



# WILDERNESS RECORD

Proceedings of the California Wilderness Coalition

September 1997

## Activists, conservationists unite in Sierra Nevada campaign



Mineral King, Sequoia National Park, looking toward the Golden Trout Wilderness. The goal of the Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign is protection the of all important areas in the Range of Light. Photo by Bruce Barnbaum.

By Scott Hoffman

The Sierra Nevada has always been described in superlatives: "the Range of Light," "the most divinely beautiful of all the mountain chains," "one of the world's greatest mountain ranges." It is the home of the largest living things on earth: giant sequoia trees. The range includes the tallest mountain in the nation outside of Alaska. It produces 70 percent of the water supply for the country's most populous state. When Americans think of California, probably the only image as indelible as that of the majestic Sierra Nevada is the image of the rugged California coast.

What few people in California or elsewhere in America realize is that the 15.5-million-acre, 430-mile-long Sierra Nevada range is sliding toward destruction. Its old-growth forests, though held in public trust by the U.S. Forest Service, are rapidly being logged to extinction. Many of its remaining wild roadless lands are also at risk, jeopardizing many species dependent on this ecosystem. Clearcuts and the 25,000 miles of

logging roads constructed over the years by the U.S. Forest Service have fragmented much of the Sierra's remaining wild and old-growth areas into relatively small, isolated stands. The resulting erosion has also destroyed thousands of miles of fish habitat and threatens the quality of California's drinking water. Turbidity, silt, and loss of reservoir capacity increases the costs Californians pay for both water and electric power. Nonetheless, the Forest Service has proposed logging 835,000 additional acres and building 1,200 miles of new roads over the next decade in the national forests of the Sierra Nevada.

The Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project (SNEP) report entitled "Status of the Sierra Nevada", published by the independent Wildland Resources Center at the University of California, concludes that:

- Aquatic/riparian systems are the most altered and impaired habitats of the Sierra Nevada.
- Timber harvest has increased fire severity in

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## California conservation today: A new activist's introduction to major policy issues affecting public lands

By Ryan Henson

Since CWC usually reports on specific events, we rarely step back and offer a "big picture" view of California public lands conservation. Below, we have tried to describe the key trends, policies, and other influences which greatly effect the current and future management of these public lands.

This month is devoted to logging, livestock grazing, and off-road vehicle use (ORV). In the coming months, we will also offer general introductions to fire management, mining, land exchanges, road impacts, roadless areas, wilderness study areas, ancient forest, recreation, wilderness, and visions for public lands management in the coming century.

### Logging and road construction

Logging is a publicly subsidized activity in our national forests and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands, as is the road construction that goes along with it. Fortunately, the BLM's logging program has become quite minuscule, so this section will focus on Forest Service logging issues.

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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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## Wilderness Record

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## Coalition News

### CWC hires new Executive Director!

After much searching, the Board of Directors has hired Paul Spitler as the new Executive Director of the California Wilderness Coalition. Paul started as a volunteer with the Coalition, working on logging, grazing and off-road vehicle issues. Later he was hired by the Western Ancient Forest Campaign (WAFC) to be their California Organizer. With WAFC, Paul spear-headed efforts in California to protect ancient forests on public land.

His keen political sense, dedication, media expertise and propensity to work very long hours are great news for the Coalition. We are hoping that Paul's leadership will steer this growing organization to new heights in protecting California's wild lands. Look here next month as Paul settles into his new job and shares his vision of what comes next for CWC and public lands conservation throughout the state.

### Position Available

The California Wilderness Coalition has a part-time opening for a Membership and Development Associate. The Membership and Development Associate works closely with the Executive Director to plan and coordinate all aspects of CWC member relations and fundraising. Specific duties include maintenance of the CWC database, coordinating membership renewal and fund appeal mailings, acknowledging donations with a timely response, soliciting new members, coordinating fundraising events, working with the Executive Director to develop grant proposals, and working with volunteers and other miscellaneous administrative duties.

#### Desired Qualifications:

- Excellent verbal and written communication skills
- Membership/development experience with non-profit organization
- Fundraising experience including grant writing, major donor campaigns, and event planning
- Computer literate (Macintosh office; Panorama and Microsoft Word a plus)
- Excellent time management and general office skills

Flexible hours and days. Half-time salary DOE. Position open beginning September 1.

Send resume and references to: California Wilderness Coalition 2655 Portage Bay East, Suite 5 Davis, CA 95616

### WANTED:

A four-drawer filing cabinet and large executive desk for our new Executive Director. Call (916) 758-0380 if you can help. Thank you.

### Save the Date!

Sunday, November 13

- CWC is celebrating at the Patagonia store in San Francisco!
- Cocktails, silent auction, and more!
- Former Senator Alan Cranston will be present.

Stay tuned for more details.

### CWC T-shirts



Julissa wears our six-tone landscape shirt, available in jade, fuchsia, light blue, or pale green for \$15. Paul sports our three-color logo T-shirt, available in jade, royal blue, birch, or cream for \$15.

Not shown but still available: our animal design by Bay Area cartoonist Phil Frank, in beige or light gray, for \$12. All shirts are 100 percent double-knit cotton. To order, use the form on the back page.

## Public Lands Management

# Black Sands Beach: wilderness not an ORV sandbox Letters needed to counter national campaign to keep beach open

A follow-up to an alert published last month.

By Ryan Henson

The 60,000-acre King Range National Conservation Area (NCA) is one of California's most spectacular wild lands. Situated in southwestern Humboldt County, the King Range is the longest stretch of undeveloped coastline remaining on the west coast of the United States. The area hosts a plethora of sensitive animal species in its ancient forests, woodlands, grasslands, tidepools, beaches, and wetlands, including northern spotted owl, goshawk, bald eagle, fisher, salmon, steelhead, Roosevelt elk, mink, pileated woodpecker, and migrating marine mammals.

Hiking and backpacking have increased tenfold over the last two decades, and the area's many friends have long lobbied Congress to protect it as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System. The protection and restoration of this unique area is a high priority for conservation groups.

The BLM, which has begun to manage the area to preserve its wildness, also supports protecting much of the NCA as wilderness. For example, during the Bush administration the BLM recommended to Congress that over 24,000 acres of the area be preserved as designated wilderness while refusing to recommend any wilderness protection for dozens of other wild areas across the state. Given the agency's internal reforms since the late 1980s and its general change in attitude towards wilderness, it is likely that the BLM will support a larger wilderness proposal at some point in the future.

The BLM's Arcata Resource Area is proposing to close 3.5 miles of coastline in the King Range to off-road vehicles (ORVs). The closure would stretch from Telegraph Creek to Gitchell Creek on Black Sands Beach.

Galvanized by the anti-conservation Blue Ribbon Coalition, ORV groups have begun a national campaign

to stop the BLM's closure plans. The BLM has tried various strategies to curb ORV use on Black Sands Beach and encourage "responsible" motorized recreation. However, the agency concedes that these measures "do not seem to have reduced the overall level of illegal use." In addition, conflicts between ORV users and hikers have increased dramatically.



The King Range National Conservation Area. Photo by Jim Eaton.

**Galvanized by the anti-conservation Blue Ribbon Coalition, ORV groups have begun a national campaign to stop the BLM's closure plans.**

Closing Black Sands Beach to ORVs will be a major leap forward in the fight to protect and restore the NCA's primitive character. October will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the designation of the King Range NCA. If it is ever to become the "King Range (or Lost Coast) Wilderness," we must fight to rid the area of vehicles for good.

#### What you can do

Please send a letter\* supporting closing of Black Sands Beach to ORVs to:

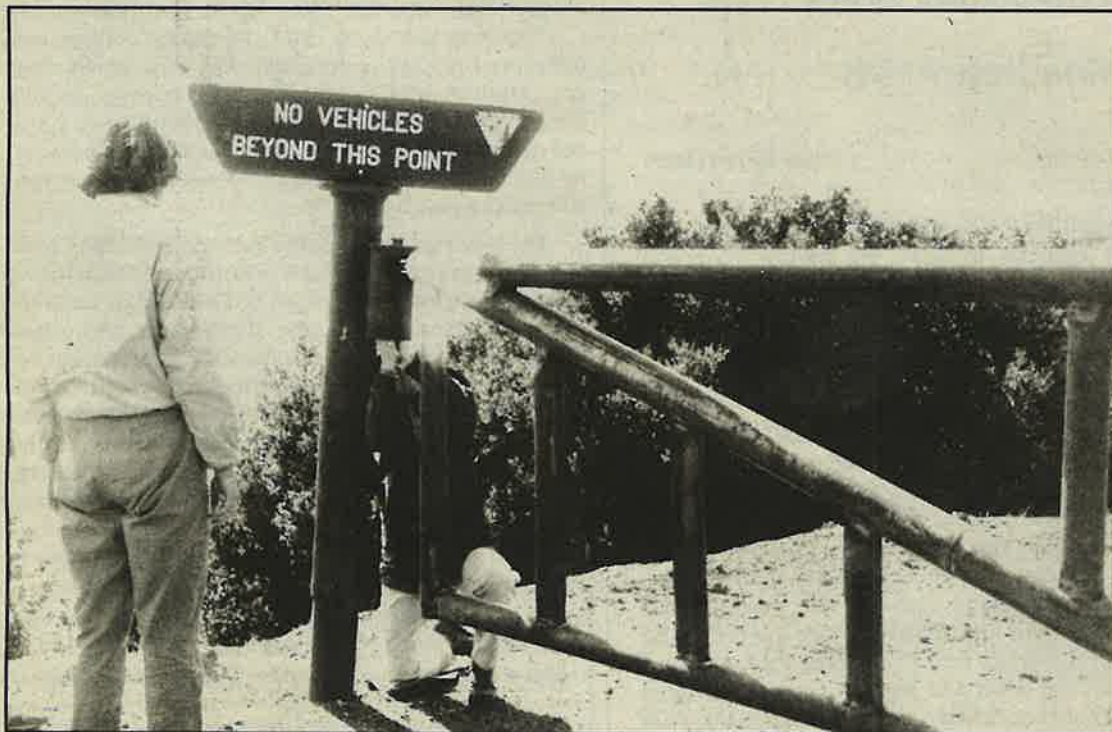
Lynda Roush, Area Manager, BLM Arcata Resource Area, 1695 Heindon Road, Arcata, CA 95521.

It is always helpful to send copies of such letters to one or both of California's senators at:

The Honorable Barbara Boxer or the Honorable Dianne Feinstein

Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

\* Ms. Roush will also accept comments via electronic mail at [lroush@ca.blm.gov](mailto:lroush@ca.blm.gov) or by fax at (707) 825-2301.



The BLM has increasingly worked to reduce motorized vehicular traffic in the King Range National Conservation Area. Photo by Jim Eaton.

## Ancient Forests

# Ancient forest logging in Shasta-Trinity roadless area threatens wildlife, water quality

By Anthony Ambrose

The Shasta-Trinity National Forest is currently proposing to log ancient forest habitat in the Beegum Creek watershed near the Yolla Bolly-Middle Eel Wilderness. The Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Beegum Corral/Regan Timber Sale outlines plans to cut 14 million board feet of trees (enough to fill roughly 2,800 logging trucks) from 1,886 acres, construct 3.9 miles of new roads, and "reconstruct" 9 miles of existing road (reconstruction is often new road construction in disguise). In addition, 1.8 miles of "fuel breaks" are proposed within the East Beegum Roadless Area without conducting a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement as required by the National Environmental Policy Act.

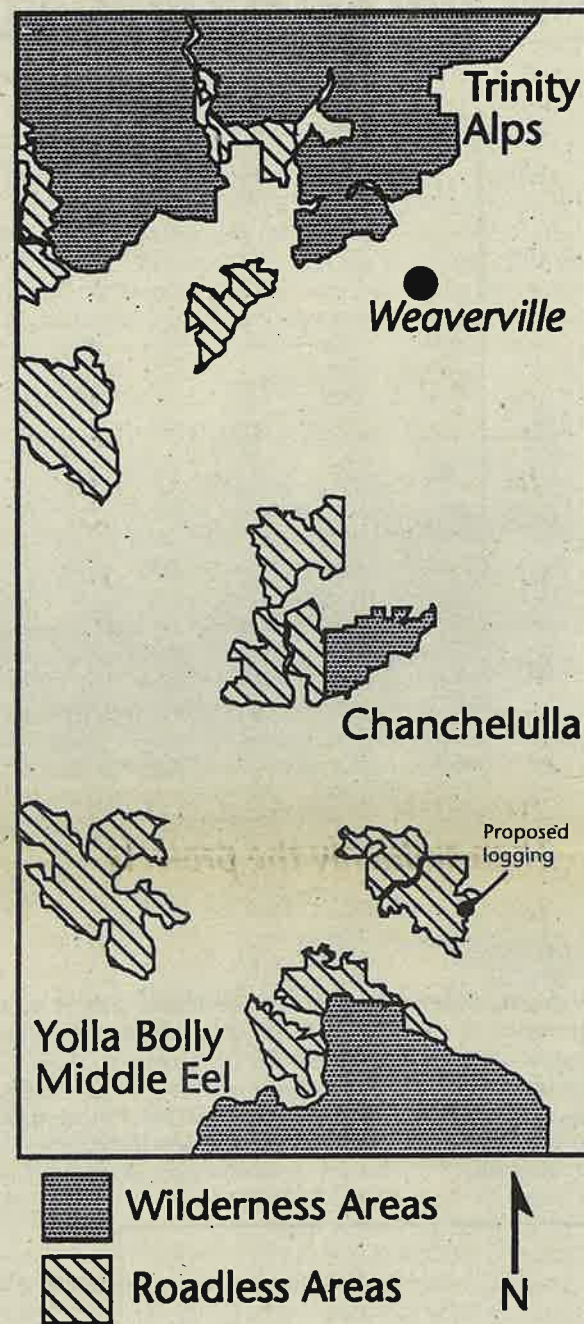
Over 28 old-growth dependent species are believed to occur within the Beegum watershed, including northern spotted owls, northern goshawk, Pacific fisher, and American marten. However, logging and associated road construction over the past 30 years have eliminated most of the native ancient forest and has left old-growth habitat severely fragmented.

Using twisted logic and incomprehensible pseudo-science, the Forest Service is now proposing to destroy some of the few remaining old-growth fragments in the headwaters of the watershed, claiming that more logging and road construction is good for "forest health." For example, the Beegum Watershed Analysis recommends "defragmenting" the landscape by clearcutting old-growth patches to "create larger areas of consistent landscape pattern" (i.e. young tree plantations). In other words, instead of defragmenting habitat by growing young, small trees into large, old ones, the Forest Service has decided to make the entire area a tree farm instead of a forest.

The timber sale contains four of the five known northern spotted owl nesting and breeding areas located within the Beegum Creek watershed, and is located between two northern spotted owl Critical Habitat Units (areas the government has identified as irreplaceable habitat) designated as old-growth reserves under the President's Northwest Forest Plan. The four groves intended for logging, as well as the 8,600 acre East Beegum Roadless Area, provide the primary north-south migration corridor between the Yolla Bolly-Middle Eel Wilderness and the Chancelulla Wilderness, yet the Forest Service claims that logging there will help maintain and restore habitat connections between these wilderness areas.

The Beegum Creek watershed also provides cold, clear water to the Sacramento River drainage, critical for the maintenance and recovery of the river's anadromous fish, including steelhead trout and winter run chinook salmon (in high-water years Beegum Creek itself supports these fish). The cumulative impacts from past management activities in the watershed threaten the integrity and functioning of the aquatic systems, yet the Forest Service is proposing continued logging and road construction in sensitive riparian areas and directly in stream channels. They have also failed to consult the Bureau of Land Management, which has recommended that this portion of Beegum Creek be permanently protected as a Wild and Scenic River.

The Beegum Corral/Regan timber sale is a prime example of the Forest Service's reluctance to implement ecosystem management based on sound scientific prin-



Map by Jim Eaton

ciples. It exemplifies the continued efforts of public land management agencies to serve the narrow economic interests of the timber industry at the public's expense, and the continued assault on our last wild areas.

### What you can do

The 30 day comment period on the EA ends on September 18. For copies of the EA, contact the Hayfork Ranger District (POB 159, Hayfork, CA 96041, (916) 628-5227). To voice opposition to the sale, contact Hayfork District Ranger Mike Hupp, and Forest Supervisor J. Sharon Heywood (2400 Washington Ave., Redding, CA 96001, (916) 246-5222). Demand that the Beegum Corral/Regan Timber Sale be immediately withdrawn, and that all future management plans consider the needs of the ecosystem rather than just limited private interests. Also remind the Forest Service that you oppose the continued logging of roadless areas and ancient forests. For more information, contact Citizens for Better Forestry, POB 1297, Hayfork, CA, 96041.

Anthony Ambrose works for Citizens for Better Forestry.

## Citizen's stop roadless area logging

By Ryan Henson

August brought a few welcome victories to conservationists, Native Americans, and others who struggle to protect what remains of wild California.

First, Anthony Ambrose and others with Citizens for Better Forestry (CBF) in Trinity County succeeded in convincing the Forest Service to withdraw its logging plans for the popular Pattison Roadless Area in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. We are proud to report that CWC intern Ginger Gallup was the first to discover that the Forest Service's logging plans included the roadless area, despite the agency's claims to the contrary.

The Pattison Roadless Area was so close to being designated a wilderness area (and therefore protected from all logging, road construction, and most other forms of destruction) that its name even appears on a poster celebrating the passage of the California Wilderness Act of 1984. Sadly, the roadless area was dropped at the last minute when then-Senator Pete Wilson demanded an across-the-board thirty percent cut in the acreage to be protected as the price for his support of the act. Activists have been struggling to thwart Forest Service logging plans for the area ever since.

Native Americans living along the Trinity River also stopped Forest Service logging plans, in this case a project slated for the Cow Creek Roadless Area in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. The area is sacred to three tribes in the region and the Forest Service's logging proposal would have greatly disrupted their age-old religious use of the area.

This was the third time the Forest Service has attempted to log the area since the early 1980s. The first attempt was stopped by CBF because of the controversy surrounding the logging of northern spotted owl habitat, and the second was stopped last year by CWC. The latest attempt was a scaled-down version of the first two.

The repeated fights for the Pattison and Cow Creek roadless areas highlights the pressing need to achieve permanent protection for all of California's remaining wild regions. CWC, the Sierra Club, and other groups are laying the groundwork for legislation to designate new wilderness areas for the protection and restoration of biological diversity on our public lands. Since the drafting and passing of such bills typically can take a decade or more, conservationists will have many more battles in the meantime.

**Native Americans living along the Trinity River also stopped Forest Service logging plans, in this case a project slated for the Cow Creek Roadless Area in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest**

## Wilderness News

# Geothermal run-a-muck at Medicine Lake

## Wells, powers lines, and towers slated for remote northern volcanic lake

By Janie Painter

The Medicine Lake Highlands, located in eastern Siskiyou County, traverse the Modoc, Klamath and Shasta-Trinity national forests in Northern California. The Highlands are part of California's largest volcanic area. Pristine Medicine Lake lies within the volcanic caldera (the rim of the ancient volcano that created this landscape) at the 6,700 foot elevation. Medicine Mountain lies on the south rim of the caldera, offering spectacular views of the surrounding country. To the west, Mount Shasta stands as a sentinel, her arms reaching out and guarding all her natural treasures.

The latest geothermal fiasco in this region is being promoted by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the United States Forest Service. As one local reporter put it, "You don't hear them coming until they are on top of you—the energy projects that originated with government sponsored leases a decade or so ago. Sold in Washington, the leases are bought by large companies who probe the ocean or earth in relative obscurity until they strike a profitable 'field.' Then suddenly the projects appear in your backyard, with names like Fourmile Hill and Telephone Flat, and people wonder where they came from. And what hit them." (David Manley, Mount Shasta Herald, July 23, 1997). The BLM and Forest Service have leased public lands to two corporations, CalEnergy and CalPine, who are proposing to build geothermal power plants in the Medicine Lakes Highlands.

CalEnergy's Telephone Flat geothermal project is proposed for 1.5 miles east of Medicine Lake and lies within the volcanic caldera. CalPine's Fourmile Hill geothermal project would be located three miles north of the lake on the outside slope of the caldera, just south of the Lava Beds National Monument. CalPine intends to run their high voltage transmission lines one half mile from the lake, parallel to the campground and visible from the lake. The 120 foot-wide right-of-way will be clear-cut out of old-growth lodgepole pines. The lodgepole pine is extremely slow growing because of the lack of nutrients in the pumice soil and the cold winter months. As a result, a 7 inch diameter lodgepole pine from the Medicine Lake area can be up to eighty years old.

We feel strongly that the location of these projects is in an area that poses serious geophysical risks. Could geothermal drilling trigger the volcanic activity that already exists?

The pristine Medicine Lake area is not only a popular recreation spot for campers and fishers, it is also home to abundant wildlife, including bald eagles and osprey which nest along the lake shore. Medicine Lake has a long historic Native American heritage, and several local tribes: the Pit River Tribe, Shasta Nation and the Klamath/Modoc tribes all have sacred ceremonial sites there.

The development of this project would result in the construction of an eighteen acre power plant site, four

miles of above-ground, 3 foot wide steam pipelines, acres of well sites and over twenty miles of 120 foot towers to support the high voltage transmission lines. It would be necessary to build many new roads to connect and maintain the entire system.

Eighteen to twenty-two geothermal production and injection wells would be drilled for the first CalEnergy power plant. It will take 45 to 90 days of around the clock drilling to complete one of the 3,000 to 6,000-foot deep wells. Drilling would only be curtailed during heavy

***You don't hear them coming until they are on top of you—the energy projects that originated with government sponsored leases a decade or so ago. Sold in Washington, the leases are bought by large companies who probe the ocean or earth in relative obscurity until they strike a profitable 'field.' Then suddenly the projects appear in your backyard, ... and people wonder where they came from. And what hit them.***

winter snow months. The constant noise made by the drilling would not only be extremely disruptive to humans, but to the wildlife of the area as well.

The damaging impact on the flora and fauna, geology, Native American ceremonial sites, and recreation opportunities will change the face of the Medicine Lakes Highlands forever.

### **Dubious cost effectiveness raises probability of future plants**

The 100 million dollar cost for construction of the 48 megawatt CalEnergy Telephone flat project is simply not cost effective. It is difficult to believe that a 48 megawatt power plant can generate enough income to pay off the construction and maintenance costs during the reasonable life of the facility. With power plants all over the western United States shutting down and the onset of deregulation of electricity, we question the wisdom of these major new geothermal projects. The CalPine Fourmile Hill project will be no more cost effective or efficient. As yet, there is no buyer for the electricity

generated by this plant. Both companies own other geothermal leases in the area. The total number of leases sold to power plants is being looked into to determine the extent of the cumulative impacts of several potential new plants.

The proposed 300 megawatt transmission line has the capability to carry power from six 49 megawatt power plants. The effects of these potential additional power plants has not been addressed in the draft EIS/EIR. This inattention to the big picture raises serious concerns about the cumulative environmental effects of these additional power plants.

The power generated by the CalEnergy project will not benefit the citizens of California, who will be paying the price of the environmental destruction of this pristine and unique area. The power will, in fact, be sold to Oregon. It is obvious that the intent is to take the natural resources put in trust for the people and sell them to the highest bidder.

In the current political climate, when the public is especially concerned about threats to the environment, we ask why geothermal development now? The geothermal potential of this area has been known since at least 1981. The cost effectiveness of this project is certainly questionable. The environmental and ecological costs are extremely high.

We feel this project is being promoted now as a scheme to generate money for the BLM and the Forest Service. Budget cuts affecting both these agencies are well known. If you follow the money trail, they are the ones who will be receiving the cash, along with Siskiyou County who will benefit through property taxes and royalties. The BLM and the Forest Service are entrusted to manage public lands, like the Medicine Lake Highlands, for the public good. Instead, the agencies are proposing to desecrate this area to enhance their own coffers in complete disregard of the public trust.

### **What you can do**

Letters from the concerned public opposing both the Fourmile Hill and Telephone Flat geothermal projects will help make the case that people care about this unique and pristine region. Review copies of the EIS/EIR can be obtained from the address below. Letters should be sent to:

Randall Sharp, Project Leader  
Fourmile Hill/Telephone Flat Projects  
U.S. Forest Service  
800 West 12th Street  
Alturas, CA 96101

The comment deadline is September 16, although it very likely will be extended pending a Freedom of Information Act request.

Janie Painter is the Coordinator of the Medicine Lake Citizen's for Quality Environment.

## Conservation today: a new activist's introduction to issues in California's public lands

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At its heart, the public land logging controversy is very simple: corporations take the trees, the Forest Service collects a small fee, and the public is repaid with degraded streams, useless (and destructive) "roads to nowhere," diminished plant and wildlife habitat, and visual scars on the land. The fees collected by the Forest Service rarely exceed the costs of planning logging projects in the first place.

On the other hand, logging practices have improved dramatically. According to many scientists, some forms of logging may actually help restore previously clearcut areas. While some national forests have begun implementing such "eco-forestry" efforts, others continue to seek out ancient forests to cut.

There are several major policy controversies that may either decrease, or increase logging in our forests depending on how they are resolved. For example, the future

management of habitat for California spotted owls and other old-growth dependent species in the Sierra Nevada is terribly controversial and will likely effect everything in the Range of Light from wilderness and water quality to road mileage and how much ancient forest will be left in the twenty-first century.

In 1993, a team of scientists convened to study the owl's decline released a study commonly known as the

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## Wilderness News

# Effort launched to regain diverted Eel River water

Since 1908, a Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) dam and diversion facility known as the Potter Valley Project has taken up to 90 percent of the water from the headwaters of the Eel River and redirected it south through hydroelectric turbines into the East Branch of the Russian River. Concerned citizens of that watershed say unnaturally high flows are damaging the Russian River ecosystem; meanwhile, the Eel River suffers from abnormally low water levels and high temperatures that are lethal for aquatic life. In both rivers, salmon and steelhead trout are on the brink of extinction.

The Eel is California's third-largest river system. Formerly a cool, deep river, it is now shallow, warm, and choked with gravel. Its levels of sediment are legendary—arguably among the highest in the world. In years past, the Eel was also legendary for its great numbers of fish. In 1900, there were at least 250,000 coho, chinook, and steelhead in the Eel River, with 100,000 chinook alone harvested from the Eel River. Today there might be a total of 25,000 anadromous fish (fish that spawn in fresh water, live their adult lives in the ocean, and return to their stream of origin to reproduce). Statewide the current total estimate for coho salmon is less than 7,500, and of that number, 3,000 to 5,000 are believed to be from the Eel River. What will it take to make returning this river system to its former health and abundance a priority?

While the Potter Valley Project is certainly not the only problem affecting the Eel River, it is certainly one of the main impediments. Stopping the Eel's diversion to the Russian would instantly and dramatically lower water temperatures and raise the level of the river. The timing is right for making a move to regain this water. PG&E has announced that the Potter Valley Project is no longer a profitable hydroelectric venture, and since downstream users on the Russian system refuse to subsidize the diversion by paying for any of their diverted Eel River water, PG&E has decided to sell or shut down the facility.

One might think that closure of this hydroelectric facility means the automatic return of diverted water to the Eel. Think again! Sonoma and Marin counties are maneuvering to buy the Potter Valley Project and gain control of the Eel River water flowing south, despite

Sonoma County Water Agency's own analysis in 1990 (and again in 1994) stating that there is plenty of water in the Russian River system to meet all legitimate existing needs (with the exception of the community of Potter Valley, which has come to rely on the diversion). This is a political water grab, pure and simple. Sonoma County would maintain the Potter Valley Project not as a hydro-



The headwaters of the main stem Eel River. Downstream up to 90 percent of its water is diverted for hydroelectric generation. Photo by Ryan Henson.

electric business but rather as a water delivery system.

***The Eel is California's third-largest river system. Formerly a cool, deep river, it is now shallow, warm, and choked with gravel. Its levels of sediment are legendary—arguably among the highest in the world. In years past, the Eel was also legendary for its great numbers of fish***

A grassroots group known as Friends of the Eel River has studied the situation and is moving to file suit against PG&E to prevent any sale of this project and to insist that if its original purpose—electricity generation—is no longer valid, then the water should stay in its rightful watershed. Based on the public trust doctrine, the lawsuit claims that ecological concerns on both the Eel and Russian rivers mandate the end of the diversion. Furthermore, the facility was initially constructed against the wishes of Humboldt County (where the majority of the Eel River watershed is located) and has been a violation of the public trust since its inception. Given the clear needs of the Eel watershed versus the weak claims of counties to the south, the lawsuit has an excellent chance of success.

Friends of the Eel River is working to raise \$15,000 to launch the lawsuit. Fortunately, the attorney has agreed to work on the case pro bono. Anyone wishing to donate or learn more can contact Friends of the Eel River at P.O. Box 1834, Willits, CA 95490, (707) 459-9278.

# Ancient forest near Yosemite spared the saw

The U.S. Forest Service has decided not to proceed with a controversial proposal to log an old-growth forest adjacent to Yosemite National Park. The proposal had raised a firestorm of protest by environmental organizations and concerned citizens.

The North Mountain Roadless Area, in the Stanislaus National Forest, was targeted for logging after the Ackerson-Rogge fires burned the area last summer. The area contains abundant old-growth forests and critical wildlife habitat, and includes one of the largest remaining old-growth stands in the central Sierra Nevada. The North Mountain area was one of five areas targeted for salvage logging. In four separate decisions in August, Forest Service officials approved all the other salvage sales except the North Mountain sale. Those four approved sales will allow logging of more than 95 percent of the salvageable dead or dying trees in the area. North Mountain had relatively few dead trees compared to the other areas since its old-growth stands were far more resistant to the fires.

"We want to praise the Forest Service for making this decision. The agency deserves recognition for responding to the overwhelming public support to protect the old-growth values and the wild, primitive recreation of North Mountain," said John Buckley, Executive Director of the Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center (CSERC) in Twain Harte.

After pressure from Representative Gary Condit convinced the Forest Service to attend a meeting with concerned citizens from the Modesto area, a follow-up helicopter flight brought the agency officials and interested members of the public to North Mountain. CSERC staff were able to show Forest Service officials that there were far less trees available than had originally been estimated. Instead of four to eight million board-feet, less than one million board-feet were actually available for logging, and part of that was excluded from logging by special wildlife restrictions.

Citizens overwhelmingly opposed the attempt to log the old-growth forests of North Mountain. Of 115 letters received by the Forest Service regarding the logging proposal, 109 urged the agency to cancel the project. Also, over 450 citizens donated \$7.31 each to "purchase" the threatened forest. \$7.31 is the amount the Forest Service determined that taxpayers would earn per acre from the sale of the trees.

"We received a lot of responses on this small part of the Ackerson-Rogge salvage, with very little support to enter the area for harvest," Acting Forest Supervisor Glenn Gottschall said. "This lack of support, along with insufficient volume and value, coupled with my desire to not diminish the old-growth values in North Mountain, led to this decision."

North Mountain is located against the edge of Yosemite National Park, just above the Tuolumne River. It's one of the largest remaining old-growth stands still left in the central part of the Sierra Nevada on national forest land. A combination of grassroots, local, and national group's efforts led to the cancellation of the sale. This rare and special place will continue to thrive thanks to the efforts of many.

Sources: Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center, Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign.

## Wilderness Forum

### Sierra Nevada Campaign

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the Sierra Nevada more than any other recent human activity.

- The most important cause of the decline of Sierra Nevada wildlife has been the loss of riparian, foothill and late successional forest habitat.
- Riparian areas in the Sierra Nevada have been damaged extensively by mining, dams, diversions, roads, logging, residential development and recreational activities.
- Excessive sediment yield into streams is causing widespread water quality problem in the Sierra Nevada.

To protect and restore the Sierra Nevada, numerous individual activists and more than 50 local, regional and national conservation organizations have organized the Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign. The ultimate mission of the Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign is to protect the old-growth forests, riparian areas, roadless lands and other biologically important areas of the Sierra Nevada.

To accomplish this, we are working to provide interim protection for the Sierra's outstanding natural areas and values by educating the general public and decision-makers about the need to protect the Sierra Nevada ecosystem. We are also utilizing scientific and legal resources to foster long-term protective management of public forestlands in the range. Ultimately we would like to establish a system of ancient forest reserves, wilderness areas, wild rivers and protected watersheds.

Since its inception the Campaign has made considerable progress on several fronts. We have been working on a strategic response to the California Spotted Owl Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) recommendations. We attended the Tahoe Summit with President Bill Clinton and Vice-President Al Gore where we disseminated a report on the state of the Tahoe forest ecosystem. We have contracted with two new individuals for forest defense and science coordination. And we have initiated a strategic response to S. 1028, "the Quincy Library Group bill" in the Senate.

The Campaign has also contracted with eight organizations and one individual to monitor national forests in the Sierra Nevada. We have also initiated the formation of two new groups that will provide additional forest monitoring, completing a network of forest monitors that will cover every National Forest in the Sierra Nevada.

#### Upcoming Events

The Campaign will hold a series of workshops in the Sierra Nevada intended to integrate converging ideas and efforts related to designing a viable reserve design network for the Sierra Nevada. These workshops will help activists apply Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project (SNEP) data and findings to lay the groundwork for permanent protection of the Sierra Nevada through a science-based reserve design, which considers the ecosystem as a whole.

This will not be another meeting on the endless problems we have to deal with. It will be a proactive workshop to give activists the tools to shape the wilderness and wild and scenic river legislation of the future and provide input into important resource documents such as the California Spotted Owl EIS. It will also start the work of creating an overall reserve design that we could promote as an alternative in forest plans of the future.

To join the Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign or for more information on conservation programs in this region or upcoming workshops please contact: Scott Hoffman, Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign, 128 J Street, 2nd Floor, Sacramento, CA 95814, (916) 442-3155 ext. 206, or e-mail [sierra\\_campaign@friendsoftheriver.org](mailto:sierra_campaign@friendsoftheriver.org).

Scott Hoffman is the Coordinator of the Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign.

### Conservation today

continued from page 5

CASPO (or California spotted owl) report, a plan which recommended that in most forest types, all trees greater than 30 inches in diameter within the range of the California spotted owl be protected. The Forest Service's attempts to develop a long-term management strategy to replace CASPO have all been met with tremendous opposition from conservationists because they would double logging in the Sierra Nevada. While these plans were shelved after significant public protest, a new plan currently under development will almost certainly spark a mammoth conservation battle next year.

Also threatening the forests of the Sierra Nevada is the Quincy Library Group bill (see *Wilderness Record*, August 1997). Supporters contend that the legislation will preserve the Lassen, Plumas, and Tahoe national forests as never before by protecting roadless areas, streams, and a substantial amount of ancient forest and by redirecting these national forests' logging programs to focus on the removal of small, crowded, fire-prone trees rather than old-growth trees. On the other hand, the logging program authorized by the bill will double cutting in these national forests (which together comprise one-third of the Sierra Nevada), degrade water quality and wildlife habitat, preempt additional protections that may be achieved in the near future through the fight over the California spotted owl management plan, and cost the taxpayers \$83 million.

Northwestern California's public forests also have an uncertain future. While logging has been reduced tremendously through the hard work of conservation activists, concerned scientists, bureaucrats and policymakers of conscience, ancient forest is still being logged and roads are still being built into previously wild areas.

President Clinton's Northwest Forest Plan (known as Option 9) was supposed to end the "timber wars" of the 1980s and create a scientifically sound, consensus-based vision for forest management within the range of the northern spotted owl (a close relative of the California spotted owl). Option 9 was approved in 1994, and is currently being implemented in the forests of the Pacific Northwest and northwestern California. On paper, Option 9 provides far stronger protections for the forests of northern California and the Pacific Northwest than does CASPO for the Sierra Nevada. For example, the plan protects to varying degrees 75 to 85 percent of all remaining old-growth within the range of the northern spotted owl and creates a large network of ancient forest reserves.

Despite the many positive aspects of the plan and its strength on paper, its loopholes are being exploited to such an extent that northwestern California's national forests are threatened by a host of old-growth logging proposals.

#### Off-road vehicles (ORVs)

The Forest Service and BLM have finally begun to reform ORV use on public land. In the past (and today in some areas) ORV enthusiasts could ride anywhere they wanted, no matter how ecologically sensitive the area. Unfortunately, ORV use is nearly impossible to control in large, open areas like the Mojave Desert.

On the other hand, these reform efforts have been funded by a subsidy from the State of California (yes, a portion of our gas tax is used to promote this destructive use of public land!), and the same funds used to control ORVs and repair the damage they cause is being used to promote ORV use.

#### Livestock grazing

Many of our national forests were created in the first place because sheep and other livestock were denuding them and causing enormous problems for farmers and urban dwellers downstream.

Grazing practices have improved tremendously since our national forests were founded and the vast herds of

## Calendar

**September 14 Headwaters vigils** to be held at Pacific Lumber's mill in Carlotta and at the State Capitol in Sacramento. Call the Bay Area Coalition for Headwaters at (510) 835-6303 for information on camping and transportation to the Carlotta vigil. The Sacramento vigil will be held at 7:00pm on the west steps of the Capitol. Other vigils are scheduled for San Francisco and Los Angeles. For more information contact Susan at Headwaters Sanctuary Project at (510) 444-4710 or e-mail her at [susans@nextgeneration.org](mailto:susans@nextgeneration.org).

**October 2-3 Meeting of the Northwest Resource Advisory Council** (formerly Ukiah District RAC). Call Ryan Henson at (916) 758-0380 for information.

**October 22-23 Meeting of the Sacramento Province Advisory Council.** Topics will include the implementation of Option 9. Call Ryan Henson at (916) 758-0380 for more information.

**October 25th Annual Meeting of the California Ancient Forest Alliance** in Davis, California. All activists who would like an opportunity to join with others now working to protect the ancient forests of California, or those who would like to learn how to become involved are encouraged to attend. The meeting will be held at the Village Homes Community Center. Call Scott Hoffman at (916) 442-3155 for more information.

sheep expelled (some sheepherders were driven out at gunpoint). On the other hand, in countless areas streams are being polluted, meadows are being over-grazed and often denuded, and sensitive plant species are being pushed to the brink of extinction by cattle and, on occasion, the notorious sheep. As with ORVs and logging, the public has the dubious honor of subsidizing public lands grazing with our tax dollars. For example, ranchers in 1993 paid only \$1.86 per month to federal agencies for each cow and calf they grazed on public lands, while fees for grazing similar areas on private land averaged \$10 or more per month for a cow and calf.

Individual national forests like the Modoc and Toiyabe have made great strides in reforming grazing practices, particularly in streamside areas. On the other hand, the most ambitious grazing reform effort is being undertaken by the BLM—despite a hostile Congress. The BLM's proposed reforms focus particularly on streamside areas and other fragile ecosystems. The success of these reforms depends on cooperative ranchers, conscientious government officials, and an active core of citizen activists willing to keep an eye out for grazing abuses while using public lands.

For more in-depth information about these or any other public lands issues, please contact CWC at (916) 758-0380.

Ryan Henson is the Conservation Associate for CWC.



## Coalition Member Groups

Ancient Forest Defense Fund; Branscomb Angeles Chapter, Sierra Club; Los Angeles 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 Fund for Animals; San Francisco

Golden Gate Audubon Society; Berkeley Hands Off Wild Lands! (HOWL); Davis High Sierra Hikers Association; Truckee International Center for Earth Concerns; Ojai Kaweah Flyfishers; Visalia Keep the Sespe Wild Committee; Ojai Kern Audubon Society; Bakersfield Kern River Valley Audubon Society; Bakersfield Kern-Kaweah Chapter, Sierra Club; Bakersfield Klamath Forest Alliance; Etna League to Save Lake Tahoe; South Lake Tahoe LEGACY-The Landscape Connection; Leggett

Loma Prieta Chapter, Sierra Club; Palo Alto Los Angeles Audubon Society, West Hollywood 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 Habitat; Woodside Natural Resources Defense Council; S.F. NCRCC Sierra Club; Santa Rosa Nordic Voice; Livermore Northcoast Environmental Center; Arcata 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 Seven Generations Land Trust; Berkeley Seventh Generation Fund; Arcata Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund; S. F. Sierra Nevada Alliance; South Lake Tahoe Sierra Treks; Ashland, OR Smith River Alliance; Trinidad Soda Mtn. Wilderness Council; Ashland, OR South Fork Mountain Defense; Weaverville South Yuba River 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 Yahi Group, Sierra Club; Chico Yolano Group, Sierra Club; Davis Yolo Environmental Resource Center; Davis

*"We received a lot of responses on this small part of the...salvage, with very little support to enter the area for harvest. This lack of support, along with insufficient volume and value, coupled with my desire to not diminish the old-growth values in North Mountain, led to this decision."*

— Acting Forest Supervisor Glenn Gottschall on his decision to stop the controversial logging project near Yosemite National Park. See article on page 6.

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