

WILDERNESS *Record*

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CALIFORNIA WILDERNESS COALITION
WINTER 2004

Remote Modoc Plateau
gets a second chance

President signs
Unhealthy Forests bill

First steps for more
state wilderness

Will California's new Governor
protect lands from bogus highways?

The Diablo Range:
California's best kept secret

NORTHEAST CALIFORNIA: NEW WILDERNESS IN SIGHT



CALIFORNIA WILDERNESS COALITION

The Voice for Wild California

Staff

Executive Director

Mary L. Wells

Senior Field Organizer

Tina Andolina

Regional Outreach Organizer

Josh Buswell-Charkow

Administrative Assistant

Amanda Dranginis

Development Associate

Michael Gelardi

Communications Director

Keith Hammond

Policy Director

Ryan Henson

Desert Program Director

Bryn Jones

RS 2477 Field Organizer

Byron Kahr

Editor, Designer & GIS Specialist

Laura Kindsvater

California Wildlands

Project Coordinator

Alison Sterling Nichols

California Wildlands

Project Science Coordinator

Pete Nichols

Bookkeeper

Janice Stafford

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What's next for California?

With a presidential election on the horizon and a brand new governor for California, 2004 is going to be an interesting year for our public lands. Many Democratic presidential candidates have exemplary environmental records and propose significant new measures to increase conservation. No doubt, President Bush will think twice about some of his administration's more extreme development proposals in the coming year. It will be interesting to watch!

Last fall, the California political landscape was permanently changed with the first recall of a sitting governor and the election of Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. For conservationists, the first question asked is: Where will Governor Schwarzenegger come down on the environment?

Since the Governor has never held public office before, he has no track record for us to look to in order to anticipate his policies. His political appointments on the environment are encouraging. Governor Schwarzenegger has appointed long-time environmentalist Terry Tamminen to head up the California Environmental Protection Agency, which regulates our air and water quality and toxics control. Environmentalists have applauded this appointment.

It is the Resources Agency, though, which manages our public lands, parks, wildlife, and water resources, and Governor Schwarzenegger has appointed Mike Chrisman as Resources Secretary. Mr. Chrisman has been a Republican aide in Sacramento, worked for Southern California Edison, and is a partner in a farming operation. Mr. Chrisman has also served on some nonprofit boards and as the Vice President of the California Fish and Game Commission.

While Governor Davis occasionally vexed conservationists, his administration had a strong environmental record. Governor Davis's Resources Secretary, Mary Nichols, was particularly active defending California's federal wildlands, often crossing swords with the Bush Administration over its development proposals. Former Secretary Nichols wrote strongly worded letters to the Department of Interior informing it of California's opposition to Department proposals to end Wilderness Study Areas on Bureau of Land Management lands and to give away federal lands under the RS 2477 road loophole. We are hopeful that Secretary Chrisman also can stand up to the irresponsible management of our federal lands by the Bush Administration.

Ironically, just as there was a sea change in California politics, CWC launched our Golden State Wilderness Campaign to protect more of California's state-owned public lands as wilderness areas. Ryan Henson, CWC's Policy Director, will be heading up the campaign, and you can read more about it inside this issue. Right now we have the opportunity to designate 54,000 more acres of wilderness in Anza Borrego Desert State Park—one of the crown jewels of our state park system. Many other state lands are ripe for protection too. Despite the changes in Sacramento, the permanent protection of pristine lands as wilderness has always been a bipartisan issue. We're confident that we can be successful in designating wilderness on California's state lands, regardless of who is in Sacramento. Stay tuned for our progress!



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Our Mission

CWC's mission is to protect and restore California's wild places. CWC works toward a healthy future for California citizens and wild landscapes. That future is one where wilderness, wildlands, and biodiversity are core values for all Californians. These values generate a profound respect and appreciation for the state's mountains and rivers, coasts and deserts, allowing each person to develop deep relationships with wild nature. A commitment to conserve all roadless lands and native plants and animals in a functional network of protected areas becomes the basis of California law, policy, citizen ethics, and action. 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.

front cover photo:

The Tunnison Mountain area, which may soon be proposed as wilderness in a northeast California wilderness bill. Photo by Jim Rose.

back cover photo:

The White Mountains, California's largest proposed wilderness and a unique and fragile area. Photo by Jim Stinson.

California's remote Modoc Plateau gets a second chance

by Ryan Henson

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is seeking ideas from the public on how it should manage the almost million and a half acres it oversees in eastern Shasta, Lassen, Modoc, and eastern Plumas counties. The region, known as the Modoc Plateau, is characterized by vast grasslands, sagebrush flats, deep canyons, steep mountains, innumerable caves, and spires of volcanic rock. Herds of pronghorn antelope, Rocky Mountain elk, and mule deer graze this rugged landscape, while golden eagles fly above.

Over the years, roads have been constructed throughout the Modoc Plateau for mining, livestock grazing, utility development, and recreation. Despite this, the region still contains over 320,000 acres of wilderness-quality lands, from the cliffs of the 750-foot Pit River Canyon to the scenic Skedaddle Mountains.

In November, the California Wilderness Coalition, Defenders of Wildlife, and Sierra Club Shasta Group urged the BLM to protect threatened roadless areas in the



A quiet creek in the Skedaddle region



Sunset over the Skedaddle Mountains

region. Currently, there are two types of BLM roadless areas in California: places called "wilderness study areas" (WSAs) that are being managed by the BLM to maintain their wilderness values, and other roadless areas that still have no protection. In the past, in order to get a roadless area protected as a WSA, groups like the CWC met with the BLM and asked them to assess the wilderness values of a particular area. If the BLM concluded that it met certain criteria, then the BLM could designate it as a WSA and protect it for at least five years or until such time as Congress could decide whether it should be designated wilderness.

This process changed dramatically earlier this year when the state of Utah challenged the BLM's wilderness inventory procedures in order to thwart protection efforts in that state. The White House negotiated a

damaging court settlement with Utah that resulted in a prohibition on the creation of any new WSAs anywhere in the United States.



The BLM is currently deciding whether to manage the Skedaddle Flats and five other northeastern California areas to "preserve their wilderness character."

As a result of the settlement, conservationists can no longer assert that an area has wilderness values and then ask the BLM to either prove or disprove us; now the burden of proof is on us.

In northeastern California, the CWC and other groups submitted 107 pages of evidence supporting our contention that six currently unprotected roadless areas have wilderness values and should be protected. These areas provide habitat for elk and pronghorn and a refuge for the rare sage grouse, a declining species known for its complex pre-dawn mating dances.

It is essential that the BLM begin managing these and other parts of the Modoc Plateau as unique natural treasures. Your comments can help influence the preparation of a "resource management plan" that will guide the BLM's stewardship of this special region for at least the next decade.

What you can do

Please send a letter to:

Jeff Fontana
BLM, Eagle Lake Field Office
2950 Riverside Drive
Susanville, CA 96130

You can also fax your letter to (530) 257-4831. In your letter, please ask the BLM to include the following in its Northeast California Resource Management Plan:

- A commitment to manage Snowstorm Mountain, Shinn Mountain, Observation Peak, Skedaddle Flats, Skedaddle West, and Shaffer Mountain to preserve their wilderness character.
- A comprehensive review of potential new wild and scenic rivers, and a commitment to recommend for designation any streams that are found eligible.
- A commitment to confine vehicle use to only existing sanctioned routes, and to close those routes that are not essential for public or agency use.
- A plan for the creation of a network of foot and horse trails to meet the growing demand for non-motorized recreation.

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

Unhealthy logging law signed by Bush

Start of a new logging boom on public forests?

by **Keith Hammond**

Spooked by the worst wildfires in southern California history, Congress hastily passed forest thinning legislation in November, allowing President Bush to sign into law in December many of the worst features of his unhealthy "Healthy Forests Initiative." California's delegation played a major role, with Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Representative Richard Pombo (R-Tracy) among the main negotiators of the deal.

While there is some good in the new law, on balance it fails to address California's real fire management needs, and makes it easier for timber companies to log the big trees off our national forests while leaving behind highly flammable small trees and brush. It also makes it more difficult for citizens to watchdog federal forest management and prevent egregious abuses.

On the plus side, Senator Feinstein won language requiring forest managers to protect old-growth forests from thinning projects (although subject to the bill's general loopholes for trees "threatened by fire insects or disease" which may make it difficult to enforce). And the bill was amended before passage to ensure that at least half the federal monies for the legislation will go to protecting communities, instead of to logging companies for logging big trees in wild places. This is a real step forward in mandatory allocation of money to places where people are; it was a key principle of Senator Boxer's much better fire bill which the Republican leadership otherwise never allowed to see the light of day.

But overall, this Unhealthy Forests bill is a timber company's delight. Forget that most fire danger to people comes from brush and small trees on private land around communities, especially in southern California—this bill targets only public lands, and often promotes the logging of large fire-resistant trees instead of real hazardous fuel reduction projects.

The bill significantly limits environmental review and public input on forest thinning projects. It makes it harder for citizens to stop phony projects that are really just logging as usual, because for the first time ever Congress gutted portions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), limiting environmental reviews on thinning projects—a gap that thousands of logging trucks may soon be driving through. Equally ominous, it limits federal judges' power to delay illegal projects. On balance, it's a pro-industry, anti-democratic law in keeping with the Bush Administration's affinity for big corporations and mega-millionaires at the expense of the public and the environment.

Long before this year's fires erupted, California leaders from both parties begged the White House for emergency funding to cut hazardous trees in southern California, but got no reply. When the deadly fires came, we were fortunate they were put out before they hit the biggest tinderbox of all. The drought- and beetle-killed pine forests on the San Bernardino National Forest are another fire disaster just waiting to happen.

One good thing we hope comes out of all this is that maybe southern California forests will finally get more of California's share of federal fuels reduction money—because that's where the most people are threatened by extreme fires. Moving the thinning money south may be our best hope of limiting the dishonest logging of big trees in the backcountry under the new Unhealthy Forests law.

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

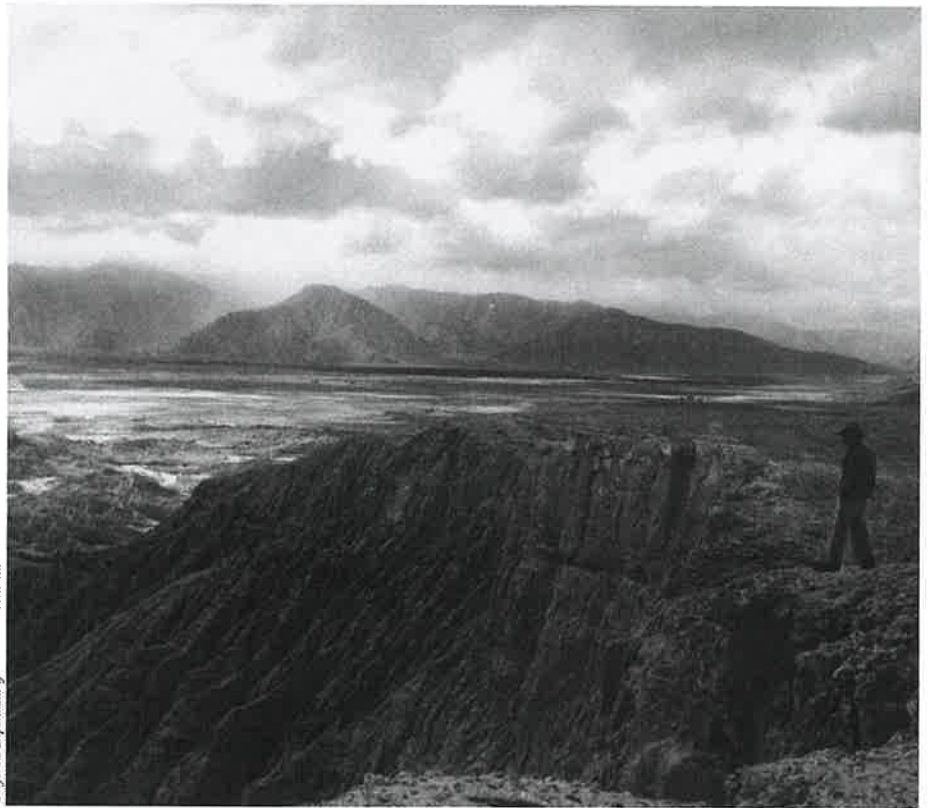
Please help defend California's largest state park from energy developers and off-road vehicles!

by Ryan Henson

Anza-Borrego Desert State Park is the largest California state park and is a critical refuge for endangered plant and wildlife species, including approximately 60 percent of California's remaining peninsular bighorn sheep population. The park's magnificent arid landscape of giant boulders, mesas, canyons, sand dunes, and famous groves of majestic native palm trees attracts visitors from around the world.

Though founded in 1933, Anza-Borrego Desert State Park still does not have a management plan to guide the California Department of Parks and Recreation's stewardship of the area. Over the last few years, park staff have worked hard to develop a General Management Plan for the park and finally completed one in 2003. The proposed plan recommends that more than 54,000 acres of the park be designated as wilderness, and that other areas be protected for their historical and natural values. The plan also provides a blueprint for how to meet the growing demands of visitors to the park.

Before it can be implemented, the General Management Plan must be approved by the California State Park and Recreation Commission. The commission was scheduled to vote on the plan in October, but appeals from anti-environmental groups to the new Schwarzenegger administration have resulted in a delay of the vote. Meanwhile, energy developers, off-road vehicle enthusiasts, mountain bikers, and others are taking advantage of the delay to lobby Governor Schwarzenegger to oppose the General Management Plan. We can't let the forces of development overrun our parks!



California Department of Parks and Recreation

Anza Borrego Desert State Park. Park staff have proposed that over 54,000 acres of the park be designated as wilderness, as part of a blueprint for how to meet the growing demands of visitors to the park.

What you can do

You can help defend Anza-Borrego Desert State Park by writing a letter as soon as possible to:

Caryl O. Hart, Chair
California State Park
and Recreation Commission
P.O. Box 942896
Sacramento, CA 94296-0001
Fax: (916) 653-4458

In your letter, you should explain why the park is important to you and then make the following points in your own words:

- The Anza-Borrego Desert State Park General Management Plan is an excellent document that balances the

needs of people with the protection of the environment.

- The General Management Plan is the result of years of study and a great deal of public input.
- The General Management Plan deserves the unanimous support of the State Park and Recreation Commission.

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



Martis Valley: Sierra wildlands threatened by development

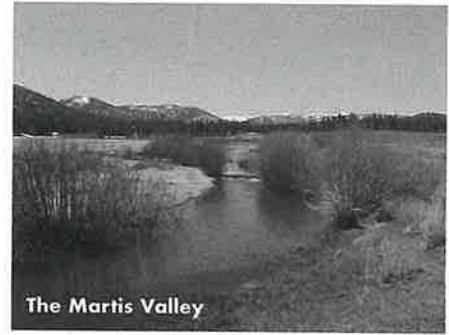
by Pete Nichols

On the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada between the town of Truckee and north Lake Tahoe, the ecologically diverse Martis Valley is threatened by sprawling urban and resort development. This development would be allowed under the Martis Valley Community Plan, which is currently under consideration by the Placer County Board of Supervisors. This irresponsible plan would allow more than 6,800 homes, millions of square feet of commercial development, an expansion of Highway 267, and ski resort and golf course development that would severely impact the ecological integrity of the valley and would alter critical wildlife habitat in the region.

The Martis Valley's location on

the eastern slope of the Sierra gives the valley a unique assemblage of elements from both the Sierra and Great Basin biogeographic regions, including ponderosa pine forest with a Great Basin sagebrush understory. Several rare plant species are found in the Martis Valley, including the *Plumas ivesia*, which is federally listed as threatened.

The valley is a crucial habitat linkage between the Granite Chief Wilderness Area and other portions of the Sierra Nevada, the Mount Rose Wilderness Area in the Carson Range, and the Tahoe Basin. The valley contains critical summer foraging and fawning areas for the Loyalton Truckee deer herd, and is used as a corridor by this herd during migration to its winter range in Nevada. In addition, the area between the Granite Chief Wilderness Area and the Martis



Valley was identified in the California Wilderness Coalition's *Guide to Wildlands Conservation Planning for the Greater Sierra Bioregion* as a core Wildlife Conservation Area.

Development of this magnitude in the Martis Valley would not only harm its terrestrial ecology, but would detrimentally impact the hydrology of the region. Martis Creek is a tributary of the Truckee River that supports salmonid populations and is probably important for the recovery of the threatened Lahontan cutthroat trout. The stream, meadows, and riparian wetlands within the Martis Creek watershed also provide habitat for a variety of wildlife and sensitive plant species. The upland habitats in the watershed buffer the creek and its tributaries from hydrologic alterations and changes in water quality produced by land use changes.

Sierra Watch, a non-profit conservation group, has developed an alternative to the plan that would limit development to 3,000 homes. This approach is more reasonable and considers the impacts on the area's water, wildlife, and natural ecosystems. The valley's proximity to the Lake Tahoe basin underscores the importance of maintaining its ecological integrity, as the area is already severely impacted by development and human recreation.

For more information contact Tom Mooers, Sierra Watch, (530) 265-2849 or visit www.sierrawatch.org.

Pete Nichols is the California Wildlands Project's Science Coordinator.

Golden State Wilderness Campaign takes its first steps

California is one of a few handful of states that designates wilderness on state lands. In fall 2003, the California Wilderness Coalition launched the Golden State Wilderness Campaign, beginning an inventory of potential wilderness on state lands owned by the California Department of Parks and Recreation, Department of Fish and Game, and State Lands Commission.

Already, CWC is in the thick of efforts to protect state-owned land as wilderness, starting with Anza-Borrego Desert State Park (see facing page) and Knoxville Ranch.

In November 2003, CWC urged the California Department of Fish and Game to recommend to the legislature that much of the Knoxville Ranch Wildlife Area be designated as wilderness. The Knoxville Ranch is a wonderful region of grasslands, stately oak woodlands, chaparral, and other habitats in northeastern Napa County. The Department of Fish and Game is preparing a plan for how it will manage the area, and the agency is under pressure to open the Knoxville Ranch to vehicles. Currently, none of the lands in California managed by the Department of Fish and Game are designated as wilderness.

Additionally, CWC's staff are preparing for 2004's major survey by creating fine-scale GIS maps of potential state wilderness, and by crafting a campaign to begin building public and legislative support for additional wilderness.

Northeast California to get its own wilderness bill? New organizers join the campaign

by Tina Andolina, Josh Buswell-Charkow, and Ryan Henson

The past several months have seen an exciting expansion in the California Wild Heritage Campaign.

In early October, Reps. Mike Thompson (D-Napa) and Hilda Solis (D-El Monte) introduced bills in the U.S. House of Representatives that mirror Senator Boxer's California Wild Heritage Act. Rep. Thompson's bill, H.R. 3327, includes all of the areas in the Wild Heritage bill from Tuolumne County north, excluding the Clavey River. Rep. Solis's bill, H.R. 3325, contains all the areas and rivers in the southern part of the state including the areas on the east side of the Sierra Nevada and the Clavey River.

Both bills have had a warm welcome from wilderness supporters in Congress. So far Rep. Solis's bill has 18 cosponsors and Rep. Thompson's bill has eight.

Also this fall, three new regional organizers have joined the campaign. They bring fresh new ideas and energy and will help us be better connected to the heart and soul of this effort—the local volunteers. We are pleased to welcome our new teammates: Emily Templin, who is working in the Central Valley, Josh Buswell-Charkow, who is organizing in the First Congressional District (northwest California), and Holly

Owens, who is working in Riverside.

Our efforts have also gotten a boost from the campaign's partnership with the National Hispanic Environmental Council. We now have two full-time organizers to reach out to California's growing Latino population. Kristina Ortez, working in

legislature, the Northern California Coastal Wild Heritage Wilderness Act of 2003 (H.R. 1501/ S. 738). This bill will protect roughly 303,000 acres of public lands as wilderness areas and one wild and scenic river in the First Congressional District in northwest California. Some areas included in

this bill are the spectacular King Range, the longest stretch of undeveloped coastline in the lower 48, as well as additions to some already designated areas like the Siskiyou and Yolla Bolly Wildernesses.

Senator Feinstein stated her support of H.R. 1501 at a Congressional breakfast this summer and we hope she will soon agree to co-sponsor the bill. Wilderness supporters who live in the First District continue to lead groups on hiking trips to their favorite proposed wilderness areas. On each hike, they arrange a group

picture complete with a banner asking Senator Feinstein for her support. Locals have also held several letter writing parties, with everything from wine tasting to poetry readings followed by asking the participants to write a letter to Senator Feinstein. Many elected officials in the First Congressional District support H.R. 1501, and will soon be sending Senator Feinstein a letter asking her to co-sponsor the bill.

Prospects for the Northern California Coastal Wild Heritage Wilderness Act of 2003 look good and we are eagerly awaiting a hearing in the House in the next Congressional session.



Wilderness supporters visiting the King Range proposed wilderness urge Senator Feinstein to co-sponsor the Northern California Coastal Wild Heritage Wilderness Act.

Fresno, and Sabrina Parra-Garcia, working in Woodland Hills, have built connections to important allies and constituencies within the Latino community. This partnership will not only help us build greater and more diverse support for the California wilderness bill, but it will also help us build stronger bridges for future efforts to protect our environment.

Progress in northwest California

Meanwhile, we continue to move forward on one of the best-supported wilderness bills before the federal

In October, Trinity County wilderness supporters David Rose, Kenneth Baldwin, Bill Huber, and Grace Rose made the long trek to Washington, D.C. where the fate of Trinity County's federal lands is decided. The volunteer lobbyists were seeking support in Congress for protection of many important wild places in Trinity County, including additions to the Trinity Alps and Yolla Bolly-Middle Eel Wildernesses.

Kenneth, a professional forester, explained to Congressional staff how protecting wild areas in Trinity County would not hurt the timber industry or worsen fire danger. Bill, a wine-maker, described how the California Wild Heritage Act would benefit salmon and steelhead trout populations, while landowners and farmers David and Grace discussed the economic benefits of wildland protection.

While Trinity County and other areas in far-northern California are wilderness-rich but still somewhat poor in support for conservation, everyday heroes like David, Kenneth, Bill, and Grace continue to build that support and prove that wildland conservation is an integral part of a healthy economy and a high quality of life for rural California.

Exciting news for northeast California

Meanwhile, wilderness supporters in Shasta and Lassen counties are exploring the possibility of pursuing new wilderness proposals in the high desert country along the Nevada-California border north of Reno and east of Susanville.

Areas that could be included in a Lassen County wilderness proposal are the:

- Skedaddle potential wilderness, northern California's largest unprotected roadless area at 207,000 acres.
- Pit River potential wilderness, with its sheer 750-foot high cliffs.
- Tunnison Mountain potential wilderness, with its world-class assemblage of Native American rock art.

All three of these areas contain spectacular rock formations and vast fields of native grassland. Wildlife is abundant, and includes pronghorn antelope, sage grouse, Rocky Mountain elk, and other species.

Activists will be meeting in the coming months to develop a wilderness vision for the region.

The Diablo Range: California's best kept secret



Backpackers in the Joaquin Rocks potential wilderness

Most people have heard of Mount Diablo, but few have heard of the Diablo Range: it is California's best kept secret. Stretching from Mount Diablo southeast to near Coalinga or Parkfield (there's no established definition), the Diablo Range is 150 to 180 miles long.

The northern Diablo Range, which includes Henry Coe State Park and the Mount Hamilton area, is a high-priority area for acquisition and negotiation for the Nature Conservancy. The southern Diablo Range, which is roughly two-thirds privately owned and one-third Bureau of Land Management (BLM) owned, is a region equally deserving of conservationists' efforts.

The Diablo Range's proximity to both the Bay Area and rapidly growing Central Valley cities such as Fresno and Merced make it a valuable site for exploration, recreation, and relaxation.

The range harbors two potential wilderness areas, Joaquin Rocks and Panoche Hills, as well as the famous barrens of the New Idria Serpentine Formation (which, while they have been damaged by mercury mining and off-road vehicle use, are also home to some amazing rare plants). It also features an astonishing diversity of native oak species. It is extremely important habitat for mountain lion.

Recently, a meeting was held in San Juan Bautista to discuss conservation issues pertaining to the southern Diablo Range. For more information, please contact: Tom Hopkins at (831) 429-9010 or tomhopkins@cruzio.com.



RS 2477: Will Governor Schwarzenegger defend public lands? New CWC report documents 5,500 miles of "highway" claims

by Byron Kahr

Phantom highways continue to threaten wild lands in California, as industry-backed off-road vehicle associations and one county government are lining up to claim rights-of-way under RS 2477, the now infamous loophole from an 1866 federal mining act. Using the repealed law, these foes of wilderness are trying to pry open backdoor access for road building and motorized recreation in our national parks, wilderness, and other protected lands.

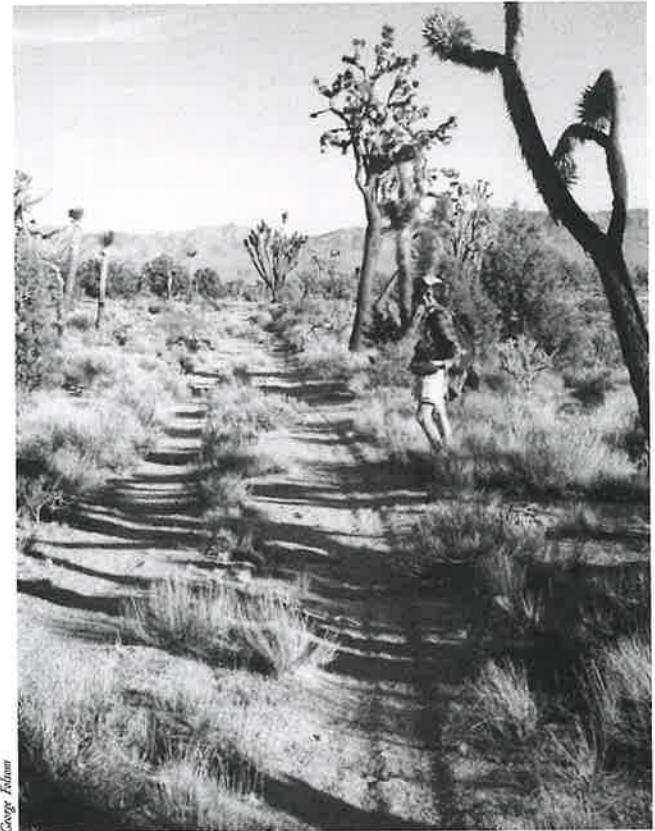
CWC recently confirmed that San Bernardino County officials have had direct discussions with the Interior Department about getting the county its own Memorandum of Understanding with Interior, the first step in taking ownership of RS 2477 "highways" en masse. Interior revealed this information in a reply to questions from Senator Joe Lieberman (D-CT). In November, the Blue Ribbon Coalition wrote to the Bureau of Land Management re-asserting its demands for 100 miles of rights-of-way in the King Range National Conservation Area and threatening to hold a motorcycle ride down the beach in the proposed wilderness area.

Sidestepping the modern law that permits rights-of-way over federal lands, these proponents of RS 2477 instead hope to propose "highways" through parks and wilderness using the antique law—with no public involvement and no analysis of environmental impacts.

In November, CWC released a report on our year-long investigation of RS 2477 road proposals in our state, *Highway Robbery in California*, available online at www.calwild.org/resources/pubs/rs2477.php. In all, more than 5,500 miles of "highway" proposals threaten California's public

Right: Many of the "highways," like this one in the Mojave National Preserve, show little sign of construction or use.

lands, including five national parks (Sequoia, Death Valley, Joshua Tree, Mojave, Redwood) and 23 wilderness areas, from the Siskiyou Wilderness in the north to the Mesquite Wilderness in the southern California desert. (For a synopsis of the report's findings, see box on this page.)

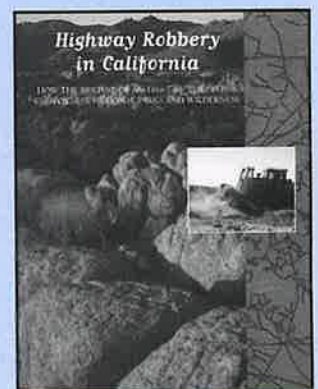


CWC tracks RS 2477 threat to California's wildlands in new report

The California Wilderness Coalition recently published a landmark report, entitled *Highway Robbery in California: How the Revival of an 1866 Law Threatens California's National Parks and Wilderness*. The report outlines how part of an obsolete law from 1866, known as Revised Statute 2477 (RS 2477), may allow counties and special interests to build roads through national parks, wilderness areas, national monuments, military bases, and even privately owned lands.

Among the report's findings:

- In California, more than 5,500 miles of proposed RS 2477 "highways" would cut through our national parks, forests, monuments, wilderness areas, and even a state park.
- RS 2477 "highways" have been proposed in five California national parks, 23 wilderness areas, seven proposed wilderness areas, and many other protected public lands.



Road proposals also threaten the King Range NCA and many other unprotected wilderness areas and conservation lands. When field-checked, the majority turn out to be jeep trails, abandoned ranch or prospector routes, foot trails, and other minor tracks, not highways. With detailed maps and photos of bogus claims, CWC's report was picked up by newspapers in San Bernardino, Riverside, Ontario, Palm Springs, Barstow, Wrightwood, Eureka, and Crescent City, and carried on the Associated Press and several radio stations.

CWC continues working with conservation groups in Washington D.C., and on the ground in California to derail the Bush Administration's attempts to grant these rights-of-way through our wildlands.

Unfortunately, an amendment to this year's Interior appropriations bill that sought to protect parks and wilderness from RS 2477 claims did not survive in the Senate. The powerful Alaskan Senator Ted Stevens (R-AK), chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, stripped the

language out of the Interior appropriations bill in conference committee at the urging of Utah's senators. This leaves all of the nation's public lands vulnerable to bogus road proposals for another year.

Here in California, CWC volunteers, interns, and staff are busy field-checking the more than 5,000 miles of RS 2477 right-of-way assertions in San Bernardino County (see our activist profile on Kim Floyd on page 12). We are coordinating the effort from CWC's new office in Riverside, which will serve as the headquarters for our efforts to protect desert wilderness. Equipped with topographic maps and GPS units, friends of desert wilderness are ground-truthing the county's proposed "highways" in the Mojave National Preserve and in designated wilderness areas. Often the hardest part is finding the routes at all, as many of them have been abandoned for decades. You can help too, just by hiking and snapping photos: Contact Byron Kahr at (909) 781-1336.

With San Bernardino County's continued efforts to secure an agree-

ment with the Department of Interior over RS 2477 rights-of-way, it is crucial that Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and his new Resources Secretary Michael Chrisman continue our state's opposition to the Bush Administration giving away public lands in California by using RS 2477.

Outgoing California Resources Secretary Mary Nichols wrote the Bush Administration last May instructing the Department of Interior not to process any RS 2477 "disclaimer" applications affecting California. Governor Schwarzenegger has an opportunity to prove his commitment to conservation right now, by informing the Bush Administration that the state of California continues to oppose the Department of Interior's new "disclaimer of interest" rule, and all attempts by individuals and local governments in California to claim phony rights-of-way under RS 2477.

What you can do

Ask Governor Schwarzenegger and Resources Secretary Mike Chrisman to oppose the use of the illegal disclaimer rule to give away federal lands in California under RS 2477 because it has no environmental review, it allows no public participation, and many RS 2477 claims in California are not highways at all, only faint trails in national parks and wilderness areas. Send your letter to:

Mike Chrisman
Secretary, Resources Agency
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone: (916) 653-5656

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

- Six southern California counties have passed resolutions asserting RS 2477 rights generally.
- San Bernardino County is thus far the only county to actually petition the Department of Interior to give it ownership of specific rights-of-way.
- San Bernardino County has claimed more than 5,000 miles of proposed "highways," which is more than twice its current road network.
- Of these 5,000 miles of proposed "highways", 2,231 miles cut through desert tortoise critical habitat.
- The Blue Ribbon Coalition, a national off-road vehicle (ORV) advocacy group funded in part by the oil and mining industries and ORV manufacturers, has proposed 48 miles of "highways" in the Siskiyou Wilderness, 51 miles in the Giant Sequoia National Monument, and 100 miles in the King Range National Conservation Area.
- A legitimate alternative to RS 2477 exists for valid rights-of-way: Title V of the 1976 Federal Lands Policy and Management Act (FLPMA).
- Title V offers many advantages over RS 2477, including lower costs, potentially shorter turnaround time, much lower liability, environmental review, public participation, and protection of private lands.

CWC's report on the impacts of RS 2477 in California is available on the web at: www.calwild.org/resources/pubs/rs2477.php.

Byron Kahr is the California Wilderness Coalition's RS 2477 Field Organizer.



Kim Floyd

an interview with
Amanda Dranginis

San Bernardino County recently began to pursue a loophole in an archaic mining statute (known as RS 2477), which has enabled county governments and special interest groups throughout the West to propose roads through national parks, forests, wilderness areas, and other protected areas. When the county began targeting some of California's most pristine wildlands in the desert, the Mojave Chapter of the Sierra Club quickly rallied against this threat of abuse to our public lands.

Kim Floyd has been at the forefront of their effort since its inception. He accepted the responsibility with enthusiasm and has focused primarily on RS 2477 fieldwork coordination: groundtruthing, collecting GPS data and photos of spurious claims, and training fellow activists. His work has culminated in a comprehensive photo inventory of proposed "highways."

How did you become an environmental activist?

My wife Joyce and I joined the Sierra Club in the 1970s and I became active after visiting the Mojave group general meeting in 2001. Both the Group and Chapter meetings are 40 miles down the hill from Wrightwood. I hate to drive, but after attending three monthly meetings of the Mojave Group, I was convinced that I had met a group of people who wanted to go after some real environmental conservation work.

What has been the most rewarding or enjoyable part about the RS 2477 fieldwork you've done?

The fieldwork involves learning, hiking, and providing a product that will help protect our deserts. That is a great combination for me. I also have



had the opportunity to work and hike with about 20 people on this effort over the past year.

What has been most challenging about this work?

The greatest challenge has been the distances that we need to drive to do our work. The desert is a beautifully large piece of real estate and the drive is always worth it.

Do you consider it a challenge to be an environmental activist in such a politically conservative region as San Bernardino County?

Being an environmentalist in San Bernardino County in some ways is easy. It is generally easy to tell what side of the issues our elected officials will come down on. The conservative policy makers in the High Desert area of San Bernardino County support rapid economic growth driven primarily by land development. They listen to property owners, business owners, and off-road vehicle groups. We will need to develop alliances with these groups based on different issues.

What is your take on recent political developments surrounding RS 2477?

The current situation is exactly what many of us predicted as we fought to defeat Bush in 2000. We have to use all tools available to push back the conservative policies and protect the

environment until a more sensible administration is in place in Washington. I believe that we can expect the political environment in the High Desert area to continue to be quite conservative for the next 10 to 20 years. I think that we will need to continue to work with state and federal government

agencies and the courts to help protect our desert areas.

What would be your advice to someone who is considering becoming an activist in this effort?

For others who are considering the possibility of doing this work, I think that the travel distances are a challenge to be considered. Beyond that, come on out! We will team each new worker with an experienced worker. We will learn to use GPS, maps, and a compass to follow routes. Each day, in teams of two, we will complete 6 to 12 miles of easy to moderate hiking. Each night we car camp and share a campfire.

Kim Floyd lives in a small community on the western edge of the San Bernardino Mountains with his wife Joyce. He went to school in Michigan, worked in Milwaukee for 12 years, and transferred to a position in Los Angeles in 1979. In 1998, after 34 years of business experience, Kim retired to Wrightwood, CA. Today, he enjoys working with the perennials and native flowers in his yard, skiing at a resort near his home, and paragliding in the company of hawks, eagles, swallows, and hang gliders.

CWC would like to extend our deepest thanks to Kim for his incredible work on the RS 2477 campaign.

CWC celebrates new Big Sur Wilderness

Despite the rain, November 8th was a great day for California wilderness lovers, who flocked to San Francisco to attend the California Wilderness Coalition's Annual Autumn Celebration. Held at the California Society of Pioneers building, the event honored Senator Barbara Boxer and Congressman Sam Farr for their courageous advocacy on behalf of California's wild places.

In commemoration of their successful effort to protect new wilderness along the Big Sur coastline, the California Wilderness Coalition presented Senator Boxer and Congressman Farr with our inaugural Philip Burton Award, a stunning, large Tom Killion woodcut print of Vincente Canyon, Big Sur. Tom Killion, who was in attendance, received warm applause for his incredible artwork.

Denouncing the Bush Administration's efforts to undermine fundamental environmental protections in California and across the nation, Senator Boxer urged the audience "to get political" in defense of our natural heritage.

Striking a lighter note, Congressman Farr delighted the crowd with tales of his deft deal-making in the House of Representatives. His tenacious advocacy



Congressman Sam Farr (at right) honors Gordon Johnson for his many years of hard work to protect Big Sur Wilderness

for the Big Sur Wilderness and Conservation Act secured the bill's improbable passage in the waning days of December 2002.

Earlier in the night, CWC Board President Don Morrill bestowed the first-ever Jim Eaton Wilderness Award on former CWC Executive Director Paul Spitler for his years of tireless service to the organization. In an uplifting acceptance speech, Paul lauded "the next generation of wilderness leaders" currently serving on staff at CWC.

In addition to bringing the California conservation community together to honor our wilderness champions, the event also raised critical funds for CWC's efforts to protect wild



Senator Boxer urges the audience to "get political" in defense of our natural heritage



Don Morrill (left) presents Paul Spitler with the inaugural Jim Eaton Wilderness Award

California. With over \$26,000 in contributions, this year's Autumn Celebration was our most successful ever!

CWC would like to extend a warm thank you to all of our 2003 Autumn Celebration individual and business donors—your support made this special night possible.

Our deepest thanks to the donors for our 2003 Autumn Celebration

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Los Padres: 80 percent of local voters want protection

After much delay, February 2004 is the expected release date of the final environmental impact statement for proposed new oil and gas leasing on the Los Padres National Forest, just east of the Santa Barbara coast. The draft plan, released in October 2001, was a terrible document that proposed new drilling in hundreds of thousands of acres of proposed wilderness, inventoried roadless areas, and endangered California condor habitat. Oil drilling in these places would spoil water quality, fishing streams, and wildlife habitat—for at most 10 days of oil for the nation.

Hiking, camping, and horseback riding in the beautiful Los Padres backcountry would never be the same. Many of these places would be permanently protected by the California Wild Heritage Act—if they aren't riddled with oil wells first.

The California Wilderness Coalition and its partner groups have been organizing local opposition to the Forest Service leasing proposal, with many local elected officials and newspapers strongly opposing. And while Representatives Lois Capps and Sam Farr and Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer all have expressed their opposition to the drilling proposal, much still depends on Representative Elton Gallegly, the Ventura/Simi Valley Republican whose 24th Congressional District includes much of the forest targeted for drilling.

Congressman Gallegly has valiantly protected wilderness before, as the sponsor of the 1992 Los Padres Condor Range and River Protection Act—but he has not yet opposed this proposal for new oil leasing in his constituents' backyard. In a November 2003 poll of likely voters in the mostly Republican 24th and 25th districts, nearly 80 percent of respondents said public lands should be protected from oil and gas drilling and other destructive development, and 60 percent favored protecting more public lands in California as wilderness.

You can help send the same message to Congress. Please contact your Congress members—especially if you live on Rep. Elton Gallegly's district—and ask them to do all they can to oppose new oil leasing anywhere in the Los Padres National Forest, and to protect wilderness and wild rivers. Our last wild forests should be saved for future generations and wildlife, not ruined with oil fields for the benefit of a few oil companies. To look up addresses and phone numbers for your Congress members, visit www.house.gov and www.senate.gov.

BLM withdraws approval for guzzlers in Sheephole Wilderness

Good news: In November, BLM withdrew its decision to allow artificial water installations ("game guzzlers") in the Sheephole Valley Wilderness near Joshua Tree National Park. In our appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, CWC and our partner groups had won a stay against construction because BLM failed to analyze the cumulative impacts to wilderness from the many guzzlers proposed by the California Department of Fish and Game (six in this wilderness, and dozens more in other desert wilderness areas).

Now the ball is in BLM's court. BLM must require Fish and Game to provide real scientific justification for building new dams, tanks, plumbing, and service roads in federal wilderness areas—and BLM must prevent unnecessary impacts to wilderness—or we'll be prepared to appeal again. CWC and our partners Desert Survivors, Wilderness Watch, Center for Biological Diversity, and Natural Resources Defense Council have asked Fish and Game to complete its ongoing bighorn sheep metapopulation studies and then do an environmental analysis of its desert-wide guzzler proposals, under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). In the meantime, we have said we can accept temporary guzzlers on a case by case basis, in the event of a real water emergency for bighorn sheep.

This way, bighorn and wilderness would both be protected while our state lawfully decides where—or whether—Californians need scores of new artificial water installations in our wild desert ecosystems.

Administration undermines roadless policy again

On July 14, 2003, Wyoming U.S. District Court Judge Clarence Brimmer issued a decision blocking implementation of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. Judge Brimmer interpreted the Wilderness Act in a bizarre and unprecedented manner, stating, "The Forest Service, through the promulgation of the Roadless Rule, designated 58.5 million acres of National Forest land as a de facto wilderness area in violation of the Wilderness Act."

Section 2(a) of the Wilderness Act states that "no Federal lands shall be designated as 'wilderness areas' except as provided for in [the Wilderness Act] or by a subsequent Act." In Brimmer's view, there is no difference between roadless areas and wilderness areas.

Brimmer's inability to discern a legal difference between roadless areas and wilderness areas is perplexing. The Wilderness Act clearly is far more restrictive than the Roadless Rule. For example, snowmobiles, motorcycles, and mountain bikes are prohibited in wilderness areas, but not in roadless areas. Mining and associated road building are prohibited in wilderness areas, but not in roadless areas.

In November, in an unprecedented move, the Bush Administration filed a brief at the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals arguing that citizens of the United States have no right to appeal Judge Brimmer's decision.

Conservation groups and many members of Congress were outraged by the Administration's action. Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) wrote the Department of Justice to urge the Bush Administration to support the public's ability to defend the rule in court.

Courtesy of The Wilderness Society's Wilderness Support Center.

CWC wish list

CWC is working very hard to protect California's wild places...on a shrinking budget. Here are some items that would really help us in our efforts to protect wilderness:

- Storage units for maps
- Frequent Flyer miles (40,000 miles allows a staff person to go to Washington, D.C. and advocate for wilderness)
- Used PC laptops (Pentium III or greater, CD RW or DVD drive preferred)
- Reliable 4WD vehicle or Jeep
- Digital cameras
- Slide scanner
- Lightweight RGB digital projector

Farewell Michael Killigrew

Michael Killigrew, former president of the South Yuba River Citizens League, died of a brain tumor on December 8. He



had a knack for bringing people of diverse interests together for the environment and orchestrated the recent exchange of Sierra Pacific Industries land along the river to the state park system.

After working as an editor at the *New York Times* and *Atlantic Monthly* early in his adulthood, he moved to Nevada County in the 1970s. He formed the Tahoe-Baikal Institute, a nonprofit ecological exchange.

He said he came back to Nevada County from his international experiences deciding he wanted to do something for the beauty right outside his back door. "It's inspirational to contribute," he said. "The first time that you see that river, it's awe-inspiring; it's stunning."

At the time of his passing, Michael was working with CWC's California Wildlands Project and other Sierra-based conservation groups to bring the many diverse interests of the Sierra together in an effort to provide habitat connectivity throughout the region.

CWC gains Desert Director



We are very excited to welcome Bryn Jones as our new Desert Program Director! Bryn recently completed dual advanced degrees in law and American Indian Studies at the University of Arizona. While a law student, she worked as an intern for the Center for Biological Diversity for two years, helping to successfully defeat a proposed coal mine on Zuni sacred lands. Bryn's experience in community organizing and coalition building, as well as her background in legal and media strategy, will be key to CWC's success in building our desert advocacy program.

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:

Check enclosed.

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\$500 Big Sur

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\$30 Individual

\$10 Contributor

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

www.calwild.org. Email: info@calwild.org

w/04/wr



White Mountains Proposed Wilderness

Size: Approximately 297,000 acres

Nominated as a National Natural Landmark by the Department of the Interior, the range's high peaks and rolling ridges represent a rare alpine island rising above a sea of sagebrush desert. An extremely fragile landscape, the White Mountains are home to

the oldest living trees in the world, the nearly 5,000 year old bristlecone pines, and the highest peak in the Great Basin, 14,246 foot White Mountain peak. Cottonwood Creek cascades down a steep canyon on the east face of the Whites, past aspen thickets and through meadows of willows teeming with migratory songbirds every spring and summer.

Wilderness and Wild & Scenic River status for the White Mountains and Cottonwood Creek, respectively, would protect this diverse ecosystem and ensure that habitat connectivity, ecosystem health and

outstanding recreational opportunities are preserved for this unparalleled wildland.

The steep topography of the Whites, combined with a high variety of soil types, yield amazing biological diversity over a relatively small area. Once can move quickly from desert alkali shrubs at the base of wide alluvial fans, up through pinyon-juniper woodlands into the high barrens of the gnarled bristlecones, and out onto windswept alpine fell barrens, an ecological journey equivalent to walking north from the Mojave desert to the polar Arctic.



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