

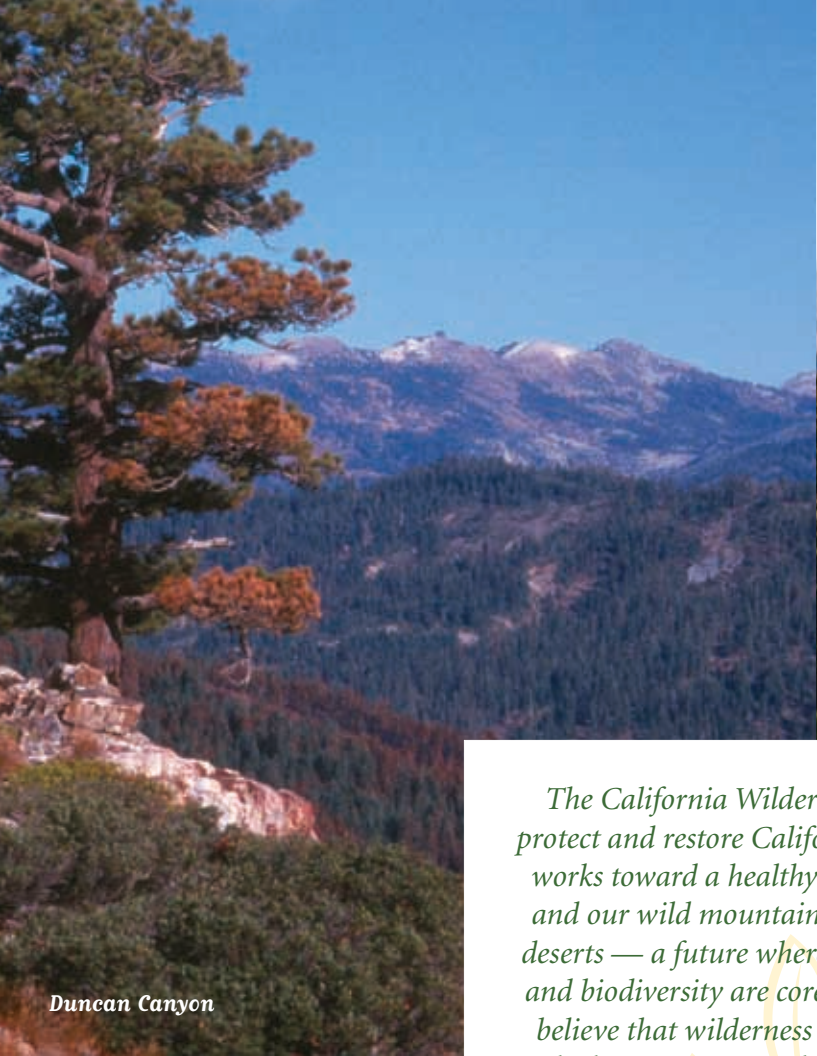
OUR NATURAL HERITAGE AT RISK:

# California's 10 Most Threatened Wild Places 2003

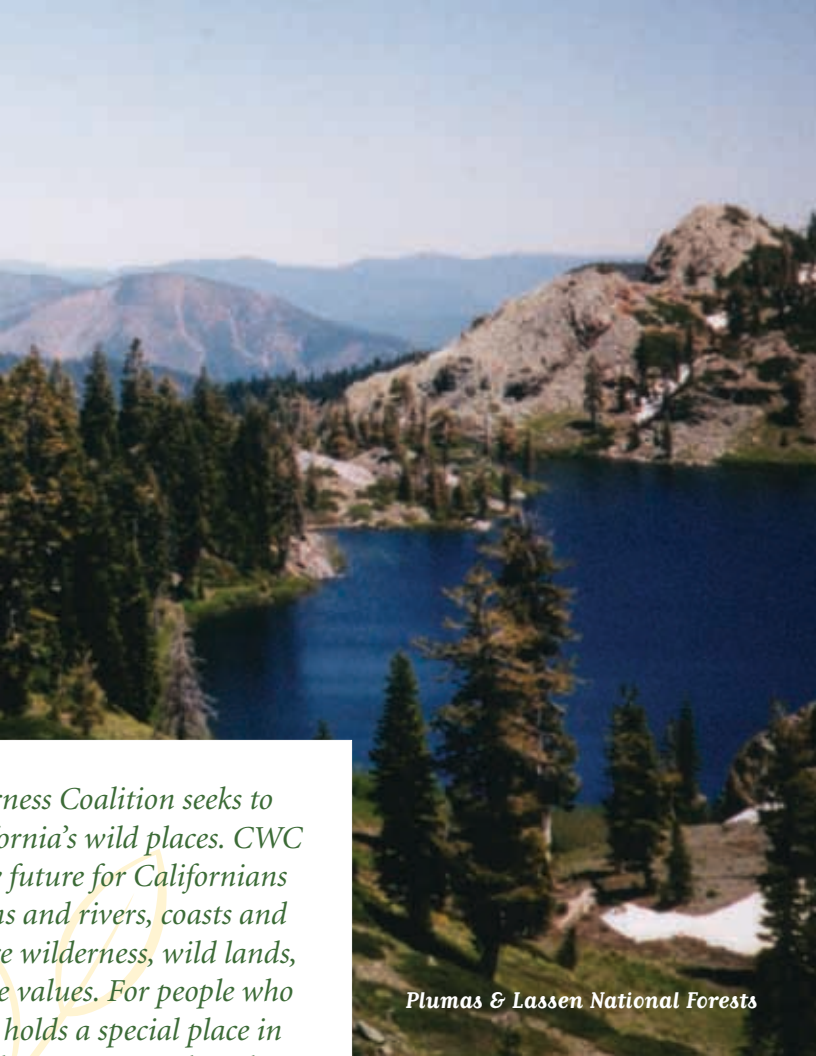


CALIFORNIA  
WILDERNESS  
COALITION

*The Voice for Wild California*



*Duncan Canyon*



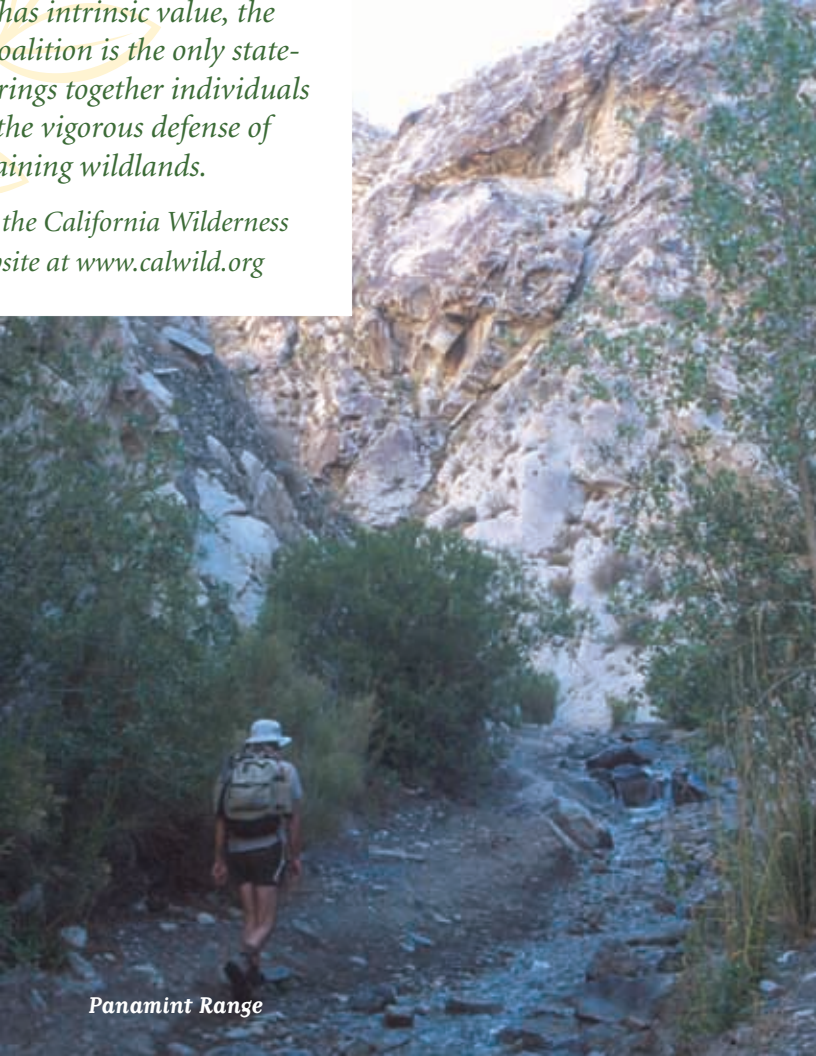
*Plumas & Lassen National Forests*

*The California Wilderness Coalition seeks to protect and restore California's wild places. CWC works toward a healthy future for Californians and our wild mountains and rivers, coasts and deserts — a future where wilderness, wild lands, and biodiversity are core values. For people who believe that wilderness holds a special place in the human spirit and has intrinsic value, the California Wilderness Coalition is the only state-wide organization that brings together individuals and organizations in the vigorous defense of California's remaining wildlands.*

*For more information on the California Wilderness Coalition, visit our website at [www.calwild.org](http://www.calwild.org)*



*Cleveland National Forest*



*Panamint Range*

OUR NATURAL HERITAGE AT RISK  
*California's 10 Most Threatened  
Wild Places*



*March 2003*

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The following organizations contributed to this report:

- American River Wildlands
- California Wild Heritage Campaign
- Center for Biological Diversity
- Center for Sierra Nevada Conservation
- Desert Protective Council
- Desert Survivors
- Friends of the Panamints
- Forest Issues Group
- Heart and Soul Coalition
- John Muir Project
- Mount Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center
- National Parks Conservation Association
- Northcoast Environmental Center
- Oregon Natural Resources Council
- Sierra Club California
- Tejon Working Group
- The Wilderness Society

*Front cover: Klamath River, salmon photo by AP Wide World.*

*Back cover: Algodones Dunes, photos by Andrew M. Harvey, [www.visualjourneys.net](http://www.visualjourneys.net).*

*“Something will have gone out of us as a people if we ever let the remaining wilderness be destroyed; if we permit the last virgin forests to be turned into comic books and plastic cigarette cases; if we drive the few remaining members of the wild species into zoos or to extinction; if we pollute the last clean air and dirty the last clean streams and push our paved roads through the last of the silence.”*

— Wallace Stegner, “Wilderness Letter,” 1960

## California’s 10 Most Threatened Wild Places



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# Executive Summary

Since the 2002 elections, California has been rocked not by earthquakes or El Niño but by a deluge of new federal threats to our state's wild environment. It is as though a floodgate opened in Washington, D.C.: Literally dozens of regulatory rollbacks, decision reversals, and other anti-environmental policies have gushed forth in just a few months, many targeting California specifically.



*The Bush Administration is revising policies to increase logging of old-growth forests in the Sierra Nevada.*

Today the Bush Administration is hitting the Golden State's wild public lands harder than any administration in memory, opening our national monuments to logging, our national forests to oil drilling, even our national parks and wilderness areas to road-building. Many of California's proposed wilderness areas are targeted for logging or development. Adding to the strain, industrial logging and urban sprawl on privately owned lands threaten to snuff out some of California's most important wildlife habitat. To choose the ten wild places in the deepest danger was difficult this year, starting from a list more than twice that long.

## ***Bush Administration's Unprecedented Rollbacks***

Fully half these areas are threatened because the Bush Administration has refused to enforce one key policy: the Forest Service's Roadless Area Conservation Rule. This landmark conservation measure, adopted by the Forest Service in 2000 but suspended by the current administration, protects the last wild national forest lands — 58.5 million acres in the U.S. and 4.4 million acres in California — from development, logging, and road-building. In December 2002, a federal court

## ***California's 10 Most Threatened Wild Places in 2003 are:***

**Algodones Sand Dunes** — Bush Administration's extreme off-road plan would overturn protection of endangered wildlife and wilderness.

**Panamint Range (Briggs Mine and Surprise Canyon)** — Open-pit mining and extreme ORV use would devastate natural landscapes, sacred lands, and wilderness.

**Cleveland National Forest** — Proposed freeways, dams, and, power lines threaten region's last unprotected wild forests.

**Tejon Ranch** — Sprawl and industrial development threaten key habitat on California's largest private landholding.

**Los Padres National Forest** — Proposed oil and gas development puts wild forest lands and endangered species habitat at risk.

**Duncan Canyon** — Salvage logging would ruin old-growth forest, roadless areas and proposed wilderness.

**Westside Sierra Corporate Forestlands** — Company's plan to clearcut 1,000,000 acres would degrade water and drive Sierra Nevada wildlife toward extinction.

**Plumas and Lassen National Forests** — Bush Administration's massive logging "experiment" would cut old-growth forests and spotted owl habitat.

**Medicine Lake Highlands** — Development of geothermal power plants would lay waste to wild forests and sacred lands.

**Klamath River Basin** — Excessive water diversion is killing thousands of salmon and hurting farmers, fishermen, tribes, and endangered wildlife.

reinstated the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, sweeping away a judicial challenge. Now the Bush Administration is expected to dismantle the rule administratively. If enforced, the rule will save the threatened roadless areas of the Los Padres National Forest, the Cleveland National Forest, and Duncan Canyon (Tahoe National Forest), plus threatened portions of the Plumas National Forest (Humboldt Summit Roadless Area), and the Medicine Lake Highlands (Mount Hoffman Roadless Area on the Modoc and Klamath National Forests). Without the rule, all these areas are in imminent danger of development or logging.



*“The Bush Administration is issuing a shocking series of anti-environmental policies that specifically target California’s wildlands.”*

The Bush Administration also has reversed many policies specific to California, stripping away hard-won protections and approving harmful projects. It approved industrial power plants in the Medicine Lake Highlands near Mt. Shasta which were denied by the previous administration. Similarly, it reversed the denial of an open-pit mine in the California Desert Conservation Area. It is re-opening large areas of the fragile Algodones Dunes, previously closed to vehicles to protect endangered species. Last summer it overruled its own federal scientists and cut back Klamath River flows, killing more than 34,000 salmon in Northern California. It is stripping key protections from the



*The Forest Service proposes to log the Duncan Canyon Proposed Wilderness, violating both the Sierra Nevada Framework and the Roadless Area Conservation Rule.*



AP WIDE WORLD

*The Bush Administration diverted Klamath River flows last summer, killing more than 34,000 salmon.*

Northwest Forest Plan that protect California’s ancient forests and salmon. And today, the Bush Administration is dismantling the Sierra Nevada Framework — the historic plan that protects wildlife and old-growth trees in 11 of California’s national forests — so timber companies can more easily log ancient forests in our state’s greatest mountain range.

California’s endangered species have been especially hard hit. In just one year, Bush Administration officials slashed critical habitat for the threatened California red-legged frog, coastal California gnatcatcher, Alameda whipsnake, San Diego and Riverside fairy shrimp, and 19 endangered or threatened species of Pacific salmon and steelhead. Furthermore, they denied any endangered species protection at all for the imperiled Yosemite toad and California spotted owl. They even propose to drill for oil in the Los Padres National Forest where the critically endangered California condor is struggling to evade extinction.

JIM ROSE

## *Wilderness, Wildlands, and Wildlife Habitat*

California conservationists are working hard to protect many of these threatened places as congressionally designated wilderness areas before they are lost forever. Wilderness legislation currently proposed in Congress would permanently protect the wild Los Padres National Forest, Duncan Canyon, parts of the Klamath River Basin, and many other threatened places so that future generations can enjoy them as we do today.

Still, some of our most threatened public wildlands are not even being considered for wilderness protection. In Southern California, the last roadless wildlands on the Cleveland National Forest – true wilderness in all but policy – could be lost forever to new freeways, hydroelectric projects and powerlines. Unprotected wilderness-quality desert lands in the Panamint Range and the Algodones Dunes are menaced by open-pit mining and off-road vehicle abuse.

And some of the most endangered wilds are not public lands at all. The vast privately owned Tejon Ranch in Southern California is now being fragmented by urban development, while the corporate forestlands of the Westside Sierra Nevada

are being shattered by clearcut logging. In each case, conservationists have identified large private landholdings as critical for preserving California's wildlife corridors and biodiversity, and their fragmentation threatens wildlife and waters belonging to all Californians. Yet these key habitat lands cannot be saved by an act of Congress; preserving them will require strong coordinated action by state and local governments, concerned citizens and organizations, and the corporations responsible for these lands.

## *Recommendations*

While specific recommendations for each threatened area are found in the full report, we recommend a number of measures that would substantially increase protection for many of these places, as well as other threatened wildlands in California:

- Congress should designate wilderness areas on deserving public lands in California. Wilderness designation is the strongest protection under law, and the only means to ensure these lands are permanently protected for future generations. The California Wild Heritage Act, introduced by Senator Barbara Boxer and Representatives Mike Thompson and Hilda Solis, would preserve many additional wilderness areas and wild and scenic rivers on California's federal public lands.
- The U.S. Forest Service should uphold the Roadless Area Conservation Rule and find compatible ways to use forest resources without fragmenting and destroying the nation's last wild forests.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service should complete the listing of threatened and endangered species, and the designation of critical habitat for them, as required by law.
- Local land use planners should plan regionally, across political boundaries, to control urban growth in order to conserve threatened wildlife habitat and the connecting linkages vital to individual species and local ecosystems.



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

*The Bush Administration proposes new oil drilling in endangered California condor habitat in the Los Padres National Forest.*



# About This Report

California is renowned for its scenic wilderness areas, from redwood forests to the snowy High Sierra to the scenic California desert. These special places provide recreation opportunities for millions, and are a vital part of our natural heritage and quality of life.

The California Wilderness Coalition represents some 3,400 individuals and 200 conservation groups and businesses who seek to protect and restore California's wild places so that future generations may enjoy them as we do today. The aim of this report is to bring to your attention *California's 10 Most Threatened Wild Places* in 2003 – wildlands of statewide significance in jeopardy of damage or destruction this year.

Each year the California Wilderness Coalition staff, along with concerned citizens, activists, and conservation organizations, reviews threatened wildlands throughout California. After careful review, *California's 10 Most Threatened Wild Places* are chosen by using the following criteria:

**Severity:** What is the severity of the problem and the permanence of the damage?

**Urgency:** Does the problem pose an immediate threat to an area or will it slowly degrade an area over time?

**Impact:** How will the threats impact the wildlands? Do the threats include one or several of the following: logging, mining, urban development, oil and gas development, road-building, off-road vehicle use, water development and diversion?

**Significance:** What is the ecological, cultural or historical significance of the area? Does the area contain threatened or endangered species?

**Fragmentation:** Are the wildlands becoming increasingly fragmented, resulting in both geographic and ecological isolation?



*Biodiversity and endangered species are key reasons to protect the Los Padres National Forest from oil drilling.*

Your active participation is greatly needed to preserve the wild areas near you and across California from threats that would permanently damage or destroy their wild character. For more information on how to get involved to help protect California's most threatened wild places, see the "What You Can Do" section regarding each place. Unless more citizens get involved to help save these imperiled wildlands, we will continue to lose precious places that should be cherished for generations to come.

# Algodones Sand Dunes

## BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S EXTREME OFF-ROAD PLAN WOULD OVERTURN PROTECTION OF WILDLIFE, WILDERNESS, AND SUSTAINABLE RECREATION

### Background

In the southeastern corner of California's Imperial County, there is an enticing American Sahara — the Algodones Sand Dunes, designated as a National Natural Landmark. This expanse of towering dunes forms a unique ecosystem that harbors endangered plants and animals, but also attracts a more dangerous breed of wildlife — swarming crowds of up to 240,000 people driving destructive off-road vehicles (ORVs) through the dunes on busy weekends.

In order to protect endangered species, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) signed a lawsuit settlement agreement in November 2000 with three conservation groups and five off-road vehicle groups. This historic agreement barred ORVs from 49,300 acres of sensitive dunes habitat in addition to the already protected 26,000-acre North Algodones Dunes Wilderness, and left open nearly 70,000 acres most popular with off-roaders — about half the dunes, or 106 square miles. The agreement established a needed conservation balance until BLM could develop a new management plan to better protect wildlife. Before the agreement, mobs of off-roaders would tear through sensitive areas of the dunes. Endangered species were not the only losers: fatal gun battles and stabbings, high speed collisions, and attacks on federal rangers threatened human lives as well.

Conservationists have proposed that the newly protected 43,000-acre central closure area and a smaller northern closure be permanently protected as the South Algodones Dunes Wilderness, and North Algodones Dunes Wilderness Addition. The large central area represents the wildest, highest, and most remote part of the dunes and encompasses much of a former BLM Wilderness Study Area.

### Outstanding Values

The Algodones Dunes are the largest dune system in the U.S., stretching 40 miles long and five miles across. The 300-foot dunes and their surrounding desert woodlands of mesquite, paloverde, and ironwood trees are home to many threatened and endangered species, including at least four species that live nowhere else on earth: Peirson's milkvetch, the unique plant known as "sand food," Algodones Dunes sunflower, and Andrews dune scarab beetle. The dunes are also home to the endangered desert tortoise, sensitive flat-tailed horned lizard and sensitive Colorado desert fringe-toed lizard.



ANDREW M. HARVEY, WWW.VISUALJOURNEYS.NET

*The fragile Algodones Dunes suffer from unmanageably large crowds of off-road vehicle users.*

Native Americans first inhabited the dunes, crossing between an ancient lake and the Colorado River. Early explorers such as Juan Bautista de Anza and later, the Southern Pacific Railroad, detoured around the wild dune system. Today the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area, which encompasses the Algodones Dunes, offers not just ORV areas but also spectacular opportunities for camping, hiking, bird watching, photography, and other sustainable recreation. The dunes offer a wilderness experience like no other in California.

### Threats — Intensive Off-Road Vehicle Use

Off-road vehicles kill dunes vegetation, destroy animal burrows, and kill wildlife. Scientists have shown the harmful effects of ORVs on dune plants and animals, documenting significantly reduced densities of both in areas open to vehicles. Huge, unchecked crowds of as many as 240,000 people and a preference by BLM to manage the entire dunes area primarily for intensive off-roading place the Algodones Dunes at great risk.

In March 2002, BLM released a proposed management plan for the dunes that would be a disaster for conservation and for sustainable, non-motorized recreation. BLM did not propose any alternative maintaining the current balanced management. Instead, BLM plans to reopen all the current closures, eliminating all protected areas outside the designated wilderness area. Comprising only 15 percent of the dunes at their northern tip, the existing wilderness area is not enough to ensure survival of dune species.

BLM's plan also fails to limit ORV crowds to what the agency can handle, ensuring that off-roading at the dunes will continue to overwhelm law enforcement, decimate wildlife, and drain staff and rangers from BLM, the Forest Service, the National Park Service, and other agencies nationwide as extra officers are brought in to deal with violent off-roading crowds. In October 2000 and November 2001, holiday weekends in the Algodones Dunes resulted in widespread violence and numerous fatalities.

### **Status**

The BLM plan could be approved at any time, immediately reopening 49,300 acres of sensitive wildlands to ORVs. In fall of 2002, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) voiced concerns that the plan may jeopardize the continued existence of the threatened Peirson's milkvetch. But political pressure from the off-road vehicle lobby, the BLM, and Bush Administration officials will likely push FWS to cave and issue a permit for the BLM plan. FWS must designate critical habitat for the milkvetch by 2004. It is also considering listing the Andrews dune scarab beetle as a threatened or endangered species. Both decisions would affect dunes management.

In January 2003, the California Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Commission for the first time rejected BLM's \$1.1 million grant request for operation of the recreation area, finding that BLM's mismanagement of the dunes threatens rare species. The commission did approve BLM's full grant request for law enforcement.

### **Recommendations**

BLM should maintain the current balanced management by keeping ORVs out of all currently protected areas, immediately set a reasonable carrying capacity for ORV crowds that the BLM dunes staff can handle, and promote non-motorized recreation to diversify visitation and boost the local economy. BLM should scrap the proposed plan and develop a new one that offers the current balanced management as an alternative.

Congress should permanently protect the central closure area by designating it as wilderness, enacting conservationists' proposal for a South Algodones Dunes Wilderness Area, and also protect the proposed addition to the North Algodones Dunes Wilderness.

### **What You Can Do**

Please write these important legislators and thank them for their efforts to protect the Sonoran desert. Ask them to ensure that the Department of the Interior maintains the currently protected areas and does not sacrifice the fragile wildlife and wilderness of the Algodones Dunes to off-roading. Urge them to designate the South Algodones Dunes Wilderness and North Algodones Wilderness Addition.

#### **Hon. Bob Filner**

United States House of Representatives  
2428 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 225-8045  
(202) 225-9073 fax

#### **Hon. Barbara Boxer**

United States Senate  
112 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510  
(202) 224-3553  
(415) 956-6701 fax in San Francisco

#### **Hon. Dianne Feinstein**

United States Senate  
331 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510  
(202) 224-3841  
(202) 228-3954 fax

#### **Hon. Raul Grijalva**

U.S. House of Representatives  
1440 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 225-2435  
(202) 226-6846 fax

Contact the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and ask them to support dunes conservation and oppose reopening any protected areas to ORVs.

#### **Mike Pool, BLM California State Director**

2800 Cottage Way, Suite W-1834  
Sacramento, CA 95825-1886  
Mpool@ca.blm.gov  
(916) 978-4600  
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#### **Steve Thompson**

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(916) 414-6710 fax

### **For more information contact:**

#### **Center for Biological Diversity**

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www.biologicaldiversity.org

#### **Desert Protective Council**

Terry Weiner, Conservation Coordinator  
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jtdesert@ixpres.com

#### **California Wilderness Coalition**

Pat Flanagan, Desert Representative  
(760) 361-5430  
paflanagan@earthlink.net  
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# Panamint Range

## (Surprise Canyon and Briggs Mine)

### OPEN-PIT MINING AND OFF-ROAD VEHICLES WOULD DEVASTATE NATURAL LANDSCAPE, SACRED LANDS AND WILDERNESS

#### Background

One of California's largest natural, undeveloped landscapes, the vast Panamint Valley stretches 70 miles long and 20 miles wide through Inyo County. Looming above it is the stunning face of the Panamint Range, its 11,000-foot heights forested with juniper, piñon pine, and ancient bristlecone pine. Most of the Panamints are protected in Death Valley National Park but their southwestern slopes fall outside the park boundary on Bureau of Land Management lands, which are at risk today from mining and off-road vehicles (ORVs).

BLM lands in the Panamints include the scenic Surprise Canyon and Manly Peak Wilderness Areas — and between them, a 14,000-acre block of gold mining claims. Congress withheld this area from protection in the 1994 California Desert Protection Act for mining interests to explore, but required BLM to report in 2004 on the area's suitability for wilderness designation. Recently the owner of the nearby CR Briggs open-pit cyanide leach heap mine applied to bulldoze up to 60 miles of new roads in the claim block area, on the steep mountainsides of the Panamints, to locate a new open-pit mine. The existing mine in the south end of the valley has permanently scarred the historic Manly Fall area of Redlands Canyon. The proposed new exploration would disturb wildlife habitat and potential wilderness, and bring the destruction of the mountainside into center view for visitors heading north to Death Valley National Park.

Also omitted from the 1994 Act was a jeep route up Surprise Canyon, bisecting the designated wilderness and running right up the middle of a creek. The route was used by a small group of extreme ORV enthusiasts who used winches to haul their specially modified 4x4 vehicles up waterfalls in the narrow canyon, harming the stream and its strip of riparian forest. In winter 2001, natural floods washed out the jeep route; today BLM is weighing whether to reopen it to ORVs.

#### Outstanding Values

Panamint Valley contains one of the nation's most dramatic undeveloped mountain escarpments. In just a few miles the Panamint Range plunges 10,000 feet, providing an immense natural canvas of colorful rock exposures. Bighorn sheep and other wildlife roam in and out of adjacent Death Valley National Park. Much of the proposed mine exploration area was a Wilderness Study Area. With the historic ghost town of Ballarat at its base, the Panamint Range is visited by tourists from all over the world who seek its Wild West scenery. The



*The wild Panamint Range, seen here from Death Valley National Park, is being eyed for a new open-pit mine.*

Panamints are sacred lands of the Timbisha Shoshone tribe, who oppose any physical destruction of the landscape.

Surprise Canyon is a remarkable spring-fed perennial stream, flowing free from Death Valley National Park down to the BLM Surprise Canyon Wilderness and Area of Critical Environmental Concern. The stream supports a desert oasis for rare and endangered species including the least Bell's vireo and the Panamint alligator lizard. Except for the narrow stream corridor, the entire canyon is a designated wilderness. In 2002, BLM found Surprise Canyon Creek eligible for wild and scenic river protection by Congress.

#### Threats — Open-Pit Cyanide Gold Mining, Extreme ORV Recreation

If the proposed exploration takes place, visitors will find the natural vista of the Panamints broken by an eyesore of road-cut scars. If no mine results, the BLM says the exploratory roads would be "reclaimed," but the reclamation standards they propose would not restore today's views. If exploration finds enough gold, a new open-pit mine would carve out the face of the Panamint Range, leaving gigantic benched terraces of waste rock and cyanide heap-leach pads. No restoration would be possible, as the mountainside would be gone.

Surprise Canyon briefly became a playground for extreme off-roading that damaged its riparian areas and springs, and degraded other visitors' experience. For about 15 years Surprise Canyon suffered from ORV drivers winching vehicles up waterfalls, eroding stream banks, cutting trees, and spilling oil, antifreeze, and gasoline into the creek.

## Status

BLM prepared an environmental assessment of the proposed mining exploration in 2002. Although conservationists and Death Valley National Park officials requested a full environmental impact statement (EIS), BLM officials approved the project in December 2002, concluding that the impact of new roads would be insignificant. Road-building and exploratory drilling could begin any time, and new open-pit cyanide leach-heap mining, if approved, could be a year away. In January 2003, Friends of the Panamints and Western Action Mining Project appealed BLM's decision and asked the Interior Board of Land Appeals to halt any activity until the appeal is decided.

To limit environmental damage caused by open-pit mines, in December 2002 the State Mining and Geology Board issued emergency regulations to require back-filling of mine pits. If these regulations are made permanent, the Briggs mine expansion probably would not be economical.

A natural flood scoured the ORV route from Surprise Canyon in winter 2001. Today, BLM is drafting a comprehensive EIS to decide whether to reopen the route to vehicles. At the urging of ORV interests, in December 2002 BLM established a "Technical Review Team" to give additional attention to motorized recreation in the EIS and revisit the creek's eligibility for wild and scenic river protection; the team's report is due in April, with the draft EIS due after that.

## Recommendations

Defending Panamint Valley's natural visual landscape is important, both by itself and as part of the campaign to reform the obsolete 1872 Mining Law, which still allows immense destruction of public lands and natural resources without just compensation or restoration.

BLM should prepare a full EIS to determine the effects of mine exploration or open-pit mining on the Panamint Range's environment, scenic visual resources, and wilderness suitability. BLM should ensure that any exploration would fully preserve the area's wilderness suitability if economic ore is not found.

The State of California should make permanent the Mining and Geology Board's regulations requiring back-filling of mine pits.

BLM should keep Surprise Canyon closed to vehicles to protect this designated Area of Critical Environmental Concern.

BLM should recommend wilderness designation of the canyon as an addition to the surrounding wilderness area, and recommend designation of Surprise Canyon as a wild and scenic river. Congress should designate these protections as part of the California Wild Heritage Act.

## What You Can Do

Please take just a minute to write California's U.S. Senators and thank them for their efforts to protect desert landscapes. Ask them to help save the natural landscape and sacred lands of Panamint Valley, and to protect Surprise Canyon as a wilderness and a wild and scenic river.

### Hon. Barbara Boxer

United States Senate  
112 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510  
(202) 224-3553  
(415) 956-6701 fax in San Francisco

### Hon. Dianne Feinstein

United States Senate  
331 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510  
(202) 224-3841  
(202) 228-3954 fax

Urge the State Mining and Geology Board to make permanent the regulations requiring back-filling of all new mine pits in California.

### State Mining and Geology Board

801 K Street, MS 24-05  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
(916) 322-1082  
(916) 445-0738 fax  
smgb@consrv.ca.gov

And urge BLM to permanently protect Surprise Canyon by keeping out damaging off-road vehicles.

### Hector Villalobos

BLM-Ridgecrest Field Office Manager  
300 S. Richmond Road  
Ridgecrest CA 93555  
(760) 384-5499 fax  
hvillalo@ca.blm.gov, jaardahl@ca.blm.gov  
(also send a copy to BLM State Director Mike Pool at  
mpool@ca.blm.gov, castatedir@ca.blm.gov)

## For more information contact:

### Desert Survivors

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<http://www.desertwilderness.net/BriggsMine.htm>

### Friends of the Panamints

Tom Budlong  
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TomBudlong@bigfoot.com

### Center for Biological Diversity

Daniel R. Patterson, Desert Ecologist  
(909) 659-6053 ext. 306  
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# Cleveland National Forest

## PROPOSED FREEWAYS, DAMS, AND POWER LINES THREATEN REGION'S LAST UNPROTECTED WILD FORESTS

### **Background**

The Santa Ana Mountains and Palomar Mountains are low-elevation ranges of the Cleveland National Forest, extending through Orange, Riverside and San Diego counties. They are a refuge of public lands, wilderness, and wildlife habitat in the intensively developed region between Los Angeles and San Diego, and the urban sprawl now extending into Riverside County. In recent years, development on private lands has crowded the national forest, threatening to sever wildlife linkages between the Santa Anas and the Palomars further south.

Now a trio of major infrastructure development projects threatens to pierce the wild Cleveland National Forest itself. In 2002, proposals moved forward for a new freeway, a new dam and reservoir, and new power line corridors, all of which, if approved, would destroy potential or existing wilderness areas on the Cleveland National Forest.

In recent years, local conservationists urged wilderness protection for several areas in the Santa Anas, but encountered strong opposition from mountain biking enthusiasts. Today the Trabuco, Ladd, and Coldwater roadless areas are threatened by a proposed freeway. The Morrell Canyon potential addition to the San Mateo Canyon Wilderness is the site of a proposed dam and hydroelectric reservoir and a power line that also threatens the Wild Horse potential addition. In the Palomars, the existing Agua Tibia Wilderness also is threatened by a different proposed power line corridor.

### **Outstanding Values**

Although so much of southern California has been developed, the Cleveland National Forest still contains high-quality wildlife habitats. Diverse sage, chaparral, and grasslands ecosystems are interspersed with pine-covered ridges and stream-cut canyons of riparian forest, harboring mountain lion, bobcat, mule deer, badger, coyote, and the food chains on which they depend. The area's meadows and wetlands serve as a migratory corridor for birds and butterflies, as well as habitat for rare and endangered amphibians. Morrell Canyon flows into San Juan Creek, a designated area of high ecological significance that is home to the endangered arroyo toad and rare plants. It is also potential reintroduction habitat for endangered southern steelhead, threatened California red-legged frog, and the sensitive southwestern pond turtle.

The wildlands of the Cleveland National Forest give millions of urban dwellers easy access to a wilderness experience just a short trip from home.



*Surrounded by development, the Cleveland National Forest harbors good wildlife habitat and wilderness.*

### **Threats — Freeway Construction, Hydroelectric Development, Power Lines**

#### **FREEWAY CONSTRUCTION**

Riverside County is pushing for a new freeway to Orange County, punching through the Santa Anas and the Cleveland National Forest to connect Interstate 15 with State Highway 241. At least four different proposed routes are on the drawing board, each cutting through one or more of the Trabuco, Coldwater, and Ladd roadless areas. Any of these routes would fragment wild forests, block wildlife movement, increase air pollution and run-off pollution on the Orange County coast, and fuel sprawl in Riverside County. An alternate proposal to tunnel through the mountains would still impact the forest, as it would require access roads on the surface to maintain vents and other support structures.

#### **HYDROELECTRIC DEVELOPMENT**

A local water district is nearing federal approval for a pumped-storage hydroelectric project that would drown the Morrell Canyon proposed wilderness. At night, water from Lake Elsinore would be pumped uphill to new dams and 150-acre reservoirs in Morrell and Decker Canyons, to be flushed back downhill to turn turbines during daytime peak energy hours. The project would flood the roadless area, the historic Morgan Trail used by hikers and equestrians to access the San Mateo Canyon Wilderness, and critical habitat for the endangered arroyo toad. It would also create an interbasin transfer of highly polluted Lake Elsinore water over the crest of the Santa Anas into the relatively pristine San Juan Creek, degrading water quality for ranches, homes, and wildlife.

## **POWER TRANSMISSION LINES**

San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E) recently proposed a new high-voltage transmission line through the Cleveland National Forest, near the Morrell Canyon hydro project. The proposed Valley-Rainbow Interconnect (VRI) power line would cut through the Wildhorse potential wilderness, ruin scenic views and a popular hanggliding area, and could destroy critical habitat for the endangered arroyo toad, threatened California red-legged frog, and threatened California gnatcatcher. It also could impact rare oak savanna and vernal pool habitat in the Santa Rosa Plateau Ecological Reserve. An alternate route would cut through the existing Agua Tibia Wilderness in the Palomar Mountains.

### ***Status***

President Bush signed an executive order in November 2002 to speed the Riverside freeway project, streamlining environmental review for a plan to tunnel through the Cleveland National Forest. The plan will now require approval from multiple federal agencies.

Although the original backer Enron pulled out in February 2001, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) issued a preliminary permit for the Morrell Canyon hydroelectric project to the Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District. Despite overwhelming local opposition at public hearings, the U.S. Forest Service is considering a permit for the project, now promoted by Nevada Hydro.

After several proposed power line routes met stiff resistance from Temecula Valley officials and the Pechanga Indian tribe, U.S. Representative Darrell Issa introduced legislation in September 2002 to route the Valley-Rainbow Interconnect through the Cleveland National Forest instead. The bill failed. In December 2002 the California Public Utilities Commission (PUC) rejected the VRI power line as too costly to ratepayers and not needed in the next five years, and found alternate routes that would go around the Cleveland. In January 2003, SDG&E officials formally asked the PUC to reconsider the route through the Cleveland, in preparation for a lawsuit. Rep. Issa is expected to reintroduce the bill in Congress this year.

### ***Recommendations***

Rather than build a freeway through Southern California's arc of wilderness, Riverside and Orange counties should implement the Orange County Transit Authority's plan to develop light rail between the two counties and make better use of the State Road 91 freeway. Orange County should provide more affordable housing so workers aren't forced to commute to Riverside.

To protect these and other roadless areas, the Bush Administration should implement the Forest Service's Roadless Area Conservation Rule, which would protect the Ladd, Coldwater, and Trabuco roadless areas from freeway construction and other development.

Congress should designate Morrell Canyon and the Ladd, Coldwater, and Trabuco roadless areas as permanent wilderness areas, so that future generations can enjoy this area as we do today.

SDG&E should withdraw the VRI proposal and pursue alternate methods of increasing transmission capacity by upgrading and modernizing existing transmission lines. It should implement clean energy alternatives and produce those alternatives locally.

Preserving wildlife habitat linkages and preventing habitat fragmentation should be priorities in the Orange, Riverside and San Diego Natural Community Conservation Plans (NCCPs).

### ***What You Can Do***

Please write these members of Congress urging them to permanently protect the Cleveland National Forest's Ladd, Coldwater, Trabuco, and Morrell Canyon potential wilderness areas from development.

#### **Hon. Darrell Issa**

U.S. House of Representatives  
211 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 225-3906  
(202) 225-3303 fax

#### **Hon. Dianne Feinstein**

United States Senate  
331 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington D.C. 20510  
(202) 224-3841  
(202) 228-3954 fax

#### **Hon. Barbara Boxer**

United States Senate  
112 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510  
(202) 224-3553  
(415) 956-6701 fax in San Francisco

Please write and phone local elected officials in Orange, Riverside and San Diego counties. Encourage them to support county NCCP planning efforts, transportation planning, responsible urban development, and land acquisition initiatives that protect the Santa Ana and Palomar Mountains and the linkages that promote wildlife and habitat connectivity.

### ***For more information contact:***

#### **Sierra Club**

Tim Allyn  
(213) 387-6528 x202  
Allyn1@earthlink.net

# Tejon Ranch

## SPRAWL AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT THREATEN KEY HABITAT ON CALIFORNIA'S LARGEST PRIVATE LANDHOLDING

### Background

The 270,000-acre Tejon Ranch stretches across two counties in Southern California, connecting the South Coast, San Joaquin Valley, Sierra Nevada, and Mojave Desert. This vast ranch, the size of Los Angeles, is the largest single private landholding in California. Its unique location at the confluence of these ecologically diverse regions makes it critically important to wildlife. Surrounded by a sea of urban development, Tejon Ranch is an oasis of open space for Southern Californians and for dozens of declining and endangered species.

Recently, the owners of Tejon Ranch owners have unveiled plans for extensive commercial, residential, and industrial development. So far, plans for a 15.4 million-square-foot industrial complex have been approved, a move that will dramatically worsen air quality in one of the nation's most polluted air basins. Plans for large new residential and resort subdivisions are also in progress.

### Outstanding Values

Tejon Ranch is an enormous and historic California landscape. Agriculture on the ranch contributes to the local and state economies, while its natural habitats preserve the wild heritage of California and open space that is vital to human health and quality of life.

There is compelling scientific evidence that Tejon Ranch plays a crucial role for the conservation of biodiversity on regional, state, and national levels. This region has been identified by conservation biologists as an irreplaceable core habitat area for numerous imperiled species, including the San Joaquin kit fox, striped adobe lily, Bakersfield cactus, Mexican flannelbush, arroyo toad, California red-legged frog, blunt-nosed leopard lizard, and Mojave ground squirrel. It contains designated critical habitat for the endangered California condor and supports healthy populations of other raptors, American badger, mountain lion, tule elk, and mule deer, which require large and intact wildlands to survive.

Spanning the headwaters of 14 creeks and an elevation range of more than 8,000 feet, the Tejon Ranch includes 27 different vegetation communities ranging from coastal riparian to montane forests, oak savannas, and desert scrub. It is a critical landscape linkage between the Transverse Ranges, Peninsular Ranges, and the Sierra Nevada. This linkage is essential to maintaining a functional wildlands network and is key to any regional conservation strategy. The lower-elevation areas also provide a linkage between southeastern and southwestern stands



DAVE CLENDENEN



DAVE CLENDENEN

*Oaks and grasslands of the vast Tejon Ranch are slated to be paved over for industrial zones and urban sprawl.*

of grassland, habitat that is threatened by agricultural and urban development in much of the southern San Joaquin Valley.

### Threats — Industrial and Residential Development

One major Tejon Ranch development has been approved, and more are on the way. In January 2003, Kern County officials approved the expansion of the Tejon Industrial Complex from a small warehouse center into a massive warehouse and distribution hub serving the entire state. This expansion will destroy more than 1,000 acres of grassland and farmland. It will double the amount of industrial land in Kern County, bringing unprecedented new levels of diesel pollution to the county's notoriously hazardous air.



The proposed "Centennial" development in the Antelope Valley north of Los Angeles would pave 11,700 acres of oak woodlands, chaparral, and grassland to build an entire new city of 30,000 tract houses, and would add tens of thousands of cars to Los Angeles County freeways every day.

While the Tejon Ranch Company has not publicly disclosed its full development plans, corporate documents reveal that it is also planning a several-thousand-unit resort development with golf courses, spas, and "mountain cabins" near Tejon Lake, in the shadow of Mount Pinos.

All of these developments would have an enormous impact on the region's quality of life by exacerbating regional traffic and air pollution problems. The Los Angeles Basin and Southern San Joaquin Valley face some of the worst traffic and smog in the nation, and children in Kern County are already one-third more likely to develop asthma and other respiratory problems than children nationwide.

None of these potentially precedent-setting developments should be considered without a comprehensive analysis of the ranch's unique natural resources, the impacts of development, and the full disclosure of future development plans. Over time, the cumulative results of this piecemeal development approach could prove to be regionally devastating to threatened plants and wildlife.

### **Status**

The land use plans for Kern and Los Angeles counties currently call for the Tejon Ranch to remain a working landscape of farms, grazing land and open space. The Tejon Ranch Company has not revealed its overall plan for the ranch. Instead, it is submitting piecemeal development proposals one by one.

Kern County supervisors approved the expansion of the Tejon Industrial Complex in January 2003, and construction could begin later this year.

Los Angeles County has begun an extensive environmental review process for the proposed Centennial development that will likely take until 2004 to complete. Construction could begin as soon as 2005. To halt this massive development effort, action must be taken now.

### **Recommendations**

The counties of Kern and Los Angeles and the Tejon Ranch Company have a responsibility to engage in a regional planning process to ensure that the impacts of new development, and conversely, the conservation of open space, are configured for the public good. Tejon Ranch is just one piece of a regional landscape that faces tremendous challenges from sprawl, water supply, traffic, and air pollution. Conservation of the ranch in its current state would protect the region's agricultural heritage, unique biological values, and open space, and should be a top priority of planners. Planning for protection of the ranch should be based on up-to-date information about biological and cultural resources, long-term species conservation, air

quality, water resources, geology, land use planning, and quality of life issues for the whole region.

The supervisors of Los Angeles and Kern counties should uphold existing land use plans and reject piecemeal or leapfrog developments that would worsen traffic, pollute the air, and destroy habitat and farmland. Development in southern Kern and northern Los Angeles counties should be in the form of infill into existing communities first. This "smart growth" would be consistent with regional plans and would minimize impacts to the environment while providing new housing opportunities.

### **What You Can Do**

Please write to the boards of supervisors of Los Angeles and Kern counties. Ask them to uphold their general plans and reject piecemeal development proposals on Tejon Ranch until there is a larger plan in place that considers regional impacts and conservation needs. Send your letters to:

#### **The Honorable Board of Supervisors**

County of Kern  
1115 Truxtun Avenue, 5th Floor  
Bakersfield, CA 93301  
board@co.kern.ca.us

#### **The Honorable Board of Supervisors**

County of Los Angeles  
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
executiveoffice@bos.co.la.ca.us

### **For more information contact:**

#### **Tejon Working Group**

Terry Watt  
(415) 563-0543

# Los Padres National Forest

## PROPOSED OIL AND GAS DEVELOPMENT PUTS WILD FOREST LANDS AND CRITICAL HABITAT AREAS AT RISK

### Background

In October 2001 the U.S. Forest Service released a proposal for new oil and gas leasing on the Los Padres National Forest, located on California's central coast. The Forest Service has targeted an estimated 140,000 acres for new leasing — 74 percent of which are wild and roadless forest lands that provide vital habitat for many threatened and endangered species, including the critically endangered California condor.

The Forest Service has identified "high potential" areas likely to be the first threatened if new oil and gas drilling is permitted. These areas include several proposed wilderness areas, archaeological and cultural sites, well known trails for horse packing, backpacking and hiking, lands the Forest Service has identified as "Areas of High Ecological Significance," and habitat for some 20 imperiled species.

While drilling in these areas poses significant risk, it offers no real solution — providing at most a ten-day supply of energy for the nation. According to the Forest Service's own studies, the Los Padres National Forest contains less than one percent of the gas and oil thought to exist in federal lands throughout the United States.

### Outstanding Values

The southern district of the Los Padres National Forest marks a transition zone between central and southern coastal California where warm, dry climates to the south meet cool, wet climates from the north. Adding to the effect, the mountain ranges here are a rare phenomenon due to their east-west axis. Transition zones of this type create a higher density of biodiversity — the region is home to more than 1,500 native plant and animal species.

The variety of ecosystems in the Los Padres include sea coast and marine habitats, redwood forest, mixed conifer forest, oak woodland, grassland, piñon-juniper woodland, chaparral, and semi-desert. Among the species inhabiting the forest are the California condor, bald eagle, peregrine falcon, California spotted owl, tule elk, bighorn sheep, San Joaquin kit fox, California red-legged frog, southern steelhead, and California jewelflower.

### Threats — Oil and Gas Development

At least 20 plant and animal species listed as threatened, endangered, or sensitive under state and federal law are at risk from expanded oil and gas activities on the Los Padres National Forest. According to the Forest Service, the species most at risk from oil drilling are the blunt-nosed leopard lizard and the



JIM ROSE

*Wild forests of the Los Padres are targeted for oil drilling, including endangered condor habitat.*

California condor, both endangered. The mountain plover, Swainson's hawk, southern rubber boa, riparian brush rabbit, California spotted owl, and many other species are also at risk.

Furthermore, 66 percent of the oak woodlands within the Los Padres National Forest exist in areas being considered for oil and gas exploration. This constitutes a significant threat, as oak woodland habitat has declined dramatically from its historical range and is a conservation priority for California.

Several proposed wilderness areas could be impacted by oil and gas development. This would devastate their wild character and disqualify them from being designated by Congress as wilderness. Potential wilderness areas that are likely to be the first threatened if new oil and gas leases are permitted include: White Ledge, a Matilija Wilderness addition; Bear Creek, Cuyama, and other Dick Smith Wilderness additions; Moon Canyon, Fox Mountain, and other San Rafael Wilderness additions; and Apache, Badlands, Quatal Canyon, Long's Canyon, and other Chumash Wilderness additions.

Numerous Native American archaeological sites exist within the proposed oil and gas areas including Painted Rock, Lion Canyon, and White Ledge. Two proposed wilderness areas, Quatal Canyon and Badlands, are still used by the Chumash for spiritual ceremonies and festivals.

### Status

The Forest Service accepted public comments until April 2002 on a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) describing its proposal to open 140,000 acres of forest to new leasing, including 100,000 acres of roadless areas. The draft failed to use

the most current biological surveys for threatened species, and lacked any discussion of impacts to water quality from toxic drilling muds or from the large amounts of groundwater required to generate steam for drilling.

Public comments overwhelmingly opposed new oil leasing, as did editorials by local newspapers and a letter from Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer and Representatives Lois Capps and Sam Farr. Senator Boxer has formally proposed the protection of new wilderness areas on the Los Padres as part of the California Wild Heritage Act.

The Forest Service plans to release its final EIS in late spring 2003 — but first it must receive a formal biological opinion from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) on the possible effects of new leasing on more than 20 sensitive species. As of January 2003, FWS was unable to begin its work because of serious mistakes and omissions in the Forest Service's biological assessment, and had asked the Forest Service to provide more information. In October 2002, all three condor chicks born in the wild that year died in their nests in the Los Padres National Forest, a disappointing setback for the \$35 million condor recovery program.

### **Recommendations**

Congress should permanently protect the threatened wildlands in the Los Padres National Forest by designating them as wilderness, as proposed in the California Wild Heritage Act. This would ensure that future generations will be able to enjoy these areas as we do today.

The Bush Administration should immediately implement the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, which prohibits road-intensive activities such as oil and gas development in inventoried roadless areas.

The Los Padres National Forest should abide by the Roadless Rule and drop any alternative that would allow road-building or leasing in roadless areas. It should ensure it has all the necessary information to make an informed decision on oil and gas activity before proceeding with the final EIS, including the impacts on groundwater systems, water quality, and toxics, as well as the most recent data on threatened and endangered species and condor recovery efforts.

### **What You Can Do**

Please tell these key Congress members that you would like to see roadless areas in the Los Padres National Forest protected as wilderness areas, not drilled for oil.

#### **Hon. Elton Gallegly**

U.S. House of Representatives  
2427 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 225-5811  
(202) 225-1100 fax



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

#### **Hon. Lois Capps**

U.S. House of Representatives  
1707 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 225-3601  
(202) 225-5632 fax

#### **Hon. Dianne Feinstein**

United States Senate  
331 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510  
(202) 224-3841  
(202) 228-3954 fax

#### **Hon. Barbara Boxer**

United States Senate  
112 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510  
(202) 224-3553  
(415) 956-6701 fax in San Francisco

Write the Forest Service to tell them that you do not want new oil and gas leasing in the roadless areas of the Los Padres National Forest, and that these areas should be permanently protected with wilderness designation.

#### **USDA Forest Service**

Al Hess, Project Manager  
1190 East Ojai Avenue  
Ojai, CA 93023  
ahess@fs.fed.us

### **For more information contact:**

#### **California Wilderness Coalition**

Jason Swartz  
(530) 758-0380  
jasons@calwild.org

#### **California Wild Heritage Campaign**

Erin Duffy  
(805) 564-2460  
calwild\_sb@yahoo.com  
<http://www.californiawild.org>

# Duncan Canyon Roadless Area

## SALVAGE LOGGING WOULD RUIN OLD-GROWTH FOREST AND PROPOSED WILDERNESS

### Background

In August and September 2001, the Star Fire burned nearly 13,000 acres on the Eldorado and Tahoe National Forests, including about half of the 9,400-acre Duncan Canyon Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA), a remote area of rich old-growth forest.

In 2002 the Tahoe National Forest issued a logging plan for the burned area, known as the “Red Star Restoration Project.” The plan’s stated purposes are the removal of fire-killed trees, hazardous fuels reduction, road reconstruction and decommissioning, and associated forest restoration. To this end, the Forest Service plans on “salvage” logging the largest trees from much of the roadless area, despite prohibitions on such logging in the Forest Service’s own Roadless Area Conservation Rule.

For decades, local citizens have advocated wilderness protection for Duncan Canyon. The California Wild Heritage Act, introduced in Congress by Senator Barbara Boxer and Representative Mike Thompson, proposes to designate 2,880 acres of the Duncan Canyon IRA as a wilderness area. Over 1,000 acres of this proposed wilderness is slated to be logged by the Forest Service. Additionally, the failure of the Bush Administration to implement the widely supported Roadless Area Conservation Rule has left the larger roadless area under threat.

### Outstanding Values

Duncan Canyon harbors one of the last stands of intact old-growth mixed-conifer forest in the central Sierra Nevada. Nearly all forests in this 5,000- to 7,000-foot elevation range have been severely impacted by decades of aggressive fire suppression, grazing, and logging. As a result, they are greatly underrepresented in the wilderness system of the Sierra.

Visitors to Duncan Canyon are awed by the vast size and sheer number of ancient sugar pines, incense cedars and ponderosa pines. Due to their high commercial value, trees of this size disappeared long ago from most of California. Dominated by massive white fir and red fir, this ancient forest also shelters marvelously diverse riparian areas along tributaries such as Duncan Creek. The Duncan Canyon IRA provides prime old-growth habitat for several birds and mammals that are in serious decline in the Sierra Nevada: the California spotted owl, northern goshawk, wolverine, Pacific fisher, and American marten. The heart of Duncan Canyon also serves as a vital fawning ground for the region’s mule deer.



JIM ROSE

*Duncan Canyon is a sanctuary of old-growth forest wilderness on the Tahoe National Forest.*

### Threats — Salvage Logging

The Forest Service plans to conduct salvage logging in the Duncan Canyon Inventoried Roadless Area, including much of the proposed wilderness. Its plan is long on logging old-growth trees, and very short on restoring the forest or reducing hazardous fuels. In order to pay for this forest “restoration” project, the Forest Service plans to log and sell off the biggest trees across virtually the whole project area, while reducing hazardous small fuels in only a few strategic locations — despite voluminous research indicating that large trees are the most fire-resistant, and small trees and brush create the greatest fire risk. Unfortunately, the Red Star project and other “restoration” projects are not fully funded by Congress, increasing the pressure to sell off the largest trees for their timber value.

Logging of massive trees disturbs soils, streams, and wildlife that depend on old-growth forest conditions. The Red Star project area includes more than 1,800 acres of essential habitat areas for the northern goshawk and California spotted owl, designated by the Forest Service’s own regional management plan, called the Sierra Nevada Framework. Commercial logging in and around these vital areas would undoubtedly impact these sensitive bird populations. Duncan Canyon’s creeks would be greatly impacted by sediment runoff.

Logging the Duncan Canyon Roadless Area also could disqualify it for wilderness designation, by replacing wild forests with a landscape of stumps, disturbed ground, and degraded streams. In addition, the Red Star salvage logging plan would set terrible precedents by violating both the Sierra Nevada Framework and the Roadless Area Conservation Rule.

## Status

In November 2002, the Tahoe National Forest released its final environmental impact statement (FEIS) and record of decision for the Red Star Restoration Project. There was little change from the draft plan. The Forest Service still plans on salvage logging 5,530 acres, including more than 2,000 acres in the roadless area and more than 1,000 acres in the proposed wilderness area, and it still proposes to remove the largest trees and leave behind the dangerous small fuels.

The Forest Service closed the public comment period in January 2003, after local residents and conservation groups protested the FEIS and formally appealed the decision to log. If appeals are unsuccessful, Duncan Canyon could be logged as soon as summer 2003.

## Recommendations

To protect California's roadless areas from destructive activities such as those proposed by the Tahoe National Forest, the Bush Administration must fully implement the Roadless Area Conservation Rule.

Congress should designate the Duncan Canyon Wilderness Area, as part of the California Wild Heritage Act.

The Tahoe National Forest should propose ecological restoration measures that improve forest health without devastating old-growth for the sake of revenues. It should:

- Protect the proposed Duncan Canyon Wilderness Area from commercial logging.
- Enforce the Roadless Area Conservation Rule by excluding commercial logging from the Duncan Canyon Inventoried Roadless Area, allowing only small-diameter trees to be removed to reduce hazardous fuels.
- Uphold the Sierra Nevada Framework and its requirements to restore old forest structure and function.
- Provide better environmental analysis, including on-the-ground confirmation of fire-killed areas, aquatic species monitoring, effects of helicopter logging on sensitive soils, fuel models, and snag size requirements of affected species.
- Use the best available science to determine how best to return the area to a natural fire regime and manage dangerous fuel loads.
- Use prescribed burning as a primary tool to reduce hazardous fuels.

## What You Can Do

Write to California's U.S. Senators and ask them to protect Duncan Canyon. Encourage them to tell the Tahoe National Forest to uphold the Roadless Rule and the Sierra Nevada Framework and protect the entire Duncan Canyon Roadless Area from logging.



JIM ROSE

### Hon. Barbara Boxer

United States Senate  
112 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington D.C. 20510  
(202) 224-3553  
(415) 956-6701 fax in San Francisco

### Hon. Dianne Feinstein

United States Senate  
331 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington D.C. 20510  
(202) 224-3841  
(202) 228-3954 fax

### For more information contact:

#### California Wilderness Coalition

Jason Swartz  
(530) 758-0380  
jasons@calwild.org

#### Forest Issues Group (FIG)

Don Jacobson, Executive Director  
(530) 272-1433  
donj@infostations.net

#### American River Wildlands

Ed Pandolfino  
ARwildlands@aol.com

#### John Muir Project

Chad Hanson, Director  
(530) 273-9290  
(530) 273-9260 fax

# Plumas and Lassen National Forests

## MASSIVE LOGGING “EXPERIMENT” WOULD CUT OLD-GROWTH AND SPOTTED OWL HABITAT

### Background

The U.S. Forest Service has proposed to log more than 183,000 acres of the Plumas and Lassen National Forests — the largest such “experiment” in the agency’s history — to see how it will impact sensitive species like the California spotted owl and the behavior of forest fires in the northern Sierra Nevada. The so-called Plumas-Lassen Administrative Study logging project would far exceed the scope and intensity of logging and road construction allowed by the Forest Service’s own management plan for the region, known as the Sierra Nevada Framework.

The proposed logging project even violates the Herger-Feinstein Quincy Library Group Forest Recovery Act (QLG) passed by Congress in 1998. The QLG plan was crafted by conservationists, timber industry representatives, and others in the Plumas County community of Quincy, where they frequently met at the county library. The group set out to develop a management plan for the Plumas National Forest that would benefit both the environment and the local timber industry; later they added much of the Lassen and Tahoe National Forests. Their plan greatly increased logging for five years, which some local conservationists felt would reduce fire danger while protecting roadless areas and other important places. The QLG plan was then proposed as legislation in Congress by Representative Wally Herger and Senator Dianne Feinstein.

Most conservationists opposed the QLG plan because it would boost logging enormously, it would govern forests owned by all Americans with a management plan representing narrow local interests, and it conflicted with the budding Sierra Nevada Framework, the Forest Service’s plan to protect ecosystems across the region. Despite strong opposition, the QLG plan became law in the final minutes of the 1998 congressional session.

When the Sierra Nevada Framework was approved in 2001, the Forest Service called for a study of the impact of logging on old-growth forest ecosystems in the Sierra, to be conducted in the QLG region. The Bush Administration’s proposed Administrative Study, however, would log large trees and owl habitat more severely than either QLG or the Sierra Framework allow. Local conservationists who supported QLG now say the Administrative Study has hijacked QLG, which never contemplated the removal of large trees that owls need for nesting. Many conservationists believe the vast experiment is a pretext to accelerate logging in sensitive areas with large trees that would otherwise be spared from the chainsaw.



*A huge logging “experiment” by the Bush Administration would cut large old-growth trees in sensitive owl habitat.*

### Outstanding Values

Eleven huge parcels of the Plumas and Lassen National Forests ranging in size from 45,000 to 79,000 acres are proposed for logging in the Administrative Study. This vast region includes habitat for the California spotted owl, Sierra Nevada red fox, American marten, Pacific fisher, northern goshawk, bald eagle, and many other rare animals and plants. It is dotted with campgrounds, lakes, and other popular recreation areas, and is traversed by the famous Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail.

The northernmost area slated for logging includes a portion of the Humboldt Summit Potential Wilderness, a 32,000-acre roadless area that is eligible for protection in the National Wilderness Preservation System but would be disqualified if it were logged and criss-crossed with roads.

### Threats

The proposed experiment is dubious from a scientific standpoint and would heavily impact habitat for declining species. The Forest Service would log more than 285 square miles, with more than 17 square miles of small clearcuts. It would build 160 miles of new roads — the distance between Fresno and San Jose — in sensitive watersheds that supply the Feather River and Oroville Reservoir and include at least one run of chinook salmon. It would cut large trees that are supposed to be protected by the Sierra Nevada Framework, up to 34 inches in diameter, and would remove more forest canopy than the Framework allows. It would cut in 13 percent of the California

spotted owl sites in the entire Sierra — without designating any non-logging “control” areas for scientific comparison.

Ultimately, some 30,000 acres per year of suitable owl habitat would be logged, heavily impacting the remaining old-growth habitat available to the owl and other declining species such as the American marten, Pacific fisher, and northern goshawk.

Though the experiment is purportedly intended to study how logging affects old-growth species, forest ecology, and fire regimes, reputable scientists already know that logging and road construction increase habitat fragmentation, watershed degradation, and fire severity. For these reasons, conservationists believe the proposed logging would increase fire danger, harm already damaged watersheds, and push species like the California spotted owl closer to extinction. Furthermore, because the Forest Service lacks funding to complete the research and monitoring portions of the project, it is likely to abandon the research once the logging is completed.

Conservationists also believe it is profoundly unwise to conduct potentially harmful experiments on imperiled species of wildlife. The Forest Service estimates that this vast region includes, at most, between 220 and 440 California spotted owls.

### **Status**

The Forest Service plans to issue a draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) for the Plumas-Lassen Administrative Study in March 2003 and accept public comments for 45 days; conservationists have requested at least 90 days to analyze the plan and comment. The plan is likely to be approved in summer, and logging could begin as soon as fall of 2003.

### **Recommendations**

The Sierra Nevada Framework was developed after decades of struggle over the management of the region that John Muir praised as the “Range of Light,” and was finally approved in 2001. It is inappropriate to defy its most important provisions before the Forest Service even learns to implement it properly.

The Forest Service should ensure that all proposed logging, whether “experimental” or not, adheres strictly to the Framework’s limitations on the size of trees and amount of forest canopy that can be removed. The Forest Service should preserve all roadless areas and build no new roads for this project — the agency itself has acknowledged that our national forests already have too many roads and too little money to maintain them. The Forest Service should not allow cutting in California spotted owl “home range core areas” — regardless of the scientific or commercial motives of this experiment, it is unacceptable to specifically target nesting areas for logging. Further, the Forest Service should not proceed with any logging until Congress has specifically appropriated all money needed for research and monitoring.

### **What You Can Do**

Write to these important public officials and request that the proposed Plumas-Lassen Administrative Study comply with the Sierra Nevada Framework’s tree-size limits and forest canopy requirements, and refrain from building new roads, cutting in California spotted owl home range core areas, or cutting in the Humboldt Summit Potential Wilderness.

#### **Jim Pena, Forest Supervisor**

Plumas National Forest  
P.O. Box 11500  
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#### **Hon. Dianne Feinstein**

United States Senate  
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#### **Hon. Barbara Boxer**

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### **For more information contact:**

#### **John Muir Project**

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#### **California Wilderness Coalition**

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# Westside Sierra Corporate Forestlands

## COMPANY'S PLAN TO CLEARCUT 1,000,000 ACRES WOULD DEGRADE WATER AND DRIVE SPECIES TOWARD EXTINCTION

### Background

California's Sierra Nevada is a vast and rugged 380-mile-long mountain range, clothed in magnificent forests, lakes, and rivers that generate much of the state's water supply. It features spectacular Lake Tahoe, eight national forests, three national parks, numerous wilderness areas and state parks, and the highest peaks in the lower 48 states.

The Westside Sierra's mid-elevation forests are some of the richest forests in the world, and the most productive in the Sierra for fish and wildlife, plants, water, and timber. They blanket the range's west flank from roughly 2,500 to 7,500 feet elevation, and extend from south of Yosemite National Park to the northern watersheds of the Feather River.

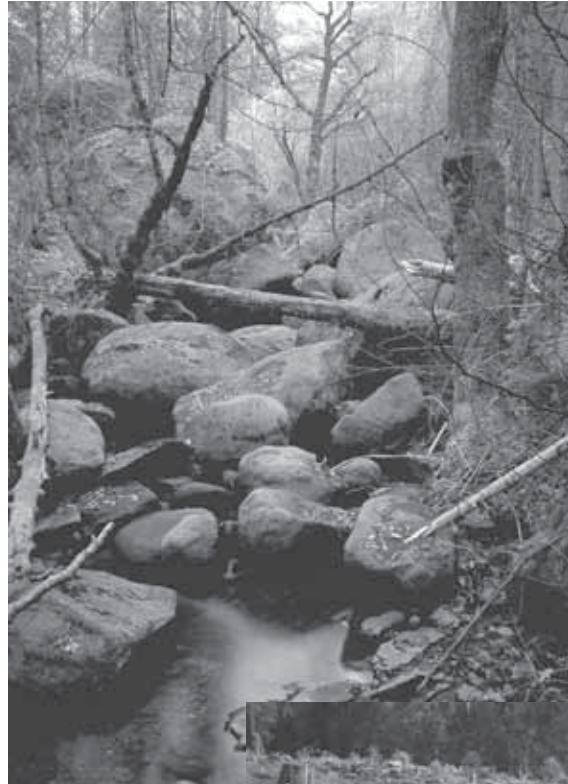
One timber company, Sierra Pacific Industries, plans to clearcut more than one million acres of California forestland, mainly in the Westside Sierra, and it has already logged an estimated 40,000 acres. SPI is the largest corporate timberland owner in the U.S. and the largest private landowner in California, with many holdings directly adjacent to California's rivers, national forests, and national and state parks. Although the lands that SPI is logging are its own, clearcut logging is a devastating practice that is causing significant harm to the wildlife, water, and public lands that belong to all Californians.

### Outstanding Values

The Westside Sierra's mid-elevation forests are rich in biodiversity, exhibiting high quality terrestrial habitat and mostly healthy rivers and streams. They are home to black bear, mule deer, mountain lion, bald eagle, and many rare or endangered species including the threatened Lahontan cutthroat trout, California mountain king snake, Pacific fisher, American marten, Sierra Nevada red fox, northern goshawk, and California spotted owl.

The Westside Sierra forests and their abundant waters and wildlife draw millions of visitors to enjoy hunting, fishing, rafting, camping, hiking, and scenic driving in California's greatest mountain range. The recreation and tourism sector is the largest employer in the Sierra, generating more than \$1.4 billion per year and more than 23,000 jobs.

Water is another precious resource these forests provide — more than 60 percent of the state's water supply originates in the forests of the Sierra Nevada.



*Clearcut logging by private corporations is fragmenting key wildlife habitat in Westside Sierra forests.*



### Threats — Clearcut Logging

Clearcut logging is a particularly damaging technique that removes all vegetation and replaces the complex forest ecosystem with herbicide-laced tree plantations, directly eliminating wildlife habitat on large swaths of land. Clearcutting also fragments larger wild landscapes, making it impossible for some wildlife to migrate, or even to find sufficient food, shelter, or mates.

The Forest Service's management plan for the region's public forests, known as the Sierra Nevada Framework, requires the agency to protect plants and animals that depend on old-growth forests, and prevent them from slipping toward extinction. Unfortunately, SPI's large-scale clearcutting on private lands threatens these conservation goals in many parts of the Sierra.



- To restore the declining Pacific fisher, a rare mink-like carnivore of old-growth forests, the Forest Service plans to reconnect the fisher's northern and southern populations, which are widely separated by a gap that extends to the south end of Yosemite National Park. SPI's clearcutting of its lands along the national park boundary and northward is severing much of this important habitat connection.
- SPI owns extensive "checkerboard" lands interspersed with the public lands of the Tahoe National Forest, much of it habitat for the declining California spotted owl. (The ownership pattern — every other square-mile block is private land — is left over from railroad land grants in the 1800s.) Today SPI is clearcutting blocks of forest in the upper Yuba River watershed, logging old-growth trees directly adjacent to old-growth on the public lands, thus carving owl habitat into isolated "checkerboard" islands.
- While Calaveras Big Trees State Park still boasts awe-inspiring groves of giant sequoias, today it is surrounded by SPI clearcuts as close as 100 yards from the park boundary. SPI's plan to clearcut another 8,000 acres adjacent to the park in the immediate future would eviscerate a key wildlife corridor.

Clearcutting also greatly degrades water quality and sensitive watersheds in California. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has listed many Northern California rivers as "impaired" under the Clean Water Act due to erosion and runoff from industrial logging. Most Sierra rivers are not monitored by EPA or the state, though they suffer from similar logging practices — major rivers affected by SPI clearcutting include the Stanislaus, Mokelumne, American, Yuba, Clavey, Feather, and Fall Rivers.

Recent studies indicate that clearcutting also increases the risk of large, uncontrollable fires that endanger forests and nearby communities, because clearcutting and replanting creates thick stands of small, even-aged trees that are highly flammable.

## Status

The state's current forestry regulations are allowing SPI to clearcut more than a million acres of California forests with no limit on the amount of clearcutting in a single watershed, and no protections for sensitive watersheds or ancient forests. Ironically, a 2000 poll indicates most Californians do not believe clearcutting is even legal — and the overwhelming majority feel it should not be allowed.

Since 1999 when SPI announced its plan to cut one million acres, it has filed Timber Harvest Plans (THPs) for many thousands of acres, much of it old-growth forest. Little documentation of actual cutting is available, but the corporation's approximately 70-year rotation schedule indicates it has logged more than 40,000 acres already. Areas slated, but not yet cut, include forests near Calaveras Big Trees, Ebbetts Pass, and Georgetown.

Logging on private lands is regulated by the State of California.

Although the State Water Resources Control Board is required to ensure that logging does not violate the Clean Water Act, the water board unfortunately has delegated this authority to the California Department of Fire and Forestry (CDF). CDF consistently has approved highly damaging logging plans and failed to protect water quality, prompting calls for reform.

## Recommendations

Only quick, decisive action by Governor Davis can ensure that these magnificent forests, and the wildlife and jobs that depend on them, will survive for future generations. Governor Davis must recognize that Sierra Pacific Industries' million-acre clearcut plan threatens to devastate Westside Sierra forest ecosystems, degrade the state's rivers and drinking water quality, and diminish outdoor recreation for all Californians.

Governor Davis should ban clearcutting in favor of intermediate harvest styles which still allow for timber production and profits without environmental devastation. The state should buffer all streams from logging, increase the number of large trees protected on industrial forestlands, and set sustainable limits for logging within a single watershed.

Additionally, the Governor should require full enforcement by the state agencies that review Timber Harvest Plans: the Department of Fish and Game, State Water Resources Control Board, and California Geological Survey. These agencies should be fully staffed to review THPs as state law provides, based on the best available science, and they should furthermore be directed to go after corporate environmental abuses.

## What You Can Do

Please contact Governor Davis and ask him to protect Westside Sierra forest ecosystems, ban clearcutting, and put our state's environmental cops back on the job in corporate timberlands.

### Governor Gray Davis

State Capitol Building  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
(916) 445-2841  
(916) 445-4633 fax  
governor@governor.ca.gov

### For more information contact:

#### Sierra Club

Warren Alford  
(916) 557-1100 x111  
warren.alford@sierraclub.org  
www.sierraclub.org/ca/forests

# Klamath River Basin

OVERUSE OF RIVER'S RESOURCES IS HURTING FARMERS,  
FISHERMEN, TRIBES, AND WILDLIFE

## Background

Stretching more than 250 miles from southern Oregon to the Pacific Coast of northern California, the Klamath River Basin is a national ecological treasure, encompassing steep mountains and canyons, high desert, lush rainforests and wetlands, and salmon spawning streams.

Beginning in the early 1900s, the federal government directed and financed the draining of 75 percent of Upper Klamath Basin wetlands for conversion to irrigated farmland. This process transformed the Upper Basin into today's heavily farmed landscape, and placed several species of fish in jeopardy of extinction.

Massive agricultural water diversion in the Klamath's upper basin, and from its lower tributaries the Scott, Shasta and Trinity Rivers, has put intense stress on endangered fish and inflamed a long-standing water struggle among farmers, Native Americans, and fishermen – a struggle exacerbated by a series of droughts since the early 1990s. During a 2001 drought, Klamath Basin farmers protested sharp cuts in their federal water allocations which were made to protect endangered fish. Siding with farmers, the Bush Administration cut back Klamath River flows in 2002, causing the deaths of more than 34,000 migrating salmon and steelhead in what is believed to be the largest recorded fish kill in U.S. history.

## Outstanding Values

Considered the "Everglades of the West," the Upper Klamath Basin once held 350,000 acres of seasonal lakes, freshwater marshes, and wet meadows. It is a home or stopping ground for 263 bird species, including the largest wintering population of bald eagles in the lower 48 states, and millions of migratory waterfowl.

Every fall, nearly 80 percent of the birds migrating along the Pacific Flyway rest and feed in the region's six National Wildlife Refuges. Altogether, more than 400 wildlife species live here, including sage grouse, pronghorn, and Rocky Mountain elk.

The Lower Klamath Basin encompasses most of the wild Klamath Mountains, world-renowned for extraordinary plant biodiversity. Twenty-nine species of conifers grow in the basin, including the weeping spruce which survived the Ice Age nowhere else.

The Klamath River and its tributaries once produced the third largest commercial fishery of salmon and steelhead in the continental United States. Today the region's waterways are home to remarkably large native trout, threatened coho salmon,



JIM ROSE

*Protecting wilderness like this area in the Marble Mountains will help safeguard Klamath River waters for threatened salmon.*

and other sensitive fish species such as spring chinook salmon, lamprey, green sturgeon, and the *c'wam* and *kuptu* fish, also known as the Lost River and shortnose suckers — both are endangered species.

## Threats — Water Diversion, Loss of Wildlife and Fisheries

Much of the Klamath River Basin's summer water supply is diverted away from wetlands, lakes, and rivers, to irrigate crops and pastures. Three-quarters of the Upper Basin's wetlands have been converted to agriculture, increasing water pollution and knocking this natural filtration system severely out of balance. Logging and road-building also have destroyed habitat, increased winter flooding, and further decreased summertime base flows. These impacts jeopardize the region's threatened and endangered fish, and have left the basin's National Wildlife Refuges without sufficient water in 6 of the last 11 years.

Low water flows kill fish and prevent the recovery of species, including the threatened coho salmon. Even before the record fish kill last September, the Klamath River experienced spring-time kills of tens of thousands of young salmon smolts. Degraded water quality and the loss of in-stream and riparian

(streamside) habitat have devastated sport fisheries, whitewater recreation, and commercial salmon fisheries where 4,000 family-wage jobs and \$80 million per year in economic benefits have been lost.

Despite federally protected fishing rights, the basin's Native American tribal fisheries also have suffered greatly. The Klamath tribes in Oregon once depended for food upon the *c'wam* and *kuptu* fish, which have ancient cultural and spiritual significance; now these fish are endangered species. To the Karuk, Hupa, and Yurok tribes, the Klamath River and its salmon are irreplaceable gifts of their Creator – a vital natural resource and the foundation of native economies, spirituality, and ancient life ways. The chinook salmon also are considered tribal trust resources, which the federal government has an obligation to protect.

## Status

In August 2002, as thousands of chinook salmon made their way up the Klamath to spawn, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation reduced flows to the lower river, despite warnings and pleas from tribal, state and federal biologists. The low flows caused higher water temperatures and crowding of the returning salmon, culminating in a disease outbreak that killed a record 34,000 salmon and steelhead in September. During this time, many of the Klamath Basin's National Wildlife Refuges also were without sufficient water – yet farmers upstream received full water deliveries.

In fall 2002, a federal wildlife biologist revealed the Bush Administration had pressured the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to accept flows they knew were too low to support fish. Newspapers reported the Administration also was suppressing a U.S. Geological Survey economic report which found Klamath fisheries worth billions of dollars more than the basin's irrigated agriculture.

U.S. Representatives Mike Thompson (California) and Earl Blumenauer (Oregon) introduced legislation seeking \$220 million to buy farmland, boost river flows and water quality, and aid communities hurt by the 2002 salmon kill.

In January 2003, the California Department of Fish and Game concluded the federal government's excessive water diversions were the prime cause of the September 2002 salmon die-off. The National Research Council and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are due to make final reports in March 2003.

In April the federal Bureau of Reclamation is expected to declare 2003 a dry year, triggering restrictions on water allocations for farmers, endangered lake fish, and threatened coho salmon in the Klamath River – based on the same NMFS biological opinion that failed to protect fish in 2002.

## Recommendations

For the Klamath River Basin to regain its clean, life-sustaining rivers, lakes, and marshes, its remaining wild lands must be protected and its wetlands must be restored.

- To reduce irrigation demand, the federal government should initiate a program to buy land and water rights from willing sellers.
- To protect National Wildlife Refuges, the federal government should initiate a program to reclaim and restore wetlands and phase out farming in the Refuges.
- To protect imperiled fish and wildlife, federal agencies must guarantee adequate water flows, lake levels, and habitat for the recovery of salmon and other listed species, and for the protection of bald eagles and National Wildlife Refuges. They should improve water conservation, complete the Hardy Phase II study of flows needed to restore salmon fisheries, implement the Trinity River flow decision made by Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, and reopen the National Marine Fisheries Service's flawed biological opinion on coho salmon.
- Federal agencies must respect tribal treaty and reserved rights – water quality and quantity must be protected and ensured for all citizens of the Klamath River Basin.
- Congress should protect roadless forests as wilderness areas.

## What You Can Do

Please write California's U.S. Senators and ask that they support these important measures to restore the Klamath River Basin.

### Hon. Dianne Feinstein

United States Senate  
331 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510  
(202) 224-3841  
(202) 228-3954 fax

### Hon. Barbara Boxer

United States Senate  
112 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510  
(202) 224-3553  
(415) 956-6701 fax in San Francisco

*Please send a copy to the Northcoast Environmental Center.*

## For more information contact:

### Oregon Natural Resources Council

Wendell Wood  
(503) 283-6343  
info@onrc.org  
<http://www.onrc.org>

### Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations

(541) 689-2000  
fishlifr@aol.com  
<http://www.pcffa.org>

### Northcoast Environmental Center

Tim McKay  
(707) 822-6918  
nec@northcoast.com  
[www.necandeconews.to](http://www.necandeconews.to)

# Medicine Lake Highlands

## CONSTRUCTION OF GEOTHERMAL PLANTS WOULD LAY WASTE TO WILD FORESTS AND SACRED LANDS

### Background

Industrial development threats to the remote and geologically unique Medicine Lake Highlands have greatly escalated in recent months with the actions of the Bush Administration. Calpine Corporation, a San Jose-based energy producer, is moving forward with plans to develop large geothermal power plant complexes on the Modoc, Klamath, and Shasta-Trinity National Forests northeast of Mount Shasta.

In 2000, the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management denied one of these proposed power plant projects, at Telephone Flat. The location of the project within the Medicine Lake caldera was deemed inappropriate due to noise and visual concerns, and because it would disrupt the area's scenic and recreation values, old-growth forest and wildlife, and Native American sacred sites. As originally proposed, the Telephone Flat project also would have built roads and power lines in three potential wilderness areas: the Mount Hoffman, Lavas, and Dobie Flat Roadless Areas.

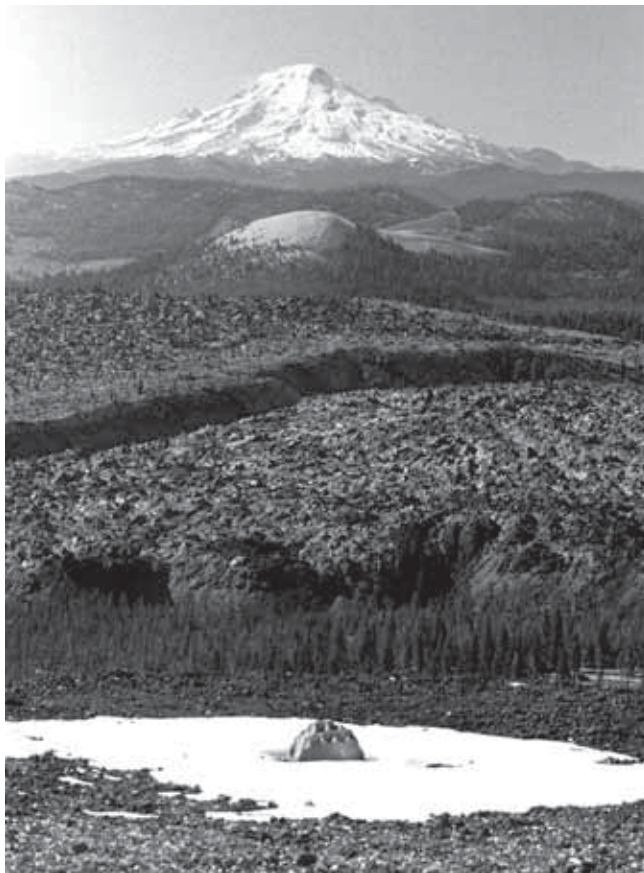
In November 2002 the Bush Administration reauthorized the Telephone Flat project despite the strongly-worded rejections of the BLM, Forest Service, and White House Council on Historic Preservation. It did agree to spare the three roadless areas.

Another Calpine proposal, the Fourmile Hill project, was approved in 2000, subject to a five-year moratorium on any further geothermal development. The moratorium was subsequently lifted by the Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton.

### Outstanding Values

Rising out of a sea of blue-green forested hills northeast of Mount Shasta, the Medicine Lake Highlands volcano encompasses California's most diverse volcanic fields, on the continent's largest shield volcano. The volcano's caldera, a 500-foot-deep crater about six miles long and four miles wide, was formed when underground magma flows collapsed the dome's summit. The azure waters of Medicine Lake lie embedded in this million-year-old sculpture with its striking variety of textures — lava flows, clear lakes, sparkling mountains of glass-like obsidian, slopes of white pumice, dark boulders, and silvery-green mountain hemlock.

The Highlands' clear skies, with visibility of 70 to 100 miles, are home to eagles, goshawks, and rare bats. Tall forests shelter rare carnivores including American marten and Pacific fisher, and unknown numbers of sensitive plants. The Highlands' aquifer forms the major source of spring waters flowing into the Sacramento River and is California's largest spring system.



JANE ENGLISH, WWW.HEART.COM

*Industrial development would cover the Medicine Lake Highlands with power plants, well fields, toxic sump pools, and new roads.*

The Highlands are one of the most sacred areas to the Pit River and Modoc tribes, who have steadfastly opposed the developments. Linked by traditional running paths, Mount Shasta and the Medicine Lake Highlands share tribal stories that weave eternity, time, and the land together.

### Threats

Calpine owns 43 geothermal leases covering more than 47,000 acres of the Medicine Lake Highlands, and is pressing forward with two proposed power plant complexes: the Fourmile Hill project, and the Telephone Flat project which federal agencies previously denied.

The two projects would cover up to eight square miles with power plants, well fields, toxic sump pools, new roads, clearcuts, power lines, and other structures. They would push industrial develop-

ment into an area that is still mostly wild forest, and into sacred lands one mile from Medicine Lake, a cultural and spiritual site for at least four Native American tribes. At least 37 miles of new transmission lines would be constructed, in addition to above-ground pipes that reach temperatures up to 500 degrees Fahrenheit. Cumulatively, hundreds of wells could be drilled to depths approaching 10,000 feet.

The Mount Hoffman Roadless Area contains many geothermal leases and currently is not protected as wilderness. While the area was dropped from the Telephone Flat project, it is likely to be targeted again soon by other power plant projects expected in coming years.

The Energy Security Act, introduced in Congress in 2001 as part of the Bush Energy Plan, aims to subsidize geothermal development and provide new forms of corporate welfare. It would exempt the industry from paying royalties for leases on public lands; strip Forest Service managers of decision-making power, paving the way for development in roadless and other sensitive areas; and require taxpayers to shoulder the costs of environmental studies.

### **Status**

In January 2003, conservation groups filed an appeal before the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) against the Bush Administration's reversal approving the Telephone Flat project. If the appeal and any subsequent courtroom challenges fail, construction at Telephone Flat could begin in late 2003.

Exploratory drilling at the Fourmile Hill site began in fall 2001 and continues today. Environmental and Native American groups appealed the Fourmile Hill project to IBLA but those appeals were denied. Two additional lawsuits are pending under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Calpine has already sold any power generated by these projects to the Bonneville Power Administration, which serves Oregon and Washington but supplies no power to California. Nevertheless, the California Energy Commission committed nearly \$50 million in funding from California ratepayers to the Telephone Flat and Fourmile Hill projects with the stipulation that they would be on-line by 2002. When the developer failed to meet that deadline, CEC held a public comment period on whether to deny the grant, penalize the developer, or reinstate the money. CEC extended the funding by four years to December 31, 2005, and furthermore awarded Calpine another \$1.1 million for exploratory drilling at the Fourmile Hill site.

### **Recommendations**

Greater conservation measures should be enacted to offer these areas increased protection. Congress should designate the Mount Hoffman Roadless Area as a wilderness area. The Bush Administration should refrain from challenging the Forest Service's Roadless Area Conservation Rule, which protects the Mount Hoffman, Lavas, and Dobie Flat Roadless Areas from development, logging, and road building.

California and the U.S. Congress should support energy conservation and energy efficient technologies, rather than subsidize industries that damage public lands. During the energy crunch of summer 2001, Californians reduced electricity use an average 10 percent during peak hours — the equivalent of nearly 100 geothermal power plants.

### **What You Can Do**

Please write to California's U.S. Senators. Ask them to protect the Medicine Lake Highlands and our sensitive public lands from geothermal development, and to designate the Mount Hoffman Roadless Area as wilderness.

#### **Hon. Dianne Feinstein**

United States Senate  
331 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510  
(202) 224-3841  
(202) 228-3954 fax

#### **Hon. Barbara Boxer**

United States Senate  
112 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510  
(202) 224-3553  
(415) 956-6701 fax in San Francisco

### **For more information contact:**

#### **Mount Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center**

Michelle Berditshevsky  
Peggy Risch  
(530) 926-3397  
<http://www.mountshastaecology.org>  
<http://www.medicinelakevideo.org>

#### **California Wilderness Coalition**

Ryan Henson  
(530) 474-4808  
[ryan@calwild.org](mailto:ryan@calwild.org)  
<http://www.calwild.org>



JANE ENGLISH, WWW.BEHEART.COM

# Last Year's 10 Most Threatened Wild Places

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW? A NOTE ON THE STATUS OF 2002'S MOST THREATENED:

**Trinity Alps Wilderness Additions:** **Saved.** A federal judge stopped the Forest Service's illegal logging in April 2002. Senator Barbara Boxer and Representative Mike Thompson have proposed the areas for wilderness designation.

**Mojave Desert — Cadiz Project:** **Saved.** In October 2002, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California rejected the water-mining proposal as financially and ecologically unsound, thanks to strong leadership by Senator Dianne Feinstein and Representative Jerry Lewis.

**Mojave Desert — Fort Irwin:** **Outlook uncertain.** Congress gave the Army endangered tortoise habitat for a tank training range, and the Army may get exemptions from protecting it. But five surrounding wild areas are now proposed for wilderness designation by Senator Boxer and Representative Hilda Solis. *Contact: Desert Protective Council, (619) 543-0757.*

**Owens River Headwaters:** **Outlook uncertain.** Sen. Boxer and Rep. Solis propose to protect the area permanently as part of the Ansel Adams Wilderness. So far, ski developers have not opposed. *Contact: The Wilderness Society, (760) 647-1614.*

**Gaviota Coast:** **Still threatened.** *See Also In Trouble, below.*

**South Orange County:** **Still threatened.** *See Also In Trouble, below.*

**Santa Ana and Palomar Mountains:** **Still threatened.** *See p. 6 of this report.*

**Los Padres National Forest, Medicine Lake Highlands, Klamath River Basin:** **Still threatened.** *See this report.*

## Also In Trouble in 2003

These troubled wild places missed this year's list but are sure candidates for next year's; many are menaced by federal environmental policy rollbacks and reversals.

**Giant Sequoia National Monument.** In violation of the 2000 monument proclamation, the Bush Administration proposes heavy commercial logging — with clearcuts in giant sequoia groves and large-scale removal of big, green trees — in the name of reducing fire risk. Century-old sequoias up to 30 inches across would be logged. *Contact: California Wilderness Coalition, (530) 758-0380.*

**Mojave National Preserve.** In February the Bush Administration enacted a new rule to allow counties and private interests to take over federal lands to build highways. More than 2,500 miles of "highways" are claimed in the Preserve, including abandoned jeep trails, wash bottoms, and footpaths in designated wilderness. Many other desert wilderness areas are threatened. *Contact: California Wilderness Coalition, (530) 758-0380.*

**Gaviota Coast.** Southern California's last rural coast faces imminent mini-mansions and golf courses, and the Bush Administration has nixed a move for National Seashore designation. Local groups have formed a coalition to fight development, but the area desperately needs conservation funding to buy key habitat. *Contact: Gaviota Coast Conservancy, (805) 967-5828.*

**Golden Trout Wilderness Additions.** Proposed wilderness areas on the Sequoia National Forest are home to California's endangered state fish, the golden trout, but the Forest Service is planning to log them, along with other roadless areas totaling some 80,000 acres. *Contact: California Wilderness Coalition, (530) 758-0380.*

**California Desert — Indian Pass.** The Bush Administration reversed its predecessor's denial of a new open-pit mine in the California Desert Conservation Area, on sacred lands of the Quechan Indian tribe. The proposed Glamis Imperial cyanide heap-leach gold mine is opposed by Senators Feinstein and Boxer, California Governor Gray Davis, and the California legislature. *Contact: Quechan Indian Tribe, (858) 454-8687.*

**Joshua Tree National Park.** Developers plan an entire new city on the park boundary, which would fracture critical wildlife corridors, worsen air pollution, and strain dwindling aquifers. A massive proposed landfill threatens wildlands on the other side of the park. *Contact: National Parks Conservation Association, (510) 839-9922.*

**White Mountains — Birch and Furnace Creeks.** Illegal ORV use has damaged delicate desert canyons and proposed wilderness areas in this spectacular 14,000-foot range. The Forest Service and BLM are planning closures, but the Bush Administration's dismantling of the Sierra Nevada Framework may dismantle the closures too. *Contact: Friends of the Inyos, (760) 647-0079.*

**South Orange County.** Local residents have organized strong opposition to proposed residential and toll road development in the region's last open space and rare habitat. State, federal, and local agencies are reviewing developers' proposals; conservationists seek funds to purchase the land. *Contact: Friends of the Foothills, (949) 361-7534.*

**San Benito Mountain and Joaquin Rocks Potential Wilderness.** BLM is failing to control illegal ORV use that is damaging rare forests, a designated wilderness study area, and other potential wilderness lands in this little-known corner of San Benito and Fresno counties. *Contact: California Native Plant Society, (831) 624-8497.*

**San Luis National Wildlife Refuge.** The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has opened this Central Valley wildlife refuge to new oil and gas exploration, despite the presence of rare vernal pool habitat, sandhill cranes, and endangered species. *Contact: San Luis National Wildlife Refuge, (209) 826-3508.*

**Jackson State Redwood Forest.** In this experimental working forest operated by the State of California, loggers still take down giant coast redwoods, the world's tallest trees. With 98 percent of ancient redwoods already gone, conservationists are asking the State to restore redwoods, not log them. *Contact: Jackson Forest Restoration Campaign, (707) 964-5800.*

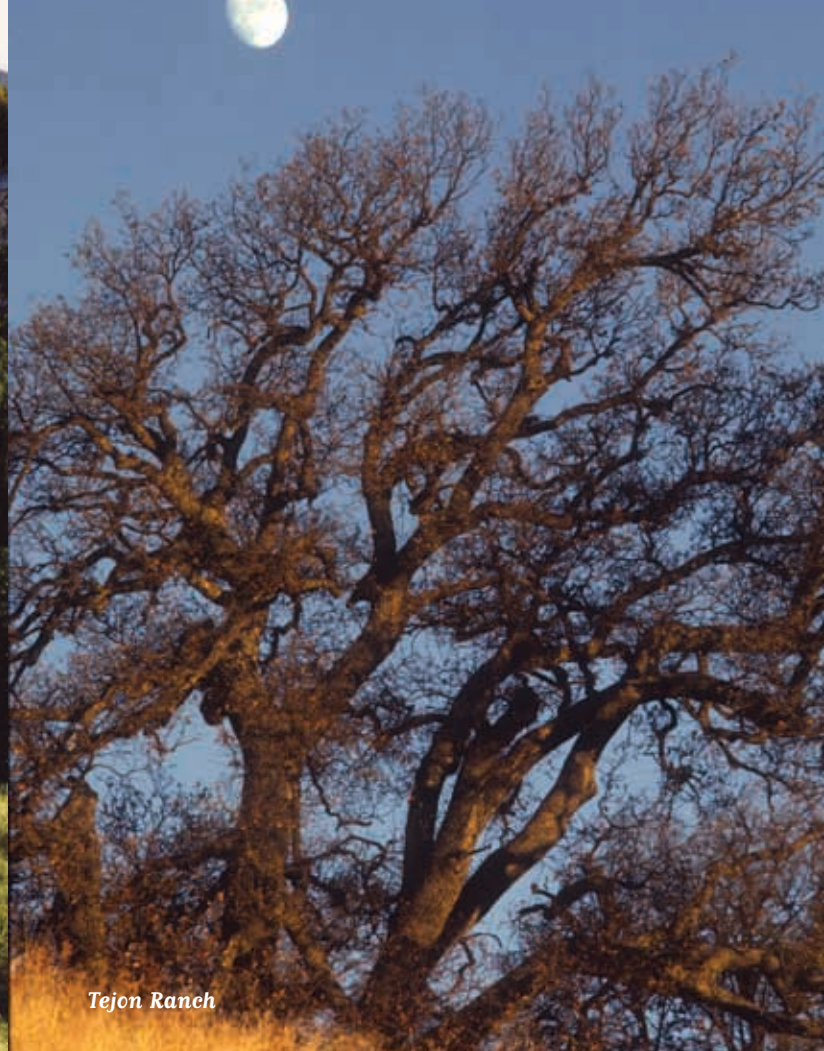


*The Forest Service proposes heavy logging in Giant Sequoia National Monument, including cutting down century-old giant sequoias.*

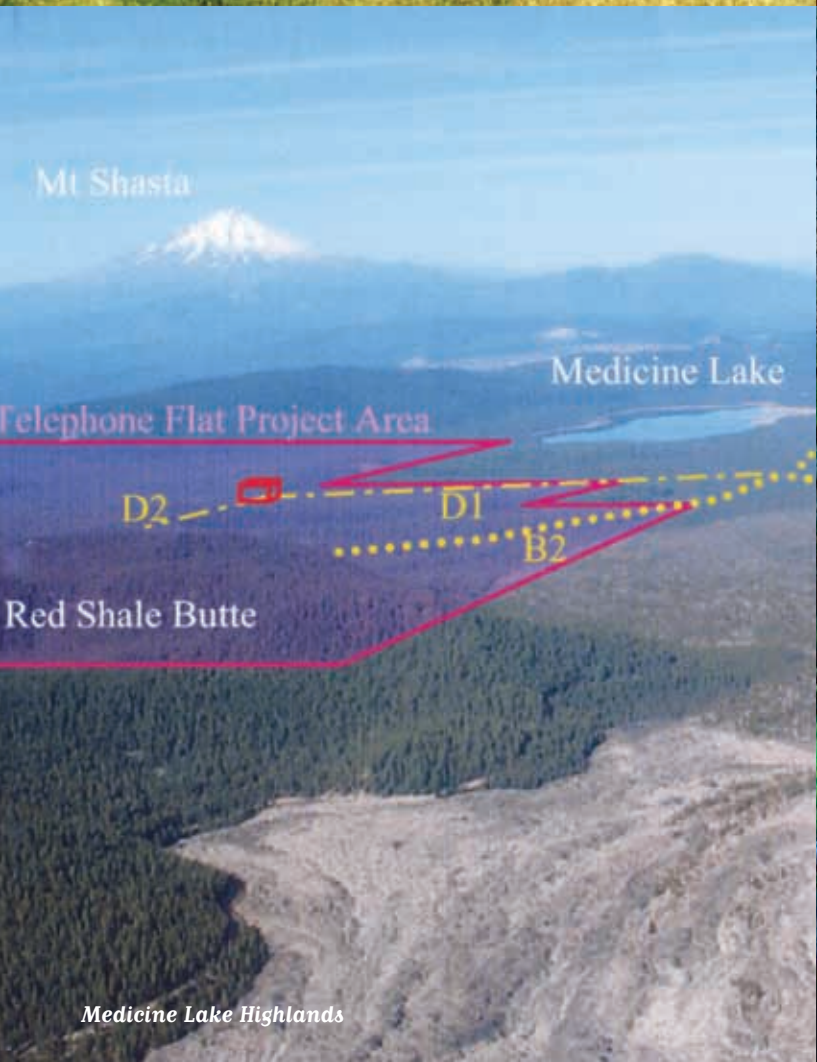
CARLA CLOER



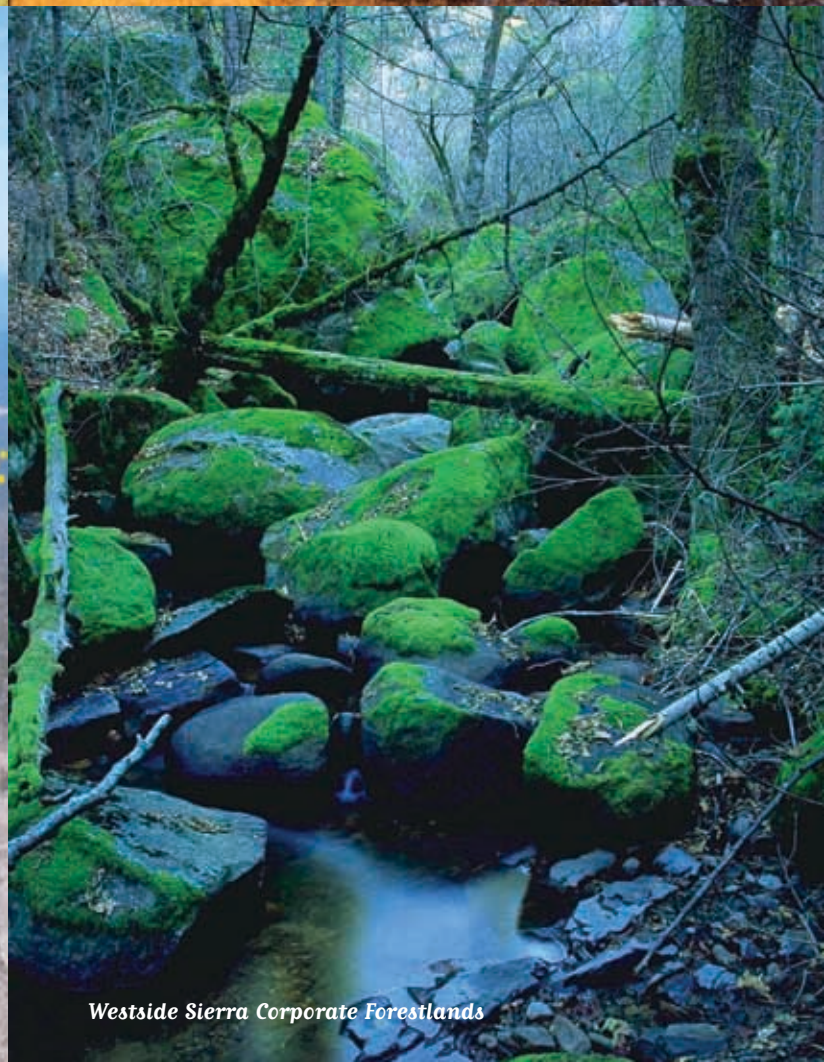
*Los Padres National Forest*



*Tejon Ranch*



*Medicine Lake Highlands*



*Westside Sierra Corporate Forestlands*



**California Wilderness Coalition**

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