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CONSERVATION NORTHWEST PEOPLE, PLACES, AND POLICIES

My home, my passion: Dick Slagle, conservationist

Dick Slagle is a retired third-generation Republic pharmacist who has spent much of his life exploring and speaking out in favor of preserving wild forests in the Kettle River Range in Ferry County, Washington. In the fall of 1976, Dick joined with other conservationists to form the Kettle Range Conservation Group, serving as its board president and then on its advisory board.

After eight decades he considers himself lucky to still live in the place of his birth, unlike most Americans. In the early years the fastest mode of travel to the outside world was a 12-hour ride on the Great Northern Railroad to Spokane by way of British Columbia and the Colville River Valley.

His first job at age 15 was digging fire line on the 1934 Aeneas Creek fire. Later, he attended Washington State College (now WSU) and continued working summers for the Forest Service as a fire lookout high in the Kettle Range on Quartz, Sheep, Thirteenmile, Columbia, and White Mountains from towers that ranged from 15 to 45 feet tall.

His last summer with the Forest Service was 1942. That summer, while the world was at war, on “his” mountain, White Mountain, he was surrounded by wilderness. “My job was not unpleasant, though I constantly watched for smoke. The view was magnificent! To the west was the basin of upper Hall Creek, on the east lay the Sherman Creek Valley and in the distance the southern Selkirks of Idaho. The Kettle Range extended in a procession north to the Canadian Border. On the western horizon were the Cascades, and on rare occasions I could catch a glimpse of Mount Rainier.”

That fall Dick began serving four years in the US Army in Europe. During those years he had one escape—his photograph of White Mountain. “I could look at it and relive the quiet and solitude of the wilderness, the sunsets, the sound of the coyotes, but above all, the absence of stress. It was a great comfort to me because I knew that it would always be there, and I knew that I could always return to it.”

Since those early years, his life has been busy and at times demanding. On his return from the war he followed

in his father’s footsteps and, together with his brother Maurie, ran the family’s Republic Drug Store, which has operated since 1904.

Today, Dick occasionally assists his nephew Rob and his wife Patty to run the family pharmacy business. As he stands in his front yard and gazes east at the Kettle River Range, he sees a landscape he knows and loves, and has spent much of his life advocating for its preservation. “This area has many resources to be carefully and wisely used, but above all, it is the wilderness that is precious.”

Musing on his past, Dick recalls a 1984 meeting in the proposed Kettle Range Wilderness with former Ohio Congressman John Seiberling, then Chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee. Seiberling said, “How can you set a price on wilderness? How can you set a price on your church, or how can you set a price on your family?” That’s the way Dick Slagle feels about the Kettle River Range—his priceless home and passion.

Summer outreach updates

This summer the PEOPLE of Conservation Northwest have been “keeping it wild” in all sorts of ways!

Conservation Northwest introduced our new name to Seattle at information tables at the University District and Fremont Street Fairs and at the Burke Museum’s Arctic Refuge exhibit opening. We teamed up with the I-90 Wildlife Bridges Coalition on the proposed wildlife crossings as part of the I-90 expansion, generating hundreds of postcards to the Department of Transportation. The Coalition also threw a great kick-off tailgate party for the public comment period at the DOT’s meeting at South Lake Union, featuring local folk rock faves, The Ghosts. Thanks to coalition intern, Melanie Welch for all her great work!

Thanks to: Forest Berg, Blaire & Craig Brooke-Weiss, Richard Champlin, Colby Chester, Demis Foster, Scott Grohusky, Helen Hsiao-Yun Sun, Laura Livingston, Thomas Palm, Steve Weigner, Andy Wickstrand

Grove Guardians—Conservation Northwest volunteers who monitor Forest Service activities on national forests—have been keeping a close eye on the Fischer Fire area of the Wenatchee National Forest, where the Forest

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Service has embarked on a reckless post-fire salvage logging project; logging of big old trees has been underway since May. Volunteers made three groundtruthing trips to the area, and Conservation Northwest hosted two well-received weekend workshops on dry forest fire ecology and wildfire management on site at the Fischer Fire area.

Thanks to: Ann Atkeson, John Barnard, Chris Beamis, Susan Evans, David Foecke, Joe Fisher, Naoko Forderer, Dawn Gauthier, Keala Hagmann, Karen Haire, Ruth Hanscom, Bill Kampen, Sandy Kampen, Jonah Keith, Janet Mallas, Steve Mallas, Paul Myhre, Dana Nalbandian, Anne Nowacki, Joleen Post, Pat Rasmussen, Justin Rolfe-Redding, Betsy Steele, Barb Swanson, Rusty Thurman, Ward White



Volunteer applies "scent" to a tree to attract rare carnivores.

Dozens of volunteers from around the state have been working on the Rare Carnivore Remote Camera Project's sixth field season. Film is coming in, and we've got some great marten, lynx, and bear shots—though no grizzly photo yet! Spring quarter interns Andrew Hartwig and Frazier Coe have continued helping on the project this summer.

And we've had a great team of interns serving as volunteer coordinators for the ten teams: Robin Fay in Seattle, Heather Fuller in Spokane, and J. R. Barker in Bellingham.

Thanks to: Susan Albrecht, Marge Andrews, Mike Arnot, Paul Balle, Paul Bannick, Eric Bard, Mike Barenti, Juliet Barenti, Gordon Beaman, Lisa Beaman, Christina Bielefeld, Anne Bjornstad, Paul Brookshire, Ben Busack, Fred Butts, Andy Chinn, Mark Christiansen, Terry Clark, Michael Colfer, Carrie Cordova, Brittany Davidson, Toni Davidson, Chad Davis, Matt Ferguson, Joe Figel, Tammy Filliater, Bill Fouts, LeAnn Fuller, Jody Gerdts, Courtney Harris, Denise Howard, Linda Howard, Terri Hutton, Paul Irsfeld, Harold Jackson, Hazel Jackson, Derek Jordan, Alex Karpoff, Brian Kirk, Charley Knox, Kelly Konicki, Faye Krenekl, Rich Krenekl, Lori Kuo, Jeff Lambert, Sue Madsen, Gary McCormick, Jory Mullein, David Noble, Steve Patterson, Carolyn Prentice, Laurie Rechholtz, Dinah Reed, Pat Regan, Mark Rhodes, Elizabeth Rothman, Julianne Seeman, Scott Shaffer, Mark Skatrud, Adriel Stewart, Andrew Strand, Mendy

Tarwater, Denise Urness, Kandi Valentine, Holly Weiler, Therese Whitman, David Whitmer, Ken Wilcox

Wilderness supporters from all around northeast Washington gathered to camp, hike, work on trails, and learn about wilderness issues on two work party field trips this summer in the Colville National Forest. Please see article in main newsletter section to learn more.

Thanks to work party crews: Jason Duba, Bob Conquergood, Ryan Fuller, Patty Gates, David Heflick, Bob Konkerguard, Yvette Olsen, Steve Siegfried, Ashli Myers, Ethan Myers, Stephanie Smith

An enthusiastic committee of volunteers is hard at work on our upcoming gala dinner and auction in Spokane. Slated for November 2, this not-to-be-missed event will be held at The Davenport Hotel in downtown Spokane. It takes a lot of effort to put on a successful soire' like this one, and folks from around the state are chipping in with their time, energy, and auction donations.

Thanks to volunteer committee: Lee Alkire, Harvey Berman, Nicole Bronson, Lexi Coburn, Travis Coletti, Kathleen Conley, Carrie Cordova, Maryanne Gaddy, Megan Knowles, Scott Knowles, Barbara Marney, Jack McKinlay, LeiLanie Peters, Dinah Reed, Justine Scott, Michael Silva, Marni Solheim, Kassie Swenson, Mark Spyder Thompson, Pam Vail, Shannon Webb, Debra Willson

Thanks to table captains: John Allen, Steve Anthes, Neil Beaver, Tim and Susan Coleman, Travis Coletti, Mitch Friedman, Jeff Holmes, Jeff Lambert, Paul and Karen Lindholdt, Gino Lisiecki, Tom May, Lew and Wynne Persons, Robert Pyle and Lunell Haught, David and Lynne Sanders, Jon Snyder, Richard and Dana Wall

Our staff counts on regular volunteers to help in Bellingham, Seattle, and Spokane, in our offices and with occasional outreach efforts. Almost every day there's at least one volunteer sending out mailings, filing, maintaining our computer network, phonebanking, poster, tabling, or running errands. Without this help, our operation would grind to a halt!

Thanks to: Katie Carver, Ryan Crim, Chris Feringer, Doris Ferm, Stacey Glenewinkel, Michael Hinkel, Roger Iverson, Henry Lagergren, Jim Lantz, Tom McNeely, Marcus Mueller, Alan Rhodes, Susan Rhodes, Chris Roy, Sabina Singh, Marcelle Stone, Amber Strawn, Gee Sutherlin, Sara Thompson, Sara Wheatley, Jim Withee

Part 2 in a series: Endangered Species Act under the gun

In our Summer 2005 issue we examined the critical habitat component of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), by far the biggest prize on the radical right's hit list in Congress and the White House. Today we'll examine the listing process: how plants and animals get federal protections under the Act, and how ESA foes are seeking to undermine the law's ability to provide a safety net for our nation's most vulnerable inhabitants.

What would you say if the federal government decided that Puget Sound salmon deserved no protection under the Endangered Species Act because there are already healthy salmon populations in Alaska? Or that our orcas be allowed to go extinct because there are plenty of the magnificent beasts in British Columbia?

Pretty ridiculous, eh? But no more ridiculous than declaring Snake River dams an immutable part of the landscape, which the administration did in defending its Columbia River salmon policies. Yet these are the kinds of things the Bush administration and their ring bearer, Richard Pombo (R-CA), Chairman of the House Resources Committee, are proposing.

The Pombo bill cynically named "The Endangered Species Recovery Act" was recently passed by the House of Representatives. The bill does nothing less than gut the Endangered Species Act, and if it becomes law will be the first step toward the biological impoverishment of our nation.

Science and the Listing Process

Listing is the first and most important phase in restoring endangered wildlife and their habitat. A listed plant or animal receives protections from death and harmful activities within its critical habitat, and a coordinated effort to bring it back from the brink of extinction.

Anyone can petition the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (for terrestrial species) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries Service (for marine species and anadromous fish) to protect a species under the ESA. If the Services determine that a petition presents enough evidence that a species or a key population is threatened with extinction, it initiates a status review of the plant or animal which could then lead to its formal "listing" as either threatened or endangered.

The agencies themselves also initiate listing processes—at least they used to. The Bush administration has never initiated a listing process for any species and has responded to scientists or citizen petitions only as a result of litigation.

The ESA requires that listing and other decisions be based on "best available scientific and commercial information," in other words, most robust evidence. The definition of "best" is left to the scientific community because science is ever-evolving with new technologies and methodologies.

The agencies also have a peer review policy that they have used since 1996 for all listing and critical habitat decisions. A 2003 report by the General Accounting Office concluded that all such decisions were indeed supported by the peer-reviewers.

The Pombo Fix

In Rep. Pombo's legislation just passed by the House the listing process is severely compromised because the bill requires the Secretary of Interior to define the "best science" and determine what science is even considered relevant to the listing process. In essence a political appointee would be given veto power over final decisions by credible federal biologists. The ESA requires the agencies to consider all information submitted by states, scientists, corporations, or any other parties with an interest in the species. The Pombo legislation requires the agencies to ignore some of these public comments, saddles agencies with massive paperwork, and creates an appeals process that could be launched by any person that doesn't like the scientific findings.

The Pombo bill also limits protections for imperiled plants and animals by fostering confusion over which species need help. Currently under the ESA, subspecies can be listed based on whether they constitute a Distinct Population Segment (DPS). A DPS is defined as a discrete subpopulation of a particular species with little or no interaction with other populations of its kind and significant to the conservation and recovery of that species. Establishing the discreteness and significance of a sub-population of animals or plants is prerequisite to its receiving protection under the ESA.

Pombo establishes a different standard for defining distinct populations. The data to support their listing must be "conclusive," a term so vague that it's unattainable and would lead to endless litigation. Thus, even if there's a consensus of scientific opinion that supports the listing of



*Bald eagle with salmon,
copyright Paul Bannick*

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a species, the Secretary can still deny ESA protection for a population of a plant or animal by ruling that the science is “inconclusive.”

Under a Pombo “updated” ESA, beloved animals such as the Canada lynx, bald eagle, and gray wolf would never be protected and recovered in the lower 48 states under the umbrella of the law, because there are healthy populations of these animals in Canada and Alaska. Although the language of a Pombo bill may change over the coming months, it’s clear that the intent of extremists in Congress and the White House is not to modernize but to eviscerate this visionary law.

Forest planning endures new regulations

After 15 years, the forest plans for the Okanogan, Colville, and Wenatchee National Forests are being revised. The recent roadless area boundary review for the forests was part of that ongoing process. In past decades, as they planned the future of each national forest, forest managers operated under a powerful tool, the National Forest Management Act. Under the original implementation regulations for that act, alternatives were developed and input from scientists and regular citizens was sought and heeded. As a result the final plans as a result responded to citizen concerns and to new scientific information. That’s all changed now, as the protective power of the regulations has been diluted mightily by the Bush administration.

Background of the new regulations

The National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA) requires each national forest to develop land and resource management plans and to revise those plans at least every 15 years. The first set of federal regulations to implement NFMA were adopted in 1982, and national forests produced forest plans pursuant to those regulations in the late 1980s.

In the early 2000s—in anticipation of an upcoming round of plan revisions—new regulations were issued, debated, suspended, and re-issued in a seemingly endless cycle. Ultimately, in December of 2004, revised regulations were finalized and adopted. And earlier this year, more-detailed guidance for the USFS was outlined in agency “directives.”

Impact of the new regulations

The combination of the new regulations and directives constitute a radical departure from procedures national

forests followed in developing forest plans of the 1980s. Hard-and-fast rules have been replaced with discretionary guidance; mandatory public-comment requirements have been replaced with agency discretion regarding the nature and timing of public comment opportunities; and quantifiable standards have been replaced with non-binding guidelines.

For example, guidance in the Forest Service Handbook reads as follows: “Do not write guidelines in the imperative mode because imperative mode conveys mandatory compliance. Guidelines should not use the helping verbs ‘do not,’ ‘may not,’ ‘may only,’ ‘must,’ ‘not allowed,’ ‘prohibit,’ or ‘shall.’ These helping verbs convey a degree of compliance or restriction that is not appropriate for guidelines. The helping verb ‘should’ or ‘ought’ is recommended for guidelines to recognize that extenuating circumstances are likely to occur.”

Even in the critical area of the “species-viability requirement,” forest supervisors and other official decision-makers have been given unprecedented discretion to de-

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termine species for which management actions are needed to prevent listing under the Endangered Species Act, as well as the specific measures that will be taken to protect those plants and animals. Mandatory guidelines and obligations in the old regulations have been abandoned.

Under the 1982 regulations, forest planners were required to develop and analyze a number of alternatives to the agency’s proposal. Through this process, alternate (and often widely divergent) concepts of forest management were compared side by side in an environmental impact statement and presented to the public for consideration. Under the new regulations and guidance, non-mandatory “options” have replaced mandatory alternatives. If a forest supervisor chooses not to develop options to the plan, the public will be presented with a single concept of forest management—the agency’s.

This is the challenge we face in the current forest plans revisions process. Conservation Northwest will continue working to make sure our voices are heard and forests are protected.