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Mount Williamson in the southern Sierra is one of few sites in California inhabited by bighorn sheep.

Photo by Bob Schneider

Relic Bighorns Menaced By Domestic Sheep Disease

By Joe Bogaard

The future of the Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep has long been of concern in California. But it has only been recently that the Department of Fish & Game (DFG), in conjunction with other state and federal agencies, has begun to take strong actions to maintain viable, secure populations of this rare subspecies, which resides only in California's Sierra Nevada.

The bighorn is threatened in part by previous overexploitation, habitat loss, and livestock competition, but a highly contagious bacteria carried by domestic sheep poses the greatest hazard to the survival of the wild sheep. The DFG's efforts to increase numbers and sizes of populations have been met with sometimes disappointing results.

As is true of most North American wildlife, these sensitive creatures' populations plummeted with the European invasion. Over a century ago, in 1873, the California legislature afforded all wild sheep full protection in an effort to avoid possible extinction. Contrary to hopes and expectations, the populations did not recover but have maintained themselves at relatively low densities in a few isolated herds.

The bighorn in California, *Ovis cana-*

danensis, consists of 3 subspecies. The Sierra race is found in disjunct pockets in our state's eastern backbone, primarily near Bishop and Lone Pine. Two subspecies are found in the desert; the Nelson bighorn ranges throughout the Southern California desert, and the rare Peninsular bighorn is restricted to specific regions in San Diego and Riverside counties.

While all three subspecies' populations have dropped greatly and their ranges have contracted in the last two centuries, the *O. canadensis sierra*, the Sierra bighorn, is clearly the most imperiled. Of the total of 4,800 sheep throughout California, Sierran sheep number only 300.

In October 1968, at the request of the state legislature, the DFG undertook to determine the current status of bighorn sheep in California. In the quarter century preceding, the populations in many areas experienced declines and local extinctions, which are generally attributed to water shortage, habitat encroachment, and livestock-propagated disease.

At present, the Sierra bighorn seems threatened mainly by habitat intrusion coupled with the highly contagious pasteurella parasite, carried primarily by domestic sheep which are themselves immune

to its effects.

Recent efforts to ensure a future for these majestic creatures have taken the form of reintroductions. The largest herd, the Baxter herd, presently consists of about 180 members; it has been the primary source of DFG-mediated herd relocations.

The reintroductions have met with mixed results. Sites are chosen based on the sheep's historical distribution and have included areas of the Southern Sierra as well as more northerly regions, including the Modoc National Forest (NF) and Lava Beds National Monument (NM).

Lee Vining Canyon, near Yosemite's eastern boundary, is the site of a recent reintroduction. Despite poor weather, predation, and disease, that herd persists. Two years ago, soon after the release, the original 24 sheep were ravaged by a late storm and eight animals seeking refuge in the high country perished.

Mountain lion predation has resulted in the loss of five sheep. Two lions have been killed by DFG biologists in efforts to protect the herd. This strategy of lion elimination will continue, according to Vern Bleich, the DFG bighorn reintroduction coordinator, until the sheep numbers have stabilized in the canyon.

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Mono Lake Water Rights Upheld

Fish were big winners in a state appeals court ruling that gave first priority of water downstream of dams to sustaining fish populations. State water licenses for unlimited diversions, specifically those granted the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) for a key Mono Lake tributary, were ruled illegal. The court ordered that Los Angeles' 14-year old state water licenses in the Mono Basin face revocation hearings.

Released on May 25, the court decision was reached by a 3-judge panel from the third district court of appeal. State Fish and Game Code Section 5937, passed in 1937, and Section 5946, added by the state legislature in 1953, require downstream fishery flows from all dams. The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) granted Los Angeles permits that bypassed the laws. In a 1986 ruling, Sacramento Superior Court Judge Lloyd A. Phillips had said that LADWP did not have to comply with the section enacted after the original L.A. permits were granted.

A statewide fishing group, California Trout, was the lead plaintiff, and the Mono Lake Committee a co-plaintiff, in the action to force the SWRCB to update the licenses and require water releases for the protection and preservation of both fish and Mono Lake.

The ruling was "a great victory," according to Martha Davis, Executive Director of the Mono Lake Committee.

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Report

Last month I mentioned that I was looking for an excuse to go to Lee Vining or somewhere else on the east side of the Sierra. Sally Miller gave me the pretext with the need to meet with the developers of the June Mtn. Ski Area.

The developers were anxious to meet with us since their plans for building this summer were foiled when the Forest Service granted us a stay of any construction while our appeal of the ski area expansion was being decided.

Since the meeting appeared to dovetail with the long-awaited CWC backpack into the Granite Chief Wilderness on Memorial Day Weekend, I said I'd come.

The owner of both resorts, Dave McCoy, has a long-standing dream building ski lifts, runs, and facilities all the way from June Mtn. to Mammoth Mtn. A number of environmentalists have a dream of designating San Joaquin Ridge and Glass Creek as wilderness. These two views of the future are in direct conflict with each other.

Negotiations continue, but it seems likely that the appellants will not object to some development this summer, such as the upgrading of a ski lift, as long as it is clear that such construction is not part of the ski area linkup. We may be obstructionists, but we aren't *completely* unreasonable.

It was time to head up Hwy. 395 to get to the Granite Chief trailhead. Here came the first sign that all was not to be perfect this weekend: Inyo and I left Lee Vining at 1:30 and got to the trailhead after 11 p.m.

By Jim Eaton

I had expected to spend more than four hours driving. But the road from Soda Springs to French Meadows Reservoir had a few surprises waiting. The trees across the road were manageable; it was the snow that stopped me. Five patches of snow, and I was but six miles from my destination.

So I gave it a try. An hour later, after digging El Trucko out of the snow bank, I retreated to Alternate Route B, a 150-mile detour that brought me back to Auburn.

But everything looked bright Saturday morning, and the puppy and I hiked the five miles to the big waterfall in the middle of Picayune Valley. We set up camp, explored, and waited for the seven Coalition volunteers who were due in the afternoon.

Light showers started after noon, and by the time the backpackers showed up there was a steady rain. As the evening wore on, the rain changed to sleet and soft hail. Just before dark the clouds briefly lifted and gave us a view of what was about to come—the snow line was only a few hundred feet above us.

Like many other campers that weekend, we awoke to several inches of freshly fallen snow. And it was *cold*. After thawing around a fire, the consensus was to hike back out and try again some other weekend.

I know our friends in the Pacific Northwest probably think we are wimps. But we were in the Sierra Nevada. And we all know that in the "Gentle Wilderness" it never rains at night or snows on Memorial Day. Maybe Mother Nature is sending us mortals a message?



"They don't know that they need this program, but they do," said Chuck Sisco, Wildlife Biologist with the National Audubon Society. Sisco helped coordinate and lead the Adopt-a-Forest workshop held in Weed, CA on May 21 & 22.

Forest Service to Tighten Appeals Process

The Forest Service formally announced far-reaching proposed revisions to the general appeal regulations in a briefing at agency headquarters in Washington, D.C., on May 13.

The appeals process was designed to resolve disputes short of going to court. Despite the fact that most appeals are denied and do *not* result in legal actions, pressure from the timber industry and local governments has resulted in the new rules, the second such tightening of appeal regulations in the past decade.

Two sets of regulations are proposed. One would govern appeals dealing with agency administration of written instruments, such as special use permits. The second set of regulations would apply to appeals of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) related decisions, such as a challenge to a forest plan or timber sale. Following is a listing of important changes proposed for the latter category of appeals.

- Notices of appeal would be called "requests for review." The statement of reasons would be combined with the request for review into a single document.

- All "review" documents — including the request for review (with statement of reasons) and stay requests — must be filed within an unextendable 45-day period from the date of publication of the decision in a local newspaper. Current regulations allow the agency to approve time extensions for filing statements of reasons when requested.

- The Forest Service must decide on reviews of forest plans within 90 days from

the time the review record closes (at the end of 45 days from the date of publication) and on all other reviews within 30 days from the time the review record closes.

- Reviews will be limited to a single level, although the agency will be allowed discretion to provide a second level of review. All review decisions will automatically be sent forward to the next highest administrative level of the Forest Service. The decision to take a review under consideration at a higher level rests with the Forest officer at the higher level.

- Forest Service responsive statements, appellant replies to responsive statements, and oral presentations will be eliminated.

- No opportunities for formal intervention are provided; however, third parties will be allowed to submit comments for the review record.

- Stay requests (to be called "delays of implementation") may be granted only if implementation of the action under review is imminent. Procedural decisions such as the denial of a stay request will not be reviewable.

While the Forest Service is not proposing any type of filing fee, the agency is specifically requesting public comment on this controversial item.

The proposed revisions are open to written public comment until July 15, 1988. Comments should be sent to: F. Dale Robertson, Chief, USDA, Forest Service, P.O. Box 96090, Washington, D.C. 20090-6090.

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Members Say:

Misconceived Emergency

Dear Stephanie,

Much thanks to you and Lisa Miller for the great job on the Lake Pillsbury Basin Salvage fiasco article.

The Forest Service has taken a solid position on the issue...salvage logging is mandated by NFMA—regardless of environmental consequences. Since it's an "emergency situation," other environmental laws don't seem to apply. The "emergency" is not watershed restoration, but revenue loss caused by waiting too long to salvage the trees. They will mitigate the damage if "economically feasible" but salvage logging is the "prime objective."

Thanks again!

Don Morris
Willits, CA



Wilderness Trivia Question:

Which wilderness areas contain Sierra redwoods (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*)?

-Answer on page 6-

Save this date: October 19 – 22, 1989 is the California Wilderness Conference!

UPDATES

Roadless Area Studied for Salvage Logging Potential

Bald eagles and peregrine falcons are among the creatures that make their homes in the steep, fragile slopes of the South Fork roadless area, nestled in prime timber country. Salvage logging has been recommended for the area in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest's "Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the South Fork Fire Recovery/Salvage Project," released at the end of May.

The Forest Service recommends clearcutting 700 acres and selectively cutting 1,216 acres more. About 67 percent would be harvested by helicopter, 16 percent by skyline, and 15 percent by tractor. New roads constructed in the released South Fork roadless area would total 7.3 miles.

The South Fork Mountain Defense Committee is opposed to the Forest Service's

preferred alternative, and would like to work with concerned people on comments. Contact:

South Fork Mountain Defense Committee
Third & F Streets
Eureka, CA 95501
(707) 442-0208

Comments on the plan will be accepted by the Forest Service until July 18, 1988. A copy of the EIS can be obtained by contacting:

Forest Supervisor
Shasta-Trinity National Forests
2400 Washington Ave.
Redding, CA 96001
(916) 628-522

"We need the tonic of wildness, to wade sometimes in marshes where the bittern and the meadow-hen lurk, and hear the booming of the snipe; to smell the whispering sedge where only some wilder and more solitary fowl builds her nest, and the mink crawls with its belly close to the ground.

"At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land & sea be infinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable.

"We can never have enough of nature. We must be refreshed by the sight of inexhaustible vigor, vast and titanic features, the seacoast with its wrecks, the wilderness with its living and its decaying trees, the thundercloud, and the rain which lasts three weeks and produces freshets. We need to witness our own limits transgressed, and some life pasturing freely where we never wander."

—Henry David Thoreau



Endangered Species Act Held Over Turtle Excluder Devices

While thousands of species languish on the candidate endangered species list, the Senate is delaying action on reauthorization of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), S. 675. Although the House passed its version of the bill by an overwhelming majority last December, action on this important and popular bill is being held up by the objections of a few senators. Environmental groups have been lobbying hard to get the Senate leadership (majority leader Robert Byrd), to schedule the bill for action on the Senate floor.

A letter urging action on the bill, written by Senators Daniel Evans (R-WA) and Wyche Fowler (D-GA) has been signed by 29 senators. The letter calls for "timely consideration" of the act so that "this vital program will be reaffirmed and improved without further delay." Both California senators Alan Cranston and Pete Wilson, who are among the 36 co-sponsors of the ESA bill, have signed the letter.

A major stumbling block before the bill is the objection of Senator Howell Haflon of Alaska to the use of turtle excluder devices (TEDs) in fishing nets. According to Jim

Pissot of the National Audubon Society, TEDs are one of the great success stories of ESA. In the past 35 years the female population of the Kemp's Ridley sea turtle has dwindled from 40,000 to only about 500 individuals. The inexpensive and easy to use TEDs have been proven to work by keeping the turtles from becoming entangled and drowning in fishing nets.

There are currently about 4,000 candidate species on the waiting list for consideration as endangered species. If the reauthorization bill passes, there would be an increase in the funding available for the monitoring of the candidate species. The bill also mandates the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to use its emergency powers to place a species on the endangered list when there is an immediate danger of extinction. Since 1973 there have been 80 confirmed extinctions, but the actual number may be as high as 200.

Other provisions of the bill include increased protection for endangered plants, a requirement for more explicit and uniform recovery plans by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and stiffer penalties for intentional violations.



Sespe, Sisquoc, and Upper Klamath Rivers Considered For Wild and Scenic Status

Portions of the Sespe, Sisquoc, and upper Klamath Rivers are on the way to becoming federally protected as Wild and Scenic Rivers.

Representative Robert Lagomarsino (R-CA) has announced his intent to introduce

Wild & Scenic River legislation for eight miles of the Sespe River and for the Sisquoc River. Although a good step, his bill would delete the lower two miles of the Sespe, which even the Forest Service has recommended for Wild and Scenic protection, in

order to save room for a future reservoir project.

Also awaiting Wild & Scenic designation are 19 miles of the upper Klamath River, from Boyle Reservoir in Oregon to Copco Reservoir in California. Two bills that would

protect the Klamath have been introduced in the House of Representatives, H.R. 4164 and H.R. 3738, both of which are sponsored by Representatives Peter DeFazio (D-OR), Ron Wyden (D-OR), and Les AuCoin (D-OR).

H.R. 4164 would place 47 Oregon rivers and five miles of California's upper Klamath in the National Wild and Scenic River system. H.R. 3738 would protect just the upper Klamath.

A large dam and reservoir for the upper Klamath has been proposed by the City of Klamath Falls. Called the Salt Caves project, it would reduce California flows and flood the river from the J.C. Boyle powerhouse to the Oregon border. The upper Klamath is a designated Wild Trout Stream.

(See the WR, Nov.-Dec., 1987 for a longer article on the Sespe)

For more information, contact:

Steve Evans
Friends of the River
909 12th St., Suite 207
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 442-3155

Partially reprinted from Cross Currents, a Friends of the River publication.



Salvage Appeals Aren't Frivolous, Congressional Hearings Find

On May 20 the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Forests, Family Farms and Energy held a one-day field hearing in northern California concerning the Forest Service's fire salvage program. The hearing was requested by subcommittee member Wally Herger (R-CA), who attended along with Congressman Harold Volkmer (D-MO), Chairman of the subcommittee. Representatives of national and local conservation organizations testified, as did Forest Service personnel, the timber industry, and local government officials.

Conservationists expressed strong criticisms of the salvage program and charged that the agency is grossly underestimating the cumulative impacts of aggressive salvage logging on water quality, anadromous fishery habitat, and soil stability. The timber industry charged that "obstructionists" are

blocking the timely salvage of timber through frivolous appeals. In California, the Forest Service has offered a total of 450 million board feet (mmbf) of salvage timber, with 150 mmbf currently under appeal. Since no stays have been awarded, several salvage sales under appeal are already being logged.

Conservationists presenting testimony at the hearing were the Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society, Citizens for Better Forestry, Marble Mountain Audubon Society, and the Forest Issues Task Force.

Patricia Schifferle, California/Nevada Regional Director for The Wilderness Society, explained in her testimony that the appeals process has resulted in better resource management decisions for salvage operations, as in the case of the Gulch Salvage Sale in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. Represented by the Sierra Club Legal Defense

Fund, The Wilderness Society appealed the sale because the Forest Service had made serious sale planning errors and did not incorporate adequate environmental safeguards. For example, the Forest Service failed to include site-specific environmental mitigation measures, neglected to protect the riparian or appropriative water rights of several local landowners, failed to identify and protect sensitive drainages, and did not obtain key rights-of-way required to operate the sale. The agency agreed with many of the allegations set forth in the appeal and, in response, has improved the design of the sale.

In his closing summary, Chairman Volkmer expressed an overall confidence in the Forest Service, but stated that like any agency, the Forest Service sometimes makes

mistakes. Mr. Volkmer did not accept industry allegations that the salvage program is being obstructed by frivolous appeals. Rather, he said that from what he heard during the day's testimony, conservationists are not abusing the appeals process and are not halting the salvage program.

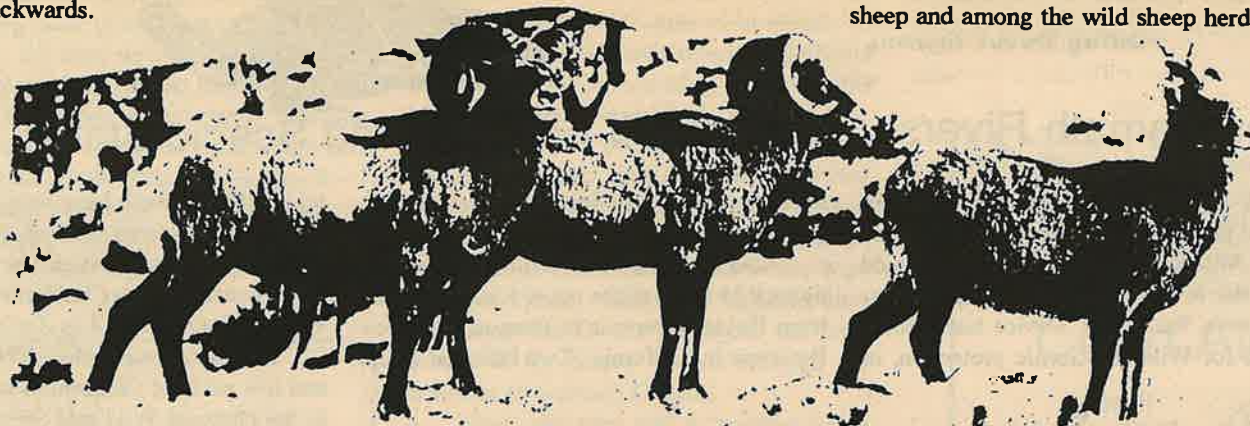
Chairman Volkmer also stated that while the appeals process is a logical forum for the public to air disagreements over the conduct of the salvage program, concerned parties should make efforts to resolve their differences outside of appeals where possible.

Reprinted from The Wilderness Society's Bi-Weekly Update of the National Forest Action Center, May 30, 1988.

Majestic Vegetarian Climbers

The bighorn sheep, *Ovis canadensis*, is a wild mountain sheep in North America. Its range contracted significantly with the onslaught of Europeans. While it previously existed fairly contiguously throughout the western half of this continent, only disjunct relic populations persist today. These occur in British Columbia and Alberta, Canada, into the Rockies, the southern Sierra, and the deserts of the southwest.

The sheep is a nimble-footed beast that has a tawny yellow coat in the summer and a grayish brown color in winter. The underparts and buttocks are conspicuously white year-round. While females' horns are compact and slightly arched, the male rams develop large horns that spiral backwards.



Bighorn prefer the dry and upland mountain regions in the summer, often occupying precipitous and rough regions. Here they find grasses, flowers, and young shoots, feeding generally during early morning and late afternoon to avoid the heat of the day. The cold winter season sends the sheep into the forests, within the protection of timber and mountain gorges.

When threatened, the bighorn can display amazing agility, speed, and endurance on seemingly sheer faces. Their cloven hooves, resembling rubber in elasticity, are sharp-edged and concave, forming suction cups.

Although they are herd animals, males and females do not generally interact except in the mating season of late fall and early winter. During this period, males fight for females, but after this reproductive season, the males rejoin in a harmonious flock.

Lambs, usually one and occasionally two per female, are born in May and June. The young usually mature in their third year.

The sheep's seasonal altitudinal migration and low reproductive potential combine potentially to the bighorn's disadvantage. Human disturbance and/or domestic livestock in the lowlands has facilitated disease transmission. The bighorn's low reproductive capacity, fluctuating with browse conditions and climate, has decreased the recovery potential for herds whose populations fall dramatically due to disease, drought, or habitat loss.

Bighorn sheep

continued from page 1

But the greatest threat to the Lee Vining sheep, most experts agree, is the interaction with domestic sheep. An always-lethal, highly contagious bacteria, pasteurella, can decimate a herd in weeks. The pasteurella bacteria transmission process is not fully understood by biologists. Nose to nose contact is the suspected mode and presumed to be the same between wild and domestic sheep and among the wild sheep herds.

"We have no plans to reintroduce bighorn sheep," states Lava Beds NM interpreter, Gary Hathaway. Though alternative sites have been considered, the habitats are not ideal and biologists fear the sheep might migrate to the original site and suffer an identical fate of their predecessors.

This winter's loss of the over 50 member South Warner herd, in Modoc NF, is "the biggest setback the program has had," according to DFG veterinarian Dave Jessup.

Fourteen sheep, introduced in the early 1980s, grew to over 50 by winter, 1987. For capacity, this success was exceptional. A die-off began in December, however, and at least 51 animals died. DFG hopes that a small band survived up an isolated canyon nearby, but these hopes appear to be wishful thinking; all radio collars that were attached to the sheep are accounted for.

Besides total herd loss, the Lava Beds NM and Modoc NF sites have something in common: adjacent domestic sheep allotments. A generally-accepted, sufficient buffer zone between domestic and wild sheep is five miles. Neither of these unsuccessful reintroductions were afforded this protection.

Prior to the South Warner project, Modoc and DFG officials decided that no present grazing allotments would be altered. According to Bill Britton of the Modoc NF, if for some reason the lessee voluntarily relinquished rights or circumstances demanded revocation, the region would not be reissued for domestic sheep.

The Lava Beds NM present policy excludes bighorn releases. The most appropriate site is bounded by the Modoc NF with another domestic sheep allotment. The Forest Service is equally unaccommodating in this situation. "Modoc officials have stated that they have no plans to terminate the lease

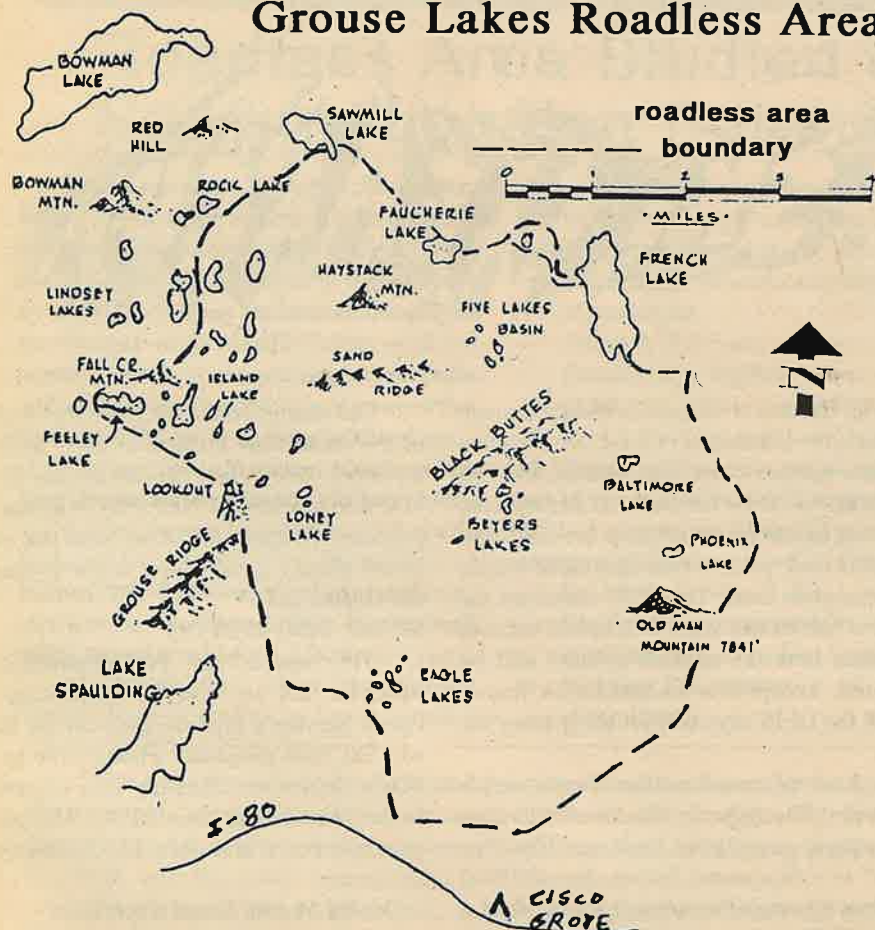
Prospects for the Lee Vining herd are generally improving, however. A supplement of 11 animals, removed from the Baxter herd in late March, brought the herd population to nearly 30, and, according to Bleich, about 15 ewes are ready to calf this spring.

The northern releases, in Modoc NF and Lava Beds NM, met with far less success. Both herds showed great promise, but both were decimated. Once pasteurella is contracted it is only a matter of time.

Travelling along with a hunting party on future Lava Beds NM lands, John Muir reported the presence of sheep in the late 19th century. But they have not been seen since 1906, until the mid 1970's, when a herd was released. It maintained itself through 1980 generally free of predation and human interference. In this same year, the bacteria infected the herd and 100 percent mortality was reported shortly thereafter.

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Grouse Lakes Roadless Area



Grouse Lakes Roadless Area to Gain Lots of Private Land

"I think this is the only natural thing to do. It's beautiful property and has a lot of good timber, but it's difficult to manage over the long term because of the poor soils. It would be tough to maintain roads there," said Don Curry, a land specialist with Sierra Pacific Timber Company.

This reasonable attitude on the part of Sierra Pacific is leading to the addition of about 14,000 acres of near-pristine private land to the existing Grouse Lakes roadless area in the Tahoe National Forest.

Money from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, which comes from offshore oil development fees, will be used to buy the property from Sierra Pacific. Sierra Pacific acquired the parcel when it purchased 90,000 acres in Nevada County from the Southern Pacific Land Company in March. The land's value has not yet been determined.

The cooperative deal was worked out by the Grouse Ridge Lakes Coalition, a group of environmental and recreation groups. The Trust for Public Lands in San Francisco is coordinating the negotiations, and it may take several years for the deal to be completed. Congress must approve the use of

money from the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

"It's fairly unusual. But it's nice to be working with a group like the Grouse Ridge Lakes Coalition to preserve this area. I kind of like it myself," said Curry.

The Grouse Lakes area is located northwest of the small community of Cisco Grove on Interstate 80, 25 miles east of Nevada City. Six trails enter the area, where more than 125 alpine lakes of two acres or more in size are found between Bowman Lake and the interstate. Several peaks are above 8,000 feet, and the region is covered with stands of red fir, Jeffrey pine, and sugar pine, most of which have never been logged.

The roadless area has been treated as a "motor vehicle closure area" by the Forest Service. Ken Werner, Land Exchange Officer with the Tahoe National Forest, does not think that the area will gain wilderness status because of a number of private inholdings and some old roads.

Despite Werner's contention, the Grouse Lakes roadless area was identified as having wilderness characteristics by the Forest Service during the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE II) in the late 1970s. The acquisition of Sierra Pacific's holdings will leave only a small amount of private inholdings in the 21,100-acre roadless area.

The area was closed to motor vehicle use in 1972 after an acrimonious public meeting and letter writing campaign. Even though the Forest Service did not recommend Grouse Lakes for wilderness designation in RARE II, the area has been managed for primitive recreation values.

Small but Contiguous Desert Lands To Be Dropped as Wilderness

In its latest Wilderness Study Area (WSA) report, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has recommended "no wilderness" for four small desert wilderness study areas. The areas covered by the final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) range from 958 to 2,131 acres in size but are adjacent to existing or potential state wilderness in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park.

Uses that the BLM has identified for these areas are fire suppression, mining, and cattle grazing.

The primary vegetation community of the four areas is semi-desert chaparral, with desert scrub at lower elevations. Each of the areas is a home for sensitive plant species, with thirteen such species located in the Table Mountain WSA. The EIS reports that the impact of the "no wilderness" alternative on these species will be minor.

Three of the WSA sites have historically been habitat for bighorn sheep and will probably become their stomping grounds again, as a reintroduction of the mammals is planned in a nearby area for 1990. The EIS states that "domestic cattle will compete with [bighorn] sheep somewhat for water and forage, and also potentially transmit diseases to them." These are considered to be "minor negative impacts."

A BLM official said that he has never seen domestic sheep in the area, which can carry the pasteurilla bacteria

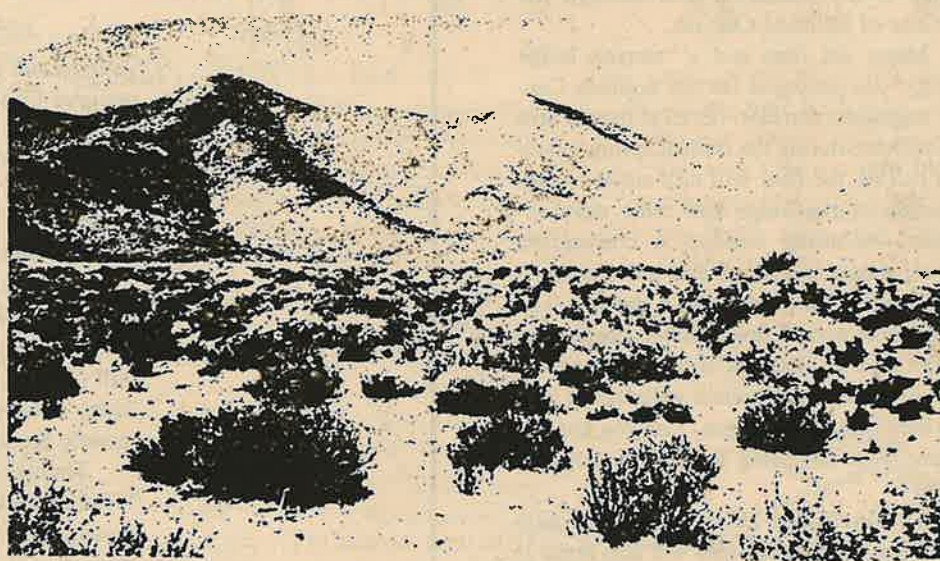
that is lethal to wild bighorn (see bighorn article starting on page 1). The EIS notes that these effects would also be felt under the "all wilderness" alternative since grazing is a "grandfathered" (allowed) activity in wilderness; "only very minor differences [between alternatives] are foreseen."

[Note: the peninsular bighorn sheep is a different subspecies than the Sierra Nevada bighorn, which is discussed in the bighorn article.]

Sawtooth Mountains Area C is on the northern boundary of a state wilderness, the

San Ysidro Mountain WSA is adjacent to Los Coyotes Indian Reservation to the north and state wilderness to the northeast, and Table Mountain WSA is contiguous with the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park wilderness to the north and east.

Other nearby BLM WSAs are slated for future wilderness recommendation, according to a BLM official. Over 5,000 acres of Sawtooth Mountains area B (not included in this EIS) may be recommended for wilderness sometime in the future, according to BLM officials.



Sawtooth Mountains A WSA



Blueberries grow in fire-made clearings.

Appeal regulations continued from page 2

Efforts are also in motion on the legislative front to alter the appeals process. Representative Denny Smith (R-OR) has introduced legislation (H.R. 4447) that would impose a \$1,000 fee to file a timber sale appeal. Cosponsors of the bill include Wally Herger (R-CA). The legislation supported by the timber industry, was the subject of a recent editorial in the *Portland Oregonian*. The paper strongly opposed the legislation, stating that "Members of Congress are on shaky ground when they move to restrict their constituents' ability to challenge federal agency decisions."

Reprinted from the *Bi-Weekly Update*.

Ski Resort Proposed Near Mammoth

By Frank Stewart, for Friends of the Inyo

Inyo National Forest recently has published a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Sherwin Bowl Ski Area. The DEIS reviews a proposal to allow a permittee to build an alpine ski resort on 3,100 acres of national forest land in Mammoth Lakes. Sherwin Bowl is a roadless area "released" by the California Wilderness Act of 1984.

Here are some of the issues:

• **Development of new ski areas vs. further expansion of existing ski areas:** Mammoth Mountain and June Mountain, two existing ski areas, could be permitted to expand their operations to accommodate an additional 8,000 skiers. This is the same number of added skiers proposed by the Forest Service in their "Preferred Alternative" of the draft Inyo Forest Plan. [The final Inyo Forest Plan is due out in August.]

It certainly would be more sensible to allow the existing ski areas to build out to their permitted limit, and also encourage greater mid-week use, before building another downhill ski resort in an untouched area. The option of building out existing facilities should have been considered as one alternative in the DEIS.

• **Economic feasibility:** One of the economic problems with the Sherwin Bowl area is its short ski season. The DEIS states that the average probability of having sufficient snow coverage to open in December is less than 50 percent. Also, mule deer migration through the Sherwin area will require that skiing close down in early April.

The ski area developer is proposing extensive commercial and residential development of adjacent private land. This suggests that the Sherwin Ski Area, which is on public land, is subsidizing real estate development on private land. This fact, along with the short ski season, raises the question of whether the project is economically feasible

on its own merit—environmental considerations aside.

• **Degradation of quality of life and recreational experience in the Mammoth Lakes area:** The DEIS projects a growth in the town's population of as much as 40 percent. In addition, over the course of a winter, as many as 420,000 additional skiers will crowd into the town of Mammoth Lakes to ski at the Sherwin Ski Area. This will increase congestion, overload services, add to existing air pollution (Mammoth Lakes already violates Environmental Protection Agency air quality standards), degrade an excellent cross-country skiing and equestrian area, and create the kind of urban atmosphere the visitor has come to the mountains to escape.

At the present time, the Inyo National Forest has twice as many visitors in the summer as in the winter. The majority of these people are hikers, campers, anglers, and sightseers. These people come to the eastern Sierra to enjoy the forest in its natural state. However, if the Sherwin Ski Area is developed, the swaths of clearcuts necessary to provide ski runs, lifts, towers, and trails will be visible from all major viewpoints in the area, including those in the John Muir Wilderness.

• **Lack of data on meeting increased water demands:** The current water supply system for Mammoth Lakes is already operating at capacity. The DEIS doesn't provide the data necessary to evaluate whether or not adequate additional water is available to support 40 percent more skiers. Significant use of water for snowmaking will add to the stress on water resources.

• **Disruption of mule deer migration:** The proposed ski area and associated real estate developments would occupy the migratory corridor of a herd of 4,000 mule deer—25 percent of all deer in the Inyo National Forest. This herd migrates each year from the Owens Valley to the west slopes of the Sierra Nevada through the confines of Solitude Canyon.

Major ski runs and a "canyon lodge facility" are proposed for the Solitude Canyon migration corridor. Even if the ski area closes down during the critical spring migration period, the deer will still suffer. Construction of the lodge and other developments—including condos, a convention center, shopping center, and golf course—will destroy the deer herd's cover. The presence of even a few hundred people in a part of their habitat that is ordinarily all but free of human interference will disrupt normal herd behavior patterns. Can you imagine a deer herd migrating through a shopping center?

The increased skier traffic and new roads servicing the ski area will also result in a greatly increased number of deer road kills. Road kills are the major cause of death for mule deer in the Inyo National Forest.

In addition to making it all but impos-



sible for the deer to migrate normally through the area, the habitats of at least two sensitive wildlife species—the pine martin and the goshawk—will be harmed. Other species that will be adversely affected are the flammulated owl, prairie falcon, golden eagle, and mountain lion. The DEIS mentions the acres of habitat that will be disturbed but does not state how the various species will be affected, except for the mountain lion—which the DEIS says will probably leave the area.

• **Lack of consideration of cumulative impacts:** The Sherwin Ski Area DEIS does not address cumulative impacts. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires a cumulative impact study when a series of developments that affect the same area are proposed. Some of the developments presently being proposed for the Mammoth Lakes area of the Inyo National Forest include: 4 geothermal plants, 2 golf courses, expansion of the airport, expansion of June Mountain Ski Area, and an expansion of Mammoth Ski Area that would cover eight miles of the pristine San Joaquin Ridge.

Obviously, NEPA requires that studies of the cumulative impacts of these projects be done. The Forest Service cannot be allowed to circumvent NEPA by isolating the proposed Sherwin Ski Area from the combined effects of all these other proposed developments!

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Your input is vital! Public opinion is the strongest tool we have for influencing the Forest Service's final decision on the Sherwin Ski Area proposal. Please write to the Forest Supervisor, detailing your objections to the Sherwin Ski Area DEIS. The public comment period ends June 13. Address your letters to:

Dennis Martin, Forest Supervisor
Inyo National Forest
873 North Main
Bishop, CA 93514

"Friends of the Inyo" is a coalition of Eastern Sierra residents and conservation organizations formed to help protect the Inyo National Forest's unique qualities: scenic beauty, clean air, abundant water, varied wildlife and plant populations, and many opportunities for low-impact recreation.



Court Allows Lower Timber Cut

In a decision that significantly strengthens the federal government's discretion to restrict timber cutting in the national forests, a federal court rejected a timber industry demand that the Forest Service allow cutting in sensitive wildlife habitat in Wyoming's Bridger-Teton National Forest. The industry claimed the Forest Service was not living up to the high cutting levels of its 1979 Timber Management Plan.

The court's April 18 decision denied Louisiana Pacific's (L-P) motion for an injunction to increase timber cutting, saying responsibility for closure of L-P's Dubois mill (*High Country News*, 4/25/88) lay with the company. Judge Clarence Brimmer said L-P had failed to plan adequately for secure timber supplies.

Thomas Lustig, who argued the case for the National Wildlife Federation, which intervened on the side of the Forest Service, said the decision "dispels the argument that the national forests must be managed for economic gain, public or private."

Reprinted with permission from *High Country News*, May 9, 1988.

Wilderness Trivia Answer:

-from page 2-

Sequoia-Kings Canyon, and Golden Trout wilderness areas.

Las Vegas: Belly-Buttons, Bright Lights, and a Wilderness Conference?

By Mary Scoonover

The Las Vegas Hilton is an appropriate setting for a "National Wilderness Conference," held June 2 and 3, 1988.

The first-of-a-kind event is sponsored by such avid wilderness supporters as National Rifle Association, American Mining Congress, United Four Wheel Drive Association, Independent Petroleum Association of America, National Ski Areas Association, International Association of Drilling Contractors, American Motorcycle Association, National Forest Products Association, and more.

The conference is designed to examine the impact of wilderness on America. To that noble end, speakers will address the impact of wilderness on wildlife management and hunting; water rights of cities, agriculture, manufacturing and mining; agriculture and timber; mining and oil and gas production; and camping and off-road vehicle use.

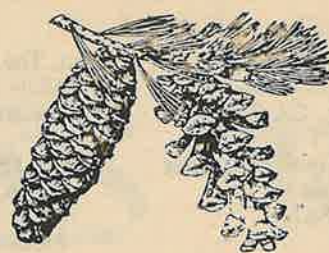
California State Senator H.L. "Bill" Richardson addressed the gathering on Friday to tackle the topic of the wilderness' impact on national economy and national security, and the magnitude of the wilderness issue.

Rounding out the event was Utah Con-

gressman James V. Hansen with a luncheon address. It's a good bet that conference attendees were not disappointed. After all, Hansen is the statesman who introduced H.R. 3727, an act seeking to give any state in which 25 percent or more of the lands are federally owned, the right to disapprove the establishment of wilderness areas in that state. Perhaps Congressman Hansen will also explain why his bill has not moved from the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee.

If imitation is truly the highest form of flattery, environmentalists should feel a warm glow. In an article for the May 2 *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, former Nevada Congressman Jim Santini noted that the conference "is an effort, in part, to emulate the highly successful organizational efforts of the national environmental groups." Santini goes on to conclude that "the land users are tearing at least one page out of the preservationists action book."

Mary Scoonover is a former intern with the CWC who is an attorney for a state water agency in Sacramento.



Bighorn

continued from page 4

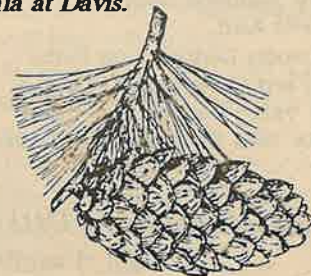
there," Hathaway said; consequently, no release will be attempted.

Meanwhile, the DFG will pursue other sites. But the big Baxter herd, the usual source of translocated sheep, is unavailable for four or five years. "Dry weather the last two years has resulted in poor lamb recruitment," says Bleich. "We are down to 180 animals now and that's as low as we want to go." The Great Western Divide in Sequoia National Park and Mount Tom and Taboose Creek in the Inyo National Forest are sites inhabited historically by sheep that are being considered by the DFG.

Bleich says the DFG wants to reintroduce bighorn in the Modoc NF and Lava Beds NM ranges, but it would require some major revisions in the land use policy. The Forest Service resists adhering to the required multiple-use ethic to manage the lands for a variety of uses, and they continue to grant grazing leases on land occupied by wild sheep or favorable for an introduced herd.

"The whole multiple-use concept is entrenched in land management in both the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management," said Bleich. "But it is not a legitimate strategy with domestic and mountain sheep."

Joe Bogaard is an intern with the CWC who is studying zoology at the University of California at Davis.



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California Wilderness Coalition



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.

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The *Record* welcomes letters-to-the-editor, articles, black & white photos, drawings, book reviews, poetry, etc. on California wilderness and related subjects. We reserve the right to edit all work. Please address all correspondence to: California Wilderness Coalition, 2655 Portage Bay East, Suite 5, Davis, California 95616, (916) 758-0380.

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CALENDAR

June 7 Endangered Species Act Action Day; contact the National Audubon Society.

June 11 *Voices From Around the World: Pursuing Sustainable Water Development Solutions*, conference sponsored by International Rivers Network; UC Berkeley Campus, 2000 Life Sciences Building, 8:30am-5pm. For more information call the I.R.N. (415) 788-3666.

June 13 DEADLINE for comments on the Sherwin Bowl Ski Area Draft EIS. Send to: Attn. Recreation, USDA Forest Service, Inyo National Forest, 873 N. Main St., Bishop, CA 93514.

June 24 DEADLINE for the "scoping phase" for public comments on the Klamath National Forest's Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Land and Resource Management Plan. Send your ideas to: Jim Anderson, Klamath National Forest, 1312 Fairlane, Yreka, CA 96097.

July 9 Comments due on the Forest Service's interim rules for appeals that relate to "catastrophic events," like fire salvage timber sales. See article on page 3.

July 12 Comments due on proposed Forest Service appeal regulations. See article on page 2.

July 18 Comments due on the South Fork Fire Recovery/Salvage Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement. See article on page 3.

July 25 *Conservation of Diversity in Forest Ecosystems: A Symposium*; sponsored by the U.S. Forest Service; University of California, Davis. Call Connie Millar, (415) 486-3133 or Larry Riggs, (415) 548-3131 for more information.

California Wilderness Coalition
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