



WILDERNESS WATCHER

The Quarterly Newsletter of Wilderness Watch

Volume 26 • Number 1 • Spring 2015

Wilderness Watch Blocks Helicopter Invasion in Wildernesses in Arizona

By Kevin Proescholdt

On January 29th, the Forest Service's Southwest Regional Forester favorably responded to objections by Wilderness Watch and others to halt—at least for now—a massive helicopter invasion of Wildernesses in Arizona for an intensive management scheme for the areas' bighorn sheep populations. In December, Wilderness Watch and allies filed a formal objection with the Forest Service over this plan.

The plan, proposed by the Arizona Department of Game and Fish (AZGF), would last 10 years and involve hundreds and hundreds of helicopter flights and 450 helicopter landings in five designated Wildernesses on the Tonto National Forest. This project is related to a separate 10-year proposal, with 200 more helicopter landings, to monitor



Bighorn sheep on the Tonto National Forest, AZ.

Photo: U.S. Forest Service

and possibly place more bighorns into the Pusch Ridge Wilderness on the Coronado National Forest. The state agency would use the helicopters to capture, collar, translocate, monitor and otherwise “manage” bighorn sheep.

The helicopters would also likely be used to eliminate predators like mountain lions. Though AZGF's documents don't directly mention predator control, they do admit that, “In some instances, predator body samples will be taken for analysis and research investigation,”

a strong indication that AZGF plans to kill predators. Already, the AZGF has contracted with hound hunters to kill mountain lions in the Pusch Ridge Wilderness. Ironically, the use of hounds also stresses bighorn sheep.

The proposal is wrong for Wilderness in many ways. First, it would authorize a massive, long-term invasion of designated Wildernesses by helicopter landings.

Second, the proposed project would harass, capture, and domesticate a population of bighorn sheep that is currently fairly wild. Next, the project would involve killing predators in designated Wilderness. And finally, the project would have the Forest Service abdicate its requirements to protect wilderness character under the federal Wilderness Act to a state game agency that is not required to protect that wilderness character. While Wilderness Watch doesn't oppose all proposed bighorn translocation and reintroduction projects, this project certainly cries out for strong opposition.

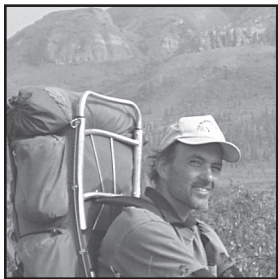
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message from the Executive Director



In one of its final acts, the 113th Congress passed the most destructive public lands and wildlife law in decades. It was attached as a 400-page “rider” to the must-pass Department of Defense budget bill—more than \$600 billion in weaponry, war funding, and veterans’ benefits that most members were unsurprisingly loathe to oppose.

Wilderness Watch spearheaded a rapid, nationwide grassroots opposition to this “rider,” and though our 50-plus allied groups didn’t prevail, we refused to stand idly by and watch this cynical sell-out of our wilderness and public lands legacy go unchallenged. In just a few short days we were able to raise the nation’s awareness of the law’s dubious provisions—giving away to a private corporation 70,000 acres of the Tongass National Forest, stripping wilderness study area protection from thousands of acres of land in Montana for coal mining, handing over sacred Apache homelands in Arizona to a foreign mining corporation, allowing unlimited helicopter use in two Wildernesses in Nevada for heavy-handed “management” of wildlife and habitat, and exempting livestock grazing from complying with environmental laws on over 250 million acres of public land, including tens of millions of acres of Wilderness.

As the details became clear, the media began to question what most initially praised as a good deal to break the partisan logjam in Washington. They began to understand the tradeoffs and the dubious process of attaching public land provisions to the unrelated Department of Defense funding bill. Long-time conservationists bemoaned a process that pitted conservationists against one another—the price of new Wilderness in Colorado, for example, was giving away a huge chunk of national forest in Alaska.

Unfortunately, these and other concerns were lost on a handful of Beltway greens and some provincial groups that still praise the deal. The Wilderness Society called it a “blockbuster” of a deal while the National Wildlife Federation crowed that it “hopes this bill is a forerunner of the kind of work Murkowski can produce as chairman” in the new Republican-controlled Senate. For her part, Senator Murkowski has promised it will be a forerunner since she intends to use her position to force a road through the Izembek Wilderness in Alaska, something many of us have fought for years. It seems almost certain we’ll again be confronted by the specter of congressional Republicans staging a raid on public lands aided by Beltway “greens” grasping for anything they can call a “victory.”

The silver lining is that the shenanigans on the Defense Bill jolted awake many grassroots conservation groups to just how easily their years of work can be instantly undone by Beltway insiders playing “Let’s Make a Deal.” Wilderness Watch has seen it before when Congress used last-minute riders to make legal three unlawfully built outfitter lodges in the famed River of No Return Wilderness in Idaho and to split the Cumberland Island Wilderness in Georgia with permanent roads. So it was heartening to see the response to a weekend call-to-arms to oppose the riders on the bill.

The Defense bill fiasco has given a jolt to grassroots efforts to organize into a loud and effective voice that will stand in the way of what promises to be the most anti-public lands Congress in recent history, and to call out those who are giving away hard-fought environmental gains for political favor. It won’t be easy—never has been—but one can’t mistake the feeling that conservationists around the country are beginning to realize that our public lands and Wilderness are at great risk, and that we can do much better.

Stay tuned, sharpen your pencils, fire up your keyboards, and keep your Congressional delegation’s addresses and phone numbers handy. Together we’ll win the fight for America’s Wilderness. 🌿

—George Nickas



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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Helicopter Invasion (continued from page 1)

The Wildernesses at risk include the Four Peaks, Hells-gate, Mazatzal, Salt River Canyon, and Superstition Wildernesses on the Tonto National Forest, from which most of the bighorn sheep would be snatched, and the Pusch Ridge Wilderness on the Coronado National Forest that would be the recipient of the purloined bighorns.

Bighorns in the Santa Catalina Mountains, where the Pusch Ridge Wilderness is located, disappeared in the late 1990s, and reintroduction has occurred since that time. That disappearance, however, begs the question of why and whether that cause or causes (such as changing habitat or other conditions) have made the Santa Catalina Mountains unsuitable to support a viable population of bighorn sheep now. This is just one of scores of questions that were not addressed or analyzed in either the Tonto National Forest or Pusch Ridge environmental assessments (EAs), but should be thoroughly analyzed in a much more complete environmental impact statement (EIS).



Superstition Wilderness, AZ, one of five Wildernesses on the Tonto National Forest where bighorn sheep would be captured.

Photo: Al HikesAZ, Flickr

The project is also unfortunately typical of three recent disturbing trends in Wilderness:

- The project typifies the over-reliance by the federal wilderness-administering agencies on motorized access in Wilderness, especially access by helicopters. Most of the federal agencies justify motorized access inside Wilderness as the “minimum tool” for a wide range of projects. This reliance, coupled with a growing institutional loss of traditional skills in the federal agencies (knowing how to use packstock, for example, or use crosscut saws instead of chainsaws, or travel and live for several days in the backcountry rather than fly in and out in a day) means the wilderness-administering agencies increasingly turn to helicopters for projects inside Wilderness that can and should be done without motors.
- The project illustrates the willingness of the federal agencies to abdicate their responsibilities under the Wilderness Act to state agencies on issues of wildlife. State game agencies often erroneously contend, and the federal agencies all too often unquestioningly agree, that

the state agencies can do whatever they want for wildlife management in federal Wildernesses and by whatever means they wish. While the Wilderness Act allows the states to manage wildlife in Wilderness, the law does not in fact provide the broad authority for which many states wish.

- The proposal is yet another example of bighorn sheep projects that are incompatible with Wilderness. Bighorn sheep are a popular species with many hunters, and state game agencies are usually quite eager to gain revenue from selling more bighorn hunting licenses. Other current problematic bighorn sheep projects have been proposed in Zion National Park and the High Uintas Wilderness in Utah. The construction of permanent 14,000-gallon water containment structures (“guzzlers”) in the Kofa Wilderness in Arizona (which Wilderness Watch blocked in the federal courts) was purportedly to artificially boost bighorn sheep populations. Additional bighorn “management” proposals exist elsewhere as well.

The Forest Service issued a short Environmental Assessment (EA) and a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for this project. Wilderness Watch and our allies filed the formal objection to the FONSI. Regional Forester Calvin Joyner agreed with us that the analysis was inadequate and instructed the Tonto National Forest to conduct the additional analyses. Joyner wrote, “Based on my review, I find that the analysis presented in the EA and supporting documentation does not adequately address Forest Service responsibilities under the Wilderness Act and other guidance that requires coordination with States related to wildlife and fish management in wilderness.”

Joining with Wilderness Watch in the formal objection are Friends of Wild Animals (FOWA), Sierra Club Grand Canyon Chapter, WildEarth Guardians, and Supporting and Promoting Ethics for the Animal Kingdom (SPEAK). Wilderness Watch is grateful to Arizona attorney, Cindi Tuell, lead author on our groups’ objection. You can read the objection on our website. 🐾

The Relevancy of Wilderness

—Janine Blaeloch

**Editor's note: The following is reprinted from Western Land Project's Winter 2014 newsletter.*

Just a few weeks ago, I attended a conference in Albuquerque marking the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, the law that created the National Wilderness Preservation System. The conference provided a much-needed opportunity to celebrate Wilderness—a designation affording public lands the highest level of protection currently available under our laws. It was also a time to contemplate challenges to Wilderness, whether physical, climatic, political, or philosophical. The latter two provide contexts for major debates around Wilderness these days.



One is the debate regarding the *quid pro quo* land deals lately engineered by some of

the national environmental groups, securing Wilderness designation in one place by agreeing to privatization or development of other public lands. I spoke at the conference on this issue in a presentation entitled “*Quid Pro Quo* Legislation and the Devolution of Wilderness,” which you can read on our website at westernlands.org/publications/papers.

Yet there is another debate roiling around Wilderness that has broader and more chilling implications: one that questions the relevancy of Wilderness, given the impact that humans have had on global systems in the current epoch, which the questioners have taken to calling “the Anthropocene.”

One of the leaders of what might be called the “neo-environmentalists” is Peter Kareiva, Chief Scientist of The Nature Conservancy, which is the richest and possibly least-conservationist organization with such a name. Kareiva’s basic premise is that nature is not fragile and in need of protection, but resilient and in need of more human management. Another adherent, Emma Marris, is the author of *Rambunctious Garden: Saving Nature in a Post-Wild World* and says, as one blogger summarizes: “that wilderness is gone forever; we should all get used to the idea of the environment as human constructed; and that this is potentially a good thing.” The neos like market-based approaches, technology, and placing humans at the center of any action we take with regard to nature. They point out that their movement is optimistic—which in a strange way makes sense, given their embrace of total human agency.

This philosophy has received a lot of play, in the *New York Times*, *New Yorker* magazine, *Scientific American*, *The Econ-*

omist, *National Geographic*, *Smithsonian*. And it has also prompted publication of a book called *Keeping the Wild: Against the Domestication of Earth* (Island Press) comprised of more than 20 essays by environmental thinkers (and doers) who strongly take issue with the neo-environmentalists’ views.

In his concise essay, “Rise of the Neogreens,” English activist and writer Paul Kingsnorth beautifully summarizes and counters the essential arguments of the neo-environmentalists.

For example, neo Emma Marris has stated, “For decades people have unquestioningly accepted the idea that our goal is to preserve nature in its pristine, pre-human state. But many scientists have come to see this as an outdated dream that thwarts bold new plans to save the environment.”

To which Kingsnorth replies “I’ve met a lot of...environmentalists...and I don’t think I’ve ever met one who believed there was any such thing as ‘pristine, pre-human’ nature. What they did believe was there were still large-scale, functioning ecosystems which were worth getting out of bed for to help protect them from destruction.”

Kingsnorth warns that these bold new plans Marris and others are promoting are based on the ideas that “nature doesn’t matter...that the interests of human beings should always be paramount...and that the political and economic settlement we have come to know in the last 20 years as ‘globalization,’ is the only game in town, now and probably forever.” And, he says, “The neo-environmentalists have a great advantage over the old greens, with their threatening talk about limits to growth, behavior change, and other such against-the-grain stuff: They are telling this civilization what it wants to hear.”

As the impacts of our actions become increasingly evident on a planetary scale—and especially where government power goes to those who are pro-unrestrained growth and anti-saving-anything—we are bound to see more of the neo-environmentalists and their triumphalist arguments. The essays in *Keeping the Wild* are a solid response to them, as well as moving reminders of why Wilderness and the wild are as relevant as they have ever been. ♪

Janine Blaeloch is a Wilderness Watch board member and the founder and director of the Seattle-based Western Lands Project, which monitors federal land exchanges, sales, giveaways, and any proposal that would privatize public lands. She has written three books on these issues, including “Carving Up the Commons: Congress and Our Public Lands.” Janine earned a degree in Environmental Studies from the University of Washington, with a self-designed program focusing on Public Lands Management and Policy. Before starting Western Lands Project, she worked as an environmental planner in both the private and public sectors. She has been an activist since 1985.

Wilderness in Congress

As many predicted, the new 114th Congress has sadly started out with a variety of attacks on Wilderness. **Border Bill.** HR 399, the “Secure Our Borders First Act,” would waive a variety of environmental laws (including the Wilderness Act) within 100 miles of the international borders with Canada and Mexico. The legislation would allow road construction and maintenance, vehicle barriers, the use of motor vehicles, and other activities even within designated Wildernesses. It is now awaiting a vote on the floor of the full House of Representatives. The Senate version, S. 208, is still in committee. **Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs).** Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), in part reacting to the strong wilderness recommendation for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in her home state, pushed an amendment on the Senate floor during debate over the Keystone XL pipeline bill (S. 1) that would have stripped away protections for all Wilderness Study Areas in the United States, some 17 million acres. Fortunately that amendment did not reach the needed 60-vote threshold and did not prevail. **Sportsmen’s Act.** Rep. Dan Benishek (R-MI) has reintroduced his “Recreational Fishing and Hunting Heritage and Opportunities Act” (HR 528). As with his bill from the last Congress (which did not pass), this legislation would gut protections for every Wilderness in the nation. Unfortunately, this is probably just the beginning of Congressional attacks on Wilderness. Stay tuned!

Wrap-up of the 113th Congress: The 113th Congress ended in December. Even though there were a few bright spots for Wilderness in this Congress, all in all the 113th Congress compiled a pretty dismal record on wilderness legislation or protection, passing far more bills damaging wilderness than bills protecting wilderness. Here’s our summary of the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly:

THE GOOD

- **Sleeping Bear Dunes Wilderness designation, MI.** 32,557 acres. Clean bill, with no special provisions. Public Law 113-87.
- **Alpine Lakes Wilderness additions, WA.** Adds 22,000 acres. Clean bill, though was part of Defense Bill that sacrificed many public land protections in order to pass. P.L. 113-291.
- **Hermosa Creek Wilderness designation, CO.** 37,236 acres. Clean bill, though was part of Defense Bill that sacrificed many public land protections in order to pass. P.L. 113-291.


THE BAD (all part of Defense Bill), P.L. 113-291.

- **Pine Forest Range Wilderness designation, NV.** 26,000 acres. Many special provisions will make it difficult to protect as Wilderness (motor vehicles, helicopters, aircraft use, and water developments for wildlife).
- **Wovoka Wilderness designation, NV.** 48,000 acres. Many special provisions will make it difficult to protect as Wilderness (motor vehicles, helicopters, aircraft use, and water developments for wildlife).

- **Columbine-Hondo Wilderness designation, NM.** 45,000 acres. Removed part of the existing Wheeler Peak Wilderness to allow for a mountain bike trail.
- **Bob Marshall Wilderness additions, MT.** Adds 50,401 acres, but with problematic weed control language and at the cost of losing 15,000 acres of BLM Wilderness Study Areas in eastern MT. The bill also statutorily locks in existing uses such as ATVs and mountain bikes on tens of thousands of acres of adjacent roadless land that conservationists have long advocated for Wilderness designation.
- **Scapegoat Wilderness additions, MT.** Adds 16,711 acres but with problematic weed control language and at the cost of losing 15,000 acres of BLM Wilderness Study Areas in eastern MT. The bill also statutorily locks in existing uses such as ATVs and mountain bikes on tens of thousands of acres of adjacent roadless land that conservationists have long advocated for Wilderness designation.

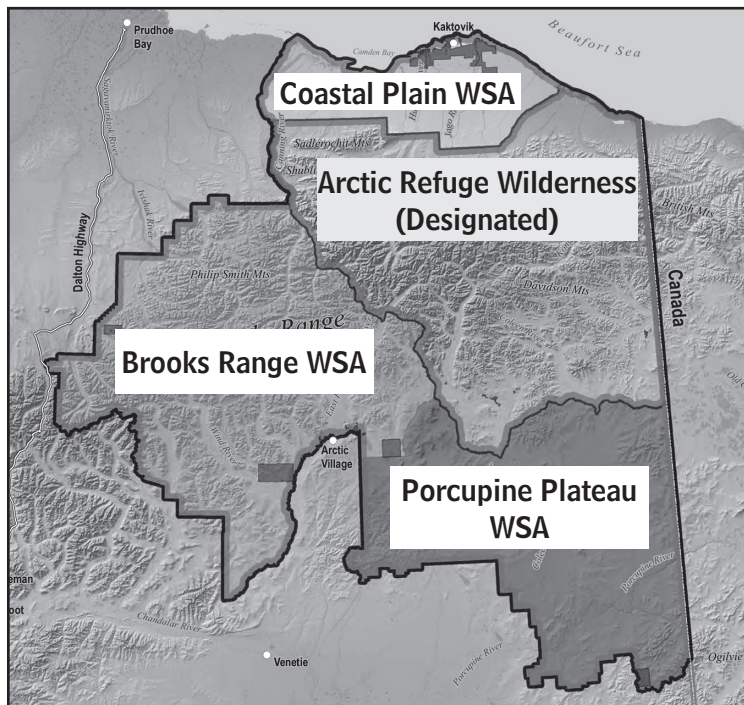
THE UGLY

- **Green Mountain Lookout, WA.** This bill, promoted by the Wilderness Society, allows the illegally-constructed 2009 replica lookout to remain atop Green Mountain in the Glacier Peak Wilderness. P.L. 113-99.
- **Livestock Grazing.** Allows federal agencies to re-issue 10-year livestock grazing permits when they expire and to re-issue them without environmental review or adherence to other environmental laws. This law affects hundreds of millions of acres of national forests and BLM-administered public lands (including Wilderness). Part of the Defense Bill. P.L. 113-291.
- **Idaho Wilderness Water Resources.** Grandfathers in private water systems in the Frank Church-River of No Return and Selway-Bitterroot Wildernesses. Many were built by trespass on public wilderness lands and run to privately-owned inholdings. P.L. 113-136.
- **North Cascades National Park boundary adjustment, WA.** Allows for the moving of the boundaries of North Cascades NP and its Stephen Mather Wilderness to allow re-alignment and reconstruction of the upper Stehekin Road, a “road-to-nowhere” that doesn’t connect with any other road. P.L. 113-291.
- **North Cascades National Park Fish Stocking, WA.** Allows the National Park Service to continue fish stocking in up to 42 of the 91 lakes previously stocked in the Park and in the Stephen Mather Wilderness. Many of these lakes were historically fishless, and, in recent years, the Park was moving towards restoring some lakes to their natural condition. P.L. 113-137.

To see Wilderness Watch’s full chart of wilderness legislation, visit our website. 


Full Protection Recommended for the Arctic Refuge

In a bold move that would protect nearly all of the magnificent Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska, the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is recommending full wilderness protection for more than 12 million Refuge acres, including the coastal plain. In late January, the FWS released its final Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), which will guide stewardship of this iconic wilderness for the next 15 years or more. The FWS chose Alternative E, which Wilderness Watch has been supporting, as its preferred alternative. Alternative E recommends the following Wilderness Study Areas for protection as designated Wilderness: the Brooks Range, the Porcupine Plateau, and the Coastal Plain. The Obama administration is backing FWS's decision to protect the Arctic, and is urging Congress to designate these 12 million acres as Wilderness. Meanwhile, groups like Alaska Wilderness League, Defenders of Wildlife, and PEW have been advocating for the designation of only the Coastal Plain as Wilderness (1.4 million acres).



Additionally, the FWS is also recommending the Atigun, Hulahula, Kongakut, and Marsh Fork Canning Rivers for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

What you can do:

Contact your members of Congress and urge them to support designating 12 million acres of the Arctic NWR as Wilderness. Visit our website to learn more. 

This map shows the three Wilderness Study Areas proposed for Wilderness designation, as well as designated Wilderness in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. By USFWS.



Perennial springs in the Brooks Range Wilderness Study Area. By Sally Bolger.



Porcupine Plateau Wilderness Study Area showing a long line of caribou at the start of their spring migration to the calving grounds on the coastal plain. This illustrates how the various parts of the Refuge are connected and part of a greater whole, and why it is important to designate all of the Refuge as Wilderness. By Fran Mauer/USFWS.

On the Watch

Rein in Excessive Use in Sequoia-Kings Canyon Wilderness



Photo: George Wuerthner

Wilderness Watch is asking the National Park Service (NPS) to rein in excessive commercial stock use in one of the premier Wildernesses it administers in the Lower 48—the Sequoia-Kings Canyon Wilderness (SEKI) in Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks in California. Excessive commercial stock use has become a heated issue here. 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 may be necessary in the SEKI Wilderness, in accordance with the Wilderness Act.
- Rejected the NPS's proposed zoning scheme, which 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.

NPS Proposes Hunting Regulations to Protect Predators in Alaska



Wilderness Watch is strongly supporting the National Park Service's (NPS) Proposed Hunting and Trapping Regulations for Alaska National Preserves, a precedent-setting action that would help protect predators and natural processes within the National Park system. The NPS is proposing to override state hunting regulations and instead prohibit killing brown bears through baiting, prohibit killing wolves and coyotes during the denning and early rearing seasons, and prohibit using artificial light to kill black bears in their hibernation dens within 19 million acres of Preserves. This NPS action responds to the State of Alaska's persistent efforts to increase the killing of predators (wolves, bears, and coyotes) within the National Preserves.

In our comments on the draft regulations we:

- Supported the proposed prohibition on baiting brown bears and recommended that the final regulations include black bears, too.
- Supported the prohibition on using artificial light for killing bears in their dens and opposed the use of dogs for hunting of bears.
- Supported the prohibition on wolf hunting during the denning period when wolves are especially vulnerable and recommended that wolf hunting close April 1 to November 1, rather than the proposed May 1 to August 9.
- Supported a prohibition on using drones and other electronic devices, including motion sensing cameras, to aid sport hunting in the National Preserves.
- Opposed Alaska's proposed prohibition on anyone blocking or interrupting another person's hunting or trapping.

You can read our comment letters on these and other issues on our website, or contact us for more information.

On the Watch continued on page 8

Helicopter Use in High Uintas Wilderness Draws WW Challenge



Photo: Cordell Andersen

Wilderness Watch is concerned about a proposal by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) to use helicopters to capture bighorn sheep in the High Uintas Wilderness. The Forest Service (FS), in an ill-conceived move, decided to issue a Categorical Exclusion (CE) to allow the UDWR to use helicopters in the Wilderness, basically making the decision ahead of the required public comment period. We are worried about the impacts to the Wilderness and bighorn sheep, in addition to the backward process of approving this plan. Though at least one helicopter sortie was flown in 2014, the FS has promised a more thorough review and public input process should more flights be proposed. ❧

Forest Service Proposes Poison and Exotic Bugs for Gospel Hump Wilderness

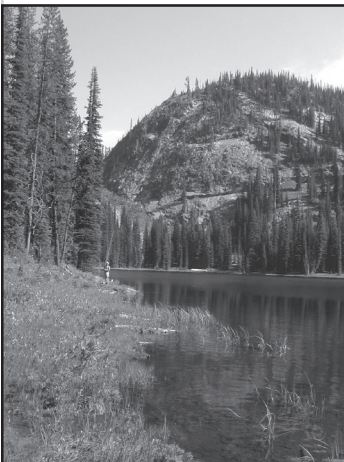


Photo: Gary MacFarlane

Wilderness Watch is urging the Forest Service (FS) to reconsider its weed-control plan for the Gospel-Hump Wilderness in Idaho. The proposal is very disappointing as it encourages extensive trammeling of the Wilderness and will likely have little chance of success in controlling the spread of weeds or introduction of new weeds. This new proposed plan is more of the same failed strategy: spraying herbicides and introducing “biological controls” (exotic insects). Experience has shown that prevention measures are the best, if not the only way to keep weeds from being established in wild areas.

In our scoping comments we:

- Urged the FS to focus on weed prevention in its plan instead. Specifically, we recommended mandatory quarantines of stock, inspection of equipment at trailheads, weed-free livestock food, policies that close off or limit use in weedy areas until weed-free, and reducing livestock grazing impacts.
- Opposed the FS’s plan to introduce exotic insects (“biological controls”). Similar efforts elsewhere have led to unforeseen and uncontrollable impacts.
- Opposed the FS’s plan to use herbicides. ❧

Drakes Estero Finally Wilderness



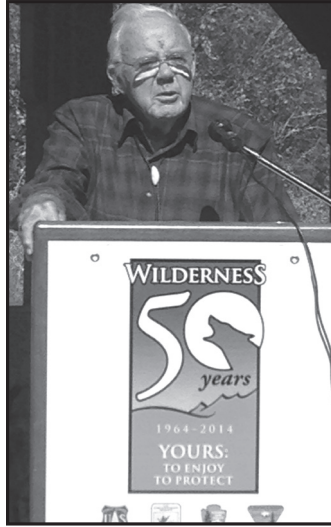
Photo: Bill Ingersoll

At the end of 2014, Drakes Estero in Point Reyes National Seashore in California finally became Wilderness once the Drakes Bay Oyster Company (DBOC), following an ongoing series of legal defeats over the past two years, finally agreed to stop operating its commercial oyster farm. Congress designated the Phillip Burton Wilderness nearly 40 years ago, and Drakes Estero was to be officially added once the commercial operating permit expired in November 2012. This long-awaited good news is slightly tainted by the fact that the National Park Service (rather than DBOC) will be completing the area’s clean-up (and taxpayers will pick up the tab). ❧

A Tribute to “Brandy”

Wilderness Watch is recognizing one of our champions, Stewart Brandborg (“Brandy”), the only remaining architect of the 1964 Wilderness Act and the effort to pass it into law, for his lifetime commitment and work in protecting Wilderness. Brandy worked alongside Howard Zahniser from 1956 until 1964 as they shepherded the Wilderness Act through Congress.

After Zahniser’s early death in 1964, Brandy led the wilderness movement across the nation for the next dozen years, building a network of wilderness activists and shepherding new areas into the National Wilderness Preservation System. Brandy’s unique ability to mobilize grassroots support across the



Brandy delivers the keynote speech at Wilderness Gateway last September.

country has led to an unimagined expansion of the nation’s designated wilderness system, encouraged efforts for additional protection, and inspired preservation of wild lands in countries around the world. Brandy serves as Wilderness Watch’s senior advisor and spent many years volunteering as a board member.

Brandy gave a number of inspiring calls to action last fall in celebration of the Act’s 50th Anniversary. He was interviewed for news articles and was featured in an 18-minute film produced by the Forest Service, “Brandy, Reflections on the Wilderness Act and Advocacy.” (You can view the film and read the articles on our website.)

On the Watch continued

FAA Plan would Spare Kootznoowoo Wilderness from Airport and Road Construction



The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has rejected for now a proposal from the State of Alaska to build a new airport and access road in the million-acre Kootznoowoo Wilderness on Admiralty Island in south-east Alaska. The FAA has instead recommended a site where the lands are privately owned or owned by the local community. FAA’s recommendation is contained in the Angoon Airport Draft Environmental Impact Statement released in early January 2015.

The proposed airport would serve the community of Angoon, the only permanent settlement on the Island which is located about 55 miles south of Alaska’s capital, Juneau. Angoon is currently accessed by seaplane and ferry.

The existing ferry service is adequate to meet current and projected passenger demand, and seaplane service is available approximately 44% of the hours in any given year. The new airport is projected to improve aviation availability to approximately 90% of total hours in a given year.

You might wonder why the FAA would even consider a Wilderness alternative for the airport location, given the Wilderness Act would normally prohibit any such project in Wilderness. It’s because when Congress passed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), which designated the Kootznoowoo Wilderness, it included a special provision that allows for the placement of transportation and utility systems in Wildernesses in Alaska. The allowance isn’t a given; for example it would require approval by Congress and the President for such construction to go forward. The State of Alaska, being what it is, looked straight to the Wilderness for the new airport site while ignoring the much less expensive and less controversial location near the town of Angoon. Fortunately, the FAA is proposing a much wiser course of action.

Kevin Proescholdt will be testifying at the FAA hearing in Washington D.C. on the airport plan.

Changing of the Guard

As we welcomed three new board members, we also celebrated two of our dedicated and stalwart leaders for the many years they served on the board.

WW Welcomes New Board Members

Marty Almquist



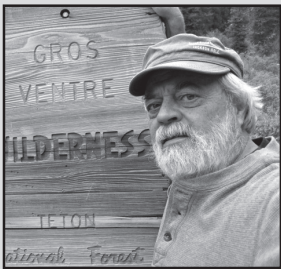
Marty retired from the Forest Service in 2014, with nearly 20 seasons as a wilderness ranger in the Selway-Bitterroot (Idaho/Montana), Anaconda-Pintler (Montana) and Frank Church–River of No Return Wildernesses (Idaho), and another five years administering outfitter special-use permits. She has been inspired by many strong wilderness advocates, including Bill Worf—first introduced while working together during the early 1990s Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Limits of Acceptable Change planning process. Marty has seen first-hand and appreciates the critical role Wilderness Watch plays maintaining the core ideals that define these wild lands. 🌿

Talasi Brooks



A veteran of trail crews across the United States, Talasi joins the Board after earning a Master of Science in Environmental Studies and a law degree from the University of Montana. Her wilderness ethic was shaped by the wilderness staff on the Sierra National Forest and by the staff at Wilderness Watch, who supervised her two internships. After clerking for the Montana Supreme Court for a year, Talasi moved to Boise, Idaho, where she practices public land law and environmental law for a nonprofit law firm. She is a die-hard commuter biker, aspiring backcountry skier, weekend backpacker, intermittent rock climber, voracious reader, and dog lover. 🌿

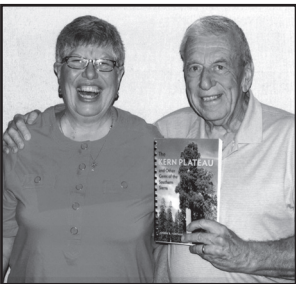
Dr. Franz Camenzind



Dr. Franz Camenzind is a wildlife biologist turned filmmaker and environmental activist. In his career he conducted numerous wildlife assessments, often focusing on threatened and endangered species. Serendipitous opportunities led him to a long career in the documentary film industry where he produced films on coyotes, wolves, grizzly bears, pronghorn antelope, giant pandas, and black rhinos. Although now enjoying retirement in his Jackson, Wyoming home of 44 years, he is still very much involved in local, regional, and national environmental issues. He spent his last 13 years before retiring as Executive Director of the Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance. Prior to that he served on its board for 13 years and was one of the founding board members of the Greater Yellowstone Coalition. 🌿

A Tribute to Two Past Leaders By George Nickas

I attended my first Wilderness Watch board meeting in March of 1996 during my first week of employment at WW. It was a bit intimidating being in the room with such notable wilderness leaders as Stewart Udall, Bill Worf, Clif Merritt, Bill Cunningham, Jim Curtis, and **Joe Fontaine**. So it was with more than a great debt of gratitude that the Wilderness Watch Board of Directors bids adieu to Joe, whose run as a leader at WW eclipsed nearly everyone who came before or since.



Joe joined the Board in 1994 after meeting WW's founder, Bill Worf, and finding an organization that shared his deep commitment to wilderness stewardship. Joe eventually served in every officer position on the Board at one time or another, and he led a critical transition when he replaced Bill as president of the organization. Joe and his dear wife, Bugs—and you can't mention one without the other—wore ruts in the highway between the southern Sierra Nevada and western Montana making the marathon two-day trek for semi-annual Board meetings. And they did all of this while being actively involved in so many other organizations, especially the Sierra Club, where Joe also served on the national board, including a stint as president, for more than a decade.

Past Leaders continued on page 11

But what will always make Joe's and Bugs' participation special isn't a love of meetings or the work of building an organization, but their unparalleled decency and steadfast, lifelong passion for preserving Wilderness forever. Joe started working to protect the Golden Trout Wilderness before there was a Wilderness Act, and he continues watchdogging the Golden Trout and other Sierra Nevada wildernesses to this day.

Joe missed his last Board meeting in November due to an accident that left him with a fractured vertebra in his neck. But it didn't keep him down for long as he continues his local efforts to protect public lands. We'll miss the camaraderie and good counsel of Joe and Bugs at board meetings, but no doubt we'll continue working together to protect our shared Wilderness heritage.

Thank you, Joe and Bugs, for all you do! 🌿

Bob Oset, a long-time Wilderness Watch board member also term-limited at our Fall 2014 Board meeting. Bob served a long U.S. Forest Service career as a wilderness ranger/specialist in the Selway-Bitterroot and FC-River of No Return Wildernesses in Montana and Idaho. Bob was



an early leader in the Forest Service's leave-no-trace program, in its wilderness advisory group, and in organizing a backcountry workers association that fought to improve conditions for rangers and build support for wilderness programs.

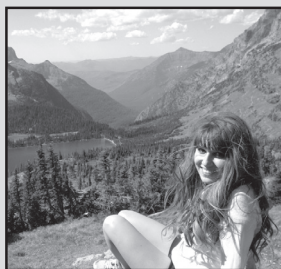
Bob first joined the Wilderness Watch board shortly after the organization's founding in 1989, then rejoined in 2007. Wilderness Watch benefited greatly from Bob's lifelong experiences in wilderness stewardship and the activism that he brought the Board.

We won't let Bob get too far away, even though tracking him down isn't going to be easy given his propensity for skiing, rafting, kayaking, hiking, backpacking, biking or camping most days of the year.

Thanks for all you've done for Wilderness Watch, Bob! 🌿

Legal Interns Bolster Wilderness Watch Programs

Hannah Chessin



Hannah Chessin was one of Wilderness Watch's fall 2014 interns from the University of Idaho School of Law. Hannah is a third year law student studying environmental and natural resource law. She assisted our staff attorney in researching and challenging extensive helicopter use in Tonto and Coronado National Forest Wildernesses.

A Montana native, Hannah graduated from the University of Montana with a degree in Political Science. While in Montana, she worked for an environmental and political non-profit organization and hopes to return to environmental advocacy after graduation. When she's not hitting the books, Hannah loves long day hikes exploring somewhere new, swimming and relaxing at Payette Lake, and riding her bright red city cruiser bike. She

also enjoys the winter months and loves to snowboard and snowshoe. Glacier National Park has a top ranking on Hannah's list of favorite places. 🌿

Patrick Johnson



Patrick Johnson was one of Wilderness Watch's fall 2014 legal interns from the University of Idaho School of Law. Patrick assisted our staff attorney with Freedom of Information Act requests and analysis on motorboat usage in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. He also assisted Wilderness Watch in challenging extensive helicopter use in Tonto and Coronado National Forest Wildernesses.

Patrick was born and raised in the foothills of the Kentucky Appalachian Mountains in a log cabin built by his father along the banks of the Licking River. He has a deep passion for creating a more just planet that prioritizes environmental justice and societal equity. In his spare time he enjoys hiking and fishing and has fallen in love with north Idaho and all of its organisms. He looks forward to working and playing in the west for years to come. 🌿

All Good Books Are Journeys

By Jeff Smith

Nature writer Gary Ferguson's new one, *The Carry Home*, is his 22nd book, and he takes us on multiple expeditions at once, expeditions in wilderness and, perhaps more importantly, expeditions of the mind.

Overshadowing all the expeditions is a bad decision in 2005 on the Kopka River in Northern Ontario, in white-water Gary and his wife Jane had planned to avoid. The portage trail "was blocked by a chest-high jumble of blown-down timber." But the weather was cooperating. They had just completed a refresher course in whitewater canoeing. It was one of those spontaneous, let's-go-for-it moments a person tries the rest of his life to explain.

They "were devoured by a fury of white-water." Gary broke his leg going over a four-foot waterfall, and it took the local search and rescue team three days to find Jane's body.

They were three weeks from their 25th anniversary, just days from Jane's 50th birthday. Gary figures they had traveled together on 350,000 miles of adventures. One wonders whether it would have been easier to have been the one who died doing something she loved, rather than the survivor, alone in the waves of memories, the stuff of two lives reduced to one, the quarter-century of journals and photographs and meanderings, the grieving of friends and family, their now hollow home in Montana, the empty Chevy van, and her ashes.

On their way to the launch-site of their last adventure, in a conversation that came out of nowhere, Jane asked if Gary knew where she wanted him to spread her ashes. She wanted them laid to rest in five separate wild places. Gary calls the five places "unshackled landscapes" ranging "from the red rock of southern Utah to the foothills of Wyoming's Absaroka Range; from the granite domes of central Idaho to the Beartooths of south-central Montana, to a certain high valley in northeast Yellowstone."

We learn that each had been raised in the Midwest, went to college there, but fell head over heels for the West, for what Gary calls a "big embrace of the last untrammelled places" . . . "a fine alternative to the straight roads of Indiana" . . . where he remembers "the lemony grease of furniture polish, the baked meatloaf with ketchup glaze and chicken casseroles floating in mushroom soup." They were headed for "places where miracles not only happen, but where they happen all the time."

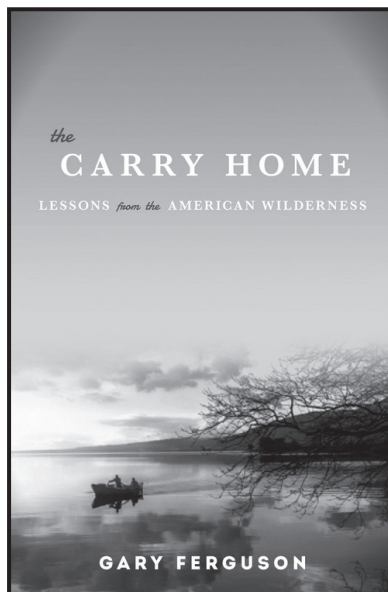
They forged an itinerant life, "a life that would keep wild ground always underfoot," traveling the highways of the West, stopping in campgrounds to hook up their word-processor for Gary to write guidebooks, magazine articles, and to string for the *Los Angeles Times*. Jane taught in nature schools, co-wrote some children's guides, and honed her skills as an emergency medical technician. They finally came to rest in the home of their dreams in Red Lodge, Montana. Jane quit teaching and partnered in a restaurant, keeping her EMT bag close to the door as part of the local search and rescue team. Gary wrote one of his best, *Hawk's Rest*, about the outlaws and outfitters and wilderness rangers in the thoroughfare region of wilderness just the south of Yellowstone Park.

Canoeing was their special love. "It was a good-sense way of traveling in the American West, a region where everything kneels at the river: elk and deer and grizzly and eagle and osprey, raccoon and wolverine and mountain lion, kingfishers and dippers and giant rafts of chattering ducks and geese." That's what got them to the Kopka, and that's when all of it fell apart.

Gary dreaded "[t]he final proof she was gone forever" . . . his "hard goodbye" that would come only with leaving her ashes in the places she loved. He's on the top of his game writing about these hikes and natural history of these places and the critters he meets. But he's also into uncharted territory, hard into the headwinds of grief, a subject that doesn't come easy to most outdoorsmen (or indoorsmen either, for that matter).

And that's the beauty of the expedition. Early on I had some qualms about the nonlinear story-telling, which is highly unusual in a memoir. But I admired the writing and the lyrical descriptions, and I finally told myself to just relax. You're with an expert here, and it's his job to take you to the wild country (real and metaphorical) and bring you out the other side.

This is a courageous journey, which, in the end, got me thinking about some of the things I'd read recently by the philosopher Simon Crichtley, who teaches at The New School for Social Research in New York. The fundamental response of the thinking person to our contemporary cultural reality, Crichtley says, is disappointment. We are profoundly disappointed in our politics and our religion



All Good Books are Journeys continued on page 13

Wilderness in the Courts

South Fowl Snowmobile Trail

Wilderness Watch and our allies recently lost a decade-long fight to prevent the Forest Service (FS) from building the South Fowl Snowmobile Trail next to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in Minnesota. When the FS first approved the trail in 2006, it ignored the negative impact on the area's wilderness character and rejected an alternative route. Wilderness Watch, the Izaak Walton League of America, Sierra Club Northstar Chapter, and Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness then won a district court decision, which required the FS to complete an environmental impact statement analyzing the snowmobile trail's impacts to the area's wilderness character. However, despite a National Park Service (NPS) review that refuted the agency's faulty EIS, the FS again approved the trail. We responded by asking the Court to reject the FS plan on the basis that it violates the Wilderness Act and National Environmental Policy Act. Unfortunately, the court ruled against us on February 13, even though the judge agreed with us that the new trail will introduce new and louder snowmobile noise into the Wilderness, and he described the case as a "close call."

Though we're disappointed with this decision, we're pleased that the judge refused to grant the government's request that he rescind his 2007 decision holding the Wilderness Act could bar activity outside of designated Wilderness areas if that activity degrades wilderness character within the Wilderness. The judge's decision upholds this important precedent for protecting those Wildernesses that pre-date the early 1980s, when Congress started including anti-buffer zone language in wilderness bills. Many thanks to our attorney, Kristen Gast Martilla of Minneapolis, who provided superb legal representation on this lengthy case. 🌿

All Good Books Are Journeys continued

because neither seems to be making any headway changing what Crichtley says is "a violently unjust world, a world defined by the horror of war, a world where, as Dostoevsky says, blood is being spilt in the merriest of ways, as if it were champagne."

Crichtley says the antidote to this deep-seated disappointment is commitment. We're most centered when we com-

Fred Burr High Lake Dam

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals recently ruled that Wilderness Watch's challenge to motorized equipment, including helicopters, for a dam maintenance project in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness (S-BW) in Montana is moot. On January 22, we argued before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals that the Forest Service's (FS) authorization of two helicopter flights into the S-BW for routine dam maintenance activities was in blatant violation of both the letter and the spirit of the Wilderness Act.

The Fred Burr High Lake dam is a small, low-hazard, earthen dam located approximately 6.8 miles inside the wilderness boundary. Last summer, the private dam owner flew in materials and replaced a deteriorating wooden catwalk with a prefabricated, 17-foot steel ramp to access the dam's headgate valve, even though the valve has been accessed for over a century via a primitive log catwalk constructed and maintained from native materials found onsite. Likewise, the dam itself has historically been accessed via foot or packstock from a FS trail. The dam owner argued that the new single-span steel catwalk design necessitated the use of helicopters to transport the catwalk to the site, and the agency failed to require the dam owner to consider a different design or a reasonable range of alternatives that would have instead relied upon traditional skills and materials as required by the Wilderness Act.

The district court agreed with the FS' decision, so we appealed to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. We couldn't get a stay of the district court decision, and the project was completed before the case could be heard. We pursued our appeal, however, because the situation will most likely reoccur with other dams in the S-BW. While the Ninth Circuit panel appeared concerned that the Forest Service had not pursued reasonable alternatives that would not offend the Wilderness Act, the court ruled the case was moot (since the work had been completed), leaving the district court opinion in place and a Circuit opinion on this issue for another day.

Wilderness Watch will continue pushing the Forest Service, and private dam owners, to administer these legally permitted, but non-conforming structures in a manner that doesn't further degrade the area's wilderness character. 🌿

mit ourselves to others and a place we love. This is what Gary Ferguson found with Jane in the life they built together. And this is what he lost. It is only in the difficult work of exploring this loss, steeping himself in it, following through on the ritual of spreading her ashes in wilderness, that he can move on to committing again to others and to places—like wilderness—that have meaning. 🌿

Wilderness50 National Conference

In mid-October, Wilderness Watch staff and board members attended and presented at the Wilderness 50th National Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico. We had been involved in planning efforts for the last several years, and also worked directly with artist Monte Dolack to produce the official national poster commemorating the anniversary. We joined together with some 1,200 wilderness supporters from across the country.

Our board and staff spoke to hundreds of people—in presentations, workshops, and informal gatherings. Wilderness Watch board and staff presented 17 of the conference's total 84 concurrent sessions, or about one-fifth of the presentations. We presented our perspectives on untrammelled Wilderness, wildness and Wilderness, Wilderness in the Courts, wildlife management in Wilderness, *quid pro quo* legislation, the problems of special provisions, our work to protect Wilderness, and more. We met people at our display booth and hosted an off-site party, which drew several dozen activists.

Although the W50 National Conference was a celebratory event, Wilderness Watch and others did sound the alarm. The current state of our National Wilderness Preservation System and the Wilderness Act are both threatened by the fading commitment of federal managers, the brazen attacks in Congress, and the uninspired and compromised positions of many of the Beltway greens.


Some highlights of the Conference included calls to action by the following folks:

- Author Terry Tempest Williams who gave a moving keynote address as part of “Wilderness and Our Sense of Place;”
- Howie Wolke, long-time conservationist and Wilderness Watch Vice-President, who spoke about some of the large, national conservation groups selling out the conservation movement and undercutting the work of grassroots groups;
- Chris Barns, retired Bureau of Land Management representative to the Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center, who spoke about our Wilderness system in peril.

We look forward to continuing the conversations about protecting Wilderness in the face of so many challenges. 

50 Years: A Celebration of Wilderness


Wilderness Watch, along with Friends of the Clearwater and the US Forest Service, gathered dozens of wilderness activists September 12 to 14 for “50 Years: A Celebration of Wilderness” in Idaho. This event was part of the nationwide celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act. The weekend's festivities included an inspiring address and call to action by the only remaining architect of the Wilderness Act, Stewart Brandborg (“Brandy”). There were traditional-skills demonstrations, children's activities, live music by Dana Lyons, and much merriment.

Unlike many other 50th anniversary celebrations, critical discussions were a key component to the gathering and included the topics of preserving natural vs. wildness, fire management in Wilderness, wildlife management in Wilderness, and the future of wilderness stewardship. We hope to continue these discussions in more gatherings like this. 

Wilderness Watch Presentations

Wilderness Watch's Kevin Proescholdt shared a presentation that describes Sigurd F. Olson's role in the national wilderness movement and in the passage of the Wilderness Act at the following locations:

- Dec. 31, Northwoods Audubon Center, Sandstone, MN • Jan. 24, Jay C. Hormel Nature Center, Austin, MN
- Feb. 15, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, MN

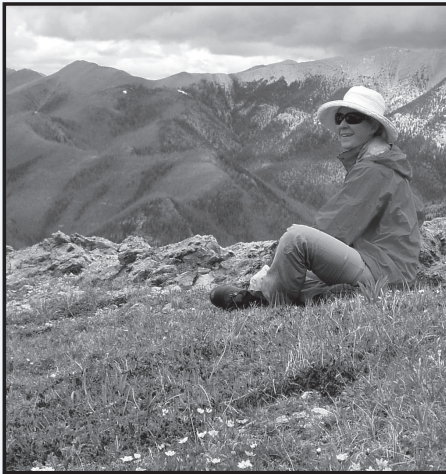
Wilderness Watch co-sponsored the Lake Superior Wilderness Conference in Duluth, Minnesota, on Sept. 5-6, 2014. Kevin Proescholdt gave one of the opening presentations on the history and need for the Wilderness Act. View a description of the conference and links to some of the presentations on the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute's website at: www.northland.edu/wilderness.htm 

Legacy Gifts Power Wilderness Watch

By Jeff Smith

“The beauty of furthering my goals beyond my life.”

Wilderness Watch supporter Cate Campbell spends much of her time trekking, biking, skiing, canoeing, or talking about her and her partner Lee’s next trip. Last fall she watched a wolf walk below where they were hunting, and it never knew they were there.



She became a member of Wilderness Watch after witnessing one of our first successes, the 1990s fight against permanent outfitters’ camps in the Frank Church—River of No Return Wilderness in Idaho.

“I could see that designating Wilderness was only part of the battle,” she says. “Reminding people why it’s valuable and safeguarding it, like you’re doing, that’s also an important battle.”

She backs us up with an annual contribution, and, recently, she told me that she has written a bequest into her will. When I asked why a woman on the leeward side of retirement living a non-stop, modest lifestyle would do so, Cate smiled. She liked “the beauty” of “furthering my goals beyond my life.”

Nice. Wilderness Watch has benefitted in recent years from an increase in bequests, one of which significantly expanded our “Wilderness Forever” endowment. These gifts have inflated our sails. Thanks to them, we are leaving the Great Recession behind and have picked up speed with an expanded staff and new capabilities.

Bequests can be small or large, geared toward general support, or tailored to advance a particular program. Let Jeff Smith know if you, as Cate phrases it, like the beauty of furthering wilderness stewardship beyond your life.



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On our Blog

So-Called Conservation Groups Betray Wilderness

By: *Howie Wolke*

This is the slightly amended written document that I worked from while giving my talk at the 50th Anniversary Wilderness Conference in Albuquerque this past October... The actual speech can be viewed on You Tube.

My name is Howie Wolke and I live in the foothills of the Gallatin Range in southern Montana just north of Yellowstone National Park, about a mile from the greater Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness Complex. I've been a wilderness guide/outfitter for backpacking and canoe trips since 1978. I am also a past President and the current Vice-President of Wilderness Watch.

...The truth is that a deep malaise afflicts wildland conservation... Real activism that highlights education and organizing wilderness defenders has been swept aside, replaced by collaborative efforts to designate watered-down Wilderness...



Wilderness: The Next 50 Years?

By: *Martin Nie and Christopher Barns*

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...

But what is the future of the wilderness system?

...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. 

Visit our blog to read these and other posts: www.wildernesswatch.wordpress.com 