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Compromised desert bill makes agonizing progress in Senate

By Lucy Rosenau

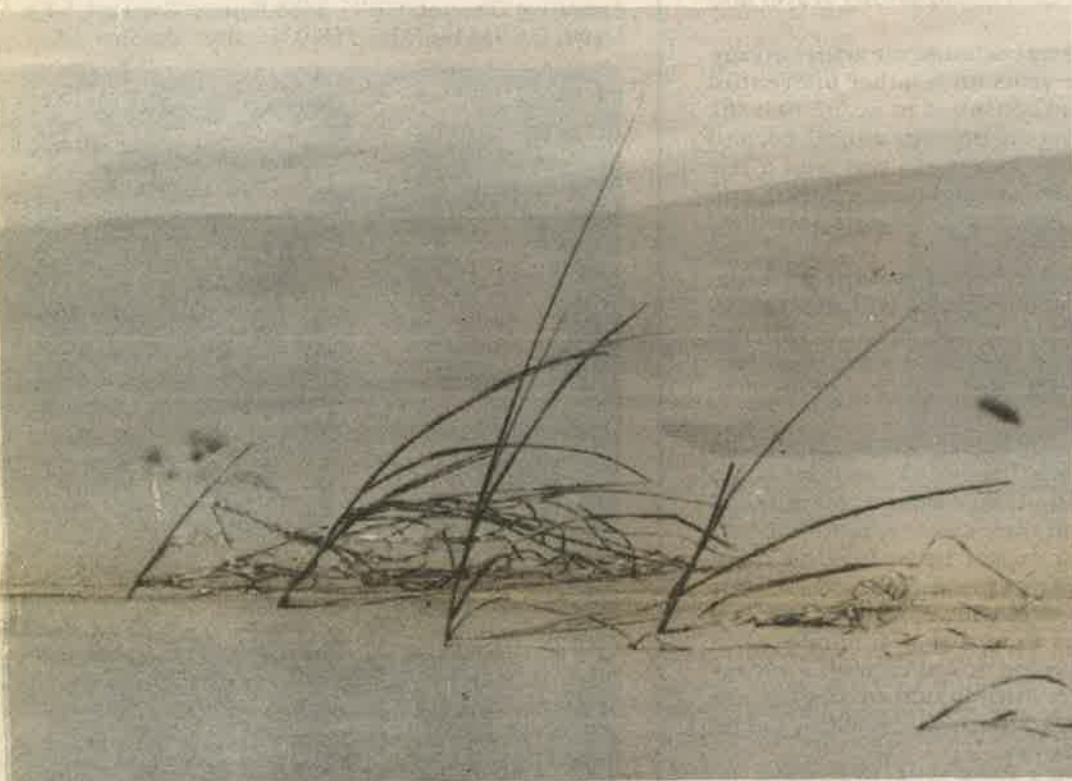
California's Senator Dianne Feinstein twice tried—and failed—in September to move her desert bill out of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee and onto the Senate floor for a vote. A third committee mark-up session is planned for the first week of October.

The desert bill did, however, make progress last month. Unfortunately, the cost of that progress was a significant loss of acreage: Lanfair Valley has been excluded from the future Mojave National Park, South Algodones Dunes has been dropped from wilderness consideration, and a number of other proposed wilderness areas have suffered boundary changes to accommodate the military, mining interests, and off-road vehicle users.

Once this desert bill clears the Senate, and observers remain optimistic that it will, House passage of a companion bill is expected to be swift and comparatively easy. Any differences between the two bills then would be worked out by House and Senate negotiators, and their final bill would be sent to the president, who is expected to sign whatever bill results, probably by the end of this year.

The desert bill that is making its way through the Senate now differs in some important ways from the desert bill passed by the House in 1991 and from the bills once advanced by former Senator Cranston. The 1991 House bill, for instance, would have designated at least 400,000 more acres of wilderness than the Feinstein version. Having already gained the support of the Defense Department which wants to expand Fort Irwin, by removing the Awawatz, South Awawatz, and Soda mountains and a

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The South Algodones Dunes, 61,000 acres of habitat for endangered species, have been dropped from the Feinstein desert bill to provide "habitat" for off-road vehicle users. The smaller northern parcel of the dunes is still slated for wilderness protection. Photo by Jim Eaton

Draft plans finally released for California's four "spotted owl" forests

Pity the mail carrier, because the plan is in the mail. Four plans, in fact: the draft land and resource management plans for the four "spotted owl" forests of northern California—the Klamath, Mendocino, Shasta-Trinity, and Six Rivers national forests. At some ten pounds each, these long-delayed documents soon will be arriving with a decided thud in mailboxes around the state.

The forest plans, which codify the direction of management activity for the next 10-15 years, were an unusually long time in coming, even for forest plans which are typically overdue. The reason for the delay is the northern spotted owl, a small, shy bird which was listed as threatened throughout the Pacific Northwest in 1990. The listing of the owl and subsequent lawsuits over the federal government's proposals to protect the bird and its old-growth habitat meant forest plans then being drafted had to be scrapped. By early this year, the Forest Service had new draft plans ready but delayed their release so they would conform with President Clinton's proposed solution to the forest crisis, which was announced this summer.

The forest plans will receive close attention from everyone with an interest in how these national forests are managed—loggers, environmentalists, county supervisors, wildlife and water agency officials, and perhaps Judge Dwyer, the federal jurist who in 1991 ordered all logging ceased in spotted owl habitat until the federal government came up with an acceptable plan to preserve the species. Forest plans typically receive such widespread scrutiny because they provide overarching direction for every aspect of forest management: how many and which trees will be cut; how wildlife, streams, and plant communities will be protected; where livestock grazing and off-road vehicle travel will be allowed; and where roads will be built.

For wilderness activists, forest plans are important because the plans list which roadless areas will be recommended for wilderness designation and direct how all roadless areas will be managed. Forest plans also list river segments that are eligible for protection as wild-and-scenic rivers and outline how wilderness areas will be used.

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Coalition news

Monthly Report

I just returned from a meeting with Regional Forester Ron Stewart, two dozen of his top staff, and representatives of the California Ancient Forest Alliance (CAFA). Stewart told us there is a new Forest Service in the making, one that will emphasize environmental protection over commodity production. He and his deputies seem sincere and well-meaning, but after decades of fighting the agency, we find it hard not to be skeptical.

This must be similar to how Israelis and Palestinians feel about the peace accord in the Middle East. They desperately want peace but cannot believe it really is going to happen.

But when the Forest Service does the right thing, we will back them. That is why the Coalition has intervened in appeals that challenge the agency's decision to temporarily stop grazing in Meiss Meadow in the future Echo-Carson wilderness. For a change, we are *supporting* a Forest Service decision.

+++++

Staff changes are often painful, partly because we have to find someone willing to work at a challenging job for little pay, but mostly because we have to say goodbye to a close friend. After four years, office coordinator Nancy Kang is looking to move on to new fields of flowers.

Nancy actually has a real day job, as a botanist for the environmental consultants next door; in her odd hours, she keeps the Coalition's membership and office together. But she is growing tired of the Davis-Sacramento area and is looking for a new flora to learn. Perhaps she just wants to avoid the allergies that everyone who stays here long enough seems to develop.

She hasn't lined up anything yet, so if you need a bright, hard-working botanist, give us a call. I can't think of anyone I would recommend more highly than Nancy. She intends to make a change by early next year, giving both of her employers time to make an orderly transition.

Unlike many of us older activists who are rock-and-ice backpackers later turned environmental-

ists, Nancy is part of the newer generation of activists who entered the field with a biocentric orientation. Her love of plants and animals embraces all ecosystems, as evidenced by her field work in Central Valley vernal pools in the blistering summer sun. We need many more people like her.

Fortunately, there are more young activists, like Erin Noel and Ryan Henson, being added to our ranks. For, as Steve Evans noted after a recent CAFA meeting, "Most of us are getting grayer and heavier."

The ides of September found me achieving my two score and five years on a rather uneventful day. But others had conspired to assure that the occasion of my aging did not pass unnoticed, and so a party (advertised as a roast) was held a few nights later. A number of neighbors, relatives, and friends (*not* mutually exclusive categories) attended bearing delicious treats.

The surprise of the evening was the presentation of a large sum of money that will allow me to purchase a coveted toy—a scanner to use with our computers. I was so grateful I was speechless, which probably made the attendees grateful as well.

There is not enough space left to list all who contributed, but I would like to acknowledge Robin Kulakow and Wendy Cohen who masterminded the plot and kept all their co-conspirators silent.

While you can expect better-looking maps and other graphics in the *Record*, others may possibly find this new machine as annoying as my library of computer sounds that announce each action, especially typing mistakes, with a variety of obnoxious noises. Already I am envisaging new start-up screens and reports laced with "Calvin and Hobbes" characters.

Oh, little do they know what they have unleashed!

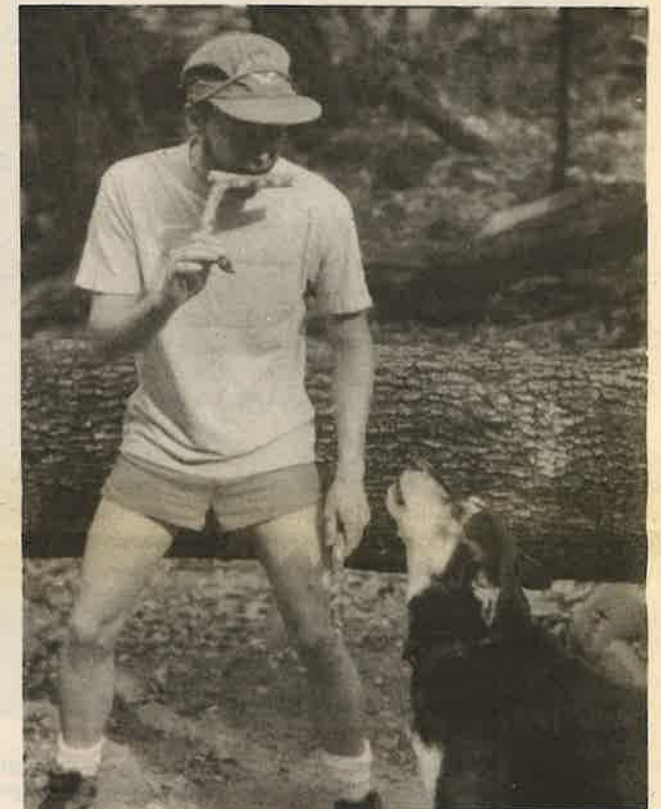
By Jim Eaton

Job Opening

The California Wilderness Coalition will be hiring a coordinator for its Davis office. The office coordinator, a part-time position starting this fall, has primary responsibility for member services. Other duties include outreach and general office work.

Applicants should be familiar with Macintosh computers; any knowledge of Panorama, Word, or Pagemaker software is helpful. We are looking for that individual who is organized, flexible, cheerful, concerned for wilderness, and willing to share office space with a large but friendly dog.

For salary, hours, and other details, contact Jim Eaton, Executive Director, CWC, 2655 Portage Bay East, Suite 5, Davis, CA 95616; (916) 758-0380 after October 17.



Inyo, the large but friendly office dog, teaching CWC board member Nobby Riedy a new trick. Photo by J. Eaton

CWC appeals logging plan for Salmon River roadless area

The California Wilderness Coalition has joined with The Wilderness Society, Friends of the River, California Sportfishing Protection Association, and the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations in appealing the Blue/Ray timber sale scheduled for a roadless area in the Klamath National Forest. The appeal was filed by Stephan Volker of the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund.

If the Blue/Ray timber sale is allowed to go forward, a roadless area adjacent to the Trinity Alps Wilderness would be penetrated by logging roads so trees could be cut. The area targeted for logging is less than a quarter mile from a segment of the South Fork Salmon River that is currently under study for

consideration as a wild-and-scenic river. Half a mile downstream of the logging site, a portion of the river is already designated wild and scenic.

If that is not reason enough to object to this plan, consider this: The area is habitat for the northern spotted owl, a threatened species.

The groups are requesting a stay to stop the timber sale while their appeal is considered. If the stay is not granted, the non-profit organizations will have to file suit to stop the logging.

The appellants contend that, at the least, a full environmental impact statement (EIS) should be prepared for the proposed

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Wilderness Trivia Quiz Question:

Which California county has the greatest number of designated wilderness areas within or partly within its borders?

Answer on page 7

CWC Internships

The California Wilderness Coalition is accepting applications for two six-month internships developing statewide wilderness proposals. Both positions are unpaid and entail a great deal of responsibility; shorter internships in different fields may also be available.

An intern is needed to coordinate the development and compilation of a statewide wilderness proposal for the Bureau of Land Management wilderness study areas that will not be protected by the California Desert Protection Act.

A second intern is needed to identify the wilderness areas, wildlands, and corridors that together will comprise the California proposal of the Wildlands Project.

Both positions involve working with activists and professionals throughout the state and traveling; the CWC can reimburse interns for some of their travel and telephone expenses. Residence in the Davis-Sacramento area is not necessary for either position, but is preferred.

Individuals who are responsible, organized, self-directed, and passionate about wilderness are invited to contact Jim Eaton at CWC, 2655 Portage Bay East, Suite 5, Davis, CA 95616; (916) 758-0380 for more information.

Wilderness legislation

The road to ruin

One of the Reagan administration's legacies is a policy under which portions of the Pacific Crest Trail probably would qualify as a highway

By Jim Young and Vicky Hoover

Would you believe that a 127-year-old law which has long since been repealed could still allow roads to be bulldozed into federal lands we thought were protected—lands like Alaska's Denali National Park and Arctic National Wildlife Refuge or Utah's Capitol Reef National Park? Or segments of the Pacific Crest Trail? Believe it.

The culprit is Revised Statute 2477, a one-sentence section of the Lode Mining Act of 1866, which states that "The right-of-way for the construction of highways over public lands, not reserved for public purposes, is hereby granted." The idea behind the law was to encourage mining and "open the West" by ensuring road access.

By 1976 Congress had belatedly realized that developers no longer needed any special assistance in opening the West and, in enacting the Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA), repealed R. S. 2477. But the FLPMA specified that valid, existing R. S. 2477 right-of-way claims established prior to 1976 would still be recognized.

The problem

The key question at issue—how to determine whether an R. S. 2477 right-of-way is valid—dates from before 1976. But the question's importance skyrocketed in 1988, the final year of the Reagan administration, when Secretary of the Interior Donald Hodel issued a policy that assured that states and counties can obtain a highway right-of-way for virtually any dirt road, track, footpath, or dogsled route on public lands that had not been "reserved" (designated as a national park, forest, wilderness, or refuge, for instance) before 1976 and before the route was established. Hodel's policy was written in response to pressure from the state of Alaska, which was eager to use R. S. 2477 to promote development in remote, wild, recently protected areas like the Arctic Wilderness. The Hodel policy, which is still in effect, deliberately promoted the giveaway of R. S. 2477 rights-of-way by establishing extremely loose standards for proving R. S. 2477 claims valid.

Under the Hodel policy, for example, the statute's original requirement that a road claimed under R. S. 2477 must have been "constructed" is now interpreted to mean simply that vehicles can pass because some rocks have

been moved or some brush cut. The statute's criterion of regular and unrestricted use is now defined so that even use by only a pedestrian or pack animal can allow virtually any dirt road, footpath, or dogsled route to qualify as a public highway. The Reagan administration's goal clearly was to give away as many private rights-of-way on public lands as possible, thereby encouraging additional development and disqualifying roadless lands from wilderness protection.

Since the Hodel policy came into being, assertions of R. S. 2477 claims have mushroomed across the West and in Alaska. Counties and states are now claiming rights-of-way to thousands of miles of primitive trails, tracks, and alleged roads crossing national parks, wildlife refuges, and wilderness areas. Claimants have no burden of proof imposed on them to show that they have a valid basis for their claim (see sidebar), and the Bureau of Land Management and National Park Service are not required to produce any written findings justifying their recognition of an R. S. 2477 claim.

If the asserted rights-of-way are granted, existing government policy could allow many of these dirt tracks to be expanded and paved. Routes in national parks, forests, and wildlife refuges that predate the creation of those reservations are potentially subject to claims. The total number of possible claims is incalculable, but could add up to hundreds of thousands of miles of road. The Interior Department's report to Congress on the threat to public lands envisions a "spaghetti plate," a tangled web of unneeded roads covering our parks and public wildlands, permanently scarring pristine landscapes, disqualifying fine roadless areas from wilderness consideration, fragmenting wildlife habitat, and creating a management nightmare for the administering agencies.

The solution

Until recently, most R. S. 2477 claims had been restricted to Alaska and Utah, but states, counties, and individuals, spurred by the "wise use movement" to assert R. S. 2477 claims as a weapon against environmental protection, have begun filing claims throughout the West. Because of this, conservation groups are working to draw public and congressional attention to the intentional misuse of R. S. 2477 and the threat to public lands.

In June, the Interior Department issued a final report to Congress on the existing policy and its potential consequences. Conservationists were disappointed that the report contained no recommendations for a new policy. The Department is continuing to study this issue,



This dirt track in the Bodie Hills could be paved as a public highway under the Hodel policy. Photo by Mike Gonella

Claiming California

An estimated 5,600 R. S. 2477 claims had been filed with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) when the final report to Congress was released in June 1993—5,000 of them in Utah. But California has not been spared. As of March 1993, 53 claims had been filed here. Of these, 17 have been recognized by the BLM as valid. The remaining 36 claims, many of them filed by a single individual on a single day with no documentation, are pending. However spurious the claims appear, the BLM nonetheless is required to investigate each one.

The report also assessed how many claims might potentially be filed in Western states. Because this depends on a number of factors, including the amount of public lands in each state and how state law defines highways, no meaningful predictions can be made for any state. California law is more restrictive than the laws of many Western states, however, because it does not consider all section lines to be public roads.

however, and plans to write new regulations during the next four to six months.

Fortunately, there are good arguments against the Hodel policy that, in the changed atmosphere of a new administration, can be publicized and used to advantage:

- The Hodel policy is legally indefensible. To begin with, it contradicts both the plain language of R. S. 2477 itself and previous Interior Department policy statements.
- The Hodel policy is inconsistent with federal court opinions, including a 1988 opinion by a federal district court in Utah which required detailed findings about actual construction in order to validate an R. S. 2477 right-of-way claim.
- The Hodel policy ignores federal case law in denying management control by Interior Department agencies over R. S. 2477 rights-of-way.

How you can help: Write to Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt asking that he withdraw the disastrous Hodel policy on R. S. 2477 rights-of-way and replace it with new regulations that protect wilderness and other public lands from unnecessary destruction. A new policy should narrowly limit the circumstances in which an R. S. 2477 claim can be asserted and require strict regulation of construction or expansion of any right-of-way that is granted.

Secretary Bruce Babbitt
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Reprinted from the August 1993 issue of Public Lands, newsletter of the Sierra Club's Public Lands Committee. This article was based on material prepared by the National Parks and Conservation Association. For a copy of that document, "Revised Statute 2477: Great Western Road Giveaway Threatens Parks, Refuges, and Wildlands," write to Terri Martin, NPCA, Box 1563, Salt Lake City, UT 84110.

Wilderness management

DFG kills fish to save fish in Carson-Iceberg Wilderness

For the third and (they hope) final time, Department of Fish and Game (DFG) biologists poisoned fish in Silver King Creek in the northern Sierra's Carson-Iceberg Wilderness in September. Their purpose: to save the threatened Paiute cutthroat trout.

The fish targeted by the DFG operation are a hybrid that were identified for the first time in the 1950s, after sheepherders and anglers, unaware of the difference between native and non-native trout, stocked the creek with rainbow trout. Pure populations of the endemic Paiute cutthroat trout, an offshoot of the equally threatened Lahontan cutthroat trout, survived upstream, in sections of the creek system that were isolated by waterfalls from the invasive rainbows.

DFG biologists want to restore the Paiute trout to its original range, but first they must eradicate the hybridized trout so that the re-established pure Paiute trout will not be hybridized again. To do this, they apply rotenone, a chemical that kills fish (by impairing their ability to use the oxygen in water) but is harmless to the other species that live in or near the creek. A second chemical, potassium permanganate, is used to detoxify the water after rotenone is applied.

Eric Gerstung, a DFG biologist who has been working on the project, says rotenone is harmless to birds, plants, amphibians, invertebrates, and mammals (including humans). Nonetheless, the DFG posted the affected stretch of the creek during chemical treatment.

Given the creek's isolation and inaccessibility (DFG staff used packstock to carry their equipment to the site), the agency is confident that, once the rainbow trout are

eradicated, accidental contamination will not recur. Recolonization by the native trout is expected to be rapid.

The biggest remaining threat to the Carson-Iceberg Paiute trout is nearby cattle grazing, which degrades the trout's habitat, Gerstung says. The DFG would like to see the area closed to cattle grazing; the Forest Service, which manages the wilderness, has begun collecting data that may support the DFG's recommendation.

It would be a nice twist if it is the tenuous position of the Paiute cutthroat trout that finally gets cattle out of this wilderness area, because the presence of cutthroat, a threatened species, was one of the primary justifications for the establishment of the Carson-Iceberg Wilderness in 1984.

The Paiute cutthroat trout has been federally protected since 1970 when it was listed as endangered; in 1975 its status was upgraded to "threatened." Two reserve populations of the species have been established in the Ansel Adams Wilderness and in the White Mountains, in case this restoration effort fails.

Gerstung says that although Silver King Creek is considered at little risk from the accidental reintroduction of non-native fish, many other Sierra lakes and streams are still being contaminated by misguided or uninformed recreationists who buy small fish to use as live bait and, at the end of the day, dump the leftovers into the water. These bait fish survive and outcompete native species.



The fences (and cattle) will stay on the range if Western senators have their way. Photo by Lucy Rosenau

New regs mean new tactics for forest activists

By Mike Chiropoulos

With most attention focused on the Forest Service's continued efforts to reform the administrative appeals process (see companion article on page 6), the Forest Service issued its revised National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) implementation regulations in 1992 to little fanfare. Tucked in among the new regulations, however, is a revised definition of "categorical exclusions" which might enable the Forest Service to circumvent public scrutiny of the timber cutting program by designating sales in small packages.

The Forest Service handbook defines categorical exclusions as "a category of actions which do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment and for which neither an environmental impact statement (EIS) nor an environmental assessment is required." For sales that qualify as categorical exclusions, NEPA-mandated public involvement guarantees are essentially lacking. District rangers can finalize these sales by dismissing public concerns as insignificant and issuing a brief decision memo, without providing formal comment periods.

The new Forest Service regulations increase the volumes of timber sales that can be sold through categorical exclusions to 250,000 board feet for timber harvest and 1,000,000 board feet for salvage sales. The new ceilings represent increases of 250 and 400 percent, respectively, from the 1986 regulations. The Forest Service also can

repackage large sales as several smaller, separate sales to evade NEPA requirements.

With the new regulations in place, forest activists are obligated to closely monitor the location and nature of all proposed sales. One possible recourse for activists who come up against categorical exclusions is to argue that the cumulative impacts of the proposed actions are "individually minor but collectively significant" and, therefore, are subject to NEPA requirements. Categorical exclusions can be appealed under established Forest Service administrative appeal procedures.

The revised NEPA regulations also contain new EIS requirements for actions in roadless areas. If a proposed action would "substantially alter the undeveloped character of an inventoried roadless area of 5,000 acres or more," an EIS must be prepared. An EIS is required even if less than 5,000 acres of the roadless area would be significantly affected. In addition, actions in roadless areas smaller than 5,000 acres may still require an EIS if the proposed action could have significant environmental effects. Forest Service policy previously was to require an EIS for any action in any roadless area, but that policy was never incorporated in the agency's regulations.

Finally, the regulations set a clear standard for notice of future actions by forest supervisors and district rangers. "Schedules of proposed actions" must be prepared and distributed at least once every three months to interested agencies, organizations, and individuals.

Reprinted from the Summer 1993 issue of Forest Trust Quarterly Report.

The Forest Service can repackage large timber sales as several smaller, separate sales to evade NEPA requirements.

Western senators team up to block grazing reform

The administration's proposal to reform public-land grazing, announced in August by Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, is in trouble, and not from the conservationists who had pressed for more sweeping reform. A bloc of western senators, including California's Senator Dianne Feinstein, have attached a rider to the appropriations bill that determines the Interior Department's budget, a rider that prohibits the department from spending any money to implement Secretary Babbitt's reform plans next year.

Western senators, democrats and republicans alike, traditionally oppose any attempts to reform public-land grazing practices, but Senator Feinstein's vote to block reform was a surprise. Although she is considered a moderate and must run for re-election in 1994, it is not apparent why Senator Feinstein would support an amendment that so few of her constituents favor (see article on page 5). Efforts to reach the senator's office for comment were unsuccessful.

The fate of the reform package, which would raise the fees charged grazers who use public lands, will depend on the outcome of a conference between House and Senate members that is expected to take place in early October. The House passed its version of the appropriations bill with no prohibitions on grazing reform.



Wilderness views

Wilderness adventures

On the trail from Desolation to Inner Peace

By Rick Palkovic © 1993

The trail into Desolation Wilderness from Fallen Leaf Lake isn't exactly a technical climb. Still, it seems steep enough to someone who's used to taking any grade over six percent in his automobile. The exertion required by my 40-pound pack isn't enough to keep me warm against the attacking October wind, which cuts through my wind-breaker like Geronimo taking revenge for the European invasion. "Take it easy!" I shout into thin air. "My ancestors weren't even here when the West was being won!" But the wind spirits won't relent, and I plod on because I'm too tired to turn back.

Fortunately, I'm not alone. Lorraine is up ahead, uncomplaining as always. Few things are harder to put up with than the annoyance of a good example, as Mark Twain so rightly observed. I have no doubt that Lorraine is pondering the true and humble thoughts of Henry David Thoreau even as I sneer in concert with the mordant wit of Twain. Still, I'm counting on her for body heat later tonight, provided we can manage to set up our tent in the wind. Better not to alienate her before we bed down. So I keep my thoughts to myself as I wonder why, while there is barely enough air for me to breathe at this altitude, there is no shortage of it penetrating my goose down vest.

Finally, in late afternoon, we find a camping spot in a ragged grove of pines at the west end of Heather Lake. I drop my pack, rip it open, and dig out my hooded waterproof poncho. As I lash it to my body with a length of cord, I feel the spatter of freezing rain on my face. Great. A quiet evening around the campfire. I should have brought marshmallows.

But first the tent. Ordinarily, Lorraine and I make a good team when we set up our tent. At least, we do when the wind isn't blowing rain at 20 knots. As it is, we are

I feel the spatter of freezing rain on my face. Great. A quiet evening around the campfire. I should have brought marshmallows.

barely on speaking terms by the time we thread the spindly fiberglass arms through our tent's obstinate little sleeves. I boldly pound tent stakes into rocks where no stake has gone before.

It is hardly dinner time, but we need some hot food fast—I estimate 20 minutes before the onset of hypothermia. I set up the stove in the lee of a big rock and manage to light a fire over which we cook couscous and canned chicken. After we eat, we heap up the dishes to deal with in the morning, stand up stiffly, and look into each other's windburned faces. "How about a little hike?" says Lorraine, squinting through wind-driven tears. "Hey, why not?" say I, calling her bluff.

So we hike about 50 feet to a nice view of the lake. It's surrounded by battered white firs. Muddy gray storm clouds boil up over the horizon. The view is awe-inspiring and beautiful, but in no way hospitable. Although the sun is still well above the horizon, we have to find shelter. "How about we go to bed and try to get warm?" I say, and Lorraine agrees, half frozen as she is.

We pull off our boots and muddy clothes, put on every dry garment we can locate, and climb into our bags. The tiny tent, built for light weight more than roominess, shrinks even smaller as the wind bashes in the west wall. We periodically kick it back out as we read our miniature books by the failing daylight: she her pocket Thoreau and I my *Tao Teh Ching*. By their books shall ye know them.

Eyestrain eventually closes my book. Lorraine can read on and on, though, even in the dark. But she stops to keep me company.

The wind is howling and we concentrate to keep from shivering. We tell scary stories. The one about the teenagers on the lonely back road and the man with the hook. The one about the ghost with the bony fingers and the big, flabby lips. I try to frighten her with tales of space

aliens. "This is the sort of place they like," I say. "They never drop down into Washington D.C. and ask to talk to the President. Hell, no. They skim along the mountaintops looking for isolated campers. Then they beam them up into their spaceships and make them take off all their clothes. I think I hear one coming right now!" Lorraine laughs—no doubt a futile attempt to disguise her terror.

I try to start a wrestling match, but because our sleeping bags don't zip together, our groping is about as effective as a couple of Amish kids courting across a bundling board.

For hours we entertain ourselves in our very small world. Our tent is a little portable cave we carry with us so we can merge with the prehistoric past, known in these modern times as the Natural World. We talk into the night, and a long night it is—14 hours between bed and breakfast, as we later calculate. So long that no amount of tossing and turning can make us comfortable. So long that we actually grow weary of trying to sleep.

The next morning we hike past Lake Aloha in stunning, clear weather. I reflect on the home we left behind, with its flush toilet and television and microwave oven—all the comforts of the American middle class. But how inexplicably unhappy I sometimes feel in that world!

Up here on the pass it's just the opposite. Our immediate plans extend only as far as the next meal and the next smooth place to sit and rest. We are living in the landscape. Even dying up here would be just one more step down the trail—no big deal, simply the final reunion with nature. As we ascend to the scenic climax on Mosquito Pass, our legs aching and pestered by insects, my physical discomfort is perfectly complemented by the first hints of a profound inner peace.

Have a wilderness adventure to share?

Send us a brief story about your best or worst or funniest trip in a California wilderness: Wilderness Record, CWC, 2655 Portage Bay East, Suite 5, Davis, CA 95616.

National survey says "yes" to wilderness, "no" to grazing (and "duh" to overpopulation)

By Jim Eaton

National polls affirm the public's support of wilderness and the environment, and the latest survey is no exception. Researchers Brent S. Steel, from Washington State University, and Mark Brunson, Utah State University, conducted the Western Rangelands Survey earlier this year. They compared national responses with answers from Oregon residents. Interestingly, the results were quite similar. Here is a summary of national opinions elicited in the survey.

Nine out of ten polled believe that humans have an ethical obligation to protect plant and animal species; eight in ten think we can do this in productive harmony. Nearly three-quarters of respondents think that wildlife, plants, and humans have equal rights to live and develop on earth.

The public is evenly split on whether technological advances will solve natural resource shortages, but believes—by nearly two to one—that technical and scientific experts are usually biased.

Many (40 percent) are neutral about overpopulation, with 36 percent agreeing that the earth should have far fewer people on it and 24 percent disagreeing.

Asked about banning grazing on all public lands, 34 percent favor a ban and 21 percent oppose one. Overwhelmingly (67 to 14 percent), respondents think that higher fees should be charged for grazing. The majority believes that fees should be set at fair market value, although many would allow this increase to be imposed gradually.

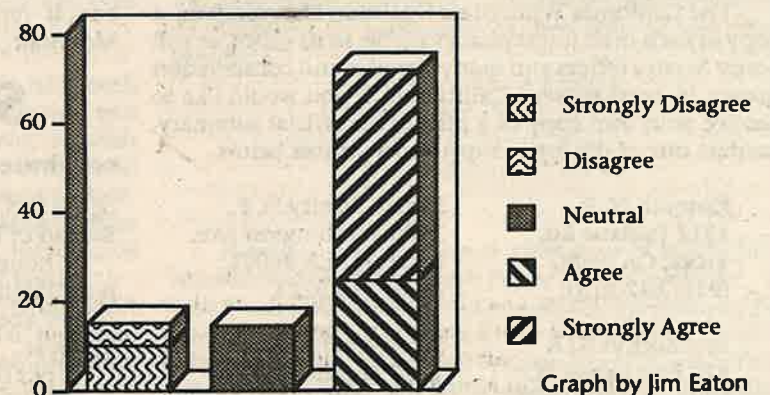
In addition, the public thinks that federal rangelands are overgrazed (60 to 26 percent), that the loss of streamside vegetation is serious (83 to 7 percent), and that water quality has worsened (86 to 7 percent). Respondents do not believe that wildlife populations have remained constant or are increasing (74 to 12 percent) or that overgrazing has decreased markedly over the past 50 years (65 to 17 percent).

Environmental groups rank highest in public confidence in the survey, with 89 percent of respondents expressing some or a great deal of confidence in them. Ranking lowest are the oil and

gas industry (33 percent), ranchers (50 percent), and the mining industry (51 percent). People think more highly

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More wilderness areas should be established on federal rangelands



Wilderness news

9,000 comments later, Forest Service is rethinking appeals revisions

By Mike Chiropolos

The latest Forest Service proposal to revise its administrative appeals process generated 9,000 comments, an astonishing avalanche of paper for a rule-making procedure. From under that avalanche, the Forest Service may be easing its stance. In particular, the agency seems poised to disown a provision that would have substituted newspaper publication of proposed projects for the current custom of mailing notices to interested parties.

"We screwed up; that one just fell through the cracks," admitted a Forest Service official. The revised notice provision is inconsistent with a 1992 congressional directive and irreconcilable with the proposal's purported emphasis on securing public involvement prior to the final decision. According to the official, a preliminary review of public comments has convinced the agency to recommend continuing the practice of mailing notices.

Nothing is yet known about the fate of other provisions of the agency's April 1993 proposal to streamline the administrative appeals process. Environmental activists were particularly troubled by parts of the proposal that appeared designed to limit the public's ability to file appeals of timber sales—like an abbreviated filing period and the elimination of individual notice (see article in May 1993 WR).

Reprinted from the Summer 1993 issue of Forest Trust Quarterly Report.

Forest plans

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Specific management or implementation plans for individual wilderness areas usually are released separately from forest plans.

The public has until December 30 to submit comments on the draft plans. After reviewing the public's comments, the Forest Service will issue final plans, perhaps as early as next spring. Comments should be sent to the forest supervisor at the addresses below. Upcoming issues of the *Wilderness Record* will feature analyses of the draft plans written by forest activists that may be of use to members who wish to comment on the plans.

The California Wilderness Coalition also will have a copy of each draft forest plan available in its office, as will Forest Service offices and many libraries and conservation groups in northwestern California. If you would like to receive your own copy of a plan or an official summary, contact one of the forest supervisors' offices below.

Klamath N. F.
1312 Fairlane Rd.
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Eureka, CA 95501
(707) 442-1721

Desert bill's agonizing progress

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portion of the Kingston Range from her bill, Senator Feinstein has been busy cutting deals to get votes from her Senate colleagues.

Shopping for votes

The bitterest compromise for wilderness supporters came when Senator Feinstein attempted to placate off-road vehicle (ORV) users, who oppose her legislation, by removing Imperial County's 61,000-acre South Algodones Dunes Wilderness Study Area from the bill altogether and dividing or otherwise diminishing a number of other proposed wilderness areas—Kingston Range, Grass Valley, Little Picacho Peak, and Bighorn, Rodman, Little Chuck-

walla, Piper, Orocopa, and Old Woman mountains—to accommodate ORV routes. Though the concession is unlikely to have garnered her many votes from ORV users for her re-election contest next year, Senator Feinstein did gain ORV-enthusiast Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell's (D-CO) support for the desert bill.

Sad to say, the concession may have been unnecessary. Norbert Riedy, a senior policy analyst for The Wilderness Society who has been working on desert legislation for seven years, says that Senator Feinstein was convinced by claims that wilderness designation of South Algodones Dunes would preclude any ORV access, claims that are, quite simply, false.

The best augury so far for the success of the legislation is the unexpected support of Sen. J. Bennett Johnston (D-LA), who chairs the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. Not known as an environmentalist, Senator Johnston apparently was swayed by lobbying from a variety of sources to support the establishment of a Mojave National Park.

How the Mojave should be protected had been a sticking point until Senator Johnston agreed to a Mojave National Park in which hunting would be banned. The National Rifle Association (NRA) continues to lobby against park designation, but the organization now is asking for a Mojave National Preserve, with hunting allowed, to be managed by the National Park Service. Unacceptable to desert activists as this position is, it nonetheless represents an improvement over the NRA's previous stance, which was in favor of a national monument with hunting—a category that conservationists consider oxymoronic.

Another attempt to amend the bill to allow hunting in Mojave National Park is expected from Sen. Frank Murkowski (R-AK), however, when mark-up resumes.

The high cost of winning

Heartening though the bill's chances are, the price paid was dear. South Algodones Dunes is "a major pocket of biodiversity" and "one of the most important dune systems in North America," according to the California Native Plant Society's vice president for conservation Ray Butler. The fragility and biological importance of South Algodones Dunes probably cannot be overstated: The dunes support a daunting number of species that are somehow imperiled, including the endemic Andrews dune scarab beetle, the flat-tail horned lizard, Colorado desert fringe-toed lizard, desert tortoise, Peirson's milk vetch, silver-leafed dune sunflower, and giant Spanish needle.

All those species are still more endangered now that Senator Feinstein has agreed to release South Algodones Dunes both from her bill and from its protected status as a wilderness study area. (The smaller North Algodones Dunes Wilderness Study Area remains in the Feinstein desert bill.)

Studies by the Bureau of Land Management and Department of Fish and Game have identified ORV use in the dunes as responsible for declining populations of several native plants. Apart from their obvious potential to crush individual plants and animals, ORVs also destroy suitable habitat.



This horned toad of the east Mojave may soon have a bullet-free new address: Mojave Wilderness, Mojave National Park. Photo by Jim Eaton

Logging appealed

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timber sale (euphemistically called a "landscape assessment" by the Forest Service). The groups would prefer that the sale be withdrawn altogether to protect the wilderness, wildlife, and recreational values of the area.

The Forest Service has argued that an EIS is not needed because the roadless area is smaller than 5,000 acres (see article about new regulations on page 4). But the wild area is adjacent to the 500,000-acre Trinity Alps Wilderness, and it functions as a wildlife corridor to the Marble Mountain and Russian wilderness areas to the north.

Survey results

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of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (74 percent) than the Bureau of Land Management (55 percent).

Though this survey focused on opinions about federal rangelands, the results are quite similar to a previous survey about the condition of federal forests conducted last year.

For a copy of the results of either survey, write to Brent S. Steel, Washington State University at Vancouver, Department of Political Science, Vancouver, WA 98663.

Book review

Thoughtful portraits of the Range of Light

California's Sierra Nevada

By George Wuerthner, American & World Geographic Publishing, Helena, MT, 1993, 104 pp., \$14.95 paperback.

At first glance, *California's Sierra Nevada* looks like any other pretty picture book. George Wuerthner's photographs are spectacular, and it is a joy to flip through this book enjoying his images.

Then you begin to notice that these photos are not the work of someone who drove along the roads in the Sierra, stopping occasionally to shoot a large format camera. Rather, the photographs—a view north from Sonora Peak, flowers at Siberian Pass, rocks in the Granite Chief Wilderness, and a winter climber in Humphrey's Basin—are testament to Wuerthner's preference for wild places. From the Tule River to the Yuba, from Mono Lake to the Sierra foothills near Pinecrest, Wuerthner has provided a photographic inventory of the Range of Light's diverse plants, animals, and scenery.

The text is as thorough a portrait of the Sierra as the photographs. After treating readers to an enumeration of Sierra superlatives, Wuerthner briefly addresses the range's climate, geology, history, plants, and wildlife. Special sections are devoted to Mono Lake, giant sequoias, fire ecology, and water development. Wuerthner also lists the 50 highest peaks and the 19 designated wilderness areas in the Sierra Nevada.

For a coffee table book, *California's Sierra Nevada* includes more environmental messages than you'd expect, unless you already know Wuerthner's work (he is an occasional contributor to the *Wilderness Record*). Controversial topics like livestock grazing, logging, road building, fire suppression policies, and water subsidies are shoe-horned into the text or the photo captions.

In a long section on history, Wuerthner relates the many park and wilderness victories that have been achieved over the decades. He chronicles the preservation of Yosemite, Sequoia, and Kings Canyon national parks and the struggles against Hetch Hetchy Reservoir, roads across the Sierra, a proposed downhill ski resort in Mineral King Valley, and the Owens Valley water diversions. He writes about the designation of much of the high country as wilderness, giving credit to the California Wilderness Coalition and other groups for their work on the 1984 California Wilderness Act.

Wuerthner concludes with a plea for the entire range to be managed as one ecosystem linked in all directions by corridors to other ecosystems. If we fail to do so, he warns, "the Sierra may soon represent not our greatest conservation achievement and vision, but our greatest failure."

—Jim Eaton



On the fence about what to wear? CWC t-shirts go anywhere.

Art models our six-tone landscape shirt now available in jade and fuchsia as well as the ever-popular light blue and pale green for \$15. Jessie wears a design by Bay Area cartoonist Phil Frank; it comes in beige or light gray for \$12. All shirts are 100 percent double-knit cotton. To order, use the form on the back page.

Wilderness Trivia Answer:

Siskiyou County, with eight wilderness areas.

from page 2

DATES TO REMEMBER

October 14 & 16 SCOPING MEETINGS to discuss alternative designs for the Sequoia National Forest's new trail system. The meetings are in Porterville (October 14, from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the Porterville library, 41 W. Thurman) and Kernville (October 16, from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. at Kernville Elementary School on Sierra Way). For more information, call Jim Whitfield at the Sequoia N. F., (209) 784-1500.

October 17 CWC BOARD MEETING in Davis. The Board plans to discuss possible new directions for the Coalition. For more information, call Jim Eaton at (916) 758-0380.

October 17 COMMENTS DUE on the Clinton administration's proposal to reform public-land grazing. Send to: Director (200), Bureau of Land Management, P. O. Box 65800, Washington, DC 20035-9980 and to: Chief, U. S. Forest Service, 201 14th and Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20250. (This is an extension of the comment period; the deadline is an estimate released by the BLM. To be sure your comments will be considered, send them early.)

October 22-24 FREE CONFERENCE on Reinventing Nature/Recovering the Wild at U. C. Davis' Silo Union. For details, call (916) 752-1219.

October 28 COMMENTS DUE on the Clinton administration's "Option 9" solution to the Pacific Northwest forest crisis. For more information, call Tim McKay at the Northcoast Environmental Center in Arcata, (707) 822-6918.



California Wilderness Coalition

Purposes of the California Wilderness Coalition

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

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The Wilderness Record

The *Wilderness Record* is the monthly publication of the California Wilderness Coalition. Articles may be reprinted; credit would be appreciated. Subscription is free with membership. The *Record* welcomes letters-to-the-editor, articles, black & white photos, drawings, book reviews, poetry, etc. on California wilderness and related subjects. We reserve the right to edit all work.

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"... the assertion of R. S. 2477 rights-of-way in proposed wilderness areas could be used as a tool to defeat wilderness designation because by definition the area must be roadless."

From the Interior Department's final report to Congress (article on page 3)

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