



# ADVOCATE

Winter 2015

## The President's Letter

Over the course of the last year, the Sawtooth Society was presented with several unique opportunities where we continued to successfully exhibit the important role we play as the only non-profit organization dedicated solely to preserving, protecting and enhancing the Sawtooth NRA. First and foremost was the Sawtooth Society's pivotal role in securing permanent Congressional Wilderness designation of three longstanding Wilderness Study Areas (the Hemingway-Boulders Wilderness, the White Clouds Wilderness, and the Jim McClure-Jerry Peak Wilderness) through the passage of the Sawtooth National Recreation Area and Jerry Peak Wilderness Additions Act (SNRA+). Although two of these areas were already protected by inclusion in the Sawtooth NRA, the passage of SNRA+ avoided the potentially disastrous effects of overlaying a proposed national monument onto the Sawtooth NRA.

This year, the Austin Kraal Memorial Volunteer Program continued to expand, providing increasing support to the Forest Service while offering a larger number of youth and adults with the opportunity to experience this beautiful area while benefiting from the camaraderie and friendship that can only be built through teamwork. Largely through the efforts of Kelly Conde (our Volunteer and Membership Coordinator) and with the support of our Executive Director, Gary O'Malley, we are increasingly reaching out to organizations that serve at-risk youth offering to provide them with an outdoor experience like no other. Statistically, the number of young people who spend time in the great outdoors is declining. The Sawtooth Society is dedicated to doing our part to reverse this trend.

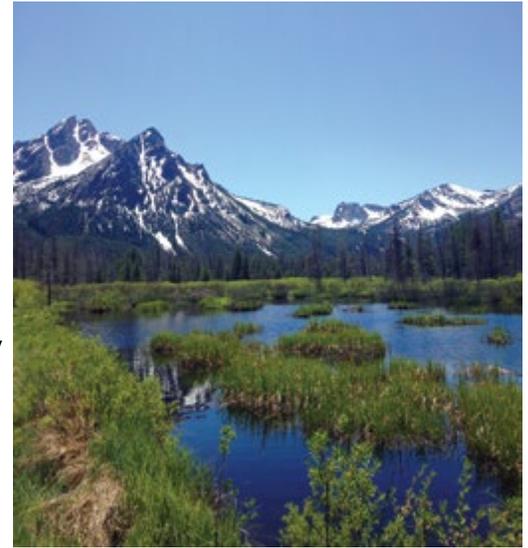
Despite the Sawtooth Society's significant successes, the Sawtooth NRA (and thus the Sawtooth Society) faces increasing challenges. Operational funding for the Forest Service continues to be insufficient to enable the local staff to effectively and efficiently maintain important elements of the Sawtooth NRA. For example, some trails are not cleared until late August, if at all. This often results in erosion and damage to the view shed as trail users blaze new paths around deadfall. Also, the recent Wilderness designations create areas that will require additional efforts to prepare and maintain. Likewise, the number of visitors coming to the Sawtooth NRA continues to grow and new types of recreational uses for the area (e.g., Fat Bikes) continue to evolve. The need for volunteers to help keep the Sawtooth NRA a pristine destination for recreation has never been greater.

The Sawtooth Society currently coordinates more on-the-ground volunteers in the Sawtooth NRA than any other organization, but to meet the needs of the coming years will require ever increasing numbers of volunteers and increasingly more funds. The Sawtooth Society is gearing up to meet these challenges and is also working to try to engage other organizations to assist us in our volunteer efforts. The Sawtooth NRA gives so much to so many.

It is truly a special place, as all who have visited it readily attest. If we want it to remain the iconic treasure that we have enjoyed, I believe that each of us have to give back. If you would like to join us as a volunteer, please reach out to us through our website: [www.sawtoothsociety.org/volunteer](http://www.sawtoothsociety.org/volunteer).

For all of those who have made donations or served as a volunteer in the past, we offer our heartfelt thanks and hope that you will continue to support us. The Sawtooth Society is committed to making 2016 the best ever for the Sawtooth NRA.

Wayne Hughes  
President, Sawtooth Society



## Volunteer Program Completes Important On-the-ground Projects

# Join the Fun!



The Sawtooth Society's Austin Kraal Memorial Volunteer program ended its third season of volunteer work with miles of trails cleared and old fences clipped, thousands of weeds pulled and scores of campsites cleaned. All told, there were more than 1,200 hours of boots-on-the-ground work completed by the Austin Kraal Memorial youth and adult volunteers who all gave back to the Sawtooth National Recreation Area (NRA) in a big way this season.

"I've backpacked quite a bit in the Sawtooths, and I saw this program as an opportunity to give back to a special place that I love," said Will Gattiker, a youth volunteer who participated in the program.

The volunteer program is more than a plan to help maintain and enhance the Sawtooth NRA, it gives people a chance to experience the Sawtooths in a different and more meaningful way.

"I've had experiences in the outdoors since I was very young," Gattiker said. "But this was different and special in that I was able to share it with a great variety of people — people I might not otherwise have had the opportunity to camp and work beside."

Gattiker was one of 11 youth who traveled from Boise to spend a week volunteering for the Sawtooth Society through the Boise Parks and Recreation and Foothills Learning Center Sawtooth Camp. Gattiker and his campmates spent their time pulling Spotted Knapweed, an invasive weed that crowds out native species, along the banks of the Salmon River. They pulled over 40 bags of weeds total. When not giving the Sawtooth NRA their time and sweat, the youth attended a presentation on riparian health and how invasive weeds affect it and spent time exploring the area and recreating at Redfish Lake.

Gattiker's group was one of 15 who, from May to September, volunteered their time. Because of the willingness and hard work of these volunteers, the Austin Kraal Memorial Volunteer program is the largest of its kind in the area. This summer alone, it brought over 150 youth and over 200 volunteers total to the Sawtooth NRA.

As Kelly Conde, the Sawtooth Society's Volunteer and Membership Coordinator reports, "This volunteer program is fulfilling a need in the area. Both of the Forest Service, who needs more people helping with on-the-ground work, and of visitors, who are

looking for more meaningful ways to spend their vacation. And with the new Wilderness designation, this volunteer program is more important than ever."

The Sawtooth Society was heavily involved with encouraging Congress to establish the remarkable Boulder-White Clouds area as Wilderness. With the growing success of the volunteer program, the Sawtooth Society plans to focus some of their work on the Boulder-White Clouds to engage groups of both youth and adults in maintaining Idaho's newest Wilderness.

The Society also plans to assist in getting popular trails cleared early in the season. The hope is to get 100 miles of trails cleared through volunteer work in late May and June. Along with the Wilderness work and trail clearing, the volunteer program will continue to focus on expanding youth participation.

Those interested in volunteering as a group, or individually for the Austin Kraal Memorial Volunteer program can contact Kelly Conde at [kelly@sawtoothsociety.org](mailto:kelly@sawtoothsociety.org) or visit the website at [www.sawtoothsociety.org/volunteer](http://www.sawtoothsociety.org/volunteer). Help us preserve, protect and enhance the Sawtooth NRA — anyone can volunteer.



*"The Sawtooth NRA trail system is a huge value to visitors and residents alike, thus the Sawtooth National Forest is dedicated to maintaining and clearing the trails within the Sawtooth NRA. However, we realize we cannot do it alone. The Sawtooth Society's willingness to assist and to engage the youth in this effort is a huge benefit to the Forest Service, visitors, and residents, while also providing an invaluable experience for our youth. The Forest Service is proud to partner with the Sawtooth Society in this effort, and look forward to many more years of working together!"*

*Kirk Flannigan, Area Ranger, Sawtooth NRA*

## Winter Events Right Around the Corner...

This winter, the Sawtooth Society will host a number of fun events to celebrate the Sawtooth NRA. From photography and wine at Ketchum's Gallery Walk to a free skate ski lesson at Stanley's Park Creek Ski area, there will be something for everyone! Make sure to check the Sawtooth Society website for a current list of upcoming events: [www.saw-](http://www.sawtoothsociety.org/events)

[toothsociety.org/events](http://www.sawtoothsociety.org/events). Since we will also be sharing upcoming events by email please send us your email if it has recently changed or if we do not have it on file already — [Kelly@sawtoothsociety.org](mailto:Kelly@sawtoothsociety.org).



## WILDERNESS LEGISLATION SIGNED INTO LAW

For more than a decade, Idaho-based groups, including the Sawtooth Society, have worked with Congress to protect lands in the eastern portion of the Sawtooth NRA as Wilderness. On August 7, after numerous aborted attempts to pass several different versions of this legislation, President Obama put his signature on the legislation giving the permanent “gold standard” of protection to these lands. Who would have thought it possible at the start of 2015? Never an easy task, particularly stand-alone legislations such as this, the Sawtooth National Recreation Area and Jerry Peak Wilderness Additions Act passed both the U.S. House and Senate without a single vote against it!

Over the last two-plus years the Society directly engaged with decision-makers in Congress and the Administration in an effort to build momentum for Wilderness legislation. It also voiced strong opposition to the potential of overlapping a National Monument on top of the Congressionally established Sawtooth NRA as others proposed.

The Society is delighted in this outcome and wants to thank its many members who engaged with elected officials, the Administration and other important stakeholders over the last several years. This is truly a great outcome for the people of Idaho and for everyone who loves the Sawtooth NRA and it permanently preserves and fully protects these unique lands.

As 2015 draws to an end we all have many reasons to give thanks. On that list should be our appreciation for ensuring that these quintessential Wilderness lands and the spectacular Sawtooth NRA remain as such for future generations. It is not something that any of us should take for granted. In these times of political discord, it is truly heartening that the Idaho delegation came together to show the rest of the country that it is possible to work together in a positive manner and do the right thing for Central Idaho.

The primary credit for the bill's passage goes to Congressman Simpson and Senator Risch. Without their tremendous support, leadership and perseverance we likely would be struggling with the true effects and ambiguity of a National Monument today. They both

deserve a great deal of our collective gratitude and please thank them if you get the opportunity to do so!

As Congressman Simpson said upon the bill's signing, “The Boulder White Clouds area is now protected, in perpetuity, by the gold standard of preservation designations. I am proud that this was accomplished through a truly collaborative process that produced an Idaho solution to decades of conflict and debate. Without the work of our many partners in this process, and especially the tireless efforts of Senator Jim Risch, today's signing would not have been possible.”

The Sawtooth Society is delighted and gratified to have played such an important role in passage of the Sawtooth National Recreation Area and Jerry Peak Wilderness Additions Act.



## Public Policy Work – Serving as an Advocate for the Sawtooth NRA

The Society is actively involved in a number of policy issues in its role as an advocate for the Sawtooth NRA, this includes:

**Fire Collaborative** – The Sawtooth Valley Wildland Fire Collaborative was formed following the 179,000-acre Halstead Fire in 2012. This community-based group has met on a regular basis and produced a series of recommendations to the Forest Service in the fall of 2013. The Collaborative believes that without large-scale hazard fuel modification there is a high probability of another Halstead-scale wildfire along the northeast and east sides of the Sawtooth Mountains and along the west and north sides of the White Clouds Mountains. The agency is supportive of these recommendations and has implemented several important new efforts, including the Road 210 thinning and Highway 21 projects. Additional point protection measures are also underway. The next community meeting is set for 2:00 pm, January 14th at the Stanley Community Center. Please plan to attend if you are in the area!

**Private Lands Program** – Private lands within the Sawtooth NRA have requirements placed upon them by Public Law 92-400, which established the area in 1972. It is important to have

an effective private lands program administered by the Forest Service to retain the rural character and the other priority values identified by the Act. One of the Society's priorities over the last few years has been to partner with the agency and find ways to improve the program and share what has worked well over the past 40-years. "What we don't see" is today's headline and this success should be celebrated and made known. A "Lessons Learned" document is nearing completion and its release is planned in 2016 as a tool for landowners, builders, architects and others to help make structures as inconspicuous as possible.

**Wilderness Planning** – A part of the recent legislation creating three new Wilderness areas in Central Idaho is a requirement to complete new Wilderness management plans within a three-year period. Two of these new Wilderness areas, the Hemingway-Boulders and White Clouds, are within the Sawtooth NRA and the Society will be fully engaged in the planning process, which is expected to commence early in 2016. The Forest Service is currently pursuing the needed funding and staffing and a draft plan is anticipated to be released in 2017. This will be a public process, so should you wish to engage there will be plenty of opportunity!

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## A Proven Track Record – Thank you!

The Sawtooth Society's mission is narrowly focused: to preserve, protect, and enhance the Sawtooth National Recreation Area. Formed in 1997, the Society is the only non-profit group dedicated exclusively to serving as an advocate for the Sawtooth NRA, preserving open space and enhancing its recreation facilities and services.

The Society has directly funded over \$650,000 to complete 175+ recreation-related projects and coordinated nearly 100 on-the-ground volunteer projects benefiting the area. It has also helped champion Sawtooth Vision 20/20, a long-term strategic planning effort to address opportunities and threats facing the area, actively pursued public policy decisions at the state and national levels, sponsored

numerous recreation and educational events, and worked in the private lands arena to provide public education, act as a proponent for private landowners and facilitate the purchase of Conservation Easements on at-risk properties.

In the coming year the Society will be engaging in a multi-year campaign to build sufficient long-term revenue sources to sustain its growing and unique efforts to preserve, protect, and enhance the incredible Sawtooth NRA. This effort will establish a reserve fund, enable testamentary giving to benefit the Society, and for those new to the Society, become an ongoing annual "Sawtooth Supporter". As this campaign unfolds please consider being involved to help us further preserve, protect and enhance the Sawtooth NRA.

It is also important to thank all of you for all you currently do to help the Society and the Sawtooth NRA, including: volunteering to complete an on-the-ground project, contacting decision-makers on key issues facing the area, becoming involved on the Society Board, attending our annual fundraiser the Sagebrush Soiree, contributing an auction item for the Soiree, buying a "goat" license plate so we can fund another 175 recreation enhancement projects and providing an annual financial donation. Your support comes in a variety of ways and it is deeply appreciated!



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- Kelly Conde, Volunteer/Membership



**SPONSOR A VOLUNTEER PROJECT!**

Make a difference in the Sawtooth National Recreation Area. Learn more about sponsoring a project by contacting our Volunteer Coordinator, Kelly Conde, at [kelly@sawtoothsociety.org](mailto:kelly@sawtoothsociety.org).



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**CHECK YOUR PLATES!**

If it isn't a goat, it isn't giving to fund the important ongoing work of the Sawtooth Society. When you "Get a Goat", you "Give a Gift"!