

# Advocate

Protecting the Sawtooth National Recreation Area

## SNRA Stakeholders Address Area's Future

Can the Sawtooth National Recreation Area (SNRA) be sustained as the special place Congress envisioned when it created the area in 1972, and those that live, work and visit there have come to expect?

That is the fundamental question facing the area and the reason the Sawtooth Society is sponsoring *Sawtooth Vision 20/20: Shared Strategies for the Future*.

*Sawtooth Vision 20/20* is a collaborative effort involving the U.S. Forest Service and a broad spectrum of other SNRA stakeholders to establish a shared long-term vision for the area,



*A broad spectrum of SNRA stakeholders met for an initial two-day workshop in May to plan for the future of the area.*

coupled with goals, objectives and actions designed to achieve that vision.

The first of two workshops for selected participants was held May 18 and 19 in Stanley. It was facilitated by the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution, an organization established by Congress to assist parties in

addressing issues related to natural resources, public lands and environmental management. Forty people attended the workshop. They represented multiple interests, including local, county, state and federal government, non-motorized and motorized recreation,

ranching, fish and wildlife, area property owners, conservationists and local businesses, among others.

Society president and executive director Bob Hayes opened the meeting by describing the conditions that make managing the SNRA a daunting task today, including federal budget constraints on the

*continued on page 5*

## Recreation Projects Get Financial Boost

In the nine years since the establishment of the Sawtooth Society, the organization has invested more than \$400,000 to improve recreation-related facilities and services in the Sawtooth National Recreation Area (SNRA).

Thus far in 2006, the Society has contributed \$57,800 for 11 projects in the SNRA. They include: \$15,000 – Forest Service for maintaining trails in the Sawtooth, White Cloud and Boulder Mountains; \$10,000 – Sawtooth Volunteer Fire Department for construction of a

new firehouse; \$6,000 – Forest Service for a volunteer coordinator; \$5,000 – Forest Service for summer interpretive programs at the Redfish Lake Visitors Center; \$5,000 – Forest Service for maintaining the historic Pole Creek ranger station; \$5,000 – Sawtooth Ski Club for cross country ski trail grooming equipment; \$5,000 – Sawtooth Search and Rescue for emergency equipment; \$2,500 – Forest Service for a volunteer to staff the Bowery Creek guard station; \$2,000 – Forest Service for an SNRA

camping brochure; \$1,500 – Retired Smokejumpers' Association for maintenance of the Sawtooth Valley corral; and \$800 – Sawtooth Music Festival.

Slightly more than half of the funds spent have come from Society members, with the balance coming from the special State of Idaho license plate program that benefits recreation-related projects in the SNRA. The Society manages the license plate program under a contract with the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation.



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The Sawtooth Society is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that was established in 1997 to protect the Sawtooth National Recreation Area.

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# Commentary

by Bob Hayes,  
*President and Executive Director,*  
*Sawtooth Society*

The lead story on page one describes a long-term planning initiative, sponsored by the Sawtooth Society, to help ensure that the 756,000-acre Sawtooth National Recreation Area (SNRA) remains the special place that Congress envisioned when it created the area in 1972.

This is important work, because the SNRA's future well-being is far from being secured.

When established, the SNRA was to be managed as a "showcase" in the National Forest System. Indeed, for a time, the Forest Service unit with responsibility for the SNRA was given the federal funds to protect the area's natural, scenic, historic, pastoral, wildlife, and recreational qualities.

Slowly, however, the SNRA was starved of money and manpower. According to the Government Accounting Office, the Forest Service operating budget declined by 26 percent by between 1993 and 1997. Responding to a public outcry that included the Society's voice, the operating budget for the SNRA was increased in the late 1990s and has remained fairly stable since, although far from the level required to manage the area as a "showcase."

Shortages of money and manpower are not the only challenges facing the Forest Service managers of the SNRA: visitors to the area are on the increase; there are growing conflicts between motorized and non-motorized users; a pine beetle infestation threatens to fuel catastrophic wildfire; and a powerful law – the *Endangered Species Act* – which didn't exist when the SNRA was created,



drives many management decisions and consumes huge amounts of agency staff time.

The effect of these challenges on the SNRA is staggering: visitor facilities and services have been curtailed and closed; maintenance has been deferred and the backlog is growing; response times for permitting, inspections, environmental analyzes have been delayed, and the list goes on.

To the casual eye, these challenges may be overshadowed by the incomparable beauty of the area and varied opportunities for outdoor recreation, but they are taking their toll on the SNRA.

If those who cherish the area don't act now to agree upon a shared vision of what the SNRA should look like, feel like and be during the second 35 years of its existence, and prescribe goals, objectives and actions for achieving that vision, I'm afraid it will be too late. That's why the Society is sponsoring *Sawtooth Vision 20/20: Shared Strategies for the Future*.

When we first announced *Sawtooth Vision 20/20*, people were both excited and skeptical. Excited, because they saw the need. Skeptical, because they saw past planning efforts fail to meet

*continued on page 7*

# Multiple Issues Discussed at Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the Sawtooth Society's board of directors was held, Saturday, July 29, at the Community Center in Stanley.

Society president and executive director Bob Hayes convened the meeting at 9:00 am. Minutes from the 2005 annual meeting were formally adopted and a report from independent auditors Eide Bailly on 2005 financial results was read into the record. Nine directors were reelected to the board (couples count as a single director): Jim Bennetts; Jeff and Deb Bitton; Orval Hansen, Michael and Candace Humphreys; Jim McClure; Ted and Helen Pardoe; Gray Reynolds; Dottie Stimpson; and Larry Stone. Newly elected to the board was Arlen Crouch, owner of Redfish Lake Lodge.

Hayes gave an operating report for the first seven months of 2006. He described the Society's sponsorship of *Sawtooth Vision 20/20: Shared Strategies for the Future* and called upon director Paul Hill, chair of committee heading the project, to summarize the long-term planning initiative. Hayes also described the work of three other Society committees, one that addresses issues related to private lands within the boundaries

of the Sawtooth National Recreation Area (SNRA), one that identifies infrastructure needs in the area and recommends those which should receive the organization's financial support, and another that conducts the *Sagebrush Soiree*.

For the balance of the year, according to Hayes, the Society will continue to focus on completing *Sawtooth Vision 20/20*, monitoring U.S. Representative Mike Simpson's *Central Idaho Economic Development and Recreation Act* (CIEDRA) as it moves through Congress, reviewing the Forest Service's plans to address the growing threat of catastrophic wildfire in the SNRA and encouraging the exchange of State of Idaho lands in the SNRA for federal lands elsewhere in Idaho to eliminate possible land-use conflicts.

Hayes announced that he would step down sometime during the first six months of 2007 as the Society's



The Sawtooth Society's board of directors convened in Stanley in July for their annual meeting.

founding executive director, after more than nine years on the job. A search committee of the board will be formed to hire a successor. He will continue to serve his term as president.

Director Orval Hansen facilitated a discussion among directors that focused on the importance of restoring healthy and sustainable Salmon populations to the SNRA.

Special guest Sara Baldwin, area ranger for the SNRA, updated Society directors on Forest Service activities.

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 pm.

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## CIEDRA Clears First Congressional Hurdle

H.R 3603, The *Central Idaho Economic Development and Recreation Act* (CIEDRA) was approved on a voice vote by the U.S. House of Representatives on July 24. To become law, the bill must pass the U.S. Senate and be signed by the President of the U.S. A Senate hearing is expected in September.

CIEDRA, also known as HR 3603, would designate as statutory

Wilderness 312,000 acres of federal land in central Idaho, including portions of the Boulder and White Cloud Mountains in the Sawtooth National Recreation Area (SNRA).

The legislation would also provide economic assistance to local government, primarily by transferring ownership of several thousand acres of federal land — mostly open sagebrush country — currently administered by the

Bureau of Land Management to Blaine and Custer Counties, and the communities of Stanley, Clayton, Challis and Mackay. Custer County and the City of Stanley would receive 162 acres adjacent to the city. The land would be transferred with legally enforceable deed restrictions to ensure that it is used in a manner compatible with federal regulations governing the use of land in the SNRA.

# Sawtooth Society Voices Concern About Gravel Pit in SNRA's Sawtooth Valley



*The Sawtooth Mountains serve as a backdrop for the State of Idaho Department of Transportation gravel pit.*

In July, a large gravel pit was excavated unexpectedly in the Sawtooth Valley on the east side of Highway 75, not far from Fourth of July Creek. The pit is located on land owned by the State of Idaho, less than one-half mile from an existing gravel pit on federal land.

The industrial site is supplying gravel for use by the Idaho Department of Transportation (IDT) in resurfacing Highway 21 from Vader Creek to Banner Summit.

In a letter to the Forest Service and State of Idaho, the Sawtooth Society expressed concern over the circumstances that led to the excavation of a new gravel pit when one already existed and voiced support for an exchange of State and Federal land that would eliminate State property within the boundaries of the SNRA. The text of our letter follows:

*We are writing to express two concerns about the recent excavation of a gravel pit on State of Idaho land in the Sawtooth National Recreation Area (SNRA) and adjacent to the Sawtooth Scenic Byway.*

*One concern relates to the circumstances that led to the excavation. We understand that the Idaho Department of Transportation (IDT) applied for a permit from the U.S. Forest*

*Service (Forest Service) to access an existing gravel pit on Federal land in the SNRA but, prior to receiving the permit, developed a site on State land adjacent to the federal site. Spokespeople for the State and Federal agencies involved attributed the situation to a "misunderstanding" and "miscommunication." We may never know all of the facts that contributed to the situation but, from an outsider's perspective, it appears that the working relationship between IDT and the Forest Service may not be what it should.*

*Our other – and more fundamental – concern relates to the fact that the State and Federal governments have, by law, decidedly different objectives for land in the SNRA. The State, represented by the Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) is directed to generate income from its lands to fund public education. The federal government, represented by the Forest Service, is mandated to ensure that land in the SNRA is not used in a way that substantially impairs the natural, historical and recreational qualities of the area. Even with good communications and a constructive working relationship between State and Federal*

*agencies, these differing and potentially conflicting objectives will continue to pose a dilemma as long as the State owns land within the boundaries of the SNRA.*

*We understand that discussions are currently underway between IDL and the Forest Service regarding the State's desire to obtain Federal lands in the Cascade area in exchange for State lands of equivalent value. We strongly encourage all parties to include State land that is in the SNRA in any exchange that may occur.*

*Acting in concert and with a sense of urgency, we are confident that the State and Federal governments can affect a land exchange in a timely fashion.*

The Society recognizes that IDT needs a convenient source of gravel to maintain roads in the SNRA, but believes that such a source can be found somewhere other than the heart of the Sawtooth Valley and Stanley Basin, where many millions of dollars in federal taxpayer money have been invested since 1974 to protect the area's scenic beauty. Our organization will follow-up with federal and state government officials on this matter in the coming weeks.

# Galena Overlook Renamed to Honor Churches *Improvements Planned for Most-Often-Visited Site*

The overlook on Galena Summit – the most often visited site in the Sawtooth National Recreation Area (SNRA) – has been renamed the *Bethine and Frank Church Overlook* in honor of the couple's efforts to protect the area. The site will also receive a face lift in 2007-2008

The renaming ceremony took place July 30. A crowd of approximately 100 was on hand as officials from the Forest Service, State of Idaho and Sawtooth Society spoke of the many contributions the Churches have made to the SNRA. Former U.S. Senator Frank Church was instrumental in creating the SNRA in 1972 and Bethine was the founding president of the Society.

Speaking on behalf of the Society, current president and executive director Bob Hayes said, those who

live, work and visit the SNRA owe much to the Churches, and for that reason it is fitting that the Forest Service has elected to rename the unparalleled vista for them.

Improvements to the *Bethine and Frank Church Overlook* will include a resurfaced

parking area, new retaining wall, interpretive displays, area maps, viewing scopes and an information kiosk. The existing structure that includes toilet facilities will be removed, as the cost of supplying



*Bethine Church is surrounded by family and friends at a ceremony renaming the overlook at Galena Summit for her and her husband, former Senator Frank Church.*

water and treating waste is prohibitively expensive.

The Society is raising private funds to supplement public funds for improvements to the overlook.

## Stakeholders

*continued from page 1*

Forest Service, fewer agency "boots on the ground," shifting priorities by policymakers and stiff requirements imposed by a powerful law (Endangered Species Act) that did not exist when the SNRA was created.

Add to these conditions, Hayes said, ever-increasing expectations from the public for more recreational facilities and services, heightened conflicts between non-motorized and motorized use, beetle-killed trees and the threat they pose to catastrophic wildfire, and other issues, and it speaks loudly about the need for the Society-sponsored initiative.

Hayes was followed by Paul Hill, a member of the Society's board of directors and chair of its *Sawtooth*

*Vision 20/20* committee, who elaborated on the purpose of and need for the initiative, and challenged participants to work together collaboratively with the aim of achieving common ground.

SNRA area ranger Sara Baldwin expanded on the purpose of and need for the initiative from the Forest Service's perspective and how it fits with the Sawtooth Forest Plan and other agency planning and legal requirements. She and other Forest Service personnel described the financial, social and environmental factors impacting its key areas of focus: private lands administration; water and fisheries; recreation; forest and fuels; and invasive species.

During the first day of the workshop, participants described what they value most about the SNRA, identified critical issues for

strategic planning, and broke into small work groups to discuss specific concerns related to those critical issues.

During the second day, the breakout groups met to develop critical issue problem statements, identify stakeholders potentially affected by each issue and discuss challenges to resolving each issue.

So other interested parties could comment on the outcome of the May workshop, public meetings were held in Stanley on July 20, Ketchum on July 25 and Challis on July 27.

A full report of proceedings at the workshop and public meetings is available by logging onto the Society's website:

[www.sawtoothsociety.org](http://www.sawtoothsociety.org), then clicking on the link to the left of the homepage.

# 2006 Sagebrush Soiree Raises Record Amount

The 2006 *Sagebrush Soiree*, the Sawtooth Society's premier fundraising event generated a record \$84,000 in revenue to support the Sawtooth Society's work on behalf of the 756,000-acre Sawtooth National Recreation Area (SNRA) and those who live, work and visit the area.

150 people gathered at Drew and Linda Lawler's Sawtooth Valley Ranch, Saturday July 29, to enjoy the event.

Guests began arriving at 6:00 pm to socialize on the lawn outside the ranch house. Local bluegrass band Headwaters performed against the background of the Sawtooth Mountains.

Attendees were seated under a festive tent for dinner at 7:30 and, true to the theme, "Celebrating Sawtooth Wildflowers," were treated to "Alpine Beauty Appetizers" that included stuffed smoked salmon puffs and bacon jalapenos, "Meadow Treasure Salad" consisting of baby greens, grape tomatoes and feta cheese dressed with wild huckleberry vinaigrette and nasturtiums,



*150 people attended the 2006 Sagebrush Soiree to support the Sawtooth Society's work on behalf of the 756,000-acre SNRA.*

"Sagebrush Staff of Life," aka thick crusted potato sage bread, "Marsh Mint Magic" that consisted of wild rice with fresh orange, mint and golden raisins, "Clover Patch Vegetables" of carrots and beets in a ginger sauce, "Sego Lilly Lamb" that included grilled marinated lamb with braised rosemary sauce, and capped off with a "Wild Berry Blossom Treat" of wild huckleberry cheese cake. Wine, courtesy of Larry and Nan Stone of the Ketchum Grill, accompanied the dinner.

At 8:30, folks turned their attention to center stage and the start of the raffle and auction. By then, all but five people were eliminated by chance as potential raffle winners. The prospective winners stood and four were systematically eliminated from consideration. The actual winner, Marc Kottraba of Stanley, chose one of ten items – the Hawaiian vacation package, donated by Don and Susan Lawrenz — as his prize.

Spurred on by auctioneer Steve Wright of Clayton, guests bid generously on the remaining items: The items included: a vacation for four people to the Shakespeare Festival in Ashland, Oregon, courtesy Paul and Ann Hill, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Roxy Ann Winery, Ashland Springs Hotel, Amuse Restaurant and Gogi's Restaurant; a drift boat trip for two people on the Middle Fork of the Salmon River, courtesy of Solitude River Trips and Salmon Air; a weeklong stay for six people at a private home in the Sawtooth Valley, plus extras, courtesy of Bob and Donna-Marie Hayes, Sawtooth Adventure Company, Stanley Baking Company, Fisher Creek Lodge, Redfish Lake Lodge, Kasino Club and Bridge St. Grill; a guided steelhead trip for two people, courtesy of Sawtooth Fishing Guides; a field trip for four people and an Idaho Fish and Game biologist to monitor wolves in the SNRA; a guided cross country ski



*Steve Wright, auctioneer, Clayton.*



Fun was had by all.



Hans and Terry Carstensen receive the Sawtooth Society's Distinguished Director's Award for 2006 from fellow director Donna-Marie Hayes (left).



Drew and Linda Lawler provided the event venue at their Sawtooth Valley Ranch.

trip and use of a yurt in the Sawtooth Mountains for 14 people, courtesy of Sun Valley Trekking; a day hike with noted backcountry author Margaret Fuller; a guided

horse packing trip in the Sawtooth Mountains, courtesy of Mystic Saddle Ranch; and a day in the field with wildflower expert and author Doreen Sadler.

The grand finale was the Rolling Collective Bid, where guests pledge financial support for special Society projects. This year, they were for capital improvements to the *Bethine and Frank Church Overlook* at Galena Summit, and construction of the Sawtooth Volunteer Fire Department Building in Stanley, which also is home to the Sawtooth Search and Rescue unit and

Emergency Medical Technicians.

During the evening, Hans and Terry Carstensen were presented with the Society's *Distinguished Director Award*. The award is given annually for exemplary service. The Carstensen, who live part of the year at their ranch in the Sawtooth Valley, were recognized for hosting 12-14 high school-age volunteers who visit the SNRA every summer to maintain trails, build log worm fences and help local civic groups. The Carstensen have also been active on special committees of the board.

## Commentary

*continued from page 2*

their expectations.

I believe this planning initiative is different. The plan is being built from the bottom up – by the broadest possible range of SNRA stakeholders — in collaboration with the Forest Service — rather than the other way around. The process is grounded in pragmatism and recognizes the legal, financial, social and environmental realities of managing the area. Additionally, the

process not only seeks to identify a shared vision for the SNRA, but also shared responsibilities, for while the Forest Service has the primary role in determining what happens in the area, the State of Idaho, with its management of lands (see “Gravel Pit on page 4) and fish and wildlife, has a significant role to play. Likewise, Blaine and Custer Counties, the City of Stanley, and the public at large – folks who live, work and recreate in the area. Finally, the process calls for the plan to be monitored on a regular

basis to determine if it is being carried out effectively and, if it isn't, to sound the alarm and demand accountability.

The point I want to make in closing is that the future of the Sawtooth National Recreation Area is in our collective hands and *Sawtooth Vision 20/20: Shared Strategies for the Future* provides stakeholders with a unique opportunity to work collaboratively to develop a road map which will guarantee that the area is what we want it to be for generations to come.



*High-school-age girls and boys from Landmark Volunteers construct a trail along Pigtail Creek in the White Cloud Mountains. The area was burned last year by a 40,000-acre wildfire and erosion this spring blew out a section of the original trail that leads to Warm Springs Meadow. The Sawtooth Society has sponsored Landmark Volunteer work parties to the Sawtooth National Recreation Area since 2000.*



*Volunteers from the Retired Smokejumpers' Association toiled for a week this summer to repair damage to the historic Pole Creek Ranger Station. Vandals damaged the two-room structure, as well as interpretive signs. Their efforts and those of another group of Retired Smokejumpers were funded in part by a grant from the Sawtooth Society.*

