

WORDS OF the WILD

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

Protect our Oceans:

Now More Than Ever The need for a Central Coast National Marine Sanctuary just gets clearer

-- by Andrew Christie

At the November 14, 2012, meeting of the California Coastal Commission in Santa Monica, with the final permit for Pacific Gas and Electric's (PG&E's) potentially devastating high-energy Central Coast offshore seismic survey hanging in the balance, the vote went the right way. The permit was denied.

If the commission had voted the other way that day, our coastal wildlife and the coastal economy would have been in big trouble. Every commercial and recreational fisher in San Luis Obispo County would literally have been out of business the next day, when the project was scheduled to commence; ordered to tie up their boats at the dock for the next 42 days.

For 30 of those days, PG&E's seismic vessel would have towed air guns through their prime fishing grounds, firing 250-decibel blasts every 15 seconds, 24 hours a day. The goal of all this testing was to get a better picture of the seismic hazards around the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant (DCPP) -- a worthy goal, but one that Sierra Club and our allies argued could be achieved in a manner causing less destruction to wildlife.

Once the testing was over, the local community would have been left with the aftermath, con-

tributing to the scant body of scientific knowledge on the subject by finding out exactly what the short- and long-term impacts had been on wildlife-- at the cost of significant harm to wildlife--i.e. the degree of disorientation, deafening and/or injury or death caused to marine mammals, birds, fish and larvae.

So how close did we come? You can now hear the idea bandied about on the Central Coast that the seismic survey never had a chance of being approved.

Here's the reality: Every state and federal agency with any oversight role had signed off on the PG&E project. The federal Environmental Assessment and state Environmental Impact Report had been certified. By the time PG&E got to the California Coastal Commission, they had nearly every other permit they needed. The Coastal Commission was the last stop on the regulatory road, and the most likely outcome appeared to be that the Commission would issue the final permit after imposing additional permit conditions to try to somewhat mitigate the survey's potential damage.

Because the Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council, Surfrider, Coastal Protection Network *et al* intensively educated staff and commissioners for weeks before the Santa Monica hearing, that potential staff recommendation for approval with conditions ultimately changed to a recommendation for denial. Faced with that,

and the public outrage in the hearing room, the commission unanimously agreed with the staff recommendation.



photo: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Sea lions

However, it has not gone unnoticed that the Coastal staff's recommendation for denial included wording that left open the possibility for future seismic testing proposals: "[I]t appears premature to conduct the currently proposed survey during the fall of 2012, as other ongoing data collection and analysis efforts by PG&E, the NRC, and USGS are likely to provide even better seismic characterization of the DCPP area in the near future and thereby potentially reduce the need, extent, or duration of the proposed survey."

Why is it a bad idea to depend on the Coastal Commission to save you from the next bad offshore project to come down the pike, and the one after that? For two reasons: First, relying on the assumption that a similar *ad hoc* coalition will come together

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A Central Coast National Marine Sanctuary -- from page 1

to oppose any and all such future projects is risky and not exactly a plan, nor a good use of our community's resources. Second, members of the Coastal Commission serve at the discretion of the governor and leaders of the state legislature. In the commission's 40-year history, there have been many Commission majorities that considered it their duty to deliver unto PG&E anything it wanted that was related to Diablo Canyon, whenever PG&E came to the commission to ask.

photo: Steve Hillebrand, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



To truly protect our coast from damaging seismic testing—with its attendant harm to coastal and marine wildlife—we need the permanent protection of a national marine sanctuary for the Central Coast. A national marine sanctuary would need to be designated by Congress and would be the underwater equivalent of a national park. It would give local stakeholders control over many coastal management decisions, permanently protecting our waters from damaging projects like 250 decibel seismic surveys.

A highly relevant quote appeared in The San Luis Obispo Tribune's October 19, 2012, edition, about the Coastal Commission hearing on the seismic survey. The story reported on a meeting of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council and its discussion of the project:

"There is no way in the world it would happen in the sanctuary," advisory council member

Geoffrey Shester said at the Cambria meeting, expressing frustration and disbelief that "because it's a couple miles away, all we get to do is weigh in on some concerns."

Not to belabor the point: Had there been a Central Coast National Marine Sanctuary in existence in 2011-12, it could have weighed in at the beginning of the seismic survey permit process with a simple statement to the effect that the proposed activity is not allowable within Sanctuary waters. Instead, local citizens and environ-

mental groups, fighting a losing battle all the way through the regulatory process, had to attempt a Hail Mary pass at the end of it, pushing back against the momentum of multiple prior permit approvals.

In short, we got lucky this time.

Living with a marine sanctuary

A February 22 meeting convened by Morro Bay Mayor Jamie Irons and City Councilman Noah Smukler brought Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary Superintendent Maria Brown and her predecessor Ed Ueber to the Morro Bay Community Center, along with Zeke Grader, executive director of the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations. They spoke about their first-hand experience in managing, working and living with the Gulf of the Farallones Sanctuary (which was established in 1981 and protects 1,250 square miles of marine habitat off San Francisco) and the Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary (established in 1989 just north of the Farallones sanctuary, protecting 529 square miles of ocean between Point Reyes and Bodega Head.)

Grader said of his experience as the leader of commercial fishermen involved with the Gulf of the Farallones and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries, "I don't think there's a government entity that we've ever had

a better relationship with." The Gulf of the Farallones sanctuary, like all such

national marine sanctuary...the underwater equivalent of a national park

sanctuaries, supports the economic growth of local coastal communities, scientific research, and the preservation of underwater treasures — and the health of the local fishing industry — for future generations. (See WOW, "Wilderness--in the Ocean?" Aug 2011.)

Some other interesting facts related by the distinguished panelists:

- The Sanctuary Advisory Council can be defined however a community wants to define it in its sanctuary charter. Historically, they have been eminently democratic: one stakeholder group, one seat, one vote.
- The Sanctuary Advisory Council is central to the hiring decision for sanctuary superintendent.
- The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) delegates authority for managing the sanctuary to the local superintendent
- 99 percent of the recommendations made by the Gulf of the Farallones SAC are implemented.
- Every marine sanctuary is different. Each has its own founding document, outlining which activities the sanctuary will manage. San Luis Obispo could have a sanctuary that regulates only offshore oil and gas drilling.

In other words, the establishment and management of a national marine sanctuary is based on local control and input from the community.

It is up to everyone with a stake in the environmental health of the Central Coast to grasp the reality of both recent history and the future threats coming our way and support the real bottom line: we need a permanent solution to protect our coast.

That's why Sierra Club is advocating for the creation of a Central Coast National Marine Sanctuary. ♪

(Andrew Christie is the Director of the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club)

Earth Day Every Day

-- by Heather Anderson

Earth Day (April 22) almost coincides with John Muir's birthday (April 21). Although Muir (1838 to 1914) became an inspiration to environmentalists everywhere through his writings on conservation, there was need for a new wake-up call.

The man who took up that challenge was Gaylord Nelson, senator from Wisconsin. Nelson sponsored many environmental policies, from EPA, a ban on DDT, gas mileage standards, to the landmark Wilderness Act of 1964. He worked endlessly to pass the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Endangered Species Act.

When Gaylord Nelson staged the first Earth Day celebration in 1970, twenty million people took part. In 2012, one billion people from 192 countries took part in the 42nd celebration of Earth Day, with "Acts of Green", as elected officials, students abroad, Peace Corps, congregations, and entertainers all promoted environmental advocacy and events.

Nelson couldn't imagine a

world with twice as many everything: people, schools, highways, and parking lots. Global population is expected to rise from the three billion of 1960, the current seven billion, to nine or ten billion in 2050. Excessive population growth threatens environmental sustainability. Global climate change is the major world issue of the day. Brian Fagin, in *The Great Warming* (2009), notes how drought in earlier times had brought cultures to the edge of collapse. Now climate is changing faster and will affect billions of people who are ill prepared to cope with severe water shortages, depleted aquifers and dry aqueducts.

Mark Hertzgaard, author of *Earth Odyssey* (2009) comments that

- 1) We have no time to lose; water scarcity, climate change, and species extinction are getting worse.
- 2) Poverty is a central problem; four billion of the earth's seven billion are



photo: earthobservatory.nasa.gov

inconceivably deprived. As they strive to improve their condition, overall environmental footprint will expand with the demand for more cars, computers, more everything. 3) We have the technology to solve the situation. We can work more efficiently, do more with less, shift to a safer, cleaner energy future by smart energy solutions and efficiency and stopping our dependence on nuclear, coal, and oil. There is no clean coal.

Hertzgaard in *Hot*, (2012), and James Hansen in *Storms of My Grandchildren* (2009) wrote about the impending need of their offspring to confront global warming impacts.

Where to start? First, check your carbon footprint (http://myfootprint.org/en/quiz_results), shrink it: walk more, ride less, buy less, recycle more, save water and energy, save paper, save animal and plant species, save farmland and parks, save habitat, forests and wilderness. Join Every Day, Earth Day (www.action.earthday.net) and work to make environmental education, clean energy, and the green economy a reality. Teachers can include it in their curricula (see *Art Education and Eco Awareness*, 2010), homemakers in their homes, businesses in their workplace. We can write, phone, or email Congress (capitol switchboard, 202-224-3121.)

We live on a unique planet with amazing diversity, incredible beauty, and the most intricate ecological web-of-life. Rachel Carson called her experience with the earth *A Sense of Wonder* (1956). Barry Lopez (1998) wrote simply, "We have taken the most obvious kind of wealth from this continent and overlooked the more lasting, the more valuable and sustaining experience of intimacy with it, the spiritual dimension..."

We are grateful for wild places, urban and rural, which belong to each of us as American citizens. On this special day and every day, think what we can do to celebrate, cherish, and protect our planet. ♪

(Heather Anderson is an artist, art educator, and longtime volunteer activist leader with the Tehipite Chapter.)

Forest plans

The Inyo, the Sierra, and the Sequoia are three important Sierra Nevada national forests that have started the major job of revising their management plans. Now local activists who enjoy these forests and all Americans have a chance to influence future forest management.

Our wilderness committee especially seeks roadless areas in each forest to be recommended for wilderness. The Sierra Forest held an initial public meeting in Fresno on Feb. 9, and a good representation of Tehipite Chapter activists attended; they appreciated the chance to have some detailed discussions with agency staff.

The Inyo met with interested members of the public in Bishop on April 4, and Malcolm Clark reports for the Club's Range of Light Group: "I attended the first of two technical assessments held on April 4, There

were about 25 people including Forest Supervisor Ed Armenta and other forest personnel. There were also some people attending by phone. There has been a push by local motorized advocates in Inyo County to get their people more involved in the plan revision process, but environmentalists were well represented at the meeting with attendees from Friends of the Inyo, the Mono Lake Committee, Eastern Sierra Wildlife Care, the Bishop Paiute Tribe, and more. After a general presentation on the plan revision process and time-line, those present broke up into four topic oriented groups: Assessment of Recreation, Wildlife and at-risk Species, Role of Partners, and Economic Conditions. The group agreed that partnerships with stakeholder organizations are crucial given likely levels of agency funding, and the Forest needs a long term coordination plan for involving partners

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Nevada Wildlands news: Legislation, a visit to Gold Butte -- and Water

-- by Marge Sill and Vicky Hoover

The bills to establish a Pine Forest wilderness in northwest Nevada have been reintroduced in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Although this wilderness has been endorsed by the entire Nevada Congressional delegation and the Humboldt County Commissioners, it has not yet been passed.



Stacy Goss enjoys Gold Butte's "Little Finland"

The Lyon County lands bill, which includes a 48,000-acre Wovoka Wilderness, has been introduced in both the House and the Senate. Again, this bill is endorsed by the entire Nevada delegation and by the Lyon County Commissioners. Both these bills should be passed in this Congress since they have no opposition. The Nevada state legislature recently held a hearing on SJR15, the Wovoka bill, during which freshman Congressman Steve Horsford testified in favor of the bill.

A bill establishing a Gold Butte National Conservation Area with wilderness in far southeast Nevada may be introduced this spring; it has strong support from both Senator Harry Reid and Rep. Horsford. The Clark County Commissioners have also supported this proposed legislation.

In February the CA/NV wilderness committee camped for two nights in Gold Butte's Whitney Pockets area. Terri Robertson, outreach coordinator with Friends of Gold

Butte, led the group on a drive and walk tour near Gold Butte's Lime Canyon Wilderness. Everyone was awed by the dazzling red rock area known as "Little Finland" -- from the unusual fin-shaped rock formations. The CA/NV Wilderness Committee has sponsored trips to Gold Butte for about a dozen years.

Nevada and Utah clash on eastern Nevada water issues

The Sierra Club has steadily opposed efforts to export water from farther north in eastern Nevada to Las Vegas, to augment Las Vegas's potentially shrinking supplies of water from the drought-prone Colorado River. The high mountains around Great Basin National Park and other eastern Nevada ranges practically on Nevada's border with Utah afford both snow and rainfall which can augment the ground water resource. Both the Snake Valley, just west of Great Basin Park, and the Spring Valley just east of the Park are prime targets for exporting water south via a new pipeline. Environmentalists are concerned about the drying up of springs for wildlife if ground water is depleted.

Ranchers and other residents of western Utah have raised the alarm about such water exportation from the beginning. They fear not only that their own ground water supplies will be lost as centuries-old—possibly ice-age—underground water reservoirs are emptied—but that the drying out of the Snake Valley and nearby valleys of western Utah could make Utah's "heavily populated Wasatch Front, [the area of Salt Lake City] vulnerable to dust storms and worse air pollution."

This fear was voiced in early April by Utah Governor Gary Herbert as he officially rejected an agreement with Nevada that would allow Las Vegas to pump massive quantities of groundwater from aquifers under the states' border. He had heard too much serious opposition from local residents opposed to the water deal.

Environmentalists in southern Nevada have pointed out that the very high costs of constructing such a long pipeline would add greatly to what southern Nevada residents pay for their water. Sierra Club will continue to oppose this interbasin water export both in the media and the courts. ♪

Forest Plans

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The next round of meetings may occur in May and June.

Joe Fontaine reports on the Sequoia: The Sequoia Forest had two public meetings in early February, in Porterville and Kernville. They are in the "assessment" phase now and plan to complete that in a year; then they begin the formal NEPA process for regular public involvement. There are no upcoming scheduled public meetings for Sequoia. They are

accepting comments about the accuracy of the assessments on the "WIKI" part of their website. We will push for wilderness designation for some of the roadless areas in Sequoia Forest. Earlier, as part of their Giant Sequoia National Monument management plan, they recommended wilderness designation for part of the Moses roadless area. We were pleased at that but have appealed the whole plan on grounds of proposed continued logging.

The Sierra Nevada Our Wild America campaign team plans a meeting for local activists on May 9 in Visalia about both the Sierra and the Sequoia planning processes. Promoting wilderness for roadless areas in both national forests will be a big component of that meeting. If you are from the central valley or surrounding communities and care about your national forests -- *do join us May 9*. Contact Sarah Matsumoto, sarah.matsumoto@sierraclub.org, (415)977-5579.

Fast, Furious, And Anonymous:

Without visible identification, off-road vehicle riders continue to violate the law with impunity

-- by Philip M. Klasky, Community ORV Watch, www.orvwatch.com.

Almost every weekend in the spring and fall and especially during holidays, rural communities in the southern California desert are invaded by off-road vehicles (ORV) who use our neighborhoods as playgrounds and cause widespread damage to public lands, wilderness areas, critical habitat for endangered species and other lands off-limits to all vehicles. Any attempt to report this illegal activity is hampered by the fact that these trespassers demonstrate no respect for private property or the law, are difficult for law enforcement to apprehend and, without visible identification, are virtually impossible to report.

Off-road vehicles in California are not required to display any visible identification. The only information that could possibly link the vehicle to the rider is on a small sticker obscured behind or below the driver. Private property owners have no recourse from the onslaught of illegal and irresponsible ORV abuse. Riders violate the law without consequences, and law enforcement is frustrated in any attempt to apprehend them. On ORV web sites and blogs, riders boast that they are impervious to the law due to their anonymity. Imagine if automobiles on our nation's highways did not have to display visible identification. How would you report a hit-and-run incident or an intoxicated, reckless or speeding driver? Why should off-road vehicles be any different than automobiles in displaying identification?

According to a recent report by Responsible Trails America (RTA), a non-profit organization that supports common-sense off-road vehicle enforcement and management policies, other states are taking the lead on requiring visible identification.

The report (found on www.responsibletrails.org),

explains that twelve states require large, visible identification in the form of a license plate or decal, and more states are joining the effort. The initiative helps to weed out the renegade riders and help protect opportunities for those who follow the law. Visible identification gives law enforcement the tools they have asked for in order to respond to illegal activity. The rules regarding off-road vehicle identification are different from state to state resulting in a confusing patchwork of regulations. Some states require visible identification, registration and decals, while others have no title, visible identification or registration requirements at all.

The current situation is unacceptable, but there are remedies. The state of California, through the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division, needs to mandate that the green stickers be visibly displayed. We invite ORV organizations in California to join in our efforts to support legislation requiring visible license plates. This is an important way that the Blue Ribbon Coalition, American Motorcycle Association, California Off-Road Vehicle Association, Off-Road Business Association and other ORV special interest groups can exhibit their often-stated goal of encouraging legal and responsible behavior. Riders can encourage others to respect the rights of private property owners and businesses by policing themselves through "peer

reporting". Advocacy for visible license plates would prove that the ORV industry and user groups are serious about reining in those who give the sport such a bad reputation.

Contact Community ORV Watch through our website www.orvwatch.com.



ORVs illegally ride on the Pacific Crest Trail in the southern Sierra Nevada, ignoring signs that clearly prohibit them.

if you are interested in supporting efforts to make riders more identifiable and therefore more responsible. We invite vendors and user groups to work with us on an ad campaign that encourages responsible recreation through education and accountability. ☞

(Philip M. Klasky owns a home in Wonder Valley near Joshua Tree National Park. He is on the Steering Committee of Community ORV Watch and a member of the Alliance for Responsible Recreation, a coalition of homeowners, conservation groups, residents and businesses working to protect private and public lands from ORV abuse.)

"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

Photo: Mesonika Pecuch, Ken Community ORV Watch



Outings

Support wilderness the Sierra Club way!



April 21-27 -- Sun - Sat Escalante River Canyon

Join Delta-Sierra Group's Utah Service Trip/Car Camp/Day Hiking 2B). Assist Boulder Community Alliance, part of the Escalante River Watershed Partnership, in their Russian Olive eradication program. Work on private land on the Escalante River, at direction of Bill Wolverton to do clearing for chain sawing of Russian olive trees using loppers, small hand saws and herbicide. Participants need work clothing, provide own food, gear and travel to worksite and trailhead. Optional Central Commissary by Elaine Gorman. Contact leader, Paul Plathe at (209)476-1498.

May 4-5 -- Sat - Sun Carrizo Birds, Fences, History

Visit and assist an outstanding and relatively unknown national monument -- Carrizo Plain -- with CNRCC Desert Committee. On Sat, assist monument staff in removing fence wires to help pronghorn antelope. Sun is for sightseeing. Views from Caliente Mountains are spectacular; spring flowers and varied raptors likely. Contact leader Craig Deutsche (310)477-6670, or craig.deutsche@gmail.com.

May 11-12 -- Sat - Sun Black Rock Hot Springs Tour

Come explore the hot springs in the Black Rock Desert about 100 miles north of Reno with Great Basin Group. Playa conditions to determine exact itinerary. Be prepared for cool weather. May meet in Reno Fri evening; potluck likely Sat. Sorry, no RVs or trailers. Dogs OK w/ leash, pick up after them. LNT. Call leader after 5/1. Leader: David Book, (775)843-6443.

May 23-24 -- Thurs - Fri Death Vly Wilderness Restoration

Join CNRCC Desert Committee as we work with Ranger Charlie Callagan to restore wilderness values to a beautiful desert area. Possible projects include removing fencing from Last Chance Canyon or picking up debris on east side of park. Previous projects have included raking out vehicle tracks and repairing trails. Leader: Kate Allen, kj.allen96@gmail.com, (661)944-4056.

May 24-27 -- Fri - Mon Kings River Wilderness study

Join Steve Evans, Friends of the River, and Vicky Hoover in an exploratory weekend car camp to visit a roadless area in Sierra National Forest on north side of Kings River. Enjoy low elevation Sierra wildflowers and get to know one or more streams and a potential wilderness we'll urge Sierra National Forest to recommend for protection in their upcoming Forest Plan. Central commissary offered, contact Vicky Hoover, (415)977-5527, vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org.

May 25-27 -- Sat - Mon Black Rock Rendezvous

This Memorial Day Weekend trip is a great way to experience the Black Rock Desert in northern Nevada for the first time. A popular Great Basin Group event with lots of activities to choose from, including speakers, guided tours, kids' activities, visits to hot springs, a potluck, raffles, and more. Trailers and RVs OK but no hook-ups. Dry camping only. Sign-up starts 5/16. For information, call David Book (775)843-6443.

June 2 -- Sun MGL Mine Clean-Up, Day Hike

Come out at 8 am, help with clean up near an old mine site in the Nightingale Range n. of Nixon. Lots of cans and bottles. Bring work gloves: we supply trash bags and haul trash out. Hike afterward, about 6 mi. RT, 500 ft. gain. See some beautiful country most folks don't even know exists. DOK. Leader: Pat Kleames (775)359-5089. Mod. easy.

June 9 -- Sun Lagomarsino Canyon Day Hike

Meet 8 am for hike through scenic riparian canyon. Numerous stream crossings possible--poles highly recommended. Halfway point is a real treat - a petroglyph site with 10,000 year old rock art. Wild horses sightings likely. Mod. Strenuous: difficult at times because of uneven, rocky surfaces. About 12 mi. RT, 1000 feet of gain. Trip limit 15. DL. Leader: Pat Kleames (775)359-5089. Co-leader: Holly Coughlin (775)331-7488.

July 4-7 -- Thurs - Sun Black Rock Independence Day

Great Basin Group plans a very busy holiday weekend in the Black Rock. Probable car-camp for long weekend exploring; possible amateur radio class on Sunday. Leader is very familiar with the area. Sorry, no RVs or Trailers. Dogs on leash, LNT. After 6/15, call David Book, (775)843-6443 for more info.

July 26-29 -- Fri - Mon Eastern Nevada Wilderness Service

Once again we partner with ranger John from BLM in Ely for a scintillating Wilderness service project in wild eastern Nevada. We've worked in Mt. Grafton Wilderness south of Ely, Highland Ridge, just south of Great Basin National Park, and Becky Peak Wilderness in the Schell Creek Range north of Ely. Where will it be this time? Sign up and find out--useful, enjoyable, hard work in a wild, scenic area. Central commissary offered, contact Vicky Hoover, see May 24-27.

On CA/NV Wilderness Committee's March 29-31 Turtles Mountains wilderness characteristic inventory field trip--experiencing some dubious little-used "roads".



photo: Judy Branfman

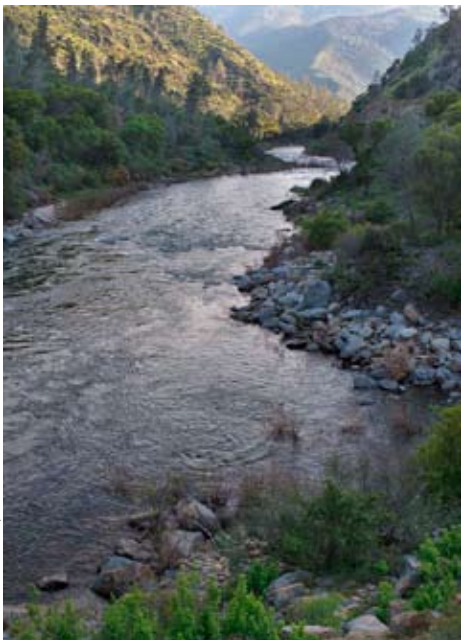
National Outing to Pyramid Lake

Sierra Club national outings don't come to Nevada that often, but this year, May 5 to 11, there's a good one. Claudia Hillgoss will lead the "50-Plus Pyramid Lake Service and Fun" trip. Based comfortably in a nearby hotel, trip members will do two days of service with the Pyramid Lake Paiute tribe and will have plenty of time to hike and explore this sacred mountainous area north of Reno. One space remained on this trip (#13077A) in early April. ☺

A treasured California river under threat

-- by Ronald Stork

Last year, led by a bi-partisan coalition of Congressmen from the southern and central San Joaquin Valley, the U.S. House of Representatives voted, for the first time since the passage of the National Wild & Scenic Rivers Act, to de-designate a portion of a wild & scenic river in



Merced River at North Fork downstream into encroachment

order to put a reservoir in it. In this case, it is the iconic Merced River, perhaps best known as the river of Yosemite Valley.

This year, the Congressional effort is being championed by Rep. Tom McClintock, who characterized the National Wild & Scenic Rivers System as “truly outrageous red tape.” Original co-sponsors of McClintock’s bill HR 934 included Representatives Doug La Malfa, Jeff Denham (who sponsored the bill last Congress), Jim Costa, Devin Nunes, David Valadao, and House minority whip Kevin McCarthy.

Passed in 1968, the National Wild & Scenic Rivers Act sought to balance the decades and even centuries of alterations to this nation’s waterways by the Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Soil Conservation Service, and

legions of private, municipal, and state dam, reservoir, and canal builders. It asserted the value to our society of leaving some rivers wild, free and undammed.

The central focus of this statute is to ensure that rivers remain free-flowing with the beds and banks of protected rivers in a natural state. Designated rivers have been widely regarded as “permanently protected.” Mr. McClintock, perhaps with an eye to even greater prizes, is now seeking to take the “permanent” out of “permanently protected.”

HR 934 would de-designate about a half a mile of the Wild and Scenic Merced River just upstream of Lake McClure Reservoir in the Sierra foothills northeast of Merced (about 35 miles downstream from Yosemite Valley) to advance the Merced Irrigation District’s speculative bid to expand their reservoir. The expanded reservoir would inundate portions of two different Areas of Critical Environmental Concern administered by the Bureau of Land Management as well as parts of the agency’s Merced River Wilderness Study Area. In addition, an expanded reservoir would

Americans don't vandalize our National Wild & Scenic River System any more than we vandalize our National Park System

illegally drown terrestrial limestone salamanders, a state fully protected species.

The project, as proposed, could result in the failure of the District’s New Exchequer Dam and would add only about 2.5 percent to the water yield of this project, which already occupies 32 miles of the Merced River downstream. Indeed, this dam, unlike a few of its neighbors, has never even filled and spilled.

Last year, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Com-

Next Wilderness meeting Sunday, June 2, San Francisco

The next meeting of the Sierra Club’s California/Nevada Wilderness Committee will take place Sunday, June 2, at Sierra Club headquarters in downtown San Francisco. Join us for fun, networking, food, and timely presentations on worthwhile wildlands topics—including organizing for California events for the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act next year. 10 am to 5 pm, possible dinner afterwards. Come a day early for a Saturday hike near the south end of the Bay. All interested wildlands advocates invited. Contact Vicky: vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org.

mittee failed to take up this measure. Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR), the new chair of the Committee, has not indicated his perspective on HR 934, although Senator Dianne Feinstein has indicated her sympathy with the goals of the House effort. Senator Barbara Boxer has not spoken on the issue.

The Sierra Club has opposed the Merced de-designation bill. This bill’s re-introduction is not a proud day for America. We certainly will try to ensure that the bill fails again. American’s don’t vandalize our National Wild & Scenic River System any more than we vandalize our National Park System. At least I hope not. ☞

(Ron Stork is Senior Policy Staff with Friends of the River, (916) 442-3155 x 220, rstork@friendsoftheriver.org, www.friendsoftheriver.org. He has also served as a long time volunteer in the Mother Lode Chapter.)



Downstream of Yosemite National Park, the Bureau of Land Management cares for the designated river

Wilderness Anniversaries -- 20, 25, 30, 50 --and parks 150

California and Nevada will celebrate multiple anniversaries in 2014:

** 2104 will mark the **20th anniversary** of the California Desert Protection Act, the largest land preservation law ever legislated for the Lower 48 states. President Bill Clinton signed the Act on October 31, 1994.

** The Nevada Forest Service Wilderness bill will mark a quarter century in 2014--**25 years**. Signed by President George Bush on Dec. 5, 1989, the law brought thirteen wilderness areas into Nevada's national forests.

** The California Wilderness Act of 1984 added many new lands to California Wilderness almost **30 years ago**, including wilderness for the largest part of our major Sierra Nevada national parks, Yosemite and Kings Canyon/Sequoia.

** The Wilderness Act turns 50! Signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson on September 3, 1964, the Act brought into being America's National Wilderness Preservation System. Almost 10 million acres of lands in national forests,

that had previously been identified administratively by the Forest Service as wilderness areas, wild, or primitive areas became part of the new System, which gave the power of law to keeping natural places undeveloped, to let nature dominate there, forever.

** Yosemite National Park will celebrate the 150th anniversary of its state land grant in 1964. On June 30, 1864, President Abraham Lincoln's signature on the Yosemite Grant, a bill that ushered

in the national park idea, enacted the lasting preservation of Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias. This was the first time a federal government set aside a piece of land purely for preservation for the people.

** California's State Parks System came into being in 1864 so will celebrate 150 years in 2014—and all next year we'll highlight and enjoy California's own State wilderness system—inspired by and modeled on the federal system. We have exactly 12 state

wildernesses--you could visit one a month during 2014!

--Vicky Hoover

State Wilderness	Park	Acres
Anza-Borrego Desert	Anza-Borrego Desert SP	297,400
Boney Mountain	Point Mugu SP	6,190
Bull Creek	Humboldt Redwoods SP	10,450
Cuyamaca Mountain	Cuyamaca Rancho SP	13,210
Henry W. Coe	Henry W. Coe SP	23,300
Limekiln	Limekiln SP	413
Mount San Jacinto	Mount San Jacinto SP	12,465
Murrelet	Prairie Creek Redwoods SP	6,600
Redwood Heritage	Jedediah Smith Redwoods SP	5,500
Santa Rosa Mountains	Anza-Borrego Desert SP	87,000
Sinkyone	Sinkyone Wilderness SP	7,100
West Waddell Creek	Big Basin Redwoods SP	5,810
Total		475,438



WORDS OF the WILD

The Sierra Club 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.

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