



IDAHO
CONSERVATION
LEAGUE

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The Idaho Conservationist



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CERTAINTY IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

Glenn Oakley Photo



Justin Hayes

Writing you this letter now is one of the most difficult things we've ever done. As we write, Idaho has just implemented a 21-day order directing that all Idahoans stay in their homes. The severity of the novel coronavirus and its impact on our nation and our communities is evolving. It's clear to us all that our world will be very different when you hold this newsletter in your hands than it is today as we write it.



Lori Gibson Banducci

In this time of tremendous uncertainty and concern, some truths become sharper and clearer than they have been for some time. The power of love and compassion -- for family, for friends, our communities and for total strangers. The gift of human touch and connection. The sound of a running river, the song of birds outside your window.

The novel coronavirus does not respect geographic, cultural, political, social or economic boundaries. COVID-19 has made crystal clear to everyone how inextricably connected we all are. And, how we all have a responsibility, not just to ourselves, but also to each other. Perhaps, this understanding of interconnection will extend beyond the coronavirus.

Like yours, the lives of ICL staff have been upended. New routines and a new normal, which is not routine nor is it normal; the only certainty is that this is still evolving. We're all isolated in our homes, trying to balance the work that continues at ICL with the tug of war that comes from addressing the immediate needs of our families and the uncertainty of what lies ahead.

Reflecting on this moment would not be complete without asking ourselves how this national crisis, this global crisis, will change us. Will we move forward with new resolve to be the change that we want to see in this world? Perhaps, if there is a silver lining, this is it: A better and deeper understanding of our inner connection with humanity and with nature.

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ICL's board and members provide the strategic direction for our organization. This guidance is captured in our "Strategic Plan." We've previously shared with you the meat of that plan — our commitment to conservation outcomes, captured in our four major campaigns: making Idaho carbon neutral, restoring Idaho's salmon and steelhead, making Idaho's Snake River fishable and swimmable again, and securing landscape-level protections for public lands.

Now, let us share with you the heart of our strategic plan. Last December, we finalized our new "vision" for our work. ICL's staff and board agreed on this in advance of the current crisis that all Idahoans are up against: Our vision is an Idaho where public lands remain public and are well managed, air is clean, lakes and rivers are healthy, fish and wildlife thrive, and a prosperous, sustainable future exists for all Idahoans.

ICL works to protect the environment and through our work we seek to create a just, prosperous and sustainable future for all Idahoans. This vision, this message of hope, seems more relevant than ever right now. In this moment of incredible need and uncertainty—where wealthy and poor, urban and rural, liberal and conservative look out into the world and wonder what lies on the other side of this crisis—we need a vision that seeks to protect the earth and care for all people.

Our strategic plan helps guide ICL as we act. It defines our values. We call this "The ICL Way." This is ICL staff, leadership, board, members, supporters, partners, and friends—all of us—together. This was all of us before this crisis and this is all of us right now. This is how we are going to support each other through this moment, how we are going to support our families, our communities, and this is how we are going to ensure that ICL's work is even more impactful in the future.

Be well. Stay safe. Support each other.

Justin Hayes
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Lori Gibson Banducci
Board Chair

FROM ICL'S 2020-2023 STRATEGIC PLAN...

In achieving our goals and securing our vision of what we would like Idaho to be in the future, ICL staff and board adhere to the following core tenets. These are our values, how we will operate, and the standards to which we will hold ourselves accountable.

Connecting People to Nature

We seek and encourage opportunities for all Idahoans to experience the benefits of time spent in nature, understanding that this builds support for protecting it.

The Long View

ICL works for bold outcomes that may take years, even decades to achieve. This can be difficult at times, but we persevere, embracing incremental progress toward achieving ambitious long-term goals.

Integrity

All ICL people are expected to adhere to high standards of personal and professional ethics—anything less is unacceptable. As a practical matter, ethical conduct cannot be assured by written policies and codes; it must be a deeply ingrained tradition.

Trust and Respect for Individuals

We approach each situation with the belief that people want to do a good job and will do so, given the proper tools and support. We create an inclusive work environment that supports diversity.

Teamwork

ICL recognizes it is only through effective cooperation that we can achieve a just, sustainable and prosperous Idaho. Our commitment is to work as a fully integrated team to fulfill the expectations of our colleagues, members, supporters, partners and future generations who depend on us.

Accountability

ICL will hold decision-makers and entities accountable for respecting the rule of law and will exercise our administrative and legal rights as needed.

Style Matters

The complex interplay between environmental protection, policy, politics and personalities means that how we are perceived by the outside world can directly affect our credibility and trust in key relationships. When we cannot find agreement and acceptable compromises, we will strive to find ways to disagree without being disagreeable.

Collaboration

Wherever and whenever possible, ICL works with others to find common ground and to create solutions that support the needs of all parties.

Flexibility and Innovation

Success requires as much art as science. There are likely to be several ways to accomplish our objectives; we do not let the “perfect” become the enemy of the “good.” We strive for the highest quality in our work and always look for new and better ways to advance ICL's mission.

For All Idahoans

ICL works on behalf of the diverse people of Idaho. To succeed, we need to understand and value differing perspectives, find common ground, and seek to bring people together in support of common goals.

OUTDOOR RECREATION IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

As Idahoans adapt to the rapidly evolving COVID-19 situation, many are turning to the outdoors for recreation, stress relief and exercise. Idaho has an abundance of trails and public lands to explore, but there are important health and safety measures to consider before you head out. **First, if you're sick, please stay home.**

Stay local.

Traveling increases the risk of spreading COVID-19. Many people are flocking to places like National Parks to find outdoor solace, but many parks are now experiencing an overwhelming increase in traffic. Also, healthcare systems in smaller communities like Ketchum, Stanley and McCall are at risk of being overwhelmed, especially if visitors get sick. Rural and remote communities are asking visitors to stay away during the outbreak to protect the health of their citizens. Please take into account current closures and research current regulations before heading out.

Keep at least 6 feet apart.

Even outdoors, it's important to maintain a safe distance from others. The CDC recommends staying at least 6 feet apart since the virus can be spread from respiratory droplets when an infected person sneezes or coughs. When you encounter others on a single track trail please step off the trail if necessary to let others pass at a safe distance — but do not keep walking once you have stepped off the trail. It's important to maintain these places we love, which includes avoiding widening current trails or creating new trails.

Hike at less busy times and seek out less popular trails.

Communities across the nation are having to shut down trails and parks because they are getting too busy. Your favorite trail is likely to be busier than usual, and it's important to avoid overcrowding to

ensure proper social distancing. Before you head out, consider the typical traffic on the trail. If it's usually busy, consider a new trail or visiting when traffic tends to be lower (like early in the morning). As always, make sure someone knows your destination and expected time of return.

Be safe in the backcountry (or don't go).

With ski resorts closed for the season, some people are looking toward the backcountry. Do not venture into the backcountry unless you have the proper gear and experience. Even if you are prepared, consider the potential risks of your backcountry activities. With the strain on our emergency systems and medical professionals, especially in rural communities, we need to be mindful of our decisions to take unnecessary risks. This is not the time to learn new potentially risky hobbies.

As always, practice Leave No Trace principles and respect our public lands.

Now more than ever it is vital to practice Leave No Trace principles and be respectful to Idaho's abundant trail systems. This includes checking for local closures, not hiking on muddy trails, not blocking trails, and being respectful to other patrons.

We know many people are looking to the outdoors for solace and exercise during these trying times. As you head outdoors, please follow the best practices laid out by medical experts and local officials. Enjoy the fresh air and your local trails (with proper social distancing), be kind to others, and stay safe and healthy!

For additional resources, please see the version of this article that was posted on our website at www.idahoconservation.org/blog.

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Josh Johnson Photo

NEW MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR NATIONAL FORESTS IN NORTH AND CENTRAL IDAHO

Do you like to hike, ski, hunt, fish, mountain bike, or raft? If so, chances are you spend a lot of time in Idaho's national forests, which cover roughly 40% (20 million acres) of all Idaho land.

And, those who spend a lot of time recreating in Idaho's great outdoors — especially the Nez Perce-Clearwater and Salmon Challis National Forests — should be interested in the U.S. Forest Service's drafting of new management plans for these two Idaho gems. Forest management plans are revised only once every 20 to 30 years and provide overarching guidance that all forest projects must adhere to, so they are crucial to get right.

As part of the forest management plan revision process, the Forest Service evaluates potential areas for protection under both the Wilderness Act and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. These plans also include direction for fish and wildlife habitat management.

If you've ever been to the Lochsa, Selway, or Clearwater rivers, then you've visited the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest. It's 4 million acres, consisting of lush forests, mountain peaks and free-flowing rivers. ICL recruited members to share their views on the Forest Service's draft plan for the Nez Perce-Clearwater at public meetings in Boise, Coeur d'Alene, Moscow, and Missoula, MT. One of ICL's primary goals is to secure wilderness area protections for the Mallard-Larkins, Great Burn and Meadow

Creek Roadless Areas in the Nez Perce-Clearwater. We are also working to secure proposals for new wild and scenic rivers, including the North and South Fork Clearwater rivers. The Forest Service expects to approve a final plan in 2021.

The Salmon-Challis National Forest is similarly bestowed with incredible, rugged scenery, vast roadless areas, and two of the nation's iconic rivers — the Middle Fork and Main Salmon. In this area, we've been involved for several years with the Central Idaho Public Lands Collaborative, a group of diverse stakeholders whose mission is to develop recommendations for the management of public lands that reflect the needs and desires of the general public. The Forest Service wants to know how well existing forest plans are working in the Salmon-Challis. We seek to ensure outdated elements of these plans are updated (possibly in a full plan revision) and to secure protections for new conservation designations in the region, such as the upper headwaters of the Middle Fork.

To learn more about these two forest plans and how you can get involved, text IDAHO LAND to 52886, follow ICL on Facebook, sign up to receive our emails, and check out our website. Stay tuned for future opportunities to have your say about our national forests.

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STUDENT ADVOCACY

Student and youth voices have always been on the forefront of environmental and social movements. Today, we see more and more opportunities for them to stand up and demand action on critically urgent issues such as climate change, endangered species, and clean air and water. These young folks want policies that make meaningful impacts for a sustainable future, because, quite simply, it's more their future than that of older generations.

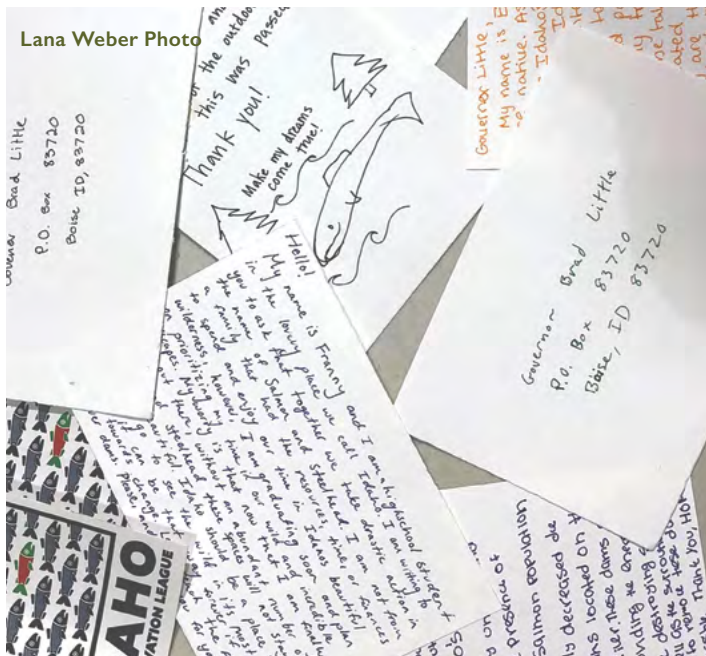
We're lucky to witness their activism, advocacy and demand for change. Whether it's a coordinated protest on an international scale, as we have seen under the leadership of Greta Thunberg, a policy change at the local level, or a series of thoughtful choices students make during daily rituals. Have you seen how many 15 year olds carry around reusable straws?

This past year ICL partnered with Boise's One Stone Lab School (9th-12th grade) to share what we know about the Midas Gold mining project near Yellow Pine. Students engaged on both sides of the issue, which included presentations from ICL, meetings and tours of the site, an open forum in our office after the tour, and meetings with area Tribes.

Resulting from our collaboration with One Stone, ICL created the role of Student Environmental Advocacy Coordinator. We mentored Asa Menlove, a senior and strong supporter of ICL's salmon and steelhead campaign, for this role. We helped Asa develop a guiding voice, materials and support as he testified in front of the Northwest Power and Conservation Council, created student-driven events, did his own independent research and wrote letters to the editor.

Due to Asa's stellar, path-breaking work, ICL will continue to offer the Student Environmental Advocacy Coordinator role, which we hope to open in September, to a high school student in Boise who has a vested interest in environmental action. Through these programs, ICL is finding ways to not only encourage student involvement in our campaigns, but also give students the space to grow, inspire and create. Stay tuned as we help them use their collective strength and voices to tell their own conservation stories.

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THE NEVER-ENDING WORK OF CONSERVATION

I often think of the Idaho Conservation League's work as a relay race: current members, supporters and staff carrying the baton forward from those that ran the leg before us. Our first relay leg started all the way back in 1973 when ICL was founded. The people who came together to found ICL then were picking up Idaho's piece of a national movement to protect our natural world.

Back then, the ink from bedrock environmental laws had just started to dry. In 1970, President Richard Nixon signed the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in recognition of the impacts human decisions and projects have on the natural world, and requiring federal agencies to take a hard look at environmental and public health impacts from these decisions. Two years later, the Clean Water Act (CWA) was established to "restore and maintain the integrity of our nation's waters" and to achieve water quality levels that are "fishable and swimmable" across the board.

These bedrock environmental protections, though, have taken a beating under the Trump administration. Already this year, proposed changes to NEPA and the CWA gut these laws in ways that even a majority of scientists appointed under the current administration disagree with.

NEPA ensures public involvement and participation in major federal projects regardless of whether you're talking about a plan that will guide national forest management for 20-30 years or a near term recreation plan for your favorite trail system. A foundational principle of NEPA is public input into such projects.

However, proposed changes to NEPA remove many of the public comment and input opportunities the law provides. The changes also discount the contributions to climate change of many federal projects as well as anything else that could be considered a "cumulative impact" of a project proposal.

In January, a new definition of a water of the United States, or WOTUS, was announced. It's an important definition, as the CWA only applies to WOTUSs. The new definition removes myriad rivers and streams, not because they don't carry pollution but because they don't flow year round. It also removes many wetlands and ponds where the connections between the wetland or pond and a river are not apparent to the eye.

For the most part, the new definition ignores the science of hydrology which tells us that there is a connection between surface water (rivers, lakes, ponds, wetlands) and groundwater (wells, any water underground, most drinking water). In short, what just happened to the CWA allows more dumping of pollution at no expense to the polluters as the Trump Environmental Protection Agency just redefined a WOTUS to include far less water than it used to.

However, all hope is not lost. We are pushing back against these NEPA and CWA changes. We'll continue to champion Idaho's water and landscapes in many ways, including meeting with elected officials and agency staff, organizing public comment, and litigation.

And as we think back to ICL's founding and the bedrock of today's environmental protections, let's remind ourselves that we'll also celebrate another environmental milestone this year: Earth Day's 50th anniversary on April 22!

Created to acknowledge the importance of environmental protection, Earth Day is as important today as it was 50 years ago. And we should all celebrate all that's been accomplished; a moment of rest and reflection in the ongoing relay race that is conservation.

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With contributions from Randy Fox,
Conservation Associate



NORTHERN IDAHO

SPEAK UP FOR BEAUTIFUL LAKE COEUR D'ALENE

Since I last wrote about Lake Coeur d'Alene's water pollution issues in ICL's October 2019 newsletter, a lot has happened.

The Coeur d'Alene Lake Collaborative hosted the Our Gem Symposium, an annual forum where nearly 200 scientists, business owners, tribal leaders, elected officials and community members gathered to discuss the health and future of Lake Coeur d'Alene. A common message emerged: The lake needs our help.

Forum participants understood that toxic waste from over 100 years of mining in the Silver Valley lurks below the placid surface of Lake Coeur d'Alene. And if a fragile balance in the lake's water chemistry isn't managed responsibly, this waste could create an even bigger disaster.

At the symposium, a representative from Gov. Brad Little's office announced that the State of Idaho had begun the process of seeking an independent, third party to review water quality data and produce an assessment of the lake and recommendations for addressing challenges.

Meanwhile, earlier this year, the Environmental Protection Agency began gathering public input for its five-year review of ongoing federal Superfund site cleanup in the Coeur d'Alene Basin. The Idaho Conservation League was able to secure an extension for public comment, through April 30, on this review.

It's critical we send a message to the EPA that it's long overdue to take water pollution in Lake Coeur d'Alene seriously and respond to the potential disaster that lurks underneath the lake's surface. We've already gathered over 100 comments! You can help by visiting www.idahoconservation.org/action and submitting a comment from the comfort of your home! Please join us in speaking up for the health and safety of Lake Coeur d'Alene.

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John Robison Photo

EASTERN IDAHO

THE KILGORE MINE PROJECT: UNCERTAINTY IN IDAHO'S CENTENNIAL MOUNTAINS

The Kilgore gold exploration project in the Centennial Mountains has been a roller coaster ride — but not the fun kind. The Centennials form an important east-west wildlife corridor between the greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and the vast wilderness areas of Central Idaho. Water from the Centennials also sustains the Camas National Wildlife Refuge and provides East Idaho farmers with precious water for irrigation.

All of that is in jeopardy, however, because a Canadian mining company, Otis Gold, has expanded its exploratory drilling project in the area with hopes of turning one of the peaks into an open-pit, cyanide heap leach gold mine. This type of mining was banned just a few miles north in Montana over 20 years ago due to extensive water contamination issues.

It looked like the Centennials had received a welcome reprieve this winter when the U.S. District Court ruled favorably on a lawsuit filed by Advocates for the West on behalf of the Idaho Conservation League and the Greater Yellowstone Coalition in November 2018. The court found that the Forest Service acted “arbitrarily and

capriciously” in approving the exploration project and had not adequately considered the project’s potential impacts on water quality and the Yellowstone cutthroat trout in one of the new drilling areas. However, it remains to be seen when drilling can resume, or if further environmental analysis will be required.

Meanwhile, Excellon Resources, a mining company based in Toronto recently acquired Otis Gold with plans to continue drilling at Kilgore. Excellon has been talking up Kilgore as the “Round Mountain” of Idaho, which is concerning given that the project in Nevada that they are referring to is an extensive open-pit mine ill-suited for the shallow water table and spring runoff that’s found in the Centennials.

Despite the ups and downs ahead of us, ICL and our partners are committed to a long-term effort to protect clean water and wildlife in the Centennials.

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CENTRAL IDAHO

RESTORING ICONIC BALD MOUNTAIN

Over the last 20 years, a myriad of insects and diseases have severely damaged forests throughout the Wood River Valley. A particular hotspot centers on Bald Mountain, not only Ketchum and Sun Valley's main economic driver, but also a local icon fondly called Baldy.

Wildfires in recent decades have made circles around Baldy, creating an island of green forest. Unfortunately, reddish-brown patches of unhealthy trees, clearly visible to the naked eye, have infiltrated this island of green.

Federal agencies and the Sun Valley Company are working together to save Baldy's forests by applying beetle-specific pheromones that deter insects, and by treating the area with measures such as thinning and removing infested trees. However, this hard work has yet to be scaled up to a level that outpaces the beetle epidemic and forest die-off.

In response, ICL and the 5B Restoration Coalition (5B is the license plate code for Blaine County) have been working closely with the U.S. Forest Service

as the agency develops a more appropriate scale project to address long-term forest health and safety issues on Baldy. The project, which is still undergoing environmental review, may start this fall.

In the meantime, community members throughout the Wood River Valley, with the help of the National Forest Foundation, have rallied together in support of improving the health of Baldy's forests. Volunteer efforts to ski through Baldy's forests and remove last year's pheromone patches before installing fresh replacements patches to ward off the beetle are understandably delayed for the time being, as are the Forest Service's plans to involve the community in planting new seedlings. However, we hope these plans are able to be rescheduled and started up again when appropriate.

Josh Johnson

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John Robison Photo

SOUTHERN IDAHO

MORE THAN 11,000 COMMENTS HELPED PROTECT PUBLIC LANDS

Last spring, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) released a draft Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the Four Rivers District, which covers more than 780,000 acres stretching from Glens Ferry to Brownlee Reservoir. The draft RMP stripped protections from a number of conservation areas. I'm pleased to report that earlier this year the BLM brought significant protections back into the plan, a result of Idahoans speaking up for the lands they love.

On February 14, the BLM released its final plan that will inform and guide resource management in the area for the next 20-30 years. ICL engaged our members and worked with our partners to provide comments and recommendations to the BLM, resulting in over 11,000 responses!

Your responses helped extend BLM protections on public lands, sensitive plants and wildlife from east of Mountain Home to the Boise Foothills all the way up to the fringes of Hells Canyon. Here are some highlights:

- Protections for the Boise Front grew to 15,000+ acres and will enjoy protections for sensitive plants and as a recreation area.
- Critical habitat for upland birds and big game, nearly 86,000 acres, will be maintained in the Bennett Hills east of Mountain Home as part of what's known as a designated Backcountry Conservation Area.

- Nearby King Hill Creek and Box Creek will be considered Wilderness Study Areas, which means these lands have the characteristics of wilderness and could be future candidates for a Wilderness Act designation.
- To the west, near Hell's Canyon, the Sheep Mountain/Wildhorse River area has been identified as Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC), which are generally roadless areas that are primarily undeveloped and "primitive."
- Habitat protection for the Hixon Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse increased more than four-fold to 18,660 acres.

As you can see, ICL and Idahoans worked hard to protect our public BLM lands. To put this into context, similar BLM RMPs in Alaska, Colorado, Montana, and Oregon, unfortunately, resulted in zero acres of LWC protections.

Thank you for your commitment to our state and your willingness to stand up for your public lands. While much work remains, together we have achieved much and can continue to make forward progress in protecting the special places, plants, and wildlife that we all love.

Randy Fox

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FEDERAL AGENCIES CHART A PATH TO EXTINCTION

In February, federal agencies managing the Columbia-Snake River hydropower system released their Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), analyzing the impact of the system on society and natural resources, including Idaho's threatened salmon and steelhead. The draft stems from a 2016 federal court decision calling for "an approach that will finally move the listed species out of peril," but it does not answer this call.

Unsurprisingly, the DEIS rejects breaching of the lower Snake River dams, despite admitting that this alternative "showed the highest predicted potential smolt-to-adult returns (SARs) for Snake River salmon and steelhead." A higher SAR means more fish return to their spawning grounds.

The agencies' analysis also assigned an "uncertain" economic benefit to the restoration of salmon and steelhead populations to Idaho, despite the reliance of many communities on these fish and the potential for a booming recreational economy if they are restored. The draft instead aims to barely improve fish survival via spill operations (more water released to help push fish over the dam, rather than through dangerous turbines), resulting in predicted returns nowhere near Idaho's goals for recovery.

The federal plan is unlikely to lead to removal of Idaho's fish from the endangered species list, and

will never bring Idaho the abundant, harvestable, and ecologically significant fish populations we all want. Idaho's U.S. Rep. Mike Simpson sharply criticized the document's recommendations on Capitol Hill by saying, "The one thing that [the DEIS plan] will not do is speed up the migration of salmon to the Pacific Ocean, which is now about twice as long as it used to be...It takes them twice as long, warmer water, more predators...We don't have a Columbia River anymore." He later added that this status quo of operations is "just not working."

ICL will continue to advocate for and engage in creating regional solutions together with other stakeholders in the Columbia-Snake River system. Farmers, irrigators, and utilities have real concerns about dam breaching, and we're ready to engage in dialogue with these groups to ensure that saving salmon and steelhead does not come at their expense. The DEIS is an exercise in what will not work, and we look forward to swiftly moving away from it, and toward a path to recovery for Idaho's iconic fish. Rep. Simpson sums it up best, **"Everything we do on the Columbia River can be done differently if we choose to do it differently ... Salmon need one thing. They need a river."**

Mitch Cutter

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Your voice matters! If we don't take bold action, Idaho's wild salmon and steelhead may go extinct. Text "Idaho Fish" to 52886 or visit www.idahoconservation.org for more information.



Lara Rozell Photo

DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOU GET YOUR ELECTRICITY FROM?

Ever create a budget or business plan? You know, the sort of document that gets you from here to there. That's what Idaho's three major electric utility companies are all in the process of doing right now — a process that will inform the future of energy in Idaho and whether we address climate change.

Every two years, the law requires electric utility companies in Idaho to develop a long-range planning document or Integrated Resource Plan (IRP). In these plans, electric companies forecast how energy demand will change over the next 20 years and, based on this forecast, create a plan that identifies the amount and type of energy resources the company will use to meet that demand (i.e. coal, gas, wind, solar, etc.).

These plans are significant because where we get our electricity from determines things like how cheap or expensive our electricity is and how much or how little we impact our air quality, water quality, and the climate. So, if you pay a bill to Idaho Power, Rocky Mountain Power, or Avista, you're about

to start hearing a whole lot more from the Idaho Conservation League about how to get involved in these plans.

This is your opportunity to have an important say in what sort of energy mix your utility will plan for in decades to come. **Now, is the time to say YES to more renewable sources of energy, such as wind and solar, and NO to fossil fuels.**

If we want to influence where we get our electricity from, we have to actively participate in a utility's long-range planning process. If you care about the future of energy in Idaho and addressing climate change, it's time to dig in. ICL is here to help. Interested in hearing more? Visit www.idahoconservation.org and sign up to receive our email updates!

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JOURNEYS IN SNAKE RIVER COUNTRY: THREATENED WATER AND HIDDEN GEMS

As Idaho's snowpack melts from higher elevations, we are reminded that a good amount of this water flows into the mighty Snake River. Before the spring thaw and social distancing recommendations due to COVID-19, a crew of ICL staff, members, volunteers, and nonprofit partners strapped on our snowshoes and ventured into the Magic Valley's South Hills, where the headwaters of several tributaries of the Snake begin.

After driving up the desert canyon carved by Rock Creek, we arrived in a snowy forest as blue skies peaked through the cloud cover. Shelley McEuen of Friends of Rock Creek led the way across the rolling terrain and explained the journey of the creek from the protected national forest in which we stood down through the agricultural plains and industrial district of Twin Falls before its confluence with the Snake River. Despite these human impacts, we also learned that beavers flourish in parts of the creek, indicating ecological health.

We hiked through the forest for about a mile before turning around, stopping at several ponds that feed into Rock Creek and listening to early season birdsong in the trees. The hardest part of the hike was our ascent back up to the road, but our snowshoes handled the incline well. After returning from our snowshoe expedition, the group convened for a sunny apré at Magic Mountain Ski Resort where we

examined maps of the area to see Rock Creek as just one piece of the larger puzzle of the Snake River system.

Like Rock Creek, the Snake River rises from pristine headwaters before setting downstream on a journey of frequent diversions, high-impact use from industrial agriculture, and severely declining water quality. Though the Snake River is a hardworking river, its jewel-toned springs, canyon walls, whitewater rapids, and mountain headwaters are all part of a special and unique landscape.

Our snowshoe hike is one of many adventures ICL had planned to connect Idahoans to the rich and iconic natural scenery that surrounds us. ICL had plans for multiple member outings including hikes along the canyon rim, paddling in the springs, and service projects along the Snake. However, with social distancing measures still in place from concerns over COVID-19, these activities will be postponed until medical experts indicate such outings are once again safe. In the meantime, we will still be working diligently to protect and restore Idaho's Snake River. Please visit www.idahoconservation.org to stay up-to-date about the current status of our work and events.

Hannah Smay

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Kelly Hewes Photo

A NEW CHAPTER FOR ICL'S EMERGING LEADERS FOR IDAHO'S ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

ICL's Emerging Leaders for Idaho's Environment (ELIE) program is gearing up for its third year. The goal of this program is to empower and engage the next generation of environmental leaders in Idaho. As we welcome new ELIE members to the ICL team, we celebrate the incredible energy and enthusiasm our 2019-2020 ELIE cohort brought to our conservation community. Last year, we had our cohort split into two ELIE groups, one in Boise and one in Ketchum.

The Boise ELIE crew was excited to kick off the year supporting ICL's salmon and steelhead work. They held a screening of the film *Damnation* at Neckar Coffee, a local Boise coffee shop, and packed the house! The Boise ELIE crew also held a kick-off event to support ICL's September Member Drive at the Boise bar Backyard at Franklin House in an effort to get more young professionals to join ICL as members. Boise's ELIE group also volunteered at multiple events, including ICL's annual porch party and a trail maintenance day in the spring. ELIE members found ways to use their own backgrounds and skills to support conservation in Idaho, from inviting ICL staff to present in classrooms, to identifying spaces to hold events, to lending their photography and graphic design skills, and much more.

In Ketchum, the contributions of the wonderful emerging leaders in Central Idaho have been just as extraordinary. In addition to bringing more than 50 new members into ICL's community, the Central Idaho ELIE team took on many creative and impactful projects in support of ICL's conservation work. The crew bolstered ICL's salmon and steelhead campaign by creating postcards for fish advocates to send to elected officials, tabling at events and films, testifying at Governor Little's Salmon Workgroup, and recruiting participants for an evening storytelling program about Idaho fish. In their final few weeks in the program, the Central Idaho ELIE team was busy with outreach for the Bald Mountain Stewardship Project, drumming up public comments and designing bold campaign stickers.

Our ELIE members are wilderness stewards, community leaders, creative minds, passionate anglers and committed educators. We thank these incredible conservation advocates for strengthening ICL and our community!

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POWER TO THE PEOPLE

I was one and half years old when the first Earth Day was celebrated on April 22, 1970.

Smog choked America's cities. Rivers stank. Hell, rivers burned. Fish and wildlife were going extinct. Gas guzzling cars belched lead into the air — causing birth defects and cutting lives short.

People stood up. They organized. Americans from all walks of life said enough is enough. In short order, our great country came together. Congress passed the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Endangered Species Act. The progress made since then to protect the environment has been astounding.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. Should we celebrate? Today, we face an environmental crisis of epic proportions: Climate Change. As the people of Earth call out for leadership, sadly, America's leadership has turned its back. Progress made in years past is being stripped away.

Protections for water and air, for wildlife and wild places are being reversed. No past success or commitment — big or small — is safe: science removed from decision-making, water quality standards lessened, automobile fuel efficiency

standards weakened, efforts to cut global warming emissions abandoned. Instead, a headlong charge into unfettered fossil-fuel development.

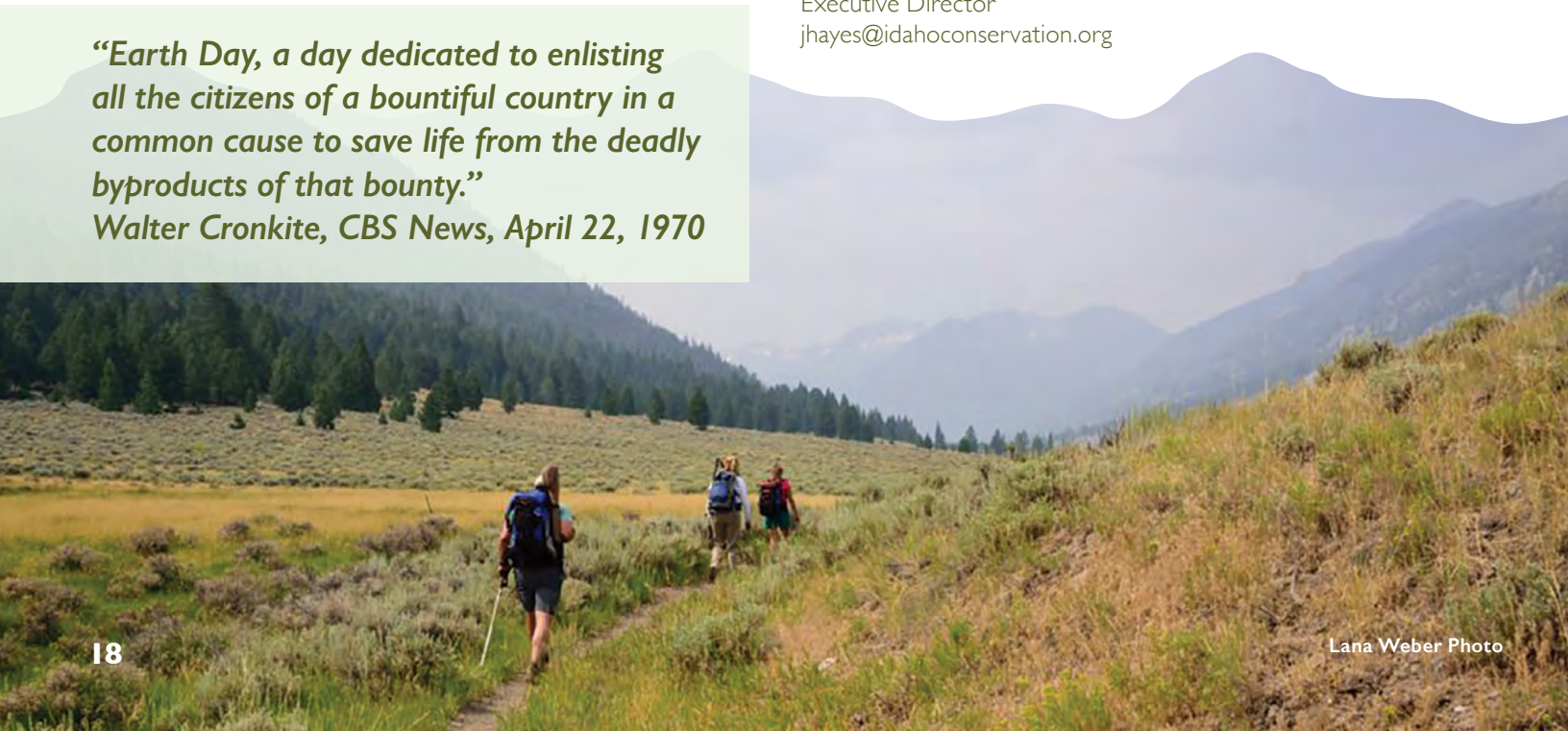
Discouraging? Yes. But even in this very difficult moment for conservation in our nation, I have hope. Real hope. Because with your help we are making a difference. Together we are tackling climate change by putting Idaho on a path to be carbon neutral. We are cleaning up our rivers and working to restore our wild salmon and steelhead, and ensuring that our wild lands are a refuge for wildlife and for people to nourish their spirits.

When I think about my two teenage kids, I do wonder what sort of world their children will live in. Let's not let future generations down. Let's not let ourselves down. Don't just celebrate the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. Let's use this moment, this crisis, to recommit ourselves to the activism that created Earth Day.

Together, let's think globally, act locally. We have serious, urgent work to do. It is daunting — but we frankly have no choice. There can be no Plan B because there is no Planet B.

Justin Hayes
Executive Director
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“Earth Day, a day dedicated to enlisting all the citizens of a bountiful country in a common cause to save life from the deadly byproducts of that bounty.”
Walter Cronkite, CBS News, April 22, 1970





Legislative Wrap Up

Mary Beth Whitaker Photo

SOME UPS AND DOWNS, BUT IN THE END... NOT MUCH CHANGED

Lawmakers hurried out of the Statehouse at the end of March as COVID-19 entered Idaho, marking one of the shortest sessions in recent years. A few legislators left early for fear of spreading the virus, and ICL was forced to abandon the marble hallways as the last weeks dragged on. Still, we made Idaho's Voice for Conservation heard, just as we've done since 1973.

As predicted, the 2020 session took up many issues that remained unresolved from 2019: reconsideration of Administrative Rules, K-12 Science Standards, property taxes, initiative reform, and industrial hemp production.

Science Standards survive (sort of)



Mary Beth Whitaker Photo

For several years running, the Idaho Legislature has battled over administrative rules that include K-12 Science Standards, which provide minimum requirements for schools to ensure students receive a robust education, including an understanding of climate

change. In 2018, after years of wrangling, ICL was pleased that the rules were finally approved by the Senate Education Committee. However, because the 2019 session failed to extend any Administrative Rules, all 8,000+ pages of code had to be reviewed and resubmitted for legislative approval, including the Science Standards.

The House Education Committee again took aim and rejected the Science Standards (insisting that climate change does not belong in public education). Once again, thankfully, the Senate stood firm and upheld the standards. Ultimately, the legislature did approve an interim committee to review all education standards in detail, so there's a good chance they'll be back in the spotlight in future years.

Pesticides take center stage

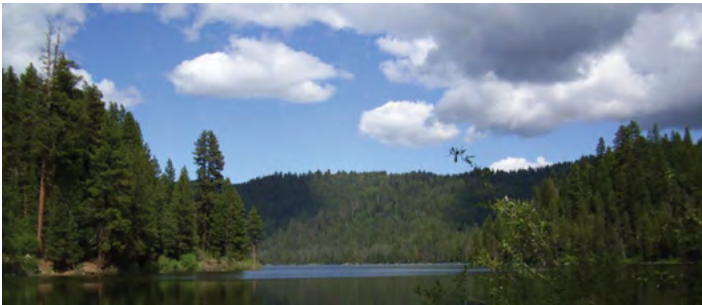
In May 2019, a crop duster sprayed fungicide on farmworkers in an adjacent hops field. The workers involved in the incident fell ill and the pilot received only a warning. Shockingly, the response from the Idaho Agricultural Aviation Association were proposals to strike important rules and weaken the state agriculture department's oversight.



USDA Forest Service Photo

The House Agricultural Affairs Committee accepted these proposals and rushed them through. Thankfully, the Senate took time to understand the implications and amended the bill, restoring important public health protections. It still wasn't enough for Gov. Little, who vetoed the bill after the legislature adjourned. Unfortunately, his administration will concur with the House's rule changes, meaning that some existing protections will be restored, while others are allowed to expire. A mixed bag.

Public land assaults come in many forms



Mike Charters Photo

While the legislature didn't take up a public lands takeover directly, there were some skirmishes near the edges.

In January, the interim Federalism Committee invited former Utah Rep. Ken Ivory to the Statehouse. Ivory has been criticized for his proposals to seize and privatize public lands. Last fall, after directing a state contract to a private firm, Ivory retired from the Utah Legislature and went to work for that firm.

The firm estimates the value of public lands to calculate federal payments, or Payments in Lieu of

Taxes. Ivory said he could plug in any numbers to inflate values in an effort to demand higher payments. The truth is, demanding more money from the feds is a fool's errand and Idaho's Congressional Delegation has been working for years on meaningful reform to this important program.

Still, the House introduced a resolution in the session's waning days, which passed on a party-line vote. The measure would have allocated \$250,000 for Ivory's firm to run a "pilot program." ICL and our partners criticized lawmakers for advancing a controversial measure late in the session, especially during the coronavirus crisis. With little time left, the Senate shunted it to the State Affairs Committee and refused to consider it. More good news!

We were also thankful that the Senate Resources and Environment Committee Chairman held a bill that would have further injected politics into Idaho wildlife management. The House had passed the proposal to eliminate current law requiring political balance on the Fish and Game Commission.

Holding (and stopping) bills works both ways though, and it was unfortunate that the same Senate Resources Chairman put the brakes on the Public Access Protection Act, which would have established a citizen's right to sue those who illegally restrict public land access. The Wilks Brothers and others have illegitimately closed public lands and roads, but currently only county sheriffs can challenge these closures in court. We hope to see more progress next year on this important issue.



Paul Sableman Photo

Fish and wildlife issues

The House Resources Committee Chairman put the brakes on a resolution that sought to better understand and address the decline of birds in Idaho (studies show a 30% decline across North America

since 1970). Despite passing the Senate unanimously, at least one Senator had a change of heart and asked the House chairman to hold the bill. Unfortunately... he did.

It wasn't all flat tires and dead ends this year, as some bills made it through. One that we supported closed a loophole only a poacher could love. In February, a state judge threw out a conviction for poaching a cow moose in North Idaho. The law referenced "animals" and since the man only poached one moose, he was able to walk away scot-free. Thankfully, the legislature corrected this error, so if you poach a single moose, elk, or any wildlife species with a \$1,000+ value, you'll be guilty of a felony.



USFWS Photo

Other measures that passed included a misguided memorial in support of the lower Snake River dams, which impede the recovery of salmon and steelhead in Idaho. As we pointed out in our testimony before the Senate Agricultural Affairs Committee, we support finding solutions that make communities whole. We all benefit from a healthy economy, investments in a clean energy future, efficient transportation infrastructure, and restored fisheries. Sadly, the memorial passed, pitting communities against one another and failing to promote solutions.

Despite House leaders' early statements that water quality would be a focus during the session, we didn't see much action related to toxic algae outbreaks, declining groundwater quality or other important issues. We were pleased, though, that the legislature continued funding for a middle Snake River monitoring project to better understand water quality trends in the river. ICL's Snake River Campaign seeks to make the river swimmable and fishable again, and a better

understanding of current conditions and trends will contribute to our success.

Climate and transportation issues

In 2019, the House Environment, Energy and Technology Committee hosted a hearing on the ongoing and anticipated impacts from climate change on Idaho. The committee heard from experts from the University of Idaho, Boise State and INL, along with leaders from Simplot and HP. In response, the Heartland Institute, which bills itself as a "free-market think tank," reported that climate change isn't happening in Idaho, and even if it is, it benefits the state.

The siren song was too sweet for House leaders to resist, so they invited the institute's James Taylor to present his findings to the House Resources Committee. Too bad for them, Taylor kept referring to Idaho as "Iowa" and couldn't name a single state scientist who supported his view that climate change will be beneficial to Idaho.

On climate change, construction standards for homes and businesses have a direct relationship to our energy costs and emissions. That's why we were encouraged when the Idaho Building Code Board submitted updated energy efficiency standards to the legislature.



CC Photo

While we had hoped the board would go further, this was the first year they had reached consensus. Regrettably, that consensus didn't extend to the legislature. The House Business Committee moved to strike the efficiency standards altogether. The Senate Commerce Committee, though, went the other way and approved them with bipartisan support, meaning they will take effect.

We weren't so lucky on a measure defeated by the Senate to recommend consideration of Electric Vehicle infrastructure in new apartment buildings.

Similarly, a good bill to allow consideration of High Occupancy Vehicle highway lanes passed the Senate but was held by the Chairman of the House Transportation Committee and didn't receive a hearing.

Conclusion

In the end, the Idaho Legislature left a lot on the table. They failed to agree on Administrative Rules, provide property tax relief, address important transportation issues or advance rules for hemp transport. Legislative inaction cuts both ways though, and we successfully opposed many bills this year. That can count for a win, right?

The real win though, is successfully connecting ICL's supporters to decision makers in the Idaho Statehouse. It remains an honor and a privilege to carry on the tradition of serving as Your Voice for Conservation.

To see a full list of the bills we worked on this session, visit: www.idahoconservation.org/billtracker.

Until next year, esto perpetua,

Jonathan Oppenheimer

Director of External Relations

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Matt Benjamin Photo

HELP PROTECT IDAHO BY MAKING A GIFT DURING IDAHO GIVES!

Help ICL protect the clean water, clean air and beautiful places that make Idaho special by making a gift or renewing your annual support during Idaho Gives April 23 - May 7. Thanks to the generosity of the Benjamin Family Foundation all gifts will be matched up to \$20,000 — doubling your impact for Idaho's environment! When we all work together, we can protect this beautiful state we call home for generations to come.



*Join us during
Idaho Gives.*

ICL has continued to see many exciting changes and additions to our team. Austin Walkins was promoted from Senior Conservation Associate to Climate Campaign Coordinator and will now oversee our energy, transportation and agriculture work to combat climate change. ICL also offered our public lands fellow Randy Fox a position he accepted as a Conservation Associate. Randy will continue to support our public lands and work closely with public lands director John Robison.



Kelley Hewes photo

Goodbye Amanda

Amanda Gardner served as ICL's development assistant for just over two years. ICL is bidding a bittersweet farewell to Amanda, who recently accepted a position with her partner as co-directors of the White Clouds Preserve at Greenfire Ranch. Amanda has been a wonderful addition to ICL's team. Her sweet, optimistic personality will be sorely missed, but ICL is excited to support Amanda as she moves on to her next wonderful adventure. We would like to thank her for her passion, dedication and enthusiasm. Her bright, happy demeanor has left a mark on us all.



Photo Courtesy Mitch Cutter

Welcome Mitch

In January, ICL welcomed Mitch Cutter to serve as our salmon and steelhead advocacy fellow. Mitch comes to the team with a background and interest in species conservation and energy — a perfect combination for the salmon and steelhead work he has been diving into. After graduating from Whitman College with a degree in Biology, he worked in the energy field as a consultant, helping utilities and federal agencies plan for the future and modernize to better serve their ratepayers and the public. We are excited to welcome this hoppy-beer loving, skiing enthusiast to the ICL team.



Photo Courtesy Annelise Eagleton

Thank you Annelise

During this legislative session, ICL was fortunate to have Annelise Eagleton join us as our legislative intern. Annelise worked on multiple advocacy projects, including protecting public lands, upholding Idaho's building Energy Conservation Code, and promoting and upholding Idaho State K-12 Science Standards. She wrote a resolution that passed the Idaho Senate calling for legislative support to study declining bird populations, and worked to bring farmworker voices to the legislature to oppose a bill that would weaken pesticide protections. Thank you, Annelise, for your wonderful work this legislative session!

THANK YOU to all of the volunteers from around the state who have given their time, energy and enthusiasm to supporting the Idaho Conservation League's work to protect this beautiful wild Idaho we all call home. We could not do the work we do without your support.

Membership renewal made easier! Your annual membership renewal date is printed on the mailing label below. Please help save costs by renewing your membership before it expires. Renew online at www.idahoconservation.org or use the enclosed envelope.



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Wild Idaho!

For decades, ICL members, partners, staff and board have gathered at beautiful Redfish Lake Lodge in Stanley, Idaho in May for our annual conference, *Wild Idaho!*

For public health reasons, we will not be meeting in our traditional way this year. However, the ICL staff and board are exploring other options to connect you, our members, with our conservation work, and to bring our wonderful community together.

We'll keep you posted, and we'll see you soon!