The Environmental Threat We Would Rather Ignore: Overconsumption

by Nate Bellinger

When the population of the world reached seven billion people in October of 2011, many environmentalists used the occasion to renew their claims that overpopulation is the foremost environmental threat we are facing and will lead to ecological destruction and natural resource deficits. Overpopulation is definitely an important issue that we all should take seriously. However, in addition to overpopulation, an equal, if not greater, threat to the environment is overconsumption of finite natural resources. Here, I argue that overconsumption by the world’s wealthiest people, and the negative externalities of this overconsumption, is one of the most pressing threats to our environment and something that we should all be paying more attention to and be thinking about ways to address.
Blaming overpopulation alone for the environmental problems that we are facing is a too simplistic approach; because the point at which the Earth is “overpopulated,” or put differently, has reached its carrying capacity, necessarily depends on how many resources people are consuming. An overly simplistic example may help illustrate this point. Say there are 100 units of fresh water on Earth. If everyone consumed 20 units of freshwater, Earth’s carrying capacity would be five people. If however, everyone consumed one unit of water, Earth’s carrying capacity would be 100 people. Thus, population and consumption are inextricably linked – the more people consume, the fewer people Earth can support. If we did not consume so many resources, population would not necessarily be such a pressing environmental problem.

Overconsumption exists when resources are consumed at an unsustainable level as measured by the ecosystem’s capacity. This is a problem because we live on a planet with finite natural resources. Some of the most critical natural resources that we rely on include freshwater, forests, topsoil, biodiversity, marine fish stocks, and clean air.

Today, we find ourselves facing a situation where overconsumption of natural resources is contributing significantly to deforestation, overdrawn rivers and aquifers, landscape degradation from mining, and other environmental problems. Furthermore, the negative externalities of this overconsumption are polluting rivers and oceans, contributing to climate change, and making people sick. It is time that we recognize overconsumption as one of the more serious threats facing our environment and begin thinking about ways to address the problem.

**Overconsumption in Developed Countries**

The world’s wealthiest billion people, primarily living in developed countries like the United States, consume far more resources than is ecologically sustainable on average. We buy cell phones (which we upgrade every two years); we have TVs, video game consoles, and cable boxes in multiple rooms in our house; we buy lots of cars (which are much bigger than they need to be); our houses (which are also unnecessarily large) contain appliances such as air conditioners, dryers, dishwashers, and microwaves; and we are constantly buying new clothes, shoes, toys, and other household items. Consuming these products is not necessarily bad, but increasingly we are consuming these things excessively and are discarding and replacing things that are still perfectly functional. For example, two-thirds of appliances that are disposed of still work.

In addition to all the “stuff” we consume, we also consume an inordinate amount of fossil fuels – coal, oil, and natural gas. These fuels power the cars and planes that enable us to travel around the world, heat and cool our homes, and provide us with electricity for our homes and for manufacturing. Again,
this is not inherently bad, but we use far more fossil fuels than is necessary or sustainable, with perilous consequences for the climate.

We also consume many products that are used just once before ending up in a landfill. Every year, Americans use more than one billion plastic bags and throw away enough paper and plastic cups, spoons, and forks to circle to equator 300 times. In the United States, we consume 1,500 plastic water bottles every second. We also consume tons (literally) of paper and cardboard, glass, aluminum, and other materials, which are used just once before being discarded (Recycling helps, but not consuming these products in the first place would be much better.) No matter what indicator is used, the fact is that the world’s wealthiest are consuming a staggering amount of resources, far exceeding the sustainable level of consumption.

What is particularly troubling about overconsumption is the inequality in who is over-consuming. Unsustainable levels of consumption are generally found in affluent societies such as the United States, Canada, Europe, Japan, and Australia (countries where population growth is generally not perceived to be a problem). However, many of the externalities of this consumption are born by the poorest people. Carbon emissions, an indicator of fossil fuel consumption, provide a vivid example of this inequality – the world’s richest half-billion people, 7% of the global population, are responsible for 50% of the world’s CO2 emissions, while the world’s poorest 50% are responsible for just 7% of CO2 emissions. American’s have a particularly large carbon footprint – our per capita CO2 emissions are second in the world among all major countries (Australia is number one). The carbon emissions of one American today are equivalent to the emissions of 4 Chinese, 20 Indians, 30 Pakistanis, 40 Nigerians, or 250 Ethiopians. These emissions are accelerating climate change, which affects us all but has particularly negative consequences on the world’s poorest people.

In short, we are faced with an undeniable situation where a small number of people are consuming far more than their share of the planet’s natural resources to the detriment of the planet and to the detriment of the poorest people.

It is worth noting briefly that overconsumption is not inevitable, and, in fact, has been increasing in recent decades. Although there are various factors contributing to this rise in consumption, the advertising industry is a major contributor. The average American is exposed to 3000 advertisements a day – and these ads tell us that we will be happier, sexier, and cooler with a new car, a bigger TV, the latest clothing style, and the newest cell phone or iPod. In 2012, there were 36 companies that spent more than one billion dollars on advertising, primarily
to convince people to consume more of their products.\textsuperscript{ix} The influence and success of advertising campaigns in encouraging people to consume more goods should not be underestimated.

**What Can We Do About Overconsumption?**

Admittedly, figuring out how to address the issue of overconsumption is challenging (though no more challenging than figuring out how to deal with the very sensitive and morally-charged issue of overpopulation). Here, I explore some preliminary thoughts on things that we as individuals and as the Sierra Club can do to address the issue of overconsumption; my hope is that this article will encourage others to think of their own ideas and ways to contribute, as well.

One of the most important things we need to do is to decouple the link between consumption and happiness. While advertisers spend billions convincing us that buying stuff will make us happy, there are numerous studies that support the notion that once people’s basic necessities are met (mainly food and shelter), consuming additional products will not make you any happier.\textsuperscript{x} The fact that you can’t buy and consume your way to happiness is great news. It means that many people may not need to work so hard to make so much money in order to buy stuff that they don’t need and won’t make them any happier. Getting this message out is an important step that will hopefully encourage people to think more critically about why we unnecessarily consume so much stuff.

We also need to do more to educate ourselves and others about the true environmental impacts of our consumption. Sometimes this information can be hard to come by; at other times, it is out there, but we don’t want to hear it. Before buying a new cell phone or flying on an airplane, we need to be aware of how that decision will affect the environment and think hard about whether the negative impacts are justified. If people had a better understanding of the true environmental impacts of their decisions, it might encourage them to consume less.

There are a number of lifestyle and cultural changes that we can promote to reduce consumption. One example is promoting a sharing economy, where people share various goods and services. For example, each household probably does not need its own
lawnmower, vacuum cleaner, tool shed, or car. Instead, these products could be shared among households. This trend is catching on as more neighborhoods and communities are beginning to have tool-lending libraries and car sharing opportunities. Not only does sharing resources help reduce consumption, but it also tends to create a sense of community, which has many additional benefits.

Finally, we should be thinking about ways in which to incorporate the negative externalities of the goods and services we consume into their cost. One way to do this is through a carbon tax. Such a tax would incorporate the negative externalities of carbon pollution into the cost of our decisions that result in fossil fuel consumption. If we were forced to pay for the true costs of all the fossil fuels we burn, we would very likely consume less. Whatever approach or combination of approaches is taken, it is extremely important for the sake of the environment and our overall well being to reduce the current levels of consumption in developed countries.

Conclusion

I believe that we, as Americans, the most profligate consumers of natural resources in the world, have a responsibility and an opportunity to reduce our levels of consumption in order to minimize the negative impact we have upon the environment. Currently, we are consuming far more resources than is sustainable, with perilous consequences for the environment. Addressing the issue of overconsumption will not be easy, but it is critical if we want to leave a habitable planet for future generations.
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I use the term “we” loosely because most Americans and readers of this publication will fall into the class of the world’s wealthiest billion people.

The United States leads the world (excluding Monaco and San Marino, two small countries with a combined population of less than 70,000) in automobiles per capita.


Coming Home.

Fall has arrived and winter is knocking on the door. It is a time of transition. It makes me stop and look back at the summer activities and pause to reflect on how nice it is to be home again.

Summer is such a great time for travel and vacations. We get out and explore many places. For some it is a series of short trips to the Redwoods or the Cascades or a weekend campout by a quiet river. For others it is the culmination of weeks or months of planning for a long trip to some exotic islands or perhaps overseas to other countries with erupting volcanoes or painted canyons with wild life we have never seen before. We experience new people with new words and strange new foods and a very different view of the world. It is our chance to really get out of our normal routine and experience other cultures and beautiful places. We expand our minds as we see, hear, touch, taste, and smell beautiful new places and people.

But isn’t it wonderful to come home?

Coming home is all about reuniting with family and friends and sharing all the great experiences from the summer travels. This includes getting together once again with our friends in Marys Peak Group. All are welcome to come and join in the fun and relax and share their travels and experiences.

Marys Peak Group is a great combination of friendly people who have common interests and enjoy having good times. Whether it be getting out for a walk at Peavy Arboretum or Bald Hill or hitting the trails in MacDonald Forest, there is something for everyone. Exploring nature in and around our home, the Willamette Valley, is what we do best. It may be on a trail or a kayak or perhaps on skis or snowshoes. This is the time of year for enjoying all that is right here at home. We are very fortunate to live in a valley with mountains close by and the coast a short distance away. But it is really the people here in the Willamette Valley, in Corvallis and Philomath from Albany to Salem all the way to Newport – that make the difference.
Through our friendships and experiences we work together to care for and share this home we live in.

If you are new to the area or just new to Marys Peak Group and would like more information about our hikes and other activities check out our website at http://oregon.sierraclub.org/groups/marys_peak/index.asp or drop me a note at bruce.encke@hp.com.

Isn’t it wonderful to have such a great place to come home to? Hope to see you on a hike soon.

Bruce

Smith Rock State Park

Photo by Barry Wulff

Smith Rock State Park
For Janet Throop, the best part of childhood was annual family camping trips. Growing up in the congested Philadelphia area suburbs, Janet looked forward to helping load the car with two old canvas umbrella tents, wool blanket rolls, and sooty pots and pans to go camping for two or three weeks. Her mother loved hiking and cooking outdoors, and instilled curiosity and love of nature in the hearts of the whole family.

After college Janet became a high school biology teacher, teaching from an ecological viewpoint (a new concept at the time) and taking her students on hiking field trips. Janet’s interest in hiking is more for learning and seeing than for exercise. "How far and how fast are not my goals, but I love to observe and learn from what I see. Sharing observations and questions is such fun. This earth is incredible and we need to care for it. I see so much damage because of the number of people there are and the style of living we've become accustomed to. We've had a big impact on the earth, and we need to be mindful about making changes."

It took some arm-twisting before she agreed to lead MPG hikes, because she thought she wasn’t "an Allen Throop leader", she says in reference to her late husband. A geologist, he loved maps, exploring, and organizing trips. Janet learned geology from him, and he learned biology from her. The beautiful upland trail at Fitton Green is named for him as a memorial to his tireless contributions to the Greenbelt Land Trust and his enthusiasm for sharing the natural world with people.

Together they lived all over for Allen's work in geology--Maine, Pennsylvania, Arizona, and even their dream-come-true seven years in remote locations in Australia. Their two children were born there. In 1980, after living in lots of mining camps and towns, Janet chose Corvallis as a great place to raise their son and daughter. Hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, canoeing, and rock climbing were all part of their lives.

Throughout the year Janet spends much time nurturing her large and lush yard full of flowers, fruit trees, berries, and vegetables. For over thirty years she has been an active Benton County Master Gardener.

When indoors, Janet fills her life with music. A violinist now with the Willamette Valley Symphony, she also has more than twenty young students to whom she teaches Suzuki violin. That came about when her own children begged to study Suzuki violin and cello, and Janet saw that their teacher was overloaded with students. Seeing a need for teachers, Janet took Suzuki teacher training. Through playing and teaching music, she has gotten to know many people in the community and has had the satisfaction of seeing her young students grow up and become people she admires. Some have even become professional violinists.

Through music, Master Gardening, and
hiking, Janet knows just about everybody in the community. "MPG is such a wonderful organization, getting people out for so many different kinds of hikes. It enables people who wouldn't otherwise go out to participate. Adults who haven't had this chance as children can benefit from hiking with a group, learning by seeing what others have and do, such as appropriate equipment so they can be out in different kinds of weather, and what kind of food to bring along. And there is a ripple effect that benefits their children and grandchildren.

If you haven't met Janet yet, keep your eyes peeled for her next hike. You're in for a treat.

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Autumn is a beautiful time in Corvallis and the neighboring Cascades. Fall colors brighten up the forest, and crisp weather keeps hikers cool. Our leaders love the Cascades in late summer and early fall, and you can find many different trips to the Cascades in our schedule. You don’t need to venture far to get the rewards of autumn, we have plenty of close-by hikes to choose from as well, especially as fall transitions to winter. We are very lucky to have so many trails to choose from so close to and in our town.

Be sure to read the outing description carefully. The difficulty level is listed, Cascade mountain hikes tend to be difficult, more so than local hikes. Don’t hesitate to ask your leader any questions you have about which outing is right for you or what you should wear and bring. Watch the weekly email for additions and changes, occasionally outings need to be canceled or moved to a different date. If you are on Facebook be sure to “like” our page, upcoming outings are featured and pictures from past outings are often shared.

Often, space is limited, so check with the leader in advance of an outing, and then be sure the leader knows if you must cancel. If contacting the leader over the phone, don’t call after 9:00 p.m. please! Always fun, MPG outings also provide opportunities to explore our natural environment, learning more about the unique flora and fauna of our region and how they can be preserved.

Important: For General Outing Policies, see page 15. Please read them with care.

Saturday, September 7 – Willamette River Paddle. Bring your own canoe or kayak to paddle a ten- or twelve-mile stretch of the lovely Willamette River; exactly where we go will be determined closer to the date. PFD and whistle required. If your boat is 10’ or longer you will need an Aquatic Invasive Species permit. Please contact leader in advance to register and for additional trip information including meeting place. Number of participants will be limited. Moderate. 9:00 a.m. departure from Corvallis. Contact leader to sign up: Andi Stephens, at 843-709-9094 or andi.q.stephens@gmail.com

Sunday, September 8 – Duffy Lake. All of the Cascade lakes in the early fall are pleasant to visit. This moderate level hike, on a well-graded trail along the headwaters of the North Santiam River, will take us into Duffy Lake for a good view of Duffy Butte where we can have our picnic lunch. 6.6 miles, 800’ elevation gain. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the First Street parking lot behind the Super-8 Motel in Corvallis. Bring lunch. Register with leader Barry Wulff at 541-929-6272 or wulffb@peak.org
Friday-Sunday, September 13-15 – Indian Heaven Wilderness Backpack. In this area of southern Washington near Mt Adams, we will hike past mountain lakes, going through sub-alpine forest and meadows. We’ll camp at lakes where swimming is an option, and huckleberries should be plentiful. Relaxed pace. Backpacking distance is 6.8 miles and 900 feet of elevation gain total. Optional day hiking of 4+ miles. Group size limited to 8 participants. Well-equipped beginners in good hiking condition are welcome! Rated easy/moderate. Contact leader: Lelia Barlow, leliatrips@gmail.com

Saturday, September 14 – Four-in-one Cone. This hike starts off of Highway 126 near McKenzie Pass. We’ll take the old Scott Trail to the summit of a broad cinder cone for a stunningly beautiful view of the Three Sisters. Much of the trail is in the open and we’ll pass through some basalt lava flows. 9 miles, 1,500’ elevation gain. Difficult. Limited to 12, because it is in the Three Sisters Wilderness. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the First Street parking lot behind the Super-8 Motel in Corvallis. It’ll be a long day. Bring appropriate gear and a good lunch and snacks. Register with leader Barry Wulff at 541-929-6272 or wulffb@peak.org Co-leader: Bruce Encke.

Tuesday-Monday, September 17-23 – Evolution Basin Kings Canyon Backpack. This is a classic High Sierra backpack with North Lake and South Lake west of Bishop at the ends. Three passes, 53 miles, spectacular scenery. Possibly a visit to hot springs. Difficult. Contact leader to pre-register: joannedemay08@gmail.com or 971-237-9775.

Wednesday, September 18 – Opal Creek. Some of the best old growth forest in the Willamette Valley foothills is in the Opal Creek area, northeast of Mehama. We’ll hike into Jawbone Flats via a trail past Opal Pool and along the gushing Little North Santiam River. Return on a gravel road through ancient forests. Moderate difficulty, 7 miles with 500 feet of elevation gain. Meet at the First Street parking lot behind the Super-8 Motel in Corvallis for an 8:30 a.m. departure. Contact leader: Barry Wulff at wulffb@peak.org

Thursday-Sunday, September 19-22 – Three Sisters Wilderness Backpack. We’ll explore the Northwest part of this alpine wilderness area, starting near the Dee Wright Observatory on the McKenzie Pass and hiking our way through Matthieu Lakes toward Linton Meadows, with close views of Collier Cone, Little Brother, North and Middle Sister. The final day we will return past Obsidian Falls via the Obsidian Trail to Frog Camp. Moderately Difficult, 26 miles with 4,000 feet of elevation gain. Contact leader: Larry Davis, at larrydavis@peak.org or 503-390-8210.

Saturday, September 21 – Clear Lake to Sahalie & Koosah Falls. The reflections of the magnificent fall colors on Clear Lake's surface, with its clear, sparkling, pristine water, are truly views to behold! We will follow the 1.5-mile trail along the west side of the lake to the headwater of the McKenzie River. This will be combined with a 3.2-mile loop via the McKenzie River Trail that twice passes the river’s two grandest cascades, 100-foot tall Sahalie Falls and 70-foot tall Koosah Falls. Moderate, totaling 6.2 miles with 400 feet elevation change. Meet on First Street behind the Super-8 Motel for an early 8:00 a.m. departure. Contact leader: Robert Verhoogen, at 541-745-518 or rverhoogen@mac.com

Sunday, September 22 – Fitton Green. Join us as we walk the Allen Throop Loop at Fitton Green. This 1.2-mile loop will give us a lovely view of the valley around Philomath and of Marys Peak. Easy, with a bit of downhill grade on the gravel trail. This hike is suitable for those who enjoy a more leisurely pace and for families. All children must be accompanied by an adult. Children who are not with their parent or guardian must bring a release form signed by the parent, which can be obtained in advance from the hike leader. Meet in time for a 1:00 p.m. departure at Wilkinson parking lot, 27th and Arnold, on the OSU campus. Contact leader Julie Arrington at 541-752-6052 or julie.seahorse@gmail.com.
Saturday, September 28 – Trail Work on Marys Peak. Marys Peak is the sentinel of the coast range. Come join with other MPG members for trail work on Marys Peak! We use the peak trails nearly year round. So let’s work with the Forest Service and give back to the trails. There will be work for all levels of ability. The exact location and the nature of the projects will be determined as the date nears. Contact leader to register: Ray Drapek, at raydrapek@gmail.com or 541-754-7364.

Sunday, September 29 – Willamette River Paddle. Bring your own canoe or kayak to paddle a ten- or twelve-mile stretch of the lovely Willamette River; exactly where we go will be determined closer to the date. PFD and whistle required. If your boat is 10’ or longer you will need an Aquatic Invasive Species permit. Please contact leader in advance to register and for additional trip information including meeting place. Number of participants will be limited. Moderate. 9:00 a.m. departure from Corvallis. Contact leader to sign up: Andi Stephens 843-709-9094 or andi.q.stephens@gmail.com

Friday, October 4 – Mt. Hebo. We’ll climb on historic Native American trails up this coastal peak, to meadows atop a 15-million year old basalt lava flow, where on a clear day, views extend from Tillamook Bay and Cape Lookout to Pacific City’s Haystack Rock. Difficult, up to 8-miles, with 1,500 feet of elevation gain. Meet at the First Street parking lot behind the Super-8 Motel in Corvallis for an 8:00 a.m. departure. Contact leader: Barry Wulff at wulffb@peak.org Co-leader: Steve Griffiths.

Sunday, October 6 – Chip Ross Park Loop starting at Timberhill Athletic Club. This moderate hike is about 3 miles and approximately 600 feet of elevation gain. Start time 10:00 a.m. Directions to meeting spot near Timberhill Athletic Club: continue on 29th Street North of Walnut. Go over exactly two speed bumps and park at the second TAC parking lot (behind the bus stop). Contact leader to register: Marilyn Syverson at syverson.marilyn@gmail.com.

Saturday, October 12 – Old Cardwell Hill Road. Hike on the road built in 1855 connecting Wren with Corvallis. Enjoy talking about the history, noticing a lovely mixture of trees and some interesting restoration forestry being done by private woodlot owners. 5.2 miles with 935 feet of elevation gain. Be prepared for several steep sections on gravel road surface. The flatter portion along the Mary’s River is not likely to be muddy this early in the fall. Meet at Wilkinson Hall parking lot on the OSU Campus (Arnold &27th) for a 9:00 a.m. departure. Bring water and a snack. To register, contact leader: Janet Throop at 541-753-1804 or throopj@peak.org

Sunday, October 13 – Willamette River Paddle. Bring your own canoe or kayak to paddle a ten- or twelve-mile stretch of the lovely Willamette River; exactly where we go will be determined closer to the date. PFD and whistle required. If your boat is 10’ or longer you will need an Aquatic Invasive Species permit. Please contact leader in advance to register and for additional trip information including meeting place. Number of participants will be limited. Moderate. 9:00 a.m. departure from Corvallis. Contact leader to sign up: Andi Stephens, at 843-709-9094 or andi.q.stephens@gmail.com

Friday-Sunday, October 18-20 – Gorge Car Camp. We will go back one last time to the excellent Beacon Rock group camp ground on the Washington side of the Columbia Gorge to hike the Gorge trails we have not done or re-hike favorites. The campground is available to us after 2:30 p.m. on Friday and we plan to hike up Beacon Rock later that afternoon. We will hike on Saturday and, after packing up, we will hike on Sunday before heading home. The campground is equipped with an indoor, lighted kitchen with running water, an outdoor roofed eating area with picnic tables, two sleeping shelters and two vault toilets. Contact leaders to register: Bob Custer, at laststand@exchangenet.net, and Irene Schoppy, at iameyers@yahoo.com.
THE BENCHMARK

**Wednesday, October 23 – Lower Santiam Wagon Road.** This beautiful portion of the old wagon trail runs from the former Mountain House restaurant to House Rock through an alder forest and a mature Douglas fir forest. We’ll keep our eyes out for interesting mushrooms; big leaf and vine maples will be in full fall color and add splendor to the 5-mile round trip hike. 300 feet of elevation gain. Moderate, with minor stream crossing. Meet for 9:00 a.m. departure at the First Street parking lot behind the Super-8 Motel. Contact leader: Barry Wulff at wulffb@peak.org

**Saturday, October 26 – Willamette River Paddle.** Bring your own canoe or kayak to paddle a ten- or twelve-mile stretch of the lovely Willamette River; exactly where we go will be determined closer to the date. PFD and whistle required. If your boat is 10' or longer you will need an Aquatic Invasive Species permit. Please contact leader in advance to register and for additional trip information including meeting place. Number of participants will be limited. Moderate. 9:00 a.m. departure from Corvallis. Contact leader to sign up: Andi Stephens, at 843-709-9094 or andi.q.stephens@gmail.com

**Thursday, October 31 – Calloway Creek Trail in Peavy Arboretum.** This is one of the prettiest trails in the Corvallis area. There are ups and downs, but nothing strenuous on this well graded all-weather pathway. 3.5 miles, 260 feet of elevation gain. Meet for a 10:00 a.m. departure from the First Street lot, behind the Super-8 Motel. Join leader for lunch at Sada’s Sushi and Izakaya afterward. Contact leader: Barry Wulff at wulffb@peak.org

**Sunday, November 3 – Marys Peak hike.** Let’s celebrate the time change by looking for fall color or snow on Marys Peak. Hike the East Ridge Trail from Connors Camp, take the road to the summit then come back down on the trail. 7 miles, 1,600 feet gain. Moderate pace. Contact the leader for meeting time and place. Randy Selig, at 541-738-0753; or rselig@peak.org Note: Daylight Savings Time ended last night. Remember to turn your clocks back Saturday night so you are on time for this hike!

**Friday, November 29 – Walk off the Tofu or the Turkey.** Join us for this traditional post-Thanksgiving 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. Perhaps a detour down the newly rebuilt Old Growth Trail. Moderate, 7 miles, with 650 feet of elevation gain. Meeting at trailhead for a 1:00 p.m. departure. Contact leader for directions and to register: Irene Schoppy at iameyers@yahoo.com or 541-758-8591.

**Sunday, December 8 – Uproute Trail.** Hiking on McDonald Forest roads in the damp winter months is a good option for getting outdoor exercise. The scenery is good anytime of the year on this loop. 5 miles, 690 feet. Moderate. Meet at the Wilkinson Hall parking lot at 27th and Arnold for at 9:00 a.m. departure. Contact: Barry Wulff at wulffb@peak.org

**Wednesday, January 1 – New Years Day Walk.** A New Year Day afternoon walk is a Marys Peak Group tradition, usually followed by a social gathering. We’ll walk interesting neighborhood streets and paths, probably somewhere in NW Corvallis. Easy/moderate, not more than 5 miles, with less than 1,000 feet of elevation gain. Watch weekly email for details and contact leader: Doris deLespinaasse, at 541-753-4775 or ddeles@proaxis.com
YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES:

If you attend an MPG Outing, you are responsible for your own care, including but not limited to making sure that you are sufficiently fit and equipped for the event. Talk with your leader if you have any doubts about whether you can handle the outing, or any questions about what to bring. Tell your leader about medical conditions which could affect your participation and safety, including but not limited to diabetes, heart conditions, insect allergies.

ARRIVING FOR AN OUTING: Please contact the leader before an outing. Then arrive at the start point a few minutes early; we leave on time. Unless otherwise stated, carpool departures are from the parking lot between Wilkinson Hall and the Asian Cultural Center at Arnold and 27th Streets, on the OSU campus in Corvallis. Contact the leader to meet the group at a point other than the start point.

CANCELLATIONS: If you are unable to attend an outing you have signed up for, please let your leader know. Often the number of participants is limited. You could be preventing someone on a waiting list from joining the outing if you don’t notify. Occasionally MPG has to cancel or change an outing, usually for safety reasons. If you have given the leader an email address and/or phone number, you will be notified if at all possible.

CARPOOLS: Suggested driver reimbursement is $3.00 for every hour driven; perhaps more when the roads are difficult or the number of riders is small; possibly a little less if a vehicle has 5 or more people in it.

DOGS: Dogs, other than certified assistance dogs, are allowed only on designated dog walks.

WHAT TO WEAR; WHAT TO BRING: Dress for the weather, with sturdy boots or walking shoes, usually rain gear, no jeans or heavy cottons for extended outings. Bring water, sunscreen, snacks, lunch if outing starts in the morning, any medications you might require. For longer outings, especially in wilderness areas, you should consider bringing the Ten Essentials.

LIABILITY WAIVER: All participants must sign a standard Sierra Club liability waiver before each outing. To read the liability waiver before you choose to participate on an outing, please see www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms, or contact the National Sierra Club Outings Department at (415) 977-5528 for a printed version. Neither the Sierra Club nor the Marys Peak Group is responsible for participants during the trips to and from the trailhead.

MINORS ON OUTINGS: People under 18 are welcome on outings for which they have sufficient fitness, but must be accompanied by a responsible adult. A liability waiver (see above) must be signed by a parent or legal, court-appointed guardian.
Dr. Robert Beschta, OSU Professor Emeritus, will speak about the impact of livestock grazing on Western public lands from a climate change perspective. Compiling the results of various studies, Dr. Beschta and 7 colleagues found that grazing is exacerbating the impacts of climate change. The study warns of continued soil erosion, stream degradation, loss of habitat, and other ecological damage on millions of acres of grassland, sagebrush steppe, and riparian ecosystems throughout the West and calls for drastically reducing domestic livestock, feral horses, and burros from federal lands in the West. In some areas, control of large deer and elk herds may be needed, possibly by reintroducing large predators.

Sullivan has written four novels and a dozen nonfiction books about the Northwest, including “Hiking Oregon’s History,” “Oregon Favorites,” and “The Case of D.B. Cooper’s Parachute” His journal of a 1000-mile hike he took across Oregon, “Listening for Coyote,” was chosen by the Oregon Cultural Heritage Commission as one of Oregon’s “100 Books,” the 100 most significant books in the state’s history.

As always, expect anecdotes about geology, history, and wildlife along the way. Bill will have autographed copies of his books available for sale at the talk.
HARRUMP!!! The deep guttural voice of the bullfrog claims authority over the sea of reeds. The many varied songs of a dozen birds in the near vicinity in turn challenge his dominance.

Every visit to Jackson-Frazier wetlands on the 2,800-foot Bob Frenkel boardwalk yields a fresh and fascinating insight into a different world. The charming meandering wooden walkway leads you through a mix of woodland, shrubs, streams, prairies and marshes. The atmosphere and sights change from season to season, each time of year bringing its own glories and wonders. It is, in turn, an outdoor classroom as well as a quiet place for reflection and interaction with nature.

This 147-acre wetland was established as part of the Benton County Parks system in 1992 to protect the natural features of the area and to allow for education, research, and public use. Today it has a daily routine of visitors.

For many years, the Jackson-Frazier tract was a vast wet prairie, maintained by frequent Native American burning. From the mid-1850’s and on into the 1900’s it passed through several owners and was used for grazing. In 1984, a land development company purchased the land. But by then the State was well into pressing Oregon counties to examine their lands and zone them for forest, agriculture, residential and other land uses. Wetlands were not to be ignored. In 1982 Benton County approved a Goal 5 Task Force plan to protect 14 acres of Jackson-Frazier wetland. In the intervening years, before 1992, there was a tug-of-war between the developer and the county, ending in the county foreclosing on the developer in 1990 for failure to pay taxes. Benton County quickly rezoned the area as a wetland to persevere is in perpetuity.

Wetlands are important for flood control, water purification and habitat protection. The boardwalk lets us share this special place with its many natural residents. Countless birdsongs penetrate the air, along with the sounds and presence of frogs, snakes, mallards, and even an occasional nutria swimming to a hiding place underneath a low-hanging bush. One can often see a fallen Oregon ash with the fresh teeth marks from a beaver’s handiwork. The floor is mossy and verdant in summer, and a swollen lake in the winter. The tree trunks are covered with sage green lichen year-round. Depending upon the season, the abundance of plant life such as wild roses, tufted hairgrass, spirea, camas, hooker willow, bittersweet and more each in turn show their special qualities to all who care to wander and marvel.

Located at the end of Lancaster Street in north Corvallis, we are truly blessed to have this wild landscape and cool retreat from urban life right in our backyard.
Jackson-Frazier Boardwalk
“Treasure in our Backyard”

Boardwalk in Spring/Summer

Boardwalk in Winter (note the ice!)

Spirea

Marsh wren

Rosa rugosa

Summer Cat Tail

Winter Cat Tail

Photos by Barry Wulff
My wife and I went to an arts and craft fair on a sunny and warm Saturday. The booths and displays were in a side pasture of a private residence that had been opened up to accommodate the event. It was a beautiful location in the foothills northeast of Albany. The booth area was shaded by tall, old firs and cedars, and the yard was decorated with flowers and housed pavilions where all sorts of tasty treats beckoned us to stop and pass a moment in the idyllic surroundings of the Willamette Valley in the summer.

At one shaded table, where cookies and lavender lemonade were being offered, a breeze blew up the slope that fell away from the house past grape arbors and lavender fields to one of the most stunning vistas of the Cascades that I remember ever having seen. The North Santiam River rolled by further below, and the peak of Mt. Jefferson stood against the azure sky like a pillar supporting the heavens.

That I could see Mt. Jefferson from where I was indicated just how clear it was on this summer day. I remember thinking how lucky I was to live in a place like the Willamette Valley. And compared to places like Los Angeles, the bay area around San Francisco, the sprawling cities of the Northeast and dense population centers of the South, we live in an absolutely pristine environment, where we can see for a hundred miles and fill our lungs with pure air. But it's like the serpent in the garden, or the thorn on a rose stem. Nothing comes without a cost or a potential hazard.

On a good day, from spots in Corvallis you can see Mt. Jefferson to the northeast and the Three Sisters to the southeast, even above the ground haze created by pollutants that range from ground dust to heavy car and truck exhaust. Sometimes, when the conditions are right and you're on a high spot somewhere in Corvallis, you can see the greyish cloud of auto pollutants rising up from I-5. And sometimes, when the conditions are right, the valley floor can be obscured by a mist of windblown ground dust, agricultural haze, and pollutants carried on the wind, from Eugene on some days and from Portland on others. But, fortunately, these situations don’t exist all the time, and in some places, not often at all.

When we consider such things, what do we mean by “pollutants” or “conditions”? As it happens, there are people and agencies that measure and define these things. The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, www.oregon.gov/DEQ, the Oregon Climate Change Research Institute, www.occri.net, and Oregon State University College of Earth, Ocean and Atmospheric Sciences, www.ceoas.oregonstate.edu, all have definitions and measurements that we can use to understand the events and situations in the Willamette Valley as they relate to pollutants and conditions.

Willamette Valley is considered to have a Mediterranean-like climate in that it doesn’t get
too hot in the summer and it doesn’t get too cold in the winter (generally). There is a marine/ocean influence that at times causes thick, heavy moist air to drop into the valley from the west or at other times to pass over the valley. This is nearly a text book definition of the climatic conditions in the Willamette Valley, as I recall them from my classes in Atmospheric Sciences. (Yes, I am an OSU grad.) These climate conditions are excellent for agricultural and other human activities.

According to Kathie Dello, Associate Director of the Oregon Climate Change Research Institute at OSU, who personally considered the Willamette Valley climate to be “excellent” as opposed to her home environment of New York, the valley is like a bowl, surrounded by mountains. When the conditions are right, there can be inversions, convections and air currents that can blow up and down the valley or sometimes not at all. When the conditions are right, she observed, the valley can seem to have a lid on it: no air movement, humid and stilted.

Under these conditions, ground-generated pollutants get trapped and build up in the valley, causing high pollutions levels. Dello observed that during summer months, when high pressure systems that cause air to move in a clockwise direction can hover over the state, the resulting air patterns can push smoke from wildfires throughout the Cascades into the valley, causing smoky conditions.

Marcia Danab, Community Involvement Coordinator for the state’s Department of Environmental Quality, with 22 years at the department, agrees that weather patterns can add to the pollutant buildup in the valley, especially during inversion conditions, when the air is trapped in the valley. The DEQ has on-line a document, 2011 Oregon Air Quality Data Summaries-revised in June of 2012, which has air quality information going back for more than a decade. This document states that the air pollutants of greatest concern in Oregon, and monitored by the DEQ, are: ground level ozone (commonly known as smog), fine particulate matter (mostly from wood smoke or other combustion sources), car emissions, and dust. The fine particulates are called PM2.5 because they are 2.5 micrometers and smaller in diameter. There is another measurement of particulates which is PM10, which are bigger than PM2.5 but generally not as prevalent. Also of concern are greenhouse gases (GHG) which include: water vapor, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, ozone and CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons, the most commonly known being Freon). And lastly, air toxics, which include: carbon monoxide, diesel soot, benzene, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (tar-like by-products from auto exhaust), and heavy metals, such as manganese, nickel and lead.
Most, if not all, of these pollutants are caused by human activities. According to Danab, the goals to reduce or limit some of these pollutants have been successful in some cases and still remain challenges in others. Carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, lead, and PM10 have been trending down for some time and are far below federal health standards.

PM10s are the particulate pollutant most associated with field burnings and have been decreasing since the passage in 2010 of Senate Bill 528, that outlawed field burning. Air toxics, Danab says, are still a challenge. The air toxics of most concern are car exhaust pollutants.

In the DEA’s data summaries, Corvallis shows 343 days of good air conditions and 18 of moderate conditions, with no days being unhealthy and four days missing from the count. You can monitor daily air quality around Corvallis at the DEA home page under “advisories”.

Danab observed that, in her 22 years with the DEA, general air pollutants caused by vehicles have decreased due to cleaner running cars and catalytic converters. But still, under the right atmospheric conditions, smog can be blown from Portland to Salem and could blow from Eugene to Corvallis. Danab also notes that most pollutants are caused by activities that can’t be legislated, such as travel and, in the valley, farming. In the DEA data summary, transportation accounts for 37% of all greenhouse emissions, with residential and commercial activities accounting for 35%, farming 8%, and industry 20%.

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) monitors highways in the state and documents at their website www.oregon.gov/odot vehicle counts at certain points in Oregon. At the highway intersection of Route 34 and I-5, 38,700 vehicles pass on an “average” day, every day. And you can see the haze for miles, when the conditions are right.

“When the conditions are right.”

When the conditions are right, the valley can be smoggy and hazy, thermal updrafts can take tons of dust and soil out of the fields, along with water vapor from irrigation, and push them into the sky so that the sun seems defused through a brownish pane of glass. And the soot and tar from cars and truck exhaust rise up from the valley floor like a bad idea to cast a misty gray pall up and down the valley.

On the other hand, when the conditions are right, you can see forever, to those spots where the sky is held up by the snow-peaked mountains and rivers run clean under clear azure skies. These days, more frequent than the other kind, remind us why we chose to live in this beautiful place.
This past spring I had an opportunity to visit with Rhett Lawrence, the Oregon Chapter’s newly installed Conservation Director. Right away, I was impressed with his background and interests and how they are a great fit for the Chapter. For more than ten years, Rhett has focused on public interest and environmental policy issues, first in Georgia and more recently in Oregon.

Rhett is a native of Greenville, South Carolina. He was a drummer in a rock band while in high school, perhaps thinking, like many teens, that there was a future in being in a traveling rock band; but no doubt he was setting a beat to a larger world. After all, he was a National Merit Scholar. He went on to receive his undergraduate degree from Emory University in 1990. While studying for a double degree in English and Philosophy, he became involved with the student environmental organization that would set a course for his future calling. Friends introduced Rhett to camping, and he helped organize the Emory campus 1990 Earth Day events. One of his first environmental campaigns was to increase recycling on campus and start using more sustainable materials. Emboldened by these experiences, Rhett joined the Sierra Club and moved on to earn a law degree from the University of Georgia at Athens and looked forward to a profession in environmental policy issues.

In the early 1990’s, jobs in environmental law were scarce and the country was entering a recession. So Rhett switched gears and moved to rural, southern Georgia to become a staff attorney representing low-income clients through a state legal services program. It was not his true passion, though his time in south Georgia did enable him to spend a great deal of time paddling in the Okefenokee Swamp. He also got involved with the Sierra Club at that time, battling a DuPont titanium mine on the edge of the Okefenokee and beach driving at Cumberland Island National Seashore. Longing to work in the environmental field he applied to environmental nonprofits, including the Public Interest Research Group in Boston. That led to interviews in Boston, Denver and Portland.

When an opportunity to move to Portland, Oregon and work for the Oregon State Public Interest Research Group (OSPIRG) came about at the end of 2000, he accepted the position without ever having set foot on our soil. He welcomed a real change of scenery and new professional role. For five and a half years, he worked on clean water and toxics issues, including Willamette River cleanup – a far cry from his public advocacy work in southern Georgia.
In 2006, Rhett moved on to join the Save Our Wild Salmon (SOS) organization. He became a policy analyst involved in efforts to remove the lower Snake River dams to restore steelhead and salmon to the Columbia River Basin. He remained with SOS until joining the Oregon Chapter Sierra Club in February. In each of his steps Rhett’s taken on great challenges and wider variety of issues.

Certainly, there are many environmental issues for Rhett to engage in on the Chapter’s behalf. During the next year, he’ll be working with Oregon’s Groups to identify those issues that we as a Chapter need to focus on. Some of the issues will be yearly challenges, such as hunting of cougars with dogs and cutting of old growth in our state forests. At the same time, there will be new issues arising. As members of the Oregon Chapter, we need to step up to the plate and engage those challenges with Rhett.
Summer visitors to the area just below the summit of Marys Peak known as "the rock garden" return year after year in late May, June and early July to enjoy the spectacular wildflower bounty of this unique natural area. There among the granitic outcroppings on the steep south/southwest slopes thrives a diverse community of plants adapted to the particular combination of climate, elevation, and soil conditions found on the peak. Many of these plants bear colorful flowers with "garden" impact far greater than the plants' relatively small statures, among them Phlox diffusa.

The genus Phlox, comprised of more than 60 species, belongs to the Polemoniaceae. Its members are found throughout much of North America (there is one Asian species) occupying many ecological niches, from the dryland species of Mexico and the American Southwest to the woodland dwellers of the humid Atlantic coastal states to alpine and subalpine gems such as Phlox diffusa. All have showy flowers with the characteristic phlox salverform corolla of five flared (and usually flattened) equal petals fused at the base to form a narrow tube. Flower colors vary among the species, including white, pale blue, various shades of pink and purple, red, orange, and even the occasional yellow. The different species range in height from a few inches to several feet and are found from sea level to mountain peaks.

Phlox diffusa, the species found in the rock garden on Marys Peak, is by no means restricted to the peak, or even to western Oregon. It is found throughout western North America, as far north as southern British Columbia and Alberta, as far south as Mexico, and as far east as Nebraska and South Dakota. In California alone, its elevation range is between 3,300 and 13,300 feet above sea level.

The species is described in wildflower guides as being "locally common", which I interpret to mean that where you find one plant, you are likely to find many more of the same kind – but there will be vast areas within its range where the species is totally absent. In other words, habitat matters.

The rock garden on Marys Peak has the conditions favored by P. diffusa: thin gravelly soil with full sun exposure and sharp drainage. This tap-rooted perennial may be found growing throughout the West at subalpine (e.g. the top of Marys Peak) and alpine elevations in similar situations: pumice fields, scree, talus, rock outcrops, dry meadows, even open forest.

Like its much better known and long-domesticated cousin P. subulata, the creeping or moss phlox, P. diffusa is a mat-forming plant whose beautiful flowers
(about 3/4 inch across) are borne so abundantly as to almost completely hide the leaves during peak bloom. Out of bloom, *P. diffusa* is a dark green mat or open mound from two to eight inches high, rather prickly to the touch because of the sharp tips on its very narrow opposite leaves, which are hairy at their bases.

Unlike creeping phlox, the more refined spreading phlox is challenging to grow at low elevations with hot summers and has been a source of frustration to many a dedicated rock gardener. It is best appreciated in its native montane habitat.

Transportation options have many benefits. From the health perks of walking and biking, to the CO2 reduction of carpooling and public transportation, and the financial savings that come along with reducing single-occupant-vehicle miles, there is something for everyone.

An Oregon Department of Transportation program called Drive Less Connect is trying to make it easier for Oregonians to explore transportation options. There are over 1,700 Drive Less Connect members in Linn, Benton and Lincoln Counties, and thousands more throughout the state. The program’s free website, www.DriveLessConnect.com, enables users to connect with carpools and commuter vanpools, as well as track their trips by bike, bus, walking, teleworking, and carpool/vanpool to win prizes such as gift cards to grocery stores, coffee shops and restaurants. During our statewide fall campaign from October 21 to November 1, you can win dozens of prizes, including vacation packages throughout the state! Check our website for more information. The program supports community connectivity, workforce development, and sustainability.

Drive Less Connect has made a measurable impact on protecting the natural environment in Oregon. Drive Less Connect members in our region have reduced 1,777,512 pounds of CO2 since the program launched at the end of 2011. They also have saved $617,142 on costs such as gas and car maintenance avoided by not driving alone.

To be a part of this success, check out www.DriveLessConnect.com for yourself. It’s free, easy, and you control your personal information. Use Drive Less Connect to find a carpool for your commute to work, to school, or for one-time trips anywhere in Oregon, Washington and Idaho.

Here’s how to get started:
Create your profile at www.DriveLessConnect.com by clicking “Register Now.”

After completing your profile, click “Ridematch” in the top blue bar of the page to create a trip. Click “Find Matches” if you want to view potential rideshare matches. Click “Calendar” to track trips (your calendar is private).

Any questions? Call me at Cascades West Rideshare, 541-924-8480. Thank you for your interest!

Tarah Campi is Transportation Options Outreach Coordinator of the Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments.
Hike to the Source of Dixon Creek
Saturday, April 13th, 2013, 2012

Leader: Irene Schoppy

Photos by Irene Schoppy

Deep in the coast range near Mapleton, Sweet Creek cascades down a series of falls. This group of 11 was in for a real treat with the water full and the trees lush with moss. They were entertained by water ouzels performing while passing the ten-foot Split Falls, followed by a canyon of punchbowl falls, Ledge Falls, to culminate in the twenty-foot Sweet Creek Falls. This was followed by walking a short trail to the beautiful Beaver Creek Falls farther up the road.

Sweet Creek Falls - Saturday, April 20th, 2013

Leader: Barry Wulff

Deep in the coast range near Mapleton, Sweet Creek cascades down a series of falls. This group of 11 was in for a real treat with the water full and the trees lush with moss.
In 2010, the Marys Peak Group of the Sierra Club initiated a program to plan and plant a native arboretum in each of the schoolyards of Corvallis – one schoolyard per year. Our sixth annual Earth Day Tour in 2013 was to visit the three arboretums that have been planted by the MPG in cooperation with the schools, the Corvallis Odd Fellow Lodge and the Benton Soil and Water Conservation District. We were shown the trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants of the arboretums and saw how the schools are using them in the educational environment. The group of both bikers and carpoolers met at the Crescent Valley High School Arboretum, traveled to the Cheldelin Middle School Arboretum and ended the tour at the Corvallis Waldorf School, where the group were also shown a mature arboretum planted some years ago on the same site.

Students did the presenting at Crescent Valley High School.

Teachers showed the group their mature arboretum at Corvallis Waldorf School.

For a chance to do some leisurely exploring of the South Oregon coast Ray reserved two yurts at Bullard's Beach state park just across the Coquille River from Bandon. This group of six made stops for hiking at Blacklock Point and Cape Blanco, the western-most location in all of the conterminous USA. The nearby picturesque town of Bandon afforded some great meals beyond campfire fare.

Left to right, Joanne DeMay, Becky Garrett, Robin Bonine, Loretta Rivard, Ray Drapek and Marilyn Syverson.
Meet the Champs! Eighteen miles and 3,000 feet of elevation gain, in a challenging hike across the various roads and trails in McDonald Forest, scaling Peavy Peak, Vineyard Mountain, Dimple Hill and McCulloch. This photo shows the marathon hikers at the very end of the outing, still standing and still smiling. It was a great day, and the hope is to make this an annual event.


On an old road through conifers in the Beazell Memorial Forest, a group of ten hikers climbed to a lovely meadow, with a stellar view of Marys Peak. From there, they followed a trail that zigzags down to Plunkett Creek, all while enjoying colorful wildflowers and moss covered deciduous trees.

Beazell Forest South Meadow & Plunkett Creek Loop
Saturday, May 11th, 2013
Leader: Janet Throop

McDonald Forest Traverse - Sunday, May 26th, 2013
Leaders: Irene Schoppy and Richard Seekatz

Photo by Barry Wulff

Janet Throop and Susan Nevin photograph wildflowers, as Doris deLespinasse looks on.
Southern Oregon Coast Car Camp - May 30 - June 3, 2013

Leader: Bob Custer
Photos by Bob Custer

Richard Seekatz

During the 5 day/4 night stay at the Harris Beach State Park in Brookings Oregon, campers: Bob Custer, Debi Gile, Doris deLespinasse, Mary Betts Sinclair, Randy Selig, Richard Seekatz and Linda Seekatz, could not have asked for better weather. Bright blue, cloudless skies greeted everyone each day, with temperatures in the middle 60’s before cooling off to the high 40’s at night.

On Friday, May 31st, we started the day by hiking the Redwood Nature Trail, which was an easy 2.6-mile loop near the Chetco River. This is the largest concentration of Redwood trees in the state of Oregon. Afterwards we proceeded to the 9,600-acre Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park, south of Crescent City, California. The number of very large Redwoods is quite impressive within the “Stout Grove” half-mile loop trail. Everyone was terribly in awe of these monster trees. We decided this was a nice location to have our lunch. Afterward we got back into our cars for a very short drive to view the “Boy Scout Tree”. The 4.8-mile round trip to this 20-foot thick Redwood was well worth the effort. Our return drive passed through Smith River, which is the “Easter Lily Capital of the World.” Ninety-five percent of the Easter lily bulbs are raised in the area.

The first two nights we were treated to Randy Selig’s white chicken chili with corn bread and Linda Seekatz’s spaghetti and meatballs. Another culinary highlight was provided by Debi Gile who made one of her signature berry pies and morning muffins.

Saturday, June 1st, turned out to be our most challenging day! It wasn’t necessarily the hiking we did, but the road we traveled over. Vulcan Peak and Vulcan Lake are in the Kalmiopsis Wilderness area. This remote location can only be accessed over a 13-1/2 mile, very bumpy, narrow gravel road. Numerous potholes and landslides had to be maneuvered around, which took close to 1-1/2 hours. The 2002 Biscuit Fire swept this area and today the understory is mostly Manzanita with many gray, dead trees standing, as far as one can see. The top of the 4,655-foot Vulcan Peak gives a wonderful 360-degree view of the Kalmiopsis Wilderness and of the ocean. We had lunch at the top, where a lookout

Richard Seekatz
had once stood. Vulcan Lake required that we travel an additional mile or two by car, to where the road ended and the trailhead began. After a number of switchbacks, we were at the ridgeline where we could see both Vulcan Lake and Little Vulcan Lake. Making our way down to the lake we had to contend with a great deal of fallen trees from the fire and the trail was not obvious to the eye. Vulcan Lake is a cirque lake with a rich blue/green color. Most of the group rested by the lake but a few ventured over to Little Vulcan Lake to view the carnivorous Darlingtonia plant. For the day we hiked 5-1/2 miles with 1,550 feet of elevation gain and 3 hours of difficult gravel road driving!

Sunday, June 2nd, was our final full day in the area. The group split up with several doing a portion of the California Coastal Trail while others hiked along a large portion of the Boardman Park Trail. Those doing the California Coastal Trail from Hidden Beach to the Klamath lookout were somewhat disappointed. In Bill Sullivan's book description of this hike, he calls it the prettiest part of the Redwood Coast’s portion of the Coastal Trail. We would take exception to that, because it has grown up considerably with massive amount of salmon berry bushes and other vegetation. Views of the water were not that plentiful. It was a pleasant hike, but not one that we would recommend. The highlight of the day for this group was the Native American Museum, located at the “Tree of Mystery” tourist attraction. It is one of the world’s largest private collection of Native artifacts in the world and well worth a visit. It is also free to view. On the other hand, the entire Boardman State Park Coastal walk is spectacular and should not be missed. If you are to do this hike please walk from north to south to avoid the possible high winds. Those who did portions of the trail included: Debi, Mary Betts and Doris. All raved at the beauty along the coastline.

I should say that our campsites were wonderful. We had two adjacent campsites – one that comfortably could accommodate two tents, the other site could easily handle six or seven tents. Our trusty leader, Bob Custer, sure knows how to pick them! Harris Beach State Park is well situated for exploring the area, it has wonderfully clean and free showers and high hedges separate most sites. We would highly recommend this park.

We had a wonderful group of campers and a most enjoyable time. Bob did a great job in organizing the outing and when Monday morning came, we all said our good byes, looking forward to our next adventure.
Many people know the Steens, few the Pueblos. This section of the Desert Trail is marked by cairns, with no actual trail. Ten people joined in this challenging four-day, three-night backpack going south to north, from Denio to Fields, and did a side trip up Pueblo Mountain, for a total of 27 miles and 6,500 feet of elevation gain. Not for the faint of heart!

This group was privileged to walk these beautiful wetlands with botanist and plant ecologist Loverna Wilson, who is one of the people who planned the layout of the boardwalk and helped raise the funds to execute it. They stopped to examine a variety of wetland plant communities and learned about the types of plants that grow within each community, depending on the micro-environments around them.
This group took the Oregon Coast Trail to Cummins Creek, then ascended the Cummins Creek Loop Trail to a great picnic spot. From a high vantage point, they enjoyed a wide-open view of the Cummins Creek Wilderness, with lots of giant Sitka spruce, western hemlock, Douglas fir, and western red cedar. The hike back to the Visitor Center was via the Cooks Ridge Trail.

Left to right: Pat Megowan, Nathaleigh Vann, Ann Tibbot, Chris Williams, Miriam Richards, Steve Griffiths, Hilary White, Janet Johnson, and Scott Gilbert.

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Oak Creek Greenway Trail, Albany
Tuesday, June 18th, 2013
Leader: Leslie Hogan

left to right: Porter Landon (age 10), Hilary White, Jane Donovan, Barry Wulff, Linda Baskenville, Becky Garrett and Leslie Hogan.

View of trail

This delightful little trail runs behind housing developments along the greenway that follows the Calapooia River in Albany. All were enchanted by the lush green woods, bird song, marsh and meadow. What a lovely find.
It says something for MPG hikers when ten people will show up in a downpour to enjoy one of our local favorite trails together! This three-mile loop hike went up and over Bald Hill starting from the Reservoir Road entrance.

At Stahlman Point, avid backpacker, Pat Megowan, displays the contents of his pack with explanatory comments to interested onlookers. Shown left to right are: Greg Hayes, Kathleen Petrucela (behind), Joan Hayes, Becky McKenzie (blue shirt, arms folded), Sally Matthews, Becky Garrett and Pat Megowan.

What a great hike to start off the summer. Participants had a view of Mt. Jefferson and an overview of Detroit Lake from the point at the end of this trail arising from the “quiet side” of Detroit Lake in the Old Cascades. Doug fir and tall native rhododendrons are found along the trail, along with many other woodland flowers.
Summer Solstice Gala
Sunday, June 23rd, 2013
Organizer: Marilyn Hinds

Held at the beautiful Dancing Oaks Nursery

Photos by Bruce Encke
This pleasant 5.8 mile hike along a scenic low-elevation creek outside of the Dexter/Lowell area southeast of Eugene was a welcome respite to the July heat.

History Hike to Champoeg and Willamette Mission
Wednesday, June 26th, 2013
Leader: Nancye Ballard

This was a day of leisurely hiking and the opportunity to visit key sites associated with Oregon’s eventual statehood. The tour began at Champoeg State Heritage Area and was followed by lunch at the historic Butteville Store before driving to Willamette Mission State Park for more hiking in the area of the first Methodist Mission in Oregon.

Fall Creek
July 2nd, 2013
Leader: Sam Miller

This pleasant 5.8 mile hike along a scenic low-elevation creek outside of the Dexter/Lowell area southeast of Eugene was a welcome respite to the July heat.

Left to right: Bob Smythe, Ken Fitschen, Ken Williams, Randy Selig, Jim Mitchell, Sandra Verhoogen, Joanne DeMay and Robert Verhoogen.
Summer 2013 Kayak Trips

A summer full of great kayak trips! With Andi Stephens joining Larry Davis in offering their expertise, we have been able to offer more great adventures on the water than ever.

Photos by Larry Davis

Leaders: Andi Stephens and Larry Davis

Foster Lake 6-22-13

Willamette Kayak 7-6-13

Willamette Kayak, Andi Stephens & Barbara Loeb 5-11-13
Starting at Tombstone Pass and ascending up to the meadows of Cone Peak, this group of 12 then continued on to Iron Mountain, for a total of 6.8 miles and 2,008 feet of elevation gain. The loop featured a multitude of flowers and clear views of the Cascade Peaks.
Monday the group of 12 drove up close to Three Fingered Jack and hiked the Canyon Creek Meadow Loop before making camp at the quiet end of Suttle Lake at Blue Bay Campground. Day two took them to the Patjens Lake Trail, a loop that goes past four lakes of varying degrees of depth and significance, inviting a swim before heading home (with a refreshing stop at the A&W in Sweet Home!)

Leader Robert Verhoogen (left, in white shirt) explains the route.

As part of Benton County’s "August in Motion" initiative, this group walked 3.5 miles at a moderate cardiovascular pace along parts of the Intensive Management, Calloway Creek, and Forest Discovery Trails, including a partial loop around Cronemiller Lake, mostly under the forest canopy.

Blue Bay Camping/Hiking Trip
Monday-Tuesday, August 5th-6th, 2013
Leader: Leslie Hogan

Monday the group of 12 drove up close to Three Fingered Jack and hiked the Canyon Creek Meadow Loop before making camp at the quiet end of Suttle Lake at Blue Bay Campground. Day two took them to the Patjens Lake Trail, a loop that goes past four lakes of varying degrees of depth and significance, inviting a swim before heading home (with a refreshing stop at the A&W in Sweet Home!)

Group on the Canyon Creek Meadows loop trail.
Left to right: Marilyn Syverson, Tiffany Woods, Nancy Messman, Cindia Wells, Don Kuhns, Ken Fitschen, Chris Williams, Sally Matthews, Steve Griffiths, Leslie Hogan, and Brenda Summers.
The MPG Sierra Club Executive Committee has three positions open this year. Elected candidates will serve two-year terms, beginning January 1, 2014. Below are five nominees and their statements. Members should look for the official ballot soon, and be sure to vote prior to November 1st.

**Marjean Austin**—Member for 13 years. Currently on ExCom, and serves on MPG Political/Environmental Team. Has been a member of Oregon Environmental Council for the past six years. Worked in public health for 12 years, instrumental in obtaining Air Quality Assessment in several Benton County schools. In 2007, volunteered for Oregon Toxic Alliance, which implemented Integrated Pest Management in Lane County schools. Became a weed spotter through Soil, Water, and Conservation Agency to help identify and control spread of invasive plants. Involved in many tree plantings and various trail maintenance. If re-elected, I will continue to promote and support nature education and outdoor experiences for youth.

**Debra Higbee-Sudyka**—Presently the Political and Environmental Action Chair and Vice Chair for MPG. We recently passed a milestone of 400 ppm of CO2 in our atmosphere. The repercussion of this is climate change, which affects so much of what we hold dear—from our beloved natural areas to the future of our children. An essential piece needed in order to create a sustainable world is to work towards political change. Therefore if I were to be re-elected, my work with the Political/Conservation EnAcTeam, will focus primarily on climate change. I believe it is the environmental issue that connects with all the rest, and is the most important issue of our time.

**Robert White**—An active participant with his wife, Hilary, Robert has been involved with MPG outings and National Sierra Club concerns. With a strong background in business as well as field biology, and including experience as past president of a local Rotary Club and other community committees, he has been provided with the tools to be a valuable and effective member and leader of the MPG ExCom. He is not only well qualified, but has a great desire to help the Marys Peak Group continue to address the local environmental and sustainability issues.
Carolyn Kindell~ As a U.S. conservation biologist and recent transplant from Florida and Sierra Club member, I am interested in the protection and management of existing natural areas and in helping people to understand and appreciate nature. I served on the board of directors of the Friends for the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge Association, and served for two years as the Membership Coordinator. Recently, I volunteered with the Corvallis Sustainability Coalition’s Natural Areas Action Team. I look forward to helping the Group on advocacy related to natural areas protection and management at local and statewide levels. I would like to help the club continue its tradition of learning and sharing knowledge out-of-doors. Serving on the ExCom is a way I can “give back” while I continue to learn with this supportive, fun, knowledgeable, and highly effective group of people.

Show your support for MPG by purchasing a special Marys Peak Group T-shirt!

Mary Ellen Lind and Dennis Murphy

Pre-shrunk neutral ash gray cotton
Women’s – S, M, L, and XL
Men’s – S, M, L, and XL

Only $10 EACH!

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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 you may wish to involve yourself.

Trail maintenance/Building: Interest in working on local and regional trails? There’s a regular schedule for trail building and maintenance here in the Willamette Valley. Contact: Ray Drapek at raydrapek@gmail.com

Leading outings: 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: Irene Schoppy at iameyers@yahoo.com

Conservation/Sustainability: You may be interested in specific environmental issues, and would be willing to attend meetings of government agencies to monitor their activities and testify at hearings. Contact: Debra Higbee-Sudyka at dwhigbe@juno.com

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? Contact: Debra Higbee-Sudyka at dwhigbe@juno.com

Graphics/Illustration: Have you graphics and illustration skills? Have access to desktop publishing software? 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: Christy Stevens at Christy.stevens@linnbenton.edu or 541-753-4353.

Writing/Photography: 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: Barry Wulff at wulffb@peak.org

SIGN-UP FOR THE WEEKLY EMAIL

The Marys Peak Group offers many activities other than those listed in the Benchmark. Our weekly email announces upcoming events and activities with complete contact information. You may sign-up to receive the weekly email by sending a note to Jane Luther at janeluth@gmail.com. Or, if you have a Google account, you can subscribe by going to: http://groups.google.com/group/marys-peak-group/ subscribe and choose “E-mail - send each message to me as it arrives” (the message “Approximately 1 e-mail per day” is incorrect; MPG weekly email will be sent once a week.)

Your email will not be shared with other entities.