



ADVOCATE

Winter 2016

Annual President's Letter

In 2017 the Sawtooth Society will enter the 20th year of working to fulfill our mission to protect, preserve, and enhance the Sawtooth National Recreation Area. The Sawtooth National Recreation Area (SNRA) will celebrate its 45th 'Birthday' in 2017 as well. I think that we can all agree that the SNRA looks 'pretty good for its age' thanks in large part to the hard work and diligence of the Sawtooth Society's Board, our members, our numerous volunteers, our generous benefactors, and our partners.

In a marriage, the 20th Anniversary is considered an important milestone, and the illustration of marriage fairly represents the relationship between the Sawtooth Society and the SNRA land itself, since the Sawtooth Society is the only non-profit organization dedicated exclusively to the SNRA. The SNRA gives so much to us in its beauty, its serenity, and its myriad of opportunities for recreational activities. The Sawtooth Society, in turn, tries to give back to the SNRA by working to protect the values set forth by Congress in Public Law 92-400 that created the SNRA.

Like a marriage, we must constantly work to give back more than we take if we want this partnership to thrive. The Sawtooth Society was instrumental in securing permanent Congressional protection of new Wilderness Areas within the SNRA just last year. The Society works to maintain the trails and the view shed of the SNRA, works to protect private lands, strives to protect environmentally sensitive areas, funds the activities of other organizations who love this area as we do, provides opportunities for volunteers who wish to join us in our efforts, and works with the Forest Service and other community organizations with like-minded goals who want to keep the SNRA as a beautiful area to recreate and relax for all.

It is certainly worthwhile in a marriage to revisit our vows from time to time, and similarly it is important as we ponder the Sawtooth Society's mission that we reflect on the values set forth by Congress in protecting the SNRA. PL 92-400 states, in part, "Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That (a) in order to assure the preservation and protection of the natural, scenic, historic, pastoral, and fish and wildlife values and to provide for the enhancement of the recreational values associated therewith, the Sawtooth National Recreation Area is hereby established....."

Those are certainly beautiful, well-crafted words that are clearly meant to protect the area while providing for the ongoing opportunity for 'public recreation and enjoyment'. On this Anniversary, and frequently, we should pause and ask ourselves whether the Sawtooth Society has been true to the intent of the founders of the Sawtooth National Recreation Area. I believe that we have. One of the most important aspects that we have tried to balance is to effectively protect the resources of the area while not eliminating recreational opportunities while at the same time working to ensure that recreational activities do not negatively compromise the natural resources and values of the SNRA. It is interesting that Congress instructed us to 'PRESERVE and PROTECT the natural, scenic, historic, pastoral, and fish and wildlife values', but we are to 'provide for the ENHANCEMENT of the recreational values associated therewith'.

As we enter our next twenty years, the Sawtooth Society's promise to all of our supporters, to the wise group of individuals who had the vision to establish the SNRA, and to all who have ever visited or hope to visit this beautiful area is that we will tirelessly work to protect, preserve, and enhance the Sawtooth National Recreation Area. If you have been a part of this effort in the past in any way whatsoever – we thank you! If you would like to join us in the future in pursuing our goals or have suggestions as to how we can better fulfill our mission, please give us a call or drop us an e-mail. Either way, we look forward to seeing you on the trail, in the valley, or around town!

Wayne Hughes
President, Sawtooth Society



Volunteer Program

Your Sawtooth NRA Needs You!

There's been a changing of the guard for the Austin Kraal Memorial Volunteer Program. In June, Kelly Conde became Conservation Manager for the Pocatello-based Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust. We are sorry to see her go, but know she will continue to be a strong voice for conservation work in Idaho.

The Society has recently hired Greg Travelstead as its Stewardship Coordinator. Greg will continue Kelly's great work with youth and community groups, in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and other organizations, to identify and complete on-the-ground projects within the Sawtooth National Recreation Area. Greg is very aware of the Society's volunteer work from his direct involvement in several projects over the last two years. Already on-board and working to organize 2017 projects, Greg is providing continuity to the program, as well as fresh insights and ideas resulting from his field seasons as a Forest Service employee working on Sawtooth NRA trails.

Travelstead, who has lived in the Wood River Valley for the past 14 years, graduated from Boise High School and attended Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York graduating with a B.S. in Geology. At the University of Colorado at Boulder, Travelstead earned

an M.B.A. He discovered the Sawtooth and White Cloud mountains through backpacking trips in high school, which sparked a connection to nature, community and a commitment to advocacy.

"These experiences helped to steer my life in a positive direction at a crucial time and allowed me to be a better person and citizen," said Travelstead. "I'm delighted to have the opportunity to share and instill my gratitude for the Sawtooth NRA as Stewardship Coordinator for the Sawtooth Society. This is an opportunity to help more people engage in nature and cultivate a broader constituency for the Sawtooth NRA and public lands use and preservation."

Greg brings over forty years of Sawtooth NRA knowledge and experiences. In addition, he has a passion for traditional tools and methods that are essential for Wilderness projects, where motorized and mechanized equipment are prohibited. This knowledge will assist with more efficient trail clearing as well as training of new youth groups and others to the area.

Travelstead maintains and sharpens cross-cut logging saws for surrounding National Forests and private collectors and notes that

good crescent-ground saws, made from quality US steel, went out of production in the 1950's. These antiques are an important part of our intermountain heritage and if you have an old saw hanging in your barn or shop – Greg would love to see it (and may even help you restore it!).

"We're very fortunate to have someone with Greg's professional background and hands-on experience in this important position," said Sawtooth Society Executive Director Gary O'Malley. "With Greg's energy and passion for the area, we are confident he will build on the good work that has been completed to-date and enable even more people to help us enhance the Sawtooth NRA."

Greg is currently meeting with Forest Service staff and partners to develop the project list for the summer 2017 season. There is always a need for volunteers to assist the agency with projects ranging from riparian restoration, big game-friendly fence modifications, invasive species control, trail logging, brushing and pruning, trail reconstruction, Wilderness character monitoring and back-country patrolling. Greg is also planning for the camping and overnight accommodations needed by multi-day volunteers.



New New Stewardship Coordinator Greg Travelstead removing a pack stock safety obstacle at a choke point along the Boise River on the remote west side of the Sawtooth Wilderness.



This scene of youth putting down their electronic devices and getting out to enhance your Sawtooth experience will be replicated many times in the coming months. If you know a group who may want to get involved, please contact Sawtooth Society staff.

In early November, Greg attended the National Wilderness Conference in Missoula and the resounding theme was the need for much more effective youth engagement. Young people need the restorative, confidence-building effects of outdoor adventures, and our public lands need new generations of committed stewards and advocates. The Sawtooth Society is deeply grateful for the Kraal's foresight in creating the Austin Kraal Memorial Volunteer Program, which targets exactly these needs for both our young people and our public lands. It is wonderful and reassuring to see that other areas of the country are putting together similar programs.

According to recent statistics released by the Forest Service, nearly 75% of the agency's trails are not receiving adequate maintenance, and nearly 25% have been effectively

abandoned due to shrinking staff and financial resources. This broader problem directly affects the nearly 760 miles of Sawtooth NRA trails and a similar pattern is seen here.

While the agency is developing a National Strategy for a Sustainable Trail System, a critical element will be the need for partner groups to help bridge these deficiencies. Greg is carefully reviewing how best to use the Society's limited resources to make the greatest impact.

Already in various stages of planning for 2017 are numerous one-day projects, and at least two multi-day trail projects in the Wilderness areas. These will be great opportunities for four to six people to enjoy five days of supported backpacking, while also performing critical trail work in very special places Greg bets you've never been (or possibly even heard of!).

Please consider giving your time and effort to this amazing place we all love! Contact Greg to be added to the email list for upcoming projects, either at (208) 721-7665 or email greg@sawtoothsociety.org. Also, if you have ideas for areas needing "love" or if you could help provide lodging for a group, even a small one, please let Greg know!



Sawtooth Society volunteer Bailey Ireland of Hailey rocking the single buck!

PLANNING UNDERWAY FOR NEW WILDERNESS AREAS

Last year President Obama signed into law the Sawtooth National Recreation Area and Jerry Peak Wilderness Additions Act (SNRA+), giving permanent Wilderness designation to the Boulder-White Cloud mountains and Jerry Peak areas. This legislation capped more than 40 years of work and most recently a decade long campaign to provide greater protection for this magnificent area — an effort many observers doubted could ever succeed. Passage of SNRA+ demonstrated how much we can achieve working together toward a common goal.

Now the public planning process for the future management of the two new Wilderness areas in the Sawtooth NRA is underway and you have until January 7th to comment on the draft plan. The plan is available on the Forest Service website at <http://arcg.is/28Z6RVo>.

The proposed plan includes a number of specific changes, among them: a prohibition on campfires above 9000'; a limit on size of groups at 12 people and 14 head of stock, and a number of other restrictions intended to protect alpine soils and vegetation.

Many of you, and certainly the Society, fought long and hard for the creation of these two new Wilderness areas. But in many ways that was just the beginning. Now we need to make sure a broad public voice is heard as the plan for the future management of these areas is crafted.

Also, without a robust on-the-ground stewardship program to protect these spectacular areas, much of that effort may be for naught. The Society has the largest volunteer and stewardship program in Sawtooth NRA history and has invested over \$700,000 in Sawtooth

NRA recreational facilities and services. We invite everyone who helped achieve this victory to now join us in the job of preserving, protecting and enhancing this special place for generations to come.

Go to the planning website. Submit your comments. Call Greg Travelstead at 208.721.7665 to join in a stewardship project in 2017. Become involved in the Sawtooth Society's efforts on behalf of the Sawtooth NRA!



Kathy Muir, State and Federal Grant Manager for Idaho State Dept. of Parks and Recreation, and Terry Clark, Executive Director for Sawtooth Interpretative and Historical Assoc., review Sawtooth Society's grant investments to SIHA at the Museum in Stanley.

If you are involved with a non-profit that works to enhance recreation in the Sawtooth NRA we would encourage you to go to our website at www.sawtoothsociety.org to learn more.

Wildland Fire in the Sawtooth NRA

Hopefully you have had a chance to get involved in the Wildland Fire Collaborative Process over the last four years – if not, you will have plenty of chances in the coming months to learn about this important work firsthand. Please do so!

On approximately a quarterly basis, the Collaborative meets to identify and recommend the location, type and scale of fuel treatments and other Wildland fire reduction strategies intended to avoid yet another large-scale fire in the Sawtooth NRA.

The most recent meeting in September focused on reaching final agreement on the proposed South 21 and Elk Mountain East fuels modification projects to the West of Stanley. This area was established early in the planning as a high priority and these two projects have been under discussion for the last year. Both were reviewed on-the-ground during the Collaborate field trip on July 29, 2016.

The South 21 project will utilize a combination of commercial thinning, non-commercial thinning, and prescribed fire. An interdisciplinary team from the Forest Service will be established to complete project scoping by the summer of 2017. It is important to appreciate that one purpose of the planned thinning is to help keep Highway 21 open during an intense wildfire. The target date for a final decision on this project will be the fall of 2017, with implementation planned in the spring of 2018.

Some of the primary concerns that must be addressed in the scoping process include: Roadless Areas which bring special requirements, endangered and sensitive fish habitat, visual retention standards, Wild and Scenic River requirements, invasive species, sensitive riparian areas, and the decommissioning of old roads. The total potential area to be treated in this project is expected to be over 4,000-acres.

The Elk Mountain East project will also use a combination of commercial and non-commercial thinning, and pile and broadcast burning to reduce hazardous fuels. Much of the discussion on this project focused on the Dry Creek Fire this August and the need to modify the proposed project, since some of the project area was burned. While this fire was very concerning due to the historically dry conditions and forecasted winds, it now presents an opportunity to tie planned actions to its boundary. The timeline for this project will be similar to that for the South 21 project and it is expected to be nearly 5,000-acres.

The Collaborative also discussed and reaffirmed the urgency of completing these projects. The recent Pioneer Fire and the Dry Creek Fire confirmed the extreme wildfire potential in the area, and the probability of a catastrophic wildfire occurring in the project areas if the completion of these projects occurs more than 3-5 years in the future.

In early December the Salmon-Challis National Forest and the Sawtooth NRA staff also conducted the first of what will become a number of community briefings to build a better understanding of the projects being planned. Attending one of these informal sessions gives participants a chance to ask their questions and understand the “what and why” for the projects.

The Collaborative is currently preparing a letter to submit to the two Forest Supervisors supporting the South 21 and Elk Mountain East projects. The letter will urge the Forests to complete these projects as expeditiously as possible, utilizing the current Farm Bill authority. The letter will also stress the importance of completing the ongoing Road 210 Project as planned and emphasize the need to begin to queue up the additional projects in the remaining priority zones.

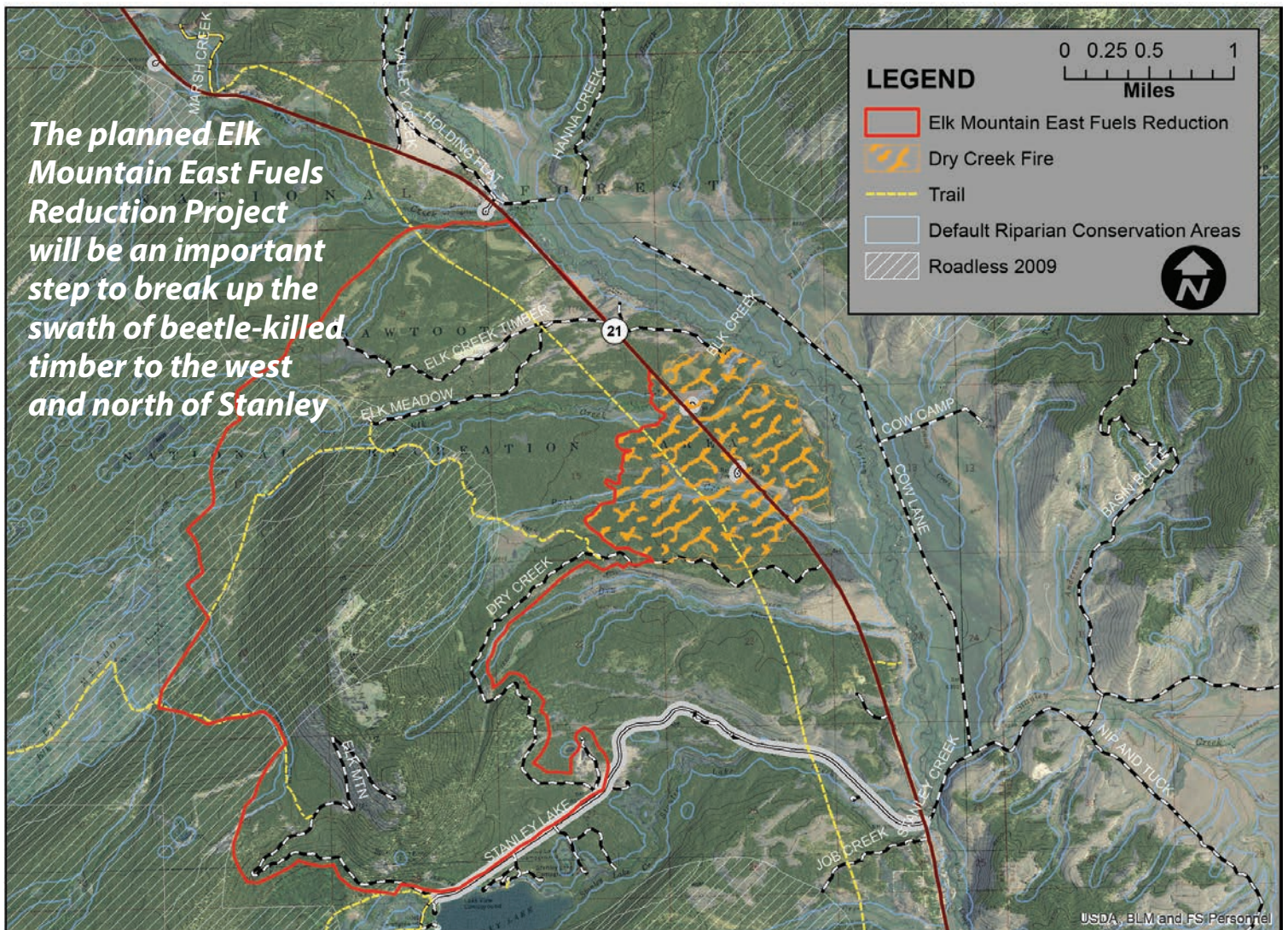
The Society is strongly supportive of expeditiously moving forward on all aspects of the recommendations made by the Fire Collaborative and urges you to get involved in this comprehensive effort! If you would like to be added to the email-based invitation list for upcoming meetings please call 208.721.2909 or send an email to gary@sawtoothsociety.org.



Credit: Jeffrey Lubeck, MESH Gallery

The prevailing wind blows the recent Dry Fire across the road and towards Valley Creek where firefighters were able to contain it – we all were fortunate the predicted strong westerly winds did not materialize!

Elk Mountain East Fuels Reduction



HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW THE SAWTOOTH NRA?

Guess this location and be the first to call Gary at 208.721.2909 and to win a prize and get credit in the next newsletter!



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STAFF

Gary O'Malley, Executive Director
Greg Travelstead, Stewardship Coordinator



BECOME INVOLVED IN A STEWARDSHIP

Get some exercise. Give back to the SNRA. Learn more about joining or sponsoring a Stewardship or Volunteer Project by contacting greg@sawtoothsociety.org or calling him at 208.721.7665.

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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"!