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WILDERNESS RECORD

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CALIFORNIA WILDERNESS COALITION

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No. 4

Reagan Goes Wild for Kern River

President Reagan has recommended that Congress designate a portion of the North Fork Kern River as "wild" under the national Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The Tulare County stretch of river is located in the southern Sierra Nevada north of Isabella Reservoir.

In 1981 the U.S. Forest Service recommended that 61.5 miles of the North Fork Kern River be designated "wild" and 17 miles be classified as "recreational." The Reagan administration shortened the "wild" stretch by eight tenths of a mile to avoid possible conflicts with mining claims and eliminated the "recreational" portion entirely.

The North Fork Kern River

originates on the western slopes of Mount Whitney. Descending 10,000 feet from this highest point in the contiguous United States, the river flows 83 miles to Isabella Reservoir, 45 miles northeast of Bakersfield. The upper 47.5 miles is within Sequoia National Park and the Golden Trout Wilderness. Of the remaining 35.5 miles south to Lake Isabella, 31 miles are managed by Sequoia National Forest and the remaining 4.5 miles are predominantly private.

More information on the Kern River begins on Page 4. The wild Kern will be a major topic at the California Wilderness Conference in Visalia this October.



North Fork Kern River is proposed for "wild" status Photo by Bob Barnes

Roads in the King Range Wilderness?

If you like wilderness but don't like to walk, you'll love the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) proposal for the King Range -- drive! A transportation plan for the King Range National Conservation Area has been released in which BLM proposes allowing visitors to drive inside the Wilderness Study Area (WSA). Public comment on this plan will be accepted until September 16, 1985.

BLM proposes to allow vehicles inside the WSA on the controversial Smith-Etter route, along Telegraph Ridge, and south of the Mattole River to Punta Gorda. Conservationists consider this action blatantly illegal.

In addition to the proposed plan, four other alternatives are offered. The "no action" alternative would allow more vehicle use under the 1974 management program, two alternatives would open additional routes, and one alternative would be the same as the proposed one except that a permit would be required for the Smith-Etter route.

No alternatives are offered which reduce vehicle use or eliminate vehicles from the WSA.

Some segments of jeep roads will be closed. As a result, BLM claims the environmental impacts of their proposed action will be positive because the potential for resource damage caused by off-road vehi-

cles (ORVs) would be reduced. Social impacts to some deer hunters "who hunt while they drive" would be negative. BLM claims there will be no adverse environmental impacts which cannot be avoided, but social impacts include a reduction in deer hunters because "many of them would not or could not walk the distance from where a deer is bagged to the vehicle."

All types of vehicles will be allowed on the King Range, Prosper Ridge, and Kaluna Cliff routes and parts of the Smith-Etter, Saddle Mountain, Nooning Creek, and Paradise Ridge routes. Four-wheel drive vehicles, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), and motorcycles will be allowed on the Windy

Point, Horse Pasture, and Telegraph Ridge routes and parts of the Johnny Jack/Ridge, Nooning Creek, and Paradise Ridge routes.

The beach from Telegraph Creek to Gitchell Creek will continue to be an open area to vehicles. BLM admits that ORVs continue north into the closed area but suggests that this use can be minimized.

A Wilderness Alert on the proposed plan was issued by the California Wilderness Coalition. Comments will be received until September 16, 1985. Write to:

John T. Lloyd, Area Manager
Arcata Resource Area
Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 11
Arcata, CA 95521

Coalition Report

by Jim Eaton

I was quite surprised to see the Reagan administration recommend much of the North Fork Kern River for "wild" designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

It shouldn't have been unexpected, since the Forest Service previously had recommended protecting the river, but we've just gotten out of the habit of hearing good environmental news from the White House.

And then there is William Penn Mott. Almost as soon as he took over the helm of the National Park Service, Mott began saying unexpected things. He has suggested that overcrowding in Yosemite might be stopped by limiting Californians to one weekend per year (akin to Edward Abbey's thought that in such a holy place you should be happy with one visit in a lifetime).

Mott also has intrigued us with his proposal for a Wild River National Park (see page 5). It's a great idea, but so unexpected coming from the Reagan administration.

Environmentalists can be visionaries, but we spend so much of our time with our heads down fighting to save wilderness from immediate threats that we seldom have time to look into the future. Like Mott, Huey Johnson used to shake us out of our slumber with great ideas which really should have been obvious.

It's not that we don't want to plan ahead. But this year, for example, we must react to a score of forest plans, proposals to open the King Range to off-road vehicles, routes for power lines, plans to expand ski resorts, and other things we don't yet know about. If we don't respond, we lose wilderness.

But planning for the future is necessary and is one of the reasons we are holding our wilderness conference this October. We are reacting to threats to wilderness, as we must, but we also should be planning our future.

After all, it's only 15 years to the 21st century.

News Briefs

Acid Rain Study Grounded

As a result of the U.S. Forest Service's opposition to the use of helicopters in wilderness areas, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will use foot and horseback to sample hundreds of wilderness lakes in their acid rain study this fall. Conservationists had

been divided over EPA's proposal.

Nearly all of 388 wilderness lakes in the West managed by the Forest Service will be sampled using ground access. The National Park Service is more lenient about the use of aircraft in the backcountry.

BLM Begins Plan for Big Butte

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is preparing a management plan for the Big Butte portion of the Yolla Bolly-Middle Eel Wilderness. BLM manages 7,200 acres of the wilderness area.

include management of the Big Butte road (inside the wilderness), access to and acquisition of private property, and fire and recreation management. The draft plan is scheduled to be released soon.

Fall Energy Conference

The Kern-Kaweah Chapter of the Sierra Club is organizing an energy symposium in Bakersfield on November 9-10. Main speakers will be Charles Imbrecht, chairman of the California Energy Commis-

sion, and Amory Lovins. Sunday programs will be devoted to field trips to energy facilities around Bakersfield. For more information, contact: Georgette Theotig, P.O. Box 49, Tehachapi, CA 93561.

Russ Shay Moves to Capitol Hill

Russ Shay, the Sierra Club's field representative in northern California and a director of the CWC, is moving to Washington, D.C. to work for the House Interior Committee. Shay will work

for Rep. John Seiberling and replaces Andy Wiessner, who is moving to Colorado. Friends are sorry to see Russ leave the state but are happy he will continue to work on wilderness issues.

Update

Duke Dumps Sinkyone

In late June, Governor Deukmejian vetoed the seven million dollars earmarked for expansion of the Sinkyone Wilderness State Park. Sinkyone supporters, buoyed by an appeals court victory in the Sally Bell Grove lawsuit, say they are not giving up.

The acquisition of the 7,000 acres offered by the Georgic-Pacific (G-P) Corporation for the Sinkyone additions was backed by the State Parks and Recreation Commission, environmental groups, and north coast legislators. But the governor deleted the money from the state budget, recommending that the funds be used for "priority projects closer to the state's population centers."

G-P now says it plans to continue managing the land for timber production.

While the shock of the

budget cuts was still sinking in, attempts were being made to find alternative funding and the courts were keeping logging at bay in the 75-acre Sally Bell Grove, where demonstrators put their bodies between old growth trees and loggers' chainsaws last summer.

In late July, a state appeals court ruled that the timber harvest plan (THP) for the grove, which contains 1,000-year-old trees, did not adequately address environmental and archaeological concerns.

The decision, which overturned a lower court ruling that upheld the logging plan, could set major precedents for review of private forest practices.

Although the timber harvest plan process is considered legally "equivalent" to the provisions of the California Environmental Quality



Former redwood in the additions to Sinkyone State Park Photo by Sam Camp

Act, the presiding appeals court judge said the legislature did not intend to grant the timber industry a "blanket exemption" from environmental laws.

The court also said protection of Indian archae-

ological sites was not adequately addressed in the THP and that, at the very least, the Department of Forestry should have consulted with the Native American Heritage Commission.

-Andy Alm
Econews

October 25-27 in Visalia

1985 California Wilderness Conference

Registrations are pouring in for what may be the largest ever concentration of California wilderness leaders and supporters. The California Wilderness Conference in Visalia on October 25-27 is the place

to be this fall.

Preregistration is only \$15 until October 15. Registration at the conference will be \$20. A special sponsor registration for \$30 lands you a CWC T-shirt.



David Brower speaks to the 1978 conference crowd

Photo by Alan Hauser

Senator Cranston to Address Conference

Senator Alan Cranston will address the gathering and meet with wilderness leaders. In addition, Representative Rick Lehman (or an aide) will be attending the conference. Lehman has been an active supporter of wilderness, Mono Lake, and the Tuolumne and Kings rivers. Also, the office of Congressman Chip Pashayan will be represented.

Conservation leaders include David Brower of Friends of the Earth, Brock Evans of the National Audubon Society, Dave Foreman of Earth First!, Harriet Allen of the Desert Protective

Council, Mark Dubois of Friends of the River, and Jim Eaton of the California Wilderness Coalition.

The Sierra Club will be represented with both volunteer leaders and staff including executive director Douglas Wheeler, Doug Scott, Joe Fontaine, Edgar Wayburn, and Jim Dodson. The Wilderness Society is sending Peter Kirby from their Washington, D.C., office as well as Californians Patti Hedge and Jay Watson.

Other conservationists include Martin Litton, Genny Smith, Nancy Pearlman, and Ardis Walker.

Groups and Businesses

We're not sure yet just what Recreational Equipment, Inc. (REI) will be bringing, but conference sponsor Wilderness Press will be there with hiking guides and maps. Genny Smith Books will have books for sale, and other businesses are expected to offer their wares. Lots of information from organizations will be available, along with T-shirts, buttons, bumper stickers, trinkets, and snake oil.

Several people are helping out non-profit groups by

sponsoring their booth. Mike McWherter, author and photographer, is sponsoring Citizens for Mojave National Park. Genny Smith of Genny Smith Books is sponsoring the Mono Lake Committee.

Among the groups and businesses who will have booths at the conference:

California Wilderness Coalition
Citizens for Mojave National Park
Comm. to Save the Kings River
Friends of the Earth
Friends of the River
Kaweah Group, Sierra Club
Kern-Kaweah Ch., Sierra Club
Mineral King Group, Sierra Club
Mono Lake Committee
The Nature Conservancy
Recreational Equipment, Inc.
Genny Smith Books
Tulare Ct. Audubon Society
Wilderness Comm., Angeles Ch., Sierra Club
Wilderness Press.

Workshops for Both Pros and Novices

Two types of workshops will be offered at the conference. Short, informative workshops will be featured on Saturday and Sunday.

On Friday, in-depth workshops will allow participants to learn about a number of subjects. Working with the media, especially

television and radio, will be taught by Nancy Pearlman. Mysteries of forest planning will be uncovered by a team from the Wilderness Society. Karen Northcutt will lead people through the maze of environmental impact reports and statements. John Amodio will tell you how they man-

aged to save the Tuolumne River.

On Saturday and Sunday, shorter workshops will cover more topics, including wild rivers, forest planning, politics, and the desert.

Slide shows will include two multi-projector presentations by Howard Wilshire and John Nakata, the Scent of Man and one about off-road vehicles. Other slide shows will cover the California desert, endangered wildlife, and Alaska.

Donations for a raffle are increasing. Included are a Forks of the Kern raft trip for two (Chuck Richards, Chuck Richards' Whitewater), young person's scholarship to a raft/backpack camp (Rick Mitchell's Harmony Expeditions), \$300 of free video service (Mike Henstra, Sierra Video Productions), American River raft trip (Friends of the River), three free dinners for two (Las Palmas Restaurant, Visalia), and a whale cruise for two (Wilderness Subcommittee, Bay Chapter, Sierra Club). Special Friday morning prizes include twenty free lunches at Gumbo's Chinese Restaurant.

Wilderness Art an Important Part

An exhibit of Ansel Adams photographs will be among the outstanding art displays at the California Wilderness Conference. The Ansel Adams will exhibit open that weekend in the nearby art gallery at the College of the Sequoias and will remain in Visalia through December 1st. Mary Alinder will present a lecture with slides on Ansel Adams.

An exhibit by photographer Tupper Ansel Blake will be featured at the conference. The 140-foot long display explores California's major environments.

Other items on display

will include selections from a wilderness art contest held in the local schools.

CONFERENCE PREREGISTRATION

- ☐ Please send me a registration packet for the Conference
- ☐ Yes, sign me up for the Visalia Wilderness Conference \$15
- ☐ I would like to register as a sponsor (and get a T-shirt) \$30

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ ZIP _____

Mail to:

California Wilderness Coalition

P.O. Box 269

Porterville, CA 93258

A Southern Sierra Wonderland

The Kern River

by Patrick Carr

The following article is reprinted with permission from Friends of the River's membership newsletter, *Headwaters*.

Imagine a river that is three and a half hours' drive from the nation's second most populous urban area, yet possesses the longest stretch of free-flowing water in the Sierra Nevada.

Imagine a Yosemite Valley stretching 30 miles to penetrate the heart of the Sierra, yet forming only part of a canyon that extends from the permanent snow of 14,000 foot peaks to an arid, sun-drenched desert.

Imagine wildly mountainous country that is home to California condors, bald

eagles, peregrine falcons, and other rare or endangered species, yet also receives over 300,000 human visitors each year.

It may sound like a fantasy land, but all this and more exists on California's Kern River. The southernmost river of its size in California, the Kern pours steeply from the most dramatic part of the Sierra Nevada to end in a landlocked desert basin near Bakersfield. The only Sierra river flowing north-south, geography and "Lake" Isabella (actually a 570,000-acre foot reservoir) divide the Kern into three sections: the North Fork, the South Fork, and the Lower Kern.

The River Divided

The Kern's North Fork embraces what is beyond a doubt the most spectacular scenery in the Sierra

Nevada. Set amid ice-carved granite amphitheaters and bounded by spires that culminate in 14,495-foot Mt.

Whitney, the North Fork's headwaters alone qualify it as an extraordinary river. But within a few miles of its birth the river plunges into a 4,000-foot deep canyon that is one of the most unusual features of the Sierra Nevada. Following an almost straight course for 30 miles, the "Kern Trench" was created by glaciers gouging out an earthquake fault. Unique geologic features include lakes dammed by enormous landslides and canyon walls festooned with lips of lava erupted from ancient volcanos.

Leaving Sequoia National Park and entering the national forest of the same name, the North Fork remains secure from development through the 303,000-acre Golden Trout Wilderness, named for California's state fish.

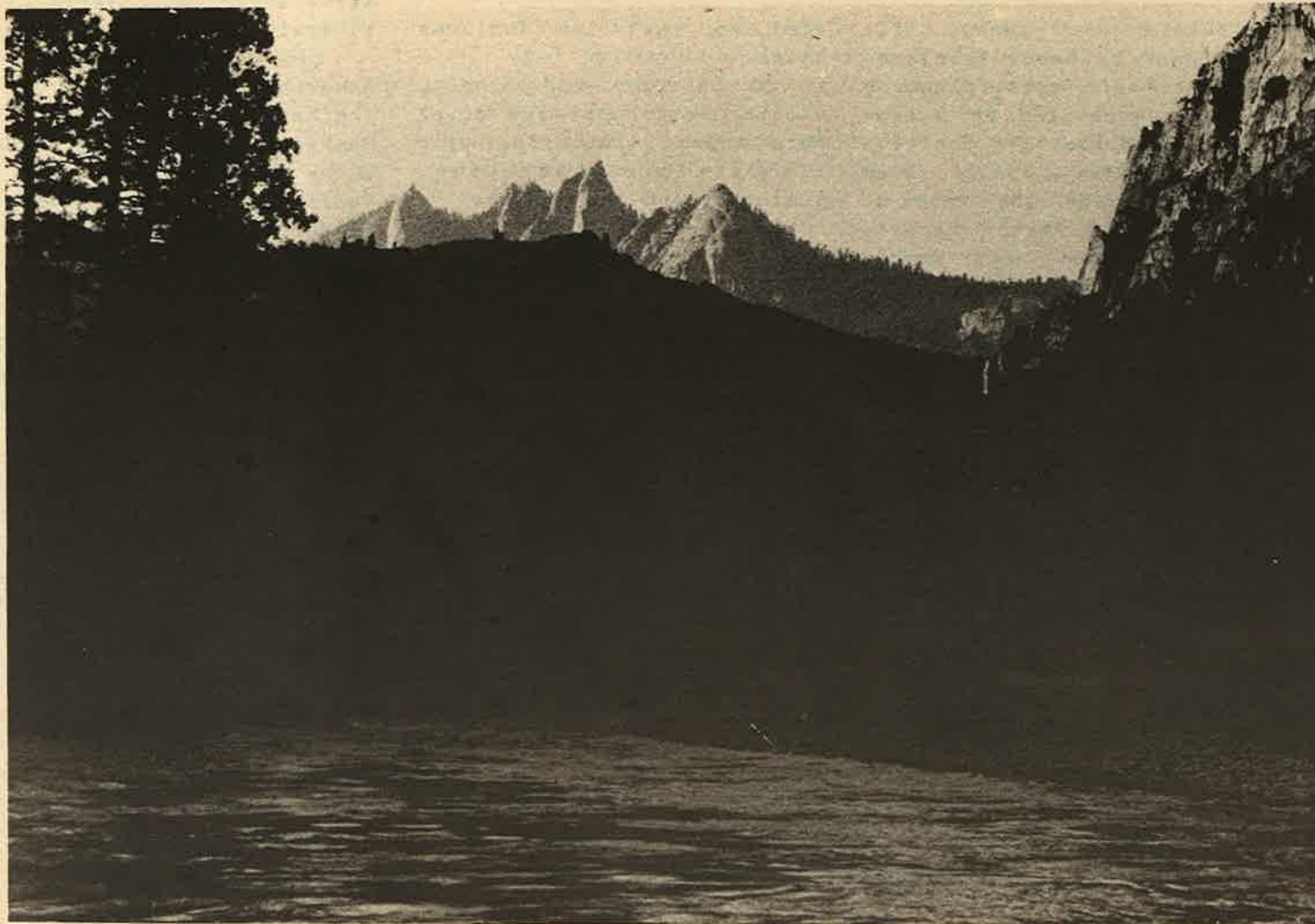
But from the North Fork-Little Kern River confluence downstream to the town of Kernville near Isabella Reservoir, 36 miles of river will be open to potential damming if they are not included in the National Wild and Scenic River System. The upper 18 miles of this length, known as the

"Forks of the Kern" whitewater run, confronts boaters and hikers with a roadless, isolated canyon and roaring hydraulics that were first rafted only a few years ago.

Below this, beginning at the Johnsondale Bridge and ending at Kernville, is the more popular "Upper Kern" whitewater run. This stretch of river is far better known because of easy access: a paved highway parallels it, and nine Forest Service campgrounds house summer weekend crowds. One small dam diverting water to a Southern California Edison hydroelectric powerhouse does little to diminish the Upper Kern's appeal to anglers, rafters, and innertubers. According to Sequoia National Forest figures, 290,000 people enjoyed the North Fork Kern in 1982, more than double the recreational use of the mainstem Tuolumne River below Yosemite National Park. Over 80% of the North Fork visitors come to the Upper Kern portion.

The North Fork's tremendous values led Congress in 1978 to request that it be studied for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River System. Released for review in August 1981, the study recommended Wild and Scenic designation for 78.5 miles of the river, and concluded that this would have little impact on water development because of the poor economics of the one dam that had been proposed (and later dropped), the Elephant Knob project above Johnsondale Bridge.

The study recommended "recreational" designation, the least restrictive classification in the Wild and Scenic Act, for the Upper Kern stretch. This would allow limited commercial development along the popular highway corridor, but the Reagan administration's final review of the study, released almost four years after the draft version, dropped that portion altogether. Although no dams are proposed along this stretch, the protection is important to guarantee that it remains free-flowing and unpolluted.



The Golden Trout Wilderness rises behind a quiet stretch of the North Fork Kern River

Photo by Bob Barnes

Into the Great Valley - the Lower Kern

Below Isabella Reservoir the Kern flows for 32 miles through a scenic canyon before entering the Central Valley. Most of this stretch is tapped for hydroelectric development; the Kern annually supplies enough hydropower to supply 300,000 people. Yet the Lower Kern remains surprisingly natural, and is a popular recreational resource among southern Californians, among them Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley.

Bradley rafted the river on July 20 with members of Friends of the River's (FOR) Los Angeles Chapter and FOR Board member Mike Gage. Over 30,000 people rafted the river in 1984, according

to the Forest Service, while thousands more camped, fished, or swam. The 23 miles of whitewater found here form the most accessible mountain river for 9.5 million people, and are a major breadwinner for the local area.

More hydro development is proposed for the Lower Kern, and could spell an end to this recreation. The two-dam Hobo project would drain water from 11 miles of currently wild river. FOR is protesting this project before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and is organizing local interest in keeping the river a source of inspiration as well as kilowatts.

The South Fork Kern - Rare Forest and Birds

Born among the cliffs and domes of the Golden Trout Wilderness, the South Fork flows across miles of high plateau before ending in Isabella Reservoir. Except for some unfortunate exclusions, most of the river's upper stretches are federally-protected wilderness and are home to wolverine and other rare species.

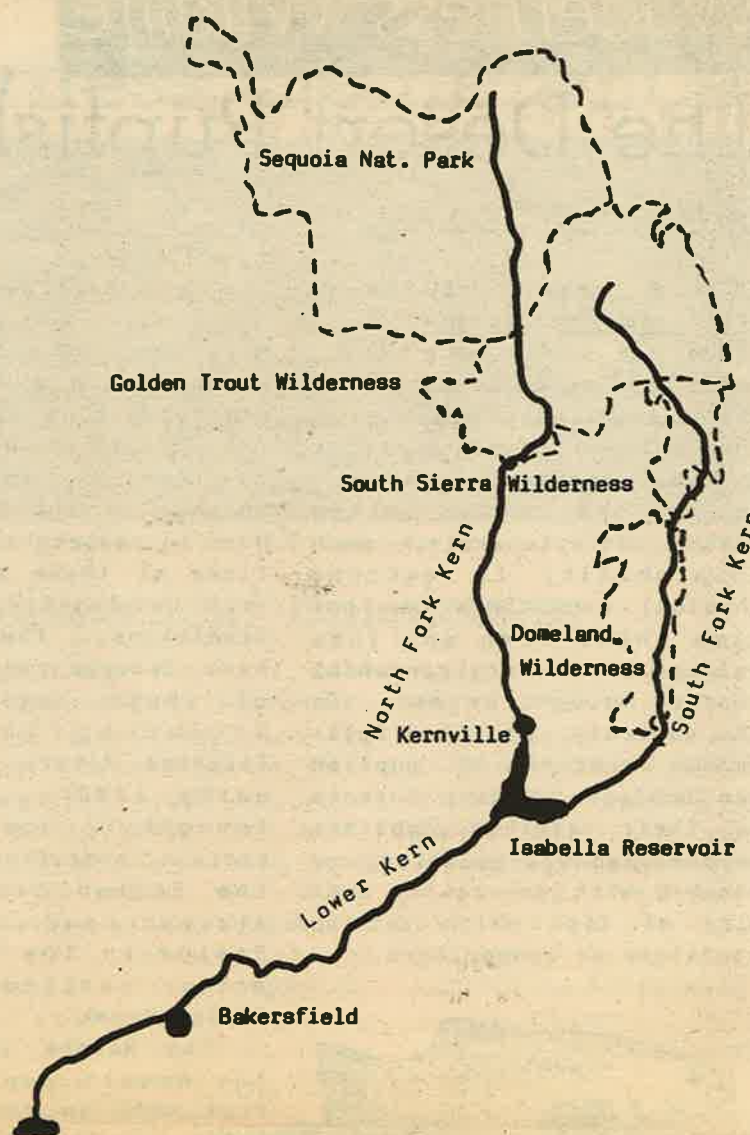
After flowing from the Domeland Wilderness the river meanders lazily for 15 miles through one of California's largest remaining streamside forests, a habitat that has

generally disappeared from the state. This warm, lush woodland, home to yellow-billed cuckoos and bald eagles, has also been proposed for hydro development.

Sequoia National Forest is studying the South Fork for Wild and Scenic designation. Readers can review and comment on the forest plan by writing:

Charles Pickering
Sequoia National Forest
900 West Grand Avenue
Porterville, CA 93257

Patrick Carr is editor of Headwaters, the membership newsletter of Friends of the River.



Mott Proposes Wild River National Park

According to the Christian Science Monitor, National Park Service director William Penn Mott, Jr. is spreading the word that he would like to establish a

Wild River National Park.

"We've got parks for everything else -- Grand Canyon, Yosemite, Mesa Verde, now we're talking about one for tallgrass prairie -- so why not set one up for a river so people can see what one looked like before man came along?" Mr. Mott says.

A number of rivers in Alaska would qualify for this concept, but Mott wants the park to be in the Lower 48 states so it will be more accessible to most Americans. The Mattole River of the north coast has been proposed as a candidate river. Conservationist and river runner Martin Litton has suggested that the Kern River is much more pristine, at least in its upper stretches.

No matter which river is selected, it will take an act of Congress to designate the nation's first Wild River National Park.



Riparian forest along the South Fork Kern River

Photo by Mike Henstra

FRIENDS OF THE RIVER

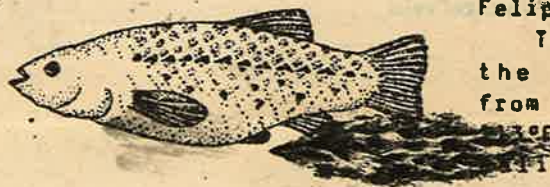
Friends of the River (FOR) is the leading conservation organization in California dedicated to protecting our remaining free-flowing rivers and conserving our water and energy supplies. Headwaters is the official bi-monthly newsletter of FOR. Annual membership is \$20. Write Friends of the River, Bldg. C, Fort Mason Center, San Francisco, CA 94123.

Wilderness Wildlife

The Desert Pupfish

by Dennis Coules

The desert pupfish, *Cyprinodon macularius*, is a member of a family of fish, the Cyprinodontidae, that has successfully adapted to such extreme environments as thermal springs, temporary pools, and saline inland seas. Unfortunately, such adaptability to extreme physical conditions has not made these fish any less vulnerable to environmental changes wrought by man. On the contrary, all five California species of pupfish are subject to many threats as their limited habitats become drained, polluted, or stocked with non-native species of fish which act as predators or competitors.



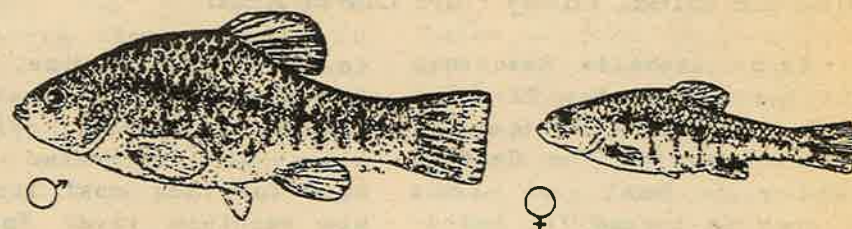
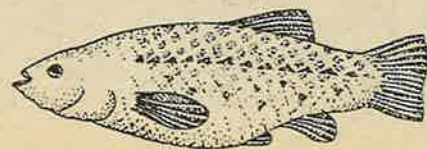
HABITAT AND BIOLOGY

All of the California pupfish species are the products of rapid evolution which occurred since the isolation of different pupfish populations after the last Pleistocene glaciation. About 10,000 to 20,000 years ago, the North American glaciers receded for the last time. Although the regions that now comprise the southwestern deserts were never glaciated, the climate was much cooler and wetter than today. Large lakes, such as 650-foot deep Lake Manly in what is now Death Valley, covered many desert basins. Since that pluvial period, most aquatic habitats in the desert have shrunk to small, isolated springs and streams. As these habitats became more and more isolated, interbreeding between pupfish populations became impossible and a number of distinct species and subspecies evolved over several thousand years, including the one which is the subject of this article.

The desert pupfish originally was found in California, Arizona, and Baja California along the lower Colorado and Gila Rivers, the Sonoyta River of northern Mexico, and numerous springs in the Salton Sink. Due to alterations in the flows of these major rivers from dam-building and water diversions, these pupfish have disappeared from most of their native range, including the entire Colorado River. As of the early 1980's, they were thought to occur only in certain shoreline pools of the Salton Sea and some streams and irrigation drains in the Salton Sea area, particularly San Felipe Creek.

The waters inhabited by the desert pupfish range from 48°F in the winter to 110°F in the summer. The salinity of the waters varies from fresh to nearly double that of seawater. The desert pupfish can survive low oxygen levels as well as great daily fluctuations in temperature and salinity.

Desert pupfish swim in loose schools from which small groups break off and forage on algae and small invertebrates. The breeding season extends from April to October, during which time the males become territorial and the schools are comprised entirely of either adult females or juveniles. Males become bright blue with a lemon-yellow tail during the breeding season. Females may lay 50 to 800 eggs in a season. The eggs hatch in an average of 10 days, depending on temperature. Growth is rapid and the entire life cycle can be completed in one summer if conditions are ideal.



CONSERVATION STATUS

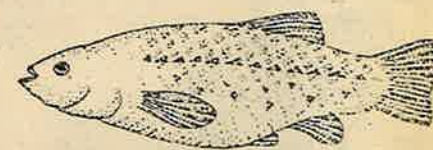
The only viable, natural population of the desert pupfish now occurs in San Felipe Creek. Smaller populations in shoreline pools of the Salton Sea and irrigation drains are subject to predation by the African cichlid *Tilapia* and other introduced predatory fish such as bass. Consequently they do not represent long-term potential for survival of the species. Even the San Felipe Creek population is threatened, as severe winter storms and flooding a couple of years ago decimated its numbers. Surveys late last year found that few pupfish were left in this habitat. Reintroduction of fish from a desert pupfish refugium established in a spring located in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park helped bolster the San Felipe Creek population. Another transplant refugium was established recently in order to help insure the preservation of self-perpetuating populations of desert pupfish.

Additional measures have been undertaken to enhance the survival of the desert pupfish in its natural habitat. The Department of Fish and Game is currently cooperating in the purchase or exchange of parcels of private land near San Felipe Creek. Consolidation of these lands will aid management of the area, as the Bureau of Land Management's San Sebastian Marsh Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). One goal of this ACEC is the removal of the exotic tamarisk plants which are choking the stream pools upon which the pupfish depends. Tamarisk is a serious problem in aquatic habitats throughout the desert because its rapid water use through transpira-

tion reduces water levels and may dry up springs and pools.

In October 1980, the desert pupfish was declared endangered by the State of California, so its take, possession, and sale are prohibited by state law. Nevertheless, over-collection by aquarium fish hobbyists has been cited as a threat to this species in the past and illegal collection may continue.

The long-term existence of the desert pupfish in what remains of its natural habitat is still problematic but could be accomplished if maintenance and rehabilitation of San Felipe Creek is given a high priority. Another possibility for habitat rehabilitation and pupfish recovery is the Salt Creek ACEC at the northeastern end of the Salton Sea. Fortunately, the desert pupfish is easily bred in captivity and can be maintained successfully in refugia in parts of the desert outside of its historic range, at least as long as there is an active interest in the species' survival.



FURTHER READING

Peter Moyle, *Inland Fishes of California*, UC Press, 1976, 405pp.

R.J. Naiman and D.L. Soltz, *Fishes in the North American Deserts*, Wiley-Interscience, 1981, 552pp.

Also, contact Desert Fishes Council, 407 West Lise Street, Bishop, CA 93514.

Dennis Coules is the California Wilderness Coalition's consultant for wildlife and desert issues.

Tradeoff for Development

Fringe-toed Lizard Preserves Proposed

by Dennis Coules

The Coachella Valley Fringe-toed Lizard, *Uma inornata*, is a characteristic inhabitant of areas of fine, windblown sand in the Coachella Valley near Palm Springs. Even wind shielding and sand stabilization of its habitat can result in decline or elimination of fringe-toed lizard populations.

In 1980, the Coachella Valley Fringe-toed Lizard was listed as "endangered" by the State of California and "threatened" by the U.S. Office of Endangered Species due to threats such as habitat development and wind shielding, off-road vehicles, flood control projects, and exotic, invasive plants. In June 1985, a fringe-toed lizard Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) was prepared and transmitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by a steering committee consisting of local city governments and the County of Riverside, assisted by state and federal agencies and the Nature Conservancy (NC).

The HCP proposes the conservation of 12,382 acres of fringe-toed lizard habitat, mostly in three separate reserves, while allowing development of 69,925 acres of remaining habitat. The three reserves are the Coachella Valley Preserve, Willow Hole-Edom Hill

Reserve (currently classified by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern), and the Whitewater Floodplain Reserve (currently owned by the Coachella Valley Water District but managed by BLM). Integrated with the HCP is a proposal for an Endangered Species Act Section 10(a) Permit to allow the "incidental take" of Coachella Valley Fringe-toed Lizards in areas to be developed, which would otherwise be in violation of the Act. Thus, the HCP is an attempt by local governments to resolve questions of violations of the Act and possible prosecution when granting development permits in fringe-toed lizard habitat.

Funding for purchase of the preserves would come from state, federal, and private (NC) sources, as well as a per-acre fee to be imposed on all development and grading permits in fringe-toed lizard habitat outside of the preserve areas. This fee will be \$600 per acre until \$7 million is collected and \$100 per acre thereafter and will be collected by the NC for preserve acquisition. The permit fee system would continue for 30 years, over which time it is projected that \$10 million will be collected.

One might question why enforcement of the Endangered Species Act alone would not provide sufficient protection for this species without granting concessions to developers over the majority of its habitat. According to the environmental impact statement which accompanies the HCP, even enforcement of the Endangered Species Act without exception would not necessarily secure large enough blocks of habitat to assure conservation of the Coachella Valley Fringe-toed Lizard. For one thing, enforcement often takes place after the fact and does not prevent habitat destruction. Convictions would be difficult to obtain due to the necessity to demonstrate actual presence of this secretive lizard before disturbance, and fines are not heavy enough to deter many landowners from lucrative developments. Thus the compromise embodied in the HCP is presented as the only salvation for the fringe-toed lizard, despite anticipated destruction of the vast majority of its present habitat.

However, the environmental impact statement does explore other possibilities for enhanced protection of the fringe-toed lizard, all of which were rejected in the HCP by the local governments as being too costly or too restrictive to develop-

ment. These include three potential additions totaling nearly 10,000 acres to the Coachella Valley Preserve, the addition of 673 acres to the Whitewater Floodplain Reserve, the addition of 554 acres to the Willow Hole-Edom Hill Reserve, and creation of two additional preserves (a 1,660-acre South Dillion Road Preserve and a 3,881-acre Eastern San Geronimo Pass Preserve).

One of the most interesting alternatives considered and rejected is rehabilitation of habitat that is now shielded from sand transport and will thus become unsuitable as fringe-toed lizard habitat in the future. This includes the entire region south of Interstate 10, which is shielded both by the highway and the Southern Pacific Railroad line, as well as by tamarisk tree windbreaks planted to protect these transportation corridors. Nearly half of the current fringe-toed lizard habitat is affected by this sand transport barrier. Relocation or breach of the highway and railroad line, along with removal of the tamarisk, could restore the habitat. Artificial transport of sand across the barriers also is theoretically possible. However, the local developers envision this region as the major area of urban expansion, and land costs there are much higher than to the north. Thus, no reserves are planned for the large area of habitat south of Interstate 10.

Dennis Coules is the California Wilderness Coalition's consultant for wildlife and desert issues.

California Wilderness Coalition

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PURPOSES OF THE CALIFORNIA WILDERNESS COALITION

...to promote throughout the State of California the preservation of wild lands as legally designated wilderness areas by carrying on an educational program concerning the value of wilderness and how it may best be used and preserved in the public interest, by making and encouraging scientific studies concerning wilderness, and by enlisting public interest and cooperation in protecting existing or potential wilderness areas.

Coalition Member Groups

Lorra Prieta Chapter, Sierra Club
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Marin Conservation League
Mendocino Environment Center
Mono Lake Committee
Monterey Peninsula Audubon Society
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Mt. Shasta Resources Council
Natural Resources Defense Council
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Planning and Conservation League
Porterville Area Environmental Council
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South Fork Trinity Watershed Association
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UC Davis Environmental Law Society
The Wilderness Society

A black and white line drawing of a person whose head and arms are replaced by cacti. The person is wearing a t-shirt that says "keep it wild" above a circular logo of a mountain, and "California Wilderness Coalition" below it. The person's legs are also depicted with a cactus-like texture.

Please add \$1.25 postage; 75 for each additional T-shirt. They also are available at the Sierra Club's S.F. Bay Chapter bookstore and at REI stores in California.

Join the Coalition!

† tax deductible

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