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# KS WILD NEWS

The Journal of the Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center

## Winter 2005

PRINTED ON 100% POST CONSUMER WASTE, CHLORINE-FREE PAPER



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[www.kswild.org](http://www.kswild.org)

### COVER PHOTO:

The Flat Creek watershed, a tributary to Elk Creek, is the site of the 2002 Timbered Rock fire. This aerial photo shows post-fire logged private lands mixed with public lands. The federal portions within the fire will no longer be logged thanks to KS Wild. Photo by Dang Ngo.

## Old-Growth Reserve Saved

In a legal victory with far reaching implications for national forest management in the Pacific Northwest, KS Wild protected the Elk Creek Old-Growth Reserve from the Medford BLM's plans to log vast swaths of the post-fire landscape.

Northeast of Medford, Or., the 2002 Timbered Rock Fire burned entirely in the federal portion of the Elk Creek Old-Growth Reserve. In response to litigation filed by KS Wild, Judge Ann Aiken ruled in November that the logging of large trees, many of them in small patches that died in the fire, would harm the recovery of old-growth. Old-Growth, or "Late-Successional", Reserves are designated to protect older forests "now and in the future," and scientists insist that large dead trees are critical to old-growth forest development.

Elk Creek is also a "Key Watershed" designed to protect at-risk Chinook and Coho salmon and steelhead trout. Judge Aiken's decision protects over 800 acres of native forests from being converted into tree plantations.

## Scattered Apples Victory

After years of dedication from the Williams community, District Court Judge Michael Hogan ruled in favor of a lawsuit filed by KS Wild and Williams residents against the Scattered Apples timber sale.

The judge ruled that the BLM failed to disclose the environmental consequences of the timber sale, citing KS Wild's recent 9th Circuit ruling on cumulative impacts (see page 4). Unfortunately, the judge also ruled that the BLM was not legally required to consider the community alternative known as SARA.

KS Wild hopes to mediate the remedy for the lawsuit and help develop a creative solution for this project. The Williams watershed could use some small-diameter thinning, and we are hopeful that this ruling will result in sparing large diameter trees while allowing authentic fuels reduction to move forward.



**KS Wild's victory saved 800 acres of post-fire forest like this one.**

## Many thanks to all our supporters:

### Volunteers, Collaborators, Musicians and Artists:

Karina Black, Ralph Bloemers, Grady Boyd, Sam Bridges, Susan Jane Brown, Trace Bungay, Cascadia Wildlands Project, Ginger Cassady, Regina Chichizola, Bob Cremins, Alice Di Micele, Francis Eatherington, EPIC, Evan Frost, Greenpeace, Kyle Haines, Scott Harding, Nick Joslin, Jay Lininger, Brian Litmas, Ivan Maluski, James McCloud, Kim Mericle, Jasmine Minbashian, National Forest Protection Alliance, Dang Ngo, Ahavah Oblak, Oregon Natural Resources Council, Oregon Sierra Club, OSPIRG, Pacific Environmental Advocacy Center, Stephanie Parent, Peace House, Tim Ream, Jarid Simons, Rolf Skar, Barry Snitkin, Steve Wiedel, Becky White, and many others.

### Special thanks to our hardworking canvassers:

Hazel Robin, Liza Tran and Joe Flaherty

### Support These Businesses Because They Support Us!

Ashland Food Co-op, Ashland Mountain Supply, Buckhorn Springs, Claudia Beausoleil Mediation Service, Dan the Backhoe Man Excavation Service, Evo's Java House, Full Circle Sports, Geppetos, Green Springs Inn, Greenleaf Restaurant, Heartsong Chai, Herb Pharm, Inc., Horizon Herbs, Kalb Chiropractic, Morningstar Healing Arts, North Coast Chiropractic, Northwest Nature Shop, Plant Oregon Nursery, Sunshine Natural Foods, Trillium Natural Foods, Williams General Store.

### Deep gratitude goes to:

Scott Allison, Astrov Fund, Michael and Linda DuBose and Aftermarket Technologies, Jeff Groethe, Walter and Conny Lindley, Herb Pharm, Inc., Rex and Deanna Bell, Shannon Clery, Elizabeth Coker, James Grey Hecht, Brad Horwitz, Sally Mackler and the Suzan R. Mackler Fund, Katherine Mechling, Margaret Purves, Fredric & Lundy Reynolds, Peter and Karen Salant, Steven and Priscilla Weaver, Jerard & Carol Weigler.

### Thanks to the following foundations for supporting KS Wild:

444S Foundation, Deer Creek Foundation, Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund, Heller Charitable and Educational Fund, a donor-advised grant from the McKenzie River Gathering Foundation, directed by the Maud T. Kernan Fund, Patagonia, Inc., A Territory Resource, The Weeden Foundation, Whole Systems Foundation, Wilburforce Foundation.

### KS Wild Board of Directors:

Shannon Clery, Liz Crosson, Stuart O'Neill, Keith Quick, Laurel Sutherlin, Derek Volkart, Board Advisor-Jim Bowne

### KS Wild's Mission:

The Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center (KS Wild) works to protect and restore the outstanding biological diversity of the Klamath-Siskiyou and south Cascadian Ecoregions of southwest Oregon and northwest California. We use environmental law, science, education and collaboration to help build healthy ecosystems and sustainable communities.



# Focus on our KS Wild Family

## Dwarf mistletoe - (*Arceuthobium tsugense*)

Mistletoe is widely recognized as the bough under which to smooch someone during the holidays. Beyond kissing customs, mistletoe is referred to as a forest pest that requires eradication due to its impacts on timber volume.

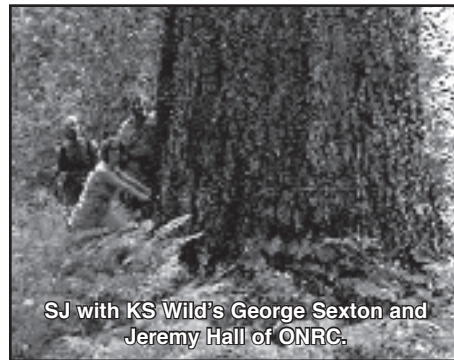
Mistletoe is a parasitic plant - it requires a host tree to live. "Mistletoe" means "all heal" in the Celtic language and was thought to possess healing powers as well as hold the soul of the host tree.

While there are more than 1,300 species of mistletoe worldwide, only two are native to North America. Dwarf mistletoe is found in the western U.S. and is important to the ecology of forested systems. Evidence indicates that mistletoes have been a part of forests for thousands, perhaps millions of years. The fruit, foliage and pollen of mistletoe are a food source for numerous bird, mammal and insect species. Dwarf mistletoe alters the growth patterns of infected trees, creating structural complexity within forests.

Mistletoe does not typically kill trees (that would not be a good strategy for a parasite), but it does reduce the growth rate of host trees. On public lands, agencies should not be managing for peak growth rates of commercial trees, rather they should be managing for a complex forest and a wide range of forest values.



**American mistletoe**  
(*Phoradendron flavescens*)  
is the other native North American mistletoe.



SJ with KS Wild's George Sexton and Jeremy Hall of ONRC.

**Susan Jane Brown**—This environmental attorney kicks more butt than a truckload of donkeys.

As one of KS Wild's closest allies, Susan Jane (or SJ as she is known to her friends) has worked with us to protect thousands of acres of ancient forests at the Timbered Rock, Silver Hawk and Meteor timber sales. SJ strikes fear into the heart of evildoers with bulletproof legal briefs and a commanding court presence, yet she brings joy to the hearts of her friends by marching them

to the most beautiful places on earth and concocting unique alcoholic beverages.

SJ is currently a staff attorney for the Pacific Environmental Advocacy Center at the Lewis and Clark Northwestern School of Law where she defends the forest while also instructing up-and-coming law students. <http://www.lclark.edu/org/peac/>

At her previous position as Executive Director of the Gifford Pinchot Task Force, she put a stop to old-growth logging in the Southern Washington Cascades. Without Susan Jane, many of the old-growth forests we know and love would be stump fields. SJ is a hero to those who love a living planet.

# Fire Recovery Dupe

The cover photograph of this edition of *KS Wild News* was taken from a small plane operated by Lighthawk, a network of conservation minded pilots. This is the site of the 2002 Timbered Rock Fire, but the photo was taken after much of the area was "salvaged."

The exposed soil and scars on the earth are from logging on industrial private land owned by Boise. The patches of green trees that remain are on land administered by the Medford District Bureau of Land Management.

## Kicking a Watershed When It's Down

The cover photograph shows the Flat Creek canyon, a tributary to Elk Creek. Elk Creek is the most productive salmon watershed in the Upper Rogue River. After a fire, watersheds are particularly sensitive. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to tell you that after a fire, driving tractors and dragging trees across sensitive soils will lead to erosion. After Flat Creek was logged, Boise placed bales of hay in nearly every stream they logged to capture the massive sediment flush on its way to salmon spawning grounds. More than 6,000 acres of private land was clearcut after the Timbered Rock Fire.



Photo: G. Sexton

**Hay Bales placed on Flat Creek in an attempt to stop erosion.**

## Fire is Natural

For thousands of years natural fires have been an important part of forest ecosystems in the West. Natural wildfire provides wildlife habitat, creates forest diversity, and recycles important nutrients. Fire does not destroy a forest, every forest you have visited forest has burned. Already in the Klamath-Siskiyou, millions of acres of forest have been converted to tree farms and agricultural land. We don't need to create any more. A combination of fire-safety improvements on homes, the removal of small-diameter fuels and prescribed fire near communities is the best solution for people and nature in fire-dependent areas.

## What You Can Do

Oregon's Junior Senator Gordon Smith is set to introduce legislation that will mandate salvage logging after any fire or other natural disturbance. Call him and Senator Wyden (and your Senator if your outside Oregon) and ask them to support the role of natural fire for natural areas and oppose any effort to mandate clearcut salvage logging anywhere, for any reason.

**Gordon Smith:** (503) 326-3386  
One World Trade Center  
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Portland, OR 97204

**Ron Wyden:** (503) 326-7525  
700 NE Multnomah St, Suite 450  
Portland, OR 97232



# Biscuit Logging Near Bald Mountain

## Flat Top Ancient Forests Hitting the Ground

by George Sexton

*"Sentiment without action is the ruin of the soul."*  
- Ed Abbey

Remember the Bald Mountain Road Blockade that helped launch the ancient forest movement back in the eighties? Yeah, me neither. But it was a seminal event in the annals of forest defense, and I've often felt a debt of gratitude to those forest defenders who made their stand on the Bald Mountain road.



**Sugar pine, Flat Top unit 22, cut December 2004.**

Unfortunately the Biscuit old-growth logging that is currently taking place at the Flat Top timber sale on the Northeast corner of the Kalmiopsis Wilderness has attracted a lot less attention than was present during the legendary efforts to protect the North Kalmiopsis from logging during the eighties.

## Matrix Ancient Forests: Doomed to Die

The Silver Creek Timber Company is now logging large-diameter trees near Phillips Creek and South Fork Silver Creek in a narrow wedge that sits between the Kalmiopsis Wilderness Area and the North Kalmiopsis Roadless Area. These lands were designated as a "matrix" old-growth logging sacrifice zone by the Northwest Forest Plan. In addition to logging ancient forests in the "matrix," the Forest Service is also attempting to salvage log supposedly protected land designations such as "late successional reserves," (that means old-growth reserves) and inventoried roadless areas. While the struggle to protect old-growth targeted for logging in the "reserves" winds it's way through the court system, the "matrix" lands, like Flat Top, remain a free-fire zone for clearcutting.

## Enter Silver Creek Timber Company

Never heard of the Silver Creek Timber Company? Well you aren't alone. Nobody had heard of them before the Biscuit timber sales started hitting the street. Essentially a front-group for old-growth mills, Silver Creek is selling the ancient trees it logs at Flat Top to Roseburg Forest Products, Rough and Ready and Oregon Overseas. In addition, Silver Creek has contracted Columbia Helicopters to log and haul at Flat Top. Columbia Helicopters is well known for logging operations around the world, as well as oil development in ecologically and socially sensitive places like Alaska's north slope, Ecuador, Indonesia and the Sudan.

National Monument. The Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (PCT) dances along the Siskiyou Crest but does not enter any Wilderness between the Marble Mountain and Sky Lakes Wildernesses, some 50 miles apart. The Kangaroo has historic trails, Research Natural Areas, Botanical Areas and Geological Areas, but none are saved with the greatest protection: Wilderness.

Supporters of Red Buttes expansion and Siskiyou Crest Wilderness will continue the campaign for designation. We have 20,323 acres protected, but we want to expand that to over 100,000 acres, including Condrey Mountain. With your help, we can be the voice for the land and protect this gem for generations to come. Contact Susan Menanno at: [redbutteswilderness@hotmail.com](mailto:redbutteswilderness@hotmail.com) for more information, and prepare yourself for Siskiyou Crest hikes in Spring and Summer 2005.

## COME HIKE WITH KS WILD THIS WINTER

In November, KS Wild and OSPIRG visited the 2002 Antelope Fire east of Ashland. Weather was no deterrent to an amazing hike through a forest in its third year of recovery.



Join us on January 30th for a fantastic snowshoe on Mt. Ashland. Contact us for details.

Visit [www.kswild.org](http://www.kswild.org) for schedules of hikes, our free environmental film series and other events.

## Please Join KS Wild Today!

**Yes, I want to support KS Wild's efforts to protect the remaining wild forests of the Klamath-Siskiyou Ecoregion with a tax-deductible membership donation of:**

\$20     \$50     \$100     Other \$

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (    ) \_\_\_\_\_

Mail this form along with your membership donation to:  
Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center, P.O. Box 332, Williams, OR 97544

# Memoirs of a Wilderness Ranger

by Susan Menanno

In June of 1990 I found myself climbing up over Sweaty Gap trail. Sweaty Gap ridge line divides the Middle Fork of the Applegate River from the Butte Fork. It's a low gap, but one climbs 1,200 feet from the Middle Fork to the Gap in about one mile. The trail has 17 different tree species and they co-mingle all the way to the Gap. From mixed conifer to serpentine, this quick one mile demonstrates the grandeur of the Siskiyou Mountains.



**Susan Menanno on Sweaty Gap looking into the Kangaroo Roadless Area and Lake Peak.**

Dropping down into the Butte Fork Canyon, black bears used to be a common site. Hiking up the 8-mile trail of the Butte Fork one season (I worked in the Red Buttes as Lead Wilderness Ranger for 11 seasons), I saw seven bears in one day. It was common to see bears on a weekly, if not daily basis. That was the early 1990s. By the time I retired in 2000, bear sightings had become rare.

The Red Buttes Wilderness is a place I call home. From June 1990 through October 2000, I continually walked the trails and ridges of this remote area. I am dazzled by the beauty, the bloom, the rock formations, the wildlife, and the complete solitude and quiet of this forgotten Wilderness.

During the 1970s, the Forest Service conducted its roadless area review and evaluation (RARE); a two phase process, and from the RARE II evaluation, this unique area was coined the Kangaroo Roadless Area. The Kangaroo straddles the Siskiyou Crest of southern Oregon and northern California and is over 100,000 acres. In 1984, the 20,323 acre Red Buttes was designated Wilderness from the greater Kangaroo roadless area.

As a tree-planter for 11 seasons prior to being a Wilderness Ranger, I worked hard to preserve areas along the Siskiyou Crest as Wilderness. While we had a victory of 20,323 acres as Red Buttes Wilderness, the job is not done. We have so much more unprotected Kangaroo roadless area that should become Wilderness.

Why save more land as Red Buttes Wilderness? You've probably heard all the facts: global significance for rare geology and botany, connectivity corridor from the Siskiyou and Kalmiopsis Wilderness areas over to the land arc of the Cascade-Siskiyou

Silver Creek Timber holds the distinction of being busted last year for logging trees that stood within the designated Kalmiopsis Wilderness adjacent to the Flat Top timber sale.

## A Legacy Of Destruction

The next time you head to the Bald Mountain or Flat Top wilderness trailheads, be sure to enjoy the fresh new Flat Top clearcuts on the 090, 642 and 091 road systems. While the legacy of the Bald Mountain forest defenders was an increased awareness of ancient forest logging throughout the West, the legacy of the Northwest Forest Plan will be roughly one million acres of old-growth clearcuts, like those at Flat Top, that have been silently condemned to the "matrix" sacrifice zone.



## AWESOME NINTH CIRCUIT WIN ON UPPER ROGUE

It all started back in July 2002 when KS Wild filed a lawsuit against the Medford BLM challenging the Indian Soda and Conde Shell old-growth timber sales. These sales were the first of four proposed sales in the South Fork Little Butte Creek watershed, east of Medford near Mt. McLoughlin. The four timber sales combined would have logged almost 30 million board feet from 10,000 acres in the Upper Rogue watershed.



The Butte Creek watershed is well-known for its many recreational opportunities and its biological value. Hiking, bird-watching, camping, picnicking, swimming, boating, hunting and fishing are all popular activities in the area. The watershed also provides habitat for spotted owls and fish species such as Chinook, Coho and Pacific lamprey.

KS Wild challenged the logging in Federal district court and anti-environmental Judge Michael Hogan heard the case. You may remember Judge Hogan as the fellow who claimed there is no difference between hatchery and wild salmon.

Predictably, Hogan ruled in favor of the BLM's old-growth logging plan. KS Wild then appealed Judge Hogan's decision to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. KS Wild staff attorney Brenna Bell successfully focused on the BLM's failure to disclose or analyze the cumulative effects of logging in this fragile watershed. On October 28, the 9th Circuit reversed the district court's decision and ruled for KS Wild, giving a new lease on life for old-growth forests in the Upper Rogue watershed.

Not only did the Court halt these illegal sales, the ruling will improve the way the Medford BLM gathers and discloses information to the public. For the first time ever, the BLM will have to fully disclose the impacts of its old-growth logging program on fish and wildlife. In addition to protecting some of the remaining Butte Creek forests, this case law will help ensure that all federal agencies disclose the real environmental impacts of their actions to the public.

# As Wild As It Gets

## Step Back in Time on the Salmon River

By George Sexton

It's easy to feel awed by the Salmon River. Visiting this Wild and Scenic tributary to the Klamath is like stepping back in time. Endangered Chinook and Coho salmon still spawn in its cold, clear water after reaching the end of their journey to find an undammed river lined with ancient forests. The Marble Mountain, Trinity and Russian Wilderness Areas offer some of the best backcountry hiking in the world. Whitewater enthusiasts speak of the Salmon River in the reverential tones usually reserved for religious conversations. In short, the Salmon River watershed contains some of the last, best Wildlands in the lower 48.



Photo: G. Sexton

**This old-growth sugar pine is scheduled to be cut as part of the Meteor timber sale on the Salmon River.**

## Love It Or Log It

Another way in which visiting the Salmon is like stepping back in time is that the Salmon River Ranger District timber planners have an old-west mentality in which anything that can't be mined should be logged. Unfortunately when the federal timber sale planners look at the ancient forests of the Salmon River watershed, they do not see a world-class ecological gem; instead they see thousands of acres of "over-mature" trees that they would like to see logged and converted into industrial fiber plantations.

## Three Terrible Timber Sales

The Forest Service's assault on the ancient forests of the Salmon River heated up when it sold the 1,040 acre Glassups timber sale, which was logged in 2003. The logging of ancient forests in Glassups energized forest-defenders in Northern California and Southern Oregon to ensure that such destruction never happens again. A brave last ditch attempt was made to save a handful of old trees in Glassups by three young tree-sitters who put their lives on the line and hung tough in three ancient trees while the forest fell around them.

# Siskiyou Crest Updates

## Nabob Ridge and Condrey

Fruit Growers Supply Company is seeking a permit to access and haul timber from its 240-acre inholding in the heart of the Condrey Mountain Roadless Area. The permit would facilitate logging of some of the most spectacular old growth forest on the Siskiyou Crest.

In October, KS Wild filed suit against the Forest Service over the authorization of the Nabob Ridge Road Use and Helicopter Landing Permit, which would enable the liquidation of this precious ancient forest. KS Wild challenged the permit because the Forest Service refused to analyze the impacts of the project on the Condrey Mountain Roadless Area, spotted owls and their critical habitat, water quality, soils, and the old-growth forest reserve where the project is located. KS Wild continues to seek funding to purchase this private inholding in order to protect it in perpetuity.

This suit also challenges the Forest Service's method of seeking public comment on these types of projects. The Forest Service, under new Bush administration regulations, allowed public comment only on a "project description," which included no information regarding the environmental effects of the project.



[www.mountashland.com](http://www.mountashland.com)

## Mount Ashland Ski Area

The Rogue-Siskiyou National Forest approved the Mt. Ashland Association's plan to convert the upper Ashland Creek watershed into an industrial playground. In November, outraged citizens filed 28 separate appeals. The Regional Forester denied the appeals and gave a final go-ahead to development. Before getting started, however, MAA must revise its lease agreement with the City of Ashland to operate the publicly owned ski area.

The lease requires MAA to reserve money to "restore" the mountain when lack of snow forces closure of the ski area, as occurred in 1991-92. Expansion increases this restoration liability. MAA has not secured financing for expansion and it has not submitted plans to the City or the Forest Service, nor has it indicated when it will proceed.

Meanwhile, citizens are demanding that MAA subject its board of directors to election and open meeting laws. Contrary to its by-laws, the board now self-appoints to maintain control of opinion and fails to give public notice of its meetings. Dues paying MAA members should have a vote and be able to attend board meetings.

# KS Wild Protects Klamath Old-Growth Beaver Creek Timber Sale Stopped In Its Tracks

by George Sexton

In days gone by the Forest Service would have simply called an old-growth timber sale an old-growth timber sale. Nowadays old-growth timber sales are invariably named “watershed restoration projects” or “fuels treatments” because the Forest Service knows that old-growth logging is as unpopular as it is unethical.

On the 14th of October KS Wild prevailed in US District Court in the case of KS Wild v. USFS and protected 975 acres of native forest, including 477 acres of spotted owl critical habitat, from logging. The ancient forests in Beaver Creek, a tributary to the ailing Klamath River, will continue to provide clean water and irreplaceable wildlife habitat.

These forests could not have been protected without the hard work of Regina Chichizola and Marianne Dugan.

KS Wild will continue to stand up for ancient forests, spotted owls and salmon when ever they are threatened. We will also steadfastly refuse to call old-growth timber sales “watershed restoration.”



In the field at the Beaver Creek timber sale.

## Forest Health Pop-Quiz:

Q: What do the Klamath National Forest timber planners call an illegal old-growth timber sale that logs spotted owl critical habitat in a heavily degraded watershed that serves as the last cold-water refuge for salmon and steelhead below the Iron Gate dam?

A: A watershed restoration project.

Q: What does a federal judge call an illegal old-growth timber sale that logs spotted owl critical habitat in a heavily logged watershed that serves as the last cold-water refuge for salmon and steelhead below the Iron Gate dam?

A: An arbitrary abuse of discretion that violates the National Forest Management Act and the Klamath Land and Resource Management Plan.

Q: What does KS Wild call such Klamath National Forest old-growth timber sales?

A: Easy pickings for establishing great legal precedent.

On the heels of Glassups old-growth logging, the Forest Service planned two more ancient forest timber sales in the Salmon River watershed; the 578 acre Knob timber sale and the 744 acre Meteor timber sale. KS Wild has taken the Knob timber sale to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, and has administratively appealed the Meteor timber sale. We will exhaust every legal means to ensure that the Glassups tragedy is not repeated at Knob and Meteor.

## Stand Up For What You Stand On

Please take a moment to weigh-in with the Forest Service and urge them to protect the ancient forests of the Salmon River watershed. These forests currently provide some of the best spotted owl and salmon habitat in the country. Lets make sure it stays that way.

## TALKING POINTS ON THE SALMON RIVER

- ◆ The ancient forests of the Salmon River watershed are more valuable for recreation, wildlife habitat and clean water than as industrial fiber plantations.
- ◆ Responding to the death of 68,000 Chinook in the Klamath River, the National Research Council stated that, “Logging and its associated road-building have greatly increased erosion on the steep and fragile slopes of the watershed.” Please ask the Forest Service to stop logging on erosive slopes and begin decommissioning unneeded logging roads.
- ◆ The Forest Service needs to stop intentionally killing spotted owls and should rescind all timber sales that require “take” (kill) permits for the spotted owl.

## WHO TO WRITE

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## Help KS Wild Protect the Wildlands You Love

Without KS Wild, thousands of acres of old-growth and roadless forest would be cut down. A wide range of species, from mountain lions to rare, endangered lilies would be at further risk. Dozens of watersheds would be degraded by improper land management activities. Please help be a voice for the voiceless.

## KS Wild Endowment Fund

KS Wild, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, is establishing the KS Wild Endowment Fund. Tax-deductible contributions to the Endowment Fund will help to build a stable financial base for KS Wild, in order to provide a consistent source of funding to continue our work of protecting the wild places of the Klamath-Siskiyou Ecoregion.

**Please call 541-846-9273 to help. Thanks for your support!!**

# Featured Hike:

## Sterling Mine Ditch Trail, Little Applegate

by Lesley Adams

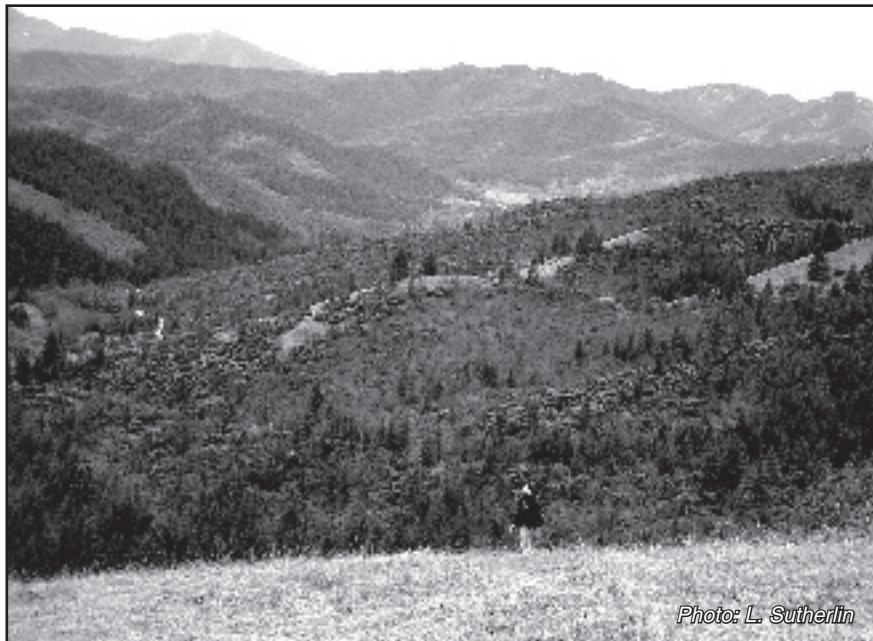


Photo: L. Sutherlin

Little Applegate Watershed, looking downriver from the Sterling Ditch Trail.

Winter has set in; the days are short, the snow is gaining depth, the trees are bare and the birds are opening food caches they built up throughout the year. While it is gratifying and exciting to engage in snow-time activities, there are also opportunities to hike on low-elevation trails in the winter and avoid the preparations and strenuous output of snow-shoeing or backcountry skiing. One trail that I enjoy year-round is the Sterling Mine Ditch Trail in the Little Applegate.

The Ditch trail is a remnant of southern Oregon's gold rush, which began on Sterling Creek around 1854. Hydraulic mining became the preferred method to extract gold – a process that used hydraulic machines to blast water into streambeds and wash out the desired gold layers. One of the greatest engineering feats of its time, miners began construction of the Sterling Mine Ditch in 1877 to bring water from the Little Applegate River to operate hydraulic machines on Sterling Creek.

Upon completion, the ditch measured more than 26 miles long. It took hundreds of workers, many ill-treated Chinese laborers, to complete the project. The ditch was used until the 1930s, and it is now maintained as a gentle trail through a portion of the beautiful and unique eastern Siskiyou.

In the rain shadow of the highest peaks of the Siskiyou Crest, the Little Applegate is one of the most arid regions in western Oregon and the confluence of rare and

interesting plant communities. The area is a diverse mosaic of dry grasslands, mature conifer forest, deciduous woodlands and shrublands dispersed with old-growth madrone and several species of oak, as well as hazel, mountain mahogany and Klamath plum. One can also find ancient junipers (*Juniperus occidentalis*) on the western edge of its range on Anderson Butte or the extremely rare Siskiyou Water Birch (*Betula occidentalis onapina*) in Muddy Gulch.



Purple mouse-ears is a fantastic monkey flower (*Mimulus douglasii*).

This area is part of a grazing allotment that has been inactive for 20 years, so the recovering grasslands offer a unique springtime opportunity to see flowers not common in other areas. Much of the area is a refuge for Gentner's fritillary (*Fritillaria gentneri*), a beautiful red lily that lives nowhere else in the world but southwestern Oregon. Other rare plants found in the area include Slender-flowered primrose (*Camissonia graciliflora*), Purple mouse-ears (*Mimulus douglasii*), Woodland star (*Lithophragma heterophyllum*) and Klamath gooseberry (*Ribes inerme klamathense*).

Broad views from the Ditch trail can warm the soul and illustrate the wild nature of this landscape. The trail traverses part of the proposed Dakubetede Wilderness – the lowest elevation portions of proposed Siskiyou Crest Wilderness. This area is also part of the proposed 5,000 acre Bald Lick timber sale that may include more than 7 miles of new road construction. The Environmental Assessment on Bald Lick is due out in early 2005.

## Getting There

From Jacksonville, follow Hwy 238 to Ruch. Turn left on Upper Applegate Road. Continue for four miles, and then turn left on Little Applegate Road. In three miles, you will see the historic town site of Buncom on your left, continue on the road (it veers to the right). After six miles, the Bear Gulch Trailhead will be on your left (the first of three trailheads). If you continue less than one mile further on Little Applegate, Tunnel Ridge trailhead is on the left, with parking across from the trailhead. If you continue another two miles you can also start from the Little Applegate trailhead.

## Be Prepared

Always be prepared when you go into the woods! Bring your maps (directions should always accompany good maps), hiking boots, plenty of water, food and a good attitude. Also, beware of the poison oak!



## Kupillas Loses Re-Election, Heads "Healthy Forests"

The Medford Mail Tribune reported on December 16 that former Jackson County Commissioner Sue Kupillas has been chosen as the first Executive Director of Communities for Healthy Forests. The goal of the organization is to build support for upcoming legislation that would mandate logging after all fires. Kupillas has a long and sordid history of working on behalf of timber interests in southwest Oregon. See page 2 for what you can do to help stop bad post-fire forest legislation.