



# WILDERNESS WATCHER

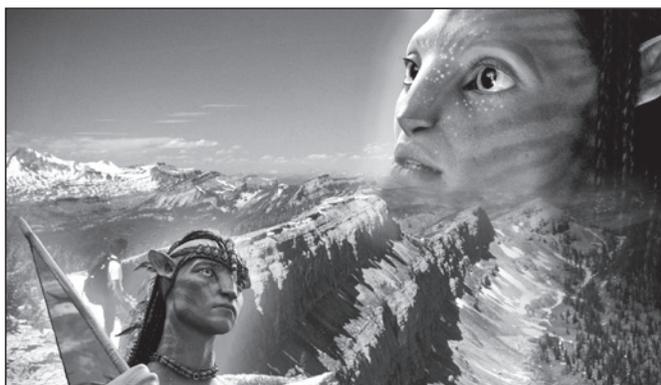
The Quarterly Newsletter of Wilderness Watch

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## Avatar II Coming to a Wilderness Near You?

by Dawn Serra

The request seemed innocuous enough. Idaho Public Television (IDPTV) approached the Forest Service (FS) this past spring for permission to film a crew of students doing trail work in the Salmon-Challis National Forest. More specifically, though, the filming would take place within the part of the Forest Congress has designated as the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness. The Forest Service, believing the filming to be commercial in nature, initially denied IDPTV's request because the Wilderness Act prohibits such com-



mercial enterprise in Wilderness. However, regional forester Harv Forsgren reversed the decision of local agency officials after feeling political heat from Idaho Governor "Butch" Otter and Congressman Mike Simpson. The filming not only took place, but the FS then issued an interim rule sanctioning even more commercial filming on public lands, including Wilderness.

Two issues arise from this: what makes IDPTV's filming commercial and why is most commercial enterprise, including filming, incompatible with Wilderness?

Commentators were quick to criticize the FS's original decision to deny the filming, making the claim that public television is, by its nature and tax-exempt status, non-commercial. But this is a misconception. "Non-profit" status under the Internal Revenue Code does not equal non-commercial. Courts have routinely held that private, non-

profit corporations can engage in commercial activities, and many do, including public television stations. Idaho Public Television, and others, rely on programming to draw in advertisers (i.e. "corporate sponsors"), not unlike the network and cable channels, and to solicit viewer contributions.

The Wilderness Act bars commercial enterprise—even that which has no physical impact on the land—because the Act's framers saw the benefit, and the need, to protect Wilderness from being viewed and used as a commodity, and from having its management compromised by economic interests. Our representatives in Congress have set aside wilderness as distinctly different from all other lands where economic interests dictate land use. We have decided this land is valuable for its own sake.

After IDPTV completed its filming (you can read the trail crew leader's first-hand account in the sidebar on page 9), the FS released an interim rule authorizing even more commercial filming in national forests, including Wilderness. This is in blatant disregard of the Act's prohibition on commercial enterprise. The only qualification in the new rule is that the FS must approve of the film's message. However, the content of the message has no relevance in determining whether the activity is commercial, nor is the regulation of free speech an appropriate role for the Forest Service or any other government agency. A spokesperson conceded in a Montana Public Radio interview that the policy would allow James Cameron (of *Titanic* and *Avatar* fame) to shoot his next film in the Bob Marshall Wilderness!

Perhaps the Forest Service could

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...and More!

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# insights from the President

## *Wilderness and Risk*



Threats to wilderness occasionally arise from a seemingly innocuous source, the concern for safety. While they may be well intentioned, agencies often justify improper or even unlawful actions in wilderness in the name of protecting us, visitors—according to the Wilderness Act—who do not remain.

Some of the real-life actions justified under the umbrella of safety include reconstruction of patrol cabins, helicopter flights for search and rescue training, and, as one recent *New York Times* editorial suggested, adding signs in

wilderness to prevent hikers from getting lost. On the surface, the justification for these actions may seem alluring – who is against safety? But at closer analysis, this justification is deeply flawed.

First, it is wrong by law. The Wilderness Act specifically bans structures, aircraft landings, motorized use, and installations like signs, subject to a narrow exception that includes actual emergencies. Nowhere does the Act allow these otherwise non-conforming elements as a means of risk avoidance.

Second, it is wrong for wilderness. By its very nature, wilderness presents us with risks not found in the vast areas of civilized country. The risk is part of the point, because therein lies the opportunity to experience nature on its terms, not ours. If we want true wilderness, then we had better be prepared to accept the risks that come with it.

Third, it is wrong for safety. The pursuit of insulating ourselves against risk in wilderness can itself have dangerous, and even tragic, consequences. This past summer, a plane carrying three National Park Service employees went missing on the way back from repairing a wilderness patrol cabin in western Alaska. The plane was never found. The repairs were justified under the Wilderness Act in the name of safety. As with most of Alaska, there were bears in the area, and the sole basis for the repairs was that the cabin was deemed more secure and convenient than the traditional means of pitching a tent.

Perhaps just as dangerous is the expectation that these various measures create. The more we colonize wilderness with signs, structures, and helicopters, the more users will come to rely on them as a substitute for true preparedness. This dependency not only detracts from the wilderness experience, it poses a real safety threat in its own right.

Currently, Wilderness Watch is challenging a BLM decision to authorize hundreds of helicopter flights into wilderness areas in Nevada for the purpose of search and rescue training. The authorization is beyond what even the agency itself deemed necessary. While it is the only program of its kind, the case gets to the heart of what sort of wilderness we want to have—real wilderness, or wilderness in name only.

Please support us as we take on these difficult challenges. ♻️

—Jon Dettmann



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

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P.O. Box 9175  
Missoula, MT 59807  
Phone: (406) 542-2048  
[www.wildernesswatch.org](http://www.wildernesswatch.org)  
[wild@wildernesswatch.org](mailto:wild@wildernesswatch.org)

# On the Watch

## Wilderness Building Boom



Wilderness Watch file photos

### Glacier Peaks Wilderness:

Wilderness Watch recently alerted our members to the Forest Service's (FS) newly constructed Green Mountain "Lookout" in the Glacier Peak Wilderness in Washington's North Cascades. It's described as a visitor's center—the last time a person manned a lookout in the area was the early 1970s.

This concrete and steel-reinforced structure was built high atop Green Mountain, using helicopters to transport materials and motorized equipment for the construction—in clear violation of the letter and spirit of the Wilderness Act. This was all completed without public notice or environmental analysis.

Wilderness Watch will keep pressuring the Forest Service until the structure is removed and the site restored.

To learn more and view photos of the structure, visit our blog at: [www.wildernesswatch.wordpress.com/](http://www.wildernesswatch.wordpress.com/) 



Photo by National Park Service

### Glacier National Park:

Wilderness Watch recently asked the National Park Service (NPS) not to rebuild the non-operational Heavens Peak Lookout in Glacier National Park (GNP). (The lookout was constructed in 1945 and abandoned years ago, as was the trail leading to it.) The Park Service's proposal includes repairing the roof, shutters and exterior wood surfaces, painting the exterior, and stabilizing the masonry. A helicopter would fly in reconstruction materials.

Heavens Peak is within the heart of one of our country's wildest Parks and within NPS recommended wilderness, which agency guidelines require managing as designated wilderness. The Wilderness Act prohibits structures unless the minimum required for preserving an area as wilderness, a requirement the lookout does not meet. The NPS should allow the lookout to continue to melt into the ground, which would restore the site's natural condition and comply with wilderness law and NPS policy. Read our comments and learn more on our website: [www.wildernesswatch.org/issues/index.html](http://www.wildernesswatch.org/issues/index.html) 



Wilderness Watch file photo

### Mokelumne Wilderness:

In our April *Watcher*, we reported on an illegal structure in the Mokelumne Wilderness in California, known as the Monte Wolfe Cabin, which the Forest Service (FS) has allowed a private group to use and maintain for years. The ongoing violation continues, with the most recent event occurring in July when the agency landed a helicopter to close off the cabin's entrance. The agency justified this illegal motorized intrusion by stating, "The Forest feels the action is necessary to reduce any potential impact to the interior contents of the structure. The sense of urgency for taking temporary measures is necessary since hiker access into the wilderness is increasing daily." If "vandal-hikers" could reach the cabin

as the FS feared, why couldn't the Forest Service also hike in and respect the law? And why did the Forest Supervisor tell a wilderness ranger who was hiking in to turn around and let the helicopter do the job? 

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## Arctic



Photo by National Park Service

### Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve:

Wilderness Watch has weighed in on the scoping process for amending the general management plan for Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve.

Gates of the Arctic has more than seven million acres of Wilderness. At four times the size of Yellowstone National Park, Gates of the Arctic helps protect the stunning central Brooks Range, northern boreal forests, rolling tundra, and six Wild & Scenic Rivers, along with the caribou, grizzly and black bears, moose, wolves, Dall sheep, and eagles that depend upon this habitat.

We urged the National Park Service to consider wilderness as the central theme for the plan. We asked NPS to preserve wilderness character, which should serve as the primary consideration for evaluating potential agency actions. NPS should also adopt wilderness stewardship principles. We urged new developments/structures to be prohibited, along with snowmobiles and motor boats, that private visitors take precedence over commercial interests when use is limited, helicopters use be limited to emergencies, and that natural diversity and ecological processes be left alone. Read our comments on our website: [www.wildernesswatch.org/issues/index.html](http://www.wildernesswatch.org/issues/index.html) 🐾



Photo by Fran Mauer/US Fish & Wildlife Service

### Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan:

The 19-million-acre Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is an irreplaceable national treasure, the crown jewel of America's wilderness. It has no comparison in its vastness, remoteness, awe-inspiring landscapes, and abundant wildlife. It is made up of eight million acres of Wilderness, has 20 rivers running through it, and is home to 45 species of land and marine mammals, 36 species of fish, and more than 194 species of birds from six continents. There are no roads, trails, or commercial developments—visitors must travel by foot, boat, or plane.

The Fish and Wildlife Service is beginning to revise the Refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), which will guide its future. The Plan will make important decisions regarding the degree to which the Refuge will remain natural, wild, and free. It will guide many aspects of Refuge management, especially "on the ground" activities and uses of the Refuge. This also presents an historic opportunity to recommend that the Plan include a wilderness review for all non-Wilderness Refuge lands, including the coastal plain.

A strong, effective plan is essential to keeping the Arctic wild. You can learn more and become involved by visiting our website: [www.wildernesswatch.org/issues/index.html#Arctic](http://www.wildernesswatch.org/issues/index.html#Arctic) 🐾

### Remote Automatic Weather Stations:

Wilderness Watch has urged the National Park Service (NPS) to abandon its plan to install permanent remote automatic weather stations (RAWS) across the Arctic. The RAWS would be located in Gates of the Arctic National Park (4), Noatak National Preserve (6), Cape Krusenstern National Monument (2), Kobuk Valley National Park (1), and Bering Land Bridge National Preserve (4). Nine of the sites are proposed in designated Wilderness, with the remaining eight sites on wilderness eligible lands. NPS would use helicopters in nearly all cases to transport the stations to their sites and for annual maintenance.

We asked NPS to select the "No Action Alternative," which the agency correctly identifies as the environmentally preferred alternative. In our comments, we noted that the RAWS proposal violates the Wilderness Act's prohibition on installations and the use of motor vehicles within Wilderness (where not necessary to preserve the Wilderness). Additionally, the environmental assessment fails to provide an adequate range of alternatives—such as making extrapolations from data at existing locations—as required by the National Environmental Policy Act. It fails to justify the proposal as the minimum requirement to administer the area as Wilderness. NPS's plan will result in permanent degradation to wilderness character. You can read our comments on our website: [www.wildernesswatch.org/issues/index.html](http://www.wildernesswatch.org/issues/index.html) 🐾

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## Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks, CA



Photo by CA Dept. of Fish and Game

Wilderness Watch let the National Park Service (NPS) know we're deeply concerned with a NPS proposal to use helicopters and "net-guns" to capture up to 40 endangered Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep within Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.

The proposed study is being done in partnership with the California Department of Fish and Game. Our concerns include: harm to wilderness

character, lack of evidence the project is necessary to preserve the wilderness or bighorns' well-being, inconsistency with the Wilderness Act's minimum tool requirements, direct injury or death to critically endangered Sierra Nevada bighorn, and other significant effects on the population. We are concerned about decreased long-term survival of captured animals and behavioral changes, including avoidance of key winter range, etc. In our scoping comments, we suggested alternative approaches that would respect wilderness, while promoting better habitat conditions for bighorns. You can read our comments on our website: [www.wildernesswatch.org/issues/index.html](http://www.wildernesswatch.org/issues/index.html)

## Yosemite Wilderness, CA



Photo by National Park Service

Wilderness Watch has urged the National Park Service (NPS) to restore the wild character of Yosemite Wilderness by removing the cable system on Half Dome. We asked NPS to do this using non-motorized/mechanized tools and transport, and to determine an appropriate use level. We let the Park Service know we appreciate its efforts to address issues created by the cable system, including its incompatibility within designated Wilderness. We noted the cable system is unnecessary to preserve the area as Wilderness

and it conflicts with the Wilderness Act's prohibition on structures and installations. We added that it degrades the area's wilderness character by altering the natural, undeveloped condition and greatly decreases opportunities for solitude. This is a good example of how a different perspective, one that accepts Wilderness on its own terms, is required to protect Wilderness.

This past summer, to address safety concerns due to crowding, the NPS instated an emergency interim permit system to limit the number of visitors using these cables. The agency is conducting an environmental assessment (EA) to determine a long-term management strategy, and the EA will address safety, the visitor experience, and preservation of wilderness character. You can learn more and read our comments on our website: [www.wildernesswatch.org/issues/index.html](http://www.wildernesswatch.org/issues/index.html)

## Emigrant Wilderness, CA



Photo and article by Steve Brougher

A poorly conceived trail project in the Emigrant Wilderness in California was recently modified as a result of our Central Sierra Chapter's persistent efforts. The steep and rough primitive trail, consistent with the wilderness setting, accesses a relatively remote part of the Wilderness immediately adjacent to Yosemite National Park. From 1997 to 2004 Wilderness Watch repeatedly raised concerns and requested more detail about a proposed "re-

construction" project that would have fundamentally changed the area's wilderness character. The Forest Service provided no further information, and we heard nothing until this past May

when a local newspaper article alerted us that the project had received funding and would be done this year. When further inquiry revealed the project had been categorically excluded from environmental assessment or analysis through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and approved with a decision memo, Wilderness Watch considered legal action to stop it. Acknowledging that the planning process had been mishandled and our concerns with the project had not been properly considered, the district ranger then offered some major modifications that positively responded to our primary concerns. The changes also addressed erosion problems and meadow impacts without significantly altering the trail's character. Thanks to the Central Sierra Chapter for its unrelenting efforts, demonstrating the importance of focused commitment and resolve to ensure a good outcome for wilderness.

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# Wilderness, Aircraft and the Struggle for Wholeness

By Talasi Brooks

Just past the boundary of the Rattlesnake Wilderness, I sit high above a web of small lakes. It's a finger-numbing fall day. Birds fly a double helix, their calls, the insect buzz, and the soft swish of wind the only sounds. Quiet. I think of the constant undercurrent of wheels and exhaust I left this morning. It's hard to imagine, here, that they even exist.

This consciousness is part of Wilderness. In 1955, Howard Zahniser called for "areas of wild nature in which we sense ourselves to be... dependent members of an interdependent community of living creatures that together derive their existence from the sun." One objective of Wilderness is to promote humans' retaining a sense of ourselves as members of an ecological community. In Wilderness we face nature on equal footing with other species. Federal agencies and their land managers have the responsibility to preserve "wilderness character," or the tangible and intangible qualities that make this experience possible.

Paradoxically, the Wilderness Act contains provisions that complicate this mandate. The Act's terms suggest Wilderness is a surface resource, neglecting both the intent of the legislation's founders, and ecological

realities. Where original drafts of the Wilderness Act attempted to protect full ecosystems, envisioning Wilderness as a three-dimensional, interconnected entity that included "the related airspace reservations," banned grazing, and closed mineral resources to commercial development, these provisions proved unachievable in light of political realities at the time. The final Act defined Wildernesses as "areas," a geometrically two-dimensional term. The consequent management difficulties are highlighted in the case of airspace above federally designated Wilderness.

"Aircraft is an intrusion in the Wilderness," stated an excerpt from a *Forest Service Committee Report on Aircraft vs. Wilderness* published in a 1947 issue of *The Living Wilderness*. Chaired by Olaus Murie and including other wilderness luminaries like Robert Griggs, Frederick Law Olmstead, and Aldo Leopold, the committee recommended regulation of aircraft, including a 2,000-ft. ceiling above natural areas. These recommendations did not make it into law with the exception of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, where an executive order designated a 4,000-ft. ceiling.

The Act itself has special provisions that allow aircraft use for limited

administrative purposes or for public use where established at the time of Wilderness designation, subject to regulation by the Secretary of Agriculture. While the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has asked that pilots observe a voluntary 2,000-ft. overflight height, the recommendation is neither enforced by the FAA nor enforceable by the federal agencies that administer Wilderness.

After a collision involving "flightseeing" planes over the Grand Canyon in the 1980s, the government began investigating impacts of airspace use above protected areas. Reports showed that overflights below 2000 ft. can disturb wildlife by evoking a startle response. Over time, such responses may alter reproductive success, result in habitat avoidance or abandonment, and threaten species viability. Some sources suggest that vibrations from aircraft may affect insect communities such as honeybees and can disturb hibernation of desert toad species. Sonic booms from military aircraft can lead to the collapse of structures and produce elevated sound pressures that may cause auditory impairment in some wildlife. Overflight noise can affect predator-prey relationships by impeding communication and disrupting natural soundscapes.

In addition, airstrips, helipads, and aircraft landings may contribute to the spread of invasive weeds. In a Class I airshed, the effects of aircraft use on air quality and correlating incidences of acid rain merit further discussion. Ultimately, our understanding of how an inhabited airspace might impact protected ecosystems is incomplete. But, in a land designation that mandates human self-restraint and humility in our interactions with nature, it's



Talasi Brooks is in the Environmental Studies/Law Professional program at the University of Montana. She interned at Wilderness Watch doing policy research for the 2009-2010 school year. In the summers she works for the US Forest Service on a wilderness trail crew in Idaho and reads innumerable fiction books.

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inconsistent to allow a use that seems damaging without full evaluation of its consequences.

Aircraft negatively impact the indices adopted by federal agencies for monitoring conditions relating to wilderness character. They affect *untrammelled* because they allow greater human control over the physical environment, *natural* in their disturbance of wildlife and spreading of invasive species, *undeveloped* because they are motorized/mechanized and necessitate landing structures, and provision of *opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation* by creating noise and diminishing other visitors' sense of remoteness.

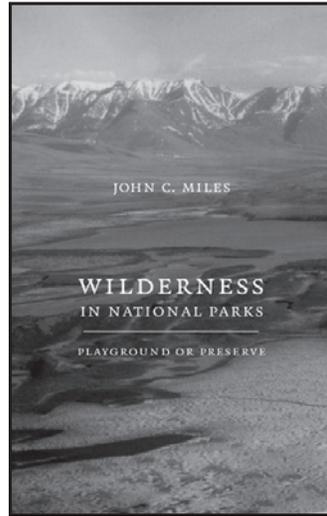
Since aircraft cause degradation of wilderness character, their use should be limited or excluded wherever possible. But, because the Wilderness Act does not specifically address airspace and some newer Wilderness bills include exceptions, managers are often reluctant to take a firm stance. Enabling and encouraging managers to preserve Wilderness character by protecting Wilderness airspace requires more of a legal mandate than currently exists.

Galileo was imprisoned for proposing that the earth is round. Now, it is hard to conceive of a flat reality. We engage with the third dimension when we walk in the rain, watch birds, climb mountains, breathe. A two dimensional surface resource lacks wholeness philosophically, experientially, and ecologically.

Senator Frank Church said "Without wilderness this country will become a cage." To realize the full legacy of Wilderness, we need Wilderness that is whole. As we transition into a new decade of Wilderness protection, we should strive for a legal shift towards a three-dimensional vision that reflects experienced reality, strengthening rather than compromising the protections guaranteed by the Wilderness Act. ♪

## Review: Wilderness in National Parks

Reviewed by Kevin Proescholdt



John C. Miles, *Wilderness in National Parks: Playground or Preserve*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009. 334 pp., index, notes, photos, charts.

Environmentalists often rate the National Park Service (NPS) the greenest of the four federal land-management agencies. Unlike the others, the NPS doesn't cut down trees, graze livestock, lease lands for oil and gas development, or hunt wildlife. The NPS has rightly prided itself for decades on protecting its lands. Surely then, the thinking goes, the NPS also embraces Wilderness, the most protective form of federal land designation.

Well, no, it doesn't, and John Miles' new book, *Wilderness in National Parks*, explains why.

Miles carefully traces the history of wilderness in national parks going back to the origins of the first national parks in the nineteenth century. He describes the 1916 Organic Act and how it established the sometimes conflicting mandates to both protect the parks "unimpaired" as well as provide for their use and enjoyment by people. This is the conflict embodied in the book's subtitle, *Playground or Preserve*. Put simply, some in the agency thought Wilderness designation would make visitation to those portions of the national parks more difficult.

NPS initially didn't support the 1964 Wilderness Act because the agency feared the loss of its administrative discretion over its lands. The agency thought it wouldn't be able to use its designated Wilderness to meet growing visitor demand for campgrounds, roads, and other accommodations. "Its hands would be tied in the future as it faced growing pressures for visitation," Miles writes.

Some in the NPS actually thought the Wilderness Act would lessen protection of its backcountry. That concern appeared somewhat justified, Miles points out, when Congress was debating the Wilderness Act. Amendments were proposed in 1961 that would have empowered the president to authorize prospecting, reservoirs, roads, and other developments in Wildernesses normally prohibited in national parks. Fortunately, Congress rejected those amendments.

For many years before Congress passed the Act, NPS tried to avoid the loss of discretion by publicly stating "wilderness not developed is wilderness protected." But, at the same time, its own development program, the Mission 66 Program begun in the 1950s, raised the

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## Tin Cup Dam, Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness



Photo by US Forest Service (2005 repair work)

On August 2, Wilderness Watch and Friends of the Clearwater appealed the Bitterroot National Forest's decision authorizing helicopter flights and heavy equipment to rebuild the Tin Cup Dam in the Selway-Bitterroot

Wilderness (SBW). Tin Cup was once a natural lake, whose outlet was mined to allow greater drawdown.

The dam was built decades ago without motorized equipment. When Congress designated the SBW in 1964, the

Secretary of Agriculture promised the American people that the dams in the SBW would be continue to be managed and maintained in that same fashion. However, we're seeing more and more proposals to use motorized equipment on wilderness dams.

Since the late 1990s, when the Forest Service approved so-called emergency work on Tin Cup with heavy equipment and helicopters, agency officials have promised the public a thorough environmental impact statement prior to any reconstruction. That promise was broken. The less rigorous environmental analysis did not even analyze a non-motorized option nor did it allow public comment

As expected, the regional office denied our appeal. Wilderness Watch is reviewing options. 🐾

## US/Canada Border

Wilderness Watch recently joined other organizations in signing a letter expressing concerns about future northern border plans. The letter was drafted in response to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection's intent to prepare four programmatic environmental impact statements (EISs) for the United States' entire border with Canada (including land extending 100 miles to the south of the line). The letter outlines concerns with the process, along with potential impacts to wildlife, wilderness and other

public lands, Native American lands and interests, local economies and communities, and climate change.

Much of the environmental disaster that has beset the southern border has been caused by Border Patrol activities. For example, the Cabeza-Prieta Wilderness in Arizona has become riddled with user-created roads, most of which were created by Border Patrol. Wilderness Watch will continue to work with other organizations pushing for a more sensible approach to the northern border. 🐾

## In the Courts:

### Court Rules Challenge to Wilderness Wolf Capture and Collar Program is "Moot"

Wilderness Watch's case against the Forest Service (FS) for allowing the Idaho Fish and Game Department (IDFG) to land helicopters in the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness to capture and radio collar wolves was heard in July. We, along with other conservation groups, had filed a motion for a preliminary injunction in February, which was denied by U.S. District Judge B. Lynn Winmill. Although Judge Winmill ruled the case moot, as the special use permit had terminated, some positive things came out of the hearing.

Laurie Rule and Laird Lucas of Advocates for the West represented Wilderness Watch. Ms. Rule highlighted the Wilderness Act's statutory language and underscored that, regardless of IDFG's goals, the Forest Service failed to show that helicopter landings to collar wolves are necessary to maintain wilderness character.

It seemed Judge Winmill understood our concern about helicopter landings in support of so-called research that's not necessary to preserve wilderness

character. In his order, Judge Winmill strengthened his earlier cautions about the incompatibility of helicopters in Wilderness, and he warned the FS it will have to do an EA or EIS on any future projects that involve using a helicopter in Wilderness.

You can read the ruling on our website: [www.wildernesswatch.org/issues/index.html#Injunction](http://www.wildernesswatch.org/issues/index.html#Injunction) 🐾

## Avatar II (continued from page 1)

have avoided the controversy had the agency suggested an alternative location for Idaho Public Television to

obtain its desired footage. Filming in backcountry other than Wilderness could have met the television station's

needs without compromising the Wilderness Act. Idaho certainly doesn't lack other wild public lands where

film crews could film trail work. Instead, we find ourselves in the absurd situation where the agency takes on the Orwellian role of authorizing a "wilderness" experience we view from the comfort of our living rooms, while it degrades true wilderness to produce this virtual experience.



*The following comment was posted on Idaho Conservation League's blog in response to their 5/20 post, "Wilderness Take Two."*

### Filming in the Wilderness Posted by Nellie Bunce on June 04, 2010

I was the crew leader on the Trails project, of which was the center of this controversy. The film crew from IPTV was allowed on our trail project. I withdrew my consent to be filmed as I have strong beliefs that this type of filming should NOT ever be allowed in our Wilderness areas.

My suspicion that this filming was completely unnecessary was confirmed shortly after our trail work began. We were working the Camas Creek Trail, which begins in the Salmon-Challis National Forest and after 4 miles or so it crosses into the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness. The film crew would ask several times a day if we could move any faster, if we really needed to fix everything on the trail, when we would get to the wilderness boundary, all the time with the tone of hurry, hurry, hurry....

It was ridiculous. When we finally moved across the wilderness boundary the cameraman stayed long enough to film 2 of my crew members put up a tent and then the cameraman left. Not a single second of trail conservation work was filmed inside the wilderness. This section of filming for, Outdoor Idaho, was a joke. They could easily have filmed outside of the wilderness and avoided this argument altogether and in doing so showed a concerned and valid wilderness ethic, instead of making a mockery of our last best places, our wilderness.

## Board Member News



**A Vision of Wilderness Stronger Than Ever**—In July Wilderness Watch celebrated board member and co-founder Bill Worf's birthday with a party in Missoula. Bill celebrated his birthday with 60 of his closest friends and family, some of whom traveled from Oregon and Colorado.

Bill was on the Forest Service task force that in 1965 wrote the regulations and policies for implementing the newly passed Wilderness Act. He became the Forest Service's first wilderness program leader, a position held until 1969 when he transferred to Missoula, Montana to serve as Regional Director for Wilderness, Recreation and Lands. After he retired, alarmed that merely designating land as Wilderness wasn't enough to keep it wild, he help found Wilderness Watch in 1989. 



Photo by Jim Miller

**Stewart Brandborg Recognized for Lifetime Wilderness Work**—Wilderness champion Stewart Brandborg was awarded an honorary doctorate on May 15 by the University of Montana College of Forestry and Conservation. Stewart has had a long and distinguished career with a number of environmental and conservation organizations. "Brandy," as he's known to many, worked alongside Howard Zahniser as they shepherded the Wilderness Act of 1964 through Congress, served as Executive Director of The Wilderness Society from 1964 to 1976, and remains a tireless advocate to ensure its proper implementation. He has also worked in the field conducting ground breaking wildlife and wildlands research for state and federal land management agencies. 

## Book Review: The National Park Service and Wilderness (continued from page 7)

suspensions of wilderness conservationists like Howard Zahniser of the Wilderness Society, David Brower of the Sierra Club, and others that undeveloped park land was really not protected. Only after Stewart Udall became Secretary of the Interior in 1961 did the official NPS position on the Wilderness Act change from opposition to grudging support. Miles writes that still the NPS “could not let go of the conviction that designation of national park wilderness was a superfluous and unnecessary step.”

Of course, there has never been a single, monolithic NPS view about Wilderness from the 1930s until today. The author highlights the roles played by NPS biologists like George Wright, Lowell Sumner, and others who “defined ‘unimpaired’ in essentially ecological terms.” They operated like an opposition party within the NPS for decades and advanced a view Miles considers “more compatible with that expressed in the 1964 Wilderness Act,” as opposed to mainstream NPS thinking that promoted automobile access and expanded visitation.

The NPS dragged its heels when it came to the required wilderness reviews in the 1960s and 1970s, according to the book. It also struggled with issues of purity, non-wilderness “enclaves,” and “motor nature trails.” It was only when it implemented the 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), 32 million acres of instant Wilderness in that state, that the author believes the agency

finally embraced the challenges of Wilderness.

*Wilderness in National Parks* is a great addition to the literature of Wilderness. Some minor errors have crept into the text, however. Alaska became a state in 1959, for example, not 1958 (p. 206). Isle Royale lies in Lake Superior, not Lake Michigan (pp. 255-256). The Congress at work in 1978 was the 95<sup>th</sup> Congress, not the 96<sup>th</sup> (pp. 258-259). And airplane use is *not* regularly allowed in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in Minnesota (p. 235), but rather this area enjoys the only airspace reservation in the nation to prevent low flights and float-plane landings.

I also wish that Miles would have examined some of the current NPS challenges. Wilderness Watch’s recent litigation both at Cumberland Island (where the NPS provided motorized van tours in the Cumberland Island Wilderness) and the Olympic Wilderness (where the NPS planned to helicopter in pre-fabricated trail shelters to replace collapsing historic shelters)—together with the agency’s profligate use of helicopters, chainsaws, and other motorized equipment in park wilderness—would indicate that at least some of the old internal struggles over the meaning and management of Wilderness still continue.

Despite these minor shortcomings, *Wilderness in National Parks* is a most welcome book. 🌿

## In memory of V. J. Henry, Jr., 1931-2010

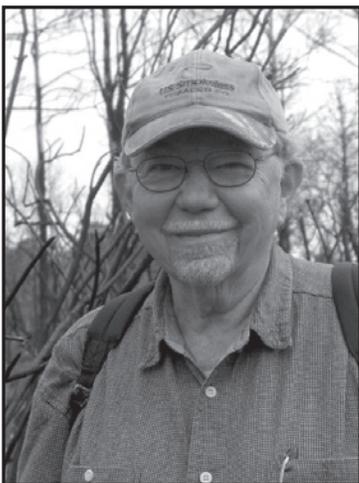


Photo and article by Carol Ruckdeschel

The Georgia Chapter of Wilderness Watch lost a fine man, positive thinker, and tireless leader when VJ departed. He had been diagnosed with terminal cancer and died peacefully in his Savannah home on May 12th.

VJ earned his doctorate in Oceanography from Texas A & M in 1961. He joined the faculty at the University of Georgia and became associated with its Marine Institute on Sapelo Island. His career included teaching, research, and administration. He was on the faculty of both Georgia State University (1982) and Georgia Southern University (1992), where he became Director of the Applied Coastal Research Lab on Skidaway Island in Savannah until his retirement in 2002. He served on the Board of the Cumberland Island Museum from 2007 until his death.

VJ co-authored the geology chapter in the “Ecology of the Cumberland Island National Seashore” report to the National Park Service (NPS). VJ was also involved with research on dredging at the Kings Bay Naval Base.

VJ was intimately associated with the Georgia Chapter of Wilderness Watch, which he chaired, and the Center for a Sustainable Coast. Although he found dealing with the NPS challenging, he spent years trying to guide the agency in protecting Cumberland Island. Wilderness Watch and Cumberland Island have lost a true friend. 🌿

# What kind of organization is Wilderness Watch?



By Jeff Smith, Membership and Development Director

You are supporting an organization that knows the difference between what's on the ground in wilderness (reality) and what the agencies are promoting on a television or computer screen (virtual reality). Let me explain.

As a former magazine writer and book publisher, I have a good ear for clear language and its obverse, distortion and hypocrisy. First, read this:

A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is... an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man is a visitor who does not remain. . . .

Later, the Wilderness Act states, "Except as specifically provided for in this Act, there shall be no commercial enterprise..." Exceptions include commercial services such as outfitters "performed within the wilderness . . . to the extent necessary for activities which are proper for realizing the recreational or other wilderness purposes of the areas."

This summer, the Forest Service unilaterally created a new exception to allow commercial filming in wilderness. Rose Davis, a Region 1 public relations person, defended the agency in a radio interview. Asked if the new policy would allow James Cameron to film the sequel to the hit film "Avatar" in wilderness, Davis said yes and then elaborated,

I think it's going to bring wilderness to your living room or to your radio because I think that a lot of people that don't access the wilderness don't know what it is or its intrinsic value. They're also very different—from red rocks to mountain tops—and so this is also an educational opportunity for us to—with some guidance and direction and oversight—really bring the wilderness to the American people and show them why it's so protected and what its intrinsic value is.

Looking beyond her mangled language, Davis is describing an agency in direct violation of the law, which is choosing to degrade the real landscape of wilderness while promoting its virtual, idealized representation on television. Your contributions are supporting us as we use the clear language of the Wilderness Act to overturn this new policy, and others that threaten to undermine both the letter and spirit of this extraordinary law. ♪

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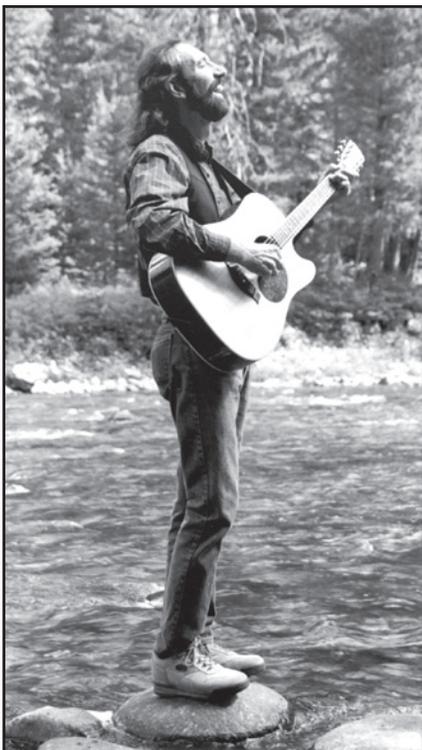
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## Walkin' Jim Stoltz, 1953-2010



**W**ilderness Watch is deeply saddened by the passing of our longtime friend and ally Walkin' Jim Stoltz.

Walkin' Jim was a unique American folksinger and backcountry traveler, who hiked more than 27,000 miles through the wildest parts of North America. He told of his adventures and love of wild places and creatures through his music and multi-media shows. He toured the country over the last 23 years, sharing his stunning photography, humorous and elucidative stories, inspirational poetry, literally awesome lyrics, and emotion-packed vocals with school groups and the public. His last show in his home state of Montana was a benefit in Missoula for The Last Best Place Wildlands Campaign (please see April 2010 *Watcher*). Always the advocate, Jim distributed Wilderness Watch literature at events from coast to coast.

Four years ago, Walkin' Jim organized a 45-state outreach tour with other musicians and authors and worked with hundreds of community organizations to support clean water and protect our remaining public roadless lands and their dependent wildlife. The Environmental Protection Agency recognized his work and presented him its Outstanding Achievement Award.

Walkin' Jim was a champion for all things wild and we will sorely miss him. He returned to the Earth on September 3rd, the anniversary of the signing of the Wilderness Act, at the too young age of 57. 🌿