



# WILDERNESS WATCHER

The Quarterly Newsletter of Wilderness Watch

Volume 17 • Number 1 • February 2006

## Evading the Helicopters Wolves & Wilderness gain reprieve in Idaho

“Only a mountain has lived long enough to listen objectively to the howl of a wolf.”

— Aldo Leopold

The situation didn't look good. In December, the Idaho Department of Fish & Game requested permission from the Forest Service to use helicopters in the Selway-Bitterroot, Gospel Hump and Frank Church-River of No Return wildernesses to track, tranquilize and radio collar wolves. Idaho argued that the project was essential for “managing” the state's 43 packs, an estimated 600 animals listed as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Those few people who learned of the plan over the winter holidays had few illusions as to Idaho's definition of “management” – under pressure from some sportsmen and outfitters to increase elk populations and implement a commercial wolf-hunting season, Idaho wanted to track the wolves in order to exterminate them. Indeed, the State's federally approved Wolf Recovery Plan allows that two-thirds of its current wolf population be wiped out.



To add insult to injury, Idaho Fish & Game proposed to use helicopters in some of the country's most pristine Wildernesses to accomplish its goals. The Department planned to collar two wolves in each pack and estimated that 3 helicopter landings would be required for each collaring effort. Motorized use is not permitted in Wilderness except in circumstances of human safety or when such use is necessary to meet the minimum requirements for protecting the area as Wilderness. Though the State's proposal failed to meet either of these requirements, the Intermountain Region of the Forest Service based in Ogden, Utah agreed to approve the project as a Categorical Exclusion (CE) in the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness. A CE bypasses environmental review based on a determination that the project is minor and short-term and will have no significant environmental impacts. The Forest Service did not even bother to publish a public comment notice in any local or regional newspaper!

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# insights

## From the Executive Director

### Sustaining Wilderness Traditions

In this issue of the *Watcher*, Wilderness Watch President Howie Wolke describes how “landscape amnesia” threatens Wilderness. He notes how a broad array of insults to Wilderness are accepted by many “simply because they’ve never experienced Wilderness without them.”

There’s another kind of amnesia that also threatens to fundamentally change Wilderness in the years ahead, and that’s the disappearance of the traditional knowledge and skills that are necessary to meet the challenge of good wilderness stewardship. This includes the loss of “woods skills,” like the primitive arts of travel, and the ability to properly use and care for a variety of hand tools. But it also includes losing the aptitude to deal with management challenges in way that is conducive to preserving wilderness character—yielding our modern day technologies and conventions for a more subtle, respectful approach toward Wilderness.

While landscape amnesia affects the physical character of Wilderness, the loss of these other values, what we are calling “wilderness traditions,” threatens the idea of Wilderness—as a place set apart from the technologies, machinery and conventions of our modern world. It’s more than just a choice between using a chainsaw or a cross-cut saw. It’s the choice between restraint and expediency, between letting Wilderness work its timeless magic on us, or forcing the Wilderness to adapt to our schedules and demands.

Over the years, Wilderness Watch has done much to try and slow the proliferation of motorization, mechanization and inappropriate developments in Wilderness. We’ve successfully challenged many projects, have engaged managers on dozens of others, and have gained important court rulings that help to rein-in the most egregious abuses. But given the rapidly accelerating reliance on motorized access and tools, it’s clear that more needs to be done. Support from every quarter—the public, federal agencies and Congress—needs to be rekindled for these wilderness traditions to survive.

In the months ahead, you’ll be hearing about our Sustaining Wilderness Traditions campaign—a program we hope to launch this year. We’re excited that the campaign will be an effective means to not only reverse the “growing mechanization” that is encroaching on our Wilderness lands, but also preserve important cultural traditions that are closely linked with our wilderness heritage.

Saving Wilderness is about more than protecting land. It’s also about keeping alive those traditions that allow us to engage Wilderness in a respectful and humble way.



George Nickas



The *Wilderness Watcher* is the quarterly newsletter of Wilderness Watch, a non-profit organization advocating the protection and responsible stewardship of the nation’s designated Wildernesses and Wild & Scenic Rivers.

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# In Memory and Sincere Gratitude



Eva Jean Worf  
July 21, 1927 – November 7, 2005

Wilderness Watch lost one of our dearest friends when Eva Jean Worf passed away on November 7, 2005. From the day Wilderness Watch was conceived, nearly 17 years ago, Eva Jean has been a nearly indispensable part of our success. Though she always eschewed credit of any kind, it is probably safe to say there wouldn't be a Wilderness Watch if not for the support of Eva Jean.

As many Wilderness Watch members know, it was Eva Jean's husband, Bill, who co-founded and led Wilderness Watch for many years. But their life together was a partnership and that meant Eva Jean was involved in our work in many ways. She assisted Bill in his efforts on a daily basis, attended every Board meeting until last fall, and accompanied Bill to literally dozens of other meetings, conferences and events. Eva Jean was a quiet, but keen observer, and a trusted advisor. She was also a great ambassador for Wilderness Watch - a chance encounter on an airplane several years ago eventually led to two of the largest grants Wilderness Watch has ever received.

Eva Jean was raised on a ranch near Rosebud, on the High Plains of eastern Montana. The self-reliance and confidence she gained in those early years served her throughout her life. In 1946 she and Bill were married and a few years later they began their 33-year Forest Service career. It took them to many parts of Montana, Wyoming, Utah, and Washington D.C., including spending some of those early years living at remote ranger stations. In a story Eva Jean wrote for a book about being a "Forest Service wife," she told of often being left alone with several children to tend,



Eva Jean and Bill Worf, 2005. Photo by Gamyr Worf.

while Bill was out with a packstring riding over the district. Sometimes that left her as the only "official" available, and in her unflappable, matter-of-fact way she did whatever was needed, from paperwork to scaling logs that timbermen were hauling off the mountain.

Eva Jean inspired all of us with her indomitable spirit, her extraordinary courage, and her generous smile. She will be missed always. But her grace, commitment and love of wild country will live on in Wilderness Watch and in our nation's Wilderness system.

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## Helicopters, continued from page 1

The task of alerting the public and stopping the project was daunting, especially since the comment period fell over the hectic Holiday Season. Key Forest Service personnel were on vacation and therefore unable to answer questions or provide information to the public on the proposal. Meanwhile the clock was ticking and Idaho was preparing to conduct approximately 50 helicopter landings in the River of No Return beginning immediately upon approval.

Aware of the short window of opportunity, Wilderness Watch joined forces with Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Friends of the Clearwater, Idaho Conservation League, Idaho Sporting Congress, Western Watersheds Project, and The Wilderness Society to broadcast the imminent threat to wolves and Wilderness. Despite the distractions posed by

holiday parties, gifts and eggnog, the regional office in Ogden received approximately 170 in-depth comments. Figuring that the agency would green light the project regardless of the comments, Attorney Laird Lucas with Advocates for the West notified the Forest Service that we would immediately move to enjoin the project in court if necessary.

Happily, in early January the Forest Service announced that it would defer its decision until it conducts a detailed environmental analysis. This means that both the wolves and the Wilderness will enjoy at least one more winter of solitude and peace before the issue returns. This time we feel confident that the State of Idaho will face even greater public resistance if it tries to move forward with its wolf control plan. ❧

# Taming the Wilderness

## New National Park Service policies take the wild out of Wilderness

“When all the dangerous cliffs are fenced off, all the trees that might fall on people are cut down, all of the insects that bite are poisoned... and all of the grizzlies are dead because they are occasionally dangerous, the wilderness will not be made safe. Rather, the safety will have destroyed the wilderness.”

— R. Yorke Edwards (Canadian naturalist)

The National Park Service (NPS) recently revised all of its national policies, including its wilderness policies, and is now taking public comments on the new Drafts. The NPS oversees more wilderness acreage than any other agency, including the majority of all designated Wilderness in Alaska, so please let the Park Service hear your thoughts!

Contrary to the Wilderness Act's purpose to preserve wilderness character, the revised NPS policies emphasize public use as the primary purpose of Wilderness. This error is based on a misinterpretation of the Wilderness Act's six “public purposes” (uses) as the overall purpose of the Act itself. The allowable uses in Wilderness include recreational, scenic, scientific, educational, conservation and historical use. However, if these uses are the statutory purpose of the Act itself then anything that enhances those uses could be justified in Wilderness, such as using helicopters to enable recreational heli-skiing!

Instead of wild, undeveloped landscapes associated with solitude and self-reliance, under NPS' proposed new policies Wilderness would be managed for intensive recreational and scientific uses and special events. The policies direct NPS to actively promote and facilitate visitor use and commercial services in Wilderness. NPS would undertake wilderness monitoring to ensure that the public uses of Wilderness are being accommodated.

The revised policies place major emphasis on assuring visitor safety in Wilderness and would allow construction of structures and other new developments to enhance visitor use.

For example, the new policies would allow construction of new trails, informational signs, toilets, developed campsites, trail shelters, supply caches for outfitters, equipment caches for managers, and administrative cabins for rangers inside Wilderness. The parks would encourage visitors to hire commercial outfitters and guides for safety reasons, and outfitters would have special privileges not allowed to other visitors.



To encourage scientific activities in Wilderness the new policies would allow permanent research installations and a variety of activities and forms of access that are incompatible in Wilderness. Special events (and, presumably, large groups) would be allowed if they have a park or Wilderness “theme.” It is difficult to envision what these events would entail - a Wilderness lecture series, perhaps?

NPS recognizes that some activities may conflict with other types of use, so the draft policies call for temporal and spatial zoning of the Wilderness in order to accommodate a variety of uses. Potentially, if you want the freedom to roam in solitude and quiet you may be told to hike on Mondays and Tuesdays, because Wednesdays may be reserved for commercially guided day hikes, and Thursdays may be scheduled for large special events! Also, if you want a non-motorized wilderness experience you may be advised to avoid days when helicopter are transporting researchers, rangers and supplies into the Wilderness.

### What you Can Do:

Write a letter to the National Park Service detailing your concerns with its new wilderness policies.

#### Mail To:

Bernard Fagan, National Park Service  
Room 7252, 1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240  
waso\_policy@nps.gov

View a more detailed Action Alert is on Wilderness Watch's website, [www.wildernesswatch.org](http://www.wildernesswatch.org).



## Out & About - Wilderness Watch on the Road

### • Wild Rockies Rendezvous - Old friends & new

Wilderness Watch was a co-sponsor and organizer of the 2005 Wild Rockies Rendezvous. The Rendezvous, held September 23-25 along the Lochsa River in northern Idaho, is an annual event bringing together conservationists from throughout the Northern Rockies region. Topics included forest protection, restoration, wilderness controversies, and ways to attract younger people to public lands protection efforts. The program included presentations by Wilderness Watch board president Howie Wolke, board member Stuart Brandborg, executive director George Nickas, and policy coordinator TinaMarie Ekker.

### • 8th World Wilderness Congress - Taking our message to the world

Wilderness Watch Executive Director George Nickas was invited to make two presentations at the 8th World Wilderness Congress in Anchorage, Alaska in October. The Congress was attended by more than 1,000 people representing government, academic, business and citizen organizations around the world. The first presentation was a poster session that highlighted Missoula, Montana as a "center of excellence for research, education, training and citizen advocacy." Missoula is home to the federal govern-

ment's national wilderness training center, national wilderness research institute, University of Montana's Wilderness Institute and Wilderness Watch, the only citizens' organization dedicated solely to the protection of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Nickas' second presentation to a packed room was a panel debate with Doug Scott, who represents the Pew Foundation's Campaign for America's Wilderness, on the controversial and emerging trend of promoting non-conforming activities in Wilderness in some new wilderness bills. George spoke against the provisions, describing how the provisions harm individual areas, set precedents for future designations, and how this proliferation of special provisions undermines both the public perception and the reality of what makes Wilderness unique. Scott spoke in support of the new breed of bills.

Wilderness Watch Cloud Peak Chapter was represented at the Congress by Karen Ferguson, who also participated in a poster session describing the Chapter's long-term monitoring work in the Cloud Peak Wilderness.

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## Fran Mauer wins Olaus Murie Award for conservation efforts in Alaska

This fall, Wilderness Watch board member and Alaska Chapter Chair Fran Mauer received the Olaus Murie Award for Outstanding Professional Contributions from the Alaska Conservation Foundation. The award is given to an individual who has influenced local, regional, statewide and national environmental issues in the course of their professional careers. Before becoming the Alaska Chapter Chair for Wilderness Watch, Fran spent 20 years working as a biologist in the Arctic Wildlife Refuge. His commitment to wild places did not falter after retirement, and he continues his conservation efforts as an active opponent of drilling in the Refuge and as a spokesman for critical issues facing Wilderness in Alaska.

All of us would like to congratulate Fran and to thank him for donating the \$1,000 award to Wilderness Watch's efforts to safeguard Wilderness in Alaska!



Fran in the Arctic Refuge Wilderness. Photo by Colin Worf.

# Landscape Amnesia and Wilderness

— by Howie Wolke

As the 21st century unfolds, the role of Wilderness Watch in resuscitating the essence of the Wilderness Idea becomes more crucial than ever. The eons attest that wilderness is the real world, today a still living vestige of three and a half billion years of organic evolution, the fundamental fabric upon which all life and all economies – human and not – are based.

As our readers know, there are many threats to both de-facto and designated Wilderness, from bulldozers and chainsaws and ATV's to various manifestations of poor stewardship in protected Wilderness Areas. One particularly insidious threat is lurking within society's outlook toward wild landscapes. I call it "Landscape Amnesia". Landscape Amnesia is a disease of modern generations of humans who lack a collective memory of healthy landscapes. What I'm talking about is real landscape-derived memory, not merely remembering landscapes via the printed or photographic record.

Speaking regionally, we westerners are now two full centuries removed from the days of Lewis and Clark, which ushered in rapid European colonization of the West along with massive habitat destruction and wildlife extermination. So roughly 10-12 generations have expired since Lewis and Clark first saw the unbelievably teeming and mostly pristine western wilderness. Even more generations have come and gone in the East since its landscape was first hacked up and chopped down by colonists. As we know, what modern generations see when they gaze upon both rural and wild landscapes, is a far cry from what the early Europeans saw. The ramifications of this extend deep into the psyche of modern society -- including the conservation movement --and our relationship with the land.

First, one might ask how modern land managers might attempt to restore damaged habitats when nobody remains alive who remembers the pristine lands and the forces that shaped them? Cottonwood floodplain forests, tallgrass prairies and old growth Appalachian forests are examples of once expansive ecosystems that have been nearly obliterated. Multimillion-acre expanses of completely undeveloped pristine roadless weedless wilderness with all native species and natural processes thriving are likewise nearly extinct. Time marches on. Those who remember the old places die. Gradually the depleted condition becomes the perceived norm. Wasn't most of Nevada always sagebrush and dirt? Didn't this stream always dry



Denali Wilderness, AK. Photo by Jerome Walker.

up each summer? Wasn't this mountain always covered with puny trees? Weren't cottonwoods and willows always absent from this floodplain? And isn't the Bob Marshall Wilderness as wild as ever?

When it comes to designated Wilderness, landscape amnesia allows us to accept a broad array of insults that are increasingly common in "protected" Wilderness. Ranger cabins, air strips, helicopters, outfitter caches, weed infestations, fire suppression, predator control, smog, fences, motor vehicle corridors, eroded multi-laned trails, denuded over-used campsites, stock bridges, stock tanks, jet boats and more have become part of the modern "wilderness experience", all as we bathe in the illusion that such incon-

gruities don't seriously detract from wilderness character. Modern generations accept these insults simply because they've never experienced Wilderness without them.

As President of Wilderness Watch, I'm proud to work with folks who realize that Wilderness areas are to be managed as unique bastions of primitive America, "in contrast with

those areas where man and his works dominate the landscape" (Wilderness Act, section 2(c)), and where "wilderness character" is to be maintained or enhanced, not compromised. This is both a point of law and the very essence of the Wilderness Idea. As a professional wilderness guide and outfitter in the western U.S. and Alaska for nearly 30 years, I can resolutely say that wilderness character is be-

As future generations experience "Wilderness" as a compromised imitation of the real thing, the essence of the Wilderness Idea will die.

ing needlessly compromised throughout the Wilderness System. That's why a few years ago I got involved with Wilderness Watch. Although I'm proud of the typically successful work this organization does defending Wilderness in the legal arena, I suspect that our greatest contribution is simply being here to remind society, including fellow conservationists, that some landscapes, especially our wildest, just shouldn't be compromised.

Landscape Amnesia is an insidious threat both to Wilderness on the ground and to the Wilderness Idea. By now, most Wilderness users have come to accept many of the incongruities listed above as simply coming with the territory. There's no collective memory of anything else. As future generations experience "Wilderness" as a compromised imitation of the real thing, the essence of the Wilderness Idea will die. As ideas die, so do actions based upon those ideas. And without action by those who care, there can be no wilderness in the modern world. We have, after all, entered the century in which the only remaining wild landscapes will be those that we choose to protect. Part of that choice is how well we'll protect the chosen lands. So let us never forget that the essence of Wilderness and the

glue that binds the Wilderness Idea is the un-compromised wildness and naturalness of self-willed land. If we fail in our lifetimes to preserve and restore where necessary the basic character of our Wilderness (lands with our highest level of protection), then we also fail to provide future generations with the information – a baseline -- required to foster a commitment to real Wilderness.

In my opinion, Wilderness is civilization's best idea. In an increasingly crowded, industrialized and unstable future, real wilderness will thrive only if we today have the wisdom to include vast acreages of wild lands in the Wilderness System, and to care for those lands the way Congress intended when it had the wisdom to enact the Wilderness Act of 1964. Otherwise, landscape amnesia guarantees that real wilderness will fade into the distant dimming memory of a species of primate that's often too clever for its own good. 🌿

*Longtime Wilderness guide, conservationist and writer Howie Wolke is currently the President of Wilderness Watch.*

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## Hearings Held on Controversial Idaho Wilderness Bill

October brought two public hearings on the controversial Central Idaho Economic Development and Recreation Act (CIEDRA) introduced earlier this year by congressman Mike Simpson (R-ID). Among other things, the bill would designate 300,000 acres of the Boulder-White Cloud Mountains as Wilderness, dedicate 560,000 acres to priority use for off-road vehicle recreation, and give away approximately 6,000 acres of public land in central Idaho to private development.

More than three dozen regional and national conservation organizations oppose the bill due to its many disturbing components, including weakening existing protections for the Sawtooth National Recreation Area (SNRA) and undermining the provisions and protections of the Wilderness Act. (See October 2005 issue of *Wilderness Watcher*). The bill is supported by The Wilderness Society, the Pew Campaign for America's Wilderness, and the Idaho Conservation League.

On October 13th Idaho's Blaine County commissioners held a 4-hour public hearing in Ketchum to hear views from the bill's supporters and opponents. Wilderness Watch executive director George Nickas was one of five speakers invited to make a formal presentation in opposition to the bill, along with Janine Blaeloch of the Western Lands Project, biologist and Blaine County resident Kaz Thea, singer-songwriter Carole King, and Bernie Zaleha, chair of the Sierra Club's national conservation governing council.

"I believe we should not seek the lowest common denominator when it comes to wilderness and saddle a wilderness designation with exceptions, exclusions and exemptions...in my view the focus of this bill is placed on development, with public land giveaways, monetary favors and special legislative provisions for a select few."

— Rep. Nick Rahall (D-W.VA)

On October 27th the House subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health held a national hearing on CIEDRA in Washington D.C. Carole King testified on behalf of the 37 regional and national groups opposing CIEDRA. Carl Pence, former Sawtooth NRA district ranger, acting on behalf of a coalition of retired Sawtooth NRA managers, also spoke against the bill. Testimony from the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management was also highly critical of the bill. Congressman Nick Rahall (D-W.VA), ranking Democrat on the Subcommittee, opened the hearing with strong criticisms of the legislation, saying this is the first time he can remember opposing a wilderness bill.

Congressmen Tom Udall (D-NM) and George Miller (D-CA) defended Simpson's "collaborative effort" to "find compromises that work." But many Idaho residents and conservation groups see little in CIEDRA that's beneficial for public lands.



# On the Watch

## Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, ID

**Trail Upgrades Appeal Denied** - In January, the Forest Service denied an appeal filed by Friends of the Clearwater, The Ecology Center and Wilderness Watch challenging the agency's decision to construct new trail puncheon along a 1 1/2 mile muddy but stable stretch of the Wind Lakes Trail. We first appealed this Forest Service decision in November 2004, prompting the agency to withdraw its decision and request that all parties meet on the trail to discuss and negotiate.

The trail is one of several routes leading to the popular lake basin. The crumbling, rotten puncheon makes it more difficult for horses to negotiate the trail without sinking hoof-deep in the mud, so the Backcountry Horsemen Association want the trail rebuilt. After two days of hiking the area, Wilderness Watch and Friends of the Clearwater confirmed that other existing trails to the lake are more suitable for horses and much more scenic. Despite this, the Forest Service has decided to install new puncheon, an unnecessary placement of new structures in Wilderness.



Sitka Sound, Tongass National Forest, AK. Photo by Jerome Walker.

## National Forest Wildernesses, AK

**Helicopters to Collect Plant Samples** - Last spring, without public notice or environmental analysis, the Regional Forester for the Tongass National Forest in Alaska authorized approximately 1100 helicopter landings over a ten-year period in all national forest Wilderness in Alaska to conduct vegetation inventories. Wilderness Watch joined the Sitka Conservation Society in voicing strong objections. In August, the Regional Forester told us he was canceling the helicopter landings scheduled for summer 2006 and would prepare an environmental analysis (EA) and solicit public comment. The EA is expected to be available for comment opportunity early this spring.

## Ojito Wilderness, NM

**New Wilderness in New Mexico** - In October new legislation designating the 11,000-acre Ojito Wilderness in New Mexico was signed into law. The legislation set aside an additional 11,000-acre buffer area adjacent to the Wilderness to protect cultural and archaeological sites important to the Zuni Tribe. These buffer lands will be purchased by the Zia Pueblo. New developments and off-road vehicles are prohibited in the buffer area, but the public will still have access for hiking and camping.

## Russell Fjord Wilderness, AK

**Moving at Glacial Speed** - Carved by glaciers, the Russell Fjord slices deep into the mountainous mainland of southeast Alaska, draining northward to the sea. Towering over the mouth of the fjord is the Hubbard Glacier. Unlike most glaciers, which are retreating, the Hubbard Glacier is advancing and expected to form an ice dam across the mouth of the fjord within a few years. This natural process has occurred many times in the past and is an intrinsic part of the wilderness character of the Russell Fjord Wilderness.

When the natural outlet is blocked, water in the fjord backs up, rising higher and higher in the narrow channel. If the blockage lasts long enough, water could begin spilling over the low rim at the southern terminus into the Situk River drainage on the other side of the divide.



Hubbard Glacier and Gilbert Point, July 8, 2005. FS photo.

This possibility has residents of the tiny village of Yakutat worried. The current economy of Yakutat depends on commercial and recreational fishing opportunities associated with the Situk River and its prime spawning habitat. Increased stream flow caused by spillover from Russell Fjord could scour the river channel and cover the gravel spawning beds with silt.

There is talk of blowing up the glacier or drilling tunnels through it. Some Yakutat residents are also lobbying for construction of a diversion dam in the Wilderness

on the southern rim of the fjord to channel the spill-over away from the Situk River drainage and into a canal that the Army Corps of Engineers would dredge from the rim of the fjord to the sea. In 2005 Alaska's Senator Ted Stevens added a provision into a national appropriations bill authorizing the Secretary of the Army "to carry out, at full Federal expense," projects for "ice and glacial damage in Alaska."

The Forest Service proposed that the Army Corps to use helicopters to fly motorized drilling rigs into the Wilderness last fall to spend several weeks drilling core samples along the rim of the fjord to assess the stability of the substrate for possible dam construction. However, the Forest Service's own documents show that the agency can find no statutory basis for authorizing such an action.

Wilderness Watch met with USFS officials and submitted written comments pointing out that clearing landing pads and drill sites and running drill rigs for several weeks in the Wilderness cannot be construed as "limited in context and intensity" and is clearly not what the Wilderness Act intended!

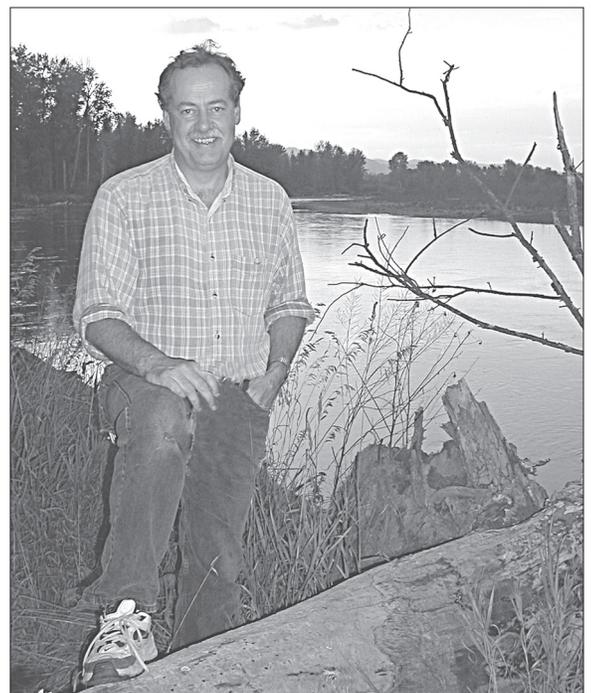
In October the Tongass regional forester approved the project as a 'categorical exclusion,' which means without environmental analysis and not subject to appeal. Weather has prevented the activity so far and Wilderness Watch continues monitoring the situation and will work to protect the Russell-Fjord Wilderness.

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## Wilderness Watch Welcomes Jeff Smith!

All of us at Wilderness Watch are excited to introduce Jeff Smith as Wilderness Watch's new Membership & Development Director. Jeff joined Wilderness Watch at the beginning of 2006 after directing the MontanaWorks program for the University of Montana. An experienced grant writer, he has worked with many nonprofits, including Families First, the International Wildlife Film Festival, homeWORD, the Missoula Boys and Girls Club, the Virginia City Preservation Alliance, and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. He is the author of many magazine articles, including one on fire management in Wilderness for the *Smithsonian*, and two books, *The Montana Book of Days*, a day-by-day guide to Montana history, and *K. Ross Toole's Montana*, a celebration of the life's work of a truly progressive Montana historian.

Feel free to call or email Jeff to introduce yourself at (406) 542-2048 x3, [jsmith@wildernesswatch.org](mailto:jsmith@wildernesswatch.org).



# Last Minute Reprieve: Fish kill in Wilderness dead for now

Sometimes reprieves for Wilderness happen just in the nick of time. Such a reprieve occurred in August, just after our October newsletter was mailed.

Silver King Creek is a drainage within the Carson-Iceberg Wilderness in the High Sierra. The upper reaches of the stream above Llewellyn Falls comprise the entire known historic range of the Paiute Cutthroat Trout (PCT), a small subspecies of the Lahontan Cutthroat. After many years of stocking with non-native fish by the California Department of Fish & Game (Department), the PCT was in jeopardy and listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act.

The Department began repeatedly poisoning the upper stretch of Silver King Creek above Llewellyn Falls to remove the non-native fish it had previously stocked, and restock with PCT. They also began stocking other drainages in the area with PCT to expand the fish's range. By 1985, populations of the PCT were thriving in 11 stream-miles in the Sierra, an expansion beyond the 9.1 stream-miles that was originally the PCT's sole native range.

Despite the PCT's recovery, in July 2005 the California State Water Quality Control Board issued a pollution discharge permit authorizing the Department to poison 11 miles of Silver King Creek below Llewellyn Falls. The stated purpose was to remove non-native rainbow trout that the Department had previously stocked and then replace them with PCT. However, there is no evidence that PCT ever lived below the falls, which serve as a natural barrier to upstream migration by other fish species.

The actual goal of the poisoning project was to expand the Department's California Heritage Trout Challenge by allowing recreational fishing of the PCT. The Challenge invites sportsmen to catch and photograph six species of native trout to earn a Trout Challenge certificate.

Wilderness Watch cooperated with other organizations and individuals in an unsuccessful effort to convince the State Water Board not to issue the pollution discharge permit. Within days of the decision, the Department moved swiftly to conduct the poisoning within two weeks.

Wilderness Watch, Californians Against Toxics, Friends of Hope Valley, and several individuals scrambled to try and block the poisoning in court. Our dedicated attorneys, Pete Frost with the Western Environmental Law Center and Julia Olson with Wild Earth Advocates, worked long hours to draft litigation and a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) request for filing in state court on August 18th. The hearing took place the next day in Sacramento. Unfortunately, the State court denied our TRO request.



Carson-Iceberg Wilderness. WW file photo.

Julia flew back to Portland that night to spend the second weekend in a row working with Pete on a last-ditch effort to win a TRO in federal court.

Meanwhile, the Department, assisted by local outfitters and Marines from the nearby Mountain Warfare Training Center, were spending the weekend transporting 35 people and thousands of pounds of gear with packstrings into the Wilderness. The poisoning was set to begin early Wednesday morning, August 24th.

On August 22nd attorney Pete Frost flew to Sacramento for a day-long TRO hearing in federal court. Our expert witness, Dr. Nancy Erman, is a retired professor of macro-invertebrate biology specializing in macro-invertebrates of the High Sierra. She emphasized that rare and endemic macro-invertebrate species were very likely present in the creek below the falls but had never been inventoried, and would almost certainly be eradicated if the poisoning took place. At 5:00 p.m. the Judge finally rendered his decision -- we had won the restraining order!

Meanwhile, the Department crew was camped deep in the Wilderness, ready to deploy the poison at sun-up. Not trusting sketchy radio contact to notify Department officials, intrepid Wilderness Watch member Jeff Kane and his friend Brett Walder drove two hours to the trailhead and took off running up the mountainous path by moonlight and headlamp, clutching the Judge's order in hand and delivering it to a very unhappy game warden 8 miles later.

This is an excellent example of how protecting Wilderness requires ongoing effort, commitment and vigilance. Thanks to all who worked long hours in a race against time to protect the Carson-Iceberg Wilderness and its native species for at least another day! ♡

# “Good Things for Wilderness will come Out of This”

## Illinois Forum brings together wilderness advocates

On November 4-6th Wilderness Watch held a regional Wilderness Forum on the edge of the Lusk Creek Wilderness in Southern Illinois. Two dozen wilderness advocates from Missouri, Indiana, Arkansas, Minnesota and Illinois gathered amidst the quiet woods and fields of Camp Ondessonk near Ozark, Illinois for discussions on the core principles that define and guide wilderness protection. Attendees participated in workshops examining commercial services in Wilderness, regional wilderness challenges, and utilizing the “minimum requirement” tool to evaluate potential projects in Wilderness.

Several groups were invaluable in organizing the event, including Friends of Bell Smith Springs, Heartwood, Illinois Chapter of the Sierra Club and Shawnee Audubon.

Local officials, land managers, county attorneys, and several educators and students attended a reception held on the opening evening. U.S. District Court Judge J. Phil Gilbert graciously provided the keynote address, discussing the role of the judiciary in wilderness protection and noting that conflict can be beneficial by engaging differing interests in examination of important issues. Following Judge Gilbert’s talk was a special presentation on the values of Wilderness to the human spirit by noted Wilderness Act scholar Roger Kaye.



Camaraderie, great humor, and making new friends were all highlights of the Forum and, as one participant put it, “You guys really accomplished something here with us. Good things for Wilderness will come out of this.”

## LOVE THE WILDERNESS? Help Us Keep It Wild!

**Yes! I would like to make a contribution and help defend Wilderness!!!**

*Here is an extra donation to help protect Wilderness!*

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*I would like to become a member!*

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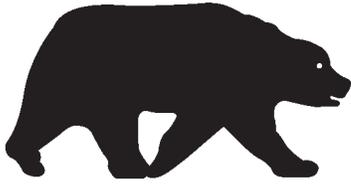
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# Predators and other Wild Things of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem

Experience a wildlife paradise and participate in important research with renowned wildlife biologists Steve Gehman and Betsy Robinson of Wild Things Unlimited (WTU). Participants will stay at and have exclusive use of B Bar Ranch, located just north of Yellowstone National Park (YNP) in the spectacular Tom Miner Basin. In addition to the wonders of the Basin, participants will take several trips from the ranch into Yellowstone Park to observe wildlife in the Park's magnificent Northern Range.

Tom Miner Basin is of special interest to Wild Things Unlimited, wildlife management agencies and regional conservationists due to the presence of rare carnivores including grizzly bears, wolves, wolverines and lynx, and because of its geographical position along a potential wildlife corridor linking the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem to the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem of northwestern Montana. Attendees will participate in observation sessions and record data related to locations and activities of wildlife such as bears, wolves, elk, moose, mountain goats and bighorn sheep. We will also conduct on and off-trail day hikes to search for signs of wildlife activity such as tracks, scats, rub trees, day beds and feeding sites. **Wilderness Watch will receive a \$200 donation from Wild Things Unlimited for each person who credits us when making their reservation.**

**2006 Dates:** February 14-18 (6 days/5 nights); May 22-28 (7 days/6 nights)

**For more information:**

Wild Things Unlimited 406-522-9825, wtu@mcn.net, www.wildthingsunlimited.org  
B Bar Ranch 406-848-7729, bbar@bbar.com, www.bbar.com



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