

# KS WILD NEWS

The Journal of the Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center

WINTER 2022



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## NOTES FROM THE TRAILHEAD

Since 1997, KS Wild has been advocating for the wildlands, wildlife, and watersheds of the Klamath-Siskiyou bioregion, making 2022 our 25th anniversary. Anniversaries are a time of reflection, a time to review and examine where you started, how far you've come, and where you are headed. KS Wild started as a group of concerned neighbors who came together to protect their watershed and fight against clearcuts, mining, and devastating forest practices in their rural communities. Since that time, we've grown into a leading conservation organization defending public lands, setting legal precedent with rippling effects, shaping policy, and enhancing protections across southwestern Oregon and northwestern California.

Our story includes the history of the Siskiyou Regional Education Project, the grassroots movement organized around the Bald Mountain Road blockade on the boundary of the Kalmiopsis Wilderness in 1983. There are still many of our supporters who came to us through the educational tours led by Lou Gold. KS Wild merged with the Siskiyou Project in 2011, and carried forward the legacy of forest defenders in our region.

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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KS Wild's history also includes that of Rogue Riverkeeper, which was established in 2009 in response to the Jordan Cove LNG project—a fossil fuel project that was successfully squashed just last month after years of collaboration, dedication, and community organizing. Rogue Riverkeeper continues to be a strong voice in the region for the clean water, healthy communities, and native fish. With the 50th Anniversary of the Clean Water Act this year, you'll be hearing more from Rogue Riverkeeper on the latest campaigns to safeguard the Rogue basin amidst the growing stress of a changing climate.

When I think back to the small group of rural neighbors in the Applegate Valley hoping to protect their backyard forests and watershed, I imagine they couldn't have anticipated the impact and influence KS Wild would have on Oregon's forest practices, or that we would be one of only a few conservation organizations representing environmental interests at the table with the Governor and the timber industry. You can read more about the impacts of those negotiations in the article on the Oregon Forest Practices Accord.

Many things look different from when we started. Climate change has created an expediency in our work that we didn't have before. In response, we created our Climate Program in 2019 to address issues around wildfire, community adaptation, and climate smart land-use policy. We've seen changes in the demographics of our region as well as shifts in attitudes around forest policies and practices. Yet what remains is a lasting belief that the Klamath-Siskiyou is a special place on earth that deserves staunch advocacy.

Finally, KS Wild's history of success has everything to do with you, our supporters. Some of you have been with us since the beginning. You understand the power of collective action. You trust us to monitor public lands, gather credible research, make decisions based on science, and solve some of the toughest land policy challenges facing our bioregion. While a lot about our organization has grown and changed in the last 25 years, one thing remains constant—our unrelenting commitment to protect the best and restore the rest.

*Jessica Klinke is KS Wild's Communications Director.*

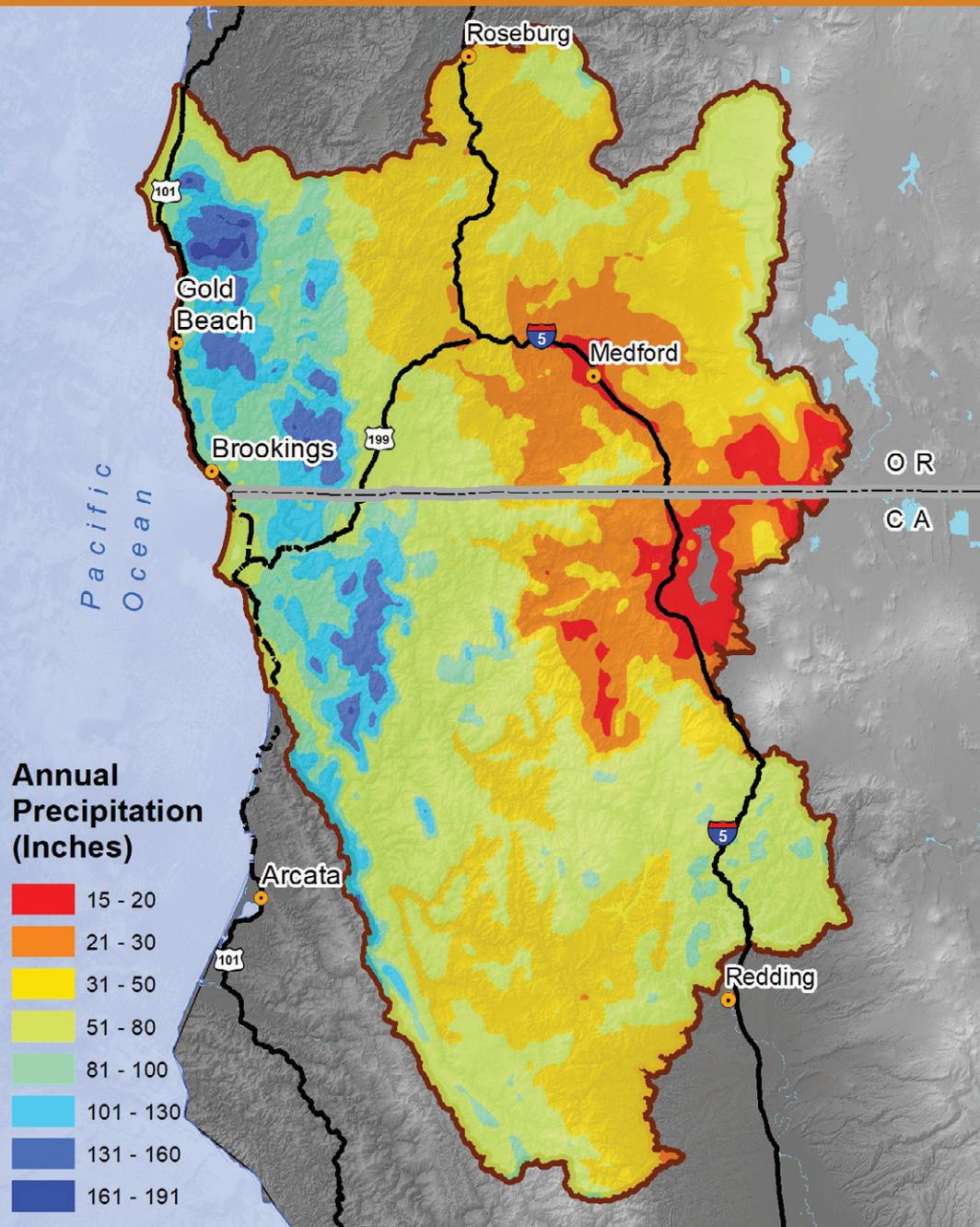
## FIRST NATIONS AND CARETAKERS

The fight for this region runs deeper than the 25 years of KS Wild. It starts with the First Nations who called this land home: the Takelma, Shasta, Tolowa Dee-ni', Coquille, Umpqua, Chit-dee-ni (Chetco), Modoc, Tututni, Cow Creek Umpqua, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Karuk, Yurok, and Klamath tribes.



# WATER LIKE GOLD

Climate change causes effects to weather patterns all over the world but some areas are more sensitive to these changes than others. We can tell from this map that there is a wide range of average precipitation patterns across the Klamath-Siskiyou, therefore water conservation may be more of a necessity in the east range than in the west where precipitation levels are higher.





# SPRING CHINOOK THE CLIMATE CHANGE SALMON

Unlike all other salmon on the west coast, the spring chinook salmon ascend rivers in the spring when rivers are favorable for migration due to high flows and cool water. Thus, they are not as vulnerable to migration mortality as are fall chinook that migrate in late summer and early fall when flows are low and stream temperatures high.

High spring flows enable spring chinook to pass falls and make long journeys to access cold water refugia and spawning areas in the upper portions of watersheds. The spring chinook enter natal rivers from the Pacific Ocean with remarkably high fat reserves that allow them to hold through the summer and ultimately spawn and die in the early fall.

These cold-water habitats at the higher elevations in the watershed are often inaccessible to fall migrating chinook. Fall chinook and other salmon generally make relatively short journeys to spawning area during fall and are often stymied from reaching desirable upriver spawning areas by inconsistent fall flows. Since stream temperatures in high elevation areas are much cooler than in lower elevation areas, the spring chinook has an advantage when stream temperatures increase due to climate change. Similarly, spring chinook would be less affected by flow depletion caused by climate change.

Historically, these advantages resulted in much higher abundances of spring chinook than fall chinook, however, dams have eliminated or greatly reduced spring chinook abundance on most larger rivers. The excellent habitat remains intact above the dams, but the spring chinook cannot access it.

For example, the upper Klamath Basin at 5,000-foot elevation has several spring-fed tributaries that gush incredibly cold water all through the summer where spring chinook once prospered. Efforts are currently underway to remove several dams and allow spring chinook to once again flourish in the upper Klamath basin. The genetically based traits of spring chinook provide ecological insurance against climate change that no other salmon possesses.

*Rich Nawa is KS Wild's Staff Ecologist.*

# THE PRIVATE FOREST ACCORD

In the early morning hours of October 30, 2021, KS Wild's Climate Program helped make history for Oregon forests and rivers. After nearly a year of intense negotiations between six conservation groups and six timber industry representatives, we reached an unprecedented conservation agreement known as the Private Forest Accord to dramatically improve the state's forestry rules.

Oregon's private forest rules are the weakest on the West Coast. In many cases, these rules allow logging right up to stream banks and enforcement has been weak. The agreement would reshape safeguards for salmon and other aquatic species on more than 10 million acres of private forestland. The agreement is a huge step forward for climate-smart forest rules, particularly in safeguarding the cold water that fish need.

The Accord covers many aspects of forest management, from leaving wider buffer strips along streams to protecting landslide-prone areas. Beaver, salamanders, and other stream-associated species will benefit from the agreement. It also requires that all roads allow for the passage of fish, benefiting many aquatic species.

**WHAT'S NEXT?** The private forest agreement now advances to the legislature to be codified into law. There will be further rulemaking processes and a plan will be developed to present to federal fish and wildlife agencies for the development of a Habitat Conservation Plan that would guide conservation of at-risk fish species.

## Issue Spotlight

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**Road crossings** can create barriers to fish and other species, which can lead to a loss of access to habitat for fish to spawn and carry out their life cycle. Culverts and other road crossing structures like bridges channel water under a road. If these structures are old and alter the flow of a stream, they can become complete obstruction to aquatic species.



The new private forest agreement requires the timber industry to upgrade all of their old stream crossings to ensure fish passage. New culverts will be designed using "stream simulation" to mimic stream gradient, flow, and stream-bed material. This massive timber industry investment in fish passage is combined with the development of a state program that will assist small private landowners to upgrade their roads to ensure fish passage.

*Joseph Vaile is KS Wild's Climate Director.*

# Wild & Scenic Film Festival

presented by KS Wild & Rogue Riverkeeper



## FEBRUARY 25th

VIRTUAL LOBBY 6:00PM  
PROGRAM BEGINS 6:30PM

[www.siskiyoufilmfestival.org](http://www.siskiyoufilmfestival.org)

KS Wild's Siskiyou FilmFest is once again collaborating with Rogue Riverkeeper's Wild & Scenic Film Festival—both celebrating 20 years of inspiring activism through film and art—to bring you our signature film festival, VIRTUALLY!

The Wild & Scenic Siskiyou Film Festival brings the community together to celebrate our work protecting the Klamath-Siskiyou wildlands, and restoring clean water in the Rogue Basin. It is a virtual night of fun with raffle prizes, films, and more!

Considered one of the nation's premiere environmental and adventure film festivals, the films from Wild & Scenic combine stellar filmmaking, beautiful cinematography, and first-rate storytelling to inform, inspire, and ignite solutions toward restoring the earth and human communities while creating a positive future for the next generation.

Enjoy award-winning films about nature, community activism, adventure, conservation, water, energy and climate change, wildlife, environmental justice, Native American and Indigenous cultures.

Community support makes our work possible. If you or your business would like to get involved with the Wild & Scenic Siskiyou Film Festival as a sponsor or with a donation to our raffle, please contact Allee Gustafson at [allee@kswild.org](mailto:allee@kswild.org).

*Allee Gustafson is KS Wild's Community Organizer*

**Tickets Now Available**

[www.siskiyoufilmfestival.org](http://www.siskiyoufilmfestival.org)





# A NEW CHAPTER WITH AN OLD FRIEND

It has long been an idea in the Western U.S. that “whiskey is for drinking, water is for fighting” and there are few other resources that touch us all the way water does. I am excited to become the new Rogue Riverkeeper Program Director, stepping into the role forged by dedicated conservationists such as Robyn Janssen. I am proud to be joining Conservation Director Emily Bowes as we take on the work of serving as the advocate for the Rogue watershed.

Western rivers and the outdoors have always been a part of my family’s life. I have been working to protect waterways since my first whitewater rafting trip in the central Sierra in my early teens when I learned to boat and joined with many others as we unsuccessfully tried to save the Stanislaus River from inundation by one of the last large dams constructed in the U.S.

Water and this basin are not new to me, having lived in the Rogue Valley since 1992. My first job with Rogue water was coordinating a volunteer water monitoring program for local watershed councils in 1998. Since then, I have worked for the largest municipal water provider in the basin, served as Coordinator of the Bear Creek Watershed Council, and worked for a regional stormwater regulator implementing Clean Water Act requirements. I spent four years serving as a member, and then Chair of the Jackson County Natural Resources Advisory Committee. I have worked to educate our community on the importance of protecting water quality for humans and fish with programs such as Salmon Watch.

I have lived rurally and in town. I recreate in the snow and on our rivers and lakes. I have seen Rogue water from a diversity of perspectives which will inform my approach in my role as Riverkeeper.

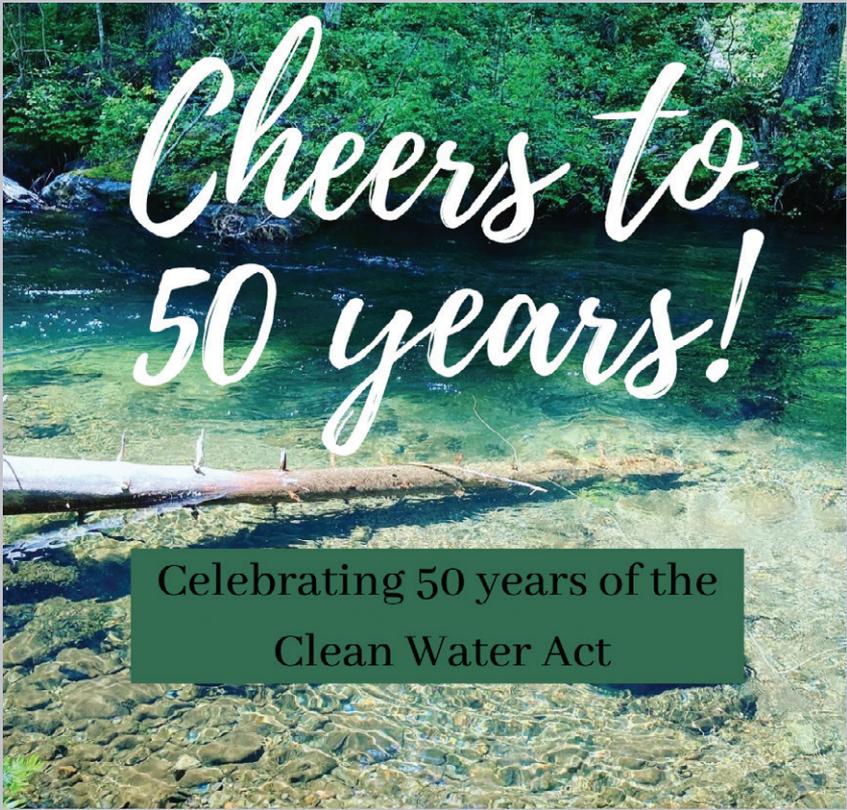
Everyone reading this introduction already understands the dire conditions caused by the misuse of our resources and the stresses caused by climate change. You understand the need for decisions and actions which result in sustainability and conservation. As we turn a new page in the Rogue Riverkeeper story, I will be asking your help to ensure our community understands the benefits of clean water and promoting sustainable use of our water resources and acts upon that understanding. Where necessary, I’ll ask your help in fighting governmental and private insults to our rivers and streams because once lost, we cannot regain some of these resources.

I look forward to recreating and working with you in the field and at events.

*Frances Byung*

Rogue Riverkeeper Program Director





This year marks the 50th anniversary of the landmark water protection legislation, the Clean Water Act! This law provides federal protections from pollution to rivers, lakes, streams, and oceans within the United States. Before the passage of the 20th century's most influential environmental protection law, rivers would catch on fire from toxic chemicals, waterways contained dangerous levels of bacteria, and lakes were dumping grounds for garbage.

Now, there are strict standards in place to ensure safe and clean water is available in our nation's waterways for drinking, recreation, and wildlife habitat.

In 2022, Rogue Riverkeeper will celebrate the golden anniversary of the Clean Water Act by highlighting some major victories for environmental conservation that would not have been possible without this mighty source of federal protection. We will bring attention to all the work that still needs to be done to ensure clean water protections for the Rogue River Watershed.

In collaboration with other conservation groups we will be looking for solutions to introduce clean water protections statewide. Worsening drought conditions and other effects of climate change are making water conservation and clean water protections more important than ever. We've been fighting to protect our water the last fifty years and we're ready to fight for fifty more!

*Emily Bowes is Rogue Riverkeeper's Conservation Director*

# NORTHERN SPOTTED OWL

## "CRITICAL HABITAT" ROLLERCOASTER

### LIFE IS HARD

Life is undeniably difficult for the few remaining Northern spotted owls still inhabiting the once vast ancient forests of the Pacific Northwest. Invasive Barred owls that are not dependent upon old-growth forest habitat are outcompeting and preying upon spotted owls as forests become more fragmented and less ecologically complex. Climate change is resulting in longer and more intense fire seasons which may result in less functional spotted owl forest habitat. And logging continues to remove vast swaths of ancient forests, especially on BLM-managed forests in Oregon.



Old-growth forest habitat.

### WHAT IS CRITICAL HABITAT?

The idea behind the designation of spotted owl "critical habitat" by the US Fish and Wildlife Service is that public forest lands needed for the survival and recovery of the species will be managed to allow for spotted owl reproduction and movement across the landscape. Basically, this means retaining old-growth forests on public lands.

### BLM SHELL GAME

The Bureau of Land Management has always placed artificial timber production targets ahead of the needs of wildlife. The agency's latest scheme involves removing all of the forest habitat from spotted owl activity centers that it deems to be unoccupied. This shell game results in an ever diminishing amount of habitat to support an ever diminishing number of owls. So much for critical habitat.

### POLITICS TRUMPS ECOLOGY

In the waning days of the Trump Administration the US Fish and Wildlife Service removed 3.4 million acres of forests from the "critical habitat" designation. Fortunately, the Service recently reversed course and reinstated the critical habitat protection for many Forest Service lands. However, 200,000 acres of BLM managed old-growth forests serving as critical habitat were nevertheless dropped from the protective status.

Why would the Fish and Wildlife Service remove BLM forests in Oregon from spotted owl critical habitat designation when the species is in steep decline? The answer is that many decisions made by federal agencies are political rather than ecological.

# FIRE IS A YEAR-ROUND RELATIONSHIP

The 2021 fire season was long and difficult. As the climate heats, summers extend, and forests parch, the smoke and the flames are becoming a more and more inescapable fact of life here in fire country.

## BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE FIRE

It is important to remember that we are not helpless passengers on train to destruction. There are effective and proven actions that we can take before, during and after forest fires to help impacted communities and ecosystems.



Post-fire salvage logging in the Slater fire footprint on the Siskiyou Crest.

**BEFORE** fire season arrives, we can harden our homes and communities to the arrival and spread of fire. Where forests meet development we can utilize small-diameter thinning and prescribed fire to reduce the impacts of fire exclusion and climate change on fire behavior.

**DURING** fire season we can focus firefighting where it will be most effective in protecting lives and structures.

**AFTER** the fires are extinguished by the autumn rains we can support impacted communities, address infrastructure damage to forest roads, culverts and facilities, and attempt to stabilize soils in at-risk watersheds.

## "SALVAGE" LOGGING IS NOT RESTORATION

Dead trees (known as snags) are not everyone's cup of tea, and that's ok. Yet it's undeniable that large snags do provide important wildlife habitat functions, anchor soils, aid in forest regeneration and allow for nutrient cycling. It is also undeniable that seeing thousands of acres of charred snags where a green forest used to stand is a jarring and emotional experience.

The last thing that post-fire forests need is for the Forest Service to clearcut burned stands, yard the snags, and replace burned native trees with dense timber plantations. We can do better. Real restoration means tackling climate change, protecting watersheds, and supporting fire-impacted communities.

*George Sexton is KS Wild's Conservation Director.*

# WILD RIVERS ARE LIFE

If you have driven the Redwood Highway (U.S. Route 199) between Grants Pass, Oregon, and Crescent City, California, you may have heard the region referred to as Wild Rivers Country. From the Rogue to the Applegate and Illinois and over to the coastal watersheds of the Smith and Chetco, rivers are the lifeblood of many rural communities in southwest Oregon and northwest California's Klamath-Siskiyou region.



Rough and Ready Creek, a tributary of the Illinois River.

We are working with partners on several pieces of legislation that would preserve and protect rivers (and watersheds) for drinking water, and as sanctuaries for wild salmon and steelhead. KS Wild staff have been busy during the current Congress, advocating for protection of more than 300,000 acres of public lands. In recent months, KS Wild has organized local business and grassroots support for several pieces of legislation benefiting our region's waterways and wildlands.

The Oregon Recreation Enhancement Act passed the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee in November with bipartisan support, thanks in large part to Senator Wyden's advocacy. The "ORE" Act would establish a new 98,000-acre National Recreation Area in the Rogue River Canyon, which would also include a 59,000-acre expansion of the current Wild Rogue Wilderness. The bill also permanently "withdraws" 101,000 acres of public land in the Rough & Ready, Baldface, and Hunter Creek watersheds, protecting them all in perpetuity from strip mining. (This "mineral withdrawal" is also on a separate track in the U.S. House of Representatives, where Congressman DeFazio has introduced the Southwest Oregon Watershed and Salmon Protection Act.)

The River Democracy Act is a larger statewide bill from Senator Wyden and would designate several hundred miles of waterways in the Rogue, Applegate, Illinois, Chetco, and Coquille River watersheds as Wild and Scenic waterways. KS Wild submitted a letter of support earlier this fall and is working with partners to advance the bill in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee this winter. There are additional Wild and Scenic Rivers Act designations for the North Fork of the Smith River in Senator Merkley's Smith River National Recreation Area Expansion Act. Senator Merkley's bill would extend National Recreation Area status to Oregon's portion of the North Fork Smith River, while designating more than 70 miles of tributaries to the Oregon portion of the North Fork Smith River as Wild and Scenic Rivers.

Thanks to the support of folks like you, KS Wild and partners are making good progress in advancing legislation in the 117th Congress to support public lands, wildlife, and river conservation. Follow us on social media and read your email for updates!

*Michael Dotson is KS Wild's Executive Director.*

# BUSINESS SUPPORT ELEVATES RIVER PROTECTION BILLS IN CONGRESS

When our community comes together, good things happen and as I look back and reflect on last year I find myself remembering the amazing amount of support from rural business owners in southern Oregon who are protecting and defending the Klamath-Siskiyou region.

**Thank you to these businesses** for sending a message to our elected leaders that the communities of southern Oregon support legislations that protect biodiversity, defend clean water and old growth forests with these bills: River Democracy Act, Oregon Recreation Enhancement Act, Southwest Oregon Watershed and Salmon Protection Act and the North Fork Smith River National Recreation Area Expansion Act.

A special thank you for writing letters and endorsing important conservation work:

**Anderson Custom Rods • Andras Outfitters • Ashland Fly Shop  
Conner Fields Brewing and The Haul • Momentum River Expeditions  
Noah's River Adventures • Northwest Rafting Company  
Orange Torpedo Trips • Oshala Farm • Rogue Infinity Outfitters  
Rogue Valley Angers and Fly Shop  
Sawyer Paddles and Oars • Wooldridge Creek Winery**

Please support businesses that support important conservation work in the Klamath-Siskiyou region and Rogue basin watershed.



# WELCOME NEW STAFF!

## WELCOME (BACK!) FRANCES OYUNG

Frances Oyung served as the Rogue Riverkeeper Program Assistant in 2016 and will now be filling Robyn Janssen's shoes as Program Director for Rogue Riverkeeper.

Frances has lived in the Rogue Valley since 1992 and has over 20 years of experience in water resources in the Rogue Basin including monitoring, restoration, and regulation. Frances enjoys bringing people with shared missions together to do work and has a deep rooted connection to rivers, watersheds, and the natural world. She looks forward to serving as Riverkeeper and you can look forward to hearing more from Frances in the coming years.



## WELCOME HALEIGH MARTIN

Haleigh Martin joined the KS Wild and Rogue Riverkeeper team in November 2021 as our new Communications Associate. After moving west from Virginia, Haleigh spent two seasons working on a crew maintaining and reopening some of the most forlorn wilderness trails across the Klamath-Siskiyou region. She then spent time working as an outdoor educator and frontcountry trail worker for the Medford Bureau of Land Management and US Forest Service.

Haleigh looks forward to conveying her love of this area and helping to highlight KS Wild's incredible work through digital organizing and social media engagement.



# GET YOUR BIRD ON

Saturday, February 19, 2022



Southern Oregon Land Conservancy  
and Teresa Fernandez

Join us and the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy on this free expert-led bird hike through the Jacksonville Woodlands, a 255-acre park and natural conserved area. Birding is a great way to explore the low elevation woodlands, meadows, and chaparral mosaic where the group will likely detect Acorn Woodpecker, Oak Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, and Western Bluebirds. The group may also bird along Jackson Creek and in the forest. Fun fact: the Jacksonville Woodlands also provides valuable habitat for the endangered lily, *Fritillaria gentneri*, and hosts a number of other native plants and animals. Limited space. **More details and to sign up visit [kswild.org/events](http://kswild.org/events).**



Join KS Wild and American River Touring Association (ARTA) for 5 days along the Rogue Trail with raft support and delicious meals.

For more information:  
[www.kswild.org/events](http://www.kswild.org/events)

ROGUE RIVER TRAIL  
RAFT-SUPPORTED HIKE

MAY 2022





NONPROFIT ORG  
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[www.kswild.org](http://www.kswild.org) [www.rogueiverkeeper.org](http://www.rogueiverkeeper.org)

Cover: Great Grey Owl near Howard Prairie. Photo by Mel Clements.