



High Country News 75¢

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Lander, Wyoming

Friday, May 16, 1980

Will Mancos Mesa make the wilderness grade?

Solitude seekers disagree about open spaces

by Joan Nice

Each year thousands bounce over the rapids in Cataract Canyon or make a wake in Lake Powell. But few visit Mancos Mesa, only a few miles away. And why should they? It's wide open Colorado Plateau country, where an occasional pinyon pine or juniper is a relative oasis.

Nevertheless Mancos Mesa and 174 million equally obscure acres in the West have been spotlighted for the past two years in the U.S. Bureau of Land Management's public land wilderness inventory.

Now the inventory phase of BLM's wilderness search is ready for public scrutiny. With all but 5

(continued on page 6)



Photo by Judy Sumner

THE AUSTERE PLACES, the flat and relatively barren deserts where a gnarled tree looks like an oasis, are the black sheep in BLM's current wilderness inventory.

Wyo. water project faces voter test, questions remain

by Philip White

CHEYENNE, Wyo. — The state of Wyoming, using new wealth from its coal severance tax, is plunging headfirst into the water business.

In what may be the country's largest state-financed water project, this city is embarking on a \$100 million aquatic adventure that rivals, in scope, some of the biggest federal projects.

Critics fear that state dam builders, in their enthusiasm to accommodate Wyoming's growth, may sweep away many of the economic and environmental constraints just now being imposed on federal projects.

A special election in Cheyenne this summer will endorse or reject such a regulatory regression. It may also show just how far the state's residents are willing to go in accepting the economic side-effects of unrestrained growth.

A LONG STRAW

Prior to 1960, the southern Sierra Madre mountains between Encampment and Baggs in southeastern Wyoming were inaccessible and undeveloped. The streams flowing westward off the Continental Divide joined the aptly-named Little Snake River, which rises in the Colorado mountains and serpen-

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Quailing at tailings

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In Durango, Colo., children used to play on the dusty abandoned uranium tailings pile...grown up now, they want it taken away.

Birds of Prey

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Kestrels, great horned owls and their brethren hunt in this undisturbed Snake River area, but developers are on the prowl, too.

Livingston's fair breeze

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Jay Carter's 25-kilowatt generator goes up in Montana, and the move toward wind power approaches gale force.

Colo. solons last gasp

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As the session closed, legislators passed an air quality plan and saved a pile of federal money...otherwise, they didn't do much.

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Muskie swaps dirt for diplomacy; Air, water to be tainted in trade?



Opinion

Why is everyone so confident that our new secretary of state and former senator, Edmund Muskie, can stand up to the Soviets, the Arabs, and even Zbigniew Brezezinski?

They've seen him face off against polluters.

Some automakers and industrialists breathed a sigh of relief as Muskie took his place in the president's cabinet this week. Through air and water pollution laws passed over the last two decades, he has forced expensive changes in their style, and he had shown no signs of easing up.

Muskie made a lackluster appointment to the public works committee into a historic battleground for the earth. He fought pollution before many people even noticed it. Though he promoted essentially voluntary cleanup at first, he authored and passed increasingly tough bills as public support and scientific evidence grew stronger.

Now, thanks to the skillful negotiating of this senator from Maine, an effective battery of air and water legislation is in place. But Muskie's departure from the Senate nevertheless makes us uneasy. The battle is far from over.

An upcoming fight to kill an Energy Mobilization Board conference report that allows waivers of laws for fast-track energy projects (see "Capitol Currents") probably would have been led by him. So would the fight for rigorous hazardous-waste cleanup legislation. The markup of a clean water bill, interrupted recently by Muskie's appointment, no doubt would have benefited by his presence. So would the debate over reauthorization of the Clean Air Act next year.

It's not that Muskie was the only environmentally fastidious member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. Far from it. Without help, he never could have cleaned up the country's water and air to the extent that he has. But none of his sympathetic colleagues on the panel has Muskie's muscle and skill. What's worse, the frontrunners for the chairmanship of Muskie's Environmental Pollution Subcommittee are Sen. Mike Gravel (D-Alaska) and Lloyd Bentsen (D-Tex.). While Gravel is better than Bentsen, neither is a budding environmental crusader. Because the full committee's chairman, Jennings Randolph (D-W.Va.), is weak, the chosen person will be given relatively free rein.

We're not close enough to the legislative scene to be sure, but we suspect that Muskie's promotion could mean bad news for the big skies and the clear waters of the West. How frustrating to lose leadership in the Senate, just when the country's economic troubles are muddying environmental debates and muddling public concern.

If Muskie's the man who could ease world tensions, we'd not begrudge him to Carter. But we may find that Muskie's temper or his lack of foreign affairs savvy cripples him in the new job. Or, if Carter loses in November, he simply may not have enough time to go beyond his briefings.

We hate to suggest denying a fine man an interesting new challenge, but there are potential problems in the vacuum he's leaving as well as in the one he has filled. We may have traded a great pollution fighter for an ineffective diplomat.

— JN

Dry, bureaucratic proposals mean a "long

by Sam Reynolds

"(The North Central Power Study of 1971, the proposals of which run through this book like a long night of nausea, has been termed by government agencies, power and energy companies, and some environmentalists as 'in-operative.' I submit that it is not. It is the essence of 'Project Independence.'"

— K. Ross Toole in his book "The Rape of the Great Plains."

The Bonneville Power Administration is running twin 500 kilovolt power lines smack through the north side of the Missoula Valley.

Those lines will occupy a corridor as wide as a football field is long. They will be strung along towers ranging from 85 feet to — when both lines hang from the same tower — 175 feet tall. The latter height is as tall as a 15-story building. The taller towers are in store for much of western Montana, and almost certainly for the Flathead Reservation.

So what else is new? From the time Colstrips 3 and 4 were born it was known they would send twin 500

kilovolt lines across western Montana. News reports dating from 1977 said the Montana Power Co. had asked BPA to build the western portion of the Colstrip power lines.

News stories last August and September, accompanied by maps, showed where the BPA wanted to put the twin lines — smack up the Clark Fork Valley.

People are organizing to resist. Good luck. But don't count on winning. The prime time to fight was when Colstrips 3 and 4 were considered by the state Board of Natural Resources, then by the state Board of Health and En-

vironmental Sciences, then by the federal Environmental Protection Agency. Those fights long ago were lost in favor of the project — and its power lines.

It's all over except for the final corridor selection and the erection of the power lines. The fight against that is worthy, but it will not block the power lines.

But don't despair. The federal government, the utilities, the energy companies have lots more goodies in store. They've made no secret about it. The Colstrip power lines are mere harbingers of things to come.

THE NORTH CENTRAL POWER STUDY. Published in 1971, the study was the work of experts drawn from 19 investor-owned utilities, two public power utilities, six corporations and eight municipalities. One federal representative served.

It proposed to build 42 enormous minemouth generating plants (21 of them in Montana) with a total generating capacity of 69,000 megawatts. (Colstrips 3 and 4 together have a generating capacity of 1,400 megawatts.)

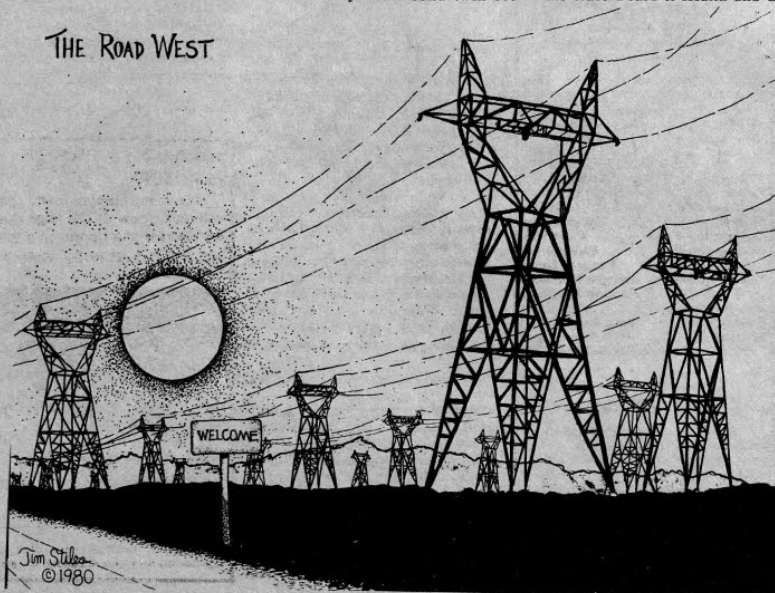
It projected that the population of eastern Montana would increase by an estimated 300,000 to 400,000 people due to power development.

TWO REPORTS DONE BY THE BPA AND THE FOREST SERVICE IN 1977. These outlined the "long range energy corridor requirements to the Pacific Northwest" for seven to 42 years.

The corridors would serve minemouth power plants generating up to 167,000 megawatts, or roughly 120 power plants the size of Colstrips 3 and 4. (All of Montana used an average of less than 1,200 megawatts during 1975, and more than a quarter of that was used by the Anaconda Aluminum Co. reduction plant at Columbia Falls.)

If electricity usage is higher than the more modest projections, between 14 and 20 energy corridors will be needed, the studies said. Up to 42 double-circuit

THE ROAD WEST



VALLEY RANCHERS

Dear HCN,

We run cattle on U.S. Forest Service land for five months a year and appreciate your defense of grazing rights.

One point that many overlook in discussing grazing on public land is the dependence of many valley floor ranchers on this summer range. If the ranchers are denied the use of this summer range the entire ranch may be economically unfeasible. The ranch, often the only green space surrounding a community, will then be up for sale and the subdivisions on their way.

Bill Fales
Carbondale, CO



night of nausea"

550 kilovolt power lines might be built across Montana and Wyoming during the next four decades.

Was the North Central Power Study just a passing phantom? Evidently not. Then came...

"ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS OF SYNTHETIC FUELS."

Published by the U.S. Department of Energy on July 12, 1979, this study laid out a scenario that would erect 36 giant synthetic fuel plants in 10 southeastern Montana counties, increasing their populations by 369,000 people between 1980 and 1990.

Whatever devastation the various coal generating scenarios omit, synfuel takes care of. Congress this year will pass a bill to create an Energy Mobilization Board. The board will have vast powers to sweep aside state restraints on synfuel development.

Synfuel plants convert coal to petroleum products. They use enormous amounts of water. They promise to pollute horrifically. Their technology is young, so they can be expected to waste resources and the taxpayers' money.

The federal government will have ultimate responsibility for the plants. Though energy companies will build and operate the plants, the federal government will guarantee them a profit, whatever world oil markets do.

Massive population influxes due to power and synfuel development will politically overwhelm western Montana and all of traditionally rural eastern Montana. The newcomers can be expected to be indifferent to the state's traditions, to its present assets and resources, to state control over major facility siting, and to pollution controls.

Fairy tales? Well, big mucky-mucks, mostly paid by the taxpayers, keep coming up with these horrible accounts, presenting them in dry, bureaucratic tones that they seem to take seriously.

And lo, it is coming to pass. The twin



Letters

Dear HCN,

In the April 4 HCN, in the classifieds: Can you find out if Dear Cumquat found Blackie for me? My heart went out to her. I would have sworn they'd be under the nightshade leaf, seeing they weren't in the cogstone.

Bill Thomson
Cupertino, Calif.

Looney Limericks by Zane E. Cology

The BLM said the Flat desert mesas just weren't appropriate wilderness places

"They're too dry, and too small
And not pretty at all

And besides, there are just too many faces"

Colstrip power lines that are about to sweep through western Montana are merely the breath of the future. What can we do?

Organize now. Organize well. Organize permanently. Fight this power line and those coming after it every inch of the way because, friends, we ain't seen nothin' yet.

Sam Reynolds is the editorial page editor of *The Missoulian* (Missoula, Mont.), where this article first appeared.

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To have a sample copy sent to a friend, send us his or her address.
Write to Box K, Lander, Wyo., 82520.

Dear HCN:

I am a livestockman who runs both cattle and sheep on the federal range in Southcentral Idaho. I am writing to express my concern over what has come to be known as the "Sagebrush Rebellion."

Historically state land has become private land. I see this happening in Idaho should it become the owner of all presently unappropriated federal lands. Idaho is not in a position to assume financial responsibility for these lands, and would eventually be forced to sell them to the highest bidder.

Who would be the buyers for such lands? Not livestock operators like myself. Considering the vast tracts of grazing land needed for any economically-sized operation, the livestockman cannot afford to purchase these lands, much less pay the taxes upon them. The only potential purchasers for such vast tracts are banks, oil companies, insurance companies and the independently wealthy.

Idaho has some of the largest tracts of wilderness and desert left in the continental United States. These would be locked away forever for use by the privileged few. Many is the time while checking stock, I have found people alone in the middle of the desert. They were there for no particular purpose, other than to see what was to be seen, perhaps more importantly in our mass society, to be alone. This last is something that I definitely wish to see preserved for my grandchildren. It won't be there for them, however, if access to such lands is closed due to private ownership.

Les Sliman
Sliman Sheep Company
Gooding, Idaho

Dear Friends,

Within the past year, three of us on the staff have become parents — and some corners of the office have an air of schizophrenia about them: clippings and typewriters here, toys and teething biscuits there.

The latest addition to the staff family is Jessica Marie Wiles, born April 11 to Steve and to Sara, HCN's photographer.

Because of her youth, dark-haired Jessica has been to work only a couple of times, so we don't know her well. Her tiny, delicate face looks old, wise and stern. Her mother, who knows her better, describes her as active and good-tempered.

Sara has worked part-time as a photographer, darkroom technician and production assistant at HCN for two years now. She has a master's degree in anthropology from Indiana University and did a thesis on Arapahoe kinship on the Wind River Indian Reservation north of Lander. She has been a VISTA volunteer in Rock Springs and a social worker in Lander.

It's tough now, as Sara begins part-time work again, to juggle feeding times and deadlines. But this summer Jessica could turn into something of a professional asset. If all goes well, a trio made up of Jessica, Sara and Marjane Ambler, HCN's former managing editor, will hit the road together to gather stories and photos in Montana and South Dakota about Indians and energy development.

What could be a better way to break the conversational ice, Sara says, than

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CLEAN UP URAVAN

Dear HCN,

In the March 18 article about Uravan, you talk about the nine million tons of uranium tailings impounded in two ponds atop a mesa 350 feet above Uravan.

I own a ranch on the Dolores River a few miles to the north of Uravan. I just purchased it about two years ago from an old-timer who had lived on it over 50 years. He said that since the plant has gone in at Uravan, no fish have been able to live in the Dolores River and the quality of the water even for irrigation is terrible. He said that any time you wish, you can go up to the plant at Uravan and the tailing ponds located along the river are visibly dripping and flowing into the river from seepage out of the ponds.

I want to join in with whoever is trying to make Union Carbide clean up their operation.

Jack Treece
Grand Junction, Colo.



Jessica Marie Wiles

a beaming baby? A screaming baby is another possibility, of course, but buoyant new parents with the determination of Sara just don't dwell on possibilities such as that.

— the staff

SPRING PLANTING

This spring plant something that will really grow. Place *High Country News* in the hands of a friend and watch a growing awareness take root.



Enclosed is \$15 for 25 issues. Send HCN to my friend:

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address _____
city _____
state & zip _____

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Cheyenne Water...

(continued from page 1)

tines across the Colorado-Wyoming border 10 times before deciding to head south to the Yampa River.

But when the Atlas ICBM boom hit Cheyenne in the late 1950s, the city of Cheyenne began searching for supplemental supplies. Finding no unappropriated water close to home in either the North Platte or the Laramie River, the city filed for rights on a treasure of unappropriated water in the small west slope streams of the Sierra Madre, 120 miles west of Cheyenne, where farmers accustomed to abundant irrigation water had never bothered to file for water rights.

In 1965, Stage I of Cheyenne's water development project was completed. It begins just below the Continental Divide on the west slope of the Sierra Madre.

Cement barriers divert an average of 7,500 acre-feet (one acre-foot equals 325,851 gallons) from five streams into a pipeline which transports the water by gravity flow under the divide and into a reservoir. The water then flows into the North Platte via the Encampment River.

Not a drop of that west slope water ever actually flows into Cheyenne bathtubs. It "repays" the Platte River for water diverted upstream — out of Douglas Creek, a Platte tributary from the east. Douglas Creek water is then removed and is transported by gravity flow across the Medicine Bow Mountains, the Laramie basin and the Laramie Mountains, finally emptying into Cheyenne's own Crow Creek drainage.

This imaginative "Platte payback" system, combined with the 5,100 acre-feet produced by Crow Creek and 2,000 acre-feet from area well fields, gives Cheyenne an average annual supply of 14,500 acre-feet.

The city's average yearly consumption (1967-78) has been 12,500 acre-feet, although it dropped as low as 10,621 acre-feet when the 1977 drought prompted a voluntary conservation effort.

GOING THIRSTY?

Beginning in the early 1970s, government and railroad growth tied to energy development in the state caused Cheyenne to sprawl in every direction. Again predicting water shortages, the Cheyenne water board in 1976 asked the Medicine Bow National Forest for a permit to build Stage II. The board expected a quick, automatic approval, allowing it to extend its water collection

facilities to another 10 creeks providing an additional 30,000 acre-feet.

But Stage II would chop out a sixth of Huston Park, the largest remaining roadless area in southeast Wyoming. Dewatering the streams would destroy the last prime habitat of the rare Colorado River cutthroat trout.

The planned reservoir enlargements would drown many miles of stream fisheries and meadows. Roads would open the area to motor vehicles, degrading the habitat of the elk, grouse, bear and big horn sheep that live in the Huston Park area.

The ensuing environmental analysis delayed the project and doubled its estimated cost. And the minimum flows that the Forest Service requires will reduce the possible production of Stage II by one-third to about 20,000 acre-feet.

Realizing that Cheyenne water users would face awesome water rates if required to pay for Stage II themselves, the city water board in 1978 began courting the Wyoming Legislature. In 1979, that body established the Wyoming Water Development Commission to plan state water development and authorized it to prepare a feasibility study of Stage II.

The nine commission members appointed by Gov. Ed Herschler included engineers, ranchers, farmers, lawyers and construction industry representatives. The commission funded a hurried feasibility study and last November announced it would recommend state funding for Stage II.

The Legislature approved a bill earlier this year authorizing construction of the western half of Stage II. The other half, which may provide water largely for other area cities, would not be built until the mid-1980s.

ALTERNATIVES

By putting all its water development eggs in the Stage II basket, Cheyenne water planners may be missing less costly alternatives, including conservation, ground water, and full utilization of existing reservoirs.

"The water board is so committed to this project," said Ed Strader, a city resident and Stage II critic, "and the Legislature is so crazy to get a project going under the old 'use it or lose it' and damn the costs' philosophy, that there has been no thought to less costly alternatives."

"The city should be looking seriously at recycling and conservation before committing ourselves to this project," he said.



Photo courtesy Medicine Bow National Forest

LOOKING NORTHEAST up the North Fork of the Little Snake River in Wyoming's Sierra Madre Mountains. Stage I is at right. Stage II includes a pipeline extending across this area.

John Jackson, a planning manager for the state water development commission, agrees that all the possible alternatives to Stage II were not extensively considered. "You have to draw the line somewhere on how many crazy schemes you can consider," he said.

City Water Board President Elmer Garrett, who has served on that body for 20 years, disagreed that alternatives were not adequately studied.

"Back in 1959 when we started this project, we did an extensive search for water," he said. "The only water was in the Little Snake and I can't imagine any other place to get water in this day and age."

But water experts with other agencies feel there may be overlooked supplies. "There hasn't been much exploration" in the area and no predictions can be made on ground water potential, said Marvin Crist, a hydrologist in Cheyenne with the U.S. Geological Survey.

There is a spring flowing 20 miles west of Cheyenne, however, Crist said, "which was producing 875 gallons a minute (1,430 acre-feet per year) a few years ago. That indicates some water could be developed from the area," he said.

Peter Huntoon, a University of Wyoming hydrologist in Laramie, said he is "pretty optimistic" that a significant amount of water could be taken from wells drilled into the Casper formation west of Cheyenne.

Stage II critics also say that much can be done to conserve water, including raising what they consider to be inequitable industrial water rates.

"The Husky Oil refinery uses two

million gallons a day and pays 52 cents per thousand gallons," said Strader. "But residential users pay 82 cents. If those rates were equalized it would pressure Husky, Warren Air Base and the Union Pacific to conserve and recycle water."

A CRACKED DAM

Another potential water source is the city's Crystal Lake Reservoir.

Twenty miles west of Cheyenne on the Middle Crow Creek, the reservoir can be filled to only 60 percent capacity because of a 1978 inspection by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that found the dam may be unsafe.

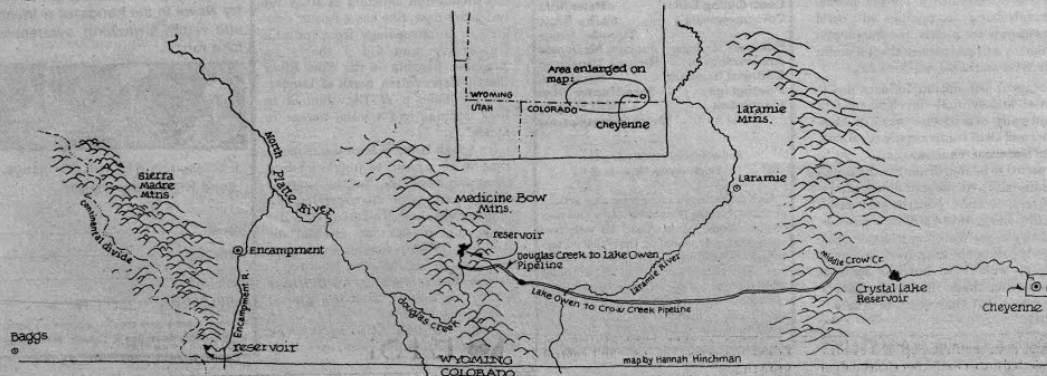
The Corps inspection report cites a number of problems, including cracks, seepage, erosion and an inadequate emergency spillway — all of which could contribute to a "possible failure of the dam."

The Corps recommended a drilling and testing program to determine the dam's structural capacity.

"We said fine, go ahead and test it," City Water Board President Garrett said. "But they said they weren't funded to do that sort of testing, and we said we didn't have the money either." The test, according to Garrett, would cost \$150,000.

Both Garrett and the board's staff engineer, Herman Noe, deny the dam is unsafe.

"None of the dams the Corps inspected got a seal of approval," Noe said. "They're just covering their own tail by questioning the integrity of every dam. It's never been shown that



the dam has a structural problem. The Corps did not claim it was unsafe, they only recommended it be investigated."

The Crystal Dam leakage problem, however, is nothing new to the board. Grouting programs in 1958, and again in 1975, sealed many cracks. But the consultants who did the 1958 work reported to the board that year that "the structure was found to have such a large number of seams, honeycombed areas and other leakage channels" that construction of a new upstream face was the "ultimate solution."

As a result of the Corps report, the state engineer requires the city water board to keep the water level 15 feet below the spillway — a loss of 1,575 acre-feet in storage capacity, which is almost 15 percent of Cheyenne's present annual water usage.

But again, despite having spent some \$700,000 on engineering studies for Stage II, not one cent has been directed to considering upgrading the Crystal Dam to improve storage capacity or resolve the safety concerns.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The handful of Cheyenne residents concerned about the unanswered questions surrounding alternative water supplies note that two out of every three dollars spent on the first half of Stage II are to be paid by the project's water users, largely the city's residents.

The entire cost of building the latter half may be borne by water users (no one is sure yet). Early estimates show a minimal tripling of water bills after the first half is built.

Under the legislation authorizing Stage II, a contract for repaying most of construction costs must be approved by the town's voters. A special election is expected late this summer.

But project critics fear that voters will not be given all the facts, and that the election will be submerged in the murkiest depths of electoral politics.

"Until they get their first water bill, the voters may or may not realize (the costs of the project)," conceded state water planner Johnson. "They (the water project backers) are going to be doing a real selling job, since we have a 240 percent above normal runoff this year."

Cheyenne residents are not alone in lacking solid financial information. No one, including Stage II builders, can predict the exact cost of the project, or pinpoint exactly who will pay what share of those costs.

The estimated price tag for Stage II is roughly \$100 million. That figure excludes inflation, cost overruns, and future operation and maintenance costs — factors that have doubled and tripled the costs of similar water development projects.

In the sort of fractionalism that has characterized water project funding throughout the West, only the cost of the first half of Stage II will be considered in this summer's election.

(The city is merely required to develop a financing plan for the second part, and voter approval, if that plan should call for bonding, is not necessary for several years.)

The first half of Stage II is to cost \$60 million to construct. One-third of that sum is to come from a grant from the Water Development Account and the rest from a loan through the Permanent Mineral Trust Fund. Both accounts are funded by state severance taxes on energy development.

According to a Feb. 12 report to the legislature from the state engineer, water from the first half of Stage II is projected to cost \$2.77 per thousand gal-

lons — a 338 percent increase over present rates.

That estimate, however, is based on a seven percent interest rate on the bond. The catch is that no one knows exactly what the interest rate will be until it is applied for. And in a classic Catch 22, it can't be applied for until the voters approve the overall mechanism.

Under the legislation authorizing Stage II, that interest rate must fall between five percent and one-half percent less than the going rate, which is currently ten percent and in a high state of flux. Project backers say it will be seven to eight percent; critics fear ten percent or more. The final figure is anybody's guess at this time.

A meaningful cost-to-benefit analysis of the Cheyenne water project is also elusive.

Most large water projects are multipurpose, and include water targeted for irrigation use. The benefits for these projects can be calculated in increased crop yields and other tangible products.

The Cheyenne project, however, is strictly for municipal and industrial use, and the project's benefit is defined by what the water users are willing to pay. To equalize the cost-benefit ratio, one simply raises the water rates until they match the costs.

The key to scrutinizing a project's cost-benefit ratio, however, whether it is multi- or single-purpose, is to compare the proposed project with the cost-benefit ratios of alternatives. This, say Stage II critics, has not been done.

One reason is that Stage II is wholly state funded.

Federal projects require environmental impact statements, and the Environmental Protection Agency's role in commenting on those statements is considered key to having independent reviews of federal projects.

Most state-funded projects, including Stage II, involve federal lands, and thus require environmental impact statements. But according to the Environmental Protection Agency's Gary Johnson in Denver, his agency will be able to only superficially comment on Stage II's economics because it is state funded.

In the meantime, the burden of providing an independent project analysis of Stage II rests with the citizens of Cheyenne. And only one group, Community Action of Laramie County, has taken any initiative to do so. Their study will focus on the impacts to low-income citizens only.

THE HARD SELL

So the issue returns to the question on everyone's minds: Will the citizens of Cheyenne approve a \$40 million bond for a water project, for which the final cost is unknown, the need uncalculated and the alternatives unstudied?

Just last month, the water board got an inkling of the possible difficulties ahead for them when, for the first time in recent history, the city council failed to approve a rate hike requested by the board. And that increase request was for a mere eight percent in water and sewer rates, necessary to cover inflationary costs of existing operations.

But if anyone can sell Stage II, it's the city water board.

"We have to prepare for growth," says board president Garrett. "If people want to come here, we can't stop them. Eventually we'll have to supply water and sewer to the outlying developments because they'll pollute themselves."

"Boulder tried to control growth and failed miserably. You just can't control growth."

Indians counter sage rebels: 'the land doesn't belong to you'

by Jim Robbins

A new ingredient has been added to the simmering pot of the Sagebrush Rebellion — the question of Indian rights and sovereignty.

Numerous Indian tribes throughout the West have come out in opposition to the rebellion, a move by Western states to gain control of land now under federal ownership.

At the heart of the issue are rights guaranteed by treaty to many tribes to hunt, fish, cut timber, graze and gather food on public lands outside the reservation. These lands were part of the tribes' aboriginal hunting grounds. The tribes fear that the states, who have a long history of enmity toward Indians, would not allow off-reservation rights, despite promises by many state officials to the contrary.

During Idaho's legislative session, representatives of the five Idaho Indian tribes — the Shoshone-Paiute, Shoshone-Bannock, Nez Perce, Kootenai and Coeur d'Alene — traveled to Boise to testify with environmentalists against several Sagebrush Rebellion bills.

Larry Echohawk, an attorney for the Shoshone-Bannock of southern Idaho, told the Idaho House Agricultural Affairs Committee, "Any guarantee that tribal off-reservation use rights will survive a state takeover of federal land rings hollow. A guarantee today is an unkept promise tomorrow."

"The federal government may be a devil," one tribal representative said, "but it is a devil we know."

Echohawk cited the importance of unappropriated public land to the Indians. "Enactment and implementation of (Sagebrush Rebellion bills) will directly threaten the survival of tribal culture and religion which are tied to these ancient activities," he said. "Such measures will also seriously deplete or destroy important tribal food sources at a time when nearly 40 percent of the Shoshone-Bannock are unemployed."

The threats to Indians could extend beyond the loss of off-reservation

rights. Nevada has claimed in courts that it was not admitted to the union on the "equal footing" with other states that the Constitution assures because Congress retained 87 percent of its lands. If Nevada's "equal footing" argument is accepted by the courts, the state would be entitled to all public lands within its borders set aside after statehood, including Indian reservations, according to an informal opinion from John Leshy, an attorney for the Interior Department.

Idaho Indian reservations would not be affected since they were set aside before statehood, however.

At the legislative hearing most ranchers and farmers spoke in support of the rebellion. "My father settled this land in 1895," one white cattle rancher said. "Now the federal government is trying to tell us what we can and cannot do. The time has come for us to have control over our own lives."

Later a Shoshone-Paiute rancher testified: "You know I've set here listening to you people talk about *your* land and how your daddy came here 100 years ago. Well, I'll tell you something. My daddy lived here, and his daddy, and his daddy before him, all the way back for 6,000 years. At least."

"The land doesn't belong to you and it doesn't belong to the federal government. It belongs to us and the federal government has only made a small down payment on it. You people can talk all you want about your land, but I'll tell you something brother, you don't own it."

It appears that at least some of the concerns expressed by Indians fell on deaf ears. Although the bills they opposed were not passed, a bill that set up a committee to study the Sagebrush Rebellion and included representatives from 10 affected groups made no provision for Indian representation.

Jim Robbins is a free-lance writer and a researcher for the Idaho Conservation League.

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BLM wilderness...

(continued from page 1)

BLM Wilderness Inventory Results

	Public lands subject to wilderness inventory	Acres proposed as wilderness study areas	Acres already identified as wilderness study areas
Arizona	12,596,000	0	517,000
California	16,585,000	4,000	6,338,000
Colorado	7,996,000	765,000	50,000
Idaho	11,949,000	804,000	820,000
Montana	8,140,000	534,000	249,000
Nevada	49,118,000	3,079,000	1,626,000
New Mexico	12,847,000	672,000	148,000
North Dakota	68,000	0	0
Oklahoma	7,000	0	0
Oregon	13,965,000	1,750,000	439,000
South Dakota	277,000	0	0
Utah	22,076,000	1,752,000	427,000
Washington	310,000	15	0
Wyoming	17,793,000	497,000	56,000
Totals	173,727,000	10,057,000	10,670,000

From the April 11, 1980 Federal Register.

by Van Becay

DURANGO, Colo. — Several hundred yards outside this town of 12,000 sits a million ton mountain of radioactive tailings, a byproduct of the nuclear industry that processed uranium here from World War II to the early 1960s.

Though Colorado has nine such tailings sites, Durango's is in the highest health risk category for mill tailings set by the Department of Energy. It is ranked as the most hazardous in the state by the Colorado Department of Health.

Plans for cleaning up the pile range from burying or covering the tailings to trucking them over 150 miles and consolidating them with other tailings being reprocessed in Naturita. However, despite growing agitation among residents here, any solution to the problem is considered years away.

WORLD'S BIGGEST SANDPILE

A mill to process uranium for the Manhattan Project was built on this site in 1943. After World War II the Vanadium Corporation of America acquired the mill and continued to process uranium for the Atomic Energy Commission.

In 1959 a cleanup of the site was sparked by waste leach water seeping into the Animas River, which runs within 60 feet of the main pile. Before the cleanup, radium in the water two miles below the mill measured 480 times higher than normal background radiation. Radium in the sediment measured 545 times background radiation. Even today, long after the cleanup, levels are four times background radiation.

In 1963 Vanadium closed its Durango operation and left town, leaving behind a main pile of 1.3 million tons of radioactive waste and a smaller adjacent pile of 300,000 tons.

Residents of Durango then were more concerned over dust blowing from the tailings than possible radiation hazards. Since nothing had been done

million acres of land assessed, the agency has proposed that about 12 percent, or some 21 million acres, an area slightly smaller than the state of West Virginia, should be studied for possible wilderness designation.

In individual states the percentage varies — from 14 percent of BLM lands

in Idaho to three percent in Wyoming. The BLM's recommendations in Colorado and Montana are about 10 percent.

In Utah, where some of the agency's most spectacular lands lie, 10 percent or 2,179,000 acres have been recommended — an area smaller than Yel-

lowstone National Park. Here, too, the agency has met some of its most spectacular opposition.

Lonely Mancos Mesa in the southeastern part of the state didn't make it. At 51,000 acres it is big enough — 10 times bigger than the Wilderness Act requires. And it's natural enough. The imprint of man in a wilderness must be "substantially unnoticeable." Only 25 percent of Mancos Mesa would be disqualified because of drill sites and roads, the BLM says.

But Mancos Mesa and many other wild, open spaces in the West fell short on utilitarian grounds. The Bureau didn't think they measured up to the act's requirement that an area provide "outstanding opportunities" for either "solitude" or "primitive and unconfined recreation."

The mesa is clearly no traditional outdoor fun spot. It's windy, hot and — except for the occasional canyon — a plain blend of bare ground and hardy buffalo berry, Mormon tea, cliff rose and Indian rice grass. The BLM doesn't go so far as to call the terrain monotonous, but in its April 1980 Wilderness Inventory document, it does say it lacks "focal features."

As to solitude, the Bureau implies that if a van full of Boy Scouts arrived at the other end of the mesa, you would

Colo. town waits, wonders what to do with uranium tailings

to stabilize the two piles of fine sand, winds would kick up plumes of dust that towered thousands of feet into the air, and a fine pinkish layer of dust would settle over cars and houses.

Gretta Highland recalls growing up in the early '60s. "After school my friends would sneak into the mill yard and play in the tailings. It was the biggest, best sandpile in the world. My mother would never let me go with them because she was afraid we'd get caught by the watchman."

With the economic benefit of the mill gone, residents began clamoring to clean up the source of dust. In 1966 Dr. Chester M. Wigton, a general practitioner, was elected president of the Durango Chamber of Commerce. "I began receiving calls from all over town," said Wigton. "People began vie-

AEC disagreed.

"The spokesman for the AEC told me that according to their standards there was no radiation hazard from the pile, and since the wind wasn't blowing that day, there was no dust problem," recalled Wigton. "I asked the spokesman, since there was no hazard from the radiation, if we could use the tailings for roadfill and other construction projects in town. The spokesman said, 'Oh, no, you can't do that. Those tailings must be left strictly alone.'"

Wigton had no better luck with Vanadium. Though the Colorado health agency required covering the piles, the regulations had no teeth in them. The company agreed to water the main pile and to plant some ground cover to provide a cap over the mountain of sand.

STILL VALUABLE

In 1976 Vanadium — since merged with Foote Mineral Company — sold the tailings and some adjacent land to Rancher's Exploration and Development Company of Albuquerque, N.M. At the time, Rancher's was reprocessing a similar though smaller tailings pile at Naturita, Colo.

Since the Durango piles contain approximately 20 percent of the original uranium content, or 600,000 pounds of recoverable ore, and delivered uranium then was worth about \$40 a pound, it looked as if Durango would be rid of its tailings and Rancher's would realize a tidy profit.

But this time the Colorado Department of Health thwarted the plan. Rancher's proposal was to truck the

radioactive material to a spot 10 miles outside of town, leach the tailings to recover the uranium, and cover both old and new sites with two-and-a-half feet of shale.

The health department cited numerous environmental and health safeguards that would have to be guaranteed to allow such a proposal. The agency also required a dirt cover ten feet thick. Rancher's felt the added safeguards and covering made the project economically unfeasible and decided against reprocessing the tailings. Durango had lost another chance to be rid of its radioactive waste dump.

Disposal of the Durango tailings now awaits the federal cleanup mandated by the Uranium Mill Tailings Act of 1978. Federal money to dispose of 25 tailings sites in ten states will pay up to 90 percent of the cleanup costs.

Richard Campbell, manager of a special office of the Energy Department in Albuquerque, N.M., responsible for cleaning up all the tailings sites under the federal law, stressed that all options are still open. But Campbell noted, "Physically covering the Durango pile stretches the imagination. Putting the necessary cover on such a steep pile would be extremely hazardous. Almost any reasonable man will look at that pile and say how can you get 10 feet of dirt on top of it?...the law requires we also consider reprocessing."

MOVING THE PILE

The most likely scenario for the Durango tailings will include moving the pile, whether or not it is reprocessed. Alternatives range from moving the tailings by conveyor or slurry to a spot a few miles away from town to be reprocessed or buried, to trucking them 150 miles to Naturita, site of Rancher's first successful reclamation project, to be reprocessed there.

Despite the cost of diesel fuel and the huge mass of tailings involved (moving the two Durango piles will require 25 ton trucks to carry 65,860 truckloads), the Naturita plan has its supporters. They hope that it would consolidate

"After school my friends would sneak into the mill yard and play in the tailings. It was the biggest, best sandpile in the world."

wing the pile as a problem."

Wigton invited the AEC, Vanadium, and the Colorado Department of Health to Durango to discuss the matter. The health department agreed something should be done and proposed a two-to-three foot cap of soil. Vanadium and the

feel pretty silly seeking cover behind a gossamer clump of rice grass.

In the Bureau's words: "Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are considered to be less than outstanding. This is attributed to the limited natural screening and the lack of focal features that would provide an environment for either a variety of primitive recreation pursuits or an outstanding experience in any one primitive recreation pursuit...Opportunities for solitude...are less than outstanding."

That means Mancos Mesa may be big and wild, but in the Bureau's opinion it hasn't got what it legally takes to be wilderness.

The San Juan County commissioners are pleased. What with Arches and Canyonlands national parks next door, they think they have enough sanctified scenery.

"We think enough land in our county already has been taken over by the federal government," said Commission Chairman E.S. Boyle. "Of course we're opposed to wilderness proposals."

"ATROCITIES"

"They say you can't find solitude here," said Dick Carter of the Utah Wilderness Association. "But based on

the isolation and size of the unit and the canyon systems, we say you can."

Carter goes so far as to list this decision among "the great BLM atrocities" that he feels have been committed in the wilderness decisions in his state. Among the other expansive, remote areas that he said have been unfairly thrown out of the running are Wahweap on the Kaiparowits Plateau and part of Mt. Ellen in the Henry Mountains. Both contain well over 100,000 acres, but BLM rejected them on the grounds that they don't offer "outstanding" opportunities for solitude or recreation.

"Solitude is inherent in areas of this size," Carter said.

Unfair interpretations of the solitude-or-recreation requirement have resulted in homogeneity among the proposed wilderness study areas, Carter said. Lots of canyons and buttes make it, but the rolling or flat, open areas generally don't.

"A flat or rolling area in this country that has managed to stay pristine...is very, very rare," said Debbie Sease, who is coordinating several pro-wilderness groups' work on the BLM inventory from Washington, D.C. "It should be a top wilderness priority."

BLM's Utah Wilderness Coordinator, Kent Biddulph, makes no apologies for

COMMENT CALL

Deadlines for public comment on the Bureau of Land Management's proposed wilderness study areas are:

UTAH — June 30
COLORADO — April 30
IDAHO — July 3
MONTANA — June 30
WYOMING — July 7
NEW MEXICO — June 30
OREGON AND WASHINGTON — June 25
NEVADA — June 30
ARIZONA — late August

the discrimination against flat areas. "Look at the criteria in the Blue Book for determining 'outstanding,'" he said.

BLM's blue-colored *Wilderness Inventory Handbook* states, "Factors or elements influencing solitude may include size, natural screening, and ability of the user to find a secluded spot...It may be difficult, for example, to avoid the sights and sounds of people in a flat open area unless it is relatively large."

tailings instead of creating new hot spots.

In western Colorado, near Uravan, (see HCN 2-22-80) Naturita is centrally located to most of the tailings sites in the Colorado River Basin. If the plan proves economically feasible, it could serve 25 other tailings sites within the same range. Should Rancher's choose to bid on the reclamation, the company's equipment from the original reprocessing is still located in Naturita.

Neil Reams, Montrose County Commissioner and one of the original proponents of moving the Durango tailings to Naturita, said, "The biggest problem with moving the pile is the economics. However, if the government is going to spend millions of dollars on disposal of these tailings, it is far better to put the money into transportation and truck

the tailings where they are politically acceptable.

"The people of Durango don't want the tailings there. They're afraid of them, they feel they're bad for the tourist business. If you covered that pile with 100 feet of dirt, the people of Durango would still be afraid they'd explode or seep into the ground or whatever. Naturita is different. I know of only one person in the area who has any doubts about moving the tailings here."

Besides being acceptable to area residents, consolidating tailings in Naturita has other advantages. The underlying Mancos shale in the area inhibits the tailings from leaching and polluting water. Also, since Rancher's has already reprocessed tailings there, environmental studies required for ad-

ditional reprocessing can be taken in part from earlier studies done for Rancher's.

As for the danger of transporting the tailings, Reams said: "Trucks wreck. You could get run over in Naturita, too. But the radiation from one truckload is so low that it wouldn't be a disaster. One truckload off a bridge isn't going to affect the river."

FRUSTRATING WAIT

Nevertheless, disposal of the tailings is still years away.

In the Durango Chamber of Commerce office sits a 16-step flow chart issued by the Department of Energy detailing the next two years of procedures. Simplified, they include federal (continued on page 14)

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Biddulph's conclusion is: "So a flat area with sparse vegetation and little topographic variation probably is not going to stay in."

However, a July 12, 1979, memo to state directors from the associate director of BLM warns against narrow interpretations: "It is erroneous to assume that simply because a unit or portion of a unit is flat and/or unvegetated, it automatically lacks an outstanding opportunity for solitude."

Carter suspects that the BLM is throwing out the big, flat areas for the wrong reasons. Kent Biddulph denies it, but Carter says that the BLM is considering Mancos Mesa's uranium potential and fears the wrath of the activist, anti-wilderness San Juan County commissioners.

BLM is supposed to ignore resource conflicts until the next round, the "wilderness study" phase. Even if a roadless area is lined with solid gold, at this point the agency must concentrate on whether its wilderness characteristics meet the minimum requirements of the law.

Likewise the BLM is supposed to turn a deaf ear to wilderness polemics from the public. This has been difficult, since nearly every segment of the public participating in the process has at times ignored BLM's orderly process. The public has frequently jumped from the inventory-phase discussion of whether an area has wilderness qualities to the question that will be asked after September: whether it should be protected as wilderness.

Commissioners want to talk about economic freedom, oil companies about energy, ranchers about bureaucracy and environmentalists about the number of people who support the concept of wilderness. At this point, according to BLM's rules, all of these topics are irrelevant.

As the inventory first began, state and local officials and commodity interests scowled while environmentalists smiled. "The fruits of our input so far have been excellent," a Sierra Club news release stated last fall.

But now Dick Carter speaks of "atrocities" and his counterparts in other states are upset, though in most cases to a lesser degree. "Utah provides an example for every problem we have with the inventory," said Sease. BLM's pats on the back are coming from outside the conservation community. One wilderness skeptic who is a Utah state official said: "They've done an excellent job." Commissioner Boyle has only a slightly less enthusiastic assessment: "The BLM has done a fair job of following Congress' dictates," he said.

BLM is at a watershed. By September it will have completed what most observers consider to be the easiest part of its wilderness task — deciding which lands merit consideration. Next, it will plunge into the controversial business of weighing one resource value against another. In many cases it will have to tell Congress whether wilderness or energy development is the preferred option for a given piece of land. What's more, it must protect the study areas' wilderness values until Congress takes action. BLM's final recommendations to the president are due by 1991.

While the furor over Mancos Mesa and other wild, open lands proposed to be dropped from the inventory will have died down by September, BLM's work will have barely begun.

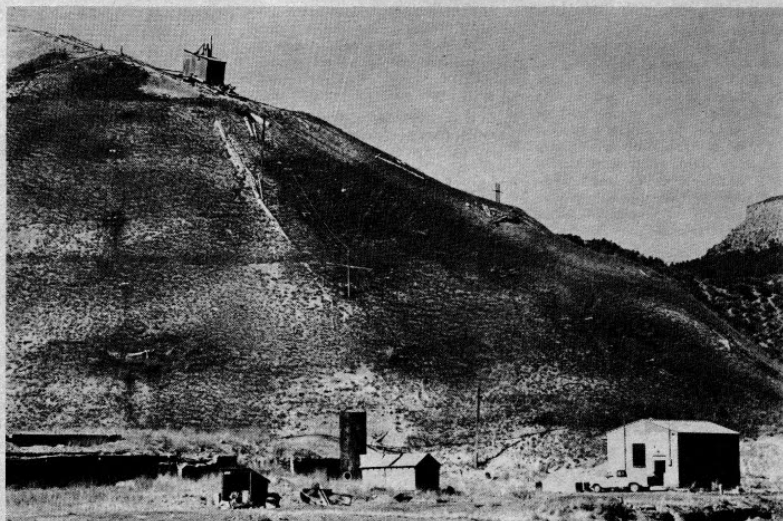
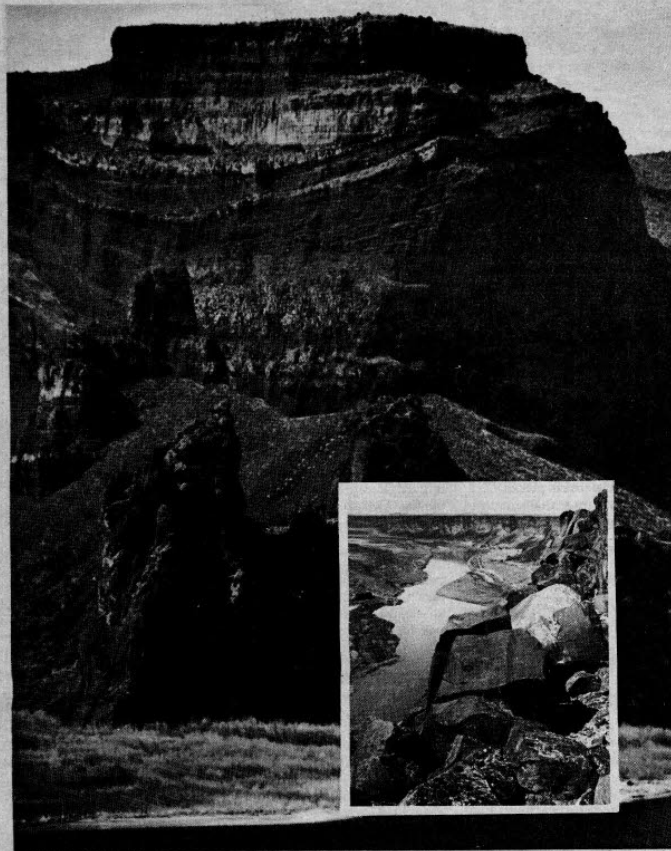


Photo courtesy of the Durango Herald

URANIUM TAILINGS at an abandoned millsite in Durango, Colo., despite some vegetative growth, have caused alarm among townsfolk, who fear their instability and radiation may cause health problems.

8-High Country News — May 16, 1980



Snake River Canyon provides a nesting ground for the largest concentration of raptors in North America.

by John McCarthy

Off the top of a power pole drops a bird with wings tucked, the fast-flying prairie falcon. This is its turf—the sage flats. Townsend ground squirrels beware.

As the squirrels dart in and out of their holes, I bounce along the road in a pickup truck headed to Snake River Canyon. My guide is Mark Hilliard, wildlife biologist for the Snake River Birds of Prey Natural Area in southwestern Idaho. The sagebrush plateau that stretches out on either side of the road is the hunting ground for the largest concentration of nesting raptors in North America.

Fourteen species nest in the area: prairie falcons; kestrels; marsh, red-tailed, ferruginous and Swainson's hawks; golden eagles; turkey vultures; and great horned, barn, screech, long-eared, burrowing and short-eared owls.

Dedication Point is the first open view of the canyon. Steep cliffs of fractured basalt rise up several hundred feet from the river bottom. It's all downhill for birds carrying prey from the shrub-grassland hunting area to their eyries in the canyon walls.

Five prairie falcons are swooping, cutting and calling kee-kee-kee. Quick and bold, they look like overgrown swallows. As they acrobatically set up

territories, a red-tailed hawk soars overhead.

In 1971 the secretary of Interior declared the canyon-and-cliffs nesting sites a "natural area" of 32,000 acres. Now the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, which administers this land, has recommended protecting a total of 720,000 acres including the sage plateau, the birds' hunting ground. The plan would set aside the land as a conservation area, which would require the birds' survival to come first, while allowing other uses.

The road to the river hangs on the canyon side. We creep down to the first impediment ever placed on the Snake River, the Swan Falls Dam. Built in 1901 to generate electricity for silver mines, it is still in operation today.

At the utility's settlement it is warm, the apricots are in bloom, the onions are up, the forsythia is bright yellow. Two Canada geese walk across the yards. In a beautiful masonry building, generators deliver the muffled sounds of progress.

Around the bend, cows with calves are grazing.

Along the river common mergansers and cinnamon teal take off as we approach. A pair of geese honks at the truck. Two blue herons flap into their ungainly flight. A marsh hawk works the reeds.

Birds of Prey Natural Area

EYRIES IN THE CANYON SWIFT HUNTING IN THE



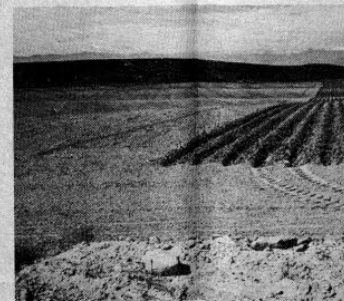
PRAIRIE FALCONS, at home in their well-protected territories.

This time of year, in March, the golden eagles are sitting on eggs. They hunt early and then remain in the nest on a cool day such as this one. In a week or two, after the hatch, the male eagle will go into a hunting frenzy.

A team of BLM biologists and university contractors established the birds' hunting range through radio tracking and observation. Now, in a second phase of research, they are looking at man's activities in the area—grazing, oil and gas leasing, National Guard training, unnatural fires, recreation. They'll use the information to write a management plan for the proposed conservation area aimed at curbing those activities that threaten the raptors' welfare.

A squall is blowing in from the Southwest as we climb out of the canyon, completing a loop. Before heading for home, I try to drive back out to the Swan Falls road. The rain, fog and mud from the storm discourages me from going out to the canyon rim in my small car. So I walk through the flats to smell the wet sage, listen to the meadowlarks sing and watch the kestrels dive off the wires.

John McCarthy is a free-lance writer and ranch hand based in White Bird, Idaho.



AGRICULTURAL operations such as this one in Idaho threaten the birds' habitat, biologists say.

E CANYON, HUNTERS THE SAGE

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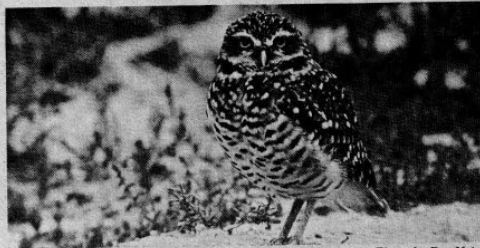


Photo by Ron Maier

THE DIMINUTIVE burrowing owl is among 14 species of raptors that live in Snake River Canyon in Idaho.

Expanded raptor refuge under siege

Interior Secretary Cecil Andrus' proposal to expand the Snake River Birds of Prey area in southwestern Idaho is under siege.

April 29, about a month after Andrus submitted his plan to Congress, two development-oriented groups and five Idaho residents filed suit in federal district court in Boise, claiming that the Interior Department's environmental impact statement on the proposal is inadequate.

The plaintiffs argue that the 570,000-acre expansion abuses the legal rights of people who want to claim land in the area for farming under the Carey and Desert Land Entry acts.

The U.S. Supreme Court, however, in a related case, has ruled that the secretary of interior has the final say about whether to allow homesteading under those acts.

The plaintiffs in the birds-of-prey suit want the Andrus legislation withdrawn and a preliminary injunction against enlarging the bird refuge until a new impact statement is written. Filing suit were Sagebrush Rebellion Inc. and Southwest Idaho Development Association, both non-profit groups.

Andrus' proposal, which would extend protection to the birds' expansive upland hunting areas as well as to their nesting sites in the Snake River Canyon, emerged from recommendations by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and Idaho Gov. John Evans. The nesting sites have been protected as the 32,000-acre Snake River Birds of Prey Natural Area since 1971. So far, Congress has taken no action on the new proposal.

BLM studies indicate that farming the dry sage flats around the canyon

would destroy a major food source for the raptors — the Townsend ground squirrel. Agency researchers say the birds come out of the canyon to hunt, making forays of up to 15 miles.

Opponents of the expansion argue that the studies did not consider the possibility of new advancements in agricultural techniques that could make farms and squirrels compatible. They also say there may be undiscovered ways to enhance squirrel populations in one area to mitigate their loss in other areas.

"If someone can come up with a reasonable plan for both birds and agriculture that's fine," said BLM Wildlife Management Biologist Mark Hilliard. But he maintains that no scientific evidence confirms these theories. Besides, Hilliard said, "There is more than enough land (suitable for irrigated farming) outside the area to use all the water available in southern Idaho."

The BLM studies indicated that a number of other land uses would be compatible with the natural area. Grazing, in fact, is deemed beneficial to the birds of prey ecosystem. Local grazing groups, including the Owyhee Cattleman's Association and the Sunnyside Winter Grazing Association, support the conservation area.

Other existing uses that would continue under the proposal are recreation and Idaho National Guard training.

New mineral leasing would also be allowed, "as long as activities are in harmony with management objectives for the area," Gov. Evans said.



Defenders of Wildlife photo by Dick Randall
in their well-protected canyon eyrie.



Photo by John McCarthy
such as this one in Idaho mean goodbye ground



Wyoming Game and Fish Department photo

GROUND SQUIRRELS dart in and out of their holes, watching for shadows from above.



Defenders of Wildlife photo by Dick Randall
THE KESTREL



Teton National Park photo
SCREECH OWL

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ENERGY

Fair breeze for wind energy; projects whirl

by Dan Hollow

LIVINGSTON, Mont. — If you listen to Jay Carter hold forth in his light Texas drawl on the 25-kilowatt wind machine he raised on private ranch land east of here, the temptation is strong to buy one quick before another gust passes.

Carter, of Jay Carter Enterprises of Burk Burnett, Tex., was standing beside the tower waiting for the wind to come up and set the blades spinning and current flowing into Montana Power Co. lines.

He was not bashful at all about predicting that generation of electricity from sophisticated new wind turbines is about to explode.

"I've had 27 orders in the last week," Carter said. With the implementation of PURPA, a 1979 federal law that requires utilities to buy back electricity from private alternative-energy sources, and the sizeable tax breaks and subsidies contained in the recently passed federal windfall profits bill, "it's just going to be phenomenal," Carter said.

Under such buy-back rules, the owners of such generators will get credits from the power company for every kilowatt they feed back into the system.

PURPA (Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act) requires each state's public service commission to establish rates based on the "avoided costs" of the electricity, meaning a figure tied to what it would cost the utility to build a new generating source, such as a coal-fired plant, not on an existing cost

such as the half-cent-per-kilowatt price for hydroelectric power.

The Montana Commission is expected to consider the complicated question of buy-back rates when it deals with the next round of Montana Power rate hikes later this year.

Carter's machine is the largest of the modern generation of wind turbines in Montana, according to James Iverson at the state Department of Natural Resources and Conservation.

NEW TECHNOLOGY

Not only is the market for machines like Carter's growing, the technology of wind power generation is scheduled to take a giant step forward next year throughout the West. At Greasewood Flats, near Medicine Bow, Wyo., a fiberglass rotor on a steel tower 262 feet high will begin turning in September, 1981.

The Wyoming project, funded by the federal Water and Power Resources Service, is aimed at installing 50 such 2,000 kilowatt wind machines in the Greasewood Flats area by 1990. The 100-megawatt system will cost \$196 million — a price tag federal officials say it will repay in 30 years.

The U.S. Department of Energy is funding the erection of a similar wind machine, capable of producing 2,500 kilowatts, near a Columbia River Gorge site in Washington.

And various windy spots throughout the region are thinking ahead to the Energy Department's MOD-V wind project, in which giant 4,000-kilowatt wind machines will be erected. Compet-

ing contracts to design the turbine have been awarded to General Electric and Boeing, and 18 locations, including Livingston, have been designated "candidates" for MOD-V. The Energy Department is erecting wind measuring towers at each site for two years of data gathering.

Other candidate sites in the region include Bridger Butte, Wyo.; Finley Air Force Base, in North Dakota; Minot, N.D.; Tucumcari, N.M., and Wells, Nev.

At the end of two years, the "candidates" will have the inside edge for the MOD-V award, though the competition will be open to any sites that utilities nominate.

MODEST SCALE

In the meantime, though, things are moving ahead on a more modest scale.

The wind turbine erected here was purchased — for \$25,000 installed — by the Montana Power Co. as part of a state-funded research project by the Montana Energy Research and Development Institute of Butte. MERDI received a \$100,000 grant from the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation last June to study data from the turbine and from wind measuring towers in Livingston, Big Timber and Whitehall.

Montana Power engineers will be in charge of the turbine, with power company employees making daily checks at the site at first, according to Leonard Decco, senior engineer at MPC headquarters in Butte.

A special fast-drying cement was poured for the tower supports. The tower was raised, leveled with guy wires and then lowered again to attach the turbine and blades. The power will go directly into a MPC distribution line that was extended three-quarters of a mile to reach the site, which is located on private land leased to MPC.

A bank of sophisticated meters will record all the input and output to the turbine, according to Keith Goodall, head of metering at MPC.

The data, digested by a computer, will be used to determine the electrical activity so the MPC revenue department can use the information in preparing buy-back rate structures to present to the Montana Public Service Commission. The data will also be used by the MPC engineering department to make predictions on the feasibility of wind power, Goodall said.

"Personally, I think you'll see wind really take off the next few years," said Pete Antonioli, who is director of conservation and alternative energy for MPC.

"It's a beautiful resource," he said. "You don't have to mine it or clean it."

And with buy-back requirements, and new tax incentives, the wind power industry seems a little blown away by its new vogue. Carter said his firm is backordered to April 1981, and he foresees gearing up to the production of 60 machines a month within two years.

Hot Line



URANIUM PROBES OKAYED. A state district judge in Montana denied last month an attempt by environmentalists to stop uranium exploration in the state. Friends of the Earth, the Montana Wilderness Association and Flathead Citizens for Safe Energy wanted to stop Kerr-McGee Corp. from exploring for uranium in southeastern Montana until an environmental study was done. Judge James Wheelis of Missoula ruled that Kerr-McGee's drilling did not appear to have serious environmental impacts.

IN SITU PLANT CLOSES. An in-situ uranium mining operation in Palangana, Tex., will be shut down because of high mining costs and low uranium prices, according to a McGraw-Hill's Nuclear Fuel newsletter. The announcement of the shutdown came close on the heels of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's decision to shut down — at least temporarily — an in-situ uranium mine in Wyoming that was reportedly polluting groundwater with uranium-leaching agents. The Texas operation had been in operation since 1977.

MBPP WHOOPING IT UP. After years of delay caused by financing, farmers, worker accidents, and whooping cranes, the Laramie River Station Power Plant, near Wheatland, Wyo., is about to start pouring out the juice. The first unit of the coal-burning plant, the largest consumer-owned electrical generator in the country, will produce 500 megawatts sometime this month. Two more units will go to work over the next two years. The \$1.6 billion project was nearly delayed two years ago when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service declared the Platte River downstream from the project critical habitat for whooping cranes, an endangered species. The consortium of electric cooperatives behind the project got a special congressional okay, after agreeing to maintain streamflows and set up a \$7.5 million trust fund for whooping cranes.

OIL GLUT DEVELOPS. When it comes to reserves of oil, it's feast or famine in the Western world. The International Energy Agency, a 20-nation organization that coordinates energy policies for Western countries, told the *New York Times* that industries in oil-consuming countries are building stockpiles well above what they had in reserve last year at this time. Trying to avoid a squeeze like the one suffered last year during the Iranian crisis, energy companies are increasing supplies at record rates. In addition, a mild winter has slowed consumption. The agency, which suggested last year that each member country have reserves equivalent to 90 days worth of imported oil needs, says supplies in the United States and other Western countries have now risen above that level...and industries are still adding to their petroleum stockpiles.

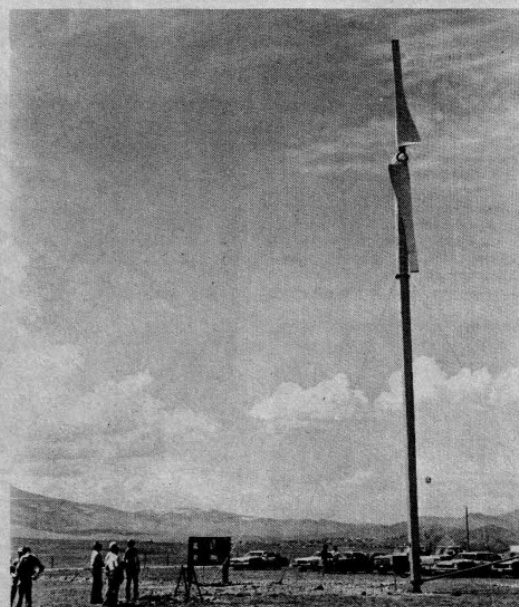


Photo by Dan Hollow

HIGH-MOUNTED ROTOR will harness the high winds near Livingston, Mont., and feed electricity back into the lines of the Montana Power Co.

Dan Hollow is a reporter for the Livingston Enterprise.

BUILDING WITH COAL. They don't build houses of coal, but the Wyoming Homebuilders Association, facing a 60 percent drop in residential building this year, would like to shore up the housing market with coal severance tax funds. The association asked for a temporary cut from the state's Permanent Mineral Trust Fund to provide low interest loans for new homes. An association official said carpenters in the state faced losses of \$64 million in wages this year, and \$16.5 million in sales, property and income tax revenue would be lost by the state. An aide to Gov. Ed Herschler said he was "sympathetic" but not likely to rebuild the housing industry with coal bucks.

BUFFALO SYNFOEL. While officials and townfolk in Buffalo, Wyo., were still sorting out their feelings about a proposal made last year to build a coal gasification plant at nearby Lake DeSmet, they got something new to think about — Mobil Oil Co. wants to build a synthetic fuels plant in the area, too. Like the earlier proposal, made by Texaco Inc. and Transwestern Pipeline Corp., the Mobil plan is in the early stages — the company has applied for federal grants to do a feasibility study. Mobil owns about 2,600 acres near Buffalo, along with water and mineral rights. A spokeswoman told wire services that if the company went ahead with the plan, construction would begin in 1985, bringing about 7,000 workers to the area at its peak.

SUN SHINES ON N.M. The New Mexico Solar Energy Institute at New Mexico State University in Santa Fe has gotten the nod from the U.S. Department of Energy for a \$6 million program to demonstrate the use of photovoltaic cells in residences. The Institute will begin immediately construction of up to 15 photovoltaic systems on homes in the area. The program is one of three regional demonstration programs — the other two are in the Northeast and Southeast.

HOLD THE BIOMASS. The Solar Energy Research Institute (SERI) in Golden, Colo., should have a new building to house its 700 employees and research labs by 1985. But if the federal budget cutters have their way, the new building will not be the showcase of alternative technologies that SERI Director Denis Hayes would like. Hayes, a long-time solar advocate and coordinator of the first Earth Day in 1970, had asked for \$30 million in construction funds for fiscal 1981. The Carter administration balked, cutting back that request to \$1 million. At press time, it appeared Congress would up the figure to \$5 million or \$6 million. But according to Hayes, a "fair number of demonstration features would be scrapped" even at that funding level, including windmills, photovoltaic cells, and a sizable biomass plant. The cuts have disgruntled some SERI employees, who feel the federally-funded institute should be trying out the technologies it is researching.

DRILLERS HIT LIZARD. It's not easy to get through hard rock to pools of oil, but a group of oil explorers in Australia has run into something even more difficult: the Great Goanna lizard. Drillers in remote Western Australia recently gave up their hunt when aborigines, alarmed that drill bits

might prick the lizard that they believe sleeps beneath the ground, drove the drillers away with stones and yelling. The drillers may return with armed guards, but a member of the Yungngera tribe implied that policing the aborigines was not the problem — "the lizard," he told wire services, "will be disturbed," with drastic consequences.



ENERGY BILLS

Over the past month the Energy Mobilization Board and synthetic fuels corporation legislation has been worked out among House and Senate conferees, and final passage is imminent. But there are other parts to the omnibus energy bill that are holding up the package — among them is a section setting up solar and conservation banks, and gasohol and biomass funding. The final version of the Emergency Mobilization Board legislation left some Senators seething — it would allow the EMB, with congressional approval, to exempt 12 projects a year from federal laws and state laws modeled after them. Senate conferees voted nine-to-eight to accept such waivers, which had previously been voted down by the full Senate. Opponents of the measure, who say they will fight it on the Senate floor, complained that the White House, which ostensibly opposed such waivers, made no attempt to influence the conferees in that direction. The conference compromise now returns to both houses for approval; a fight is expected on the Senate floor.

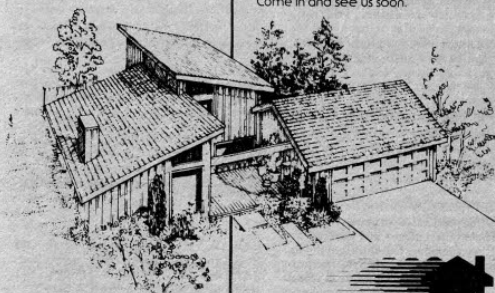
LOTTERY LEASE CEASE?

Interior Secretary Cecil Andrus has lifted his ban on noncompetitive lottery leasing of federal oil and gas tracts. But Congress may soon bring the system to a halt. Faced with widespread corruption in the noncompetitive leasing system, the Senate Energy Committee has tentatively approved a proposal by Sen. Dale Bumpers (D-Ark.), strongly opposed by Sen. John Melcher (D-Mont.) and other western senators, that would make all leasing competitive. In 1978, 76,000 acres were leased competitively, while 12.5 million acres were leased noncompetitively. The Bumpers bill would shorten the lease term from 10 to five years and increase the maximum lease size from 640 acres to 2,560 acres.

WILL FEE BE?

On the eve of President Carter's 10-cent-a-gallon gasoline fee, a district court judge has decided Carter overreached his executive authority and ruled the fee could not be imposed. As HCN goes to press, federal attorneys are appealing the ruling. Judge Aubrey E. Robinson Jr. ruled that Carter went beyond the scope of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, which gives him power to regulate imports on crucial materials. Robinson wrote that Carter's fee on all gasoline — not just imports — was illegal. But Robinson did not buy the argument of consumer groups and oil industry lawyers against the 10-cent fee: that it was a tax and had to originate in the House of Representatives.

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12-High Country News — May 16, 1980

Colo. legislature passes clean air bill, but little else

by Todd Engdahl

DENVER, Colo. — The Republican-led General Assembly passed air pollution controls and some energy tax credits during its recently-completed 127-day session, but aside from those two issues, the 52nd session was more notable for what it didn't do on environmental and resource issues than what it did.

Reduction of automobile air pollution along the heavily-populated Front Range was the session's major issue. A bill requiring mandatory vehicle inspection and maintenance was passed on the session's last night, and Gov. Dick Lamm (D) has promised to sign it.

Successful passage of pollution legislation has eluded the General Assembly for three years, and that history of failure — plus heavy federal pressure to pass a bill or lose \$300 million in federal money — contributed to passage of a bill this year.

Light rail transportation for Denver was also a major issue in 1980. But lawmakers were more concerned with the politics of the Regional Transportation District than they were with possible reduction of pollution. And many experts predict that any light rail system in Denver would do little to reduce air pollution.

Unable to resolve bitter differences over the RTD issues, the General Assembly settled for letting Denver-area voters decide in November if they want to raise sales taxes to pay for construction of the initial leg of a light rail system.

Efforts to tap the massive state budget surplus for use in light rail construction failed.

TAX CREDITS

Perhaps the most future-oriented step taken by the Legislature was passage of income tax credits for installation of energy-conservation or alternative energy-generating devices.

There is a maximum credit of \$400 for energy-saving devices and of \$3,000

for alternative systems such as solar power.

Those tax credits were the only significant energy conservation measure which passed, despite — or maybe because of — the fact that Gov. Lamm made conservation a top legislative priority. Lamm, a Democrat, and the Republican-controlled Legislature have a history of stormy relations.

Another Lamm suggestion, increasing the state's low severance tax on minerals, was made with little expectation that it would pass, and it did not.

But legislation was approved making it easier for energy companies to prepay certain taxes. Officials hope that will allow potential boomtowns to prepare for development before it happens.

Other major proposals shared the fate of the increased severance tax.

DEVELOPMENT FUND

Lamm's fondest wish, use of the state surplus to create a Colorado Development

Fund, remained a wish for the most part.

Lamm wants to establish a \$500 million fund that would be used for such major public services as water project construction, highway repair, rapid transit development and boomtown assistance.

Not many Colorado lawmakers openly share Lamm's concern about funding future development, but the Legislature did vote to commit \$100 million of next year's general fund surplus to highway repair and water project construction.

Lamm said that was better than giving the money away permanently as tax relief, which was what happened to another \$100 million of surplus funds.

Another major proposal, this one by Republican Senate President Fred Anderson, also got short shrift. Anderson wanted to create a water authority with the power to issue bonds for water project construction. With an original \$100 million price tag, his proposed water board was cut to \$1 million and finally died in committee.

Gov. Lamm also pushed for work on a more immediate problem — management of hazardous wastes. But lawmakers were unable to come to any agreement on the issue.

UTILITY RATES

The Legislature also failed to agree

on a couple of crucial utility rate measures.

Intense consumer pressure caused the surprise defeat of a bill which would have allowed utilities to temporarily impose proposed higher rates while the state Public Utilities Commission considered whether such rates should be made permanent.

But a proposal to establish lower, lifeline rates for the poor and elderly also died.

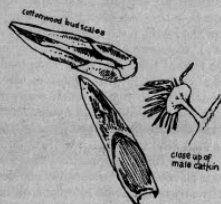
There were a few small steps taken by the Legislature, including: creation of incentives for local governments to develop waste methane gas and solid wastes for fuel; recognition of the state Office of Energy Conservation as an official state agency (it has been operating informally, financed by federal grants); and approval of various tax breaks for electric automobiles.

A couple of things which the Legislature didn't do pleased environmentalists.

The Legislature reviewed all the rules and regulations of the Department of Natural Resources — a move some feared could have led to weakening of environmental rules.

That didn't happen. And a proposed reorganization of all state energy agencies eventually was killed.

Todd Engdahl is an assistant city editor and statehouse reporter for the Denver Post.



CLASSIFIEDS

Classified ads cost 10 cents a word. They must be prepaid.

INTERNSHIPS. Applications are now being considered for summer and fall internships at HCN. Applicants should have some experience in either journalism or the environmental-energy field. The position is unpaid, and provides experience in writing, production and research.

POSITION: The Powder River Basin Resource Council, an agricultural-conservation group working on energy development issues in eastern Wyoming, seeks a staff coordinator and field organizer. Self-motivated, dedicated, and enthusiastic individuals desired. Send resume immediately to PRBRC, 48 N. Main, Sheridan, WY 82801; (307) 672-5809.

TETON WILDLIFE: A 5 day field course on ecological relationships of the larger mammals found within the Jackson Hole — Yellowstone ecosystem. June 2-6. For information write or phone Teton Science School Box 68, Kelly, WY 83011. (307) 733-4765.

HELP WANTED: Get away from it all. Live by yourself. Remote area — S. Wyoming. Tree cutting, log construction & upkeep. Starting date and duration open. Prefer mature individual with chainsaw experience. Salary, Board, Room, Benefits. Apply: Cloud Nine Ranch, c/o 1241 Palisades Ave., Rock Springs, WY.

BLACKIE: In code, I would write: Dinwoody, fish haven, phosphoria, and don't take the towels. But there can be no more codes. A whole new ballgame, and forget the Minnesota Twins. Peel me a muscat. Your daffy taffy tragedy will not be forgotten.

OUTDOOR PHOTOGRAPHY: A 5 day field course on landscape, close-up and wildlife photography. Basic through advanced skills. Operation of the camera and darkroom techniques. July 7-11. For information write Teton Science School, Box 68, Kelly, WY 83011 or phone (307) 733-4765.

SUMMER NATURE CLASSES IN THE TETONS. 5 day courses on wildlife, plants, geology, astronomy, river ecology, archeology, photography, environmental education and backpacking. For brochure write Teton Science School, Box 68, Kelly, WY 83011 or call (307) 733-4765.

REVEL! CAROUSAL! PERUSAL! All this and much more at the Lander Bloomsday walk-a-talk. Live chickens, dead romance and moot literary allusions will be supplied. If you're in search of something whether a father, a son, or just your hat, join the Lander Bloomsday walk-a-talk June 16th. Replies will be kept confidential, but may later figure into best-selling sex thriller. Contact: wm, box k, Lander, WY 82520.

BIRDS OF GRAND TETON: A 5 day field course on identification, ecology, and behavior of birds. June 15-20. For information write Teton Science School, Box 68, Kelly, WY 83011 or phone (307) 733-4765.

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WILD HORIZONS EXPEDITIONS. Box 2348-H, Jackson, WY. 83001 (307) 733-5343. Guided backpacking, mountaineering, ski touring, field seminars in conservation. Emphasis on all aspects of conservation and wilderness education. Custom and family trips, small groups, free brochure.

FOURTH FOOTRACE. The Fourth Annual High Country News 5-mile Citizens Footrace will begin June 14 at 6 p.m. in City Park in Lander. The route hasn't changed, but we've added more classes this year. Ribbons will be awarded to the first three men and the first three women finishers in each of following age categories: 18 and under, 19-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50 and over. There will also be an open walkers class. Entry fee is one dollar. Registration for the race will begin in the Park at 5:15 p.m. A potluck picnic will follow.

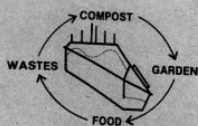
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WANTED. An independent woman with an adventurous spirit, to join me in exploring several proposed Wilderness Study Areas in Wyoming during August or September. Call Dick at 1-419-845-2742 or write Box 295, 169 E. Church St., Marion Ohio 43302.

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May 16, 1980 — High Country News-13

Western Roundup

1080 coyote control research given new life

Rekindling the predator control controversy, Secretary of Interior Cecil Andrus has resumed federal research into the use of Compound 1080 in toxic collars to kill coyotes.

The decision closely follows the agency's approval of a request to use the controversial chemical to poison Columbian ground squirrels in Montana.

Sheep ranchers, strong advocates of 1080, are hoping the decisions will lead to increased use of the controversial chemical. A spokesperson for Andrus denies such a trend is in the works.

The predator control policy adopted by Andrus last November emphasizes techniques that cut livestock losses without killing coyotes, such as improved sheep management.

That policy eliminated federal funds to research killing coyotes by placing 1080-filled collars around the throats of sheep.

Wildlife enthusiasts oppose the use of 1080 in any form, including collars, because of feared "secondary" killings of wildlife who consume contaminated bait or carcasses.

Andrus' decision to resume federal research was based on new evidence discounting the secondary killing theory, and on the secretary's fears that 1080 advocates would pressure states and private institutions to do their own research, says Alan Levitt, public relations officer for the Fish and Wildlife Service.

State and private research, Andrus maintains, would be less controllable, and could involve extensive and dangerous field testing.

Two national wildlife groups backed Andrus' decision. In a joint press statement, the heads of the National Audubon Society and the National Wildlife Federation said, "We can live with toxic collars 'until non-lethal techniques prove effective.'"

A representative for the Defenders of Wildlife, however, said he opposes Andrus' decision to resume research. "What he's done is thrown a bone to the sheep industry," says Dick Randall, the group's Wyoming representative. "There's a lot of political pressure from the industry to use 1080, but the fact remains that toxic collars can only be used in limited situations, and reasonable alternatives exist, including fencing, guard dogs, and better herding."

Convincing 1080 advocates that such alternatives work will not be easy, Randall admits. At congressional hearings on the issue this spring, Sen. John Tower (R-Tex.) said, "If a lot of these

bleeding hearts had been around a million years ago, we'd be up to our eyeballs in dinosaurs."

And Sen. Alan Simpson (R-Wyo.), who has a strong rancher constituency, applauded the resumption of 1080 research and said he was optimistic that it would eventually lead to a complete policy reversal in favor of toxic controls. Ranchers are expected to continue lobbying for immediate 1080 programs.

Defenders' Randall says the Montana permit for rodent control is of serious concern. The state will be allowed to treat 50,000 acres in 19 counties with 1080 to poison ground squirrels, which caused \$1.4 million in crop damage in 12 other counties sprayed last year.

The exemption was made by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. But a Department of Interior sign-off was necessary under the Endangered Species Act, which prohibits federal approval of programs that harm such species.

The Interior department ruled that the spraying would not impact the area's bald eagle, gray wolf and grizzly bear population. State officials had feared Interior would rule against the request because of Andrus' predator control policy, which, at the time the application was made, still excluded federal 1080 research.

Carbondale hears greenbelt plan

Facing heated pressure from nearby coal development and unchecked urban growth, city planners in Carbondale, Colo., are considering a recreational plan that would make it a "model natural garden town" for the whole country, according to plan backers.

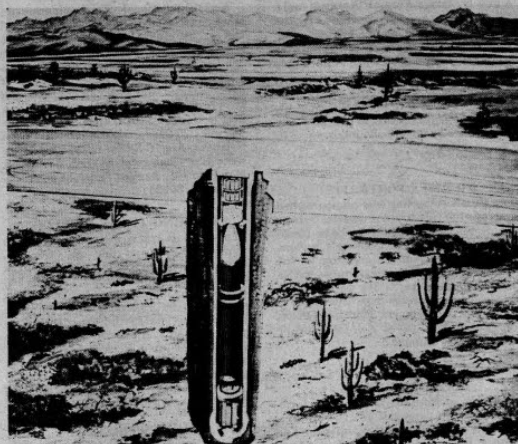
The plan was recently submitted by Carbondale residents Jack and Barbara Snobble to the city's Parks and Recreation Committee for consideration.

Among its features are support for designating Red Bluff (a scenic overlook and site of a proposed mine) a BLM natural-study area, river rafting marinas and put-in and take-out points, river-front and ridge-line pedestrian trails, and preservation of nearby ghost towns as historic sites.

"There is still time to create a viable green belt here," the Snobblies wrote in a local newspaper article detailing their plan. "But it is closing up fast."

protective regulations. He recommended that the BLM review any planned land exchanges with the state with this in mind.

Environmentalists in Utah say the issue shows how the state would manage lands it is trying to obtain from the federal government through the Sagebrush Rebellion.



— Photo courtesy of U.S. Air Force

THE MX RACETRACK plan is dead, the Defense Department recently announced. The current idea is to arrange the missiles along straight roads, using shorter transportation lines, slightly less land, and a 10 percent savings in cost. Even so, the *Deseret News* editorialized on May 8, the "MX remains an unpalatable prospect for Utah and Nevada." The MX proposal has evolved considerably since the original vertical shelter depicted in this artist's conception.

Idaho land bid snubbed by court

The secretary of Interior has the final say in determining whether millions of acres of federal lands will be turned over to individuals for agricultural development, the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled.

At issue was the 1894 Carey Act, passed by Congress to encourage homesteading of federal lands in the West, and a lawsuit brought by the state of Idaho that claimed it had an absolute right to some 2.4 million acres of federal land under the act.

The state brought suit claiming that Secretary of Interior Cecil Andrus was stifling state efforts to convert much of that desert acreage into irrigated farmland. As a key example, state officials pointed to Andrus' proposal to expand

the Birds of Prey natural area by absorbing some Carey Act lands.

Nine other states — Arizona, California, Colorado, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming — joined Idaho in arguing the case. At stake were some 17 million acres of public lands throughout the West that may qualify for homesteading under the act.

A ruling in favor of Idaho would have added a new twist to the Sagebrush Rebellion. But only one of nine justices, Byron White, sided with the states.

Idaho Attorney General David Leroy nonetheless called it a legal draw, pointing out that the court also ruled that if the secretary of Interior rejects a Carey Act application, it could be subject to judicial review.

New natural landmark listings

Twenty-four areas in the U.S. deemed nationally significant examples of America's natural heritage have been designated as National Landmarks by the Secretary of Interior.

The classification does not affect ownership of the areas. But landmark owners are encouraged to voluntarily protect the significant values of their property, and for their troubles, receive a bronze plaque identifying their land as a registered landmark.

Of the latest additions, which bring the total number of landmarks to 511, seven are in the West: Roxborough State Park, a 765-acre tract of Fountain Sandstone formations and raptor

habitat near Denver; Hobo Cedar Grove Botanical Area, 24 acres of pristine old growth western red cedar in northern Idaho; the Menan Buttes, five volcanic cones in eastern Idaho near Rexburg; Niagara Springs, one of the largest (and least disturbed by hydroelectric development) springs in the Snake River Plain aquifer system in Idaho; Fischer Lakes, a glacially-scoured plain in central North Dakota; Grande Ronde Gooseheads, a 5,600-acre area in Washington's Columbia plateau highlighted by the meandering Grande Ronde River; and the Steptoe and Kaniak Buttes in eastern Washington.

Utah archeological riches threatened

Archeological resources on state-owned lands in Utah have received little protection from state agencies, and the neglect is likely to continue, says state archeologist David Madsen.

In a recent letter to the Bureau of Land Management, Madsen said that the state has failed to work out any

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Bulletin Board



FOREST PLANNING

A new magazine, *Forest Planning*, and a number of other services are offered by the Nationwide Forest Planning Clearinghouse: a resource file that may be tapped by mail for a dollar fee, a speakers bureau and workshop assistance services. The Clearinghouse, run by the nonprofit Cascade Holistic Economic Consultants, is at P.O. Box 3479, Eugene, Ore. 97403. Subscriptions to the monthly magazine are \$4.80 for individuals and \$10 for institutions.

WILDLIFE PORTRAITS

The greenest treefrog ever photographed is one of nine portraits now available from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 16x20 inch posters. Brown bears, kestrels, swans, and rattlesnakes join the treefrog in the FWS gallery, and each portrait comes with a brief information sketch. The portraits are for sale for \$6 from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Ask for Wildlife Portrait Series Number 5.

LOCAL PROGRAMS

A survey of 150 projects involving local communities in renewable energy resource projects is available from the Center for Renewable Resources. The survey is titled *Shining Examples: Model Projects Using Renewable Resources*. Among the projects described are solar water heaters in low-income Puerto Rican homes and the nation's largest solar greenhouse, in Cheyenne, Wyo. For a copy, send \$4.95 to the Center for Renewable Resources, 1001 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Suite 510, Washington, D.C. 20036.

SOLAR-SUBTERRANEAN DESIGN

The Architectural Extension of Oklahoma State University is holding a two-day seminar for architects, engineers, contractors, and others interested in the technical problems, costs, energy savings and integration of solar systems and underground buildings. The course will be held at the Arizona Biltmore in Phoenix, Ariz. and will cost \$195. For more information, write Jody Poppel, Architectural Extension, OSU, 115 Architecture Bldg., Stillwater, Okla.

COAL-ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

Workshops for local officials, planners and others interested in mitigating impacts of coal or other energy development have been scheduled throughout the Rocky Mountain West by the Missouri River Basin Commission. The three-day workshops will cover environmental and economic impacts, and ways to manage them. Workshops will be held in North Dakota, June 11-13; Wyoming, June 25-27; Montana, July 16-18; and Nebraska, Aug. 6-8. For registration forms write U.S. Geological Survey, Box 25046, Mail Stop 701, Denver Federal Center, Denver, Colo. 80225.

WYOMING-TEXAS PIPELINE

In anticipation of increased oil production from the Overthrust Belt, MAPCO, Inc., wants to build an oil pipeline from Rock Springs, Wyo., through Utah, Colorado and New Mexico to Gaines City, Tex. Public meetings on the project are being held by the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management in May. A May 22 meeting will be at the Outlaw Inn in Rock Springs. Copies of a draft environmental statement on the project are available from the BLM public affairs office, Main Interior Building, 18th and C Sts., N.W., Washington, D.C.

SOLAR WORKSHOPS

Colorado Sunworks is offering summer workshops covering "solar applications," the "language of solar energy," and "passive solar design" this summer. The one-day seminars will be offered in June and September, at prices ranging from \$15 to \$95. In addition, the company offers to review passive solar plans for \$35. For more information, write to Colorado Sunworks, Box 455, Boulder, Colo. 80306.

ENERGY IMPACTS

The Western Organization of Resource Councils and Rural America are holding a two-day conference on energy development impacts in the Northern Plains June 21-22. Among other topics, the conference will address the problems created for small communities by large-scale projects such as synthetic fuels plants. The conference will be held in Dickinson, North Dakota. For more information, contact Susan Westell, Dakota Resource Council, P.O. Box 254, Dickinson, N.D.; (701) 227-1851.

SNOWMACHINES RESTRICTED

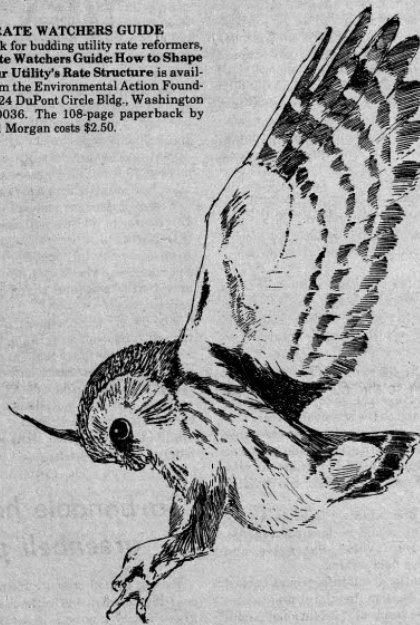
The Potholes-Baseline Flats area of Grand Teton National Park would be closed to snowmobiling, under the preferred alternative chosen by the National Park Service for managing snow machines in the park. Most of the unplowed roads and waterways would be open, however. Public meetings on the proposal are to be held on May 28 at the Holiday Inn West in Golden, Colo., and May 30 at the Ramada Snow King Inn in Jackson, Wyo. Written comments will be accepted through June 30 (Superintendent, Grand Teton National Park, P.O. Box 67, Moose, Wyo. 83012).

SOLAR FILM

The Solar Lobby is promoting the new movie called "The Solar Film." The 10 minute, 35 mm film received an Academy Award nomination, is produced by Consumer Action Now and will soon be available for rent or purchase. Contact: Consumer Action Now, 355 Lexington Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

RATE WATCHERS GUIDE

A book for budding utility rate reformers, *The Rate Watchers Guide: How to Shape Up Your Utility's Rate Structure* is available from the Environmental Action Foundation, 724 DuPont Circle Bldg., Washington D.C. 20036. The 108-page paperback by Richard Morgan costs \$2.50.



Durango...

(continued from page 7)

regulations to establish safe limits of radiation for sites after cleanup, several stages of environmental studies, remedial plans, public hearings for citizen input, bid packages to contractors, and final performance of remedial action. If all goes as outlined, cleanup will begin in the spring of 1982 and continue for three to five years.

Durango residents have grown increasingly aware of the hazards of long term radiation exposure, particularly exposure to Radon 222, the primary health hazard from the Durango tailings.

Radiation above normal background levels is evident everywhere within 0.7 miles of the tailings, a distance that encompasses many residences and businesses.

Dr. Scott McCaffrey, spokesman for Citizens For Safe Tailings Management, a local action group, voiced the frustration felt by many. "No matter how the pile is finally taken care of, we're looking at three to five more years of exposure to radon gas. The studies on health effects of radon gas show a linear relationship. The longer the exposure

to radon, the more cancer shows up."

After McCaffrey claimed lung cancer rates in Durango appeared to be four times the national average, the Colorado Department of Health, in the fall of 1979, completed their own study. They found the rates for cancers in Durango to be at the state average, with the exception of south Durango, near the tailings pile, where the rates for leukemia and lung cancer were slightly higher.

Because of the small numbers involved (only cancers of the last 10 years were studied), Dr. Stan Ferguson, director of disease control and epidemiology for the department, cautions against drawing conclusions from the study. However, he feels the slightly higher rates nearer the piles is ample reason for additional studies of the possible link between cancer and the tailings. As of this writing, no new studies are under way.

Van Becay is a freelance writer based in Durango, Colo.

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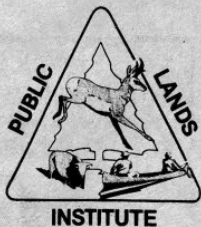
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May 16, 1980 — High Country News-15

Trackings

followups on previous stories

PCB spill

(see HCN 3-7-80 for previous story)

Arguing that the federal government should have acted sooner to stop last summer's PCB feed contamination incident, a Montana feed company is suing three federal agencies for up to \$40 million.

Lawyers for the Pierce Packing Co. of Billings claim that the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Food and Drug Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency were negligent in reacting while the company distributed some two million pounds of meal laced with PCBs. Pierce itself has been sued by purchasers of the feed.

The meal was contaminated by a leaking electrical transformer last June. Undetected, it spread to almost 20 states, resulting in large losses of agricultural products and unknown human health effects.

PCB—a polychlorinated biphenyl—is used in transformers and other machinery. It is known to cause cancer in animals.

The feed company says it took the federal agencies three months to discover the contamination, and that because the federal government is responsible for monitoring the presence of PCB in commercial foods, the agencies should have reacted sooner.

The feed company has also sued the manufacturer of the electrical transformers that leaked. The Environmental Protection Agency recently fined Pierce some \$40,000 for the spill—the largest fine to date under the Toxic Substance Control Act.

In a related development, the three federal agencies are considering a ban on use of PCB around food production, fertilizer and animal feed facilities.

Businesses covered by the new ban would include fertilizer and pesticide makers, food processors including slaughterhouses, and poultry, egg and fish processing facilities, and animal feed producers.

—MM

Snowmobiles

(for previous story see HCN 10-19-79)

Opponents of snowmobiling in the "Potholes" area of Grand Teton National Park came a step closer to victory this month as the National Park Service announced its "preferred alternative" for managing snowmobiles in the park.

Though a final decision is yet to be made, the Park Service favors limiting snowmobiles to most unplowed roads and frozen water surfaces—the policy applied generally throughout the national parks.

Snowmobile enthusiasts and Jackson businessmen have argued that snowmobiles did little damage to the Potholes, and the area lured snowmobilers from around the country, benefiting the local tourist industry.

Under the rule proposed for Grand Teton, 72.8 miles of roads and 26,700 acres of waterways within the park would still be open to snowmobiles.

Public meetings on the management plan will be held (see Bulletin Board for details).

—GOG

16-High Country News — May 16, 1980



by Hannah Hinchman

LANDER, Wyo. Stepped out hoping to find an eye-level ash bough so that I could draw the pinwheels of its orderly

leaves emerging. But frost in the night was so severe that almost every leaf was killed; they crumbled when I touched them.

I wonder whether ash trees are as opportunistic as willows, which will send up sprouts from a felled trunk if there remains even a small connection to the roots.

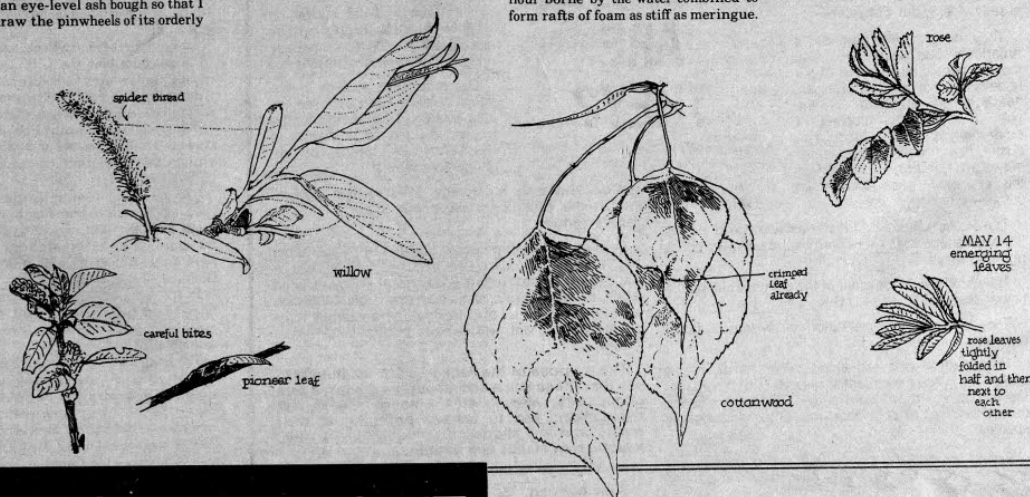
The frost followed a week of storms that seemed to come from all directions, hovering from morning through night. Snow hit randomly — as we approached the mouth of Sinks Canyon we passed through a stripe of snow about 50 yards

wide that drew a perfect line parallel to the foothills. It was rain everywhere else.

In Sinks Canyon, through the mat of snow-flattened dead vegetation, have come balsamroot, bluebells and cow parsnip. With the 10x hand lens, balsamroot leaves appear to be covered with delicate infant mouse fur. I watched one bead of water on the fur, its surface film swirling and rolling. Then turned to the Popo Agie River, engaged in another kind of swirling and rolling that drowned out all sounds but the piercing call of Townsend's solitaires. Runoff fury and the load of silt and rock flour borne by the water combined to form rafts of foam as stiff as meringue.

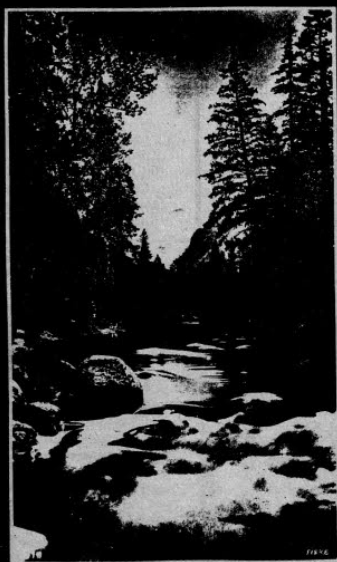
Where a current met a rock wall, huge bubbles formed, shifting and combining in threes, at 120 degree angles.

The philosophers who have a horror of randomness should look again. Even something as apparently chaotic as this mess of bubbles actually repeats intricate patterns. And those philosophers who recoil from nature as a stern and tyrannical force should look again. Nothing is forcing those bubbles to combine at angles of 120 degrees, it just works out that way, through "beautiful exchanges of stress and yield, upheaval and rearrangement, scattering and then regathering..." as the poet David Wagoner said.



GEORGE FISKE

Yosemite Photographer



By Paul Hickman and Terence Pitts

by Paul Hickman and Terence Pitts, Northland Press, Flagstaff, Ariz., 1980. \$20, cloth, 118 pages. Photographs.

Review by Peter Wild

With the ungainly camera equipment of 100 years ago loaded in a wheelbarrow, the photographer pushed his "cloud-chasing chariot" up and down Yosemite's rutty trails. For nearly 40 years, George Fiske made a living by selling prints in his little Yosemite shop and through outlets in San Francisco.

Unlike famous park photographers Edward Muybridge and Carleton Watkins, Fiske's name doesn't appear in most histories of photography. But Ansel Adams, while dismissing the efforts of Muybridge and Watkins, says, "I do get excited at Fiske." In 1904, fire destroyed three-quarters of Fiske's negatives. Some years later, Adams — whose own work owes much to Fiske's interpretive eye — made prints from those saved. With a biographical essay, photographic notes, and a portfolio of some 75 Fiske reproductions, this new book marks a rediscovery. It should prove a revelation to camera enthusiasts and an enlightening footnote to those intrigued by park history.

There's a tinge of pathos to Fiske's earnest middle-class strivings, to his misfortunes and the limited successes of his lifetime. Weary of a boyhood spent building fences from the stones he lugged out of his father's New Hampshire fields, young Fiske went west prior to the Civil War. Before establishing his own modest enterprise in Yosemite, he worked for various San Francisco studios. When he married Myra Morrill in 1873, a friend noted that the

groom's new father-in-law "had no use for men who took pictures."

Though he won critical approval for displays at two international exhibitions, Fiske didn't have the business savvy to turn praise into publicity and business success. He experimented with the latest photographic techniques. And he revealed a sense of humor by naming his horse Sailor Boy, one of his donkeys Honest John.

Today his photographs provide a record of Yosemite in a quaint time. Fiske appreciated the wild, romantic side of nature; hence his views of the Sierra in storm, a subject that has come down to us as a Yosemite tradition, if not a cliché. But unlike Muybridge and Watkins, who catered to popular tastes for the overblown and the fanciful, Fiske lived in Yosemite. He often balances dramatic natural scenes with human figures, thus lending a sense of intimacy to what was, after all, his home.

As Terence Pitts says in the photographic notes, "Fiske found a way to avoid both overstatement and understatement; he was neither overwhelmed into silence nor forced into the unintentionally melodramatic or humorous, but maintained a poise between the formal and the instantaneous, between the rigidly structured image and the chaotic one." The approach calls to mind that of his contemporary, Alfred Stieglitz.

