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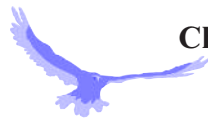
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PUBLISHER, EDITOR, ADVERTISING SALES,
COPY EDITOR, PRODUCTION & DESIGN
Anita M. Wilks
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Diane Bergstrom
James C. Hu - High Country News
Ariana Brocious - High Country News
BuffaloFieldCampaign.org
Maya L. Kapoor - High Country News
Jessica Kutz - High Country News
Janet McCabe - High Country News
Jim Plane - State Farm Insurance
Victoria Peterson - High Country News
Laura Pritchett - Writers on the Range-HCN
Eric Siegel - High Country News
Anna V. Smith - High Country News
Valerie Wedel
CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS/ARTIST
Bethany Goodrich
John Kurc
Ed Ogle/CC via Flickr
Duncan Rawlinson
Stephany Seay - BuffaloFieldCampaign.org
Brooke Warren
Gabriel Wolken
Dave Tee - Cover Photo
Michael Quinn/NPS

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Patchwork Of Lands Fragments Wildlife Migration

By Eric Siegel Nov. 1, 2020 High Country News

For generations, elk and mule deer in the remote South San Juan Mountains along the Colorado-New Mexico border have migrated from summer's alpine meadows down to the grassy lowlands where they spend their winters. Most of the higher portion of this major migration corridor lies on U.S. Forest Service lands — even in a wilderness area — but the ungulates' path also cuts directly through some of the largest privately owned properties in the region. If those parcels were sold and developed, their loss would cut off the seasonal wildlife flow.

Similar situations exist across the region, where huge ranches sprawl across wildlife habitat at the feet of mountain ranges and sometimes take up entire valley floors. Land-management agencies can help protect the adjoining public lands from development, but they have little say about what happens on these private parcels, which have become critical pieces in the jigsaw puzzle of wildlife conservation.

This is especially true in the Intermountain West, where population growth and soaring land values have put a premium on undeveloped private lands. Rarely can governments or conservation organizations afford to buy these properties outright. But landowners, land trusts, nonprofits and public agencies can often cobble together enough money to purchase development rights to the land — thereby creating a conservation easement, often at a fraction of the overall property value. The property owner retains ownership but agrees to work with the state to manage the land for ecosystem health.

That's exactly what happened in the South San Juans. In July, private landowners working with the Chama Peak Land Alliance, The Conservation Fund, the U.S. Forest Service and the Colorado State Forest Service put a conservation easement on the 16,723-acre Banded Peak Ranch — the final piece of a 30-year, 65,000-acre effort that permanently protects this entire wildlife corridor.

Thanks to the Great American Outdoors Act, which passed this summer, such deals could get a significant

boost. The act fully and permanently funds the Land and Water Conservation Fund, thereby doubling the amount of cash available for purchasing private inholdings or funding conservation easements on them.

Climate change drives species into higher elevations and latitudes. The Nature Conservancy mapped the potential migration routes that could result as habitats shift.

The longest main street in America begins at the southern limits of Island Park, Idaho, and ends an eyelash west of the Montana border. On a map of Fremont County, Island Park has the profile of an immense shoelace — 36.8 miles long and, in many places, just 500 feet wide. The town's main street is its spine, the thoroughfare that connects everything with everything else: It's how Island Park's 270 year-round residents, along with its thousands of seasonals, get to Harriman State Park and the TroutHunter fly shop and 500 miles of snowmobile trails. It's also a segment of America's longest road, U.S. 20, a federal highway that meanders from Newport, Oregon, to Boston, Massachusetts. More than a million vehicles speed past Island Park each year, many conveying tourists to Yellowstone, which lies beyond the Continental Divide.

Eastbound trucks tote lettuce from California; westbounders slosh with Bakken crude. To Island Park, U.S. 20 is a lifeline. To most of America, it's a conduit. For Idaho's wildest inhabitants, it can also be a death trap. Elk traverse the highway as they descend from mountain redoubts to winter range on the Snake River Plain, then return on the crest of spring's green wave. Moose cross U.S. 20 on their way to browse near the quartz folds of the St. Anthony Sand Dunes. Mule deer, grizzlies and pronghorn all ford the asphalt river, and some perish in the attempt. Between 2010 and 2014, animals caused 94 vehicle crashes along a 56-mile stretch of U.S. 20. Because most collisions go unreported, the real body count is even higher: According to state surveys, 138 ungulates died on U.S. 20 and a connected 9-mile stretch of State Highway 87 in 2018 alone.

Such car-inflicted carnage is *(Continued on next page.)*

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not unique to Idaho. More than a million large animals, and around 200 drivers, die annually from collisions nationwide. Over the last two decades, researchers have converged on a solution palatable to politicians on both sides of the aisle: wildlife crossings, tunnels and bridges that funnel creatures under and over highways. If roads are habitat-sundering gashes, crossings are the stitches that sew up rent landscapes. In the three years after the Wyoming Department of Transportation installed eight crossings near Pinedale in 2012, for instance, some 40,000 mule deer and 19,000 pronghorn safely navigated U.S. 191.

So when the Idaho Transportation Department began contemplating wildlife overpasses along U.S. 20 in 2016, you could forgive local conservationists for expecting the proposal to meet smooth sailing. Instead, the crossings inspired a fierce debate about the future of U.S. 20, an argument that pitted conservation's burgeoning emphasis on large-scale habitat connectivity against the rural West's long-standing desire to exert local control over land management. The controversy has bewildered more than one observer. "In my world, I look at wildlife crossings as a win-win situation," Patricia Cramer, the transportation ecologist who first recommended the U.S. 20 overpasses, told me. "Never has anybody said, 'Not in my backyard.' Nobody says I don't want a wildlife crossing." Nobody, that is, until Island Park.

Deer are frequently hit along this busy street as it bisects two islands of open space amid growing neighborhoods. During 2016 renovations to this key arterial, the city installed streetlights in part to help traffic spot wildlife, as well as a pedestrian/wildlife underpass at Moose Can Gully. That narrow tunnel of concrete, though, isn't used very often by deer. Soon they won't have as much incentive to cross; in November, the city approved construction of 68 townhouses which will cover most of the grassy meadow below Hillview.

ONE BLUEBIRD MORNING in September, I chugged north on U.S. 20 in a procession of RVs, campervans and Subarus back-loaded with mountain bikes — the West's recreational economy loose on the land. The highway slipped from sagebrush flats to lodgepole forests and back, occasionally do-si-doing with the glittering course of the Henrys Fork River. The speed limit plunged from 65 to 45 mph as the road passed through clusters of gas stations and cabins, though the signs felt more like suggestions — everyone in a hurry to get to a trailhead or a fishing hole, anywhere besides where they already were.

North of town, the road began to climb. The land tightened, crinkling as though squeezed by a giant fist, as the highway wound out of the Island Park caldera — the vast volcanic footprint planted more than a million years

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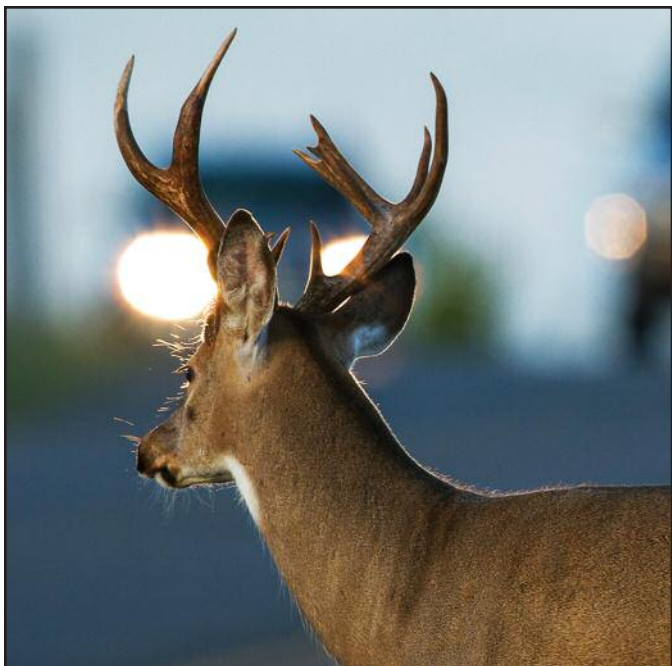
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A white-tailed buck is backlit by headlights moments before it dashes across rush-hour traffic on Hillview Way in Missoula, Montana.

earlier by the Yellowstone hotspot — and into the Henrys Lake Mountains. Whippy poles marked snowmobile trails. This tortuous 4-mile stretch was Targhee Pass, and it was the source of the trouble.


Like much of America’s aging infrastructure, the roadbed


at Targhee Pass is gradually deteriorating, afflicted by icing, frost heaves and poor drainage. In the fall of 2016, under the National Environmental Policy Act, the Idaho Transportation Department and the Federal Highway Administration began studying how best to remedy the section’s problems — among them wildlife collisions, which accounted for nearly a quarter of Targhee Pass’ crashes (none of them fatal, at least for humans). Swelling tourism would only exacerbate the danger: While just 5,600 vehicles navigated the pass daily in July 2012, the agency forecast summer traffic to reach 9,400 cars a day by 2042.

Like many hyperbolic claims, Schumacher’s grew from a germ of misinterpreted truth. Beginning in the 1980s, conservationists have increasingly focused on connecting swaths of land through which animals can freely roam, habitat linkages called wildlife corridors. In 2008, the Path of the Pronghorn, a migration route through Wyoming, became the country’s first federally designated corridor, and bills that would establish a national corridor system are currently idling in the U.S. House and Senate. Schumacher perceived sinister intent in this turn toward connectivity: Corridors would “be used to justify placing Island Park into a massive, large scale, conservation area” — a scheme, she wrote in other posts, with United Nations backing. Watts shared her alarm, opining that the corridor bill was “FAR worse” than the Antiquities Act, the law presidents use to designate *(Continued on next page.)*

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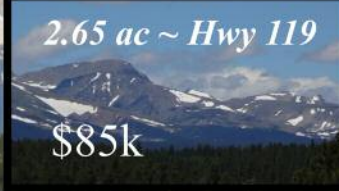


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The angriest diatribes, predictably, were directed at the group promoting the largest corridor: the Yellowstone-to-Yukon Conservation Initiative, or Y2Y, which promotes habitat connectivity between Yellowstone National Park and the Canadian Yukon. In Alberta, Canada, Montana and elsewhere, Y2Y has pursued wildlife crossings without sparking controversy; in Island Park, though, its grand dream became a target. “If overpasses are built ... Y2Y will then advocate the corridor is classified as a protected area,” Schumacher theorized. “The area surrounding a corridor, or buffer, will also require restricted or banned use.”

On July 30, 2018, Fremont County’s commissioners took local control a step further: They elected to put overpasses to an advisory vote on that fall’s ballot, the same strategy that, four years earlier, had torpedoed a national monument. The vote’s outcome wouldn’t hold legal water, but it would wield powerful influence. In an election earlier that year, voters in North Idaho’s Bonner County had rejected a wilderness area in the Scotchman Peaks, the range that towers over Lake Pend Oreille, by a 54-46% margin. To environmentalists’ chagrin, Sen. Jim Risch, R-Idaho, deferred to popular opinion and withdrew his support for the wilderness.

Wildlife passage advocates had good reason to fear a similar outcome in Fremont County. Many of the

overpasses’ staunchest defenders were registered to vote elsewhere; Jean Bjerke, for example, winters in Cedar City, Utah. Such migrants might contribute substantially to Island Park’s tax base and love the town deeply — but, from the ballot’s standpoint, they were invisible. Pro-crossing seasonals wrote the Island Park News to bemoan their disenfranchisement; in “Ken’s Korner,” Watts countered that foes of the vote wanted to silence legitimate locals. The IPPC mounted a campaign that impressed even its adversaries, garnering endorsements from every county elected official, the Chamber of Commerce, and the district’s representatives in the state House and Senate. Although Bjerke and her allies rallied their own troops, by the time Nov. 6, 2018, arrived, they knew it was over. The results were definitive: 78% of the electorate had rejected overpasses.

THE VOTE MAY HAVE BEEN LEGALLY MOOT, but it proved politically decisive. Idaho Transportation Dept. released its environmental assessment for the Targhee Pass repairs, it spurned overpasses in favor of a cheaper solution or ADS — an array of radar stations that would activate flashing warning signs whenever a creature rambled onto the road. With money tight, the agency reasoned, funding should go first toward road stretches with higher documented collision rates than Targhee Pass.

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Online Learning

By Valerie Wedel

Ideas and Strategies That Help

Screaming child, tears rolling down face... brightly colored headphones stuck over ears, clutching tablet and workbook... This is the heartbreaking image that has made its way onto the evening news in the metro Denver, Colorado, area in recent weeks. But this is not the only face of online learning.

We all may learn in several different ways – some by hearing, some by seeing, some by doing. There are a variety of ways we can take in knowledge and process it into useable skills. Younger children are typically hardwired to learn through movement and experience. They are often not developmentally ready to sit still at a desk for long periods of time. In fact, for children, learning through play is much more effective!

As a mom, this lesson was really driven home by home-schooling. The curriculum that helped teach this is called *Enki Education*. This curriculum was created by Beth Sutton, a certified Special Ed teacher and Waldorf teacher. It is experiential, differentiated based on where each student is in a given moment, based on science and best practices, and... playful.

With the current emphasis on working from home where possible, parents may expect their young children to put in a workday similar to their own. This is a pipe dream. Children are simply not ready to do this.

Here in the foothills above Denver, some families are forming small “pods,” where parents and children can share lessons in groups of perhaps two households. This is a great idea – even if the ‘pods’ met only once or twice a week. Both parents and children benefit from some kind of social group – even a tiny one.

This idea of learning-at-home-pods (hey, let’s think of a cool acronym...) is closely linked to the homeschool coops that many homeschooling families create. I would suggest parents, whose children migrate into home learning, ready or not, consider trying this approach.

Another powerfully helpful way to shift gears is walking or playing outdoors. I learned (the hard way!) that my children had a great school day when we started with physical exercise of any kind. Try a walk around the neighborhood. Or a nature walk, picking up leaves to draw or trace. Or playing tag with patches of sunshine. Or, if you are a dancer, make up child-friendly dance moves. This is a great way to start a school – or work – day.

Set up a special space for school also. Children (and parents) need to shift gears from “home being separate from school,” to “home is also” (Continued on next page.)

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school.” One way to do this is to make a morning ritual of setting up school space together. Clear off the school table - which could be a living room coffee table, or a dining table – what ever you have! Put out your children’s materials together. Make a game of this. We get our things ready - now it is school. If you used to have a morning ritual, getting up, making breakfast and lunches, getting to school, this is a chance to create a special new ritual the children are part of. This helps give everyone in the family a sense of place again.

This current social situation is a time of great challenge. It is also a lovely opportunity to connect in a way we never get to when all of us are roaming the world at warp speed. In the blink of an eye, my children have grown up and leaped off into the larger world. Perhaps this wild time of forced at-homeness, in the interests of helping us all stay healthy, can be an opportunity to enjoy a part of your families’ life that normally parents don’t get to see.

Since my children grew up, I am now thrilled to be teaching at one of the local community colleges. The department is architecture and engineering. Try moving a drafting course online at the 11th hour! The time commitment for instructors teaching this way, unexpectedly, is simply massive. However, in a class of 15, five students and their entire households have or are in

various stages of being seriously ill and/or grieving losses. Being online is the only way we could continue on with the course. It is working!

The lovely work my students are producing is impressive. We meet via Zoom for studios twice a week, three hours each. There are emails, video tutorials, and drawing reviews between studios.

Many students were initially unhappy; feeling the teacher-student-group connection we all value so highly would be lost. The connection is still there, though different. We have come to know each other’s family pets... We see glimpses of each other’s lives that we could not in a traditional classroom. And a huge benefit - no commuting on icy roads! I have come to love teaching from my home studio.

I also teach music to private students. Try moving music online when there is a time lag, and wonky Internet connection! The connection one forges: student - teacher, is the glue that holds it all together. We cherish that connection and improvise ways to keep succeeding. How strong, creative and resilient you may become, through this experience.

My part in this online community is to help facilitate learning in a way that is meaningful and effective. Would you care to guess how many hours a week I average to do just one course? For one 4-credit class, it is about 20 – 25 hours per week. At the end of the day, I still love what I am doing! And get to tell my students how proud I am of the hard work they are putting in, and the beautiful work they are producing.

This situation of isolating at home as much as possible will not last forever. Eventually, we will create a different “new normal,” returning to fuller participation in our larger world. When that day comes, I wish for you to be proud of what you, your family, and community have achieved!

Resources: Enki Education, website:

<https://enkieducation.org/> Meditation for parents (!):

<https://youtu.be/blmWJOVlcQc> R&R, just feeling good:

<https://youtu.be/O8cvCIVuiu4>

Theme song for this time:

Roll With It, by Steve Winwood

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Wilderness Rescuers Brace For Busy Winter

By Jane C. Hu Nov. 11, 2020 High Country News

Every winter, volunteers from Seattle Mountain Rescue are dispatched to the sites of dozens of harrowing incidents: They rescue backcountry skiers buried in avalanches, help injured hikers descend slick trails — and once, they even removed the wreckage of a single-engine plane from a mountainside. Volunteers must tackle steep, avalanche-prone mountain terrain, carrying the requisite gear to ward off hypothermia. Once on the scene, they rig anchors and ropes to carry out rescues, a time-intensive project that often lasts until after dark. “I can’t think of a time I didn’t come out in a headlamp during a winter mission,” said Cheri Higman, chairperson of the organization.

And this winter may be harder than usual, thanks to COVID-19. Owing to the pandemic, outdoor recreation skyrocketed this summer, and that trend is projected to continue into the winter. As a result, backcountry first responders are preparing for a potential rise in rescues, especially given the forecast for a particularly snowy winter in the Northwest. “We are anticipating there will be an uptick in accidents,” Higman said.

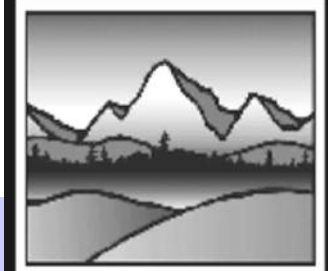
As soon as a wilderness emergency is reported in

Washington, county sheriffs dispatch search and rescue volunteers. In King County, where Seattle is located, the sheriff may call one of nine all-volunteer units that make up the King County Search and Rescue Association. Each has its own specialty: building anchors with ropes and rigging kits for steep alpine rescues, tracking lost people, or transporting other rescuers on all-terrain vehicles. The association has over 500 responders on its roster, though only 25% of them are trained to work in snowy terrain.

In addition to assisting with missions, Seattle Mountain Rescue typically holds a number of trainings and workshops throughout the year. This winter, concerned about early snow, it began training six weeks earlier than usual. But, Higman said, new volunteer enrollment has been down this year, in part because the organization had to abandon a recruitment round after the pandemic hit in the spring. Like other outdoors organizations, Seattle Mountain Rescue moved most of its training online; it’s also had to cancel in-person community workshops on treating cold injuries and training for winter navigation, which can help decrease the need for rescues.

The pandemic restrictions could be a problem as more recreationists head outside. By *(Continued on next page.)*

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Highlander Recreation

October, the King County Search and Rescue Association had already conducted 191 rescues, compared with a total of 198 for all of 2019. Search and rescue groups in other Western states, including California, Utah and Colorado, were also stretched thin over the summer.

And this winter, many of the people hitting the slopes are likely new to backcountry adventures. With many ski areas limiting ticket sales in response to COVID-19, and resorts in New Mexico and Colorado already selling out of passes, retailers are reporting an uptick in backcountry gear sales. For instance, Ean action sports company with stores in Seattle, Portland, Denver and Salt Lake City, has seen its April-to-October sales for ski-touring equipment like boots, bindings and skins increase by 120% compared to the same period in 2019. “We see customers that are looking to provide themselves with options,” said Laura Holman, Evo’s assistant buyer.

Organizations that train recreationists are also preparing for a busy year, but COVID-19 has forced them to adapt. The Northwest Avalanche Center, which typically offers avalanche awareness courses to about 10,000 people annually, has pivoted to an online-only format. Similarly, The Mountaineers, a Seattle-based alpine club, has taken its basic avalanche safety classes online, with in-person field practices limited to small groups. Those courses are filling



Guides practice their crevasse rescue skills on the Cowlitz glacier, Mount Rainier, Washington last year. With increased recreation during the pandemic, backcountry first responders are preparing for a potential rise in rescues this winter. Brooke Warren

up fast, making it challenging to balance the demand with the COVID restrictions, said Mountaineers CEO Tom Vogl: “We’re all trying to figure out how we can offer as many courses as possible while continuing to contain the spread of the virus.”

Scott Schell, the executive director of the Northwest Avalanche Center, hopes that the abrupt move to digital education will actually allow more people to take part. The center’s 14th annual Northwest Snow and Avalanche workshop went online for the first time this year, and attendance was higher than ever before. “Avalanche awareness and education in general is now more accessible than ever to people in rural areas, (who) have historically been underserved,” said Schell.

Meanwhile, many of the Northwest’s best-known outdoors organizations are teaming up to coordinate a message for recreationists looking for safe but snowy fun this year. Their advice: Always check avalanche forecasts, carry an avalanche shovel, probe, transceiver and other necessary gear, and seek training whenever possible. Schell said that it’s a common misconception that popular summer hiking trails are safe to snowshoe in the winter. “Snowshoeing is not the wintertime equivalent of hiking,” he said. “You’ve got to have a winter mindset, and that involves the ability to identify avalanche terrain, and when it’s appropriate to be there.”

Jane C. Hu is a contributing editor for High Country News and an independent journalist who writes about science, technology and the outdoors. She lives in Seattle.



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The Danger Of Self-Isolating On Public Lands

By Jessica Kutz - March 20, 2020 High Country News

Ski resorts have shuttered. Disneyland is closed. Professional sports have been canceled. For most of the United States, social events and attractions ranging from museum visits to music festivals have vanished. But despite nationwide warnings that people should stay at home and limit unnecessary outings, national parks and monuments have, for the most part, remained open.

As a result, visitors desperate for activity and distraction have flooded into Moab, Utah, the gateway to Arches National Park. “We had crowds of people that felt like peak summertime,” said Ashley Kumburis, who manages a rafting and jeep tour outfitter that’s still open. “If you didn’t know this contagious virus was spreading, you would think it was a regular summer day in Moab.”

On March 16, doctors from Moab Regional Hospital sent a letter to Gov. Gary Herbert, R, asking for help. “We are writing this letter to implore you to shut down all non-essential business service in Moab,” it reads. Citing a lack of hospital beds and no local intensive care unit — at a time when lodging for the following weekend was estimated to be at between 75-95% capacity — officials were concerned that “tourism would drive the spread” of COVID-19. Within a few hours, the Southeast Utah Health Department issued an order closing restaurants and lodging, and camping on both public and private land to outside visitors.

Yet Arches National Park, which draws over 1.5 million visitors in an average year, remains open. And as of this week, national parks across the country that are still open

are now free. “This small step makes it a little easier for the American public to enjoy the outdoors in our incredible National Parks,” Interior Secretary David Bernhardt stated in a press release.

For people around the country, this is a confusing message. After hearing that outdoor spaces are the safest areas to avoid the spread of COVID-19, many are venturing out, seeking the sort of isolation that public lands offer. But when visitors start overwhelming gateway communities, the public lands are no longer a safe refuge. In Moab and other tourist-based towns, the message that their backyards are still open to out-of-town visitors is making both residents and park employees fear that their communities and workplaces could become the next COVID-19 hotspot.

Friends of Cedar Mesa, a nonprofit located in Bluff, Utah, that runs a visitors center for Bears Ears National Monument, a popular climbing area, urged visitors to reconsider their travel plans. Citing a surge in camping and tourists after Moab closed itself to tourism, the group released a statement on Thursday. “This flood of visitors negatively impacts the sensitive landscape we strive to protect, but even more importantly, in a time of great uncertainty, an increase in visitation has the potential to put remote gateway communities at risk.”

Sending people to parks means they’ll use the amenities in both the parks and in nearby towns. Grocery stores in the rural West, as in the rest of the country, are struggling to stay stocked, bathroom facilities will need cleaning, and the more visitors there are, the greater chance for injuries that might need to be treated in (Continued on page 15.)

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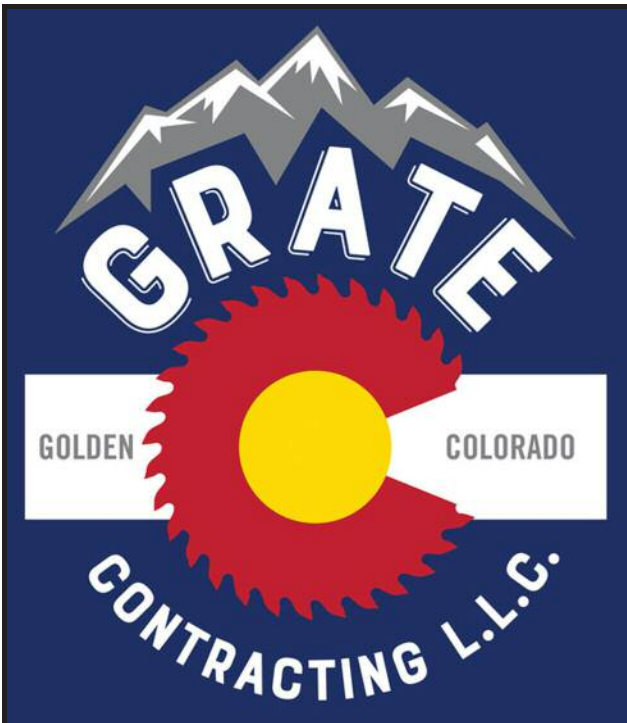
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rural hospitals — hospitals that lack the capacity to treat them.

Park employees are also concerned about being put in contact with possibly contagious crowds. One national park employee in Skagway, Alaska, quit on Wednesday, “citing inadequate precautions for keeping park staff from being exposed to coronavirus,” according to a local news report. “It is mind-boggling that an official with responsibility for all of the public lands that fall underneath the Interior is willing to risk his workforce to spin a message that everything is great, go to a national park,” said Joan Anzelmo a retired park superintendent and spokeswoman who served for 35 years with the agency in places like Yellowstone and Grand Teton.

And that’s not all: “I’m especially worried about fire season right now,” Anzelmo told me. “NPS employees from all different backgrounds form a good part of the wildland firefighting workforce.” Anzelmo fears what will happen if those employees get sick or overworked while trying to keep parks open during a national emergency. “Do we want to exhaust that bench of the federal workforce in public lands right now for a momentary feel-good moment while a pandemic is raging, or do we want to be smart and be ready for the other emergencies that are going to happen?”

Meanwhile, state parks are indicating that people can travel as long as their destination is the outdoors, putting other tourism-based towns at risk. Depoe Bay, Oregon, a town of approximately 1,500 that bills itself as the world’s smallest natural harbor, and Oregon’s state parks have remained open despite closing many visitor facilities and campgrounds.

Tourists typically flock to Depoe Bay this time of the year to view the gray whale migration during the annual Spring Whale Watching Week, which was supposed to start on March 21. The park canceled the event and is continually announcing new measures to reduce COVID-19 transmission. Yet as long as the park remains open, visitors still feel encouraged to visit. “You can still enjoy this spring break tradition on your own,” its website reads, with a list of places people can see the whales.

Local resident Kelly Fuller wants Oregon State Parks and Recreation to explicitly tell visitors to stay away. While Fuller understands that people want to get outside and breath some fresh air, it’s inevitable that they’ll wander into town to use the restroom and visit local businesses. “We have to not go buy knickknacks in cute shops. We have to stop doing that. Otherwise, a lot of people are going to die who don’t need to die,” Fuller said. “There are ways to go outside without traveling to another area.”



A crowd of photographers line up to capture the sunrise at Mesa Arch near Moab, Utah, in Canyonlands National Park on an early fall day in 2016. Duncan Rawlinson

Fuller herself has three relatives in the at-risk age category — all over the age of 70— currently sealed up at their homes in town. “I’m running around in the outside world shopping for them,” Fuller said. “The least the state can do is close everything nonessential and tell people to stay in their homes; don’t come down to these small towns on the coast,” Fuller said.

And Depoe Bay may be at greater risk than other gateway communities. The town has a large population of retirees, many of them at an age where getting sick with COVID-19 could mean hospitalization or death. In response, the local clinic is no longer accepting walk-ins, instead fielding patient concerns by phone appointments only. The clinic has set up a tent outside and a mobile health unit for patient testing.

As Depoe Bay, like the rest of the country, prepares for a possible onslaught of COVID-19 cases, Fuller wants visitors to reconsider coming and unknowingly infecting her small community. “People can come back in the summer when things are better,” she said. “But not now.”

Jessica Kutz is an assistant editor for High Country News.

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The Power Of Lecture

By Diane Bergstrom

“Go to the science,” surmised Vera S. Evenson, after explaining an experiment she conducted in the mid fifties at Perdue University, Indiana. Vera is a respected expert mycologist, published author, and Emeritus Curator, Sam Mitchel Herbarium of Fungi, Denver Botanic Gardens. She has overseen a collection of 20,732 preserved documented fungal specimens. When she talks, we should listen. Poison Control does. Vera is among the experts they consult when worried parents call after their child has eaten an unidentified mushroom from the yard. If she isn’t familiar with fungi in the caller’s area, i.e. Hawaii, she knows a fellow mycologist who is. Many a caller has been comforted by her extensive knowledge and soothing wisdom.

Vera has a lifetime familiarity with viruses and bacteria. When the flu epidemic hit Montana in 1917-1918, her mother, as a young woman, was one of the few family members who didn’t contract it while she cared for ill relatives. Her mother’s brother tragically lost his life to it. Vera explained there are historic pictures of townspeople wearing masks in the 1900’s, and how purposefully they ran in and out of stores to quickly do their shopping. She said during the cold fall and winter months, most buildings

were heated by pot-bellied stoves. Unknown at the time, the heated dry air allowed the virus to float around for hours and spread. The sadness is apparent as she outlines the tremendous loss of life due to WWI, the pandemic, and that antibiotics were still in the development stage.

While earning her Master of Science degree in Microbiology including Virology (the study of viruses), her interest in cultivating and growing also grew. She cultivated pure cultures of bacterium and inoculated them with viruses. She explained that viruses have no cell wall; just a cluster of DNA and/or RNA, all hooked together, intent on interrupting cell sequences. Her lecture, which she shared with me several years ago, has been a sticking science lesson, as I’m sure it was with her undergraduate students and anyone fortunate enough to hear it. Before her lecture, she assembled sterile petri plates with hospitable growing medium and placed them around the classroom. She rinsed her mouth with a bacteria solution tinted with pink pigment, then instructed her students to uncover the plates. She spoke in her normal voice from a lectern for half an hour and had the 25 students recap the plates. Each location was marked on the plates; they were turned upside down and allowed to grow for a few days. Every plate showed signs of pink bacteria colonies except the one plate placed furthest from the lectern. The plates placed closest



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to the lectern grew the most prolific colonies. The point of her lesson was to illustrate how far bacteria can float out into a room on the mere droplets emitted as you speak, without coughing, laughing, yelling, or sneezing. She reiterated that bacteria are heavier than viruses due to their spore walls; therefore, viruses in droplets can also float round in the air and travel. Higher humidity causes more droplets to fall to the floor. Mind you, she gave this lecture in the 1950's. Mask up.

Several years back, I wrote a *Highlander Monthly* article with a title posing the question of why we should be concerned about hurricanes in land locked Colorado. I'd attended a lecture at the Conference of World Affairs by the chief meteorologist from the National Hurricane Center. He outlined the challenges they'd had convincing the governor of Louisiana of the impending devastation of Hurricane Katrina. When the governor didn't immediately respond, they circumvented him and went to the mayor of New Orleans, who wanted to consult with his attorneys before shutting down the city. Days of evacuation and lives were lost due to politicians controlling the narrative, and obstructing public warnings. My lesson from that lecture was to go to the scientific community sources for the purest information and advice. These times bring that lecture to mind, I tuned in last week to a Colorado Author Talk with one of my favorite authors, Pam Houston, presented by Lyons Regional Library. Besides being a prolific author, she teaches and lectures at UC Davis. During the

conversation of writing during these difficult times, she said that when she wore a mask in her ranch town of Creede, she was called names. This made her so sad, she explained, as she thought she lived in a small mountain town where people took care of each other. Let's be better than that. Let's be the people who take care of ourselves, and each other, and listen and learn from great lectures!



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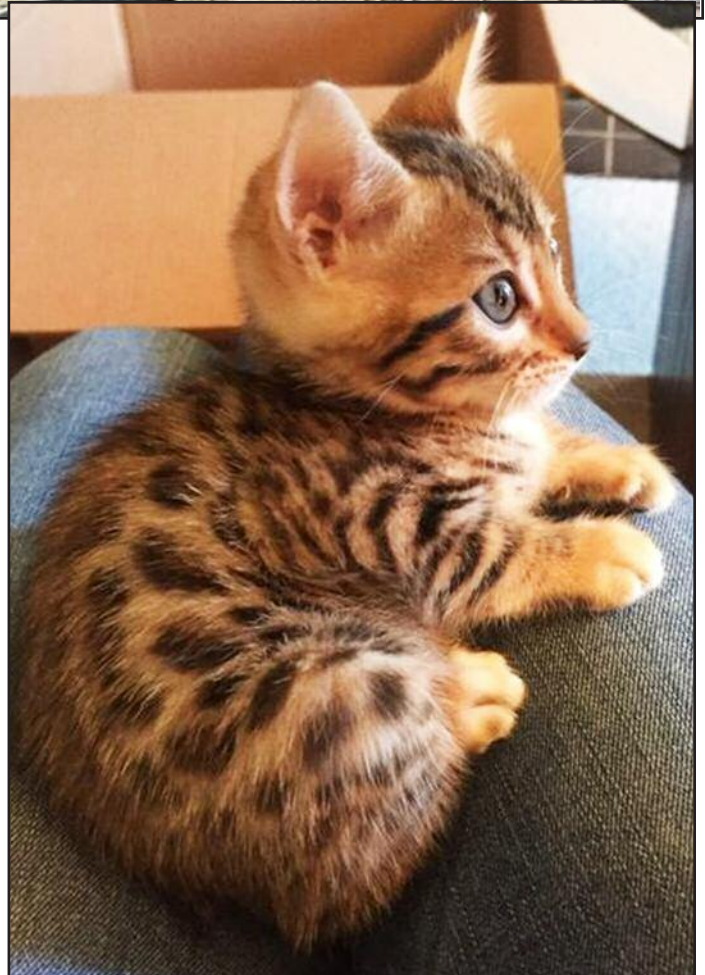
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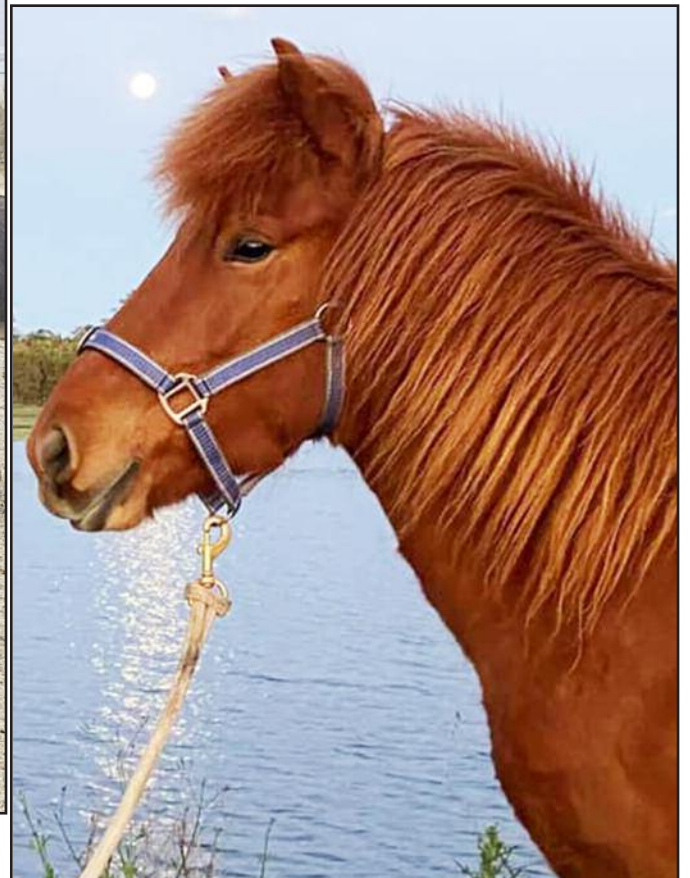
Bottom right: *Cat Lovers Club kitten.*

This page top Left: *Charlie's Tale.*

Top right: *Mixed cattle breed puppy.*

Bottom left: *POV's.*

Bottom right: *Icelandic from Stephanie.*



Driving Distractions ~ Being Pulled Over By Police

From Jim Plane – State Farm Insurance

Did you know texting is not the only driving distraction? In 2018, 2,841 people were killed in crashes involving a distracted driver, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Texting while driving is one of the most dangerous driver distractions, it's not the only one.

More driving distractions to avoid

Grooming. Pressed for time, some people conduct grooming activities in the car, such as putting on makeup or using an electric shaver. Do yourself and other drivers a favor by completing your morning routine at home.

Eating and drinking. Your steaming cup of coffee spills or ingredients slip out of your sandwich—any number of distractions can arise when you drive and dine. Stay safer by saving the refreshments until you're parked.

Monitoring passengers. Attending to children in the back seat can be up to 12 times as distracting as a cell phone and having a pet in your lap adds to distractions.

Rubbernecking. Slowing down to look at a traffic collision could cause a crash of your own. The same thing goes for lengthy looks at billboards, a street address or a great mountain view.

Listening to music and infotainment systems. Playing your radio at a high volume or wearing headphones takes

your focus away from the road. These distractions reduce the likelihood you'll hear car horns, emergency vehicles or other key noises. Similarly, with cars getting smarter, DVD players in the back and other passengers' devices; there are more distracting sounds than ever before that may be coming from various parts of the car.

Daydreaming. If you've ever realized you just missed an exit because you weren't paying attention, you've experienced a common distraction: daydreaming. Resist the urge to drift off while driving, and keep your attention on the road. Vary your typical driving routes. A change in scenery and traffic conditions could help you stay alert.

Nodding off. According to a poll by the National Sleep Foundation®, an estimated 60% of Americans have admitted to driving while drowsy, and 37% have nodded off behind the wheel. If you feel sleepy, pull over. Walk around to rouse yourself, switch drivers, or find a safe place to nap before you resume driving.

What drivers should be ready to do if they are pulled over.

It's likely to happen, so advise your children what to do when pulled over by police. Getting pulled over can be stressful and scary for drivers. If new to this situation, consider following these steps when you see flashing lights in your rear view mirror: **Slowly pull over.** Use the turn signal and proceed to a safe location along the right side of the road. If the location seems dangerous, continue driving until you find a safe, well-lit place to stop, but turn on your hazard lights to indicate you see the officer. As long as it's clear that you intend to pull over, most officers will understand.

Be wary of unmarked vehicles

If the officer is driving an unmarked vehicle, don't be afraid to question their validity. You can call 911 to verify that the unmarked vehicle pulling you over is an on-duty officer. Or, ask to see the officer's badge and photo ID. If the officer won't present it, request to call another officer. Always call 911 if the situation appears to be threatening.

Follow the officer's instructions

Roll down the window and place both hands on the wheel. Do exactly what the officer asks, including providing your license and registration once requested. Alert the officer before reaching into the backseat, the glove compartment or into a purse or other bag. **Stay calm**

Talk to the officer in a calm manner to avoid escalation of the situation. **Return to the road safely**

Once the officer has processed your information and written a warning or ticket, and after they have verbally told you you may leave, put on your turn signal and look for oncoming traffic. Merge slowly onto the road when it's safe.

Always remember to buckle up, a fine for not wearing your seat belt is one less thing you should have to worry about.



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Tribes Offer New Way Managing The Tongass

By Anna V. Smith Oct. 1, 2020 HCN

In the early fall of 2018, Marina Anderson sped down the rough road connecting one side of Alaska’s Prince of Wales Island to the other. She had only a few hours to get to a public meeting over the potential opening of the Tongass National Forest, her tribe’s ancestral land, to logging and mining.

Mail is delivered by floatplane once a week to the Organized Village of Kasaan’s tribal office on a rugged island in southeast Alaska. But the mail can be delayed for a week, or even a month, by high winds and rough waters. Anderson, who was then working as a tribal office assistant, had opened an important letter barely in time: The U.S. Department of Agriculture had notified the tribe of a public hearing, to be held that very day, on whether to remove Roadless Rule protections from the Tongass National Forest. “We were blindsided by it,” Anderson, who is now Kasaan’s tribal administrator, said recently.

In the end, Anderson and the tribal official she went with made it to the meeting and were able to hear directly from the Forest Service and speak with the other tribes present. Still, Anderson’s experience exemplifies the federal government’s long-running failure to adequately work with tribes. Alaska’s petition to the Forest Service to increase logging on the Tongass was the latest move in a two-decade battle, including policy changes, court decisions, appeals and injunctions, over the protection of 9.4 million acres of the world’s largest unfragmented temperate rainforest. In response, at the end of July, 11 Southeast Alaska Native tribes, including Kasaan, petitioned the USDA, the agency that oversees the Forest Service, requesting a new rule that would require it to work with tribes to identify and protect parts of the Tongass that hold life-sustaining value for the Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian — old-growth red cedar trees, which are used for canoes; salmon watersheds; and lands with traditional fish camps and burial sites.


The July petition to create a “Traditional Homelands Conservation Rule” represents a new strategy in tribal nations’ ongoing efforts to hold the federal government to

its legal responsibility to consult with them on projects that impact them. If the USDA accepts the petition, it would create a mechanism to involve the 11 tribes in the conservation and management of their ancestral lands — something that’s increasingly critical as climate change shifts the wildlife patterns and habitat that so many remote villages, including Kasaan, rely on.

THE TERM “TRIBAL CONSULTATION” oozes bureaucracy, but it is a primary process by which tribal nations can influence projects that will affect them by interacting with the U.S. on a government-to-government basis. The process is a way to acknowledge that tribes retain a relationship with ancestral lands, including those beyond reservation boundaries. “It’s an opportunity for an affected government — not just a stakeholder — to have a say in what happens,” said Natalie Landreth (Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma), senior staff attorney at Native American Rights Fund. “These are very real rights.”

But the United States has not always consulted with tribes in good faith. The construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline, the designation (and un-designation) of Bears Ears National Monument in Utah, and the construction of the U.S.-Mexico border wall through Kumeyaay, Tohono O’odham and other tribal lands all represent federal decisions made with little or no tribal input.

Consultation was formalized as a process in 2000, when it became a requirement for federal agencies. Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama each reaffirmed and expanded the consultation process. The current President has not. His approach to Indigenous issues — including his reduction of Bears Ears National Monument, a tribal-led initiative, by 85% — has favored industry over Indigenous nations. But no matter who is president, longstanding problems persist in the way agencies deal with tribes. In a sweeping review of the decision-making process last year by the Government Accountability Office, interviews with 57 tribal leaders and comments from 100 tribes pointed out problems, saying agencies started the process too (Continued on next page.)



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late and did not consider their input or respect tribal sovereignty. The agencies, meanwhile, said they had difficulties contacting tribes and complained about the lack of adequate consultation resources. Too often, what constitutes enough consultation is determined by federal agencies, with little recourse for tribes that disagree.

In their Traditional Homelands petition, the 11 tribes wrote that the process is currently a “one-way system of communication,” where federal agencies use consultation to “issue orders and give updates to the tribes about what will happen.” In the case of the Tongass, six tribes, including Kasaan, had signed on to cooperate with the federal government on a request for development by the state of Alaska. (Some have since withdrawn.) But throughout the two-year process, tribes said the USDA repeatedly ignored their input and requests for in-person meetings; fast-tracked seemingly arbitrary deadlines; and proceeded as usual despite a pandemic that has disproportionately hurt Native communities. None of the tribes recommended a full repeal of the Roadless Rule, and around 95% of public comments opposed complete exemption. So far, however, exemption remains the U.S. Forest Service’s clear preference.



*Marina Anderson, Kasaan's tribal administrator, climbs an uprooted tree on Prince of Wales Island, Alaska.
Bethany Goodrich*

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“The Forest Service recognizes and supports the sovereignty and self-determination of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal nations through building, maintaining, and enhancing government-to-government relationships with Tribal Governments,” said a spokesperson for the USDA, adding that it has received and is reviewing the petition. “We engage inclusively with people in mutual respect, active collaboration, and shared stewardship. We promote meaningful nation-to-nation consultation with tribal nations.”

With the petition, the tribes — Kasaan, the Organized Village of Kake, Klawock Cooperative Association, Hoonah Indian Association, Ketchikan Indian Community, Skagway Traditional Council, Organized Village of Saxman, Craig Tribal Association, Wrangell Cooperative Association, Yakutat Tlingit Tribe, and Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska — are asking the USDA to move toward a framework of “mutual concurrence. That concept improves on consultation and better aligns with the international standard of “free, prior and informed consent,” which is enshrined in the U.N.’s Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People. With mutual concurrence, “the power dynamic is much more even, where the tribe has more of a substantive say, and the agency has to respond to and respect that tribal input,” said Monte Mills, director of the Margery Hunter Brown Indian

Law Clinic at the University of Montana, who specializes in public lands and tribal management. "It's proposing a new relationship for the management of the forest as a whole."

THE FOREST SERVICE'S FINAL DECISION on the Tongass exemption will come this fall. So, too, could the decision on whether or not the USDA will take up the petition for a traditional homelands rule. A rejection isn't necessarily the end: A new presidential administration would give the 11 tribes a new opportunity to make their case.

The Tongass National Forest encompasses a number of Southeast Alaska Native villages and their ancestral lands, so any decision about it will affect access to food sources like salmon, Sitka black-tailed deer and wild berries, as well as cultural resources like western red and yellow cedar trees, which are used for regalia, baskets, totem poles, masks and smokehouses. Yellow cedar is imperiled by climate change, and the Tongass is also a critical carbon sink. "We need (the Tongass) more than ever as the climate's warming and our tourism and fishing industries have been taking a hit, both because of the pandemic and changing ecosystem conditions that have affected fish runs," said Kate Glover, a staff attorney for Earthjustice based in Juneau who has worked on litigation around the Tongass. "We need to protect the forest that they depend on."

With Alaska warming faster than the rest of the United States, it's getting harder to put up food for the winter, a matter of survival in places like Kasaan, which has no grocery store. And the pandemic is only exacerbating the

problem, creating disruptions in travel and food supplies.

At 26 years old, Marina Anderson has heard nearly all her life about the possibility that the Tongass could be logged, with little regard for the tribes who rely on it. Her father was a logger and a tribal council member, her mother president of the Alaska Native Sisterhood, a nonprofit that promotes Indigenous rights. Anderson remembers doing her homework at their meetings, as conversations about sea otter hunts, Alaska politics and Indigenous rights wafted around her. "Our way of life is something that isn't always transcribable to English," Anderson said from her office in Kasaan in August. "My relationship to the Tongass goes so deep that I'm made aware of it every day and in different ways. The salmon that I eat, that comes from the Tongass. The air that I breathe, that comes from the Tongass."

That depth of connection and intrinsic value can get lost in the tribal consultation process, especially given the way the U.S. views land and water and the life they harbor, Anderson said. Cultural needs — for generations to come — are not quantifiable. "The Forest Service asked me, 'How many trees do you guys need left for canoes and totem poles?'" Anderson said. "They understand that we need old growth: tight grain, beautiful logs, straight-grain logs. What they don't understand is that we don't have a number for them."

Editor's Note: Since this story went to press, the Forest Service has issued a Final Environmental Impact Statement for a full exemption of the Tongass National Forest from the Roadless Rule.

Anna V. Smith is an assistant editor for High Country News.

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Wildfires Require A Drastic Fix

By Laura Pritchett Oct. 27, 2020 Writers on the Range - HCN

I live on a county road near the evacuation perimeter of what is now Colorado's largest wildfire. Yesterday, the sheriff's deputy was outside, his lights flashing red-blue-red, giving my house a strobe light effect. He was directing traffic as people fled the mountain with trailers filled with cattle and horses and goats and belongings.

The wind was roaring, first one direction and then another, which is why this fire blew up again. The Cameron Peak Fire has been burning for two months — a long two months — leaving me and most of my neighbors with a hacking cough and guts that feel like they're filled with clay.

When we get the occasional blue sky day, I'm so relieved that I play hooky from work and walk up this county road, getting in exercise while I can, trying to clear my head while I can, obligations be damned. I truly find it hard to care about anything, which is saying something, given my personality. Even work is difficult on smoky days — my brain feels gritty because of ash and helicopters overhead

and the grim anxiety in the air. It's hard to process things, to be productive, to think.

I thought I'd be better at this, more resilient, less fazed. As a person born in Colorado, I'm used to wildfire. Plus, I know that these forests needed to burn. Not like this, sure, but we all knew they were a tinderbox, and it's just a flat-out, predictable truth that they were going to go. On top of that, we know climate change makes it worse.

All ten of the largest wildfires in Colorado have happened since 2000, this Cameron Peak Fire at 207,000 acres as of this writing, followed by Pine Gulch, Hayman, West Fork Complex Fire, Spring Creek Fire, High Park Fire (which had me evacuated in 2012), Missionary Ridge Fire, 416 Fire, Bridger Fire, and Last Chance Fire. And as I wrote this essay, the Lefthand Canyon Fire, the CalWood Fire, and the frightening East Troublesome Fire sprang up, driving thousands from their homes. Such pretty names, sending remnants of trees into our lungs. No wonder most of my novels written over the past 20 years contain wildfires, because they truly have been part of my lived experience.

I've always believed that it's expectation which causes

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The Cameron Peak Fire could be seen from Loveland, Colorado, in mid-August. As of late October, the fire had grown to more than 200,000 acres and was only 64% contained. Ed Ogle/CC via Flickr

suffering, that we only are sad when things don't go the way we want, and thus I feel I shouldn't be suffering now. But living it, and expecting it, are two different things. Familiarity doesn't make it any easier. When the body senses biological threat, the result is cortisol, inflammation, pain. After all, particles are daily being lodged into our lungs. People are truly suffering here, in body and in spirit. Honest admissions of despair are rampant, and nobody is embarrassed about it.

COVID makes it harder. Let's be honest: Our friends don't really want us evacuated into their little homes and sharing air, nor do we want to put them in that position. So we stay put, always on the edge. I never thought I'd take

breathable air for granted. Lowering my expectations that far seems, well, sad.

Some things help. Friends, offers of assistance, memories of the good days, and, yeah, air purifiers. We can also think ahead to prescribed burns, thinning, fuel reduction, forest management, fire resiliency, and Aldo Leopold's idea of "intelligent tinkering," where we make forests more resilient to climate change via smart restorations of natural landscapes. All this is good, but what would help most of all is to have others extend their empathy and make green-living the priority.

Wouldn't it be a miracle if the whole damn world banded together and realized climate change was the number one priority? Accepted that science was real? Got it together, made some changes at home, such as not buying anything unnecessary? Because that is

part of the true fix. At some point, drastic measures will happen, because the suffering will extend to all, and to such an extent that it cannot be ignored — though I wish that weren't necessary.

This morning, I woke up to birds still at the feeder, a fawn walking by, winds calmer. It's creepily quiet, with no traffic because everyone west of me is evacuated.

It is still a sad time and I feel broken, but the air quality has moved from Hazardous to Moderate, which has me thinking that perhaps we, as a people, could move in that direction, too, especially during the clear-sky times when we can think and get to work.

Laura Pritchett is a contributor to Writers on the Range, (writersontherange.org), a nonprofit spurring lively conversation about the West. She is a novelist and directs the MFA in nature writing at Western Colorado University.



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Update: BuffaloFieldCampaign.org

Yellowstone Threatens to Kill Our National Mammal

It is currently very quiet here on the front lines. Patrols are going out each morning and afternoon, monitoring buffalo migration corridors. So far the only gentle giants we have seen recently have been seen through a spotting scope, deep inside Yellowstone National Park. Montana's buffalo hunt opened on the 15th, so state hunters have been seen in the area, but they are finding no buffalo to kill. Though buffalo are absent, we have had the pleasure of seeing a mama moose and her enormous calf, which is always a treat.

Help protect our National Mammal! Contact Yellowstone to oppose their slaughter plans and urge Congress to strengthen the National Bison Legacy Act! Image by Buffalo Field Campaign.

You would think that buffalo inside Yellowstone National Park are safe from human threats, but such is not the case, especially in Gardiner along the park's northern boundary. Inside Yellowstone is the Stephens Creek buffalo capture facility, where thousands of wild buffalo have been captured and shipped to slaughter over the years. This year may prove no different; Yellowstone conducted their bison population estimate stating that there are approximately 4,700 buffalo (1,200 of which are from the imperiled Central herd) and they intend to kill upwards of 900 buffalo this year. Our National Mammal, killed by Yellowstone National Park.

Want to contact the park to let them know what you think about that? Good idea! Contact Yellowstone Superintendent Cam Sholly at 307-344-2013 or email him at yell_superintendent@nps.gov. You can also go further to protect our National Mammal by contacting your members of Congress and urge them to strengthen the National Bison

Legacy Act.

Though our numbers are very few due to Covid, we have some quality folks here who are really enthusiastic about being in the field and learning all they can. It's been great getting to know these folks whom the buffalo have called. Everyone is anxious to start skiing, but the weather is playing a few tricks on us right now. After a nice cold snap that brought just under a foot of snow, temperatures have risen and as I write this it is "snoing" outside, melting much of the snow. That is not so unusual for November here in the Hebgen Basin, but warming trends are rising. It is predicted by scientists that if the climate continues to warm, our Ice Age friends the buffalo could shrink in size by half within the next fifty years. Fifty years is too short a time for them



to be able to adapt to such a dramatic change. The irony here is that buffalo, as native grazers who create and benefit healthy plant communities, are carbon sequesters. This means that they can not only help heal the wounded land, but by doing so, can also stem rising temperatures. In a nutshell, more buffalo on a larger landscape are excellent for the planet, as we know, and obviously good for the buffalo themselves. This is why we are fighting so hard to gain more ground for wild, migratory buffalo and to gain them federal protection under the Endangered Species Act as well as recognition as a Species of Conservation Concern by the National Forest. You are the reason we are able to do this important work, and we are so grateful to each and every one of you. Stay with us, keep raising your voice, and never give up on our shared vision of wild buffalo roaming freely all over the lands that are their birthright! WILD IS THE WAY ~ ROAM FREE!

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Dept. Of Homeland Security Building A Wall

By Maya L. Kapoor and Ariana Brocius Oct. 30, 2020
High Country News

This article was published in collaboration with Arizona Public Media.

Diana Hadley, a retired environmental historian, knows firsthand the remoteness of Guadalupe Canyon, a lush riparian corridor spanning northern Mexico and the Southwestern United States. In the early '70s, she and her then-husband raised three children there while working on a cattle ranch and living off-grid. The location had its hardships: Once, a huge monsoon storm damaged the road into the canyon so badly, her family had to pack supplies in by mule for six months. Still, Hadley recalls the canyon as “a really exciting, beautiful place to live.” The canyon walls themselves were “absolutely beautiful,” Hadley said.

“They’re really steep, and they’re rosy-colored rock.” Now, some of those rock walls are crumbling. Racing to fulfill the current administration’s campaign promises, the Department of Homeland Security is dynamiting cliff sides and carving switchback roads up incredibly steep mountains to build a 30-foot-tall border wall through Guadalupe Canyon. Not only is the construction expensive, it will have little impact on undocumented immigration into the U.S. It will, however, destroy an important North American wildlife corridor.

Not many people visit Guadalupe Canyon, home to multiple bands of Apache, today known collectively as the Chiricahua Apache. But for wildlife, it’s an essential travel destination. Cottonwoods and sycamores tower over streams and springs, providing habitat for birds rarely found in the United States, including violet-crowned hummingbirds and aplomado falcons.

The canyon is part of the isolated and rugged Peloncillo Mountains, a habitat corridor between northern Mexico and the Southwestern U.S. that is traversed by ocelots, black bears, mountain lions, white-nosed coati and even jaguars — the region is federally designated critical habitat for the endangered cats. Local landowners, nature geeks and land managers alike recognize the region’s importance: Canyon sections have been designated a wilderness study area by the Bureau of Land Management, and an important bird area by the National Audubon Society. Nearby ranches have conservation easements. Tucked into the corner of Arizona’s border with

New Mexico, the canyon is also very remote. It’s about 30 miles from the nearest town, Douglas, Arizona.

Because the Department of Homeland Security does not release information on the specific locations of border apprehensions, it’s hard to know how significant a route Guadalupe Canyon is for undocumented migrants. Still, according to the Arizona Daily Star, the number of people apprehended while crossing the border illegally in the Tucson sector, of which Guadalupe Canyon is a part, hit a three-year low this past April.

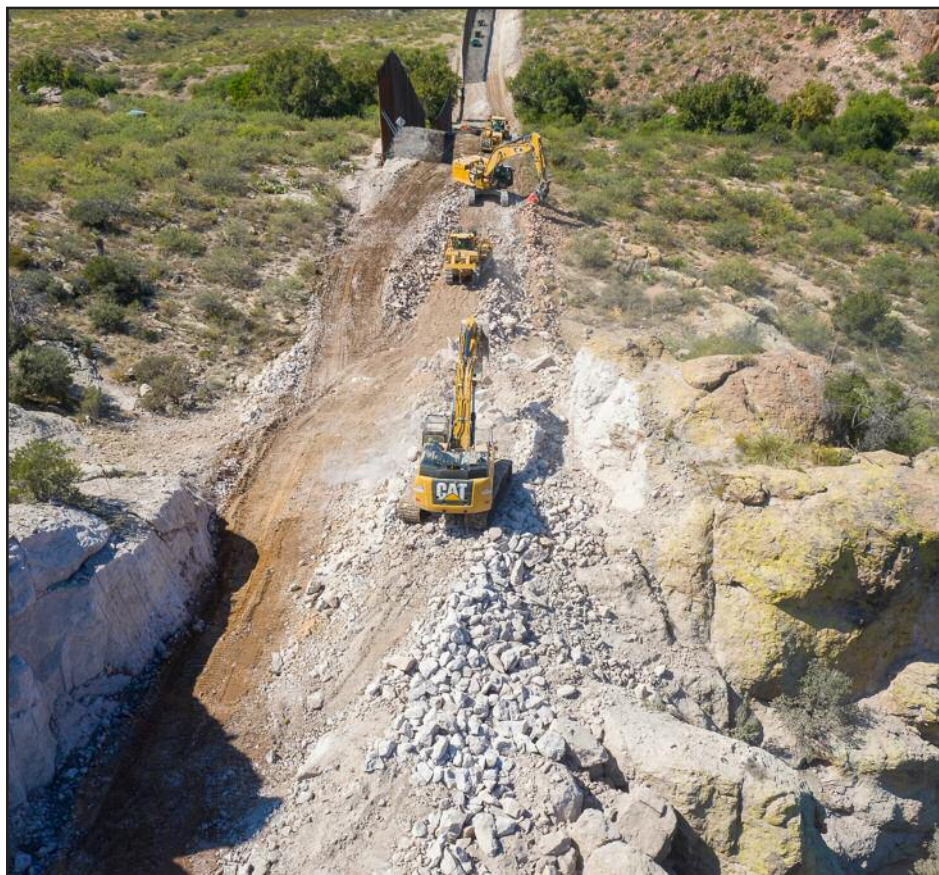
“It’s in the middle of nowhere,” Louise Miszta, conservation director of the nonprofit Sky Island Alliance, said.

Environmental destruction in the name of border security is happening across Arizona and the Southwest. U.S. Customs and Border Protection maintains that the new construction fulfills the agency’s “operational requirements to secure the southern border,” but its effectiveness in deterring undocumented immigration is unclear. Last year, the Center for Migration Studies reported that more undocumented migrants in the U.S. overstay visas than cross its international borders illegally.

But since 2019, contractors have followed DHS bidding, building new 30-foot-high steel bollard walls across most of Arizona’s border with Sonora, Mexico, mostly across federally protected lands, including national monuments and national parks. Construction has already severed critical binational riparian wildlife corridors and impacted scarce water sources, such as the San Pedro River, the San Bernardino wetlands and Quitobaquito Springs, a culturally significant site to several

(Continued on next page.)

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which makes it that much more atrocious, that they're just destroying this mountain range." Guadalupe Canyon is incredibly steep, so the Department of Homeland Security is building switchback roads and blasting cliff sides, simply to enable construction vehicles to access the U.S.-Mexico border. Witnesses say habitat and ranchland are being damaged, while debris from construction blasts is falling on both sides the international border.

Myles Traphagen, the Borderlands Program Coordinator for the nonprofit Wildlands Network, is working with photographer John Kurc to document the destruction in the U.S. and the potential fallout in Mexico. If construction is, indeed, depositing rubble in Mexico, Traphagen attributes the contractors' cavalier behavior to a culture of lawlessness pervading border wall projects. Under the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, and other legislation passed in the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist

Indigenous nations and the only habitat for several endemic species, including the Sonoyta mud turtle and Quitobaquito pupfish. Customs and Border Protection claims to be monitoring water levels and other environmental impacts in sensitive areas and working "to minimize impacts when and where possible."

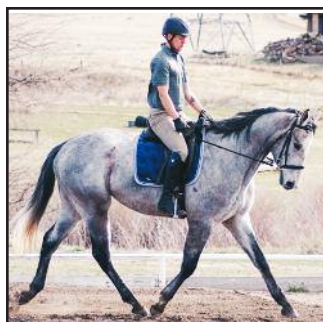
"There's not any kind of security issues in these areas. There's no emergency, and there's no security issue —

attacks, the federal government gained the authority to build border barriers and waive federal laws that hindered that work.

Border wall construction as seen near the entrance to Guadalupe Canyon in early October. John Kurc

So far, this administration has waived more than 60 laws, including the National Environmental Protection Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, to build its wall.

"The crux of this whole thing is that because of the waivers that are issued (for border wall construction) for virtually all environmental and cultural laws, and the fact that there never had to be any environmental review, the construction culture is completely lawless," Traphagen said. Sally Spener, foreign affairs officer for the International Boundary Water Commission (IBWC) would not comment on the legality of an American construction project impacting Mexican land. IBWC public affairs officer Lori Kuczanski acknowledged that the agency had



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received complaints from a ranch owner in Mexico about debris on private property. However, she said that an IBWC engineer investigated and concluded that the rubble was on the U.S. side of the border. According to Kuczanski, the wall is being built 800 feet north of the international boundary, and any debris is falling on American soil.

However, José Manuel Pérez, director of operations of the nonprofit Cuenca los Ojos Foundation Trust, which owns several ranches on the Mexican side of the border, maintains that he has seen rubble on a small section of the organization’s private property in Mexico, and that the Mexican government has not responded to complaints.

But focusing on the rubble may obscure the larger story. Pérez is more concerned about the wall’s impacts upon the organization’s broader mission — and the region’s ecology. “Cuencas los Ojos as a nonprofit is trying to preserve wildlife corridors between two nations,” he explained. “That wall totally cuts (off) our intentions to restore and protect those wildlife corridors.”

In addition to impacting wildlife more than immigration policy, the Guadalupe Canyon section of wall is also expensive. According to Jay Field, a public affairs officer with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, construction in Guadalupe Canyon is costing about \$41 million per mile. Because the funding for this section of the border wall comes from federal money to fight drug smuggling, it wasn’t affected by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals’ October ruling, which found that the current president’s use of military construction funds to build the wall was illegal.

Even the construction preparations are permanently marring the landscape: Blading the ground to flatten staging areas and access roads, drilling wells to pump groundwater for concrete, and even dynamiting mountainsides will harm hundreds of wildlife and plant species.

The Sky Island Alliance has done restoration work in Arizona’s mountains and canyons in the past, but Misztal worries that the the border wall’s impacts will be impossible to undo.

“The wall can be taken down, which restores connectivity, right? And certainly, restoration can be undertaken,” Misztal said. “But if you see those videos, you’ve seen how they’re actually blowing up rockface and the side of the mountains.



A staging area for border wall construction near Guadalupe Canyon. John Kurc

Maya L. Kapoor is an associate editor at High Country News. Ariana Brocious covers the environment and water for Arizona Public Media in Tucson.



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Glaciers Retreat & Permafrost Thaws

By Victoria Petersen Nov. 9, 2020 High Country News

Tucked against glacier-capped mountains, the Begich Towers loom over Whittier, Alaska. More than 80% of the small town's residents live in the Cold War-era barracks in this former secret military port, whose harbor teems every summer with traffic: barnacle-encrusted fishing boats, sightseeing ships, sailboats, superyachts and cruiseliner monstrosities. This summer, coronavirus travel restrictions put a damper on tourism in the usually buzzing port. Then came warnings of a potentially devastating tsunami.

Whittier residents have been mindful of tsunamis for generations. In 1964, the Good Friday earthquake was followed by a 25-foot wave that crushed waterfront infrastructure, lifting and twisting rail lines and dragging them back to sea. The Good Friday earthquake — which killed 13 people here and caused \$10 million worth of damage — still occupies Whittier's memory.

With tons of rock and rubble precariously perched high above a nearby fjord, ready to crash into the sea, the town's present is being shaped by both its past and preparations for an uncertain future. This destabilization is being driven by climate change: Tsunamis are becoming more likely in Alaska as hillsides, formerly reinforced by glaciers and solidly frozen ground, loosen their hold on once-stable slopes.

On May 14, an Alaska Department of Natural Resources press release and a public letter from 14 scientists warned locals of a possible landslide-generated tsunami. Alaska has identified three similar events in the past: Tsunamis in 2015 and 1967 occurred in remote areas, while one in 1958 killed two people whose boat was capsized. But the unstable slope in Barry Arm, a narrow steep-walled fjord in Prince William Sound, is vastly more dangerous. The potential energy from a catastrophic slide here is approximately 10 times greater than previous events, the state's top geologist said in the May press release.

The landslide in Barry Arm has been lurching towards the ocean since at least 1957, when Barry Glacier — which once gripped the base of the mountainside and held back the slope — first pulled its load-bearing ice wall out from under the rocky slope. As the glacier retreated, so did the slope's support system — dragging the rock face downward toward the ocean, leaving a distinct, zig-zagging indentation in the hillside. Between 2009 and 2015, Barry Glacier retreated past the bottom edge of the landslide, and the slope fell 600 feet. Since 2006, Barry Glacier has receded by more than two miles. Scientists believe the slope is likely to fail within the next 20 years — and could even do so within the year.

Climate change makes land more unstable and increases the risk of landslide-caused tsunamis. Brentwood Higman, geologist and executive director of Ground Truth Alaska, is working with other scientists to research climate change's impact on landslide-triggered tsunamis. “(These events) are worth worrying about regardless of climate change,” Higman said. “But there are a number of reasons to think climate change makes them a lot more likely.”

As glaciers recede, the land above them also becomes more unstable. The craggy alpine region of south-central Alaska is already thawing dramatically. Once-frozen slabs of rock, dirt and ice are releasing trapped liquids and becoming more prone to sliding down mountains. Another less-obvious symptom of climate change increases the risk. When there's more water in the atmosphere, precipitation becomes more intense. Rain, even more than earthquakes, is prone to trigger landslides, Higman said. Climate change will make landslides more likely and more frequent, said Anna Liljedahl, an associate scientist with the Woodwell Climate Research Center. “It's a new emerging hazard, and that's why it's urgent to do an assessment of where we have these unstable slopes and where they are a hazard to people,” Liljedahl said.

Tracking unstable slopes can give local governments time to install warning systems, so scientists are working to identify unstable land, focusing on monitoring landslides near communities in Southeast and south-central Alaska. In mid-October, Gabriel Wolken, the Climate and

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A view of Barry Arm in which the receding Barry Glacier and the vulnerable section of land are visible on the right side of the image. Photo courtesy Dr. Gabriel Wolken

Cryosphere Hazards Program manager for the Alaska Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys, took a helicopter to Barry Arm. From the air, he conducted a lidar survey, using a laser scanner to measure the topography of the slide area in fine detail, calculating how the landslide has moved and changed since June. The data is still being processed. But, there are new rockfalls in the area every time he visits, indicating the area's instability. "The rock itself isn't very competent," Wolken said. "It's basically falling apart."

There's no easy way to gently coax a colossal land mass off the side of a mountain and into the ocean. Whittier residents are aware of the risk, said Peter Denmark, who runs a commercial kayaking business in town. "With the people around town, there's a laissez-faire attitude about it," Denmark said. Alaskans have "thick skins" when it comes to disasters, he said. "If it's not tsunamis, earthquakes, volcanoes, forest fires — it's one thing or another." Still, Denmark is taking precautions; he avoids the Barry Arm area on kayaking tours.

Kelly Bender and her husband Mike rely on summer tourism in Prince William Sound. From their waterfront office, she charts water taxis, fishing boats, kayaking and sightseeing tours. Before news of the potential landslide broke, Bender said their fleet went into Barry Arm daily. With its scenic location, near glaciers and a popular beach, the state estimates that 500 people could be in the area at any

given time during peak tourist season. Bender has changed tour routes, cancelled water taxi trips — even cancelled a planned wedding. "The danger part of it — people are feeling like 'we know what to do in a tsunami,'" Bender said. "It's the business part of it that we're all really, you know, hanging by a thread." When tsunami warning sirens blare in Whittier, residents know to move swiftly away from the coast and head to higher ground. The state encourages coastal residents to keep a "go bag" filled with emergency supplies and to plan evacuation routes.

While it's still possible to avert or mitigate many of the worst impacts of climate change, there really isn't an option to eliminate landslide-generated tsunamis. The state uses howitzer cannons to trigger controlled avalanches in railway and highway corridors, but there's no easy way to gently coax a colossal land mass off the side of a mountain and into the ocean. "It's pretty much science fiction," Higman said. Smaller landslides might be able to be stabilized from the bottom up, but large landslides, like in Barry Arm, "forget about it," Liljedahl said.

Increasing preparedness, installing a robust monitoring system on and near landslides and creating an effective localized alert system are the best ways to protect communities, she said. Some locals, like Denmark, the kayak outfitter, prefer a quicker approach, however. "My idea was to just blast it down and duck," he said. "But nobody thought that was a good idea."

Editor's note: This story has been corrected to show that the Woods Hole Research Center is now called the Woodwell Climate Research Center. Victoria Petersen is an editorial intern for High Country News.

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How New Administration Can Prioritize

By Janet McCabe Nov. 13, 2020 High Country News

This article was originally published on The Conversation and is republished here with permission.

The current administration has waged what I and many other legal experts view as an all-out assault on the nation's environmental laws for the past four years. Decisions at the Environmental Protection Agency, the Interior Department and other agencies have weakened the guardrails that protect our nation's air, water and public lands, and have sided with industry rather than advocating for public health and the environment.

Senior officials such as EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler assert that the this administration has balanced environmental regulation with economic growth and made the regulatory process less bureaucratic. But former EPA leaders from both Democratic and Republican administrations have called this administration's actions disastrous for the environment.

Rolling back laws and hollowing out agencies, this administration has used many tools to weaken environmental protection. For example, it issued an executive order in June 2020 to waive environmental review for infrastructure projects like pipelines and highways.

The EPA has revised regulations that implement the Clean Water Act to drastically scale back protection for wetlands, streams and marshes. And the administration has revoked California's authority under the Clean Air Act to set its own standards for air pollution emissions from cars, although California is pressing ahead.

This administration has also changed agency procedures to limit the use of science and upended a longstanding approach to valuing the costs and benefits of environmental rules. It has cut funding for key agency functions such as research and overseen an exodus of experienced career staff.

I expect that the Biden administration will quickly signal to the nation that effectively applying the nation's environmental laws matters to everyone – especially to communities that bear an unfair share of the public health burden of air pollution, like the Grand Canyon.

With a closely divided Senate, Biden will need to rely primarily on executive actions and must-pass legislative measures like the federal budget and the Farm Bill to further his environmental agenda. Policies that require big investments, such as Biden's pledge to invest US\$400 billion over 10 years in clean energy research and innovation, can make a big difference, but may be

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Mather Point is one of the most popular and busiest viewpoints on the South Rim of the Grand Canyon, Arizona. For visitors entering the park, Mather Point is the first place to stop and see the canyon. Michael Quinn/NPS

challenging to advance. Coupling clean technology with infrastructure and jobs programs to build back better is likely to have broad appeal.

I expect that officials will move quickly to restore the role of science in agency decision-making and withdraw past-era policies that make it harder to adopt protective regulations. A Biden EPA will end efforts to impede states like California that are moving ahead under their own authority to protect their residents, and will make clear to career staff that their expertise is valued. The agency is likely to withdraw or closely scrutinize pending proposals,

such as the ongoing review of the current standard for fine-particle air pollution.

One area where EPA can quickly change course is enforcement. Biden's climate and energy plan pledges to hold polluters accountable, and his administration reportedly plans to create a new division at the Justice Department focused on environmental and climate justice. Biden has promised greater attention to environmental justice communities, where neighborhoods are heavily affected by concentrations of highly polluting sources such as refineries and hazardous waste sites.

Many of these actions can be done quickly through new executive orders or policy changes. Regulatory changes will take longer. In my view, Biden's biggest challenge will be deciding what to prioritize. His administration will not be able to do (or undo) everything. Even with a revitalized career workforce and political staff all rowing in the same direction, there won't be enough bandwidth to address all the bad policies enacted in the past four years, let alone move forward with a proactive agenda focused on public health protection and environmental justice.

Janet McCabe served as Deputy Assistant Administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Air and Radiation (OAR) from 2009 to 2013, and as Acting Assistant Administrator for OAR from 2013-2017. She is Director of the Indiana University Environmental Resilience Institute and Professor of Practice at the IU McKinney School of Law.

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Cheshire Cat - Catio 303.642.0362
Hands, Hoofs & Paws pg 23 303.503.6068

ART

The Silver Horse - pg 30 303.279.6313
The Rustic Moose - pg 30 303.258.3225

AUTOMOBILE

Carl's Corner pg 25 303.642.7144
Kysar's Place pg 15 303.582.3566
Mountain Muffler pg 5 303.278.2043

BUILDING/CONSTRUCTION

ACE Indian Peaks Hardware pg 10 303.258.3132
Arrow Drilling-pg 9 303.421.8766
Caribou Painting pg 13 303.641.7964
Grate Contracting pg 14 303.579.9519
Meyer Hardware pg 3 303.279.3393
Mountain Home CO pg 12 303.618.9619
Peter Palombo, Surveyor-pg 29 720.849.7509
RedPoint Construction pg 10 303.642.3691
Steel Structures America ins cov 970.420.7100

BUSINESS SERVICES

Graphics Galore 303.642.0362
Karen Schwimmer, CPA pg 25 303.642.0628
Wondervu Consulting Serv. pg 11 303.642.0433

CHIMNEY SWEEPS

Chimney Service of CO pg 22 720.515.0416
MidTown Chimney pg 16 303.670.7785

CIGARS

Foss Company pg 24 303.963.5693

CLOTHING

The Rustic Moose - pg 30 303.258.3225

COMPUTER SERVICE & REPAIR

Wondervu Consulting Serv. pg 11 303.642.0433

DRIVEWAYS/ GRADING SERVICES

Benchmark Land Care pg 26 303.485.1001
Rock Creek Civil, LLC pg 27 720.583.4555

ELECTRIC

United Power - Inside back Cover 303.642.7921

ENTERTAINMENT

KGNU Radio pg 32 303.449.4885

ENVIRONMENTAL

TEG - tegcolorado.org

FARRIER

Forbes Farrier Service pg 21 303.642.7437

FIREWOOD & FOREST MANAGEMENT

High Timber Mtn Tree Serv. pg 17 303.258.7942
Lumber Jacks - pg 29 720.212.1875
Pruins Pruning/Tree Care pg 13 303.653.7967
Rock Creek Civil, LLC pg 27 720.583.4555

GIFTS

The Silver Horse - pg 30 303.279.6313
The Rustic Moose - pg 30 303.258.3225
Nature Photography Notecards pg 21

GROCERIES

B & F Moutain Market pg 31 303.258.3105
5280 Meat Processing pg 8 303.650.7471
Golden Poultry & Meats pg 6 720.697.0508

HEALTH & FITNESS

Hands, Hoofs & Paws pg 23 303.503.6068

HEATING

Agfinity ins front cover 1.970.454.4081

HOME IMPROVEMENT

ACE Indian Peaks Hardware pg 10 303.258.3132
Benchmark Land Care pg 26 303.485.1001
Caribou Painting pg 13 303.641.7964
Grate Contracting pg 14 303.579.9519
Meyer Hardware pg 3 303.279.3393
Mountain Home CO pg 12 303.618.9619
Pruins Pruning/Tree Care pg 13 303.653.7967
Redpoint Construction pg 10 303.642.3691
Rock Creek Civil, LLC pg 27 720.583.4555

HORSE BOARDING

Rudolph Ranch, Inc. pg 5 303.582.5230

HORSE TRAINING

Timberline Sporthorses pg 28 720.999.7235

INSURANCE

Jim Plane-State Farm- pg 20 720.890.5916

LIQUOR

Foss Company pg 24 303.963.5693
Mid-County Liquors pg 23 303.642.7686
Underground Liquor pg 16 303.582.6034

MUSIC LESSONS

Piano & Harp in CCC pg 17 303.642.8423

PROPANE

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Carl's Corner pg 25 303.642.7144

REAL ESTATE

Byers-Sellers Mtn Properties pg 7 303.642.7951
Mock Realty-Kathy Keating -Back cov 303.642.1133
Mountain Home CO pg 12 303.618.9619

RETAIL

ACE Indian Peaks Hardware pg 10 303.258.3132
B & F Moutain Market pg 31 303.258.3105
Meyer Hardware pg 3 303.279.3393
The Silver Horse - pg 30 303.279.6313
The Rustic Moose - pg 30 303.258.3225

REVERSE MORTGAGES

Universal Lending Corp. pg 26 303.791.4786

ROOFING

Independence Roofing pg 3 720.399.0355

STEEL STRUCTURES

Steel Structures America ins cov 970.420.7100

TAXES

Karen Schwimmer, CPA pg 25 303.642.0628

WATER & WELL

Arrow Drilling pg 9 303.421.8766

United Power Allocated Additional \$300,000 for Co-op Cares Fund

Earlier this year, the United Power Board of Directors approved a special allocation of \$250,000 from unclaimed capital credits to the Co-op Cares Fund. The funds were designed to assist members who faced direct impacts as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly through illness or job loss.

As the pandemic enters its third wave, members find themselves still facing potential uncertainty going into the holiday season and new year. In recognition of the need to continue providing member assistance, the board approved additional allocations to the Co-op Cares Fund in November.

These new allocations include an additional \$50,000 for members financially impacted through the remainder of 2020 and \$250,000 to help members in 2021. That is a total allocation of more than \$500,000 over the course of 2020 and 2021.

In addition to the Co-op Cares Fund, United Power has various means of helping members stay on top of their electric bills including payment arrangements, extensions, prepay, budget billing, and assistance from local agencies. United



Power encourages members to contact us so we can connect them with the most appropriate assistance program for their situation.

"All we are asking our members to do is pick up the phone and call us if they are having difficulty paying their bill," said Bryant Robbins, interim CEO. "We can't help you if we don't know you are struggling."

The Co-op Cares Fund will be available for assistance through the end of 2021, or when the fund is depleted. United Power members who are impacted by the current health emergency or any other situation can reach our Member Services department at 303-637-1300.



Scholarship Opportunities

Applications Due: Jan. 29, 2021

Each year, United Power awards academic scholarships to outstanding students served by the cooperative. Scholarships include awards for students attending an accredited university or college in Colorado or pursuing a specific degree program, as well as 10 book scholarships. This year, United Power will award 17 scholarships for a total of \$19,500. Awards range between \$1,000 and \$2,000.

Eligibility varies for each scholarship, but in general overall academic achievement (such as GPA and ACT/SAT scores), extracurricular activities and community involvement rank high in the evaluation process. A brief written essay is required, and the applicants primary residence must be in United Power's service territory.

For more information, including a list of available scholarships, visit www.unitedpower.com.

Giving a Little, Helping A Lot

United Power is Asking Members "Why I Round-Up"?

Every month, thousands of United Power members voluntarily have their bills rounded up to the next whole dollar through Operation Round-Up, a member-funded foundation that helps area nonprofits provide for those in need.

Because of COVID-19, the Round-Up board, made up of fellow members, acted proactively to ensure impacted members were able to receive the same level of services. These decisions included grants to organizations such as Coal Creek's Pastor's Pantry while maintaining on-going support to several partner organizations. Unfortunately, this unusual year has stretched Round-Up to its limits, and it needs our members' help.

"A very small donation by the many United Power members adds up to a significant amount of money, which can be used to help members in need," said Steve Whiteside, a Round-Up board member and Coal Creek resident.

Those small donations are as little as \$6/year or just \$.50 per billing statement. Sign up at www.unitedpower.com or by calling Member Services at 303-637-1300.

If you already support Round-Up, we'd like to hear why you round-up. Let us know on our social media or by responding to our Reader Rewards question in the November *United Newsline*.





Christmas Tree Lighting

Community Invited - Saturday, December 5th @ 7pm

Whispering Pines Church parking lot - 73 Gross Dam Road



134 Kegley Road
Best Views in Colorado
4 BD/ 3 BA 4,051 sq.ft. **\$1,350,000**



Coal Creek Canyon
Gorgeous Updated Log Home - 1.82 Acres
4 BD/ 4 BA 3,817 sq.ft. **\$1,100,000**



687 Copperdale Lane
Privacy abounds amongst the Aspens
3 BD/ 2 BA 1,920 sq.ft. **\$429,000**



181 Hummingbird Lane
Nicely Updated - Theater Room 1.29 Ac.
3 BD/ 2 BA 2,129 sq.ft.. **\$474,000**



4303 30th Street, Boulder
Wonderful Park Like Setting .40 Ac.
4 BD/ 3 BA 2,842 sq.ft. **\$990,000**



Coal Creek Canyon
Fabulous Luxury Home, Views
4 BD/ 4 BA 4,697 sq.ft. **\$950,000**



3497 Coal Creek Canyon #18
Adorable Summer Cabin
3 BD/ 1 BA 1,184 sq.ft. **\$249,000**



11470 Ranch Elsie Road
Horse Property! 3.8 Acres
2 BD/ 1 BA 1,948 sq.ft. **\$455,000**



198 Range Road
Solar Powered & Secluded "Treehouse"
2 BD/ 2 BA 1,652 sq.ft. 2.7 Ac **\$569,900**



34226 Gap Road
Amazing Mtn Home, Backs to Conservation
Land 4 BD/ 2 BA 2,750 sq.ft. 1.14 Acre



1257 / 1316 Chute Road
Secluded 5+ acres, Divide, City,
and Gross Dam Views **\$139,000**



11440 Inspiration Road
Amazing Views at Road's End
3 BD/2 BA 2,341 sq.ft. 1.5 Ac. **\$540,000**



31992 Coal Creek Canyon Drive
Horse property- Walkout Guest Ste. - 4 Ac
3 BD/ 3 BA + Den 2,907 sq.ft. **\$689,900**



Coal Creek Canyon
Custom Log Home - 4.2 Acres
3 BD/ 4 BA 3,300 sq.ft. **\$900,000**



85 Valley View Drive
Breathtaking Divide & Lake Views
4 BD/ 4 BA 3623 sq.ft. 1+Ac. **\$775,000**



**BUY OR SELL A HOME with
Kathy or Janet & USE
the moving truck for FREE**



Kathy Keating
CRS, ABR, GRI
EcoBroker
Broker Associate
303.642.1133

For additional information & photos:
www.kathykeating.com
kathykeating@mockrealty.com
Janet.LoveWhereYouLive@gmail.com



Janet Ingvaldsen
Broker Associate
Realtor
720.600.9006

