Coal Trains and Export Confronted in Cascadia Communities, Climate and and Wildlands Threatened by Giant Energy Scheme

by Bob Ferris, Executive Director

A number of coal export terminals like this are proposed in Cascadia, including one in Coos Bay (Columbia Riverkeeper). Proponents of a coal terminal in Coos Bay, Oregon are starting to push their project to ship up to 10-million tons of thermal coal yearly to Korea. This coal will be mined on federal lands in the Powder River Basin of Montana and Wyoming and loaded onto trains. These trains are so heavy — 17,500 tons — that they need four locomotives and stretch for a mile and a third across the countryside.

The human health implications are significant as these locomotives will create roughly 1.5 tons of additional diesel particulates per mile annually — all along the more than 1,200-mile route through the Pacific Northwest. Diesel particulates — including nano-particles — are linked to increased risk of lung and heart disease as well as cancer. Coal dust from the open rail cars would also cause additional problems to those with existing respiratory conditions.

The environmental consequences of this project are myriad and range from oxygen-robbing coal dust blown and washed into our waterways to the global implications for climate change and ocean acidification by enabling the creation of 18-million tons of new CO2 emissions along with acid rain compounds and mercury. It should be noted, too, that the train while on the Coos Bay rail link would cross waterways more than 100 times on an ancient, geologically challenging route and that the port would require the removal of 14 Rose Bowl stadiums full of Coos Bay bottom habitat before the behemoth bulk carriers could even approach the loading dock.

And the economic arguments for this project are deceptive at worst and faulty at best. When we talk about jobs we should talk about net jobs and factor in all the people who will be put out of work from small businesses isolated by lumbering unit trains blocking access across at-grade crossings for 5-10 minutes several times a day. Add to that the combined impacts of our government selling the coal at a discount —

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BUSINESSES GIVE BACK

A sustainable planet is essential to sustainable business. That’s why more and more companies are actively investing in Cascadia Wildlands. Business support saves wild places from imminent destruction and wildlife from extinction. Please join us in thanking and patronizing the visionary businesses that recently supported our work with generous cash contributions:

Business Champions ($5,000+)
- Patagonia, Inc.

Business Sustainers ($1,000-2,499)
- Pivot Architecture

Business Partners ($2,500-4,999)
- Tactics Board Shop

Business Friends ($250-999)
- Backcountry Gear Ltd.

In addition, hundreds of businesses contribute goods and services to support Cascadia Wildlands, especially through our annual Wonderland Auction. Please help us thank the businesses that support our work with generous in-kind contributions:

- Discovery Voyages
- Ninkasi Brewing Company
- Paul’s Bicycle Way of Life

Cascadia Wildlands is a proud recipient organization of 1% for the Planet, an alliance of businesses committed to leveraging their resources to create a healthier planet.

Thank you to all of our individual and family supporters and the many volunteers who help us protect wild places! Huge thanks to the foundations and community groups that have recently made substantial contributions to support our work:

44S Foundation
- Alaska Conservation Foundation
- Astrov Fund
- Ben & Jerry’s Foundation
- Brainerd Foundation
- Burning Foundation
- Deer Creek Foundation
- Earth Friends
- Fund for Wild Nature

Furthur Foundation
- Kenney Brothers
- Watershed Foundation
- Klorfine Family Foundation
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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Join Us in Wonderland
Saturday, December 8, 6-10 p.m.
EMU Ballroom (University of Oregon)

The Wonderland Auction is less than two months away, and this wildly popular event turns out a large and lively crowd that fills the expansive EMU Ballroom.

Join Cascadia Wildlands, Mountain Rose Herbs, University of Oregon Outdoor Program, Ninkasi Brewing Co., Green Solutions Printing, Coconut Bliss, Back to the Roots Landscaping, Eugene Weekly, Ring of Fire, and our community supporters for exciting live and silent auctions, a gourmet buffet dinner by Ring of Fire, Ninkasi microbrews, fine wines, Coconut Bliss dessert and plenty of holiday cheer!

This year’s auction features fabulous coast and mountain getaways, an Alaskan adventure, rafting and fishing trips, handcrafted wood furniture, outdoor gear, wine packages, and much more.

Space is limited, so reserve your tickets today at www.CascWild.org.
Tickets are $35 in advance, $40 at the door, and kids 12 and under get in for free! See you on December 8 in Wonderland!

Vacuuming Up the River Bottom
Suction Dredge Mining Threatens Wild Salmon
by Josh Laughlin, Campaign Director

A new Gold Rush is happening, and it is occurring in some of the most sensitive wild salmon watersheds in southwest Oregon. Over 150 years after the original rush, though, today’s frenzy is occurring with gasoline-powered vacuums, called suction dredges, that are mounted to floating docks and literally suck up river bottoms as miners look for the last flecks of gold. The stakes are high for imperiled salmon and other fish species whose life cycles occur where the gold is being sought.

The New 49ers have set their sights on iconic river systems in southwest Oregon, like the Illinois, Rogue, and South Umpqua, ever since California passed a moratorium on suction dredge mining in 2009. Litigation by the Karuk Tribe, citing impacts of the practice on fish species, coupled with widespread outreach and advocacy efforts, compelled the state of California to pass the moratorium and relieved river’s like the Klamath, Scott, Salmon and others critical to the survival of wild salmon from suction dredge mining.

However, the ban in California has pushed the practice north into Oregon and the threat is serious as gold has reached $1,700/ounce. The Rogue River and its tributaries have become ground zero for the practice. And over two-dozen gold mining claims were laid on stretches of the South Umpqua River above the community of Tiller in the Umpqua National Forest this past spring.

This stretch of the South Umpqua is renowned for its Oregon Coast coho salmon population that has been listed as threatened with extinction. It also shelters struggling wild Chinook salmon and lamprey populations. The Forest Service and other entities have spent millions of dollars in years past working to restore fisheries habitat in this river system. Today, it faces the prospect of gas-powered vacuums sucking up the river bottom and disrupting the fragile life cycle of these imperiled fish species.

The science suggests great caution when suction dredging intersects with endangered fish habitat and that fisheries managers should be especially concerned when dredging coincides with the incubation of embryos in stream gravels.

Researchers also express caution about suction dredging releasing mercury locked in the riverbed and the potential health implications for fish and other species. Agencies overseeing our federal watersways, like the Forest Service, aren’t taking the implication of the practice serious enough.

Represented by the Western Environmental Law Center, Cascadia Wildlands and co-plaintiffs Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center and Rogue Riverkeeper on October 23 filed a lawsuit challenging the Rogue-Siskiyou National Forest’s failure to consult with the National Marine Fisheries Service, the expert agency on endangered fish, a requirement of the federal Endangered Species Act when an action, like suction dredging, may impact a listed fish species and its critical habitat. Stay tuned as this case and other efforts on this issue develop.

Ninkasi Hosts Pints Gone Wild! on the First Mondays of the Month

Join Cascadia Wildlands and Ninkasi Brewing Co. on the first Mondays of the month for Pints Gone Wild! at 272 Van Buren St. A generous portion of pint sales at the tasting room on those days go to support our conservation work. Live music starts at 6 pm, followed by knee-slapping Cascadia Trivia Night. See you there!

Washington Pack pup (WDFW)

Washington Pack Exterminated

At Cascadia Wildlands, we have our hands full with wolf recovery in Oregon, but the recent aerial execution of the Pack Wedge in Washington has forced us to turn our attention north. The pack kill came in response to alleged depredation incidents on cattle attributed to the Wedge Pack. However, the validity of some of the depredation investigation reports and subsequent confirmations by the state of Washington have been questioned by outside experts. Additionally, the rancher who experienced the depredations had turned his cattle lose on public land without any meaningful supervision and was resistant to employ non-lethal prevention measures.

Cascadia Wildlands and other wolf advocates issued a formal letter to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, threatening to sue over the questionable kill order. Washington pulled back its sharpshooters temporarily, only to issue a Friday afternoon kill order and execute the entire pack. We hope there were lessons learned by the state as wolf recovery in Washington now has our full attention.
In the Spirit of Pinchot and Roosevelt
Wild Salmon Reserve Proposed in Copper-Bering Deltas
by Gabe Scott, Alaska Field Director

One of Cascadia Wildlands’ proudest accomplishments is staving off oil drilling at the remote Alaska ghost town of Katala, in the middle of the Copper River Delta. Through grassroots organizing and litigation, we stopped the drilling before it started, causing a 70,000-acre oil lease to expire. Today, we are taking time to enjoy the place, and working to permanently protect it through a special designation – a Wild Salmon Reserve. Building on the vision of Gifford Pinchot and Teddy Roosevelt, we see this designation as a model of the working wilderness concept, and our best defense against a changing climate and challenging economy.

The Copper-Bering River complex is the largest intact wetland in Cascadia (B Cole).

The Copper-Bering River complex is the largest intact wetland in Cascadia and is comprised of over 700,000 acres of braided channels, ponds, lakes, and muskeg, ringed in spectacular old-growth forests and jagged, ice-capped peaks. This spectacular landscape provides incredibly productive habitat for millions of migratory birds and waterfowl, bear and wolf. The Delta flats host the world-famous Copper River salmon fishery, while the uplands abound in spawning migratory birds and waterfowl, bear and wolf. The jagged, ice-capped peaks. This spectacular landscape

No place has been more significant in the history of Conservation than Katala. In the early 1900s, the J.P. Morgan-led Alaska Syndicate tried to build a metropolis here, “The Pittsburgh of the North,” before their hubris was exposed by a furious 1907 storm that smashed the harbor to pieces. Gifford Pinchot staked his reputation, and his job, on the conviction that this rich land be preserved for sustained production for future generations, rather than exploited for short-term gain. The remnants of the town, and the sunken wreck of the SS Portland, “The Gold Ship” that started the Klondike gold rush in 1898, can still be found by attentive adventurers.

History has proved Pinchot correct, but threats loom. A Korean corporation owns the coalfield, and another corporation owns rights-of-way for roads. Climate change and human population stress the ecosystem, making ecological resilience more important than ever.

The next step is a Wild Salmon Reserve designation. The opportunity is now for the Obama administration, with the current Chugach National Forest Plan revision. We are working in partnership with Syak Preservation Council — which is brokering a deal to accomplish this precedent-setting action.

For a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for a guided vacation to this natural wonder, accessible only by bush plane, come ready to bid at the Wonderland Auction on December 8.

Cascadia Wildlands and our business partner, Mountain Rose Herbs love fish. They — like us — understand deeply that so much of what we value in Cascadia is tied to healthy waterways and robust populations of salmon and steelhead. In fact, the folks at Mountain Rose Herbs love our native fish so much they have committed up to $5,000 in matching money for this fall’s fundraising drive to help Cascadia Wildlands expand our work to preserve our native salmon heritage. These additional monies will be used to cover fisheries work from our emerging efforts in Alaska (see Alaska story) to confronting forest practices that damage salmon streams and evolving threats such as suction dredge mining for gold in endangered salmon habitat in Oregon (see suction dredging story).

Mountain Rose Herbs is hoping that you and others understand the critical need for this work and are willing to join them in contributing to this vital initiative. Please visit the “Giving” section of our website (CascWild.org) for details or use the enclosed envelope to take advantage of this generous opportunity today. Thanks in advance for your support.

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costing us millions annually in lost resource value — and job loss associated with shipping a discounted raw material to a competing economy. Toss in the needed public investment in rail infrastructure necessary to make this work for the rail companies, other freight traffic and communities from here to the mines and you come out with millions of reasons to oppose this project and few to support.

For Cascadia Wildlands, we cannot help but simultaneously look at how these facilities have historically operated and what is at stake in terms of wild places and wild creatures. On the one hand we see that the coal industry is long on promises about jobs and economic benefits and short on performance as our nation’s landscapes are littered with coal terminals and fugitive dust problems and rail routes with far too frequent derailments. Since the economic arguments are not broadly beneficial, on the contrary, we see no compelling reason to put our natural splendor and health at risk. This is not a project that should be allowed to move forward. No coal, no how.

Mt. Rose Herbs to Match Your Donation up to $5,000 to Support Cascadia Wildlands!

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