

# WORDS OF the WILD

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

## Nevada rolls out a bill for Wilderness in the north: Pine Forest range

On November 2, the entire Nevada Congressional delegation championed introduction of a new bill for Nevada wilderness—the Pine Forest Recreation Enhancement Act.

This bill would designate 26,000 acres within the Blue Lakes and Alder Creek Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) as the Pine Forest Range Wilderness Area and release 1,500 acres of the existing WSA lands. The bill would also direct the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to exchange federal lands surrounding nearby ranches for private parcels within the existing WSAs to allow for more appropriate management of public lands and ensure the economic viability of privately owned ranches.

Senator Reid's bill is S. 1788; the House version sponsored by Rep. Mark Amodei is H.R. 3377.

As Senator Harry Reid announced shortly afterwards: "Last week, I was joined by my colleagues in the Nevada Congressional delegation in introducing the Pine Forest Recreation Enhancement Act...product of a comprehensive two-year local process. Local ... stakeholders in Humboldt County came together to develop this proposal through a series of public meetings and presented it to the delegation with broad community support. The Nevada State Legislature and the Secretary of the Interior have praised the robust and inclusive local process used for this bill as the gold standard for

community-based wilderness proposals.

"...there is no question that the unspoiled natural lands and wildlife habitat in the Pine Forest Range should receive the strongest level of protection we can provide for public lands. Situated 100 miles northwest of Winnemucca, the Pine Forest Range boasts high alpine lakes and rivers surrounded by granite spires that are home to the Lahontan cutthroat trout, native only to Nevada. Thick forests of aspen and white-bark pine that blanket these mountains provide a stronghold for mule deer, while the steep slopes and open sage-brush meadows are home to thriving herds of bighorn sheep and pronghorn. The area is also well known by sportsmen across the west for its world-class chukar hunting."

Joining Senator Reid were Sen. Dean Heller, and Reps. Shelley Berkley, Joe Heck and Mark Amodei. "This legislation will result in enhanced recreation opportunities and better

land management," Senator Heller said. "I am pleased to support this bill...as an example of how public land designations should be handled."

Congresswoman Berkley praised the way "local communities, elected officials and conservationists have all joined together to call for protection of these beautiful Silver State open spaces." Rep. Amodei also applauded the community-driven focus of the bill that gave Nevadans "a seat at the table."

Marge Sill, longtime Nevada wilderness activist leader, who has kept this newsletter apprised of progress as the bill was being prepared, noted, "As we celebrate the fifth anniversary of the White Pine Wilderness on Dec. 18, we are thrilled that more spectacular Nevada wilderness is on the near horizon. And we invite you to visit the Pine Forest Wilderness next summer, in body or spirit, and to revel in its beauty." ##

It was 15 years ago, in 1996, that the CA/NV Wilderness Committee visited the Pine Forest Range over Memorial Day. From their camp at the Blue Lakes, shown here, some participants climbed Duffer Peak, 9397 ft., the range high point.



photo: Vicky Hoover

## Administration supports protecting 18 BLM areas

Beauty Mountain in California, Nevada's Gold Butte and Pine Forest Range are among 18 backcountry areas in nine states that Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar recently highlighted as deserving protection by Congress as national conservation areas or wilderness.

The list of areas managed primarily by Interior's Bureau of Land Management (BLM) features places where there is significant local support for Congressional protection.

In addition to Beauty Mountain, the Secretary's report names additional areas in California:

- The California Desert—Sand to Snow, Mojave Trails, Avawatz Mountains, Great Falls Basin, Golden Valley and Other Conservation Designations in Senator Dianne Feinstein's California Desert Protection Act of 2011.
- English Ridge area, located in the Coast Range in Northern California's Mendocino County,

"Building on the President's America's Great Outdoors initiative, I hope these areas can form a strong foundation for a bipartisan conservation agenda for this Congress," said Secretary Salazar.

The report is the result of work by Deputy Secretary David J. Hayes and BLM Director Bob Abbey to identify – based on input from Congress, state and county officials, tribes, and other interested parties – a preliminary list of BLM lands that merit consideration by Congress for designation as national conservation areas or Wilderness.

The report emphasized that it "does not purport to identify all lands that deserve congressional action... [but] some of the most compelling candidates for immediate congressional action" and that the report would have "no effect on current management of any of the areas described."

BLM Director Bob

Abbey noted that the BLM manages over 245 million acres of land nationwide, primarily in 12 western states. Since the passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964, Congress has designated approximately 8,700,000 acres of BLM land as wilderness – just 3.5 percent roughly of the land that the BLM manages.

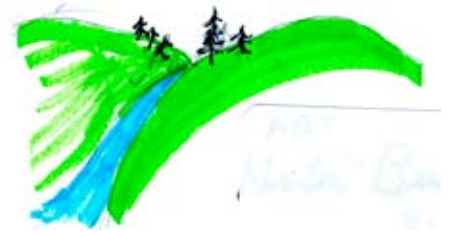
Public lands managed by the Department of the Interior draw more than 400 million visits a year. These conservation lands play a critical role in keeping local economies healthy and active. According to some recent non-governmental estimates, outdoor recreation supports as many as 6.5 million jobs and provides as much as \$1 trillion in annual economic benefits. Special designations, such as national conservation areas and wilderness areas, attract additional tourism and visitor spending in local communities.

At the same time, the BLM is also following Interior Department mandates to inventory and protect additional lands with wilderness characteristics. BLM states are addressing this focus on lands with wilderness characteristics and how to protect those wilderness qualities via their regular planning processes

### Next Committee meeting

Join the California/Nevada Wilderness Committee and the Desert Committee February 11-12, 2012, in their annual joint meeting in Shoshone, California. Get to know fellow advocates, celebrate wilderness, and learn about our campaigns and the issues we face. Mingle learning, fun, and beautiful desert scenery. Meeting begins Saturday noon, adjourns at 5 for happy hour, potluck, and evening program; resumes Sunday a.m. until lunch time. Likely Sunday afternoon hike. Contact [vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org](mailto:vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org), (415)977-5527, or Terry Frewin, [terrylf@cox.net](mailto:terrylf@cox.net).

## San Joaquin River Gorge to be Wild & Scenic?



Helen Burke

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recommends protection of the magnificent San Joaquin River Gorge as a National Wild & Scenic River. The recommendation is in the Bakersfield BLM Draft Resource Management Plan (DRMP), which will provide management direction for more than 408,000 acres of public land in central California. Steve Evans of Friends of the River points out, "The Wild & Scenic recommendation for the San Joaquin River Gorge is gutsy given that it defies the intent of several members of Congress and other government agencies to build the proposed Temperance Flat Dam, which would flood the Gorge and destroy its outstanding attributes."

Dam proponents will be mobilizing to oppose the agency's recommendation for Wild & Scenic protection and its many other conservation-oriented proposals – including protecting all Wilderness Study Areas and 17,890 acres of other lands with wilderness qualities. Conservationists need to speak out in favor of protecting the Gorge and other sensitive areas in written comments to the BLM. The deadline for public comments in Dec. 9, 2011.

The BLM manages about 4,000 acres in the San Joaquin River Gorge, upstream of the existing Friant Dam and Millerton Reservoir in the Sierra Nevada foothills northeast of Fresno.

The draft RMP is at: <http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/bakersfield.html>

**Take Action!** Send an email today thanking Bakersfield BLM Field Manager Tim Smith and supporting Alternative C, in the draft Bakersfield plan, which should be modified to reduce grazing [cacalrmp@blm.gov](mailto:cacalrmp@blm.gov) #

# An Overlooked Gift – Nature around us

## Sierra Club’s “Mission Outdoors” gets kids outside

-- by Rob Jordan

As the holidays get into full swing, an invaluable gift idea attracts little notice. It is an antidote to stress, mental fatigue and obesity. It is a respite from urban cityscapes, ever-present technology, and daily demands.

It is the gift of the outdoors.

It’s no secret that children are increasingly isolated from nature, enabled and encouraged to lose themselves in video games and text messages instead of forests and rivers and even simple neighborhood vacant lots or other open spaces.. If nothing changes, generations to come will likely see nature and the outdoors as superfluous and wilderness as utterly alien. Who will advocate for the last great open spaces then? Who will defend nature?

While we can’t expect children to ask for outdoor adventures, we can show them the way. The Sierra Club is on a mission to bring the gift of the outdoors to children across the country. Under the umbrella of its new Mission Outdoors initiative, the Club

is focusing on four coordinated programs aimed at getting kids and their families into nature.

“We are all working to reconnect people with the outdoors and to connect them with the conservation movement,” said Sierra Club National Youth Outreach Representative Tiffany Saleh of the club’s Los Angeles field office. “It just made sense for us to pull together to work in a more coordinated way.”

Mission Outdoors’ core components are:

- **Building Bridges to the Outdoors (BBTO)**, an effort to educate community leaders, decision makers and the public, convene national and state level partners, and advocate for more opportunities for youth to experience nature. Through BBTO, we hope to engage new audiences in advocacy and invest in the next generation of environmental activists and stewards.
- **Inner City Outings (ICO)**, a community outreach program that provides opportunities for urban

youth and adults to explore, enjoy, and protect the natural world. ICO primarily serves young people who would not otherwise have access to outdoor opportunities (due to lack of awareness, income, skills, or adult role models). ICO is an effective way to link participants from different cultures, foster respect of self and others, and provide outdoor skills training and leadership opportunities.



photo: Mission Outdoors

- **Local Outings** are a great way to find out about local conservation issues while enjoying the great outdoors. With 63 chapters and more than 400 local groups providing more than 10,000 day and overnight outings for 200,000 people annually, you can choose from day hikes, peak scrambles, bicycling, cross-country skiing, bird-watching, conservation-oriented walks, or forays into the remaining natural areas of our major cities.
- **Military Families Outdoors**, a program aimed at getting military families and veterans outdoors as a method of stress relief, family and social integration, and physical, mental, and emotional health improvement. In partnership with organizations such as the National Military Family Associations and Operation Purple Camps, we have helped get 50,000 military families, veterans, and youth outside since 2006. Moving forward, we will focus on providing consistent contact and leadership in the outdoors for military families and veterans across the nation.

### A California teen speaks out

My name is Karen de Leon and I am 14 years old. I was born in Los Angeles but later raised in the Bay Area. In L.A there aren't that many places that any one person could possibly go to experience the feeling of being out in nature. Yes, there are parks but it's not the same... And most of the time parents don't have the time to take their kids down the street to the park because when they do, even if it's a block from where they live, they just have to take the car.

When I came to the Bay Area it seemed so different because there were more trees than I thought could ever exist. Seriously, too much green for me to soak up in one day. I never really considered myself an outdoors kind of girl. But I have been very fortunate to have had the chance of rock climbing, biking at beaches, hiking the Grand Canyon, and river rafting. Although all those activities are really fun, sometimes just going for jog at a local park can be a connection to nature. We all should go out and enjoy the fresh air that we have right out on the other side of our front door.

To me nature is something I can easily connect to especially because I love to write and so being around nature inspires me. Everybody should connect to nature because shouldn't we know what we're protecting? No one should say, "Oh I have no connection with nature because I don't know how to hike or camp". You don't need to go out and camp to connect to nature. If you love music let nature sounds inspire you, and if you love video games let nature's amazing sceneries lead you to an imaginary place.

Being outside is the only place where I feel like the impossible is possible and where I, in my mind, can soar infinity feet up to the sky. What calls me to nature is the feeling of being free and not in four walls. Everybody has his or her own reason to get outdoors. I know mine...what's your reason? ##

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# An Overlooked Gift – *gift of the outdoors*

## Children and Nature

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Together, these programs engage more than 250,000 people in outdoor experiences each year and train thousands of volunteer leaders, including youth leaders, across all 50 states, Washington, DC and Puerto Rico. Each program will continue to do what it does best. But by integrating our activities and strengths where appropriate, we can work more effectively to accomplish larger goals.

The overarching long term goal of Mission Outdoors is to get America outdoors. We will do this by providing access to outdoor experiences for more people of all backgrounds, building alliances and partnerships that connect all communities to their natural heritage, and organizing grassroots and federal administration support for the value of outdoor experiences and the protection of our natural heritage.

### The Children in Nature Network

One of our partner groups is the [Children & Nature Network](#), a national network of approximately 80 loosely affiliated regional collaboratives that support and accelerate the growth of the children-in-nature movement. The movement is an offshoot of *The Last Child in the Woods*, the pathbreaking 2000 book by Richard Louv. The book's prediction of a nation beset by "Nature Deficit Disorder" galvanized parents' groups and local neighborhoods groups around the country.



photo: Brian Beffort

Friends of Nevada Wilderness takes families and kids on wilderness service trips

Speaking with the Sierra Club recently, Louv said more adults need



photo: Brian Beffort

to understand and act on the importance of nature in their children's lives. "By learning how effective nature can be in the promotion of their children's health and well being as well as cognitive functioning; and by realizing that, as adults, they'll receive all the benefits themselves when they do get

The children-in-nature movement shows signs of real progress. First Lady Michelle Obama, with the support of the Sierra Club and other groups, started "Let's Move Outside," a component of Mrs. Obama's nationwide "Let's Move" physical activity initiative to combat childhood obesity in a single generation.

New ideas are gaining traction, according to Louv. They include outfitting local libraries with area hiking maps, pamphlets on local nature, registries for community gardens, and

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### THE "VITAMIN N" PRESCRIPTION –

#### *Nature Time for Children and Adults*

(from a July 26, 2011) post on Children & Nature website, by Richard Louv--Co-Founder and Chairman Emeritus of the Children and Nature Network)

In 2009, Janet Ady of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service stood before a crowd of grassroots leaders gathered by the Children & Nature Network. She held up an outsized pharmacy bottle. Within the bottle was a physician's prescription – one that would be as appropriate for adults as it would be for children.

The contents of the medicine bottle included a Web address to National Wildlife Refuges, a guide to animal tracks, Leave No Trace tips, a link to information on planting native vegetation to help bring back butterfly and bird migration routes, a Power Bar, and other items – including a temporary tattoo of migratory birds. The label read: *Directions:* Use daily, outdoors in nature. Go on a nature walk, watch birds, and observe trees. Practice respectful outdoor behavior in solitude or take with friends and family. *Refill:* Unlimited. *Expires:* Never.

An expanding body of primarily correlative scientific evidence points in a single, common-sense direction: Getting children outside can be good for their health. And getting them outside in nature may well offer special benefits.

Contact with the natural world appears to significantly reduce symptoms of attention deficit disorder in children as young as five. Nearby nature, and even a view of nature from a bedroom window, can reduce stress in children. Natural environments, such as parks, foster recovery from mental fatigue and may help children as well as adults learn. Green exercise may offer added benefits when compared to equal exertion in indoor gyms.

Healing gardens on hospital grounds are now popular. Dr. Daphne Miller, a general practitioner in Noe Valley, California, envisions nature prescriptions as part of the burgeoning field of integrated medicine. She also believes that park rangers can, in effect, become para-health professionals. So can whole park districts. Santa Fe, New Mexico, in an effort to fight its high rate of diabetes, launched its Prescription Trails program in which physicians can refer patients to a trail guide.

By applying what I call the Nature Principle, city planners, developers, architects, educators and many other professionals could improve the nation's health. But pediatricians have taken the first steps. They play an especially powerful role. ##

# Taking children into Wilderness: A backpack with our son Philip

-- by Cassie Barr

*I did my first backpack at age eight with my family. It was 10 days out of Mineral King in the Sierra. That trip is burned in my mind and has shaped my thoughts about life and nature ever since.*

*My husband David and I took our son Philip to Black Rock Lake in the Yolla Bolly Wilderness recently. He is five years old and carried only his water and snacks in his small backpack. It was not an easy trip. I have not been backpacking since before he was born, and I got a migraine the next day. But it was all worth it when I heard Philip and his father yell down to me at camp as I was lying down resting. I heard their laughter and cries of joy as they found their way cross country to the ridge overlooking the lake.*

*We spent only two nights at Black Rock Lake. We saw no one else.*

*Philip and I discovered at dusk that the baby skipper bugs in the lake responded to our yells and noises. One side of the lake synchronized as their little legs all moved in unison to the sounds we and our dog Perla made.*

*It was good to be together with our son without TV, telephone, or schedules to keep--just being there together. There was a lightness, a freedom and intimacy that was as beautiful as the wilderness around us. A peaceful reassurance of being alive and*



photo: Cassie Barr

*part of this world. I'm sure the experience is firm in Philip's memory, and I am glad he will carry it with him for the rest of his life. There will be longer trips when he can carry more weight -- and more good memories to come. ##*

(Cassie Barr is chair of the San Francisco Bay Chapter's wilderness committee.)

## Gift of the Outdoors

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even outdoor gear for checkout. A campaign in the Netherlands seeks to enshrine children's right to nature experiences in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Closer to home, the Healthy Kids Outdoors Act under consideration by Congress would bolster state, local and federal efforts to connect children and families with nature and is supported by OAK (Outdoors Alliance for Kids), a national alliance co-founded by Sierra Club to promote the value of outdoor experiences for children, youth and families.

At least eight states, and some cities and parks, have passed children's outdoor bills of rights or environmental literacy plans. Such initiatives are working their way through legislatures in at least three more states. California was one of the first states to adopt a Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights. The largely symbolic statement provides that every child should have the right to, among other things, camp under the stars, follow a trail, and catch a fish.

Despite evident momentum, the

road forward is unclear. Battered by the recession and shifting political winds, environmental concern appears to be at a low ebb. In California, approximately 70 state parks are under consideration for closure.

"We're seeing signs of progress, but that won't continue unless efforts to connect kids to nature are part of a broader movement," said Louv.

That's exactly what the Sierra Club is doing. Together with other organizations, we are highlighting programs to get children outdoors -- whether around the corner in their neighborhoods or into the forest somewhere farther away. These

programs and the rise of grassroots movements such as "Children in Nature" are the best hope for the future of wild places. ##

(Rob Jordan is a freelance writer and editor based in San Francisco. His father, Bob Jordan is chair of the Sierra Club's Utah Wilderness Task Force.)

## How to Get Involved

What can you do? It can be as easy as walking out your front door. A few ideas:

- Organize a family outdoor outing;
- Join or start a family hiking club in your neighborhood;
- Take a walk through a local park;
- Enjoy a backyard picnic;
- Contact a decision maker in your community and let them know why getting kids outside is important to you;
- Get together with other concerned community members to brainstorm how you can get kids involved in outdoor activities in your neighborhood. ##

## More Information on getting Children Outdoors

[-\(www.sierraclub.org/missionoutdoors\)](http://www.sierraclub.org/missionoutdoors),  
[-Information on starting a family nature club](#)  
[-Information about getting young people involved as "Natural Leaders"](#)

-Richard Louv's blogs: [www.natureprinciple.org](http://www.natureprinciple.org) and [www.childrenandnature.org](http://www.childrenandnature.org)  
[-information about how contact with the natural world affects children's development](#) ##

# Half Dome Trail Stewardship Plan

## *Solitude, Recreation, Preservation...Wilderness*

How many people are too many for a wilderness trail? Half Dome, one of the most popular attractions in Yosemite National Park, lies in designated wilderness. In 2008, up to 1,200 people a day tackled the famous trek up the cables; the high level of use has led to both safety and environmental concerns. At crowded times, people had to wait to descend from the dome—sometimes as storm clouds and even lightning whipped over the summit. The National Park Service (NPS) began in May, 2010 to develop a plan to provide long term stewardship of the Half Dome route in a manner that is consistent with the Wilderness Act and the NPS Organic Act.

Ever since Josiah Whitney in his 1870 Yosemite Guide-Book called Half Dome “perfectly inaccessible,” Half Dome has challenged hikers. In 1919, the Sierra Club developed a cable system that lets visitors without technical rock climbing ability reach the summit of Half Dome for. In 1984, Congress designated Yosemite backcountry, including Half Dome, as wilderness. Today, the hike to the summit of Half Dome is arguably the most iconic and popular wilderness excursion for visitors to Yosemite National Park.

### Wilderness and Half Dome

In 1964, in a nearly unanimous vote, Congress passed the Wilderness Act (Act) “to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness.” The Wilderness Act describes wilderness as “an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.”

The cables were on Half Dome long before it became wilderness; thus they were allowed to stay as a pre-existing use. If someone wanted to put new cables today on a wilderness peak, it would not be permitted.

While the Wilderness Act provides principles and guidelines, it does not provide use numbers or prescribe specific management actions. For example, the Act states that wilderness provides “outstanding opportunities for solitude,” but it does not define the number of people allowed before solitude is impacted. The Half Dome trail’s popularity is taking a toll on its wilderness environment – which no longer reflects the “natural conditions” and “solitude” called for by the Wilderness Act.

Monitoring along the trail shows:

- Vegetation damage and soil loss, trail widening and erosion;
- Habituation of wildlife along the trail corridor, and at the summit and subdome, from improper food storage and feeding;
- Threats to a population of the Mt. Lyell Salamander, a California Species of Special Concern;
- Severe crowding on the subdome, summit and cables, including long lines to use the cables;
- Very high encounter rates on the entire trail.

As environmental integrity has suffered, so has visitor safety. Crowding on the Half Dome cables can increase departure time from the summit and the amount of time visitors are exposed to natural hazards such as slippery wet rock, extreme temperatures, and lightning. To address the problems, the National Park Service is developing a long-term management, or “stewardship”, plan for the Half Dome trail. Specifically, the plan will:

- Consider all ways to preserve and enhance wilderness character—with a range of alternatives from removal of the cables, to access restrictions potentially involving day-use permits;
- Institute management prescriptions that protect and enhance the natural and cultural environment;
- Establish thresholds for social conditions on the Half Dome trail;
- Assure unimpeded travel conditions, so that visitors may manage their own



photo: Vicky Hoover

Half Dome seen from top of North Dome

risk;

- Commit to an ongoing monitoring program to ensure the above goals are met.

The establishment of a permit system for Half Dome has elicited varied responses. Some people oppose *any* restriction on numbers of people using the cable, or seek placement of an additional cable, or cables(!), or urge removal of the Dome from wilderness status. On the other hand, some call for total removal of the cable to restore “pure” Wilderness. Sierra Club supports a permit system that limits usage to improve the natural environment, enhance the wilderness experience for visitors and guard individual safety, and wants the EA to include an alternative for removal of the cable.

Data gathered during an interim permit system in 2010 will help inform the plan. Scoping was completed in 2010, and a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) and proposed stewardship plan are expected to be released for public review and comment this coming winter, potentially by the end of January, 2012. There will be a 45-day comment period. A draft proposal for a permit system will be released at the same time, in order to solicit public comments, although what kind of permit system will actually be implemented, if any, will depend on the results of the EA and comments on it.

Because this EA will be out too late to guide Half Dome stewardship for the 2012 season, the National Park Service is also preparing a temporary permit system for 2012. It will incorporate some changes from the present permit system based on lessons from permitting experiences in 2011.

To find out more about the Half Dome Stewardship Plan, visit the park’s planning website at [www.nps.gov/yose/parkmgmt/planning.htm](http://www.nps.gov/yose/parkmgmt/planning.htm) ##



# Outings

Support wilderness the Sierra Club way!



## Dec 29 - January 2 -- Thur-Mon Holiday Service in Carrizo Plain

Celebrate the end of the year and offer service to the pronghorn antelope in remote Carrizo Plain National Monument. Between Bakersfield and San Luis Obispo, this vast grassland is home to pronghorn antelope, tule elk, kit fox, varied birds. Intro hike Dec. 29, 2 days-plus modifying barbed wire fencing, and a day to hike and explore. \$30 covers 4 dinners and New Year's morning breakfast, plus stay at Goodwin Ranch. Limited to 14 participants, Contact Desert Committee leader: Craig Deutsche, [craig.deutsche@gmail.com](mailto:craig.deutsche@gmail.com), (310)477-6670.

## Dec 31 - January 1 -- Sat-Sun New Year's in Gerlach, Nevada

A totally informal New Year's celebration, involving walking between the 3 bars in Gerlach. Unless you are really hardy, stay at Bruno's Motel, check in and reservations at the bar, (775)557-2220. Other activities: hot springs if the playa permits, the local art gallery, scenic drive, etc. Dogs limited. Sign-up 12/15-12/28 with Great Basin Group/Toiyabe Chapter leader David Book, (775)843-6443.

## January 1, 2012 -- Sun Southern Nevada Hangover Hike

Start the New Year right by joining your fellow hikers on the traditional moderate but scenic hike to Calico Tanks in Red Rock Canyon NCA beginning late morning. Geology of the Aztec Sandstone will be discussed. Group limited to 15 by BLM. Contact Leader: Geologist Gary Beckman (702)648-2983.

## January 14 -- Sat Echo Wash, Lake Mead NRA

Which variety of eagle are we most likely to see along the lakeshore as we wander this scenic wash? Approx 6 mi. RT hike, contact Southern Nevada Group leader: Bill Marr (702)433-0473.

## January 15 - Sun Red Cap Red Rocks Cyn, NCA,

Elevation gain of 800 ft on this 3 mile Las Vegas area round trip hike. It is short, challenging and most of all is fun. We'll

scramble to a high point in the Calico Hills. What species lies dormant in the water pockets until the rains come? Leader: George McDonald (702)808-3855.

## January 20 - 22 -- Fri-Sun Death Valley Wilderness

Help restore wilderness values in this beautiful national park, as we work with Death Valley Wilderness Coordinator Charlie Callagan. Projects may include re-landscaping former OHV routes now in wilderness, trail repair, cleanup around historic cabins. Meet early Fri afternoon to begin work. Happy hour potluck Sat. Fri and Sat night car camping. Desert Committee Leader: Kate Allen, [kj.allen96@gmail.com](mailto:kj.allen96@gmail.com), (661)944-4056.

## January 28 -- Sat N. Valley of Fire, Lake Mead, NRA

Is the desert varnish we see on the colorful cliffs a result of biotic or inorganic processes? Approx 6 mi. RT hike. Leader: Bill Marr (702)433-0473.

## January 28 - 29 -- Sat-Sun Winter Escape In Carrizo Plain

Combine a day of service to the Carrizo Plain National Monument with a day of sightseeing and/or hiking. Weather uncertain. We remove or modify fences to give pronghorn greater mobility; our recreation depends on group wishes. Combine carcamping, day-hiking, and service in a relatively unknown wild place. Leader: Craig Deutsche, [craig.deutsche@gmail.com](mailto:craig.deutsche@gmail.com), (310)477-6670. CNRCC Desert Committee.

## February 4 -- Sat Hidden Valley, Muddy Mts, NV

The Muddy Mountains Wilderness is part Park Service in Lake Mead NRA, and part BLM Wilderness. Along this 5 mi. loop in a majestic valley of Aztec sandstone, discover natural springs, petroglyphs, pictographs, arrowhead chippings and more. Need high clearance to trailhead. Southern NV Group leader: George McDonald (702)808-3855.

## February 18 - 20 -- Sat-Mon Grass Valley Service

Near Ridgecrest, CA, the Grass Valley

Wilderness features rolling hills and rock outcroppings. As it no longer has cattle grazing we will help remove old fence poles and disguise an illegal road--joining a group of college age SCA interns. Work Sat and Sun, and hike and explore the Wilderness on Mon, President's Day. Combine exploring and service in a little known wilderness. Leader: Craig Deutsche, see Dec. 29 and Jan. 28-29.

## March 4 -- Sun Bridge Mountain, Red Rock Cyn

We'll reach one of the best scrambling hikes at Southern Nevada's Red Rock Canyon NCA via Rocky Gap Road Summit; gain 2000' over 5 mi. RT. At the escarpment view overlooking Pine Cree, the fun begins: we'll climb up a chute to the "bridge" then on to the summit. Unforgettable breathtaking summit view of Red Rock and Las Vegas. Which are older: the limestone or the sandstone formations? Leader: George McDonald (702)808-3855.

## March 16-18 -- Fri-Sun Whipple Mts Desert Service

Join CA/NV wilderness committee and Mojave Group's annual service trip with the Needles office of BLM; for this patrician *greening* of the desert, we'll return to the Whipple Mts, home of elusive saguaro cactus. Actual work project details still a secret, to be revealed to those who sign up with leader Vicky Hoover, (415)977-5527 or [Vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org](mailto:Vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org). Central commissary, usual exorbitant fee.

## A Trip Report

Late last summer, Loma Prieta Chapter wilderness chair Bill Kirkpatrick reported, "Last week, two friends and I traversed the ridge of the Schell Creek Mountains, northeast of Ely, Nevada, from north of North Schell Peak south to the top of South Schell Peak. We stayed on the ridge for three nights and three days. We were lucky to have good weather and convenient snow to melt for water. The fourth day we descended through the drainage of one of the forks of Timber Creek; this magnificent valley was a textbook on glaciation. It was clear that nobody had been south of North Schell Peak in at least a year, before we were there." The High Schells were among areas in eastern Nevada's White Pine County designated as wilderness in 2006. ##

## Elden Hughes: loss of a giant -- a beloved leader is gone

The sad news came on Dec. 4: Elden Hughes passed away quickly after a recurrence of his former cancer. Activists are still too stunned to offer adequate tribute to this desert leader immediately; we are just beginning to face his loss and to collect our countless remembrances of our friend. Elden was one of the principal leaders of the California desert campaign that led to the Desert Protection Act of 1994. He turned desert tortoises into DC lobbyists. Elden's pithy way with words has become legend.

The Los Angeles Times called Elden "a crusader for wild places and a leader of the Sierra Club's battles to protect desert wilderness from development and abuse; a visionary and inspirational figure who mentored generations of activists in fights to reduce the environmental damage of developments, including

renewable energy projects on pristine landscapes... Hughes was among a dozen environmentalists invited to the White House in 1994 when President Clinton signed the landmark California Desert Protection Act..."

Among many awards he received, he especially prized the Sierra Club's John Muir award in 1996; being named a Sierra Club honorary vice president in 2001, and receiving the Angeles Chapter's Weldon Heald Conservation award.

Desert and wilderness activist Cal French found words to begin the reminiscences:

"I'll never hear that wonderful voice directly again, even on the phone, "This is Elden Hughes..." after which would come the question, the information,



Angeles Chapter photo

Elden and his wife Patty with President Clinton--and tortoise--in 1994.

the call to action. It was a voice I first heard at Fossil Falls in the southern Owens Valley maybe 40 years ago. I forget the date, but not the voice. We were outsiders joining the Angeles Chapter's Rock Climbing Section for some practice climbs on the lava face. That night there was singing around the campfire, and Elden entertained with rather raunchy songs accompanying himself on his 12-string guitar. He could draw people in, entertain them, inspire them, get them committed to preserving wild places. So, over the intervening four decades there were phone calls, meetings and even more singing, which I think got toned down a bit after he married Patty Carpenter. So long, old friend and mentor. I will hear your voice and its messages in my head until my days end." ##

## WORDS OF the WILD

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

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FIRST CLASS



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