



WILDERNESS RECORD

Proceedings of the California Wilderness Coalition

December 1998

Uncommon coalition prevails in northern California forests

Forest Service cancels Hi-Ridge timber sales Ancient forest, potential wilderness spared

By Paul Spittler

Responding to a request from a unique coalition of environmental groups and a small, northern California timber company, the U.S. Forest Service recently announced the cancellation of six environmentally harmful timber sales in four northern California national forests.

"This is a win for our forests, a win for the economy, and a victory for common sense," said the Coalition's Ryan Henson. "Had they been carried out, these timber sales would have caused tremendous environmental damage and forced a small timber company to face bankruptcy."

The six canceled sales would have been severely damaging to several ecologically sensitive areas in four national forests in northern California. Because the sale contracts were awarded in the early 1990s when logging was less regulated, they would not comply with current environmental law and policy. Included in the logging plans were old-growth forests and a roadless area that is a potential wilderness area.

Because the price of lumber has plummeted since the timber sale contracts were signed, the contract holder, Hi-Ridge Lumber Company of Yreka, California would have been financially ruined if the contracts had not been canceled. Company President Gerry Bendix said the cancellation of the sales was "a matter of life or death" for the company.

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Death Valley, Mojave national parks plan for the future

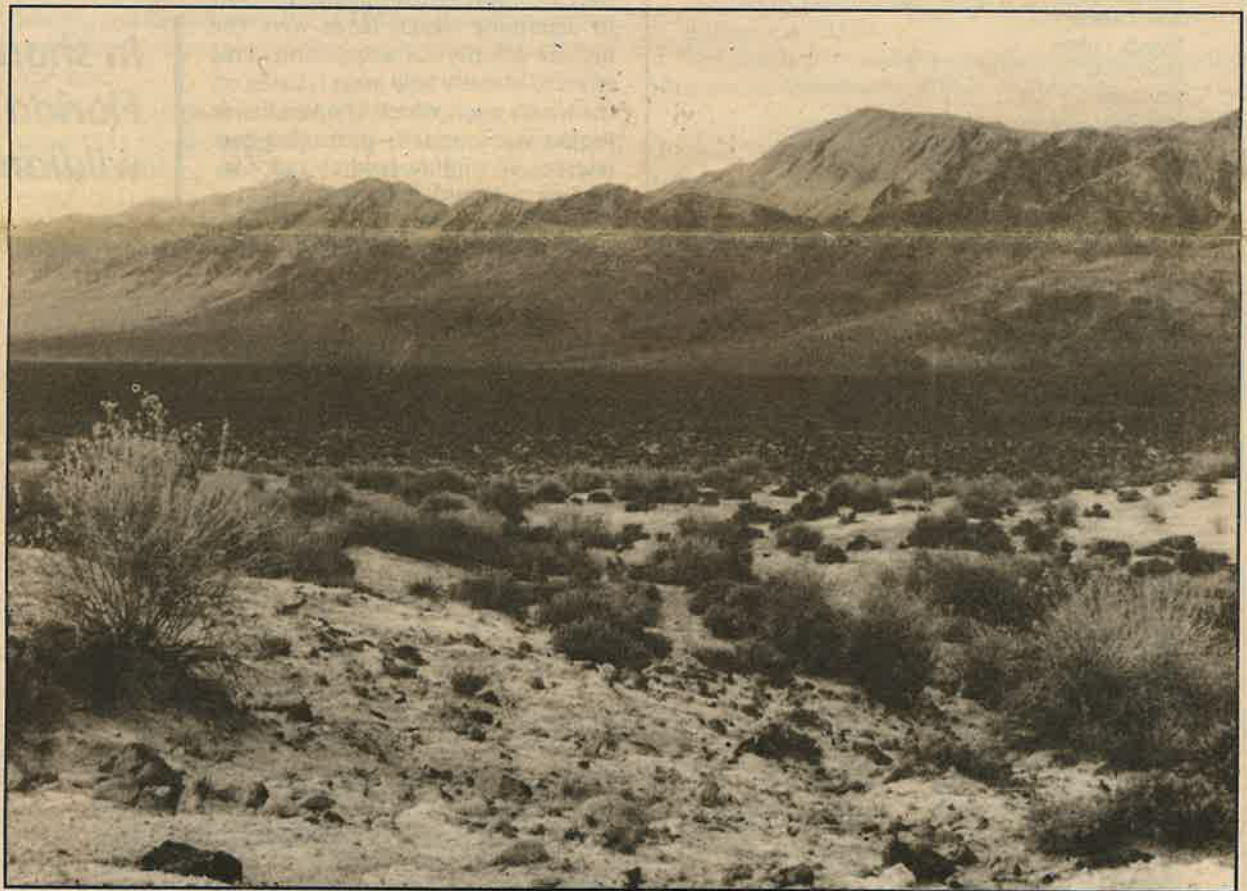
By Ray Wan

The California desert's diverse plant and animal communities, sweeping vistas of mountains, valleys and dunes, and rich cultural history have all led to its increased popularity. In light of this and increasing threats to its protection, the United States Congress passed the California Desert Protection Act in 1994. This landmark legislation dramatically expanded the Death Valley National Monument while upgrading it to a national park and

established the Mojave National Preserve. The legislation was an enormous victory for conservation, but both parks still face a wide range of threats and need public vigilance to ensure the long-term health of these remarkable desert ecosystems.

To guide the management of Death Valley and Mojave national parks for the next two decades, the National Park Service has recently published a draft general management plan (DGMP) for each park unit. These documents

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The Last Chance Range in Death Valley National Park. Recreation is taking its toll in certain sensitive areas of the park. The National Park Service is challenged with the task of protecting the park's ecology while accommodating growing numbers of visitors. Photo by Jim Eaton.

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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

Director's Report

If Florida can do it, why can't we?

If you think that California is the national leader in protecting its most important wildlife habitat, think again. With a series of bold initiatives over the past eight years, the state of Florida has developed the most effective and far-sighted land protection measures of any state in the nation. Californians who are concerned about environmental protection must be asking, "If Florida can do it, why can't we?"

Florida's efforts to protect key wildlife habitat received a major boost in 1990 when the legislature, at the request of the (Republican) Governor passed a ten-year, \$300 billion bond to provide funds for habitat acquisition. The measure, called Preservation 2000 or P2000, was in response to a report issued by the state that found that Florida's wildlands were disappearing rapidly. The report concluded that if development continued at the current rate, the state would lose three million acres of wetland and forest by the year 2020.

Preservation 2000 provided funds for habitat acquisition, and also spurred the state to jump-start a comprehensive planning effort to determine which lands were the highest priority for acquisition. This effort to identify wild areas is based on the tenets upon which The Wildlands Project was founded—protecting core reserves of wildlife habitat and connecting them with migration corridors. Because this planning effort was completed by state agencies, it carries a weight and legitimacy that is unprecedented.

In 1994, the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission issued a report showing the results of their analysis of the state's wildlife habitat needs. The analysis looked at the habitat needs of 44 focal species that serve as "umbrella or indicator species of biological diversity in Florida." The habitat needs of these species was combined with other information, including locations of rare plants and underprotected natural communities, to develop a map showing the most important habitat required for the survival of the state's plant and animals. In short, the state of Florida developed a wildlands vision.

The results have been tremendous. With Preservation 2000 funds, the state has protected over one million acres of critical habitat since 1990. The program is the pride of the state, and the legislature recently appropriated funds to continue P2000 into the next millennium. The program is now looked upon as a model for the rest of the nation.

California has not passed a park bond in for ten years. Information on the location of the state's most important plant and animal habitat is scarce, at best. Also, the state has never bothered to draft a vision for assuring the survival of the state's biological diversity, leaving this task instead to non-profit organizations like CWC. It's time for a new approach in the Golden State.

CWC is working to develop a statewide map showing the most important wildlife reserves and connecting corridors. We hope that this map will serve as a vision for the long-term protection of the state's biological diversity. But we can't do it alone. For this vision to become a

reality, the state simply must play a more active role in planning for, and protecting, our plants and animals.

So, what is it going to be California? Will we continue to take a piecemeal approach that aims to protect species only

after they become critically threatened? Or, will we learn from the lessons taught by states like Florida, and begin to plan for species survival on a statewide level in a way that will assure that our precious plants and animals will thrive far into the future?

We have a new governor, who we hope will bring a new attitude towards conservation in California. Let's not lose this opportunity to change the state's conservation paradigm towards one that includes far-sighted planning, bold statewide initiatives, and will leave a legacy that all future Californians can look at with pride.

By Paul Spitler

Board of Directors welcomes an old friend and bids farewell to others

The Board of Directors will see some new changes at the next meeting.

Jil Zilligen has stepped down after a short stint on the Board. Jil's work commitments, along with planning for her upcoming baby, have made her too busy to continue to serve. Sally Miller has also decided to leave the Board after years of service. Sally has been a tremendous asset to the CWC Board as a grassroots activist fighting on the front lines for our wild areas. Unfortunately, her work with Friends of the Inyo and the Inyo County Planning Commission have made it difficult for her to continue to be a part of CWC's Board. So long Sally and Jil. We'll miss you!

At its November meeting, the Board welcomed its newest member—someone who needs no introduction. He's been involved with the Coalition for 22 years (since

he and four others founded it in 1976), and was Executive Director for seventeen of those years. Jim Eaton will be a tremendous asset as his knowledge of wilderness issues, and of the organization, is unsurpassed. Welcome, Jim. It's a pleasure to have you back!

Patagonia lends support to CWC's work

Patagonia has granted the Coalition \$5,000 to support our efforts to protect California's wild areas. Patagonia has been a long-time supporter of CWC, and has provided direct grants, support for our annual fundraiser, and invaluable outreach assistance. And they make great, high-quality, environmentally friendly, outdoor gear. Thanks for everything, Patagonia!



Wilderness Management

No taxi for skiers in the Toiyabe National Forest

Company pulls proposal to tow skiers in a potential wilderness using snow-cats

By Sally Miller

The Toiyabe National Forest announced on November 12 that the proponent of a controversial commercial snow-cat operation had withdrawn its proposal. Sierra Catski Inc., of Lake Tahoe, had proposed to utilize a snowcat—a large, motorized over-the-snow-vehicle—to tow skiers and snowboarders to the top of snow-covered mountains in the roadless areas near Bridgeport, California. The locations proposed for use by Sierra Catski included Eagle Peak, Crater Crest, Monument Ridge, Dunderberg Peak and Copper Mountain, all of which are part of the Toiyabe National Forest's 54,137-acre Hoover East roadless area. 23,500 acres of the roadless area, including Eagle Peak, Crater Crest and Monument Ridge, were proposed by the Toiyabe National Forest over ten years ago as additions to the Hoover Wilderness.

Last spring, the Forest Service unveiled Sierra Catski's proposal, generating immediate outcry from conservationists and backcountry skiers. Sierra Catski hoped to capitalize on the increasing popularity of backcountry skiing and snowboarding in the eastern Sierra. Yet, unbeknownst to the Forest Service, the areas proposed for utilization by Sierra Catski are already popular backcountry winter-use areas for those seeking a wilderness-like experience. Many skiers ascend Dunderberg Peak and other nearby mountains under their own steam, using climbing "skins." Self-propelled snowboarders use snowshoes to ascend the peaks. "These skiers and others seek a pristine, backcountry experience, not one filled with the whine of motorized vehicles," said Marcus Libkind, coordinator for the cross-country skiers' group Nordic Voice, which helped to defeat the proposal.

Local skiers and conservation groups, led by Friends of the Inyo and Nordic Voice, quickly mobilized in an effort to defeat the ill-conceived proposal. They sent out alerts generating over 400 letters of opposition to the Forest Service, which, according to District Ranger Kathy Lucich, is the greatest volume of mail ever received by the Toiyabe National Forest on a local issue. Letter writers expressed concern about the motorized invasion of roadless areas proposed by the agency itself for wilderness, and possible impacts of motorized use on winter wildlife. Citizens also expressed concern about disruption of a prime wilderness recreation experience and displacement of existing use by self-propelled skiers and snowboarders in favor of motorized users. While there has always been tension between motorized and non-motorized recreationists, there is increasing tension as well between commercial and non-commercial users who recreate on public lands. There were also concerns raised about safety, due to the proponent's proposal to use explosives in the backcountry for avalanche control.

In response to the great number of letters, the Forest Service met with the proponent this summer and indicated that Sierra Catski would have to fund studies of winter and spring recreational use of the areas, as well as other studies needed for the environmental analysis. This fall, Sierra Catski decided to drop its proposal rather than pay for the required studies. Apparently the proponent, like the Forest Service, was overwhelmed with the tremendous volume of negative comments that were received in response to its proposal.

Bodie Hills potential wilderness to get open-pit gold mine?

By Sally Miller

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announced in November that it is considering a proposal by Paramount Gold Inc., a Canadian-based mining corporation, to allow exploration for gold in the Bodie Wilderness Study Area (WSA). The Bodie WSA, located northeast of Yosemite National Park and part of a complex of WSAs in the Bodie Hills, is—by the BLM's own admission—the crown jewel of the WSAs in the Bodie Hills. Rough and Atastra creeks cut through this beautiful area and pronghorn antelope roam its sagebrush-covered hills.

Paramount proposes exploratory drilling, construction of drill pads, and installation of new roads to reach the drill pads in the WSA. The BLM estimates that just under two acres of the area will be disturbed by the activity, requiring Mono County to prepare a plan to reclaim the disturbed acreage. Under the state's Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975, reclamation of sites disturbed by mining is required for any disturbance over one acre.

The BLM intends to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) on the proposal, even though conservation groups are asking that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) be prepared due to the potential for the exploration activity to have significant impacts on the natural resources within the WSA. Conservationists are

also asking that the BLM work with Mono County to prepare an environmental document which jointly assesses the impacts of the proposal and proposed reclamation activities in the same document.



What you can do

The BLM plans to release the EA in January, 1999. While the deadline for submitting "scoping" comments will be passed by the time readers receive this issue of the *Wilderness Record*, the BLM has previously committed to holding a comment period (probably 30 days) on the EA. Please contact the BLM and ask them to place your name on the mailing list to receive a copy of the EA.

Call (760) 872-4881, or send an e-mail to saddingt@ca.blm.gov, or write the BLM at:

Attn. Steve Addington
Area Manager
785 North Main Street, Suite E
Bishop, CA 93514

The Bishop BLM website will also eventually have this document online (www.ca.blm.gov/bishop).

For more information on the proposal contact Sally Miller at (760) 647-6411 or sallym@telis.org. Also, stay tuned to the *Wilderness Record* for further information.

Sally Miller is the president of Friends of the Inyo and an outgoing member of CWC's Board.



Rough Creek flowing through the Bodie Wilderness Study Area. The BLM is considering a proposal for an open-pit gold mine in the area, which the agency itself calls the "crown jewel" of potential wilderness areas in the Bodie Hills complex. Photo by Emilie Strauss

While conservationists and skiers are savoring their victory, they realize that this proposal may be resurrected at any time in the future. Ultimately, the only way to prevent the onslaught of commercial, motorized recreation from swallowing our remaining roadless areas is to protect them as wilderness. In the meantime, however, a big thank you goes out to everyone who helped to defeat the proposal. Your letters really did make the difference.



National Forest Management

Guiding the future of the Range of Light Forest Service to develop management plan for Sierra Nevada

By Greg Love

The Forest Service is in the process of developing a management plan that will guide the future of the entire Sierra Nevada for the next fifteen years. The plan, which will regulate logging, grazing, and recreation in the national forests of the range is the final step in a long, controversial and convoluted process which began over three years ago.

In 1995, the Forest Service released a draft plan to manage the habitat of the California spotted owl. The proposed management plan would have been disastrous to the owl and the ecosystems of the Sierra as a whole. Due to pressure from environmental activists around the state, the Clinton administration postponed the implementation of the plan and appointed an independent scientific review panel to look at the scientific basis for the plan. After reviewing the information in the newly released Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project, the independent review panel determined that the Forest Service's plan was intrinsically flawed and should be scrapped. The present management plan proposal process grew from the recommendation of the scientific review panel.

The plan, which will regulate logging, grazing, and recreation in the national forests of the range is the final step in a long, controversial and convoluted process which began over three years ago.

While the management plan proposal process has developed, a simultaneous and parallel program called the Sierra Nevada Framework has been operating. Through the Framework, the Forest Service has received comments and proposals for the management plan from environmental, timber and grazing interests. Now, the Framework process has been set aside as the first official comment period on the management plan begins.

The Forest Service is asking the public to send suggestions and any new scientific information to be considered in the drafting of the plan. It is important for the future of the Sierra Nevada that the plan protects all ancient forests, streams, meadows, roadless areas and critical wildlife habitat. This is our opportunity to stop the destructive activities that have ravaged the Sierra for decades.



What you can do

Everyone one is encouraged to send letters to the Forest Service suggesting how it should manage this irreplaceable national treasure. Below are some suggestions on points to mentioned in your letter.

• All watercourses in the Sierra Nevada should be protected from logging and grazing by buffers along streams and rivers.

• The Forest Service should remove all roads causing damage to streams and rivers.

• All large blocks of old-growth forest should be protected from logging and road building in a system of reserves. Also, protect all small patches of old-growth and protect all trees over 30 inches in diameter.

• The Forest Service should survey and protect all roadless areas over 1,000 acres in size. No roads, logging or other development should be allowed in these roadless areas.

• Protection of our public land is the Forest Service's responsibility— make ecosystem protection and restoration the highest priority on national forest lands.

Send letters, postmarked by January 19th, to:

Steve Clauson, EIS Team Leader
USDA Forest Service
Sierra Nevada Framework Project, Room 419
801 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Public Meeting

The Forest Service has also planned a meeting in San Francisco on January 12 to listen to public comments on what direction the management plan should take. At this meeting, it is important that the Forest Service sees that complete protection of the rich and diverse resources of the Sierra Nevada is truly the only option. The meeting is scheduled from 6:30pm-9:00pm on January 12th at the Sierra Club Office, 85 2nd Street San Francisco. Everyone is encouraged to attend.

Greg Love is an intern with CWC.

Humboldt-Toiyabe to amend forest plan

Agency to take a fresh look at thousands of acres of potential wilderness

By Paul Spitler

The Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest recently announced a major forest plan amendment affecting all lands within the Carson Ranger District. The forest plan is the guiding document that directs all land management within the forest. The plan amendment offers an excellent opportunity to assure that the Humboldt-Toiyabe adequately protects its potential wilderness areas.

The California Wilderness Act of 1984 "released" numerous wilderness areas throughout California. These released areas instantly became open to logging, mining, and other forms of development. However, the Act also allowed for released areas to be reviewed during the revisions of forest plans. That revision process is now under way in the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest.

The Forest Service recently carried out a new survey of all roadless and undeveloped land within the Carson Ranger District. Now, through the plan amendment pro-

cess, the agency will determine whether to recommend the identified roadless areas for wilderness protection. Once recommended as wilderness, roadless areas are managed as wilderness until they are either designated wilderness or released by Congress. In short, agency wilderness recommendations are a critical first step towards assuring that a roadless area is eventually designated as wilderness.

Unfortunately, initial indications from the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest are not good. The proposed system for identifying potential wilderness is critically biased against wilderness designation. The agency proposes, for example, to eliminate from wilderness consideration many areas that are within three miles of a road because they are not considered remote enough for wilderness. This type of bias will eliminate many vitally important roadless areas from wilderness consideration.

The agency must hear from concerned citizens on the importance of roadless area protection. This is a crucial time for thousands of acres of roadless land in the

Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, and your letter could affect the future of this pristine and wild region.



What you can do

Write a letter (postmarked by January 23) to:
Northern Sierra Amendment
Dave Loomis, Forest Planner
1536 South Carson Street
Carson City, NV 89701
e-mail: nosateam/r4_h-t@fs.fed.us

Urge the Forest Service to recommend all roadless areas for wilderness protection. Remind the agency of the critical social and ecological values of roadless areas—even those within three miles of a road! Also, mention that President Clinton has stated that roadless areas deserve protection, and should be managed by "science, not politics." Encourage the agency to uphold the President's commitment.

Paul Spitler is Executive Director of the California Wilderness Coalition.

Activist Updates

Wildlands 2000 volunteers progress in statewide campaign

By Celia Barotz

In October 1997, the California Wilderness Coalition launched Wildlands 2000, a campaign to protect California's remaining wild places as legally designated wilderness. We are delighted to report that in the last fourteen months we have made great progress identifying, mapping and field-checking the preliminary boundaries for the many wild places we hope to include in our final wilderness proposal.

We have held numerous workshops throughout California, including the Mendocino, Six Rivers, Tahoe, Los Padres, and Inyo national forests. These workshops introduced the campaign to volunteers and taught them how to draw boundaries for areas they want to propose for wilderness and field check them to ensure their accuracy.

As of last month, preliminary boundaries have been drawn for the national forest and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands that have been identified as deserving protection. Meanwhile the field-checking effort has gained significant momentum.

Last summer Nate Greenberg, CWC's talented intern, took the lead field checking all of the preliminary boundaries for proposed wilderness areas 5,000 acres or larger in the Klamath National Forest. Nate received invaluable assistance from the Klamath Forest Alliance and Marble Mountain Audubon Society. Volunteers have already checked the boundaries of selected proposed wilderness areas in the Mendocino, Six Rivers, Lassen, Shasta Trinity and Stanislaus national forests.

Currently, CWC field-checkers are busy working in five national forests throughout California. Leah Mahan, with assistance from members of the Plumas Forest Project, is field-checking in the Plumas National Forest. Robert Lonsdorf and Laura Kinsvater are field-checking in the Tahoe and Eldorado national forests, respectively. Breck McAlexander is field-checking in the Sequoia National Forest, with the assistance of Sierra Club volunteers, including Joe Fontaine, and Bob Barnes of the Audubon Society. Finally, Ceal Klingler is field-checking in the Inyo, with the help of devoted Sierra Club, Audubon Society, and Friends of the Inyo volunteers.

The Sierra Club's Joyce Burk is leading a cadre of enthusiastic volunteers in southern California, who are drawing boundaries and field-checking proposed wilderness areas in the Angeles, Cleveland, San Bernardino and Los Padres national forests.

As of last month, preliminary boundaries have been drawn for the national forest and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands that have been identified as deserving protection. Meanwhile the field-checking effort has gained significant momentum.

We express our sincere gratitude to everyone who has given time to Wildlands 2000 in 1998. Your enthusiasm and dedication is greatly appreciated.

In 1999, we will continue to field-check boundaries

Biodiversity groups busy shaping vision for the state

As the year winds down, the pace of California's Wildlands Project is only picking up speed. From the Klamath-Siskiyou region to the south coast, CWC and cooperating groups are making waves in our efforts to create a wilderness and biodiversity reserve network throughout California. Here's an update of the current highlights of the California Wildlands Project.

South Coast Mapping Charette coming in April

Although it harbors some of the most unique and threatened biodiversity in the world, the south coast of California has no comprehensive plan to protect key habitat areas and wildlife corridors from development. Despite the efforts of various agencies and conservation organizations to create Natural Community Conservation Plans (NCCP) and Multiple Species Conservation Plans (MSCP), large areas of important wildlands and biodiversity have been overlooked. CWC is organizing a scientific workshop to assess the status of biodiversity conservation and create a comprehensive vision map for a reserve network throughout the region.

Contact Person: Rich Hunter, CWC, (530) 758-0380

Conception Coast Project eyes National Seashore designation

The CCP is providing maps and biogeographic information in a new effort to study the Gaviota coast for a protective status designation. The Gaviota Coast Conservancy has requested congressional authorization and funding to document the resource values of the area, measure the level of community support for protecting the area, and determine the suitability and feasibility of various designations, including National Seashore. This effort will serve as a valuable "pilot project" for the type of watershed-level, cooperative, science-based planning that will be necessary to implement the CCP vision for the entire region.

Contact Person: John Gallo, CCP, (805) 687-2073

Ventana Wildlands Project evaluates linkages for mountain lions

The VWP has completed a preliminary analysis of mountain lion habitat and threats to landscape connectivity in the central coast. The results indicate that urbanization and agricultural development have caused extensive habitat fragmentation. Entire subpopulations of lions are threatened with isolation from other subpopulations. The VWP is now in the process of site-specific analysis of potential linkages between large areas of

for proposed wilderness areas and begin introducing the campaign to people throughout California who are not yet aware of this historic effort.

If you've been thinking about joining Wildlands 2000, now is the perfect time. Do not be deterred by the onset of winter, for some of the areas that are being proposed for wilderness are low elevation and accessible year-round. However, if you prefer to wait until the spring, there will still be plenty of national forest and BLM areas to be field-checked.

Joining the Wildlands 2000 campaign is a wonderful way to meet others who share your commitment to wilderness, make a lasting contribution to the protection of our natural heritage and gain first-hand knowledge of some very special wild places.

If you would like to learn more about Wildlands 2000, enroll in a CWC field-checking workshop, or request a copy of CWC's Mapping Guide and/or Wilderness Area Review Guide, please call Ryan Henson at (530) 335-3183 or Paul Spitler at (530) 758-0380.



contiguous habitat. At the same time, various other wildlife, plants, and natural communities will be mapped and analyzed to determine additional priority areas.

Contact person: Verna Jigour, VWP, (408) 246-4425

Klamath-Siskiyou Alliance will release information for reserve design

A coalition of conservation organizations in northwestern California and southern Oregon are publishing the results of ecological assessments in a special issue of *Natural Areas Journal*. This spring, over five years of scientific research on the status of biodiversity in the Klamath-Siskiyou region will be available for conservation planning in this globally-significant bioregion.

Contact Person: Kelpie Wilson, Siskiyou Project, (541) 592-4459

Sierra Nevada Wildlands Project seeks additions to proposed reserves

The Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign (SNFPC) has proposed a variety of ecological reserves for national forest lands in the region (see article on previous page). While this plan goes a long way to protect biodiversity and wilderness on public lands, many ecosystems of the greater Sierra Nevada were not addressed by these proposals. For instance, no new reserves were proposed for oak woodlands and east-side old-growth forests. Oak woodlands are home to more animal life than any other ecosystem in California. CWC is continuing efforts to map and prioritize reserves for these critically important ecosystems.

Contact Person: Rich Hunter, CWC, (530) 758-0380

Rich Hunter is the California Wildlands Project Coordinator.



Wildlands 2000 volunteers pose during a break from field-checking the Dexter Canyon potential wilderness in the Inyo National Forest. In the center (with sunglasses) is Sally Miller, president of Friends of the Inyo. On her right is Ceal Klingler, CWC field-checker. Peeking behind Sally is Paul Spitler, Executive Director of CWC. Thanks to all volunteers who are helping the Wildlands 2000 effort.

Wilderness Management

Desert parks: myriad issues in planning for the future of these national treasures

Continued from page 1

ments are critical blueprints that will guide park management well into the 21st century. The DGMPs are much needed—Death Valley completed its last general management plan in the 80s and this will be the first such plan for Mojave National Preserve.

Since the plans will have lasting ramifications for the future of the California desert, they need to reflect the Park Service's overarching goal of resource protection. The Park Service is legally required to circulate drafts of these plans for public review and input. Your comments are important and could make a difference in the future of these two parks. These plans cover a broad array of issues affecting the parks' natural and cultural resources. The following is a summary of some key issues that would benefit from public input.

Feral Burros

One of the threats to the desert's native flora and fauna is the proliferation of exotic species such as the feral burro. Hundreds of feral burros and horses in both parks trample native vegetation and sensitive wildlife habitat, causing serious degradation. Commendably, both DGMPs intend to remove all feral burros from Death Valley and Mojave. However, the plans focus on a fixed set of strategies that may not outpace the burros' natural rate of reproduction. Both parks should develop a more flexible program which may include direct elimination of burros to achieve complete removal.

Cattle Grazing

Grazing often has serious effects on the surrounding environment. The negative impacts of grazing are magnified in the desert because the soils are easily compacted and disturbed, and the native vegetation is not adapted to constant, heavy grazing. The California Desert Protection Act does permit grazing in Death Valley and Mojave national parks, but the Park Service is legally required to regulate grazing to protect park resources. The DGMPs for both parks must state the intent to regulate grazing so that impacts on native plant and animal species such as the federally threatened desert tortoise are minimized.

Wilderness Protection Standards

One half of Mojave National Preserve and 95 percent of Death Valley National Park have been designated by Congress as wilderness areas, affording them the highest level of protection of all federal lands. Currently, the management plans do not embody these higher standards of resource protection. The guidelines for grazing, camping and motorized access should reflect wilderness protection standards. The plans also need to identify the wilderness boundaries in Death Valley and Mojave in order to appropriately manage those areas.

Mining

Both Death Valley National Park and Mojave National Preserve contain mining claims that precede their establishment as national park units. Mojave, in fact, has more mining claims than all other national park units combined. Though these existing mining claims may be valid, the Park Service is legally obligated to regulate or even stop mining to protect the parks' resources. Currently, the DGMPs are very general in their approach towards mining regulation. The management plans need to commit to a level of mining regulation that will emphasize resource protection. This would include strict monitoring of groundwater use in mining operations and acquisition strategies for mining claims that pose a threat to the park.

Saline Valley

Death Valley's over 3 million acres of open desert park land have attracted many recreationists to the park. Growing popularity could take its toll on park resources, and unmanaged levels of recreation may become problematic in popular sites such as Saline Valley. The Death Valley management plan defers discussion on the management of Saline Valley to future consultation with "user groups." The planning process should be guided by public input from all interested parties, but the ultimate management decision must be based on the Park Service's predominant goal of resource protection.

Eureka Dunes

Death Valley's Eureka Dunes, some of the highest natural sand dunes in the country, harbor several endangered plant species. Some endemic species such as the rare Eureka Valley evening-primrose are found only in Death Valley National Park. Studies by botanists as well as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service indicate that recreational activities such as sandboarding (or dune "surfing"), horseback riding and camping pose a potential threat to Eureka Dunes' endangered plants. Death Valley's management plan needs to regulate such activities, already growing in popularity, before they significantly threaten the area's native species.

Development in Mojave

Although the creation of Mojave National Preserve increased the level of protection for the region, the park unit is still beset by a host of inappropriate activities and development proposals. Currently, an international airport, golf course and housing development, and open-pit mines are proposed for within or near its boundaries. Mojave's management plan needs to effectively address these threats if the preserve's natural and cultural treasures are to be protected. Formulating a strategy to acquire private inholdings within or surrounding the preserve would help alleviate the threat of inappropriate development.

Hunting

Commendably, Mojave's DGMP proposes to outlaw the hunting of "varmint" species, a decision that will protect the preserve's natural predators such as bobcats, badgers and coyotes. The recent passing of Proposition 4 would also render trapping of wildlife in the park illegal. The legislation, however, may not be effective in banning trapping since it may be subject to court challenge. The National Park Service should ban trapping in Mojave's management plan to ensure both public safety and wildlife protection.

Research Facilities

Two excellent facilities located in Mojave National Preserve currently serve as invaluable research sites. Wildlife management and habitat restoration all stand to benefit from research conducted in these facilities. The management plan should establish protection for these research stations by restricting recreation in natural reserve areas.



What you can do

Death Valley National Park and Mojave National Preserve need your input to create general management plans that will protect their natural and cultural resources for future generations. You can help preserve the integrity of the California desert by writing a letter to the National Park Service and emphasizing the following points:

General Issues for Both Parks

- * The management plans must outline grazing management that would restore wildlife habitat.
- * The plans should fully embody the higher standards required for wilderness management. It should apply those standards to management of grazing, camping, motorized access and other uses.
- * The management plans must include strategies and timetables to properly regulate mining and, where feasible, acquire claims that threaten park resources.
- * The parks should develop a more flexible management strategy that allows direct reduction of burros if other strategies fail to achieve complete removal by 2001.

Death Valley National Park

- * The park must manage Saline Valley to prevent further degradation and promote restoration through visitor management and revegetation.
- * The vulnerable Eureka Dunes area harbors several endangered and endemic plant species that need to be shielded from potentially harmful activities such as sandboarding and horseback riding. The Park Service should emphasize the protection of the area's endangered species before such recreational activities become a significant threat.

Mojave National Preserve

- * The draft management plan makes an excellent start at placing important restrictions on hunting of "varmint" species. The Park Service should also echo the will of California voters and ban all trapping in the preserve for human safety and wildlife protection.
- * Mojave is beset by numerous threats from development proposals, both inside and outside the preserve. The final management plan should include an aggressive acquisition program and outline a strategy to monitor and respond to these threats.
- * Two excellent university facilities doing park-based studies, the Soda Lake and Granite Mountains research stations, need protective measures in the plan to ensure their continued high quality work, such as recreational restrictions in the natural reserve areas.

Please send comments on Death Valley's draft plan to the following address:

Superintendent Richard Martin
Death Valley National Park
Death Valley, CA 92328

Comments on Mojave's draft plan should be sent to the following address:

Superintendent Mary Martin
Mojave National Preserve
222 East Main Street, Suite 202
Barstow, CA 92311

Thank you for your help in protecting and preserving the beauty of the California desert for many years to come!

Ray Wan is a policy analyst intern at the National Parks and Conservation Association's Pacific Regional Office.

For more information, contact the National Parks and Conservation Association at (510) 839-9922.

Wilderness Forum

Letters

High Sierra wilderness should be treated as wilderness

Regarding an article in the October issue of the *Wilderness Record*, there are a few things I just had to say about the High Sierra Wilderness Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The fundamental problem, which I believe lies at the root of some of the inequities mentioned in Tom Suk's article, is that the Forest Service does not manage the wilderness areas as wilderness.

The methodology used in this EIS is a multiple-use approach that divides the wilderness into zones, only one of which is to be maintained in a pristine condition.

However, the Wilderness Act mandates that wilderness areas shall be "protected and managed so as to maintain...natural conditions." This means all 885,477 acres of the designated wildernesses, not just the most remote parts (597,170 acres in the agency's preferred alternative). The Wilderness Act also states that wilderness areas shall be administered for the "use and enjoyment of the American people." Yet a restrictive trailhead quota system has been imposed on foot travelers without any public comment process and without any concerted effort to control other, more destructive, uses of wilderness.

Livestock are regularly given preference over people in wilderness management. (E.g. group size limitations of fifteen people and 25 head of stock on trails; priority for outfitters over the public in obtaining permits, etc.) The Forest Service spends substantial sums of money to upgrade back country trails, while at the same time restricting entry to the places these trails lead to—an obviously inconsistent policy that is not intended to benefit hikers and backpackers but is done for the convenience of horses and mules. All of this despite the well-known environmental damage attributed to stock grazing and traffic and the suspected link to water pollution. One alternative goes so far as to require that human waste be packed out; but no proposals are offered for reducing the accumulations of manure in the meadows and along trails. It is somewhat galling, after wading through mountains of mule dung to reach some remote location, on meeting a back-country ranger there, to be greeted with a stern lecture on the proper means of waste disposal.

Recreational stock could be eliminated altogether without diminishing anyone's use and enjoyment. Guiding and packing (helpful and perhaps even necessary for some people) can be accomplished quite satisfactorily by humans traveling on foot.

The most disappointing thing about the EIS to me was the summary treatment of wildlife issues. I was happy to see at the head of the list in the CWC alert "...clear, science-based measures for protecting sensitive wilderness species and habitats." In contrast, the Biological Evaluation discusses only a short list of Forest Service "sensitive species," and the plan offers little in the way of protection for these creatures or their habitats.

In fact, there are elements of the proposed action that pose a real threat to wildlife. Chief among these is the Fire Plan, which states that management-ignited fires will occur in the wilderness. This is a deliberate destruction of wilderness elements, alteration of natural conditions and a clear violation of the Wilderness Act. The hypothesis that small fires are ecologically benign, whereas large ones are destructive, has not been scientifically validated. Many organisms, which are vital components of the natural condition of the wilderness, are killed or injured by low-intensity fires.

It is conceded that "some losses of habitat components will occur," including sensitive species habitat components. But it is confidently asserted (without any justification) that "benefits in the long term are expected to outweigh the adverse effects." The expected benefits are a reduction of the supposedly dangerously high fuel levels in the wilderness (dense timber stands, accumulated down wood and forest debris, described as "unnatural" and "excessive"). This flimsy argument does not apply to the high Sierra, where fires are overwhelmingly the result of weather and climatic factors. The fuels are essential habitat elements for many animals.

The Fire Plan threatens wilderness values in additional ways. In practice, prescribed burning involves creating openings and corridors through the forest. Such openings will benefit some species, but they cannot be tolerated by those that require continuous cover. These operations entail the removal of quantities of sound, mature trees. In the wilderness, this is expressly prohibited by the Wilderness Act. There is reason to fear that the Fire Plan will really function as a justification for logging in protected wilderness areas and ancient forests that otherwise could not be logged.

Nell Patterson
Palmdale

Hi-Ridge sales canceled

Continued from page 1

CWC worked with the Klamath Forest Alliance (KFA) and the Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign (SNFPC) to urge cancellation of the projects. Both Felice Pace of KFA and Craig Thomas of the SNFPC provided invaluable assistance in the effort to cancel the sales. Craig's expert analysis of the projects' numerous violations of environmental laws was key to defeating the damaging sales.

The unusual coalition also united members of Congress with normally divergent interests. Democrats Barbara Boxer, Dianne Feinstein, Pete Stark, George Brown Jr., and Nancy Pelosi all sent letters to the Forest Service urging cancellation of the six sales. Republican Representatives Richard Pombo, Wally Herger, John Doolittle, and George Radanovich made similar requests of the agency.



**Happy Holidays from the
CWC staff!**

Calendar

January 5 Adopt-a-Wilderness meeting for the San Bernardino National Forest. For more information contact Ryan Henson at (530) 335-3183 or ryan@calwild.org.

January 6 Adopt-a-Wilderness meeting for the Cleveland National Forest. For more information contact Ryan Henson at (530) 335-3183 or ryan@calwild.org.

January 9 Field-checking training for the Cleveland National Forest. For more information contact Ryan Henson at (530) 335-3183 or ryan@calwild.org.

January 10 Field-checking training for the San Bernardino National Forest. For more information contact Ryan Henson at (530) 335-3183 or ryan@calwild.org.

January 11 Adopt-a-Wilderness meeting for the Angeles National Forest. For more information contact Ryan Henson at (530) 335-3183 or ryan@calwild.org.

January 12 Adopt-a-Wilderness meeting for the Los Padres National Forest. For more information contact Ryan Henson at (530) 335-3183 or ryan@calwild.org.

January 12 Open hearing for the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest to discuss upcoming forest plan. The meeting will be held from 1:00pm to 2:00pm at the Douglas County Administration Building Courtroom, 1616 8th Street Minden, NV. See article on page 4.

January 19 Scoping deadline for the Sierra Nevada Management Plan. See article on page 4.

January 23 Comment deadline for the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest plan amendment. See article on page 4.

January 23 Field-checking training for the Los Padres National Forest. For more information contact Ryan Henson at (530) 335-3183 or ryan@calwild.org.

January 24 Field-checking training for the Angeles National Forest. For more information contact Ryan Henson at (530) 335-3183 or ryan@calwild.org.

Jan 30 Southern Sierra Nevada Activists Conference. The Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign is hosting this all-day gathering which will address a variety of topics. For more information contact Bob Brister at (559) 641-7427 or sierra_outreach@friendsoftheriver.org.

Coalition Member Groups

American Lands Alliance; Washington, D.C
 Ancient Forest Defense Fund; Leggett
 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
 Center for Sierra Nevada Conservation;
 Georgetown
 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
 Earth Justice Legal Defense Fund; S. F.
 Eastern Sierra Audubon Society; Bishop
 Ecology Center; Berkeley
 Ecology Center of Southern California; L.A.
 El Dorado Audubon Society; Long Beach
 Fresno Audubon Society; Fresno
 Friends of Chinquapin, Oakland
 Friends of Plumas Wilderness; Quincy
 Friends of the Garcia (FROG); Point Arena
 Friends of the Inyo; Lee Vining
 Friends of the River; Sacramento
 Fund for Animals; San Francisco
 Golden Gate Audubon Society; Berkeley

Great Old Broads for Wilderness; Boulder, CO
 Hands Off Wild Lands! (HOWL); Davis
 High Sierra Hikers Association; Truckee
 International Center for Earth Concerns; Ojai
 John Muir Project/Earth Island Institute; Pasadena
 Kaweah Flyfishers; Visalia
 Keep the Sesse 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; Arcata
 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
 Mother Lode Chapter, Sierra Club; Sacramento
 Mt. Shasta Area Audubon Society; Mt. Shasta
 Mountain Lion Foundation; Sacramento
 Native Habitat; Woodside
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 NCRCC Sierra Club; Santa Rosa
 Nordic Voice; Livermore

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 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 Audubon Society; San Diego
 San Diego Chapter, Sierra Club; San Diego
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 Nevada City
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 U.C. Davis Environmental Law Society;
 Davis
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 Western States Endurance Run; S. F.
 The Wilderness Land Trust; Carbondale, CO
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 Yolano Group, Sierra Club; Davis
 Yolo Environmental Resource Center; Davis

"As for the opposition, I don't have a polite way of addressing them...they just don't want our lands, they want our freedoms and they want to control everything we do in pusuit of happiness and enjoyment..."

—From a "wise-use" e-mail list sponsored by an off-road vehicle group.

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NAME _____

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