

50
YEARS



IDAHO
CONSERVATION
LEAGUE



An enduring love for
Wild Idaho



Acknowledging the Land and Waters We Love

For 50 years, the Idaho Conservation League has worked to protect and restore the air, water, lands and wildlife of what we now call Idaho.

As we celebrate this milestone we acknowledge that some have loved these lands for hundreds of generations. Idaho contains the traditional unceded lands of Indigenous peoples, including Newe (Shoshone-Bannock), Numu (Shoshone-Paiute), Nimiipuu (Nez Perce), Schitsu'umsh (Coeur d'Alene), Ktunaxa (Kootenai), Kalispel, and other affiliated bands and tribes.

Tribes have vast experience in these landscapes, and are an important voice and actively involved in the management and use of these lands. We are immensely grateful for the Native-led conservation efforts taking place today. We honor and welcome partnership and opportunities for learning and value the extensive knowledge, experience, and practice that are so vital to the future of conservation of both natural and cultural resources.

The cultural significance of this land, its waters, and wildlife to Indigenous peoples who recognize Idaho as their homeland cannot be overstated, and we recognize and appreciate the ongoing commitment on the part of Tribal governments and Tribal members to protect and steward these homelands. As ICL enters the next 50 years of our short history we redouble our commitment to promote diversity, inclusivity, and justice for Indigenous peoples, and for all Idahoans.



Editor's Note: Idaho Through Fresh Eyes

As a little girl growing up on a small lake in the Midwest, I fell in love with the warbler songs and pollywogs of the natural world around me. Enthralled by the seasonal cycles of nature, I dreamed of more. I dreamed of seeing some place truly wild.

I was lucky enough to land in Idaho after college. In the Gem State, I discovered brilliant bluebird skies over glacier-carved mountain peaks. I found wild rivers full of life and adventure. I delighted in the wren songs echoing among cliffs and canyons. My childhood dreams became a reality in Idaho. It was love at first sight.

I know I'm not alone.

Before this special place was called Idaho, people have connected with this land in deep and meaningful ways. When you look at the rugged beauty in Idaho, what's not to love?

It's one thing to say you love Idaho's fresh air, clean water, and vast landscapes full of diverse wildlife, but it's another to back that up with action. For 50 years, the Idaho Conservation League has turned a love for the wild things that make Idaho special into a legacy of protection. This special publication tells a 50-year-old love story as unbridled as the rivers that carve deeper into the granite each day, fierce as the birds of prey that soar ever higher across the sky, and unwavering as the beauty of our most precious landscapes.

YOU are a part of this love story. This special 50th anniversary publication recognizes ICL's members, leaders, and staff of our past, current, and future. With ICL, we can all be a part of something bigger than ourselves.

With this publication, we honor ICL's story. We look back on our accomplishments of the past and look forward to the challenges ahead. We learn from our elders and embrace the youth who will lead us forward. Through it all, we reflect on what ties us together – a love for a wild Idaho.

Today, when I think about wild places, I don't just recall the visions of my young imagination. Or even the excitement of when I first saw a golden eagle, or glimpsed Redfish Lake. What's more, I feel gratitude for the people that worked to make sure there was a wild Idaho left for me to discover. I am grateful for the Idaho Conservation League.

With your continued support, we will ensure future generations will write the next chapter in Idaho's love story. This publication is dedicated to the love story that built the Idaho Conservation League – to the people who care, the places that inspire, and a vision for the future.

Thank you for being a part of this story.

Abby Urbanek
Communications Manager





Table of Contents

Part One: The People Behind ICL

Celebrating Successes, Moving Forward	7
ICL's Beginning	9
Planning for the Future: ICL's Role in the Passage of the Land Use Planning Act of 1975	11
The Miracle-worker Who Saved the Idaho Conservation League	13
More Than Meets the Eye: How ICL's Opposition to Pioneer Helped Protect the Snake River	15
My Life with ICL	16
A Gift to ICL is a Gift to the Future	17
The Evolution of ICL	18
Lesson from the Land: Put People First	21
With Communities and ICL, We Are Stronger Together	22

Part Two: The Places That Inspire

ICL's Role in the Creation of the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness	25
Protecting Long Canyon	27
The Owyhee Initiative: 1,000 Cups of Coffee	31
The Saga of Idaho's Roadless Gems	33
Protecting the Precious Waters of North Idaho	36
From the White Clouds to the White House	39
All Hands on Deck for the Boise Foothills!	41
Protecting the Magic Of the Night: The Central Idaho Dark Sky Reserve	43
Bringing Passion and Creativity to Public Lands Conservation	44
Idaho's Enduring Wildlife Legacy	45
Beyond Idaho: ICL Mercury Work Creates National Protections	47

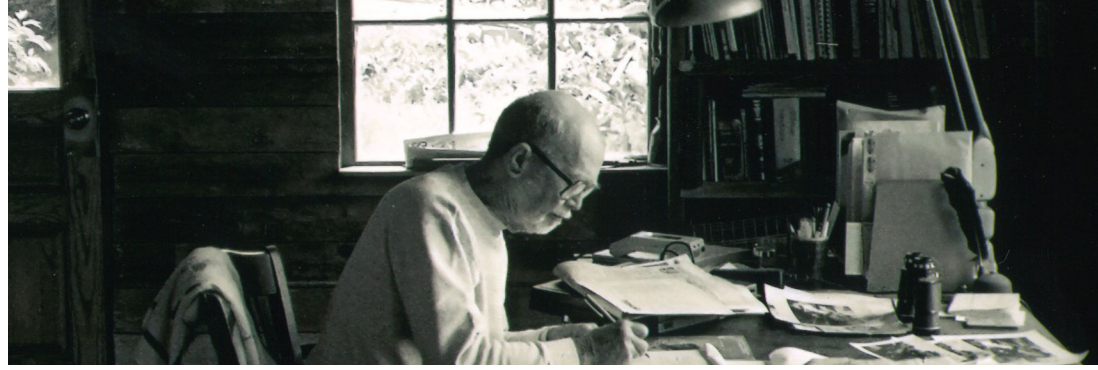
Part Three: A Vision for the Future

Respecting and Restoring the Snake River	51
Building a Brighter Future for Idaho's Energy Needs	52
Hard-Headed Enough to Try	53
Motorized Pressure on Idaho's Public Lands	55
ICL as a Mining Industry Watchdog	56
Love and Rage in the Columbia River Basin: The Birth of Youth Salmon Protectors	57
Passing the Torch: ICL's Emerging Leaders for Idaho's Environment	58
Room to Roam	59
For the Love of Idaho: Ensuring a Future for ICL	60

Part One

THE PEOPLE BEHIND ICL





Celebrating Successes, Moving Forward

Justin Hayes
Executive Director

Rebecca Patton
Chair, Board of Directors



Justin Hayes



Rebecca Patton

It is with a sense of awe and pride that we mark this big milestone for the Idaho Conservation League – 50 years of working to protect the land, water, air, and wildlife of Idaho!

ICL's founding in 1973 came in the midst of the blossoming of the modern environmental movement. A decade earlier the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* raised concerns about the environmental impacts caused by widespread pesticide use. Americans saw huge offshore oil spills, massive clearcuts, indiscriminate mining, unbridled development, and chemical and hazardous waste spills. In 1969, the Cuyahoga River in Ohio caught fire.

Idaho was not immune from these crises. Air pollution was leaving a toxic legacy on Idaho mining towns. The federal government was

blocking salmon and steelhead streams with giant dams. Wildlife like bald eagles, caribou, and grizzly bears flitted near extinction. Massive clearcuts on national forests were gaining national attention.

All of this prompted people from across America to come together to demand change. Major pieces of environmental legislation passed on a bipartisan basis: the Wilderness Act (1964), the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (1968), the Clean Air Act (1970), the National Environmental Policy Act (1972), the Clean Water Act (1972), and the Endangered Species Act (1973).

These laws gave ICL the legal framework for many of the accomplishments that shape Idaho's very special character and protect many of Idaho's most treasured places. There are the iconic, well-known wins like the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness, Owyhee Wilderness, the Boulder-White Clouds Wilderness, and Wild and



Scenic River protections for portions of the St. Joe, Clearwater, and Salmon rivers.

There are also many things that never happened because of ICL... the polluting coal-fired power plants, the open-pit mines, highways through the backcountry, and the dams stopping wild rivers that were never built.

Over the past five decades ICL also has engaged in a wide range of issues less glamorous but essential to the health and prosperity of our state – ensuring both state and federal agencies follow their own rules, protecting water quality by holding industrial facilities and municipal sewage treatment plants accountable, protecting air quality, and pushing for sustainable management of public lands while protecting wildlife.

ICL's "special sauce" isn't laws and regulations though.

What makes ICL special is the caring, passionate advocates who support ICL's work and are willing to take action to protect and restore the Idaho that we love. Our shared values of integrity, teamwork, respect, and working for win-win solutions wherever possible define ICL's approach. An approach that has been remarkably effective.

As we celebrate with gratitude all those who contributed to ICL's environmental victories of the past 50 years, we must also recognize all of the work that we must now lean into. Our foundation is a strong base as we embrace the challenges ahead. We have urgent work to do: tackle climate change; restore salmon runs; protect and restore the health of our rivers and lakes; and protect large, connected landscapes and the wildlife that depend on them. Together we must be the change-makers that Idaho needs right now.

Thank you for being part of this amazing community. You fill us with hope.



ICL's Beginning

Mary Lou Reed

Former Idaho State Senator, ICL Founder
and Former Board Member



Celebrating ICL's 50th anniversary has been a refreshing journey back in time to younger days when my husband Scott and I delighted in hiking, camping, and swimming in the summers and skiing and ice skating in the winters in the year-round wonderland of Idaho.

Scott and I had migrated to Coeur d'Alene in 1956 after searching for a town in the West that could use a sole practitioner lawyer and his firmly Democratic partner. Coeur d'Alene had room for both. We fell in love with Coeur d'Alene Lake at first splash. We had found our playground.

But Scott and I were quickly reminded that life is not all play. A hardworking conservationist and political activist, Art Manley, immediately took us under his wing and introduced us to the challenges facing North Idaho and the lakes we had become so attached to.

Art brought us into his big and colorful wildlife group, which met once or twice a month at the Eagles Lodge for free hot dogs, movies, and chatter. By the '70s, hot dogs and wildlife

movies were not satisfying for a large number of conservationists looking for action.

In Boise, a group of kindred spirits had been holding roundtable meetings to discuss statewide issues. Some of us from Coeur d'Alene started attending. Senator John Peavey in Blaine County opened his compound at lovely Pettit Lake for talk sessions. Idaho Falls also fostered interested and concerned conservation-minded individuals.

In 1973, it was time we turned talk into action. But who were "we?" At that time, "we" were a collection of younger souls from around the state, caught up in the swirl of environmental awareness that was sweeping the nation. But we knew Idaho was special. We knew that Idaho had wilderness areas that were candidates for preservation, we were aware our population was growing very quickly, and we recognized Idaho cities had outgrown their adolescent beginnings and needed help planning for the future.

We came together in agreement that Idaho had been discovered and needed help facing future growth and preserving the state's natural treasures.

Our good fortune was to run into Bill Bryan, a young man from Maine who had just heeded the call to Go West after earning his doctorate in Environmental Studies from the University of Michigan.

Based in Helena, Montana, Bill's dream was to help environmental enthusiasts save the wonders of the Northern Rockies. With the financial help of several donors, Bill had put together a non-profit organization to assist newly-formed environmental organizations in Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming. Bill, with his newly-formed Northern Rockies Action Group (NRAG), came to Idaho to meet with and advise the emerging Idaho group.

With Bill Bryan's guidance, our initial crew formed a board and made plans for raising money, renting a headquarters, and hiring staff. The Idaho Conservation League was born.

An active Sandpoint optometrist, Ken Cameron, was chosen to lead the group. For a potential staff person, high praise was shared about a young Boise mother, Marcia Pursley, who subsequently accepted the job as Coordinator of the new organization.

Sometime in 1973, Marcia Pursley, as Coordinator, took over the basement of the Boise YWCA as the first office of the freshly minted Idaho Conservation League. The exact date has been lost. Bill Bryan brought in an intern, Belle Heffner, who had just earned her master's degree from the University of Michigan. Belle volunteered full-time for the two years she was able to remain in Idaho.

Both Marcia and Belle did a great job for ICL.

For those of us whose commitments to ICL date back to the early years, reflecting on 50 years is a marvelous chance to exchange memories and hugs. Over the years, our common concerns about Idaho's environment have served to build friendships loaded with respect and affection.

My devotion to ICL is truly five decades long, and while the scientific issues of saving the salmon and the water of Coeur d'Alene Lake are important to know and apply, our allegiance to the cause is one part head and one part heart. For each of us the driver is our attachment to place – be it landscape, or lake, or beauty, or wild creatures, or all of the above and more – we care enough with our heads and our feelings, to put our time and resources into protection and support of the world around us.



Planning for the Future: ICL's Role in the Passage of the Land Use Planning Act of 1975

Marcia Pursley

Coordinator/Executive Director (1973-1975)

In the early 1970s, local planning and zoning in Idaho was an option, not a requirement. Unregulated growth was running the show in Idaho neighborhoods, communities, and businesses. Unique terrains and neighborhoods were not protected by clear standards – including my own.

A developer proposed a high-density subdivision for the foothills behind my family's house in



northeast Boise. Concerned about the potential impacts, I put my two preschool kids in a stroller and went door to door, talking with neighbors. Many signed a petition opposing the development. Twenty of them showed up at the Boise City Council meeting to testify against it. One neighbor told me that being involved was the most exciting thing she had ever done.

Our grassroots activism led to the developer sitting in my living room, asking me what density my neighbors and I were willing to accept. He agreed to exactly what I said was appropriate for the sloping, fragile foothills terrain. At the time, this “planning process” was a norm for many Idaho communities. But that needed to change, and soon.

In 1970, Cecil Andrus was elected Governor of Idaho. Opposed to unbridled development, he decided that local planning needed to be mandatory. Gov. Andrus understood that mandatory local planning and zoning didn't stand a chance in the Idaho Legislature without statewide input and a statewide coalition, so he worked to build that.

Paralleling Gov. Andrus' statewide outreach work in 1973 was the formation of the Idaho Conservation League.

My neighborhood work caught the attention of a few Idaho environmentalists looking for someone to staff the newly-formed ICL. Prior to this, I had never stepped a foot inside the Idaho Capitol building. That quickly changed when I accepted the role as ICL's "coordinator," and became the organization's first staff member.

ICL quickly joined the broad coalition that supported the Governor's legislation. We adopted the Land Use Planning Act as our top legislative priority for the 1974 legislative session.

Our first board meeting was only a few weeks prior to the start of the session, so we used the session as our start-up.

Our office was buzzing with activity. We communicated with lawmakers, sent out our newsletter, and set up our phone tree and volunteer program. We were visible enough in the Capitol that one male lobbyist sometimes referred to me as "Mother Pursley."

Unforeseen by the coalition supporting the 1974 Land Use Planning Act was opposition from a cadre of influential lobbyists. In the final days of the session, the bill was killed. This sudden demise led me and other ICL members to join with Senator John Peavey and other activists in launching a Sunshine Initiative, requiring financial disclosure by candidates and lobbyists. My former husband, Boise attorney Ken Pursley, wrote the initiative. We gathered the required signatures to get it on the November 1974 ballot. Idaho voters approved it by more than 77 percent.

That same year, Governor Andrus was reelected. Our eyes were now set on the 1975 legislative session.

During the 1975 session, the Local Planning Act managed to pass the Senate. But certain legislators in the Idaho House aimed to kill it with a slew of amendments.

Despite numerous amending votes on the House floor, the bill survived intact. From the House public gallery, ICL volunteers observed the amending process and recorded how each legislator voted on each amendment. Back then, amending votes were not officially recorded.

ICL volunteers also took detailed notes in key committees. Then, they'd report back to the ICL office, where we held weekly strategy meetings. Once a week, I was on the phone with our statewide network to discuss the status of the bill and the urgency to contact key legislators.

From our volunteers' recording of the amendment votes we knew that Representative Elaine Kearnes from Idaho Falls was a potential yes vote for the final bill. Fortunately, when the final vote on the 1975 Local Planning Act was imminent, ICL Field Coordinator Jeff Fereday was in Idaho Falls meeting with ICL members. During that meeting, Jeff conveyed to members how imperative it was to persuade Elaine Kearnes to vote yes.

As always, our members did not let us down. The Local Planning Act of 1975 passed the Idaho House by two votes. One of which was that of Elaine Kearnes.

For several years after the Act's passage, vocal opponents made their annual attempt to repeal the law. These repeated efforts – and their repeated lack of success – are reminders of the significance of the law and how controversial it was.

ICL's role in the passage of the Land Use Planning Act not only showed that we can plan for the future. It showed that the time had come for Idahoans to have a voice for conservation in the Idaho Legislature. **50 years later, we still do.**

The Miracle-worker Who Saved the Idaho Conservation League

Pat Ford

Executive Director (1979-1984)
and Former Board Chair

I started with the Idaho Conservation League in November 1977 as a clean-energy researcher. Jimmy Carter was president. And the “energy crisis” was still fresh in America’s mind.

ICL was fighting construction of coal-fired power plants that power companies were anxious to build. ICL field organizers in eastern Idaho and the Magic Valley were the spear points. We championed energy efficiency, renewable energy, and keeping power rates low, rather than swallowing the sizable rate increases necessary to finance coal plants.

As I recall, through 1978 ICL had about six staff all working at full speed. ICL failed to submit a grant report – which led to withholding of the second half of this badly needed grant. In fact, much of the money had already been spent. All of it was needed for cash flow. It was an acute symptom of severe overextension.

For the first time, ICL came face-to-face with implosion.



Staffer Dick Linville said it bluntly, “If we were a business, we’d be in liquidation.”

No money meant no paychecks. Two months later, I was the only staff remaining. I didn’t have a clue about fundraising or management. Thankfully, Mary Lou Reed – ICL’s board chair at the time – took me under her wing.

It was touch-and-go. Mary Lou was the strategist and executor of the survival path. She connected me to key contacts and rallied others. She persuaded key funders and influential Idahoans. She inspired ICL volunteers, who as they always have, responded. I am sure there is much she did that I never knew about. One of her hardest tasks was her most essential: Keep ICL alive.

ICL avoided shutdown by two main finger-holds. First, the work. It was game time for the River of No Return Wilderness, an area that had been protected administratively by the Forest Service at the urging of Harry Shellworth in 1931, but did not have permanent protection as Wilderness.

In 1979, Sen. Frank Church decided to move a bill, setting hearings in Lewiston, Salmon, and Boise. The River of No Return Wilderness Council met in our office, Mary Lou and Scott Reed among them. What could ICL do to help?

ICL organized statewide for the hearings. We hired back Dick Linville who hit the road with a slide show created by Gary Richardson. The strategy worked – the call for wilderness won the day at Salmon, Lewiston, and Boise hearings, as





well as the full hearing record.

Sen. Church then went to work, with much help from Cecil Andrus, who was then U.S. Secretary of the Interior and served several terms as Idaho Governor. Church pushed a 2.3 million-acre Wilderness Bill through Congress. In retrospect, it is just amazing.

The second factor of ICL's survival was Mary Lou Reed. Forty-four years ago, she kept this organization alive so it could become what it is today. She has given to ICL in every one of its 50 years, Scott with her for 42 of them.

"The work," as I call it, will never end. ICL's mission will always be needed. It will carry

organizations and people through travail, and it must carry them through success. If it doesn't, then the success won't last.

I recently spoke with Renee Quick, a former ICL lobbyist in the '80s and longtime volunteer. I asked her how she first connected with ICL. "Oh, it was all Mary Lou's fault." That pretty much sums it up: everything this organization has accomplished since 1979 is Mary Lou's "fault."

At age 93, Mary Lou came down to Boise for a 50th anniversary celebration in January 2023. I wondered as the date approached how those of us present could possibly honor her. Then I realized my question was backward. It was she who has honored us.



More Than Meets the Eye: How ICL's Opposition to Pioneer Helped Protect the Snake River

Jeff Fereday

Executive Director (1975-1977)

In 1975, in its earliest years and still shaky on its feet, ICL faced one of the thorniest environmental issues of the decade – Pioneer, a 1,000 megawatt coal-fired power plant proposed by Idaho Power just 20 miles south of Boise. With a battle this big, ICL had no other option than to rise to the challenge.

Just as important to Idaho's natural resource future – but perhaps even more interesting – was what Pioneer led ICL and others to do afterwards.

The campaign to defeat Pioneer revealed facts about how Idaho Power was mismanaging its Snake River hydroelectric resources. For years, Idaho Power had been encouraging more agricultural land development, served by high-lift pumping from the river and aquifer upstream of Swan Falls. This took huge amounts of electricity, depleting river flows and harming Idaho Power's 16-dam hydroelectric system. ICL took notice and began to discuss what to do to take steps toward restoring the Snake River, protecting Idaho's hydroelectric base, and avoiding future projects like Pioneer.

At the time, Idaho was the only place in the West where the last homestead laws – the Carey Act and the Desert Land Entry Act – were still viable, and land developers were taking advantage. In February 1977, ICL held an Agricultural Lands Conference in Twin Falls to discuss the issues. As the federal agency in charge of approving the land transfers under these statutes, the Bureau of Land Management was our target audience. We successfully convinced BLM to conduct a full

environmental review of the land conversion. But by the time their review was issued in 1979, a separate result of our conference had become the driving force in achieving our goal.

In 1977, attorney Matthew Mullaney filed a petition (which I and many other ICLers signed onto) with the PUC seeking ratepayer relief, based on the fact that Idaho Power had failed to protect a crucial company asset – its Snake River water rights at the Swan Falls Project. The genius of the Mullaney petition, which came to be known as the Peavey Petition, was its focus on the fundamental resource and environmental problem that had given rise to Pioneer in the first place – Idaho Power's effort to make up for their dwindling hydro base.

After unsuccessful motions and posturing in the press, Idaho Power did something shocking – they joined our fight. In January 1978, the company protested thousands of irrigation water rights and the Idaho Department of Water Resources, and filed an action in Ada County District Court. The company asserted that its 1901-priority hydropower water rights at Swan Falls Dam were not subordinated to later-established upstream irrigation water rights, and that those upstream junior water users were subject to being shut off to provide river flows to the Swan Falls Project.

All hell broke loose. Idaho Power was in state district court opposing some 7,500 Snake River Plain irrigators, most of which were groundwater pumpers whose diversions were proven to be depleting the Snake River. The Mullaney/Peavey Petition had given birth to the massive Swan Falls litigation.

In 1983, the Idaho Supreme Court ruled in favor of Idaho Power. Litigation was eventually settled, and included a statute granting a full adjudication of all Snake River water rights.

The Swan Falls controversy essentially achieved ICL's initial goals: shut down significant new agricultural development on the Snake River Plain, establish a minimum stream flow at Swan Falls, and trigger the Snake River Basin Water Rights Adjudication. ICL, Matt Mullaney, and the Peavey petitioners were there through it all, and brought about change.



My Life with ICL

Ed Cannady

Staff (1988-1991) and Former Board Member

I grew up in Oklahoma, on Muddy Boggy Creek (Really. That is its name). When I moved to Idaho in 1973, I immediately fell in love with the state because of its abundant clean water – as well as its wildlands, clean air, and wildlife.

You may notice a coincidental timing with my entry to the state and the creation of the Idaho Conservation League. I was still in high school at that time and oblivious to ICL's formation, but 50 years later, the timing is not lost on me.

My first experience with ICL was in the mid-eighties when I started attending meetings of the Ada County Chapter while I attended Boise State. I had just finished traveling across the world, from Alaska to India, and knew it was time to start working for the places I loved. I had seen enough of the world to know Idaho was special and worth fighting for. It was quickly obvious only one organization was doing that comprehensively, and that was ICL.

Opportunities to contribute arose immediately. I soon became president of the chapter, then for four years the chapter representative on the ICL Board. I was often over my head at board meetings, but I learned. I look back in awe on those days and the people I met, like Mary Kelly, Will Whelan, Charles Ray, Dr. John Osborn, Gary

Richardson, Ken Robison, and many others, and most importantly Pat Ford, my long-time hero and mentor.

I assisted ICL's legislative lobbyist Will Whelan and learned a lot. When Will moved on I became ICL's lobbyist for three years, and learned first-hand the uphill battle we faced at the state level. The battles were too numerous and colorful but they were all worth fighting.

I then had another opportunity to fight for what was most important to me as a Wilderness Ranger in the Sawtooth National Recreation Area. I'm certain the Sawtooth Country and the Alaskan bush saved my life in my teens. I committed to the wilderness like I did to ICL. Moving to Smiley Creek after college gave me the opportunity to become more involved with Wood River ICL folks like Tommy Pomeroy, Nicola Potts, Linn Kincannon, Mike Medberry, Jude Hawkes, and many others. Working for the Forest Service limited how much I could be involved with ICL, but I still appreciated the group's hard work.

I can't say I have always agreed with ICL on everything, to the point of canceling my membership once, but I came back. I believe in relationships, and the Idaho Conservation League has been one of the most important in my life. And I am nothing if not loyal. Today, I believe in this organization more than ever.

As I join in the celebration of ICL's 50th anniversary this year, I also celebrate the 50th anniversary of my first backpack trip in the Sawtooth Wilderness. I look back on that life-changing hike and reflect on how far I have come in my relationship with wilderness, with Idaho, and with ICL. I feel gratitude. Thanks to ICL the air I breathe and the water I drink are cleaner, and the land I love is more protected.

I honor founders and heroes past, heroes of the present, and the current ICL staff, board, and members, who now work for Idaho's future.

A Gift to ICL is a Gift to the Future

Glenn F. Stewart

Executive Director (1990-1994)

“Ten thousand dollars for the future of conservation. For the future of clean water and pure air. It means that much to me.”

With those words and a \$10,000 check, Walter Minnick kick-started my tenure as ICL’s executive director. That keynote speech at ICL’s 1990 annual meeting was easily the most memorable event of my 45-year career as a conservationist.

Walt’s gift was more than a check. He asked others to join in his giving, helping to raise \$40,000 in one night. He then organized fundraising gatherings across the state. The endowment campaign aimed at putting a million dollars – now surpassed – into the bank to help support ICL during lean times, or as Walt said, “to be sure there was always an ICL to fight for the conservation of Idaho.”

This fundamentally changed ICL. We began to think of ourselves as a “permanent” organization. In the first two years of our endowment campaign, more than 400 people contributed. Members owned that endowment – and invested in ICL as the keeper of the dream to keep Idaho wild.

At a time of big challenges and growing pains in the early ‘90s, ICL’s Board of Directors came together to plot statewide strategies to reach the organization’s goals. Tommy Pomeroy’s enthusiasm, love of wild places, and infectious smile made him an impactful board chair and leader. Trish Klahr and Mike Medberry led the water quality and public lands work. ICL was lucky to have them. So was I. ICL has been blessed with solid, committed program leaders.

For the prickly issues that advocacy alone could not solve, we needed lawyers and a continued

presence in the legislature. We partnered with Laird Lucas at the LAW Fund. Ed Cannady put on his suit every day to go toe-to-toe with sometimes hostile legislators during the session. I don’t think people really understand how difficult of an assignment that is. But Ed showed up. Every day.

I was surrounded by good people. The lovely and affable Joan Hummel was at our front desk. Senator Karl Brooks came from the legislature to join our staff and offer good counsel. John McCarthy held down the Boise public lands desk. Mindy Harm lobbied the legislature after Ed Cannady moved on. Along with the hardworking staff, board members like Mark Solomon made ICL’s issues a nearly full-time job.

What we all need to remember is that while ours is good, compelling, and important work, it can also take a toll. Folks can take ICL’s losses personally. I know that I did at times. We must take care of ourselves and each other. So I ask all of you good people to follow Edward Abbey’s “One Final Paragraph of Advice: Do not burn yourselves out...” And if you feel as if you are getting close, just head into one of Idaho’s outdoor wonderlands for both revitalization and to remember why this work is so important.



The Evolution of ICL

Rick Johnson

Public Lands Director (1985-1987),
Executive Director (1995-2019)

Early in my time as executive director, in a hot moment, a timber executive said to me, “Rick, I can see you know how to make a point. I’m going to be watching to see if you learn how to make a difference.”

Years later, after we’d passed the Boulder-White Clouds wilderness bill, Rep. Mike Simpson reminded me of an early conversation where I’d told him our community was really good at stopping things and that I wanted to help Idaho conservationists also get good at getting good things done.

Fighting bad things most certainly protects the environment, but it can also build a negative public stereotype. It’s a dance – both stopping bad things and advancing a positive agenda are important in conservation. Stopping bad things is how you stop coal-fired power plants and the nation’s largest sources of toxic airborne mercury – both huge ICL accomplishments. But as ICL celebrates 50 years, we also must reflect on our strategy to become an organization that gets things done.

Back in 1998, ICL’s Board Chair Jerry Pavia and I were walking a single-track dirt trail in the French Creek roadless area, discussing ICL’s 25th anniversary. The next day, ICL board and staff were to gather in McCall for a strategic planning retreat. Jerry stopped mid-stride, turned to me and said, “Imagine it’s ICL’s 50th anniversary. The board has invited us back to talk about everything everyone did back in the 25th to make the ICL of today. That’s what we have to talk about tomorrow – everything that we’re going to do.”

He paused and then asked, “So, what are we going to do?”

Knowing Jerry, he still has his notes from that walk on the trail back in 1998.

Those notes read: “By 2000, ICL would have an endowment over \$1 million. Own our office in downtown Boise. Be sufficiently secure to not worry about upcoming paychecks for staff. Have 12-14 staff within 8 years. Make ICL an organization where you come to have a career and not just a stepping stone to somewhere else. Create term limits for the board to keep it changing. Create a sabbatical program. Secure new federal wilderness designations in Idaho.”

It was a given that we would always need to stop bad polluting or destructive projects and policies. It was also a given that we’d try to advance ambitious and proactive campaigns to build alliances and public support. But to do any of these things for the long haul, ICL needed to become an institution.

This evolution was an intentional journey about building alliances, credibility, and public support. It was about learning how to turn love of Idaho into policy. It took risk – getting things done often means meeting others in the middle.

Over a number of campaigns, nothing built ICL more than building the endowment. Raising substantial funds to not be directly spent put a solid keel on the ICL boat, ensuring ICL could grow into a lasting institution.

We did all the things on Jerry’s list and so much more. And let’s be clear about who “we” are.

“We” includes staff that have dedicated their lives to protecting the best of Idaho. It includes board members from across the state that have given so much. It includes extraordinary donors who started as a small cadre but is now a truly inspiring list. It includes foundation supporters from across the country who recognized that we were doing something special in Idaho. But most of all, it is our members. Because of you, ICL will be here for as long as it takes. And that, my friends, means forever.



Rep. Mike Simpson and Rick Johnson share a quiet moment overlooking iconic Castle Peak in the Cecil D. Andrus-White Clouds Wilderness.



Lesson from the Land: Put People First

Lauren McLean

Mayor of Boise, Staff (2002-2005)



Twenty-five years ago, I fell in love with the city of Boise, the Idaho landscape, and our community of Idahoans.

Just out of college, I felt a calling to protect the people and place that I'd been lucky enough to find and call home. As ICL turns 50, I realize how much this organization – and the work it made possible – influenced my own path. The Idaho Conservation League has proven integral to the entire journey.

The memories of my time working at ICL, the people, and the communities in which I worked remain vivid. I can still feel the memory of walking to ICL's office on Idaho Street, very pregnant with my daughter Madeleine, to meet Rick Johnson. I recall Suki Molina and Rachel Winer walking toward me as I stood on the steps of the Idaho Democratic Party offices on Franklin Street, stopping to ask if I'd want to run a campaign

to protect the Boise Foothills – the unique and irreplaceable setting of the city I'd fallen in love with.

ICL gave me a chance to make civic engagement part-and-parcel of the work of the organization.

The root of our work was the belief that we must protect people, protect places for people, and do this alongside the very folks seeking protection.

I walked county roads in North Idaho, seven months pregnant with my son Aiden, with local residents seeking to protect their children's lungs from smoke-filled skies. I wandered fields in the Magic Valley, getting sprayed by a pivot applying wastewater on fields. I put on muck boots to walk around a dairy and learn about its operations. I spent countless nights on the road to meet folks where they lived; to learn their needs and hopes for their community and to determine how to support their efforts in effective ways. I engaged them in ICL's work as we engaged in theirs. In the process, I fell more deeply in love with this state and its people.

Those were fun days, as we sought to create opportunities for everyone to engage on the very topics that mattered most to Idahoans: their families and community, their health, clean air, and clean water.

To call these experiences "formative" is an understatement. Just as the land we call home shapes us, our communities, and the course of our lives, working for ICL and with people across this state shaped me. The opportunity of working for ICL in my 20s was a gift. So was continuing to work with ICL over the course of my career. I remain deeply grateful. The lessons I learned still guide me today: advocate for the places we love and the people we hold dear.



With Communities and ICL, We Are Stronger Together

Randy Fox

West Central Idaho Conservation Associate

When I was a child and a family crisis arose, like an inadvertently broken window or sibling disagreement, my mother always reminded my brother and me that our small family was like a chain: strong when linked together, much weaker when separated. Those talks outlined the driving force in my life: the concept of community.

The dictionary defines “community” as a social group whose members have something in common, such as a shared government, geographic location, culture, or heritage. I believe community is more than a definition, and over the past two years I have been fortunate enough to see community in action through the eyes of ICL, McCall, and Valley County.

Nearly three years ago, a development company named Trident Holdings, LLC presented a proposal to acquire some 28,000 acres of state endowment lands in and around McCall. If you would like an example of how a crisis can bring a town together as a community, the Trident proposal fits the bill.

Locals quickly formed the Payette Endowment Lands Alliance to challenge the Trident land exchange. They identified alternative land management options to the Idaho Department of Lands. Many of the group’s founding members were already part of another local group, Save the South Fork Salmon, who had been opposing the Stibnite Mine proposal near Yellow Pine for nearly a decade. These tireless volunteers came together to stand for public lands and the access we all cherish, for values they hope to instill in younger generations, and for the vision they hold for Valley County. This vision is being accomplished as a community.

Ultimately, the uproar and resulting vision provided the opening for ICL to open its West Central Idaho (WCID) field office in McCall. Soon after, ICL helped form United Payette – a coalition of conservation-minded non-profits and concerned citizens – to identify ways to permanently conserve the Payette endowment lands.

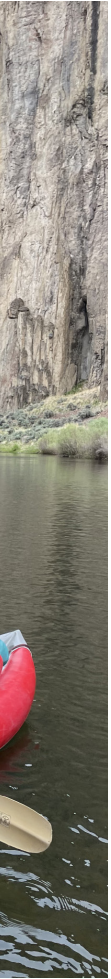
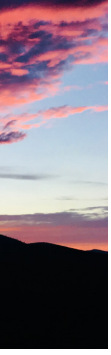
In just two years, United Payette has built trust and open communication with Idaho Department of Lands, the Valley County Commission, and McCall City Council; helped procure a conservation easement for a single parcel on Cougar Island; established recreation/conservation leases on two parcels of endowment lands; and helped establish a Recreation Advisory Committee to inform Valley County’s future growth. At ICL’s annual *Wild Idaho!* conference in 2022, we recognized four of these amazing individuals by presenting them with the Keith and Pat Axline Award for Environmental Activism.

Since opening the WCID office, I have met and worked with many passionate individuals who care deeply about the region’s future. I have seen the people of McCall and Valley County come together during times of grief and loss, as well as times of joy and celebration. While there are certainly differences of opinions within this community, the vast majority chooses to be a link in the larger chain, providing strength and resilience to one another in order to face the next challenge together.

The people in McCall exemplify what it means to be a community. But they are not unique in this. In every neighborhood, town, and region throughout Idaho, communities are working together to realize a brighter future. “Community” means more than shared interests or beliefs. Community is shared accomplishment and loss. Community is heart, soul, and hope. Community is as small as a family, and as large as a state. ICL fits within each, forming a chain that grows stronger with each link.







Part Two

THE PLACES THAT INSPIRE

ICL's Role in the Creation of the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness

Pat Ford

Executive Director (1979-1984)
and Former Board Chair

The River of No Return Wilderness, located in Idaho's heart, was protected by the Central Idaho Wilderness Act of 1980. Idaho Senator Frank Church steered it through Congress. At Senator Jim McClure's request, Congress put Church's name on the Wilderness as he lay dying in 1983.

I joined the ICL staff in late 1977. My job was to help stop coal-fired power plants from being built in southern Idaho. But ICL's Boise office hosted the River of No Return Wilderness (RNRW) Council meetings, and I couldn't stay away.

Here were the wise, tested conservation leaders of that Idaho day: Ted Trueblood, Ernie Day, Bruce Bowler, Nelle Tobias, Fred Christensen, Mary Lou Reed, Ken Robison, Tory Croft, and others. I learned the trade and practice of conservation. They shine in my memory. Their achievements shine across Idaho.

The Council formed in 1972 at a meeting in Salmon, when a 2.3 million acre Wilderness was named, roughly mapped, and strategized. For six years, the Council patiently built the case and public support, and quietly coaxed their friend Frank Church to move legislation. In late 1978, Senator Church decided to move, despite likely harm to his re-election in 1980.

The Council began to meet more regularly, stuffing envelopes and making calls. ICL itself was imperiled at the time – I was the only staff. But this was an all-hands-on-deck moment for Idaho conservation. Led by organized groups and



individuals, urban and rural communities alike.

Senator Church scheduled summer '79 field hearings in Salmon, Lewiston, and Boise. ICL focused on Salmon and Boise, and helped some in Lewiston. I raised money to hire Dick Linville to hit the road in southern Idaho, engaging people and enlisting witnesses for hearings and letter-writers for the record. My former ICL colleague Gary Richardson created a fine slideshow. Our partners included The Wilderness Society, Sierra Club, Idaho Environmental Council, affiliates of the Idaho Wildlife Federation, and of course the RNRW Council. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game had its own pro-Wilderness Martel Morache hit the road to reach hunters and anglers. (If that seems unimaginable today, that's because it is).

Wilderness proponents outnumbered opponents at all three hearings by large margins. These were long, genuine field hearings. Hundreds spoke. Dramatic moments and emotions from both sides are still with me.

Among others, ICL completed one key task for the Council – taking a sealed envelope to Senator Church in Washington, D.C. I was not

shown the letter, which related to a boundary reduction Church was considering east of McCall. Church was upset at the contents, and strongly rebuked its flexibility to me. I responded as I'd been advised: say as little as possible, with great respect. In the end, most of that area stayed within his boundary.

I remember one particular day, where 35 maps lay on the office floor, stitched together, delineating the outer boundary of the 2.3 million acre proposal. There was a big hole in the middle for yet even more topos. It sunk in: this is a really big place.

Church's staff based the final maps on submissions from Ron Watters of Pocatello, drawn in consultation with many others. Then, Senator Church, with help, got a 2.3 million acre Wilderness through Congress and to President Jimmy Carter's desk. Five months later, he lost his Senate seat by 4,000 votes to Steve Symms.

Think about central Idaho with no Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness. It is a scary thought. Any time you get the chance, in or around this special place, thank this great man for this gift.

I am in the Frank every year now. I appreciate its many trailheads with short hikes to meadows, lakes, and streamside camps. Its deep interiors take more effort. And then there's its gathering place – the Middle Fork of the Salmon River.

The chance to help Frank Church keep Idaho's heart wild grew many things for ICL. It helped establish ICL as a positive force in Idaho conservation not just to others, but to ourselves. It kindled ICL's public lands and Wilderness work, with dedicated staff arriving soon thereafter. It deepened an ethic rooted-in-Idaho character, embodied in early leaders that we tried to carry on. It taught political lessons that we would use for decades to come.

I didn't see at the time how this amazing Wilderness was the peak of political power for Idaho conservation in my lifetime – power embodied most notably in Frank Church and Cecil Andrus in the years they worked together. It was an honor to ride in their slipstream, to help leaders like Ted Trueblood and others. And it is an honor to now step into the big, wild place they saved for Idaho.



Protecting Long Canyon

Jerry Pavia
Former Board Chair

The year was 1976. Long Canyon, an 18-mile pristine stretch of old-growth cedar-hemlock-white pine forest, suddenly became endangered when the Forest Service created a plan to log it by punching a road in from a neighboring drainage. This is the last major unroaded drainage that runs from the Kootenai Valley into the heart of the Selkirks in the most northern part of Idaho.

This development plan was a shock. This old-growth forest that becomes sub-alpine habitat at its top end was previously believed safe due its inaccessibility because of the narrow mouth of the drainage.

I believe that somehow the forest and mountains sensed the threat and called out for help. A group of newcomers to the area heard the call. We became the Boundary Backpackers. This was a name that member Will Venard, later on the ICL Board of Directors, came up with when asked unexpectedly by the press who we were. "Ah, ah, Boundary Backpackers." The name stuck.

In the early years, our sole effort was to protect Long Canyon and the granitic Selkirk Mountains. In addition to endless meetings with the Forest Service, letter writing campaigns, and all the other efforts that volunteers use to achieve their goals, one of the members, Dr. Bob Crooks, came up with the idea of going into Long Canyon for about a week and a half every September to work on reopening the 20-mile trail that was in bad shape. This was done under the Forest Service supervision of Pat Hart who also happened to be one of our members.

The trail was a mess. Every September for about 15 years, this became an annual non-political effort. One of the members suggested that when in Long Canyon for the trail effort, there be absolutely no discussion about the politics of Long Canyon. We went in to work, and got to know each other better in a spectacular wilderness setting. We usually camped about 11 miles up the trail, surrounded by the old-growth cedar-hemlock forest that was interspersed with straight tall white pines reaching for the sky.

Boundary Backpackers was organized in a unique way. We never had officers or dues. We accepted all positive ideas to advance our goals, as long as the person making the suggestion worked on the idea with other volunteers.

If I remember the year correctly, Boundary Backpackers became a Chapter of the Idaho Conservation League in 1980. In exchange for





becoming a chapter, Boundary Backpackers got free copying and printing at ICL's office in Coeur d'Alene and two staff members to work on the trail that September – Liz Merrill and Cam Spicer. We've also had a member on the ICL Board of Directors from that time to the present.

The goals of Boundary Backpackers evolved. We became involved in other environmental issues in the area including getting the Kootenai River white sturgeon listed under the Endangered Species Act, working to preserve the small remaining herd of woodland caribou in the mountains, and numerous other issues.

The hard work on the trail paid off. The trail became a gem of the Forest Service trails in the region. Long Canyon was finally removed from the Forest Service Timber Base, and is no longer in danger of being logged.

This is a superficial look at the effort put into saving Long Canyon. There are many stories of those days in the Canyon – hearing wolves howl late at night as the sparks of the campfire lifted through the old growth trees, the Burly Brother stories, and more. Sharing these and other stories from around Idaho over the last 50 years can inspire new generations who follow in our dusty footsteps.



Captain Wilderness made his debut in the early 1980s in the pages of ICL's newsletter. Created by former legislator and artist Mark Larson, Captain Wilderness remains a voice for Idaho's wilderness protection, and bears a striking resemblance to longtime ICL Board Chair Jerry Pavia.



With rolling, sagebrush steppe plains, dramatic canyons, and limitless recreation opportunities, the Owyhee Canyonlands boast some of the best views in Idaho.



The Owyhee Initiative: 1,000 Cups of Coffee

John McCarthy
Staff (1993-2005)



The effort to craft wilderness boundaries in the Owyhee Canyonlands began with cookies and coffee.

Craig Gehrke of The Wilderness Society and myself, then conservation director for the Idaho Conservation League, drove over to Bruneau with trepidation and dubious expectations. We were going to test the possibility that conservationists could talk to ranchers about the actual shape and size of wilderness in the desert corner of southwest Idaho.

We first met with a young rancher named Chris Black. Chris has a reputation for an open mind and strong appreciation of the wild land where he ran cattle. He welcomed us into his home, where his 5-year-old daughter offered us fresh baked cookies from her Easy-Bake Oven and his wife poured us coffee. So began the 1,000 cups of coffee strategy – meet people, talk, talk, talk, look at maps.

Our second trip also started with coffee and cookies,


and ended with rolling out maps and discussing them. Craig and I went to the Pleasant Valley Schoolhouse on Mudflat Road just over the Idaho/Oregon border. We met with the Jordan Valley side ranchers, about four extended families.

We figured just having it be Craig and I would keep it simple. But our conversations were complex. We discussed land use, landscape, community, wild creatures, and wilderness. We started regular meetings with conservationists, ranchers, elected officials, and the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes. We never met in Boise or Ada County. We always went to Owyhee or Canyon County. The meetings were sometimes over lunch, but always over coffee.

Early on, the members of the Owyhee Work Group – from what became known as the Owyhee Initiative – determined that plans to designate any Wilderness through legislation must gain the approval of any rancher whose grazing permit included proposed wilderness. After our first forays into these communities, the conservation coalition determined it could be possible to work with people about wilderness. We got to it.

Craig took the lead on the words. He and The Wilderness Society began to craft legislation, with all the quirks and pitfalls of legal language for wilderness. It fell to me to meet with all of the ranchers, on their home turf, to talk about the map for wilderness. Through it all, we worked closely with Senator Mike Crapo, who helped ensure that Owyhee County leaders and residents alike were able to voice their concerns and proposals.

That journey lasted more than four years and took us to all corners of the 5 million-acre Owyhee County, to talk with about 60 ranching families. We talked about roads, fence lines, ecology, wildlife, grazing patterns, family history, landscape changes, and water. Always, these discussions were fueled by coffee, served at the ranch house, trailer office, shop, cow-camp, or the Bruneau One Stop cafe. I got to travel across amazing country to meet with interesting people, even if at times somewhat adversarial.



Our initial meeting with Chris Black proved pivotal. He recognized his family operation could continue in wilderness, and that the protections of wilderness extended to matters of the heart for him – quiet, solitude, wildlife, free-flowing water, and untrammelled beauty. Our common values led to common ground, in a literal sense of drawing lines on the map for Wilderness.

Each of the eventual five named wildernesses that formed the Owyhee Wilderness hold stories of definition and creation. Two outsiders from the work group were critical to them.

Time and time again, I went to Dale Towell – a desert bighorn sheep expert at the Department of Idaho Fish & Game. Dale put real lines on the map for where bighorn sheep lambed, where the rams roamed, and where the bands of wild sheep moved for water and forage. His knowledge was vital in discussions with ranchers about their needs, the needs of wild sheep, and wilderness boundaries that balanced both. It turned out that doing right by bighorn sheep led to our solution, and shaped the agreed upon lines on the wilderness map.

To make the physical maps we relied on desert rat and boater Amy Haak and her crew at Spatial Dynamics. Amy was a cartographer and early master of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) computer analysis of ecological and geographic data. She made us dozens and dozens of maps with standard landmarks, roads, waterways, and more. She took reams of data and created GIS pictures on the land, displaying rare species, species richness and density, distance from roads, bighorn sheep habitat, creeks with redband trout, and other ecological values. These ecological maps informed us on where to focus our efforts and ensure our push for wilderness included the areas with highest ecological value.

A trip to the far southwest corner of Idaho again proved the value of our maps and GIS analysis. We needed to visit a ranch encompassing the Little Owyhee River drainage. To get there we had to drive through three states – Idaho, Oregon, Nevada, and

back into Idaho. To find it, we needed a guide.

Tony Richards, the husband of Owyhee County Treasurer and work group member Brenda Richards, had cowboied at this far-flung Star Valley Ranch as a young man, and agreed to take us there. On a hot summer day, Tony drove me and Roger Singer from the Sierra Club on the five-hour journey there. Upon arrival, we sat under a tree with the ranch manager and enjoyed some iced tea. Then, we rolled out the maps.

We hoped to illustrate how adding about 80,000 acres into wilderness, from the ranch of more than 100,000 acres, and closing 15 miles of rarely used road would have benefits. It would create a huge swath of connected habitat, and keep renegade motorists from trampling the land.

Whether it was our maps, GIS data, or the fact that Tony accompanied us and said we were OK, the rancher agreed to a big chunk of wilderness and to closing the road. Now, the Owyhee Wilderness backed up to Oregon for more than 20 miles at the border. And we were still waiting for our Oregon friends to strike a deal on their side.

In March 2009, with Senator Mike Crapo by his side, President Barack Obama signed the Owyhee Wilderness into law, creating the first wilderness in Idaho in 31 years and protecting 517,000 acres of our wildlands and 325 miles of our wild rivers. Idahoans did it by working together. And Senator Crapo and friends in Washington, DC got it across the finish line to ensure it would persevere.

On the drive back to Boise, I asked Tony what he did out there beyond nowhere in his early 20s as a cowboy. He replied, pointing out the window to the seemingly endless, empty landscape, “It was a great job. I got to see all this great country.”



The Saga of Idaho's Roadless Gems

John McCarthy
Staff (1993-2005)

Jonathan Oppenheimer
External Relations Director

Like a mountain trail, the effort to protect Idaho's roadless national forests was rocky and circuitous. Generations of passionate activists played a part, and we're proud of our legacy defending these vast expanses of pristine forest.

Idaho is blessed with 20 million acres of national forest, including over 4 million acres of congressionally-designated Wilderness, where Congress has prohibited most mechanized intrusions. But there are an additional 9.3 million acres of undeveloped forests known as "roadless" areas, representing 17% of Idaho's land mass. There are hundreds of recognized roadless areas across Idaho, including the Selkirks, the Lemhi Range, the Great Burn and others.

Often just as wild as Wilderness, these areas have generated long and contentious debates over road building, logging, motorized recreation, and other development.

Idaho has more roadless national forests than any state in the lower 48. These lands tend to be steep, rugged, and buried in snow for much of the year. And they are vast, especially compared to the fragments of wildlands left in other states. More than two dozen roadless areas exceed 100,000 acres, with several over 200,000. Roadless lands secure a refuge for wildlife, provide clean water, sequester millions of tons of carbon, connect key ecological strongholds, and ensure a quiet place where Idahoans can escape the bustle of modern life. They are a big part of what makes Idaho special.

So it's clear why "roadless" national forests have been a longstanding priority for the Idaho Conservation League.

This story has many chapters. Early Forest Service visionaries Bob Marshall and Aldo Leopold led some of the first national efforts. In 1930, Harry Shellworth helped protect the Idaho Primitive Area in the Middle Fork Salmon River watershed. In 1964, Idaho Sen. Frank Church led the passage of the Wilderness Act which protected the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. Church followed with an inventory of national forest roadless areas (processes known as RARE I and II) in the 1970s. ICL engaged in those efforts, and carried the torch through the '80s and '90s. Along every step, ICL organized thousands of people, hundreds of times, resulting in tens of thousands of letters and calls.

Every person who spoke up created momentum toward victory.

IDAHO ROADLESS: THE MIDDLE YEARS 1993-2001

John McCarthy

In 1993, I had worked in Idaho's backcountry and was already committed to roadless protection. That year, I started work for ICL and quickly realized that ICL shared that commitment. We sued the Clearwater National Forest to protect roadless areas from logging. As a result, the Forest Service had to conduct ecological reviews of roadless forests. ICL soon launched a statewide campaign to protect these last pristine forests.

Roads caused major ecological damage, not only to forests, but also to watersheds, salmon, and wildlife. We couldn't limit ourselves to protecting the crown jewels as Wilderness. We also needed to protect the integrity of roadless forests and limit the most damaging action – bulldozing new roads.

The campaigns highlighted local activists speaking from the heart about special places for a day hike,

a mountain bike ride, an afternoon fishing, camping trip with the kids, or a multi-week excursion. This proved powerful – Idahoans engaged to protect their beloved places and experiences.

At the end of his term in January 2001, President Clinton issued the final Roadless Area Protection Rule in essence protecting roadless areas across the country. Incoming President George W. Bush was less favorable to forest protection. So the story was far from over.

By the time Jonathan Oppenheimer and John Robison joined ICL in 2002, we were pitched into the next phase of roadless forest protection...

IDAHO ROADLESS RULE: 2001-PRESENT

Jonathan Oppenheimer

President Clinton's 2001 National Roadless Rule triggered a dozen federal lawsuits by industry and anti-conservation interests, including one from the state of Idaho. These pressured the Bush White House to overturn the rule. Roadless areas were in legal limbo.

Critics of the roadless rule said it amounted to a top-down federal mandate. As parties fought in the courts, the Bush Administration invited states to develop special rules for roadless areas within their borders.

In early 2006, then-Gov. Dirk Kempthorne jumped at the chance. (Then he left Idaho to serve as Bush's Secretary of the Interior.) Gov. Kempthorne was succeeded by Jim Risch. Gov. Risch invited county commissioners from across Idaho to weigh in. To some, this looked like an orchestrated effort to undermine the protections of Idaho's 9 million acres of roadless areas.

At the same time, Idahoans overwhelmingly supported protecting these unique areas. ICL helped generate over 140,000 public comments in support of Idaho's backcountry forests. ICL and our members traveled to Washington, DC to testify at National Roadless Commission meetings.

ICL sponsored an Adopt-a-Roadless-Area campaign and worked with ICL members and local, regional, and national groups to advocate for these areas. In October 2006, Gov. Risch submitted a petition to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), who then analyzed and developed a proposal to manage all 280 roadless areas spanning every corner of Idaho.



Finally, in October 2008 the Bush Administration signed the Idaho Roadless Rule, establishing special rules to govern management of Idaho's roadless national forests. The Bush Administration and Gov. Risch heeded the voices of Idahoans. They made key decisions that helped to improve the rule. To this day, Senator Risch considers the Idaho Roadless Rule, and the resolution of decades of debate, one of the most significant accomplishments of his career in public service. ICL agrees that he deserves significant credit for helping craft a balanced rule.

The final rule maintained protections consistent or stronger than the Clinton Roadless Rule for the vast majority of Idaho's 9.3 million acres of pristine forests. It also "released" 400,000 acres to development. Even so, 15 years later, few of these acres that were designated as "general forest" have been developed. Projects still must comply with other environmental laws.

Today, ICL remains actively engaged in reviewing roadless area issues. We serve on the Idaho State Roadless Commission and coordinate closely with state, local, Tribal, and other stakeholders to support the rule's implementation and protect these key areas.

Ultimately, the Idaho Roadless Rule was an administrative decision, meaning that a future President could undo it. That's one of the reasons why we work to ensure that it's fairly implemented, and why we support congressional efforts to codify the rule into law. This includes potential opportunities to protect some of those as Wilderness Areas.

So when you consider the Selkirks, the Great Burn, the Pioneers, the Lemhi Range, the Needles, and other wild lands of Idaho, understand the history behind keeping them wild. And be prepared for the next opportunity to comment!



Protecting the Precious Waters of North Idaho

Jennifer Ekstrom

North Idaho Lakes Conservation Associate

Brad Smith

North Idaho Director

Majestic lakes and rivers define the Idaho Panhandle. ICL has worked for many years to protect Idaho's great waterways like Lake Coeur d'Alene, Lake Pend Oreille, Priest Lake, and the Kootenai River – waters that support the unique North Idaho way of life.

ICL has never taken Idaho's clean water for granted. Founders like Mary Lou and Scott Reed, Art Manley, and others doggedly advocated for clean water in our earliest days. ICL has held polluters accountable for violating the Clean Water Act and worked for community plans to meet federal requirements that our waters be clean enough to swim, fish, and supply drinking water.

ICL has long been concerned about aquatic weeds like milfoil. Former ICL staff member Susan Drumheller helped pass legislation that created a boat inspection program vital to keep destructive and invasive exotic mussel species out of our state's waterways. Alongside partners like the Lake Pend Oreille Waterkeeper and Center for Biological Diversity, we've also stopped problematic developments like the proposed Trestle Creek Marina.

These measures have been necessary, but too often merely react to a crisis. In 2022, ICL launched a more holistic and proactive North Idaho Lakes Conservation Program.

This program launched after Lake Pend Oreille Waterkeeper (LPOW) asked if ICL would consider taking on their advocacy and water quality monitoring efforts. ICL agreed to take on and

expand this work. ICL secured funding to hire a full-time staffer dedicated to our waterways. Jennifer Ekstrom, who formerly served as LPOW's Executive Director, joined the team to helm the program.

In addition to managing the Water Quality Monitoring Program, a citizen-science program to track the health of Lake Pend Oreille, Jennifer plays a leading role in identifying major threats and finding solutions to protect North Idaho waterways. For example, there is too much phosphorus pollution in the shallow water near the shoreline of Lake Pend Oreille, and in particular in Boyer Slough. This pollution is the result of poorly regulated development and improperly treated sewage, and both are issues we are working to address.

Mining pollution also remains a concern. Approximately 80 million tons of heavy metals rest on the bottom of Lake Coeur d'Alene from a century of mining in the Silver Valley. This pollution will stay mostly in place – unless phosphorus and nitrogen levels continue to rise. Too much pollution will change the chemistry of the lake and cause the heavy metals to dissolve, creating a highly toxic lake environment – and unsafe waters for you and your families to swim in.

Mining waste is an ongoing problem, not just a historic legacy. ICL is working with the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho and other U.S. and Canadian partners to reduce selenium pollution in the Kootenai River. This pollution originates from mountaintop-removal coal mines in the Elk River Valley of British Columbia, which then flows into Lake Kocanusa on the BC-Montana Border and downstream into the Kootenai River in Idaho.

Of course, ICL could not do any of this alone. Our allies over the years include the Panhandle Environmental League, Selkirk Conservation Alliance, Kootenai Environmental Alliance, and The Lands Council, among others.

With so many threats to North Idaho's iconic lakes and waterways, ICL is pleased to focus additional resources on a comprehensive, solutions-oriented approach and provide an unwavering voice for protecting the lakes and rivers that define this region of Idaho.





From the White Clouds to the White House

Rick Johnson

Public Lands Director (1985-1987),
Executive Director (1995-2019)

Idaho Rep. Mike Simpson stood next to me in the Oval Office of the White House, the presidential seal embossed in the floor at our feet. President Obama had just signed into law legislation that protected the Boulder, White Cloud, and Jerry Peak areas as Wilderness.

“So, Congressman, you’ve been working on this for 15 years,” the president said.

“Yes,” Rep. Simpson said. Then, looking at me he added, “Rick has been working on it for 30 years.”

The president took my hand, and said, “Well, this must be a very special day for you.”

You have no idea, I thought, thinking of all the Idahoans who had pushed to make this day happen. “Yes,” I managed to gasp, as Obama kept hold of my hand. “It’s a special day for a lot of people.”

It was a special day, and a special story, indeed.

It’s tempting to open this story with my first glance of Castle Peak up close as amber sunset fell over the granite peak on a week-long backcountry ski across the White Clouds. Or how we developed a relationship with Rep. Mike Simpson, a true and to many unlikely hero for Idaho conservation. Or by reflecting on the many, many people who worked so hard on a seemingly endless campaign – people who just never gave up.

But here, on ICL’s 50th, the most important story to tell goes well beyond the Boulder-White Clouds. This story exists because of the wisdom of the founders of the Wilderness Act of 1964 –

including Idaho’s own Frank Church who carried the bill creating the wilderness system in the Senate.

Wild country and rivers are core to what Idaho is, literally defining what Idaho means to many of us. It defines Idaho so completely that many Idahoans simply take wild places for granted. Not ICL. Keeping these places wild has always been one of ICL’s core purposes.

The formal designation of Wilderness is one of the most protective land designations in our country, a rare circumstance where federal public land is designated by a majority vote in the U.S. Congress. It is very hard to pass a bill in the U.S. Congress. In Idaho, a state famous for being suspicious of the federal government, it’s even harder. ICL’s path in getting this bill through Congress involved political and organizational strategy, and a very intentionally traveled path.

The effort to protect the Boulder-White Clouds predates even ICL itself. It started with the fight against an open-pit mine in the late ‘60s. That escalated into the 1970 governor’s race, which brought Cecil Andrus to office. That was followed by creation of the Sawtooth National Recreation Area.

In the 1980s, I got involved by helping build a statewide wilderness effort. That work evolved into my career, something I’m deeply grateful for. In the 1990s, we created a site-specific wilderness campaign for the Boulder and White Cloud Mountains.

To pass a bill, you need a member of Congress to lead the effort. A champion. Mike Simpson seemed unlikely at first, but doing something other Idaho leaders had failed to do intrigued him. After his first multi-day trip into the majestic peaks, he was hooked. Mike Simpson became a champion of the White Clouds and never gave up. Neither did ICL.

With Simpson’s support, the campaign endured a political roller coaster ride for more than a decade. It’s easy to talk to folks who agree

with you, but we needed more. ICL spoke to opponents and those who didn't know us but were curious and open to listening. And ICL listened back. Ultimately, together, we sought a center and tried to find compromise.

After many challenging years, the campaign intentionally evolved into a difficult but powerfully catalytic proposal to declare the area as a national monument. This shift brought in new resources and allies and was national in scale, a strategy that had been used before and has been used since. But as the monument effort gained momentum, we shifted back to our original goal – a Congressionally designated wilderness area.

After so many decades, the political stars were finally aligned. Success came in a blinding flash.

Simpson and others adroitly moved from the voice-vote unanimous passage in the House on a Thursday, to unanimous passage in the Senate the following Tuesday. That Friday, I found myself standing alongside Rep. Simpson and President Barack Obama, as the bill was signed into law. The Boulder-White Clouds were officially Wilderness. Protected Wilderness.

Today, ICL is 50 years old, the legacy of the Boulder-White Clouds lives on, and Mike Simpson is fighting for Idaho's salmon and the first member of Congress to call for removal of the four lower Snake River dams. Together, we will accomplish that too.



All Hands on Deck for the Boise Foothills!

Suzi Molina
Staff (1991-2017)

In 1998, Boise was seeing another growth spurt, and the Idaho Conservation League struggled to make a major decision: Should ICL get involved in the fight for the future of the Boise Foothills?

Boise was changing before our eyes. So far, major development in Boise's surrounding hills had been limited. But that was poised to change. Developers planned big communities on the east and west side of town which included the foothills. There was even talk of turning 8th and 9th Streets into one-way thoroughfares to accommodate traffic to new foothill subdivisions!

But inside ICL, the public lands staff had its hands full with our slate of priorities around the state. If ICL decided to jump into the future of the foothills, someone needed to step up.

I raised my hand and became the ICL staff liaison on the topic.

My first project was the Foothills Open Space Plan organized by Jim Hall, head of Boise Parks and Recreation. The committee included conservationists, developers, activists, private landowners, and public land managers. The plan would cover about 80,000 acres from Highway 21 to the east and Highway 55 to the west of town. Sixty percent of the land was publicly owned and forty percent was private. After working on this for a year and getting it passed by the Boise City Council, it became apparent to many of us that the open space, scenic setting, and wildlife habitat of the Boise Foothills were threatened.

Mayor Brent Coles was keen on an initiative to protect the foothills. He hired a consultant who ran the numbers, looked into ideas, and came forward with a plan that no one could afford. After that failure, a diverse group of ten citizens sat down with Mayor Coles on a bleak afternoon in December 2000. Mayor Coles turned to us and said "what can we do?" One by one we each volunteered to take a part in the project to put a levy on the ballot in May 2001.

ICL pledged to deliver on getting out the vote. This was no small undertaking.

We had done our homework. We hired Rachel Winer, who came with experience organizing



campaigns and getting out the vote. The campaign committee hired Lauren McLean as the campaign manager. The campaign also had the brains and involvement of consultants who had run political campaigns.

What is a serial levy? Basically the community would vote on a special election to raise \$10 million for the purchase of foothills land. This would be a two-year add-on to property taxes. The cost for an average homeowner was \$15 each year for two years. Businesses like Micron would pay a much larger share of the total.

We decided the campaign would be subtle, operating without media, yard signs, or flash. The concept was simple: find the voters, talk to them, and find out if they supported protecting the foothills. We targeted neighborhoods that were near the foothills or looked at the foothills. Come election season, we would go back to these voters and get them to turn out for a 'yes vote' on May 20, 2001.

ICL headquarters was the headquarters of all volunteer action. We recruited volunteers to knock on doors and to telephone voters, seeking support. This way, we identified a large number of supporters as quickly as possible. We targeted protection on a map highlighting the east, west, and central foothills.

But the question remained: Would Boise voters really tax themselves for conservation?

At the time, many in the business community doubted we could pass this levy. By a narrow vote, the Boise Chamber of Commerce did not support the levy. Even a few conservation organizations voted against supporting the levy. Luckily a parade of believers supported the effort, by either promising to vote yes or by volunteering.

On May 20, 2001, Election Day finally arrived. The special election ballot contained only one question: Do you support the Boise foothills serial levy? Our get-out-the-vote effort was enormous – over 100 volunteers were either calling voters from the ICL office or giving voters rides to the polls or assisting as poll watchers.

In the end, it was the highest turnout in 10 years for a special election: 38% turned out to vote and of those 59% supported the foothills levy. I always believed it would pass, but the enormity of our success blew my mind.

The levy included an annual audit of the funds and a Foothills Advisory Committee to oversee land purchases. The committee was formed with business and community representatives, including myself. Charles McDevitt served as chair. In less than ten years, the committee used levy funds to purchase 10,750 acres of foothills worth over \$37 million, and added more than 100 miles of trails to the Boise foothills.

In 2015 Boise voters approved another \$10 million serial levy. That levy is not limited to land acquisition in the foothills, and includes the Boise River and funding to protect clean water, native plants, and wildlife habitat.

Does ICL make a difference? All I have to do is look at the lovely natural setting of Boise's Foothills and my happy neighbors enjoying our trails, and know we do.



Protecting the Magic Of the Night: The Central Idaho Dark Sky Reserve

Betsy Mizell
Central Idaho Director

Idaho's spectacular landscapes are world famous, but in some ways, our scenery is even more striking in the dark of night, under the vastness of space.

Idahoans may take our natural night skies for granted, but we shouldn't. Across the country, more than 80 percent of people live in cities where light pollution dilutes and distorts views of the stars and planets.

Research shows the Milky Way is hidden from view for more than one-third of the world's population. That is more than two billion people. And the problem is only worsening as light pollution continues to grow and intensify around the world. Light pollution is not only an aesthetic problem for people, it also impacts the natural world, such as interfering with migration of some bird species.

Idaho's night sky is extraordinary – from the winter solstice to warmer nights, laying on your back, catching a shooting star, or having someone point out constellations and planets. We are lucky that in Idaho, with very little effort, even urban folks can quickly access a relatively unimpaired view of the heavens.

In 2017, this Idaho value gained international recognition from the International Dark-Sky Association. The Central Idaho Dark Sky Reserve – an area spanning more than 1,400 square miles – became the first of its kind in the United States and one of just 12 such reserves worldwide at the time. Today, there are 21 of these reserves in the world, but Idaho's remains the only one in the United States.

The Central Idaho Dark Sky Reserve represents the work and commitment by the cities of Ketchum, Sun Valley and Stanley, along with Blaine County, ICL, businesses, private landowners, and public land managers to protect and promote the region's dark skies and remarkable stargazing opportunities.

While conservation is often tough and frustrating work, Idaho would be a much different state if ICL was not around. Future generations will benefit from the Central Idaho Dark Sky Reserve, one of many of ICL's accomplishments in the past 50 years. As we continue to combat light pollution and find ourselves living in a world with very few truly natural nighttime environments left, ICL will continue to advocate for the magic of night skies and help mitigate light pollution for the next 50 years and beyond.



Bringing Passion and Creativity to Public Lands Conservation

John Robison

Public Lands Director

From the deep woods of the panhandle to the sagebrush steppe of southern Idaho, we are blessed with millions of acres of national forest and other public lands. At the Idaho Conservation League, our role is to speak for critters and wild places that don't have a voice.

"Speaking truth to power," is part of the job. But it's not enough to just make a point; our job is to also make a difference.

ICL's foundation is our members, supporters, and colleagues. When you combine a shared love for Idaho's natural heritage with local knowledge, subject matter expertise, grit and savviness, you have a potent force to get things done. Both perseverance and creativity come into play.

In our early years, ICL figured out how to slow down or stop some of the worst abuses of our public lands. Back then, the Forest Service was subsidizing clearcuts on steep hillsides next to salmon streams, leaving lasting injuries for our clean water and fish. ICL staff learned the underlying science, went out on the ground, engaged our members, learned the ins and outs of federal regulations, and partnered with top-notch legal firms like Advocates for the West, Earthjustice, and others to overturn illegal agency decisions. We still reach into our legal toolkit as needed to stop high-risk, illegal projects like the Golden Hand Mine in the headwaters of Big Creek in the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness and to hold polluters like the Atlanta Gold Company in the Boise watershed accountable.

Stopping bad projects is often easier than creating positive, proactive and lasting solutions. Creating permanent protections requires more than simply saying no. This is why ICL's public lands staff became leaders in the field of collaboration, an

approach that can yield better, longer-lasting results than litigation. The trick is knowing which tool to use.

The first Idaho river I ever paddled was the Bruneau River back in 1991 (on my very first day in Idaho). For me it was a no-brainer that this amazing desert river deserved full and immediate Wilderness and Wild and Scenic River protections. However, securing any such designations had been high-centered for decades.

The key to getting moving was collaboration. It meant bringing the full diversity of stakeholders together via the Owyhee Initiative, which included ranchers, conservationists, outfitters, recreationists, the county, and Tribes. We forged a common vision that reflected both the national and local significance of these lands. As a result, we now have over 517,000 acres of Wilderness and 317 miles of Wild and Scenic Rivers in the Owyhees. I was lucky enough to be involved in that journey and learned lifelong lessons from others – not just from fellow conservationists.

Other successful examples of collaboration include the Idaho Roadless Rule, more than ten Forest Restoration Collaboratives, the Upper Salmon River Conservation Action Program, and the Boulder-White Clouds Wilderness.

Vilifying other stakeholders may feel good, make good political theater, and may sometimes be warranted. But it doesn't always lead to collaborative solutions. So instead of going into a situation assuming we have the lone solution, we have learned the value of listening. We have learned to appreciate other perspectives, honor diverse experiences, and seek common ground. Peel back the rhetoric and you find the core values, the key interests, and the creativity. These values often include our quality of life, appreciation for open space and wildlife, community, and protecting the things that make Idaho special.

Collaboration doesn't mean we forgo our role as watchdogs. We still litigate when necessary. We don't collaborate just to collaborate, or litigate just to litigate. Idaho's natural heritage encompasses an amazing amount of diversity, and protecting it requires diverse approaches as well.

Idaho's Enduring Wildlife Legacy

Jeff Abrams

Wildlife Program Associate

Seeing the flit of a house wren in the brush, a beaver slap its tail and vanish, spotting a bighorn ewe and her lamb high on a dizzying rock ledge, or hearing a howl at dusk and wondering whether it was a coyote or wolf. Idaho's wildlife heritage brings both joy and wonder. The Gem State is home to wonderful wildlife. Idahoans know this, and cherish it. And for fifty years, ICL has worked on wildlife's behalf.

Over the decades ICL staff have put countless hours into conversation and field time with wildlife managers, ranchers, elected officials, and local citizens striving to collaboratively identify ways for vulnerable species and people to live alongside each other. We've spoken up for Idaho's imperiled megafauna like grizzly bears, wolves, caribou, and wolverine, forcing wildlife management agencies to create and implement protections for them.

In addition to improving the conservation of individual species, ICL's efforts have safeguarded critical habitat for wildlife. We led efforts to permanently protect places like the Owyhee

Canyonlands and the Boulder-White Clouds as Wilderness. We've also provided guidance for land managers to better manage road and trail access in North Idaho to protect grizzlies, wolverines, and lynx from motorized disturbance.

Despite a deep love for wildlife among many Idahoans, our state's wildlife management does not always reflect what's best for wildlife. And given the current double-barreled threats of habitat loss and climate change, the need for wildlife conservation has never been greater. That's why ICL launched a refocused Wildlife Program in 2022, with a focus on nongame wildlife. This effort focuses on building a more vocal wildlife constituency, advocating for funding commensurate with the needs of all species, and strengthening Idaho's wildlife management policies.

Idaho's Wildlife Violator Compact, which was codified in 1991, includes this public trust doctrine language: "Wildlife resources should be managed in trust for the benefit of all Idaho's residents and visitors." ICL's current work strives to hold government officials accountable to this duty. However, the way Idaho currently manages wildlife is outdated and mostly contrary to this doctrine.

Today, the majority of Idaho's wildlife funding goes to game species like deer, elk, and trout. While these species generate funds from hunting tag and fishing license sales, they represent a small fraction of all the species found in Idaho. The





majority of Idaho's wildlife – 97 percent – are nongame species, meaning they aren't fished, hunted, trapped, or pursued. Yet, these species only receive 3 percent of the Department of Idaho Fish & Game (IDFG) budget.

This needs to change. It's impossible to ensure Idaho's wildlife heritage is passed down to future generations without the full range of wildlife being represented in wildlife management. We need funding to support the full breadth of Idaho's wildlife. ICL is advocating for this, and serving both as a voice for the well-known, charismatic species of Idaho as well as the less discussed species like the monarch butterfly, American pika, and Northern Idaho ground squirrel.

As the globe faces an existential extinction crisis, there is intense urgency for this mission.

In 2019, the last Woodland Caribou in Idaho was captured in the Selkirk Mountains and transported to a holding pen in Canada. We no longer have wild bison. Prehistoric sturgeon are suffering. Sage-grouse numbers continue to trend downward. Aquatic species such as Idaho's wild salmon and steelhead, lamprey, bull trout, burbot, and Snake River snails all struggle to survive and are federally protected as sensitive or endangered species. The same goes for wolves, grizzly bears, and lynx. Idaho's wildlife is calling for help. ICL is answering that call with solutions. But we can't do it without passionate people like you.

Strong stewardship of wildlife doesn't happen by accident. It relies on good governance. In that regard, ICL will continue to remind decision-makers of their responsibility to serve as trustees of our beloved wildlife. Idahoans – and our wildlife – deserve to have wildlife management grounded in sound science, collaboration, and reasonable decision-making. When that doesn't occur, we'll use other tools, such as the Endangered Species Act or other laws, to protect and sustain the species that are so integral to this place we call home.

Good governance also needs informed and motivated citizens. ICL has experience in this realm. Since our early days, we've relied on committed advocates to speak up for the things that matter most to them. We will continue to call on you to engage in this work. And we will educate and connect wildlife lovers of all stripes to decision-makers. Through an overwhelming outcry from wildlife lovers across the state, we will see our next watershed conservation moment.

From the pygmy rabbits, pronghorn, and sage-grouse in southern and eastern Idaho's sagebrush sea... to the white sturgeon, steelhead, and bull trout in North Idaho's great lakes and rivers – ICL will continue to support protections for lands to provide for the diversity of habitats that wildlife need. They are all part of the intricate and interrelated ecology of Idaho. And they are all worth saving.

Beyond Idaho: ICL Mercury Work Creates National Protections

Justin Hayes
Executive Director

It started with a simple question...

In 2004 I was on the shore of the Salmon Falls Creek Reservoir in southern Idaho. Staped to the side of a dilapidated kiosk was a sun-bleached piece of paper, warning the public to limit their consumption of fish caught in the reservoir.

The advisory stated that mercury had been detected in the fish at dangerously high levels. I'd never seen such a warning before in Idaho. I asked myself, *Where was this mercury coming from?*

My initial thought was that perhaps an old mine or illegal dump located upstream was discharging contaminated wastewater. Snooping around failed to turn up any likely sources, so I dug deeper.

We learned that mercury pollution in water can originate as air pollution from coal-fired power plants. Mercury is a potent pollutant – even just a couple of pounds of mercury pollution in the air from a smokestack can contaminate surrounding areas, especially lakes and rivers. From there,

mercury can accumulate in fish and potentially poison people who eat the fish.

Salmon Falls has no heavy industry nearby. We didn't see any likely culprits.

After broadening our investigation, we noticed several large gold mines in northern Nevada. Geologists confirmed that mercury could be present in gold-bearing ore bodies – but the nearest mine was about 80 air miles away and in a different watershed. There were many more mines, but they were even further away. Could this be the source of the mercury contamination?

More research revealed that these large gold mines are not just big holes in the ground. They also included large ore processing facilities. These facilities superheated ore, which could in turn volatilize mercury in the ore, sending it skyward as air pollution.

We reviewed all of the permits and regulatory filings that the gold mine companies submitted to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Those documents said mercury pollution from these facilities were negligible.

Call me skeptical, but there was something dubious about mining companies reporting nearly zero mercury emissions when everything about their ore and processes seemed to say that there should at least be some emissions.

We quickly decided that we could not trust the information from the companies. We needed better data – so we rented a sophisticated portable mercury detector and went for a road trip.



ICL then did something nobody else had ever done before... measured mercury emissions near gold mines. We drove down gravel roads all over northern Nevada, circling the mines as best we could, analyzing air samples and recording wind direction and air speed. What we learned changed everything.

We encountered massive plumes of mercury in the air downwind from these mines. The mercury levels that we documented in the ambient air were many times higher than you would expect even in enclosed industrial facilities.

We published our data and initiated legal actions challenging the accuracy of the companies' regulatory EPA filings. It was like poking a bear with a sharp stick.

The gold industry is big business in northern Nevada and they have a lot of political sway. It got testy. But then, slowly, quietly, but comprehensively, the companies started to file documents correcting their past filings.

The companies' "re-reporting" revealed that individually, these gold processing facilities are some of the largest mercury-emitting sources in the United States.

Individual smelters were releasing as much mercury as 5 to 50 average sized coal-fired power plants. When one considers that these facilities are all clustered together along Idaho's southern border, it gives one pause. For many years Idaho

had been downwind from what was the equivalent of 160 coal-fired power plants worth of mercury. The plants were basically unregulated and doing next to nothing to reduce their emissions. People in southern Idaho were just getting shallaced with mercury.

ICL demanded action. To its credit, the EPA quickly crafted new air pollution regulations targeted directly at mercury emissions from the gold industry. New air pollution control rules required facilities to install mercury-specific pollution control equipment.

All told, it took six years from when ICL asked that simple question – *where is this pollution coming from?* – to getting new nationwide rules in place. At the time, this felt maddeningly slow. But when you consider the pace of government and regulations, it seems like warp speed. In the end, ICL greatly reduced the amount of mercury emitted from these mines and into the nation's waterways.

Years later, a mining company executive confided to me that the work we did actually changed the industry worldwide. Responsible companies tell their investors that they hold themselves to high standards even in parts of the world that may not have high standards. Installing mercury pollution control equipment at gold facilities is now a standard practice.

I'm proud of this work. Once again, ICL made a difference.

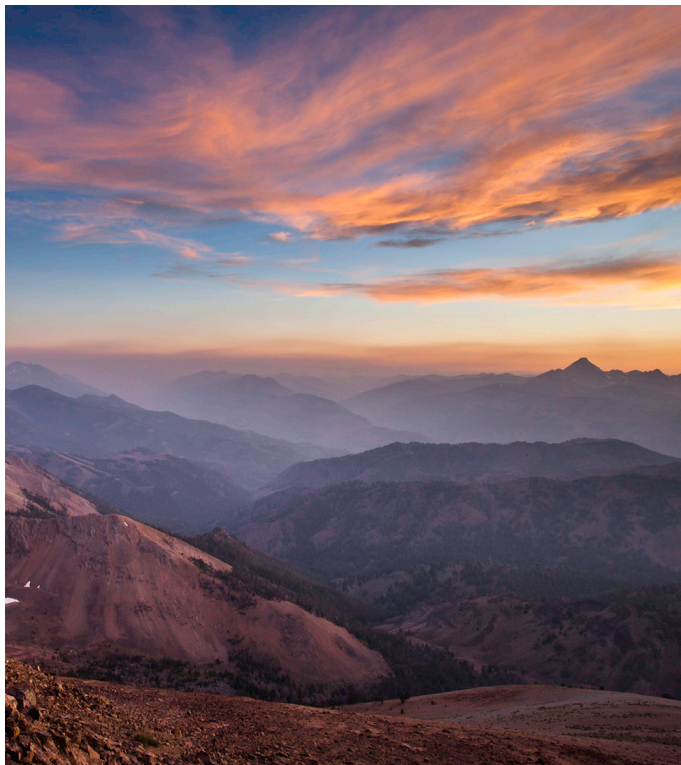




Part Three

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE





Respecting and Restoring the Snake River

Josh Johnson

Senior Conservation Associate

The mighty Snake River has always been the lifeblood of Idaho. For millennia, the Snake provided for the ancestral people of this region – cold spring water to drink, abundant fish to eat, and sheltered areas to ride out Idaho’s harsh winters.

More recently, the Snake has provided irrigation water for crops in what is otherwise a high desert. This river has given much, but in the last 100 years, more intensive human activity is taking its toll.

In eastern Idaho, the Snake River is a blue-ribbon trout stream, a world-famous tourist destination, and a refuge for people and wildlife. But as the river touches our western border, the water is so polluted that the State warns people not to eat fish from its waters and that water pollution can be damaging to skin. Pets have died from toxins they touch or ingest by swimming in or drinking from the Snake River.

When ICL was founded in 1973, the Snake River was in dire straits. Today, the pollution in the river is less visible than in the past. But these pollutants – mainly phosphorus and nitrogen – aren’t harmless. Though ICL recognizes and applauds the important clean-up efforts undertaken to address sediments and pollution, a lot of work remains for the sake of human and ecological health.

For decades the Snake River and its aquifer have been polluted and overexploited, resulting in poor water quality and declining flows. Low flows and highly-regulated flow timing prevent the river from experiencing natural spring floods that scour the

river bed clean. This results in degraded water quality and threatens habitat for fish and other aquatic species.

Lack of water isn’t the only concern; agricultural pollution makes the river unsafe, and water quality all along the Snake River and in its aquifer has been contaminated by tons of manure from large animal feedlots and other sources. Climate change makes matters worse as snowpacks thin, temperatures rise, and spring arrives earlier each year.

In the 1970s and ‘80s, ICL and our partners helped limit new agricultural development of federal public lands on the Snake River Plain, established a previously unthinkable minimum stream flow standard on the Snake River at Swan Falls Dam, and triggered the Snake River Basin Water Rights Adjudication. In the last decade, ICL adopted a defined, long-term campaign to restore the Snake River to a state where people can safely swim and catch and eat local fish.

The work is complicated. We provide technical and policy expertise to develop effective pollution control plans for the Snake. At the legislature, we advocate for a cleaner river. In communities like Pocatello and Twin Falls, we dedicate substantial time and effort toward community engagement and advocacy. We work with many partners in our efforts – the canal companies, farmers and ranchers, conservation districts, and local citizen groups.

ICL also learns from other places. A strong federal-state-Tribal-private partnership – like ongoing programs restoring the Chesapeake Bay, Great Lakes, and the Yakima River – is the best model for basin-wide clean-up. This expansive vision will be our long-term focus in the years to come.

We are excited to be the generation that leaves a mighty Snake River in better shape than we inherited it.



Building a Brighter Future for Idaho's Energy Needs

Brad Heusinkveld
Energy Policy Associate

When it comes to the Idaho Conservation League's identity, it's clear that energy work galvanized ICL's foundation.

In the 1970s, a wave of coal plants were built across the Intermountain West. Idaho Power planned to build the Pioneer Plant just 20 miles south of Boise. The potential pollution impacts were obvious. The brand new ICL lined up to oppose Idaho Power. It was a classic David v. Goliath, but energy regulation of the day had little sympathy for underdogs and environmental concerns.

Instead, ICL and our allies dove into the difficult details of economics and energy growth at the Idaho Public Utilities Commission (PUC). Then, as now, utility regulation was rooted in terse analysis and rules that demanded hard professional work from a young organization.

But like so much of ICL's work, defeating the Pioneer Plant took equal amounts of public organizing and a bit of charisma. Against the odds, ICL and our allies stopped the Pioneer Plant. That win set the tone for a long history of energy advocacy fueled by detailed analysis, hard-won credibility, and constant focus on the public interest.

ICL has also pushed Idaho utilities toward ending their reliance on out-of-state coal. In 2015, we helped convince Idaho Power to divest from the Valmy plant near Battle Mountain, Nevada. In 2017, we pressured Avista Corporation to divest from the Colstrip coal plant in Colstrip, Montana. Just last year, ICL worked to get Idaho Power to announce plans to exit each of the units of the Jim Bridger coal plant in Wyoming – one of the biggest

sources of carbon pollution in the West.

ICL advocated for these closures for both the environment and Idahoans. Not only do these plants pollute our air and water, they also impact the pocketbooks of Idahoans. They drain energy dollars from Idaho since they are located in neighboring states, and are increasingly expensive to operate. ICL's advocacy for an early transition from coal has Idaho on a path toward becoming coal-free, and one day carbon neutral.

Now that coal plants are closing, ICL's work is more important than ever. The new economics of renewables is causing seismic shifts in Idaho's energy system.

Renewable wind and solar energy are now the cheapest sources of power available. Coupled with emerging battery technology and the policies implemented in the Inflation Reduction Act, America now has a credible and clear path to a future without carbon fuels. This could come at a pace and scale to meaningfully curb pollution and mitigate the worst impacts of climate change. Like a gradual but inevitable shift in the tide, electrification is well underway.

But this change comes with its own challenges. The energy regulatory system is built around big companies with big electric plants. A truly renewable energy grid demands coordination on the regional scale. At the same time, small scale production opens great new opportunities of individual and community energy generation.

It is slow work to get the Idaho Legislature to embrace a changing energy landscape, but the state's cities, businesses, and regulators all recognize that change is coming. Progress toward a cleaner and more sustainable energy industry takes years of incremental wins and policy nudges. The rules will have to catch up.

ICL has built a reputation as a consistent and credible voice by offering sound assessments always tilted toward a cleaner, more equitable energy system. As always, ICL will be there, pushing for an energy future that prioritizes conservation and protects the public.

Hard-Headed Enough to Try

Mitch Cutter

Salmon & Steelhead Associate

In April 2019, the Andrus Center Conference at Boise State University focused on the state of Idaho's wild salmon and the industries that are interwoven with these fish – energy, transportation, and agriculture. A question was then asked of politicians and industry leaders from across the region: Could these disparate interests – some of them long-time adversaries – come together and agree on a solution to save Idaho's salmon and ensure no one was left behind?

Idaho Congressman Mike Simpson thought so, saying: *“Make no doubt about it. I want salmon back in Idaho in healthy and sustainable populations. Can this be done? I honestly don't know. I don't know if the willpower is there to do it... But I will tell you that I am hard-headed enough to try.”*

Simpson's dedication to achieving this solution inspired a reinvigorated interest in salmon restoration. Restoring Idaho's wild salmon and steelhead became one of ICL's four primary campaigns, signifying newfound hope and commitment to restoring a free-flowing lower Snake River and abundant wild fish.

We launched into the campaign as a leading voice in Idaho and in the Northwest. We helped found regional and state-wide coalitions of conservation and fishing groups that work together to highlight the importance of wild fish, the dire straits Idaho's fish are in, and a better future for the Northwest that is possible through restoring the lower Snake River. We developed partnerships with Indigenous Tribes in the region, who have long advocated for salmon restoration as a foundation of their cultures, economies, diets, and promises made by the United States long ago.

In 2021, Rep. Simpson released his salmon proposal, the Columbia Basin Initiative. He gained support from Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) and former Oregon Governor Kate Brown. Powerful Washington Democrats Senator Patty Murray and Governor Jay Inslee took interest as well, creating their own report and recommendations on restoring the lower Snake River and reaching the same conclusions as Simpson.

People started talking. They talked because Rep. Simpson, the Tribes, ICL, and many others started a movement. That movement was based on the suffering economics of guides and outfitters, the slow starvation of Puget Sound orcas, and the sure extinction of Idaho's magnificent sea-run fish. More people are realizing that the status quo isn't working, and talking about the need for change.

These conversations were an important start, but just a start. We needed powerful decision-makers to listen. ICL created its first-ever grassroots mobilization team to bridge that gap. Over three years, the team made tens of thousands of connections between Northwest citizens and their elected leaders to advocate for change on the lower Snake River.

Youth, too, injected their energy into the campaign. The Youth Salmon Protectors – a network of young people from across the region – came together to advocate for salmon, orcas, Tribal justice, and the promise that they'd be able to experience the same magnificent fish their parents and grandparents did.

Now, political momentum is on our side. The most senior leaders in the region agree that in order to save Snake River salmon, the dams must go. The Biden Administration calls dam breaching the “centerpiece action” of a strategy to restore abundant fish populations. Pressure is building, and change is coming.

For too long, the Snake and Columbia Rivers have been managed to benefit some, at the expense of others. It's time to even the scales. The willpower to save salmon from extinction exists; it's our job to point that energy in the right direction. Like Simpson, we're hard-headed enough to keep trying.



Motorized Pressure on Idaho's Public Lands

Brad Smith
North Idaho Director



Public lands are part of Idaho's very essence and our identity as Idahoans. For 50 years, ICL has worked to protect Idaho's public lands from a slew of threats. In the last few decades, our public lands have faced pressure like never before.

In the late 1990s, the use of off-road vehicles on public lands exploded when manufacturers began mass-producing four-wheelers and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs). Idaho's public lands felt the impact. The Great Burn Conservation Alliance – a non-profit grassroots conservation organization working along the Montana/Idaho border – documented piles of trash, human waste, and the destruction of meadows by off-roaders near Fish Lake on the Clearwater National Forest. In an effort to protect Fish Lake, a lawsuit against the Forest Service was filed. This was one of the first indications that the use of unrestricted off-road vehicle use was taking a toll on public lands in Idaho.

Up until this point, nearly all public lands outside of wilderness areas and national parks were open to off-road use. One could legally ride on a road, trail, or even "off-road." But with the boom in popularity, regulations were clearly warranted.

In the early 2000s, the problem came into focus. The George W. Bush Administration directed all national forests to end the policy of unfettered off-road vehicle access. Every national forest in the country was instructed to adopt a "travel management plan" and restrict the use of motorized vehicles to designated roads and trails. Each national forest was required to make decisions that would minimize the impacts of motorized travel to fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, and other uses of the forests.

The Salmon-Challis National Forest was one of the first in Idaho to draft a plan under the new directive.

ICL surveyed hundreds of miles of roads and trails on the Salmon-Challis, documenting and photographing areas where off-road vehicle users were tearing up meadows, causing erosion, and impacting the forest.

ICL's evidence was ignored, and the Forest Service approved a travel management plan that allowed these abuses to continue. ICL countered with a lawsuit, and in a groundbreaking ruling, a federal judge ordered the Salmon-Challis to close areas that had been damaged by off-road vehicle use. The ruling became the standard by which other national forests would have to comply.

Unrestricted snowmobile use also became increasingly problematic. In North Idaho, mountain caribou were often displaced by snowmobiles from their winter habitat in the Selkirk Mountains. ICL and partners then filed suit to protect caribou habitat on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest. In 2005, a federal judge ordered the Forest Service to close 250,000 acres of National Forest Land to protect mountain caribou. This was before "snow bikes" entered the scene, which are capable of reaching winter terrain that was previously considered inaccessible. The combination of lighter and faster snowmachines and the sheer increase in winter recreation causes even more pressure on species like wolverine and mountain goat, which must conserve critical winter energy in order to survive. Even grizzly bears can be impacted by snowmobiles when they emerge from hibernation in early April.

While conflicts over recreational use can end up being decided by a judge, ICL prefers to work it out through dialogue and collaboration. In northern Idaho, ICL recently worked with snowmobile clubs and backcountry skiers to draft and agree on a winter travel management plan for the Sandpoint, Priest Lake, and Bonners Ferry Ranger Districts. This plan strikes a balance between the demand for winter recreation opportunities and the needs of wildlife. It also shows that when we take the time to understand the various ways these lands are important to Idahoans, we can work together to advocate for better stewardship.

While there's no telling what sorts of contraptions humans will devise for travel and recreation in the future, one thing is clear: there will always be a need for organizations like ICL to advocate for responsible recreation on public lands.

ICL as a Mining Industry Watchdog

Will Tuedemann

Conservation Associate

Mining is deeply intertwined in Idaho's history. In fact, it was largely the discovery of gold in Idaho during the 1860s that created a rush of American-European settlers that pushed the territory toward statehood in 1890.

The Idaho Gold Rush severely disrupted and dislodged Native American Tribes across the Gem State. While early mining focused on gold and silver, minerals and commodities including cobalt, molybdenum, zinc, antimony, copper, gravel, and phosphate ore have all been mined or continue to be mined in Idaho today.

Historic mining has left scars on Idaho – slag heaps of waste rock, channelized rivers, and acidic and chemical pollution of air and water. These impacts include unhealthy levels of heavy metals in the air and blood of Idaho communities that society is still struggling to repair. While we all use minerals every day, we also need to remain vigilant to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past.

Currently, large-scale active mining in the state most notably includes the underground silver mines of North Idaho's Silver Valley, the large open-pit phosphate mines of eastern Idaho, and smaller gold and other metal mines throughout the state, in various stages of development.

Because most of the high-grade gold deposits in Idaho have been mined out, mining companies now target low-grade ore. In these operations, mining companies dig up tens of thousands of tons of ore to extract a few ounces of gold, leaving millions upon millions of tons of waste rock (tailings) dumped on Idaho's land in the process. These tailings commonly contain high levels of toxic heavy metals. If not properly contained, lead and arsenic can leach into Idaho's groundwater, rivers, lakes, and streams, threatening the health of Idaho

families both downstream and downwind of mines and processing operations.

For decades, ICL has served a watchdog role on the mining industry. We engage in all aspects of the environmental permitting process. We track water and air pollution reports from mines to ensure legal pollution limits aren't being violated. We share our work with the public to make sure Idahoans know what threatens their air, water, and land.

Many proposed or current mining activities still present a threat to Idaho's clean air and water. The Galena Complex silver mine in Idaho's Silver Valley has been discharging illegal concentrations of arsenic and lead into the South Fork of the Coeur d'Alene River for more than a year. Exploration for the CuMo Mine Project, a potentially massive open-pit mine in the headwaters of the Boise River, is restarting. The proposed Stibnite Gold Project east of Cascade could be a disaster waiting to happen for the headwaters of the South Fork of the Salmon River.

As we continue to protect Idaho's environment from negative impacts of mining, ICL also strives to be pragmatic. We work directly with mining companies to improve practices where the risks are manageable. We have seen significantly cleaner mining operations as a result.

ICL also recognizes the need to balance the mining of certain commodities, like cobalt, to help fuel a transition to cleaner energy while seeking to avoid, minimize, and mitigate the potential environmental impacts that such mining can present. Near Salmon, ICL and cobalt mining company Jervois have worked together to fund additional watershed restoration work that goes above and beyond the company's regulatory reclamation requirements on site.

At the same time, ICL believes that some places will always be too special to mine, and some risks are too great. Idahoans can count on ICL to work to stop ill-conceived mining projects, protect our state's most special places, and make sure what mining that does occur meets the highest standards to protect our families and communities.

Love and Rage in the Columbia River Basin: The Birth of Youth Salmon Protectors

Asa Menlove

Youth Salmon Protectors Founding Member

Youth Salmon Protectors was born out of love and rage: Love for wild fish, wild rivers, complex ecosystems, thriving cultures, healthy economies, and all else that anadromous fish provide. Rage against colonialism, unfettered industry, political inaction, hypocrisy, and ecological devastation.

These two rivers – love and rage – flow in the same direction (Westward, in our case), never more than a mountain range apart. They are fed by the same heavy winter snows and are nurtured by the same creatures and plants and stones which bind them. They flow peripherally, tangentially almost, but eventually all things merge into one. At their confluence, we found power.

At its inception, Youth Salmon Protectors (YSP) was a group of 10 or 12 young Idahoans writing postcards to Idaho's elected officials in hopes that they might get on board with Congressman Simpson's then-new Columbia Basin Initiative. We continued to write hundreds of postcards, banner bridges, screen films, and hold rallies at the Capitol.

We were like a river at high water – preaching the anadromous gospel to anyone else who would listen. The riverine metaphors write themselves. We began as a headwater stream, way up in the Sawtooth Valley, and we made our way into the raging torrents of the Columbia. It's been two years since Youth Salmon Protectors was born. The growth in membership, engagement, and scale of actions has been exponential. Now with

over 2,000 members across the Pacific Northwest and chapters in three states, our impact is felt throughout the region.

Youth activism is beautiful because it knows no guidelines, has no formula. It does not exist behind closed doors, in meetings, on conference calls, or in campaign donations. While there is room for legislative and bureaucratic advocacy within our movement, change cannot stand on the old ways alone. Change is born out of dissatisfaction with the status quo, out of the desire for something better, healthier, and more just. Change is born out of love and rage.

It has been incredible to observe the change being made by this group of people. I am grateful to Lana Weber and the rest of the ICL staff for granting me the opportunity to do this meaningful work. While I don't play a role in many of the actions that are coming out of this organization today, I still feel so motivated by the work of my peers. This mutual inspiration carries the movement, or at least my own ability to be a part of it. I am so grateful to each and every person who has organized, shown up, or been a part of this river of change.

In love, rage, rivers, and salmon, there are a few constants. The undying need for movement, upstream or down, into something more beautiful, more whole. Metamorphosis, always changing, the shedding of the old ways and the dawn of the new. Raw and unbridled energy, ripping its way out to the sea or swimming up rapids.

I believe that the future of salmon and steelhead activism, and the future of all environmental activism, is contingent upon the willingness to ride the knife edge between love and rage – to drink from both rivers, and to know that they are made of the same water. Youth Salmon Protectors does it well. The water is high, the banks overflowing, and we are swimming out to the Pacific. We're bringing the four lower Snake River dams out with us and welcoming the salmon and steelhead back upstream.

Passing the Torch: ICL's Emerging Leaders for Idaho's Environment

Allison Fowle

Alumna, Emerging Leaders for Idaho's
Environment

Standing at the overlook of the Yellow Pine pit, I watched with amazement as my students took page after page of notes, their journals bursting with quotes, sketches, and questions to research about the proposed Stibnite Gold Project. A couple of hours earlier, I struggled to wake them up in the pre-dawn frost of our campsite along the South Fork of the Salmon River. Now, they were wide awake and paying close attention to everything around them, from the bare mountainside left behind by past mining to the shiny artistic renderings of how this mining company proposed to leave the site when they were done mining.

My students and I were touring the Stibnite mine with Perpetua Resources as part of an interdisciplinary course centered on a big, sticky question: should the mine be permitted to reopen, and who should have a say in that decision?

Over the course of the semester, we met with key stakeholders on both sides of the issue, including representatives of the Nez Perce Tribe, grassroots organizers from Save the South Fork Salmon in McCall, local experts in geology and hydrology, Yellow Pine residents, and representatives of Perpetua Resources. The first expert we met with, though, was ICL's Public Lands Director, John Robison. We trusted John to help us contextualize the issue within the bigger picture of Idaho's public lands.

I had only recently become part of ICL through the Emerging Leaders for Idaho's Environment (ELIE) program, which works to connect people in their 20s and 30s to ICL's work. ELIE asked me to lend my unique perspective, talents, and interests to further ICL's mission. I began building a deeper understanding of major environmental challenges and movements in Idaho. I was also figuring out how I could make a positive impact on issues that mattered most to me.

From movie screenings to membership drives, I worked on many fun and rewarding projects through ELIE. The most meaningful work by far, though, has been bringing high school students into environmental advocacy work.

At the end of the Stibnite course, my students and I hosted an art show at Ming Studios in Boise to showcase their responses to the proposed mine and to engage a broad audience in the issue. Together, we'd become passionate about the South Fork Salmon River, and each student felt inspired to speak up on its behalf – all of my students submitted official comments responding to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Stibnite Gold Project. But the reach of ICL didn't stop there.

In the months that followed, I brought two students to testify in favor of breaching the four lower Snake River dams and helped another draft his speech for the Youth Climate Strike. The group's passion was contagious – our entire school became interested in environmental issues. A year later, over a third of the student body enrolled in a course focused on Congressman Mike Simpson's Columbia Basin Initiative.

After reluctantly graduating from ELIE, I stayed enthusiastically involved with ICL. I bring students into the Boise office and ICL staff into my school whenever I can. In regards to the question I posed to my students at Stibnite, I believe they answered quite clearly: young people deserve a say in what happens to our environment.

Room to Roam

Josh Johnson

Senior Conservation Associate

For anyone in search of the unspoiled grandeur of the West, look no further than the High Divide! The diversity of landscapes found within the High Divide is truly unique, encompassing everything from Idaho's highest peak (Mount Borah) to two of the nation's iconic wild and scenic rivers (Middle Fork and Main Salmon) to some of the best sage-grouse habitat in the West.

Idaho's High Divide stretches eastward from the majestic peaks of Central Idaho to the wildlife haven of Yellowstone National Park. This is some of the wildest country in the lower 48, and one of the largest connected landscapes that remain in North America.

The High Divide is home to a plethora of wildlife, including bears, wolves, bighorn sheep, salmon, and bull trout. The region is unique because it serves as an ecological bridge between expansive wilderness areas in Central Idaho and the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. That means wide-ranging wildlife species like bears and wolverines have the room they need to roam, and not be hemmed in by development. This kind of big, connected habitat is critical to maintain healthy genetics and to respond to climatic changes over the long term.

High-resolution GPS collar data from elk, deer, and pronghorn herds have highlighted the significance of the High Divide as a preeminent migratory crossroads for wildlife in the western U.S. ICL and our partners are currently identifying avenues to more permanently protect these important migratory corridors – and thus the highly treasured animals that rely on them.

For recreationists, this region provides unparalleled opportunities to hike, ski, bike, hunt,

fish, raft and kayak in a wild, remote setting devoid of the crowds increasingly found elsewhere.

While much of this country has retained much of its wild, roadless character due to its remote, rural setting, we cannot assume that will remain the case. The area faces growing pressures from extractive industries, uncharacteristic wildfires, and increasing unauthorized motorized traffic – all of which threaten to chip away at this precious landscape.

ICL, along with our conservation and sportsman partners, has worked tirelessly over the decades to keep this special part of Idaho ecologically intact. Much of this effort has been on two fronts: 1) heading off environmentally impactful projects within the High Divide, and 2) engaging in land management planning to shape the future of this landscape. Planning is particularly important; these plans dictate how public land in this area is managed for the next 15-30 years. As part of this work, we have participated in various stakeholder collaborative groups over the years, injecting a pragmatic, environment-focused perspective and a willingness to work across ideological differences to achieve success.

The million-dollar question facing the future of the High Divide is climate change. On one hand, the High Divide is a climate refuge, with cool, high elevation valleys and cold, snowmelt-fed streams. These features will become increasingly important in a warming climate, as wildlife that can migrate come to this area from surrounding, less suitable habitats. But eventually, as temperatures continue to rise, even this climate stronghold will start to become less suitable for certain types of flora and fauna. Whitebark pine, bull trout, and sage-grouse are just a few of the species in the region at risk in a warming climate.

The High Divide is a place eminently worthy of conservation. It is the kind of truly wild, rugged habitat that makes Idaho unique. ICL is proud to help keep it that way.

For the Love of Idaho: Ensuring a Future for ICL

Diana Burrell
Development Director

For 50 years, Idaho Conservation League members, donors, volunteers, and staff have accomplished amazing feats to protect the wild Idaho we hold dear.

In all of these achievements, members and longtime donors have been with us every step of the way. This work would not be possible without their financial support. We have grown from a cadre of volunteers in 1973 to an organization with 30 full-time staff and offices in Boise, Ketchum, McCall, Sandpoint, and Seattle. This is because of you – our members who embraced our vision for a prosperous, sustainable future for all Idahoans.

Protecting the Idaho we know and love is not a “one and done” endeavor. Many of ICL’s successes took years, some even took decades, to accomplish. While we make significant achievements every year, there is still much more to do. There will always be more to do – and we simply can’t do it without you.

This year, we’ve set audacious goals to match the tenacity and breadth of our work. In 2023, we aim to bring 1,000 new members into the ICL community, and 50 new Legacy Partners



Donate to ICL and help keep Idaho wild.

to sustain the future of ICL and continue to keep Idaho wild. Whether you have been an ICL member for 50 years or are just getting to know us, for the love of Idaho, please consider supporting our work in one or more of the following ways!

- Become a GEM State Protector – give monthly for the lands and wildlife you love. (GEM=Give Every Month)
- To honor ICL’s 50th, increase your giving by 50% or more to help sustain ICL’s ongoing work.
- Share your love of Idaho! Next time you’re outside enjoying a beautiful Idaho hike with a friend, tell them why you love ICL or gift them a membership. We’ll be sure to warmly welcome them into our community!
- Become a Legacy Partner by leaving a gift to ICL in your will or estate to ensure future generations are able to continue to enjoy the Idaho you love.
- Raise your voice! Subscribe to our email updates and action alerts so you can know how, when, and where to direct your conservation advocacy efforts.

You’ve just read about a vast amount of work going to protect this beautiful place we know and love. Now we are counting on you, dear reader, to increase your investment in Idaho. Visit idahoconservation.org to take the next step.

Overcoming evolving threats to our public lands, clean air and water, and abundant fish and wildlife in years to come will require new advocates and innovation. We need those who truly love Idaho to join ICL’s efforts. Help us continue ICL’s story. A gift today is a gift for future generations. Together, we will ensure there is always a wild Idaho to love.

AOMI CLAYTON
 A SPELLMAN
HILBERT
 EICHBERG
 SERVHEEN
 ROCKETT
 MMONDS
 TROTTER
 BERGER
 N CLARK
 CILLILL ERICKSON
 GERRY SNYDER
 LINN KINCANNON
 SUKI MOLINA
 MARY BETH WHITAKER
EMERALD LAFORTUNE
 SHEILA ROBERTSON
FRED CHRISTENSEN
 ED CANNADY
 ROBINSON
 ERIC STRAUBHAR
 BELLE HEFFNER
 BILL MAUK
 LEXI BLACK
 PERRY BROWN
JANICE BROWN
 ANDREA BOGLE
 REBECCA PATTON
 CHRIS CAMPBELL
 JERRY STURGILL
 KTOA NAYTORA
 CAROLYN
 NOSRERSON
 LINDA BERGERSON
 BETTE WOOD
 BELLE HEFFNER
 ELLIE HUDSON-HECK
JIM MCFADDEN
JOAN BEVIRT
MARK INGRAM
RICK JOHNSON
CRAIG GEHRKE
JUSTIN HAYES
 PAUL TODD
 RENEE QUICK
TED CHU
MARY LOU REED
 ANITA ANDRUS
 MILLIE OBERLIN
PAT FORD
 KAY FINLEY
 JOHN MOELLER
 MARIE CALLAWAY
 KELLNER
PETRINA DESTRO (BESTOR)
 ROY HEBERGER
JIM DONART
 MARK BENJAMIN
 KATHLEEN KREKOW
 JAMIE SHEA
 CLIFF BRADLEY
 LUPITO FLORES
 ABBY URBANEK
 LISA KREPEL
 MARK DALY
SCOTT REED
 MARY FAUROT
 PETTERSON
 JAN BROWN
AMY HAAK
 KRISTIN CAMPBELL
 SHIVA RAJBHANDARI
ED LANGWORTHY
 MATTHEW BULLARD
 MIKE RICHARDSON
GARY RICHARDSON
 MELINDA HARM (BENSON)
 DEBORAH SHIMKUS
 BEN PURSLEY
 EMILY CLEVELAND
 JIM KEATING
 BILL EASTLAKE
 BRAD HEUSINKVELD
 JOSH JOHNSON
 BILL WEPNER
 RACHEL BRINKLEY
TED TRUEBLOOD
 HANNAH SMAY
 SUSAN GILLILAND
 MICHELE BEUCLER
 WENDY WILSON
 MITCH CUTLER
KEN SELF
 SARA ARKLE
 SARAH MICHAEL
 RHONDA ROHE
 WILL TIEDEMANN
 DALE GOBLE
 AMANDA GARDNER
 MELINDA HARM (BENSON)
 KAREN HOSTETTER
 BECCA RODACK
MARK SOLOMON
 MATT DOLLINGER
 LAURA PINOVER
 DAVNEA TILM
 JENNY ESTES
DUANE MARLEY
 KELLEY PEDIGO
 LOIS SCHOW
MARK INGRAM





IDAHO
CONSERVATION
LEAGUE

208.345.6933
PO Box 844
Boise, ID 83701

**Thank you for being a part of ICL's
love story. Help us protect and
preserve the wild Idaho you love for
the next 50 years and beyond.**

