



# WILDERNESS WATCHER

The Quarterly Newsletter of Wilderness Watch

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## Our Largest National Park and Wilderness: A Neglected and Abused Treasure

By Fran Mauer

*"There is one word of advice and caution to be given those intending to visit Alaska....If you are old, go by all means, but if you are young, wait. The scenery of Alaska is much grander than anything else of its kind in the world and it is not wise to dull one's capacity for enjoyment by seeing the finest first."*

—Henry Gannett, 1899

Perhaps no other place in Alaska better represents Gannett's advice than Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve (Wrangells).

This magnificent area has the largest active glacial complex in the country along with nine of the 16 highest peaks in North America. A continuous spectrum of un-fragmented ecosystems extends from marine to alpine to the boreal forests of interior Alaska. Established in 1980 by the Alaska National Interest

Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), Wrangells is

the largest unit of our National Park system (13.2 million acres) and also includes the nation's largest single designated Wilderness (9.078 million acres). Its diverse ecosystems support

a great variety of wildlife such as: marine mammals, mountain goats, Dall sheep, grizzly and black bears, wolves, wolverine, moose, caribou, trumpeter

swans, other waterfowl, and salmon, among numerous other species. Like with many national parks/preserves and wildlife refuges in Alaska, most of the lands not designated Wilderness in Wrangell-St. Elias are equally as wild and deserving of protection as the lands that are designated Wilderness.



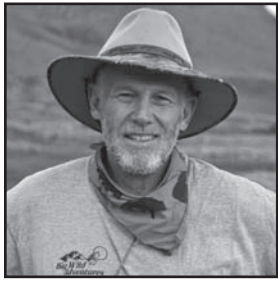
A primary purpose for Wrangell-St. Elias is: "To maintain unimpaired the scenic beauty and quality of high mountain peaks, foothills, glacial systems, lakes and streams, valleys, and coastal landscapes in their natural state to protect habitat for, and populations of fish and wildlife..." This all seems so wonderful, however, the stewardship of this great landscape and its living creatures has been troubling from the very start.

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## Message from the President



**B**efore term limits eject me from the Board of Directors for at least a year, I wish to address two fundamental truths about Wilderness.

First, truly wild Wilderness is essential for the protection of natural ecosystems and their diverse life forms (Wilderness that isn't really wild isn't really Wilderness).

Wilderness is the truest vestige of the real world, the Petri Dish of evolution for over 99.9 percent of the Earth's 3.5 billion-year organic journey. Also, Wilderness is the only proven environment in which we know, through experience, that diverse evolving life can be maintained for many millennia. Wilderness benefits humanity, sure, but for me, it's primarily about protecting life as we know it on Earth.

Conservation writer George Wuerthner recently cited a scientific study, which confirmed that protected areas, including Wilderness, contain more abundant and diverse life than unprotected lands. Of course, for those of us who've spent a big chunk of our lives in the wilds, this is a no-brainer. For where might one find wolves, grizzlies, and large areas of unspoiled natural plant communities—in the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness, for example, or in Kansas croplands? The answer is obvious, though studies such as the one noted by Wuerthner still contribute to the public discourse. As E.O. Wilson suggests, half of the Earth's land area should be protected as nature reserves—and for good reason.

My second topic is overpopulation. The human population explosion is the most fundamental threat to all wildlands. Most Wilderness areas are becoming increasingly hemmed in by intensively developed human-dominated landscapes. So with population growth, Wilderness becomes more isolated, less remote, and less wild. Ecologists assert that fragmented, isolated Wilderness is less able to sustain healthy populations of many wild native species than Wilderness with more connectivity and lower surrounding human populations.

In addition, population growth increases pressures to allow mechanical contrivances in both designated and potential Wilderness. The efforts of both the extractive industries and the mechanized recreation lobbies to diminish new Wilderness designations and to oppose good Wilderness stewardship are particularly successful in areas of rapid population growth.

Ideological dogmas often obfuscate the population issue. For example, the left often argues that we have a distribution problem instead of an overpopulation problem. And many on the right simply worship the paradigm of unimpeded economic growth for its own sake ("the ideology of the cancer cell", according to Ed Abbey). I won't mention the religious dogma problem here, because that one is so obvious.

Yet population growth threatens nearly everything. Forget for the moment pollution, climate change, oceanic fisheries depletion, urban sprawl, traffic jams, violent crime, war, genocides, and many other problems that are partly or largely functions of overpopulation. In my lifetime the U.S. population has grown from 150 million to over 320 million humans. During this period, the National Wilderness Preservation System was also born and grew significantly. Yet population growth and associated sprawl, resource extraction, livestock grazing, off-road vehicle abuse, and more have fueled a dramatic concurrent reduction in overall wildland acreage.

Wilderness Watch is a lean and effective conservation organization, partly because it maintains its focus on keeping designated Wilderness wild. To me, designating and protecting wild landscapes is humanity's highest calling. In the U.S., this means, above all else, designating Wilderness under the Wilderness Act of 1964 and keeping it wild.

Nonetheless, I'll end my term as Wilderness Watch President with the thought that unless overpopulation becomes a major topic in the sociopolitical discourse, and unless population growth abates, the assault on wild nature will accelerate. And tomorrow's "Wilderness" will barely resemble that which we consider to be wild today. 🌿

—Howie Wolke



The Wilderness Watcher is the quarterly newsletter of Wilderness Watch, America's leading conservation organization dedicated solely to protecting the lands and waters in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

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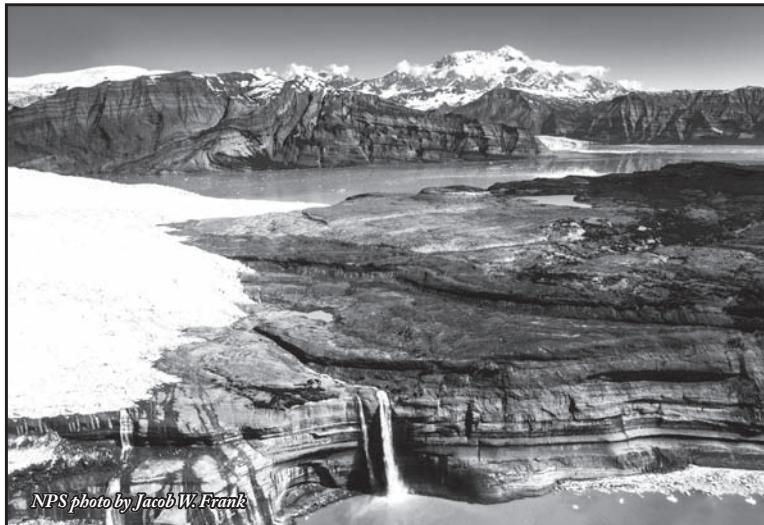
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## A History of Flawed Stewardship

A terrible combination of timid park managers, a Reagan administration hostile to conservation, and aggressive local interests seeking all terrain vehicle (ATV) and snowmobile access set the stage for inappropriate management policies and significant impacts to scenery, wildlife habitat, and wilderness characteristics of this great National Park and Wilderness. From the beginning, the National Park Service (NPS) failed to properly delineate the relatively limited areas where ATVs and snowmobiles were being used for traditional activities at the time of the park's establishment. Instead of applying existing authority to promulgate access regulations, the Park Service's regional office opted to address access in its General Management Plan (GMP), which was completed six



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years after park establishment. The GMP proclaimed there were “established patterns of use” by ATVs and snowmobiles, although staff admitted to “loose” documentation of these patterns.

This initial period of inaction created a slippery slope for expansion of motorized activities in the Park and Wilderness that should have been prevented. For example, in 1983, the Park Service began issuing permits for recreational ATV use. The number of permits more than quadrupled in 25 years, from 64 issued in 1985 to 263 in 2010. Thus the first plan did little to restrict motorized use in the Wrangells. By 2001, the ATV impacts in the Wrangells topped the list of protected areas in Alaska where the administration of motorized uses had been bungled. (For more information see

G. Ray Bane’s “Shredded Wildlands: All-Terrain Vehicle Management in Alaska” published by the Sierra Club and the Alaska Conservation Foundation.)

Although two major studies during the late 1980s documented ATV impacts in Wrangell-St. Elias—such as trail braiding, soil erosion, vegetation damage, permafrost melting, and hydrological alterations—the Park Service’s regulation of ATVs remained nearly non-existent. Finally a lawsuit was filed in 2006 to challenge the management of ATV use. In a settlement agreement, the NPS agreed to suspend issuing permits for three trails with the worst impacts, and to complete an environmental impact statement (EIS). The final EIS identified impacts that had already been documented in the two previous studies and admitted that moderate to major impacts to wilderness character had occurred due to subsistence ATV use in Wilderness.

In 2014, 34 years after establishment of the Wrangell-St. Elias, final regulations were promulgated regarding ATV use. The current regulations limit subsistence ATV use in Wilderness to certain designated trails, although ATVs may travel off-trail as much as 0.5 miles on either side to retrieve game animals. All other subsistence ATV use in Wilderness is prohib-

## Largest Wilderness (continued from page 3)

ited. The regulations continue to allow recreational ATV use on non-wilderness lands.

From this sordid history, it is obvious that much remains to be done to achieve appropriate administration to properly protect this magnificent national treasure.

### Current Planning Action

In June 2016, the Park Service requested public comments for a draft proposed action document that will guide development of a Wilderness Stewardship and Backcountry Plan to be incorporated as an amendment to the park's General Management Plan. The "Proposed Action" included among other things, the sanctioning of recreational snowmobile use in the Wrangell-St. Elias Wilderness. Wilderness Watch, along with Trustees for Alaska, Winter Wildlands Alliance, and other organizations, has challenged this proposed recreational snowmobile use because it would violate both ANILCA and the Wilderness Act. Several other issues, including the management of air access, ATV use, and grazing of horses on Park lands, are also of concern. It is our understanding that NPS

will prepare a draft environmental assessment (EA) and again solicit public comments.

The Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, Preserve, and Wilderness, with its great vastness, intact ecological systems, exemplary wilderness qualities, and lofty establishment purposes requires a correspondingly high level of attention by the National Park Service and the American citizens to assure its permanent protection. Wilderness Watch will continue to engage with the National Park Service and our allies in Alaska and keep our members informed as this very important planning process moves forward. 🌿

*Fran worked as a wildlife biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Alaska. He first worked to compile biological information in support of the legislative action leading to passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act which set aside over 100 million acres as National Parks, Refuges, Wilderness Areas and Wild Rivers. Following passage of the Act, he was a wildlife biologist at Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for over 20 years. An outspoken advocate for Wilderness, Fran's writings have appeared in various media sources and publications opposing proposed oil development in the Arctic Refuge. Fran is the Representative of Wilderness Watch's Alaska Chapter and serves on the Board of Wilderness Watch.*



### Stewart Brandborg— Still Fighting for Wilderness

On Oct. 19, several Wilderness Watch staff and board members visited Stewart "Brandy" Brandborg, Wilderness Watch's Senior Advisor. Brandy is the great lion of the wilderness movement, and the last living architect of the eight-year campaign in Washington, DC, to write and pass the 1964 Wilderness Act. Though other wilderness champions like Polly Dyer of Washington State also played important roles in passing the Wilderness Act, Brandy is the last one from the small group that included Howard Zahniser and David Brower that designed and implemented the campaign, and lobbied the Wilderness Act through Congress. Now in his 90s, Brandy still fights for Wilderness! From left, George Nickas, Jeff Smith, Dana Johnson, Brandy, Gary Macfarlane, and Kevin Proescholdt. 🌿



# Wilderness in the Courts

## Legal Victory in the River of No Return Wilderness: Judge Halts Mine Exploration!

On August 2, a federal judge issued an order declaring that the U.S. Forest Service's approval of the Golden Hand Mine exploration project in the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness in Idaho violated the Wilderness Act and other federal laws. In July 2015, Wilderness Watch and allies, represented by Advocates for the West and Western Mining Action Project, challenged the Forest Service's authorization of extensive drilling, bulldozing, road construction, and motor vehicle traffic in the remote Big Creek drainage of the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness. The Forest Service had given American Independence and Mineral Mining Company (AIMMCO) the green light on a host of wilderness-damaging activities to explore the validity of mining claims at its Golden Hand Mine. The agency authorized AIMMCO 571 out-and-back motorized trips per year for three years, including roughly 400 trips for transporting workers in pickup trucks to and from work sites. It also authorized the use of jackhammers, drillers, dump trucks, bulldozers, and other heavy machinery to construct over four miles of road and 11 drill pads, to drill up to 18 test holes 500 to 800 feet underground, and to excavate 4,000-gallon sump pits lined with plastic to contain drilling fluid. Our suit challenged these activities noting that "AIMMCO would create a flurry of motorized industrial activity that will [] degrade the Wilderness [...] and] violate requirements of the Wilderness Act and the Wilderness Management Plan for the Frank Church[-River of No Return] Wilderness to limit motorized activity to a minimum and only that which is essential."



*Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness by Kevin Proescholdt*

On August 2, 2016, Federal Judge B. Lynn Winmill agreed, holding that the Forest Service's authorization violated the Wilderness Act, the National Forest Management Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act. While Judge Winmill was clear that "mining will never be compatible with wilderness," he acknowledged that mining laws and the Wilderness Act must co-exist at times. The limitations of this co-existence, however, are demonstrated by the order in this case. While valid mining claims made prior to

wilderness designation may continue, and while AIMMCO is allowed to do some assessment work to prove the validity of its mining claim, the Judge found the agency's broad and unjustified authorizations in this case went too far. For example, the Judge explained that the Forest Service should have considered banning motorized commutes—a decision that would have reduced motorized trips from 571 per year to approximately 171 per year. The Judge was

also concerned that the Forest Service may have unlawfully relied on information obtained through confidential meetings with AIMMCO that was never disclosed to the public.

Judge Winmill's order invalidates the Forest Service's authorizations and halts the onslaught of heavy machinery slated to climb Pueblo Summit and drop into one of the largest and wildest Wilderness landscapes in the Lower 48. This victory is the result of our ongoing efforts to protect the River of No Return from the relentless pressures of commercial exploitation, human manipulation, and motorized intrusion. ♪

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## WW Board Welcomes Cyndi Tuell



**Cyndi** has worked as an attorney, consultant, and activist since 2007, focusing on public lands management issues related to roads and motorized recreation in national forests in New Mexico and Arizona. Recently, she has focused her public lands work on protecting natural resources in the borderlands. A native of Tucson, Arizona, Cyndi is an avid hiker, backpacker, and defender of wild places. She received the Nancy Zierenberg Sky Island Alliance Advocate award in 2013 and was named the Sierra Club Grand Canyon Chapter's 2015 Conservationist of the Year. ♪

# Michael Frome, 1920-2016

By Kevin Proescholdt

*"Wilderness, above all its definitions, purposes and uses, is sacred space, with sacred power, the heart of a moral world."* –Michael Frome

Long-time Wilderness Watch board member and friend Michael Frome died on September 4, 2016, at the age of 96. A nationally-acclaimed journalist and author, Michael was a fierce defender of wilderness, national parks, and the natural world.

Typical of Michael's humor and dedication to the written word, he arranged with his daughter, Michele, and son, William, to send out a final edition of his Portogram newsletter posthumously. "This is the last edition of my Portogram, due to my departure from this earth on September 4, 2016," he wrote. "It has been great fun, I've enjoyed it very much, and I send my best wishes to all my friends and followers. Be of good cheer, Michael."

A New York City boy, Michael began work after his military service during World War II as a travel writer, initially for the *Washington Post* and later for the American Automobile Association. His work introduced him to national parks and national forests, and he was intrigued.

In 1960, Michael became interested in the conservation organizations working to protect wild America, and he began making the rounds of the offices in Washington, DC. His most open and warm reception came from Wilderness Watch's current senior advisor, Stewart "Brandy" Brandborg, who had just started work on the staff of the Wilderness Society. This meeting began a strong friendship that continued to the present day.

Michael also met and became friends with many of the others working to pass what became the 1964 Wilderness Act: Howard Zahniser of the Wilderness Society (Brandy's boss and mentor), Harvey Broome on the So-

ciety's Governing Council, David Brower of the Sierra Club, and many more.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Michael transitioned into work as a conservation columnist for several national magazines, and as the author of a string of books on nature, national parks, wilderness, and the outdoors. He wrote a regular column for *Field & Stream*, *Los Angeles Times*, *American Forests*, and *Defenders* (the magazine of Defenders of Wildlife). In his columns, he called the issues as he saw them, and refused to back down on his criticisms, even when his editors asked or ordered him to do so. For this display of integrity, he was fired from some of his magazine posts, but such dismissals clearly showed the strong ethics Michael displayed throughout his career.

His books during this time included *Whose Woods These Are: A History of the National Forests* (1962),

*Strangers in High Places: The Story of the Great Smoky Mountains* (1966), *The Forest Service* (1971), and *Battle for the Wilderness* (1974).

After many years as a journalist and columnist, Michael began a new career teaching environmental journalism at the University of Idaho, University of Vermont, Northland College (Wisconsin), and Western Washington University. During this time, he also earned his doctorate in 1993. And he continued writing books, including *Regreening the National Parks* (1992), *Green Ink: An Introduction to Environmental Journalism* (1998), *Greenspeak: Fifty Years of Environmental Muckraking and Advocacy* (2002), his autobiography *Rebel on the Road: and Why I was Never Neutral* (2007), and *Heal the Earth, Heal the Soul: Collected Essays on Wilderness, Politics, and the Environment* (2007).



WW's Kevin Proescholdt met with Michael Frome and his wife, June Eastvold, when they visited St. Paul, MN in 2013.



## Michael Frome (continued)

In the mid-1980s, when I was directing the Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness in Minneapolis, Michael received a big national parks award. The award came with a \$5,000 check. But rather than keeping that prize money for himself, Michael turned around and gave it all away to 10 regional or grassroots organizations like the Friends that worked to protect national parks and wilderness. His \$500 check was most welcomed! Later, when Michael taught at Northland College in Ashland, Wisconsin, I invited him to give the keynote speech at our annual meeting. It was a talk to remember!

Throughout his entire career, Michael spoke for wilderness and the outdoors, not afraid to criticize those who damaged either. At one point early in his career, the U.S. Forest Service actively courted Michael, hoping to nurture a voice who would write glowing things about the agency. As Michael looked more closely at the agency's dealings, however, he strongly criticized many of the practices the agency promoted and the courting stopped. Similarly, as some of the large national conservation organizations began to lose their way, Michael publicly criticized groups like the Wilderness Society that he felt had cast aside principles for political deals at the expense of wilderness.

On News Year's Eve of 1994, Michael married Rev. June Eastvold, the pastor of University Lutheran Church in Seattle. June became a big part of Michael's life. After they both retired, Michael and June moved back to the Midwest, settling in Port Washington, Wisconsin.

Michael joined the Wilderness Watch board of directors in the late-1990s, with friends like Brandy, Bill Worf, Stewart Udall, Joe Fontaine, Joyce Kelly, and others on the board. Michael had a phenomenal memory clear to the end, and could remember with great clarity and detail incidents and people he had met decades before.

It was always a treat when Michael and June attended the board meetings. After he was term-limited as a board member, Michael continued to serve on Wilderness Watch's Advisory Council. He was always eager for wilderness news and happy to advise staff and board on issues we faced.

Michael continued speaking and writing to the end. In September 2014, for example, at the tender age of 94, Michael and I both gave keynote presentations at the Lake Superior Wilderness Conference in Duluth to help celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act. "So my plea this evening is to have zest for the preservation of wilderness," he told the conference attendees. "We got a great start, a really wonderful start with the Wilderness Act. Despite all the obstacles that came up, and have come up, it stands as an emblem of maturity, of sacredness. Let's spread it out all over."



*WW's Kevin Proescholdt with Michael Frome at the 2014 Lake Superior Wilderness Conference in Duluth, MN to help celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act.*

And Michael continued to write books well into his nineties. In 2015, he authored *Rediscovering National Parks in the Spirit of John Muir*, published by the University of Utah Press. And he completed at least one more wilderness book yet to be published, tentatively titled *A Place for Wilderness in a Changing World*. I was honored that Michael asked me to read the manuscripts of both books, and I hope to see this new wilderness book published in the near future as well.

The late U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson, the father of Earth Day and a co-sponsor of the Wilderness Act, said of Michael, "No writer in America has more persistently argued for the need of a national ethic of environmental stewardship than Michael Frome." We're honored and grateful for Michael's many contributions to Wilderness Watch, for his voice for the protection of authentically wild Wilderness, and for his warm camaraderie. Be of good cheer, Michael! 🌿

# On the Watch

## Kootznoowoo Wilderness Spared an Airport



Photo: Don MacDougall via Flickr

In a great victory for the Kootznoowoo Wilderness, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), with the support and urging of Wilderness Watch and our supporters around the country, has decided to site the Angoon Airport outside the boundaries of the Kootznoowoo Wilderness in southeast Alaska. The nearly million-acre Wilderness on Admiralty Island is home to a large population of grizzly bears and many other species of wildlife. A provision in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), which designated this Wilderness, has a process that could allow for transportation and utility systems to be sited within Wilderness in Alaska.

Wilderness Watch has been fighting to keep the Angoon Airport out of the Kootznoowoo Wilderness. We were the only conservation organization to testify against the State of Alaska's proposal at a hearing in D.C. and we also urged the public to comment on the Angoon Airport Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

We learned earlier this year that the Angoon City Council passed a unanimous resolution that supported siting the Angoon Airport within the town limits of Angoon rather than in the Wilderness. The federal agencies involved in the decision had also been supporting the non-Wilderness option. Only the State of Alaska opposed the option to build the airport and its access road outside the Kootznoowoo Wilderness.

Thank you to all who opposed this intrusion in the Kootznoowoo Wilderness—your public comments were not only noted by the FAA at the D.C. hearing, but made a difference! 🐾

## Let Nature Determine Outcome on Isle Royale



Photo: Kevin Proescholdt

In July, Wilderness Watch submitted comments supporting Alternative A, "No Action," in the National Park Service's Isle Royale Wolves EIS Public Scoping. This would allow wolves to come to and go from the island based on natural migration. The Park Service is also considering different translocation alternatives that would bring wolves to the island from the mainland, though Wilderness Watch does not support such manipulations of the wolf population on Isle Royale.

Wolves established a population on Isle Royale, the largest island in Lake Superior, decades ago after crossing a 14-mile ice bridge from Ontario to the Michigan island. They became part of the world's longest-running and most famous predator-prey study (along with the

island's moose). The wolf population has averaged 25, but this year was down to two. Wolves have come and gone from Isle Royale over the years as ice bridges have permitted. In February of 2015, three wolves crossed the ice to Isle Royale, but returned to the mainland after five days despite the abundant moose population on Isle Royale.

Ninety-nine percent of Isle Royale's 134,000 acres is Wilderness and Alternative A is the only one that honors and upholds the area's wilderness status. Natural processes, not human demands, should determine whether predators stay or go in Wilderness. 🐾



### Mt. Hood Wilderness Threatened by Proposed Structures and Installations



Photo: Thomas Shahan via Flickr

Wilderness Watch is gravely concerned about a U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) proposal to install permanent structures and installations in the Mt. Hood Wilderness in Oregon. In August, Wilderness Watch submitted comments to the U.S. Forest Service on the USGS Volcanic Monitoring Stations in Mt. Hood Wilderness Preliminary Assessment. The USGS is proposing to build four new permanent volcano monitoring stations on the flanks of Mt. Hood within the Wilderness. These four new stations would be in addition to the 10 existing monitoring stations on or near Mt. Hood on the Mt. Hood National Forest. These stations would be permanent structures and installations that would require an unlimited number of helicopter landings to install the stations and service them for at least 30 years and probably long after that into the future.

The project significantly violates the 1964 Wilderness Act which prohibits structures, installations, and helicopter flights and landings, all of which degrade wilderness character. ♪

### New Rules Will Help Protect Wildlife on National Wildlife Refuges in Alaska



Photo: Michael Stadelmeier

In August, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) published final regulations governing the killing of bears, wolves, coyotes, and wolverines in national wildlife refuges in Alaska including nearly 20 million acres of designated Wilderness on the refuges. These regulations preempt several State of Alaska hunting and trapping regulations meant to reduce populations of carnivores with the intent to increase moose and caribou numbers.

The new federal rules prohibit same day airborne hunting of bears, wolves, and wolverines; use of traps, snares, and nets for killing bears; killing of wolves and coyotes from May 1 to August 9; killing of bear cubs or mothers with cubs (except for subsistence hunts where this is traditional); and use of bait to kill brown bears.

These prohibitions will help protect wildlife on refuges in Alaska, but there are some shortcomings, including:

- Allowing the use of bait to kill black bears, even though black and brown bears live in many of the same areas. This negates much of the benefit of prohibiting brown bear baiting and leads to both species becoming habituated to humans. Baiting of any wildlife for the purpose of killing is unacceptable, especially in our national wildlife refuges.
- The prohibition on killing wolves and coyotes during the denning season is too short and should extend from April 1 to November 1 to better protect mothers, pups, and family groups during denning and at rendezvous sites.
- Allowing black bears and cubs to be killed in their winter dens (during October 15 to April 30 in certain areas) for traditional subsistence practices.
- Final regulations have omitted some of the stronger requirements that were to be met before predator control is allowed in refuges.

Now Alaska's senators and congressman are pushing legislation that will overturn the Fish and Wildlife Service's new rule and a similar rule adopted by the National Park Service for national parks and preserves in Alaska. See page 14 for more information. ♪

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### Another Helicopter Proposal to Capture and Collar Wildlife



Photo: Lone Peak Wilderness by Michael T. Waltermann

Wilderness Watch and other organizations are opposing a Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) plan to use helicopters to capture and collar non-native mountain goats in three Wildernesses along the Wasatch Front in Utah—Twin Peaks, Lone Peak, and Mt. Timpanogos. UDWR is trying to learn why the non-native goat population is declining, so it can try to reverse the decline and provide more goats for hunters. UDWR is seeking Forest Service (FS) approval to land helicopters this fall and next, in what could be an ongoing, long-term project.

The Forest Service's first responsibility is to protect the wilderness character of the Twin Peaks, Lone Peak, and Mt. Timpanogos Wildernesses. UDWR's proposal fails to show how landing helicopters and placing radio telemetry collars on non-native mountain goats is necessary to protect these Wildernesses. 🐾

### The Enchanted Valley Chalet in the Olympic Wilderness should be Removed



Photo: National Park Service

Wilderness Watch is urging the National Park Service (NPS) to completely dismantle and remove the dilapidated Enchanted Valley Chalet in the Olympic Wilderness in Washington. The structure stands in the path of the East Fork Quinault River, and its eventual demise threatens to flood the wild river with brick, metal, wood, and other debris. The Park Service should allow natural conditions to be restored to the Wilderness.

In August, we submitted scoping comments on the Final Disposition of the Enchanted Valley Chalet Environmental Assessment. We noted that the chalet fails to meet the narrow exception the Wilderness Act makes for structures and installations necessary to administer an area as Wilderness. We also noted that the other alternatives—retaining, permanently anchoring, or relocating the Chalet to another area within the Wilderness—fail to preserve wilderness character. 🐾

### WW Urges a Wilder Yosemite Wilderness



Photo: George Wuerthner

Wilderness Watch recently submitted comments on Yosemite National Park's Wilderness Stewardship Plan (WSP) Preliminary Concepts and Ideas. The 704,000-acre Yosemite Wilderness in California makes up 94 percent of the Park. The Park Service is focusing on just two of the four issues identified during scoping—visitor use and capacity, and stock use—however, trail management, non-conforming structures/uses, and commercial services also need to be addressed.

We are urging the Park Service to:

- Limit overnight group size to 10 people plus nine head of stock (beating hearts or number of legs might be better measures) on trails and four to six people off-trail. This limit should apply to day use also;
- Devise a plan to account for the skyrocketing number of through-hikers when considering the park's carrying capacity;
- Monitor stock use and fully evaluate the agency-suggested alternatives that would potentially eliminate or limit it to only administrative or private use;
- Limit (or end) commercial services in the Yosemite Wilderness to what is truly necessary;
- Remove structures from potential wilderness and designate it as Wilderness;
- Remove nonconforming structures such as the cables on Half Dome; and
- Eliminate chainsaws, helicopters, and other nonconforming uses for routine management actions.

All alternatives should ensure that the wilderness character of the Yosemite Wilderness is preserved. The Park Service must allow natural processes, not human actions, to define the character of the Wilderness. 🐾



# Wilderness Intended as Refuge from Bikes and other Mechanization

by Kevin Proescholdt



Several recent opinion pieces from around the country have asked why mountain bikes cannot be allowed to ride in Congressionally-designated Wildernesses. A new mountain biking organization has even had a new bill introduced in Congress (S. 3205) to open all Wildernesses in the country to mountain bikes and chainsaws. But the

short answer to their question is that allowing bicycles in these areas would defeat the very purpose of setting aside and protecting these areas as Wilderness.

Congress passed the Wilderness Act to protect the wilderness character of these places, not to establish recreation areas. Wildernesses preserve the great silences of lands removed from the influences of modern civilization. Wildernesses are free from human domination or manipulation, where ecological and evolutionary processes may continue unhindered by humankind. Wilderness provides places where wildlife can thrive without being startled by zooming human machines.

In order to protect wilderness character, Congress and the framers of the 1964 Wilderness Act prohibited bikes (and other intrusions of modern civilization) from Wilderness while writing and passing this landmark law. The law specifically says, “there shall be no temporary road, no use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment or motorboats, no landing of aircraft, *no other form of mechanical transport*, and no structure or installation within any such area.” (Emphasis added.) Bicycles are obviously a form of mechanical transport; the law can’t be much clearer than this.

This issue is not about the physical differences in trail damage by bikes versus horses, this is not so much about trail safety, nor is it about whose mode of outdoor transportation is better. This issue is about protecting the wild character of these Wildernesses.

Under the Wilderness Act, Wildernesses are sanctuaries for wild animals and wild processes to occur, and

sanctuaries for humans to escape the influences of our modern industrialized civilization. Like other sanctuaries, Wildernesses must be treated with humility and restraint. Part of that humility and restraint lies in how we approach and travel through Wilderness. Mountain bikes and other machines are no more appropriate in Wilderness than they might be in other sanctuaries like Washington National Cathedral.

Mountain bikers sometimes claim that Congress didn’t specifically mention bicycles in the Wilderness Act so therefore they must be allowed. Such an argument is merely wishful thinking, just as would be claims by all-terrain vehicle owners or snowmobilers that the Wilderness Act didn’t specifically enumerate their choice of machine transport.

Mountain bikers sometimes claim that the U.S. Forest Service didn’t specifically ban bikes until 1984, but that’s an intentionally misleading claim. For starters, Congress banned bikes from Wilderness in 1964, and it doesn’t matter a whit whether the Forest Service waited to specifically mention bikes in its regulations. If bikers did ride in Wilderness after 1964 (in that era before mountain bikes were invented), they did so illegally. Moreover, the other three federal agencies that administer Wilderness (National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Land Management) all specifically banned bicycles in designated Wilderness in their initial regulations and there was never any doubt about or challenge to the rules.

The 1964 Wilderness Act has served the nation well in the 50-plus years since it was enacted. It protects these special places from activities that degrade their wilderness values, including mechanical transport and mountain bikes. As a nation, we need to continue to use humility and restraint in how we treat our Wildernesses, and that includes not weakening the Wilderness Act. The new bill in Congress (S. 3205) would allow mountain bikes to invade these sanctuaries. That bill must not pass. There are many, many areas for riding bicycles, but Wilderness is not one of those places. ❧

*Kevin Proescholdt of Minneapolis is the conservation director for Wilderness Watch. He has written widely on Wilderness, including Troubled Waters: The Fight for the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (1995) and Glimpses of Wilderness (2015).*

# Wilderness Watch Critiques Ecological Interventions Proposal

By Kevin Proescholdt

In June, the interagency Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute in Missoula, Montana released a draft “decision support tool” to guide managers contemplating ecological intervention management actions in Wilderness. Though intended to require managers to more adequately justify such interventions, the support tool could ultimately make it easier for such interventions to occur. Wilderness Watch responded with detailed comments in September, opposing such manipulations.

The draft document, “Supplement to Minimum Requirements Analysis/Decision Guide (MRA/MRDG): Evaluating Proposals for Ecological Intervention in Wilderness,” was issued for limited review in June. The draft sets up a checklist for wilderness managers to use to evaluate ecological manipulations of Wilderness, much of which might ostensibly be done to mitigate or overcome the effects of climate change.

Unfortunately, the policy starts from the premise that it is appropriate for managers to engage in such in-

terventions and will most likely be used by managers to ensure that all boxes are checked, rather than to seriously question whether proposed projects are appropriate in Wilderness.

## Wilderness Watch’s concerns include:

- The Wilderness Act generally prohibits interventions in Wilderness. The Wilderness Act calls for restraint and humility in Wilderness and directs us to leave Wilderness unmanipulated and untrammelled. As such, Wilderness should be kept free from human control, and should be allowed to function in its ecological and evolutionary roles without human constraints, manipulations, and interventions, regardless of whether managers may wish to see different conditions on the ground. This is a basic tenet of Wilderness, that Wilderness remains a “self-willed” land.
- Ecological interventions in Wilderness to try to mitigate climate change will degrade wilderness character just like other interventions do. Many proposed ecological intervention proposals seem to be the result of sure-to-increase wide changes to ecological systems as a result of human-caused climate change. Specific interventions in Wilderness to address climate change are unlikely to alter the trajectory of the changing climate, and will only serve to degrade the wilderness character of the areas so manipulated.
- The framework for the so-called five qualities of wilderness character found in Keeping It Wild 2—the agencies’ wilderness character monitoring protocol, which the “decision tool” is based upon—is flawed and improperly diminishes the central importance of wildness in wilderness character. Some underlying assumptions, in particular that preserving wildness is not central to protecting wilderness character, need to be reconsidered before approving a framework to evaluate proposed ecological intervention in Wilderness. Some of these relate to the appropriateness of the five wilderness qualities the agencies have selected, which are used in the decision tree in the Minimum Requirements Decision Guide/Minimum Requirements Analysis (MRDG) process. (See accompanying article.)
- The MRDG process was not designed to analyze ecological intervention in Wilderness. Rather, its purpose was to analyze whether the narrow exceptions to the prohibitions in section 4(c) of the Wilderness Act could be used in administering Wilderness. In other words, the MRDG process applies to proposals to use



*Using the flawed KIW2 framework, as one example, the Forest Service recently authorized the Idaho Department of Fish and Game to use helicopters to capture and collar 60 elk in the Frank Church–River of No Return Wilderness.*

*Photos: Kevin Proescholdt/Brett Haverstick*



## Ecological Interventions Proposal (continued)

motorized equipment, motorized/mechanized transport, build structures, or other prohibited actions. Even if ecological intervention were appropriate, the MRDG process seems to be a poor tool to make those determinations, as this Supplement itself tacitly admits, “This supplement is needed because ecological intervention proposals commonly entail complex legal, scientific, and ethical questions that may be beyond the realm of a typical MRA or MRDG.”

- The Supplement repeatedly asks wilderness managers to make judgments or answer questions that are well beyond their expertise and in most cases beyond the knowledge of the world’s greatest experts. For example, one question asks “Does the proposal describe how the

ecological intervention will provide long-term adaptation or mitigation to the effects of climate change?” Even the world’s leading ecologists would hesitate to answer this question and wouldn’t likely have much confidence in their answer. Similarly, though most wilderness managers are NOT attorneys, another question asks, “Does the proposal describe if potential legal and administrative conflicts and uncertainties have been resolved?” Few if any wilderness managers have the legal expertise to answer this question. In short, while the questions will make it appear the proposed ecological interventions will be well thought out, the reality is managers can’t provide answers with any level of certainty whatsoever. 🌿

### How Keeping It Wild 2 (KIW2) Framework Improperly Diminishes Wildness

The four federal agencies that administer Wilderness (U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Land Management) have developed a new framework for monitoring and preserving wilderness character. Among many other problems, the misleadingly named *Keeping it Wild-2 (KIW2)* framework fails to recognize the central importance of wildness to wilderness character, and instead decreases wildness to only a small fraction of what must be preserved.

The framers of the Wilderness Act certainly recognized the central importance of wildness to Wilderness. Howard Zahniser, for example, the author of the Wilderness Act, wrote more than a decade before the Wilderness Act became law, **“We must remember always that the essential quality of the wilderness is its wildness.”**

The KIW2 framework recognizes *wilderness character* is a holistic concept that includes symbolic meanings of humility and restraint, landscapes primarily free of human manipulation and free of signs of modern society. But for the purposes of monitoring and decision making, KIW2 devolves wilderness character into five separate qualities—untrammeled, natural, undeveloped, outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation, and other features of interest. The five qualities are defined as equal in importance and often in conflict with each other.

So under KIW2, wildness (untrammeled) is reduced to only 20 percent of wilderness character, rather than the

central importance it should have. Perhaps more problematic, the KIW2 framework sets up all five features to be in conflict with each other. So a wilderness manager could decide to approve a project that damages the untrammeled and undeveloped qualities, but which she believes would improve the recreation quality.

Using this flawed framework, as one example, the Forest Service recently authorized the Idaho Department of Fish and Game to use helicopters to capture and collar 60 elk in the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness, part of the state’s ongoing efforts to increase elk populations by severely reducing wolf numbers through predator control and liberal trapping and hunting seasons. The Forest Service determined the impacts to wildness (untrammeled) from intervening in the natural predator-prey relationships, and the impacts to the undeveloped quality (using helicopters and installing radio collars on the elk) were offset by potentially increasing elk numbers, which would benefit the “natural” quality of the wilderness.

It is these kinds of rationalizations or balancing acts the KIW2 protocol fosters, but which will surely diminish wildness and degrade the wilderness character of the areas in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

For a full critique of the KIW2 protocol, download the report, “The Definition of Wilderness Character in ‘Keeping It Wild’ Jeopardizes the Wildness of Wilderness” by David Cole, Doug Scott, Ed Zahniser, Roger Kaye, George Nickas, and Kevin Proescholdt, from our website: [www.wildernesswatch.org](http://www.wildernesswatch.org). 🌿

# Wilderness in Congress

## Utah PLI

On July 14, Reps. Rob Bishop (R-UT) and Jason Chaffetz (R-UT) introduced the Utah Public Lands Initiative (PLI) Act (HR 5780) dealing with millions of acres of public land in eastern and southern Utah. The bill purports to equitably solve public lands issues but is a blatant giveaway to extractive industries and development interests. Wilderness Watch prepared a detailed analysis of the wilderness provisions contained within the PLI. Though the PLI proposes to designate 41 new Wildernesses, Wilderness Watch's analysis shows that the bill actually guts wilderness protections these areas would receive under the 1964 Wilderness Act, and includes numerous unprecedented harmful provisions never before found in any other wilderness designation law. The sheer number and types of these special provisions ensure that the Wildernesses designated by the PLI would be nothing but WINOs—Wildernesses In Name Only. Though no Senate PLI companion bill has yet been introduced, Rep. Bishop has announced his intention to move his House bill quickly through the House Natural Resources Committee (which he chairs) this fall, with an initial hearing there Sept. 14. And Rep. Bishop is adept at attaching bad bills to other must-pass legislation, so the threats posed by this bill remain very real. To read Wilderness Watch's analysis of the PLI's wilderness provisions, please visit our website. 🐾

## Mountain Bikes in Wilderness

On July 13, Sens. Mike Lee (R-UT) and Orrin Hatch (R-UT) introduced S. 3205, the Human-Powered Travel in Wilderness Areas Act. This bill, drafted by the mountain bike organization, the Sustainable Trails Coalition, would open the entire National Wilderness Preservation System to mountain bikes, chainsaws, wheelbarrows, and any other future human-powered machines. The Wilderness Act has banned all bikes and other mechanical transportation in all Wildernesses since 1964, but this bill would amend the Wilderness Act to allow them. Anticipating this bad legislation, Wilderness Watch organized a sign-on letter last spring opposing such legislation. A total of 115 organizations across the country signed on to the letter, which we shared with Members of Congress. The sign-on letter and the introduction of this terrible legislation have sparked a lively debate in media across the country, with many individuals and editorial boards editorializing against the bill. But that doesn't necessarily mean that this bill won't move in Congress during the current lame-duck session. You can read the sign-on letter on our website. 🐾

## Energy Bill/Sportsmen's Bills

Congress has introduced a number of bad sportsmen's bills that would harm Wilderness, and unfortunately the bills keep getting worse. In the House, HR 528 (Ben- ishek, R-MI), the Recreational Fishing and Hunting

Heritage Act, would effectively repeal the 1964 Wilderness Act. This bill would allow unlimited habitat manipulation and development, including temporary road construction, for actions to purportedly facilitate hunting, fishing, recreational shooting, or wildlife conservation. The bill would amend the Wilderness Act to place such projects and activities on par with preserving wilderness character, as the purpose of the Wilderness Act. The bill would also exempt all such projects in Wilderness from environmental review.

HR 2406 (Wittman, R-VA), the Sportsmen's Heritage and Recreational Enhancement Act (SHARE), contains the bad wilderness language of HR 528, but would also for the first time open all Wildernesses across the nation to commercial filming by such commercial enterprises as TV, cable, and internet hunting and fishing shows. HR 2406 passed the full House of Representatives on Feb. 26.

In the Senate, the Bipartisan Sportsmen's Act (Murkowski, R-AK) passed the full Senate on April 20 as part of S. 2012, the Energy Policy Modernization Act. The wilderness-damaging portion includes language that would open up all Wildernesses to commercial filming for the first time, though the language has been modified somewhat from the original language. On May 25, the House adopted a substitute for S. 2012 under the same Senate bill number and that version passed the full House that day. This House version of S. 2012 contains the wilderness-damaging provisions from the Sportsmen's Bills that would essentially gut the Wilderness Act and allow unlimited habitat manipulations if done for any reason even remotely connected with hunting, fishing, shooting, or wildlife management. Other bad provisions include a legislative de-listing of the gray wolf in Wyoming and the Great Lakes states from the protections of the Endangered Species Act, and a legislative blocking of agency attempts to limit predator killing and unethical hunting practices on national wildlife refuges and national preserves in Alaska. A conference committee has been charged with working out differences between the Senate and House versions of the Energy Bill, including the damaging wilderness provisions. 🐾

**WHAT YOU CAN DO:** Please contact your two Senators and House representative and ask them to oppose these bills.

### TO FIND AND CONTACT MEMBERS OF CONGRESS:

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You can also write your senator or representative at:

Senator (Name)  
US Senate  
Washington D.C. 20510

Representative (Name)  
US House of Representatives  
Washington D.C. 20515 🐾



# Remembering Jim Dayton

By Jeff Smith

**W**e lost Jim Dayton, one of the founders of Wilderness Watch, on June 21 just three days shy of his seventieth birthday. Twenty-seven years ago, alarmed by three new commercial resorts along the Middle Fork of the Salmon River within the Frank Church—River of No Return Wilderness, Jim worked with Bill Worf and Roberta Cross Guns to bring Wilderness Watch into existence.

Jim lived an exuberant life. Before Wilderness Watch, he'd been an electrician, a Michigan State alumnus, a sergeant in a U.S. Army tank crew, a fisherman in Alaska, a wilderness ranger in the Moose Creek District of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, a river guide, and a member of the Lolo Hot Shots, a fire fighting crew.

As our first executive director, Jim brought the organization through its most difficult and least rewarded phase. Jim helped define our mission, publish our first newsletters, recruit loyal members and donors, organize conferences, write grants, beg and borrow computer equipment. Eventually, the organization moved out of Jim's bedroom into the modest office in downtown Missoula that we still occupy.

"Once we formed, people heard about us," Bill Worf wrote back then. "They brought us management issues from all over the country. Our executive director is a terrific young man . . . and he's, in my view, one of the top, if not the top wilderness persons in the United States."

"He was outraged!" his friend, Mike Bader, said, remembering Jim's reaction to the Forest Service permits

for the Salmon River resorts. "It was a total violation of their responsibilities, and Jim really got after it."

Jim was raised in Michigan, and he fell in love with the West as a young man after a family camping trip to California—two parents, six kids in a station wagon—with stops at Escalante, Yosemite, and Yellowstone.

At his memorial service on August 20, his brother Bob said Jim's main focus was to "respect and leave this planet a better place." Gail Gutsche said Jim could no longer even count the number of times he floated the main stem of the Salmon River. She said he went to the wilderness, often alone, to build strength as a "fierce lover and protector of wilderness."

Even during his illness, during his final two years, "He was way too busy living to think about dying," said Lou Herritt.

Joe Regan paid tribute to Jim's joyful nature by reciting Yeats:

*While the world is full of troubles  
And anxious in its sleep  
Come away, O human child!  
To the waters and the wild  
With a faery, hand in hand,  
For the world's more full of weeping than you can understand.*

Jim's family and friends ask that memorial contributions be sent to a Montana wilderness nonprofit of your choice. 🌊



*Jim Dayton at Flathead Lake in Montana, 2014. Photo by Matthew von Dayton.*



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