

HighlandsNEWS

JOURNAL OF KETTLE RANGE CONSERVATION GROUP

Winter 2015



Kettle Range Conservation Group
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www.KettleRange.org

Our Mission

To defend wilderness,
protect biodiversity, and
restore ecosystems of
the Columbia River
Basin.

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KETTLE RANGE CONSERVATION GROUP PRESENTS



WILD & SCENIC[®] FILM FESTIVAL

A WILD LIFE



2nd ANNUAL

February 28 - Carousel Building, Republic

March 5 - Alpine Theatre, Colville

Doors Open 5:30 PM - Films at 6:30 PM

16 FILMS * FOOD/DRINK * RAFFLE * DOOR PRIZES

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From the President

Here we are at the beginning of a new year. The promise of new beginnings, new challenges and the continuation of friendships and our continued love for all things wild. As always we will continue to our efforts to protect this special place we call home.

As most of you know working on environmental issues and policies can be extremely frustrating, exhausting and even, sometimes, a little depressing. In my time working on policies for the US Fish and Wildlife Refuge system one of the most important things I learned is that sometimes you need to say the heck with it, throw your work aside, and go out and enjoy the wilds that you are working to protect.

In this spirit let's focus on the fun. In 2015 we will be sponsoring and/or hosting 3 major events. First for the second year we will have the Wild and Scenic Film Festival, February 28 in Republic and March 5 in Colville. July 17-19, we will once again host our annual Kettle Range Rendezvous (my personal favorite), and as always, November 14, the fun and exciting Fall Auction. Quickly here I would like to personally thank everyone who helped out or participated in the auction. Once again our members were great with their donations – our members rock!

Want more fun? If you live on the Colville side of the mountains (Republic side is also welcomed) I am going to try to revive the idea of evening summer hikes. There are a lot of hikes that can be done in the evening such as Hoodoo canyon, the Sherman Creek area, Gillette Ridge and the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Area just to name a few.

As some of you may know I have extensive knowledge of the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge and can give anyone numerous hike ideas. The Refuge is also a great place for people who enjoy the lower land activities in the winter. It's great for snowshoeing, hiking, cross country skiing or just enjoying the peace and quiet. The Refuge is also a white-tailed deer wintering ground which can make for some fun animal watching. Keep your eye on our Facebook page as I will be posting some interesting lowland hikes, most you will not find on a map. They are either unmarked trails or routes that I or one of my friends discovered.

Lastly, a little about me. I am new to this position and am still just getting my feet wet. I do have past experience with nonprofits as the former President (and current VP) of the Friends of the Little Pend Oreille NWR. I also work with the National office of the USFWS Refuge system on issues concerning, nonprofits (and the Service), volunteer coordination, outreach and other policy issues concerning nonprofits.

My policy is to be as available to you as possible. Please feel free to email me if you have any questions, ideas, concerns, and yes, even criticisms. I am always glad to hear from members. My email is: bigdan65@yahoo.com.

Wishing all of you and the critters of the wilderness a great 2015.



Daniel Price, KRCG Board President

WAR on WOLVES - FACT, FICTION and PERSECUTION

Gray wolf controversy in the Tri County region of northeast Washington has become a three-ring circus "The Greatest Fear on Earth." This spectacle of fear, ignorance and mismanagement began with the slaughter of the Wedge Wolves in 2012 and recently raised to a new fever pitch. The Steven's County Cattlemen Association hired Jamie Henneman, former (and sometimes still) reporter for the Colville Statesman-Examiner, to be their spokesperson and also formed a new wolf-hate group, Washington Residents Against Wolves (WARAW).

WARAW's main function appears to be promoting fear and lobbying city, county and state government to liberalize wolf killing. What they want translated into policy is that if you fear a wolf you should be able to kill it – simple as that. And, one of their key tactics is to promote fear of wolves. Their latest billboard blitz in Spokane framed around a digitally enhanced snarling wolf harkens back to the Dark Ages – wolf as the devil -- and other religious wars including those against the Tribes of People who revered *Canis lupis* because wolves were mysterious, fearless, tactical and of great strength. European immigrants to North America came from cultures philosophically rooted in wolf hatred, even to the extent of having specialized military regiments dedicated to killing them.

If it wasn't for an unfortunate few NE Washington ranchers having had wolf depredation of their livestock would there really be a problem? If reducing human injury was a key metric, a wolf diet of deer, elk and moose would be a benefit to travelers by reducing highway vehicle/animal collisions, and yes, even reducing losses of agriculture crops eaten by deer and elk. A human is far more likely to be killed by a cow or a dog than a wolf, in fact there has been only one documented death from a wolf in the U.S. (Alaska).

There is a Washington State managed compensation program that pays ranchers for livestock losses due to wolf depredation and there is funding from state and private organizations to defray the cost of the Range Rider Program. To date, there have been no depredations of livestock overseen by that program.

Kettle Range Conservation Group advocated for a range rider program as far back as 1996 to better manage livestock grazing in the Colville National Forest to protect aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems.

Public lands ranchers and even the U.S. Forest Service pushed back against our request as being too costly. The beauty of the current program is that ranchers participating in it have discovered that cattle do as well or better with range riding and have far fewer losses of livestock.

Anti-wolf organizers want you to believe wolves are mindless killers and that the only way to instill good behavior in them is to kill them. However, neither approach is supported by science research.

According to 40 years of research by Dr. Gordon Haber, gray wolves use about 25% of their lifespan to reach maturity - about the same as humans. Wolves are family animals. Wolf pups are the nucleus of a family and typically tended by 1-2 year old sub-adults after leaving their den. Wolf families breed and hunt cooperatively, and are non-hierarchical in feeding. Pups are entirely dependent upon their family for two years before they become fully functioning adults. A mature gray wolf naturally is no more likely to be fearful of a human than it is of a grizzly bear. Fearlessness is not a sign of aggression – rather, a sign of curiosity.

Adult wolf fearlessness – especially in alpha male & female -- makes them more likely to be killed by aerial snipers and hunters on foot while sub-adults and pups take cover from such threats.

In his 40 years of observing wolves in Denali National Park, Dr. Haber noted that wolf families would routinely engage in playfulness any hour of the day. His journals documented that every wolf and family was unique. For instance, the Savage River Family – that was wiped out by trappers and hunters in 2008 – was unique in their ability to hunt wild sheep in mountainous icy terrain that Haber described as so steep as to be extremely difficult for an experienced climber with crampons to negotiate. Yet those wolves in pursuit of sheep would run full tilt, dive into steep snow-filled gullies and slide on their feet as deft as any skier in their pursuit of sheep. When the Savage River Family adults were killed, that skill vanished with them.

Adults wolves, in particular alphas, are storehouses of survival skills and knowledge about their home range that are taught to pups and sub-adults. That's why the loss of adults, particularly

cont'd from page 3

alphas, can have significant negative impacts on wolf families leading to breakup and formation of new breeding pairs.

Research does not support claims by anti-wolf groups that wolves prefer livestock over ungulates nor that wolves prefer beef or lamb once they have tasted it. Wolves are opportunists, testing potential prey for weaknesses, then catching and immediately eating what they can. In one case in Alaska, Haber documented a wolf family consuming an entire 200 lbs sheep ram (except large bones, stomach contents and antlers) in just 12 minutes – and in another instance the Toklat River Family lived entirely on snowshoe hare for two years! The Toklat's switched from sheep (their preferred) to snowshoe hare after both alphas were killed by hunters. In winter, as much as 50% of wolf diet consists of carrion that adults are astute at locating and digging out of deep snow. In Alaska, wolves are successful killing moose – their primary prey -- less than 5% of the time in winter.

Absent catastrophic depredations, such as the loss of both alpha female and male, a wolf family home range once established tends to remain in place for long periods of time. Home ranges parallel prey specie habitats, water and historic denning sites – some of which were historically inhabited by species such as bear, coyote, fox and even humans.

In December, Washington State University's Dr. Robert Wielgus released peer reviewed research that revealed killing wolves leads to increased wolf-livestock depredations. Analyzing U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Department of Agriculture reports from over 25 years, Dr. Wielgus found that for every wolf that was lethally removed, wolf-livestock depredations increased by 5 percent the following year.

A century of relentless killing programs targeting wolves, coyotes and cougars -- and control studies where they weren't -- found more killing leads to more predator breeding and offspring, resulting in more livestock and wildlife depredations (often carried out by young males). As in the case of wolves, stable adult predator populations maintain control of breeding while keeping nefarious male behavior in check.

The gray wolf is a Washington stated-listed endangered species. Its population growth has remained flat since 2012. There are non-lethal wolf control deterrents that safeguard livestock and wolves that have been proven locally to be effective such as range riders, fladry (brightly colored flagging), flashing lights and electric fences. Wolves are important to healthy ecosystems and they are an incredibly intelligent animal. Dr. Haber observed a wolf family spotting and thence stalking a herd of sheep 8 miles distant and bedded down in snow!

Let us cease the madness of killing wolves just because they eat meat. As with the great whales, once we humans learned of their intelligence, killing them was no longer socially acceptable. Gray wolf deserves no less respect. There will be instances where individual aberrant wolf might need to be removed – and Dr. Haber acknowledged that – but not entire families or even multiple wolves from the same family.

Note: information for this article was borrowed from "Among Wolves," written by Gordon Haber and Marybeth Holleman, Snowy Owl Books, University of Alaska, 2013. Sadly, Dr. Haber died in a plane crash in 2009 while researching Denali's wolves.



The Annual Auction was FUN!

About 100 people laugh-packed the Carousel Building in Republic for the annual Kettle Range Conservation Group auction held on November 15. As one participant put it "the auction is an event he looks forward to each year."

Ninety-seven local businesses and individuals donated auction items in support of community collaborative forestry restoration strategies, recreation trails program, preservation of roadless areas and to provide scholarship grants to students attending college. A homemade dinner, dessert and beverages including beer from Republic Brewing Company combined with live music by Mark Walker Rhodes and a fun-loving audience made this event one to remember. For those who couldn't make it – we hope to see you at our annual auction this coming November 14!

It was such a FUN event!

KRCG would like to thank all who attended this year's annual dinner and auction and for your generous contributions that helped make this event a success. Also thanks to all the artisans, businesses, and individuals who so generously donated items to the auction. Lastly, thanks to all the volunteers who helped to make this a great night!



"To be whole. To be complete. Wildness reminds us what it means to be human, what we are connected to rather than what we are separate from."

- Terry Tempest Williams

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

16th Annual Kettle Range Rendezvous

July 15-17 at Swan Lake



*Get the most out of your life - walk the earth, breathe the sweet air, listen to the sound of your heart beating a rhythm of life and connecting mind to body.
Be part of this place.*



The Wilderness Act Turns 50

Signed into law on September 3, 1964 by President Lyndon Johnson, The Wilderness Act established a legal precedent that remains unique across the world with its fundamental and guiding principles the preservation of wild, free-willed and naturally evolving ecosystems. The Act had overwhelming bipartisan support, passing 373-1 in the House and 73-12 in the Senate. Today, about 4 percent, or 110 million acres of wilderness areas have been designated on federal public lands in the United States. Over half of the total is located in Alaska.

Like the bill itself, first introduced in 1956 by Rep. John P. Saylor of Pennsylvania and revised 66 times over nine years before it was signed into law in 1964, designating new wilderness areas often requires a very lengthy political process.

In northeast Washington, the 40,000 acre Salmopriest Wilderness Area is one of only two wilderness areas that are protected out of an area encompassing over 6 million acres of national forests and stretching from the Okanogan River in Washington to the Kootenai River in Montana. There has not been another acre of wilderness protected in this vast region for over 30 years!

The Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition is a collaborative group formed in 2002 to support a "balanced approach" in the Colville National Forest in restoring healthy forests and protecting new wilderness areas. Yet this group of timber industry and conservation interests has completely faltered even to get a wilderness bill introduced -- let alone passed -- though during its twelve years it has gotten more than three dozen timber sales past legal hurdles and declining US Forest Service budgets.

Protecting new wilderness areas has become such a political football that even where there is general agreement among business, conservation, the public and political moderates that more wilderness would be good for the economy, meet citizen interests and pass on a legacy of untrammeled lands to future generations - it's like pushing an elephant over a mountain to get it done.

In particular, the debate about the term "untrammeled" continues to vex this debate. Wilderness opponents incorrectly define this term as "pristine" and argue that roadless areas in the Kettle / Okanogan Highlands are not pristine and therefore are ineligible to be wilderness. Then commissioner and now Senator Brian Dangel has argued this point, as have others. The fact is they are incorrectly interpreting the meaning of "untrammeled."

Jon Christenson, in his September 2, 2014 article in LA Observed, further identifies the historical context behind the use of untrammeled:

"Howard Zahniser had been searching for just the right word as he was drafting the act for the Wilderness Society. When a friend used "untrammeled" to describe the ocean, Zahniser liked it immediately. Some of his colleagues worried that the word was too poetic and would associate the act with the "daffodil" wing of the conservation movement. "Undisturbed" was better, they argued."

But according to biographer Mark Harvey, Zahniser "thought that 'undisturbed' was inaccurate, given that many proposed wilderness area had already been altered by mining, grazing, and other uses." Zahniser liked the capaciousness and flexibility of "untrammeled," which he took to mean "free, unbound, unhampered, unchecked." "Unshackled" is another synonym. With "untrammeled," Zahniser reached deep into American ideas of freedom for a term that would liberate the land. In doing so, consciously or not, he also linked the wilderness ideal to the greatest battle for freedom in American history, the Civil War, and the next chapter, as President Johnson called it, the civil rights movement of his own times."

There is a tremendous amount of misinformation about The Wilderness Act that is tactically bantered by its foes in industry simply to scare people into believing it's a bad deal for the people. The fact is evidence of prior human use no more fits the definition of untrammeled than it disqualifies an area to be protected as a wilderness area. Zahniser recognized this and that the imprint of human society, be it tribal or 21st Century, was part of wilderness as certainly as a trail, campground or historic site. Rural and urban citizens alike recognize the value of clean water & air, wildlife habitat security and solitude - all emblematic of wilderness. (cont'd next page)



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Legislation was introduced to preserve 80,000 acres in the Kettle River Range as wilderness. However, though that initiative was pared down to 60,000 -- it then failed to pass the House and was thus dropped from the 1984 Washington Wilderness Bill. Senate report language in 1984 directed the US Forest Service to manage the Kettle Crest as "Primitive" -- which it has not done, instead managing it as semi-primitive and promoting use of mechanized uses therein.

The Colville National Forest has announced it will release its long awaited draft Forest Plan Revision in May 2015, and in it identify its preferred alternative for managing the Forest and the Kettle Crest for the next 20 years.



Thirteenmile Inventoried Roadless Area - Kettle River Range
Colville National Forest - James Johnston photo

When The Wilderness Act was signed into law on September 3, 1964, the population of the U.S. was 192 million. When the 1984 Washington Wilderness Bill was signed into law, the population was 235 million. Today, as the population of the US passes 320 million, we must seriously question those who would deny future generations access to the same wild public lands that we have access to, today. The Wilderness Act was by design meant to ensure that future generations would be able to experience the grandeur and solitude that only free-willed, untrammled wild nature provides.

Poetry Corner

Rhyme or Reason?

I always wanted to write poetry
Publish books on insights that were mine alone
Built on intuition given by forests, rivers and mountains.
But alas, I'm in love with all things wild and free.
Writing poetry about them seemed all to narcissistic,
A self-indulgence of knowledge that was gifted.

Is it better to challenge minds through prose or punditry?
The struggle to give of oneself in words can be just as easily
Done in the form of appealing a timber sale, writing
A letter-to-editor, castigating corruption and lies.
But Mother Earth beckoned thee to defend wilderness,
To tithe with reason and not rhyme.

Timothy J Coleman



IN GRATITUDE

Kettle Range Conservation Group is a voice of the rural grassroots conservation movement. We rely on our members and volunteers to produce this newsletter, protect & restore ecosystems, organize the Wild & Scenic Film Festival, Project Scholarship, Kettle Range Rendezvous, trail work & hikes and our fall auction. Thank you!

A very special thanks to our major gifts donors and the following foundation supporters:

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Help us sustain healthy ecosystems. Your annual membership supports Project Scholarship and our work to protect special places while promoting healthy forests in the Colville National Forest.

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Kettle Range Conservation Group is a 501(c)3 non-profit, community charity founded by a concerned group of citizens in Republic, WA in 1976. Your membership dues are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

Please use the secure Dwolla or PayPal form on our website
www.kettlerange.org or fill out this form, include your check and mail to:

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\$60 comes with 2 tickets to Wild & Scenic Film Festival (select location) + 2 stainless steel pint mugs

Other amount: \$ _____ One time donation: \$ _____

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