



WILDERNESS RECORD

Proceedings of the California Wilderness Coalition

February 1998

Wilderness debate heats up in Eastern Sierra

By Sally Miller

As conservationists from throughout the state begin laying the groundwork for a new wilderness proposal for California, the debate over the future of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) wilderness is already raging in the eastern Sierra. At issue is whether eighteen Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) in Mono and Inyo counties should become wilderness. The eighteen WSAs total about 288,000 acres of public lands, or thirty percent of the BLM lands in the two counties. The WSAs contain many unique and varied habitats which range from the maze of Bishop tuff and high desert replete with spectacular spring wildflowers in the Volcanic Tablelands, to prime Great Basin sagebrush habitat in the Bodie Hills, and from pinyon-juniper woodland on Granite Mountain east of Mono Lake, to important riparian habitat on the alluvial fans at the base of the southern Sierra Nevada. Pronghorn antelope roam the WSAs in the Bodie Hills, a wealth of

archaeological sites can be found in many of the areas, and Crater Mountain WSA, one of the largest volcanoes in the region, contains lava tubes worthy of exploration.

In 1987, the BLM released a final study and environmental impact statement on the eighteen WSAs. Surprisingly, the BLM recommended that none of these areas be designated as wilderness. The recommendations were forwarded to Congress in 1991 (subsequently, Congress designated a portion of the Southern Inyo WSA as wilderness in the California Desert Protection Act of 1994). Currently, the WSAs are protected as potential wilderness under the Bureau's "Interim Management Policy" (IMP) for lands under wilderness review. The IMP allows off-road vehicle (ORV) use on existing routes in the WSAs, but the BLM is required to annually monitor the WSAs and take special steps to assure that the wilderness values of the areas are protected. Until Congress makes a decision on whether to designate the lands as wilderness, they will continue to be managed under the IMP.

People for the West launches anti-wilderness campaign

Frustrated by passage of the California Desert Protection Act and philosophically opposed to wilderness, local members of the "wise use" group People for the West (PFW; now changing their name to "People for the U.S.A.") began to lobby local officials a year ago to support the legislative "release" of the WSAs. This would strip these areas of protection and open these lands to mining, ORV use and other activities that could compro-

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Forest Service: No roads in roadless areas Key lands exempted from new policy

By Paul Spittler

On January 22, 1998, Forest Service Chief Mike Dombeck announced a new policy prohibiting road construction into some roadless forest areas. The new policy is a dramatic shift for the agency and will help protect thousands of acres of roadless lands across the western United States.

The policy follows a heated Congressional debate on the subject of national forest logging roads last year. In mid June, the House of Representatives voted to reduce federal funding for logging roads by one third. The vote

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One of many petroglyphs in the Volcanic Tableland Wilderness Study Area. Photo by Sally Miller.

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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

A Needed Change

"These last remaining wild areas are precious to millions of Americans and key to protecting clean water and abundant wildlife habitat, and providing recreation opportunities. These unspoiled places must be managed through science, not politics."

—President Bill Clinton, November 14, 1997

The upcoming Forest Service policy prohibiting road construction in roadless areas is a welcome—and desperately needed—change in the way our national forests are managed. The move to protect America's roadless lands is not a final solution since such a policy could be overturned administratively or legislatively, but it does move us one step closer to achieving permanent protection for roadless areas. The Clinton administration's policy could not come at a better time.

For the past fifty years, California's roadless lands, like those throughout the western United States, have been subject to continual assaults by the relentless timber program of the U.S. Forest Service. Reckless logging has eliminated over ninety percent of America's old-growth forest, and our vast expanse of wildlands has been reduced to mostly small and scattered parcels.

The assault continues to this day. Since the Forest Service identified national forest roadless areas in the 1970s, the state of Idaho alone has lost over one million acres of roadless lands. California's roadless areas have been the target of no less than 41 timber sales in the past two years alone. This onslaught of logging threatened to carve up many of the state's last de facto wilderness areas. Clearly, immediate intervention is needed to prevent this tragedy from continuing.

But that is only half the picture. There is an intense debate being carried out within the halls of Congress over the management of our national forests. For the past three years, the new Congressional majority has carried out a calculated attack on our national forests. Under the guise of "improving forest health," (the debunked "log it to save it" approach) Congressional Republicans have managed to dramatically shift the debate over national forest management. The logging rider was just the beginning. Several bills pending in the House and Senate threaten to make permanent the "logging as a solution" approach to forest management.

On the other side of the debate are environmental organizations who argue that logging is the problem, not the solution, to the ecological crisis facing our national forests. The outdated emphasis on resource extraction has led many of our national forests to the brink of ecological catastrophe. Old-growth forests—and the species that depend on them—have been systematically eliminated. Species are becoming endangered faster than we can count. Each major storm unleashes a new wave of mudslides and erosion, which further degrades water quality and pushes salmon and steelhead even closer to extinction. We desperately need to shift the debate back to the real issues and threats facing our national forests: too much logging, grazing, and road construction.

The Chief's announcement comes at a most welcome time. Now you have the Chief of the Forest Service—an agency not known for its environmental ethics—arguing that the problem in our national forests is not too many trees, but too many logging roads. 440,000 miles too many, to be exact. It is a short step from arguing that too many logging roads are the problem to arguing that too much logging is the problem as well.

The timber industry and its cronies in Congress are on the defensive once more. Now, instead of promoting their "log it to save it" legislation which would doom our national forests to ecological oblivion, they are in the uncomfortable position of arguing publicly for federally subsidized logging roads into our nation's last unprotected wilderness areas. This whining position is far out of favor with the American people.

When President Clinton made the above statement last November, it may have been the first time ever that a sitting President said the words "roadless areas" and then called for their protection. The recognition of these areas' importance in providing wildlife habitat, recreation opportunities and water quality is a dramatic and much needed improvement in the ongoing debate over national forest management. We have seized the initiative and are shifting the debate with the Forest Service Chief and President of the United States as our spokesmen. Now we must get Congress to listen.

By Paul Spitler

Wanted: Computer

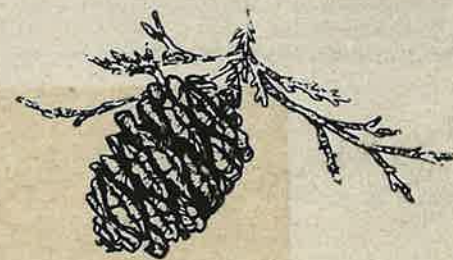
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Wilderness Management

Forest Service seeks input on Desolation Wilderness user fees

By Canyon Fred

In 1995, Congress authorized a "pilot program" whereby the federal land management agencies (U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, etc.) could charge fees for various recreational uses of public lands that have traditionally been free. For example, several areas are now charging for trailhead parking and for hiking on wilderness trails. Congress intended that if the pilot projects generated significant revenue and gained public acceptance, recreation use fees could become the norm throughout the nation. One pilot area is the Desolation Wilderness in the Eldorado National Forest in California, where fees are now charged for overnight use, wilderness permit reservations, and trailhead parking. The Forest Service held two public meetings in January to receive public feedback on the Desolation fee program, and the agency is now accepting written comments.

Users of the Desolation Wilderness are charged \$5 per person per night (for the first two nights), plus a \$5 permit reservation fee. Under this formula, for a stay of two nights or longer, a group of two persons pays \$25, a group of three pays \$35, etc. There is a maximum fee of \$100 per group, and individuals may purchase an annual pass for \$20. A parking fee of \$3 per car is being tested at one trailhead (Eagle Falls), but persons who have already purchased overnight wilderness permits may park there for free. (An earlier plan to charge fees for all day hikes was dropped after strong public reaction convinced the Forest Service to scale back its proposal.)

The Forest Service collected a total of \$121,034 from Desolation Wilderness visitors last year (\$94,121 for overnight stays, \$17,220 for trailhead parking, and \$9,693 for permit reservations). Most of the revenue was spent on hiring trailhead and backcountry rangers, installing signs, and conducting trail maintenance. But although the agency had told the public from the outset that the new fee program would result in a "greater level of service," that goal has not been realized because Congress has simultaneously cut the level of appropriated funds for managing the Desolation Wilderness. Therefore, the revenue from the fees has allowed the agency to spend about the same amount as in previous years on managing the wilderness, only now much of that money comes directly from the pockets of recreationists who use the area.

Those who attended the January workshops were generally supportive of the concept of charging fees for use of public lands, but several concerns were raised. The biggest concern expressed to date is that the amount of the fees for various uses has been arbitrarily set, and does not appear to take into account the impact of various activities on wilderness resources, or the actual agency costs of managing the various uses. For example, critics of the fee structure pointed out that hikers are charged over 100 times more to spend a night in the Desolation Wilderness (i.e., \$5 per person per night) than the cost to graze a cow in the same area (i.e., about 4 cents per day), and that cattle cause considerably more damage to wilderness resources than recreationists traveling on foot. Hikers at the workshops also pointed out that horses cause considerably more trail wear than foot travelers,

and argued that equestrians should therefore pay a higher fee in recognition of the higher trail maintenance costs.

Forest Service personnel at the workshops appeared to be surprised by these criticisms, and they offered various excuses for not setting the amount of the fees commensurate with the impact of various activities. For example, several agency officials reminded the audience that Congress sets the cattle grazing fees, and that the Forest Service has no influence over the current desire of Congress to provide substantial subsidies to the ranchers and corporations that run cattle in wilderness areas. Regarding the fees for recreational stock users, citizens were told that foot travelers are charged the same fee as stock users because such an approach was "easier" for the agency to administer. Don Lane of the Forest Service's Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit stated that it was simply easier to charge all recreationists the same fee rather than to make an informed determination regarding how much more to charge stock users in order to repair their greater trail erosion.

Unsatisfied by these responses, one hiker at the Lake Tahoe workshop reminded agency personnel that the Forest Service has full authority to set the amount of recreation fees, and that if fees must now be charged for recreational uses, then recreationists should at least receive the same privileges that Congress affords to commercial livestock operators. That hiker concluded that he was willing to pay the same amount per day as is charged for a cow, and no more. Another participant reminded agency personnel that the public pays federal workers' salaries and expects them to do what is right and fair, not simply what is "easy." And a Forest Service research scientist who attended the workshops added that numerous studies are in fact available that quantify the differences in trail wear caused by hikers and equestrians, and that it would not be unreasonably difficult for managers at the Desolation to devise an equitable fee structure that accounts for those differences. One Lake Tahoe resident who declined to give a name concluded that "I support fees for wilderness use....But these fees aren't fair, and until they are, I'm not going to pay. Catch me if you can."

When their first round of arguments obviously failed to placate the audience, Forest Service personnel at the Lake Tahoe workshop also opined that these "equity" issues aren't as critical in the Desolation as in some other wildernesses that have higher levels of cattle grazing and recreational stock use. Citizens replied by pointing out that there are in fact significant levels of commercial and private livestock use in the area, and that they wanted the Forest Service to address these issues in the Desolation fee structure, especially since the program is a "pilot study" intended to be applied in many other areas. "If you don't address these issues during the pilot program, they likely will never be addressed," said one participant.

The pilot fee program will continue at the Desolation Wilderness (and at about fifty other areas throughout the country) for one or two more years, after which time a report will be sent to Congress to summarize the results of the program. Congress will then decide whether the pilot program will be continued, expanded, or dropped.

The Forest Service will consider modifying the Desolation fee structure following public input. Comments on the pilot fee program for the Desolation Wilderness can be sent to: John Phipps, Forest Supervisor, Eldorado National Forest, 100 Forni Road, Placerville, CA 95667

Canyon Fred is an activist on Sierra Nevada issues.



Pyramid Peak as seen from Ropi Lake, Desolation Wilderness, Eldorado National Forest. Photo courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Fergus.

Wilderness Management

Southern Sierra wilderness plan delayed

"On-the-ground" time needed to assess plan

By Tom Suk

The comment period on the draft wilderness management plan for the John Muir, Ansel Adams, Monarch, and Dinkey Lakes wildernesses has been extended until November 1998. The Forest Service, having taken more than five years to prepare the draft plan, finally released it for public review last December. Comments on the draft plan were originally due by March 6, 1998, but the Forest Service revised the deadline after receiving numerous requests for an extension. The comment deadline has been extended by several months to allow the public ample time to review the document, and to use the coming summer season to compare the plan's many assumptions and conclusions to "on-the-ground" conditions in the four wilderness areas.

When finalized, this plan will guide the management of nearly one million acres of wilderness in the Sierra Nevada. To receive a copy of the draft Muir-Adams wilderness plan, contact:

Bob Hawkins
Inyo National Forest
873 North Main Street
Bishop, CA 93514
(760) 873-2490

Tom Suk, a former National Park Service employee, is an activist on high Sierra issues.



John Muir Wilderness. Thomson Ridge is visible in the background. Photo by Peter Sax.

New hope for Forestdale Creek area

By Marcus Libkind

A victory in court brings new hope that the Forestdale Creek area, a favorite destination for backcountry skiers and snowshoers in the Toiyabe National Forest, will someday be closed to snowmobiles.

Years of effort by skiers to get this small piece of Forest Service land east of Carson Pass closed to snowmobiles were met with a devastating blow in 1992 when the Carson Ranger District Winter Travel Plan declared that the area would remain open to snowmobiles. Two appeals led to reviews by the Forest Service that were flawed by factual and procedural errors. These blatant errors became the basis for the lawsuit.

An out-of-court decision has resulted in the nullifying of that part of the Carson Ranger District Travel Plan that deals with winter use of the Forestdale Creek area. The decision requires the Forest Service to start over and consider not only the three square miles of the original appeals, but also an expanded area. They must also look at whether the county or the Forest Service has jurisdiction over Forestdale Road.

In the original decision and in each subsequent appeal decision the Forest Service claimed that they did not have jurisdiction over the area in question. No matter how hard the appellants tried to correct inaccuracies put forth by the Forest Service, they were rebuffed at each stage. It appears the Forest Service had no interest in basing their decision on facts and affording due process.

In July, 1993, the Deputy Regional Forester ended all out-of-court options for remedying the errors. Anne Mudge of the law firm Washburn, Briscoe and McCarthy volunteered in September, 1995, to represent the Sierra Club

and Friends of Hope Valley. But not until March, 1997 was the lawsuit filed in federal court.

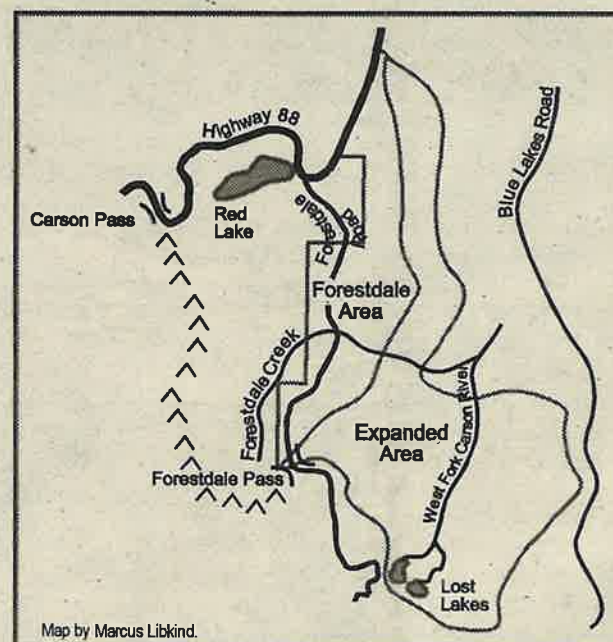
The response from the government attorney was swift—the Forest Service wanted to settle out of court. In September the appellants and the government signed a stipulated agreement that gave the appellants everything they could have expected from a court decision.

While the settlement does not close the area to snowmobiles, it renders moot the original travel plan as it applied to winter use of the Forestdale Creek area. The Carson Ranger District has until December 1, 1998 to issue a new decision notice. That decision must not only consider the three square miles that were of issue in the appeals, but also an expanded area which includes Lost Lakes and a portion of the West Fork of the Carson River.

The Forest Service had previously agreed with Alpine County that Forestdale Road was under county jurisdiction, and the county had chosen to leave it open to snowmobiles. The settlement requires the Forest Service to reassess this jurisdictional issue in light of new regulations regarding roads on public lands.

The Forest Service must now gather current information on the skier-snowmobiler conflicts in the area. The Code of Federal Regulations is very specific in its requirement that should a conflict between motorized and non-motorized vehicle use exist, then the motorized vehicle use must be mitigated or the area closed to the motor vehicles.

Non-motorized vehicle users can now submit comments on a questionnaire to prove that there is a conflict in the Forestdale Creek area. These comments can be based on actual experience in the Forestdale Creek area or a person's general aversion to motor vehicles in an area



where one ventures in search of a wilderness experience.

For more information or to obtain a Forestdale Creek questionnaire contact:

The Nordic Voice
P.O. Box 1211
Livermore, CA 94550
(510) 455-5816
marcus@nordicvoice.org

requested questionnaire 3/10/98
Marcus Libkind is the Issues Coordinator for Nordic Voice.

Wilderness News

Forest fees fall flat

Adventure Pass program generates more frustration than revenues

By Alisdair Coyne

Despite promises that the newly instituted Forest Service Adventure Pass program would generate a wealth of revenue and "allow 80 percent of the new fees collected between 1996 and 1998 to go into the recreation maintenance budget of the national forest where collected," newly released Los Padres National Forest Adventure Pass program figures demonstrate the overwhelming unpopularity and incredible overhead associated with the program.

Started in June of 1997, the Adventure Pass program is a three-year pilot project that requires users of Southern California national forests to pay a \$5 parking fee when visiting a forest. The program was instituted as an experiment to replenish national forest recreation budgets that have been reduced by Congress in recent years.

Many Californians are outraged that the Forest Service charges visitors a parking fee while other forest "users" continue to benefit from long-standing government subsidies. For instance, the Forest Service loses about \$400 million every year in its road-building and below-cost timber sales to logging corporations. Grazing fees average around \$2 per cow/calf pair per month on public land, while on private lands, grazing fees are usually five to ten times higher. There is a broad sentiment that the playing field should be levelled and these give-aways curtailed.

National Forest Adventure Pass CAN'T SEE THE FOREST FOR THE FEES

KSWC, (805) 646-5960

Not the promised windfall

Out of a total Los Padres National Forest income of \$66,300 from the sale of Adventure Passes over the busiest summer months (July, August and September) an average of only \$1,600 was available for distribution for

site-specific improvements in each of the five Los Padres Ranger Districts. Enforcement staffing for the Los Padres National Forest, however, required just short of \$42,000.

Funds collected from the sale of Adventure Passes are tallied each three months, for distribution over the following three month period. While Adventure Pass sales are expected to shrink dramatically over the winter months, the costs of Adventure Pass enforcement staff will remain unchanged, leading to substantial losses ahead for the Los Padres National Forest's Adventure Pass program.

The \$66,300 raised in the Los Padres National Forest is less than 30 percent of the \$223,267 anticipated by Forest planners.

According to internal Forest Service documents obtained by the Keep the Sespe Wild Committee (KSWC), a mere 12 percent (\$7,950 out of \$66,300) of Adventure Pass revenues generated in the Los Padres National Forest this summer are available to meet the promised facility improvements.

For the entire Adventure Pass area of the four Southern California national forests (Los Padres, Angeles, Cleveland and San Bernardino) the figures are slightly better. Out of \$693,800 raised over the summer, only 34.5 percent, or \$239,400, is available for site-specific recreation improvements, after enforcement and overhead costs are subtracted. When the sale of passes plummets in winter months, the entire program will be scrambling to break even on a year-round basis.

"Reversing one hundred years of free access to our forests surrenders a principle that shouldn't be sold at any price," says KSWC Director Kevin Looper. "The most important point here is not the unpopularity of Adventure Pass enforcement, but the failed commitment of Congress to protect our national forests."

Two very real concerns are that if the program is deemed successful, it will be extended to every national forest in the country, and the fees will increase as Congress realizes that it can dump its previous long-term responsibilities onto national forest users.

The Keep the Sespe Wild Committee urges national forest users to write to their Congressional representative and ask that they both scrap the Adventure Pass program

"The most important point here is not the unpopularity of Adventure Pass enforcement, but the failed commitment of Congress to protect our national forests."

and double the Forest Service Recreation Budget (which is a mere \$200 million for the entire nation), in order to maintain deteriorating facilities without imposing parking fees on visitors to our national forests.

What you can do

Please write to:

- Your representative, House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515
- Senator Barbara Boxer, U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510
- Senator Dianne Feinstein, U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510

Please ask the above lawmakers to:

- End the Forest Service Adventure Pass fees for parking in our national forests.
- Increase the Forest Service's Recreation Budget to maintain trails and trailheads.

For more information on the campaign against the Forest Service Adventure Pass, contact the Keep the Sespe Wild Committee, PO Box 715, Ojai, CA 93024, (805) 646-5960.

Alisdair Coyne is the Conservation Director of the Keep the Sespe Wild Committee.

East-side BLM wilderness debate

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mise the natural and cultural values of the WSAs.

This past fall PFW, unbeknownst to the public, began quietly going to local chambers of commerce, tourism commissions and similar agencies, seeking resolutions of support for "release" of the WSAs. The resolutions were to be sent to members of Congress, specifically Representatives John Doolittle (R-Rocklin) and Jerry Lewis (R-Redlands) as well as Senators Boxer and Feinstein, asking them to introduce release legislation.

By the time the conservation community caught up with PFW, the "wise-use" group was before the Mono County Board of Supervisors. The Board decided a workshop exploring the issues would be appropriate before taking any position. In December, PFW went to the Mammoth Lakes Town Council seeking support. After two hours of public testimony and deliberation, the

Town Council, like the Board of Supervisors, also decided it would like a workshop prior to taking a position. The

Doolittle's aide, John Martini, later said that they had spoken with Representative Helen Chenoweth about the release of BLM WSAs in a "national context."

Town Council workshop took place in early January, and citizens from Mammoth and around Mono County packed

the Mammoth Community Center to speak their minds. Supporters of wilderness outnumbered wilderness opponents by more than two to one. Some individuals on both sides of the issue asked the Town Council not to take a position and instead expressed support for a community dialogue involving all stakeholders, including those who live outside the eastern Sierra. After hearing three hours of public testimony, the Town Council voted 5-0 not to take a position on the issue.

In spite of this setback to its anti-wilderness agenda, PFW is continuing its romp through Mono and Inyo counties, trying to garner additional support for release legislation. As this article went to press, Representative Doolittle, speaking at a Republican Central Committee reception, indicated that, while he strongly supports the release of the WSAs, he will not introduce legislation

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Wilderness News

BLM Wilderness debate

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calling for their release. He cited concerns that the political climate isn't ripe and the House leadership wouldn't support such a measure now. He urged those who want to see a release bill to be "proactive" and make it an issue for those officials running for office so they can take it up in the next session.

In a chilling hint of what could happen, he referred to this issue as a "national" one. His aide, John Martini, later said that they had spoken with Representative Helen Chenoweth (R-ID) about the release of BLM WSAs in a "national context." Martini reiterated Doolittle's statement that if President Clinton would "support the BLM's recommendations" they would introduce release legislation immediately.

The BLM study found that all eighteen WSAs qualify for wilderness designation. However, whether each WSA is ultimately designated wilderness will depend on the amount of public support garnered for each area. Despite media attempts to portray the issue as a "battle" between pro and anti-wilderness forces, there is much common ground among citizens on both sides of the debate: people want places where they can find solitude, they are concerned about the very real possibility of mining

in these areas (in fact, there is currently a proposal before the BLM for a large-scale mineral exploration for gold in the Bodie WSA), they want to protect the areas' natural and other values, and they want reasonable access. The meeting in Mammoth revealed that access appears to be the only substantive issue creating conflict among the various interests.

Meanwhile, conservationists in the eastern Sierra are gearing up for a summer season of field trips to the various WSAs to better familiarize themselves with the areas and their values. Eventually, those interested stakeholders who are committed to a problem-solving approach hope to get together and start looking at the WSAs on a site-specific basis, identifying the actual—versus perceived—conflicts and addressing ways to resolve them.

If you would like to become involved in the

campaign to protect BLM wildlands as future wilderness, please contact Sally Miller at (760) 647-6411 or e-mail her at sallym@telis.org. You can also contact Nobby Riedy with The Wilderness Society at (415) 561-6641 or e-mail him at nobby@tws.org.

Sally Miller is with Friends of the Inyo and is a member of the board of CWC.

Despite media attempts to portray the issue as a "battle" between pro and anti-wilderness forces, there is much common ground among citizens on both sides of the debate.

Roadless Area policy

Continued from page 6

was an interesting one as conservation minded Democrats united with fiscally conservative Republicans to eliminate the ecologically destructive logging road subsidy. A similar vote in the Senate ended in a tie, and with Vice President Al Gore unavailable to cast a deciding vote, the measure went down in defeat. But the message to the Administration was clear: the egregious subsidy for the construction of logging roads must come to a halt and our precious and rare roadless areas must be protected.

The Clinton administration's policy affects millions of acres of roadless areas throughout the western United States. The temporary prohibition on road construction is being presented as a part of a larger program aimed at examining the role of and need for the 440,000 miles of roads currently lacing the national forest system. Last year, Department of Agriculture Undersecretary Jim Lyons called roads the single worst water quality problem within national forests.

The policy will give roadless areas a level of protection they have never been offered. Even though the policy will not prohibit logging in these areas (as conservation groups had originally hoped), the prohibition on logging road construction will make logging in roadless areas much more expensive, and thus more difficult. In California, the proposed policy would likely have only minimal impact since few roadless area timber sales in the state require road construction. However, in western states with vast tracts of roadless lands, especially Idaho and Montana, the directive will have dramatic impacts.

Roadless areas, or unprotected wilderness, are the last remnants of wildlands remaining within our national forests. They contain vast tracts of old-growth forest, harbor countless species of wildlife, and are a prime source of clean, cold water—required by salmon and steelhead for their survival. In California slightly more than four million acres of roadless lands are open to logging, mining, and road construction. Many of these areas are threatened by such projects each year.

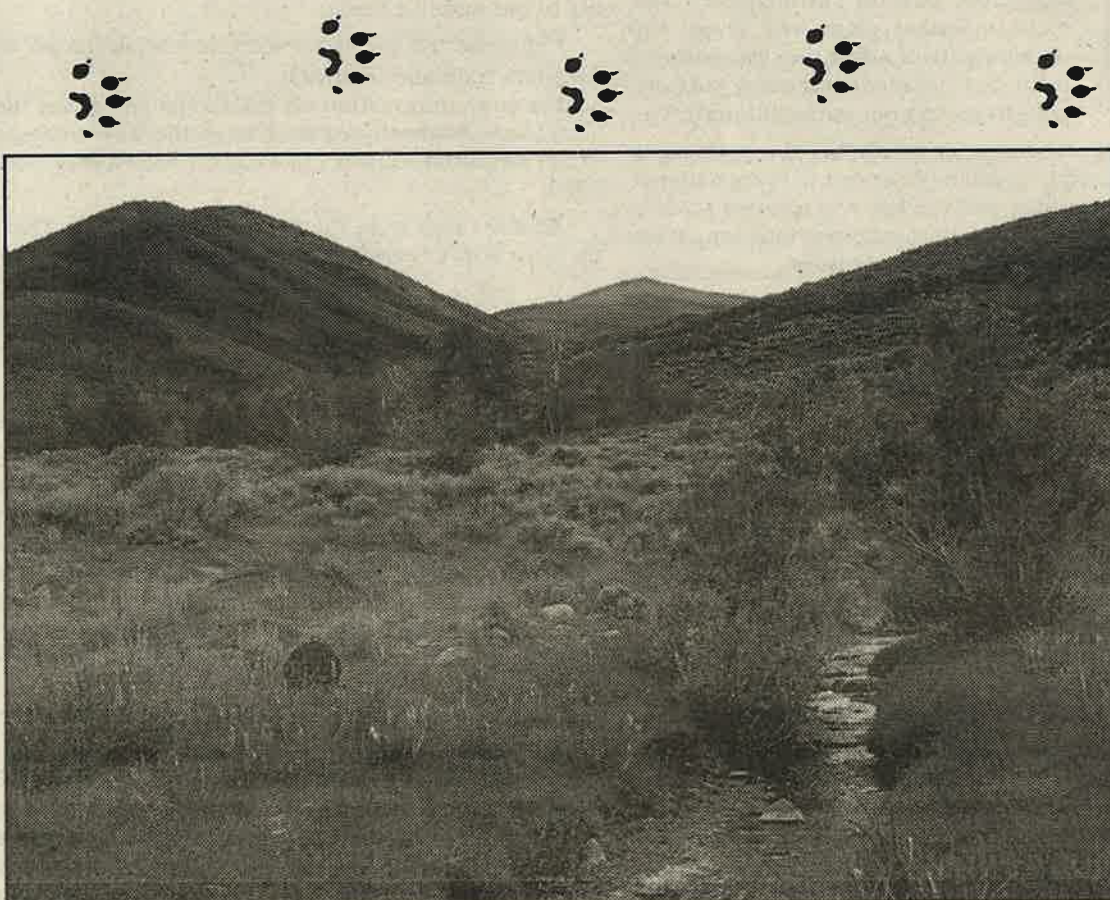
The change in policy has been greeted with muted enthusiasm by environmental organizations, scientists, policy makers and newspapers. In December, 168 scientists from across the country sent a letter to President Clinton urging him to protect all roadless areas greater than 1,000 acres in size. "A scientifically based policy for roadless areas on public lands should," the scientists wrote, "at a minimum protect from development all roadless areas larger than 1,000 acres and some smaller areas that have special ecological significance because of their contributions to the regional landscapes."

Many newspapers have also voiced their support for the proposed policy change. The *Washington Post* called the proposed policy "a good idea" and urged that the "reflexive opposition it has drawn from certain members of congress...be brushed aside." In California, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *San Jose Mercury News* and the *San Francisco Examiner* have endorsed the policy.

California elected officials have spoken out in favor of protection for de facto wilderness as well. In early January, twenty California Representatives sent a letter to Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman, urging him to protect all roadless areas greater than 1,000 acres. Referring to California's unprotected wilderness lands, the letter encouraged the President to "enact a strong policy of protection for these critical lands." Senators Boxer and Feinstein also sent letters of support.

The political support is important. The "reflexive" (read "knee jerk") Congressional Republicans mentioned in the *Post* editorial, especially those from western states,

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Rough Creek, Bodie Wilderness Study Area. Photo by Sally Miller.

Wilderness Forum

Letters

Everyone here at Forest Issues Group (FIG) would like to thank both Paul, yourself and the California Wilderness Coalition staff for the support you have given this past year. We very much appreciate the friendly and helpful attention you have provided whenever we have called or visited the CWC office. Most of all, we are especially grateful for the vast amount of time (and expense) required to travel the considerable distance to attend FIG meetings in the Grass Valley/Nevada City area. The training materials and expertise provided has benefitted our forest protection group immeasurably. Thanks! Keep up the good work.

James Woods
Forest Issues Group, Grass Valley

Editor's note:

Forest Issues Group, a grassroots conservation organization working on issues affecting the Tahoe National Forest, recently celebrated its first anniversary. FIG has already had great success in helping to keep their neck of the woods wild and healthy. CWC's Adopt-a-Wilderness program, in conjunction with the Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign, was instrumental in helping to form this group.

For more information on FIG call Don Jacobson at (530) 272-1433.

Roadless Area policy

Continued from page 6

have already criticized the new policy. Anti-wilderness Republicans have already promised to block its implementation.

In her usual departure from common sense, Representative Helen Chenoweth (R-ID), Chairman (her word) of the House Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health, argued that the proposal would be "devastating to people and the environment" and would be a "slap in the face" to good science. Chairman Chenoweth offered no explanation for her opinion, other than to enclose a letter by the Vice-President of the Society of American Forests which argues, among other things, that the policy would mean that outhouses would no longer be available within roadless areas.

Unfortunately, anti-environmental members of Congress have already convinced the administration to exempt from the new policy two regions with an abundance of roadless lands. Those regions, including Alaska, Washington, Oregon and northern California, would still be threatened with road construction in roadless areas. The

areas exempted from the policy in California include the Mendocino, Shasta-Trinity, Klamath, and Six Rivers national forests. Since 1996, 75 percent of the attempts to log in roadless areas in California occurred in these four forests. While the policy has been greeted as a good start, it has also drawn the ire of conservation groups throughout the state for this reason.

To exempt such a vast area of potential wilderness is a classic symptom of an administration sans backbone. The *St. Louis Post Dispatch* put it best in a January 15 editorial on the subject. Referring to the proposed exemptions, the *Post* said "That's tantamount to issuing restrictions on the beer industry but exempting Anheuser Busch and Miller. It makes no sense."

Despite the exemptions however, the change in policy is a welcome one. It will provide conservationists some necessary breathing room. Now activists can focus more on achieving permanent protection for roadless areas and less on defending those areas from immediate threats.

Paul Spitler is the Executive Director of CWC.

Calendar

February 13-15: Western Ancient Forest Activists Conference, Ashland, Oregon. This annual conference, sponsored by Headwaters, draws hundreds of activists from all over the West. Participants will be reviewing the successes and setbacks of 1997 and planning future strategies. Workshops will cover legal, legislative, scientific, organizing, outreach, education and other topics. For more information contact Chant Thomas at (541) 899-1712 or e-mail him at deep@mind.net.

February 20: Around the Campfire with Dave Foreman. Come listen to Dave as he charts a course for wilderness recovery and the flourishing of native biodiversity in California. U.C. Davis campus, 7-10pm. Call Rich Hunter at (530) 758-0380 for more info.

February 23: Comment deadline on the Yosemite Valley Implementation Project. See January, 1998 *Wilderness Record*.

March 14-15: Public Interest Environmental Law Conference, Eugene Oregon. Organized by Friends of Land Air Water, the conference will offer a variety of workshops, speakers and panelists. For more information call (541) 346-3828 or e-mail L-A-W@law.uoregon.edu. Register online at www.pielc.uoregon.edu.

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.

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9:30 AM - 3:30 PM

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- DARRYL YOUNG, Aide to State Senator Tom Hayden
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- ZEKE GRADER, Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations
- TARA MUELLER, Environmental Law Foundation
- CLARENCE HOSTLER, Hupa Tribe
- THERESE HELICZER, Next Generation
- RYAN HENSON, California Wilderness Coalition
- DAVID ORR, Sierra Club, John Muir Project
- JOSH KAUFMAN, Sierra Club Redwood Chapter
- ELYSSA ROSEN, Sierra Club, Salmon Project Coordinator
- CHARLES LITTLE, Sierra Club, National Forests Chair
- PAUL SPITLER, California Wilderness Coalition

Bring your own brown bag and/or donations for morning refreshments & vegetarian lunch
Information: Joyce King (510) 525-6445, Phillip Batchelder (510) 841-6761

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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
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"We have ample new scientific evidence of the immense social and environmental values provided by roadless areas."

—Michael Dornbeck, head of what used to be the world's largest road construction agency—the U.S. Forest Service— on its new policy prohibiting roadbuilding in most roadless areas.

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