

WILDERNESS RECORD

News Journal of the California Wilderness Coalition

SPRING 2005



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CALIFORNIA WILDERNESS COALITION

The Voice for Wild California

CENTRAL OFFICE

1212 Broadway, Suite 1700
Oakland, CA 94612
(510) 451-1450

info@calwild.org

SACRAMENTO FIELD OFFICE

P.O. Box 1593
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 313-4517

NORTH COAST FIELD OFFICE

P.O. Box 241
Eureka, CA 95502
(707) 825-9510

DESERT FIELD OFFICE

4065 Mission Inn Avenue
Riverside, CA 92501
(951) 781-1336

STAFF

Executive Director
Mary L. Wells

Senior Field Organizer
Tina Andolina

Regional Outreach Organizer
Josh Buswell-Charkow

Office Manager
Meredith Eilers

Development Manager
Michael Gelardi

Policy Director
Ryan Henson

Desert Program Director
Bryn Jones

Desert Field Organizer
Byron Kahr

GIS Coordinator
Josh Lazarus

Membership Assistant
Ian Sanchez

*The California Wilderness Coalition protects
the natural landscapes that make California unique,
providing 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.*



GALEN ROWELL

The view from Fonts Point, Anza-Borrego Desert State Park.

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A Stunning Spring in the Desert



One word can describe California's weather so far in 2005—wet. While far northern California's Klamath Basin is still in a drought, the epic rains this winter have been a boon to the rest of the state, particularly the desert. With rainfall breaking 100 year old records, the desert is blooming with more wildflowers than anyone has ever seen. The rain has caused southern California's ephemeral streams, wetlands, and lakes to look like they aren't going away any time soon. Parts of Death Valley have even been likened to Hawaii's Napali Coast. All of this beauty is drawing a huge influx of new visitors. People are spending time in those wild lands in similarly record numbers, enjoying a very special desert experience. At CWC, we're always happy to hear of folks heading to the outdoors. It's often time spent in nature, especially at a young age, that makes people value and want to protect our last wild places.

Overwhelming public support has further protected one of the crown jewels of the desert. In February, the California State Parks Commission voted to permanently protect almost 56,000 acres of desert beauty as wilderness in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. CWC's Golden State Wilderness Campaign submitted recommendations, educated commissioners, and rallied support for this popular park and home to the endangered peninsular bighorn sheep. These lands are now protected under the California Wilderness Act that protects unique state lands for perpetuity—as the federal Wilderness Act does for national lands. This was a great victory for our Golden State Wilderness Campaign because it increased the size of the State Wilderness Preservation System by over ten percent. When there is so much bad news on the environment coming out of Washington, DC, it's great to have some positive news here at home. And the best way to celebrate is to travel to the desert to see those once in a lifetime wildflowers!

Mary Wells is the Executive Director of CWC



BRYN JONES



Spring wildflowers in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park.

New Era of Conservation in Anza-Borrego

In February, the State Parks and Recreation Commission received a huge round of applause when it unanimously approved the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park General Plan. The plan designates nearly 56,000 acres in the park as wilderness and 440 acres as a cultural preserve in order to protect the sensitive natural and cultural resources of this unique area.

Anza-Borrego Desert State Park is truly an international jewel. Located in Riverside and San Diego counties, it is among the largest state parks in the United States. Anza-Borrego is a critical refuge for endangered plant and wildlife species, including approximately 60% of California's endangered peninsular bighorn sheep. It is also home to a multitude of historical and cultural resources, which provide glimpses into the human history of the region. Anza-Borrego's magnificent arid landscape of giant boulders, mesas, canyons, sand dunes, and majestic native palm trees attracts visitors from around the world.

Though founded in 1933, Anza-Borrego has never had a management plan to guide the California Department of Parks and Recreation's stewardship of the area. Over the last few years, park staff worked hard to develop a General Management Plan (GMP) for Anza-Borrego.

The management plan is visionary in many ways. It appropriately focuses on management of park resources within natural boundaries, such as watersheds and air basins, rather than solely within property lines. The plan encourages park staff to be a voice in planning processes outside the boundaries of the park when a proposal may impact resources within the boundaries. It also encourages the acquisition of lands outside the park from willing sellers to foster habitat connectivity and landscape linkages and minimize negative effects and conflicts from adjacent land uses.

Palm Canyon is one of the most popular attractions in Anza-Borrego.



GALEN ROWELL

When it was first released in 2003, off-road vehicle lobbying groups were successful in convincing the new Schwarzenegger administration to delay a vote on the GMP by the State Parks and Recreation Commission. Park staff re-released the draft for public comment last summer and the Commission finally met to consider its adoption in February. Conservationists voiced their support at each stage. With their approval of the plan, Commissioners sent a clear message that state parks are places that deserve strong measures of protection and set a good precedent for plans not yet approved, like Red Rock Canyon State Park.



GALEN ROWELL



The conservation plan will help protect endangered peninsular bighorn sheep.



COALITION news

State Wilderness Inventory Volunteers Needed

How often do you get to combine one of your favorite pastimes with a good cause? The California Wilderness Coalition (CWC) needs you to take a walk for wilderness!

CWC needs your help to identify and protect wilderness candidates through our Golden State Wilderness Campaign. California is one of only a few states with its own wilderness protection system for state-owned lands. Our Golden State Wilderness Campaign aims to significantly add to this system in order to permanently protect California's wild places.

If you are interested in visiting targeted parcels of state-owned lands to document their wild character, please contact Ryan Henson at (530) 246-3087, or at rhenson@calwild.org

CWC Wish List

- Frequent flyer miles or Southwest Airlines free tickets
- Four-wheel drive vehicle
- Digital cameras

New Sacramento Office

The California Wilderness Coalition is proud to announce the opening of our new Sacramento Field Office!

The office can be contacted at follows:
California Wilderness Coalition— Sacramento Field Office:
P.O. Box 1593, Sacramento, CA 95814
PHONE (916) 313-4517 • FAX (916) 448-1789

Good Luck Lea!

Office Manager Lea Francisco is departing CWC to begin a new position as the sole staffer for the Filipino/American Coalition for Environmental Solution (FACES). FACES is an inter-generational organization that works for environmental justice within communities in the United States and in the Philippines. CWC has greatly appreciated Lea's hard work and great talents; we wish her the best of luck in her new position.

Welcome Meredith Eilers

CWC is excited to welcome Meredith Eilers as our new Office Manager. After a childhood spent negotiating the suburban jungle of Long Island, New York, Meredith fell in love with the White Mountains and the Connecticut River Valley of New Hampshire while attending Dartmouth College. She graduated with a degree in Ecology and Anthropology and then spent time working on an educational organic farm in New Hampshire. Meredith moved to California a year ago and has enjoyed exploring our spectacular coastline, deserts, and mountains. Meredith's deep appreciation for natural landscapes and diverse practical skills make her an outstanding addition to the CWC team.

Highlights of California's Threatened Wild Places

The California Wilderness Coalition has released its fourth annual *California's 10 Most Threatened Wild Places* report, drawing attention to wilderness lands at risk across the state.

The report is a result of extensive surveys with conservation groups, scientists, and other wilderness experts. It demonstrates both the severity of the threats facing our natural heritage and the diversity of places affected. Among the most serious threats to wild California are the Bush Administration's rollback of federal forest protections and the growing political clout of extreme off-road vehicle lobbying groups.

CALIFORNIA'S 10 MOST THREATENED WILD PLACES IN 2005

Desert

ALGODONES SAND DUNES (off-road vehicles)
MOJAVE NATIONAL PRESERVE (road proposals)
WHITE MOUNTAINS—FURNACE CREEK
(illegal off-road vehicle trails)

Southern California

CLEVELAND NATIONAL FOREST
(proposed freeways, dams, and power lines)

Central Coast

LOS PADRES NATIONAL FOREST (oil drilling)

Sierra Nevada

HOOVER WILDERNESS ADDITIONS (illegal snowmobile trespass)
**NORTHERN SIERRA NEVADA AND SOUTHERN CASCADE
NATIONAL FORESTS** (logging-exacerbated fires)
OWENS VALLEY WILDLANDS (excessive groundwater pumping)

Northern California

KLAMATH RIVER BASIN (excessive water diversion)
SALMON RIVER WATERSHED (logging, mining, and road building)

To view the full report, visit:

<http://www.calwild.org/resources/pubs/10most05.php>

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North Coast Wilderness Bill Gains Momentum

Fresh on the heels of a unanimous Senate victory at the close of 2004, CWC continues to build government support for the Northern California Coastal Wild Heritage Wilderness Act (H.R. 233/S. 128) in 2005. Congressman Mike Thompson quickly reintroduced the bill in the new Congress on January 4TH, and Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein introduced the companion Senate bill later in the month.

Thanks to the leadership of these wilderness champions, the bill was advanced out of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee in less than a month. Although there is no date set yet for a full Senate vote, this development positions the bill well for movement this year.

In early February, the legislation also picked up an important endorsement. Governor Schwarzenegger's office sent a letter to Chairman Richard Pombo (R-CA) of the House Resources Committee announcing his unequivocal support for the bill. The governor urged Representative Pombo's committee to act on the legislation as soon as possible.

The support of Governor Schwarzenegger raises the profile of this important conservation measure and demonstrates to the rest of the country the premium Californians place on preserving our natural heritage. Chairman Pombo has not yet given a date for a hearing, but promised the bill would indeed receive one soon.

If you have not done so yet, please write to Governor Schwarzenegger and thank him for his support of this important legislation.

Send your letter to:
Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

PHONE (916)445-2841

or

FAX (916)445-4633

You can also send your thank you via email on the Governor's web site at www.govmail.ca.gov/ Be sure to choose Federal Wilderness for the subject line.

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CWC Sponsors Off-Road Vehicle Conference

Activists, private landowners, and concerned residents convened in Joshua Tree in February to examine the growing problem of illegal and destructive off-road vehicle use on private and public lands in the desert. Thanks to a massive volunteer effort led by Morongo Basin Conservation Association, California Wilderness Coalition, and Community ORV Watch "Desert Communities Under Siege: Strategies for Protecting our Public and Private Lands from Off-Road Vehicle Abuse" was a huge success. The Alliance for Responsible Recreation, a coalition of conservation organizations, community groups, and private landowners planned and sponsored the conference.

More than 150 participants shared experiences, learned about relevant laws and regulations, questioned public officials, and developed strategies for moving forward. BLM Desert District Manager Linda Hansen joined representatives from county supervisor's offices, planning departments, and sheriff's offices on a panel discussion focusing on the off-road vehicle crisis in the desert. Officials on the panel heard residents' concerns about illegal off-road vehicle use in the desert, and endorsed many of Alliance's proposals for addressing off-road vehicle abuse. Since the conference, the Alliance has held follow up meetings in Yucca Mesa, Red Mountain, Temecula, and Joshua Tree.



Bureau of Land Management Plans for the Future

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is in the process of preparing management plans for most of its northern and central California field offices. These plans will guide the agency's decisions regarding logging, mining, cattle grazing, off-road vehicle use and other activities for the next decade or more. The planning process offers conservationists an important opportunity to work with the agency to conserve vital natural areas.

Public involvement is an essential requirement in the BLM's planning process. CWC has been working hard to encourage local activists to attend the agency's planning workshops. In addition, we have been providing our own extensive recommendations that a large number of areas in the six affected BLM field offices be protected in a natural state.

To participate in the BLM's planning process and help ensure that wild areas are not threatened with development, please contact CWC at (510) 451-1450, or at info@calwild.org



Park Service Mulls New Protections for San Gabriel

As a result of Representative Hilda Solis's (D-El Monte) San Gabriel River Watersheds Study Act of 2003, the National Park Service has begun studying "ways to improve historical, open and green space for families" in the San Gabriel watershed.

The study could eventually call for the establishment of a national park or for improved coordination among the current patchwork of federal, state and locally managed public lands.

As described in the legislation, the study area covers more than 1,000 square miles, or 700,000 acres. Most of the study area is located in Los Angeles County, with small portions in Orange and San Bernardino counties.

The Park Service study should complement other conservation efforts in the region. Representative Solis and Senator Barbara Boxer have introduced the Southern California Wild Heritage Act, which seeks to protect many wild areas in the watershed as wilderness. The Pleasant View, Cucamonga Additions, Sheep Mountain Additions, Silver Mountain and West Fork proposed wilderness areas are all included in both the wilderness legislation and the Park Service study.

To learn more about the study and to participate, visit www.nps.gov/pwro/sangabriel/index.htm or call Martha Crusius, Project Manager, at (510) 817-1447.



California Wilderness Coalition Spring Celebration

Featuring a slideshow presentation and book signing by award winning California nature photographer **Trish Tuley**.



Thursday April 28

Reception 6–8 PM
Society of California Pioneers

300 FOURTH STREET AT FOLSOM STREET
SAN FRANCISCO
ACROSS FROM THE MOSCONE CENTER
POWELL STREET BART STATION

- Hors d'oeuvres
- Wine tasting
- Silent wine auction

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1212 Broadway | Suite 1700 | Oakland | CA 94612

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