Oregon Wild

Endangered Forest Wilderness

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Oregon Natural Resources Council

Oregon Natural Resources Council

Founded in 1974, Oregon Natural Resources Council's mission is to aggressively protect and restore Oregon's wildlands, wildlife and waters as an enduring legacy. ONRC has been instrumental in securing permanent legislative protection for some of Oregon's most precious landscapes, including nearly 1.5 million acres of Wilderness, 95,000 acres of Bull Run/Little Sandy forests (protected to provide municipal water supplies) and almost 1,700 miles of Wild and Scenic Rivers. Leading the national grassroots charge for conservation of roadless areas in our national forests, ONRC helped secure administrative protections for over 58 million acres of spectacular roadless areas across the country.

Our wilderness, old-growth forest and Klamath Basin programs protect pristine drinking water, unparalleled recreation opportunities and fish and wildlife habitat across Oregon. Through the power of 6,500 members, over 1,600 e-mail activists and more than 1,000 active volunteers, ONRC works to maintain environmental laws, while building broad community support for our campaigns. With a staff of fifteen, including regional coordinators who live and work in each corner of Oregon, ONRC's strength is its active grassroots citizen network.

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To all who have ever raised a voice, a hand or some hell
to save Oregon's remaining wilderness. And to all those who will.

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Front cover: Old-growth ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) in the Lookout Mountain Unit of the proposed Ochoco Mountains Wilderness. Photo by Larry Olson.

Previous page: old-growth Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*) in the Cascade Head Unit of the proposed Coast Range Wilderness. Photo by Gary Braasch.

Back cover: Old-growth Douglas-fir in the Big Bottom Unit of the proposed Clackamas Wilderness. Photo by Bob Holmstrom.

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Woe to them that join house to house;
that lay field to field,
till there is no room, that you may dwell
alone in the midst of the earth.

Isaiah 5:8

Fancy cutting down all those beautiful trees to make pulp
for those bloody newspapers and calling it civilization.

Winston Churchill

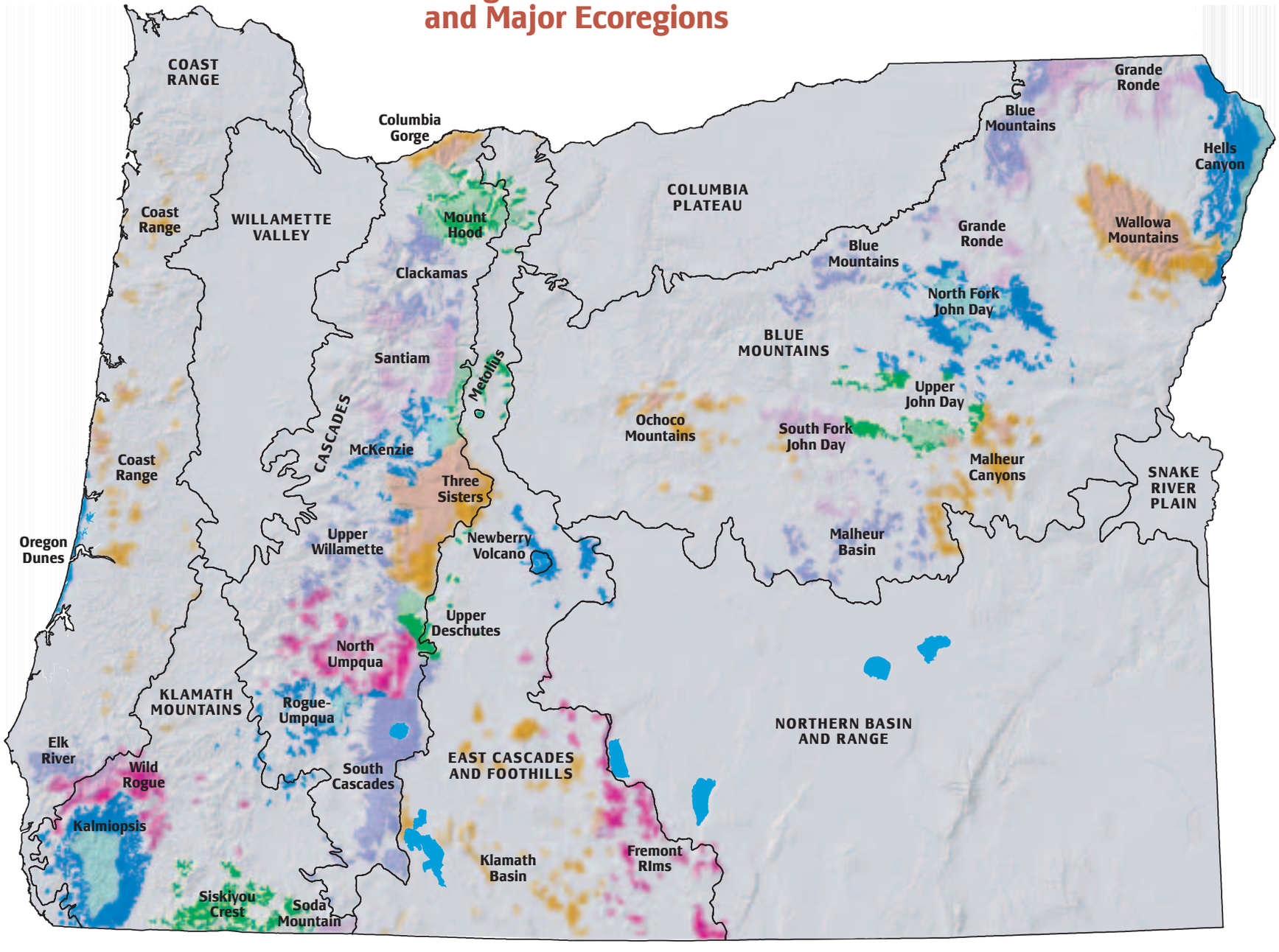
Have you gazed on naked grandeur where there's nothing left to gaze on,
Set pieces and drop-curtain scenes galore,
Big mountains heaved to heaven, where the blinding sunsets blazon,
Black canyons where the rapids rip and roar?
Have you swept the visioned valley with the green stream streaking through it,
Searched the Vastness for a something you have lost?
Have you strung your soul to silence? Then for God's sake go and do it;
Here the challenge, learn the lesson, pay the cost.

Robert Service, in The Call of the Wild

The West of which I speak is but another name for the Wild; and what I have
been preparing to say is, that in Wildness lies the preservation of the World.

Henry David Thoreau

Map 0-1. Oregon Forest Wilderness and Major Ecoregions



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Foreword

The trail brings us to a creek that carves tight curves through a marshy meadow. The creek is deeper than it is wide, and so clear we can make out every ripple in the sand, every caddis fly larvae and pickerel weed bent to the current. Red-wing blackbirds sway on reeds, raising their beaks in song. We hear the winnowing of a snipe and the Sora rail's descending song, but we can only imagine the hidden rail, padding on spread toes across mud below the reeds. In the creek, the shadow of a rainbow trout darts under a lotus in yellow bloom. Above the creek, swallows swoop after midges. So high we lose it in the sun, a bald eagle soars on broad wings. We raise binoculars to watch a sandhill crane hunt for frogs. Sunlight reflects on the bright new needles of lodgepole pines that circle the valley.

The meadow is whole, intact, singing with light and life. It has the feel of a place where every bird is in its tree, every mouse and snake is in its burrow, each tree and wind-riffled reed is in its place. I had forgotten.

Accustomed to the stripped down and hacked up habitats at the edge of town, I had forgotten this richness and complexity, the wholeness of an intact ecosystem. Like so many others, I live in the silence of places that have been abused for more than a hundred years — forests cut and cut again, rivers emptied of the abundance of life, marshes paved for parking lots. But changes often happen slowly, and losses are often hard to see. People who remember a healthy landscape die or move away, and others move in who have no memory of the forests and marshes. So it's easy to forget what a healthy habitat looks like, easy to assume that degraded, cut-over landscapes are the way things have always been, will always be.

Ecologists call this the problem of the sliding baseline. If we no longer know healthy, beautiful habitats, our standards of natural health and beauty slide down to meet the degraded landscapes that we know.

There are dozens of compelling reasons why we need to preserve forest wilderness — to clean, store and replenish fresh water and fresh air; to find solace and renewal for tired spirits; to preserve species diversity; to honor God's creation; to protect places of safety where wild plants and animals can thrive. The list goes on. But in my mind, one of the most important functions of wilderness is to remind people of what normal is. Wilderness reminds us that the natural state of this world is to be healthy and beautiful, the way it once was and the way it might be again. By showing us a vision of what we have destroyed in our everyday lives, wilderness is a standard by which we can measure our loss, as it is a standard to measure our hopes.

GARY BRAASCH

Old-growth forests are not so much an inheritance from our ancestors as a loan from our successors. ►

There is another sliding baseline — an ethical baseline. Along with the degradation of the land has come the degradation of our standards for human behavior. We think of ourselves as good people, while we destroy the ecosystems that provide the fresh water and air that we all depend on. We congratulate ourselves on supporting our children, while we bulldoze the habitats of species that no person's child will ever see again. We think of ourselves as patriots, as we poison our country's air, deplete its fields, mine out its resources, dam its rivers. We are not ashamed. We see no hypocrisy in loving our children and the land, while we act in ways that sicken both. On the contrary, measuring ourselves against degraded moral standards, we think we're doing the best we can.

But in wilderness — in remnant patches of unspoiled land — there is a high, clear moral standard. The wilderness ethic requires that when we enter a wilderness, we enter a place where we must do no harm. We enter into the peace of a place that must not be plundered. Shouldering our packs, we step onto the land with relief and celebration, but also with restraint, transformed by our responsibility to be care-full, to safeguard the well-being of an unspoiled place. We may not always live up to the wilderness ethic, but we know what it requires of us. The wilderness ethic is a moral standard by which we can measure the hypocrisies of our everyday lives. This is a standard to measure what we can hope for from human beings. It's a vision of the possibility of living in harmony with the land, of walking on earth as a guest, with gratitude and respect.

So I celebrate the advent of a new book about forest wilderness in Oregon. In Oregon, there still are some glistening, bird-graced, bountiful wildlands beyond the end of the road. These must remain intact. Here, in the healthiest places, we can become our best selves. Here, in the wholeness of unfragmented wilderness, in the entirety of ecosystems with all the pieces in place, we can remember what it means to be whole ourselves.

Kathleen Dean Moore
Corvallis, Oregon

Kathleen Dean Moore writes about water and wilderness in her books: Riverwalking; Holdfast; *and* The Pine Island Paradox, *from Milkweed Editions. She is professor of philosophy at Oregon State University, where she directs the Spring Creek Project for Ideas, Nature and the Written Word.*

SANDY LONSDALE

Industrial foresters considered the Pacific Yew (*Taxus brevifolia*) worthless slash because it didn't make good lumber. Then scientists discovered that the yew's bark contains the cancer-fighting compound paclitaxel (a.k.a.Taxol®). They remarked that the molecule is so complex that only a tree could have thought of it. ►

Preface

(T)he love of wilderness is more than a hunger for what is always beyond reach; it is also an expression of loyalty to the earth, the earth which bore us and sustains us, the only home we shall ever know, the only paradise we ever need – if we only had eyes to see. Original sin, the true original sin, is the blind destruction for the sake of greed of this natural paradise which lies all around us – if only we were worthy of it.

—Edward Abbey[1]

Once while walking in the Three Sisters Wilderness, I encountered a fellow who lived there most of the year. Usually he stayed away from the main trails and camped where no one was likely to come across him — and therefore likely to cross him. He was walking to town for supplies. He didn't like town. "If I spend too much time in town, all I do is get into fights and end up in jail," he said. "Out here, I'm at peace and the town is peaceful too."

Much later, I met George Atiyeh — nephew of a former Oregon Governor, and, more importantly, the person who would become the leading savior of Opal Creek. He credits the wilderness of Opal Creek with allowing him to deal successfully with the post-traumatic stress caused by his tour of duty in Southeast Asia. Before George was old enough to legally drink, his government sent him off to Cambodia with an M-16 and later denied he was ever there. After returning home, he retreated to a remote old mining camp that his family owned on the Little North Santiam River. There, Atiyeh heeded the words of John Muir:

Camp out among the grass and gentians of glacier meadows, in craggy garden nooks full of Nature's darlings. Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as the sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves.[2]

Several years passed before George was again ready to deal constructively with society (and vice versa), but when he was, he went to battle on behalf of the land that had healed him. Thanks to George and many others, Opal Creek and the historic mining camp are now protected as the Opal Creek Wilderness and Opal Creek Scenic Recreation Area.

The Three Sisters hermit and George Atiyeh are but two of countless Oregonians who have gone — and go — to Oregon's forests for solace, comfort, restoration and yes, even recreation. Oregon's forest wildlands provide that and much, much more. They are home to countless species of plants and animals — some that live, swim, crawl and creep nowhere else in the world. They protect soil from erosion, provide nutrients for the Pacific Northwest's amazing anadromous fish and provide pure drinking water for thousands of Oregonians. Precious little of these wildlands remain. The time to protect them is now.

ELLEN MORRIS BISHOP

Common in northeast Oregon are forest "stringers" flanked by grasslands. The cooler, wetter north-facing slopes favor forests.

Andy Kerr
On the right bank of Rock Creek
May 2004

Acknowledgements

This book contains little original research or original thought. It is an assemblage of information and argument for these times. Much of the information contained herein comes from published sources; some does not. The books, publications and other sources I consulted and relied upon are generally noted, but I also wish to generously thank and acknowledge all of the contributing scientists and researchers for their invaluable work. Since this book is written for the lay reader, its popular style cannot do citational justice to those whose published works I used to write the book. Of course, I did cite sources wherever I could, including attribution for direct quotations.

I also wish to thank people who contributed their time and knowledge to help write the book. First, my colleagues at the Oregon Natural Resources Council: Tim Lillebo, Wendell Wood and Regna Merritt, who are tireless warriors in defense of the wild. They (along with James Monteith, ONRC's former executive director) have done more than nearly anyone else in recent times to preserve Oregon's wild. While they did not act alone to protect Oregon's protected Wilderness, without them, it would not have been protected at all. That as much wild roadless forestland is still available for permanent protection is attributable to ONRC's Doug Heiken and his colleagues who are using science, the courts and public opinion to stop an endless assault of timber sales.

The next generation of tireless wilderness warriors is coming on-line. ONRC's GIS (Geographic Information System) jockey and map maestro Eric Fernandez compiled both the research and final maps for the book, as well as cheerfully responded to my endless requests. Leeanne Siart found obscure government records for me. Erin Madden collected critical roadless area files. Nanci Champlin compiled almost thirty years of the organization's image archives. Sumner Robinson aided immeasurably in the digitalization of the images in this book. Susan Ash, Alex Brown, Jeremy Hall and other ONRC staff previously mentioned reviewed text. Several of the ONRC staff contributed photography to the book. Jacki Richey and Candice Guth managed the finances for this project, and David Wilkins helped find the money to pay for it. Joellen Pail meticulously reviewed the final pages. Seeing a need for the book, Regna Merritt recognized its potential and Ken Rait — then with ONRC, now with Campaign for America's Wilderness — helped focus the effort into the campaign book it is. Finally, Jay Ward is leading the effort to make the dream described in this book a reality.

Other wild warriors that helped in large and small, but always important ways include: Ric Bailey, Jim Baker, Sharyn Becker, the late Joy Belsky, Omar Bose, John Brandt, Dan Brummer, Chris Burford, Jim Cahalan, Greg Clark, Romain Cooper, Gerald and Buff Corsi, Ken Crocker, Dominick DellaSala, Paul Dewey, Tom Dimitre, Linda Driskill, Nancy Duhnkrack, Greg Dyson, Francis Eatherington, Erin Fagley, Edwin Florance, Evan Frost, Stu Garrett, Patty Goldman, Kevin Gorman, Gary Guttormsen, Ashley Henry, Bob Holmstrom, Mark Hubbard, Tim Ingalsbee, Kurt Jensen, Jimmy Kagan, Jim Kauppila, Joan Kittrell, William Leonard, Penny Lind, Jay Lininger, Cameron LaFollette, Darilyn LeGore, Christine Masters, Steve Miller, Jason Miner, Jim Myron, Frazier Nichol, Reed Noss, Ken Olsen, Ralph Opp, Randal O'Toole, Mike Piehl, Sally Prender, Jim Rogers, Leslie Salvo, Robert Schofield, Doug Scott, Mary Scurlock, Leslee Sherman, Jenny Young Seidemann, Chant Thomas, Dave Thomas, Pepper Trail, Barbara Ullian, Joseph Vaile, Dick VanderShaff, Sherry Wellborn, Boyd Wilcox, Chuck Willer, Dave Willis, Robin Wisdom and Tonia Wolf.

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LEON WERDINGER

Forests in Oregon co-evolved with fire. Most fires are not stand-replacing, but cool-burning ground fires. Both renew forest ecosystems.

◀ Old-growth Douglas-fir and western redcedar in the Indian Ridge Unit of the proposed McKenzie Wilderness.

I am deeply appreciative of Kathleen Dean Moore for contributing her wise and eloquent words for the foreword.

Sandy Bryce and Glen Griffith were very helpful in explaining the intricacies of ecoregion classification.

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I am certain I have missed people who deserve thanks, and for that, my apologies. While I'm apologizing, I will do so again for any errors that survived the gauntlet of research, writing, editing and review. Any errors are mine alone.

About the Maps

The maps in this book represent five years of wildlands research and mapping. Initially developed through examination of satellite imagery and high-resolution digital orthophotography, the maps were then subjected to further review and evaluation through extensive field checking involving over four hundred people. A variety of source data was used for analysis including, but not limited to: Land Use /Land Cover from the U.S. Geological Survey, TIGER road data from the U.S. Department of Commerce, detailed road data from the thirteen national forests in Oregon, data from the Bureau of Land Management for Western Oregon and past logging data from five western Oregon national forests. The maps were based on the Oregon Roadless Areas Mapping Project — a cooperative effort between the Oregon Natural Resources Council and Pacific Biodiversity Project.

Introduction

Whatever you do will be insignificant, but it is very important that you do it.

—Mahatma Gandhi[3]

I did not want to write this book. I would prefer not to share any secrets about Oregon's remaining wild forests, but there was no other choice.

Despite the fact that the wildlands described in this book would be even better protected if they remained as unknown and unvisited as many currently are, I share them with the hope that if more people know and care about them, they will not be lost to exploitation but instead become protected for future generations of Oregonians to cherish and conserve.

Oregon has 2.3 million acres of designated Wilderness, which amounts to about 3.7 percent of the state. However, Oregon has an additional five million acres of publicly owned forests (an additional 8 percent of the state's land area) that are both wild and unprotected.

Most of Oregon's protected land is classified as "forest." But with a few notable and glorious exceptions, the land that has been designated Wilderness is of little economic or biological productivity. Most is either rock and ice above timberline, or is above the commercial timberline — where the trees are smaller and slower growing. Oregon's unprotected wilderness is just as wild, just as natural and just as important as its protected Wilderness — and these unprotected forested wildlands provide irreplaceable and inimitable ecological, economic, social goods and services. However, the benefits of these wildlands will be lost if Congress does not protect them from roading, logging, mining, off-road vehicles and other threats.

The Oregon Wild Campaign of the Oregon Wild Forest Coalition advocates for the protection of Oregon's remaining forest wildlands. To help identify these areas and secure legislative protection for them, we have organized the five million roadless acres into 32 Wilderness proposals that incorporate and expand upon Oregon's 37 existing forested Wilderness areas. Each of the more than 1,200 individual units identified within these 32 proposals qualify for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System; some are large, some are small; however, all are important to protect for future generations.

These Wilderness proposals are designed for landscape conservation, and are centered on major watersheds or mountain ranges. A wild swath of forest is not an island, but part of a larger, ecologically connected whole. Our goal is to protect Oregon's entire remaining wilderness, not in isolation, but as part of a conservation and restoration framework that extends throughout the state beyond the borders of the individual Wilderness areas. This will ensure that our children — and theirs for generations to come — will benefit from functioning forests across the landscape and over time.

In addition to these forested wildlands, there are also at least 6.2 million acres of de facto wilderness within Oregon's Sagebrush Sea (another 10 percent of the state's land area) in need of protection. That brings the total of the state's remaining wilderness to 13.5 million acres, or 21.7 percent of Oregon. Does that sound like a lot? It does not to a wolf, or a salmon or a grizzly bear. Or to anybody who understands how wildlands contribute to Oregon's quality of life.

Unless enough wilderness-loving Oregonians know about these endangered places, they will be lost to timber beasts, cattle barons, mining conglomerates, land developers, unenlightened (and sometimes venal) bureaucrats and motorheads who have forgotten how to walk. Whether attributed to greed, stupidity, convenience or ignorance, the result would be the same: wilderness lost.

We have a challenge ahead of us. As Vice President Al Gore noted,

The maximum that is politically feasible, even the maximum that is politically imaginable right now, still falls short of the minimum that is scientifically and ecologically necessary.[4]

Political realities can be changed; ecological realities cannot.

So dear reader, in exchange for learning some secrets about these wonderful and wild places, I make this request: do something for Oregon's threatened forest wilderness.

Pick up the phone or a pen, or reach for a keyboard and contact the elected and appointed officials in whose hands the fate of these last wildlands rests.

Give money and/or time to organizations working to save these places. If one does not have the time, one may well have the money.

Encourage your friends, family and colleagues to do the same. No one person acting alone can save these wild places. Working together, we can.

UNLESS someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not.

—The Lorax (Dr. Seuss)[5]

KEN CROCKER

Notes

[1] Abbey, Edward. 1968. Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness. Ballantine Books. New York, NY: 190.

[2] Muir, John. 1901. Our National Parks. Houghton, Mifflin & Company. New York, NY: 56.

[3] This quote is widely attributed to Gandhi.

[4] McKibben, Bill. *Not so fast.* New York Times Magazine (July 23, 1995).

[5] Geisel, Theodore Seuss. 1971. The Lorax. Random House. New York, NY (unpaginated).

◄ Madrones (*Arbutus menziesii*) in the Kalmiopsis country resprouting just after the Biscuit Fire of 2002 was extinguished by rains.