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# WILDERNESS RECORD

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CALIFORNIA WILDERNESS COALITION

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July, 1992



## California gains five new wilderness areas

By Lucy Rosenau

In the rugged coastal mountains between Monterey and Ventura are a pair of condors, wild rivers, pockets of rare plants, and, since June 19, five new wilderness areas. On that day President Bush signed the Condor Range and Rivers Act, adding 402,000 wild acres to the National Wilderness Preservation System and pleasing environmentalists who have sought wilderness designation for these roadless lands since 1984, when the California Wilderness Act passed without protection for most of the Los Padres National Forest (NF).

Enactment of the legislation means that almost half of the Los Padres NF now is protected as wilderness. According to Sally Reid, Chair of the Sierra Club's Los Padres NF Task Force, "Half the forest will be safe from ORVs [off-road vehicles] and continued oil development. The rivers will be protected from the impacts of recreational mining. The Los Padres is now one of the best-protected forests in the country."

In addition to the five wilderness areas—Chumash, Garcia, Matilija, Sespe, and Silver Peak—the bill designated three Wild & Scenic Rivers (W&SRs). Five other rivers (see chart below) were granted W&SR "study" status, which means that the Forest Service will evaluate their potential for inclusion in the W&SR system. The study

Condor Range and Rivers Act of 1992

| WILDERNESS           | ACRES          | W&S RIVERS      | MILES |
|----------------------|----------------|-----------------|-------|
| Sespe                | 220,000        | Sespe           | 31.5  |
| Chumash              | 38,000         | Sisquoc         | 33    |
| Matilija             | 30,000         | Big Sur         | 19.5  |
| Garcia               | 14,000         | Sespe* (*study) | 10.5  |
| Silver Peak          | 14,000         | Piru*           | 49    |
| San Rafael additions | 48,000         | Matilija*       | 16    |
| Ventana additions    | 38,000         | Little Sur*     | 23    |
| <b>TOTAL</b>         | <b>402,000</b> | Lopez*          | 11    |

rivers will benefit from interim protection until Congress determines their eventual disposition. Still unprotected are hundreds of thousands of acres of roadless lands and portions of Sespe Creek. Steve Evans, Conservation Director of Friends of the River, was ambivalent: "Although we are disappointed that all 55 miles of Sespe Creek are not

*continued on page 4*

Middle Fork of Matilija Creek, Matilija Wilderness  
Photo by Timothy Teague, courtesy of Keep the Sespe Wild

## Despite legal victories, Mono Lake still up a creek

By Bob Schlichting

The Mono Lake Committee often is asked, "How is Mono Lake doing?" Legally, we seem to be winning. Physically, the lake is losing. Despite all our court victories, conditions and water levels continue to decline.

Legally, we are still under a preliminary injunction—a temporary ruling issued in 1991—that says the lake should be no lower than 6,377 feet above sea level. After listening to testimony over a six-month period, El Dorado

County Superior Court Judge Terrence M. Finney decided Mono Lake needed to be at least that full to protect its fragile ecosystem. To this end, all diversions were halted temporarily.

Today, the lake level sits at approximately 6,374.5 feet—two-and-a-half feet below the court-ordered minimum.

During last year's involved hearing, attorneys for the city of Los Angeles argued that the city's Department of

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# COALITION PAGE

## MONTHLY REPORT

BY JIM EATON

By now, most of you should have received a fund appeal signed by our new President, Mary Scoonover. If you have not already responded, please do. We don't ask for money often, and our special appeals really are crucial to our operation. Like other organizations, the recession has caused our already lean budget to become leaner.

Some projects are a pain from start to finish. This fund appeal was one of them. Perfectionist Mary spent a lot of time refining her message about the new course the Coalition is charting. The graphics we wanted to use just didn't work out. While buying supplies, I locked the keys in my truck. The hard drive on my computer went to byte heaven. And then there were the envelopes.

Some years past a member complained about the waste in mailing our fund appeal first class (this was when the non-profit rate really was cheap). We listened, and we discovered the Postal Service had very attractive stamped envelopes available. We opted for the window envelopes because they saved us considerable time with the mailing and members were more likely to note changes of address on the return form. But others complained about the plastic in the windows.

As a result, we have taken to using envelopes without a window, addressing the envelope, and trying to stuff it with the appropriate return form. So it was great to learn that on Earth Day the Postal Service began mending its ways by using recycled paper and soy-based inks for its envelopes. Delighted to see the Postal Service turn green, I ordered several boxes of their newest window envelopes.

Only I forgot to ask about the windows. I just assumed that, with all the environmental hype, the windows either would be glassine or nothing at all. I was wrong.

We will let the Postal Service know they have a little further to go before they merit the environmentally-correct stamp of approval.

By the way, you might want to check out some of the stamps and envelopes available. A "protect the environment" stamped envelope with an endangered Hawaiian plant was issued on Earth Day (I have yet to see one in the mail), there is a booklet with hummingbirds, and this month a sheet of 50 different wildflowers will be available. Coming this fall is a booklet of wild animals. The stamp

collector in me will appreciate seeing lots of fund appeal returns franked with these colorful stamps.

And lest you think we are a large corporation hiring a mailing house to send out our publications, let me assure you that's not the case. We have monthly mailing parties to send out this newsletter, and our fund appeals and renewals are done in-house.

The fund appeal took so long to get together that it ran into travel and vacation schedules. Nancy, Lucy, and I worked through the weekend to get it out. Nancy and I began stuffing on a Saturday evening, watching the Discovery channel and learning lots about Komodo dragons and carnivorous, predatory caterpillars in Hawaii. The following evening was fun watching highlights of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, seeing friends on television as I stuffed their envelopes. I saw gentle giant Mark Dubois, the friend of the river now working on global issues, and I watched Randy Hayes of the Rainforest Action Network get arrested for protesting our country's failure to join the rest of the world in protecting our environment. As Randy was dragged away, his "Boxer" button showed the world his political preference.

There are lots of tasks involved in putting out such a mailing: copying, cutting, folding, collating, stuffing, sealing, and sorting. I took on the job of stuffing every envelope we mailed, thereby looking over the Coalition's membership in a very thorough way. I was pleased to see a lot of names of folks I know or at least whose names I recognize as longtime CWC members. I also was pleasantly surprised to see many new names from around the state.

If you read Mary's letter, you know we are planning to return to basics by doing much more field organizing to train activists. My hope is that during the coming year I will see many of you in person at a meeting or workshop.

Finally, congratulations to all who worked for the wilderness and rivers in the Los Padres National Forest. It has been eight years since we've seen a large wilderness bill pass. Although there were innumerable activists working on this legislation, three leaders stand out: Alasdair Coyne and Steve Evans who worked to save the rivers and Sally Reid for our 400,000+ acres of new wilderness. Thank you!

## Wilderness primer, part XIV

## Wilderness myths

• Once land is designated wilderness, it is protected forever.

Fact: The president can authorize dam construction in established wilderness areas, although not on Wild & Scenic Rivers. No president has exercised this authority since the 1964 passage of the Wilderness Act. Congress, however, can and does change wilderness boundaries, removing lands from wilderness protection. In 1990, Congress changed the boundary of California's Ventana Wilderness to accommodate a proposed extension to a dam. Although the dam site was outside the existing wilderness, the enlarged reservoir would have encroached on the wilderness. The boundary change resulted in a net wilderness gain of 117 acres.

• Hunting is not allowed in wilderness.

Fact: Although hunting usually is prohibited in wilderness areas managed by the National Park Service, both hunting and recreational shooting are allowed in Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management wilderness areas.

• Consumptive uses (e.g. grazing) specifically mentioned in the Wilderness Act may not be curtailed.

Fact: Managers may curtail any activity (except on patented lands that are private property) which leads to resource damage.

• If an agency recommends wilderness designation for a particular area, the agency will manage the area as wilderness until Congress acts.

Fact: Agencies routinely allow users of motorized vehicles and mountain bikes access to proposed wilderness areas.

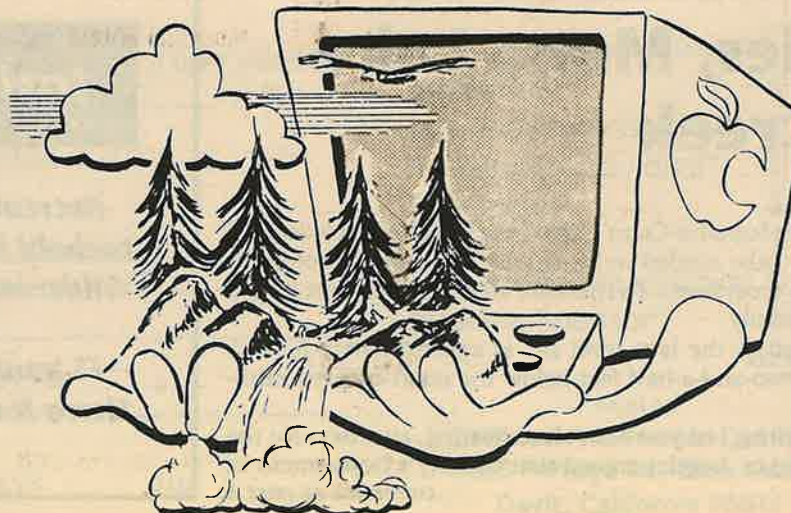
• Too much wilderness has been set aside already.

Fact: Many of California's ecosystems are unrepresented in the National Wilderness Preservation System, and many of the existing wilderness areas are relatively small "islands" that cannot by themselves preserve biodiversity.

• Wildfires may not be suppressed in wilderness areas.

Fact: The Wilderness Act does not specify what measures may be used to control fires, insects, and disease. When people are in jeopardy, however, managers may use any means necessary to protect human lives.

This graphic, originally created by Pat Rigley, appeared on the cover of a successful Apple grant application masterminded by CWC Vice-President Steve Evans. This summer, CWC and a number of our member groups each will receive a Macintosh LC computer.



### Uncle Jim's Wilderness Trivia Quiz Question:

What California wilderness has had its boundary altered four times by Congress?

Answer on page 7.



## BLM wilderness study areas

### BLM's 39 percent wilderness solution

By Jim Eaton

The Modoc Plateau is known for its mountains of lava and broad valleys that once were inland seas. Because volcanic soils are porous, streams and rivers are uncommon here. That scarcity makes the Tunnison Mountain Wilderness Study Area (WSA) special.

Flowing through the southern portion of the WSA is Willow Creek, a perennial stream that is the area's outstanding scenic feature. The creek begins in a shallow, wooded basin and gradually cuts deeper into the lava, forming a canyon one to two hundred feet deep. The stream supports a brown trout fishery as well as other aquatic life. Native Americans lived along its banks and left their mark in numerous archaeological sites.

In the center of the WSA is Tunnison Mountain, four-and-a-half miles long and separated by Long Canyon from the similar Horse Lake Mountain to the north. Both mountains are relatively narrow, and almost continuous chains of small peaks comprise their crests. Rising to 6,400 feet in elevation, the ridges are characterized by a mix of open slopes, mountain mahogany thickets, and meadows.

Other vegetation in the WSA includes ponderosa and Jeffrey pine, juniper, willows, sagebrush, bunch and annual grasses, and sedges.

The wildlife here are Great Basin species: pronghorn, deer, coyote, rabbit, bald and golden eagles, sage grouse, and quail. Hunting accounts for most of the human use of the area.

The 20,437-acre WSA is located seven miles northeast of Susanville. It was studied for its wilderness potential by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in the early 1980s.

Assisting the BLM was a technical review team of local citizens representing livestock operators, mining interests, off-road vehicle (ORV) users, hunters, cultural experts, wild horse advocates, and one wilderness supporter. The team recommended a 7,889-acre wilderness, 39 percent of the WSA. The BLM adopted this recommendation.

The northern third of the WSA (see map) was eliminated from wilderness consideration due to a primitive road up Long Canyon and several private parcels. Apparently no thought was given to closing this dirt route that nearly bisects the WSA. There are no roads to the small private holdings at present, but the BLM worries that owners may want to develop the parcels.

The southern portion of the WSA was not recommended for wilderness primarily because it has been identified as a potential site for a trans-Sierra powerline corridor. No construction is planned, but the agency feels the option for towers and wires should remain available.

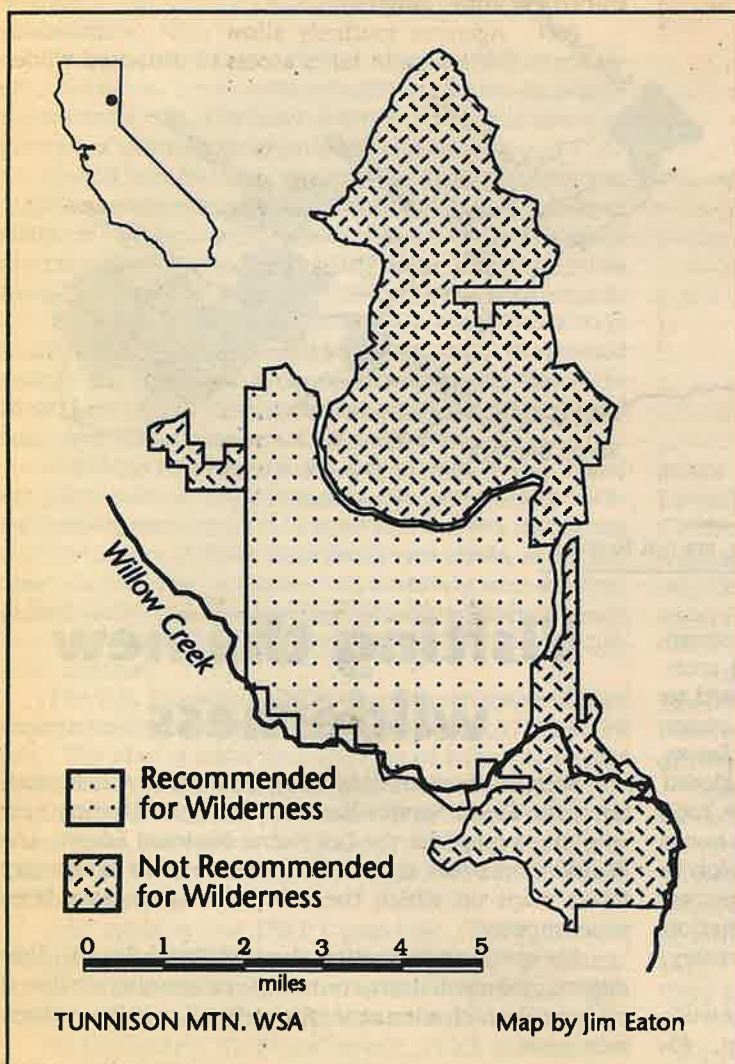
Ironically, most of the WSA's "most distinctive physical feature," Willow Creek, lies in this section. But the area also is favored by ORV users, a use which the BLM says it cannot control. The BLM justifies ceding this wild land to ORV enthusiasts and potential powerline construction by saying these uses are more important than protection of an area "of generally nondescript wilderness qualities."

The BLM does admit that the entire area is manageable as wilderness but complains that preserving the wilderness qualities of the non-recommended lands "would require more effort."

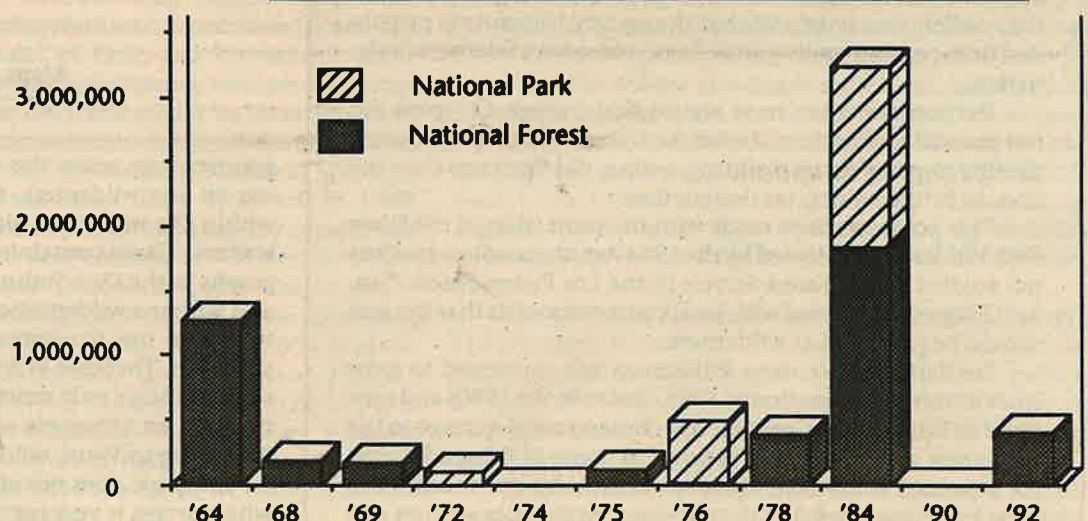
Environmentalists are not sympathetic to the BLM's complaint. The California Wilderness Coalition and others are working to convince Congress that the entire Tunnison Mountain WSA is deserving of wilderness designation.



Willow Creek in Tunnison Mountain WSA Photo by Jeff Fontana, BLM



#### WILDERNESS ACRES DESIGNATED IN CALIFORNIA



Sources: The Wilderness Society, U. S. Forest Service, CWC. Acreage figures for 1974 and 1990 are too small to register. No wilderness legislation passed in years not charted. Graph by Jim Eaton



## Wilderness legislation

# Los Padres wilderness package adopted

continued from page 1

protected, we think the 31 miles of the Sespe along with the Sisquoc and Big Sur represent important additions to the W&SR system." He added, "We'll get another chance in the Congressionally-mandated studies."

Prospects for the roadless areas left unprotected and hence officially deemed "released" are uncertain. According to Erwin Ward, Recreation Planning Officer for the Los Padres NF, the released roadless areas will be available for multiple use "in some form." Wilderness status for these areas can be addressed in the next forest-wide planning cycle, which is not due for ten years.

Prospects for released roadless areas everywhere grew a little brighter with last month's enactment of the Condor Range and Rivers Act because one of the new wilderness areas, the Silver Peak Wilderness, was itself a released roadless area after it failed to win protection under the 1984 California Wilderness Act. Silver Peak is believed to be the first released roadless area in the country later to be accorded wilderness status (see sidebar).

While the fate of released roadless areas remains unknown, changes for the newly designated wilderness areas are certain. One of the Forest Service's first tasks, Ward said, will be posting the areas as closed to mountain bikes and ORVs, educating their users about the new restrictions, and erecting barriers as necessary. The legislation left open one ORV corridor, the Toad Springs Trail through the Chumash Wilderness, until an alternate route outside the wilderness can be developed. Only then will

the trail revert to wilderness.

The windfall of five new wilderness areas and large additions to the existing San Rafael and Ventana wildernesses (see map) has the Los Padres NF ready to hire a new planner. Management plans must be developed (or updated for San Rafael and Ventana), and amendments to the forest plan are anticipated. The Limits of Acceptable Change method of wilderness management will be used.

Among the management issues to be addressed are grazing and the increase in visitors that wilderness designation may engender. Cattle grazing allotments persist in some of the new wilderness areas, and grazing will continue there unless resource damage indicates the need for change.

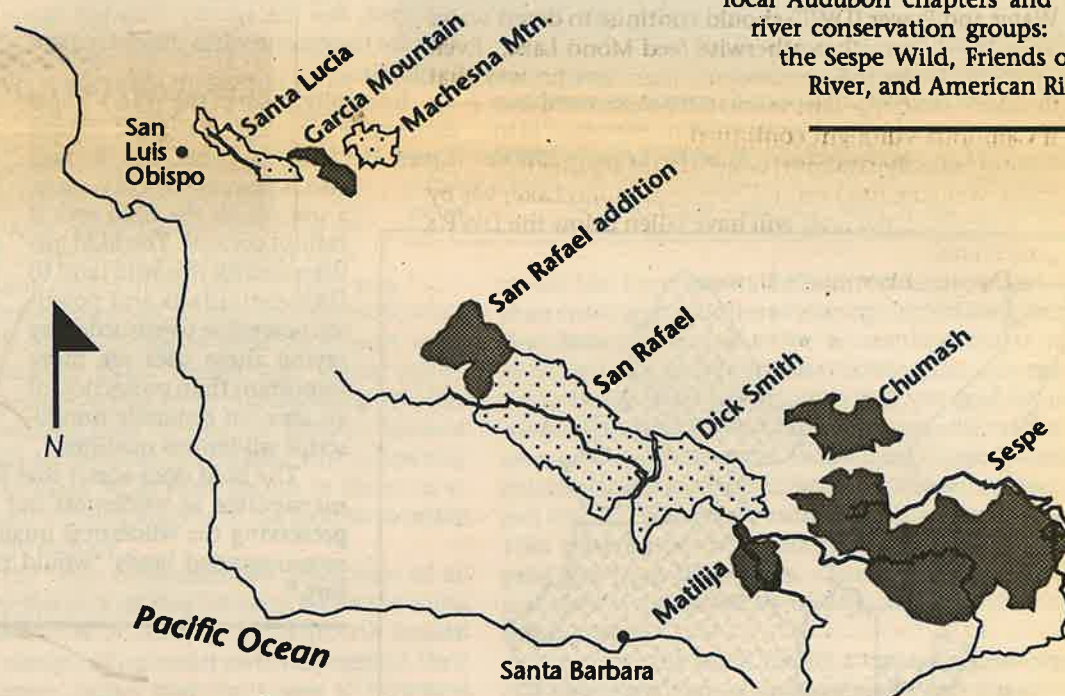
Although decisions about the need for quotas or permits will not be made until forest

bighorn was killed off by diseases borne by domestic sheep, wildlife officials have successfully re-established the species in the Sespe Hot Springs area, where domestic sheep are absent. Historically, Sespe Creek hosted two species that now are rare, the coastal steelhead and the arroyo toad. Low water in the creek this year has left open the question of whether the steelhead, considered at high risk of extinction by the American Fisheries Society, still survives in the Sespe. The arroyo toad is the subject of a petition for listing as a threatened or endangered species by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

An inventory of the forest's botanical resources is underway. (The Los Padres NF recently hired its first botanist.) After the inventory is completed, management plans will be developed. Known plants of special interest include Santa Lucia fir in the Ventana Wilderness and a grove of pinyon pine, designated a Research Natural Area, in the Chumash Wilderness.

For this wealth of wilderness, Reid credits "the Chumash Indians, who have supported wilderness all the way, and the condors, who supported us unknowingly."

Reid also singled out Senator Alan Cranston, without whom the wilderness effort "never would have gotten off the ground." Joining the Sierra Club in its wilderness campaign were local Audubon chapters and three river conservation groups: Keep the Sespe Wild, Friends of the River, and American Rivers.



Maps, by Jim Eaton, are not to scale.

## Never say never

There are two significant elements in the Condor Range and Rivers Act that could have ramifications throughout the country. First is the wilderness designation of a "released" roadless area, and second is the ever-expanding Ventana Wilderness.

When Congress passed the California Wilderness Act in 1984, it "released for multiple uses other than wilderness" 241 roadless areas totaling more than three million acres. Predictably, the U.S. Forest Service has argued that Congress "settled" the roadless area issue and that the agency therefore is prohibited from recommending any released area for wilderness designation.

Environmentalists have argued that though Congress did not mandate wilderness studies for these released areas during the first round of forest planning, neither did Congress close the door to future wilderness designation.

This point has been made with the protection of the Silver Peak Wilderness. Released by the 1984 Act, the roadless area was not studied by the Forest Service in the Los Padres Forest Plan. Yet Congress has agreed with local conservationists that the area should be protected as wilderness.

Similarly, the Ventana Wilderness has continued to grow since its initial designation in 1969. Twice in the 1980s and now twice in this decade, Congress has chosen to add acreage to the wilderness area. Though it is true that some of these additions are separated from the original wilderness by dirt roads, Congress has recognized that the various components are part of a large wilderness complex.

—Jim Eaton

planners can assess the impacts of human use on the wilderness, some special areas within the wilderness already are closed to visitors. Caves containing Chumash pictographs in the Dick Smith, San Rafael, Sespe, and Ventana wildernesses have been closed to public use to protect the fragile rock paintings. The Sespe Wilderness also is home to the nation's only sanctuary for California condors, an extremely endangered species. According to Ward, wilderness designation for the Sespe does not affect the sanctuary, where access is very restricted.

Visitors to the Sespe can see other wildlife, including Nelson bighorn sheep. Although the indigenous population of Nelson

## Visiting the new wilderness

Because of uncertainty about final wilderness boundaries, the Forest Service has not yet begun drafting new wilderness maps for the Los Padres National Forest. Los Padres employees soon will have available temporary forest maps on which the new boundaries have been superimposed.

For specific information about trails, trailheads, conditions, and restrictions, contact the ranger districts (listed on page 6) which administer the various Los Padres wilderness areas.

continued on page 6



## Wilderness management

# Recreational mining regs eyed for Sheep Mtn. Wilderness

By Peter Ser

A proposal by the Angeles National Forest (NF) to recognize recreational mining as a legitimate activity along the East Fork of the San Gabriel River in the Sheep Mountain Wilderness has led environmentalists to question what repercussions—from localized resource damage to statewide precedent—such a decision might have. The Angeles NF currently is revising draft guidelines in hopes of finalizing a set of standards and regulations for recreational mining along the East Fork. Comments on the proposed guidelines are due September 15.

The East Fork of the San Gabriel, which flows through the southwestern portion of the Sheep Mountain Wilderness, was in the 1800s the site of a short, frenzied gold rush and of Eldoradoville, the only gold-rush town in the San Gabriels. Since then, only a small amount of gold has yielded to the "recreational" miners who have worked the

East Fork ever since Eldoradoville washed away in a catastrophic flood. Today, as higher gold prices and the development of mechanized and portable mining equipment have increased the popularity of recreational mining, environmentalists and forest officials have begun to worry about the potential for damage to the East Fork watershed and its wildlife.

The guidelines being developed by the Angeles NF would allow only gold panning within the wilderness; dredging and sluicing, as well as panning, would be permitted outside the wilderness boundary. That is a distinction that works only as well as the boundary is marked.

But the wilderness boundary beside the East Fork is not well marked, as forest officials know all too well. Vandalism and theft of signs have been a continuing problem, and the Mount Baldy Ranger District which

manages the East Fork watershed hopes to install permanent boundary markers in the future.

Environmentalists fear that recreational mining along the East Fork may hurt the local wildlife and disturb sensitive streambeds. According to the forest biologist, no adverse effects on the fishery are known to have resulted from recreational mining. Rather, he asserts, dredging along the river may benefit fish by creating the deep, cool pools advantageous to breeding.

In response to these and other issues, the Angeles NF has sought public input on its draft Guide for Recreational Mining. At scoping meetings, recreational miners have outnumbered environmentalists. Comments on the proposed guidelines will be accepted until September 15. Send to: Supervisor Mike Rogers, Angeles NF, 701 N. Santa Anita Ave., Arcadia, CA 91006.

Peter Ser is a CWC intern.

## Mono Lake

continued from page 1

Water and Power (DWP) should continue to divert water from the streams that otherwise feed Mono Lake. Even with diversions, they contended, there was no way that the elevation of the lake would fall below 6,374 feet, even if California's drought continued.

Fortunately, the court rejected that argument. All the water available has been spilling into Mono Lake; yet by summer's end, the level will have fallen below the DWP's projections.

Despite this winter's above average rainfall in southern California, the six-year drought continues to plague the eastern Sierra. The Mono Basin received only about 70 percent of normal precipitation this season.

Courts have no control over the shortage of moisture. But the reason this drought is having such a devastating effect on Mono Lake is because of the DWP's excessive diversions in the past. Mono Lake had been allowed to fall dangerously low even before California's drought began.

That is why the Mono Lake Committee has always fought for a buffer—an extra margin of water that would protect the lake (and its inhabitants) in dry times like these. Lake levels will fluctuate naturally but never should fall below that critical 6,377-foot elevation.

If today's level were 6,386 feet instead of 6,374 feet, natural conditions could cause Mono Lake to drop without placing the ecosystem in jeopardy. Instead, increasing salinity now is approaching dangerous levels, and once again, islands that are critical bird nesting sites are connected to the mainland and land-based predators. If Mono Lake's level continues to drop, the entire ecosystem may soon collapse.

The U. S. Forest Service has issued a management plan recommending a lake level that ranges from 6,377 to 6,390 feet. The plan is based on a number of scientific studies that advocate such a range to protect Mono Lake.

The nine-foot buffer, to 6,386 feet, called for by the Mono Lake Committee is consistent with Forest Service recommendations. In fact, the Committee's position is a bit conservative.

And what is the DWP's position? DWP General Manager and Chief Engineer Daniel Waters contends that no buffer is needed and that the lake level is fine right where it is, three feet below the court-set minimum.

Unfortunately, the Forest Service, which manages the

Mono Basin Scenic Area, can only suggest a lake level; Forest Service recommendations have no force in law. The California Department of Parks and Recreation, which manages the Mono Lake Tufa Reserve, also has no control over the DWP. The DWP still would be diverting water today if not for the court decisions won by the Mono Lake Committee and its ally, the National Audubon Society.

Courts first halted Mono Basin diversions in 1989. The DWP was ordered to restore four long-dry streams and fisheries to pre-diversion conditions. Water now runs down those creeks and, incidentally, into Mono Lake.

Some stream restoration work has been completed successfully. But the DWP seems determined to drag out the process as long as possible. The DWP has admitted to spending over \$12 million already in its court battles over Mono Basin water, and still litigation continues. It is a war of attrition that the DWP is fighting; as long as Mono Lake's supporters perceive the battle as being won, the DWP's tactics can succeed.

We cannot let up. Still ahead of us is an expensive, time-consuming set of administrative hearings before the

State Water Resources Control Board, which will balance the needs of Mono Lake and its streams against the water needs of Los Angeles. Given the appeals which almost certainly will follow the Board's decision (expected in 1993), the process could last until the end of the decade.

Meanwhile, the DWP is as determined as ever to hold onto Mono Lake's water. For two years, DWP bureaucrats have turned their backs on millions of dollars made available by the state legislature to finance replacement water supplies for Los Angeles rather than agree to protect the lake.

The question remains: "How is Mono Lake doing?" The answer is: "Not well." The struggle to protect the lake always has depended on grassroots support; we cannot afford to become complacent now. Despite our victories, very little seems to have changed. The battle for Mono Lake's survival is far from won.

Letters on behalf of Mono Lake may be sent to Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley, 200 N. Spring St., Los Angeles, CA 90012. Reprinted from the Summer 1992 issue of the Mono Lake Newsletter, a publication of the Mono Lake Committee.



Mono Lake remains in trouble despite legal victories.

Photo by Dave Brown



## Wilderness news

# FS's own scientists want end to Sierra clearcutting

By David Edelson and Sami Yassa

A team of scientists has released a landmark report on the California spotted owl which fundamentally alters the debate regarding forest management in the Sierra. If the report's recommendations are adopted by the Forest Service later this year, clearcutting would be banned throughout the Sierra Nevada.

The California spotted owl, a subspecies closely related to the northern spotted owl, inhabits old-growth forests in the Sierra Nevada. The Forest Service's management strategy for the owl has been to establish a network of 1,000-acre "spotted owl habitat areas" (SOHAs) located six to twelve miles apart; each SOHA was designed to provide habitat for a single pair of owls. But recent studies on the owl have shown that owl pairs actually utilize far more than 1,000 acres of habitat—anywhere from 3,000 to 10,000 acres per pair. In addition, the 1990 report of the Thomas Committee on the northern spotted owl described the SOHA strategy as a "prescription for extinction" of the spotted owl and recommended protection of large blocks of old growth as "habitat conservation areas" (HCAs) that would support 20 pairs of spotted owls, rather than single pairs.

Based on this research, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and other environmental groups filed a series of appeals and lawsuits challenging timber sales and forest plans for failing to protect the California spotted owl. Under threat of a lawsuit challenging its overall regional management of the owl, the Forest Service agreed to convene a panel of government scientists, the California Spotted Owl Technical Assessment Team, to study current management and recommend necessary changes. In addition, the agency established a "cumulative effects analysis" process for reviewing individual timber sales to ensure that the owl would be protected while a new management strategy is developed. The process already has resulted in major reductions in logging throughout the Sierra.

**Logging would be practiced only to the extent and in a manner that it does not impair ecological processes or environmental assets.**

The owl technical team, headed by Forest Service researcher Jared Verner, released its report on May 8. The two-inch-thick report strongly criticizes current Forest Service management and recommends sweeping changes in logging practices throughout the Sierra. Among the report's major conclusions and recommendations are:

- The California spotted owl, like the threatened northern owl, nests and roosts predominantly in very large, old trees. The number and distribution of these large trees "will decline sharply over most of the Sierra Nevada in the next few decades" if existing forest plans are implemented. Under current plans, 72 percent of proposed logging will be by clearcutting and other even-aged methods—a major departure from the selection methods which

have been used historically.

- The SOHA strategy "is not a workable strategy to assure long-term maintenance of spotted owls." Creating isolated "islands" of old growth in a "sea" of clearcuts and younger trees is not a viable conservation strategy. A "successful long-term strategy for spotted owls in the Sierra Nevada must result in the clustering of pairs such that many occur as neighbors with overlapping home ranges in the same general area."

- The report recommends interim management while further research is carried out to determine more accurately owl population levels, trends, and habitat needs. Interim management would entail maintaining all existing SOHAs, protecting from logging 300 acres of "the best possible" habitat surrounding every nest site, protecting all live trees and snags 30 or more inches in diameter at breast height, and limiting logging in old growth to retain 40 percent of the canopy.

Although the team recommended protection of all large trees in the Sierra, it stopped short of recommending complete protection of all remaining old-growth forests. The strategy is designed to protect owls throughout their current distribution, rather than limit owls to separated blocks of habitat such as HCAs. Further research will determine whether an HCA strategy is desirable for the California owl.

In a tantalizing suggestion deep in Chapter 13, the team offered a new vision for managing the Sierra: "We



Clearcuts will be banned throughout the Sierra if the Forest Service adopts the recommendations of its scientific advisory panel. Pictured is the Tuolumne River in the Stanislaus NF.

would like to propose a different forest paradigm. Rather than striving to produce a fully regulated forest, we believe that foresters should strive to manage forests so as to maintain the processes that characterize natural forest ecosystems. Toward this objective, the goal of management activities is to maintain, protect, and, where necessary, create natural forest structures. Logging [would be] practiced only to the extent and in a manner that it does not impair ecological processes or environmental assets. This system does not guarantee an even flow of wood products from the forests. The efficacy of silvicultural practices is evaluated by biological rather than market-based criteria."

In sum, the team issued a sweeping indictment of current Forest Service management and recommended major improvements in logging practices throughout the Sierra. The key issue for the future will be whether and to what extent the agency decides to implement these recommendations. That decision is expected in September.

David Edelson and Sami Yassa work for the NRDC.

## New wilderness

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|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| Matilija, Sespe     | Ojai Ranger District<br>1190 E. Ojai Ave.<br>Ojai, CA 93023<br>(805) 646-4348                     |
| Garcia, San Rafael  | Santa Lucia Ranger District<br>1616 N. Carlotti Dr.<br>Santa Maria, CA 93454<br>(805) 925-9538    |
| Chumash             | Mt. Pinos Ranger District<br>Star Route, Box 400<br>Frazier Park, CA 93255<br>(805) 245-3731/3462 |
| Silver Pk., Ventana | Monterey Ranger District<br>406 S. Mildred<br>King City, CA 93930<br>(408) 385-5434               |

## Tools for activists

# LAC made easy as ABC

If the much heralded "Limits of Acceptable Change" (LAC) process has not yet come to your favorite wilderness area, chances are it soon will. The Forest Service's preferred method of wilderness management, LAC is both complicated and controversial.

A government publication is available that explains the rationale for the adoption of LAC and illustrates the nine-step LAC method. A second section of the 37-page

booklet provides an extended case history showing how LAC might be applied to the "Imagination Peaks Wilderness."

For a copy of the booklet, "The Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) System for Wilderness Planning," write to the USDA Forest Service, Intermountain Forest and Range Experiment Station, Ogden, UT 84401 and request General Technical Report INT-176.



## Book review

### Guide to "The Pumiced Land"

#### Exploring the Southern Sierra: East Side

J. C. Jenkins and Ruby Johnson Jenkins, Wilderness Press, Berkeley, 1992, 304 pp., \$15.95.

*Exploring the Southern Sierra* is a revision and update of J. C. Jenkins' *Self-Propelled in the Southern Sierra: The Sierra Crest and Kern Plateau*, first published in 1978. The book provides a trail guide to a large region, much of it designated wilderness, north of Tehachapi Pass Road (Highway 58) and south of Horseshoe Meadows Road.

Included in this area (the northern portion of which is dubbed "The Pumiced Land" by the authors) are the little-used Dome Lands Wilderness, the South Sierra Wilderness, and the large Golden Trout Wilderness. The hikes and bicycle or car tours described pass through arid desert slopes, pinyon-juniper woodlands, pine forests, and lush (or dry) mountain meadows and lead to a number of readily climbed peaks.

An abundance of information makes *Exploring* a good buy: it points out many worthwhile trails you might not

consider otherwise, it provides local history, and it carefully describes reliable sources of water and areas where campsites may be found. All distances (to trail forks, stream crossings, and other landmarks) are meticulously measured and recorded; vague trails and obscure landmarks are noted so that your chances of missing them are reduced.

Having *Exploring* available will add considerably to your enjoyment of a trip in the Southern Sierra and may lead you to some lovely areas you would have missed without the book.

—George M. Clark

#### Wilderness Trivia Quiz Answer:

Ventana Wilderness, designated in 1969, was added to in 1978, 1984, 1990, and 1992.

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#### CWC t-shirts

Robert (L.) models our six-tone anniversary shirt which comes in light blue, yellow, light green, or peach for \$15. The animal design Michael wears is by Bay Area cartoonist Phil Frank; it comes in beige or light gray for \$12. All the shirts are 100 percent double knit cotton. To order, use the form on the back page.



## DATES TO REMEMBER

**July 11** ACTIVISTS MEETING of the California Ancient Forest Alliance in Davis. Call Jim Eaton at (916) 758-0380 for details.

**July 13** COMMENTS DUE on revisions to the Toiyabe NF's off-road vehicle management plan for Hope Valley. If snowmobiles are allowed over Armstrong Pass, the Freel Peak Roadless Area will be at risk. Send to: Guy Pence, District Ranger, Carson Ranger District, USFS, 1536 S. Carson, Carson City, NV 89701.

**July 21, August 4** SCOPING MEETINGS on the development of management plans for the Ansel Adams, Dinkey Lakes, John Muir, and Monarch wildernesses in the Inyo, Sequoia, and Sierra national forests. The July meeting will run from 7:00-9:00 p.m. at the Clovis Memorial Building, 453 Hugues Ave., Clovis; the August meeting, also 7:00-9:00 p.m., will be at the Catholic Church Parish Hall, 849 Home St., Bishop.

**August 7-9** SIERRA NOW CONFERENCE, an environmentalist offshoot of the Sierra Summit, is open to all interested individuals. For information about the Sacramento conference, contact Wiltshire & Assoc., 116 New Montgomery St., #220, San Francisco, CA 94105; (800) 748-6647.

**September 15** COMMENTS DUE on recreational mining guidelines proposed for the East Fork of the San Gabriel River in the Sheep Mountain Wilderness. Send to: Supervisor Mike Rogers, Angeles National Forest, 710 N. Santa Anita Ave., Arcadia, CA 91006. (See article on page 5.)



**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 *Wilderness Record* is the monthly publication of the California Wilderness Coalition. Articles may be reprinted; credit would be appreciated. Subscription is free with membership.

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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#### Editor

Lucy Rosenau

#### Contributors

George M. Clark  
Jim Eaton  
David Edelson  
Bob Schlichting  
Peter Ser  
Sami Yassa

#### Photos & Graphics

Dave Brown  
Jim Eaton  
Jeff Fontana, BLM  
Timothy Teague

#### Advisors

W. Cohen  
J. Eaton



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*"I think our people are growing more and more to understand that in reference to the forests and the wild creatures of the wilderness our aim should be not to destroy them simply for the selfish pleasure of one generation, but to keep them for our children and our children's children."*

—President Theodore Roosevelt, 1903

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