WILDERNESS Record

News Journal of the
California Wilderness Coalition
Summer 2004

Senate hearing for north coast wilderness bill

Anza-Borrego contemplates more wilderness

President Bush mounts stealth attack on Roadless Conservation Rule

Judge bans logging in Duncan Canyon roadless area

Celebrating 40 years of wilderness protection

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DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Savoring conservation victories

It has been a very busy summer here at the California Wilderness Coalition. In June, CWC moved our main office from our long-time home in Davis to Oakland. CWC's successes over the last 28 years can be attributed to our grassroots strength–bringing together people, organizations, and decision-makers across our state to protect California's last wild places. Much of that strength has been built by our base of staff and volunteers in Davis.

In recent years, however, the structure of our organization has evolved. We are no longer an organization with a single center of operations and support. We now have field offices in Eureka, Riverside, Redding, and soon, Sacramento. At the same time that we are building CWC's presence and profile throughout California, we are also working to streamline our internal operations and coordinate our efforts statewide with those of our conservation partners. Although we have strong historic ties to the Davis community, we believe that the time has come to elevate our operations to a higher level. Our new Bay Area location will provide a centralized hub for our conservation work, allowing us to build stronger relationships with our partner organizations, business sponsors, and local supporters. Our new capitol field office will continue to serve our strong base of Sacramento Valley supporters.

Jim Rose

Conservationists have successfully stopped a proposal to log the Duncan Canyon roadless area's old-growth forest.

In July, our attention turned to the U.S. Senate, where a hearing was held on the Northern California Coastal Wild Heritage Wilderness Act (S. 738/H.R. 1501). Sponsored by Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein and in the House of Representatives, Congressman Mike Thompson, the bill would protect nearly 300,000 acres of pristine lands from the Oregon border to the Napa Valley. The bill will continue to move through Congress this fall!

And in August, the conservation community had an exciting victory, as a federal judge ruled that a proposed salvage logging project could not go forward in Duncan Canyon, a large, old-growth forest in the central Sierra Nevada's Tahoe National Forest. CWC and many other organizations have been fighting to save this roadless area for several decades. It's a beautiful Sierra landscape that is proposed for permanent protection in the California Wild Heritage Act now before Congress. At CWC, we're definitely savoring this victory, and you should too. It's not too late to visit Duncan Canyon and enjoy its beauty. If you can't make it before snowfall, CWC and our friends have made sure that you still have the opportunity for the rest of your lifetime!

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Our Mission

The California Wilderness Coalition defends the pristine landscapes that make California unique and provide clean air and water, a home to wildlife, and a place for spiritual renewal. CWC is the only organization dedicated to protecting and restoring California's wild places and native biodiversity on a statewide level. Since 1976, we have empowered local communities and conservationists to be the voice for wild California.

front cover photo:
Sand dunes in Death Valley National Park, courtesy National Park Service.

California Desert Protection Act turns 10

by Jim Dodson

Ten years ago on October 31, 1994, a small group of Californians gathered in the Oval Office as President Bill Clinton signed into law the California Desert Protection Act, the largest land bill passed in that decade. Like most such events, this represented the culmination of years of effort by hundreds of people. On this 10th anniversary of the CDPA and 40th anniversary of the 1964 Wilderness Act, it is worthwhile to look briefly on how it all came together.

More than 25 years earlier, a band of desert rats decided to explore the California desert and educate the larger environmental community about its values. A series of "desert study trips" over the next few years produced several dozen informed and vigorous activists. Media contacts grew to help waken the broader public to the desert's beauties–and its problems. When the 1976 Federal Land Policy and Management Act required the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to write a California Desert Plan, we were ready. Over the next four years, activist numbers soared as there was an open public debate on resources and uses: mining, grazing, utilities, recreation, and wilderness. Volunteers checked hundreds of miles of wilderness study area boundaries and submitted thousands of comments. In the end, painful agreements emerged on a balanced document that was approved at the end of the Carter Administration.

National Park Service

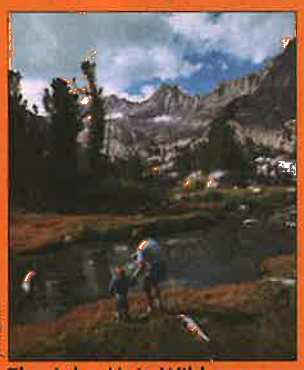
The 1994 California Desert Protection Act upgraded both Death Valley (pictured here) and Joshua Tree national monuments to national park status, and enlarged their boundaries to preserve more of the fragile desert's environment. It also protected millions of acres of land as wilderness, and designated the Mojave National Preserve.

The Reagan-Watt team brought a change of direction much like that we are experiencing now. In 1982, Secretary of the Interior James Watt approved a series of amendments that gutted much of the Desert Plan, including wilderness recommendations. Realizing that the administrative gains once offered by BLM were nothing certain, desert environmentalists began to look for legislative solutions. Over the next two years, they used the expertise they had built up over the previous decade to research and develop an expansive legislative proposal using the established land management tools of wilderness and parks to guarantee lasting protection. In doing so, they chose the bold course of identifying lands based on their intrinsic natural qualifications, not political considerations, to establish a baseline map for future generations.

Senator Alan Cranston introduced the California Desert Protection Act (CDPA) in 1986 and became a vigorous champion for it. Representatives Rick Lehman and Mel Levine stepped up to do the same in the House. Grassroot activists joined with all the major state and national environmental organizations in a coalition called the California Desert Protection League. A massive campaign started to gather support for the bill both in communities across

Celebrating 40 years of wilderness protection

On September 3, 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed legislation creating the National Wilderness Preservation System to "...secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefit of an enduring resource of wilderness." This month, we're celebrating the cornerstone of our work to protect California's natural heritage with the historic 40th anniversary of the Wilderness Act.



John Dutta

The John Muir Wilderness was designated in 1964 and enlarged in 1984.

California and in key states and districts across the country. Teams of supporters adopted their favorite wilderness areas.

Senator Cranston and later, Senator Feinstein introduced new (and improved) versions of the CDPA from 1987 to 1993 with each new Congress. New information led to boundary adjustments both up and down with each iteration, resolving many site-specific concerns of resource users–primarily ranchers and small miners. Local desert support groups in places as distant as South Carolina and Kentucky worked to educate key committee leaders across the country. Student groups held "dorm storms" to overwhelm Congressional offices with calls at key points.

This all came to a head with a window of opportunity in the 103rd Congress, when the election of President Bill Clinton and a Democratic majority in both houses of Congress meant both supportive administrative agencies and committee chairs. After a final round of hearings, the bills moved to the floor of Congress in its final days. Despite delaying tactics by opponents, the Senate stayed in session one extra day on October 8; the CDPA got the magic 60th vote to pass at the absolutely last possible minute. More than seven million acres of new wilderness and parks gained protection. (This story is told in detail in Frank Wheat's *California Desert Miracle*, available in good bookstores and libraries.)

In the decade following this dramatic victory, the story has continued to unfold in a long series of implementation actions. BLM and the Park Service are just now finishing official boundary maps and legal descriptions. Enforcement of wilderness boundaries remains weak, and vehicle trespass continues in many places. Thousands of acres of problematic in-holdings have been purchased from willing sellers and brought into public ownership.

However, despite the protections brought by wilderness designation, many of the management gains made and then lost twenty years ago remain to be resolved. Off-road vehicles run rampant in some areas, cattle overgraze fragile arid lands, and endangered plants and animals are still at risk. The task of continuing the wilderness designation fight remains, since several Congressional Wilderness Study Areas and new wilderness areas are now possible due to land ownership changes. Each cycle of environmental action builds on the achievements of those before–and the work of a few desert rats and then an army of legislative lobbyists have built a solid foundation to support the future achievements of today's workers.

Jim Dodson worked tirelessly for the California Desert Protection Act. Today, he continues to fight to protect the pristine desert. CWC is proud to have his guidance on our board of directors.

COALITION NEWS

CWC moves to new Oakland office

In June, the California Wilderness Coalition opened the doors of its brand-new downtown Oakland central office. The new office is on the 17th floor of the historic Bank of Italy building, and features spectacular views in all four directions. Our new address is: 1212 Broadway, Suite 1700, Oakland, CA 94612. Our new phone number is (510) 451-1450. Stop by for a tour sometime!

Please welcome Lea Francisco

CWC's new Office Manager, Lea Francisco

CWC is proud to welcome Lea Francisco as our new Office Manager. Lea graduated from UC Berkeley this May with a B.S. in Resource Management. In her work for the Center for Environmental Health, she did everything from organizing a fundraising event to researching case leads, and compiling and analyzing data for a report used to reduce toxic exposure in hospitals. Lea also recently joined the efforts of the Filipino American Coalition for Environmental Solutions (FACES), which will be working to stop and prevent toxic pollution and environmental degradation in the Phillipines from U.S. sources. Her passion in working for positive change, in addition to her excellent communications and managerial skills, are already proving invaluable to CWC in our new office in Oakland.

Farewell, good luck Amanda and Laura

After two years of competently mastering every new task thrown at her (and there were many!), Amanda Dranginis has left CWC to begin law school at UC Berkeley. We have greatly appreciated her hard work and intelligence in administration and RS 2477 program development, and will miss her warm smile and spirit.

CWC GIS and Publications Manager Laura Kindsvater, who is also a Ph.D. candidate in biogeography at UC Davis, was recently awarded a John Muir Fellowship for research in environmental science. She will be leaving CWC at the end of September in order to focus on completing her dissertation research. She wishes CWC all the best!

CWC creates new online Activist Center

New to our website is CWC's Activist Center, featuring exciting notes from the field, latest action alerts, regional news and events, and other fun features! Check it out at: www.calwild.org/resources/center.php. You can also receive updates from our Activist Center via our new email newsletter, *Untrammeled*. To receive *Untrammeled*, as well as periodic email alerts on pressing conservation issues, sign up for our email list at www.calwild.org.

Anza-Borrego to designate more state wilderness?

Anza-Borrego Desert State Park contains critical habitat for endangered plant and wildlife species, including 60 percent of the state's remaining population of Peninsular bighorn sheep. Anza-Borrego's magnificent arid landscape of giant boulders, canyons, sand dunes, and famous groves of majestic native palm trees attract visitors from around the world.

Eric Knapp

Anza-Borrego Desert State Park

In 2003, the park's general management plan recommended that more than 54,000 acres of the park be designated wilderness. The California State Parks and Recreation Commission was on the verge of designating this new wilderness when the vote was postponed because of opposition from off-road vehicle interests. The parks department has now revised the plan and is considering the public's comments on it.

Two plan alternatives propose significant protections. The Preferred Alternative recommends that more than 55,000 acres of the park be designated as wilderness, and 2,600 acres be designated as a cultural preserve. Alternative 3 recommends that 31,200 acres of the park be designated as wilderness, and 44,500 acres be designated as preserves.

Anti-conservation bills defeated in state senate

CWC helped defeat two bills introduced in the California Senate that would have severely impacted Coyote Canyon, a portion of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. The first bill, SB 1294, would have re-introduced a herd of non-native horses to Coyote Canyon. Park biologists had removed the horses in March 2003 because they were malnourished and had severely damaged a stream. The second bill, SB 1338, would have forced the park to permit off-road vehicle (ORV) use through a 3.1-mile stream.

Bush attacks Roadless Conservation Rule

On July 12, the Bush Administration announced the latest proposed changes that would gut the Roadless Rule. The Roadless Rule, developed under Clinton, protects 58 million acres of remote wildlands in national forests. Under the newest Bush proposal, individual state governors would have to propose protection for each specific area.

Then, it is at the discretion of Mark Rey, Undersecretary of Agriculture and former timber industry lobbyist, whether the areas would be protected. Allowing governors to "opt-in" for roadless protection essentially eliminates national protections for roadless areas. States could also petition the Administration to further weaken protections. Without the Roadless Rule in place, decisions on road building and logging would once again go back to forest plans.

In California, more than 4.4 million acres of "inventoried roadless" lands are at stake, including habitat for 65 species protected under the Endangered Species Act. More than a million of those acres are in the northwest corner of the state.

The proposed rule change will be open for public comment until November 15. To protest this destructive proposal, visit www.calwild.org/action/alert_073104.php.

Take action: End illegal snowmobile use!

The spectacular proposed Hoover Wilderness additions feature more than 30 alpine lakes, beautiful mountain meadows, and soaring granite peaks. Their abundant wildlife includes black bear, wolverine, mountain lion, Yosemite toad, mountain yellow-legged frog, and threatened Lahontan cutthroat trout.

This spring, the Forest Service finally decided it would start enforcing the area's snowmobile closure starting with the winter season of 2004-2005.

In retaliation, large numbers of renegade snowmobilers invaded the proposed Hoover Wilderness additions, Yosemite National Park, the Emigrant Wilderness, and the Pacific Crest Trail, which bans all motorized use, including snowmobiling.

Paul McFarland

View of Mono Lake from the Hoover proposed wilderness additions

The Forest Service is now *reconsidering* its proposal to issue citations for illegal motorized use! They may even *cancel* the long-standing closure to snowmobiles in the proposed Hoover wilderness additions.

Please tell the Forest Service that these wild lands belong to all Americans and you want them protected by enforcement of the existing closures! Send your letter to:

Mr. Jack Troyer, Regional Forester
USDA Forest Service
Intermountain West Region
324 25th Street
Ogden, UT 84401
Email: r4_regional_forester@fs.fed.us
Fax: (801) 625-5359

Courtesy of Darrell Knuffke and Sally Miller, The Wilderness Society.

Judge bans logging in Duncan Canyon roadless area

In August, Judge Morrison C. England Jr. blocked a logging project in the Duncan Canyon roadless area after concluding it could worsen the threat of destructive wildfires and damage critical habitat for some species. The judge found that the Forest Service ignored several scientific studies as well as back-country protections when it approved the logging in the Tahoe National Forest.

When it proposed the logging, the Forest Service cited several scientific studies that concluded forest thinning reduces fire risk.

But as Judge England noted, it was not the kind of thinning the Forest Service had in mind. In fact, the studies specifically admonished against the approach proposed: harvesting large trees and leaving treetops and limbs, called slash, piled on the forest floor. Though the Forest Service said it would return within a few years to clean out small growth and slash on about half the acreage, it said it lacked the money to take care of the rest, meaning large amounts of highly flammable small wood would have been left.

Jim Rose

Old-growth forest in the Duncan Canyon roadless area, proposed as wilderness in the California Wild Heritage Act, has been saved from logging again!

After the judge's decision, the Forest Service immediately announced that it would continue to push for logging in the roadless area. However, Forest Service staffers later said that they had decided to cancel their logging plans for Duncan Canyon roadless area at this time.

Judge England referred to the area's status as a proposed wilderness in his decision, stating that logging would preclude the area from being designated as wilderness.

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.*
___ *Bill my ___Visa; ___MasterCard; ___ American Express.*

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*Phone*_____ *Email*_____

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___ *$30 Individual*
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su/04/wr

Senate reviews north coast wilderness bill

House hearing expected soon

Summer has been an exciting time for the Northern California Coastal Wild Heritage Wilderness Act, legislation that would protect nearly 300,000 acres of the north coast's wildest land in the first congressional district. On six different occasions, groups as diverse as elected officials, outdoor business representatives, wineries and scientists made the trek to D.C. to push for this important legislation. The hard work culminated with the first hearing for this bill in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee on July 21st.

At the hearing, Congressman Mike Thompson and Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein spoke at length about the thoroughly exhaustive and inclusive approach used in crafting this legislation, ranging from working with agencies to local landholders and mill owners. Senator Larry Craig, normally a skeptic of wilderness legislation, applauded Congressman Thompson, and Senators Boxer and Feinstein, saying it was clear they had done their "due diligence."

With the hearing now finished, much work is still needed to pass the legislation before the end of the year and one important step will be receiving the official support of Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. The Governor has shown an interest in making the environment a pillar of his administration, but he has yet to officially take a stance on this bill.

If you have not yet done so, please call, write or e-mail Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger right away, and ask him to officially support Congressman Mike Thompson's Northern California Coastal Wild Heritage Wilderness Act, H.R. 1501/ S. 738. He can be reached at (916) 445-1456 or (916) 445-2841. Press 7 to speak to a constituent services representative. After identifying yourself, explain that you are calling to urge the Governor to support the Northern California Coastal Wild Heritage Wilderness Act, U.S. Senate bill 738.

Jim Rose

The Northern California Coastal Wild Heritage Wilderness Act could designate ten new wilderness areas, such as the magnificent Underwood Wilderness, as early as this year.

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