



WILDERNESS WATCHER

The Quarterly Newsletter of Wilderness Watch

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Drilling for Gold in Wilderness? We Think Not!

By Jeff Smith

Wilderness Watch has joined four other organizations to strenuously object to the Payette National Forest's decision to allow extensive new gold explorations in the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness (FC-RONR) in Idaho.

The "River of No Return" is literally the wild heart of Idaho. It's shaped like a heart, and its 2.4 million acres pump wildness to all directions of the panhandle of this pyramidal Northern Rockies state. It's the largest contiguous Wilderness in the Lower 48, with 296 maintained trails (2,616 miles). Yet it's even wilder than that, with 1.5 million acres of trailless terrain.

Think steep, dry, Salmon River canyons, so filled with whitewater that if you go there the least bit unprepared, you may never return. Even Lewis and Clark heard the warnings of the Lemhi Shoshoni and decided not to

go in there. The iconic expedition that had been running rivers of the West for two years straight walked north to the Lolo Trail instead of hazarding a journey down the Salmon River.

In our era, the Salmon River country lures more than 40,000 wild country enthusiasts—floaters, backpackers, equestrians, and other adventurers—each year.

As unbelievable as it sounds, the Forest Service (FS) has authorized the American Independence Mines and Minerals Company (AIMMCO) to build

four miles of temporary road into the Wilderness to an altitude of 7,300 feet in the headwaters of Big Creek, a tributary of the Middle Fork of the Salmon River. There, the company will build 11 drill pads and use a skid-mounted drilling rig to drill 13 to 18 core holes 500 to 800 feet deep. Miners will also re-open an 80-year-old collapsed adit, or mine mouth. They will pull water from a nearby creek, leave a waste-rock pile,

and build a trench for fluid wastes and drilling debris. How is this possible in Wilderness?

According to the FS plan, AIMMCO will regularly drive pickups, a seven-cubic-yard dump truck, a 6 X 6 flatbed truck, a D-8 bulldozer, ATVs, and a forklift into the Wilderness. AIMMCO will use compressors and chainsaws for up to three years of explorations. The FS will allow the miners to take up to 25,000 gallons



*Middle Fork Salmon River,
Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness.*

Photo: Rex Parker

In This Issue...

Drilling in Wilderness	Page 1
Presidents's Message	Page 2
In Congress	Page 5
In the Courts	Page 5
Essay	Page 6
On the Watch	Page 8

...and More

Drilling in Wilderness continued on page 3



Wilderness is Last Best Retreat

Spring arrived in Jackson, Wyoming, sometime in February. Winter was—different—this year. If I were an astrologer, I'm sure I could determine why weather, society, and politics all seem to be in turbulence these days. But it is because everything does seem so upside down that we cherish those special

places, people, and activities that give us rest or purpose or maybe even a better perspective on life.

Wilderness is that last, best retreat. A place where we are not followed by all the gadgets and information that typically are ever-present, that draws us into a realm far removed from our personal and professional lives. Wilderness is the place to experience a level of connection, of competence, of reflection and honesty that are fundamental to who we are as human beings; even if we never actually get to visit a Wilderness.

How would it feel to know that there were no longer places on Earth that were wild and untamed, that held mysteries and possibilities? Mountains, valleys, deserts, forests, and snowy landscapes that challenge us and show us that we can overcome fear and accomplish feats that we thought unimaginable, even if the feat is as simple as spending a week, a few days, in the backcountry.

There is magic to heroes in unknown lands, to explorers and intrepid travelers. While some of us can see ourselves going into space, for many of us it is Wilderness that provides the stage for being the best we can be. Wilderness gives us opportunities to test our capabilities and to learn of our strengths, even if they are the same tasks we do at home: preparing meals, finding shelter, or staying safe.

The National Wilderness Preservation System is a visionary ideal. Designating it was also a huge political and societal undertaking. It took many years of debate, drafts, study, and cooperation to produce a law that ensures at least some of the land within the United States is protected for what it is: untrammled, primitive, and shaped by nature instead of humans. And the result, currently, is about 110 million acres free from the trappings of civilization. These wilderness lands allow us to expand the limits of who we are, whether we are hiking in these wild places or just dreaming of what lies out there.

Like all things worthwhile, Wilderness requires care and nurturing. These chaotic times are hammering on our protected lands and on the Wilderness Act itself. Wilderness Watch is instrumental in seeing that we are doing what we can and should be doing to protect our Wildernesses, and their best resource is us, the public. Our voices and our interactions with the federal land managers and with Congress are critical to keeping Wilderness wild. And our financial support of Wilderness Watch means that we will still have these special lands, even if we never visit them. Thank you for your continuing support. 🌿

—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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of water a day from nearby Coin Creek for their drilling. Mining operations could continue 24 hours a day, seven days a week for three summers, with miners establishing a camp and supply depot just outside the wilderness boundary, but commuting back-and-forth in vehicles—driving themselves, fuel, and supplies—almost 200 times each summer, with a total allowance of 571 trips during the explorations.

“They believe that mining trumps all other uses,” said Roger Flynn of the Western Mining Action Project, who, along with Bryan Hurlbutt of Advocates of the West, filed the objections for the four organizations. “They think the 1872 Mining Law lets them do what they want to do on public lands. Even so, it’s rare that you get something like this in wilderness.”

This mine, called the Golden Hand, is a coronary thrombosis ready to strike in the wild heart of the River of No Return.

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The Forest Service contends it has no choice under the 1872 Mining Act but to allow this scale of mining to happen, despite its own regulations requiring a Wilderness unimpaired for future generations, despite an earlier environmental impact statement that drew more than 17,000 public comments, most opposed, and despite an earlier court decision meant to severely limit the project’s adverse affects on the Wilderness.

“It’s an indication of the current mentality of the Forest Service,” Wilderness Watch executive director George Nickas said. “The agency is in a downward spiral when it comes to managing Wilderness. In years past you had leaders like (Secretary of Agriculture) Orville Freeman, who basically told Kennecott Copper, ‘Don’t even ask,’ when the company talked of opening a mine in the Glacier Peak Wilderness. Now you’ve got managers who want to do the mining company’s bidding and who throw their hands in the air when you question the impacts on Wilderness.”

The Golden Hand is not a new mine. A miner named J.M. Hand discovered it in 1889, and another, Claude Elliot, owned the mine during its only active period, from 1932 to 1934. The mine produced 1,485 metric tons of ore, which Elliot distilled to about 85 pounds of gold and about 19 pounds of silver, worth about \$44,000. Since then, the old mine has been melting back into nature, a process that should continue now that it’s in the River of No Return Wilderness.

But the sleeping dog woke up after AIMMCO took ownership of the exhausted claims of the Golden Hand in 1979, the year before the FC-RONR entered the wilderness system. Soon after the company filed a request to validate two of its claims.

This is permissible in some circumstances under the Wilderness Act, but only within specific constraints. By law, the FS must provide mining companies with reasonable access if mineral claims are judged valid. Supposedly, the deadline set for validating claims was December 31, 1983.

And here’s the issue: whether AIMMCO has valid claims that date back before that 1983 deadline.

The saga took a turn toward legal morass in 1987 when the agency denied the company’s initial request to vali-

date its claims. A decision by a federal judge in 2002 reversed that denial and recognized AIMMCO’s right under the 1872 Mining Act to “corroborate preexisting expo-

sure of a valuable mineral deposit.” In other words, Judge B. Lynn Winmill did not allow AIMMCO to open a full-throttle treasure hunt for new deposits but required the company to show “exposure of a valuable mineral in its claim” dating back before the deadline.

The judge also limited the validation work to AIMMCO’s original plan: to “use hand labor” in Claim 1 to clear the entry to the old mine mouth, known as the Ella Portal, and to use “mapping, sampling, trenching, and drilling to confirm the existence of mineral-bearing xenolith” in Claim 2.

The company, under the leadership of a retired South Carolina paint company executive named Conway Ivy, resubmitted a new plan of operations in 2007, and the FS’s draft environmental impact statement (EIS) was issued in 2012. After analyzing over 17,000 comments, the agency released the final EIS on January 2 this year and gave opponents 45 days to object.

Wilderness Watch did so on March 13 joined by Earthworks, Friends of the Clearwater, Idaho Conservation League, and the Wilderness Society. Roger Flynn of the Western Mining Action Project and Bryan Hurlbutt of Advocates for the West wrote our 61 pages of objections.

In brief, our objections document how the FS’s approval of AIMMCO’s plan with its roads, motorized vehicles, mechanized drilling, water quality threats, and daily work-

Drilling in Wilderness (continued from page 3)

ers' commutes violates the Wilderness Act and numerous other laws and agency regulations. We also suggest that the agency has let the mining company's genie out of Judge Winmill's bottle, encouraging extensive and intrusive new mineral explorations beyond the scope of the original ruling.

"Judge Winmill's decision clearly expected the Forest Service to approve a plan that is a reduced version of AIMMCO's 1987 assessment work request," our brief states. "Therefore, the Forest Service should have started with the 1987 plan and then worked with AIMMCO to scale it back as instructed by the court."

In addition, our objections make these points:

- There is no blank check in Wilderness. The Wilderness Act limits all projects to what is "essential" and "reasonable," meaning they must leave the Wilderness unimpaired. In the Siskiyou National Forest, for instance, federal courts have upheld strict conditions, including making miners walk to the mine site rather than drive. The industrial scale proposed at the Golden Hand must be brought back to the original proposal, as Judge Winmill intended.
- This is not a treasure hunt. The mineral explorations must stay within the claim boundaries, and AIMMCO must limit all confirmation activities to known deposits. Judge Winmill wrote, "AIMMCO must reduce the scope of its surface disturbing proposals, focus only on work that is necessary to support validity, and propose mitigation and protective measures." This means doing without its excavator, expanded drill pads, and drilling equipment that would be used to drill up to 18 core holes down to 800 feet beneath the surface. The FS must keep explorations to surface sampling and basic

underground sampling that result in less disturbance than proposed in 1987.

- The agency's water quality analysis is sloppy and inadequate. Three species of fish in the Wilderness have been listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act: Chinook salmon, steelhead, and bull trout. Converting a hiking trail into a haul road for industrial equipment; transporting fuels, solvents, and other toxins along roads following the streams; concentrating waste rock near the Ella Portal; bringing waste water to the surface; and allowing vehicles to ford streams (600 crossings a year) will likely degrade water quality. The FS should have done a baseline water quality study and a mitigation plan before allowing mining. The company's use of up to 25,000 gallons a day of water from nearby Coin Creek could also have an adverse impact on a threatened fishery. The agency also has tacitly permitted some operations—including a 4,000-gallon "mud pit" for drilling fluids and cuttings—in the Payette National Forest's riparian conservation area in violation of its own Forest Plan.

So what happens now?

A resolution conference call with the FS on April 13, according to one of the lawyers present, ended with the agency "not budging on the scale of exploration work, the amount of motorized and mechanized activities, or the lacking analyses we identified in our objections."

As the newsletter is going to press, we are still awaiting the Forest Supervisor's response to our objections. Should the agency choose to go forward supporting the mining proposal, the only remaining course of action is to seek redress in federal court. ❧

Legal Fellow Bolsters Wilderness Watch Programs



Katie Bilodeau

When I was 11 years old, I wanted to drive an SUV, have a golden retriever, and be an environmental attorney when I grew up. Today, when I have to drive, I drive a 1998 Subaru Forester (better), have a border-collie mix (better), and am launching that career. It was not a straight line from 11 year-old point A to 35 year-old point B, although I have always loved nature and have been concerned for the environment. I grew up in Cheyenne, Wyoming, and I earned a master's degree in water resources from the University of Idaho and then a law degree from UI's College of Law with foci in environmental law and Native

American law. My now-husband and I adopted a border-collie mix during law school because I wanted a dog smart enough to draw me into psychological warfare. I got that wish; Ivy will hop onto our futon and stare me down—eye-level—from one foot away when it is time for me to play instead of work. I have recently finished clerking for a judge, and am eager to jump into environmental advocacy with licenses to practice law in Idaho and Washington. I am really excited to be getting some great experience with Wilderness Watch, fighting to preserve the untrammled. ❧

Wilderness in Congress

Arizona Border Bill

On March 17, the Orwellian-named Arizona Borderlands Protection and Preservation Act was introduced in both the House and Senate (HR 1412, Salmon, R-AZ; and S. 750, McCain, R-AZ). This is the latest in a long series of bad bills dealing with the border that sacrifices Wildernesses there. This bill would require the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior to provide U.S. Customs and Border Protection (and its U.S. Border Patrol) immediate and motorized access to any federal lands (including Wilderness) along the Arizona border with Mexico, regardless of any other law such as the Wilderness Act or the Endangered Species Act. 🌿

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Wilderness Recommendation

On April 3, President Obama forwarded to Congress his administration's recommendation to designate an additional 12 million acres of the Refuge as Wilderness. Though the current Congress is unlikely to act on this request, the Administration's bold and visionary recommendation alone adds a new layer of protection for the Coastal Plain, Brooks Range, and Porcupine River Wilderness Study Areas. If Congress eventually enacts the President's recommendation, it would create an intact Wilderness in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge of 19 million acres. 🌿

Sportsmen's Bills

On March 12, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on the so-called Bipartisan Sportsmen's Act (S. 405 and S. 556, Murkowski, R-AK). These bills would open up all Wildernesses across the country to commercial filming for the very first time. The Wilderness Act bans commercial enterprise in Wildernesses, including commercial filming. Wilderness Watch is working to address this issue. 🌿

National Park and Wilderness Waters Protection Act

On April 15, Congresswoman Betty McCollum (D-MN) introduced HR 1796 (later reintroduced as HR 2072 with some technical changes), the National Park and Wilderness Waters Protection Act. This bill deals only with Minnesota, and seeks to protect the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) and Voyageurs National Park from pollution from proposed new copper-nickel sulfide mines. The bill would withdraw federal lands and minerals from exploration and development in the Rainy River watershed. Some of the proposed mines, such as Twin Metals, would be located in this watershed and would drain their pollution into the 1.1 million-acre BWCAW and then into Voyageurs National Park. 🌿

Wilderness in the Courts

WW Pursues Freedom of Information Act Lawsuit to Force Release of Recreation and Commercial Pack Stock Use Monitoring in Emigrant Wilderness

Wilderness Watch's Central Sierra Chapter has long been concerned with the Forest Service's (FS) unwillingness to take action to protect the Emigrant Wilderness in the High Sierra from overuse and abuse, to meet the standards in its forest plan, or to meet legal requirements in administering its commercial packstation permits.

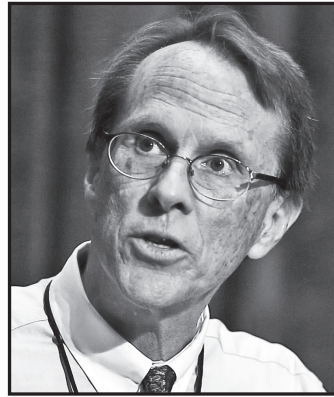
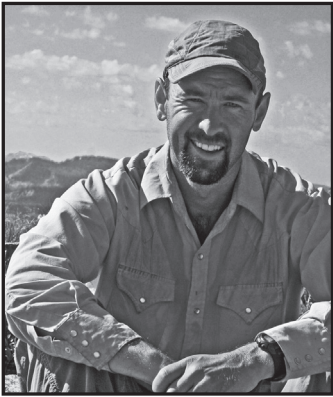
In order to test these concerns and gain a more complete picture of the agency's monitoring program, Wilderness Watch, in August 2014, sent a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to the Stanislaus National Forest requesting information on recreation use monitoring and outfitter guide permit administration for the Emigrant Wilderness. The FS notified us that it would not release any of the requested information pertaining to recreation use monitoring. Wilderness Watch appealed this denial to the FS's FOIA appeals office, but we received no determination on our appeal, even after multiple requests.

The FS was violating several FOIA provisions, and the recreation use monitoring information was needed to investigate concerns that overuse was significantly degrading some areas of the Wilderness. So, on March 18, Wilderness Watch filed suit in Federal District Court to force the agency to comply with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). After we filed suit, the FS changed course and released the recreation use monitoring information. We are in the process of reviewing that information so stay tuned.

The Freedom of Information Act provides the public with an essential transparency mechanism for understanding Federal agency operations and ensuring that Federal agencies are held accountable for their operations. Wilderness Watch regularly uses FOIA requests to seek information about agency administration of Wilderness, and we will continue to press for agency transparency and accountability through the use of the Freedom of Information Act, the provisions and spirit of the Wilderness Act, and through the court system when necessary. 🌿

Wilderness: The Next 50 Years?

—Martin Nie and Christopher Barns



Martin Nie (left) is Director of the Bolle Center for People & Forests at the University of Montana. Chris Barns (right) is a retired BLM Wilderness Specialist/Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center representative. The Article from which this essay stems was published by the Arizona Journal of Environmental Law & Policy in October of 2014.

September 3, 2014 commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the Wilderness Act of 1964. No other environmental law, save perhaps the Endangered Species Act, so clearly articulates an environmental ethic and sense of humility. The system the law created is like no other in the United States. Once designated by Congress, a wilderness area is to be managed to preserve its wildness, meaning that these special places are to be free from human control, manipulation, and commercial exploitation. Celebrations are being planned throughout the country and each will undoubtedly take a look back at the history of this law and the land it now protects. But what is the future of the wilderness system?

The story of wilderness is far from finished. Most at stake are lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Both agencies manage millions of acres that are potentially suitable for wilderness designation. For the USFS, this includes land that is currently managed pursuant to the 2001 roadless rule (35.7 to 45 million acres depending on the inclusion of the ever-contested Tongass National Forest), and state-specific roadless rules covering Idaho (9.3 million acres) and Colorado (4.2 million acres). Also at stake are wilderness study areas (3.2 million acres) and places recommended for wilderness designation by the agency itself (5 million acres).

The BLM manages 528 Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) totaling approximately 12.8 million acres, most of which were identified in the initial BLM inventory of its lands in the late 1970s. The agency is currently updating its inventory of other areas with wilderness characteristics, and a very rough estimate is that an additional 5 to 10 million acres will be identified—not including Alaska. The first inventory for areas with wilderness characteristics on lands

managed by the BLM in Alaska has started, and perhaps 40 million acres will be found.

These lands provide the base from which future wilderness designations on USFS and BLM lands may come. Complicated planning processes, interim management measures, and politics will ultimately determine whether or not these lands are protected in some form in the future. The politics of wilderness is more complicated and challenging in 2014 than it was in 1964. We believe that three interrelated factors will shape wilderness designations in the future: extreme political polarization, trends in collaboration, and increasing demands for the manipulation of wilderness.

Congressional Polarization

We begin by focusing on the increasing polarization of Congress and its impact on wilderness politics. Since the Wilderness Act requires an act of Congress to designate wilderness, what happens in this institution necessarily impacts what happens to wilderness-eligible lands.

The history of the Wilderness Act makes clear that Congressional partisanship and ideology have always factored into wilderness politics. After all, Congress considered some 65 versions of the law over an eight-year political process. Politics notwithstanding, the U.S. House of Representatives still passed the law by a vote of 374 to 1, and in the previous year, the U.S. Senate passed a version of the Act by a 73 to 12 margin.

What has so remarkably changed since these votes is the degree of partisan and ideological polarization of Congress. The so-called “orgy of consensus” that ostensibly characterized the environmental lawmaking of the 1960s and 1970s has all but disappeared in a loud and angry falling out of the center.

Polarization has already impacted wilderness politics. For example, the 112th Congress was the only Congress to actually decrease the size of the Wilderness System. And we cannot recall a House session that has introduced or passed so much anti-wilderness legislation.

There is little reason to believe that polarization will abate any time soon so chances are good that gridlock and dysfunction will characterize wilderness politics, as it does in so many other policy areas. Designations will become more difficult and those opposing them will ask for a more absurd list of political concessions.

Compromise and Collaboration

Some wilderness advocates have embraced more collaborative approaches to wilderness politics, an approach whereby

those seeking additional wilderness make deals with an assortment of interests that want something else, from rural economic development to motorized recreation. While collaboration could potentially break long-time wilderness stalemates, we fear that those collaborating in today's polarized political context may make deals that collectively threaten the integrity of the Wilderness System.

The move towards collaboration in contemporary wilderness politics is understandable for a couple of reasons. First is the nature of the remaining wilderness-eligible lands managed by the USFS and BLM. Many wilderness battles of the past were focused on protecting "rocks and ice," high altitude alpine environments with fewer pre-existing uses than found on lower elevation lands. But many current wilderness proposals now aim to protect lower elevation landscapes—and thus places with more "historic" uses and entrenched interests associated with them. The growing use of motorized recreation also helps us appreciate why some wilderness advocates have a sense of urgency when it comes to making deals to get wilderness designated sooner rather than later. Wilderness advocates fear that these machines will increasingly intrude into potential wilderness areas and make their protection more difficult in the future because of associated impairments and claims of "historic use."

That compromise is part of wilderness, as it is for politics more generally, is not the dispute. What is disputed is whether these compromises have gone too far in recent years and what precedent they set for the future of the Wilderness System. We suspect that multi-faceted negotiations, in which wilderness is but one part of larger deals, will increase in scale and complexity. Wilderness may become currency in lop-sided negotiations—providing something to trade in return for more certain economic development on non-wilderness federal lands.

We are also concerned that those interests collaborating will view the original 1964 law as simply a starting point for negotiations and that there will be increasing calls for non-conforming uses and special provisions in newly-designated wilderness areas, such as language pertaining to grazing, wildlife management, motorized use, and fire. Precedent is a special concern in this context because of how often special provisions—to meet the desires of those opposed to wilderness—are replicated in subsequent wilderness laws. There appears to be a disturbing trend in the collaborators representing "conservation" interests negotiating away central tenets of the Wilderness Act in exchange for simply getting an area called "Wilderness" designated. As a result, recent legislation appears to be enshrining the WINO—Wilderness In Name Only.

Wilderness Manipulation

The third issue pertains to what we believe will be increasing demands to control and manipulate wilderness in contravention of the law's mandate to preserve wilderness areas as "untrammelled." Such demands will likely be made in the context of ecological restoration and efforts to mitigate and adapt to various environmental changes, such as threats posed by climate change. We suspect that future wilderness designations and the politics surrounding them will increasingly use climate change—whether as a legitimate concern, or merely an excuse—to focus on issues such as water supply, fire, insects, disease, and invasive species.

The relationship between water and wilderness will be particularly problematic in the West. Testifying before Congress on the proposed San Juan Mountains Wilderness Act of 2011, the USFS shocked many by opposing the bill's provision to prohibit new water development projects in the new wilderness areas.

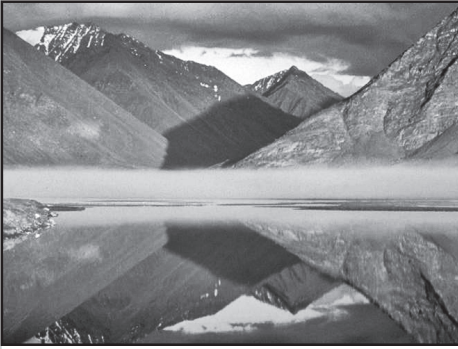
The water issue is also likely to manifest itself through the artificial delivery of water to wildlife populations in wilderness. The USFWS acquiesced to the state of Arizona's request to build two artificial wildlife waters to benefit bighorn sheep within the Kofa National Wildlife Refuge Wilderness, despite the presence of over 60 such installations already in the area. However, this decision to manipulate the wilderness ecosystem was contested, and in 2010 the Ninth Circuit ruled that the USFWS failed to adequately analyze whether these "guzzlers" were necessary to meet the law's minimum requirements. It seems that the courts will defend the undeveloped nature of an untrammelled wilderness where the agency charged with its stewardship will not.

Recently introduced legislation goes even further—beyond simply providing artificial water: the Sportsmen's Heritage Act of 2012 version that passed the House would guarantee that any action proposed by a state wildlife agency would automatically satisfy the "necessary to meet minimum requirements" test mandated by Section 4(c) of the Wilderness Act.

Manipulating wilderness ecosystems frequently involves placing structures or installations in areas that are, by law, supposed to be undeveloped. They may make the area less natural, even though the law requires wilderness to be "protected and managed to preserve its natural conditions." And, uniformly, they manipulate areas "where the earth and its community of life are [supposed to be] untrammelled." These demands may end up as bargaining chips in the designation process—part of the increase in collaboration and compromise that is the hallmark of recent legislation. Manipulating wilderness ecosystems, which now seems

On the Watch

Wilderness Watch Opposes Proposed Research Project Threatening Arctic Refuge Wilderness



Wilderness Watch is opposing an intrusive research project proposed by Northern Arizona University for the Arctic Refuge Wilderness in Alaska. The proposed project is a three-year investigation of glaciology, hydrology, and meteorology in the Lake Peters area on the north slope of the Brooks Range. The Draft Environmental Assessment (DEA) has an alarming number of proposed actions prohibited in Wilderness: helicopter landings, extensive motor boat use, numerous instrument installations, mechanized equipment use, and the placement of a chemical dye in streams. Wilderness Watch supports research, but Wilderness must not be degraded in the process.

We urged the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to reject this project. Specifically:

- The proposed project will degrade the area's wilderness character.
- The DEA and minimum requirement analysis fail to justify that the prohibited actions are necessary to protect Wilderness. Rather, the stated purpose is to fulfill private research interests.
- The DEA fails to provide an alternative other than the proposed action and the No Action alternative. At a minimum, the FWS should have considered an alternative to conduct the research outside the Wilderness or one that excludes or minimizes helicopters, motor boats, structures and installations, and other generally prohibited uses.
- The inadequate public notification and comment period fail to fulfill the intent of the NEPA. 🌀

WW Objects to Feedlot next to Gros Ventre Wilderness



Photo: Mark Gocke/Wyoming Game and Fish Dept.

Wilderness Watch and three other groups have filed a formal objection to the Forest Service's (FS) decision to approve a Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) elk feeding ground next to the Gros Ventre Wilderness in Wyoming.

Over the years, WGFD has created 22 feedgrounds for elk in western Wyoming. The FS can take a step toward correcting the negative impacts of feeding wildlife by rejecting the Alkali Creek feedground permit. The feedgrounds increase the potential for the spread of diseases like chronic wasting disease and lead to environmental damage. WW and its co-objectors are concerned in particular about the negative effects this unnaturally high concentration of elk has had on the neighboring Gros Ventre Wilderness. The agency must uphold its responsibility to protect the area's wilderness character. 🌀

Wilderness Watch Questions Permanent Structures and Installation in Mt. Hood Wilderness



In April, Wilderness Watch submitted scoping comments to the U.S. Forest Service (FS) on a U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) proposal to install permanent structures and installations in the Mt. Hood Wilderness in Oregon. The USGS wants to install four new monitoring stations on Mt. Hood to monitor seismic and volcanic activity. We raised concerns about establishing permanent installations and the use of helicopters for access to the structures, both of which run counter to the letter and spirit of the Wilderness Act. Stay tuned! 🌀

Photo: Steve Butcher

Wilderness Watch Testifies to Protect Kootznoowoo Wilderness



Wilderness Watch testified in Washington, DC, on March 10 at a hearing dealing with the Kootznoowoo Wilderness in Alaska. The hearing concerned the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Angoon Airport. The State of Alaska is hoping to use a section of the 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act to build an airport inside the boundaries of the Kootznoowoo Wilderness. This portion of ANILCA has never been utilized to allow such construction within Wilderness in Alaska, and the State may be hoping to set a precedent with the Angoon Airport. Wilderness Watch, the only conservation organization to testify at the hearing, supported either the No Action alternative or Alternative 12e with Access 12e, which is the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) preferred alternative that would build the airport outside the boundaries of the Kootznoowoo Wilderness. A big THANK YOU to all WW members who commented on the Angoon Airport Draft EIS. Staff from the FAA noticed! 🌿

Boundary Waters Mining Updates

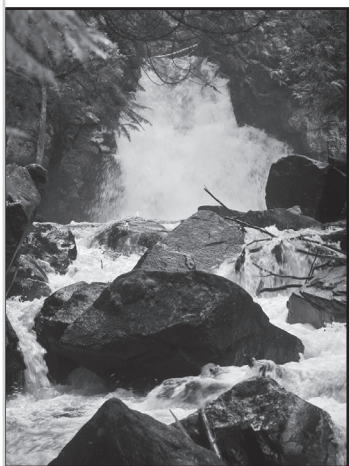


Photo: Kevin Proescholdt

Proposals to develop new copper-nickel sulfide mines near the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) in Minnesota continue to remain controversial. Though iron ore and taconite mining has occurred on northeastern Minnesota's Iron Range for more than a century, mining for copper, nickel, and other precious metals has never before occurred. Acid mine drainage and heavy metals from the proposed mining are likely to cause environmental harm to the BWCAW and Voyageurs National Park. Wilderness Watch and other environmental groups have opposed a Forest Service proposal to exchange some of the state-owned school trust lands inside the BWCAW for federally-owned lands outside the Wilderness; this exchange is widely seen as a step to benefit the development of the new copper-nickel mines, some of which would lie just outside the borders of the BWCAW. On April 15, Rep. Betty McCollum (D-MN) introduced a bill in Congress (HR 1796 and HR 2072) to withdraw federal lands and minerals in the Rainy River watershed (which includes the areas of the proposed mines whose pollution would drain into the BWCAW) from exploration or development. Her bill is seen as a step to encourage the Obama Administration to take similar actions administratively. 🌿

Wilderness Watch Opposes Helicopter Use in High Rock Lake Wilderness

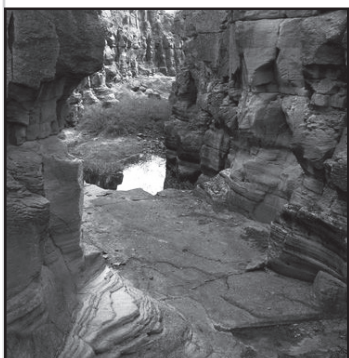


Photo: Bureau of Land Management

Wilderness Watch recently submitted comments on a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposal to use helicopters to ferry tools and materials to a site in the High Rock Lake Wilderness in Nevada where it plans to install fencing around a spring. The spring is only a half-mile inside the wilderness boundary, and the BLM crew can hike an abandoned vehicle trail. The spring is home to the endangered desert dace, and BLM claims wild horses and burros are damaging the spring. In our comments, we suggested BLM focus its efforts on addressing the root cause of the problem by considering capturing the horses and burros outside the Wilderness. The agency should also determine whether livestock might be causing damage. We urged the BLM, if a fence is proven to be necessary, to pack in all materials, tools, and supplies with packstock or on foot. 🌿

Wilderness Watch Weighs in on Proposed Grizzly Reintroduction in North Cascades



Photo: NPS/Michael Silverman

Wilderness Watch has submitted scoping comments to the National Park Service (NPS) on the proposed reintroduction of grizzly bears in North Cascades National Park in Washington, including the Stephen Mather Wilderness. Wilderness Watch strongly supports grizzly bear recovery in the North Cascades provided it can be accomplished in a manner that is both respectful of and protects the area's wilderness character, and does not result in the unnecessary deaths or harassment of grizzly bears.

We made the following points in our comments:

- Wilderness Watch supports the recovery of extirpated species where human actions have eliminated an indigenous species like the grizzly bear, as long as habitat conditions are suitable and the population will be self-sustaining.
- The NPS should look at a range of alternatives to reintroduction, including natural recovery.
- If the NPS chooses to reintroduce bears, the NPS should work with Canada to help ensure the population will be allowed to grow and that bears that leave the Park won't be killed in Canada.
- Any activities related to reintroduction must be carried out in a way that respects Wilderness and preserves wilderness character. For example, motorized equipment should not be used to reintroduce or monitor bears. 🌀

Wilderness: The Next 50 Years? continued from page 7

acceptable to some "conservation" interests, may become a *de facto* political requirement in an increasingly polarized political climate where it seems one side seems to not care how an area is managed as long as it's called "Wilderness," and the other side doesn't care what it's called as long as it's not managed as wilderness.

So, is "Wilderness" an idea whose time has come and gone?

We reflect on the words used by Congress in establishing the Wilderness System in 1964:

In order to assure that an *increasing population*, accompanied by *expanding settlement* and *growing mechanization*, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition, it is hereby declared to be the policy of the Congress to secure for the American people of present and *future generations* the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness.

The italicized words are emphasized because they explain why the reasons for adding to the Wilderness System are stronger in 2014 than they were fifty years ago. In 1964, the U.S. population was 192 million, it is now approaching more than 319 million. Along with this increasing population has come a staggering expansion of settlement, especially in the American West, and a phenomenal increase

in the amount and power of motorized and mechanized use on public lands. The Wilderness System remains vital in protecting places and values that are increasingly rare in modern society.

Now, more than ever, we need the transcendent anchor provided by Wilderness. This is not asking for too much when we consider that roughly 5 percent of the entire U.S. is protected as wilderness, and a mere 2.7 percent when Alaska is removed from the equation. Nor is it too much when we consider that the majority of the U.S. has already been converted to agricultural and urban landscapes, with much of the remaining lands networked with roads. We are not so poor economically that we must exploit every last nook and cranny of our wild legacy for perceived gain; we are not yet so poor spiritually that we should willingly squander our birthright as Americans.

This is why we must fight for "Capital W" Wilderness, as originally envisioned, and make a stand for those last remaining roadless areas with wilderness characteristics that deserve our protection. It also means pushing back against the tide of compromising away the very essence of wilderness, and resisting the urge to manipulate wild places as if they were gardens to produce some desired future as if we knew what was always best for the land.

We need Wilderness, real Wilderness. Now, more than ever. 🌀

Let's Exchange Promises

By Jeff Smith



Close your eyes. Imagine yourself in your favorite wilderness spot, that wild place made just for you. Now imagine being there with your grandson or granddaughter. Imagine your grandchild doing the same.


Now we're getting there. We're getting close to a vision of the wilderness system where wildness exists, as the Wilderness Act says, as an enduring resource, where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. Yes, we're getting there.

Wilderness Watch won't give you a backpack or a ball cap when you join. We're not much for contests and prizes to keep your renewal up to date.

What we hope to give you instead is a promise, actually an exchange of promises. You become a member and then renew your membership each year, and we'll do all we can to make sure that meditation above, about your favorite spot in Wilderness, comes true for you, your grandchildren, and their grandchildren.

My favorite spot, by the way, might be where Big Salmon Creek runs into Big Salmon Lake in the Bob Marshall Wilderness, and you can look all the way down the lake to the South Fork of the Flathead River and the back side of the Chinese Wall on the horizon. Favorite time of day: early morning. Favorite utensil: flyrod.

We're very grateful for your support, and we hope we can continue working together for a long, long time.

You can open your eyes now. 

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

Here is an extra donation to help protect Wilderness!

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Padding would mar wild landscapes

By: *Franz Camenzind*


For the second time in as many years, a bill that would open certain waterways within Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks to “hand-propelled vessels” is making its way through the legislative maze in Washington, D.C. Introduced by Congressman Cynthia Lummis and pushed by the kayaking and packrafting community, the new law is aimed at granting this single user group access to more front-and backcountry waterways in our two national parks. As written this bill directs “the Secretary of Interior to promulgate [to proclaim formally or put into operation] regulations to allow the use of hand-propelled vessels on certain rivers and streams” in the two parks.

Instead of having our park’s waterways managed by resource professionals abiding by the service’s Organic Act, this bill would set as policy the desires of a special interest group teamed with Washington politicians. This is a terrible way to manage our national parks.



A winter visit to Cumberland Island Wilderness

By: *Jerome Walker*

In February, the weather is usually perfect on Georgia’s coastal islands. That’s one of the reasons why America’s wealthiest men formed the exclusive Jekyll Island Club during the late 1800’s and turned that island into a Gilded Age playground. Every winter they repaired to their “cottages” on Jekyll to hunt, fish, play golf and tennis, sail, and otherwise divert themselves. It’s rumored that poor Thomas Carnegie wanted to join the club, but because he and his brother Andrew came to this country as penniless teenagers from Scotland, they were supposedly turned away. Whether this story is true or not, in 1884 Thomas Carnegie purchased most of Cumberland Island, just south of Jekyll Island. He and his wife Lucy then proceeded to build a complex of lavish mansions there. Today, 17 mile-long Cumberland Island, larger than Manhattan Island, is a National Seashore, administered by the National Park Service. Along with places like Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon, it’s been designated a World Heritage Center by the United Nations for its unique natural beauty. Roughly the northern half of the island is a federally designated Wilderness. 

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