

High Country

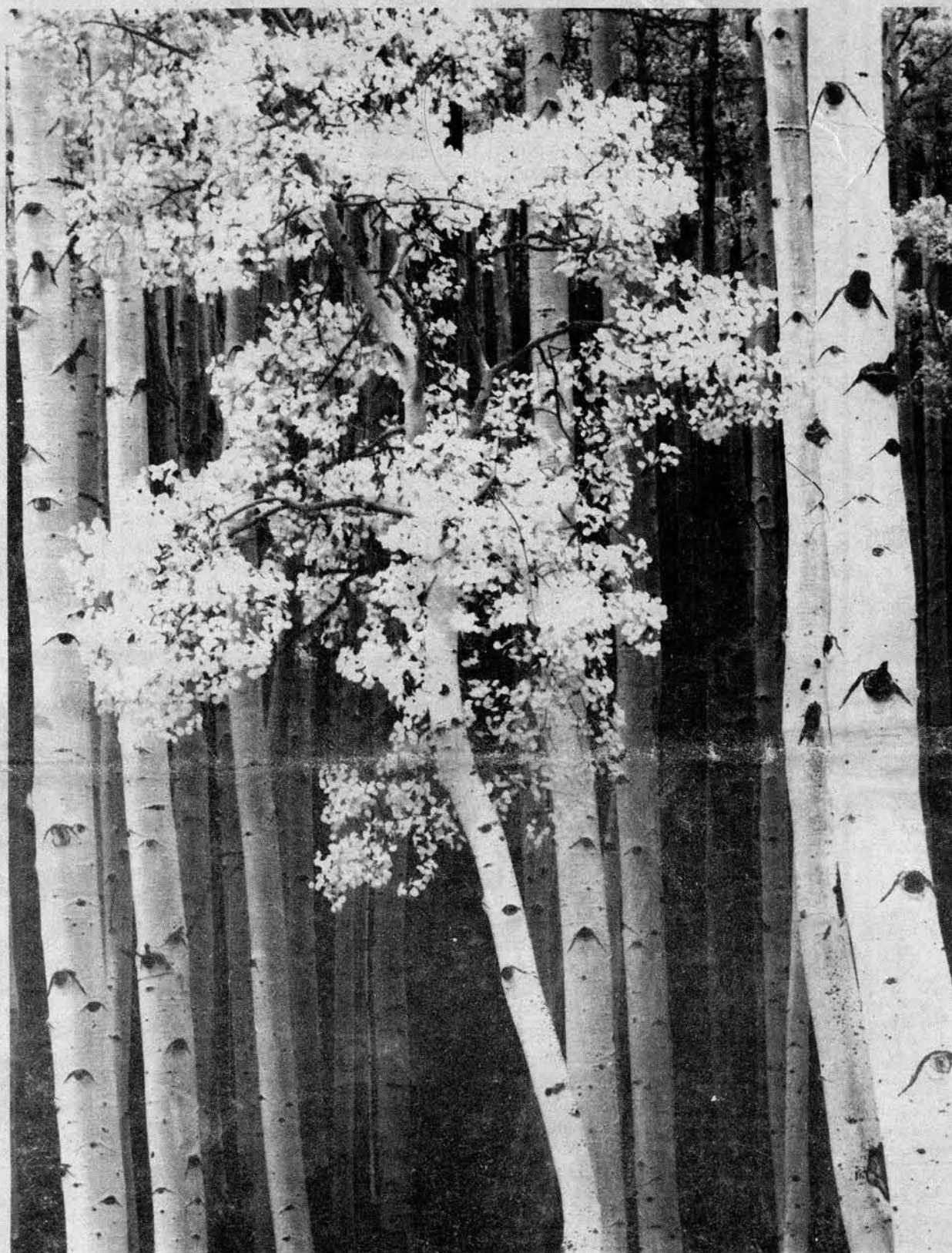
news

August 6, 1984

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The Paper for People who Care about the West

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Dale Schickelanz

The National Forests are cooking

by George Sibley

I remember a morning up in the Nez Perce National Forest in Idaho: I was there with a forest-fire crew called the "Crested Butte Hotshots," and what we were doing was wandering through the woods looking for a forest fire. That may sound silly, but this was only mid-morning; the fire we were there to fight had "laid down" during the night previous, as fires usually do, and it wasn't "up" yet and ready to run under the influence of the sun. For that matter, the fight against it wasn't "up" and organized either. No one seemed to know where the fire lay under the general pall of smoke.

But what I remember most about that morning was how quiet it was there in the woods -- or rather, how it was quiet. It was a hot, dry, stifling stillness: the air was heavy and hazy, holding on to every bit of the heat belting in from a sun that hung in the smoke-brassy sky like a Japanese flag. It was quiet partly because all life with any sense had left the area. But it wasn't an "empty silence": it was a silence pregnant with a sense of gathering energies, something like life but different; the forest was cooking, dry heat piling up in layers, concentrating under the trees, and we all knew in a matter of hours the fire would be up and running, all literal hell breaking loose.

I mention that moment because there seems to be a similar ambience hanging over the forests of Western Colorado this summer: all quiet for the time being, but with a lot cooking. The aspen groves of the Colorado forests seem to be the current focus of activity. Louisiana-Pacific, the biggest forest-products company to come into the southern Rockies to date, will have two aspen flakeboard plants on line by early fall, one in Olathe near Montrose, and one up in Kremmling along the Colorado River.

But Forest Service efforts to map out some "multiple-use aspen treatments" that would provide aspen for the L-P mill in Olathe have been delayed by an administrative appeal

from two local Western Colorado groups. They claim that

1) Louisiana-Pacific's request for timber -- 150,000 tons per year for each mill, the amount of wood on somewhere between 1500 and 2000 acres -- is a major impact that was not covered in the National Forest Land Management Plan approved (more or less) last year; and

2) the first aspen treatment area mapped out, in the Red Canyon area up on the Uncompahgre Plateau, does not comply with the Forest Service's own "Aspen Management Guidelines."

That administrative appeal was

[Continued on page 10]

2-High Country News -- August 6, 1984

WESTERN ROUNDUP



High Country News

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The West is heard in San Francisco

The Democratic National Convention went west in 1984. The vast majority of the delegates, press and political groupies had to travel right over or through Reagan territory to get there, for in 1980 those empty spaces held a majority for the actor from Hollywood; and it did not go unnoticed that he may well repeat that performance in 1984.

But western voices, though weak at election time, were heard at the convention in Democratic policy statements. The Democratic Platform made it clear that the party supports public ownership and control of public lands and managing them according to the principles of multiple use and sustained yield "with appropriate environmental standards and mitigation requirements to protect the public interest." There was support too for "substantial" expansion of the National Wilderness Preservation System along with evaluations of their mineral resources.

Western interests were also represented by an Environmental Caucus -- a first in convention history. With 582 delegates, it was second in strength only to the Women's Caucus, and the eight Rocky Mountain and Intermountain States ("The West")



contributed 20 percent of their total delegations against 14 percent for the rest of the country.

Although the eastern presence was overwhelming numerically, Gary Hart supporters were a dominant force on the platform drafting team when it came to environmental policy. Rep. Tim Wirth from Colorado said, "This is the strongest environmental platform ever."

Some of the issues the platform addresses are:

Hazardous Wastes: "High priority must be given to establishing and implementing a program to phase out the land disposal of untreated hazardous waste..." **Clean Air and Water:** "The Democratic Party supports a reauthorized and strengthened Clean Air Act... Our effort should be designed to reduce

environmental and economic damage from acid rain..." The *Environmental Protection Agency*: (It) "... should receive a budget that exceeds in real dollars the agency's purchasing power when President Reagan took office, since the agency's work load has almost doubled in recent years."

The platform also registers strong concern about wetlands, wildlife, water policy, workplace safety and pesticides and herbicides. On natural resource management it states: "At the same time we encourage enhanced energy production, we must recognize that conserving irreplaceable resources, using energy efficiently instead of wasting it, and protecting our environment help guarantee a better life for 21st century America."

Apart from the platform and policy development, western influence was overshadowed by broad-based concern about national security and jobs and social justice.

Only two other caucuses addressed specific western concerns: the rural organization, chaired by John Stencel, President of the Denver-based Rocky Mountain Farmers Union, and the Native American Caucus.

--Don Bachman

Dear friends,

To the casual reader, this issue of *High Country News* looks like 16 pages of newsprint. To us, it looks like an airplane -- an airplane which takes us from Idaho's INEL nuclear facility north and east to Montana's Rocky Mountain Front, then south to the Husky oil facilities in Cheyenne, then west to the cyclists rolling through Rawlins, Wyoming, and finally down to Colorado's Front Range and Western Slope.

Actually, the trip is not quite as pin point as that. The story by Marjane Ambler on uranium tailings lawsuits covers every Rocky Mountain town which has had uranium mining or processing. It is also a trip back in time. As a former HCN staffer, she recalls that in early 1980 HCN predicted the tailings lawsuits now blooming like 1000 radioactive flowers.

And George Sibley's piece on the new imperatives of the timber industry is relevant everywhere aspens grow. Sibley, who always writes with regional perspective, explains why clearcutting has come to aspens -- a tree loggers once ignored.

A more 'local' story concerns the entire state of Colorado -- the struggle of the empty half of the state to prevent the crowded twentieth part of the state from siphoning water out of the Colorado River basin. The story has echoes of Owens Valley, the rural area Los Angeles drained dry in the early 1900s.

The interview with cyclist Stephen Abromowitz is a byproduct of the board meeting in northwestern Wyoming in early July. We returned from Jackson, Wyoming by way of Lander and the Bikecentennial Route, and passed twenty or so cyclists laboring across the Red Desert. The cyclists inspired several emotions -- wonder that they were pedaling where they could be motoring, mixed with a feeling that we also ought to be

pedaling, rather than enriching the oil companies. Despite being brash reporters, we didn't have the nerve to force one of the cyclists off the road in the Red Desert for an on-the-spot interview. Our restraint was rewarded when we ran into Abromowitz in the Rawlins diner.

We hope our communication of cyclists' problems with truckers and motorists makes up for a breach we had committed two days earlier. It occurred after 12 or so hours on the road between Paonia and Jackson. We reached Jackson bleary, and drove out of a pit stop into the path of two cyclists laden with panniers. As we drove off we could see through our rearview mirror that they were shaking their heads more in sorrow than in anger at yet another motorist who thinks bicycles can stop on dimes.

The back of the paper has a new HCN feature titled "What Do Environmentalists Really Want?" with environmentalist David Marcus taking a first crack at that question. Even further back is a page of letters telling us one thing, some environmentalists do not want.

We ask that you fly this HCN flight slowly since it is the last you will receive for a month; the staff takes off two weeks in August, and the paper -- although it has a mind of its own -- does also.

This issue is due in part to HCN's intern program, which has brought us Lisa Lombardi, a graduate student in literature at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and a graduate in wildlife management and literature (she knows it's a funny mixture) from the University of Idaho at Moscow. This issue includes a half page or so of bulletin boards she gleaned from the mail which hits us each day, as well as a roundup she wrote on INEL in Idaho. The issue also includes an article on a timber cut near Leadville, Colorado by John Day, a



Lisa Lombardi

Harvard student who spent the first few weeks of the summer here as an intern.

Finally, since we are in the communications business, we should communicate to you that the U.S. Postal Service has told us that like it or not (we don't like it) we have a new address: Post Office Box 1090, Paonia, Colorado 81428. HCN moved from Lander to Paonia exactly a year ago, changing its address then. It is possible that a new tradition is being established: yearly address changes.

Finally, if you are concerned about the future generation, you might follow the lead of one Wyoming resident. Thanks to this anonymous donor, the next 24 issues of HCN will go to the following school libraries: Midwest H.S., Kelly Walsh and Natrona County High Schools in Casper, Kaycee H.S., Glenrock H.S., Buffalo H.S., Douglas H.S., Shoshoni H.S. and Central and East High Schools in Cheyenne.

--the staff

FOE struggle now shifts to the court

The controversy over the direction Friends of the Earth should take has entered a formal stage. On July 19, ousted FOE director and founder David Brower went into California State Superior Court to ask that the July 2 meeting of the Friends of the Earth board be declared null and void (HCN, 7/23/84). If the court agrees there was not a quorum, Brower would be reinstated as a director.

In a separate action, nine of FOE's 28 directors have asked FOE president Dr. Daniel Luten to call a special meeting of the membership. According to Brower, FOE by-laws require Luten to call such a meeting when five or more board members ask for it. Brower said the nine ask that the membership vote on the following:

The removal of FOE's surviving 27 board members;

The election of a new, reduced board of 15, eight of whom would be from the present board; and

The amendment of FOE's by-laws to make them virtually identical with Sierra Club by-laws.

The adopted Sierra Club by-laws would require member election of directors, direct financial support of chapters, amendment of the by-laws only by the membership, and creation of an endowment fund to build financial stability. The changes, Brower said in an interview July 25, would remove organizational weaknesses he sees: a large, unwieldy board; the ability of the board to amend by-laws on three-day notice; the self-perpetuating nature of the board -- he said it has never had a contested election; a lack of a strategy for financial stability; and weak financial support for field offices. He also said the effort was aimed at stopping FOE's merger with Environmental Action and centralization of FOE in Washington, D.C.

As of HCN's deadline, no firm details were available on the meeting. Tom Turner, who edits *Not Man Apart* for FOE out of San Francisco, said events are moving quickly and "anything you write will be out of date." As of July 27, he said, there was no official reply from the FOE Board or management on the meeting request.

But he said the organization's temporary head, Robert Chlopak, "reads the by-laws somewhat differently from the directors who requested the special meeting." They ask that it be held in Berkeley, California on September 1; Chlopak believes setting up a meeting would take at least 50 days.



If the meeting is scheduled, the Brower forces will compete with FOE's present board for proxies from members. Publicizing the issue is eased by the fact that the bulk of FOE's 30,000 members live in northern California, and the San Francisco press has covered the dispute in some detail. In addition, Brower said corporate law in New York, where FOE is incorporated, gives him access to the FOE mailing list for purposes of soliciting proxies.

The FOE newspaper, *Not Man Apart*, is the most direct way to reach the membership. Editor Turner said the September issue is being prepared now for mailing in mid-August. Turner said that originally two board members were going to write their versions of the events leading to the ouster of Brower. But those articles, Turner said, didn't seem to do the job.

So Turner attempted to write a neutral account, using his 15 years with FOE, dating back to its founding, to provide historic perspective. Turner said he abandoned the article when Brower went into court. Turner said he feared it might be seen as an attempt to influence the lawsuit. Instead, he said, an official club statement by Chlopak and board president Luten was being readied for the September issue.

There is also a ghost on hand -- 30,000 copies of the July/August issue of *Not Man Apart*. Because they contain the controversial Brower ad criticizing the board and appealing to members to save the staff, they were ordered shredded by the board at the disputed July 2 meeting. But Turner said the lawsuit saved the papers before the printer got around to shredding them. The court could order the mailing of that issue to the membership.

Returning to the proposed by-law changes, Brower said he hopes adoption of the Sierra Club structure will enable FOE to duplicate the larger

group's success. He said the Sierra Club by-laws foster interaction between directors and staff, blurring the distinction between board and staff.

"It has given the Sierra Club 360 chapters and 15 regional conservation committees. There are problems -- it muddies the lines of authority." But he said attempts to rigidly separate the staff from the board creates a vacuum. He said yeasty interaction between board and staff is especially necessary in an organization like FOE, which lacks tax exempt status for most of its activities. "The non-deductibles need to have an exciting enough program to get non-deductible contributions."

On another subject, Brower said he had problems with some of the press coverage of the issue. He said *Energy Daily*, which is an industry newspaper, said he is trying to regain power. "I haven't had power since 1978, when I was CEO." Although he is a candidate for the insurgent board, he said he is down for the shortest possible term.

He also objected to descriptions of himself as a poor financial manager who had led the organization into disastrous publishing efforts. He said that when he handed the organization over to Rafe Pomerance in 1978, it was only \$25,000 in debt. Today it owes \$700,000. He also said that the publishing effort he had set up was self-sustaining and an important part of FOE's outreach to new people.

He charged that publishing had been used as a cash cow by Pomerance, who headed FOE until a few weeks ago, with the book inventory finally remaindered at a loss. Brower also denied a charge by present FOE head Robert Chlopak that there was a 99-year supply of Amory Lovins' book on soft energy paths. "And there was no \$100,000 loss on books. The trouble is, the Washington office never understood publishing. Pomerance trashed the publishing effort."

If the Brower effort succeeds the following 15 people would make up the new FOE board:

For the term ending April, 1985: Winona LaDuke, Dr. Cheryl Holdren, W. Mitchell, David Phillips, and David Brower. For the term ending April, 1986: Dr. Raymond Dasman, L. Hunter Lovins, Timothy Such, James Barnes, esq., and Dr. David Brooks. For the term ending April, 1987: Don Pierce, Herb Chao Gunther, John Hooper, James Murray and Dr. Judy Diamond.

--the staff

HOTLINE

Grizzly hunt opposed

Defenders of Wildlife and the timber industry's Inland Forest Resource Council are united in opposition to Montana's grizzly bear hunt. Spokesmen for each group told the Federal-State Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee that they jointly oppose the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Park's policy of allowing 25 bears to be killed annually, some of them by hunting.

Scorched earth policy

Beekeepers in Sheridan, Wyoming say the city-sponsored spraying of an insecticide meant for mosquitoes killed their bees as well. Frank and Ellen Lentsch reported that the insecticide, Baytex 4, destroyed about 90 hives, even though the hives had been moved outside the spray area. The poison was brought into the hives by "forage bees" that had collected pollen from sprayed plants. The beekeepers said they would probably have to move away and start over.

Sharing good and bad

Legislators from North Dakota and Montana plan to meet this fall to hammer out a draft interstate compact with Tenneco. The company plans to build a \$3.2 billion coal gasification plant near the Montana-North Dakota border, but hasn't decided yet which state will host the plant. Legislators want the compact to ensure that the host state doesn't reap all the tax benefits since both states will share impacts. Tenneco plans to start construction by 1988.

Restricted chemicals



Union Pacific warns visitors at its closed tie plant

The chemicals which contaminate Union Pacific's closed tie treatment plant near Laramie, Wyoming (HCN, 6/11/84) have been restricted by the Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA said creosote, pentachlorophenol and arsenicals, which are contaminants at the railroad tie plant, have all been found to cause cancer in laboratory animals. The chemicals are used in 97 percent of wood preservatives and are also found in about one-third of the pesticides used in this country. The new restrictions will ban sales to the general public after February, 1985, and require registered applicators to heed warnings and wear protective clothing for commercial use. Restrictions are also proposed on products treated with the chemicals and the EPA suggests sealing any treated materials, such as lawn furniture, with shellac to prevent direct contact. EPA's six-year review of the major wood preservatives found that the chemicals are also associated with genetic changes and birth defects.

BARBED WIRE

The company you keep.

President Ronald Reagan, who is patron saint of James Watt and Anne Burford, complains that people don't believe that the environment has always been a "great interest" of his.

Let's hope not.

An Oklahoma oil company executive says. "We're as environmentally conscious as anybody." His Woods Petroleum wants to drill in Montana's Lewis and Clark National Forest on the Rocky Mountain Front. The firm wants to build an access road through the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks' Blackleaf Wildlife Management Area to reach the proposed well, according to the *Great Falls Tribune*.

A new item to pack out.

Mount Rainier's 14,410 foot peak in Washington is so popular with climbers -- 8,000 a year -- that the Park Service has used its ingenuity to keep the snow slopes white. Steps include issuing plastic baggies to climbers so they can pack out their bodily wastes, using llamas to haul wastes from portable toilets, and hiring a "pooper-scooper" to pick up excrement left by folks on the trail.

Just a smidgeon apart.

Montana Power Company puts the value of Kerr Dam at \$233 million. The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes say they would be willing to pay \$12 million for it. The dam, which is on

the Flathead Reservation, is up for grabs because the power company's federal license expired in 1980.

More bites in the dust.

Consumers Power Co., a Michigan based utility, announced this week it will cancel its Midland nuclear project, making it the latest in a series of casualties including Public Service Co. of Indiana's Marble Hill project, a group of Ohio utilities' Zimmer plant, and Public Service Co. of New Hampshire's Seabrook project.

Seabrook, for example, exceeded its projected costs by 1000 percent, rising from \$400 million to \$4.1 billion. \$2.7 billion has already been spent. And the Tennessee Valley Authority announced it will vote next month on a staff recommendation to cancel four of its unfinished nuclear plants.

4-High Country News -- August 6, 1984

HOTLINE

Further study needed

A preliminary study by a Boise State University sociologist indicates a higher-than-normal cancer rate in areas downwind from the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory. In a talk before the American Association for the Advancement of Science in May, sociologist Michael Blain documented 17 cancer-related deaths in 19 years in Clark County, Idaho, twice the number predicted according to cancer rates in the state. A special review panel of the Idaho Academy of Science recently criticized Blain's report for unclear statistical methods and an inadequate sample size. Blain, a member of the anti-nuclear Snake River Alliance, said that some members of the Academy overreacted to his findings. The report was a pilot study, and the only conclusion was a need for further study, he pointed out.

Hurry

Thirty-nine archaeologists have until September to complete excavations at the site of Exxon USA's Riley Ridge gas sweetening project in southwestern Wyoming. The study, which will cost Exxon about \$1 million, includes four digs on the site of the plant and construction worker camp, excavations along a rail spur, and a survey along a pipeline. The area was used 5,000 years ago by both nomadic Plains Indians and the more agricultural Indians of Utah's Great Basin. The Plains Indians followed the buffalo, but what drew the crop-raising Indians to the dry sand dunes which still exist in the area is a mystery archaeologists hope to unravel before weather closes them down.

Bebemoth swallows whale

In the third multi-billion-dollar oil merger this year, Texaco Inc.'s \$10.1 billion takeover of Getty Oil Co. won final approval from the Federal Trade Commission last month. The FTC voted 4-1 to allow the merger of the nation's third- and 14th-largest oil companies, but only after setting up a regulatory scheme to insure that refineries previously dependent on Getty crude would not be left dry. For the next five years, Texaco has agreed to supply West Coast independent refineries which previously purchased their crude oil from Getty either directly or indirectly. The FTC hopes that will decrease the probability of a failure at the refineries, which would allow Texaco an opportunity to acquire them at distress prices and further reduce competition. Since February, Chevron, formerly Standard Oil Co. of California, acquired Gulf Oil Corp. for \$13.2 billion, and Mobil Corp. bought out Superior Oil Co. for \$5.7 billion.

Utah survived

Months of flood-control planning paid off for Utah this spring. Despite very high runoff, flood damage in Utah is estimated at only \$21 million, compared to \$500 million last year. The cut in damages was achieved mainly by routine housekeeping -- the cleaning of storm drains and canals, dredging, and the like. The low-damage estimates do not include the effect of the rising Great Salt Lake, which earlier in the summer broke through dikes protecting Great Salt Lake Minerals' salt evaporation ponds. The flooding could put the 500-worker company out of business for an extended period.

Former ranger criticizes Forest Service

A former Forest Service ranger has charged that Forest Service officials are mismanaging land at the base of Mt. Elbert, Colorado's highest mountain.

The former ranger is Dan Heinz, now a consultant to the National Wildlife Federation in Montana, and from 1974 to 1977 the Leadville district ranger for the San Isabel National Forest. He says the Forest Service has ignored the land use plan for the Leadville district by overcutting timber, building roads and threatening elk habitat.

According to Heinz and Dennis Zadra, a Leadville construction worker who noticed the increased cutting a year ago, the current district ranger is allowing a major increase in timber cutting. That ranger is Gene Eide, who took over from Heinz in 1977. Eide denies that the plan has been violated. "It would appear that we're grossly overcutting, but we're not," says Eide.

The land use plan, titled the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Upper Arkansas Planning Unit, calls for 250,000 board-feet of timber to be removed from the district annually. This year, according to Eide, the district will provide 1.6 million board feet.

Eide says the cut was increased because local demand for firewood skyrocketed this year. But Heinz says although it is legal to change the plan, the public should have been consulted on any large increases.

"The basic issue is a major deviation from a contract with the public," Heinz says. "That EIS isn't worth the paper it's written on."

Heinz and Zadra also charge that roads have been built in violation of the plan, which specifies that all roads follow existing corridors. The two men say a road into the Box Creek area has



Gene Eide, Leadville District Ranger

been built one and a half miles from any existing corridor. Eide says the road was constructed to meet firewood demand.

"When you're selling (timber) you have to have a way for people to get to it," he says.

The original plan also called for the creation of "80 natural appearing openings up to two acres in size," for elk habitat. Most of the timber to come out of the district was to have come from these clear-cuts, according to Heinz. But under Eide, the cuts have been increased beyond the two-acre limit.

In a recent letter to Zadra, the supervisor of the Pike and San Isabel National Forest, Karl Tamer, wrote that the cuts could be increased to 40 acres. Zadra argues that the larger cuts will subject elk to overharvest during elk season because elk flee to clear spaces when threatened.

Eide says the Colorado Division of Wildlife has been involved in the cutting, and officials found no reason to worry about the elk. "I do not agree the elk herd is threatened," Eide says. "The herd is still increasing." Heinz

responds, "If they complete the harvest, they will harm the elk."

Heinz says he could have prevented the controversy several years ago when land at the base of Mt. Elbert was being considered for wilderness.

"A lot of people trusted me to put it into some type of backcountry management," he says. "I bitterly regret not having gone for wilderness...on Mt. Elbert. It would have been a shoo-in. I personally talked people out of it."

Heinz says the Upper Arkansas plan provided enough safeguards for the district, and decided not to press for the wilderness. "I didn't feel it was necessary. (The area) could still produce some wood and protect the values of Mt. Elbert. 'If (Eide) thought that was poor planning, then he should have gone to the public.' That, for Heinz, is the major issue -- the lack of public involvement in the decision to change the land use plan.

Eide says that he is justified in changing the land use plan. "Any time conditions change you can change the planning. It's meant to be flexible. I think we're following pretty close." The demand for firewood, he says, justified the increased cutting and the building of roads.

For Eide, the war being waged by the man whom he replaced stems from professional differences. "His heart and soul were in this plan," says the ranger. "But in any large organization, you have differences of opinion. We obviously have one."

Heinz says the issue is not simply the amount of wood cut or the number of roads built. "That's a silvicultural thing, which is not the point at all." The issue, he says, is "a major violation of the public trust. After 25 years (with the Forest Service) I'd still like to believe in the agency. I just feel terribly violated."

--John Day

An Idaho group goes to court over INEL

A grassroots conservation group in Idaho filed suit July 17 against the Department of Energy for gearing up to spend more than \$26 million on the New Production Reactor without conducting an Environmental Impact Study.

The Snake River Alliance of Boise based its case on documents obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request. Kerry Cooke of the alliance said the documents revealed that the Department of Energy had already issued at least 34 contracts for environmental studies involving the reactor at the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory.

Originally the third-choice site, INEL was bumped into first place largely through the influence of Idaho Senator James McClure (HCN, 11/28/83), and it has been a factor in Idaho politics ever since. The reactor would bring 1,000 permanent jobs to the Idaho Falls area, which is economically dependent on the nuclear industry. The reactor will produce tritium and possibly plutonium for nuclear weapons.

Cooke said the Natural Resources Defense Council is a participant in the lawsuit, which will be filed in a federal district court in Washington, D.C.

Last month, the alliance and NRDC sent a letter to Energy Secretary Donald Hodel asking for an immediate start on an Environmental Impact Study. Joining in the request was the Energy Research Foundation

of Columbia, North Carolina and the Hanford Oversight Committee of Hanford, Washington. Both states are under consideration for the New Production Reactor site.

Cooke said the groups are concerned that major decisions are being made and contracts let without the participation of the public, a violation of the National Environmental Policy Act. The reactor has never been officially approved by Congress nor a site chosen. Cooke said that aside from DOE, no federal agencies, state, or private organizations were consulted or notified of the preliminary studies on the NPR.

The project is huge. By DOE's estimate, the NPR will cost \$6 billion, but the House Armed Services Committee estimates a budget of \$12 to \$16 billion. The committee has questioned whether the reactor is worth the expense.

It took the Snake River Alliance four months to obtain the documents on the work being done at INEL. In early February, using the Freedom of Information Act, they requested all reports, contracts and memoranda concerning the project.

The DOE at first told the alliance it would have to pay the costs for producing the material, Cooke said, on the grounds that the request was not in the public's behalf. The alliance then scaled down their request and asked only for contract and subcontract documents, she said. They also

enclosed a three-page defense of the fee waiver.

Cooke said in March they received the documents at no charge but found some sections of the contracts missing. It was not until May 29, after repeated requests, that the missing sections were received.

The contracts at INEL include detailed maps of the proposed reactor site, studies of potential water use, the geology of the Snake River Plain, and flood routing in case of failure of the nearby Mackay Dam. Three million dollars were spent in Idaho between August, 1983 and March, 1984, Cooke said.

DOE said the studies were preliminary and had to be done before a choice was made among possible sites and various reactor technologies. DOE has said only one Environmental Impact Statement is required after the final site and technology are selected, and that public involvement will be solicited at that time.

To the Alliance and the other conservation groups which have joined them, the DOE is proceeding in a backwards manner. They argue that the National Environmental Policy Act requires public involvement in early "scoping" sessions before crucial decisions are made.

The DOE has targeted 1985 for a final decision on the New Production Reactor.

--Lisa Lombardi

Wyoming county gets in the oil business

The fate of Husky Oil Co.'s western refineries, pipelines, trucking equipment and gas stations remained in doubt in late July while three former Husky executives sought financing to purchase the assets.

Husky sold its U.S. exploration and production assets to Marathon Oil several months ago, but Marathon declined to buy the "downstream" assets. Husky is anxious to dispose of the remainder of its U.S. capital, and on June 1 a Husky subsidiary called RMT Properties (for "refining, marketing and transportation") assumed ownership.

On May 15, the Laramie County Commissioners in Cheyenne, Wyoming, hurriedly passed an "inducement resolution" pledging to approve industrial revenue bonds of up to \$10 million to help Sirius Energy Inc. in the purchase of RMT's assets. Sirius is headed by George Dibble of Denver, former public affairs director for Husky, and two other former vice-presidents.

Husky's 30,000 barrels-per-day refinery in Cheyenne is probably the biggest single asset involved in the possible sale of RMT's holdings. The company also owns and operates a smaller refinery in Salt Lake City and a refinery in Cody, Wyoming which was closed two years ago.

Some 30 truck stops and 50 smaller stations throughout the western states are also involved in the sale, which reportedly carries a pricetag of more than \$125 million.

Two of the Wyoming truck stops and the Cheyenne refinery have been hit with pollution lawsuits in recent months (see accompanying story). The city of Cheyenne has grown out to and beyond the refinery and many residents have complained about refinery odors. The plant employs nearly 200 persons.

RMT and Sirius officials were reluctant to discuss the sale when contacted at their offices. But a union president in Cheyenne, Elvin Steward, said RMT had informed employees "that they now hope to close the deal by the end of August."

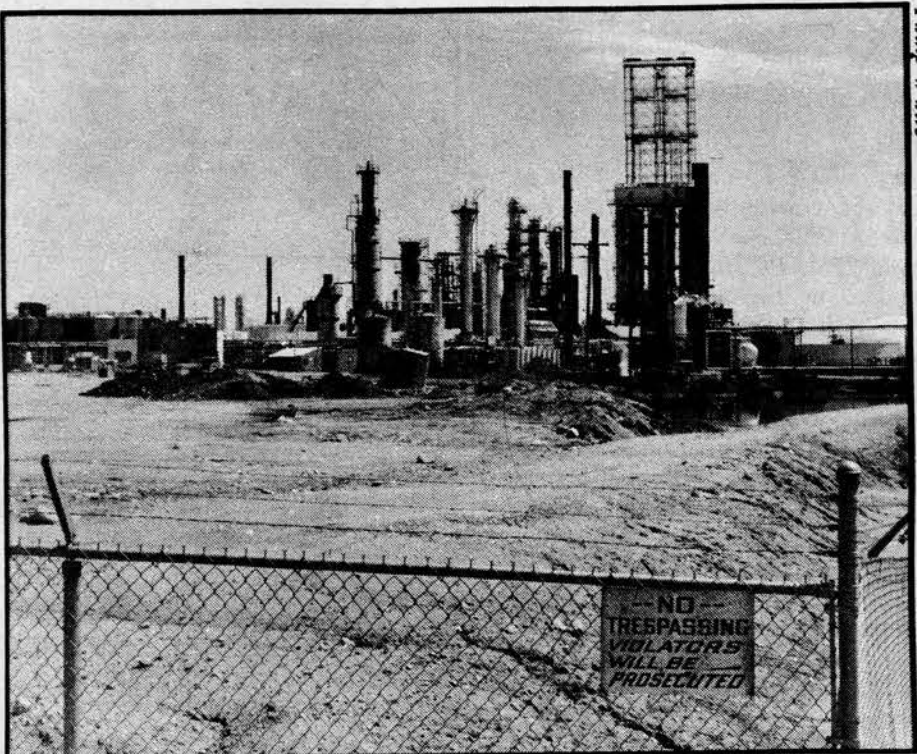
Steward said Husky has told employees that it will shut the refineries down if it is unable to sell. "We originally heard they would close the sale on June 29 and Sirius would take over on the 30th," Steward said. "But something happened and that didn't go through."

Steward said the Cheyenne refinery has been running at full capacity this summer, selling gasoline, jet fuel and paving asphalt. He said a surge in highway work caused by the federal gas tax increase has resulted in a large asphalt contract for the refinery.

The Cheyenne refinery is tiny compared to some of the giant coastal plants which are rated at 250,000 to 300,000 barrels-per-day. Because of its size, the refinery is a marginal operation, especially in the winter. An article in Cheyenne's *Wyoming Eagle* recently said Husky was losing \$40,000 a day on its Cheyenne plant.

The closing of the refinery would be a severe blow to the growth-oriented Cheyenne water board, which is presently building its \$60 million Stage II water project to bring more western slope water from the Sierra Madre mountains 100 miles west of town. The refinery often accounts for half of Cheyenne's total water consumption.

--Philip White



Husky Oil Co.'s refinery in Cheyenne, Wyoming

Oil, air and water don't mix

Husky Oil Co. has been sued at least four times in the past two years for alleged pollution violations in Wyoming.

Two of the suits claim air and water degradation at the company's Cheyenne refinery, and the others allege violations of environmental laws at Husky truck stops in Cheyenne and Rock Springs.

The state Department of Environmental Quality sued Husky about two years ago alleging illegal sulfur emissions from the Cheyenne refinery. In November, 1983, the state and Husky signed a consent decree under which Husky agreed to install an improved sulfur recovery plant and tail gas unit by April, 1985. The agreement allows Husky to earn partial rebates of its fine by meeting monthly stipulations in the decree.

Last week DEQ engineering supervisor Chuck Collins said that Husky is presently building the new sulfur plant at the refinery and "in general they have done fairly well" in complying with the decree. He said the company has missed on "one or two" of the monthly rebates by operating above the existing capacity of the sulfur processing equipment.

Three other Husky suits were filed

this June. In one, DEQ alleges that the refinery is causing "extensive groundwater contamination by a variety of organic contaminants throughout the shallow aquifer beneath the refinery as a result of waste disposal practices and product loss over a period of years."

An assessment by a consultant for Husky said the pollution thus far "will not significantly affect existing water uses" in the area. But the state contends that the full extent of the problem is not yet known.

Husky, its subsidiary RMT Properties, and its lessee, Truck Terminals Inc., are named as defendants in a DEQ suit involving underground leakage of gasoline a year ago from the Husky Truck Stop just west of Cheyenne.

The suit alleges that 7,000 gallons leaked into underground aquifers and sewage pipes and that the defendants illegally failed to notify DEQ of the problem or to clean up the spill.

Husky Oil, RMT and Husky Super Stops, Inc. are named in the fourth suit, which claims the companies have illegally operated a waste treatment plant at the Husky truck stop west of Rock Springs.

--Philip White

HOTLINE

A cutting study

Financially, the U.S. Forest Service would be better off to confine its timbering activity to Washington and Oregon, according to a recently released study by the Government Accounting Office. The study shows that 70 percent of the agency's timber sales outside Washington and Oregon lost money in 1981 and 1982. Sales in Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, Nebraska, Kansas, Utah, the Dakotas and Nevada lost the Forest Service \$156 million. According to the GAO, the losses occurred because the Forest Service sold scrawny timber on steep slopes with fragile soils or sold hefty old-growth timber in expensive-to-reach canyons. The Forest Service said it expects to make money when it cuts the reforested steep-sloped areas fifty years from now. But the GAO said future cuts would also lose money. Forest Chief Max Peterson said the GAO did not properly account for the 25 percent of timber sales income the agency hands over to local government, and that they didn't take into account the value of roads built for logging.

A vanishing inventory

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is funding a \$200,000 inventory of all known endangered species on Park Service lands in the west and midwest. The three-year study by University of Wyoming biologists will cover more than 20 sites in Wyoming, Montana, Nebraska, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Kansas, Wisconsin, Ohio, Indiana, and Iowa. All endangered species from plants to mammals will be surveyed and the data used in park planning and development.

The EPA under fire

The watchdog group Environmental Safety charged July 10 that federal laws governing toxic pollution are not being obeyed by as much as 80 percent of the polluters. At a press conference in Washington, D.C., former Surgeon General Luther Terry and two former secretaries of health, education and welfare endorsed the group's conclusions that the Environmental Protection Agency is not enforcing the laws. In a lengthy rebuttal later, EPA said the report contained many factual errors and that industry compliance is greatly improved.

Suspects accused of preying on birds

Federal and state agents have arrested more than 30 people accused of buying and selling protected birds of prey. The arrests concluded a three-year undercover operation centered in Montana and conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, state conservation agencies and U.S. Attorneys' Offices. The investigation uncovered what one official termed a "thriving international market in federally protected birds."

Federal officials estimated 400 birds were illegally taken from the wild by the dealers; most of the birds came from Montana, a prime habitat. Many were smuggled to Europe and the Middle East, where they fetched prices up to \$50,000.

The National Audubon Society called the arrests a "resounding



Peregrine falcon

rebutal" to the Fish and Wildlife Service, which last year decided to allow the sale of birds of prey bred in captivity. An Audubon official said the sales encouraged theft of wild birds and their illicit trade.

Suspects were charged with breaking federal and state wildlife statutes, conspiracy, mail fraud and making false statements. The most serious of the charges, dealing in protected birds, could bring a maximum five-year prison sentence and a \$20,000 fine.

The U.S. Attorney in Montana, Paul Dunbar, said the illegal operations had the sophistication of a drug-smuggling ring, including the hiding of eggs in false-bottomed suitcases.

--John Day

HOTLINE

Hunting cranes



Sandhill cranes

For the third year in a row, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has approved a special hunt for greater sandhill cranes and Canada geese in western Wyoming. Because the sandhill cranes are "foster-parents" of whooping cranes, an endangered species, Al Langston of Wyoming's Game and Fish Department says the season is set early before the whoopers migrate. The 25 whoopers, along with 12-15 young from this summer's breeding program, live with their sandhill families at Gray's Lake, just over the border in Idaho. Langston said if a whooper is spotted, that area is closed and an observer assigned to the bird until it has flown out of all hunting areas. Hunters are also given brochures to help them distinguish between whoopers and sandhill cranes, Langston added. There will be 250 permits issued with a bag limit of two cranes and two geese.

Golden sludge

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare has filed a civil complaint against a gold mining operation for failing to stop stream pollution inside the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness. Golden Reef Mine is a mile away from the wilderness boundary. The state charges that Golden Reef has failed to comply with an out of court settlement reached last January after streams were contaminated by a sludge spill. The mine was ordered then to monitor water quality and make reports to the Idaho health and welfare department. Now, says the state, runoff from the sludge has contaminated streams inside the wilderness even though the mine was closed for the winter, and no reports have been made. The maximum fine for each water quality violation is \$1,000; Golden Reef Mine paid \$25,000 in the settlement reached seven months ago.

Progress, in the form of oil and gas exploration, has finally come knocking on the door of the Rocky Mountain Front in northwest Montana. The Front is a uniquely rugged area just south of Glacier National Park, bordered on the west by the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area, on the east by the Montana high plains, and on the south by Highway 200.

It is one of the last areas where each spring the grizzly emerges from his mountain home to forage in the swampy lowlands of the eastern plains. The Front is also ideal habitat for the endangered gray wolf and for large herds of elk, mountain sheep and deer.

The area has been brought to the fore by an Application for a Permit to Drill a 13,510-foot-deep wildcat well by American Petrofina of Texas. It wants to drill in the Hall Creek area of the Lewis and Clark National Forest three miles south of Glacier National Park.

It is the first attempt at major drilling but it is unlikely to be the last. Oil companies seized by "Overthrust Fever" see the Front as a hot prospect and are doing a great deal of seismic exploration. But for the moment this first well is stalled by the grizzly.

The building of 6.2 miles of permanent road and of a bridge to the drill site was to have started in July. It was stopped by a "jeopardy opinion" from the Fish and Wildlife Service to the Forest Service: "The proposed Hall Creek exploratory oil/gas well is likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the grizzly bear." The grizzly is on the federal threatened species list in the Lower 48.

The implications of the wildcat well go beyond the local effects. The Northern Continental Divide ecosystem is the last place south of Canada where the grizzly is healthy. An estimated 500 grizzlies roam Glacier National Park, the Bob Marshall, Great Bear and Scapegoat Wilderness Areas, and contiguous wildlands.

Hall Creek in the Badger-Two Medicine area is part of several hundred thousand acres in this ecosystem which remain unprotected, and Bill Cunningham of the Montana Wilderness Association sees the American Petrofina proposal as precedent setting.

"It's the first application to drill in the Rocky Mountain Front in at least twenty years. It may decide how hundreds of thousands of acres of similar land will be handled. It will tell industry where we're heading. Are we going to keep nibbling away at the last one percent of grizzly habitat? Will we keep playing the mitigation game? Or will we protect the ecosystem?"

The Fish and Wildlife Service jeopardy opinion came in reaction to an environmental assessment (EA) released in March by a Forest Service and BLM interdisciplinary team recommending approval of the well. The jeopardy opinion blocks the approval, but the agencies are currently negotiating a possible compromise. One possibility is that the Forest Service will adopt one of the two mitigation approaches suggested by Fish and Wildlife.

The first would allow the access road and bridge, but require removal and restoration after the drilling. It would also require a comprehensive plan describing how the agencies would manage the area for further exploration and development. The second calls for airlifting in drilling materials to avoid road building.

Drill rigs eye Montana's Front



It is not just Fish and Wildlife which has problems with the Hall Creek decision. Dr. Charles Jonkel, who heads the Border Grizzly Project at the University of Montana, says Hall Creek is a corridor linking grizzly habitat in Glacier with habitat to the south in the Bob Marshall-Great Bear-Scapegoat wilderness areas. The populations interbreed, which strengthens the gene pool of each. If human activity in Hall Creek cut grizzly movement between Glacier and Bob Marshall, both populations might be weakened.

Jonkel says there is "essentially no data base" to judge the effect activity would have on the animals. He says the agency's decisions were "based on extrapolations of data from studies done further south" instead of on data from Hall Creek. He suggests that they should have said: "We don't have a data base to make a decision... therefore, first we have to get the data base." He also said, "You're crazy to return a decision based on extrapolated data."

Dale Gorman, Forest Supervisor

for the Lewis and Clark National Forest, says the team did use extrapolated data. But he also says it "drew on the best information available" and that the "cumulative effects process used was state of the art." Jonkel disagrees, saying the cumulative effects technique is not yet ready for use.

A separate issue is whether an overall plan is needed to guide drilling and production. Critics say that considering only the present application leaves the area open to "piecemealing" -- the permitting of individual projects without looking at total effect. Their call for an overall plan is echoed by Fish and Wildlife in its jeopardy opinion.

The BLM's Lewistown District manager, Glenn Freeman, who helped make the Hall Creek decision, replies, "The drilling of a wildcat well is so speculative that a field development plan does not have viability either for industry or the environmentalists."

Cunningham suggests that a comprehensive plan already exists. "The Forest Service wants the oil and gas industry to build logging roads for it." He says the Hall Creek road would become a part of the Forest road system, and be used to log areas now inaccessible.

A separate issue is whether the BLM and Forest Service can deny Petrofina a right to drill. The Lewis and Clark National Forest said in a 1981 EA that the Energy Security Act of 1980 has language ordering the Forest Service to allow all permits to drill. Cunningham says the Forest Service misinterprets the Energy Security Act.

Why has it taken so long for drilling to reach the Rocky Mountain Front? Cunningham suggests, "It's remote and rugged. And Montana's populist tradition discouraged companies from invading it. But there is also a feeling now among some in the industry that 'no one is going to tell us where we can't drill.' Plus, they're encouraged by the Reagan Administration's attitude."

Cunningham says his group will look closely at any decision emerging from the Forest Service and Fish and Wildlife negotiations. "Fish and Wildlife is just another federal agency subject to political pressure. If we're not satisfied, we will almost certainly see court action."

--Stuart Blundell, staff

Stuart Blundell is a student at Montana Tech in Butte, Montana. This article was paid for by the High Country News Research Fund.

Interior loses a coal fight

The legacy of former Interior Secretary James Watt had a large chunk taken out of it last month by a federal district court. In a 35-page ruling, Judge Thomas A. Flannery threw out several major regulations issued by the Department of Interior under Watt. Perhaps most important, Flannery found that Interior could not delegate to the states regulation of surface mining on federal lands under the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977.

Flannery also found that the regulations illegally exempted between 500 and 1,000 plants which wash, crush and size coal. Finally, the environmental groups which filed the lawsuit said this decision bodes well

for the future. The complex legal challenge to Watt's coal regulations was broken into three parts by the court. Flannery's decision is therefore the first of three.

The lawsuit was brought by the Environmental Policy Institute, National Wildlife Federation, National Audubon Society, Sierra Club, Western Organizations Resource Council, Illinois South Project, Save Our Cumberland Mountains and Virginia Citizens for Better Reclamation. A copy of the decision is available from the Environmental Policy Institute, 218 D St., S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003.

--the staff

BULLETIN BOARD

ENTERPRISE AND ENVIRONMENT

The Political Economy Research Center, Montana's conservative resource management institution, will host its annual National Conference for journalists at Lone Mountain Guest Ranch from September 18-21. "Enterprise and Environment: Explorations in Conservation" is the title of this year's conference, which will focus on resource development, wildlife, and water issues. For more information write the Center at 502 South 19th St., Bozeman, MT 59715.

OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS LEASING

The Department of the Interior requests comments from industry, state governments and the public on policies for a 5-year oil and gas leasing program for the Outer Continental Shelf. The new program will take effect in June 1987 when the current program expires. Comments or requests for more information can be addressed to the Deputy Associate Director for Offshore Leasing, Minerals Management Service (MS-641), 12203 Sunrise Valley Drive, Reston, VA 22091, before August 24, 1984.

COLORADO PLATEAU CONFERENCE

Conservationists from the Four Corners states plan to meet August 25-26 in Grand Junction, Colorado to talk about wilderness, parks, Wild and Scenic designation for rivers and other regional issues. Neither the press nor public officials are invited to the working sessions, which will be held at the city-county building at Rood Avenue and North 5th Street beginning at 9 A.M. on August 25. To register call Mark Pearson, Western Slope representative for the Colorado Open Space Council, 303/245-1191, or write him at COSC, Box 204, Grand Junction, CO 81502.

MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL WORKSHOP

An environmental education workshop will be held August 14-17 at the University of Montana Biological Station on the east shore of Flathead Lake. Sponsors are the Bitterroot, Flathead, Kootenai, and Lolo national forests, and two graduate college credits are available through the University of Montana in education or environmental studies. Registration is \$55 for four days, room and board included. Contact Virginia Tribe, Lolo National Forest, Building 24, Fort Missoula, Missoula, MT 59801 (406/329-3832).

CANYONLANDS ROAD CONSTRUCTION

Two draft Environmental Assessments concerning proposed roads in Canyonlands National Park have been released for review and comment by August 23. Prepared by both the Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management, the EAs cover construction of 13.5 miles of road on lands administered by both agencies. Copies are available from the Superintendent, Canyonlands National Park, 446 South Main, Moab, UT 84532 (801/259-7164).

MONTANA PHOTO CONTEST

The Northern Plains Resource Council is sponsoring its second annual "Rural Montana" Amateur Photo Contest. Photographers who make 50 percent or less of their income from photography are eligible to enter their work in the following categories: People, Flora, Animals, Humor, Scenics, Heritage, and Photos by Youths 16 and Under. The entry fee is \$5 a print, and the deadline is September 22, 1984. For rules and information, contact the Resource Council at 419 Stapleton Building, Billings, MT 59101 (406/248-1154).

MONTANA'S ENERGY RESOURCES

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation has released the first four of a series of pamphlets on Montana's Energy Resources, covering (and titled) *Wind*, *Small Hydro*, *Geothermal*, and *Alcohol Fuel*. The department has also released the *Montana Wind Energy Atlas*, which gives detailed wind data for 50 different sites across the state, including rankings of high-potential sites. Both are available from Montana's Natural Resources Department, Energy Division, Capitol Station, Helena, MT 59620 (406/444-6697).

\$1,000 FIRST PRIZE

A Committee to Defeat Ronald Reagan is sponsoring a contest for the best art work or information which tells why Reagan should not be re-elected. All media -- radio, bumper sticker, brochure -- that can be easily reproduced and distributed are eligible. First prize is \$1,000. Entries must be postmarked no later than August 30 to the Committee to Defeat Ronald Reagan, P.O. Box 20492, New York, NY 10025.

AGRICULTURE CONCLAVE

A Sustainable Agriculture Conference will be held October 12-14 at Montana State University in Bozeman sponsored by the Alternative Energy Resources Organization. The conference will focus on maintaining soil fertility and the decline of farm profits and yields. Contact AERO, 324 Fuller C-4, Helena, MT 59601 (406/443-7272). The cost to non-members is \$35.

SAFE ENERGY

Public Citizen, a public interest group founded by Ralph Nader, has released *A Safe Energy Platform, the Road to Trillion Dollar Energy Savings*. The booklet discusses current energy sources and policies, and proposes we change our ways to a new policy of using more efficient and renewable non-polluting sources of energy. The 80-page booklet costs \$5 for individuals but \$20 for industry groups. Write Public Citizen, 215 Pennsylvania Ave., S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003.



FLYWAYS

Flyways -- Pioneering Waterfowl Management in North America, is a new book published by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, covering waterfowl management from the 1930s to the 1960s. Copies are available for \$17, Stock No. 024-010-00653-6, Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

MONTANA RANGELANDS LOANS

Low-interest loans are available from the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation to help landowners improve their rangeland. Under the Montana Rangeland Improvement Program, private landowners are eligible for up to \$20,000 at seven percent interest, with a maximum repayment schedule of 10 years. Priority is given to projects which will benefit more than one ranch and that have additional funding. Each improvement must be part of a conservation plan for the entire operating unit. Contact your local conservation district or Conservation Districts Division, DNRC, 32 S. Ewing, Helena, MT 59620 (506/444-6667).

"WOW!"

"Dress 'em up in old clothes and sturdy shoes, and we'll take you all into the woods," offers Boise Cascade Corp. in a full-color ad in *Newsweek* announcing tours of logging sites. The aim is to show how a forest is logged to sustain yields forever and to inspire wonder: "Your kids will go 'Wow!'" For the location and time of a tour near you, contact Sharon Ramsey, Boise Cascade Corporation, 1 Jefferson Square, Boise, ID 83728.

NUCLEAR WASTE MANUAL

The Citizen's Nuclear Waste Manual, a comprehensive guide to nuclear waste site selection, has been published by the Nuclear Information and Resource Service. It examines the legal and regulatory framework for site selection, the federal agencies involved and discusses ways to influence the process at local levels. It costs \$20 from The Resource Service at 1346 Connecticut Ave., N.W., 4th floor, Washington, D.C. 20036 (202/296-7552).

BOY SCOUT BADGE CRITICIZED

The Critical Mass Energy Project is organizing a letter-writing campaign criticizing the Boy Scouts of America for their atomic energy merit badges. Critical Mass says that the badge handbook is "rife with misinformation" because it minimizes the dangers of nuclear power and obscures the links between atomic power and atomic bombs. They are asking for letters, particularly from former or current Boy Scouts, protesting the handbook and stressing energy conservation. Letters should be sent to Critical Mass Energy Project, 215 Pennsylvania Ave., S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003 (202/546-4790).

CULTURAL PARKS WORLD CONFERENCE

The first World Conference on Cultural Parks will be held September 16-21 at Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado. Sponsored by the National Park Service, the conference will discuss how to protect and preserve the world's cultural sites. There are now 165 natural and cultural sites on the World Heritage List, and 11 of the 12 U.S. sites are National Parks. Mesa Verde was the first site designated by the 21-nation committee.

For more information, contact James Harpster, National Park Service, Rocky Mountain Region, 655 Parfet St., Denver, CO 80225 (303/234-3095).

GREAT SALT LAKE HIGH

The Great Salt Lake has finally reached its high-water mark this year. The U.S. Geological Survey reports that on July 1-3 the lake reached 4209.25 feet above sea level at the Saltair Beach Boat Harbor before it began to recede. This is the highest the lake has been since 1878 when the water level reached 4209.40 feet. The highest recorded level was 4211.50 feet in 1873.



FOCUS ON FERRET

A workshop on the black-footed ferret will be held at the University of Wyoming in Laramie on September 18-19. Papers on the current status of the population, surveys and research on the black-footed ferret will be presented, as well as research on the prairie dog, the ferrets' main prey. Contact Stan Anderson, Black-footed Ferret Workshop, P.O. Box 3166, University Station, Laramie, WY 82071 (307/766-5415).

MEMORIAL PEACE WALK

The 3rd annual Hiroshima/Nagasaki Memorial Walk will be held August 11 in Scottsbluff, Nebraska. Sponsored by the Scottsbluff Chapter of Nebraskans for Peace, NO MX, and Western Solidarity, the walk begins at 10 A.M. at Wildcat Hills State Park. Walkers will go to a proposed MX silo site one and a half miles away, where there will be a short service. Afternoon activities begin at 12:30 P.M. back in the park and speakers include Dr. Leo Sartori, former Senior Advisor for the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and Charlotte Black Elk, granddaughter of Black Elk. Call Western Solidarity in Denver 303/355-5124 or NO MX in Scottsbluff, 308/635-7768 for more information.

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of view from which
to see the land



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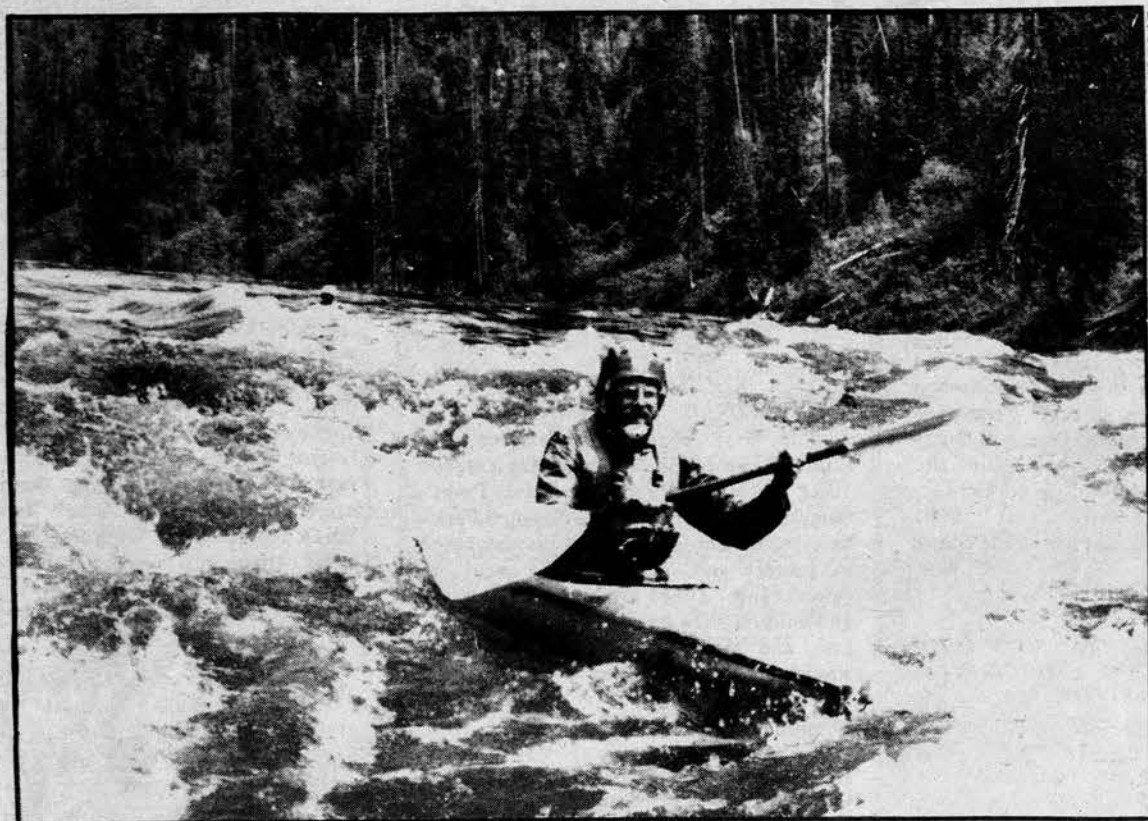
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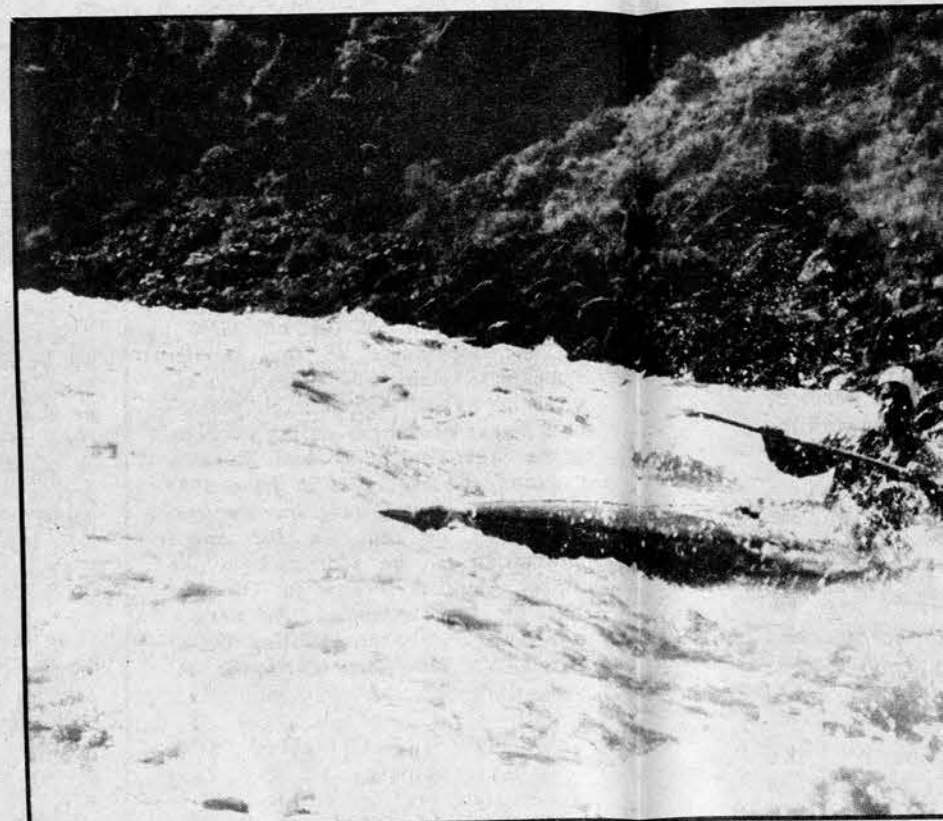
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8-High Country News -- August 6, 1984



South Fork of the Salmon River, Idaho

NORS



Owyhee River, Oregon

WHITEWATER



Salmon Falls, Idaho

Martin Litton

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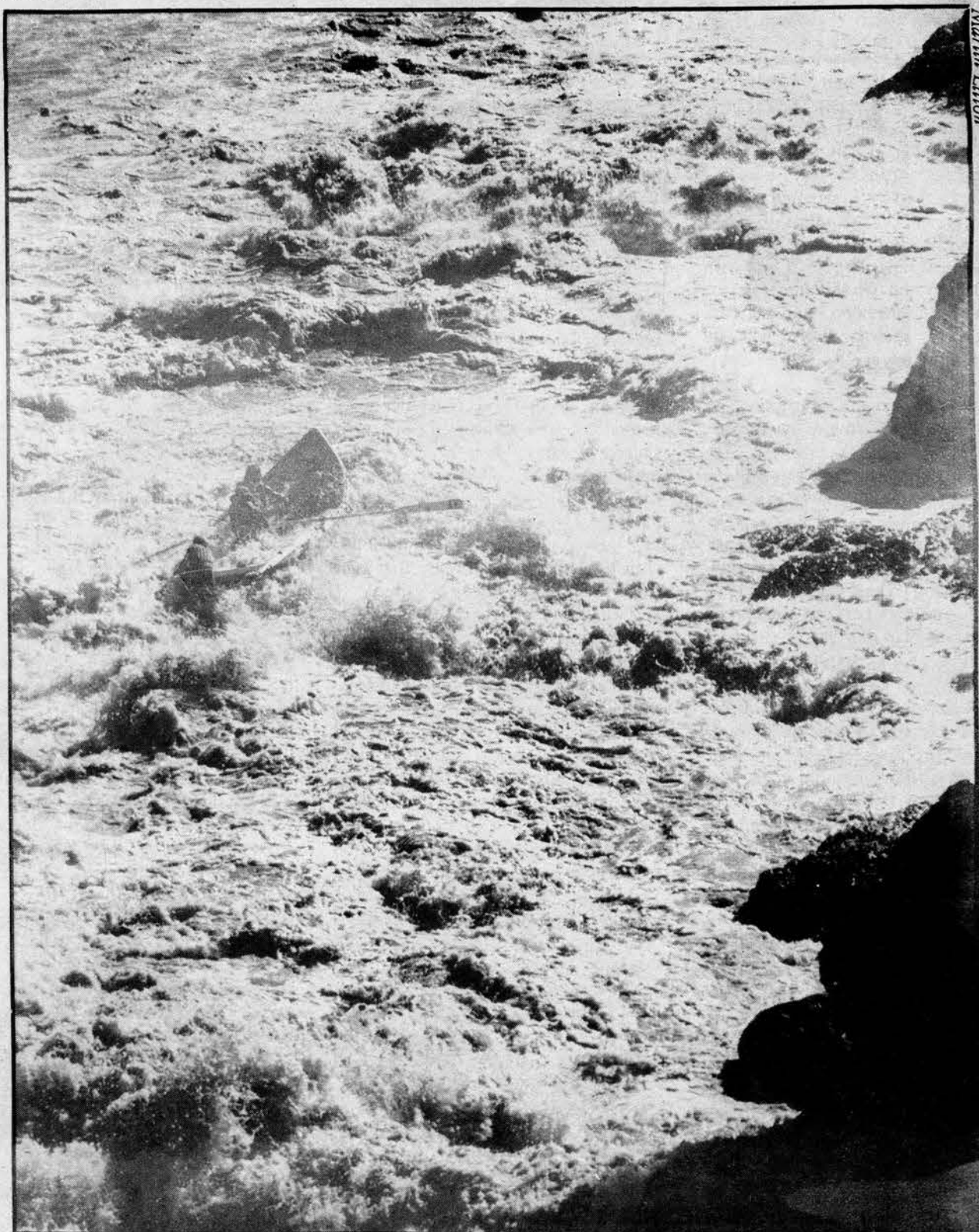


NORS



Martin Litton

Wild Sheep Rapid, Hell's Canyon, Idaho



Martin Litton

For beginning whitewater enthusiasts -- and there are a growing number in the West -- the non-profit, National Organization for River Sports has a new 'How To' brochure filled with good advice: Practice your skills before trying harder runs, get some instruction at a kayaking or rafting school, go on a guided trip, learn your river, and use proper equipment. There are also tips on books, outfitters and easy rivers in the brochure, called How To Get Into Kayaking And Rafting In The State Of Colorado. Copies are available from NORS, Dept. NP-1, 314 N. 20th St., Colorado Springs, CO 80904.

Lava Falls, Grand Canyon

Forests...

[Continued from page 1]

addressed to the Regional Forester in Denver; from that office it was essentially kicked back down to the local level. The Supervisor of the Grand Mesa-Uncompahgre-Gunnison National Forest (GMUGNF) was instructed to start negotiating with a committee from the two groups appealing the Red Canyon aspen treatment, the Western Colorado Congress headquartered in Montrose, and the Western Slope Energy Research Center in Hotchkiss.

Possibly the regional office sent this aspen problem back down to GMUGNF because it already has its hands full with other problems relating to GMUGNF. After the regional office approved the extensive 50-year Land Management Plans submitted by GMUGNF and San Juan National Forest last year, administrative appeals were filed with the national Forest Service office against the two plans by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and the state of Colorado. Their complaints dealt with the fact that nearly all timber sales on southern Rocky Mountain forests result in a net loss economically, contrary to National Forest management regulations; and they objected to the manner in which the Forest managers try to wipe out that loss by distributing the deficits incurred for things like road-building to recreation, wildlife, range or water.

The national office in turn kicked one of those appeals back down to the regional office, instructing the Regional Forester to negotiate an understanding with Colorado's Department of Natural Resources, whose primary interest is in seeing a greater management emphasis placed on the State's number one industry, recreation. And the national office entertained the NRDC appeal itself.

So everything is more or less pending right now. The NRDC appeal, according to the Washington lawyer Kaid Benfield, has been "fully briefed and argued;" and the Forest Service will probably release its response by this summer.

In Denver, the Department of Natural Resources, under its agreement with the agency, is waiting for the Forest Service to help assemble a list of names for a "panel of experts" to pass judgment on all major silvicultural treatments in Colorado forests that involve substantial amounts of timber cutting. The Forest Service is also working up its part of a recreation development plan that will be done in cooperation with state and local entities.

And "down on the ground" in the GMUGNF country, Forest Supervisor Ray Evans and his people are meeting frequently with a committee made up of members of the two conservation groups. Both sides are non-committal about what gains, if any, are being made. But one participant said they hope to have some reportable progress by August. Louisiana-Pacific, meanwhile, continues to assemble its mill and a timber-buyer has been flown in from Coeur d'Alene to scour the countryside within a hundred-mile radius for farmers and other landowners with a stand of aspen they would be willing to part with. The buyer, Tim Kylo, thinks he will probably be able to find enough privately-owned aspen to get the mill through its first year.

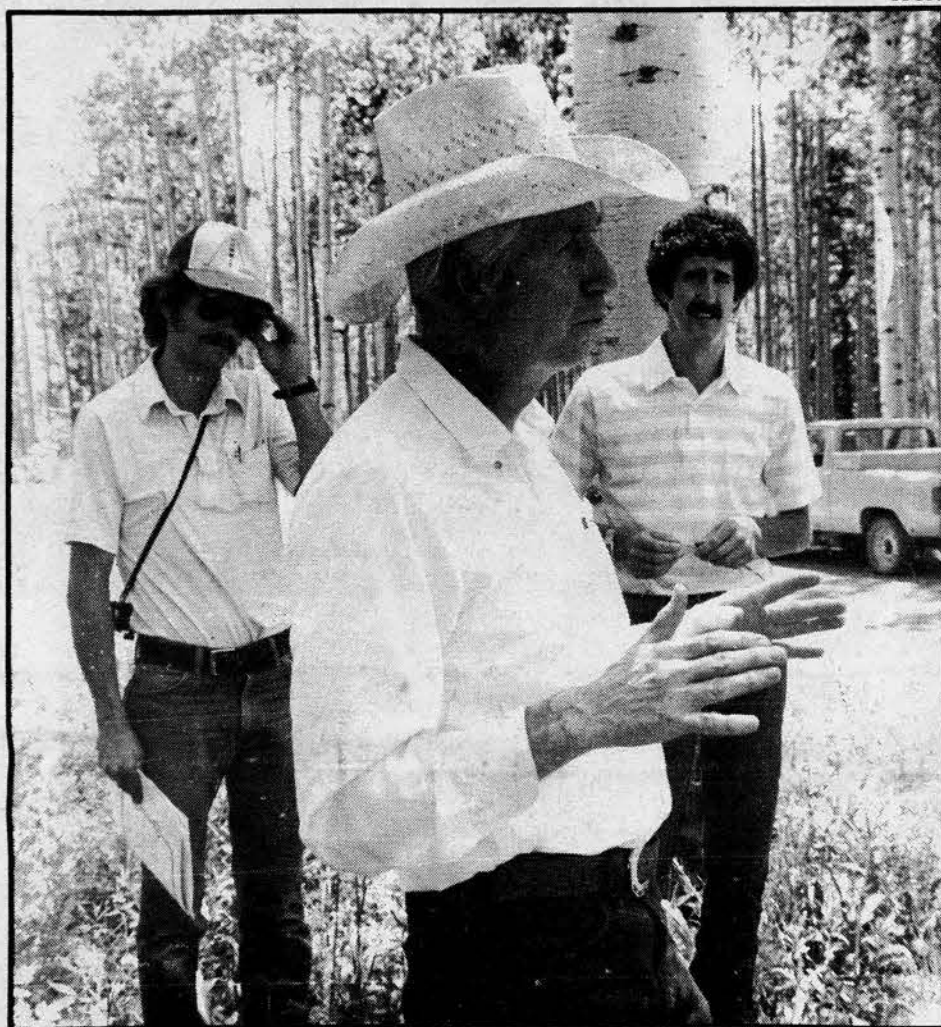
So, all quiet -- and everything cooking.

I thought it might be a good idea to take advantage of whatever remains of this un-empty quiet while everything is coming to a boil under us, to try to take the largest possible look at just what is cooking. A recent issue of HCN (June 25, 1984) carried a good set of articles about the geology of the West, including one about the almost unimaginably vast tectonic forces that created (and continue to create) the geological West -- great crustal plates crushing together head-on, riding over and under each other, grinding off in opposite directions with occasional jerk-stop earthquakes, or slowly pulling apart.

It has occurred to me that human society can be visualized in similar

the aspen tree, but not as a biological entity; think of it instead as the nexus of any number of cultural economic and social forces.

Timbermen and woodsmen of a hundred years ago -- or twenty years ago for that matter -- would be surprised to see the attention the aspen is getting today. In terms of most human purposes, the aspen has always been regarded as a weed. A lovely weed, to be sure: nice to have around except when it was in the thicket stage after sprouting, but nothing to fight over. A wet wood, it makes for warped lumber; as firewood, it burns too fast with too little heat. It was only used at all



Paul Senteney, range and wildlife biologist for the Forest Service, talks about aspen cuts during a recent tour for

the press and concerned citizens. Robin Nicholoff, left, lives near GMUGNF; Dave Plunkett, right is a forest planner.

images -- great mass movements set in motion by the combined energies of shared dreams, hopes and fears; masses bent on collision courses by the influence of other masses in movement; "dead" movements with an inertial momentum that often outlasts the hopes and fears that gave them their initial energy. I think, in fact, that until we can see our lives in terms of the same kind of massive dynamics with which we are beginning to understand the previously disconnected elements and forces of our geography, and until we learn how to shape our political and cultural responses to that scale of events, we will continue to be tossed about while economic masses with nothing going for them but old momentum grind their way to some meaningless hiatus. The current election is as good a measure as any of the extent to which our political structures are no longer the cause but just a belated symptom of change around us; to believe that this program or that one will actually do much to, say, wipe out the deficit or bring peace, is as naive as believing that a fleet of bulldozers could "cure" the San Andreas Fault by blading off the little hills and rills that are its surface manifestation.

But -- yes: where to start? Back down on the ground, I think, after those lofty generalizations. Start with

because it was so common. In the Rockies, up in the Lake States and New England, all over Canada: practically everywhere that trees grow in the cooler parts of the continent, there was aspen, common as dandelions.

But that very abundance is what has made the tree too valuable to remain a "weed". After World War II, we found ourselves facing what promised to be an increasingly uncomfortable situation in our forests: after two hundred years of natural evolution -- another way of saying "taking the quick and easy way" -- the American forest-products industries had become almost entirely dependent on softwood timber, especially the big old-growth timber that was obviously exhaustible. In the postwar boom, the demand for that softwood timber had grown so huge that it began to exceed -- substantially in the West -- the amount of new softwood growing up in the forests every year. National timber inventories begun in the 1950s showed that there was plenty of new wood growing in the forests every year, but most of it was forests of young exuberant hardwoods.

So there was a clear mandate for resource planners: to avert a timber crisis sometime around the turn of the century, we had to learn how to replace a large part of the demand for

high-grade, softwood, old-growth with a demand for young, small, low-grade hardwoods. This meant new products and new equipment for harvesting and processing -- in effect, the making-over of a whole industry. As any sociologist could tell you, it is better to do that kind of thing gradually over a period of time, rather than leaving it until it all has to be done at once.

The problems and possibilities of hardwood utilization became the focus of a lot of research. It was supported and carried out by the bigger and wealthier segments of the forest-products industries and by the research arm of the Forest Service, with the two entities often working together at facilities like the Forest Products Research Laboratory operated by the Forest Service on the University of Wisconsin campus in Madison. A lot of the closeness between the Forest Service and the forest-products industry, so deplored and envied by environmental forces, comes out of their cooperative research efforts, I think.

Structural flakeboard, like Louisiana-Pacific wants to make in Western Colorado, is one of a family of products developed in that research: the problems of shrinkage, warping and knots in the small hardwoods were overcome by "disassembling" the tree into grits, chips or flakes, and then reassembling the pieces into structural elements using resins set by a heat-pressing process.

The phenolic resins used in the manufacture of most flakeboards and particleboards, including L-P's, are products of the petrochemical industry. And this bothered the industry and the Forest Service researchers for aesthetic as well as political and economic reasons: efforts to extend one valuable resource were putting pressure on another even more limited resource.

The truly elegant solution, they saw, would be to create "renewable" adhesives from the (increasingly skimpy) leftovers from the forest or agriculture. Research along those lines was funded and at this point there are two promising results: one is an adhesive made from the "spent sulfite liquor" that contains the lignin -- nature's plant-glue -- removed from wood in the sulfite pulping process (the smelly one). The other is an adhesive made from agricultural residues like corncobs and oat or rice hulls. These adhesives require longer pressing times at hotter temperatures but are cheaper to produce, and eventually the economics of the situation will probably favor them over the petrochemical resins.

Hardwood flakeboard is not so new a product as it might seem to anyone who had never heard of it until Louisiana-Pacific brought out its "Waferwood" and "the smart man's plywood" five years ago. Flakeboard has been produced on a small scale in Canada for twenty years now. But obviously the marketing of such a product is a problem. In the equations of supply and demand, the flakeboard's whole reason for being lies on the supply side; over on the demand side, it was being put out in a market where the demand for structural panels has been met -- or overmet -- by plywood for years. So long as the price of low-grade hardwood is low -- especially in comparison to the escalating cost of the relatively high-quality softwood logs required for plywood -- flakeboard can be produced and sold at a lower cost than plywood. But even with that advantage, it has taken a substantial marketing effort to launch

flakeboard in a conservative marketplace that has no complaint with plywood.

Were you to look at the top twenty American forest products companies on the basis of their past market emphases, general reputations, and suchlike, in an effort to determine which company might be most likely to make a major investment in a product whose chief virtue is its role in the better utilization of a resource, Louisiana-Pacific might be pretty far down on your list.

In a business world increasingly dominated by huge megacorporations affecting a paternalistic -- or at least avuncular -- role as the creators, maintainers and perpetrators of the good life, Louisiana-Pacific has a "lean and hungry look;" and it comes across as a throwback to an earlier, more individualistic era of capitalism. It is one of the few large corporations I can think of in any industry which has so taken on the distinct character of the individual in charge -- in this case, a savvy and hard-driving lumberman named Harry Merlo, who has been running the company ever since its creation as a spin-off from Georgia-Pacific. It was spun off to settle an anti-trust suit -- and also, partly, to give a very restless and aggressive Harry Merlo something to do before he started breaking up furniture and eating his fellow executives at G-P.

In the era of the "people-oriented company," in an industry increasingly dominated by large corporations that run four-color ads in the glossy (non-recycled) magazines proclaiming their devotion to the growing of trees and building of the forests of the future, Merlo and Louisiana-Pacific look old-fashioned. They don't seem to be in it for anything but the money to be made turning trees into the things people use. An article about Merlo and his company in *Forbes Magazine* said, "Clearly he is the kind of man who wants to make money; he's not just in it for the feeling of power that comes from running a company."

Nor apparently is he in it for the warm fuzzies that come from being regarded as a benevolent and paternal presence in the communities in which L-P operations are located. When L-P acquires an existing forest-products firm, a few heads invariably roll and everybody who stays works a lot harder. I visited a big hardwood sawmill in Alexandria, Louisiana, which L-P had bought from a local family that had been running it for two or three generations. At the time that L-P acquired the mill, it was employing some 360 people and producing about 20 MBF (million board-feet) of hardwood lumber a year. Within a couple of years, L-P management had it producing 30 MBF with 200 employees. When L-P acquired Fibreboard Corporation in 1978, they closed down two plants, laid off 431 workers, and "shook down and decentralized" management.

Back in the dark ages of what nostalgicians call the "glory days of American logging," nearly all the lumber companies were strictly tree-processors, looking at their resource the same way miners looked at theirs: go in, get the goods, and move on.

Today, in a different age, all of the major forest-products companies are tree-producers as well as tree-processors: any kind of long-term planning -- for even as long as a single human generation -- demands that they take a degree of responsibility for the regeneration of what they use. Louisiana-Pacific does less of this than most of the other major forest

companies. An in-depth series of articles on the structure of the U.S. wood-based industry in the *Forest Products Journal* in the fall of 1981 showed L-P's "wood raw material self-sufficiency range" to be 15-39 percent -- lowest of the "billion-dollar wood giants," with the average being 45-55 percent, and Weyerhaeuser setting the extreme example with 88-100 percent self-sufficiency.

L-P's low standing in this field is partially due to the fact that, by the time they came into being, forest land had become almost too expensive to justify forest production by the iron laws of capital investment. But their land-poor status is also a reflection of Merlo's management direction: the bigger money is in processing timber, not producing it, and most of his

mythology with caulks instead of spurs. But the gyppos had a more mainstream mythology: money.

"I don't know what the exact definition (of gyppo) is," Merlo said to an interviewer for *Business Week*, "but I like to think it's somebody who can make a living off somebody else's leavings."

"Somebody else's leavings" is not a good general definition of the National Forests. But the attitude probably, explains, as well as anything could, the otherwise unlikely marriage of a lean and mean, old-school, overtly profit-hungry company like Louisiana-Pacific, and an unknown, marketless 21st-century product designed to solve a major resource problem through the utilization of a "wee species."



HCN

energy has been directed toward the acquisition of processing facilities to buy cheap and shape up. If some forest land came along with a deal, fine; but if not, maybe even better, because it is the processing facilities that L-P wants.

So what do they do for timber? They buy it from other people: farmers, absentee landowners -- and from all of us through the Forest Service. More than a fourth of the lumber processed in L-P mills comes off public land. I got in trouble with the Montrose, Colorado, radio station (KUBC) recently for calling L-P a "gyppo outfit;" but I was only quoting Merlo in talking about his own company.

Back in those "glory days," a "gyppo" was an independent logger who contracted with the big timber companies to cut some of their timber for them. Most of the gyppos were young ambitious men with a lot of energy and no money, trying to put together a stake to get into business. They were hated by the lumberjacks -- mostly because they had nothing but contempt for the mythology of the lumberjacks, which made out, so far as I can tell, that you weren't really a man unless you worked under impossible conditions for next to no money, all of which you blew on a drunken whoring binge immediately after payday. Kind of like the cowboy

It is a huge gamble. By next year they plan to have the capacity to produce a billion square feet of "Waferwood" scattered across the country. But it is a gamble that makes a lot of sense for a company that has to buy sixty to eighty percent of its wood supply, because aspen and other low-grade hardwoods are the only relatively abundant and untapped wood resource left.

An issue that needs more clarification, however, is exactly what the value of aspen is in Western Colorado, where it is not quite the "weed" it might be in other regions. Structural flakeboard made out of small hardwoods creates a tremendous opportunity for the constructive blending of public and private interests in many parts of the country. In regions where there is a lot of semi-forested agricultural land in private ownership -- and this includes practically everything east of the Mississippi, where three-fourths of our best forestland lies -- the presence of a flakeboard mill can be a tremendous incentive toward the tree-farm management that has to occur on the private forest land (60 percent of the total), if the pressure for timber production is going to be taken off of the public forests of the West.

L-P is doing a lot of this kind of

resource-organization work in the Lakes States and the Southeast, with its own education and landowner-incentives program as well as support for state and regional programs. But all of that costs money that only comes back slowly if at all over long periods of time. And if there is a large supply of mature aspen that could possibly be tapped into through negotiations with a single owner (actually, an owner-representative, a distinction the Forest Service doesn't always keep too clear), and better yet an owner who doesn't need to be educated in forest management, and will even take on responsibility for regeneration, writing off part of the cost of the whole operation as recreational or wildlife management -- a company governed by the iron laws of profit-oriented management can hardly be expected to do anything other than try to get into a deal like that. But the same mix of public and private benefits does not exist when a flakeboard mill sets up near a public forest. And right now it looks like rather than reducing timber-production on the public forests, flakeboard is adding to that pressure -- a fact that seems inconsistent with the Forest Service's intentions in initially helping to develop the product.

There may be something a little refreshing about Louisiana-Pacific's advent here in Western Colorado. After the 1970s, with all the big corporations descending on Colorado like the Second Coming of Christ, Inc., proclaiming the new age of the people-oriented company, promising model communities and new-generation facilities, throwing around front-money and promising mitigation right and left -- and then almost all of them quite literally flying-by-night -- it's kind of nice to see an old-fashioned company that does nothing to dispel the notion that when big business comes knocking it's a good idea to keep your hand on your wallet. They want a limited partnership: some trees in exchange for some jobs and a new outfit to tax. They don't care whether we love them or not.

It is, in short, a 19th century company come to build a 21st-century product -- maybe as good a definition of Ronald Reagan's America as I've heard. But what such a situation requires here -- closer to the 21st century than the 19th -- is the full awareness that all governance and discipline in the situation will have to come from sources other than the company, for internally L-P is bound only to follow the powerful but limited logic of money and its multiplying.

So who will have to be responsible for the larger pictures of life? Local governments and citizen's groups, whose appreciation for the economic benefits of jobs and taxes cannot blind them to the fact that Louisiana-Pacific is an energetic but undisciplined entity in the larger picture that will try naively to get away with anything they can that might reflect positively on their bottom line. And the Forest Service, although it appreciates Louisiana-Pacific for helping them solve the Great American Timber Crisis, must not forget their responsibility to keep people from ruining the people's forests.

We will be looking at efforts along those lines in the next Forest Reports, as soon as some of the things that are cooking start to boil...

□

George Sibley is a freelance writer who lives in Fort Collins, Colorado.

Colorado's civil war pits East against West

The mountainous and still undeveloped Western Slope of the Rockies in Colorado is a step closer to having its fate determined. The area has most of the Colorado's wilderness, big game, and ski towns such as Aspen and Vail, but only a handful of people -- less than 10 percent of Colorado's 2.9 million residents.

But because the western slope of the Rockies intercepts eastward moving air masses, it has most of Colorado's water. It sits at the headwaters of the Colorado River and of tributaries such as the Gunnison, Eagle, Blue and Yampa rivers. For years, irrigation districts and cities on the Front Range have siphoned water through the Continental Divide. About 500,000 acre-feet of water is diverted yearly into the Missouri River basin.

Fruit growers, cattle ranchers, and energy and tourist industries have sued and complained about the transmountain diversions for a half century. The water is diverted high in the mountains, drying up or reducing flows in hundreds of miles of streams, and affecting rafting and other tourist activities as well as agricultural valleys.

Indications are that the Western Slope will soon have more to complain about; the stage is being set for much larger diversions by Denver and 47 towns and water companies. Their united efforts come just as Western Colorado is particularly weak, lacking both grassroots consensus and leadership in Congress and the Legislature.

The lack of unity and leadership is aggravated by a particularly weak economy. Its long-time bulwark, cattle ranching, is in very poor shape. Oil and gas drilling and coal mining have recovered from the lows of 1982-1983, but are not expanding. Oil shale appears dead.

Recreation based on the public lands -- skiing, rafting, hunting, backpacking -- has maintained its position and perhaps expanded. But recreation makes a strange bedfellow with ranching, energy and small businesses that are the traditional Western Colorado power base and a coalition has not been formed.

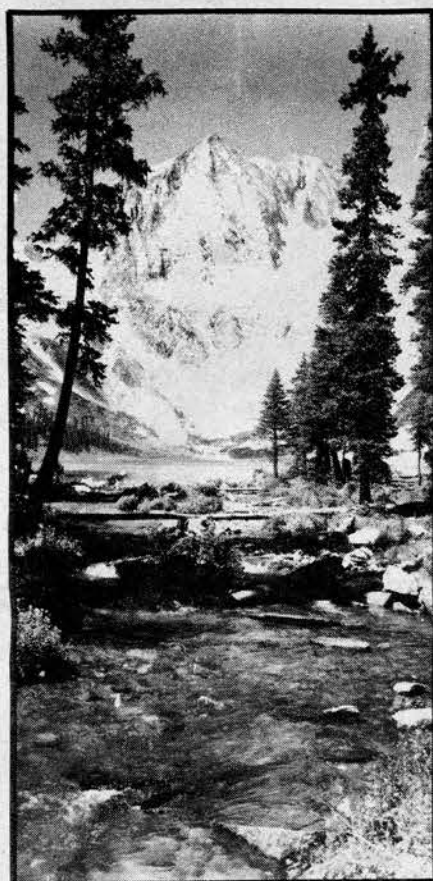
Despite its apparent potential and periodic booms, the economy has not jelled -- no one factor has taken the lead. The area has more water than it can now use in existing reservoirs and the energy, recreation and ranching industries have not created a strategy to keep everyone's options open for the future.

By comparison, the suburban areas around Denver have a precise vision of their future. Led by the metropolitan area Homebuilders, the suburbs see endless residential and economic growth based on energy and regional leadership. Denver won't grow beyond its 500,000 residents. But its office and commercial economy will expand, providing a focus for the growing suburbs around it.

To meet suburban water needs, Denver and its 47 allies propose a 1.9 million acre-foot reservoir at Two Forks on the South Platte River on the eastern side of the Continental Divide. The large reservoir is seen as a threat to Western Colorado; it will let the metropolitan area build a series of transmountain diversions over the next 50 years. The diverted water would be brought under the Continental Divide and stored in Two Forks.

Standing between the metro area and its ambitions is the Systemwide Environmental Impact Statement -- a \$10 million or so study of the area's water needs and ways to meet those needs. The EIS, which was started two years ago, ran into criticism from Western Colorado and from Denver-area environmental groups. As a result of the criticism and as a result of the metro area's desire to focus on particular projects, the EIS was recently redesigned.

The top brass of the Army Corps of Engineers travelled to Grand Junction in Western Colorado July 26 in a helicopter with Governor Richard Lamm (D) to view the area to be affected and to describe the new study to Western Colorado interests.



Hagerman Peak and Snowmass Creek, Colorado

In general, the Corps brought welcome news. Western Colorado had charged that the initial approach slighted the impacts it would suffer from future diversions. This time, led by Colonel William Andrews of the Omaha District, the Corps said the entire array of environmental social and economic impacts would be studied.

It also said that it would look not just at the Two Forks Reservoir, but also at the implications of Two Forks: the future diversions it would make possible, the effect on the salinity of the Colorado River, and how Colorado could meet demands on the Colorado River from Arizona and California in dry years if so much stored water was sitting on the east slope of the Rockies in Two Forks.

But the Corps did not give Western Colorado one major thing: the offensive. The only counter proposal Western Colorado has on the table is the Green Mountain Exchange -- use of water in the existing Western Colorado controlled Green Mountain Reservoir to eliminate the need for new diversions.

But the Water Providers have been vociferous in saying that a trade for Green Mountain water is not an alternative to Two Forks. The Corps backed up the Providers: "Green Mountain Exchange will not be studied in site-specific detail because

it is not an alternative to South Platt storage and the time frame for development and implementation puts this water source as a long-term option."

After the Corps made its presentation, the Western Slope Water Advisory Council, which has served as a discussion center for Western Slope interests, complained bitterly to Governor Lamm that the Denver area was not negotiating and that all roads appear to lead to Two Forks.

Chairman Andy Williams said discussions on alternatives had ceased. He urged Lamm to get negotiations going again. Eagle County Commissioner Dave Mott questioned the value of the Army

**Fruit growers,
cattle ranchers
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Corps EIS. "If we're not talking with the Water Providers now," he asked, "how will we implement" the results of the EIS later?

Lamm, who until recently was at the center of the so-called Water Roundtable negotiations, attempted to reassure the group. "I would consider my whole time wasted if all we come out of this with is East Slope water storage. I would consider myself double-crossed. I'm trying to balance interests -- I want to see a project that benefits both sides."

But even as the Western Slope was asking Lamm for help, its divided state was on display. Missing from this and earlier meetings were representatives from Vail and from Summit County, which has many of Colorado's ski areas.

Given its divided state, Western Colorado's main hope may be that the same situation affects the Front Range. Robert Weaver, a water consultant and chairman of a coalition of mainly Front Range environmental groups called the Environmental Caucus, said in a telephone interview that Two Forks would be very costly -- \$600 million with interest. He said it has been estimated that it could push Front Range tap fees from today's \$4,000 up to \$15,000 in 1984 dollars. If the EIS backs those numbers, it may put pressure on the 48-entity group which intends to build the reservoir.

But, Weaver said, there is an alternative to \$15,000 tap fees. "The Homebuilders want to spread the cost across the whole metropolitan area. They don't want to raise tap fees to where growth pays its own way. They want to raise monthly water rates to existing customers." If the Homebuilders convince municipalities to raise water rates, he said, the economic obstacle to Two Forks would be reduced.

Weaver said Denver, with its retired residents and many citizen groups, would probably resist such hikes. But the suburbs, he said, with 900,000 residents, have a higher income level and are less well organized. He guessed that the Homebuilders could convince them to transfer the costs of growth to existing residents.

The metro area also has unity problems. Denver, which owns the Two Forks site and the water rights which would fill much of it, has still not signed the Two Forks agreement. Denver's auditor believes parts of the agreement violate Denver's charter. In reaction, the city of Thornton has stopped paying its share of the costs of the Army Corps EIS and has taken Denver and the other Water Providers to court to force a decision on the agreement.

But time is not necessarily on Western Colorado's side. Summit County, which sits just west of the Continental Divide and is home to Keystone, Breckenridge, and Copper Mountain ski areas, may sign a separate peace with Denver. According to County Manager Bruce Baumgartner, because Denver has diverted so much water out of the Blue River, the county has no water for ski area snowmaking or for new resort construction. "We're the only county on the Western Slope that needs water today." The county has 10,000 permanent residents, but grows to 60,000 on busy ski weekends.

As a result of the pressures, Baumgartner said, the county has negotiated a proposed agreement with Denver which would give it about 3,500 acre-feet of municipal and snowmaking water. In addition, Summit County could discharge the output from its tertiary sewage treatment plants directly into Roberts Tunnel and then into the Denver water system. At present, the discharges go into Denver's Dillon Reservoir, increasing the phosphorous load and limiting additional Summit County growth. Denver also promises to maintain Dillon full or nearly full during the summer recreation season, rather than draining it off into Two Forks.

In return, Baumgartner said, Summit County will promise to support the Two Forks Reservoir.

The proposed agreement has been strongly objected to by Western Colorado's Colorado River Water Conservation District. The District says that Summit County has no assurances it will get 3,500 acre-feet from Denver; it also claims the agreement to maintain Dillon at a recreation level is vague.

Summit County, because it has already been largely dewatered, would suffer the most severe impacts from Two Forks and future diversions. With it out of the way, environmental objections to Two Forks may have less force with the federal agencies.

--Ed Marston

The West's tailings mess becomes a legal mess

by Marjane Ambler

At sites throughout the West, Department of Energy contractors are scurrying to remove uranium tailings from buildings and lots where they have been sitting for 20 years or more. But they are not moving fast enough to avoid several lawsuits filed because tailings were used in foundations or other parts of homes and businesses.

The tailings are being removed by DOE from more than 8,000 properties near inactive uranium mill sites and by other federal and state agencies from some properties near operating mills.

Technically, occupants of buildings at all the sites have experienced a health risk since only those with radon levels above the Environmental Protection Agency standards are being cleaned up. In addition, thousands of dollars in property values are at stake at many sites. Consequently, it is surprising that only a relatively low number of lawsuits have resulted from the misuse of the tailings.

The lawsuits have been against previous owners of homes, realtors, a state government, a former mill owner and several federal agencies. Two were settled out of court; the others are still pending.

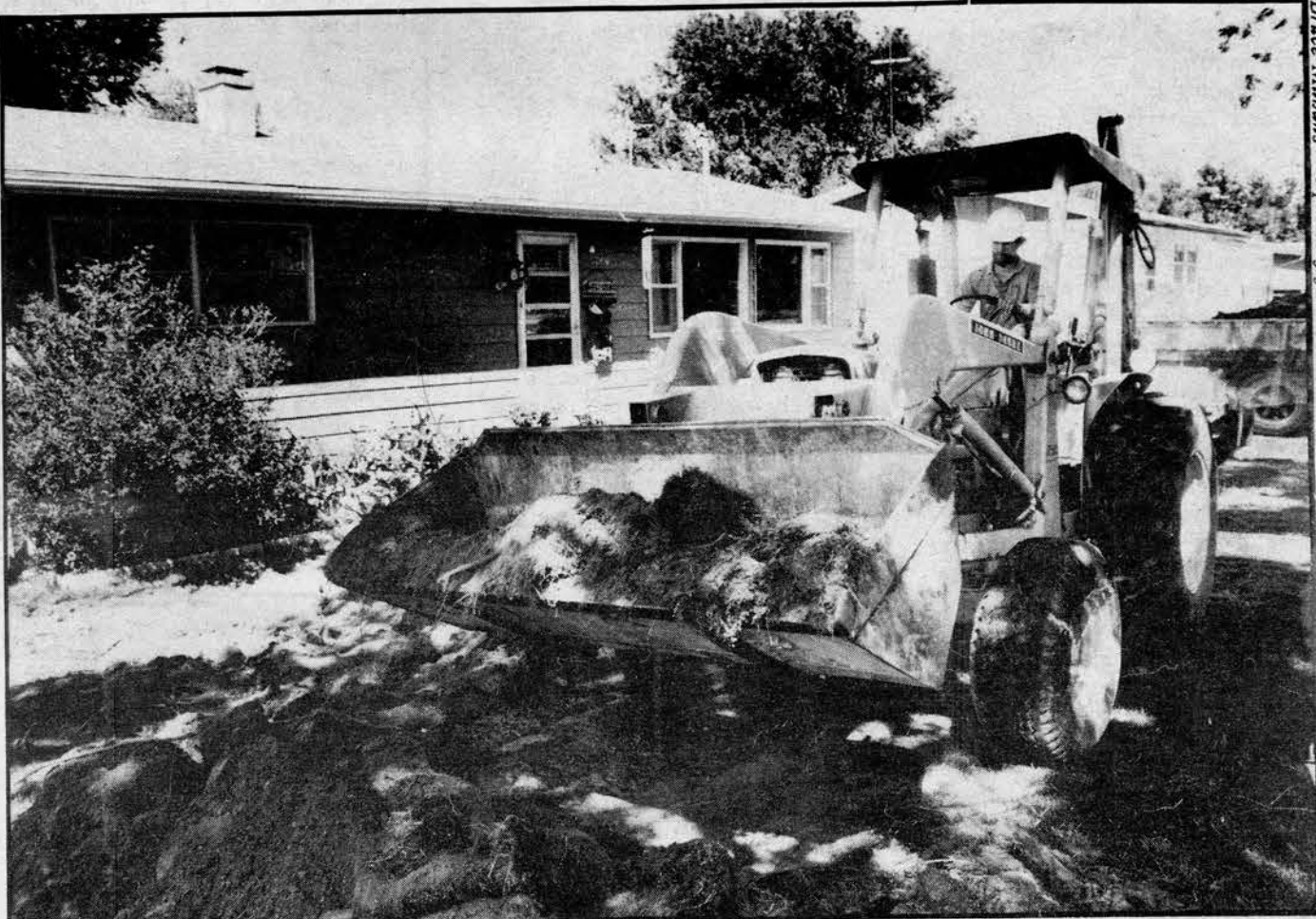
Two landmark cases charge potential future harm from exposure to the low-level radioactivity from the tailings. Five years ago in Edgemont, South Dakota, five-year-old Chris Brafford's hair started falling out. His bones ached, and his sister developed diarrhea that doctors could not explain. In December of 1979, Neil and Genevieve Brafford discovered that they had been living in a tailings-contaminated house. After they moved out, their children's health symptoms disappeared, according to their attorney, Andy Reid of Chadron, Nebraska.

Last spring their lawsuit against the Susquehanna Corp. of Denver was settled without any publicity at the company's request. The Braffords thought the federal and state governments were "extremely negligent," according to Reid, since the Brafford's home had been identified in a survey in 1971 (see accompanying story) and in a government study in 1978. However, the family decided to sue the corporation instead. Although Susquehanna-Western, Inc., which operated the uranium mill in Edgemont, no longer existed, the parent company, Susquehanna Corp., was sued.

"We figured the taxpayers were paying through their pockets and through their health (for such tailings problems), and if we sued the government, we would be forcing the taxpayers to pay again," Reid said. A political decision was made to put the liability where it belonged -- with the corporation -- which should have guarded the tailings more carefully, he said.

A spokeswoman for Susquehanna in Denver would not comment on the case or on the amount of the settlement.

Although the case was settled out of court, Reid thinks it sets an important precedent. The suit was on the basis of an increased risk of cancer and the "probability of injury" to chromosomes. Reid said Dr. Karl Morgan, a noted expert on radiation, testified that he believed at least one



Tailings removal at an Edgemont, South Dakota home, June 1984

member of the family would die as a result of the exposure.

Former millworker William Price has chosen to sue several federal agencies because of tailings contamination. Price said he discovered elevated radioactivity levels in his home in Moab, Utah, using equipment he borrowed from the mill. Price forfeited his house to the Farmers Home Administration to avoid foreclosure and then moved to Nevada to make a new start.

The hot spot had been indicated in the 1971 study, too, but he was never notified. Price charges that his children suffered unnecessary radioactive exposure, and the family has "potential future harm" from the exposure. He filed suit in federal court in Salt Lake City last year against the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the Department of Energy, and the Environmental Protection Agency. A trial is expected this fall.

Levels of radon progeny in his house averaged .17 working levels, five times higher than the EPA standard for residences. A working level was the amount of radiation to which a miner could be exposed in previous years. Now the limit in mines is .33 working levels, but because people generally spend much more time in their homes than miners spend in mines, the standard for homes is set lower.

Radon levels in the Brafford home were even higher. Before the family moved out, they were .67 working levels, more than 20 times the standard.

In Grand Junction, Colorado, the Yves Galler family is planning to sue the previous owners and the realty firm that sold them a house underlain by tailings. An attorney for the defendants, Bray and Co. Realty, said the firm did not know of the tailings.

The attorney declined to comment further about the pending litigation.

Another realtor, Homequity, Inc., was dropped as a defendant in a lawsuit several years ago when no evidence could be found that the company was aware of tailings under a house in Durango, Colorado. Plaintiffs James and Ann Schnell, however, won a settlement from the original owners on the basis of fraud.

In the Grand Junction case, the Gallats are arguing that the \$140,000 house was sold for \$80,000 because the realtor and previous owners, Jack E. and I.D. Nightingale, knew of the tailings. The Gallats said they moved to Grand Junction from Utah only to suffer health problems and psychological stress as a result of the tailings experience, according to their attorney, Jersey Green of Englewood, Colorado.

The lawsuits are an AEC legacy

In a copyrighted story on Jan. 25, 1980, that was subsequently picked up by several other newspapers in the West, *High Country News* reported on the Lucius Pitkin, Inc. radiation survey that had "slipped through the cracks" and been forgotten by state and federal agencies.

At that time, *HCN* predicted that lawsuits would result from the agencies' negligence in following up on the survey results. The Environmental Protection Agency had hired Lucius Pitkin, an Atomic Energy Commission contractor, in 1971 to take a mobile gamma ray scanner through towns near active and inactive uranium mills throughout the West. In 106 communities, the survey detected 6,485 spots of elevated radiation, which the EPA refers to as "hits." They might indicate tailings, concrete blocks, radium-faced clocks in store windows or chunks of ore used for decorative purposes.

EPA turned the results over to the Atomic Energy Commission and sent copies to the states. The AEC ignored it, and the study was apparently lost when AEC split into the Energy Research and Development Administration and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Only one state -- Colorado -- apparently followed up on it, according to EPA.

The study has been used by DOE in its work to clean up properties near inactive mill sites, but the portion of the survey pertaining to about 20 towns near active mills was forgotten and never even referred to in environmental impact statements prepared by NRC on active mills.

The story described how Utah became aware of the study when the William Price home in Moab was found to have high radiation levels.

--Marjane Ambler

While the plaintiffs in these cases said they were worried about health effects from exposure to tailings, others are more concerned about the stigma.

Won-Door, Inc. of Salt Lake City sued the state of Utah several years ago for issuing detrimental press releases about tailings on its property, according to Utah attorney general Fred Nelson. Won-Door also charged the state with failing to prevent tailings from being deposited on its property, but the state suit was dismissed in 1981. A suit by the same company against the federal government is being continued until DOE contractors complete remedial action on the property.

In South Dakota, an Edgemont promoter is organizing a class action suit against the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for a policy that he says discriminates against his town. Four years ago, HUD instituted a moratorium on insuring mortgages or selling homes with excessive indoor radiation levels in Edgemont. The policy applies only to Edgemont and Butte, Montana.

[Continued on page 14]

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The perils of cycling

We ran into Stephen Abromowitz mid-day in Rawlins, Wyoming, where he was reading the *Rocky Mountain News* and lingering over breakfast. Actually, he was into more lengthy lingering than breakfast alone would provide. He was killing two days in Rawlins, a mining and prison town in south-central Wyoming, to insure that tick fever did not catch him on the town-less, doctor-less expanse of desert that lies between Rawlins and Lander, Wyoming.

For the ordinary traveler, the Rawlins to Lander trip is a matter of hours. But Abromowitz, who in real life is a New York City school teacher, is not an ordinary traveler. He makes his way from town to town on an 18-speed touring bike whose panniers bulge with water, food, pots and pans, and sleeping gear -- everything you need to cross the empty quarter of America in a self-contained way.

Abromowitz was easy to spot in the Rawlins diner just off Interstate 80. His very businesslike bike was outside, leaning against the diner wall, and he was sitting at a table where he could keep an eye on it. And amidst the families of post-church Sunday breakfasters, he looked a bit different -- determined to keep up the New Yorkers' ritual of reading the *Sunday Times* with breakfast, even if he had to make do with the *Rocky Mountain News*.

There's good reason for Abromowitz to seat himself where he could watch his bike. He said that 18-speed touring bikes cost from \$250 up to \$2,000. The bags, empty, cost another \$300. The light-weight gear inside probably costs another \$300.

Plus, in his first week of the two-month vacation, the experienced biker had received enough omens to make him wary. A rainstorm in New York on departure day turned a one-hour trip to JFK airport into a four-hour ordeal. He not only missed his plane, but also his travelling companion -- the lady who had planned the trip and whom he couldn't locate when he arrived hours later in Denver's Stapleton Airport.

So Abromowitz hurriedly planned a trip -- a plan which took him into the Rockies through Walden, in northern Colorado, where he discovered a tick on his leg. The Walden doctor who removed the tick had news for him:

tick fever incubates in four days, and there is a one in four chance of coming down with the debilitating, flu-like infection.

"He told me that just as I was hitting my stride, feeling good, meeting some nice people." The four days gave him enough time to reach Rawlins, the last stretch of which required travelling on Interstate 80. "There was at least a 40 mile per hour cross wind. Then, with the big trucks, I was literally blown off the road a few times." Being blown off the road wasn't the worst thing. "Sometimes you get sucked toward the trucks. And not all of the truckers go into the outside lane to pass you."

Abromowitz intends to spend two months touring, heading across Wyoming into Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks and then perhaps north into Montana. So a few days of tick fever in Rawlins won't destroy the vacation. But it may hurt his ability to do 60 miles a day in the 100 degree desert and 40 miles a day in the mountains. At age 41, conditioning doesn't come as easily as at 21.

Most bikers he sees are in their 20s and 30s. "But I met a group of about five on the road -- they were all in their 60s and 70s, and they had been invited to the White House" to celebrate their feat.

Some bikers travel in groups, but most are alone. He says that's not because bikers are anti-social, but because pairing is difficult. "We're all going in different directions. Also, one biker will do 50 miles a day and another 90. That's a problem."

Finally, some are driven and some less driven. "If I take a day off, I feel guilty. You get into the exercise. I get a high from it. I want to put in a certain number of miles a day. It's hard to explain."

Although the New Yorker is alone on the road, he's not lonely. "The afternoon sun in the desert is tough. So I cycle from about 6 to 10 A.M. and then from 5 to 8 P.M." For the seven hours in between, "I try to get to a town. I shop. I talk to people about the town. I never have trouble finding people to talk to. And most of them are super. That's a big part of the trip."

If the Rawlins diner is an example, Abromowitz could spend all day chatting. As soon as he walked up to



Stephen Abromowitz

his bike, people entering or leaving the restaurant began asking questions about destination and miles per day, or offering their thoughts on the pluses and minuses of pedaling across Wyoming.

But cycling is not all democracy. On the road, "I always stop for cyclists if they have bags. If I see day-trippers, I'll say hello but I won't stop. What they're doing is not that demanding. They don't have to be that much on the ball to survive. But I'll say hello to any cyclist before I'll say hello to someone in a car."

Cars and trucks are the bane of a cyclist's existence. "I have almost been killed by a trucker so far this trip. The majority of drivers are considerate. But a substantial minority doesn't give you enough ground. They don't realize a loaded bike wobbles. For some, it's thoughtlessness. But with a few, it's aggression -- they're crazy."

A key to coping with vehicles is a sideview mirror. "If you're on a two-lane road and trucks are coming from two directions, you've got to get the hell off the road. The thing about truckers is, they usually don't slow up."

It is not just trucks and cars that can cause problems. His route will take him through the Wind River Indian Reservation in Wyoming, and Abromowitz said bikers he met "told me the Indians threw firecrackers at them on the Fourth of July. And one got hit with a beer can. That was a little disturbing. But it may have just

been the Fourth. I've seen non-Indians a little crazy on the Fourth."

Another danger, he says, is thirst. "Make sure you don't get thirsty. Once you're thirsty it's too late -- you'll feel tired the next day." Guarding against thirst means lugging water bottles. "Maybe at one time you could drink the water in roadside streams. But you can't do that now. So I carry two quarts of water for a 30-mile stretch."

He doesn't recommend that just anyone get on a bike and start off cross-country. "I work out all winter." He swims and he takes his bike indoors and hooks it up to a Turbo Trainer Wind Machine -- a device which increases pedaling resistance as his speed increases to simulate real conditions. The penalty for a lack of conditioning is severe. "If you're older and out of shape, your legs and knees can give out."

Given the heat, the dangers and the aloneness, why pedal across western America? "It's not just the exercise. It's the feeling of being free. The fresh air. You see every tree. Every bird. You hear every sound. You get close to nature. It sounds corny, but it's true."

He brings some of that closeness to nature back to his junior high science students in the form of slide shows of the National Parks he passes through. "I wish my teachers had done that when we were in school. A picture is worth a thousand words."

--Ed Marston

Tailings...

[Continued from page 13]

The Colorado Health Department issues certificates when properties are cleaned up and publicizes that its records are open. Many realtors and individuals have used those files to determine if certain properties have radiation problems. Before any new building permits are issued, Colorado also makes radiation checks at new sites. After the Lucius Pitkin survey in 1972, the state took the unique precaution of sending letters to property owners about it, according to Bud Franz of the Colorado Health Department.

As the Gallets' lawsuit illustrates, however, the effectiveness of safeguards in Grand Junction depends upon the buyer's awareness that tailings are a problem in some homes

there. The Gallets were moving from Utah so they didn't check the state records and they didn't ask about tailings, said their attorney. "The attitude in Grand Junction is that everyone there knows to ask about tailings."

Even though construction efforts are underway in Edgemont this summer to clean up tailings from about 150 properties, DOE contractor Tom Carter of Bendix Field Engineering, Inc. said that some homes will still exceed EPA standards after tailings are removed. A shale formation under part of the town is causing natural radiation, he said.

HUD is now aware of the natural radiation in Edgemont, according to John Endres, HUD's regional director of housing management in Denver. But the Washington office has not determined whether to lift the moratorium, broaden it to include any houses in the country with excessive

indoor radiation levels, or to leave the problem to local and state authorities.

As clean-up activities continue across the West, DOE is still trying to decide how to protect future homeowners from similar problems. DOE contractors can work only where homeowners agree to allow access. So far, only a small percentage of homeowners have refused access to DOE: nine of 106 requests in Grand Junction and two of 75 in Edgemont. DOE pays for the entire clean-up whether it involves moving a house off its foundation to get at tailings or excavating a rosebush. Some homeowners, however, are skeptical that the problem is serious enough to warrant the inconvenience.

If they do not change their minds before DOE's contract expires, the properties will remain contaminated. In the 1978 mill tailings legislation, Congress said that DOE must put a notice in the local land records

describing radioactive materials that are removed from each property. James Morley, DOE project manager, interprets this to mean including materials that have not been removed as well. Morley said his agency is not sure whether such a warning could legally be attached to a title. And if the survey team is denied access, Morley is not sure if DOE can detect the extent of contamination, or even the owner in some cases, which would make the warning to future home purchasers difficult or impossible.

Because of the thousands of homes with tailings in Grand Junction, the state of Colorado has had the most opportunity to think about a process for warning potential buyers of tailings hot spots.

Marjane Ambler is a free lance writer based in Lander, Wyoming and a former staffer with *High Country News*.

WHAT DO ENVIRONMENTALISTS REALLY WANT?

Opponents who aren't hypocrites

by David Marcus

Freud addressed a similar question with a notable lack of success. I will limit myself to a much narrower question than the one proposed, namely "What Do I Really Want." The reader will have to take my word for it that I am an environmentalist.

At the deepest level, I want to live in a United States where my grandchildren will have the opportunity to have been born and to live in an environment at least as pleasant as the one I live in. That basic desire determines much of my attitudes about issues such as world peace, free access to all means of birth control, and the preservation of exhaustible resources such as wilderness (I'm for all three).

But while these underlying attitudes may be what HCN intended me to write about, they are not what motivates my daily life. I do not go to work each day saying to myself "today I will prevent nuclear world war in the year 2050."

No. At the daily level what I really want are honest opponents. If my views are to be opposed by industry, by the Reagan Administration, by the Moral Majority, then I demand honesty as to their motivation. I find deeply repugnant the fact that my opponents can not only trample on values I hold dear, but deny that they are doing so, for their denial makes it impossible to argue with them.

What, you are saying to yourself, is he talking about? Let me give as an example the price of energy from Hoover Dam.

The Reagan Administration professes to believe in free markets. It professes to believe that the government should not control prices or own the "means of production," as the Marxists are pleased to call them. As an economist, I tend to agree with them in situations where price is the main issue (my faith in the market ends where externalities are concerned, since externalities are by definition those factors which are not captured by market pricing, but that is a different issue). The Reagan Administration also professes to be concerned about the U.S. budget deficit, and President Reagan has called for a constitutionally-mandated balanced budget.

Hoover Dam was constructed 50 years ago with federal financing. To repay the federal investment, electricity was sold to various public and private utilities for a 50-year period under contracts designed to recover the federal

investment plus interest at the rate of 3.25 percent per year. Those 50-year contracts expire in 1987, and in the spring of 1984 Congress voted on how to market Hoover energy for the next 30 years.

As an environmentalist and an economist, my interests coincided. Pricing Hoover energy at its replacement cost rather than its construction cost would let consumers know its true value. If they still wanted it, fine. If they chose to use less energy in response to higher prices, also fine, since the physical reduction in energy consumption would come from reduced coal burning at Southwest coal plants, which would improve air quality, or else reduced gas use at urban power plants, reducing the rate of depletion of an exhaustible resource and improving urban air quality.

The Reagan Administration should have agreed, too. Selling Hoover energy at its worth would have raised money to reduce the deficit, which they say they support, would have ended non-market pricing of a major energy resource, (the Reagan Administration told us what a good thing it was to end oil price controls), and would have ended the federal regulation of who gets Hoover's output (the Reagan Administration routinely denounces government allocation of resources in lieu of the free market).

The Grace Commission report, the *President's Private Sector Survey on Cost Control*, had already called for bringing the rates for power marketed by

the federal government "more in line with those charged by the private sector."

So what happened?

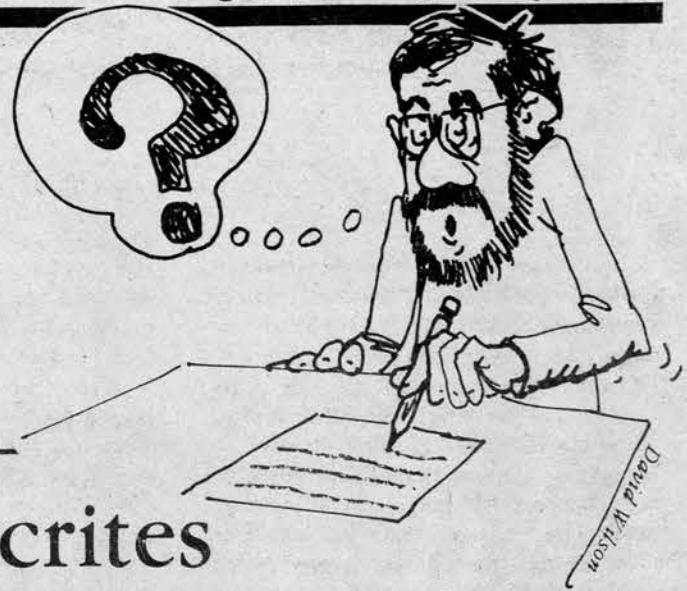
Nothing. The Administration has supported a bill to renew the current Hoover allottees' rights to Hoover output for another 30 years. The price will be far below market value, encouraging profligate energy consumption with resulting consumption of depletable resources and air pollution. Some of the revenues which do result will be explicitly used to subsidize the Central Arizona Project, which will provide subsidized water to Arizonans, encouraging wasteful use of water as well as energy.

As an environmentalist and as a taxpayer I find this outrageous. But how can I attack it if an appeal to the Reagan Administration's own professed principles fails? If our opponents will not be honest about their own agenda, how can we argue with them or ever convince them?

By paying lip service to market principles but ignoring an opportunity to put them into play, the Reagan Administration suggests that its real agenda is: "We want to do what makes money for our friends." And with that kind of agenda, there is no hope for rational discourse.

I want opponents who will admit to what *they* really want.

David Marcus is an energy consultant and staff member of the Environmental Defense Fund in Berkeley, California.



A call to pens

With this issue we begin a new series called: "What Do Environmentalists Really Want?"

Some opponents of the environmental movement think they already know the answer: That environmentalists have a hidden agenda to bring industrialized society to a shuddering halt. But David Marcus, for example, says it's his opponents who have the hidden agenda. So he poses a counter question: "What Do Those Who Oppose the Environmental Movement Really Want?"

What *High Country News* really wants is additional essays to illuminate the human concerns and passions which lie behind environmental issues. We are especially interested in epiphanies -- in particular events or

experiences that made you aware of environmental issues and shaped your approach to those issues.

Some of the essays we receive from readers will be printed in *High Country News*. If we (hopefully) don't have enough room for all the contributions, they may be collected in a booklet titled: "What Do Environmentalists Really Want?" The essays may make their writers famous, but they won't make them rich: we are not paying for contributions to this series.

Despite the lack of pay, we hope the series serves a valuable function: to help define the issues and people which collectively make up the environmental movement in the West. Mail essays of 500 to 1,000 words to: Editor, HCN, P.O. Box 1090, Paonia, Colorado 81428.

ACCESS

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16-High Country News -- August 6, 1984

LETTERS

HEAVILY TIMBERED FORESTS WEREN'T MEANT TO BE LIVED IN

Dear HCN:

I am writing in further commentary to the article by Katherine Lazars Bauer about tending her pine forest in a suburban mountain division west of Denver. (HCN, 5/28/84).

Her problems are just beginning.

I know the country where she lives. I have known it all my sixty-five years as a Denver resident - at least from earliest childhood memories. And I have never seen it in worse condition. At best these heavily timbered forests were never meant for human habitation. Ominously this year may prove my point. I have mixed emotions over the possibility. No one with normal human compassion could really wish for the property devastation and loss of life I fear could happen, yet how else can mankind learn that some natural environments are not compatible with human habitation?

The current problem is the spruce budworm, a pestilence far more damaging than the pine beetle malaise which now seems to have run its course - at least in the lower latitudes. Hillsides in the Turkey Creek Canyon, Indian Hills and Conifer areas of Jefferson County show populations of dead or dying Douglas Fir which are as large as the living trees amongst them. Although the pestilence is called spruce budworm, Douglas Fir trees suffer the worst damage in the mountains because most spruce forests grow at elevations too high for the budworms to survive. Budworms do not attack any species of pine.

With half the forest full of highly ignitable, dead-branched trees, all that's needed is a sustained dry spell of two or three weeks, followed by a damn good lightning storm accompanied by a brisk wind (so often part of a lightning and thunder storm), or one or two careless camping groups, and you'll see a conflagration which could be somewhat similar to the defoliation air strikes in Vietnam.

Forests are not meant for human habitation. Permissive county commissioners who almost exclusively represent profit seeking land owners and speculators are responsible for this human infestation. Except that one would really be suing one's self, I would like to see sufferers from a forest fire successfully sue the county for class action damages because their approval of residential subdivisions implies a lack of danger to property offered for sale to neophyte buyers (from Ohio, for example).

It is interesting that almost 80 percent of homeowners in the mountains are newcomers to the state. So many natives who love the mountains are content with visitations and worry that population growth is making serious inroads on the enjoyment. Except for the horribly serious consequences of a forest fire holocaust, one could almost find satisfaction in the tragic comeuppance to so many new residents who would teach us lackluster natives a thing or two about preserving anti-social lifestyles on two or three acres of forested mountain land.

My answer is not only the threat of holocaust, but also the analogy that pigs are never content to merely drink at the waterhole. They insist on wallowing which leaves the water repulsively muddied for the next visitor.

But there is some logic to the phenomenon of newcomer attraction to our forests. They come from eastern

forests where generous rainfall renders forest fires highly improbable. Our forests are subjected to numerous and intense dry spells during a decade of average weather, not to mention several severe lightning storms each summer. Unrealized or forgotten (again and again) is the fact that our mountains are merely an oasis in an enormous and hostile desert region.

Adding insult to injury are the empire building bureaucrats from state and federal forest services. If people would live amongst the trees in defiance of nature, they must be protected from such natural processes as fire and pestilence. Never mind the poor guy in the city who pays for the expanded service with ever more regressive state and federal taxes.

Meanwhile our cowardly governor, who ran for his first term as a land-use expert from the State Legislature, has

long since given up opposing overly permissive state growth and gone on to such national issues as immigration, health care, and duties toward death by the aged. Suburban Republicans now dominate the statehouse, allowing tax avoidance and unrestricted land development to thrive. Worse yet, State Treasurer Roy Romer, who made millions savaging the forests with residential subdivisions in western Jefferson County, will certainly be the Democratic candidate for governor, and probably our next governor, unless Republicans find someone with more public appeal than present potential indicates.

And don't give me that holier-than-thou attitude, Marstons. It's happening on your side of the mountains, too, only there aren't as many people yet; he says with a jaundiced eye on Aspen, Vail, Breckenridge, Telluride and Durango. Otherwise....

Cordially yours,
Robert McPhee
Denver, Colorado

A DEDICATED READER PROTESTS

Dear HCN,

I am one of your most dedicated readers. I have come to know HCN as a living piece of the region I love most. Your cover article on the July 9th issue left a good deal to be desired. It is a weak and undeserved personal attack on writer Edward Abbey. Your Abbey/Glen Canyon Dam juxtaposition is at best a thin, potentially offensive pretense for expounding on your new-found love of Glen Canyon Dam.

I grant the Bureau of Reclamation has done a fine job of saving itself from its own blunders last summer. But heroics at Glen Canyon Dam will not salvage the Bureau from its historical reputation as a reckless developer of expensive, often unnecessary and questionable water projects any more than a speech on the shore of the Chesapeake Bay will salvage Reagan's disastrous environmental record.

To long-time westerners like Abbey, Glen Canyon Dam symbolizes a history of Bureau of Reclamation boondoggles and ecological disasters. Your editorial sidesteps these deeper issues and makes you look silly, not Abbey.

Your line of reasoning seems to be that Glen Canyon Dam is wonderful because it attracted 83,000 visitors on

the 4th of July and it is a huge technological wonder staffed by heroic individuals. Its human qualities overwhelm the values of the wilderness it replaced. Taken farther, we can apply this line of reasoning to other developments in the West. We can marvel at the human and cosmic grandeur of shopping centers, tacky subdivisions and even the Central Arizona Project.

Doubtlessly Abbey would agree that Glen Canyon Dam is an engineering wonder. But the point he makes in his writings (overstated in order to be heard over the din of TV, motorboats and actor presidents) is that the subtle values of nature have never fully been appreciated by Americans and that our continued rampaging destruction of the West will preclude any future awakening to the humbling, spiritually satisfying experience of wilderness.

Abbey and others remember Glen Canyon and we are unconvinced by the argument that there are other canyons like it today. We remember the battle to save Glen Canyon and so to us the dam will forever stand as a monument to human arrogance and to the innocent West that once was.

My best to you,
Tom (Tex) Ribe
Washington, D.C.

AND THE WRITER REPLIES

Dear Tom Ribe,

I think the landscape created by Lake Powell is best described as "drowned rat," and the damming of the canyon to provide power and a conversation piece for time-killing, bored tourists is a destructive waste of resources, nature and capital.

But that's only my personal view. And the purpose of the article wasn't to present my personal view or to make HCN's readers comfortable. The purpose was to get dam manager Tom Gamble and dam enemy Edward Abbey in a conversation-at-a-distance.

The danger is that those within a movement will turn their opponents into dehumanized comic strip villains and ignore the fact that they may be dedicated to what they do, and may adhere to a value system they believe

is high-minded and altruistic. Unless we understand those opponents and their values, and test our arguments and values against theirs, we are bound to lose. Saying Glen Canyon Dam and Lake Powell are atrocities may convince the convinced, but it has little effect on the unconvinced.

It also has little effect on the underlying reality typified by the 83,000 boaters on Lake Powell on one summer day. For beneath the Glen Canyon debate between environmentalists and the Bureau is mass society with its enormous consumerist appetite -- a baying pack which Abbey chooses to vilify and Gamble chooses to welcome. It is fun to vilify, but I worry about what would happen if society were to stop feeding and amusing the pack.

Sincerely,
Ed Marston



PRETENDS TO WONDER

Dear HCN,

In the July 9 issue of HCN, Ed Marston pretends to wonder if Edward Abbey could learn to love Glen Canyon Dam. He concludes that a tour of the interior is the only hope, giving Abbey a chance to mingle with the workers while Lake Powell and the canyon are conveniently out of sight. An enthusiastic "can-do" guide would point out all the marvels -- engineering challenges heroically met, cubic this, mega that. You've got to admit big technology puts on one hell of a show, huh, Mr. Abbey?

If the losses are kept out of sight and mind, or at least camouflaged, then we all can be fascinated and seduced by the scope and complexity of mankind's technological power. Especially when there are, or seem to be, big benefits. After all, 83,000 people make use of Lake Powell on Memorial Day alone. And all that electricity produced! Obviously a worthwhile endeavor.

If one or more dams were allowed to be constructed in the Grand Canyon itself, then no doubt they would also be planned, built, and staffed by friendly, productive, honest people. Would employ men, women, and minorities ready to test their wits and courage against the rigors of a massive engineering challenge. The rapids of the Colorado are really becoming old hat, anyway. John Wesley Powell and all who were to follow (fewer than 83,000 in the history of the former Glen Canyon) have had their day. It's time to take a tour of the modern world. Throw away all your worn copies of *Desert Solitaire* and the like. As Marston says, Edward Abbey can be so easy to dismiss.

John Wahl
Duncan, Oklahoma

A CURIOUS COINCIDENCE

Dear HCN,

I was interested in your Hotline note (7/9/84) on the new Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge in southern Nevada. It is a curious coincidence that Ash Meadows is also the subject of many studies concerning proposed nuclear waste storage at the nearby Nevada Test Site (NTS), because the NTS is the source for much of the groundwater that feeds the springs in Ash Meadows. This is the kind of information that should be known by all parties concerned with the Refuge and with evaluating the possibilities of the NTS as a repository.

Marith C. Reheis
Golden, Colorado