

# WORDS OF *the* WILD

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

## Centennial of the National Park Service Celebrating our national parks in California and Nevada

-- by Vicky Hoover

Throughout 2016, the National Park Service has celebrated its one hundred years as an agency and has emphasized public visits to national parks. Sierra Club has used the centennial to focus attention on our national parks as iconic American protected areas—uniquely prized by our national culture.

But: what about *Wilderness* and our national parks? National parks are known in part for some major developments—roads that span many parks, high-profile hotels, shops and other commercial services. Yet, in spite of that, the portion of many parks that is developed is relatively small, and a gratifyingly large proportion of most national parks is natural and wild. Of 84 million acres in our National Park System, 44 million acres (52 percent) is designated wilderness—(with 32 million acres of that within Alaska..) Vast additional areas in our parks are truly wild even if not actually designated, by law, as wilderness.

While Sierra Club park celebrations this year have been too numerous to recount here—we highlight one special event in California and an important statement in Nevada.

### Celebration on Muir Pass

August 25 is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the actual day in 1916 that President Woodrow Wilson signed the Act establishing the National Park Service as an agency within the Department of the Interior.

On August 25, a Sierra Club

contingent assembled on Muir Pass within designated wilderness in Kings Canyon National Park for a special ceremony.

Why Muir Pass?

On top of 11, 955-foot Muir Pass, roughly half way along the length of the fabled John Muir trail that goes from Yosemite to Mt Whitney in Sequoia National Park, is the Muir Hut, or Muir Memorial Shelter, a 1930-stone building constructed by Sierra Club both to honor our founder John Muir and to offer an emergency shelter for hikers caught out in a mountain storm.

The Aug 25 ceremony marked and celebrated the official placement – at long last – of the Muir Memorial Shelter on the National Register of Historic Places.

### Muir Memorial Shelter: Historic

Buildings are not placed on the National Historic Register lightly, or easily. About three years ago,

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photo: Joan Hamilton

"John Muir" at Muir Pass on August 25

Sierra Club volunteer and historic-properties architect by profession Doug Harnsberger, Californian by birth but now resident of Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, was backpacking with his family on the Muir trail and reached Muir Pass for the first time. Immediately he was struck by the unique style of the octagonal stone structure there. He learned a bit about the structure in chatting with a Park Service ranger doing hut routine maintenance. Shocked that the shelter was not already on the historic register, Harnsberger determined to get it recognized as Historic.

So began a nearly three year crusade that involved intense research endeavors for Doug, including a visit to the Sierra Club's Colby library. He learned that Sierra Club leader Will Colby had

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## Muir Memorial Shelter -- from page 1

the idea for a memorial hut on Muir Pass and was inspired by a 1926 *National Geographic* article featuring Italian mountain “Trullo Huts”, to hire a prominent California architect to create a design along Trullo lines.

All the information that Harnsberger’s relentless studies uncovered went into an incredibly detailed and complex nomination form, on which Harnsberger worked with NPS historical building experts--with enthusiastic support from Kings Canyon/Sequoia Superintendent Woody Smeck. Finally, this summer his endeavors were rewarded when the nomination was approved by state and national authorities, and the historic status became reality. Harnsberger elected the NPS anniversary day to orchestrate a celebratory ceremony on Muir Pass, and he worked with Sierra Club director Chuck Frank, Outings Director Stacy Bare, and wilderness advocate Vicky Hoover to recruit a Club contingent.

Dave Roberts of Sierra Club National Outings volunteered to be the official leader of the Sierra Club group heading up to Muir Pass from Florence Lake; Dave’s group included a Sierra Club staff reporter—Tom



Muir Memorial Shelter--drawing in *Sierra Club Bulletin* from 1930

Valtin, a videographer—Julia Marshall, and two Chicago-area high school students working with Sierra Club’s ICO program (Inspiring Connections Outdoors) -- Leo Hernandez and Luis Ramirez, and their mentor Chris Grenier, Chicago ICO chair.

Group size in the wilderness is

limited to 15, but three separate Sierra Club groups heading to the Pass from different trailheads planned to meet at the Memorial Shelter for a unique celebration in which both Sierra Club and NPS participants shared. The NPS granted us a “Special Use Permit”: to assemble briefly as more than 15 persons. Harnsberger had worked with a designer to prepare a new plaque for the Hut, and an NPS mule team brought the 110-pound bronze plaque up to Muir Pass just in time for the Aug. 25 gathering. (See p 3, bottom.)

Roberts’ trip took three days to backpack from Florence Lake up to base camp at 10,800-ft Evolution Lake. Next day, the 25th, the group hiked the five miles up to the Pass for the ceremony, returning to Evolution Lake late afternoon.

### Ceremony at Muir Memorial Shelter

During the rededication ceremony for the Muir Memorial Shelter, Doug Harnsberger outlined the history of the Shelter—how Will Colby’s inspiration to honor John Muir via a stone structure midpoint on the Sierra trail that bore his name—led him to work with Bay Area architect Henry Gutterson --a student of Bernard Maybeck-- to design a sturdy building



Muir Memorial Shelter--on August 25

based on a traditional steep-roofed Italian mountain hut. Gutterson played a crucial role in converting the ancient Trullo Hut construction details into a strong structure able to withstand the severe climatic forces at the 12,000 feet high Muir Pass.

Then, no less a personage than

John Muir himself—the ceremonial “Ghost of Honor” – in the person of Tehipite Chapter activist and long-time Muir impersonator Frank Helling--described Club history related to the Sierra Nevada; Muir was followed by Sierra Club deputy executive director Bruce Hamilton, who highlighted more recent Sierra Club history in connection with our national parks and how we are emphasizing parks during this NPS centennial year.

The company, augmented by several passing backpackers who delighted in joining this once-in-a-lifetime celebratory event, then finished the ceremony with two rousing songs led by Tom Valtin--a Scottish ballad once sung by John Muir himself and Woody Guthrie’s “This Land is Your Land.”

### The advance party

As a senior backpacker, I myself wanted to head toward Muir Pass more slowly, so I undertook to start out a day ahead of Dave Roberts’ main party. With me in the advance group, and providing valuable support, were three friends: \*\*First of all John Muir/Frank Helling himself—who also has been around long enough not to want to hurry; \*\*Donn Furman, whom I first knew as director of the successful 1980s campaign to save the Kings River from the proposed Rogers Crossing Dam, and who has also abetted other river-protection efforts; on many Sierra backpack trips since then, he taught me to seek out Sierra rivers, as well as mountains; \*\*Jack Hession, whom I first knew as the Club’s Alaska staffer, who was a leader in designing the bill that became the 1980 ANILCA, and who has taken me on memorable rafting trips on truly remote Alaska rivers, before and since his staff retirement.

Dave’s main party caught up with our team on our second day, and we camped with them in both McClure Meadow—after a fierce afternoon hail storm--and at exquisite Evolution Lake.

After the ceremonial day, our group also took a more leisurely trip back to the Florence Lake ferry than the main party. The longer you can savor the Sierra wilderness the luckier you are. ☺



## Senator Reid on NPS Centennial and Nevada lands

As the retiring senior senator from Nevada, whose efforts have been instrumental in making Nevada the state that has garnered more new wilderness *in this century* than all other states put together, Harry Reid made a statement on the National Park Service centennial that is worth quoting:

In Senator Reid's words:

"On August 25, 1916, President Woodrow Wilson signed legislation creating the National Park Service in order to protect both our breathtaking natural lands and the places that exemplify our American experience. These are places that have inspired women, men and children for generations.

For a century, the Park Service has given millions of people across the country and around the world the opportunity to revel in America's historic beauty and heritage. Today, the National Park Service manages over 400 national parks, monuments, historic sites, battlefields and memorials. Their vital work ...has supported thousands of jobs and pumped billions into local economies. In fact, for every \$1 we invest in our national parks, our economy sees \$10 in return.

The centennial of the NPS gives us all the chance to celebrate Nevada's public treasures. Nevada's National Park lands and historic trails showcase the very best of our state's beauty. Our landscapes have enriched the lives of all Nevadans and have created new economic opportunities.

Like our 26th President, Theodore Roosevelt, I understand how valuable our national lands are to our national character. ...Inspired by his work and our nation's proud tradition of conservation, I have sought over the past quarter century to continue on the important work of protecting our public lands.

One of the first major pieces of legislation I authored in Congress was the law creating Great Basin National Park in 1986 – Nevada's first national park. I am pleased that this beautiful part of Nevada, with its dramatic mountain ranges, the country's southernmost glacier and the rare, ancient bristlecone pine forests, is getting the national recognition it deserves." [see article next page.]

"I also led the charge for the creation of the Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument, which spans 22,650-acres in Southern Nevada. Designating this area as a national monument has conserved, protected and enhanced this unique and nationally important resource along with the many

more prehistoric [fossil] treasures that will be found in the decades to come.

And many may not know this, but our very own Lake Mead National Recreation Area, stretching from southeastern Nevada to northwestern Arizona, is the fifth most visited site in the National Park System. Within Lake Mead, the National Park Service has also designated the Black Canyon Water Trail, one of the only designated national trails for canoeing, kayaking and boating in the west.

As our nation celebrate[s] the centennial of the National Park Service, we must recommit to our role in bolstering environmental stewardship and protecting our public lands so every American can experience the magnificence of our national parks and monuments for centuries to come. I encourage all Nevadans to visit our National Parks in the coming days with family and friends." ~

(from a press release dated Aug. 25, 2016, by Senator Harry Reid); sent to WOW by Mother of Nevada wilderness Marge Sill.)

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## President Obama on America's parks: why he traveled to Yosemite

In early June President Barack Obama--on the eve of a first-ever trip he and the First Lady were undertaking to Yosemite National Park and Carlsbad Caverns National Park, made this pronouncement::

"National parks are an American invention. They are treasures in our national inheritance -- millions of acres of public lands and waterways -- that one generation passes on to the next. These beautiful spaces offer adventures for our children, essential protection for our wildlife, and support for local economies.

Yet, we aren't entitled to them. Our public lands need our protection -- they need our dedication to their upkeep and our commitment to their expansion. And it falls on the shoulders of each new generation to carry on this stunning inheritance, because even though our national parks are vital to our future, the consequences of climate change are becoming more evident every day."

Promoting awareness of our national parks and the challenges they face--that's why the First Family traveled to Carlsbad Caverns and Yosemite National Parks in June.

That is also why he launched "Every Kid in a Park" this Centennial Year, which gives fourth graders and their families

free access to national parks around the country. ~

photo: Doug Harnsberger



The new plaque in Muir Memorial Shelter honors its historic status and features bas-reliefs of Muir and Colby

## 40th for FLPMA-- The BLM "Organic" Act

-- by Dennis Ghiglieri

In the summer of 1976, I was in Washington D.C. for an environmental workshop learning how to lobby for wilderness and parks and wildlife along with many of my fellow conservationists from across the country. While there we met with Congressional Staff and Congress members to lobby for wilderness and parks and wildlife – essentially all ways to protect parts of the public domain for future generations.

Jimmy Carter was running for President against President Gerald Ford. And a landmark piece of legislation was before the Congress that summer called the **Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA)**. Excitement over FLPMA was high that summer because it would establish for the first time that the public lands were to be retained and managed to assert their value.

We had very high hopes for FLPMA because important environmental legislation had been enacted in 1970 under President Nixon establishing the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Clean Air Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

FLPMA [say Flip-Ma], as it is now referred to, for the first time created the authority that establishes how the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) carries out its management responsibilities throughout the United States on 240 million acres of public land (about 4.1 percent of the land area of the entire

country today.) As today, some within the ranching and mining and commodity industries opposed FLPMA and lobbied President Ford especially hard to oppose the legislation. However, Congress passed FLPMA on October 1, 1976, and President Gerald Ford signed it on October 21, 1976.

While there are those in the ranching and mining industries who continue to advocate for disposal of the public land, widespread public



photo: Howard Booth

Wild BLM lands needed FLPMA's mandate to become wilderness

support remains for continued Federal management of the wide open spaces of the public domain.

FLPMA gave the BLM authority to conduct wilderness studies and

wilderness management on its roadless lands and create Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs).

As FLPMA says "...the public lands be managed in a manner that will protect the scientific, scenic, historical, ecological, environmental, atmospheric, water resource, and archeological values; that, where appropriate, will preserve and protect certain public lands in their natural condition;...will provide food and habitat for fish and wildlife...; and provide for outdoor recreation and human occupancy and use..."

The public lands are every American's heritage, and FLPMA is essential to keeping the public lands public. ♪ (This article appeared first in *Toiyabe Trails*)

### What is meant by "Organic Act":

FLPMA is called the BLM Organic Act because it consolidated and articulated BLM's management responsibilities. FLPMA established, amended, or repealed many land and resource management authorities, including provisions on Federal land withdrawals, land acquisitions and exchanges, rights-of-way, advisory groups, range management, and the general organization and administration of BLM and the public lands. FLPMA established BLM as a multiple-use agency. <http://www.blm.gov/flpma/organic>.

(Dennis Ghiglieri, of Reno, is Toiyabe Chapter conservation chair)

## Great Basin National Park -- the 30th

-- by Roberta Moore

Visiting Eureka, Nevada in October, 1878, John Muir wrote, "The height of the timber-line in eastern Nevada, near the middle of the Great Basin, is about eleven thousand feet above sea level; consequently the forests, a dwarfed, storm-beaten condition, pass over the summits of every range in the State. Only three mountains in the State have as yet come under my observation whose summits rise distinctly above the tree line. These are Wheeler's Peak, 12,300 feet high, Mount Moriah, about 12 thousand feet, and Granite Mountain, about the same, all of which are situated near the boundary line between Nevada and Utah Territory." (*Steep Trails*, Chapter 13, *Nevada's Forests*)

Little did he know that seven years later Absalom Lehman would discover "a cave of wondrous beauty" in this very landscape. This discovery led to the designation of Lehman Caves National Monument in 1922 managed by the USFS until 1933 when the monument was placed under the NPS.

On another October day, 108 years later, Great Basin National Park was established in 1986, including the original monument, as the nation's 49th and Nevada's only national park.

As we celebrate Great Basin National Park's 30th birthday on October 27, let's also celebrate visionaries like our own Marge Sill who championed this cause and with her dedication helped to create another incredible piece of "America's Best Idea". As she enters her 93rd year, "the Mother of all Nevada Wilderness" holds title to protecting Nevada's and our nation's wild places for well over half her life time.

On October 27, drink a toast to Nevada's crown jewel, Great Basin National Park. Let's also raise our glasses and remember John Muir and Marge Sill, heroes of preserving our natural lands.

Great Basin NP plans a celebration for the park's 30th birthday, but plans have not yet been finalized. For information, visit <https://www.nps.gov/grba> ♪

(Retired from NPS, Roberta Moore lives in Baker, Nevada, with her husband David, next to a 431-acre bird and wildlife sanctuary that the Moores donated to the Nevada Land Trust. Roberta, with Scott Slovic, edited *Wild Nevada: Testimonies on Behalf of the Desert*.)



# New Wilderness proposed for two counties in northwest Nevada

-- by Shevawn Von Tobel

New wilderness for northwestern Nevada – in both Washoe and Pershing Counties - might just be a reality by the end of the year!

With a population of fewer than 7,000 people, Pershing County, just northwest of Reno and directly south of Winnemucca, boasts an incredible amount of rugged and remote mountain ranges and wild places that can delight an explorer. After initiating a series of stakeholder meetings, gathering public input, redrawing maps, and attending public open houses, Senators Dean Heller and Harry Reid introduced the *Pershing County Economic Development and Conservation Act* this summer.

If passed, the bill would designate seven key wilderness areas across Pershing County: **Cain Mountain, Tobin Crest, Bluewing, Fencemaker, Selenite Peak, Mt. Limbo, and North Sahwave**, totaling 136,072 acres. Many of these areas are Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) or Lands with Wilderness Characteristics – all managed by the Bureau of Land Management. Designating these places as wilderness would permanently resolve the WSA issue in the county. The wilderness designations will protect a critical wildlife and landscape corridor that assures habitat and genetic diversity for the wildlife of this region, especially for the greater sage-grouse, while also protecting our outdoor recreation heritage and Pershing County's picturesque and rugged landscapes.

Sierra Club activists have expressed concerns over some provisions in the bill, apart from wilderness.

Also in the works is a public lands bill for northern Nevada's **Washoe County**, a wild region stretching from

north of Pyramid Lake to the Oregon border. Friends of Nevada Wilderness is optimistic a bill will get introduced by the end of fall to protect this rich volcanic legacy of sweeping vistas, expansive sagebrush seas, and thriving populations of pronghorn, mule deer, bighorn sheep, and greater sage-grouse. This public lands bill would protect key sagebrush habitat throughout northern Washoe County and designate the **Poodle Mountain, Fox Range, Granite-Banjo, Macy, Buffalo Hills, Massacre Rim, and Wall Canyon** Wilderness areas, totaling 494,793 acres of wilderness, managed by the Bureau of Land Management. All of these except for the Granite Range are currently Wilderness Study Areas – designating them as wilderness would forever resolve longstanding management concerns in the county. Sierra Club wilderness field trips have visited many of these areas. Friends of Nevada Wilderness believes this proposal will sustain our high quality of life in the greater Reno-Sparks region and will bring lasting benefits for our economic and development needs, sustain our outdoor recreational pursuits, and provide key conservation measures.

## Gold Butte protection anticipated

The two county proposals are not all for the wilds of Nevada... our push to gain permanent protection for Gold Butte is progressing well. In early August, Gold Butte Congressional champions Sen. Reid and Rep. Dina Titus (D-NV1) rolled out the second damage report prepared by Friends of Gold Butte, a detailed account of all new instances of environmental damage found throughout the Gold Butte area. The Senate Minority Leader, along with Rep. Titus; William Anderson, former chairman of the Moapa Band of Paiutes; and representatives from the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority and the Nevada Resort Association, held a press conference in Las Vegas to



photo: Brian Beffort

Wide open expanses in northwest Nevada's Washoe County need protection in the Buffalo Hills WSA

announce the release of the report. At the event, Sen. Reid was optimistic that a Gold Butte National Monument would "happen before the end of the year."

Shortly thereafter, President Obama made an appearance and speech at the annual Lake Tahoe Summit, a yearly gathering of federal, state, and local leaders dedicated to the goal of restoring and sustaining Lake Tahoe. Friends of Nevada Wilderness was at the event to give away hundreds of golden "Protect Gold Butte" sunglasses to flood the arena with gold and also received petition signatures from the crowd to send to the President, urging him to designate the Monument this year.

And now Friends of Nevada Wilderness and Sierra Club are fighting the most recent attack on Nevada public lands--the Air Force is looking to take over ownership of the majority of the **Desert National Wildlife Refuge**, which would close it to the public and not allow the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to continue to manage the huge area for the benefit of wildlife populations.

**You have an opportunity NOW to have your voice heard.** The Air Force wants **your comment**, and we urge you to ask for **Alternative 1** which maintains the status quo. Better yet, attend the public meeting on **October 20<sup>th</sup>** in North Las Vegas. The Air Force and U.S. FWS have been sharing use of the Refuge for the last 50 years - let's keep it the same, so we can continue to visit and keep this Refuge for wildlife. **Visit [www.nevadawilderness.org/dnwr](http://www.nevadawilderness.org/dnwr) for info on how to comment and the upcoming public meetings.** ☞

For information, visit [www.nevadawilderness.org/takeaction](http://www.nevadawilderness.org/takeaction) or call our office at (775)324-7667. (Shevawn Von Tobel is communications and outreach director for Friends of Nevada Wilderness.)



photo: Kurt Kuznicki

Desert bighorn thrive in Desert National Wildlife Refuge--largest national wildlife refuge in the Lower 48 [wildlife](http://www.wildlife.org)

## Remembering Jerry Connor

-- by John Hankins

**J**erry Connor, of Santa Maria, California, passed away on April 4 causing a downpour of sadness for this local Sierra Club legend. He was one of a handful of long-time activists in the Los Padres Chapter's Arguello Group. Often he'd be surrounded by a hundred or more oil workers during hearings. But he found a niche, such as serving on the Vanderberg Air Force Base environmental committee, leading outings, and organizing public programs.

Equally by his side was his wife Doris, and they shared a love of the outdoors. Los Padres Chapter members are figuring out the best way to honor a man who spent at least 40 years in the Arguello Group, creating programs, outings, clean-ups and so much more.



Secretary of Interior Sally Jewell (2nd in the line) hikes at Whitewater Preserve. She's followed by Joan Taylor



photo: John Hankins

A memorial service was held April 30 at the Gloria Dei Lutheran church, in Santa Maria.

"He's been the backbone of our Arguello Group for at least 20 years," said Connie Geiger, the group's perennial secretary with Jerry as Chair, both of whom organized the outings.

And what a hiker, every week he'd go out. He was also a "great weatherman," which he practiced in the military, and was relied upon for the hike forecasts. Some other comments:

**Rosemary Holmes:** "It is hard to have a Sierra Club meeting, not hear his positive contributions and see his smile."

**Fran Farina:** "It won't be the same without his active participation."

**Jim Hines:** "I am filled with sadness, but take comfort in knowing that Jerry is leading hikes in a special place now. A great man who worked for years on issues in north SB county and his outings were enjoyed by so many."

**David Gold:** "The ever-vigorous

## Monumental Celebration: A dazzling California Desert day

-- by Joan Taylor

**O**n a clear Spring day at the Whitewater Preserve, hundreds celebrated California's new 2016 National Monuments, namely: Mojave Trails, Sand to Snow, and Castle Mountains. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell led a throng along several miles of the Pacific Crest Trail in Whitewater Canyon, and expressed great joy at the thought that these special areas are now protected for all time.

Creation of these new National Conservation Lands units has indeed been a multi-generational, multi-cultural effort. It all started with an unprecedented gift of land from The Wildlands Conservancy to the American public. Senator Dianne Feinstein had joined forces by providing critical support at a critical time. At the beginning, the idea of a National Monument stretching from Joshua Tree

and engaged Jerry Connor hiked and attended meetings until nearly the end. An amazing and admirable person. The Sierra Club, Los Padres Chapter and Arguello Group owe him an enormous debt."

**Mike Stubblefield:** "How much we respected Jerry's boundless energy and enthusiasm that belied his actual age."

**Vicky Hoover:** "At many regional wilderness committee meetings over the years, Jerry was there with us to represent the Los Padres Chapter." ~

*(John Hankins is editor of the Condor Call, the Los Padres Chapter newsletter.*

National Park to Mojave National Preserve and connecting several isolated Wilderness areas seemed audacious. In 2004 Sierra Club's own Elden Hughes made sure the Club was the first national organization to endorse this idea, which eventually caught fire, inspiring not only other organizations, but most importantly involving regional youth and underserved communities in a public-driven effort. What started as an audacious idea ultimately became reality in the 1.6 million acre Mojave Trails National Monument. (See WOW, Apr 2016, Dec. 2015)

Given the enormous pressures to industrialize the California desert, these three new Monuments were designated none too soon. Their designation ensures the irreplaceable cultural, scenic and biological resources of these areas are preserved to serve the great public appetite to experience California's last vast wild places intact – an appetite which will surely do nothing but grow in our ever-shrinking world.

Secretary Jewell, California Secretary of Resources John Laird, and many others who care deeply about the California desert came together to celebrate a remarkable accomplishment and to express their sincere thanks to President Obama for protecting these special desert areas for all generations to come. ~



# Planning for San Gabriel Mountains National Monument

Comment by October 17

-- by Roberto Morales

Two years ago President Barack Obama proclaimed almost half of the 700,000 acres of the Angeles National Forest as a National Monument; such a protective designation made sure there would be no further mineral extraction in that area and mandated the creation of a separate management plan for the new Monument within three years from the date of the proclamation. (See WOW, Dec 2014, Dec 2015.)

The designation of part of the San Gabriel Mountains into a National Monument was especially important to the Obama administration because of close proximity of these mountains to one of the largest cities in the country. The Angeles Forest, and now the San Gabriel Mountain National Monument, sit directly at the northern edge of the vast city of Los Angeles.

While the president recognized the value of protecting the mountains and rivers for conservation, he also pointed to the need for greater and equal access to low income communities of color which very often lack adequate green spaces near home -- especially in Los Angeles.

"We heard from the community, that for a lot of urban families, this is their only big outdoor space. Too many children in L.A. County, especially children of color, don't have access to parks where they can run free, breathe fresh air, experience nature, and learn about their environment," as President

Obama emphasized in designating the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument.

"This is an issue of social justice. Because it's not enough to have this awesome natural wonder within your sight -- you have to be able to access it," the President said.

## Progress on management planning

We are approaching the final steps towards preparation of the management plan for the monument. Previously, the US Forest Service had one round of public meetings to provide community input. Sierra Club members provided more than one third of all comments, which led directly to progressive elements being included in the plan.

The second and final round of management plan drafting began August 17 with the release of the final three chapters of the Plan's Environmental Assessment. It offers a solid starting point from which to develop an ambitious vision for our new San Gabriel Mountains National Monument.

The transportation section of the plan is worthy of praise. The Forest Service is listening to the needs of the community. Still, the final plan should include more clearly defined objectives and set a pro-active tone to establish more connections to the Monument through public and alternative transportation.

In other plan elements, the agency fails to present clear objectives for providing an outstanding visitor experience and specific actions to protect fully the features the Monument was established to protect.

Although the plan offers some reasonable "desired conditions," it makes no specific commitment to the million-plus people who visit the monument each year as to how it will achieve those conditions. The Forest Service can do better. We are calling on the agency to set clear objectives and lay

out definite management actions that it will undertake to improve the visitor experience and provide outstanding visitor services and recreational opportunities.

The public comments period for the National Monument will run until October 17, and everyone including non Los Angeles residents can submit a comment directly to the Forest Service through this [link](https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/CommentInput?Project=46964). <https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/CommentInput?Project=46964>

Individual comments are extremely important; and will help determine the way that the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument will be managed for the next 20 years. Please help today by commenting to the agency and including some of the points above. ↗

(Roberto Morales is Community Organizer with the San Gabriel Mountains Forever Campaign in Los Angeles, (213) 387-6528 x213; (818) 400-6340.

## Vallejo -- Wild in the City— Visions of the Wild

The third annual Visions of the Wild Festival will take place September 15-18 in downtown Vallejo--just north of the S.F. Bay Area. First held in 2014 to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the signing of the Wilderness Act, the festival has continued as a collaborative effort among the US Forest Service (whose Region 5 headquarters are in Vallejo), the Vallejo arts community, the City of Vallejo, and various regional agencies, organizations, and non-profit groups.

The theme this year is "Wild in the City," emphasizing the connections between our urban environments and the wildlife that can be found there. Events include art exhibitions, films, Coastal Cleanup Day, and more. All events are free, except for two boat tours up the Napa River and up Carquinez Straits. (The latter sold out quickly.)

Full scheduling details may be found on the [Events Page](#), while general information may be found at the [Festival Website](#). ↗

(from Mike Painter, CaluWild)



Roberto leads visitors in San Gabriel Mts National Mounment

# Yosemite Wilderness planning--Preliminary Concepts: September 2016

The National Park Service seeks your input on a series of concepts and ideas that will address some complex issues facing the Yosemite Wilderness.

Yosemite National Park initiated the Wilderness Stewardship Plan (WSP) in November 2015. At that time, the public had the opportunity to provide general comments and to voice concerns regarding the Wilderness. The Park Service posed two questions for the public to consider: What do you value about the way in which the National Park Service currently manages the Yosemite Wilderness?; and What are the most important issues facing the Yosemite Wilderness today, and how should they be addressed?

*(Most of this article is based on agency website information and follows WOW's initial April 2016 piece on Yosemite wilderness planning.)*

After reviewing the comments received from the public, the park service has produced preliminary concepts related to the two most complex topics identified as having substantive effects on wilderness and wilderness management (visitor use and capacity and stock use). They hope to direct the conversation towards productive management solutions.

The Park Service will use your feedback to help further refine the preliminary concepts and ideas, which will be presented in the Draft WSP for public review during the summer of 2017. *Comment Period closes: 09/30/2016.*

The following are four different concepts designed to manage visitor use. Each affects the user and the environment differently. When reviewing, consider which concept might work best for you. Each may have different impacts on topics backpackers care about -- Freedom of choice where to camp and travel; Ease of obtaining a Wilderness Permit; Dispersal of visitors throughout Wilderness; Ability to balance use with Wilderness Capacity.

## Concept One: Revised Trailhead Quota Approach

1. Yosemite National Park would

continue to utilize the trailhead quota system for all wilderness recreation.

2. To respond to current use patterns and to ensure capacities of travel zones are not exceeded, the number of permits offered for trailheads used to access high-use zones would be substantially reduced. The result would be that fewer people could access the zone, and the high-use areas within it would see a corresponding reduction in visitor density.

3. Once backcountry permit holders enter the wilderness, they could travel where they wish.

## Concept Two: Destination Quota Approach

1. Yosemite National Park would continue to utilize the trailhead quota system for all wilderness recreation.

2. Current trailhead quotas would be retained; however, visitors wishing to camp at high-use destinations would be required to obtain an additional "camping" permit. The result would be that the same number of people could access the zone, but there would be direct control over the number of people who could camp at high-use destinations.

3. Users not camping at one of these high use popular destinations would be able to camp wherever they wish.

4. Once backcountry permit holders enter the wilderness, they would be free to travel where they wish.



## Concept Three: Zone Quota Approach

1. Yosemite National Park would replace the trailhead quota system for all wilderness recreation with a zone-based system to acquire tighter control over numbers and densities of use.

2. This system would require all permit holders to reserve specific zones for each night of their wilderness trip.

3. Users would be free to start their trip from any trailhead, and once they are in their reserved zone, they would be able to camp wherever they wish.

4. Under this concept, current Yosemite Wilderness zone boundaries would remain the same or could be redrawn to accommodate future changes in use patterns. Backcountry permit holders can originate anywhere.

## Concept Four: Designated Campsite Approach

1. Yosemite National Park would replace the trailhead quota system for all wilderness recreation with a zone-based system to acquire tighter control over numbers and densities of use.

2. This system would require all permit holders to reserve a specific zone for each night of their wilderness trip.

3. Users would be free to start their trip from any trailhead.

4. For low-to moderate-use zones, users would be free to camp wherever they wish once they reached their reserved zone. For high-use zones, such as the Sunrise Creek zone, users would be required to camp only at a first-come/first-serve designated campsite.

5. Under this concept, current Yosemite Wilderness zone boundaries would remain the same or could be redrawn if future use patterns change.

Comment as you wish; here is one consideration (from WOW editor): The division of park wilderness into "zones" is a flawed and troubling concept. The zone idea has become popular with park planners ensconced in a regional office far from wilderness. It may make managing visitor use easier for administrators, but it sure is deadly for a perception of untrammelled wilderness by wilderness users. *Wilderness is wilderness -- don't let the agency chop it up into separate "zones".* In the recent Sequoia/Kings Canyon wilderness plan, we did convince the NPS to toss out the "zone" concept--Yosemite should do no less. Zones give too much leeway to allow less appropriate uses in some places. Let the agency determine specific high-impact places/destinations and regulate use there on a site-specific basis -- they do not need to blanket the entire wilderness with 'zones' to do that. ♪





# Outings



**Support wilderness the Sierra Club way!**

*--May your trails be crooked, winding, lonesome, dangerous, leading to the most amazing view. May your mountains rise into and above the clouds. -- Edward Abbey (from Range of Light Group newsletter)*

## September 23 – 25 -- Fri-Sun

### Black Rock Desert

Join us for **National Public Lands Day** in helping in this beautiful and remote desert about 100 miles north of Reno. Plans are for a work project of some sort; and we usually include a day of work and day of play. More information by mid-September. Great Basin Group Leader: David Book (775)843-6443.

## October 15 – 19 -- Sat-Wed

### Panamint City Backpack & Cabin Assessment

Assist NPS volunteer Birgitta Jansen in assessing the state of backcountry cabins in Death Valley NP. Meet Sat evening at Chris Wick camp and backpack up Surprise Canyon to Panamint City on Sun. Mon and Tues, work with Birgitta on assessing the condition of the cabins. If we finish early, there will be time for exploring this interesting historical area. Not a beginning backpack. Water in the canyon may require a hike to get it and must be filtered before drinking. Be prepared to carry all food and equipment needed for the trip, as well as some of tools we will use. Group size limited. Contact Desert Comm. leader Kate Allen, kj.allen96@gmail.com, (661)944-4056.

## October 22 – 23 -- Sat-Sun

### Ghost Town Extravaganza

Celebrate Halloween by visiting the ghosts of California's colorful past in the eerie desert landscape near Death Valley. Camp near historic ghost town of Ballarat. Sat, a challenging hike to ghost town Lookout City with historian Hal Fowler who will regale us with tales of this wild west town. Return to camp for Happy Hour, potluck followed by a midnight visit to Ballarat's graveyard. Sun, tour Ballarat itself before heading home. Send \$8 per person (check payable to Lygeia Gerard), home and work phones, email address and rideshare preferences to Mojave Group Leader: Lygeia Gerard, P.O. Box 721039, Pinon Hills, CA

92372, (760)868-2179. (Assisted by Marguerite McGuigan)

## Memorial Day Service trip to Weepah Springs Wilderness

Where IS the Weepah Springs Wilderness? This little-known wilderness area in south/central/eastern Nevada is at the northern edge of the new Basin & Range National Monument—designated by President Obama in July 2015, just over one year ago. Knowing we Sierra Club wilderness advocates sought to further our acquaintance with the new national monument, Ely BLM District wilderness ranger John Miller – with whom our committee has worked now for eight years on service trips – chose Weepah Springs as an outing site -- to get a useful job done for wilderness AND allow some sightseeing in the immediately adjoining national monument. (Last Thanksgiving, Toiyabe Chapter chair David Von Seggern had also led an exploratory



photo: Wicky Hoover

Weepah Wilderness workers pose by the barrier they just built

outing into the new national monument. --See WOW, Dec 2015.)

On Saturday, from our camp at the edge of wilderness we put up a sturdy barrier to keep vehicles out of the Weepah Springs wilderness along a faint cherry-stemmed route that had led into the now protected area.

On Sunday we enjoyed a driving and walking tour through Coal Valley in the new monument, where BLM's Monument Manager, Alicia Stiles, and her family, joined us for a walk to the summit of what we called "Heizer Hill"—from which we looked down into the ranch of landscape artist Michael Heizer—whose massive concrete construction "City" helped lead Senator Harry Reid to urge presidential protection for the huge area that now comprises two major valleys and several mountain ranges in south/central Nevada. "City" is not now open for public viewing.

A visit to this remote area made a fine destination for Memorial Day; the area is far from any major communities; Tonopah is more than 100 miles to the west; Ely 100 miles to the north. Alamo offers the nearest gas station and store, but, truly, it can hardly be called "near." Trip videographer Par Rasmusson posted a work-party video on YouTube: [https://youtu.be/4\\_Qv2cYmAqk](https://youtu.be/4_Qv2cYmAqk).



A Weepah Springs Wilderness walk

## Speaking for the Trees: The New Urban and Community Forestry

## Get Our Children Outside to Engage with Nature

-- by Ben Fogle from The Guardian

Children & Nature Network



**To be a tree in the city is very hard.** A tree that would live 80 years in the forest has a life expectancy of 20 years in the suburbs, and less than that in an urban setting where trees are often planted in sidewalk cutouts. Let's face it; even if a tree gets planted correctly and watered, it faces a host of other environmental and human challenges ranging from storms, insects, air pollution, and low-quality soil to road salt and reckless drivers. And vandalism.

Thanks to the National Urban and Community Advisory Council (NUCFAC) and their newly released 10-year Urban and Community Forestry Action Plan, there is a clear outline of all the reasons we should nurture our urban trees. I recently spoke with Liam Kavanagh, NUCFAC's Plan Chair and New York City's First Deputy Commissioner for the Department of Parks and Recreation, about the plan's goals.

What are the accomplishments from the last plan? The good news is that we grew urban forestry plans and advocates by huge numbers. The number of communities with urban forestry plans rose by 70%; the majority of states now have urban forestry plans, and community tree policies and ordinances have increased by 58%.

Even with the jump in new plans, fewer than half of Americans live in communities with programs to plant and maintain their urban forest.

-- CityParks Blog - September 2, 2016 | by Kathy Blaha | In the News 

*From the Children and Nature Network* – a sister organization with which Sierra Club Chapters often work closely; see <http://www.childrenandnature.org/>

Government plans to [introduce national tests for seven-year-olds](#) shows just how far our exam obsession has come. Our kids now face constant assessment as politicians attempt to measure the success of schools. Children have become tiny cogs in a box-ticking government machine.

Let's be honest, some people are better suited to exams than others in the same way that some are more sporty or arty. Exams left me feeling worthless and lost.

The wilderness rescued me. I have been shaped by my experiences in the great outdoors. Feeling comfortable in the wild gave me the confidence to be who I am, not who others want me to be. There is a natural simplicity to nature; it is far more tactile and tangible than the classroom. It's a leveller; it strengthened my character and set me back on track.

We need to bring positivity, health and wellbeing back into our schools. **It's time to turn classrooms inside out**


That's why, instead of pumping time and money into exams, we should focus on wellbeing and encouraging our children to connect with the natural world. I'm not suggesting the abolition of exams, but we could certainly cut back to allow more time for children to explore the world around them.

It doesn't need a huge investment either. Part of the beauty of wilderness schooling is that the overheads are very low. You want a classroom? Build a shelter from nature's store. You want to eat? Forage for it.

And evidence shows connecting with nature really works. Free play in the outdoors is good for social and emotional development, improves self-awareness, and makes children more co-operative. A study by the [American Medical Association](#) in 2005 concluded that: ["Children will be smarter, better able to get along with others, healthier and happier when they have regular opportunities for free and unstructured play in the out-of-doors."](#) There is also scientific evidence that the wilderness can reduce [hyperactivity and has a soothing effect on children](#), especially those suffering from attention deficit disorder.

The Scandinavians have led the way in this field for many years, not only ensuring class time in the wilderness, but also replacing teaching by subjects with topics. Wilderness schooling involves a similar approach of non-conformist team work, with kids expected to work together in nature. No longer do they sit in rows while their teachers lecture, lessons are now collaborative. The system is geared towards improving communication, confidence, character and resilience rather than pushing kids through exam factories.

Our once progressive and world-class education system now seems to have ground to a halt. Why are we still relying on cramming information to be regurgitated in exams?

Let the outdoors be a weekly topic – encompassing geography, environment, resourcefulness, home economics, science, and maths – undertaken outside. 

<https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2015/dec/17/>

-- sent to WOW by Cassie Barr, S.F. Bay Chapter, environmental education coordinator.



# Congress considers Wildland related bills

## House passes Joaquin Rocks Wilderness, mine cleanup fund

In early July, shortly before heading out for their expanded summer recess, the House of Representatives passed more than half a dozen public lands bills, including legislation that would establish a nonprofit to help the Bureau of Land Management clean up thousands of abandoned mine sites nationwide. Sponsor Rep. Jody Hice (R-GA10) praised the bipartisanship that went into H.R. 3844, the mine cleanup bill. Rep. Alan Lowenthal (D-CA47), mine bill co-sponsor and ranking member of the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources, called the legislation to establish a Bureau of Land Management Foundation “long overdue.”

The nonprofit organization would solicit and take in donations to address intractable BLM projects, including wild horses and abandoned mines. BLM Director Neil Kornze supports creation of the foundation.

### Joaquin Rocks Wilderness

The House also passed H.R. 1838, which would reopen the 75,000-acre Clear Creek Management Area that was closed by BLM over concerns about asbestos exposure in the former mining area (E&E Daily, Dec. 10, 2015). Congressman Sam Farr (D-CA20) the sponsor, said the bill does not expose the public to any danger so long as people are aware of the risks, much like rock

climbers who scale peaks in national parks.

Although not publicized in the news bulletins, Rep. Farr’s bill —



On a 2006 field trip to Joaquin Rocks

the Clear Creek National Recreation Area and Conservation Act, also includes a 21,000-acre Joaquin Rocks wilderness which Sierra Club activists in California have helped to design, as the result of numerous wilderness committee field trips to the BLM-managed area in the central Diablo Range – the inner coastal range. The dramatic, vertical Joaquin Rocks (named for the elusive, mythical outlaw Joaquin Murietta) are visible from Interstate 5 near Coalinga. While Sierra Club strongly supports the proposed wilderness, the off-road-vehicle recreation emphasis in the bill makes it impossible for us to support the legislation as a whole.

—In part, from Environment and Energy News, July 6, 2016

### Ocean Protection sought in new House bill

Southern co-chair of the California/Nevada Wilderness Committee, Jim Hines of Ventura, CA, updated the Los Padres Chapter on a new bill in Congress. But, because this ocean protection bill is unlikely to pass, he stated: “We are working with the Obama Administration to get national marine monuments designated.

This is a entirely new type of marine protection. And right here off the coast of Santa Barbara county we have the chance to have two marine national monuments designated.

The designation would be for two areas known as Sea Mounts, these are areas under the ocean’s surface which are ancient volcanoes and submerged islands: one is known as the **Rodriguez Sea Mount**, located about 40 miles west of San Miguel Island and the other is **San Juan Sea Mount** located about 50 miles west of Santa Cruz Island.”

Congressmen Sam Farr (D-CA20 Monterey) and Ted Lieu (D-CA33 Santa Monica) have introduced legislation in Congress (HR 5797) to make these designations along with several others in the Pacific Ocean.”

Introduced in July, HR 5797 is entitled the “California Seamounts and Ridges National Marine Conservation Area Designation and Management Act.” The text of the bill is descriptive:

The California Seamounts and Ridges National Marine Conservation Area established by this Act contains a series of ancient volcanos and underwater geological features in the Exclusive Economic Zone. Found on the seamounts, ridges, and banks in the Conservation Area are rare deep-water corals, sponges, anemones, tunas, sharks, seabirds, marine mammals (including orcas, sperm whales, and blue whales), endangered sea turtles, octopuses, and diverse fish populations, some of which are endemic to the area.

The only hydrothermal vents in the continental Exclusive Economic Zone are found on Gorda Ridge located off the north coast of California and the south coast of Oregon. These areas’ remote location and depth contribute to their remarkably pristine condition, limited human footprint, and reputation as a vital frontier for scientific discovery, with research expeditions continuing to yield new and rare species, greater understanding about ecological relationships, and renewed appreciation of the uniqueness of deep-sea ecosystems.

Despite currently limited direct pressure from extractive use, the Conservation Area is undergoing rapid change due to warming waters, ocean acidification, and ecological stress from pollution and other sources... According to many scientists, comprehensive marine habitat protection is one of the most important actions for building resilience in ocean environments to ...challenges presented by anthropogenic and other stressors impacting marine ecosystems. The purpose of this Act is to protect, conserve, and enhance for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations the nationally significant values of the California Seamounts and Ridges National Marine Conservation Area.”

Jim Hines commented, “*The plight of our oceans is the most serious global environmental crisis that gets too little attention.* We’re pleased that forward-thinking California legislators are seeking to protect vital ecological elements of our western ocean.”

## Your Yosemite: A Threatened Public Treasure--by Robert ( Bob) Binnewies

-- Reviewed by Gene Rose

The national parks and public lands are under attack yet again. This year's face-off at the Malheur Wildlife should remind the environmental community that the money changers and resource raiders never rest.

This book by Robert Binnewies throws light on past and ongoing efforts to sabotage our parks' preservation mission, as he describes his years as Yosemite Superintendent. For seven years, 1979 until 1986, Robert Binnewies led a valiant effort to draft a master plan for Yosemite National Park. He and his staff went to extremes to secure public input and jump through the hoops of the National Environmental Policy Act. Over 60,000 individuals responded in the largest planning effort ever undertaken by the National Park Service. The resulting 1980 Yosemite General Management Plan was a visionary plan to de-urbanize Yosemite Valley...but it was all for naught.

The park concessionaire, a unit of MCA prevailed upon its close ties with the Reagan White House and torpedoed the plan and preserve its cash cow profits. Reagan's old Hollywood press agent and head of MCA didn't need an appointment to get into the White House. Even NPS

Director William Penn-Mott went along with the conspiracy that saw Binnewies being fired and the GMP confined to the scrap heap.

The cost: Ten years of planning and about \$20 million went down the drain. Profit, politics and the good ole boy network had trumped the NPS mission of protection and preservation

The associated costs: the nation's faith in government planning.

There was no congressional inquiry; the NPS inspector general report abetted the cover-up. No park service official fell on his sword. The press failed its responsibility, There was no public outcry. The sabotage of the Yosemite GMP was a national tragedy.

While the author avoids some of the details that led to his dismissal, his message underscores how money and politics have come to dominate public land issues.

Among other things, he explores the NPS' inability to understand the meaning of "unimpaired," the operative word of the 1917 Organic Act that defined the mission of the NPS. How much growth, development and park visitation are enough?

Binnewies also rails against the park service's failure to write a concessions contract that preserves park

values, instills a measure of competition while protecting the public interest.

Once again, today, America's "Best idea..." the national parks and public lands are under attack from a new generation of resource raiders. Marketing, "branding" and the call for ever more economic development of public lands should be a wakeup call for the environmental community.

Fans of Yosemite history will enjoy the author's review of pre-park historic events, including the pioneering behind the Yosemite Grant of 1864, the nation's first real effort toward wildland protection.

For those dreamers who had looked to the national parks as one place where the dollar does not dominate... dream on. Park, forest, desert protectors ...read on; the money changers are everywhere...even in the high cathedral of Yosemite. ♪

(Editor's note: readers will also enjoy Binnewies' keen reminiscences of varied public interactions during his years as Yosemite Superintendent.)

(Published by White Cloud, 2015 - <http://www.whitecloudpress.com/>).

(Gene Rose, for many years the environmental reporter on the Fresno Bee, is now retired and living in Oakland, California.)

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### FIRST CLASS

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.