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WILDERNESS RECORD

Proceedings of the California Wilderness Coalition

June 1996

Sequoia preservation bill in the works

By Kathy Brennan

To many people, Latin names of species may seem bland and uninformative. One notable exception—*Sequoiadendron giganteum*—at least imparts a small sense of the awe these trees inspire.

Historically sequoias had a range that included Europe and much of North America. Climate change over geologic time diminished their ability to live in most of these regions, and now they survive only in the Sierra Nevada. They can live in excess of 3,000 years—a time-span that is well beyond human ability to conceptualize.

Many of these ancient groves within Sequoia National Park now enjoy protection from the chain saw. A bill to establish preserves protecting the groves of giant sequoias that now lie outside the national park should be introduced in Congress any time now. While the big trees themselves are now safe from cutting, the associated conifers that are crucial to the stability of the sequoia ecosystem are threatened by logging.

The origins of the Sequoia Ecosystem and Recreation Preserve Act of 1996, being sponsored by Rep. George Brown (D-CA), lie in the history of poor management in the Sequoia National Forest. In the mid 1980s the Forest Service began to log sequoia groves without properly notifying the public. While they avoided old-growth, they removed second growth sequoias, and clear-cut in and around the ancient trees. Local conservationists filed a lawsuit and won.

In 1988, the Sequoia National Forest released its forest plan. Included within it were provisions for timber yields above what conservationists considered sustainable for this forest. They were



Giant sequoias.

Photo by Tim Palmer

Pilot Creek Roadless Area falls to salvage rider

By Ryan Henson

In late May the Six Rivers National Forest, ignoring objections from conservationists, announced that it will proceed with the proposed Pilot Creek Timber Sale. Normally activists could have appealed the plan, but the salvage rider (a law passed last year by Congress severely limiting court oversight and exempting many kinds of logging from administrative appeals) stripped all legal recourse to stop it. The approval of the project is ironic considering the Six Rivers National Forest has been trying to cultivate a pro-conservation image of late. The logging of the Pilot Creek area seriously undermines this public relations effort.

A tributary of the Mad River, Pilot Creek is an important salmon and steelhead stream. Recognizing its value as a refuge for anadromous fish, President Clinton's Northwest Forest Plan (also called Option 9) designated the area a "key watershed", meaning logging and road construction must be balanced with restoration and habitat preservation. The Forest Service claims that the Pilot Creek Timber Sale (which will remove up to 16 million board feet of trees) strikes such a balance.

Indeed, not all of the agency's plans for the area are objectionable. For the most part, the proposed logging consists of the thinning of small-diameter trees. This logging is intended to retain canopies dominated by large trees. This is a sharp contrast from conventional timber sales which usually remove these canopies altogether.

The Forest Service also proposes to create "shaded fuelbreaks" (areas where the forest has been thinned to reduce the opportunity for a fire to burn freely from one tree to another), permanently close several roads, restore damaged riparian areas, stabilize landslides, burn the understory of oak groves to promote oak regeneration, and set several prescribed fires (controlled burns) to reestablish more natural fire patterns. No clearcutting will occur.

While the Forest Service's plans are certainly far better than previous logging proposals for the area—proposals which stressed clearcutting and extensive road construction, activists are outraged over the agency's intention to log in riparian areas and the Pilot Creek Roadless Area (RA).

The logging in streamside areas is disturbing to activists because it will occur in "riparian reserves" established by Option 9. While these reserves are designed to protect riparian areas from logging and road construction, Option 9 does not make them completely off limits to logging.

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also concerned about the impact such logging would have on the groves. A coalition of environmental groups appealed that plan—, as did the timber industry, who felt that it failed to release enough timber.

To settle the dispute, all parties agreed to mediation. A process that was intended to take a few months turned into a year and a half of negotiations. The agreement that came out of this, called the Mediated Settlement Agreement (MSA), was equally a show of good faith as it was a legal document.

During the mediation process, local environmentalists realized that the agreement offered only short term protection, because forest plans are only active for 10 to 15 years. They also realized that good faith alone cannot protect trees. As John Rasmussen, a sequoia local and Sierra Club volunteer said, "10 to 15 years doesn't protect trees that live to 4,000."

Since the time the MSA was signed, activists have grown increasingly frustrated with the Forest Service.

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...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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Monthly Report

Like harvesting mussels, I normally restrict my desert visits to the months that contain the letter "r". Despite my predilection, I ended up spending most of May in the hot, arid lands.

First off was a board meeting of The Wildlands Project in Tucson. Although the meeting was productive, I especially enjoyed the flight down and back. From Emigrant to the Dead Mountains Wilderness, I identified 30 wilderness areas and half that many unprotected roadless and wilderness study areas.

It wasn't all work and no play in Tucson. On a day hike in the Pusch Ridge Wilderness, I was engrossed in a discussion with *Wild Earth* editor John Davis as we stepped over what we took for a large rock. Trailing us, Mitch Friedman yelled out, "hey guys, that's a desert tortoise!"

A few minutes later, John excitedly pointed out a chuckwalla. I was trying to explain that chuckwallas aren't pink and black, but having nearly stepped on one threatened species, I figured my credentials as a naturalist were no longer held in high esteem by my colleagues. Others confirmed that we were looking at a gila monster, my first sighting in the wild.

The second leg of my desert sojourn was the string attached to the grant of our new Macintosh. It was intended that I become a GIS (geographic information system) expert by attending a training and conference in Palm Springs.

The training was a blast. We were in the cool pines of the James Reserve, a research station in the University of California system in the San Jacinto Mountains. Several of the trainers were from the wilderness movement, so our workbook exercises included wildlife management, effects of roads on watersheds, and timber sale analysis.

I even got a day off to explore part of the Santa Rosa Mountain Wilderness. Despite hiking the only trail in the wilderness on a Sunday, I didn't see another soul. I guess others generally don't do the desert in May, either.

Then it was time to join 7,000 others at the ESRI

(Environmental Systems Research Institute) GIS conference in the Palms Springs convention center. This was more interesting that I had feared—Bruce Babbitt gave a keynote speech, several of us crashed the Forest Service users group meeting, and there were practical seminars by scientists, government employees, and activists working to protect land and save species. I came home with four mouse pads and a head full of information.

With the conference done, Wendy flew down and we headed off to the Dome Land Wilderness. Our weather karma held—on the drive through the desert it rained and snow was falling lightly on the Kern Plateau. After debating the folly of backpacking in such inclement weather, we headed down the South Fork of the Kern River into Rockhouse Basin.

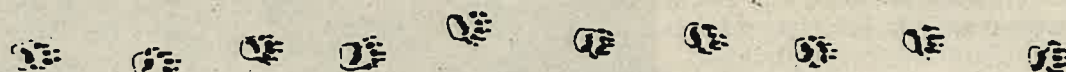
It turned out to be a great decision. Having eschewed the east side of the river and the Pacific Crest Trail, we wound our way over the rocks and through the rose bushes down to Fish Creek. All the practically-minded people were thus across the river, leaving much of the wilderness to ourselves alone.

A week after this portion of the Dome Lands was added to the wilderness system in 1984, I joined Bob Barnes and Tim Palmer on a Martin Litton flight over the area. I was appalled at the maze of four-wheel drive roads scarring Rockhouse Basin.

A dozen years later, Mother Nature has done a remarkable job of reclaiming the roads. A few still used as trails remain wide and sandy, but most have a healthy plant population covering the roads and slowing erosion. The main testaments to the ORV era are the rusting cans and old beer bottles still littering portions of the wilderness.

Thanks to Bob, Martin, Joe Fontaine, and the others who obtained the protection this area deserved despite the fierce opposition of the abusers.

By Jim Eaton



Staff Profile:

Paul Spitler

Paul Spitler has held one of the CWC's coveted unpaid internships for nearly a year now. His outstanding work has helped us to influence several important grazing and logging projects in the Sequoia, Sierra, Klamath, and Lassen national forests. He has also written a number of *Wilderness Record* articles and a wilderness alert. In addition, Paul works part-time with the CWC member group Citizens for Better Forestry monitoring logging projects in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest.

Ryan Henson, the CWC's conservation associate, especially appreciates Paul's selfless labor since "Paul's work has allowed us to fight for wilderness like never before."

One of our long-term organizational goals is to add folks like Paul to the staff so that we can lighten the load on our existing beleaguered employees and use his talents full time saving California's wild lands.

In the meantime, Paul is studying geology at the University of California at Davis and will graduate in June. What will he do for fun this summer? Work here at the CWC, of course.

Wilderness Trivia Question

How long can a giant sequoia live?

Answer on page 7

Please send a complimentary copy of the *Wilderness Record* to:

Name _____

Address _____

Area of interest (if known) _____

May we use your name? _____

California Wilderness Coalition,
2655 Portage Bay East, Suite 5, Davis, CA 95616

Wild Rivers

North Fork Mokelumne River spared from dam: Still denied Wild & Scenic protection

By Katherine Evatt

One of the best-kept river secrets in Northern California is the wild North Fork of the Mokelumne River, especially the section below Salt Springs Reservoir and outside the nearby Mokelumne Wilderness Area. Although the North Fork Mokelumne is relatively close to Central Valley population centers, few venture into its wild, steep canyons or down its Class III-V white water. While much of the upper canyon has been logged, the inner canyon's rugged terrain has protected it well over time and in the past kept it relatively free from pioneer settlement, mining, and resource destruction.

Although a dam project that would have destroyed nearly 10 miles of the river was defeated in late 1995, the North Fork remains largely unprotected, despite its clear suitability for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

The Mokelumne is a hard-working river with dams and diversions supplying water to the East Bay and power for millions. Yet the free-flowing stretches of the North Fork contain some of the most valuable intact natural and cultural resources in the Sierra. The North Fork canyon's most unique feature, the "outstandingly remarkable value" qualifying it for National Wild and Scenic River status, is a network of Native American archaeological sites occupied continuously for more than 2,500 years. Its old-growth forests, among some of the last in the Sierra, are home to Pacific fishers, California spotted owls, and goshawks. In addition, the canyon's residents include native rainbow trout, three herds of mule deer, nine species eligible for federal threatened or endangered status, and 15 species of special concern to the state. And it offers opportunities for solitude that may be unmatched for any area so close to metropolitan California.

Hydro project defeated

In 1984, Amador County proposed a hydroelectric and water project for the Devil's Nose reach of the North Fork. The Devil's Nose Project, named for a distinctive granitic feature along the river, included plans for a 470-foot dam with a reservoir flooding more than nine miles of pristine, rare, mid-elevation river canyon. In 1994, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) staff dismissed the county's hydroelectric license application, citing the project's economic infeasibility as well as the county's failure to provide requested environmental and water supply information. The county appealed the dismissal to the Commission itself, which, in September 1995, granted reconsideration of the application. After receiving a detailed letter from FERC requiring submission of the previously-delayed environmental information, Amador County offered the project to Central Valley and Bay Area water purveyors. Finding no takers, the Amador County Board of Supervisors voted in December of 1995 to withdraw the Devil's Nose application due to the project's financial infeasibility. Subsequently, the county also abandoned the accompanying water rights applications.

Community-based organization Foothill Conservancy led the local fight against the dam, with support from



North Fork of the Mokelumne River, at the Devil's Nose site.

Photo by Brian Fesseden

many local residents. Friends of the River, the Committee to Save the Mokelumne, and other regional groups played a key role in the dam project's defeat.

Wild and Scenic status sought

As the Devil's Nose Project applications were pending, the US Forest Service, which had previously found the 17-mile stretch of the North Fork Mokelumne between PG&E's Salt Springs and Tiger Creek reservoirs eligible for Wild and Scenic River status, conducted a Wild and Scenic suitability study for that section of the river. The study and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) completed in 1992, recommended "Recreational" classification for the upper 6.5 mile section of the reach, which contains three popular campgrounds. Unfortunately, the Forest Service refused to support designation of the lower 9.5 mile wild segment from the Bear River confluence to Tiger Creek reservoir.

All evidence in the DEIS pointed to a finding of "Wild" suitability for this reach of the river. The Forest Service, however, justified its decision by citing Amador County's expressed need to use the river for water supply, as evidenced by the pending FERC application.

Today, with the Devil's Nose Project completely out of the picture, the Forest Service's rationale for its 1992 finding no longer exists. Still, the agency has refused to reconsider its previous suitability findings. Since the 1994 initial dismissal of the Devil's Nose application, river advocates have been bounced from the local forest to the region to the Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Jim Lyons, and back again. In discussions this spring, Eldorado National Forest supervisor John Phipps indicated that the Forest Service has forwarded a recommendation based on the preferred alternative in the DEIS to Congress and claimed the matter is out of the agency's hands. (No Final EIS addressing the public comments critical of the draft has been issued.)

The current situation

River advocates are continuing to push for Wild and

Scenic river designation for all eligible portions of the North Fork Mokelumne. (A 26-mile stretch of the river, mostly within the Mokelumne Wilderness Area above Salt Springs Reservoir, was recommended for designation by the Stanislaus National Forest.) Conservation groups are seeking better protections for the river through the FERC relicensing of PG&E's Mokelumne River Project (located on the North Fork): improved recreation and fish flows, recreation facilities in the more developed areas, and watershed restoration and protection measures. Advocates for the Coast-to-Crest Trail, which would connect the Pacific Crest Trail to the East Bay trails system, are seeking a trail through much of the Mokelumne canyon. Commercial rafting permit applications for the North Fork have languished for more than three years while the Forest Service devotes its local staff and resources to timber sales.

Local support for the North Fork

Mokelumne continues to build, but without a favorable Forest Service recommendation, Wild and Scenic designation will be hard to get, even when the political climate in Washington changes.

What you can do

The North Fork Mokelumne needs your help. Please write to Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Jim Lyons (see address below), expressing your support for reconsidering the 17 miles of the North Fork Mokelumne below Salt Springs Reservoir for National Wild and Scenic River status. Alternative 4 of the DEIS, the "Wild" alternative, offers more than enough support for a suitability recommendation, and new information on the Sierra's forest, riparian habitat, and wildlife bolsters the case. Protection and recognition of the canyon's cultural resources should be a high priority for the Forest Service. And as part of its ecosystem management policies, the agency should protect the canyon's forests, wildlife, and oak riparian woodland, as well as the river itself. Furthermore, with Amador County's abandonment of the Devil's Nose Project, there is no longer any evidence or rationale supporting the Forest Service's earlier political decision to defer protection of the river for local water supply.

The North Fork of the Mokelumne River, a precious remnant of our state's valuable cultural and natural heritage, should be protected for future generations.

Under Secretary Jim Lyons
U.S. Department of Agriculture
14th Street and Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Katherine Evatt is an activist with the Foothill Conservancy

Ancient forests

Sequoia Preservation bill to be introduced

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Under the document, the agency is required to do studies and research a grove management plan. Also under the MSA the Moses Roadless Area (RA) was to be recommended to Congress for wilderness designation. Six years later, both have yet to be done. The Forest Service has done a good job of mapping all the groves, a difficult process that is part of the MSA. However, the MSA was to result in a new document to modify the forest plan. Although the Forest Service claims to be working on it, it should have been completed long ago. The agency claims to have had funding problems, but they have had the money to continue logging operations in the meantime. The MSA gives temporary protection to six of the roadless areas in the forest, but Lyon Ridge RA, which is slated to be logged, is an example of why this bill is important. Under the bill it would be a sequoia preserve.

Rasmussen, who has seen the mediation process all the way through and is involved in the creation of the sequoia bill, feels that ultimately the forest needs this legislation, because the Sequoia National Forest's management history does not inspire confidence. He is concerned about the long term survival of these majestic groves: "In the long run the only way to fully protect the groves is to legislate additional protection. You can't protect giant sequoia groves by drawing circles and not protecting the ecosystem around the groves."

As he pointed out, currently the groves themselves are not really protected, even if the sequoias cannot be logged, because the trees need a full ecosystem—they are interdependent and associated with trees and other organisms that also need protection. In addition, past management has not provided for recreation and solitude because of diminished scenic quality of the groves as well as lessened ecological viability. Thus the guided management called for in the bill is necessary.

The primary purpose of the bill is to "protect and maintain the groves of giant sequoia...their supporting ecosystems, and associated forests...[and] to preserve the natural state and processes that have created and maintained these forests for millennia."

This bill is different from other kinds of protective legislation, because it seeks to strike a balance to protect a range of human interests while ensuring the long term survival of the groves.

In the areas set aside for preserves, recreational opportunities would be provided for hikers, equestrians, and campers. Hunting and fishing within sound ecological parameters would be allowed, as would ORV use on existing roads.

Aside from the preserve, some new wilderness would be added. The Golden Trout and Domeland wilderness areas would be enlarged. The Staff Roadless Area would be added to the Bright Star Wilderness. Right now the Sequoia National Forest has proposed to build ORV trails in all of these proposed wilderness areas.

Other roadless areas would become Ancient Forest Reserves to protect the old-growth. These would include the Freeman Creek watershed, McIntyre Complex Groves, the Moses, Slate Mountain, and Rincon roadless areas, and the Deer Meadow, Agnew, and Kennedy sequoia groves. These could be crucial protective designations, because part of Slate Mountain is proposed for salvage logging. The rest of these old-growth areas are currently unprotected from the same threat.

There is a provision in the bill to establish a Scientific Advisory Team which would be a panel of nine scientists conducting a thorough ecosystem review. This could be an essential part of the survival of these trees. One reason for this need is the lack of a sound scientific basis for past management decisions. An example is the historic and critical role of fire in sequoia communities. Years of fire suppression may have detrimentally impacted sequoia seedling regeneration. Studies show that sequoias germinate in large numbers following fire because they need bare mineral soil to establish themselves. An active management plan based on sound ecology may be necessary to reinstate processes, such as periodic fire, that were poorly understood in the past but vital to sequoia survival.

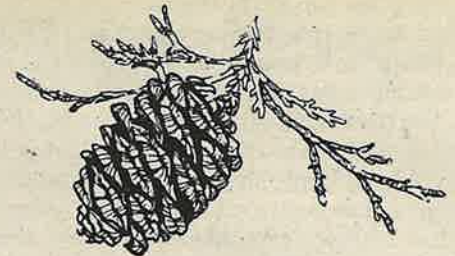
A final provision of this bill creates a Community Assistance task force to assist communities that may lose

revenue as a result of lost timber sales. The assistance would be in the form of job placement and other similar support.

On a tour of the Sequoia National Forest, our guides, Rasmussen and Joe Fontaine, another sequoia local and Sierra Club activist, showed us an area above the popular Trail of 100 Giants. It had been clearcut about eight years prior. The conifers that had not been logged were up against some giant sequoias, creating a perfect ladder for fire to climb up the sequoia and create a crown fire. Since sequoia do not stump sprout, unlike their coastal redwood relatives, such a fire could be devastating to these trees that have stood for centuries. In a healthy grove, this would not be a threat. While the Forest Service claims that logging in and around the groves keeps them healthy and encourages regeneration, it seems that trees that survived for thousands of years without our help probably do not need logging. And if cuts are supposed to help establish seedlings, why was sugar pine planted in the cleared area?

As Fontaine pointed out to me as we stood looking up at the Sherman Tree, we really know very little about how these sequoias grow and live. Our lifetimes are short and these trees have stood for eons. This makes it difficult to have an idea of how sensitive they are to impacts caused by road building, logging, and other relatively recent disturbances and human activity. If the sequoias are to survive, we have to be more sensitive now.

Rasmussen emphasized the necessity of thinking in centuries, in terms of the life span of a sequoia—"long term protection is needed for a tree that lives for 3,000 or 4,000 years." This bill, if passed, would be a step in that direction.



Salvage logging in the Pilot Creek Roadless Area

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Unfortunately, a loophole in Option 9 allows these areas to be logged if the supposed benefits of logging outweigh the ecological harm of cutting the trees. Since the Forest Service often views logging as a solution to nearly every ecological concern, this loophole frequently is exploited.

Offering no compelling ecological justification for logging in Pilot Creek's riparian reserves, the only argument the Forest Service could make is that the thinning of young trees in the reserves will accelerate the development of old-growth forests. While there is some truth to the theory that selectively removing trees from young forests allows the remaining ones to grow faster, conservationists contend that such risky experiments should not be conducted in a key watershed when erosion, water quality degradation, habitat disruption, and other impacts will result.

The agency's plans to log the Pilot Creek Roadless Area have also angered conservationists. Once a 10,000-acre wildland, salvage logging in the late 1980s has reduced the Pilot Creek Roadless Area to only 4,600 acres. Despite its small size, the roadless area is critical to maintaining the health of the Pilot Creek watershed as well as serving as a refuge for species sensitive to human disturbance. Under the Forest Service's plans for the region, over 900 acres of the roadless area will be logged and otherwise disturbed.

The Forest Service also proposes to construct over seven miles of roads in the watershed. While Option 9 allows roadbuilding in key watersheds as part of a controversial political compromise, many biologists argue that no new roads should be constructed in these watersheds. On the other hand, Option 9 strictly forbids the construction of new roads in roadless areas within key watersheds. Despite this, the Forest Service proposes to construct a new road in the Pilot Creek Roadless Area, following the Six Rivers Land and Resource Management Plan (the Forest Service's principal planning document for the region over the next decade), which claims that the Pilot Creek RA is no longer roadless. The lack of roads in over 4,600 acres of the area did not sway the agency.

While the Pilot Creek Timber Sale clearly is a vast improvement over the old-fashioned timber sales that have destroyed large areas of old-growth forest in the Six Rivers National Forest and other public lands, conservationists maintain that roadless areas—especially in sensitive watersheds—are no place for forestry experiments. Since roadless areas constitute no more than 15 percent of the Six Rivers National Forest's landbase, it is ridiculous to argue that the agency cannot find any less sensitive and controversial areas to log. The failure of the Forest Service to protect this important area in its Land and Resource

Management Plan is one of the major reasons the CWC and other conservation groups appealed the document.

Since the Forest Service has made its decision, the fate of the Pilot Creek Roadless Area is in President Clinton's hands. If the President chose, he could cancel or modify timber sales like Pilot Creek. While the salvage rider orders his administration to log public lands, it does not preclude him from protecting roadless, riparian, and other sensitive areas. Unfortunately, the President has been slow to protect these areas and has largely allowed the Forest Service to run amok.

What you can do

Write or fax Kathleen McGinty, Director, The White House Council on Environmental Quality, Old Executive Office Building, Room 360, Washington, DC 20501, Fax (202) 456-2710. Request that the Pilot Creek Roadless Area and riparian reserves be removed from the Pilot Creek Timber Sale in the Six Rivers National Forest. Remind her that the Clinton administration has promised to protect our environment and implement the salvage rider without allowing undue ecological harm. Demand that the administration cancel all planned salvage rider timber sales in roadless areas, old-growth forests, and other critical areas. It is always helpful to send copies of such letters to your congressional representatives.

Wilderness management

Inyo Permit Controversy Revisited: Agency poised to listen on compromise solution

by Gary Guenther

In April, Inyo National Forest inflicted a new wilderness reservation system without environmental analysis or any solicitation of public comment. Some major changes from the previous system were made at this time, the most notable being that permits for all trailheads requiring quotas would be reservable, where in the past half were available on the day of the trip. Another significant change is that permits would be mailed directly to the visitor, where in the past only a confirmation was mailed and the visitor picked up the actual permit from a Forest Service ranger station the day of the trip.

These changes aroused controversy among many wilderness advocates and users. Some of the controversy focused on the loss of personal contact (wilderness care and safety related education) in the issuance of permits, potential loss of spontaneity in obtaining permits, possible change in patterns of use, inequities in the allocation of wilderness use, and more users not obtaining permits at all.

Concerns also were expressed about the new system's inability to track "no-shows," historically 30 to 40 percent

of reserved permits, resulting in the loss of ability to track the actual amount of wilderness use. While this potential reduction in wilderness use on quota trails could be viewed as positive, there are concerns that this use would be transferred to areas with lighter use and no quotas. In response to this issue, the Inyo National Forest is seeking comments on a no show wilderness permit proposal. The proposal calls for establishment of an estimated no show rate, based on historic data, specific to each trailhead. These historic no show rates then would be applied as a percent of the actual reserved quota and re-issued to the public on a first come basis the day of the hike. The inability to track actual use would remain.

Since the advent of trailhead quotas in the 1970s, commercial pack stations are allowed to issue wilderness permits for their clients separately from the trailhead quotas that applied to all other users. Other wilderness commercial outfitter/guide service providers operating under special use permit, such as mountaineering guides, are required to obtain wilderness permits through the same quota system as the non-outfitted public. Inyo

National Forest proposes to address this inequity by allowing the guides to write their own permits based on their past use. This level of use, estimated to be between 1,300 and 2,500 days, is less than one half of one percent of total wilderness use. Comments also are sought on this proposal.

While local citizens appreciate the efforts of the Inyo National Forest has made to address concerns related to the new system, at recent meeting all made clear to the Forest Service that the agency's proposals are seen as only temporary "bandaid" solutions to a poorly planned system. These and other issues related to wilderness protection, access, and management need to be addressed in the upcoming wilderness plan for the John Muir and Ansel Adams wilderness areas.

If you would like to comment on the agency's no show or outfitter/guide proposals, write Forest Supervisor Dennis Martin, Inyo National Forest, 873 North Main Street, Bishop, CA 93514.

To get on the mailing list to receive the draft John Muir/Ansel Adams wilderness plan, contact Becky Bittner at the above address.

Agencies plan for newly protected wild areas

by Ryan Henson

The Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are seeking public input on how to manage the Chimney Peak, Sacatar Trail, Owens Peak, Kiavah, and Bright Star wilderness areas, as well as recent additions to the Dome Land Wilderness. The agencies will use this information to craft a wilderness management plan addressing fire, grazing, recreational development, and other important issues.

These wildlands were protected by the California Desert Protection Act of 1994 along with millions of acres of additional wilderness scattered across southeastern California.

These wild areas are all northwest of Ridgecrest, California, but what they also have in common is that they are in the ecological transition zone (called an "ecotone" by ecologists) between the southern Sierra Nevada, the Mojave Desert, and the Great Basin. This diversity of habitats enables these areas to host a stunning array of plant and animal life.

These areas also are fairly unique in that two of them are managed jointly by the Forest Service and BLM. For example, the 88,290 Kiavah Wilderness is mostly in the Sequoia National Forest, but contains large expanses of BLM holdings as well. The wilderness protects much of the Scodie Mountains, a region noted for its plant and wildlife diversity. Of particular interest is the great variety of migratory birds who use the area. The Dome Land Wilderness is also mostly within the Sequoia National Forest, but the Desert Protection Act added adjacent BLM wild areas to it. These BLM additions provide additional protection for the ecologically-critical South Fork Kern River watershed.

Like most of the new wilderness areas designated by the California Desert Protection Act, Chimney Peak, Owens

Peak, Sacatar Trail, and Bright Star are all managed exclusively by the BLM. The 13,700-acre Chimney Peak Wilderness is a rugged land composed of steep canyons and granite mountains. Joshua trees, pinyon pine, and numerous species of cacti call the area home. The 51,900-acre Sacatar Trail Wilderness shelters rare desert riparian forest

and native grasslands. The area also hosts golden eagles and the rare prairie falcon. The 74,640-acre Owens Peak Wilderness is a striking ecotone where alert explorers can find live oak, Jeffrey pine, Joshua trees, sagebrush, and cactus growing beside one another. The Pacific Crest trail

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Kiavah Wilderness

Photo by Jim Eaton

Wilderness news

Controversial logging plan for the Sierra Nevada delayed

By Ryan Henson

On a recent visit to California, Kathleen McGinty, the director of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, announced that the release of the California Spotted Owl Environmental Impact Statement (CalOwl EIS), which is under preparation by the Forest Service, will be delayed until a major ongoing scientific study of the Sierra Nevada is completed. This study is the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project (SNEP), a comprehensive assessment of the ecological health of the Sierra Nevada. Activists urged the Clinton administration to delay the release of the CalOwl plan, which will guide forest management throughout the Sierra for years to come, until the Forest Service has time to review the SNEP report (to be released in late June) and incorporate its conclusions into the CalOwl strategy.

The California spotted owl, a relative of the Pacific Northwest's northern spotted owl, depends on ancient forest habitat since it nests in very large, old trees. With over 90 percent of the old-growth forest in the Sierra Nevada already destroyed, the California spotted owl and other animals and plants dependent on this ecosystem are in serious jeopardy. In 1993, the Forest Service adopted a short-term plan to protect the owl. The plan, called the California Spotted Owl (CASPO) report, has many flaws, but it has protected most remaining old-growth groves in the Sierra Nevada for the last two years.

The CalOwl EIS will replace the CASPO report and worsen logging practices in every national forest in the Sierra. The new plan fails to protect the Sierra Nevada's vanishing old-growth forests and the species, including the spotted owl, that depend on them. Though much of this old-growth habitat is found in unprotected, pristine roadless areas, the plan does nothing to protect these rare wildlands. Predicated on the theory that only logging can prevent forest fires, the new CalOwl plan will allow such heavy logging in the middle and upper slopes of the Sierra

that there will not be many trees left to burn.

According to Forest Service data, the CalOwl EIS will allow over 19,700 acres (29 square miles) of clearcutting, and over 43,000 acres (67 square miles) of selective logging during the first decade of the plan. These figures do not include salvage logging, which last year accounted for half of all logging conducted on the Sierran national forests covered by the EIS. If salvage logging is included, almost 100 additional square miles of Sierran national forest land will be logged in the first 10 years following the plan's approval.

Though these numbers are staggering, the Forest Service projects a decrease in logging under the plan, as much as 60 to 64 percent below pre-CASPO levels. The Forest Service also predicts that under the plan, in 50 years there will be 56 percent more Sierran old-growth forest habitat than there is today.

Though a reduction in logging is welcome news, activists object to several potentially fatal flaws in the plan. For example, as Sami Yassa of the Natural Resources Defense Council notes, 10 out of 11 scientists convened by the Forest Service to review the CalOwl plan concluded delay the release of the CalOwl EIS signals a willingness on the part of the Clinton administration to improve the plan by incorporating the SNEP report's recommendations. However, these hopes may be misplaced: many of the same Forest Service researchers who helped develop the CalOwl EIS also worked on the SNEP report. Conservationists believe that these researchers have a pro-logging bias and will attempt to justify more cutting through the SNEP report.

The SNEP report is scheduled to be released in late June. Stay tuned to the *Wilderness Record* in the coming months for detailed reviews of the report and its conclusions.



Forest Service goes online with new Pacific Southwest Web site

The Forest Service's Pacific Southwest region announced the debut of its World Wide Web site, located at <http://www.r5.pswfs.gov>. Their press release says its new site on the Internet should offer people better access to Forest Service news and information, and should reduce the costs and waiting time associated with the mailing of hard-copy information.

The web site is divided into two major categories: the first is National Forest Virtual Visitor Center, which features general information about recreation activities in the 18 national forests in California. This section also features tours, map ordering information and travel links.

The second category, the national Forest Management information Center, could be of interest to activists. This section contains strategic management information, current press releases, contact information, and the Region's strategic plan. Both sections of the web site will be updated regularly, and more information added as it is developed. Links to National Forest home pages will also be added as sites come online. As of press time, we haven't had a chance to look over this site, so we don't know what to expect.

Agencies plan new wilderness areas

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bisects the area from north to south and skirts 8,400-foot Owens Peak, the major peak in the southern Sierra. The 9,250-acre Bright Star Wilderness is known for its dense stands of Joshua trees and, like the nearby Kiavah Wilderness, for its migratory songbird populations. Activists hope to increase the size of this BLM wilderness area someday by adding the adjacent Staff Roadless Area in the Sequoia National Forest. This would create a larger, more ecologically viable wilderness protecting many irreplaceable areas.

Activists note that the BLM is doing a very good job of implementing the California Desert Protection Act despite insufficient funds and an anti-conservation climate in Congress. This is especially surprising given that the BLM originally felt that the CDPA went too far. Rather than hold a grudge, the BLM moved quickly to protect its new desert wild areas. Indeed, the new letterhead for the BLM's Ridgecrest Resource Area says that the agency is now "Protecting the last vestige of wild California." By contrast, the Forest Service still has not prepared management plans for all of its wilderness areas designated by the California Wilderness Act of 1984.

A good wilderness management plan will ensure that grazing, recreation, fire management, and other potentially destructive activities are conducted in such a way as to preserve and, if necessary, restore the wild character of these areas. The wilderness management plan should also address off-road vehicle trespass problems (with rare exceptions, motorized vehicles are not allowed in designated

wilderness areas) and develop a strategy to restore areas within wilderness previously damaged by mines, roads, and other developments.

Enlightened fire management policies allowing lightning-caused fires to burn naturally within the wilderness areas while also proposing to use "prescribed fire" where necessary (fires intentionally set by management agencies to reduce overall fire danger and restore fire-dependant ecosystems) are particularly important. In addition, sound grazing policies are especially critical in fragile desert ecosystems where damaged plant communities take decades, or even centuries, to recover.

What you can do

Write to Michael Ayers, BLM Ridgecrest Resource Area, 300 South Richmond Road, Ridgecrest, CA 93555 by June 18, 1996. Request that the Southern Sierra Wilderness Management Plan:

- Minimize the impact of commercial livestock grazing in the wilderness areas until grazing can be phased-out over time;
- Allow lightning-caused fires to burn naturally where appropriate;
- Provide for an active prescribed fire program;
- Severely limit the use of motorized equipment for fire suppression;
- Develop a schedule for the restoration of old mines, roads, and other heavily disturbed areas, and;
- Identify known or potential off-road vehicle trespass areas and develop ways to prevent motorized entry.

Wilderness forum

Book Reviews

A Rage for Justice: The Passion and Politics of Phillip Burton

By John Jacobs, University of California Press, 1995, 578 pp.

The first question that may occur to some readers of this review is why the *Wilderness Record* is reviewing the biography of a Machiavellian congressman from San Francisco, one of our nation's most densely populated cities. But to those who followed wilderness and park politics on the national level during the years before Phil Burton's death in April 1983, this question is hardly an item for "Uncle Jim's Wilderness Trivia." Simply stated, from the late sixties until his early demise, Representative Burton was the single most effective advocate for the protection of wild lands — and any other issue that engaged his passion for justice — in the entire Congress.

A Rage for Justice is a lively and novelistic account of Burton's life and accomplishments. Though loaded with detail, it is not a dense, scholarly history but rather a brisk

for the natural environment, which, in his analysis, was in similar peril from the greed and power of those he called "the exploiters." But he was no starry-eyed idealist; he was a shrewd horse trader who knew when to compromise and how to pile up political debts that he would later cash in at a bonus to advance his own causes. In Jacob's book, we follow Burton's political evolution as he goes from cleverly courting southern "cotton king" congressmen, trading votes on their cherished agricultural subsidies for their surprising support for sweeping and costly relief for thousands of coal miners suffering from black lung disease, to his later masterful assembly and passage of "park barrel" bills that protected vast acreages of imperiled wild lands and open space nationwide by including choice plums in each and every congressional district necessary to ensure passage.

The list of Phil Burton's legislative accomplishments in the environmental arena alone is extraordinary: the establishment of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area; the expansion of Redwood National Park to provide proper protection to its ancient groves; the passage of the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978, the largest parks bill in American history, and its follow-up in 1980, which began as a purported correction of "technical errors" in the previous legislation, but ended up as a \$70 million act that created the Channel Islands National Park and significantly expanded several existing parks; and the enactment, after Burton's death, of the California Wilderness Act, which significantly increased the acreage of national forest wilderness in California. As impressive as this list is, the real fascination of the book lies in its vivid descriptions of the intricate machinations Burton employed to achieve his ends: bills passed out of committee with gaping holes to be filled in later at his discretion, flurries of successive drafts of bills that none but Burton and his closest allies could keep track of, and bewildering parliamentary maneuvers that left would-be opponents uncertain what they were voting for. During Burton's tenure, the environmental movement had a champion in Congress who could play all of the games of the slickest, most generously funded politicians, and win. Jacob's gives us an inside view of how he operated and makes us long for half so skilled an advocate in Washington today.

In all, this is a fine and compelling book about one of the true heroes of the environmental movement; presented warts and all, and with a good measure of compassion and humor. It is a fitting monument to the troubled,

It is a fitting monument to the man who, it has been said, would use every trick in the book to secure the preservation of wilderness, but wouldn't dream of setting foot in one unless you promised him a pack of Chesterfields and a bar behind every tree.

journalistic look at the career of a complex, driven, and not altogether likable man. This approach comes as no surprise, given author Jacobs' career as a northern California journalist, currently political editor of the McClatchy newspapers. Burton had a prodigious memory for details and a demonic gift for putting together unlikely coalitions to advance his agenda of social justice and environmental protection — and for rolling over those who opposed him. The book, true to its subject, is loaded with Burton's crude threats and drunken, expletive-laced tirades. This was a man so arrogant about the enormous power he could wield in Congress that he bragged that he could round up 110 votes "to have dog shit declared the national food."

But beyond the arrogance, the abrasive manner, and the incivility to his foes was a remarkable man who cared obsessively about the underrepresented elements of society. Initially this meant to Burton oppressed minorities and the poor, but in time he came to have the same feeling

Letters to the Editor

Vividly I recall my first pre-World War II ascent of Mt. Whitney! No parking problem, isolated and quiet, occasionally responding to the question "whereya heading?" to an infrequent passerby, pre-giardia awareness and freedom of travel without permit! Recently, after fifty years, to commemorate that once uncommon event, my daughter (an ICU nurse) begged me for this modern day climb. Luckily, paying a few bucks we got our Wilderness Permit admission ticket at bargain prices compared to Disneyland (\$33 plus \$6 parking) and Magic Mountain (\$31 and \$6) parking.

We shared the feeling that Inyo National Forest management of this popular cherished area, plus the fact that we paid the fee would insure a quality wilderness experience. The roadhead was a car jam as if a casino could be on top. Or was it a fact, that this Eastern Sierra mecca had become a modern day Magic Mountain in spite of quotas and regulations. Outhouses overload and irresponsible outdoor enthusiasts left their buried treasures and litter ever too close to Trail Camp. It was obvious that this area was loved to death, as non-permit day hikers zoomed up and down the Whitney Freeway. A more substantial user fee could perhaps guarantee a safer high quality wilderness experience we had hoped for.

During the 1970s the restricting wilderness permit system rubbed the heels of many hikers. Overused trails required quotas for man and beast alike. Increased stock use chewed up the trails and essence of manure and urine often angered those preferring to tread lightly wishing for more hiker only trails on federal lands seemingly managed for multiple abuse. As backpackers, should the USFS continue to subsidize our pleasure as it frequently does for grazing, mining and timber sales? Why couldn't wilderness permits entrance fees be jacked up for our benefit and improvement of the facilities? And when will the pack and grazing animals be charged fairly for their privileged wildland experience which so frequently results in the contamination and abuse of riparian areas? Wilderness cattle grandfathered in by the Wilderness Act pay a bargain price of only \$2 to \$8 per month for their "inappropriate" and unsightly contributions to wilderness. If recreational fees could be used solely for national parks and lands would you agree? Remember the public land agencies budget cuts caused this permit calamity. The Inyo National Forest lost about \$2 million over the past 10 years. Budget cuts and downsizing have only resulted in heavier work loads in a time of bigger and ever escalating salaries for congressmen and CEOs. While the current

Calendar

June 25 WORKSHOP & SCOPING meetings on the Sequoia-Kings Canyon Wilderness Management Plan will be held to hear how the public would like to see this wilderness area managed. The workshops are in San Francisco 7/9, Los Angeles 7/16, Three Rivers 7/18, and Bishop 7/25. Call Malinee Crapsey at the National Park Service for more information (209) 565-3131.

June 27-28 WORKSHOP ON water resources and grazing. The Tule River Conservancy is continuing its Public Partnership Volunteer Monitoring Program with a series of workshops in the Sequoia National Forest. Training provided on general stream ecology and monitoring, plus many other topics. Contact Dan Utt at (209) 542-2196 or lutt@ocsnet.net

June 28-29 PUBLIC WORKSHOP & CONFERENCE to present the findings of the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project (SNEP) at the El Dorado County Fairgrounds in Placerville. The SNEP report assesses the health of the Sierra Nevada. Look for upcoming articles discussing this important project. For information about the conference, contact Erin Fleming at (916) 752-8086 or epfleming@ucdavis.edu

Wilderness Trivia Answer

Who knows? No tree has been found that died of old age. They sometimes are killed by lightning, windthrow or logging.

troublesome, brilliant man who, it has been said, would use every trick in the book to secure the preservation of wilderness, but wouldn't dream of setting foot in one unless you promised him a pack of Chesterfields and a bar behind every tree.

-Trent Orr

environment bashing Congress will provide moneys to fight the Freeman, ever increasing militia movements, pay lawyers to hedge the "Wise Use" philosophy and protect federal lands (belonging to all Americans) from state's rights attacks, and accommodate some foreign mining corporations with 1872 laws, our natural heritage will continue to suffer.

Fortunately, I live less than five miles from wilderness. Previously, 50 percent of the Wilderness Permits were issued near entry stations. Under the new plan, only unreserved permits will be available. Could it be that opportunists will overbook many dates for the \$3 fee with little intent to use all the requested bookings? At the age of 72 and spending so many days of my life preserving and protecting wilderness values, I must trust my luck to hit the trails so dear to me. More so, I am willing to pay for the value received for the non-Disney/Magic Mountain experience. Today, public lands need public support, just like public radio and television. Clean air and water come with a price tag, too. We no longer live in the era of John Muir and Norman Clyde. I hope that I have made a somewhat convincing argument. Do I hear \$15, \$20, or maybe \$25...what is it worth to you?

Paul Kluth, Mammoth Lakes

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"Wilderness itself does not grow, of course, but our evaluation of it and our attitudes do."

— Peggy Wayburn

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