



WallowaLands

Wallowa Land Trust
Autumn 2022

AUTUMN 2022

WallowaLands Autumn Newsletter



Image Credit: Leon Werdinger Photography

Shifting of Seasons

Change is in the air. The nights are cooling off, leaves are changing from greens to goldens and animals are preparing for colder months ahead. Since we last shared a WallowaLands newsletter with you, much has changed in our office too. We welcomed a new staff member to our team, who you can meet on page 6. We completed a conservation transaction with the Wiggins-Graybeal family that now permanently protects another 34 acres of forested land by Wallowa Lake. And, the Management Plan for the East Moraine Community Forest has been approved. All of this just over the past few months! During that time I also had the pleasure of seeing many of you face to face for the first time in two years. I didn't realize how much I missed that personal contact, how buoyed I am by those interactions. Phone calls, texts and zoom interactions just aren't the same as a warm hug and a smile.

That connection with other people is as vital as our connection to land. We are irretrievably dependent on each other and the earth. This crucial lesson has been driven home for me over the past couple years. And I think it is also what makes conservation work so deeply satisfying. This is work that cannot be done without community, without sweat and dirt. We're in this together and I cannot imagine doing anything else in a more beautiful place! Thank you for your care and support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kathleen', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Kathleen Ackley, Executive Director

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Cover Image Credit: Jo Jefferies

RIVER RESTORATION ON THE WOLFE PROPERTY

Written by Montana Pagano - Watershed Restoration Specialist, Nez Perce Tribe Department of Fisheries

In 2011 and 2016, Wallowa Land Trust completed two separate yet contiguous conservation easements with the Wolfe Family along the Lostine and Wallowa Rivers. These conservation easements enhanced protection and habitat for spring Chinook salmon, summer steelhead, resident bull trout, and other fish and wildlife populations. This lower reach of the Lostine River is ranked as a top priority for habitat restoration work in Wallowa County largely due to its long legacy of human alterations, including channel straightening through levee construction, vegetation clearing for agricultural purposes, and wood removal within the channel itself.

Since Wallowa Land Trust's completion of the initial Lostine-Wallowa easement, the Nez Perce Tribe's Watershed Division has worked with the trust and other partners at Wolfe Ranch to complete the Lostine Wetland and Side Channel River Restoration Project. To achieve the project goal of restoring the Lostine to a more natural state, giant logjams were constructed on gravel bars to intercept and slow streamflow and encourage water into historic floodplain side channels. The restoration of the river's heterogeneity through these various habitat features would provide adult and juvenile fish places to rest, feed, and seek refuge from predators.

Under this year's blazing August sun, construction began. To minimize site disturbance, the project utilized a "light touch" approach, evident in the breaching of levees only in select locations to create backwaters and alcoves. Future plans for large-scale plantings and the seasonal inundation of the river's floodplain will also improve the quality of existing emergent wetlands as well as create new ones, enabling colder stored water to reenter the river during hot/dry conditions.

We all look forward to observing various changes resulting from restoring natural process and function back to this reach of the Lostine River. Our hope is to see more eagles soaring, fish swimming, frogs breeding, and plants growing on this increasingly wild landscape. Many thanks go to Wallowa Land Trust, Grande Ronde Model Watershed, BPA, OWEB, ODFW, and most importantly, landowners Woody and Megan Wolfe. ♦



SIDE CHANNEL OUTLET

Before



SIDE CHANNEL OUTLET

After

Images courtesy of Montana Pagano

PLAN APPROVED FOR THE EAST MORAINE COMMUNITY FOREST

Written by Katy Nesbitt

To conserve the treasured view of the Wallowa Lake moraines, the plants and wildlife that live there, and the land's traditional uses, a plan is now guiding the management of the East Moraine Community Forest. Conveyed into county ownership in January, 2020 by the Wallowa Lake Moraines Partnership, the management plan was approved by the Wallowa County commissioners at their Sept. 7 meeting and adopted Sept. 21. Years in the making, the plan will guide forestry and livestock grazing activities as well as habitat and natural resource conservation and recreation.

The Partnership, including Wallowa County, Wallowa Land Trust, Wallowa Resources and Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, vowed to maintain the traditional uses of the property - timber and cattle management, while allowing non-motorized recreation such as mountain biking, hiking, cross country skiing and horseback riding. All motorized use, including "e-bikes" is prohibited to provide quiet enjoyment of the more than 1,820-acre county property and to protect species like mule deer and Spalding's catchfly.

"All along we have worked with the public, land use managers and scientists, as well as focus groups, to determine how best to manage this property for multiple uses," said Wallowa County Commissioner John Hillock, who serves on the Community Forest's executive committee.

Now that the plan has been approved, the Partnership will develop annual operating plans for each of the Community Forest's conservation values - forestry, range, habitat, cultural resources and recreation. These plans will use the Forest's management plan as a guide as well as that year's climatic condition to best balance all of its uses.

A series of trail cam images taken on private property near the East Moraine over the last few years show the kinds of animals that call these lands home. Images by Jo Jefferies.



EAST MORAINÉ CONT.

To get a sense of how the Forest is used by recreationists in particular, the Partnership is sponsoring a use study to better understand how public access will affect sensitive habitat, natural resources, and how the different uses interact with each other.

User data will be collected through a survey asking how people access the Community Forest, whether on foot, bicycle or horseback; what times of day and seasons are in highest use; what areas are being used; and how many visitors come each year.

Tara Porter is managing the survey, supported by a grant from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Conservation and Recreation Fund. She said the visitor use study is a continuation of a 2020 visitor survey that informed the development of the Community Forest's Management Plan.

Porter said, "The survey for this study will build off the previous one in order to create the best possible visitor experience, while protecting and enhancing the diversity of native plants, animals, and their habitats."

Katy Nesbitt, Wallowa County Natural Resource and Economic Development Director, will be assisting the Partnership's executive committee with the management of the Community Forest. She said the use study will be updated periodically to determine any increase in recreational use, the impacts to existing trails as well as the broader landscape.

"This study will be a good baseline on which we will build in the coming years," Nesbitt said. "In order to reduce conflicts with the Forest's management and the conservation values, we will continue to monitor our visitors' use to provide the best public enjoyment of this unique landscape."

To participate in this survey through June 30, 2023, fill out the form on the following webpage: <https://arcg.is/1ni0re> or access it by scanning the accompanying QR code.

Paper copies will be provided at trailhead locations. For more information regarding the use study, contact Tara Porter at 541.962.5083, or trpcreativeresources@gmail.com. ♦

Scan QR code here



Larry Nall co-leads a guided hike up the East Moraine for the East Moraine Celebration on September 10, 2022. Image taken by Dr. Ellen Morris Bishop.



Wiggins Property Conserved

BY SARAH KLEINHANZL

As part of our continuing efforts to conserve the unique natural setting surrounding Wallowa Lake, we are pleased to announce that we are now official members of Wallowa Lake Village! Thanks to the generosity of the Wiggins family, Wallowa Land Trust now owns 34 acres at the south end of Wallowa Lake.

The property was donated to the Land Trust in September by Brett Wiggins, Eric Wiggins, Christopher Wiggins, Tony Wiggins and Cathy Wiggins-Graybeal. This property had been in the Wiggins family for several generations and the family wanted to honor the wishes of their grandmother, Irene Wiggins. Irene loved this area and would be delighted to know this property is now conserved, to be managed for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations.

The property is steep and thickly forested, surrounded by the East Moraine Community Forest on three sides. Noxious weeds are minimal and the forest is in good health despite being overgrown. Many animals pass through the property as they make their way down from the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest to the valley floor. “We are honored to receive this generous gift from the Wiggins Family,” said Kathleen Ackley, Wallowa Land Trust’s Executive Director. “The growing mosaic of protected properties surrounding Wallowa Lake means continuity of healthy habitat for generations to come.”

This project was made possible by the Wiggins-Graybeal Family, the Bergstrom Foundation and individual donors like you. ♦

**34 ACRES
PROTECTED!**



Ruffed Grouse Image Credit: Jo Jefferies

WELCOME, KEL

Sarah sat down with new Conservation Program Manager, Kel Hoffman, Ph.D. as he begins his role at Wallowa Land Trust.

Why did you decide that this role was the right fit for you?

After traveling to Enterprise to interview for the position, I had a feeling that this would be a good fit. I enjoyed the camaraderie of everyone at the office and the easy way that staff got along. I was impressed with how present and hands-on the board members were as well. All in all, the people I met made me feel comfortable and wanted. That went a long way. The land sealed the deal. After being here for a few days I began to enjoy the feeling of being tucked in at the foot of the mountains with wide open land to the north. It was just a good combination that felt promising.

What are you most looking forward to in working at Wallowa Land Trust?

I'm most looking forward to seeing the positive impacts of my efforts play out in the community around me. It was important to me in my job search to find an organization that was integrated into the larger community that it served. I think WLT fits that bill. The proximity the land trust has to the people of Wallowa County means you have the chance to learn firsthand how WLT's efforts affect people. It's exciting to be that close to the product of your work.

What are your goals within this Conservation Program Manager position?

In the short term, my goal is to get up to speed with current projects and simply acclimate to life here in Wallowa County. In the longer term, it's my hope that my presence allows WLT greater capacity to conserve more land in this beautiful area. ♦

WE'RE LOOKING FOR LAND
STEWARDS TO JOIN OUR TEAM OF
VOLUNTEERS! IF YOU'RE
INTERESTED IN HELPING WITH
CARING FOR OUR CONSERVED
LANDS, REACH OUT TO KEL AT
KEL@WALLOWALANDTRUST.ORG





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

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