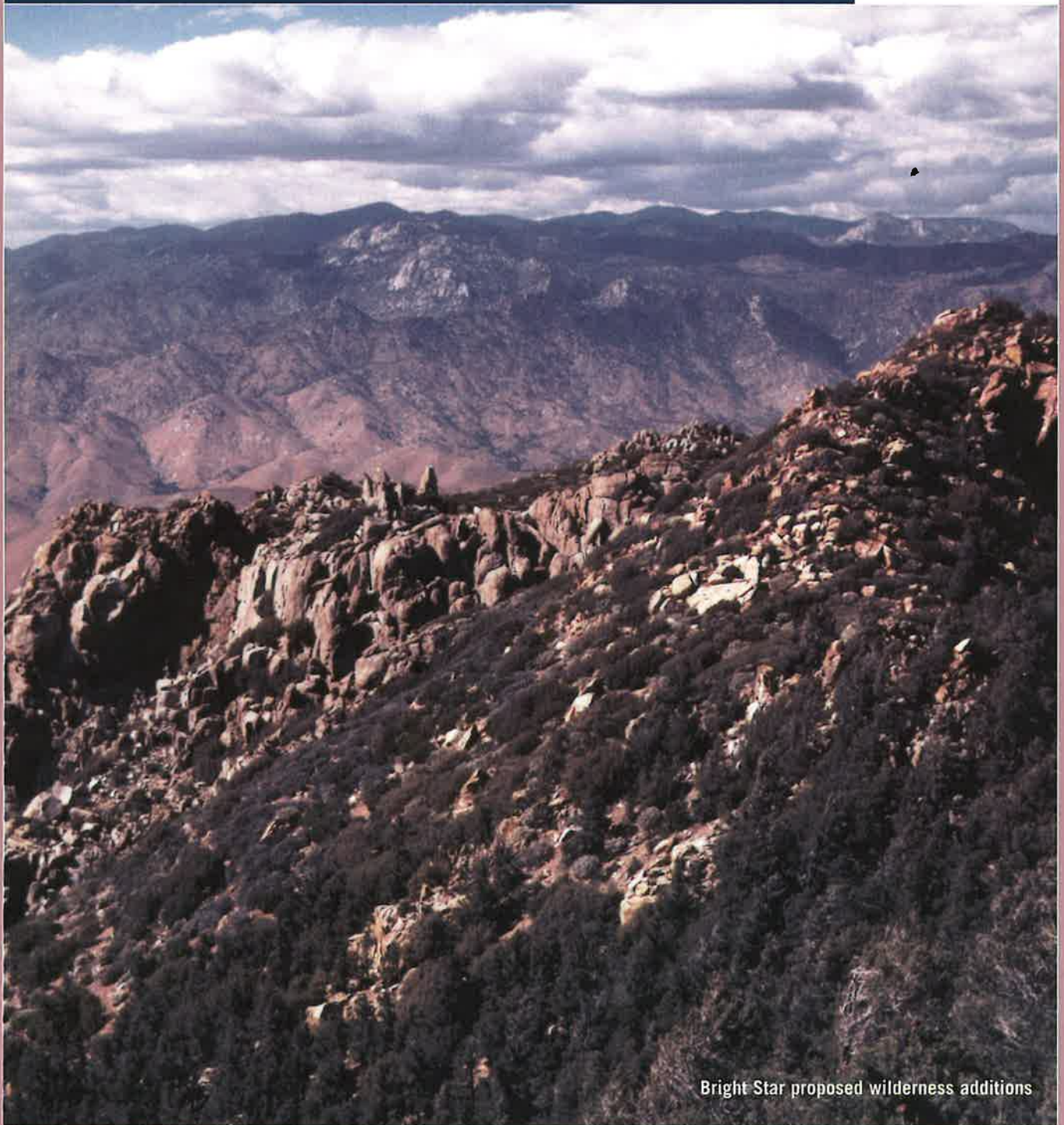


WILDERNESS RECORD

News Journal of the California Wilderness Coalition

SUMMER 2007



Bright Star proposed wilderness additions

Bright Star Wilderness Proposal Threatened *page 4*

Increased Congressional Scrutiny
of R.S. 2477 Claims *page 6*

New Wilderness Opportunities
in the 110th Congress *page 6*



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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 recreation and 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.



DOUG STEAKLEY

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Design by Maia Wilkinson/maiawilkinson.com

Wilderness Can't Wait

No doubt many of you have been enjoying the beautiful California summer outdoors — hiking, bird watching, camping, and fishing. These are the traditional uses of the backcountry that the Wilderness Act protected in 1964. The idea behind wilderness is not just to permanently capture the wild character of a particular landscape. It also provides a place to enjoy historic pastimes in their original settings. Horseback riding, hunting, or simply experiencing solitude from the hustle of everyday life are preserved in wilderness areas.

This is why it's so saddening to hear that the U.S. Forest Service is proposing to open up the Bright Star proposed wilderness additions in the Sequoia National Forest to off-road vehicle (ORV) use. This area is proposed as wilderness in the California Wild Heritage Act, currently before Congress. Allowing ORVs in the area will degrade the land, but the first thing that will happen is the destruction of the area's wilderness character. Sure, those time-honored quiet uses, like backpacking and picnicking, will still be allowed in the area, but ORV noise and dust will destroy the experience. Of course, then there's the issue that a mauled landscape would make the land unsuitable for Congressional wilderness designation — maybe forever.

The Bright Star proposed wilderness addition is considered an Inventoried Roadless Area by the Forest Service. Under the national Roadless Rule, this means the land is protected from logging, road-building, and other development. Unfortunately, the Roadless Rule has a huge exception you can literally ride an ORV through — it doesn't rule out ORV use in roadless areas. Still, the Sequoia National Forest already provides hundreds and hundreds of miles of routes for ORV users to enjoy. Why is the Forest Service breaking new ground for ORVs in an area that has been up for wilderness designation in Congress since 2002? There is no good answer.

The fact is that the longer our wilderness proposals linger in Congress the more likely it is that they'll be degraded as they wait. You'll read about the current status of wilderness legislation in the 110th Congress inside. Please do what you can to get involved in one of these wilderness campaigns. The Forest Service's action is just another reminder that wilderness can't wait. Most importantly, though, spend some time outside this summer and enjoy the wilderness for everything it has to offer!

Mary Wells is the Executive Director of CWC



DOUG STEAKLEY



The Cahuilla Mountain proposed wilderness offers visitors outstanding views of the Cahuilla and Anza Valleys and the San Jacinto Wilderness to the northeast

Good Luck Lea!

CWC's Membership Director, Lea Francisco, leaves us this summer to begin law school in the fall at Santa Clara University. Lea has been with CWC for over three years, and has been the driving force behind some truly terrific events, and a steady increase in membership. We will surely miss her bright smile and cheerful attitude. We wish her all the best in this new chapter!

CWC is Building a New Website!

This summer, with help from a service grant from the Taproot Foundation, CWC will be redesigning our website. We expect the new site to go live in the early fall. Stay tuned!

A Call for Photos

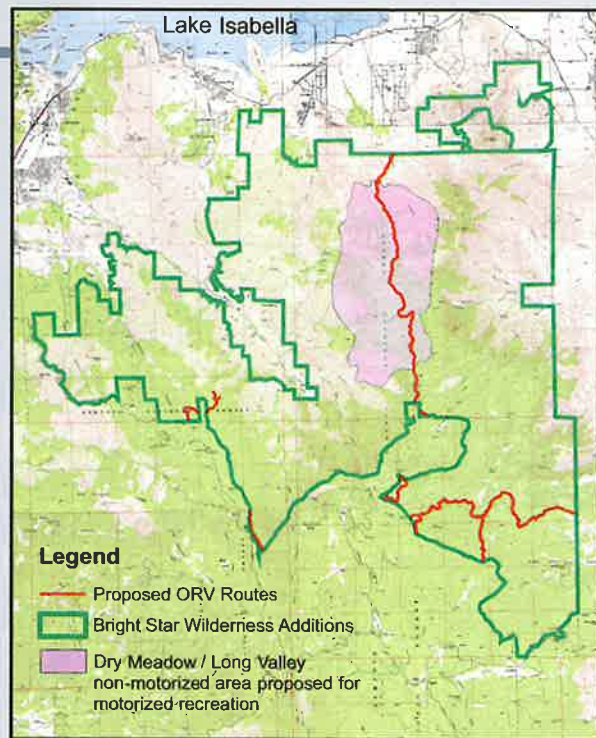
Do you carry your camera on every backpacking trip? Do you suffer the extra ounces in your pack for the sake of art? Are you a budding nature photographer, just waiting to be discovered? This may be your chance!

CWC is always in need of new additions to our wilderness photo collection. With very few exceptions, every beautiful photo you see in the pages of the Wilderness Record, or on our website, was taken by a wilderness activist or member, and donated to CWC for use in our advocacy and membership materials. We welcome all submissions, but we are particularly in need of high resolution digital images. Landscapes and California's unique flora and fauna are all appreciated! Please contact Meredith at meilers@calwild.org, or call our Oakland office, if you are interested in donating photos.

The California Wilderness Coalition is working with conservationists, private property owners, equestrians, and community groups throughout the state to stop route proposals in potential wilderness, direct motorized vehicle use away from sensitive lands and nearby communities, and enforce ORV management laws. If you are interested in joining us in the field to document off-road vehicle damage and build the case for wilderness protection contact Brent at bschoradt@calwild.org.

Off-Road Vehicles Threaten Bright Star Wilderness Proposal

The U.S. Forest Service is proposing new off-road vehicle (ORV) routes through the Bright Star proposed wilderness additions in the Sequoia National Forest. If approved, ORVs would run rampant across thousands of acres currently under consideration by Congress for wilderness protection in Senator Barbara Boxer's California Wild Heritage Act (S. 493). The result may be that this land could no longer be designated as wilderness by Congress because it would be so degraded by ORV use.



Proposed off-road vehicle routes in Bright Star proposed wilderness additions



BRIAN ROUGH

The Bright Star proposed wilderness additions, just south of Lake Isabella in Kern County, would greatly expand the current Bright Star Wilderness from 9,500 acres to almost 60,000 acres. This special area is located at the confluence of four of California's distinct bioregions: the Sierra Nevada, Traverse Range, Mojave Desert, and Central Valley. The lands within the wilderness proposal provide clean water for Kern County residents, spectacular views for outdoor enthusiasts, and contain the rare Piute cypress trees that are endemic to the area.

After years of ignoring unauthorized ORV use in the area, the Forest Service is proposing new route designations that would open up much of the proposed Bright Star wilderness additions to motorized vehicles. One of the most disturbing routes in the Forest Service's proposal additionally includes re-zoning the 5,500 acre Dry Meadow/Long Valley semi-primitive non-motorized area from non-motorized to motorized. This would now allow motorized vehicles in an area previously set aside for quiet recreation. As a result, hikers, backpackers, birdwatchers, and equestrians would be displaced. Moreover, these unique wild lands may be ineligible for wilderness protection because the landscape could be sliced and diced by ORV abuse. The Forest Service is also proposing to designate an additional 21.8 miles of previously closed roads to motorized vehicles.

This proposal illustrates the ongoing threat that ORVs poses to both California's wild places and open frontier across the western United States. As ORV use continues to grow in popularity so do the devastating impacts to our pristine landscapes, watersheds and outdoor recreation. ORVs erode hillsides, pollute our air and water, disturb wildlife and their habitat, and disrupt neighboring communities. In addition, ORV damage increases exponentially when renegade riders create new, unauthorized routes through the heart of wild places, which lead the way to even more unauthorized routes. The result is an endless network of illegal roads and routes that collectively degrades our nation's last wild places.

The proposed off-road vehicle route through the Bright Star proposed wilderness additions crisscrosses streams, having a negative impact on riparian wildlife and vegetation

TAKE ACTION!

Contact Sequoia National Forest Supervisor Tina Terrell today to tell her that you oppose designating off-road vehicle routes in the Bright Star proposed wilderness additions.

Forest Supervisor Tina Terrell
Sequoia National Forest
1839 South Newcomb Street
Porterville, CA 93257

PHONE (559) 784-1500
FAX (559) 781-4744

Tell Forest Supervisor Terrell that you:

- Oppose the designation of off-road vehicles routes in the Bright Star proposed wilderness additions, part of Senator Barbara Boxer's California Wild Heritage Act (S. 493).
- Oppose the designation of new motorized vehicle routes in inventoried roadless areas.
- Believe that the Forest Service should not re-zone non-motorized areas to motorized.

If you have visited the Sequoia National Forest, or better yet, if you have been to the Bright Star Wilderness, the proposed additions, or other Sequoia National Forest roadless areas, tell the forest supervisor why these wild places are important to you.

Increased Congressional Scrutiny of R.S. 2477 Claims

HOWARD GROSS



For the last seven years, the Bush administration has been using administrative actions to wield the little known 19th century statute known as R.S. 2477 in an effort to give away hiking trails, cow paths, dirt tracks and other routes in National Parks, Wildlife Refuges, wilderness, and other important public lands. In California, the Mojave desert has a spider web of claims—including in Death Valley National Park and the Mojave National Preserve. The House of Representatives has just passed language in this year's Interior Appropriations bill that will finally bring some scrutiny to the administration's actions.

Under the Bush policies, states, counties, and off-road vehicle groups have alleged that hiking trails, wash bottoms, streambeds, dog sled trails, and little-used two-tracks are actually constructed highways under R.S. 2477. They have tried to get the federal government to accept these claims and surrender management, and some are trying to develop these trails and routes into paved highways and/or allow off-road vehicle use. Some hope these new (so called) highways will promote mining, timber, and oil and gas development.

Representative Mark Udall (D-CO) successfully pushed for the Interior Department to submit quarterly reports to the committee on R.S. 2477 issues. There also will be more congressional oversight of administrative decisions regarding these claims. This is the first set of checks and balances on the R.S. 2477 issue in many years. Public lands in California, Utah, Alaska, and other western states will finally have some additional security from being quietly given away.

• • •

New Wilderness Opportunities in the 110th Congress

After six successful years, the California Wild Heritage Campaign, comprised of CWC, Friends of the River, Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society, and our regional partners, are looking south and east for new wilderness opportunities. The California desert and the east side of the Sierra Nevada have the most promising political outlook in the 110th Congress for wilderness designation. Some of the areas have been in wilderness legislation in the past, while other lands present new opportunities due to recent acquisitions.



(ABOVE) The Cahuilla Mountain proposed wilderness is one of the many beautiful areas included in the California Desert and Mountain Heritage Act

(ABOVE LEFT) Granite Mountains, Mojave National Preserve

Businesses for Wilderness

In Riverside County, Representative Mary Bono (R-Palm Springs) is on the cusp of reintroducing her 125,000-acre California Desert and Mountain Heritage Act which would designate three new wilderness areas—Beauty Mountain, Cahuilla Mountain and South Fork San Jacinto—and add to the existing Agua Tibia Wilderness and Joshua Tree National Park Wilderness. These lands span from the Mojave to the Colorado deserts to southern California's endangered coastal sage scrub habitat of the Coast Range.

The bill also proposes to protect four streams as wild and scenic rivers, including the North Fork San Jacinto River, Fuller Mill Creek, Bautista Creek, and the spectacular Palm Canyon Creek, which provides an important sanctuary for the endangered Peninsular bighorn sheep and southwestern flycatcher. Palm Canyon Creek also supports the largest California fan palm oasis in the United States. Representative Bono and Senator Barbara Boxer (D-California), who is expected to introduce a companion bill in the Senate, are even considering adding additional areas to the bill in the desert east of Palm Springs.

In the eastern Sierra Nevada, Representative Howard "Buck" McKeon (R-Santa Clarita) is considering reintroducing his bill from last year which will add roadless lands to the existing Hoover Wilderness in the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest and protect the Amargosa River as a wild and scenic river. The Amargosa is the only river that flows into Death Valley National Park. As a ribbon of life through a parched landscape, it supports a wide variety of plants and animals that cling to the river for their very survival.

Recent land acquisitions have made Milpitas Wash in far southeastern Imperial County another potential wilderness area. At almost 70,000 acres, Milpitas Wash supports the largest Sonoran desert woodland in the United States. Until recently, this area had too much of a checkerboard ownership of private and public lands to be considered for wilderness designation. A significant number of federal acquisitions have made this now a potential wilderness. We are beginning the necessary organizing to make Milpitas Wash a politically viable wilderness in this Congress. All of this news makes 2007 an exciting year for California wilderness!

David Brower once said, "There is no business to be done on a dead planet." CWC is supported by a number of business sponsors who believe that statement passionately. These businesses support CWC's work in a variety of ways, from in-kind donations to contributions of a portion of their profits. Below are three businesses that are long-time supporters of CWC and other conservation efforts. For a complete list of our business sponsors, please visit our website at <http://www.calwild.org/about/sponsors.php>.

PATAGONIA, INC.

CWC has been supported by Patagonia, Inc. for almost 20 years. Begun as a small company making gear for climbers, Patagonia is now a worldwide outdoor clothing retailer and a leader in sustainable business practices. Patagonia gives 1% of its sales every year to environmental non-profits—granting \$29 million to date. Patagonia's other environmental efforts include an employee internship program and company-wide conservation campaigns. Staff may take up to 2 months off to work for an environmental group, while still remaining on payroll. The company also runs environmental campaigns where it uses all its channels to raise awareness and activism around an environmental issue. "Oceans as Wilderness" is their current campaign highlighting the connection between the vitality of human life and the marine environment, so that we can all become better stewards of the ocean in our daily lives.

Patagonia was also a founding member of the Conservation Alliance, a group of outdoor industry companies that grants its collective annual membership dues to grassroots environmental organizations. For more information about Patagonia, visit: www.patagonia.com

SHUTE, MIHALY & WEINBERGER LLP

The San Francisco law firm of Shute, Mihalý & Weinberger has been a long-time supporter of CWC's work. The firm's attorneys share a passion for the environment and represent community groups, local governments, and state agencies in an array of land use, natural resources, and environmental protection matters. While they are proud of their legal work for the environment, the firm recognizes that protecting California's natural resources also requires grassroots organizing, scientific research, and advocacy. They complement their legal efforts with contributions to CWC and other environmental groups. In addition, the firm is committed to sustainable business practices both inside and outside the firm. Employees get to work by foot, carpool or transit, and the firm has been "greening" its office space. The firm also urges courts to require pleadings to be filed electronically or on recycled paper. More fundamentally, they are a group of people who love the outdoors and tell stories around the lunch table of recent camping trips or other outdoor adventures. For more information about Shute, Mihalý & Weinberger, visit: www.smwlaw.com

GREEN PLANET REAL ESTATE

Betsy Thagard is a Berkeley-based real estate broker with both a professional and personal commitment to the environment.

Before going into real estate, Betsy worked as an attorney for environmental non-profits. She knows how important personal donations are for the work of groups like CWC. When she started her own brokerage, she wanted to combine her business and environmental interests by ambitiously donating ten percent of her commission from each sale to the environmental non-profit of her client's choice. Betsy grew up in the Alabama woods, and sadly watched pollution and sprawl degrade the land she loved. She wants to do the best that she can to ensure a livable planet for her children. In addition to her business donations, her family only has one car, an electric one powered by solar panels on her roof.

In addition, because of her particular love for California's wilderness, Betsy will donate an *additional five percent* of her commission to CWC if a CWC member refers a buyer or seller to her. Find out more about Green Planet Real Estate at: www.greenplanetrealestate.com

If you are interested in becoming a business sponsor of CWC, please contact Meredith at meilers@calwild.org, or call our Oakland office at (510)451-1450.

Take a Hike in the Cahuilla Mountain Proposed Wilderness!

Trail name: Cahuilla Mountain Trail

Distance: 2.5 miles to summit of Cahuilla Mountain

Difficulty: Moderate

Features: Cahuilla Mountain is a major landmark to the communities of the Anza Valley and the neighboring Cahuilla Indian Reservation, and it has long held a special place in the hearts of the Cahuilla Band of Mission Indians. This trail climbs the mountain in a moderate ascent.

The trail climbs 800 feet over its 2.5-mile course to the top of the 5,635 foot summit and passes multi-colored boulders, stately groves of black oak, Jeffrey pine and Coulter pine along the way. From the top, Cahuilla Mountain offers spectacular views of the historic Juan Bautista de Anza Trail, majestic San Jacinto peak, Palomar Mountain, Beauty Mountain and the deserts of the southeast. Spring wildflower displays are magnificent. The area is home to mountain lion, mule deer, mountain quail and California quail as well as two rare species, the large-blotched salamander and red diamond rattlesnake.

Cahuilla Mountain is the setting for one of the most famous novels from early California history, *Ramona* by Helen Hunt Jackson, published in 1884.



DOUG STEARLEY

View from Cahuilla Mountain, Cahuilla Mountain potential wilderness

Directions to Trailhead: West of Anza on Highway 371 near mile marker 371 RIV 68.0, turn right (north) onto Cary Road which becomes Tripp Flats Road. After 3.6 miles turn left on Forest Service Road 6S22. Drive for 2.4 miles to the signed trailhead on your left.

Information on this trail was gathered from John W. Robinson's and David Money Harris's *100 Hikes in Southern California: San Bernardino Mountain Trails*, 6th Ed. (Wilderness Press, Berkeley, CA January 2006).

CALIFORNIA WILDERNESS COALITION

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