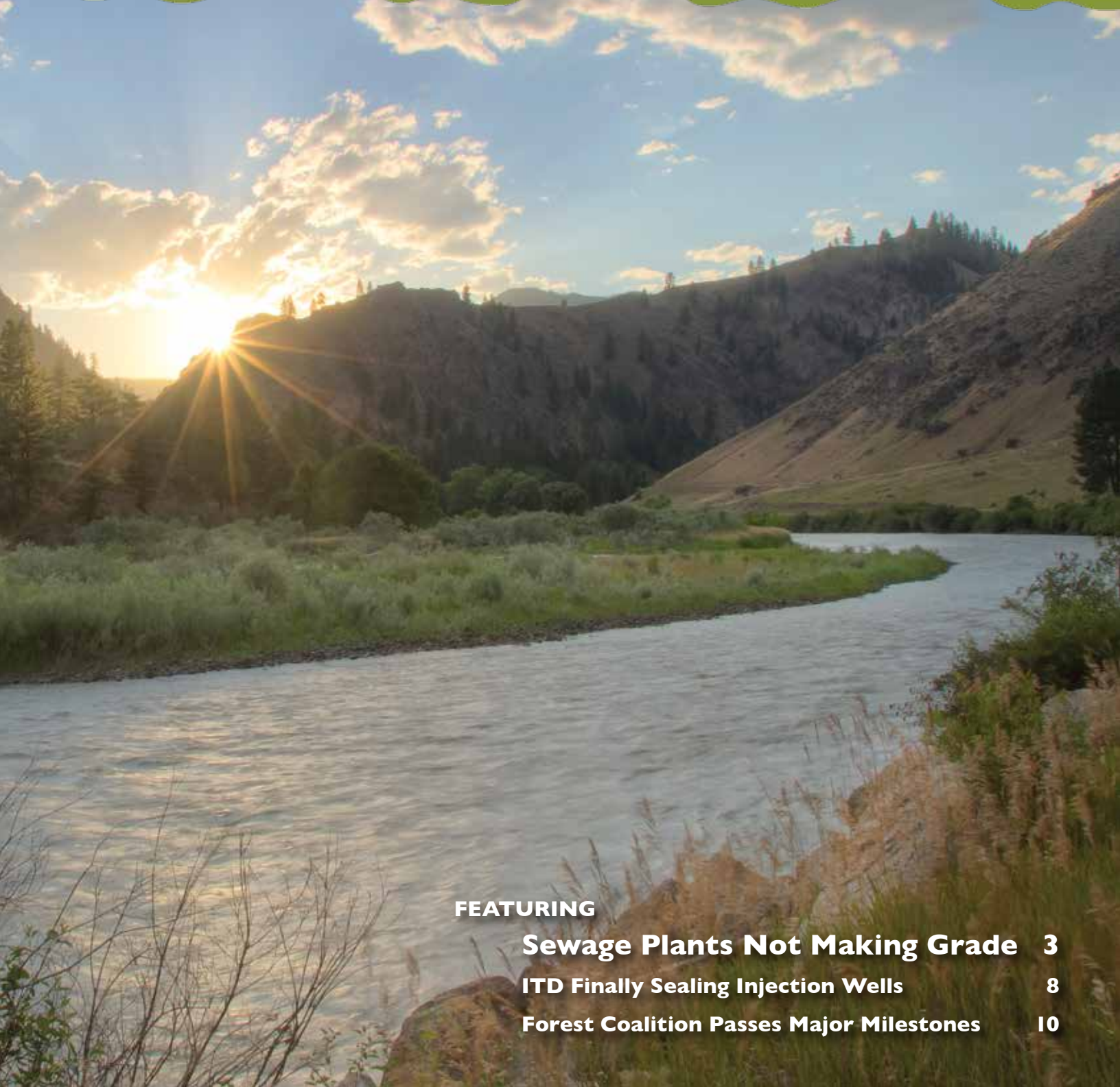




IDAHO  
CONSERVATION  
LEAGUE

Vol XX No 3  
October 2017

# The Idaho Conservationist



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- Lori Gibson Banducci, Vice Chair, Boise
- Bill Weppner, Secretary, Boise
- Julie Richardson, Treasurer, Hailey
- Tanya Anderson, Victor
- Judy Baker, Emmett
- Kahle Becker, Boise
- Jerry Brady, Idaho Falls
- Carolyn Coiner, Twin Falls
- Paul Cunningham, Boise
- David Eichberg, Boise
- Steve Lockwood, Sandpoint
- Jim Norton, Boise
- John O'Connor, Bonners Ferry
- Tom Page, Hailey
- Rebecca Patton, Hailey
- Buddy Paul, Coeur d'Alene
- Jerry Scheid, Idaho Falls
- Kim Trotter, Driggs
- Margrit von Braun, Moscow

# Andrus's Legacy

Glenn Oakley



Rick Johnson

*I was with a group of Idaho Conservation League supporters in the new White Clouds Wilderness when Cecil Andrus passed. The mountain he helped save, Castle Peak, loomed high above as we camped under what would have been tailings from an open-pit mine had he not won the 1970 governor's race.*

*"The mountain that made a governor," he said about Castle Peak, and Andrus never lost touch with the White Clouds. An avid outdoorsman, he hunted a mountain goat in the Boulders. His last elk hunt was in the White Clouds in his eighties.*

*Supporting our work with Rep. Mike Simpson on a Boulder-White Clouds wilderness designation yet frustrated with the congressional stalemate, a few years ago, Andrus encouraged ICL to pivot strategically. We should focus on President Barack Obama, he argued, and seek a national monument, which could be created by presidential order alone. It would be political leverage or a worthy protection in its own right. "You have an opportunity," he said, "Don't overreach. Get it done." We did.*

*On August 7, 2015, I walked out of the White House, after joining Simpson as Obama signed the Boulder-White Clouds wilderness bill. My first phone call was to Andrus. "We finally got it done, governor."*

*Andrus famously used a bold monument strategy in Alaska as President Jimmy Carter's Interior Secretary. After Congress acted, over 100 million acres were protected, one of the nation's greatest conservation achievements. Andrus's legacy to the country was profound. So was ICL's Andrus friendship. I am grateful to have been part of both.*

*For more, read my blog on Cecil Andrus at [www.idahoconservation.org/blog/cecil-andrus-remembrance](http://www.idahoconservation.org/blog/cecil-andrus-remembrance).*

*The cover of this issue features a photograph from ICL's 2017 artist in residence, Linda Lantzy: A summer sunset over the Salmon River in the Salmon-Challis National Forest.*

**Rick Johnson**  
Executive Director  
[rjohnson@idahoconservation.org](mailto:rjohnson@idahoconservation.org)

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Moon Pass / Linda Lantzy

# Idaho Sewage Plants Not Making Grade

When you flush your toilet, the contents don't magically disappear. Sewage gets cleaned at a sewage treatment plant operated by your city and then discharged to your local river. Along with public safety and roads, sewage treatment is a critical function of local government.

Idahoans love to fish and swim in the many rivers and lakes in our state, so effective sewage treatment plants are absolutely vital to protecting human health and water quality. Imagine how you'd feel about your children wading in a creek polluted with poorly treated sewage.

Right now, 114 municipal sewage plants in Idaho discharge treated sewage into rivers. These operate under permits that limit how much pollution they can discharge. Unfortunately, sewage plants in Idaho violated water quality requirements a staggering 1,768 times from 2014 through 2016.

These violations are serious and can harm human health. Pollutants like *E. coli* can cause severe illness, and mercury can render fish unsafe to eat. Excess phosphorus can increase algae growth, which depletes oxygen levels in water and harms fish. Ammonia and chlorine can be lethal to fish.

The Idaho Conservation League recently reviewed discharges from these 114 facilities. What we found shocked us. In the last three years, only 19 percent of treatment plants in Idaho operated without violations; 81 percent had discharges that violated their permit limits.

While no discharge violations are acceptable, some facilities are failing much worse than others. The 10 worst performing facilities were responsible for nearly half of all violations in the entire state. This is totally unacceptable.

(continued on next page)

*Keeping our water clean is a priority. It's a core value that we all share; therefore, it's a responsibility that we all share in. Municipal sewage treatment plants are on the front line in protecting our rivers and our health.*





## Idaho Sewage Plants Not Making Grade (cont.)

To help Idahoans understand the issue as well, we wrote a report, available to the public, that explains the permits and pollutants and shares information about violations. You can download our report—[bit.ly/idahosewagereport](http://bit.ly/idahosewagereport)—and review details for the city where you live.

Consider calling your elected officials to talk about this issue. You may want to thank them for prioritizing clean water near you, or you may want to express concern about the performance of your local wastewater treatment plant.

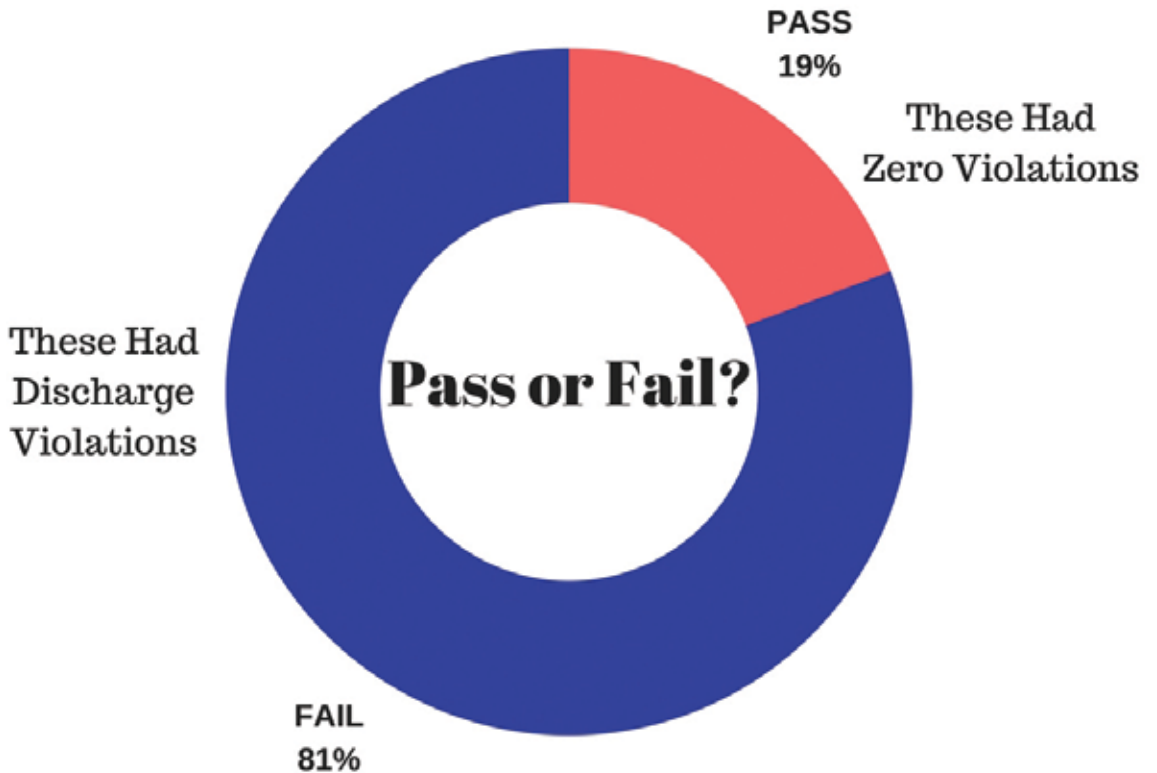
Some of the facilities that earned failing grades are going to need to invest in equipment upgrades. Others may need to tighten up how they operate. The bottom

line though is that many sewage treatment plants need to get their act together.

We Idahoans love to swim, fish and play with our kids in Idaho’s rivers. Keeping our water clean is a priority. It’s a core value that we all share; therefore, it’s a responsibility that we all share in. Municipal sewage treatment plants are on the front line in protecting our rivers and our health. Achieving perfection is not easy, but when it comes to protecting our families from polluted water, we should accept nothing less.

**Justin Hayes**  
Program Director  
[jhayes@idahoconservation.org](mailto:jhayes@idahoconservation.org)

*Consider calling your elected officials to talk about this issue. You may want to thank them for prioritizing clean water near you, or you may want to express concern about the performance of your local wastewater treatment plant.*



## Showing Up

You have heard that “showing up is 80% of life” and “showing up is half the battle.” When I think of ICL, I think of “showing up with the facts.”

ICL fights on so many fronts: cleaning up the Snake River, protecting North Idaho’s Scotchman Peaks, preventing the selloff of public lands, retiring coal plants, and confronting energy and climate issues. These battles fall within our mission to protect clean water and air and to preserve our special places—and our staff takes them all on.

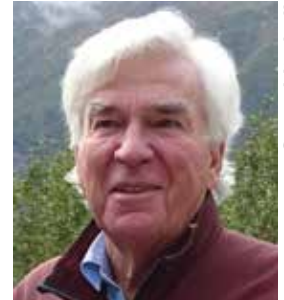
How does ICL succeed in so many areas in today’s harsh political climate? One way is through collaboration with diverse partners. Another is the willingness to compromise to make progress in incremental steps. Often, it is showing up armed with facts and relying on reason and evidence to direct the debate. This approach may

not guarantee success, but past successes often stem from this position.

Your ICL board, representing you and the good people of Idaho, encourage you to join us—to “show up” and make your voice heard for conservation. With today’s social media, it has never been easier to voice your opinion. Whether by a tweet, an Instagram, a phone call ... or old-fashioned letter writing, standing up for Idaho’s conservation has never been more important.

Benjamin Franklin cautioned, “A little neglect may breed great mischief.” We know there is more than “mischief” afoot for Idaho, our country and our world. Let’s not neglect. Let’s show up. Thank you for all you have done and will do for Idaho and for conservation.

**Steve Mitchell**, Chair  
Idaho Conservation League Board of Directors



Steve Mitchell

Steve Mitchell

*Your ICL board, representing you and the good people of Idaho, encourage you to join us—to “show up” and make your voice heard for conservation.*



# What's Next for Scotchman Peaks?



Little Spar Lake / Phil Hough

*The case for the proposed Scotchman Peaks Wilderness continues to be strong.*

The case for the proposed Scotchman Peaks Wilderness continues to be strong. Sen. Jim Risch's office held another open house in July to hear what locals thought about the proposal. A strong majority who attended the open houses in Hope and Clark Fork approved of wilderness designation in the Scotchman Peaks. ICL thanks all of those who attended the open houses and expressed their support. With Friends of the Scotchman Peaks Wilderness, we have been working to preserve this area for over a decade.

You may recall that Risch introduced legislation to protect the area as wilderness last December. The Scotchman Peaks Wilderness Act was introduced just days before the last Congress adjourned. Introducing a bill that was never intended to pass that late in the session was really the beginning of an ongoing public process.

Based on this process, Risch will decide whether to reintroduce the 14,000-acre wilderness proposal, modify it or drop the effort all together. We remain optimistic that the senator will reintroduce the Scotchman Peaks Wilderness Act in one form or another.

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game is among the few opponents. The agency wants to use helicopters and motorized equipment in wilderness areas to do its work. Risch's office is talking with the agency to understand their concerns. Assuming that the agency's concerns can be addressed, the results of the open houses make a convincing case for moving forward.

**Brad Smith**  
North Idaho Director  
bsmith@idahoconservation.org





## Lessons from the Trail

This summer, I joined the Idaho Conservation League, Idaho Trails Association, and U.S. Forest Service on a trail maintenance trip into the White Clouds Wilderness. It was my first time doing trail work and only my second time backpacking, so I wasn't sure what to expect.

During the trip, I broadened my appreciation for the hard work that volunteers contribute to maintaining these remarkable areas. For example, our crew put in more than 350 volunteer hours of work, cutting and removing 20 fallen trees, moving two large boulders, repairing tread on nearly 100 feet of eroded trail, collecting trash and clearing encroaching brush from the trails.

Over the course of our work, I learned how to use a cross saw and axe, helped

move fallen trees, packed tools, and more. At the end of each day, I felt like I was making a difference in one of the most beautiful places I've ever been. I also had to exercise some quick problem solving when the soles of my secondhand hiking boots detached. Nothing that a little paracord and rubber bands couldn't fix!

Starting the trip, I was worried I wouldn't be able to keep up (a justified concern from the only person hiking in jeans). But by the end, I had learned new skills and spurred my passion for wilderness stewardship. I hope others who have considered joining these trips decide to give it a shot. Just be sure to bring a can-do attitude and a sturdy pair of boots.

**Haley Robinson**  
2017 Summer Intern

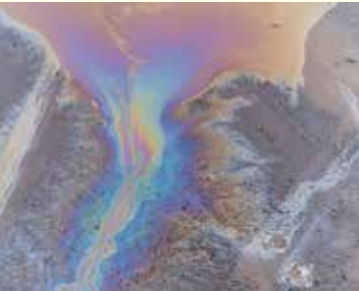


Suki Molina

*I hope others who have considered joining these trips decide to give it a shot.*



# ITD Finally Sealing Injection Wells



Oil and mud / CC Duncan Rawlins

The Idaho Conservation League is working with the Idaho Transportation Department to permanently seal long-outlawed vehicle waste injection wells at its facilities. ICL reached an agreement giving ITD until the end of October to complete the task.

The agency appears to be on track—but the work doesn't end there. The next step is to clean up any soil and groundwater at sites throughout the state that may have been contaminated.

While we continue to ensure that ITD fulfills its duty to seal and clean up these

wells, our efforts on vehicle waste injection wells is just beginning. Around 60 single disposal wells are located at private facilities throughout Idaho—and these are the ones we've identified.

Any drain, well or hole in the ground where hazardous vehicle waste can be dumped is considered a disposal well. So many more of these wells may exist in Idaho than we know.

**Austin Hopkins**  
Conservation Associate  
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# Permitting Underway for Midas Gold



Midas Gold sign / John Robison

The U.S. Forest Service has started the permitting process for Midas Gold's Stibnite Gold project in the headwaters of the South Fork Salmon River, a place revered for its salmon, wild country and world-class whitewater.

While the Canadian mining company emphasizes restoration, Stibnite Gold is still a massive open-pit cyanide vat leach mine. A new study by Earthworks examined the track records of the 27 modern gold-mining companies operating in the United States. The study found that 74 percent of these mines contaminated surface or groundwater supplies, killing fish and polluting drinking water.

The Stibnite Gold project is more complex and higher risk than these other mines. None of them propose to dewater a fork of the Salmon River and excavate an open pit hundreds of feet below the riverbed.

The draft analysis will take 18 months or more to complete, after which there will be another opportunity for public comment. So stay tuned.

**John Robison**  
Public Lands Director  
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# Keeping Dredgers in Check

Since 2013, recreational suction dredge miners in Idaho have had to obtain federal Clean Water Act permits and avoid dredging in sensitive fish habitat. While some miners have abided by these new requirements, others have refused.

This year, ICL worked with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service and Idaho Department of Water Resources to ensure that all miners had the required permits and followed regulations, especially in important spawning areas in the South Fork Clearwater River.

ICL was prepared to hold any miners who refused accountable under the citizen-enforcement provisions of the CWA. Fortunately, most dredgers operated legally.

On the Salmon River, the Idaho Department of Lands issued a 10-year riverbed mining lease to a Riggins-based dredger, despite his unwillingness to obtain permits from the EPA and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. ICL sent the miner a warning letter under the CWA. If he moves forward without permits, ICL will take action.

This year, only several hundred steelhead returned to Idaho. So protecting sensitive aquatic habitat from the effects of dredging is more important than ever.

**Jonathan Oppenheimer**

Government Relations Director  
joppenheimer@idahoconservation.org



Dredge mine / Brad Smith

*This year, only several hundred steelhead returned to Idaho.*

*Thanks to our summer interns who did so much for us! Haley Robinson (left) and Will Wicherski (right) as they paddle the Boise River with ICL member Kerry Molina (middle).*



2017 summer intern float / Lana Weber



# Coalition Passes Major Milestones



*ICL's years of involvement in the Payette Forest Coalition are paying off.*

ICL has participated in the Payette Forest Coalition for several years. And our involvement is paying off. This summer, the coalition and partners passed two major milestones. First, the U.S. Forest Service approved its third landscape-scale, collaboratively developed restoration project, titled the Middle Fork Weiser River Landscape Restoration Project.

The project encompasses almost 40,000 acres of Forest Service lands and includes a variety of integrated activities. To address forest health issues, the project uses both commercial and noncommercial thinning, restores over 1,000 acres of aspen stands, reduces hazardous fuels in strategic areas and authorizes prescribed fire on 27,000 acres.

To improve watershed health, the project decommissions 76 miles of high-risk, unneeded roads; improves 55 miles of stream; and replaces two undersized culverts that block fish passage. To improve recreation opportunities, the project adds

new trailheads and trails, improves the Cabin Creek Campground and installs two vault toilets.

The second milestone is that the Payette Forest Coalition agreed to create the Land Allocation Committee to take a closer look at recommended wilderness. The committee's goal is to see whether better boundaries or alternate designations could provide more certainty for both recreationists and conservationists.

Members of the Land Allocation Committee agreed that all options should be on the table, including designating wilderness or replacing recommended wilderness with other options. The group will rely on local input for the Secesh, Needles, French Creek and Patrick Butte areas.

Contact me for more information on either milestone.

J. R.





# Net Metering: Growing But at Risk

The increasing affordability of solar panels and sense of urgency stemming from federal backpedaling on climate change are spurring Idahoans to install their own renewable energy systems and benefit from net metering programs.

Net metering refers to the process by which an electric utility, like Idaho Power or Avista, compensates its customers for electricity they produce from renewable energy systems that they own.

Visualize your electric meter ticking up as you use electricity. But with net metering, as your rooftop solar panels produce excess energy, your electric meter ticks down and that excess goes to the grid for others to use. In other words, by the end of the month, customers who net meter pay only the difference between the amount of energy they use and the excess energy they provide to the grid—their “net” energy use.

Right now, Idaho Power’s service territory alone includes nearly 1,500 net metering systems. Idaho Power estimates that number will quadruple by 2021. And it’s no wonder, given the many benefits. Net metering lowers electric bills and reduces the amount of air pollution and greenhouse gases created. In addition, more energy produced by customers means that utilities have less need to build costly new electric facilities, further reducing costs for all electric customers.

Unfortunately, Idaho Power has proposed to change its net metering rules, risking the affordability of renewable energy. Go to the Take Action page on our website to speak up for the many benefits of renewable energy and net metering.



Creative Commons

*Net metering lowers electric bills and reduces the amount of air pollution and greenhouse gases created.*

**Matt Nykiel**

Conservation Associate  
mnykiel@idahoconservation.org





## ARTA, a Match Made in Idaho



At ICL, we enjoy the generous partnership of many businesses. Thank you to all of them!

In this issue, I shine a light on one business that consistently goes above and beyond for Idaho and ICL. ARTA is a river outfitter based in California and guiding on rivers throughout the West. In Idaho, ARTA guides on the Middle Fork Salmon, main Salmon and Selway rivers—epic whitewater beloved around the world.

What sets ARTA apart is its business model and commitment to protecting iconic western rivers. As a nonprofit, all of ARTA's extra funds are distributed to conservation organizations that advocate for the rivers that it runs. For over four decades, ICL has championed Idaho's rivers, so ARTA rewards us with a significant cash gift each year.

I could end with, "Thank you, ARTA." But ARTA also sponsors our artist in residence

program, providing the annual gift of a Middle Fork Salmon trip to our current artist. Our artists come away from their incredible river journeys with inspiration that shows in their work. And the deal gets even sweeter.

During the solar eclipse, ARTA led ICL members and two staff on a trip down the Middle Fork, donating a percentage of proceeds back to ICL. Guests and staff alike praised this trip, part of ICL's growing trip series. ARTA, for all you do for ICL and for America's rivers, we thank you!

Learn more about ARTA and reserve your spot on the trip of a lifetime at [www.arta.org](http://www.arta.org).

**Aimee Moran**

Development Director  
[amoran@idahoconservation.org](mailto:amoran@idahoconservation.org)





# Gloria Osberg, Defender of Wildlands

Gloria Osberg has long fed the current of ICL, as a defender and explorer of Idaho's wildlands, and she has also provided a steady nudge to keep us moving and doing what's right. Author of *Day Hikes Around Sun Valley*, a book that ICL sold for many years, Gloria introduced countless people to Idaho's special places and lifelong memories. And all along, ICL benefited. In 2004, at our *Wild Idaho* conference, we gave Gloria the Keith and Pat Axline Award for Environmental Activism.

While you'll never hear it from her—behind those sparkling eyes, she is a selfless and tough woman—Gloria has not been well in recent years. Her explorations now are based on memories and photographs and support from John, her inspiring husband and partner. One of my favorite memories was the U.S.

Forest Service dedication of the Osberg Trail in the Sawtooth National Forest to recognize her commitment to public lands.

Gloria wanted to participate in our It's My ID campaign, an effort to build the ICL endowment and create a fund for enduring climate work. Her gift, one of the last in this successful two-year campaign, brought the ICL campaign to over \$5 million, well over our initial goal.

Gloria and John have always been about exceeding goals, whether on the trail, in enduring friendships, or for travel to the beloved Arctic. Over many years, they have inspired ICL staff and members. As I've often told them, they have long modeled a life worth living.

R. J.



Courtesy of Gloria Osberg



Wild Idaho 2004 / Diane Ronayne

*ICL Executive Director Rick Johnson presents Gloria Osberg with the Keith and Pat Axline Award for Environmental Activism at our Wild Idaho conference in 2004.*

# Good-bye Avery—Hello Josh

Avery Shawler



Avery Shawler

Avery Shawler spent the last two years inventorying lands with wilderness character that are managed by the Bureau of Land Management in central and southern Idaho. She has been a valuable asset to our team, advocating for keeping wild places intact. Avery now goes to the University of California, Berkeley to start a doctoral program in landscape-level conservation planning. We wish Avery the best of luck in her new adventure!

Josh Johnson



Josh Johnson

We welcome Josh Johnson to our Central Idaho office where he now serves as a conservation associate protecting the quality of Idaho’s water, air and natural resources. His background is in environmental education and geology. After growing up in Washington, D.C., Josh spent the last few years exploring the mountains and working in Aspen, Colo., and Jackson, Wyo. Fun fact: Josh just logged four straight years of skiing every single month and plans to continue his streak here in Idaho.

**Dani Mazzotta**

Central Idaho Director

[dmazzotta@idahoconservation.org](mailto:dmazzotta@idahoconservation.org)



Central Idaho night sky / Peter Lovera

*Learn more about the community effort to protect the night sky in Central Idaho as a dark sky reserve at <http://www.idahodarksky.org/>*

*ICL adventures this August included a float trip on the Main Salmon River (photo below), outfitted by SOAR Northwest!*



Main Salmon float trip / Todd Chavez



## Volunteers

Our thanks to the volunteers without whom our achievements would not happen. (6/15/17 – 8/31/17)

Preston Andrews  
Joan Beckley  
Emil Berg  
Martha Bibb  
Lauren Brassell  
Todd Chavez  
Matt Davidson  
Patrice Davies  
Lexie de Fremery  
Mary Franzel  
Scott Friedman  
Kelsi Guth  
Dave Heep  
Cate Huisman  
Deb Hunsicker  
Carol Jenkins  
Tricia Kennedy  
Terri Lawrence

Ron Mamajek  
Jim Mellen  
Becky Mills  
Britta Mireley  
Bill Molina  
Marianne Nelson  
Danette Phelan  
Rick Price  
Brandt Quirk-Royal  
Scott Ransom  
Ed Robinson  
Don Silvernell  
Kerri Silvernell  
Joey Terra  
Ken Thacker  
Emily Williams  
Denise Zembryki

## Keeping It Wild

Edward Abbey said, “It is not enough to fight for the land; it is even more important to enjoy it.”

To both fight for and enjoy Idaho’s unsurpassed beauty, ICL and the Sawtooth National Recreation area have wilderness stewards in the Sawtooth, White Clouds, Hemingway-Boulders and Jim McClure-Jerry Peak wildernesses.

These volunteers merge adventure and activism by connecting with fellow trail users, practicing Leave No Trace principles and cleaning up. So far this year, 40 stewards have done 70 patrols, encountered more than 400 people, dismantled or cleaned 60 fire rings and packed out 50 pounds of trash.

These volunteers sometimes find weird things. One steward stumbled upon a full-sized grill, dining table and candelabras, all of which must have been helicoptered in. Another found a well-constructed pit toilet.

Having volunteers address messes like these is proof that our wilderness stewardship program is making a huge difference. Without our stewards, we couldn’t fully preserve what makes Idaho’s wildernesses special.

**Betsy Mizell**

Community Engagement Associate  
bmizell@idahoconservation.org

## Remember the Idaho Conservation League in Your Estate Plans

We hope you will consider the Idaho Conservation League in your estate planning. Memorial gifts and bequests are placed in our endowment fund so that these gifts can permanently support conservation in Idaho. We welcome inquiries about bequests to Aimee Moran at 208.345.6933 x 15 or [amoran@idahoconservation.org](mailto:amoran@idahoconservation.org).

If you wish to make a provision in your will, the following general language is suggested:

“I give, devise and bequeath to the Idaho Conservation League, an Idaho not-for-profit corporation, located on the date hereof at 710 North 6th Street, Boise, Idaho, 83702, the sum of \$\_\_\_” (or specifically described property).



Trash being removed from the Sawtooth Wilderness / Colleen Holle



**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](http://www.idahoconservation.org) or use the enclosed envelope.



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***Pssst—Pass It On!***

**Know someone who enjoys Idaho's great outdoors and quality of life but may not be an ICL member yet?**

**Well, what are you waiting for?**

**Pass on this ICL newsletter, *The Idaho Conservationist*, and inspire your friend to get involved. Word of mouth is a great way to build our conservation community. And in these pressing times, Idaho needs all the friends she can get. *Pass it on!***