



WILDERNESS WATCHER

The Quarterly Newsletter of Wilderness Watch

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“Guardians, not Gardeners”

By Kevin Proescholdt

There is a growing trend among wilderness managers and some researchers and ecologists to garden Wilderness, rather than guard it. There has always been a tendency to want to “manage” nature, to do hands-on fieldwork, to correct “problems,” or to restore conditions favoring this species or that. But that’s why wilderness advocates and their congressional allies fought so hard and long to pass the Wilderness Act—to restrain those who want to control everything, from wildlife to landscapes to natural processes.

Howard Zahniser of the Wilderness Society, the Act’s chief author, deliberately chose the word “untrammeled” for defining Wilderness. For him, this word was the essence of Wilderness, the word that best captured its meaning. Although an arcane word then and now, Zahniser rejected the advice of friends and colleagues to replace the word and retained it in the eloquent definition of Wilderness that remains in the law today. “Untrammeled” means unmanipulated and unconfined; it does not mean untouched or “untrampled” by humans, as some



Ventana Wilderness, slated for nine miles of fuelbreaks.

Photo: Tom Hopkins, Ventana Wilderness Alliance

surmise. Rather it describes an area free from human control or manipulation, even if the area has seen human impacts in the past. As such, untrammeled is still the word that best defines the wild essence of Wilderness.

Zahniser, always the careful wordsmith, penned a succinct summary of this intent in a 1963 issue of *The Living Wilderness* magazine. With regard to Wilderness, he wrote as the title of his essay, we should be “Guardians, Not Gardeners.”

Now, however, some wilderness managers and researchers seem to increasingly want to garden Wilderness in ways that would profoundly influence and manipulate Wilderness. Proposed actions are sometimes rationalized for such beneficially sounding purposes as ecosystem health, or for purposes related to climate change. Yet these actions would nonetheless profoundly degrade the untrammeled essence of designated Wilderness. Wilderness Watch has recently engaged two major Forest Service proposals designed to garden the wilds.

Linville Gorge Wilderness

The Linville Gorge Wilderness lies in western North Carolina, and is part of the Blue Ridge Escarpment of the southern Appalachian Mountains. This 11,786-acre Wilderness was an original unit of the

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An extraordinary gift

There were so many upheavals this past year: weather, campaigns, and community disasters. Our world is shifting in many ways. We are seeing extremes of climate and politics impacting our lives and our environment. Our world is becoming more fragile. As the oceans and lands surrounding us undergo pressures from temperature changes, economic resource needs, wide fluctuations in precipitation, high winds and higher flood

levels, we are also seeing confusion and inertia at the political level on how to deal with these new realities. While, as individuals, we are not able to provide hands-on solutions to each concern we have about our surroundings, we are fortunate that Wilderness Watch has claimed the unique, critical wilderness lands of our country as its first and only priority.

For 24 years Wilderness Watch has worked to ensure that the wilderness lands that have been set aside for protection under the Wilderness Act are not degraded. Only about five percent of all land in the country and less than three percent of land in the lower 48 states has been officially designated as Wilderness, yet the job to maintain those lands in an untrammled state indicates the task is neither small nor easy. Yet there is hope.

In these uncertain times, one reliably steadfast and consistent factor has been the support that citizens, neighbors, and friends have given to Wilderness Watch. From piggy bank coins to endowment giving, these supporters and their funds are critical to the success and vision of the organization. One of the hidden truths about our work is that some of our greatest supporters and Wilderness' greatest advocates do great deeds in very quiet ways. Nowhere was that more evident than the recent extraordinarily generous gift from Bob Binger, who died last August and bequeathed to Wilderness Watch the single largest contribution in our 24-year history. It was an incredible confirmation of the value of the unceasing work done by the staff and board of Wilderness Watch. Bob frequently remarked about how WW did so much with so little. With his gift we'll be able to do much more, including more quickly initiating some of our long-range plans for greater wilderness protections.

Our voices need to be heard in order to ensure that we can live a life that supports all of our needs, including the need to experience wildlands that are free of the demands we make elsewhere. Wilderness Watch is very grateful for your support and to be able to represent your voice. Contact us to make sure that your concerns are known. 🐾

—Louise Lasley



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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National Wilderness Preservation System, and includes a 12-mile rugged, steep-walled gorge cut by the Linville River. The river drops a dramatic 2,000 feet in elevation, churning through the gorge before leveling out in the Catawba Valley.

The Linville Gorge Wilderness contains 39 miles of challenging trails, and a wide variety of plant communities and forest types, including old-growth forests that have survived forest fires of the past.

Despite the protection of Linville Gorge for nearly half a century as Wilderness, the U.S. Forest Service (FS) has recently proposed the Linville Gorge Wilderness Prescribed Fire Project that would burn the entire Wilderness two to three times in a 10-year period. The project includes all of the accompanying impacts like cutting fire lines in the Wilderness, and would change the wild gorge from an untrammled Wilderness into a heavily manipulated and managed forest.

Wilderness Watch supports allowing lightning-caused fires to play their ecological role in Wilderness. However, this proposal for the Linville Gorge Wilderness does not propose allowing lightning-caused fires to burn, but rather calls for managers to intentionally set fires at the time, place, and conditions chosen by human managers, not Nature. The outcome will undoubtedly be far different from that caused by natural lightning fires.

Unfortunately the FS has ignored impacts to the untrammled and unmanipulated wilderness character of the Linville Gorge Wilderness in its proposal. Even if manager-ignited fire may bring some perceived ecological or species-specific benefits, human-ignited fire in Wilderness is a significant manipulation of the area, which should be allowed to evolve on its own accord, as set forth under the Wilderness Act.

Wilderness Watch urged the Forest Service to protect the untrammled wilderness character of the Linville Gorge Wilderness. We also urged the agency to conduct its burns and manipulation outside the Wilderness, and to analyze methods of protecting structures outside the Wilderness (wrapping, foaming, removing flammable vegetation in the immediate vicinity of the structures) as an alternative to the proposed plan. Among other points, we asked the agency to analyze why lightning fires alone could not provide the desired benefits to the ecosystem of the Linville Gorge Wilderness.

Ventana Wilderness

Across the country from the Linville Gorge Wilderness, just inland from California’s Big Sur coast, lies the Ventana Wilderness. The Ventana Wilderness today consists of 234,005 acres. First designated in 1969 at 98,000 acres, Congress has expanded this Wilderness four subsequent times with additional laws in 1978, 1984, 1992, and 2002.

The FS has proposed a Strategic Community Fuelbreak Improvement Project for the Ventana Wilderness that calls for cutting and maintaining a seven-and-a-half-mile long, 150-foot wide swath of permanent fuelbreaks, created with chainsaws, heavy equipment, and motor vehicles, and maintained in perpetuity. This proposal, like the one for the Linville Gorge Wilderness, does great violence to the concept of an untrammled and unmanipulated Wilderness.

Will future generations inherit a wild and untrammled Wilderness as promised in the Wilderness Act, or will they have only a facsimile—landscapes that are less developed than other places, but managed and controlled by humans just the same?

This issue is complicated by a series of special provisions Congress added to the subsequent laws that expanded the Ventana Wilderness over time. These special provisions authorized “presuppression” work within the Ventana additions to address the possibility of a fire escaping the Wilderness and burning private property or homes. But none of the special provisions authorized chainsaws, heavy equipment, vehicles, or permanent firebreaks within an area that is to remain “untrammled by man.”

Wilderness Watch has weighed in against the Ventana proposal, arguing it would violate the 1964 Wilderness Act, including the prohibitions on motorized equipment and motor vehicles. We also pointed out that the special provisions are ambiguous and are not mandatory, meaning the FS is not required to conduct the project as proposed. This project would set a terrible precedent, not only for future managers of the Ventana Wilderness, but for the National Wilderness Preservation System.

We also urged the agency to re-examine the appropriateness and effectiveness of fire suppression and presuppression in Wilderness, noting that our knowledge of the ecological role of fire has increased dramatically since the first special Ventana provision took effect in 1978. We also pointed out that the latest FS fire research shows that the most effective means of fireproofing homes in a wildland/urban interface is to remove fuels in the immediate vicinity of homes (not in forests miles away), and

“Guardians, not Gardeners” (continued from page 3)

to fireproof individual structures with wraps, foam, sprinkler systems, use of fire-resistant materials, and creating defensible space around structures.

The Future?

The projects proposed for the Linville Gorge and Ventana Wildernesses are part of a growing trend across the country. As more and more wilderness managers begin to cope with the effects of a warming climate, more and more of these proposals will surface. Despite the often-innocuous

or beneficial sounding purposes, many of these proposals strike at the heart of the very definition of Wilderness.

Will future generations inherit a wild and untrammeled Wilderness as promised in the Wilderness Act, or will they have only a facsimile—landscapes that are less developed than other places, but managed and controlled by humans just the same?

Will we be Guardians or Gardeners? 

On the Watch

Victory Nears for Izembek Wilderness—Your Help Needed



Photo: Christine Sowl (USFWS)

On Feb. 6, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released its Final Environmental Impact Statement that studied a proposed land exchange and a 20-mile road to be constructed through the Izembek Wilderness in Alaska. In a great victory for Wilderness, the agency announced its preferred action is to not approve the exchange and road. A final Record of Decision was due in early March.

But Alaska politicians, led by U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R), mounted a furious attack in response, hoping to convince outgoing Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar to reverse this decision. Murkowski had authored an amendment to require this study in the 2009 public lands omnibus bill that designated 2.1 million acres of Wilderness in nine states. Some in the environmental community supported Murkowski's amendment as a means to pass the full bill.

Wilderness Watch wrote to Sec. Salazar, and encouraged its members and supporters to do as well, and asked him to support the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's recommendation to protect the Izembek Wilderness. A decision had not been issued by the time this newsletter went to press. If you're reading this and a decision is still pending, we encourage you to email Sec. Salazar (exsec@ios.doi.gov) and ask him to stand firm against the intense political pressure and to approve the Record of Decision against the exchange and road as soon as possible. Please cc Dan Ashe, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: dan_ashe@fws.gov.

For more information, visit our website: www.wildernesswatch.org/issues/index.html#Izembek 

Forest Service Drops Plan for Helicopter Use in Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness



Photo: Gary Macfarlane (Friends of the Clearwater)

On Feb. 22, the Forest Service (FS) withdrew its decision to use a helicopter to replace the bridge over Running Creek in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness in Idaho. The action was taken in response to an administrative appeal filed by Wilderness Watch and Friends of the Clearwater. Rather than using a helicopter to haul in pre-assembled bridge stringers, the Forest Service agreed to use a packable design. Wilderness Watch is extremely pleased with the new decision, which will help to keep alive the traditional skills necessary to administer Wilderness without motorized access and equipment. The project will also now serve as a positive example for wilderness stewards everywhere.

Read the appeal and decision on our website: www.wildernesswatch.org/issues/index.html#RunningCreek 

WW Opposes Helicopter Use in Chemehuevi Mountains Wilderness



Photo: Chris Barns, courtesy of wilderness.net

Wilderness Watch is opposing a BLM plan to allow the University of Wyoming (UW) to use helicopters to fly students and materials in and out of the Chemehuevi Mountains Wilderness in California. The students would study the Chemehuevi Mountains Fault system over a three-year period. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) presented this proposal for public comment at the end of January. The Wilderness Act expressly prohibits the landing of helicopters in Wilderness, but the BLM felt that the reference to scientific uses in the so-called public purposes section of that law gives the agency permission to approve the project.

In our comments, we let the BLM know that:

- It should have immediately denied the proposal since it is illegal;
- Scientific research in Wilderness must be conducted in accordance with the Wilderness Act;
- The Wilderness Act prohibits the landing of aircraft in Wilderness;
- The proposal fails the National Environmental Policy Act because it lacks any alternatives accessing the site by foot rather than helicopter; and
- We also requested documentation related to consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the Endangered Species Act (ESA) due to the presence of critical habitat for the ESA-listed Desert Tortoise.

To read our comments, visit our website: www.wildernesswatch.org/issues/index.html#Chemehuevi 🌿

Rein In Unlimited Use in Sequoia-Kings Wilderness



Photo: George Wuerthner

Wilderness Watch has asked the National Park Service (NPS) to rein in unlimited commercial stock use in designated Wilderness in Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks in California. Unlimited commercial stock use has become a heated issue in the Sequoia-Kings Canyon Wilderness (SEKI). Most of our comments on the Preliminary Alternatives for the SEKI Wilderness Stewardship Plan focused on the need to better manage this use.

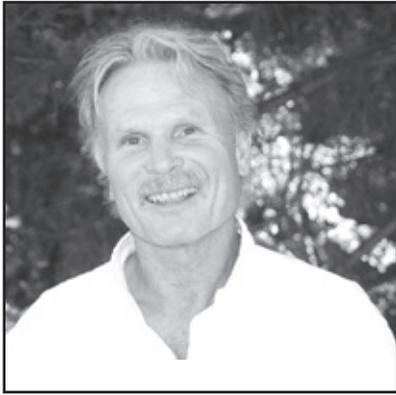
In our comments we:

- Urged the NPS to first conduct a needs assessment to determine whether and the extent to which commercial stock use may be necessary in the SEKI Wilderness, in accordance with the Wilderness Act;
- Noted the NPS's proposed zoning scheme would create sacrifice zones where high impacts would be allowed;
- Noted the Preliminary Alternatives fail to offer any limits on commercial stock use;
- Urged the NPS to reduce group size limits (now as high as 35 people and 20 animals);
- Asked the NPS to remove its own stock animals from the Wilderness when not being used, rather than allow them to graze SEKI's fragile meadows all summer.

Download our comments at our website: www.wildernesswatch.org/pdf/SEKIWSP1tr_2012-11-26.pdf 🌿

State Agency Game Farming Is Not Compatible with Wilderness or Ecosystem Integrity

—by George Wuerthner



With the delisting of wolves from protection under the Endangered Species Act, their management has been turned back to the individual states where wolves occur. Most of these state agencies are adopting policies that treat wolves as *persona*

non grata, rather than as valued members of their wildlife heritage. Nowhere do I see any attempt by these state agencies to educate hunters and the general public about the ecological benefits of predators. Nor is any attempt to consider the social ecology of wolves or other predators reflected in management policies. Wolves, like all predators, are seen as a “problem” rather than as a valuable asset to these states.

State agencies are increasingly adopting policies skewed toward preserving opportunities for recreational killing rather than preserving ecological integrity. State agencies

charged with wildlife management are solidifying their perceived role as game farmers. Note the use of “harvest” as a euphemism for killing. Their primary management philosophy and policies are geared toward treating wildlife as a “resource” to kill. They tend to see their role as facilitators who legalize the destruction of ecological and wilderness integrity, rather than as agencies dedicated to promoting a responsible land and wildlife ethic.

Want proof? Just look at the abusive and regressive policies states have adopted to “manage” (persecute) wolves and other predators.

Idaho Fish and Game, which already had an aggressive wolf killing program, recently announced it will transfer money from coyote killing to pay trappers to kill more wolves so it can presumably increase elk and deer numbers.

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks supports new regulations that will lengthen the wolf killing season, increase the number of tags, and reduce the license

fee charged to out of state hunters. In 2011, the agency requested permission to kill all but 12 wolves in the Bitterroot Mountains, including those within the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, claiming wolves were killing too many elk.

Wyoming is even more regressive. Wolves are classified as “Predatory Animals” in much of the state and can be shot on sight at any time without a license or a “bag limit” in many parts of the state.

Alaska, which already has extremely malicious policies toward wolves, is attempting to expand wolf killing even in national parks and wildlife refuges (it is already legal to hunt and trap in many national parks and refuges in Alaska). For instance, Alaska Fish and Game is proposing aerial gunning of wolves in Kenai National Wildlife Refuge and wants to extend the hunting/trapping season in Lake Clark National Park, Katmai National Park, and Aniakchak National Preserve. The state has also proposed aerial gunning of wolves and gassing of pups in their dens in the Unimak Wilderness, ostensibly to increase caribou numbers. Fortunately, after a national public outcry, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service rejected this proposal.

Similar persecution of wolves to various degrees is occurring in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan.

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks is on a vendetta against a small newly established mountain lion population in that state, and has greatly increased its mountain lion killing quotas.

The point is these agencies are still thinking about predators with a 19th-century mindset when the basic attitude was the “only good predator is a dead predator” and the goal of “wildlife management” was to increase hunter opportunities to shoot “desirable” wildlife such as elk, deer, moose, and caribou.

Many state game farming agencies suggest they have to kill predators to garner “social acceptance” for them. Killing wolves, bears, coyotes, and mountain lions is suggested as a way to relieve the anger some members of the ranching/hunting/trapping community have towards predators. Is giving people who need counseling a license to kill so they can relieve their frustrations a good idea?

Despite the fact that many of these same agencies like to quote Aldo Leopold, author of *A Sand County Almanac*, and venerate him as the “father” of wildlife management, they

What makes state game farming policies so unacceptable is that there is no excuse for not understanding the ecological role of predators in ecosystem integrity. Recent research has demonstrated the critical importance of predators for shaping ecosystems, influencing the evolution of prey species, and maintaining ecosystem integrity.

fail to adopt Leopold's concept of a land ethic based upon the ecological health of the land.

Leopold understood that ALL wildlife play an important role in wilderness and ecosystem integrity. Leopold wrote: *"The outstanding scientific discovery of the twentieth century is not television, or radio, but rather the complexity of the land organism. Only those who know the most about it can appreciate how little we know about it. The last word in ignorance is the man who says of an animal or plant: "What good is it?" If the land mechanism as a whole is good, then every part is good, whether we understand it or not. If the biota, in the course of aeons, has built something we like but do not understand, then who but a fool would discard seemingly useless parts? To keep every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering."*

To keep every cog and wheel means not only keeping species from going extinct, but maintaining the ecological processes that maintain ecosystem function. What makes state game farming policies so unacceptable is that there is no excuse for not understanding the ecological role of predators in ecosystem integrity. Recent research has demonstrated the critical importance of predators for shaping ecosystems, influencing the evolution of prey species, and maintaining ecosystem integrity. We also know that predators have intricate social relationships or social ecology that is disrupted or destroyed by indiscriminate hunting.

Yet state game farming agencies continuously ignore these ecological findings. At best, their policies demonstrate a lack of professionalism. At worst, they show the agencies are as ignorant of recent scientific findings as many of the most vocal hunters/trappers they serve.

The problem is that state game farming agencies have a conflict of interest. Their budgets depend on selling killing permits, which depends upon the availability of elk, deer, moose, and caribou. Any decline in "game" animal populations is seen as a potential financial loss to the agency. Therefore, these agencies tend to adopt policies that maintain low predator numbers. Yet, these same agencies are never up front about their conflict of interest. They pretend they are using the "best available science" and "managing" predators to achieve a "balance" between game and predators.

Because of this conflict, game farming agencies turn a blind eye to ethical considerations. Most of the public supports hunting that avoids unnecessary suffering of the animals. People want to know the animal was captured and/or killed in an ethical manner. In other words, the animal had a reasonable chance of evading the hunter/trapper and is consumed rather than killed merely for "recreation" or, worse, as a vendetta. But when the goal is persecution, ethics and "fair chase" are abandoned.

If the agencies continue down this path, it's clear they will lose legitimacy with the public at large, and efforts to take away management authority will only strengthen. For in-

stance, voters in a number of states have already banned the recreational trapping of wildlife, always over the objections of state game farming agencies. Efforts are now afoot to ban trapping in Oregon and other states may soon follow suit.

The trend towards greater restriction is seen as the only way to rein in the abusive policies of state game farming agencies. In California, voters banned hunting of mountain lions in 1991, and an effort is underway to ban bobcat trapping. Oregon banned hunting of mountain lions with dogs. In other states, there are increasing conflicts between those who love and appreciate the role of predators in healthy ecosystems and state game farming agencies.

Bans on all hunting have even occurred in some countries. Costa Rica just banned hunting, and Chile has so limited hunting that it is effectively banned. I suggest that the maltreatment of predators displayed by state game farming agencies will ultimately hasten the same fate in the U.S. 🐾

George Wuerthner has visited over 400 designated wildernesses across America, and published 36 books on a variety of environmental, geographical, and wilderness topics. He has worked as a biologist, backcountry ranger, river ranger, hunting guide, and wilderness guide. He now conducts research on predators, wildfire, and wildlands conservation topics.

As a further example of the incompatibility between the actions of many State fish and game departments and good wilderness stewardship, the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) is opposing any more Wilderness from being designated in that state because designation does not allow the agency to practice its game farming and habitat manipulation abuses in wild country. A January 17, 2013 article in Prescott's *The Daily Courier* described the State's position:

Wilderness areas and other designations that restrict human uses of public lands have resulted in an "erosion of the department's ability to proactively manage wildlife," the letter says, and at the least result in costly hurdles to wildlife management actions.

Examples in the letter of actions that can be complicated or prohibited in Wilderness include aquatic habitat structures, wildlife cameras and mechanical brush thinning.

This isn't the first time the state agency has expressed its concerns about new designations for federal lands. The Game and Fish Commission voted to oppose the idea of a Grand Canyon Watershed National Monument last May because of concerns about access, conservation efforts and wildlife-related recreation.

While wildlife management practices have often escaped the scrutiny of many wilderness advocacy organizations, the actions of agencies like AGFD should serve as a wake-up call to wilderness advocates about the threats game farming agencies and their allies pose to Wilderness stewardship and the protection of all wild ecosystems. 🐾

WW Urges Greater Protection for Gates of the Arctic



Photo: National Park Service

Wilderness Watch, led by its Alaska Chapter, recently submitted a letter to the National Park Service (NPS) reiterating our support for Option 1 in the General Management Plan (GMP) for Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve in Alaska. Gates is the NPS's premier wilderness park and served as the inspiration for Bob Marshall, who was instrumental in developing the concept of wilderness and its value, and building support for its protection. We asked the NPS to recommend Wilderness designation for all eligible areas of the Preserve, and to implement the strongest measures of wilderness stewardship. We also asked the NPS to keep Gates free of signs, facilities, installations, and trails, and to refrain from hindering natural processes with management actions such as predator control, habitat manipulation, and fire suppression. Let the NPS know you support Option 1 by sending an email to: Gaar_Planning@nps.gov. Download our letter and get background information at our website: www.wildernesswatch.org/issues/index.html#GOAW 🌿

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Tombstone Denied Immediate Access to Bulldoze Miller Peak Wilderness



Photo: Bob Herrmann

A federal court recently denied the City of Tombstone's request to immediately use heavy equipment in the Miller Peak Wilderness (MPW) in Arizona to repair part of its water supply. The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals decided not to block the Forest Service (FS) from preventing the City from entering the Wilderness with motorized equipment. The Court rejected Tombstone's argument that the agency's actions interfere with the state's Tenth Amendment rights. The city failed to prove it was entitled to an injunction for "emergency repairs." Meanwhile, litigation continues in federal district court over the merits of Tombstone's claims to access and own these springs in the Wilderness. The FS has opposed Tombstone's claims in court, and Wilderness Watch has been working to stop Tombstone from invading the MPW with motorized equipment. Download the decision and get background information at our website: www.wildernesswatch.org/issues/index.html#OK 🌿

EPA Sets Haze Guidelines for BWCAW, Voyageurs, Isle Royale



Photo: Kevin Proescholdt

In January, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued final rules to cut haze over the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) and Voyageurs National Park in Minnesota, as well as over Isle Royale National Park and Wilderness in Michigan. Under the federal Clean Air Act, these three areas are classified as "Class I" areas. They are the cleanest airsheds and must be protected. The new EPA rules will require six taconite plants (iron ore processing facilities) in northern Minnesota and one in northern Michigan to install new equipment to reduce sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions, which contribute to haze. The EPA ruled that the earlier state plan promulgated by the MN Pollution Control Agency did not adequately protect the three Class I areas from haze pollution. Six environmental organizations also filed suit in December in federal district court on this issue, trying to force the EPA to also reduce pollution from the state's largest power

plant, Xcel Energy's Sherco plant, which also contributes to haze over the three areas. 🌿

Drakes Bay Oyster Co. Sues National Park Service



Photo: Bill Ingersoll

As we reported in the Fall/Winter 2012 Watcher, Drakes Estero has finally been added to the Phillip Burton Wilderness in California, as Congress promised the American people nearly 40 years ago. Last November, Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar decided to allow the operating permit for the Drakes Bay Oyster Co. (DBOC) to expire so the area could be protected as Wilderness. The DBOC responded to the decision by filing a lawsuit against the National Park Service and requesting a preliminary injunction to allow its operation to continue past the February 28th shutdown date, while the lawsuit is being heard. In February, Federal Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California denied the injunction, deciding the courts don't have jurisdiction

to overrule the Secretary's decision. Judge Gonzalez Rogers also invoked the 1976 Point Reyes Wilderness Act, which designated Drakes Estero as "potential wilderness" and gave the Secretary of Interior the power to decide when the potential wilderness would become designated wilderness. The DBOC appealed that decision and, on February 26, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals granted DBOC an emergency motion that will allow the commercial operation to remain open until its hearing in May. Drakes Bay Oyster Co. also is facing a cease-and-desist order handed it by the California Coastal Commission last month based on numerous infractions of environmental and other rules. ❧

Horses Aid Wilderness Restoration in Pemigewasset Wilderness



Photo: Forest Service

The Forest Service is continuing its restoration of wilderness conditions in the Pemigewasset Wilderness in New Hampshire. In 2009, the agency decided to remove a deteriorating bridge over the Pemigewasset River, along with a second bridge in the Wilderness, a project that Wilderness Watch supported. It was a strong decision by the Forest Service, not only because it would restore the area's wilderness character and remove unnecessary structures, but also because the agency stood up to the opposition from some local and regional hiking/conservation groups. Most recently, draft horses removed some of the bridge materials, a great example of completing a project with the traditional ("primitive") skills and tools called for in the Wilderness Act. The bridges were also dismantled without using motorized

equipment. Thank the Forest Service for restoring this part of the Pemigewasset Wilderness by emailing Forest Supervisor Tom Wagner: twagner02@fs.fed.us.

This good FS work has drawn the ire of anti-wilderness members of the NH Legislature, who have promoted a non-binding state resolution urging the agency to retain all other bridges in Wilderness, blaze trees along trails in Wilderness, and other actions that restrict good wilderness stewardship. If you live in New Hampshire, you might want to contact your legislators urging them to oppose this ill-advised resolution (www.gencourt.state.nh.us/).

Read the resolution at: www.gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2012/SCR0002.html ❧

Mountains With Handrails



Photo: National Park Service

In a disappointing display of temerity, the National Park Service has decided to retain the cables on Half Dome in the Yosemite Wilderness in California and implement a daily permit limit of 300 hikers. Wilderness Watch had been urging the NPS to remove the steel cable system and to adhere to the law and the agency's own policies, which state wilderness visitors must accept Wilderness on its own terms. Because of the cables, Half Dome and the trail leading to its top have become severely overcrowded. The decision reduced the number of people on the trail at one time from 1,200/day to 300/day, an "improvement," but still far more than should be allowed in designated Wilderness. Even the least attuned visitor will not find solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation as called for in the Wilderness Act. Download the decision and get background information at our website: www.wildernesswatch.org/issues/index.html#HalfDome 🌀

California Grazing Reform Project's 2012 Field Season Summary

In summer 2012, for the third consecutive year, Wilderness Watch joined with The Klamath Forest Alliance (KFA) and the Environmental Protection Information Center on the Project to Reform Public Land Grazing Practices in Northern California. The project has been monitoring grazing practices, documenting impacts to water quality, wetlands, and habitat, and using that documentation to advocate for grazing reform. The project has found severe overgrazing in some areas along with the following persistent and widespread problems:

- Riparian vegetation is damaged and revegetation is prevented where livestock congregate.
- Water quality, including in High Quality Waters in Wilderness, is degraded by animal waste and bank trampling.
- Sensitive lakes and wetlands that cattle did not historically access are now being degraded.
- Recreational use of Wilderness is also impacting riparian areas and water quality.

We wish to acknowledge KFA and its volunteers for all their work to move the project forward. Our groups are also beginning to work with interested parties on the return of the gray wolf and managing livestock-wolf interactions and conflicts. Download the report: www.wildernesswatch.org/pdf/GrazingReform_2012AnnualRpt_final.pdf 🌀

Wilderness in Congress

Readers will recall that the last Congress considered several bills that would have severely damaged Wilderness. These bills included the House's Sportsmen's Heritage Act (which would have eviscerated wilderness protections nationwide), the Bishop Border Bill (which would have allowed the Department of Homeland Security unfettered access for building roads, towers, and walls in Wildernesses [and other public lands] within 100 miles of both the northern and southern borders), and many more. Fortunately, these bills didn't pass during the lame duck session of Congress, and they are now dead. They may be reintroduced in the new Congress that began in January.

On the other side of the ledger, no wilderness designation bills passed the last Congress. But many have been

already introduced so far in the 113th Congress. They include good bills free of special provisions or special management language, such as the Alpine Lakes Wilderness Additions in Washington State (S. 112 and H.R. 361), the Sleeping Bear Dunes Wilderness bill for Michigan (S. 23 and H.R. 163), and the Udall-Eisenhower Arctic Wilderness Act for the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska (H.R. 139). Bills with wilderness damaging provisions include two bills in Nevada (S. 150/H.R. 696 for the Wovoka Wilderness and S. 342/H.R. 433 for the Pine Forest Range Wilderness), the Central Idaho Economic and Development Act (CIEDRA) (H.R. 145), and the Forest Jobs and Recreation Act for Montana (S. 37). 🌀

Wilderness and Timelessness *By Jeff Smith*

Wilderness is a part of the past, the present, and the future. It's past because it was the raw material from which we Americans carved ourselves. Even today, wilderness managers must keep technology primitive, limit development, and preserve the wilderness character of these larger-than-life places.

Wilderness is a fundamental part of the American present, with a preservation system that numbers nearly 110 million acres in 44 states. There for all Americans adventurous enough to strap on a pack. A person must be present, too, because a mistake in planning or a blunder in the presence of wildlife can exact a heavy price.

It is our future . . . if we can keep it.

That's where Wilderness Watch's "Forever Wild Endowment" comes in. Wilderness Watch created this fund so that our mission would endure long into the future.

An endowment is a self-propelled funding mechanism. It is a fund separate from our operating budget, and we establish rules stating the organization can only spend a portion of the income earned. In that way, the endowment supports our current programs and helps to ensure

Wilderness Watch will be here for the long term.

Wilderness Watch took the first step about 10 years ago when the board of directors squeezed a few thousand dollars from our operating funds.

Following that came a couple of generous contributions from one of our founders, Bill Worf, and a bequest written into the will of one of our retired board members and his wife—Jim and Gail Curtis. Their generosity bumped the endowment to six figures and set the stage for the envelope that arrived the last day of November 2012.

In it was a check for over \$320,000 from the estate of Bill Worf, who had passed away the year before and left most of his estate to WW.

We are honored that our work on behalf of Wilderness has brought in

this gift that will, in Bill's words, "leave something for the long-term."

"People who care about Wilderness can leave something for the long-term."



Bill Worf (second from right) with his family: grandson Colin, daughter-in-law Leslie, and son Brent.

If you would like more information on making a contribution or leaving a bequest to our Forever Wild Endowment, please send me a note (jsmith@wildernesswatch.org) or give me a call, 406-542-2048, ext. 1. ☎

LOVE THE WILDERNESS? Help Us Keep It Wild!

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

Here is an extra donation to help protect Wilderness!

\$250 \$100 \$50 \$30 \$ _____

I would like to become a member!

\$30 \$50 \$500 \$15 \$ _____
Regular Contributor Lifetime Living Lightly Other

My check or money order is enclosed.

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On our Blog

We encourage you to regularly visit Wilderness Watch's blog. You'll find it on our home page. Our commentaries cover all things "Wilderness."

Here's an excerpt from a recent blog post:

"Snow Kiting and Wilderness"

I recently came across an on-line forum asking whether "snow kiting" is allowed in Wilderness. While snow kiting in Wilderness might still be a rather rare activity, the question bears quite heavily on a variety of activities and the future of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

For those unfamiliar with the sport, snow kiting is an offshoot of kiteboarding (a water sport), but conducted on land and on snow. Like kiteboarders, snow kites use large inflatable kites—some are similar to parasails—that allow

the wind to pull them along or to jump and glide in the air for seconds at a time. Kite lines run to a snow kiter's harness and handle, which are used to maneuver the kite. Though many snow kites use snowboards, some telemark and alpine skiers also use kites as part of their sport.

Snow kiting in units of the wilderness system seems to have increased in recent years. But I believe snow kiting violates the Wilderness Act, even though the federal agencies have been slow in writing specific rules spelling out such a ban. I hope that soon, before this use becomes too entrenched in units of the wilderness system, all four agencies will ban snow kiting in Wilderness for two main reasons.

Visit our website to link to our blog:
www.wildernesswatch.org 

Wilderness Watch's blog: www.wildernesswatch.wordpress.com