

History of the Hippies in Takilma: by Kindi Farhnkopf

Part 20-Solutions-The Environmental Years in Takilma-continued

The evolution and impact of the environmental movement in Takilma is explored in the next chapter of solutions.

The Siskiyou Regional Education Project, 1983-2013.

In 1995, protests were planned against the Sugarloaf and China Left Timber Sales near the Oregon Caves National Monument. Hundreds of protesters were gathered to stop the logging trucks from entering the forest, and many were arrested one day including the Executive Director of the Siskiyou Project, Steve Marsden; Steve Jontz, Congressman from Indiana; Brock Evans of the Audubon Society and Charlie Ogle of the Sierra Club. Although the timber sales were later clear-cut, the media with a live CNN broadcast helped propel the event into the public arena. For the first time pictures of huge fir stump fields were published, to the horror of the public, which believed that the national forests were protected. It became obvious that the biggest and the best trees were being harvested and the remaining forest was being degraded by the process. The Spotted Owl debate heated up and the controversy between loggers and forest guardians became a national issue. Meanwhile, Siskiyou Project used the publicity to gather many more members and to expand its operations, in hopes of permanent legislative protection.

In 1997 the Siskiyou Project hosted its First Conference on Siskiyou Ecology, attended by 300 scientists, students, land managers and local citizens. The Siskiyou Field Institute was the idea of botanist Jennifer Beigel and as a result of her coordination, by 1999, provided the educational component of the Siskiyou Project's programs, with over 33 science-based field courses on the ecology of the Klamath-Siskiyou Bio-Region. The success of the Field Institute in the coming years, under the leadership of Sue Parrish, who expanded its programs, was so strong

that the Institute eventually in 2004 was able to become its own non-profit organization by partnering with Southern Oregon University and the River Network.

In 1998 the Siskiyou Project, along with partners at the World Wildlife Fund and leading scientists Dr. Reed Noss and Dr. James R. Strittholt, of the Conservation Biology Institute produced the Klamath-Siskiyou Conservation Plan, a landscape level conservation biology assessment which would include comprehensive maps of the region, and its resources. The Siskiyou Project had also managed to secure Land and Water Conservation funds to buy out 2000 acres of mining claims, along the Wild and Scenic Chetco River, inside the Kalmiopsis Wilderness. By the next year, their massive public outreach campaign convinced the Forest Service to deny a large strip mine along Rough and Ready Creek, the most botanically diverse watershed in the State of Oregon. They also helped create a 1,162 acre Area of Critical Environmental Concern, called the "Redrock Rainforest" on BLM lands near the Redwood Highway.

In 2000, under the able and brilliant leadership of Kelpie Wilson, the Siskiyou Wild Rivers National Monument campaign was launched. Collaborating with the Soda Mountain Wilderness Council, led by Dave Willis, the Siskiyou Project supported both their own Siskiyou Wild Rivers campaign and the Soda Mountain National Monument campaign. Even with enthusiastic support from Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, the Siskiyou were again second in line and not able to get the support of outgoing President Clinton. He created the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument instead. At least the Siskiyou were getting some name recognition.

It was obvious then that more public and local support was needed to protect such a large landscape, however, due to Secretary Babbitt's support the Siskiyou were granted a two year moratorium on new mining claims. Siskiyou Project performed a field survey of mining damage on the area's rivers and streams documenting

much damage. Photographer Barbara Ullian was able to document off-road vehicle damage to rare plant habitats and to help protect those areas. Special hikes and slideshows were held to draw attention to the need to protect the rare and endemic species of the eco-system.

The Voice of the Wild Siskiyou's newsletter and the new www.siskiyou.org website were used extensively to reach a network of members that Lou Gold had developed with his tour across America. The talented staff continued to bring attention to the issues through the skillful use of the media to affect public opinion.

Julie Norman, the former Executive Director of Headwaters had been hired to create a Klamath-Siskiyou documentary to be aired on public television. Their filming schedule included the talents of Ed Begley Jr., as narrator and Martha Stewart cooking salmon with Agnes Pilgrim, elder of the Rogue-Takelma Indians, for an upcoming TV special. Many other scientists and experts were interviewed as the film highlighted the regions many wonders. The film, in a slightly different format was aired on Southern Oregon's public television station.

In 2002, with the retirement of Lou Gold, a young enthusiastic campaigner was hired to replace him: Rolf Skar. Rolf, based in a small office in Portland, carried the word all over Oregon and across the nation about the need to protect the Siskiyou. His first summer the Kalmiopsis erupted in the Biscuit Fire of 2002, the largest fire in Oregon's history, and the Siskiyou Project responded by monitoring the fire and wildlands for the next several years. Ecologist Rich Nawa of the Siskiyou Project, worked with Conservation Directors Barbara Ullian and Romain Cooper to survey and monitor the activities in the fire area, creating a public outreach campaign

against salvage logging, which studies had shown slowed the natural regeneration of the forests.

To help with educating the public, the Siskiyou Environmental Film Festival was held in Ashland each winter from 2002-2007. This program offered documentary films about the area and its ecology, fire science, forestry, restoration, wildlife and citizens. The festival, organized by Barry Snitkin, brought together the many groups and concerned citizens of the area to network with each other, and filmmakers from around the country. For the gala 20th Anniversary Festival, the special guest was Agnes Baker-Pilgrim, Elder of the Rogue-Takelma Indians. As Grandmother and spiritual leader of Oregon's native people, she had resurrected the ancient Salmon Festival on the banks of the Rogue River, and invited all to come to pray for the protection of the salmon's homeland.

A lawsuit to protect Oregon's cougar population was won by Siskiyou Project's staff attorney, Lori Cooper in 2004. An Economic Study of the Klamath-Siskiyou Bioregion by Ernie Neimi was produced by Siskiyou Project in 2005, helping to forecast the future change away from dependence on forest resources and jobs.

In 2006 the Siskiyou Project, opened an office in Grants Pass, and

continued its public outreach campaign to gather support for legislative protection. Some of its original employees and board members have moved on, but the mission has not died, and is carried on by new activists with fresh energy. Recently, the Siskiyou Project merged with the Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center of Ashland and continues to work for the permanent protection of America's precious ancient forests. www.kswild.org

Recently, Lou Gold returned to Oregon from Brazil, his new home, to see old friends in the Illinois Valley. When asked what the environmental movement did right or wrong, he replied, "I don't think much about what's right or wrong these days, and the only thing I can say is, I can no longer depend on the same old assumptions that I used to use as a forest activist in America. The world is a different place today." I was struck by the wisdom in those words; that we often grow older to find out how little we know about the world and we are humbled and changed by that knowledge.

Author Kindi Farhnkopf is a poet and flower child of the 60s who has lived in Takilma for 33 years. She worked at the Siskiyou Project for 10 years, as their office manager and accountant.



Staff and Board of the Siskiyou Project in 2001

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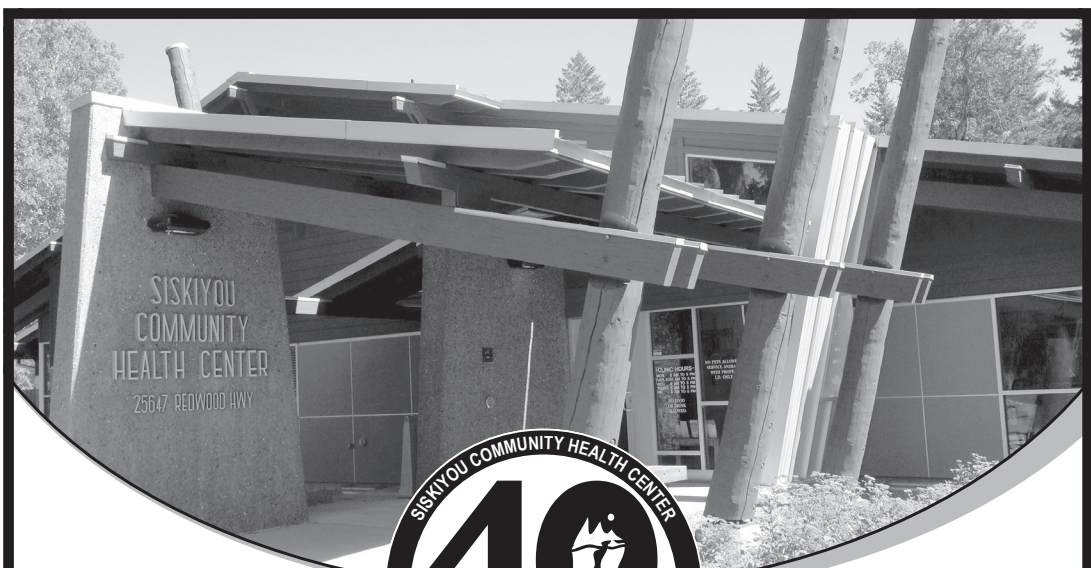
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