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Marbled murrelets, which nest in coastal ancient forests like those in Sinkyone Wilderness State Park, have now been listed—perhaps fleetingly—as a threatened species. Photo by David J. Cross

Murrelet listed, but still not out of the woods

By Jeffrey St. Clair

Under orders from two federal courts, the Bush administration finally and reluctantly announced its decision to list the marbled murrelet as a threatened species in California, Oregon, and Washington. However, the Fish and Wildlife Service, which had attempted to postpone a decision on the listing until January 1993, also announced that it would re-evaluate its decision in 90 days and might change the listing, raising the possibility that the bird could be delisted in December.

The marbled murrelet nests in old-growth forests of the Pacific Northwest within fifty miles of the coast. According to the Fish and Wildlife Service, "the marbled murrelet is threatened by the loss and modification of nesting habitat (older forests) primarily due to commercial timber harvesting." Oil spills and gill-net fishing also have contributed to the decline in murrelet populations, which the Fish and Wildlife Service now estimates as fewer than 9,000 birds in the three states.

Most biologists consider the marbled murrelet to be endangered in California, Oregon, and Washington and

threatened in southeast Alaska, according to Kim Nelson, a researcher with the Oregon Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit in Corvallis and one of the leading experts on the murrelet. Estimates of the size of the Alaskan population of murrelets range between 25,000 and 50,000 birds. But due to oil spills and continued heavy logging of the Tongass National Forest, the murrelets may be declining even faster in southeast Alaska than in the Northwest.

Nevertheless, political pressure from the Alaska delegation led the Fish and Wildlife Service not to list the Alaskan population. Instead, the agency appears to be poised to rule that the Alaskan and Northwest populations of the bird are not geographically-distinct populations under the Endangered Species Act, a tactic the agency recently used to deny listing the northern goshawk as a threatened species in the Southwest.

In a sparsely worded, two-paragraph statement, the agency laid the foundations for a possible future move to delist the murrelet, announcing its intention to re-exam-

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Election roundup:

Public lands in mostly unfriendly hands

By Ron Stork

In 1992, the year of change, California voters made surprisingly few changes in the representation of the state's public lands. As in previous years, the Congressional districts with public lands will be represented by Republicans who are generally inclined to oppose protective land use designations or other federal management changes that may reduce commodity outputs from the federal lands.

The Northstate

The most significant exception to that pattern came in District 1, where Rep. Frank Riggs, the one term moderate Republican, was defeated by Dan Hamburg. Local conservationists hope that Hamburg will develop into the most pro-environment leader of any of California's public lands representatives.

District 1 includes vast ancient forests, big rivers, enormous amounts of forested private land, and the western portions of the Siskiyou, Klamath, Six Rivers, and Mendocino national forests. The district also contains the King Range, Red Mountain, South Fork Eel River, Thatcher Ridge, Eden Valley, Cedar Roughs, and Cache Creek wilderness study areas (WSAs).

Northstate voters overwhelmingly re-elected Republican Rep. Wally Herger to one of the state's two biggest public lands districts. He will represent most of the Six Rivers, Trinity, Klamath, Shasta, Modoc, Lassen, Plumas, and Tahoe national forests, parts of the Mendocino and Rogue River national forests, and the extensive Bureau of Land Management (BLM) holdings on the Modoc Plateau with its many WSAs.

Rep. Herger is on the Agriculture Committee, where he has opposed forestry reforms. He also has opposed wild-and-scenic river (W&SR) designation in his district and is likely to do so in the future.

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BLM's in-house wilderness course has a lot to teach us.....5

COALITION PAGE

MONTHLY REPORT

When Paul Brink asked if I would speak at a training course for Bureau of Land Management field staff, I said, "Sure—where is it?" Ridgecrest.

At first blush, it seemed too far away. But there was a Sierra Alliance meeting at Donner Summit the following weekend, and I never miss an opportunity to travel along U.S. Highway 395.

Lucy decided the BLM course looked interesting enough to attend all five days. I hung around for two, long enough to say my piece and listen to what some others had to say. It was intriguing to hear everyone from State Director Ed Hasteley on down tell the assemblage that a California desert bill is imminent. Even a staff member who worked for the Republicans on the House Interior Committee dolefully said, "by this time next year there will be a big desert bill enacted."

On that cheery note, I decided to head north. I had promised my canine companion Inyo that we would camp out each night on this trip, and now was the time to head into the Inyo Mountains for which he was named. In the fading light, we raced up Mazourka Canyon to Badger Flat where we found a campsite overlooking the Owens Valley and with a view of the snow-dusted Sierra Nevada beyond.

After a quick dinner, we took a brief hike, a walk shortened when I realized how hard it was to follow a black dog on a very dark night. Back at camp I noticed that the water in Inyo's bowl rapidly was changing from liquid to solid form.

After playing lizard in the morning sun, we took several hikes. From the top of Barber Peak, we could see an amazing panorama—south to Keynot and Inyo peaks, the Sierra from Olancha to the Palisades, and north to White Mountain Peak. We hiked up dolomite-choked Tamarack Canyon through the pinyon pines and junipers and up into the limber pines. On the shady north slopes remnant patches of October's snowfall remained, but it seemed strange to be kicking up dust at 10,000

BY JIM EATON

feet in the cool sun of mid-November. Needless to say, I didn't see another soul. I kept hearing military jets but couldn't spot them until I realized that they were flying in the valleys below me.

That evening I drove down to Hank and Darcy's cabin at Tom's Place where a dozen activists were gathered for the first of a series of workshops they have planned to increase their effectiveness. Frank Stewart led this session on the environmental review process.

After sleeping near the Watterson Roadless Area and getting chased out of the Dexter Canyon Roadless Area by a dark sky spitting snow flakes, I retreated to Lee Vining where CWC Board member Sally Miller and I caught up on issues.

From there it was off to Donner, with a stop for a hike along the rapidly freezing West Walker River. Inyo loved loping through the shallow snow near Norden, but the three-inch base at Donner Summit portends yet one more year of drought. Or, from another perspective, a seventh year of normalcy after several decades of unusually wet weather.

The crowd that gathered for the Sierra Alliance meeting was a delight. Activists from throughout the Sierra attended, along with those of us from farther afield. The group worked on the logistics of establishing this new organization which will focus on the many issues facing the Range of Light.

I returned to Davis refreshed by the post-election enthusiasm of wilderness activists. Even many of the BLM employees I met in Ridgecrest were looking forward to the change in administration.

All week long there were expressions of hope and opportunity that I have not heard for a decade and a half. The time is ripe for turning these empowered activists loose on the problems of wild land protection and the preservation of biodiversity. Big changes are in the wind.

Roadless areas

Loch Leven lakes on the chopping block

By John Moore

The three beautiful Loch Leven lakes a few miles south of Big Bend are one of the most popular hiking destinations along Interstate 80 and are increasingly popular with cross-country skiers to boot. An easy trail—the second most heavily used trail in Tahoe National Forest—climbs through beautiful forest over the valley rim to a rocky plateau and the sparkling lakes.

No signs inform visitors that the south end of the first lake, all of the second lake, and all of High Loch Leven Lake are on a square mile of private property inside a roadless area. The parcel was granted to the Southern Pacific railroad over a century ago. For years Southern Pacific offered to trade this land to the Forest Service for timber land elsewhere, but the Forest Service would not give up any timber land. That Forest Service policy created the present dilemma.

A few years ago, Southern Pacific sold the square mile to a timber company, which has filed a timber harvest plan for the parcel. The plan's map shows harvest areas on shores of all the lakes, including the entire east shore of High Loch Leven Lake. The proposed helicopter logging very likely would remove practically all of the largest trees, leaving the vicinities of the lakes and the trail an ugly, thinly-forested mess for decades to come.

The Tahoe National Forest and the landowner have been negotiating a land exchange for many months without making noticeable progress toward agreement. One source of delay has been the Forest Service's attempts to acquire other lands in an expanded exchange. There is a chance the land could be acquired with the trees still standing if the Forest Service limits the exchange to the Loch Leven parcel and expedites the exchange negotiations. Write to John Skinner, Supervisor, Tahoe National Forest, P. O. Box 6003, Nevada City, CA 95959 if you think the Forest Service should make acquiring the Loch Leven lakes—with the forest intact—a priority.

Lovers of the Loch Leven lakes can write also to the California Department of Forestry to protest any timber sale (and specifically Timber Harvest Plan 2-92-347) near these beautiful and heavily-visited lakes. Address your letter to the Department of Forestry at 6105 Airport Road, Redding, CA 96002, with a copy to Director Richard Wilson, Department of Forestry, 1416 9th Street, Sacramento, CA 95814.

John Moore is a long-time activist working to transfer special Sierra lands from private to public ownership.

Letters

Dear Editor,

Your October 1992 issue reported that Ike Livermore (a CWC Advisory Committee member) is concerned that "hikers are becoming increasingly militant about protecting wilderness at the expense of the commercial packers." Would he have us turn our backs on the continued degradation of wilderness areas by stock animals?

We all have experienced the trampled, overgrazed meadows and lake shores, littered with piles of manure. We all have suffered the dusty trails churned by stock hooves. We all have negotiated the cumbersome wire fences built for the convenience of stock users. And we all take our drinking water from the streams and lakes into which stock animals urinate and defecate. The list goes on and on.

Recreational stock use certainly has a place on our public lands. But in crowded areas where use must be rationed, the phase-out of commercial stock use is the obvious and correct course. One horse has at least as much impact as three people. Without the impacts of commercial stock, popular

areas could withstand many more hikers. We should maximize the number of people who are allowed to visit these areas instead of allocating a disproportionate share of the quota to a profiteering, special-interest group—commercial stock packers.

We encourage your readers who agree to join us.

Yours sincerely,
Peter Browning, Coordinator
High Sierra Hikers Association
Truckee

The CWC neither condones nor opposes the use of pack stock in wilderness. We do oppose, however, any activity detrimental to the wilderness resource. On that basis, certainly, pack stock are inappropriate in some places, as are hikers. The CWC would like to see energy devoted to protecting wilderness and wild lands from the most serious threats like cattle grazing. —Ed.

Uncle Jim's Wilderness Trivia Quiz Question:

Where are there peaks named for monsters in Homer's *Odyssey*?

Answer on page 7

BLM wilderness study areas

Borderlands wilderness a refuge of rare plants and rare silence

By Nick Ervin

On my trusted old Auto Club map of San Diego County, the Otay Mountains sit atop the Mexican border within a roughly triangular blank spot bracketed by secondary roads on two sides and the international border on the third. Such blank spots on a map entice wilderness buffs like me. Remarkably close to the San Diego metropolitan area, the Otay Mountains wilderness complex comprises almost 14,000 acres in two wilderness study areas (WSAs) bisected in large part by the cherry-stemmed Otay Mountain Truck Trail (see map). This is classic chaparral, coastal sage scrub, and oak woodland country, but it is also unique—an oasis of increasingly-rare undisturbed land in crowded western San Diego County.

The late October sun is unusually hot as I follow a relentless uphill course toward the summit of 3,572-foot Otay Mountain, the "place of gathering stone" to the Kumeyaay who used the mountain's felsite to make tools. The "road" I am using as a trail lazily winds its way up the deep-green slopes, vegetated more and more thickly as I ascend toward the ridge tops. This thin ribbon of orderly civilization intrudes on the otherwise unmarred landscape; as a ready-made path, however, it is a godsend through the dense chaparral cloaking the mountain flanks. On the lower reaches I have just left behind, the dry scrubland recedes from view, unremarkable aesthetically but important biologically.

On the clearest of days, the views from these peaks extend well into northern Baja California, out into the ocean realms, and north all the way to Mt. San Jacinto. On any average day, like this day, the chaparral hinterland of San Diego County still rises all around, stark in its beauty and with its own kind of grandeur. Aside from their value for primitive recreation, the Southern and Western Otay Mountain WSAs act as irreplaceable havens for several threatened species, most prominently the rare and pungent Tecate cypress. As I ascend further these attractive trees begin to appear, scattered at first and then in profuse abundance. In shape like a small pine, the Tecate cypress has branches and needles that remind me more of a

juniper. Yet it is the exotic fragrance which intrigues me most of all. Globular seedpods hang heavy and plentiful from its graceful branches. The pods emit a characteristic strong and oddly pleasing odor unlike anything I have encountered before. Few large trees grow here, but many seedlings dot the gullies cutting through the hillsides below and above me.

Several other sensitive or threatened plant species—including the mariposa lily, Otay manzanita, Gander's pitcher sage, and mountain misery—survive in the WSAs, which the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has recognized as "an unequalled and unique plant assemblage."

Having concluded that the two Otay Mountain WSAs provide "numerous opportunities for solitude" as well as "outstanding opportunities for scientific and educational use," the BLM proposes to protect the majority of both WSAs as wilderness. The absence of entrenched commercial uses undoubtedly contributed to the agency's recommendation. Only marginal grazing occurs on a small percentage of the area, and no active mining. The Otay Mountain Truck Trail is a favorite with mountain bikers and hang gliders, but the biggest threats arise from a long-standing plan, presently dormant, to turn adjacent areas to the west into an off-road vehicle park and a current proposal for a 15,000-acre subdivision that would leave Otay Mountain an island surrounded by 100,000 residents.

None of these concerns dominates my thoughts at the moment; I am filled with delight at the surrounding vistas and the slender cypress trees. Some old, dilapidated, World War II era concrete structures along the trail actually add to the charm of this ruggedly appealing place. This day's hazy weather obscures the most distant views, but the purple-hued, austere stone outcrops of peaks well



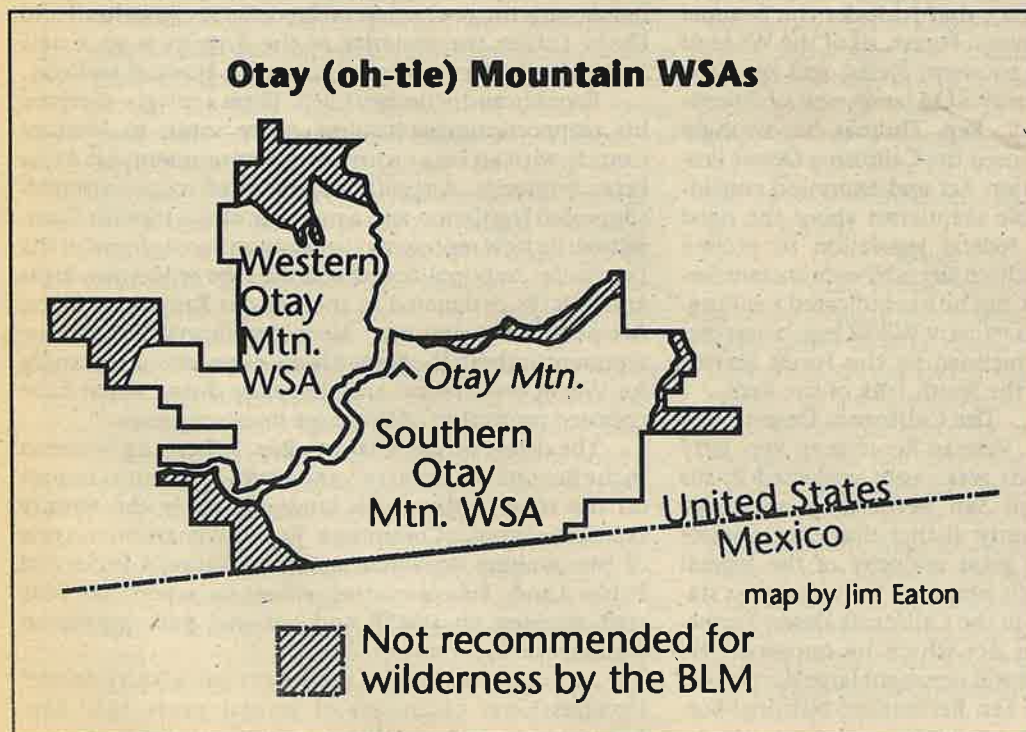
Otay Mountain survives as an oasis of rare species in western San Diego County.
Photo by Nick Ervin

inside Mexico present themselves in high relief, jutting above their earthen floor. The peaks to the south differ little from the those to the north and east, but they tug at me if only because they are foreign. Odd, I ponder, how an artificial political boundary can spur such a fascination within me. In reality, the Otay-San Ysidro Mountains wildlands extend beyond the frontier, mocking the contrived boundary line. When it comes to future management and protection, such political lines will influence the fate of wild species here. Pressures undoubtedly will mount as the human population swells in northern Mexico as well as in my own home city over the next few generations. Wildfire dangers already pose a threat; this area has not burned for many, many years, and the store of dry fuel is alarmingly high.

For now I am content to let political and ecological dangers recede as I sweat my way upward, picking and sniffing cypress seedpods for inspiration. What a wonderful place! It has none of the conventional beauty of the alpine forests of the Sierra Nevada, the dramatic rock formations of Joshua Tree or Lassen, or even the haunting symmetry of desert sand dunes. Instead the Otays subtly invite you to consider their worth in different terms, as a wild refuge for rare, disappearing life forms and as a place for quiet contemplation, a retreat from the ubiquitous clanging techno-culture dominating so many of our daily lives.

This mountain will never draw substantial, admiring crowds—nor should it. That would be ruinous. For those who exult in the unsullied splendor of wild nature, however, the experience of visiting will leave you nourished and satisfied.

Nick Ervin lives amid the techno-clamor of San Diego, from whence he often escapes to the wilderness. For more information about visiting the Otay Mountain WSAs, contact the BLM's South Coast Resource Area office in Palm Springs at (619) 251-0812.



Wilderness representatives

Political landscape looks grim

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Rep. Vic Fazio's new district includes most of the Sacramento Valley, with large federal water projects but few federal lands: the eastern portion of the Mendocino National Forest and the western portions of the Lassen National Forest, which has a number of eligible W&SRs such as Mill and Deer creeks, will be in his care.

Although Rep. Fazio in the past has enjoyed a good working relationship with environmentalists, that relationship has been strained in recent years by his championing of Auburn Dam, his opposition to many of the provisions of Rep. George Miller's water reform legislation, and his reluctance to support environmentally-sound reauthorization of the Endangered Species Act and protection of Sierra Nevada ancient forests.

Rep. Fazio is not a member of the Interior or Agriculture committees, but his senior seat on the Appropriations Committee and his position in the House leadership make him one of the most influential members of California's Congressional delegation.

The Sierra Nevada

Republican Rep. John Doolittle has some of the most heavily-visited public lands in the state in his district, and he is strongly committed to damming rivers and cutting down as many trees as possible. Reapportioned out of the northstate, Rep. Doolittle now can concentrate his energies on the central Sierra Nevada, the Eldorado and Stanislaus national forests, and portions of the Toiyabe and Inyo national forests. He will represent the Mono

Basin Scenic Area and the extensive BLM lands and WSAs around Mono Lake and the northern Owens Valley.

All of California's rivers most endangered by proposed dam construction—the American, South Fork American, Mokelumne, North Fork Stanislaus, and Clavey—are in this district. Rep. Doolittle has been active on the Interior Committee, working strenuously to build alliances with other Republican members to dam rivers in his district and the rest of the country.

Veteran Democratic Rep. Rick Lehman defeated Republican challenger Tal Cloud by a razor-thin margin in the now-Republican 19th District which contains some of the most beautiful public lands in the country: Yosemite and Kings Canyon national parks and the Sierra National Forest as well as the northern portion of the Sequoia National Forest and the little-known Merced River WSA.

Rep. Lehman is Chair of the California Desert Subcommittee and one of the principal sponsors of the California desert legislation passed by the House last year. But Rep. Lehman disappointed environmentalists with his cautious approach to Sierra Nevada timber management reforms and his cosponsorship of Rep. Doolittle's legislation to authorize federal construction of an expandable Auburn Dam on the American River. Clearly, conservationists will have to work closely with Rep. Lehman to ensure active progress on federal lands issues both within and outside his district.

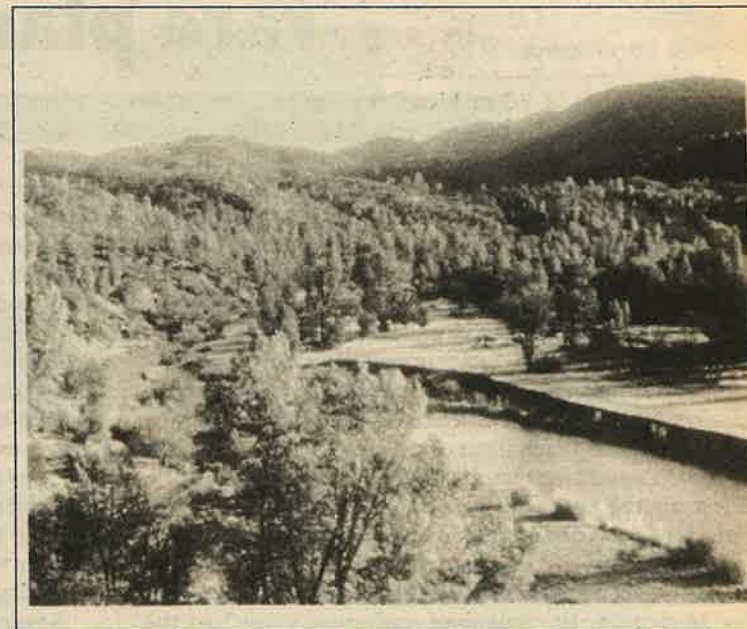
Interior Committee Democratic Rep. Calvin Dooley won easily in his new San Joaquin Valley district. His previous district included extensive sections of the Sierra and Sequoia national forests, but public lands in his new district are much rarer, the most notable being the Panoche Hills WSA in western Fresno County.

Bakersfield Republican Rep. Bill Thomas easily won re-election to a district that includes the Sequoia National Forest, all of the WSAs of the southern Sierra, and the Kern County BLM lands west of Bakersfield. Rep. Thomas has strongly opposed the California Desert Protection Act and expressed considerable skepticism about the need for federal legislation to protect southern Sierra Nevada ancient forests, but he has indicated a willingness to carry W&SR legislation recommended by the Forest Service for the South Fork of the Kern.

The California Desert

Veteran Republican Rep. Jerry Lewis was easily re-elected in his giant San Bernardino and Inyo County district that encompasses the great majority of the federal lands proposed for wilderness status in the California Desert Protection Act which he opposed. He also will represent large portions of the San Bernardino National Forest.

Rep. Al McCandless comfortably defeated his Democratic challenger in a Riverside County district rich with WSAs. The district also contains the southern portion of the San Bernardino National Forest.



The Cache Creek Wilderness Study Area, with its lovely Wilson Valley, is one of the few WSAs to have landed in friendly hands. Photo by Eric Knapp

Battles are brewing

The federal public lands are meant to be managed for the welfare of all of the citizens of the United States. Thus, members of Congress from all over the country have just as much stake in the welfare of public lands as do the individuals who represent them. From that perspective, the Californian most important to the fate of our public lands is Rep. George Miller, from a Contra Costa County district with a notable absence of public lands.

As Chair of the Interior Committee, Rep. Miller directed an ambitious legislative effort to push for reform of the 1872 Mining Law, protect ancient forests and wild and scenic rivers, designate wilderness in the California desert, protect the Grand Canyon, and institute the most far-reaching environmental reforms of the massive Central Valley water project in the state's history.

Big agendas take time and lots of political capital, and Rep. Miller was most successful in just the last two goals. But many of these still-unfulfilled policy initiatives (as well as state-wide and regional wilderness and wild-and-scenic river bills) will be part of the agenda of the 103rd Congress thanks to Rep. Miller. Critical to his success will be the recruitment of a strong Interior Committee since a number of his key allies, including Reps. Peter Kostmayer, Jim Jontz, and Mel Levine, are not returning.

The Senate

It generally takes the support of both of a state's senators to move public-lands legislation successfully through the United States Senate. With the election of two Democratic senators, there may be more opportunity now for an ambitious public-lands agenda than any time in the memory of public-lands activists.

Senator-elect Barbara Boxer established a strong environmental record in the House of Representatives, and environmentalists look forward to working with her. Sen. Dianne Feinstein made strong environmental statements during her campaign, the most notable being her commitment to enact the desert legislation first proposed in 1986 by Sen. Alan Cranston. Already, Sen. Feinstein has recruited one of Sen. Cranston's most able environmental staffers.

Sens. Boxer and Feinstein will have tough battles in front of them. California House members who oppose their endeavors probably will try to recruit out-of-state senators to block important legislation.—Ron Stork

ably defeated his Democratic challenger in a Riverside County district rich with WSAs. The district also contains the southern portion of the San Bernardino National Forest.

Rep. Duncan Hunter also won comfortably in his eastern San Diego and Imperial County district. He too has always opposed the California Desert Protection Act.

Conservative incumbent Reps. Randy Cunningham, Ron Packard, and Christopher Cox joined GOP newcomer Kenneth Calvert in retaining control of much of the Cleveland National Forest and nearby desert lands in Riverside and San Diego County.

The only desert BLM lands that managed to find their way into Democratic hands are the two Otay Mountain WSAs—which were not included in the California Desert Protection Act—in freshman Democrat Bob Filner's new San Diego district. (See article on page 3.)

The Southern Coast Ranges

The Angeles National Forest remains in Republican hands with the re-election of Reps. Carlos Moorhead and David Dreier; the majority of the Angeles is in a new Palmdale district won by businessman Howard McKeon.

Republican incumbent Rep. Elton Gallegly survived his reapportionment-inspired move south to Ventura County with an easy victory over environmentalist Anita Perez Ferguson. A regular opponent of conservationist-supported legislation and a member of the Interior Committee, he now represents the southernmost chunk of the Los Padres National Forest and the new wilderness areas and W&SRs designated in the Condor Range and Rivers Act passed this summer. More significantly, he will be representing both the Sespe River sections still under study for W&SR designation and the water districts that have opposed protection of the Sespe in recent years.

The defeat of Santa Barbara Rep. Robert Lagomarsino in the Republican primary could have a substantial impact on the tone of the public-lands debate in the already rancorous Interior Committee. Rep. Lagomarsino was one of two ranking Republicans on the National Parks and Public Lands Subcommittee, where he supervised GOP staff working on W&SR and national park legislation throughout the country.

Although included in the Sierra Club's "dirty dozen" Congressional campaign of several years ago, Rep. Lagomarsino was something of a moderate (at least when

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Wilderness management

BLM staff learning to care for wilderness

By Lucy Rosenau

November 16-20 in Ridgecrest, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) held its third training course in wilderness management. Unlike the previous sessions, the Ridgecrest course was intended not for wilderness specialists but for field staff—the geologists, range conservationists, wildlife biologists, botanists, and recreation planners who will have to perform their jobs in new ways once wilderness is designated.

From the outset, it was clear that these employees had grave concerns about working in wilderness. Some of their fears were easily allayed, based as they were on misapprehensions about what wilderness designation will mean. But there were many more concerns expressed that remain problems, and not just for the agency that wants to become the authority on arid lands wilderness management. Though the BLM still hopes to influence how boundary lines are drafted in the final desert bill, a source of considerable concern to field staff and administrators alike, it is certain that some problems will linger long after the transition from wilderness study areas (WSAs) to designated wilderness is accomplished. Among the thorniest of these problems are incursions by off-road vehicles (ORVs), lawsuits resulting from the denial of rights-of-way, and a tight budget that may grow tighter.

But there was reason for optimism as well. Under a new president and interior secretary, the BLM is bound to be a markedly different agency. Already, there are signs that the BLM will be more forthcoming and more "green" than it ever has been. When State Director Ed Hasty opened the course by declaring himself a long-time wilderness user who believes that "wilderness is not recreation" but an important resource, he undoubtedly surprised

many in the audience with both his sentiments and his frankness. With one notable exception, the BLM instructors who addressed the class espoused the agency's stated policy, delineated in its manual, to stay true to the intent of the Wilderness Act. Again and again they advised the field staff to "err on the side of wilderness."

In all, there were 25 speakers, panelists, and instructors for the 46 staff members enrolled in the course. For some of the field staff, the training was optional; courses like this one are necessary for advancement within the agency. For others, attendance was mandatory. The Ridgecrest Resource Area office, which hosted the course and consequently did not have to pay for transportation or lodging, enrolled 11 members of its staff. Because of the distances involved and because California is the only state expected to have new BLM wilderness designated next year, almost all the field staff came from California, many from resource areas in the desert. Though the curriculum offered mostly general information about the principles and practice of wilderness management, the audience made good use of the discussion periods that followed each presentation, asking



On a field trip to Golden Valley Wilderness Study Area, participants in the BLM's wilderness training course discussed how to manage recreational use. The Golden Valley is expected to be designated wilderness sometime next year when a California desert bill is enacted. Photo by Lucy Rosenau

Can we learn to care for the BLM?

Since the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is comparatively new to wilderness management, many environmentalists have had few encounters, positive or otherwise, with BLM staff. That situation is, of course, about to change in California. In the interests of improving relations between the environmental community and the agency, here are some points to bear in mind.

1. The BLM is not a monolithic agency. Some field staff favor wilderness designation, some are apprehensive but not opposed, and some are opposed. The same probably is true of the managers; some predict we will see a "greening of the agency" that has been stymied until now by Presidents Reagan and Bush and by old-line administrators who will retire soon and be replaced by younger, greener employees.

2. BLM field staff do not believe they warrant their reputation as anti-environmentalist. How, one geologist asked at the training course, could Senator Cranston have found eight million acres of potential wilderness in the California desert if the BLM is as bad a steward as environmentalists contend?

3. BLM field staff hear from interest groups opposed to wilderness (interest groups that are no more monolithic than the BLM, incidentally) far more often than they hear from environmentalists. Area offices may receive several publications from off-road vehicle (ORV) promoters but none from environmental groups. Furthermore, the environmen-

tally-inclined hiker is a much less visible user of BLM wilderness study areas than the hunter in an ORV, the cattle grazer, or the mining claimant.

4. BLM field staff are professionals working under strict federal guidelines. Before making a decision, a BLM employee may have to consult applicable legislation (the Endangered Species Act, the Wilderness Act, the 1872 Mining Law, the National Environmental Policy Act, and many more), the Code of Federal Regulations, and the agency's own manual. Decisions are neither arbitrary nor groundless (if only to limit appeals which cost the agency scarce funds).

What you can do

1. Make yourself visible. If you visit a BLM wilderness study area or wilderness, contact the area office before or after your trip. Area offices, particularly those in the desert district, may not be near enough to your destination for you to stop by, but you can call the office for information or to report any problems you may have observed. Area offices have maps, and the staff know their wilderness study areas (though maybe not as well as you—some of these areas are huge and a single office may oversee more than a dozen). The BLM's Sacramento office can provide you with addresses and phone numbers for all area offices; the directory also has a state map showing which lands each area office administers. For a copy, call (916) 978-4754.

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questions about specific situations in their own WSAs.

Minimum tools, maximum headaches

The one principle of wilderness management that generated the most concern and questions was the requirement to forgo, whenever possible, the use of mechanized or motorized equipment. Although the Wilderness Act generally forbids the use of mechanical transport and all motorized equipment, mechanized tools are not expressly outlawed. BLM policy, however, appears to equate mechanized with motorized and mandates the use of "minimum tools." What constitutes minimum tools will, of course, depend on the specific job to be done. The group seemed to agree that wild horses and burros cannot be rounded up without helicopters, but few other scenarios elicited such definitive answers. Representatives from Yosemite National Park and Sierra National Forest, who participated in a panel on wilderness management, described the different policies between and within their agencies. Ultimately, it will be the BLM's area managers who decide when to authorize the use of mechanized and motorized equipment.

That using minimum tools will increase the time, and hence the cost, of working in wilderness troubled some of the field staff, who find it neither logical nor economical to send a GS12-rated employee into the wilderness on foot or horseback when the intrusion would last only a few hours if a helicopter were allowed. In a part of the desert where the military routinely performs low-level overflights, the group considered limitations on helicopter use particularly silly, the more so after Doug Kari of Desert Survivors, a member of a panel of wilderness users, said he found low-level overflights enhanced his desert experience by contributing to his feeling of being out on the edge.

Another inconsistency that troubled participants is the practice of promoting populations of some exotic species, like chukar that are favored by hunters, while trying to eradicate other exotic species like tamarisk. After discussion, the group agreed that there is a crucial distinction between chukar and tamarisk: chukar are not known to crowd out native species, but tamarisk, a plant that grows vigorously along water sources, not only displaces natives but usurps scarce water as well.

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Wilderness management

Challenges galore for the BLM

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A final inconsistency was noted when Gary Stumpf, a cultural resources specialist from the Arizona state office addressed the group. Stumpf argued that cultural resources like archaeological sites should be used. Indeed, he maintained that rather than simply catalog and protect these sites, we should attempt to extract their value by promoting them as visitor destinations or excavating them for research purposes. A minerals specialist in the group protested the inconsistency that surface disturbance for the purpose of extracting resource values is acceptable for cultural sites but not for minerals which are necessary to the country's economic well-being and which reduce our dependence on imports.

Stumpf's insistence that cultural sites have no value unless they are somehow used offended some people. Unlike the other speakers, he advocated human use of wilderness, suggesting that interpretive signs could appropriately be placed inconspicuously among petroglyphs and inside historic structures. After he spoke, other instructors clarified that BLM policy is not to place interpretive signs in wilderness, except when needed to protect the resource, and not to promote use, their unofficial motto "Come step in some BLM" notwithstanding.

As part of its policy of not promoting use and keeping the wilderness free of human impacts, the BLM does not intend to install signs, trails, or other visitor facilities inside wilderness unless they are necessary to protect health and safety or to disperse recreation away from overused or sensitive areas. Overuse is not expected to be a problem in most BLM wildernesses in California, although officials do anticipate a temporary surge of interest in these areas immediately following wilderness designation.

Signs along wilderness boundaries will be an important tool in limiting ORV incursions, but because there are few natural barriers in the desert, additional precautions will be needed. On a field trip to Golden Valley WSA, a creative solution to the juxtaposition of incompatible uses was proposed. An ORV recreation area is less than a mile from the boundary of the WSA, and a limited-use motorcycle area is separated from the WSA by a narrow dirt road. On the assumption that signing alone would not be adequate to prevent accidental intrusions (and because

BLM policy forbids the creation of buffer zones), the field staff recommended that motorcycle trails could be rerouted within the limited-use area, away from the boundary road, and simultaneously improved to benefit motorcyclists.

Though the BLM will limit and sometimes remove visitor facilities, installations intended to benefit wildlife and cattle probably will remain. Some guzzlers, fences, dams, and other structures will have to be maintained, ideally with minimum tools. There seemed to be consensus that wherever possible, these installations would be camouflaged to minimize their impact on visitors. Removal and rehabilitation of

structures and trails that are no longer needed is desirable but perhaps not practicable without increased funding.

All of this raises the question, a question that in fact was raised, of how to tell the difference between "tinkering" and necessary management. No answer surfaced, but the BLM currently is rewriting its wilderness manual and regulations. Wilderness management plans will address these issues in detail and will be written with input from interdisciplinary teams to avoid confusion and conflict.

An overflowing front burner

But writing the wilderness management plans will be a relatively low priority immediately following wilderness designation because of myriad more-pressing jobs like boundary posting that will have to be done first. In an exercise, the field staff were asked to list all the tasks that would accompany designation and rank them according to their immediacy. Of the several dozen tasks identified in the exercise, almost all were assigned high priority, a daunting prospect.

One of those many high priority tasks will be informing users which areas have become wilderness. For ORV users, who will be excluded entirely from wilderness, the job is comparatively clear cut, though BLM staff are not looking forward to being perceived as the "bad guys." In the case of inholders and mining claimants, the situation is more complicated. Inholders and mining claimants will



A petroglyph in the future Golden Valley Wilderness Photo by Lucy Rosenau

have to be informed that BLM policy is to deny rights-of-way and instead grant temporary access permits. Keith Corrigan of the BLM's national office speculated that this policy is likely to generate lawsuits predicated on the assumption that by denying a right-of-way, the agency is "taking" part of the inholder's or mining claimant's property value without reimbursement.

For miners, wilderness designation will bring other changes as well. Miners will have to

file a plan of operations, a public document, any time they want to perform more than "casual" work on their claims. Moreover, because staff and funds are limited, BLM policy is not to conduct validity tests, a prerequisite to establishing ownership of the claim, until a claimant files a plan of operations. That means a claimant cannot realize the value of the claim without embarking on a time-consuming process with an uncertain outcome. In Arizona, where BLM wilderness already has been designated, after claimants were notified of this policy, many dropped their claims altogether.

An interesting theoretical problem that could have serious implications arose during a discussion of mining issues. Under the 1872 Mining Law, there is a rule (the APEX rule) that allows a miner to follow a vein until it tapers out. What if, one geologist wondered, the vein leads into a designated wilderness? Does the APEX rule still apply? No one present was prepared to hazard an answer, and it was suggested that any definitive answer would have to come from the courts. Consulted later, Jim Lyon of the Mineral Policy Center, an organization committed to the reform of the 1872 Mining Law, said he believes subsequent wilderness designation would not obviate a miner's rights under APEX rule. The issue has not yet arisen as far as Lyon knows, but he predicts the federal government would have to buy out claimants to avoid takings lawsuits.

If the training course seemed to produce more questions than answers, that may be good news. There is no "cookbook" approach to wilderness management; different situations require different solutions. All things considered, the BLM's stated policy seems appropriate and even hopeful. But, as always, the proof is in the pudding.

Environmentalists challenged, too

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2. Consider whether your group can get more involved. Every group has its own constraints, limited budgets chief among them, but will the environmental community consider its job done with wilderness designation and leave the agency to manage on its own the lands we have fought long and hard and sometimes bitterly to protect? When California Wilderness Coalition (CWC) Executive Director Jim Eaton, a panelist at the Ridgcrest training course, was asked this question, he responded that despite his own interest in wilderness management and despite the need for oversight and cooperation, the CWC would continue to devote most of its energy and resources to winning protection for endangered wild lands. (Beginning this month, we will send a copy of the *Wilderness Record* to each area office, however.) Doug Karl of

Desert Survivors said much the same thing. BLM staff understand budget constraints as well as anyone, but the feeling remains that having achieved our objective—wilderness—we will leave them to do an enormous and difficult job without much support.

3. If you want wilderness management to be a higher priority for the agency, consider supporting legislation similar to that proposed last year by Rep. Bruce Vento (D-MN), legislation that would create a Director of Wilderness within the agency and reserve funds for wilderness management (see *WR* article, April 1992). Without more money, the agency will have to play budgetary musical chairs, shifting funds from Arizona, where wilderness legislation passed a few years ago, to California once a desert bill is enacted.

—Lucy Rosenau

Murrelet

continued from page 1

ine within 90 days "the basis for recognizing [the Northwest] population of murrelets as a 'species.'"

The listing of the murrelet culminates a contentious battle that began in January 1988 when the Portland Audubon Society and other environmental groups petitioned the Fish and Wildlife Service to list the robin-sized seabird as a threatened species.

In the meantime, logging of murrelet habitat on state and private lands has been accelerating since the listing of the bird appeared imminent. In Oregon, some logging companies said that they accelerated their planned logging activities by as much as two years in order to log murrelet habitat prior to the bird's listing.

Reprinted from the October 1992 issue of *Forest Watch*, published by Cascade Holistic Economic Consultants.

Book review

Conscientious new wilderness guide

The Hiker's Hip Pocket Guide to the Mendocino Highlands

By Bob Lorentzen, Bored Feet Publications, Mendocino, 1992, 240 pp., \$13.95.

Bob Lorentzen explains that around 1860 the rugged, unmapped mountains beyond the Russian River were known as the Mendocino Highlands. Much of the land remains wild today—the Mendocino is the only national forest in California that is not traversed by a paved road or highway.

Over half of Lorentzen's guide is devoted to the trails of the Yolla Bolly-Middle Eel and Snow Mountain wilderness areas, and a topographic map of the Yolla Bollies is included. But other little-known areas, such as the Cache Creek Wilderness Study Area, state parks in Lake County, Boggs Mountain State Forest, and Cow Mountain Recreation Area, are represented as well.

As a trail guide, the book is extremely detailed. Trail junctions and signs are completely and accurately described, and Lorentzen provides a running commentary on the plants, trees, and vistas along the route. Lorentzen introduces each hike with some of the area's history, focusing especially on the Native American use of the land. He also examines the land forms, with up-to-date geological explanations. Snow Mountain, he explains, is a volcanic sea-mount that was scraped off the ocean floor and uplifted nearly intact to its present position.

Despite its title, this is not solely a hiking guide. Trails that are appropriate for horses, mountain bikes, and wheelchairs are indicated. Lorentzen suggests the best time of the year for hiking each trail (with many spring and fall recommendations), warns of potential hazards, and gives detailed instructions on how to find the trailheads.

Best of all, this is a guide book with a conscience. Lorentzen distinguishes the wilderness trails from the others and includes a wilderness "ten commandments." In many hike descriptions, he warns of sensitive areas you should avoid and suggests lands that should be given wilderness protection. His philosophy is clear as he urges readers to "enter the wilderness with an open heart and mind, thankful that such solitude exists in such a troubled, complex world."

—Jim Eaton

Wilderness Trivia Quiz Answer:

Scylla and Charybdis guard the Enchanted Gorge in the Sequoia-Kings Canyon Wilderness.

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Turn heads in a CWC t-shirt

Intern Holly (r.) is turned out in our six-tone anniversary shirt which comes in, light blue, yellow, light green, or peach for \$15. Animal lover Carla, in turn, wears a design by Bay Area cartoonist Phil Frank; it comes in beige or light gray for \$12. All the shirts are 100 percent double-knit cotton. To order, use the form on the back page.



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* 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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DATES TO REMEMBER

December 15 SCOPING MEETINGS on a proposal to dam the Clavey River, organized by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), in Sonora. The first meeting, for representatives of resource agencies, will run from 1:00-4:00 at the Stanislaus National Forest Supervisor's office, 19777 Greenley Road. The second meeting, intended for the general public, is scheduled for 7:00-10:00 p. m. at the Mother Lode Fairground, 220 Southgate Drive. For a copy of the scoping document, call (916) 920-0300. Written comments may be sent to the FERC at 825 North Capitol St., NE, Washington, DC 20426.

December 15 COMMENTS DUE on a proposed amendment to the Inyo National Forest's forest plan that would adopt changes requested by the CWC in our appeal of the South Sierra Wilderness Implementation Plan. Send comments to the Inyo N. F., Attn: Land Management Planning, 873 North Main St., Bishop, CA 93514.

December 23 DEADLINE TO PROTEST EI Dorado County's application for water rights to the Aloha reservoir in Desolation Wilderness and Caples and Silver lakes. Send to: State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Water Rights, P. O. Box 2000, Sacramento, CA 95812-2000. For more information, write the League to Save Sierra Lakes at P. O. Box 267, Kirkwood, CA 95646.

February 7 DAVE FOREMAN will headline the CWC's annual fundraiser at the Varsity Theater in Davis. A 5:00 p. m. reception precedes the main program. For ticket information, call (916) 758-0380 or see the January *Wilderness Record* for details.

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Election analysis

continued from page 4

compared with the rest of the Republican members of the Interior Committee). He supported compromises and relatively uncontroversial public-lands legislation that his colleagues might otherwise be inclined to oppose.

His successor, Republican Michael Huffington, will be representing the Los Padres National Forest in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties as well as BLM holdings in the inner Coast Ranges (including the Caliente Mountain WSA). It is

unknown, however, what committee assignments Huffington will seek.

Veteran Monterey County Democratic Rep. Leon Panetta will be returning once again to his seat representing the northern Los Padres National Forest and the Pinnacles National Monument and adjacent WSAs.

CWC Board member Ron Stork, who works as Associate Conservation Director for Friends of the River, spends a lot of time in the halls of Congress.

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