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CONSERVATION NEWS AROUND THE NORTHWEST

Double the pleasure: Two victories for Northwest forests

When the timber industry urged the Bush Administration to triple federal logging levels in the Pacific Northwest by eliminating environmental safeguards under the Northwest Forest Plan, the administration entered into sweetheart settlement deals agreeing to each of the industry's proposed rollbacks. The Aquatic Conservation Strategy was one of the casualties of the industry deals.

Leading scientists developed the Aquatic Conservation Strategy in 1994 to protect salmon and clean water by requiring that logging, roadbuilding, mining, and other habitat degrading activities would be constrained or tailored to protect functioning watersheds.

"The administration defied both the science and the law in weakening stream protections to increase logging in our public forests," said Patti Goldman of Earthjustice, who represented Conservation Northwest and others in a lawsuit against the administration filed in April 2004.

On March 28 Magistrate Judge Mary Alice Theiler agreed with Goldman, stating that the Bush Administration acted illegally in weakening protections for salmon and clean water.

This is not the first time a judge has declared the Bush Administration's new rules for Northwest forests illegal.

Conservation Northwest and allies also challenged the administration's attempt to eliminate protections for wildlife that live in old-growth forests on federal lands in the Pacific Northwest, and in August 2005 won our "Survey and Manage" case with big help from Oregon Natural Resources Council and skillful representation by attorneys from Western Environmental Law Center and Pacific Environmental Advocacy Center. In December the federal judge temporarily halted 144 timber sales that could fatally injure these rare old-growth associated plants and animals.

National forests that concentrate on restoring plantations, such as the Gifford Pinchot, Olympic, and Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie will not feel the effects of this ruling as much as will federal forests in southern Oregon that continue to target old

growth for liquidation.

These are victories for all Americans who value wildlife and the old-growth forests of the Pacific Northwest.

Hemlock Dam is coming down

There was good news for native steelhead on Trout Creek in southern Washington: the Forest Service has decided to remove Hemlock Dam, the number 1 ranking problem for threatened steelhead



A stilted Trout Creek will soon run free for steelhead. Photo: Gifford Pinchot Task Force

in the Wind River watershed. The creek will run free for fish thanks to the efforts of the Gifford Pinchot Task Force and hundreds of supporters who urged the agency to remove this Depression-era dam in the Gifford Pinchot

National Forest. Trout Creek once saw as many as 1,500 lower Columbia wild steelhead spawn above the dam; in 1999 biologists counted only 14 returning wild steelhead.

The 16-acre reservoir behind the dam was shallow and choked with sediment, and the structure was a bottleneck for fish and other aquatic organisms. Dredging could begin as early as next year, after Congress appropriates money to carry out the project. Removing the dam promises a rebound for native steelhead.

Wily wolverines

In the forested upper reaches of the Methow Valley, biologists trapped a young female wolverine and fitted her with a radio collar. It was the first time a wolverine was "collared" in Washington State. They had hoped to track how far the 19-pound, 3-foot-long wolverine traveled and what elevations she reached, to learn more about the habitat and lifestyle of this elusive forest carnivore. But then...she slipped her collar. Wolverines and other members of the weasel family are well known for their



Wolverine captured on remote camera in the Pasayten Wilderness. Photo: Conservation Northwest, Rare Carnivore Remote Camera Project

intelligence.

Wolverines have already disappeared from many parts of their historical range; they were thought to have died out in the North Cascades in the 1960s. Yet over the last ten years there have been several confirmed wolverine sightings: in the mountains above the Methow Valley, in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, and in other areas above Leavenworth. It's likely that these largest of the land-based weasel family have recolonized Washington

from the more plentiful forest habitat in British Columbia.

Wolverine have also been "captured" on film by the Rare Carnivore Remote Camera Project, which Conservation Northwest volunteers operate every summer in north-central Washington. This spring, volunteers are putting new cameras near Snoqualmie Pass at key I-90 crossing points, to follow up on wolverine sightings there over the last several years.

Six years ago conservation groups including Conservation Northwest petitioned the federal government to protect the wolverine under the Endangered Species Act. The Bush administration denied the petition and refused to conduct a scientific status review of wolverines (the first step in the listing process) citing a lack of conclusive data. Last year we filed a lawsuit in federal court to overturn the government's decision to consider new legal protections for the rare animal. That case is pending.

Like the wolverine, we're also wily, and not going to give up on gaining protective status for this magnificent and important forest carnivore.

Citizens for Eastern Washington Wilderness

People living in eastern Washington care deeply about the beautiful country in their own backyard. Some of them last year formed a group, Citizens for Eastern Washington Wilderness, to help protect remote and wild public lands on the Colville National Forest.

As part of our initiative for the Columbia Highlands, Conservation Northwest is working with the Citizens, who meet a

few times each year to coordinate and organize their efforts on wilderness, roadless, recreation, and forest issues in eastern Washington.

Needless to say, the Citizens also like to get out and hike. They occasionally coordinate trail maintenance and forest restoration outings (listed on our website calendar), as well as sponsor events that showcase the wealth of eastern Washington natural areas.

One of the most active wilderness groups in the state, Citizens for Eastern Washington Wilderness includes members, volunteers, and staff from Conservation Northwest, The Lands Council, Spokane Mountaineers, Upper Columbia River Group of the Sierra Club, Backcountry Horsemen of Washington, Hunting & Fishing Conservation Coalition, and many more.

Island marble butterfly deserves protection

A rare species of butterfly in Washington, the island marble butterfly, could warrant Endangered Species Act protection, according to the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The February decision comes after a petition for protection was filed by Conservation Northwest, Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, Center for Biological Diversity, and Friends of the San Juans.

Of the few remaining butterflies, most have been found at American Camp, a national historic park on San Juan Island. Loss of native prairie habitat to development and herbicide use both pose major threats to survival of the butterfly. The agency has until November 2006 to decide whether the island marble butterfly deserves special protection.



Island marble butterfly habitat. Photo: Robert Michael Pyle

Support from Lowe's for mountain caribou

The home building company Lowe's is hearing from its suppliers and wood products consumers on the need to protect mountain caribou, one of the most endangered mammals in North America.

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In a recent letter sent to British Columbia officials including Environment Minister Barry Penner, a Lowe's representative strongly advocated recovery for all herds. Lowe's cited various government reports and initiatives on mountain caribou, and stressed that a forest rich in biodiversity is part of British Columbia's legacy and what makes the region such an important source for wood products.

When you shop at Lowe's, please urge them to carry only sustainably cut BC wood, to protect mountain caribou habitat.

“One of a Kind Rainforest” photo contest

In the interior of the Pacific Northwest, the world's only Inland Temperate Rainforest stretches northward across the US/Canada border, from northeastern Washington and northwestern Idaho into central British Columbia. Within this lush interior rainforest thrives the rare mountain caribou and many other animals, and its conservation is today a major landscape focus for Conservation Northwest.

Now, the Mountain Caribou Project, of which Conservation Northwest is an active member, has launched a new photo contest. For the next four seasons, let us see what you see! Enter your photos into the “One of a Kind Rainforest” photo contest; go to www.oneofakind.com. Your pictures could be prize winners.

Eliminating protections for wolves?

The US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has announced its intentions to eliminate Endangered Species Act protections for gray wolf in the northern Rocky Mountain region. The anticipated rule-making would first create a “Distinct Population Segment” of gray wolves, to include the entirety of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming; the eastern third of Washington and Oregon; and a part of northcentral Utah. The second step of the FWS proposal would delist this population



Gray wolf pup. Photo: USFWS

based on the argument that the wolf population in this region has achieved recovered levels and graduated from Endangered and Threatened Wildlife status.

Should federal protections be lifted, the job of maintaining and monitoring recovered wolf populations would fall to individual states. The FWS has already approved state management plans for Montana and Idaho, and the latter's management plan has sparked broad concern that governmental officials intend to eradicate parts of the wolf population there. Idaho is a potential source population for wolves migrating to Washington. It is as yet unclear whether Washington is required to possess a state plan before delisting could occur in the eastern third of the state, which includes the Columbia Highlands.

Wolves haven't recovered in Washington, and they were never included in initial recovery plans. There are already formidable barriers to wolf migration from the Rockies into Washington, including a heavy patchwork of human settlements and the Columbia River itself. The government's actions create yet another barrier to wolf recovery in the Northwest.

Conservation Northwest believes that most of the Columbia Highlands in northeastern Washington should not be included in a Northern Rockies distinct population. Eliminating protection for gray wolves throughout our region is no way to treat recovering wolves in the greater Northwest.

I-933 sprawls on Washington

Conservation Northwest is taking part in helping defeat Initiative 933, an attempt by developers and corporate interests to roll back a decade of land use laws, zoning regulations, and environmental protections in Washington State.

Initiative 933:

- Would create loopholes for irresponsible developers to exploit by forcing local governments to choose between protecting communities or exempting certain landowners from land use laws.
- Would cost taxpayers millions of dollars and bankrupt local governments.
- Would take away a neighbor's right to protect their property. People would no longer have a voice in deciding how their community should grow.

It's an altogether bad idea. To learn more about I-933, visit www.protectcommunities.org.

Thank you, one and all!

Throughout the pouring rains of winter, the people of Conservation Northwest have "kept active" keeping the Northwest wild! The staff would like to thank:

- The thousands of members who stuck with us through our transition to becoming Conservation Northwest (during a challenging year for Americans with many other causes to be concerned about) and helped us end 2005 on a healthy financial note;
- The hundreds of supporters who responded to our action alerts with letters to government and elected officials, demonstrating that we are a force to be reckoned with;
- And the dozens of volunteers who made it possible for us to do what we do, such as the work listed below.

Conservation Northwest citizen lobbyists traveled to Olympia to participate with hundreds of other activists from around the state in two different organized lobby days: Priorities for a Healthy Washington Lobby Day and Transportation Lobby Day.

Many thanks to volunteers: Bob Aegeter, Howard Armstrong, Becky Cox, Dave Atcheson, John Barnard, Colby Chester, Anne Gilbert, Bill Haigh, Ann Haslam, Sebastian Helm, Steve Irving, Shirley Jacobson, David Nock, Keeley O'Connell, Elaine Packard, Jacob Struiksma, Phillip Taylor, Sarah Wheatley

Conservation Action Teams (CAT) brought people together to socialize and learn how to get involved in our current campaigns at CAT meetings in Olympia and Bellingham.

Thanks to these volunteers: Paul Anderson, Peggy Bruton, Carolyn Dobbs, Jane Ely, Mary Ann Firmin, Kevin Head, Holly Hinman, Tom Holz, Sally Jacky, Ann Johnson, Michael Koenen, Bethany Loudon, Erika Malone, Alex Ramel, Henry Romer, Leslie Romer, Julia Spencer, Gina Smith, Linda Smith, Krag Unsoeld, Yoshe, Heather Dalzell, Brandon Speers, Keith Fredrickson, Dave Ewoldt, Dawn Gauthier

To help us in the office, volunteers came in regularly to our Bellingham, Seattle, and Spokane headquarters to help out with day-to-day operations.

We couldn't do it without you! Our gratitude to: Terry Clark, Ryan Crim, Doris Ferm, Michael Hinkel, Clover Martin, Susan Rhodes, Molly Sherlock, Liz Johnston, Jen Knight

Staffing outreach information tables is another great way people help us out. Volunteers worked the crowds at the Seattle Patagonia screening of the film, *Being Caribou*; the annual late winter Eagle Festival in Concrete; the Seattle Flower & Garden Show; and environmental career fairs at the University of Washington and Western Washington University.

Thanks to: John Barnard, Brianne Cohen, Ryan Farncomb, Nick Hartrich, Paul Hezel, Catherine Hovanic, Thomas Palm, Joanne Polayes, Oliver Ross, Kate Selting

Phonebanking is hard, but often, satisfying work, and Conservation Northwest volunteers helped get the word out about key comment periods and public hearings.

Gracias: Henry Lagergren, Roger Iverson, Elisa Weiss

Public hearings can make all the difference influencing public officials and public policy and we thank all who speak out for wildlife and wild places at a US Fish & Wildlife Service hearing in Twisp about lynx critical habitat and a Sound Transit board meeting in Seattle about the proposed Cross-Base Highway in Pierce County.

Special thanks to: Sue Coleman, Melody Fleckstein

Amazing but true: Interns are people who commit to three or six-month stints for nothing more than a very small stipend and the desire to gain experience while protecting wildlife and wild forests. Interns are key to all our work, and they served in Bellingham, Seattle, and Spokane, making our conservation, communications, and outreach programs robust.

Our hearts go out to: J.R. Barker, Terri Hutton, Leigh Owen, Jana Prothman, Michael Silva, Clayton Bliss, Angel Dbronica, Judy Suing

How you can get involved

To keep up to date on ways you can get involved in our work, visit our web site, www.conservationnw.org and click on "Get Involved," "Take Action," or "Calendar." Or contact our volunteer coordinators:

Bellingham: Rose Oliver, 800.878.9950 x10, rose@conservationnw.org

Seattle: Andrea Cuccaro, 206.675.9747 x205, andrea@conservationnw.org

Spokane: Crystal Gartner, 509.747.1663, crystal@conservationnw.org