

KS WILD NEWS

The Journal of the Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center
Spring 2024



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Notes From the Trailhead

There is nothing more important to KS Wild than you, our supporters. Thank you for trusting our organization to be good stewards of the planet, as well as stewards of your charitable donations over the years. Our staff of 8 is an effective voice for the forests, waters, and wildlife of the Klamath-Siskiyou bioregion because of a massive network of conservation advocates that range from Seattle to San Francisco and 35 other states nationwide. Throughout this Spring edition of the KS Wild News, you will find stories that highlight the work we accomplished over the past year and the impact you made: collectively, our supporter network contributed more than **14,000 letters, petition signatures, and donations!** This level of engagement is crucial to KS Wild's conservation mission.

Over the past year, you helped us advocate for new Wilderness Areas, National Recreation Areas, and Wild & Scenic River designations as part of our campaign to advance the Oregon Recreation Enhancement Act and Smith River National Recreation Area Expansion Act. If Congress can follow through on their task of governance in 2024, we may see opportunities to protect threatened waterways and public lands in the Rogue River, Illinois River, and North Fork Smith River watersheds. You also helped us withstand an onslaught of Medford BLM District timber sales that continue to target critically important old-growth forests. Long standing projects like Bear Grub in the Applegate have finally been abandoned by the BLM, and we are on the verge of altering old-growth logging projects – Penn Butte and Late Mungers – outside the community of Williams.

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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Success on restoration projects at special places like \$8 Mountain are possible because volunteers make a commitment every year to rehabilitate meadows and wildlands that are damaged by off-road vehicles. While you read our 2023 Impact Report, we hope you feel proud of the work your support accomplishes, and we hope you enjoy reading about other successes from the past year as much as we have enjoyed achieving these milestones.



Before and after six years of consistent stewardship work at Eight Dollar Mountain Botanical Area. Credit: Allee Gustafson

While the Impact Report is meant to shine a light on the successes we share together, I also want to be transparent and honest about the state of biodiversity advocacy groups, and the greater non-profit sector in general. The past two years – 2022 and 2023 – have been some of the most challenging for non-profits nationwide, especially when it comes to fundraising. National data shows that many organizations are seeing budget contractions between 5-15%, and that’s the case with KS Wild and our Rogue Riverkeeper program. Following the successful campaign to stop the Jordan Cove LNG during the past decade-and-a-half, Rogue Riverkeeper’s largest grant funders thanked us profusely, but they were also transparent and let us know their support would stop in 2023. These are difficult decisions to accept, and yet we understand why their philanthropy would need to go to another region where LNG pipelines and fossil fuel extraction are threatening communities, waterways, and the climate.

Our community is what helps us get through challenging times, and there are plenty of challenges to confront in 2024. Despite the shifting landscape with charitable giving and foundations, the KS Wild community is showing signs of growth. For the first time in several years, we are seeing more community members digging deep and giving back to KS Wild and Rogue Riverkeeper. Over the course of this year, we hope you continue supporting KS Wild with your charitable donations. We also hope you will consider helping us spread our conservation mission and message. I look forward to writing an impact report in 2025 that showcases even more project successes because folks like you shared our mission and work with close friends, neighbors, and family members.



Wild & Scenic Illinois River. Credit: Haleigh Martin

Michael Dotson, KS Wild Executive Director

FOREST WATCH ROUNDUP

Defending the Klamath-Siskiyou Region

KS Wild keeps eyes on over 8,000,000-acres of public lands in southern Oregon and Northern California. We evaluate every logging, mining, grazing project that is proposed by the Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and we then work to defend and restore forests and watersheds. We help public land managers plan and implement restoration projects and we work to change or thwart actions that would harm wildlife or watersheds.

In Oregon we monitor:

1. The Fremont-Winema National Forest
2. The Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest
3. The Medford District BLM
4. The Klamath Falls Resource Area BLM

In California we monitor:

1. The Klamath National Forest
2. The Six Rivers National Forest
3. The Shasta-Trinity National Forest

Field Work and Office Work

We conduct field work and utilize the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to provide site-specific ecological and legal comments on federal land management proposals. We encourage public lands managers to focus on restoration rather than resource exploitation. If the project would harm forest or watershed values, we file an administrative objection. If the project would violate the law, we file litigation.

Allies and Friends

Our closest Forestwatch colleagues include:

- The Western Environmental Law Center
- The Environmental Protection Information Center
- The Soda Mountain Wilderness Council
- Oregon Wild
- Cascadia Wildlands
- Crag Law Center
- Mt Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center
- Silvix Resources



Our Conservation Director standing at the base of a clearcut in southern Oregon. Credit: Haleigh Martin

Looking Back

In 2023 Forestwatch:

- Protected and retained old-growth forests surrounding Lake of the Woods on the Fremont-Winema National Forest.
- Filed a legal challenge to the Medford District BLM's plan to accelerate old-growth logging in the Late Successional Reserve land use allocation.
- Prevented logging the Late Mungers and Penn Butte old-growth timber sales above the community of Williams. Oregon.
- Thwarted salvage logging clearcutting and road construction on steep-erosive decomposed granitic slopes in the headwaters of the Salmon River in the Klamath National Forest.
- Convinced the Shasta-Trinity National Forest to drop or modify hundreds of acres of logging that would have removed late-successional Northern spotted owl habitat.
- Achieved in the modification, improvement or cancelation of numerous projects across the region.
- Prevailed in litigation to protect Oregon spotted frog fens and wetlands from grazing near the community of Chemult.

Looking Forward

In 2024 we intend to:

- Accelerate our challenges of BLM logging projects that target the Late Successional Reserves old-growth reserves.
- Reform riparian grazing practices on the Fremont-Winema National Forest.
- Influence the Snowy Butte project administrated by the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest to focus on restoration rather than logging.
- Prevent clearcutting of post-fire Late Successional Reserve forests in the Klamath National Forest.
- Take on BLM old-growth timber sales across the region.
- Help the Forest Service transition towards restoration, recreation and watershed protection.
- Ensure that public lands project focus on fire resiliency near homes and communities and not on backcountry logging and mining.

Special Focus: Regeneration Logging and Fire Hazard

It is way past time for the timber industry and the BLM to join with rural communities to decrease rather than increase fire hazard on public forest lands. Unfortunately, some timber planners still insist on converting resilient native forests into dense timber plantations near homes and communities. In 2024 we intend to challenge that outdated practice. Page 89 of the BLM's South Clark timber sale Environmental Assessment shows why this logging practice needs to change:

Under Alternative 2, of the 1,087 acres of **regeneration harvest**, 5.5 acres are within the WDA and 608 acres are **within the WUI**. These harvested acres would result in a young stand and a high density young stand structural stage that **would the shift the relative stand-level fire hazard from moderate to high for up to 50 years** on this dry forest site. This shift from moderate to high will occur with or without immediate activity fuels treatment.

George Sexton, Conservation Director

PROTECTING OLD-GROWTH FORESTS FOR THE CLIMATE

KS Wild has been advocating for mature and old-growth forest protections since its founding in 1997. Over the years, science has shown that not only are old-growth forests important for clean water and supporting a diversity of wildlife habitat, we now know these older forests are key to combating climate change.

In the past year, we have seen major steps forward in KS Wild's campaign to protect older forests and fight climate change! Here is a snapshot of our recent activity:

Old-Growth Campaign:

KS Wild has been a part of a national campaign to influence President Biden's old-growth Executive Order (EO). Recently, the Biden Administration announced a proposed nationwide forest plan amendment to advance protections for 25 million acres of old-growth trees on Forest Service lands. We have worked alongside national, regional, and local organizations to increase public awareness and engagement around the EO and offered input through workshops and conversations with Forest Service staff.

- KS Wild members submitted over **1,000 comments** (adding to the 500,000 comments nationwide!) to the Department of Agriculture and the Department of the Interior advocating for durable protections for mature and old-growth forests.
- We hosted our 2nd annual Forest Defender Training Series! Over 100 community members sent **500 letters and personal emails** to the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, along with **1,000 postcards** to the Biden Administration.
- Holiday art party for ancient forests! We shipped a total of **40 cards and 15 ornaments** to decision-makers in Washington D.C. encouraging them to take action on old-growth policy.



KS Wilder standing with an old-growth tree. Credit: G. Sexton

OLD-GROWTH DATE

Northwest Forest Plan Update:

The Forest Service announced it will be updating the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) which covers 24.5 million acres of public land throughout the Pacific Northwest. To date, the NWFP has been successful in improving the region's streams and waterways, protecting salmon habitat, and conserving old-growth forests.

- Roughly 4 million acres of the Klamath-Siskiyou region is managed under the NWFP. KS Wild is uniquely positioned in the southern Pacific Northwest which is a core area of the Plan update.
- Over **600 KS Wild members** have submitted comments advocating for the protection of old-growth forests in the NWFP update.

✓ 1,000+ comments,
500 letters & personal
emails, & 1,000
postcards delivered for
old-growth protection

✓ 600+ comments
submitted for old-
growth centric
Northwest Forest Plan
amendments

Looking ahead, we will continue to advocate for a lasting solution to permanently protect remaining mature and old-growth forests. The nationwide forest plan amendment will protect some old-growth trees, but it leaves open loopholes that could allow logging of many others. The agency's proposal also lacks safeguards for mature trees, which will become old-growth if we don't log them. The NWFP update is set to be complete by early 2025. We will need to advocate for strong protections for wildlife habitat, waterways, and mature and old-growth forest ecosystems in the face of climate change.

Alexi Lovechio, Climate Program Manager

Coming Soon:

2024 Forest Defender Training Series

The series is focused on having your activist voice heard. The skills you'll learn are critical pieces in the forest defense movement, and we need your help.

- Thursday, March 21st: LTE workshop
- Wednesday, June 12th: How to submit a public comment
- Friday, June 28th: Hike & Write
- Wednesday, July 10th: How to submit a public comment

For more information and to sign up to grow your skills, head over to www.kswild.org/events

FOR THE ROGUE

Rogue Riverkeeper's work to protect clean water for native fish and healthy communities in the Rogue River Basin comes in many forms. Our methods of advocating for water quality and holding polluters accountable include diverse aspects of water protection.

Blue Heron Creek

In 2023, Rogue Riverkeeper worked with community members to officially name and protect Blue Heron Creek in Phoenix. We also sought and received protection for a springs complex in the same area that would have been paved and built upon. The City of Phoenix Planning Commission recognized the importance of keeping the cold, clean water flowing to Bear Creek and stipulated that the planned housing development not impede the flow of spring water.



*Frances Oyung, RRR Program Director, at Blue Heron Creek.
Credit: Jamie Lusch*

Trash Cleanups

The unhoused population living along riparian areas—especially along Bear Creek—continues to be a challenge that crosses jurisdictions and authorities. As a small non-profit organization, Rogue Riverkeeper participates in collaboratives like the Bear Creek Restoration Initiative where partners including Jackson County and other city representatives work to protect the ecological function of Bear Creek and its riparian area while supporting humane and safe conditions for all community members. Rogue Riverkeeper works with these same partners every April and September as a part of the Bear Creek Stewardship Clean up which brings together community members to collect thousands of pounds of garbage from Bear Creek. Another part of our ongoing work to reduce trash in waterways is our participation in the annual Rogue River clean-up and invasive plant removal event. For more information and to join us for an upcoming cleanup event, check out the "Get outside with us" section on the next page or visit our events page at www.rogueiverkeeper.org/calendar.

Legislation Monitoring

Last year, Rogue Riverkeeper worked with a coalition to pass a bill to protect an important member of the Rogue ecosystem, the beaver. This year, we will seek to pass the "Living with Beaver" bill that will help private landowners improve waterways and wetlands in the state. Stay in touch as we will rally supporters for this bill as it progresses.

Jet Boats

Jet boats on the Upper Rogue remain a challenge. While last year the OR Parks Dept. did not renew the special use permit for the Rogue Jet Adventures concession, they allowed them to operate anyway by passing the buck to other state agencies as to whose authority it was to actually limit or regulate them. In 2024 Rogue Riverkeeper will be engaging with the "Oregon's Kitchen Table" community conversations on how we envision a safe and sustainable Upper Rogue River. It is still to be determined whether the best path to reduce the impact of jet boats in Upper Rogue is through the OR Marine Board adopting rules to protect other users and the aquatic environment or another agency. Local support will make the difference. We will keep you posted on the best way you can help on this issue.



Clean Water Act Rollbacks

The Clean Water Act faced its most significant threat in 2023 as the US Supreme Court sharply limited its authority. Rogue Riverkeeper will continue to use the existing regulatory framework to protect waterways but lack of enforcement by the regulatory agencies has been a long-standing problem. Notably, the high levels of bacterial contamination on Little Butte Creek and the high levels of neonicotinoid Imidacloprid in Lone Pine Creek are the issues of highest concern. Rogue Riverkeeper will also continue our long-standing bacteria monitoring program that will be integral to our clean water defense in the coming year.



Volunteers along the Greenway at the 2023 BCSD. Credit: Haleigh Martin

Get outside with us!

Become an integral part of our work and the health of the Rogue River basin by joining us for an upcoming cleanup! We will be celebrating Bear Creek Stewardship Day on April 20th for a community-wide cleanup along the banks of Bear Creek. We will also be participating in the annual Rogue River cleanup and invasive plant removal on May 18th. Be a part of the movement to create impactful change for Rogue basin communities and water quality by joining us for one of these days.

Visit www.rogueriverkeeper.org/calendar to join us for one of these feel-good, community led and organized events.

*Frances Oyung,
Rogue Riverkeeper Program Manager*

STEWARDSHIP: YOUR PUBLIC LANDS & YOU

Stewardship and volunteers go together like spring rain and flowers—both are a gift I look forward to this time each year. As we approach another stewardship season, let's reflect on our achievements and look ahead to what we hope to accomplish this year.

In 2023, the PLAY stewardship program accomplished **four stewardship events** and **three activist trainings** which totaled **55 hours** with **72 volunteers!** We were able to hone in on key areas of interest where our volunteers and collaboration with the USFS and BLM will make the most impact:

- Eight Dollar Mountain and Days Gulch Botanical Areas
- Alex Hole (proposed botanical area)
- Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument's mardon skipper enclosures and the Mariposa Preserve
- Siskiyou Crest



A group of volunteers with new signage they installed at Days Gulch Botanical Area Credit: Allee Gustafson

The projects we've identified align with our mission to mitigate illegal off-road vehicles and grazing cattle, and in some cases, mitigate the spread of invasive species. Our partners in these projects include the USFS on the Rogue River-Siskiyou and Klamath National Forests, Monument BLM, Friends of the CSNM, Native Plant Society of Oregon, the Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Applegate Siskiyou Alliance, and Vesper Meadow.



*The tiny mardon skipper on a fingertip.
Credit: John Vilella*

What's next and what's at stake?

The mardon skipper butterfly is classified as imperiled and is only found in small pockets in Oregon, including the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument. These skippers are most active in a short window from mid-May to early June. Their eggs are laid on Idaho fescue and California oatgrass and they feed on nectar from plants such as Wyethia, camas, vetch, bistort, and potentilla. Even though it's threatened, this species is retaining its numbers with the help of volunteers like you keeping a close eye on threats like grazing cattle because habitat loss is its biggest threat.

Plants like the locally endemic Mt. Ashland lupine (*Lupinus aridus ssp. ashlandensis*), the curious Henderson's horkelia (*Horkelia hendersonii*), and the beautiful but fragile Greene's Mariposa lily (*Calochortus greenei*) are well known but rare.

By protecting the habitat of these rare plant species, our Public Lands And You (PLAY) stewardship program and volunteers play a crucial role through their steadfast efforts to create more resilient landscapes in the face of threats to the plants' ecosystems. These projects create human-nature connection through monitoring and restoration efforts; where one cannot exist without the other, and where everyone and everything can give back reciprocally. By working together, we can make a significant impact in protecting our prized local ecosystems. KS Wild's PLAY stewardship program is essential to our mission of loving where you live and defending what you love. Protecting the best and restoring the rest takes help from all of you!

Our PLAY stewardship program is blooming with volunteer opportunities for you to get outside and enjoy the rugged beauty of our backyard public lands. Sign up for one of our events this spring or summer! Whether it's protecting sensitive meadows and botanical areas or monitoring impacts from illegal off road vehicles and grazing cattle, you can make a difference. No matter if you're a seasoned volunteer or just starting, there are a variety of roles available that cater to all skill levels. So, as we gear up for another stewardship season, we hope you make a commitment to learn more about these species and visit their habitats at an upcoming stewardship event!



Mt. Ashland lupine, Credit: KS Wild



Henderson's horkelia, Credit: Norm Jensen



Greene's Mariposa lily Credit: John L Thompson

Become a steward of your public lands!



Scan the QR code to the left with your phone's camera to learn more about our stewardship efforts across Klamath-Siskiyou public lands and learn how you can join our awesome group of folks who build fences, restore native plant populations, install interpretive signage, and create impactful change for the rare plants that live here and no where else in the world!

www.kswild.org/land-stewardship

Allee Gustafson, Events & Volunteer Manager

SURFING THE WAVES OF CHALLENGE

As an organization that takes its policy cues from science, it's imperative that KS Wild also use the same detached honesty when assessing the health of our organization. Although the last few months capped the year off well, KS Wild had a challenging 2023 navigating a nationwide shift in the landscape of environmental conservation funding.

The change from our projected budget in late 2022 to our actual expenses by the end of 2023 was significant—we ended up cutting back our expenses by about \$150,000. To account for this fiscal shortfall, one staff position was cut, and another three were reduced by attrition and not-rehired. That is a huge shift for us, but our team of 8 is adjusting to a new philanthropic landscape following a challenging period of local climate emergencies and a global pandemic.

Our situation is not unique. 2023 was one of the most challenging years for non-profits ever. After many organizations rode the wave of financial uplift from donor and foundation generosity during the pandemic, that wave crashed as inflation impacted families and foundation budgets tightened.

Because of our bioregional focus, we fared better than many national and global organizations. Being able to speak to issues that occur directly in the backyards of our supporters is an impactful and authentic way to fundraise for our worthy cause. Grant

funding made up 47% of our revenue in 2023, however the dollar amount of that revenue has declined year-to-year as several of our largest funders have shifted their priorities away from biodiversity and place-based conservation work.

The upshot to all of this? Our community remains absolutely dedicated to the work that we do. Our donors give an average of \$92 a year, or about \$8 a month. Do you enjoy or care deeply about the public lands in the Klamath-Siskiyou? We humbly encourage you to give to the wild at any amount that is comfortable for you—even \$8 a month, we are able to continue our watchdog efforts on over 8 million acres of public lands in our bioregion.

Isaak Oliansky, Development Manager



10 YEARS OF HIKING THE ROGUE RIVER TRAIL

For the past decade, we have offered a unique way to experience the well known Rogue River Trail. Traversing the rocky riverside slopes, the trail ebbs and flows through meadows and oak savannahs offering some of the most accessible backpacking. A decade ago, we teamed up with our friends at American Rivers Touring Association (ARTA) to make backpacking along the Rogue even more accessible.

Every May during this trip, hikers get to explore the entirety of the Rogue River Trail in 5 days and 4 nights with only a daypack on while ARTA rafts float the hikers' camping gear, food, water, and camp comforts from camp to camp. This allows folks to experience the Rogue without the added burden of carrying a heavy pack!



Leading this trip with ARTA has allowed us to build closer relationships with supporters that value conservation globally and locally and grow a stronger understanding by participating in this region's treasures that we are working to protect. A small group capped at 15 hikers lets us see more wildlife, stop to identify plants and wildflowers, and notice the subtle geologic features this area boasts. In addition to this, ARTA generously donates a portion of each person's involvement to our regional conservation work!

Our gratitude is bottomless for our adventurous rafting partners at ARTA, for all the hikers that stay inspired to speak up for the wild, and for all of those who contribute to and support our work. We thank you.

Holly Christiansen, Administrative Director

Interested in joining our 2024 trip? Go to www.kswild.org/events to sign up!

"The raft-assisted 40-mile hike along the Rogue River National Recreation Trail has become one of my favorite entries into early summer adventures.

Carrying my gear is not an option for me; I can walk and hike endlessly but not with weight. Venturing out into the beauty and solitude, being fed 3 meals a day with the freedom to walk with just a Camelbak and a small fanny pack feels so luxurious."

-Risa Buck, long-time KS Wild supporter, has hiked the trail with us for 3 years in a row and is signed up for her 4th in 2024



Two iconic KS Wild events are back in person!



WILD & SCENIC[®] FILM FESTIVAL

where activism gets inspired

We are excited to host the return of the Wild & Scenic Film Festival **IN PERSON!** If you've attended one of our film festivals in the past, you know that it is a true night of community building and activism. We hope that these evenings of film will inspire you to mobilize for the love of the Wild! Enjoy food and beverages, take advantage of ways to put your inspiration into action, enter a raffle with numerous incredible local prizes, and more! We've also invited a variety of other local organizations to join us for the evening, so you can learn about all the ways you can become a local conservation legend.

**APRIL
12**

HISTORIC
ASHLAND
ARMORY

Tickets are on sale now!

Due to theater size, in-person ticket sales are limited.

Virtual tickets on sale too!

Visit siskiyoufilmfest.org or scan below.



**APRIL
14**

GRANTS PASS
PERFORMING ARTS
CENTER

Save the date

KS Wild Annual Dinner

is back at the Historic Ashland Armory

Saturday, October 19, 2024





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

Bear Creek Stewardship Day: April 20th, 8:30am-12pm

Join Rogue Riverkeeper and community members as we assemble at numerous locations along Bear Creek to pick up trash and protect this important tributary to the Rogue.

Earth Day Celebration at the KSW office: April 22nd, 5-7:30pm

Celebrate Earth Day with your favorite regional conservation nonprofit! We'll be opening our doors for snacks, drinks, mingling, and music by Eight Dollar Mountain.

Wildflower Hike along the Wild & Scenic Illinois River: April 26th, 9am-3pm

Join George and Allee for an easy walk along the Wild & Scenic Illinois River. You will gain wildflower identification skills in one of southern Oregon's most biodiverse hotspots!

Rogue River Cleanup: May 18th, 8am-12pm

Give back to the Rogue during this annual Rogue River cleanup event! We'll be pulling invasive plants as well as collecting trash from the riverbed and the riverbanks.

Beginner's Bird Walk: May 25th, 9-11am

Are you interested in learning how to identify birds of the region's riparian areas? Join Frances on an easy walk along the Bear Creek Greenway to develop your bird ID skills.

Forest Defender Training Series

Learn more on page 6.

Rogue Riverkeeper Whitewater Rafting Fundraiser Trip: September 7th-10th

A few spots are still open for our four-day, three-night whitewater rafting trip down the iconic Wild & Scenic Rogue River! Our friends at ROW Adventures make this a trip of a lifetime AND donate a portion of each person's cost to Rogue Riverkeeper.

Upcoming First Fridays at the KS Wild office in Ashland

April 5th: Willow McCloud

May 5: Sarah Red-Laird, Bee Habitat in Cyanotype

June 2: Vanessa Jo Bahr, Memento Mori



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ROGUE RIVERKEEPER'S

**FUNDRAISING
RAFTING TRIP
ON THE ROGUE**

with ROW Adventures
September 7-10, 2024

Join Rogue Riverkeeper Program Manager, Frances O'ying, for 4 days & 3 nights on the Wild & Scenic Rogue River! ROW Adventures will be donating \$200 per person to Rogue Riverkeeper's conservation work.

Book through ROW adventures for a \$250 discount when you mention Rogue Riverkeeper. Call 1-800-451-6034 to reserve your spot!



Cover:
Blooming bear grass in the Rogue River-Siskiyou
National Forest. Credit: Haleigh Martin