KS Wild’s Mission:
The Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center is an advocate for the forests, wildlife and waters of the Klamath and Rogue River Basins of southwest Oregon and northwest California. We use environmental law, science, collaboration, education and grassroots organizing to defend healthy ecosystems and help build sustainable communities.

Upcoming Hikes

June 14: Evening Hike on the Wild and Scenic Rogue
Come learn about the campaign to protect the wildlands and tributaries of this special place. Carpool leaves Grants Pass at 5:30pm. Call Shane at 541-476-6648 to RSVP.

June 23: LNG pipeline route in Douglas County
An easy hike up Hoover Hill. Meet at Abby’s Pizza in Winston at 10:30am. Call Lesley at 541-488-9831 to RSVP.

July 18: Evening Hike on Grizzly Peak
Enjoy spectacular views of Mt. Ashland, Mt. Shasta, Mt. McLoughlin and Pilot Rock in soft evening colors. Carpool leaves Ashland at 4pm. Call George at 488-5789 to RSVP.

July 21: Hike in the Marble Mountain Wilderness
A strenuous hike to Paradise Lake to enjoy high elevation wildflowers, meadows, and lakes. Leave Evo’s in Ashland at 9:30am sharp. Call George at 488-5789 to RSVP.

July 21: LNG pipeline route in Coos County
Visit www.rogueriverkeeper.org for details.

August 12: Easy Wildflower Hike on Mt. Ashland
Enjoy wildflowers on the Pacific Crest Trail. Meet at Evo’s Coffee House 11:30am. Contact Gary at 488-5789 to RSVP.

September 8: LNG pipeline on the Rogue/Umpqua divide
Visit www.rogueriverkeeper.org for details.

Adopt-a-Botanical Area
The Klamath-Siskiyou region is celebrated as a host to some of the most diverse plant life on earth, including an array of wildflowers on display each spring and summer. Some of our crown jewels of botanical diversity are supposed to be protected in “Botanical Areas” and “Areas of Critical Environmental Concern” on public lands. Our “Adopt-a-Botanical Area” program is designed to mobilize volunteers to be KS Wild’s eyes and ears on the ground in designated Botanical Areas throughout the Klamath-Siskiyou region, which are often under threat. Contact Monica@kswild.org to get involved.
ORVs Threaten the Smith River National Recreation Area

The Smith River National Recreation Area (NRA) is almost too good to be true—clean, cold water supports vibrant steelhead and salmon runs in one of the largest wild and scenic river systems in the world; serpentine botanical areas boast rare and beautiful wildflowers; and spectacular backcountry wildlands provide world-class adventure and wildlife habitat.

The Smith River wildlands are a national treasure that has been handed down to us, intact and beautiful, from previous generations. Its special values are so revered that in 1990 Congress passed, and President George H.W. Bush signed, the Smith River National Recreation Area Act specifically to protect its outstanding rivers, forests, fisheries and wildflowers. Unfortunately, we may be the generation that tarnishes these values for all who come after us.

Enter the Extreme Off-Road Vehicle Crowd

Where most people see unspoiled wildlands and wild rivers, a few are only able to see this special place as another spot to tear up with their four-wheelers. Every year, more and more illegal off-road vehicle (ORV) routes are punched into sensitive meadows, riparian areas and backcountry wildlands. While the Smith River National Recreation Area Act gave the Forest Service the authority to prevent such damage, they have largely sat on their hands for the past 22 years while botanical hotspots and meadows have been churned into mud bogs.

The Forest Service’s half-hearted efforts to gate or “berm” (create an earthen barrier) some of the most damaging illegal ORV routes have been wholly ineffective—gates are torn down and berms are breached almost as soon as they are installed.

Particularly sad is the destruction of the Sourdough Camp that accesses the southern trailhead into the Kalmiopsis Wilderness. Located at the confluence of the salmon-bearing North Fork Smith River and Baldface Creek, for decades Sourdough Camp served as a beloved campground known for its wildflowers and serenity. As extreme off-road vehicle use through the Smith River NRA skyrocketed, Sourdough Camp was trashed beyond recognition. The meadows have been turned into parking lots. ORV trails cut up steep banks in the riparian areas. Families, hikers, botanists and fishermen have largely been pushed out by the self-described “big boys with big toys” crowd.

The Forest Service Planning Process

The Six Rivers National Forest now faces the difficult task of trying to establish a “travel management plan” that will designate where ORV use on the forest is appropriate, and where it is too harmful to the values the National Recreation Area was designed to protect.

For years, KS Wild and our friends have been asking the Forest Service to prohibit ORV use on routes that pose a “high risk” (according the Forest Service Roads Assessment) to irreplaceable botanical, watershed and wildland values and to encourage ORV riding on routes that are a “low risk” to the environment. Keep in mind we are only talking about user-created illegal ORV routes here. Motorized use of Forest Service roads would, of course, continue.

Del Norte County, where much of the Smith River NRA is located, is not known as a hotbed of environmental activism. Indeed, the County and a national ORV lobby organization called the Blue Ribbon Coalition, have teamed up to oppose any efforts to reduce ORV damage in backcountry wildlands. The Forest Service is under tremendous local pressure to designate ORV routes through serpentine meadows, in sensitive watersheds and through roadless wildlands.

The Future of the Smith River National Recreation Area

The Forest Service needs to know that most people value the NRA as more than just another off-road vehicle sacrifice zone. Due to the effective pressure from the County and off-road vehicle clubs, the Forest Service is poised to authorize ORV routes in some of the most sensitive and special locations that were supposedly protected by Congress. Once ORV routes are established, and mapped, through roadless areas, botanical hotspots and at-risk watersheds, there is no going back.

Please join us and tell the Six Rivers National Forest that these lands should be protected for the shared values we all find in them and not handed over to the militant few who refuse to accept any limits on where they ride ORVs on our public lands. To learn more and take action: www.kswild.org/smithrivernra.

Save the Date: October 6

Please join us for our wildly fun and delicious KS Wild Annual Dinner and Auction!
For years, fish biologists have recognized the confluence of McNeal Creek and the South Fork Salmon River for its crucial role in the life cycle of at-risk salmonids in the Klamath River system. Cold water at the mouth of McNeal Creek literally serves as a lifesaver when water temperatures in the Salmon River approach lethal levels for juvenile salmon and steelhead.

Mining Welfare

Instead of protecting the cold-water values of McNeal Creek that belong to all Americans, the Forest Service recently signed a decision authorizing private mining of these public lands that involves diverting thousands of gallons from McNeal Creek into an industrial settling pit. Currently, as a taxpayer, you the reader own the water rights to Mc Neal Creek. The Forest Service is proposing to literally give your water away—not a cent will be charged to the miners to use your water.

It gets worse. The gold miners will pay no royalties on the mineral wealth that they hope to extract from these public lands. Indeed, it is possible that, as has happened elsewhere, taxpayers could be saddled with clean-up costs that are not covered by the minimal reclamation bond.

The McNeal Creek miners just couldn’t wait to start tearing up the watershed. In the exploratory phase of mining they dug larger pits than were authorized and then attempted to cover-up their misdeeds before Forest Service inspectors arrived. Later, they cleared vegetation on the proposed mining site down to dirt without waiting for the necessary approval. What was the Forest Service’s response to the miners jumping the gun and failing to abide by the terms of their legal notice? They authorized more mining and water withdrawals.

Not on Our Watch

If the Forest Service won’t protect McNeal Creek and the Salmon River from illegal mining, we will. KS Wild and our friends at the Klamath Forest Alliance have teamed up with the Crag Law Center to file suit in the Sacramento Federal District Court. Stay up to date with our efforts at www.kswild.org.
The Rogue Basin is Feeling a Little Pooped

The Rogue Basin has a problem. Specifically, a poop problem. Hundreds of miles of streams and rivers throughout our watershed are considered unsafe for recreation due to high levels of fecal bacteria. Not only is this pollution a threat to human health, but activities that put fecal bacteria in the water also often harm water quality in other ways that negatively impact salmon and other fish. Water with high levels of fecal matter is also regularly high in temperature, turbidity and nutrients that can lead to reduced oxygen levels in the stream. Such pollution is the opposite of what salmonids need to thrive.

Rogue Riverkeeper continues to work with community members, agencies and Southern Oregon University (SOU) to perform intensive studies on the sources and severity of these fecal bacteria problems. Here’s what we have learned so far.

Little Butte Creek: Not Looking Good

According to Oregon’s Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Little Butte Creek has the most severe fecal pollution problems in the Rogue Basin. A good portion of our field efforts in 2011 were to get updated and more frequent data to try and answer the question: Is Little Butte Creek water pollution improving enough under restoration efforts, or is more needed?

To implement our study plan, dedicated student volunteers collected samples from June through October at 14 sites throughout the watershed on all streams identified by DEQ as having too much fecal bacteria. The Jackson County Watermaster’s Office (JCWO) and the Medford Water Commission (MWC) collected flow measurements at the same sites, allowing us to get a better picture of the total amount of bacteria from each of the tributary streams.

Our data show that fecal bacteria in Little Butte Creek is not improving. Unfortunately, it’s getting worse. With an overall 59% reduction in fecal bacteria needed to be considered healthy, some tributaries need up to a 91% reduction! Bacteria levels in 2011 were not only higher than safe levels, but the data display a statistically significant steadily increasing trend since 1998 (see graph, bottom left).

There’s a lot of work to do to turn this trend around, including the reduction and elimination of polluted irrigation return water. You can download our Little Butte Creek report containing our full results and recommendations at www.rogueriverkeeper.org/bacteria.

Ashland Creek: City is Taking Important Steps

In 2010, Rogue Riverkeeper worked with a group of community members, the City of Ashland and SOU students and faculty to identify the source of fecal pollution in Ashland Creek. We discovered that the major contributor of the pollution is an irrigation ditch that discharges to Ashland creek. Our data suggested that the irrigation ditch water entered city limits relatively clean and got progressively worse the further it flowed through town. Given that the irrigation ditch is a popular dog walking area, the City installed additional doggie waste stations and signage along the ditch trail. We sought to statistically confirm in 2011 what our 2010 data suggested, and see if we could determine any effect of education and additional doggie waste stations.

Lo and behold, the 2011 sampling confirmed that ditch-side activities in Ashland are the source of the pollution, and suggests that the severity of the problem is declining. Additionally, the City has committed to piping portions of the ditch, which will prevent pollutants from entering the water before it discharges to Ashland Creek, as well as conserve water that is currently being lost to evaporation.

And that’s not all. For her high school senior project, Maureen Page did some sampling on Ashland and Bear Creeks and discovered that there is a portion of Ashland Creek upstream of the City’s sewage discharge where bacteria levels are far above anything we’ve seen upstream. From Nevada St. to the sewage outfall, the contamination was often as much as five times that of state criteria for safe levels. Could it be caused by the dog park to the west or the cow pasture to the east? Without further information we can’t say, but we will be working to make sure that this problem is addressed.

Thanks to Claire Allen, Emelye Hugo, Maureen Page, Lia Shrewsbury and Hans Teucher for all of their work collecting and analyzing samples, Kathleen Page for making our bacteria sourcing program possible, and JCWO and the MWC for their help.

As we advocate for the implementation of recommendations in our 2010 and 2011 reports, we are turning our efforts this year to study chronic bacteria pollution in Evans Creek, which flows into the Rogue River between Medford and Grants Pass.
The Future of BLM Lands is in Your Hands

Western Oregon Bureau of Land Management (BLM) forests are again the center of attention. The Obama administration has begun a new planning process to determine the fate of 2.6 million acres of Oregon’s public forests, and they want to hear from you.

What’s at Stake?
Regular KS News readers and most Oregonians are familiar with the values of Oregon BLM lands. Western Oregon BLM encompasses a forested area larger than the states of Rhode Island and Delaware combined! Whether hiking up Grizzly Peak, exploring the Applegate or Illinois Valleys or heading down the Wild and Scenic Rogue River, you are surrounded by BLM forests. They are the public lands that most everyone sees whether they live in or are just visiting southern Oregon.

The Bush administration tried unsuccessfully to open up these forests to increased industrial logging by slashing protections for salmon-bearing streams and forest-dependant wildlife. They proposed designating several off-road vehicle play areas throughout the state. While KS Wild and our allies successfully stopped those plans, the next chapter in BLM management has yet to be written.

BLM Forests Are a Lifeline
BLM forests are valued for many reasons. First is their position on the landscape. These forests provide some of the most important fish habitat and wildlife connections on the West Coast. While timber companies and the federal government have cut most of the ancient forests of the Pacific Northwest, about 18% remain. Oregon BLM lands are home to one million acres of mature and old-growth forest. Old forest habitat, and the wildlife that depend on it in the Cascade and Coast Ranges, would not be connected without low-lying, southern Oregon BLM forests.

Oregon BLM lands also provide habitat for Oregon’s iconic salmon and steelhead runs, and public water systems that originate on BLM provide for tens of thousands of people. Public lands are where many Americans recreate, including local neighbors and people from across the U.S. In addition to equestrian, birding and botanizing activities, world-class rafting and fishing attract tourists and millions of dollars are spent every year from recreating on BLM lands. About 50,000 Oregonians live within 1.4 miles of these BLM lands and their views, privacy and quietude are dependant on these forests.

Let Your Voice be Heard
Please let the Obama administration know that the BLM needs to craft a management plan that embraces restoring our forests and watersheds and stops degrading these important public resources. Please tell the BLM to support the “Community Conservation” alternative that would advance forest restoration and protect water, salmon and our rare older forests. This alternative would:

- Shift BLM efforts and jobs to restoration of forests and watersheds.
- Achieve social and economic objectives through forest restoration activities.
- Collaborate with communities to develop forest management, fire mitigation and recreation opportunities.
- Protect the remaining mature and old-growth forests.
- Limit off-road vehicle damage to public and adjacent private land.
- Restore salmon and streams on BLM land.

Take Action: The BLM is accepting initial comments until July 5. You can email your comments to: BLM_OR_RMPs_WesternOregon@blm.gov or write: BLM State Director P.O. Box 2965, Portland, Oregon 97208 Visit www.kswild.org or contact joseph@kswild.org for more information.

Siskiyou Wild Rivers Meeting

First Tuesdays (June 5, July 3, August 7) from 7-8pm County Building, 102 S. Redwood, Cave Junction

As part of the Siskiyou Wild Rivers Campaign, KS Wild members and allies are invited to participate in monthly meetings to plan and implement long-term strategies for protection and restoration in the Illinois Valley Watershed. These meetings will be focused on initiatives to further the Siskiyou Wild Rivers Campaign. The Campaign is working to create a place where future generations can enjoy wild salmon and trout, rushing rivers, and the wonders of Siskiyou Mountains and forests for years to come.

Water Talks

Join us monthly to talk water. Rogue Riverkeeper staff will facilitate a casual and fun discussion about water issues in the Rogue Basin—ranging from pollution and gas development to salmon habitat and water withdrawals.

1st Wednesdays—June 6, July 5 (note that the July date is a Thursday due to the holiday), August 1, Sept. 5

For locations, visit: www.rogueriverkeeper.org or call 541.488.9831
**Suction Dredge Fever Coming to a Stream Near You**

Suction dredging is an increasing threat to Oregon’s streams and rivers, with the number of permitted operators statewide quadrupling in the last five years, the majority of them operating in the Rogue Basin. In contrast, there is a moratorium on suction dredge mining in California until 2016.

A suction dredge is a gas-powered vacuum attached to a floating sluice box. Miners use the vacuum to suck up the bottom of streams and rivers and run sediment through the sluice to filter out gold and then dump the sediment back into the stream. Suction dredge mining can have a negative effect on aquatic habitat quality, kill fish eggs and offspring, and disturb and destabilize the streambed substrate, mobilizing toxic heavy metals in the process.

**Vacuuming Up Streambeds:** Suction dredge mining disrupts aquatic communities and has been increasing in southern Oregon in the past few years.

**One recommended “recovery action” in the National Marine Fisheries Service’s draft plan to recover coho salmon in southern Oregon and northern California:** "Develop suction dredging regulations that minimize or prevent impacts to coho salmon. Consider special closed areas, closed seasons and restrictions on methods and operations." Of the 30 independent populations studied in the recovery plan, 25 were found to be at “high risk” of extinction.

Rogue Riverkeeper is looking to keep a close eye on suction dredge mining when it starts again on June 15th (July 1st in the Applegate watershed), and we could use your help. Perhaps you have them droning away in front of your house, blocking the river above your favorite rapid or muddying your favorite swimming hole? We have a suction dredge toolkit that we’d like to share with you that contains tools and guidance on what to look for and document to help us protect our waterways. Please contact forest@rogueriverkeeper.org if you are interested in suction dredge monitoring.

**Featured Hike: French Flat**

Just south of Cave Junction, located between Highway 199 and Rockydale Road is a magically beautiful, botanically rich area called French Flat (see cover photo).

The area was originally known as Sailor’s Diggings because it was discovered by a small group of sailors who had jumped ship in early 1852 in Crescent City to make their way to Jacksonville and the southern Oregon gold strike. Following in their wake were Frenchmen who would also mine the area. In later years, French Flat would again be extensively hydraulic mined with the construction of a huge drainage canal, which would become known as the “Logan Cut” near the West Fork Illinois River.

French Flat boasts one of the most diverse landscapes in southwest Oregon and has a high “beta” diversity where hikers can go from a coastal temperate rainforest (with a few pines here and there) to a pine savanna, to a beautiful, low elevation oak forest. These are three distinct and very different vegetation types; all found within one square mile!

The BLM designated this special place as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern in 1995 to protect its outstanding botanical values, which include the largest population of the endangered Cook’s desert parsley on public lands and other rare wildflowers such as Waldo rockcress, Howell’s fawn lily, Siskiyou fritillary, and slender meadowfoam.

Locals are working to protect this botanical wonderland from the damage that ongoing off-road vehicles cause to meadows, as well as trash dumping and renewed mining proposals. Learn more about these efforts by visiting Greg Walter, Friends of French Flat, on Facebook.

**Getting There:** There are two primary public access points to French Flat:

1) Drive south of Cave Junction about 1 mile and turn left on Rockydale Road, go south 3.8 miles to Sherrier/Raintree Road, turn right and go west just over 1 mile and watch for BLM gating/wood fence in a dense forest beyond the private residences.

2) Drive 1 mile further south on Rockydale (4.8 miles) and look for the BLM gate and parking spot on the west (right) side of the road.

It is helpful to have a BLM map, a wildflower guidebook and binoculars. Please respect the surrounding private property.
The public lands of the Klamath-Siskiyous can be a hiker’s delight, but shrinking agency budgets have come to mean less and less trail maintenance and support for non-motorized outdoor recreation. As a result, there has been a recent boom in trail associations and inspired individuals coming together to improve the quality of local trail systems. One such group is the Siskiyou Mountain Club, which was formed to promote, enhance, and sustain primitive outdoor destinations in the Siskiyou backcountry.

Gabe Howe and the other folks at the Siskiyou Mountain Club do an excellent job of mobilizing volunteers and working with a diverse array of interests to maintain and improve neglected trail systems throughout the Siskiyou Mountains – from Soda Mountain to the Kalmiopsis Wilderness. They’ve worked with agencies to secure permits and address liability and safety issues. They’ve partnered with other groups throughout the region to convene work parties and bring about a significant improvement in foot-powered access to remote places. KS Wild is thrilled to see this mostly volunteer-driven effort growing and hopes others will join us in giving the organization the support it needs to thrive.