



The Forest Watcher

The Quarterly Membership Publication of Los Padres Forest Watch

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

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ForestWatch Protects 10,000 Acres from Oil Development

Earlier this month, ForestWatch and rural landowners celebrated a tremendous victory after the federal Bureau of Land Management decided to withdraw more than 10,000 acres from a controversial oil lease sale.



ForestWatch and rural landowners joined forces to protect the Rangeview Ranch, nestled between the Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge and the Los Padres National Forest.

The leases were along the boundaries of national treasures like the Los Padres National Forest, the Carrizo Plain National Monument, and the Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge. The Bureau auctioned these leases to oil companies in June for as little as \$2.00 per acre. The auction was the first step in allowing oil drilling in this remote region.

With support from our members, ForestWatch joined forces with rural landowners in the area whose land would have been

affected by oil development. Eight of the landowners joined ForestWatch in formally challenging 11 of the 32 total parcels on the auction block, concerned about the damage that drilling could bring to wildlife, water pollution, and the area's rural quality of life.

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Illegal Off-Road Vehicle Routes Threaten Forest Lands

This Summer, officials at the Los Padres National Forest announced the beginning of a multi-year process to reduce the amount of environmental damage caused by illegal off-road vehicle use.

The Los Padres currently has a system of over 880 miles of routes open to ATVs, dirtbikes, and four-wheel-drive trucks. Off-road vehicles must remain on these designated routes, and cross-country travel is strictly prohibited by law.

However, this rule is not always followed, and is rarely enforced. Irresponsible off-roaders have carved a vast network of illegal trails through pristine streams, rare habitats, fragile meadows, and wilderness areas. This unlawful activity disrupts wildlife, interferes with wilderness recreation, and sends erosion into mountain streams. The problem has become so bad in recent years that Forest Service Chief Dale Bos-

(Continued on page 7)



An illegal off-road vehicle trail scars a hillside on West Cuesta Ridge in San Luis Obispo County.

Celebrating Two Years of Forest Protection



Jeff Kuyper is the Executive Director of ForestWatch.

“For the past two years, ForestWatch has led the charge to protect our region’s national forests, monuments, and other natural treasures.”

One autumn afternoon, several concerned citizens joined together to discuss the fate of the Los Padres National Forest. It was the Fall of 2004, and the future of the forest looked bleak.

Our nation’s longstanding environmental laws were being unraveled at an alarming pace. Congress was passing loopholes and exemptions that slashed the public’s ability to participate in forest management. All of this made it easier for corporations and developers to plunder our public lands for their own private benefit.

Oil companies seized this opportunity to invade our region’s natural treasures. Plans were made to expand oil drilling on 52,075 acres of Los Padres forestland, and more recently, another 13,000 acres near the boundary of the forest, a wildlife refuge, and a national monument. Then a new forest management plan cut these protections even further, opening up 74% of the last remaining unprotected wild areas in the Los Padres to road building and development. The Forest Service’s budget – already too low – suffered further cuts,

leaving even less money for local officials to do their job.

All this would have deeply troubled President Theodore Roosevelt, who said during a visit to the Santa Barbara Forest Reserve in 1903, “I think our people are growing more and more to understand,” he said, “that in reference to the forests and the wild creatures of the wilderness our aim should be not to destroy them simply for the selfish pleasure of one generation, but to keep them for our children and our children’s children.”

The idea of ForestWatch was born on that Fall afternoon two years ago. Ever since, ForestWatch has led the charge to protect our region’s forests, monuments, and other natural treasures. We’re the only local organization working to protect and restore the entire forest, from Big Sur to the Sespe.

Thanks to the support of you and your neighbors, we’ll continue to provide cutting-edge protection for these public lands so that they’ll still be here for generations to come.

New Faces Join ForestWatch Board of Directors

ForestWatch welcomes two new additions to our Board of Directors:

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jennifer Jackson

Santa Barbara

Brad Monsma

Camarillo

Michael Summers

Santa Barbara

Michelle Tollett

Ventura

Philip Tseng

Santa Barbara

Pat Veasart

San Luis Obispo



As botanist for a consulting firm, **Jennifer Jackson** conducts surveys of rare plants, participates in vegetation mapping and GIS projects, and prepares land management, mitigation, and restoration plans. She previously worked as a field botanist in some of the country’s most spectacular National Forests in Oregon, Colorado, New Mexico, and California’s High Eastern Sierras. She has a B.S. in Environmental Science with minors in Plant Biology and Geology from The Ohio State University, and is an avid skier and backpacker.



Brad Monsma’s adventures in the southern Los Padres over the last decade have given him a deep love of the landscape and a sense for how the Los Padres shapes the identity of the region and the character of its people. His book, *The Sespe Wild: Southern California’s Last Free River* explores the environmental and cultural history of Sespe Creek. Brad is Professor of English and Director of the Center for Integrative Studies at California State University, Channel Islands where he teaches environmental and multicultural literatures and works closely with the program in environmental science and resource management.

Fall Membership Drive is Underway!

In celebration of our second anniversary, ForestWatch is excited to launch our Fall Membership Drive! In just two years, we've grown from a tiny group into a respectable and effective organization with over 250 members from all over the region. Our members are the backbone of our organization, providing critical support for all of our important programs.

Our goal during last year's drive was to double our membership base. We achieved that goal, and now we're asking for your help so that we can double our membership *again!* To do this, we'll need support from 500 of our closest friends and supporters — people like you who care strongly about the future of our local forest.

As much as we've grown, we're still a relatively small organization. Our office is cramped, we have only one staff person, and our workload is overwhelming. Despite these challenges, we've secured some tremendous victories for your forest, and we're counting on your support to carry these successes even further.

Our current members have helped us grow into a powerful and effective voice for your public lands. You'll find a renewal form in your mailbox soon, and we truly appreciate your continued support. If you're not yet a member, we hope you'll consider joining one of the most effective organizations in our region.



New Members

Thank you to all of our new and existing members for their generous support over the Summer. Your contribution allows us to continue our important work in protecting the Los Padres National Forest.

Evan Albright	Kevin & Sonia	Ray King	Dunivant Nakasone
Louis Andaloro	Connors	Eric Kingery	Paul Niedringhaus
Gene Anderson	Paul Cronshaw	Walter Knapp	Helen Olson
Anonymous	Willy & Nancy Hill	Penny Knowles	Timothy Owens
Joseph Baird	Cunha	Dan & Joan Kuyper	Jacquelyn Paul
Mary Ellen Barilotti	Rev. Paul Danielson	Ruth Lasell	Lyn & James Pett
Bettina T. Barrett	Nancy de L'Arbre	Claudia Leidecker	Katharine Pond
Jack Barsman	Bill Denneen	Michael Leiner	Ken & Jo Rogers
Iris Peterson & Fred	Chris Dille	Knute Johnson &	Valerie Ryden
Barthold	Don & Catherine	Penny Maines	Sheldon & Alice Sanov
Beatrice Battier	Dishion	Frances Shannon	Lorraine Schulmeister
David Baxter	Jack Ellwanger	Marsh	Celia & Peter Scott
Susan Bee	Charles & Carol	Charaline & Frank	Jeannette Scott
June & Shed Behar	Frilot	Maxim	Kevin & Sheila Snow
Joan & Robert	Dorothy Geisler	Lily McClintock	Loren & Linda Solin
Benedetti	Cynthia & Dieter	Thomas & Janice	Madeleine Sone
Elizabeth Black-	Goetze	McCormick	Martin Stevenson
welder	Dennis Hadenfeldt	Sara Miller McCune	Bill Turley
Cynthia Boche	Sheila Harman	Bob & LaVerne	Jeff Van Bueren
Lisa Brown	Neil & Ann Havlik	McDonnell	Pat Veesart
Doug & Lee Buck-	John & Pam	James McGrew	Stephen & Judy Walker
master	Heatherington	Robert McLaughlin	David Wass
Tom Budlong	John Heinsius	Steven Marx	Jeff White
Gary & Theresa	Scott Jaffke	Ed Mercurio	Lornie White
Bulla	Ernest Jones	Jeanne Michaels	Margaret Wilson
Steve Chambers	Richard Jorgensen	Ruth Miller	George Winard
Carolyn & Steve	Pat Jump	Brad Monsma	Nancy Winters
Conner	Keep the Sespe Wild	Paula Steinmetz &	
	Kalon Kelley	Allan Morton	

Foundation Support

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Resources Legacy
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Astrov Fund
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Earthworks Rock Climbing School
Giati Designs, Inc.
Great Pacific IronWorks
Island Seed & Feed
Linnaea's Café
Pacific Travelers Supply
Patagonia, Inc.
The Thacher School

Trustees of the Forest

Trustees of the Forest are our visionary supporters who contribute at least \$1,000 annually in unrestricted support to ForestWatch.

These dedicated individuals ensure that we have the ability to confront environmental assaults on our public lands and to achieve vital protections for our most precious landscapes.

Make a difference that will last lifetimes. Join the Trustees of the Forest.

For more information, contact us at (805) 252-4277 or info@LPFW.org



TWO YEARS PROTECTING *YOUR* NATIONAL FOREST — FROM THE BIG SUR COAST TO THE SESPE WILDLANDS

FORESTWATCH ACCOMPLISHMENTS: 2004 THROUGH 2006

ForestWatch emerged in Fall 2004 to serve as a voice for your national forest, demanding strong protection for the mountains, streams, deserts, wetlands, and wildlife of this spectacular area. Here is a look back at our major accomplishments over the past two years:

* PROTECTED MORE THAN 14,000 ACRES FROM OIL DEVELOPMENT

In July 2005, officials approved a plan to expand oil drilling across 52,075 acres of forestland. The new plan would produce less than a single day's worth of oil for our nation, and would allow development to come dangerously close to wilderness areas and sensitive habitats. ForestWatch was the only local organization to challenge this plan. Now, after the Forest Service denied our appeal, we're the only local group preparing to hold the agency accountable in a court of law. When an oil tycoon last year tried to drill for oil *inside* the Carrizo Plain National Monument in San Luis Obispo County, we protected nearly 4,000 acres. And in the Cuyama Valley, we recently joined with rural landowners to protect more than 10,000 acres from oil development.

* MONITORED DAMAGE CAUSED BY UNMANAGED GRAZING

Last year, ForestWatch began a survey of all 98 grazing allotments on the Los Padres. We requested documents and conducted site surveys to identify problem areas, and will work with officials and permittees to improve rangeland conditions. We're also working to prevent an illegal grazing expansion plan in the Silver Peak Wilderness Area along the Big Sur coast.

* PROTECTED OUR FORESTS FROM LAWLESS LOGGING

Last year, we convinced the agency to prepare environmental studies of several logging plans across the forest, and submitted over 70 comment letters to the agency from members of the public urging protection of the large trees in these popular recreation areas.

* DEMANDED A STRONGER PLAN TO PROTECT THE FOREST

Late last year, the Forest Service revised its management plan for the Los Padres National Forest. This new plan severely weakens protections for the forest's wildlife, clean water, and quiet recreation opportunities, and opens up 74% of the forest's roadless areas for development. ForestWatch was the only local group to challenge this management plan, joining forces with several other national organizations to file a formal appeal.

* SURVEYED HUNDREDS OF MILES OF ILLEGAL ORV TRAILS

ForestWatch is recording hundreds of miles of illegal ORV trails across the forest, documenting which ones are causing the greatest amount of damage. We have also submitted comments on several proposals for new trails, and work with the agency to ensure that their limited funds are used to restore damaged areas and to increase enforcement, rather than on the construction of new trails.

* CONDUCTED OUTREACH IN FOREST COMMUNITIES

Our 250 members keep up to date on forest issues through our quarterly newsletter and email action alerts. Our website receives over 50 different visitors each day, providing information that is not available anywhere else. And our Citizens' Forest Campaign travels around to forest communities, showing concerned citizens how they can become more involved in issues affecting their national forest.

Each one of these victories was accomplished with hundreds of volunteer hours and support from various communities around the forest. *You* played an important role in helping us secure each one of these victories — thanks for your support!

LOOKING AHEAD: 2007 AND BEYOND

Over the course of the next year, ForestWatch will continue to be at the forefront of protecting our region's public lands.

We'll track proposals for oil development, logging, mining, ORV trails, and other resource extraction activities. Working with our team of scientists and legal experts, we'll continue to submit comment letters, file appeals, and use strategic litigation when necessary to protect the forest from environmental damage.

We also look forward to spending time in the field, monitoring forest conditions, identifying areas of concern, and working with forest officials to protect these lands. Several restoration projects are currently in the works to rejuvenate degraded areas using teams of volunteers.

Our Adopt-a-Forest program will give concerned citizens an opportunity to become caretakers of their own little part of the forest, allowing us to keep watch over greater areas of the forest.

As our organization continues to grow, we look forward to expanding our capacity by hiring an additional staff person to coordinate our volunteers and public outreach efforts, moving into a more functional office space, and working closely with local communities surrounding the forest.

Finally, we hope to organize several fun events for our members and supporters. These will be exciting opportunities for all of us to come together and celebrate the forest that we work so hard to protect and enjoy.

Our Citizens' Forest Campaign: Coming to a Town Near You

More than 45 concerned citizens attended our first-ever Forest Forum, held earlier this year in downtown Santa Barbara.

The evening began with a screening of *America's National Forest*, a short film showcasing the mountains, rivers, forests, wildlife, and recreation opportunities of national forests across the country.

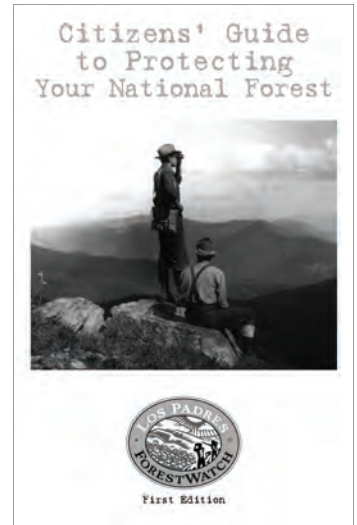
ForestWatch staff then presented a photographic journey into the heart of our very own Los Padres National Forest, highlighting these spectacular wildlands and what we are doing to protect them.

The evening concluded with a letter-writing workshop, where those in attendance learned about a proposed logging plan for Figueroa Mountain and then wrote letters urging Forest Service officials to protect the large trees on the mountain.

Everyone in attendance received their own copy of ForestWatch's newly-released

Citizens' Guide to Protecting Your National Forest, which discusses ways that you can become more involved in issues affecting your forest. The event was sponsored by the Fund for Santa Barbara.

ForestWatch plans to hold similar events this Fall and Winter in Ventura, Ojai, the Santa Ynez Valley, and San Luis Obispo.



Visit www.LPFW.org to order or download your copy of our new Citizen's Guide.



Forest Drilling Plan: ForestWatch Puts Agencies on Notice

In June, ForestWatch filed a formal notice of our pending lawsuit against several government agencies for their role in approving last year's 52,075-acre oil drilling expansion plan in the Los Padres National Forest. The notice charges the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Marine Fisheries Service with violations of the Endangered Species Act, and demands the agencies take action to protect rare plants and animals harmed by oil drilling.

The Forest Service first approved the drilling expansion plan in 2005. The plan would produce less than a single day's supply of oil, at great cost to our national forest. Some of the new drilling zones were located dangerously close to four protected Wilderness Areas (including the Dick Smith Wilderness, see page 8), a Condor Sanctuary, a Wildlife Refuge, and the Sespe Wild & Scenic River. The Upper

Ojai Valley and the Upper Cuyama Valley were particularly hard-hit by this expansion plan. The plan would harm wildlife, pollute the air we breathe and the water we drink, and tarnish the landscape with a network of oil derricks, pipelines, transmission wires, roads, and storage tanks.

ForestWatch was the only local organization that appealed this plan, challenging it on several legal and scientific grounds. The California Attorney General also filed a similar appeal, giving the agency one last chance to protect the forest from runaway oil development.

This April, ForestWatch learned that all appeals were denied. Now, the only option left to protect the forest is to take the agency to court. The drilling plan is so bad, and the legal violations are so severe, that we cannot stand by and allow oil drilling to expand into these fragile areas. The lawsuit will serve as the last line of defense between a clean, green forest and a forest littered with noise, runaway development, and a host of toxic chemicals. Stay tuned!



The endangered California condor is one of the world's most imperiled birds.

ForestWatch Protects 10,000 Acres (from the front page)



Oil development requires a network of roads, pipelines, storage tanks, transmission wires, and other infrastructure, threatening our wild landscapes.

ForestWatch argued that BLM failed to adequately study the damage caused by oil development, and failed to consult with expert wildlife agencies like the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The lands supported endangered plants and wildlife like the California condor, San Joaquin kit fox, blunt-nosed leopard lizard, and California jewelflower.

This was the second time in less than a year that the Bureau tried to lease these lands. The first attempt — in December 2005 — was cancelled after ForestWatch challenged that auction, too.

After the BLM tried to auction these same lands again in June, ForestWatch and the eight landowners filed challenges. We also requested copies of several documents, but the agency refused to grant our request, forcing us to file a lawsuit under the Freedom of Information Act.

The Bureau may re-auction these parcels at any time. ForestWatch will continue to closely monitor future auctions and will work with landowners to protect this remote area. Thanks to all of our members and supporters for helping us to protect more than 10,000 acres from oil development.

ForestWatch Appeals New Management Plan for Los Padres

In April, the Forest Service approved its revised management plan for the Los Padres National Forest. After carefully reviewing the new plan, ForestWatch decided to file an appeal in July. The plan focuses too much on expanding roads, motorized recreation, and commercial extractive uses such as oil drilling, rather than protecting the natural values and low-impact recreational uses that so many citizens enjoy.

Two California agencies — the Resources Agency and the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection — likewise challenged the plans. They called the new plan “deficient” for allowing road building and development in the forest’s roadless areas. The agencies also criticized the Forest Service for failing to uphold its promise to the State to protect these areas. Shockingly, the new plan would allow de-

velopment and road building in 74% of the forest’s pristine roadless areas. These are some of the last untouched and unprotected lands remaining in the forest.

Because of these concerns, ForestWatch joined a powerful coalition of statewide and national groups in filing the appeal. ForestWatch filed its appeal with Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth in Washington, D.C. The Forest Service has until the end of the year to issue its decision.



The new forest plan recommends this stretch of Upper Piru Creek for Wild & Scenic River protection, but did not include similar protections for other eligible rivers in the forest.

“The new plan would allow development and road building in 74% of the forest’s pristine roadless areas.”

BREAKING NEWS: Forest Service Approves Figueroa Logging Plan

As we go to press, the Forest Service has just approved its logging proposal for Figueroa Mountain in Santa Barbara County. The agency made some changes to its final plan,

and ForestWatch is carefully reviewing these changes to determine whether they are enough to protect the large trees in this highly popular area.

Visit www.LPFW.org for updates.

Illegal ORV Trails (from the front page)

(from page 1)

worth has called unmanaged ORV use one of the biggest threats now facing America’s national forests.

Los Padres officials announced in June that they had counted over 160 miles of these illegal trails. ForestWatch believes that the agency overlooked many illegal trails, and that there could be as many as twice that number. Now begins the task of going into the field to identify illegal trails.

With support from the Resources Legacy Fund Foundation and Wildlands CPR, ForestWatch is completing a forest-wide inventory of all illegal routes on the Los Padres. Using a team of volunteers, we are spreading out into Santa Barbara, Ventura, Kern, San Luis Obispo, and Monterey counties, taking photos of illegal routes and using Global Positioning Systems (GPS) to pinpoint the exact locations of these illegal trails. After our field work is complete, we will present our findings to forest officials.

Field Notes – The Dick Smith Wilderness Area

The “conscience of Santa Barbara County,” Dick Smith explored the Santa Barbara backcountry and was deeply committed to the preservation of its wild beauty. As a reporter, his articles highlighted the importance of preserving the backcountry. He authored *The California Back Country* and *California Condor: Vanishing American*, and worked tirelessly to establish the San Rafael Wilderness Area in Santa Barbara County – the first area protected after passage of the 1964 Wilderness Act. After his untimely passing in 1977, the Dick Smith Wilderness Area was established by Congress to honor his enduring legacy.

The wilderness that now bears his name is an area of extremely rugged terrain covering nearly 68,000 acres of Santa Barbara’s and Ventura’s backcountry. Madulce Peak is the highest point here at over 6,500 feet, with views of the Santa Barbara backcountry and the Pacific Ocean in the distance. The southern Sierra is visible to the north. Some of the most beautiful stands of mixed conifers grow here.



The Rancho Nuevo area near Scenic Highway 33 is more open terrain with massive sandstone rock outcrops, chaparral, big cone Douglas fir and Great Basin sagebrush. The area contains habitat for the southwestern willow flycatcher, the California spotted owl, and the condor.

Eight main trails wind their way through these pristine wildlands, providing 49 miles of hiking and horseback riding opportunities. The historic route connecting the Santa Barbara backcountry with the Cuyama Valley passes through this wilderness area via Alamar and Puerta Suela trails. The Chumash and later settlers all used this route.

Dick Smith was recently honored with the Wilderness Spirit Award from the Wildling Museum in Los Olivos. An exhibit showcasing his life’s work is on display from now through January 7, 2007. An extraordinary man who opened many eyes to the unique beauty of the Los Padres backcountry, Dick Smith’s legacy – and his wilderness namesake – together inspire a renewed call for the protection of some of our last remaining wild places.

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