



NATIONAL CONSERVATION LANDS

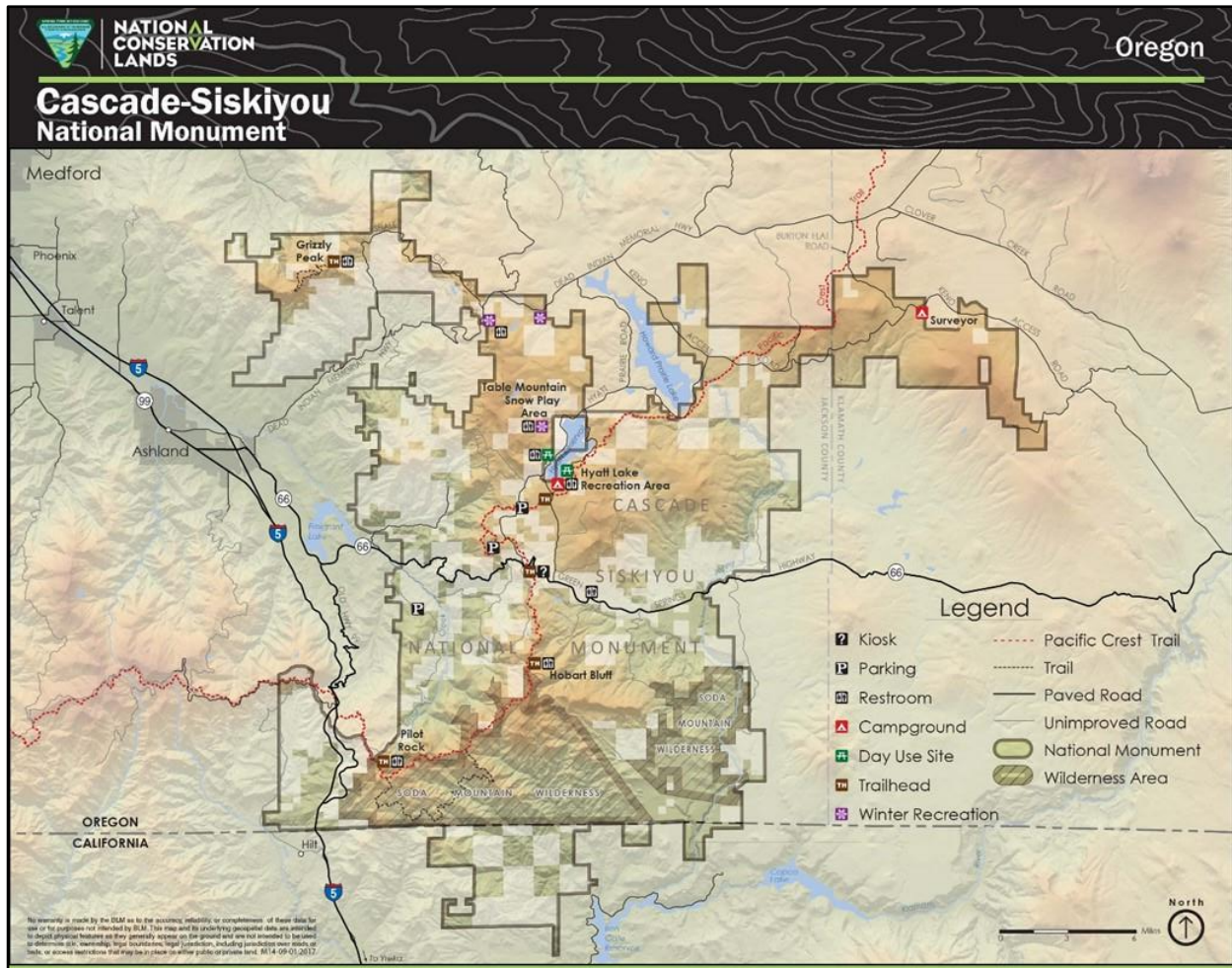
Oregon/Washington
2023: Annual Manager's Report

Cascade-Siskiyou

National Monument



Map



Accomplishments

The Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument (CSNM) was established in recognition of its remarkable ecology and to protect a diverse range of biological, geological, and historic objects. The richness of the plant community is due to the CSNM's location at the intersection of the Cascade, Klamath, and Eastern Cascade Slopes ecoregions. Evolution, long-term climatic change, and geological processes all contributed to the high ecological richness of the lands now within the CSNM.

In 2023, the CSNM continued to provide high quality recreation opportunities, including hunting, snowmobiling, mountain biking, riding horses, Nordic skiing, snowshoeing, birdwatching, and wildlife viewing. Hiking opportunities include over 40 miles of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, the Grizzly Peak Trail, and the Lone Pilot Trail. The Hyatt Lake Recreation Area provides camping, hiking, fishing, and boating opportunities.

During the 2023 season, the CSNM hosted two artists through the BLM's annual Artist-in-Residence Program. Oil painter Leslie Ann Hauer of West Richland, Washington, spent over a week immersed in beautiful early summer weather painting landscapes found along the Monument's scenic backcountry roads. Acrylic and ink artist Nisty Tharp of Salt Lake City, Utah, painted landscapes around Hyatt Lake, showcasing the relaxed pace of nature observation at camp. Both artists donated several art pieces to the BLM that will be used in promotional materials for the Monument.



Artwork from artists-in-residence Leslie Ann Hauer (left, report cover) and Nisty Tharp (right)

Challenges

The CSNM now spans two states, three districts, and three field offices. There are currently three Field Managers who make decisions for their respective portions of the CSNM and an Assistant Monument Manager who supervises Monument staff and manages the Monument budget. These administrative divisions create challenges for cohesive management.

The water and wastewater systems at the CSNM's Hyatt Lake Campground date to 1969 and had become an ongoing operations and maintenance issue. In 2023, work began to replace the water and wastewater systems throughout the campground and associated day use area. All three campground loops (A, B, C) were closed in 2023 while the contractor worked to replace water and sewer lines. The Wildcat Primitive Campground and Horse Campground, which are also located in the Hyatt Lake Recreation Area, were unaffected by this work and were open all season.

The Medford District encompasses over 870,000 acres of BLM-administered land; three BLM law enforcement rangers, two full-time contract deputies, and a seasonal deputy are responsible for patrolling the entire District, including the CSNM. The CSNM continues to receive numerous reports of poaching, trash dumping, vandalism, and motorized incursions into the wilderness.



FY 2023 infrastructure repair work in Hyatt Lake Campground

Visitors

With an estimated 230,182 recreation visits in FY 2023, the CSNM continues to see increased visitation; estimated visitation in FY 2022 was 227,447. Many of these visitors enjoy the CSNM while driving and stopping at waysides. Visits for hiking and winter recreation activities, such as sledding, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and snowmobiling, have also seen significant increases.

Visitation was down significantly from 2022 at the Hyatt Lake Recreation Area due to most of the facilities being closed to replace the water and wastewater systems. In 2023, Wildcat and Horse campgrounds were the recreation area's only operating campgrounds. Wildcat Campground offers a more rustic camping experience and is popular with campers. With the Hyatt Lake Campground closed for the season, Wildcat Campground had an occupancy rate of 60 percent for the entire season with over 1,100 visits.

Hunting continues to be a popular fall activity in the Monument. The CSNM is well-regarded for black-tailed deer hunting and, in the autumn, the Monument's roads and dispersed camping areas are busy with hunters looking to fill their tags. The diversity of habitat provides many different hunting experiences close to the population of the Rogue Valley. Deer, elk, bear, mountain lion, and waterfowl are all hunted within the CSNM. Anglers fish via boat and shoreside at Hyatt Lake, as well as on Jenny Creek along the eastern boundary of the Monument.



Camping in Wildcat Primitive Campground

Partnerships

In 2023, the CSNM continued a successful partnership with the Friends of Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument (Friends). With BLM financial support, the Friends offered interpretive programs, guided hikes, and naturalists talks in the Monument, reaching about 450 people. The Friends connected with another 1,000 people at tabling events.

For the second year, the Friends held a successful summer program at the Crest at Willow-Witt. The program, which spanned seven weeks and served about 150 students aged 5 to 12, provided an opportunity for young explorers to forge connections with nature. Participants were immersed in natural beauty and deepened their understanding of the environment through hands-on activities and educational sessions.

The Friends are also important partners for National Public Lands Day (NPLD) events and stewardship days in the CSNM. In both 2022 and 2023, the BLM partnered with the friends on NPLD events to remove unneeded fence along a wildlife corridor. In total, over a ¼ mile of 3-strand barbed wire fencing and dozens of t-posts were removed.

The Pacific Crest Trail Association (PCTA) is an active partner and helps maintain over 40 miles of the Pacific Crest Trail in the CSNM. Since the Hyatt Lake Campground was closed in 2023, the PCTA was unable to host their annual Trails Skills College at the CSNM. However, PCTA volunteers continued to maintain the trail through the CSNM and there are plans for the Trails Skills College to return in 2024.

The CSNM partners with the Southern Oregon Nordic Club (SONC) to maintain the Buck Prairie Winter Trail System, which has over 32 miles of trails for skiers, snowmobilers, and snowshoers. The SONC donates hundreds of hours maintaining trails and provides outings and workshops to skiers of all ages and abilities. In 2023, the BLM purchased a Polaris OHV, which has greatly improved the SONC's ability to groom winter ski trails.



Students in the youth summer program in the CSNM

Science

In 2023, surveys located a nesting pair of northern spotted owls and two fledged young within the CSNM. This site received several visits that combined collecting data with educational opportunities for biologists from BLM, USFWS, and Oregon State University.

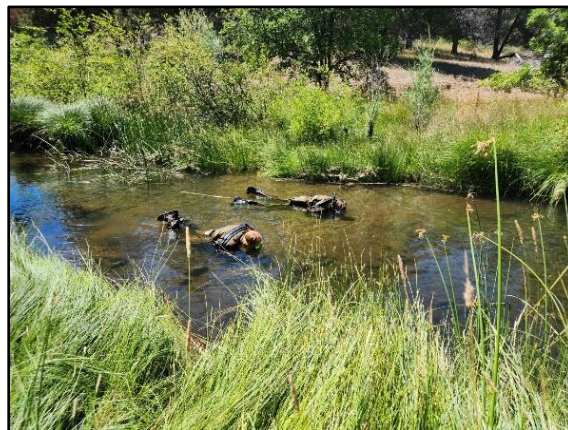
As part of a cooperative effort between the BLM and local conservation organizations, many of the historical mardon skipper butterfly meadows were monitored in 2023. This effort yielded valuable information that will inform upcoming restoration work to improve habitat quantity and quality for mardon skippers and other native pollinators.

Also in 2023, two locations in the CSNM were sampled for bat species presence. This data was submitted to the North American Bat Monitoring Program and contributes to the ongoing effort to better understand bats across Oregon and the western U.S.

In early July, biologists from multiple agencies and local conservation organizations, along with members of the public, carried out annual bumble bee surveys in the CSNM. Target species include the endangered Franklin's bumble bee and the western bumble bee. BLM biologists carried out additional bumble bee surveys later in July and August.

In cooperation with the BLM, Professor Jacob Youngblood (Southern Oregon University) and two students conducted surveys for, and made life history observations of, Siskiyou short-horned grasshoppers (a Bureau Sensitive Species). This expanded on work done by BLM biologists in 2008.

BLM biologists snorkeled approximately 3,000 meters of Jenny Creek in the CSNM to assess population trends of Jenny Creek sucker and redband trout. The populations in these reaches are surveyed approximately every 5 years. The survey found the highest observed density of suckers since monitoring began, largely driven by exceptionally high juvenile counts. A scour event and subsequent algal bloom in the spring are thought to have created excellent conditions for juvenile sucker recruitment in 2023.



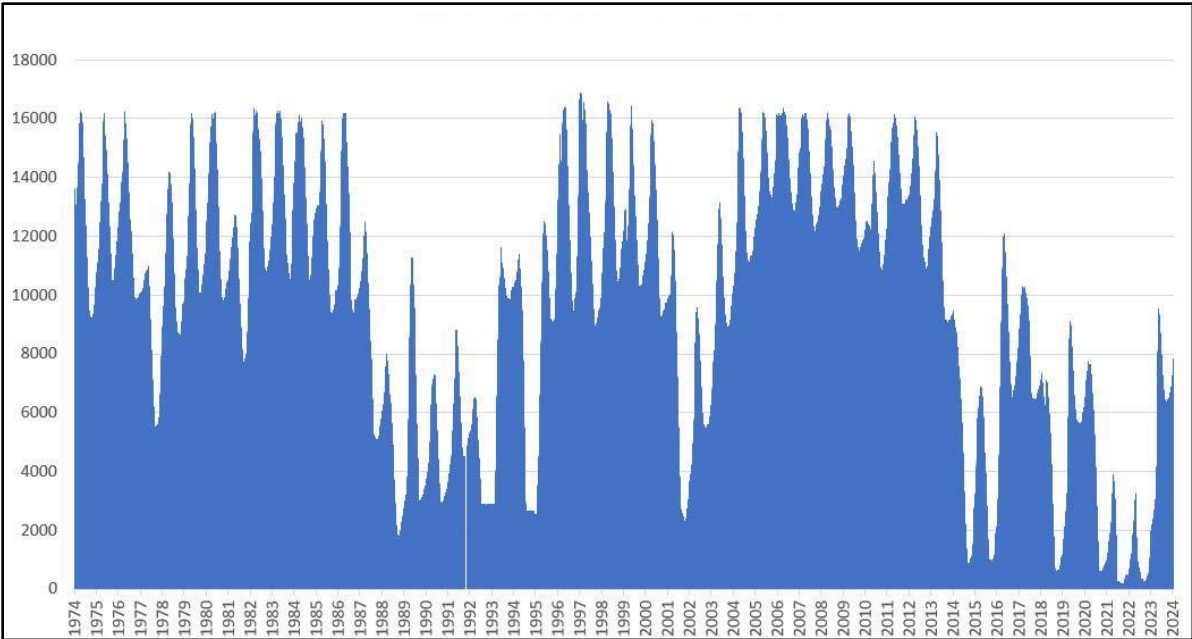
Jenny Creek snorkel survey

Climate Impacts

Across southwest Oregon, impacts of fire exclusion and changing climate have led to a significant increase in dead and dying trees. Recent studies indicate that more trees have died between 2015-2019 than the previous four decades combined. Aerial surveys conducted by the US Forest Service have identified more than 200,000 acres of tree mortality on lands managed by the BLM Medford District.

Over the last century, Douglas-fir has expanded into many lower-elevation sites. At higher elevations, such as in the CSNM, white fir has similarly expanded. Formerly, many of these sites were ponderosa pine forests or oak woodlands maintained by frequent, low-to mixed severity fires. The expansion of Douglas-fir and white fir into sites at the lower limit of their precipitation requirements and upper limit of their temperature tolerances has contributed to tree mortality. Climate also plays a role; southwest Oregon has been in drought conditions for most of the last 20 years, which exacerbates the effects on species such as Douglas-fir and white fir. Dying fir trees are increasingly evident within the CSNM. Dead and dying trees pose a safety risk to people and infrastructure near homes and recreation areas and along roads and utility corridors in the Monument. Tree mortality can also change fire behavior and how firefighters engage with fire.

Reservoirs in and around the CSNM have been at record low levels in recent years. Water storage in Hyatt Reservoir has been trending downward in the past 10 years. Average minimum flows at the BLM stream gauging station on Jenny Creek (a flow-regulated stream), near the California border continue to trend downward.



Hyatt Reservoir water level in acre-feet, 1974-2024 (Source: BOR)

Climate Resiliency

In 2023, the CSNM staff collaborated with Project Beaver (formerly "the Beaver Coalition"), a local non-profit group of riparian experts, on projects to increase climate resiliency in the CNSM. The goal of these project are to enhance the capture and storage of water in stream channels and adjacent floodplains. Projects are implemented in high priority areas where efforts are likely to achieve enhanced floodplain connection through treatment and that were identified through previous monitoring efforts.

To date, three stream reaches totaling approximately 2 miles have been treated through the construction of Beaver Dam Analogs (BDAs), which are simple, hand constructed structures that mimic beaver dams. BDAs slow the transport of water through the treated reach and encourage channel aggradation and enhanced flood plain connectivity. This increases storage of water on the floodplain and allows for subsequent release of water to aquatic habitats during the dry season. In 2023, the BLM completed NEPA and permitting for five new treatment areas. Implementation is scheduled to begin in the summer of 2024 on these areas. Additional funding to continue this work was also applied for in 2023 through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law-Keystone Initiative.



Beaver Dam Analog (BDA) structure in CSNM

Social and Environmental Justice

Each fall, graduate students from Southern Oregon University provide curriculum-based education programming for area students at the Monument. This 8-week program is called “Fall in the Field.” The Fall in the Field program is a collaboration with Southern Oregon University’s Environmental Education Graduate Program and is the capstone project for the program’s master’s degree candidates.

In FY 2023, approximately 500 students from third to eighth grade participated in the program. Lessons focused on habitat types, forest health, at-risk species, and the importance of public lands. All 18 schools participating in the “Fall in the Field” program are Title I schools serving low-income students.



Fall in the Field students on Greensprings Mountain Trail in CSNM

Events

The CSNM resource management plan allows the BLM to authorize commercial recreational uses through special recreation permits (SRP) that are consistent with the plan’s objectives. The BLM established specific SRP evaluation criteria for the CSNM in 2014. These criteria include potential permit availability, thresholds, and adherence to the resource management plan.

In 2023, the BLM authorized two SRPs in the CSNM, both of which were originally issued in 2022. An SRP was issued to the Siskiyou Field Institute to conduct a 1-day field course (Butterflies & Diurnal Moths of the Cascade-Siskiyou) to observe butterflies and moths in the CSNM. The second SRP was for the Pacific Crest Endurance Ride, a 35-, 55-, and 75-mile endurance horse riding event held over the course of 2 days.



Wildflower hike participants in the CSNM

Words from the staff

The staff of the CSNM are keenly aware of the essential role of the Monument's many motivated and creative partners, volunteers, and supporters. We recognize that, moving forward, we will need to continue to work together to accomplish our shared goals within the CSNM. We cannot thank these volunteers and supporters enough for their tireless service to the CSNM's unique and varied resources and values.

The BLM continued work revising the CSNM Resource Management Plan (RMP) in FY 2023. The BLM contracted with the Langdon Group to conduct a pre-scoping situation assessment for the CSNM RMP revision with key interested and potentially affected parties. The situation assessment identified issues for consideration in scoping and generated a list of interested parties. The assessment helped inform the BLM's public involvement process. Ninety-one confidential interviews were conducted between December 2022 and February 2023 with BLM employees, Tribal Nations, and interested or potentially affected parties/individuals.

The BLM published the Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) for the RMP in June 2023. The AMS provides a brief description of the resource conditions within the planning area and how these resources are currently being managed. The AMS serves as a baseline for the development of alternatives in the environmental impact statement (EIS) associated with the RMP. This document represents an early component of the planning process and is not a comprehensive, detail-oriented document for various resources. It is intended to provide a summary of existing management practices, including direction from existing plans and agency policy, local resources, and social and economic conditions.

The formal scoping period for the RMP began on June 9, 2023, with the publication of the notice of intent in the Federal Register. The scoping period ran through August 8, 2023, and the BLM held four public scoping meetings during this time. The BLM received 198 comment submissions from the public during and after the official public scoping period. Upon a thorough review of the scoping letters received, approximately 300 substantive comments were parsed out that required more thorough review and/or analysis. On August 22 and 23, the BLM Interdisciplinary Team participated in an alternatives development workshop for the CSNM RMP.

Documents associated with the development of the RMP can be found on the eplanning site: <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2023675/510>



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