The MPG 2008 Summer Solstice Celebration was another great success. More than 125 MPG members and their families gathered at Dancing Oaks Nursery to celebrate the day. The many varieties of salads and desserts were impressive and delicious.

MPG Chair Barry Wulff gave an update on MPG activities. More than a dozen people went home with one of the raffle items, which included a backpack, a gorgeous fused-glass bowl, and a rafting trip. MPG is grateful to the donors of all these great prizes.

Our guest speaker for the evening was David Graves, the Northwest field representative of the National Parks Conservation Association. Graves outlined the work of his organization and the challenges we all face in maintaining our national parks and monuments.

The NPCA is very active in the Northwest. They are working to bring the Mount St. Helen’s National Monument under the administration of the National Park Service. It is currently administered by the woefully underfunded National Forest Service.

The NPCA is also working to expand the North Cascades National Park and the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument, and to expand and enhance the protection of the Oregon Caves National Monument in southern Oregon.

A special project that Graves is personally working on is planning for the removal of the dams on the Elwha River in the Olympic National Park.

Many thanks go to Marilyn Hinds, Mike Brantley, John Nervik, Jeff Goby, Mysti Weber, Monika Shepherd, Joyce Canan, Kay Yates, Julie Arrington, Jane Luther, Peggy Osburn and all the great volunteers who helped to make this event a great success.
Going Electronic in an Electronic Age

Is YouTube, or something similar, in the MPG’s future? I often ask what is the best way to utilize the electronic media to better communicate with our members in a timely fashion.

More and more organizations are finding that printing and mailing costs have become prohibitive. Also, finding interesting and well-written material is always a challenge. We are not alone, as we see newspaper and magazine readership declining.

People are finding their lives so filled that they lack the time and patience to read in-depth articles. It’s something along the line of “give me the brief facts, and I’ll deal with it.” Furthermore, going electronic reduces paper waste and saves trees.

The telephone tree and the paper edition of the Benchmark posted to all of our members held us in good stead for many years.

Some years ago we replaced the telephone tree with the Sunday evening e-mail. Playing phone tag is very time consuming. Land lines are becoming passé. Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) are the “new thing” – a phone with Internet and Web capabilities is all one needs nowadays.

Printing and mailing costs were catching up with our financial bottom line. We have now foregone the traditional printed and posted Benchmark.

This issue of the Benchmark, now available online to download as a PDF, is our first totally electronic edition.

Our editors have endeavored to make it interesting to read and appealing to the eye.

The issue is available on our Web site for anyone to read. Go to www.oregon.sierraclub.org/groups/marys_peak/benchmark.html. You may download the entire edition and print it.

For those who want to print just selected pages, you may do that, too. Those who wish to focus only on the outings, celebrations, and evening programs may do so by signing up for the weekly e-mail at maryspeakgroup@peak.org.

Your feedback about our avenues of communication is important to us. Send your comments to the Benchmark editors or to me (wulffb@peak.org) for the weekly e-mail.

~Barry Wulff, Chair

The Sierra Club Foundation is a 501©3 organization and donations are tax-deductible.

I want to help support Corvallis’s urban environment by purchasing a Community Tree.

I wish to contribute: $5 _______ $10 _______ $25 _______ $50 _______ Other _______

Please make checks payable to: Sierra Club Foundation

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The Sierra Club Foundation is a 501©3 organization and donations are tax-deductible.
Leader Profile

Oregon has the clearest, coldest most refreshing water this side of Illinois. At least that’s what MPG mid-week hike coordinator Leslie Hogan remembers from her childhood.

After spending the first 10 years of her life in Oregon, Leslie moved to Illinois with her family. The family did come back each summer to vacation, and Leslie remembers taking many camping trips to East Lake and the Metolius River areas, which were family favorites.

“When we lived in Illinois, I used to dream of the startling feeling of brushing my teeth with freezing Metolius River water and being in water clear enough to see crawdads flipping themselves to safety away from my wading feet,” Leslie said. “In Illinois, the lakes and rivers were warm for swimming but were pretty uniformly one color, brown.”

Leslie did not make it back to live in Oregon until her junior year in college at the University of Oregon, but she has pretty much stayed here ever since. She and her husband of 36 years, Jim, enjoy hiking as do their daughter, son and daughter-in-law.

“The longest hike I’ve ever been on was a steep, up and down 13-mile hike onto Mt. Hood,” says Leslie. “At the very end of that hike, we were weary, weary hikers who were hiking on a path parallel to the road where we had parked. We were just down a steep berm from it, and I saw that we were hiking too far beyond our car. But I said nothing, because the thought of climbing up and over that berm to get to the car was more than my body dared even contemplate at that point. The downhill trek was just too sweet to give up!”

Being in the outdoors seems to have been an inherent if not inherited trait for Leslie, as both her grandmothers were avid walkers. “My grandmothers were inveterate walkers, dying respectively at 95 and 102 with good, strong hearts,” remembers Leslie. “And I’ve always walked where I wanted to go.”

Leslie also took time for the occasional cross-country ski trip and rare backpack trip. She says she only became a “real hiker” when she joined the Marys Peak Group about 10 years ago.

What keeps drawing Leslie back to the outdoors is what she can only describe as the peace and beauty at every level; the micro and the macro. “All you have to do is remember to look for it, and it’s there waiting to elate you,” she adds.

She also feels a sense of smugness that she gets her exercise in without ever having to step on a treadmill.

And Leslie credits Barry Wulff for setting a great example of how to acknowledge every hiker. “Barry was leading most of the hikes when I started with the group,” she says. “At some point, wanting to do my part and pay back MPG for getting me out into the natural world more often, I took advantage of the leadership training that the group provides.”

Now, as mid-week hike coordinator, Leslie has led mostly local hikes. She says she can’t help but think how the mental health values of getting outdoors outweigh even the physical benefits.

The longest hike she has led so far was the recent 10-miler into Carl Lake, which was made longer, she says, by the mounds of snow the group had to hike up and over and the extra paces they had to take to relocate the trail after losing it in the snow.

Although now a retired primary school teacher, Leslie used to go into the classroom on Mondays and tell her kids about the amazing hikes she had taken into the Three Sisters or up to Jefferson Park. Her goal, she says, was to plant a seed into her student’s minds of the wonderful places in Oregon to see and the wonders of the natural world.

“It helps to keep one’s perspectives sharp about what supports life on earth, what real clean air should smell like, how cool the earth can be when it’s green, what amazing distances one can see when the air is clear, and how absolutely pure the sound of a breeze through leaves truly is,” adds Leslie.

The people that have inspired and continue to inspire Leslie are right here in the Marys Peak group. People like Bob Frenkel, Bob Custer and John and Denise Nervik are her role models. As she so eloquently puts it, “They are older and fitter than I am; they are the energizer bunnies of MPG.”

Whether it’s following the “kora,” or pilgrim’s route, around a mountain monastery in Tibet, a multi-day trek to hill tribes in Thailand, or hiking cliffs while going from inn to inn above the Tiger Leaping Gorge in China, Leslie tries to do some type of hiking wherever she goes.

“The great thing about hiking with MPG is that it is filled with people who have also taken wonderful world-wide hikes. We can share our experiences with a sense of wonder and communality,” she adds.

To that end, Leslie believes if you get fit, you can stay fit and have a heck of a good time doing it. And she feels your options for adventure in the natural world stay open as you age, especially if you keep signing up for MPG hikes!
MPG outings provide opportunities to explore our natural environment while learning about the unique flora and fauna of our region and how we can help preserve it. Join in as we check out the special qualities of the Willamette Valley in fall, such as the return of plump green mosses, renewed rivers and streams and the colorful foliage of yellow big leaf maples and other trees. Or take a distant journey with us into the Cascades and camp near Mt. St. Helens. **Contact the leader before each event; space is often limited.**

For additional outings and updates, see our weekly e-mail. Not on the e-mail list? Contact Barry Wulff at wulff@peak.org or by phone at 541-929-6272 to be added.

**Note: For General Outing Rules see page 7**

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**Saturday-Sunday, Aug. 30–Sept. 7**

– **PCT Backpack V**

This backpack continues the trek south on the Pacific Crest Trail, through the Mt. Washington and Three Sisters Wilderness areas. We will hike in a variety of habitats from alpine meadows to Cascade forests and rocky lava fields. **Limited participation.** Difficult. Leader: Ray Drapak, 754-7364, drapak@fsl.orst.edu.

**Saturday, Aug. 30 – Marys Peak Summit, 3 Hikes**

An MPG Labor Day weekend tradition. On all three, great views from the top, from the ocean to the Cascades on a clear day. **(Hike 1)** North Ridge Trail to the Summit. From Woods Creek Road through heavy Douglas fir, cedar, and Noble fir forests. Difficult, 9.4 miles, 2,300 feet elevation gain. Meet at the Wilkinson Hall parking lot (Arnold & 27th) for an 8:00 a.m. departure. Leader: Doris deLespinasse, 753-4775, ddeles@proaxis.com  

**(Hike 2)** East Ridge to Summit. From Conner’s Camp, up though large firs, vistas over the coast range. Moderate, 7 miles, 1,500 feet of elevation gain. Meet at the Wilkinson Hall parking lot (Arnold & 27th) for a 9:00 a.m. departure. Leader: Jane Luther, 758-8279, janeluth@gmail.com  

**(Hike 3)** Meadow Edge and Summit. This year we’ll add an easier option — hike around the meadow, through the trees, and to the top. Easy, 3 miles, 800 feet elevation gain. Meet at the Wilkinson Hall parking lot (Arnold & 27th) for a 10:00 a.m. departure. Leaders: Jim & Nancye Ballard, 752-4441, ballardjn@gmail.com

**Saturday, Sept. 6 – Monument Peak Trail System Loop**

We will begin a 9-mile loop from the Santiam Horse Camp and hike along this beautiful multi-use trail system located in the Santiam State Forest and BLM lands. The system was developed with over 1,000 hours of local volunteer work, and travels through lush diverse forests offering occasional breathtaking views of the Cascade foothills and the Santiam Valley. Moderate, 9 miles, 1,600 feet elevation gain. Meet at the Wilkinson Hall parking lot (Arnold & 27th) for an 8:00 a.m. departure. Leader: Jane Luther, 758-8279, janeluth@gmail.com; Robert Verhoogen.

**Saturday, Sept. 13 – Trail Work on Marys Peak**

The North Ridge Trail near the parking lot has become a gully for water. Help re-shape and fill the tread to get water off the trail. We will hoe, shovel, crowbar and move stones. Bring work gloves, water and lunch. Meet at Bimart parking lot on Philomath Blvd. and 53rd in Corvallis at 8:30 a.m.; return early afternoon. Leaders: Margie Powell, Tom Bucht, Denise Nervik, 752-8241, nervikd@peak.org

**Sunday, Sept. 14 – Beazell Memorial Forest, Dog & People Walk**

With or without a dog, walk the lovely shaded old roads and creekside trails at this Benton County park in Kings Valley, near Philomath. Dogs must be under leash or voice control at all times, be well-behaved and non-aggressive to people and other dogs. Bring water for dogs even though we will have access to creeks in a few places. Moderate, 3 mi./600 feet elevation gain. 9:00 a.m. departure. Leaders: Kay Yates, 754-0463, kyates@peak.org; Monika Shepherd, 754-5994.
Saturday-Tuesday, Sept. 13-16 – Fall Creek – Broken Top Backpack
Experience woody creeks, high alpine meadows, glaciers and mountain lakes in the Three Sisters Wilderness. We’ll go in at Green Lakes, spend two nights camping and exploring near the base of Broken Top, then return via the Soda Creek Trail. 18 miles, 3,000 feet elevation gain with packs plus day hikes. Moderate/difficult. Leader: Larry Davis, 503/390-8210, larrydavis@wvi.com; Lelia Barlow.

Wednesday, Sept. 17 – Hewlett Packard Tour
Join us for a tour of HP’s Corvallis facility. We’ll get an overview, view the wafer fabricating area and product demo center, see a demonstration of the revolutionary HALO video conferencing, and tour their Community Garden and lake. Approximately 1.5 hours. Reservations must be made by September 2. Information required at time of reservation: Full name, country of citizenship, place of employment. Meet behind Super 8 Motel on 2nd St. for a 1:00 p.m. departure. Leader: Marilyn Hinds, 929-7136, mkhinballard@peak.org

Friday-Sunday, Sept. 19-21 – Lewis River Car Camp (full; wait list available)
We’ll camp among fir trees beside the Lewis River at the Lower Falls group camp. This site, in Southern Washington’s Gifford Pinchot National Forest, is rated as a “10” for its scenic location. Hike to falls along the river, to the best viewpoint of Mt. St. Helens, maybe to a cave — see area hikes in Sullivan’s 100 Hikes in NW Oregon. Planned hikes are moderate to difficult; easier trails are available. Contact Leaders: Bob Custer, 745-3994, laststand@exchangetnet.net; Mike Neeley-Brown, 541-752-6052, mnb@coas.oregonstate.edu

Saturday, Sept. 20 – Oregon Gardens
Enjoy the richness of the end of summer at the Oregon Gardens located on 80 acres near historic Silverton. We will walk on a guided tour through some of the more than 20 specialty gardens where we can relax and be dazzled by waterfalls, quiet ponds, fountains, a unique display of conifers, a 400-year-old Signature Oak and lots of unique garden art. Admission is $8; box lunches available if ordered in advance. Pre-register by Sept. 12. Meet at Wilkinson Hall parking lot for a 9:30 a.m. departure. Leader: Ray Drapek, 754-7364, drapek@fsl.orst.edu; alternate contact through Sept. 7: Jane Luther, 758-8279, janeluth@gmail.com.

Sunday, Sept. 21 – Oregon Coast Trail, Cape Perpetua
Visit a seldom seen part of this very scenic area, with a one-way hike that starts near Yachats, climbs to the St. Perpetua viewpoint, and then descends to the visitor center/tidepool area. Moderate, 5 miles, 1,000 feet elevation gain. Meet at the Wilkinson Hall parking lot (Arnold & 27th) for a 9:00 a.m. departure. Preregister; limited to 12 participants. Leader: Clifton Cooper, 760-2543, cliftoncooper2002@yahoo.com

Friday, Sept. 26 – Cascadia Park & Petroglyphs
We’ll walk with a district archeologist to petroglyphs on private land near lovely Cascadia Park. Learn about the history of the area and the tribes that used it. Bring a lunch to enjoy at the site. Easy, 2.5 miles, 100 feet elevation gain. Meet at the Wilkinson Hall parking lot (Arnold & 27th) for a 9:00 a.m. departure. Preregister, limited to 20. Leader: Irene Schopy, 758-8591, iameyers@yahoo.com; Doris deLespinasse.

Sunday, Sept. 28 – Browder Ridge
Near Iron Mountain, but higher and in many ways better. Old growth, stupendous views — and no crowds. We’ll go up the well-graded Gate Creek trail to the upper meadows. Those who wish to can scramble to the rock outcroppings and even better views at the top. Difficult, 8.4 miles, 2,100 feet elevation gain. Meet at the Wilkinson Hall parking lot (Arnold & 27th) for a 9:00 a.m. departure. Leaders: Bruce Encke & Loretta Rivard, 753-6884, bruce.encke@hp.com

Saturday, Oct. 4 – Corvallis Green & Solar Tour
We hope all of you will take a look at the uses of solar power techniques and “green” gardens on this self-guided tour. This is not an MPG activity; it is part of the American Solar Energy Society’s National Solar Tour and is sponsored by Solar CREEK. MPG may host a bike group touring together; watch weekly e-mail for updates. See www.solaroregon.org/resources_education/solar-home-tours/oregon-green-and-solar-tours-2008 for further information about Corvallis and other Oregon tours, including Salem.
Sunday, Oct.  5 – Gordon Lakes
Starting from the Gordon Lakes East trail head, south of House Rock, we’ll hike down to Gordon Meadow, eat lunch and explore. Along the way we will pass two lakes containing cutthroat trout and Soapgrass Mountain, a sheer basalt cliff. Moderate, 7.5 miles, 500 feet elevation gain. Meet at the Wilkinson Hall parking lot (Arnold & 27th) for an 8:00 a.m. departure. Leader: Armand Schoppy, 758-8591, Awtchoppy@yahoo.com; Doris deLespinasse.

Saturday, Oct. 11 – Trail Work, Corvallis
Assist with trail building or maintenance at a city or county park or other area near Corvallis. Bring work gloves, water, lunch. 8:30 a.m.; return mid-afternoon. See weekly e-mail or contact leaders for details, including meeting place. Margie Powell, Tom Bucht, Denise Nervik, 752-8241, nervikd@peak.org

Sunday, Oct. 12 – Three-Fingered Jack Loop
We’ll climb through a burn to an alpine view beneath the craggy summit of Three-Fingered Jack. The return, past three lakes, will include a short, steep downhill scramble. Difficult, 11.4 miles, 1,600 feet elevation gain. Meet at the Wilkinson Hall parking lot (Arnold & 27th) for an 8:00 a.m. departure, or contact leader for Salem departure time/place. Limited to 12; wilderness area. Leader: Larry Davis, 503/390-8210, larrydavis@wvi.com

Sunday, Oct. 19 – Buck Mt. Trail at Silver Creek Falls State Park
During the 7-8 mile walk through evergreen forest and high wetlands, we will start east of the state highway, gain 800 feet in the first 2.75 miles, and then gradually descend over the last 4.5 miles. Moderate, 7-8 miles, 800 feet elevation gain, muddy with more difficult ascent if it’s rained in past 3-4 days. Meet at Wilkinson Hall parking lot (Arnold & 27th) for an 8:00 a.m. departure to avoid crowds. Leader: Robert Verhoogen, 745-5185, rverhoogen@mac.com; Larry Davis.

Sunday, Oct. 19 – Mulkey Creek Loop Family Hike
Able young hikers welcome with adults to join us on this pretty trail over farmland and through a beautiful shaded ravine with giant oaks. Easy, 4.3 miles, 580 feet elevation gain. We’ll leave from the Oak Creek entrance to Bald Hill parking lot at 1:00 p.m.. Leader: Jane Luther, 758-8279, janeluth@gmail.com; Christi Raunig.

Sunday, Oct. 26 – Finley Wildlife Refuge with Refuge Biologist
A mostly open and level walk to explore the less visited south end of this refuge south of Corvallis, in areas that close for the season on Nov. 1. We’ll pass Cheadle Pond and go to Pigeon Butte, accompanied by Molly Monroe, refuge biologist, who will share her knowledge of refuge history and wildlife found there. We may also make a visit to McFadden Marsh. Bring binoculars if you have them. May be some muddy, slippery places. Easy, 3 miles, 250 feet elevation gain. Meet at the Wilkinson Hall parking lot (Arnold & 27th) for a 9:00 a.m. departure. Leader: Karl Hartzell, 758-2275, karlerun@yahoo.com

Saturday, Nov. 1 – Dixon Creek Tributaries & Watershed Tour
We’ll walk in the upper Dixon Creek watershed with Corvallis Water Resources Specialist Diana Sharps, examining features that make a healthy waterway, good for fish, other wildlife, and people. Easy, not more than 4 miles, 600 feet elevation gain, but could be muddy and slippery places. Preregister; space is limited. Meet at the Wilkinson Hall parking lot (Arnold & 27th) for a 10:00 a.m. departure. Leader: Doris deLespinasse, 753-4775, ddeles@proaxis.com; Janet Throop.

Saturday, Nov. 8 – Mushroom Walk
Explore the mushroom world in a local forest with Dr. Nancy Weber, mycologist affiliated with OSU Department of Forest Ecosystems and Society (FES). What’s up, what’s interesting about it? Moderate. Meet at the Wilkinson Hall parking lot (Arnold & 27th) for a 9:00 a.m. departure. Preregister; space is limited. Leader: Marilyn Hinds, 929-7136, mkhinballard@peak.org; Doris deLespinasse.

Sunday, Nov. 16 – Oak Creek to McCulloch in Autumn
The McDonald Forest area has some of the loveliest big leaf maples around, plus streams, mosses, and ferns. We’ll make a loop on roads and trails, through areas where lush green mosses abound, then climbing to the viewpoint at McCulloch Peak. If weather cooperates, we’ll have views of the Willamette Valley and foothills, perhaps even the Cascade Peaks draped in new snow. Moderate/difficult, 8-9 miles, 1,700 feet elevation gain. Meet at the Wilkinson Hall parking lot (Arnold & 27th) for a 10:00 a.m. departure. Leader: Bruce Encke & Loretta Rivard, 753-6884, bruce.encke@hp.com
Saturday, Nov. 22 – Autumn at Fort Hoskins & Beazell Memorial Forest
We’ll visit two Benton County parks, both in Kings Valley, a lovely section of Coast Range foothills near Philomath. In the morning we’ll examine the short trails at Fort Hoskins, with its layers of Native American and European settler history. We’ll lunch in the covered shelter at Ft. Hoskins, with its panoramic views. Then we’ll go to nearby Beazell, where fall foliage can be especially lovely on the Plunkett Creek - South Meadow loop. Moderate, about 5 miles, 1,000 feet elevation gain. Meet at Wilkinson Hall parking lot (Arnold & 27th) for a 10:00 a.m. departure. Leader: Doris deLespinasse, 753-4775, ddeles@proaxis.com

Friday, Nov. 28 – Walk Off the Turkey
A brisk loop walk on Vineyard Mountain roads from the Lewisburg Saddle in McDonald Forest. Good well-drained gravel roads; pleasant forests; occasional vistas over the Coast Range. Moderate, 7 miles, 650 feet elevation gain. Meet at the Wilkinson Hall parking lot (Arnold & 27th) for a 1:00 p.m. departure. Leader: Lelia Barlow, lelia.trips@gmail.com (e-mail preferred); 758-8279

Sunday, Dec. 7 – Peavy Arboretum Stroll
Walk the low-lying trails in this area of McDonald Forest. We will do the Calloway Creek and Forest Discovery trails. Lots of trees, as well as a lake and creek. Easy, 4 miles, 500 feet elevation gain. Meet at the Wilkinson Hall parking lot (Arnold & 27th) for a 1:00 p.m. departure. Leader: Cliff Cooper, 760-2543, cliftoncooper2002@yahoo.com

Sunday, Dec. 14 – Corvallis Area Historic Building Walk
A local-area walk through campus and downtown to waterfront. Led by OSU assistant archivist. Stop along the way for something warm at New Morning Bakery. Easy, 3 fairly level miles. Meet at the Wilkinson Hall parking lot (Arnold & 27th) for a 1:00 p.m. departure. Leaders: Ray Drapek; Karl McCreary, 754-8627, karl.mccreary@oregonstate.edu

Friday, Dec. 26. – Ski, Snowshoe, or Hike
If the snow is ready for us, we’ll do a cross-country ski somewhere in the Cascades; otherwise a snowshoe or a nearby hike. See weekly e-mail for details. Leader: Lelia Barlow, lelia.trips@gmail.com (e-mail preferred), 758-8279

Thursday, Jan. 1 – New Year’s Day Walk, Dimple Hill
Once again, for our traditional New Year walk, we’ll go up a tree-lined gravel road from Oak Creek to Dimple Hill, with views over the valley — perhaps the Cascades, should the weather happen to cooperate. Moderate, 7 miles, 1,100 feet elevation gain. Meet at the Wilkinson Hall parking lot (Arnold & 27th) for a 1:00 p.m. departure. Leader: Doris deLespinasse, 753-4775, ddeles@proaxis.com

General Outing Rules
Contact the leader before each event. Please arrive before the stated time; we leave on time. Dress for the weather; sturdy boots or shoes and rain gear as needed. No jeans or heavy cotton for extended outings. Bring water, sunscreen, snacks and lunch if outing starts in the morning.

Silver Falls, Sunset Bay State Park.

Suggested reimbursement to carpool drivers is $2.50 per person for every hour driven (more for difficult roads). All participants must sign a standard Sierra Club liability waiver before each outing. To access the liability waiver, please see www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter nor the Marys Peak Group is responsible for participants during the trips to and from the trailhead.
SUMMITING THE SEVEN CONTINENTS' HIGHEST PEAKS  
Wednesday, Oct. 8, 7 p.m., Corvallis/Benton County Public Library

Only 200 people have reached the summits of the highest points on all seven continents: Europe, Mt. Elbruz at 18,540 ft. in Russia; N. America, Mt. Denali at 20,320 ft. in Alaska; S. America, Aconcagua at 22,841 ft. in Argentina; Antarctica, Vinson at 16,067 ft. in the Ellsworth Range; Oceania, Carstensz Pyramid at 16,023 ft. in Indonesia; Asia, Mt. Everest at 29,030 ft. in Nepal/Tibet; and Africa, Kilimanjaro at 19,340 feet. We have a member of this elite group right here in our area, Mark Luscher of Albany, who this year completed his dream by successfully climbing Mt. Everest. Come hear about what it takes to prepare and then climb all of these summits and especially what it’s like to reach the top of the world’s highest mountain.

Thursday, Nov. 13, 7 p.m., Corvallis/Benton County Public Library

Dave Metz will describe his experiences skiing and hiking more than 600 miles from the NW coast of Alaska to the Dalton Highway. He nearly starved hiking across a remote part of the Brooks Range, where he didn’t see a single person for 50 days. Facing the arduous days and the tremendous isolation, he willed himself to remain calm to appreciate the vastness of the land, and to connect with wilderness again.

Scenic Grande Ronde River

Rafting take-out point on the scenic Grande Ronde River near Troy, Oregon. See pages 12 & 13 for the full story, Paddle Rafting the Wallowa and Grande Ronde.
What’s Happening, Local

Area Trail Work

The MPG trail work volunteers were active this past spring, and are now looking forward to fall activities. The Corvallis area is blessed with a fine network of hiking trails. By helping to maintain trails after normal wear and tear and storm damage, they will be in good shape for years to come. Will you join us?

Two trail work days are scheduled this fall. Volunteers are needed for all sorts of tasks and welcomed for our upcoming events.

Saturday, Sept. 13 ~ Trail Work, Mary’s Peak, North Ridge Trail. Join MPG for trail work on Mary’s Peak North Ridge Trail (see Outings list, pg. 4, for details).

Saturday, Oct. 11 ~ Trail Work, Corvallis. Assist with trail building or maintenance at a city or county park or other area near Corvallis (see Outings list, pg. 6, for details).

To volunteer, contact a trail work coordinator:

Tom Bucht, 738-1333, tombucht@gmail.com
Denise Nervik, 752-8241, nervikd@peak.org
Margie Powell, 752-5922, margiepowell@comcast.net

Stop the Plastic Bags!

On June 1, China began forbidding the production of ultra-thin plastic bags and forbid its supermarkets and shops from handing out free plastic carriers. China’s cabinet, the State Council, said China uses too many of the bags and fails to dispose of them properly, wasting valuable oil and littering the country. San Francisco banned plastic grocery shopping bags last fall. Wouldn’t it be nice if Oregon banned plastic bags from grocery stores and returned to recyclable paper bags, charging five cents a bag? This is done in other countries. Some stores are now selling reusable bags. There are alternatives. Anyone wish to join a local campaign?
MPG Sierra Club Executive Committee has three positions open this year. Elected candidates will serve two-year terms. Below are the six candidates and their statements. To place your vote for your choice of three candidates, check the corresponding boxes on the attached form at the bottom of the page and mail to the address below. Or, place your vote via e-mail to Steve Ford at sandsford@peak.org.

**Doris deLespinasse, incumbent**—Member for nine years. Frequent outing participant, outing leader, and currently coordinator of the outings schedule. Attends executive committee meetings regularly and participates in other aspects of MPG decision-making. Supports the national Sierra Club’s new, broader focus on smart energy and waste reduction.

**Bruce Encke**—Member of the MPG four years. Participated in many hikes and has become a hike leader. Participated and co-led the MPG on the annual SOLV beach cleanups. Has been working for years in support of environmental issues and loves nature and the outdoors. Is an active member of the HP Sustainability Network. Would like to be on the ExCom to increase his involvement and support of MPG.

**Leslie Hogan, incumbent**—Member of Sierra Club for 10 years. Currently coordinator of mid-week hikes. Volunteers for trail work, on initiatives, canvassing for political candidates with strong environmental records, and with local community groups advocating for stewardship of mature trees. Seeking a second term. Only recently appointed secretary and would like to be a voice on the board for supporting the conservation arm of MPG.

**Ralph Nafziger**—Member since 1980. Participant in 10 National Sierra Club outings and 12 National service trips. Has 35 years of experience as a hiking/backpacking/snowshoeing leader, and served as Chemeketan vice-president, treasurer, auditor, and monthly hike coordinator. Supports the efforts and goals of the MPG; wishes to bring a fresh perspective.

**Randy Selig, incumbent**—Has led trips with the national club and with MPG, and organized river trips for MPG. Has served on boards for the Benton Soil and Water Conservation District, the Greenbelt Land Trust, the NW Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides, and the Institute for Food and Development Policy. Thinks it might be helpful to keep some institutional memory around.

**Christy Stevens**—Member since 2002. Has advocated for environmental issues in multiple venues. Leads and organizes trips with the MPG. Snowshoes frequently with the MPG, and some cross-country skiing. Would like to strengthen our relationship and services for current members, reach out to prospective members, be accessible, and advocate for environmental issues. Welcomes opportunity to serve MPG and her community.

Please check the box adjacent to your three choices only. All ballots must be received by November 1.

- Doris de Lespinasse, incumbent
- Bruce Encke
- Leslie Hogan, incumbent
- Ralph Nafziger
- Randy Selig, incumbent
- Christy Stevens

Mail form to: MPG Elections, PO Box 863, Corvallis, OR. 97339.
Electronic votes may be sent via email to: sandsford@peak.org, with MPG BALLOT in the subject line.
LAND CONSERVATION: WHO’S SAVING OUR LANDS?

by Karlene McCabe

Oregon is beautiful in the light of summer. In the unmanaged forests or out in the fields, the flowers bloom. Resident birds and butterflies brighten our spirits. As children we had plenty of opportunities to explore the natural world.

It is the natural Oregon we have all come to know and love. Yet, saving it for future generations is a challenge. The Willamette valley is constantly under the pressures of growth and development. Open spaces are lost parcel by parcel; a little here, a little there. Soon large chunks are gone.

What organizations are in the business of working to conserve our open spaces for future generations?

Conserving open spaces is the province of non-profit organizations such as 1000 Friends, The Greenbelt Land Trust and The Nature Conservancy. These organizations work to protect Oregon lands that provide for scenic enjoyment, public recreation and education, natural habitats, maintenance of productive forest and farmlands, and the conservation of historically important areas.

In all cases it takes financing both public and private to preserve these important lands. State and federal grants are available to help with the costs of purchasing lands but most of these grants require a “match” from the organization that is purchasing the property. Private donations help to build the match funds that are critical for conservation of properties. Private donations also help to fund the transaction costs of pulling the lands deals together.

These transaction costs include the cost of property appraisals, environmental assessments, legal review of documents and staff costs for negotiating the land purchase. Many of the government grants programs do not cover these costs.

The Greenbelt Land Trust (www.greenbeltlandtrust.org/) is a local organization working in Marion, Polk, Linn and Benton Counties. They work with local landowners to conserve land by outright purchase of land or by purchasing development and sometimes agricultural and water rights so that the land will be maintained for conservation purposes in perpetuity.

They provide an important option for landowners who wish to conserve their land and need to find alternatives to developing their properties in order to receive some return on their property holdings.

Requests for these conservation services have grown over the last 10 years with the Greenbelt receiving inquiries each month from landowners interested in conserving their properties. Property owners see the face of the Willamette Valley changing and want to find ways to conserve the lands they love.

As an example the Greenbelt recently completed acquisition of a conservation easement on a 199-acre property known as Lone Star Ranch. The property contains significant oak woodlands and upland prairie habitats that are rare in the Willamette Valley. It is zoned rural residential 2 acre minimum and could have been developed with up to 92 homes. The family wanted to find a way to conserve the property, continue to live on the land and pass the property on to their children who will continue to run the ranch. Using funds from the Bonneville Power Administration the Greenbelt was able to purchase a conservation easement on the property that conserved the oak woodlands, upland prairies and grasslands.

In addition to Lone Star Ranch, the Greenbelt is working with four other landowners to help conserve 600 acres of wetlands, oak woodlands, upland prairie and streamside habitats. Two of the properties are located along the main stem of the Willamette River in Linn and Polk counties. The other properties are located in Benton County in the Luckiamute and Muddy Creek watersheds. They are purchasing conservation easements on all four properties using a combination of funds from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, United States Fish and Wildlife Service and BPA.

The Greenbelt is working to secure $4,000,000 from these sources to purchase conservation easements on 800 acres of land in 2008. They need to raise $200,000 in private funds by September 30 in order to meet the match requirement for these grants.

Please consider donating to the Greenbelt to help them reach the goal to protect 800 acres of rare native habitats in the Willamette Valley. Contact Karlene McCabe at Karlene@greenbeltlandtrust.org, or by phone 541-752-9609, or mail contributions to P.O. Box 1721, Corvallis, OR. 97339. You can view additional information about the projects at their website at www.greenbeltlandtrust.org.

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In the northeastern corner of Oregon lies a superb white-water rafting river — the Grande Ronde. A group of 12 intrepid MPG members made it their goal to raft it this past June. “It was a wonderful trip: beautiful scenery, great people, perfect weather, good food, and an expert team of river guides,” said Christy Stevens, trip leader, as she described the recent Mary’s Peak Group expedition on the Wallowa and Grande Ronde Rivers.

On Saturday, June 14, we began our journey by car-pooling to Minam State Park, northeast of La Grande. We camped there the night before our raft trip, and again when we returned after three days on the river. At Minam State Park, we met five members of the Free Spirit Rivers rafting company, who awaited us there with campsites, rafts, and dinner. Under the leadership of Dawn Jones, two guides would serve as paddle raft captains, and three would pilot the gear-filled oar rafts as we all made our way northward for 39 miles from Minam to Mud Creek, near Troy.

We had final safety talks and packing sessions, and then after breakfast on Sunday, we were ready to go. We arranged ourselves six to a paddle raft, and with captains Michelle Overall and Patricia Benner, we were on the river. The first 10 miles of the trip were on the lower section of the Wallowa River. The headwaters of this river are mostly within the Eagle Cap Wilderness of the Wallowa Mountains. Snow pack in the Elkhorn Mountains also feeds the Grande Ronde river system, so the water was high, fast, and cold!

In this free-flowing river, water levels change rapidly, depending on the year’s snow pack and local weather. This river system runs on a downhill gradient of approximately 19 feet per mile. This year, the volume of water was higher than average. Water volume is described in cubic feet per second, with 1 “cfs” equal to 7.5 gallons of water flowing each second. The mean volume for June is 4,300 cfs. During the time we were on the river, its volume was 8,900 cfs! At this level, the river runs 5-8 miles per hour. On Monday, we traveled 7.5 miles in our first hour on the river.

This river system has primary rapids of classes II and III, with changes in designation depending on water levels. There were many standing waves and roller waves because of the high volume of water. We thoroughly enjoyed going through Minam Roller Rapids, Redrock Rapids, Blind Falls Rapids, Sheep Creek Rapids, and Martin’s Misery.

In 1988, the Wallowa and Grande Ronde Rivers were designated as Oregon State Scenic Waterways. That same year, components of the river system were designated by the U.S. Congress as National Wild and Scenic Rivers. As such, there are no roadways within the area, and motorized boats are not allowed. The public lands along the Wallowa and Grande Ronde rivers are administered by the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, and the states of Oregon and Washington.

Some primitive, undeveloped campsites are available on a first-come, first-served basis. There were a few groups of fishermen and other paddle rafters on the river, so we tried to choose a campsite and begin to set up camp by early afternoon each day. Within this wild and scenic river area, regulations mandate that a camping group be limited to 25 people. The group must carry drinking water, a fire pan, and a containerized portable toilet system. All solid waste, campfire ash, and debris must be packed out of the river corridors.

The river corridor is a complex ecosystem of natural features, spectacular scenery, and a variety of plant and animal life. The first section of our trip was within steep, rugged canyon walls of Columbia River basalt, dense evergreen forests, and grassy ridges.

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THE BENCHMARK

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This gradually changed to rolling hills and shallower river banks at the Mud Creek take-out site.

Native Americans used these river canyons as travel corridors and camps, and for plant-gathering, hunting, and fishing. The Wallowa band of the Nez Perce were inhabitants of this particular area. We had informative evening presentations about the Nez Perce by Patricia Benner of Free Spirit Rivers. In honor of the Nez Perce, Patricia gave us each a trade bead and then assisted us in making necklaces as reminders of these forerunners to this river area.

We were fortunate to have naturalists within our group who are experts in such topics as geology, wildflowers, birds, mammals, and reptiles. Among the wildlife we sighted and identified during the trip were a western diamondback rattlesnake, a Rocky Mountain cow elk, bats, mule deer, and Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep (three ewes and three nursing lambs made their homes on the ridge just across the river from one of our campsites). We saw tiger swallowtail butterflies, an adult male bald eagle, yellow warblers, house wrens, song sparrows, Lewis’s woodpecker, common mergansers, American dippers, a soaring pair of adult golden eagles, and a spotted sandpiper with four eggs in her nest.

The wildflowers were magnificent. In camp and along the river banks were purple and sulphur lupines, columbine, Indian paintbrush, queen’s cup, yarrow, balsamleaf arrowroot, scarlet gilead, mock orange, camas, and other spots of bright color that we were unable to identify.

We arrived at the Mud Creek take-out point on Tuesday afternoon, June 17. A few cars had been shuttled to this point, so we shared the ride back to Minam State Park. Along the way, we drove along a switchback gravel road and through almost-deserted towns to the Joseph Canyon Overlook, where we had wonderful views of the snow-capped Wallowa Mountains. We spent our last night of the trip back at Minam State Park, and then on Wednesday, June 18, we reluctantly returned to civilization. We agreed that this expedition should become a standard offering for the Marys Peak Group.

Front Row, l to r: Michelle Overall, Dawn Jones, Patricia Benner & Al Grapel (Free Spirit Rivers). Second Row, l to r: Pat Smythe, Marcia Shapiro, Arthur Shapiro, Christy Stevens, Marcia Hoak & Kathy Peterson. Back Row, l to r: Bob Smythe, Rob Gould, Tony Howell (FSR), Sue Cowles, Tim Cowles, Karl McCreary & Bruce Peterson.
Deep within the Vermillion Cliffs of Colorado Plateau lies a spectacular and challenging multi-day backpacking opportunity. Paria Canyon is a 38-mile slit in the beautiful and little-visited Bureau of Land Management wilderness that straddles southern Utah and northern Arizona. The source of water for the Paria River is high in Bryce Canyon National Park.

Only competent and ambitious backpackers dare take the plunge and enter the Vermillion Cliffs Wilderness. There are a host of obstacles to finding potable water, avoiding the possible sweeping flash floods and ever-present quicksand, as well as dodging daytime searing heat or freezing nighttime temperatures. Nevertheless, the rewards are extraordinary.

In mid-April of this past year, I found myself standing at the White House Trailhead late in the morning along with six companions from the Salem Chemeketans hiking group. We were there ready to take on this wildlands challenge. Each of us was laden with gear, food, and water, and feeling fit as a fiddle. A 50-pound pack rested comfortably on each back, with five liters of water and plenty of dried food for six days.

There was high, light bleakness to the 4,280-foot trailhead. The river and its canyon were not immediately apparent. The feeling was that of an outwash plain. The sun, high in the sky, washed out the details of the landscape. Each of us donned dark-tinted sunglasses. We began to walk over mounds of grey-brown gravel, through small drainage areas to access the main drainage of the Paria. With puffy white clouds sailing overhead, the warm breeze felt good. However, when we headed into the canyon, occasional gusts of wind forced us to duck our heads and stand with our backs to the wind. Tumbleweeds passed us at a good pace; some were swept up and taken high in the sky.

This first day, we were to make our way to the confluence of Paria Canyon and Buckskin Gulch, 7.5 miles away. As we approached the river, little more than two-tenths of a mile from the van, we encountered a sign indicating that the trail would be in the watercourse. This was not going to be a boot walk, but one done in sandals or trail running sneakers. Our first steps into the water quickly reminded us of how very cold snowmelt can be. We were going to be in this river for nearly all of the remainder of this trip.

Within an hour’s walk, the canyon walls were closing in. They were of decorative salmon-red Navajo sandstone with elaborate cross bedding, much like the red rock formations of other areas in Utah I have explored. At one point, sand rained down on us from high above. The powerful forces that decorated the stable rock continue to work.

After a couple of hours, we selected a shady spot for a midday snack. Here we sat and attempted to absorb in our minds the various geological shapes. We used our imaginations and pointed out to each other various animal heads or fort-like structures. Before long, we were making our way into the narrowest portions of the sinuous canyon, barely 15 feet wide, with walls towering 800 feet above. The sun never reaches some of these constricted portions of the Paria. Standing in the middle of the stream and looking up, we could make out little of the sky. Our voices echoed during normal conversation.

By late afternoon, we reached the confluence with Buckskin Gulch. It was practically dry. After making a slight detour up the gulch to replenish our water supply, we continued downstream about 10 minutes to a high spot, safe from a potentially raging river. In the past, thunderstorms far away have generated walls of water racing through the canyon, sweeping with them everything that wasn’t

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rooted or in a safe haven. Death from drowning lurked for those who did not seek high ground.

Most visitors to the Canyon do not venture beyond this point; the challenges to safety continue to increase. Since the confluence has several places for tenting, a large number of visitors make this their destination. Having walked 7.5 miles this day, we scouted the area and found a suitable spot for our tents on a sandy rise about 100 feet above the water’s edge. From there we could look down on the river. We watched it, from where it appeared around a bend in the canyon upstream through to where it passed around a bend farther down the canyon.

We decided to make our second day a layover day and explore Buckskin Gulch. We strapped on lightweight daypacks filled with food and water for our exploring mission. Buckskin Gulch is much narrower for a longer distance than is Paria Canyon, and it has many more challenging obstacles. About a half-mile up Buckskin, we encountered a massive series of rocks. There were alternate ways to cross the massifs. One involved squeezing the pack and then the body through very narrow cracks. Another possibility was to go overland with the assistance of ropes. Putting aside my claustrophobic fears, I chose the former — always worrying about a slight shift in the formation. An inch here or there, and I would be history. Others chose the rope option.

After meeting on the other side, we hoped we had encountered our last major obstacle. No more than 200 yards farther along, we encountered a narrow 15-foot passage filled with water the color of café-au-lait. How deep it was, we didn’t know. Would it be quicksand? That was entirely possible. A more venturesome member of our team stepped forth. Fortunately, he found sturdy footing with water only 18 inches deep.

Soon we heard voices, many voices. Within a couple of minutes, a family of six came trudging toward us. They were making a loop, coming down Buckskin and going up and out on the Paria walk we had covered the day before. They were making it a day trip without heavy packs. With quick exchanges of “hellos,” we passed each other. Their voices soon were silenced by distance.

By mid-afternoon, we were far into the narrows of the gulch. What an eerie feeling! There’s no vegetation in a gorge of this design, not only because of a lack of light, but because most everything gets swept away in the periodic raging waters that scour the walls and floor.

We turned around by early afternoon and retraced our steps. There’s always much to be learned and seen from an alternate perspective of the landscape. The time of day brings different shadows, temperatures, and availability of water. At a wide point in the gulch that had a few shrubs and a grand cottonwood, I encountered a raven and a falcon bantering. Their different individual cries of challenge or warning became louder and louder as they circled and descended. Finally the raven, taking the plunge, landed, and picked up something from the floor. He then took off and flew in one direction for perhaps a hundred yards, turned and flew in the opposite direction another hundred yards. He did this several times, to gain altitude. Finally, after reaching the rim, he drifted out of sight with his prize. He was an intruder. The falcon returned to his perch, high above on the wall of the gulch.

A desert coolness set in as the late afternoon progressed, with deep shadows stretching across the canyon floor. By dinner time, we were all dressed in nearly every bit of clothing we had, including full rain suits for breaking the wind. We could sense that the temperatures might fall to near freezing before morning, which they did. I huddled near my small gas stove for warmth; a freeze-dried dinner and a hot cup of tea went down well. Campfires are not permitted in the wilderness; nor was there any wood to be found. On the canyon rim to the east appeared a gibbous moon. We broke out our cameras to record the view.

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There’s something special about sleeping in the desert. One feels so alone, so much a part of the landscape. The feel and sound of the wind is different from that found in a forest. Light gusts are followed by periods of deepening stillness. For us, the wee hours of the morning, after the moon had set, brought out a beautiful display of stars in all directions. Lying in a somnolent state, I listened to the wind sweeping the canyon walls above. When light finally returned, the canyon wren called to us.

While the desert nights can be bone chilling in April, the days are usually comfortable. By staying near the canyon walls, we could easily find relief from any undesired heat. Whatever winds there were during the night had vanished by the time we resumed our journey. There was no hurry to get moving; today our destination of Big Spring was an easy five miles. We suspected that the mid-day heat would not be a challenge; but it would be warming, nevertheless.

We were now alone on our journey. Not only alone as a group, but we took opportunities to walk alone as individuals. Trekking down the middle of the stream, we spread out, and only the moving sounds of our bodies in the canyon were evident. Often we were out of sight of each other, because the canyon meanders a lot in its middle portions. This allowed us to enjoy a tremendous sense of place. One walks a great distance in these meanders, even while taking shortcuts across sandy berms, but covers little overland linear distance. One minute we were facing the sun; the next, it was on our backs.

The canyon would repeatedly widen and narrow on the way to Big Spring. Parts of the canyon remain forever cool, for sure. Along this section were massive arches to be admired. There were walls of maidenhair ferns generated by seeps from the walls next to the river’s edge. More and more, we were seeing shrubs on the river’s banks that were strewn with debris from past storms. In many instances, the flotsam would be 12 feet above the river’s edge. A reminder, indeed, of the precariousness of our position.

Big Spring was a delightful campsite, with cottonwoods that provided more than adequate shade. As with all of our nights we set aside an area for preparation of meals and good conversation. What would we discuss in depth tonight? Would it be the presidential race — advantages of Clinton vs. Obama? Or would it be the decline of the airlines, the gyrations of the markets, health maintenance, digital cameras, peak oil and prospective alternatives? Yes, we did talk about backpacking. How could we get the weight down without sacrificing basic comfort and essentials? Each of us brought our different viewpoints to the discussion. Lively they were, and each of us gained greater perspective on various issues.

As we moved downstream from our initial trailhead, the Paria gained in volume. When we started, we were in water to our ankles. Now it was mid-calf depth, and greater in a few spots. I knew that if I stumbled with my pack on, I’d be in serious trouble. With our being so spread out, it would be minutes before any help would arrive should any of us falter. I learned not to walk in the eddies that formed below the larger river boulders. My sticks helped in the deeper and wider sections. The sticks acted as feelers in this cappuccino-colored water. My sneakers were constantly filling with and emptying of sand.

By the morning of our fourth day, I noticed a distinct stiffness to my trail runners and lower pant legs. It was more than an issue of drying out after being in the water. They were encrusted with a white lime; salts remained after the evaporation. The increasing alkalinity of the stream was the culprit. As I collapsed my tent, gathered my gear, and tanked up with five liters of water, I slipped those cold and crusty items on. I was relieved to immerse my feet and legs in the water; the stiff scratchiness disappeared. My 50-pound pack continued to ride comfortably on my shoulders and hips.

Looking forward to another great day on this watery canyon trail, we headed out for the Shower Spring campsite, 10 miles downstream. As the canyon widened, the April desert warmth was refreshing, but the canyon closed again at mile 16 with a massive boulder jam. Without words of alarm, we quietly grouped and picked our way carefully through the assemblage, being very careful to avoid shade-obscured deep pools, only to disperse again after passing the challenge. The rhythm of the group was becoming apparent, personal space when appropriate, quiet support for overcoming challenges. All for one, one for all.

The day was warming, reaching into the high 80’s. I was relieved to shed my pack for a look into The Hole, a slick rock cavern at least 100 feet high and wide and 300 feet deep into the cliff side. Fracturing of the sandstone with scouring by a once-raging river...
created this beautiful, cool, refreshing amphitheater. My voice echoed off the walls, punctuated by the dripping of seeps. I lingered.

Off again into the sun, pumping with my sticks. I felt my growing strength and at the same time a tiring of the muscles. Was adrenaline obscuring my body’s natural limitations? I kept going and noticing the sandy terraces, with box elders and cottonwoods becoming more abundant. Sandstone cliffs on each side of the widening river course soared well over a thousand feet. Soon an opportunity came to shed my pack again. This time I wanted to explore a dry side canyon to view Wraith Arch, a mere mile away. It is a true arch, with plenty of space behind its sweeping truss — the largest span in the entire Paria River drainage. Without a pack, the 600-foot climb was a joy to make. I was pleased that the arch and the backdrop were in a shadow; my camera could capture its splendor.

The afternoon progressed, and it was time to move on from this side diversion. Shower Spring campsite lay a few miles down stream. The variety of the sights and challenges had been enough for me to absorb on this day. I wanted to savor what the mind had accumulated and replenish the body with food.

Backpacking meals are a challenge for me. Invariably, I opt for freeze-dried, two-person dinners. At an average of a dry six ounces per dinner, they are an acceptable weight for the nourishment they provide. Over the years, I’ve come to know what I like and what I don’t like. Once the stove is fired up to heat the water, dinner is but 10 minutes away, and there’s no pots, pans, or dishes to wash. Eat them right out of the pack. I’m a fan of Mountain House® dinners, from Oregon Freeze Dry, located in Albany. A local product.

Shower Spring is a super seep between the emerging red sandstone Kayenta Formation and the overlying Navajo Sandstone. Fresh, potable water was pouring out into a pool. It was hidden behind the bushes on the opposite side of the river from our campsite. We were able to clean up and get the salts off of our bodies. Being refreshed and cleaned, we all got a better night’s sleep.

We were now 16 miles from Lees Ferry, our destination. Another beautiful day dawned. Yet, the worry of the heat build-up would be of concern. Could we do it all in one day? Wise to take two, of course, especially in the desert heat. Potable water would become scarce. Would the few springs still be flowing? How far could we go before we got into a no-return situation? Each of us would be calculating the risk of our decisions. Do I carry emergency water for others? Would they be doing it for me?

In every instance of the trip so far, we either filtered our water or sterilized it with a SteriPEN® water purifier. The battery operated SteriPEN® is a recent development for water purification. This eight-ounce device emits a UV light to destroy microbes and has been found to be highly effective. Pump filters are twice this weight.

We decided to play it safe (and be wise) and head for a campsite eight miles away. After a few miles, we were able to leave the stream behind and head out on a high overland route. Finally, I could put my boots on. My feet and back appreciated the support. The high route sported lots of desert plants in bloom. The walls of the canyon widened on both sides of the river, opening a grand panoramic vista to the south. The Navajo Sandstone was now 3,000 feet above the river.

The day became warmer and warmer as time passed. There was no shade as we picked our way through a five-mile-long stretch of boulder field. The temperature rose to a ‘cool’ 89 degrees. Trekking in the desert in this heat is hazardous. I could feel the wobbliness in my stride; I became a sloppy walker as the day went on. I drank often from my Platypus® reservoir. Yet, I knew that I had to conserve my total supply for the evening and morning meals, as well as the next day.

Soon, I was wondering where the campsite might lie. There were few landmarks to guide us with our maps. Was it over there under that lone cottonwood, or was it the one in the distance? We finally assembled and sent two of our companions ahead without packs in search of the campsite mentioned in the guides. We were all happy when they returned shortly with good news. It was a quarter of a mile ahead. Picking up our packs, we trekked the final leg, weary from a sun-drenched day. Shedding our packs at the site, we sat on a few dead limbs under a lone cottonwood for perhaps 30 minutes, before beginning to set up our tents.

A quiet, warm evening made sleeping comfortable. We planned on getting out early before suffering another walk in the mid-day sun. We were up by 5:30 a.m. and off by 7 a.m. We were now hiking through a scrub forest with a network of trails; there was no main trail. We knew if we headed south and kept the river on our left, we were on course for Lees Ferry. Like horses heading for the barn, our heads down, we trudged on, passing evidences of bygone ranch facilities.

We finally reached an old cemetery. Deciding we didn’t want to make this our final destination, we kept walking. We could see the area where our shuttle vehicle was parked about a mile away. To get there, I decided to take to the water again. I slipped back into my crusty running shoes and got myself in the middle of the stream. There I was trekking the last half-mile down the Paria, knee deep in tawny, silt laden, alkaline water, and enjoying every minute of it.

As I climbed the sandy embankment out of the river at the Lees Ferry parking lot at about 11:15 a.m., I thought of how beautiful this 42-mile trek was through 85 million years of sedimentary time. It was over; a true sense of accomplishment remained. As we gathered by the freshwater hoses that the BLM had provided in the parking lot, we squirmed each other like children.

We revived our bodies with showers, food and comfortable beds at the Marble Canyon Lodge near the edge of the Colorado. As deserts treks go, I thought this to be the best that I had done. Will I go backpacking in the desert again? Only if my body will let me. I can always dream of the Fish River Canyon in Namibia.
NEAT STUFF!

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COMING THIS FALL

Third in the series of trail maps from Sky Island Graphics.
This map will cover coastal trails in Northwest Oregon as well as the trails in Saddle Mountain State Park.

Great stocking-stuffer!

Franz Dolp’s book of poetry “Leaves On The River”

The book is organized into two sections, beginning with a meditation on lessons learned from nature through a year’s seasons. From the first poem entitled “The Snow Comes Quietly,” traveling through time to the last line of the final poem, his journey ends as it began, in “white stillness.” All the while, Dolp clings to his mentor, the natural world, and contemplates what life teaches to the living. In section two, “River,” the poet takes a similar voyage through space, from the source to the headland, always listening, ever discovering, and continuously absorbing an acquired wisdom taught by the undomesticated world.

THE BENCHMARK
Get Involved!

You joined the Sierra Club because you like the outdoor life, or because you want to support the environment. The Marys Peak Group offers opportunities to engage more actively in both. Here are a few areas where you can become involved.

• **Trail maintenance/building** – Interested in working on local and regional trails? There’s an opportunity for joining with a great group of folks for trail building and maintenance in the Corvallis area. Contact: Denise Nervik at nervikd@peak.org

• **Leading outings** – Do you enjoy working with people in group settings? How about leading an outing, such as a snowshoe or ski trip, hike, rafting adventure, backpack or special field trip of interest? Training is available. Contact: Doris deLespinasse at ddeles@proaxis.com

• **Conservation/Sustainability** – You may be interested in specific environmental issues. Would you like to get involved in a specific conservation issue? Do you want to repair environmental damage? Would you be willing to attend meetings of government agencies to monitor their activities and testify at hearings? Contact: Barry Wulff at wulffb@peak.org.

• **Political activism** – How about engaging in lobbying? Would you be willing to become involved in political issues relating to the environment or supporting a candidate for election? Would you join with a team to interview a candidate for a potential endorsement? Training is available. Contact: Marilyn Hinds at mkhinballard@peak.org.

• **Graphics/Illustration** – Have you graphics and illustration skills? Have access to Adobe InDesign or Photoshop? Like making displays for events and booths? Contact: Barry Wulff at wulffb@peak.org.

• **Fundraising** – Do you like to promote activities for organizations? Like to meet people? How about producing concerts or managing a party? Do you have fundraising skills? Contact: Barry Wulff at wulffb@peak.org.

• **Membership** – Do you like to communicate with people? Are you able to organize tabling events? Help assure the future of the environment by getting more people interested and involved in MPG activities. Contact: Kay Yates at kyates@peak.org

• **Writing/photography** – Do you like to write? Would you like to research an issue and then write about it? Are you handy with a digital camera? Want to show off your camera skills? Contact: Lori Fluge-Brunker at flugelb@linnbenton.edu

We Need Your Photos!

Sixteen MPG’rs enjoyed a wonderful tour and luncheon at The Thyme Garden in Alsea on June 11. Rolfe Hagen started by taking the group along a feeder creek of the North Fork of the Alsea, while he told us about their attempts to preserve and restore salmon spawning habitat. Then he led us on a grand tour through the organic garden, which displays plants grown for a multitude of uses: culinary, medicinal, dyeing, dried flowers, attracting butterflies, honey production, etc. This event was a feast for all our senses. A return visit is in order, for sure.

*Photo by Barry Wulff*
Are You Registered to Vote?

We believe Sierra Club members should be voters.
If you have never registered to vote in Oregon, you must register at least 21 days before Election Day; this year that is by October 16. If you were registered in Oregon but have since moved to a new location, you must re-register. Ballots will not be forwarded from your old address. You can re-register right up to Election Day.

Registration forms are available online from the Oregon Secretary of State Election Division at: www.sos.state.or.us/elections/votreg/vreg.htm

Or, visit your local country clerk to obtain the necessary form. Please register and vote.

Marys Peak Group Political Endorsements

ANNABELLE JARAMILLO for Benton County Commissioner

Annabelle Jaramillo is running for her third term as Benton County Commissioner. Along with her many responsibilities and duties as County Commissioner she is, by her own words “an avid advocate for the conservation of natural resources and wildlife.” By her actions, she has supported the Corvallis to the Sea Trail, the Corvallis to Albany Bike Trail, and development of other local trails. She has supported Marys Peak Group’s trail work activities for the county as well as supported the development of several county parks that have trails (Beazell and Ft. Hoskins).

Annabelle has supported the Marys Peak Natural Resource Interpretative Center in Philomath. She has been involved in and supported a long-term water management plan for the county. Annabelle has earned and deserves the endorsement of the Marys Peak Group.

JAY DIXON for Benton County Commissioner

Jay Dixon is running for his third term as Benton County Commissioner. His primary focus has been on children, justice and law enforcement; however he has been supportive of conservation issues as well. He has lent his support to the Corvallis to the Sea Trail, Marys Peak Group activities in trail maintenance, Marys Peak Natural Interpretative Center and water management planning. Marys Peak Group is pleased to endorse Jay Dixon as Benton County Commissioner.
**Past Outings**

**Local Wine Tour**

On Saturday, July 12, 14 participants enjoyed a tour and tastings at five Corvallis and Philomath wineries. The day started with a picnic lunch at Lumos. The leader *par excellence*, Steve Ford, not only drove the rented bus, but also entertained the group with the next winery’s history and a description of their best-known products. Wineries visited were Lumos, Cardwell Hill, Airlie, Emerson and Belle Vallée.

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**Luckiamute Natural Area Outing**

On Tuesday, May 6, the MPG led 26 people on a hike through both the south and north parcels of the Luckiamute State Natural Area, which occupies about 900 acres where the Luckiamute and Santiam Rivers join the Willamette. This beautiful state-owned land, which is still under development, straddles the Benton-Polk county line and is regarded as a high priority location for restoring native habitats and multiple ecological functions of the river floodplain.
Oregon’s mid-ocean coast played host to our 2008 Memorial Day Weekend car-camping trip. Sixteen people participated in the traditional weekend camping trip, which was led by Tom Bucht. We were based at the Sunset Bay State Park campground outside of Coos Bay. Except for the drive down on Friday, the weather treated us to some perfect conditions for hiking and enjoying the out-of-doors. The group proved to be highly compatible, even with tents pitched in tight quarters. Ages ranged from teens to the 70s, and everyone came away with the glow one gets from enjoying positive experiences.

We headed out at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, walking south past Sunset Bay beach to Shore Acres State Park. After a few miles of winding our way through a canopy of rustic coastal trees and shrubbery, it was a surprise to come out to some formal English and Japanese gardens resplendent with large multicolored azaleas and rhododendrons in full bloom. We continued on to Simpson Reef overlook, where there was a bachelor party of sea lions conducting themselves loudly and boisterously on the rocks below. Docents were on hand to explain many intriguing facts and answer questions about the sea lions. We continued on to Cape Arago State Park and descended to the South Cove tide pools for lunch, where we sat on the driftwood and scavenged large strings of kelp.

On the way back, we were treated to the scene of a mother sea lion nursing her pup on the deserted beach below. Upon sensing our presence, she hurriedly herded the little one back into the water. We were thrilled by a bald eagle that soared so close it was almost as if he were posing for us. When we reached the formal gardens once again, some decided to linger there, while others opted for a longer return route, following the edge of the cliff along the shoreline. This group encountered some amazing rock formations created by wind and water; it seemed as though we were wandering through an alien planet. We hiked a total of 10 miles on this first day, which made the hot showers and campfire camaraderie after dinner most welcome.

Sunday morning greeted us with blue skies and sunshine, and we left early for Golden and Silver Falls State Park, about an hour’s drive northeast of Coos Bay. We hiked a total of about 4 miles to the bottom of Golden Falls, then to the bottom of Silver Falls, followed by a climb to the top of Golden Falls, where we could see the water crash precipitously down into the depths of the forest. It was truly spectacular scenery, well worth the trip.

After lunch at the picnic tables spaced around the parking area for the falls, we headed back to Charleston and visited the South Slough Estuary. Completely different sights and smells teased our senses as we walked along a maze of boardwalks through giant skunk cabbage and other marsh plants, out onto two dikes heading into the slough, where we saw a grey heron and were able to watch the tide oozing back into the estuary in small gentle spurts, as though echoes of waves on the distant ocean.

The evening campfire this night was spirited, with shared stories, s’mores, Daryl’s Famous Decadent Chocolate Cookies, and much laughter.

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On Saturday, May 3, 20 members of the MPG were treated to a special tour of the new 1,244-acre Coburg Ridge Nature Conservancy easement property northeast of Eugene. Jean Jancaitis and Charlie Quinn from the Nature Conservancy led the group for 6.5 miles through various portions of the property to the top of 2,000-foot Mt. Baldy. Atop the mountain under sunny skies, there were spectacular views toward Eugene and to the south. The property is not open to the public.

It was another truly very special and “memorable” Memorial Day trip.

Spring at Coburg Ridge

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