



WILDERNESS RECORD

Proceedings of the California Wilderness Coalition

December 1997

Clinton administration pulls plug on plan for California spotted owl and Sierra Nevada forests

By Scott Hoffman

November brought good news for the Sierra Nevada's national forests and wildlife. Thanks in part to the work of numerous conservation groups the Clinton administration announced that it was withdrawing a Forest Service plan for the long-term management of the California spotted owl. The controversial plan would have significantly increased logging throughout the national forests of the Sierra Nevada. The decision was based on a

The decision was based on a report... which concluded that the agency's plan was scientifically flawed.

report, prepared by a formal committee of scientists, which concluded that the agency's plan was scientifically flawed. The committee's report identified a number of "critical shortcomings" with the Forest Service's proposed plan, including "inadequate protection for the spotted owl," "the lack of any treatment of the uniqueness of the old-growth or late successional forest ecosystems and their constituent species," and "low viability of furbearers."

Environmental leaders applauded the Clinton administration for recognizing the need for a new plan that would address the scientists' recommendations for increased forest protection. "The Forest Service keeps trying to weaken environmental protection in the Sierra, but the science shows that the Sierra's forests, rivers, and wildlife need more, not less, protection," said attorney David Edelson on behalf of the Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign. "The Forest Service is stuck in the same old groove of emphasizing timber production. It's time for a new approach, one based on science," said Edelson.

The committee's report was particularly critical of the Forest Service's policies toward old-growth forests and

wildlife habitat. Louis Blumberg of The Wilderness Society stated: "Only sixteen percent of the old-growth remains in the Sierra Nevada's national forests. These imperiled forests serve critical ecological functions by safeguarding water quality and providing essential habitat for wildlife such as the spotted owl and the Pacific fisher. The Forest Service should protect the remaining old-growth, not log it. What will it take for the Forest Service finally to understand that simple message?"

An earlier version of the plan was halted in August of 1996 by the Clinton administration as well. That plan drew considerable concern from activists because of its proposal to increase logging in the Sierra, ostensibly for fire protection. The Forest Service's failure to consider the findings of the just-released Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project (SNEP) generated a flurry of criticism. The SNEP report is the largest independent scientific study of the Sierra Nevada ever conducted.

"We applaud the Clinton Administration for convening this scientific committee," said John Buckley of the Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center. "The Committee really worked hard to do a thorough, balanced review of the Forest Service's management proposal, based upon the best available scientific research and opinion. The Administration should now follow through by developing a new plan for the Sierra Nevada's national forests that provides strong protection for old-growth forests, wildlife habitat, and aquatic resources, consistent with law, science, and public sentiment," said Buckley.



The California spotted owl management plan would have increased logging in the Sierra Nevada, jeopardizing numerous species—including the spotted owl itself. Cliff Lake, Dinkey Lakes Wilderness, Sierra National Forest. Photo by Pete Yamagata.

Now the work will begin to ensure that the revised plan is truly based on the best possible science, including the findings of the SNEP report.

For more information contact Scott Hoffman at the Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign by calling (916) 442-3155 or e-mailing info@sierraforests.org.

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California Wilderness Coalition
2655 Portage Bay East, Ste. 5
Davis, California 95616
ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Phil Farrell
883 Loma Verde Ave
Palo Alto, CA 94303-4116



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California Wilderness Coalition

2655 Portage Bay East, Suite 5
Davis, California 95616
(530) 758-0380
Fax (530) 758-0382
info@calwild.org
www.calwild.org

...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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Conservation Associate
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Herb Walker, hwalker@calwild.org
Membership Associate
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Editor
Herb Walker

Writers
Canyon Fred
Steve Evans
Ryan Henson
Scott Hoffman
John Moore

Photos & Graphics
Eric Gerstung
Lucy Rosenau
Pete Yamagata

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Coalition News

Monthly Report

"Clinton pushes volunteerism, service groups"
Sacramento Bee headline, November 30, 1997

Once again, President Clinton has issued a plea to Americans: to build a better nation, volunteer. The President called for citizen service "to be at the heart of our efforts to prepare America for the 21st century." The President may be an odd spokesman for volunteerism: his active dismantling of the safety nets that protect vulnerable American citizens—and American wild areas—make volunteerism even more necessary. (As well, the President's answers to the Whitewater investigation have been far less than voluntary.) The President may not be the best messenger, but his message is an excellent one.

As a small organization with a very large mission, the Coalition continually relies upon volunteer spirit for its survival. From citizens who spend an hour a month writing letters to interns who work 50 hours a week, volunteers are the unsung heroes that make wilderness protection possible. I want to take this space to thank a few of the CWC faithful who have spent countless hours making our work possible.

Laura Kindsvater has been active with the Coalition for over a year. She has been coming in nights to work on defending threatened forest areas. Laura completes CWC comments on issues such as the proposed talc mine within the Death Valley National Park wilderness. She also is working to assure that logging within the Tahoe National Forest does not jeopardize potential wilderness areas or other areas of high biological importance.

Laura Villasenor and Wendy Riddle have been a tremendous help lately. Both come in to the office on a regular basis to help with everything from stuffing envelopes to proofreading letters. They are learning the ins and outs of environmental policy and are actively taking part in CWC's wildlands defense work.

Nate Greenberg has also been working at the Coalition office as a Conservation Intern. Nate has been commenting on proposed mines and timber sales and has been coordinating the wilderness proposals for the Modoc National Forest. Nate is also putting together a slide show on the Lassen and Plumas National Forests.

Delbert Williams recently sought asylum in Davis from the largely pro-logging community of Quincy (home of the infamous Quincy Library Group). Del has been putting in long hours preparing a report on the status of California's roadless areas. Once complete, the report will be a compilation of the best information on the status of California's last remaining unprotected wilderness areas.

Our newest volunteer is Joan Reiss, who recently joined the CWC Board of Directors. After serving as Regional Director for the western region of the Wilderness Society, Joan started her own environmental consulting business. Aside from being a wilderness fanatic, Joan is also active in the fight against breast cancer. Her energy, enthusiasm and commitment to conservation will be welcome additions to the CWC Board. Welcome Joan!

The other volunteers who make the organization go are too many to mention by name, but are worthy of praise nonetheless. Our Board of Directors has a cumulative 108 years of volunteerism as members of the Board. Each month a dedicated crew of volunteers gathers to mail out the *Wilderness Record*. Without them, your *Wilderness Record* would still be sitting in a neatly stacked pile in the office. Finally, hats off to the hundreds of citizens who respond to action alerts by sending letters and making phone calls to decision-makers at key moments. These wilderness enthusiasts provide the energy needed to protect millions of acres of California wild areas. Without them, our work would be impossible.

The legacy of these volunteers will be the protection of all California wild areas and we are greatly indebted to their efforts.

By Paul Spitler

Patagonia fundraiser draws a happy crowd

CWC's annual fundraiser, held in San Francisco on November 13, was a smashing success. The event, sponsored by Patagonia, was held at their San Francisco store. Over 100 CWC supporters were treated to an array of delicious food and wine, courtesy of Bay Area restaurants and vineyards. Featured guests included Senator Alan Cranston, Sierra Club President Adam Werbach, and long time activists Johanna Wald and Vicky Hoover. The event raised \$10,000 to support the Coalition's conservation programs. Thanks to all who attended for making the event so successful.

Also, a special thanks is due to Patagonia for sponsoring, organizing and hosting the event. Their support helped make the event possible. Finally, special thanks to The Wilderness Society and the Men's Wearhouse for their financial contributions.

The Coalition joins one

The Coalition recently joined the Forest Water Alliance, a union of organizations working to protect forests, water quality and wildlife within the region inhabited by the northern spotted owl. As a new Alliance member, CWC will work to defend threatened wild areas in the California forests that are home to spotted owls, publicize the ecological importance of and threats to those forests, and create a vision for the permanent protection of the region's remaining wild areas.

Foundations boost CWC's programs

CWC was awarded a \$40,000 two-year grant from the Educational Foundation of America to support our wildlands organizing effort. The money will be used to recruit and train citizens from across California in the art and science of wildlands protection, and will also be put towards the creation of a statewide wilderness proposal. Thanks EFA!

The Mennen Environmental Foundation approved a \$10,000 grant to the Coalition to support our Adopt-a-Wilderness program. The program was supported by the Foundation this year and was very successful. Wildland protection workshops were given in Chico, Grass Valley, Alturas, Quincy and Mariposa. In 1998, workshops will be given across the state to citizens interested in becoming wildlands guardians. We appreciate the continued support of the Mennen Environmental Foundation.

A heartfelt "thank you" to the following Foundations for their support this year:

- Columbia Foundation
- Educational Foundation of America
- Foundation for Deep Ecology
- The Mennen Environmental Foundation
- Patagonia Foundation
- Peradarn Foundation
- The Pew Charitable Trusts, via the Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign

Wilderness News

Twisted science threatens McCloud roadless areas Forest Service study calls for roads and logging to save forest

By Steve Evans

The Forest Service has completed a watershed analysis for the lower McCloud River on the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. The analysis sets the stage for a potentially brutal battle over the agency's intent to build roads and log in what remains of the McCloud's roadless areas.

Watershed analysis is intended to provide a scientific assessment of current watershed conditions, identify problems, and recommend potential solutions that would then be considered for implementation as specific projects. But the analysis is being used to justify the Forest Service's logging agenda by promoting the twisted idea that the only way to "save" forests from wildfire is to log them.

The McCloud watershed is one of the most biologically diverse regions in northern California. Straddling the ecological transition zone between the Sierra Nevada, Modoc Plateau, Cascade Range, and Klamath-Siskiyou Mountains, the watershed provides important ancient forest and aquatic habitat for northern spotted owl, Peregrin falcon, rare bats, Shasta salamander, wild trout, and sensitive plant populations.

The watershed's ancient forests were placed in a supposedly protective "late seral reserve" under President Clinton's plan for Pacific Northwest forests. The watershed's aquatic values were recognized by the Forest Service, which determined the McCloud River to be eligible for National Wild & Scenic River status due to its outstanding fishery, geologic, scenic, historic and cultural values.

Much of the McCloud watershed's biological diversity is derived from its relatively undeveloped character. Most of the watershed was inventoried as part of the East Girard and West Girard roadless areas in 1979. But the California Wilderness Act released the roadless areas to "multiple use" in 1984. Since then, most of the East Girard roadless area has been roaded and logged.

Now the Forest Service evidently wants to finish the job by proposing to "establish" 55 miles of so called "fuel management zones" (FMZs) which will encompass ridgetop areas 600 to 1,300 feet wide, with accompanying roads. The FMZs would eventually affect 6,700 acres of the watershed, much of it currently roadless and undeveloped.

The Forest Service claims that the FMZs are needed to prevent or control catastrophic wildfire. But little evidence is provided in the watershed analysis to prove that the FMZs would be effective. In fact, the opposite may be true. Recently ecosystem studies have concluded that logging actually increases fire severity. The FMZs would require the reopening of old jeep roads or the construction of new roads, which would increase human access to currently relatively inaccessible areas. Logging and even "fuel reduction" activities are known causes of



The wild and rugged McCloud River drainage could face a cure that is more destructive than its "disease": more logging and road-building. Photographer unknown.

wildfire ignition. In reality, construction of the FMZs may increase the likelihood of human-caused fires.

The proposed FMZs are also contrary to the intent of federal management direction which established the late seral reserve to protect old-growth wildlife species, requires the implementation of an aquatic conservation strategy to protect unique aquatic values, and allocated a portion of the watershed to unroaded recreation.



What you can do

The watershed analysis is simply a study, not a decision document. However, letters to the Forest Service could head off future projects which call for road construction and logging in the McCloud's sensitive watershed and threatened roadless areas.

Write a letter today to Forest Supervisor Sharon Heywood, Shasta-Trinity National Forest, 2400 Washington Street, Redding, CA 96001. Oppose the recommendations of the McCloud Watershed Analysis to build roads and log in the East and West Girard roadless areas. Be sure to mention the following points in your letter:

- Proposed "fuel management zones" (FMZs) in the McCloud watershed threaten water quality, important riparian and late seral habitat, and roadless recreation.

- There is no evidence that the proposed FMZs will prevent, reduce, or control wildfires. In fact, the vegetation management and additional human access recommended in the analysis will undoubtedly increase the potential for wildfire ignition.

- FMZs should not be constructed in roadless areas, the late seral reserve, riparian reserves, unstable slopes, and areas allocated to unroaded recreation.

- No soil disturbing activities should occur until a cumulative watershed effects analysis and environmental impact statement are completed.

- Ask to be placed on the notification list for any project intended to implement the recommendations of the watershed analysis.

For more information, contact Steve Evans at Friends of the River by calling (916) 442-3155, or e-mail him at sevens@friendsoftheriver.org.

Steve Evans is Conservation Director of Friends of the River and a CWC Board member.

Thousands of acres in the Grouse Lakes Roadless Area go public

By John Moore

Countless Californians have been enjoying the trails and beautiful lakes of the Grouse Lakes Roadless Area (RA) in the Tahoe National Forest for decades. Environmental-

ists have also been working for years toward a Forest Service acquisition of the thousands of acres at Grouse Lakes, until recently owned by Southern Pacific Railroad. Public acquisition is the first step in ensuring that the Grouse Lakes RA remains roadless and protected for wildlife, healthy forests and public recreation.

The long campaign by environmentalists for acquisition of the Grouse Lakes lands has recently been rewarded. With the completion of a very large land exchange in September, almost all of the former Southern Pacific lands in the Grouse Lakes RA, approximately

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Wilderness News

Joint management plan in the works for the lower Colorado River

By Ryan Henson

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) are developing a cooperative management plan for a vast desert region along the Colorado River on the border of California and Arizona. Though only a small part of the area under consideration is in California, the portion in the Golden State includes the Imperial National Wildlife Refuge Wilderness (contiguous with the California BLM's Little Picacho and Indian Pass wilderness areas), as well as the Cibola National Wildlife Refuge Wilderness.

The BLM and FWS feel the Trigo Mountains-Imperial Wildlife Refuge Cooperative Management Plan is necessary because, among other things, "Off road vehicle use throughout the planning area is affecting wildlife habitat [and] wilderness values...." Other concerns include an over-abundance of non-native feral burros, military operations that may conflict with wilderness values, and a demand for additional motorized routes through the area.

Given this region's sensitive ecology, it is imperative that the two agencies coordinate their management of area. For example, the area is home to several sensitive wildlife species, including desert bighorn sheep, black-tailed gnatcatcher, Vaux's swift, Colorado River toad, spotted bat, loggerhead shrike, chuckwalla (a very large lizard), flat-tailed horned lizard, Gila woodpecker, Nelson bighorn sheep, desert tortoise, and the elusive Yuma puma (a rare population of mountain lions living along the southern Colorado River).

The region is already imperiled by several existing and proposed stripmines, including the mammoth Imperial Project mine proposed for ten miles to the east. These threats make it all the more important that currently pristine lands stay that way.



What you can do

Please write to:

Ron Morfin, Outdoor Recreation Planner
Bureau of Land Management
2555 Gila Ridge Road
Yuma, AZ 85365

Request, in your own words, that the Trigo Mountains-Imperial Wildlife Refuge Cooperative Management Plan propose to:

- Reduce feral burro and horse populations in a humane manner*
- Prohibit the construction of new motorized vehicle routes
- Close as many roads as possible both in and near designated wilderness areas
- Remove all existing structures except those of exceptional historical or cultural importance
- Require that all military activities be of a low-impact nature and consistent with wilderness, wildlife protection, and other key concerns

Your letter should be received by January 15, 1998.

* Burros and wild horses are usually put up for adoption or relocated. The days of large-scale shootings appear to be over.

Legislative Roundup

Quincy Logging Bill Delayed—Boxer jumps off bandwagon!

In a last minute move, the Senate delayed action on the Quincy Logging Bill. If passed, the bill could double logging levels and greatly increase erosion, sedimentation and watershed disturbance on two and a quarter Sierra Nevada National Forests.

In a midnight move in the waning moments of the Congressional session, the House passed the controversial logging bill by attaching it to unrelated legislation. The Senate was poised to pass the measure moments before adjournment when an anonymous Senator placed a hold on the bill. By placing a hold on the legislation, the Senator delayed any Senate action on the Quincy bill until January, when the measure is likely to come up again.

Good news for opponents of this misguided legislation comes from Senator Barbara Boxer, who announced that she would have voted "no" on the bill had it come up for a vote in the Senate. She added that in the next session of Congress she plans to remove her name as a cosponsor. The Senator had wanted to improve the bill and worked on amendments to lessen its impact. These improvements "were not enough for me to finally vote for the bill," she explained, adding that "I am particularly disturbed that the bill does not include specific language to protect the most sensitive old-growth areas identified by the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem [Project] report."

President Signs Interior Bill

Ignoring the veto requests made by dozens of members of the House of Representatives, President Clinton signed the FY98 Interior Appropriations Bill. The large spending bill is a yearly target of Republican extremists, who make a ritual out of loading down the bill with anti-environmental riders. The bill just signed by the President includes unlimited road construction subsidies for logging corporations, a moratorium on forest plan revisions, a measure gutting the log export ban, and several other pernicious measures. The bill does include funding for the acquisition of Headwaters Forest, but ties that funding to Congressional approval. Environmentalists pushed for a Presidential veto.

Watch Out in '98

Republican extremists are sharpening their claws for 1998. A number of bills are pending in the House and Senate which jeopardize California wildlands. Among the worst are the Craig Logging Bill, S. 1253 or "Loopholes for Logging," which is scheduled for hearings in the House and Senate early next year. The industry supported bill would roll back environmental laws protecting National Forests and open the door to unchecked logging on our public lands. The Smith Logging Bill (H.R. 2515 in the House, S. 1467 in the Senate) passed a House subcommittee and is heading for a full committee vote early next year. The bill, which is being touted as a kinder, gentler version of the Craig bill ("a Craig bill in sheep's clothing," as one environmental group put it), would drastically increase logging in the name of "forest health," thus undermining the health of forest ecosystems.

Roadless area protection needs federal action

The failure of Congress to eliminate destructive logging road subsidies from the Forest Service budget through the appropriations process now requires strong executive action on the part of the Clinton administration to protect national forest roadless areas.

Immediately after signing of the Interior Appropriations bill, President Clinton announced that the Forest Service is developing a new management policy for roadless areas. Here is an excerpt of the President's statement:

"I will again propose elimination of purchaser road credits next year while holding counties and small businesses harmless and have asked the Secretary of Agriculture to take the necessary administrative steps to be prepared to implement the Administration's proposal in FY 1999. Further, the Forest Service is developing a scientifically based policy for managing roadless areas in our national forests. These last remaining wild areas are precious to millions of Americans and key to protecting clean water and abundant wildlife habitat, and providing recreation opportunities. These unspoiled places must be managed through science, not politics."

A letter from Secretary Dan Glickman to Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) providing more detail of the proposal

states: "...the chief is working on a roads policy that will address your concerns about diminishing the threat of mud and landslides, encouraging development of cheaper and more environmentally benign roads, and finally,

Immediately after signing of the Interior Appropriations bill, President Clinton announced that the Forest Service is developing a new management policy for roadless areas.

identifying and developing strategies to protect municipal watersheds and roadless areas."

This administrative initiative has the potential to provide much needed protection for roadless areas and to reform the costly and environmentally destructive Forest Service roads program.



What you can do

Please contact Jim Lyons, Under Secretary of Agriculture and tell him the President needs to take strong administrative action to protect roadless areas.

Under Secretary Jim Lyons, U.S. Department of Agriculture: Phone (202) 720-5166, Fax: (202) 720-4732

—Western Ancient Forest Campaign

Wilderness Management

Forest Service back-pedals on Mokelumne Wilderness plan

By Canyon Fred

On November 14, the U.S. Forest Service released for public review and comment a new alternative for managing the 104,000-acre Mokelumne Wilderness. The new alternative largely backs away from visionary elements that were contained in an earlier draft. For example, the new plan would weaken or eliminate controls the agency had earlier proposed on cattle grazing, group sizes, recreational stock use, cowbells, and recreational shooting. The agency is inviting comments on its new proposal until January 2, 1998.

The Mokelumne Wilderness spans three national forests (Eldorado, Stanislaus, Toiyabe) between Lake Tahoe and Yosemite National Park. In 1995, the Forest Service issued a draft management plan for the Mokelumne that contained a host of improved standards for managing the area and protecting the experience of wilderness visitors. The draft provisions would have limited the effects of cattle grazing in sensitive riparian areas, reduced the maximum number of recreation stock to eight animals per group for overnight camping, required that recreation stock be kept at least 200 feet away from water sources, and prohibited cowbells and indiscriminate shooting. However, after being pressed by pro-livestock interests and gun lobby groups, the agency is proposing to weaken all of these provisions.

The 1995 draft included numerous specific standards and guidelines to protect riparian areas from the effects of grazing and trampling by livestock. For example, the 1995 draft included specific standards for streambank stability, utilization of woody species by livestock, and minimum residual stubble height. These specific requirements have been replaced in the new draft by language which states that managers should aim to achieve a generalized desired future condition.

The 1995 plan also proposed maximum group size limits of eight persons and eight stock animals for overnight use, with no exceptions. The new proposal increases the allowable number of recreation stock to 12 animals per group, and also allows for case-by-case exceptions to be granted, for groups as large as 15 persons and 25 stock animals. The environmental assessment accompanying the new proposal contains no evaluation of the impacts that such large groups would have on wilderness

resources or the experience of other visitors. And because criteria for issuing exceptions are not clearly defined, it is impossible to predict how many exceptions the agency will actually grant. It is therefore questionable whether the proposed restrictions will have much effect in limiting the number and effects of large groups.

The original proposal further required that stock animals be tied at least 200 feet from lakes, streams, trails, and campsites. The new draft cuts that distance in half, allowing stock animals to be kept within 100 feet of lakes, streams, and trails (with no specific requirement for distance from campsites). Curiously, backpackers would still be required to dispose of wash water at least 200 feet from all water sources, trails, and campsites. The environmental assessment contains no information or justification regarding why dishwater must be disposed at least twice as far from water, trails, and campsites as the waste products generated by stock animals.

In response to public complaints about noise, the Forest Service included in its 1995 draft a requirement that the use of cowbells be phased out in the Mokelumne Wilderness. However, after being pressured by commercial livestock permittees, the agency now proposes to remove that requirement. The new plan would allow the use of cowbells to continue in perpetuity. But perhaps the most contentious issue in the 1995 draft was a proposal that would have limited the discharge of firearms to hunting and

in rare emergencies. The Stanislaus National Forest currently has a policy that prohibits target shooting, random plinking, and other recreational shooting in wilderness areas, and the agency proposed to extend this policy to cover those portions of the Mokelumne Wilderness that lie within the Eldorado and Toiyabe national forests. While numerous public comments supported that proposal in order to reduce noise and to protect the sense of solitude, gun lobby groups vehemently opposed these restrictions, and the Forest Service backed down. The new plan even proposes to rescind the Stanislaus National Forests long-standing policy against the indiscriminate use of guns in its wilderness areas.

Despite the weakening amendments described above, there are a few notable improvements in the new draft. After reviewing public comments, the Forest Service recognized the adverse effects of allowing campfires at high elevations by adding a prohibition on campfires above 8,000 feet throughout the Mokelumne Wilderness. While the 1995 draft would have allowed a 700 percent increase in commercial use of the wilderness, public comments prompted the agency to rethink that aspect of the plan. Under the new proposal, commercial use could still triple (from less than 500 to 1,360 "service days"), but the increase now envisioned is substantially lower than that originally proposed.



What you can do

Written comments on the new proposal must be postmarked by January 2, 1998, and should be sent to:

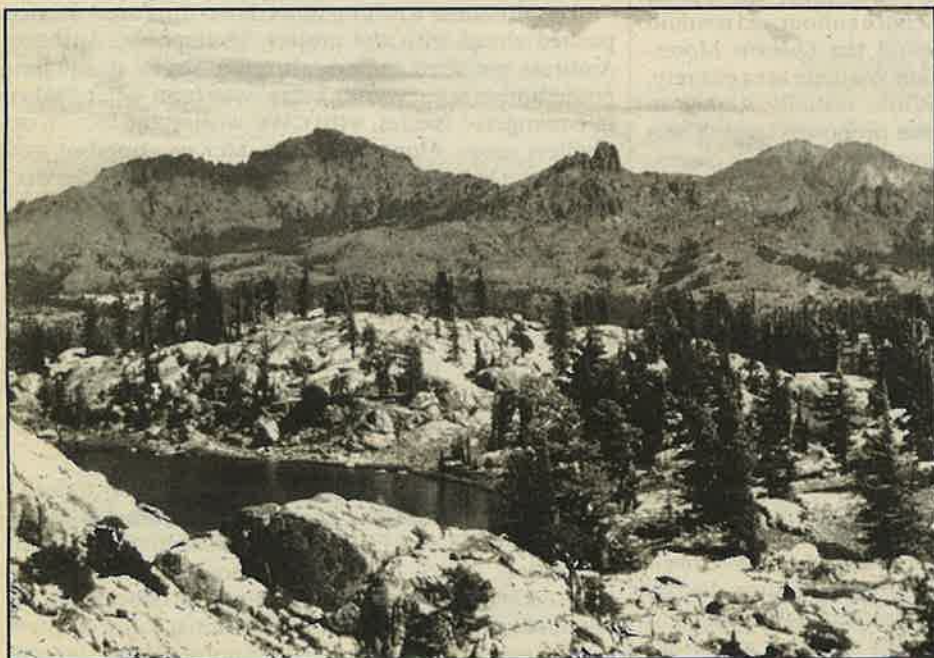
Eldorado National Forest
Attn: Mokelumne Wilderness EA
100 Forni Road
Placerville, CA 95667

Readers who wish to review the plan may request a copy of the new proposed action for the Mokelumne Wilderness by calling the Forest Service at (916) 622-5061.

Canyon Fred is an activist who works on issues affecting the high Sierra.



Frog Lake, Mokelumne Wilderness. The Forest Service's proposed management plan for the area backed away from their previous aim to limit the effects of grazing, stock use and shooting. Photo by Lucy Rosenau.



Granite Lake, Mokelumne Wilderness. The 104,000-acre wilderness area could see a three-fold increase in commercial use—considerably less than the Forest Service's previous proposal to increase commercial use by 700 percent. Photo by Pete Yamagata.

Wilderness Activism

Anatomy of a victory: How the Orleans Mountain Roadless Area was spared

By Ryan Henson

After nearly sixteen months of struggle, conservation activists were finally successful recently in thwarting the Forest Service's plans to log the Orleans Mountain Roadless Area in the Six Rivers National Forest (see the October issue of the *Wilderness Record*).

The evolution of this final victory is a tawdry tale of agency stubbornness and misplaced determination which all began in the winter of 1995-1996 when a series of violent storms toppled thousands of trees in the largely roadless Horse Linto and Tish Tang A Tang creek watersheds 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 planned to remove 11 million board feet (enough to fill 2,200 log trucks) of the fallen (and in many cases, simply leaning) trees from a designated late-successional (old-growth) reserve, the southwest portion of the Orleans Mountain Roadless Area (comprising 15,700 acres adjacent to the protected Trinity Alps Wilderness), and other key wild lands. By comparison, the Six Rivers National Forest normally logs 15 million board feet (3,000 log trucks) of trees annually from the entire forest.

The Forest Service claimed that if left to rot, the fallen or leaning trees posed an unnaturally high fire hazard that, if a wildfire occurred, would wipe out the sensitive fish and old-growth habitat in the area. The agency had no proof for its theory, and had failed to explain why this perfectly natural phenomenon never wiped out forests before salvage logging came along. Despite this, they moved aggressively to log the area using the authority of the infamous "salvage rider" which exempted such projects from environmental laws such as the Clean Water Act and Endangered Species Act. As a result, the agency planned this large-scale logging in watersheds that are important steelhead trout spawning streams, are known to host pine marten, Pacific fisher, northern spotted owls, and other old-growth dependent species, and comprise one of the largest remaining pristine wild areas in California. The Forest Service planned to pull fallen trees directly out of streambeds, from steep canyon walls, from landslide-prone soils, and other areas that aquatic scientists and forest ecologists have long urged the agency to avoid.

The first phase of the project involved the normal removal of trees that had fallen across roads. While implementing this normally non-controversial operation the Forest Service began logging so aggressively that they angered not only conservationists, but other federal agencies as well. For example, phase one of the Horse Linto logging project was supposed to clear roads of fallen trees, but in many cases the agency strayed far from the roads—dragging as many trees as they could up to the waiting log trucks. Doing so violated an agreement the Forest Service had with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) which was concerned about potential loss of habitat for the many endangered species living in the area such as the northern spotted owl. The FWS came quite close to citing the Forest Service for violating the agreement.

The final phases of the planned logging operation involved cutting in the Orleans Mountain Roadless Area and other key wild areas. However, this would violate a directive from Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman ordering the Forest Service to refrain from logging roadless areas under the salvage rider (the Forest Service is an arm of the United States Department of Agriculture, or USDA). In response, the then-forest supervisor of the Six Rivers National Forest, Martha Ketelle, flew to Washington, D.C. to personally lobby for an exemption from the Secretary's directive. In response, staff members of the Northcoast Environmental Center (NEC), CWC, the Western Ancient Forest Campaign (WAF) and other groups lobbied the USDA as well. Sadly, Ms. Ketelle won the war of words and was granted permission to log the roadless area.

In response, CWC and WAF organized a rally in San Francisco in front of the US Forest Service's California headquarters which consisted of a mock funeral for the ancient forests being cut down under the salvage rider. While not busy protesting, Paul Spitler, formerly of WAF and now CWC's Executive Director, furiously sought to find other ways to halt the cutting. In late 1996, Spitler discovered an obscure provision in Forest Service policy requiring the agency to conduct surveys for the Del Norte salamander prior to any "ground disturbing activities." Since the Forest Service was unable to dodge this provision, Ms. Ketelle "voluntarily" withdrew the project. As Paul Spitler later put it, "How nice—they 'voluntarily' decided to comply with the law!"

Proving the maxim that conservation is the art of delay, the Forest Service revived the sale in early 1997 after the infamous rider expired. Now, the agency had to comply with our nation's environmental laws, and activists were waiting with law books in hand.

This time, the Forest Service announced it would avoid the Orleans Mountain Roadless Area entirely. While initially happy to

hear this, I soon found that the proposed logging was well-within the roadless area despite the agency's claims. While researching this, Henson found that the dispute over the roadless area's boundary revealed a terrible flaw in the Six Rivers National Forest's Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP).

A national forest's LRMP is designed to guide all of the Forest Service's activities based on a zoning system similar to a city or county's general plan. For example, some areas are zoned for intensive logging, while others are zoned for ski resorts, ancient forest reserves, stream protection, or other uses. LRMPs also identify roadless areas and zone them for various uses, although rarely for protection.

The Six Rivers LRMP asserted that many of the forest's roadless areas no longer exist because they have been logged and filled with roads. The problem Henson discovered is that the Forest Service offered no real evidence to support these claims, and Anthony Ambrose and other conservationists confirmed that, to the best of their knowledge, the Orleans Mountain Roadless Area is still roadless and pristine. When the LRMP did offer evidence, it was confusing and contradictory at best.

For example, the Six Rivers LRMP merely mentions that while logging and "short" spur roads have affected 800 acres of the Orleans Mountain Roadless Area, "natural integrity generally has been maintained." Despite this, the plan asserted that 5,000 acres in the southern portion of the roadless area no longer existed because of the previous logging (the Forest Service's proposed salvage logging would be within the unjustly deleted 5,000 acres).

CWC submitted a Freedom of Information Act request asking the Forest Service to provide all documents pertaining to the Six Rivers National Forest's decision to eliminate 5,000 acres from the Orleans Mountain Roadless Area. As the information provided by the agency proved, the Six Rivers National Forest failed to conduct any meaningful analysis in its LRMP of past disturbances in the roadless area, to what extent the roadless area boundary should be altered, and what the possible future impacts of altering the boundary might be.

The documents provided to CWC also revealed that the decision to drop the 5,000 acres came not in a legally valid environmental impact document, but in a September 22, 1994 e-mail message between Forest Service staff which simply stated that "Larry says to remove the entire part of the south area [sic] that is south and east of Horse Linto Creek." Thus, 5,000 acres of roadless land were removed without any public input or environmental considerations. "This was one of the worst examples of arbitrary decision making we have ever encountered" said Henson in a letter to Martha Ketelle. He went on to chastise her further by writing that:

"All of this paints a disconcerting portrait of key land management decisions being made unilaterally by the Forest Service without public input, proper analysis, or the development of a reasonable range of alternatives. If 5,000 acres of a roadless area can be eliminated by informal conversations between Forest Service staff alone, what is the point of [our environmental laws]? If this behaviour is tolerated, we fear that timber sales and other major projects will someday be approved on the phone, or mapped and authorized over lunch on a napkin."

Despite these scathing objections, the Forest Service pushed ahead with the project. In response, Anthony Ambrose prepared an administrative appeal of the proposed timber sale covering every issue from water quality to endangered species, with CWC writing the section on roadless areas. Along with Tim McKay, Ambrose and others met to negotiate the appeal with the Forest Service. Two weeks ago, the agency scaled the project back significantly by withdrawing the proposed roadless area logging and offering more protection for Del Norte salamanders. After months of hard work, conservationists could finally breathe a sigh of relief. Much of the credit for this victory goes to Anthony Ambrose and Tim McKay of NEC, as well as Paul Spitler. Thanks are also due to the hundreds of citizen activists who lobbied against the proposed logging, particularly the Sierra Club Redwood and Bay chapters.

The Six Rivers National Forest has a fairly "green" reputation. Indeed, a major national environmental group hailed the Six Rivers LRMP as the best such document in the nation, which demonstrates how truly inadequate other LRMPs are. Perhaps by sparing the Orleans Mountain Roadless Area, the Six Rivers National Forest can now make a new start in both its philosophy of land stewardship and public relations.

Ryan Henson is the Conservation Associate for the California Wilderness Coalition.

We fear that timber sales and other major projects will someday be approved on the phone, or mapped and authorized over lunch on a napkin.

Wilderness News



area's natural values will occur. The 18,000-acre Grouse Lakes RA was inventoried in RARE II (an evaluation of roadless areas for possible wilderness designation), and will be considered when wilderness activists plan for future designation of additional Forest Service wilderness.

The recent consolidation of public ownership of the Grouse Lakes Roadless Area is a big step forward, but the management of the Grouse Lakes Roadless Area will pose significant challenges to wilderness activists in future years.

John Moore is an activist with the Sierra Club.

Beyers Lake, Grouse Lakes Roadless Area, Tahoe National Forest. This popular backpacker's destination, now public land, is part of a 7,500-acre land swap recently completed between the Forest Service and Southern Pacific Railroad. Photo by Eric Gerstung.



Grouse Lakes wildlands acquired

Continued from page 3

7,500 acres, are now part of the Tahoe National Forest.

Favorite destinations such as Penner Lake, the Five Lakes Basin, and Beyer Lake are now public land. Until recently, about half the land in the Grouse Lakes RA was private land; now only about ten percent of the area is private land. The Forest Service deserves hearty thanks for completing this major acquisition which will greatly benefit present and future Californians.

There are still important lands in and near the Grouse Lakes area which are not part of the Tahoe National Forest. Walter Hewlett owns 480 acres just north of the Grouse Ridge Lookout, including Milk Lake. He almost certainly does not plan to develop this parcel, but his long-term plans are not known. PG&E owns about 900 acres near Lindsey and Rock Lakes on the northwest side of the Grouse Lakes area. PG&E appears likely to sell some of their extensive real estate to help make the company more competitive in the restructured electric utility industry. If PG&E decides to sell, having critical lands like those around Lindsey and Rock Lakes acquired by public agencies will be a big challenge for environmentalists and the government. The Nevada Irrigation District owns several parcels not clearly related to their water supply developments. Altogether, future acquisition of remaining important Grouse Lakes lands from willing sellers might require considerable effort.

Environmentalists will also have to keep an eye on future Forest Service management of the Grouse Lakes area to make sure that motor vehicles continue to be excluded and that no activities which would degrade the

Calendar

December 16 Training for new forest activists for the Plumas National Forest in Quincy, CA. Call Ryan Henson at (530) 758-0380 for details.

December 20 Deadline for comments on proposed logging in the Smith River National Recreation Area. Call Ryan Henson at (530) 758-0380 for details.

January 1 Trainings for new forest activists interested in the Sierra, Modoc, and Plumas national forests. To be held in Mariposa, Alturas, and Quincy respectively. Call Ryan Henson at (530) 758-0380 for dates, times, and locations.

January 2 Deadline for comments on the Mokelumne Wilderness Area management plan. See article on page 5.

January 10 Symposium: The Relevance of Conservation and Environmental Biology to Traditional Native Cultures. Sponsored by the American Indian Science and Engineering Society at U.C. Davis. Speakers include Robert Mesta (condors), Frank Lake (salmon), and others. For more information call Don Hankins at (530) 750-1710.

January 22 Deadline for comments on the Trigo Mountains/Imperial Wildlife Refuge Cooperative Management Plan. See article on page 4.

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"For humans to cause species to become extinct and to destroy the biological diversity of God's creation, for humans to degrade the integrity of the Earth by causing changes in its climate, stripping the Earth of its natural forests, or destroying its wetlands...these are sins."

— His All Holiness Bartholomew I, spiritual leader of the world's 300 million Orthodox Christians, at a symposium on religion, science and the environment in Santa Barbara.

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