

## Time to Tone Down the Rhetoric

To hear some tell it, environmentalists want to steal your property, close every road in the forest, and turn the Siskiyou Crest into an eco-preserve where people aren't allowed. Such hogwash may help sell bumper stickers and newspapers, but it's not remotely true.

Nearly everyone can agree that the Siskiyou Crest is a special landscape that we are fortunate to have in our collective backyard. But passions run high when discussion turns to the future management of federal lands surrounding the Crest. Recently, this important dialog has been stymied by a small but vocal opposition who are using fear and violent rhetoric to advance wild conspiracy theories and anti-government militancy.

It is time for everyone to take a deep breath and take an honest look at what is on the table. KS Wild has sought meaningful protections for the amazing wildlands of the Siskiyou Crest for over a decade. A little over a year ago a national monument designation was proposed as one possible vehicle to improve fire management, recreational opportunities and road maintenance on this often overlooked landscape. We welcome suggestions on how to achieve these goals.

Our current proposal puts forward a management vision that strengthens protections for the most pristine and ecologically important parts of the landscape, creates a robust restoration plan that would involve small diameter thinning and calls for a comprehensive fire management strategy that protects communities and restores forest resiliency. This plan also calls for the continuation of hunting, firewood gathering, motorized recreation and access to all main destinations and private in-holdings. Nothing in the proposal involves the acquisition of any private property or any changes in what a landowner is allowed to do with their property.

It is worth noting that there is, in fact, a major proposal very much alive in Southern Oregon that does propose the use of eminent domain to seize private property against the will of its owners: the Jordan Cove Liquefied Natural Gas Pipeline project. KS Wild and our friends have been working closely with landowners to protect homes and farms from seizure by the pipeline company since this project was announced. Ironically, the 'property rights' activists in such an uproar about our proposal for the public lands on the Siskiyou Crest are nowhere to be found.

There are important discussions and legitimate concerns about the future of the Crest that are being voiced by people with widely varying political perspectives. KS Wild welcomes those conversations and indeed, our proposal is meant to provoke them. But the aggression, threatening language and intentionally misleading claims coming from the loudest voices are not helping anyone. At a meeting last week in the Applegate, organized by anti-conservation activists, the final speaker ended the event by yelling at the audience "I want you all to leave here mad! If you don't get up and fight right now

your children will end up slaves or they will be dead!” This kind of bombastic overstatement would be humorous if there were not a long history of violent threats from these same elements of our community.

We believe that current management of the Siskiyou Crest lacks a coordinated fire management, restoration or recreational vision. The three National Forests that manage the Crest across two states are often working at odds with one another. KS Wild’s goal is to see the natural beauty, biological diversity and ecological health of this little known natural treasure receive the protections it deserves. This is a long-term conversation, and we encourage those who share our love for this place to take part.

Our proposal for future management of the Siskiyou Crest may be viewed at:  
[www.siskiyoucrest.org](http://www.siskiyoucrest.org).

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