

WORDS OF *the* WILD

Vol. XVIII, No. 3 December 2015



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

Thanksgiving time in Nevada's Basin and Range National Monument

Brand new sign in brand new national monument



photo: Christian Gerlach

Toiyabe Chapter Chair David Von Seggern co-led a *monumental* Nevada Thanksgiving outing with Our Wild America Campaign staffer Christian Gerlach. Seven folks braved the frigid winter of the High Desert to explore Nevada's new national monument--Basin and Range--to collect pictures of the vast area's pristine beauty, and investigate the site of an oil/gas lease sold only a few months before the monument designation—hoping to prevent approval of its development.

Our group met up evening of Thanksgiving Day with a campout



photo: Christian Gerlach

Conservation outing participants climb a Golden Valley hill to look over at Michael Heizer's "City" artwork

-- by Christian Gerlach

at Pahranaagat National Wildlife Refuge campground, kicking off our first night with even a bit of pumpkin pie. The 24 degree night was good preparation for the unexpected cold later. Friday morning we began a two-day dirt and gravel road monument tour, entering the monument from the Mount Irish Archaeological District. We approached the sacred sites of the Paiute and Shoshone, who had left their stories and knowledge on the rocks. The petroglyphs amazed us with variety and sheer numbers. Sadly there was evidence of weathering and some careless vandalism. That first day ended with the successful traverse of snowy 7200-ft. Logan Pass which takes you by Mt. Irish and into Southern Garden Valley.

The vastness of this 1100-plus-square mile national monument allowed us to barely savor this valley before we stopped to set up camp in "Murphy Gap", a picturesque mountain pass, racing against the setting sun. That night temperatures dropped to below 14 degrees F. Fortunately we all had a hot dinner and plenty of warm clothes and sleeping bags.

Saturday, after we had thawed out, we drove along a road that took us right by the Worthington Mountains, a range that John Muir explored and enjoyed. We then cut across Garden Valley, with a view of the towering Grant Range. We hiked up a hill from where we enjoyed a distant view of

artist Michael Heizer's landscape masterpiece "City" and panoramic views of the immensity of the valley. The final stop was Murphy's reservoir, where a proposed oil/ gas lease is still being considered by the BLM. Again we drove across the valleys, past scenic Water Gap in the dramatic Golden Gate range with its towering sheer faces.

We left the new national mon-



photo: Vicky Hoover

David Von Seggern examines Pahranaagat Mt. Irish petroglyphs at edge of Basin and Range monument

ument with mixed feelings of gratitude, satisfaction, victory, and uncertainty for the future of the pristine viewshed within Basin and Range. ∞

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Gold Butte Economic Analysis released

A study commissioned by Outside Las Vegas Foundation and released in November found that permanently protecting Gold Butte would bring great economic benefits to the Silver State. Mesquite, Las Vegas, and surrounding communities would have an increase in tourism.

From the analysis by the independent company Applied Analysis, here is a brief summary of key findings concerning the economic impacts associated with visitors to a designated Gold Butte National Conservation Area (NCA):

- Visitation to the Gold Butte area is likely to increase as a result of the designation. Gold Butte's proximity to nearby cities, including both Mesquite and Las Vegas, as well as various other nearby national parks and recreation areas offers a reasonable expectation that designation of the area would draw an additional 35,000 visitor trips per year.

- Gold Butte visitors are likely to visit other southern Nevada locales as well.

- In addition to the economic impact expected from the average visitor to BLM's Gold Butte, Mesquite businesses have the opportunity to capture new overnight visitors, who will need lodging, entertainment, and food and beverages. If just 10 percent of these new visitors to Gold Butte decided to spend a night in Mesquite, the total economic impact for the community would be \$2.7 million per year, creating 28 full-time jobs.

- Though added visitation would provide most of the substantial economic gain of designation, new infrastructure as well as additional resources provided at the site by the BLM could bring further benefit.

Legislation in Congress (S. 199 sponsored in the Senate by Harry Reid (D-NV) and H.R. 856 in the House of Representatives by Dina Titus (D-NV1), would establish a 350,000-acre Gold Butte National Conservation Area, including several wilderness

Three new California Desert National Monuments proposed

California Senator Dianne Feinstein has sent a letter to President Obama, requesting that he designate three new national monuments in the California desert by executive action according to the Antiquities Act.

For the last several Congresses, the Senator has introduced a bill in the Senate to establish several new wildernesses, add on to a couple of existing ones, and establish two large new national monuments in the California Desert. In the current 114th Congress, the Senator waited

for many months for Congress to move her bill forward. When Congress failed to act, Feinstein turned to the President in August.

From her letter to the President: "I write to request your administration use its authority under the Antiquities Act of 1906 to designate three national monuments in the California desert: the Mojave Trails, the Sand to Snow, and Castle Mountains National Monuments.

"The Mojave Trails, Sand to Snow, and Castle Mountains monument proposals are truly deserving of

areas in the non-roaded sections. Congress has not acted on these bills. Jaina Moan, executive director of Friends of Gold Butte, points out, "While the sponsoring legislators are still pursuing Congressional action, some groups and businesses are considering asking President Obama to use the Antiquities Act, and we see much public support for permanent protection by any means-NCA with wilderness or National Monument. ♻️"

Antiquities Act protections.

"The proposed Mojave Trails monument would encompass sweeping desert landscapes along historic Route 66... as well as critical wildlife corridors between Joshua Tree National Park and the Mojave National Preserve.

"The Sand to Snow National Monument would cover 135,000 acres of BLM and Forest Service land between Joshua Tree National Park and the San Bernardino Mountains, from the desert floor in the Coachella Valley to the top



San Gorgonio Chapter and Allen Hernandez bring "My Generation" youth to Whitewater

of Mount San Gorgonio...and is one of the most important wildlife corridors in Southern California.

"Castle Mountains is proposed as an addition to the Mojave National Preserve in the legislation; this area northeast of the current Preserve boundary was left out of the 1994 California Desert Protection Act due to an active gold mine which ceased operations in 2001."

Whitewater hosts public meeting

To assure opportunity for public input on the proposal-- to show the President the broad public support, Sen. Feinstein hosted a large public meeting mid-October at the Whitewater Preserve near Palm Springs. Some 800 people attended, and all who wished were given one minute to speak. Approximately 2/3 to 3/4 of comments strongly favored presidential executive action. Sierra Club fully supports this action, and Club volunteers from all over southern California and beyond were present at Whitewater, and many spoke up. ♻️

Channel Islands Wilderness proposed by National Park Service

-- by Jim Hines and Vicky Hoover

In spring of 2015, the National Park Service in Channel Islands National Park combined a wilderness study and wilderness plan with the revision of its General Management Plan. The resulting final plan proposes some 65,000 acres (about 53 percent of the land area of the park) for wilderness designation. The Record of Decision (ROD) was signed in September.

The area proposed for wilderness would include all of West and Middle Anacapa Islands; most of the NPS lands on Santa Cruz Island; most of Santa Rosa Island; almost all of Santa Barbara Island; and all islets, islands, and rocks offshore of the main islands, with the exception of Prince Island. However, the lands on Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa Islands would be proposed as potential wilderness due to temporary nonconforming activities and developments, such as roads. Closure and restoration of roads on Santa Rosa and Santa Cruz Islands would be planned.

The entire Santa Barbara Island, except for the dock, ranger station, and campground, would be proposed for wilderness designation.

The wilderness proposal, as outlined in the Accompanying EIS's Alternatives 2 and 3, would have a long-term major beneficial impact on wilderness character primarily due to designating much of the park as wilderness and

removed or converted into trails on Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa Islands, selected roads would continue to be maintained for visitors to see Santa Rosa Island and to administer and protect resources on both islands. The emphasis was on protecting sensitive resources throughout the park. The plan includes biosecurity protocols to prevent the introduction of nonnative species.

Lands within the park proposed for wilderness designation (including lands proposed as potential wilderness) will be managed "to preserve wilderness character" until such time as Congress specifically decides whether or not to include them in a formal wilderness designation. This means that management activities on lands proposed for wilderness cannot be allowed to diminish the wilderness character of those lands.

If the areas on east Santa Cruz Island and Santa Rosa Island proposed as potential wilderness were designated by Congress as potential wilderness, they would be converted to designated wilderness once the nonconforming conditions have been rectified.

The wilderness character of the two islands has been degraded by the presence of nonnative species, livestock overgrazing, and other evidence of past human manipulation. Park managers advise that considerable research and resource management activity is needed to restore the ecosystem of the areas, and that installation of monitoring devices and other activities normally prohibited under the Wilderness Act may be required. Removal of roads

and restoration of the landscape also would use heavy machinery. As a result, some short-term impacts on the wilderness character in the areas proposed as potential wilderness can be expected. These activities would be carefully carried out so as to prevent long-term degradation of wilderness



Hiking high on Santa Rosa I. with a view over to Santa Cruz I. on a Sierra Club California Channel Islands tour led by Joan Jones Holtz

character, which would be enhanced over time. Wilderness stewardship plans would be developed for any new wilderness areas in the park.

Channel Islands and NPS wilderness

The National Park Service administers more wilderness than any other federal land-managing agency. The 44 million acres of designated park wilderness comprise more than half of all the lands within our park system and more than 40 percent of all the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Congress established Channel Islands National Park in March, 1980, and the park's enabling legislation and the Wilderness Act required that the Secretary of the Interior submit a wilderness recommendation to the President "[W]ithin three complete fiscal years from the date of enactment..." [94 STAT. 77]. According to Frank Buono, of PEER (Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility), the recommendation, due on September 30, 1983, [end of that fiscal year] took an additional 31 and a half years to appear.

As PEER asserts, "Despite its proud leadership profile, the Park Service has tended to drag its feet on wilderness matters; has failed to forward wilderness recommendations to the President, conduct legally-mandated wilderness assessments, or prepare wilderness management plans. In the 1970s, NPS had an entire office devoted to wilderness. Today, NPS lacks a comprehensive overview of its wilderness needs."

Channel Island's wilderness proposal shows there is hope ahead. ♪



Famed Anacapa I. arch is a Channel Island National Park symbol

closing and restoring roads on Santa Rosa and Santa Cruz Islands. When other NPS management actions independent of the plan, such as revegetation efforts, are added, there could be a long-term major beneficial cumulative effect.

Although many roads might be

Wilderness 2.0 What does wilderness mean to the Millennials?

Does the wilderness tradition still speak to Millennials?

-- by Matt Kirby and Kim Smith

(A condensed version of an article in the *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences* (spring 2015.) It was also subject of a presentation by the authors at the 2014 National Wilderness Anniversary Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico.)

Introduction

It is nearly 25 years since Bill McKibben declared “the end of nature.” And, in 2005, Richard Louv warned us that “nature deficit disorder” was on the rise. Today’s children, he worried, spend far more time indoors in front of screens than in the woods and end up disconnected from the natural world. They may care about biodiversity, sustainability, and environmental justice—but do they care about wilderness?

This paper investigates that hypothesis by posing the question, what does wilderness mean to the Millennial generation? More specifically, does the idea of wilderness have relevance for Millennial environmentalists? To answer that, we organized a national essay contest on the theme of wilderness. Defining “Millennial” as individuals born between 1980 and 2000, we restricted the contest to people born after 1979. We also identified prominent environmental activists born after 1980 and invited them to write longer essays on our question. We then analyzed the 41 contest entries and the invited essays for common themes, identifying continuities and discontinuities with the inherited wilderness tradition. [We] conclude that the idea of wilderness still resonates for these Millennials, that certain key themes in that tradition seem to remain vital and relevant, and that the tradition is evolving to adapt to the new concerns and experiences of twenty-first-century Americans.

Background

The “American wilderness tradition” [was] ably documented by Roderick Nash in his 1967 classic, *Wilderness and the American Mind*. This intellectual, literary, and political tradition originated in the nineteenth century and was developed by a small group of [influential] twentieth-century wilderness advocates--such as John Muir, Aldo Leopold, Robert Marshall, and Wallace Stegner.

What exactly is the wilderness concept? As William Cronon summarizes, wilderness

in this tradition is “the natural, unfallen antithesis of an unnatural civilization that has lost its soul. It is a place of freedom in which we can recover the true selves we have lost to the corrupting influence of our artificial lives. It is the ultimate landscape of authenticity.” Cronon was describing the tradition only to critique it. The trouble with the idea of wilderness, according to Cronon, is that it sets up a romantic myth of purity that masks the all-too-real impacts that humans have even on “wild” landscapes. But, he noted, the tradition also serves as an important vehicle for expressing deep moral values regarding our relationship to the natural world.

Both Cronon and his critics seem confident that the wilderness tradition is a pretty robust one -- one of the more enduring and powerful of American traditions. Will the Millennials—the post-1980 generation, growing up in the midst of the sixth great extinction, witness to anthropogenic global ecological transformation and seemingly glued to computer screens from infancy—continue to value the experience of wilderness? What, indeed, does “wilderness” mean in the anthropocene?

Bill McKibben raised [the] point that our *idea* of wilderness is disappearing. Future generations, he warned, may not be able to conceive of a place outside of human intention and history. McKibben captured the unease generated by this concept—the Anthropocene: in an age of human domination of biological, chemical, and geological processes on Earth, where can the values associated with wilderness find safekeeping?

Anthropogenic climate change is not the only factor threatening those wilderness values. The 2005 book of Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods*, articulates a concern that resonates broadly with American audiences. “Within the space of a few decades,” he argues, “the way children understand and experience nature has changed radically.... Today, kids are aware of the global threats to the environment—but their physical contact, their intimacy with nature, is fading” (Louv 2005, p. 1). “For a new generation, nature is more abstraction than reality. Increasingly, nature is something to watch, to consume,

to wear—to ignore” (Ibid., p. 2). Louv argued that this disconnection could lead to nature deficit disorder: diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, and higher rates of physical and emotional illnesses (ibid, p. 34). Those claims bode ill for the



wilderness tradition, which seems to require at least a small group of enthusiasts willing to go outside and play.

Cultural and environmental trends, including biodiversity loss and climate change, increasing urbanization, and changing communications technology, may affect how and whether Millennials experience the natural world: thus what does the wilderness tradition mean in twenty-first-century America?

Methods

Few scholars have challenged the finding that environmental activism has declined among Millennials. But, our study [is] not attempting to explain the distribution of wilderness values across the Millennial generation. Rather, we are interested in the wilderness tradition, which is not the same as public opinion or individual attitudes. We define “tradition” as a collectively held phenomenon rather than an individual characteristic. A tradition is an evolving collection of ideas and rhetorical strategies that tend to cluster together.

The carriers of the wilderness tradition have always been a small group of highly engaged individuals who (1) articulate a set of values around the idea of wilderness and (2) organize action [for] those values. To understand how a tradition is evolving, we must investigate how this small group of environmental leaders is interpreting the traditional *idea* of wilderness.

We do not expect the carriers of the wilderness tradition to be typical of other Millennials. While they will be responding to the same -- *continued on p. 5*

Millennials and the Wilderness tradition -- *continued*

A chance to be alone instead of lonely

broad cultural trends affecting other Millennials, they will be unusually interested in wilderness. We focus on people providing intellectual leadership to the wilderness movement. We identified several environmental leaders born after 1980 and invited them to write essays on: What does wilderness mean to the Millennial generation? Is there still a case to be made for wilderness? If so, how can we make that case?

We received three completed essays (from Jessica Goad (Center for American Progress), Jacob Glass (Podesta Group), and Elizabeth Shephard (Director, LifeCity), hardly enough for analysis. But, we also gathered a more substantial body of data by an essay contest. Sponsored by the Sierra Club, the contest invited anyone born after 1980 to submit an essay of no more than 750 words on the meaning of wilderness. The winning essay was published in Sierra Online, and some of the finalists are publicly available on: <https://sites.google.com/a/carleton.edu/wilderness-2-0/home> (the full collection of essays is available from the authors).

We received 41 contest entries. Again, we do not claim that this group is representative in any statistical sense—any more than the works of Thoreau or Muir were representative of their generation. We were most successful getting contributions from people close to us. Two invited essays and one contest entry come from students of Kim Smith, and two invited essays come from colleagues of Matt Kirby. The contest was advertised to the Sierra Club's 63 chapters, the Sierra Club online, and the listserv for the Association for Environmental Studies and Sciences.

We caution against assuming that this sample represents values widely shared among Millennials in general. But, we believe that the essays are sufficient for our limited purposes: -- to understand the various ways that Millennials can draw on the wilderness tradition and make it meaningful. Our sample is therefore more like a focus group than a public opinion survey. We aim to study how highly engaged wilderness lovers define, discuss, and contest the inherited meaning of wilderness.

Results

We found four major thematic elements in the essays. Notably, they

are not new or necessarily specific to the Millennial generation. We tackle these four themes individually, beginning with the one that remains the most continuous with early environmental thought: beauty and solitude. The other three, (1) wilderness as an illusion (2), the dichotomy between wilderness and technology, and (3) finding wilderness locally (small wilderness), also illustrate some important complexities in and discontinuities with that tradition.

Solitude and beauty

This theme ran through the majority of the essays. The writers clearly realize that areas devoid of obvious signs of human interference can hold a unique kind of moral and aesthetic value. Such places allow a person to find him or herself; they offer a place to escape, and a place to find beauty and wonder, something essential to the human experience.



Essayist Elizabeth Shephard sums up this sentiment when she writes, “wilderness is a place to find refuge in the harmony of nature,” and “it is a place full of chaos, danger, and testing.” We test our humanity in a place free from modern conveniences. Killian Sump, reflecting on her time as wilderness guide in Alaska, writes, “the prospect of adventure, coupled with the beauty of wilderness, allows people to open up and learn more about themselves.”

What is the value of this escape from society? Essayist Christina Alvarez found solace in the wild. She treasures “the gush of wind against my face that dried my tears, the touch of a lily flower against my cheek, and the feel of the earth beneath me as the world caught me.” Gwendolyn Murtha echoes that theme, explaining that wilderness offers an antidote to the loneliness of crowds—a chance to be alone instead of lonely.

Others identified the moral value of being alone in the wilderness as a kind of humility. As Taylor Bolinger put it, “If we do not preserve [wilderness], if our only access to it is in packaged form, then your youngest will never struggle up that sand hill so far from the sound of cars that there is naught but stillness...” To Meg O'Connor, “conserving wilderness is an

act of respect to a community that is not one's own—a community that is not always inviting, welcoming, or hospitable.”

But, wilderness is not only a place to test and find yourself in solitude, but also a place to find aesthetic beauty. Many of our writers shared the nature aesthetic of nineteenth century landscape painters such as Albert Bierstadt of the Hudson River School. Bierstadt gave us awe-inspiring paintings of wild places in the West that captured the American imagination. Aesthetic values, the sense of awe and grandeur most easily found in wild places ... continue to inspire. Ben Thureau writes in “On Aesthetic Education,” “The challenge of wilderness today, as a value in our lives, is to hear again the language of beauty.”

Our essayists wrote movingly: of [seeing] “a skilled and patient blue heron catch a large fish only to have it stolen away by a bald eagle.” (Lauren DePerna, “Wild Life Support”). Nicole Crescimanno shared the moment when “the sun kisses the earth at 5 am at the most eastern point of the country.” (“Escaping to Wilderness”). Chelsea Batavia succinctly captures these meanings of wilderness in her essay “This Wild World”: “Stand in a snowy aspen grove, immersed in space, silence, and light; feel your thoughts break in muted echoes. Gasp in awe, collapse in terror, bow in humility, and weep in a world indifferent to your presence. Then walk on, face forward into the unknown.”

Wilderness as an illusion

While not as universal a theme as beauty and solitude, an important idea [in] many essays was that of wilderness as a social construct or, for some, an illusion. This theme complicates the received wilderness tradition. While earlier nature writers recognized that wilderness was an abstract idea, they focused on making the case *for* that wilderness idea. For example, John Muir was well aware Yosemite Valley had been reshaped by human impact on the land. Yet, it did not discourage him from viewing the park as wild and worthy of protection from *future* influence.

Our Millennial writers are aware that the wilderness idea is a social construction and that wild landscapes are far from being independent of human influence. Jacob Glass's essay on the politics surrounding the Scotchman Peaks Wilderness Area captures that reality, as does Jeff Jenkins' essay on the technological infrastructure surrounding Clark Mountain in the Mojave: “this wilderness enclave exists in perpetuity due to conservation efforts -- *continued on p. 6*

Millennials and the Wilderness tradition -- continued

Our generation's relationship to nature is not impoverished, merely different

afforded by the surrounding developed landscape.”

No essay better encapsulates this theme than the “The Illusion of Wilderness” by Kate Leary. She begins with a direct challenge to Thoreau: “I went to the woods not because I wished to live deliberately, but because I wished to live imaginatively.” She went into the wild as a “dreamer fed by stories of exploration,” seeking the illusion of wilderness, “however faint.” Her favorite wilderness, a scrap of second-growth woods behind her suburban house, was far from pristine, but “things don’t stop having value when they become chipped, flawed, or stained.”



Katie is not alone in this sentiment. Lara Brenner describes her child-

hood in a city, reporting that she felt connected to nature despite never going camping or having the opportunities to explore remote areas usually defined as wilderness. She writes that “to disregard urban nature is to deny the experiences of millions of children. Our generation’s relationship to nature is not impoverished, merely different.” And here, Brenner gets to the crux of the issue for some in this generation. Defining wilderness as what is “out there,” distant from human habitations, we neglect those who have no access to those distant places. To Millennials, this may present a problematic tension between preserving wilderness and serving humans.

Some of our essayists questioned prioritizing wilderness preservation in the face of more pressing issues. Justin Welch, in “Rethinking Wilderness,” insists that “environmentalists in the twenty-first century and beyond must look inward, to densely populated built environments.” Brandon Jordan agrees: “Environmentalists should hold other factors, such as economic equity, as important while discussing nature.”

Others, however, suggested that we need to adjust our idea of wilderness. Nicholas Robinson suggests that “there is a case to be made for... a different kind of wilderness; a new “wilderness”, accessible to everyone.... Trails and signs may soon scatter what are now untouched

wilderness areas. Although no longer as wild, these places can still offer a retreat for the majority of the population.” Shan Kothari argues in “Reclaiming Wilderness” that in addition to large-scale, relatively pristine landscapes, “we may also think of wilderness as whatever attunes us to perceive more clearly the delicate interplay of natural processes....”

Perhaps the most sophisticated view was offered by Elizabeth Shephard: “Reconciling our interconnectedness and not our isolation from wilderness is the task of the 21st Century....”

Wilderness and technology

Wilderness is traditionally defined by what it is not: it is not man-made, and it is not governed by human intentions: it is not technology. The dichotomy, even hostility, between wilderness and technology is a long-standing theme in wilderness writing and politics. As a reaction to the Industrial Revolution in Britain, wilder areas of the countryside became the refuge away from the soot and unhealthy conditions of industrialism. The Romantics celebrated these places, and they quickly became a national resource against encroaching industrial development.

This relationship between wilderness and technology persists and has expanded. The complexities of that relationship are explored in “A Technological Wilderness” by Jeffrey Jenkins. Jenkins recounts a journey that takes “the same route that Muir originally walked in 1869 when he first arrived in San Francisco and headed towards the Sierra.” He is headed for Clark Mountain, where he hopes to escape modern society, much like Thoreau on his trek to Mt. Katahdin. But, unlike Muir and Thoreau, Jenkins travels through a highly developed landscape, “past the oil fields in the Central Valley and over Tehachapi Pass.” Traveling by car, he is soon “ensnared by a wolf pack of Priuses”. Even on top of Clark Mountain, he does not escape modern technology: “I pass a cell phone tower on my ascent and ... walk under successive power line corridors where a helicopter hovers overhead.” He does find wilderness—but he finds it dependent on the surrounding technological infrastructure.

Jenkins’ essay highlights a striking difference between older wilderness writings and these essays: a chief threat to wilderness is now communications technology. No matter how remote

you are, you can no longer escape the trappings of modern civilization—even if those changes are not fundamentally altering the landscape. Jenkins realizes this the moment that he has gotten into designated wilderness and his smartphone vibrates with an incoming text.

The ubiquity of communications technology was a dominant theme; six essays defined wilderness as a place without cell phone service. Of course, the threat to wilderness has always been evolving, different to every generation. [Once dams, then clear-cut logging.] However, the threat now seems more existential: no matter what remote corner you retreat to, it will still be within reach and interconnected with the world you sought to escape.

This interconnectedness challenges the tradition of wilderness; perhaps, Millennials can no longer think of wilderness as a separate reality. But, that may make preserving wilderness more important than ever. Ben Cosgrove muses that “I don’t think we’re misguided in placing a high value on interpersonal connection or access to information, but something doesn’t feel right about trading the real world for the virtual one.” Cosgrove sees wilderness areas as an antidote: “the power of wilderness to demonstrate both the value of real places and the incompleteness of virtual ones.” In wilderness, “we wander through places that are bigger than we are, that don’t cater to us.... Wilderness forces us to look at what’s really there, and so pushes back against our inclination to engage only with things we want to see....”

Finding wilderness locally

The final theme that we found woven through a number of essays was the value of finding wilderness locally. Our authors were as concerned with small-scale wilderness—any place wild enough to immerse you in the natural world—as they were with large-scale, legally designated areas.

The willingness to find wilderness even in degraded landscapes is perhaps the most striking discontinuity between the Millennial writers and the received tradition. As discussed above, while earlier writers sometimes recognized that even the wildest places had been shaped by humans, the wilderness valorized places where humans were -- continued on p. 7



Millennials and the Wilderness tradition -- continued

The role that protected lands have in combatting climate change

not the predominant force on the landscape. The essayists often find [wilderness] in unexpected places. Lara Brenner found “a frontier of my own to explore in the vacant lots and steel culverts of my neighborhood, and discovered there a web of ecosystems that had taken on a life of their own. I was inspired not by the vast, primeval forest but by the complex microcosm found in a bucketful of pond water.” For Mike Galgay, wilderness is “present in places that retain their own characteristics and flavor apart from what man has colored them with.” Preserving wilderness, for him, means interacting with the land in a way that respects the wild element in the forest behind one’s house, or in one’s garden.

This theme questions the dichotomy between humans and wilderness. Elizabeth Shephard in “Find Our Way Home” writes that we need to “shift our perspective of ‘the wilderness’ from something separate from ourselves to something that is everywhere and within us.” These writers suggest that if we are truly to connect people with the natural world, we must value landscapes that are accessible—even if degraded.

These writers are not advocating for changing the legal designation of wilderness, nor are they saying that those areas do not have value. Shephard still values wilderness that allows one “to escape and find refuge in the harmony of nature.” These experiences are real and worthy of protecting. But, our writers, raised with a global ethic, value experiences of nature available to a wider array of people. They want to expand the scope of preservation to encompass “drainage ditches and alpine streams, on sidewalks and salt flats, from skyscrapers to mountaintops” (Brenner).

Conclusion

Obviously, our conclusions are limited to the small number of essays that we received. With that caveat, we can draw some tentative conclusions about the continuing vitality of the wilderness tradition. Not surprisingly, our main conclusion is that worries about the death of the idea of wilderness seem to be overstated. The rhetoric of traditional wilderness politics is still powerful. Wilderness holds profound experiences for those who are able to visit those

places. However, these writers do believe that Millennials are increasingly disconnected from the outdoors and more connected with technology.

Second, the Millennials who participated in our contest seem comfortable expanding the scope of lands worthy of protection to encompass smaller and more highly managed or restored landscapes. Wilderness as it is currently defined and as legally protected may become less relevant to this generation than natural places closer to home. Big wilderness is also important and worthy of protection. The ability to achieve

something doesn't feel right about trading the real world for the virtual one.

solitude and a sense of humility depend, in part, on the scale of the wilderness. We merely note (along with William Cronon 1996) that small wilderness may increasingly come within the gambit of wilderness advocacy. Nor should this surprise us; one of the greatest contributors to the wilderness tradition—Thoreau—is known for his celebration of the small wilderness of Walden Pond.

Third, our writers are also eager to know how human needs can be accommodated within wilderness policy. The Millennial generation sees itself as more focused on social justice, more tolerant, and more diverse than previous generations (Pew Research Feb 2014). Our essays suggest that discussions of the ecosystem services provided by wilderness, the human health benefits associated with outdoor recreation and protected public land, the need to preserve biodiversity, and the role that protected lands have in combatting climate change are all potential avenues into making the case for wilderness preservation (Edmunds, “Wilderness—What is it Good for?” and Kelly, “Wilderness in the City”). Our writers also discuss access, especially for underserved communities, to these lands.

Finally, some writers suggest that even if they are somewhat disconnected from natural landscapes, Millennials do enjoy a sense of global connectedness that can be used to protect wilderness. Madelyn Hoagland-Hanson put it well in “Young in a Future Without Wilderness,” “Say what you will about our attention

deficits and lack of close social ties; we have greater immediate access to a massive international network of people and information than ever. Consequently, our global connectedness is, if not greater, certainly more visible than in the past.” A large part of the youth climate movement has focused on the rights of indigenous peoples across the world, [connecting] climate change and the loss of wild places on which many cultures still rely for subsistence. Jasmine Wang reminds us: A healthy environment and basic human rights of clean water, sanitation, food and shelter cannot be mutually exclusive.

As our essayists demonstrate, the wilderness tradition remains vital and powerful, and it has the capacity to evolve to accommodate the new concerns and experiences of twenty-first century Americans – to inspire the next generation of wilderness lovers. ♪

(Matthew Kirby is a Senior Campaign Representative with the Sierra Club based in Denver, Colorado. Prior to that for six years he served on Sierra Club’s Washington DC Lands Team staff, as a lobbyist working on public lands protection.)

Kimberly Smith is a Professor of Political Science and Environmental Studies at Carleton College. Former President for the Association of Environmental Studies and Sciences, she has written and published extensively on environmental thought, including wilderness.)

New public access on west side of Nevada’s Rubies

Imagine Nevada: How about dozens of alpine lakes and hanging valleys described as the Yosemite of Nevada? Welcome to “The Rubies”, the Ruby Mountains Wilderness.

After three years of hard work, The Wilderness Land Trust announced in mid-2015 that 413 acres of once-private land in and on the west side of the Rubies are now part of treasured wilderness, in the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest.

“Thanks to a willing seller and the Wilderness Land Trust, access and the Murphy Creek Trail are now secured and complete for the benefit of all Americans,” said Bill Dunkelberger, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest Supervisor.

The 33-mile long Ruby Crest National Recreation Trail has a new extension with The Wilderness Land Trust’s purchase of the Murphy Creek parcel. Previously, access required crossing private lands where landowners can shut off access at any time. www.wildernesslandtrust.org ♪

Tortoises Through the Lens: *Tortugas a través de la Lente*

An innovative project to let the desert tortoise – icon of the Mojave Desert – combine forces with school children living near the desert is succeeding remarkably to benefit both the tortoise and the kids.

Children who live in urban communities near the desert often have little or no connection to these wild landscapes; but a program to study the tortoises—with interesting personalities of their own—is helping many to appreciate the broader values of the desert—and by extension, nature in general.

The project of bringing southern California kids on field trips to the desert was started by David Lamfrom, with the National Parks Conservation Association, and his partner Rana Knighten, who works for Mojave National Preserve. As the Los Angeles *Times* reported, “Armed with digital cameras, 13 Southern California high school students ignored the discomfort of temperatures hovering above 100 degrees, lying on their stomachs in dirt and cactus spines to document the behavior and habitat needs of desert tortoises.”

On their field trips, the students, from several desert-area communities, took the time to write about their observations and impressions. The kids pursued this engrossing project on various weekends over more than two years.

The students who come from Barstow, Needles, Desert, Victor Valley, and Pete Knight High Schools, Excelsior Education Center, the Academy for Academic Excellence, and a home-school program, developed a keen appreciation for the art of wildlife photography and for tortoise conservation. Lamfrom stated, “It’s important to give the students enough space and independence so that they can build their own connections with the natural world and species like the desert tortoise.”

Lamfrom and Knighten have enthusiastically shared their love of nature and stewardship sense with youth from the California Desert. They emphasize the great value to youngsters in learning how to connect to nature by studying it closely, thinking independently, and caring for the earth’s creatures and each other.

The students’ photographs and writings on the tortoises have emerged as a new book, called *Tortoises Through the Lens: A visual Exploration of a Mojave Desert Icon*. Translated into Spanish as well, the book is entitled, *Tortugas a través de la Lente: una exploración visual de un icono del Desierto de Mojave*.

Student choice has been an important part of the program, and the students were involved in every part of the production of the desert tortoise conservation book. They decided which of their photos would be featured in the book and at the art exhibit, and how to best



spend the money the program receives from sales of the book to further desert tortoise conservation.

The desert tortoise is threatened as its habitat recedes due to more people recreating in desert areas and big new developments encroaching. Although desert tortoises, which can live for a century, are protected under state and federal endangered species acts, they face multiple threats: coyotes, ravens, invasive plants, respiratory disease and habitat loss. The tortoises are extremely sensitive and have complex social lives.

The whole book is a splendid achievement, especially considering the intimate involvement of kids in its preparation. But the fact that it’s also available in Spanish is truly icing on the cake. Lamfrom said the translation was not in the original

plan, but as their field trips developed they realized how many of the youngsters were Spanish speaking and that a wider outreach was possible in Spanish. We quote from the pathbreaking Spanish version:

Las tortugas del desierto son animales carismáticos; las crías increíblemente encantadoras, y la especie era tan abundante que los residentes de Joshua Tree, California, recogían tortugas silvestres el primer fin de semana de cada mes de mayo, pintaban sus caparazones, y las ponían a competir en carreras entre ellas. Marcado por generosas cantidades de cerveza, este festival se llamaba “Días de la Tortuga” y fue utilizado como una herramienta de mercadotecnia para atraer visitantes al desierto.

Nadie se tomaba el tiempo para considerar el impacto de este trato de las tortugas hasta que los reptiles comenzaron a desaparecer del medio silvestre. Una enfermedad respiratoria virulenta diezmo la población de tortugas en las décadas de 1970 y 1980. El depredador aún más feroz de la Tortuga juvenil, el cuervo, ha incrementado su población más de mil veces con el crecimiento de las comunidades humanas y con el consecuente aumento de desechos aliménticos que permanecen al descubierto. El desarrollo a gran escala en el desierto también significó la destrucción y fragmentación del habitat de la Tortuga.

La primera lección que nuestros hijos deben aprender es como ver y compartir las maravillas del mundo natural. El antídoto para la desesperación es ver una Tortuga del desierto masticando flores silvestres hasta su boca está pintada con una especie de lapiz labial verde de los jugos de la planta. Y con el conocimiento de lo que el animal enfrenta, es un acto de verdadera esperanza y de Valentía tomar una fotografía de esta escena y compartirla con los demás. Para decir a nuestros amigos, a nuestra familia, a nuestros maestros, a nuestros funcionarios electos: “Esto es de lo que he sido testigo. Esto es lo que vale la pena proteger.”

(Book text by Michael Cipra, translated by Carlos Nagel.)

Tortugas a través de la Lente is published by Sunbelt Publications of San Diego, and sponsored by NPCA. ☞

Fighting against Fees on public lands--an ongoing saga

-- by Scott Phillips

That distant rumbling you hear is the sleeping dragon of privatization awakening from a long nap and preparing to fly. Unless citizens act soon and decisively, the dragon's allies in Congress will succeed in converting us from owners of the public domain into mere customers who must purchase a pass just to take a walk in the woods.

The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA), which since 2004 has prohibited the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management from charging us a fee just to picnic on a roadside, walk through federal lands, or camp in dispersed areas, hit its sunset date in 2014 and is now on its third short-term extension. The current sunset



date is September 30, 2017. Both houses of Congress have vowed to use the time to reform FLREA's many weaknesses and inconsistencies. But, as Kitty Benzar, executive director of the Western Slope No Fee Coalition (WSNFC) based in Durango, Colorado, points out, they are going in very different directions:

"In the Senate, Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Chairman Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) held a hearing in September at which she excoriated the agencies' fee programs for high levels of administrative overhead, inappropriate fees, and the use of private entities as gatekeepers between citizens and our public lands. 'I think we're getting ripped off,' she said. Her office is

reported to be working on legislation that will rein in agency FLREA abuse.

"But across Capitol Hill in the House it's a whole other story. Natural Resources Committee Chairman Rob Bishop (R-UT) has published draft legislation he says would 'modernize' the current law. What it would actually do is gut FLREA of any restrictions or prohibitions on what fees the agencies can charge, encourage the agencies to out-source recreation to private companies, and incentivize those companies to build privately owned 'improvements' by giving them 30-year permits – a de facto transfer of ownership from public to private hands. And as if 'de facto' ownership is not bad enough, Bishop's bill would also authorize federally built and owned recreation infrastructure to be sold outright into private hands.

"With the two chambers taking such diametrically opposed approaches, we could end up with yet another DC stalemate, likely resulting in further extensions of FLREA."

Short term extensions would be preferable to Bishop's bill, which would repeal FLREA's specific prohibition on fees for:

1. Parking or picnicking along roads or trailsides,
2. General access,
3. Dispersed areas with low or no federal capital investment
4. Walking through, boating through, horseback riding through, or hiking through federal lands or waters without using the facilities or services.

The fee issue might look relatively unimportant – on the surface, but be assured, its ramifications demand our focused attention. Fees are the tip of an ugly iceberg, and this maxim applies: «If it can be commodified, it will be commodified. Once it is commodified, it will almost certainly be privatized.»

USFS and BLM fees improperly or illegally imposed are a cancer. Left unchecked they will metastasize into further commercialization and privatization. Fees raise concerns for social equity, free public access,

forest economics, and industry subsidies.

Fees are appropriate only for the use of facilities with high levels of federal capital investment such as campgrounds with potable water and high end marinas/boat ramps. National Park entrance fees are historically accepted.

Sierra Club policy opposes fees for simple access to undeveloped public lands traditionally free to the public. There should never be a fee to use a trail. Fees are especially egregious for visits to designated Wilderness: charging a fee to enter wilderness clamps a "trammeling" effect on the experience and sidesteps the Wilderness Act's prohibition on commercialization. Wilderness should not be about grubbing for dollars.

The BLM and Forest Service have abused their fee authorities, which are tied to the use of «amenities». Allowing the agencies to retain the fees they collect can spur them on to build unneeded amenity infrastructure hardly anyone wants. Sierra Club policy highlights the social injustice of fees; they weigh more heavily on lower income visitors who don't have the alternative of visiting private resorts. The public lands are a common good--not a cash cow.

The federal agencies are perversely treating recreation as if it were a commodity like timber, mining, or grazing. They outsource recreation management to the private sector and treat the public as if they were consumers --customers--and not owners of our national heritage. There needs to be strong Congressional oversight.

There is a crucial therapeutic mental/spiritual component of an unencumbered walk in the woods or a paddle down the creek. We need the psychic rejuvenation of quality outdoor recreation time. Body and soul increasingly require an antidote to our wired, loud, hyped, and commercialized world. Encountering a «STOP-Pay Here» sign can negate the excitement of the natural recreation experience.

Consider these words by Ed Abbey:
"At least in America one exception remains to the iron rule of oligarchy. And that is--a walk into the Big Woods, a journey on foot into the uninhabited interior--a voyage down -- continued on p. 10



Outings

Support wilderness the Sierra Club way!



February 6 - Sat

Eldorado Wilderness, south Nevada

Come join our one-day joint service project with Friends of Nevada Wilderness to build a barrier against vehicle trespass into this rugged wilderness just west of the Colorado River, south of Las Vegas. Even if you've never done it before, you'll become an expert on digging post holes. And stay to enjoy campstyle dinner that night from Vicky Hoover. Contact 415-977-5527 or vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org.

February 12 -- Fri

Mojave Preserve Restoration

Join CA/NV Desert Comm. and National Park Service in a restoration project in the Mojave National Preserve one day

Public Lands Fees -- from page 9

the River of No Return. Hunters, fisherman, hikers, climbers, white-water boatmen, red rock explorers know what I mean. In America at least this kind of experience remains open and available to all, democratic. Little or no training is required, little special equipment, no certification of privilege. All that is needed is normal health, the will to do it, and a modicum of courage. It is my fear that if we allow the freedom of the hills and the last of the Wilderness to be taken from us, then the very idea of freedom may die with it."

Urge the national leadership of the Sierra Club to put its muscle behind obtaining a sound, fair fee structure that would authorize agency fees only for the use of developed facilities and prohibit fees for undeveloped federal lands or waters.

For information, visit the website of the Western Slope No Fee Coalition (WSNFC). www.westernslopenofee.org. Here is a link to a suggested draft bill written by WSNFC which has been circulated within Congress. Kindly use this as a spring board and contact your Senators and Representatives. http://www.westernslopenofee.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Recreation_Fee_Legislation_Discussion_Draft.pdf

Let our legislators know they must appropriate additional funds for our agencies to be good stewards of our public lands. ♪ (Scott Phillips, of Hailey, ID, is fee issues chair of the Sierra Club's Recreation Issues Team. Contact Scott at scottyphi@cox.net).

before Desert & Wilderness meeting in Shoshone (see box p. 11.) Meet Fri 9 am, work until it's time to head for Shoshone for dinner. We'll remove "culturally planted species" (tamarisk, fan palm, sunflowers) along Zzyzx Rd and at Desert Studies Center. Bring water, sunscreen, hat, lunch. Tools provided. Don't miss this annual event-good work and fun. RSVP to Sid Silliman, gssilliman@verizon.net.

March 2 - 6 -- Wed-Sun

Anza Borrego State Park

Visit this amazing California desert state park east of San Diego. Wildflowers may be blooming. Space in group campground is reserved from 2 pm Wed. to noon Sun. Optional half-day off-road adventure with a commercial outfitter (\$135) on Thur or Fri. Day hikes involve rocky trails and maybe some rock scrambling off trail. Deposit required by Feb 1 to confirm participation. Limit 18. Contact leader: Rich Juricich, rich.sierraclub@pacbell.net, 916-492-2181.

March 5 - 6 -- Sat-Sun

Explore Afton Canyon

Afton Canyon Natural Area is 37 miles n.e. of Barstow off I-15. Here Mojave River runs above ground and Mojave Road goes through the canyon. Outstanding scenery and riparian habitat. Join Mojave Group/CNRCC Desert Committee to camp at Afton campground and hike (moderate) on both days to interesting sites. Camping available for early arrivals Fri night Mar 4 also. Leader: Carol Wiley, desertlily1@verizon.net or 760-245-8734.



March 10 - 12 -- Thur-Sat

Death Valley Wilderness Restoration

Come help restore wilderness values in this remote and beautiful desert park. It may be a spectacular wildflower year, and we will have time to stop and admire the flowers. Project not yet determined, but may be working on the Cottonwood Canyon trail. That could change before March. Leader: Kate Allen, kj.allen96@gmail.com, 661-944-4056. CNRCC Desert Committee.

March 12 - 14 -- Sat-Mon

Pine Valley Ventana trail work

Three days with Ventana Wilderness Alliance (VWA) -- hike 5.5 miles in Ventana Wilderness from China Camp to Pine Valley doing some work along the way and make a base camp. From there we work each day on nearby trails: Bear Basin Connector Trail, Carmel River Trail leading into Pine Valley and possibly the trail leading to Hiding Camp. There is work for all abilities, from crosscut saw work to brushing and tread work. Leaders: Steve and Beth Benoit. <http://www.meetup.com/Ventana-Wilderness-Alliance-Meetup/>

March 25 - 27 -- Fri-Sun

Wild Spring Desert Service

Join Mojave Group and the CA/NV Wilderness Committee for our annual desert wilderness service project with Needles office of BLM. This year's destination still a mystery at press time, but Turtle Mountains, Dead Mts or Clipper Mts are all potential sites for useful restoration work, wilderness enhancement, and spring desert beauty. Central commissary, contact Vicky Hoover (See Feb 6) or Carol Wiley (see March 5-6.)

Apr 11 - 14 -- Mon-Thur

China Camp Ventana trail work

Hike 9 miles with VWA from China Camp to Hiding Camp, then 8 miles down Carmel River Trail to Los Padres Dam. Focus of the work will be logging and brushing, in Hiding Canyon and between Hiding Camp and Bluff Camp. Leaders, Steve and Beth Benoit. For info and to sign up, visit VWA Meet-up site: <http://www.meetup.com/Ventana-Wilderness-Alliance-Meetup/>

Apr 28 - May 1 -- Thur-Sun

Ventana Double Cone Work

VWA offers 4 days/3 nights trail work in Ventana Wilderness to remove downed trees between Pat Spring and Puerto Suelo Gap. Strenuous 7-mile hike on first day. Base camp at Pat Spring and day hike to work site each morning, maybe up to 4 miles (1-way). Join us as we continue to clear a path to the VDC summit. For info and to sign up, go to VWA Meet-up site: [\(see above trip.\)](#) ♪

Bill to expand San Gabriel Mtns. National Monument and establish new Recreation

On October 23, Rep. Judy Chu (CA-27) introduced the San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers Protection Act. Cosponsored by Reps. Grace Napolitano (CA-32), Adam Schiff (CA-28), Linda Sanchez (CA-38), and Tony Cardenas (CA-29), and supported by local water, conservation and recreation groups, this bill would expand the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument boundaries and establish a new National Recreation Area (NRA) along the Foothills and San Gabriel River corridor. This would enhance conservation, increase access for communities by connecting park-poor areas to open space, and improve management of the area with more resources, education, and public engagement. The bill's sponsors stated:

"The designation of the San Gabriel Mountains as a national monument was an important step towards making our mountains healthy again, but we still have a long road ahead in order to see that goal through," said Rep. Chu. "This legislation will expand the National Monument to include the western portions of the Angeles National Forest and establish a National Recreation Area (NRA) along the foothills and San Gabriel River corridor to complete the vision of a city seamlessly and sustainably connected to its mountains, and mountains that are accessible for all."

"I am proud to support our efforts to increase San Gabriel Valley green space and boost job creation for cities in my area," said Rep. Napolitano. "This expansion makes the Foothills and San Gabriel River corridor eligible for critical federal funding to help clean up and develop our beloved recreational areas."

"As the population of Los Angeles continues to grow, our nation's precious natural resources and open space will be increasingly threatened by overdevelopment and sprawl. We need to preserve open space in the San Gabriels before it is too late," said Rep. Schiff.

Last Congress, Rep. Chu introduced H.R. 4858, the San Gabriel National Recreation Act, which would designate the San Gabriel Mountains, river corridors and Puente Hills as a National Recreation Area. But seeing the need for immediate

Bring Back Land & Water Conservation Fund Congress ousts popular recreation and parks fund

Getting the Land and Water Conservation Fund reauthorized is a top conservation priority for Sierra Club and other environmental organizations, sportsmen's groups, and land trusts.

The 50-plus year old LWCF has been the main federal source of moneys for agencies to acquire private inholdings in conservation units like national parks and national forests, and, through its vital "Stateside Grants" program, for states to provide matching money to local communities for acquiring land for parks and other outdoor recreation facilities -- it has funded projects as small as community swimming pools. And the LWCF doesn't cost taxpayers a cent but has been funded by a small part of royalties paid to the federal government on offshore drilling leases.

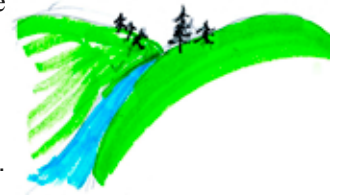
But end of September this Congress ignominiously let LWCF expire, and we and our champions in Congress are working to BRING IT BACK. There are bills in both Houses (H.R. 1814 with 197 cosponsors and S. 890 and S. 338 with 42 cosponsors total) to reauthorize it, and our champions -- like Senator Reid -- are working hard to assure LWCF reauthorization gets attached to a "must pass" bill before Congress adjourns Dec 11.

In California every Democratic member of the delegation supports LWCF reauthorization. In Nevada, Congresswoman Dina Titus is a cosponsor of HR 1814, and Senator Reid is a powerful supporter.

For a listing of some of the projects funded by LWCF, see the LWCF Coalition website at: <http://www.lwcfcoalition.org/nevada.html> and <http://www.lwcfcoalition.org/california.html>. And you can

action, Rep. Chu and local groups called on the Administration to designate the San Gabriel Mountains a National Monument. (See WOW Dec 2014.) Heeding their call, President Obama designated the San Gabriel Mountains a National Monument in October 2014. (From Rep. Judy Chu Press Release.)

download the Nevada and California factsheets at <http://www.lwcfcoalition.org/files/FY16%20State%20Factsheets/California16.pdf> and <http://www.lwcfcoalition.org/files/FY16%20State%20Factsheets/Nevada16.pdf>)



Please contact your Congressional representative and senators *now*, and thank them for their support for reauthorizing LWCF and urge them to take these key messages to Leadership *now*:

Please contact your Congressional representative and senators *now*, and thank them for their support for reauthorizing LWCF and urge them to take these key messages to Leadership *now*:

- LWCF MUST be permanently reauthorized before the end of this year's legislative session.

- The Bishop bill is the wrong approach—it is not bipartisan, diverts money away from conservation to oil extraction, inflicts draconian cuts to most parts of LWCF

- The bipartisan Murkowski-Cantwell agreement is the right path forward; it addresses questions in a balanced and reasonable way. In the House, also support the brand new (Dec. 1) bill H.R. 4151 that mirrors the Senate's legislative agreement.

Call the Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121 for a direct line to your member of Congress. For more information, contact Vicky Hoover at vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org or 415-977-5527. ☞

Next Wilderness meeting Feb. 13-14, 2016, Shoshone, CA—annual joint meeting with CNRCC Desert Committee.

The next meeting of the Sierra Club's California/Nevada Wilderness Committee will take place Saturday and Sunday, February 13 and 14, 2016. Fun, networking, timely presentations on wild and deserty topics —including desert wilderness. Meet agency staff, meet the young SCA work crews, all in scenic desert surroundings, with happy hour and potluck dinner Sat. plus evening program. Camp or other accommodation nearby. All interested wildlands advocates invited. Contact Vicky: vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org or Terry Frewin: terrylf@cox.net.

See you in Shoshone. ☞

Jason Mark's *Satellites in the High Country* Searching for the Wild in the Age of Man

-- reviewed by Vicky Hoover

So you've backpacked to a high remote basin in the Sierra Nevada, just at treeline, and on a perfect crystal-clear night you are stretched out to sleep under the stars—myriads more than you ever remember seeing, and you're marveling at the infinity of them when one slowly, deliberately, moves across your line of vision—with that slight jerkiness that shows it is a satellite.

Even here, in this farthest, remote wild, human effects are apparent, inescapable. Is there ANY real Wild?

It's the theme of this inspiring new book by Jason Mark that – yes, the wild is out there, and guarding it is more important than ever.

Journalist Mark—until recently the editor of *Earth Island Journal*--contemplates the meaning of *wild* as he visits a different wild area in each of his chapters, and discusses different facets of wilderness.

He begins close to home in the San Francisco Bay Area, in the Point Reyes National Seashore, scene of recent conflict over a commercial oyster farm—with Drakes Bay finally added to wilderness. He highlights the worth of nearby nature -- the wild close by.

It is far north in the Arctic Refuge, where even its obvious wildness does not keep it safe from impacts of

global warming, that our author, musing on the value of NOT intervening to save isolated species threatened by climate change, zeroes in on “lack of intervention” as the true meaning of *wild*: **“Wilderness is not about purity or even primitiveness. It's about autonomy.”**

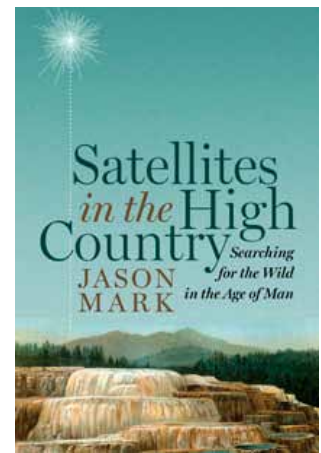
He determines: **“Forget ‘untouched’. What matters now is whether a place is uncontrolled.”**

A backpack in Yosemite National Park makes him think of the exploration and adventuring background of wilderness, and how explorers became conservationists and helped create a national identity for us.

Venturing into Olympic National Park's Hoh Rainforest brings ideas of the intrinsic rights of wildlife and of raw nature. In New Mexico's Gila Wilderness, the presence of wolves is an arresting notion: **“animals are a portal into wildness.”**

In Lakota country, around the Badlands and northern Plains, he thinks back over history and sees that, although Indians affected, changed natural ecosystems in the past, sure, there was a difference: **“Indian alterations didn't halt the recurrence of other natural processes. Indians disturbed the land but did not strive to exercise dominion over it.”**

He meets a group of primitive backcountry users—working hard to eschew



modern conveniences--using Stone Age tools only. He sees their valiant struggle as based on an innate desire for freedom and likens the wilderness spirit to human freedom – “wilderness as a civic good.” (*Ed Abbey cheers.*)

Throughout, Mark neatly blends the particular place details with broad maxims of wilderness philosophy, slanted toward the needs of earth's future, and expressed with an eloquent originality. What's more he does it with some charming descriptive passages: **“Pinnacles and spires twist and fold into wafer-thin ridges, like a meringue made from dust and clay....”**

Jason Mark is now the new editor of *Sierra* magazine. You can see his essay, “Where the Wild Things are,” in *WOW* (Aug. 2014.) Check out his book and see if you too believe he'll make his mark as a powerful new thinker—and writer—for the wild.

Satellites in the High Country: Searching for the Wild in the Age of Man. Hard cover, 320 pp. \$28.00, Island Press. <http://www.islandpress.org/book/satellites-in-the-high-country>. ↗

WORDS OF the WILD

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“We simply need that wild country available to us, even if we never do more than drive to its edge and look in. For it can be a means of reassuring ourselves of our sanity as creatures, a part of the geography of hope.”

-- Wallace Stegner

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