



WILDERNESS WATCHER

The Quarterly Newsletter of Wilderness Watch

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New Forest Service Policy takes aim at Predators

— By TinaMarie Ekker

What do the following animals have in common: bears, mountain lions, coyotes, foxes, bobcats, wolves, lynx, eagles, cormorants, osprey, bull trout, weasels, badgers, raccoons, and pine martens?

Eating other creatures is a natural part of their existence. They're all predators. Each has evolved its own niche for obtaining meals: teeth and claws, stealth, enhanced eyesight or sense of smell, high-speed aerial acrobatics, or cooperation with others of their own kind.

There's one other predator that plays a major role: *homo sapiens*. For a number of reasons human beings object to other predators. Since first European settlement, we have employed a seemingly endless variety of methods for eliminating our competitors. We've taken advantage of their specialized traits such as their keen senses or group behavior. Examples include scent-attractant baits, poisoned carcasses, or radio-collaring individuals and then using a helicopter to locate and destroy the whole pack.



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And Much More!

Last June, the U.S. Forest Service sparked a firestorm when it released proposed revisions to national policy on predator control in designated wilderness. Forest Service officials claim the wilderness policies must conform with an agreement, a Memorandum of Understanding or (MOU), they signed in 2004 with the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's Wildlife Services Division (APHIS-WS). APHIS is an agency within the Department of Agriculture and Wildlife Services is its little-known predator control program.

Wilderness Watch believes the Forest Service got it backwards. The MOU must conform with Forest Service policy, and that policy must conform with the Wilderness Act.

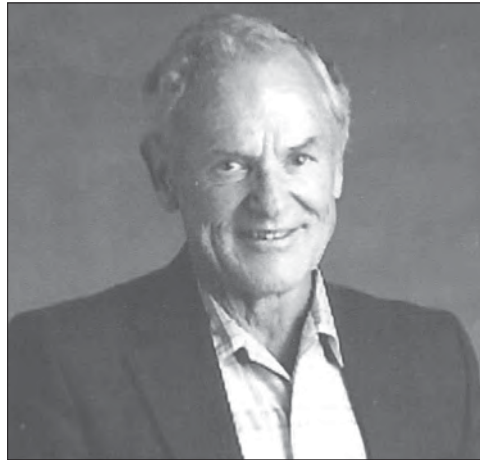
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Remembering Joe Higgins - Passionate Friend to Wilderness

— By Bill Worf

Joe Higgins lost his long fight with a heart problem on August 3. His wife Dorothy said the end came quick. August 2 was an unusually good day. They went to dinner, watched TV, and he had a good night's sleep. In the morning they were getting ready to go for a walk when the final attack came.

I first met Joe in 1969 when he was district ranger on the Clearwater National Forest. He had responsibility for a piece of the Selway/Bitterroot Wilderness. He also had to initiate management on the newly designated Wild and Scenic River. He approached both jobs with the drive and passion that marked his entire life. I could count on him to complete any task with skill and pride. We became personal friends as well.



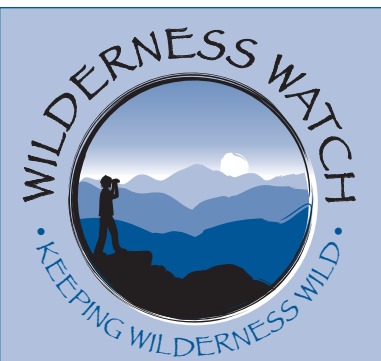
Wilderness was a special passion of Joe's. Joe had broad experience in hands-on wilderness management both from an agency administrator's point of view and from that of a wilderness lover and tireless advocate. Before I met him, he'd been a district ranger in the Bob Marshall Wilderness from 1966 to 1969. In 1975, he was promoted to wilderness staff officer on the Superior National Forest with responsibility for the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. Then in 1981 he became wilderness and special areas group leader for the Pacific Northwest Region.

Joe had visited wildernesses and Wild and Scenic Rivers throughout the United States and Canada. He had a national perspective and was recognized as a strong wilderness advocate by all four federal agencies responsible for wilderness management.

Joe retired from the US Forest Service in 1992 but he did not retire from his personal passion. He formed the first Wilderness Watch chapter, the Northwest Chapter, covering the states of Washington and Oregon. He also became a member of the Wilderness Watch board of directors serving until 1996. He approached work on the board with the same dedication that marked his Forest Service career.

He is still watching. All wilderness managers need to do is listen for guidance in the gentle wilderness breezes.

Bill Worf is one of the founders of Wilderness Watch and serves on the board of directors.



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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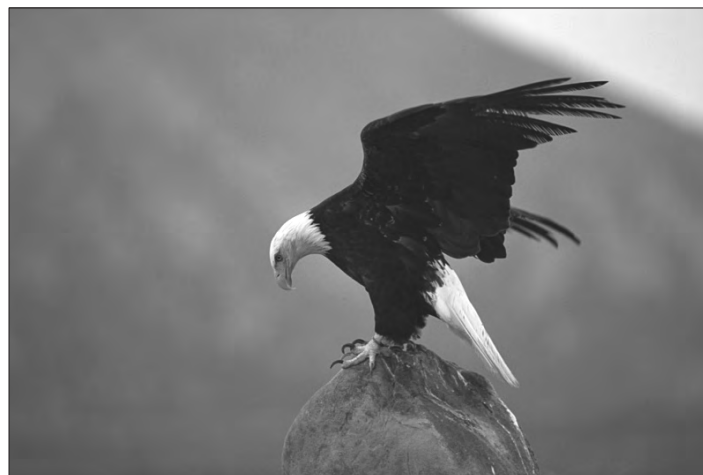
Over 87,000 Americans sent in public comments on this proposal.

Although large mammals often come to mind when people think of predators, the new Forest Service proposal encompasses a more open-ended concept, “predacious mammals and birds.” We have seen instances in national parks and wildlife refuges where federal managers have authorized the wholesale shooting of fish-eating birds to placate sport fishermen who claim the birds are outcompeting them. With this policy change, we can expect more of these nuisance killings.

The new policy adds the use of pesticides to predator control. Wilderness Watch believes the Forest Service intends to target predatory or non-native fish, thereby catering to state fish and game managers’ frequent proposals to poison wilderness lakes and streams to remove fish that compete with more popular sport fish.

We suspect that federal officials are proposing the changes not because current policies are inadequate but because of political pressure by outside entities, especially state managers and hunting and fishing outfitters. A close reading of the proposal reveals that the new policy would:

- Allow poison baits, including cyanide-filled M-44s, long prohibited in wilderness.
- Allow aircraft landings and use of motor vehicles, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), and snowmobiles in wilderness for predator control.
- Eliminate the criterion that the agency authorize lethal control in wilderness only if it had taken place prior to wilderness designation.
- Allow the killing of entire “local populations,” thereby eliminating the current policy’s focus on targeting “the offending individual.”
- Eliminate a current provision that lethal control requires case-by-case approval from the regional forester. The policy would allow APHIS-WS, state officials, and private individuals to determine when lethal control should occur.
- Allow predator control as one mechanism to achieve state fish and game goals for popular game species, something not allowed under current policy.
- Allow “collaborative groups” to set predator control objectives for wilderness. This radical change would enable livestock organizations and hostile local interests to set predator control agendas.
- Eliminate the requirement that control must be “necessary.” Instead, new objectives such as public health,



Eagles can become the unintended victims of predator control methods.

threatened and endangered species, livestock protection, and game management goals would rule predator control.

Control measures that the Forest Service will be permitting include leg-hold traps and snares, body-gripping suffocation traps, calling and shooting, aerial gunning, poison baits, M-44s that explode releasing cyanide into the target’s mouth and lungs, and “denning,” which entails snaring pups on sharp hooks to pull them from their dens to kill them.

Wilderness Watch is concerned that numerous non-target species will also lose their lives. For example, bald eagles have been killed by poison baits and by leghold traps, and the M-44s attract many species including bears, coyotes, wolves, dogs, and foxes.

To date, most predator control in wilderness has occurred to protect domestic livestock, but this isn’t the sole impetus for the new policy. Some state fish and game officials and commercial hunting guides are increasingly calling for killing predators in order to increase the size of big game herds. For example, Idaho Fish and Game has proposed the elimination of two-thirds of the wolf packs in portions of the state. We fear that the new policy will result in the harassment and death of predators, even in wilderness not grazed by domestic livestock.

Wilderness Watch distributed an Action Alert to our members and to other conservation organizations. We also submitted lengthy comments to the Forest Service addressing the problems and suggesting revisions.

For instance, we have been told by Forest Service officials that APHIS-WS plans to use poisons very sparingly, but “just wants to have that option.” Up to now that option has been expressly prohibited in wilderness. Forest Service policies should say that poisons or pesticides of any kind, including baits, M-44s, and livestock collars containing poison, are inappropriate in wilderness and should be prohibited.

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Predators, continued from page 3

Forest Service policy has never authorized the use of motorized equipment, aircraft, snowmobiles, ATVs, or any motorized transport for predator control. The proposed change would allow the regional forester to approve motor vehicles in wilderness. This is a dramatic change to existing policy and should not occur.

Many predator species are not classified as game species and therefore lethal control has not been allowed in wilderness as a game management tool. Aside from regulating hunting and fishing, the Wilderness Act contains no other exceptions for game management. There are no exceptions for poisons, pesticides, or habitat manipulation using predator control. Predator control should simply not be allowed in wilderness as a tool to manage game.

The new policy would hand decision-making authority to APHIS-WS, the states, and collaborative groups. The new policy says the Forest Service should "coordinate" and "cooperate" with other entities and "participate" in annual predator control "work plans." Likely collaborative groups include livestock interests and hunters, whose top priority may not be the preservation of

an area's wilderness character. The Forest Service should remain the entity responsible for determining the need for predator control in wilderness. Any proposed predator control activities in wilderness should be approved by the regional forester on a case-by-case basis, and the decision should be based on two primary factors: whether non-lethal methods have been tried and whether there is documented evidence that lethal control is necessary.

In conclusion, Wilderness Watch believes that the proposed policy changes represent a major threat to wilderness character and to wildlife, and the Forest Service needs to do a full analysis through an environmental impact statement.



Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Steward Earns National Award

A district ranger on the Bitterroot National Forest, Dave Campbell, recently became the first recipient of the Forest Service's National Wilderness Fire Management Award. The agency gives the award to a manager who has "demonstrated outstanding achievement, innovation, and creativity in managing wildland fire within wilderness areas to promote the preservation and / or restoration of the role of fire within the natural wilderness system." Campbell has stewardship responsibilities in both the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness and River of No Return Wilderness, where he has built the most progressive wilderness fire program in the country.

In a recent *Ravalli Republic* article, Campbell gave tribute to several Forest Service visionaries, including Wilderness Watch founder Bill Worf, for their work developing the first natural fire program more than 30 years ago. He also looked to the future, noting that it was time to put the lessons learned into practice outside as well as inside the wilderness.

Wilderness Watch congratulates Dave for a well-earned award, and we thank the Forest Service for awarding a good steward for standing up for wilderness.





Wilderness & the Courts

Silver Peak Wilderness, CA

Represented by the Western Environmental Law Center, Wilderness Watch, the Ventana Wilderness Alliance, and Los Padres Forest Watch are challenging a Forest Service decision to establish livestock grazing in a portion of the Silver Peak Wilderness.

The case involves a small parcel of formerly private land known as Kozy Kove along the California coastline south of Big Sur. Livestock grazing on the private lands ceased in 1990 when the lands were sold to new owners. In 1995 the Trust for Public Lands acquired the parcel and subsequently sold it to the U.S. Forest Service in 1997. There was no livestock grazing throughout this time. In 2002 Congress added the lands to the Silver Peak Wilderness. The surrounding wilderness lands have not been grazed and will remain free of livestock grazing.

The Wilderness Act provides that, subject to reasonable regulation, livestock grazing "shall be permitted to continue" where that use was "established prior to [wilderness designation]." In this case, the land had not been grazed since coming under public ownership, nor for 12 years prior to wilderness designation. It does not appear to meet the "where established" criterion set in the Wilderness Act. Further, one of the purposes for which the public acquired the land was to preserve its biological richness, which would be better protected without cows.

Given that the courts have not addressed what Congress meant by "established prior to designation," this case could set an important legal precedent. While the amount of livestock grazing in wilderness has generally declined over the years, we are aware of several instances where agencies are considering grazing in areas that have not been grazed for a decade or more.

Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, MN

A story in the last *Wilderness Watcher* told of the Forest Service's decision to build a new snowmobile trail just outside the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW).

The trail would replace an illegal trail that snowmobilers created inside BWCAW. Wilderness Watch, along with several other organizations, asked the Forest Service to reconsider the decision. The regional forester denied our request.

The trail will be bulldozed along the face of a cliff overlooking the wilderness. Visitors to BWCAW will hear and see

snowmobiles on the new trail. We believe this will degrade the wilderness character of the BWCAW. More troubling is that the trail is being built to provide snowmobilers with access to South Fowl Lake, which is inside the wilderness. (Our newsletter incorrectly stated that the lake is outside the wilderness).

In August, Wilderness Watch, the Izaak Walton League, Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness, and the Sierra Club Northstar Chapter filed suit in federal court to stop construction of the illegal trail. The Minneapolis law firm of Faegre & Benson is representing our organizations in the case. The Forest Service has agreed to postpone the trail until the court rules.

Grand Canyon, AZ

The Grand Canyon River Outfitters Trade Association and the Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association have asked to intervene on the side of the National Park Service (NPS) in litigation regarding the new Colorado River Management Plan.

The new Park Service plan allows outfitters a quota of 476 trips to take 16,225 paying customers down the Colorado River during the popular summer season. In contrast, the plan allows only 185 trips by 2,270 self-guided public boaters access to the river in the summer. The plan does increase non-commercial trips during the off-season, with self-guided boaters gaining 92 additional trips during the winter when the commercial concessionaires do not use the river. Self-guided boaters also gained an increase of trips in spring and fall.

The Park Service chose to retain the commercial sector's existing allocation (17,606 paying customers each year) but doubled the annual allocation to the self-guided public (7,051 people).

The Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association supports the plan because of these increases for the public. Along with another group, American Whitewater, the Association has signed an agreement with the outfitters' trade association. The groups agreed:

- not to support wilderness designation of the corridor;
- not to support annual re-allocations of the plan's commercial and non-commercial permits; and
- to support the river concessionaires' motorized allocation and renewals of the concessionaires' contracts.

Last March, River Runners for Wilderness, Rock the Earth, Living Rivers, and Wilderness Watch filed suit challenging the agency's failure to manage the river corridor as wilderness. We also challenged the new plan's lack of balance between the numbers of commercial and non-commercial permits.

Recently we asked the court to reject the requests by the Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association and Grand Canyon River Outfitters to intervene during the opening phase of the case. We don't object to including the two groups in negotiating suitable remedies that will address our concerns and bring NPS into full compliance with NPS policies.

The court will hear the case this winter or early spring.

Wilderness in Congress - Bills target Wilderness nationwide

Threat 1: Is there a Right to Ride Roughshod Over Wilderness?

Earlier this year, a bill titled "the Right to Ride Livestock on Federal Land Act of 2005" (H.R. 586) passed the U.S. House of Representatives. The bill granted special rights to equestrians on public lands and ties the hands of managers, making it more difficult to regulate stock or protect wilderness from harm.

The bill traveled an unusual trajectory. Rather than being open to discussion in the House Resources Committee (the normal route) it was diverted to the Agriculture Committee, then to the Subcommittee on Department Operations, Oversight, Dairy, Nutrition, and Forestry. It appears this jurisdictional shift was a conscious effort to avoid scrutiny, and it worked. Not one hearing was held. Instead the bill was released from the disinterested committee directly onto the House floor for a vote.

Two Congressmen spoke against the bill. Representative Ron Kind (D-WI) put H.R. 586 into context saying,

"Numerous recreational uses occur on our public lands, including hunting, fishing, hiking, camping. Singling out the recreational use of pack and saddle animals for special treatment creates the potential for conflict with these other recreational uses and complicates resource management of the public land. . . . This will be the only recreational use codified in law."

The ranking minority member of the Resources Committee, Representative Nick Rahall (D-WV), added,

"In effect, the bill hampers the ability of local federal land managers to administer trails under their jurisdiction in a flexible fashion taking into account changed local circumstances. In effect, the pending bill says that trails historically open to pack and saddle stock horses shall always remain open to them within units of our National Park System, National Forest System, Wildlife Refuges and BLM lands. This not only ties the hands of the local land managers to make adjustments if warranted, but appears to be a nationwide rubber stamp approach to what has not been a national problem with respect to public trail usage.

"I am also concerned about the precedent we are setting here. It is my understanding that the American Horse Council fully backs the pending bill. A noble organization, which does good service for the equine community. Yet, what if the American Motorcyclist Association catches wind of this bill. Can we expect a counter proposal from them, to make trails open to off-road motorcycles also deemed to be the highest and best use of public trails? I would expect their members would not want to be viewed as second class citizens when it comes to trail use. And the hikers, the bikers, the ATV groups. The list goes on."



Equestrian damage in the Lusk Creek Wilderness, IL.

Wilderness advocates would do well to contact their Senators and let them know how they feel about "right to ride" legislation.

Threat 2: Senator Burns' Dam(n) Bill

In the last edition of the *Wilderness Watcher* we reported that Senator Conrad Burns (R-MT) had introduced legislation, the Bitterroot National Forest Dam and Reservoir Maintenance Act (S.2633). Among other things, the bill would grant unrestricted rights-of-way for hundreds of miles of roads to access 16 small irrigation dams in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. The public outcry against the bill has boiled up throughout western Montana. Both major daily newspapers in the region, *The Missoulian* and *The Ravalli Republic*, have covered the story repeatedly, and both have editorialized against the bill.

Said *The Missoulian* on May 14,

"Recent legislation by Sen. Conrad Burns to grant Bitterroot [Valley] irrigators the right to drive and use motorized equipment in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness represents a discouraging abandonment of creative problem-solving, not to mention the notion of wilderness preservation. . . . it's hard to fathom why anyone would think it a good idea to exempt even small dams from accepted engineering standards and dam safety laws. Do circumstances warrant such measures? Hardly."

Said *The Ravalli Republic* on May 9,

“Dam owners have successfully maintained wilderness dams for more than 40 years under the provisions of the Wilderness Act, and we are confident they will be able to continue to maintain them without sacrificing one of our nation’s most cherished laws. Burns’ bill would effectively remove the wilderness dams from the wilderness by eliminating the ethic that we are visitors in those special places.”

In July, sources in Washington alerted Wilderness Watch that Senator Burns, chair of the Interior Appropriations Committee, would sneak his bill out of committee as a “rider” to the Interior Appropriations bill. Our calls to his staff in Washington revealed nothing. His staff held their cards close to their chests, neither confirming nor denying the rumors. So we quickly organized a news conference with retired Forest Service officials and a sympathetic dam owner who opposed the bill.

Most speakers suggested that the Senator hold local hearings on the bill. The president of one water-users association, John Pearson, told reporters, “Backcountry to us is an extremely important part of our existence. . . . It is really important for all of us to protect this.” Retired Forest Service civil engineer Kirk Thompson told reporters, “I don’t know of any dams that are unsafe. Many have been rebuilt using primitive equipment, which costs less.” Steward Brandborg, a Wilderness Watch board member, estimated that between \$7 and \$11 million worth of public land would be given away under the bill and said, “This may be the worst land grab in history. If people don’t rise up, we will lose this wilderness.”

The story grabbed the headlines throughout Montana, and, before the day was out, Senator Burns had told reporters he wouldn’t be attaching the bill as part of the appropriations process.

The Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness dodged that bullet, but the congressional session during an election year is still far from over. Wilderness Watch will keep its eyes on this bill until the session is officially closed for business.

Threat 3: The CIEDRA Proposal in Idaho

Past issues of *Wilderness Watcher* have contained articles and updates on the Central Idaho Economic Development and Recreation Act (CIEDRA), a controversial bill that would designate the Boulder-White Cloud Mountains as wilderness. The bill contains many wilderness-weakening exceptions, gives away 5,100 acres of public land for development, and establishes motorized recreation as the priority use on more than a half-million acres of public land in central Idaho.

In July CIEDRA passed in the U.S. House of Representatives through an unusual, last minute maneuver by the bill’s sponsor, Congressman Mike Simpson (R-ID). Normally, Congress votes bills out of a House subcommittee if they are placed on the docket 48 hours before the vote. However, CIEDRA and two other wilderness bills were lying fallow in the House Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health. CIEDRA had Republican



Canyon Lake, Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, MT.

support while the other two, California and New Mexico bills, were supported by Democrats. Simpson made a deal with the Democrats that his party would not block the Democrats’ bills if they agreed not to block CIEDRA. With no more than a few hours’ warning, CIEDRA and the other bills were abruptly passed with no time for public response.

Simpson then scheduled a vote on CIEDRA the very next business day, a Monday, in the full House, under a suspension of the rules. Suspension votes are normally restricted to very minor bills, such as re-naming a federal building, and the votes are unrecorded. Generally, most members of Congress don’t even attend suspension votes, and sponsors of such bills show up to vote and then leave. Simpson placed CIEDRA on the docket immediately before the votes on the California and New Mexico bills, once again with the understanding that, if the Democrats blocked CIEDRA, then the Republicans would block the Democrats’ bills.

Over the weekend Wilderness Watch and several other organizations scrambled to produce a packet of information on CIEDRA and find Democrats willing to testify against the bill. We sent our packet to every member of the House on Monday morning. It included a one-page fact sheet signed by 47 conservation organizations, a five-page analysis prepared by Wilderness Watch detailing the provisions in CIEDRA that are harmful to wilderness, and a letter from the Sierra Club signed by the Club’s president, Carl Pope, urging Congress to not allow a vote on CIEDRA under suspension of the rules. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-WV) and Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) echoed that request in a strongly worded, joint letter also delivered to members of the House Monday morning. Wilderness Watch and others posted urgent alerts on the Internet asking people to phone Congress.

Before the vote, Congresswoman Maloney gave a scathing critique of CIEDRA, mentioning Wilderness Watch and our analysis several times. When the chair called for the vote, the only four legislators present voted three to one to pass CIEDRA on to the Senate.

That is how CIEDRA managed to pass the “full House.”

Good News for the Emigrant Wilderness!

— By Steve Brougher, Central Sierra Chapter Chair

On June 8, 2006, Federal District Court Judge Anthony Ishii ruled that the Wilderness Act of 1964 expressly forbids the Forest Service from repairing, maintaining, and operating 11 dams within the Emigrant Wilderness on the Stanislaus National Forest. Wilderness Watch and High Sierra Hikers Association brought the lawsuit, which Judge Ishii heard in the Eastern District of California. The ruling is the latest in a string of victories for wilderness advocates going back 16 years.

Located in the central Sierra Nevada adjacent to Yosemite National Park, the Emigrant contains 18 rock and mortar dams built between 1920 and 1951. Most of the dams raised the existing lakes so water could be released in late summer to enhance the survival of the established, but non-native fishery. But a 1989 Forest Service report concluded the dams provided little or no benefit to fisheries or recreation. Nevertheless, the Forest Supervisor decided to appease local dam supporters and allow maintenance of 12 of the dams. The regional forester subsequently overturned that decision in 1990 with a clear explanation of why the dams' maintenance in wilderness was inappropriate. After several days of pressure from dam advocates, the Forest Service backed away from this conclusion, and the agency then embarked on 16 years worth of wasted time, effort, and taxpayers' money trying to justify the dams.

For example, new management guidelines for the Emigrant published in 1998 called for the maintenance of eight dams. The rationale included the enhancement of the fishery and recreation, but also contained a new wrinkle, that seven of the dams were eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

The court overturned the management plan on appeal, directing the Forest Supervisor to document "why the maintenance of each dam is the minimum necessary for the administration of the area as wilderness," a primary standard applied by the Wilderness Act. The draft Environmental Impact Statement failed to establish that the dams were necessary for preserving the Emigrant's wilderness character.

About this same time local Congressman John Doolittle introduced federal legislation that would have required the maintenance of the dams, based on the false argument that Congress had intended to do so back in 1975 when Congress designated the Emigrant as Wilderness. Several versions of this bill passed the House of Representatives between 1997 and 2001, but the legislation never came to a vote in the Senate. Subsequently, Doolittle and Congressman George Radanovich pressured the Forest Service to permit dam maintenance. The Forest Service dutifully complied in 2003, and that led to the current lawsuit.

Our contention all through the process has been that Congress designated the Emigrant Wilderness to preserve its wilderness character, not to preserve its dams and non-native fisheries. We've used the Forest Service's own documents to show that



Rock dam, Emigrant Wilderness, CA.

the Emigrant dams are not necessary— even for sustaining the fishery, recreation, or historical values. We've also asserted that the dams adversely affect wilderness values by trammeling the natural hydrology and ecology of the area.

Recently, the Forest Service and several intervenors filed a notice of appeal to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, therefore re-joining the battle for at least one more round. We anticipate another favorable decision that will further repudiate the efforts of the Forest Service and its political masters. We anticipate that the court will again strengthen the mandate of an enduring resource of wilderness for the American people. Many thanks to Peter Frost of the Western Environmental Law Center for representing us in this case. ♻️

From the Bench

As important as Judge Ishii's decision is for protecting the Emigrant Wilderness, the court's rationale is even more important for Wilderness. The decision demonstrates a profound understanding of the Wilderness Act and Wilderness Watch believes the decision will resonate in other cases. We thought you might enjoy some excerpts from the ruling:

On the Forest Service argument that the Wilderness Act is ambiguous and awards discretion to the agency:

"...the text of the Wilderness Act provides no indication that Congress intended to exempt existing dams in wilderness areas from the general prohibition against 'structures' or 'installations.' The court must conclude the plain and unambiguous text of the Wilderness Act speaks directly to the activity at issue in this case . . .

[T]he repair, maintenance and operation of the dam structures [is] clearly and unambiguously contrary to the provisions of the Wilderness Act.”

On the Forest Service claim that fishery enhancement legitimizes the project:

“While Forest Service casts the changes brought about by the dams as achieving a balance of sorts between amphibians and fish, the fact remains that the balance is being struck between the historically established amphibious species, whose habitat is diminished in the balance, and the historically absent fish species, whose presence is the result of relatively recent human endeavor.”

The Wilderness Act...is as close to a ‘purist manifesto’ as may be found in the area of environmental law.”

On the Forest Service argument that the dams meet the recreational purpose of wilderness:

“While fishing is an activity that is common among visitors to wilderness areas, neither fishing nor any other particular activity is endorsed by the Wilderness Act, nor is the enhancement of any particular recreational potential a necessary duty of wilderness area management . . . The wilderness that the Act seeks to preserve is not defined by reference to any particular recreational opportunity or potential utility, but rather by reference to the land’s status or condition as being ‘Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation.’

“Because it is not possible to infer from this language that establishment (much less enhancement) of opportunities for a particular form of human recreation is the purpose of the Wilderness Act, it is not possible to conclude that enhancement of fisheries is an activity that is ‘necessary to meet minimum requirements for the administration of the area for the purpose of this chapter.’”

On the Forest Service argument that the dams meet the “historical” purpose of wilderness:

“Absent a declaration by Congress of the need to restore and preserve the dam structures in recognition of their historical significance, there is nothing the court can point



to that would authorize such an action where the maintenance of the dams would otherwise come into conflict with the Wilderness Act.

“The area manifested its wilderness characteristics before the dams were in place and would lose nothing in the way of wilderness values were the dams not present. What would be lost is some enhancement of a particular use of the area (fishing), but that use, while perhaps popular, is not an integral part of the wilderness nature of that area.”

On the argument that the dams are allowed because they are “substantially unnoticeable” in the wilderness:

“Defendants contend [that the structures] are small, low, and visually integrated into the natural surroundings . . . Distinctions such as unobtrusive and harmonious with the natural environment involve subjective judgments that may vary depending on the interests of the observer. The Wilderness Act’s prohibition against structures is categorical so far as the court can determine, allowing only those exceptions that are specifically set forth in the Act or in Congress’s designation of a particular wilderness area, neither of which apply here.”

On Intervenor’s (California Trout) claim that the Wilderness Act isn’t a “purist manifesto”:

“Intervenors’ first contention is summarized completely by the heading given to the argument – ‘The Wilderness Act Is Not A Purist Manifesto.’ [S]ubjective characterizations aside, the Wilderness Act is as close to an outcome-oriented piece of environmental legislation as exists. Unlike NEPA, or the Clean Air or Clean Water Acts, the Wilderness Act emphasizes outcome (wilderness preservation) over procedure. As such, it is as close to a ‘purist manifesto’ as may be found in the area of environmental law.”



On the Watch

Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness, ID

Caught in a Jam: In July, a heavy rainstorm uprooted trees and washed them into the Middle Fork of the Salmon River where they formed a massive logjam in the narrow channel at Pistol Creek Rapids. Approximately 300 people were stranded on a beach upstream, their river trips interrupted. Some began portaging their boats and gear around the jam on an existing trail. An outfitter brought in horses from a nearby ranch to help with the portage. One man with a disability that normally requires a wheelchair rode a horse around the logjam and told reporters he was having a terrific experience. Most of the other groups hiked to a nearby airstrip and were flown out of the canyon or simply sat on the beach for several days, waiting for the Forest Service to do something. The Forest Service obliged by bringing in a motorized drill to set hundreds of pounds of dynamite. They blew up the logjam, a decision that sparked a widespread debate regarding safety and convenience in wilderness.

Wilderness Watch sent a letter to U.S. Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth requesting a formal review of the agency's response: "The decision to blow up the logjam raises important questions about Wilderness and the Forest Service's stewardship responsibilities," we wrote. "There is little doubt that other natural events of similar or greater magnitude will occur in designated Wilderness in the years ahead and that managers will be confronted with these challenges many times. For that reason, the response to this event serves as an important learning opportunity for present and future managers, as well as for the general public." We are awaiting the Chief's response.

Carson-Iceberg Wilderness, CA

Fish-kill Revived? In August, a federal District Court issued a restraining order preventing the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) from poisoning 11 miles of Silver King Creek within the Carson-Iceberg Wilderness in the eastern Sierra (see *Wilderness Watcher*, Winter 2005). The court ruled that the Forest Service had failed to determine whether any rare or endemic macroinvertebrate species live in the remote creek and had failed to demonstrate that poisoning would have no long-term, significant impacts. The restraining order was in response to a petition filed by Wilderness Watch, Californians for Alternatives to Toxics, and Friends of Hope Valley.

Now, California Fish and Game folks have rounded up the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) to help revive the poisoning project. FWS is preparing an environmental impact statement this time, presumably to address the court's concerns.

Glacier Peak Wilderness, WA

For Your Convenience: On July 14, 2006, the forest supervisor for the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest in Washington signed a decision authorizing an unspecified number of helicopter flights and landings in the Glacier Peak Wilderness. Trail crews want to fly in to repair 10 bridges and 3,500 feet of trail over a nine-mile area damaged by heavy rains and flooding.

Wilderness Watch submitted comments noting that the scale of the project and the impacts from numerous helicopter landings and over-flights required the careful evaluation of an environmental impact statement. The agency didn't think the project was significant enough to warrant even a short environmental assessment and issued the decision as a categorical exclusion not subject to appeal. This outcome was no doubt bolstered by the fact that the majority of comment letters the Forest Service received came from recreation users that supported helicopters because it would get the trail open faster.



Olympic Wilderness, WA

What part of No don't they understand? Last year, a federal district court agreed with Wilderness Watch and Olympic Park Associates and told the National Park Service that the Wilderness Act doesn't allow rebuilding structures in the Olympic Wilderness to maintain historic imprints of settlement on the landscape. This fall, the Park Service plans to ignite fires in the Olympic Wilderness to re-create open areas in the forest that early homesteaders cleared. The purpose is to revive historic burning practices to produce "cultural landscapes" to maintain the pioneer "cultural scene." Wilderness Watch, Olympic Park Associates, and Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility sent a letter to the superintendent reminding him of the earlier decision, namely that it is not the intent of the Wilderness Act to re-create and perpetuate the human-built environment.

In last year's case, the Judge acknowledged it might be true, as the Park Service asserts, that the "setting, association, and feeling" of early settlement activities are "significant aspects of historic use within the park." But he ruled, "this type of usage is in the past and a new value has been placed on the land by the creation of the Olympic Wilderness."

Chiricahua Wilderness, AZ

Paintball Warriors? In August, Wilderness Watch received a call from a resident of tiny Portal, Arizona, asking for advice and assistance regarding 74 paintball enthusiasts planning to descend upon the area in October to hold a paintball tournament within the Chiricahua Wilderness. A flyer from a website advertising the event asked the players not to arrive in Portal in their boots and camouflage. The flyer explained that the Forest Service requires a special use permit for groups of 75 people or more, so the paintball event will be limited to 74 people. The wilderness has a group size limit of 15, but the forest supervisor had not officially posted the order so it was not enforceable. The players' flyer advised that, should a ranger interfere, players should disperse into groups of 15 and continue the game. Although the paint is biodegradable, it can remain visible for some time, as do any unexploded paint balls. Staff at the Ranger District told us they notified the group that the Forest Service would not authorize the event. Then the players' website disappeared from the Internet so the agency was unable to make further contact. No one knows if the paintball warriors will show up, and Forest Service officials say they'll be ready if they do.

Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex, MT

Dead End: Wilderness Watch and Friends of the Wild Swan jointly filed an administrative appeal in June challenging a U.S. Forest Service decision authorizing the Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks managers to poison 11 high-elevation lakes within the Bob Marshall Wilderness. Motorboats will be used to churn the pristine waters and helicopters will airlift boats and supplies to remote lakes. The purpose of the poisoning is to remove non-native fish previously stocked in the lakes and replace them with westslope cutthroat trout. The state agency wants to maintain recreational fishing and prevent cutthroat from being listed as a threatened or endangered species. Cutthroat have declined in their native range due to the impact of non-native fish, which officials stocked for decades in Montana's lakes and streams. The problem is the 11 wilderness lakes were never native range for cutthroat. The lakes were all naturally fishless. Unfortunately, game and fish managers were unwilling to consider leaving the lakes fishless because managing the lakes as recreational fisheries is one of the State's goals.

In discussions with the Forest Service, Wilderness Watch suggested a variety of options the agency could pursue to aid cutthroat trout recovery, but the Forest Service said halting the poisoning was simply "not on the table." We lost our appeal soon afterwards when the regional forester upheld the decision to poison the lakes. We are now considering how to respond.



Tongass Nat'l Forest Wilderness, AK

Helicopter Update: Last year the U.S. Forest Service regional forester in Alaska authorized nearly 1,100 helicopter landings in wilderness to inventory plants on the Tongass National Forest. Wilderness Watch and the Sitka Conservation Society strenuously objected. This spring the regional forester decided to further assess the project in an environmental impact statement (EIS). A draft was released in June for public comment. We anticipate the final EIS will be released this fall.

The proposed action remains basically unchanged, with nearly 1,100 helicopter landings and more than 90 hours of low-level helicopter flights over wilderness each summer. Much of the helicopter use is to access several hundred high-elevation, non-forested add-on plots that are not part of the Forest Service's normal forest inventory.

Here is a sample of our comments:

- "We are not opposed to the vegetation Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) being conducted in wilderness when the inventory is conducted in a manner that is fully compatible with wilderness and preserving the special wilderness values these areas have been set aside by Congress to protect."
- "The EIS suggests that the vegetation data can be used to help managers identify desired conditions... The desired conditions of wilderness are spelled out in the Wilderness Act and include no landing of helicopters."
- "A major omission in the EIS is its failure to disclose the extent that USFS personnel are currently conducting on-the-ground work by foot and skiff, without use of helicopters in Alaska."
- "We object to the preferred alternative eliminating the possibility of using base camps."
- "Our review of the administrative record reveals that the Alaska Region conducted an informal survey of wilderness staff in every other USFS Region of the country and discovered four things:
 1. Many other wilderness managers are not even aware of the FIA program.
 2. Managers who are familiar with the FIA program have not used the FIA data for any wilderness protection purposes.
 3. Helicopters are not being used for FIA work in wilderness anywhere else in the country.
 4. No other USFS region has requested FIA to inventory non-forested add-on plots."
- "We urge that all add-on plots that are not accessible by the means described above should be dropped from the inventory."

Guidelines for Defining & Improving Wilderness Boundaries

— By Kevin Proescholdt & Howie Wolke

I. Introduction

Congress establishes wilderness boundaries in legislation creating each specific wilderness area. Some boundaries work better than others in protecting and enhancing Wilderness. Wilderness Watch's 17 years' experience with protection and stewardship of designated wilderness has given us critical insight into those criteria that determine how successful the boundaries will be in ensuring the preservation of wilderness values.

Wilderness Watch supports the nondegradation standard for wilderness. In other words, Congress can designate (and has designated) wilderness areas that show some impacts from past human activities in the area. But after an area has been designated as wilderness, there should be no further degradation of the area's wilderness character. Designated areas that show considerable impacts should be restored. With proper stewardship, an area's wilderness character will improve after designation, as past impacts become less noticeable over time.

Wilderness Watch strongly supports designating new wilderness, and in so doing increasing the total size of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

A critical consideration in proposing new wilderness and in drawing boundaries, however, is whether the area can and will be managed to preserve its wilderness character. The answer is as much political as it is ecological or geographical—all must be considered. Wilderness is not merely a tool to stop inappropriate development on federal lands, such as timber sales or off-highway vehicles. Wilderness designation must protect an area's wilderness character. In some cases another existing land designation, such as a national recreation area, national scenic area, national conservation area, or national monument might be a better tool to protect important natural resource values such as ecological integrity, non-motorized recreation opportunities, etc.

II. Guidelines in the Wilderness Act

The 1964 Wilderness Act did not delineate how to draw Wilderness boundaries. But there are three general guidelines from the 1964 Wilderness Act that provide some guidance. These guidelines are:

A. Impacts substantially unnoticeable. The area "generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable...." Congress has designated many areas that have shown evidence of human impacts. But these impacts should be "substantially unnoticeable," particularly in the context of the entire designated wilderness. If the impacts

are substantially noticeable throughout a large portion of the wilderness, then perhaps wilderness boundaries should be drawn to leave these impacted areas outside wilderness. Lawmakers might want to consider a protective classification other than wilderness.

B. Solitude or unconfined recreation. The area must provide "outstanding opportunities for solitude, or a primitive and unconfined recreation." Solitude is one of the key qualities protected by the Wilderness Act. This does not mean that an area must be a highly sought-after recreation area. Outstanding opportunities for solitude might be a function of just the opposite. The best measure Wilderness Watch has found for solitude can be found in the following definition developed by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and published in the agency's draft wilderness regulations in 2001:

Wilderness solitude is a state of mind, a mental freedom that emerges from settings where visitors experience nature essentially free of the reminders of society, its inventions, and conventions. Privacy and isolation are important components, but solitude also is enhanced by the absence of other distractions, such as large groups, mechanization, unnatural noise, signs, and other modern artifacts. It is a highly valued component of the visitor's experience because it is conducive to the psychological benefits associated with wilderness and one's free and independent response to nature.

The ability of an area to provide these opportunities and the public and political support for management that protects and enhances these opportunities should be principle considerations in drawing wilderness boundaries.

C. 5,000 acres. The area must have "at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition." This is a general guideline, since Congress has, on rare occasions, designated islands as small as five acres as wilderness. Especially in the eastern U.S., the 5,000-acre minimum can be difficult to reach. The potential for an area to provide outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation, along with ecological and other considerations discussed below, can help determine boundaries.

D. Ecological, geological, or other features. The Wilderness Act provides that Wilderness "may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value." A boundary for a wilderness might

be drawn, for example, to include an area of ecological significance or part of the historic route of the Lewis and Clark expedition.

III. Other Practical Guidelines for Drawing Wilderness Boundaries

In addition to these general guidelines from the Wilderness Act, there are a number of other practical guidelines critical to ensuring the area can truly function as wilderness.

A. Administration and stewardship as wilderness. A wilderness area's boundaries must be drawn so that the managing agency can effectively administer it as wilderness. A wilderness area must be "untrammeled"—a key descriptor in the Wilderness Act—so that natural ecological processes like a natural fire regime is allowed to function unhindered and unconfined by humankind. Are the boundaries adequate to allow this? Does the political will exist to let this happen?

B. Ecosystem boundaries. The best wilderness boundaries are often match ecosystem boundaries, such as an entire watershed, biome, critical habitat, or basin. Also, the best wilderness boundaries protect the broadest possible spectrum of ecological communities representing a particular area. For example, rather than protecting just the subalpine and alpine ecosystems of a typical mountain range, a better boundary would include sagebrush steppe and montane forest ecosystems in addition to the higher altitudes.

C. Shape and size. Beyond the ecosystem boundaries mentioned above, both the shape and size of wilderness boundaries matter. Here are some aspects of shape and size.

1. *Maximize the interior of wildernesses, and minimize the edge effect of boundaries.* Long narrow wildernesses have lots of edge but little deep interior. To maximize the protection of wilderness character, we should draw boundaries to protect contiguous blocks of wilderness. Amoeba-shaped boundaries (often drawn to avoid potential conflicts) maximize edge and minimize remote interior, thus creating a variety of management and ecological problems.

2. *Minimize "cherry stems."* Some wilderness boundaries have "cherry stems" in them, where boundaries were drawn to exclude an incompatible use such as a road from the wilderness. This can result in a non-wilderness corridor running deep inside a wilderness, making protection of wilderness values difficult even in the interior. However, rather than excluding large acreages from wilderness in order to keep "cherry stems" entirely beyond the wilderness, we recommend closing and rehabilitating such intrusions where feasible, and drawing the boundary to include the rehabilitated area.

3. *Avoid fragmentation.* Individual units of designated wilderness should stand on their own, even if part of a single-named wilderness. A single wilderness of 100,000 acres can better protect wilderness character and ecological integrity than 10 units of wilderness at 10,000 acres each located close to each other but perhaps separated

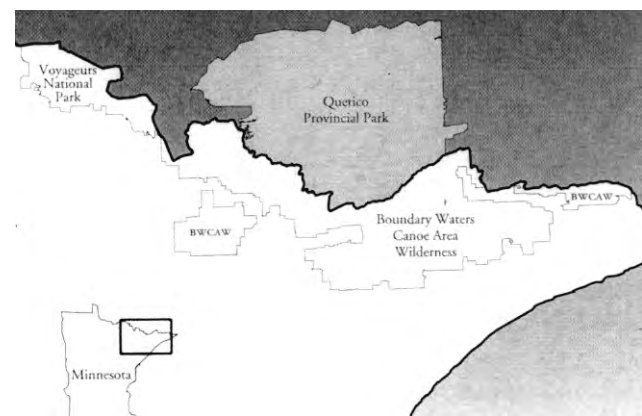
by gravel roads.

4. *Bigger is better.* Generally, the larger a wilderness, the greater its interior. The greater the interior, the better opportunities for solitude and the greater the chances for maintaining ecological integrity. Be bold. Think big. Bigger is better.

One example that helps illustrate the preceding points on size and shape is the international Quetico-Superior wilderness complex in northeastern Minnesota and northwestern Ontario. In Minnesota lies the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW). Adjacent along the international boundary is Ontario's Quetico Provincial Park, a wilderness class park.

Both wilderness areas are part of the same ecosystem, both are about the same total size. Together they form an international wilderness complex of 2.3 million acres. But significant differences exist in the ways each area's boundaries were drawn. The BWCAW has two smaller wilderness units detached from the main wilderness unit, for example, as well as two major road corridor cherry stems.

The following chart reveals these boundary differences:



Miron Heinselman, *The Boundary Waters Wilderness Ecosystem*, 1996.

	<u>Quetico</u>	<u>BWCAW</u>
Size (acres)	1,175,000	1,098,000
Units	1	3
Major Cherry Stems	0	2
Miles of edge	260	586

Because Quetico's boundaries are more compactly drawn, solitude and other wilderness characteristics are more easily protected and provided. Because the BWCAW has two smaller detached units, separated from the main wilderness by roads, and because the BWCAW is stretched thinner in an east-west direction with a much higher edge-to-interior ratio (more than twice as much edge as the slightly larger Quetico), wilderness stewards have a greater difficulty protecting and providing solitude and other wilderness qualities. The BWCAW still provides outstanding wilderness character and offers great wilderness experiences, of course, but because of the differences primarily in boundaries, Quetico's wilderness character is better preserved than that of the BWCAW. ♪

Conservation Groups Call for Moratorium on Bad Wilderness Bills

A coalition of 80 organizations issued a press release on September 12 calling our colleagues in the conservation community and Congress to support a moratorium on passage of any omnibus bills that privatize public lands and undermine wilderness. Wilderness Watch was one of four groups spearheading this effort.

This extraordinary request brought together conservation groups from across the country to push back against an escalating and alarming new trend in public lands legislation. Over the last six years, wilderness legislation has been lumped into complex public land bills that give away public land, encourage urban sprawl, and compromise the principles of the Wilderness Act.

This form of legislation has come to be called "*quid pro quo* wilderness." The Latin phrase means an exchange, giving something up to get something in return. Powerful members of Congress are demanding that any new wilderness must come at the price of privatizing public lands and authorizing major land and water development wrapped up in the same legislation. Most disturbingly, the wilderness that results from these bills is often saddled with exceptions that gut the intent of the Wilderness Act.

Our moratorium letter is titled "An Open Letter to the Conservation Community Calling for a Moratorium on Damaging Public Land and Wilderness Legislation." In it we highlight four *quid pro quo* bills currently pending in Congress:

- Central Idaho Economic Development and Recreation Act (CIEDRA);
- Owyhee Initiative Implementation Act of 2006;
- White Pine County Conservation, Recreation and Development Bill of 2006 (northeastern Nevada); and
- Washington County Growth and Conservation Act

Many groups that signed the moratorium letter fear that Congress will bundle these four bills together into one large omnibus bill before the end of the year.

Taken together, if passed, these bills would give away 160,000 acres of public land. Wilderness would come with numerous exemptions to the Wilderness Act, including:

- the use of aircraft, ATVs, and snowmobiles for wildlife management;
- lethal predator control;
- fish stocking with non-native fish;
- "customary use" for ranchers to ride ATVs and motorcycles in Wilderness;
- a special statutory right for riding stock in wilderness;
- unlimited new water developments called "guzzlers" in wilderness; and
- fire management authority devolved to state and local agencies, including the use of bulldozers and other machinery in wilderness.

While these changes to wilderness stewardship would technically apply only to the lands designated as wilderness under the bills, over the past 17 years we have watched the corrosive effect of such changes on the entire National Wilderness Preservation System. Wilderness managers not directly affected by the weakened provisions come under intense political pressure to allow such weakened management.

Earlier this year, the Bush administration proposed to sell 300,000 acres of national forest land across the U.S. The American public and the conservation community were united in opposing the proposal.

Despite this widespread consensus that public lands should remain in public hands, a small number of conservation groups have actively gone against the grain supporting passage of *quid pro quo* wilderness bills even though they privatize public land. If Congress passes the four pending *quid pro quo* bills, they will have assisted in privatizing more than 400,000 acres of public lands, more than the recent administration proposal that drew such a wide wave of protest.

In our letter, we also ask those organizations supporting these bills to recognize the danger the bills pose to public lands and join us in opposing them. We ask for a moratorium on all wilderness legislation that contains public land giveaways and special exemptions to the Wilderness Act.

We ask for a unified movement to protect public lands and wilderness. We ask all conservationists to work toward an agreement on principles and bottom lines, and while this discussion happens, we ask for unified opposition to the passage of any more of these damaging wilderness bills this year, in this Congress, in this political environment.

While Wilderness Watch and the other organizations that signed the moratorium strongly support expansion of the wilderness preservation system, we oppose *quid pro quo* legislation because it undermines the intent of the Wilderness Act and thus makes wilderness less authentic and less wild. Such legislation undercuts the efforts of other conservation groups fighting sprawl, ORV abuse, and other environmental problems. Furthermore, *quid pro quo* legislation ushers us onto the slippery slope of privatizing the public domain.

Due to the sweeping implications of the *quid pro quo* approach for public lands and wilderness, Wilderness Watch and the 79 other conservation groups believe that a time out for detailed review and discussion is prudent. The future of our public lands literally hangs in the balance. ♻️

Wilderness Through a Teen's Eyes

— By Jeff Smith, Membership & Development Director

I was reminded of the importance of wilderness in a very personal way last month when I got away for six days in the Scapegoat Wilderness with partner Carol and my 16-year-old son Max. Max had just finished a 70-game schedule with the Missoula Mavericks, his American Legion baseball team. He'd played in every game, pitched 65 innings, struck out 77 batters, batted .333, and got promoted to the senior team for an extra two weeks. He was ready for a break.

Max is perpetually plugged into X-boxes, I-pods, YouTubes, MySpaces, phones, cell phones, TVs, and radios. Not surprisingly, his response to wilderness was intense and took the shape of a classic bell curve, moving from excitement to discomfort and back again.

We started up the trail at the crack of noon on Saturday. The 1988 Canyon Creek Fire had taken the trees along the North Fork of the Blackfoot River, and, though the river bottom was coming back in healthy, 25-foot lodgepole pine, our hats were the only things protecting us from the sun. We hiked more than 50 miles in a loop to the Danaher Basin in the neighboring Bob Marshall Wilderness and back again through Canyon Creek Lake. Except for the last day after we topped out for a swim at Otatsy Lake, it seemed like we were constantly gaining altitude.

It wasn't the physical demands that sent Max into his funk. It was the deep reality of wilderness. "I want to go back," he told us as we ate lunch on Danaher Creek, on our fourth day. "You guys can stay. I can just hike out by myself. We can arrange a time in a few days for me to meet you at the trailhead."

"It's boring!" he said. He missed his friends. He didn't realize we'd be gone so long or hike so far. Two of the three nights we'd been out, deer moving close to our tents awakened him. "Dad, what's that?" he asked. We'd seen bear prints, and we were camped near a pond where any number of moose gathered. Bottom line, there wasn't any place to get away from wilderness. There was no artificial reality to shield this fact. There was nowhere to plug in.

We made sure he knew we were in this together. No splitting up. We admitted we were scared, too, and that sorting through these feelings -- being alone in some of the wildest country in the Lower 48 -- was part of the experience. Clean camps, bear spray, and careful planning lessened but could not eliminate danger. He had already gone from exhilaration to this dissatisfaction and uncertainty. What made him think his feelings weren't going to change back again?

Then we compromised, saying Carol and I would give up the extra day we were going to spend on Danaher Creek. We would start back the next morning. With luck, we'd get back in time for him to say goodbye to a girlfriend leaving for California. That settled it. Toward the end of the day we outran a storm back to



our tents. The storm blew in with a torrent of wind, thunder, and lightening. It was an extraordinary show. The three of us stood on a hillside and watched the fury of the storm until it spent itself, kind of like what had happened inside Max that day.

On the trail back, Max really got in sync with the landscape. At one point he pointed out a deep cut in the standing dead trees where the lightening might have started the Canyon Creek Fire. The scorched trees started in a narrow band and descended all down the canyon to the North Fork. At the end of the day when all three of us hit the wall, he helped find the trail to Canyon Lake.

The next morning, We plunged into Otatsy Lake -- probably the most refreshing swim ever taken in the entire history of the human race! We swam to the very middle, trolling on our backs, watching a rare 360-degree view of the surrounding mountains. He kept alert as we walked several hours down the flank of East Spread Mountain, which was covered with huckleberries. We saw full bear prints in the dust of the trail and huge piles of purple scat. As the sun drew down its long rays, he led the way along a dried creek bed and across the last, three-mile plain to the car. He raced Sonny, our dog, the last 100 yards to the car.

Wilderness is where we unplug, where we experience the world as it is. We make the machines silent and use our legs to circumnavigate, our eyes to absorb the splendors of the wild, our ears to listen to its murmuring, our skin to feel its breath. Thanks to Max, Carol and I realized again that this is the place where we can know ourselves and our place in the universe. ☁

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