

# WILDERNESS *Record*

NEWS JOURNAL OF THE  
CALIFORNIA WILDERNESS COALITION  
SPRING 2003

CALIFORNIA'S 10 MOST  
THREATENED WILD PLACES

BUSH'S CONTINUED ASSAULTS ON  
OUR NATIONAL FORESTS

DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR FACILITATES  
GIVEAWAY OF PUBLIC LANDS

SEQUOIA NATIONAL MONUMENT  
TO BE LOGGED?

DEVASTATING EXPERIMENT  
THREATENS PLUMAS AND LASSEN

COURT VICTORY FOR  
ROADLESS AREA CONSERVATION

GUZZIERS GONE BAD

THE ALGODONES DUNES: WILL BLM PROTECT RARE SPECIES  
OR RE-OPEN 85% OF LAND TO OFF-ROAD VEHICLES?



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*The Voice for Wild California*

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## DIRECTOR'S REPORT

### Head for the hills

**E**arlier this spring, the California Wilderness Coalition (CWC) released its annual report on *California's 10 Most Threatened Wild Places*. CWC staff, members, and coalition partners had a very difficult time with this year's report—because it was so hard to cut the list down to only 10!

The Bush Administration is intent upon turning California's public lands into corporate property, and no place is considered off-limits. Wilderness, national parks, forests, monuments, and other public lands throughout California are being targeted for irresponsible drilling, logging, mining and other developments.

Some may ask, isn't this just business as usual for our federal government? After all, hasn't every presidential administration abused our public lands in some way?

Unfortunately, this is a unique situation. Never have there been this many threats to the California environment from our own federal government. Some are incredibly pernicious. The Forest Service has announced a massive "logging experiment" in the northern Sierra Nevada designed to gauge the tolerance of the California spotted owl to logging in its nest groves. The Forest Service has also stopped surveying for certain sensitive plant and wildlife species in northwestern California, previously required prior to logging.

Other threats are simply outrageous, like the revival of the RS 2477 provision of the 1866 mining law that allows the federal government to hand over public land to local governments and private entities for roadbuilding. The Bureau of Land Management has issued a rule that gives it the authority to distribute federal lands with minimal public involvement and legal review. Taking advantage of this opportunity, an aggressive effort by San Bernardino County has resulted in 2,567 miles of road claims in the Mojave National Preserve and another 2,419 miles elsewhere in the California desert, including national parks and wilderness. Off-road interests including the Blue Ribbon Coalition, comprised of corporate oil, gas, mining, and recreational vehicle interests, are the driving forces behind the claims in the area.

Sadly, there is a feeling that none of our wild spaces are safe. In the name of fire prevention, the Forest Service is actually proposing to log and build roads in the Giant Sequoia National Monument. This is in a monument designed to protect the earth's largest living trees—the giant sequoias—and they want to log them! The motto of the Bush Administration's Forest Service should be, "We will leave no log behind."

What can we do about all this bad news? First, help CWC fight for wild California. Take a few minutes to respond to a CWC action alert and let the Bush Administration know how much you care for our Golden State. CWC's staff and board deeply appreciate your support in our efforts. CWC has been the voice for wild California for 27 years because of members like you. Your contributions make that voice loud!

Finally, go out and enjoy the wildflowers! The birds are singing, and California's incomparable wilderness is in bloom. Visit the Giant Sequoia National Monument and see the breathtaking trees. If that's too far, go to the Angeles National Forest or the Marin Headlands or another part of wild California near you. Explore and enjoy our wild Golden State—and revitalize your commitment to protect it!



Mary L. Wells



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front cover photo: *Algodones Dunes*, c. 2002 Andrew M. Harvey, [www.visualjourneys.net](http://www.visualjourneys.net).

back cover photo: *Black Oak proposed wilderness*, by Jim Rose.



Photo: Dave Cinderman

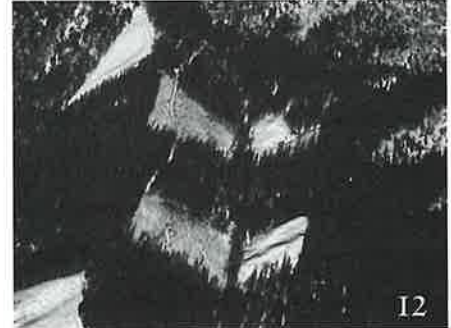


Photo: Carla Clever



Photo: Sally Miller

### Our Mission

The California Wilderness Coalition's mission is to protect and restore California's wild places. CWC works toward a healthy future for Californians and our wild mountains and rivers, coasts and deserts, a future where wilderness, wild lands, and biodiversity are core values. For people who believe that wilderness holds a special place in the human spirit and has intrinsic value, the California Wilderness Coalition is the only statewide organization that brings together individuals and organizations in the vigorous defense of California's remaining wildlands.

# Full steam ahead on California's north coast wilderness

## Plus: Locals show strong interest in desert wilderness protections

by Ryan Henson  
and Pat Flanagan

**T**he California Wild Heritage Act is the CWC's highest legislative priority because when passed, it will protect nearly 2.8 million acres of California's last wild places. Senator Barbara Boxer and Representatives Mike Thompson (D-Napa) and Hilda Solis (D-El Monte) introduced the act in Congress in May of 2002. Representative Sam Farr (D-Monterey) introduced an allied measure, the Big Sur Wilderness and Conservation Act.

Since May, activists promoting the California Wild Heritage Act have made much progress, including:

- Winning written endorsements from over 600 businesses and 300 county supervisors, city councilmembers, and other local elected officials.
- Getting a resolution of support from both the California State Senate and California State Assembly.
- Convincing over 15,000 Californians to sign petitions and send letters urging Senator Feinstein to support the bill.
- Passing Representative Sam Farr's Big Sur Wilderness and Conservation Act, which designated more than 54,000 acres of new wilderness along California's spectacular central coast (see page 24). While this is only one small piece of the California Wild Heritage Act, such an accomplishment is quite welcome in this political climate.

Senator Boxer expects to reintroduce the California Wild Heritage Act soon. Representative Mike Thompson will also reintroduce a bill covering his own district, the "Northwest California Wild Heritage Act," very shortly.

Given the powerful anti-environ-



Jim Rose

**Proposed wilderness areas in the First Congressional District (northwest California), such as the Yuki proposed wilderness (pictured here), have a strong chance of winning wilderness protection this year.**

mental majority in Congress, it is extremely unlikely that the California Wild Heritage Act will pass in its entirety this year. However, the 17 wild places in Representative Thompson's First Congressional District have a very strong chance at winning protections this year. Like Representative Farr, Mr. Thompson has excellent ties with many Republican members of the U.S. House of Representatives and can use these connections to advance protection for the more than 308,000 acres of proposed wilderness and more than 19 miles of wild and scenic rivers covered by his Northwest California Wild Heritage Act.

Conservationists will continue to push hard and build support for wilderness and wild & scenic river protection throughout California. Prospects for the statewide bill will be considerably improved if Senator Feinstein agrees to support it. Conservationists are working hard to win Senator Feinstein's endorsement of the measure.

In January, Desert Field Organizer

Pat Flanagan facilitated the first in a series of environmental lectures designed to educate local citizens about desert wilderness and the California Wild Heritage Act. Bob Ellis, member of Desert Survivors, showed slides taken during walks across the Sheephole Valley, Palen/McCoy, and Big Maria Wildernesses to illustrate the concept, the reality, and the politics of desert wilderness. Thirty people attended, signed petitions, and asked questions until long after our published closing time. February's lecture provided in-depth information on the wilderness areas proposed in the California Wild Heritage Act and on the RS 2477 highway robbery in the Mojave National Preserve and surrounding public lands (see page 7). CWC's Environmental Lecture Series is presented in partnership with the Morongo Basin Conservation Association.

**Ryan Henson is the California Wilderness Coalition's Policy Director. Pat Flanagan is CWC's Desert Field Organizer.**



# New Congressional committee leadership promises struggle and disappointment for our public lands

by Jason Swartz

**T**he mid-term elections of 2002 placed control of both the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives in the hands of the Republican Party. As a result, several anti-environment Congressmen have been selected as chairmen of important committees. The chair of a committee controls its agenda, thus determining what bills, hearings, and resolutions are taken up.

There are 20 committees in the Senate and 24 committees in the House. Of these, the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources and the House Committee on Resources have the greatest impact and direct jurisdiction over California's wilderness, water, wildlife, parks, monuments, and wild places.

Below is a breakdown of the jurisdiction of each committee and the recent environmental records of the Congressmen chosen as the chairmen.

Senator Pete Domenici, a Republican from New Mexico, is Chairman of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. This committee oversees oil and gas leasing, national parks, national monuments, Forest Service lands, Bureau of Land Management lands, wilderness, water rights, groundwater resources, surface mining, and public lands grazing.

Senator Domenici is an outspoken supporter of reduced regulations protecting endangered species, increased energy exploration, and the repeal of many important environmental laws. California's public lands will be increasingly under threat of salvage logging operations, oil and gas leasing, and measures to weaken effective environmental legislation while Senator Domenici chairs this committee.

In the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress, Senator Domenici received a meager 8% pro-environment rating (League of Conservation Voters, 2002 National Environmental Scorecard).

## SENATOR PETE DOMINICI VOTED TO:

- reduce the required wildlife protections that dam operators must follow
- drill for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge
- reduce protections for endangered species in the Klamath ecosystem

Source: League of Conservation Voters Environmental Scorecard, [www.lcv.org/scorecard/index.asp](http://www.lcv.org/scorecard/index.asp)

## REPRESENTATIVE RICHARD POMBO VOTED TO:

- exempt the Defense Department from such basic environmental laws as the Endangered Species Act
- allow oil and gas leasing off California's beautiful coast
- disallow important protections for endangered species in the Klamath ecosystem

Representative Richard Pombo, a Republican from California, is the Chairman of the House Committee on Resources. He therefore oversees national parks, national monuments, Forest Service lands, the wilderness system, public lands grazing, the wild and scenic rivers system, marine sanctuaries, coastal waters, water reclamation, public rights of way, oil and gas leasing, endangered species, and wildlife refuges.

Representative Pombo is a rancher from Tracy, California. Since arriving in Congress, Representative Pombo has made it quite clear where he stands on issues affecting California's environment. He is out of touch with mainstream Californians and represents the far right fringe of the Republican Party on environmental issues. His most egregious attacks have been focused on dismantling the Endangered Species Act, supporting oil drilling off the California coast, and adamantly fighting new wilderness designation. He is also a strong supporter of the Bush Administration's plans to reduce fire

threats by logging remote roadless areas.

Having Representative Pombo in control of the legislative dialogue of our public lands and wildlife will ensure an agenda that supports extraction and exploitation, not environmental protection.

In the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress, Representative Pombo received a lowly 9% pro-environment rating (League of Conservation Voters, 2002 National Environmental Scorecard).

These two committees have the power over what laws and programs will threaten our water and air quality, wildlife, wilderness, and general ecological health, as they join forces with the Bush White House (see next page). California's wilds have never been faced with such a determined anti-environmental federal government. They will need a substantial effort on the part of all Californians to ensure that tomorrow's California is left in better condition than it is today.

**Jason Swartz is CWC's Public Lands Policy Analyst.**

# The White House assaults wild lands

by Ryan Henson

The Bush Administration has issued more than 200 changes in environmental and conservation policies in what has become a truly unprecedented assault on our nation's air and water quality and wild lands. The aggressive rollbacks of policies meant to protect land, air, and water has been especially hard on California, where the federal government manages almost 47 million acres of land, about 47 percent of the state. California's Attorney General Bill Lockyer described the White House's actions in dramatic terms while testifying before the State Assembly Natural Resources Committee in January: "Not since General Sherman's march on Georgia has the federal government been so aggressive with a state, and we're not even at war with them."

Despite Mr. Lockyer's assertion, conservationists have felt as though they were at odds with the White House for quite some time. Over the last year, the White House has issued numerous proposed policy changes to completely alter the way our federal public lands are managed.

The following is a partial list of the worst of these measures.

- Weakening the National Forest Management Act regulations: See article on p. 10.
- Weakening the Northwest Forest Plan's Aquatic Conservation Strategy: See article on p. 11.
- Eliminating the Northwest Forest Plan's "Survey and Manage" rules: See article on p. 11.
- New Bureau of Land Management (BLM) appeal regulations: The new regulations would greatly reduce the ability of citizens to administratively challenge development projects on BLM land.
  - Reduced analysis before logging: See article on p. 10.
  - New Forest Service appeal regulations: See article on page 10.
  - Facilitating bogus road claims under Revised Statute 2477 (RS 2477): See article on p. 7.
  - Opening the Giant Sequoia National Monument to commercial logging and off-road vehicle use: See article on pp. 12 and 13.
  - Conducting massive logging "experiments" in the name of spotted owl protection on the Plumas and Lassen National Forests: See article on p. 14.
  - Undermining the Roadless Area Conservation Rule: See articles on pp. 15 and 16.
  - Rewriting the Sierra Nevada Framework to allow more logging: See article on p. 17.

- Offshore oil drilling: The state of California has declared its coastal waters off-limits to new oil wells, but the White House has attempted to extend 36 oil and gas leases along the central coast. Last December, a federal court ruled that the Bush Administration had not adequately studied impacts on the environment, but the Administration is expected to appeal.

- Pentagon gets a free pass: The Department of Defense (DOD) is the biggest polluter of all federal agencies, yet the Bush Administration has proposed to exempt the DOD from the Clean Water, Clean Air, Endangered Species, Migratory Bird Treaty, and Marine Mammal Protection acts.

- Endangered species: Protections for the California red-legged frog, California spotted owl, Alameda whipsnake, green sturgeon, San Diego and Riverside fairy shrimp, and the California gnatcatcher have all been rejected or reduced by the Administration recently.

- Dam operators favored over streams: The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has begun working to weaken the

rules it issues for hydroelectric dam operators, which often require that sufficient water be provided for fish and recreation. Some of California's most important waterways will be impacted by these rollbacks.

- Livestock grazing on BLM lands: The Department of the Interior has proposed new rules to reduce BLM oversight of livestock grazing. Stay tuned for more information on this topic in future issues of the *Wilderness Record*.

## What you can do

Write to California Attorney General Bill Lockyer and thank him for his excellent work fighting federal rollbacks of environmental regulations, and encourage him to concentrate on fighting rollbacks affecting California's federal lands. He can be reached at:

Attorney General Bill Lockyer  
California Department of Justice  
Public Inquiry Unit  
P.O. Box 944255  
Sacramento, CA 94244-2550  
(800) 952-5225

You can also contact Mr. Lockyer by filling out a comment form on his website at: <http://caag.state.ca.us/contact/general.htm>.

**Ryan Henson is the California Wilderness Coalition's Policy Director.**



Universal Press Syndicate/Olfert



# Department of the Interior facilitates giveaway of parks and wilderness: RS 2477 rule takes effect

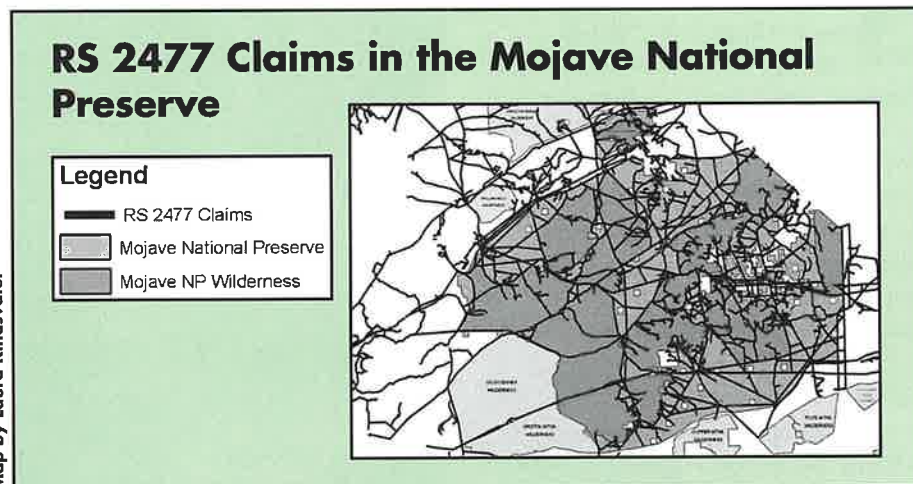
by Amanda Dranginis

In February, the U.S. Department of the Interior adopted a new rule to facilitate the giveaway of federal lands to local governments or private interests claiming "highways" across public lands under the 1866 mining law known as Revised Statute 2477. (For more background on RS 2477, see the *Wilderness Record*, summer 2002). The rule allows the Bureau of Land Management to "disclaim" federal ownership of lands, so that these antiquated, unsubstantiated claims on jeep trails, footpaths, even waterways, can be turned into paved highways or opened to vehicles even if they are in national parks or wilderness.

The Bush Administration's disclaimer rule facilitates these RS 2477 claims across all federal lands, including national parks, wildlife refuges, national forests, tribal lands, archaeological sites, and military lands, and even across privately owned lands. It opens the floodgates for thousands of so-called "highway" claims with no criteria in place to determine their validity. Under the rule, BLM's process for determining whether a valid right-of-way exists is not open to the public, nor is there any opportunity to appeal decisions. In addition, BLM says the rule is exempt from environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act.

The new rule has grave implications for wild lands throughout the West. In 1995, a National Park Service report found that 66 units of the park system were threatened by RS 2477 claims, and that impacts "could be devastating...could cross many miles of undisturbed fish and wildlife habitat, historical and archaeological resources, and sensitive wild lands...would undoubtedly derogate most unit values and seriously impact the ability of the NPS to manage units for purposes for which they were established."

In California, the threat of RS 2477 claims is widespread. At greatest risk are



**San Bernardino County claims 2,567 miles of "rights-of-way" in the Mojave National Preserve, over 600 miles of which intrude into designated wilderness.**

the Mojave National Preserve, Death Valley and Joshua Tree National Parks, and wilderness areas in the California Desert Conservation Area. CWC has also confirmed that RS 2477 claims exist in the Giant Sequoia National Monument, Sequoia National Forest, Six Rivers National Forest, and King Range National Conservation Area.

In the California desert, San Bernardino County has indicated it will press BLM to "disclaim" RS 2477 routes in the coming months. The county claims nearly 5,000 miles of these RS 2477 "highways" (more than twice its maintained road inventory of 2,341 miles), including more than 2,500 miles in the Mojave National Preserve, more than 800 miles in designated wilderness, and more than 300 miles in areas proposed for wilderness designation in the California Wild Heritage Act. CWC is monitoring the county's actions and field-checking its claims in wilderness.

Fortunately, conservationists have rallied strong opposition to the new rule. CWC has joined many groups in a national campaign against bogus road claims. In January, the *Los Angeles Times* printed a major story on the threat to California parks and wilderness. In March, Senator Dianne Feinstein, champion of the 1994 California Desert

Protection Act, and Senator Barbara Boxer, champion of the new California Wild Heritage Act, sent a joint letter to Interior Secretary Gale Norton asking her not to process any disclaimers involving RS 2477 highway claims, and asserting that the rule itself is illegal because it violates a Congressional moratorium.

Exacerbating the issue, the Forest Service recently proposed its own new rule, that would allow maintenance of claimed RS 2477 rights-of-way without the special use authorization required for other routes and trails. If adopted, this Forest Service rule could allow bulldozers to "improve" bogus highway claims through wild lands in our national forests.

CWC continues to monitor RS 2477 claims in California, organize field work to photograph and document bogus claims, and provide our research and reports to the media, the general public, and Congress. We will keep working at the state and national levels to mount a powerful defense against these phony highway claims and the Bush Administration's attempts to give away our wild public lands.

**Amanda Dranginis is the California Wilderness Coalition's Administrative Assistant.**



# California's 10 most threatened wild places 2003

by Keith Hammond

Since the 2002 elections, California has been rocked not by earthquakes or El Niño, but by a deluge of new federal threats to our state's environment. It is as though a floodgate opened in Washington, D.C. Literally dozens of regulatory rollbacks, decision reversals, and other anti-environmental policies have gushed forth in just a few months, many targeting California specifically.

Today the Bush Administration is hitting our wild public lands harder than any administration in memory, opening our national monuments to logging, our national forests to oil drilling, and even our national parks and wilderness areas to road-building. Adding to the strain, industrial logging and urban sprawl on privately owned lands threaten to snuff out some of California's most important wildlife habitat.

Each year CWC quizzes activists and conservation groups to find the 10 wild places in the deepest danger—this



Dave Clendenen

**Tejon Ranch is a crucial habitat linkage, used by wildlife to migrate between the Sierra Nevada and the central and south coasts. It is threatened by conversion to suburban and industrial development.**

year we have a bumper crop. California's 10 most threatened wild places in 2003 are:

**Algodones Sand Dunes**—The Bush Administration's extreme off-road plan would overturn protection of endan-

gered wildlife and wilderness.

**Panamint Range (Briggs Mine and Surprise Canyon)**—Open-pit mining and extreme off-road vehicle use would devastate natural landscapes, sacred lands, and wilderness.

**Cleveland National Forest**—Proposed freeways, dams, and power lines threaten this region's last unprotected wild forests.

**Tejon Ranch**—Sprawl and development threaten key habitat on California's largest private landholding.

**Los Padres National Forest**—Proposed oil and gas development puts wild forest lands and endangered species habitat at risk.

**Duncan Canyon**—Salvage logging would ruin old-growth forest, roadless areas, and proposed wilderness.

**Westside Sierra Corporate Forestlands**—Company's plan to clearcut 1 million acres would degrade water quality and drive Sierra Nevada wildlife toward extinction.

**Plumas and Lassen National Forests**—The Bush Administration's massive logging "experiment" would cut old-growth forests and spotted owl habitat.



c. 2002 Andrew M. Harvey, www.visualjourneys.net

**The Bureau of Land Management has proposed to re-open 85 percent of the Algodones Dunes to off-road vehicle traffic, despite the threats to rare and endangered species and to law enforcement officers unable to control sometimes violent crowds in the hundreds of thousands.**

### *Medicine Lake Highlands*—

Development of geothermal power plants would lay waste to wild forests and sacred lands.

**Klamath River Basin**—Excessive water diversion is killing thousands of salmon and hurting farmers, fishermen, tribes, and endangered wildlife.

### *Bush Administration's unprecedented rollbacks*

Fully half these areas are threatened because the Bush Administration has refused to enforce one key policy: the Forest Service's Roadless Area Conservation Rule. This landmark conservation measure, adopted in 2000 but suspended by the current Administration, protects the last wild national forest lands—58.5 million acres in the U.S. and 4.4 million acres in California—from development, logging, and road-building. In December 2002, a federal court reinstated the rule, sweeping away a judicial challenge. Now the Bush Administration is expected to dismantle the rule administratively.

If enforced, the rule will save the threatened roadless areas of the Los Padres National Forest, the Cleveland National Forest, and Duncan Canyon (Tahoe National Forest), plus threatened portions of the Plumas National Forest (Humboldt Summit Roadless Area), and the Medicine Lake Highlands (Mount Hoffman Roadless Area on the Modoc and Klamath National Forests). Without the rule, all these areas are in imminent danger of development or logging.

The Bush Administration also has reversed many policies specific to California, stripping away hard-won protections and approving harmful projects. It approved industrial power plants in the Medicine Lake Highlands near Mt. Shasta, which were denied by the previous administration. Similarly, it reversed the denial of an open-pit mine in the California Desert Conservation Area. It is re-opening large areas of the fragile Algodones Dunes, previously closed to vehicles to protect endangered species. Last summer it

## California's 10 Most Threatened Wild Places



overruled its own federal scientists and cut back Klamath River flows, killing more than 34,000 salmon in northern California. It is stripping key protections from the Northwest Forest Plan that protect California's ancient forests and salmon. It is also dismantling the Sierra Nevada Framework—the historic plan that protects wildlife and old-growth trees in 11 of California's national forests—so timber companies can more easily log ancient forests in our state's greatest mountain range.

California's endangered species have been especially hard hit. In just one year, Bush Administration officials slashed critical habitat for the threatened California red-legged frog, coastal California gnatcatcher, Alameda whipsnake, San Diego and Riverside fairy shrimp, and 19 endangered or threatened species of Pacific salmon and steelhead. Furthermore, they denied any endangered species protection at all for the imperiled Yosemite

toad and California spotted owl. They even propose to drill for oil in the Los Padres National Forest where the critically endangered California condor is struggling to evade extinction.

CWC's *10 Most Threatened Wild Places* report is sent to hundreds of media outlets, California's congressional delegation, and other opinion leaders and decisionmakers. It also includes urgent action items that readers can do to help save these places. It is our hope that by informing Californians about threatened wilderness and habitat, we can help protect California's precious natural heritage for future generations to enjoy.

*California's 10 Most Threatened Wild Places 2003* is now available at [www.calwild.org/resources/pubs/10most.php](http://www.calwild.org/resources/pubs/10most.php)—please read it and take action!

**Keith Hammond is the California Wilderness Coalition's Communications Director.**

# Bush's continued battery of our national forests and the laws that govern them

by Jason Swartz

California's national forests have never been under assault as they are right now. The Bush Administration intends to tear apart forest protection by revising some of the most basic environmental statutes ever enacted.

Currently the Administration is proposing changes to several environmental laws, including the National Forest Management Act (NFMA), National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and Appeals Reform Act. These laws serve to ensure that ecological stewardship is practiced responsibly on our public lands. These proposed changes would eliminate resource protection, accountability, transparent decision-making, and opportunities for public involvement. A few of the proposals by the Administration are detailed below.

## *National Forest Management Act*

The National Forest Management Act requires national forest managers to prepare management plans every 15 years and divide each forest into zones delineating where certain types of development are allowed or excluded. It also requires that "viable populations" of species be maintained.

The Bush Administration plans to focus the Forest Service on commodity production instead of environmental protection with several revisions to forest planning. The proposed changes would eliminate the requirement for an environmental impact statement (EIS) in the forest planning process. An EIS is the most comprehensive document used under federal law to explain a land-use proposal, offer alternatives, and solicit public input.

It would also eliminate the viable

populations requirement, remove special considerations for roadless areas, give development equal standing with ecological sustainability, open forests up to more commodity development and off-road vehicle use, eliminate public participation, and make compliance with standards and guidelines optional.

The proposed National Forest Management Act revisions would make our national forests more vulnerable to logging, mining, off-road vehicle use, and other environmentally damaging activities. Initial comments on this revision are due April 7, 2003.



**Clearcuts on the Eldorado National Forest as seen from above. The Bush Administration plans to focus the Forest Service on increased logging, mining, off-road vehicle use, and other environmentally damaging activities, as well as limit the public's ability to comment on proposed activities on public lands.**

## *National Environmental Policy Act*

As part of the "Healthy Forests Initiative" proposed by the Administration, hazardous fuels reduction projects would be exempted from the documentation requirements of NEPA by establishing them as "categorical exclusions." This would allow the Forest Service to conduct thinning and other fuels reduction activities without

preparing an EIS or environmental assessment (EA), and severely inhibit opportunities for public involvement.

This proposal allows the Forest Service to build an unlimited number of temporary roads and log in roadless areas if deemed to have no "adverse affect." Project size would be unlimited. Categorical exclusions could be used for salvage logging projects, as long as they are stated to be for "fuels reduction." This approach would also presume that long-term benefits of fuels reduction activities outweigh the short-term impacts to endangered species.

This proposal is seriously flawed

because it would allow virtually unlimited logging to occur with no environmental analysis, no opportunity to appeal, and inadequate opportunity for public comment. Comments for the proposal were due on January 31, 2003, and we await the response from the Administration.

## *Appeals Reform Act*

The proposed amendments to the



Appeals Reform Act, also part of Bush's "Healthy Forests Initiative," would make it more difficult for citizens to effectively exercise their rights to administratively appeal Forest Service timber sales and other land management decisions.

The major changes proposed include: (1) allowing projects under appeal to be implemented for economic reasons such as salvage logging, (2) exempting smaller timber sales from appeal, (3) limiting appealable issues to those specifically raised in prior comments, (4) only considering "substantive" comments, (5) omitting interested parties from the appeals process, and (6) exempting project decisions made by Department of Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman or Undersecretary Mark Rey.

Comments for this administrative action were due February 18, 2003.

### *What you can do*

Please write the Forest Service and your Congressional representatives by April 7, 2003, and request that the proposed "Forest Service Planning Rule" be dropped and that the 2000 National Forest Management Act regulation remain in place. Send your letter to:

USDA FS Planning Rule,  
Content Analysis Team  
P.O. Box 8359  
Missoula, MT 59807  
E-mail:  
planning\_rule@fs.fed.us  
Fax: 406-329-3556

For more details, see the alert on our web site at [http://www.calwild.org/action/alert\\_021903.php](http://www.calwild.org/action/alert_021903.php).

**Jason Swartz is the California Wilderness Coalition's Public Lands Policy Analyst.**

## **Bush Administration continues efforts to dismantle the Northwest Forest Plan**

**T**he U.S. Forest Service implemented the Northwest Forest Plan in 1994 as a compromise between environmental groups and the timber industry. The impetus for the compromise was the long-raging battle in the Northwest over the northern spotted owl, endangered due to the logging of the old-growth forests on which it depends. The plan extended a moderate degree of protection to approximately 80 percent of the ancient forests remaining in the region's federal lands.

The Bush Administration has recently begun to unravel crucial protections that the Northwest Forest Plan provides, including the "survey and manage" provision, and the "Aquatic Conservation Strategy." These rollbacks are vehemently supported by the timber industry, which donated \$1 million to the Republican Party during a Bush campaign visit to Portland in May 2000.

### *Survey and Manage*

The purpose of this key provision is to require that surveys for certain sensitive species be conducted in areas proposed for logging. This provision has been strongly supported by conservationists because it provides some protection for the last 20 percent of ancient forests not preserved by the Northwest Forest Plan.

These wildlife surveys are an integral part of the Northwest Forest Plan and represent the minimum protections that should be provided to our ancient forests. Considering that most of the species covered in this provision live in old-growth forests, the impact of the survey and manage requirement can be reduced by simply not logging what little ancient forest remains on our federal lands. The removal of these requirements will lead to additional listings under the Endangered Species Act and reduce habitat connectivity.

### *Aquatic Conservation Strategy*

The Aquatic Conservation Strategy was developed to restore and maintain the ecological health of watersheds and aquatic ecosystems on public lands. It requires that land use activities be limited or excluded in those parts of the watershed that are prone to instability. Activities such as logging and road construction must minimize effects on riparian corridors by having negligible impacts on stream flows, erosion, and healthy riparian function.

These protective measures are problematic for logging interests because they require agencies to maintain the existing aquatic conditions and to restore conditions when degradation is apparent. By eliminating these aquatic protections, the Administration will be handing control of watershed health over to timber companies and the mining industry. The worst thing that can happen to the watersheds of the Northwest is to open them up to road construction, excessive erosion, degraded water quality, and elimination of habitat. The proposed revision of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy will do just that.

The Administration's unraveling of both the survey and manage requirements and the Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives would eliminate important protections for our remaining ancient Northwest forests. The draft supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) for both these amendments was expected in spring 2003, with the final SEIS and record of decision due out in June or July 2003. In each case the public will have the opportunity to comment on the proposed revisions to the Northwest Forest Plan.



# Chainsaws sharpened for Giant Sequoia National Monument

by **Carla Cloer**

In April 2000, President Clinton's proclamation that created the Giant Sequoia National Monument also banned commercial logging—so why is the timber industry cheering now? It's because the recently released draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) for the monument goes directly against the proclamation. Logging will continue, even though the proclamation has stronger rules against tree removal than national park laws.

Except for alternative 4, every alternative in the DEIS provides for the continuous logging of large trees. The preferred alternative, 6, is the worst: It would cut more trees annually than were taken from the entire forest just two years before the monument was created—all in the name of protection!

The battle to stop logging on the

Sequoia National Forest began in 1981. More than half of the Earth's sequoia groves were without legal protection in this national forest. In 1988, a landmark lawsuit stopped clearcut logging in groves, but only after more than 1,000 acres were stripped to bare soil, leaving only the largest giants. The Forest Service claimed such logging was to restore groves from fire suppression, but sequoia experts testified that logging does not emulate fire and that groves were being damaged. After the injunction, logging continued outside of the arbitrarily defined "groves."

When the Giant Sequoia National Monument was proclaimed in 2000, it was left under the control of the Forest Service instead of being transferred to the National Park Service.

The same local Forest Service personnel who had clearcut the groves in the 1980s and considered the forest one big tree farm were trusted to kick their addiction to logging.

A Scientific Advisory Board was supposed to guide the Forest Service in creating the initial monument plan, but the Forest Service had it in the mail before the Scientific Advisory Board had its first meeting. DEIS maps of "grove influence areas" are based on an in-house, incomplete draft document which has had no peer review.

The public must demand that the Giant Sequoia plan follow the monument proclamation. Fifty years of industrial logging is enough!

**Roadless areas such as the Moses Roadless Area, pictured here, are threatened by logging in the Giant Sequoia National Monument. Please act now to save these beautiful wild places from chainsaws.**



Carla Cloer





**Clearcuts like this in a Black Mountain grove are likely in the future of the Giant Sequoia National Monument if the Forest Service goes ahead with their plan.**

The Forest Service claims they must log to prevent hot fire, but only hot fire can open sequoia cones high in the canopy and allow the trees to reproduce. They say they must log to safely restore the natural fire return interval, but they have no Fire and Fuels Management Plan, no criteria for letting natural fire burn, and no policy to suppress fire only when human life or property is in jeopardy.

They claim they need to log big trees to pay for the non-logging restoration projects, but logging projects in the forest will not pay their own way, let alone pay for additional projects. Figures for DEIS economic comparison charts appear to have been pulled out of thin air to convince readers that only logging can protect the monument.

Alternative 4 is the only alternative that treats the monument as an integrated ecosystem and protects all of the natural, historical and scientific objects inside its boundaries. It allows tree cutting only where it would protect structures, where needed for public or structure safety, or where objective studies show a unique site-specific problem for which tree removal is the

only solution. The majority of the forest would be managed using conservative strategies including hand thinning and controlled burning, which the Sequoia National Park has successfully used for decades. It is the only alternative that increases compatible recreation by reestablishing historic hiking and riding trails and increasing non-motorized winter sports.

The public must demand that the monument plan follow the proclamation. We recognize a logging plan when we see it. Fifty years of industrial logging is enough!

## *What you can do*

Please write or call California's U.S. Senators and let them know you support protection, rather than logging, of our precious sequoia forests:

Senator Barbara Boxer  
1700 Montgomery St. # 240  
San Francisco, CA 94111  
Phone: (415) 403-0100  
Fax: (415) 956-6701

Senator Dianne Feinstein  
One Post St. # 2450

San Francisco, CA 94104  
Phone: (415) 393-0707  
Fax: (415) 393-0710

Visit these websites for more information about our analysis of the DEIS:  
<http://sequoianet.org/>  
<http://www.sierraclub.org/ca/sequoia/>

See images of Giant Sequoia National Monument clearcuts from space at:  
<http://terraserver.homeadvisor.msn.com/image.aspx?t=1&s=14&x=112&y=1250&z=11&w=1>

If you would like to receive email alerts regarding the Giant Sequoia National Monument, please write to [carla.cloer@sierraclub.org](mailto:carla.cloer@sierraclub.org) or Sequoia Task Force, P.O. Box 3543, Visalia CA 93278, with your email address.

**Carla Cloer has been working to protect the giant sequoias for decades. She lives in Visalia, not far from the Giant Sequoia National Monument.**

**Editor's note: Heartfelt thanks to those of you who wrote to the Forest Service this year and asked for true protection of the giant sequoias. As of press time, we had received copies of more than 100 letters from concerned citizens.**

# Plumas and Lassen National Forests slated for devastating "Administrative Study" logging plan

by Jason Swartz

**T**he Forest Service plans to log more than 183,000 acres of the northern Sierra Nevada, allegedly as part of an experiment on the effects of various fuels reduction activities. The proposed "Administrative Study" project is inspired by the Herger-Feinstein Quincy Library Group Forest Recovery Act (QLG) passed in 1998.

Most conservationists opposed the QLG plan because it promoted an enormous increase in logging and subjected the management of a vast amount of public land to the narrow interests of a small group. The plan is also in serious conflict with the Sierra Nevada Framework, approved in 2001. When the Framework was approved, the Forest Service called for a study on the impact of logging on old-growth forest ecosystems and their dependent species in the QLG region. However, the Forest Service has gone beyond the limits of what a proposed experiment should encompass.

The "study" would log more than 285 square miles, with 17 square miles of small clearcuts. It would build 160 miles of new roads in sensitive watersheds including at least one run of chinook salmon. It would also allow the cutting of trees up to 34" in diameter, much more than the Framework allows. The project would log in 13 percent of the known California spotted owl sites in the entire Sierra Nevada, without designating any non-logging "control" areas for scientific comparison. In the end, close to 30,000 acres of habitat would be logged, heavily impacting the remaining old-growth forest available to the owl and other declining species such as the northern goshawk, Pacific fisher, and American marten.

The experiment's alleged goals are to study how logging affects old-growth species, fire regimes, and forest ecology,



Del Williams



**Above: a 60" stump after logging on the Plumas National Forest. Left: the spotted owl, which needs old-growth forest to survive.**

This experiment creates such a grave threat to the forests of the northern Sierra Nevada that CWC has included it in our 2003 *10 Most*

even though scientists have already determined that logging and road construction increase habitat fragmentation, watershed degradation, and fire severity. While the Forest Service states that it will conduct long-term research on the effects of the experiment, they will more likely complete the logging and then claim they don't have sufficient funds for the appropriate post-logging monitoring.

*Threatened Wild Places* report (see pages 8 and 9). A draft environmental impact statement for the "Administrative Study" was expected to be released in March 2003. Details on the plan can be found on the Plumas National Forest website at [www.r5.fs.fed.us/plumas](http://www.r5.fs.fed.us/plumas) or by calling (530) 283-5549.

**Jason Swartz is the California Wilderness Coalition's Public Lands Policy Analyst.**



# Conservationists protest Duncan Canyon logging proposal

by Jason Swartz

**O**n January 6, 2003, several conservation organizations including the California Wilderness Coalition appealed the Forest Service's "restoration" plan for Duncan Canyon. Under current law, higher echelons of the Forest Service must now consider our protest of the proposal.

The plan is a massive commercial logging campaign disguised by the false rhetoric of ecological restoration. The "Red Star Restoration Project" was developed by the Tahoe National Forest after the Star Fire of 2001 burned 17,500 acres. Approximately 4,300 acres of the burn area lies within the heart of the Duncan Canyon Roadless Area.

Duncan Canyon is one of our last areas of wild, unlogged forests. A large portion of the roadless area has been proposed for wilderness designation in the California Wild Heritage Act. Instead of promoting a plan to reduce surface fuels in this intact ecosystem, the Forest Service has formulated its so-called restoration activities as the removal of the largest, most fire-resistant trees on the landscape. The proposed plan would also leave behind the smaller fuels that are the most likely to feed hazardous forest fires. By focusing its limited funding on large-scale wilderness logging, the Forest Service is failing in its duty to protect communities and human lives from the threat of catastrophic wildfires.

When we consider that most of the logging would occur within the Duncan Canyon Roadless Area, it is clear that the Tahoe National Forest has no intention of upholding the Forest Service's Roadless Area Conservation Rule. Yet, in December of 2002, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals reinstated the Roadless Rule (see

article on page 16), reaffirming that areas like Duncan Canyon must be protected from commercial logging projects proposed under the guise of fuels reduction.

In response to the Forest Service's misrepresentation of a logging plan as restoration, the California Wilderness Coalition, Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign, Sierra Club-Mother Lode Chapter, Forest Issues Group, American River Wildlands, Sierra

regulation and policy that are cited by the appeal are (1) A violation of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule as reinstated by the Ninth Circuit Court, (2) Multiple violations of the National Environment Policy Act, including segmentation of environmental analysis, as well as failure to provide accurate scientific information, to consider road-related impacts, to adequately respond to public comments, and to adequately assess cumu-



Jim Rose

**Conservation groups have filed an appeal in hopes of stopping the proposal to log some of the last old-growth forest in the Central Sierra.**

Foothills Audubon Society, American Lands Alliance, and The Wilderness Society filed a notice of appeal to the record of decision and final environmental impact statement of the proposed project. We intend to see the Duncan Canyon Roadless Area and the entire Star Fire landscape restored through ecologically sound management. The violations of law,

**By focusing its limited funding on large-scale wilderness logging, the Forest Service is failing in its duty to protect communities and human lives from the threat of catastrophic wildfires.**

lative impacts, and (3) violations of the National Forest Management Act, including failure to assess cumulative impacts to management indicator species, to monitor populations of indicator species, and to follow the existing forest plan as amended by the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (Framework).

As we await the results of the appeal, we hope and expect that these truly rare stands of old-growth mixed-conifer forest will be protected from short-sighted, profit-driven plans to plunder a unique and pristine roadless area.

**Jason Swartz is the California Wilderness Coalition's Public Lands Policy Analyst.**

# Federal judges rule in favor of roadless areas

by Ryan Henson

**T**he Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals recently overruled challenges against President Clinton's Roadless Area Conservation Rule. The roadless policy is now the law—unless logging, mining, or other development interests appeal to the Supreme Court, or President Bush proposes a policy to take its place. However, the Roadless Area Conservation Rule will be enforced by the Forest Service for months and possibly even years while these challenges are advanced.

## How it was created

In October 1999, then-President Clinton proposed to “protect ... priceless, back-country lands” in our national forests. Specifically, the President directed the Forest Service to prepare a plan protecting our remaining national forest roadless areas.

Thousands of people attended public meetings hosted by the Forest Service, and citizens wrote more than 1.5 million letters and postcards in response to the draft plan. A majority demanded that the draft be changed to provide stronger protection for all of our nation's roadless areas.

The vast amount of public com-

ment on the Roadless Area Conservation Rule made it the second most commented-on federal regulation in history.

The Forest Service responded to this unprecedented public outcry. The final version of the plan prohibited most types of logging and all forms of road construction in roadless areas. Unfortunately, it contained some significant loopholes threatening roadless areas with off-road vehicle use, mining, and “salvage” logging (the cutting of supposedly dead, dying, or diseased trees). Still, the Roadless Rule is a historic policy that will help protect these irreplaceable wild areas.

## Rule overturned under unusual circumstances

During the 2000 election, President Bush made clear his opposition to the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. While it's no surprise he undermined it once he took office, he did so in a surprising way.

The rule was challenged in court by the state of Idaho, logging companies, and other anti-conservation interests. Under the law, the White House must defend federal policies like the Roadless Rule in court. Opponents argued that there had not been enough public involvement in the creation of the

policy. Given the unprecedented public input that had been gathered, federal lawyers should have easily defeated this argument. However, the Bush Administration simply capitulated. As a result, an injunction was issued against the Roadless Rule.

Fortunately, conservationists were also defending the Roadless Rule and they appealed the case to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco. In December, the three-judge panel issued a strongly worded ruling with a 2-1 vote in favor of Clinton's Roadless Conservation Area Rule. The ruling states, in part:

“Given the importance of roadless lands as a resource and the ease with which they may be irretrievably damaged, and the amount of forest land already crossed by roads...a near total ban on further road construction in the remaining and precious roadless areas within our national forests is not the drastic measure that the plaintiffs make it out to be.”

While the policy is no substitute for designating roadless areas as fully protected wilderness areas, it is nevertheless a tremendous step forward. We do expect a full-scale assault on it in the coming months, but in the meantime, it offers vital protections.

**Ryan Henson is the California Wilderness Coalition's Policy Director.**

<i>Clinton proposes to “protect ... back-country lands.” Directs Forest Service Chief Michael Dombeck to prepare plan protecting remaining roadless areas.</i>	<i>Forest Service issues draft plan; more than one million people ask that it be strengthened.</i>	<i>Forest Service issues final plan, which prohibits road-building and most types of logging, but has significant loopholes.</i>	<i>President Clinton approves Forest Service Roadless Area Conservation Rule.</i>	<i>Bush Administration issues notice delaying implementation of Roadless Area Conservation Rule nationwide.</i>	<i>Injunction issued against rule after being challenged in court and left undefended by Bush Administration. Immediately appealed by conservation groups.</i>	<i>Appeal heard by Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.</i>	<i>Ninth Circuit Court rules in favor of Roadless Conservation Rule.</i>
October 1999	May 2000	November 2000	January 2001	February 2001	May 2001	October 2001	December 2002



# Forest Service's plans will render the Sierra Nevada Framework meaningless

by Jason Swartz

**T**he Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (also called the Framework) is the result of over a decade of planning and analysis by the Forest Service with over \$23 million invested in the process. The Framework was established to preserve old forests, protect the California spotted owl, and reduce the risk of fire to communities. Unveiled in 2001, it was the Forest Service's first effort to apply a flexible strategy to reduce wildfire risk by utilizing several types of fuels reduction techniques: prescribed burning, thinning, brush removal, and reduction of surface fuels. It has received acclaim from scientists and conservationists due to the balance struck between old forest protection and reduction of fire risk.

Unfortunately, even this comprehensive, widely supported conservation measure is not safe from the exploitation of the Bush Administration. After a year and a half review by the Forest Service, a final review report was released on March 6. The review takes a giant step backwards and grants Regional Forester Jack Blackwell the authority to allow maximum logging throughout the Sierra with minimal public input or regulatory control. The Forest Service alleges that the increase in logging is essential for producing the revenues that will allow the clearing of hazardous fuels that provoke forest fires, ignoring that many of these hazardous fuels are remnants of previous logging. A few examples of this perverse ideology can be found in the Tahoe National Forest (see page 15), and the Giant Sequoia National Monument (see pages 12 and 13).

The amended plan would call for the logging of 450 million board feet per year. This is three times the amount logged in the Sierra last year, and twice the amount logged in the late 1990s before the Framework was adopted. The



Carla Cloer

**The "Three Sisters," pictured here, were surrounded by other giant sequoias and ancient pines as part of the Black Mountain sequoia grove in the Sequoia National Forest until they were isolated by a clearcut in 1986. The Bush Administration is trying to pave the way for more such logging by dismantling the Sierra Nevada Framework.**

Forest Service would allow the logging of trees up to 30" in diameter in old-forest emphasis areas, which have a current size limit of 12". This limit on tree size had been established in order to protect the vital habitat of the imperiled California spotted owl.

Other changes to the Framework proposed by the Forest Service: loosening restrictions on grazing designed to protect wildlife habitat for species like the rare Yosemite toad and willow flycatcher, increasing the amount of tree cover that can be removed, and dropping protections for spotted owl foraging areas.

The Regional Forester will officially propose these changes in late March.

Soon after, the agency will publish a notice of intent to prepare a draft supplement to the 2001 final environmental impact statement. Release of the draft supplement will be followed by a 90-day public comment period. The Forest Service expects to publish a new record of decision in fall of 2003.

These overt attempts to dismantle the Framework without ever attempting to implement it are likely to lead the Forest Service to court. Conservationists will sue to protect the California spotted owl and the Sierra Nevada's last old-growth forests.

**Jason Swartz is the California Wilderness Coalition's Public Lands Policy Analyst.**

## Desert and north coast planning efforts launched

by **Pete Nichols**

**T**he California Wildlands Project continues to develop a conservation vision for California. Project staff ended the last half of 2002 by creating a strong network of partnerships for the implementation of the Sierra Nevada and Central Coast Wildlands Conservation Plans. Currently, several of our partners are utilizing the information contained in these plans to assist in the development of their own conservation strategies. California Wildlands Project staff are working in the field in these regions to identify pilot projects, such as the preservation of habitat linkages, to demonstrate the effectiveness of protecting the component parts of a wildlands network.

We are now gearing up for the development of new conservation plans for the California desert, north coast and Central Valley. The initiation and completion of these regional analyses will move the California Wilderness Coalition closer to realizing a statewide conservation vision for California.

As a component of the California Wildlands Project's statewide wildlands planning effort, the Desert Wildlands Project will identify critical habitat and habitat linkages for focal species (e.g., desert tortoise, arroyo toad, and bighorn sheep), and will chart a science-based network of wildlands that



Cleveland National Forest

**The endangered arroyo toad has lost more than 75 percent of its habitat to development and dam construction. The Desert Wildlands Project will help keep this imperiled species from slipping over the edge.**



Pacific Biodiversity Institute

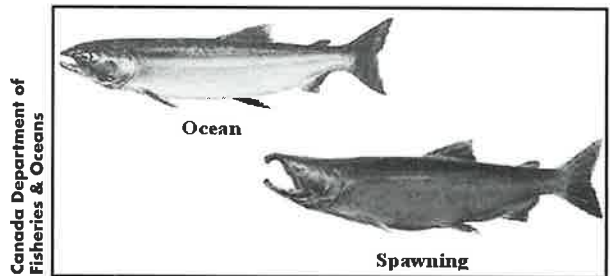
**The North Coast Wildlands Conservation Plan will help protect the undisturbed, dense forests that the shy Pacific fisher needs for its survival.**

are necessary for the maintenance of biodiversity in the region. The maps and data that result from this analysis will assist activists, land managers, and local planners in protecting the ecological integrity of California's unique desert ecoregion.

The North Coast Wildlands Conservation Plan will focus on protecting the last large core habitat areas and habitat linkages in the north coast region. In addition to developing a wildlands reserve network for the region, much of the focus in the North Coast Wildlands Conservation Plan will be on integrating a "rewilding" restoration component into the overall conservation plan. Much of this region has been fragmented and degraded by poor land-use practices in the past and a rewilding approach to begin the process of healing these wounds is

needed. With this in mind, the North Coast Wildlands Conservation Plan will identify habitat for many terrestrial species that are currently in peril within the region (e.g., northern spotted owl, Pacific fisher), as well as the habitat of threatened aquatic species such as the coho salmon. Combining data concerning present and historic wild runs of these salmon will provide the planning team with an indication of watershed health and will enable project staff to work with partners to identify priority watersheds for protection and restoration in the region.

In the Central Valley, plans are still underway to conduct a wildlands effort that will form the final piece of the statewide wildlands vision. Currently, a steering committee has been formed to



Canada Department of Fisheries & Oceans

**Wild coho salmon have been affected by competition from fishery salmon, as well as the degradation of the old-growth forest streams on which they depend.**

help develop this conservation planning effort. The Central Valley Habitat Conservation Symposium will be a two-day intensive conference bringing together partners interested in habitat conservation in the region. Participants will network, share information, and help create a unified conservation plan for habitat protection and the future of the valley.

**Pete Nichols is the Science Coordinator for the California Wildlands Project.**

# Guzzlers in wilderness: not a recipe for success

by Pat Flanagan

In December 2002, the California Wilderness Coalition's Keith Hammond and Pat Flanagan visited Vern Bleich, senior wildlife biologist for the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), to discuss the department's long term plans for bighorn sheep management in the California desert. CDFG manages sheep populations throughout California on both state and federal land.

Both CWC and CDFG would like to see the return of healthy herds of bighorn sheep to our desert mountains where they previously occurred naturally. However, we have real problems with CDFG's approach, which depends heavily on installing artificial water developments called "game guzzlers," many in designated wilderness areas, without scientific basis or environmental analysis.

Guzzlers typically include dams or pipes that divert spring waters or floodwaters to fill large tanks, which then are piped to artificial watering holes to create permanent water sources for wildlife—often where no natural surface waters previously existed. There is not adequate scientific documentation to prove that guzzlers benefit sheep survival. There are, however, documented instances where guzzlers have failed and caused the deaths of numerous animals by drowning or disease.

In addition, guzzlers can artificially increase animal numbers beyond the natural carrying capacity of the surrounding land, can alter hydrology, and can act as magnets for predators, potentially threatening both the bighorn and other critters like the endangered desert tortoise. Guzzlers have additional impacts on wilderness areas, because CDFG generally insists on maintaining them and refilling them manually during dry spells by the use of motor vehicles, which creates permanent vehicle routes and attracts illegal vehicle trespass into wilderness.

Since a 1969 agreement between CDFG and hunting groups, more than 70 guzzlers have been installed in the

California desert. In 2002, BLM documents revealed that CDFG is planning to install scores—maybe hundreds—more guzzlers, including many in wilderness areas.

BLM's Northern and Eastern Colorado Desert (NECO) Plan Amendment proposes 87 new guzzlers, including 22 in wilderness; BLM is currently considering installing two in the Sheephole Valley Wilderness on an "emergency" basis, although Bleich conceded that there is no emergency at present.

Over several hours, Bleich and CWC staff discussed the troubling history of desert sheep, the lengthy efforts to restore their numbers using supplemental water, and the regionwide management plans in preparation. Sheep populations suffered a crippling blow during the early mining days. Miners depleted or destroyed springs throughout the mountain ranges. The loss of natural water and the hunting of sheep for food wiped out entire populations in certain ranges.

With naturally fragmented populations, sheep have had difficulty recovering to their former ranges. Road and interstate highway construction has permanently disrupted sheep movement through traditional territory. CDFG's management techniques concentrate on conserving traditional habitats and forcing colonization to new habitats through re-introduction. CDFG considers the installation of guzzlers and the enhancement of natural springs and waterholes to be key components of sheep management. However, sheep populations are also known to survive without supplemental water and, especially in wilderness, CWC believes they should be left to achieve numbers compatible with natural conditions. We also would like to see tamarisk removed and other improvements of natural waters tried before artificial plumbing is installed anywhere, especially in wilderness.

Bleich showed us a few years of guzzler monitoring data, none of it recent—monitoring was discontinued years ago. Some guzzlers had been



Pat Flanagan

**Guzzlers, like this one located in the Cady Mountains proposed wilderness, are scientifically unproven to help bighorn sheep.**

installed but never used by sheep. If ever conservationists and the Department of Fish and Game are to come to agreement, then scientific studies must support the need for guzzlers and provide the rationale for placement of each guzzler, in or out of wilderness.

Our concerns are that installing guzzlers in wilderness can actually harm wildlife, artificially transform ecosystems that by law are supposed to remain natural, and degrade the quality and the very meaning of wilderness areas. Without performing detailed environmental analysis to justify the need for and siting of these guzzlers, CDFG's plan would violate land use plans, wilderness statutes, and California and federal environmental law. Worse, it could waste a lot of money and spoil a lot of wilderness areas without even helping bighorn sheep.

Until the Department of Fish and Game can provide the necessary science and monitoring data to support their assertions that guzzlers are a necessary component of bighorn sheep management, we cannot support guzzler installation in wilderness areas.

**Pat Flanagan is the California Wilderness Coalition's Desert Field Organizer.**

# Field trip to Surprise Canyon and the Briggs Mine proposed expansion area

by **Pat Flanagan**

In mid-December of 2002, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) took interested parties on a day-long field trip into the Panamint Mountains to experience a study in contrasts, between the serene western slope proposed for mining exploration and the contested off-road vehicle "route" up the beautiful watered Surprise Canyon.

In 2001, natural floods scoured the off-road vehicle route out of Surprise Canyon, and the BLM has left it closed to vehicles since. Formerly, off-road vehicles literally winched their way up the narrow canyon's creek, spilling oil into its waters and disturbing desert wildlife. The BLM, in partnership with the National Park Service, is now deciding the future of the canyon.

The purpose of the field trip was to learn as much as possible about the area, while walking to the base of the famous waterfalls.

At the end of the morning we could only reaffirm our question: is this rare desert riparian system, a precious resource in the life history of organisms from migratory songbirds to resident bighorn sheep, compatible with the continuing frantic disturbance of vehicles designed to overcome all obstacles?

In stark contrast to Surprise Canyon, the afternoon's visit was to the proposed CR Briggs exploration site, on wilderness-quality lands north of the company's current open-pit, cyanide heap-leach gold mining operation. The company proposes to carve 20 or more miles of new exploratory roads across the mountain face, in preparation for a new open-pit cyanide mine. Conservation groups oppose this project because it would disrupt wildlife habitat and potential wilderness and would have a terrible permanent visual impact on this gateway to Death Valley National Park,



Pat Flanagan

**This peaceful waterfall in Surprise Canyon may be re-opened to off-road extremists who trample this rare desert riparian habitat.**

and because of the massive destruction that would be caused by the open-pit mine. Extensive discussion with BLM officials confirmed that they don't consider visual impact a cause for project denial; the mining company may begin bulldozing at any time.

## *Surprise Canyon*

Please express your desire that Surprise Canyon continue to be undisturbed by vehicle traffic. Write to:

Linda Hansen, Manager  
BLM, California Desert District Office  
22835 Calle San Juan de los Lagos  
Moreno Valley, CA 92553

Superintendent J.T. Reynolds  
Death Valley National Park  
P. O. Box 579  
Death Valley, CA 92328  
Fax: (760) 786-3283  
DEVA\_Superintendent@nps.gov

Please send a copy of your letter to:  
Pat Flanagan  
California Wilderness Coalition  
6427-F Mesquite Ave.



Tom Budlong

**These roads were created in 1994 for the current Briggs Mine. Roads for the new mine would leave deep scars on the beautiful Panamint Range.**

29 Palms, CA 92277  
paflanagan@earthlink.net

## *Briggs Mine exploration*

The BLM Ridgecrest Office has approved the proposed exploration, claiming that the impacts will be insignificant. However, the State Mining and Geology Board has recently proposed permanent regulations requiring the backfilling and site recontouring of new open pit mines. If these regulations are made permanent, it is likely that the Briggs mine would not be economical and exploration would cease.

Please write Governor Davis expressing your support for these permanent backfilling regulations:

Governor Gray Davis  
State Capitol Building  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Phone: (916) 445-2841  
Fax: (916) 445-4633  
governor@governor.ca.gov

**Pat Flanagan is the California Wilderness Coalition's Desert Field Organizer.**



# Inyo National Forest moves to protect two desert creeks from illegal off-roading and route construction

by Paul McFarland

In the arid northern Mojave Desert, water is life. For nearly every desert creature, the rare green islands around springs or seeps make living possible in this extreme environment. On the southern slopes of the White Mountains, approximately 20 miles east of Bishop, California, the Inyo National Forest is finally moving to ensure that this fragile triangle of water, streamside vegetation, and desert wildlife is protected from off-road vehicle damage.

For over a decade, local citizens and conservationists have brought attention to ongoing off-road vehicle damage on Birch and Furnace Creeks, two unique and beautiful examples of spring-fed desert forests. Two years ago, a local mapper checking the boundaries of the citizens' proposed White Mountains Wilderness turned up even more evidence. By Furnace Creek, all-terrain vehicles and motorcycles had punched through more than a mile of desert wetlands, leaving huge mud bogs, deep ruts and smashed vegetation. The scene on Birch Creek was even worse: sometime that spring, someone had used a chainsaw to cut through mature willows, cottonwoods, aspens and birch trees along every riparian section of the overgrown four-mile route.

According to a 1999 Forest Service letter to the California State Off-Highway Vehicles Stakeholders group, the routes up Birch and Furnace Creek had washed out over two decades ago, and rebuilding them would not be "a cost-effective use of federal or state funds." Unfortunately, the natural closure of these canyon-bottom routes was not enough to keep drivers out.

In January 2003, the Inyo National Forest finally began the overdue process of closing these illegal and damaging routes. Stating that the ongoing damage to Furnace Creek was not compliant



Paul McFarland

**Off-road vehicle damage in Furnace Creek. The Inyo National Forest has agreed to construct barricades closing the canyon to illegal off-road vehicle use.**

with the Inyo's Forest Plan or the Sierra Nevada Framework guidelines, the Forest Service issued an emergency closure order, while the Bureau of Land Management, which manages the access route into the canyon, will work to construct a defensible barrier near the canyon mouth. Acknowledging that there is no legal route up Birch Creek, the Inyo will construct barricades at both the top and bottom portions of the canyon to halt illegal and damaging route construction.

Only constant vigilance will ensure that the Forest Service and the BLM follow through on their promises and finally act to protect these creeks. Thanks to the Center for Biological Diversity, the Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society, the State Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Commission, and local conservationists for continuing to provide this vigilant oversight.

**Paul McFarland is the Conservation Director for the Friends of the Inyo.**

## Commission denies \$1.1M due to poor management

In a historic vote for sustainable land management, the State of California Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Commission in January turned down a \$1.1 million Bureau of Land Management (BLM) funding request for Algodones (Imperial) Dunes management. The BLM has been under fire from the commission and conservationists for poor management of off-road vehicles in the dunes and proposing a plan to roll back endangered species protections.



**Algodones Dunes sunflower**

The Desert Protective Council, Center for Biological Diversity, California Wilderness Coalition, and other conservation groups recommended the commission pull funding after BLM proposed to open 85 percent of the dunes to off-road vehicles. The dunes host an amazing community of rare and imperiled endemic species, including the Peirson's milkvetch, flat-tailed horned lizard, desert tortoise, and Algodones Dunes sunflower.

BLM was fully funded \$292,000 by the commission for law enforcement. Overall, the agency received 21% of its original \$1.4 million request. The unfunded portion of the agency's request would have gone toward implementing the agency's plan to open the majority of the dunes to off-road vehicles.

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Yosemite Regional Conservation Trust; Oakland



*Thanks to a hero*

On December 4, the wilderness movement lost the physical presence of a passionate, wise and deeply committed man. Doug Pressel had been volunteering his time to build support in the Sacramento Valley for the California Wild Heritage Act, and his former job as an advertising executive gave him valuable skills that he generously contributed to the effort to protect the



Doug Pressel

wild. The community of Chico and countless advocates for wild places will greatly miss Doug, though his spirit will bless our efforts and lives forever.

*Welcome Anne and Catania*

CWC would like to welcome its new board members: Catania Galván and Anne Schneider. A specialist in multicultural environmental outreach, Catania has worked closely with the Latino community. Anne, a partner in a Sacramento law firm, specializes in the field of water law. She also has much experience with issues of project permits and groundwater rights. CWC welcomes their collective experience

and looks forward to working with them.

*CWC wish list*

The California Wilderness Coalition is working hard to protect California's wild places...on a shoestring budget. Here are some items that would greatly help us fight for wilderness:

- Frequent Flyer miles (40,000 miles allows a staff person to go to Washington, D.C. and advocate for wilderness)
- Reliable 4WD vehicle or Jeep
- Digital camera
- Lightweight RGB digital projector
- Nikon or other high-quality slide scanner

ENDANGERED SPECIES PROFILE

**The California Condor**

by Brooke Byrd

**W**ith a wingspan of almost 10 feet, the California condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*) is the largest raptor in North America. Needing large, open tracts of land for foraging, condors subsist mainly on large carcasses such as deer, cattle, and marine mammals. They eat only carrion, which they find with their incredible eyesight or by following other scavengers.

As a result of human encroachment, pesticides and lead poisoning, as well as loss of their prey base, condors have been perched on the edge of extinction. At one point in the 1980s, only nine individuals were known to exist in the wild. As a result of a \$40 million captive-breeding program, while still endangered, condors are slowly recovering. As of October 2002, there were 202 total California condors, with 73 living in the wild.

With the first wild condors successfully laying eggs (no chicks have yet survived), and many more just reaching sexual maturity, now is a very

important time for this species. Today wild condors make their home in the southern Los Padres National Forest on the central California coast, relying on the steep cliffs and rocky outcroppings to place their nests. They can often be spotted soaring near the water on thermals, foraging along the beach, or sunning with their huge wings spread open. Condors have also been re-introduced near Big Sur, California and in the Grand Canyon of Arizona, and biologists hope that these populations will begin reproducing very soon.

Condors are incredible fliers, often traveling 150 miles a day to forage. They have never been known to attack a living animal and are vital parts of the ecosystem. Very intelligent and highly social, California condors will often roost in a communal group. They will entertain themselves and are highly inquisitive, especially the immature birds. They often mate for life and have special bonding rituals. Fastidiously clean birds, they bathe and preen after meals.

The recent legislation that created additions to the Ventana, Silver Peak, and Pinnacles Wilderness Areas was an important step in the recovery of these



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

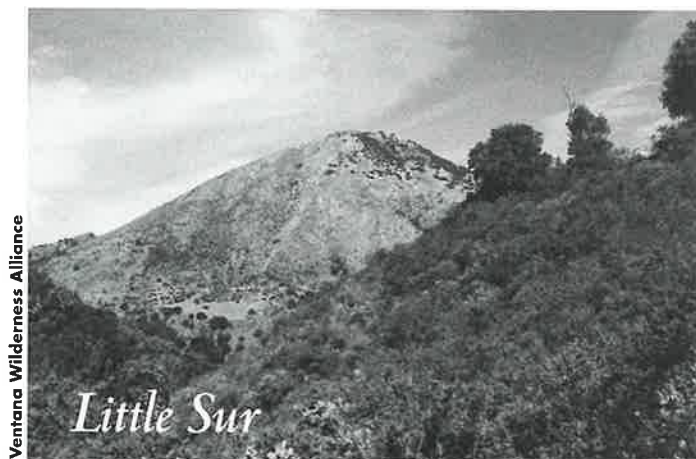
**The December 2002 legislation that created additions to the Ventana, Silver Peak, and Pinnacles Wildernesses helped preserve habitat for the majestic condor.**

majestic birds, protecting valuable and vital habitat. However, another crucial area is under attack. The Forest Service is proposing oil and gas leasing in wild roadless areas of the Los Padres National Forest, which are within the territory of at least 20 condors, and are the site of the re-introduced condors' first breeding attempts. If these areas are opened to oil drilling, the struggling condor population will be negatively affected by human disturbance and loss of habitat. Condors could be pushed completely over the edge to extinction.

**Brooke Byrd is the California Wilderness Coalition's Communications Intern.**

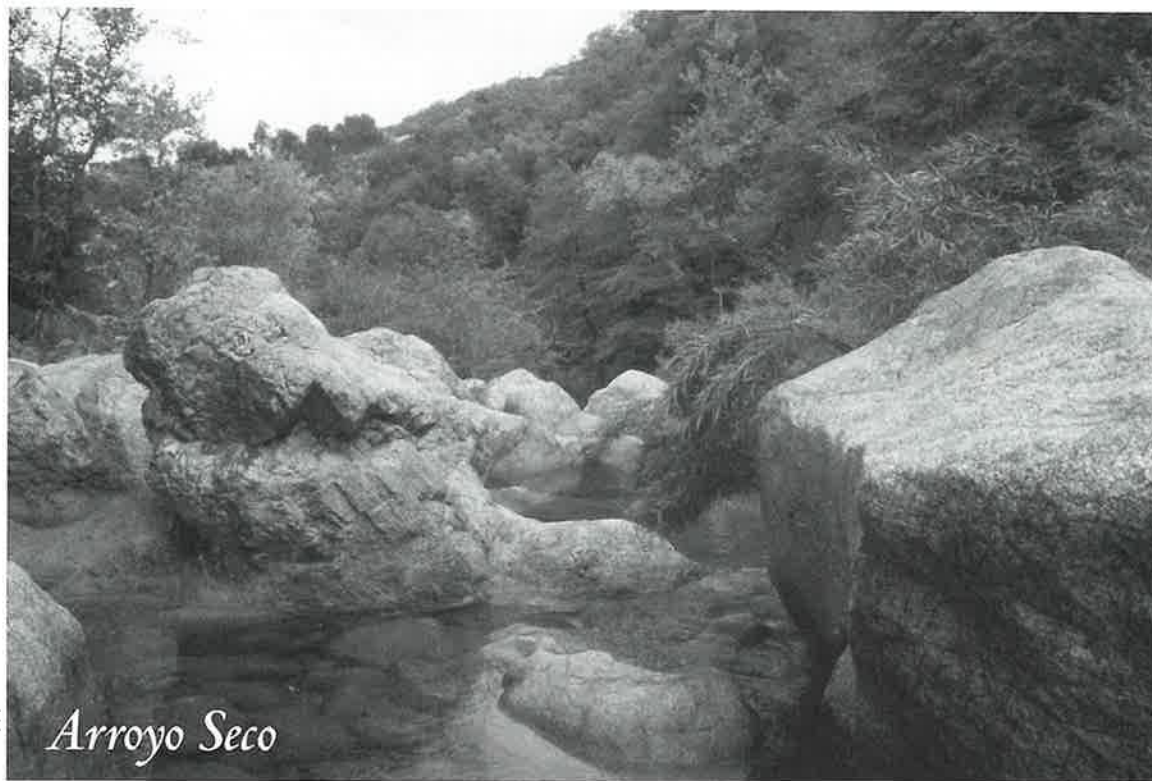
## A VISIT TO NEW WILDERNESS

On December 19, 2002, President Bush signed the Big Sur Wilderness and Conservation Act into law. The act protects more than 54,000 acres of California's central coast as wilderness, providing both a refuge for visiting people and a home for many species of wildlife, including the California condor (see previous page). Featured here are pictures of the new additions to the Ventana and Silver Peak Wildernesses, as well as directions to some trailheads so you can get out and enjoy them! For more trail information, see <http://www.ventanawild.org/trails/trail.html>.



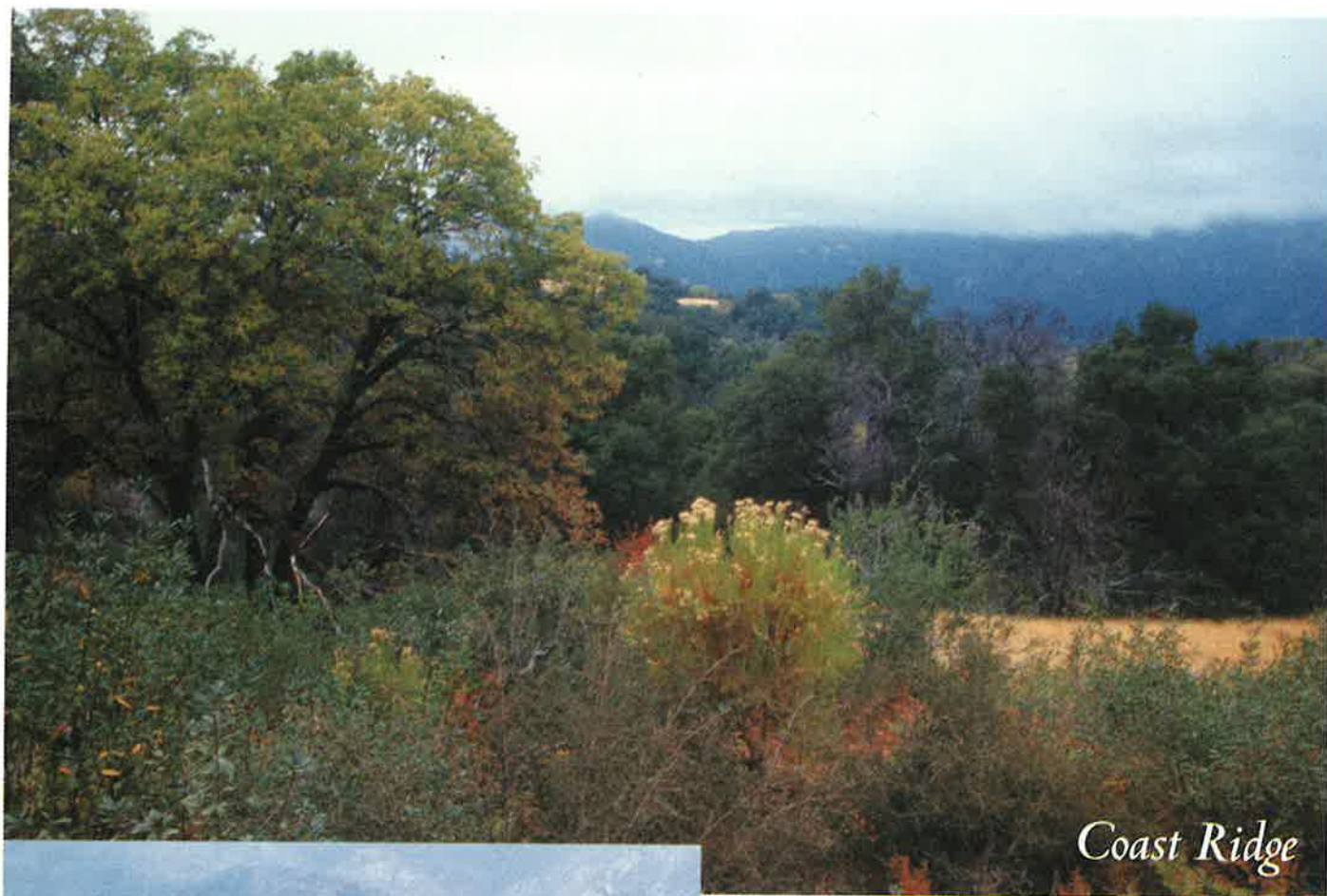
Ancient redwood forest lines this canyon where the Little Sur River carves its way through limestone bedrock.

To reach the recently created Little Sur addition to the Ventana Wilderness, take Highway One 21 miles south from the Carmel River Bridge to the Old Coast Road, turn left and travel 3.5 miles to the trailhead of the Little Sur Trail.

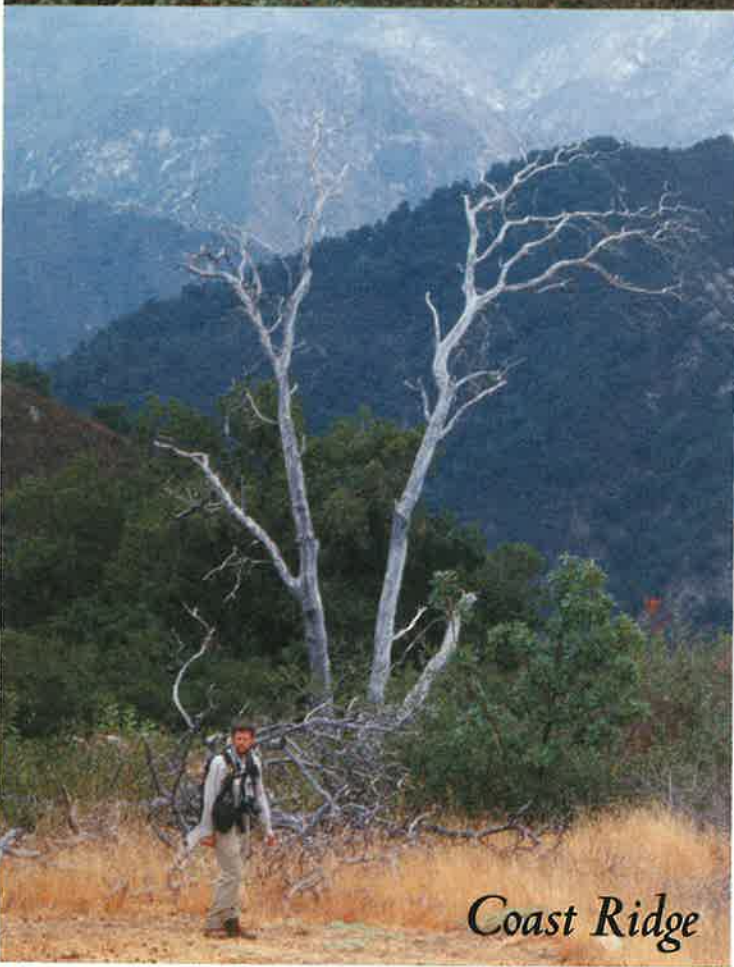


The Anastasia Canyon Trail takes the visitor through open meadows and forest with rare Santa Lucia Fir found on the upper slopes. Beautiful oak woodlands like those shown here are also a part of the landscape. One couldn't ask for a more peaceful and relaxing setting.

To reach the Anastasia Canyon addition to the Ventana Wilderness: From Highway One, take Carmel Valley Road 23 miles to Cachagua Road, turn right and follow for 1.5 miles to Tassajara Road, turn left and follow 5 miles to the trailhead.



*Coast Ridge*



*Coast Ridge*



*Coast Ridge*



*Willow Creek*

All photos on this page by Jim Rose



## CALIFORNIA WILDERNESS COALITION

*The Voice for Wild California*

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## MEMBERSHIP

### Contributing to the Cause

The California Wilderness Coalition is, first and foremost, a community of people with common dreams. Whether our dreams are of scaling pristine peaks or waiting for the fish to bite on a glassy lake, knowing our grandchildren will have the chance to behold wildlife in its natural habitat or knowing simply that the habitat exists, we are bonded together by our passion for wilderness.

CWC provides the outlet to make our common dreams a reality, thanks to our community of members, activists, and supporters. As we step up our efforts to pass the California Wild Heritage Act, design a conservation blueprint for California, and defend our public lands from unwise uses, we need our network to be as wide and as deep as possible. Whether you're already a member of CWC, or are just learning about our coalition for the first time, there are many opportunities to strengthen your ties to our community.



Jim Rose

Fairy lanterns (*Calochortus*) in the Cache Creek proposed wilderness

### Volunteer

As a grassroots advocacy group, the activism of our supporters is essential to our success. Writing letters to public officials and local newspapers, attending public meetings, and leading hikes into potential wilderness areas are three ways to show your support for wilderness. In addition, our staff are always looking for volunteers and interns to lend a hand to our various programs and activities around the state. If you would like to receive information via email about volunteer opportunities in your neck of the woods, phone us at (530) 758-0380 or send a message to [info@calwild.org](mailto:info@calwild.org) including your name and zip code.

### Join the California Wilderness Coalition

The generosity of our members makes possible the protection of our state's last remaining wild places. Equally important, our membership demonstrates support for wilderness to those with the power to decide the future of our public lands. The more people we represent, the stronger our voice in California and in our nation's capital.

The CWC offers many levels of membership to serve the financial needs of our supporters. Members receive a subscription to the quarterly *Wilderness Record* and periodic wilderness alerts.

### Become a Wildland Advocate

Membership in our Wildland Advocates program represents the most significant opportunity to contribute to the protection of California wilderness. This committed group empowers the staff and volunteers of CWC to be effective in our efforts to safeguard these lands. Giving levels for Wildland Advocates start at \$250 per year. Please contact Michael Gelardi at (530) 758-0380 if you have questions or suggestions about giving to protect our wild heritage.



# SUPPORT YOUR CAUSE



**Sweatshirts:** Navy blue or forest green, full-color logo on the back and "Keep It Wild" on the sleeve.

Hoodies available in S to XXL, crew necks in L to XXL.

**T-shirts:** 100% organic cotton. White on a cobalt blue shirt, or in full color on a natural shirt.

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Item	Color	Size	No.	Price	Subtotal
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## Join the California Wilderness Coalition TODAY!

Your membership includes a subscription to our quarterly journal, the *Wilderness Record*, action alerts to keep you informed, and the opportunity for direct participation in our campaigns.

Enroll me as a new member of CWC. Enclosed is \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for my first year membership dues.

I am already a member. Here is a special contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to help the Coalition's work.

Contact me about volunteer opportunities.

I would like to pledge \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per month.

Method of payment:

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sp/03/wr



## Black Oak Proposed Wilderness

**Managing agency:** Tahoe National Forest.

**Size:** Approximately 12,160 acres.

**Location:** In Placer County, roughly 25 miles northwest of Auburn.

The Black Oak proposed wilderness contains old-growth forests that are home to California spotted owls. There are both Protected Activity Centers (PACs) and Spotted Owl Habitat Areas (SOHAs) designated in the North Fork of the Middle Fork American River corridor. Potential habitat is present for the bald eagle, the Pacific fisher, and pine

marten. The stream is remarkable botanically because of the presence of *Lewisia cantelowii* and *Lewisia serrata*, both extremely rare. *Lewisia serrata* is a Forest Service "sensitive" species found in only eight locations, four of which are on the North Fork of the Middle Fork of the American River.

This area also contains the famous Michigan Bluff to Last Chance Trail, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The North Fork of the Middle Fork American provides water for Folsom Reservoir, which is the municipal water supply for both Placer and Sacramento counties.



**CALIFORNIA  
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