



News From the Woods

Summer 2010

Supporting Northwest Biological Diversity and Communities

On the Cover: *Pale Blue-Eyed Grass, a rare plant that occurs only in the Cascade Range, is currently under consideration for addition to the endangered species list by the US Fish & Wildlife Service. Photo by Bob Hansen*

New Mining Threat Near Mount St. Helens

A little over two years ago, the Task Force celebrated a major victory when a proposal to begin building a mine on the border of the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument was defeated. General Moly Inc. (GMI), a Colorado based mining company, was pursuing a fringe acreage lease on 3,000 acres of land a mere 12 miles from the spectacular volcanic crater and visitor facilities.

The proposed mine would have been disastrous for the environment in the area. Besides the obvious impacts of huge machinery tearing apart the terrain and hauling copper, silver and molybdenum on the roads through the forest, the mine posed risks to the Green River's fish populations and even threatened the drinking water supplies of downstream cities such as Longview.

The Task Force worked tirelessly to build public and political opposition to the mining proposal. Task Force employees spent long nights pouring over maps, legal documents and environmental data. We were the lead organization in gathering local political leaders to oppose the mine, obtaining strong letters from local governments and from Senator Cantwell and Murray's offices. The Task Force also sent representatives to nearly every public meeting or hearing in the area to give informative presentations about the mine to affected citizens, many of whom did not know about the mine and would not have had the opportunity to speak up to protect their community until it was too late. The Task Force was so effective at getting the word



The thought of mining on the border of the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument was disagreeable to nearly everyone who heard about it, especially those whose water and air quality would be harmed.

out that GMI often sent representatives to the same meetings our employees were attending and give presentations in retort (we took that as a compliment to our effectiveness!)

The result of all of our hard work and the work of other environmental, citizen, and recreation groups was stunning. Over 33,000 comments in opposition to the mining lease were submitted, including the aforementioned strong letters from local political leaders and city governments. This large public movement against the proposal pushed the Bureau of Land Management to deny the land lease to GMI.



The Green River ecosystem, celebrated by fishermen and surely to be seriously harmed by the proposed mine, was protected.

It was a tremendous victory, but unfortunately the result of the decision was only temporary, and it granted the land no permanent protection. Recently, Ascot Resources, a Canadian mining company, has purchased GMI's rights to the land and is preparing to apply for a permit for exploratory drilling. Certainly it is disappointing, but there is some good news: right now we have the opportunity to stop this mining proposal before it even gets to the phase that the GMI proposal reached before it was stopped. The environmental impact of the type of mine that Ascot intends to eventually build will be no less damaging than the one proposed by GMI, and the Task Force is working hard to make sure this proposal does not get any further than the one before it.

We will keep you updated with the latest news on this new development and our efforts to permanently protect this area from mining. Please visit our website and our Facebook page often to keep updated. Just remember, as former Task Force Conservation Director Ryan Hunter said, "Stopping a mining proposal is like stopping a boulder rolling down hill, it is much easier to stop it before it gains momentum and considerable financial investment, which simply pressures the government to allow it to continue." We stopped the GMI mine before the boulder rolled very far. This time, let's stop the Ascot boulder before it even starts rolling.

Thatch Moyle and the Task Force Benefit from Volunteer Work

Thatch Moyle was looking for a good organizational match when he read an article in the High Country News about the Task Force's executive director, Emily Platt, in March of 2009. Recently downsized from his work as a land use planner at an architecture and engineering firm due to the shrinking economy, highly motivated to keep working, and with time on his hands, he had Geographic Information Systems (GIS) skills to offer the right conservation/restoration group. A lifelong volunteer and lover of the outdoors, Thatch's idea was to provide valuable volunteer hours as a way to jumpstart a new career path that matched his internal values and his desire to work for a non-profit. He found a good match in the Task Force's approach to their work, especially our emphasis on collaboration to accomplish restoration projects.

Thatch was also a good match for the Task Force. Lacking the resources for a dedicated GIS staff member, and about to undertake the creation of a Mt. Hood National Forest restoration plan that would require extensive maps and data created with GIS work, we were thrilled at his offer to help. "With our current staff and resources, this was going to be a challenging project," explains Deputy Director Lisa Moscinski. Thatch has contributed not just maps and graphics but knowledge as well. "Thatch has also taught me a lot about GIS, which included improved ways to collect and organize data," added Lisa.



Besides offering Thatch an opportunity to gain useful experience applying his skills in a working environment, his role with the Task Force has provided other benefits. Thatch explained, "I've loved becoming more involved. Attending the Mt. Adams collaborative group field tours and visiting the amazing Gifford Pinchot National Forest canopy crane research center were great opportunities." Here Thatch is all geared up with harness and helmet for a ride in the canopy crane.

Thatch feels that his contribution has been important. Lisa agrees, "It's especially impressive that he's already committed over 150 hours of volunteer time and is willing to see a project through from start to finish."

We thank Thatch for his considerable contributions to the work of the

Gifford Pinchot Task Force. If you'd like to volunteer, please contact Membership Director, Derek Meinhard at derek@gptaskforce.org or 503-221-2102, ext 102.



Thatch touring the site of the Hemlock Dam after it was removed and learning about the next steps towards ecosystem recovery with the Mt. Adams collaborative group.

Youtube Videos & Facebook Updates

There are even more ways to keep up with the Task Force now. We are now posting weekly updates on our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/giffordpinchottaskforce. We have also posted a few youtube videos of some of our recent work, including some sequences of very interesting animal behavior from our predator tracking program cameras. You can find the videos on our website and on our Facebook page.



A young black bear nearly demolishes a camera site in search of a meal. See the video on Facebook!



Upcoming Task Force Events

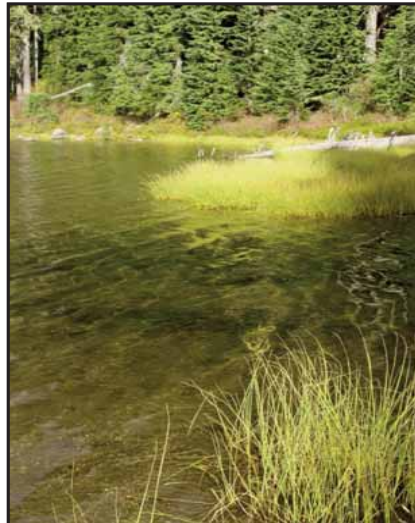
For more information about any of the following events or to sign up to attend, please contact Task Force Membership Coordinator Andy Prah at andy@gptaskforce.org or 502-221-2102 x 103.

June 26th – Mount St. Helens Weed Rodeo

On June 26th the Gifford Pinchot Task Force will be partnering with the Mount Saint Helens Institute (MSHI) and the US Forest Service for the 5th annual MSHI Weed Rodeo. Volunteers will meet at the Coldwater Lake Picnic Area at 9:00am for registration and information on invasive weed control. From there we will move onto the surrounding hillsides and begin removing scotch broom, often with a striking view of the volcano. A far cry from pulling weeds in your yard! At 3:30 we will drop our tools (into the truck) and pick up a plate for an optional BBQ/potluck followed by a free guided tour of the recently renovated Johnston Ridge Observatory with Monument Scientist Peter Frenzen. Volunteers should come equipped with long pants, sturdy boots, work gloves and a personal lunch or snacks. You can find more information and pre-register on the MSHI RSVP page on www.mshinstitute.org. Contact Chris Clark at (360) 449-7887 or trail-work@mshinstitute.org with any additional questions.

July 17th: Indian Heaven – The Indian Racetrack & Green Lake

The Task Force is excited to announce the first member hike of 2010 on Saturday, July 17th. This classic hike in the Indian Heaven Wilderness will be led by Task Force Membership Coordinator Andy Prah. We will start by hiking a couple of miles in a deep, lush forest, taking frequent breaks to admire the countless types of trees, shrubs and flowers in the area. Eventually we will arrive at the “Indian Racetrack” where we will learn about the interesting Native American history of the area. No hike in Indian Heaven would be complete without a beautiful lake, so we will make a short one mile hop over to the Pacific Crest Trail and visit Green Lake.



The lakes of Indian Heaven are tranquil and scenic.

Depending on time, we might take an optional trip to the site of a former fire lookout on Red Hill to finish off the day.

This hike is suitable for families and beginners - 6 miles; <1000 feet of elevation gain, all at an easy pace. The trip will be in a federal wilderness area and the group size will be limited to 12. We look forward to this great day filled with ecology, history and scenery!

July 21st and 28th - Happy Hour with the Task Force

Join the Task Force for happy hour in Vancouver on July 21st and in Portland on July 28th (locations TBD). The Task Force staff will be there to chat about our programs, forest management, and answer any questions you have about our work. Maybe most importantly, we'll buy the first round of drinks for the first 20 supporters who come to join us! Please RSVP if you are planning to attend.

Host a Screening of *Trout on the Wind*

The Task Force is happy to announce the release of *Trout on the Wind*, a documentary focusing on the removal of the Hemlock Dam from the Gifford Pinchot National Forest's Trout Creek. We are offering group screenings of this interesting look at the first dam-removal project on public lands in the Pacific Northwest. If you are a part of a group that would like to see this 25 minute film, just contact us and we'll arrange a time and send a staff member to your location.

Upcoming Forest Service Fee Waiver Days (no trailhead or campground use fees) - August 14 - 15th; September 25th.



Volunteers help to remove invasive species, keeping Mount St. Helens a natural, wild place to study and observe the effects of the volcanic eruption 30 years ago.

Wind Energy Project Needs Your Comments

There has been much discussion about wind power in the Columbia River Gorge over the past decade, and another wind project in the Gorge is set to move forward: the Whistling Ridge Wind Energy Project near White Salmon, Washington. It will consist of about 50 of the newest technology (think very large) wind turbines dotted across ridge-top land in Skamania County. The project would be highly visible from communities such as White Salmon, Underwood and Hood River. It would also be visible from a large section of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area and the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, two national treasures which draw people and families from around the country.

The visual concerns about this project have been well addressed by the Forest Service, the National Parks Service, and local community leaders such as representatives of Friends of the Columbia River Gorge. The Task Force is more focused on some of the environmental impacts of the project, which have been overshadowed by the scenic debate.



The Task Force fully supports renewable energy projects, and we are excited to see so much investment in sustainable forms of energy production, but we are opposed to projects which would have a high cost to native fish and wildlife. The project is proposed in an area that is a historic nesting site for the northern spotted owl and which currently provides owl habitat. Spotted owl populations have continued to plummet across their entire range, and we are in a critical stage for the recovery of this iconic bird. The draft environmental impact statement (EIS) for the project lacked adequate monitoring data on northern spotted owls in the project area. This lack of adequate monitoring and analysis often leads to the negative environmental effects of a proj-

ect being discovered when it is already too late. In addition, the draft EIS did a poor job of discussing other wildlife impacts that will be caused by road construction in the project site.

The Task Force is not asking for this project planning to be stopped. We are asking for the environmental impacts to be studied thoroughly before a decision to move forward is made. This project is happening right along the edge of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest - we need to make sure that sensitive and threatened species we all work to protect will not be harmed by this project.

Please submit your comments on the draft EIS. Tell them that:

- You would like to see monitoring and analysis of northern spotted owls and the effects of the project on owl habitat included in the EIS.
- You are concerned with the inadequate analysis of the effects of road construction and increased traffic in the project area on fish and wildlife.
- Feel free to include that while you are a supporter of renewable energy, you do not think a large project within sight of the Columbia Gorge National Scenic area is an appropriate location for their development.

Comments will be accepted through July 19th. Comments may be submitted online at: <http://www.bpa.gov/comment> ; via mail to: Bonneville Power Administration, Public Affairs Office - DKC-7, P.O. Box 14428, Portland, OR, 97293-4428; or faxed to (503) 230-3285.

The draft EIS can be viewed at http://www.efw.bpa.gov/environmental_services/Document_Library/Wistling_Ridge and the best source for further information is the Friends of the Gorge website at <http://www.gorgefriends.org/section.php?id=56>

Task Force Conserving Paper This Year

Saving paper is great for the environment and the Task Force. The Task Force has chosen to only print two of our four newsletters this year. We will produce all four in an electronic version however, so if you have not been receiving emails from us, please put your email address on file by sending an email to our membership coordinator Andy at andy@gptaskforce.org. In addition, if you would like to receive all our newsletter electronically from now on, please contact Andy with your current email address.

Thank You For Responding with Comments

We would like to acknowledge and thank all of our supporters who sent in over forty email comments at the end of May in support of the Mt. Adams Ranger District's proposal to decommission (which closes unneeded forest roads and reduces fish and wildlife impacts as well as maintenance costs) two high risk roads, which will benefit fish, water quality, and wildlife. Roads are widely recognized as a risk to aquatic ecosystems and terrestrial species on federal lands nationwide. The two roads have a combined length of 2.8 miles with three fish passage barriers limiting access for steelhead and other aquatic species. Almost all the comments received on the project came from Task Force supporters - and the result was obvious - the Forest Service decided to move forward on the project, exactly what we were urging them to do.



Heavy equipment is called in to remove a giant pipe during a road decommissioning project. The pipe had harmed fish habitat for years. Thanks to your comments we will likely see more encouraging scenes of ecosystem restoration like this.

For those of you who haven't yet used our new web form system for sending in email comments, you'd be surprised at how easy it can be to show your support for projects and critical issues that affect our public lands. Agencies like the Department of Fish & Wildlife and the Forest Service rely on public comments to help them steer policy, decision making, and project specifics. Look here (<http://www.gptaskforce.org/conditdam>) to see an example of how easy it can be to express your opinion. The form provides suggested language about the issue which can be sent with a click, but it also allows you to customize the message that you want to send.

Requests for comments and vital facts about the issues are often found in our monthly email updates, with links to more details and the comment forms on our website. We urge you to take a few minutes when those emails arrive to join your fellow activists who have sent in over 150 email comments in the past few months regarding such important issues as the Washington Wolf Plan, fishing at Spirit Lake, and Condit Dam removal.

Ask the Task Force

I saw the great wildlife pictures from your field cameras on your web site. How are these pictures used in your work?

We're glad you liked the photos; they are really popular with many of our members. Thanks to the generous support and volunteer hours of members like you, we are about to start the season by placing six cameras near Indian Heaven and Mount St. Helens. As great as the images are just for sheer enjoyment; they also serve an important role by documenting what species of wildlife exist in different areas of the forest.



This young American pine marten is not only cute, but it is also quite curious, as it visited one of our Mt. Adams camera sites more than three times in one week.

Especially valuable are the images of carnivores like wolverine and American pine martens. The data collected is used to show location and use of wildlife corridors as well as help inform land management decisions in the areas wildlife use and need. The images can provide confirmation of the many reported sightings of rare and elusive wildlife and will improve the impact of the Task Force's advocacy on conservation and restoration issues. For example, those stunning images of the wolverine result in the need to modify timbers sales to avoid disruption of its habitat. Our goal for this year is to expand this program to include 8-10 cameras throughout the GPNF. This is only possible with the support of our members, who fund camera purchases, and volunteers who head out to the woods to retrieve the photos captured by the cameras. If you find this program valuable and can offer financial support, follow this link to donate: <https://www.chi-cash-advance.com/sforms/appeal512/Contribute.aspx>. If you would like to volunteer to regularly check the cameras for results, please contact Conservation Director Jessica Walz at jessica@gptaskforce.org or 503-221-2102 ext 101.

Restoration Plan Update

As our long time supporters know, in Spring 2008 the Gifford Pinchot Task Force created and published a restoration plan for the Gifford Pinchot National Forest entitled *Restoring Volcano Country* (click the title to view the plan on our website). After three years of steady work toward accomplishing the many projects and priorities outlined in this long-term plan, we are proud to present you with an update of some on the ground successes and a preview of more that will be completed this summer.



Trout Creek is part of the Wind River watershed, which is now one of the few watersheds in the Columbia River basin that is entirely free-flowing from its source to its confluence with the Columbia.

Last autumn, after 10 years of advocacy, a major priority in the plan was accomplished when Hemlock Dam was removed. Thanks to the efforts of the Task Force staff, its members, partner organizations, and the Forest Service, vital habitat has been restored for threatened steelhead. In fact, steelhead returned to Trout Creek the same day that water was returned to the stream channel, signaling the beginning of a restoration process that will continue for the next few seasons. The project also had significant

economic benefits, employing two full-time crews throughout the summer from the James Dean Construction Company, based in Glenwood, Washington.

As a result of another successful campaign led by the Task Force and its members, the 30,000 acre Ice Caves Grazing Allotment is no longer being used. Two rare species, the endangered mardon skipper butterfly, and pale blue-eyed grass, which is threatened with extinction, make their homes there. In fact, 80% of all pale blue-eyed grass populations in the world are located in this area. Stream banks and water quality, along with the trout habitat in Lost Creek will also dramatically improve as a result of this change.

Other successes have come in the area of funding for the work in the restoration plan. In a sign of a shift in priorities, the U.S. Congress allocated \$180 million to the Forest Service for road restoration work throughout

the Nation, with about 1/4 being spent right here in Washington and Oregon. The Task Force played a leadership role in a coalition that was responsible for this major investment and we look forward to continuing to play a role in funding restoration priorities for our public lands.

Looking toward this summer, we anticipate more major successes. The Spencer Butte Roadless Area will be expanded by an enormous 3,000 acres (the size of the entire University of Michigan campus, one of the largest in the country and home to 42,000 students and 38,900 faculty!), increasing prime habitat for wolves. Bull trout, winter steelhead, spring Chinook, coho and resident rainbow and cutthroat trout habitat will also be improved when work is completed that will remove 52 culverts, 7.9 miles of road, and restore 10 different streams. This project will result in reduced sediment delivery to streams from the existing roads, eliminating the imminent risk of road failure into Clear Creek, restore habitat connectivity, and restore the natural movement of water.

To see completed work on the ground and the start of even more restoration projects is a testament to the ability of our supporters to unite in their desire to protect and restore our forest. Your continued activism and financial support will help ensure that this important work continues, and we thank you for your commitment.

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The Gifford Pinchot Task Force supports the biological diversity and communities of the Northwest through conservation and restoration of forests, rivers, fish, and wildlife.

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