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CONSERVATION NEWS AROUND THE NORTHWEST

Conservation Northwest Volunteer Program 2006

The staff would like to thank all the people who rolled up their sleeves and helped us with our work this year. We're an effective grassroots force for conservation because folks like you care enough to spend your time working with us. We've got big plans for next year, and look forward to working with you again!

Offices

All three major Conservation Northwest offices—Bellingham, Spokane, Seattle—were bustling with energetic volunteers this year, helping with everything from data entry to database design to marketing research.

Interns

Conservation Northwest continues to attract and recruit high quality interns from the region's colleges and universities. These passionate young activists learn the nuts and bolts of nonprofit advocacy work, and we benefit from their time, energy, and insights. This year interns tracked numerous forest service projects, commented on proposed management plans, got the word out about our work at festivals, and fleshed out our new web site.

Conservation Action Teams

In 2006 Conservation Northwest created venues for our supporters to come together as a community, learn about our campaigns, and help make a difference. These "Conservation Action Team" gatherings in Seattle, Bellingham, Olympia and Tacoma drew folks from many walks of life to get more involved in our work while bonding over dinner and drinks.

Hikes/Field Trips

This summer we teamed up with Spokane Mountaineers and the Upper Columbia River Sierra Club to offer hikes highlighting some of the Columbia Highland's finest trails. More than 100 people from communities in eastern Washington and northern Idaho joined us to experience some of our wildest roadless areas, including the Kettle Crest, Profanity, Hoodoo, Grassy Top, and Abercrombie-Hooknose areas.

Conservation Northwest brought people to the Central Cascades, where The Cascades Conservation Partnership protected over 38,000 acres of forestlands over the last few years. Twenty people hiked to Mount Margaret, Paris Creek, or Tinkham Peak to learn about the Partnership's efforts and the exciting fol-

low-up work of the I-90 Wildlife Bridges Coalition.

In the spring, local naturalists, historians, and wildlife experts led hikes to Blanchard Mountain in Skagit County, raising awareness around the Department of Natural Resources' plans for logging and roadbuilding in this popular recreation area.

In April Conservation Northwest joined forces with the Washington Native Plant Society for a field trip to the site of the proposed Cross Base Highway in Pierce County.

Remote Camera Project

Conservation Northwest continues to work with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the US Forest Service to place and maintain cameras with sensors in backcountry locations, to document the presence and range of key wildlife. Volunteers hiked into remote areas, set up camera/sensor stations, and returned to gather the film. Volunteers will work this winter to compile and analyze the data, and share our finds with our agency partners, including two photos of the elusive wolverine! The work will help inform plans for wildlife bridges across I-90 near Snoqualmie Pass.

Work Parties

Trail work parties offered an opportunity for outdoor enthusiasts to keep wilderness trails open and build stronger alliances with other recreationists. Conservation Northwest partnered with the Backcountry Horsemen and Spokane Mountaineers on a series of projects on the Kettle Crest and in the Salmo-Priest Wilderness.

Our volunteers also helped stem the tide of invasive plant species. Work parties in Seattle's Discovery Park and Spokane's River Front Park saw many hands diligently removing invasive species and planting native plants in their place.

Events

Conservation Northwest held our annual fundraising dinner and auction event at the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle this June. It was a beautiful evening, with 300 guests enjoying the photography and stories of noted Yellowstone-to-Yukon advocate



A trail crew works on Edds Mountain using tools ferried up by the mules and horses of the Ferry County Chapter of the Backcountry Horsemen. Photo: Jeff Lambert

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Florian Schultz. Over 40 volunteers staffed the event, making certain the adults had fun at the auction...and the kids had fun at the Zoomasium!

We also hosted our annual donors' briefing at the Woodland Park Zoo in October. Our largest financial contributors were treated to close encounters with the zoo's resident grizzly bears, and in-depth discussions of our plans for 2007.

Conservation Northwest also hosted several house parties this year in the greater Seattle and Spokane areas. Thanks to dedicated supporters who served as hosts and opened their homes to dozens of members, we added to our supporter rolls in these key communities.

And this year we teamed up with a new backcountry gear store in Bellingham, Backcountry Essentials, for a Cinco de Mayo fundraiser in our hometown. With family-oriented activities followed by all-evening music at Boundary Bay Brewery and Bistro, the event introduced the community's recreation crowd to our work. Thirty of our stalwart volunteers made it all possible.



*Red tree voles spend their lives high in old-growth trees, eating the centers of conifer needles like so many ears of corn.
Photo: Conservation NW files*

BLM Goliath, meet red tree vole David

In 2006 came good news for the red tree vole, a small rodent

that lives in the treetops of old-growth forests; and, incidentally, good news too for the northern spotted owl that dines on them. In November, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in Oregon sided with conservationists to rule that the Bureau of Land Management illegally reduced protection for the red tree vole under the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan's Survey and Manage program. That program requires the Forest Service and BLM to survey public lands for about 300 species considered at risk but unprotected under the Endangered Species Act.

According to the court, the decision to downgrade the red tree vole to a classification where it was no longer necessary to look for their nests before logging, or to protect those nests, was made without public involvement, violating federal laws including the National Environmental Policy Act. Based on the finding,

the judge also stopped two old growth timber sales in the western Cascades of Oregon, Cow Catcher and Cottonsnake, in the Glendale BLM Resource District outside Grants Pass, Oregon.

“Yes” to water and wildlife

A lot of positive changes came out of the recent midterm elections, including rejection of Initiative 933 by 58% of Washington voters. I-933 would have required the state to either waive environmental laws or pay developers not to violate them.

Conservation Northwest offices were busy many nights during the weeks leading up to the election with a phalanx of phone-bankers. Thanks one and all for your help in saying “no” to I-933 and “yes” to a positive future for neighborhoods and farmlands, water and wildlife in Washington.

Good news for turtle and ESA

Some species are doing better today than yesterday, thanks to protection from the Endangered Species Act. 2006 was another record breaking breeding season for Kemp's Ridley sea turtle, whose nests are up by the dozens in Texas and thousands in Mexico. Outgoing Rep. Richard Pombo once contended that 99% of all species listed under the ESA have failed. He was wrong. Until recently the ESA's most vociferous opponent in Congress, Mr. Pombo's recent failure to gain re-election spells relief and a better future for critters like Kemp's Ridley sea turtle.

Idaho wolves protected—for now

Federal Fish and Wildlife officials rejected an Idaho State Department of Fish and Game plan to eliminate three-quarters of the wolves in north-central Idaho in a stated attempt to boost elk recovery. The planned extermination of the wolves was Idaho Fish and Game's first action taken after receiving primary responsibility for managing most of the state's wolves. You'll remember that we asked you to speak out on this plan earlier this year, and we're thankful that our supporters generated several hundred letters against the proposal.

Wolves were successfully reintroduced into Idaho in 1995 and now number 800 in Idaho and Montana, a population that serves as the basis for recovery programs in Oregon and Wash-

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ington. In Montana, the steady recovery of wolves and other predators in Yellowstone National Park has already begun to alter the park's ecology and increase diversity of plants and animals, from willows to beavers to foxes.

This year the federal government also proposed killing wildlife including wolves and bears in national parks, wilderness areas, and research natural areas. That proposal was retracted, thanks to popular and scientific outcry.

A unique grouse deserves better

In November the US Fish and Wildlife Service rejected a petition to list the Columbian sharp-tailed grouse as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act, despite its dwindling numbers. The petition was submitted in October 2004 by Conservation Northwest along with other conservation groups.

The Columbian sharp-tailed grouse is the smallest of seven subspecies of grouse and characterized by dark grey plumage and spotting on the throat. Despite the negative ruling, the grouse is still considered a species of concern throughout its historic range and the agency has begun reintroduction efforts in parts of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Nevada. Major threats to the bird include loss of habitat, inbreeding, and hunting, heightened by fire, drought, and inclement weather.



Historic (gray) and current (black) distribution of Columbian sharp-tailed grouse. Map: Courtesy Schroeder 2003

Climate change under-anticipated

In the words of biologist Camille Parmesan on climate change, "It's here, it's real. This is not just biologists' intuition. It's what's happening." Parmesan's review of 866 scientific studies appeared recently in the *Annual Review of Ecology, Evolution and Systematics*. According to the report, even scientists who five years ago had anticipated that harmful global warming was still much further off are surprised. At least 70 species of frogs have already

gone extinct due to global warming. The former population of 300 breeding pairs of emperor penguins on the western Antarctic Peninsula is down to nine. Their future is in our hands.

Bright side to a forest storm

The wettest November on record for Washington hit hard in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest in the Central Cascades. Extensive road damage caused by the storm may however lead to opportunities for conservation. Many of the washed-out roads, considered high-priority for decommissioning, divide large, otherwise roadless areas and degrade water quality.

After similar damage caused by severe flooding in 1996, Congress appropriated additional funds for road decommissioning; and the need for funding now is even greater. Gifford Pinchot National Forest's annual cost for road maintenance is \$1.8 million on top of a roadwork backlog of \$40 million.

The Gifford Pinchot Task Force is one of the groups urging the Forest Service to pursue decommissioning, rather than rebuilding, the roads. For who can say when the next storm will hit?

When "salvage" —is not

A recent report by the Government Accountability Office says that "salvage" logging in the 2002 Biscuit fire in Oregon's Siskiyou National Forest cost \$2 million more than it made in logging receipts. The GAO study also found that litigation brought by conservationists played no role in logging delays or other expenses.

Instead, the large size of the operation was to blame, along with mapping flaws, coupled with the downsizing of local Forest Service personnel (619 staff in 2002 to 400 in 2005). That's led to the present predicament: no revenue from receipts means no funding for restoration and fire safety work. The Siskiyou region of the southwest Oregon Cascades has 200 miles of rivers, incomparable geology, and intricate plantlife; it deserves better.

Meanwhile, the Bush administration has been pushing



A towering pile of discarded, cut trees "salvaged" from the 2004 Fisher Fire near Leavenworth. Photo: Erin Moore

Congress to act on HR 4200, a bill designed to expedite post-disturbance logging in national forests at the cost of environmental reviews. With the recent changes in Congress, the bill was recently pronounced dead on arrival for 2006.

The case for free rivers

An economic study called "Revenue Stream" (2006) makes the definitive case for dam removal on the lower Snake River, home to several runs of salmon and steelhead listed under the Endangered Species Act.

The study's conclusions are convincing. Maintaining these dams, with all benefits and costs taken under consideration, carries a 20-year price tag that is \$5 billion larger than the cost of removing the dams, replacing their benefits, and restoring salmon runs. Moreover, with the dams gone, the expected boost to the fishing and recreation industries projects a renaissance spanning the western states to the tune of \$20 billion over the next two decades.

The study, funded by diverse organizations including Save Our Wild Salmon, Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association, Northwest Energy Coalition, and Republicans for Environmental Protection, also identifies other areas where similar assessments are needed, such as the Columbia Basin.

Rarest of butterflies

The island marble butterfly was denied listing under the Endangered Species Act on November 14 following a year-long study by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The study was conducted in response to a petition from Conservation Northwest and allies requesting emergency listing of the species under the ESA. Despite the fact that less than 3% of the highly endemic butterfly's habitat remains and only 1,000 individuals are thought to survive, the agency downplayed ongoing threats to the butterfly and found listing "unwarranted."

The island marble was thought extinct for 90 years until its rediscovery on San Juan Island in Washington state in 1998. The highest concentration is found on San Juan Island National Historical Park at American Camp, where mismanagement and herbicide spraying likely killed dozens of larvae in 2005. Listing of the species under the ESA would have ensured active work by managers at American Camp to protect this rarest of butterflies.

Ode to Harvey Manning

The Pacific Northwest lost a veritable grizzly bear of conservation when Harvey Manning,

the man who gave the Issaquah Alps their name and who invented the 100 Hikes series for The Mountaineers Books, died November 12 at the age of 81. Conservation Northwest Executive Director Mitch Friedman gives his respect and remembrances:

I first met Harvey Manning 20 years ago when he spoke at an Earth Day event I organized at the University of Washington. He seemed barely fit enough to climb the stairs to the lecture hall. It made me wonder how he got up mountains; but he'd gotten up plenty of them. Maybe Harvey used his oversized body to store all his memories. Then there were all his strong opinions; he needed lots of space to store them.

Harvey was a wilderness guy. He wanted more wild places not for trails, but for grizzly bears and nature itself. He was opinionated and passionate for wildlands and freely cussed those who would impede or diminish it.

Over the years I'd served on a board with Harvey, and he helped me with a few projects now and then. I remember his telling about how in the old days he was more aware of the stars in the night sky. (According to Harvey, the camping gear was so lousy then that one lay awake all night shivering.) Harvey also told about the first time he encountered somebody he didn't know at Cascade Pass and had his first sense of the crowding to come. He had experienced the mountains and the conservation movement through the transformative decades.

I am honored to have known Harvey Manning in the same way I feel honored to have known David Brower. Both were larger-than-life pioneers of conservation to whom we owe so much. There are places in the mountains where the imprint of Harvey Manning's life and work is surely deep enough to remain, perhaps forever.



Harvey Manning. Photo: Courtesy The Mountaineers Books

