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Cattle in Kennedy Canyon north of Yosemite Wilderness Photo by Tim Palmer

Republican maneuvers delay desert bill

By Jim Eaton

A wilderness activist once said, "preservation is the art of delay." Republican members of the House of Representatives are proving to be artists themselves. In June they turned the principle around, employing parliamentary tactics to delay preservation of the California desert.

The House version of the California Desert Protection Act, H. R. 518, is a companion to the bill guided through the Senate by Senator Dianne Feinstein. Representatives George Miller (D-Martinez) and Bruce Vento (D-MN) are working closely with the bill's sponsor, Rep. Rick Lehman (D-Fresno), to move the legislation through the House.

Opponents to the desert bill, led by Rep. Jerry Lewis (R-Redlands), have dragged out the process by arguing for hours over minor issues and forcing recorded roll call votes for amendments that pass unanimously.

"The House already has debated the desert bill for eight and a half hours," said a frustrated Norbert Riedy, senior policy analyst for the Wilderness Society. "They only took ten hours to pass a trillion-dollar budget."

So far the House has spent three days just debating the rules governing debate on the issue and a few of the 45 proposed amendments to the desert bill.

Among the amendments already considered was one by Rep. Richard Pombo (R-Tracy) which would have opened 1,000 miles of off-road vehicle routes in wilderness areas. That proposal was defeated by a close vote.

A weakening amendment that did pass, however, allows the California Department of Fish and Game to use vehicles in wilderness whenever the agency deems it necessary. An alternative proposed by Rep. Vento to substitute standard language about wildlife management (as in the Senate version) lost by four votes. The amendment's proponents gained the sympathy of other House members by showing photographs of a deer drowning in the Coachella Canal and by misstating the difficulties of managing wildlife in wilderness.

Among the most important issues still to be debated are amendments regarding hunting in the Mojave, private lands, and grazing.

Although the House bill restores much of the public and private land around Lanfair Valley to the proposed Mojave National Park, the issue of hunting remains to be resolved. Having given up their efforts to keep the east Mojave under the stewardship of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), park opponents now are seeking

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Foraging ahead

There's a lot to chew on in Clinton's grazing reform plan

By Ryan Henson

Despite a century or more of agrarian mythology to the contrary, livestock grazing on western public lands is anything but romantic or good for the land. More pervasive on U. S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands than mining, logging, or off-road vehicle use, livestock grazing has degraded more habitat than all of these activities combined. According to the National Wildlife Federation, grazing has played a "significant role" in the decline of 76 species either listed or proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act. The California Native Plant Society estimates that nearly 100 of the state's rare and endangered plant species are threatened by grazing.

Though conditions on public rangelands have improved significantly since the turn of the century, serious problems remain. The task of reforming grazing practices on public lands appears deceptively simple considering that the primary opponents of reform, federal grazing permittees, comprise only 6 percent of all cattle ranchers and 12 percent of all sheepherders in the west. Together, these permittees raise a mere 12 percent of all livestock brought to market in the 16 contiguous western states.

Considering their insignificance to the western economy, the over 25,000 federal permittees are a disproportionately powerful political force with innumerable allies and a decided interest in maintaining the status quo. Time and again, reform proposals have been soundly defeated by this small yet vociferous constituency. Already this Congress, several attempts by the Department of the Interior to reform grazing practices and increase grazing fees were quashed in the U. S. Senate.

In the face of this opposition, the BLM and Forest Service recently unveiled "Rangeland Reform '94," the latest attempt to change the way livestock grazing is

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Coalition news

Monthly Report

The last few weeks have been a study in contrasts. First was the Wildlands Project weekend at Clair Tappaan Lodge at Donner Pass where we sketched out a grand vision for restoring the Great Basin. Then came the ugly reality of the struggle to pass the California Desert Protection Act.

The Wildlands Project lets me loose my imagination and plan a utopian future in which the incredibly diverse flora and fauna of North America are free to interact and evolve, unimpeded by humans. I can dream the big dream without worrying about what is expedient in the here and now.

It was fun to watch long-time activist (and my mentor) Marjorie Sill and my former housemate Roger Scholl draw enormous wilderness reserves and wide corridors, unconstrained by the "political realities" of a state where some legislators seem mired in the 19th century. Marge and Rog know Nevada's wildlands well, and they understand what bold steps will be needed to keep their state's ecosystems intact.

In addition to activists from the Silver State, environmentalists came in from Oregon, Idaho, and Utah. Ryan Henson and I contributed our thoughts for the California portion of the Great Basin. Besides the usual Wildlands crowd—Rod Mondt and the Daves (Foreman and Johns)—I ran into James Monteith, an old colleague now with Save the West. Monteith was a founder of the Oregon Wilderness Coalition (now the Oregon Natural Resources Council) that was the model for the CWC.

Ryan and I were eager to learn how to conduct a "vision" meeting, since we are planning a similar one for California this September. Our challenge may be in limiting the number of participants.

In stark contrast to the Wildlands meeting, I spent three days watching the House debate on the California Desert Protection Act on CSPAN. Fortunately, I'm able to work on other things while the speeches drag on and on and on. It's hard not to yell at the TV when a representative utters some outlandish drivel against the bill, and it's frustrating that I can't rebut the misstatements and untruths being spread as gospel.

You have to depend on your champions in Congress. You do the best you can to make sure she or he knows the issue inside and out, and you can always fill in the blanks if you get a last-minute phone call. But only representatives and their staff members are allowed on the floor of the House, so you hope your briefings are thorough and remembered.

When you see a map of drug smuggling routes in the desert being tendered as a reason for allowing motorized access to the Orocochia Mountains Wilderness, you want to ask how the smugglers managed to get through the Chocolate Mountains Gunnery Range just south of the Orocochias. You'd think the military would welcome the chance to shoot at live targets.

When you see the photo of a drowned deer in the Coachella Canal presented as evidence for requiring vehicular maintenance of artificial watering holes, you want to question why we have an unfenced, uncovered aqueduct running through the desert.

But most of all, you are frustrated that the debate centers on scenic beauty, mining and other commercial uses, and competing forms of recreation. You listen in vain for the word "biodiversity." You wonder when Congress is going to discover that saving the desert is about preserving ecosystems, wildlife habitats, and large wilderness areas. Like Edward Abbey, I suffer from hope.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Several months ago I wrote about personalized license plates with environmental messages. I've since recalled that Sinkyone and King Range activist Mel Linn had LOST CST on his truck. Richard S. Cimino has SA MONO L. Larry Pearson, Wendy's boss at the Water Quality Control Board, has plates reading H2OQLTY.

And Scott Kruse reports that since 1971 his vehicles have worn JMUIR. This has resulted in his being stopped over 40 times while driving across the country by police officers who only wanted to know who *really* was driving the car.

By Jim Eaton

A solvent summer

The arrival of summer also marks the halfway point of our fiscal year. We're doing okay, to paraphrase our treasurer, and we thank the following donors and members, whose extraordinary generosity has contributed to that happy state of affairs:

Mary Tappel; Zoogen Inc.; Sierra Club Foundation; Ellison, Schneider & Lennihan; Tom Lumbrazo; Susan & Joseph Bower; Anne Schneider; The Wilderness Society; Mary Scoonover & Bill Barnette; Richard Van Alstyne; Carmichael Roofing; Dan Raleigh; Genny Smith; Novo Nordisk Biotech; Lorraine Anderson & Rick Palkovic; Arthur & Sidney Barnes; Florian Boyd; Elizabeth Carlton; Alan Carlton; Wendy Cohen & Jim Eaton; Frank DiGenova; Lillian & Claud Eaton; Mike Eaton; Vic Fazio; Marilyn Gallaway; Andrew & Sasha Honig; Howard & June Kambach; Robin Kulakow & Bill Julian; Norbert Riedy; Ellen Rosenau; Reuben Schilling; David Silva & Linda Spangler; Susan Smith; Sari Sommarstrom & Tom Jopson; Patty Vernelson & Robert Black; Jon & Peggy Watterson; Robert Zappala; California Alpine Club.

A testament to wilderness

Putting the California Wilderness Coalition in your Will is an excellent way to assure we can continue protecting and preserving California's precious wildlands far into the future.

Currently, the Coalition's Smoke Blanchard fund, an endowment honoring the late mountaineering guide, supports wilderness preservation efforts on the Sierra Nevada's East Side, an area Smoke particularly loved.

To leave a bequest, simply add a paragraph to your Will stating: "I bequeath to the California Wilderness Coalition the sum of ____ Dollars [or, for insurance policies, land, or other property, please specify]."

If you would like to discuss leaving a bequest to the Coalition, please call executive director Jim Eaton at (916) 758-0380. All information will be held in strict confidence.

Mendocino Forest Watch joins Coalition

The California Wilderness Coalition's newest member group is Mendocino Forest Watch. An offshoot of the Upper Eel Earth First!, the watchdog group focuses primarily on, you guessed it, the Mendocino National Forest. Its long-term goal is to preserve the area's native biodiversity, first by protecting wilderness and roadless areas and ultimately by establishing a 15 million-acre North Coast Wilderness, which Mendocino Forest Watch founder Don Morris envisions extending from Coos Bay in Oregon to California's Clear Lake.

For the time being, however, the group is busy promoting its alternative to the draft Mendocino forest plan. The Citizens' Forest Plan, which Morris says received substantial public support during the Forest Service comment period, incorporates wilderness recovery areas, watershed protection, and ancient forest reserves. Mendocino Forest Watch also monitors and strives to protect the region's wilderness study areas and wild rivers.

To learn more about the activities of Mendocino Forest Watch, contact Don Morris at P. O. Box 1551, Willits, CA 95490; (707) 459-4715.

Our man Friday

In May, Ryan Henson joined the CWC staff as our part-time conservation associate. Ryan has been donating his Fridays for the last six months, arriving early and staying late to analyze documents, study maps, and generally keep a wary eye on the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Now that he's on staff, Ryan will be getting a paycheck for his work, but little else will change. The Forest Service and BLM can count on receiving more stern missives whenever they propose diminishing the wildness of California's roadless lands, and *Wilderness Record* readers can count on seeing more of Ryan's in-depth articles.

Much as we'd like to have Ryan on the job five days a week, neither our budget nor our office can accommodate him yet. Hence, our current wish list, the Monday-Thursday Fund.

The Monday-Thursday Fund

Before we can invite Ryan to join us full-time, we will need more money, more office space, and more office equipment (that's your cue). Specifically, we need:

- a Mac-compatible fax modem
- a Macintosh LC (or faster) computer
- a multi-line phone system
- desk lamps
- filing cabinets.

If you can contribute any of the above, or if you can point us to someone who can, please contact Lora Leerskov at the CWC office, (916) 758-0380. Ryan and the wild things will thank you. The BLM and Forest Service may be somewhat less grateful.

Wilderness Trivia Question:

Grazing has left its imprint on our landscape in more ways than you might think. Which of these words occurs most often in California place names: cattle, cow, bull, or sheep?

Answer on page 7

Wilderness victories

BLM cancels Cahto logging

By Lucy Rosenau

A long-contested plan to log the old-growth Douglas firs on Elkhorn Ridge in the proposed Cahto Wilderness has been dropped, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announced in May to the considerable pleasure of wilderness advocates. Because the logging rights to 360 acres near the South Fork of the Eel River in northwestern Mendocino County already have been sold, the BLM will have to recompense the buyer, either with an outright payment or with another logging contract.

Environmentalists protested when the BLM approved the sale in 1987, arguing that logging would destroy habitat for old-growth dependent species, pollute the wild-and-scenic South Fork Eel, and disrupt the ecological integrity of the proposed wilderness. In 1989, with logging imminent, conservationists went to court, and the logging has been delayed by litigation ever since.

Times—and the BLM—have changed. The northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet now are protected under the Endangered Species Act, and the South Fork was determined a key watershed and old-growth reserve under Option 9, President Clinton's plan for the ancient forests of the Pacific Northwest.

According to Stephan Volker, the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund (SCLDF) attorney who represented Cahto defenders in their fight, "Three factors saved Elkhorn Ridge. First, concerned activists held the chainsaws at bay until SCLDF could secure a temporary restraining order from the federal courts. Second, the extraordinary dedication of [Cahto activists] Michael Huddleston and Eric Swanson enabled SCLDF to put together such a strong case that the BLM was forced to suspend the timber sale and conduct the environmental studies required by law. Third, the BLM ultimately had the courage to admit that the sale was a big mistake and that Elkhorn Ridge's irreplaceable old-growth forest deserved permanent protection as an ecological preserve."

The BLM's Arcata Resource Area manager Lynda Roush says she hopes that conservationist support for the deci-

sion to terminate the logging contract will extend to support for the agency's future management of the area, management that will emphasize "greater protection of the viewshed, enhancement of hiking and primitive recreation opportunities, and protection of anadromous fisheries," according to the record of decision cancelling the Elkhorn Ridge timber sale.

Steven Day, a wilderness proponent and member of the Ancient Forest Defense Fund which filed the lawsuit that stalled the logging of Elkhorn Ridge, says he enjoyed reading the record of decision and was struck by the BLM's reversal. "The rationale [for this decision] has always been available to them, but they hadn't chosen to use it."

The Cahto controversy

The Cahto (pronounced kah-toe) controversy began when the BLM lands around the South Fork Eel River were left out of the agency's wilderness study inventory. In 1976, when Congress passed the Federal Land Policy and Management Act which mandated the inventory of candidates for wilderness study area status, the BLM owned three parcels near the South Fork—Brush Mountain, Elkhorn Ridge, and Cahto Peak (see map). The Brush Mountain and Elkhorn Ridge parcels each were smaller than 5,000 acres, the usual (but by no means absolute) minimum-size criterion for wilderness designation, and consequently were not selected as wilderness study areas. The BLM's Cahto Peak parcel exceeded the 5,000-acre

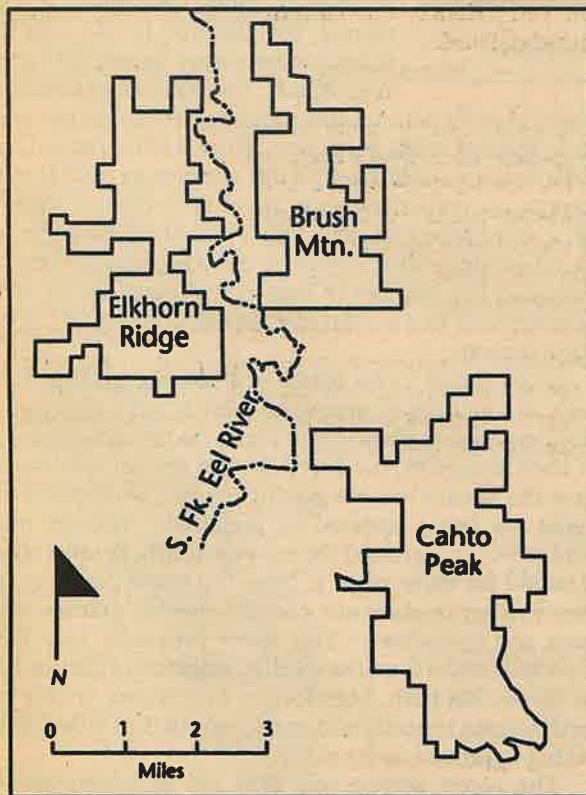


Brush Mountain in the proposed Cahto Wilderness Photo by Michael Huddleston

standard, but the agency determined it lacked some of the characteristics of a wilderness, specifically, the potential for primitive recreation or solitude.

In 1981, the South Fork of the Eel River was designated a wild river, and in 1983, the BLM acquired the then-privately owned stretch of the river that separates Brush Mountain from Elkhorn Ridge. Under pressure from conservationists, the agency in 1990 initiated a study of the wilderness potential of the area, since the acquisition of the private land created a single parcel larger than 5,000 acres. But the BLM rejected an Eel River Wilderness Study Area, despite an overwhelming majority of public support for the designation.

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The BLM's holdings in the Cahto area at the time of the wilderness inventory. Today, the BLM owns the river corridor between Elkhorn Ridge and Brush Mountain, and a Nature Conservancy preserve lies between Brush Mountain and Cahto Peak. Map by Jim Eaton

Key watershed designation scotches Salmon River logging—for now

A contested timber sale in the Orleans Mountain Roadless Area adjacent to the Trinity Alps Wilderness is another casualty of Option 9, the management plan for Pacific Northwest forests adopted by the Clinton administration in April. The proposed Blue/Ray timber sale in the Klamath National Forest has been dropped because it lies within the South Fork Salmon River watershed, which was designated a key watershed under Option 9.

The California Wilderness Coalition (CWC) and other conservation groups had appealed the proposed logging on the grounds that the environmental review of the sale was inadequate (see October 1993 WR). The CWC contends that actions in roadless areas require an environmental impact statement, not the less exacting environmental assessment that was performed for the Blue/Ray sale.

Stephan Volker, the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund attorney who represented the conservationists in their appeal, cautions that key watershed designation does not guarantee the safety of the roadless area. No logging is allowed in a key watershed until land managers analyze how to permanently protect the watershed, a process that may take a year or more and includes opportunities for public input. The Forest Service expects to finish its analysis for the South Fork Salmon watershed in late July. When the watershed analysis is complete, the Forest

Service may again propose logging the roadless area, and there are indications that the agency intends to do so.

In a May 3 memo about the timber sale, Klamath National Forest supervisor Barbara Holder wrote, "If Judge Dwyer lifts the injunction on [logging in] suitable habitat for the northern spotted owl, additional area can be included for treatment within this assessment area." For treatment, read logging.

On June 6, Judge Dwyer released the federal lands in the Pacific Northwest from his three-year-old ban on logging, though he has not yet approved Option 9.

The Orleans Mountain Roadless Area, on the northern edge of the 500,000-acre Trinity Alps Wilderness, is viewed by wilderness advocates as a future addition to the wilderness. The roadless area is habitat for the threatened northern spotted owl and borders a segment of the South Fork Salmon River that is being considered for wild-and-scenic river designation. Together, the river and roadless area function as a wildlife corridor linking the Trinity Alps Wilderness to the Marble Mountains Wilderness farther north.

A public meeting about the watershed analysis for the South Fork Salmon River is scheduled for July 27. Contact the Klamath National Forest supervisor's office, 1312 Fairlane Road, Yreka, CA 96097; (916) 842-6131, for details.

Grazing reform

An activist's guide to grazing reform

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managed on federal lands. The reform plan would raise fees in all western states except Texas, Alaska, and Hawaii (eastern ranchers already pay higher grazing fees) and improve grazing standards across the country. Comments and suggestions from the public on how to improve the draft of the reform plan will be accepted until July 28.

Since few conservationists will want to slog through the many documents that comprise the plan, the California Wilderness Coalition offers this summary of each agency's most important grazing management proposals and an analysis of the alternatives in the Rangeland Reform '94 draft environmental impact statement (EIS). The Coalition's suggestions for people who wish to submit comments are on page 6.

BLM grazing reforms

The BLM estimates that 66 percent of the riparian areas and 43 percent of the uplands it manages are either "not functioning" now or are at risk of ecological collapse if improperly grazed. Riparian areas in particular are "at their worst condition in history" according to the agency.

The BLM proposes to reverse this trend by requiring state BLM directors to develop new grazing standards and guidelines meant to maintain functioning ecosystems, rehabilitate riparian areas, improve water quality, and preserve and restore the habitat of animals and plants listed or proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act. The agency proposes that one standard be developed for each state (or for several states if they are ecologically similar), but directors of ecologically-diverse states like California and Oregon are given the option of preparing separate rules for each unique ecosystem.

Once the geographical or bioregional scope of rangeland reform is established within each state, a highly controversial provision of the BLM's grazing reform rules would allow western governors to appoint "multiple resource advisory councils" to help BLM state directors prepare grazing reform rules. One of these 15-member councils would be organized for each BLM district (there are four in California), and the composition of each council would be determined by formula: one-third environmentalists, historical preservationists, primitive recreationists, and other conservation-minded citizens; one-third off-road vehicle enthusiasts, miners, ranchers, loggers, and other "wise-use" advocates; and one-third scientists, elected officials, Native Americans, "members of the general public," and other miscellaneous interests. If the Department of the Interior is not satisfied with a governor's nominations, it would have the option to veto them.

BLM state directors then would develop ecosystem-specific grazing reform standards for soil stability, distribution of nutrients and energy, protection and rehabilitation of wetlands and riparian areas, the needs of plants and animals listed or proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act, seasons of critical plant growth and regrowth, periods when rests from grazing are required, situations in which season-long grazing may take place without causing undue ecological harm, protection of ephemeral rangelands, and the amount of forage that could be consumed annually. BLM state directors would have 18 months to consult with the public, the advisory councils, and other interests to develop these guidelines. If they fail to meet the deadline, the Department of the Interior would impose "fallback standards."

Once grazing reform standards are developed for each state or ecoregion, local BLM officials would enforce the provisions and strengthen them if necessary for individual allotments. The grazing reform rules thus will become part of the terms and conditions of every new grazing permit issued by the BLM, and existing permits will be amended to conform with the new rules.

Other reforms proposed by the BLM include the use of range improvement funds, which derive from grazing fees, to finance ecosystem rehabilitation projects or unspecified rangeland improvements. Half of these funds would be returned to the state where they were collected; the other half would be retained by the Department of the Interior and spent on selected restoration projects. Also of

develop grazing rules for individual national forests. The land and resource management plans prepared every fifteen years for each national forest would specify which lands are potentially suitable for grazing and what general goals, standards, and guidelines must be followed by permittees. Most importantly, forest plans would have to specify how much plant material may be consumed in each forest ecosystem.

This is an improvement over current practice because many forest plans now offer little, if any, guidance to their range conservation staff about how to protect riparian areas, when livestock should be removed, and how often allotments must be monitored. For some national forests, few general standards exist at all beyond those required by the Clean Water Act, National Forest Management Act, and other federal laws. Fortunately, this is not the case in California, where all national forests have at least some general standards regarding watershed and range protection.

Though forest plans would provide general guidelines and identify areas that may be suitable for livestock grazing, in most cases it would take a rangeland project decision (RPD) to determine whether a potentially suitable area can be grazed. RPDs eventually would be prepared for every national forest grazing allotment. As with other major environmental documents, under federal law RPDs would be subject to public comment and scrutiny, administrative appeals, and the National Environmental Policy Act review process.

In addition to considering whether an area may be grazed, the RPDs would examine the site-specific environmental impacts of grazing, the amount of forage that may be consumed, the duration of use, and the measures necessary to mitigate grazing impacts. The RPD could authorize

issuing grazing permits and stipulate the mitigation measures required of the permittee. Once a RPD is issued, the Forest Service could alter permit conditions only if such changes are consistent with the environmental analysis that accompanied the RPD. This latter reform is important since it would prevent the Forest Service from significantly increasing the number of livestock allowed on an allotment without first examining the environmental impact of the increase.

Since many forest plans lack specific grazing standards and guidelines, and since there is not a RPD (called allotment management plans under current grazing rules) for each allotment, the Forest Service reform rules would allow the agency to issue grazing permits while the documents are being updated or prepared. Though most permits would be issued for ten-year terms, permits could be issued for three years at most if a forest plan has not been written or does not contain specific grazing standards and guidelines. This latter provision may have important impacts on the grazing programs of California's Six Rivers, Klamath, Mendocino, and Shasta-Trinity national forests, the only national forests in the United States lacking approved forest plans.

The Forest Service and BLM are proposing similar approaches to livestock trespass, water rights, range improvement funds (though the Forest Service is less specific than the BLM about how they will be spent), grazing fees (discussed below), and grazing by foreign-owned corporations. In some cases, however, the Forest Service range

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Cattle fences along the Pacific Crest Trail south of Ebbetts Pass Photo by Tim Palmer

importance is the BLM's proposal to allow ranchers to stop grazing their allotments for up to three years for "personal or financial reasons," and for up to ten years to allow the land to recover from grazing, without losing their permits or having their allotments grazed by other ranchers. Under current rules, ranchers either must graze their allotments or lose them.

The BLM also proposes to change the qualifications necessary to apply for or renew grazing permits. Under the new rules, ranchers who have had a BLM, Forest Service, or (under limited conditions) state grazing permit cancelled within the previous 26 months would be prohibited from grazing livestock on BLM land. Furthermore, permits would be revoked for a variety of infractions: harming fish or wildlife; applying or storing pesticides or herbicides; altering, polluting, or destroying natural water sources; tampering with archaeological artifacts; failing to pay grazing fees; habitually failing to close gates; or flagrantly violating the new state grazing reform rules. Ranchers who repeatedly allow their livestock to stray onto public land or off their assigned allotments would pay substantially higher fines than under existing rules. In California, for example, miscreant ranchers who "willfully and repeatedly" graze in unauthorized areas would be assessed upwards of \$30 per cow or sheep plus the expense of rehabilitating the land and investigating and prosecuting the trespass.

Forest Service grazing reforms

In contrast to the BLM's national, state, and regional grazing reform standards, the Forest Service proposes to

Roadless lands

Support for a Caples Creek Wilderness remains strong, but grazing and motorcycles are taking a toll

By Jim Eaton

The Washington, D. C. office of the U. S. Forest Service has determined that no new environmental impact statement (EIS) must be developed to assess the impacts of a proposed hydroelectric project in the Caples Creek Roadless Area of the Eldorado National Forest south of Lake Tahoe because the original EIS accompanying the 1988 forest plan (which recommended the area for wilderness designation) adequately addressed the issues.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission had requested that forest planners re-evaluate their proposed wilderness boundary, which includes a potential hydroelectric site at the confluence of Caples Creek and the Silver Fork of the American River. But at a public scoping meeting over a year ago, as well as in written letters, the public overwhelmingly expressed opposition to the dam plan known as "Foottrail."

Whether the Commission will attempt to proceed with plans to license the Foottrail project remains to be seen. The Forest Service's commitment to its wilderness recommendation, now reaffirmed by its refusal to write a new EIS, is a considerable impediment to dam proponents.

The Forest Service's continued opposition to the dam relieved wilderness advocates who had been outraged last fall when the agency constructed two large bridges over Caples Creek within the boundaries of the proposed wilderness (see January 1994 *WR*). One of the bridges spans Caples Creek near the confluence with the Silver Fork, the same site coveted by dam proponents. Environmentalists had worried that the presence of the bridge might be used to justify the dam project.

The bridge construction disturbed conservationists on another score as well. The bridges were built without public notice and to standards greater than seemed warranted. The overconstruction of the bridges apparently resulted from a Forest Service mistake, and the agency has since increased its efforts to involve the public in its management of the roadless area.

Recently, the Forest Service hosted a field trip in the proposed wilderness to discuss the bridges and other

controversial management issues. In addition to Forest Service personnel, participants included a grazing permittee, motorcyclists, other trail users, and environmentalists. Among the conservation groups represented were Friends Aware of Wildlife Needs (FAWN), Friends of the River, the Sierra Club, and the California Wilderness Coalition.

As we hiked along Caples Creek, concerns quickly were raised about overgrazing in the roadless area. Although the rancher who uses the allotment defended his practices, the absence of young trees in an aspen grove and the trampled stream banks gave credence to the environmentalists' claims.

Though the Forest Service recommends this area for wilderness, motorcyclists continue to use some trails because the agency's policy for its roadless areas is to allow activities that will be outlawed after wilderness designation, a policy that ensures that wilderness designation will be opposed by users who face eviction. Damage to trails and archaeological sites from motorized vehicles was examined, and the motorcyclists argued the damage resulted from the trails not being designed for motorized use. They apparently were hoping to convince the environmentalists not to press for wilderness designation so they can continue to ride their machines.

Some of the Forest Service employees seemed surprised to find the environmentalists more concerned



Participants in a recent field trip in the Caples Creek Roadless Area examine an overgrazed aspen grove.

Photo by Jim Eaton

about the health of the ecosystem than wilderness recreation. Concerns about cattle, for example, focused on the destruction of fishery and wildlife habitats rather than distaste for stepping in cow pies and hearing cowbells.

Unfortunately, few specific agreements were reached, and the status quo—grazing and motorcycles included—is likely to persist. Important though the Forest Service's support for wilderness designation is, it is not enough to ensure the area's protection, either as a wilderness or as a potential wilderness. While Caples Creek awaits congressional designation, diligent citizens will need to watch and defend this wild area.

Jim Eaton is executive director of the California Wilderness Coalition.

Cahto victory hailed; next step, wilderness?

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Day points to an inconsistency. "Brush Mountain and Elkhorn Ridge were natural but not big enough [to meet the BLM's standard for wilderness]. When the BLM acquired the river corridor, then they were big enough but not natural."

Though the outcome was disappointing to advocates of a Cahto Wilderness, that the BLM revisited the question of wilderness study area status at all is important. California Wilderness Coalition executive director Jim Eaton believes the precedent will be significant in the Diablo Range of central California, where recent acquisitions by the BLM have created large enough parcels of public wildlands to qualify for wilderness study area status and the protections that go with it.

The lack of wilderness study area status has not deterred conservationists from pursuing a Cahto Wilderness. As envisioned by Day and other activists, the wilderness would incorporate Brush Mountain, Elkhorn Ridge, Cahto Peak, the wild South Fork Eel River, and the Northern California Coast Range Preserve, a 7,000-acre wildland between Brush Mountain and Cahto Peak managed jointly

by the BLM, Nature Conservancy, and University of California.

What happens next

Though the timber sale now has been dropped, Day says activists should not assume that the entire area is safe from logging. The BLM is continuing to develop a management plan for the South Fork Eel wild river corridor and will be amending its plan for the Arcata Resource Area. Any logging in the corridor, Day believes, has the potential to harm the river's already-imperiled coho salmon.

Though the South Fork also has been determined a key watershed, Day points out that the key watershed boundaries end at the ridgetops; the wildlands beyond the ridgetops are not protected by the designation. And key watershed designation does not necessarily preclude future

logging in the watershed itself.

A campaign by the Ancient Forest Defense Fund has persuaded Representative Dan Hamburg (D-Ukiah), whose district includes the proposed Cahto Wilderness, to join the ranks of Cahto defenders. Rep. Hamburg has had discussions about the Elkhorn Ridge timber sale with the

"The BLM had the courage to admit that the sale was a big mistake and that Elkhorn Ridge's irreplaceable old-growth forest deserved permanent protection as an ecological preserve."

BLM's state director and has offered to introduce legislation to fund the buyback.

For information on the proposed Cahto Wilderness, contact the Mendocino Environmental Center at 106 W. Standley Street, Ukiah, CA 95482 or the Environmental Protection Information Center (EPIC) at P. O. Box 397, Garberville, CA 95542. To get on the mailing list for plans being developed for the Cahto area, contact the BLM's Arcata Resource Area office at 1125 16th Street, Room 219, Arcata, CA 95521; (707) 822-7648.

Former Modoc supervisor named regional forester

On July 11, California will have a new regional forester. Lynn Sprague, a former supervisor of the Modoc National Forest, will replace Ron Stewart as head of the Forest Service's Pacific Southwest region, which includes all the national forests in California except the Toiyabe. Stewart is moving to the agency's Washington, D. C. office.

Sprague has 31 years of experience with the agency, much of it in the timber program. He was appointed to the California post by Forest Service chief Jack Ward Thomas.

Wilderness news

Will South Warner W'ness welcome wildfire? Time, and public reaction, will tell

The Forest Service is accepting public comments on a fire management plan and environmental assessment being developed for the 70,000-acre South Warner Wilderness in the Modoc National Forest of northeast California. The comment period ends July 15.

As proposed, the plan would establish criteria under which lightning-caused fires would be allowed to burn uncontrolled in the wilderness. A wildfire would be re-evaluated each day it burned to ensure that it still met the criteria. Fires that do not meet the standards would be suppressed.

The current policy on fires in the South Warner Wilderness is dictated by the 1991 Modoc forest plan. Managers are required to suppress wildfires in a manner compatible with wilderness values and public safety. Since that plan was written, the Forest Service has adopted a national policy of allowing some wilderness wildfires to burn, but only if criteria have been determined in a fire management plan.

The goal of the new policy is to restore natural conditions to wilderness areas where fire, a natural agent, has been artificially suppressed for decades. The historic exclusion of fire from wilderness areas means that prescribed burns may be needed before any wildfires can be safely allowed free rein in the wilderness.

The criteria that will determine which fires are allowed to burn have yet to be developed, but the effect of

wildfire on private property, sensitive species, air and water quality, and public safety are likely candidates. There are extensive private lands on the perimeter of the wilderness but no inholdings.

No resident threatened or endangered species have been identified, but the wilderness is home to plants that are candidates for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act, and there has been one unconfirmed sighting of a peregrine falcon. As far as Modoc biologists know, neither the northern nor California spotted owl inhabits the wilderness.

The remoteness of the South Warner Mountains means that public safety and air quality are less exigent concerns than they would be in more populated parts of the state. The South Warner Wilderness was designated a Class I area under the Clean Air Act, however, the most

stringent category.

Other issues to be addressed in the plan include determining "minimum tool" techniques for fire suppression or fire management, techniques that will have the least adverse impact on the wilderness.

Comments about the proposed plan should be sent by July 15 to the Warner Mountain Ranger District, Modoc National Forest, P. O. Box 220, Cedarville, CA 96104. For more information, call the ranger district office at (916) 279-6116.



Desert bill

continued from page 1

weaker "preserve" status for the area, a status under which hunting is allowed.

Both the Senate and House bills allow grazing in perpetuity in the Mojave National Park and in BLM lands that will become part of Death Valley National Park. Rep. Lewis plans an amendment that would grant the BLM authority over grazing on National Park Service lands. Rep. Vento, on the other hand, plans to offer an amendment that would set a deadline for the elimination of grazing in these two new national parks.

Private lands remain controversial, especially inholdings in the national parks. Rep. Lewis is proposing to exempt property owners from environmental laws that apply to the surrounding federal lands.

Republican senatorial candidate Michael Huffington is entering the fray to fight the desert bill. The first-term representative from Santa Barbara, who has been uninvolved in the legislation until now, announced in June that he will oppose plans for a land swap with the Catellus Development Corporation that is intended to facilitate wilderness management by eliminating inholdings. How effective he will be remains in doubt; during his two years in Congress, Rep. Huffington has spoken on the House floor for a total of eight minutes, and only one of those minutes was spent on an issue up for a vote.

Further House action is expected just before or just after the congressional Fourth of July recess.

CWC guide to grazing reform

continued from page 4

land reform program is markedly different from the BLM proposals. The Forest Service plan does not include advisory councils or any grazing advisory board or provide a comprehensive list of which standards, if violated, will lead to cancellation or suspension of grazing permits. The Forest Service does require permittees to conduct research on their allotments and submit the results to the agency, but would continue to issue permits to ranchers who had state grazing permits revoked in the past.

Grazing fees to increase

Grazing permittees currently pay \$1.86 per month for every cow, every five goats, and every five to seven sheep they graze on public lands in the western states. By contrast, the cost of grazing livestock on unirrigated private land ranges from a low of \$5.72 in Arizona to a high of \$17.00 in Nebraska; California landowners charge an average of \$10.40.

To narrow the gap between grazing rates on public and private lands in the west and help mitigate the ecological harm done by livestock grazing, the BLM and Forest Service propose to raise the fee to \$2.75 in 1995, \$3.50 in 1996, and \$3.96 in 1997. Thereafter, the fee could rise no more than 25 percent above the previous year's rate, with the increase in any one year roughly proportionate to the average annual increase in private grazing rates. For example, if the 1998 private grazing rate increases by 10 percent over 1997 rates, then public-land grazing fees may rise proportionally. Though certainly an improvement over current policy, this proposal inevitably will prevent public-land grazing rates from ever achieving parity with private rates.

The EIS alternatives

The Rangeland Reform '94 draft EIS presents five grazing management options: Alternative 1 would retain current grazing rules; Alternative 2, the preferred alternative, would implement the reforms outlined above; Alternative 3 would increase livestock grazing on public lands; Alternative 4 would eliminate grazing in all ecologically sensitive areas, wilderness areas, and some roadless areas and wilderness study areas; and Alternative 5 would phase out all grazing on public lands over a three-year period.

The most interesting part of the draft EIS concerns the agencies' perception of the current condition of public rangelands. Though the BLM acknowledges that 43 percent of its upland areas and 66 percent of its riparian areas are in terrible shape, the Forest Service claims that 80 percent of its upland areas and 78 percent of its riparian areas are either "meeting, or moving toward [its] objectives." The disparity may result from the fact that many forest plans have few, if any, ecologically-sound objectives to achieve, and others have standards that are inadequate at best. An area that is "moving toward" forest plan objectives by definition is not meeting those objectives.

If the Forest Service is overly optimistic about the current condition of its rangelands, it is the BLM's enthu-

siasm for Alternative 2, the preferred alternative, that is most controversial. The BLM anticipates that Alternative 2 will decrease the amount of land open to grazing by 3 percent "over the long term." Despite the minuteness of this reduction, the BLM claims that uplands and riparian areas in proper functioning condition will increase under this alternative by 55 percent and 27 percent respectively. In contrast, the Forest Service estimates that only 2 percent of its uplands and 7 percent of its riparian areas will improve under Alternative 2. Though the agencies do not agree about current conditions or about future conditions under the preferred alternative, they do agree that Alternatives 4 and 5 are the only options that will dramatically improve conditions for the near and distant future.

What you can do

The public has until July 28 to comment on Rangeland Reform '94. The plan in its present form is only a modest improvement over current policy, though the BLM's proposed national grazing standards are a significant step in the right direction. A strong public response could push the federal government further along the path of reform.

In your letter to the rangeland reform team (send it to Rangeland Reform '94, P.O. Box 66300, Washington, DC 20035-6300) please request that:

- The BLM strengthen its standards for riparian areas, wetlands, sensitive plant sites, and all easily damaged ecosystems;
- The BLM abandon its proposal to create multiple resource advisory councils. Allowing advisory councils to help shape rangeland reform rules reinforces the misplaced sense of ownership that many grazing permittees have toward public lands. Since ample opportunity for involvement already exists in the BLM's decision-making processes, grazing permittees should not be accorded any special opportunities to influence grazing policy;
- The Forest Service adopt national grazing reform goals for the protection of watersheds, riparian areas,

soils, plants, and wildlife. Unless the Forest Service adopts national grazing standards similar to those proposed by the BLM and requires individual national forests to adhere to them strictly, the agency may fail to consistently protect sensitive habitats and the species they support;

- Cattle be removed from designated wilderness areas. The BLM and Forest Service should make the abolition of grazing in wilderness areas a prominent part of their rangeland reform efforts. Excluding livestock from these areas will provide a baseline by which to judge grazing reform efforts on other public lands;

- Fees for public-land grazing be raised so that they are comparable to fees charged for private-land grazing;

- The Rangeland Reform '94 draft EIS more realistically assess current rangeland conditions, especially for Forest Service lands. Though the BLM should be praised for admitting how degraded most of its lands currently are, both agencies must avoid exaggerating the positive impacts of the preferred alternative in the final EIS;

- Alternative 4 be adopted as the preferred alternative in the final EIS. Only Alternative 4 or 5 will reverse the continued decline of America's public rangelands.

Ryan Henson is the CWC's conservation associate.

Wilderness Inquirer

Monkeying around with ducks, and other wilderness riddles

What exactly is monkeywrenching, and does it occur in wilderness? LL, Sacramento

The term comes from Edward Abbey's 1975 novel, *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, in which a band of misfits, angered at the development and waste of the West, fought back by toppling billboards and disabling construction equipment. The popular book (soon to be a major motion picture, as they say) was one of the inspirations for Earth First!, and 'monkeywrenching' came to encompass a variety of illegal ways of sabotaging environmentally destructive projects, ways that do not necessarily involve monkey wrenches.

Most of the practices monkeywrenchers want to stop (like the logging and roading of old-growth forests) are not allowed in wilderness, so most monkeywrenching occurs in unprotected areas. We have had reports, however, of mining-associated survey stakes being pulled up, and signs are sometimes removed (perhaps by souvenir collectors as much as by wilderness purists). Some wilderness visitors (and some wilderness rangers) destroy the ducks—the small cairns—that mark trails. A minimal duck may be an appropriate way of indicating a trail across an extensive granite field, for instance, or marking a trail under snow, but many ducks are overconstructed or mark trails that should be evident even to the novice hiker. Ducks also are erected by some cross-country travelers to direct slower members of their party. In this case, the slow hikers should scatter the ducks as they pass them.

You left Sinkyone Wilderness out of your wilderness guide. NT, Eureka

The name is misleading: Sinkyone Wilderness State Park on the Lost Coast (near Arcata) has never been designated wilderness.

Why are there dams in wilderness areas (e.g. Emigrant Wilderness)? AF, Stockton

Quite simply, there are dams in wilderness areas because Congress has accorded wilderness status to areas like Emigrant that contain dams. Most wilderness dams

are like the dams you see in Emigrant—low catch dams made of native stone. Unlike dams that were erected to store water for power generation downstream (Desolation Wilderness has two of these, at lakes—more accurately, reservoirs—Aloha and Rubicon), catch dams create or enhance opportunities for recreational fishing by enlarging existing lakes and maintaining downstream flows in times of low water.

None of these dams was seen by Congress as an impediment to wilderness designation. That may seem incongruous, given the Wilderness Act's definition of wilderness: "an area of undeveloped federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements . . . with the imprints of man's work substantially unnoticeable." But Congress has authorized wilderness areas that would defy many of the criteria in the Act if the Act did not contain so many fudge words: Wilderness "generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature . . . with . . . man's work substantially unnoticeable [emphasis added]." And wilderness advocates hardly are likely to reject proposed wilderness areas because they contain some human imprints.

All the dams in all the nation's wilderness areas (an estimate that there were 100 dams in the nation's Forest Service wilderness areas in 1987 seems low) predate wilderness designation. The Wilderness Act did provide for the possibility of dam construction in existing wilderness, but this power, reserved to the president, has never been exercised. (In 1990, Congress redrew the boundary of the Ventana Wilderness to accommodate a proposed dam, rather than risk the president setting a precedent.) The possibility of dam construction in wilderness, however remote, is one reason wilderness advocates also advocate wild-and-scenic river status for wilderness rivers.

That Congress designated wilderness areas containing dams does not necessarily mean that Congress requires the dams to be maintained and preserved. If there were a compelling reason to remove a dam—to restore the area's pristine character, to protect a species, to eliminate a potential hazard—it is our guess that the dam could be removed (but only after a full environmental review, of course).

Have a question about wilderness? Send your questions to Wilderness Inquirer at the CWC, 2655 Portage Bay East, Suite 5, Davis, CA 95616.

CWC T-shirts

Pat (left) likes our six-tone landscape shirt now available in jade and fuchsia as well as the ever-popular light blue and pale green for \$15. Lora wears a design by Bay Area cartoonist Phil Frank; it comes in beige or light gray for \$12. All shirts are 100 percent double-knit cotton. To order, use the form on the back page.



**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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July 15 COMMENTS DUE on a wildfire policy being developed for the South Warner Wilderness. Send to: Warner Mountain Ranger District, Modoc National Forest, P. O. Box 220, Cedarville, CA 96104. (See article on page 6.)

July 15-16 ANNUAL MEETING of the Sierra Nevada Alliance in Mammoth Lakes. Call the Alliance for more information at (619) 934-4546 or (916) 542-4546.

July 27 PUBLIC MEETING on the watershed analysis for the South Fork of the Salmon River. Contact the Klamath National Forest, 1312 Fairlane Rd., Yreka, CA 96097; (916) 842-6131 for details. (See article on page 3.)

July 28 COMMENTS DUE on the Clinton administration's proposed new grazing rules. Send to: Rangeland Reform '94, P. O. Box 66300, Washington, DC 20035-6300. (See article beginning on page 1.)

July 28-31 FIELD WEEKEND, sponsored by the Eldorado National Forest and National Audubon Society, in Indian Valley and the Mokelumne Wilderness. Call Audubon's Bob Barnes at (916) 481-5332 for information or to register for the free event.

July 29-31 WORKDAY, float trip, and dinner at Cache Creek, one of three national Public Lands Appreciation Day events. For details, contact the Bureau of Land Management's Ukiah office at (707) 468-4000.

Wilderness Trivia Answer:

'Sheep' and 'bull' are the most common, with over 50 place names each. 'Cattle' is the least popular.

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The Wilderness Record

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.

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"We're a species in the middle of going mad . . . I wonder if wilderness designation should be part of the health care package."

—Terry Tempest Williams
In the *Washington Post*

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