

10 CALIFORNIA'S *Most Threatened Wild Places* 2006



Ken Hedrick

Anza-Borrego Desert State Park

OUR NATURAL HERITAGE AT RISK

California Wilderness Coalition



Special Thanks to:

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OUR NATURAL HERITAGE AT RISK

California's 10 Most Threatened Wild Places

May 2006

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Executive Summary

California is known for its beautiful coastline, sweeping desert vistas, towering redwoods and snowcapped peaks. Californians cherish the natural diversity and beauty of the Golden State.

Over the years, Californians have fought hard to protect the natural splendor of our nation's most populous state. We have preserved public lands to provide clean air and water, a home to wildlife, and places for recreation and spiritual renewal. Unfortunately, many of California's last remaining wild places remain in harm's way. This report chronicles California's ten most threatened wild places and details how we can work together to protect our state's precious natural resources.

Southern California's Mojave and Colorado deserts are faced with an onslaught of destructive proposals that threaten their health and sustainability. Rampant urbanization, illegal off-road vehicle use, high-rise power line proposals, and mining by international corporations pose immediate threats to the desert region's most spectacular landscapes. Shavers Valley, Surprise Canyon, Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, Furnace Creek, and Red Rock Canyon State Park are all threatened by a diverse set of ill-conceived proposals.

Southern California's National Forests provide critical open space to our state's most densely populated region. Where Californians see a biodiversity "hotspot" worthy of the highest protection, the Bush Administration's Forest Service sees prime real estate for toll roads, power lines and other infrastructure development.

The Sierra Nevada mountain range is threatened by the City of Los Angeles's insatiable demand for water in the arid Owens Valley and by increased logging and snowmobile abuse in the Stanislaus National Forest.

Northern California's Klamath River Basin faces an ever-worsening crisis. Salmon populations in this once-prominent salmon fishery are crashing to the point where commercial fishing may be halted entirely. Water diversions and logging in the watershed threaten to permanently destroy what was once among the world's most productive salmon fisheries.

Each of these threats is an opportunity for Californians to stand up for the health and vitality of our priceless public lands and waterways. This report presents clear and viable solutions to all of these threats. In some cases, it means designating new wilderness; in other cases we simply urge government agencies to honor existing legal agreements and policies. If a planning or decision-making process is underway, we indicate how to best balance development and motorized recreation with conservation.

Without exception, California's most beloved parks, forests, streams and deserts remain intact because previous generations valued preservation over exploitation. In order to preserve our threatened wild places we need ordinary citizens to stand up and speak out so that future generations can enjoy the spectacular wild places that make California unique.

About This Report

2006 Ten Most Threatened Wild Places AT A GLANCE

Anza-Borrego Desert:

San Diego Gas and Electric has proposed a 500 kilovolt transmission line through Anza-Borrego Desert State Park with towers up to 16-stories high. The proposed route for the power line would degrade wilderness and greatly impact threatened and endangered species in the area.

Indian Pass:

A proposed mining project threatens this Quechan Tribe spiritual place and critical habitat for the threatened desert tortoise.

Shavers Valley:

Development of a new city, apart from existing infrastructure, in Shavers Valley threatens a vital wildlife corridor near Joshua Tree National Park and the Mecca Hills Wilderness.

Furnace Creek:

A proposed off-road vehicle trail threatens this rare desert wetland. BLM's proposed road through the creek would further damage the wildlife and Native American cultural sites of the White Mountains.

Red Rock Canyon:

Intensive off-road vehicle use impacts both riparian and wildlife values in this beautiful desert state park.

Surprise Canyon:

A proposal for extreme off-roading threatens species in this rare Mojave Desert riparian ecosystem.

Southern California National Forests:

Proposed freeways, power lines and off-road vehicle routes threaten some of the last remaining open space in our state's most densely populated region.

Owens Valley:

Excessive groundwater pumping from the Los Angeles Department of Water is turning this Sierra Nevada jewel into tumbleweeds.

Stanislaus National Forest:

Increased logging and snowmobile abuse in the Pacific Valley roadless area threatens wilderness values and rare wildlife species.

Klamath River Basin:

Excessive water diversion is killing salmon and hurting endangered wildlife, fisherman, farmers and tribes.

The California Wilderness Coalition (CWC) represents 4,600 individuals and 200 businesses and conservation groups committed to protecting California's wild places. For the past 30 years, CWC has worked with communities, policy-makers, activists, and scientists to conserve the Golden State's wildlands.

This is the fifth in a series of annual reports highlighting the ten most threatened wild places in the state. Every year, CWC staff works with partner conservation organizations, scientists, and others to assess threats to California's wild places. After careful analysis, the state's most threatened wild places are selected based on the following criteria:

Urgency and severity of threat: Does the problem pose an immediate threat to an area? What is the severity of the threat? Will it cause permanent damage or significantly degrade the area over time?

Significance: What is the ecological and cultural significance of the area? Is it a unique and/or biologically important landscape in California? Does the area contain animals or plants threatened with extinction?

Updates from last year:

Several places in this report are carried over from the 2005 report because they remain seriously threatened. However, there was a success story from last year's list: in March of 2006 the U.S. Federal District Court of San Francisco upheld protections for the Algodones Dunes. As a result, sensitive habitat areas of the dunes will remain protected from off-road vehicle damage.

In addition, Congressman Buck McKeon and Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein recently introduced the Eastern Sierra Rural Heritage and Economic Enhancement Act (H.R.5149) that would permanently protect much of the Hoover wilderness additions in the eastern Sierra Nevada.

Anza-Borrego Desert

Bryn Jones



Anza-Borrego is among the largest state parks in the US.

Outstanding Values

Anza-Borrego Desert State Park is truly an international jewel. Located in Riverside and San Diego Counties and spanning 600,000 acres, it is among the largest state parks in the United States. Anza-Borrego is a critical refuge for endangered plant and wildlife species, including approximately 60% of California's endangered peninsular bighorn sheep. It is also home to a multitude of historic and cultural resources, which provide glimpses into the human history of the region. Anza-Borrego's magnificent arid landscape of giant boulders, mesas, canyons, sand dunes, and native palm trees attract visitors from around the world. Three-quarters of the Park is designated wilderness under the California Wilderness Act.

Threats

The San Diego Gas and Electric Company (SDG&E) wants to run a 500 kilovolt transmission line the length of Anza-Borrego. A succession of towers the size of 16-story buildings would be constructed through the heart of the park, threatening to skirt established wilderness as well as popularly visited places like Tamarisk Grove Campground. SDG&E submitted an application to the California Public Utilities Commission in December 2005 to build the new line, called the Sunrise Powerlink, from the Imperial Valley to western San Diego County.

The proposed route would run roughly along Highway 78 and out through Grapevine Canyon. At points along this route, only very narrow corridors exist between wilderness areas, leaving open the possibility that SDG&E may encroach on areas designated for permanent protection from development. If built, the line could also be visible from inside the Park's wilderness areas, forever industrializing the unparalleled natural views and spoiling the experience of wilderness as a place untouched by humans. Visitor experience in popular places like Tamarisk Grove Campground would be negatively affected, and wildlife, like the Park's mountain lions, golden eagles, and

endangered bighorn sheep, would suffer. In a place where Native American history is rich, this project would greatly impact cultural and religious heritage.

SDG&E has failed to fully consider alternatives that avoid the Park. Utility watchdog groups such as the Utility Consumers' Action Network and Border Power Plant Working Group are questioning the need for the line altogether.

Solution

High-rise industrial powerlines should not be permitted through Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. Last year, the State Parks and Recreation Commission approved a General Plan for the Park setting high levels of protection for the entirety of the Park and creating 56,000 acres of new wilderness. This behemoth of a project was not approved by that Plan and is not consistent with its goals. The Governor will ultimately decide the fate of this ill-conceived proposal.

Please write a letter to Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. Tell him that Anza-Borrego Desert State Park should be protected and that the State Parks Department should oppose the line going through the Park because there are other alternatives.

Please write to:
Governor Schwarzenegger
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

CC to: Bobby Shriver
Chair of California State Park and Recreation
Commission
P.O. Box 942896
Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

For More Information
Bryn Jones
California Wilderness Coalition
(951) 781-1336
bjones@calwild.org

Kelly Fuller
Sierra Club, San Diego Chapter
(619) 445-4390
k.d.fuller@sbcglobal.net

Indian Pass

Outstanding Values

Indian Pass lies between the Indian Pass Wilderness and Picacho Peak Wilderness in the Imperial County desert. A land of serene beauty, the landscape is a mix of desert valleys, canyons, and washes that make the area rich with plants and animals, including microphyl woodlands, which provide much needed cover and food in this extreme environment. Indian Pass is critical for the survival and recovery of the threatened desert tortoise. The adjacent Indian Pass Area of Critical Environmental Concern was designated by the Bureau of Land Management to protect a unique petroglyph field and other native cultural resources.

Native Americans from the Quechan Tribe have come here for thousands of years on spiritual pilgrimages. Because the place is of great spiritual and cultural importance, the Quechan people have used the area as a final resting place for their relatives, and have traveled its ancient trails and canyons on journeys characterized by a meditative practice called "dreaming."

Although not incorporated into the reservation designated for the tribe, the area remains sacred to many in the Quechan community who continue to visit to perform traditional ceremonies. Degrading Indian Pass would be highly destructive to this community and its way of life.

Threats

We are facing a new type of threat at Indian Pass. In 1987, Glamis Gold initiated the development of mining operations at Indian Pass. The proposal converted 1,400 acres of public lands into a surface gold mine. Glamis Gold planned to use cyanide-heap-leach mining to extract gold from Indian Pass, using toxic cyanide to "leach" gold from the crushed rock. The mine would have left permanent holes, about 900 feet deep and waste rock piles the size of 30-story buildings on the otherwise natural landscape. The mine would also be shockingly inefficient. Experts estimate that the Glamis mine at Indian Pass would only produce 1 ounce of gold for every 280 tons of rock. The project would have permanently desecrated this sacred place.

In April 2003, California Senate Bill 22 was passed into law, requiring that the site of a surface mine be completely backfilled and returned to its original state. According to Glamis Gold, the financial burdens of this process halted development of the mine. In response, Glamis, filed a

claim against the United States pursuant to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Glamis is challenging the effect of the California mining legislation requiring restoration and backfill to mitigate the environmental impacts of the mine on the basis that it restricts their right to profit. If successful, there is a risk that California's backfill regulations could be indirectly rendered null and void, re-opening the possibility of industrial development at Indian Pass and other natural and cultural landscapes.

Solution

In 2005, the Quechan Indian Nation submitted a brief to the NAFTA Tribunal in support of the California measures and explaining the cultural, religious and spiritual value of the Indian Pass area to the Quechan and other Colorado River First Nations.

Please contact the Secretary of the Interior and request that they protect Indian Pass from threats including mining and unauthorized off-road vehicle use.

Please write to:
 The Secretary of the Interior
 Department of the Interior
 1849 C Street, N.W.
 Washington DC 20240



This land of serene beauty is threatened by invasive gold mining.

For More Information
 Courtney Ann Coyle
 Tribal Attorney
 (858) 454-8687
 courtcoyle@aol.com

Pauline Jose
 Quechan Culture Committee
 (760) 572-0661

Shavers Valley

Outstanding Values

The beautiful and expansive Shavers Valley is nestled between Joshua Tree National Park and the Mecca Hills Wilderness. Located 15 miles east of Indio, it is a place of great importance to the nearby Coachella Valley residents and to people statewide. It is also critical to the survival of the threatened desert tortoise. Running through Shavers Valley is Pinkham Wash, a vital wildlife corridor for bighorn sheep and other wildlife traveling between Joshua Tree National Park and the Mecca Hills Wilderness. The valley is a natural desert landscape where precious groundwater shows itself through springs and seeps, including Cottonwood Springs and Sheephole Oasis.

Threats

A Southern California developer, GLC, is planning to pave over Shavers Valley to construct 15,000 sprawling housing units. This ill-conceived proposal would create a city of 45,000 residents outside of the Coachella Valley's current urban boundaries.

Development in Shavers Valley would be financially and ecologically devastating for Riverside County. The project would permanently destroy important desert habitat between Joshua Tree National Park and the Mecca Hills Wilderness. Intense groundwater pumping for the development would threaten rare desert waters such as Hidden Springs, Sheephole Oasis and Cottonwood Springs - each critical to the survival of the desert's web of life.

Paving over Shavers Valley would undermine 10 years of conservation planning efforts by local Coachella Valley governments and stakeholders. Since 1995, local governments, developers and conservationists have worked together to create the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan, which sets forth a vision of development and conservation for the Coachella Valley's next 75 years. Development in Shavers Valley would single-handedly exceed the amount of habitat disturbance allowed in the entire habitat conservation plan.



Bryn Jones

Shaver's Valley is an irreplaceable habitat for wildlife, especially the desert tortoise and bighorn sheep. Precious groundwater shows itself through springs and seeps, including Cottonwood Springs and Sheephole Oasis, and clear skies are not yet muddied by smog.

Solution

Riverside County should reject this project. The development of an entirely new city in this fragile desert landscape would have devastating effects on the natural and cultural resources of Shavers Valley. Please write to Supervisor Roy Wilson. Ask him to oppose the development in Shavers Valley.

Please write to:
 Roy Wilson, Riverside County Supervisor
 73-710 Fred Waring Drive, Suite 222
 Palm Desert, CA 92260

For More Information

Bryn Jones
 California Wilderness Coalition
 (951) 781-1336
 bjones@calwild.org

Jeff Morgan
 Sierra Club, Tahquitz Group
 (760) 324-8696
 jckmorgan@aol.com

Furnace Creek

Outstanding Values

Flowing down the eastern slope of the White Mountains, North America's largest desert mountain range, the green ribbon of Furnace Creek stands out in stark contrast against the serene hills of cactus and pinyon pine. Shaded by mature cottonwoods, willows and birch trees, Furnace Creek's cattail wetlands are the life support system for deer, hawks, mountain lions, bobcats and quail in this northern Mojave Desert canyon. The health of this isolated stream is tied directly to the health of regional desert wildlife.

Threats

While any semblance of a road in Furnace Creek washed out in the early 1980s, a handful of vehicles have trespassed into this rare desert wetland every year. All-terrain vehicles, jeeps and motorcycles have punched through the creek and crashed through trees, bushes and bogs, leaving muddy tracks in their wake.

Because of the obvious damage done to this fragile desert habitat, the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) closed this area to motorized travel to protect its unique values. Unbelievably, the agencies now propose to reverse their decision to protect Furnace Creek and actually build a new road through this rare desert oasis in violation of federal and state laws designed to protect critical desert wetlands.

Archeologists have documented nearly 30 Native American cultural sites along the proposed new route. The agencies are creating a management headache for themselves. They have acknowledged problems in the past with keeping rogue vehicles out of nearby Cottonwood Basin, home to the threatened Paiute cutthroat trout.

Solution

Spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to build a road up a desert stream to accommodate an estimated twenty vehicles a year makes no sense in our age of rapidly declining land management budgets, services and staff. For example, the Inyo National Forest has recently begun closing the visitor's center at Mono Lake, which serves over 115,000 people a year, due to a lack of funds. Yet it is aggressively spending funds to justify building a road that will wash out time and time again in the remote White Mountains.

Furnace Creek's cattail wetlands are the life support system for deer, hawks, mountain lions, bobcats and quail in this northern Mojave Desert canyon. Irresponsible off-road vehicle use has damaged this fragile habitat.



Paul McFarland

There are over 3,600 miles of dirt road on the Inyo National Forest alone, but only one Furnace Creek where deer can drink, birds nest and countless aquatic animals live. It is neither sensible nor balanced to allow a small group of extreme off-road vehicle users to run roughshod over decades of scientifically-based land management protecting unique desert wetlands.

By maintaining the legally-mandated protection of Furnace Creek, the BLM and Forest Service can turn their limited resources to better serve the millions of Americans who visit our desert lands rather than wastefully pander to a vocal minority of extreme off-road vehicle advocates.

Please write the Regional Forester and BLM State Director and urge them to make sound use of your tax dollars to benefit the land and the majority of public land users, not a handful of off-road extremists.

Please write to:
Bernie Weingardt, Regional Forester
USDA Forest Service - R5
1323 Club Drive
Vallejo, CA 94592

Mike Pool, State Director
Bureau of Land Management
2800 Cottage Way
Sacramento, CA 95825

For More Information
Paul McFarland
Friends of the Inyo
(760) 873-6400
www.friendsoftheinyo.org

Red Rock Canyon

Outstanding Values

Red Rock Canyon State Park is known for its multi-colored rock formations, cliffs and buttes. The Park is located in a transition zone from the Sierra Nevada to the Mojave Desert, containing a variety of unique and diverse habitats.

Red Rock Canyon is home to an assortment of rare plants and animals. The area hosts endemic snails, scorpions, several species of endemic moths, nesting golden eagles, and prairie falcons. Both the endangered Mohave ground squirrel and the endangered desert tortoise depend on Red Rock Canyon for survival.

The Park includes one of the best fossil beds in North America and protects the cultural heritage of the Kawaiisu Indians. Thousands of hikers, bikers, birders and campers visit Red Rock Canyon for its serene natural beauty.

Threats

In 1994, the Park tripled in size when the 17,000 acre Last Chance Canyon additions were added to the park. Last Chance Canyon contains important desert riparian woodland in the midst of this arid desert park. Unfortunately, this magnificent canyon is being damaged by poorly managed off-road vehicle use that disturbs desert habitat, degrades the wetlands, and disrupts the quiet serenity of the park.

In 2003, the Department of Parks and Recreation came up with a balanced recreation plan that would have closed the most damaging off-road vehicle routes within the park. Unfortunately, the Department has yet to move forward with their "preferred alternative" plan and have decided instead to allow off-road vehicle abuse to continue in Last Chance Canyon.

Conservationists are concerned that the Department decided not to implement their preferred alternative, only after closed-door meetings with off-road vehicle industry groups. Off-road vehicle abuse continues despite the well-documented negative impacts to wildlife habitat and visitor experience within the Park. Irreplaceable Native American heritage sites have been seriously damaged.

Solution

As a state park, Red Rock Canyon should be managed to preserve its delicate natural resources for Californians and future generations to enjoy. California's Department of



Bryn Jones

Known for its striking white and red rock formations, cliffs, and buttes, Red Rock Canyon is one the most diverse mojave habitats.

Parks and Recreation must prepare a management plan that provides adequate protection for the important cultural and natural heritage values of Red Rock Canyon. Off-road vehicle routes that damage natural or cultural resources must be closed so that the park can be preserved in perpetuity.

Please contact Ruth Coleman, Director of the California Department of Parks and Recreation to express your support for a balanced management plan that protects Red Rock Canyon State Park from off-road vehicle damage.

Please write to:
 Ruth Coleman, Director
 California Department of Parks & Recreation
 1416 9th St, Rm 1405
 Sacramento, CA 95814

For More Information

Bryn Jones
 California Wilderness Coalition
 (951) 781-1336

Karen Schambach
 Public Employees for
 Environmental Responsibility
 (530) 333-1106

Surprise Canyon

Bryn Jones



Surprise Canyon provides a rare wetland-riparian habitat, containing the highest volume spring-fed perennial creek in the Mojave

Outstanding Values

Nestled in the Panamint Mountains, Surprise Canyon is a lush riparian ecosystem. Containing the highest volume spring-fed perennial creek in the Mojave Desert, the canyon is home to many rare species. Bighorn sheep, the Panamint alligator lizard, and the Panamint daisy can be found in the Surprise Canyon Wilderness that surrounds the creek. Surprise Canyon is a popular trek for hikers, birders and photographers leading to the long-deserted mining town of Panamint City in Death Valley National Park.

Threats

In the 1800s, miners built a road through Surprise Canyon to mining claims near Panamint City. There have been no active mining claims for many years, and any semblance of a road has been washed out since 1984. Yet, up until 2001, extreme off-roaders winched their vehicles up the canyon in an attempt to turn this fragile desert stream into a motor-vehicle obstacle course. In 2001, an important legal victory forced the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to close Surprise Canyon to off-road vehicles until an Environmental Impact Statement is completed. The riparian woodland recovered dramatically, with numerous cottonwood and willow trees once again filling the canyon.

Now the BLM is considering opening Surprise Canyon to extreme off-roading in an upcoming management plan. This rollback of protections would decimate one of the last remaining wild streams in the Mojave Desert. Motorized-vehicles would invade wilderness, destroy aquatic life, and disturb sensitive desert wildlife. Native plants and trees would be removed to make way for the roar of off-road vehicles.

Solution

The BLM must keep Surprise Canyon closed to vehicles. The pending management plan is an excellent opportunity for the BLM to take a proactive role in protecting native vegetation, wildlife and the recreational values of the canyon. In December 2005, Senators Feinstein and Boxer sent a joint letter requesting that the BLM keep Surprise Canyon permanently closed to vehicles above Chris Wicht Camp. Wetland-riparian habitat is rare to begin with, especially in the desert. Riparian areas represent some of the most biologically and economically important resources that the BLM is entrusted to manage.

Please write to the BLM and urge them to protect Surprise Canyon. Tell them not to let off-road vehicles destroy this desert gem.

Please write to:
 Steve Borchard, Manager, California Desert District
 Bureau of Land Management
 22835 Calle San Juan De Las Lagos
 Moreno Valley, CA 92553

For More Information
 Jason Fried
 California Wilderness Coalition
 (951) 781-1336
 jfried@calwild.org

Southern California National Forests

Outstanding Values

Stretching from Monterey to Baja, the Cleveland, Los Padres, Angeles, and San Bernardino National Forests are visited by over eight million people a year. These four forests are critically important because of their ecological diversity and precarious location next to some of our most urbanized landscapes. They contain most of the remaining open space in the nation's most densely populated region. Southern California National Forests host most of the remaining habitat for the California condor, kit foxes, and dozens of other endangered species of plants and animals.

Threats

The U.S. Forest Service recently released the Final Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMP) for the four Southern California National Forests. National forests, like cities and counties, are zoned for various levels of development. The LRMPs describe these zones and what is allowed in them, and they must be revised every 10-15 years. The Final LRMPs for Southern California's Cleveland, Los Padres, Angeles, and San Bernardino National Forests cover over 3,530,000 acres of land, including over 1,065,000 acres of unprotected and largely pristine wild lands.

The Forest Service was urged to release final plans that would provide adequate protection for the many ecological and social values that make the four forests irreplaceable. The agency's plans failed in almost every respect.

The plan allows motorized vehicle use and development in the majority of the forests' roadless areas. This means that off-road vehicle use, road construction, utility development, and other development projects will be allowed in most of the 1 million acres of roadless lands. The Forest Service only proposed a mere 8% of those wild lands – 86,000 acres – as wilderness.

Solution

In 2005, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger promised to protect California's 4.4 million acres of national forest roadless areas after the Bush administration opened these areas up to road construction, unrestricted logging and other types of development.

Please write Governor Schwarzenegger by July 20, 2006 and ask him to keep his pledge to protect California's roadless areas by appealing the Angeles, Cleveland, Los Padres and San Bernardino National Forest Management Plans.

The Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

For More Information

Ryan Henson
California Wilderness Coalition
(530) 246-3087
rhenson@calwild.org



The Red Rock Mountain range of the Castaic Mountains potential wilderness in the Angeles National Forest provides critical open space and wildlife habitat near California's most densely populated region.

Michael Grenetz

Owens Valley

Outstanding Values

In the shadow of the eastern Sierra Nevada, the Owens Valley contains a mixture of meadows, marshes, ponds, springs, woodlands, and desert creeks. It is one of the largest such habitat complexes in the arid Great Basin. The valley is home to many plants and animals, including tule elk, desert fishes, hundreds of different kinds of birds and rare wildflowers. Owens valley is critically important to the eastern Sierra's recreation and ranching economy. They also support wildlife, fishing, hunting, exceptional birding, livestock grazing and other recreational opportunities.

Threats

The infamous history of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) "buying" the Owens River in the early 1900s is relatively well known, especially after the release of the film *Chinatown*. LADWP saw Owens Valley not as a rich habitat of indigenous species, but instead as a permanent water supply for thirsty Los Angeles. Owens Valley is now the source of the most severe dust storms in the United States, destroying local agriculture in Owens Valley. However, the valley's groundwater-dependent landscape continued to generally thrive despite the water grab, until 1972, when LADWP enlarged its aqueduct and started pumping more and more groundwater out of the region.

Inyo County and local conservation groups sued LADWP for its excessive groundwater pumping, starting nearly two decades of ongoing litigation and negotiation. Finally, in 1991, LADWP signed a landmark agreement with Inyo County that was a win for all parties. It provides LADWP with a reliable water supply. The agency, in turn, committed to restoring damaged wildlands and preventing future damage to Owens Valley.

However, fifteen years later, little has changed. LADWP continues to pump more and more water, failing to repair past damages and subsequently, more meadows and wetlands are disappearing. Two thirds of the remaining alkaline meadow plant community in California are "hanging on" in the Owens Valley. The pumping is quickly turning the valley into tumbleweeds and dust even as LADWP is being forced to spend millions to reduce

the dust pollution blowing off the now-dry Owens Lake. Currently, LADWP is pumping even more groundwater than when it caused the original damage to these lands. Yet the agency plans to increase its pumping even more.

Solution

LADWP must be held accountable to the legally binding agreement it made in 1991, the Inyo-LA Long Term Water Agreement. It should stop forcing Inyo County to spend its limited resources on litigation.

Please write to the LADWP Commission President and ask that Los Angeles allow water tables in the Owens Valley to recover and to manage groundwater so that water levels remain within the root zones of native vegetation.

Please write to:
Mary Nichols, LADWP Commission President
Rm. 1555-H, 15th floor
111 Hope St.
Los Angeles, CA 90012

For More Information
Mike Prather
Owens Valley Committee
(760) 876-5807
prather@qnet.com



Owens Valley contains a mosaic of meadows, ponds, marshes, springs, woodlands, and desert creeks. As the Los Angeles Department of Water continues to pump more water, the area is turning into a dustbowl.

Mike Prather

Stanislaus National Forest

Outstanding Values

The Stanislaus National Forest is located in the central Sierra Nevada, east of the foothill towns of Angels Camp, Groveland, and Sonora. The Stanislaus features giant Jeffrey pines, white pines, hemlocks, firs, and other conifers. The area features a mix of lush meadows, rushing streams, and many hillsides with bright, colorful displays of lupine, columbines, and other wildflowers.

The remaining roadless areas in the Stanislaus contain remarkably well-preserved high elevation conifer forests. One of these roadless areas is called the Pacific Valley roadless area. It is located at the very crest zone of the range. The open forests and remoteness of the Pacific Valley provide wild, pristine habitat for a wide range of wildlife species. The shallow soils and steep slopes of Pacific Valley make it a particularly delicate portion of the forest.

Threats

The wildlands of the Stanislaus National Forest are threatened by increased logging throughout the forest and by snowmobile abuse in the Pacific Valley roadless area.

In October 2005, the Bush Administration's Forest Service released a plan to triple logging levels in the Stanislaus. The Forest Service claims that the new logging plan will reduce fire risk. However, scientists tell us that fire risk is reduced by treating brush, limbs and small trees on the forest floor, not by commercial logging practices that focus on larger trees with high habitat values. Commercial timber comes from trees that are large, naturally fire resistant and provide the shade that keeps the forest cool and moist. In fact, in a Congressional study, logging in the Sierra Nevada was identified as the largest human caused contributor to wildfire.

The existing Stanislaus Forest Plan forbids motorized use within Pacific Valley roadless area, along the Highway 4 corridor, as well as other roadless areas. However, Forest Service officials are blatantly ignoring illegal snowmobile entries into the Pacific Valley Roadless area. Officials have failed to take firm steps to restrict illegal snowmobile use. The majority of officially designated wilderness in the Stanislaus National Forest is high elevation rock and ice, with limited forest habitat for wildlife species.



CWC

The Stanislaus National Forest features high elevation conifer forests, lush meadows, streams, and rolling hillsides.

The Pacific Valley Roadless Area features rare wildlife species and high value forest habitat that would be damaged if the Forest Service continues to turn a blind eye to snowmobile abuse. Restricting snowmobile use in the area is especially important to species like the American marten, which has disappeared from most of the heavily logged areas of the forest.

Solution

The Stanislaus National Forest needs to be protected from excessive logging and snowmobile use in roadless areas. The disturbance and loss of canopy cover that comes from excessive logging, as well as the noise and disturbance that comes from snowmobile use in roadless areas, are environmental threats that would compromise the wilderness, recreation and habitat values of the forest.

At this time, the decision to triple logging has already been finalized and there is no current opportunity to overturn that pro-logging policy. However, the threat to the Pacific Valley roadless area can still be turned back if enough people act to share their concerns.

Please write a letter to the U.S. Forest Service to let them know that under no circumstances should the agency allow the Pacific Valley roadless area to be legally opened up to snowmobile use by a new winter recreation plan. Urge them to keep the area in a truly wild condition by prohibiting all motorized use within the area.

Stanislaus National Forest
Attn: Forest Supervisor
19777 Greenley Road
Sonora, CA 95370

For More Information
Brent Schoradt
California Wilderness Coalition
(510) 451-1450

Klamath River Basin



Klamath Basin Coalition

Logging, grazing, farming, road construction, and dams have left the river and the surrounding communities mere shadows of their former selves.

Oustanding Values

The Klamath River once ran uninterrupted for 250 miles from its headwaters to the sea. It linked the high desert sage country of southeastern Oregon and northeastern California with the ancient forests and rugged canyons of the Klamath Mountains, and the fog-shrouded redwood coast. For salmon, steelhead trout, cutthroat trout, sturgeon, Modoc sucker and other fish species it was a blue green ribbon of life, and the wetlands near its headwaters served as a home to tens of millions of waterfowl.

Today, the watershed still serves as a stop-over point for 90 percent of the birds using the Pacific Flyway, a smaller number of salmon, steelhead, Modoc sucker and other fish species still remain in the stream.

Threats

Over the last century and a half much has changed in the Klamath watershed. It has experienced mining booms, extensive and often highly destructive logging, the introduction of vast herds of cattle and sheep, the construction of thousands of miles of road, the conversion of wetlands to agriculture, the construction of dams, and other large-scale water diversions. The cumulative impact of these activities has left the river a mere shadow of itsformer self, but one that conservationists are determined to protect and restore nonetheless.

The river's Chinook salmon population is now so depleted that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association recently closed commercial fishing on 400 miles of coast surrounding the mouth of the Klamath and strictly limited fishing on another 300 miles. This will result in hundreds of millions of dollars in losses to the salmon fishing fleet and tribal economies as well as substantially higher prices for fish consumers.

Solution

The Klamath River needs more, cooler, and cleaner water, particularly in the hot summer months. This year, four hydropower dam permits for the Klamath will be reviewed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. It is critical that these dams be de-commissioned to make way for a free-flowing Klamath River.

To resolve the water crisis in the Klamath Basin, Congressman Mike Thompson and Senators Feinstein, Boxer and Wyden introduced the Salmon Assistance and Recovery Act of 2006 (H.R. 5213 and S. 2649) to develop a recovery plan for Klamath River salmon and to resolve the water crisis in the Klamath Basin. The bill will help mitigate the economic impacts of declining salmon numbers.

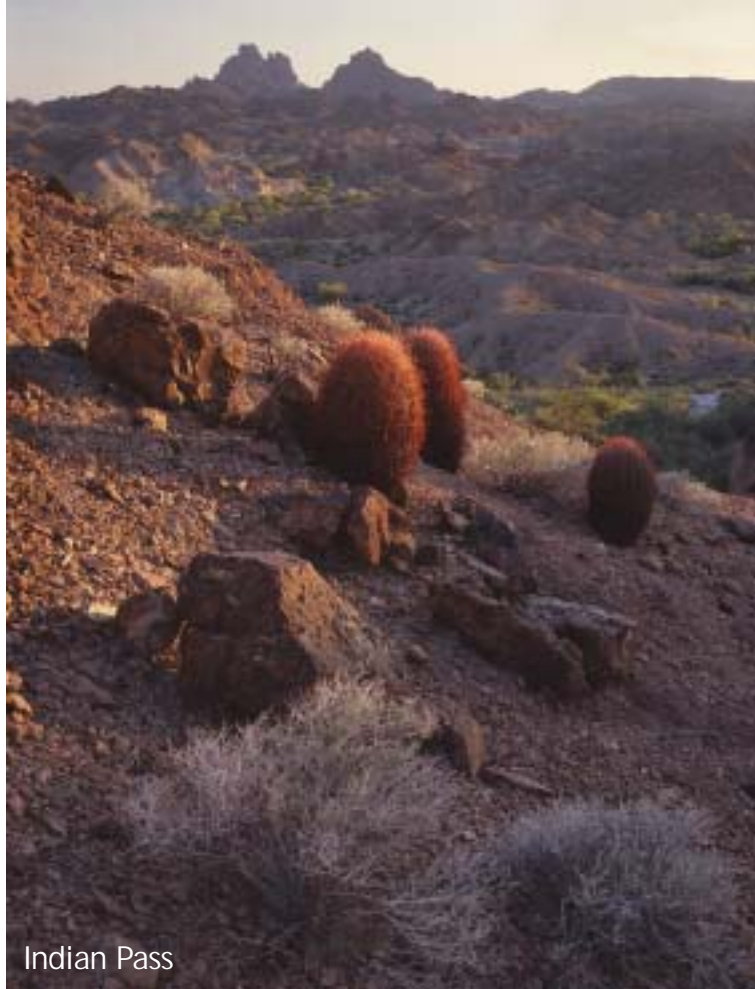
Please write your member of the U.S. House of Representatives:

The Honorable (full name)
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ask him or her to co-sponsor Congressman Mike Thompson's H.R. 5213 that would direct the Secretary of Commerce to provide emergency disaster assistance to the Basin and to develop and implement a research and recovery plan for Klamath's fisheries.

For More Information

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