

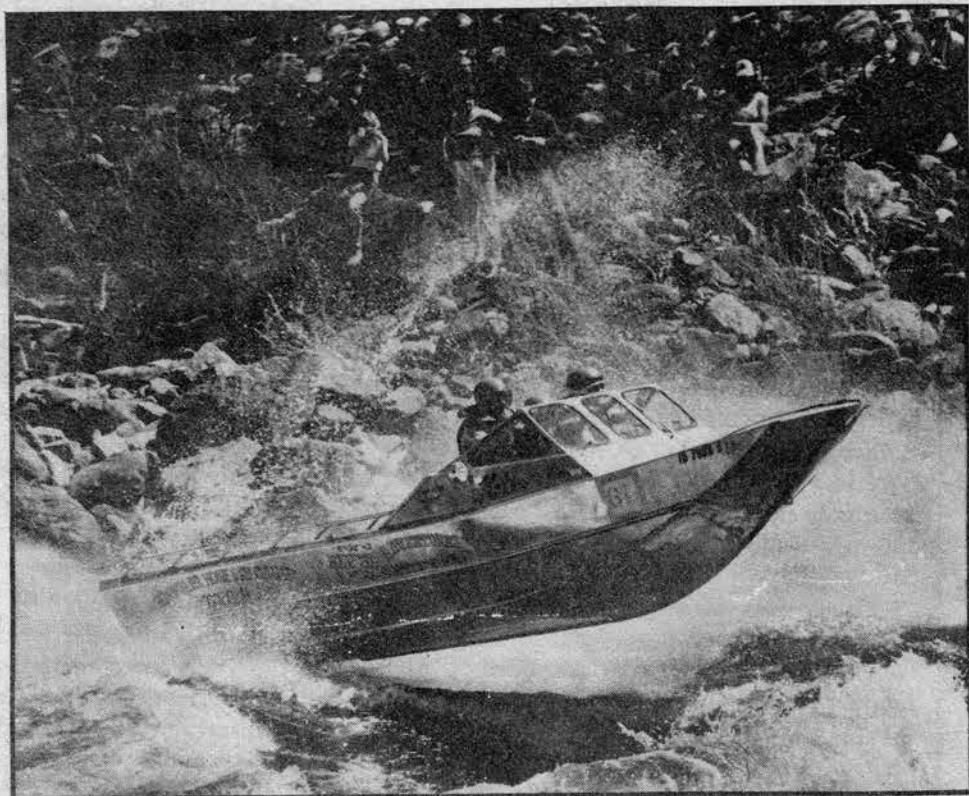
High Country News

May 27, 1985

Vol. 17 No. 10

A Paper for People who Care about the West

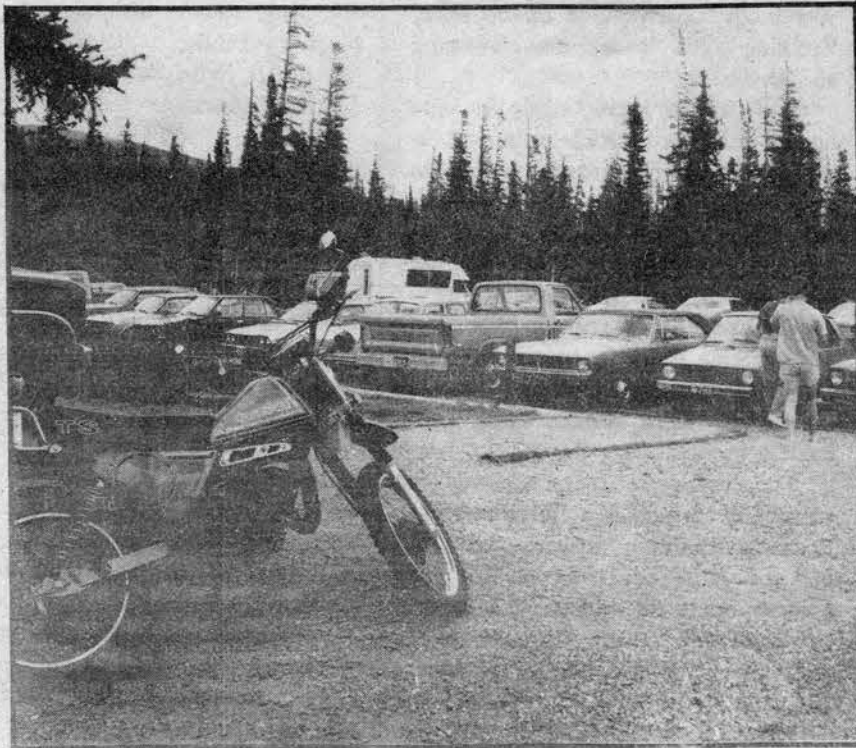
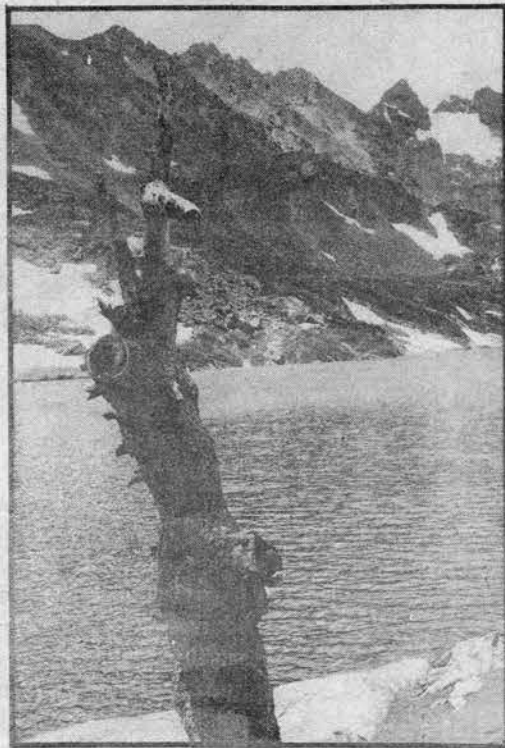
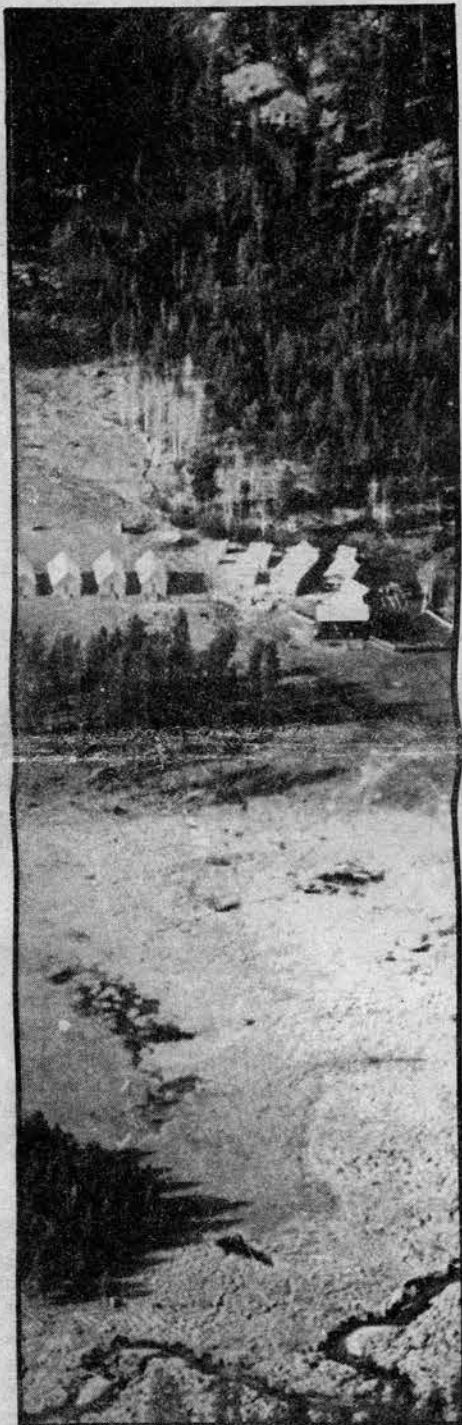
One Dollar



WILDERNESS

It ain't what you think

A Special Issue on
wilderness management
begins on page ten



PHOTOS, clockwise from lower left:
Firewood cutting killed this tree in
Colorado's Indian Peaks Wilderness;
Janet Robertson; A ranger packing
garbage in Wyoming's Bridger

Wilderness, USFS; Jetboat in River of
No Return Wilderness, Chris Pietsch;
Helicopters may be used for acid rain
studies in Western wilderness areas;

Richard Murphy; Overused campsite,
Indian Peaks, Janet Robertson;
Hunters' camp in River of No Return
Wilderness, Ernest Day; A sign

designed to eliminate spaghetti trails
in Indian Peaks, Janet Robertson; and
A parking lot on the boundary of
Indian Peaks, Janet Robertson.

WESTERN ROUNDUP

Idaho's Jersey-Jack gets a two-year reprieve

Idaho's Nezperce National Forest has responded to the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals decision regarding the Jersey-Jack roadless area (HCN, 3/4/85). The Forest's decision guarantees that the area, between the Gospel-Hump and Frank Church -- River of No Return wildernesses, will remain roadless for at least another two years.

First, Nezperce Forest Supervisor Tom Kovalicky has rescinded the Forest's 1981 plan for a timber access road into Jersey-Jack. It was this plan, appealed by local landowners and Idaho conservation groups, that the court ruled was in violation of the National Environmental Policy Act.

Second, general management decisions about the area will be made in the Nezperce National Forest Plan. A draft version of that plan, released in early March, proposed to manage Jersey-Jack "for timber production and other multiple uses on a sustained-yield basis" -- the category for lands managed primarily for timber production. Outfitters and conservationists support another alternative, evaluated in the draft plan's environmental impact statement, which proposed roadless management of the area. The comment deadline on the draft plan is June 1, and the Forest expects to release a final Forest plan in October or November 1985. Since that final plan will be subject to appeal, it may or may not take effect upon release.

If and when the Forest's proposed general allocation of Jersey-Jack takes effect, a new site-specific road and timber harvest plan will be developed, and a separate EIS written for it. The court ordered preparation of such a site-specific EIS, analyzing cumulative impacts, before any development can occur in the area. Nezperce resource staffperson David Fischer said that the

EIS, when undertaken, will "probably cover a larger area than Jersey-Jack alone."

This all means that the Forest's plans for the Jersey-Jack area -- timber management -- have not changed. But those plans must now survive Forest-wide planning to be completed this year, and then survive a later EIS detailing actual harvest level and timing, miles and locations

of roads, and cumulative impacts on other resources. Idaho conservationists can be expected to mount major efforts at both levels to change the Forest Service's position.

Nezperce public information officer Mary Zabinski said the flow of timber to local mills for the next three to four years will not be affected by the new decision.

--Pat Ford



High Country News

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BARBED WIRE

But who will tame the ferry?

A story in the Salt Lake City *Deseret News* hails a new ferry linking Bullfrog Marina to Hall's Crossing on Lake Powell. "The new ferry will take a small step toward taming this 180-mile-long reservoir..."

Giving new meaning to the term bad taste.

Under a quote from Abraham Lincoln and alongside a photograph of the Lincoln Memorial, a railroad industry ad in the April 17 *New York Times* reads: "For almost 100 years, America's railroads were bound in servitude to various special interests, and stifling federal regulations prohibited the railroads from competing freely in the marketplace."

Working hard to separate church and state.

The Mormon Church recently transferred at least \$20 million worth of downtown Salt Lake City real estate from taxable to tax-exempt firms it owns to avoid federal taxes on the property. The transferred land underlies such buildings as the Howard Johnson Hotel, the Union Pacific Building and Hardee's Restaurant.

Getting real tough.

A report deploring current trends in higher education lists the following goals as desirable: that college graduates should be able to think abstractly, be literate, understand numerical data and appreciate the arts.

Only in California.

In Alhambra, California, the local McDonalds has been retrofitted with solar panels by Atlantic Richfield's ARCO subsidiary. Nicknamed McSolar, the restaurant grills Big Macs and fries McNuggets with energy from the sun's golden rays.

Nine months would be more like it.

In preparation for a fitness walk across America, Bob Sweetgall's medical team told him to spend nine weeks doing nothing "so I would represent the average guy."

The Good Earth, 1985.

Urban Americans told Gallup pollsters that farmers work hard and are underpaid. They also put farming near the bottom of a list of occupations they aspire to for themselves or their children.

Dear friends,

As a joke last issue, we temporarily let Pat Ford's lead paragraph on his story read that Idaho's timber industry now holds fourth place in the state, "trailing agriculture, manufacturing and terrorism."

Little did we know, while we were having our little chuckle, and even as we were changing terrorism to tourism on the copy, that an HCN stringer from Idaho named Jeanette Ross was standing outside a meeting room, her foot jammed in the door, attempting to cover a press conference on terrorism. The meeting was of some interest to HCN because the "terrorists" being considered were peace and anti-nuclear groups.

The story, as it turned out, was too peripheral to HCN's mission. But Ross's journalistic tenacity did gain her and HCN coverage on TV and newspapers in the region. One report even showed that we are truly regional; it placed us in "Paonia, Wyoming."

Speaking of Paonia, Wyoming, the staff, which isn't as young as it used to be, or as young as former staffs, has decided that the traditional six-mile footrace usually held in May doesn't allow time or breath enough for conversation and appreciation of the outdoors. So the footrace has been

replaced by a hike up 12,396-foot Mount Lamborn, just outside and above Paonia, on Saturday, June 29. We hope readers within a reasonable distance (Denver to the east, Lander to the north, Salt Lake to the west) will be there. Details to follow.

We bid goodbye to Lisa McKhann, the HCN intern for the last three months, who returns to Prescott College in Arizona for her diploma before heading to the wet Northwest in search of work. Lisa is the person who hauls 20 pounds or so of mail across the street from the post office each day. Much of the weight is newspapers, newsletters and press releases from around the region. Their appearance each morning at 10 leads us to sympathize with the IRS employees who one day said, "The heck with it," and sicced the shredder on some correspondence.

The daily mail bag reminds us that millions of things are going on in the region, of which we can only cover a few. So what do we do? Mostly we feel guilty and nag ourselves until we get around to the neglected issues. At the moment, our strongest guilt feelings are directed at our neglect of the Hatfield decision, our failure to cover the Central Utah Project as it approaches some sort of climax, our



Mount Lamborn

lack of a progress report on the Intermountain Power Project (they're spending lots of money and employing lots of people), lack of late news on the hapless BLM oil and gas lottery, and failure to follow up a tip on shenanigans in a Wyoming forest.

We're most pleased when we can bid adieu, if only temporarily, to some issues. In this HCN, the fight over Jackson Lake Dam ends, the Great Salt Lake is kissed off as a threat, and a new director is appointed to head up the National Park Service. Balancing those closures, however, is this Special Issue on wilderness management, which promises to keep everyone occupied for as long as we are all blessed with the Wilderness Act and the land designated under it.

--the staff

Paving Burr Trail will open remote area

Rolling sage and sandstone hills undulate like the spine of a giant dragon. Cutting laterally across the landscape, deep canyons carved by wind and water meander south towards the Colorado River. Through this wilderness, a dirt road twists and turns.

This is the Burr Trail in the headwaters of southern Utah's Escalante canyon system at the heart of the Colorado Plateau. The road is also at the heart of a controversy over road paving, tourism and industrial development in this remote region.

The National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management have released a draft environmental assessment on a proposal to realign, widen and pave the Burr Trail, and the Interior Department is now receiving public comments. Hearings were held May 22-24 in Bicknell, Blanding and Escalante, all in southern Utah. No hearing was scheduled for Salt Lake City, after Utah Sens. Jake Garn and Orrin Hatch, Reps. James Hansen and Howard Nielson, and Gov. Norman Bangert wrote the Park Service specifically to request that hearings not be held in Utah's capital city.

The letter stated that a hearing "in Salt Lake City, which is so far removed from the area (i.e., the Burr Trail), is difficult to justify... Hearings and meetings are rarely deemed necessary in southern Utah on matters affecting northern Utah."

The decision not to hold a hearing in Salt Lake City provoked a storm of protest from local environmentalists. The controversy reached Interior Secretary Donald Hodel, who decided last week that the Park Service decision to skip a Salt Lake City hearing would stand. Tom Wilson, an Interior Department spokesman based in Washington, D.C., said Hodel does

not want to become involved in the matter.

Conservationists, who say most people who use the Burr Trail live in Salt Lake City, have organized their own "citizens hearing." It will be held June 3 at 7 p.m. at the Unitarian Church, 549 S. 1300 E., Salt Lake City. Conservationists are also hopeful that a congressional hearing will be held. The National Parks and Recreation Subcommittee in the House, however, has not decided if it will meet on the matter in Salt Lake City this summer.

The Burr Trail winds for 66 miles out of Boulder, Utah, passes between North Escalante Canyon and The Gulch -- two BLM wilderness study areas, traverses the spectacular Waterpocket Fold in Capitol Reef National Park, and runs south to Del Webb Recreation Properties' Bullfrog Marina on Lake Powell. The marina is in the Glen Canyon Recreation Area.

For several years the Burr Trail has been the target of an intensive effort to add to the so-called "Golden Circle" highway system. Local and state officials favor the project, claiming it would increase tourism in southern Utah. The road becomes impassable during wet periods due to washouts and slippery clay sections. Except for those rare occurrences of wet weather, however, the road is passable for normal passenger cars. But at no time of year is the Burr Trail passable for large tour buses or Winnebagos.

The improvements outlined in the EA would entail a massive construction project: six major bridges, extensive road cuts and realignment, and blasting and widening of the steep switchbacks on the east side of Waterpocket Fold in Capitol Reef National Park.

The Federal Highway Administration in Denver recently estimated the cost of the project at \$37 million, substantially higher than the previous estimate of \$21 million, which was prepared by the engineering firm of Creamer and Noble of St. George, Utah.

In an attempt to defuse environmentalists' concerns, the EA labels the road a "scenic highway," with maximum allowable speeds of 30 to 40 miles per hour. But critics say paving would open one of the wildest and most remote regions in the West to industrial development. The new highway would provide access to the Circle Cliffs Tar Sands Area, open a potential corridor for electric transmission lines, and would help link ARCO's carbon dioxide fields deep within the Box - Death Hollow Wilderness Area, 10 miles west of Boulder, with oil fields in New Mexico and Texas.

A major paved highway would also destroy the primitive character of the area. "Many people come to Utah for a remote backcountry experience," says Terri Martin of the National Parks and Conservation Association. "Part of that experience is driving on dirt roads. We should protect those dirt roads to preserve that kind of experience. The EA makes no mention of wilderness values, and that is the key issue."

Conservationists support the "Limited Improvement" option for the Burr Trail, but not paving. They say that building one bridge at Bullfrog Creek, installing concrete dips in the five washes that are subject to flash floods, and putting gravel on the parts of the road that are slippery in wet weather would solve the major problems and create a year-round, all-weather road at a cost of only \$1-3 million. They also say that paving the road would hurt small towns which depend on tourists taking the longer highway route.

Paving proponents are seeking \$21 million in federal and Utah state funds. So far they have squeezed only \$600,000 out of state coffers for an engineering study, and \$200,000 from Congress for the environmental assessment by the Park Service and BLM. The Utah delegation, especially Sen. Jake Garn, continues to exert strong political pressure in support of paving. Rep. Sidney Yates, D-Ill., chairman of the House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, was instrumental in defeating federal funding for the project in 1983, after his office was deluged with mail protesting the paving plan.

Meanwhile, Garfield County has paved the first two miles of the road out of Boulder, and the county is preparing to pave two more.

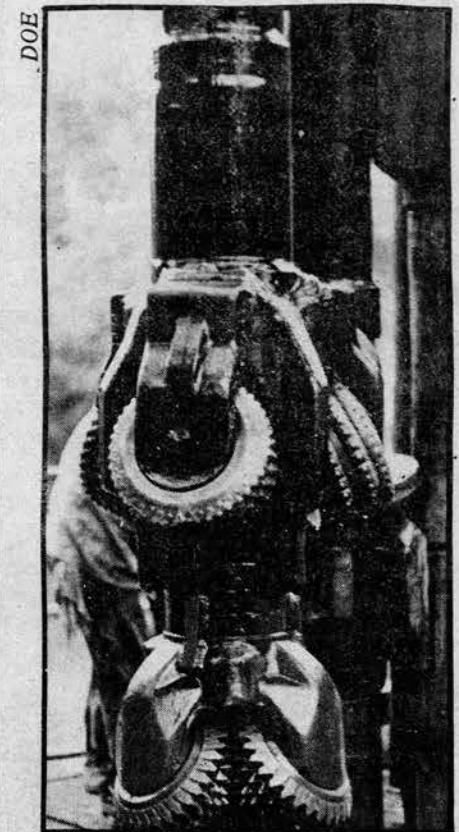
On the basis of the EA and the public comments it generates, Lorraine Mintzmyer, Regional Director of the Park Service in Denver, will decide whether the paving of the Burr Trail is a major federal decision, in which case a full environmental impact statement would be required.

You can obtain a copy of the "Paving the Boulder-to-Bullfrog Road Environmental Assessment" from the National Park Service, 125 South State St., Salt Lake City, UT 84238, or P.O. Box 25287, Denver, CO 80225. Comments are due by June 10.

--Christopher McLeod

HOTLINE

Drilling the federal treasury



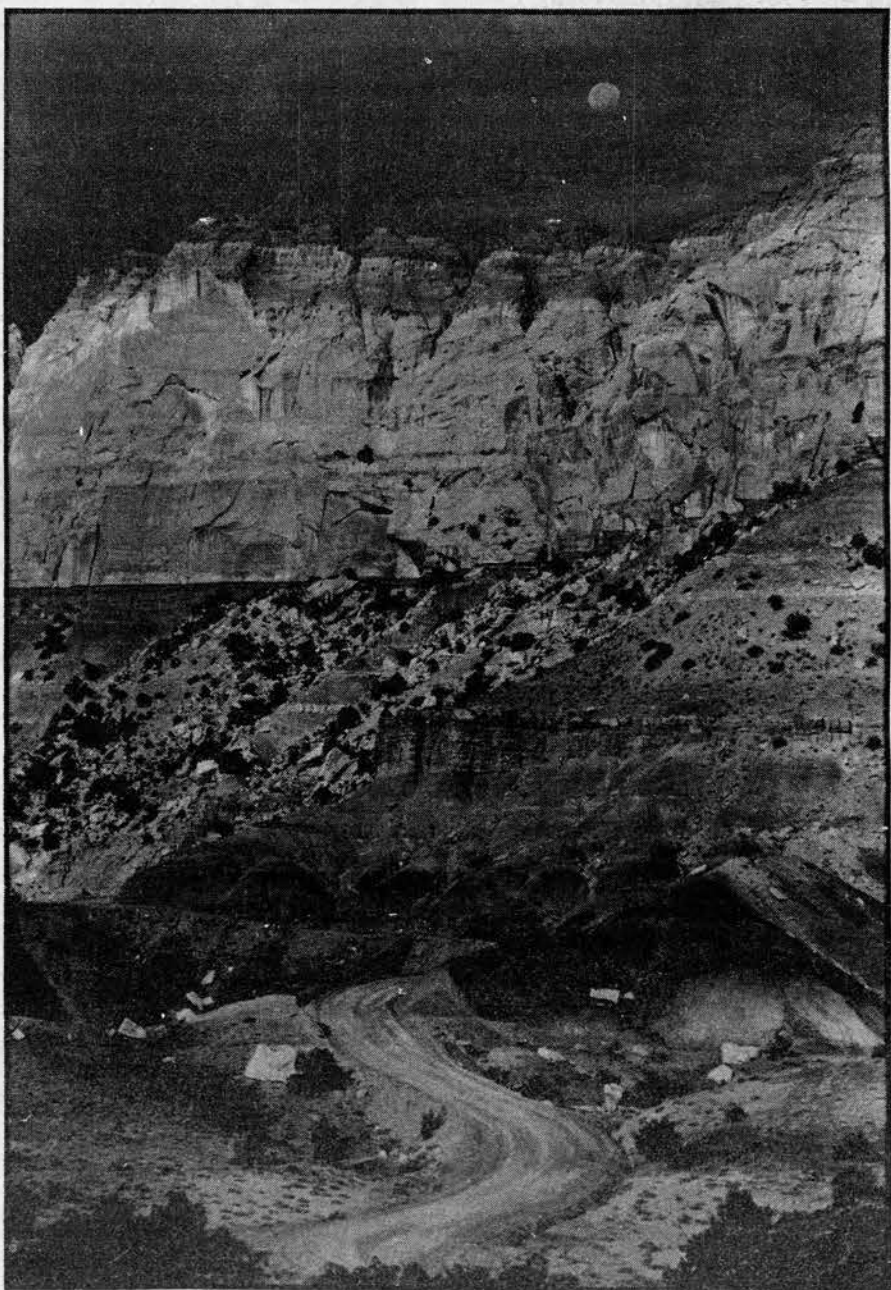
The Department of Interior has proposed setting higher bonds for oil, gas and geothermal wells so that the public doesn't foot the bill for improper closure or reclamation of drill sites. According to Bureau of Land Management Director Robert Burford, an average of 10 sites each year are abandoned by operators or inadequately reclaimed, costing as much as \$100,000 per site. Most cleanup costs are not covered by the operator's bond, Burford says. In the past eight months, operators of 69 onshore leases failed to pay royalties totalling \$4.6 million, of which about one-third was not covered by bonds. BLM says bonding requirements don't reflect today's reclamation costs or royalty liabilities because they've been adjusted just once since 1929.

Oil shale seen as disease, not cure

Eleven environmental organizations including the Sierra Club, National Audubon Society and Environmental Policy Institute recently urged Congress to abolish the Synthetic Fuels Corporation. In a letter to members of the House of Representatives, the groups charged it is "financially irresponsible to squander \$7.9 billion of taxpayers' money on the creation of an industry which the private sector has so adamantly rejected as a bad investment." They said unproven technology, soaring costs and environmental damage of synfuels projects hindered the country's efforts to reach energy security. Legislation to abolish SFC has been introduced by Representatives Mike Synar, D-Ok., and Howard Wolpe, D-Mich.

Feds sue rancher

In mid-April the federal government finally filed suit against Wyoming rancher Taylor Lawrence, who built the notorious Red Rim fence. The National Wildlife Federation had been urging the government to act ever since Lawrence's five-foot-tall fence was declared illegal by a federal attorney a year ago. Two winters ago some 1,500 antelope died after the fence blocked their migration from Bureau of Land Management land down to their wintering grounds (HCN, 2/20/84).



The Burr Trail at the Circle Cliffs, Utah

HOTLINE

Hazards go to ground



Kent and Donna Dunnen

Of the nation's 1,246 chemical waste disposal sites, less than half have adequate groundwater monitoring systems, 188 have no monitoring wells at all and 559 show some evidence of groundwater contamination, according to a House investigation. The House Energy and Commerce subcommittee on oversight and investigations reported these findings April 29, and then proceeded to hold hearings on the adequacy of the Environmental Protection Agency's monitoring program. November 1981 was the deadline set for the installation of monitoring devices. The subcommittee also found that of 36 facilities now accepting toxic wastes from Superfund cleanups, 18 are suspected of contaminating groundwater. The report suggested that EPA was merely transferring toxic waste problems, not solving them.

Groups say oil wells, grizzlies don't mix

Three federal agencies will be sued by a conservation group if American Petrofina is allowed to drill in Montana's Hall Creek area on the Lewis and Clark National Forest. The Glacier-Two Medicine Alliance, based in East Glacier Park, sent a legal notice of intent to file suit in U.S. District Court to Interior Secretary Donald Hodel. The group has already filed an administrative appeal against the Bureau of Land Management's approval of Petrofina's application for permit to drill, as have the National Wildlife Federation, the Montana Wilderness Association and eight other groups or individuals (HCN, 3/18/85). Opposition to the oil well stems from concern for threatened grizzly bears and endangered gray wolves in the area. The Interior Board of Land Appeals could take as long as one year to make its decision and any construction is halted until then. The Alliance says it will sue the Forest Service, BLM, and Fish and Wildlife Service if the appeal is not upheld.

Wyoming wants Exxon to protect wildlife

Decisions are near on key permits which will allow Exxon to proceed with an expansion at its Shute Creek processing plant in southwestern Wyoming. The \$2.2 billion project, elements of which are located in three counties, is expected to bring several thousand construction workers to the area over the next several months (HCN, 2/18/85).

The biggest remaining hurdle for Exxon is a permit from the state's Industrial Siting Council, which examines impacts of large projects and then mandates offsetting actions, or "mitigation."

Hearings by the council, composed of citizens from around Wyoming, are scheduled for May 28 in Kemmerer. Depending on the number and complexity of issues to be decided, the hearings could take from several days to perhaps two weeks. One week before the hearing verbal battles over unresolved issues seemed assured.

On the socio-economic front, Exxon was still trying to negotiate agreements with the city of Kemmerer, Lincoln County and the small Sublette County town of Marbleton on how much the company would be willing to provide in upfront financial assistance. According to figures released by the company, a package of impact aid totalling \$7 million has been put together to assist 44 towns, cities, school districts and human service agencies in a three-county area.

The Siting Council must still approve the agreements, and if a city or town is unhappy with the offer, they can argue their case at the siting hearing. The aid is slated for part of Sublette County, where 64 wells will be drilled to supply gas to a processing plant 40 miles to the south. Under Wyoming siting laws, oil field activity is exempt. But Exxon officials say they are committed to mitigation in those areas anyway.

Exxon's willingness to pay for socio-economic impacts could raise

some tough questions for the Siting Council on an issue that has only recently emerged. Wyoming Game and Fish officials say that the project, which will be the largest gas processing plant in the world when built, will disrupt wildlife habitat and put added pressure on already limited fishing opportunities. State Game and Fish Department Director Don Dexter said the drilling of the wells on a 75-square-mile area will "displace" elk from prime winter range and calving areas.

To replace the habitat and open up more fishing, the Game and Fish Commission wants Exxon to commit \$8.3 million which, Dexter said, would be used to buy ranches, improve rangeland and acquire access points on rivers and streams.

Exxon spokesman Steve Kettelkamp said the company is talking with Game and Fish about the proposal but had reached no agreement in the week before the hearing. In its mitigation outline, Exxon offered no money for habitat replacement or enhancement, suggesting instead that the state simply reduce the number of hunting licenses and lower fishing limits to compensate for the loss.

That suggestion was met with skepticism from Siting Council staff. In a report on the project's impacts, they said Exxon was asking state residents to "accept severe negative impacts without compensation." If the issue isn't settled, Game and Fish officials are likely to argue at the siting hearing that wildlife and fishing should be treated just like socio-economic issues because people hunt and fish.

Dexter said the habitat question is critical. "A lot of people think wildlife can move over and make room," he said. If there were only one project, that might be true, he added. But with the continuing development in southwest Wyoming the cumulative effects of several projects will be

devastating if something isn't done now.

Another issue which may cause wrangling and sharp debate stems from a new state law which gives the Siting Council the power to allocate sales tax receipts among the various cities and towns in the project area. Previously, the tax money was distributed on a population basis. Any shifts of money from one location to another are bound to make someone unhappy.

In addition to the Siting Council, Exxon is also waiting for a decision by the Bureau of Land Management on permits to construct the plant. The BLM recently released its own analysis of the project, along with several possible alternatives. Among them was a suggestion that the company build its plant smaller so as to more closely match Exxon's confirmed sale of gas.

A smaller plant would also eliminate the need for a second 40-mile-long pipeline. The first line, which will bring gas laced with poisonous hydrogen sulfide from the oil fields to the plant site, ran into considerable opposition from residents who worried about their safety and possible decline of property values.

Comments on the BLM study are due by June 8. The study is available from Rock Springs BLM, P.O. Box 1869, Rock Springs, WY 82902.

Meanwhile, the work force at the Shute Creek site and well fields continues to build -- on its way to a total of 5,250 by early fall if the company gets its permit to proceed with the planned doubling of the plant's capacity. Already, lines of job seekers are visible at the work site gates, waiting for one of the steady trickle of jobs that are beginning to open up as the weather improves and the pace of construction accelerates.

--Paul Krza

A Lamm comment on forests ricochets

Colorado Gov. Richard Lamm, D, was introduced at the fifth annual convention of Western Colorado Congress, a coalition of conservationists and consumers, as one who possesses "the disconcerting habit of talking about facts."

To the gathering of 100 in Montrose in western Colorado May 11, Lamm shared his opinions, although he said he ought to remember "you should never make policy at a press conference." If Lamm didn't make policy, he almost unmade it. In talking about national forests, Lamm said he and Rocky Mountain Regional Forester Jim Torrence were about to sign a memorandum of understanding emphasizing a shared recognition that "recreation is the highest and best use" of public land.

Less than a week later, Torrence said that Lamm was mistaken and that the multiple-use concept was still in effect. Torrence said there was an effort to share responsibility with the state for certain recreation improvement projects in the national forests of Colorado, but that meant no shift in emphasis toward recreation as a preferred use. Lamm's comment was attributed in Denver to sloppy briefing.

It is possible that Lamm's remarks have put the proposed Forest Service-state memorandum at risk. The agreement is the result of long-term pressure the Colorado Department of Natural Resources has put on the agency's proposed 50-year forest plans. The state saw those plans as biased toward timber and unconcerned with recreation, and went so far as to appeal one of the plans.

But the state never indicated that it was attempting to create de facto recreation areas in the forests. DeWitt John, a former assistant director of the Department of Natural Resources who led the push for more attention to recreation, said several times that the state's goal was to put recreation on an equal footing with other uses, and not to make it dominant.

The governor fielded a half-dozen questions during a talk that was laced with pithy observations, but so far no other comments have had repercussions. The following is a sampler:

Campaign contributions. "There is a precarious difference between a large campaign contribution and a bribe."

Transporting hazardous and toxic materials. "We can't ignore it or keep

it out, we have to regulate it... You need a permit to move a mobile home in Colorado, but you don't need a permit to move a torpedo."

Economic development. "During the oil shale boom, some would have sold our heritage for a \$30 bill. We don't have to sell our souls. We can create jobs and protect the quality of life."

Denver-Boulder's urban sprawl. "It's a crime against the future... How can people not know why tourists come here? To get away from mindless visual pollution... We're building the Los Angeles of the Rockies."

Political parties. "The only difference between the two parties is which special interests they listen to. The Democrats can't say no to social programs, the Republicans can't say no to the military."

Litigation. "Attorneys' fees are crazy... Did you read about the burglar who fell through a skylight, then sued and won?"

Conservationists. "I encourage you to be indignant... Most people are lethargic. You can beat money with people."

--Betsy Marston

Montana's Clark Fork is coming back

The Lewis and Clark Expedition chroniclers termed it "a queen among rivers," a gently flowing waterway promising easy access from the Continental Divide to the Pacific Coast.

The river is the Clark Fork of the Columbia. It starts as a trickle just a few hundred feet from the Divide near Butte, Montana, and wends its way 300 miles through the Treasure State before it enters Idaho and forms Lake Pend Oreille.

Its watershed is less than one-third of the state, but it is Montana's largest river in terms of volume of water. That part of Montana drained by the Clark Fork is rich in natural resources, the very reason for the state's nickname. And it is because of those resources that the Clark Fork is the most used and abused river in the western United States.

Just 20 years ago, the river ran red with the oxides of copper, iron, zinc, cadmium, phosphates and arsenic, the byproducts of acid mine drainage, sewage effluents and industrial waste. For the first half of its length through Montana, the Clark Fork was a dead river.

It is a textbook example of how little it takes to upset the ecology of a waterway. The Clark Fork draws its water from seven major tributaries, each in themselves considered major waterways. But it took pollution from only three relatively small creeks at its headwaters to damage the river for generations.

The headwaters of the Clark Fork flow through the Summit Valley, a high plateau perched on the lip of the Continental Divide. In the latter half of the 19th Century, it offered advantages to the first of Montana's exploiters.

"The richest hill on earth" was discovered at Butte on Silver Bow Creek, with a storehouse of gold, silver, copper, zinc, manganese and other metals needed to wire up the Industrial Revolution. Twenty miles downstream, Mill Creek and Warm Springs Creek carried enough streamflow to water down a smelter at Anaconda. Both areas were high in the headwaters.

The result was nearly 50 miles of tailings dumps, settling ponds and slag piles easily washed out in high water, leaving a legacy of sulphide precipitates which ecologists today consider "time bombs" that will continue to go off a generation from now if not defused.

For the past two decades, the river has been the target of a concentrated effort -- on a shoestring -- to bring it back from the edge of disaster. Other waterways have drawn national attention for cleanup funds. The Clark Fork remained, in that respect, a backwater.

If not kind to the Clark Fork in the past century, history has begun to swing her way. Environmental concern in the 1960s and 1970s jerked state government into awareness; emerging as a powerful political voice were a growing number of residents along the Clark Fork, particularly in Missoula. Home of the University of Montana and the state's third largest metropolitan area, Missoula brought pressure on state government and the Legislature. Then-Gov. Tom Judge helped matters; in his new bureaucracy no less than three agencies were



actively concerned with environmental protection, and the remaining agencies were answerable in those very terms. The governor served notice that Montana no longer would be a victim of absentee landlords; the emphasis would be on "a quality of life for our citizens in keeping with our potentials."

Judge entered his first term with the admonition in his first State of the State message in 1973 that Montana "has to clean up its act." With a new state constitution effective the same year, Montana embarked on an unprecedented volume of environmental legislation which included clean water standards. Those measures, in conjunction with other tough laws, led the Anaconda Company to merge with Atlantic Richfield in 1977 and soon after, ARCO shut down the Anaconda smelter and closed its Butte operations.

That was an economic disaster for both communities, which are still struggling to recover. But for the Clark Fork it was a salvation. Electroshocks in the river near Deer Lodge, below Butte and Anaconda, produced just seven fish in a two-mile stretch in 1973. Ten years later the figure had gone up to 1,200 fish per mile in the same area.

Recovery efforts and the future of the Clark Fork were dramatically apparent last month, when the Montana Academy of Sciences conducted its 45th annual meeting in Butte. One full day was devoted to a symposium on the river by two dozen professionals in various disciplines. Their consensus was that the Clark Fork River has a long way to go before it becomes the healthy, robust waterway of the Lewis and Clark era.

The symposium at Montana College of Mineral Science and Technology included 11 presentations on everything from bug populations to the effects of heavy metals in sedimentary deposits. One of the most telling lectures was given by botanist Vicki Watson of the University of Montana.

Among the continuing problems -- the "time bombs" lurking on the river bed and along the banks -- are acid mine drainage from old workings, potential damage from current industrial use, the presence of copper sulphates deposited in tailings and along the high-water mark and the concentrations of heavy metals in reservoirs along the stream.

The real culprits of river damage, past and future, are Silver Bow, Mill and Warm Springs creeks. More than 100 years of abuse have left yellow and green-tinted deposits which wash into the headwaters during runoff periods. Tailings near an old smelter site at Butte are targeted for Superfund reclamation, along with the settling ponds on Warm Springs Creek from the old Anaconda smelter activities.

Glenn Phillips of the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks identified the river's main pollution. It is copper, proven to be the most toxic of all heavy metals leached into the headwaters. In terms of poison potential, it outranks iron, zinc, cadmium and even arsenic, all of which are present at levels beyond what is considered safe for aquatic life by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Phillips said future problems include copper deposits left on the banks of the river as much as 100 miles downstream from their source on Silver Bow Creek. The greenish layers are evident in places as much as three feet above normal river levels. High water washes them out in the spring and in winter ice jams, and the deposits are poisonous enough to cause regular fish kills during those periods.

Carolyn Johns of the University of Montana's Department of Geology said on-site samples from the Milltown Dam, the Thompson Falls Dam, the Noxon Reservoir and the Cabinet Gorge Dam all show concentrations of copper in sediments. The level is highest at Milltown Dam, which is almost completely silted in and caused a massive fish kill when it breached in recent years. Groundwater in the same area also proved to be contaminated, causing water supply contamination for nearby communities.

The conclusion from all of this data, Watson pointed out, is that the Clark Fork is a long way from achieving its potential as a fishery and a water source. But collection of the data, and the directions the information indicates, gives hope for the future. Two days after the symposium a special team of EPA investigators began their own study of the river with an eye to applying Superfund first aid.

As to the future of the Clark Fork, the nagging concern is exploitation. Mining operations have sprung up or been proposed along the Thompson River, the Bull River and in the Cabinet Mountains (HCN, 5/13/85). All carry new threats. So far, strict laws, along with regular monitoring by at least three state agencies (the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Department of Health and Environmental Sciences, and Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks) seem to be working. Superfund cleanup of old workings in the Summit Valley and the Flint Creek Valley could defuse some "time bombs." New mining methods, chiefly the self-contained leaching and electro-winning processes, also will help.

Those recovery efforts, however, assume constant monitoring and political activism by those in the know about the river and its health. They are the same techniques which have worked over the past 10 years to get the Clark Fork off the critical list.

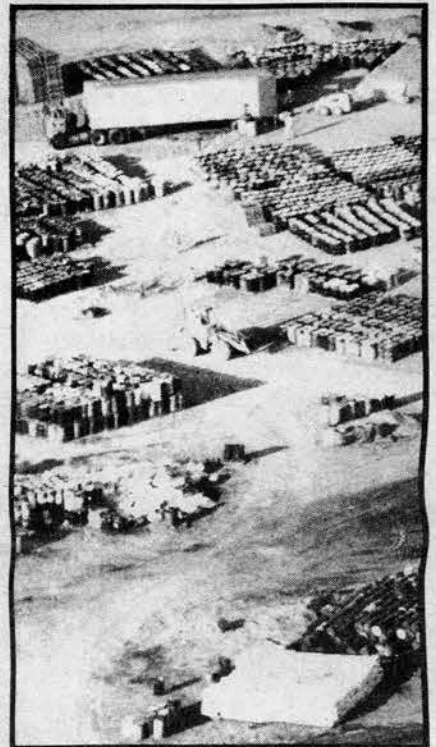
--Les Rickey

HOTLINE

PCBs galore

In Idaho, Envirosafe Services, Inc. has been fined \$480 and cited twice as the result of a 200-gallon spill of toxic waste which contaminated an employee. The employee, who began to repair a valve on a truck that he thought was empty, was splashed with wastes which contained concentrations of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) of 200,000 parts per million. The Environmental Protection Agency considers 50 ppm to be hazardous. Tests done in November and January found PCB concentrations as high as 7,642 ppm in his fat tissues. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration said it cited Envirosafe for failing to protect its employee and failing to release his medical records until March.

Unhealthy climate



Envirosafe waste dump

Idaho may lose some of its hazardous waste business if Envirosafe Services, Inc. closes its dump south of Bruneau. According to the *Idaho Statesman*, the company must pay as much as \$3 million for a permanent operating permit from the Environmental Protection Agency. It has been operating on a temporary permit. Envirosafe, which has thousands of gallons of hazardous wastes stored underground, will be responsible for decontaminating and maintaining the site if it decides to shut down, at a cost of about \$300,000. According to Envirosafe officials, the current business climate for hazardous waste is unfavorable.

The Bureau wins one

Although there may still be some fighting over details, reconstruction of Jackson Lake Dam in Wyoming's Grand Teton National Park appears certain (HCN, 2/4/85). The board of the Jackson Hole Alliance for Responsible Planning decided in late April that it would drop its two-year effort to divert the Bureau of Reclamation away from the four-year, \$84 million reconstruction project and toward water conservation by the Idaho farmers who use the water. Major construction will start in 1986 within the park. The Alliance said it had achieved important changes in the construction plan, and that it feared continued opposition to the project would detract from a more important effort: monitoring the 50-year plan for the Bridger-Teton National Forest.

HOTLINE

L-P's annual meeting draws protesters

Superintendent honored

Superintendent Robert Haraden of Glacier National Park received an award in May from the National Parks and Conservation Association for his public fight against a plan to contract out maintenance work in national parks (HCN, 4/16/84). The conservation organization said Haraden was the only park superintendent willing to publicly speak out against the Reagan administration's proposed A-76 policy, which was eventually curtailed by Congress. In another area, the NPCA hailed the appointment by President Reagan of William Penn Mott as director of the National Park Service. Mott, 75, was California parks director under Reagan. NPCA's Destry Jarvis said, "We are absolutely pleased. For the first time in this administration, the Park Service will have the clout within the administration and outside to compete for its own priorities." Mott succeeds Russell Dickinson.

Disinfecting wilderness

Environmental groups went to court in Texas April 15 to stop the U.S. Forest Service from undertaking emergency timber harvests in five wilderness areas in east Texas. The agency, which turned down appeals of the action, wants to harvest the timber to protect neighboring state and private lands from pine beetle infestations in the wilderness areas. The Sierra Club and the other groups which brought suit say pest control measures for the pine beetle have not worked in the past, and they have challenged the cutting plans under the National Environmental Policy Act, the Wilderness Act and the Endangered Species Act. According to the *Public Land News*, should the environmental groups win on NEPA grounds, the agency would have to prepare EISs on all emergency timber sales.

Great Salt Lake falters

The good news out of Utah this spring is no news. Snowpacks this year in the area around Salt Lake City have been normal, as compared to snowpacks 300 percent of normal in 1983 and 1984. As a result, the floods and mudslides which two years ago sent a river down streets in Salt Lake City have been absent. Moreover, although the Great Salt Lake will almost certainly set yet another elevation record June 1, when it is expected to reach 4,210.25 feet above sea level, its momentum appears gone. It rose 4.5 feet last year, but is only expected to rise one foot this year. Some researchers believe more normal weather will see the lake drop. The increases have already caused an estimated \$176 million in damage to wildlife refuges, lakeside industry and resorts. A rise above the 4,211-foot level would close Interstate 80 and damage Salt Lake International Airport. So the state is considering an emergency \$90 million plan to pump and dike the lake -- an action that would create 430,000 new acres of lake west of the existing lake, affecting military operations in the West Desert and possibly altering the area's weather. If the lake stabilizes, however, a planned special session of the Utah Legislature to consider the plan in June may not be necessary.

Louisiana-Pacific Corporation took its annual meeting to Grand Junction in western Colorado May 6. For a company ranked 292 on the *Fortune* 500 list, the setting at Two Rivers Plaza was modest, with plastic chairs and L-P story boards touting Waferboard and other product lines.

To get into the hall one had to be checked as management, a stockholder, carry a proxy or be an invited guest, press or police. About 30 shareholders from the area were present, along with 90 striking workers from California, Oregon and Idaho mill towns, who arrived by Greyhound bus. The strikers, out of work for 2½ years, had plenty of proxies on hand to give to supporters, who included union members from Colorado and Washington, D.C. and a dozen members of Western Colorado Congress, a coalition of conservationists and ranchers.

L-P has two new Waferboard factories in Olathe and Kremmling, towns near Grand Junction. The automated plants are two of 10 run by the company and cost a total of \$30 million. They have been controversial locally because of faulty air pollution controls and the need for large amounts of aspen from national forests.

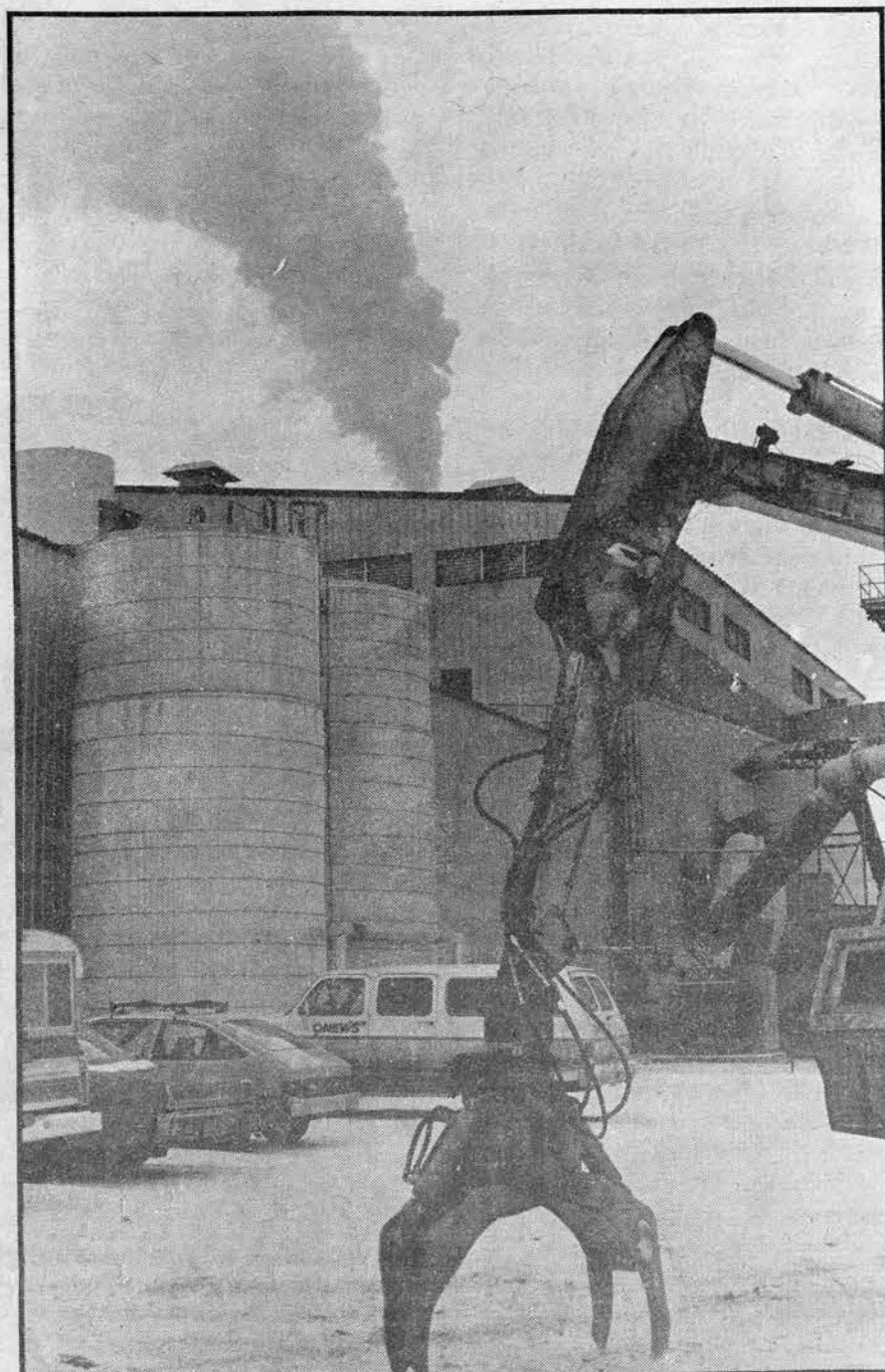
For L-P, the highly-automated plants represent a departure from past policies. Stockholders were shown a documentary produced by a local TV station in Portland, Maine, about the decline of the Northwest timber industry, which depends on old-growth trees. By contrast, stockholders were told, L-P managed to record its second best year in sales at \$1.23 billion, despite depressed lumber prices and market over-capacity.

L-P president and chairman Harry Merlo told the group that the corporation had become strong and competitive because of Waferboard and because it dropped out of the industry bargaining association 2½ years ago, leaving other companies to comply with union demands. He said its financial success was also due to several hundred million dollars that the company received from the government in exchange for lands added to Redwood National Park.

Former L-P workers present, some holding proxies, then were allowed by a reluctant chairman to introduce themselves. They called out the number of years they'd worked for the company, one saying: "Twenty-six years and not one day of illness, not one injury. I never did nothing that cost the company a dollar. I made money for you." Applause followed from the right side of the aisle, where union members and their supporters sat.

Then it was time for resolutions. A resident of Mendocino County, California, spoke up first to ask L-P to stop spraying herbicides in Mendocino County. He was gavelled out of order on the grounds that his proposal was irrelevant to the business of the meeting.

Margaret Orjias, nearest neighbor to the Olathe plant and a WCC member, then took the floor. Instead of spending \$750,000 to sponsor professional tennis last year, L-P should have developed resins that don't contain toxic substances, she said. She also urged the company to install scrubbers and work to minimize



L-P's Waferboard plant in Olathe, Colorado

noise pollution at their plants. She was called out of order.

Another WCC representative read a statement charging that L-P had established their plants in Colorado without assurance of an aspen supply. That statement was also ruled out of order.

Finally, Ed Durken, a Washington, D.C., official of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, rose to read three non-management recommended proposals. They called for an accounting of strike impacts, an independent board of directors and a new compensation committee.

Durken recited a litany of alleged mismanagement and unfair treatment of workers, and accused L-P of withholding information from stockholders. He also quoted a *Wall Street Journal* article that said L-P profits were down 91 percent for the first quarter of 1985, compared to 1984.

When Durken's two minutes for each comment were declared over,

someone from the right side of the aisle would come to the microphone to yield his stockholder right to Durken. And so it went for some 40 minutes. It was during this time that a few on the left side of the aisle applauded at the disclosure of Merlo's salary, placed at several million dollars in stock and bonuses per year. Durken added that shortly after the strike, the board voted raises of more than a half million dollars to executive officers.

After a preliminary count which showed Durken didn't have the votes to pass his resolutions, he was ordered to leave the microphone. Margaret Orjias stepped forward again to talk but was gavelled down; Durken then rose to protest; and in a moment of confusion as people shouted, the chairman hammered adjournment. The board, including Chuck Yaeger of *The Right Stuff* fame, and executives, quickly filed out the back door.

--Don Bachman

BARBED WIRE

Well, doggone, explain it to us.

The director of the Northwest Mining Association, speaking at a convention of the Alaska Miners Association in Anchorage, complained: "We've made no progress with wilderness withdrawals in the last four years. The reason isn't the government, it's the whole doggone public that doesn't understand."

Dying better, electrically.

Electricity kills 1,500 people each year. One thousand of the victims die from electrically caused fires; another 500 are electrocuted.

Yet another lesson in fine print.

Colorado residents who purchased "lifetime" memberships in seven bankrupt Nautilus clubs have no legal way to recover their membership fees, which cost up to \$900. According to Attorney General Duane Woodard, "Lifetime memberships are for the life of the health club, not the member."

That's quite a cohesive little state.

Utah Senator Jake Garn said of proposed federal air quality regulations: "This is totally unacceptable to me and to all Utahns."

BULLETIN BOARD

MORE GEOTHERMAL PROPOSED

To encourage the development of alternative energy sources, the Bureau of Land Management wants to allow more geothermal leases on federal lands. The BLM proposal would more than double the limit on the amount of land any one company can lease in a state, from 20,480 acres to 51,200 acres. No geothermal leasing would be allowed in national parks or wilderness areas. Copies of the proposed change are available from BLM's Colorado State Office, Public Room, 2020 Arapahoe St., Denver, CO 80205. Comments should be sent to the director by June 17 at 1800 C St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.

ENDANGERED SPECIES BULLETIN

Twenty-two environmental groups have sponsored a public information bulletin on the status and need for a strengthened Endangered Species Act this year. The Endangered Species Act Reauthorization Bulletin describes the procedure for protecting plants and animal species, the program's weakness because of insufficient funding and examples of the impact that limited funding has had. The sponsoring groups include the Sierra Club, World Wildlife Fund and the Center for Environmental Education. Copies of the Bulletin and action alerts are available from *Bulletin*, P.O. Box 27056, Washington, D.C. 20038.

YELLOWSTONE MANAGEMENT MEETING

Three days of discussion on management problems of Yellowstone National Park are in store for participants at the Greater Yellowstone Coalition's annual meeting June 7-9. Eighty-eight issues identified by the coalition as threats to the ecosystem include acid rain, the Bridger-Teton Forest Plan, oil and gas exploration near the North Fork of the Shoshone, the fate of Fishing Bridge and the Mosquito Lake timber sale. The meeting at the Lake Hotel and Lodge in the park will include several panel discussions and a hike around the Fishing Bridge area. Registration is \$15 plus \$6 for Saturday's luncheon and \$13 for Saturday's dinner banquet. Hotel rooms and cabins have been reserved and cost about \$30 per night. Camping facilities are also available. For registration and more information, write the coalition at P.O. Box 1874, Bozeman, MT 59771, or call 406/586-1593.

ENVIRONMENTALIST'S SOCIAL

At an evening dinner, the Colorado Outdoor Environmental Conservation Education Association will discuss fall conference plans and the future direction of the organization. Members will get together May 31 at 5:30 p.m. for wine and cheese, followed by a buffet dinner for \$5.70 per person. Call or write Roma Harrison for more information at 9474 W. Utah Place, Lakewood, CO 80226 (303/986-7428).



WESTERN UTAH'S NATURAL HISTORY

The ice age formations of Utah, its flowers, birds, desert fish and ancient civilizations will all be explored in the Utah Audubon Society's Basin and Range Seminar. Based in the Simpson Mountains southwest of Salt Lake City, the conference features excursions to explain the interactions between plants and animals in the basin and range ecosystem. Students will choose three of eight half-day courses beginning Saturday morning and ending at noon Sunday. Campsites with water are available. Tuition for the seminar is \$20, \$10 for senior citizens and free for children under 13. To reserve a place for the June 8-9 seminar, call Rick Van Wagenen at 801/467-5758.

DINOSAUR VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Park Service needs help with vegetation studies, bighorn sheep counts, searches for the endangered black-footed ferret, fossil excavation and many other projects at Colorado's Dinosaur National Monument. Positions are ready to be filled immediately. For more information on the Park Service's volunteer program, call 303/374-2216 or write Dinosaur National Monument, P.O. Box 210, Dinosaur, CO 81610.

YCC SUMMER JOBS

Teenagers can earn some money this summer working in the secluded wildlands of Montana's Bitterroot National Forest, Idaho's Panhandle and 11 other forests in the northern region. The Youth Conservation Corps has about 122 jobs for young men and women age 15-18 working for eight to 10 weeks on conservation projects such as trail maintenance and thinning timber. The pay is \$3.35/hr. For an application and more information, call the Forest Service in Missoula, Montana at 406/329-3768.

UTAH RAFT TRIP AND BENEFIT

Wend your way through Desolation Canyon on Utah's Green River in a five-day rafting excursion sponsored by the Utah Wilderness Association and the College of Eastern Utah's Canyonlands Institute. The \$300 fee pays for meals, rafting equipment and transportation to and from Price, Utah, with proceeds donated to the UWA. For more information about the trip, from June 20 through June 24, call UWA at 801/359-1337.

RESPONSES SOUGHT ON FISHING BRIDGE

Seven alternatives for lessening conflicts between people and grizzly bears at Yellowstone National Park's Fishing Bridge area are briefly defined in a scoping statement. In the public response newsletter, the National Park Service describes existing conditions and problems, as well as possible solutions, which range from leaving the area as it is to relocating all stores, campsites and employee housing. The public is asked to respond by choosing alternatives and issues most important to them. Copies of the newsletter are available from the Superintendent, Yellowstone National Park, P.O. Box 168, Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190. Responses are due June 14.

PLATINUM MINE PROPOSED

Comments are requested on a proposed platinum and palladium mine near Nye, Montana, that would operate for 30 years and extract an average of 1,000 tons of ore per day. The Stillwater Mining Company would mill the ore next to the mine and store tailings in a nearby pond. Among the concerns raised in the Forest Service's environmental impact statement for the mine, which is partly located on Custer National Forest, is the possibility of polluting the Stillwater River should the pond's dam leak or give way. Comments on the EIS are due by June 17 and should be sent to Kit Walther, Environmental Analysis Bureau, Montana Dept. of State Lands, Capitol Station, Helena, MT 59620. Copies of the EIS are also available at this address.

DRILLING

IN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

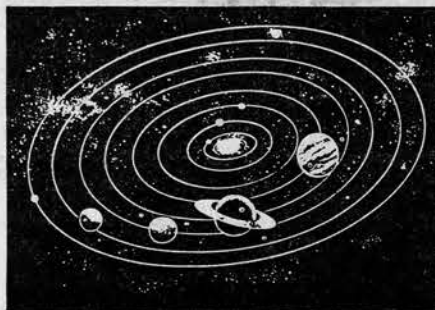
The permitting process has begun for an exploratory oil and gas well on the 130,000-acre Palisades Wilderness Study Area in Wyoming's Bridger-Teton National Forest. A scoping statement for Anschutz Corporation's 5,000-foot well has been issued outlining the proposal, which includes plans for 2 1/2 miles of new road. If the company doesn't find minerals, it must reshape and revegetate the roads to restore the area's wilderness qualities. The retention of the Palisades study status allowing for oil and gas exploration was one of the key compromises leading to the 1984 Wyoming Wilderness Bill (HCN, 10/29/84). A successful well would jeopardize the Palisades' WSA status. Copies of the scoping statement are available at the Forest Supervisor's Office, P.O. Box 1888, Jackson, WY 83001. A complete environmental assessment is due out in late June.

NUCLEAR REPOSITORY NEWS

A monthly news update on the nuclear waste dump sites near Canyonlands is available from Utah's High-Level Nuclear Waste Office. The four-page newsletter covers the state's conflicts with the Department of Energy and refers to Utah's 400 pages of comments objecting to DOE's environmental assessment procedures. Relevant developments in other western states, such as lawsuits filed by Nevada, Colorado and Washington are also covered, and among letters to the editor in May's issue is one from writer Edward Abbey. To get on the mailing list, write Utah Nuclear Waste Repository News, 101 State Capitol Bldg., Salt Lake City, UT 84114.

RESPONSIBLE WATER PROJECTS

John Nichols, the author of *Milagro Beanfield War* and *If Mountains Die*, will be the featured speaker at the Colorado Water Rendezvous to be held in Salida, Colorado, Saturday, June 22. The meeting, which is sponsored by Taxpayers for Responsible Water Projects, will hear from activists from throughout Colorado on reporting on river and conservancy district battles, followed by informal workshops. An evening program will feature awards, a talk by Nichols on citizen fights against conservancy districts, a skit and music. The cost is \$5. For information, contact Jeanne Englert, 1840 Centaur Village Drive, Lafayette, CO 80026 (303/665-2582).



SOLAR SYSTEM CONFERENCE

A conference on "Environmental Ethics and the Solar System" will be held June 5-8 in Athens, Georgia. Sponsors are the Planetary Society, University of Georgia and the journal *Environmental Ethics*, with a grant from the National Science Foundation. Topics include the nuclear uses of space, arguments against space exploration, earth orbital pollution and the beauty of space. The registration fee is \$50. For more information write Environmental Ethics and the Solar System, Georgia Center for Continuing Education, University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602.

WILDLIFE FIELD RESEARCH

Students of wildlife and natural resources can learn about the endangered timber wolf population in Montana, conduct an on-site analysis of grizzly bear habitat near Yellowstone National Park or look for the effects of acid rain in Idaho's high mountain lakes. These courses and many more are offered for up to 14 units of college credit through San Francisco State University's Wildlands Research Institute this summer and fall. The backpacking research courses run from three to eight weeks in length. For more information contact Wildlands Research, 3 Mosswood Circle, Cazadero, CA 95421 (707/632-5665).

VARIED CLASSES AT GOTHIC

Summer visitors to Colorado's Crested Butte area can learn about alpine wildflowers, geology and habitats in weekend field courses. Classes at the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory in Gothic, once a silver mining boomtown, begin June 29 and continue through Labor Day. Special field trips ranging from three hours to three days in length can be scheduled in advance. Topics for these trips include mushroom identification, nature photography, mammal tracking and local environmental issues. One-day advance registration is recommended for the weekend courses and two weeks notice is required for special trips. For more information and prices, write RMBL Field Trips, Box 519, Crested Butte, CO 81224, or call Dennis Johns at 303/349-7231.

MINERAL LEASING CONFERENCE

Controversies surrounding oil, gas and coal leasing on federal lands will be thoroughly discussed at a two-day conference at the University of Colorado's Fleming Law Building in Boulder. Speakers include BLM Director Robert Burford, Karin Sheldon of the Sierra Club's Legal Defense Fund and Wyoming Gov. Ed Herschler. "Public Lands Mineral Leasing: Issues and Directions," June 10-11, will cover the Reagan administration's leasing policy, royalty management, environmental considerations, minerals development on Indian lands and the federal coal leasing program. Registration is \$370, with discounts for governmental agencies and other groups. For more information, write the Natural Resources Law Center, CU School of Law, Campus Box 401, Boulder, CO 80309, or call 303/492-1286.

ANOTHER GRIZZLY CONFERENCE

Four evenings of presentations and discussions on the bare facts of grizzly bear management are scheduled for June 17-20 at Eastern Montana College in Billings. The Grizzly Bear Controversies Conference, which is put on by the College's Center for Continuing Education and Community Service, will cover the issues of grizzly politics, wilderness needs of grizzlies, various efforts to protect the species and the future of grizzly bears. The sessions will meet from 7-10 p.m. Monday through Thursday and will be led by representatives from government and citizen groups. Registration is \$30. For more information contact the college at 406/657-2203.

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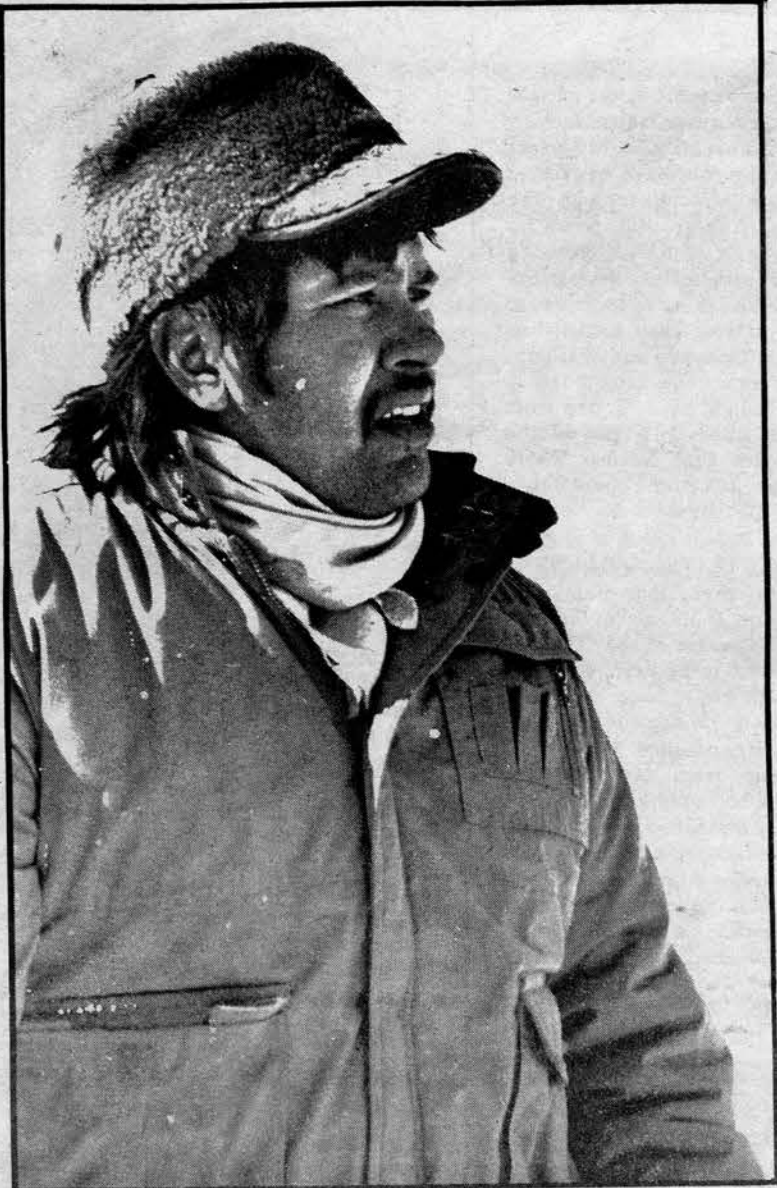
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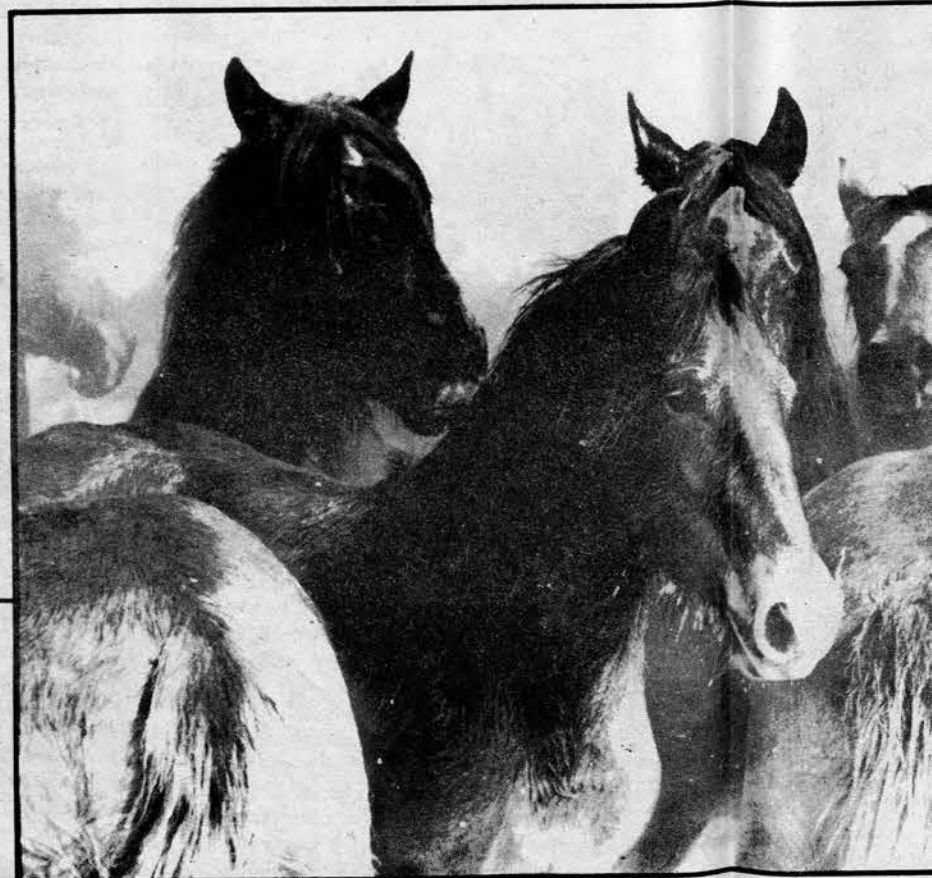
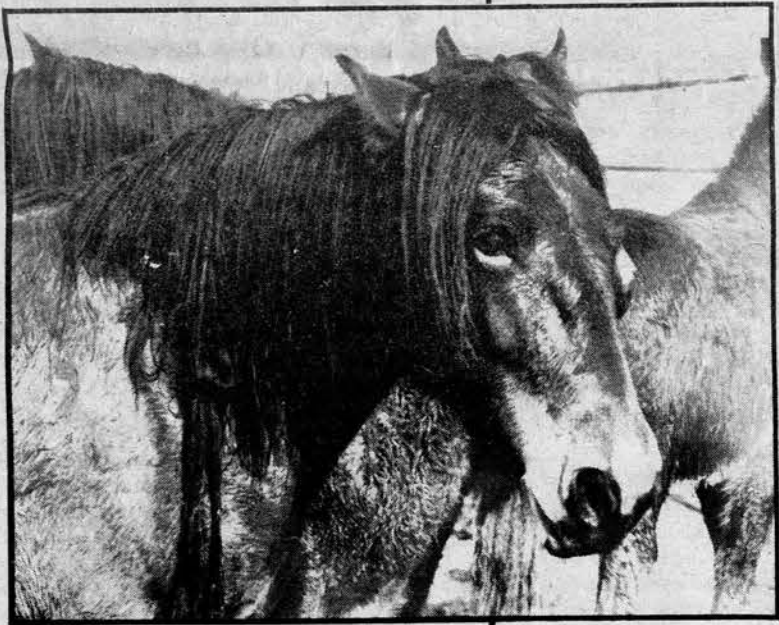
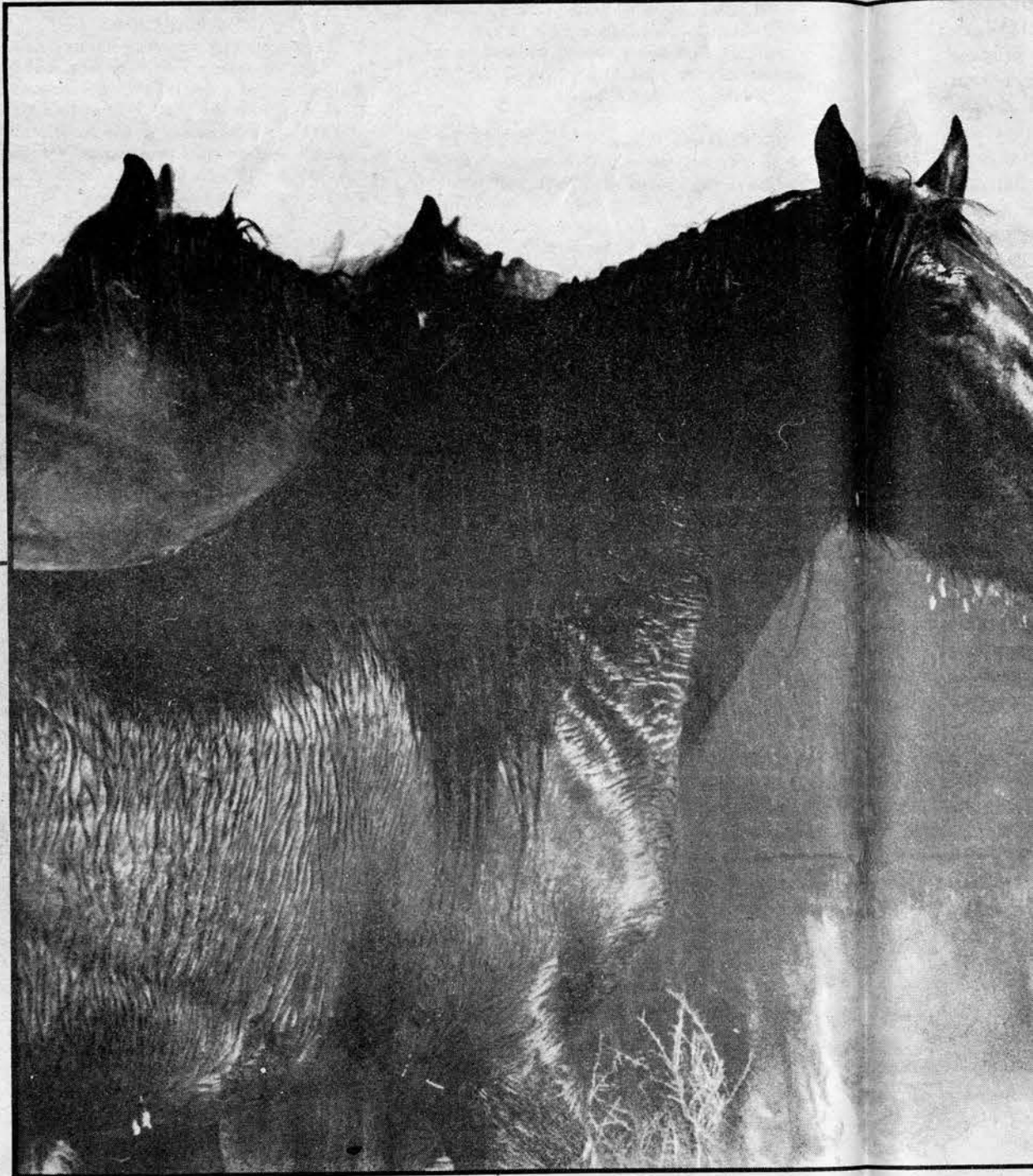
High Country News

The paper for people who care about the West.



BLM wrangler Vic McDermott

Thinning



winning the herd



photographs by

Allen Messick

Allen Messick has been staff photographer and news and feature reporter for the *Pinedale* (Wyoming) *Roundup* for the past three years. He has just moved to West Yellowstone, Montana, where he is editor and publisher of the new *West Yellowstone News*.

Wild horses, a thrilling sight on the Western range, will have their ranks thinned this year. Helicopter roundups have been stepped up by the Bureau of Land Management, which has already gathered 2,098 wild horses since the fiscal year started last October. Congress directed the BLM to remove more than 17,000 wild horses from public lands during this fiscal year, at a cost of \$16.7 million.

There are an estimated 57,000 wild horses or burros still roaming free in the West, and BLM Director Robert Burford says they have overpopulated the range and deteriorated the land. "Excess animals," he says, must go.

Under the BLM's Adopt-a-Horse program, which began in 1976, some 50,000 wild horses or burros have already been transferred to private owners. Wyoming expects to gather a total of 4,000 wild horses this year. Wyoming's BLM is currently taking a break for foaling season but will resume roundups in late June. The horses shown here were taken this March near Big Piney during three days of helicopter herding.

If you'd like to adopt a horse at a cost of \$125 and a one-year probationary wait before receiving title, write BLM Rock Springs District, P.O. Box 1869, Rock Springs, Wyoming 82902, or call 307/382-5350.



Wilderness management's time has come

The goal of the lyrical, 21-year-old Wilderness Act, which institutionalized a system of wilderness preservation in America, is as elusive as the Heisenberg Principle, which concludes that the act of observing an object always alters it. We get in our own way.

Although wilderness is what nature and not man created, it must be managed. Plans must be written, adopted and followed, and prior uses as contradictory to the spirit of wilderness as mining, jetboats and airplane landing strips must somehow be reconciled.

All this takes intervention, even though the Wilderness Act, which took 18 hearings, 65 versions and eight years to win congressional approval, calls for a minimum of human tinkering. As drafted by Howard Zahniser, a mainstay of the Wilderness Society, the Act defines wilderness "in contrast with those areas where man and his works dominate the landscape... (wilderness) is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."

Man, however, does remain. Managers have erected permanent structures inside the reaches of the Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness in Idaho (see accompanying story). There are also wildernesses that have been damaged by too much use or are so fragile even slight use expands trails into mudholes.

The management problem is a large one. Since 1964, 264 wilderness areas have been created. In 1984 alone, 8.6 million acres were added, and millions of additional acres are proposed (*HCN*, 5/13/85). While debate usually focuses on what should or should not be wilderness, a conference last year at the University of Idaho asked the question: How well are we taking care of what

we've got? Conservation writer Michael Frome concluded that nowhere is wilderness managed as it should be according to the letter and spirit of the Wilderness Act.

Despite the Act's injunction that there must be "opportunities for solitude of a primitive and unconfined type of recreation," this ideal has had to bend. How can a wilderness experience be unconfined in an area such as Indian Peaks, an hour's drive from Colorado's booming Front Range? After its establishment in 1978, the area suffered from thousands of visitors who cut down living trees for firewood and established some 500 illegal campfire rings (*HCN*, 10/31/83). One of the most heavily used wilderness areas in the country, Indian Peaks became the first wilderness in the Rockies to establish a permit and quota system for visitors.

Where there are "physical threats" to wilderness, says Michael Scott of the Wilderness Society, managers have no choice but to restrict use, whether that use would come from developers who want to bulldoze access to valid mining claims, ranchers who want to ride jeeps in to check their livestock, or hikers who want to love a wilderness to death.

Other intrusions include scientific studies such as the one proposed by the Environmental Protection Agency to gather acid rain data in high mountain lakes (see accompanying story). Greater threats come from proposed dams and reservoirs. A water diversion project was grandfathered into the creation of the Holy Cross Wilderness in Colorado, and the Denver Water Board has also proposed a water storage project for the Eagle Gap Wilderness.

Most wilderness decisions are made by the Forest Service, which administers 75 percent of wilderness. For a multiple use agency accustomed

to managing timber by selling it, wilderness decisions are relatively new and the rules are still being made. For example, it is not comfortable for rangers to watch a fire destroy hundreds of acres of trees (see accompanying story) even though naturally caused fire has always been a part of wilderness.

Many times the fate of existing wilderness is decided in management plans, some of which "zone" lands in existing states down from pristine to transition. What this means, says Scott, is that poorly managed areas may be allowed to get worse. "The wilderness areas in nice shape are the ones that aren't used very much," he says.

Hopefully, he adds, the Indian Peaks plan can become a model for other wilderness areas, particularly since it built in early and detailed public involvement. There is also a new technique developed in Montana which would provide baseline data for wilderness and manage it accordingly. Called "Least Acceptable Change," (see Opinion page), the approach is criticized by some Forest Service staffers as too subjective.

Subjectivity, however, seems inevitable in managing wilderness. It is human beings, after all, who make the decisions. Conservationists say the only recourse to public land managers who could mar what is irreplaceable in wilderness is vigilance, public involvement and lawsuits. But most admit that fighting for new wilderness or against bad wilderness bills is their first concern.

Writer and conservationist Mike Medberry, however, is concerned that the pendulum has swung too far. He suggests that environmental groups need "to protect existing wilderness. They're not paying attention to what we already have."

--Betsy Marston

Should the EPA's acid rain researchers be allowed to helicopter into wilderness?

Two federal agencies went head to head this spring over the issue of using helicopters in wilderness areas to reach high-altitude lakes for an acid rain study.

The issue also split conservationists. Some said because acid rain might threaten the survival of wilderness lakes, the need for research justified "mechanized transport" banned by the Wilderness Act. Others argued for a case by case decision for each lake.

The agencies in the dispute were the Environmental Protection Agency, which released its draft environmental analysis for a Western wilderness lake study in March, and the Forest Service, which balked at the preferred alternative. The EPA's first choice was to fly helicopters into 425 designated wilderness areas to test lakes. A total of 888 lakes have been selected for testing in nine Western states. More than a thousand lakes have already been studied in the East.

What seemed to rankle the Forest Service most was EPA's preparation of its draft EA in a vacuum. "We knew there was something going on for a year and a half," says Dennis Haddow, air quality specialist for the Forest Service in Denver, "but there wasn't coordination with us. The draft turned out to be a justification document."

The EPA based its case for using helicopters on the Wilderness Act itself, which reads: The areas are to be devoted to "public purposes of recreational, scenic, scientific, educa-

tional, conservation and historical use." And since helicopters were used to touch down and gather water samples from Eastern lakes, said the EPA, methods and results would only be consistent if helicopters were used in the West. Speed was also crucial, the EPA said, as samples deteriorate over time. The EPA added that the only wilderness values affected would be "experiential and mental and moral."

For the Forest Service, which received mixed signals from conservationists, the EPA's draft oversimplified wilderness management.

Jim Byrne, head of the Forest Service's air quality program in Washington, D.C., told a reporter: "Should you give up what's fairly explicit in the Wilderness Act because somebody wants to do some research?" Another tricky problem, he said, is precedent. There are so many requests for vehicles in wilderness, he pointed out, that they're "queued up like a breadline in the depression."

Haddow said where the EPA failed was in its premise that the study's requirements were paramount and could only be met one way -- by using helicopters. The result is that the "study was not designed to protect wilderness. We would have done it differently."

Alternatives not selected by the EPA in its draft are horse access, helicopters combined with horse access and no study at all. Haddow said 70 percent of the wilderness lakes

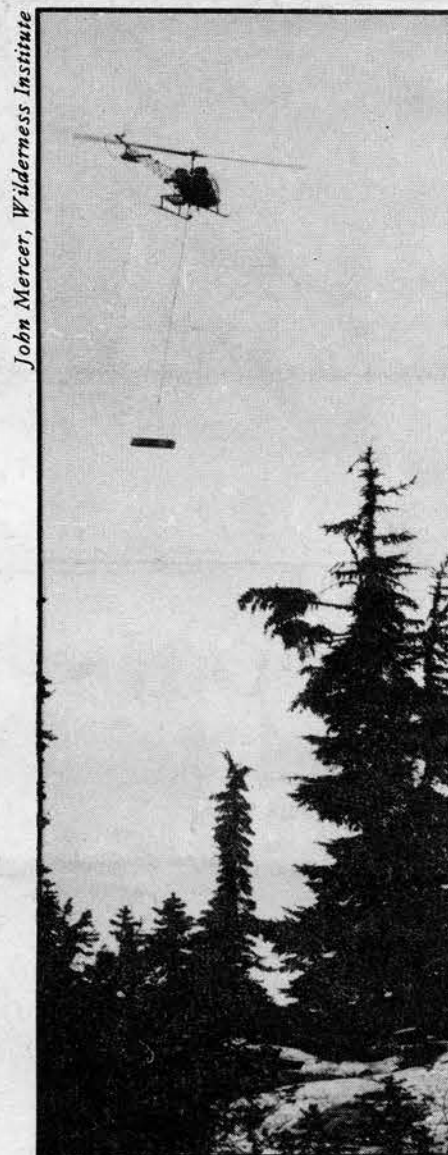
could be reached by horseback within the EPA's 24-hour time limit for obtaining and analyzing lake samples.

Haddow said the EPA, which has been "bruised" by the controversy, also failed to include the second and third phases of its acid rain research in the EA. Those phases require more detailed studies of lakes inside wilderness as well as analyses of lakes just outside wilderness boundaries.

Most conservation groups welcomed the acid rain study on the grounds that the more known about acid rain damage the better wilderness will be protected. Supporters included the Environmental Defense Fund, Wyoming Outdoor Council and the Colorado Mountain Club. The Wilderness Society, National Audubon and Sierra Club expressed reservations to the Forest Service, some after vigorous internal debate over the issue.

For Larry Mehlhaff, regional staffer for the Sierra Club, the issue was one of precedent and adherence to the Wilderness Act. Even though some wilderness areas allow some form of mechanized access through prior use, "does that mean we compromise the rest?" Ranchers are always requesting motorized access in wilderness, he said. "That's why case by case approval is needed."

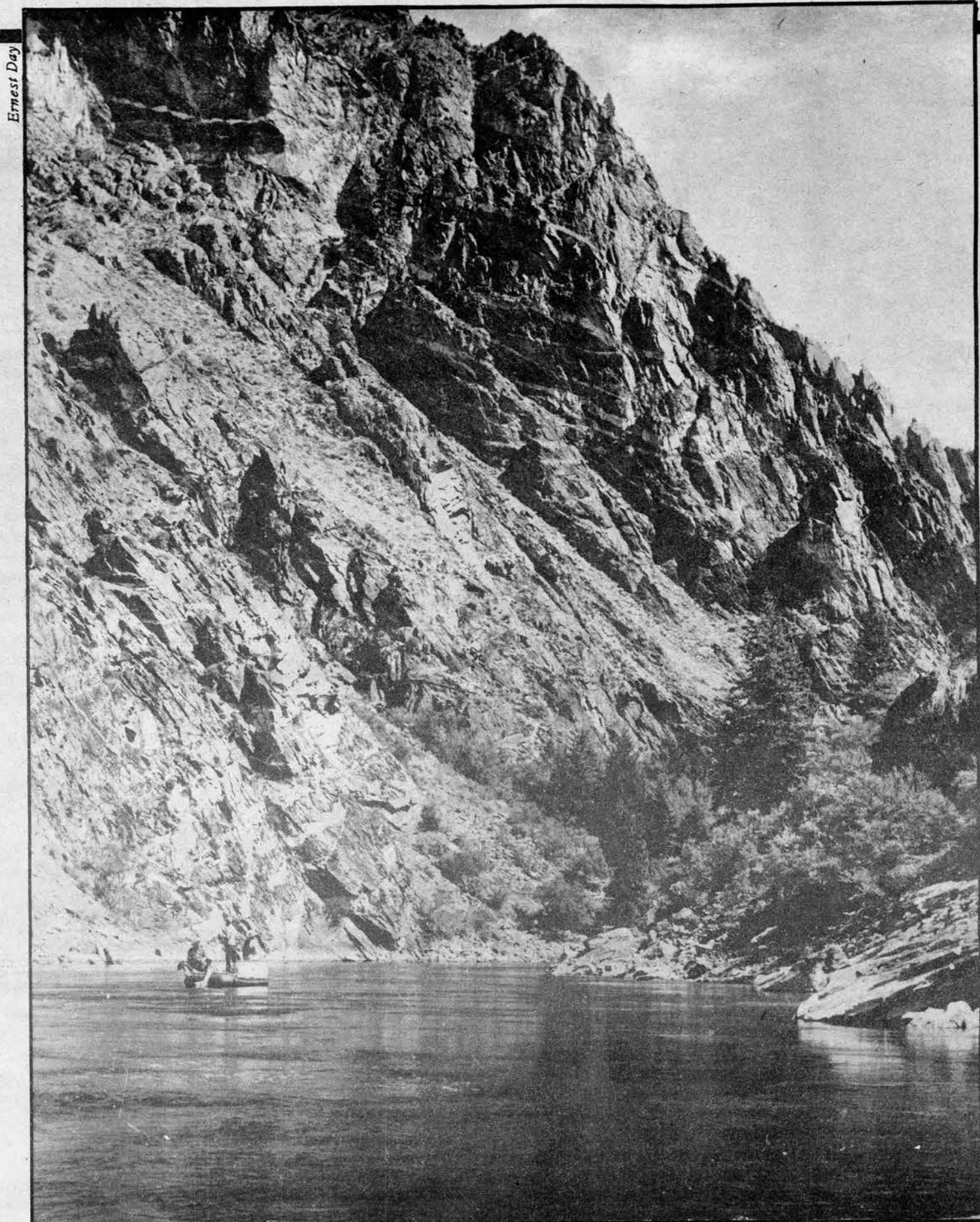
After the draft was released, the EPA and Forest Service began to negotiate. The process was not smooth, and Forest Service Chief Max Peterson twice delayed his announce-



John Mercer, Wilderness Institute

ment of the Forest Service's response to the EA. On May 20, as *HCN* went to press, an announcement was delayed again. A Forest Service spokesman would only say that it appeared EPA's helicopter use would be limited. EPA hopes to begin its survey immediately.

--Betsy Marston



Lower Middle Fork Salmon River, River of No Return Wilderness

Idaho's River of No Return Wilderness

Jetboats, planes are the rule here

by Mike Medberry

Those who think wilderness areas are created, once and for all, by a majority vote of the Congress should look at the Frank Church — River of No Return Wilderness in central Idaho. The July 23, 1980, law which established this 2.3 million-acre area -- the largest outside of Alaska and the largest administered by the U.S. Forest Service -- was the culmination of a long effort by wilderness proponents.

But it is now clear that passage of the law was simply one step in determining the fate of this land and of the Wild and Scenic rivers (the Main Salmon, Middle Fork Salmon and part of the Selway) it contains.

The wilderness bill gave the land -- which ranges from rolling hills along the Main Salmon River to rugged high country in the Bighorn Crags -- a push

in a certain direction. But it did not erase the effect on the area of its historical use.

One product of its past is a boundary which looks as if it were drawn by a mapmaker from the Jackson Pollack school of cartography: it twists inward to exclude developed or mineral-rich areas, snakes outward to take in desirable undeveloped areas, and on occasion takes wild, improbable excursions.

In the northwest corner, for example, a long peninsula shoots out to grab land along the southern boundary of the Gospel Hump Wilderness. To the south, the boundary zigs inward to create within the wilderness cul de sacs of multiple use land connected to the "mainland" by narrow corridors along roads or streams. In other places, narrow multiple use corridors along streams or roads are ends unto themselves.

The boundary gyrations come from compromises made to pass the 1980 legislation, and are found in many wildernesses.

But there are also surprising enclaves in the Frank Church wilderness: 28 aircraft landing strips, as well as rivers open to jetboats. These exceptions are heavily used. The strips accommodate more than 4,400 landings each year thanks to 88 outfitters who fly in hunters, fishermen and sightseers. And rafting enthusiasts who win permits to float the Main Salmon River find themselves sharing their wilderness experience with visitors in outfitters' roaring jetboats.

There are other inconsistencies: several active gold mines; valid but still undeveloped claims to mineral deposits; a 40,000-acre "Special

Mining Management Zone" with relaxed mining constraints to assure access to ore bodies rich in cobalt; 2,500 acres of private land; and many old cabins, including 37 identified as worth preserving. The rest tempt squatters and collect trash as they fall slowly into ruins.

All of this is in addition to the contradictions built into the 1964 wilderness act -- the mining, the cattle and sheep grazing, and the irrigation which can occur on lands intended to be forever wild.

These contradictions would make the land difficult to administer in any case. But things are especially complicated because the 3,000-square-mile wilderness lies across two Forest Service regions -- the Northern and the Intermountain, six national forests -- the Bitterroot, Boise,

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River of....

(Continued from page 11)

Challis, Nezperce, Payette and Salmon, and 12 ranger districts. In addition to the fragmented federal administration, the wilderness spans four counties.

Conflict plagued land and water decisions long before the area was designated wilderness five years ago, and it continues with the Forest Service's Wilderness Management Plan issued this March. The goal of the \$593,672 plan is easier to state than to accomplish: to manage the wilderness "unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness," while accommodating "non-conforming uses" as required by law.

For 26 years, Earl Dodds was Big Creek district ranger for the Forest Service. He criticizes the new management plan for not recognizing the administrative problems. "They can't even coordinate putting up signs," he says, and the six forests don't unite on fire fighting, patrolling, issuing permits and collection of information from visitors. Dodds says the admission in the plan that there has been difficult coordination but not significant inconsistencies "borders on dishonesty."

Frank Elder, who headed the Forest Service team which wrote the plan, says the plan itself is the tool that will improve management. He says representatives from the six forests will hold periodic meetings so that differences in budget priorities can be worked out. Now at the regional office in Ogden, Utah, Elder will have no long-term responsibility for implementing the plan he helped create. Moreover, the committee that worked on the plan has been disbanded.

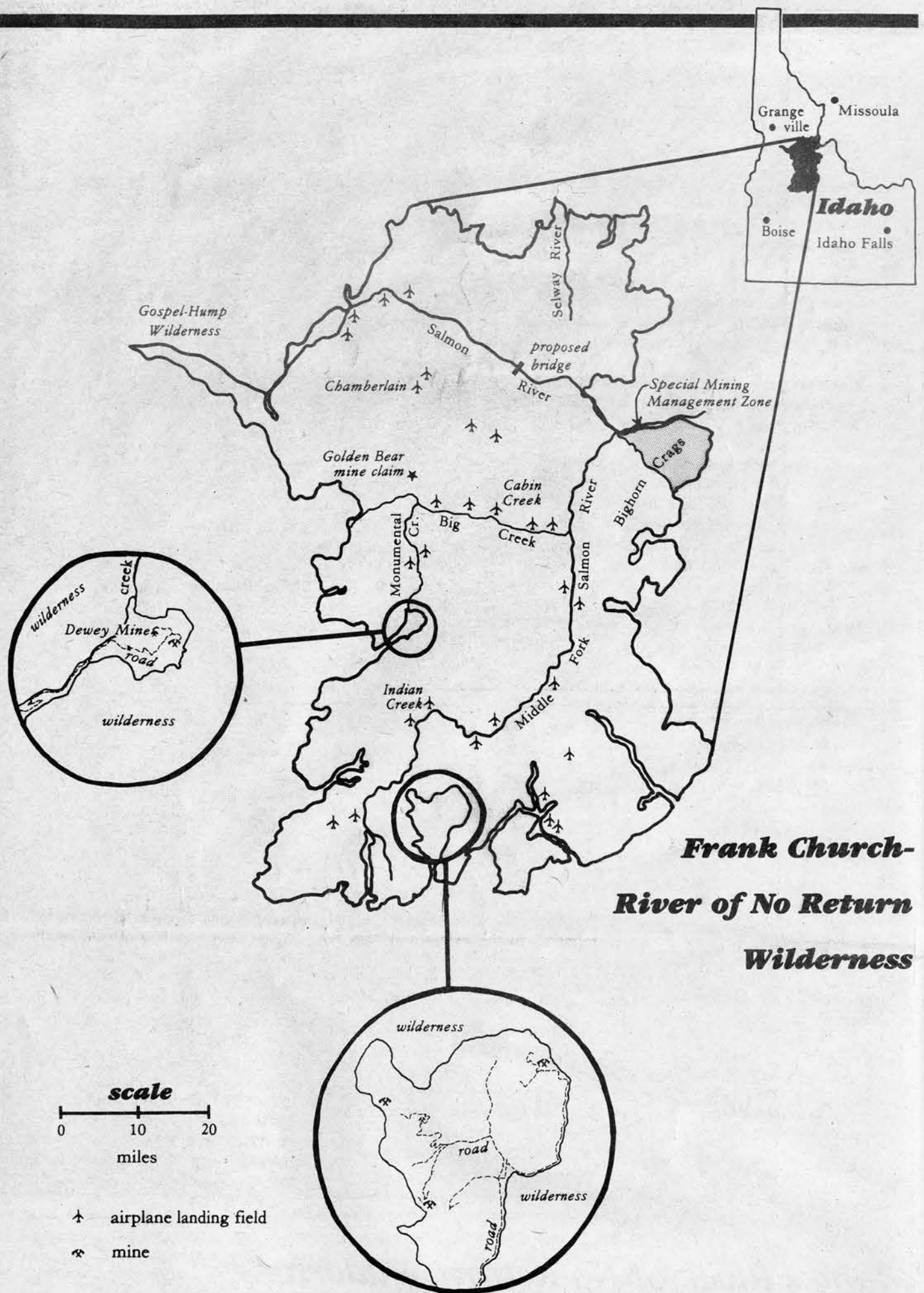
Whoever does it, implementation won't be easy. When the management plan for the Frank Church Wilderness was still in draft form, a proposal to close four landing strips met strenuous opposition from pilots. The Forest Service reconsidered and the just-released plan recommends only that use of the four strips will be "discouraged."

During hunting and rafting season, strips such as Cabin Creek, Chamberlain Basin and Indian Creek receive heavy use. At Indian Creek, for example, there may be 75 landings in a single day, with most concentrated during the morning, when flying conditions are best.

"A wilderness experience is no longer possible at places like Cabin Creek during hunting season," says Ed Krumpke, who directs the University of Idaho's Wilderness Studies Institute, a 65-acre research center on Big Creek. Krumpke criticizes the management plan for failing to address the issue of overuse of the landing strips.

The Forest Service "skirts the issue," he says. "They have directions throughout the plan to protect the wilderness resource, and yet they don't confront the problem. The law does not say that the strips will remain open and the wilderness experience will be allowed to go to hell."

Although the Forest Service assumes in its plan that the demand will continue to increase for use of the landing strips, there is no provision for any restrictions. According to the act which created the wilderness, only "extreme danger to aircraft" can close an air strip.



**Frank Church-
River of No Return
Wilderness**

M. MORAN

Mike Dorris, a pilot for McCall Air Taxi, says air strips are self-limiting because "hunters want to get away from crowds. They want a wilderness adventure and if it's too crowded, they'll go elsewhere." He opposed closing the four air strips because keeping them open "takes pressure off places like Cabin Creek and spreads out use."

Dorris's father, Bill, who has been flying into the area since 1952, says Sen. Frank Church himself advocated the air strips. He cites a letter by Church to the aeronautics director for Idaho before the wilderness was created, which reads: "The right conferred on the Forest Service to impose reasonable restrictions on existing airports does not include the right to eliminate the facilities altogether...I do not support Forest Service efforts to close existing airports within the proposed wilderness area."

Mike Dorris says that by trying to close the four airstrips in its draft plan, the Forest Service was trying to make the wilderness "fit into a mold,

into one concept of what wilderness should be...They want to bury everything that was done in the past in order to create a wilderness."

Ed Krumpke takes the opposite point of view. He says the Forest Service favors the outfitters at the expense of wildlife.

"At the Cabin Creek Meadow, so many horses and pack animals are allowed to graze that they preclude use by wildlife. Outfitters' use also affects winter range and greenup in the spring," Krumpke says.

Scott Farr, an outfitter in the Cabin Creek area, calls the criticism "all wet. There's little grazing on that meadow. I fly in 25 tons of hay for my operation. What grazing there is improves the winter range by keeping down the tall grass and allowing younger, more palatable grass to come up in the spring."

Farr adds, "It's possible to overgraze, but you can hardly tell there's been any grazing in there at all. I think the Forest Service over-restricts grazing."

But Farr agrees with Krumpke that camping at airstrips can be a problem. "Airstrips should not be a destination, but a link to the wilderness. Masses of people using strips as a destination defies the wilderness concept. I'd like to see camping near strips limited to one night."

In its plan, the Forest Service did initiate new constraints on outfitters such as limiting their camps and phasing out permanent structures. That has riled the Outfitters and Guides Association of Idaho, which has appealed the management plan.

Critics charge that problems such as the one involving outfitters cry out for public involvement to help reach solutions. But Dennis Baird of the Idaho Environmental Council says the public is left out of the decision-making process. Lill Erickson, a member of the Idaho Conservation League, says the plan "was not a high-profile item."

On another subject, she says that the plan fails by trying to swallow too much. "Major issues were addressed which should have been dealt with in

Idaho outfitters fight for camps and corrals

Idaho's outfitters and guides want the Forest Service Chief to overturn new restrictions on backcountry camps in the vast Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness.

The group also wants Chief Max Peterson to come to the wilderness to see how tough it would be to adhere to the just-released management plan.

In an appeal filed April 25, outfitters argue that removing base camps that are unused for 10 to 15 days, and phasing out equipment caches at the rate of one a year beginning in 1986, is unjustified, impractical, prohibitively expensive and in many cases "totally impossible."

During bear, elk or other seasons, hunters are flown into base camps, which usually contain wooden tables, stools, bunks and stoves. The heaviest equipment is cached, or stored, between visits by hunting parties and sometimes during off-season. A camp's outhouse is commonly used as the storehouse.

"I'm required to have sanitary facilities for guests," says Cal Stoddard of Cold Meadow Outfitters in Salmon. "The outhouse is safe, sanitary, best for the country and a convenient cache for our heavier equipment. The Forest Service doesn't understand what it takes to operate in this country... in snow."

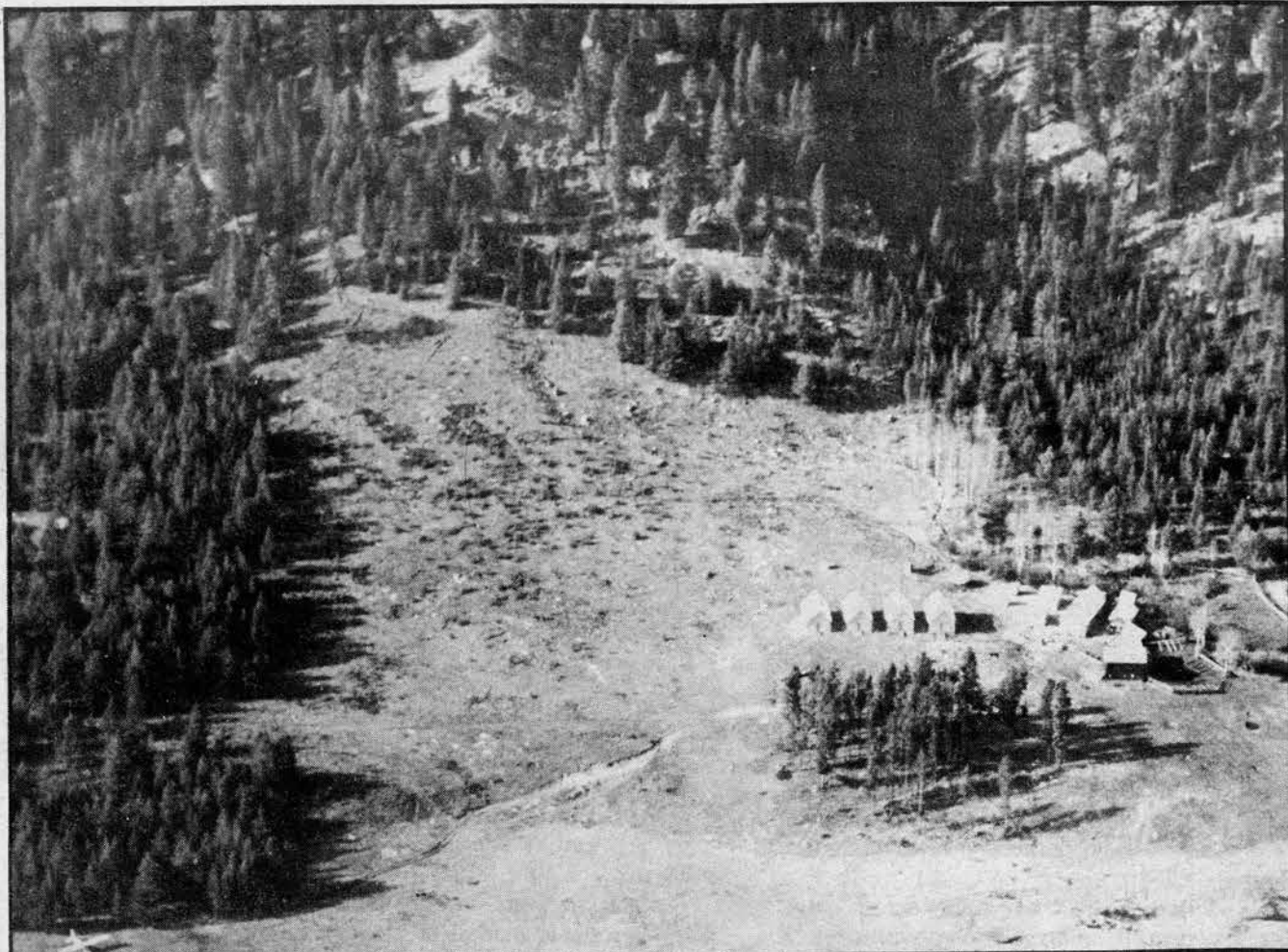
Stoddard says eliminating caches will do more harm than good. "It forces me to have more stock in there, to cut more poles for the camps -- to do more damage to the country than my camp does now."

The new plan also states that "temporary electric fences, rope hitchlines, or rope corrals are preferred" to permanent hitchracks, which in turn are preferred to permanent corrals for pack stock. The outfitter group says this requirement "could jeopardize the health of the animals and thereby the safety of outfitters and their guests."

"Electric fences or ropes will get scattered all over by elk or something else coming through my camp," says Stoddard. "The horses don't cause any problems if I can keep the corral up."

The outfitters association objects strenuously to the plan's requirement that "a permittee will normally be limited to not more than three temporary camps in addition to a base

Ernest Day



Hunters' camp near Chamberlain Basin, River of No Return Wilderness

camp." Historically, larger outfitters have established eight or 10 temporary camps, usually reached by horseback.

Outfitters cite identical language in the 1964 Wilderness Act and the 1980 Central Idaho Wilderness Act as the legal basis for their appeal: "Commercial services may be performed... to the extent necessary for activities which are proper for realizing the recreational or other wilderness purposes of the areas."

To justify its management plan, the Forest Service cites a different section of the Wilderness Act. "The Wilderness Act says there shall be no permanent improvements in wilderness," points out Frank McElwain of the Forest Service Region IV office in Ogden, Utah.

"We're trying to get facilities that have become rather permanent out of the wilderness or back on a temporary basis." Of the outlying camp regulation, McElwain says: "In some areas, campsites are limited, and if an outfitter is occupying a number of sites they are in effect reserved by him and not available to others."

McElwain agrees there is "some logic in their argument that more damage will be done to the resource. But we're encouraging outfitters to go to lighter, modern equipment." He says this will make travel more convenient and won't increase use of horses. "All these requirements are pretty standard in Western wilderness areas... For a variety of reasons they haven't been totally enforced in all areas. But we're moving that way."

Outfitter Stoddard points out that the Forest Service itself has erected permanent camps. "They say my camp and cache detract from the wilderness experience. But at the airstrip where my camp is, the Forest Service itself has five cabins standing there. Those do a lot more detracting than my camp." The agency says the law allows buildings for administering the wilderness.

Tom Robinson, Northern Rockies representative of the Wilderness Society, calls the Forest Service requirements, "the old purity argument again." He says he'll write a letter supporting the outfitters' appeal.

Idaho outfitters were an important

part of the conservationist-sportsmen coalition which worked nearly a decade to establish the River of No Return Wilderness. If the proposed requirements stand, one result may be an end to outfitter support for further wilderness designation in Idaho.

The Forest Service has received two other appeals of its management plan. Michael Greenbaum of Oakland, California, charges it is unfair and illegal to require individual boats on the Middle Fork of the Salmon River to get a float permit in a yearly lottery. Outfitters, he points out, get a special use permit which covers customers who simply book a trip.

The appeal from John Swanson of Berkeley, California, alleges -- in McElwain's words -- "non-compliance with five or six different laws and says the whole area should be managed as a game preserve."

The Chief's response to the appeals should come in two months. If the outfitters' appeal is denied, outfitters association attorney Dick Linville says they are "strongly considering" taking it to court.

--Pat Ford

River of...

(Continued from page 12)

separate review processes," she says.

One major issue is a proposal in the plan to build a bridge over the Salmon River near Disappointment Creek. Former ranger Earl Dodds says building the bridge requires an Environmental Impact Statement because it will open up a new remote section of the wilderness.

The plan itself does not clearly make the case for the new bridge. On the one hand, it says: "The mix and arrangement of roads, airfields, trails, and waterways must be considered more than adequate." But it also says: "Wilderness users will expect bridges where access is needed..."

And in an addendum to the plan,

there is this conclusion: "Concerns that we have not provided adequate opportunity for public consideration or adequately considered the social and environmental consequences of the proposal (for a bridge near Disappointment Creek) and its alternatives are mistaken."

The Forest Service's Elder says, "There is a 50-mile stretch of river without a bridge and dead end trails force people to swim the river. It's our policy to provide bridges where there is no safe ford." Elder also says the bridge will disperse use rather than encourage overuse. He adds that an EIS was not required on the bridge or any other decision in the plan. "We followed the process and put out an EA (Environmental Assessment) with a finding of no significant impact on the plan."

The plan notes that two bridges

over Big Creek have fallen into disrepair and that a "recent request to reconstruct these bridges for light truck passage has been approved."

In fact, both bridges have washed away. It was several years ago that an environmental assessment approved reconstruction of the bridges for operators of a nearby mine. Since the mine went bankrupt in 1984, no special-use permit was issued for rebuilding the bridges. Elder says a new EA is not required for their construction.

Jim Collord, a prospector who has been in the Big Creek area since 1929, needs both the bridges and a road spur to gain access to his Golden Bear gold claim.

"Potentially we've got \$12 million worth in the ground," he says. "I

don't want to leave that money in there." So far, the Forest Service has balked at giving Collord road access to his claim, saying that a 48-inch-wide trail is enough.

Lill Erickson of the Idaho Conservation League agrees. "There is no justification for a new road," she says. "An EA or EIS has to be done. I don't think the Forest Service could justify building new bridges over Big Creek just to do assay work and transport samples from the Golden Bear."

Another controversial issue addressed in the management plan is water pollution caused by gold mines just outside the wilderness. Erickson says the plan relies on the state to enforce water quality violations but that Idaho's process is "too slow and

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OPINION

Can wilderness be saved from Vibram soles?

by R. Edward Grumbine

The Danaher Basin, deep in the Bob Marshall Wilderness, is in trouble, and its story is not unique among wilderness areas.

Though 20 miles from the nearest road, Danaher Basin is a popular destination and evidence of human impact is easy to find. In many places trails are 10 feet wide, and following a rainy spell they deserve the epithet morass. Even after two weeks of dry weather, the worst sections still have standing water between washboards of exposed roots.

The flats bordering the creek have been grazed to ground level by packhorses. Camp "improvements," such as multiple fire rings, scarred lodgepole pines and areas trampled bare are all too common.

How has wilderness management failed to control overuse? The answers are complex as well as intertwined. Trends in visitor use, lackadaisical management, shoestring funding levels and political motivations have all played important roles. Whatever the tangle of explanations, the issues surrounding wilderness management need to be unravelled.

According to the Wilderness Act of 1964, wilderness is to be "managed so as to preserve its natural conditions... with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable," and also provide "outstanding opportunities for solitude." The National Forest Management Act of 1976 further refines these directives by asking Forest Service managers to: "Provide for limiting and distributing visitor use of specific areas in accord with periodic estimates of the maximum levels of use that allow natural processes to operate freely and that do not impair the values for which wildernesses were created."

Forest Service critics say that neither law is being carried out successfully. As the agency responsible for the majority of classified wilderness (outside of Alaska), the Forest Service is finding itself at the brink of a volcano that is about to erupt.

The eruption is fired by the rapid explosion in wilderness use. Visitation has increased 4 percent each year for the last two decades and shows little sign of decreasing. The Bob Marshall Wilderness recorded 178,000 visitor-days in 1982, almost three times the number in 1966.

Lack of any successful approach to wilderness management on the part of the Forest Service has contributed to the problem. In a 1980 survey of wilderness managers the problem mentioned most frequently was "local resource degradation and lack of solitude as a result of concentrated use." In the same report, 46 percent of the managers admitted to being unable to even estimate the carrying capacities of any portion of the areas under their jurisdiction.

The only widespread inventory to establish baseline data on campsite conditions was not implemented until 1976. Unfortunately, that original Code-A-Site system was too subjective to be useful. One Forest Service researcher has even called much of the information generated "irrelevant in backcountry." For a number of critical years in the late 1970s as impacts accelerated, wilderness managers used this system to amass what proved to be a wealth of useless data.

Forest Service research conducted by the Wilderness Management Research Unit of the Intermountain Forest and Range Experiment Station in Missoula, Montana, fared better during this period. Much of this work centered on using the concept of carrying capacity to answer the question, "How much use is too much?" Researchers found that degree of impact did not directly depend on amount of use. Method of travel, camping location and technique and group size all played significant roles. But the resulting "it all depends" scenarios frustrated managers who were looking for a cookbook solution.

Though many of the carrying capacity studies seemed repetitive, the work resulted in an

important shift in focus. Realizing that any level of use caused some impact, the question became one of defining the conditions desired in a given wilderness.

The idea is not new. It was first advanced in 1972 by Dr. Sidney Frissell, Jr., of the University of Montana, and Dr. George Stankey, of the Missoula experiment station. But ideas travel slowly in the ponderous Forest Service bureaucracy. Stankey, a respected wilderness researcher, also attributes this inertia to visitor and manager perceptions: "Impacts have to become severe before people notice them."

Stankey has since refined the 1972 idea into a framework called the Limits of Acceptable Change. The LAC system depends on three premises: managers and citizens will work together closely throughout the process; a systematized data base describing current conditions will be constructed and monitored; and managers and citizens will define acceptable change.

"The limits of acceptable change describe that range of environmental conditions society decides it will call 'Wilderness,'" wrote Frissell and Stankey in 1972. This is a prescriptive judgment and subject to interpretation. One person's wilderness is another's camped-out lakeshore.

To insure a rational basis for defining levels of acceptable change, citizens and managers follow a nine step process. In brief, that process studies wilderness areas in their present state, selects indicators (e.g., amount of bare ground at campsites, number of hikers encountered per day), and with the help of public input decides how much change would be acceptable.

The LAC system is not yet proven. It is being tested now in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex in Montana. "It has been a long, arduous process," says Gerry Stokes, the Recreation, Wilderness, and Land Staff Officer for the Flathead National Forest, and a guiding force behind the trial run. Much of the problem results from the nature of the area, which is composed of three distinct wilderness areas -- the Bob Marshall, Scapegoat, and Great Bear total over one million acres and are administered by four separate national forests. Because of these administrative complexities, Stokes believes that "if it works in the Bob it should work anywhere."

Although the LAC system looks to be a workable solution to a difficult problem, there are some concerns that have yet to be addressed.

A basic tenet of the LAC framework is the identification of opportunity classes. But do we really want a zoning system in wilderness? In the Bob Marshall, four such "opportunity classes" have been defined on a scale from least to most pristine. Managers argue that all zones must meet the minimum standards for wilderness. Yet, by definition, limits of acceptable change will be quite different for a popular campsite than a seldom-visited one.

Existing impacts raise doubts about using any zoning system. A Forest Service report on campsite conditions throughout the Bob Marshall Wilderness notes that "on most campsites all the overstory trees have been damaged" and that use has caused "elimination of essentially all tree seedlings." The median campsite had only 30 percent of its original vegetation compared to control sites nearby. And compared with two other popular wilderness areas, the median disturbed area surrounding a campsite was twice as large.

As for trail conditions, one need only walk the North Fork of the Blackfoot River trail to realize that it will take a major feat of engineering to rehabilitate what in many places is a 10-foot-wide mudpit. The current Forest Service *Manual* allows 24 inches as the maximum trail width.

The question becomes, "How will a zoning system improve the management of these less pristine areas? For sites that are already far below minimum standards, defining limits of acceptable change runs dangerously close to applying a "least common denominator" concept to



Bob Marshall Wilderness, Montana

wilderness. How are conditions to be improved by the LAC system?

The answer lies within the larger budgetary and political context, and the situation does not look encouraging. Only 8.5 percent of the national forest system budget is directed toward recreation. Even with a substantial increase for 1985, funds for wilderness management make up only about 6 percent of this total. In the past several years funding has been severely cut. An increasing number of wilderness rangers now work as volunteers. Yet the LAC framework depends on the work of professionals in implementing management programs.

The Wilderness Management Research Unit's operating budget (monies available after salaries are paid) has been cut over 90 percent in the last four years. To researchers such as George Stankey this can only mean corruption of the old New England adage "do more with less" to "do everything with nothing."

With the budget picture grim, a detailed and time-consuming new management system seems destined for failure. There is, however, some hope. The LAC process could help to pinpoint problem areas, creating strong arguments for corrective action. Citizen participation could also strengthen economic arguments. "If the American public values wilderness, then I think the political process will respond," Stokes says.

The politics of wilderness, for the most part, have been concerned with setting aside wildernesses rather than managing them. But now, wilderness management is at a crossroads. Will environmental groups recognize the importance of protecting the wilderness areas they have labored so long to designate? For 20 years they have thrown much of their limited resources into the allocation process. As crowding spreads, trails turn into creeks, and bare ground is exposed by Vibram-shod feet, the spectre of "wilderness in name only" hovers over the backcountry.

George Stankey believes the interaction between managers and citizens is critical. But he notes a conspicuous lack of involvement in wilderness management at the national level by all major interest groups. In fact, many of the high-profile environmental groups have become increasingly "professionalized" and focused on the bright lights of big-time lobbying, much to the detriment of their grassroots constituencies. Management is "not as exciting" and "a more subtle matter," Stankey says.

In forestry schools across the country it is business as usual, with curricula reflecting the historic bias against wilderness. There is no school anywhere that places wildlands recreation on an equal footing with silviculture. Yet the widespread implementation of the LAC system depends on a growing cadre of managers devoted to wilderness. "Wilderness has not been grasped as a major professional opportunity," Stankey charges.

Wilderness management requires involvement. How successfully does the LAC system address the paradox of "managing" a human experience marked by freedom, spontaneity and solitude? Is solitude sufficiently defined by measuring "number of other parties encountered?" And deeper: What are the "limits of acceptable change" for grizzly bear, peregrine

(Continued on page 15)

wilderness...

(Continued from page 14)

falcon, elk? The LAC framework operates within the narrow confines of a value system centered exclusively on the recreational desires of *Homo sapiens*. Poet Gary Snyder said it best when he

asked who shall "speak for the green of the leaf? Speak for the soil?"

Such questions have yet to be raised with any frequency in our culture. The LAC process, with its emphasis on prescriptive clarity and democratic decision-making, is one step in the right direction. It will take many coordinated actions if wild ecosystems are to remain healthy and whole. Until

these issues are engaged at the deepest personal, professional, and cultural levels, we will not really be practicing sound wilderness management.

□

Ed Grumbine directs the Sierra Institute of Wilderness Studies program at the University of California Extension, Santa Cruz.

ACCESS

WORK

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR position available, American Rivers Conservation Council. ARCC is the only national group working exclusively to protect America's rivers. Its board has committed to a period of major organizational growth. This job is a unique opportunity for an experienced and innovative individual to lead a national conservation group during that period. To apply, contact The American Rivers Conservation Council, 322 4th Street NE, Washington, DC 20002 (202/547-6900).

WILDERNESS TRAIL CREW volunteers needed. Boulder Ranger District of the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests is seeking volunteers to work on both district and wilderness project crews constructing and maintaining trails and performing other wilderness and district recreation work. Training, uniforms, subsistence, and housing are provided. Volunteers will be required to camp out up to three nights per week. Please contact Robert Allison, Jr., at 303/444-6001 for further information.

PROGRAM ASSISTANT, Greater Yellowstone Coalition, Bozeman, Montana. Private, non-profit conservation coalition seeks person to assist the Executive Director in designing and implementing its program plan. Salary, \$20,000. For job announcement write to Bob Anderson, Executive Director, Greater Yellowstone Coalition, Box 1874, Bozeman, MT 59715. Deadline for applications: July 1, 1985.

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In wilderness areas, fire is not a four-letter word

by Richard Hildner

A new policy that allows managers to set fires in wilderness is fanning a smoldering debate. But both its critics and supporters are adopting a wait-and-see attitude before the first match is struck.

When the Forest Service proposed the policy a year ago, there was resistance from conservationists and even some of the agency's own people. They said setting fires in wilderness was an unacceptable human intrusion and undermined the intent of the Wilderness Act. The 1964 Act barred human activities as much as possible.

Most Forest Service officials disagreed, saying that the law directs agencies to take measures "as may be necessary in the control of fire." They said a deliberately set fire reduced the risk of wildfire escaping from wilderness and threatening surrounding areas.

When final regulations were published this February, many were surprised to find a new provision aimed at reducing "unnatural buildup of fuels." The fuels that needed reducing were defined as a fire danger in excess of that which "might" have existed had fire been allowed to burn naturally. Since the early 1970s, both the Park Service and Forest Service have allowed some fires caused by lightning strikes to burn freely within wilderness. But the new provision seemed to allow land managers -- or perhaps obligate them -- to set fire inside wilderness even though there was no need to damp down the risk of wildfire.

The fuels reduction objective has since been canned. Responding to pressure from conservationists and from within the agency, the Forest Service reconsidered the proposal and withdrew it. For the time being, the Forest Service's objectives are to: permit lightning fires to play, as nearly as possible, their natural role within wilderness and reduce to an acceptable level the risks and consequences of wildfire within wilderness and its spread outside.

According to Ed Bloedel, a wilderness management ranger in Washington, D.C., reducing fuel buildup is just one way of reducing the risk of wildfire and this "process"

should never have become an objective.

That might have been the end of the controversy, except that there appears to be no consensus among Forest Service personnel about the intent of the new policy. Bloedel said the second policy objective represents a human intervention in wilderness. But he insisted that setting fires solely for fire control purposes is clearly permitted by the Wilderness Act.

On the other hand, Dave Bunnell, who has fire responsibility for the Bob Marshall Wilderness in Montana, sees the fire control objective as a first step towards a more liberal use of fire in wilderness. He said once the public gets used to the idea of lighting fires, it could become more acceptable to set fires to improve wildlife habitat, for example.

Another extension of the fire-lighting policy concerns infestations of the mountain pine beetle. In the Northwest, vast acreages of mature lodgepole pine have been beetle-killed and to many foresters these acres of dead trees represent a powder keg of destruction on a short fuse -- a situation in need of fixing. To others these timber stands and associated fires are an inevitable part of the life cycle in a pine forest.

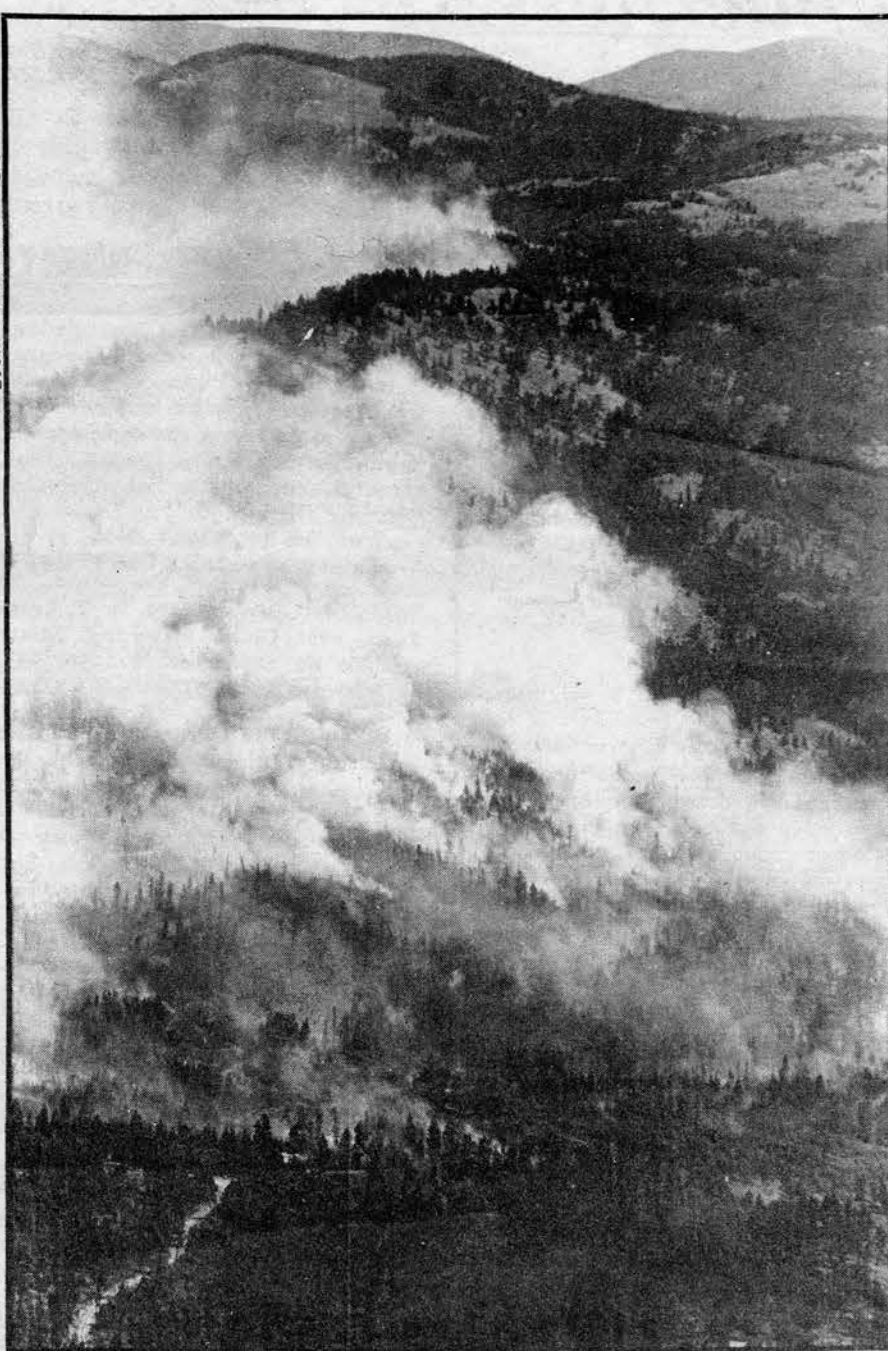
Dave Poncin, fire officer on the Nezperce National Forest, interprets the policy as potential justification for hastening the fire cycle in beetle-killed timber stands. He said that setting fires before the buildup of dead and down trees becomes too great could reduce the risk of catastrophic fires escaping wilderness.

Lack of agreement on fire policy isn't limited to the Forest Service. Bill Worf is a former Forest Service director of recreation for the Northern Region, and for years was seen as the wilderness conscience of the agency. He's pleased with the new policy.

"The Forest Service has always had the responsibility for fire protection and this new policy, as it now stands, makes it clear that natural fire can do its thing."

Others, such as the Montana Wilderness Association's Richard Kuhl, aren't so sure. "While I fully support the natural fire program, the new policy must be viewed with caution. It could give managers -- under the pretext of reducing the risk

Scott Crandell, Hungry Horse News



of potential wildfires -- the authority to set fires for other reasons, such as range or wildlife."

The first use of intentional fire will likely be limited to the smaller wildernesses of California and Arizona. The reasoning is that natural fires in small wildernesses would quickly escape to threaten timber, range and other resources outside. To many land managers this is an unacceptable risk. But because of the relatively high cost of \$15 or more per acre for intentionally set fires, there is little chance that the new policy will be initiated on a large scale.

Poncin and Bunnell of the Forest Service agree that in the Northwest the best way to implement the policy is to liberalize the conditions under which lightning-caused fires are allowed to burn.

"We're not limited by our technology, only our intestinal fortitude. We could let a lot more

(lightning fires) go," Poncin said.

If response to the original policy is any indication, then starting fires in wilderness for any purpose other than fire control will be met by strong resistance from conservationists. A safeguard built into the policy is that the public must be involved in the decision-making process.

But if public pressure to burn in wilderness for range or wildlife purposes becomes too great, wilderness values could become compromised. And despite little evidence, another challenge comes from those who say that fire suppression in wilderness has been so successful that it is necessary to set fires to restore the balance.

Richard Hildner is an international fire consultant living in Kalispell, Montana, and was formerly a fire management officer in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness.

Never of...

(Continued from page 13)

cumbersome." She refers to tailings spills at the Dewey Mine in 1981 and 1983 which eventually polluted the Middle Fork of the Salmon. According to Forest Service biologists, spawning habitat in Monument Creek was still significantly damaged in 1984.

In 1983, the state was forced to settle out of court for \$25,000," Erickson says, "which was not nearly enough to mitigate damage to the watershed. State laws are simply not strong enough to mitigate damage or assure compliance in the future."

The Forest Service's Elder says the plan calls for establishing baseline data for key streams. But, he adds, "The Forest Service can't manage

lands outside the Wilderness. We've relied on state agencies to enforce state water quality standards." Erickson replies that the Forest Service could set its own standards for water quality, and act swiftly if the standards aren't met. "Yet, no monitoring is even outlined in the plan," she says.

It was a Forest Service employee, Clem Pope, who discovered the Dewey mine spill in 1981, and his report was instrumental in shutting down the mine temporarily. He says there is now more awareness and more oversight. "All precautions are being taken to protect the resource."

Whatever side you're on and however the Frank Church Wilderness is approached, conflict seems inevitable. Ernie Day, who lobbied for eight

years for the creation of the Frank Church Wilderness, recalls, "None of us conservationists liked aircraft or jetboats in there, but it was the price we had to pay to get a bill. The outfitters were very effective in lobbying for that bill."

Day says the compromises in the Act were "part of the package, part of the bargain, and we shouldn't abrogate it." But Day adds that there should be no increase in incompatible uses and no new operators allowed. On balance, he says, "We did damn well, and if it hadn't been for Frank Church we wouldn't have done nearly as well."

Sometimes, however, it is hard to sit beside the Cabin Creek landing strip in the fall and watch an uninter-

rupted stream of planes landing and taking off. Tom Robinson, regional staffer for the Wilderness Society, notes, "It makes you wonder what we've gained with wilderness designation back here."

Answering his own question, Robinson says what's been gained is a vast and magnificent wilderness. But, it is also one that can be damaged through sloppy management and weak interpretation of the laws designed to protect it.

(The final Management Plan was issued March 1985, by the U.S. Forest Service, Intermountain Region, 324 25th St., Ogden, UT 84401.)

Mike Medberry is a conservationist and writer in McCall, Idaho.