# WILDERNESS RECORD

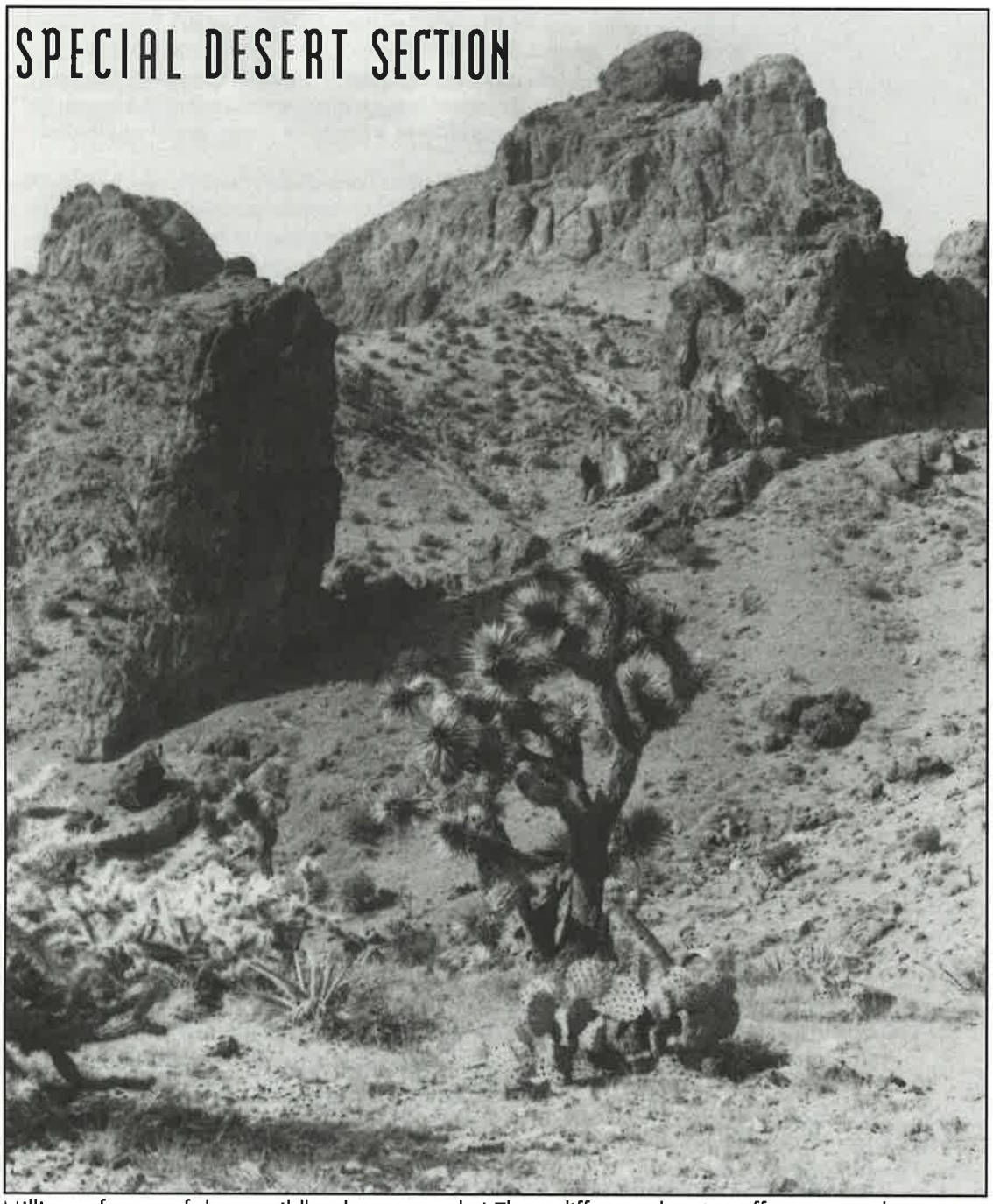
California Wilderness Coalition

A Voice for Wild California

25 Anniversary 1976-2001

Fall 2001 Volume 26 Issue 4


## SPECIAL DESERT SECTION



Millions of acres of desert wildlands are at stake! Three different planning efforts are underway: the Northern and Eastern Colorado plan (see articles on pages 20 and 21), the Northern and Eastern Mojave plan (see page 17), and the West Mojave plan (page 17). Your input is needed.

## IN THIS ISSUE

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**Our Mission**

The California Wilderness Coalition defends the pristine landscapes that make California unique, provide a home to our wildlife, and preserve a place for spiritual renewal. We protect wilderness for its own sake, for ourselves, and for generations yet to come. We identify and protect the habitat necessary for the long-term survival of California's plants and animals. Since 1976, through advocacy and public education, we have enlisted the support of citizens and policy-makers in our efforts to preserve California's wildlands.



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DIRECTOR'S REPORT

# California's Missing Linkages

Under the pressure of our growing human population and associated urban sprawl, critical habitat connections are being lost daily. Without such links between existing protected areas and other public lands, biodiversity will degrade rapidly and we will lose some of the most important and charismatic species found in our state.

*—Letter to Governor Gray Davis, signed by 60 prominent scientists and conservationists, April 2001*

This fall, the California Wilderness Coalition, in partnership with four private organizations and public agencies, released the results of a landmark study that documented—for the first time—the location and status of California's wildlife corridors.

For over two decades, scientists have been studying wildlife corridors—the paths wildlife utilize to move between larger, protected habitat areas. Much of the research has highlighted the importance of corridors as an essential component of an effective conservation strategy.

Wildlife need space to roam. Many species, such as the mountain lion, bobcat, marten and fisher, require large landscapes and wide open spaces. But throughout California, subdivisions, roads, and other forms of development continue to break up natural habitat into smaller and smaller pieces. Scientists call this process fragmentation, and cite it as the primary threat to wildlife.

Yet, despite the growing body of scientific evidence that wildlife corridors are critical to preventing the extinction of some of our best-known species, we have known very little about the locations of those corridors—until now.

In November 2000, CWC, along with four partners, brought together over 150 well-known scientists, planners, land managers and conservationists to provide information on the location and status of California's most important wildlife corridors.

At the event, participants mapped the location of known wildlife corridors and provided background information on the status, threat, use, and conservation opportunity for each corridor. The first-of-its-kind event yielded the best information to date on California's wildlife corridors, and will be a powerful tool in our effort to ensure that these areas receive permanent protection. (See related article on page 8.)

The survey will be available to local land-use decision-makers, planners, land managers, and state and federal agencies, so that they can consider the effects of their land-use decisions on wildlife migration. It is information that will, when properly incorporated into land use planning, provide immense benefits to California wildlife.

What was significant about the event, however, was not only the information it generated, but the partnership that went into its production. Event sponsors included the California Wilderness Coalition, State of California Department of Parks and Recreation, The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Geological Survey, and Center for the Reproduction of Endangered Species.

Together, this powerful partnership of conservation groups, research organizations, and state and federal agencies possesses the ability to influence conservation strategies and on-the-ground actions throughout California.

A follow-up event held in August 2001 brought many of the same partners together to develop an action plan to provide immediate protection for southern California's highest priority corridors. The team is making excellent headway. Future follow-up work, including events in central and northern California, as well as additional focused research, is also being planned.

Renowned ecologist E.O. Wilson once warned that, without connectivity, landscapes would be reduced to "pathetic remnants" that provide little ecological value and sustain few species. By working together, we can help to ensure that California's most critical linkages remain intact for the benefit of the wildlife species that are the natural heritage of the Golden State. We look forward to continuing this work.

To view the results of Missing Linkages, go to www.calwild.org/pubs/reports/linkages/index.htm.

# Conservation on private land: the time is now, the place: Congress, the issue: the federal Farm Bill

**by Ben Wallace**

When you drive to the Sierra Nevada, would you rather see subdivisions or open space along the way? Do you prefer buying fresh vegetables from family farmers selling directly at the local market, or trans-national agricultural enterprises? Do you think a wheat farmer should receive price supports in a hard year, while a walnut farmer receiving no assistance has to sell out? If these issues matter to you, then the federal Farm Bill matters too.

The Farm Bill will authorize up to $20 billion dollars per year of the federal budget. If this money is allocated wisely, it can provide open space, wildlife habitat, clean air, water conservation and a myriad of other benefits enjoyed by all Californians. A farm policy that provides financial incentives for farmers and ranchers to employ exemplary conservation practices on their lands will also ensure the health of our rural communities.

California needs a conservation-centered Farm Bill. By working to promote a strong conservation aspect to the federal Farm Bill, we can accomplish two important goals: first, our farms and ranches can be made more profitable, encouraging farmers and ranchers to stay in business. Second, the biological heritage of California can be significantly enhanced and protected through voluntary incentive programs.

The California Wilderness Coalition has produced a series of recommendations to make the next Farm Bill work better for California farmers and our environment. Our recommendations are comprised of these themes:

Laura Kindsvater

**Financial incentives for farmers and ranchers to employ exemplary conservation practices on their lands will also ensure the health of our rural communities.**

**The Farm Bill provides funding for targeted conservation incentive programs that make it easier for farmers to be exemplary stewards of the land. Farmers put time and expense into land stewardship practices that benefit the public at large. By providing financial incentives for these voluntary practices, we can encourage their widespread use—rewarding environmental excellence, rather than mitigating for losses.**

1. Increase the availability of new and existing conservation incentive programs to California farmers and ranchers.

2. Reform the administration of conservation incentive programs to minimize waste, paperwork, and redundancy while maximizing environmental outcomes.

3. Facilitate the removal of barriers that may discourage landowners from participating in conservation incentive programs.

Balancing financial necessities, environmental needs and community values in private land management is a tremendous undertaking. By providing positive incentives to landowners in the Farm Bill, we can help farmers and ranchers to protect the environment while ensuring their long-term viability.

**If you would like more information about the federal Farm Bill of 2002, please contact Ben Wallace, Private Lands Stewardship Associate at: (530) 758-0380, or e-mail: ben@calwild.org.**

# Where do we stand?

**by Kim Olson**

The Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment, issued by the U.S. Forest Service on January 12, 2001, is a landmark decision that directs the management of 11.5 million acres of national forest land throughout the Sierra Nevada region. The plan, better known as the Framework, has received wide support from environmental groups throughout California because it rises to the challenge of finding the appropriate balance between cutting small trees and brush (also known as fuels treatments) and protecting wildlife and old-growth forest, while providing for recreation and timber production.

The Framework is currently being implemented, but is also undergoing review by the Bush Administration. Under federal law, individuals and organizations have the right to appeal a decision issued by the Forest Service within 90 days after the date the legal notice is published in the Federal Register. The appeals must be related to the process used in developing the decision. This appeal period ended on April 17, and the Forest Service has 160 days from that date to review and resolve the appeals.

If there are no delays in the review process, Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth will issue a decision on the fate of the Framework near the end of September. Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman has discretionary authority to review the decision by Chief Bosworth. However, Secretary Veneman has recused herself from this process and has delegated the authority to her undersecretary. If the Bush Administration's nominee for undersecretary is approved, former timber industry lobbyist Mark Rey will be the person making the final decision on the Framework.

In order to demonstrate support for the Framework as it currently exists, the California Wilderness Coalition has been coordinating with several other environmental organizations to secure resolutions from county and city governments and to gather signatures on support letters from elected officials at all levels throughout California and from business owners and community leaders throughout the Sierra Nevada region.

## What you can do

Please help to ensure this plan is not rolled back or compromised. Write to Forest Service Chief Bosworth and urge him to support the Sierra Nevada Framework, which protects our forests for wildlife and recreation and our communities from the threat of wildfires. Please send a copy to Kim Olson at the California Wilderness Coalition so she can send copies to Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein.

Send your letter to:
Dale Bosworth, Chief
United States Forest Service
14th and Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20250

Please send a copy of your letter to Kim Olson at kim@calwild.org or fax it to (530)758-0382. For more information, contact Kim at (530)758-0380.

**Kim Olson is a Conservation Associate for the California Wilderness Coalition.**

**Stumps in the Sierra Nevada: If the Bush Administration's nominee for undersecretary is approved, former timber industry lobbyist Mark Rey will be the person making the final decision on the Framework.**

## Administration drafts sham plan for sequoia management

The United States Forest Service has begun developing a management plan for the Giant Sequoia National Monument in the southern Sierra. President Clinton designated the Monument last April in an effort to protect some of the last remaining stands of giant sequoia trees in California. Now the Forest Service must determine how the new Monument will be managed.

The first step in the process to develop a management plan calls for public comments. This "scoping" phase determines what the Forest Service plan should address. However, the document drafted by the Forest Service assumes certain management directions without any review by the public or by the Scientific Advisory Committee working on the Monument. There is also talk from the Bush Administration of reducing the size of the Monument, as well as opening the Monument to off-road vehicles use and logging in the name of "fire risk reduction."

# Activists work to protect wild rivers in Sierra National Forest

**by Tina Andolina**

Proposals to build two new dams in the Kings River watershed, about 55 miles northeast of Fresno, have resurfaced as a result of California's energy crisis. Both of these dams would inundate miles of rivers and flood some of California's wildest and deepest canyons.

In response, local wild river activists have come back together to protect these rivers. The Committee to Save the Kings River has been reborn, this time with the goal of not only stopping these dams, but also of securing wild and scenic river designation for both rivers.

The dam on Dinkey Creek, a Kings River tributary in the Sierra National Forest, would form a reservoir similar in size to Huntington Lake, but would drown Camp Fresno, a Girl Scout camp called El-O-Win, and other facilities. The reservoir would only sometimes be full, thus leaving an ugly "bath tub ring" in a canyon currently renowned for its pristine beauty. Dinkey Creek is a small river and the dam would only be able to collect enough water to generate power for four hours per day, leading local citizens to term the proposed project a "part-time dam."

The Dinkey Creek dam could ruin portions of the 8,866-acre Marble Point potential wilderness and the 21,372-acre Sycamore Springs potential wilderness, if it floods these unprotected areas.

Regardless of these concerns, the Kings River Conservation District, a Central San Joaquin Valley water management agency, is going forward with a feasibility study for building a dam on Dinkey Creek, which was shelved in the late 1980s because the cost of the energy the dam would provide was too high.

The Kings River Conservation District is due to finish its feasibility study in September. If the water management agency staff decide to pursue the dam on Dinkey Creek, they will have to go through the federal government to get a license from the Federal Energy Regulatory Committee. During that process, the public will be able to comment on the project.

The other dam proposed would be constructed at Rogers Crossing on the main fork of the Kings River. This dam would flood an 8,000-foot deep canyon, thousands of feet deeper than the Grand Canyon, and would potentially impact thousands of acres of unprotected wilderness that could otherwise have been added to the Monarch Wilderness. However, the project would be difficult to approve, because the Kings River is partially protected by federal legislation, passed in 1984, that mandates Congressional approval in order to build a dam at Rogers Crossing.

**Volunteers have already collected hundreds of signatures from local citizens who visit the camps along Dinkey Creek, asking for permanent protection for the Dinkey.**

In response to these renewed threats to the watershed, Committee to Save the Kings activists are working to build public support for permanent protection for these rivers. They are collecting letters, talking with cabin owners, and meeting with locally elected officials in order to protect these rivers. Volunteers have already collected hundreds of signatures from local citizens who visit the camps along Dinkey Creek, asking for permanent protection for the Dinkey.

Securing wild and scenic river designation for these rivers would ensure that they would be protected from any dam project or water diversion. Wild and scenic river designation would eliminate the possibility of the Kings River Conservation District threatening to dam up one of California's wild rivers each time there is a spike in energy prices.

**Tina Andolina is a Conservation Associate for the California Wilderness Coalition.**

The management plan will cover over 300,000 acres, ranging from low elevation chaparral to lands above 8,000 feet. Even though no management direction should be identified without public involvement (according to the National Environmental Policy Act), the Forest Service has jumped the gun and has already proposed specific actions such as "mechanically removing" trees from the Belknap/Nelson Complex groves in the heart of the Slate Mountain potential wilderness area. Slate Mountain currently contains rare habitat for the imperiled Pacific fisher, a carnivore in the mink family.

Further, the document makes no mention of specific management plans for this and other potential wilderness areas within the Monument, including the Black Mountain area and additions to the Golden Trout Wilderness.

Short-circuiting the process this way has made it difficult for local activists and residents to offer input on the scope a management plan should encompass, instead forcing giant sequoia advocates to react to the Forest Service's plan. The California Wilderness Coalition has called on the Forest Service to redo the document to allow citizens and the Scientific Advisory Committee the opportunity to propose a full range of options.

# Bush attempts to dismantle roadless area protection

## The American public responds with over TWO MILLION COMMENTS

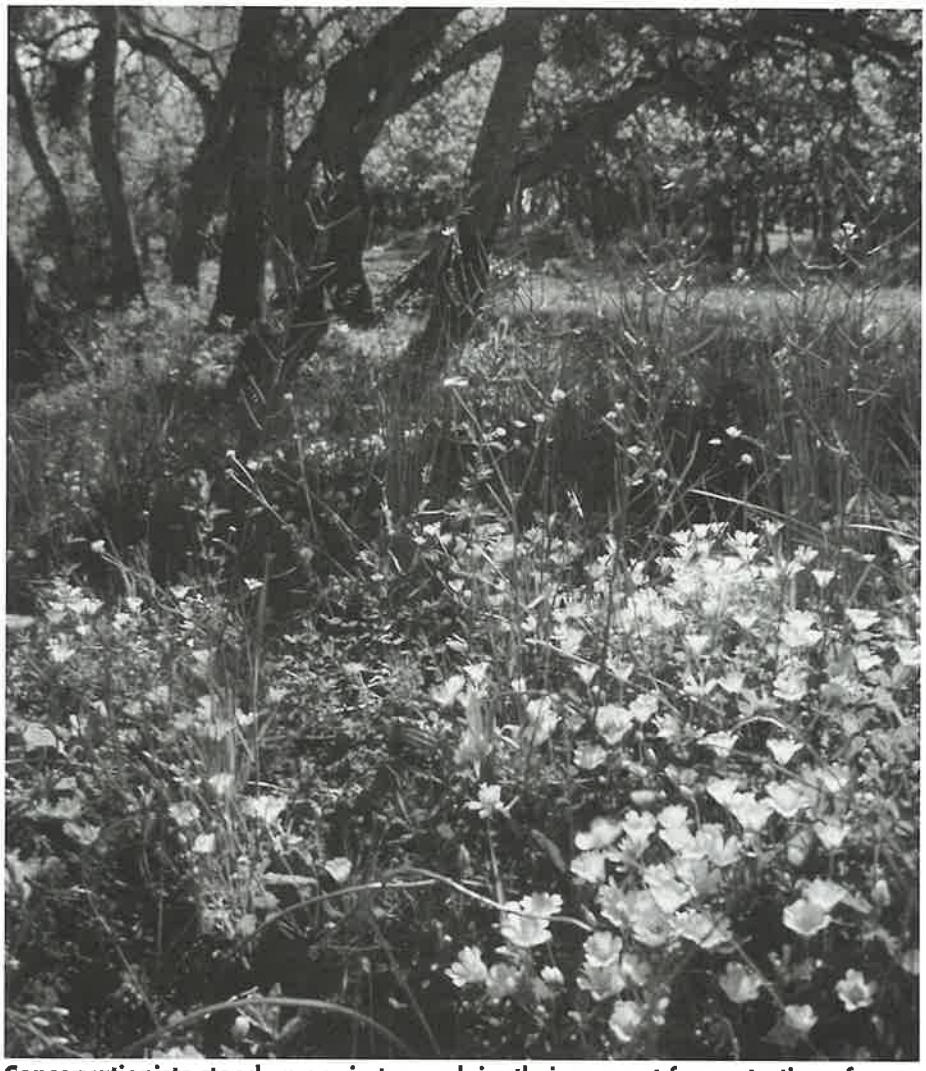
**by Carrie Sandstedt**

The roadless area conservation rule preserves our remaining wild forests by banning road building and conventional logging on 58.5 million acres of national forest land in 39 states. This policy, which was adopted on January 12, 2001, is the product of the most extensive federal rulemaking in history—with more than 600 public hearings and 1.6 million public comments.

The rule was designed to protect the last 30 percent of wild and unprotected national forest land—including 4.4 million acres in California. The roadless rule also aimed to address the issues of fire management, forest health, and access to private property.

On May 4, 2001, the Bush Administration announced that it would allow implementation of the roadless area conservation rule, but that it would propose substantial amendments to the rule.

Then, on July 10, the Bush Administration opened another comment period on the roadless area conservation rule. The public had 60 days, ending September 10, 2001, to comment on the rule.



Jim Rose

**Conservationists stood up again to proclaim their support for protection of roadless areas like this one (the Yuki roadless area, Mendocino National Forest)**

### We said it once, and we said it again

Once again, the American public responded during this 60-day comment period, by submitting over 400,000 comments, putting the total number of comments on the roadless area conservation rule at an unprecedented TWO MILLION comments.

Conservationists, religious leaders and elected officials gathered throughout the country during the week prior to the close of the comment period to celebrate overwhelming support for wild forests and to voice their concerns over President Bush's attempts to weaken protections for the last pristine areas of our national forests.

On September 5th, the California Wilderness Coalition, along with Earthjustice, the Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society, CalPIRG, and the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, held a rally in San Francisco. Speakers included Earthjustice CEO Buck Parker, Sierra Club Conservation Director Bruce Hamilton, and representatives from Senator Barbara Boxer's office and Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi's office, who read statements from two of California's greatest defenders of the roadless rule in Congress. The rally was just one of many held nationwide as part of a week-long series of regional events across the U.S., from Juneau to Atlanta and Albuquerque to Milwaukee. Concerned citizens gathered to demonstrate the country's unprecedented support of the U.S. Forest Service's roadless area conservation rule just days before the September 10 close of the second comment period.

**Carrie Sandstedt is a Conservation Associate for the California Wilderness Coalition.**

# New wilderness on the horizon

**by Tina Andolina and Ryan Henson**

The California Wild Heritage Campaign is the conservation community's coordinated effort to protect the Golden State's remaining federal wildlands and wild rivers. A collaboration between many key conservation groups, including dozens of local grassroots organizations, the California Wilderness Coalition, Friends of the River, The Wilderness Society, Sierra Club, Audubon Society, and the California Native Plant Society, the campaign's ultimate goal is to preserve wild country and wild rivers that qualify for protection under the Wilderness Act and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act—two extremely important federal laws that constitute some of the strongest habitat protection measures this nation has to offer.

Only Congress can protect a stretch of wild land as wilderness, or protect a pristine stream as a wild and scenic river. To earn Congressional support, the California Wild Heritage Campaign has been working hard to support local citizens' efforts to permanently protect wild lands and wild rivers. The California Wilderness Coalition's roles include enabling local wilderness campaigns in far northern California and the western slope of the Sierra Nevada.

## Northern California update

Volunteers and one paid staff person in the region have led 37 outings to potential new wilderness areas since January, with an equal number planned for the rest of the year. They have used these tours to gather hundreds of letters of support for wilderness and to expand the circle of activists in northern California. On July 7, they led an outing to the Mount Lassic potential wilderness in the Six Rivers National Forest attended by 28 people—the largest turnout ever for such an event in the region. The Mount Lassic region harbors a high number of rare plants found nowhere else on earth.

Volunteers in the region have gathered support at eleven events, from the Trinity Tribal Stomp to the Redwood Country Fair. Volunteers and paid staff have also given 28 presentations to groups ranging from the Clear Lake Horsemen's Association to the Gilham Butte Property Owners' Association.

The next major push is to work with local governments who support wilderness in their region, and to reach out to stakeholders (such as private landowners) who may have concerns about additional wilderness.

Carla Cloer

**Peppermint Creek in the Slate Mountain potential wilderness, where backpackers from all over the U.S. recently had a weekend retreat**

## Sierra Nevada update

Activists throughout the Sierra Nevada are continuing their efforts to find local public support for the wild places they love. Taking advantage of the summer season, hiking leaders have guided 25 hikes to potential wilderness areas and wild and scenic rivers. In the Tahoe National Forest, 24 people from all over Northern California attended a hike in the beautiful Grouse Lakes area and enjoyed a talk by a local professional geologist. Backpackers from all around California and the U.S. spent a weekend in the giant sequoia groves of the Slate Mountain potential wilderness area. In the Sierra National Forest, Committee to Save the Kings River activists asked for support in local campgrounds, generating letters to save Dinkey Creek and the Kings River and secure permanent protection for both as Wild & Scenic Rivers.

At the High Sierra Festival in Quincy, activists collected over 130 support letters from people all the over the western United States, calling on Forest Service Chief Bosworth and our representatives to protect our wild forests.

This summer, local wilderness and wild river supporters are meeting with their elected officials to discuss protecting nearby wild places. Many activists have secured letters of support from pro-wilderness county supervisors and city councilmembers. Several counties have passed resolutions supporting permanent protection for their potential wilderness areas and wild rivers. Activists are also meeting with interested groups such as local Democratic Central Committees, League of Women Voters groups, water authorities and others.

Efforts to protect local wild areas and rivers have rapidly picked up the pace, and will continue to escalate as autumn turns the aspen and oak leaves golden and crimson throughout California's spectacular backcountry. Stay tuned for the next jump forward in the campaign to protect California's last wild places.

**Tina Andolina and Ryan Henson are Conservation Associates for the California Wilderness Coalition.**

# Missing Linkages: results reverberate across the state

**by Kristeen Penrod**

On August 7, 2001, the California Wilderness Coalition released the proceedings for the "Missing Linkages: Restoring Connectivity to the California Landscape" conference, reaching the front page of practically every major newspaper in the state. The conference, held on November 2, 2000, brought together scientists, land managers, planners, and conservationists from around the state to identify and document the most critical habitat linkages for California's wildlife. Other sponsors of Missing Linkages included The Nature Conservancy, the Biological Resources Division of the United States Geological Survey, the Center for Reproduction of Endangered Species, and California State Parks.

Missing Linkages is the first-ever statewide analysis of migration corridors in California. Some of the headlines read, "Survey Lists 300 Pathways as Vital to State Wildlife," "Development Risk to Wildlife, Research Says,""California's Wildlife Thoroughfares Under Siege," and "Wildlife 'Highways' Fall Prey to Growth," to name a few. Conference participants identified 232 habitat linkages throughout the state using key species from different taxonomic groups as habitat connectivity indicators. Participants specified the location of the linkage and provided detailed information on the threats and barriers to connectivity, restoration opportunities, research needs, and the feasibility of conserving the linkage. As hoped, Missing Linkages has definitely raised the awareness level on the critical need for protecting and restoring these habitat linkages.

State and federal agencies have embraced the Missing Linkages document, as it provides direction and focus to their conservation efforts. Richard Rayburn, chief of natural resources at California State Parks, was quoted in the *LA Times* article as saying, "To me, it's the most important thing we can do to preserve values on parks lands today."

A high-ranking state official was quoted in an article in the *New York Times* Science Section. Mary Nichols, director of the California Resources Agency, stated: "We've learned as a result of advances in conservation biology that simply protecting chunks of land, even on a large scale, is not adequate to protect many species and the plants they depend on."

Scientists have long known that isolated protected areas lose species over time. M.A. Sanjayan, Director of Conservation Science for The Nature Conservancy, was quoted in the *Orange County Register* as saying, "Movement corridors are of critical importance if we are to maintain the pieces we already have in the long run. Otherwise, these islands of habitat will continue to erode in biodiversity."

Missing Linkages confirmed the need for land managers and planners to look outside their current planning boundaries in order to maintain biological and ecological processes. *The Daily News* quoted Paul Spitler, Executive Director of the California Wilderness Coalition, as saying, "Wildlife corridors are an essential component of any conservation strategy on the basis that the natural habitats have been fragmented."

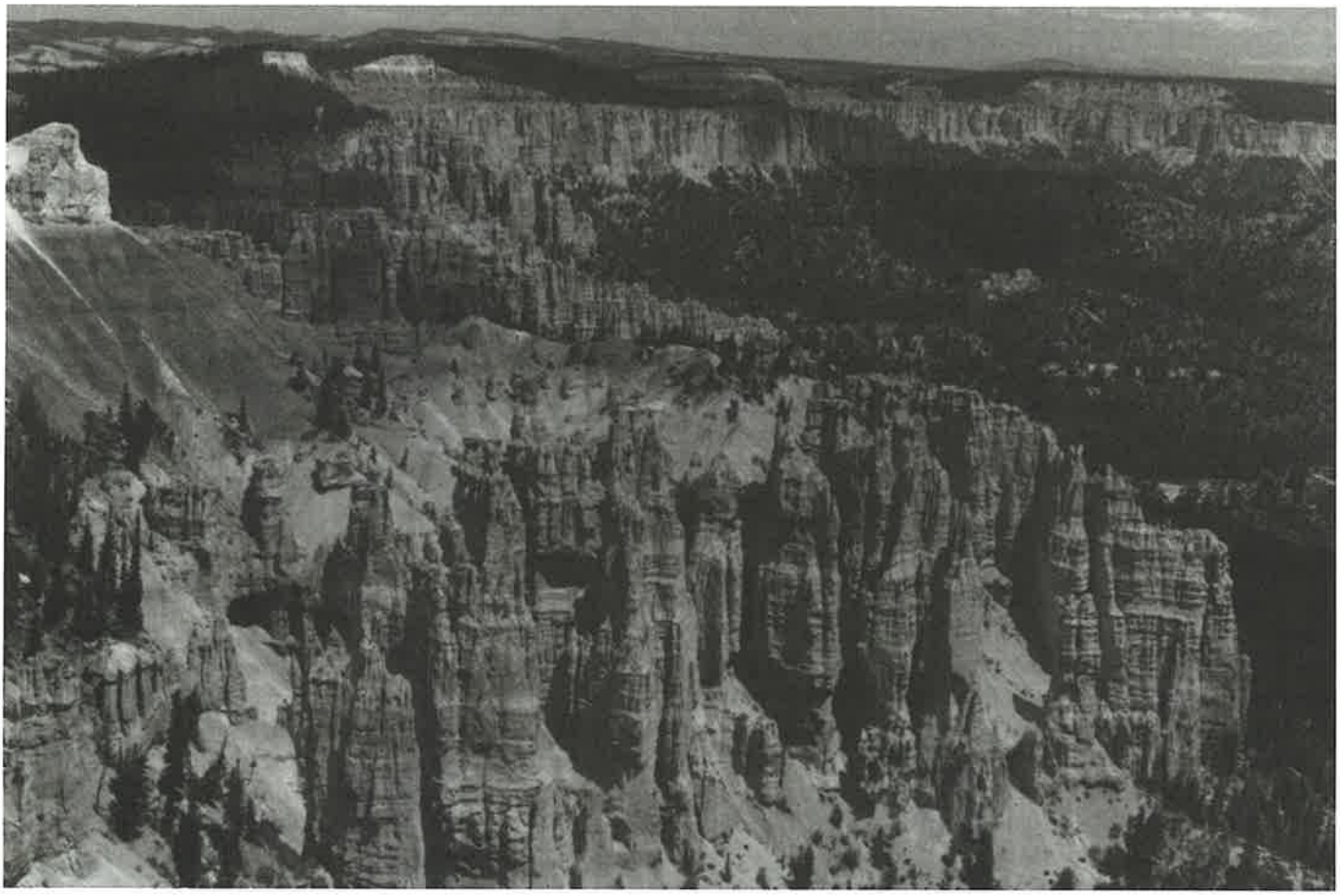
Of the 232 habitat linkages identified for the state, 60 were specified in the south coast ecoregion alone. As a follow up to Missing Linkages, the South Coast Wildlands Project hosted a meeting in August 2001 in Los Angeles to focus efforts of state and federal agencies, conservation groups, land-use planning agencies, and scientists on protecting the twelve most threatened landscape level linkages in the South Coast Ecoregion. The meeting resulted in a plan by South Coast Wildlands Project and its partners, including sponsors of Missing Linkages, to develop a "Linkage Protection Portfolio" to assist regional planners in ensuring connectivity between large protected areas in the ecoregion.

The proceedings for Missing Linkages can be viewed and downloaded online at http://www.calwild.org/pubs/reports/linkages/index.htm.

**Kristeen Penrod is the Director of the South Coast Wildlands Project.**

Mike McWherter

**The Missing Linkages conference mapped migration corridors for wildlife such as the black bear.**



Whipple Mountains Wilderness

# The California desert

*The desert has gone a-begging for a word of praise these many years. It never had a sacred poet; it has in me only a lover.*
—John Van Dyke, 1901

It is difficult to describe the California desert without quickly resorting to extremes. The landscape is so stark, so full of contrast, so unique, that ordinary adjectives fail to capture its qualities. Calling the desert "scenic" does no justice to wide, open views of rocks, bluffs, ridgetops, and mesas that span hundreds of miles in any direction. Describing as "rugged" a landscape whose inhabitants survive on mere inches of rain each year and through searing 120 degree heat, is an almost laughable understatement.

The California desert—the serene, sublime California desert—is one of the most delicate landscapes on Earth. In few other places is the line between life and death so thinly etched. And in few other places are the effects of man's work so permanent. In some parts of the desert, the scars from General Patton's tanks are still evident, over fifty years later. Yes, the beautiful desert is immensely fragile.

We are proud to present this special California desert issue of the *Wilderness Record*. Contained within are articles covering the major issues facing the California desert: the proposed expansion of the Ft. Irwin military base, the numerous ongoing desert management plans, the Cadiz water development project, and others, as well as some of the unusual aspects the desert offers: its opportunities for solitude, its wildlife, its native plants, and its precious cultural sites.

The threats to the California desert are not comparable to what they were 20 years ago, but nonetheless, they continue to jeopardize the fragile resources that make the desert landscape so unique.

Since 1977, when CWC organized our first planning meeting to discuss desert wilderness, we have been committed to desert conservation. Twenty-four years later, that commitment still holds true. We hope you enjoy this special issue, and will continue to partner in our efforts to ensure that the fragile tranquillity of the California desert remains intact for the enjoyment of future generations.

# Desert wilderness: extending forever

**by Steve Tabor**

Pete Yamagata

**View from the Sheephole Valley Wilderness: the Sheephole Range from the south**

Before the advent of the train, the auto, the airplane, the helicopter and the jet, the desert was a place to be feared. The desert was different then. Time was extended, and so was space.

The desert's immense space, its long distances and harsh travel conditions, its lack of life support for (or even acknowledgment of) the traveler, its "nothingness": all of these qualities caused it to be feared, and also despised. Throughout European history, the desert was the ecosystem with the bad reputation.

But some of us love the desert precisely FOR its space, its lack of nurture, its nothingness, its sullied reputation. For many of us in the modern world, with its compressed time and space and its intensity, the openness and emptiness of the desert are a necessity. Modern travelers rush by, and overhead, on their way to some other place that's more familiar, that's disturbingly the same. We lovers of desert wilderness seek out desert places, away from them and from the noise of their frantic rush. As we do so, we find ourselves compressed into smaller and smaller triangles and trapezoids of peace and quiet, of unsullied land and time. We find ourselves compelled to fight back, to make our triangles and trapezoids of refuge larger and more coherent, and more worthy of respect.

Twice now, I've led hikers across the wide expanse of southern California's Sheephole Valley Wilderness, 174,800 acres of about as barren and empty a land as you can think of. The newly established Desert Trail Corridor runs right through the center of it...without a road, without a real trail, without even a cairn to show the way. No stadium here, no cell phone antenna or satellite dish, not even a sacred tarn dedicated to John Muir, or a redrock canyon with Edward Abbey's name on it. Just sand and sky and widely spaced creosote bushes, some distant craggy ridges and a cactus or two, maybe a desert tortoise to show where not to go.

Both times, I wondered if we'd make it all the way, all those 38 miles. Three days was all our water-weary bodies, and our respective ever-nervous bosses, would allow. Each time, we hiked on, as we had to, pressed on by thirst and hunger, with blisters forming and worn-out shoulders, marveling at our 12- and 15-mile days. Nobody turned back. All enjoyed it: the desert if not the ordeal. For a brief period, we found ourselves in the 19th century, but without its camels or burros; WE were the beasts of burden. Each time, I couldn't help but think, "How far we have to go to escape the industrial age, its proponents and their acolytes!"

The sense of space, of openness, of possibility, of freedom are, it seems to me, among the most basic reasons for wilderness. The desert, like the rainforest, has its exquisite ecological wonders. It too has its special wildlife that exhibits uncanny survival adaptations. The scientist and the educational professional can find great value here, as the Wilderness Act requires. Scenic beauty abounds: the rocks and landforms and shadows and sunsets cause both camper and painter to drool and stammer, and reach for notebook or camera or paintbrush. And as for "untrammeled by man," well...go out to the desert and see if you can find a footprint, at least of a hiker or hunter. (Off-roaders' illegal wheel tracks are another story!)

The old-time writers knew it. Journalist Dan DeQuille in 1863, Army chronicler J. H. Simpson in 1878, geologist Israel Russell in 1885, all of these marveled at the desert's beauty, and also its sense of space. My favorite, John C. Van Dyke, said it best in his 1901 book, *The Desert*: "What is it that draws us to the boundless and the fathomless? Why should the lovely things of the earth...the grasses, the trees, the lakes, the little hills...appear trivial and insignificant when we come face to face with the sea or the desert or the vastness of the midnight sky? Is it that the one is the tale of things known and the other merely a hint, a suggestion of the unknown? Or have immensity, space, magnitude a peculiar beauty of their own? Is it not true that bulk and breadth are primary and essential qualities of the sublime in the landscape?...We do not see, we hardly know if their boundaries are limited; we only feel their immensity, their mystery, and their beauty."

May the bulk and breadth of desert wilderness extend forever into the future!

**Steve Tabor is President of Desert Survivors, an 850-member organization whose mission is to experience, share and protect the desert—a beautiful, fragile and threatened environment deserving of respect and requiring constant vigilance.**

# Room for improvement:

## How all-terrain vehicles and dirt bikes damage the desert

**by Carrie Sandstedt**

Although steps have been taken to reduce the impacts of off-road vehicles (ORVs) on the California desert, in many places these machines are still improperly managed or irresponsibly used. As a result of improper use or lack of proper land management, these machines can cause damage to sensitive soils, degrade critical wildlife habitat, trespass onto private property and publicly protected areas, and shatter the quiet of the outdoors.

### Algodones Dunes

In November 2000, the Bureau of Land Management temporarily closed 49,310 acres of the southern Algodones Dunes to off-road vehicle use. The Algodones Dunes are an ancient and active dune system that is home to many rare and threatened species. The closure occurred in an effort to protect the Peirson's milkvetch, a federally threatened flowering plant. The ban will remain until a plan has been developed to protect the milkvetch.

Despite the ban on off-road vehicles in the southern portion of the dunes, there are areas of the Algodones Dunes that are still heavily used by ORVs and are thus devoid of wildlife and native plants. In the North Algodones Dunes Wilderness Area, which is supposedly protected by federal law, trespassing still remains a large problem.

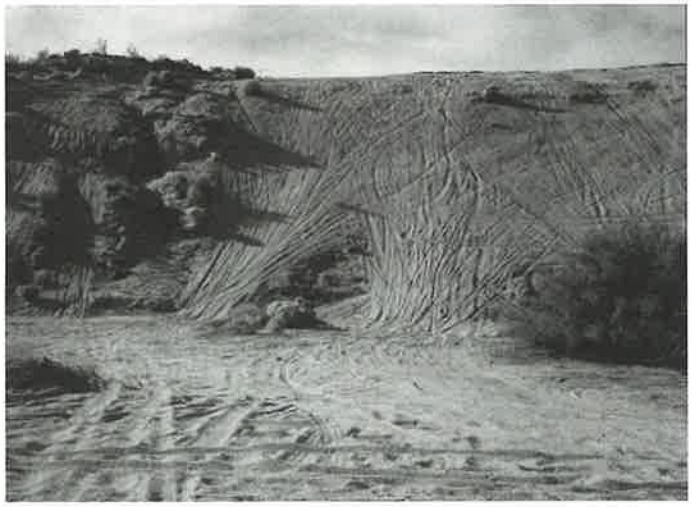
### Ord Mountains

Another area of the California desert that has been heavily impacted by off-road vehicles is the Ord Mountains region in the Mojave Desert, located southeast of Barstow. This area encompasses rocky high desert, low washes, badlands and sensitive plant communities. The Ord Mountains are also critical habitat for the federally threatened desert tortoise, and are important to desert bighorn sheep, horned lizards, raptors, bats, and other desert animals.

However, an uncontrolled network of ORV routes criss-crosses this unique desert area. Between 1977 and 1989, the number of miles of roads in the area increased by nearly 30%—yet none of the new routes had been officially designated or approved.

Although off-road vehicle use is limited in the Ord Mountains, the mountains are located between two areas that are open to ORV use. Illegal travel has taken its toll on the soils, vegetation and wildlife of the Ord Mountains.

The Bureau of Land Management was required to designate legal off-road vehicle routes in 1980, however it wasn't until 1995 that the agency finally acted. At that time, the agency closed more than 300 miles of routes due to excessive route proliferation and concern for the survival of the desert tortoise. In 1996, the BLM developed a plan to designate routes and rehabilitate damaged areas. This plan fell short of protecting damaged lands and critical species habitat and was therefore delayed. To date, the process to designate routes in the Ord Mountains awaits the completion of the West Mojave Desert Coordinated Management Plan.



Jim Rose

**Dove Springs: areas with excessive damage need to be closed and rehabilitated to prevent future damage, and greater law enforcement is needed to enforce regulations outside of designated riding areas.**

### Jawbone Canyon - Dove Springs

Located in the northwestern Mojave Desert, Jawbone Canyon and Dove Springs have been used by dirt bikes and off-road vehicles for decades, causing enormous impacts.

In some areas, this prolonged and intense usage has denuded hillsides and carved deep scars into the landscape. Furthermore, wildlife such as the desert tortoise, kangaroo rat and pocket mouse have largely disappeared from these areas. The region is home to nesting birds of prey, and was historically bighorn sheep range.

Despite the level of disturbance, there is still potential for ecological restoration in these areas. The areas with excessive damage need to be closed and rehabilitated to prevent future damage, and greater law enforcement is needed to enforce regulations outside of designated riding areas.

**Carrie Sandstedt is a Conservation Associate for the California Wilderness Coalition.**

# The desert tortoise: on the edge of extinction

**by Elden Hughes**

California's desert tortoise has been called the indicator species for the health of the desert. It's more than that. In many ways the tortoise is responsible for the health of the desert.

The desert can be very hot and very cold. To survive, the tortoise must spend the months of cold weather underground, in tortoise comfort. During the months of hot weather, the tortoise spends the cooler mornings and evenings on the surface eating, but is back in the hole at mid-day. The three months of spring are the most important, for 90 percent of the tortoise's food and water will be obtained between March and May.

Our deserts get August storms, so there is a brief bloom of flowers in October and the tortoise emerges to once again eat.

In a study at the Desert Tortoise Natural Area, scientists followed a tortoise and took detailed notes on the tortoise's feeding habits. The tortoise had regular grazing routes and in the three months of spring, the tortoise grazed 40 different species of plants. Each plant was caught at its most succulent stage, for the water in the plants was likely the only water the tortoise would get all year. If it rains and there is a puddle the tortoise will drink, but it isn't part of the plan.

The plan does involve digging holes: at least five holes per tortoise. The main winter hole is deeper than the others. The grazing holes are along the grazing trail and they are mainly to duck into when it gets hot.

All of these holes are important to the life of the desert. A burrowing owl could not possibly dig a hole; its legs are too small. Tortoises provide many of the holes that burrowing owls need. There is no part of a snake made for digging, but snakes too need holes. All the creatures that need to avoid the mid-day sun will either get under a bush or into a hole.

Tortoise researchers constantly get asked, "How many tortoises are there?" The person asking does not realize it is like asking, "How many birds are in the sky?" It is also hard to see and count tortoises. In the very best habitat, there may be as many as 300 tortoises per square mile. That may sound like a lot, but it is only one tortoise per two football fields.

**The tortoise had regular grazing routes and in the three months of spring, the tortoise grazed 40 different species of plants. Each plant was caught at its most succulent stage, for the water in the plants was likely the only water the tortoise would get all year.**

However, we can know trends without knowing absolute counts. The trends are disastrous: in much of the desert the populations are down by 90 percent. The tortoise is on the edge of extinction.

Many factors are forcing the decline. Road kills! There are virtually no tortoises within a half mile of a major road. They have all been killed. Tortoises get picked up as pets. Ravens eat the little ones. Cattle and sheep impact the food supply by changing the vegetation and by just plain eating the food. Cattle fences also provide the perches that ravens use. Recently the Mojave National Preserve removed 75 miles of fences. That's 20,000 perches.

Houses, with their dogs, make enormous impacts; even though it is prime tortoise habitat, there are virtually no wild tortoises from Hesperia to Palmdale. Disease has hit even remote populations.

What can we do? Hang onto all the good habitat we can. Truly implement the 1994 Tortoise Recovery Plan. Although the Bureau of Land Management's new plans are intended to be multi-species recovery plans, no alternative in these plans fully implements the Tortoise Recovery Plan. We must force the Bureau of Land Management to do better. The tortoise and the desert deserve no less.

**Elden Hughes is Chair of the California/Nevada Desert Committee of the Sierra Club.**

**The tortoise (right) provides many of the holes that the burrowing owl (below) needs.**

# Fort Irwin legislation would wipe out critical desert tortoise habitat and Wilderness Study Areas

**by Helen Wagenvoord**

The U.S. Army would like to expand its tank-training center, Fort Irwin, and legislation enabling this expansion is moving quickly through Congress. There is a provision in the defense authorization bill that would destroy nearly 110,000 acres of what are now protected public lands in the Mojave desert, managed by the Bureau of Land Management. These lands include habitat critical to the declining, threatened desert tortoise and the endangered Lane Mountain milkvetch, and two Wilderness Study Areas in the spectacular Avawatz Mountains. All of this would be irrevocably lost.

## Desert tortoises and wilderness at stake

The Fort Irwin provision puts the cart before the horse by giving the land to the Army before they comply with laws designed to protect our national natural heritage. As written, the legislation not only gives the lands to the Army before they have complied with these laws, it permits the Army to retain the lands at their discretion. It also gives the Army broad discretion to close these lands to public access, prematurely shutting the public out from lands that were set aside for their use and enjoyment.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is the agency designated to protect public lands and wildlife. The BLM should retain these lands and keep them open to the public until the Army has complied with environmental laws, which compel the Army to consider other alternatives and fully justify the need for this expansion in advance of taking these lands. Many of the Army's own experts state that the type of training done at Fort Irwin, where large battalions of tanks fight each other in mock battles, is becoming obsolete as the Army modernizes. The need for this expansion needs to be closely scrutinized, especially with the habitat of two endangered species at stake.

In addition, the current legislation does not authorize any funding to implement mitigation for the environmental damages caused by the expansion. Mitigation for impacts to the desert tortoise (including replacement of lost habitat and conservation measures proposed by federal agencies) is conservatively estimated to cost $300 million. This does not include the costs of additional mitigation that will be required for impacts to wildlands and other listed species.

Mike McWherter

**35,000 acres of potential wilderness would be lost if the expansion is approved according to the current proposal. These are pristine wilderness lands that support rare desert bighorn sheep and many other desert plant and animal species.**

The legislation even goes so far as to permit the Army to open its UTM-90 lands, or the southernmost strip of Fort Irwin, which have been historically closed to protect one of the few healthy, thriving tortoise populations in the western Mojave desert. The legislation would permit tank training to destroy this invaluable habitat and population.

The legislation also permits the expansion to eliminate 35,000 acres of Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs). The loss of part of the spectacular Avawatz Mountains WSA and the entirety of the South Avawatz Mountains WSA is irreversible. While not critical desert tortoise habitat, these are pristine wilderness lands that support rare desert bighorn sheep and many other desert plant and animal species.

In the meantime, there are several other nearby Wilderness Study Areas, including the Cady Mountains, Kingston Range, Great Falls Basin, Soda Mountains and Death Valley National Park 17 that were not designated as wilderness by the California Desert Protection Act because of the Army's pending expansion. As the Army is already taking over two Wilderness Study Areas, all of these other WSAs, and the remainder of the Avawatz Mountains WSA, should be granted full wilderness protection.

The legislation is moving swiftly through Congress and is likely to pass by the end of September. A coalition of nearly 100 public interest organizations have protested this expansion and the resulting environmental damage and have appealed to our Congressional friends to improve this legislation to soften the blow it deals to the hard-fought protections gained through the California Desert Protection Act.

**Before her current work on Fort Irwin, Helen Wagenvoord was the Associate Regional Director for the National Parks Conservation Association's Pacific office. She has worked on desert issues for 5 years.**

# Wilderness management: Some lessons from the California Desert Protection Act

**by Jim Dodson**

When the California Desert Protection Act (CDPA) passed in October of 1994, those of us who had worked on it for a dozen years had one really, really big victory party. Then we woke the next morning to the reality that we had merely won the beginning of what has become an ongoing and probably perpetual process to gain lasting protection. Too many of our workers either burned out or went on to new challenges, funding certainly found new causes, and we've been left to rebuild our program.

For its advocates, wilderness is an idealized state. For its agency managers, it is also (even primarily) an ongoing set of management choices, regulations to follow, etc. So let me tell you what happened after our party, and see if there are some lessons for the next wave of wilderness advocacy in California. While our experience has been with the Department of the Interior agencies (Bureau of Land Management and National Park Service), it has some general application.

**How will your wilderness monitoring program work? Can you get people with adequate access to do on-the-ground patrols?**

## Filing the maps

Wilderness legislation frequently has general language like the California Desert Protection Act—a series of paragraphs each designating a wilderness of approximately so many acres as depicted on a map with some specific date. There is also language directing the agency to file final maps and legal descriptions with Congress. Sounds fairly simple, but it still isn't done for the CDPA, almost seven years after passage. This really matters, because without legal definitions the agency can't proceed with many necessary law enforcement and management actions. For example, it may even be that without boundaries, the agency cannot (or will feel it cannot) write citations for off-road vehicle trespass in wilderness.

We have spent many hours in follow-up meetings with both Bureau of Land Management and National Park Service staff wrestling with what the lines mean on the legislative maps, and it is amazing how much difference there can be in interpretation. The lesson here is that the better the maps are that Congress uses, the less painful this will be. Certain types of boundaries may be easy to map (an elevation contour or a ridgeline) but very difficult to describe in words that can then be mapped.

## Wilderness management plans

The next step is a wilderness management plan written by the agency for each area. Wilderness designation still allows the agency significant discretion in how it acts and allows others to act. Yes, the Wilderness Act of 1964 specifically excludes certain types of use (except under certain circumstances, as you will quickly learn), but the remaining activities will likely need active management.

The California Desert Protection Act legislation was not just "everything on this map is now wilderness." It had a number of those annoying "general provisions" in the bill, and this is a common occurrence in most wilderness legislation. The forces of compromise seek special language added to permit some non-wilderness uses to continue in some way. They may just be law enforcement or fire management activities that would probably be covered somewhat under generic wilderness management activities, but even they may be given extra authority.

The wilderness management plan sets the context for how the agency will address a long list of such activities, including specific legislative directions and general rehabilitation and maintenance of the area's wilderness character. If you do have much continuing use conflicts expected, the wilderness management plan should address them—and so should you. Are there active claims in the area? What access will be provided for grazing operations? For inholdings? Will there be "wilderness appropriate" recreational use? Are proper management measures in place to support it, or to keep it from becoming an impact itself?

So you should seek that these specific implementation actions and their limits are spelled out in the wilderness management plan. In looking at these prospective management actions, you also may be able to define what the appropriate "minimum tool" may be and under what circumstances. Bulldozers for fire suppression? Chain saws? Water trucks for cattle? For wildlife?

To be honest, we are still looking forward to the process of helping the agencies write these plans. Look for a Part II in a couple of years.

## On-the-ground questions

One of the critical issues will be habitat management. Habitat for native species can be a vital wilderness resource, but protecting it can be a problem. Does the area have flora or fauna (or other

resources such as cultural artifacts) that will benefit from some specific management regime other than simple wilderness protection? If sensitive enough, you may want to be sure that even normally appropriate wilderness actions are controlled to some extent. If you have these considerations spelled out in a wilderness management plan, that can help; but you will need to keep an eye on agency action in any case.

For example, we are having problems with the California Department of Fish and Game guzzler management, largely for bighorn sheep. CDFG was given specific privileges in the California Desert Protection Act and is now demanding to deliver water and construct new guzzlers using volunteer groups in private vehicles. This has become an awkward alliance of wildlife advocates, hunters, and off-road vehicle users in some cases, and is not good for wilderness (see box below).

You will have continuing problems with vehicular use if it was a problem before; so you will need to know where and how much trespass is happening. The same can be true of any other prior use. You'll want to work with the agency in eliminating traces of past abuse and closing problem routes, either by signing, through physical obstruction, or (best) by actually removing them through reclamation. How will efforts be prioritized? Are the miles of routes removed or closed more important than the sensitivity of the resources protected? Will there be a role for wilderness activists to play in these decisions? In the eventual physical actions?

You'll find that this will happen faster if you can provide some volunteer workers. How will your wilderness monitoring program work? What resources will you have available to work on this? Can you get people with adequate access to do on-the-ground patrols? Do they have the equipment and skills to do photo documentation? Can you arrange for some GPS units to get the exact location of concerns?

Long-term land acquisition strategies for inholdings and boundary adjustments should also be a part of your planning. Most areas will have some needs for a continuing effort for both activists and the agency. Can you count on the agency for all this, or do you want to have your own program in place to make sure that the right management actions are being done correctly? (This is a rhetorical question! Yes, you'll need volunteer workers on the ground much as you did in the inventory phase—except now it doesn't end.) So, have the victory party, but pass out cameras and rakes as party favors—you'll still need your wilderness workers.

**Jim Dodson is the Director of the California Desert Protection League, an organization that coordinated the work of 120 groups to pass the California Desert Protection Act.**

## Guzzlers: problematic to deadly, with no proven benefits

**by Elden Hughes**

Guzzlers are devices that capture water and make it available to wildlife. There are two basic types: bird guzzlers and big game guzzlers. Bird guzzlers consist of a paved apron that directs the occasional rain into a tank. Wildlife can then access the water in the covered tank. Provision is often made for water to be brought by humans to the guzzler. Big game guzzlers usually have a dam to capture runoff. The water goes into tanks and then is fed to troughs with a control to keep water in the trough.

The goal of guzzlers is game farming, i.e., artificially increasing the number of, for example, quail, deer or bighorn sheep for hunters. So, the first problem is that if they work as intended, they skew the natural environment. The natural diversity is skewed to favor animals to be hunted.

A second problem is that guzzlers usually don't work very well. The bird guzzlers may increase the number of quail, but poor design and maintenance (lack of brush and cover just outside the entrances) makes them death traps: the birds are easy prey for coyotes and hawks.

Neither the Bureau of Land Management or the California Department of Fish and Game have a single scientific study that demonstrates that guzzlers for bighorn sheep either improve herd health or herd numbers. The hundreds of thousands of dollars spent on big game guzzlers is done so as a pure act of faith.

Guzzlers kill! Tortoises, lizards and other small animals crawl into bird guzzlers and are drowned. A bighorn ram fell through the top of a covered tank in the Marble Mountains and drowned. In 1995, 38 bighorn sheep died on Old Man Mountain. Congressman Jerry Lewis asked for and got a full investigation because he blamed the new park management. It was determined that lambs had fallen through the top of a tank; their decomposing bodies had poisoned and killed all the others.

Guzzlers are a massive intrusion into wilderness areas. Most have an access road for maintenance or water delivery.

With no proof that guzzlers help and absolute proof that they kill, one would think that the state would cease investing in guzzlers. No way! Dozens more are planned and their "need" is part of the new Bureau of Land Management plans for the desert. We need the plans. We don't need the guzzlers. We must fight their inclusion in the plans and fight them period.

**Elden Hughes is Chair of the California/Nevada Desert Committee of the Sierra Club.**

# Wilderness partnership success: Restoring wilderness in the California desert

**by Paul Brink**

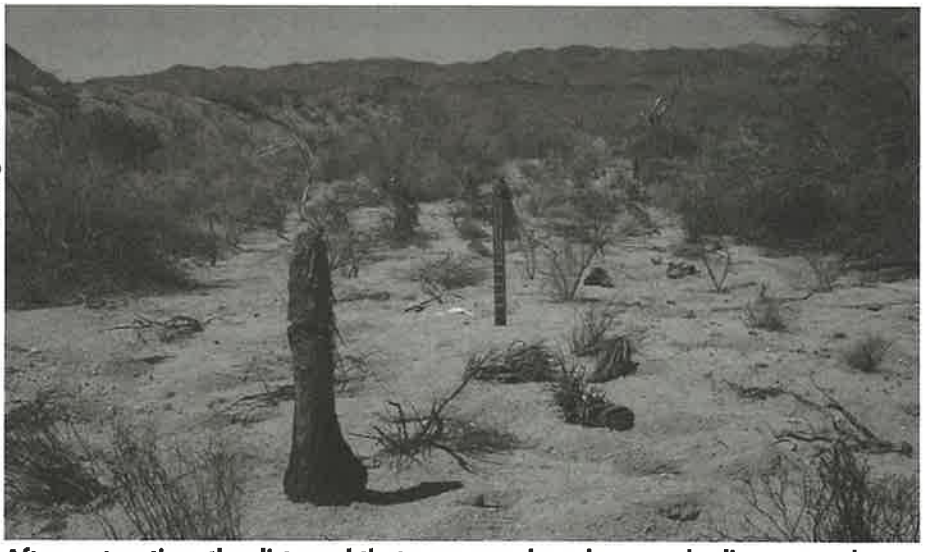
Since enactment of the California Desert Protection Act in 1994 and its designation of 69 new Bureau of Land Management (BLM) managed wilderness areas, the BLM has inventoried nearly 4,000 miles of wilderness boundaries. During that inventory, hundreds of old vehicle routes leading into the wilderness areas were identified that required immediate closure under the Act. These routes ranged from old and previously maintained roads to two-track trails. As part of an initial effort to close the routes to vehicles, the BLM placed thousands of wilderness boundary signs or, when possible, barriers. We also increased our law enforcement patrols, prepared thousands of maps, and instituted a wilderness-user ethics program.

For many situations, these steps were sufficient to prevent illegal vehicle entry on those routes. However, whenever the signs disappeared, vehicle traffic on the closed routes often became re-established, and unless BLM immediately replaced the signs, natural restoration of the route stopped. BLM manages more than 3.6 million acres of wilderness areas. Finding who removed the signs or who drove on the routes was like searching for a needle in a hay stack. In addition, when routes became reopened through use, persons unaware of the wilderness area (because the signs disappeared) sometimes used the routes unintentionally. Using signing and increased law enforcement was not sufficient to resolve this issue.

The ultimate answer was to hide the routes, especially in problem areas. However, there are only seven wilderness coordinators in the BLM Desert District, who have a limited budget and millions of acres of wilderness to manage. And the cost to hide the routes using primitive techniques (since we didn't want to use motorized equipment in wilderness) could be expensive and time consuming.

Bureau of Land Management

**Dirt roads like this one invite trespass into wilderness areas.**



Bureau of Land Management

**After restoration, the dirt road that was once here has nearly disappeared.**

Thus, the BLM developed a partnership with California's State Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Registration (OHMVR) Division, which has grants for restoration projects such as these, and the Student Conservation Association (SCA), which has crews willing to complete natural resource projects.

The SCA specializes in wildland work using students working on summer crews from all over the country. The crew leaders are provided extensive training in field skills, teamwork, and leadership. These students include both high school and college crews. Most crew members hope to be able to eventually work in the natural resource field as a profession. In 1997, BLM succeeded in bringing on our first SCA crew in California at a cost of $13,600. In one month, six students and a leader restored 14 miles of closed routes, effectively stopping entry to more than 40 miles. In 2000, BLM brought on our second crew and

again they restored 14 miles of closed routes, effectively closing 50 miles. In just two field seasons, 20 percent of all illegal routes inside 16 wilderness areas were obliterated.

BLM has had a long and very important partnership with the OHMVR Commission through which the state has provided increased funding for off-highway vehicle opportunities on public lands. BLM applied and was granted $135,000 from the OHMVR Commission to treat approximately 90 portions of routes in 14 wilderness areas. In addition, approximately 10 of the sites have barriers installed at the wilderness boundary. The BLM utilized SCA crews to complete the work. The grant monies were combined with $100,000 of BLM funds and $80,000 of SCA in-kind contributions.

Even though this cooperative project is still on-going, the pictures displayed (left) provide examples of what has been accomplished to date.

The routes are disguised using a number of different techniques. Small indentations are made in the ground and small rocks and brush are scattered on the surface. These not only hide roads but also allow for native seeds to be caught by the rocks, the indentations and the brush. This eliminates the need for re-seeding by hand. This restoration was completed in one day by a crew of five SCA students.

But more importantly, no motorized equipment was used! To date this technique has been used on 75 routes in seven wilderness areas.

This has been a very successful partnership with wonderful results for the National Wilderness Preservation System. Our long-term hope is to expand what we have learned from this year's grant into a new grant for 2002. We also hope to use the SCA program and the experiences they have learned to establish a Primitive Skills Team in the Southwest desert that can help teach wilderness managing agencies to better manage our wilderness areas.

**Paul Brink is the Bureau of Land Management's California Wilderness Coordinator.**

# New plans for the desert:
## Millions of acres of wildlands will be affected

Aside from the Northern and Eastern Colorado management plan (see page 21), two other major planning efforts are currently underway in the western and northeast Mojave, and will affect the future management of the desert.

### Northern and Eastern Mojave

In January, 2001, the Bureau of Land Management released a draft management plan covering 2.4 million acres of public lands in the northern and eastern Mojave Desert. The plan will address grazing, endangered species, management of former wilderness study areas that were not designated as wilderness by the California Desert Protection Act, and off-road vehicles.

An important element of the plan is the designation of routes that are available for motor vehicle use. Despite the fact that an Executive Order signed by President Nixon in 1972, as well as the California Desert Conservation Area Plan of 1980, required the BLM to designate legal motor vehicle routes, the agency has failed to do so.

Even though under current law, vehicles are required to stay on "existing" routes, the BLM has never produced an adequate map of existing routes, thus the designation is utterly unenforceable. In effect, the agency has created millions of acres of open riding areas where off-road vehicles can travel anywhere. The Northern and Eastern Mojave plan would end that system.

Further, the plan will establish new management criteria for the wilderness study areas that were "released" for multiple use management by the California Desert Protection Act. The Act designated over seven millions of acres of new desert wilderness. Some areas, however, were not designated as wilderness. For these areas, new management plans are needed.

The plan will also establish new protections for endangered species, including the desert tortoise, Amargosa vole, and several sensitive plants. Protections for these species has long been lacking, and they continue to decline under current management. Finally, the plan will study rivers and make determinations as to whether or not any are eligible for protection under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Such determinations are long overdue.

The BLM is currently accepting public comments on the draft management plan. (Deadline for comments is November 1.) For more information, visit www.ca.blm.gov/cdd/nemo.html.

### Western Mojave

The Western Mojave Coordinated Management Plan covers a nine million acre planning area spanning five counties and numerous federal, state, and local government jurisdictions. The plan originated in 1992 and was intended to cover both public and private lands.

This plan is extremely important, and will determine future management for millions of acres of critical species habitat, prime recreational and cultural lands, and other vital resources. Issues to be addressed include grazing, mining, off-road vehicles, endangered species, and private land acquisition.

Although the plan was initiated nearly a decade ago, it has been stalled due to controversies surrounding several key issues including the proposed expansion of the Fort Irwin military base, designation of off-road vehicle routes, and coordination with state and local jurisdictions. A draft plan is not expected for release until late 2002. We'll keep you up to date.

For more information, visit www.ca.blm.gov.

# "Where man himself is a visitor who does not remain"

**by Bob Ellis**

Our text this morning is a key phrase from that foundation document, the 1964 Wilderness Act.

Who does not remain.

Who does not remain.

Webster New Collegiate Dictionary: "remain: 1 a. to be a part not destroyed, taken, or used up (only a few ruins)."

How painful those neutral words to a Native American struggling to hold on to the fragments of his or her culture. How painful those words to one whose tribal history is the recipient of the direct and indirect genocidal impacts of European domination.

We've got a problem here. In spite of our general good-will toward native peoples, we as wilderness activists are working with a flawed text. Man does indeed remain. At least a few do. And some humans are not and never were visitors. They were there. They are there. They do remain.

It may be the case that those who formulated the Wilderness Act were only thinking of urban visitors to lands relatively recently de-populated of their native peoples. Likely they were thinking: "I go there and I do not remain there. I might want to stay but we must keep it natural."

"Natural" means no people living there now. The idea that "natural" means no people is one rooted in our European-American cultural history. I recommend reading Rebecca Solnit's *Savage Dreams* for an introduction to this topic. She explores wilderness visions of Yosemite and the Nevada desert in the eyes of both Europeans and Native Americans.

I am familiar with several areas where we have declared wilderness around and over those who are not visitors and do remain. In the California desert, the Mojave, Chemehuevi, and Quechan tribes along the Colorado River remain. Wilderness areas managed by the Bureau of Land Management now border their reservations. Urban wilderness visitors seeking desert solitude marvel at petroglyphs and pictographs, thinking about the visions of those people who do not remain. Most visitors do not distinguish the faint trails, rock alignments, and "vision quest" circles from the natural environment. Most visitors who do see these include them with the marks of vanished peoples. Few are aware that these areas are still sacred lands to remaining local tribes. Their use has not stopped. Their use continues.

Stacy Vellas

**Most visitors to the desert who do see faint trails and rock alignments (such as this Quechan prayer circle) consider them the marks of vanished peoples.**

The Mojave, Chemehuevi, and Quechan have recently come forth to say: "We are still here. We remain. We will continue to remain as we are not visitors." The Ward Valley radioactive dump proposal and the Imperial gold mine proposal have forced the tribes to become public about their current uses of the lands (some wilderness) surrounding their reservations. Their defense of these lands is a defense of themselves as non-visiting, remaining people.

A second area in California where people remain is Death Valley National Park. The Timbisha Shoshone have recently been congressionally granted a reservation and certain co-management rights in portions of the park (see article on facing page). Wilderness activists have been insistent that no "violations" of the Wilderness Act be allowed by those people who do remain. Local park management has long been in conflict with the Timbisha in Furnace Creek. This new partnership is an original and exciting attempt at inclusion. It deserves our full support and involvement.

We want more wilderness mostly because it has proven to be the strongest law protecting public land ecosystems from further exploitation. We also want more wilderness because we, as mostly urban people, need places to get away from our hyper-charged surroundings. We don't go to wilderness with the idea of meeting other people. That is our problem, however. We need to educate ourselves about the values that the remaining people have brought and continue to bring to "our" wilderness.

Some of these values are cultural, some are values associated with a sense of place, and some are changes in the physical, "natural" aspects of the wilderness. These people were here, they remain here, some will remain. We need to alter our "pure" wilderness conceptions to include and indeed encourage their participation in building the new wilderness of the future.

**Bob Ellis, a trip leader and Board member of Desert Survivors, is now serving as the environmental protection representative on the BLM's Desert District Advisory Council. He has been active in wilderness management implementation, potential wilderness surveys, and rare plant population monitoring in the California desert.**

# Tribe receives trust lands in Death Valley

## Legislation grants land to tribe with historic ties to Death Valley

**by William A. Updike**

Death Valley, Calif.—As a result of recent federal legislation, an American Indian tribe, whose ancestral homeland includes the area that is now Death Valley National Park, will be granted rights to nearly 7,000 acres of land in and adjacent to the park.

For thousands of years the Timbisha Shoshone people have lived in southeastern California and southwestern Nevada. Since 1936, the tribe has governed their affairs on approximately 40 acres of land near Furnace Creek in Death Valley. The tribe achieved federal recognition in 1983 but did not have a land base until the passage of the Timbisha Shoshone Homeland Act on November 1, 2000.

According to Pauline Esteves, the Timbisha Shoshone Tribal chairperson, the passage of the act is crucial to the survival of her people. "This plan will bring the people closer together. Many of us will be able to live and work in tribal communities once again," said Esteves. "The plan negotiated between the Timbisha and the Department of the Interior will be of great assistance in bringing economic self-sufficiency, done sustainably, to my tribe." Tribal members feel that the legislation will begin to address important cultural and economic issues. Of the 285 enrolled members of the tribe, nearly 40 percent are unemployed. More than 80 percent of the tribe's households fall below the 1993 poverty threshold, which is $13,950 for a family of four in the United States.

Although generally supportive of the transfer of lands to the Timbisha, some environmentalists expressed concern regarding a few details held within the legislation.

According to Rose Fennel, director of national parks programs for The Wilderness Society, concerns that the legislation was going to permit hunting were addressed in the final draft.

However, Fennel also said that the allotment of water to the tribe in one area was "grotesquely huge." According to Fennel, the allocation of the Scotty's Junction, Nevada, area is not an environmentally appropriate use of the land. "If the Department of the Interior was concerned about sustainable economic activity, about helping the tribe economically, they wouldn't suggest that the tribe start a farming operation in the middle of the desert," Fennel said.

Interior Department officials agreed that the allotment would permit "small truck farming," but argued that the use of water in Scotty's Junction will not adversely affect the park. "We were concerned with how much of the surface water could be used without affecting the deep water, and thus affecting the park," recalled Pat Parker, chief of the American Indian Liaison Office for the National Park Service. "We compromised and added certain provisions and conditions on the allotment, which included a mediation and monitoring process. The park and the tribe have a mutual interest in water conservation."

The traditional ancestral homeland of the Timbisha encompassed approximately 11 million acres, most of it within the Mojave Desert. The dislocation of the Timbisha people began in the mid-19th century when ranchers and homesteaders moved into the region to provide supplies for mining camps. Dislocation elevated between the mid-1920s and 1936, when the tribe was forced to move four times within the area that is now Furnace Creek in Death Valley.

"We need a secure homeland where we can rebuild our community and overcome the dispersing of a tribe—a place where people can live, work, and plan as a community," said Barbara Dunham, the Timbisha Shoshone tribal administrator. "Our tribe is losing its culture. We are deprived of being a sovereign nation, deprived of keeping traditions, songs, stories, cultural practices, and kinship."

Esteves added, "We are part of our homeland, and it is a part of us. We are people of the land."

In addition to granting land in trust at five separate sites, the act also provides for the purchase of two areas currently held by private interests. At the Furnace Creek site, the tribe plans to build single family residences, a tribal commodity center, an inn, and a tribal museum and cultural center with a gift shop.

**"We need a secure homeland where we can rebuild our community and overcome the dispersing of a tribe—a place where people can live, work and plan as a community."**
**—Barbara Dunham**

Although it bans hunting and gaming, the legislation allows the tribe to continue traditional plant management and harvesting. It also provides for the temporary closure of limited park areas to respect the privacy of the Timbisha while engaging in traditional cultural and religious activities.

# Vehicle use in desert washes and the Northern and Eastern Colorado plan

**by Steven L. Hartman**

*Editor's note: The Northern and Eastern Colorado plan is a complex document that will affect management of over 5 million acres of desert. One of the California Wilderness Coalition's main concerns with the plan involves its management prescription for desert washes (see article on facing page). Following is an article by long-time activist Steven Hartman, which presents a different perspective on desert washes and the NECO plan.*

Anyone who gets out into the desert knows the beauty of washes, the desert's normally dry arroyos, ravines, canyons and gullies that can become raging torrents during summer thunderstorms. Desert washes are an amazing resource—thin green corridors of habitat that sustain so much diversity of life in comparison to the surrounding desert scrub.

Of course, the "anyone who gets out into the desert" could be a naturalist, a mountain peak bagger, an off-road vehicle enthusiast, a hunter, or a rock hound. So it is not surprising that the protection of desert washes is a main focal point when assessing the Bureau of Land Management's Northern and Eastern Colorado (NECO) plan.

On the one hand, hunting and off-road vehicle advocates complain about closing any washes to vehicle use, given that many routes have been closed due to the recent (1994) designation of wilderness areas that cover over 1.6 million acres within the NECO area.

On the other hand, organizations such as the California Wilderness Coalition are also criticizing the NECO plan, and urge that the NECO plan incorporates "a complete route designation process that analyzes ALL routes—including washes."

Having served on the BLM's Desert Advisory Council for six years, and participating on a motor vehicle technical review team and the NECO plan interest group, I have researched desert wash habitat thoroughly. I have visited many sites throughout the NECO planning area, and met with hunters, off-road vehicle advocates, and others with the goal of developing a practical plan that would protect desert washes and yet still provide access for hunters and off-road enthusiasts.

My main concern has been that the Desert Plan (1980 and subsequently amended) does not give clear guidance whether washes are available for vehicle travel, and thus, all washes on the public lands have been treated as de facto open routes.

Thus, rather than trying to evaluate every wash within the 5.5 million acre NECO planning area, the participants in the NECO Interest Group providing input to BLM mostly agreed that there are certain areas where every wash should not be open to vehicle use. We also agreed that there are many areas of the NECO planning area where there is so little vehicle use in washes that it would not be productive to spend resources assessing the environmental impacts of use of these washes.

I tried very diligently to gather scientific or even anecdotal evidence that the amount of vehicle travel in NECO planning area washes significantly damages environmental quality from a vegetation point of view. I came to the conclusion that, in the NECO area at this time, closing all washes was not necessary to protect the environment. (In no way does the NECO plan preclude closing additional wash zones if it should be determined in the future that these areas are threatened by vehicle overuse.)

Nevertheless, not every wash in the NECO planning area should be open to vehicle use. Thus the NECO plan's preferred alternative calls for large Desert Wildlife Management Areas, portions of which will be designated as "washes closed zones" wherein vehicle use is restricted to specific routes.

As an advocate for the desert's renewable resources, I am convinced that microphyll (micro = small, phyll = leaf) woodlands that border the desert washes in southeastern Imperial County are a resource of statewide significance. They are the only example of such a habitat in California, and they have not been invaded by the invasive, non-native shrub tamarisk. If this strikingly beautiful natural environment can be preserved in its present state, this remote portion of the southern Colorado desert will soon be revered as a world-class tourist destination.

These microphyll woodlands (indicated by the presence of cat's claw, palo verde, desert willow, ironwood, mesquite, and/or smoke trees) occur on approximately 12% of the NECO plan area (675,000 acres out of about 5.5 million acres in the planning area). According to figures provided by the GIS specialist working on the NECO plan, 40% of microphyll woodland habitat (approximately 271,000 acres) within the NECO planning area is already protected. The NECO plan preferred alternative would increase protection of microphyll woodlands to 312,556 acres (46% of total).

Certainly there are sections in the draft NECO plan that need improvement. But when it comes to desert washes, BLM has come up with a decent plan that uses strong conservation measures with an emphasis on ecosystem management while balancing for multiple uses. Everyone loves washes. But we don't need to drive in every one.

**Steven L. Hartman is the Desert Conservation Chair for the California Native Plant Society. To learn more about desert washes, request a copy of Steve's article, "Desert Washes: Managing a Fragile Resource on our Public Lands" (4 pages), published by the Desert Protective Council, Educational Bulletin #98-3, by sending an email request to naturebase@aol.com.**

# Millions of acres of desert wildlands are at stake

## Your letter is needed to help protect sensitive habitat and species!

**by Paul Spitler**

In February, the Bureau of Land Management released a draft management plan covering 5.5 million acres of the northern and eastern Colorado desert. The plan, which encompasses the southeasternmost portion of the state, will guide the long-term management of off-road vehicles, grazing, mining, and other types of development.

The plan contains several positive elements. For example, washes in critical species habitat will be closed to motorized vehicles. Further, several grazing allotments would be scaled back in order to increase protection for imperiled species.

However, the plan also contains critical shortfalls that, if implemented, would jeopardize desert species and wilderness areas. The plan calls for the development of 137 new water developments to aid in the recovery of desert wildlife. While aiding wildlife is a laudable goal, these developments—also known as "guzzlers"—would seriously impact the integrity of existing wilderness areas. Twenty-four water developments are proposed within existing wilderness, *even though their impacts and locations are not disclosed or addressed!*

BLM's desert management plan of 1980, as well as an Executive Order by President Nixon in 1972, requires the agency to designate legal routes of travel for off-road vehicles. While the plan does include positive steps to limit off-road vehicles to designated routes and close some washes that contain sensitive habitat, it still falls short of the requirements of federal law.

Rather than analyzing the effects that each route has on the environment—as required by BLM's own guidelines—*the plan instead creates vast "open wash" zones where riding is allowed in any wash unless future analysis shows it to be harmful.* Washes provide habitat for many sensitive species, such as the desert tortoise, and such a broad exception imperils the recovery of this ancient and sensitive species.

Jim Eaton

**The Turtle Mountains Wilderness, in the Northern and Eastern Colorado planning area**

Finally, the plan fails to provide adequate planning guidance for the 25 wilderness areas within the planning region. Many of these areas do not have management plans, and yet are proposed for water developments and other activities. Further, several areas receive continual trespass by motorized vehicles, and the plan does not address these effects.

## What you can do

Your letter could make a huge difference in helping to guide the future management of over 5% of California's land area. Please, write today!

Write to: Lead, Northern and Eastern Colorado Desert Plan, Bureau of Land Management, 6221 Box Springs Blvd., Riverside, CA 92507-0714.

Tell the BLM that you appreciate their efforts to update desert plans and protect sensitive species such as the desert tortoise. Ask them to improve the Northern and Eastern Colorado Desert Plan (NECO plan) by:

- Eliminating all proposed "guzzlers" and other water developments within designated wilderness areas. Such developments are not appropriate within wilderness.
- Incorporating a complete route designation process that analyzes ALL routes—including washes—according to the criteria outlined in previous Executive Orders and that does not give blanket authorization to riding in washes without proper environmental analysis.
- Completing adequate management plans for the 25 wilderness areas within the planning regions, and specifying actions to prevent motorized incursions into wilderness. The BLM should not authorize any new developments within wilderness areas.

Your letter must be received by November 1. Thanks!

**Paul Spitler is the Executive Director of the California Wilderness Coalition.**

# Mojave water grab: Environmental and economic flaws exposed

**by Helen Wagenvoord**

Cadiz, Inc., an agricultural company with lands in the Mojave Desert, proposes to mine up to ten billion gallons of native groundwater from the aquifer beneath its land while also using the aquifer to temporarily store Colorado River water. Cadiz intends to sell the water to the Metropolitan Water District, an agency that sells wholesale water to local agencies in metropolitan southern California.

Two economic and scientific reports, released in August of 2001, criticize the project on the grounds that it may threaten the fragile desert ecosystem and cost southern California ratepayers far more than supporters estimate.

The bulk of the aquifer from which Cadiz plans to take the water underlies and supports five Bureau of Land Management wilderness areas (the Trilobite, Clipper Mountain, Old Woman Mountains, Sheephole Valley, and Cadiz Dunes Wildernesses) and the Mojave National Preserve. Environmental organizations charge that the groundwater mining could harm a national park and federal wildernesses that overlie the aquifer and generate serious dust storms by lowering the water table. These impacts could harm desert wildlife including the desert bighorn sheep and threatened desert tortoise, listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

A scientific report by Dr. John Bredehoeft, a former senior researcher and manager with the U.S. Geological Survey and a former editor of the journal, *Groundwater*, points out the flaws in the project's monitoring system and indicates that it is unlikely to prevent damage to the public lands and underlying aquifer.

"Cadiz says that they'll be able to detect problems when they occur. In reality, by the time they confirm signs of trouble, it will likely be too late. This safety net has serious holes in it," stated Dr. Bredehoeft. "If this were just a storage project for Colorado River water, and any pumping was confined to what Cadiz is currently pumping for agriculture which appears to be sustainable, most of my concerns would be addressed."

An economic report by the Pacific Institute for Studies in Development, Environment, and Security concludes that the project will be far more expensive than currently estimated by Metropolitan Water District (MWD) consultants.

"The most likely cost for this water is around $850 per acre-foot, 45 percent higher than estimated by MWD consultants," said Gary Wolff, Ph.D., principal economist and engineer at the Pacific Institute. "It will be even more expensive if they can't take much native groundwater: $1,050 an acre-foot or more. Since MWD's customers currently pay around $400 per acre-foot for wholesale water, and alternative dry-year water supply and storage projects have much lower costs, the project doesn't make much economic sense. Unless, of course, you are a stockholder in Cadiz, Inc." An acre-foot is equal to 325,000 gallons, enough water to supply two households for a year.

On the heels of these reports, a coalition of more than a dozen organizations, including the Western Environmental Law Center, Defenders of Wildlife, California League of Conservation Voters, and the Center for Biological Diversity, wrote Governor Gray Davis and appealed to him to oppose the project, stating, "We trust that overpriced water and lasting environmental damage are not legacies you wish to leave."

In an August 1, 2001 letter to Secretary of Interior Gale Norton, Senator Dianne Feinstein and Congressmen Jerry Lewis and Ken Calvert said they could not support the Cadiz project until questions about the aquifer's recharge rate, impacts to Mojave National Preserve and Bureau of Land Management Wildernesses, and Cadiz versus federal water rights, were addressed.

Pete Yamagata

**The Trilobite, Clipper Mountain, Old Woman Mountains (pictured here), Sheephole Valley, and Cadiz Dunes Wildernesses, and the Mojave National Preserve, could be adversely impacted if Cadiz is allowed to steal groundwater from beneath them.**

The reports and the letter from Senator Feinstein and Congressmen Lewis and Calvert can be found at: www.pacinst.org/cadiz.html.

The letter to Governor Davis from 13 environmental organizations can be found at: www.axelsabyss.com.

**Before her current work as a freelance campaign coordinator and writer, Helen Wagenvoord was the Associate Regional Director for the National Parks Conservation Association's Pacific office. She has worked on California desert issues for five years.**

# Wilderness inholdings in the California desert:
## Accomplishments, opportunities, and an uncertain future

**by Jay Watson**

When the California Desert Protection Act was signed into law in 1994, there were approximately 550,000 acres of inholdings within 69 Bureau of Land Management wilderness areas in the California desert. These inholdings were spread across three ownerships: the State of California (250,000 acres in 450 parcels), the Catellus Corporation (185,000 acres in 360 parcels), and individual private owners (119,853 acres in 1,981 parcels owned by 1,400 different owners).

Recognizing the need for acquiring these inholdings, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) launched what was to become a solidly successful program of land acquisition in the region. Will the program continue under the Bush Administration? First, let's examine the BLM's accomplishments.

Overall, since 1994, the BLM has acquired about 170,000 acres of inholdings, or 31 percent of the total inholdings within BLM wilderness in the desert. Inholdings in 11 wilderness areas have been acquired from Catellus, including large acreages in places like the Kelso Dunes, Old Woman Mountains, Sheephole Valley, and Chemehuevi Mountains Wilderness Areas. Monies from the Land and Water Conservation Fund have been used to purchase over 5,000 acres of land in another 11 wilderness areas, such as the Orocopia Wilderness and Santa Rosa Mountains Wilderness. And, over 23,000 acres of state lands have been acquired.

Just last year, Congress appropriated $2 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund for wilderness inholdings in the desert. However, that amount has been reduced to $350,000 in the fiscal year 2002 Interior appropriations bill—The Wilderness Society is hoping to see it restored back to the original $2 million.

Worse, much larger questions loom regarding the longer term outlook for the wilderness inholding program in the California desert. It is doubtful that the Bush Administration will allow the BLM's commitment to acquiring wilderness inholdings to continue—in California or elsewhere. Of course, that wouldn't stop Congress from focusing some resources on wilderness lands. But not having such a request in the President's budget will make the job of securing these important monies all the more difficult. Only time will tell if the BLM will be allowed to continue to allocate Land and Water Conservation Fund monies to acquiring wilderness inholdings in the California Desert—a program for which the agency deserves credit for pursuing so aggressively.

**Since the passage of the California Desert Protection Act, the Bureau of Land Management has acquired 31 percent of the total inholdings within BLM wilderness areas, like the Kelso Dunes Wilderness (pictured here).**

## The Mojave Preserve

A second land acquisition opportunity, including wilderness inholdings, in the California desert is picking up steam in the Mojave National Preserve. (The Mojave National Preserve is managed by the National Park Service.) The Wilderness Society, The Trust for Public Land, and the National Parks Foundation are working together on a multi-year funding effort, primarily through the Land and Water Conservation Fund, to acquire inholdings within the Mojave Preserve. About 80,000 acres of inholdings remain within the Mojave Preserve. Wilderness inholdings are a high priority, though other non-wilderness lands offer important acquisition values as well.

The House version of the fiscal year 2002 Interior bill includes $1.5 million for the Mojave Preserve. The author of this piece will be in Washington, D.C. in early September to try and ensure that this important funding survives in conference committee.

The wilderness resources of the California desert are an inspiring component of the National Wilderness Preservation System. They deserve to have their integrity assured through a comprehensive acquisition program.

**Jay Thomas Watson is the California/Nevada Regional Director for The Wilderness Society.**

# Botanical bounty in California deserts

**by Ileene Anderson**

A typical human experience in the California deserts these days is to be sealed inside a metal container, air conditioning blasting, tunes playing, more than adequate refreshments for consumption—pursuing the quickest route between two points. Well, slow down and let me tell you about some unique and interesting areas that will tweak your perception of the desert as a hot, dry, wasteland to be endured.

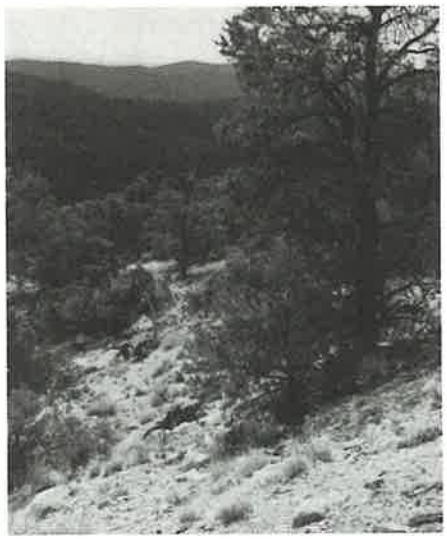
Starting at the southern border of California, the Algodones Dunes, also known as the Imperial Sand Dunes, are a very special part of California's desert. The Algodones are over 200 square miles in area, dipping slightly into Mexico, and are bisected by Interstate 8 in the south and Highway 78 in the north. These dunes are habitat for a suite of unique plant species found nowhere else in the world, such as the Peirson's milkvetch (a member of the pea family), dunes sunflower (a lemon-yellow daisy), Wiggin's croton (an unremarkable shrub, whose flowers lack petals), giant Spanish-needle (a pink, small-flowered shrub), and sand food (a parasitic plant that is considered a delicacy by native peoples).

Fortunately, the best time to see these plants is in the early spring (February to early April) when the weather at the dunes is also most pleasant. The quarter of the dunes that is north of Highway 78 is wilderness, and provides marvelous hiking opportunities. A full moon hike is an unforgettable experience.

Scattered throughout the desert at different locations is a dinosaur of a plant called Crucifixion thorn. Once you see the plant, it's understandable how it got its name—every stem terminates in a spine. These plants appear much more frequently in the fossil record than in today's desert. Large mammals that roamed desert areas during the much wetter Pleistocene Age ate the large fruits of the Crucifixion thorn. One place this relict species can still be found is in the Chemeheuvi wash at the base of the Stepladder Mountains Wilderness, off of Highway 95. Just a ways north of the Crucifixion thorn is a large "jumping" cholla cactus field. If you venture there, be sure to take a comb...it's the best way to remove the "jumping" prickles that you will undoubtedly wear, unless you are very careful.

Ileene Anderson

**Above: the ancient Crucifixion thorn; left: exploring in the Algodones Dunes, which are home to many unusual plants found nowhere else.**



Ileene Anderson

**Sky islands of the California desert**

Lastly, take a break in the shade of some nice fir trees—what, in the desert?! Yes: on the "sky islands" of the northeastern Mojave desert. In the mountain ranges (sometimes referred to as "sky islands," because the species that occur there are trapped by a "sea" of creosote bush flats) of the Kingston, Clark and New York mountains, white firs and other conifers form forests at higher elevations. These ranges are accessible off Interstate 15; portions of all of these ranges are wilderness areas. Actually, all of these ranges are botanically unique because of their remoteness and isolation. The sky islands are ideal to visit during the warmer days in the desert, because you can get up high enough to get out of the intense heat.

As with any outdoor outing, make sure you take lots of water and sunscreen, but get out of the car! The desert is filled with botanical wonders just waiting to be explored. For more information on any of these areas, contact the Bureau of Land Management at (909) 697-5200 or the Mojave National Preserve at (760) 255-8800.

**Ileene Anderson is the Southern California Regional Botanist for the California Native Plant Society.**

# The campaign to restore Jackson State Redwood Forest

**by Vince Taylor**

The Campaign to Restore Jackson State Redwood Forest offers you the rare opportunity to join in a fight for a forest where the public holds the upper hand. Jackson State Forest is already owned by the state; to save it, we need only to build sufficient political pressure to change the law governing the forest.

## The treasure and the tragedy

Established in 1947, and by far California's largest state forest, Jackson State Forest is located in Mendocino County, within four hours' driving time from the Bay Area and Sacramento. Comprising more than 50,000 acres of redwood forest, it reaches from near the Pacific Coast 20 miles eastward. It is home to thousands of species, from the yellow-cheeked chipmunk to the red-legged frog, from the downy leatherwing to the spotted owl.

Tragically, the state views Jackson State Forest primarily as a source of lumber and revenue. Each year, the California Department of Forestry (CDF), which manages this public forest, cuts out of it tens of thousands of trees. In past years, timber sales have been used to fund CDF's review of private timber harvest plans. The funds from cutting the public's trees subsidize the private timber industry.

CDF largely ignores the fabulous recreation potential of this forest. Hiking, biking, horseback riding, and camping are sacrificed by CDF whenever they conflict with timber production. CDF has equally ignored the pressing need of species dependent on mature redwood forests and has refused to give salmon habitat the protection that science recommends.

## A growing swell of support

In an important victory this May, the Campaign obtained an injunction against further logging until a revision of management plan is completed. This victory creates a short window of opportunity in which to change the legislation that controls the forest before destructive logging can be resumed.

**This mature redwood forest is home to thousands of species, from the yellow-cheeked chipmunk to the red-legged frog, from the downy leatherwing to the spotted owl.**

CDF found itself short of funds at the end of the state budget cycle, since funds had been depleted by the energy crisis. Although borrowing money from within the state was a feasible option, CDF and the Board determined to try to circumvent the court.

The Board and CDF gave no public notice of their discussions until two weeks before the Board of Forestry meeting of July 12—to be held in San Bernardino, as far away from Mendocino as possible.

The Board ignored all requests, including one from Assemblyperson Virginia Strom-Martin, to delay action to allow greater public participation. It quickly amended policies to do away with the requirement for a current management plan. But the impassioned testimony of Kathy Bailey of the Sierra Club, combined with CDF miscues and Board time constraints, caused the Board to defer until August a vote on the most indefensible and damaging action—a resolution to authorize continued logging under the 1983 plan.

Right after the July Board meeting, the Campaign obtained internal CDF documents written by senior CDF staff in 1994. These dramatically undercut the Board and CDF's argument that there would be no harm in continuing to log under the 1983 plan. They state that the 1983 plan did not even then "reflect current legal, social, or economic concerns," and that it was based on "policies from the dark ages of American forestry." The Campaign immediately distributed these documents to state legislators, CDF, Resource Agency staff, and the Board of Forestry.

Whether because of the release of the documents or because CDF and the Board realized their efforts could not stand up to further public scrutiny, the resolution to authorize continued logging in Jackson State was withdrawn from the August Board agenda.

## With your help, we are going to succeed

Join our Campaign. Our goal is to have 10,000 people demanding their legislators to make restoration to old growth the goal for our public forest. Please help us by navigating to http://www.jacksonforest.com or calling (707) 964-5800 to add your name to the rapidly growing list of citizens who want to preserve this precious remnant of redwood forest.

**Vince Taylor is the Executive Director of the Campaign to Restore Jackson State Redwood Forest.**

## Conservationists win a round in roadless area struggle

Conservationists succeeded in July in stalling a controversial logging proposal for portions of the Six Rivers National Forest adjacent to the Trinity Alps Wilderness in Humboldt County, including a roadless area.

In 1999, a fire burned for several weeks in the Six Rivers and Shasta-Trinity National Forests in Humboldt and Trinity counties just north of the small community of Willow Creek. The Forest Service proposed to log portions of the burned region, including part of the 90,000-acre Orleans Mountain roadless area.

Conservation organizations, including the CWC, filed an administrative appeal of the Forest Service's plans arguing that the roadless area should be spared given the fact that only a small amount of wild land remains in California, 12,000 acres have already been logged in the roadless area since 1979, the region is dominated by old-growth forest, and its streams host sensitive steelhead trout that were recently listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth allowed portions of the proposed logging to begin in the Six Rivers National Forest before the administrative appeal was decided, including logging in the Orleans Mountain roadless area. This prompted a lawsuit from the conservationists, who won a temporary restraining order that halted the logging. Mr. Bosworth then rescinded his permission to begin the cutting until the conservationists' administrative appeal can be decided.

## Oregon Wild gains support

Of Oregon's 16 million acres of national forest, only 11% are protected as wilderness. 4.8 million additional acres remain wilderness-suitable, yet unprotected from logging, road building, and other development. Support for the Oregon Wild campaign is snowballing. To date, 260 businesses and organizations have endorsed the campaign. In addition, over 350 citizens have ground-truthed over half of these 1000+ acre roadless areas in the Oregon wilderness proposal. Campaign leaders are hopeful of finding a congressional champion to introduce Oregon Wilderness legislation in the House this fall.

*Courtesy of the Wilderness Support Center.*

## The battle in Yellowstone rages on

This July, the Bush Administration backed away from its commitment to protect Yellowstone National Park from the damage caused by snowmobiles by entering into a settlement agreement with the International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association. As a result, the Park Service has been ordered to re-open its decision to phase-out snowmobiles and reconsider speculative advances in cleaner and quieter snowmobile technology.

To do this, the National Park Service is required to prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) to solicit more public comment. Industry's strong endorsement of this process confirms the Bush Administrations determination to keep snowmobiles in the park.

This maneuver sets aside 10 years of scientific analysis, a 3-year process to collect public input, 22 public hearings and the involvement of 65,000 people who took time to become involved it the process.

*Courtesy of The Wilderness Society.*

## BLM coastal vehicle closure heads to court

Settlement hearings for a court case challenging the Bureau of Land Management's decision to close Black Sands Beach to motorized vehicles have already begun. These are required before a judge will hear the case.

The BLM's Arcata Field Office first proposed to ban vehicles from Black Sands Beach in 1998. After taking often heated public comment both for and against the closure, the BLM officially banned vehicles some months later. Next, the Blue Ribbon Coalition and other opponents of the ban tried to overturn the Arcata BLM's decision by appealing to higher officials in the agency. The Department of the Interior rejected these appeals, thus forcing a court challenge.

The King Range National Conservation Area is situated in Humboldt and Mendocino counties and is nicknamed the "Lost Coast" because of its relatively undeveloped nature. In fact, it is the longest stretch of undeveloped coastline in the United States outside of Alaska. Black Sands Beach is the southernmost stretch of this roadless area. Today, only foot, horse, and wheelchair use is allowed on the beach. Prior to the closure, over 62 percent of equestrians and hikers surveyed by the BLM reported "conflicts" with off-road vehicle enthusiasts on Black Sands Beach, including reports of harassment, speeding, and several near-accidents.

Meanwhile, conservationists have long urged Congress to designate large portions of the King Range as wilderness, a designation that would also prohibit vehicle use on Black Sands Beach.

The first court hearings challenging the BLM's decision to close Black Sands Beach in the King Range National Conservation Area to motorized vehicles are expected in July or August.

## Coalition launches wildfire education campaign

In early August, the California Wilderness Coalition, along with the Environmental Protection and Information Center, launched a major public

education campaign aimed at increasing awareness about the relationship between wildfire and forest management.

The campaign kickoff, on August 8, was comprised of educational inserts that were distributed in over 40,000 newspapers throughout northwestern California. The inserts were included in newspapers in Eureka, Weaverville, Crescent City, Mendocino, Arcata, Laytonville, and Shasta Lake. Distribution will continue in the future.

The four-page inserts contain information on: the role of wildfire in forest ecosystems, the connection between land management and wildfire intensity, and opportunities for homeowners and land managers to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire. The publication pays special attention to the 1999 Big Bar Fire, which burned tens of thousands of acres.

The Coalition is urging the Forest Service to develop fire management strategies that reduce the threats of catastrophic wildfire while protecting the environment. Future efforts will focus on developing a pro-active fire risk reduction strategy that ensures environmental protection, as well as the development of on-the-ground fire risk reduction projects.

To view the educational insert, go to www.calwild.org.

## New wilderness in Humboldt Redwoods?

The California Department of Parks and Recreation has proposed that two new wilderness areas be designated in Humboldt Redwoods State Park north of Garberville, in Humboldt County. The potential new wilderness areas consist of over 10,400 acres of undisturbed coast redwood groves in the Bull Creek and Canoe Creek watersheds.

Both Bull and Canoe creeks flow into the nearby South Fork Eel River and provide the cold water habitat that endangered salmon and steelhead trout populations need to survive. The Department of Parks and Recreation approved the designation of two state wilderness areas last year, in Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park and Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park.

Unlike federal wilderness designation, which requires an act of Congress, state wilderness can be designated by the California State Parks Commission.

## U.S. timber program creates record losses

Waste in the federal timber sale program is at an all time high, even as logging levels have hit a record low, according to a new report by Taxpayers for Common Sense. The report found that the federal timber program cost taxpayers $407 million dollars more than it received for its timber sales in 1998.

The report also found that: (1) 105 of the 111 national forests failed to return as much money as they spent managing the timber program; (2) earlier this year, the Forest Service underreported its financial losses by more than two thirds; (3) $779 taxpayer dollars were wasted on every acre logged and $7,730 was lost on every job created; (4) the national forest that does the most restoration and cuts the fewest old growth trees made the most money in 1998: the Siuslaw National Forest in Oregon, which made $11.5 million; (5) the forest that proposed the most old growth logging lost the most money: Oregon's Willamette National Forest, which lost almost $30 million.

The biggest money losing forests were in the western states, including Alaska, Idaho, California, Montana and Washington. Oregon was at the top of the list.

*Courtesy of American Lands Alliance and Environmental News Service.*

## CARA re-introduced in Congress

The Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA) has been reintroduced in the House as H.R. 701. The bill currently has 236 cosponsors, but faces opposition from appropriators and may not receive the Bush Administration's support. The bill was passed July 25 by the House Resources Committee.

During the 106th Congress last year, the House passed a nearly identical measure, 315-102; the measure ultimately stalled in committee. The Clinton administration and appropriators blamed what bill supporters called "CARA-Lite," which provided $900 million for the Land and Water Conservation Fund instead of the multibillion-dollar package in the bill.

The measure was disliked by appropriators because it would automatically direct approximately $3 billion annually of offshore drilling receipts toward conservation programs. Currently, all royalties from outer continental shelf drilling activities ($5 billion during 1999), now go to the federal treasury, and appropriators decide how to distribute the money. Of the $3 billion, $900 million would go to land acquisition for conservation and recreation projects. Half the money would go directly to the states, and Congress would have to approve the spending of the other half.

CARA would also allocate money for 15 years for fish, wildlife, and park restoration programs. The money would include $1 billion annually for coastal states to acquire land for conservation.

*Courtesy of the Gallon Environmental Letter.*

## Owl and fisher listing goes to court

Conservationists are once again taking the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to court for failing to make a timely decision on listing the California spotted owl and Pacific fisher. Although historic fur trapping and modern logging have combined to wipe out all but 3 small populations of Pacific fishers, the agency says listing will have to wait for a court order. The USFWS is already under court order to handle 16 cases involving 300 species nationwide and another 80 active lawsuits involving 151 species pending.

*Courtesy of the Endangered Species Coalition.*

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**This bristlecone pine forest in the White Mountains potential wilderness area has existed for over 4000 years. With care and stewardship, our children and their children will continue to enjoy their company. Photograph courtesy of Galen Rowell, Mountain Light Photography.**



# Make our shared vision a reality

Half of California's land is publicly owned. One-third of California's native plants and animals are currently considered at-risk, threatened, or endangered. If we are to preserve these irreplaceable wonders of nature we *must* protect our publicly owned land.

We envision a day of inter-connected wild areas in which the wild legacy of the Golden State is *permanently* protected. Your membership in the California Wilderness Coalition gives us the strength to continue our work.

You can also help us realize our vision of protecting pristine wild areas by:

## Donating stocks

Many members have chosen to help protect wilderness by donating appreciated stocks. Donors receive a tax deduction for the entire value of the stocks, even if they were purchased for a small part of that value. (Please check with your tax advisor to clarify your exact tax benefits.) We will work with you if you wish to electronically transfer securities.

## Planned giving

Protect wild California in your will. Many of us cannot make day-to-day contributions to the causes that we love, yet in our will we can make a bequest that will leave a lasting legacy of wilderness. Here's an example of language you might use in making a bequest:

*"to the California Wilderness Coalition, a non-profit organization organized and existing under the laws of the State of California with the current address of 2655 Portage Bay East, Suite 5, Davis, CA 95616, for its general purposes."*

## Wildland Advocates

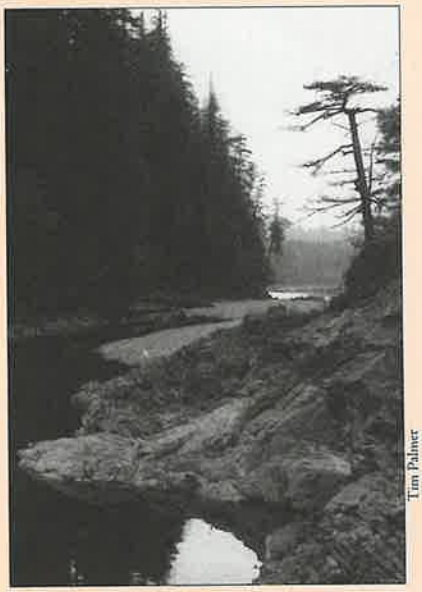
Show your commitment to the protection of wild California by joining the over 120 members of our major donor program. This committed group of individuals empowers the staff and volunteers at CWC to keep up their efforts to protect California's special wild places. Wildland Advocate members receive press releases and letters keeping them up-to-speed on our day-to-day efforts to build support for wild California. You can join Wildland Advocates by increasing your membership renewal or fund appeal donation, or by signing up for a monthly credit card deduction. Giving levels for Wildland Advocates start at $250 per year.

Please contact Eve Ladwig-Scott at (530) 758-0380 if you have questions or suggestions about giving to protect our wilderness heritage.

# California Wilderness Coalition's 25th Anniversary Celebration

*Thursday, November 8, 2001*
*at Galen Rowell's Mountain Light Photography Studios*
*1466 66th Street, Emeryville*

*Reception*
*7:00 ~ 9:00 pm*
*Special guests*


Tim Palmer

## *Twenty-Five Years of Dedication to California's Wildlands*

Founded in 1976, CWC has been involved in numerous campaigns to defend and protect wild places throughout the state. Since our inception, over ten million acres of California's land have become designated wilderness. Celebrate our victories with us as well as our efforts to permanently protect the many pristine areas in the Golden State that are still vulnerable.

Suggested donation is $75.* Please join us as the California Wilderness Coalition celebrates its 25th anniversary!

* Discount for low income is available.


**Shirts:** 100% organic cotton. White on a cobalt blue shirt, or in full color on a natural shirt. Warning: Even after washing and drying, these shirts tend to run a size larger than most t-shirts. Sizes S-XL.

**Caps:** Our full-color logo is embroidered on the front and "A Voice for Wild California" is embroidered on the back. Caps are 100% cotton, navy blue, and adjustable to all sizes.

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| *Item* | *Color* | *Size* | *No.* | *Price* | *Subtotal* |
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** Shipping: $2.00 for first hat, $0.75 for each additional hat. $2.50 for first shirt, $1.50 for each additional shirt.*

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*Please mail to: California Wilderness Coalition, 2655 Portage Bay East #5, Davis, California 95616.*

# Iron Mountains

**Approximate acreage: 128,000**

**Managing agency: Bureau of Land Management, Needles Field Office**

**Location: In the California desert, between the Old Woman Mountains and Sheephole Valley**

The Iron Mountains region is one of the largest remaining unprotected, unroaded areas in the California desert. The unprotected wilderness contains two desert mountain ranges, the Iron Mountains and the Kilbeck Hills, as well as the complete bajadas from the edges of the Cadiz and Danby Dry lake playas to the base of the mountains. The northwest bajadas and foothills of both ranges harbor numerous perched sand dune areas. The Kilbeck Hills are sand-drenched and provide a rare chance to study the flora inhabiting perched sand dunes. The surrounding bajadas also contain the classic southern Mojave creosote-scrub plant community, here showered with sand.

The large viewsheds from both the east and west give a sense of grandeur highlighting the dramatic cliffs of the Iron Mountain Range. This is a little-known and seldom-visited area. The center of the Iron Mountains provides outstanding opportunities for solitude and non-motorized recreation.

This unprotected wilderness area is a wildlife corridor between the Old Woman Mountain Wilderness and the Sheephole Wilderness. The corridor is utilized by desert bighorn sheep herds in both the Old Woman Mountain Wilderness and the Sheephole Wilderness in order to migrate from one wilderness to the other.

The Iron Mountains region was overlooked in previous surveys, but is generally in pristine condition. As one of the largest roadless areas unprotected in the California desert, it deserves wilderness protection before it is piece-mealed into smaller, less diverse segments.

Bureau of Land Management

In one month of 1997, a Student Conservation Association crew of six students and a leader restored 14 miles of closed routes in desert wilderness areas, effectively stopping entry to more than 40 miles. Last year, a second crew restored 14 miles of closed routes, effectively closing 50 miles. In just two field seasons, 20 percent of all illegal routes inside 16 wilderness areas were obliterated. For the story, see page 16.

*A Voice for Wild California — Celebrating 25 Years*

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