



**SIERRA
CLUB**

Palouse News

**Newsletter of the Sierra Club Palouse Group
Serving SE Washington and Central Idaho**

Winter 2024/25

9th Annual Wild & Scenic Film Festival

by Angela Taylor

On January 11, 2025, Sierra Club will host the 9th Annual Wild & Scenic Film Festival at the iconic Kenworthy Theater in Moscow, Idaho. This year's selection of films is bound to provide audiences with viewing pleasure, adventure, and serve as a call to action for protecting our wild lands, species, and finding innovative solutions to current problems. The films highlight local, regional, and global communities and environmental challenges. The festival will include a drawing, silent auction, two hours of films, and drinks for purchase before and during intermission with many donations from local businesses. You won't want to miss this year's lineup of inspiring, educational, and adventurous films on the big screen surrounded by like-minded warriors!



Update on Grizzly Bears in the Bitterroot Ecosystem- the short story.

By Lynne Nelson

Based on pressure from legal actions last year, the US Fish and Wildlife Service was ordered to pursue an updated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the restoration of grizzly bears in the Bitterroot Ecosystem (BE) of central Idaho and western Montana. This action was needed because grizzly bears in the BE, one of six ecosystems identified for the recovery of the grizzly bear in the lower-48 States (FWS 1993), are functionally extirpated. Previous preferred actions of the USFWS were to reintroduce a non-essential experimental population of bears into the Bitterroot Ecosystem (FWS 2000b), although that decision was never implemented due to various political hiccups. The experimental population of bears (designated as 10j) would not have been protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) as a naturally occurring population would be protected. The 10j population designation yields minimal safeguards in that bears can be shot, moved or eliminated entirely with weak rationale.

We have long supported the natural recolonization of grizzly bears into the BE and full protection under the ESA. This fall the USFWS quietly released the updated BE Recovery Plan proposed action which preferred: "Natural recolonization with FWS actions to provide education and conflict reduction." This update represents a major victory for everyone who supports natural recovery of bears and

opposes the 10j designation. The USFWS is planning to release the full EIS this summer (2025) and obtain public input. We want to be ready with our comments! While "education and conflict reduction" is very good, bears need habitat to come back into. The newly proposed Nez Perce Clearwater Forest Plan (see previous SC Palouse Group newsletter) is stacking the odds against grizzly bear recovery by proposing drastic logging and roading of pristine bear habitat, especially of areas that promote connectivity of habitat. While we celebrate our victory in getting bears the full ESA protection that they need in the Bitterroot, let's continue to advocate that grizzly bears need to find a livable environment when they come home.

Do YOU know someone who is not a PGSC member yet, but might be interested in becoming one? Instead of recycling this issue, PASS IT ALONG! The executive committee is setting a friendly goal of 25 new members in 2025. Help us reach it!

Palouse Group Sierra Club
www.facebook.com/pgsc1
palouse.sierra.club@gmail.com



Printed on 100% post-consumer paper stock

Save Incredible Old Growth.

By Al Poplawsky

Old growth forests are really incredible places. They provide cold, clean water, secure habitat for wildlife much of it unique to these forests, store immense quantities of carbon helping us to fight climate change, and cool the air with evapotranspiration. Giant, ancient “mother trees” use mycorrhizal fungi to communicate with each other and their little ones, and even send nutrients to their children (really!). However we have very little old growth left. Our Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest is supposed to have preserved ten percent of its acreage as old growth since 1987, however forest personnel have been unable to tell me if this has actually happened. In my forest travels, I occasionally happen upon possible old growth, but it is always in very small patches and doesn’t seem close to 10 percent.

We currently have the opportunity to preserve our remaining old growth forests. The Forest Service is implementing the National Old Growth Amendment. This basic rule would set these areas aside throughout the country, and would write into National Forest plans strong protective measures to conserve them. However, the USFS-proposed amendment needs much improvement. Although it prohibits “commercial” harvest of old growth, it does not preclude prescribed burns and non-commercial harvest in old growth forests.

The Sierra Club generated 17,000 comment letters on the proposed amendment, and staff are continuing to work to improve it. If you sent a letter, thanks! Hopefully the Biden administration will be able to implement a meaningful old growth amendment before late January of 2025!

Autumn Elk Creek Falls Hike

By Krystal Fairfax

About 30 folks joined the Palouse Group in October for an autumn hike to Elk Creek Falls. We ate lunch at the trailhead while guest speakers gave presentations about local environmental issues and the current efforts of their non-profits. The group then trekked through the cool shadows beneath a dense canopy of grand firs, hemlocks, and western white pines. Leaving the forest behind, we reached a hillside meadow where a solitary Ponderosa Pine stood amidst wheat-colored grasses. Across the ravine, basalt columns and lava outcroppings displayed geometric patterns and rugged texture. Elk Creek, hidden beyond the slope’s curve, offered the enticing sound of rushing water as an invitation for further exploration. Our trail eventually brought us to gently flowing pools within the Upper Falls and allowed us an up-close experience at the creek’s edge. The next stop on the footpath was a vantage point overlooking the impressive Middle Falls, plunging 70 feet down steep rock walls. Adding to the plant community diversity, part of the route passed through a rainforest-like microclimate that supported moisture-loving plants such as Maidenhair fern, wild ginger, and rattlesnake-plantain orchids. Finally, we reached the Lower Falls overlook, where we marveled at the torrent plunging through the rugged rock formations. The hike wasn’t just a leisurely walk through the woods, it was a unique opportunity to build community with like-minded, outdoor-loving individuals. The experience was a reminder that nature, in all its beauty and power, has a way of bringing people together.

Tribal, Environmental & Cultural Summit

By Angela Taylor and Julian Matthews

On June 8, 2024, the Nimiipuu Protecting the Environment teamed with Sierra Club, the International Wildlife Coexistence Network, Idaho Rivers, United, and Save the Southfork of the Salmon to host a tribal summit at Ponderosa State Park in McCall, Idaho. The event included an opening ceremony and a flotilla on Payette Lake led by Mary Jane Oatman. There was information on salmon, grizzly bears, and wolf recovery; the stibnite mine; forest management; and Nimiipuu history including panel discussions on the topics. Mary Jane Oatman presenting a new building construction style that uses hemp fibers for insulation to provide a sustainable alternative building material. A traditional dance was performed by a tribe from South Dakota, introduced by Gary Dorr. A traditional salmon feast with frybread was also prepared by local Nimiipuu tribe members. The event took place on a sunny day with a memorable lineup of speakers and events to keep everyone enthralled.



Payette Lake at McCall

SAVE THE DATE!
Annual Winter Snow Outing
Saturday January 18th
Palouse Group of the Sierra Club
and Friends of the Clearwater

Are you interested in our winter outing—skiing, snow shoeing, or just hanging out at the Palouse Divide Lodge? Saturday, January 18th, and check our Palouse Group of the Sierra Club Facebook page soon to register and see more details. The Palouse Divide Nordic Ski Club does awesome grooming on this beautiful trail system!

Join us for a nordic ski or snowshoe tour at 10:00 am in front of the Palouse Divide Lodge. Or if you would rather enjoy the day on your own, join us at the lodge in the late afternoon or for dinner and an evening program.

Those joining us for the day may come inside for a few minutes before 10:00 am to warm up before heading outside. Our ski and snowshoe tours will be 3-4 hours. *All participants are responsible for bringing their own gear and warm clothing (including extra gloves and extra layers!) plus water, lunch (CHECK EMAIL!!!) and refreshments.* We will return to the Lodge in late afternoon for happy hour, buffet dinner and an evening program.

Cost: The outing is free! The lodge will provide dinner for \$25. An overnight stay includes dinner and breakfast the next morning for \$95 per person (shared double room) or \$125/person (single room). A limited numbers of rooms are still available this weekend for both Friday and Saturday evenings and reservations are required. Our Facebook page will soon have more details.

Since this is an official Sierra Club Outing, trip participants will need to register and sign a **waiver** before we head out on the trails, which you will soon be able to do on either our Facebook page or the Sierra Club page. We will send additional information a few days before the event, including a contact list of participants to help you coordinate plans and in case you want to independently arrange carpools. We hope you can join us at Palouse Divide Lodge. The trails, the forest, and the views are beautiful!

Bring: All participants are responsible for providing their own equipment, warm clothing, water, and lunch.

Questions? Email Mac Cantrell (macantr18@gmail.com)

We hope to see YOU there!

 **VOTE!**

Angela Taylor: In the past year, I have volunteered for the Wild & Scenic Film Festival, tabled at Moscow Farmer’s Market and Lentil Fest and look forward to many upcoming opportunities. I am a passionate outdoor person with a true love of wild places and beings. Grizzly bear recovery and habitat preservation / restoration are important to me in addition to being an advocate for getting more people outside and in love with nature.

Rich Alldredge: I have been a member of the Sierra Club for over fifty years. I have served on PGSC Ex-Comm for many years. I have been a science advisor and a salmon advocate for salmon restoration efforts in the Snake and Columbia River basins for twenty-five years. I would like to continue salmon advocacy on behalf of the PGSC.

Jim Frenzel: Jim has been a member of the Palouse community since 1990, living in Moscow and teaching at the University of Idaho. With his kids all grown he is now looking for opportunities to help preserve this paradise we all call “home.”

Note: Each member of a joint membership may vote, each using one of the two columns. Please tear off ballot and mail within 30 days to:

Palouse Group Sierra Club
POB 9932
Moscow, ID 83843.

For Executive Committee (vote for up to three):

Voter 1

Voter 2

Jim Frenzel

Rich Alldredge

Angela Taylor



SIERRA CLUB

Palouse Group Sierra Club
POB 9932
Moscow, ID 83843

Non-Profit
Organization
US Postage
PAID
Permit No 4
Colton, WA

Palouse Group Sierra Club
www.facebook.com/pgsct
palouse.sierra.club@gmail.com

