction to all field staff in the Forest Service. The BLM has not yet done so.

What’s next?

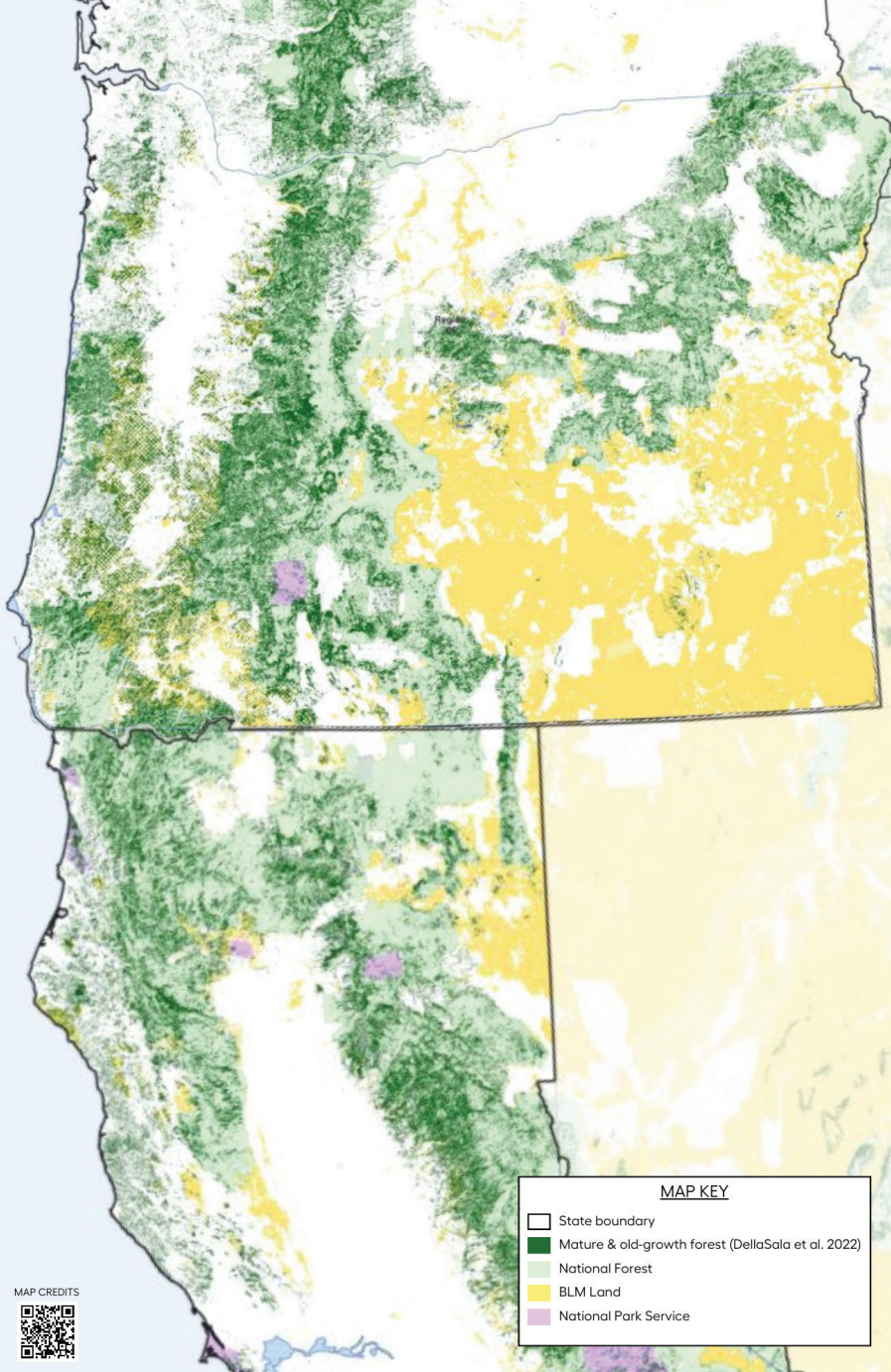
While this is a huge victory, the work is not done. In the coming months there will be opportunities for the public to give input on how these agencies should adapt their policies to protect, conserve, and manage federal forests for climate resilience. Now more than ever, we need grassroots activists like you to call on the Biden administration to ensure the result of this process creates permanent protections for our mature and old-growth forests.

How to get involved

Submit your comments directly to land managers. The BLM and Forest Service need to hear from you! Learn more about how to comment at kswild.org/oldgrowth-campaign.

*Alexi Lovechio, Forest and Climate Coordinator
Joseph Vaile, Climate Director*

REMAINING MATURE AND OLD-GROWTH FORESTS OF OREGON AND NORTHERN CALIFORNIA



A BRIEF HISTORY OF PNW OLD-GROWTH FORESTS

In the mid-1800s, European settlers forced Indigenous tribes from their land and moved eastern land into private ownership. They then moved towards the Pacific Northwest (PNW) where large swaths of old-growth forests were leveled. The California gold rush and expansion of railroad lines created a large commercial market for PNW timber.



Three loggers on a bucked and chained tree in an Oregon Forest, 1900s. Photo credit: Oregon State University Special Collections and Archives.

After large-scale, unregulated old-growth forest exploitation, forests became a national issue and Congress established the first 'Forest Reserves,' now known as National Forests. Through a series of laws, the U.S. Forest Service began managing federal forestland through the sustained yield model, which continued to convert old-growth forests into young, dense tree plantations. In 1937, the Oregon & California (O&C) Act was passed, which established the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) goal to provide a sustained yield of timber from old-growth forests on O&C lands.

It wasn't until the 1970s that more conservation-oriented management approaches emerged with the passage of three laws: the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the National Forest Management Act. These laws focused on developing transparency and public process into decision-making on public forests and required the consideration of conservation within forest ecosystems, but old-growth logging continued into the 1970s and 1980s.

In the late 1900s, science, legislation, and economic forces culminated in a major battle over forest management in western old-growth forests. Out of this battle, the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) was created to guide forest management practices in federal forests and protect over 1,000 species that inhabit old-growth forests. As of 2023, a federal advisory committee has been formed to modernize the NWFP in light of climate change impacts to forest ecosystems.

The fight to protect remaining old-growth forests isn't over. KS Wild's ForestWatch work ensures that destructive timber sales that don't follow the law in the Klamath-Siskiyou region are halted across southern Oregon and northern California.

Haleigh Martin, Communications Manager

KS WILD CHALLENGES THE BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Penn Butte & Late Mungers Timber Sales Challenged in Court

Timber Planners within the Medford Bureau of the Land Management (BLM) have long resented the idea that there should be old-growth reserves that are managed to provide late-successional forest habitat instead of to produce timber. These protected old-growth stands are called “Late Successional Reserves,” and until recently, they had indeed been managed to provide much needed habitat for rare species such as Northern spotted owls, Pacific Fisher, flying squirrels, marten, red tree voles and a host of other wildlife that depend upon old-growth forest canopy cover to survive and thrive.

Targeting the Reserves

Through the Late Mungers and Penn Butte timber sales the BLM intends to remove old-growth forest habitat from a Late Successional Reserve in the hills above the community of Williams, OR that is literally surrounded by clearcuts and second-growth timber plantations that have greatly increased fire hazard. Rather than calling the logging what it is— clearcutting—the BLM has invented green-sounding euphemisms that mimic terms that describe restoration. Clearcuts bigger than a football field are called “gap creation,” and the removal of existing late-successional forest canopy from the reserves is referred to as the “creation of open seral habitat.”

Assigning Themselves a Timber Target

Due to pressure from their allies in the timber industry, the BLM withdrew from the Northwest Forest Plan and wrote a new land management plan in 2016. The stated intent of that management plan was to shift the BLM’s logging focus away from thinning and towards “regeneration harvesting.” You guessed it, “regeneration harvesting” is yet another BLM codeword for clearcutting. As part of the 2016 management plan, the Medford District BLM assigned itself to log 10,000-acres of Late Successional Reserves. The Penn Butte and Late Mungers timber sales are an effort by the BLM to fulfill the promise they made to themselves to log thousands of acres located in old-growth reserves.

Cut Out the Public

The Penn Butte and Late Mungers timber sales were not planned under the normal public process that governs public land management. Instead, the BLM is using Penn Butte and Late Mungers to roll out their creatively named “Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM) For Fire Resilient Lands” that purports to focus on forest restoration and fuels reduction. Who could possibly object to something as rosy sounding as “Integrated Vegetation Management?”

The reality of the IVM logging program is that it seeks to speed the BLM’s agenda to achieve the 10,000-acre timber target in the Late Successional Reserves. IVM does this by replacing public involvement and site-specific BLM analysis with a generic checklist called a “Determination of NEPA Adequacy” in which BLM timber planners agree with each other that environmental analysis and public involvement would be a waste of time. An example of the public process utilized to plan Late Mungers and Penn Butt is the BLM’s online “public” zoom meeting in

[Read our IVM Legal Challenge](#)



which BLM timber planners spoke at length of their desire to increase logging while those members of the public who were allowed to speak were limited to three minutes before the BLM cut them off in mid-sentence.

KS Wild Goes to Court

Public land managers, communities and stakeholders across the West are doing the hard work of coming together and identifying opportunities to restore resilient forest conditions in the face of climate change. The Medford District BLM is woefully out of step with the times. Rather than more collaboration, they want less. Instead of protecting the remaining ancient forest they want to convert those stands to “open seral gaps” that are devoid of canopy cover.



KS Wild's Conservation Director, George Sexton, standing in the Late Mungers timber sale.

Currently, the only way for conservation voices to be heard by BLM timber planners is through a court order, so KS Wild, Oregon Wild, Cascadia Wildlands, and the Soda Mountain Wilderness Council have filed a legal challenge to the IVM Late Successional Reserve logging program and the Penn Butte and Late Mungers timber sales.

We are represented by the Crag Law Center and a copy of the legal complaint may be viewed on our website. Our hope is to shift the BLM away from old-growth logging and towards real restoration and fuels reduction and we intend to succeed!

George Sexton, Conservation Director

The Making of the Northwest Forest Plan

Monday, July 10, 6-7:30pm at the Ashland Library (410 Siskiyou Blvd, Ashland)

Hear stories with authors Jerry Franklin, Norm Johnson, and Gordon Reeves on their new book *The Making of the Northwest Forest Plan: The Wild Science of Saving Old-Growth Ecosystems* and engage in a facilitated conversation with the authors. Copies of the book will be available for sale and signing.

To learn more about this event, visit kswild.org/events.

BEAVERS: ALLIES IN THE CLIMATE FIGHT

Oregon is known as "the Beaver State" due to the furbearing animal's role many years ago, but the beaver plays a different role now as the species is an important part of Oregon's riparian ecosystems. In the fight against climate change, American beavers are one of our strongest wildlife allies. They provide many benefits to waterways and the surrounding riparian habitats by reducing wildfire risk and contributing to wildfire resilience. Beavers improve water security, assist in carbon sequestration, and create healthy habitat for salmon. The wetlands they create capture and store large amounts of carbon from the atmosphere while also acting as rearing habitat for juvenile salmon.

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ) has identified more than 89,000 miles of stream that are too warm for fish habitat. Beaver ponds can help mitigate this problem by creating cold water refugia for fish and wildlife during hot summers. Beaver ponds also create natural fire breaks that protect habitat and private lands from extreme fire events. These are some of the reasons that beavers are considered a key-stone species. However, because of the human-perceived damage beavers can cause, they are classified as a "predatory animal" on Oregon private lands. Under current law, this classification allows them to be killed with little to no oversight in the Beaver State.

Along with our partner organizations, Rogue Riverkeeper has been advocating to change this classification to "mammal" for the obvious reason that beavers are not predatory animals (they only eat plants). But due to their "predatory" status on private lands, the state allows unlimited killing of beavers with no tracking system by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW). Currently, there is a bill making its way through the Oregon Legislature that would remove beavers from the "predator animal" statute, streamline management under ODFW, and provide data collection for more informed beaver management. Rogue Riverkeeper is excited to help bring about a more holistic approach to beaver management in Oregon. Subscribe to our email newsletter to learn how you can help support increased protections for beavers this summer.

Emily Bowes, Rogue Riverkeeper Conservation Director



STREAMSIDE FORESTS HELP FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE

The lush, green swath of forest found along streams, lakes, and rivers is unique habitat; known as “riparian areas.” These habitats are the link between the freshwater ecosystem and the drier uplands. The wet soils of riparian areas act as both a sponge and a filter, holding cold water later into the summer and filtering out pollutants and sediment.

All over the globe, riparian areas are known for a high level of biodiversity. Like other forest ecosystems, the tree and shrub layers build a complex structure filled with herbaceous plants and animals from invertebrates and the birds that feed on them to the larger, plant-eating and predatory animals that can find shelter in this habitat known for its dense foliage.

While riparian habitats do not cover a large area of the Rogue basin, they are an important part of the landscape that can help buffer the effects of climate change. Riparian areas with a healthy tree canopy are critical in shading streams and rivers to reduce warming by the sun. This provides a crucial component in maintaining water temperatures that can allow cold water-loving salmon and other species to thrive. At the same time, climate change effects on these groundwater-dependent ecosystems may be especially profound with the impact of precipitation and snowpack changes.

Riparian habitats found throughout the Rogue basin are not all treated the same and are not all healthy. In parts of the basin that are heavily urbanized, like along Bear Creek where many towns are situated, the built environment runs right up to the creek and the runoff from paved areas is warmed and carries many pollutants. Along streams that have high agricultural use, riparian area grazing and irrigation practices affect the size, functionality, and health of riparian areas. Rogue Riverkeeper works in all these environments, seeking to maintain the health and function of riparian areas and wetlands that are so important in maintaining cool clean water in the Rogue basin.



A view of the riparian forest surrounding the Upper Rogue River. Photo credit: Haleigh Martin

Frances Oyung, Rogue Riverkeeper Program Director

KS WILD STEWARDS PROTECT CRUCIAL BOTANICAL AREAS

Each summer, four botanical sites receive the attention they deserve through KS Wild's Public Lands and You (PLAY) stewardship program which works to connect the public to public lands. Through consistent monitoring and on-the-ground efforts, we are saving these areas from destruction.

Eight Dollar Mountain & Days Gulch Botanical Areas

One concern when protecting botanical areas in the Klamath-Siskiyou is off-roading which compacts soil and creates soil erosion. This is a major threat to two areas protected

for their botanical significance in southern Oregon: Eight Dollar Mountain and Days Gulch Botanical Areas. With grant money and the help of a few awesome volunteers, a new kiosk was placed at Days Gulch Botanical Area in an effort to mitigate off-roading threats by educating the public about the Jeffrey pine savannas and unique wetlands, known as serpentine fens, and the need to protect them!



KS Wild volunteers repairing a fence in Alex Hole Meadow. Photo credit: Haleigh Martin

Mariposa Preserve

Located within the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument is the Mariposa Preserve, another important area we work to protect. The Preserve is stewarded for its botanical significance as it is home to two endemic plants: Greene's Mariposa lily and Detling's microseris. Greene's Mariposa Lily is the Botanical Area's namesake and only grows in Jackson County, OR and Siskiyou County, CA. Detling's microseris exists only in select areas of Jackson County, OR. Our work in this area consists of invasive weed pulls and water retention work for optimal species protection.

Alex Hole

In July and October, we head to a proposed botanical area on the Siskiyou Crest called Alex Hole to protect the special wetland meadow from grazing cows who wander from the Klamath Mountains. Alongside a small group of KS Wild staff, volunteers, and Forest Service employees, we work to set up and repair the fence that keeps the grazing cattle out to protect the unique flora and fauna that relies on this mountain meadow.

What does it look like to help keep these botanical areas thriving?

We invite you to get outside with us for an upcoming stewardship event.

Sign up at kswild.org/land-stewardship.

Allie Gustafson, Events & Volunteer Manager

OUR WORK IS FUNDED BY SUPPORTERS LIKE YOU

One of my favorite things about working in conservation on the west coast is the size comparisons to land masses on the east coast. After a few moments of research, I am pleased to announce that the Klamath-Siskiyou bioregion represents an area the size of the state of Maryland! But why stop at ribbing our east coast compatriots; Belgium, Le-sotho, and Armenia are also equivalent to the 8 million acres of public land in Oregon and California that KS Wild brings its watchdog efforts to bear on.



KS Wild supporters on our annual raft-supported Rogue River hike. Photo credit: Still Mountain Studios

Supporters like you make up about half of the funding that KS Wild and Rogue Riverkeeper receives. Individual gifts average out to about \$96 dollars a year, or \$8 a month. I'm not going to ask for your support by making any condescending comparisons to your streaming video subscriptions or espresso habit since I'm fairly positive those are things you need. Wherever you choose to spend your money, consider giving your public lands a vote with your finances to the tune of \$8 a month for 8 million acres of public land.

Anyone who spends time in the backcountry or on local trail systems knows the dire state of our public lands. Douglas firs are dying off in droves, stand-replacing fire scars are a gut-wrenching feature in our bioregion, and biodiversity is slipping away. KS Wild on its own is not a panacea for all that ails our beloved bioregion; however, we thoughtfully invest our energy, intelligence, and yes, finances, as best we can to stop the worst timber sales and steer the ship of public policy in the direction of forest restoration and watershed protection. Thank you for your support of this mission to love where we all live, and defend what we all love.

Isaak Oliansky, Development Manager

We are wrapping up our spring fundraising campaign and need your support to hit our \$50,000 seasonal goal. Please use the remit envelope that accompanies this newsletter or visit our website at www.kswild.org/donate to give back to the wild and support our wildlands and wildlife conservation efforts.

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: *PACIFIC FISHER*

While mature and old-growth forests provide many benefits for human populations, they also provide critical aspects of life for a wide variety of wildlife. One species in particular whose dwindling existence depends specifically on old-growth forests is the Pacific fisher (*Pekania pennanti*). Because individual fishers are known to travel over a home range of 50-150 square miles, they have historically been found from British Columbia to the southern Sierra Nevada.



Their large range of travel causes them to rely on mature trees, snags, or logs with cavities found in large, undisturbed tracts of old forest for resting and denning. Additionally, the small and medium-sized mammals, such as rabbits, porcupines, squirrels, voles, and birds that also rely on mature and old-growth forests make up the fisher diet.

In recent decades, Pacific fisher populations dwindled alongside the loss of mature and old-growth forests. Where fishers used to flourish across the Pacific Northwest, only about 15% of the original population persists. In recent years, the fisher has disappeared from Washington and most of Oregon. Experts recommend increasing protections for the fisher due to the extreme population decline, but little has been done in the way of federal protection in the Klamath-Siskiyou region. While the fisher was listed under the Endangered Species Act in the Sierra Nevada, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has yet to protect Klamath-Siskiyou fisher populations. Extinction of the Pacific fisher would be an irrevocable loss to the biological diversity of the temperate forests in this region.

In 2022, KS Wild and partners filed a complaint challenging the USFWS decision not to list the fisher. We continue to advocate for the Pacific fisher and other imperiled species who rely on the wild nature of this region. If you would like to help us advocate for wildlife of the KS, consider making a donation to our Wildlife Defense Fund.

Wildlife Defense Fund:



Our 6-part podcast "One Foot in the Black" examines wildfire in the West and shares stories that serve as a warning for our communities. Check it out at kswild.org/podcast or wherever you listen to podcasts.



JOIN US FOR AN ADVENTURE THIS SPRING!

Join us this spring! Once you sign up for an event online, you will receive details including carpooling locations and what to bring. Sign up at www.kswild.org/events.

Natural history walk: beavers, springs, & more: Thursday, June 18, 9:30-11:30am

Visit hidden springs and beaver dams along Bear Creek in Phoenix. We will walk on the flat paved Greenway from Blue Heron Park to Northridge Terrace and back. 2.5 miles round trip. We will stop along the way to visit and talk about special natural features and discuss fire recovery of the riparian area in Phoenix.

Recreational paddle on Emigrant Lake: Sunday, June 25 11am-1:30pm

An introduction to flat water paddling on kayak or paddleboard. We will learn some of the basics of safe boating, explore nearshore along Emigrant Lake, and provide information on the history of the site and reservoir, the role of Emigrant Lake in the region and do some birdwatching. Free kayak rental offered through the Public Lands store in Medford. More details on the RRRK Events page. www.rogueriverkeeper.org/calendar.

Alex Hole stewardship day: Friday, July 7-Saturday July 8, 2023

Join us to protect Alex Hole meadow, a biological treasure on the Siskiyou Crest. Alongside the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest, we will work together to repair a fence to protect this sensitive meadow from grazing cattle.

Rogue Riverkeeper whitewater rafting trip with ROW Adventures: Sept 12-15, 2023

Spend four days and three nights whitewater rafting and camping along the iconic Wild & Scenic Rogue River! Floating, relaxing, swimming, and hiking along this stunning river and the side canyons of the Rogue is a trip every river lover should experience.

2023 First Fridays at the KS Wild office in Ashland

Join us from 5-7pm at 562 A Street. Wine, bubbly water, and snacks provided.

July 7th: Deb Vanpoolen

August 4th: Zoe Alowan

[View our full calendar at www.kswild.org/events](http://www.kswild.org/events)

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**ROGUE RIVERKEEPER'S
FUNDRAISING
RAFTING TRIP
ON THE ROGUE**
with ROW Adventures
September 12 - 15, 2023



Cover: Artwork by KS Wild supporter Ray Pague depicting recent local protests.