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# WILDERNESS RECORD

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CALIFORNIA WILDERNESS COALITION

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## Sierra areas to charge reservation fees

### Wilderness to be taxed

The U.S. Forest Service has announced that it will charge wilderness users a reservation fee for five high Sierra wilderness areas. The new tax will cost each backpacker about double what it costs a rancher to graze a cow and her calf for a month on these same lands.

The new policy requires a non-refundable charge of \$3.00 per person for trails with quotas within the Hoover, Kaiser, Ansel Adams, John Muir, and Golden Trout wilderness areas. Fees will be returned if a reservation cannot be confirmed due to full quotas for the dates requested. Quotas are in effect from the last Friday in June through September 15 (the Mt. Whitney trail quota is from May 22 through October 15).

The tax is intended to cover the processing costs of advance reservations to wilderness areas. Since the Forest Service cannot charge the public to use their lands for recreation, users who obtain a permit in person on the day they plan to start their trip will not be charged.

Unfortunately, only one-third of the trailhead quotas are available on a first-come, first-served basis on the *continued on page 4*



Hawksbeak Peak from Rainbow Canyon in the Hoover Wilderness, one of the High Sierra areas for which a reservation fee will be charged. Photo by Dave Willis

### Los Padres wilderness awaits Wilson

By Steve Evans

In his role as an arbiter of California's wildlands, Senator Pete Wilson is considering what position he will take when the U.S. Senate schedules hearings this spring on a major wild rivers and wilderness bill sponsored by fellow Senator Alan Cranston.

Cranston's bill, S. 1625—the Condor Range and Rivers Act—would protect the last wild remnants of the coastal mountain range stretching from Big Sur in the north to Ventura in the south. Once the majestic California condor soared over the high peaks and deep canyons of this area, which were dotted with a few Chumash and Esselen Indian villages.

These mountains, which make up the Los Padres National Forest, now bear the heavy imprint of the last 150 years. The condor lives only in zoos, the Esselen Indians exist no more, and the Chumash are surrounded by a domineering culture that is rapidly building towns, roads, and reservoirs throughout their ancient homeland.

S. 1625 would protect the last undammed rivers and unroaded canyons of the Los Padres National Forest, preserve the critical habitat needed for the reintroduction of the condor, and cherish the cultural heritage of the ancient Esselen and Chumash tribes. *continued on page 5*

### Sheep Mtn. Wilderness Mine!?

By Stephanie Mandel

If you plan a trip to the rugged Sheep Mountain Wilderness, less than 35 miles from Los Angeles in the San Gabriel Mountains, you are in for a big surprise.

In the dead center of the 43,600-acre wilderness preserve you will find a machine shop, generator, and other heavy equipment.

While rare Nelson bighorn sheep look down from seemingly impossible perches, the Andrew Tungsten Mine operates inside the wilderness. Owner Ron Curtis makes no apologies for his incompatible use of the preserve, boasting of 24 truckloads of ore moving out every day, moving 3 million pounds a year on a road he describes in understatement—"you don't have a jeep trail!"

Undaunted by the legal system, Curtis has been energetic in his battle to maintain the right to operate his mine. After the Sheep Mountain Wilderness Area was designated in 1984 (a designation he testified against), Curtis' request for a permit to drive to his preexisting mine was turned down by the Forest Service. Curtis sued

the Forest Service and Secretary of Agriculture and, after only four months in court, won. The Wilderness Act of 1964 allows development of valid, existing mining claims. "Mining's easy, politics is hard," he concludes.

And yet, ironically, there is a measure of gentleness in the 43-year-old Upland, California resident's attitude toward the wilderness. Not a friend of poachers who illegally shoot bighorn in the wilderness, Curtis maintains watering holes for the sheep by cutting holes in the pipe that brings spring water downhill to the mine. "The sheep don't bother us," he claims, seemingly ignorant that the more obvious question is whether the sheep themselves are bothered.

In 1978 potential impacts on bighorn were the Forest Service's main concern with the Andrew Mine. Today those worries are somewhat quieted, according to Charley McDonald, Angeles National Forest environmental coordinator. "He's not causing a significant impact on the sheep," McDonald says.

Curtis claims to respect the environment in other ways, saying, "We don't cut trees just to cut trees or tear *continued on page 5*

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— **"Improvement" work has devastating effect on Trinity Alps Wilderness Area trail...p. 4**

— **Wilderness Elder interview: Forester Gordon Robinson...page 6**

## COALITION PAGE

### Monthly Report

Now that our office manager, Nancy Kang, has taken over all our membership tasks, it is her responsibility to figure out what to do about the various comments you, the members, send to us.

As Nancy is learning, maintaining our membership roles is full of executive decisions. A member returns a renewal nine months late: should we roll over the membership one year (meaning the next renewal notice goes out in three months) or give him or her a whole year until the next renewal? We get a \$25 check from a mailing, but the donor did not mark that they wanted to become a member: should this be treated as just a donation or should we assume she or he wanted to get the *Wilderness Record*?

In addition to those dilemmas, I'd like to share with you some of our most common complaints:

*Your return envelope is too small.* For most folks who just send us a check and a renewal form, it is no problem. But when you have to perform *origami* on the activist's questionnaire to cram it into the little envelope, people ask, "why not send a larger envelope?" Economics. The small envelopes are available at the Price Club or at Long's Drugs for a fraction of what the larger sizes cost. We hope your inconvenience is balanced by knowing that the less we spend on envelopes, the more we can spend on issues.

*Why are you sending me a renewal notice when I just sent you \$25 three months ago?* This usually happens after our annual fund appeal. Even though the fund appeal is a special event, not intended to be a renewal, this distinction is not always clear to the member. Hey, we are easy. If you can't or won't respond to a renewal after donating to the fund appeal, we will cheerfully add a year to your membership.

### By Jim Eaton

*Why don't you use recycled paper?* Economics. I know, this is a terrible answer. We are trying to change. The *Wilderness Record* soon will be on at least partially recycled paper. I'd be willing to spend twice as much for recycled products, but the last time I checked the costs were many times higher. But as soon as we can we will use as much recycled paper as possible. We do reuse as much as we can: our file folders are used from a recycling center, we make our own library boxes from used cardboard, and all our furniture is used. We recycle all of our paper, glass, and aluminum, and our wet garbage is composted in our greenhouse.

But keep your ideas and suggestions coming. Our fund appeal and renewals are sent out at 8.4¢ instead of 25¢ on the suggestion of member John Luvaas.

### Uncle Jim's Wilderness Trivia Quiz Question:

(Answer on page 7.)

In which roadless areas and wilderness areas can you find tule elk?

## Letters

### Wood fire ban an overreaction

Dear Editor,

The proposed ban on all wood fire use in Desolation Wilderness seems an overreaction. Large fires—campfires and bonfires—should be the focus of tight restrictions and education programs.

The majority of fires used in wilderness—small, safe, cooking fires using downed, dead limbwood—cause little impact. Site-specific restrictions work in other areas and could work in Desolation.

Wilderness desperately needs a strong field Wilderness Ranger program—trained, permanent people committed to effective management. Desolation's management plan has not been revised for 20 years and many problems exist—group size, commercial use, existing rules not enforced.

For more information on wilderness management studies, see GAO/RCED 89-202, a report to the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives. There is also a study being done by The Wilderness Society and the Sierra Club, Box 422, Golden, CO, 80402.

Thanks,  
M. Artemieff  
Little Norway, California

### Error

In the article entitled "Devil's Den' Timber Sale Stalks Caples Creek RA," printed on page three of the February 1990 *Wilderness Record*, the North Fork of the American Wild & Scenic River was erroneously named to be near the sale.

The sale area actually is adjacent to a small stretch of the South Fork of the American River. —Editor

## WILDERNESS ALERT:

# Wilderness inventory called "a cynical effort"

From deep within a mire of regulations an opportunity to influence the fate of the proposed Cahto wilderness has emerged.

The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Arcata Resource Area is accepting written public comments on its wilderness inventory report for the Elkhorn Ridge and Brush Mountain wilderness study areas.

Announcing the 30-day review period on February 9, the BLM found that the areas do not qualify for wilderness study because of logged sections and roads built in the South Fork of the Eel River corridor when this area was privately-owned, prior to 1983.

Several groups are objecting to the agency's decision. Eric Swanson of the Ancient Forest Defense Fund (AFDF), based in Leggett, believes the inventory ignored many of the area's values as an ancient forest, saying it "was superficial and obviously little more than a cynical effort to circumvent the wilderness issues raised by our still-unresolved Elkhorn Ridge lawsuit." Swanson points out the irony in the BLM's assertion that the Wild & Scenic River corridor is not natural. The group believes that even with the river corridor logged, the area as a whole "meets naturalness criteria."

Jim Eaton of the California Wilderness Coalition points out that even if "naturalness" criteria are not met in

the river corridor section, in the past Congress has designated wilderness areas that had sections in need of some restoration. "Look at the Snow Mountain and Point Reyes wilderness areas—there were roads and/or cabins in each of these important, otherwise worthy areas," Eaton said.

The Elkhorn Ridge and Brush Mountain areas are



Douglas Fir

individually under 5,000 acres, the cut-off size for lands the BLM must assess for wilderness eligibility. But the two areas together, excluding the logged Wild & Scenic River corridor, are well over 5,000 acres (5,900 or over 7,000 acres, depending on which BLM estimate of logged lands you use). A total of 19,220 acres is proposed as the Cahto wilderness, which would include the Cahto Peak area, Eel Wild & Scenic River corridor, the adjacent Northern Cali-

fornia Coast Range Preserve (NCCRP) managed by The Nature Conservancy, and the Elder Creek Area of Critical Environmental Concern.

The AFDF considers wilderness designation important because it would enhance and permanently protect:

- a large and fully integrated system containing a diversity of habitats including the largest old growth Douglas fir forest in coastal ranges;
- spotted owl and other old growth species' habitat at lower elevations;
- anadromous fish spawning grounds;
- a "wild" segment of the South Fork of the Eel River and its watershed;
- soils on very steep terrain; and
- scientific and educational values.

None of these values were addressed in the BLM's inventory.

Although legally required, the wilderness inventory public comment period was not freely granted. Noting public participation requirements in the Federal Land Policy Management Act, the Jackson Valley Watershed Coalition, Ancient Forest Defense Fund, Natural Resources Defense Council, and Environmental Protection Information Council filed a formal protest against the

continued on page 6

## Roadless Area

# Ski Ranch expansion overblown

By Marcus Libkind

In order to make Sierra Ski Ranch a full-fledged "destination" resort, the owner of this alpine ski area, located on Highway 50 west of Echo Summit, has submitted an expansion proposal that would double its capacity to 14,000 skiers per day and make it second in size in the Lake Tahoe area only to Squaw Valley. A highly visible aerial tram, 11 new lifts, 18 miles of new ski runs, two hotels, and approximately 400 rooms and 200 condominiums would be constructed on 2,000 acres of Forest Service land and some private land.

A joint Environmental Impact Report and Statement (EIR/EIS) has been prepared by the Forest Service and El Dorado County to address the environmental impacts of the resort project on this sensitive area. This section of forest along Highway 50 is relatively undeveloped and is treasured by Nordic skiers and hikers for the relative ease of backcountry access and natural beauty. The ski area expansion, as proposed, would intrude on this natural beauty and on other recreational opportunities in the area.

The Forest Service has developed a "Preferred Alternative" which responds to some, but not all, of conservationists' concerns with the proposed resort expansion. The following is a summary of specific concerns which remain:

- **Roadless areas:** No ski lifts or runs should be built in or adjacent to the Dardanelles Roadless Area, including the Bryan Mountain and Promised Land areas proposed by the developer. A 20,000-acre wilderness, called the Echo-Carson, is being proposed by the Sierra Club for the area south of and including the Bryan Mountain and Promised Land area. The Forest Service should be encouraged to manage the area to preserve its wilderness characteristics in order to keep it eligible for wilderness consideration.

- **Backcountry ski access:** No ski lifts should be built to the top of Huckleberry Mountain unless an adequate route to the ridges and views, Bryan Meadow, and the Promised Land is included for backcountry Nordic skiers. The alternative route described in the Sierra Ski Ranch EIR/EIS is not a substitute for the traditional Huckleberry route. It lacks the scenic qualities of the traditional route, it turns a short tour to the Sierra Crest into a very long tour, and the parking is poor. One-way lift tickets to the backcountry are not an acceptable alternative to the present free access, either.

- **SnoPark:** The construction of an 150-car SnoPark site at Johnson Pass Road in 1990 will increase demand by Nordic skiers for access via Huckleberry Mountain to the wilderness south of Highway 50, so it is inappropriate simultaneously to close this access.

- **Omission of viable alternatives:** Viable compromise alternatives to the six large-scale development alternatives proposed in the ski area EIR/EIS were developed in 1987 at Forest Service "scoping meetings." The EIR/EIS does not consider any of those compromise alternatives. Construction of the North Bowl and Big Pine developments would tie in well with the existing ski area, increase the number of skiers-at-one-time by 2,480 (a 35 percent increase), preserve the Bryan Mountain and Promised Land areas, and maintain Nordic ski access via Huckleberry Mountain to the wilderness. Why was this alternative not considered?

In lieu of a compromise alternative, Alternative 7, which states "no action," is the only alternative for concerned conservationists.

The argument of "unsatisfied demand" used in the EIR/EIS is not a legitimate argument to justify ski area development. Facilities exist to meet alpine skier demand for many, many years to come. What is lacking is that alpine skiers have not learned to make use of the existing

facilities in non-peak periods (weekdays). This is in contrast to backpackers, who are limited by permits and therefore must use the wilderness resources more uniformly.

Send your comments to: SSR-Draft EIR/EIS, U.S. Forest Service, 100 Forni Road, Placerville, CA 95667. The deadline is April 2, 1990.

*Marcus Libkind is author of five Nordic skiing guidebooks and is a founder of the Nordic Voice newsletter of the Ski Touring Section of the Loma Prieta Chapter of the Sierra Club.*



## Legislation

# Desert bill opposition acts rudely at hearing

By Vicky Hoover

On February 10, the third and last Congressional field hearing on the California Desert Protection Act took place in Los Angeles. Convened by the House of Representatives Public Lands and National Parks Subcommittee at the Beverly Hills High School auditorium, the day-long event attracted passionate interest on both sides of the issue. Nearly 1,000 desert supporters attended, gaily attired in bright yellow shirts and waving yellow ribbons.

But desert supporters were outnumbered—about four to three—by orange-clad opponents of H.R. 780 and S. 11, Senator Alan Cranston and Rep. Mel Levine's legislation to establish three national parks and 81 separate wilderness areas in the California desert. This was in contrast to a previous hearing, in Barstow, where environmentalists clearly outnumbered off-road vehicle enthusiasts, miners, *continued on page 4*



## Other States

# Idaho wilderness bill

Among the more outrageous recent affronts to wilderness preservation is a wilderness bill (S.371) for Idaho. The bill would give the U.S. Forest Service the unprecedented authority to remove from wilderness status land that Congress set aside under the original Wilderness Act of 1964. According to the Sierra Club *National News Report*, the bill also "forfeits federal reserved water rights and allows non-conforming use of wilderness regardless of environmental damage."

The authority to overrule Congress would be limited to Idaho and to wilderness areas that contain roads.

Sponsored by Idaho's Senator James McClure, the bill would designate 1.5 million acres of wilderness, as opposed to the four million acres included in a competing bill (H.R. 2213) sponsored by Representative Pete Kostmayer (D-PA).

# Mining reform bill needs reform

Shortly after its introduction to Congress on January 23, mining law reform legislation (HR 3866) has been labelled as flawed and incomplete by major environmental groups.

The legislation is sponsored by Representative Nick Rahall (D-WV), chair of the House Mining Subcommittee, and cosponsored by Representative Bruce Vento, Chair of the House Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands.

Environmentalists agree that provisions of the 1872 Mining Law need to be rewritten. They are concerned because under the law mining of hardrock mineral ore is exempt from normal environmental safeguards and the government receives no payment for the minerals.

The Mineral Policy Center in Washington, D.C. is coordinating efforts to oppose HR 3866 and believes the bill does not provide enough environmental protection or address the issue of royalties to the government. Their analysis also criticizes the legislation for "doing nothing to prevent staking claims and mining in proposed wilderness areas and other environmentally sensitive lands. Mining law reform should withdraw Wilderness Study Areas and other unsuitable areas."

For more information on mining law reform, write to the Mineral Policy Center, 1325 Massachusetts Avenue NW #550, Washington, D.C., 20005, (202) 737-1872.

## Wilderness Management

# Trinity Alps trail trashed

By Barbara Peck

During the spring of 1989 the Trinity Alps Wilderness Area began to suffer systematic and ongoing destruction. This destruction was begun by the Weaverville Ranger District of the U.S. Forest Service and was called trail restoration and maintenance. It was carried out by California Conservation Corps crews led by over-zealous and misguided supervisors who had the full and unequivocal support of Gary Brimhall, zone engineer of the Weaverville District.

Along the eastern slope of the Trinity Alps, some seven miles west of Trinity Center, begins a complex of trails reaching into the Wilderness Area. Perhaps the loveliest of these is a short four to five mile section of trail from the Swift Creek Trailhead to Gibson Meadow and Granite Lake. Although the Forest Service map defines this section as a foot trail hazardous to livestock, over the years it has been very popular with riders and hikers.

In the past this trail was lush with ferns, orchids, columbine, lilies, monkshood, angelica, goldenrod, lupine, and shooting stars. When

the wild azaleas were in full bloom the trail seemed to ascend through snowdrifts, and the fragrance was sweet as the most aching emotion.

The trail wound through alders, pines, oaks, incense cedars, and firs. It jumped over brooks, crossed open, rocky areas, and skirted the edge of a beautiful meadow lazily divided by a meandering trout stream. It was one of the finest trails in the Trinity Alps—and the Trinity Alps is a lovely place. It is where engineer Brimhall chose to begin.

This stretch of trail was "improved," according to Brimhall, to a standard concept of trails serving all user groups. To achieve this standardization boulders were drilled and split, streams were filled in, and large trees were cut. Domesticity was carved out of the wilderness. The trail maintenance was so destructive, careless, and thoughtless that almost the entire wild quality of the trail has been lost forever beneath the indelible handprint of humans. Brimhall described it quite simply by stating that "boulders are obstacles" and "brush was cut back to an eight foot clearing."

Dozens of boulders, never in the way, were drilled, shattered, and left with exposed drill holes, the large pieces tossed to the side. Brimhall stated, "We are sensitive to aesthetics and attempt to sledge off the edges of the drill holes to minimize any unnatural appearance." There were hundreds of drill holes and not one was sledged. He further stated, "Drill holes are traditional."

The clearing of vegetation was excessive. There were swaths cut 11, 15, and even 33 feet wide. The whole effect was of a road being shoved through the wilderness. The cut plants were tossed in heaps along the trail's edge, creating fire hazards.

According to Brimhall, trees up to four inches in diameter at breast height are considered brush. Live trees larger than this were definitely cut. Stumps 11, 13, and 15 inches in diameter remain along the trail. Some of the cut trees left lying nearby measured 25 and 30 feet tall.

Switchbacks and steep hillsides edging the trail were



This stump is from a red fir that was 15 inches in diameter where cut. It pointed away from the trail but was cut anyway as part of the "brush" cleared eight feet beyond this section of the Swift Creek Trail in the Trinity Alps Wilderness. Photo by Barbara Peck

cleared. By September of 1989 plant re-growth near Gibson Meadow was only a few inches. Soil erosion in these areas had begun even over summer.

Extreme trail erosion was dealt with inconsistently. In some instances the trail was re-routed right next to the eroded area, smashing down whatever was in the way. This material was then piled in an ugly heap in the old trail. The entire job was justified as conforming to standard Forest Service specifications.

Brimhall stated that the trail crew was learning job skills and good work habits. The examples cited demonstrate that they were learning a total disregard for wilderness. The work performed was in direct opposition to the Wilderness Act. Individuals entrusted with overseeing the wilderness must have respect for wilderness or we will lose it.

*Barbara Peck lives in Redding, California.*

*Note: The Wilderness Record asked Gary Brimhall of the Forest Service if he would like to write his side of the story, to be printed along with Barbara Peck's article.*

*Brimhall declined, explaining that he himself has not surveyed the trail since last summer's efforts. He said that he hopes to visit the trail this summer with Barbara Peck and any other interested people to discuss the areas of concern one by one. — Editor*

## Desert hearing

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and cattlemen who oppose the bill.

Another contrast with the previous hearing was the raucous and aggressive behavior of some of the desert bill opponents. Subcommittee Chair Bruce Vento frequently had to interrupt testimony with his gavel to silence vociferous off-roaders in the back of the auditorium.

Some supporters left early because they were clearly intimidated by threatening and rude opposition remarks. At least one scheduled witness, intimidated by opponents' shouts, declined to speak.

An impressive assemblage of witnesses, led by California Attorney General John Van De Kamp and Controller Gray Davis, spoke up for desert preservation. Mr. Zev Yaroslavsky, Los Angeles City Councilmember, testified on Los Angeles' support for the desert bill.

Two Bay Area county supervisors travelled to Los Angeles to support the Cranston-Levine bill. Supervisor Jim Gonzalez from San Francisco reported on the resolution which the city and county of San Francisco passed to endorse the desert bill, stressing the need of urban residents—the vast majority of Californians—for parks and wilderness. From neighboring San Mateo County, Supervisor Anna Eshoo emphasized the awareness of San Mateo County residents of the value of open space protected from the impacts of off-road vehicles and commercial development.

The presence at the hearing of two central California county supervisors also underscored the fact that the federal lands of the desert belong to all citizens, not just those who live nearby.

The Mayor of the City of Rosemead described himself as a former racer who, having watched fellow motorcyclists deliberately ride over desert animals, came to support the legislation to protect the desert.

One argument often repeated by the opposition was that the Bureau of Land Management's "Desert Plan," developed at the cost of \$8,000,000 and four years of public hearings and public comment, was being needlessly "scrapped" by the Cranston-Levine bill. In fact, the bill builds on the BLM plan, maintaining its good features and strengthening its weaknesses.

Environmentalists left the hearing feeling confident that Chairman Vento and the subcommittee members would return to Washington, unimpressed by the hearing's noise and tenor, to study the evidence and decide the issue of desert preservation by its merits.

*Vicky Hoover is Chair of the Sierra Club's Northern California Desert Task Force.*

## Wilderness tax

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day of entry, and the Mt. Whitney trailhead permit is available only by advance reservation.

"It's a question of fairness," said Jim Eaton, the California Wilderness Coalition's executive director. "Wilderness users won't object to paying fair fees for using the backcountry, but now they are being singled out for their form of recreation. Although backpacking causes minimal impact on the forest, motorcyclists, four-wheelers, and other forest users pay nothing and need no permits for their much more destructive uses of our public lands."

Applications to reserve permits will be accepted by mail or in person from March 1 through August 31. Reservations will not be accepted by telephone. Mailed applications will be accepted with postmark dates of March 1 through August 15 only; postmark dates before or after this period will be returned.

# Los Padres wilderness bill

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The Condor Range and Rivers Act encompasses some of the largest remaining unprotected wildlands in the state, protecting 543,100 acres of wilderness and more than 252 miles of river. It offers the first major opportunity to protect some of California's wild country since 1984 and the first California additions to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System since 1987.

Highlights of S. 1625 include designation of all 55 miles of Sespe Creek as a Wild and Scenic River and designation of the 280,300-acre Sespe Wilderness. The Sespe is one of the few undammed rivers in Southern California, providing ideal habitat for anadromous fish and native trout, as well as bear, deer, and cougar. Ranging from high peaks (8,000 feet) to low elevation river canyons, the Sespe area offers a wide variety of diverse recreational opportunities to the residents of the Los Angeles metropolitan area. But Sespe Creek is threatened by at least two proposed dams. Wild river and wilderness designation of this area is a top priority of the Condor Range and Rivers Act.

Draining the Ventana Wilderness in the northern end of the forest are the Big and Little Sur rivers—prime steel-head streams flowing through canyons cloaked with redwoods, offering numerous trails for entry into the wilderness, and connecting with nearby Pfeiffer-Big Sur and Andrew Molera state parks. The Condor Range and Rivers Act would designate the upper portions of the Big and Little Sur rivers as Wild and Scenic and require study of their lower segments for potential future protection. Designating the rivers and adding four roadless areas

*"Cranston's bill contrasts sharply with an inferior House version sponsored by Representative Robert Lagomarsino (H.R. 1473), which designates 40 percent fewer river miles and 30 percent less wilderness."*

totalling 63,000 acres to the Ventana Wilderness would help protect this region from development pressures, including a large proposed strip mine on Pico Blanco Mountain between the north and south forks of the Little Sur River.

Another major river originating in the Ventana Wilderness which will be protected in S. 1625 is the Arroyo Seco River. In the Arroyo Seco canyon is a corridor road which separates units of the Ventana Wilderness. Wild and Scenic designation of this incredibly rugged river canyon would protect numerous recreational sites and trails. It would also prevent degradation of the adjacent wilderness, which is threatened by a proposal to build a dam and reservoir which would inundate part of the wilderness.

In the center of the Los Padres Forest, S. 1625 would designate Lopez Creek in the Santa Lucia Wilderness and the Sisquoc River in the San Rafael Wilderness as Wild and Scenic Rivers. In addition, the 15,000-acre Garcia Wilderness would be established and the 51,000-acre La Brea roadless area would be added to the San Rafael Wilderness. Other river and wilderness designations in the bill include Piru Creek, Matilija Creek, Manzana Creek, South Fork Sisquoc River, Pinos-Badlands Wilderness, Matilija Wilderness, and Silver Peak Wilderness.

Because legislation affecting a single state usually requires the concurrence of both Senators, the long-term protection of this area will be decided largely by Senator Wilson when hearings on S. 1625 are held sometime this spring. Cranston's bill contrasts sharply with an inferior House version sponsored by Representative Robert Lagomarsino (H.R. 1473) which designates 40 percent fewer river miles and 30 percent less wilderness.

Controversial aspects of the House bill which will probably be debated in the Senate include de-classification of part of the Ventana Wilderness to allow for the expansion of the Los Padres dam and reservoir on the Carmel River. Also controversial is a requirement of the Forest Service to build a new off-road vehicle trail elsewhere in the forest to replace the Johnson Ridge trail which would be closed to motor vehicle use by the establishment of the Sespe Wilderness. Proposed dams on Sespe Creek and the Arroyo Seco River will be major items of debate. Cranston's bill also includes areas which were released for potential development by the 1984 California Wilderness Act, most notably Silver Peak.

*Steve Evans is President of the CWC and Conservation Director for Friends of the River.*



The rare Santa Lucia fir is found only in California's Monterey and San Luis Obispo counties, the territory of the Los Padres National Forest.

Photo by Pete Yamagata



## Wilderness mine

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up the land just to tear it up." But McDonald is concerned about his agency's difficulty in keeping an eye on just what is happening with the mine. While Curtis has a permit to drive the nine miles into the wilderness to reach the mine, under the Wilderness Act the Forest Service is not allowed vehicle access.

McDonald explains that the aging and overworked staff just can't make the hike—which involves a 2,500-foot gain in elevation—as often as he thinks would be best. The local Forest Service staff is currently working to obtain permission from the Regional Forester or Chief to drive into the wilderness to monitor the mine, according to Donald Stickers, Mt. Baldy District Ranger.

Stickers says at least one road has been built near the mine site that wasn't allowed in the mine's plan of operations. The plan was approved in 1978, prior to designation of the wilderness, and is binding until Curtis decides to change the nature or scope of the mine operation. Stickers says that a new plan is inevitable as "their understanding of the resources changes" and technology changes.

A new plan of operations would include a new environmental assessment (EA), which could put more restrictions on the mine operation. McDonald would like to see the plan "more sensitive to wilderness values."

Stickers acknowledges that Curtis has a right to mine, adding that "The Forest Service has a right to protect the surface resource up to a point." He also seems to have some understanding for Curtis' situation, recalling that "he never wanted it to be wilderness in the first place."

Tungsten is used for light bulbs, breaker points, oil well drilling bits, and radiation shielding. Most of the metal used in the U.S. is imported from China. The ore is heavy, greyish-white rock called scheelite.



Ron Curtis stands by a rock crusher on his tungsten mining claim in the Sheep Mtn. Wilderness Area. Photo by John Rapp

## Wilderness Elder

# Gordon Robinson: kicking down the stall

By Stephanie Mandel

"The house with all the redwood trees—I planted them," was how Gordon Robinson directed me to his house in Tiburon, California. A maverick forester for a private timber company (Southern Pacific) for 27 years, Gordon set the example of how forests can be managed for timber *and* the health of the ecosystem. When the mood inside the company changed, Gordon was fired. He began a second career as the Sierra Club's forester. Working as an environmentalist was "a new life—altogether different" for him, as he served as the credible voice in numerous debates over forest management and wilderness designation.

Now 79, the early years of Gordon's life were spent within the dense forests of Canada. Arriving in California as a child, he was shocked to find a land that was far from the tropical paradise he had imagined, but "a barren, treeless place." His first impression of Yosemite was that it was "all dried up country," and "didn't hold a candle to the Olympic National Forest (Washington state)."

Gordon learned to appreciate California's diversity and during the Great Depression worked his way through Marin Community College and U.C. Berkeley. In 1988 his first book, *The Forests and The Trees*, was published. (See review on adjacent page.)

Today he has as much to say as ever about forestry and life in general. He still shares his father's advice: "be yourself" and "there's pleasure in any work as long as it is socially useful and well done." With this advice as the meter, Gordon humbly sums up his career in forestry: "I think I did it pretty well."

WR: The Forest Service has recently announced its plans to slow down clearcutting.

GR: Oh yes, in the California Region?

WR: Yes. Regional Forest Paul Barker says they are going to reduce clearcutting by 30 percent and decrease the amount of timber sold from the California national forests as much as 20 percent. Do you think that clearcutting can ever be a sustainable forestry practice?

GR: It's a difficult subject to discuss because it's complicated. First of all, yes—in many forest types you can regenerate the forest following a clearcut. But the problem is not just how they go about regenerating the forest. It's the length of time they plan to let trees grow before they cut them and the size of the openings they clearcut. And it's whether they leave trees for other purposes so that we can have a continuous forest. They're not addressing the whole subject; they're not explaining anything, they're hiding. They're trying to deceive us. I think they've consistently tried to deceive the public about their plans. And I don't see any indication that there's a change in that. There might be, but it certainly isn't apparent. I don't think it will be apparent until they admit that they have been deceiving, and then talk about it in ways that we can understand.

You must understand that clearcutting is one method of regenerating a forest under "even-aged management." But I object to "even-aged management," so I don't care how they go about bringing about large areas of trees that are all the same species and all the same age—I object, you see? Now if they are going to reduce the amount of clearcutting that may be just their way of covering up the fact that they're going to go do some of what they call a shelterwood system, which means cutting out a large proportion of the trees and allowing natural regeneration to take place from the trees that are left. And then, after the young ones get started, they go in and remove the ones they left. And there again you convert a whole area to a



Gordon with the redwood trees he planted in the front yard of his Tiburon home. Photo by Stephanie Mandel

bunch of young trees.

Well, there are three or four techniques in their manual, all to that same objective. And I object to all of

*"If there's any really good commercial timber land involved in a wilderness proposal, why, the Forest Service and timber industry and everybody just gets up and fights like mad and they delete it."*

them, I don't care which one they use. And they make no effort to clear this up so that we can understand each other. That announcement doesn't look any different than things they've done in the past.

WR: We often hear the Forest Service and the timber industry say that so many square miles are already designated as wilderness, and isn't that enough forests saved already. But how much California wilderness is forest?

GR: I don't know. But I do know that it's very little. Most wilderness is above timberline. Most of what timber does get in wilderness is of such a quality that nobody wants it commercially anyhow. If there's any really good commercial timber land involved in a wilderness proposal, why, the Forest Service and timber industry and everybody just gets up and fights like mad and they delete it. The only place I know of where there's any really good quality commercial timber in a wilderness area is in the Marble Mountains. And it's there only because it got established before people realized that there was a market for some of that red fir. And the lobbyists for the timber industry keep wanting that taken out because they think it's inappropriate, that that's one place where the wilderness boundaries were badly set up.

WR: Do you have any favorite wilderness areas?

GR: Yes, I do. I think the Trinity Alps is my favorite. There's more variety there than in the Sierra. And it's exciting because every time you cross a ridge you find different kinds of plants and things growing and different sort of rocks, and after two or three of those you think "God, I wonder what's over the next one," but there's never time to go over all of them. It just grabs me—I want to go back and continue to explore it.

WR: Do you have any plans to write any more books?

GR: I'd like to revise that first book, principally by adding a lot more research summaries—I'd like to bring it up to date. Yeah, there are some other things I'd like to write.

WR: We can look forward to that.

GR: I don't know that it'll happen, but that's what I'd like to do.

WR: What do you think the 1990s have in store?

GR: Well, frankly I'm not optimistic because the population is increasing rapidly and we are very extravagant and we're not going to change that until we have to. And the only way to reduce our use of resources is scarcity. It won't be wisdom but necessity. We have to go on trying, and I hope I'm wrong. Sorry.

Younger people have to take the lead. If I continue to try to lead in this field it would slow down the development of people to take my place. Somebody says I'm like the old fire horse. When the fire bell rings the retired horses kick their way out of the stalls and go running down the road behind the fire engines.

## Cahto alert

continued from page 2

BLM's original disposal of the subject. In its 1989 Resource Management Plan, BLM said a wilderness inventory had been conducted, although the public had not been notified or invited to comment.

### Wild river/Elkhorn Ridge timber sale lawsuit

In 1988 the BLM proposed logging Elkhorn Ridge, but then withdrew the plan when environmentalists protested the proposed sale's effects on the South Fork of the Eel Wild & Scenic River. A river management plan,

required of all Wild & Scenic Rivers, had not yet been completed by the agency. Legal precedents indicate that logging within the corridor can not proceed until such a plan—which must integrate public review—is approved. The draft plan is expected in spring or summer of this year.

Until a river plan is approved and until an acceptable wilderness inventory is completed, the groups will continue their lawsuit, which is being conducted by the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund. Swanson vows that "We will pursue every avenue we can to prevent that area from being hacked up."

For more information, contact the Ancient Forest Defense Fund at P.O. Box 221, Branscomb, CA 95417.

## Book review

# "If logging looks bad, it is bad"

## *The Forests and the Trees: A Guide to Excellent Forestry*

by Gordon Robinson, Island Press, cloth \$24.95, paper \$17.95, 250 pages.

By Jim Eaton

My first encounter with Gordon Robinson was twenty-two years ago near Laramie Peak, Wyoming. Gordon began my forestry education back then, and he has cheerfully given his time to train generations of activists over the years. He has traveled all over the world looking at forestry issues and has spoken out despite the vehemence of his opponents.

Now you can share Robinson's point of view in his detailed book *The Forest and the Trees: A Guide to Excellent Forestry*. If you take the time to study this book, you will know why the forests are in trouble, how clearcutting destroys forests, that selective harvesting is a viable alternative, and what you can do to change the management of our public lands. As Gordon says in his Preface:

"Anyone can identify destructive forest practices. You don't have to be a professional forester to recognize bad forestry any more than you need to be a doctor to recognize ill health. If logging looks bad, it is bad. If a forest appears to be mismanaged, it is mismanaged."

The beginning chapters on the history of forestry in the U.S. and the raid on our national forests are the best background I've ever read on this subject. Robinson shows how our early efforts toward excellent forestry have been subverted over the years by a greedy industry:

"Good forestry is not a lucrative business. It never was and never will be, because it takes longer than a lifetime to grow high-quality timber, longer than anyone can wait for a return on investment."



The second part of the book explains silvicultural systems, his view of excellent forestry, and the importance of soil in the health of a forest. Robinson's idea of excellent forestry is true multiple use—managing forests for a sustained yield of timber by using long rotations and uneven-aged management techniques, while maintaining ecological balance.

Part three is about forest planning, beginning with the mathematics of timber management. This is the most difficult part of the book, but it is understandable if you take the time to follow Robinson's detailed analysis. It is also necessary to know how the Forest Service uses its information to develop their forest plans.

Finally, Robinson has a wonderful annotated bibliography with 384 quotations, summaries, and paraphrases from his lifetime of forestry knowledge. Activists will find this part indispensable for defending good timber management techniques. I expect to see many of these references showing up in comments and appeals on timber sales and forest plans.

This book is a must for citizen activists. It was written to be a tool for those who want to change the way the U.S. Forest Service manages our lands. As Robinson concludes:

"If the agency is allowed to continue on its present course, the nation's old-growth forests will vanish forever, perhaps as soon as the end of this century."

"Is this the direction in which we want to go? Or can we citizens, the owners of these old-growth forests, using the information in this book and others and the findings from the Forest Service's own research stations, succeed in convincing the agency to take a more prudent path?"

## New CWC T-Shirts!

Not one, but two CWC t-shirts! The animal design that Nancy (left) is wearing is by Bay Area cartoonist Phil Frank; it comes in beige and light gray for \$12. Jeanette (right) is wearing our official conference shirt; it has no less than six colors and comes in yellow, light green (xlarge & small only), and peach (xlarge, large, & small only) for \$15. All the shirts are 100 percent double knit cotton. To order, use the form on page 8. Please add \$1.50 postage and 75 cents for each additional shirt.

## CALENDAR

**March 3** "Humans, Wildlife, & Habitat: Perspectives on Coexistence" conference sponsored by the Environmental Law Society of the University of California at Davis School of Law. For more information, write to ELS, School of Law, University of California, Davis, CA 95616.

**March 9** DEADLINE FOR COMMENTS on the Elkhorn Ridge/Brush Mountain wilderness inventory. Send comments to or request a copy of the report from: District Ranger, Ukiah District Office, BLM, 555 Leslie Street, Ukiah, CA 95482, (707) 462-3873. (See article on page 3.)

**March 14** DEADLINE FOR COMMENTS on the supplement to the draft EIS for the Castle Mountain gold mine in San Bernardino County. Send to: Attn.: Elena Daly, BLM, Needles Resource Area, P.O. Box 888, Needles, CA 92363-0888.

**March 16-18** RIVER CONFERENCE/FESTIVAL hosted by Friends of the River Foundation at Dominican College, San Rafael, CA. For more information contact Merlyn Storm at F.O.R., Fort Mason Center, San Francisco, CA 94123, (415) 771-0400.

**April 2** DEADLINE FOR COMMENTS on the proposed expansion of Sierra Ski Ranch. Send to: SSR-Draft EIR/EIS, U.S. Forest Service, 100 Forni Road, Placerville, CA 95667, (916) 622-5061. (See article on page 3.)

**April 21** JOHN MUIR'S BIRTHDAY

**April 22** EARTH DAY

**Uncle Jim's Wilderness Trivia Quiz Answer:** Tule elk may be found in the Phillip Burton (Pt. Reyes) Wilderness and the Cache Creek Wilderness Study Area.

from page 2



**California Wilderness Coalition**

### Purposes of the California Wilderness Coalition

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

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### The Wilderness Record

The *Wilderness Record* is the monthly publication of the California Wilderness Coalition. Articles may be reprinted; credit would be appreciated. Subscription is free with membership.

The *Record* welcomes letters-to-the-editor, articles, black & white photos, drawings, book reviews, poetry, etc. on California wilderness and related subjects. We reserve the right to edit all work. Please address all correspondence to:

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## Coalition Member Groups

### Focus: Sierra Club Yolano Group

In the Sacramento Valley's Yolo and Solano counties, the Yolano Group of the Sierra Club is working to preserve the wildlife habitat remaining in this overwhelmingly agricultural part of the state.

Bern Kreissman, chair of the group, explains that wildlife habitat is found locally in riparian areas such as sinks and sloughs as well as in the Coast Ranges on the counties' western borders. "We're out to protect what remains of these parcels," Kreissman says.

In the hills of the Coast Ranges is the Cache Creek basin, whose delights include tule elk and bald eagles. The group is supporting a wilderness proposal for this area managed by the Bureau of Land Management, and has worked to prevent destructive gravel mining along its lower stretches.

The group also is working toward the designation of a Yolo Basin Wildlife Area between West Sacramento and Davis. They are active in the local

Earth Day consortium, were instrumental in the passage of a Davis City Council resolution in favor of the California Desert Protection Act, and have successfully organized a U.C. Davis Sierra Club group.

Based in environmentally-conscious Davis, the group has 1,600 members, and its hiking, backpacking, and canoeing outings are very well attended. They sponsor educational presentations every other month.

To contact the Yolano Group, call (916) 753-7788.

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