



IDAHO
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LEAGUE

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Fall colors add to the magic of Central Idaho's iconic Castle Peak. Before the White Cloud Mountains were designated as Wilderness, an open-pit mine was proposed at the base of Castle Peak. Ed Cannady photo.

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Justin Hayes

Steady On

I'm not going to sugar coat it. Our work just got harder.

The incoming President has been clear that he thinks climate change is a hoax and he intends to reverse the work underway to move away from fossil fuels.

They say what's past is prologue, and in Trump's prior term, critical positions in his Administration were filled with folks who pursued a "drill baby drill" attitude to a host of conservation issues extending way beyond just oil and gas.

Land managers tilted the scales away from resource protection toward extraction. The Environmental Protection Agency led the charge to reverse its own regulations and loosen standards. Protected landscapes were pared back. Fish and Wildlife were managed with a heavy hand.

In the face of these challenges, your love for Wild Idaho endured. Your love of Idaho's wild places and wildlife, of clean water and clean air was our North Star. With your help, we leaned in.

No matter who sits in the White House, or the Statehouse, the work we do matters. Our collective commitment to protect Idaho's environment and to ensure access to Idaho's spectacular public lands remains.

For over 50 years, ICL has successfully navigated changing and challenging political landscapes. ICL's blend of collaboration and accountability, informed by science and powered by grassroots activism has served us well. With the past as prologue, it will continue to serve you well in the future.

As you gather with family and friends, take stock of what we have here. The wild Idaho that you love needs you more than ever. And together, we will lean in.

Justin Hayes
Executive Director



Jim DeWitt

Thanks to You, ICL Stays the Course

Idaho would be on most folks' list of states least concerned about conservation. That's ironic, given that outdoor recreation is one of Idaho's biggest industries. Just ask anyone who has tried to get a campground reservation midsummer.

Our way of life here in Idaho is based on clean air, clean water, and access to the outdoors. The Idaho Conservation League has always recognized this, and fought to protect the lands and waters that make this way of life possible.

Despite an abundance of outdoor lovers in Idaho, ICL staff fight an uphill battle—and often face hostility. It's not an easy job. It can be frustrating, discouraging, and even depressing. When people care as deeply about their work as ICL staff do, losses can be felt personally. But it is such an important fight—and it's a forever fight. ICL knows it takes endless pressure, endlessly applied. But we are only able to do this because of your continued support.

Supported by your generosity and staff's willingness to persevere, ICL has and will continue to achieve the goals we share for the state we love.

All of which is why I ask you to join me in applauding and thanking the staff for their work, for staying the course.

Jim DeWitt

Chair

Idaho Conservation League Board of Directors



Rafters scope out the rapid downriver. Jenni Chaffin photo.

ICL Continues Watchdog Role Over Mining in Idaho

When it comes to the relationship between mining and Idaho's public lands, you often hear a lot about critical minerals. Some of it is true: we are going to need additional mining to help transition away from fossil fuels. Some of this mining will likely be taking place in Idaho, and as always, ICL will review these proposals to ensure that such mining is held to the highest standards. But it is important to remain skeptical and not just sign off on a mining resurgence.

There is another resource that is also critical in the coming years and decades: Clean water for our communities.

The West has a long history of mine waste contaminating groundwater supplies, springs, seeps, and streams. After years of climate denialism (particularly in the case of coal mining executives), mining companies are jumping on the "critical minerals" bandwagon, even if the proposed mine has nothing to do with being a "critical mineral" or fighting climate change. For example, most gold is used for jewelry or for hoarding wealth. There is also already enough gold in circulation to meet society's demands. For some large scale gold mining projects, mining companies create twenty tons of pollution to extract just one ounce of gold.

The General Mining Law of 1872, which is the fundamental law governing hardrock mining on public lands in the U.S., remains one of the biggest subsidies and giveaways of public resources. Mining companies can take billions of dollars of resources from federal public lands with no royalties to taxpayers. What's more, the land management agencies often assume they cannot deny a permit and that the best they can do is attempt to "minimize impacts." These subsidies encourage waste, promote pollution at taxpayer expense, and stifle innovation.

If we mine for cobalt and copper using the

same rule set, we are going to repeat the same mistakes that threaten other watersheds.

We need a new approach to better manage mining. **By reforming the mining laws, we can give communities a bigger voice, meaningful protections for clean air and water, and the right to be justly compensated for impacts.** What if we were to incentivize more recycling and greater efficiencies for critical minerals instead of literally paying companies to stockpile toxic mine waste in our headwaters that will be with us forever?

Late this summer, ICL staff visited the East Fork South Fork Salmon River. We were thrilled to see a pair of Chinook salmon and several bull trout in the emerald green pools—signs that this watershed is worth protecting. A few weeks later, we were disappointed when the Forest Service released the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and draft Record of Decision for the Stibnite Gold Project without any substantive changes to better avoid impacts, minimize harm, or offset adverse efforts.

Despite Perpetua Resources' emphasis that the project will restore the site, **the Forest Service's own analysis found that the project's creation of new toxic mine waste across such a large area will overshadow Perpetua's efforts to clean up old mining waste and that the Stibnite Gold Project would actually further degrade the area.** The agency found that the "environmentally preferred alternative" is actually the No Action alternative, i.e. no mining. Our review of the FEIS has uncovered several deep-seated flaws in the mine plan and environmental analysis. For example, it will take over 100 years for vegetation to grow back and shade the streams so that the water won't be too hot for trout and salmon to survive. But even this may not be possible, as there isn't enough soil available to grow these plants. Furthermore, the arsenic levels in the soil there may be too high to support full plant growth. Even if the reclamation bond sets aside funds to restore the soil and



The CuMo Project area is just to the left of the smoke from the 2024 Flat Fire. The topography directs water—and sometimes air—into the Boise River drainage. Note how the smoke on this day traveled downhill toward New Centerville, Mores Creek, and Lucky Peak Reservoir. John Robison photo.

replant the site, the site will be so degraded that it might be an impossible task for anyone. It can take centuries or millennia for soil to develop on mined areas. In 100 years, Perpetua will likely be long gone—leaving this as someone else’s problem to deal with, much as we are still dealing with other abandoned mine issues.

ICL and our conservation partners submitted a 250+ page objection enumerating these issues and all the ways the FEIS violates federal laws. We asked that the Forest Service withdraw the draft decision and take the project back to the drawing board. If the Forest Service decides to proceed, ICL and our partners will be forced to look at legal actions. ICL and our partners also challenged Perpetua’s draft water rights and air quality permit and these permits are being reevaluated by state agencies—hopefully with stronger safeguards.

The Forest Service also released a draft Decision Notice and Environmental Assessment for the CuMo Mine Exploration project in the headwaters of the Boise River, also without sufficient

measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts. The project’s location in the headwaters of the Boise River highlights concerns about mine exploration and open-pit development in the source of the Treasure Valley’s drinking water supply and irrigation water.

Since our founding, ICL has worked to prevent large-scale mining projects that would irreparably degrade Idaho’s environment and raise the bar on many others. This fall, we released a comprehensive mining report, which provides a general overview of how mining impacts Idaho’s natural environment and how we can balance our need for minerals with protection of our air, water, wildlife, and treasured landscapes. Scan the QR code below to read the full report.



John Robison
Public Lands & Wildlife Director

An Update on Idaho's Wildlife



USFWS/JeannieStafford photo.

Greater Sage-Grouse

The BLM recently released the latest plan for protecting Sage-grouse habitat. This plan is a slight improvement over some previous versions by precluding large energy developments in priority habitat and applying buffers and mitigation measures more consistently. However, it also includes a host of exemptions allowing development under certain circumstances and drops recommendations to protect priority habitat from mining. More still needs to be done to address the urgent threats of invasive grasses and wildfires.



Ed Cannady photo.

Wolverines

While wolverines were listed as a 'threatened' species nearly a year ago, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is still evaluating whether or not to exempt recreational trappers from penalties or fines if they harm or accidentally kill a wolverine. ICL commented that it will be difficult to recover this reclusive animal if steps are not taken to properly regulate trapping and avoid situations in which wolverines are accidentally caught in traps set for other animals.



Ed Cannady photo.

Grizzly Bears

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is expected to announce whether grizzly bears in the Yellowstone and Northern Continental Divide ecosystems will be removed from the Endangered Species List next year. While ICL acknowledges the progress made in grizzly recovery, we cannot support any delisting plan that lacks effective strategies for managing human-bear conflicts and ensuring safe movement corridors for grizzlies to reach other recovery areas, such as the Bitterroot ecosystem.



Ed Cannady photo.

Bison

Records from the 1800s show that bison herds in excess of 1,000 animals were regularly observed in many parts of Idaho. Today, wild bison are primarily confined to the boundaries of Yellowstone National Park. However, thanks to tribal-led initiatives, the idea of restoring bison to a greater portion of the species' historic range is gaining traction. ICL enthusiastically supports the idea of restoring buffalo to portions of Idaho historically inhabited by this iconic species.

Jeff Abrams
Wildlife Program Associate

No Community Left Behind

Last year, ICL helped negotiate a historic agreement between the U.S. Government and a set of Northwest states and Tribes. This pact—the Resilient Columbia Basin Agreement—delivered short-term benefits to salmon. It also laid the groundwork for detailed analysis of how to build new infrastructure that will replace the key services provided by the lower Snake River dams. This year, we’ve rolled our sleeves up to get these studies started.

The Bureau of Reclamation started an irrigation-focused study this summer. Their analysis focuses on ensuring that farmers and communities can continue to exercise their water rights in a free-flowing river. The study is still a work in progress, but early results show one big conclusion: a free-flowing Snake River has plenty of water. There won’t be any need to “import” water from elsewhere, only to modify existing infrastructure. A draft report will be available in December 2024.

The Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has started a similar study on using the network of roads and rails in the area to transport wheat from farms to ocean ports near Portland. First, though, they seek to understand how the lower Snake waterway is used now. ICL staff joined WSDOT for a field tour in August, asking questions of local stakeholders about how much they depend on barge transportation. The takeaway: barge shipping is on the decline, but agriculture still depends on the river at harvest time to export large quantities of wheat and import fertilizer. Replacing transportation services during this busy time of year is the crux of the study, which will continue through 2025. ICL sits on an advisory committee for the study and will continue to track its results.

Finally, the U.S. Department of Energy recently announced the Pacific Northwest Regional Energy Planning Project (PREPP), which will determine how to replace the lower Snake River

dams’ energy generation while achieving clean power objectives. As a region, we must develop new clean energy at a massive scale to replace fossil fuels and electrify more sectors of the economy. Within this context, building enough generation to replace the relatively insignificant power from the dams isn’t complicated. We expect the PREPP study to lay out exactly what resources would provide the most reliable, affordable replacement energy that’s also a step toward a truly clean energy future in the region.

Mitch Cutter
Salmon & Energy Strategist



Safeguarding Trestle Creek: Protecting this Special Place from Harmful Development

The calm, cool waters and wild landscape of Trestle Creek and the nearby shoreline of Lake Pend Oreille are currently teeming with life. Fish and wildlife are abundant, including eagles, beaver, and threatened bull trout. It is our region's most important bull trout spawning area.

This quiet refuge provides a secure habitat where fish and wildlife thrive in the absence of human development.

Trestle Creek is also one of the few places where families can easily observe spawning bull trout and kokanee salmon. Watching these bright red fish build their nests (called 'redds') to lay their eggs before they die is to witness the cycle of life unfolding before our eyes. Teachers have been bringing 5th grade students to view the phenomenon on Trestle Creek every fall for years.

After being stopped three times in their effort to build a marina and luxury houses at Trestle

Creek over the last 17 years, The Idaho Club is again attempting to destroy what makes this place special. This time, their proposal is to build a commercial marina for 88 boats, plus a breakwater, pedestrian bridge, parking lot, and seven houses with private docks.

The proposed development would cause hoards of new boat traffic, bringing noise, garbage, and the potential for oil and gas leaks. It would cause polluted runoff from lawns, the road, and parking lot. There is no approved plan for sewage disposal necessary for houses, or hundreds of visitors to the marina.

Our public agencies are obligated to protect public trust values, such as water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, aquatic life, and aesthetic beauty. We are calling on the Idaho Department of Lands, the Army Corps of Engineers, and others to stop the ill-advised Trestle Creek development proposal. This special place would best serve public trust values if left intact and undisturbed.

Jennifer Ekstrom
North Idaho Director



CENTRAL IDAHO

Changing the Color of a Landscape

Late this summer, wild salmon made their ancestral journey to the heart of central Idaho, bringing on their tails the promise of autumn: that of their own lives, and that of the world around them. In my imagination, I like to think of the Salmon River changing color as the impetus for the cottonwoods and the aspens to recall that it will soon be time for them to do the same. But this summer, it was hard to conceive of a river turning red with fish: fewer than 50 wild sockeye returned to Redfish Lake.

In September, ICL hosted screenings of *The Grand Salmon* in Hailey. The film shares the story of three incredible female athlete-advocates who embark on paddling the full length of the Salmon River, to Snake, to the Columbia, and finally to the ocean: an imitation of the journey made by juvenile salmon. The film concluded with a Q &

A session that lasted almost as long as the film itself. Over and over, we heard versions of the same inquiry from attendees: *what is being done, and how can I get involved?*

In this field of work, it's not uncommon to weather seasons of disappointment: decisions don't go our way, compromises are unsatisfactory, and the environmental clock ticks fast while the bureaucratic clock ticks slow. But it's only a season. The excitement, the frustration, the determination of the crowd—which cleaned me out of 300 postcards addressed to their representatives—posed a reminder, to me, of changing seasons. Like those 50 sockeye who returned, against the odds, to Central Idaho, we won't give up. We can still change the color of the landscape.

Lexi Black

Central Idaho Community Engagement Specialist



Standing from left to right, Brooke Hess, Hailey Thompson, and Libby Tobey portage around one of the four lower Snake River dams on their 78-day paddling expedition from the source of the Salmon River to the Pacific Ocean.

NORTH IDAHO

How Volunteer Stewards Safeguard Our Water and Way of Life

The great lakes of North Idaho are scenic wonders, priceless economic assets, and a foundation of our North Idaho lifestyle. From clean drinking water, to irrigation, to swimming, fishing and boating, this lake gives our communities an unparalleled quality of life. With that comes a shared responsibility to care for it.

ICL's volunteer Water Quality Stewards take this to heart; in the 13 years of the citizen science water quality monitoring program in Lake Pend Oreille, these Stewards have collected thousands of data points and water samples.

The samples are analyzed for pollutants, such as nitrogen, phosphorus, E. coli, dissolved oxygen,

and pH. Data collected in the field includes temperature and visual conditions, including improperly controlled shoreline disturbances and nuisance floating debris. Together it tells a story about our water, and helps to warn us about risks of toxic algae outbreaks, invasive weeds, or other problems.

We provide the information to the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, which uses it to make management decisions that protect water quality.

Everyone who enjoys and relies on our waters benefits from the work of Lake Pend Oreille's Water Quality Stewards. Please join us in thanking them!

Jennifer Ekstrom
North Idaho Director



Fall colors start to arrive in the Blackfoot Wildlife Management Area. John Robison photo.

SOUTHERN IDAHO

ICL Keeps Busy in the Owyhees

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recently received a grant to improve the Perjue Canyon trailhead on Mud Flat Road, a popular jumping off point for the Little Jacks Creek Wilderness. ICL agreed to supply volunteers for this work—so stay tuned for event announcements!

Unfortunately, the BLM Bruneau and Owyhee Field Offices recently approved plans that adopted hundreds of miles of illegal user-created routes in the Owyhee Canyonlands. The BLM authorized 3,186 miles of motorized routes and just six miles for non-motorized recreationists. Based on our preliminary review, we believe

the BLM failed to follow its own travel management regulations for minimizing impacts to natural resources and balancing uses. We are reviewing our legal options at this point.

ICL is pushing for plans that better balance public access and keeping the Owyhees wild, so stay tuned for more from ICL on how you can speak up for this special place.

John Robison
Public Lands & Wildlife Director



The Perjue Canyon outdoor classroom is about to get an upgrade. John Robison photo.

EASTERN IDAHO

The Upper Blackfoot Confluence: Providing a Safer Place for Trout

The Blackfoot River in southeast Idaho weaves its way through broad valleys and around rolling mountains splashed with the yellow of quaking aspen. Gathered around a bend in the river in the Blackfoot Wildlife Management Area is a semi-circle of conservationists and mining company representatives. Instead of debating mining issues, we are talking excitedly about trout. Underneath the cover of a nearby log, a Yellowstone cutthroat trout waits patiently in a deep pool for the next grasshopper to float by.

Historically, trout like this one had little in the way of healthy habitat as past land management practices had degraded many portions of the river. ICL continues to examine the effects of mining on water quality but we are also investing in a

collaborative approach to restore the river.

The log and pool—and miles of similarly restored stream reaches—are the direct result of a voluntary stewardship program that ICL helped create a decade ago. The Upper Blackfoot Confluence (UBC) brings together a unique combination of groups that includes ICL, Trout Unlimited, and some partners you might not expect—representatives from Simplot, Itafos, Bayer, and Agrium. Other key partners include the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the Bear Lake Grazing Company.

Since 2011, UBC partners have contributed \$2.25 million and found matching federal and state grants to create over \$3.2 million in funding for restoration work. As the work continues, we hope to expand this partnership to others who care about the river.

John Robison

Public Lands & Wildlife Director



WEST CENTRAL IDAHO

A Developing Approach for Conserving State Lands

The management of State lands varies widely in the western states. Fortunately for us, Idaho allows the public to access and use state-owned lands, and ICL continues working with our partners in United Payette to ensure that the State-owned endowment lands surrounding the Payette lakes remain publicly accessible and free from the threat of development.

One avenue for conserving the Payette endowment lands is through a potential land exchange between the Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) and the U.S. Forest Service. Both agencies manage forest lands in the McCall area, though with differing emphasis on management

priorities. IDL focuses on constitutionally mandated financial returns for the endowment beneficiaries, and the Forest Service manages for “multiple use” and ecological function.

With our partners, we recently established a task force to work with local officials and to help facilitate this potential solution. The task force is preparing to initiate a professionally developed public survey to help identify issues of concern and determine if the exchange is in the best public interest. As ICL and United Payette move through this process, we will keep you informed about how we can retain public access to the lands we all cherish and keep large-scale development out of the Payette endowment lands.

Randy Fox

Public Lands Associate



Forest Service Poised to Approve Bad Land Management Plan for the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest

The U.S. Forest Service began revising the Land Management Plan for the 4-million-acre Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest in 2012. Despite public meetings and thousands of comments, the agency is set to approve a plan that weakens protections for wildlands, rivers, streams, fish, and wildlife.

Before approval, organizations and individuals involved in the process were allowed to submit administrative objections. ICL, along with others, filed objections in February.

One of our main concerns is the lack of enforceable “standards” for wildlife protection. The revised plan fails to address threats to mountain goats and wolverines from snowmobile use during winter months. Snowmobiles can even disturb grizzly bears emerging from hibernation in April when snow still lingers in higher elevations.

The plan also scales back recommendations for new wilderness areas and wild and scenic rivers. For example, the Great Burn Recommended Wilderness, along the Idaho-Montana border, is vital for wildlife and non-motorized recreation. However, the revised plan reduces the Great Burn by several thousand acres to make room for more snowmobiling, a move that puts protected species like wolverines at risk. Ironically, the Forest Service justified the lack of written wildlife protection standards by claiming that areas like the Great Burn offer adequate protection.

Additionally, out of 88 rivers and streams evaluated, the agency recommended only 11 for protection under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Iconic rivers such as the North Fork and South Fork Clearwater were deemed “unsuitable” for protection.

In September, the Forest Service issued its response to objections, denying nearly all of our concerns. A final decision is expected by the end of the year, at which point ICL will consider challenging the plan in federal court.

Brad Smith
Conservation Director

Dialogue and Compromise are Key to Protecting North Idaho Wilderness

There are 4.7 million acres of designated wilderness in central and southern Idaho, but none north of the Lochsa River in the nine northern counties. This isn't due to a lack of wild spaces—northern Idaho and northwest Montana hold some of the greatest potential for wilderness expansion in the lower 48 states.

The absence of designated wilderness in the Inland Northwest is no coincidence. Past efforts to protect areas like the Scotchman Peaks, Selkirks, Mallard-Larkins, and Great Burn were blocked. Legislation drafted by Republican Senator Jim McClure and Democratic Governor Cecil Andrus, as well as later attempts by Congressman Larry LaRocco, faced strong opposition from the timber industry. Today, motorized recreation groups are also a significant source of resistance.

The path to protecting the last wildlands in the Idaho Panhandle requires collaboration.

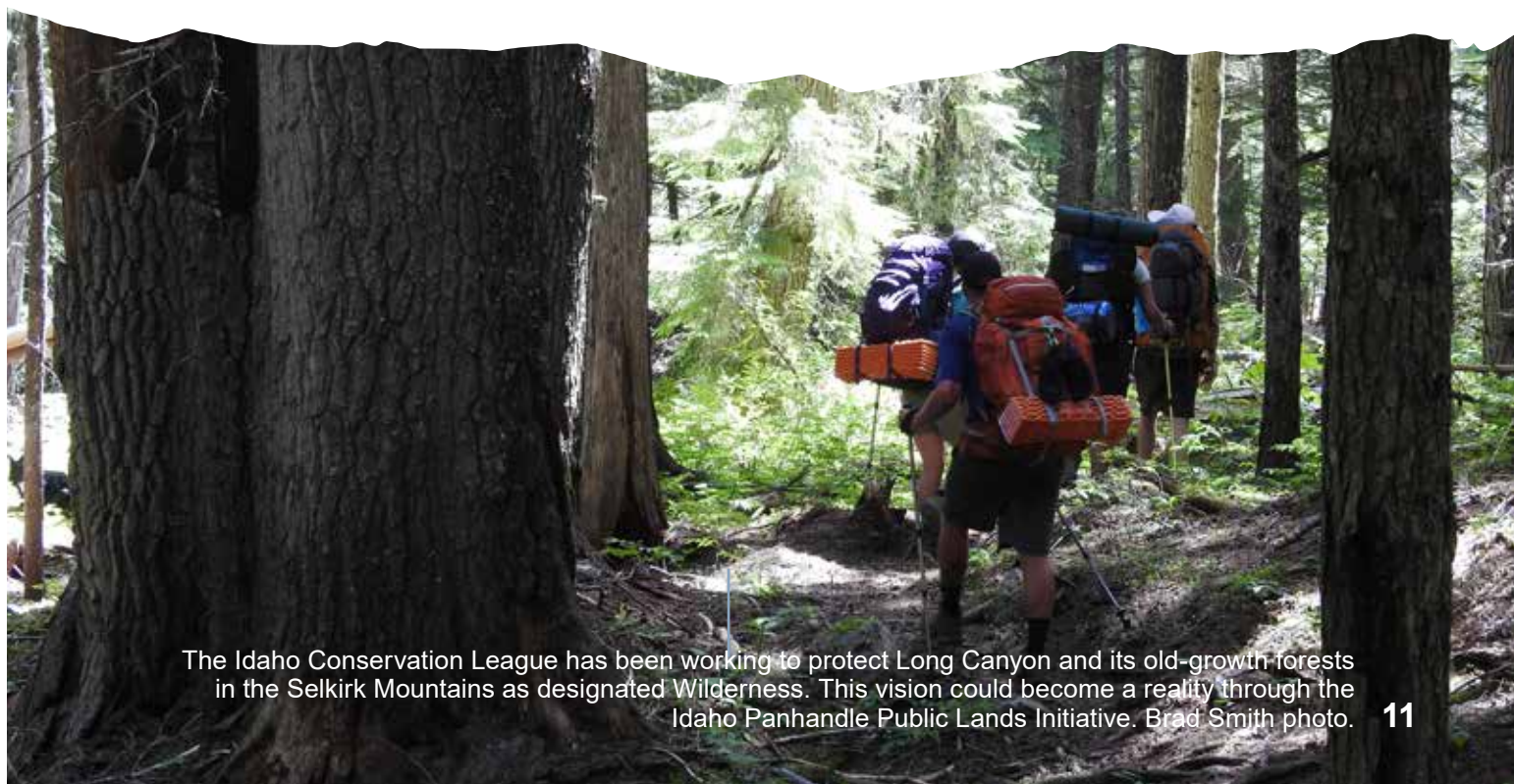
Conservation groups must engage with the timber industry, recreationists, hunters, anglers, county commissioners, and tribes to explore whether compromise is possible.

This is why the Idaho Conservation League helped launch the Idaho Panhandle Public Lands Initiative (IPPLI). Since April, this group of stakeholders has been meeting to determine if consensus on a legislative proposal for wilderness in Bonner and Boundary Counties can be reached. Negotiation and compromise will be key to securing the support of groups historically opposed to wilderness protections.

If successful, the legislation may do more than just designate wilderness. It could also boost recreational opportunities, secure public access, and address concerns around forest and wildlife management.

Dialogue within IPPLI has just begun, with the goal of drafting an agreement by the end of 2025.

Brad Smith
Conservation Director



The Idaho Conservation League has been working to protect Long Canyon and its old-growth forests in the Selkirk Mountains as designated Wilderness. This vision could become a reality through the Idaho Panhandle Public Lands Initiative. Brad Smith photo.

Seasons of Change: Strengthening Idaho's Wild Future

As the vibrant colors of fall blanket Idaho, nature begins its quiet preparation for winter. Leaves fall, nourishing the earth. Grizzly bears settle into hibernation, storing energy for the seasons ahead. Sage grouse gather in prime sagebrush habitat to feed for the winter, and bison grow their thick winter coats to face the winter storms. Wolverines create their alpine dens, ready to nurture new life.

Just as these creatures prepare for the challenges ahead, ICL rebuilds and strengthens its resources to protect the air, water, land and wildlife that define Idaho. **Your ongoing support is critical in sustaining our mission—especially as we move into the end-of-year giving season.**

Did you know that nearly half of ICL's funding comes from the generous support we receive in November and December? Your year-end donation ensures that we continue to protect Idaho's natural treasures—keeping our wildlife strong and habitat resilient.

We are incredibly grateful to you, our members. Your generosity fuels our conservation work throughout the year. Please consider making an additional investment in ICL's work before the year's end. Together, we can ensure that Idaho remains wild, free, and thriving—for all who call it home.

Make Your Gift Go Further

If you'd like to make an even greater impact, consider gifting appreciated securities, such as stocks or mutual funds. This strategy can save you from capital gains taxes and may also provide you with a charitable tax deduction. This means your gift costs you less out of pocket than a cash donation and allows you to contribute more. With more funds supporting ICL's mission, together we can achieve more of our conservation goals for Idaho.

For more information or assistance with this tax-efficient giving option, visit idahocl.org/stock or contact Diana Burrell at 208-345-6933 x 217 or dburrell@idahoconservation.org. Please ensure transfers are initiated early to take advantage of tax benefits this year.

Thank you for supporting ICL in protecting the Idaho we all love. Together, we're creating a future where wild places, people, and wildlife thrive.



idahocl.org/waystogive

Diana Burrell
Development Director

Scan this QR code or enter the URL below to see additional ways to give to ICL.

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We are Stronger Together!

The Idaho Conservation League serves as a voice for the lands and water that make Idaho special, and for the native wildlife that we share this special home with. From the grizzly bear to the bluebird, making a special donation today can help ICL continue to serve in this vital role.

Scan the QR code to make a special gift or go to idahocl.org/N1124

Make A Gift



To Contact ICL: 208.345.6933 | icl@idahoconservation.org
www.idahoconservation.org

Grizzly Bear 399 stands with her cubs. 399, who tragically died after being hit by a car while trying to cross a highway in October, leaves behind a legacy of cubs and inspiring the wild in all of us. Ed Cannady photo.