



Forest Watch

The Quarterly Membership Publication of Los Padres Forest Watch

FORESTWATCH is the only organization working to protect the entire Los Padres National Forest – from the Big Sur coast to the Sespe wildlands – from damage caused by oil drilling, off-road vehicle abuse, unmanaged livestock grazing, and other resource extraction.

Inside this issue:

Director's Message	2
Oak Group Art Show Benefit	2
Thanks for Your Support	3
Wild Wilderness Spring BBQ	3
Non-Lead Bullets in Condor Country	4
Volunteers Clean Up Thorn Point Lookout	4
Removing Tamarisk in the Sisquoc River	5
Looking Across the Forest	6-7
Truck Ban on Highway 33	9
Oil Drilling on the Carrizo	9
Forest Plan Update	11
ForestWatch Hosts Wild & Scenic Film Festival in SLO	11
Field Notes: Sisquoc River	12

Court Halts Logging Project in Fragile Burn Area

In a case with far-reaching effects across the West, a federal court has ruled that the Forest Service “ignored or entirely dismissed” its own regulations in approving commercial logging in a remote section of the Los Padres National Forest. The ruling halts the 1,000-acre project until officials prepare an Environmental Assessment or shrink the project’s footprint to reduce the environmental impacts in this fragile burn area in northern Ventura County.

The court’s ruling responded to a lawsuit filed by ForestWatch in February challenging the Forest Service’s approval of the so-called Day Fire Hazard Tree Removal Project. We filed the lawsuit after officials refused to prepare an Environmental Assessment for the project to evaluate the impacts of heavy machinery on the post-fire landscape. The areas slated for logging had partially burned in the 2006 Day Fire and were just beginning to recover.

“This ruling is a tremendous victory for our local forests, wildlife, and watersheds,” said Jeff Kuyper, ForestWatch execu-

(Continued on page 10)



Fire Season Returns to the Los Padres

Fire season started with a fury this year in the Los Padres National Forest, one of the most fire-prone forests in the country. On June 8, an escaped campfire in the Monterey Ranger District started the Indians Fire that burned more than 76,000 acres in and around the **Ventana Wilderness**. Two weeks later, lightning strikes near Big Sur ignited two additional fires which have since merged into the Basin Complex fire, burning more than 140,000 acres. And with resources already stretched thin by these and more than three hundred lightning fires burning throughout California, another fire was reported on July 1 in the front range of the **Santa Ynez Mountains** above Goleta. It burned nearly 9,500 acres before firefighters contained that blaze. It's going to be a long fire season in the Los Padres National Forest and throughout the state.

It all began on June 8, when an escaped campfire at **Escondido Campground** quickly spread into the rugged **Ventana Wilderness**. The fire - now fully contained - burned more than 76,000 acres, from the **Arroyo Seco River** on the west to **Reliz Canyon** on the east.

(Continued on page 8)



Jeff Kuyper is the Executive Director of ForestWatch.

Would our region's wild lands look any different today if you and I weren't willing to protect them? That's the mark of a truly effective conservation organization, and without the dedication and commitment of our growing alliance of supporters, these special places would be a little less special today.

Without us, the Bureau of Land Management in 2006 would have auctioned off more than 10,000 acres along the frontiers of our region's public lands to oil companies. *Without us*, the oil industry would have already started to expand their operations in the Los Padres National Forest...for less than a day's supply of crude. *Without us*, the multinational oil company responsible for last year's devastating spill in the Sespe Creek watershed would have gone unanswered and likely unpunished. We've protected our public lands from commercial exploitation for three years and counting, demanding accountability from the oil industry.

Without us, logging companies would be removing live, healthy trees from Grade Valley and Alamo Mountain as we speak. *Without us*, the Forest Service would have cut down large old-growth conifers on Figueroa Mountain without even preparing an Environmental Assessment. Our advocacy efforts have compelled agencies to follow our nation's environmental laws.

Without us, two more oil wells would have been drilled on the boundary of the Sespe Condor Sanctuary, dangerously close to critical nesting sites. *Without us*, more than seven hundred pounds of microtrash would still be scattered across the forest, waiting for condors to swoop down and bring the small bits of trash to their young. We have directly protected endangered California condors, and their habitat, from harm.

And *without us*, sixty mature tamarisk plants would have spread thousands of seeds along the Sisquoc River this spring. Our volunteers are keeping this highly invasive plant in check.

We're the only nonprofit organization working exclusively on these issues day after day. We're a small but effective bunch, channeling our resources where it matters most and tackling the tough issues that would otherwise fly under the radar screen. We're making a difference and, with your continued support, we can leave our region's wild lands even more majestic tomorrow than they are today.

For the forest,

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Oak Group Art Show Benefits ForestWatch



In March, more than one hundred ForestWatch supporters and art aficionados gathered at Marcia Burt Studio in Santa Barbara to celebrate the opening of *Backcountry Majesty*, an exhibition of landscape paintings of the Los Padres. The month-long art show featured eighty paintings and photographs from more than two dozen local artists who donated half of the proceeds from art sales to ForestWatch. Altogether, the event raised nearly \$10,000 for our local forest protection efforts! The exhibit was hosted by **Marcia Burt Studio** and organized by **The Oak Group**, a collective of local artists who dedicate their work to the preservation of open space throughout the Central Coast. Our sincerest thanks to everyone who participated in this successful event!

Thank You to Our Recent Supporters!

We'd like to thank these new and existing members for your generous contributions since our last newsletter through the end of June. Your support allows us to continue our important work to protect our region's natural treasures.

NEW MEMBERS

Jesse Arnold
Doug Campbell
Jeremy Carroll
Michael Crookston
Marge Erickson
Vince Gerwe
Michele + Glenn Havskjold
Jaspa
David + Phyllis Johnston
Norman Livermore III
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Earth Friends Wildlife Fdn
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McCune Foundation
Ben + Jerry's Foundation

RENEWED SUPPORT

Dolli Alexander
Sheila + Lincoln Anderson
George Appel
Astrov Fund
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Karen Bradstreet
Tom + Betty Budlong
Gary Bulla
Brad + Beth Cardinale
Lee Chiacos
Jim Childress
Walter + Louise Choate
Cornelia Corbett
Kevin Corse
Karen Cotter
B.D. + Liz Dautch
Arden Day
Nan Deal
Bill Denneen
Peter Dolan
Peter Dullea
Jeri Edwards
Clyde Eriksen
Yvonne Esler
Garold Faber
Matthew + Marisa Fienup,
Earthworks LLC
Joel + Vasanti Fithian
Carlos Frilot

Greg + Jennifer Frugoli,
Ecotones
Dieter + Cynthia Goetze
Linda + Frank Granat
Carl + Marian Greenfield
Dennis Hadenfeldt
Jan Hamber
Curtis Harrington
John Heinsius
Barbara + Gerald Hess
Winifred Hirsch
Donn Howell
Kathe Hustace
Angelica Jochim
Ernest Jones
Donald Kahn
Kalon + Karen Kelley
Ron Kopp
Don + Carol Lauer
Tony Lee
Jim Little
Suzanne + Tom Londo
Ken MacDonald +
Rachel Haymon
Steven + Jan Howell Marx
Steven Marx
Jane McCord
Bob + LaVerne McDonnell
Robert McLaughlin
Ralph Mendershausen
Brad Monsma
Allan Morton +
Paula Steinmetz
Burton Moyer +
Marilyn Clark

Michael Mulligan +
Joy Sawyer Mulligan
Babak Naficy
Paulita Neal + Edwin Pounder
New Camaldoli Hermitage
Joanna Newton
Peggy Nielsen
Carole + Dennis Nord
Ken + Alex Palley
Jon + Maria Parisen
Patagonia
Robert Pavlik
Gena Pennington
Lorna Pinassi
Kate Pond
David + Valerie Powdrell
Patricia Puterbaugh
Alan + Jan Rains
Arnie Schildhaus
Lorraine Schulmeister
Celia + Peter Scott
John + Aida Shellabarger
Stuart Sherman
Lynne Stark
Martin Stevenson
Richard + Suzanne Still
John Swanson
Peter Swanson
Eleanor Thomas
Rosita + Barney Tower
Philip Tseng
Art + Judy Vander
Richard + Audrey Vincent
Ernest + Elynor Whitaker
Jeff White
Wilco
Geo Wilde
Charlotte + Ron Williams

OJAI WILDI EVENT

Lesley Alexander
Louis Andaloro
Don Anderson + Nita Whaley
George Appel
Robert Auric + Anna Jacobs
Tessa Bamhardt
Bettina Barrett
Christopher Bates
Holly Blackwell
Emily + Brad Boyes
Doug + Lee Buckmaster
Tom + Betty Budlong
Sandy + George Buechley
Thomas + Frances Chadwick
Mike Chambliss + Sonia Son-
damer
Mark Condon
Kevin + Sonia Connors
Alasdair + Lauren Coyne
Carlos Frilot
Greg + Jennifer Frugoli
Lydia Golden + Brock
Bernstein
Carol + Brian Gravelle
Brian Halvorsen + Rose Quinn
Louise Heydt
Iron Mountain Boys
Island Seed + Feed
Karina Kansky + Larry Hogan
Kalon + Karen Kelley
Ed + Andrea Kish
Dan + Joan Kuyper
Ruth Lasell
Phoebe Lenhart
Bruce Livingstone
Los Padres Outfitters
Julie Manson

Richard Maxwell,
Bon Appetit
George + Peggy Melton
William + Marlene Miley
Brett Millar
Spence + Mildred Mitchell
Brad Monsma
Michael Mulligan +
Joy Sawyer Mulligan
Lisa + Mitch Myers
Barbara Perkins
Linda + Ron Phillips
Sagebrush Annie's
Fred + Phyllis Schoen
Tassajara Zen Mountain Ctr
Thacher School
Charlotte + Ron Williams
Keith Zandona

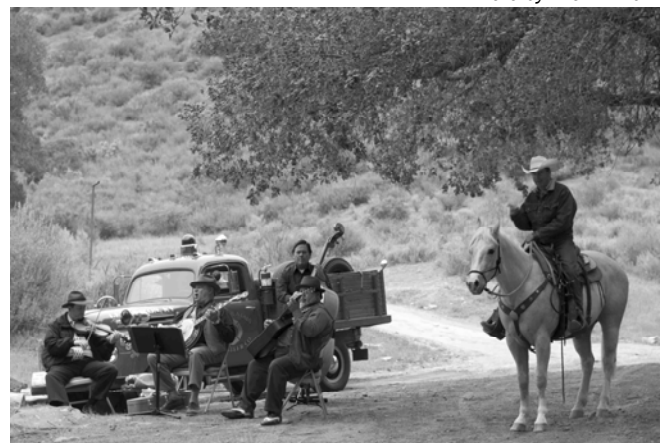
OAK GROUP BENEFIT

Bob Barker
Michele Coyle
Tom Farr
Peter Ford
Cassandra Grant
Christy Hamari
Tina Hasche
Bob Maloy
Marcia Burt Studio
Kate McCurdy
Bob Nisbet
Richard Schull +
Ginny Turner Schull
Christina Siegel
Lindsay Skutch
Leigh Sparks
Richard Stahl
Ed Vernon

Wild Wilderness! Event A Huge Success

Our first-ever membership event was a wild success, with more than fifty wilderness enthusiasts gathering to celebrate the coming of spring with friends and family at **Diamond Hitch Camp** in Ojai at the base of the Los Padres. The afternoon featured a guided nature walk, music by the **Iron Mountain Boys**, a raging campfire, horse and wagon rides, local wines and appetizers, and a **delicious gourmet barbecue**. A lively auction topped off the event, featuring a three-day guided pack trip for two into the Sespe Wilderness donated by **Los Padres Outfitters**, a two-night stay in a remote wilderness retreat donated by the **Tassajara Zen Mountain Center**, and a guided tour of the Bitter Creek Wildlife Refuge with wine tasting and dinner at **Sagebrush Annie's**.

Photo by Brett Millar



Special thanks go to the **Thacher School** for graciously hosting this event, raising \$8,000 for our local forest protection efforts. Plans are underway for an even bigger event next year to celebrate our Fifth Anniversary. Thanks to everyone for joining us on this special afternoon and we hope to see you at Diamond Hitch again next year!

Lead Bullet Ban Takes Effect in Condor Country



New state hunting regulations require the use of non-lead ammunition in habitat for the endangered California condor. Lead-free bullets are now required anywhere within the condor's range, including Ventura, Santa Barbara, Kern, San Luis Obispo, and Monterey counties. The regulations are designed to decrease the incidence of lead poisoning, the leading cause of death for condors in the wild.

Traditional lead ammunition breaks apart into small fragments that the condors consume while scavenging carcasses. Lead is a highly toxic heavy metal that impacts

the nervous system, leading to death or intensive and painful chelation to remove the lead from the condor's system.

Safe, reliable non-lead bullets and shot made from copper and other materials are widely available and perform as well as, or better than, lead ammunition. A list of certified bullets and a map of the areas encompassed by the ban are available at <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/wildlife/hunting/condor>. ForestWatch will work to educate hunters about the new requirements and monitor compliance.

Thorn Point Lookout Tower: A Trashed Treasure in the Sespe



The Thorn Point microtrash work crew. ForestWatch volunteers have now removed 724 pounds of microtrash and other trash from condor habitat.

After gathering around the campfire and retiring to their tents for a good night's sleep, eight dedicated ForestWatch volunteers awoke on an early May morning to summit Thorn Point, one of the tallest peaks in the **Sespe Wilderness** at nearly 7,000 feet in elevation. Their mission: to clean up microtrash around a historic fire lookout tower frequented by the critically endangered California condor.

A popular stop-over for condors traveling between the **Hopper Mountain** and **Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuges**, Thorn Point has accumulated its fair share of glass, bottle caps, bullet shells, and other tiny bits of trash. When adult condors take the trash back to their nests, it becomes harmful – even deadly – to condor chicks. Microtrash has become one of the leading threats to condor recovery.

The morning began with a gentle hike along the headwaters of **Cedar Creek**, but razor-sharp switchbacks on steep slopes quickly turned our journey into a very challenging one. The trek was worth it, as it afforded dramatic vistas in all directions, colorful wildflowers along the trail, and a surprising diversity of plant life as we made our way through a conifer forest of massive ponderosas, sugar pines, and big-cone Douglas firs.

After pausing for lunch and admiring the panoramic views, we cleaned up the entire site in about two hours. The site still needs work, as both the lookout tower and the adjacent shed have fallen into disarray over the years and if they aren't repaired or secured, we can expect to see a lot more microtrash in the future. We're currently discussing the issue with the Forest Service to see if we can diminish the risk to condors in the future.

Thanks to everyone who participated in this challenging but rewarding project!

ForestWatch Volunteers Tackle Invasive Tamarisk on the Sisquoc

The **Sisquoc River** is one of the most pristine streams in southern California, but tamarisk – an alien invader that grows rapidly, choking out native vegetation and consuming large amounts of water – threatens to change that. Tamarisk has appeared in scattered locations throughout the Sisquoc watershed, and for the last decade the Forest Service has tried to control this voracious non-native plant.

This year, ForestWatch—in coordination with the U.S. Forest Service—launched a comprehensive tamarisk removal project along the entire length of the 33-mile river, which flows through the heart of the **San**



Rafael Wilderness. Our goal is to eradicate invasive tamarisk plants from this ecologically sensitive watershed.

Early one April morning, a team of six ForestWatch volunteers converged near **Nira Campground** and hiked to **Schoolhouse Camp**, our base camp for the next three days. This site, nestled amongst the oaks and sycamores near the confluence of



Manzana Creek and the Sisquoc River, would serve as a picturesque and central location for our work over the next few days.

By the end of the trip, we had removed more than

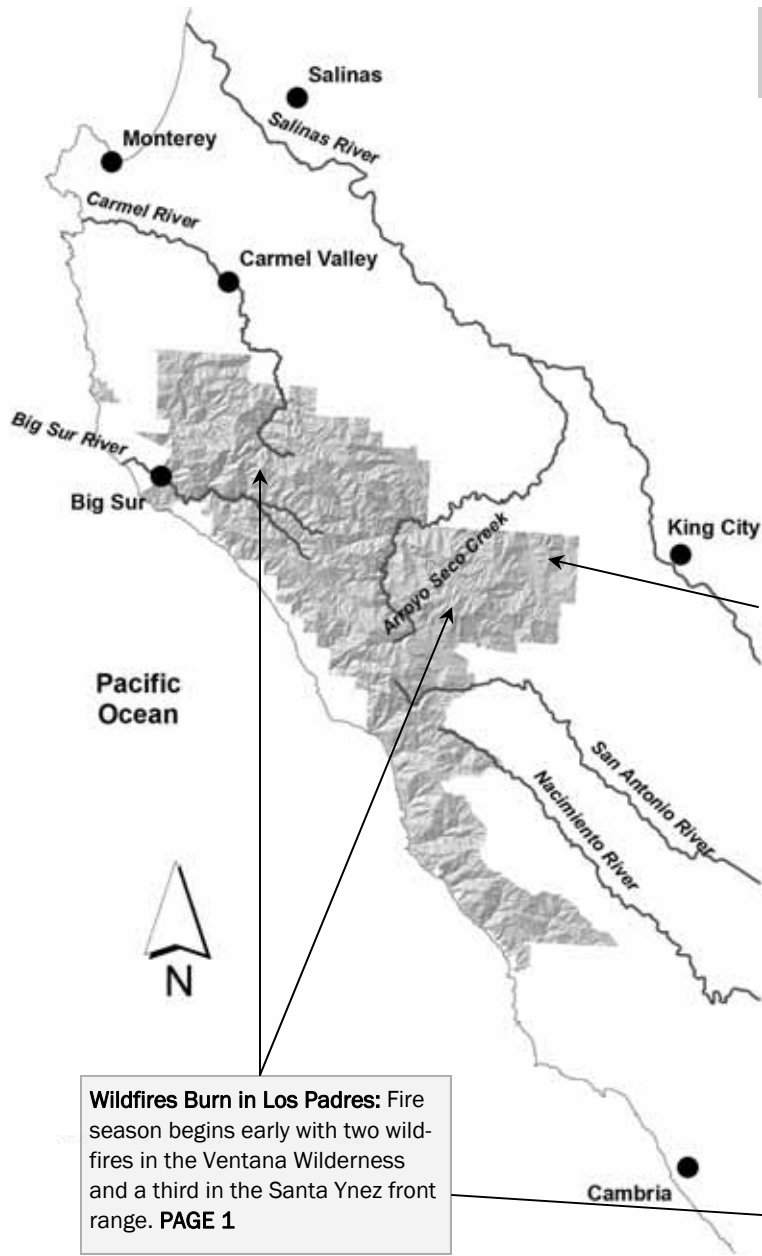
fifty mature tamarisk plants from a four-mile stretch of the Sisquoc River. Most of the tamarisk we found were mature plants and could not be pulled out by hand. Nor could they just be trimmed - they will resprout from the roots. Instead, our volunteers went to the root of the problem... literally. We carefully dug around most of the plants, cutting the root deep beneath the surface and handing the evil-doing plants their ultimate demise!

Our dedicated team of ForestWatch volunteers, our U.S. Forest Service crew, and our horse and mule support team all left the Sisquoc River with a sense of accomplishment, knowing that wildness has been restored to a four mile stretch of this pristine watershed.

ForestWatch is organizing additional tamarisk work projects in the Sisquoc River in Fall and Winter 2008, after the summer heat passes. By the end of the year, we hope to have eradicated tamarisk from twelve miles of stream. If you have a hearty appetite for adventure, we hope you'll join us on our next trek into the mighty Sisquoc!



NORTHERN LOS PADRES



Santa Margarita Ranch: ForestWatch reviewed the final Environmental Impact Report to ensure that this mega-development will not impair the adjacent Santa Lucia Wilderness.

Ventana Wilderness: We're working to improve commercial livestock grazing practices in the forest's largest wilderness area to better protect their wild character and rare wildlife in Reliz Canyon, Vaqueros Canyon, and Sweetwater Canyon in the Arroyo Seco watershed.

Twitchell Dam: ForestWatch is leading a coalition of conservation organizations in demanding adequate downstream flows for steelhead to swim from the ocean to the Sisquoc.

Sisquoc Tamarisk Removal: volunteers are working to remove invasive tamarisk from this pristine watershed. **PAGE 1**

Wildfires Burn in Los Padres: Fire season begins early with two wildfires in the Ventana Wilderness and a third in the Santa Ynez front range. **PAGE 1**

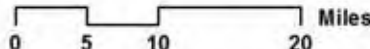
LOOKING ACROSS THE FOREST

an update on how we're protecting your region...

SOUTHERN LOS PADRES

Carrizo Management Plans: ForestWatch joined a coalition of conservation organizations in calling for strict land management standards for the Carrizo Plain National Monument and the adjacent Carrizo Plain Ecological Reserve.

Carrizo Oil Exploration: ForestWatch convinced the BLM to prepare a full environmental analysis before approving oil exploration in this National Monument. **PAGE 9**



Bitter Creek: ForestWatch authored a letter supporting a plan to restore native grasslands on this wildlife refuge.

Cerro Noroeste: We're working to prevent the removal of old-growth conifers used for condor roosting on Cerro Noroeste mountain.

Day Fire Salvage Logging: We prevailed in our lawsuit seeking to protect Grade Valley and Alamo Mountain from damage caused by commercial logging. **PAGE 1**

Thorn Point: Volunteers cleaned up 50 pounds of microtrash in the Sespe Wilderness to protect condors. **PAGE 4**

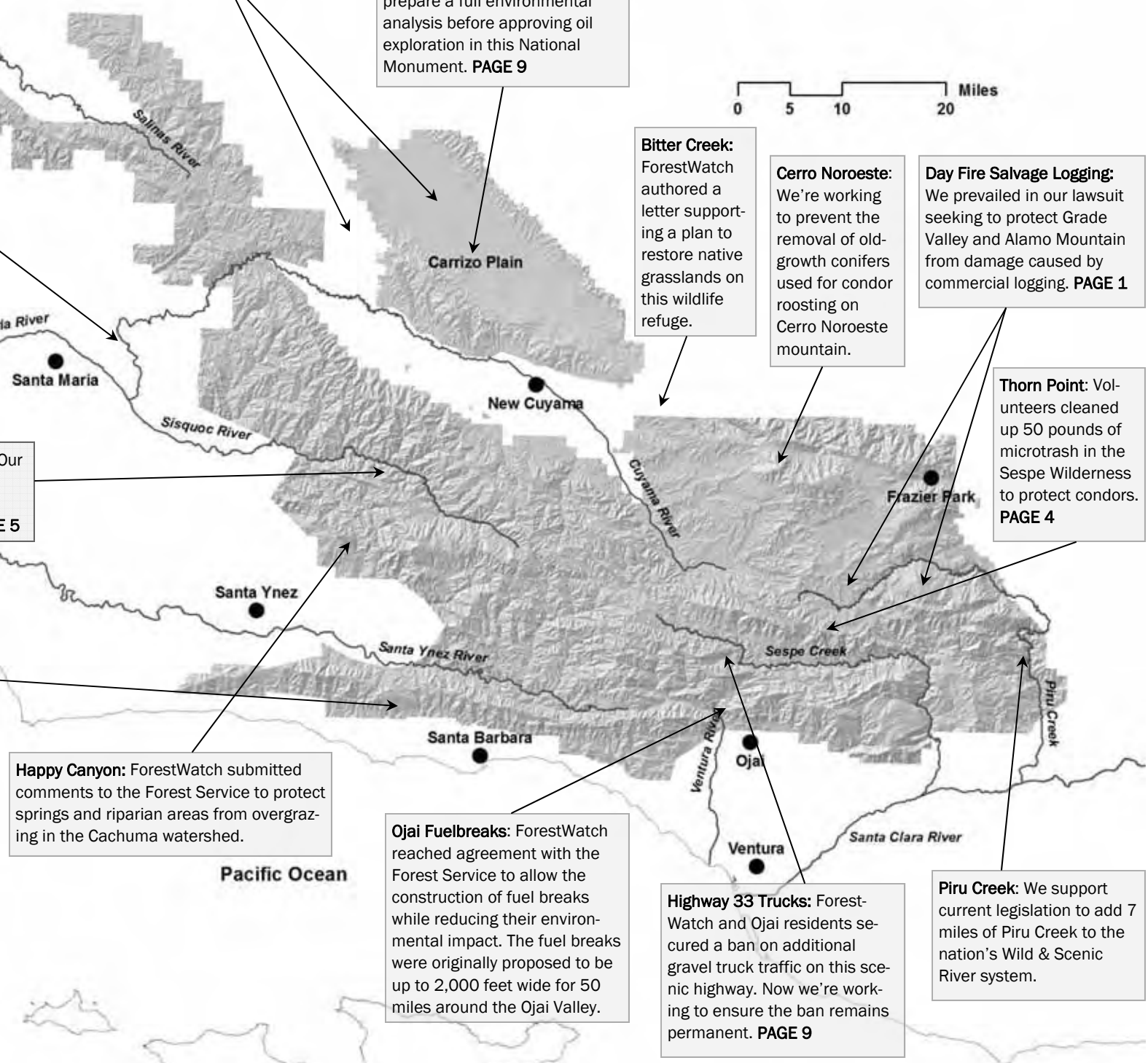
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Happy Canyon: ForestWatch submitted comments to the Forest Service to protect springs and riparian areas from overgrazing in the Cachuma watershed.

Ojai Fuelbreaks: ForestWatch reached agreement with the Forest Service to allow the construction of fuel breaks while reducing their environmental impact. The fuel breaks were originally proposed to be up to 2,000 feet wide for 50 miles around the Ojai Valley.

Highway 33 Trucks: ForestWatch and Ojai residents secured a ban on additional gravel truck traffic on this scenic highway. Now we're working to ensure the ban remains permanent. **PAGE 9**

Piru Creek: We support current legislation to add 7 miles of Piru Creek to the nation's Wild & Scenic River system.



Los Padres Ablaze (from the front page)



Smoke rises from a hillside in the Los Padres after a freak lightning storm hit the Big Sur coast. Photo courtesy of Jennifer Stevens.

Two weeks later, a freak lightning storm near Big Sur started two separate fires - the Gallery Fire along the coast (pictured left) and the Basin Fire inside the remote **Ventana Wilderness**. These two fires have since merged into one and have consumed more than 137,000 acres, with full containment expected by July 30.

The Basin Fire at one point prompted the closure of a 30-mile stretch of Highway 1 and, after the fire jumped containment lines, an evacuation of the entire **Big Sur** community was ordered. The flames are being fueled by high temperatures and erratic winds, as well as tens of thousands of dead oaks that have succumbed to a disease called sudden oak death. The Basin fire also passed over the remote **Tassajara Zen Mountain Center** deep in the Ventana Wilderness, and the monks there successfully defended the retreat while losing only a few outbuildings. The fires, which have so far cost more than \$65 million to suppress, have prompted the closure of the entire **Monterey Ranger District** until further notice.

Thankfully, all but one of the 25 wild condors in Big Sur are accounted for, including two chicks that were nesting in the burn area. The fate of a third chick nesting in the cavity of a redwood tree remains unknown. The fire also affected a condor

release site administered by the Ventana Wildlife Society. A U.S. Coast Guard helicopter rescued the eight condors

housed in the release pens, temporarily moving the endangered birds out of harms way to the nearby **Pinnacles National Monument**. The rescued condors will be released into the wild later this year.

Further south, on July 1, a fire broke out near **Lizard's Mouth**, a unique sandstone outcrop on the crest of the **Santa Ynez Mountains**. With hundreds of wildfires burning in the State of California, officials declared the Gap Fire as the state's number one priority.

More than 5,000 residents in Goleta and outlying mountain communities were ordered or warned to evacuate from their homes as the fire spread towards **Condor Peak** and **Upper Tecolote Canyon** on the fringe of the Gaviota Coast and towards **San Jose Canyon** near Highway 154. Despite fierce "sundowner" winds pushing the fire towards town, more than 2,500 emergency responders were able to protect all homes from the blaze. Now contained, the Gap Fire has covered nearly 9,400 acres of the Santa Ynez front country and has cost more than \$20 million to suppress. Until further notice, all national forest lands south of **Camino Cielo** between Gibraltar Road and Refugio Road are closed to public entry.

As both fires reach full containment, crews are focusing on rehabilitating dozer lines, to the extent possible, to minimize erosion during winter rains. The Forest Service will also undertake a Burn Area Emergency Response process to evaluate the expected impacts to watersheds in the burn areas from flooding and landslides due to loss of vegetation. Forest Watch will closely track both processes.



Scenic Highway 33 Protected from More Gravel Truck Traffic...For Now

In May, ForestWatch moved one step closer to protecting the Ojai Valley, the Los Padres National Forest, and Scenic Highway 33 from an influx of as many as 138 gravel truck trips per day to and from the Diamond Rock Mine planned for the **Cuyama Valley**.

The mining company had initially proposed to send as many as 138 truck trips per day along **Highway 33**, a narrow, winding two-lane mountain road designated as a California Scenic Highway and a National Forest Scenic Byway. The trucks would have cut through the heart of the Los Padres National Forest, rumbling by popular swimming holes, campgrounds, hiking trails, wilderness areas, and a ten-mile stretch of **Sespe Creek**.

When added to existing truck traffic, this would have resulted in one truck every four minutes during peak production, according to the mine's Environmental Impact Report.

While the Diamond Rock truck ban is now in effect, the mine operator can ask that it be lifted anytime in the future. ForestWatch and the Stop the Trucks Coalition will continue to demand that the ban remains permanent. With your support, we will also continue to monitor additional mines that could send hundreds of additional trucks through the heart of the Los Padres.



Oil Exploration Planned for the Carrizo Plain National Monument

An oil company recently announced plans to explore for oil along five-miles of the **Carrizo Plain National Monument's** ecologically sensitive interior using dynamite and 60,000-pound thumper trucks. Due to the highly fragile landscape, ForestWatch and a coalition of conservation organizations recently convinced the Bureau of Land Management to conduct the highest level of environmental review before allowing the exploration to proceed.

Vintage Production LLC, a subsidiary of oil giant Occidental Petroleum Corp., owns 30,000 acres of mineral rights on the valley floor of the Carrizo Plain National Monument. This same company was responsible for last year's devastating oil spill in the Los Padres National Forest.

The Carrizo Plain was established as a national monument in 2001 to protect the area's unique wildlife and cultural resources. Dynamite and thumper trucks would cause significant ground disturbance that would affect endangered wildlife like the giant kangaroo rat, the San Joaquin kit fox, and the blunt-nosed leopard lizard, all of which live in the area in underground burrows.

With your support we'll continue to build on our track record of protecting the Carrizo Plain from additional oil development. What little oil remains in the monument is not worth the damage that could occur from using thumper trucks and explosives in this ecologically fragile area.



The Carrizo Plain is home many rare plants and animals, including reintroduced herds of pronghorn antelope (shown) and Tule elk.

ForestWatch Halts Illegal Logging Project (from the front)

tive director. “The court confirmed what we’ve been saying all along—that an intensive commercial logging operation would wreak havoc on this ecosystem just as it begins to recover from the effects of wildfire.”

After the 2006 Day Fire passed through **Grade Valley** and **Alamo Mountain** on the Mt. Pinos District of the Los Padres National Forest, officials became concerned that “dead or dying” trees might fall onto the road, and proposed the Day Fire Hazard Tree Removal Project.

But instead of simply cutting the trees and leaving them in place for soil nutrients and wildlife habitat, logging companies pressured the Forest Service to allow a commercial timber sale in the area. And to fast-track the project through the approval process, the Forest Service classified the logging as “routine road maintenance,” which removed it from the requirement to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA).

The court’s ruling centered on whether this “road maintenance” classification was consistent with agency policy. In a stinging rebuke of the Forest Service’s approach, the court found that the Forest Service “ignored or entirely dismissed” its own requirement to prepare an EA for any

salvage logging projects larger than 250 acres, and had miscategorized the project as “routine road maintenance” in an effort to avoid preparing this important environmental document. This project was more than four times larger than the allowable limit, clearly requiring an EA.

The court agreed, concluding, “Due to the acreage of trees involved, the Forest Service plainly erred in making use of the Road Maintenance and Site Maintenance CEs and its decision to do so was arbitrary and capricious.”

During the approval process for this project, ForestWatch presented the Forest Service with several scientific studies showing that salvage logging can seriously hinder the recovery of burned areas following wildfire. Logging requires the use of heavy equipment on fragile soils, and can cause long-term damage through the construction of landing areas, road widening, and dragging trees to loading areas, according to those peer-reviewed studies.

The project was fraught with problems from the beginning. In addition to the agency’s failure to prepare an EA, ForestWatch also discovered—through several visits to the project area — that as many as 20% of the trees marked for logging were still living and did not even qualify as hazard trees to begin with.

The court’s ruling will have far-reaching effects on national forests across the country, hopefully prompting a more sensible approach to hazard tree management, one that treads lightly on the land and fully allows the recovery of the post-fire landscape. Thanks to all of our members and supporters for providing the resources necessary to bring justice to the forest. And a big thank you to our attorney, Erik Ryberg, who brilliantly presented this case on our behalf.

“The court confirmed what we’ve been saying all along – that an intensive commercial logging operation would wreak havoc on this ecosystem just as it begins to recover from the effects of wildfire.”

More than 1,400 trees were marked, like this one, for logging even though many of them were not “dead or dying” and presented no public safety hazard.



Land Management Plan Update: Plans, Postmarks and Politics, Part Two

In our last issue, we told you about how a high-ranking Forest Service bureaucrat in **Washington D.C.** refused to consider the conservation community's appeal of the new management plan for the Los Padres National Forest. His refusal had nothing to do with science-based land management and everything to do with politics, claiming that our appeal was filed one day late and didn't have a postmark!

We're pleased to report that a federal judge has ordered the agency to respond to our appeal. As you may have guessed, the Forest Service "responded" by rejecting every single one of the issues presented in our appeal. Having exhausted all other options, ForestWatch joined a coalition of conservation organizations this spring in filing a lawsuit to challenge the forest management plans in court.

And we're in good company. The **State of California** also appealed the new forest plan, arguing that the plan allowed too much development in the forest's pristine roadless areas. But the Forest Service bureaucrat rejected their appeal, too, prompting the State to sue the Forest Service.

In today's political climate, wildlife too often take the back seat to development and resource extraction interests. Your support allows us to continue to demand strong protections for our local wildlife and the wild places they inhabit.



The new management plan for the Los Padres National Forest includes vague standards, less accountability, and weaker safeguards for threatened wildlife like the California red-legged frog. Photo courtesy of Patrick Briggs, californiaherps.com

ForestWatch Hosts the Wild & Scenic Film Festival in San Luis Obispo

ForestWatch is hosting the Wild & Scenic Environmental Film Festival On Tour as it comes to San Luis Obispo! The event is scheduled for **Saturday, October 18** at the **Spanos Theater** on the Cal Poly campus and will include an evening of short and longer films designed to inspire all of us to go out and make a difference in our community.

You'll **LEARN** new ideas from a selection of inspiring environmental films with hardhitting topics including water issues, wilderness preservation, citizen activism, and more. You'll **EXPERIENCE** the adrenaline of kayaking the wildest rivers, climbing the highest peaks, and trekking across the globe with adventure films around the world. You'll **EXPLORE** the issues and movements with leading environmental activists and professionals, filmmakers, and celebrities. And you'll **CELEBRATE** the natural and wild world.

All proceeds of the event will benefit Los Padres ForestWatch. Stay tuned for more details about this exciting evening! For more information or to become an event sponsor, call us at (805) 617-4610.

patagonia presents the



Field Notes: The Wild & Scenic Sisquoc River

Hailed as “the most pristine stream” in our region, the Sisquoc River offers untouched wildlife habitat and wilderness landscapes to those few hearty souls who reach this remote area by foot or horseback. The mighty Sisquoc originates on the slopes of 6,590-foot **San Rafael Mountain**, flowing downstream for 33 miles through the rugged San Rafael Wilderness, flanked by the **Sierra Madre Mountains** to the north and the San Rafael Mountains to the south before eventually emptying into the **Cuyama River**.



Chumash rock art sites are scattered throughout the valley, as are remnants of an 1880s faith-healer homestead community. The **Manzana Schoolhouse** (a historic landmark) and various ruins are all that remain after prolonged drought forced the settlers out.

Efforts to protect the Sisquoc began in 1932 with the establishment of the San Rafael Primitive Area, and three decades later with the creation of the **San Rafael**

Wilderness Area. In 1992, 33 miles of the Sisquoc were added to the nation’s Wild & Scenic River system to protect their outstandingly remarkable values.

Never dammed, the Sisquoc is one of our region’s only free-flowing rivers. While once supporting tens of thousands of steelhead, current downstream dams and water uses prevent steelhead from swimming upstream to the Sisquoc in all but the wettest years. The river valley is home to several other rare critters like arroyo toads, red-legged frogs, southwestern pond turtles, and California condors.

The **Sisquoc River Trail** — an old overgrown wagon road — provides hiking and equestrian access along the entire length of the Sisquoc River, from the wide sandy floodplains of the lower river to the upper reaches dominated by mixed conifer forests, narrow rocky areas, waterfalls, and deep pools. The Sisquoc is a truly sacred place, and will remain so thanks to the foresight of those who fought to protect it.

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