



WILDERNESS RECORD

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CALIFORNIA WILDERNESS COALITION

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No. 1

Cranston Introduces Desert Bill

Conservationists hailed the introduction of Senator Alan Cranston's California Desert Protection Act of 1986 on February 7. The bill, S. 2061, calls for the creation of a new national park, additions to existing national park system units, additions to a state park, and new wilderness designations -- in all, it would protect some eight million acres of federal lands in southern California.

"Wilderness, a distinguishing characteristic of public lands in the California Desert, affords all Americans an unrivaled opportunity to experience vast areas of the Old West essentially unaltered by man's activities," said Cranston. "Our goal has been to establish in law the most appropriate pattern of protection to assure that all Californians and visitors to the desert will have the full value of these lands."

The California Desert encompasses 25 million acres and amounts to about one-quarter of California's land surface. Major provisions of the bill are:

*** WILDERNESS:** Based on studies conducted by the managing agencies, and an enormous amount of detailed field study by conservationists, the Cranston bill proposes designation of statutory wilderness areas to protect specific wild desert values. Most of the wilderness areas are on lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management, but included also are wild portions of the national parks as wilderness and several national forest wilderness areas within the California Desert region.

*** NATIONAL PARKS:** The Cranston Bill establishes a new Mojave National Park, giving the unique Mojave Desert ecosystem and landscape this highest form of recognition and protection. This area presently is protected only by admin-

istrative regulations that have been proven ineffective.

The legislation also fills out the presently inadequate boundaries of the existing Death Valley and Joshua Tree national monuments by adding wild desert land to form more ecologically sensitive boundaries. Each of these enlarged monuments is elevated to full statutory national park status -- a step long overdue.

*** STATE PARK:** The Cranston bill completes a long-pending proposal for the proper expansion of the Red Rock Canyon State Park, in the heart of the California Desert, by transferring to the state certain federal lands best managed as part of the state park system.

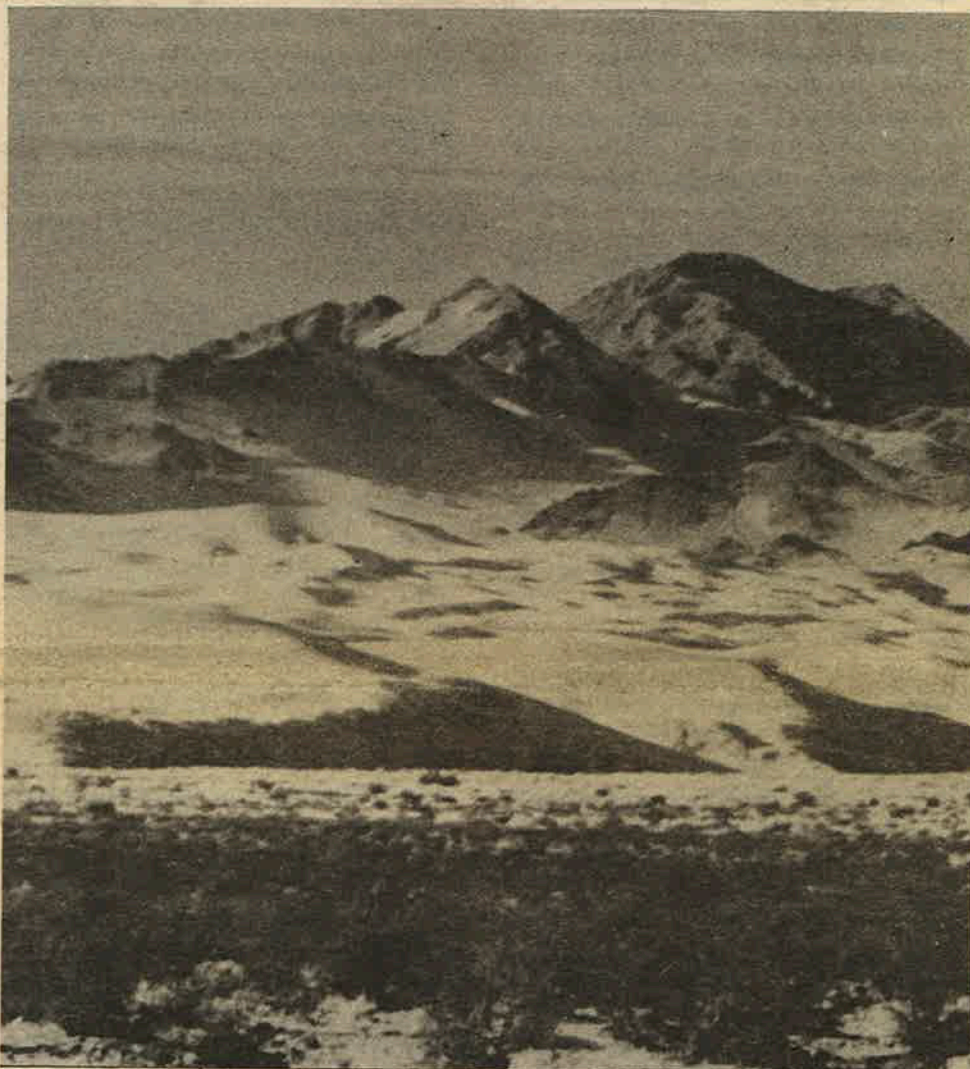
*** OTHER PROTECTIVE UNITS:** Several special areas are established to preserve unique botanical and historic features, to be administered by the Bureau of Land Management. These include the Desert Lily Sanctuary and the Indian Canyons National Historic Site.

Pashayan Bill a Mixed Bag

Congressman Charles (Chip) Pashayan has introduced legislation which would designate some lands as wilderness and a wild Kern river. The bad news is it would change the entire Wild Rivers System, remove land from national parks, require park wilderness users to pay a fee, and allow special management for an off-road vehicle route.

Conservationists are hoping to separate the good parts of the bill from the bad, but there are many undesirable provisions. As it stands, the bill would result in:

* Removal of 2,000 acres of Dennison Ridge and 500 acres of Redwood Canyon from Sequoia and



Kelso Dunes WSA in the proposed Mojave Nat. Park Photo by Mike McWherter

Kings Canyon national parks.

* Transfer of land between Sequoia National Forest and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in the Kern River Plateau.

* Designation of a 47,000-acre Scodies Wilderness on lands transferred from the Sequoia N.F. to BLM.

* Additions to the Sequoia-Kings Canyon Wilderness, although not in the Mineral King area.

* Classification of the North Fork of the Kern as a federal wild rivers from the headwaters to one mile above the Johnsondale Bridge, but not the 18 miles downstream originally recommended for "recreational" designation.

* Weakening of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act by a number of amendments.

* Institution of a wilderness permit fee system in Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks.

* Requiring Sierra National Forest to develop special regulations for the Dusey jeep trail, a narrow corridor separating the John Muir and Dinkey Lakes wildernesses.

* Prohibiting the National Park Service from condemning private inholdings in the Wilsonia part of Kings Canyon National Park.

Thank you to Ron Stork of the Merced Canyon Committee for much of the information in this article.

Coalition Report by Jim Eaton

Due to the weather, there was some question when this issue would be completed. No, Davis stayed relatively high and dry, but Wendy and I became trapped in Mendocino County on Washington's birthday while visiting old friends Sari Sommarstrom and Tom Jopson (and son Matts).

The rivers on the north coast are awesome in flood stage. We watched the Eel take a bite out of the main highway into Covelo. That didn't really matter since Highway 101 was closed in a number of places as were the roads crossing the Coast Range. We finally got out by going north on some local roads.

New faces are appearing on the Coalition's Board of Directors. The Sierra Club's Northern California Representative Russ Shay recently took a new position in Washington, D.C. His replacement is Sally Kabisch, both in his old job and on the CWC Board.

Trent Orr, attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council, is taking a one-year sabbatical to Florence, Italy. But we can still get legal advice with our new

director Julie McDonald of the Sierra Club Legal Defence Fund. Julie has been on our Advisory Committee for years, and we appreciate her helpful counsel.

Bob Schneider, one of the founders of the Coalition, is leaving the Board for awhile. We expect to replace him with three new members in April. In fact, it looks like women will be in the majority for the first time. Women have filled the CWC offices of president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer, but never have we had so many qualified women serving as directors at the same time.

Thank you to David Devine of San Francisco for becoming a business sponsor.

We welcome the Committee to Save the Kings River and the Friends of Chinquapin as our newest group members. In addition to the wild river values of the Kings, the river winds through one of the wildest canyons in the state that needs additional wilderness protection. Friends of Chinquapin are defending this Trinity County roadless area released by the California Wilderness Act of 1984.

How We Spend Your Money

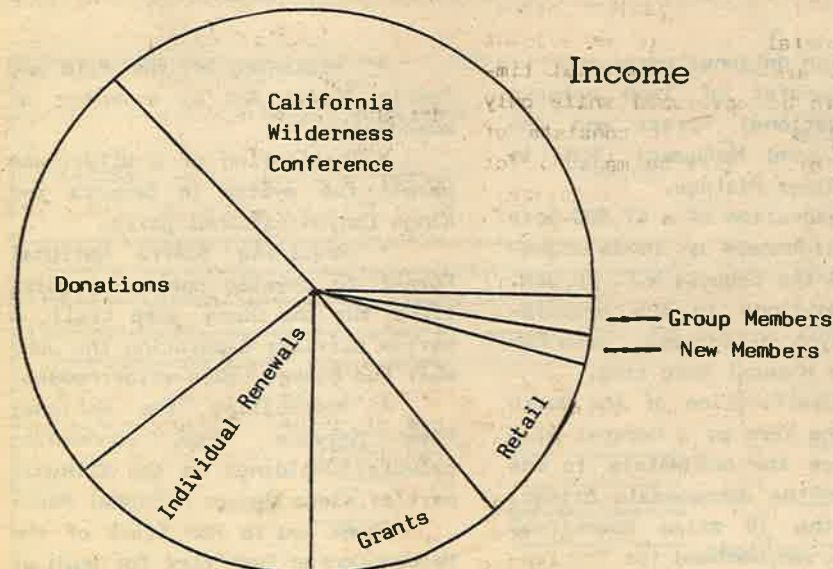
As you can see by the pie charts, the California Wilderness Conference skews our 1985 financial report. The conference cost \$15,000 and brought in nearly an equal amount, bring the Coalition's total budget for the year to just over \$40,000. Even without the addition of the conference monies, the CWC's income increased over the previous year by more than \$10,000.

As before, renewals and donations from members were the main sources of income for the Coalition. Most of the grant money came from Recreational Equipment, Inc.

(REI) for the publication of our book, Discover the California Wilderness Act of 1984. Retail income came from the selling of that book and from T-shirt sales.

Excluding conference expenses, the bulk of your donations was spent directly on wilderness issues. Quite a bit of money went into the retail category, but most of this was the publishing costs of our book covered by the grant mentioned above. Ten percent of your donations went to producing and distributing the Wilderness Record.

Thank you for your support.



News Briefs Panamint Dunes Appeal Upheld

On January 30, the Interior Board of Land Appeals issued a unanimous decision overturning the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) decision to open the Panamint Dunes to off-road vehicles (ORVs). The appellants were the Wilderness Society, Sierra Club, Desert Protective Council, California Native Plant Society, and the Timbisha Shoshone Tribe.

The Panamint Dunes are part of a Wilderness Study Area adjacent to the western boundary of Death Val-

ley National Monument. The appellants argues that opening the dunes to ORV use would cause irreparable losses to a major archeological district and unique wilderness area.

The Board ruled that "there is no question that cultural resources are wilderness values." They further found that "the risk of opening the Dunes to ORV use with the predicted adverse consequences outweighs any demand for an ORV use area."

Wild Rivers Proposed for Study

A study of the McCloud, West Walker, and East Fork Carson rivers for possible addition to California's Wild & Scenic River System was proposed on February 12 by State Assembly members Byron Sher (D-Palo Alto) and Jim Costa (D-Fresno). Sher chairs the Assembly Natural Resources Committee; Costa chairs the Assembly Water, Parks,

and Wildlife Committee. Introduction of the bill, A.B. 3101, followed hearings last October on the state's river protection system. The state system, which does not necessarily protect designated rivers from federally-authorized development, has not been enlarged since its creation in 1972.

- Friends of the River

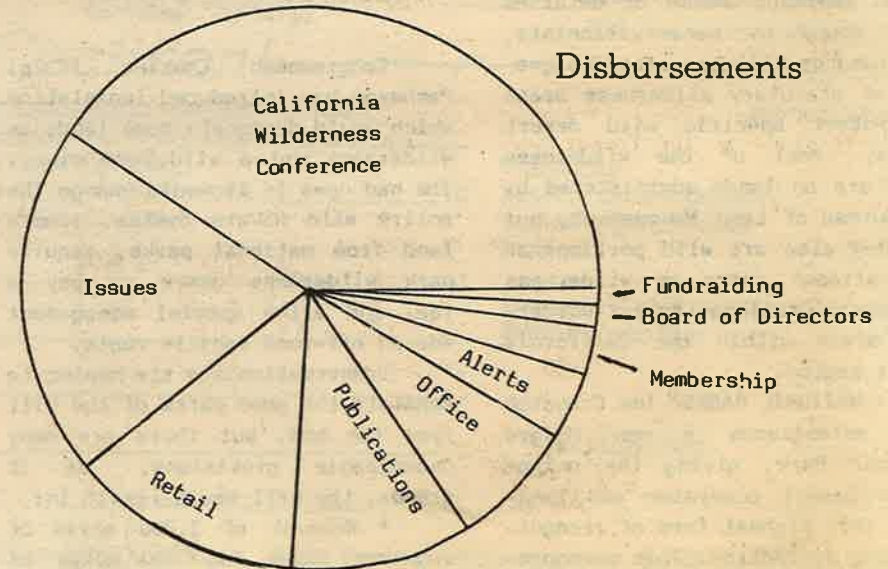
Peppermint Ski Plan Appealed

Conservationists have filed a major appeal in response to the Forest Service's decision to go ahead with the Peppermint Ski Resort in the Sequoia National Forest. The Forest Service filed a final environmental impact statement late last year for the project.

A 113-page statement of reasons was filed by the appellants, and they were granted more time to complete their complex case. Groups signing onto the appeal included the Sierra Club, California Wilderness Coalition, Defenders of Wildlife, Kaweah Flyfishers, Kern Valley Wildlife Association, Peppermint Alert, Porterville Area Envi-

ronmental Council, and the Tulare County Audubon Society. A Native American also joined as an appellant. The ski industry has entered on the side of the Forest Service.

The appellants have raised numerous issues in their complaint. Among the problems mentioned are the impact of the ski area on wildlife, including the California condor; impact on sensitive plants; suitability of access routes, degradation of air and water quality, lack of consideration of the roadless nature of Slate Mountain, and the hidden costs of the project. The use of the area by Native Americans as a religious site also is an issue.



Draft Plans Give Roadless Areas the Axe

by Steve Evans

With six draft plans for national forests in California released for public review, conservationists have identified several issues and concerns that appear to be generic to the Forest Service planning process. National forests in California that have draft plans include the Angeles, Cleveland, Stanislaus, Sequoia, Tahoe, and Plumas.

A primary concern is how the Forest Service is treating roadless areas in all the plans that have been released so far. Another critical issue in the timbered forests of northern California is how the Forest Service intends to manage for timber and the effects of this management on other forest uses and resources.

These and other issues were raised in a January meeting with Regional Forester Zane G. Smith and representatives from several groups, including the California Wilderness Coalition. Although Smith seldom responded in a substantive way to many of the concerns expressed at the meeting, he did mention that the Forest Service was reevaluating many of the preferred alternatives in the draft plans that have yet to be released in California. Smith indicated that due to heavy public criticism over the use of clear cutting, herbicides, and the destruction of roadless areas, we could expect some "significant" changes in the preferred alternatives identified in the draft plans.

The California Wilderness Coalition and other conservation groups have compiled a laundry list of problems, issues, and concerns that have been identified from the review of the six draft plans that have been released. These issues are listed below.

Roadless Areas

The most pervasive problem in the draft plans is the Forest Ser-

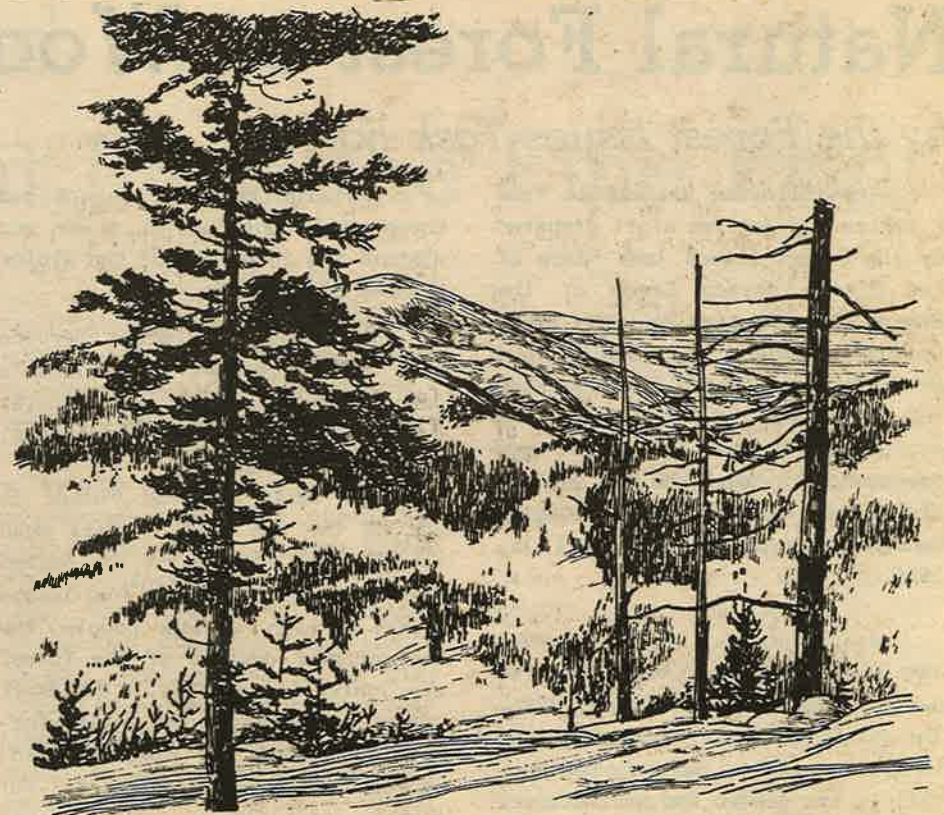
vice's biased attitude towards roadless area protection. It appears that the agency is reaching ridiculous limits in an effort to avoid dealing with this issue of great public concern. The absurdity is reinforced by the agency's planning lingo which requires the replacement of the term "roadless area" with the more neutral "unroaded area." Forest Service techno-speak also is being used to confuse the public. Roadless areas used for primitive, backcountry recreation, but not officially designated as wilderness, are now "semi-primitive, nonmotorized" areas.

More importantly, it has become evident that the Forest Service has grossly misinterpreted Congressional "release" language in the California Wilderness Act. The Act "released" hundreds of roadless areas for multiple use purposes, including the option of full administrative protection. Also, the Act clearly provides the Forest Service with the option to study released roadless areas for potential wilderness designation if they so choose. This gives the Forest Ser-

"While the Forest Service techno-jargon provides pseudo protection, real axes will fall"

vice a wide range of options to respond to the overwhelming public concern for protecting roadless areas.

In draft plan after draft plan, the Forest Service boldly states that the California Wilderness Act "resolved" the roadless area issue. Evidently, this "resolution" includes the sudden administrative disappearance of all released roadless areas. In fact, most California forests were ordered by the agency's Washington, D.C., office to remove information in the draft plans that would have shown how every inventoried roadless area would be managed under each alternative. None of the draft plans show official roadless area



boundaries on any map, and if the plan provides any narrative information at all on a released roadless area, it usually is hidden away in the appendix of the environmental impact statement.

The natural results of this planning bias are poor management

administratively designated "semi-primitive" areas will provide only "semi" protection for their roadless and recreational values. While the Forest Service techno-jargon provides pseudo protection, real axes will fall.

Very few roadless areas are expected to survive the current 10 to 15 year planning cycle. The Forest Service is committed to study any of the remnants that are over 5000 acres in size for potential wilderness designation in the next planning cycle.

These problems constitute probable violations of the National Environmental Policy Act (inadequate range of alternatives, insufficient environmental study of planning areas), and the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) (ignoring issues raised by the public). Conservationists are investigating possible avenues for administrative appeals and legal challenge.

Other Issues

Timber management is the driving force behind the planning process. All other forest uses and resources, such as recreation, wildlife, and watershed, are considered as constraints on timber production. The Cascade Holistic Economic Consultants (CHEC) of Eugene, Oregon, have reviewed several draft plans for conservation groups. CHEC has identified a number of issues dealing with timber management. These include:

* Inflated timber yields due to incorrect yield tables, inaccurate

Cont. on Page 7



Tahoe National Forest Plan

Natural Forest or Wood Fiber Plantation?

by the Forest Issues Task Force

The following article is from a twelve-page action alert prepared by the Forest Issues Task Force of the Sierra Nevada Group of the Sierra Club, Protect American River Canyons (PARC), and South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL). Many CWC activists will receive the entire alert soon; otherwise you may request a copy from the address listed at the end of the article. Deadline for comment is April 18, 1986.

Tahoe National Forest released its Draft Land Management Plan for public comment on January 6, 1986. The draft plan is heavily biased toward the timber industry and sacrifices the scenic and recreational values of the Tahoe Forest. If implemented, the plan would destroy the Tahoe as we know it. These are the critical issues:

* Eight of the nine roadless backcountry areas in the Tahoe will be roaded and clearcut logged.

* Six square miles of forest will be clearcut every year for the next fifty years. After 50 years, the only remaining natural forest will be in narrow strips along the Tahoe's scenic highways, the Granite Chief Wilderness, and a few "special interest" and wildlife habitat areas.

* Sterile "plantations" of conifers will replace the natural forest. These plantations may be sprayed repeatedly with toxic herbicides.

* Scenic hiking trails and back roads will lose their scenic qualities as clearcutting and logging roads become visible everywhere.

* Most of the remaining climax, old-growth forest will be destroyed. Clearcut logging will occur on steep slopes prone to erosion and landslide.

* Large herds of cattle and sheep will continue to graze and disturb the integrity of the alpine meadows and forests.

In total, the Forest Service plan will replace the Tahoe's scenic, recreational, and natural forest with a sterile, monotonous, wood fiber plantation.

The Tahoe National Forest is one of the ten most heavily used recreational forests in the United States — it is within four hours travel of eight million people. The recreational demands of the forest are increasing rapidly. The draft forest plan manages the entire forest, including the remote, wild, backcountry areas, primarily for timber production using a timber harvest system that is incompatible with scenic recreation.

A Citizens' Alternative to the Tahoe National Forest plan has been prepared which would manage the forest for a balance of public uses. This alternative preserves the scenic beauty, diversity, and stability of the natural forest environment while producing a steady flow of high-quality forest products to maintain the regional forest-based economy.

The Citizens' Alternative preserves the remaining roadless areas for recreation and for habitat for a wide range of sensitive and endangered plants, animals, and birds. It recommends the use of a type of timber harvesting that maintains the natural forest without the use of toxic herbicides. The scenic and natural qualities of Mount Lola would be preserved. Most of the remaining old-growth forest would be saved for scientific study and the admiration of future generations.

Roadless Areas

Over 160,000 acres of the last remaining wild and roadless areas are hidden in the remote backcountry or the Tahoe National Forest. These areas of steep slopes, alpine forests, and meadows provide outstanding opportunities for hiking, nature study, and solitude. Numerous trails wander through the sunny woods, cool moist canyons, and alpine meadows. Sheltered from earlier logging and road building attempts, these islands of peaceful, undisturbed wilderness are surrounded by a sea of roads, log-



Spencer Lakes in the East Yuba roadless area

Photo by Nancy Morton

ging, and other environmental disturbances.

If the Forest Service has its way, roads will slice into the last wild backcountry areas including the North Fork of the American River, East and West Yuba, Castle Peak, Duncan Canyon, Middle Yuba, and Bald Mountain roadless areas.

The draft plan calls for the construction and reconstruction of 40 miles of road every year for the next 50 years! New roads would continue to be built until there is a road every quarter mile throughout the forest. There would be very few wild areas left. Roads would be constructed into extremely steep canyons with serious potential for erosion, slope destabilization, and landslides.

The forests in the roadless areas are located predominately on very steep slopes where the use of clearcutting, as called for in the draft plan, presents many serious environmental concerns.

There is no economic justification for cutting any more old growth in the Tahoe or any other national forest. Plenty of fine stands of second growth timber exist to provide for the region's lumber needs. Many of the old-growth timber sales in remote roadless areas will not return enough income to cover the costs of new road construction. The forest plan does not adequately consider the ecological value of old-growth forests.

The roadless areas provide critical habitat for the sensitive and endangered plants and animals indigenous to old-growth forests.

This is the last chance. Once gone these areas cannot be replaced. Old-growth forests take hundreds of years to grow and evolve; very few virgin Sierran forests have survived the holocaust of recent logging. These forests are our last links to the stable ecological pattern of this region.

For more information, contact:
Forest Issues Task Force
Sierra Nevada Group, Sierra Club
P.O. Box 530
North San Juan, CA 95960

Tahoe Roadless Areas

Existing Wilderness	acres
Granite Chief	18,705
Roadless Areas	acres
Bald Mountain	6,453
Castle Peak	18,000
Duncan Canyon	9,403
East Yuba	17,900
Granite Chief	10,200
Grouse Lakes	21,100
Lakes Basin*	551
Middle Yuba	?
North Fk. American	49,100
N.Fk. Mid. Fk. American	11,900
West Yuba*	14,900

* adjoins Plumas NF roadless area



Plumas National Forest Plan

Plumas Plan Looks Good . . .

by Steve Evans

But Read the Fine Print

The Plumas National Forest released its draft land management plan and draft environmental impact statement (EIS) for public review in January. Unlike previous plans in California, the Plumas has taken some care in providing background data in the plan and EIS appendices that are essential to understand the proposed future management of the forest. Even the maps in the draft plan are readable.

Unfortunately, the Plumas draft plan suffers from the same agency bias and poor planning methodology that is plaguing forest plans throughout California. Problem issues of particular interest to the public include protecting roadless areas, widespread clearcutting of timber, and the aerial application of herbicides (see accompanying article).

On the surface, the Plumas draft plan looks good, especially in terms of administratively protecting roadless areas that were released for possible development by Congress in the California Wilderness Act of 1984. Almost all roadless acreage in the forest will be allocated to "semi-primitive, non-motorized" status, which ostensibly protects the scenic and primitive recreation values of the areas. However, the "fine print" in

the management prescriptions for the semi-primitive areas allows the Forest Supervisor to log timber in the area to "enhance or protect scenic or recreational values." Conservationists are perplexed about how to define this qualification, and until the Forest Service provides a clarification, we are forced to assume that so-called "semi-primitive" areas are only provided "semi-protection" from logging, road building, and other development activities.

The draft plan also will allot more than 11,000 acres from the Middle Fork Roadless Area for timber harvesting. This acreage is essential to protect the upper canyon slopes and watersheds of the pristine Middle Feather Wild and Scenic River from sedimentation caused by development. Other areas that fare poorly in the draft plan include Dixon Creek, which will lose 2,000 acres of its 5,000 acres to logging, and Adams Peak, which is allocated to "primitive, motorized" management. The plan also ignores an opportunity supported by local conservationists to expand the existing 21,000-acre Bucks Lake Wilderness to over 33,500 acres by adding uninventoried roadless land in the vicinity of Bucks Mountain and Bucks Creek.

A critical factor in evaluating the Plumas plan is determining which areas will truly be managed for timber and in which areas will other uses and resources be emphasized. Unfortunately, the Plumas Forest evidently intends to reserve the right to log timber seemingly everywhere in the forest. Almost every management prescription allows some kind of timber harvest, with the only major difference being whether timber harvested from a particular area is calculated into the overall forest timber yield.

Semi-primitive recreation areas, developed recreation sites like campgrounds, special interest designations like botanical areas, and even the Middle Fork Wild and Scenic River Zone could be selectively harvested for ill-defined purposes other than to meet timber yields. General recreation areas around reservoirs, regions managed for the full or partial retention of natural visual quality, and habitat areas for bald eagles, spotted owls, and goshawk, as well as commercial timber land, all will be selectively or intensively managed to meet annual timber yields. As a result, only the existing Bucks Lake Wilderness is off limits to logging (about two percent of the forest), and even that is qualified by the Wilderness Act loophole that allows logging to control pest infestations. About 23 percent of the forest may be logged for purposes other than meeting timber yields, and a whopping 75 percent of the forest will be managed to meet the Forest Service's annual timber quota. This inequitable plan is hardly based upon multiple use!

The Forest Service intends to use clearcutting with cuts up to 40 acres in size and the widespread applications of toxic herbicides as its prime silvicultural methods. Clearcutting and herbicides are ranked next to roadless area protection as the primary public concerns raised in the issues identification phase of the planning process.

To compound these problems, a timber economics consultant hired by conservationists has found that timber yields in the forest may be

inflated by as much as 40 percent due to poor field data, problems with yield tables, and other technical concerns. This means that the Plumas may be a paper forest without the actual timber it will need to meet its annual harvest goals.

The Sierra Club, Friends of Plumas Wilderness, and Altacal Audubon are in the process of completing a Conservation Alternative for the Plumas Forest. The alternative calls for the true protection of all roadless areas as well as timber harvest based upon selective "all-aged" management. The alternative also is designed to protect fish, wildlife, and water quality.

Written comments concerning the draft plan will be accepted by the Forest Service until May 8, 1986. Concerned citizens are urged to write in support of the Conservation Alternative, asking for complete protection for all roadless areas and in support of all-aged timber management prohibiting large clearcuts. Send your comments to:

Lloyd R. Britton, Forest Supervisor
Plumas National Forest
ATTN: Public Comments
P.O. Box 1500
Quincy, CA 95971

Steve Evans is a Chico activist and is president of the California Wilderness Coalition.



Middle Fork Feather roadless area

Photo by Brad Richards

Plumas Roadless Areas

Existing Wilderness	acres	
Bucks Lake Wilderness	21,000	
Roadless Areas	acres	protection
Adams Peak	7,000	0%
Bald Rock	7,700	100% SP,WR
Beartrap*	8,000	75% SP
Bucks Creek	6,700	0%
Chips Creek**	12,700	100% SP
Dixon Creek	5,000	60% SP
Grizzly Peak	7,000	100% SP
Keddie Ridge**	3,000	100% SP
Lakes Basin*	10,800	72% SP
Middle Fork	52,200	78% SP,WR
Thompson Peak**	2,000	100% SP

SP = Semi-Primitive WR = Wild River
* adjoins Tahoe NF roadless area
** adjoins Lassen NF roadless area

Wilderness Wildlife

The Fisher

by Dennis Coules

The fisher, *Martes pennanti*, is a true wilderness animal found in very low numbers in remote forest areas. The fisher belongs to the little-understood weasel family - the Mustelidae - and is itself more scarce and unknown than most other North American mustelids. Only the endangered black-footed ferret and the rare wolverine are more elusive.

The fisher resembles a dark, stocky weasel, with males averaging about nine pounds and females half that. It is much larger than the closely-related pine marten. From a distance, the fisher looks almost uniformly black in winter, but it actually ranges from deep brown to black, with lighter hairs around the face. The summer pelage may be much lighter overall. The tail is very densely furred.

A unique trait of the fisher is its ability to consistently prey upon porcupines, the only predator to do so. In areas with a dependable porcupine population, the fisher thus has a food supply with little competition from other carnivores. The fisher does not eat fish, which has given rise to much speculation as to why it was given its name.



RANGE AND HABITATS

Fishers are found only in North America. Their range in the United States is much reduced from pre-European settlement times. In addition to their current distribution, they once inhabited much of Idaho and Montana and as far south as southern Illinois in the Midwest and North Carolina and Tennessee in the Appalachians. Now the fisher inhabits only the extreme northeastern states, northern Wisconsin and Minnesota, relatively small regions of Montana, Idaho, Colorado, Oregon, and California, and a few pockets in other states.

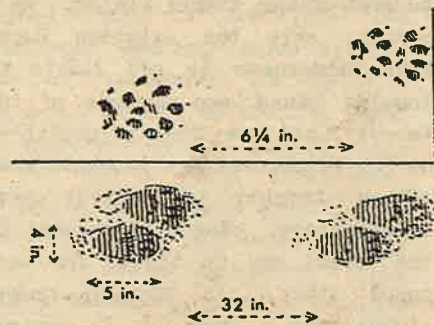
In California, the fisher is found in the Sierra Nevada between Yosemite and Sequoia national parks



and in old-growth forests of the northwestern corner of the state.

The fisher's original distribution in North America coincided roughly with the combined distribution of northern hemlock-hardwood, boreal, and western mountain forests. In California, fishers are found in mixed coniferous, Douglas fir, yellow pine, red fir, and lodgepole pine forests. They are always found in areas of continuous forest with high canopy closure, and they seem to have an aversion to open areas such as recent clearcuts, especially in the winter.

Population density estimates for fishers vary widely by region and are very limited for the west. Relatively high density estimates have included one fisher per 2.6 - 11.7 square kilometers in suitable habitat in Maine and one fisher per 9 square kilometers in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. In contrast, a density of one fisher per 208 square kilometers (51,397 acres) was estimated for a region being trapped in British Columbia.



FISHER BIOLOGY

Fishers are solitary hunters, rarely found in groups except during the breeding and rearing seasons. An average home range for an individual in New Hampshire is about 20 square kilometers (4,950 acres). In a pattern of "intrasexual territoriality," the home ranges of males rarely overlap but the home ranges of females are often located within those of one or more males.

Fishers are active at any hour of the day or night and do not hibernate during the winter. Activity seems to be greatest, or at

least the most frantic, during the spring breeding season. Females may breed at one year of age. Fishers exhibit delayed implantation, or an interruption of normal embryonic development, so that the majority of embryonic development does not occur until about ten months after fertilization. Resumption of development may be triggered by increased day length. About 30 days after fetal development resumes, the young are born, fully one year after mating. After giving birth, the female mates again within ten days. Thus female fishers are pregnant nearly all the time.

The average litter size is two to three kits. All known dens have been found high up in hollow trees, but rock piles also may be used. The female alone cares for the kits, but only for a few months. Total longevity of fishers has been greater than ten years in zoos, but is unknown in the wild.

Fishers are generalized predators and eat a wide variety of animal species as well as scavenging carcasses and eating fruits and nuts. In contrast, there are no regular predators of adult fishers. Fishers may play an important role in limiting porcupine numbers, as evidenced by the extremely high numbers of this rodent which developed following the fisher's decline in the 1920s. Porcupines are blamed for much timber damage, and the desire to control them led to fisher reintroduction programs in several states.



CONSERVATION STATUS

Trapping and logging were the two major causes of the fisher's extirpation from large areas of the United States. Their pelts always have been valuable, and they are relatively easy to trap. As a

result, populations in New York already were declining by 1850. By 1932 the fisher was extinct in Wisconsin and Michigan, and no fishers were reported in Montana and Idaho after the 1920s. It is likely that fishers survived only in inaccessible mountain regions of California, Oregon, and the northeastern states during this period.

As a result of these extirpations, most states closed their trapping seasons in the 1930s. California was the last to do so, in 1946. Fisher populations began to recover after closure of the season in several states, including Michigan, Wisconsin, New York, Maine, and Vermont. However, populations have not remained steady, and trapping seasons have been reopened and reclosed in several areas. In areas where fishers are scarce, they also can be threatened by trapping for foxes, coyotes, or other mammals.

Fisher reintroduction programs were initiated in the 1950s and 1960s in many states, most of which appear to have been successful. The most isolated fisher population may now be that in West Virginia, a result of a release in 1969. The closest wild population is in upstate New York.

In California, populations in the far northern counties appear to be growing (as reported in 1973 and 1977 publications), but populations further south either are low and stable or low and decreasing, despite a continual closure of the trapping season.

Habitat destruction from logging combined with trapping decimated fisher populations historically. Cutting of old-growth forests progressed from the Northeast to the Midwest and currently is threatening fisher populations in the West. Large clearcuts present the greatest threat to habitat because they may limit foraging area, and thus population sizes.

In California, where the fisher is a protected furbearer, the greatest threats to its survival are traps or poisons intended for other predators and continued clearcutting of its habitat. Management of our public forest lands must consider the needs of this elusive and fascinating predator if it is to remain a member of our fauna.

FURTHER READING

A summary of current knowledge of the fisher is embodied in Roger A. Powell's *The Fisher: Life History, Ecology, and Behavior*, University of Minnesota Press, 1982.

Dennis Coules is the CWC's consultant for wildlife and desert issues.

Update Sinkyone Spared Until Spring

By Andy Alm

State acquisition of more than 7,000 acres in the Sinkyone wilderness area -- and the critical old growth forest areas and trail corridors it includes -- could depend on official Mendocino County support for a compromise plan this month, according to Sinkyone activists.

The compromise would put most of the acreage now owned by Georgia-Pacific (G-P) on the northern Mendocino coast into the state forest system, to be managed for timber production and other uses. Key critical areas and corridors identified by the State Parks and Recreation Commission would be added to the Sinkyone Wilderness State Park.

Opposition by the Mendocino supervisors and a local timber labor union are credited with causing Governor Deukmejian to veto last year's \$7 million Sinkyone acquisition bill passed by the legislature. That measure would have placed the entire area into the state park -- removing it from timber production and local tax rolls.

The supervisors will discuss the issue and hear public comments at 9:30 a.m. March 11 at the county courthouse in Ukiah.

G-P, which says it is willing to sell its entire holdings in the area but not just the critical portions, has promised to delay its plans to log the Sally Bell Grove until April 1 and give the state another chance to buy the entire area. The 75-acre old-growth Douglas fir and redwood stand is considered crucial for acquisition and was the scene of arrests in 1983 as protestors occupied the site to keep G-P's chainsaws from the ancient trees.

Logging was then blocked by a suit filed by the Environmental

Protection Information Center of Garberville, and the eventual appeals court decision in the case, EPIC v. Johnson, was hailed as a major environmental precedent which forced the California Department of Forestry to adhere to the California Environmental Quality Act.

But G-P came back with a new logging plan last fall. EPIC filed another suit in late January to block that plan.

The new suit also seeks improvements in forest practice regulation on private land.

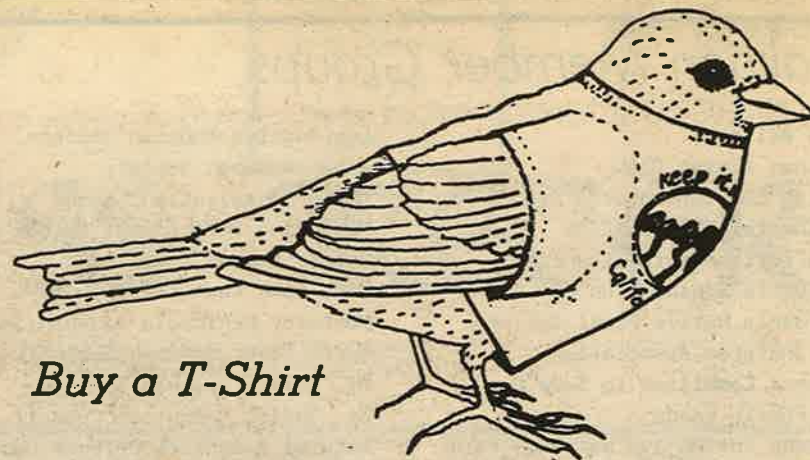
"Logging is one of California's least socially responsible industries," charged Robert Sutherland, one of the plaintiffs. "It's long past due for the logging corporations to give real consideration to the future of all the forest's users and inhabitants."

A major issue in the suit concerns loss of old growth forest habitat in California and the resulting impact on old growth-dependent species such as the spotted owl. Also up for court review are the alleged failure of state regulations to consider the potential for landslides and to adequately protect a 3,000-year-old prehistoric village site archaeological experts have termed "very significant."

The new lawsuit will be heard on March 24 at Mendocino County Superior Court in Ukiah. G-P refused to postpone the hearing date pending negotiations for acquisition.

For more information, contact the Sinkyone Council at Box 301, Whitethorn, CA 95489, or EPIC at Box 397, Garberville, CA 95440, phone (707) 923-2931.

Andy Alm is the computer whiz on the staff of the Northcoast Environmental Center in Arcata.



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Can you sparrow few bills for a T-shirt flying the CWC logo of black mountains beneath a blue sky, with yellow sand dunes in the foreground? KEEP IT WILD rings the top of the logo, with CALIFORNIA WILDERNESS COALITION beneath.

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Roadless Areas

Cont. from Page 3

inventory data, and the conversion from board feet to cubic feet.

* No attempt to justify clear cutting as the site specific "optimum method" as required by NFMA.

* Inflated timber values.

* Improper consideration of logging road construction as providing recreational benefits because of the supposed increased access.

The most critical issue in terms of timber management in the planning process is the justification of clear cutting as the optimum silvicultural method and the associated use of herbicides. Regional Forester Zane G. Smith admitted in the January meeting with conservationists that the region's entire timber program is predicated on the widespread use of clear cutting and the aerial application of herbicides. Second only to the roadless area question,

these issues are critical public concerns that were expressed in the issues identification phase of the planning process.

There are numerous other concerns that are impossible to list in one article. A sampling includes the reduction of the spotted owl population statewide by 60 percent, logging to meet timber yields within the congressionally-mandated 100-foot streamside management zones, and water quality degradation due to sedimentation caused by development activities.

The Regional Forester has made the promise that we can expect "changes" in the preferred alternatives during the coming months. Whether the "changes" will make the difference in how the national forests will be managed in the future remains to be seen.

Steve Evans is a Chico activist and is president of the California Wilderness Coalition.

California Wilderness Coalition

Editor

Jim Eaton

Graphics

Marcia Cary
Mike McWherter
Nancy Morton
Brad Richards

Contributors

Andy Alm
Dennis Coules
Jim Eaton
Steve Evans
Forest Issues
Task Force
Friends of the River
Ron Stork

Production

Wendy Cohen
Jim Eaton
Mary Scoonover

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Suite 3

Davis, CA 95616
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PURPOSES OF THE CALIFORNIA WILDERNESS COALITION

...to promote throughout the State of California the preservation of wild lands as legally designated wilderness areas by carrying on an educational program concerning the value of wilderness and how it may best be used and preserved in the public interest, by making and encouraging scientific studies concerning wilderness, and by enlisting public interest and cooperation in protecting existing or potential wilderness areas.

