



WallowaLands

Wallowa Land Trust
Spring 2021 Newsletter

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Cottonwoods and aspens have begun to unfurl their leaves along the rivers of Wallowa County, and we're beginning to come out of our shells after one of the strangest years yet. Last year was hard for many of us, but Spring in Wallowa County tells us that 2020 is officially over. We welcome this changing of the seasons, signs of moving forward.

This issue of WallowaLands is about moving forward. It includes our progress on the multi-use management plan for the East Moraine Community Forest, our tribal engagement efforts and our calendar of events this summer. (Oh, to be able to host events again! Safely, of course.) And like unfurling leaves, Wallowa Land Trust itself is growing. We are thrilled to have another person on staff to pull these events together, as well as this publication! Get to know Sarah Kleinhanzl, our new Communications and Outreach Coordinator, on page 7.

As this newsletter goes to print, my heart swells with gratitude for everyone who responded to our recent request to become monthly contributors to Wallowa Land Trust. I am in awe of how thoughtful, kind and generous our supporters are. I have had the great pleasure of speaking to a number of you in person, and your stories about why you support the land trust and your connections to the land give me fuel for another day.

When I think of Spring, I think of sunlight, afternoon drizzles, warmer days growing longer—so many elements coming together to bring life back to the landscape. Our supporters are a bit like Spring in that you come from different places, have diverse backgrounds and hometowns, and yet all come together to support the blossoming of this place.

We share a very personal and emotional connection to the land here in Northeast Oregon. If you close your eyes, no doubt you can easily conjure up the sights of ponderosa pines dotting the Wallowa Mountains, sounds of the Lostine River cascading through a narrow canyon, smells of lupine and milkvetch blooming on the Zumwalt Prairie, or even the feel of the cold glacial water of Wallowa Lake.

By coming together, sharing your stories and times and gifts of support, you bring life to Wallowa Land Trust month after month, year and year, allowing us to move forward and preserve this place we all love. This deep connection binds us together, despite our different genders, occupations, ethnicities and zip codes. It is an incredible honor to be of service to you in caring for this special place that connects us all. In times when I question the future and our ability to come together and overcome unfathomable obstacles, when I face the challenges like we all faced last year, this knowledge of our common love of the land gives me profound hope—a hope that things can and are moving forward.

A hope that as we heal and care for the land, it will heal and care for us. ■



Kathleen Ackley

An Update on the East Moraine Management Plan

In the spirit of a new season blooming, Wallowa Land Trust has been advancing its work with the Wallowa Lake Moraines Partnership and the East Moraine Community Forest Multiple-Use Management Plan. As you were surely aware, The Community Forest was officially protected as of January 2020 – a feat that would not have been possible without the generosity and dedication of our supporters. On the 1,820 acres protected, at least 15 houses could have been built as well as a conference center with staff quarters and a dock on the shoreline of Wallowa Lake. Instead, this land is now protected from commercial and residential development, forever.

But land protection isn't just a one-time action. It's an ongoing effort, a perpetual responsibility to steward the land. As a part of the Wallowa Lake Moraines Partnership, Wallowa Land Trust's Conservation Program Manager, Eric Greenwell, has been collaborating with a management team comprised of Wallowa County Commissioners, Wallowa Resources, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, the Nez Perce Tribe, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and other professionals to finalize what management of the Community Forest will look like.

Since the beginning, the Wallowa Lake Moraines Partnership has had specific goals and values they wanted to preserve for the East Moraine – values established by extensive feedback from our community. These values and goals were communicated to raise funds to purchase the East Moraine Community Forest and determined what uses will occur on the property now that it is under Wallowa County ownership. Hence, the management plan is a 'multiple-use management plan.'

As demonstrated in the public survey released last fall, people support the preservation of the Partnership's goals and five key uses for the property: forestry, rangeland management, habitat, cultural resources, and recreation.

For each of these five uses, it was important to find experts to lead surveying, data collection and drafting management goals and strategies to ensure all aspects support each other.

As Eric explains, "It is crucial to maintain a 10,000-foot view of the project, and keep in mind the end goals and where opportunities for overlap and mutual benefit could lie at all times. This requires a great body of knowledge about diverse uses that no one individual could possess. We couldn't do it without people with experience, people who understand what we are trying to achieve, what and who they represent, and above all people who share a willingness to work together."

Since the property was acquired, the management committee has had the huge task of fitting puzzle pieces of different management goals together. This project is likened to 'a bit like building the bike while riding it' - shifting a large amount of land from private to public use. It isn't as simple as writing up recommendations. A lot of data had to be collected. Multiple surveys (forest inventories, cultural resource surveys, botanical surveys, trail surveys, etc.) were necessary to create a baseline of conditions and existing uses to inform how to best approach future management.

While the Land Trust has been hard at work leading the completion of this multiple-use management plan, Katy Nesbitt of Wallowa County and Tara Porter of Tara Porter Creative Resources have been involved with improved public access, an aspect of the property that has had many community members curious.

When asked about what these access improvements will look like, Katy says, "The improved trail access points will have working gates accessible to pedestrians and cyclists at east and west entrances, and to horses on the east side, where there is more room and less congestion and traffic. Currently, trail users accessing the moraine from the west side have to crawl over or through a broken gate and cyclists have even more difficulty. On the east side we will have a large area for horse trailer parking and ample room to turn around - a feature not currently available. Pedestrians and cyclists will have an easier and safer time accessing the west side trailhead off Turner Lane, as well."

East Moraine (continued)

Trails have been historically used for hiking, cross country skiing, cycling and horseback riding. Those uses will continue, but “a better managed trail system will allow for a more pleasurable experience for all trail users, especially when many types of users may be involved,” says Tara.

Tara has been involved with creating the design for the trailhead signs to be located on the East Moraine. “One sign will be located by the west access point, colloquially referred to as “the green gate,” and the other on the east side. The general information about the trail will include a map of the area and various information educating the public to explore and learn more about the East Moraine Community Forest,” says Tara.



*Eric Greenwell spreading grass seed for a stewardship project on the East Moraine property.
Image Credit: Wallowa Land Trust*

Page 3 Image Credit: Leon Werdinger Photography

"The Community Forest is literally our common ground."

Eric Greenwell

As we near the end of the heavy back-end planning for the multiple-use management plan, there is a lot to look forward to and a lot to keep in mind. As Eric puts it, “We have an opportunity here to show and teach how multiple uses can work. For example, I think it’s fascinating that the science of today’s forestry practices can mirror how landscapes were already managed by fire, which is one of the oldest tools used to manage vegetation here by Nez Perce people. When it comes to supporting the local economy and maintaining a natural and sacred setting on the East Moraine, this is an opportunity to plan and achieve multiple goals as well as an opportunity to take the public out there, on the ground, and foster learning and dialogue about what we’re doing. The Community Forest is literally our common ground.”

And this is just the beginning. It’s important to keep in mind the first version of the multiple-use management is just the first version. The goals of the Wallowa Lake Moraines Partnership are at its heart, but how we achieve those goals, and the plan itself, will change and evolve just like what we learn about the Community Forest, and the forest itself. ■

Tribal Engagement

At the heart of Wallowa County lies the town of Joseph, a rural enclave of art, culture, restaurants and businesses. Joseph is named after the legendary Nez Perce Chief who famously stated, "Hear me, my chiefs. I am tired, the roots are sick. From where the sun now stands I shall fight no more forever." The story of the Nez Perce War of 1877, is in many cases all that Americans today know of the Nez Perce people. They might know of Chief Joseph and even recognize his visage, but the Nez Perce as a thriving, rich community of people alive today and practicing their traditional culture, seems strange and foreign to many.

Wallowa Land Trust's tribal engagement program is hoping to change that dynamic. But why would a land conservation organization be involved in something that, on its surface, seems far removed from our mission?

Our line of work has us interacting with the land in a multitude of ways. Our goals align with caring for it, overseeing its protection, and learning from it. But in working with land so intimately, it would be a huge misstep to overlook those who have cared for these lands for thousands of years before us. The heart of it is acknowledging that indigenous communities have invaluable knowledge around relationship with land.

Despite their diaspora across the west after the war of 1877, Nez Perce have always returned home to the Wallowas, following the seasonal round. Yet access to the land that sustains their culture, tradition and lifeways, is becoming increasingly scarce and sometimes fraught with danger. Indigenous people rely upon access to a diversity of landscapes, not only what is limited by what is now in public hands. Here is where Wallowa Land Trust feels we can have an important role to play.

Every day we interface with private landowners – landowners with a love for their land and a desire to manage it for long-term sustainability and climate resiliency. What if there was a way to share ancient knowledge of stewardship that not only resulted in a healthier piece of property, but also had the effect of supporting and nourishing Indigenous people? Activities such as root gathering strengthen native plant communities and can play a key role in combatting invasive weeds. Nez Perce elders have passed stories down through the generations about caring for this land we call home. There are Nez Perce residing a day's drive away in Nespelem who have only been to Wallowa County a handful of times yet know more about the flora and fauna here than some long-term residents thanks to their generational knowledge.



*Wallowa County resident learns about root gathering from tribal member.
Image Credit: Sarah Kleinhanzl*

Tribal Engagement

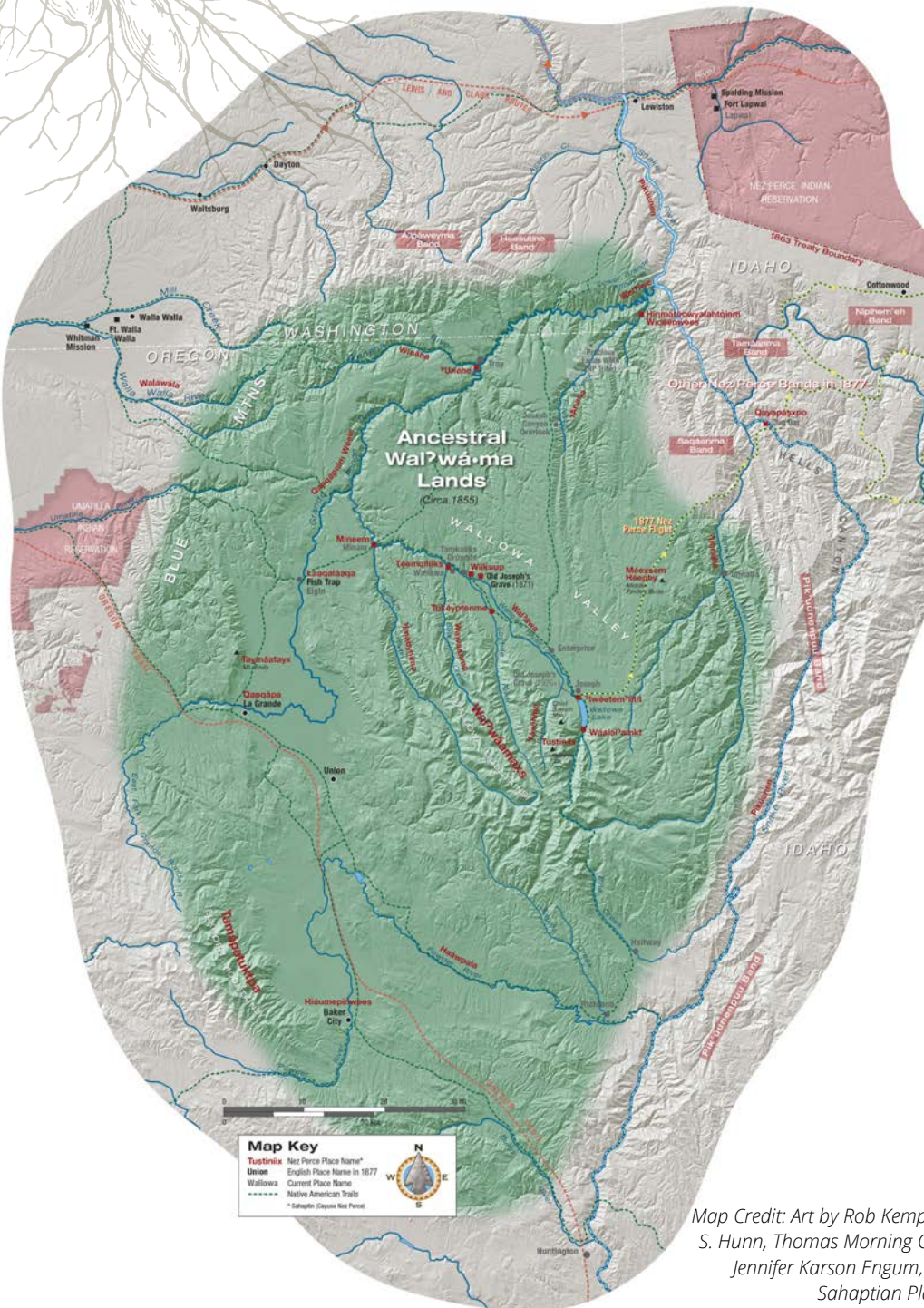
This knowledge has led to additional private landowners, such as the Locke family, to welcome native gatherers to their land here in Wallowa County. "I want to share our land with the Nez Perce because I consider our family as a temporary caretaker. Attending the dances and ceremonies at Tamkaliks one realizes that natural fit of the native people and their culture to the surrounding environment of Wallowa County" says local property owner, Barney Locke. "Our family property in the Midway area has evidence of Nez Perce encampments used by the Indigenous people as a layover on the way to and from the winter grounds in the Snake River Canyon and perhaps Joseph Canyon. Someday I would like to see that property returned to its rightful owner, the Nez Perce."

As Barney touched on, this is a unique and profound opportunity for local landowners to make connections with tribal members, as land access is a pressing concern for the traditional root gathering. If you're interested in opening up your property for traditional root gathering in the future, please get in touch with us.

"Essentially, we see this as a win-win situation. We have the honor to care for this land, not just for us, but for future generations. Who better to be a part of that than the very people who helped shape the landscape since time immemorial?" says Wallowa Land Trust Executive Director, Kathleen Ackley.

You'll be hearing more about our tribal engagement program as it grows. ■

Map Credit: Art by Rob Kemp based on the work of Eugene S. Hunn, Thomas Morning Owl, Phillip E. Cash Cash, and Jennifer Karson Engum, "They Are Not Forgotten: Sahaptian Place Names..."



Welcome Sarah

In January of this year, Sarah Kleinhanzl joined the Wallowa land Trust team as the Outreach and Communications Coordinator. This newly permanent, full-time position involves development and implementation of a communications plan, tribal learning and engagement, planning of events, and creating outreach materials such as the one you're currently reading!

Sarah grew up in Maryland before attending Appalachian State University located in the Blue Ridge Mountains of western North Carolina. She graduated with a degree in Advertising and Graphic Design, and soon after worked in client management in Washington D.C. This is around the time when most folks ask, "how did she end up in rural Eastern Oregon?"; and it's a fair question.

Growing up, Sarah and her family spent many summer vacations visiting national parks throughout the west. It was this early appreciation of our natural spaces that has guided Sarah to pursue a career in conservation. In 2020, Sarah worked as Crew Leader for Utah Conservation Corps, where she led crews into the backcountry on various kinds of environmental conservation projects. Sarah was thrilled when she stumbled upon this job opening at Wallowa Land Trust, which involves all her passions: a combination of community engagement, conservation and creative communication tactics.

And Moose

"My first impression of Wallowa County was how hospitable the people were. It reminded me of rural Appalachia in that way." New to the office space also is Moose, her sweet adopted pup. Sarah and Moose are excited to get out and further explore the trails, rivers and peaks of the surrounding area. When not outdoors, Sarah enjoys art in all forms and experimenting in the kitchen.

Interested in becoming involved with the land trust through volunteer projects or other collaboration? Have an awesome hike recommendation you're willing to share? Reach out to Sarah at sarah@wallowalandtrust.org or (541) 426-2042. ■





Wallowa Land Trust

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Wallowa Land Trust's mission is to protect the rural nature of Wallowa County by working cooperatively with private landowners, Indigenous people, local communities and governmental entities to conserve land.

2021 Calendar of Events

Details about events can be found on our website

June 19: Into The Wallowa - Guided Wildflower Hike

July 9: Stewardship Event

July 31: Into The Wallowa - Guided Geology Hike

August 5&6: Spalding's Catchfly Survey

August 7: Annual Picnic

August 28: New Member Event

September 17: Stewardship Event

October 6: Stewardship Event

October 16: Into The Wallowa Event