

# WORDS OF the WILD

Vol. X, No. 2 August 2007



Newsletter of the Sierra Club's California/Nevada Wilderness Committee

## Cool Habitats

### Wild places wallop warming effects

Climate change, or global warming, gives us new reasons to protect wild places. Conservation biologists have said for decades that we need to preserve large wild core areas, linked with corridors, to protect wildlife from human impacts. Now we are learning that over a million species worldwide are at risk due to climate change and protecting large wild places and linked corridors is one of the best strategies for their survival. This gives us another special focus for our work for wild lands, a focus that can engage broader public interest.

#### Why climate change demands more protected habitat

Climate change stresses wildlife through alterations to its habitat. As weather warms, critters (and plants!) may need to be able to move afield, most often northward or up in elevation. Extensive roadless areas on Western public lands provide the best habitat and potential wildlife corridors--especially when combined with existing wilderness and parks. When roadless areas are joined together into a "connected continental network of large core protected areas and corridors between them" they really help wildlife adapt to changing climates.

Habitat may also be lost to fires, which are expected to increase as weather becomes warmer and drier and insect infestations spread to higher elevations. Roadless lands can make it easier for wildlife to relocate if fires

shrink habitat. Furthermore, in roadless areas human-caused fires may be less likely to start. Already, fires are a big westwide issue. The US Forest Service has become the US Fire Service with fire fighting its largest budget item. This summer's fires in Nevada are severe: in a July 21, 2007 report, the Nevada Department of Wildlife calls the current wildland fires in Nevada "an environmental disaster. We are losing habitat year after year, with no end in sight."

Fire intervals in Nevada are decreasing, the report continues. From historic 200 year or more intervals to about 10 to 20 years in lower elevation sagebrush habitat. This decrease favors non-native species like flammable cheatgrass and doesn't let slower-growing sagebrush get established. Such habitat conversion threatens sage-dependent species such as sage grouse, sage thrasher, vesper sparrow, and pygmy rabbit.

Working for wildlife corridors is catching on! On a global scale. According to a Reuters release, (July 9, 2007) Australia plans to establish a continent-spanning wildlife corridor "to allow animals and plants to flee the effects of global

warming." The 1740-mile "spine" is to link Australia's southern snow-covered Alps with the tropical north. Since national parks, state forests, and other government lands do not cover enough of the continent, voluntary conservation agreements with private landholders will be essential.

Of course, global climate change is far from the only cause of stress to wildlife. We need vigilance against off-road vehicle incursions, overgrazing, poisoning of water from mining or toxic herbicides, timber clear cutting, and other damaging human activities. Mitigating or eliminating these stresses will make it easier for species to remain resilient and adapt to the new stress caused by climate change.

#### Sierra Club focus on Cool (or resilient) Habitats

To help connect our traditional wild lands advocacy with global warming, Associate Executive Director Bruce Hamilton has helped prepare a new *Resilient Habitats* featured objective for the Club's fundraising efforts around global warming, that will frame protection of wild places and wildlife habitats in terms of combating global warming.

The Sierra Club's Resilient Habitats initiative emphasizes BIG protected areas, ecosystem-scale megacorridors like "Yellowstone to Yukon". Smaller-scale land preservation can be part of a bigger scheme if areas are strategically located to connect to other protected areas. Thus, in wilderness we should give highest priority to setting aside those wild places that can be linked to others.

-- continued on page 2



## Surprise Canyon Off-road Vehicle Suit Dismissed

### Judge averts threat to Death Valley National Park

On July 24, a federal court denied an attempt by off-road vehicle enthusiasts to reopen a wild, fragile desert stream in Death Valley National Park to extreme vehicle use.

The off-roaders had sued the federal government last October, claiming rights under a repealed Civil War-era law known as R.S.2477. Sierra Club and five other conservation groups petitioned to intervene on behalf of the federal government against the claims.

District Court Judge Lawrence J. O'Neill dismissed the suit for lack of jurisdiction, since the off-roaders don't own the road. Inyo County has declined to sue.

Extreme off-road vehicle use would have damaged the canyon's unique character, including waterfalls, towering cottonwoods and lush willows that provide habitat for desert bighorn sheep, endangered birds, and rare species found nowhere else.

The suit by off-road interests claimed that the canyon's sheer walls and creek bed are a "constructed highway" and claimed a right-of-way under the old "Revised Statute." The suit is one of a number of claims by anti-wilderness local governments and private groups in the West that "bogus roads"--obscure trails and tracks--are theirs to drive under the old law. Existing rights-of-way were grandfathered in up to the time of its repeal in 1976.

According to Ted Zukoski, lead attorney for Earthjustice in the case, "Although Utah has been the epicenter of this right-of way debate, the California desert is becoming

another area where those seeking to undermine protection of wildlife habitat and wildlands are using this obsolete law."

Earthjustice petitioned to intervene in the suit on behalf of the federal government for the Sierra Club, National Parks Conservation Association, Center for Biological Diversity, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, California Wilderness Coalition, and The Wilderness Society.

Surprise Canyon's values have long been recognized. In the 1980s the Bureau of Land Management designated the lower portion of the canyon as an "Area of Critical Environmental Concern." In 1994, Congress added the upper portion to Death Valley National Park and designated the area surrounding the canyon as wilderness. But the narrow 1870s wagon road through the canyon, often flash-flooded since, was left out of Wilderness as access to old mining claims. In the 1990s, highly modified 4-wheel drive vehicles figured out how to scale the steep rough canyon. To do this, drivers cut down plants and trees, filled in portions of the stream bed with rocks and winched vehicles up nearly-vertical waterfalls. Some vehicles overturned, spilling oil and other pollutants into the stream.

In 2000, conservation groups sued the BLM to stop the damage. In a 2001 settlement, the BLM closed their part of Surprise Canyon to vehicles, pending detailed analysis. In 2002, the National Park Service permanently closed the upper canyon to vehicles. Since then, Surprise Canyon has recovered remarkably. Cottonwoods and willows flourish, bighorn sheep thrive, and endangered birds such as the Inyo California towhee are back.

"Allowing extreme jeeping in Surprise would permanently destroy its wild character, and turn this rare desert oasis into a high-energy-using motorized playground for the few who can operate specialized hi-tech machinery," said Sierra Club desert activist Tom Budlong.

##

## Cool Habitats -- from page 1

As Bruce puts it, we will "build on the existing system of U.S. protected areas (wilderness, parks, wildlife refuges etc.) to establish an ecologically-based network of protected areas, corridors, and buffer zones spanning federal, state, and private lands and waters that will preserve the full range of biodiversity from adverse climate impacts."

A key concept is ecosystem resilience -- the ability of species and ecosystems to adapt to and withstand climate change. We make our natural ecosystems more resilient by having them connected by biological corridors to allow the interchange of genetic material.

## Ways to work for resilient habitats

Strategies for incorporating global warming into our efforts to preserve wild places include developing alliances with scientists to present a compelling case why we need to protect ecosystems from climate change; documenting existing threats and case studies that show the need to act now -- such as threats to polar bears; encouraging Congress to order a report by the National Academy of Sciences and to hold Congressional field hearings to document and publicize the problem; identifying a few high profile ecosystems with a national constituency that are already at risk from climate change, then using these sites to build public and political support for a broader response; developing public education programs, such as for park visitor centers, that urge park visitors to take action.

How will the new campaign differ from our past work? Bruce points out, "Historically we've protected wild places by defending the Endangered Species Act, passing new wilderness and parks bills, cutting the logging budget, blocking oil and coal leasing etc. These are all still important. But this proposal suggests putting a Climate Campaign frame on our overall lands agenda to unify it and make sure that solutions we advocate not only protect roadless areas, endangered species, and scenic areas, but also will enable ecosystems and the full range of biodiversity to survive climate change. In doing this we are insuring the survival of our 100 year investment in protecting the earth's wild places." ##

Photo: Shelly Ellis



Activists inspect damage in Surprise Canyon



## Nevada Wild lands Update

--by Marge Sill

After a six-year intensive legislative push that designated large amounts of wilderness in southern and eastern Nevada (Clark, Lincoln and White Pine Counties) the county-level public lands effort now focuses on the western part of the state.

The Nevada Congressional delegation is considering three potential public lands bills—for Esmeralda County, Lyon County, and Mineral County.

Esmeralda County, in southwest Nevada touching the California border near the White Mountains, includes the Silver Peak Wilderness Study Area just east of the White Mountains. Nevada wilderness advocates have mapped and studied this desert area, and all who have visited it highly praise its wildness and beauty. (The CA/NV wilderness committee enjoyed a backpack to this area's dramatic and popular Icehouse Canyon in 1998.)

Lyon County, (north of Esmeralda) includes the large Forest Service roadless area known as Bald Mountain, which the Nevada Wilderness Coalition now calls the Wovoka proposed wilderness after a famous Paiute shaman from the Yerington tribe who loved the earth and its peoples. This area on the California border has also been mapped and studied extensively.

Mineral County, east of Lyon County, features famed Walker Lake, a national treasure which needs assurance of adequate water to remain healthy. The Nevada Wilderness Coalition hopes that good legislation

will be introduced soon by Senators John Ensign and Harry Reid that will be supported by the Commissioners of the three counties and by the various interests represented in numerous meetings, including the environmental community.

In the meantime, Washoe County (around Reno and stretching north to the Oregon border) is working on an open space plan that is endorsed by the Toiyabe Chapter of the Sierra Club and by all conservation groups. This plan could include *some* wilderness as well as wildlife protection and caring for water resources and cultural values.

Nye County, in central Nevada, has the most Forest Service roadless areas and BLM wilderness study areas, but a great deal of educational work must be done before a good bill can be formulated that will be satisfactory to all interests.

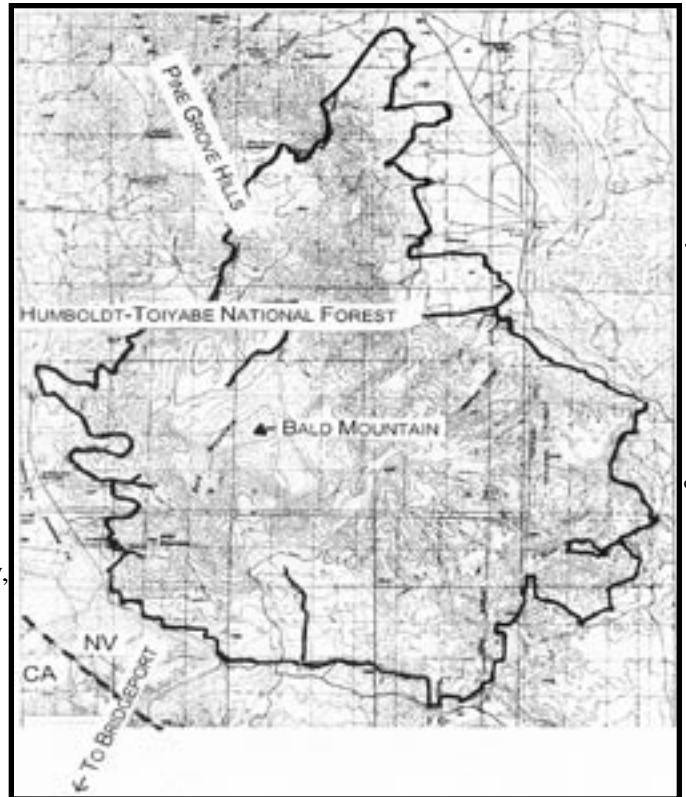
And we still hope for legislation that can help protect the wonderful cultural and natural values of the Gold Butte area in eastern Clark County, touching the Arizona border. (See WOW, Aug. 2006.) Activists

are considering a possible National Conservation Area.

Obviously, there is much to do before a greater fraction of Nevada's magnificent wild lands can be permanently preserved as wilderness. The challenge is great, but the rewards are even greater.

**Lyon County's Wovoka Proposed Wilderness:**

The Pine Grove Mountains (or Pine Grove Hills) are in the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, just east of the Sweetwater Mountains of California and Nevada, and a little west of Walker Lake and the town of Hawthorne. Volcanic cliffs, and rugged canyons and ridges—places with names like Wichman Canyon, Slide Rock, Halsey Canyon, spring flowers



from Nevada Wilderness Project; see [www.wildnevada.org](http://www.wildnevada.org)

in alpine meadows. Wovoka offers something for wilderness lovers of all levels and skills. In the southern Pine Grove range the large roadless area featuring Bald Mountain, 9544 feet, is a candidate for wilderness protection as the Wovoka Proposed Wilderness, of nearly 86,000 acres. Bald Mountain offers view east to Mt Grant and the distant Toiyabe Range and west to the Sweetwaters, the Sierra, and the Whites in California. In fact, the view from the summit of Bald Mountain is one of the few vantage points in Nevada which allows one to look EAST into California! The Pine Grove Mountains provide good habitat for mule deer, raptors, mountain lion, badger, grey fox, bobcat, black bear and sage grouse. Bordering this range, the East Fork of the Walker River has 11 miles of wild river that are also included in the Coalition's proposal. Lyon County has the 7th fastest growing county population in the nation. ##

Photo: Nevada Wilderness Project



View from Bald Mountain, Pine Grove Hills

## California Wilderness: a flurry of bills in a hurry

The 100th Congress, in which the Democrats regained the majority and key Committee chairman positions has brought new energy to land preservation efforts. In California, the desire of Senator Barbara Boxer to “make hay while the sun shines” has stimulated a big-ger legislative effort for new wilderness and wild rivers.

In February, Sen. Boxer reintroduced her California Wild Heritage bill, S. 493. Rep. Hilda Solis’s (D-CA32) House equivalent is HR 860. This vision—to preserve 2.4 million acres around the state—serves to inspire wilderness friends while the practical effort goes to several more limited proposals.

In July Sen. Boxer introduced the “Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park Wilderness Act of 2007.” This would designate the 69,000-acre John Krebs Wilderness in Sequoia National Park’s Mineral King area. And the bill would add 43,450 acres in the North Fork/Redwood Canyon and 1736 acres in Chimney Rock to the present Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park Wilderness.

The area proposed as the John Krebs Wilderness also appears in Sen. Boxer’s statewide bill, but the Redwood Canyon/Chimney Rock addition does not; this is new!

In the House, Rep. Jim Costa (D-CA20) joined the local representative, Devin Nunes (R-CA 21) in introducing the bill. (See the article by Ryan Henson.) Costa’s interest came from his connection to John Krebs; Costa began his political career as an aide to Rep. Krebs in 1975.

We await introduction of an enlarged version of Rep Mary Bono’s (R-CA45) bill for Riverside County. (See the article by Monica Argandona, below and next page.)

We also await a Rivers bill for California’s Central Coast. (See the article by Hannah Schoenthal-Muse, next page.)

Also possible is Rep. Buck McKeon’s (R-CA25) reintroduction of his bill for additions to the Hoover Wilderness and Wild & Scenic designation for part of the Amargosa River as well as a potential desert areas bill by Senator Dianne Feinstein.##

## Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park Wilderness bill

--by Ryan Henson\*

On July 12, 2007, Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) introduced legislation to protect nearly 115,000 acres in Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park as wilderness. Representatives Jim Costa (D-CA 20) and Devin Nunes (R-CA 21) introduced a companion bill, HR 3022, in the House.

Sen. Boxer said, “This bipartisan effort will protect 115,000 acres of spectacular lands, including majestic mountains, canyons, caverns and sequoia groves in Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park. This legislation will ensure that these beautiful areas will be sustained and preserved as part of California’s identity and rich, natural heritage.”

The Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park Wilderness Act, S 1774, will protect the Redwood Mountain Grove, the largest Giant Sequoia grove within the Park. The bill will also protect California’s longest cave and the Old Hockett Trail, one of the first cross-Sierra routes in the southern Sierra Nevada. The land is home to many wild animals, including the California spotted owl and the golden eagle.

### New wilderness honors John Krebs

Nearly 70,000 acres of this new proposed wilderness would be named after John Krebs, a former Fresno County Supervisor and U.S. Congressman who successfully fought to keep the Walt Disney Company from turning the Mineral King Valley into a ski resort. Mineral King was eventually transferred to the National Park Service largely as a result of Rep. Krebs’ efforts. The large roadless area surrounding Hockett Meadow would become the John Krebs Wilderness.

Sen. Boxer added, “Naming part of the new wilderness after former Congressman John Krebs is an overdue and fitting tribute to a great conservationist and legislator. John courageously led the fight to protect Mineral King Valley from development and deserves our gratitude for

its pristine natural beauty today.”

This legislation was developed in consultation with local communities, elected officials, recreation organizations, businesses, federal and state agencies and local property owners.

The local Sierra Club chapters and relevant national committees are reviewing the language of the bill to determine the Sierra Club position.

While national parks safeguard lands from many kinds of development, roads and structures for visitor support and for management activities may occur in non-wilderness portions of national parks. To keep a pristine park area wild and undeveloped, wilderness designation gives the maximum protection.

\*Ryan Henson is policy director for the California Wilderness Coalition; he also volunteers for the Sierra Club’s Shasta Group. ##

## Bono and Boxer aim to preserve Riverside County’s natural treasures

--by Monica Argandona\*

Last year Congresswoman Mary Bono (R-CA45) introduced the California Desert and Mountain Heritage Act, a bill to designate more than 125,000 acres of public lands as wilderness and 31 miles of four rivers as National Wild and Scenic in Riverside County. (See WOW, Apr. 07, Dec. 06). That bill did not move last year. Senator Barbara Boxer has become involved in this Congress’s efforts, and thanks to her advocacy of additional areas, she and Rep. Bono are working together on a bill that would protect not only the areas in last year’s bill, but would increase the amount of wilderness by approximately 60,000 acres. The proposed legislation would designate a total of 185,000 acres of wilderness in areas including Joshua Tree National Park, Cahuilla Mountain, Palm Canyon Creek, South Fork San Jacinto River, and the Pinto Mountains. It would also expand the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument by approximately 5,000 acres and add 31 miles of four rivers to the National Wild and Scenic River System.

The California Desert and Mountain Heritage Act is





life species such as the Colorado Valley wood rat, LeConte's thrasher, Nelson's bighorn sheep, pallid bat, prairie falcon and western mastiff bat. Of course,

*The Chuckwalla Mountains proposed Wilderness Additions*

likely to be introduced in both houses of Congress in late summer or early fall.

#### *Additional areas to be protected*

The new areas expected to be included in this year's legislation when it is introduced are desert areas in eastern Riverside County: the Orocopia Mountains wilderness additions, the Chuckwalla Mountains wilderness additions, the Palen-McCoy wilderness additions, and the Pinto Mountains wilderness additions.

#### *Orocopia Mountains Proposed Wilderness Additions*

The beautiful Orocopia Mountains Wilderness and the 3,760 acres of proposed wilderness additions shelter bighorn sheep, prairie falcon, Bendire's thrasher, desert tortoise and prairie falcon among a host of other species. This array of wildlife is matched by an immense diversity of plants, including ayenia, California ditaxis, Coves' cassia, crucifixion thorn, desert sand-parsley, Las Animas colubrine, mesquite bedstraw, Orocopia sage and spearleaf. The area also supports desert fan palm oases. "Orocopia" translates from Spanish into "plentiful gold", and the area has quite a mining history, but truly its wealth lies in its tranquility and rich biodiversity.

#### *Chuckwalla Mountains Proposed Wilderness Additions*

This visually stunning 14,480 acre area resembles a fortress of rock rising dramatically above the desert lowlands. It is home to many wild-

we cannot forget the chuckwalla, for which the region is named. This large potbellied reptile drops his tail as a distraction if cornered. I saw one first-hand, and I must have scared him because all I really saw well was his tail wiggling in front of me! The area has desert tortoise population densities of up to 150 individuals per square mile. Flora include rare Munz cholla cactus and desert fan palm oasis woodlands, a beautiful and rare ecosystem that for many is the very archetype of desert wildlands.

#### *Palen-McCoy Proposed Wilderness Additions*

The large Palen-McCoy Wilderness contains immense valleys and parts of four steep mountain ranges, but presently does not include all of the scenic Granite or McCoy Mountains on the northwest and southeast boundaries of the wilderness respectively. Adding these remote ranges would increase the Palen-McCoy wilderness by 20,320 acres and would together comprise one of the largest remaining wild areas in southeastern California. Four mountain ranges, dunes, gigantic washes, and large bajadas come together here and help explain the region's diverse wildlife and plant habitat. This includes the Bendire's thrasher, California leaf-nosed bat, California McCoy snail, desert tortoise, hepatic tanager, LeConte's thrasher, Mojave fringe-toed lizard, Nelson's bighorn sheep, pallid bat, and prairie falcon. The impressive ironwood forest is the largest such ecosystem in the California desert.

#### *Pinto Mountains Proposed Wilderness Additions*

The rugged Pinto Mountains rise sharply up from the northern edge of the Pinto Basin, a gigantic alluvial plain at the north edge of Joshua Tree National Park. The 24,080 acre proposed wilderness supports a fascinating variety of rare species, including the American badger, Bendire's thrasher, California leaf-nosed bat, desert tortoise, Nelson's big horn sheep and pallid bat. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife has designated the proposed wilderness as "critical habitat" for future survival of the desert tortoise. This proposed wilderness contains the most rugged and least disturbed portion of the range outside of Joshua Tree National Park.

We will keep you posted on progress of this important legislation.

\*Monica Argandona is Desert Program Director for the California Wilderness Coalition. ##

### **Save Central Coast Rivers**

--By Hannah Schoenthal-Muse

The Ventana Wild Rivers Campaign began in 2006 when Friends of the River, California's statewide river conservation organization, and the Ventana Wilderness Alliance joined forces to protect several pristine rivers in the northern Los Padres National Forest and Big Sur. The campaign has teamed up with local conservationists, community leaders and activists in the quest for Wild & Scenic Rivers designation for nine central coast streams on public lands. Federal Wild & Scenic designation ensures that rivers and streams remain free-flowing by prohibiting new dams and mandates that their outstanding values be preserved and enhanced.

The groups seek Wild and Scenic designation for: Arroyo Seco River, Tassajara Creek, Church Creek, Big Creek, Carmel River, North and South Fork Little Sur River, Nacimiento River, San Antonio River, San Carpofo Creek and Willow Creek. Because their upper watersheds are largely undisturbed, these streams provide clean water for Monterey County residents, farmers, and industries. They provide the best remaining habitat for threatened and

-- continued on page 7



# Outings

*Support wilderness the Sierra Club way!*



## August 25 -- Sat Natural history tour

Join us for a natural history tour from Minaret Summit to Deadman Pass. This area is next to Ansel Adams Wilderness and Owens River headwaters potential wilderness. Meet 10 am, Mammoth Lakes Union Bank parking lot (MLUB lot). Maximum 4 miles, mod to easy, back by 1 pm. Bring lunch, water, binoculars, cameras, insect repellent, etc., and enjoy beauty of the Eastern Sierra. Info: Mary K Prentice (760)934-0355, Mary Ann Dunigan (760)924-5982, Shalle Genevieve (760)934-9668.

## August 25-26 -- Sat - Sun Surprise Canyon Tamarisk Bash

Celebrate end of summer by removing invasive tamarisk from Surprise Canyon. Year-round stream will let us soak and cool. Work Sat with Marty Dickes, BLM coordinator. Sun hike up nearby Telescope Peak for far views and cooler weather. Carcamping, potluck Sat, and campfire stories. Contact leader Craig Deutsche, deutsche@earthlink.net, (310)477-6670).

## September 8-9 -- Sat - Sun Leavitt Meadow/Lake Car Camp

Spend 2 days hiking and exploring around this magnificent and controversial area used in winter by back country skiers. Last year, opened to

snowmobiles by USFS. Learn about this region bordering the proposed Hoover Wilderness additions. Bring own lunches, breakfast, and food for potluck. Meet 8 am Sat at MLUB lot. Call leaders to confirm. (See Aug 25.)

## September 15-17 -- Sat -- Mon Big Sur Trail Work

Join Ventana Wilderness Alliance on 3-day backcountry trip to clear logs off of 3 miles of North Coast Ridge Trail, above Cook Springs. No experience needed! Meet at entrance to Cone Peak Rd 8 am Sat. Learn techniques for clearing trails, brushing and treadwork. Backpack 4 miles. Tools provided on request. Featuring Sat potluck appetizers. For info, directions contact Ldr David Knapp, daveknapp@ventanawild.org.

## September 15-21 -- Sat - Fri Tamarisk Inventory & Removal

Join Friends of the Inyo in Upper Pat Keyes Canyon in Inyo Mountains Wilderness for a week long venture in removing this nasty exotic from rugged terrain. Leader Todd Vogel. Contact: Marty Dickes, Ridgecrest BLM, at (760)384-5444, Martha\_Dickes@ca.blm.gov.

## September 21-23 -- Fri - Sun Boundary Peak Wilderness

Join Friends of Nevada Wilderness and the Forest Service Bridgeport Ranger District for a trail restoration project in the lofty Boundary Peak Wilderness on CA/NV border south of Carson City, NV. Contact Angie Dykema, angie@nevadawilderness.org.

## September 23 -- Sun South Lake/Tyee Lakes

Visit Table Mountain roadless area and Tyee Lake, start two miles before South Lake end at Lake Sabrina, car shuttle required. Table Mountain is a

candidate wilderness area. 8 mi, 1800 ft. elev gain, strenuous trail. Bring lunch, water, hat, sunscreen, camera, stick, boots. Meet 8 am at MLUB lot, or 9 am at Bishop City Park to car pool. Leaders: Bob Hoeven (760)935-4512 and Bryce Wheeler (760)934-3764.

## September 30 -- Sun Deadman Creek to June Lake

Deadman Creek to June Lake via Yost Lake loop trip. Finish at Yost Trailhead on Hwy158. The historic trail, blocked by avalanche-downed trees, traverses an area threatened with development. 8 total mi. with 1600 ft. elev. gain, mod to strenuous. Car shuttle. Meet at MLUB lot 8 am. Leaders: John Walter (760)934-1767 and Bryce Wheeler (760)934-3764.

## October 13-15 -- Sat - Mon Carrizo Plains Service Trip

Explore, hike and serve in Carrizo Plains National Monument: Pronghorn antelope will not jump fences to escape predators but attempt to crawl under. We will modify sections of fence to facilitate this mobility. Sun either hike in Caliente Range or else tour plains viewing areas. Optional Mon continue fence work. Contact Ldr Craig Deutsche, see Aug. 25-26.

## October 20-21 -- Sat - Sun Wild and Scenic Amargosa

Travel by car and foot in Tecopa/Shoshone area south of Death Valley to see fossil sites, rock alignments, mining relics, pioneer graves, and outstanding Amargosa River riparian area. Meet in Baker. Sat car camp with potluck and campfire. A local resident will tell us about this historic area. High clearance 2WD ok. Group limit, 12, Contact ldr Craig Deutsche, see Aug 25-26.

## October 27-28 -- Sat - Sun Surprise Canyon Wilderness

Help BLM with Chris Wicht Camp after Fire Cleanup & Restoration in magnificent wild desert. Contact: Marty Dickes, see Sept 15-21. ##

photo: John Wilkinson



Activists enjoy Lava Beds outing (see p. 7)

shuttle required. Table Mountain is a



## A Visit to the Lava Beds

-- by John Wilkinson

The inaptly named Lava Beds are a collection of carved and contorted granite formations along a north-south ridge in Pershing County, Nevada, east of the Black Rock Desert. Over the 2007 Memorial Day weekend seven of us explored these fascinating formations on an overnight backpack trip.

We met Saturday night at a roadside campsite near Gerlach, Nevada and after Sunday breakfast in Gerlach headed for the west side of the Lava Beds. We shouldered our packs and took off cross-country for the ridgeline. Descending, we picked up a 4WD road which we followed south to Elephant Head Rock, then headed up to a ridge top campsite with spectacular views and remarkable rock jumbles. We then had to spend about two hours gathering water. When I scouted last year water was abundant, but now the springs were almost dry. The next day after a short hike to a high point on the ridge, we descended, eventually looping back to our starting point. The granite formations--finger-like spires, Easter Island-style "statues", and window rocks--were remarkable, and our trip was a joyful romp from beginning to end.

The Lava Beds are a prime candidate for Wilderness status, and I look forward to seeing them included in legislation in the future. ##

### Next Committee meeting

The Sierra Club California/Nevada Wilderness Committee will meet Oct. 13 and 14 in Idyllwild, Riverside County, California. Join this special gathering of wilderness advocates and learn about wilderness for Riverside County, as proposed by Rep. Bono and Sen. Boxer, and other issues. (see article pp 4-5.) We'll meet 10 am to 5 pm Sat.

Our meeting place has overnight accommodations; for those who can stay the committee will supply dinner and breakfast before our Sunday hike to an area in the Bono bill. Local folks from Riverside County are especially invited. For details contact vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org (or 415-977-5527).

## Central Coast Rivers -- from page 5

endangered species like the Central Coast steelhead, California red-legged frog, foothill yellow-legged frog, arroyo toad, spotted owl, California condor, Dudley's lousewort, and La Graciosa thistle. They include rich riparian habitat, the state's southernmost redwood forests, and the rare Santa Lucia fir. They are also rich in historic and pre-historic cultural values, including Salinan Indian archaeological sites along the San Antonio River.

Wild & Scenic designation would not only preserve the riparian communities, but it would also ensure that recreation opportunities on these rivers can continue in perpetuity. The Arroyo Seco River, one of the most popular recreation destinations in the Santa Lucia Range, flows through a series of deep rocky gorges that provide a rugged and scenic setting for camping, hiking, swimming, and whitewater kayaking. About 70 percent of the 50,000 people who visit the Arroyo Seco River every year are Monterey County residents.

Since Wild & Scenic Rivers are designated by Congress, local activists are working with Rep. Sam Farr (D-CA17), whose district includes all the proposed rivers. Campaign supporters, including the Sierra Club Ventana Chapter, the Carmel River Steelhead Association and Salinan Nation Cultural Preservation Association, are pleased that Rep. Farr has expressed interest in sponsoring a bill to protect the Arroyo Seco, but they will urge Rep. Farr to include the other eight rivers as well.

This past spring, the Campaign sponsored several river hikes to show people the proposed Wild & Scenic rivers. Veteran wilderness advocates and curious members of the public alike joined to learn about the campaign and to hike along the banks of the Central Coast's outstanding streams. There will be more hikes in the fall. For information about the Central Coast rivers campaign, to take action by writing a letter to Congress, learn how to get involved, or to view the fall river hikes schedule, (available in early September) please visit [www.friendsoftheriver.org/centralcoast](http://www.friendsoftheriver.org/centralcoast) or contact Hannah Schoenthal-Muse, Central Coast

Rivers Coordinator for Friends of the River at [hannah@friendsoftheriver.org](mailto:hannah@friendsoftheriver.org) or (831)535-8304. ##



Big Creek & hikers

Photo: Margie Whitnah

## Congress to address recreation fees

Senator Max Baucus (D-MT), chair of the Senate Finance Committee, is considering introducing legislation in the US Senate soon, to repeal the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) fee law. The House Natural Resources Committee's website lists programs that should expect oversight hearings and action.

Included for the Forest Service are recreation fees and the agency's Recreation Facility Master Planning Process (RSFMP). The website states "The Forest Service has ordered a nationwide assessment of all national forest campgrounds.... proposing to shut down or scale back one third or more of all campgrounds. The Committee will examine the potential impact this ...could have on public recreation in our forests."

Author Ted Williams recently stated in the Aspen, CO Times, "With little public or congressional oversight the Forest Service assesses recreational facilities for profitability. The ones that generate the least revenue — places to which lovers of wildness and quiet would naturally gravitate — are now first to be 'de-commissioned.' .... The agency is financing the process with \$93 million in fee receipts; in effect, charging you for the rope it hangs you with...."

California efforts to engage the state legislature by a resolution against fees slowed down when the resolution—which had passed the Assembly with flying colors—did not pass the Senate Natural Resources Committee. Forest Service opposition influenced Committee members. ##

## Joan Taylor, Wilderness Warrior: Protector of the Palm Canyons

-- by Vicky Hoover

Joan Taylor moved to Palm Springs 41 years ago and remains there, a guardian of pristine places in the surrounding desert and mountains. Soon after her arrival she became alarmed by some development threats to nearby Tahquitz Canyon--threats which led to the formation of the Tahquitz Group of the San Geronimo Chapter. This local issue and the bulldozing of an illegal road, the Dunn Road in the Santa Rosa Mountains, spurred Joan to become an environmental activist, and she hasn't stopped or slowed down in that role since. Her chief focus has been on opposing inappropriate developments; wilderness appealed to her as a pro-active way to keep pristine places undeveloped.

Along with Joyce Burk and Barbara Patterson, her first wilderness mentors, Joan worked in the late 1970s on the original Santa Rosa Wilderness; she recalls bringing along her first baby while attending some of those meetings. Then

came the California Desert Protection campaign, of which Joan was very much a part. She hosted a reception for then-Senator Seymour in Palm Springs and lobbied in Washington DC for the desert bill.

Since 1994, Joan enjoyed working with Wilderness Committee vice-chair and ORV issues activist George Barnes to craft a protocol that was acceptable to both Sierra Club and the BLM for placing physical barriers to protect the new Wilderness areas from vehicular intrusion. Joan has also fought for more wilderness in Joshua Tree National Park and worked on the park's management plan for rock climbing.

In the newest wilderness bill for the area, Rep. Mary Bono's California Desert and Mountain Heritage Act, Joan's seeks the addition of one key area to this bill: the San Jacinto Wilderness Addition. This area starts on the Pacific Crest trail and sweeps thousands of feet down the eastern slope of the San Jacinto Mountains

into Palm Canyon and beyond into the Santa Rosas. Linking the highlands with the lush riparian oasis of Palm Canyon, this wild area has long been the target of Sierra Club efforts, in the 1980s and in the desert bill. The San Jacinto addition was left out then, and Rep. Bono has left it out of her current bill. Joan asserts: "We will keep trying. Many of us local activists feel hopeful that Mary Bono will come to see the value of adding this richly deserving area--the very heart of the Santa Rosa/San Jacinto National Monument-- to her bill for Riverside County." ##



Photo: Vicky Hoover

## WORDS OF the WILD

The Sierra Club California/Nevada Wilderness Committee, an issue committee of the CA/NV Conservation Committee, advocates for preservation of unroaded, undeveloped public lands in a wild state, through legislation and through appropriate management.

Chair: Vicky Hoover (415) 977-5527  
 Vice Chair: George Barnes (650) 494-8895  
 Judy Anderson (818) 248-0402: wilderness management  
 Joyce Burk (760) 256-9561: Southern CA forests  
 Alan Carlton (510) 769-3403: CA Wilderness Coalition liaison  
 Jim Dodson (661) 942-3662: political liaison  
 Jim Eaton (530) 756-7518: Wildlands Project liaison  
 Bob Ellis (510) 526-3788: Desert Survivors liaison  
 Steve Evans (916) 442-3155 Wild & Scenic Rivers  
 Joe Fontaine (661) 821-2055: Wilderness Watch liaison  
 Letty French (805) 239-7338: Secretary  
 Terry Frewin (805) 966-3754: CA Desert areas  
 Hermi Hiatt (702) 361-1171: Friends of Nevada Wilderness  
 Bill James (702) 361-6854: Southern Nevada coordinator  
 John Monsen (818) 951-7714: Angeles Chapter coordinator  
 John Moore (916) 731-7153: Mother Lode Chapter coordinator  
 Lynn Ryan (707) 822-0323: Redwood Chapter coordinator  
 Roger Scholl (775) 747-5765: Nevada forests  
 Marge Sill (775) 322-2867: Toiyabe Chapter coordinator  
 Geoffrey Smith (858) 566-5676: San Diego Chapter coordinator  
 Graham Stafford (707) 499-1406: Newsletter Admin assistant  
 Stan Weidert (530) 474-3180: Northern CA/NV BLM areas  
 John Wilkinson (408) 947-0858: Loma Prieta Chapter coordinator



CA/NV Regional Wilderness  
 Committee  
 Sierra Club  
 85 Second St, 2nd floor  
 San Francisco, CA 94105-3441

### FIRST CLASS

#### Featured in this issue:

Cool Habitats	P. 1, 2
Surprise Canyon victory	p. 2
Nevada Wilderness Update	p. 3
CA Wilderness & Rivers	p. 4-5, 7
Outings	p. 6, 7
Recreation Fee updates	p. 7
Wilderness Warrior	P. 8