

WINTER 2005

VOLUME 1
ISSUE 2

The Forest Watcher

A Quarterly Membership Publication of Los Padres Forest Watch

Forest Watch is the only organization working to protect the entire Los Padres National Forest — from the Big Sur coast to the Sespe wildlands — from damage caused by oil drilling, illegal off-road vehicle abuse, excessive livestock grazing, logging, and ecosystem mismanagement.

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Forest Watch Appeals Plan to Expand Oil Drilling in Forest

In September, Forest Watch appealed a plan by the U.S. Forest Service that allows oil drilling to expand across more than 52,000 acres in **Santa Barbara and Ventura counties**.

The plan allows oil operations to expand into some of the forest's most popular recreation areas, threatening clean air and water, and encroaching on habitat for the California condor and other wildlife on the verge of extinction, like the San Joaquin kit fox and steelhead.

As oil operations expand, they bring with them a network of roads, pipelines, transmission wires, and other infrastructure. The plan allows up to 4,277 acres of surface disturbance.

Forest Watch is the only local

organization that appealed the drilling plan. The California Attorney General's Office filed a separate appeal.

Our appeal contains over 100 pages of detailed evidence showing that the agency's drilling plan is scientifically flawed. Our appeal also points out that the plan violates several important laws designed to protect our public lands from damage caused by oil development.

After carefully analyzing thousands of pages of agency documents and maps, Forest Watch concluded that the drilling plan puts some of the forest's most spectacular wild places at risk, for little benefit.

According to the agency's own



One of 240 oil wells in Los Padres, near the Sespe Wilderness and Sespe Condor Sanctuary (background).

estimates, new drilling in the Los Padres would yield just 17 million barrels of oil — less than a day's supply.

The plan places at risk some of the forest's most popular recreation areas. Surface drilling is allowed right up to the boundaries of three Congressionally-

(Continued on page 6)



The new forest plan establishes guidelines to protect wildlife like the San Joaquin kit fox, threatened by oil development, urban encroachment, and grazing.

Officials Release New Management Plan for Los Padres

This Fall, the Forest Service released a new land management plan for all 1.76 million acres of the Los Padres National Forest. The new plan will guide decisions on everything from protecting wildlife and providing recreation opportunities, to deciding where potentially damaging development can take place.

While the plan increases protections for some areas of the forest, it still leaves many other areas even more vulnerable to development.

NEW WILDERNESS

When an area is protected as wilderness, it receives the highest level of protection from harmful development activities.

The forest plan provided an excellent opportunity for the Forest Service to recommend new areas for wilderness protection. Once an area is recommended as wilderness, Congress is likely to officially protect the area.

However, the new plan only

(Continued on page 7)

Funky Forest Fruitcake—A Holiday Recipe for Disaster



“Grandma’s fruitcake will be darn tasty this year, compared to the administration’s disastrous recipe for our treasured wild places.”

As the Forest Service celebrates its centennial, it gives all of us a chance to look back over 100 years of forest management and explore ways to improve the health of our public lands.

Our leaders, though, have taken the opposite approach, rolling back protections for these special places and opening them up to industrial plunder.

In the last few months alone, we’ve seen attempts to rewrite our nation’s longstanding wildlife protection law, to sell off our public lands to mining companies and developers, to increase logging, and to decrease public oversight.

Industry has been quick to capitalize. Oil barons are bent on squeezing every last drop of oil from the West, threatening wild places like Wyoming’s Powder River Basin, Alaska’s Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, New Mexico’s Valle Vidal, and Colorado’s Rocky Mountain front.

Now we can add our very own Los Padres National Forest to the mix, as it now appears on the list of *America’s Most Endangered Forests*.

Instead of being a turning point

for forest management, this year has really signaled a turning point for grandma’s fruitcake. Yep, fruitcake will be darn tasty this year, compared to the administration’s disastrous recipe for our treasured places.

But there’s still hope. While the Forest Service celebrated its centennial, ForestWatch celebrated its first anniversary of being the only group keeping watch over the entire forest.

We started as just a handful of citizens from around the region, concerned about the direction in which our forest was headed.

We realized there was no single organization keeping tabs on the entire forest. Things like oil drilling, mining, off-road vehicle routes, logging, and grazing were being approved without any public oversight.

Since then, we’ve grown into a respectable membership organization with full-time staff, a web site, and several victories.

We’ve been working around the clock (literally) to return a sense of balance to our local forest. These are public lands, and we believe that they should be managed for the public’s bene-

fit, not for the benefit of private industries and special interests.

It’s a big job, but somebody’s gotta do it, and we think it’s best accomplished through a combination of community involvement, scientific collaboration, and legal advocacy. We work to make sure that damaging activities on the forest are kept to a minimum, and when they are allowed, they comply with important environmental protection laws and scientific principles.

These are exciting times for our organization. In the coming months, we’ll embark on some ambitious and cutting-edge programs. We’ll also launch a series of public workshops and a Citizen’s Guide to show folks how to become more involved in public lands issues.

And we’ll bring you perspectives from deep within the forest—old-time hikers, backwoods anglers, country horseback guides, and other people who live, work, and play here.

As the year winds down, we’d like to thank all of our members for your tremendous support

See you in the forest,

Introducing Our Board of Directors

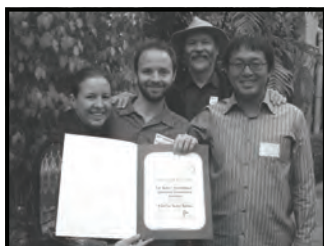
Our Board of Directors provides strategic management to the organization, coordinates fundraising activities, and guides our overall programs.

Erin Duffy of Santa Barbara brings nearly a decade of dedicated community organizing experience from groups like the California Wild Heritage Campaign and the Sierra Club.

Pat Veesart is a longtime advocate for wildlands conservation in San Luis Obispo county. He’s a former SLO County Planning Commissioner and currently works in the Coastal Commission’s enforcement division.

Philip Tseng is an environmental attorney in Santa Barbara who has worked on a variety of social and environmental

justice campaigns. **Michelle Tollett** is an Environmental Biologist in Ventura with five years of experience analyzing impacts to natural resources. **Mike Summers** has spent the last decade protecting the Los Padres, where he lives and plays. He’s former Fundraising and Outreach Director for the Conception Coast Project.



ForestWatch Directors receive a Certificate of Recognition from California Assemblymember Pedro Nava. Pictured (left to right) are Erin Duffy, Jeff Kuyper, Pat Veesart, and Philip Tseng.

Los Padres Named One of Nation's Twelve Most Endangered Forests

A recent report names the Los Padres National Forest as one of the most endangered forests in the country. Only twelve of all 155 national forests received this dubious distinction.

The report cites oil drilling, excessive livestock grazing, and illegal off-road vehicle use as the biggest threats facing the forest.

• OIL DRILLING

According to the report, oil development is the primary threat to the Los Padres. Existing oil drilling already covers 4,800 acres near some of the most sensitive areas of the forest, and a new plan could double this figure.

• OFF-ROAD VEHICLE ABUSE

The Los Padres is criss-crossed by 880 miles of designated ORV routes and other jeep roads, plus a fast-growing network of more than 160 miles of illegal user-created ORV trails. The agency has been unable to manage and enforce vehicle trespass and overuse. Last year alone, officials recorded more than 1,700 ORV-related violations on the forest.

In some areas, ORV use chokes streams with sediment and erosion, disturbs sensitive habitat, and conflicts with wilderness use and other low-impact recreation seekers. Despite these impacts, the agency is proposing to add even more

ORV trails to the area.

• EXCESSIVE CATTLE GRAZING

Nearly half of the Los Padres is open for livestock grazing. Most of these allotments (78%) have never undergone environmental studies as required by federal law. Unfortunately, excessive livestock grazing has trampled streambanks, crushed vegetation, degraded water quality, and fostered invasive weeds.

The report cited a recent plan by the agency to expand livestock grazing into a Congressionally-protected wilderness area along the Big Sur coast.

ForestWatch is now working to reduce these threats across the forest.



Renegade off-road vehicles have blazed an illegal trail through this mountain meadow on the Mt. Pinos Ranger District, and vandalized the fence.

“Despite its rich biological diversity and high number of sensitive species, the USFS fails to manage and monitor at-risk plants and animals and continues to authorize activities in sensitive habitats without an adequate analysis of potential impacts.”

- America's Endangered National Forests 2005

Forest Service Approves Illegal Grazing Scheme in Big Sur Coastal Wilderness

For the third time in six years, officials have approved an illegal plan to expand livestock grazing along 24,000 acres of the **Big Sur coastline**.

The plan, finalized in September, authorizes cattle grazing on four existing grazing allotments, one new allotment, and one expanded allotment.

Cattle and other livestock grazing on these coastal allotments threatens several federally-listed species, including the endangered Smith's blue butterfly and the threatened steelhead trout.

The plan also illegally increases grazing levels in the **Silver Peak Wilderness Area**, protected by

Congress under the Wilderness Act of 1964.

The grazing plan was originally approved back in 1999, but the agency quickly withdrew it after citizen groups objected. Officials released an updated plan in 2004, and after ForestWatch appealed the plan, the agency withdrew it a second time.

Unfortunately, the new plan suffers from the same legal and scientific inadequacies that plagued the agency's previous proposals.

Cattle have previously damaged riparian habitat for steelhead along **Prewitt and Plaskett creeks** on the Gorda Allotment, and cattle can injure or kill



The Pacific Valley Unit of the Gorda Allotment, where numerous violations have repeatedly occurred during the last six years. A new plan allows grazing to continue in this sensitive area.

steelhead eggs and young fish by treading through fish streams. Where livestock graze in or near Smith's blue butterfly habitat, trampling kills or stunts the growth of seacliff buckwheat, the butterfly's host plant.

Officials have until the end of the year to consider our appeal.

THE GORDA ALLOTMENT: REPEAT OFFENDER

This area suffers from what one official calls “a continued pattern of non-compliance.” Violations are so flagrant here that officials have suspended grazing privileges five times in the last six years. The new plan rewards this law-breaking by increasing grazing levels 29% over what's currently permitted.



The San Rafael Wilderness, looking south towards the Lost Valley.

Fall Membership Drive Is a Success!

This November, ForestWatch celebrated its one-year anniversary of providing cutting-edge protection for our public lands.

We wouldn't be where we are today without the strong support of our dedicated members. As a small nonprofit organization, most of our support comes from people like you who care about the future of our forest.

Our members helped us protect wildlife and wilderness areas by

supporting our appeal of the agency's oil drilling plan. Our members helped us protect the famed Big Sur coastline from excessive livestock grazing. And our members helped us convince the agency to study ways to reduce damage to ancient forests.

To celebrate our victories, we decided to launch a Fall Membership Drive, with a goal of attracting 100 new members in three weeks.

It was an ambitious goal, and at times it seemed impossible.

But on November 15, the last day of our membership drive, we achieved our goal...and new members are still signing up!

We'd like to extend our thanks to each of you who joined as Founding Members of Forest-Watch. Your support will ensure that our victories continue into 2006 and beyond.

*ForestWatch
thanks all of our
Founding Members,
whose support
ensures that our
victories continue
long into the future!*

Our Founding Members

Anonymous
Scott Abbott
Geoff Aggeler
Sam Babcock
Lawrence Badash
Theresa Baer
Mary Ellen Barilotti
Karen Barnard
Bettina Barrett
Beatrice Battier
David Baxter, M.D.
Luann Beach
Karen Bednorz
Susan Bee
Larry Bennett
Holly Blackwell
E.R. "Jim" Blakley
Thomas Bliss
Wanda Branich
Dr. Mary Brennehan
Doug & Lee Buckmaster
Tom Budlong
Steven Cabanatuan
Nellie Castillo
Ralph "Norm" Channell
Paul & Anne Chesnut
James Childress
Andrew Christie
Marc Chytlo
Alan Church
Bridget Clancy
Alan Coles
Shan Collins
Terri Compost
Kendall Conger
Carolyn Conner
Sonia Connors

Mary Copperud
Dr. Ian Coster
Karen Cotter
Chris Cowan
Julia Craig
Paul Culbert
Robert Culbertson
Brigitte Cullem
Rita Dalessio
Rev. Paul Danielson, Jr.
Arden Day
Nancy de L'Arbre
Bill Denneen
Chris Dille
Don & Catherine Dishion
Wena Dows
Deborah Filipelli
Carlos Friot
John Gallo
Cindy Garber
Timothy Gill
Dieter Goetze
La Donna Graham
Eileen Gray
Judith Grindstaff
John Hankins
Dorothea Harrington
Cheryl Lee Harris
Greg Helms
Gordon Hensley
Tony & Natalie Hernandez
Clifford Hopson
Boon Hughey
Terence Hurt
Kathe Hustace
Jennifer Jackson
David Jacobs

Angelica Jochim
Richard Jorgensen
Holly Keifer
Kalon Kelley
Mary Ellen Klee
Julie Kummel
Dan & Joan Kuyper
Don Lauer
Dorothy Littlejohn
Michael Lyons
Ken MacDonald
Sharyn Main
Justin Massey
Terry Maul
Charaline & Frank Maxim
Lily McClintock
Ralph Mendershausen
Walter McCall
Bob McDonnell
Robert McLaughlin
Keith Meyerhoff
Jon Miller
Maggie Mittler
Todd Moen
John Monsen
Brad Monsma
Deborah Morillo
James Mullins
Art Najera D.D.S.
Yarrow Nelson
Mark Neely
Joe Nesbitt
David Nesmith
Paul Niedringhaus
Judy Oberlander
Joan O'Keefe
Linda O'Neill

Ken Palley
Dennis Palm
Jacquelyn Paul
Farion Pearce
Carl Peceovich
Doug Peters
Iris Peterson
James Pett
Karen Poling
Randall Post
Patricia Puterbaugh
Ward Rafferty, Jr.
Kathy Richards
Joan Roberts
Antonio Leon Rosales
Fred Schoen
Celia & Peter Scott
John Shellabarger
Iain Shigeoka
Michael Sixbey
Ruston Slager
Bill Slaughter
Ernestine Smith
Kevin & Sheila Snow
Kenneth Stevenson
Ann Stockdill
Mike Summers
Tom Suk
David Swanson
Peter & Anthony Swanson
Don Tidwell
Michelle Tollett
Vera Topinka
Brian Trautwein
Phillip Tseng
Bill Turley
Jeff Van Bueren

Charles & Candia Varni
Greg Vaughn
Pat Veestart
Helene Vreeland
Howard Wade
Stephen Walker
Michael Wellborn
Priscilla Pearce Whittaker
Geo Wilde
Stuart Wilson
George Winard
Kevin Young

These businesses, organizations, and foundations provided crucial support or donated their services during our first year:

Astrow Fund
California Wildlands Grassroots Fund
Carol Gravelle Graphic Design
David Powdrell & Hugh Margerum
Fund for Santa Barbara
Fund for Wild Nature
Law Office of Marc Chytlo
Los Padres Chapter Sierra Club
Michael McFadden Photography
Monterey Inst. Research in Astronomy
Norcross Wildlife Foundation
Patagonia's Great Pacific Iron Works
Santa Barbara Foundation
Santa Lucia Chapter Sierra Club
University of Nevada Press

Volunteer Spotlight—ForestWatch Conservation Interns



Collin Pavelchik recently graduated from U.C. Santa Barbara with a degree in Environmental Studies. He's originally from Sacramento and is helping with issues affecting the Carrizo Plain National Monument and researching land ownership patterns around the forest.

Samantha Kannry is finishing her B.S. in Environmental Studies at UCSB. She's from San Rafael, California and has traveled around the world studying global environmental issues. Sam is researching endangered species issues and taking inventory of dams in the forest.



Year-End Giving

We are launching some exciting new programs to bring in the new year. You can ensure the success of these programs with a year-end donation. Your contribution to ForestWatch is tax-deductible and it's a wonderful way to show your support for forest protection.

Most of the support we receive for our programs comes from people like you who care about the future of our forest.

Please consider the following options when making your gift:

- **MAKE A DONATION**

You can make your year-end donation three ways:

By Phone. Call (805)252-4277 and you can provide your information to us over the phone.

On the Internet. Visit our web site at www.LPFW.org and click the "Donate Now" button. You can print and mail our donation form, or you can safely provide your credit card information using our secure on-line form.

By Mail. Send your donation to
ForestWatch
Post Office Box 831
Santa Barbara, CA 93102

And with your year-end donation of \$100 or more, you'll receive your choice of five hardcover books showcasing stories and photos of the Los Padres National Forest. It's our way of saying thanks.

- **MAKE A PLEDGE**

If you'd like to spread your gift out over a longer period of time, we welcome your pledge. This provides steady, reliable support that we can count on month after month. It also saves us time and money by eliminating the need to send membership renewal notices. For more information, call us or visit our website and select the "recurring donation" option.

- **WORKPLACE GIVING**

Many workplaces allow their employees to allocate a portion of each paycheck to a charitable organization. Ask your employer if they have a workplace giving program, and if they'd be willing to match your gift. If your employer has a workplace giving program through United Way, you can designate Los Padres ForestWatch to receive your pre-tax paycheck deduction.

- **SPREAD THE WORD**

Tell your friends, family, and neighbors about ForestWatch and encourage them to join. We're not a large, national organization with a public relations department. Instead, we rely on word-of-mouth to spread our message of forest protection. It's also the perfect time of year to give a gift membership.

- **VOLUNTEER**

Some of our volunteers monitor forest damage, lead hikes, or help us organize community events around town, like workshops and tabling at public events and festivals. Others help by organizing house parties, mailing parties, and other fundraising events to help support our work.

Volunteers are essential to help us carry out our programs. Visit our web site or call to find out how you can help!

Or, if you have a creative talent or expertise to offer, we might be able to put your skills to work on one of our special projects. We're currently looking for photographers, artists, GIS technicians, and other specialized skills.



The Upper Santa Ynez River, near the confluence with Mono Creek.

"Most of the support we receive for our programs comes from people like you who care about the future of our forest."

Holiday Wish List

All-Wheel-Drive Vehicle. Part of our work requires us to drive on old forest roads deep in the backwoods. Oftentimes, these roads are filled with gullies and potholes, forcing us to turn back. A sturdy all-wheel-drive vehicle in good working condition with decent fuel economy sure would help us expand our forest monitoring efforts.

Legal Research Subscription. A year's subscription to Lexis or Westlaw on-line legal research service. This will help us ensure that agencies and corporations follow the law.

Postage Stamps. We're always in need of stamps. You can buy us our first roll of 39-centers that take effect in January.

Color Laser Printer—Samsung CLP-510N or similar model with internal duplexing capabilities

Printer Toner—For our Brother MFC-8840D printer.

Office Space — We're looking for some donated office space in Santa Barbara.

Call us if you'd like to grant one of our holiday wishes!



An oak savannah on Figueroa Mountain, near the Santa Ynez Valley.



The California condor is the largest bird in North America, and one of the most endangered. There are only 57 condors in the Los Padres.

OIL DRILLING CLEARINGHOUSE

Read our appeal, view maps, and browse agency documents. It's all on our web site at www.LPFW.org

Oil Drilling (continued from front)

protected wilderness areas: the **Sespe, Dick Smith, and Chumash wilderness areas**. It also allows drilling beneath a one-mile stretch of **Sespe Creek** that is eligible for Wild & Scenic River designation.

The plan even allows drilling near some of the forest's most sensitive wildlife areas, like the **Sespe Condor Sanctuary**, the **Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge**, and the **Upper Cuyama River Valley**, an area so valuable that the Forest Service has declared it to be an "Area

of High Ecological Significance."

In response to substantial opposition from the public and the state of California, the plan will not allow surface drilling in roadless areas. While considered a victory for roadless area protection, the plan still falls far short of our communities' call for no new oil drilling.

The Forest Service received 7,800 comments from the public. A vast majority of these comments — 99% — opposed new oil drilling in the Los Padres.

A new drilling site in Santa Barbara Canyon near the Dick Smith Wilderness.

Several state, local, and national legislators and citizen groups have joined in the opposition.

The agency has until February to respond to our appeal. It's the last step before we have to ask a judge to order the agency to follow legal requirements.



"New oil drilling in Los Padres will produce less than a day's supply of oil at our current consumption rate."

After releasing the drilling plan, administration officials tried to claim that the drilling plan *protects* the forest! The truth:

MYTH: New drilling will cause only 20 acres of damage.

FACT: The plan specifically allows up to 4,277 acres of surface damage. The agency's 20-acre figure is based on an outdated 12-year-old report that does not comply with strict legal

requirements. New drilling will affect a much larger area.

MYTH: New drilling will be located next to existing drilling.

FACT: According to agency maps, new drilling areas are located up to 9 miles from existing drilling areas. Existing oil fields are located near some of the most sensitive areas of the forest. We don't need to add even more damage to these

important areas.

MYTH: The plan will help reduce the cost of gas and increase our nation's energy dependence.

FACT: According to the agency's own estimates, new oil drilling will produce less than a day's supply of oil at our current consumption rate. The Los Padres currently has 240 active oil wells and is already offering its fair share of oil to the nation.



The BLM is auctioning several parcels of land in the Upper Cuyama River Valley along the national forest boundary.

A Wave of Drilling Proposals Hits Los Padres & Carrizo Plain

The push to open up Western public lands to oil drilling has officially hit our region, according to two recent announcements by federal agencies.

Last month, a Malibu oil tycoon notified the Bureau of Land Management of plans to drill an exploratory well inside the **Carrizo Plain National Monument**, potentially opening as many as 3,500 acres to oil de-

velopment. The monument was established in 2001 to protect one of the largest concentrations of rare plants and animals in the state, and provides crucial habitat linkages to the Los Padres National Forest.

And in December, the BLM will auction 27 parcels for oil and gas drilling, covering over 19,000 acres. Five of these parcels lie along the national

forest boundary in Santa Barbara and Kern counties.

Also on the auction block are two parcels on the **Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge** boundary (critical habitat for the California condor), four parcels inside the **Wind Wolves Preserve** (the largest privately-owned wildlife preserve on the West coast), and a parcel along the **Cuyama River**.

ON THE WEB

View a map of the auctioned parcels on our web site at www.LPFW.org

ForestWatch Halts Lawless Logging in Old Growth Forests

Responding to concerns voiced by ForestWatch, the Forest Service has agreed to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) before approving logging plans in six areas of the Los Padres.

The logging projects cover 7,350 acres of forestland in popular recreation areas like **Frazier Mountain** in Ventura County, **Figueroa Mountain** in Santa Barbara County, and **Mount Pinos** and **Cerro No-roeste** in Ventura and Kern counties.

The agency first announced the projects late last year. Along with the announcement, the agency declared that it would not prepare an Environmental Assessment.

Instead, the agency tried to exploit a loophole called a "categorical exclusion," which would allow the agency to begin logging without preparing an EA. This was illegal, because under the Forest Service's own regulations, most of the logging projects are so big that they don't even qualify for the "categorical exclusion" loophole in the first place.

Forest Plan (continued from front)

recommends four areas totaling 35,821 acres for wilderness protection—less than 2% of the forest. The agency even re-treated from its draft plan, slashing 11,000 acres of wilderness that it recommended just last year.

ROADLESS AREAS

Roadless areas are the last remaining untouched wildlands in the forest. The new plan opens up 74% of the roadless areas in the Los Padres to new road construction.

The agency accepted public comments on its logging proposals earlier this year. At that time, ForestWatch pointed out that these logging projects did not qualify for a "categorical exclusion," and that the agency needed to prepare an EA before logging could begin.

However, officials continued to propose even more logging projects under the loophole. When all else failed, and it appeared that the agency would continue down this illegal path, ForestWatch submitted a Notice of Violation, outlining our main concerns and giving the agency one last chance to follow long-standing legal requirements.

In response to our notice, the Forest Service agreed in October to prepare full EAs for all six logging projects.

Unlike traditional logging operations, these six logging projects are not clear cuts. Instead, the agency is proposing to cut down some trees, leaving others to remain. The purpose of these projects, according to the agency, is to thin out overgrown forests to reduce fire intensity.

WILD & SCENIC RIVERS

The Forest Service recommends three river stretches for protection under the Wild & Scenic River Act. These rivers include the Arroyo Seco River in Monterey County, the upper twelve miles of Sespe Creek (the lower 31 miles are already protected), and Upper Piru Creek, both in Ventura County.

OIL & GAS DRILLING

The new plan rubber-stamps the agency's decision this sum-

mer to open 52,075 acres of the forest to oil drilling.

While some of these forests are overgrown and in need of thinning, ForestWatch became alarmed after learning that the agency wanted to cut trees 30 inches in diameter or larger. Scientific studies have shown that cutting trees this large actually increases, rather than decreases, fire risk. This is because larger, older trees have strong fire resistance, and if they are cut down, highly flammable brush typically grows in its place.

ForestWatch has also asked the agency to provide adequate protections for rare plants and animals like the Mt. Pinos blue grouse, Northern goshawk, California spotted owl, and the Mt. Pinos lodgepole chipmunk.

The agency expects to complete the EAs in early 2006 and release them for public review before logging can begin. ForestWatch will continue to monitor these projects to ensure that they make sense from a wildlife, fire prevention, and recreation standpoint.

mer to open 52,075 acres of the forest to oil drilling.

ORV ABUSE

The agency has counted 160 miles of illegal off-road vehicle trails in the forest. Instead of ordering the immediate closure of these renegade routes, the new plan anticipates that officials will approve and legalize some of these routes, rewarding unlawful behavior.

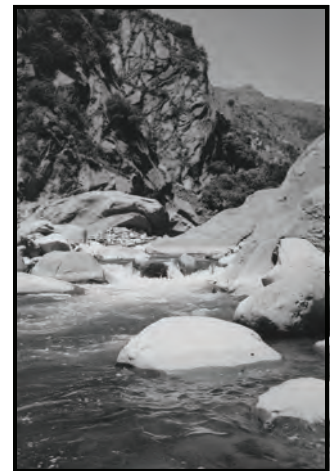
ForestWatch will continue its work to improve the plan.



Ancient trees tower high above the forest floor on Mt. Pinos. The agency is proposing to log trees and clear vegetation across 3,570 acres here.

ON THE WEB

View maps of the proposed logging areas on our web site at www.LPFW.org



Sespe Creek, as it flows through Devil's Gate. The new plan recommends Wild & Scenic River protection for the upper 11 miles of the Sespe, but omits this stretch.

ON THE WEB

The forest plan is just a click away! You can now access the forest plan and maps, in their entirety, on our web site at www.LPFW.org

Forest Places—Mount Piños

It's all downhill from here. At an elevation of 8,831 feet, Mount Piños is the highest point in the Los Padres National Forest. It straddles the Kern-Ventura county line, and forms a spectacular scenic backdrop for local mountain communities like Frazier Park and Pine Mountain Club.

Those who reach its summit can gaze across the Central Valley to the Sierras, and across the Los Padres to the Pacific Ocean.

Mount Piños is truly enchanting.

Maybe it's because some white and noble firs, ponderosa pines, lodgepole pines, and rare limber pines have stood here for over 400 years. Mount Piños is one of only three sites in the world for the Fort Tejon woolly sunflower. This place is crowned with such a diversity of plant life that the summit is one of only a few "Special Interest Areas" in the entire forest.

Maybe it's because you'll see—if

you're lucky—a California spotted owl or a Northern goshawk, animals so rare that they are protected by Forest Service regulations. The Mt. Piños blue grouse is so elusive that the bird is only rarely seen here. Condors occasionally soar overhead.

Or maybe it's because Mt. Piños is considered to be the center of the Chumash universe, known to them for centuries as Iwihinmu.

Historically, the area supported a small sawmill, and was the site of active mining in the late 1800s. Today, the only development that remains is three campgrounds, a road, and a microwave tower.

Recognizing the many natural and cultural values of this place, Congress passed the Condor Range and River Protection Act in 1992, establishing the Chumash Wilderness and protecting most of the mountain.

During the summer, it's a popular

dark-sky gazing location for amateur astronomers. Hiking and camping opportunities abound.

Without a doubt, the most beautiful time to visit is after a chilly storm has turned the landscape into a winter wonderland. It's a popular destination for cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and other alpine activities. So popular, in fact, that overcrowding has become a challenge on some winter weekends.

But if you're lucky, and find your own place of snowy solitude, it's hard to imagine this is southern California.



A winter storm transforms Mt. Piños into a snowy wonderland.

*A Quarterly Membership Publication of
Los Padres ForestWatch*

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**Protecting Our Public Lands Along
California's Central Coast**



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