

**15  
MOST  
ENDANGERED  
WILDLANDS  
2000**

[www.wilderness.org](http://www.wilderness.org)

**Off-Road Vehicles: Fastest Growing  
THREAT**



THE  
WILDERNESS  
SOCIETY





THE  
WILDERNESS  
SOCIETY

900 17th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20006-2506  
[www.wilderness.org](http://www.wilderness.org)  
1-800-THE-WILD

Front Cover Images

TOP:

ORV damage scars an  
aspen grove in White River  
National Forest, CO.  
© Richard Compton

BOTTOM:

A pristine grove of aspen  
trees in White River  
National Forest, CO.  
© Charles Gurche

Back Cover Image

Brown bear prints,  
Copper River Delta, AK.  
© Scott Annaya

*"There is just one hope of repulsing the  
tyrannical ambition of civilization to  
conquer every inch of the whole earth.*

*That hope is the organization of spirited  
people who will fight for the freedom and  
preservation of wilderness."*

—Bob Marshall

# Protecting America's Wildlands

**A**ll Americans share equal ownership over U.S. public lands. As the foremost national organization specifically focused on the protection and expansion of these special wild places, The Wilderness Society (TWS) believes it is vital to provide a regular status report about the condition of our national forests, national parks, national wildlife refuges, and Bureau of Land Management lands.

Founded in 1935, TWS works to protect America's wilderness and to develop a nationwide network of wildlands through public education, scientific analysis, and advocacy. Our goal is to ensure that future generations enjoy the clean air and water, beauty, wildlife, and opportunities for recreation and spiritual renewal provided by the nation's pristine forests, rivers, deserts, and mountains.

## The Fastest Growing Threat

The *15 Most Endangered Wildlands 2000* report is the fourth TWS annual review of threatened wildlands. This year, one of the fastest growing threats to these special places is off-road vehicles (ORVs). They pollute our water and air, destroy wildlife habitat, and diminish the quality of the recreational experience of those seeking solitude and tranquility in wilderness.

The report reveals many other serious problems that continue to threaten the preservation of our national lands: overlogging, oil and gas development, overgrazing, urban sprawl, and more. However, the past decade has seen dramatic increases in ORV ownership and use from Florida to Alaska. ORVs include dirt bikes, all-terrain vehicles, snowmobiles, and personal watercraft such as jet skis. As a result of technological advances and the development of a well-organized ORV lobby, ORVs are now the single fastest growing threat to the natural integrity of our public lands. In response, TWS has joined with hundreds of other groups in launching a nationwide campaign designed to protect our national lands from damage caused by the escalating use of ORVs. We're seeing results: the National Park Service recently announced its intention to move toward banning snowmobiles from national parks.

We do not seek to remove ORVs from all public lands. We do, however, aim to achieve balance in how our federal lands are managed by working through local, regional, and national partnerships to:

**prohibit ORV use in wilderness-quality lands,  
including roadless areas**

---

**require that ORVs remain on designated routes  
authorized by federal land managers**

---

**close all unauthorized ORV routes immediately and  
reopen them if an environmental review determines  
there would be no adverse environmental impacts**

---

**permit ORV use only to the extent that monitoring and  
enforcement are funded and implemented**

## Network of Wildlands

A “network of wildlands” is The Wilderness Society’s guiding vision for conservation in the 21st century. We define it as the conservation of America’s green spaces—from urban to rural and ultimately to wilderness areas—by identifying and supporting the linkages between these different wildlands. The linkages may be physical, with important open spaces in cities and suburbs linking flora and fauna that exist within neighboring farms, ranches, greenways, and protected public lands. In some instances, linkages may exist as emotional and cultural connections people have for distant places, such as a New York City resident’s love for Grand Canyon National Park.

Recognizing that the path to wilderness begins at our doorsteps, The Wilderness Society, in conjunction with the Anacostia River Community Partnership, a group of citizen

activists from the Washington, D.C., area, hosted a summit last November to address the need for a green infrastructure approach to managing the lands on the Anacostia River in the nation’s capital. The network concept connects people in urban, suburban, and rural communities to the wild places and green spaces that enrich our quality of life today so that we can safeguard them for our children’s futures. The restoration of the Anacostia River is a stellar example of this concept at work.

TWS believes that any “network of wildlands,” no matter what scale or configuration, ultimately has one common linkage: a reliance on America’s grandest expression of wildness—federally or state-designated wilderness areas. They are the vital core of the nation’s entire wildlands system.

## Selection Criteria

To compile the list of the 15 most endangered wildlands, TWS staff nationwide reviewed dozens of endangered wildlands. Each site was evaluated according to the following criteria:

**Immediacy of the environmental threat: did the problem present a current danger to the wildland this year or an incremental problem that may not occur for years to come?**

**Gravity of the threat and the permanence of damage it causes to the wildland.**

**The special significance of the wildland compared with others across the nation. Does the land contain a rare ecosystem, endangered species, or both?**

**Negative precedent that would be set if the threat goes unchecked. For example, if unrestricted off-road vehicle use is threatening the site and that policy is not changed, would that in turn threaten the preservation of other special lands nationwide?**

After careful review, the following wildlands were selected as the most endangered this year. They are listed in alphabetical order, by state, as they appear in this report:

**AK – Arctic National Wildlife Refuge**

**AK – Copper River Delta**

**AK – Denali National Park and Preserve**

**AZ – Grand Canyon National Park**

**AZ – Sonoran Desert/Cabeza Prieta Wildlife Refuge**

**CA – Sierra Nevada**

**CA and OR – Klamath Basin**

**CO – White River National Forest**

**ID and OR – Hells Canyon National Recreation Area**

**ME – Maine’s North Woods**

**ND – Little Missouri National Grasslands**

**UT – Utah Wilderness**

**VA – High Knob, Jefferson National Forest**

**WA – Cascade Crest**

**WY, MT, and ID – Greater Yellowstone**



ORVs



Noise Pollution



Logging



Grazing



Water Diversion



Invasive Weeds



Mining



Mismanaged Recreation



Oil and Gas Development



Road Building



Development

## Find Information Easily

This year's report has been organized to help you readily locate key information about each wildland.

### ***Alphabetical***

The 15 most endangered spots are listed alphabetically by state. The state and name of the wildland appear at the top left page of each section.

### ***Trends of Environmental Threats***

At the top right corner of each section, you can easily see the key environmental problems facing the wildland. They are represented by graphical icons.

### ***Topical Headlines***

The description of each land is then presented under the following topics:

**"What's at Stake"** – the special wilderness values of each site

**"Threats"** – the environmental problems threatening the preservation of the land

**"Voices of the Land"** – personal comments and insights from people who care deeply about the preservation of the site

**"Public Action"** – specific activities such as contacting government representatives and other actions that individuals can take to help protect wilderness

**"Recommendations"** – solutions suggested by TWS for preserving the land for future generations

**"Facts"** – a list of details about the wildland, such as wildlife and flora unique to the area

**"For More Information"** – whom to contact to get more information about the site.

## Other Endangered Wildlands

Several endangered wildlands that appeared in our 1999 report were not selected for the 15 most endangered sites this year: the Everglades in Florida, Medicine Bow and Routt national forests along the Wyoming and Colorado state borders, the Mojave National Preserve in California, Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge in Florida and Georgia, and Owyhee Canyonlands in Idaho.

All of these sites, along with a few others, appear at the end of this report in our "watch list." The reasons these sites were replaced by other wildlands in this year's list vary and are explained in the "watch list." In some cases, positive actions lessened the environmental threat to the land. However, TWS considers all the places listed in the "watch list" to be of concern because they face significant environmental threats and were chosen by the same criteria we used to select the 15 sites we consider to be most endangered.

# Oil Prices Latest Excuse for Drilling in America's Serengeti

**S**kyrocketing U.S. oil prices early this year have increased the threat of oil drilling and development in one of the wildest lands in America, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

In March, when newspaper headlines began to feature stories about consumer "sticker shock" at the cost of gasoline nationwide, the Alaskan congressional delegation, led by Sen. Frank Murkowski (R-AK), introduced a bill (S. 2241) that would allow companies to drill in the Arctic Refuge. Rep. Don Young (R-AK) has introduced a similar bill in the House. Young and Murkowski chair the committees in Congress that have jurisdiction over the Arctic Refuge. Both bills served as a stark reminder that efforts to develop one of America's great natural treasures—the 1.5-million-acre Coastal Plain of the 19.6-million-acre Arctic National Wildlife Refuge—have not abated.

Under the Reagan Administration, the Department of Interior determined that there is less than a one in five chance of finding recoverable oil there. More recently, the Department of Energy and the U.S. Geological Survey have said that oil companies could most likely recover 3.2 million barrels, only enough oil to meet U.S. needs for a few months.

Future Arctic Refuge landscape?  
Current ARCO development on Colville River Delta, AK.



© Tom Walker

Porcupine Caribou Herd in the Arctic Refuge.

## VOICE OF THE LAND

*"This area is sacred to my people. For generations spanning over 20,000 years we have hunted the Porcupine Caribou Herd for food and clothing. But the land and the caribou mean much more to us than the subsistence they provide. They are sacred to us and are a part of our culture and way of life."*—Sarah James of Arctic Village, member of the Steering Committee of the Gwich'in Nation

## WHAT'S AT STAKE

### Preserving a Sacred Wilderness

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is an exceptional—indeed, a world-class—wilderness unparalleled in the Northern Hemisphere. Located in the northeastern corner of Alaska, the Arctic Refuge protects the complete range of arctic and subarctic ecosystems and an extraordinary assemblage of wildlife.

It is a pristine wildland—the standard by which all others should be measured—a spectacular region of boreal forests, rugged mountains, and expansive tundra. No wonder the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has called the refuge's Coastal Plain "the center for wildlife activity for the entire refuge."

"Developing the Arctic Refuge would be a senseless act equivalent to burning a painting by Van Gogh or Picasso to warm yourself," said Allen Smith, The Wilderness Society's regional director for Alaska. "It would destroy this wilderness, home to an international caribou herd, grizzlies, wolves, arctic foxes, golden eagles, and millions of migratory birds that nest and feed there each year."

Spectacular fauna and flora are not the only things at stake in the Arctic Refuge. The Gwich'in (Athabaskan) Native people depend on the refuge's Coastal Plain remaining truly wild, for their subsistence and culture.

The 129,000 porcupine caribou are dependent on the refuge's Coastal Plain for their annual migration and calving. For the caribou, there is no nutritional alternative to the rich forage in this sensitive habitat.

<http://www.wilderness.org>



# THREATS

## Oil Development

The Arctic Refuge contains only 5 percent of Alaska's Arctic Coastal Plain; the other 95 percent already is available for oil and gas exploration. The Wilderness Society believes this remaining 5 percent—totaling 1.5 million acres—should be protected from development forever. Multinational oil companies and special interests in Alaska want the rights to drill in the refuge, and they are hoping that a changed political atmosphere resulting from rising oil prices will help them achieve that goal. The latest tactic is the bill introduced this year by Sen. Murkowski.

"Sen. Murkowski doesn't want a new energy policy for America; he just wants an oil drilling policy," said Rindy O'Brien, Wilderness Society vice president of public policy.

## Increased Offshore Drilling

In 1999, there was an increase in oil development on the outer continental shelf offshore from the Arctic Refuge. If an oil spill were to occur, it could dramatically damage the refuge.

## Proposed Natural Gas Pipeline

Energy interests want to build a gas pipeline through the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge from Prudhoe Bay to extract natural gas from Alaska and Canada and transport it south through Canada by pipeline. Companies involved include TransCanada PipeLines Ltd., Alliance Pipeline LP, Petro-Canada, Anderson Exploration Ltd., and Westcoast Energy Inc. from Canada; and Municipal Energy Resources Corporation, Burlington Resources Inc., and Schlumberger Ltd. of the United States.

## RECOMMENDATION

*TWS is committed to permanent wilderness protection for the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Turning the refuge's biological heart into a sprawling industrial complex would destroy this wilderness—yet would do virtually nothing to ease our energy problems. An ambitious national campaign to improve energy efficiency would create far more jobs for the nation, and they would last longer. To prevent drilling in the Arctic Refuge, TWS is working to pass legislation that would designate the Coastal Plain a wilderness area.*



# PUBLIC ACTION

## Public Action Can Save the Refuge

Americans can help win permanent protection for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge by calling or writing their congressional representatives to urge them to cosponsor legislation that would designate the Arctic Refuge's Coastal Plain a protected wilderness area, preventing oil development in this extraordinary place. Rep. Bruce Vento (D-MN) has introduced a bill to protect the refuge (H.R. 1239, The Morris K. Udall Wilderness Act of 1999). Sen. William Roth (R-DE) has introduced a companion bill in the Senate (S. 867). Write to members of Congress at:

**The Honorable**

**U.S. Senate**

**Washington, DC 20510**

**The Honorable**

**U.S. House of Representatives**

**Washington, DC 20515**

Telephone members of Congress by calling the Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121.

## The Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge features:

- The calving grounds of the Porcupine Caribou Herd.
- The most significant onshore polar bear denning habitat in the United States.
- Habitat for millions of birds that migrate from as far away as the Chesapeake Bay, South America, and Asia to nest, rear their young, molt, and feed on the Coastal Plain—preparing themselves for their long return migrations. Many of these birds grace local parks and refuges across the coterminous United States during their spring and fall migrations and during the winter months.

# FACTS

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

**Allen Smith**  
TWS Director, Alaska Region  
Phone: (907) 272-9453  
E-mail: [allen\\_smith@tws.org](mailto:allen_smith@tws.org)

**Jim Waltman**  
TWS Director, Refuges and Wildlife  
Phone: (202) 429-2674  
E-mail: [jim\\_waltman@tws.org](mailto:jim_waltman@tws.org)



The Copper River Delta.

© Greg King

## Fighting a Path to Destruction

**T**here is one community in the Copper River Delta—Cordova—and no roads lead there. Cordova residents have lived without road access since the earliest Alaskan Natives settled in this area. Because the community's livelihood revolves primarily around commercial fishing, there is no real need for a road. Ironically, it is the construction of a road elsewhere in this treasured wilderness that now poses the greatest environmental threat.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE

### Wildlife Paradise and Native Culture

There are few places left on earth that are still natural, intact, and pristine—places where the delicate balance of nature continues to thrive unharmed by human development. The Copper River Delta is such a place. It maintains an ecosystem of tremendous productivity and diversity. This crown jewel of North America's wetlands still supports world-renowned salmon runs, grizzly bears, black bears, wolves, mountain goats, moose, mink, wolverines, otters, sea lions, harbor seals, 16 million migrating shorebirds and waterfowl, and a local community sustained principally by a traditional way of life.

The Copper River Delta drains part of Alaska's Wrangell and Chugach mountain ranges into the Gulf of Alaska. As the largest contiguous wetland on the Pacific Coast of North America, the Delta is considered the most important shorebird habitat in the Western Hemisphere. It is a critical habitat for one of the most highly prized salmon runs in the world. A fresh filet of king salmon from the Copper River Delta fetches up to \$25 per pound in U.S. West Coast markets.

"A road through the Copper River Delta will rip apart the region's delicate web of life," said Nicole Whittington-Evans, Alaska Wilderness Society assistant regional director. "Bulldozing such a road would be a shortsighted act that could destroy a world-renowned fishery and other globally significant wildlife habitat. We must do all we can to protect this valuable resource."

More than 90 percent of the residents in the Copper River Delta town of Cordova continue to live by harvesting and sharing the sustainable natural resources. The area is home to the Eyak tribe, the smallest Native group in Alaska, with barely 100 living descendants. The Delta is the place where not only indigenous people, but all residents, thrive from the sustainable bounty of the land and the ocean.

<http://www.wilderness.org>

### VOICE OF THE LAND

*"My fight for the protection of the Copper River Delta is a battle to protect my way of life and one of the most beautiful, abundant stretches of wetlands that still exists in the world. The salmon runs of the Copper River and Delta are strong and healthy, providing a livelihood to hundreds of men and women, the economic base for the city of Cordova as well as the richest, most sought-after salmon in Alaska. The Delta deserves protection for the salmon and birds it gives birth to each year. And so that those of us that live here can continue to harvest salmon in the traditional way it has been harvested for the past century."* —Thea Thomas, a longtime commercial fisherwoman in the Copper River Delta

A private road scars landscape adjacent to the Copper River Delta.



© Greg King





## THREATS

### Road Building and Logging

Within this unspoiled landscape lies a 73,000-acre parcel of land owned by the Chugach Alaska Corporation. It is located entirely within the Chugach National Forest, 60 miles east of Cordova and approximately 20 miles from the Gulf of Alaska.

Chugach Alaska Corporation wants the land developed for a profit—first for timber cutting, and later on, for mining and oil and gas leasing. However, development cannot take place until a road to the corporation land is constructed. Such a road would run through the Copper River Delta and Chugach National Forest and would literally clear the way for wide-scale development and the potential loss of irreplaceable natural resources upon which the people and wildlife depend.

In March 2000, the U.S. Forest Service granted a road easement to Chugach Alaska Corporation across Forest Service land.

"This is my people's ancestral homeland. We believe the corporation has lost their wisdom because of greed," said Eyak native, Chief Marie Smith Jones. "It is only through loving the land and people that our culture can survive. Our way of life will survive if the land survives."

The corporation road would cross up to 196 streams on national forest land, many of which provide critical salmon- and trout-spawning habitat. It would degrade thousands of acres of tidal marshes and wetlands, adversely affecting migratory birds. Clearly, a road across the Copper River Delta and hundreds of its tributaries would significantly damage the environmental and aesthetic values of the area.

## PUBLIC ACTION

Members of the public can help stop the construction of a new road through the Copper River Delta by contacting Secretary Dan Glickman at the Department of Agriculture. Write, telephone, or e-mail Secretary Glickman, asking him to ensure that the Forest Service makes this issue a top priority and pursues negotiations toward a conservation easement deal with Chugach Alaska Corporation. Secretary Glickman's contact information is:

**Secretary Dan Glickman**  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
14th St. and Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, DC 20250  
Phone: (202) 720-3631  
E-mail: [ag.sec@usda.gov](mailto:ag.sec@usda.gov)

## RECOMMENDATION

*Today, The Wilderness Society and other Alaska environmentalists are trying to develop alternatives with Chugach Alaska Corporation and the Forest Service. Our goal is to help facilitate a conservation easement, whereby Chugach Alaska Corporation would forgo its development rights on the property, including road building, in exchange for money that could be invested by the corporation. Under this conservationist proposal, the Copper River Delta would remain wild, the corporation would retain ownership of the land, and the money the corporation would receive from such a resolution could go toward paying dividends to its shareholders.*

## FACTS

- With an area of more than 700,000 acres, the Copper River Delta is the largest wetlands complex on the entire Pacific Coast of North America.
- The St. Elias Mountains, which make up the eastern boundary of the Delta, are the tallest coastal mountains in the world and are capped by the greatest mantle of glacial ice outside the polar ice caps and Greenland.
- Only 11 temperate rainforest watersheds of more than 100,000 acres remain intact and undeveloped in the Pacific Northwest. Two of these are in Alaska's Copper River Delta and Prince William Sound.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

**Nicole Whittington-Evans**  
TWS Assistant Regional Director of Alaska  
Phone: (907) 272-9453  
E-mail: [nicole\\_whittington-evans@tws.org](mailto:nicole_whittington-evans@tws.org)

**Michael Francis**  
TWS Director, National Forests Program  
Phone: (202) 429-2662  
E-mail: [michael\\_francis@tws.org](mailto:michael_francis@tws.org)

# Alaska's Most Threatened National Park

**D**enali National Park is home to grizzly bears, Dall sheep, glaciers, and the highest spot on the continent, 20,320-foot Mt. McKinley. But developers would like to add a few not-so-natural features, and they have the support of the state's three powerful members of Congress.

"It's open season on Denali," said Allen Smith, The Wilderness Society's Alaska regional director. "Roads, railroads, snow machine trails, resorts, jetports, power plants—you name it, and some company has a plan to build it. This magnificent wilderness park would be changed forever if these schemes make it off the drawing board."

## VOICE OF THE LAND

*"Denali National Park is much more than the location of the highest mountains in North America. Within its boundaries it encompasses a living mosaic of the essence of the far north—the treasure of wildlife, wild plants, living waters, and seasonal diversity. This wildland embraces a spirit of reverence, awe, and adventure for each visitor."* —Celia Hunter, conservationist for Denali since the 1950s

Tourist congestion in Denali National Park.



A caribou bull grazing in Denali National Park.

© Jeff Vanuga

## WHAT'S AT STAKE

### The Yellowstone of Alaska

Denali National Park is sometimes referred to as the "Yellowstone of Alaska," but even that image does not capture the beauty, wildlife, and vast open spaces of this land. At 6 million acres, Denali is about three times the size of Yellowstone. It is an immense sanctuary of glaciers, tundra, subalpine forests, rivers, and wildlife roaming free. The park landscape rises from about 1,400 feet to the highest point on the continent at the summit of Mt. McKinley. The entire area has been shaped by glaciation, and many active glaciers, some up to 30 and 40 miles long, dominate the mountains of the park.

White and black spruce are the primary evergreens in the park. Most of the park, however, is above timberline (from 2,500 to 3,000 feet), where the vegetation is primarily alpine tundra—lichens, mosses, tough grasses, and sedges. More than 600 species of trees, shrubs, and herbs can be found in Denali.

Every summer, more than 150 species of birds migrate to Denali to raise their young. The animals most visitors hope to see, however, are the large mammals that can suddenly appear across the landscape: grizzlies, wolves, caribou, moose, and Dall sheep, as well as smaller red foxes, lynx, and more. Indeed, it is the huge diversity of life in this wild place that makes it a world-renowned subarctic sanctuary.

© William H. Mullins

<http://www.wilderness.org>

# THREATS

## Mismanaged Tourism

Denali National Park was largely an inaccessible wilderness until the Denali Highway was completed in 1957, connecting it to Anchorage and Fairbanks. Today, some 372,000 people visit the park each year, and the number of buses carrying visitors along the narrow, winding gravel road to Wonder Lake has increased by 90 percent since 1985. Studies reveal that wildlife sightings from the road have dropped 30–50 percent during that period.

“It’s understandable that people want to take this trip and see bears in the wild,” Smith said. “But as traffic on this 90-mile route gets heavier, you start to lose the wild, and with it, the large mammals. Unless we learn to take turns in this fragile area, eventually no one will see much wildlife there.”

## Road Building and Development

Smith recently submitted detailed comments to the National Park Service on the likely consequences of allowing a 10-mile road through sensitive wildlife habitat to reach the Spruce #4 mining claim, in the heart of Denali National Park, where the owner wants to build a resort. The proposed road is along the same route developers have in mind for a new 90-mile roadway or railroad. Experience with such developments has shown that once such a road is put through, much more development follows. The most influential proponent of the new 90-mile road and railroad is Sen. Frank Murkowski (R-AK), chairman of the Senate Energy Committee.

## Polluting Power Plant

Another concern is the Healy Clean Coal Plant. The 50-megawatt coal-fired power plant is located near the Usibelli Coal Mine, about nine miles north of the visitors’ center of Denali National Park. In 1994, environmentalists, the State of Alaska, and developers reached an agreement for Healy to use new, cleaner technologies so the plant would expel fewer toxic emissions than traditional coal-burning plants, which have been responsible for helping cause acid rain.

But now the future owner and manager of the plant, the Golden Valley Electric Association, is attempting a complete U-turn. It is trying to renegotiate with the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority to have the new, pollution-reducing technology developed for Healy Clean Coal Plant declared a bust and to retrofit the current plant with conventional, highly polluting technology.

## ORVs

Denali also faces a proposal to allow snowmobiles in 2 million acres of designated wilderness. Snowmobiles, like many other off-road vehicles, are a hazard to wildlife, flora, human health, and the natural quiet wilderness experience. They are highly polluting vehicles. A single snowmobile emits approximately 1,000 times the carbon monoxide of a 1988 Chevrolet Corsica. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, snowmobiles are also noisy and inefficient. They expel 25 to 30 percent of their oil and gasoline unburned into the air, and they make enough noise to cause permanent damage to the hearing of the driver and passengers.



# RECOMMENDATION

*TWS believes that the best ways to halt the myriad environmental threats now facing Denali National Park would be for Congress to designate the entire undeveloped part of the park as wilderness and to strictly enforce visitor use limits on the park road. In the meantime, TWS and other environmental organizations will continue to advocate park protection in the management plans of the park and pursue litigation, if necessary, to keep out unwanted development.*

# PUBLIC ACTION

Members of the public can help protect Denali by writing, e-mailing, or calling Bruce Babbitt, U.S. Secretary of the Interior, and Robert Stanton, director, National Park Service, and urging them to take steps to protect the wilderness values of Denali National Park and prohibit proposed development.

**Bruce Babbitt**  
U.S. Secretary of  
the Interior  
1849 C St., NW  
Washington, DC 20240  
Phone: (202) 208-7351  
E-mail: [exsec@ios.doi.gov](mailto:exsec@ios.doi.gov)

**Robert Stanton**  
Director, National  
Park Service  
1849 C St., NW  
Washington, DC 20240  
Phone: (202) 208-4621  
E-mail: [bob\\_stanton@nps.gov](mailto:bob_stanton@nps.gov)

- Denali National Park and Preserve is a 6-million-acre conservation unit.
- 2.1 million acres of Denali are designated wilderness.
- The park and preserve contains significant populations of caribou, Dall sheep, moose, grizzly bears, and wolves.
- Denali is the most heavily visited national park in Alaska.

FACTS

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

**Rose Fennell**  
TWS Director of National Parks Program  
Phone: (202) 429-2681  
E-mail: [rose\\_fennell@tws.org](mailto:rose_fennell@tws.org)

**Allen Smith**  
TWS Director, Alaska Region  
Phone: (907) 272-9453  
E-mail: [allen\\_smith@tws.org](mailto:allen_smith@tws.org)





View from the rim of the Grand Canyon.

© Lin Alder

## VOICE OF THE LAND

*"As we reach the rim, the reason we've come here begins making sense. Space suddenly decompresses, blowing out one side of the visual field. We find ourselves on the periphery, no longer seeing the world from the center looking out but from the edge looking in. Layers of rock stack up, forming pages of the oldest testament written in words so ancient we can only guess their meaning"*

—Scott Thybony. Scott Thybony writes articles and books for the National Geographic Society, guidebooks to historical and natural areas, and essays. His newest book, *Burntwater*, was chosen as a finalist for the PEN Center West literary award for creative nonfiction.

**A motorized trip embarking from Lee's Ferry, Colorado River.**

© Joel W. Rogers



# Whose Park Is It Anyway?

**G**rand Canyon National Park is struggling with more contentious issues over visitor use than probably any other national park in the country. Each year, some 117,000 air tours buzz over the canyon. Parking at the South Rim has become a nightmare. On the Colorado River deep in the canyon, most boaters travel by motorboat rather than by quieter, oar-powered craft. The result is an experience so bound by the sounds and smells of the mechanized world—on land, water, and air—that the Grand Canyon is no longer a haven for contemplative recreation.

Wilderness and wildlife protection, along with a high-quality visitor experience, have succumbed to the reach for the almighty dollar. The Federal Aviation Administration reports that 616,000 people tour the park by air each year. At \$75 to \$150 per person, that is an estimated \$46 million to \$92 million in revenue for 25 companies. Commercial river rafting has grown to a \$26 million-a-year industry shared among 16 companies. The time has come to achieve a healthier balance for this publicly held land.

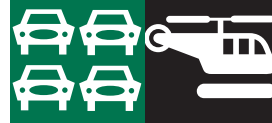
## WHAT'S AT STAKE

The effects of the loss of natural sound in the Grand Canyon go far beyond the serenity visitors expect. Disturbance—measured at more than four times the normal background level—has forced the peregrine falcons to abandon their nests and bighorn sheep to leave their isolated mountaintops. The sonic vibrations of helicopters are disturbing enough to damage cliff dwellings preserved in the Southwest since their construction as early as 500 A.D. The National Park Service predicts that by 2010, no part of the park will retain naturally quiet conditions unless further steps are taken to restrict air tours.

The Colorado River, the heart and soul of the Grand Canyon, is habitat for 482 bird, mammal, reptile, amphibian, and fish species. The noise and congestion caused by motorboats on the Colorado River are robbing visitors of the opportunity to experience nature on its own terms.

"The music of the waters and the songs of the canyon wrens are an important part of the Grand Canyon experience," said Rose Fennell, director of national parks for TWS. "These sounds are now being consumed by the noise of machines—airplanes, motor-driven boats, and cars—eroding the soul of this magnificent creation."

<http://www.wilderness.org>



# THREATS

## Non-natural Noise

There is no denying that one of the most spectacular ways to view the Grand Canyon is from the air. And yet, the sound of helicopter and plane tours immediately swallows the silence that the majority of visitors have come to experience. In 1987, Congress enacted a law that mandated restoration of natural quiet to the park, which was being overwhelmed by air tours. Since that time, air tours have nearly tripled.

## A River Runs Through It

A comprehensive planning process for wilderness management and the Colorado River within Grand Canyon National Park has been scrapped by Park Superintendent Robert Arnberger. The result: The American people have been cut out of the process of shaping Grand Canyon wilderness management, and wilderness values will continue to decline.

There is no current wilderness management plan for proposed wilderness, including the Colorado River, at Grand Canyon. According to the Wilderness Act, motorboats and other mechanized transport are prohibited in wilderness. Park Service policy directs superintendents to seek to remove such nonconforming uses, because proposed wilderness is to be managed as designated wilderness. Without a planning process, motorized use will continue to escalate on the Colorado River indefinitely.

The Park Service has been duty-bound for years to get rid of motors on the river, because more than 20 years ago, 1.1 million acres of Grand Canyon National Park were proposed for wilderness designation, including the river. Powerful representatives from the motorized rafting industry have claimed they will lose substantial profit if they are forced to convert from motor- to oar-powered river trips. The Wilderness Society believes their claims have unduly influenced the Park Service and even members of Congress, while the concerns of the broader public have been ignored.

"Managing the Grand Canyon as wilderness will guarantee the Park Service will always provide the 'outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation' that [are envisioned by the Wilderness Act]," said Liz Boussard, Grand Canyon field specialist for TWS. "At the Grand Canyon, that means opportunities to experience the Colorado River without the chaotic atmosphere that large motorized trips are currently creating."

## Bumper to Bumper

Millions of visitors arrive at Grand Canyon National Park each year for one of the most extraordinary experiences that nature has to offer. Tragically, it is the volume of visitors that threatens to overwhelm the canyon. Motorized access to the park is now such a dominant force that the most memorable experiences many visitors have had at the Grand Canyon lately have been the traffic jams and extended waits in the parking lots for spaces.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

*A balance needs to be reached that allows the public to enjoy this splendid park without detracting from its natural wonders. The Wilderness Society has launched a campaign to ensure that the public has an opportunity to be involved and that any management plan developed protects the wildest qualities of the Grand Canyon. The National Park Service and the Federal Aviation Administration must come up with a Noise Management Plan that will significantly restore natural quiet to Grand Canyon by greatly restricting low-flying aircraft in the park.*

*The Wilderness Society believes that recreational and administrative motorboats must be replaced with quieter oar-powered craft on the portions of the Colorado River that are proposed as wilderness.*

*The Wilderness Society supports the creation of a new visitor hub outside the current boundaries of the park, one specifically designed to handle the millions of visitors who arrive by car each year. From there, visitors should be able to reach the South Rim by means of a light rail system and shuttle buses.*

# PUBLIC ACTION

The National Park Service must be held accountable for ignoring the health of our public lands. We are calling on Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt to reverse the decision that halted wilderness and river planning and to resume the planning process immediately. Send your comments to:

**Bruce Babbitt**  
U.S. Secretary of the Interior  
1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240  
Phone: (202) 208-7351  
E-mail: [exsec@ios.doi.gov](mailto:exsec@ios.doi.gov)

- The heart of the Grand Canyon is the 277-mile stretch of the Colorado River.
- Thousands of miles of tributary side canyons.
- Exposed geologic strata that rise more than a mile above the river, representing one of the world's most complete records of geologic history.
- Abundant wildlife, including mountain lions, desert bighorn sheep, and mule deer.

# FACTS

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

**Rose Fennell**  
TWS Director of National Parks Program  
Phone: (202) 429-2681  
E-mail: [rose\\_fennell@tws.org](mailto:rose_fennell@tws.org)

**Liz Boussard**  
Grand Canyon Field Specialist  
Phone: (520) 527-3809  
E-mail: [eab8@dana.ucc.nau.edu](mailto:eab8@dana.ucc.nau.edu)





The Sonoran Desert contains the largest U.S. population of organ pipe cacti.

© Marv Binengar

## WHAT'S AT STAKE

The biological heart of the Sonoran Desert is the 860,000-acre Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge contains the most pristine wilderness managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the lower 48 states. Immediately north of the refuge, is the 1.6-million-acre Barry M. Goldwater Air Force Range, an area used for military training since World War II that continues to harbor extraordinary wildlife, wildlands, and cultural resources.

The adjacent Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument provides an array of plants against the backdrop of dramatic mountains and plains scenery. The monument encompasses the bulk of the U.S. organ pipe cactus population.

Farther north, the Sand Tank Mountains area contains wetter Sonoran Desert habitat, including majestic saguaro forests. Because it has been off-limits to grazing for 50 years, the area has been relatively undisturbed and provides outstanding examples of desert plant life with only a few motorized paths.

© Jack Dykinga



ORVs damage soils and vegetation on public lands in the Sonoran Desert.

## A Time for Change

**T**he Sonoran Desert is one of the most wildly diverse regions in the world. Covering southeastern California, the southern half of Arizona, most of Baja California, and much of the state of Sonora, Mexico, this vast area is home to an amazing variety of plants and animals. Its terrain varies from parched desert lowlands to semiarid tropical forest and frigid subalpine meadows. Over the next year, federal agencies will determine the future management of 2.7 million acres of the Sonoran Desert.

### VOICE OF THE LAND

*"Unfortunately the desert and the stories it has to tell are threatened largely by the actions of humans. Dirt bikes and all-terrain-vehicles cause some of the worst damage. They crush tortoises in their burrows, they smash the cryptogamic crust that holds the desert soil in place, and destroy the remains of our human past."* —Gayle Hartmann, editor and archeologist who has worked extensively in the Sonoran Desert

## FACTS

- Wildlife includes gila monsters, tarantulas, desert bighorn sheep, endangered Sonoran pronghorns, 200 bird species, and a fascinating array of reptiles and amphibians.
- This pristine region is dominated by wide, flat valleys alternating with six rugged mountain ranges.





# THREATS

## Too Many Cooks

The management of the Sonoran Desert is fractured among five separate federal agencies—Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), National Park Service, U.S. Air Force, and U.S. Marine Corps. One consequence of the disjointed management authorities is that the various federal agencies have never looked at the cumulative adverse effects their activities are having on the desert's fragile ecosystem.

## Violating the Wilderness Act

In 1998, the FWS completed a draft plan for the Cabeza Prieta Refuge, which was meant to guide the area's management for the next 20 years. Responding to the concerns of conservationists, the FWS recently withdrew its draft plan and is expected to prepare a revised plan, due later this year. As currently drafted, the plan would ratify continuing, motorized use by FWS staff and others of "administrative trails" inside the refuge's congressionally designated wilderness.

Most of the refuge has been designated by Congress as wilderness, but the FWS has continued to permit driving of vehicles and use of motorized equipment within the wilderness to maintain artificial water structures, ostensibly for desert bighorn sheep. The water tanks are unnecessary and inappropriate because wildlife populations have evolved over thousands of years in desert climates. This is a gross violation of the Wilderness Act and threatens the ecological integrity of the desert.

## The Military Managing Wildlands

The Sonoran Desert ecosystem on the Barry M. Goldwater Range contains dozens of mountain ranges and is home to the desert bighorn sheep, the critically endangered Sonoran pronghorn antelope, and myriad plant species found almost nowhere else in the United States. Approximately 360,000 acres (13.5 percent) of the range have been used to directly support military training operations and therefore have seen some level of surface disturbance from this activity. However, much of the range has not experienced such impacts.

As a result of recent legislative activities, management of natural and cultural resources on the range has been transferred from the BLM to the Department of Defense (DOD). The conservation community opposes this because of DOD's lack of experience in managing wildlands and cultural resources.

## The Forgotten Mountain Range

The Air Force has recommended that approximately 80,000 acres of public land in the northeast portion of the range no longer be withdrawn for military use, including the Sand Tank Mountains region. The question now becomes: Will this unscathed area be protected as wilderness, opened up to grazing, mining, and other commercial uses, or divested from the public trust altogether? Before any decision about the future of the Sand Tank Mountains is made, the BLM should study the area and other lands formerly within the range for their wilderness quality and recommend any that qualify for such designation.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

*The DOD needs to adopt a strong management plan to preserve the outstanding resources of the area. To protect the range's resources, an inventory of roads and trails on the range, which was delayed for over a decade, should be completed and efforts to recover the endangered Sonoran pronghorn antelope must improve significantly.*

*The FWS must discontinue off-road vehicle (ORV) use in the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge and abide strictly by the Wilderness Act. The ORV abuse that is occurring is at the hands of the FWS. This is illegal, unnecessary, and inappropriate.*

*Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) has introduced legislation (S. 1963) that will help guide the future of the Sonoran Desert region. Congress should pass this legislation to begin the process of developing a comprehensive and coordinated approach to the threats that face the Sonoran Desert.*

# PUBLIC ACTION

Tell the Fish and Wildlife Service that enough is enough. Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge should be treated as our other great wilderness areas are—as a refuge from motor vehicles for people and wildlife.

Tell the BLM that grazing, mining, and ORV use should continue to be prohibited in the Sand Tank Mountains and other areas recently removed from the Barry M. Goldwater Air Force Range, and that these areas should be inventoried for their wilderness character.

Write DOD stressing the importance of developing a comprehensive management plan to protect the resources and wilderness values of the area and the need to include the American people in the planning process.

Contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at:  
**Ms. Jamie Clark, Director**  
**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**  
**1849 C St., NW, Room 3256, Washington, DC 20240**  
**Phone: (202) 208-4717**

Contact BLM at:  
**Michael Taylor, Area Manager, Lower Gila Resource Area**  
**Bureau of Land Management**  
**2015 West Deer Valley Road, Phoenix, AZ 85027**  
**Phone: (623) 580-5500**  
**E-mail: Michael\_taylor@blm.gov**

Contact the Department of Defense at:  
**Sherri W. Goodman, Deputy Undersecretary of**  
**Environmental Security**  
**U.S. Department of Defense**  
**3400 Defense Pentagon, Rm 3E792**  
**Washington, DC 20301-3400**  
**Phone: (703) 695-6639**

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

**Jim Waltman**  
**TWS Director of Refuges and Wildlife**  
**Phone: (202) 429-2674**  
**E-mail: jim\_waltman@twso.org**

**Pam Eaton**  
**TWS, Four Corners Regional Director**  
**Phone: (303) 650-5818**  
**E-mail: pam\_eaton@twso.org**

# Logging and Other Threats Run the Length of Nation's Longest Mountain Range

**I**n this region's 11 national forests, more than 80 percent of the towering ancient forest is gone, and the fight is on to save what's left of it as well as the other natural qualities of the Sierra Nevada. But in this rapidly growing part of California, off-road vehicle (ORV) proliferation, logging, and other threats make this an uphill fight.



Aspen trees in autumn in the eastern Sierra Nevada.

© Julien Havac/Gnass Photo Images

## VOICE OF THE LAND

*"There is a direct correlation between protection of the land and the health of the local economy. The trees in these national forests are more valuable standing than they are when rumbling out of our region on the bed of a logging truck."* —Sam Dardick, Supervisor, Nevada County, California

## WHAT'S AT STAKE

### Alpine Lakes, Forests, Wild Rivers Highlight Natural Tapestry

Running 400 miles along the state's spine, the Sierra Nevada is home to 2,000-year-old giant sequoias, 95 of California's 100 tallest peaks, Lake Tahoe, and Yosemite National Park. Wild and free-flowing rivers, oak woodlands, evergreen forests, and alpine lakes and meadows are woven together to form a natural tapestry that provides habitat for two-thirds of the bird and mammal species found in California. These include mountain lions, black bears, great gray owls, and the endangered Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep, only 125 of which remain.

Two-thirds of the Sierra Nevada—about 12.6 million acres—belongs to all Americans. Most of that acreage lies within 11 national forests. Much of the rest is part of Yosemite and Sequoia-Kings Canyon national parks.



Grazing sheep in the eastern Sierra Nevada.

© Jed Manwaring



# THREATS

## Logging

The logging industry wants to cut more trees in the national forests. Whether that will happen depends in large part on the Sierra Nevada Framework Project. It represents an attempt by the U.S. Forest Service, which manages the national forests, to produce a sound long-term plan for the forests' use. In the past, the agency has permitted too much logging with too little regulation. The results include the loss of habitat for a variety of species, including the California spotted owl, whose population is declining by 7 to 10 percent per year. Of the region's 100 most significant streams, only seven were judged still healthy by the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project. These streams are part of a watershed that 60 percent of the state's population depends on for clean water.

## Road Building

Perhaps the gravest threat to water quality and fisheries is the road building that accompanies the sale of national forest timber. These forests are laced with 26,000 miles of roads, yet the timber industry now accounts for only 4 percent of the jobs in the Sierra Nevada. With the 11 national forests attracting 30 million visitors each year and Yosemite luring another 4 million, the region's economy is diversifying rapidly. "Friendly communities, high quality of life, open space, and outdoor recreation are drawing new residents, new businesses, and new wealth," said Jay Watson, California-Nevada regional director for The Wilderness Society.

"Outdoor recreation is critically important to the economic vitality of the Sierra Nevada," said James Wilson, owner of Wilson's Eastside Sports in Bishop, California. "We must do whatever we can to protect the goose that's laying this golden egg." In contrast, U.S. taxpayers lost \$3.5 million in 1997 (most recent figures available) subsidizing commercial logging in these national forests.

## ORVs

A rapidly accelerating threat is proliferation of dirt bikes and other off-road vehicles, including snowmobiles. "These machines are a fast-growing threat to the Sierra's wilderness," said Sally Miller, The Wilderness Society's regional conservation representative in the eastern Sierra. "There have been countless incursions into wilderness areas, and conflicts with skiers and other backcountry users are on the rise."

## Grazing

Domestic sheep grazing in habitat vital to Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep is another concern. Because the domestic sheep carry pneumonia bacteria fatal to bighorn sheep, just one stray domestic sheep, if it comes in contact with a wild one, can wipe out an entire population of bighorn.

## Development

The natural features that lure tourists also draw new residents, and the Sierra Nevada is the third fastest growing region in California. By the year 2040, the population is likely to triple. This development is one reason that Lake Tahoe's legendary cobalt blue color is expected to turn a murky green within 30 years, according to a recent scientific study. Algae growth is causing the lake's clarity to decrease by about one foot a year.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

*The Forest Service should not log what little remains of the region's ancient forest and should provide ample buffers along rivers and streams so that logging and other activities do not damage water quality and fisheries.*

*The Forest Service also should adopt President Clinton's proposed ban on road building in unprotected roadless areas of the national forests.*

*The National Park Service ought to move ahead with plans to reduce traffic and development in Yosemite Valley. The draft Yosemite Valley Plan unveiled in March would go a long way toward achieving those goals.*

*Congress should provide funding proposed by Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) to reverse degradation of Lake Tahoe.*

*Congress should use the Land and Water Conservation Fund to acquire key parcels in the Sierra Nevada.*

*Off-road vehicle traffic needs to be limited to specifically designated routes, to minimize damage to the national forests.*

*Domestic sheep grazing allotments that threaten Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep should be terminated.*

# PUBLIC ACTION

Citizens should contact the Forest Service, Chief Michael Dombeck, to urge him to develop rules limiting ORVs to specifically designated routes in the national forests:

**Michael Dombeck**  
Chief, U.S. Forest Service  
201 14th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20090  
Phone: (202) 205-1661  
E-mail: Mike.Dombeck/wo@fs.fed.us

- The highest point in the contiguous 48 states is part of the Sierra Nevada: Mt. Whitney (14,496 feet).
- On the basis of whitewater rafting and recreational fishing alone, the water in the Sierra Nevada's 11 national forests is worth \$250 million a year.
- The oldest giant sequoia, which is found here, is believed to be about 3,300 years old, meaning that it took root during King Tut's reign.

FACTS

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

**Jay Watson**  
TWS California-Nevada Regional Director  
Phone: (415) 561-6641  
E-mail: jwatson@tws.org

**Sally Miller**  
TWS Regional Conservation Representative  
Phone: (760) 647-1614  
E-mail: sally\_miller@tws.org



# A Wildlife Mecca Struggles for Survival



Ducks in flight, Lower Klamath Basin.

© Frank Cleland/Gnass Photo Images

**T**he Klamath Basin is one the nation's great ecological treasures. It is a stopover for nearly 80 percent of the migratory waterfowl using the Pacific Flyway and has the Lower 48's largest wintering bald eagle population. The area is also vital to salmon, trout, and other fish. But damming and diversion of rivers, the draining of wetlands, and water pollution from agricultural runoff and other sources are taking a large toll on the basin's ecology and wildlife.

## VOICE OF THE LAND

*"They rise from the water or fall from the sky with balletic grace, with a booming noise like rattled sheets of corrugated tin, with a furious and unmitigated energy. It is the life of them that takes such hold of you. . . . The staging of white geese at Tule Lake in northern California in November is one of the most imposing—and dependable—wildlife spectacles in the world."*

—Barry Lopez, author

## WHAT'S AT STAKE

### The Everglades of the West

The Klamath Basin contains outstanding wildlands, including six national wildlife refuges, three national parks, all or portions of seven national forests, and other public lands. These areas, in Oregon and California, provide recreational opportunities for millions of visitors each year. Lakes and streams in the upper basin once contained great populations of C'wam and Qapdo (Lost River and shortnose suckers) and spring salmon—important food for Native Americans, who have inhabited the basin for 11,000 years.

More than 400 wildlife species reside in the basin, including pronghorn antelope, coyotes, Rocky Mountain elk, and river otters. It is the 263 bird species, however, that have earned the Klamath



Crop dusting harms the Klamath River and its tributaries.

© Judi L. Baker

its renown. In the spring, sandhill cranes and white pelicans are among the millions of birds passing through. In the summer, white-faced ibis, yellow rails, and northern orioles nest in the area. Come fall, visitors are treated to thick flocks of snow geese, pintails, and mallards, to name just a few. "Seeing scores of bald eagles heading out to go hunting just before dawn from Bear Valley Refuge is an experience you'll never forget," said Jim Waltman, The Wilderness Society's director of refuges and wildlife.

The Klamath River, which runs 250 miles from Upper Klamath Lake to the Pacific, is the third most productive salmon fishery along the West Coast. Enormous trout swim in the basin's lakes and streams.

# THREATS

## Water Pollution and Diversion

Originally there were some 350,000 acres of wetlands in the Upper Klamath Basin. They provided vast fish and wildlife habitat, clean water, and significant natural water storage, which buffered the variance between peak and low flows in the Klamath River. Then, in 1905, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation broke ground on the massive Klamath Reclamation Project. The results: seven dams, 45 pumping plants, 185 miles of canals, and 516 miles of lateral ditches that irrigate more than 200,000 acres of farmland. "BuRec turned a great natural system on its head," said Waltman.

Three-quarters of the Klamath Basin's wetlands have been drained and converted to agriculture. The hydrology of the Klamath River watershed has been altered significantly, and water quality has suffered. C'wam and Qapdo are now listed as endangered species, and Coho salmon is a threatened species. According to the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations, some 6,870 fishing-dependent jobs, amounting to more than \$137 million in personal income, have been lost.

Irrigated agriculture has called the shots for the past century. "Even inside the borders of two of the wildlife refuges, there are a total of 28,000 acres of chemical-intensive cropland," lamented Wendell Wood of the Oregon Natural Resources Council. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has labeled the Klamath River and its tributaries "impaired" because of a variety of problems—all of which are related to commercial agriculture. The water suffers from algae blooms, low dissolved oxygen, excessive nutrients, and water temperatures too high for many native fish.

Soon the Bureau of Reclamation will issue an environmental impact statement that will determine the allocation of water in the Klamath Basin for years to come—and thus the future of endangered species and other fish and wildlife.

## Logging, Grazing, and Road Building

Along the uplands, logging, grazing, fire suppression, road construction, and other activities have impaired water quality, altered the natural hydrology, and destroyed wildlife habitat. One of the greatest threats in the Klamath Basin is a proposed ski resort development on Pelican Butte. "This would severely undermine efforts to restore the Klamath Basin," said Bob Freimark, The Wilderness Society's assistant director in the Pacific Northwest. Soon the U.S. Forest Service will release a final environmental impact statement on the proposed resort.

Soda Mountain is a 38,000-acre roadless area in southwestern Oregon famous for its biodiversity. But off-road vehicle traffic and livestock grazing spell double trouble. "It remains to be seen whether the Bureau of Land Management will step up to the plate and really deal with these issues," said Dave Willis, chair of the Soda Mountain Wilderness Council. "Despite concerned talk, we still await substantive agency action."



# RECOMMENDATIONS

*The Wilderness Society has teamed up with seven conservation and fishing organizations to form a Coalition for the Klamath Basin, which has prepared a Conservation Vision. Below are some of the proposals.*

*Commercial agriculture should be phased out inside the national wildlife refuges.*

*Land and water rights must be acquired.*

*Pelican Butte and other roadless lands should be protected.*

*Federal and state authorities need to establish interstate total daily maximum load levels under the Clean Water Act for the Klamath and Lost rivers.*

# PUBLIC ACTION

Citizens can help by urging the Bureau of Reclamation, through the contact listed below, to provide adequate water for the basin's national wildlife refuges when it prepares the environmental impact statement on water management.

**Karl Wirkus**  
Project Manager  
Bureau of Reclamation  
6600 Washburn Way  
Klamath Falls, OR 97603  
Phone: (541) 884-9053  
E-mail: kwirkus@mp.usbr.gov

- The basin has lost 75 percent of its wetlands as a result of agricultural conversion, but agricultural jobs account for a tiny percentage of personal income in the basin.
- From 1969 to 1997, the number of people who own their own nonfarm businesses rose 82 percent in Klamath County.
- The first effort to protect the Klamath Basin came in 1908, when President Theodore Roosevelt created a sanctuary at what is now Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge.

FACTS

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

**Jim Waltman**  
TWS Director of Refuges and Wildlife  
Phone: (202) 429-2674  
E-mail: jim\_waltman@twso.org

**Bob Freimark**  
TWS Assistant Pacific Northwest Director  
Phone: (206) 624-6430  
E-mail: bfreimark@twso.org

# Watch List

**I**n addition to the “15 Most Endangered Wildlands” featured in this year’s report, several other wild places across the nation face serious threats. Using the same criteria we used to select the top 15 sites for 2000, The Wilderness Society (TWS) has compiled a “watch list” of seven other locations that we believe deserve special attention. Five of these sites appeared in our 1999 report but were not selected as one of the “15 Most Endangered Wildlands” this year. The “watch list” is presented alphabetically by state.

## **AK—KENAI NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**

The 1.8-million-acre Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, south of Anchorage, is one of the most heavily visited areas of Alaska. It is on this year’s “watch list” because it faces several serious threats.

The Chugach Electric Association has proposed building a major power line across the north side of the Kenai through proposed wilderness that contains significant grizzly bear and salmon habitat. Continuing oil and gas development in the refuge’s Swanson River oil fields threatens the adjacent wilderness areas. Off-road vehicles (ORVs) and snow machines are damaging the Caribou Hills on the south side of the refuge.

TWS calls for the protection of the Kenai Refuge and abutting Chugach National Forest. They have become the lands of last resort for the wildlife of the Kenai Peninsula.

## **CA—MOJAVE NATIONAL PRESERVE**

Although a number of threats continue to confront the Mojave National Preserve, we have moved it to the “watch list” this year. Encouraging developments include: 1) significant progress on critical land acquisition; 2) modest improvements in legislation authorizing the transfer of nearby Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land for the development of a commercial airport serving the Las Vegas area; 3) the buyout of a major grazing allotment by the Park Service and BLM; and 4) the continued commitment of the Clinton Administration and Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) to Land and Water Conservation Fund funding for the Mojave. These developments give TWS guarded optimism about the future of the 1.4-million-acre Mojave National Preserve.

The Wilderness Society will continue to monitor the issues at Mojave during the coming year. In 2000, we will also establish a satellite office of our California/Nevada regional office in the California Desert.

## **CO and WY—MEDICINE BOW AND ROUTT NATIONAL FORESTS**

The Medicine Bow and Routt national forests were listed among our “15 Most Endangered Wildlands” the last two years because they have suffered extensive damage from industrial timber harvesting, and road construction. Such activities have hurt the water quality, wildlife habitat, and roadless areas of these two forests along the Colorado-Wyoming border.

One of the major threats was the Forest Service’s 1998 proposal to salvage trees from a 20,000-acre blowdown in the northern Routt National Forest. In addition, a handful of other timber sales in roadless areas were proposed for both forests, some of them in the last few remaining roadless areas. This year, the forests appear on our “watch list” rather than on our list of “15 Most Endangered Wildlands,” because strong opposition from TWS and other environmental organizations has reduced the acreage of timber sales and limited their impact on roadless areas. Additionally, some sales were stalled in the past year as a result of the Clinton Administration’s moratorium on road building. However, both forests remain threatened and must be monitored closely.



## **FL—THE EVERGLADES**

Florida's Everglades ecosystem stretches from rivers feeding Lake Okeechobee down to the Florida Keys. Half a century ago, to deal with concerns about flooding and to promote agriculture, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was directed to replumb this "sea of grass." Unfortunately, all the ditching and diking had many unintended consequences. A 90 percent decline in wading bird populations is just one illustration of how the natural system was broken.

TWS selected the Everglades as one last year's "15 Most Endangered Wildlands." It has moved to our "watch list" for 2000 because an ambitious effort to undo the damage is now under way. Last summer, the federal government unveiled a \$7.8 billion blueprint, believed to be the largest ecological restoration plan the world has seen. It would nearly double the amount of fresh water now available in South Florida and direct 80 percent of it to the Everglades. The plan also calls for reducing pollution, much of it caused by agricultural runoff. The state and federal governments will share funding responsibilities. Despite some positive developments, success is not guaranteed and the goal is years away.

## **FL and GA—OKEFENOKEE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**

Located along the Georgia-Florida border, Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge spreads across 396,000 acres of wetlands and pine upland forests. It provides habitat vital to alligators, bobcats, and more than 230 bird species. Okefenokee is also one of the last Deep South strongholds of the black bear.

Along this sanctuary's eastern border, E. I. DuPont de Nemours and Company has proposed a titanium dioxide mine, which would operate for 20 to 30 years. Such a project would imperil the area's drinking water, wildlife, and the peacefulness that is inherent to this watery wilderness.

Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge was moved from the TWS list of "15 Most Endangered Wildlands" to the "watch list" this year because a coalition of environmental groups and local representatives arrived at an agreement with DuPont in 1999. It calls for the withdrawal of the proposal, retirement of the mineral rights owned by DuPont, and acquisition of 10,000 acres for the refuge. Next steps are an appraisal and funding, most of which is anticipated to come from the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

## **ID—OWYHEE CANYONLANDS**

The Owyhee Canyonlands region is one of the most rugged and remote areas in the country. It is located in southwestern Idaho and spills into neighboring states. Last year the Owyhee appeared as one of the "15 Most Endangered Wildlands." It has moved to the "watch list" because TWS and local conservation partners have reached an agreement with the U.S. Air Force that provides important protection for the wildlife, recreation, and wilderness characteristics of the canyonlands. These include seasonal restrictions on supersonic flights, additional monitoring and studies on the effects of aircraft noise, and the establishment of an environmental working group to monitor these restrictions.

Military use is only one of the many threats to the wild character of the Owyhee Canyonlands. The building of roads, unregulated ORV use, catastrophic fires caused by humans, coupled with the impacts of grazing, continue to fragment this vast landscape. In addition, historic sites associated with the Shoshone-Paiute tribes, early settlers, Basque sheepherders, miners, cattlemen, and outlaws are suffering from increased vandalism. TWS hopes President Clinton takes advantage of his opportunity, this year, to declare the Owyhee Canyonlands a national monument under the Antiquities Act.

## **MN—BOUNDARY WATERS CANOE AREA WILDERNESS**

The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) is located in the Superior National Forest in northeastern Minnesota. With its more than 1,000 lakes and countless islands, it is an enchanting place that deserves special attention.

The need for vigilance is the result of a dramatic windstorm that occurred in July 1999. The storm leveled trees on some 300,000 acres located inside the BWCAW. Blowdowns and fire are natural occurrences on the forest lands of northern Minnesota. The threat to BWCAW comes from an alliance of anti-wilderness interests and the timber industry's effort to exploit people's fear of forest fires. The Forest Service has rejected the demands for logging and is working to minimize fire danger through accelerated salvage logging outside of wilderness and the development of a fire management plan. TWS and the Friends of the Boundary Water's will defend the BWCAW against the political influence of the anti-wilderness special interests. Also, we will closely monitor the agency's compliance with all environmental laws as it manages this natural event.

# Wilderness and Roadless Areas

Some of Colorado's most spectacular scenery is found in the White River National Forest (NF). One of the most popular forests in the country for recreation, the White River NF spans central Colorado along the I-70 corridor. Here resides the nation's largest elk herd, along with some of the best habitat in the state for lynx, wolverine, goshawk, and eagles. The forest also has a wealth of undeveloped roadless lands that provide stunning scenery, clean drinking water, prime wildlife habitat, and outstanding backcountry recreation.

## VOICE OF THE LAND

*"The quality of life we all agree we must preserve for our children is not easy to maintain. That preservation requires strong will, passion, persistence, and a willingness to stand up in the face of opposition. Some decisions require compromise. Our fragile mountain forest lands cannot survive more compromise. The last 150 years of human-wilderness interaction have compromised our mountains enough. It is time to make decisions for wise, protective management."* —Dorothea Farris, Pitkin County commissioner

Dorothea Farris, a longtime Colorado resident, is a commissioner for Pitkin County in central Colorado and has spent a lifetime advocating for the environment, education, and the cultural arts.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE

The White River NF is redoing its management plan, which will determine how its 2.2 million acres will be managed for the next 15 years. At stake are up to 300,000 acres that the Forest Service has found eligible to be added to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS), wildlands surrounding 12 ski resorts, the integrity of wildlife habitats, quality of experience for nonmotorized recreationists in the backcountry, and the ecological health of the forest itself.

"Not only are the unique and spectacular lands of the White River NF at stake, but if the Forest Service fails to recommend additional wilderness protection or backs down from its reasonable proposals to more responsibly manage unchecked and environmentally damaging recreation, it will set back national forest management across the country," said Michael Francis, director of the TWS National Forests Program.



Maroon Lake in White River National Forest.

© Jack Olson

## THREATS

### Development

Across Colorado's Western Slope, thousands of acres are lost each year to real estate development, which sprawls across valley floors up to national forest boundaries. In addition, with Colorado's booming population and growing recreation pressure, the White River NF area is at risk of becoming a glorified outdoor theme park, with myriad major four-season resorts connected by a spaghetti network of roads and trails.

In its draft plan, the Forest Service has analyzed and considered several "alternatives" for managing White River NF. One alternative considered and rejected by the agency is the "Conservation Alternative," known as Alternative I. This is the best alternative for protecting wildlife habitat, recommending additional wilderness, preventing logging in roadless areas, and restricting ski areas to their current boundaries. Unfortunately, the solution proposed by the Forest Service, although it takes some significant steps in the right direction, falls short of these objectives.

### Off-Road Vehicle Recreation

The Forest Service has taken a long, hard look at the effects of motorized routes and off-road vehicle (ORV) use and has designed a plan to manage them within the natural limits of the forest. Specifically, the agency proposes to limit all nonwinter motorized and mechanized recreation to designated routes and to close unnecessary or environmentally damaging routes. In addition, the agency proposes modest restrictions on snowmobile use to create some "quiet use" areas for backcountry skiers and snowshoers outside of designated wilderness.

This comprehensive ban on cross-country travel has sparked major opposition from the ORV community, even though it would provide ample opportunity for motorized recreation. Agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management, as well as other national forests, are



ORV damage in White River National Forest.

© Richard Compton

watching to see if the White River NF will back down under pressure or become a pioneer in the reasonable management of ORVs.

### Wildlands Protection

Protecting wildlands is essential to maintaining the ecological integrity of the White River NF. The Forest Service has identified 300,000 acres on the forest as eligible for wilderness designation, yet is proposing wilderness protection for only 16 percent of these eligible acres. As the plan stands now, more than half of the existing roadless areas in the forest will be vulnerable to logging and road building over the next 15 years. The Wilderness Society believes that the Forest Service should protect all 300,000 eligible acres. Such protections would fulfill critical environmental needs by increasing the size of core protected wildlife areas, maintaining the forested connections between existing wilderness areas, and increasing the diversity of ecosystem types protected in the NWPS.

### Industrial Recreation

The ski industry is being driven by large corporations whose motive for expanding resorts is real estate development on adjacent private lands to increase their profit margin, rather than to provide additional public skiing opportunities. In Colorado, these resort expansions are destroying wildlife habitat and are creating devastating off-site impacts on the quality of life in resort communities.

They promote sprawl, traffic congestion, and unaffordable housing prices for longtime residents and resort service workers, who routinely commute 50 to 75 miles each way to work. On the White River NF, the Forest Service has for the first time proposed to limit the growth of existing ski areas to within their current permit boundaries. Although this proposal will allow modest growth, it has triggered massive opposition from the ski industry. Whether the Forest Service stands firm will have major implications for our National Forest System.

## 15 MOST ENDANGERED WILDLANDS 2000



### Ecological Health

In its draft plan, the Forest Service is advocating an aggressive approach to managing the forest. Rather than allow natural processes, such as fire, to prevail in backcountry lands away from human settlement, the agency is proposing that more than 60 percent of the forest be zoned for logging as a mechanism for maintaining "forest health" and enhancing wildlife habitat. The Wilderness Society favors a more scientifically based approach that uses natural ecological processes.

## RECOMMENDATION

*The Wilderness Society urges the Forest Service to stand firm in its plan to manage ORV use and ski resorts in a more sustainable manner and to do more to protect potential wilderness and roadless lands. We support Alternative I as the best proposal to reach these goals. The White River has become a bellwether for forest management nationally, and the Forest Service needs to set a high standard here.*

## PUBLIC ACTION

Although the official public comment period on the draft plan ended May 9, 2000, concerned citizens should continue to contact Regional Forester Lyle Laverty and urge him to ensure that the final plan for the White River NF:

- 1 protects more lands as recommended wilderness;
- 2 limits motorized and mechanized use to designated routes and closes ecologically damaging and unnecessary routes;
- 3 limits ski area growth to within current permit boundaries; and
- 4 relies on natural ecological processes rather than logging to maintain forest health and wildlife habitat.

Direct letters to:

**Lyle Laverty, Regional Forester**  
**Region 2, U.S. Forest Service**  
**P.O. Box 25127**  
**Lakewood, CO 80225**

- The White River National Forest encompasses two and one-quarter million acres of Colorado's central mountains.
- The White River National Forest ranks as one of the top five forests nationwide for total recreation use.
- The elevation of the White River National Forest ranges from 5,000 to 14,000 feet.

FACTS

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

**Suzanne Jones**  
**TWS Assistant Regional Director, Four Corners Region**  
**Phone: (303) 650-5818, ext. 102**  
**E-mail: [suzanne\\_jones@tws.org](mailto:suzanne_jones@tws.org)**

**Michael Francis**  
**TWS Director, National Forests Program**  
**Phone: (202) 429-2662**  
**E-mail: [michael\\_francis@tws.org](mailto:michael_francis@tws.org)**



# Off-Road Vehicles and Livestock Grazing Threaten Continent's Deepest Gorge

**A**s it celebrates its 25th birthday, Hells Canyon National Recreation Area faces an array of problems: rapidly growing off-road vehicle (ORV) traffic, livestock overgrazing, and logging. The U.S. Forest Service has proposed a long-term management plan that would perpetuate the damage caused by these activities.

## VOICE OF THE LAND

*"Nothing we had ever gazed upon in any other region could for a moment compare in wild majesty and impressive sternness with the series of scenes which here at every turn astonished our senses and filled us with awe and delight."* —Capt. Benjamin Bonneville, U. S. Army/1834



Snake River.

© Brett Baunton

## WHAT'S AT STAKE

### Unique Gorge Is at Heart of Imperiled Wildland

Hells Canyon National Recreation Area covers 652,488 acres in northeastern Oregon and west central Idaho. The land runs along 71 miles of the Snake River and lies in parts of three national forests. Its most spectacular feature is the deepest river canyon in North America, measuring 8,054 feet. "The incredible elevation range at Hells Canyon, in combination with its central position in the region, provides for incredible biological diversity," said Ric Bailey, founder and executive director of the Hells Canyon Preservation Council. It is home to bighorn sheep, black bears, cougars, white sturgeon, and hundreds of other species, including spring, summer, and fall chinook salmon. Hells Canyon is also rich in Native American petroglyphs and pictographs, reflecting human history believed to date back some 7,100 years.

Hells Canyon contains the largest contiguous expanse of roadless backcountry in Oregon. About one-third of the national recreation area—220,000 acres—is part of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Although most national forest land is to be managed to balance a variety of interests, the 1975 law protecting this area mandated that it "be preserved for this and future generations, and that the recreational and ecologic values and public enjoyment of the area are (be) enhanced...." The law requires that any other uses, such as livestock grazing, be allowed only if they are "compatible" with the protective goals set forth by Congress.



Grazing has damaged Hells Canyon lands.

© Hells Canyon Preservation

# THREATS

## Inadequate Forest Service Plan

The current management plan has allowed too much damage to Hells Canyon. The Forest Service's draft environmental impact statement calls for improvements, but they are inadequate.

Hells Canyon's incredibly diverse ecosystems feature some of the largest native bunchgrass lands still intact in the Interior Columbia River Basin. "Unfortunately," said Mary O'Brien, longtime Hells Canyon conservationist, "grazing by domestic livestock could eliminate native bunchgrasses in Hells Canyon, just as it has across wide expanses of the interior Columbia Basin. Livestock also carry in the seeds of invasive species that displace native vegetation and critical wildlife forage." These seeds also arrive via all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and other ORVs, which harbor them in tire treads and underneath fenders. Yet the plan that the agency favors would allow livestock grazing to return to some areas where it has been discontinued and where native grasses are making a comeback. ORV use would be allowed to increase, as well. "There is a disconnect there," said Craig Gehrke, The Wilderness Society's Idaho director.

## Illegal ATV Cross-Country Driving

A second major problem is erosion and rutting caused by ATVs driving cross-country. Typically, drivers travel old roads to get started and then go across open hillsides, straight up slopes, and elsewhere. Cross-country travel is illegal at Hells Canyon, but there is insufficient staff to enforce the law.

Some of the erosion plaguing Hells Canyon stems from the Forest Service's failure to close old roads. There are 680 miles of road at Hells Canyon, including 150 miles of private and county routes. The Forest Service could even save money if it mothballed such roads. Yet the agency is proposing to maintain 363 miles of roads and upgrade 77 miles. We believe 195 miles should be maintained—and none upgraded. Right now more than 65 percent of this national recreation area is just a mile or less from a road. That figure should be reduced to 50 percent or less so that visitors would have a better chance of experiencing Hells Canyon without the sound of motors and wildlife displacement would be reduced. Similarly, jet boats should be eliminated on the portions of the Snake River designated "wild."

## Logging Plans

Wildlife would suffer if the Forest Service goes ahead with its plans to log areas important to the cougar, black bear, and peregrine falcon, among others. The agency contends that logging is necessary to prevent fires, disease, and insect activity. Time and again, ecologists have disputed the claim that logging can prevent wildfires or insect infestations.

When the agency began to review management options, 90 percent of the public comments called for reducing logging, livestock grazing, and ORV traffic. Yet all three of these are slated to increase under Alternative E, the option that the Forest Service favors.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

*The public has until June 20 to comment on the draft environmental impact statement for Hells Canyon, which will guide management for 10 to 15 years. Working with Native Americans such as the Nez Perce, as well as with sporting and conservation groups, we drew up a Native Ecosystem proposal, called Alternative N. It incorporates our recommendations to:*

*close old logging roads;*

*enforce the law so that ORVs do not travel cross-country;*

*protect native grasslands by phasing out livestock grazing and preventing exotic weed invasions;*

*refrain from logging.*

# PUBLIC ACTION

**Citizens can send comments to**

**Forest Supervisor  
Attn: CMP Planning Team  
P.O. Box 907  
Baker City, OR 97814**

**E-mail: [thester@fs.fed.us](mailto:thester@fs.fed.us).**

**A third option is sending a fax to 541-323-1315.**

In February 2001 the Forest Service will issue a final environmental impact statement and a record of decision.

# FACTS

- Hells Canyon is more than 2,000 feet deeper than the Grand Canyon.
- The white sturgeon is the largest ocean-going fish in the western Pacific.
- The Snake River features world-class whitewater but also offers glass-smooth water.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

**Craig Gehrke  
TWS Idaho Director  
Phone: (208) 343-8153  
E-mail: [craig\\_gehrke@tws.org](mailto:craig_gehrke@tws.org)**

# Rapid Pace of Land Sales Raises Concern About Increased Logging and Development

**S**ince October 1998, almost 5 million acres of Maine's lakes, forests, ponds, and mountains have been sold. That's 22 percent of the state—a turnover rate not seen since the days of the Hudson Bay Trading Company. The corporations that have bought most of this land may well step up the pace of logging and subdivide the areas with greatest second-home potential, spelling the end for the largest wild forest in the East.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE

### Expansive Forests Dotted with Lakes and Ponds

Maine's North Woods features deep boreal forests of spruce, pine, fir, and sugar maple, dotted with lakes and ponds and striped with some of the nation's most magnificent rivers. Wildlife such as loons, moose, and Canada lynx thrive there. The wildest, most remote section of the Appalachian Trail winds its way to its northern terminus at Mt. Katahdin. On maps of the eastern United States, Maine's North Woods stands out for its size and wildness.

"It's not hard to understand why Mainers and others love this part of the world," said The Wilderness Society's Bob Perschel, chairman of the Northern Forest Alliance, made up of more than 40 groups. "This place offers beauty, peacefulness, and world-class recreation. In the Northeast, when you think about getting away from the crowds, this is what a lot of people picture."

Only 5 percent of Maine is publicly owned, but there is a tradition among private landholders of making their property available for a range of outdoor pursuits. Hunting, fishing, and other wildlife-related activities generate an estimated \$1 billion per year in economic activity in Maine.

At the heart of the North Woods is 200,000-acre Baxter State Park, a summer mecca for those who love outdoor recreation. Baxter is surrounded by other natural areas that have yet to be protected: Moosehead Lake to the west, the Debsconeag Lakes to the south, the East Branch of the Penobscot River to the east, and land along the Allagash Wilderness Waterway and the St. John River to the north. These special places must be protected and kept open to Mainers and others, for generations to come.



Moosehead Lake is one of Maine's greatest treasures. © David A. Murray

## VOICE OF THE LAND

*"We are lucky people to have this great forest virtually in our backyard. We understand that it is our job to preserve this treasure so that our kids and your kids—and theirs—will also have a chance to wander these woods and draw inspiration there."* —Jerry Nering, owner of the Weld General Store in Weld, ME

Subdivision—the greatest immediate threat.

© Jerry & Marcy Monkman





# THREATS

## Land Rush

Over the last 15 years, the Maine-based companies that owned the lion's share of the acreage have begun to sell out to conglomerates from outside the state, outside the region, and even outside the country. As corporate decision-makers sat farther and farther away and global economic forces blew through the forest products industry, Maine's North Woods turned into a Monopoly board.

In Carthage, for example, a town of 500 west of Bangor, a century-old family logging business ended up in bankruptcy court. Its 91,000 acres were bought in the summer of 1999 by McDonald Investment of Alabama, which already has sold more than two dozen tracts. Increased logging and subdivision are under way on a number of them. "Strip and split" is one phrase used by concerned residents to describe what's occurring. "Times are changing," the town's first selectman told *Maine Times*.

## Development

Because of the Northeast's population density and wealth, developers see lots of potential in subdivision. "Big money has discovered Moosehead Lake, and many visitors now want to buy a piece of paradise," said Karin Tilberg, Maine project director of the Northern Forest Alliance.

Loss of public access is a major fear. In Skowhegan, a group called Friends of Bald Mountain Pond is calling on the state government to acquire the popular pond, bought by Plum Creek Timber Co. of Seattle. Plum Creek now owns more than 900,000 acres of Maine. "The potential gating and subdivision that all these land sales portend is a tragedy in the making," said Julie Wormser, Northeast regional director of The Wilderness Society. "Mainers have always expected that their kids would be able to walk the backwoods the way they did. When the 'no trespass' signs and gates go up, as they are beginning to around Moosehead, it means the end for a way of life."

In the midst of this turmoil, there are some bright spots. The land trust community has sprung into action to help buy, and thereby protect, at least some of the most special places. Another hopeful sign came in November 1999 when Mainers overwhelmingly approved a \$50 million bond issue to buy open space. "Yet another plus," said Wormser, "is that Governor Angus King supports the need to protect his state's natural heritage."

The state and land trusts are teaming up to purchase lands that have recently changed hands and are staying alert for potential sales of property that has not yet gone on the market. To succeed, these two partners need help from a third: the federal government.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

*Land trusts and the state must continue to pursue opportunities to acquire desirable tracts.*

*Congress should appropriate \$100 million per year to make the Forest Legacy program live up to its promise. Most of the money goes toward easements that guarantee public access, set standards for sustainable forestry, and bar development. So far, Congress has provided only \$66.7 million over the nine-year life of Forest Legacy.*

*Flexible funding needs to be incorporated into the Land and Water Conservation Fund. This fund receives \$900 million annually in royalties from offshore oil drilling, and a portion can go to the states as matching funds to help with their conservation and recreation projects. But the formula for allocating this money is based on population, so sparsely populated states like Maine do not receive enough to make the sort of impact needed in the North Woods.*

# PUBLIC ACTION

Citizens should call Governor Angus King, Jr. (207-287-3531) to urge that the state negotiate with landowners willing to sell special tracts in the North Woods, including the "West Branch lands" surrounding the West Branch of the Penobscot River. That same message can be delivered to the state's two U.S. senators:

**Sen. Olympia Snowe, U.S. Senate**  
Washington, DC 20510

**Phone:** (202) 224-5344  
**E-mail:** olympia@snowe.senate.gov

**Sen. Susan Collins, U.S. Senate**  
Washington, DC 20510

**Phone:** (202) 224-2523  
**E-mail:** senator@collins.senate.gov

- No New England state has as little public land as Maine: just 5 percent. In neighboring New Hampshire, for example, 19 percent of the land is publicly owned.
- Maine has about 22,000 miles of logging roads.
- Between 1990 and 1999, paper industry employment in Maine tumbled 23 percent—amounting to a loss of 4,100 jobs.

# FACTS

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

**Julie Wormser**  
TWS Northeast Regional Director  
**Phone:** (617) 350-8866  
**E-mail:** julie\_wormser@tws.org

# Great American Prairie Threatened by Oil Drilling and Off-Road Vehicles



The Little Missouri River is the major natural feature.

© Chuck Haney

**L**ittle of the prairie that once covered two-fifths of the United States remains in its natural condition. Some 218,000 acres of it can be found at the Little Missouri National Grasslands in western North Dakota, but that remnant is being lost to oil drilling, off-road vehicle (ORV) traffic, and other activities. The U.S. Forest Service has proposed a long-term management plan that represents only limited progress—certainly not enough to save this rare area.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE

### Prairie, Canyons, and Rolling Hills Once Roamed by Theodore Roosevelt

Little Missouri National Grasslands contains more than a million acres of prairie, rolling hills, buttes, colorful canyons, and 200-year-old Rocky Mountain juniper in North Dakota's famed Badlands. Lying along the Montana border, adjacent to the north and south units of Theodore Roosevelt National Park, this area also features 200 miles of the Little Missouri River. Wildlife includes antelope, elk, mule deer, coyotes, bighorn sheep, prairie dogs, mountain bluebirds, and golden eagles. "You may not hear a lot about this place, but once you get a look at it, you understand why Theodore Roosevelt kept coming back here," said Lillian Crook, co-founder of the Badlands Conservation Alliance.

This national grasslands is popular among campers, hunters, canoeists, horseback riders, and others fond of outdoor recreation in a peaceful area with long vistas. Top draws include the Bennett-Cottonwood and Long X Divide Roadless areas, Twin Butte spires, and Bullion Butte. Every year, more people arrive to hike or bike the 120-mile-long Maah Daah Hey Trail. Researchers treasure the dinosaur, bison, and crocodile skeletons, as well as geological rarities and Native American sites.



Oil storage facilities have invaded the prairie.

© John A. Heiser

## VOICE OF THE LAND

*"The essence of the plains is the endless blue sky from horizon to horizon and the wind. I try never to miss a sunrise or a sunset, and I love hearing prairie dogs barking and coyotes yipping and howling at dusk. That really sets the stage for the night."*

—John A. Heiser, fourth-generation rancher, living in Grassy Butte, and president of Badlands Conservation Alliance

# THREATS

## Oil Development

When Lewis and Clark and Sacagawea came through this part of the country two centuries ago, they saw a sea of grass. Today, in this national grasslands, they would look out upon a sea of oil wells. Since the 1970s, the acreage of roadless land here has plummeted from 500,000 to 218,650, mainly as a result of oil development. There are more than 1,500 well sites, some active and some abandoned. In all, 73 percent of the public's land here has been leased to oil companies, and another 25 percent is available for leasing. "The oil industry has called the shots here for the past quarter-century," said John A. Heiser, the fourth generation of his family to run cattle on some of the private holdings interspersed between federal lands. "We need to set some limits before this pocket of native prairie is totally industrialized." With Crook, Heiser co-founded the Badlands Conservation Alliance. Of the 42 states where the U.S. Forest Service manages the public's lands, North Dakota is one of only two where not a single acre has been made part of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

## ORVs

Another concern is the proliferation of dirt bikes and other off-road vehicles. The noise and pollution created by these machines are not the only problems. Some riders veer off roads and trails and across fragile prairie and ridges, damaging the land and interfering with wildlife activities. "It's getting out of hand," observed Bart Koehler, director of The Wilderness Society's Wilderness Support Center. "There are plenty of places where such driving may be appropriate, but this isn't one of them."

## Grazing

Overgrazing by livestock is a threat, too. Overuse in certain publicly owned areas, especially near rivers and streams, has degraded vegetation, hardwood draws, and stream banks. Water tanks, fences, and plastic pipelines to support the livestock have made the national grassland less natural. Associations of ranchers regulate themselves and pay fees that fail to cover the Forest Service's costs of providing the forage.

The Forest Service addressed these issues, and more, in a proposed management plan issued in July 1999. This blueprint, which replaces one adopted in 1987, is being modified in response to public comments and should be final by year's end.

## PUBLIC ACTION

Citizens can write North Dakota's three members of Congress—Sens. Kent Conrad and Byron Dorgan and Rep. Earl Pomeroy—to urge them to press the Forest Service to adopt a management plan that provides more protection for this area. They can be reached at

**U.S. Congress**  
**Washington, DC**  
**20510 for Senate; 20515 for House;**  
**switchboard: 202-334-3121**



## RECOMMENDATIONS

*Oil and gas development must be scaled back across this national grasslands. For starters, the Forest Service should try to acquire leases left in the Bennett-Cottonwood roadless area, by purchase or trade. No drilling should be permitted in roadless areas.*

*At least 218,000 roadless acres should be recommended as additions to the National Wilderness Preservation System. The Forest Service is calling for designation of only 18,000 of those acres.*

*Dirt bikes and ORVs need to be kept to specifically designated routes to minimize environmental damage, and the Forest Service should devote staff to enforcement.*

- Only 4 percent of North Dakota is public land, and Little Missouri National Grasslands represents half of that acreage.
- Theodore Roosevelt once said of this area: "Had it not been for the years spent in North Dakota and what I learned there, I would not have been president."
- When Sitting Bull agreed to live on a reservation for the rest of his life, he asked that it be located in the Little Missouri country. His request was denied.
- Grizzlies used to roam the area, but the last one was killed in 1897.

# FACTS

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

**Bart Koehler**  
**Director, Wilderness Support Center**  
**Phone: (907) 247-8788**  
**E-mail: bkoehler@twc.org**





## Paradise Lost

**T**he public wildlands of Utah, managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), contain remote twisting canyons, mesas topped with groves of juniper and pinyon pine, clean rivers, and stark mountain peaks. Today, our nation's leaders are making decisions that will determine how these lands will be used and what measures will be taken to sustain them for future generations. Efforts to pass Utah wilderness bills in Congress continue to be contentious. The debate is over exactly how much land actually qualifies as wilderness.

### VOICE OF THE LAND

*"For the residents in southern Utah, wilderness is as real as the ground below our feet. Wilderness enriches us daily with opportunities for recreation, inspiration, health and spiritual renewal."* —Phillip Bimstein, Mayor of Springdale. Phillip Bimstein is serving his second term as mayor of Springdale, Utah. As mayor he is an outspoken advocate for protection of the environment in Utah.

**Tule Valley—an area in the west desert not protected by pending legislation.**

© Jeff Garton



## WHAT'S AT STAKE

### Rugged, Remote, and Breathtaking Landscape

The San Rafael Swell area contains spectacular slot canyons, colorful rock formations, and abundant wildlife. The area supports Utah's largest population of bighorn sheep, a wide variety of migratory songbirds, pronghorn antelope, mule deer, peregrine falcon, golden eagle, and the endangered San Rafael cactus. In addition, the Swell's vulnerable and unique watercourses are critical for survival of this diversity of native wildlife.

In Utah, the Great Basin and Mojave Desert region, also known as Utah's West Desert, is remote and rugged, providing a breathtaking landscape. The climate is harsh, with summer temperatures regularly topping 100 degrees; frigid, still winters; and year-round drought. Yet the loftier mountains draw enough moisture from the air to support perennial streams, alpine meadows, and forests of pine, fir, and aspen.

**ORV damage in the Factory Butte region of Utah.**

© Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance

# THREATS



## Motorized Cacophony

Off-road vehicles (ORVs) are shattering the quiet, harming the wildlife and landscape, and irreversibly damaging public wilderness resources in Utah. According to the BLM, 90 percent of Utah's BLM-managed lands are available for use by ORVs.

As a consequence of heavy ORV abuse and the pioneering of new "routes" near Moab, the Utah Wilderness Coalition was recently forced to drop certain ORV-damaged places from its proposed wilderness package. Many other proposed wilderness areas, including Parunuweap Canyon, Factory Butte, Moquith Mountain, Sid's Mountain, and Westwater, are in jeopardy of losing their wilderness character as a result of uncontrolled ORV use.

Citing significant damage to soils, vegetation, and other resources that have impaired wilderness values, the BLM announced in March 2000 that it will restrict motorized travel in certain wilderness study areas in the San Rafael Swell region. This is definitely a step in the right direction, but for only part of Utah wilderness.

In addition, recognizing the new challenges facing western public lands, the BLM is exploring the possibilities of developing an overall plan to manage ORV use more effectively. The development of an ORV management strategy by the BLM presents an opportunity to close sensitive areas to ORV abuse and limit ORV use to designated routes.

## Congressional Assaults

The Utah National Parks and Public Lands Wilderness Act, H.R. 3035 introduced by Rep. Jim Hansen (R-UT), focuses on Utah's west desert. It contains 9.5 million acres of BLM public land, of which 2.6 million acres still qualify as wilderness. H.R. 3035 would designate less than 1 million acres of this remote and wild country as wilderness, leaving almost two-thirds of the remaining 2.6 million acres of wilderness-quality lands unprotected. H.R. 3035 would prevent interim wilderness protection for much of the more than 1.6 million acres of wilderness left out of the bill by eliminating existing wilderness study areas and shutting down current BLM efforts to designate additional wilderness study areas in the region.

On February 9, Rep. Chris Cannon (R-UT) and Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-UT) introduced their new San Rafael Swell bills, H.R. 3605 and S. 2048. Both bills fall woefully short of protecting this spectacular place. They fail to address the full geographic and ecological range of the San Rafael Swell area. They fail to designate any wilderness at all. They do not adequately address the threats posed by mining, gas, and oil and gas drilling. Finally, they do not sufficiently address the threat of ORV damage to wilderness-quality lands in the Swell.

## Digging Deep

Mining and oil drilling are significant threats to Utah wilderness. Recent oil and gas development proposals in the Book Cliffs region threaten the remaining roadless areas. Those areas are becoming increasingly crucial for wildlife because oil and gas development has

destroyed critical summer and winter habitat. The BLM is reviewing a proposal to drill more than 400 gas wells and to construct hundreds of miles of roads throughout an 80,000-acre project area that includes two units—White River and Lower Bitter Creek—proposed for wilderness designation. If this exploration continues, the wildlands of Utah will be marked by hundreds of miles of roads, pipelines, drilling pads, production wells, and pumping stations.

## RECOMMENDATION

*The passage of "America's Redrock Wilderness Act," H.R. 1732 and S. 861, introduced in the 106th Congress by Rep. Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) and Sen. Richard Durbin (D-IL), would preserve 9.1 million acres of Utah wilderness.*

## PUBLIC ACTION

The west desert bill and the San Rafael Swell legislation represent dangerous attacks on the public wilderness resources in Utah and on long-standing congressional wilderness precedents. The Wilderness Society encourages citizens to contact their members of Congress and tell them to oppose these dangerous bills. Ask them to instead support passage of America's Redrock Wilderness Act, which would protect all wilderness-quality BLM lands in Utah.

- The wildlands of Utah are home to mountain lions, bears, desert bighorn sheep, pronghorn, deer, and more than 200 species of birds.
- The scenery found in this redrock country includes slot canyons, ascending plateaus, dozens of major rock arches, and natural bridges.
- Utah encompasses 55 million acres; about 22 million acres are public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

# FACTS

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

**Pam Eaton**  
TWS, Four Corners Regional Director  
Phone: (303) 650-5818  
E-mail: [pam\\_eaton@tws.org](mailto:pam_eaton@tws.org)



## Wake Up and Smell the Clear-Cut

**T**he scenic and recreational attractions of the High Knob area, located in Virginia within the Clinch Ranger District in Jefferson National Forest, are some of the state's best-kept secrets. Clinch Ranger District harbors an incredible diversity of plants and animals, rugged mountains, and flowing streams. Unfortunately, this type of area is not well represented in protected public lands, especially in the High Knob region located in the far southwest corner of the state. In the past 10 years, 80 percent of the logging in the Clinch Ranger District has occurred in the High Knob region.

An opportunity is at hand to preserve some of the last remaining wild places in Jefferson National Forest. Over the next two years, the Forest Service intends to issue a draft management plan for public comment and ultimately adopt a long-range strategy for managing the forest. The Forest Service expects a 50 percent increase in recreation in the South, including Virginia, by 2005, underscoring the need to protect special wild places such as High Knob.

### VOICE OF THE LAND

*"Since the timber cutting has occurred behind my house, we have heard no owls at night. I have lived in this house for 25 years and could always hear them. Now there is nothing. It is very sad that they have destroyed the home of these animals."*—Otis Ward

Otis Ward has lived on High Knob for the last 25 years. What Ward would like most to see is this land and the animals on it preserved for his five grandchildren.

Clear-cut damage in the High Knob region. © Ron Skeber/Coalfield Progress



Little Stony Creek in the High Knob area. © Ron Skeber/Coalfield Progress

## WHAT'S AT STAKE

### Pristine Forest and Critical Water Supply

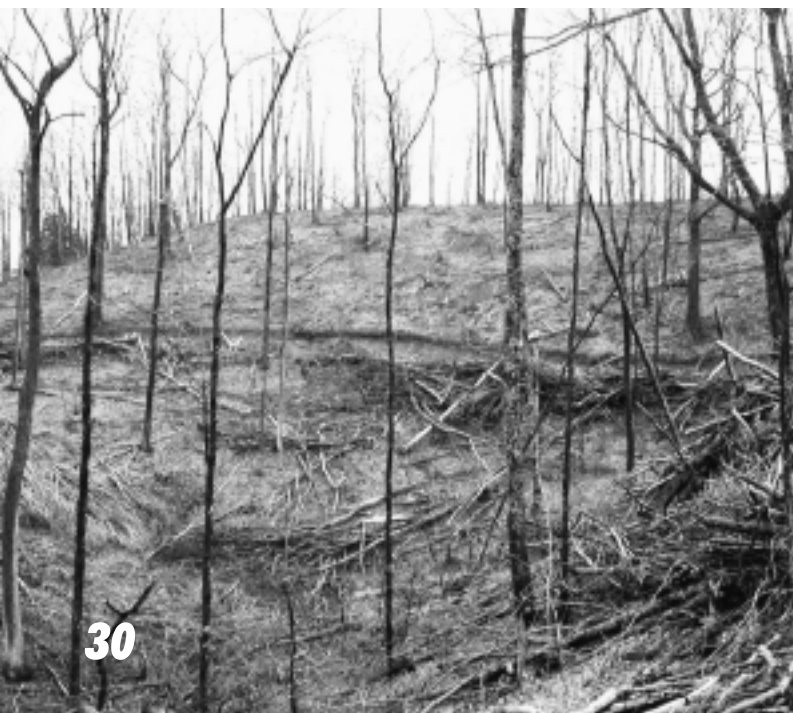
If the Forest Service continues its present policies and practices, the 57,000-acre High Knob area—with its rugged and remote terrain, mountain streams, scenic waterfalls, popular byways, miles of hiking trails, rich biological diversity, and old-growth forests—will be gone or greatly diminished.

Many native plants and animals, including wildflowers, black bears, and songbirds, are adversely affected by the lack of protection of the large tracts of contiguous forest provided by the High Knob area. These species depend on the remaining wildlands in High Knob for their survival.

The Jefferson National Forest contains the headwaters of a number of streams and rivers that nourish southwestern Virginia and provide drinking water to area residents. The water quality of the Clinch River, which includes a number of endangered and threatened species, is at grave risk from several factors. One is excessive clear-cutting. Keeping these wildlands in an undisturbed condition will help improve the water quality and preserve world-class fisheries.

"Few people are aware of the bounty of our national forests," said Michael Francis, director of The Wilderness Society's National Forests Program. "These lands supply more than half the fresh water used in homes and businesses. One-third of all our endangered plants and animals depend on the forests."

<http://www.wilderness.org>







# THREATS

## Logging Losses

The 996-acre Clear, Machine, and Burns Creek (CMB) timber sale in High Knob is already under way. The clear-cut operations in the High Knob region will increase the amount of sediment in the Guest River, now on Virginia's list of impaired waterways. According to the Forest Service's own analysis, the CMB timber sale will dump 7.4 tons of dirt into the Guest River over a one-year period.

A 1994-99 study of the Guest River, conducted by the Tennessee Valley Authority, noted that the highest levels of sedimentation on the river were recorded just below where national forest logging activities are occurring. Increased sedimentation is a serious concern because it raises water temperatures and degrades the overall quality of rivers and streams, thereby threatening the survival of marine plants and animals, as well as compromising the drinking supply for area residents. The Guest River Group, of which the Forest Service is a member, is attempting to clean up the river, and the Forest Service's recommendation to increase timber sales is exacerbating the problem.

"The Forest Service needs to take a closer look at the effects that timber sales in the area have on the pollution of the Guest River," said Detta Davis, area resident and president of The Clinch Coalition, a newly formed grassroots organization that has asked the Forest Service to stop logging until it has a plan that fully protects the ecological integrity and diversity of the area. "They are treading very close to violating the Clean Water Act."

In addition to the CMB timber sale, two others are being planned. One is in the Bark Camp region, which stretches across High Knob and includes two lakes and highly used recreation areas. This sale proposes to log mature trees on 1,413 acres in the Bark Camp area. The Bark Camp sale will build or rebuild eight miles of logging roads in this beautiful but fragile mountaintop region. The Wilderness Society is working with The Clinch Coalition.

## Recreation Versus Logging

Recreational resources in the area targeted for logging include scenic walking trails, campgrounds, and scenic waterways. According to the Forest Service, 38 times more local income is generated by recreational activity on forest land than by timbering operations, and 31 times more jobs come from recreation than from logging.

## RECOMMENDATION

*The Forest Service has acknowledged that many areas in the National Forest System should be managed for conservation, not commodities. The High Knob region of Jefferson National Forest is the place to put these new policies to work. Future management of Jefferson National Forest should feature three vital components:*

- *conservation of wildlands, roadless areas, and the remaining high-quality fish and wildlife habitat;*
- *restoration of key areas damaged by decades of high-intensity logging; and*
- *enhancement of compatible recreational uses and values.*

## PUBLIC ACTION

Strong citizen support is needed to protect the High Knob region. Work on the new plan has been in progress for seven years. Reduced funding for planning may yet again delay the completion of the Jefferson National Forest Revised Forest Plan. If this happens, it will allow the Forest Service to continue managing Jefferson National Forest as it has in the past—with increased logging. As drafted, the new plan will give better protection to the forest, including the recommendation for new wilderness areas and better protection of riparian zones. The public can help by getting on the mailing list to comment on the proposed revised Forest Service plan.

### Contact:

**Jefferson National Forest Plan Revision**  
**5162 Valleypointe Parkway**  
**Roanoke, VA 24019**  
**Phone: 1-888-265-0019**

• The Jefferson National Forest runs through three states, with 690,106 acres in Virginia, 18,526 acres in West Virginia and 961 acres in Kentucky.

• Jefferson National Forest provides habitat for a variety of species, including at least 70 species of reptiles and amphibians, 55 species of mammals, 100 species of freshwater fish and mussels, and 200 species of birds.

• Jefferson National Forest is located within several major river basins: the Potomac, Roanoke, James, New, Big Sandy, Holston, and Clinch rivers.

# FACTS

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

**Michael Francis**  
**TWS Director, National Forests Program**  
**Phone: (202) 429-2661**  
**E-mail: michael\_franis@tw.org**

**Shirl Parsons**  
**TWS Southwest Regional Grassroots Coordinator**  
**Phone: (404) 872-9453**  
**E-mail: shirl\_parsons@tw.org**

# Fragmented Wilderness

**W**ithin an hour of nearly 4 million Washington state residents lies the landscape of the Cascade Crest. Ecological threats to the Cascade Crest region have developed from a complex pattern of land ownership, with alternating public and private parcels. The resulting “checkerboard” ownership pattern in the Cascade Crest has created mixed forest cover of some old and intact forest land interspersed with extensive clear-cuts and young forest.

In the next 50 years, the population of Washington state is expected to double, from 5.6 million to 11 million people. The demands on the lands of the Cascade Crest to provide wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, open space, and clean air and water will increase accordingly. The 21st century could see the elimination of much of what’s natural about the Cascade Crest region.

Hikers in Knox Creek Trail of Cascade Crest.

© Charles Raines

## VOICE OF THE LAND

*“It’s been heart-breaking to watch the clear-cuts increase in this area since I moved here in 1966. Monitoring the impacts of the heavy logging on private lands within the Alpine Lakes Area has always been my particular concern. Transferring them to federal ownership has always struck me as the best way to resolve that issue.”* —Jim Chapman, Alpine Lakes Protection Society

Jim Chapman is a leader in the Alpine Lakes Protection Society, an organization that advocates protecting this area through land purchases and exchanges and through designation of wilderness.

## WHAT’S AT STAKE

### Ancient Forest Ecosystem

The Cascade Crest region provides habitat for some 280 species of amphibians, fish and wildlife, many of which are also found on the threatened or endangered species list in Washington. It serves as a habitat corridor, providing connectivity for plants and animals that live and travel between the Alpine Lakes Wilderness to the north and the Norse Peak Wilderness and Mt. Rainier National Park to the south. Unless we can protect and restore this landscape’s ecological integrity, we may not be able to recover species that depend on ancient forest ecosystems, such as the spotted owl and marbled murrelet.



Road building and clear-cuts,  
Wenatchee National Forest, Cascade Crest.

© Charles Raines

# THREATS

## Logging

Logging impacts are compounded by a complex pattern of land ownership consisting of alternating square-mile sections of public and private lands. This "checkerboard" ownership pattern of private inholdings and public lands is the result of the 1864 federal land grants to the railroads. Most of the private lands have since been logged, creating a fragmented forest that has devastated wildlife and threatens to sever the link between the North and South Cascades.

Land exchanges have been used as a tool to eliminate this cumbersome ownership pattern and consolidate large blocks of lands into public ownership to facilitate ecologically sound management of the area. The recently legislated Plum Creek Timber Co./Forest Service land exchange (December 1999) saw approximately 43,000 acres exchanged, with 31,000 acres going to the U.S. Forest Service and 12,000 acres going to Plum Creek Timber Co. This land exchange legislation also included a designation of a 15,000-acre wilderness study area adjacent to the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, as well as the protective designation for 5,500 acres in the Kelly Butte roadless area.

In addition, the Forest Service has three years to purchase 18,000 acres of Plum Creek lands that were dropped from the trade. These include roadless lands, ancient forests, and significant riparian habitat.

## Development

The rapidly growing Seattle/Tacoma metropolitan area continues to encroach on the wildlands of the Cascades, threatening to destroy the very qualities that attracted most of the area's residents to the Pacific Northwest. Since 1972, more than 2 million acres of land in Washington state have been converted from forest to other uses. That amounts to 10 percent of the state's forest land converted to cities, suburbs, roads, farms, or other forms of development.

## Recreation

Over the past 150 years, the greatest threat to the natural integrity of the Cascade Crest area has been extensive logging. Although this threat still exists, increasingly the area risks being overused by a population eager for recreation. Already, increased use has resulted in crowded campgrounds and trailheads and conflicting trail uses. The solitude that many outdoor enthusiasts crave when they retreat to the wildlands is becoming more difficult to find.

## Flowing Water

The Cascade Crest region is the primary source of water for the cities of Seattle and Tacoma, but the quality and quantity of this water diminish as the rainfall and snowmelt flow over a badly damaged landscape. Across the Cascade Crest, extensive logging, road building, urban sprawl, and development threaten the water on which area residents rely. The removal of vegetation leads to increased soil erosion and loss of streamside shade. These, in turn, result in sediment accumulation in streams and higher water temperatures, threatening the survival of plant and animal life.



# RECOMMENDATION

*The Wilderness Society is involved in a three-year program of research, education, and advocacy in the Cascade Crest with the goal of preserving all wilderness-quality land and restoring habitat.*

*Our goals are to*

- 1 demonstrate the value of this region and make a compelling case for protection;*
- 2 document the extent of past damage and present rate of landscape changes;*
- 3 identify priorities and opportunities for restoring ecological integrity; and*
- 4 ensure public ownership and sustainable management of public lands.*

# PUBLIC ACTION

There are a number of things that the public can do to ensure the protection of the Cascade Crest region:

Write Congress to support the dedication of \$30 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) in fiscal year 2001 to acquire key parcels in the Cascade Crest.

Support The Cascades Conservation Partnership's three-year campaign to acquire 75,000 acres of land in the Cascade Crest using a combination of private donations and LWCF funds.

Support the Washington State Growth Management Act and efforts of groups like 1000 Friends of Washington to maintain strong local land use laws in Cascade Crest.

## Contact:

**1000 Friends of Washington**  
766 Thomas St.  
Seattle, WA 98109  
Phone: (206) 343-0681  
E-mail: [info@1000friends.org](mailto:info@1000friends.org)

- The Cascade Crest's landscape is dominated by a "checkerboard" pattern of alternating, one-mile squares of national forest public land and private timberland.
- More than 280 species of amphibians, fish, and wildlife in the Cascade Crest are threatened or endangered by logging, development, and recreation.

FACTS

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

**Bob Freimark**  
TWS Assistant Regional Director, Northwest Region  
Phone: (206) 624-6430  
E-mail: [bfreimark@twswnw.org](mailto:bfreimark@twswnw.org)



# Oil Rigs and Snowmobiles Threaten American Icon

**T**hough most Americans probably assume that the Yellowstone area is fully protected, the reality is that this natural treasure faces grave threats from dirt bikes, snowmobiles, and other off-road vehicles (ORVs), oil and gas drilling, sprawl, and logging and the road building that accompanies it. Although most of this activity occurs outside the national park, it affects the health of the park and the larger ecosystem.

## VOICE OF THE LAND

*"Yellowstone is an invaluable natural laboratory. Its geothermal features are so rich in biological diversity that you can find the equivalent diversity of a tropical rain forest—in the space of a beer bottle. One enzyme found here led to a major breakthrough in DNA testing of fingerprints."* —John Spear, research associate, University of Colorado

## WHAT'S AT STAKE

### Rare Wildlife, Thermal Wonders, and Solitude

The world's first national park anchors an 18-million-acre ecosystem. Yellowstone National Park comprises 2.2 million acres; Grand Teton National Park, three national wildlife refuges, and seven national forests total another 12.5 million acres. These 12 areas add up to 82 percent of the ecosystem. It is home to the largest mostly intact geyser system left in the world, extensive lakes and streams, alpine meadows, and evergreen forests.

Greater Yellowstone provides habitat for many species found in few other places, including grizzly bears, gray wolves, bison, and trumpeter swans. One of the reasons this wildlife can survive there is Yellowstone's naturalness: more than half of the ecosystem remains road-free.



Yellowstone River in Hayden Valley.

© Christian Heeb/Gnass Photo Images



Snowmobile with bison in Greater Yellowstone.

© Irene Owsley Spector

# THREATS

## ORVs

"Unfortunately, Mother Nature is on the defensive in Yellowstone," said Bob Ekey, Northern Rockies regional director for The Wilderness Society. "The fastest growing threat right now is ORV traffic, especially snowmobiles roaring through Yellowstone National Park and wilderness areas in the Targhee and Gallatin national forests. There are also more and more dirt bikes. All these machines are getting more powerful, so they penetrate into more remote areas and do greater damage to the land."

With 80,000 snowmobile trips now being made through the park in winter, the National Park Service has proposed eliminating the machines, but a protracted fight by snowmobile manufacturers and users is under way. These vehicles drown out natural sounds, pollute the air, interfere with wildlife activities during an already-stressful season, and tear up vegetation. Although most of the attention has focused on the park, the problem is increasingly serious in the nearby national forests, and the Forest Service has yet to address it.

## Oil and Gas Development

An astonishing 7 million acres in the area's national forests are now available for oil and gas drilling. Much of this land is vital to grizzlies, elk, and other wildlife. The Forest Service is considering leasing even more of the lands it manages, including an undisturbed 370,000-acre tract in the Bridger-Teton National Forest, 35 miles south of Jackson Hole. "This should be a nonstarter," said Michael Scott, program director for the Greater Yellowstone Coalition. "This is an extraordinary place and should not be industrialized under any circumstances."

## Logging and Road Building

The logging industry, too, would like to exploit the national forests. Over the years, to facilitate the logging, 7,500 miles of roads have been built, promoting erosion that pollutes streams and breaking up wildlife travel corridors. These roads are expensive, and that's one reason that the Forest Service's commercial logging program has failed to cover its costs. In 1997, the program ate up a taxpayer subsidy of \$2.7 million in the seven forests. The Clinton Administration is considering a policy that would bar road building in unprotected roadless areas in all national forests.

## Development

The natural features that lure tourists also draw new residents, and the 20 counties in the Greater Yellowstone area have grown at an average rate of 14 percent over the last decade. The counties are failing to deal effectively with subdividers and other developers, thereby increasing the likelihood of losing wildlife migration corridors. One proposal would put a ski resort and more than 1,000 luxury homes in Targhee National Forest, just west of Grand Teton National Park. The developer would build on acreage to be acquired through a trade with the Forest Service. "We're losing open space too quickly as it is," said Ekey, "and 70 percent of the people who submitted comments on this potential land swap told the Forest Service it was a bad idea."



# RECOMMENDATIONS

*The Forest Service should stop leasing land to oil and gas companies in the national forests surrounding Yellowstone National Park and must carefully regulate any drilling that does occur.*

*The Forest Service should bar any road building in the roadless portions of these seven forests, as proposed in October 1999 by President Clinton.*

*The land exchange that would lead to development of the Grand Targhee ski resort should be abandoned.*

*Off-road vehicles should be limited to specifically designated routes in order to minimize damage to the national forests surrounding the park.*

*Congress needs to appropriate money from the Land and Water Conservation Fund to acquire acreage along important wildlife migration corridors to prevent development.*

*Bison must be allowed to migrate north across park borders in search of winter forage.*

*The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service should adopt a conservation plan that gives the grizzly bear the strongest protection possible, as declines in habitat and food sources increase the threat to this vanishing species.*

# PUBLIC ACTION

**Citizens should contact:**  
**Robert Stanton**  
**National Park Service Director**  
**1849 C St., NW**  
**Washington, DC 20240**  
**to urge a phase-out of snowmobiles**  
**at Yellowstone National Park.**

- Since the gray wolf was reintroduced in Yellowstone National Park in 1995, the population has grown to about 115.
- Greater Yellowstone is the southern anchor of the Yellowstone-to-Yukon corridor that conservationists are now campaigning to protect.
- Old Faithful erupts 18 to 22 times a day, and the eruptions go as high as 180 feet.

# FACTS

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

**Bob Ekey**  
**TWS Northern Rockies Regional Director**  
**Phone: (406) 586-1600**  
**E-mail: bob\_ekey@tws.org**

# Facts

## About Off-Road Vehicles

■ In a survey for The Wilderness Society (TWS) conducted in March 2000, 79 percent of registered voters nationwide said they favor limiting the use of off-road vehicles (ORVs) to designated routes in national forests and other public lands, to protect those lands from adverse environmental impacts.

■ According to data obtained from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Information System, nearly all of the nation's BLM land—93 percent—is available to ORV use. That means out of the 181.7 million acres of BLM land nationwide, a person can be subjected to the noise, pollution, and land destruction of ORVs on 169 million acres.

■ A University of California-Davis study showed that twin stroke engines—the kind commonly found in personal watercraft—accounted for 90 percent of pollutants such as methyl tertiary butyl ether in Lake Tahoe. An Environmental Protection Agency study has shown that small amounts of this chemical cause kidney damage and other adverse effects on the developing fetus. The same study also concluded that “in many animals, a lifetime exposure to methyl tertiary butyl ether in air causes cancer.”

■ According to the U.S. Coast Guard, although personal watercraft account for only 9 percent of the registered vessels in this country, they are involved in 36 percent of all boating accidents and 46 percent of all boating injuries.

■ A study of public attitudes in Montana found that 85 percent of hunters in the Gallatin National Forest felt that ORVs adversely affected their hunting experience. A similar study of elk hunters in Idaho found that 86 percent of the respondents felt that encountering use of motorized vehicles off of roads detracted from the quality of their hunting experience.





# THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY

900 17th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20006-2506  
[www.wilderness.org](http://www.wilderness.org)  
1-800-THE-WILD

## HEADQUARTERS

900 17th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20006-2506  
(202) 833-2300

**As of August 2000, TWS national headquarters will move to:**

1615 M Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
(202) 833-2300

## ALASKA

430 West 7th Avenue, Suite 210  
Anchorage, AK 99501-3550  
(907) 272-9453  
FAX (907) 272-1670

## CALIFORNIA/NEVADA

Presidio Building 1016  
P.O. Box 29241  
San Francisco, CA 94129-0241  
(415) 561-6641  
FAX (415) 561-6640

## COLORADO/FOUR CORNERS

7475 Dakin Street, Suite 410  
Denver, CO 80221  
(303) 650-5818  
FAX (303) 650-5942

## GEORGIA

1447 Peachtree Street, NE, Suite 812  
Atlanta, GA 30309-3029  
(404) 872-9453  
FAX (404) 872-8540

## IDAHO

710 N. 6th Street, Suite 102  
Boise, ID 83702  
(208) 343-8153  
FAX (208) 343-8184

## MASSACHUSETTS

45 Bromfield Street, Suite 1101  
Boston, MA 02108  
(617) 350-8866  
FAX (617) 426-3213

## MONTANA

105 W. Main Street, Suite E  
Bozeman, MT 59715-4689  
(406) 586-1600  
FAX (406) 586-4700

## VERMONT

P.O. Box 25  
Craftsbury Common, VT 05827-0025  
(802) 586-9910  
FAX (802) 586-9918

## WASHINGTON

1424 Fourth Avenue, Suite 816  
Seattle, WA 98101-2217  
(206) 624-6430  
FAX (206) 624-7101

## THE WILDERNESS SUPPORT CENTER

835 E. 2nd Avenue, Suite 440  
Durango, CO 81301  
(970) 247-8788  
FAX (970) 247-9020

## TWS Communications Contact Information:

Sue Lomenzo  
*VP Communications*  
Phone: (202) 429-2650  
E-mail: [sue\\_lomenzo@tws.org](mailto:sue_lomenzo@tws.org)

Ben Beach  
*Senior Editor*  
Phone: (202) 429-2655  
E-mail: [ben\\_beach@tws.org](mailto:ben_beach@tws.org)

Kathy Kilmer  
*Manager, Electronic Communications*  
Phone: (303) 650-5818, ext. 101  
E-mail: [kathy\\_kilmer@tws.org](mailto:kathy_kilmer@tws.org)

Gisele McAuliffe  
*Director of Communications*  
Phone: (202) 429-2642  
E-mail: [gisele\\_mcauliffe@tws.org](mailto:gisele_mcauliffe@tws.org)

Sabrina Williams  
*Communications Manager*  
Phone: (202) 429-8441  
E-mail: [sabrina\\_williams@tws.org](mailto:sabrina_williams@tws.org)

♻️ Printed on recycled paper.



