

OUR NATURAL HERITAGE AT RISK:

California's 10 Most Threatened Wild Places 2004



Los Padres National Forest



CALIFORNIA
WILDERNESS
COALITION

The Voice for Wild California



White Mountains — Furnace Creek



Sierra Nevada Forests



Algodones Sand Dunes



Medicine Lake Highlands

OUR NATURAL HERITAGE AT RISK

*California's 10 Most Threatened
Wild Places*



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- Center for Biological Diversity
- Center for Sierra Nevada Conservation
- Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch
- Friends of the Inyo
- Friends of the River
- Friends of the Santa Clara River
- John Muir Project
- Mount Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center
- National Parks Conservation Association
- Northcoast Environmental Center
- Oregon Natural Resources Council
- Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility
- Sequoia Forest Keeper
- Sierra Club California
- Sierra Watch
- Tejon Working Group
- The Wilderness Society
- Ventana Wilderness Alliance
- World Wildlife Fund

*Front cover: Los Padres National Forest by Andrew M. Harvey, www.visualjourneys.net (bottom), N.Todd, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (top).
Back cover: Giant Sequoia National Monument, photo by Martin Litton.*

“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

Ask a Californian what's the number one threat to wilderness and open space in our state, and you're increasingly likely to hear a single answer: the federal government.

Seemingly liberated after the 2002 elections, the Bush Administration in 2003 uncorked a staggering series of environmental rollbacks that clearly had been some time in the making. From the Department of the Interior, the EPA, and the USDA Forest Service emitted literally hundreds of policy rollbacks, decision reversals, and new pro-industry policies, easing pollution controls and encouraging development and resource extraction on the nation's public lands. Many targeted California lands specifically. As the year wore on, disbelief turned to outrage as the public saw the administration was methodically attacking 30 years of environmental progress with new federal measures weakening the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, and the Wilderness Act.

As we look out over the California landscape today, we see the federal government opening our national monuments to logging, our national forests to logging and oil drilling, and our last wilderness to road-building and uncontrolled off-road vehicle abuse. Many of California's wild areas that Congress is now considering for permanent protection are simultaneously being targeted by the Bush Administration for logging or energy development.

Adding to this strain are two of the state's largest corporate landowners, whose plans for their vast private landholdings — industrial logging and urban sprawl — threaten to eliminate some of California's most biologically important habitat for endangered wildlife. Once again, choosing 10 places in the greatest danger was difficult, starting from a list more than twice that long.

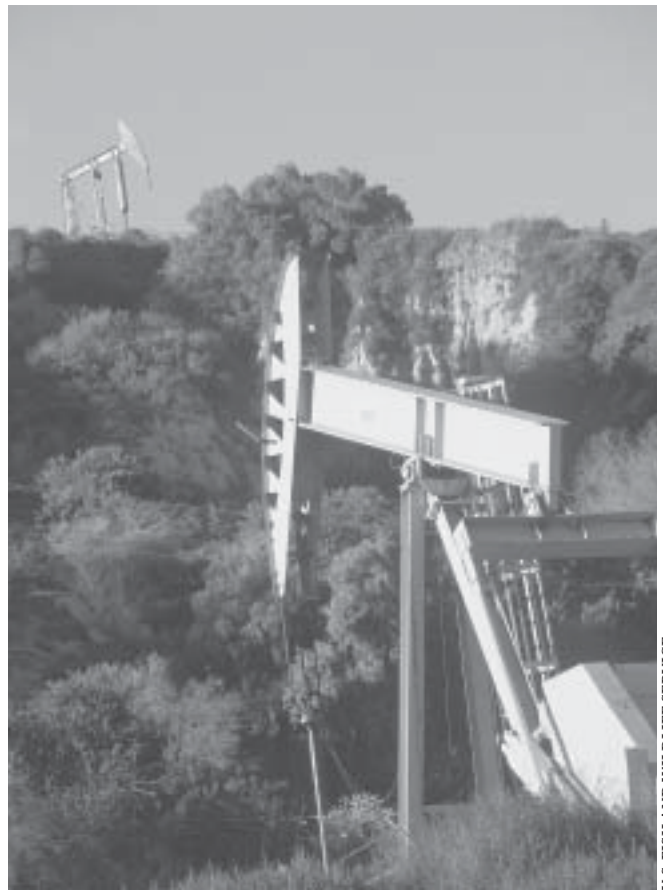
Bush Administration's Environmental Rollbacks Intensified in 2003

SIERRA NEVADA FRAMEWORK

In this year's most sweeping threat, all 11 national forests in the Sierra Nevada immediately face large increases in commercial logging from the Bush Administration's newest environmental rollback, aimed directly at California. After a perfunctory public comment period in 2003, in January 2004 the U.S. Forest Service revoked its own 2001 Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment — the historic "Sierra Framework" that protects old-growth forests and wildlife throughout the Sierra — substituting a weaker plan that lets timber companies more easily log the last ancient forests in our state's greatest mountain range. Opposed by California's governor, resources agency, and U.S. senators, the Bush Administration's revisions weaken



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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

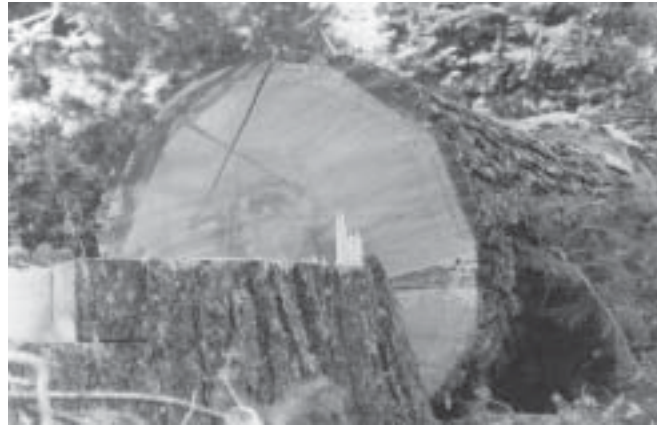
wildlife protection, eliminate protection for old-growth groves, and instead allow widespread commercial logging, projected to nearly triple the volume of logging in the Sierra.



"In this year's most sweeping threat, all 11 national forests in the Sierra Nevada immediately face large increases in commercial logging..."

ROADLESS AREA CONSERVATION RULE

Four of this year's 10 areas are in danger from the Bush Administration's ongoing attempt to gut another Forest Service policy: the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. This landmark conservation measure, adopted in 2000 but suspended by the current administration, protects the last wild national forest lands — including 4.4 million acres in California — from development, logging, and road-building. In 2003 the Bush Administration exempted Alaska's national forests from the rule, and announced a new plan to eliminate the rule in the lower 48.



In January the Bush Administration revoked a key Forest Service policy to boost commercial logging in the entire Sierra Nevada, even in old-growth forests.

If enforced, the Roadless Rule will save threatened wildlands of the Los Padres National Forest, Cleveland National Forest, Golden Trout Wilderness Addition (Rincon Roadless Area on the Sequoia National Forest), and Medicine Lake Highlands (Mount Hoffman Roadless Area on the Modoc and Klamath National Forests). Without the rule, these areas are in imminent danger of logging or energy development.

OTHER REVERSALS IN CALIFORNIA

The Bush Administration has reversed many other federal policies specific to California, stripping away hard-won protections and approving harmful projects. The Department of the Interior approved industrial power plants in the Medicine Lake

California's 10 Most Threatened Wild Places in 2004 are:

Sierra Nevada Forests — Bush Administration has revoked Forest Service's Sierra Framework; substitute plan will allow widespread logging throughout the Sierra, even old-growth areas. Private company's plan to clearcut its own 1 million acres is further degrading water and habitat for rare wildlife.

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

White Mountains (Furnace Creek) — California's largest unprotected wilderness is being invaded by illegal off-road vehicle trails damaging a rare desert stream.

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

Tejon Ranch — Sprawl and industrial development threaten irreplaceable wildlife 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.

Giant Sequoia National Monument — Forest Service's plan would continue intensive logging in a protected monument, even cutting century-old sequoias.

Golden Trout Wilderness Addition — Salvage logging in roadless area would damage proposed wilderness that's home to California's imperiled state fish.

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 salmon and hurting farmers, fishermen, tribes, and endangered wildlife.

Highlands near Mount Shasta which were rejected by the previous administration. Similarly, it is re-opening vast areas of the fragile Algodones Dunes which were previously closed to vehicles to protect endangered species. And in 2002 it overruled its own federal scientists and cut back Klamath River flows, killing more than 34,000 salmon in Northern California. The Forest Service, having dispensed with the Sierra Framework, is now stripping key protections from the Northwest Forest Plan that protect northern California's ancient forests and salmon.

California's endangered species have been hard hit. In 2002 alone, 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. They denied any protection for the imperiled Yosemite toad and California spotted owl under the Endangered Species Act. And today they propose to drill for oil in the Los Padres National Forest where the critically endangered California condor struggles to evade extinction.

Wilderness, Wildlands, and Wildlife Habitat

California conservationists are working hard to protect many of these threatened places as national wilderness areas before they are lost. The California Wild Heritage Act currently proposed in the U.S. Congress would permanently protect the wild Los Padres National Forest, White Mountains, Golden Trout Wilderness Addition, parts of the Klamath River Basin, and many other wild public lands so that future generations can enjoy them as we do today.

Unfortunately, some of our most threatened public wildlands are not being formally considered for wilderness protection. In Southern California, the last roadless lands on the Cleveland National Forest could soon be lost forever to new freeways, hydroelectric projects and power lines. In the unprotected wilderness of the Algodones Dunes, rare species are losing a battle with rampant off-road vehicle abuse.

Some of our state's 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 fragmented by clearcut logging. In each case, conservationists have identified large private landholdings as critical for preserving California's wildlife migration corridors and biodiversity, and this 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, there are several general measures that would greatly increase protection for threatened wildlands in California:



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Federal logging proposals in Giant Sequoia National Monument and the Golden Trout Wilderness Addition threaten habitat for imperiled wildlife, including the Pacific fisher and California's state fish, the golden trout.

- Congress should designate wilderness areas on deserving public lands in California. Wilderness designation is the strongest protection available under law, and the only means to ensure that wild 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 forest ecosystems.
- 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. A "moratorium" on listing species is a recipe for extinction.
- Local land use planners should plan regionally, across political boundaries, to channel urban growth in ways that conserve threatened wildlife habitat and the connecting linkages vital to individual species and local ecosystems.

About This Report

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

The California Wilderness Coalition represents some 4,600 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. With this annual report we aim to bring to your attention *California's 10 Most Threatened Wild Places* in 2004 — wildlands of statewide significance, in jeopardy of damage or destruction this year.

Each year the California Wilderness Coalition staff, working with our many partner conservation organizations, reviews threatened wildlands throughout California and chooses the 10 most threatened based on 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?



DANIEL R. PATTERSON

California's largest unprotected wilderness, the White Mountains are home to rare desert ecosystems. Creeks here are being damaged by illegal off-road vehicle trails.



JOSH BROWN

Your active participation is greatly needed to preserve these special places 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, the biggest sand dunes in the U.S., 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.

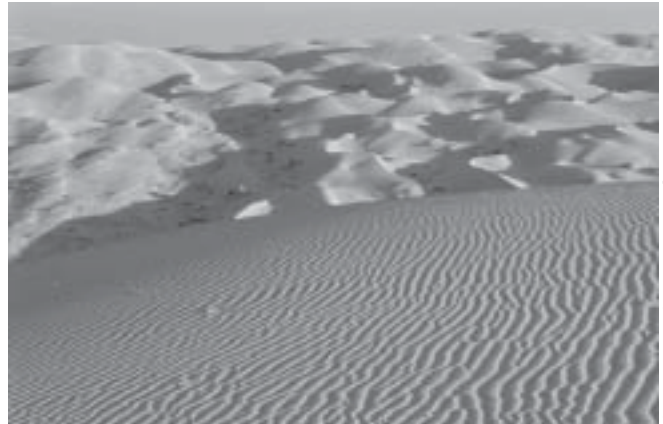
In order to protect endangered species, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) signed a lawsuit settlement agreement in November 2000 with three conservation groups and five off-road vehicle groups. This historic agreement barred ORVs from 49,300 acres of sensitive dunes habitat, in addition to the already protected 25,800-acre North Algodones Dunes Wilderness, but left open nearly 70,000 acres most popular with off-roaders — about half the dunes, or 106 square miles. The agreement established a much-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-high dunes and their surrounding desert woodlands of mesquite, paloverde, and ironwood trees are home to many threatened and endangered species, including the Peirson's milkvetch, the unique plant known as "sand food," Algodones Dunes sunflower, Andrews dune scarab beetle and others. The dunes are also home to the threatened Mojave desert tortoise, sensitive flat-tailed horned lizard and sensitive Colorado desert fringe-toed lizard.

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,



ANDREW M. HARVEY, www.visualjournays.net

Wilderness in the fragile Algodones Dunes — America's largest — is to be reopened to uncontrollable off-road vehicle crowds of up to 240,000.

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 documented significantly reduced densities of plants and animals 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 proposed a new 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 existing balanced management. Instead, BLM plans to reopen all the current closures, eliminating all protected areas outside the designated wilderness area. Comprising less than 15 percent of the dunes at their northern tip, the existing wilderness area is too small to ensure survival of dune species or offer a truly remote wilderness experience.

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. Many holiday weekends in the Algodones Dunes result in widespread violence and 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 soon after, FWS caved to political pressure from the off-road lobby, the BLM, and Bush Administration officials, and issued a permit for the BLM plan. In October 2003 this permit was blocked in federal court, forcing FWS to re-write it.

Also in 2003, FWS proposed designating 53,000 acres as critical habitat for the Peirson's milkvetch, a decision it must finalize by 2004. Again under political pressure, FWS is now considering "de-listing" the Peirson's milkvetch — simply removing it from the threatened species list. FWS is also required to consider listing the Andrews dune scarab beetle as a threatened or endangered species. All three 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. In December 2003 the state commission denied BLM's grant request for law enforcement funding due to concerns BLM was not enforcing habitat protection laws, and doing little to eliminate the causes of lawlessness.

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 a South Algodones Dunes Wilderness as proposed by conservationists, and also protect a 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.

Honorable Bob Filner

U.S. House of Representatives
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Honorable Dianne Feinstein

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San Diego, CA 92101
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Honorable Barbara Boxer

United States Senate
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Honorable Raul Grijalva

U.S. House of Representatives
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(928) 343-7949 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, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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For more information contact:

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White Mountains — Furnace Creek

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES THREATEN RARE DESERT CREEK AND PROPOSED WILDERNESS IN AMERICA'S HIGHEST DESERT MOUNTAINS

Background

In the arid northern Mojave Desert, water is life. Where this rare resource wets the sandy desert soil, tangles of willows and forests of cottonwoods teem with migratory songbirds, butterflies, mule deer and mountain lions.

Furnace Creek is living testimony to the beauty and fragility of desert wetlands. Draining the eastern slope of the White Mountains east of Bishop, Furnace Creek nurtures a deep green thread of riparian vegetation nestled at the bottom of a steep-walled desert canyon. According to the Inyo National Forest, a little-used jeep trail up Furnace Creek “washed out in approximately 1982 and... has not been considered a system road since.”

Unfortunately, decades of natural re-vegetation have not been enough to discourage ATV, jeep and motorcycle drivers. Disregarding the fragility and ecological importance of this rare desert oasis, in recent years off-road vehicles (ORVs) have punched through the creek, trees, bogs and all, leaving this critical habitat a muddy mess.

Although the creek is currently protected by a closure thanks to a decade of work by conservationists, off-road vehicle interests are actively working to reopen this delicate wetland to damaging recreational driving. The Inyo National Forest and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are now formally deciding whether to reopen Furnace Creek to ORVs.

Outstanding Values

Looming just east of the Sierra Nevada, the White Mountains are America's highest desert mountain range. They comprise California's largest unprotected wilderness at 297,000 acres, as well as the highest peak in the Great Basin at 14,246 feet, and the oldest living trees on earth, 5,000-year-old bristlecone pines. Most of the range, including the area of Furnace Creek, is proposed for permanent protection as a national wilderness area.

Fed by a nearly 4-mile-long complex of springs and seeps, slow-moving Furnace Creek creates a rare desert woodland of water birch thickets and cattail bogs topped by gigantic cottonwood trees. Hikers and horseback travelers experience the shade, gurgling water, and abundant wildlife that can only be found in desert oases like Furnace Creek.

According to the Inyo National Forest's Forest Plan, “since nearly all species are dependent on these [riparian] areas at some time in their life cycles, activities that adversely affect these habitats have more potential for affecting the overall



California's largest unprotected wilderness, the White Mountains host 5,000-year-old bristlecone pines. Creeks here are being damaged by illegal off-road vehicle trails.



JOHN DITTLI

wildlife resources on the Forest than any other kind of Forest activity.” From bighorn sheep to hawks to the endangered Paiute cutthroat trout, the health of desert wildlife throughout the White Mountains is inexorably linked to the health of its few riparian areas.

Less than 2 percent of the entire 2-million-acre Inyo National Forest supports such riparian areas — while more than 8,000 miles of open roads and trails already criss-cross Forest Service and BLM lands in the Eastern Sierra region. The current closure of Furnace Creek to vehicles affects less than 4 miles of a rarely used 4-wheel-drive trail, while protecting one of the ecological linchpins of the northern Mojave Desert.

Threats — Ecological Damage by Off-Road Vehicles

In defiance of the current closure, off-road drivers have cut gates, chopped down and smashed through willow and birch thickets, uprooted cattails and sedges, and “bogged” through

desert wetlands, leaving a muddied, rutted mess in their wake. According to the Inyo National Forest, "OHVs [off-highway vehicles] traveling in and near the Furnace Creek stream channel harm stream banks, wetlands, and plants and animals on these areas, and therefore the INF is not protecting these resources by allowing OHV use."

For nearly a decade, conservationists alerted both the Forest Service and the BLM to the ongoing damage of Furnace Creek caused by the forced passage of vehicles. Despite the fact that both agencies are legally mandated to protect rare habitats such as Furnace Creek, the damage continued.

In an environmental assessment justifying the temporary closure of Furnace Creek to vehicles, the BLM determined that off-road vehicles plowing through the creek are "causing significant adverse impacts to riparian habitat and water quality. Consequently, the need for immediate agency action is of critical environmental importance."

Status

In spring 2003, to comply with a lawsuit settlement, both the BLM and the Forest Service finally enforced their own regulations regarding ORV use and wetlands protection and temporarily closed Furnace Creek to vehicles. Citing numerous state and federal statutes, the BLM concluded that "protection of Furnace Creek's significant riparian habitat" is fully consistent with the planned goals and objectives of the California Desert Conservation Area plan." The Inyo National Forest found the current damaged condition of Furnace Creek to be out of compliance with more than a dozen statutes in its own Forest Plan and the Sierra Nevada Framework.

The Inyo National Forest and BLM Ridgecrest Field Office have initiated an environmental review under NEPA to determine the fate of Furnace Creek, with a decision expected in late 2004. Off-road vehicle interests are pushing the agencies to "rebuild" a road through Furnace Creek at considerable financial and environmental cost, or simply open the canyon back up to extreme off-road driving.

Recommendations

The Inyo National Forest and BLM Ridgecrest Field Office should enforce state and federal laws and their own regulations meant to bring balance and sustainability to public lands management, and permanently close Furnace Creek to vehicles.

To ensure that Furnace Creek and the other ecologically important habitats of America's highest desert mountain range are preserved for future generations of people and wildlife, Congress should grant the White Mountains federal wilderness status. Nearly 297,000 acres of the White Mountains — the second-largest unprotected roadless area in the lower 48 states — are proposed for wilderness designation in Senator Barbara Boxer's and Congresswoman Hilda Solis' recently introduced California Wild Heritage Act.

What You Can Do

Please write these important Congress members and encourage them to support the use of sound science to manage public lands and rare desert streams, and support the permanent closure of Furnace Creek to motorized vehicles. For background or a sample letter see www.friendsoftheinyo.org.

Honorable Howard "Buck" McKeon

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Honorable Dianne Feinstein

United States Senate
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(559) 485-9689 fax

Honorable Barbara Boxer

United States Senate
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San Bernardino, CA 92401
(909) 888-8525
(909) 888-8613 fax

Please contact these federal land managers, and encourage them to follow the laws and regulations which mandate protection of this rare desert creek.

Jeff Bailey, Inyo National Forest Supervisor

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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, private land development has extended to the national forest border, threatening to sever wildlife linkages between the Santa Anas and the Palomars further south.

Now development threatens to pierce the wild Cleveland National Forest itself. In 2003, proposals moved forward for a new freeway, a new dam and reservoir, and a new power line corridor, all of which, if approved, would destroy wilderness in the Cleveland.

In recent years local conservationists have urged wilderness protection for several areas in the Santa Anas, but time is running short. Today the Trabuco, Ladd, and Coldwater roadless areas are threatened by proposed freeway routes. The Morrell and Decker Canyon potential additions to the San Mateo Canyon Wilderness are the site of a proposed dam and hydroelectric reservoir. And a proposed major power line threatens roadless forests from north of Lake Elsinore into San Diego County.

Outstanding Values

Although so much of southern California has been developed, the Cleveland National Forest still contains high-quality wildlife habitat and is considered a biological hotspot due to number of threatened species. Diverse sage, chaparral and grasslands ecosystems are interspersed with pine-covered ridges and stream-cut canyons harboring mountain lion, bobcat, mule deer, badger and coyote. The area's meadows and wetlands serve as a migratory corridor for birds and butterflies and 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 not only support a vibrant web of wildlife — they also provides millions of Southern California urban dwellers easy access to a wilderness experience just a short trip from home.



TIM ALLYN

Last chance for wilderness: Trabuco Roadless Area and others in Orange and Riverside counties are threatened by a proposed freeway.

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

The local water district is also proposing a new high-voltage transmission line through the Cleveland National Forest, near the proposed Morrell and Decker Canyons hydro project. The line would run from north of Lake Elsinore to San Diego County and would spoil local hang gliding and scenic views and, along with the accompanying proposed hydroelectric scheme, destroy critical habitat for the endangered arroyo toad, threatened California red-legged frog, and threatened California gnatcatcher. At the same time, San Diego Gas and Electric is pushing for a similar transmission line through the Cleveland.

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 now requires approval from the counties, the state and the Federal Highway Administration.

After the original backer Enron pulled out in 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 also considering a permit for the project, now promoted by Nevada Hydro. The project is now expected to proceed to license application and environmental review by FERC.

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 — over the objection of the Forest Service. The bill failed, and 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. But in January 2003, SDG&E asked the PUC to reconsider the route through the Cleveland. Representative Issa reintroduced the legislation in 2003 and it passed in the House version of the 2003 Energy Omnibus bill, which as of January 2004 was still under consideration by the Senate.

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

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.

Local energy schemes promoted by Nevada Hydro and Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District should be replaced by regional and local energy alternatives that will meet future energy needs without destroying natural and recreational resources.

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.

Honorable Darrell Issa

U.S. House of Representatives
1800 Thibodo Road, #310
Vista, CA 92083
(760) 599-5000
(760) 599-1178 fax

Honorable Dianne Feinstein

United States Senate
750 "B" Street, Suite 1030
San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 231-9712

Honorable Barbara Boxer

United States Senate
600 B Street, Suite 2240
San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 239-3884
(619) 239-5719 fax

Please write and phone local elected officials in Orange, Riverside and San Diego counties. Encourage them to support county NCCP planning, 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
tim.allyn@sierraclub.org

Tejon Ranch

SPRAWLING DEVELOPMENT THREATENS KEY HABITAT ON CALIFORNIA'S LARGEST PRIVATE LANDHOLDING

Background

The Tejon region is an irreplaceable California landscape of mountains, creeks, oak woods and golden grasslands, whose future deserves careful consideration. Within this region, the wildlands and open spaces of the 277,000-acre Tejon Ranch, the largest single private landholding in California, are critical for their unique wildlife and biological values.

Recently, several sprawling industrial and residential projects have been approved or proposed on the Ranch which threaten these values. In addition, the ongoing General Plan updates for both Kern and Los Angeles counties could pave the way for piecemeal development of the Ranch.

Outstanding Values

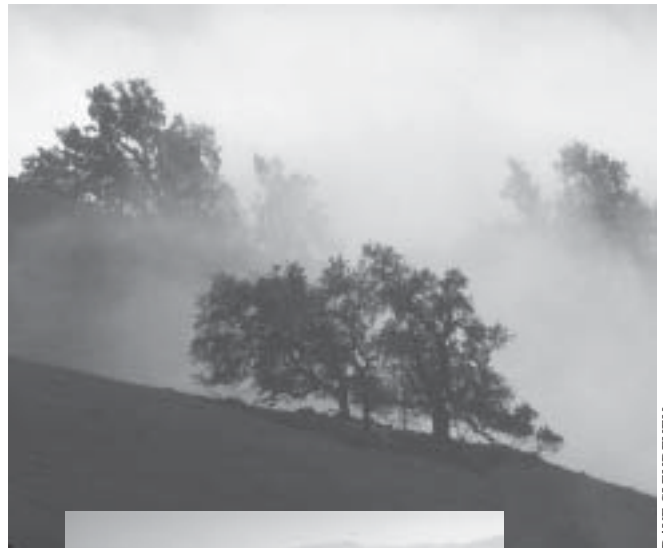
There is compelling scientific evidence that Tejon Ranch plays a crucial role for the conservation of biodiversity on a regional, state and national level. Tejon Ranch spans two counties, Los Angeles and Kern, and lies at a unique crossroads of five geological provinces and four ecological regions, all within the global biodiversity hotspot recognized by scientists as the California Floristic Province. Within this wildlife hotspot, the 277,000-acre Ranch supports 23 different vegetation communities, critical habitat for the endangered California condor and potential habitat for 20 state and federally listed species, and 61 other rare and endemic species, all within about 40 miles of the largest population center of California. Tejon Ranch provides a unique opportunity to conserve low-elevation grasslands and oak woodlands that are under-protected in the region. Conservation on the Ranch is critical to ensuring that other conservation reserves nearby remain intact, and to linking the Sequoia National Forest with the Los Padres National Forest.

Tejon Ranch is also an important open space for national security purposes. All three known development projects proposed for Tejon Ranch would underlie a number of military training flight corridors, threatening the continued viability of these routes.

Threats — Industrial and Residential Development

Three major development projects are slated for Tejon Ranch, all in areas of high core biological values and military flyover routes.

The *Tejon East Industrial Complex* would destroy 1,100 acres of farmland and grasslands and lies within an important wildlife



DAVE CLENDENEN



DAVE CLENDENEN

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

linkage along the San Joaquin Valley floor, including habitat for the threatened San Joaquin kit fox. At 15 million square feet, it would be one of the largest industrial developments in Kern County history and would greatly increase diesel truck traffic and air pollution in this already highly polluted air basin.

The proposed *Centennial* project along Highway 138 in northern Los Angeles County would replace more than 12,000 acres of grasslands, chaparral, and juniper and oak woodlands with 23,000 homes and 14 million square feet of associated retail and commercial developments.

Tejon Mountain Village would be located in the secluded hills and canyons surrounding Castaic (Tejon) Lake. Based on concept plans, the project would impact 37,000 acres of oak woodlands, grasslands, chaparral, montane hardwoods and conifers, pinyon-juniper woodlands, wet meadows and riparian woodlands.

Status

In October 2003 a Kern County Superior Court judge struck down the county's January approval of the Tejon East Industrial Complex, finding that the county failed to analyze impacts on wildlife and air quality. This lawsuit, brought by the Kern Audubon Society, Sierra Club, Center for Biological Diversity, and the Center for Race, Poverty & Environment signals the first round of a long-term effort to protect the Ranch from the sprawling development and air pollution that characterizes much of southern California.

The Tejon Ranch Company has filed an application with Los Angeles County for the Centennial development. Preliminary environmental review by county staff is underway.

U.S. Navy officials in October 2003 asked Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to ensure a coordinated master plan for Tejon Ranch because Centennial and other proposed developments would undercut important low-level flight paths for military training.

Reports issued in 2003 by the Conservation Biology Institute on the *Conservation Significance of the Tejon Ranch* and by the South Coast Wildlands Project on *Key Wildlife Linkages* underscored the significance of Tejon Ranch for its wildlife and core habitat values, and as a linkage to maintain the wildlife network in the broader region.

In May 2003 the Tejon Ranch Company and the Trust for Public Land announced an agreement for the purchase of a portion of the Ranch for conservation. Ideally, such a purchase would only occur if the company agrees to participate in comprehensive conservation planning for the entire Ranch before seeking additional development approvals; the company has not yet agreed. Some believe the company is offering to conserve remote areas in order to smooth development of other biologically critical areas.

A draft of Los Angeles County's general plan and a revised draft of Kern County's general plan are both expected in 2004.

Recommendations

Tejon Ranch's globally important biological resources warrant a comprehensive master plan for the entire Ranch, rather than piecemeal development and conservation of isolated portions. The State of California should sponsor a joint regional planning process to create such a master plan, with an emphasis on preserving biological values. It may be that little or no development is appropriate on this last great intact landscape in the region.

The Tejon region needs "smart growth" solutions that direct new growth to existing urban areas, provide jobs in balance with housing, and conserve high-quality agricultural and habitat lands. Air pollution in Kern and Los Angeles Counties is among the worst in the nation. New development outside of existing communities generates costly impacts related to air

quality, traffic, and the loss of habitat and prime agricultural lands. The counties of Kern and Los Angeles have a responsibility to engage in a regional planning process to ensure that land uses permitted on the Ranch will protect the region's agricultural heritage, unique biological values, and national security interests.

Because the entire Ranch has tremendous resource values, any lands purchased for conservation should be those with the highest biological value and those directly threatened by development. Conservation funds should not be spent solely on remote areas of the ranch that are not in harm's way.

What Can You Do

Sign a letter to Governor Schwarzenegger requesting a state-sponsored joint planning process to create a comprehensive master plan for the entire Tejon Ranch, to ensure protection of biological resources, air and water quality, and national security interests.

Sign the letter at <http://www.savetejonranch.org>.

Write to the Boards of Supervisors of Kern and Los Angeles counties and ask them to reject all piecemeal development projects on the Ranch until there is a larger regional vision for the Tejon Ranch.

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

Write to the California Wildlife Conservation Board and urge them to spend state conservation funds on Tejon Ranch only if: the funding is spent on lands that are both high-value for resource protection and threatened by development; and the Tejon Ranch Company agrees to participate in a comprehensive conservation plan for the Ranch before additional development rights are sought.

Wildlife Conservation Board

1807 13th Street, Suite # 103
Sacramento, CA 95814

For more information contact:

Tejon Working Group

Terry Watt, Coordinator
terrywatt@att.net
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 for new drilling. 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 to California's wilderness and wildlife, 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



N. TODD, U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE

Targeted for drilling: The wild forests of the Los Padres are endangered condor habitat and have only a ten-day supply of oil.

California condor, both endangered. On the brink of extinction, the condor has not successfully bred in the wild for decades. 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. Oak woodland habitat is a conservation priority for California because it has declined dramatically from its historical range.

The Forest Service proposal would allow new oil and gas leasing in roadless areas that are currently proposed for permanent protection in the California Wild Heritage Act, as additions to the San Rafael Wilderness, Chumash Wilderness, Matilija Wilderness, Dick Smith Wilderness, and Sespe Wilderness. Oil development could devastate their wild character and disqualify them from being protected by Congress as wilderness. In addition, the proposal would allow new drilling in the watersheds of Upper Sespe Creek and Piru Creek, both proposed for protection as Wild & Scenic Rivers.

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.

A \$40 million effort to re-establish the California condor in the wild has not yet succeeded, frustrated in part by human impacts on the species. Condors have collided with powerlines, bathed in pools of oil, been poisoned by lead ammunition from carcasses, and died from eating trash. To allow additional industrial development in the condor's last sanctuary would further jeopardize condor recovery.

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 and Representative Hilda Solis have proposed the permanent protection of new wilderness areas in the Los Padres as part of the California Wild Heritage Act.

The Forest Service plans to release its final EIS in April 2004 — 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. After noting serious mistakes and omissions in the Forest Service's biological assessment, FWS is writing its opinion now.

In 2003 a single condor chick hatched in the Los Padres National Forest, but died from eating trash, another disappointing setback for the \$40 million condor recovery program.

Recommendations

Congress should permanently protect the threatened wildlands in the Los Padres National Forest by designating them as wilderness areas, 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 Forest Service's 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.

Honorable Elton Gallegly

U.S. House of Representatives
2829 Townsgate Road, Suite 315
Thousand Oaks, CA 91361-3018
(805) 497-2224
(800) 423-0023 toll free
(805) 497-0039 fax

Honorable Lois Capps

U.S. House of Representatives
216 State Street, Suite 403
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 730-1710
(805) 730-9153 fax

Honorable Dianne Feinstein

United States Senate
11111 Santa Monica Boulevard, Suite 915
Los Angeles, CA 90025
(310) 914-7300
(310) 914-7318 fax

Honorable Barbara Boxer

United States Senate
312 N. Spring Street, Suite 1748
Los Angeles, CA 90012
(213) 894-5000
(213) 894-5042 fax

Write the new Forest Service supervisor to tell him that you do not want new oil and gas leasing in the Los Padres National Forest, and that the forest's roadless areas should be permanently protected with wilderness designation.

USDA Forest Service

Gene Blankenbaker, Forest Supervisor
6755 Hollister Ave., Suite 150
Goleta, CA 93117
(805) 968-6640
gblankenbaker@fs.fed.us

For more information contact:

California Wild Heritage Campaign

Erin Duffy
(805) 564-2460
calwild_sb@yahoo.com
www.californiawild.org

California Wilderness Coalition

Keith Hammond
(530) 758-0380
keith@calwild.org
www.calwild.org

Sierra Nevada Forests

NATIONAL FORESTS: BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S ROLLBACK WOULD TRIPLE LOGGING ON 11.5 MILLION ACRES OF PUBLIC FORESTS

Background



WARREN ALFORD

A forest near you: Bush policy boosts logging in Sierra's 11 national forests, even old-growth areas.

In January 2001, the U.S. Forest Service adopted the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment ("Framework") modernizing the management of 11 national forests in the 430-mile-long Sierra Nevada mountain range. The Sierra Framework is a result of 12 years of research and cooperative planning by the Forest Service, scientists, local residents, business owners, and conservationists, to protect the big trees and rare

wildlife of California's greatest natural treasure.

The Forest Service's first comprehensive Sierra-wide plan to reduce the threat of wildfire, the Framework allows logging of small trees in areas of high fire risk, while retaining large, fire-resistant trees throughout the Sierra. It calls for intensive brush and tree removal on more than 2 million acres around homes and communities, and generally allows the thinning of small trees and the use of prescribed fire to reduce hazardous fuels throughout the Sierra.

Critically, the Framework also includes an historic commitment to protect and restore 4.25 million acres of old-growth forest. It protects all remaining old-growth stands one acre or larger in the Sierra Nevada. It prohibits cutting large trees except in the fire "defense zone" around homes and towns, where trees up to 30 inches diameter can be cut for safety. The Framework protects the California spotted owl, northern goshawk, and the rare, mink-like Pacific fisher and pine marten. And it establishes for the first time a strategy to conserve aquatic and streamside habitat in all national forests in the Sierra.

In January 2004 the Bush Administration revoked the Sierra Framework, substituting a revised plan that removes old-growth and wildlife protections and nearly triples logging.

Threats — Tripled Logging, Damaged Habitat for Imperiled Wildlife

The Bush Administration's revisions to the Sierra Nevada Framework would eliminate protections for old-growth forest stands, and instead allow logging of medium and large trees throughout the Sierra Nevada, projected to nearly triple the volume of commercial logging.

The revisions would weaken protection for spotted owl habitat, by allowing the tree canopy cover to be substantially reduced, and increasing logging in the owl's home range and nest stands. They would allow significant degradation of Pacific fisher habitat by logging, though the fisher is unlikely to survive in the Sierra without habitat protection and restoration. Furthermore, the changes would significantly weaken grazing limits and water quality protections, putting aquatic species at risk and damaging pristine meadows and streams.

Where the Framework focused on thinning the most flammable trees and brush around at-risk homes and communities, the Bush Administration's revisions call for far more logging projects in remote areas miles away from communities.

Status

Forest Service officials deliberately thwarted implementation of the Framework after the Bush Administration took office, in anticipation of the administration's revisions.

The proposed revisions were criticized by California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, U.S. Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer, the California Attorney General, the California Resources Agency, and the Forest Service's own wildlife staff in Washington. The Forest Service received more than 35,000 comments opposing the revisions.

Despite this overwhelming opposition, Regional Forester Jack Blackwell signed a Record of Decision finalizing the revisions in January 2004.

What You Can Do

Visit www.SierraCampaign.org for up-to-date information and an action alert describing how to appeal the decision.

For more information contact:

Center for Sierra Nevada Conservation

Craig Thomas
(530) 622-8718
cthomas@innercite.com

CORPORATE FORESTLANDS: COMPANY'S PLAN TO CLEARCUT 1,000,000 ACRES IS DEGRADING WATER AND DRIVING WILDLIFE TOWARD EXTINCTION

Background



SPI logging fragments habitat for the rare Pacific fisher,

Sierra Pacific Industries, the largest landowner in the state, plans to clearcut more than one million acres of forestland that is interspersed with the national forests of the Sierra between Yosemite National Park and the Oregon border.

Although the lands that SPI is logging are its own, clearcut logging is a devastating, unsound practice that causes significant harm to the wildlife, water, and public lands that belong to all Californians.

Threats — Clearcut Logging

Clearcut logging degrades water quality and directly eliminates plants and animals on large swaths of land, by removing all vegetation and replacing the complex forest ecosystem with herbicide-laced tree plantations. Clearcutting fragments larger wild landscapes, making it impossible for some wildlife to migrate, or even to find sufficient food, shelter, or mates. Recent studies indicate that clearcutting also increases the risk of large, uncontrollable fires that endanger communities, because it creates thick stands of small trees that are highly flammable.

Because the Forest Service is now weakening the Sierra Framework protections on public lands for the plants and animals that depend on old-growth forests, the impact of SPI's large-scale clearcutting on private lands is a more urgent threat than ever:

- To restore the declining Pacific fisher, a rare carnivore inhabiting old-growth forests, federal scientists recommend reconnecting the fisher's widely separated northern and southern populations. SPI's clearcutting outside Yosemite National Park is severing much of this important habitat connection.
- 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 8,000 acres on the edge of the park's boundary may leave them vulnerable to the threat of catastrophic wildfire and alter subsurface water flows the ancient trees depend on for survival.
- SPI plans to clearcut in the Castle Peak proposed wilderness adjacent to the national Pacific Crest Trail — jeopardizing this area's chance to become Nevada County's first designated wilderness. Cuts are also planned along all major scenic highways and Wild and Scenic Rivers in the Sierra Nevada.

Status

Since 1999 when SPI announced its plan to clearcut one million acres, it has filed Timber Harvest Plans (THPs) for many thousands of acres, much of it old-growth forest. On a clear day in winter, a patchwork of SPI clearcuts in the Western Sierra is now visible from as far away as Mount Diablo in the Bay Area.

The state's current forestry regulations allow SPI to clearcut more than a million acres of California forests with no limit on the amount of clearcutting in a single watershed, and few protections for sensitive watersheds or ancient forests.

Legislation passed in 2003 gave new protections for North Coast rivers impacted by logging, but left the entire Sierra Nevada without those protections.

Polls indicate that most Californians do not believe clearcutting is even legal — and the overwhelming majority feel it should not be allowed.

Recommendations

Governor Schwarzenegger can stop Sierra Pacific Industries' plan to clearcut the Sierra Nevada. He should end the antiquated practice of clearcutting in favor of sustainable practices 5-that still allow for timber production without environmental devastation. He should demand that pollution from logging be regulated like other discharges, rather than waiving logging pollution permits for timber companies. He should ensure full enforcement by the state agencies that review Timber Harvest Plans, to protect California's environment from corporate environmental abuses.

What You Can Do

Please contact Governor Schwarzenegger 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 Arnold Schwarzenegger

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

For more information contact:

Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch

Warren Alford
(209) 795-8131
WAarnoldrimtrail@aol.com

Giant Sequoia National Monument

FOREST SERVICE PROPOSES TO CONTINUE INTENSIVE LOGGING IN A PROTECTED NATIONAL MONUMENT

Background

On April 15, 2000, President Bill Clinton signed a presidential proclamation designating the Giant Sequoia National Monument on 328,000 acres of the Sequoia National Forest, located in the southern Sierra Nevada. The proclamation recognized that 100 years of logging and exclusion of fire have severely degraded the forests, and that they need to be restored. Among the resources the monument was created to protect were several groves of giant sequoia trees — the largest living things on earth.

The proclamation gave the Forest Service three years to develop a management plan to protect specific resources and to provide for recreation and enjoyment by the public. Motorized vehicles were confined to roads. Commercial logging and the removal of trees, except for clearly identified ecological purposes and public safety, were prohibited.

In January 2004 the Forest Service released a final management plan that would continue intensive logging and allow 1,500 logging trucks full of timber to be cut each year inside the monument. Trees up to 30 inches in diameter could be cut, even century-old sequoias. The Forest Service has justified this logging proposal by the alleged threat from wildfire.

Outstanding Values

Giant Sequoia National Monument includes about half of all giant sequoia groves remaining in the world — the southern Sierra Nevada is the only place where they occur naturally. Some of the largest, “monarch” sequoia trees are more than 30 feet in diameter at their base and more than 300 feet tall, higher than the Capitol Dome in Washington, D.C. The oldest are more than 3,000 years old — mature trees already in the early days of the Roman Empire. A walk through one of these groves is a humbling experience. A person is dwarfed by their immense size and overwhelmed by their antiquity. Their dominating presence, as their red-barked trunks reach for the sky overtopping the surrounding pine and fir, led John Muir to dub them “Nature’s masterpiece — the first to feel the rosy beams of morning, the last to bid the sun good night.”

The presidential proclamation makes clear that the monument was created to protect not only the giant sequoias, but also many wildlife species such as the California spotted owl, and the Pacific fisher whose last refuge in the Sierra is here, having been extirpated from the northern Sierra. The proclamation recognized over 200 plant species endemic to the southern Sierra that need protection. None of these species, including the



MARTIN LITTON

Clearcuts like this one will continue in Giant Sequoia National Monument. Even century-old sequoias can be logged.

giant sequoia, can survive without a matrix of intact healthy conifer forests, the dominant ecosystem of the monument. It is these conifer forests, including giant sequoia groves, that were so heavily logged and degraded over the last century that they need restoration.

Threats — Intensive Logging

The Forest Service proposes to reduce excess fuels by logging, including clearcuts, the same type of management that led to the deplorable condition of the forest in most of the monument. Logging in the monument would further degrade wildlife habitat and possibly increase fire danger by opening the forest canopy and increasing growth of hazardous small fuels.

In the adjacent Sequoia National Park, with identical forests and ecosystems, the National Park Service has used controlled fire instead, to reduce hazardous fuels and create healthy, resilient forests that are resistant to severe wildfire. The park’s giant sequoia groves are thriving, with vigorous reproduction of the young sequoias needed to replace older trees as they inevitably succumb to natural forces. Park managers have protected developed areas inside the park by creating narrow buffers where they thin the forest and burn dead materials and undergrowth to reduce the fire hazard.

Within the monument, there are several small communities, campgrounds, and other developed areas that also need similar buffers a few hundred feet wide to protect them from wildfire. However, the Forest Service is proposing to log throughout the monument, miles from developed areas.

Status

Under its final management plan released in January 2004, the Forest Service would continue intensive logging inside the monument, in clear conflict with the presidential proclamation that created the monument in the first place. The proclamation identified logging as one of the main reasons the forest is in poor condition, and needs to be restored to a healthy resilient condition.

Conservationists are now advocating that management of the monument be transferred to the National Park Service. Under this recommendation, the Park Service would manage the monument in compliance with the direction in the presidential proclamation. The proclamation makes it very clear that no tree may be removed from the monument unless there is a clear ecological need to do so, or for public safety. Sequoia National Park has been managed this way for more than 30 years with excellent results.

Recommendations

The Forest Service should drop its plan to log in Giant Sequoia National Monument. It should protect developed areas if needed by thinning small trees and lopping lower limbs of large trees, and use controlled fire to restore the giant sequoia groves and surrounding forest.

Because the Forest Service continues to insist on intensive logging inside the monument, the management of the monument should be transferred to the National Park Service. The Park Service has a proven history of accepting stewardship for the resources under its care, and putting its responsibility to the public ahead of commercial interests. Park managers have shown they know how to get the job done, especially the restoration of sequoia forests. The Forest Service, by all indications, continues to place the interests of the timber industry before the responsibility of caring for the priceless natural resources under its care.

What You Can Do

Please contact California's United States senators. Ask them to insist that the Forest Service carry out in good faith the provisions of the proclamation that created the Giant Sequoia National Monument. If the Forest Service persists in intensive logging, ask our Senators to lead efforts to transfer responsibility for management of the Giant Sequoia National Monument to the National Park Service.

Honorable Dianne Feinstein

United States Senate
1130 "O" Street, Suite 2446
Fresno, CA 93721
(559) 485-7430
(559) 485-9689 fax

Honorable Barbara Boxer

United States Senate
1130 O Street, Suite 2450
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For more information contact:

Sequoia Task Force, Sierra Club

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Bill Corcoran
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Ara Marderosian

Sequoia Forest Keeper
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ara@sequoiaforestkeeper.org



Desolated: This giant sequoia was left isolated by intensive logging in its grove.

Golden Trout Wilderness Addition

SALVAGE LOGGING WOULD RUIN PROPOSED WILDERNESS THAT'S HOME TO CALIFORNIA'S ENDANGERED STATE FISH

Background

In summer 2002, the McNally Fire burned a large area in the southern Sierra Nevada, including 150,000 acres in Sequoia National Forest. Half of this area burned with a moderate to high severity, but the other half was low severity or did not burn at all, according to the Forest Service.

The entire Rincon Roadless Area lies within the McNally Fire perimeter. Long recommended for wilderness designation, the Rincon is now formally proposed as an addition to the Golden Trout Wilderness as part of the California Wild Heritage Act introduced by Sen. Barbara Boxer and Rep. Hilda Solis. The proposed 41,000-acre wilderness addition lies north of Lake Isabella and reaches from the North Fork of the Kern River on the west to the rim of the Kern Plateau on the east.

Outside this roadless area, the Forest Service has already awarded a contract to log hazard trees along roads and has proposed to salvage-log 30 million board feet — 6,000 logging trucks full — of burned trees on nearly 5,000 acres adjacent to the proposed wilderness. Recently, they also proposed to conduct helicopter logging *inside* the roadless area and proposed wilderness, which would degrade this area's outstanding fish and wildlife habitat and could disqualify it for permanent protection as wilderness.

Outstanding Values

An abundance of rare plants and animals flourishes in the Rincon Roadless Area in unusual biotic communities. Two major watersheds, Rattlesnake Creek and Durwood Creek, are virtually pristine and still contain native golden trout, California's official state fish which unfortunately is a candidate for listing as an endangered species. The rare, mink-like Pacific fisher also lives here, part of an isolated population in the southern Sierra. Adding the Rincon area to the Golden Trout Wilderness will give this imperiled wildlife an enduring refuge.

The gorge of the North Fork of the Kern River, already classified as a wild river in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, dominates the western boundary of the proposed wilderness addition. Spanning elevations of 2,000 feet along the river to more than 8,000 feet on the Kern Plateau, a wide variety of ecological communities call this place home, from low-lying oak grasslands and chaparral, to the higher conifer forests and even alpine zones. Very few places in the Sierra provide such an opportunity to protect an uninterrupted series of ecosystems ranging from very low to very high elevations.



Wilderness no more? The Forest Service slates Rincon Roadless Area for logging despite wilderness legislation seeking to protect it.

The existing Golden Trout Wilderness has high alpine areas and abundant middle-elevation conifer forests, but it has very little of the lower-elevation land needed to support the full variety of life here. Wildlife species that need to migrate to low elevations in winter, particularly deer, need the wild terrain in the Rincon Roadless Area as part of their territory.

Threats

Fire is not a serious threat to the plants and animals in the Rincon Roadless Area. Before people started excluding fires over the past 100 years, natural fires burned through the southern Sierra periodically; the biotic communities living there are adapted to fire. The McNally Fire did a good job of reintroducing fire to this wild area.

Logging, however, is a serious threat. None of the Rincon Roadless Area has ever been logged; much of it is mature old-growth forest. If the logging project proposed by the Forest Service is carried out, thousands of big fire-killed trees would be cut down and removed by helicopter. Logging of large trees disturbs soils, streams, and the wildlife that depends on old-growth conditions.

The Forest Service claims that if fire-killed trees are not removed, there would be a threat from a reburn in the future as the dead wood falls and accumulates on the ground. They say that natural regeneration would be destroyed by a second fire, so they propose to log the area and replant it artificially. But that argument has been refuted in scientific studies which find

that post-fire activity like logging actually creates soil disturbances that interfere with natural recovery, and that plantations are often more flammable than natural forests. Fires are an inherent part of the disturbance and recovery patterns to which native species have adapted. Even the Forest Service admits that the native plants and animals made a surprising and resilient start to recovery in the first year after the McNally Fire.

Status

The Rincon Roadless Area is part of the Forest Service's official inventory of roadless forests, and as such is protected by the agency's own Roadless Area Conservation Rule signed by President Clinton in 2000, prohibiting road building and other kinds of development in those areas. The Bush Administration has refused to implement the Roadless Rule.

The Forest Service expects to release a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) in spring 2004 that will justify its proposal to conduct helicopter salvage logging in the proposed wilderness.

Recommendations

The wildlife and ecosystems of the Rincon Roadless Area should be allowed to recover from the fire disturbance naturally. No logging or any other kind of intrusive activity should be allowed. The Forest Service should replant native streamside vegetation along streams where fire completely destroyed plant life, to give fish and wildlife a head start to recovery, but otherwise limit its intervention in the forest's natural recovery.

Congress should add the Rincon Roadless Area to the Golden Trout Wilderness, to protect a wider variety of ecosystems where plant and animal communities can flourish, particularly our endangered state fish. In the meantime the Forest Service should manage the area to safeguard its wilderness attributes. No activity incompatible with wilderness designation, such as off-road vehicle activity, should be allowed in the Rincon area.

What You Can Do

Write to the Forest Service and ask them not to log the Rincon Roadless Area or the proposed Golden Trout Wilderness Addition.

Ecosystem Manager

Sequoia National Forest
900 West Grand Avenue
Porterville, CA 93257

Thank Senator Barbara Boxer for proposing the Golden Trout Wilderness Addition in her California Wild Heritage Act, and urge her to give the legislation her highest priority.

Honorable Barbara Boxer

United States Senate
1130 O Street, Suite 2450
Fresno, CA 93721
(559) 497-5109
(559) 497-5111 fax

Ask Senator Dianne Feinstein and Representative Devin Nunes to co-sponsor the California Wild Heritage Act. Mention your interest in the Golden Trout Wilderness Addition.

Honorable Dianne Feinstein

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Honorable Devin Nunes

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U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Two creeks in the proposed Golden Trout Wilderness Addition still contain California's native golden trout.

Klamath River Basin

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

Background



AP WIDE WORLD

The Bush Administration diverted Klamath flows in 2002, killing more than 34,000 salmon and steelhead.

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 the draining of 75 percent of Upper Klamath Basin wetlands for farmland. Today 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.

In August 2002, the Bush Administration ignored warnings from tribal, state and federal biologists and drastically cut water flows to the Klamath River, causing the deaths of more than 34,000 migrating salmon and steelhead in the largest recorded fish kill in U.S. history. During this time, and again in 2003, many of the basin's National Wildlife Refuges also were without sufficient water — yet farmers upstream received full water deliveries.

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 remains 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. 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 including a record 29 species of conifers.

The Klamath River and its tributaries once supported a thriving fishery on the third largest runs of salmon and steelhead in the continental U.S. Today the region's waterways are home to threatened coho salmon and other sensitive fish species such as spring chinook salmon, lamprey, green sturgeon, and the Lost River and shortnose suckers, both endangered species.

Threats — Water Diversion, Loss of Wildlife and Fisheries

Much of the Klamath River Basin's natural water flow is diverted to irrigate crops and pastures. Three-quarters of the arid Upper Basin's wetlands have been converted to agriculture, increasing water pollution and knocking this natural filtration system severely out of balance. Hydroelectric dams on the Klamath permanently block salmon and steelhead from more than 300 miles of habitat and further degrade water quality. Intensive logging and road-building have destroyed salmon streams, increased winter flooding, and further decreased summertime base flows. Taken together, these impacts jeopardize the region's imperiled fish, and have left the basin's National Wildlife Refuges without sufficient water in 7 of the last 12 years.

Low flows kill fish and prevent recovery of the threatened coho salmon and other species. Even before the record fish kill of 2002, the Klamath River experienced springtime kills of tens of thousands of young salmon smolts. Poor water quality and the loss of in-stream and streamside habitat have devastated downriver sport fisheries, whitewater recreation, and commercial salmon fisheries, costing the region 4,000 family-wage jobs and \$80 million per year in economic benefits. Despite federally protected fishing rights, the basin's Native American tribal fisheries also have suffered greatly; today salmon are gone from the upper river, blocked by dams.

Commercial farming with pesticides and chemical fertilizers is still allowed on more than 22,000 acres within the basin's National Wildlife Refuges — the only refuges in the U.S. where row crop farming still occurs on any scale.

Status

In a November 2003 report, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service blamed the 2002 fish kill on extremely low river flows. In January 2003, the California Department of Fish and Game had similarly concluded the federal government's excessive water diversions were the prime cause of the fish kill.

In July 2003, a U.S. District Court declared the Administration's Klamath water plan in violation of the Endangered Species Act because it failed to protect threatened coho salmon, and ordered the plan re-written.

In fall 2002, a federal biologist revealed that the Bush Administration had pressured the federal NOAA Fisheries agency to accept flows they knew were too low to support fish. In July 2003, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that White House political advisor Karl Rove had repeatedly interceded in water management decisions, seeking to exploit the Klamath crisis for political gain.



CHRISTINE AMBROSE

Local activists are organizing against increased logging in the Salmon River watershed, a Klamath tributary.

U.S. Representatives Mike Thompson (D-Calif.) and Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) introduced legislation in fall 2002 seeking to buy farmland, boost river flows, and aid communities hurt by the salmon kill. In October 2003, Congressman Thompson re-introduced a bill to designate wilderness areas and salmon restoration areas in the basin.

In March 2004, PacifiCorp must apply to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to renew its license to operate five dams and six powerhouses on the Klamath River. FERC may grant a new license for the next 30 to 50 years or, alternatively, order the decommissioning of facilities and restoration of fish passage.

The U.S. Forest Service has significantly increased logging plans in the basin for 2004, targeting low-elevation big trees and threatening wild salmon spawning and rearing areas. The Forest Service is now planning or implementing 12 timber sales in the area totaling some 20,000 logging trucks full — including logging in designated Wild and Scenic corridors of the Salmon and Scott Rivers, riparian reserves, and active landslide areas.

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 excess irrigation demand and protect National Wildlife Refuges, the federal government should initiate a program to buy land and water rights from willing sellers, to reclaim and restore wetlands, and to phase out commercial farming in the Refuges.
- 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 scientific studies needed to restore salmon fisheries and lake levels, and implement the Trinity River Flow Decision made by Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt.

- Federal agencies must respect tribal treaty and reserved rights — water quality and quantity must be ensured for all citizens of the Klamath River Basin.
- Congress should protect roadless forests as wilderness areas. The Forest Service should spend its scarce fuels-reduction funds to protect homes and communities, not log big trees in remote areas.
- To restore salmon in the upper basin, PacifiCorp should construct ladders and fish screens at each facility and remove dams for which effective fish passage is not feasible.

What You Can Do

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

Honorable Dianne Feinstein

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Honorable Barbara Boxer

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Oregon Natural Resources Council

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American Lands Alliance

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www.americanlands.org

Friends of the River

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kelly@friendsoftheriver.org
www.friendsoftheriver.org

World Wildlife Fund

Brian Barr
brian@wwfks.org
worldwildlife.org/klamathsiskeyou

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 with the actions of the Bush Administration. Calpine Corporation, a San Jose-based energy producer, is moving forward with plans to develop two 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 rejected the proposed power plant at Telephone Flat, because its location within the Medicine Lake caldera would disrupt the area's scenery, natural quiet, recreation values, old-growth forests and wildlife, and Native American sacred sites. The 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, over the strong objections of the White House Council on Historic Preservation and U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer. It did agree to spare the three roadless areas.

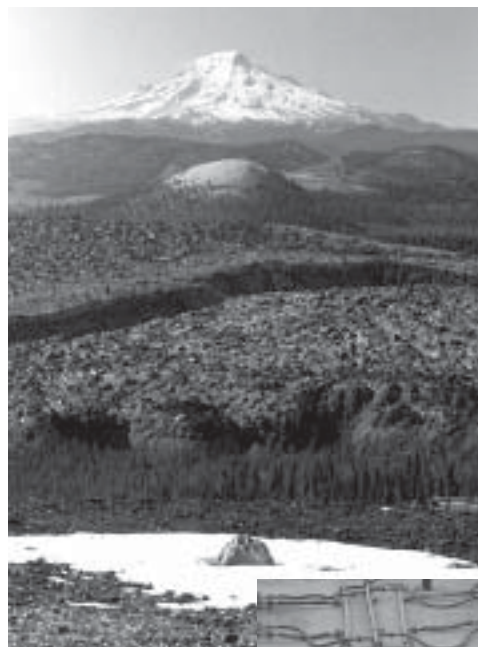
Another Calpine power plant, the Fourmile Hill project, was approved in 2000, subject to a five-year moratorium on any further geothermal development. However, that moratorium was subsequently lifted by the Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton.

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. Its caldera is a 500-foot-deep crater about six miles long and four miles wide. The azure waters of Medicine Lake lie embedded in this million-year-old sculpture, with its striking lava flows, clear lakes, sparkling mountains of glasslike 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 sensitive plants and rare carnivores including the American marten and Pacific fisher. The Highlands' aquifer is California's largest spring system, and the main source of spring waters flowing into the Sacramento River.

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.



Proposed development would include injection of hazardous acids into geothermal wells by Halliburton Energy Services.



Threats

Calpine owns 43 geothermal leases covering more than 66 square miles of the Medicine Lake Highlands and is pressing forward with exploration projects and two proposed power plant complexes — Fourmile Hill and the previously rejected Telephone Flat. These would cover up to 14 square miles with clearcuts for the power plants, well fields, toxic sump pools, new roads, 37 miles of power lines, and aboveground pipes that reach 500 degrees Fahrenheit. Hundreds of geothermal wells could be drilled to depths approaching 10,000 feet, and more than 36 tons of toxic hydrogen sulfide gas would be released each year. This industrial development would fragment a landscape that is still mainly wild forest, and invade sacred lands less than a mile from Medicine Lake, a cultural and spiritual site for at least four Native American tribes.

The Mount Hoffman Roadless Area contains many geothermal leases and currently is not protected as wilderness. Despite the area's official roadless status, in 2002 the California Energy Commission (CEC) awarded Calpine more than \$1 million to

drill a deep well here. The well was later switched to Telephone Flat, but the developer has made clear that it intends to target the Mount Hoffman Roadless Area for power plant projects in the coming years.

In September 2002 the U.S. Department of Energy awarded Calpine \$425,000 to test an experimental method where highly hazardous hydrochloric and hydrofluoric acids are injected into geothermal wells in hopes of making them more economical. Calpine is contracting this "acidization" job to Halliburton Energy Services, formerly headed by Vice President Dick Cheney.

Status

Conservationists' lawsuit against the Fourmile Hill development was heard in federal court in 2003, and a decision is expected by early spring 2004.

The Forest Service rejected appeals of the Telephone Flat project; conservationists and Native American groups expect to sue to stop the project approval. The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board has scheduled an April 2004 hearing on Telephone Flat while it considers whether to permit the controversial acid injection at the head of the largest pure spring system in California.

In 1999 the California Energy Commission granted nearly \$50 million to the two projects with the stipulation that they be on-line by 2002. When the developer missed the deadline, CEC extended the funding on condition Calpine begin construction by June 2003. Calpine missed that deadline also. Environmental groups and Native Americans are urging CEC to cancel the grant and reappropriate the money to other projects.

The CEC is now drafting criteria for certifying renewable energy sources, to meet the legislature's mandate for 20 percent renewable energy production. Based on these criteria, the state could either subsidize, or prohibit, damaging projects like Calpine's in the Medicine Lake Highlands.

Recommendations

Stronger conservation measures should be enacted to protect the Medicine Lake Highlands. Congress should designate the Mount Hoffman Roadless Area as a wilderness. The Bush Administration should uphold 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 efficient technologies and conservation, rather than subsidize industries that damage public lands. During the energy crunch of summer 2001, Californians voluntarily cut electricity use 10 percent during peak hours — the equivalent of nearly 100 geothermal power plants.

California's new renewable energy criteria should allow the CEC to give preference to projects benefiting minority populations; this could disqualify geothermal projects at the Medicine Lake

Highlands, which have a disproportionate impact to Native Americans. The criteria should disqualify projects that would desecrate sacred lands, invade roadless areas, or cause impacts that cannot be mitigated to "less than significant." Without such criteria, the CEC could certify destructive projects in the Medicine Lake Highlands and the developers would become eligible to dip into \$100 million in annual subsidies collected from California ratepayers.

What You Can Do

Ask the California Energy Commission to stop funding geothermal exploration and development in the Medicine Lake Highlands, including the Mount Hoffman Roadless Area; cancel the \$50 million awards for the Fourmile Hill and Telephone Flat developments; and establish renewable energy certification criteria that protect sacred lands, minority populations, and the environment.

California Energy Commission

Commissioner John Gessman, (916) 654-4001
Commissioner James Boyd, (916) 654-3787
1516 Ninth Street, MS-29
Sacramento, CA 95814-5512
(916) 654-4420 fax

Please ask California's U.S. Senators to protect the Medicine Lake Highlands from geothermal development, and to designate the Mount Hoffman Roadless Area as wilderness. Thank Senator Boxer for her previous support.

Honorable Dianne Feinstein

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(415) 393-0707
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Honorable Barbara Boxer

United States Senate
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California Wilderness Coalition

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Last Year's 10 Most Threatened Wild Places

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Duncan Canyon: Outcome uncertain. The Forest Service began illegal salvage logging, but in 2003 a federal court blocked them temporarily before they could log the proposed wilderness. Final outcome is unclear. *Contact: John Muir Project, (530) 273-9290.*

Panamint Range — Surprise Canyon: Still in trouble. Mining company shelved its plan for a new open pit cyanide gold mine, because new state regulations require backfill of open pits. But the Bureau of Land Management is considering reopening the oasis Surprise Canyon to extreme off-road vehicles, and ORV advocates are seeking a “highway” right-of-way up that stream

and into Death Valley National Park. *Contact: California Wilderness Coalition, (909) 781-1336.*

Plumas and Lassen National Forests: Still in trouble. Blasted for its proposal to deliberately log spotted owl nesting groves, the Forest Service withdrew its “administrative study.” But these forests will bear the brunt of increased logging under the Bush Administration’s revisions to the Sierra Framework. *Contact: John Muir Project, (530) 273-9290.*

Los Padres National Forest, Algodones Dunes, Tejon Ranch, Medicine Lake Highlands, Klamath River Basin, Westside Sierra Forests, Cleveland National Forest: Still threatened. *See this report.*

Also In Trouble in 2004

Southern Diablo Range/San Benito Mountain. Illegal ORV trails are destroying a rare serpentine forest ecosystem and the adjacent San Benito Mountain Research Natural Area. Clear Creek Management Area is the one of the most abused public land ORV areas in California. BLM is due to designate ORV routes in 2004 — a bad trails plan could doom these little-known wild lands. *Contact: Ventana Wilderness Alliance, (831) 429-9010.*



Southern Diablo Range: Illegal off-road vehicle trails damage a rare ecosystem in this little-known wilderness.

Martis Valley. Urban development of private wildlands threatens to pave a key Sierra Nevada wildlife corridor and open space between Lake Tahoe and Truckee. *Contact: Sierra Watch, (530) 265-2949, www.sierrawatch.org.*

Mojave National Preserve. San Bernardino County asserts 2,500 miles of “highway” rights-of-way in the Preserve and its wilderness areas. “Varmint” hunters are trying to force the National Park Service to maintain abandoned cattle troughs and other artificial waters, so they can shoot coyotes and badgers for sport. *Contact: California Wilderness Coalition, (909) 781-1336.*

Santa Clara River. Proposed Newhall Ranch development and other urban sprawl threaten Southern California’s last free-flowing river, and its endangered birds, plants, amphibians, and steelhead trout. *Contact: Friends of the Santa Clara River, (805) 498-4323.*

Nelson’s Bighorn Sheep habitat, Angeles and San Bernardino National Forests. Key wildlife species is down 90 percent due to urban growth and poor habitat management. New management plans underway for these national forests could rescue the bighorn or continue its decline. *Contact: Sierra Club, (213) 387-6528 ext. 203.*

Jackson State Redwood Forest. Loggers still cut coast redwoods in this experimental forest operated by the State of California — the biggest tract of public land between Humboldt County and San Francisco. 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.*

San Onofre State Beach/Rancho Mission Viejo. Sprawl and toll highway construction threaten the last major open

space in Orange County and a beloved state park. Draft environmental impact statement due in spring 2004. *Contact: Friends of the Foothills, (949) 361-7534.*

Joshua Tree National Park. Plans for a 7,000-home city development on the park’s south boundary were shelved due to overwhelming public opposition, but efforts to protect the land have stalled. The world’s largest garbage dump is still proposed on the park’s east boundary at Eagle Mountain. *Contact: National Parks Conservation Association, (760) 366-3035.*

Quechan Indian Pass. Sacred lands were saved by tough new mining regulations — but Canada’s Glamis Gold is suing under NAFTA to overturn California’s regs and revive a proposed open-pit mine. *Contact: Quechan Tribe, (858) 454-8687.*

Gaviota Coast. The last rural coast in Southern California is threatened by development, and the Bush Administration nixed a National Seashore designation. Local conservation groups need funding to buy key habitat before it’s lost. *Contact: Gaviota Coast Conservancy, (805) 967-5828.*

VENTANA WILDERNESS ALLIANCE



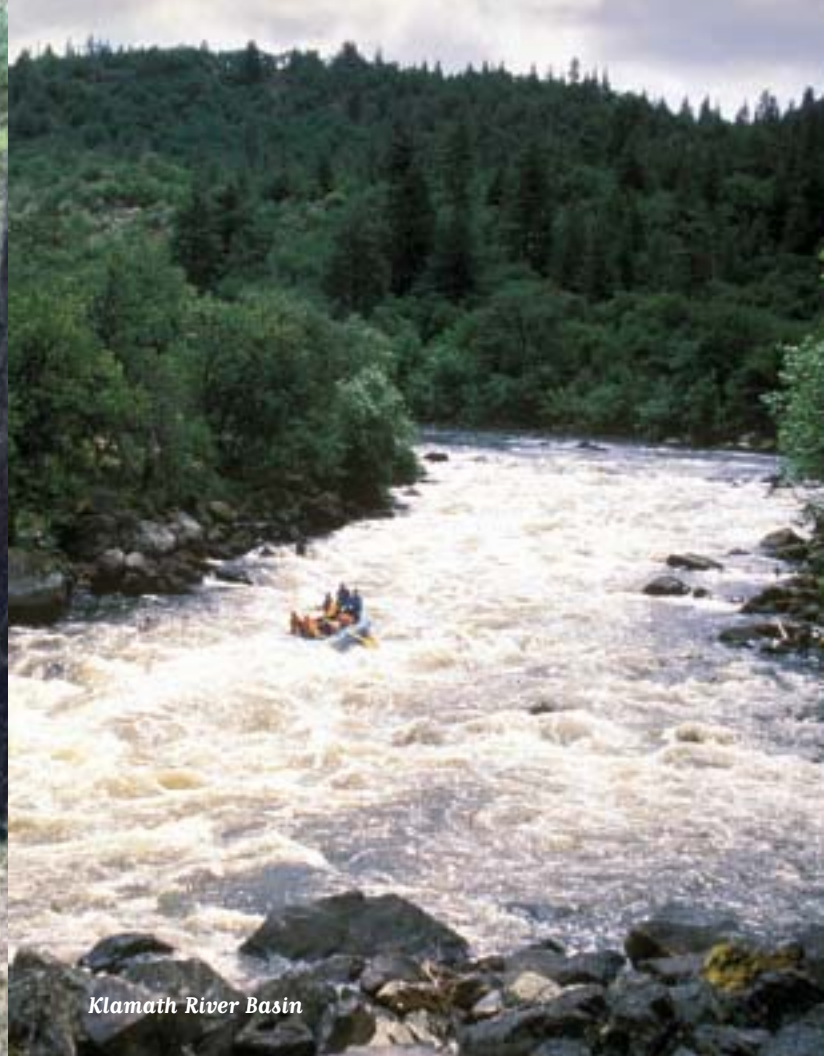
Golden Trout Wilderness Addition



Tejon Ranch



Cleveland National Forest



Klamath River Basin



Giant Sequoia National Monument

California Wilderness Coalition

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