



# WILDERNESS RECORD

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CALIFORNIA WILDERNESS COALITION

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## Sherwin Ski Area study rejected as inadequate

By Frank Stewart

Christmas came early to the east side of the Sierra. Over a year ago, the Inyo National Forest issued a final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) approving the development of a Sherwin Ski Area near Mammoth. That decision was appealed last November by a coalition of environmental groups, the state Department of Fish and Game, and two individuals (see WR article, December 1990). On November 22, 1991 Deputy Regional Forester Joyce Muraoka reversed the approval. In her 37-page decision notice she called the final EIS "incomplete and inadequate" and required Forest Supervisor Dennis Martin to further analyze several critical subject areas.

The proposed Sherwin Ski Area is envisioned as the centerpiece of a "Snowcreek Resort" that would include an 18-hole golf course, 2,332 condominiums, single family homes, and a commercial village core area. The resort would occupy both Forest Service and private lands: the ski runs and half of the golf course would be located on public land; the base lodge, maintenance facilities, condominiums, and commercial space on private land. Muraoka criticized the final EIS for addressing only public land development rather than the cumulative impacts of the total project on water supply, the endangered Owens Tui Chub, migratory mule deer populations, and fisheries.

Wildlife issues in particular received lots of attention. A mule deer herd migrates through the proposed ski area from its winter range in the Owens Valley to summer range on the west slopes of the Sierra. Muraoka ruled that deer migration monitoring should link poten-

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White Wing in the San Joaquin Roadless Area may be opened to helicopter skiing. Photo by Jim Eaton

## Threat of heliskiing hovers over the Inyo

The Inyo National Forest announced in late November that a three-year permit for heliskiing in roadless areas may be offered early in 1992. Forest planners believe there is sufficient demand to warrant issuing the permit but have yet to determine how controversial the proposal will prove.

Several locations in the Mammoth Ranger District are being considered, including McGee Mountain's east slope, part of the Convict Lake basin, Sherwin Bowl, San Joaquin Ridge, and Glass Mountain. The Inyo's Mono Lake Ranger District has rejected several permit requests which had generated controversy.

Heliskiing allows downhill skiers access to undeveloped slopes. Skiers are flown by helicopter to the top of a slope and are picked up at the bottom. The Inyo National Forest would not allow landings in wilderness areas, where mechanical transport is forbidden, or in bighorn sheep habitat.

Heliskiing generally provokes controversy. Friends of the Inyo activist and CWC Board member Sally Miller is concerned that helicopters will have to land in fragile areas like Glass Creek and Yost meadows—designated in the Inyo's forest plan for semi-primitive, non-motorized use—to pick up skiers after their runs. Meadows are likely pick-up spots because they are less vegetated than surrounding forests. And, as Miller points out, "Skiers have a natural tendency to go downhill."

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## Chainsaws to remain stilled in owl forests

Late in December, a federal appeals court rejected a Bush administration attempt to lessen protection for the northern spotted owl in order to open national forests in the Pacific Northwest to logging. A previous court ruling—appealed and now upheld—blocked new timber sales in spotted owl habitat until the Forest Service develops a plan to ensure the owl's survival.

The administration had argued that the Forest Service need not extend National Forest Management Act (NFMA) safeguards to the owl once it gained "threatened" status and corresponding protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) last June. The ruling is an important victory for the owl—and for the ancient forests where spotted owls

breed—because the NFMA requires that the Forest Service ensure "viable" populations of animals, whether or not they are threatened. The ESA, by contrast, requires only that threatened or endangered species be kept from extinction.

What's the difference? The California condor has been kept—at great cost—from extinction, but the few extant condors do not constitute a viable population because the species could not survive without extraordinary human measures. It is not enough for the Forest Service to preserve some owls in some places, the court ruled. Rather, the agency has a duty, as stipulated by the NFMA, to maintain viable populations throughout the

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# COALITION PAGE

## MONTHLY REPORT

Last month I wrote about the Sierra Summit and the ongoing process that is to follow. That program since has been renamed Sierra Now, but I don't know if there's an exclamation point after Now!

I attended a much more interesting meeting the following weekend in San Francisco. This was a small gathering of environmentalists, conservation biologists, and writers working to develop a North American wilderness recovery strategy.

The meeting was hosted by Doug Tompkins, former owner of Esprit who now runs the Ira-Hiti Foundation. Most of those attending are associated with *Wild Earth* magazine, including editor John Davis, executive editor Dave Foreman, and science advisor Reed Noss. Among the group were activists from Canada, New Hampshire, Montana, Colorado, Washington, Oregon, and California.

*Wild Earth* magazine was established to disperse the visions of wildland activists and the principles, ideas, and wisdom of the growing science of conservation biology. The purpose of our meeting was to set up an organization to assist and coordinate the environmentalists and scientists working on biodiversity preservation.

It was an intensive two days. Our agenda seemed simple enough, but there were scores of details to work out. A lot of time was spent brainstorming, but there also were many tasks assigned to those there.

I found it most exciting to be part of a vision that won't really be implemented until long after I am gone. The preservation of wilderness core areas is yet to be completed; the protection of buffer zones and connective corridors may take centuries to accomplish.

Of course, there is no intention to sup-

## BY JIM EATON

plant activists already working in their bioregions. These environmentalists are developing the detailed models for the areas they know best.

Instead, the objective of the organization is to incorporate these ideas and connect them with others to develop a grand scheme for North America. As Foreman expressed it: "My goal is to restore ecosystems so that the jaguars in Arizona can exchange genetic material with the jaguars in Belize and grizzlies in Arizona can exchange genetic information with grizzlies in the Yukon."

In the midst of these deliberations, Tompkins arranged for us a private screening of a new movie, *Anima Munda*, by Godfray Reggio, director of *Koyaanisqatsi*. This short (27 minute) feature was a powerful expression of the diversity of life on our planet with amazing footage of animals combined with stirring music by Philip Glass. The movie was commissioned by the World Wildlife Fund, and if you get a chance to see it, don't miss it.

Later I reported the gist of the weekend's meeting to the CWC's Board of Directors and received an enthusiastic endorsement of the concepts expressed. Although the Coalition will continue to focus on protecting lands as designated wilderness, we will work much more closely with those tying together these core islands with biological corridors.

There are two changes on our Board. During Barbara Boyle's pregnancy, Frannie Waid filled in for her. Barb has decided she needs to cut back her activities, so Frannie will replace her on the Board. And Sally Miller, tireless activist from the east side of the Sierra, became our newest Board member.

Finally, Gary Snyder graciously has agreed to do a benefit poetry reading for the CWC on February 1st. More details on page 7.



## Corrections

Where in the world is carmine San Diego? A map which appeared on page 3 of the December issue failed to show the location of Red Mountain.



Red Mountain Wilderness Study Area in Mendocino County

## Uncle Jim's Wilderness Trivia Quiz Question:

What California wilderness areas have caves?

Answer on page 7.

## Letters

Dear Editor:

Your November 1991 article on Sierra group size limits is misleading and deserves clarification. The article states: "Where lower limits are already established...the lower limit will remain in effect." This is true for limits on people, but *not* limits on pack and saddle stock.

If implemented, the new policy will actually raise the longstanding limit on the number of stock animals per party (from 20 to 25 head) in the Sequoia and Kings Canyon Wilderness and the Emigrant Wilderness.

To comment on the Emigrant Wilderness management plan, write to: Janet L. Wold, Forest Supervisor, Stanislaus National Forest, 19777 Greenley Rd., Sonora, CA 95370.

I invite all CWC members to contact the High Sierra Hikers Association (P.O. Box 9865, Truckee, CA 96162) for further details.

Yours sincerely,  
Peter Browning  
Coordinator, HSHA

Dear Editor:

I would like to comment on a negative trend I perceive to be taking over the CWC that is, perhaps, reflective of a trend permeating the entire environmental movement. In the last few months I have seen in these pages attacks on mountain bikers, horseback riders, hunters, ranchers, and, of course, a steady stream of invective against the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. It seems we are degenerating from activists into whiners and finger pointers.

Is it strengthening our movement to alienate people who love the wilderness? Is it wise to alienate the agencies that manage our resources?

It seems to me that the idea of a coalition is to gain political power by bringing together people with differing points of view to work for a common goal. All this bickering is making our organization weak. We become strong by reaching out to people, not by driving them away.

In this country you can be effective only by convincing a majority of the public that you are right. You do that by

being honest, educated, and positive. We're constantly crying about everything that's wrong, but what are we offering? What are we showing them about ourselves? We're wasting our time running around putting out fires when we should be exercising some positive leadership.

Yours,  
Archie Logsdon  
Ramona, CA

In the coming months, CWC and the *Wilderness Record* plan to address the issue of who we are and what we should become. —Ed.

## Voices in the wilderness

# Consider all the costs of wilderness grazing

By George Wuerthner

What do the Bruneau hot springs snail, dunes tiger beetle, grizzly bear, wolf, chinook salmon, and California bighorn sheep have in common? Not much at first glance, but each in its own way is on the verge of extinction or dramatically reduced in numbers and distribution over much of its range due in part to the livestock industry. The snail is losing its habitat to water drawdowns due to groundwater pumping to irrigate hayfields. The beetle is trampled under cattle hooves. The grizzly and wolf were shot, trapped, and poisoned to extinction over most of the west to reduce predation on livestock. The salmon suffers from dams and diversions to irrigate hayfields. And competition for forage as well as disease introduced by domestic sheep has led to the local extinction of many bighorn sheep herds. And this is only a partial list of the many ways that domestic livestock production has negatively impacted the western landscape. No other human activity has destroyed so much land in the western United States as domestic livestock production.

On public rangelands which comprise more than a third of the west, there are only 23,000 permittees or two percent of the 1,600,000 livestock producers nationally. The public lands in Nevada produce the same amount of meat as tiny Vermont. Georgia produces more beef than Montana.

The reason for these amazing statistics is aridity. In the arid west it takes many more acres to support one cow than in the east. In Georgia, for instance, a single acre can support one cow year round. In some parts of the west it may require 100-200 acres to raise the same animal—and with much higher ecological costs.

These ecological costs are many. Consider that in the arid west most of the water diverted from rivers and streams is used to grow forage and crops that are eventually fed to livestock. The loss of water affects many wildlife and plant species. Riparian zones shrink. Riparian plants suffer increasing water stress. Less water in our streams means fewer aquatic insects and other invertebrates which, in turn, support fewer fish. Fewer fish means less wildlife such as otter and mink which prey upon fish.

Cattle production in the arid west has other consequences for our waterways. The cattle breeds raised in the west originated in moist, humid northern Europe. These cattle like water and spend an inordinate amount of time in wetlands and riparian areas, the thin green corridors that line western rivers, streams, and springs.

Not surprisingly, these same narrow belts of vegetation and water are critical to wildlife. One study in Arizona found that 75-80 percent of all wildlife species were partially or fully dependent upon riparian zones for their

survival. A similar study in eastern Oregon came to the same conclusions. A 1988 General Accounting Office report on western riparian zones stated that livestock were the single greatest source of degradation, and a 1990 Environmental Protection Agency report found that these important wildlife zones were in the "worst condition in history."

Beaver, sage grouse, some bat species, and songbirds are only a few of the species impacted by the loss of hiding cover, trees (cattle eat seedlings of cottonwood and aspen, leading eventually to their local extinction), and food produced by the vegetation that winds up in the belly of cows.

The loss of predators is another uncounted cost of livestock production. Western livestock must range over

belly of a privately-owned cow could be supporting wildlife like elk. And what about the forage competition with grasshoppers, butterflies, and other invertebrates which depend upon flowers, grasses, and other vegetation that yearly goes into domestic cattle and sheep?

And there are aesthetic costs. Cow pies litter our campgrounds. Fences break what would otherwise be wide open spaces into small parcels. Cows—not elk, bison, and antelope—dominate the fauna on our western rangelands.

Finally, there are the economic costs. Taxpayers are footing the bill for the destruction of their public lands. The present price of \$1.91 per AUM (Animal Unit Month, or the amount of forage it takes to feed one cow for one month) is less than six cents a day! One would be hard pressed to feed a hamster for this little.

This fee does not come close to covering the costs of administering public lands grazing allotments, much less compensate the public for the loss of other resources, from water to wildlife, that are degraded or compromised by livestock grazing on public lands.

Taxpayers also pay for most range developments on public lands, including fencing and water developments—construction that would not be necessary if we were not grazing privately-owned livestock on public lands.

Who benefits? According to a 1986 Congressional study, three percent of the permittees control 40 percent of the public forage. It is often the wealthiest producers who benefit the most from federal subsidies. But there is no reason to support small ranchers, either. They are competing directly with livestock owners in Georgia, Vermont, and Iowa who are trying to eke out a

living as well—except they must do it on private lands at their own expense.

There is no doubt that better range management  
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**You can grow a cow on the back forty, but you can't grow grizzlies there**

## Banning grazing has political costs

By Marge Sill

Recently, an organized campaign to eliminate all grazing from any wilderness areas has been inaugurated by many dedicated conservationists who have observed firsthand the terrible effects on the public lands from unmanaged or poorly managed grazing of livestock. I can certainly understand this position, but I believe that advocating the abolition of grazing in wilderness would be an extremely unwise move politically for the following reasons:

(1) Elimination of livestock grazing would open up the carefully crafted Wilderness Act of 1964 to all kinds of amendments, many of which would emasculate the Act. There is nothing the mining or off-road vehicle interests would like more than to get these issues put up for grabs. If we were busy defending (however successfully) present and future wilderness from these attacks, our efforts would be deflected from such important legislation as the 1872 Mining Law reform.

(2) Such a position on the part of environmental organizations would make it much more difficult to get any additions to the wilderness system, particularly Bureau of Land Management wilderness. Even the best western legislators (with the exception of a few from strictly urban areas) could not support new wilderness if it were tied to a prohibition on grazing. Already, anti-wilderness groups are circulating material that emphati-

cally states that wilderness is an economic disaster for those not living in cities. This argument is untrue, but it has been hard to counter because of the prejudice of many rural counties—"cow" counties—against wilderness. We do not want to add credence to their arguments.

I also believe that it would be far better to attack the problems caused by overgrazing with a campaign to restore the ecological health of all public lands, regardless of their wilderness status. To move allotments out of wilderness onto fragile adjacent lands with important riparian areas makes no sense. Agencies must be pushed to establish excellent standards and guidelines and to enforce the best management practices. If an agency does take the necessary steps to eliminate overgrazing, environmental groups must strongly support that agency against coalitions of ranchers and against possible lawsuits.

We need dialogue among all conservation groups before any group takes a position that may impair the efforts of other groups to achieve wilderness protection for some of our most remote and spacious wild lands. Our common goal must be to achieve the best wilderness system possible.

*Marge Sill is the Vice Chair and Federal Lands Coordinator of the Northern California/Nevada Regional Conservation Committee of the Sierra Club and a member of CWC.*

tremendous acreages to find enough to eat. Ranchers typically leave their animals on rangelands without herders, making the livestock vulnerable to predation. But rather than pay for herders, guard dogs, and other techniques which would reduce predation losses, ranchers have successfully transferred this cost to the public, which pays for the predator control and pays again by the loss of predators in their environment.

Degraded rangelands support fewer animals, domestic or wild. In addition, there is direct competition for food and habitat between livestock and wildlife. Domestic sheep eat the same foods as their wild cousins. Cattle often eat the same thing as elk. Thus grass that ends up in the

**Our series profiling BLM Wilderness Study Areas resumes next month**

## Ancient forests

### Modoc management begs scrutiny

By Jim Eaton

The Modoc National Forest has released its final land and resources management plan. With a few exceptions, it looks like business as usual.

Called the most remote forest in California, the Modoc contains parts of the northeastern counties of Modoc, Lassen, and Siskiyou. Much of the national forest consists of volcanic mountains, plateaus, and uplands. More cattle and sheep are grazed there than in any other national forest in the state.

Although remote, the Modoc forest has its problems. Nearly 37 percent of the water leaving the forest does not meet state water quality objectives, mostly due to grazing and logging. Bad logging practices have left much of the forest in poor shape, forcing the Forest Service to reduce the amount of timber sold despite its own plans to axe its ancient trees. Although 342,000 acres of rangeland are in unsatisfactory ecological condition, livestock grazing will be reduced only slightly.

Nonetheless, agency officials proudly boast that "after 85 years of effective multiple-use management by the Forest Service, the Modoc is an environmentally sound and highly productive national forest that contributes to the social, economic, and environmental needs of society."

Environmentalists disagree, pointing out that the Forest Service cannot meet its own standard and guidelines. For example, forest planners are required to maintain a minimum of five percent of each forest type in older mature stands. Currently six percent of old-growth eastside pine remains. Since this is a significant amount of what little timber remains in the Modoc, the forest plan would allow these ancient trees to be logged on the theory that younger trees will become old growth seventy years from now.

#### Wildlife

Until 1989, only one spotted owl, found in the Warner Mountains, was known to exist in the Modoc National Forest. Further surveys conducted that year near Medicine Lake confirmed additional spotted owls, believed to be of the threatened northern subspecies. Because past intensive logging reduced the forest's vegetation diversity, forest planners do not think the owls are permanent or nesting residents. The owls may think otherwise.

Bighorn sheep were established in the South Warner Wilderness in 1980, but the Forest Service continued to allow grazing of domestic sheep nearby. Seven years later bacterial pneumonia spread from the domestic sheep, entirely wiping out the herd of 60 bighorn.

Other species have suffered from forest management as well. Pine marten, western gray squirrel, goshawk, willow flycatcher, Swainson's hawk, and pileated woodpecker all have suffered from past logging and grazing practices.

#### Wilderness

The only wilderness area in the forest is the 70,385-acre South Warner Wilderness. In 1984, five small additions were made to the South Warners by the California Wilderness Act; 19 other roadless areas totaling 201,600 acres were released for uses other than wilderness.

These roadless areas do not fare well under the forest plan. Less than 30 percent of the wildlands will be managed for primitive recreation; most of the areas will be opened to logging and other development. Responding to public concern over the fate of the remaining roadless areas, Forest Service officials basically said that these areas were released by Congress, and that's that.

Even the National Park Service requested that roadless areas adjacent to its Lava Beds Wilderness be managed as semi-primitive to protect the wilderness from off-road vehicle use and to enhance the wilderness experience of

visitors. The Forest Service testily replied that "we feel that the mix of non-motorized and motorized prescriptions allocated in the forest plan is most appropriate to meet the collective needs of the public that use the Modoc National Forest."

Although a remote forest, the Modoc is not beyond the scrutiny of environmentalists. Increased public concern over biological diversity, wildlife corridors, and grazing on public lands is resulting in challenges to plans that would continue past management practices. Business as usual is not good enough, even for the Modoc.



Five Lakes in winter, Granite Chief Wilderness

Photo by Jim Eaton

### New, site-specific plan devised for Granite Chief

By Jim Eaton

A new alternative has been developed for the management plan for the Granite Chief Wilderness. The Tahoe National Forest has formed an "Alternative F" after receiving public comment during the fall of 1991. The agency is asking for thoughts on the new alternative by January 21, 1992.

Rather than proposing blanket restrictions throughout the wilderness, forest planners are suggesting regulations to address specific problems:

- Camping would be prohibited in the Five Lakes basin and within approximately 250 feet of the Whiskey Creek cabins.
- The Forest Service would solicit volunteers to restore the Whiskey Creek cabins.
- Recreational stock would be limited throughout the wilderness to 12 animals per group for day trips and eight per group for overnight use.
- Dogs would be allowed but discouraged at Five Lakes. From June 1 to July 15, dogs would be barred from the French Meadows State Game Refuge and Big Springs area to protect fawns.

### A clutch of victories for spotted owl

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owl's range.

Under the NFMA, the Forest Service must develop a management plan for the spotted owl. The plan and its companion environmental impact statement (EIS) are expected in March 1992. A draft EIS was released in September 1991.

#### More good news

The Forest Service was not the only federal agency rebuffed in December for its failure to act decisively on behalf of the spotted owl. The Fish and Wildlife Service was told that District Judge Thomas Zilly would brook no more delays. Ruling that further delay would be imprudent, Zilly ordered the agency to produce within ten days its final plan designating critical habitat.

Another setback to ancient-forest logging came when Fish and Wildlife Service biologists determined that, contrary to industry claims, spotted owls breed only in old-growth forests. That spotted owls have been sighted in younger, second-growth stands is probably due to loss of old-growth habitat to logging, the agency reported. With confirmation that the owls need ancient forests to reproduce, the agency is unlikely to shrink designated critical habitat where logging now is banned.

The popular Five Lakes basin is only two miles from a trailhead at Alpine Meadows. The proposed restriction on camping is a response to resource damage that has resulted from heavy use. Five Lakes also is the site of a Sierra Club cabin, slated for removal, now used by winter visitors.

The State Historic Preservation Officer has determined that the Whiskey Creek cabins are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The cabins are located west of Five Lakes.

The five other alternatives previously developed would continue current management, maximize wilderness protection, be transitional with an emphasis on protection, maximize solitude for maximum numbers of visitors, and maximize numbers of visitors.

An environmental assessment for the management plan is expected to be completed in March 1992. An alternative will be selected by the Forest Service at that time, so public comment should be received by the January 21 deadline.

To comment or receive more information, contact Linda Nickon, Truckee Ranger District, 10342 Highway 89 North, Truckee, CA 96161, (916) 587-3558.

## Wilderness news

# Bishop plan neglects wilderness

By Sally Miller

The Bishop Resource Area hosts perhaps the greatest diversity of ecologic, geologic, and cultural resources of any Bureau of Land Management holdings in the state of California. From the arid and desolate heights of the bristlecone pine-laden Inyo Mountains to old growth and rich riparian habitat near Monitor Pass, from an outstanding concentration of archaeological sites in the Volcanic Tablelands to the ghost town of Bodie, the 750,000-acre Bishop Resource Area is a study in superlatives, boasting an incredible assemblage of plant and animal species, geological features, and cultural relics.

These resources are at great risk of destruction if the final Resource Management Plan (RMP), released in October 1991, is implemented. This plan, which would direct the management of Bishop Resource Area lands over the next 10 to 20 years, addresses such controversial issues as mining, grazing, management of wildlife and fisheries, establishment of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), land disposals and acquisitions, and designation of a powerline corridor through a roadless area.

In December, a coalition of environmental groups (the Natural Resources Defense Council, The Wilderness Society, the Friends of the Inyo, and the Toiyabe Chapter of the Sierra Club) filed an 87-page protest of the RMP with Cy Jamison, Director of the BLM. The groups protested the RMP's treatment of the aforementioned issues, as well as its failure to address wilderness issues despite numerous requests from the public in comments on the draft RMP (see December 1990 *WR*).

The BLM contends that wilderness was adequately addressed in the 1987 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for wilderness recommendations in the Bishop Resource Area and that, consequently, the RMP need not readdress wilderness issues. The 1987 EIS recommended only one Wilderness Study Area (WSA), Southern Inyo, for

wilderness designation. (The Bishop Resource Area has 18 WSAs comprising nearly 40 percent of the lands in the Resource Area.) Because the 1987 EIS was part of a larger ongoing wilderness review process, environmentalists could not appeal or protest the BLM's recommendations at that time. In their protest, the environmentalists complained that the RMP fails even to identify WSAs by name or to provide a map so that members of the public can discern the impacts of the actions proposed in the RMP on potential wilderness.

The 1987 EIS is also inadequate, the environmentalists contend, in that it could not have foreseen the potentially significant impacts of decisions made in the RMP (such as establishment of visual resource management standards and designations, desired plant community goals, mineral withdrawals, ACEC designations, and the BLM's proposal to modify watershed withdrawals) on the wilderness character and on the resource values of the WSAs. The RMP also fails to analyze a reasonable range of wilderness alternatives despite public demand for more wilderness or



Cerro Gordo town and mining site in the Southern Inyo. The Bureau of Land Management contends that establishing "visual resource management standards" and "limits of acceptable change" will protect resources from destruction by mining. Photo by Pete Yamagata

to perform any site-specific environmental analyses of impacts on these unique and spectacularly diverse WSAs.

### Reducing "unnecessary planning"

The BLM states that no actions harmful to wilderness character will be taken until Congress makes a decision on *continued on page 6*

## High cost of grazing

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could correct many of the abuses listed above, but at what cost? Building stock ponds, paying for miles of fences, and doing greater monitoring all cost money. If production of meat were the goal, a similar investment in Georgia, Wisconsin, or even Vermont would produce far more meat with far less ecological cost than continuing to subsidize western livestock production on public lands.

Consider too that each of these "improvements" means greater "domestication" of our native ecosystems. "Good stewardship" is another word for manipulation—benign manipulation, perhaps, but manipulation nevertheless. Do we really want to manipulate our wildlands any more than necessary?

Increasingly, it has become clear that wilderness areas, national parks, and other such preserves are the biological benchmarks against which other manipulated landscapes can be measured. How can anyone support the use of these lands by non-native species like domestic livestock? This is no different from supporting the introduction of Scotch pine or eucalyptus into wilderness areas and parks. If our goal is preserving biological diversity, there is no place in wilderness for alien species like domestic livestock.

Furthermore, one must ask what is really the best use *continued on page 8*

## Desert Bill wins veto-proof passage

By Vicky Hoover

The California Desert Protection Act soared through the House of Representatives November 26 in the final hours of the first session of the 102nd Congress. The overwhelming vote of 297-136 gave Rep. Mel Levine's landmark preservation bill a margin better than the two-thirds needed to overturn a Presidential veto.

Several damaging amendments were rejected, in spite of delaying tactics by Republican opponents. One amendment opposed by environmental groups did pass the House—a proposal by Rep. Ron Marlenee (R-MT) to permit hunting in the new Mojave National Monument. Sport hunting in a national monument is unprecedented and against general National Park Service regulations. Environmentalists hope to eliminate this provision in the Senate.

The Senate is where attention will turn when Congress reconvenes in January. The overwhelming House vote clearly shows the mood and the will of the nation: California's unique, spectacular, but fragile desert lands must be preserved. As Bob Hattoy, the Sierra Club's Southern California Regional Director commented, "It's an incredible victory. This is a fast-moving train leaving the station. Senator Seymour can either jump on the train or get run over."

The historic vote came nearly six years after Senator Alan Cranston first introduced legislation to protect from development more than seven million acres of desert lands in three national parks and nearly 80 remote wilderness areas. The current House bill, H.R. 2929, includes Death Valley and Joshua Tree as national parks but designates a Mojave National Monument instead of a park—a compromise with grazing and other interests.

Since its July re-introduction in the House under the forceful leadership of Reps. Levine, Rick Lehman, and George Miller, the bill sped through the committee process and arrived at the House floor virtually unchanged. In spirited, often contentious, debate these three Representatives, as well as Rep. Bruce Vento (D-MN) and others, eloquently defended the bill. Opposition came chiefly from Southern California representatives who support development—William Dannemeyer, Jerry Lewis, and Bill Thomas. Rep. Lewis introduced an amendment to substitute his own bill, H.R. 3066, espousing the meager Bureau of Land Management wilderness recommendations of about 2 million acres of wilderness, for H.R. 2929. The failure of this amendment was a significant victory for environmentalists.

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

## News from the east side

# Sherwin development delayed

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tial impacts to specific "management options" that would correct the impact. This is important because the project would be built in two phases (a concession that surfaced in the second draft EIS after the original draft was rejected). The second phase of the project would be approved only if monitoring reveals that any impacts from the first phase could be mitigated.

Muraoka also faulted the final EIS as "not consistent with the Inyo Forest Plan...to which it is tied." The Inyo National Forest has a management plan for the Sherwin deer herd which requires the Forest Supervisor either to "maintain or enhance holding areas, migration routes, and fawning areas." The final EIS failed to adopt the only alternative, "No Action," that would comply with this component of the Forest Plan.

East side activists have long questioned whether demand for downhill skiing opportunities is great enough to justify this and other proposed developments in the area. In any event, Muraoka found fault with the final EIS's documentation of demand and called for further analysis in a supplemental final EIS.

One significant effect of the ski area would be the need for new housing for employees. The final EIS may have underestimated the number of people who would work at the ski area. Local environmentalists are encouraged that the Regional Forester asked for further analysis on this subject, too.

But will the Grinch steal Christmas?

The Chief of the Forest Service, in response to intense lobbying by proponents of the Sherwin Ski Area and other ski area owners, agreed in December to exercise his discretionary power to review the Regional Forester's decision. It is unlikely, however, that the Chief will overrule Muraoka's request for supplemental review in light of the grave environmental concerns already identified.

*Frank Stewart is a member of Friends of the Inyo, one of the groups that appealed the Sherwin Ski Area EIS.*



Sherwin Ridge from near Mammoth Lakes

Photo by Andy Selters

# Heliskiing controversy

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In addition to environmental concerns, heliskiing poses recreation conflicts. Cross-country (nordic) skiers and snowshoers consider heliskiing an incompatible use in many areas. According to Marcus Libkind of the Sierra Club's Nordic Voice, Glass Mountain and the San Joaquin Ridge are the most heavily-used cross-country ski areas near Mammoth. "Like snowmobiling," Libkind says, "helicopter skiing intrudes on the solitude of the winter wilderness experience."

The Inyo National Forest is in the process of writing an environmental impact statement (EIS) that will address the cumulative impacts of numerous projects proposed for the area between Mammoth Lakes and June Lake. Friends of the Inyo and the Toiyabe Chapter of the Sierra Club believe that the heliskiing proposal would be better addressed in the EIS. "Piecemeal planning," Miller says, "could prejudice the final outcome of the EIS" by establishing incompatible uses.

**"The San Joaquin Roadless Area is not Disneyland"**

Bob Wood, winter sports specialist for the Mammoth District, says the Forest Service is seeking to provide recreational opportunities for which there is a demand. "The San Joaquin Roadless Area is not Disneyland," Miller counters. She questions whether that demand exists and whether commercial heliskiing would be economically viable, given that Mammoth Heli-Ski, whose permit from the Inyo expired in 1991, last used its permit in 1985. According to Wood, Mammoth Heli-Ski had plenty of business but not enough snow. The Mammoth Ranger District had not received any permit applications, however, when it re-

leased its proposal.

A permit could be issued as early as February of this year. Public comment is welcome, Wood says, but should be submitted before January 15 if possible. Send comments to the Mammoth District Ranger, Inyo National Forest, P. O. Box 148, Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546.

# Unholy Bishop plan protested

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wilderness in the Resource Area and that the RMP simply plans for "long-term nonwilderness management" of the WSAs in order to "minimize public expenditures, reduce unnecessary planning, and increase...on-the-ground management." Protesters contend that in order to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the BLM must take a hard look at the consequences implicit in its management direction by thoroughly analyzing the environmental impacts of nonwilderness management on the wilderness character of the WSAs.

One of the most disturbing things about this process is that the BLM in its final document presents significant new management direction and significant new information regarding grazing and mining without providing the public an opportunity to comment. "It is well established under NEPA law that public comment is required on any significant changes relevant to environmental concerns," said Natural Resources Defense Council attorney Johanna Wald. "That the Bureau thought it could make these changes without allowing public comment [in a supplemental or revised EIS] is frankly unbelievable."

**Soldier Canyon powerline**

The draft RMP proposed a powerline corridor through Soldier Canyon, a roadless area that occupies the transitional habitat between the White and Inyo mountain ranges. The public overwhelmingly opposed a corridor designation in Soldier Canyon or either of the two other sites

presented in the draft on the basis that each area possesses significant resource values and that the BLM poorly justified the need for a new corridor. The final RMP states that a corridor will not be designated in the RMP; the only alternative to be considered for a future transmission line, however, is Soldier Canyon. Environmentalists allege that the BLM has thus precluded any site-specific analysis of the three alternatives to avoid full disclosure and a reasoned decision on the environmentally superior alternative, as required by law.

The BLM's deferral of concrete decisions to protect resources to the future, when public scrutiny and involvement may be lower, and its failure to provide any reasoned rationale for decisions made in the RMP render the bulk of the document "arbitrary and capricious," according to Wilderness Society attorney Eric Walters.

The protesters have requested the entire document be redrafted and recirculated for public comment. Resolution of the protest by the Director is expected to take several months. The protest, and the Director's response, are the climax of the administrative process; if that process fails to resolve the conflict, litigation will be the only recourse available. In the interim, the environmentalist coalition has requested a stay of all actions that may cause harm to resources and thus render moot the issues protested.

*Sally Miller, CWC's newest board member, worked on the protest of the Bishop Resource Management Plan on behalf of Friends of the Inyo and the Toiyabe Chapter of the Sierra Club.*

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### Wilderness Trivia Quiz Answer:

Marble Mountain (limestone)  
and Lava Beds (lava tubes)

from page 2

## DATES TO REMEMBER

**January 8** RALLY sponsored by the California Forest & Watershed Council at the State Capitol Building from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. For details, call (707) 468-1660.

**January 15** COMMENTS DUE on a proposal by the Inyo National Forest to issue a permit for heliskiing in roadless areas. Send to: Mammoth District Ranger, Inyo N. F., P. O. Box 148, Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546. (See article on pages 1 & 6.)

**January 18** ACTIVIST MEETING of the California Ancient Forest Alliance in Davis. For details, call Jim Eaton at (916) 758-0380.

**January 21** COMMENTS DUE on the new alternative for the Granite Chief Wilderness Management Plan's Environmental Assessment. Send to: Linda Nickon, Truckee Ranger District, Tahoe N. F., 10342 Highway 89 North, Truckee, CA 96161. (See article on page 4.)

**February 1** ANNUAL MEETING of the California Wilderness Coalition in Davis. For details, call Jim Eaton at (916) 758-0380.

**February 2** ACTIVIST MEETING on wilderness proposals for Bureau of Land Management desert and non-desert lands. For details, call Jim Eaton at (916) 758-0380.



**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 *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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Yolano Group, Sierra Club; Davis

## Growing grizzlies

continued from page 5

of public lands? We have many better places to produce cows than the arid rangelands of the west, yet these same lands could—in the absence of livestock—produce far more wildlife, provide higher quality water, protect biodiversity, and provide higher quality recreational opportunities. You can grow a cow on the back forty in Georgia, but you can't grow grizzlies there or expect to have a wilderness experience in such areas. Should our public rangelands be a feedlot for privately-owned livestock or should not our public rangelands be managed as a place where the buffalo roam and the deer and the antelope play?

*George Wuerthner is a photographer living in Montana and the author of Montana: Magnificent Wilderness.*

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