

The Environmental Bi-Weekly

High Country News

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America's sacred cow?

Donkey dilemma damages public land

by Miriam A. Romero

In 1971 under the benevolent blanket of a new law, the burro, an introduced species, was given more protection than most native wildlife in the United States. In that year, President Richard Nixon signed into law the Wild Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act.

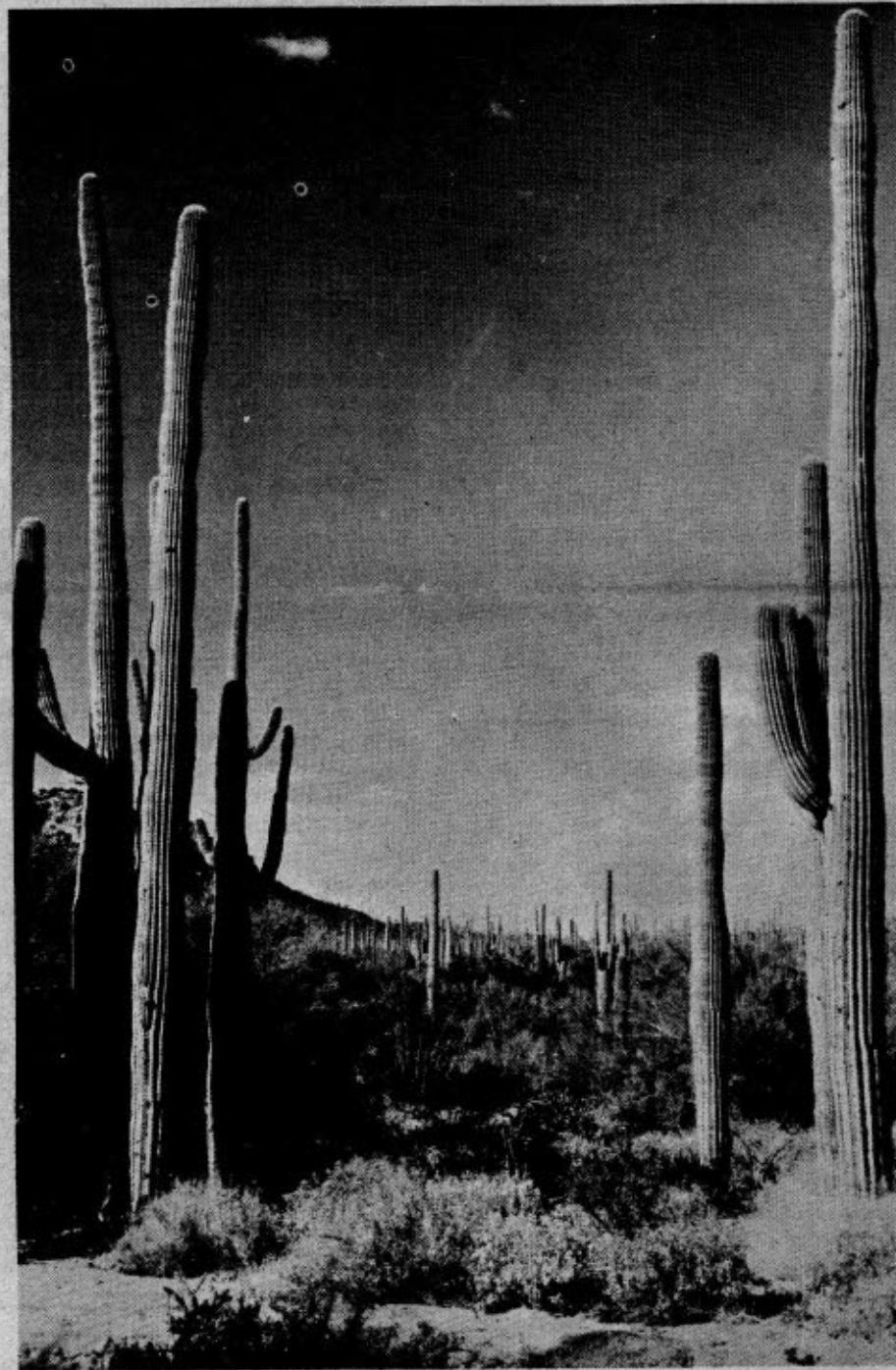
"Congress finds and declares that wild free-roaming horses and burros are living symbols of the historic and pioneer spirit of the West; that they contribute to the diversity of life forms within the nation and enrich the lives of the American people; and that these horses and burros are fast disappearing from the American scene," the bill states. Congress voted that "wild free-roaming horses and burros shall be protected from capture, branding, harassment, or death; and to accomplish this they shall be considered in the area where presently found, as an integral part of the natural system of the public lands."

Thus, for the first time, Congress gave full protection to a non-native species of animal. The burro (or "donkey") is a descendant of the Nubian wild ass of Ethiopia, and was domesticated about 3000 B.C. Only about 200 of the true native wild asses are left today (none in the U.S.), and they are on the endangered species list.

The domesticated and hybridized donkey makes a good beast of burden. Many cultures have utilized the meat and milk for human food (the meat is high in protein) and the animals also make good pets. Today donkeys are found in many countries of the world.

The Spaniards first brought the donkey to the New World in the 16th century. Both whites and the Indians used burros, and the animal was considered to be valuable chattel. Around the turn of the 20th century, prospectors used the donkey as a beast of burden. Replaced with the advent of better roads and mechanized transportation, burros were turned loose on the deserts of the American Southwest. They quickly became wild and adapted to the desert areas remarkably well.

Introduced species of plants and animals such as the house sparrow, starling, water hyacinth, or Russian thistle are commonly regarded as "ecological nightmares."



Saguaro cactus photo copyrighted by Ann and Myron Sutton

Ecologists have called the burro the "starling of the mammal world" because it outcompetes native species for habitat.

The public and Congress now have to face up to the fact that it is high time that they take a hard look at the desert burro

and a hard look at the act protecting it — PL92-195.

A HARD LOOK

The burro is a hardy little creature. It is "cute" and easily tamed and, thus, makes a good pet. Burros occupy a variety of plant communities, in elevations ranging from below sea level to over 11,000 feet. They have a wide ecological niche. They are found in sagebrush, blackbrush, pinyon-juniper, Joshua tree-yucca, pine forest, saguaro cactus, riparian, and creosote bush communities, to name but a few.

The burro is opportunistic and will eat

any food available, including shrubs, forbs, grasses, cacti, and even garbage if there is any around. It is a wasteful eater and at times has been observed pulling the entire plant from the ground, taking a bite or two, then leaving the plant to move on to the next one, consuming a total of 10 pounds of forage per day. Plants are cropped close to the ground. Often it is impossible to identify the plant which the burros have eaten because so little of the plant or shrub remains.

The burro has to drink water at least once a day in the summer and once every three to five days in the winter. Summer range is rarely more than five miles from the water source; in winter the range may be much farther. The burro can lose 30% of its own weight due to dehydration, and can regain this weight in two to five minutes by drinking large amounts of water. In spite of loss of water, its blood volume remains almost constant.

Burros are experts at conserving energy. In 1922 and 1923 a severe drought occurred on the Mojave Desert in California. Cattle losses were 65%, horses nearly 50%, burros — no losses! Burros live where water is at a premium. Depending on the habitat, rainfall can range from one inch to ten inches annually. In much of the burro habitat in the Mojave Desert, the rainfall averages two to four inches annually.

COMPETE WITH BIGHORN

Besides severe impact on vegetation and soils, burros have detrimental effects on native wildlife populations. Surveys conducted since the 1930s have recorded changes in desert bighorn sheep population numbers and distributions. Bighorns and burros compete for forage, water, space, and shade. Burros disturb habitat for rodents by trampling on burrows and reducing forage and seed production. The desert tortoise, an endangered species, also shares some habitat with burros. It is beginning to be apparent that burros will have to be eliminated from areas where they threaten endangered species or species under stress.

Burros have caused severe ecological alteration at desert water sources because they tend to congregate around water holes. Springs are polluted from their urine and feces. This means the water can't be used by hikers and backpackers. Although native wildlife may drink the polluted water, the amount of water available in burro country is reduced. Volume and flow is limited in many of the springs: volume can be measured by gallons per day (not

Last issue we reported that the Supreme Court had opened a door to Western coal development. This issue the Interior Department, apparently in defiance of some members of Congress, pushed it open even wider.

See story, page 7

(Continued on page 4)

HCN Editorial

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Study — key to planning West

As our moorings are cut loose and the region seems to slide more inevitably toward intensive coal development, it's reassuring to see a tool tossed our way that could be used to shape the region's future.

The Yellowstone River Basin Level B study, begun last November, will plan water use for the basin and adjacent coal fields. The temptation would be to write it off as just another study of the overly studied river. But it has the potential for actually allowing the public to dictate the use of water — and, consequently, the extent of coal development in the region.

Since the study area corresponds to the biggest coal deposits in the region, its possible impact is magnified.

The study seems to allow for an unusual degree of public involvement. It begins

with task force meetings in the individual river basins, proceeds through state study teams, and ends with a joint federal-state management team.

Another unusual aspect of the study is that the management team, which makes the final plans on which future federal coal decisions will be based, seems to be a group of people with more than the usual degree of concern with the environment.

The best thing that could happen — from the weary bureaucrat's perspective — would be for no one to attend the meetings. But if the people of the region do attend, and if they, for example, demand an export

policy as the only way to preserve the social and physical environment, then possibly such a policy could result.

It is also possible, of course, that these meetings will be another useless exercise which, despite assurances to the contrary, will be ignored. But for those of us who are concerned, it's worth a try.

The project is sponsored by the Missouri Basin River Commission. Only one meeting has been scheduled in Montana at this time — in Red Lodge on February 4. None have yet been scheduled in North Dakota.

Wyoming held its first meeting in Cody,

and more are scheduled in the next two weeks: Cody — Feb. 3, 9 a.m. Holiday Inn; Thermopolis — Feb. 4, 10 a.m., and Feb. 5, 1 p.m., both at the Holiday Inn; Gillette — Feb. 10, 1 p.m., Sands Motor Lodge; Sheridan — Feb. 11, 10 a.m., and Feb. 12, 8:30 a.m., both at the Sheridan Center Motor Inn.

Study teams have been set up in Wyoming with representatives of environmental groups, Chambers of Commerce, and planners, as well as representatives of federal and state agencies. There is room for everyone to participate, however. For more information, contact Paul Shore in Cody, Wyo., at (307) 587-9280 or Keith Corrigan in Helena, Mont., at (406) 449-2872.

More information will follow in future issues. —MJA

Guest Editorial

LRCC defends Platte County air, water from power plant

by Robert Wigington

About one year ago a small group of ranchers and farmers from Platte County, Wyo., met on a winter evening to discuss their concerns about a coal-fired power plant to be constructed just north of Wheatland, Wyo., by a consortium of power cooperatives called the Missouri Basin Power Project. That night these people

formed the Laramie River Conservation Council (LRCC) and decided to oppose the construction of the 1,500 megawatt plant as presently planned. It was a big step.

The Platte County Task Force set-up by the Missouri Basin Power Project and certain community leaders had accepted the plant as an inevitable circumstance and a

good neighbor. Much of the business community was already banking on the plant being built. For the most part, the plant had an official stamp of approval.

But those who met that night refused to ignore the many unanswered questions about the plant and the threat which the plant posed to the agricultural sector of the area's economy and to its environment.

LRCC now has about 70 members and is one of the most active groups in Wyoming.

These people have been instrumental in defending Wyoming's tough new air pollution standards. When the electric utilities first challenged the proposed sulfur dioxide regulations, LRCC members went to state Environmental Quality Council hearings and said that they were willing to pay the added cost of minimizing air pollution. The state adopted the stringent regulations and was sued by Tri-State Generation and Transmission, a participant in the Missouri Basin Power Project (MBPP).

Last month, LRCC appeared before the Public Service Commission in protest of MBPP's application for a certificate of public necessity and convenience. At the hearing the power consortium claimed that a major portion of the plant's power was required for use in Wyoming. LRCC pointed to the increased price of the plant's projected power consumption in Wyoming. The consortium admitted that the high price of their electricity was not considered in their projections.

LRCC has accomplished much in their short existence, but at no small price. Their

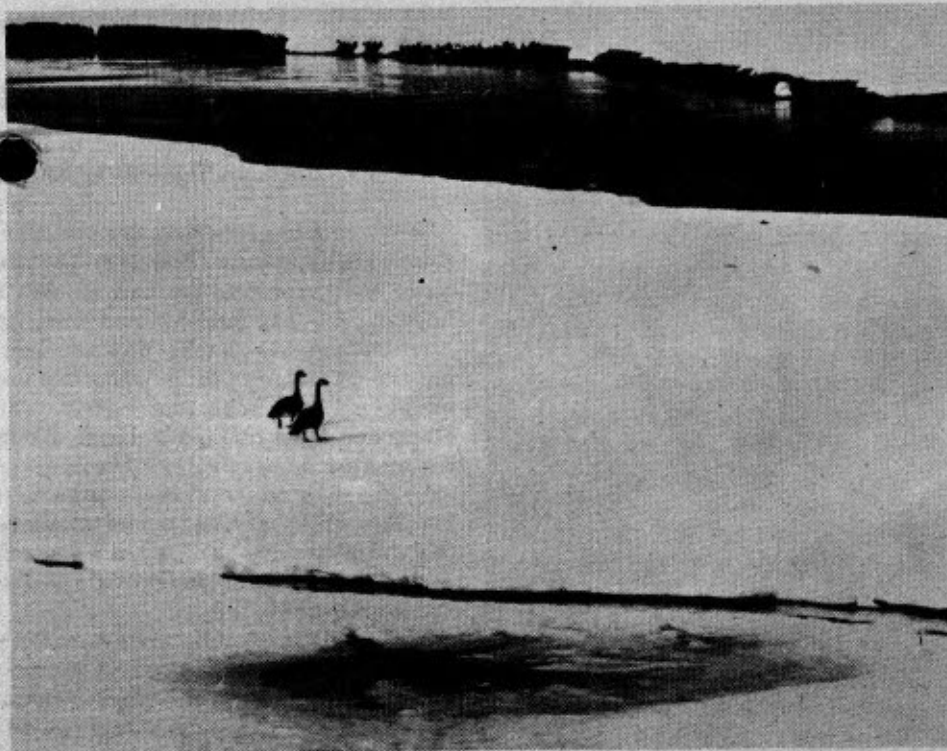
struggle has cost them dearly — sometimes a friend, and more money than they had to spend. And the struggle is not over.

Next month the Wyoming Industrial Siting Council will hear Basin Electric's application for a siting permit. In order to obtain a permit, the consortium must demonstrate that the plant will not have an unacceptable impact on the area's environment or the socio-economic conditions of its inhabitants. The hearing is designed so that citizens and citizens' groups may take part. It is also possible that an independent study of certain environmental or socio-economic impacts may be required.

LRCC will take its case before the Industrial Siting Council. The group will address socio-economic issues from local point of view. Their voice at this hearing will be critical. But they will need help. They will need legal counsel and expert witnesses in order to present their case well, and both are costly.

Contributions to LRCC's effort at the siting hearing are tax deductible if they are sent to Laramie River Legal Fund, Box 84, Wheatland, Wyo. 82201. Please help LRCC continue this vital effort to protect Wyoming's land and lifestyle.

Robert Wigington is an organizer-researcher for the Powder River Basin Resource Council. PRBRC is an agriculturally-based group concerned with coal development in Wyoming's Powder River Basin. It has about 600 members.



IDAHO. Winter sends Canada geese on a search for open water.
Idaho Fish and Game Department Photo

12) notes that our coal exports have risen to 66 million tons, most of which goes to the Japanese steel industry. The recently enacted federal energy bill made no mention of exporting our coal and oil; so under the guise of fulfilling America's energy needs, the coal of Appalachia and the West are strip mined, often for use by foreign countries.

La Nilsson
Media, Pa.

COMPOSTING PRIVY

Dear HCN,

Was I surprised and delighted with your lead article — "Toilets: a revolution from the bottom up." It was perfectly written, and with the field guide to the toilets, this number of your paper is worth the \$10 subscription price.

This is the same battle I have been working on. We have built a compost toilet following the plan of Jim VanderRyn, University of California at Berkeley technical bulletin no. 2: "Composting Privy," including complete plans — for \$100 or less.

That marvel of our modern way of life, the ceramic toilet bowl, is, in a real sense, the high point of our ascent toward the ideal — the clean — the pure. Every form has its rise or fall in the universal law of the cycle. If this is the high point of our culture there is only one way to go — from the bottom of the cycle we must go up — from the top we go down and return to the beginning from where we started in our effort to evade certain facts of life.

That ceramic bowl with its elaborate plumbing — clean water flowing in and the smelly mixture flowing out, — to the tune

of two or three thousand dollars. . . We love it and will in no case give it up — so easy — so slick — so clean — so comfortable. Press the lever and it's whisked away from sensitive noses or eyes. We each use eight to ten thousand gallons of water per year to flush away material that could be returned to the earth to maintain its fertility. Every time you flush that bowl you are committing a symbolic crime — the key to our slow suicide. Two elements, water and earth are mixed — poisoning both.

In the ancient dream symbolism, excrement is gold — the wealth of the earth — both as a valuable mineral and as a fertilizer. Those valuable biscuits in the bowl are wasted.

Waldo S. Chase
Union,
Washington

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Burros. . .

(Continued from page 1)

hour), and in the summer many springs stop flowing altogether. Due to burro grazing there is almost total loss of vegetation around springs, and thus no food and cover for birds and small mammals. Summer temperatures climb above 120 degrees, and water is a critical factor in desert ecosystems. When a large mammal such as the burro is placed into a fragile system held in already delicate balance, something has to give — and in the case of our deserts, it is the native wildlife that is giving way.

Burro reproduction rates are about 25%-30% every 18 months. Burros have no natural predators to speak of, and biologists agree that the only biological factor controlling their population is starvation. Parasites and disease are not a significant factor in their mortality rates.

The life expectancy for jennies appears to be 12-14 years and for jacks, 13-15 years. What the low mortality and high reproductive rates mean has been shown in the Chemehuevi Mountains in California. There are currently 80 burros in the area, and by 1982 it is expected at the current rate of management and reproduction in the herd, the population will be 200.

In Death Valley National Monument, there were 1,500 burros in 1942. The Park Service started a reduction program in that year. Some were given away as pets, some were shot. In 1967 reductions were stopped due to public pressures. There are now at least 1,500 burros in the monument again. During the time that reductions were tak-

ing place, approximately 4,000 burros were removed. Thus, it is evident that the burro is able to reproduce at a rapid rate, and there is no danger of the burro becoming extinct in North America, contrary to what Congress and the American people were led to believe at the time of passage of the bill.

BURROS NOT CONSIDERED

Social structure is loose; a few jacks might hold territories for several months a year. In the Wild Horse and Burro Act,

When a large mammal such as the burro is placed into a fragile system held in already delicate balance, something has to give — and in the case of our deserts, it is the native wildlife that is giving way.

Congress defined "herd" as meaning "one or more stallions and his mares," but did not include any definition as to what constitutes a burro herd. Jacks do not keep jennies as stallions do mares. Burro range and populations are tied to water sources. In fact, one gets the impression from reading the act that it was meant only for horses, and that the matter of burros was not really given any consideration at all.

Congress declared that burro habitat was considered to be "where they are presently found." Thus, wherever burros were

in 1971 is burro habitat. Wild burros occupy portions of nine Western states; the main concentrations are in southern Nevada, along both sides of the Colorado River, in southern California, and in New Mexico. In 1971, for example, burros were found in 29 mountain ranges in southern California alone. This makes it questionable that Congress and the American public actually looked at a map of burro distribution in 1971 when they defined burro habitat.

In a related, vaguely worded section, the act says that "specific ranges on public lands may be designated and maintained as (burro) sanctuaries." Designating such sanctuaries could help solve the management problem, but further clarification is needed on what is to be done with the burros on lands not designated as sanctuaries.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) may give burros away as pets. However, the government retains title to the animal. If burros have to be destroyed, the carcasses may be recycled back into the ecosystem, according to the law, but in no way shall any of the meat be utilized for any commercial purpose, either directly or indirectly. The law states that burro populations may be reduced by destroying animals, if necessary, in the most humane way possible. Firearms may be used. Burros are supposed to be managed in a way "that is designed to achieve and maintain a thriving natural ecological balance on the public lands."

'CAN'T BE MANAGED'

Can this be done? There is ample evidence that the animals are causing ir-

reparable damage to native vegetation, soils, wildlife, and water. Burros are having a detrimental effect on habitat where there are endangered species. In 1974 officials at Bandelier National Monument in New Mexico released two documents detailing the impact of the burros. The studies indicated that none of the monument's range was in excellent condition, 22% was in good condition, 31% in fair condition, and 47% in poor condition. In addition, 52% of the vegetation was in a downward trend. A soil survey showed that severe erosion was taking place, and that as much as 35 tons of soil per acre per year was being lost to erosion.

A summary of one of the documents states: "It is the conclusion of this investigation that the wild burros of Bandelier cannot be managed as a compatible constituent of the natural ecosystem. . . based on several conditions peculiar to the monument. Terrain, and consequently, inaccessibility, prevents an accurate count of the number of animals utilizing the area at any given time of the year or from year to year. The same factors preclude a reasonable understanding of the population dynamics of the burros, other than by intensive measurement of ecological deterioration of their habitat."

While the above statement says the situation in Bandelier is unique, it is not. Burros occupy very rugged terrain and habitats in much of their range. It is almost impossible to get an accurate census of burros anywhere. Their coloration makes them hard to see; access to areas is all but impossible in many cases except by helicopter; there are uneven distribution patterns; there is a lack of funding and manpower; there is a lack of baseline inventory data; and there is a lack of knowledge and expertise in burro ecology and habitat on the part of some of the agency personnel.

INHUMANE TO SHOOT

What can be done? BLM and USFS clearly have a mandate both to protect the burro and to protect the native wildlife habitat. Will the public permit them to carry out this mandate? It does not seem possible, at this time, to find owners for the large numbers of burros that will have to be eliminated from our public lands. When firearms are mentioned, many people consider this to be an inhumane management tool. The public has long been led to believe that the burros are "rare and endangered" — that they are being slaughtered and driven to extinction.

There is also an emotional spillover from wild horses that complicates the public's reaction to management under the Horse and Burro Act. Although they are two different species with different impacts and different management needs, they are treated under the same act.

Nevertheless, burro reduction will have to be an on-going program. The longer the BLM and USFS delay management and control programs, the more burros will have to be destroyed initially. Since burro populations on federal lands number between 10,000 and 20,000 animals, we are talking about quite a large reduction unless pet-owners can be found. The reductions will have to be an annual program to prevent overgrazing.

The program of maintaining burro herds in nine western states promises to be a complex one and certainly an expensive one for the American taxpayer. If the taxpayer is not willing to fund the kind of program necessary to bring this crisis under control, then we can only expect continued degradation and overgrazing of desert ecosystems and loss of native wildlife.

Much will hinge on a decision of the Supreme Court. In 1974 in New Mexico, 19



BURRO TRAILING. The trailing by burros shown above in Death Valley National Monument is typical of most of the canyons in the Panamint Range which are occupied by burros. The Wild and Free Roaming Wild Horse and Burro Act does not include National Park

Service land — only Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service lands. However, management is difficult since the burros migrate between lands managed by the BLM, Park Service, and the Navy.

Photo courtesy of National Park Service

burros were rounded up on BLM land and sold at public auction. The roundup was not authorized by BLM. When BLM learned of the capture and sale, they notified the U.S. attorney. He requested the state livestock board to return the burros to BLM land, saying they were protected under the Horse and Burro Act. The request was refused and the New Mexico Livestock Board filed suit, challenging the agency's action to administer the burros under the act and charging that it violated state statutes. All state statutes hold that wildlife is the property of the states and not the federal government.

In February 1975, the U.S. District Court for New Mexico declared the Horse and Burro Act unconstitutional and declared that the animals belonged to the individual states. The U.S. attorney obtained a stay on the judgment, however, which suspended it pending a higher court ruling.

On March 28, 1975, the federal govern-

ment appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. Preliminary hearings will be held on the case this month and a decision could be forthcoming later this year. Pending the Supreme Court decision, the law is still in effect and normal management activities can be carried out under the act.

ENVIRONMENTALISTS SPEAK

Not all citizens are enamored of the burro. On December 5 the National Advisory Board for Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burros met in China Lake, Calif. At that meeting, the public was given the opportunity to express views on the burro situation. Action was demanded by many conservation organizations, individuals, and scientists. They demanded that the devastation to desert ecosystems by burros be halted.

"The burros are using stored resources that built up over many years and it will take many decades to restore the resources," said Dr. Robert Ohmart of Arizona State University at Tempe. "The burro will ultimately destroy his own habitat."

Walter Powell of the California Wildlife Federation said, "We view with frustration and growing deep-seated anger the continued devastation of all land by the politically-protected burro."

The Sierra Club has gone on record for strong burro control programs, as has the Desert Protective Council. Peter Burk of the Sierra Club said, "We are tired of waiting for a solution to a problem that everyone now knows and understands."

The board listened to an overwhelming and outraged cry for burro reduction. Death Valley National Monument is not covered under the Horse and Burro Act since it applies to only BLM and USFS lands. Nevertheless, it is difficult for the Park Service to begin a program of burro reduction, because the burros in the Panamint Range migrate between Park Service lands, Navy lands, and BLM lands. Cooperative agreements are necessary.

Dr. Richard Vogl of California State University at Los Angeles advised the board that to protect the burro because it is a symbol of the old West is something we could do without. The miner of the old West raped and plundered the land, and it is best that the mentality and attitudes that produced this destruction of the West be forgotten, not perpetuated, he said.

So it all boils down to whether there is justification to give the burro the kind of protection it is given both by public emotion and by law just because it is "cute" and is a symbol of the old West. It is true that



WILD BURROS. Wild burros are protected under the same act as wild horses, with few distinctions made. They make good pack animals and are available as pets, although the federal government retains title under the present law.

Photo by Ben Romero

Sierra Burro Policy

Management and control

The National Sierra Club Board of Directors last spring adopted a policy on wild ("feral") burros, which Miriam Romero helped to write.

The policy statement urges that feral burros be strictly managed and controlled with humane methods. The Sierra Club recognizes the necessity of using helicopters for management purposes, i.e., for censusing, reconnaissance, and access to habitat areas.

The club also accepts using guns and giving title over to private individuals as management tools, while opposing using feral burros for sporting purposes such as racing or wrangling. When burros are shot, the club recommends donating the carcasses to government institutions.

Protection of native ecosystems

The club says burros must be eliminated from all federal and state lands where they would pose a threat to habitats of rare plants or animals and from all national parks and monuments. In other areas where native habitats have become impoverished because of overpopulation, burro herds should be culled, according to the club.

Congressional action

The club recommends that the Wild and Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act be amended to apply only to wild horses and a new burro management bill be introduced which would provide for sanctuaries for burros.

the law ensures humane treatment of the burro—but one can ask if the fact that the burro is literally eating himself out of habitat and will die from starvation and lack of water is humane.

The public can either choose mature, reasonable control and management of the burro and can insist that the agencies involved begin reduction programs, or the public can choose to continue to permit the burro to roam at will over large areas of the Southwest without reduction or control. If the public chooses the latter, then perhaps we have reached a point in time where the burro has become America's sacred cow.

Miriam Romero and her husband, Ben, started investigating the burro problem in 1973 when they recognized the ecological

crisis created by burros, particularly in Death Valley. They have both been longtime members of the Sierra Club, and she helped to write the national position on burros adopted by the club last spring. Her degree is in geography from California State University in Northridge, and she has done graduate work in arid lands resources management. They have received several awards for their educational work on burros and for their research which led to the establishment of the Amargosa Canyon-Dumont Dunes Natural Area in California. In 1973 they received the American Motors Conservation Award and in 1975 the California Conservation Council Annual Award. Residents of Montrose, Calif., they spend much of their free time presenting their slide show on burros entitled "The Jacks are Wild."

Rockies Foundation ready to give

Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho have a new fund-raising and grant-making organization, the Northern Rockies Foundation.

Its mission is to help the people of the region "preserve their natural and cultural heritage and improve the quality of life within the context of social justice," say the directors of the group. Grants will be made for projects in the fields of public information, citizen activities, the economy, environment, education, arts, and humanities.

The foundation hopes to raise \$150,000 by next January to support such projects. It already has \$60,000 toward that goal.

Dr. Alton Chase of Helena, Mont., is executive director of the foundation. He is a former philosophy professor at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minn. Leslie Petersen of Jackson, Wyo., is associate director.

The foundation hopes to make its first grants by June 30. An 11-member board of directors will decide which proposals to fund, based on recommendations of the staff. Board members are Jean Anderson of Billings, Mont.; Emily Galusha of St. Paul, Minn.; Jack Hemingway of Sun Valley, Idaho; Phoebe Holzinger of Casper, Wyo.; James Noble of Cora, Wyo.; Drummond Pike of San Francisco, Calif.; Marcia Pursley of Boise, Idaho; G. John Roush of Arlington, Va.; Leonard Sargent of Corwin Springs, Mont.; K. Ross Toole of Missoula, Mont.; and Malcolm Wallop of Sheridan, Wyo.

For more information write to Dr. Alton Chase, Northern Rockies Foundation, Box 1273, Helena, Mont. 59601 or to Leslie Petersen, Northern Rockies Foundation, Box 2497, Jackson, Wyo. 83001.



CROPPING FROM BURROS. This vegetation shows severe cropping from burros. Burros eat all the stored food in desert shrubs, and as the vegetation dies, severe erosion follows.

Photo by Ben Romero

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Coal moves East because of automatic fuel clause

by Norman Kilpatrick

Nothing could, on the surface, be further apart in the thinking of many people than strip mining coal in the Northern Plains and the automatic fuel adjustment clauses of electric companies in the Midwest. The national news media never seems to see the connection, and certainly the Western coal firms and their current and potential customers in the East don't want to talk about it.

Yet, in fact, the two items are very closely tied together. The amount of coal that is finally stripped from the Northern Plains, and certainly the potential market for such coal, is directly tied to this method which most state regulatory agencies have adopted. It allows electric utilities to use fuels that are more expensive than locally available fuels.

Most people in America believe that state public utility commissions somehow assure that the fuel burned by a power plant is the least expensive available to it. If they don't accept that fairytale, they believe that electric company management is more concerned with keeping rates down than with company profits. They believe the management will voluntarily try to obtain fuel supplies that might save the electric user a few dollars per year.

The fact is that most states, and all the Midwest states, have automatic fuel adjustment clauses. These clauses are created or approved by the state regulatory agency. They mean that that part of an electric bill which represents fuel costs, transportation costs, certain staff people, handling equipment, etc. is not effectively reviewed by the state regulatory agency. Even though states which have this automatic fuel adjustment clause may claim that they review these costs, in fact they merely check their statistical accuracy — not their justification. These costs, which may make up one-third of a customer's electric bill, are passed directly through to him in each month's electricity bill. This means, very clearly, that a utility has no requirement or need to purchase the least expensive fuel available to it.

In fact, this is the way that certain electric companies can plan to (and in some cases already have) import Western coal to their service areas, even if local high sulfur coal used with scrubbers, or low sulfur Appalachian coal, could be obtained at a lower cost.

OTHER INTEREST

Thus, plans to surface mine Northern Plains coal for Midwestern markets do not mean that such coal is less expensive. Rather, they could indicate someone connected with the Eastern utility in question has some interest in promoting Western coal over Eastern coal.

For example, in August of 1974 low sulfur coal from Utah's Carbon Fuel Mine (which American Electric Power (AEP) is helping expand for use by AEP power plants in the Midwest) cost around \$1.20 per million Btu (British thermal units) at AEP's Tanners Creek (Indiana) power plant. By comparison, low sulfur West Virginia coal from an AEP "captive mine" (a mine whose coal is used only by its owner) cost under 61 cents per million Btu delivered to that plant.

During May of 1974, coal from Wyoming's Belle Ayr Mine cost over 80 cents per million Btu delivered to AEP's Breed (Indiana) Plant. Ohio's Cardinal Plant, not far from the Pennsylvania line, burned 1.4% sulfur Utah coal in August of

1974, for a cost of \$1.27 per million Btu. This compared to Ohio coal with a lower (1.1%) sulfur content, that cost the customer 50 cents per million Btu, according to Federal Power Commission records.

During April of 1975 the giant AEP plant near Gallipolis, Ohio, burned low sulfur Belle Ayr coal for under 87 cents per million Btu, and Eastern Kentucky low sulfur coal for 67.5 cents per million Btu. (Low sulfur "spot market coal" was coming in at prices from 91 cents through \$2.09 per million Btu to that same plant from Eastern coal mines. In its arguments for using Western coal, AEP may quote these spot market prices, but it is not a fair comparison. The only fair comparison would be long term Eastern coal contracts with long term Western coal contracts.)

Critics of using Western coal east of the Mississippi also say it is encouraged by stockholders who have interests in Western railroads, Eastern utilities, and national coal and oil companies. So rational economics may not always govern decisions.

UNREGULATED PROFIT

The *Detroit Free Press* has written about the efforts by Midwest utilities to "go West" for coal, the automatic fuel clause,

and possible profit motives for such a move. According to the *Free Press*, back when (late 1973- early 1974) Duke Power Company (North Carolina) was arranging a long-term low sulfur coal contract in West Virginia for \$12.71 per ton for a 12,000 Btu coal, Detroit Edison, a major coal burner, was arranging a \$1 billion deal with Decker Coal Company for Montana coal.

When "pushed" by the newspaper, the utility admitted it did not "ask for bids from West Virginia before signing the Decker deal." As late as June of 1975 Edison was buying some low sulfur Eastern Kentucky coal for as little as 85 cents per million Btu delivered that month.

The *Free Press* quotes one Edison official as saying "... the fuel clause consideration was certainly a factor" in its decision to buy Northern Great Plains coal, and goes on to suggest that Detroit Ed's Midwest Energy company will be in a position to make profits not regulated by the Michigan Public Service Commission, from loading coal and moving it on Great Lakes barges.

Fear that, at best, utilities have no incentive to keep fuel costs down and, at worst, have interests in Western coal development certainly helped motivate West Virginia and Ohio legislatures to abolish the automatic features of their fuel clauses

during 1975. If hearings were held to question the economics of hauling Western coal past Chicago, it seems possible they could lead to reform and a decrease in demand for Western coal. These hearings would have to take into consideration long term contract prices, possible financial help for new Eastern deep mines, and the use of scrubbers.

NATIONWIDE ACTION

States must be fully prepared to protect their interests. The Ford Administration tried, in vain, to make automatic fuel adjustment clauses mandatory in all states through a bill introduced by Arizona's Rep. John Rhodes (R) in 1975.

Instead, it has been suggested that Western representatives who desire to limit development of Western coal could help achieve that purpose by supporting a nationwide end to the automatic adjustment clause.

Norman Kilpatrick is director of the Surface Mining Research Library (Box 5024 Charleston, W. Va. 25311). He is also the coal consultant to the West Virginia Legislature.

New Lifeline rates would conserve energy

by Dorothy Bradley

The Center for the Public Interest, Inc. of Bozeman, Mont., has come up with a revised utility rate structure which will encourage energy conservation and save money for low income customers. This month, the group is presenting its "Lifeline Utility Rate" proposal to the Montana Public Service Commission. The PSC is conducting hearings on a rate increase request by Montana Power Company.

Electricity in the Montana Power Company system is priced in three separate classifications — residential, commercial, and industrial. The center's proposal deals chiefly with the residential classification, and would only affect the consumption of electricity in homes, for individuals and families.

The existing structure for the Montana Power Company — and most other power companies — is called a "declining block rate system." It establishes the highest rates for the least consumption — a rate which declines as consumption increases. The theory supporting this system is that increased consumption will lower the average costs for all consumers.

But this rate structure is inappropriate given our recognition that energy is a necessity in short supply. The center believes we should change the rate structure to promote fuel conservation, and in addition, to promote fair treatment for low income families and establish a sound economic policy.

Numerous studies have documented that low income people consume less energy; and, correspondingly, higher income people tend to consume more. Wealthier people usually have larger homes, more appliances, and a generally more extravagant lifestyle. But the present declining block rate structure penalizes the low income energy consumer by forcing him to bear an inequitable proportion of society's total energy costs. In addition to paying higher rates, a much greater proportion of

his income is necessarily devoted to utility bills.

The center proposes that the Public Service Commission adopt a Lifeline rate structure for residential electricity. The Lifeline would provide the first 400 kwh a month at the cheapest rate of two cents per kwh. After 400 kwh, a half a cent increase would be charged for the next 600 kwh. After 1,000 kwh per month, the rate jumps to three cents per kwh. (We also propose a \$1.50 per month service charge to pay the costs of billing, etc. This amount is the same for all consumers, regardless of consumption, and should not be hidden in the rate structure.)

The Lifeline incorporates the principle that each family needs a certain amount of electricity for basic necessities — cooking, lights, refrigeration, etc. Because of the impossibility of conserving electricity at the lowest levels of consumption, the rate structure should not penalize low level consumers, as it presently does. However, at higher levels of electricity consumption, conservation can take place. It is at these levels that consumer demands tend to be responsive to prices. Realizing this, the center says, we should revise the rate structure to establish a workable incentive to conserve.

Anyone who consumes approximately 500 kwh per month or less would financially benefit from the Lifeline, as compared to present rates. Consumption of 400 kwh per month would provide savings of \$20 a year — a 15% decrease in rates.

About 46% of the bills issued by MPC to residential consumers are under 400 kwh per month, and 59% of the kwh consumed are under the 500 kwh line. A fair estimate is that 60% of the residential consumers in the MPC distribution system would financially benefit by a Lifeline.

Only 10% of the present residential consumption is in excess of 1,000 kwh a month, which would be included in the highest rate category of the Lifeline proposal.

The coalition supporting the Lifeline proposal has taken no stand on MPC's rate

of return. Their aim was to design a new rate structure which would bring in identical revenues as received in 1974.

In summary, the center feels the Lifeline rate structure should be adopted to provide an essential amount of electricity at the lowest rates, and appropriately discourage excessive consumption. The Lifeline in no way penalizes the Montana Power Company — in fact, resulting conservation practices should benefit the company as well as the consumers, by holding down electricity costs for all.

Dorothy Bradley is a Democratic state representative from Bozeman and a researcher for the Center for the Public Interest, Inc., P.O. Box 931, Bozeman, Mont. 59715.

ROMCOE awards

High Country News is among the winners of the 1975 Awards for Outstanding Environmental Achievement presented by the Rocky Mountain Center of Environment (ROMCOE). HCN won the ROMCOE communications award.

The citizen's award went to a Coloradoan — William B. Mounsey. Mounsey has been working to preserve wilderness in Colorado since 1964. He also founded the University of the Wilderness.

The citizen organization award went to the Idaho Conservation League based in Boise, Idaho.

Paonia High School Media and Dissentation Class in Paonia, Colo., won youth award.

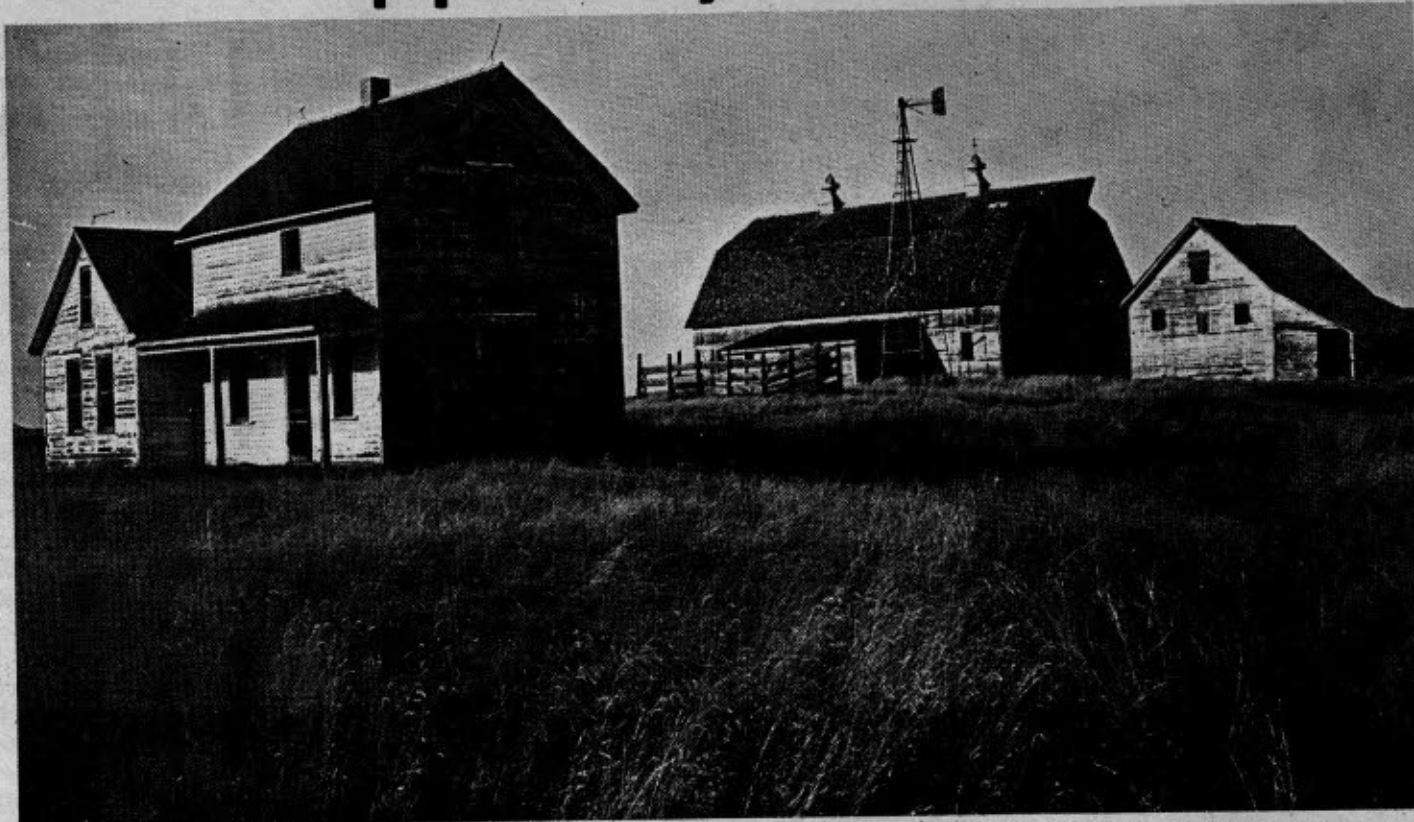
Dr. Wilson Clark, a professor at Eastern Montana College in Billings, Mont., won the education award.

Public Service Company of Colorado won the industry award.

Colorado State Senator Joe Shoemaker, who is chairman of the Platte River Development Committee of Denver, won the government award.

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Sec. Kleppe says coal moratorium over



CHANGING SCENE. Rural areas in the Northern Great Plains are now losing populations, but with renewed federal coal leasing, the face of the West will be changing. As the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals put it in its opinion on the Sierra Club suit, "Briefly put, a region

best known for its abundant wildlife and fish, and for its beautiful scenery, a region isolated from urban American, sparsely populated and virtually unindustrialized, will be converted into a major industrial complex."

Photo of North Dakota farmstead by Mike Jacobs

by Marjane Ambler

Interior Secretary Thomas S. Kleppe announced Monday the end of the moratorium on leasing of federal coal. But this doesn't mean the immediate resumption of coal development, according to Asst. Secretary Jack O. Horton, whose explanation of the action followed. Horton's ambiguous statement succeeded in raising questions, but did not succeed in staving off an angry reaction from environmental groups and from members of Congress.

No matter when the moratorium started in 1971 would have been lifted, the announcement would have been greeted with criticism, no doubt. This is because one of the most critical questions concerning federal leasing is whether more coal must be leased at all. Sixteen billion tons are already leased — enough to last 20 to 50 years, by various estimates.

However, the timing of this statement did not seem to make political sense, if Interior were interested in easy acceptance of its decision. A few days before the House had passed its federal coal leasing bill. But the bill had not been passed by the Congress as a whole. Interior could have waited a few weeks for Congress' bill, it was thought, unless Interior has reason to believe the bill will be vetoed.

Congressional representatives were among those most outraged. They were not forewarned of Kleppe's intent and apparently felt personally affronted. Rep. Teno Roncalio (D-Wyo.), one of those who has worked hard in past years to get federal strip mining legislation, said it indicated to him that coal companies wanted "immediate, wide open, unrestrained development of coal," according to a KTWO Radio report. Rep. John Melcher (D-Mont.), who has shepherded the strip mining bill through the House several times, also told KTWO he thought the Interior Department was reacting to pressure from coal companies.

When contacted by the *Denver Post*, Colorado Sens. Gary Hart and Floyd Haskell and Reps. Pat Schroeder and Tim Wirth all said leasing shouldn't be re-

sumed until proposed federal laws are enacted.

Congress sees itself as the "ultimate steward of the federal lands," according to Rep. Patsy Mink (D-Hawaii) speaking on the House floor prior to the announcement. Mink headed the House committee which prepared the leasing bill.

The same day House members were reminded that the administration doesn't necessarily agree that Congressional efforts are that important. Rep. Joe Skubitz (R-Kan.), discussing the administration's suggested amendments to the leasing bill prior to its passage Jan. 21, said, "There is strong feeling in the coal industry and some feeling in the department, that a bill is not even necessary."

The timing of the announcement was curious for another reason. Interior's own guidelines, although proposed, have not yet been promulgated. The one set of rules that has been finalized, the programmatic impact statement on the federal coal leasing program, has been legally challenged. If Interior had waited only a month and a half longer to make the announcement, at least both its leasing and its stripping regulations would have been put into effect.

NOT IMMEDIATE MINING

Interior insists that Kleppe was not actually starting the new draglines moving. The new program he discussed in his statement lifting the moratorium includes EMARS (Energy Minerals Activity Recommendation System), a system devised by Interior which will require about two years in the leasing process before any mining could begin. It involves nominations of where coal should be leased and where it shouldn't, localized planning efforts involving public input, impact statements on places that would be leased, bids, and then environmental impact statements on individual mining plans.

Interior also says leasing will not begin until the coal is needed. Kleppe said that any "impression that we're going to open the door and scuttle the West" is false.

However, even with its announcement accompanied by these assurances, Interior

must have anticipated the outrage that it would bring if made at this time, observers believe.

When asked by HCN about her interpretations of the timing of the announcement, Laney Hicks, Northern Plains representative of the Sierra Club, said she thought that Interior doesn't want businessmen to lose interest in investing in the West. The Northern Great Plains Resource Program office has received requests for its study on Western coal development from Wall Street brokers. They want to know whether to invest in draglines or in offshore drilling equipment.

Hicks says Interior wants this interest to remain alive. "Interior's fixation is with Western coal because that's where they have a finger in the pie," she says, referring to the fact that Eastern coal is mostly privately owned. "Here's the administration screaming about unemployment. Where is unemployment? It's in the Eastern part of the country. But you can't get them to look

at Eastern coal. I think the reason is they don't control it," she says.

ENOUGH COAL?

Hicks also criticized renewing leasing when there is already so much coal leased, and questioned the adequacy of the "diligent development" section of the proposed Interior leasing regulations. As long as leaseholders continue to hold coal for speculative purposes, the nation's needs still won't be met.

Speaking of the 16 billion tons already leased, Kleppe said, "On the surface, it would appear that this amount is sufficient for years to come. However, in reality, we do not know whether that amount is sufficient or if the coal we have leased is suitable for mining. We do know that some of this coal — perhaps as much as one-third — is unsuitable for mining for environmental and economic reasons. However the enormity of this leased coal clouds the issue."

Kleppe's cautious statement was partially, perhaps, motivated by legal action against Interior which claims renewed leasing is not necessary because of the amount of coal already leased. The Natural Resources Defense Council and the Northern Plains Resource Council challenged Interior's programmatic impact statement on that basis. Most environmental organizations in the region are using the need argument in their attack on Kleppe's moratorium announcement.

POWDER RIVER BASIN

Kleppe's announcement followed by one week the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to review the Sierra Club suit demanding a cumulative environmental impact statement for the Northern Great Plains. Part of the program he announced would include preparation of regional impact statements when necessary. There is still some question that Interior defines regional impact statements the same way that the Sierra Club does, however. (See HCN 1-16-76)

In the Eastern Powder River Basin, four companies are still awaiting Interior's approval of their mining plans. The Supreme Court lifted the injunction which prohibited Interior from allowing the plans. But Kleppe is now consulting with Wyoming Gov. Ed Herschler before issuing conditional approval of the permits, which is expected within a month, according to an Associated Press report.



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Box K, Lander, WY 82520

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This animal, the black-footed ferret, is one of the most endangered mammals in North America.

Photo by Luther C. Goldman and courtesy U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



The prairie dog's survival is vital to the survival of the black-footed ferret, as it provides both food and habitat.

Photo by Conrad Hillman and courtesy U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

What good is a black-footed

by Sarah Doll

It's sometimes difficult to answer the question, "What difference does it make if a species becomes extinct? It will anyway, eventually." The obvious answer, "If you have to ask the question, you probably wouldn't understand the answer," while often true, helps no one. The best answer can be given by a concerned person with facts at his disposal — facts regarding each endangered species' importance to its ecosystem.

The black-footed ferret is a good example of how an animal's ecological role is a strong argument, both economically and esthetically, for its protection. It is one of the rarest mammals in North America, with remnant populations in South Dakota and only occasional sightings in other Great Plains states. It lives in prairie dog towns, and preys on prairie dogs, gregarious little rodents that are considered a scourge by ranchers. While it is not known how much ferrets eat, if they existed in sizable numbers they would probably serve to act as a natural check on prairie dogs.

As white men settled the West, destroyed the buffalo, and allowed their cattle to overgraze the plains, the native tall grasses were destroyed and replaced by shorter varieties that the prairie dogs preferred, and their populations exploded. They soon ranked high on the ranchers' list of enemies, because they competed with cattle for grass. Every possible means of extermination was used, and with the adoption of wide-scale poisoning, prairie dog numbers were greatly reduced.

As prairie dogs dwindled, so did ferrets. They have never been common — only about 1,000 reported sightings since they were first studied in 1851 — but when the prairie dogs were numerous, there was plenty of food and habitat for the ferret. They seem to keep their own population within the limits of their food supply, rather than turning to a new source of food. However, University of Wisconsin zoologist Dr. Tim Clark, who is studying the status of ferrets in Wyoming, reports that since the white-tailed prairie dogs of western Wyoming hibernate, the ferrets in

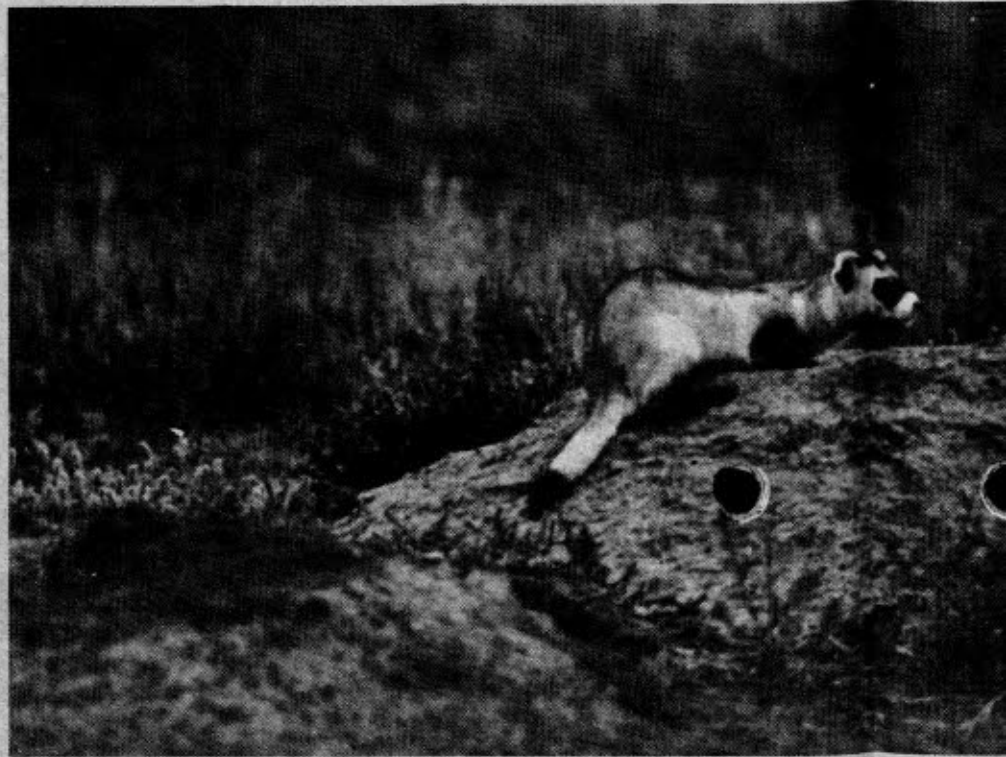
this area must find other prey in winter, often having to compete with other predators. The black-tailed prairie dogs of South Dakota and eastern Wyoming do not hibernate, and so are a year-round food supply. The ferrets in these areas have specialized their feeding habits around prairie dogs.

Besides losing their food supply, black-footed ferrets were also the unintended victims of the poisoning drive. The poison 1080 is capable of killing an animal that eats the poisoning victim, and remains lethal for months. Predator poisons and 1080 were banned in 1972 from federal lands, but can still be used on state and private lands. Since that time, prairie dog populations seem to be increasing again, but the exact status of ferrets is not known.

Ferrets are frustratingly elusive and hard to observe. They hunt at night, and rarely come out in the daylight. A good sign of ferret activity is dug-out holes in the prairie dog town, with trenches in the soft earth made by the ferret's narrow body as it digs. Another sign is numerous plugged-up holes, made by the prairie dogs in abortive attempts to trap the ferret, which can always dig its way out. Where a ferret is present, the prairie dogs also tend to behave nervously, taking flight more quickly at an alarm. However, ferrets have been found in towns where none of these signs were observed. Tracks and droppings are of little aid in locating a ferret, as both are almost indistinguishable from those of minks, which also prey on prairie dogs.

The ferret's elusiveness, which serves as protective behaviour in the wild, works against its survival as man continues to battle the prairie dog. The policy of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife (now the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), when it carried out its control practices on public land, was to avoid prairie dog towns where ferrets were believed to live. But it was impossible to know for sure, as absence of ferret sign does not mean absolute absence of ferrets.

Prairie dogs are a real problem for ranchers. John Davis, of the USFWS Office of Endangered Species, points out that as long as Americans will indulge their appe-



The black-footed ferret is identifiable by its black mask, fe

Photo by Conrad Hillman and courtesy U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

d ferret?

tite for beef (200 lbs. per person per year) we must take ranchers' needs into consideration, and this may again involve some control on federal lands leased for grazing. He suggests that it is probably better to let a government agency handle any poisoning that is done, to prevent abuses and to check for ferret residents before a town is poisoned. Use of the less lethal zinc phosphite, rather than 1080, should prevent ferret deaths resulting from eating poisoned prairie dogs.

Another potential problem is strip mining of prairie dog acreage. One solution, if ferrets are suspected in the doomed town, would be to live-trap them and release them in a national park or some other protected area. However, there is presently little good ferret habitat (which must include prairie dog towns) in protected areas.

Several steps are being taken to protect the ferrets. A recovery team consisting of experts on endangered species from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management; the National Audubon Society; the South Dakota Dept. of Game, Fish, and Parks; the U. S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, and headed by Dr. Raymond Linder of the Fish & Wildlife Service, has been set up to study the ferrets and make recommendations concerning critical habitat and management problems.

Captive breeding is a possibility, but when an animal is very rare, caution must be taken in using wild specimens for breeding experiments. Six ferrets were captured in 1971 and sent to the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Maryland to start a breeding program, but four died of distemper, leaving only two males. Patuxent presently has five ferrets, but last spring the females failed to reproduce. Conrad Hillman, ferret expert with the FWS, recently returned from Russia with 48 Siberian polecats, believed to be the closest living relative of the black-footed ferret. These are now also at Patuxent, and will be studied thoroughly before any massive breeding experiments with ferrets themselves are attempted.

Anyone who sees a black-footed ferret in Wyoming is asked to write Dr. Clark at Box 1330, Jackson, Wyo. 83001.



feet, and tail-tip.
tesy: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



The black-footed ferret is most active at night, and most easily observed then. Its eyes appear bright green in a spotlight.



"The black-footed ferret with its brilliant markings of black and shades of brown has the grace and beauty of a tiny tiger as it creeps through the grass of a prairie-dog town."

Faith McNulty, from
**Must They Die? The Strange Case of the
Prairie Dog and the Black-Footed Ferret**



Prairie dogs are often aggressive in their behavior towards ferrets, and are large enough to put up a good fight.

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Photo by Conrad Hillman and courtesy U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Photo by Frank Martin and courtesy U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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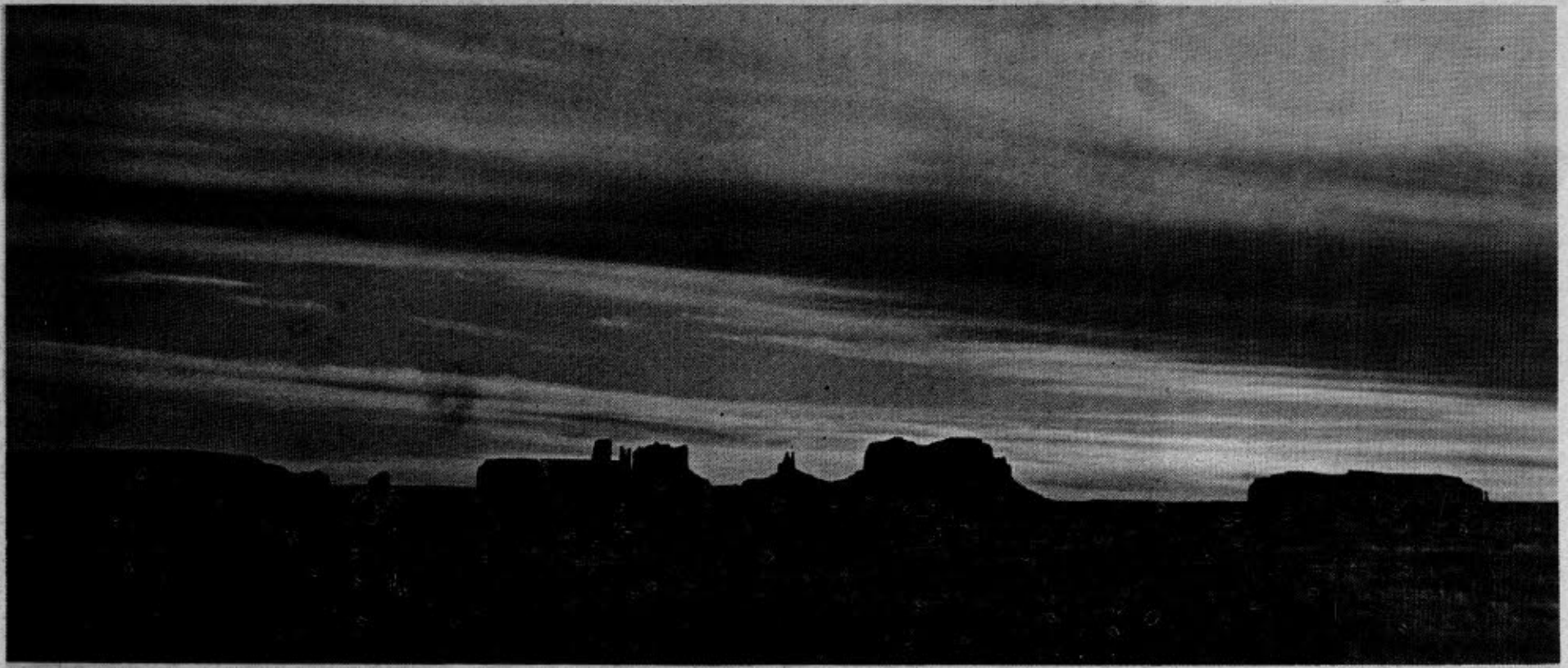


Photo by Jack McLellan

Primitive dialog develops

Kaiparowits press conference forces confrontation

by Rob Thompson

WAHWEAP, ARIZ. — On January 10, a well planned press conference sponsored by the nation's foremost environmental organizations erupted into a rowdy confrontation.

The event was designed to probe the need and the impacts of the massive \$3.5 billion Kaiparowits power project. Representatives of both local and national news media converged at the Wahweap Lodge near Page, Ariz., to examine the growing controversy involving Kaiparowits and several other large coal-fired power plants within the scenic canyon country of southern Utah.

Conference sponsors included Canyon Country Council, Environmental Defense Fund, Friends of the Earth, National Audubon Society, National Parks and Conservation Association, Sierra Club and Wilderness Society.

An aerial tour of the plant site was followed by lunch and informal discussions. Then, as the mid-afternoon press conference began, a group of nearly 100 angry southern Utahns came into the conference room.

As Sierra Club president Kent Gill delivered the keynote address he was engulfed in jeers and catcalls from the pro-Kaiparowits Utahns. Gill, a junior high school teacher by profession, remained unflustered as he described the procession of power plants across the Southwest.

"Let us know what it is we're sacrificing if we accept the national sacrifice area concept here in the Southwest. We are surely sacrificing a Bryce Canyon for a Las Vegas strip, sacrificing a Canyon de Chelly for the growth of a Los Angeles Basin, sacrificing a way of life for export of electricity," Gill said.

Rob Thompson is an active conservationist from Salt Lake City, Utah. After experiencing the press conference described in the article above, he told HCN: "When viewed in perspective, the southern Utahns with their economic troubles are like a thirsty man who asks for a glass of water, but instead is tossed in a swimming pool. The multiplicity of problems created by the solution is overwhelming."

Meanwhile, Kent Gill introduced the 15 member panel which included: Jack O. Horton, Assistant Interior Secretary; David Brower, president of Friends of the Earth; and representatives of the Environmental Protection Agency, Bureau of Land Management, and the California Energy Resources, Conservation and Development Commission; and authorities in economics, botany, law, and air quality. For a short time writer Edward Abbey sat with the panel, but he left in search of his eight-year-old daughter who was apparently lost.

MISGUIDED YEARS

Beyond the windows of the conference room lay the vast panorama of distant mesas, lonely buttes and the pink desert sand, and also the deep water of Lake Powell and the long thin layer of yellow-brown smoke from the Navajo power plant.

Eloquently, David Brower spoke of the "misguided years" when conservationists accepted the damming of Glen Canyon to save Echo Park from a dam, and when they pushed nuclear and coal alternatives to save the Grand Canyon from damming. Hoping that through the mistakes of the past we have learned about limits to growth, Brower then observed "economic growth as now practiced is a sophisticated device for stealing from our children."

"We have learned that there are as many ways to save electricity as to use it, and the one effective, immediate, and ethical solution to the energy crisis is not, as President Ford would have it, strength through exhaustion, but energy conservation," Brower said.

As Brower attempted to describe ways of conserving energy, heckling from the protesters grew intense. He had to pause and ask those who did not agree with him to allow him to finish his remarks. The catcalling continued.

Events prior to the January meeting had probably caused the southern Utahns' frustration and antagonism. Huge coal deposits under the Kaiparowits Plateau and the creation of Lake Powell at nearby Glen Canyon fostered the first power plant proposal in 1962. Through the '60s legal arrangements were made for the water and

coal. As environmental awareness grew, in 1971 the proposed plant site was moved from Warm Creek, adjacent to Lake Powell, to a somewhat less visible site at nearby Nipple Bench.

Then, in 1973 Secretary of Interior Rogers C.B. Morton rejected permits to construct the power plant, for environmental reasons. "The scenic beauty of its rugged Southwest landscape, coupled with the clarity of the air in the vicinity, are national assets of major importance, worthy of protection for the enjoyment of future generations of Americans," he said.

Six days after Morton's announcement, Utah Gov. Calvin Rampton and the Utah Congressional delegation met with the Interior Secretary urging that he reconsider his decision.

Later that year the plant site was moved again. This time to Fourmile Bench — 35 miles northwest of Lake Powell, but within site of Bryce Canyon National Park.

A SEPARATE BATTLE

Meanwhile, on the east side of the Kaiparowits Plateau, the southern Utah residents of Kane and Garfield Counties were battling with environmentalists over the proposed Trans-Escalante Highway. Many local people thought the new highway would increase tourism. The Sierra Club and Escalante Wilderness Committee wanted wilderness designation for the Escalante area.

Back at Fourmile Bench, optimism was rekindled by the energy crisis. In the spring of 1975 it seemed Kaiparowits was a sure thing. Local newspapers announced the signing of a contract with Westinghouse for the plant's generators.

But while the Kane County Commissioners were calculating how to spend the \$25 million in property tax the plant would generate, economic troubles faced the utilities. The Salt River Project dropped out of the consortium. This left Southern California Edison with a 40% interest, San Diego Gas & Electric with 23.4%, and Arizona Public Service with 18%. The remaining 18.6% power output is still uncommitted.

Last September the draft environmental impact statement on Kaiparowits drew

heavy fire. Not only were environmentalists critical of the Fourmile Bench proposal, but so were several federal agencies.

National Park Service Director Gary Everhardt said, "Development of the Kaiparowits plant as presently planned will cause serious air quality degradation in Glen Canyon National Recreation Area and Bryce Canyon National Park. Such deterioration is inimical to the purpose for which these were established by Congress."

Environmental Protection Agency Regional Administrator John A. Green said, "EPA has serious environmental reservations concerning approval of this project at either the Fourmile Bench or Nipple Bench sites."

December proved to be an especially discouraging month for project supporters. California, under pressure of a Sierra Club petition, began to probe energy demand estimates. Southern California Edison had forecast a 47% increase in per capita energy use by its customers between 1977 and 1985. San Diego Gas & Electric had forecast nearly a 100% increase between 1974 and 1985. According to California Resources Secretary Clair Dedrick, "The forecasts are out of line with proposed California conservation measures."

These events, coupled with the announcement of new air quality studies by the National Park Service, led to the December 31 announcement of a one-year delay in the Kaiparowits Project. Southern California Edison blamed "objections by environmental groups and lengthy approval processes" for the setback. In response to a question at the press conference, however, Brower predicted that economics would stop Kaiparowits.

"BURN ENVIRONMENTALISTS"

The demonstrators waved signs which read: "Save Oil, Burn Environmentalists," "Utah for Kaiparowits," "Nipple Bench or Bust," and "When you stop the world — get off!" Though the press conference remained on the verge of chaos most of the afternoon, a somewhat primitive dialog developed. Unemployment surfaced as a primary concern of locals. Panelist Hank Hassell, one southern Utahn who is also a Sierra Club

(Continued on page 11) ENR

Kaiparowits. . .

(Continued from page 10)

member, said that Kane and Garfield Counties have only about 260 people who are unemployed. The Kaiparowits plant and underground mining complex would employ 3,135 people during full operation.

At the urging of the press corps, Kent Gill invited Kanab Building contractor Gary Cox and Kane County Commissioner Sterling Griffiths to speak on behalf of the demonstrators.

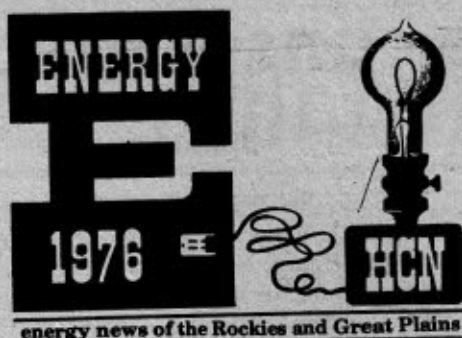
"It's very difficult to raise a family on \$3 to \$5 an hour," Cox said. "I challenge anyone here to find a more desolate area in the whole world."

Griffiths said that more jobs were needed, not only for the unemployed, but for former residents of the area who would like to return if employment was available. He said the developers had promised to establish training programs and hire as many Utahns as possible.

When a *New York Times* reporter asked what would happen if the consortium failed to keep its promises, Griffiths said, "We (the Kane County Commissioners) would deny them a building permit."

Griffiths charged that environmentalists were "brainwashed" and insisted that the benefits from power plant development would more than offset any damage to the environment. Aside from jobs, benefits would include the upgrading of education and services because of increased property taxes.

As the stormy session drew to a close, Jack O. Horton, Assistant Interior Secretary for Land and Water Resources stated, "The department has no position regarding Kaiparowits at this time." A decision on the project is expected by April from Interior Secretary Thomas Kleppe.



PLAINSMEN FILE SUIT. The United Plainsmen of North Dakota have filed suit against the North Dakota Water Commission to prevent the commission from issuing additional water permits for energy development in the state. The Plainsmen, an agricultural-environmental group, asked for a permanent injunction until the court receives certified copies of both a short and a long term comprehensive plan for use of water and related land resources. The plan is to be developed by the water commission and the state engineer. The water commission is now considering requests for water for four gasification plants and at least three electrical generating plants. The water commission provoked the Plainsmen by placing a short-term moratorium on future water permits which did not include pending applications.

UNDERGROUND TAR SAND EXPERIMENT. Federal engineers are burning tar sands underground to produce oil near Vernal, Utah. The experimental Energy Research and Development Administration project has produced only 50 barrels of oil after four weeks of burning. If perfected, however, the process could help reach large quantities of oil in tar sand deposits too deep for commercial mining.

GRASSLANDS STRIPPABLE. An amendment which implies that strip mining could take place in Wyoming's National Grasslands, which are administered by the U.S. Forest Service, has passed as part of the House version of the coal leasing bill. The amendment also asks state governors to watchdog decisions to mine these federal lands. The amendment states that the governor of a state in which strip mining is to take place on any part of the national forest system must be notified and given 60 days to respond. If the governor objects to the stripping, the federal government will wait while the governor prepares his case. At the end of six months, the Secretary of Interior shall reconsider his original decision, the amendment says.

HECHLER SUPPORTS PARKS. Rep. Ken Hechler (D-W.Va.) successfully added an amendment to the House federal coal leasing bill which specifies that coal mining will not be allowed in any area of the National Park System, the National Wildlife Refuge System, the National Wilderness System, the National System of Trails, and the Wild and Scenic Rivers System, including study rivers. Although Interior has indicated no plans to lease these areas, former Asst. Interior Secretary Jack Carlson recently criticized withdrawing them from mining. (See HCN, 1-16-76) Hechler's amendment was prompted by Carlson's speech. Another House committee is preparing a more comprehensive bill protecting the areas. The bill passed the House Jan. 21; the Senate has not yet acted on it.

PILOT LIGHTS STEAL GAS. Up to 50% of all natural gas sold in the U.S. for cooking stoves is wasted each year by pilot lights, according to a New York State Public Service Commission report quoted in *Conservation News*.

HEARINGS SLOW COLSTRIP. State hearings have added a year to the timetable for completing two generating units at Colstrip, Mont., according to Montana Power Co. An engineer for the company said that the five companies proposing Colstrip Units 3 and 4 wouldn't have committed \$20 million to the project if they had received a negative response when they first discussed their proposal with state officials in May 1973. Sixty-five days of hearings have already been held, primarily on air and water issues, and at least another six weeks or two months of hearings are expected, according to a report in *The Missoulian*. Potential witnesses number 132.

SOLAR DOLLARS MAKE JOBS. A Montana state program providing grants for research into solar, wind, and other forms of alternative energy is resulting in new, clean, small industries coming to the state. Jerry Plunkett, director of the Montana Energy and MHD Research and Development Institute, Inc., says a dozen research and development firms are considering moving to the state to take advantage of the program, according to *The Missoulian*. A state law sets aside 2½% of the coal tax for research into alternative, renewable energy projects. About \$1.7 million is expected to be available for the program during the budget period ending June 30, 1977.

Jan. 30, 1976 — High Country News-11

NEW WYO. MINE-MILL. A new 1,000-ton-per-day uranium mine-mill operation is planned for Bear Creek, 65 miles north-east of Casper, Wyo. Equal partners in the multi-million dollar venture are Rocky Mountain Energy Co. and Mono Power Co. The mill's entire production will be sent to Southern California Edison Co. and San Diego Gas and Electric Co. The mine will be open pit.

UTAH POWER APPROVED. Desulfurization equipment will not be required of Utah Power & Light Co. for its three new power plant units in Emery County, Utah. The Utah Air Conservation Committee determined that flue gas desulfurization was "not reasonable or practicable," according to a report in the *Deseret News*. The units would meet national ambient air standards if they use low sulfur coal, a Utah official said. But an Environmental Protection Agency air quality staff member predicts the units may emit enough pollutants to violate the non degradation requirement of the Clean Air Act. Across the border in Wyoming at UP&L's Naughton plant, state officials say sulfur controls will be necessary to meet Wyoming's tough state standards. UP&L has filed a lawsuit against the state seeking judicial review of the standards.

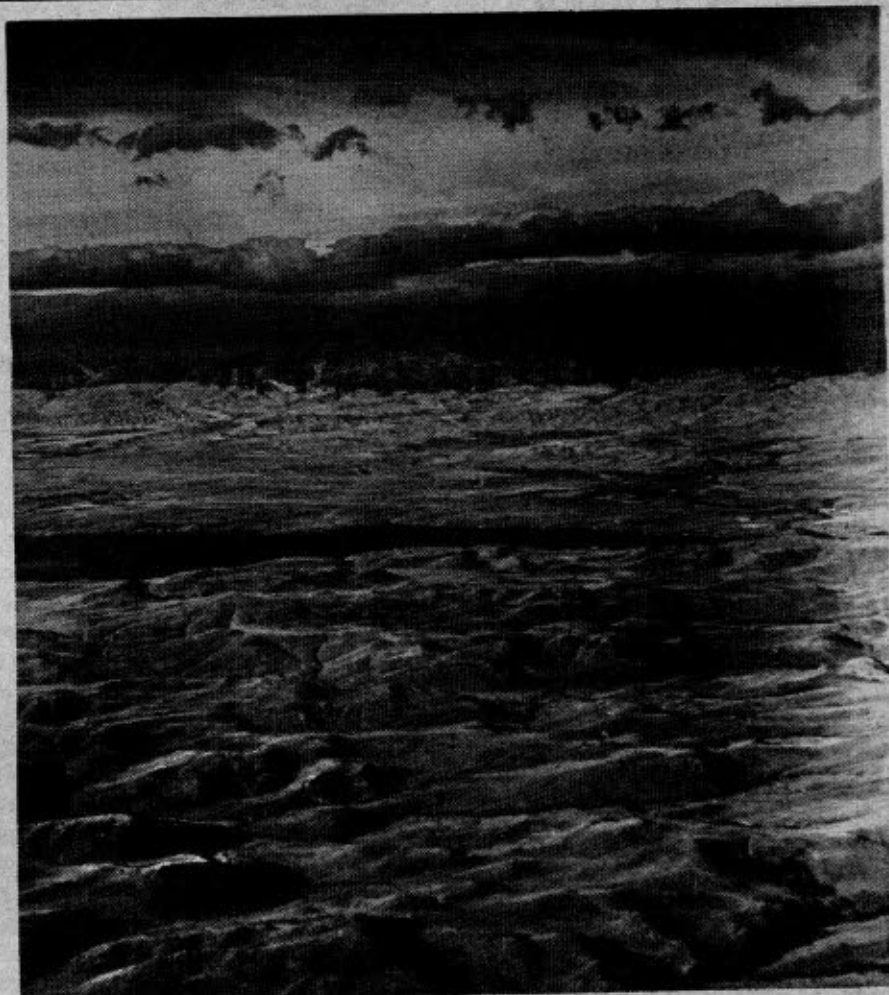


The HCN Hot Line

energy news from across the country

ROYALTY RETURN RAISED. The U.S. House passed the federal coal leasing bill with two amendments sponsored by Rep. Teno Roncalio (D-Wyo.) which are designed to help his state and other energy exporting states cope with impact. The bill would increase royalties on all federal mining to 12.5% and return 50% of that to the states where the mineral is produced. A portion of the money could be used by the states for impact aid. The rest is earmarked for schools and roads. "Wyoming is willing to do its share to help the nation solve its energy problems," Roncalio told the House. But the nation must do its share to help Wyoming meet the impact, he said. The administration wanted to drop the royalty to five percent. A conference committee of House and Senate members will prepare the bill for the President.

PROTECTING THE PIPELINE. Thousands of military men are fighting a "Jack Frost '76" war game in defense of the \$6.3 billion trans-Alaska pipeline. Field officers insist the game is aimed primarily at training troops for arctic warfare, but a key objective is a hypothetical defense of the pipeline being built, according to the Associated Press. The U.S. will thus be prepared for either foreign or inner subversive "Monkey Wrench Gangs" who might threaten the nation's oil-carrying "lifeline."



TEXACO ANNOUNCES GASIFICATION PLANT

Four years of speculation ended for Powder River Basin, Wyo., residents this week when Texaco, Inc., announced its plans for a demonstration gasification plant near Lake DeSmet. Texaco had purchased water rights at the reservoir in 1973 — enough to supply a major industry of some kind — but had not revealed its intentions until now. The plant is contingent upon Congressional funding and upon its selection by the Energy Research and Development Administration (ERDA). The capital investment for the plant could be about \$230 million, according to Texaco, and half of the money would come from ERDA.

The other three firms participating in the venture are Montana-Dakota Utilities Co., Pacific Gas and Electric Co., and Natural Gas Pipeline Co. of America, which is a subsidiary of Peoples Gas Co. The construction force could equal between 1,500 and 2,000 workers. A coal mine that would be opened near the plant would require a work force of approximately 80 people.

The Powder River Basin Resource Council has gone on record opposing the project, saying it would bring 5,000 people into the area, because of associated service positions, and 4,000 of them would leave after the plant is built. The council has taken a strong position advocating exporting coal to where it would be used for electricity rather than converting it in the region.

Photo, looking west over Lake DeSmet, by Tom Bell.

12-High Country News — Jan. 30, 1976

Region's legislators tackle conservation problems

by Glen Dodge

A hundred years ago, an Eastern writer said, "The mineral resources of Colorado exist in the imagination. The agricultural resources do not exist at all."

Gov. Dick Lamm, in his Colorado-centennial "State of the State" message, pointed out that a gold rush, an agricultural rush, a recreation rush, and now a rush on Colorado's other natural resources all indicate that those observations were somewhat less than accurate. He asked the legislature to limit the state's industrial growth; to impose higher taxes on those who dig up its minerals; and to encourage the residents to conserve what they have left.

In Idaho, Gov. Cecil D. Andrus said that Idaho's residents "would not sacrifice our natural resources for mindless economic development. . . . They are concerned about new sources of energy and that new energy sources be non-polluting."

Like Lamm's, Andrus' proposals guaranteed that legislators will spend a major part of the present sessions arguing over energy policy, natural resources, and environmental protection. Idaho and Colorado are the major fronts where environmental battles will be fought in state legislatures of the Northern Rockies during the present sessions. Lesser skirmishes are shaping up in Wyoming.

Here is a state-by-state look at legislative proposals for the area:

COLORADO

The chief environmental measures deal with reclaiming land damaged by mining, plantsiting, and a severance tax on minerals.

While Lamm did not set a specific figure for the severance tax, he did ask that it be applied to gross rather than net income from mineral sales. Democrats in the House already have submitted a bill that would levy a four per cent tax on gross sales, to apply only to the largest coal and metallic mines. However, only those oil and gas wells that produce less than 10 barrels a day — about five per cent of the state's producers — would be exempted. (Montana, with the highest coal tax in the region, has a 30% severance tax on most coal at its selling price, in addition to a 5% "gross proceeds" tax.)

Colorado Republicans generally support a severance tax, but argue that it should be applied to net income, not gross. Lamm's proposal was to apply the tax on gross sales, and to funnel part of the revenue into a "special fund to help communities in oil shale, coal, and mineral areas pay some of the costs associated with the expansion in

do all our drilling in other states. . . . There is no way we can continue to survive the uncertain, unstable and unconcerned political environment we have been experiencing of late. . . . Independents may well end up on the endangered species list."

The first item on Lamm's legislative list was a plant siting bill that "would consist of a permit system for any major new coal or gas power plant, for any nuclear or uranium enrichment plant, and for any facility involving coal gasification, oil shale, or geothermal power." That, essentially, would give the state a say about where power companies put their generating and transmitting facilities, and



PLANNING. Margie Boylan, staff member of the Idaho Conservation League. Land use planning is the group's top priority for this legislative session.

whether such facilities were needed at all. Montana and Wyoming already have siting acts.

A measure that already has created controversy in the legislature is the mining reclamation bill. Colorado's present law covers reclamation of surface land disturbed by coal, sand, gravel, and limestone operations. A bill introduced by Rep. Chuck Howe (D-Boulder) would for the first time cover all surface mining operations — including metals, oil shale, uranium, molybdenum, and prospecting — and surface effects of underground mining.

Lamm said he wanted mining sites to be "fully reclaimed after mineral extraction." The Colorado Open Space Council (COSC), an environmental organization, submitted 16 amendments to Howe's bill, proposing greater state control over mining and more environmental protection. The CF&I Steel Co. of Pueblo offered 11 amendments, asking that the bill be limited to surface mining and that the Reclamation Board be denied the authority to forbid mining on specific lands.

Harris Sherman, director of the Department of Natural Resources, has proposed also covering off-site milling operations. As the bill is written, it applies to milling operations at the mine, but not those in other locations. Sherman says milling may disturb more surface land than associated mining.

The governor also called for: mandatory deposits on cans and bottles so they could be recycled; the creation of a recycling district in the Denver metropolitan area; grants and tax incentives for people to insulate their homes; the development of codes to ensure that new buildings meet conservation standards; and a program to insulate all state buildings.

In addition, Lamm asked the legislature to appoint a "solar and energy conservation coordinator" and to forbid the erection of buildings that would block the sun's rays from a home that had solar heating.

IDAHO

Last year, the Idaho legislature passed a land-use bill that, according to Andrus, "simply requires local authorities to plan for the future." This year, Andrus submitted three more land use bills. One would let local governments set up their own definitions of subdivisions; another would require land use planning for projects that would affect a region, rather than just a locality; and the third would provide state finances and advice to local governments who ask for them.

The additional bills are necessary, Andrus said, "to encourage and expand agriculture's role in Idaho's economy; to prevent encroachment on agricultural land; and to protect and conserve our fertile soil. . . . Those who seek to repeal (the existing) law are either misinformed or are deliberately trying to mislead the public."

The Idaho Conservation League (ICL) lists land use planning as its top lobbying priority for this session. It wants a land-use law that will allow the residents of a city or county who are affected by a development in an adjacent city or county to petition for hearings. It also wants to tighten the definition of subdivisions so that five-acre "ranchettes" now exempt would be included in the land-use law. The leniency of the present law, says ICL's lobbyist Jeff Fereday, "has led to costly sprawl developments on agricultural lands."

Another issue in this session is minimum stream flow. For several years, the legislature has considered and rejected proposals which require that enough water be left in streams to maintain fish and wildlife. Such legislation could also ensure sufficient flows through dams to produce

hydroelectric power, ICL says.

A survey by the Associated Press (AP) showed that 41% of the legislators favor minimum stream flow legislation, 39% oppose it, and the rest are undecided. An interim legislative committee has recommended that such legislation be enacted for

streams in North Idaho. The committee members exempted South Idaho because much of the Snake River's water is used for agriculture, said Rep. Vard Chatburn (R-Albion), chairman of the committee.

"I don't want to show my grandchildren the Snake River bed," replied Rep. Ralph Wheeler, R-American Falls.

Some legislators oppose minimum stream flow because they feel it would take away some existing water rights. Fereday says the ICL favors the legislation provided it "does not interfere with prior rights, but treats water as the limited resource it is." Minimum stream flow legislation, said Andrus, "is not just some environmentalist's dream, but a genuine necessity."

COST OF POLLUTING TO RISE?

Andrus also asked that the fines for air and water polluters be increased to a maximum of \$1,000 per day. Last year, the Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry (IACI) supported stiff penalties so that the state could assume from the federal Environmental Protection Agency authority over waste water discharge permits.

This year, says Leo Bodine, president of the IACI, the organization may try to abolish the Health and Welfare Department's division of environment, which enforces the antipollution laws. That is because industry presently must answer both to the state and federal governments, Bodine says.

Andrus made no mention of a plant siting bill — a measure that is one of the ICL's top priorities; it is opposed by IACI. It is likely that such a measure will be introduced; it is also likely that it won't get far since the AP survey found 65% of the legislators to be against it.

Rep. Beverly Bistline (D-Pocatello) says she will introduce a bottle bill similar to the one proposed in Colorado. The ICL, says Fereday, believes such a measure is necessary. Beverage dealers say it would create unnecessary expenses.

As in Colorado, Andrus proposed tax deductions for home insulation. But he went further and asked that those who use solar or geothermal energy to heat and cool their homes be exempted from property taxes on the devices. The state, he said, may use geothermal energy for buildings in the Capitol Mall, and it was looking into the possibility of using solar or geothermal energy for office buildings to be constructed in Lewiston, Idaho Falls, or Pocatello.

WYOMING

The Wyoming legislature this year holds only a 20-day budget session, and is prohibited from considering non-budget bills unless two-thirds of the members of either house want to consider them.

The Governor's Committee on Capital Improvements for Higher Education has suggested that an export tax be levied on electric power generated in Wyoming which is used in other states. It also has recommended an increase in the severance tax on coal, trona, and uranium.

The Powder River Basin Resources Council (PRBRC) and the Wyoming Outdoor Council (WOC) are trying to raise \$6,930 for lobbying in favor of another type of export law. John Enger, president of the Wyoming Outdoor Council (WOC), wants an export policy act that would permit a plant to be built only if a company can show

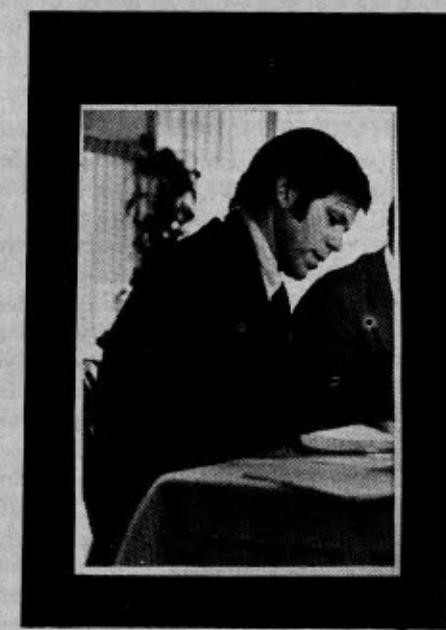
(Continued on page 14)

For information on environmental legislation in Colorado, contact:
Colorado Open Space Council, 1325
Delaware Street, Denver, Colo.,
80204. Phone: (303) 573-9241.

these industries."

The Democrats' bill did not include a provision to return money to the communities, but Rep. Paul Brown (D-Grand Junction) has prepared an amendment to do so, and several influential Republicans said such a provision was necessary to win their support of any severance tax measure.

R. H. Prewitt Jr., president of the Independent Petroleum Association of the Mountain States, said, "Colorado's interest will not be attended to, nor its revenues increased, if we are forced to shut wells and



LOOKING AT COAL LAWS. Wyoming Sen. John Turner (R.-No. Lincoln, Sublette, and Teton) suspects the state's 18-year-old coal leasing laws need revision. Wyoming has leased over a million acres for coal. That's six times the acreage under federal lease for coal.



Western Roundup

HCN

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SNOWMOBILE BAN CRITICIZED

Snowmobilers armed with 1,121 signatures on petitions met with Glacier National Park superintendent Phillip R. Iversen to protest closure of the park to their machines, according to the HUNGRY HORSE NEWS. The group said cross-country skiers may also adversely affect wildlife "and to be fair they should be banned as well." Iversen told the snowmobilers he would reconsider the ban for next winter, but the policy stood fast for now. He reported that a researcher was looking into the impact of skiers in the park. Meanwhile, the snowmobilers are working closely with the adjacent Flathead National Forest where an environmental impact statement is being prepared on snowmobile use in the forest, according to the HUNGRY HORSE NEWS.

Mont. subdividers brought to standstill

The business of subdividing land for development is almost at a standstill in Gallatin County, Mont., according to the Billings Gazette. Two years ago, developers were splitting up to 5,000 acres a month into small tracts. Tougher subdivision laws and a downturn in the economy have brought the halt, planners say.

Pollution forces Kennecott closure

Air stagnation in the Salt Lake City area forced Kennecott Copper Corp. to shut down its giant Magna smelter on Jan. 22. Pollution levels for sulfur dioxide were the highest ever recorded in Utah at the smelter site around the time of the shutdown. Kennecott was back in partial operation by Jan. 24 as the weather cleared. Total dollar loss due to the shutdown was estimated at over \$1 million. Kennecott air samplers registered the pollution before the state did. The state's warning system is based on 24-hour average concentrations.



PUPFISH IN COURT

The U.S. Supreme Court has been asked to rule if one of the world's rarest fish has a legal right to exist. The Devil's Hole pupfish is found in only one pool in Death Valley and the pool is slowly being drawn down by wells pumping near the refuge. Until the pumping started in 1968, the number of remaining pupfish was about 700 — but now there are only 294 left. The federal government obtained an injunction on the pumping and won in lower court. Now the well owner, Francis Cappaert, backed by several western states, is asking that the order be overturned. In 1952 President Harry S. Truman established the pool as a national monument under the Antiquities Act. Cappaert's attorney says a fish does not qualify as an antiquity.

Photo of pupfish copyrighted by Ann and Myron Sutton. Printed in HCN with permission.

Gov. Lamm supports wild Dolores

Public comment is now being accepted on a proposal to designate the Dolores River in Colorado as a federal wild and scenic river. An interagency study team which drew up a draft environmental impact statement on the proposal is recommending that 105 miles of the Dolores be protected. Colorado Gov. Dick Lamm is backing 140 miles of river protection — including a section of the West Dolores.

Conservation groups are calling for protection of the entire 250 miles of river system. They oppose the river segment approach taken by the federal and state government. "We feel that river systems and their ecotones do not stop and start at state or other political lines. A river is a unit and should be studied as such," say the groups.

Many local businessmen and residents are calling for no wild river because they fear loss of property rights. They also fear wild river status will jeopardize the proposed McPhee Dam. State and federal officials have assured the residents that protecting the river as proposed will not harm private property or chances for getting the dam built.

The conservation groups are taking a hands-off policy on the dam. While they've included the dam site in their river proposal they say: "Support for wild and scenic river protection for the Dolores does not constitute opposition to the proposed McPhee Dam.... Conservationists maintain that the proposed project and wild and scenic river designation can be compatible."

Comments are due Feb. 17. Send comments or requests for more information to: Don Bock, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, Mid-Continent Region, P.O. Box 25387, Denver Federal Center, Lakewood, Colo. 80225. Also refer to High Country News Sept. 26, 1975, page 8 for more information.

Game & Fish oppose Teton expansion

The Wyoming Game and Fish Commission has voiced its unanimous opposition to any further expansion of Grand Teton National Park boundaries. With more than 16% of Teton County, Wyo., currently administered by the National Park Service and only one per cent in private ownership, the Commission said, "Enough is enough! We cannot endorse further encroachment...." The Commission said, "Park Service philosophies are preservation-oriented.... It has been our experience that... (park) control has more often meant restricting recreational opportunities, especially as regards hunting and fishing." Park superintendent Robert Kerr has extended the Teton boundary study for another six months because of the degree of public interest. The study is now scheduled to be complete in October.

Town of Obsidian faces condemnation

The Sawtooth National Recreation Area in central Idaho is seeking to condemn the tiny town of Obsidian and other "nonconforming land uses" in the area. A group of landowners in Obsidian have filed suit challenging the SNRA's right to force them to sell out and are seeking an injunction on condemnation proceedings. The SNRA has been trying to get landowners to agree to sell or exchange their property, but some residents don't want to move. After the SNRA was set up in 1972, Obsidian was zoned "agricultural" to maintain scenic values.

Road allowed through Bighorn Canyon

Boosters of the proposed Transpark road through Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area in Wyoming and Montana won a major court victory last week. Two environmental groups asked U.S. District Court Judge James F. Battin to issue a permanent injunction on road construction, but instead Battin lifted the existing temporary injunction thus allowing construction to begin. The groups — the Montana Wilderness Association and the Montana Wildlife Federation — also asked Judge Battin to rule that the environmental impact statement on the first 9.6 mile segment of highway was inadequate. Again, Battin disagreed with the conservationists. The Transpark road would cut through scenic land which is valuable for its archeological sites. Conservationists fear the road could destroy these values.

Alaska wolf extermination ban sought

The Alaska Board of Game is conducting wolf and moose predator-prey studies by killing off all the wolves in some game units and only part of the wolves in others. A coalition of conservative groups led by Defenders of Wildlife views this research as "clandestine and illegal" wolf slaughter. The coalition has filed suit to block the continuation of the aerial wolf hunt on public lands.

Overhunting, hard winters, and wolves have reduced certain Alaska moose herds, game commissioner James W. Brooks told the Washington Star. The wolf kill is to see what happens when there are no wolves to hunt the moose. Initially the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was participating in the experiment, but when the conservation organizations threatened to sue for lack of an environmental impact statement, federal support was withdrawn. Defenders of Wildlife, in a letter to Alaska Gov. Jay S. Hammond, said, "The wolf cannot be considered the culprit in the decrease of the moose; in fact, he should be considered part of the solution, left alone to carry out his purpose in the wild.... The wolf must not be viewed as a competitor of man, but as a component of all nature." This is the second year that Alaska has attempted to initiate a wolf control program. Last year's proposal was stopped when Defenders and other groups filed a lawsuit.

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LOSING GROUND



JOHN G. MITCHELL

by John G. Mitchell, Sierra Club Books, San Francisco, 1975. \$8.95, hard cover, 227 pages.

Review by Peter Wild

Most people have heard about Reserve Mining. The company processes iron ore near Silver Bay, Minn., and dumps the waste into Lake Superior. Among other things, the offal contains asbestos fibers—fibers which a number of reputable scientists believe can cause cancer. Besides being a free dumping ground for Reserve, Lake Superior is the water supply for cities along its shores. Though litigation began in 1972, Reserve is still dumping.

What people may not understand is how, in a supposedly free society, one company can subject hundreds of thousands of human beings to the possibility of death by cancer. At least part of the answer, in this and hundreds of similar cases, lies in the romance between big business and government. As is true of love affairs, a good portion of the activity takes place in the dark, out of public view. Granted, right in the open a team from the Environmental Protection Agency pressed Reserve for reform even before the court battle commenced. It pressed too hard. Reserve Mining is part of a consortium with Armco and Republic Steel. Its friends in the White House saw the EPA team as the leader in an "eco-freak conspiracy."

To resist the environmental impulses of the EPA, the commerce secretary and Nixon fund-raiser, Maurice Stans, established the National Industrial Pollution Advisory Council. To it Stans appointed Willis Boyer of Republic and William Verity of Armco. In addition, Reserve boasted other powerful allies in Washington, namely Peter Flanigan and Charles W. Colson, who had turned their share of tricks for favored corporations in the past and who later would become famous in the Watergate affair.

I'm no glutton for punishment. If *Losing Ground* were merely a railing catalogue of the sins against the environment that seem to be sucking the nation toward the apocalypse, I'd toss it over on the pile with scores of other books published each year that document a similar fate. As accurate and readable as they may be, my head can take just so much. However, *Losing Ground* is unique among its kind, because the author brings to his expert journalism a personal fire and intimacy, a poetic richness to the situations discussed.

John G. Mitchell is a man who's been around. Past editor-in-chief of Sierra Club Books, writer for *Audubon* and

Newsweek, he's worked with an environmentalist's eye in such varied places as Southern California, Staten Island, Minnesota, and Gallup, N.M. Much of the book results from a recent tour on which he revisited his former haunts. He explains the hard facts, the how's and why's of the ecological changes that took place in his absence. On a journalistic level he does a supreme job of guiding the reader through such complexities as the politics, finances, and water wastage that are making King County, Calif., one of the richest agricultural regions in the nation. Its success, however, may well turn the area into a desert for the children of those presently reaping the profits. Right now, "The illusion of abundance is everywhere," Mitchell comments, standing in the middle of bright green expanses of alfalfa, sugarbeets, and wheat.

There are several flies in the ointment. Boosters of King County are meeting the challenge of plummeting water tables by drilling deeper wells and demanding water from other counties. In addition, the water they have is laden with salts which form a crust of sterile alkali in the soil. The present trick is to dump more salty water on the fields, in order to keep the alkali layer flushed down to a level beneath the roots of crops. Unfortunately, the more water used, the faster the salts accumulate in the ground. It's a game which this generation might win; future generations will lose it for sure.

Beyond the facts, however, Mitchell's greatest talent lies in his focus on what short-sighted approaches are doing to the spirits of the people who must live with them. In population, Gallup ranks eleventh of New Mexico's cities. One of its recent public accomplishments is a new jail, the largest in the state. Financially, Navajos from their nearby reservation provide the city's lifeblood. On weekends they flood into town to spend their money. They get drunk in large numbers. Over the

years there has been some talk in Gallup about starting a rehabilitation center for alcoholics. The jail solution was simpler. On a cold Saturday night Mitchell takes us along in a Ford van with Yazzie, a Navajo police sergeant, whose task is to deliver load after load of those sprawled in the streets to the jail, where they are released the next morning. In attitude, Gallup's handling of the problem is not much different than that of King County's.

Or Mitchell shows us Staten Island, where he once lived, a last natural refuge of fields and woods in the New York City area. He introduces us to Herbert Gericke, an organic farmer. For years Gericke has fought subdivisions of tacky-tacky houses, freeways, and pollution that blighted his crops. Now part of his farm is within the Absolute Kill Zone surrounding nearby storage tanks of liquefied natural gas. That's the zone, "... where everything goes poof if one of the tanks blows up." Two years ago a tank farm some miles away from Gericke's organic farm exploded, killing 40 workmen. Gericke is 80; he's tired of fighting.

Jackboots and midnight raids, as frightening and as dramatic as they might be, do not form the essence of totalitarian rule. Lack of choice does. Mitchell is suggesting that our brand of technological, laissez-faire totalitarianism may be worse than what we are used to booing self-righteously in the movies. We and our environment are being maimed and killed slowly by asbestos fibers and sulfur dioxides and oil pollution, rather than by the quick dispatch of bullets and crematoriums. Mitchell urges us to be realistic. The worsening mess was created by the public's willingness to swallow pabulum. In our time, cynicism, constant questioning, and defiance are the positive values of survival. It sounds, come to think of it, pretty much like Washington's advice about liberty and vigilance.

Lesser skirmishes in Wyoming . . .

(Continued from page 12)

it is needed to meet in-state energy demands, or if it can demonstrate that the environmental impact of building the plant where the energy is needed would be greater than building the plant in Wyoming.

In another measure favored by the conservation lobbies, coal-fired electric power plants would be taxed on a percentage of the value of the power the plants produce. Increasing the costs of generating power in Wyoming might encourage utilities to burn coal near power load centers rather than near mines. This tax, which would hit Wyoming and out-of-state consumers alike, avoids problems posed by the governor's committee proposal, conservationists say. The committee's tax, like a tax currently under attack in New Mexico, would discriminate between in-state and out-of-state consumers. WOC is against hiking oil and gas severance taxes, but favors an increase in the present 10.5% tax on coal.

Sen. John Turner (R-No. Lincoln, Sublette, and Teton) has asked the Interim Committee on Mines & Minerals to initiate a study of laws governing coal leases in the state. The laws have not been revised in 18 years. Among the changes needed may be a reassessment of rental and royalty rates, Turner says. Wyoming has over a million acres under state coal leases, almost six times the acreage under federal coal leases in the state.

OTHER STATES

The New Mexico legislature last spring

imposed a tax on electric power generated in that state and shipped to other states. That tax is costing Arizona utility customers about \$3.4 million a year. Utilities in Arizona have filed suit to block the tax, and U.S. Rep. John J. Rhodes (R-Ariz.) has introduced a federal bill to nullify it.

In Utah, a proposal has been introduced to increase fees of hunting and fishing licenses by \$1, and channel the income to predator control programs.

The legislature does not meet in Montana this year.



For information on environmental legislation in Wyoming, contact:

Wyoming Outdoor Council, c/o John Enger, Rte. 2, 944 Shoshone, Powell, Wyo. 82435. Phone: (307) 754-4576 or Powder River Basin Resource Council, 150 W. Brundage St., Sheridan, Wyo. 82801. Phone: (307) 672-5809.

BULLETIN BOARD

LOONEY LIMERICKS

by Zane E. Cology

If your grandchildren someday would care
To visit the desert, so rare —
They might peek at the scene
Betwixt and between
All the power plants being built there.

WATER FOR INDUSTRY

Hearings on a proposed reservoir which could provide water for major coal development projects in Wyoming will be held in February. Comments on the document describing the project, "Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Reservoir on the Middle Fork of the Powder River," are due March 10. Approximately half (25,000 acre feet) of the water to be stored is controlled by Carter Oil Co., a subsidiary of Exxon, and by Atlantic Richfield Company. Both corporations have large coal leases in the Powder River Basin, but have no "firm plans" for the water yet. The reservoir site is 12 miles west of Kaycee, Wyo. Hearings will be in Buffalo, Wyo., Feb. 24 at 7 p.m. in the Catholic Recreation Hall and in Casper, Wyo., Feb. 26 at 7 p.m. in the Natrona County Library. For a copy of the statement write District Manager, Bureau of Land Management, P.O. Box 2834, Casper, Wyo. 82602.

SUN SIGN ALMANAC

An almanac containing "cosmic and planetary" information has been published in Montana which includes a comprehensive section on energy. Included in the section are topics such as how we waste our finite energy resources, what "net energy" means, the problems of nuclear radioactivity, and a report on renewable, clean energy resources. The almanac also includes poems, charts of cosmic cycles, and information on gardening by the moon. It can be ordered from Elizabeth and Wilbur Wood at Box 12, Roundup, Mont. 59072 for \$3.60 postpaid.

PRONGHORN WORKSHOP

The Seventh Biennial Pronghorn Antelope Workshop will be held at the Blue Lakes Inn in Twin Falls, Idaho, from Feb. 24 to 26. The program involves technical papers on pronghorn research and management. For more information contact Robert Autenrieth, Workshop Chairman, Idaho Fish and Game Department, P.O. Box 25, 600 South Walnut St., Boise, Idaho 83707.

COAL STRATEGY

The Coalition Against Strip Mining is holding a strategy meeting in Washington, D.C., Feb. 7-9. People working on coal issues in 30 states are expected to attend, to decide how to push for enactment of a strong strip mining bill in the 94th Congress. For more information write the coalition at 324 C. St., S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003.

LAND STATUS MAP

The Wyoming Bureau of Land Management has prepared a land status map for the state depicting federal, state, and private land ownership. The map also shows BLM district boundaries and major topographical features. The map is available for \$4 from any BLM office in the state.

TETON BOUNDARY MEETING

Another public meeting on proposed boundary extensions of Grand Teton National Park has been set for Feb. 2 at 7:30 p.m. in the basement of the Teton County Court House in Jackson, Wyo. The meeting will be used to update the public on the status of the study.

Jan. 30, 1976 — High Country News-15

Tell us where to go

HCN Survey and Reader Profile

Perhaps you'd like to help us make our New Year's Resolutions.

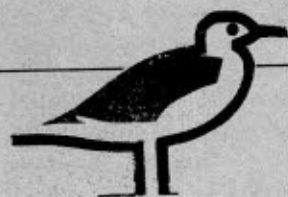
To help us do a better job of serving you, we would like for you to answer the following questions. We've included some questions about you, too, to help direct our content and advertising.

Where did you receive your current copy of HCN?
Subscription Newsstand Friend HCN
Mail-out Other

How long do you keep your copies of the paper? —

How many people read your copy of HCN? —

Would you find a cumulative index of HCN helpful?
Yes No



Do you mind HCN carrying advertising? (This one might cost me my job!) — Yes, I mind. — No it doesn't bother me.

Name several stories that interested you that appeared in HCN this past year.

Please circle one of the following evaluations or provide your own.

1. yes 2. no 3. no opinion

Do you think our reporting is accurate? 1 2 3
Is the reporting fair and objective? 1 2 3
Is the reporting lively and interesting? 1 2 3
Are the stories developed enough to provide informed reading? 1 2 3

Do you find the layout of the paper

1. easy to follow
2. confusing sometimes
3. hard to follow, send a map.

How do you rate HCN? In the past year HCN has:

1. improved
2. stayed the same
3. slumped
4. become a front for the oil companies.

Additional comments are welcome. Please include your suggestions for stories, leads, hot tips. . .



Department ratings:

Listed below are some of our regular departments and some of the subject areas we cover. Would you like to:
1. see more; 2. see less; 3. see the same; 4. see discontinued, all or part of the following list? please circle your selection.

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Practical guides such as the home insulation series |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | "Dear Friends": HCN messages to you, the reader |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | "Bulletin Board": calendar of events, things to write for |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Articles on land use |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Personality profiles |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Art work |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Poetry |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Wilderness use: hunting, camping, boating, hiking |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Natural history |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Agricultural reporting |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | | Social problems |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | "Reckoning": D.C. standings and stratagems |

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Energy reporting |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Cartoons by Rob Pudim and Paul Danish |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | "Thoughts from the Distaff Corner" by Marge Higley: grandma iconoclast |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | "HCN letters": the readers speak out. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | "High Country" by Tom Bell |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | a. environmentalist columns |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | b. religious columns |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | HCN editorials |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Guest editorials |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Centerspreads; usually two pages on natural history, plants, animals, wilderness |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Book reviews |

The reader's profile

We want to get to know you better. Developing this reader profile should give us a better understanding of our readers. (It should help us produce a pleasing product and maybe entice a few advertisers, too.) Take a few minutes, please, and answer the following questions about yourself. If a question seems too personal, skip it.

Do you live in the Rocky Mountain Region?
Yes No
(AZ, CO, ID, MT, ND, NM, SD, UT, WY)

If so, how long have you lived in the region?
Less than 5 years
5-15 years
More than 15 years
A lifetime

Do you plan to stay in the region?
No Yes

Do you live in a city or town —
a rural area —?

How many years of formal education do you have?

What is your occupation?

Do you have children? Please check their age group.
1-5 6-12 13-19 19-

How many books did you read last year?

How did you decide to buy your last major outdoor equipment purchase?

1. Friends told me about it.
2. reading equipment comparisons in trade journals.
3. the store where I bought it sold me on it.
4. mail order or bought it direct from the manufacturer.

From the following list of activities, check those you like to do:

Hunting	Rock climbing
Fishing	Sailing
Photography	Handicrafts
Bicycling	Gardening
Canoeing	Bird watching
Skiing	Astronomy
Hiking	Electronics
Other	

Do you write letters to your Congressmen about matters that concern you? Yes No

Are you registered as a — Republican;
— Democrat; — Independent

Other than voting, are you active in politics?
Yes No

Are you interested in applying energy conservation ideas to your own home or place of work?
No Yes

Do you belong to any conservation groups?

Do you attend their meetings? — Do you take an active part in their activities? — Yes No

Do your local state newspapers adequately cover environmental issues in your area?
No Yes

Are you interested in using solar, wind or methane power in your home or business?
No Yes

What periodicals on the following list do you read regularly (besides HCN, that is!): Denver Post —, Rocky Mountain News —, Straight Creek Journal —, Mountain Gazette —, Billings Gazette —, The Missoulian —, Borrowed Times —, Montana Outdoors —, The Idaho Statesman —, Casper Star-Tribune —, Gillette News Record —, Sheridan Press —, Desert News —, Sierra Club Bulletin —, Audubon Magazine —, Living Wilderness —, Not Man Apart —, Environment —, Environmental Action —, L.A. Times —, New York Times —, Wall Street Journal —, AERO newsletter —. You may add to this list.

Thank you for your time. As soon as I get this thing tallied we'll print the results in HCN. *August*



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Sierra Club's Southwest Representative

John McComb: a natural for the job

by Peter Wild

People envy John McComb, Southwest Representative of the Sierra Club. They think it would be wonderful to be paid to hike through the deserts and mountains surrounding Tucson, Ariz. McComb chuckles at the thought. "They don't realize," he says, "that I did a lot more hiking before I took this job." Believing that dedication and patience are two essential qualities for his profession, he works 70-80 hours a



JOHN MCCOMB: "If I tried to measure my success in terms of what I'd ideally want, I'd be a psychological wreck. I find it much more useful to measure things in terms of what would happen if the Sierra Club didn't do anything."

Photo by Joanna McComb

week, most of it at his desk or traveling to hearings. Though he doesn't get out as often as he'd like to visit the spots he loves, he takes satisfaction from his efforts to protect them.

McComb's background reflects a long and sympathetic contact with the outdoors. As a boy in Ames, Iowa, he tagged along on field trips with his father, a professor of forestry at Iowa State University. After receiving a B.S. in electrical engineering from the University of Arizona, he worked a year for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Not satisfied, he returned to Tucson to study hydrology. Under his leadership the Conservation Committee of the Southern Arizona Hiking Club urged its members to protect their interests in the growing Southwest by supporting wilderness legislation for favorite haunts.

Other things conspired to make a full-time conservationist of him. In 1965 David Brower, then Executive Director of the Sierra Club, was looking for Arizonans to testify against dams proposed for the Grand Canyon. McComb volunteered and made the first of his many future appearances before Congressional committees in

Washington. In the next few years he became one of the state's most enthusiastic part-time conservationists. When the position of Southwest representative opened in 1970, he was a natural for the job.

In addition to McComb's office, the club supports field representatives in the Pacific Northwest, Northern Plains, Midwest, Southern California, and Alaska. Each is responsible for major conservation issues in the area, for lobbying in state and national legislatures, and for providing professional information to volunteer environmentalists. Each conducts field investigations and keeps the main office in San Francisco up to date on local developments. On top of these regular duties, McComb publicizes information via his newsletter, *Southwest Wildlands*. With the growing number of environmental crises, it's a big, at times overwhelming, job. Assisted by one secretary, John McComb scrambles to keep track of his vast territory of Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, and West Texas, an area under heavy assault by power interests.

Of prime concern is Kaiparowits. A consortium of power companies led by Southern California Edison wants to build the 3,000-megawatt, coal-fired generator in southern Utah. McComb calls Kaiparowits "... my number one priority..." because it is the "... largest single threat to our priceless scenic values." The plant is the vanguard of a scheduled invasion by the power industry into an area rich in such public treasures as Grand Canyon, Zion, and Bryce Canyon National Parks. Along with other Southwesterners, John McComb fears that pollution from the mammoth facilities would blight the unique and pristine Colorado Plateau.

Planned primarily to export energy to large cities in other states, they are a classic example of intended sacrifice of the rural environment for urban convenience. A green on red poster tacked to his bulletin board comments: "Power Plant — Stick It In L.A."

When asked about similar projects throughout the Rocky Mountain states, McComb replies that people are learning from experience. They are changing their attitudes about being exploited. Having seen the high taxes, overcrowding, and air pollution that often come along with developments, they want to make sure that energy companies campaigning to locate in their areas will not become long-term liabilities.

However, many Utahans are backward in this respect. "In contrast to almost every other state, Utah is still welcoming energy development with open arms. They don't realize the problems that will accompany development or how destructive it will be to their lifestyle," he explains.

When reminded that some Utah politicians claim that opposition to Kaiparowits comes only from out of state, McComb sighs as if he has heard the argument many times before. For years organizations in Utah such as the Uinta Chapter of the Sierra Club have urged citizens to take a

hard look at the long-range results before committing themselves and their children to the proposals of outside exploiters. Furthermore, the wild country of southern Utah is an inspiration to thousands of visitors each year. "The public land," the planned sites of the power plants, "belong to all Americans," he emphasizes.

McComb is a believer in action by the private citizen. Personal efforts — letters to Congressmen and public officials or testimony at hearings — count heavily. Officials want to be reelected; they care about public opinion. However, he comes back to the value of persistence and patience, modified by a bit of philosophy. "If I tried to measure my success in terms of what I'd ideally want, I'd be a psychological wreck. I find it much more useful to measure things in terms of what would happen if the Sierra Club didn't do anything." He spent eleven years in a continuing battle to protect the Grand Canyon and still isn't entirely satisfied with the Enlargement Act which Congress passed in 1974.

Persistence paid off in the successful five-year struggle to establish the Sycamore Canyon Wilderness in Arizona. "In spite of opposition from Rep. Sam Steiger," in whose district the canyon lies, "we got the wilderness legislation through because we continued to push and didn't give up." Wilderness areas on Pine Mountain, Mt.

Baldy, and in Petrified Forest National Park, to note a few, wouldn't exist without the work of John McComb and others like him.

His files bulge with folders of ongoing projects: land management, air pollution, water use. The Southwest's water laws are lax, its water tables falling. "We've spent water like a little kid that got into his piggy bank and thought it would never run out." With elimination of wasteful practices, McComb reasons, the Southwest could get along with its existing supplies.

Sometimes elements of humor go along with his work, which often involves persuading an official to consider alternatives to outmoded approaches. For years conservationists had urged the Park Service to explore substitute transportation in automobile-choked Grand Canyon National Park. In 1972, while visiting the Grand Canyon, McComb invited the superintendent to go for a bicycle ride. He was taken aback at the offer, protesting that he hadn't done such a thing in years. However, the official's wife sided with McComb; together they persuaded the reluctant superintendent to go. Fortunately, the pair witnessed a spectacular sunset as they pedaled along the rim. The following year the park started renting bicycles. McComb's not sure if the minor incident was responsible for the change, but he is sure that it helped.

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Dear Friends,



This week we learned that **High Country News** is to receive the 1975 Rocky Mountain Center on Environment award for communications. We thank whoever out there had enough confidence in HCN to nominate the paper. It's a treat for this bunch of isolated journalists in the middle of Wyoming to get that pleasant kind of feedback.

Sometimes we hunger for more critical assessments of our product, too. Each issue we ask ourselves: Are we really giving the reader what is important? Are we boring you all to death with gloom? Have we over-emphasized energy news? Why wasn't there room for even one pretty picture?

Letters to the editor whip us into shape sometimes. But they usually address the issues, rather than the direction of the paper. And they tend to be written when someone is extremely agitated, not merely pleased or slightly disappointed.

"You are a bunch of nuts. I hope you

freeze in the dark and they burn your plant for heat," is one such message we've received. "Thank you for running my son's picture in your last paper," is another.

If we are to judge by the number of letters-to-the-editors, *The Monkey Wrench Gang* book review would win our most-provocative-story of 1975 award. But that still doesn't tell us where you want us to go with the paper.

This is all leading up to a request for help. Rip out page 15 of this issue, please, and let us know what you think. Use an extra sheet if you need to. If you're disappointed with HCN in some way, pick up your pen and let us know about it. If you can't think of anything you'd change, let us know that, too. (We need to hear from those who back the status quo — or you might not recognize your next HCN!) In a month or two we'll give you a full report — and hopefully an amusing portrait of HCN readers.

—the editors

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