



# Quarterly Connection



Joan Gilbert Madsen 2010

## Wolves in Working Landscapes Grassroots Solutions in Wallowa County

Perspectives on wolf reintroduction are sharply divided, with strong opinions on either end of the spectrum. The cost of wolf reintroduction was spread broadly across the general public. However, the cost of living with wolves is local and direct, borne by individual livestock producers and their rural agrarian communities. The first two wolf packs to re-establish in Oregon have chosen Wallowa County to be their home. Wallowa County's commitment to agriculture, in particular working ranches, has maintained an ideal habitat for wolves. Our community is in the tough position of learning to live with wolves. Government funding exists but is not enough to manage the economic impacts of a growing wolf population. Last spring the Imnaha pack regularly traveled through private rangeland and

pastures next to homes. Wolves killed calves, which raised concerns for human safety and the continued viability of ranching.

Agriculture is a significant economic enterprise in Wallowa County, supporting 773 full time jobs and generating nearly \$40 million in revenue. These working landscapes, and the way of life that maintains them, are highly valued by our community. In the midst of a tough economy and high land prices, the impact of living with wolves on our livestock producers is intense. There are no state or functional federal compensation programs in place. Defenders of Wildlife has committed to reimbursing ranchers for "confirmed" losses of livestock to wolves, but only through September 2011. In this vast and rugged landscape

it is difficult to find wolf kills, diminishing the value of traditional compensation programs. Following the fall roundup, one of our ranchers, operating in the vicinity of a wolf den, reported 3 times as many calf losses than in previous years. Wolves impact ranching in other ways too. Research in Idaho found cattle body condition declined in the presence of wolves. Ranchers fear they will have smaller calves that bring less money and thinner cows that do not breed well. In addition, there is no accounting for the anxiety felt by ranchers who exert more time and effort to keep their herds safe.

Holly Akenson, Wallowa Mountain Institute Program Director, has had firsthand experience living with and researching wolves

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in Idaho. Meeting with Wallowa County stockgrowers, she addressed concerns about personal safety, and the use of horses around wolves. She also coordinated meetings – on rangeland shared by cattle and wolves – between university students and ranchers who had experienced wolf depredation on their cattle.



Ranchers and students talk about wolves in Wallowa County. [Photo: Holly Akenson]

Both Whitman College and Oregon State University students learned firsthand about the difficulties experienced when wolves and livestock mix. The stockgrowers found that sharing their knowledge and perspectives in this respectful environment led to new understanding and compassion by young people who were not aware of the impacts of wolf restoration.

Our ranching community is working hard to minimize depredations and increase political support. Old bone piles near calving grounds which attract wolves are being removed; ODFW supplied telemetry equipment to monitor wolf locations and special boxes with noises and lights to scare wolves from calving pastures. A range rider was employed by the ranches with funds from ODFW and Defenders of Wildlife to monitor cattle, find wolf kills, and discourage wolves from interacting with cattle. Wallowa County Stockgrowers and Oregon Cattlemen's Association continue to formulate and advocate new policies that secure enough protections and benefits to leave enough room

for our producers to prosper in the presence of wolves.

The turmoil around wolves has generated a remarkable outcome – an innovative grassroots solution to the economic impacts of wolves, initiated by the Wallowa County Stockgrowers. Instead of waiting for federal and state agencies to develop compensation programs, our local livestock producers created a “community based” compensation plan. The Community Activated Livestock Fund (CALF) recognizes and supports the role of ranching in our local community. In September, the Stockgrowers voted unanimously to adopt CALF and requested support from the Wallowa County Commissioners. Compensation will target confirmed and unconfirmed losses using past production and survival records as a baseline. Requests for compensation will be reviewed by a locally appointed board. Funding will be solicited from local people and businesses first. Once established, the plan will be presented as a model and a mechanism for any future state and federal compensation plans to reimburse livestock producers across Oregon.

Wallowa County is again leading the state by growing solutions from the ground up. We encourage everyone passionate about Wallowa County and NE Oregon to contribute to this new fund, and to speak up for conservation measures that allow for our local communities to thrive in the presence of the wolves. It's another step forward in Wallowa County's commitment to steward our landscapes and produce the high quality food that graces our plates.

# Exciting news from WR Community Solutions Inc!

A new Community Development Revolving Loan Fund and significant investment in an Integrated Biomass Energy Campus highlight the work of WR Community Solutions Inc (the for-profit subsidiary of Wallowa Resources) over the past year.

In October 2010, WR Community Solutions Inc successfully concluded an agreement with *Portland Family of Funds* on the establishment and operation of the Northwest Community Capital Fund. The *Portland Family of Funds* will initially capitalize this revolving loan fund with \$100,000 to finance community development projects in NE Oregon. WR Community Solutions Inc, working with local partners, will identify priority projects, develop financial plans and

agreements and submit this information for final review and approval to the NWCCF administrators. In its pilot phase, the fund will be used to provide short-term bridge financing for small renewable energy projects, primarily involving photovoltaic solar energy systems. After proof-of-concept, the project proponents will work to raise additional capital for the Fund, and expand the scope to include other renewable energy and community development projects. Contractors who have short-term projects of this type that are eligible for the various Federal and State tax credits and rebates currently available, but which require bridge financing, should contact Myron Kirkpatrick at (541) 426-8053.

By the end of 2010, we will also secure \$750,000 in new investment to expand the woody biomass campus in Wallowa. This new funding will create a small woody biomass fired combined heat and power system that will be co-located with Community Smallwood and Integrated Biomass Resources. It will provide heat and power to both companies. The feasibility of a log sort and merchandize yard for the campus is also being studied. Such a sort-yard could generate significant operational efficiencies in the woods, providing better returns to landowners and forest contractors, and improve the economics of stewardship forestry. It should also benefit the mills by capturing more saw log volume and



Nils Christoffersen and Kyle Couch with students at Reservoir Biomass Project on Mitchell Ridge. [Photo: Holly Akenson]

reducing costs associated with sorting and breakage. When the final pieces fall into place, the new investments will generate 10-15 new jobs, build a local market for 50,000 to 100,000 tons of woody biomass, and further reduce our dependence on imported energy.

## New Staff!

Along with our move to a new office building, the Wallowa Resources Stewardship Center (aka The Old Hospital), 2010 has brought a range of staff changes.

**Mark Porter** is now the Director of our Watershed Stewardship Program, a merger of the weed program and our collaborative watershed restoration work. **Sarah Ketchum** is the Watershed Stewardship Program Coordinator.

**Kyle Couch**, from Joseph, OR, was hired this spring as the Watershed Stewardship Program Officer. He immediately took responsibility for nearly 1,000 acres of fuel reduction work and associated biomass utilization funded through the Federal Stimulus Program. “My mom, Barbara, worked here briefly, ten years ago, following the closure of the Joseph mill before moving on to Potlatch – it's exciting to see how much

the organization had grown.” Kyle was raised in a logging family, and attended Joseph High School where he won State wrestling honors. His background includes forest stand exams, forest inventory, log felling, and fighting fire with the Union Hotshots. Kyle received his

Bachelor's Degree in Natural Resources with an emphasis in Forest Ecosystems from Oregon State University. An avid outdoorsman, Kyle enjoys hunting, fishing, rafting, rock climbing, and many other adventure pursuits.

Within our Wallowa Mountain Institute, **Troy Nave** left to pursue seasonal field work in Alaska and **Penny Arentsen** resigned following the birth of her first child, a beautiful baby girl named Linden! Both will be missed.

**Amy Busch** is picking up the reins of our Youth Stewardship Education Program. She jumped right in leading the summer backpacking program and tackling all the fall youth programming. “I am extremely impressed with the youth programs at

Wallowa Resources and tip my hat to Penny's hard work.” Amy's background provides a wealth of experience to the WMI team. She has led backpacking trips, taught at a residential camp on Catalina Island, conducted aquatic ecology research in Alaska and Florida, managed bird education programs in Southern Oregon, and been a park ranger for several National Parks. She also brings expertise in program evaluation and nonprofit management from her graduate work at Southern Oregon University, where she received a master's of science in environmental education and a certificate in nonprofit management. Working and living in Wallowa County is a dream come true for Amy. “Ryan and I have spent a winter here and knew about this area from his stepdad's stories growing up in Enterprise. I had a hunch if I loved the winter so much here I would love the summers, which I especially did!”



WREN class this fall on top of Findley Butte. Amy Busch in the middle of the photo. [Photo: Wallowa Resources]



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## WR Stewardship Center is born

In June Wallowa Resources moved into our new office building – the WR Stewardship Center – better known to most in Wallowa County as the old hospital building. Most of the building had been vacant for the last three years. Now a community of natural resource, renewable energy and community development organizations have brought new life to the building.

Today we have eleven tenants – including USDA Farm Services Agency and Natural Resource Conservation Service, the Wallowa Soil and Water Conservation District, Renewable Energy Solutions, Sun Storage, Renewable Energy Constructors, Energy Trust of Oregon, Schwabe Williamson and Wyatt, WR Community Solutions Inc, Wallowa Resources, and the Wallowa Valley Care Center.

Nearly \$100,000 in remodeling and improvements have been completed to-date – converting the medical rooms to efficient commercial space with modern information technology networks and phone systems. Future investments will target opportunities in renewable energy – including solar PV and a woody biomass boiler – as well as bringing fiber optic cable to the building to improve IT capabilities.

We are extremely grateful to the Wallowa County Health Care District for the gift of this building!

**Please explore and enjoy our updated Website at [www.WallowaResources.org](http://www.WallowaResources.org)**

In addition to the articles presented here, Wallowa Resources is working on a broad variety of educational, range stewardship, natural resource, policy and watershed restoration projects throughout Wallowa County.

To find out more about what is happening at Wallowa Resources, just go to [www.WallowaResources.org](http://www.WallowaResources.org) or call us at 541-426-8053 today!

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