CELEBRATING 15 YEARS OF SERVICE
Dear Friends,

This year Crag Law Center marked its 15\textsuperscript{th} year of providing legal aid for the environment! As you may know, we founded Crag in 2001 after working for a few years for a large, private law firm. We hatched a plan to put our shared values towards making a positive impact on the world and took a deep breath and quit the firm. In a few short months, we found ourselves in court fighting old-growth timber sales, battling for Wilderness on the North side of Mt. Hood, and protecting clean water and salmon.

Over the next ten years, we grew the organization, brought on new staff, and dove into some fascinating and incredibly challenging work. We battled Shell in the Arctic – and won. We fought the U.S. Forest Service from Alaska all the way down to Northern California – and won. We have defended Oregon’s world-class land use system from attack – and won. And as our staff grew, we also brought on more and more volunteers and law students, who we trained to be the next generation of advocates, and they learned not only how to do the legal work, but also how to work with under-represented communities.

Today, we look around and think back to those first few experiences. We had hoped that we could grow the organization and make Crag bigger than the two of us and we have done so. But we could not have imagined the outpouring of support from the community. Now, we come to work, and our staff, our volunteers, and the communities we represent are like extended families. We are still fighting for justice, for families, and for prosperity for everyone. And we are preparing this organization to continue its work defending our natural legacy for the next generation to come.

So as we look forward to the next 15 years, we want to thank our families and Crag’s staff – Courtney, Suzanne, Oliver, Maura, Carrie and Emma – for taking on these challenges with us. Your hard work is proof that this organization is bigger than us, and we are excited to see what you will accomplish for communities across the Pacific Northwest. And we ask our supporters to join with us for the next 15 years so we can pass on to our children and grandchildren everything we cherish about the Pacific Northwest.

Sincerely,

Ralph Bloemers & Chris Winter
Co-Founders and Co-Executive Directors
I thought it was very bold... They were making a lot of money at that time. It takes a lot of nerve, drive, and desire to give up a paycheck to do something you believe in.

- LEE DAYFIELD

Hired Ralph and Chris at Stoel Rives before they started Crag

These are lawyers who do good in the world. The folks at Crag... they are my heroes.

- AURORA DEL VAL

Local Water Alliance

One of the things that I loved most about Crag was that I worked on a wide range of cases. The first case that I worked on was about timber issues in the Alaskan region where I grew up! It was great to open up the material for my first assignment and understand that the work I was doing affected some of the things I love the most. Another highlight was working on an environmental justice case; it was very educational and rewarding to work directly with Crag’s clients.

- KELSEY SKAGGS,

Summer Associate 2014

If we hadn’t engaged Crag... we would have lost a really special side of Mt. Hood that’s still a natural area where a lot of people go to backcountry recreate, winter and summer, a special agricultural area. Crag helped us protect all of that.

- MIKE MCCARTHY

Client and Pear Farmer
Crag works to protect the Northwest’s natural legacy through the following program areas:

Communities

Many people lack tools to effectively engage in decision-making processes that directly affect their lives. Communities of color and low-income communities often experience a disproportionate share of the negative impacts of pollution and industrial development. Crag strengthens organizing efforts by helping to educate and advocate for legal solutions to disparate impacts of environmental pollution.

Coastal Law Project

Oregon’s coast is the pride of the state and a national treasure, but it is under immense threat from developers and resource extraction schemes. Since 2004, Crag has represented the Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition and local citizens to ensure the coast’s natural environment remains both wild and accessible for generations to come.

Environmental Justice

Crag’s first environmental justice case successfully challenged the Environmental Protection Agency’s failure to respond to pollution complaints from the Rosemere Neighborhood Association in Washington under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.

Protecting Impacted Rural Communities

Local citizens and conservation groups are invested in preserving Oregon’s farm and forestlands. Starting in 2012, Crag began working with a low-income, elderly community to stop a polluting asphalt operation in their residential area and address systemic land use violations.

No Drilling in the Arctic

For thousands of years the Inupiat Eskimo of Alaska have depended on subsistence hunting and fishing in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas. This way of life continues, but it is threatened by the unrelenting search for oil in traditional hunting grounds. In 2008 Crag began working with local Native groups to protect their traditional way of life.
The Wild

We, the public, own much of the land in Oregon, Washington, and Alaska. Government agencies manage these lands for a variety of uses, including clean drinking water, wildlife habitat, and recreation. To protect these wild lands for current and future generations, Crag launched the Public Lands Program in 2001. Our first clients and partners worked to protect the Cascade Mountains and old-growth forests; we’ve since expanded our efforts to landscapes across the Pacific Northwest.

Protecting Mount Hood

One of our first cases led to Mt. Hood Wilderness legislation signed by President Obama. Ralph and Chris helped a strong community coalition defend the wild north side of Mt. Hood from a proposal to develop a destination resort and secured a positive solution and settlement to permanently protect the north side.

Preserving Forest Landscapes

Soon after the Bush Administration took office in 2001, regional land managers began approving controversial logging projects targeting old growth forests burned by fire. But the Pacific Northwest’s forests were born in fire—burning is crucial in the evolution of forest ecology. Crag worked to stop multiple post-fire timber sales in Oregon’s and Washington’s wild forests.

Birds, Bugs, and Fish, oh my!

Since 2009, Crag has worked with wildlife conservation groups to protect the Pacific Northwest’s rare and sensitive species. With cases devoted to protecting the Leona’s little blue butterfly, marbled murrelets, and coho salmon, we stand up for imperiled species of all types.

Restoring Wild Rivers

Dams impede fish passage and cause significant harm to native fish populations. Crag helped smooth the way for dam removal projects like Hemlock Dam on the Wind River in 2010 and the Fielder Dam in the Rogue Valley in 2015.

Protecting Alaska’s Old-growth Forests

We work to protect centuries-old trees in the coastal rainforests of Southeast Alaska. Since 2013, Crag has challenged and stopped a number of proposals to log old-growth forests on the Tongass National Forest in order to protect Alexander Archipelago wolves and other sensitive species, combat climate change, and preserve this world-class resource.
Climate

Climate change is today’s most pressing and important issue. In some ways, all of the work we do relates to climate change, whether it is preserving forests as carbon sinks, protecting public access to shorelines that are eroding from bigger storms and sea level rise, or defending species whose critical habitat is shrinking. We take on cases that directly address both the sources and impacts of climate change in the Pacific Northwest.

No Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) in Oregon

Crag helped stop proposals to export fracked gas from the Rocky Mountains through the Columbia River Gorge that would have devastated fish habitat and caused huge spikes in greenhouse gas emissions. Today, after more than a decade of work, we continue to provide legal support for a broad coalition seeking to defeat the Jordan Cove LNG export facility, the final gas terminal and pipeline proposal in Southwest Oregon at Coos Bay.

Protecting Our Oceans

As our oceans absorb increasing amounts of carbon dioxide, they become more acidic. Over time, this takes a heavy toll on seawater quality and marine ecosystems. In 2009, Crag reached a settlement with EPA on a first-of-its-kind lawsuit targeting EPA’s regulation of ocean acidification.

Fighting Dirty Coal

In 2012, Crag began working with a coalition of groups to keep coal exports out of Oregon and the Columbia Gorge. Together, we have defeated multiple proposals to export dirty fossil fuels through our waters and vulnerable communities.

Clean Air, Healthy Future

Crag represents Oregon youth challenging the state’s failure to take meaningful action on climate change. Some natural resources are so essential for human life and well-being that our government holds them in trust for all citizens under the Public Trust Doctrine. Part of an international movement to promote intergenerational justice, the Atmospheric Trust Litigation began in 2011. We argue that the government has a duty to protect our atmosphere as a public trust resource for the benefit of our children, grandchildren, and future generations.

No Nestlé in the Gorge

Water is one of our most precious public resources. In the Pacific Northwest, climate change will bring significant changes to water availability, and we’re taking a stand to protect our water supply. Since 2012, Crag has worked with local people and conservation groups to prevent Nestlé from privatizing and bottling our public water in the Columbia River Gorge.
At first, I must say, Ralph’s visage is imposing—he is well over six feet tall with eyes blue enough to sear one’s soul. Upon arriving at Crag, I felt that Ralph, situated across the seemingly vast wooden office, was analyzing me and my fellow intern, Lindsey. It was as though he were scanning our countenances for some indication of our life experiences. Over the course of the summer, I have found that he does, in fact, conduct these analyses, but not with the cold severity that I feared they would be.

(See Ralph Bloemers)

The first day my fellow intern, Lindsey, and I met Chris, he was seated behind his desk, shoes off, a flannel over his hiking t-shirt, and in jeans. He rose, shook our hands, and promptly invited us to his house for a barbecue the following week. Such, I find, is his personality: unassuming, casual, and warm.

Chris tells us that his central motivation for environmental conservation is the outdoors. His father was a mountaineer; he himself lived his early years in Seattle; and some of his childhood memories include watching slideshows of people who had climbed the Himalayan Mountains and returned with breathtaking tales. He also spent a lot of time on the coast of Maine as a
He deeply invests in his friends and strangers alike, inquiring into the histories of their lives, their experiences, and their childhoods. As a result, Ralph’s interview proved to be warm and compelling.

We enter the long, wooden room to find Ralph in his usual, brightly checked plaid. His summer intern has departed; the hazy, late-morning light has just settled into the room, and there is almost a total absence of noise. We begin by asking him what he likes to do in his free time. Ralph says that his favorite thing to do was to spend time on rivers in his kayak, but that everything changed about five years ago, with the arrival of his son, Theo. Now his favorite thing to do is to spend time with his wife and five-year-old son. He relishes playing with Theo, “teaching him to swim, how to love the water, and the outdoors.” From there, it is not long before Ralph begins to discuss his own childhood.

Ralph was born in Holland, to a Dutch father and an American mother. Ralph says that he cherishes his Dutch identity, that it gives him an outside perspective on the American culture in which he has spent much of his life. It has also afforded him many opportunities, such as being able to work in Munich, Germany and London, England.

Ralph’s mother owned and operated a Gouda cheese farm in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, and it was there that he spent much of his childhood. After his parents’ divorce, Ralph, his brother, his sister and his mother had to figure out what to do with the 600-acre cheese farm—in the end, his mother found a group of nuns to purchase the farm and preserve the land as it was. In the surrounding area, his mother convinced the neighbors to put conservation easements on their land, and as a result, the whole area has been preserved to look just as when Ralph grew up there 30 years ago.

This passion for the environment and the attachment to the land that his mother demonstrated, Ralph says, is what began his dedication to conservation. In college, he found where he would begin that work. He had two remarkable professors who taught him to see the inequalities perpetuated by our governmental and economic systems and historical imbalances of power. He learned how the status quo is preserved and poverty, racism and environmental degradation is perpetuated. Ralph emphasizes that his choice to go to law school was about the notion he had regarding the Earth. He felt that human’s treatment of the land was unsustainable and inequitable and so he sought to get the skills so that he could try to change the direction in which the world was headed.

“I wanted to do something—something about the Earth or the environment. It seemed to me that how we were treating the

(See Ralph Bloemers)
With all this, he agrees that it was his family experiences and upbringing that impelled him toward environmental conservation.

In fact, Chris loves the outdoors so much that if he weren’t an environmental attorney, he says that he would be working in ski patrol, be a climbing guide, or living out of a van. My counterpart, Lindsey, asks him, laughing, “So it was a choice between being a lawyer or a bum? Those were the two options?” Chris carefully clarifies that yes, those were the two options, because before law school, he worked at Lake Tahoe in a ski resort. He was living on a couch, trying to decide what he wanted to do for the rest of his life. The best thinking is done on friends’ sofas, after all.

On to more momentous causes, we ask Chris what the inspiration for Crag was. In law school, he worked for what is now called Earthjustice, located in San Francisco. While there, he met several law students, and they took a road trip to Eugene to attend an environmental law conference. There, he was exposed to “a whole other world of environmental litigators.” During his final summer in law school, Chris took an internship with a large private firm, Stoel Rives, where he met
Ralph Bloemers, and he “got a whole different experience.” After graduation, Chris took a full-time position with Stoel Rives, which helped him relocate to the Northwest and get established out here.

He worked there for several years, but realized “pretty quickly that my heart was in the conservation work.” Consequently, he could not conscionably continue to work at the big private firm. So he and Ralph talked about that during the first couple years and decided to do something on their own. Chris says he chose to, “follow my passions and what I really wanted to do. So Ralph and I decided to start an organization so we could do that kind of work and that’s how we hatched the idea for Crag.”

“It was a definite fork in the road and I made the right decision.”

Back in 2003, Ralph and Chris were featured in an article for the Daily Journal Commerce, in which Chris said that after starting Crag, “we work hard, but we sleep better at night.” Thirteen years later, I want to know if this paradigm still holds true. Chris tells me, “One of the great things about growing has been having other people come on board and so we really did work super hard for like ten years, like unbelievably hard. Having [everyone in the office] has helped Ralph and I maintain a more sustainable lifestyle; the sheer number of hours has gotten better for me personally over the last couple years, and at times it feels really intense. But just in terms of personal satisfaction and overall happiness, it feels way better than working at a private firm. Sometimes my wife and I talk about where I would’ve ended up or where we would’ve ended up if I hadn’t made that decision back in 2001.”

So where does he think he would’ve ended up? Chris says that he would guess much wealthier, much unhappier, much unhealthier, and who knows what else.

Jordan Bollmann is a senior at Duke University, who interned with Crag Law Center via the DukeEngage program during the summer of 2016.

Chris Winter is co-executive director and co-founder of Crag Law Center. He is originally from Washington, but spent much of his childhood in the Eastern US. He is a graduate of Cornell University and University of Michigan Law School. He worked at a professional law firm for three years before founding Crag Law in 2001. During my interview with Chris, he proved to be as dynamic and compelling as Crag’s success would suggest that he is.

Earth was out of balance.”

Given the arrival of Crag’s 15th anniversary, I ask Ralph if he sees Crag as being an entity that is now bigger than he is, that is capable of outliving its directors and continuing on with the work that they’ve begun. I want to know, really, if they think Crag has become their legacy piece. Ralph says that Crag has “been bigger than us for a long time; since we started Crag, it has been bigger than us because of all the people we represent, all the people we work with, and all the people that have volunteered.” He says that the passing of his father affected him deeply and caused him to reconsider whether Crag was what he wanted to continue doing, or if he ought to set off on some new path. He asks, “Do I want to be doing something else? No, I’m going to keep going with this. I’m going to finish this. And this is the best use of my time.”

Ralph Bloemers is both co-founder and co-executive director of Crag Law Center. He is originally from Holland and grew up in Virginia. He is a graduate of University of Colorado at Boulder, where he studied political science. He obtained his law degree at Willamette Law School. Before Crag, he interned at several non-profit organizations and worked at a professional law firm.


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Crag is able to provide high quality legal services at low or no cost because of the grassroots support of individuals like you. By supporting Crag’s work with a financial contribution, you can make sure that communities across the Pacific Northwest have free and affordable legal representation when they need it most:

Become a Crag Guardian
With an affordable monthly or quarterly donation, you can provide essential ongoing support for Crag’s work to provide free and low-cost legal services for local communities.

Support Crag’s 2016 Give!Guide Campaign
Help raise awareness and support for Crag by making a donation through the Willamette Week Give!Guide. Post your support on your favorite social media and encourage your friends and family to give. The Give!Guide will thank you with goodies like free tacos. Trout Creek Orchard will send a box of pears to each person who donates $250 or more to Crag. Find more information at giveguide.org

Make an annual gift
Your commitment to make a donation to Crag each year will provide us with a steady base of support to take cases for communities facing environmental challenges and social injustice.

Make a one-time donation
Every donation to Crag goes a long way. Each year we provide over one million dollars’ worth of free and low-cost legal services and we count on your support to do so.

Make a legacy gift
Crag supports communities working to protect the natural legacy of the Pacific Northwest for our generation and for all generations that will follow us. By remembering Crag in your will, you can make your legacy the protection of our region’s wild and natural places.

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