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WILDERNESS RECORD

Proceedings of the California Wilderness Coalition

September 1996

Sierra Nevada logging plan scrapped by President Clinton—hailed as a major victory for California conservation

By Ryan Henson

The ancient forests of the Sierra Nevada and the plants and animals who depend on them are threatened by everything from smog to urban development. What threatens them most, of course, are chainsaws.

The roar of those chainsaws has been dulled significantly, however, by the Clinton administration's decision in late August to scrap the Forest Service's *Environmental Impact Statement, Managing California Spotted Owl Habitat in the Sierra Nevada Forests of California: An Ecosystem Approach* (known as the CalOwl EIS). The EIS would have governed forest management in the Sierra Nevada for years to come, and its implications for everything from water quality to road construction would have been tremendous. Concern over the plan's proposal to increase logging significantly in the Sierra Nevada had delayed its release until August, and finally lead to its cancellation a few days later.

As the name implies, the CalOwl EIS was meant to guarantee that the California spotted owl (a close relative of the well-known northern spotted owl of the Pacific Northwest) and other old-growth species do not disappear from the Sierra. In 1993, a team of scientists convened to study the owl's decline released a study commonly known as the CASPO report, a plan which recommended among other things that all trees greater than 30 inches in diameter within the range of the California spotted owl be protected. These guidelines were adopted by the Forest Service and currently are

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The California spotted owl, as well as the entire Sierra Nevada has been given a reprieve with the cancellation of the CalOwl EIS.

Grazing bill to offer ranching interests public lands give-away

With the goading of House Speaker Newt Gingrich, western Republicans and the livestock industry have negotiated a "compromise" grazing bill. The bill simply ameliorates a few of the worst aspects of the prior version, sponsored by Senator Domenici, but still remains a major threat to the health of our public lands and citizen's rights to participate in decisions that affect those lands.

The current version of the bill, "The Public Rangelands Management Act" (H.R. 1459), sponsored by Representative Sherry Boehlert (R-NY), still represents a giant step back in grazing management. This proposed legislation exempts grazing decisions from many existing environmental laws, keeps taxpayer-subsidized grazing fees at below market values, discourages—and in many cases prevents—users from holding permits for conservation use (even those who voluntarily seek such a permit), and severely limits the public's right to participate in grazing management decisions.

Management decisions affecting grazing, such as seasonal adjustments in livestock numbers and pesticide use for vegetation not favored by cattle, are exempted from the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This immunity from our basic environmental laws frees land managers from preparing any environmental analysis,

allowing livestock to cause more damage to fish and wildlife habitat, riparian areas, and other values on public lands.

In an attack on the rights of the public to involvement in grazing decisions on national forests and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands, the Boehlert bill restricts

This proposed legislation exempts grazing decisions from many existing environmental laws, keeps taxpayer-subsidized grazing fees at below market values ...and severely limits the public's right to participate in grazing management decisions.

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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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Coalition news

Monthly Report

Wendy called me at the office last month and remarked "it's frightening when you don't recognize the voices answering the phone!"

Since she signs the paychecks, and because we've had few employees until recently, strange voices usually mean a new intern or volunteer. But we've added two new staff members last month, although they will only be working for three months on our campaign to stop the salvage "clearcut" rider.

Kate Cox is working in our Davis office to assist Ryan and Paul on the campaign, while Bill Corcoran is working in southern California. These two finally broke the U.C. Davis cabal here—the other five staffers all have the same alma mater.

Kate is taking time off from Western Washington University to help out. She had been volunteering in our office, but when the campaign began to devour the rest of the staff's time (especially when Ryan and Paul were on the road), we decided we needed more hours from her. We squeezed the grant from El Bosque Pumalin Foundation and found enough money to pay her part time.

Bill is a U.C.L.A. graduate who has worked as a freelance journalist and screenwriter. As a volunteer he worked on the California Desert bill and has helped the Endangered Species Coalition and the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance. He is the Southern California Organizer for the campaign.

This rapid expansion has strained the resources of the CWC. I spent the day rewiring our phone system to accommodate another incoming phone line, and I'm desperately searching for affordable voice mail. Our fax/modem seems to be in constant use, and there is great competition for any available computer.

My only escape from the office last month was an extended weekend trip to Mono Lake. I was joined by board member Mary Scoonover on a mercy mission to visit Sally Miller, another board member recuperating from appendicitis. The day before we arrived, Sally worked on her recovery by climbing 12,590-foot Mt. Connors.

Thus our plans of lying around Mono Lake in lawn chairs sipping wine were altered. Instead, Sally led us on hikes into the San Joaquin and Hall Natural Area roadless areas. My dog Inyo didn't complain about the exercise; he far preferred the mountains (even the rain) to our flatland Davis walks.

Our first day was spent climbing up to Yost Meadow, a beautiful wetland just east of the Ansel Adams Wilderness. This area would have been a downhill ski run had not Frank Stewart and Sally appealed a proposed expansion of the June Mountain Ski Area. The threat remains, and it will remain until permanent protection is granted to the San Joaquin Roadless Area.

The next day Roland Knapp (Sally's husband) joined us for a hike into the Harvey Monroe Hall Natural Area, a research area north of Tioga Pass. We hiked in to where Roland has been studying mountain yellow-legged frogs. Roland had reintroduced the rare species into a lake purged of fish, but the Department of Fish and Game complicated his research by dumping a load of brook trout into the lake. We didn't see any frogs, but we did get a glimpse of a Yosemite toad.

On the hike we explored the Bennettville mine, an abandoned adit in the mountainside. Inyo bravely joined Roland in the tunnel and seemed to enjoy his Gregorian chants emanating from the darkness. This 19th century mine was one reason given by the Forest Service for not proposing this area for wilderness since its designation would cause "a lost opportunity to interpret cultural values."

Despite the exercise, it was a relaxing visit. For an area with such a short growing season, Sally has a great garden. We had great meals and enlightening discussions.

On the drive back across the Sierra, Mary and I had one question we could not solve. Why do we and our respective spouses live in the petrochemical soup of the Central Valley rather than in the mountains?

I'm still searching for the answer.

By Jim Eaton

Sierra Nevada Alliance honors CWC staffer for work on stopping Barkley salvage sale

Ryan Hensen received his first award since high school this past summer at the annual Sierra Nevada Alliance conference. The Alliance's Last Best Place Award was given to those who worked to protect the watershed of Deer Creek from the ravages that would have occurred due to the proposed Barkley timber sale.

The award states "Each of us carries a last, best place in our hearts—that part of the landscape that forms a bond with nature, that nurtures our growth and restores our spirits. We know these places when our passions are

engaged to protect them and secure them for future generations."

The award to Ryan and the California Wilderness Coalition recognized his effectiveness in garnering political support for halting the sale, which resulted in White House intervention and rescission of the bid opening.

The Alliance award was given jointly to Ryan, the Quincy Library Group and Steve Evans of Friends of the River for their work to protect the area that includes a roadless area, is adjacent to the Ishi wilderness, and is one of the last remaining spawning grounds of the spring run chinook salmon.

The award states "Each of us carries a last, best place in our hearts—that part of the landscape that forms a bond with nature, that nurtures our growth and restores our spirits. We know these places when our passions are engaged to protect them and secure them for future generations."

Wilderness Trivia Question

How did Beegum Basin get its name?

Answer on page 7

Wilderness News

CalOwl EIS cancelled

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being implemented in most Sierran national forests. The CASPO guidelines will remain in effect until further studies of the owl's population trends and distribution are completed, and a long-term management plan for owl habitat is prepared.

The CalOwl EIS would have replaced the CASPO report's guidelines, and would have applied to every Sierran national forest with the exception of the Inyo, Toiyabe, and Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (the plan also covered the Modoc National Forest, though it is outside of the Sierra Nevada).

An earlier draft of the EIS proposed to protect all trees over 40 inches in diameter throughout the range of the owl (as compared to the 30 inches recommended by the CASPO report), and to protect known owl nesting areas until the year 2005, except during salvage logging operations. The plan also proposed to establish protective riparian management zones around streams, lakes, wetlands, rivers, and other water sources. However, the plan allowed road construction, salvage logging, and other development activities in these areas under many circumstances.

Most importantly, the draft EIS divided the eight Sierran national forests covered by the plan into three zones: a late-successional and riparian zone (occupying the lower third of all watersheds), where only salvage logging, fire break development, and "emergency" road construction would be allowed; a mid-slope zone where, in addition to the above, clearcuts less than two acres in size and heavy thinning would be allowed; and an upper-slope/ridge zone (occupying the upper-third of all watersheds) where slightly larger clearcuts, more intensive thinning, and the construction of 300-500 foot-wide fire breaks will be allowed to "compartmentalize" watersheds in case of fire.

This three-tiered approach to forest management was driven ostensibly by a fear of fire. For example, gambling that the spotted owl can find sufficient habitat in the late-successional and riparian zone and, to a lesser extent, in the mid-slope zone where a moderate number of snags and other old-growth habitat elements will be retained, the Forest Service proposed to heavily log and thin the upper-slope/ridge zone so that it will become, in effect, a large fire-break. This proposal would have led to the creation of fuelbreaks on almost every unprotected ridgetop in the eight national forests covered by the plan.

According to Forest Service data, the draft CalOwl EIS would have allowed over 19,700 acres (29 square miles) of clearcutting, and over 43,000 acres (67 square miles) of

selective logging under the first decade of the plan. This does not include salvage logging, which in 1994 accounted for half of all the logging conducted in the Sierran national forests covered by the draft EIS. If salvage logging is included, almost 100 additional square miles of Sierran national forest land would have been logged in the first ten years following the plan's approval. Though these numbers are staggering, the Forest Service projected a decrease in logging under the plan, as much as 60 to 64 percent below pre-CASPO levels. The Forest Service also predicted that there would be 56 percent more Sierran old-growth forest habitat in fifty years under the plan than there is today.

Though a reduction in logging, the protection of some of the Sierra's largest trees, and increased protection for riparian areas (and lower slopes generally) was welcome news to conservationists, environmental groups (including the California Wilderness Coalition) railed against the plan's three-tiered strategy which essentially would have forced old-growth dependent species off of ridgetops and down into lower slopes and canyons. Activists were also opposed to the draft EIS because it was to be released prior to the completion of the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project (SNEP) report, the largest independent scientific study of Sierran ecosystems ever conducted. It seemed ridiculous for the Forest Service to release the CalOwl plan without considering the implications of the SNEP report.

Sources inside the Forest Service revealed that, while in the final version of the EIS, the three-tiered approach had been abandoned, riparian area protections had been improved, and that many of the SNEP report's recommendations were adopted, these same sources confirm that logging in the Sierra Nevada would have increased dramatically over current levels under the plan, and that the SNEP report's most important old-growth recommendations were ignored. One anonymous Forest Service official recently told the CWC that "There are parts of the plan you're going to like, and parts you're really going to hate. I'm sure we'll all end up in court." Meanwhile, three recently completed (but still unpublished and confidential) studies of California spotted owl populations are rumored to show that the owl is in decline. This would have had enormous implications for the CalOwl EIS since it was predicated on the assumption that owl populations are stable or even increasing. In addition, a group of SNEP scientists recently wrote Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman complaining that the EIS was terribly flawed and should thus be abandoned.

These arguments convinced the Clinton administration to at first delay, and then abandon the plan. The plan's delay was roundly condemned by the timber industry, which feared that if the SNEP report's often grim conclusions concerning wildlife, water quality, ancient forests, and other issues were incorporated into the CalOwl plan, that the logging authorized by the EIS would be drastically reduced (the timber industry had previously sued to prevent the release of the SNEP report). With his usual eloquence, Rep. John Doolittle (R-Rocklin) blamed the delay on pressure from "Clinton's little eco-freak friends." For its part, the White House issued a statement saying that the EIS was "inconsistent" with Clinton administration environmental policies. They did not elaborate.

The Forest Service must now start from scratch with a new plan using new assumptions. Since a draft of the new plan will not be released until well after the November election, activists fear that President Clinton will delay the politically unpopular decision to increase logging in the Sierra until after the presidential race is decided. Despite Rep. Doolittle's assumption that a cozy relationship exists between the White House and conservationists, activists are very worried that the administration will release another flawed old-growth management plan in the future.

What you can do

Please write to The Honorable Dan Glickman, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 14th & Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250 and thank him for withdrawing the flawed and destructive CalOwl EIS. Request that a new plan be crafted that:

- protects all roadless areas as reserves;
- protects all species dependent on old-growth ecosystems;
- Retains CASPO guidelines;
- Uses the best available scientific data, especially the SNEP report, as its guide.

Also, please send a copy of your letter to your Congressional representatives at the addresses below:

The Honorable _____
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable _____
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

proposed welfare for the livestock industry

continued from page 1

citizen participation until after the agency has made a decision—in consultation with the affected permit holder. Even then, the public will only have the opportunity to protest the decision. The current right to appeal to an administrative judge or court is stripped.

In contrast, grazing permittees are allowed full participation in decision-making. Resource Advisory Councils (RACs), comprised of conservationists, ranchers, agency officials, and others currently advise the BLM on land management issues. These collaborative groups have for the past year made progress in developing a grazing management approach that addresses environmental concerns. The grazing bill would create new rancher-dominated Grazing Advisory Councils, which would be entrusted with making all the meaningful decisions on grazing policy. This would leave the RACs without any real input into grazing management decisions.

In giving ranchers a new, special interest right, another provision would require the Federal government to pay "adequate" compensation to permittees for providing access to the public to their own lands. Given the shrinking budget of land management agencies, this creates the very real possibility that the public could be excluded from recreational access to millions of acres of national forests and BLM lands that are surrounded by private lands.

Permittees also would enjoy title to so-called range "improvements," such as fences, water troughs and other projects on public lands that make them more productive for livestock. If an agency were to limit grazing in order to protect fish and wildlife habitat, for example, taxpayers would be at risk of a "takings" claim. This could amount to an expensive payment to the permittee to stop damaging public lands.

Water developments are included in the range "improvements" that ranchers would be given title to. Along with title, permittees can control access to this water, and thus demand tax-dollars when land managers limit livestock access to "their" water.

The Gingrich-backed bill would also make it much more difficult than it is now to reduce harmful grazing on public lands. It also re-writes the current national standards governing grazing decisions. The standards developed from Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt's new grazing regulations would be junked.

According to its supporters, the proposed legislation sets a new objective for grazing management that provides "stability to the [public land] livestock industry" and the "safeguard[ing]" of current grazing levels. However, opponents contend if this bill is passed streams,

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Wilderness management

Stanislaus vehicle plan under attack from ORV and snowmobile groups

By John Buckley

After years of delay, Stanislaus National Forest officials have finally released a "Motor Vehicle Travel Management Plan" to control the use of dirt bikes, snowmobiles, and four-wheel-drive vehicles (4WDs) in the forest. Special interest motorcycle and snowmobile groups are wasting no time rallying their members to greatly weaken the plan. Even worse, off road vehicle (ORV) groups are pressuring the Forest Service to throw open many of the last remaining protected wild places in the Stanislaus to off-road use.

For decades, ORV use in the Stanislaus has grown steadily, so that on busy summer or fall weekends, it is difficult to find a section of the Forest where dirt bikes, all terrain vehicles (ATV's) or 4WDs are not blaring along dirt roads or flying up skid trails in a cloud of dust. Snowmobile use in winter has also boomed in popularity, and illegal use occurs frequently with snowmobile tracks often visible miles inside protected wilderness boundaries.

For years, local and regional conservation groups have pressed Stanislaus officials to confront the situation with a clear, comprehensive management plan. This summer, the Forest Service has released a Motor Vehicle Travel Plan that would limit ORV use to designated roads and trails, and would limit snowmobile use. Their "preferred alternative" is Alternative 1, which would provide the greatest amount of restrictions and is the most environmentally-sound alternative of the four provided.

Local conservation groups strongly support Alternative 1 because it keeps dirt bikes and ATVs out of roadless areas; it restricts snowmobiles from entering roadless

"Near Natural" areas; it stops ORV use across some parts of the lower elevation forest where private property owners oppose such use; and it greatly improves the ability of the Forest Service to limit ORV use in areas important to wildlife.

Unfortunately, ORV groups immediately responded to the plan with outrage. ORV enthusiasts packed the first two public hearings and condemned the Forest Service for restricting their use. They ridiculed Forest employees who tried to defend the plan, and they mounted an aggressive lobbying campaign to get Alternative 4 chosen.

Alternative 4 would leave the Stanislaus Forest wide open to the broadest possible ORV use. Snowmobiles could speed across roadless areas—disturbing wildlife and cross-country skiers. ORV routes could be built right across critical wildlife habitat or along the very edge of wilderness areas. Alternative 4 has the strong support of State ORV officials who take "Greensticker" funds (a controversial state program, funded from various sources, that acquires and develops land for off-road use), and use the money to promote ORV use. With State officials and ORV activists combining their lobbying efforts, the Stanislaus National Forest is under great pressure to give up on Alternative 1 and give in to the ORV groups by choosing Alternative 4.

A few examples: Alternative 4 would allow ORV use along Kibbie Ridge east of Cherry Lake all along the Yosemite Park boundary. It would also allow ORV use in the Clark Fork Stanislaus River, along Kennedy Meadows, and all along the western edge of the Emigrant Wilderness.

It is critical that wilderness advocates take a brief moment to send in a short letter to the Forest Service supporting Alternative 1. Your letter can help the agency



This curious image is found on the front page of the Stanislaus National Forest's "Motor Vehicle Travel Management Plan".

to see that there are people out there who do care about peace and quiet, about soils, water, and wildlife, and about protecting wilderness and roadless area values.

What you can do

Please write a letter, by September 31, to:

Jan Wold, Forest Supervisor, Stanislaus National Forest, Attn: Motor Vehicle, 19777 Greenley Road, Sonora, CA 95370

- Tell the agency you support Alternative 1.
- Let them know your concerns about ORV use, especially in roadless areas, important wildlife areas, and areas where recreation use is high.
- Urge them to protect the Near Natural areas from any ORV use.

For more information, contact the Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center at (209) 586-7440.

John Buckley is Executive Director of the Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center.

Beegum Basin saved: Shasta-Trinity buys private old-growth area



Beegum Basin lies on the slopes of North Yolla Bolly Peak, shown here.
Photo by Pete Yamagata

By Ryan Henson

Last year we reported that a parcel of privately-owned old-growth forest in the Beegum Basin area of the Yolla Bolly-Middle Eel Wilderness would have been logged unless the Forest Service could purchase it. We are now pleased to report that the Forest Service has acquired the 160 acres of ancient forest, meadows, waterfalls, and other natural wonders and saved it from the chainsaw.

The Beegum Basin area forms the headwaters of Beegum Creek, a waterway proposed for "wild river" status by the Shasta-Trinity National Forest (this designation, under the National Wild & Scenic Rivers Act, would prohibit dam construction, logging, and road building in or near the creek). Though inside the Yolla Bolly-Middle Eel Wilderness, it remained under private ownership. Last year, the parcel's owner decided to log the area. After a flurry of protest from hunters, hikers, and wilderness advocates opposing the logging plans, the Forest Service began negotiating with the owner. Neither party could agree on a fair price until recently.

In announcing the acquisition, the Shasta-Trinity National Forest cited the importance of the letters the agency received in support of purchasing the area, including letters from CWC members. This show of public support enabled the Forest Service to convince a skeptical Congress of the area's wilderness values and of the overwhelming public sentiment in favor of protecting it.

If the area had been logged, it would have left a clearcut one mile long and a quarter-mile wide across the west slope of North Yolla Bolly Mountain and would have destroyed one of the most scenic and pleasant areas in the wilderness. This catastrophic loss of ancient forest and prime plant and wildlife habitat in the Beegum Basin would have affected the entire region.

Kudos to the Forest Service for saving this critical wild area.

Salvage Rider

Clinton administration's salvage rider quick fix: too little, too late?

by Ryan Henson

The salvage rider, an amendment to an appropriations bill passed by Congress and signed last year by the president, has become the single greatest threat to California's national forests this year. Since the rider makes several types of logging on federal lands immune from environmental law, citizen challenge, and court review, conservationists have been unable to stop even the most destructive timber sales in our national forests.

President Clinton has the authority to delay, cancel, or modify the timber sales authorized by the salvage rider. Even if a sale is sold to the timber industry (few in California have yet been sold), the president can choose to buy it back. Calling the president on his claim that he is a friend of the environment, conservationists have been urging him for months to cancel salvage rider-authorized timber sales in roadless areas, ancient forests, and other sensitive wild areas.

Despite this pressure, President Clinton has done a lackluster job of defending public wildlands from the salvage rider and the abuses it authorizes. The best administration effort came in July when Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman released a directive to the Forest Service ordering the agency to:

- Avoid roadless areas unless these areas are "imminently susceptible to fire;"

- Minimize new road construction;
- Make non-salvage sales subject to federal environmental law and make non-salvage sales that were reclassified as salvage sales *after* the passage of the salvage rider subject to federal environmental law;
- Make sales that were rejected for environmental reasons before the rider, and then resurrected after the rider was passed, subject to federal environmental law, and;
- Reduce the number of healthy trees cut under the guise of salvage logging.

While Secretary Glickman's directive is welcome as a first step towards mitigating the worst abuses authorized by the salvage rider, there are several reasons why the secretary's order has not been viewed as a panacea. The new directive has countless loopholes, applies only to projects that have not already been sold to the timber industry, will only remain in effect for two months, and ignores non-salvage sales planned for national forests covered by President Clinton's Northwest Forest Plan (a compromise solution to management of the Pacific Northwest's old-growth, also known as Option 9).

One of the worst aspects of the salvage rider is that it makes all timber sales in national forests covered by Option 9—salvage and non-salvage alike—immune from court review and environmental law. In California, this means that every timber sale in the Mendocino, Klamath,

Shasta-Trinity, and Six Rivers national forests is covered by the salvage rider. That the White House would sanction such a broad exemption from our nation's environmental laws and allow it to continue has activists in disbelief.

The good news is that several of the worst salvage rider sales in California will be delayed as a result of the new policy. The California Wilderness Coalition was recently notified, for example, that the worst timber sale proposed in California's national forests this year, the Dillon salvage sale in the Klamath National Forest, will be postponed by the secretary's directive until next year—after the salvage rider expires. This is also true for several other destructive timber sales in the Sequoia, Lassen, and Klamath national forests, among others. While the Forest Service still plans to log important wild areas in these and other forests, CWC and other groups will now be able to use our nation's environmental laws to defend them in court.

Not unexpectedly, some national forests appear to be ignoring Secretary Glickman's directive entirely, while others are actively exploiting its every loophole (see article below). Meanwhile, activists are urging the president to cancel (or at least delay until next year) all salvage rider sales in ancient forests, roadless areas, and other wildlands before it's too late.

Forest Service looks the other way on new salvage directive

By Ryan Henson

A windstorm last winter toppled several thousand trees in the largely roadless Horse Linto Creek watershed in the Six Rivers National Forest. Not content with simply removing the fallen trees from across and around the few roads in the area, the Forest Service is now planning to remove 11 million board-feet of the fallen (and in many cases, simply leaning) trees from the Orleans Mountain Roadless Area—an old-growth rich wildland adjacent to the Trinity Alps Wilderness (in comparison, the Six Rivers National Forest normally logs 15 million board-feet annually from the *entire* forest).

The Forest Service claims that if left to rot, the fallen or leaning trees will pose an unnaturally high fire hazard that, in the event of a wildfire, will wipe out the sensitive fish and old-growth habitat in the area. Though the agency can offer no evidence to prove its assertion, and has failed to explain why this perfectly natural phenomenon never destroyed our forests prior to salvage logging, their unscientific and transparently pro-logging rhetoric has convinced the Clinton administration to consider exempting the proposed salvage logging from Glickman's directive against logging in roadless areas (see article above).

While there is no scientific evidence to support the Forest Service's claims, the political evidence is clear: the timber industry threatened to have Six Rivers National Forest Supervisor Martha Kettle fired if she failed to log the area. On a recent trip to Washington, D.C., Kettle personally lobbied Department of Agriculture officials for

an exemption from Secretary Glickman's directive—an extraordinary move under normal circumstances.

Unfortunately, the secretary left the decision to grant the exemption up to Jack Ward Thomas, the Chief of the Forest Service. As the first biologist to head an agency traditionally dominated by loggers and road builders, activists originally had high hopes that Chief Thomas would clean up the Forest Service and place wildlife, water quality, wilderness, and other values on at least an equal footing with timber production. Unfortunately, Chief Thomas has failed to perform as promised, and has even publicly encouraged the logging of old-growth and roadless areas (this sudden change of heart has led some activists to jokingly speculate that "the real" Jack Ward Thomas is bound, gagged, and imprisoned in the basement of the Department of Agriculture). Consequently, there is little hope that Jack Ward Thomas will protect the Orleans Mountain Roadless Area.

What do we stand to lose if the area is logged? The Horse Linto Creek watershed has important steelhead trout spawning streams, is known to host pine marten, Pacific fisher, northern spotted owls, and other old-growth dependent species, and contains some of the largest remaining pristine wild areas in California. The Forest Service plans to haul fallen trees directly out of streambeds, steep canyon walls, landslide-prone soils, and other sensitive areas that aquatic scientists and forest ecologists have long urged the Forest Service to avoid.

By the time you read this, Chief Thomas' decision may have already been made. Logging is scheduled to begin in a few weeks with minimal environmental review. Because of the timber salvage rider, CWC and

other groups can only appeal to Secretary Glickman and Chief Thomas to spare this irreplaceable wild area. Your letters could make a difference.

What you can do:

Please call, fax, or write a letter to Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman as soon as possible. Also, send a copy of your letter to Kathleen McGinty and Forest Service Chief Jack Ward Thomas. Mention in your letter that the directive from Secretary Glickman is intended to protect wild areas like the Orleans Mountain Roadless Area. Granting an exemption will violate both the letter and intent of the Secretary's directive. Ask that, for the sake of the old growth forests, wildlife and salmon of the Horse Linto area, the Forest Service deny the Six Rivers' request for exemption.

The Honorable Dan Glickman
U.S. Department of Agriculture
14th and Independence SW
Washington D.C. 20250
(202) 720-3631
fax (202) 720-3631

Kathleen McGinty, Director
White House Office of Environmental Quality
Old Executive Office Building, Room 360
Washington, D.C. 20501
(202) 456-6545
fax (202) 456-2710

Chief Jack Ward Thomas
U.S. Forest Service
14th and Independence SW, Room 4
Washington, D.C. 20250
(202) 205-1055
fax (202) 205-1765

Wilderness news

Steelhead listed under Endangered Species Act

By Michael Bowen

Headlines in this summer's papers brought a 50-year-long crisis out of the closet: Pacific coast steelhead populations are in serious trouble. The fish story of the summer in California and the Pacific Northwest was about a federal proposal to finally list the prized sport fish under the Endangered Species Act.

Two years ago, when a National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) review team began an inventory of steelhead runs, it was unable to find even one healthy steelhead population in California. NMFS learned that summer steelhead are extinct in 45 percent of their range, and winter steelhead in 29 percent.

A lawsuit from a group of 24 conservation and fisheries organizations last fall prompted the federal government to jump start the listing process. By next July, NMFS must make a final ruling.

NMFS' current proposal for steelhead could mean an ESA listing of either "threatened" or "endangered." "Threatened" could allow incidental take (an activity that results in the killing of an individual of the species), while "endangered" bars any take.

California Trout and others see the steelhead listing as a spectacular opportunity for a species success story. The mighty steelhead, known for its legendary strength and beauty, is a type of coastal rainbow trout that, like salmon, migrates from river headwaters to the ocean and back to complete its life cycle. Remarkably, steelhead can migrate and spawn more than once, while other salmon species die after spawning.

The steelhead is an integral part of our natural heritage, and holds tremendous economic value. A recent University of California at Berkeley analysis valued California sport fishing, including steelhead, at \$5 billion annually. California Department of Fish and Game and its Idaho counterpart have estimated a value of \$75-\$300 per individual steelhead. If populations recover to levels proposed by California Fish and Game, steelhead, at \$300 a fish, could contribute \$150 million annually to California's economy.

Fifty years ago, more than 1 million steelhead populated Pacific Northwest and California rivers. As new dams blocked access to spawning areas and forests fell to loggers' saws, the populations declined. Existing dams and poor land use practices—such as logging, gravel mining and livestock grazing—continue to damage remaining spawning habitat. Population estimates in 1994 were 250,000 fish; current estimates are 100,000 fish.

Southern California has been hardest hit by the steelhead decline. Historic annual estimates were 20,000 adults in the Santa Ynez River, 4,000 to 5,000 in the Ventura River, and 9,000 in the Santa Clara River. The current average annual run in these rivers is less than 100 adult fish each.

Before the July 1997 deadline for final ruling on the steelhead's fate, NMFS will hold a series of public meetings—as yet unscheduled—to assess public sentiment for restoration. It is crucial that we attend those meetings to speak up for the steelhead. Get involved—ask NMFS about a schedule for public meetings in your area, and write comment letters about steelhead restoration. Contact Gary Stern, Supervisory Fisheries Biologist, NMFS, 777 Sonoma Ave #325, Santa Rosa, CA 95404, 707-575-6060.

Michael Bowen is the Bay Area Manager of California Trout.

Time runs short for Headwaters and the marbled murrelet

By Kathy Brennan

About 1,000 years ago, some tiny seeds germinated on a wet, foggy coastal area in Northern California. Those seedlings grew into magnificent ancient redwood forests that at one time covered much of California's coastal mountains and valleys. Most of these forests were devastated by logging over the past 150 years, but the Headwaters forest, owned by Pacific Lumber (PL), is still home to spectacular ancient redwood groves.

Before logging decimated the population, two million acres of mature redwood forests grew from Oregon down to the central California coast. Today only ten percent of the ancient redwood forest that existed in 1850 is left, and at current logging rates, by the year 2000, only five percent will remain.

The Headwaters forest is an area of 76,000 acres in the Elk River and Salmon Creek watersheds. The Headwaters Grove is a 3,000-acre ancient redwood grove within the forest. It is the only unprotected ancient grove that has not yet been logged, although Pacific Lumber is doing its best to change that.

Within the area is a tremendous wealth of species. Many are rare, threatened, or endangered. Most of these are dependent upon unique old growth characteristics for their habitat. The coho salmon needs clear clean freshwater streams to spawn. Their population has been reduced to 1 percent of what it was just 50 years ago. The marbled murrelet is a threatened seabird that nests exclusively in old-growth. Headwaters is one of only three nesting areas that still exist in California. Pacific Lumber's Habitat Conservation Plan for the murrelet proposes logging all the old-growth and residual forests in Headwaters—a plan that would eliminate all murrelet nesting areas on its property. Many other species are found in the forest there, from the Roosevelt elk to the tiny red tree vole.

The real story of Headwaters—the trees and their unique ecology is long and rich. Unfortunately, however, today the story of Headwaters is eclipsed by a debate about its value: the perceived market value vs. the worth of a rare ecosystem.



The marbled murrelet. Photo by Gus Van Vliet

Pacific Lumber, a family operated company, ran a logging business in the area for 80 years. PL had a reputation as a responsible timber company and fair employer. In 1985, Maxxam bought PL in a hostile takeover. To finance the takeover, Charles Hurwitz, owner of Maxxam, used a short term \$300 million bank loan, and \$450 million in junk bonds sold by a Michael Milken brokerage firm. To pay off the loan, Maxxam terminated PL's pension plan, sold all non-timber assets, and tripled the cutting of ancient redwoods. In the first two years after the takeover over 40,000 acres of old-growth redwood were cut.

In 1988, a Maxxam controlled savings and loan (S & L), United Savings Association of Texas (USAT), collapsed. Since USAT deposits were federally insured, this

cost taxpayers \$1.6 billion.

On August 2, 1995, the Federal Deposit Insurance Commission filed a claim against Hurwitz for his role in the USAT S & L failure.

Meanwhile, PL continued felling redwoods as fast as they could, including illegal logging in 1992 in the Owl Creek Grove. This is the second largest of the untouched ancient groves in the Headwaters forest. They stopped only after the Environmental Protection Information Center (EPIC) and the Sierra Club went to court. Since Maxxam's takeover of PL, EPIC has gone to court 8 times to stop Maxxam from illegal logging. This battle is not over yet.

In early 1995, PL announced plans to "salvage" log in the Headwaters grove under an exemption approved by the California Department of Forestry (CDF). In September 1995, a federal judge issued a preliminary injunction that temporarily stopped salvage logging on PL land to prevent a "take" of the threatened marbled murrelet. This injunction expires September 15. After that day, PL can proceed with plans to build a road into the Headwaters Grove and "salvage" log. The exemption for salvage, when filed with the CDF, relieves timber companies of their obligation to file a Timber Harvest Plan (THP). While about 250,000 acres of private land were reviewed by a THP, 2,980,000 more acres were granted salvage exemptions in California, and thereby underwent no environmental review.

On August 7, 1996 EPIC and the Sierra Club filed a petition with the California Board of Forestry to ask that emergency rules be adopted to protect ancient forests in California from exemption logging. These rules would prohibit disturbance or damage to endangered and threatened species habitat. The Board will decide at their meeting September 10th and 11th. The decision they make essentially will determine the ability of some species to survive.

Meanwhile, the federal government still has lawsuits pending against Hurwitz for his role in the S & L fiasco. Although Hurwitz continues to deny any connection between the S & L failure and PL operations, the evidence strongly suggests that they are related.

Recently Maxxam has been talking with Deputy Interior Secretary John Garamendi about a land swap in which the federal government would acquire the Headwaters grove in exchange for federal lands elsewhere. Although it is largely speculation right now, there has even been talk of exchanging land on Treasure Island in the San Francisco Bay.

Most environmentalists oppose a land swap, because it could entail trading other ancient forests for Headwaters—an unacceptable trade. In addition, such a trade probably would only include a small portion of the Headwaters Forest. Ecosystems and the species that comprise them need continuity: protection of a small fragment of the forest that may eventually be surrounded by clearcuts will not help the coho or the murrelet survive, and it certainly will not create conditions for a viable redwood population to survive and regenerate over the next 1,000 years.

Instead of a land swap, many conservationists are calling for a debt-for-nature swap. The federal government would get the Headwaters forest, and in exchange, some or all of Hurwitz's debt for the S & L bailout would be expunged. This seems to be the most favorable option to most conservationists.

There is some federal support for the acquisition of Headwaters by the federal government, as evidenced by the reception of a bill introduced in 1994 by Dan Hamburg, the former Representative for the Headwaters area. Unfortunately, the current Representative, Frank Riggs,

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Wilderness forum

Letters to the Editor

I found the article on cows illegally trespassing in Sequoia National Park most instructive. I agree that it's a good idea to complain to the supervisor of the Inyo National Forest, the source of the bovine bogies.

In addition, I would urge writing the superintendent of Sequoia National Park to ask him what he intends to do

about it. After all, this blatant illegal trespass is happening on his watch. I think he would be extremely motivated to insist the Forest Service keep its cows out of the park he is responsible for protecting.

John Miller
Los Gatos

In Memorium

Luis Ireland, Outstanding Conservationist

By Eric Gerstung and John Moore

Luis Ireland, one of the California Sierra Club's most knowledgeable and dedicated public lands activists, died on June 29, 1996. Luis had been a conservation activist ever since he joined the Club in 1953.

Luis held so many positions in the California Sierra Club that it is difficult to remember them all.

Beginning in the mid-fifties, he was a member of the Sierra Club's "national" conservation committee, which then met monthly at Sierra Club headquarters. Later, he was a member of the Mother Lode Chapter Conservation Committee for many years and was chairman in 1957 and again in 1967-69. Luis was a member of the Northern California-Nevada Regional Conservation Committee's (NCRCC) National Forest Committee for many years and was its chair for several years in the 1970s. Working with this committee on preservation of forests and wilderness may have been the most satisfying of all his efforts. His achievements as National Forest Committee chair set a standard which his successors have found very difficult to emulate. He also founded and chaired numerous RCC and Chapter Task Forces to coordinate work on a wide variety of urgent public lands issues, such as management of Lassen Volcanic National Park.

Luis was perhaps best known for his work on wilderness. Altogether he spent months visiting roadless areas in northern and central California and ranged as far afield as eastern Nevada. In his position as NCRCC National Forest Chair, he made intensive efforts to encourage activists to make systematic and detailed studies for potential wilderness areas and emphasized the importance of developing support in rural communities near potential wildernesses. Jim Eaton, Executive Director of the California Wilderness Coalition, recalls these efforts: "Luis and his wife Laverne generously opened their house and their hearts to the growing body of wilderness supporters. I remember many weekends spent in their living room as we worked to plan strategy, develop positions on issues, and coordinate our actions. I learned much from him in those early days, and I've always admired his persistence and kindness."

Luis was particularly interested in wildernesses in the central Sierra Nevada, including the Bucks Lake, Granite Chief, Mokelumne, and Carson-Iceberg wildernesses. He liked to remind fellow activists that the campaign for a Granite Chief wilderness began in the Irelands' living room in West Sacramento in 1956—and finally achieved success with the 1984 Wilderness Bill, 28 years later. The present boundaries of the Granite Chief Wilderness, expanded Mokelumne Wilderness, Carson-Iceberg Wilderness, and expanded Emigrant Wilderness closely resemble maps that Luis prepared and submitted to Congress. Other roadless areas for which he carefully prepared boundaries, including Echo-Carson, Caples Creek, Hoover Additions, and the Huckleberry-Hart area adjacent to Lassen Volcanic National Park, are still awaiting designation.

One of Luis' motivations for pursuing wilderness designations so diligently was his passion for preservation of forests. As his wife Laverne has written, "From his childhood he had a passionate love of trees (all kinds of trees, not just majestic virgin forests) and always planted more around our houses than the lot sizes justified. He grieved over every tree lost, whatever the cause." In recent years Luis had worked to call attention to the Port Orford cedar root disease crisis and had urged that its spread be prevented by limiting access to groves free of the disease. Luis also had worked in the last few years on protection of forests of the Diablo Range.

California's environment and wilderness have benefited greatly from Luis Ireland's decades of tireless work. Fellow environmentalists extend their deepest sympathies to his wife Laverne.

Laverne has suggested that environmentalists commemorate Luis' life and work by renewing their personal commitments to the preservation of wilderness and forests.

The California Wilderness Coalition has established an activist support fund in Luis' honor. The fund will provide small grants to California activists working on local wilderness and public lands issues. Donations may be sent to the Luis Ireland Fund, c/o California Wilderness Coalition, 2655 Portage Bay East, Suite 5, Davis, CA 95616.

Headwaters forest

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seems bent on doing everything in his power to ensure that no ancient forests survive into the next century.

Time is running out for Headwaters. On September 15 when the temporary injunction that was imposed to prevent logging during marbled murrelet breeding season is lifted, Maxxam can, and will, begin logging immediately.

The California Board of Forestry decision is another temporary (emergency) measure, but it could buy time

for Headwaters. The only permanent solution is federal acquisition of the Headwaters forest.

If you want to help you can contact the Environmental Protection Information Center at (707) 923-2931 for more information. Please see the Calendar on this page for information about a rally to be held on September 15 in support of saving all of the Headwaters forest and the marbled murrelet.

Kathy Brennan is the Membership Associate and Conservation Intern for CWC.

Calendar

September 14-15 Rally to save Headwaters Forest. Pacific Lumber's injunction against logging in the Headwaters forest will be lifted on September 15, when the marbled murrelet breeding season ends. The rally is to be held near Eureka, for the exact location or more information about the rally please contact the Environmental Protection Information Center (EPIC) at (707) 923-2931, the Bay Area Coalition for Headwaters (BACH) at (510) 835-6303, or the Mendocino Environmental Center (707) 468-1660. See article on page 6.

September 14-15 Refocus on the Desert. A meeting of the Sierra Club's Regional Conservation Committee to plan and strategize on management of the California desert. All committed desert activists who want to be involved in protecting the "Arid Lands" are welcome. To be held at Keller Hut, San Bernadino Mountains. For more information contact Hillary Gordon at (310) 478-4102.

September 31 Deadline for comments on the Stanislaus National Forest ORV plan. See article on page 4

October 4-6 California Exotic Pest Plant Symposium '96. To be held in San Diego. For information contact Sally Davis, P.O. Box 15575, Sacramento, CA 95825-0575

Wilderness Trivia Answer

The name is a Southern reference to a limestone peak downstream that resembles a bee colony in a hollow gum tree

Grazing legislation

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wildlife, sensitive plants, and biological diversity on our public lands will be trampled for the benefit of ranchers at the government trough.

—Adapted from A Natural Resources Defense Council factsheet

Coalition Member Groups

Ancient Forest Defense Fund; Branscomb Back Country Horsemen of CA; Springville Bay Chapter, Sierra Club; Oakland Bay Chapter Wilderness Subcommittee; S. F. California Alpine Club; San Francisco California Mule Deer Association; Lincoln California Native Plant Society; Sacramento Citizens for Better Forestry; Hayfork Citizens for Mojave National Park; Barstow Citizens for a Vehicle Free Nipomo Dunes; Nipomo

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Hands Off Wild Lands! (HOWL); Davis High Sierra Hikers Association; Truckee International Center for Earth Concerns; Ojai Kaweah Flyfishers; Visalia Keep the Sespe Wild Committee; Ojai Kern Audubon Society; Bakersfield Kern River Valley Audubon Society; Bakersfield Kern-Kaweah Chapter, Sierra Club; Bakersfield Klamath Forest Alliance; Etna League to Save Lake Tahoe; South Lake Tahoe Loma Prieta Chapter, Sierra Club; Palo Alto

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Northcoast Environmental Center; Arcata People for Nipomo Dunes Nat'l. Seashore; Nipomo Peppermint Alert; Porterville Placer County Cons. Task Force; Newcastle Planning & Conservation League; Sac. Range of Light Group, Toiyabe Chapter, Sierra Club; Mammoth Lakes Redwood Chapter, Sierra Club; Santa Rosa The Red Mountain Association; Leggett Resource Renewal Institute; San Francisco San Diego Chapter, Sierra Club; San Diego San Fernando Valley Audubon Society; Van Nuys Save Our Ancient Forest Ecology (SAFE); Modesto Sequoia Forest Alliance; Kernville Seven Generations Land Trust; Berkeley Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund; S. F. Sierra Nevada Alliance; South Lake Tahoe Sierra Treks; Ashland, OR Soda Mtn. Wilderness Council; Ashland, OR South Fork Mountain Defense; Weaverville South Yuba River Citizens League; Nevada City Tulare County Audubon Society; Visalia Tule River Conservancy; Porterville U.C. Davis Environmental Law Society Ventana Wildlands Group; Santa Cruz Western States Endurance Run; S. F. The Wilderness Land Trust; Carbondale, CO The Wilderness Society; San Francisco Wintu Audubon Society; Redding Yolano Group, Sierra Club; Davis Yolo Environmental Resource Center; Davis

"It's a thoroughly reprehensible decision. They don't want to (decide) because Clinton's little eco-freak friends would hit the ceiling."

— Rep. John Doolittle, on the Forest Service's decision earlier this month to delay the release of the California spotted owl EIS. The agency subsequently canceled it entirely. See story page 1.

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