



WILDERNESS RECORD

Proceedings of the California Wilderness Coalition

March 1996



Sherwin Ridge is popular with hikers and cross-country skiers. But a plan to build a golf course threatens the Inyo National Forest roadless area. Photo by Andy Selters

Inyo golf course would slice into Sherwin Roadless Area

The Forest Service's latest development scheme for the Inyo National Forest is to authorize a nine-hole golf course and driving range on public land, including a slice of the Sherwin Roadless Area. Inyo National Forest officials first proposed the golf course in 1991, only to discover that Forest Service regulations generally prohibit golf courses in national forests. In 1992, the chief of the Forest Service changed the regulations, however, and last year that office gave local forest officials permission to reconsider the project. The supervisor of the Inyo now claims authority to approve the golf course and has published, but not widely disseminated, a draft environmental impact statement (EIS). The comment period on the proposal closes March 12.

After the 4,000-acre Sherwin Roadless Area, adjacent to the John Muir Wilderness, was released from mandatory consideration for wilderness designation by the California Wilderness Act of 1984, it was selected as the site of the proposed Snowcreek Ski Area. But public pressure, poor environmental planning, and dubious economics have delayed the resort's development. Sherwin Ridge remains today an undeveloped scenic backdrop to the town of Mammoth Lakes and a popular and accessible area for hikers and cross-country skiers.

The current proposal by Dempsey Construction is to expand the existing Snowcreek golf course at the base of Sherwin Ridge, on the outskirts of the town. It calls for nine full-size fairways and greens, a driving range, ponds, and faux streams to complement the nine holes already developed on adjacent private land. Dempsey hopes the expanded golf course and ski area will boost lackluster condominium sales.

Environmentalists have long contended that the impacts of the proposed ski area and golf course must be analyzed together in a comprehensive EIS for the entire Snowcreek Resort. The company has adjacent private land that could be used for the golf course expansion (and has already built on land that would have been suitable) but wants to reserve that land for ski base facilities, a mall, and more speculation residences.

The Forest Service's preferred alternative calls for the golf course to use reclaimed water, and for some road

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Carson-Iceberg additions fall prey to snowmobiles

By Jim Eaton

Stanislaus National Forest Supervisor Janet Wold has decided to reduce the size of the Forest Service's proposed additions to the Carson-Iceberg Wilderness. Claiming a "mapping error," the Forest Service is making this change to accommodate snowmobilers who currently use the roadless lands near Highland Lakes illegally.

The California Wilderness Coalition (CWC) opposes eliminating portions of the roadless area from the agency's wilderness recommendation and will appeal the decision. Hard hit by snowmobilers in winter, the area also is pounded by cattle in summer (see article on page 3).

The Tryon Peak additions, as the area is called by the Forest Service, span the Sierra crest south of Highway 4. In addition to the wildlands around Highland Lakes, the area includes Noble Canyon and lands north of Silver Peak. These lands were removed from the proposed Carson-Iceberg Wilderness in 1984 in a compromise needed to secure the support of then-Senator Pete Wilson for the California Wilderness Act.

Forest Service officials say the "mapping error" recently came to their attention and that they would like to make this "correction" before a proposal to expand the Carson-Iceberg Wilderness is submitted to Congress for legislative action.

But in the 1984 California Wilderness Act, Congress specifically ordered the agency to study potential additions to the Carson-Iceberg Wilderness—and provided detailed maps of the lands to be reviewed.

The Forest Service responded by declaring that the area it now wants to turn over to snowmobilers "would make a logical addition to the Carson-Iceberg," and maps accompanying the two drafts and the final forest plan clearly indicate that the lands around Highland Lakes are recommended for wilderness designation.

The Forest Service's change of heart stems from increased use of the Highway 4 corridor by over-the-snow vehicles. Snowmobilers who use Highway 4 as a route across the Sierra turn south to Highland Lakes and north to Blue Lakes, frequently trespassing into both the Carson-Iceberg and Mokelumne wilderness areas. The boundary change appears to be a means of legitimizing the illegal use now occurring around Highland Lakes.

Concerned as the Coalition is that snowmobile users are trespassing into this proposed wilderness addition in violation of the forest plan and into the wilderness in violation of federal law, the CWC is even more concerned about how snowmobiles impact wildlife, both within the existing and proposed wilderness as well as surrounding forest lands.

Of greatest concern is the impact on forest carnivores, especially the Sierra Nevada red fox, pine marten, fisher, and wolverine. Forest Service reports state that "fisher habitat areas...are important to the viability of the species. Wolverine, red fox, and pine marten are also important wildlife species needing the solitude provided by this area."

These species are adversely affected by winter recre-

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...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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Coalition news

Monthly Report

It's hard to believe the Coalition has been around for 20 years. Gerald Ford was President when we began. The nation celebrated its bicentennial. I had nary a gray hair on my head.

After the CWC's annual meeting on February 3rd, three dozen past and current supporters gathered in my living room to celebrate our two decades of activism. Four of the five founders (Phil Farrell, Bob Schneider, Don Morrill, and me), all nine current and past presidents, and quite a few former staff members attended.

Along with some of our more recent volunteers, stalwarts Mary Tappel and Paul Grant showed up—they began volunteering back in 1976 and have been with us ever since. David Rains Wallace drove up from Berkeley in the rain and reminded me that we first met even before the Coalition existed.

Steve Evans got the awards for longest time on the board of directors (19 years) and longest term as president. Wendy Cohen lacked a year on Steve's service, but her volunteer work as treasurer eclipses all others. It's why we say she's "treasurer for life."

We passed around a get-well card for conservation associate Ryan Henson who spent the weekend in the hospital. Ryan wasn't supposed to be here anyway (he had planned to attend the Headwaters conference in Ashland), but Mother Nature had other plans for him. I was able to cheer him with the news that the Foundation for Deep Ecology had funded his Adopt-a-Wilderness project.

Being young and strong, Ryan recovered rapidly and has spent the last week and a half in Washington, D. C., attending the American Forest Congress and working the Hill. I'll search for signs of Potomac fever when he returns.

The warm storms of early February portended an early spring. In what has become an annual pilgrimage, Wendy and I spent a long weekend at Sorensen's Resort in Hope Valley, snowshoeing in the thin, soggy snow that survived the tropical rains. It was nice to get out in the wilds and spend several days without telephones, televisions, or

computers. Although I did bring work with me, I found myself reading David Wallace's eco-thriller *Vermillion Parrot* instead.

Back home the rains and chilling fogs kept me from pruning the fruit trees that have grown to become my major winter chore. I resisted following Bob Schneider's rule of pruning: the closer to the base, the fewer cuts necessary (I suppose only one cut is needed if you go low enough). I fretted as the weeds outcompeted the flowers, knowing I could not pull them without bringing up a pound of wet clay soil.

The almonds broke forth in blossom on February 19th. The plums soon followed, and my peach even began to open. Spring was around the corner. But the native plants, with their older, wiser genes, waited.

Today it snowed. Not just in the Sierra, but down here in the Valley as well. Although there were just a few flakes in Davis, pictures from Capay Valley show blooming almonds covered with snow. I don't know what damage will result; I do know the bees go on strike during rainy and cold weather so that the flowers are not pollinated.

Genetic variation. It's the key to species survival. In unfettered nature, most plants and animals have enough variation to allow some individuals to live through times of frost, drought, flood, viral attack, and even global climate change. It's when we fool with Mother Nature by growing "super trees," developing a handful of varieties of high-yield corn, or breeding the last condors in zoos that we set ourselves up for failure.

I'll get along okay without almonds, plums, or peaches this year. But narrowing the gene pool may well spell extinction for bighorn sheep, wolverines, spotted owls, and even sugar pine. We must keep that in mind when we plan experimental logging, expand snowmobiling areas, continue overgrazing, or allow golf courses on public land.

By Jim Eaton

20 years old, and still growing

We are pleased to welcome two more groups to the California Wilderness Coalition.

The **Tule River Conservancy**, a watchdog group for the Sequoia National Forest, is in its sixth year of monitoring timber sales and other practices that threaten the southernmost forest of the Sierra Nevada. The conservancy also conducts workshops and field trips to educate the public, the media, and legislators about good forestry.

For more information about the conservancy and its work on behalf of the Sequoia National Forest, write to P.O. Box 723, Porterville, CA 93258.

Far to the north, the members of **South Fork Mountain Defense** are developing, in conjunction with the Wildlands Project, a long-term strategy to protect the biological diversity and ecological integrity of the Klamath-Siskiyou region. Because of its exceptionally rich species diversity, South Fork Mountain is vitally important to the long-term conservation of the region.

For more information, contact South Fork Mountain Defense at P. O. Box F, Mad River, CA 95552.

Correction

An article in the February issue about the Forest Service's decision to evict Bradley Hut from the Granite Chief Wilderness mistakenly reported that the Sierra Club opposes the agency's plan. In fact, it is the ski-touring sections of two Sierra Club chapters that are fighting to have the ski hut retained.

CWC wins \$10,000 grant

The Foundation for Deep Ecology has awarded the California Wilderness Coalition \$10,000 to expand our Adopt-a-Wilderness program. The program, which was launched last fall with start-up funds from Patagonia, trains new activists to better monitor and influence how wildlands are managed.

The Foundation for Deep Ecology, which already supports the Coalition's work on the Wildlands Project, recognizes that the Project's long-term goal—protecting biodiversity by establishing a continental network of large, interconnected wilderness reserves—cannot be realized unless wildlands are defended today.

The grant will enable us to hold more training workshops and provide more assistance to the people who participate by adopting the wildland of their choice. For more information about either Adopt-a-Wilderness or the Wildlands Project, contact Ryan Henson at the Coalition office, 2655 Portage Bay East, Suite 5, Davis, CA 95616; (916) 758-0380.

Wilderness Trivia Question

What wildlife species's scientific name means glutton?

Answer on page 7

Wilderness wildlife

Plummeting bighorn sheep populations prompt concern

By Kathleen Brennan

Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep populations have been declining rapidly over the past few years. The Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep Foundation conducts an annual census of the five Sierra bighorn populations, and according to a 1995 report on the status of three of the five herds, their numbers are decreasing.

There are three subspecies of bighorn sheep in California: the California (Sierra Nevada) bighorn, the peninsular bighorn, and the Nelson (desert) bighorn. In 1995, the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) estimated their numbers at 350, 650, and 3,650 respectively. The California bighorn and peninsular bighorn are protected as threatened species, but the desert bighorn has been game for hunting since 1987.

Historically, the California bighorn ranged from Modoc County to the southern Sierra. They vanished with the influx of settlers into California in the late 1800s and the early part of this century. Domestic sheep grazing on bighorn winter ranges in spring, summer, and fall diminished forage and affected the quantity and quality of food available. The domestic sheep introduced fatal diseases to the wild bighorn. Increased human presence also affected bighorn sheep by encroachment and overhunting.

Bighorn sheep usually inhabit rocky, high-elevation terrain where they can find forage and avoid predators. They winter at lower elevations, usually below the snowline. Bighorn sheep, being very social animals, learn from older ewes and rams the home ranges and migration corridors they tend to use their entire lives. They are not known to emigrate, even when unoccupied areas are accessible. For this reason, the DFG decided to expand bighorn distribution in the state by relocating some of the sheep.

In 1971, 10 California bighorns from a population in British Columbia were placed in an enclosure at Lava Beds National Monument. They did well, and in 1980 four of the bighorns were relocated to the Warner Mountains to establish a herd there. Ten more sheep were moved to the Warner Mountains from Mt. Baxter in the southern Sierra Nevada to supplement the herd with native sheep. That same year, the Lava Beds herd experienced a devastating die-off after contact with domestic sheep. The Warner Mountains herd met the same fate in 1988.

The first relocation involving Sierra Nevada bighorns took place in 1979. Nine sheep from the Mt. Baxter herd

were moved to Wheeler Ridge in the John Muir Wilderness in the Inyo National Forest. The following year, 10 more sheep were moved from Mt. Baxter to Wheeler Ridge. Since then, 91 sheep have been moved to re-establish herds in Wheeler Ridge, Lee Vining Canyon, and Mt. Langley. Until recently, these herds appeared, for the most part, to be doing well and increasing.

But a 1995 census of the Wheeler Ridge, Lee Vining Canyon, and Mt. Baxter herds found all three populations dramatically smaller than they had been two years before. The unusually severe and long winter of 1994-95 is partially responsible.

On Wheeler Ridge, researchers counted 20 sheep in January 1995, but by summer only five sheep were found. An avalanche killed 12 sheep, a perennial problem for sheep in this steep area.

Currently it is estimated that there are only nine or ten ewes in this herd.

In Lee Vining Canyon in Yosemite National Park, researchers saw no sheep on the lower elevation winter range. In the summer, they found a total of 33 sheep. This is a drastic difference from the 77 sheep counted in

1993—a decline of 60 percent in just two years. No carcasses were found to provide clues to what happened, but because no sheep were seen in winter, questions of winter survivorship were raised. The sheep seen in late spring were in poor physical condition. The decline of this herd is of special concern because it had been considered a good potential source of sheep for future reintroductions.

The Mt. Baxter population is actually two separate herds: one at Sand Mountain and one at Sawmill Canyon. When the Sand Mountain herd was counted in winter,



Nelson bighorn ram and ewe

Photo by Mike McWherter

Social animals, bighorn sheep learn from older ewes and rams the home ranges and migration corridors they will use their entire lives.

researchers spotted 10 sheep. In the summer, they found nine. Based on evidence of flower head consumption and other forage species utilization from this area, researchers estimated that the population has declined 40-50 percent over the past two years and 80 percent since the late 1970s. The Sawmill Canyon herd was not sighted in the winter; the summer count found nine sheep. This total of 18 sheep for Mt. Baxter is a decline of over 80 percent. This herd totalled over 108 in 1978, before it was winnowed to establish the Wheeler Ridge and Lee Vining herds.

Although the winter of 1994-95 certainly contributed to the recent decline in bighorn populations, there are other problems as well: fragmentation of their ranges by roads and other developments, a lack of migration corridors, little to no emigration or genetic exchange between populations, and mountain lion predation.

In the future these populations need to be carefully monitored. John Wehausen and Karl Chang, authors of the Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep Foundation report on the recent population changes, recommend that the 1984 interagency recovery and conservation plan, which guides management decisions regarding the Sierra bighorn, be updated to address these problems.

Kathleen Brennan is an intern at the CWC.

CWC appeals grazing plan to protect Sierra frogs

By Jim Eaton

The California Wilderness Coalition (CWC) has joined in an appeal of a livestock grazing management plan for the Highland Lakes area of the Stanislaus National Forest. The grazing allotment covers portions of the Carson-Iceberg and Mokelumne wilderness areas.

The CWC joined California Save Our Streams Council, Citizens for Meadow Management, High Sierra Hikers Association, and Linda Blum in challenging the grazing plan. The Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center filed a similar appeal.

The area west of Ebbetts Pass is home to wolverine, fisher, marten, Sierra Nevada red fox, Yosemite toad, mountain yellow-legged frog, and Mount Lyell salamander, all rare or imperilled animals. In addition, the Department of Fish and Game has planted Lahontan cutthroat trout, a threatened species, in Milk Ranch Creek.

The Forest Service estimated that in 1991 9,000 visitors camped in the area; 5,000 people visited the surround-

ing Carson-Iceberg Wilderness, and 1,000 hunters used portions of the allotment. Some of those recreationists have expressed concerns that cattle grazing disturbs ecological balance and diminishes water quality, and many have complained about odors and cowbells in the wilderness.

Currently 215 cows along with their calves graze the area each summer. Because the majority of the range is in poor condition, the Forest Service plans to reduce this number to 140 cow-calf pairs over a seven-year period and to build new fences.

Economically, the plan is a disaster. Under the 1996 grazing fee formula, the permittee would pay \$870 this year and less in the future as cattle numbers are reduced (half the money collected goes to local counties, and the remainder goes to the federal government). The Forest Service spends nearly \$2,000 a year monitoring and administering the allotment. In addition, the Forest Service will spend \$47,100 on new fencing to supplement a \$10,000 electric fence built in 1992.

Fencing does not guarantee success in mitigating grazing impacts, however. The \$10,000 fence along Milk Ranch Creek was breached when "some animal" chewed through the electricity supply wires, and cattle soon were grazing in the "protected" area.

It would be far cheaper for the Forest Service to pay off the permittee and not build the fencing. The Forest Service estimates it would spend \$3,000 to \$10,000 to compensate the permittee and another \$10,000 to rehabilitate the land. Not only would closing the allotment save taxpayers money, but the sensitive species there would be protected from cattle.

Though there are numerous good reasons to abandon this allotment, the CWC's appeal focused on the impacts of grazing on frogs and toads. A study in the Highland Lakes area determined that the rare Yosemite toad and mountain yellow-legged frog are adversely affected by grazing. The appellants are asking that no grazing be authorized there unless an environmental impact statement shows that these species and cattle can co-exist.

Ancient forests

Better forests through logging? Forest Service says yes

By Paul Spittler

Working with the Forest Service, I have come to expect a certain amount of linguistic creativity. This is, after all, the agency that refers to old-growth forests as "overmature stands," clearcutting as "regeneration harvests," and clearcuts as "created openings." But oral overkill reaches new levels when the Forest Service attempts to describe how best to use its adaptive management areas (AMAs).

These areas were created by President Clinton's forest plan of 1994. An AMA is simply an area where the Forest Service plans to experiment with new management techniques (i.e. new logging methods). In trying to "integrate commercial timber harvest with ecological objectives," the Forest Service promises to be innovative, dynamic, and integrative.

Those goals not only appear vague, they are vague. Language on the subject is so "dynamic" that often it is difficult to discern just what the Forest Service plans to do. In an effort to clear up the confusion, the agency recently released a draft implementation guide for the Hayfork AMA.

The Hayfork AMA is a sprawling expanse of 350,000 acres in the Shasta-Trinity and Six Rivers national forests. Included within its boundaries are all or part of six roadless areas: Pattison, Cow Creek, Underwood, Pilot Creek, Board Camp, and West Beegum. The AMA contains thousands of acres of old-growth forest and is home to numerous species of wildlife, including marten, fisher, wolverine, black bear, peregrine falcon, bald eagle, and northern spotted owl.

The draft implementation guide outlines the main activities in the AMA: ecosystem management plans, watershed restoration projects, and the proposed logging of 24 million board feet of trees in 1996.

Much of the logging is scheduled for the Pilot Creek watershed. This watershed was given the highest rating possible—meaning it is one of the healthiest in the Pacific Northwest—in the president's forest plan. The proposed logging would devastate the watershed's anadromous fishery and destroy the now-pristine Pilot Creek Roadless Area.

Though the guide calls for an innovative approach to forest management, some of the greatest threats to the Hayfork AMA are not from bad management but from researchers. Much of the proposed innovation comes from a single source, the Pacific Southwest Research Station. Research stations are outposts of the Forest Service that conduct research in national forests. The

Pacific Southwest Station is proposing several studies within the Hayfork AMA that, if carried out, could ravage the area's wildlands.

The most controversial is a proposal to "treat" (read: log) several old-growth stands to test the effects of such logging on the northern spotted owl, the threatened species whose protection was the impetus for the Clinton forest plan. The study, which will cost \$100,000 next year, is viewed by environmentalists as evidence that the Forest Service is more interested in finding new excuses to log than in protecting forest biodiversity.



Tractor logging

Photo by Delbert Williams

Other proposed studies—both involving logging—bolster this belief. One will measure the effects of logging along intermittent stream channels, which currently are off-limits to logging. Another, similar to the owl study, will analyze the effects of logging on the fisher, a rare forest carnivore about which little is known. Many scientists believe, however, that the reason for the fisher's rarity can easily be identified: extensive logging and ensuing habitat fragmentation in national forests.

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Constitutionality of salvage rider challenged

On December 15, 1995, the Biodiversity Legal Foundation and the Alabama Wilderness Alliance filed suit against the U. S. Forest Service in federal district court in Montgomery. The lawsuit challenges the constitutionality of the Timber Salvage Rider contained in the 1995 Rescissions Bill, Public Law 104-19. The suit also challenges the legality of the Forest Service's decision under the rider to provide a series of massive salvage timber sales covering 15,000 acres of the Conecuh National Forest in Alabama. The Forest Service claims this logging is necessary to salvage trees that blew down when Hurricane Opal swept through the area on October 4, 1995.

The suit is the first in the nation to contest the constitutionality of the rider. Because it suspends all normally applicable conservation laws and drastically reduces the relief a federal judge can grant to prevent abuse of the national forests, the rider amounts to nothing less than a blatant violation of the right to due process, the right to equal protection, the right to petition the government for a redress of grievances, and the separation of powers.

This "logging without laws," as it has been characterized, means the Forest Service and large corporate logging companies do not have to comply with the Endangered Species Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Water Act, or any other laws when they cut national forests. Radical conservatives in the U. S. Congress rushed the rider through both the House and Senate without adequate public discussion or disclosure of impacts, and in the process emasculated 25 years of conservation law designed to protect the public interest. "It is clear that many of these massive salvage timber sales are being conducted for the sole benefit of large forest industries and do not relate to forest health issues," noted Ray Vaughn, attorney for the Biodiversity Legal Foundation and Alabama Wilderness Alliance.

"The rider is vague and unreasonable, and violates the due process clause in the Fifth Amendment of the United States Constitution. The wording of the rider is such that no reasonable person can decipher its meaning. Insect infestations and dead and down trees are an important and normal part of healthy, functioning forest ecosystems. The vague and indecipherable rider precludes the public from making reasoned comments and from engaging in meaningful participation in the democratic process. There are no reasonable definitions to clarify the complicated and unusual provisions of the Act," added Vaughn.

Under the rider, the federal judge must rule on the case within 45 days. If the litigants prevail in this important Alabama case, it will have nationwide implications on how the Forest Service conducts its salvage sales.

Reprinted from the Brigid 1996 issue of Earth First! Journal. The Biodiversity Legal Foundation and Alabama Wilderness Alliance are currently in settlement negotiations with the Forest Service. For more information, contact the Biodiversity Legal Foundation at 2004 Eighth Street, Suite F, Boulder, CO 80302; (303) 442-3037.

Another month, another Lassen salvage sale

By Joe Welton

The Forest Service is proposing to salvage log several sections of the Lassen National Forest where windstorms have knocked down trees. The sale includes parts of the Heart Lake, Chips Creek, and Trail Lake roadless areas, undeveloped wildlands where nature should be allowed free rein.

The logging would violate the Quincy Library Group agreement to protect roadless areas in the Lassen and Plumas national forests. Although that agreement is not binding on the Forest Service, the group's unique composition—environmentalists, loggers, and other local residents who have reached some consensus on how the national forests should be managed—means its recommendations cannot easily be ignored.

Chips Creek Roadless Area currently is managed for non-motorized primitive recreation, so it is still pristine enough to qualify for wilderness protection. Trail Lake Roadless Area is adjacent to the Caribou Wilderness and boasts incredibly diverse wildlife: black bears, black-tailed deer, osprey, wolverines, and martens. Heart Lake Roadless

Area, a potential wilderness extension to Lassen Volcanic National Park, has diverse wildlife and beautiful alpine scenery, making the area an invaluable wilderness resource.

The Forest Service heartily agrees. At least it did in 1992, when the agency's Lassen forest plan recommended both the Heart Lake and Trail Lake roadless areas for wilderness designation. Salvage logging must not be allowed to spoil these three roadless areas.

What you can do

Write to Michael R. Williams, District Ranger, Alamanor Ranger District, Lassen National Forest, P. O. Box 767, Chester, CA 96020 by March 15 (your letter must be postmarked by this date). Request that the Heart Lake roadless area, the Soda Creek drainage in the Chips Creek Roadless Area, and the southern section of the Trail Lake Roadless Area be excluded from the proposed Windthrow Salvage Sale. Remind him that salvage logging would infringe on the abundant wildlife and recreational opportunities in the roadless areas. Tell him all three undeveloped areas should be kept pristine.

Joe Welton is an intern at the CWC.

Wilderness news

Is cloud seeding polluting Sierra wilderness areas?

In the absence of proof, Forest Service licenses PG&E to continue

By John Buckley

In 1993, the Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center (CSERC) appealed a Forest Service decision to allow Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) to operate cloud-seeding burners in the High Sierra to increase runoff for the utility's hydroelectric projects downstream, contending that the burners emit silver iodide into the Carson-Iceberg and Mokelumne wilderness areas. The appeal cited a lack of information about how silver iodide pollution would affect wildlife and plants both within the wilderness areas and in the Stanislaus National Forest beyond.

In response to the appeal, Forest Service and PG&E officials agreed to develop an environmental assessment for the project. CSERC agreed to allow the cloud seeding for one year while the environmental assessment was developed. Because of a "misunderstanding," the agency approved PG&E's plans for two years.

PG&E has six burners on the perimeter of the Mokelumne Wilderness (and six precipitation gauges inside the wilderness). The burners emit silver iodide particles which form the nuclei of raindrops or snow.

CSERC is concerned primarily about the toxic effects silver may have on plants and wildlife. Lab tests show silver toxicity in aquatic insects and trout eggs can occur at levels as low as parts per billion, and PG&E uses its burners during the vast majority of storms. At the very least, there should be monitoring of the soil and water in the areas most likely to be affected by the weather modification project.

CSERC also believes that by allowing weather modification, the Forest Service is illegally altering the wilderness

environment. The agency's position is that weather modification violates neither the Wilderness Act nor Forest Service regulations.

PG&E and the Forest Service released an environmental assessment of the cloud seeding in October 1995. Contrary to its agreement with CSERC, the Forest Service allowed PG&E to operate again this winter, even before the public had a chance to comment on the environmental assessment and before a decision was made.

As expected, the environmental assessment claims there is no proof that enough silver is accumulating to harm the environment. The document does acknowledge that silver is toxic to aquatic and semi-aquatic organisms but contends that pollution from cloud seeding is probably not a cause of the disappearance of mountain yellow-legged frogs from High Sierra lakes and streams. The environmental assessment says silver accumulation in soil or water is not likely to be a problem



Frog Lake in the Mokelumne Wilderness. Photo by Lucy Rosenau

Environmentalists are teed off by golf course proposal

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building and a driving range beyond what Dempsey requested. The EIS acknowledges that approval for a golf course in a national forest is virtually unprecedented and that granting it could beckon other suitors for more "urban developments" in national forests across the country.

Besides the unsavory precedent of the Forest Service dedicating land to golf, environmentalists are concerned about direct impacts, especially to the Sherwin deer herd. Drought and development have reduced the herd of mule deer to one-fifth of its size just 10 years ago. The golf course would take away part of the herd's crucial fawning and holding area and threaten its only remaining migration corridor. The 1988 Inyo forest plan previously required the Forest Service to enhance and not impinge on this habitat, but the agency quietly amended the plan to call only for mitigation of impacts to the herd. The mapping of areas with low deer-herd use in the EIS is suspiciously similar to the proposed golf course boundaries.

Other issues at stake include pesticide use, which could poison deer, bats, waterfowl, and other wildlife attracted to the grass and ponds on the course. Even if all irrigation were with reclaimed wastewater, a golf course still would soak up a huge amount of water from other developments that could use wastewater. And with wastewater agreements uncompleted and the treatment plant unfinished and guaranteed to fall short of demand by 1998, this golf course would severely strain supply in a water-desperate town, increasing the pressure to drill for new sources in pristine watersheds nearby. Downstream from the town of Mammoth Lakes is critical habitat for the

Owens tui chub, a federally listed endangered fish that depends on adequate flows.

In justifying this proposal, the EIS cites a simplistic and exaggerated guess by the Town of Mammoth Lakes that there is unmet annual demand in the area for 116,000 rounds of golf. The EIS includes no study of current recreational use, only a rough guess that something more than 160 visitors use the area each year. Later the document admits that golf demand has leveled and that most summer visitors come to the area for dispersed recreation like fishing, hiking, cycling, and sightseeing. The EIS also admits that the golf course would favor "a more urban visitor"—not to mention one able to afford a \$60 or \$70 green fee. The document barely mentions that another championship golf course is slated for construction this summer on private land within the town.

What you can do

Write to the Forest Supervisor, Inyo National Forest, 873 North Main Street, Bishop, CA 93514 by March 12. In your letter, emphasize that a golf course needed only to enhance real estate sales is not appropriate for public land. The proposed expansion of the Snowcreek golf course is an unacceptable threat to the tradition that national forests are for forest-specific natural resource management and forest-specific recreation that is accessible and affordable to everyone. Moreover, the golf course would cause undue impacts to the Sherwin deer herd, stress water resources for Mammoth Lakes, and, potentially, impact the Owens tui chub. The EIS does not adequately consider the alternatives of development on private land or a land exchange. The proposal should be denied, and the Sherwin Roadless Area should be reconsidered as an addition to the John Muir Wilderness.

The golf course would favor "a more urban visitor"—not to mention one able to afford a \$60 or \$70 green fee.

and that silver poses no risk to recreationists who drink from streams.

CSERC believes the analysis in the environmental assessment is insufficient. No water or soil sampling was done in the areas closest to the burners, the places most likely to be contaminated. No studies were done to analyze how aquatic insects and other parts of the food chain are affected by silver pollution.

Perhaps most telling was the admission in the environmental assessment that there is no proof this kind of cloud seeding works. It's all theory. The environmental assessment states that "the expected benefit from this program would likely be a 3 to 6 percent increase in annual runoff." CSERC believes such a small increase cannot justify polluting streams and soil in wilderness areas.

John Buckley is the director of the Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center. This article first appeared in the Winter 1996 issue of The CSERC Newsletter.

Carson-Iceberg

continued from page 1

ational use. Wildlife biologist Reginald Barrett says "there is good justification for listing the fisher, Sierra Nevada red fox, and wolverine as endangered species.... Human disturbance, including recreational activities, and especially roads, appear to be detrimental to the wolverine, and possibly the fisher, marten, and red fox." And the Natural Resources Defense Council explains that because it has little body fat, "the marten... must continue to hunt tree squirrels and other prey that remain active above and below the snow in winter, when starvation is a constant threat."

To eliminate the impacts of snowmobiles on forest carnivores, the California Wilderness Coalition requested that the Forest Service:

- keep its existing wilderness recommendation for Tryon Peak;
- eliminate the use of over-the-snow vehicles from the Highland Lakes area; and
- study how winter recreation affects forest carnivores and other wildlife species.

Instead, Stanislaus National Forest officials ignored the impacts of snowmobiles on the wilderness and the forest carnivores that live there. The Coalition trusts that forest officials at higher levels will have more sense.

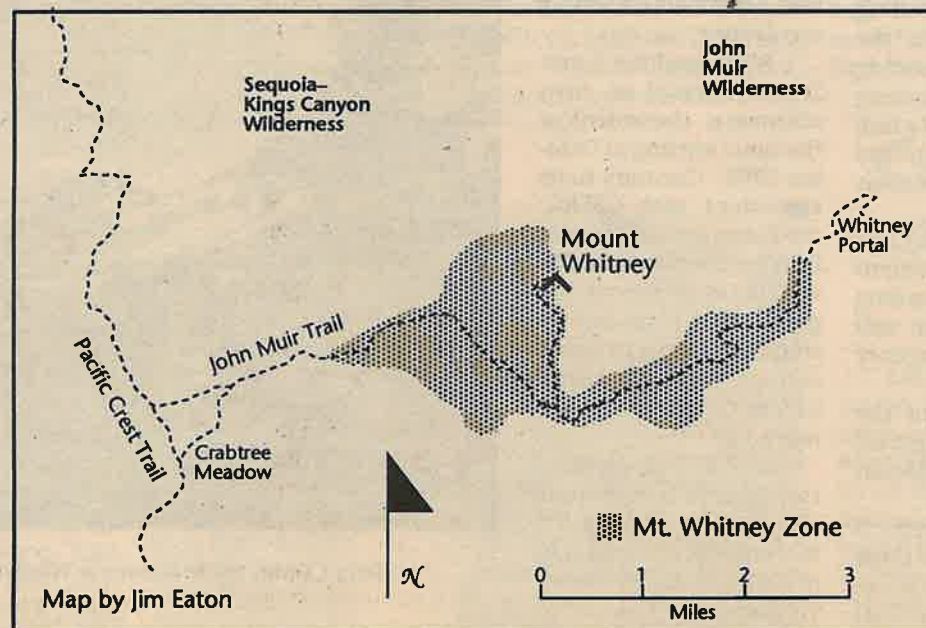
Jim Eaton is the CWC's executive director.

Wilderness news

New permit system for Mt. Whitney starts April 1

Hikers who want to climb Mt. Whitney this summer will need a special permit, and so will anyone else traveling through the new Whitney Zone (see map). The Forest Service and National Park Service, responding to the area's overuse, will be requiring hikers to apply for a special Whitney permit in addition to the wilderness permits they already need for the two wilderness areas—John Muir and Sequoia-Kings Canyon—that share the state's highest peak.

Because only a limited number of overnight and day permits will be available and demand is expected to be high, wilderness officials recommend that people make their plans early. Rather than process reservation requests themselves, as the agencies have done in years past, the Forest Service and Park Service will select, by March 1, a private contractor for the job. The contractor will begin accepting reservation requests, for a fee, on April 1, and people who are awarded Whitney permits will be able to pick them up when they collect their regular wilderness permits. Any of the Whitney permits that are not reserved will be distributed at ranger stations, but given the area's popularity as a destination, people who want the best chance of getting permits should try to reserve them.



The Forest Service and Park Service already have daily quotas for popular trails in the John Muir and Sequoia-Kings Canyon wildernesses, and the new system will not further limit how many people may enter the wilderness—at least not this year. Since the existing quota and permit

system have failed to prevent overuse of the Mt. Whitney area, the agencies anticipate the need for more restrictions in the future.

Mt. Whitney's popularity is largely attributable to its preeminence—at 14,495-feet, it is the highest point in the coterminous United States—and its accessibility. While climbers test their skills on the East Face, the 11-mile Mt. Whitney Trail allows hardy hikers to reach the summit and return in a single day. The Forest Service estimates that 500-600 people use the Mt. Whitney Trail each day in season. More than 7,000 overnight permits are issued each year, and there may be as many as 22,000 dayhikers annually.

The mountain's popularity is so longstanding that toilets had to be installed 30 years ago to handle the human waste. Today there are two solar toilets, one at Outpost Camp and one at Trail Camp, and their use exceeds capacity. The rangers who service the toilets get hazard pay.

The concentration of recreationists has created myriad other problems—bears and marmots habituated to people, eroding trails, vegetation loss, litter, etc.—familiar to anyone who hikes in the High Sierra. Although the installation of a new permit system for the Whitney Zone is no remedy, it will free Forest

Service and Park Service staff who now handle permit requests for other duties.

During March, you can contact the Forest Service's White Mountain Ranger Station (798 North Main Street, Bishop, CA 93514; (619) 873-2525) for information on where to apply for Whitney Zone permit reservations.

Wilderness Land Trust acquires Matilija inholding

California has more designated wilderness than any state outside of Alaska. Given the extent of designated wilderness in California, it is perhaps not surprising that a great number of private lands exist within those wilderness areas. Railroads played a substantial role in California's development, and federal land ownership patterns are complicated by "checkerboard" railroad lands.

When it came time to designate wilderness areas, Congress unavoidably had to include substantial numbers of these privately held sections in order to follow natural topographic boundaries.

California also experienced the same pressures for mineral development and homesteading that occurred across the West. Patented mining claims and converted homesteads today are scattered throughout California wilderness areas.

California's wilderness includes more private inholdings than any other state and accounts for almost 40 percent of the nation's inholdings. The Forest Service has reported that as many as 45,000 acres of private lands lie within the boundaries of California's 4.3 million acres of national forest wilderness.

The inholdings take many forms and have a variety of impacts on wilderness values. In Northern California's Trinity Alps Wilderness, one entire section has been subdivided into 30 summer home sites. An easily passable two-wheel drive road crosses several miles of wilderness to reach this residential development.

Given that the Wilderness Act defines wilderness as a place where humans are visitors who do not remain, permanent residential sites on private inholdings clearly conflict with the spirit of wilderness.

Other wilderness inholdings have seen commercial logging, ongoing mining, resorts, and other permanent signs of civilization that diminish the wild character of surrounding wilderness lands.

The substantial number of California inholdings has led the Wilderness Land Trust to expand its successful Colorado program into the Golden State. The Trust's first California project was the purchase of a 20-acre inholding in the Matilija Wilderness within the Los Padres National

Forest. This parcel was sold to the Wilderness Land Trust in 1995 by a local Ojai landowner with a keen interest in seeing the property protected.

Forest managers have suggested a number of other prospective projects. One such prospect is a 240-acre inholding in the Trinity Alps Wilderness in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. Originally patented for mining, this inholding includes substantial amounts of old-growth that provides spotted owl habitat. The owner has received approval from the state to log the property and is negotiating with the Forest Service for road access. The owner has expressed willingness to sell the property at a reasonable price, assuming that action can occur in a timely fashion.

As usual, the chief hurdle will be finding federal funds to purchase the inholding. Congress has proposed to cut Forest Service land acquisition funding by almost one-half in 1996. Given California's booming population and expanding development, there are many areas in crucial need of land acquisition funds.

In recent years, Forest Service priorities have rightly targeted the Big Sur coastline and undeveloped canyons surrounding Los Angeles and San Diego. Even as overall budgets

are shrinking, we need to expand the land acquisition pie to include enough funds to buy critical wilderness parcels. The Wilderness Land Trust has addressed this problem in Colorado by working closely with the state's congressional delegation and the regional Forest Service office to promote an exclusive fund to buy inholdings in Colorado wilderness areas.

The Wilderness Land Trust has successfully promoted a national wilderness inholding account for the Forest Service, but the \$1 million in this fund is quickly consumed by only a handful of projects. The Trust hopes the Colorado model can be repeated elsewhere in the country, and California seems an obvious choice.

Excerpted from the Winter 1996 issue of The Wilderness Heritage, newsletter of the Wilderness Land Trust. For more information, contact the Trust at 1101 Village Road, Suite 2A, Carbondale, CO 81623; (970) 963-9688.

California's wilderness includes more private inholdings than any other state.

Hayfork AMA

continued from page 4

Forest Service scientists and timber planners seem to view the Hayfork AMA as a training ground where experiments can be conducted at the expense of the forest. The draft implementation guide states, "even if anything...tried [were] a failure, the integrity of the ecosystem from a regional perspective would not be compromised."

Science is an essential part of forest policy. We need to know how logging affects forest ecosystems and sensitive species. But old-growth forests, roadless areas, and wild-and-scenic river corridors are no place for experiments in logging. Pristine lands are far too scarce to be playgrounds for overzealous scientists. Most of these studies could be done on the millions of acres of forest that already have been logged.

Future research in the AMA should focus on restoration. What is the best way to restore a degraded stream? How should we manage areas of high fire risk? How can we improve the chances of survival for the dozens of imperilled forest species? These are the questions that need to be answered.

One of the Forest Service's goals for the Hayfork AMA is to increase public participation in the planning process. Planners have even set up booths at the county fair and are developing an Internet site. So the Forest Service is eager to hear your opinion on this one.

What you can do

Write to Julia Riber and John Veevaert, Hayfork AMA Coordinators, P. O. Box 1120, Weaverville, CA 96093. Tell them that the Hayfork AMA should not be a sacrifice ground. Ask that all remaining old-growth and roadless areas be protected from logging and road building. Suggest that research in the AMA focus on restoration and rehabilitation of degraded wildlands. Comments are due by March 15.

Paul Spitzer is an intern at the California Wilderness Coalition.

Wilderness forum

Book review

A Manual of California Vegetation

By John O. Sawyer and Todd Keeler-Wolf, *California Native Plant Society, Sacramento, 1995, 471 pages.*

Reed Noss noted in 1994, "In a study of the nation's endangered ecosystems...California stood out as exhibiting some of America's most pronounced losses in ecosystem diversity." What are these ecosystems, and how do we keep them from vanishing? The California Native Plant Society (CNPS) has taken a major step toward characterizing vegetation assemblages, typically a means of describing ecosystems, by publishing *A Manual of California Vegetation*.

The result of a five-year effort involving many of the state's premier botanists, the *Manual* is the first to describe the plant communities of California with one of the biologist's favorite devices: keys that allow the user to make an either/or determination of the identity of the assemblage in question. Most importantly, the keys can be understood without a botanical background.

Vegetation communities are organized at the botanical series level. (Series are collections of plants characterized by and named for the dominant species present.) To identify vegetation communities at the series level does not require an extensive background in botany, but simply a knowledge of the identity of some of the species that are most important in California.

For each series, the authors describe associated plants which may be present, the geographic setting, distribution, and elevation. It may take a while for some readers to get used to the abbreviations, but these will be familiar to people who use the *Jepson Manual*, the most recent treatment of California's flora at the species level. Happily, a succinct description and map of the terms used are available. If future editions appear, I hope they will include maps showing the range of the communities for rapid reference.

The next level of vegetation assemblage below the series level is the association. Associations are identified by assemblages of vegetation that occur beneath the dominant plants. Among the eight associations for the lodgepole pine series, for example, are the lodgepole pine/big sagebrush and the lodgepole pine/pussypaws association. Common names for species are used throughout, but each series description includes the scientific name of each species. (This is helpful if your favorite common name has not been selected.) In addition, descriptions or names which have appeared elsewhere are included, like the widely used but unpublished Holland descriptions developed by the state Department of Fish and Game (DFG).

The book contains 32 color plates with 163 excellent photographs of the vegetation series described. For those

interested in learning more, extensive bibliographic data are available.

Why have people gone to all the effort to develop this book? A principal reason is to provide data that ultimately can be used to afford legal protection to rare or threatened plant communities. The CNPS, in cooperation with the DFG, is starting its fourth year of collecting scientific data through field surveys to provide detailed information on the makeup of the more uncommon plant assemblages described in this book. This work will continue, as will review of the book by botanists.

The *Manual* is a very important step in disseminating and expanding our knowledge of California's vegetation, which is, after all, the basis of much that we treasure in our state. You probably will want a copy in your California books collection.

—George M. Clark

Resources

The First Thousand Days of the Next Thousand Years, a special publication on the Wildlands Project, is now available from *Wild Earth*, the conservation quarterly. The special issue gives an overview of the mapping and reserve design done to date for the Wildlands Project, which is working to map and implement a North American network of interconnected ecological reserves. Copies are \$5 each and can be ordered from *Wild Earth* at P. O. Box 455, Richmond, VT 05477; (802) 434-4077.

Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, or PEER, has published a white paper that reveals scandalous mismanagement of forests and funds by officials of the Eldorado National Forest. Entitled *Business as Usual: A Case Study of Environmental and Fiscal Malpractice on the Eldorado National Forest*, the report is available from PEER (2001 S Street, NW, Suite 570, Washington, DC 20009-1125 or 76554.133@compuserve.com or (202) 265-PEER) for \$5 a copy.

Letter

What more can we do?

As always, I enjoyed and was educated by the February issue. Being a closet history teacher, I particularly enjoyed "20 years of defending wilderness." As I read about the resurrection of the Barkley timber sale and other "logging without laws" atrocities, however, I became increasingly disturbed. It wasn't the ugly details. As most *Record* readers know, I deal with those every day in my work at the Klamath Forest Alliance. What bothered me was the "What you can do" section at the end of each story. In light of the current attitude of the Forest Service, many members of the California congressional delegation, and the administration, writing letters seems at best a weak, and at worst a totally ineffective, response. We are outraged, but all we are asked to do is write a letter!

It is time for Californians outraged by the war against our public forests to take an additional step. We need to get off our butts and into the streets. Why is it that no group has visited Rep. Fazio's office with media, signs, and fanfare to inquire why he is not sponsoring the Furse Public Land Laws Restoration bill? Why are we not protesting in front of Sierra Pacific Industries headquarters or occupying Wally Herger's offices? Direct action need not be illegal (although civil disobedience should not be discouraged), and it must be nonviolent. It should be happening now!

In Oregon and Washington activists are protesting in the forest, at the offices of politicians, in front of logging trucks and lumber mills, in the town squares. They are bearing witness to the truth and making enemies of the forest pay a political price. They also are educating the general public in ways that build the forest's constituency and inspire new activism. Why aren't we doing that in California?

Felice Pace
Etna



CWC T-shirts (order form on page 8)

Wilderness Trivia Answer

The wolverine (*Gulo gulo*).

Calendar

March 11-14 PUBLIC MEETINGS to discuss issues that should be considered in an upcoming coordinated management plan for California's Colorado Desert. Meetings are from 7:00-10:00 p.m. in Palm Springs (March 11), Needles (March 12), Blythe (March 13), and Twentynine Palms (March 14). For locations, call the Bureau of Land Management at (909) 697-5200.

March 12 COMMENTS DUE on a proposal to expand a golf course into the Inyo National Forest (article on page 1). Send to: Forest Supervisor, Inyo NF, 873 North Main Street, Bishop, CA 93514.

March 14-15 PUBLIC MEETING of the resource advisory committee for the Bureau of Land Management's Ukiah district, in Arcata. For details, call Renee Snyder at the BLM, (707) 468-4000.

March 15 COMMENTS DUE on a draft implementation guide for the Hayfork adaptive management area that will affect roadless areas in the Shasta-Trinity and Six Rivers national forests (article on page 4). Send to: Julia Riber and John Veevaert, Hayfork AMA Coordinators, P. O. Box 1120, Weaverville, CA 96093.

March 15 COMMENTS DUE on a Lassen National Forest salvage sale that threatens three roadless areas (article on page 4). Send to: Michael R. Williams, District Ranger, Almanor Ranger District, Lassen NF, P. O. Box 767, Chester, CA 96020.

March 16 COMMENTS DUE on a proposal to require permits for organized groups who use the King Range National Conservation Area. For a copy of the environmental assessment, contact the Bureau of Land Management's Arcata office at (707) 825-2300.

March 23 MEETING to discuss issues affecting the Southern Sierra Nevada Bioregion, in Tehachapi. For details, call the Institute for Ecological Health at (916) 756-6455.

April 12-14 ENVIRONMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL in San Francisco. For more information about The Big Green Screen, call Food First at (510) 654-4400.

April 13-14 MEETING of the California Ancient Forest Alliance to plan its Sierra Nevada campaign, in Davis. For details, call Jim Eaton at the CWC, (916) 758-0380.

April 27-28 KERN VALLEY FESTIVAL, celebrating bioregions, in Weldon and Kernville. For information about field trips and workshops, call the organizers at (619) 378-2407.

May 18-19 WORKSHOP on grazing reform, sponsored by the California Grazing Reform Alliance, in Sonora. For more information, call the California Mule Deer Association at (916) 645-3288.

Coalition Member Groups

Ancient Forest Defense Fund; Branscomb Back Country Horsemen of CA; Springville Bay Chapter, Sierra Club; Oakland Bay Chapter Wilderness Subcommittee; S. F. California Alpine Club; San Francisco California Mule Deer Association; Lincoln California Native Plant Society; Sacramento Citizens for Better Forestry; Hayfork Citizens for Mojave National Park; Barstow Citizens for a Vehicle Free Nipomo Dunes; Nipomo Committee to Save the Kings River; Fresno Conservation Call; Santa Rosa Davis Audubon Society; Davis Desert Protective Council; Palm Springs Desert Subcommittee, Sierra Club; San Diego Desert Survivors; Oakland Eastern Sierra Audubon Society; Bishop Ecology Center; Berkeley Ecology Center of Southern California; L. A. El Dorado Audubon Society; Long Beach Friends Aware of Wildlife Needs (FAWN); Georgetown Friends of Chinquapin, Oakland Friends of Plumas Wilderness; Quincy Friends of the Garcia (FROG); Point Arena Friends of the Inyo; Lone Pine Friends of the River; Sacramento Friends of the River Foundation; S. F. Fund for Animals; San Francisco Hands Off Wild Lands! (HOWL); Davis

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Los Padres Chapter, Sierra Club Marble Mountain Audubon Society; Etna Marin Conservation League; San Rafael Mendocino Environmental Center; Ukiah Mendocino Forest Watch; Willits Mono Lake Committee; Lee Vining Mt. Shasta Area Audubon Society; Mt. Shasta Mountain Lion Foundation; Sacramento Native Species for Habitat; Sunnyvale Natural Resources Defense Council; S.F. NCRCC Sierra Club; Santa Rosa Nordic Voice; Livermore North Coast Center for Biodiversity & Sustainability; Leggett

Northcoast Environmental Center; Arcata Northern Coast Range Biodiversity Project; Davis People for Nipomo Dunes Nat'l. Seashore; Nipomo Peppermint Alert; Porterville Placer County Cons. Task Force; Newcastle Planning & Conservation League; Sac. Range of Light Group, Toiyabe Chapter, Sierra Club; Mammoth Lakes Redwood Chapter, Sierra Club; Santa Rosa The Red Mountain Association; Leggett Resource Renewal Institute; San Francisco San Diego Chapter, Sierra Club; San Diego San Fernando Valley Audubon Society; Van Nuys Save Our Ancient Forest Ecology (SAFE); Modesto Sequoia Forest Alliance; Kernville Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund; S. F. Sierra Nevada Alliance; South Lake Tahoe Sierra Treks; Ashland, OR Soda Mtn. Wilderness Council; Ashland, OR South Fork Mountain Defense; Weaverville South Yuba R. Citizens League; Nevada City Tulare County Audubon Society; Visalia Tule River Conservancy; Porterville U.C. Davis Environmental Law Society Ventana Wildlands Group; Santa Cruz Western States Endurance Run; S. F. The Wilderness Land Trust; Carbondale, CO The Wilderness Society; San Francisco Wintu Audubon Society; Redding Yolano Group, Sierra Club; Davis Yolo Environmental Resource Center; Davis

"I'm damned if I'll walk!"

—Assemblyman Bill Morrow (R-Oceanside) in the *Borrego Sun*, protesting a Department of Parks and Recreation decision to close three miles of Coyote Canyon in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park to off-road vehicles. He was cited by a park ranger for driving in another closed area.

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