

# A Brief Political Future for Oregon's Forest Wilderness

## Why Wilderness?

*Without enough wilderness America will change. Democracy...must be fibred and vitalized by regular contact with outdoor growths – animals, trees, sun warmth and free skies – or it will dwindle and pale.*

–Walt Whitman<sup>1</sup>

*Our village life would stagnate if it were not for the unexplored forests and meadows which surround it. We need the tonic of wildness – to wade sometimes in marshes where the bittern and the meadow-hen lurk, and hear the booming of the snipe; to smell the whispering sedge where only some wilder and more solitary fowl builds her nest, and the mink crawls with its belly close to the ground. At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be infinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomable. We can never have enough of nature. We must be refreshed by the sight of inexhaustible vigor, vast and titanic ventures, the sea-coast with its wrecks, the wilderness with its living and its decaying trees, the thunder-clouds, and the rain which lasts three weeks and produces freshets. We need to witness our limits transgressed, and some life pasturing where we never wander. We are cheered when we observe the vulture feeding on the carrion which disgust and disheartens us, and deriving health and strength from the repast.*

–Henry David Thoreau<sup>2</sup>

**W**hy wilderness? Why the hell not wilderness!? As Edward Abbey proclaimed, “The idea of wilderness needs no defense. It only needs more defenders.”<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, the default setting of our Western society is that nature does not have intrinsic or practical value unless we can dig it up, cut it down, graze it off, plow it under, drain it dry, make it wet or haul it away. Even wilderness defenders need information and arguments with which to persuade an increasingly on-line – but out of touch – public about the importance of and threats to wilderness. As social philosopher Lewis Mumford wrote:

*When we rally to preserve the remaining redwood forests or to protect the whooping crane, we are rallying to preserve ourselves, we are trying to keep in existence the organic variety, the whole span of natural resources upon which our own future development will be based. If we surrender this variety too easily in one place, we shall lose it everywhere; and we shall find ourselves enclosed in a technological vision without even the hope that sustains a prisoner in jail – that someday we may get out. Should organic variety disappear, there will be no “out.”<sup>4</sup>*

Abbey argued in *Desert Solitaire* that:

*No, wilderness is not a luxury but a necessity, and as vital to our lives as water and good bread. A civilization which destroys what little remains of the wild, the sparse, the original, is cutting itself off from its origins and betraying the principle of civilization itself.<sup>5</sup>*

What is wilderness? A standard dictionary definition is rather complex:

- 1a(1): a tract or region uncultivated and uninhabited by human beings.
- 1a(2): an area essentially undisturbed by human activity together with its naturally developed life community.
- 1b: an empty or pathless area or region
- 1c: a part of a garden devoted to wild growth.
- 2: wild or uncultivated state.
- 3a: a confusing multitude or mass
- 3b: a bewildering situation.<sup>6</sup>

When many Americans think about wilderness, the first thing that comes to mind is recreation. Visitors to designated Wilderness can hike, ride a horse, raft, canoe, hunt, fish, appreciate wildlife and wildflowers, take pictures, perform non-disturbing scientific research, make love, swim and camp. However, while recreation (consider the composition of this word: “re-creation”) is reason enough to save wilderness, there are many, even more compelling arguments for protecting wildlands.

Some commentators consider wilderness in terms of either anthropocentric or biocentric values. America's first wilderness advocates may have had an intrinsic appreciation of the biological values of wilderness, but often tailored their appeals to the American public and political establishment on the aesthetics of wilderness.

Wilderness areas are reservoirs of natural biodiversity, home to plants and animals that may be of great scientific and medical use to humans. Wilderness areas leave room for the fires, floods and other natural disturbances and processes that fuel evolution and support the whole web of life. Wilderness provides goods and services to our economy without cost.

Wilderness areas are refuges for fish and wildlife. Yellowstone National Park (most of which is still de facto wilderness) was originally preserved as a "pleasuring ground" for people because the geothermal features amused tourists. No one knew in 1872 that creating the park would later become the only reason that the United States still has wild bison and grizzly bears.

Some commercial uses occur (but shouldn't) in designated Wilderness areas. The Wilderness Act prohibits the use of all-terrain vehicles, mountain bikes or jet skis, road building, logging and development of oil, gas and geothermal energy. However, one can (but shouldn't be able to) graze livestock, maintain fences and irrigation ditches, exploit a valid mining claim, or patent (transfer to private ownership) a mining claim for \$2.50 to \$5.00 an acre in Wilderness. One might even be able to build a new water project, but only with Presidential approval. (However, no approval has ever been granted under this exception.)

Designating Wilderness areas actually saves taxpayers money, because wilderness-destroying activities have only ever been and can only ever be profitably exploited by those who are subsidized by the government to do so. Since these activities are prohibited in Wilderness, taxpayer subsidies to log and road these areas are not available.

The preservation of wilderness is also a rational hedge against ignorance. Nancy Newhall, who wrote *This is the American Earth* with Ansel Adams, said, "The wilderness holds answers to more questions than we yet know how to ask."<sup>7</sup> Until humans know everything, it makes no sense to discard any answers that wilderness may hold.

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Conservation Biology Institute (CBI) recognized the ecological importance of large roadless areas (those 5,000 acres and greater) because they contain:

- *Relatively high levels of intact late-seral/old-growth forests;*
- *Essential habitat for many species of conservation concern (including threatened ones);*
- *Broad array of habitat types and elevation bands;*
- *"Buffer areas" from exotic species invasions and edge effects;*

Long sections of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail pass through wildlands that have no protection from logging and other development. ►







DAVID STONE, WILDLAND PHOTOGRAPHY

- Critical winter range for ungulates;
- Landscape and regional connectivity; and
- Aquatic strongholds for salmon.<sup>8</sup>

WWF and CBI also note that small roadless areas (those 1,000 to 4,999 acres) are important for many of the same reasons as large roadless areas. They state that small roadless areas are:

- Essential habitat for species key to the recovery of forests following disturbance such as herbaceous plants, lichens, and microhizal fungi;
- Habitat refugia for threatened species and those with restricted distributions (endemics);
- Undisturbed habitats for mollusks and amphibians;
- Remaining pockets of old-growth forests;
- Over-wintering habitat for resident birds and ungulates;
- “Stepping stones” for wildlife movements across fragmented landscapes.<sup>9</sup>

## Small Wilderness

*In short all available wild areas, large or small, are likely to have value as norms for land science. Recreation is not their only, or even their principal, utility.*

—Aldo Leopold<sup>10</sup>

*It is vitally important to protect the values of roadless areas 1,000 acres and larger from all activities that will harm their wild character.*

—U.S. Representatives Earl Blumenauer,  
Peter DeFazio, Darlene Hooley and David Wu<sup>11</sup>

Much of Oregon’s remaining unprotected forest wilderness is between 1,000 and 4,999 acres in size. In eastern Oregon and Washington, 85 percent of all roadless federal forestlands occur in patches less than 5,000 acres.

In defining Wilderness for legislative purposes, Congress said that — in general — an area must be at least 5,000 acres, or “is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition.”<sup>12</sup> However, since enacting the Wilderness Act in 1964, Congress has designated numerous small Wilderness areas. In Oregon, these include not only anomalies like the 17-acre Three Arch Rocks Wilderness just offshore of Oceanside, but also free-standing (not islands) areas like the 4,800-acre Menagerie Wilderness east of Sweet Home.

◀ Walking is not the only way to enjoy wilderness. Brice Creek Unit, proposed Upper Willamette Wilderness.

The anthropocentric (aesthetic and recreational) — biocentric (nature at her best) distinction should be taken into account when considering an area's size and suitability for Wilderness designation. Aldo Leopold, the great American ecologist and co-founder of The Wilderness Society, once defined a wilderness area as one sufficiently large enough for a two-week animal pack trip. In today's America, where there is more common understanding of horsepower than horses, there are very few such large wilderness areas left.

Bob Marshall, a great American forester and another co-founder of The Wilderness Society, also recognized the scientific values of small roadless areas:

*The minimum area necessary for the maintenance of primeval conditions varies with forest type, climate and topography. In general the Forest Service believes that for scientific purposes 1,000 acres is about the smallest area desirable, in special cases where so much as 1,000 acres of virgin forest cannot be found the largest available area will have to be sufficient.*<sup>13</sup>

As Michael Frome writes in his book *Battle for Wilderness*, another wilderness prophet also acknowledged the importance of small wildlands:

*(Henry David) Thoreau foresaw man's need to reach out from the clatter of the mechanical age for a touch of the natural. He proposed that each community sustain a primitive forest of 500 or 1,000 acres. "Let us keep the New World new," he proposed, "and preserve the advantages of living in the country."*<sup>14</sup> [Emphasis in original]

Marshall noted the limits of small areas for human recreation.

*A tract of 1,000 acres, while well adapted for research is too small for satisfactory recreation. The person with a yearning for the beauties of the primeval wants to do more than just stroll into a virgin stand of timber and squat. He desires to be able to walk around in it for a considerable period, losing himself for a while in its timeless beauty, forgetting that there is such a thing as a machine-aged world. This is extremely difficult to do in 1,000 or even 5,000 acres.*<sup>15</sup>

There is no doubt that the recreational utility of wilderness generally decreases in areas less than 5,000 acres (about eight square miles). If one hikes through a 1,000-acre roadless area, one may miss having an epic "wilderness" experience altogether, as one may look outward and see roads, clearcuts and other signs of human exploitation. There are, of course, exceptions — areas where the topography and grandeur of nature conspire to create a sense of solitude in spite of being small.

DAVID STONE, WILDLAND PHOTOGRAPHY



The Crabtree Valley Unit of the proposed Santiam Wilderness contains old-growth Douglas-fir and western redcedar perhaps 1,000 years old. The unit is 1,726 acres in size, or approximately equivalent to the area of Portland bounded by the Willamette River, East Burnside Street, SE 33rd Avenue and SE Powell Boulevard.

Small Wilderness areas also help perpetuate larger natural systems essential for fish and wildlife habitat, stream flow and clean drinking water. These are but some of the many modern scientific reasons to protect small roadless and wild areas. In a letter to President Clinton urging the protection of roadless areas, 136 scientists noted:

*There is a growing consensus among academic and agency scientists that existing roadless areas — irrespective of size — contribute substantially to maintaining biodiversity and ecological integrity on the national forests. The Eastside Forests Scientific Societies Panel, including representatives from the American Fisheries Society, American Ornithologists' Union, Ecological Society of America, Society for Conservation Biology, and The Wildlife Society, recommended a prohibition on the construction of new roads and logging within existing (1) roadless regions larger than 1,000 acres, and (2) roadless regions smaller than 1,000 acres that are biologically significant.... Other scientists have also recommended protection of all roadless areas greater than 1,000 acres, at least until landscapes degraded by past management have recovered....*

*As you have acknowledged, a national policy prohibiting road building and other forms of development in roadless areas represents a major step towards balancing sustainable forest management with conserving environmental values on federal lands. In our view, a scientifically based policy for roadless areas on public lands*



should, at a minimum, protect from development all roadless areas larger than 1,000 acres and those smaller areas that have special ecological significance because of their contributions to regional landscapes.<sup>16</sup>

## Wilderness Economics 101

*It seems to be a law in American life that whatever enriches us anywhere except in the wallet inevitably becomes uneconomic.*

—Russell Baker<sup>17</sup>

*For unnumbered centuries of human history the wilderness has given way. The priority of industry has become dogma. Are we as yet sufficiently enlightened to realize that we must now challenge that dogma, or do without our wilderness? Do we realize that industry, which has been our good servant, might make a poor master?... Our remnants of wilderness will yield bigger values to the nation's character and health than they will to its pocketbook, and to destroy them will be to admit that the latter are the only values that interest us.*

—Aldo Leopold<sup>18</sup>

*We are rapidly building a world in which the questions of health and peace and prosperity sooner or later will be moot because we will have crippled the very engine of life that makes it all possible... The economy is a wholly owned subsidiary of the environment. All economic activity is dependent upon the environment with its underlying resource base. When the environment is finally forced to file under Chapter 11 because its resource base has been polluted, drained, cut down, dissipated, and irretrievably compromised, the economy goes down to bankruptcy with it. The economy, in reality, is just a subset of the ecological system.*

—Senator Gaylord Nelson<sup>19</sup>

*We could have saved the Earth but we were too damned cheap.*

—Kurt Vonnegut<sup>20</sup>

“If you don’t cut it, dig it, pick it or pump it, it is not real wealth,” an old logger once growled. His thesis that all wealth comes from exploiting the earth conveniently ignores the vast wealth of goods and services provided both from human knowledge and by nature left unmolested. There is real, measurable economic value in fish and wildlife, clean water, clean air, new compounds for medicine and other goods and services that nature provides.

Expert scientists and economists have studied the value of “ecosystem services” —

THE LARCH COMPANY



Construction products need not all come from wood. Bagasse (sugar cane), wheat stalk, industrial hemp, corn stover, rye-grass straw and other agricultural fibers can be manufactured into boards and panels using non-toxic, bio-based binders.

nature’s goods and services. One study, in the journal *Nature*, considered selected goods and services as the oceans’ constant recycling of nutrients, pollination of domestic and wild crops by birds and insects, as well as the “air conditioning” and oxygen provided by wild plants. The economists estimated what it would cost humans to replace these essential goods and services. They calculated that ecosystem services provided by the earth’s soil, forests, marshes, oceans and fish and wildlife species was worth \$33 trillion (\$33,000,000,000,000). For comparison, the “gross world product” was approximately \$18 trillion (both 1996 dollars). Very conservatively, nature’s good’s and services to humankind are 1.8 times the value of humankind’s economic output.

Among these services are medicinal plants. The value of such yet-to-be-discovered extracts from tropical forests is estimated at \$147 billion. Over-the-counter medicines with plant extracts are estimated to be worth \$84 billion annually.

Paclitaxel (a.k.a. Taxol®), an effective cancer-fighting compound, was originally discovered in the Pacific yew, a tree previously considered by most foresters to be a worthless “weed,” of use only to cushion old-growth Douglas-firs as they were felled. The scientist who identified paclitaxel in the laboratory noted that the molecule is so complex that only a tree could have thought of it. Once scientists isolated paclitaxel, modern technology allowed the efficient synthesis of the molecule from other more common yew species. Once perceived to be a worthless tree, the Pacific yew became priceless.

While nature provides us with critically important ecosystem services, a market economy — for all its strengths — is poorly equipped to recognize them. For example, people value both cool and clean air. Cool air may be obtained by purchasing an air conditioner, but clean air cannot be bought in the marketplace (unless one considers the oxygen sold in vending machines on the polluted streets of Tokyo).

If an intact forest is privately owned, it is also difficult for the owner to capture, in traditional economic terms, the economic benefits of not logging it. The market does not usually credit forest owners for providing clean air and pure, cool water to the public. The private owner can only realize an economic return by cutting down the trees. Ironically, it usually costs society more to replace or mitigate the ecosystem services lost by logging a private forest than if the public had simply purchased the forest, or the timber rights, from the private interest.

However, even publicly owned forests have their problems. The perverse incentives of our federal forest system often cause public managers to log at the expense of the public trust to maximize their own budgets and bureaucratic fiefdoms. From both private and public forests, nature provides goods and services without charge, but she charges heavily when we abuse her.

Those who would deny Wilderness protection to Oregon's last wild forests often couch their arguments in economic terms. Their economic arguments, however, are selective, in that usually they only consider the economic value of logging, mining, grazing and other such activities. They conveniently forget that natural forests provide tangible economic values in the form of drinking water, tourism, recreation and commercial fishing.

Wilderness opponents also tend to consider only selected local — rather than regional or national — economic values. In some aspects, federally subsidized mining, logging, road-building and grazing may be considered economically beneficial on a local scale, as they create local jobs and income. However, these jobs come at the expense of other jobs and local and regional economic benefits from conserving nature. In any case, such subsidies are deadweight on the greater economy.

Economic arguments against forest Wilderness center on three topics: timber supply, jobs and profits.

Let's first consider the issue of *timber supply*.

- Roadless areas have proportionally less merchantable timber than do (or did) other public and private lands. That's often why they are still roadless — timber companies could not afford to exploit them.
- If domestic timber supplies are short, then ban the export of raw logs overseas.
- The timber industry's dependence on federal timber is minimal. Of the seventy-one sawmills remaining in western Oregon, only one receives more

ELIZABETH FERYL/ENVIRONMENTAL IMAGES



If Americans need the wood from federal forests as the timber industry says, why are they exporting overseas unprocessed logs from their own tree farms?

than two-thirds of its timber supply from federal lands. Only three are supplied with one-third to two-thirds of their logs from federal lands. Forty Oregon mills buy no federal logs.

- Most logging is to satisfy domestic needs for fiber, not “wood” per se. Fiber, which can be available from many other sources, is used to make construction materials, paper and a thousand other products. Our national policy ought to include obtaining most fiber from other, more ample and sustainable supplies, such as from farms (especially crop wastes now burned).

Now let's consider the *jobs* issue.

- Studies show proximity to Wilderness is economically beneficial to local communities.
- According to the Forest Service, if Oregon's 1.9 million acres of inventoried roadless areas were protected from logging, only 58 logging-related jobs would be lost. By this calculus, if the additional approximately 3.1 million acres of Oregon's uninventoried roadless areas were also protected as Wilderness, only 153 timber jobs would be lost.
- Wilderness, protected or unprotected, provides jobs in commercial, sport and

# Top Dozen Reasons for Wilderness

**12. Recreation.** Wilderness is much more than a place for fun in the outdoors. Recreation is a fine, but far from the only, reason for Wilderness protection.

**11. Ecosystem Goods and Services.** More jobs, more wealth and more economic activity are generated by leaving forests standing than by cutting them down.

**10. Medical Benefits.** Every species has a complex and unique circuit of chemical reactions. Most medicines are based on compounds found in plants and animals. Humans haven't even classified all plant species on earth, let alone tested their potential for medical benefits. Wilderness is like a library — most people would choose not to burn down a library, especially if most of the books in it haven't been read yet. Preserving wilderness preserves species that preserve options that can preserve people.

**9. Arrogance Insurance.** Humans are engaged in a grand experiment of manipulating our environment. However, any valid science experiment must have a control with which to compare the experiment's results. Wilderness is a control for the massive and pervasive environmental changes we are imposing on ourselves.

**8. Clean Air.** Forests, especially older forests, absorb pollutants, including climate-altering carbon dioxide, and produce oxygen.

**7. Drinking Water.** According to the Forest Service, four-fifths of Oregonians get their drinking water from federal forest watersheds. It's some of the best water in the world.

**6. Biodiversity Conservation.** Many species cannot adapt to the highly manipulated and simplified landscapes that humans create. Wilderness itself is a landscape niche to which many species are uniquely adapted. Wilderness protection allows the continuation of ecological processes that support all life on earth.

**5. Legacy for Future Generations.** Preserving wilderness for future generations is natural estate planning.

**4. Freedom.** Wilderness offers an escape from daily assaults on our senses and psyches.

**3. Humility.** Wilderness reminds us that while humans are a very powerful species, we are certainly not the only species on earth and not omnipotent.

**2. Re-creation.** More than mere "recreation," wilderness is a source of spiritual renewal.

GEORGE WERTNER



Many hunters support Wilderness designation to protect both habitat and their recreational experience.

**1. Hope.** If you've read this far, no explanation is needed.

*Wilderness is an anchor to windward. Knowing it is there, we can also know we are still a rich nation, tending to our resources as we should — not a people in despair searching every last nook and cranny of our land for a board of lumber, a barrel of oil, a blade of grass, or a tank of water.*

— Senator Clinton Anderson (D-NM)  
(principal sponsor of the first Wilderness bill)<sup>22</sup>



tribal fishing, guiding, hunting, birding and related industries. These jobs are sustainable, while logging old growth cannot be.

- Oregon's economy has diversified over the past decades, and the wood products industry is becoming increasingly inconsequential to the state's future. Only 1.9 percent of jobs in Oregon and Washington are in wood products.
- Automation in the woods and the mills has resulted in fewer workers needed to produce the same amount of wood products than a decade ago. Even fewer will be required a decade from now.
- Oregon counties with the most protected natural areas experience the most job and income growth.
- Ecological restoration can create new jobs in the woods, especially in replanted clearcuts:

*Done correctly, thinning younger [managed] stands can produce logs while at the same time enhancing ecological and conservation values by reducing susceptibility to fire and other disturbances, improving habitat for lichens, and structurally diversifying stands. In dry forest types we understand some judicious under-thinning of older forests, removing only trees that have established since fire exclusion, may be warranted to reduce fire hazard.<sup>21</sup>*

Finally, let's consider the *profits* issue.

- Who earns the profits from logging federally owned forests? Absentee corporations or local communities? Are such profits limited to the current generation, or are they carried over to future generations? (Sustainable industries, such as fishing or guiding, could provide employment and income to local communities forever.)
- Often only a few make a fortune exploiting nature (such as timber company CEOs and stockholders), while the rest involved (local loggers) miss out. After a multi-national timber company has logged an area, it moves on (local timber companies just go out of business), while the local communities left behind suffer from the damage done to their landscape.
- Corporations maximize profit at the expense of jobs (employees always appear on the *cost* side of a corporate balance sheet). As timber supplies are depleted, jobs are quickly eliminated.

Most neoclassical economists believe that if the value of ecological protection and restoration cannot be assessed exactly in monetary terms, then it should not be counted

at all. Although these economists will often admit that ecological protection and restoration are worth *something*, because the value is not easy to quantify, they usually set it at zero. By refusing to estimate an economic value for nature and instead pretending it to be zero, these economists choose to be precisely wrong on nature's worth, instead of estimating its value and being approximately correct.

Those who value nature above profit should attempt to assign a market value to nature — if only to defend it against devastating exploitation. If we don't, the default value of nature will be zero, rather than infinity (think *long-term*, beyond the time value of money), as it should be. The things that we value most — self, health, family and community — could be characterized as irrational economic investments in the capitalist system because the return on investment is too low or “incalculable.” Wouldn't it be better to improve the way society calculates and measures what it truly values? Wouldn't it be a shame to fail to save the Earth — and therefore ourselves — because too many economists consider nature inefficient (or difficult to price) and too many accountants regard investing in nature a poor return on capital?

## Across the Landscape and Over Time<sup>23</sup>

*If we are going to whittle away at (significant landscapes), we should recognize, at the very beginning, that the whittlings are cumulative and the end result will be mediocrity.*  
—Newton Drury, Director, National Park Service (1940-1951)<sup>24</sup>

This chapter could not be complete without a discussion of the necessity of conserving and restoring the web of life in general, and specifically in Oregon's forests. Scientists call it “biodiversity,” shorthand for the term “biological diversity.”

*Biodiversity is the variety of life and its processes. It includes the variety of living organisms, the genetic difference among them, the communities and ecosystems in which they occur, and the ecological and evolutionary processes that keep them functioning, yet ever changing and adapting.<sup>25</sup>*

Conservation biology is a new branch of science created to address the critical need to end the human-caused mass extinction of species that is now underway and accelerating. Conservation biologists are developing guidelines that must be followed if humans are to leave room for nature. Briefly stated (and not surprisingly), these guidelines require that we stop destroying natural habitat and that critical habitat that has been destroyed be restored. By integrating scientific knowledge about habitat requirements with population dynamics, the effect of pollutants and other factors, conservation biologists have come to the conclusion that wilderness landscapes are the



anchors of biodiversity. So much wilderness has already been lost that we must work to conserve every acre that remains and to restore a fair amount that has been degraded or destroyed. We must do so not only because we love wilderness emotionally and spiritually, but also because doing so is ecologically and economically imperative.

If the public wants the grizzly bear and the wolf to return, then we need Wilderness and lots of it. If we want wild salmon — not as museum pieces, but in abundance — we need Wilderness and lots of it. The spaces between Wilderness areas should also be better managed to maintain their role as corridors and links in the greater ecological and economic systems.

Dr. Reed Noss, a renowned ecologist who helped define the discipline of conservation biology, has described the ecological requirements of biodiversity conservation:

1. *Represent, in a system of protected areas, all native ecosystem types and seral (successional) stages across their natural range of variation.*
2. *Maintain viable populations of all native species in natural patterns of abundance and distribution.*
3. *Maintain ecological and evolutionary processes, such as disturbance regimes, hydrological processes, nutrient cycles, and biotic interactions, including predation.*
4. *Design and manage the system to be responsive to short-term and long-term environmental change and to maintain the evolutionary potential of lineages.*<sup>26</sup>

Representation of all ecosystem types means including both common and unique habitats, the lowest to the highest elevations, the wettest to the driest climates, all soil and geologic types, all vegetation types of all age classes and all possible combinations of the above.

Because an ecosystem is more than a collection of species — it is an *interconnection* of species — the health of each and every species is critical. Many species thrive without any special attention, but given our extensive alteration of virtually every ecosystem, some require our special attention. Wide-ranging carnivores, such as wolves, bears and wolverines, are excellent indicators of ecosystem health. Protect and restore an ecosystem or landscape to ensure the continued existence of these wide-ranging carnivores and many other species under the ecological umbrella will benefit as well.

Noss has prescribed additional guidelines for designating and protecting habitat:

1. *Species well distributed across their native range are less susceptible to extinction than species confined to small portions of their range.*
2. *Large blocks of habitat, containing large populations of a target species, are superior to small blocks of habitat containing small populations.*



3. *Blocks of habitat closer together are better than blocks far apart.*
4. *Habitat in contiguous blocks is better than fragmented habitat.*
5. *Interconnected blocks of habitat are better than isolated blocks; corridors or linkages function better when habitat within them resembles that preferred by target species.*
6. *Blocks of habitat that are roadless or otherwise inaccessible to humans are better than roaded and accessible habitat blocks.*<sup>27</sup>

We must preserve and restore large enough tracts of wild nature to allow ecological and evolutionary processes to function unfettered.

The practical application of the principles of conservation biology and landscape ecology requires consideration of three essential components, the three C's of conservation science and policy: cores, corridors and carnivores.

*Cores* are the heart of a conservation management system — the larger and more numerous, the better. They are of the highest quality habitat. Protecting core habitat is best achieved by designating large areas of Wilderness. This is why Congress needs to designate the larger roadless areas described in this book as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

To ensure the proper flow and dispersal of species individuals and populations between core areas, the system must be connected by *corridors*, ideally containing areas of high-quality habitat. This is best achieved by designating smaller Wilderness units (as identified in this book), wild and scenic rivers, as well as other similar protective classifications to connect larger wildlands or serve as stepping-stone habitats.

These cores and connectors must be buffered with restrictions on human activities that degrade natural values — with the most stringent restrictions applying to the actual cores and corridors, and with restraints becoming fewer the further away one is from the protected areas.

The third essential component is protection of umbrella species such as *carnivores*. As top predators, carnivores regulate ecosystems and are essential components of ecosystem health. Large carnivores have generally been extirpated from most ecosystems. Noss and his colleague Michael Soulé admonish us:

*(M)any people are uncomfortable in proposing the reintroduction of large and politically troublesome carnivores. But this is no excuse. Timidity in conservation planning and implementation is a betrayal of the land. Even in the relatively populated regions like most of the eastern United States, the land cannot fully recover from past and present insults and mismanagement unless its bears, cougars, and wolves return. The greatest impediment to rewilding is an unwillingness to imagine it.*<sup>28</sup>

The cornerstone of any landscape conservation strategy is identifying and conserving what is still wild. To this end, the Oregon Wild Forest Coalition has inventoried the remaining forest wildlands in Oregon and recommends them all for Wilderness designation.

## Wilderness: Expanding Concept, Shrinking Supply

*Friends at home! I charge you to spare, preserve and cherish some portion of your primitive forests; for when these are cut away I apprehend they will not be easily replaced.*

—Horace Greeley, editor, *New York Tribune* (1851)<sup>29</sup>

*We dare not let the last wilderness on earth go by our own hand, and hope that technology will somehow get us a new wilderness or some remote planet, or that somehow we can save little samples of genes in bottles or on ice, isolated and manageable, or reduce the great vistas to long-lasting video-tape, destroying the originals to sustain the balance of trade and egos.*

—David Brower<sup>30</sup>

Limitations on party size, pack animals, camping sites and campfires have long been in effect to minimize human impacts on delicate environments in Wilderness areas. However, the Forest Service increasingly realizes that protecting the natural character of vegetation and soil alone will not adequately protect wilderness values. The agency is now considering limiting the actual number of visitors to protect another legally mandated wilderness value: solitude. If too many people are in the woods at once, even no-trace camping will not provide adequate protection for Wilderness.

Limits have been considered on visitors to Oregon's Mount Hood Wilderness and Washington's Alpine Lakes Wilderness, which are within easy reach of the Portland and Puget Sound metropolitan areas. In some cases, the Forest Service has contemplated visitor reductions as large as 60 and 90 percent. Such limits are already common on popular floating rivers including the Rogue and Colorado.

Choosing to shoot the messenger rather than solve the problem, former Senator Slade Gorton (R-WA) promoted legislation that would have prevented the Forest Service from imposing limitations on Wilderness visitation. A better solution is for Congress to simply add more areas to the National Wilderness Preservation System. There has been no major expansion of Wilderness in Oregon or Washington since 1984, though both states' populations and the demand for Wilderness recreation have skyrocketed. The National Forest System and Bureau of Land Management's forested



# Top Ten Arguments Against Wilderness (and Refutations)

*We are not so poor that we have to spend our wilderness, or so rich that we can afford to.*

— Newton Drury, Director, National Park Service (1940-1951)<sup>31</sup>

## 1. Forest fires cannot be fought in Wilderness.

False. Forest fires can and are fought in Wilderness areas. Both the Wilderness Act itself and implementing regulations allow federal forest managers wide latitude to pursue aggressive fire fighting in Wilderness. Temporary roads can be built using motorized equipment. (Note that permanent roads actually increase fire risk from human-caused ignition.) However, the question that first needs to be answered is why do we want to fight forest fires in areas designated as Wilderness. Forests have co-evolved with wildfire and are renewed by them.

## 2. Designating Wilderness costs jobs.

A plethora of studies has debunked this myth. Less than 2 percent of jobs in Oregon and Washington are in the lumber and wood products industries. In an expanding economy, more jobs are typically added to the regional economy in a single year than the total number of existing jobs in lumber and wood products. Forest Service data indicates that only 153 logging-related jobs would be lost in Oregon if nearly five million acres of the state's remaining roadless forestlands were designated Wilderness as recommended by this book. The logging and milling jobs provided by clearcutting forests are unsustainable. A standing forest provides sustainable jobs for commercial, sport and tribal fishing, hunting, guiding, ecotourism, wildlife watching and nature appreciation businesses. The potential timber that could be extracted from remaining roadless areas would be but a tiny portion of the nation's annual timber supply. Most roadless areas are still roadless because their timber isn't worth exploiting given the low volumes, steep slopes and unstable soils.

## 3. Designating Wilderness harms the economy.

Industry can only profitably exploit roadless areas with the aid of substantial government subsidies. Subsidies in turn drag on the economy. Such government subsidies can be better invested in programs that achieve greater social and economic benefits. The local data is also clear: counties in the American West with the most Wilderness acreage are doing better economically than those without designated Wilderness.

## 4. Society needs wood; Wilderness designation cuts our supply.

A slight increase in recycling can offset any decrease in timber supply that occurs due to Wilderness designation. The two types of "garbage" most prevalent in landfills are paper and wood, respectively. Technological improvements in production efficiency and increased recycling, along with the use of sustainable alternative fibers, can meet our needs while allowing for broadscale Wilderness designation. Less than 10 percent of all the logging in Oregon and Washington is on federal land and only a very small fraction of that occurs in roadless areas. We can have Wilderness and toilet paper too.

## 5. Wilderness is just a playground for urban elitists.

Wilderness is an egalitarian playground. One does not need special equipment to enjoy Wilderness. If one does want to invest in a state-of-the-art and top-of-the-line backpacking ensemble, it would still be impossible to pay more than one-quarter the price of a very low-end all-terrain vehicle (not to mention the cost of motor boats, travel trailers and land yachts). Wilderness, like all public lands, is available to everyone.

## 6. People with disabilities cannot enjoy Wilderness.

Actually, people with disabilities routinely visit wilderness on foot, by horseback, with the assistance of llamas or other pack animals and by boat. One can also enjoy the wilderness by simply sitting at its edge and relishing the unspoiled vistas and enjoying the grace and power that emanates from it.

## 7. Wilderness designation locks up valuable minerals.

The best deposits of minerals in this country were located long ago. The few, small deposits that exist in Oregon's roadless areas are generally of very low value. Only if mineral prices skyrocket could these deposits begin to appear economically viable. However, should prices rise, increased recycling and the mining of landfills — where most of our exploitable minerals now exist — would still be more profitable than mining virgin ore.

## 8. Wilderness is off-limits to mountain bikes.

One could ride a bicycle into a cathedral, but one shouldn't. Adequate mountain biking habitat will continue to exist in areas unsuitable for Wilderness designation. And there are potentially tens of thousands of miles of more trails in the form of poorly maintained logging roads that could be converted into mountain biking trails in the future.



GEORGE WUERTINER



Forestland recovering from the Tillamook Burn (which burned so intensively and extensively because it was being logged) in the Tillamook State Forest.

#### **9. Wilderness designation makes livestock grazing difficult.**

If only it were so. The original Wilderness Act grandfathered in livestock grazing. Since then, Congress has enacted guidelines that further entrench livestock grazing interests in the Wilderness System. Conservationists recommend that the federal government offer generous compensation to any and all ranchers who voluntarily retire their federal grazing permits in Wilderness. Not only is it very good for Wilderness and windfall for ranchers, it's a great deal for taxpayers, who subsidize the federal grazing program.

#### **10. Dams cannot be constructed in Wilderness.**

Actually, they can, if their purpose is for water supply. Dam construction in Wilderness requires an express order of the President, but the Wilderness Act allows it. To date, no presidential exemption has ever been granted, as none has ever been justified.





ELIZABETH FERIL/ ENVIRONMENTAL IMAGES

holdings contain many de facto wilderness areas that are worthy of congressional Wilderness protection. These lands already provide significant backcountry recreation opportunities and could absorb additional visitors in the future, if they are not roaded and clearcut. However, if these roadless forestlands are degraded, recreationists will be displaced. This will funnel even more visitors onto existing protected Wilderness areas, threatening their natural character.

In Oregon, the majority of the lands protected as Wilderness are either high-elevation forests or “rock and ice” above timberline. Though small areas of low-elevation old-growth forests have also been protected as Wilderness, much more could be if Congress would act soon.

While the National Park System and National Wildlife Refuge System also have lands that qualify for Wilderness designation, the biggest potential source of new Wilderness areas in the Pacific Northwest lies within federal forests (managed by Forest Service and BLM) and the Bureau of Land Management’s desert holdings.

## Other Threatened Forest Wildlands

Nearly all of Oregon’s remaining forest wilderness is managed by the Forest Service or the Bureau of Land Management. However, the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the state of Oregon and Indian tribes also manage some of Oregon’s remaining wild forests.

*State Forests.* Of the sizeable land grant Oregon received from the United States at statehood, only the Elliot State Forest in the southern Oregon Coast Range still contains any unlogged virgin forest. Oregon’s other state forests, the Tillamook and Clatsop, Santiam and Sun Pass State Forests were cutover private timberlands that were received by the state when forfeited to county governments many decades ago for non-payment of taxes. As they grow back, the opportunity to create additional small — but important — protected areas increases. This would require action by the Oregon Legislature or initiative vote of the people. The ecological values of these forestlands make this a goal worth pursuing.

*Indian Reservations.* Most forested lands owned by Native Americans in Oregon are small and scattered, save for the Warm Springs Indian Reservation which contains some important wilderness values, including, most notably, several miles of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, Olallie Butte and one bank of the lower Metolius River. Although tribal lands are not public lands, the Pacific Crest Trail and Olallie Butte are open to public recreation (as part of a deal that transferred a portion of the Mount Hood National Forest to the Warm Springs Indian Reservation). In Oregon, the Native American tribes are important leaders in regional natural resource management, including salmon conservation and restoration that involve protecting spawning

◀ How many trees must be left standing in a clearcut so that it’s no longer called a “clearcut?” An example of “new” forestry, developed by foresters in response to criticisms about clearcutting.

OWAR F. BOSE



Olallie Butte is a roadless Cascade peak on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation.

and rearing habitat in intact forests. But like many Oregon communities, the tribes' economic activities often include logging and sawmills. In Montana, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes have found a balance by designating certain lands on their reservation as the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness. Perhaps the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation could consider doing the same.

*Private Lands.* There are no statistically significant tracts of virgin forest left on private lands in Oregon. In some cases, small private inholdings exist within designated and proposed Wilderness. While minor in size, their key locations requires their eventual conversion to public ownership through purchase from willing sellers.

## Get Involved

*Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan: "Press on" has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race.*

—Calvin Coolidge<sup>32</sup>

Wilderness advocates often debate what the most important reasons for protecting wilderness might be. However, when making the case for Wilderness, you should

choose an argument that appeals to your audience. If you're talking to a hunter who likes to hunt big game, you should not dwell on the importance of wilderness as inspiration for literature. If you're talking to a birder, speak of wildlife habitat. If you're talking to an angler, speak of refugia for wild fish. If you're talking to someone who is concerned about health and well being and whose watershed is contained in forest wildlands, stress the importance of wilderness as a source of both high quality and copious quantities of fresh, cold water.

Aldo Leopold noted, "There are some who can live without wild things, and some who cannot."<sup>33</sup> Actually, some people can live without knowing the importance of wild things, but no one can actually live without wildness.

There is a story behind every one of Oregon's permanently protected Wilderness areas. In each case, special people — sometimes just one person — rose to the occasion and worked to protect places that they cared passionately about. They often worked long and hard, and against great odds, but they were eventually rewarded with the permanence of congressionally protected Wilderness.

Today, many wild areas in Oregon are seriously threatened. However, they can be saved — for this and future generations — if at least *one* person decides to answer the call for each special area. Advocating for Wilderness requires no professional skills or particular talent. Mostly it takes time and a willingness to do what needs to be done. If one is persistent, one can help save one of Oregon's next protected Wilderness areas. It may involve writing letters, making phone calls, attending public meetings, contacting elected officials, learning and sharing information with friends, family and colleagues, visiting proposed Wilderness areas and maybe even lobbying in Washington, DC. But imagine what you, your progeny, your community and our nation can gain.

The Oregon Natural Resources Council and other organizations will continue to work hard to save wilderness, but success also depends on committed volunteers who are willing to engage in the political process (see Appendix F). Eighty-percent of democracy is just showing up. ♦

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The Wilderness Society. "On Wilderness." Available at [www.wilderness.org/library/documents/wilderness\\_quotes.cfm](http://www.wilderness.org/library/documents/wilderness_quotes.cfm).

<sup>2</sup> Thoreau, Henry. 1942. WALDEN: OR LIVE IN THE WOODS. Signet Classics/New American Library of World Literature. New York, NY: 211.

<sup>3</sup> Abbey, Edward. 1977. THE JOURNEY HOME: SOME WORDS IN DEFENSE OF THE AMERICAN WEST. E. P. Dutton. New York, NY: 223.

<sup>4</sup> AndyKerr.net. "Wilderness." Available at [www.andykerr.net/Wilderness/WildernessPT.htm](http://www.andykerr.net/Wilderness/WildernessPT.htm).

<sup>5</sup> Abbey, Edward. 1971. DESERT SOLITAIRE: A SEASON IN THE WILDERNESS. Ballantine Books. New York, NY: 192.

<sup>6</sup> MERRIAM WEBSTER'S COLLEGIATE DICTIONARY. 11th ed. 1996. Merriam-Webster, Inc. Springfield, MA: 1433.



- <sup>7</sup> Adams, Ansel and Nancy Newhall. 1960. *THIS AMERICAN EARTH*. Sierra Club. San Francisco, CA; Ballantine Books. New York, NY: 84.
- <sup>8</sup> DellaSalla, Dominick and James Strittholt. 1999. Importance of Roadless Areas in Biodiversity Conservation: A Scientific Perspective. World Wildlife Fund. Ashland, OR; Conservation Biology Institute. Corvallis, OR: iv.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> Leopold, Aldo. 1970. *A SAND COUNTY ALMANAC: WITH ESSAYS ON CONSERVATION FROM ROUND RIVER*. Ballantine Books. New York, NY: 276.
- <sup>11</sup> Wu, David, et al., letter to President Clinton (October 2000).
- <sup>12</sup> The Wilderness Act, 16 U.S.C. 1131(c).
- <sup>13</sup> Marshall, Robert. 1933. *THE PEOPLE'S FORESTS*. Harrison Smith and Robert Haas. New York, NY: 176-177.
- <sup>14</sup> Frome, Michael. 1974. *BATTLE FOR WILDERNESS*. Praeger Publishers. New York, NY: 18 (emphasis original).
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>16</sup> Letter to President Clinton from 136 scientists (Nov. 14, 1997).
- <sup>17</sup> *THE COLUMBIA WORLD OF QUOTATIONS*. 1996. Columbia University Press. New York, NY (quote no. 5227, originally published in *The New York Times* (March 24, 1968)).
- <sup>18</sup> Brown, David E. and Neil B. Carmony. 1990. *ALDO LEOPOLD'S SOUTHWEST*. University of New Mexico Press. Albuquerque, NM: 160-161 (originally published in Aldo Leopold, *A plea for wilderness hunting grounds*, *Outdoor Life* (Nov. 1925)).
- <sup>19</sup> Nelson, Gaylord. 1994 *The bankruptcy files*. *Wilderness* 57(205): 11.
- <sup>20</sup> BrainyQuote.com, [www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/k/kurtvonneg108238.html](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/k/kurtvonneg108238.html).
- <sup>21</sup> Perry, David A., Reed F. Noss, Timothy D. Schowalter, Terrence J. Frest, Bruce McCune, David R. Montgomery, James R. Karr. 2001. Letter to Regional Interagency Executive Committee to implement Northwest Forest Plan (Sept. 4, 2001).
- <sup>22</sup> Wilderness.net. "Wilderness Quotes." Available at [www.wilderness.net/quotes.cfm](http://www.wilderness.net/quotes.cfm).
- <sup>23</sup> This section is adapted with permission from Andy Kerr. 2000. *OREGON DESERT GUIDE: 70 HIKES*. The Mountaineers, Seattle, WA: 74-77.
- <sup>24</sup> \_\_\_\_\_. *The state of the park*. Greater Yellowstone Report. Greater Yellowstone Coalition, Bozeman, MT (Summer 2000). Available at [www.greateryellowstone.org/water/rivers/yellowstone/yellowstone\\_park\\_sum00nl.html](http://www.greateryellowstone.org/water/rivers/yellowstone/yellowstone_park_sum00nl.html).
- <sup>25</sup> Noss, Reed F. and Allen Cooperrider. *SAVING NATURE'S LEGACY: PROTECTING AND RESTORING BIODIVERSITY*. Defenders of Wildlife and Island Press. Washington, DC: 5, quoting The Keystone Center. 1991. Final Consensus Report of the Keystone Policy Dialogue on Biological Diversity on Federal Lands. The Keystone Center. Keystone, CO.
- <sup>26</sup> Noss, Reed F. 1992. *The Wildlands Project: land conservation strategy*. *Wild Earth* (Special Issue): 11.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid at 12.
- <sup>28</sup> Soulé, Michael and Reed F. Noss. 1998. *Rewilding and biodiversity: complementary goals for continental conservation*. *Wild Earth* 8(3): 25.
- <sup>29</sup> Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center. undated. Wilderness Awareness Training Module. Missoula, MT (appendix C, "Wilderness Quotes").
- <sup>30</sup> AndyKerr.net. "Wilderness." Available at [www.andykerr.net/Wilderness/WildernessPT.htm](http://www.andykerr.net/Wilderness/WildernessPT.htm).
- <sup>31</sup> AndyKerr.net. "Wilderness." Available at [www.andykerr.net/Wilderness/WildernessPT.htm](http://www.andykerr.net/Wilderness/WildernessPT.htm).
- <sup>32</sup> Calvin Coolidge: 30th President of the United States. "Quotations." Available at [www.calvin-coolidge.org/pages/history/research/quotations/quotesp.html](http://www.calvin-coolidge.org/pages/history/research/quotations/quotesp.html).
- <sup>33</sup> Leopold, Aldo. 1966. *A SAND COUNTY ALMANAC: WITH ESSAYS ON CONSERVATION FROM ROUND RIVER*. Sierra Club/Ballantine Books. New York, NY: xvii (originally published in 1949).

ELIZABETH FERYL ENVIRONMENTAL IMAGES



The most important decisions about the fate of federal forests in Oregon are made in Washington, DC.