

Wallowology!

Natural History Discovery Center

Earth Day 2022

Dear Wallowologists,

It may have been another challenging winter for us humans, but our Wallowa Country trees, plants, fungi, insects, and other critters have continued to work hard on all the essential ecosystem maintenance jobs they do year-round to help keep our lands and waters healthy!

Northeast Oregon's big Ponderosa pines are drawing carbon from the atmosphere as they add another ring. Salmon are swimming up the Snake and Grande Ronde Rivers on their long journey home. They bring abundant nutrients from the sea to enrich their inland natal streams, feeding the invertebrates that, in turn, feed them. Wildflowers will soon offer up a feast of nectar and pollen for native bees, butterflies and other insects, ensuring another generation of brightly colored mountain meadows throughout Greater Eastern Oregon.

Ponderosas, salmon and bees are tough, but this season we're celebrating some of the hardest working ecosystem managers in Eastern Oregon – Beavers! Along with intact watersheds, the presence of Oregon's state animal, *Castor canadensis*, is the most effective way to maintain high water tables for habitat diversity and as natural inhibitors of severe wildfires (see photo).

Here at Wallowology, we're cheering on beavers all season long! You'll be amazed what they have to teach us about fish, big trees, and bioengineering on an epic scale. Beavers work together to create habitats that support an abundance of wildlife, restore floodplain connectivity, mitigate increasing aridity, provide habitat for threatened species, and improve livestock grazing opportunities.



Beaver colonization on Dixon Creek effectively modulated Bootleg Fire impacts.

This is Wallowology's ninth season, and an especially exciting time because many of our land conservation endeavors are coming to fruition. About half the natural and cultural history exhibits at Wallowology Discovery Center in downtown Joseph pertain directly to land conservation projects or campaigns important to local residents and the intermountain region as a whole, including several Indian Tribes. Rural residents and landowners can play a significant role helping mitigate the impacts of climate change, especially for water, using land conservation strategies like forest reserves and beaver restoration.

For example, as our landscape-level conservation vision for Northeast Oregon's Blue Mountains takes shape, many of the important biological and physical dynamics of these forests are on full display at Wallowology, which hosts over a thousand people annually. We're expanding several exhibits and adding new displays. Outdoors, we're pursuing new innovative explorations.

This summer, true to Wallowology's mission, we'll help beavers tell their stories in a variety of imaginative ways, indoors and outside. With exhibits, presentations, outings, and other educational activities, Wallowology's programs seek to connect people to our region's unique landscapes and rich natural history, in this special part of the intermountain American West.



A busy beaver exploring the Discovery Center.

Beavers Taught Salmon How to Jump! (Cayuse proverb)

We've also been as busy as a beaver colony! As an experiment, last year we kept the Discovery Center open through the end of December for the first time, and hope to do so again in 2022. We've expanded our staff and hired local conservationist Charla Lower as our new Associate Director. Wallowology's Faculty roster (and the seven members playing staff roles this year) is enclosed for your entertainment.

Last summer, our ***Volunteers of the Year Marilyn & Gene Cripe*** (Pilot Rock) took on a huge outdoor challenge at Wallowology. Among other accomplishments, they created outdoor exhibit space and a water feature we hope guests will explore! Drop by this spring and volunteer to help make our outdoor educational venue more native and impactful, and learn about other volunteer opportunities, inside and out.

This summer, we encourage you to attend weekly *Wallowology at the Lodge* events – scientific and cultural presentations featured at Wallowa Lake Lodge Thursday evenings. We'll also continue our weekly Discovery Walks, extensive outings into special places, and other outdoor learning experiences – check our website to learn about all the events scheduled for this season!

We're so appreciative of your support – you've stuck with us through the trials and tribulations we've all faced together. Our community has coalesced around many challenging issues, and we're lucky to live and work in such an authentic place. Wallowology also feels that responsibility in terms of our relationships with the natural lands and lifeforms that all of us here in Eastern Oregon are privileged to have in our lives.

Thanks everyone for your generous contributions! For those who've donated recently, you're included in this letter because we want you to know our plans for the coming season. However, many of you have not yet contributed for 2022, and this is your opportunity to do so!

Please donate online at **Wallowology.org** or by mail to **PO Box 666, Joseph, Oregon 97846**

Like beavers, we need to work as a team to keep our educational programming available to the public year-round. We hope you and your family will choose to support our work by making a donation for 2022!

We look forward to seeing you soon at Wallowology!

Handwritten signature of Charla Lower in black ink.

Charla Lower Associate Director

Handwritten signature of James Monteith in black ink.

James Monteith Executive Producer