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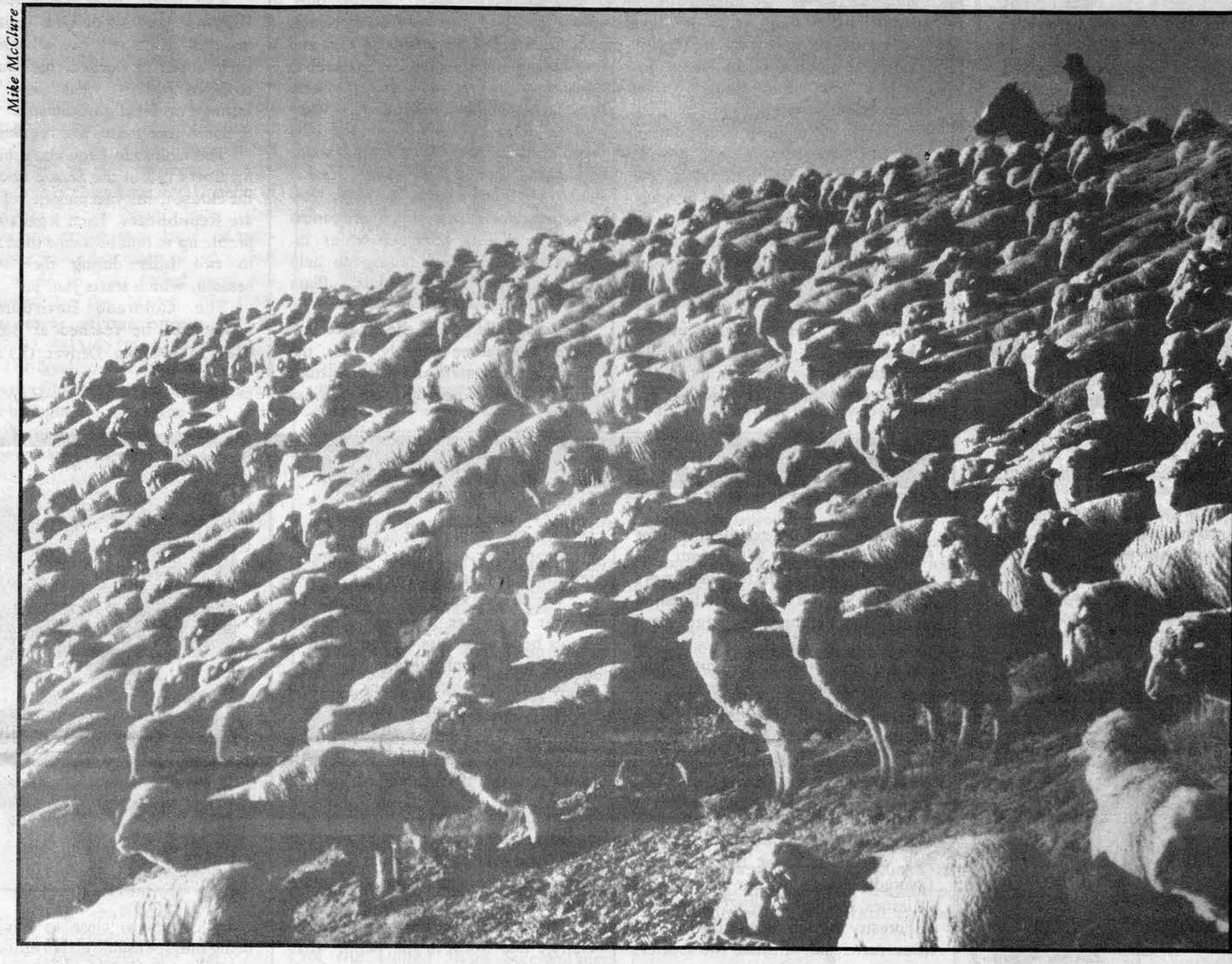

Mike McClure

Livestock grazing fee

High Noon in Washington, D.C.

by Betsy Marston

After a year of negotiation between cattle growers, nine national conservation organizations and congressional aides, no compromise was reached on the controversial issue of fees for livestock grazing on public land. With Congress on the brink of adjourning last week, there was no bill detailing what the government should charge ranchers who graze their cows or sheep on publicly owned land in the West, and no agreement about how to salvage over-grazed lands or democratize grazing advisory boards.

The result is that on Dec. 31, 1985, the current grazing fee formula enacted seven years ago dies, as do advisory boards to the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management that are currently controlled by ranchers. That passes the political hot potato away from Congress and back to the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture, who can administratively establish a new grazing fee. Congress, however, must still decide on who gets to serve on grazing advisory boards.

For much of 1985, there seemed to be momentum for reforming the way federal agencies parcel out permits for grazing on millions of acres of public lands in 16 Western states.

First was a climate of budget austerity in the Reagan administration. As Don Crabill, director of natural resources for the Office of Management and Budget put it: "Grazing fees are considered a subsidy similar to subsidies in transportation, housing, small business... It is intended that most of those subsidies will be reduced or eliminated."

Second was the issue of decades of degradation to public lands, with no relief in sight. In 1975, for example, the BLM concluded in a report to the Senate: "Public rangelands will continue to deteriorate. Projections indicate that in 25 years productive capacity could decrease by as much as 25 percent." BLM officials later called their predictions an understatement.

Nevertheless the third and last draft of an "omnibus" range bill was pronounced dead on Dec. 13 by Russ Shay, a public lands aide to Rep. John Seiberling, D-Oh. In a telephone interview, Shay said Seiberling the day before had met with the other grazing bill sponsors -- Sen. Malcolm Wallop, R-Wy., Sen. James McClure, R-Id., and Rep. Morris Udall, D-Az. -- to see if a bill could be saved. Shay said the problem was, "The bill had become a bad bill. The ranchers overplayed their hand and got too much of what they wanted."

Donald Michieli, program director for the National Cattlemen's Association in Washington, D.C., disagreed. He said ranchers met in Denver two weeks ago and approved the third draft bill,

(Continued on page 12)

WESTERN ROUNDUP

Colorado lawmakers prepare for 1986

It appears now that the major issues in the 1986 Colorado Legislature may be continuations of unfinished business: Amax's attempt to gut the law which lets cities (particularly Crested Butte) protect their watersheds; Mountain Bell's attempt to free many of its activities from regulation; Colorado-Ute Electric Association's continuing quest for freedom from the Public Utility Commission; attempts by environmentalists to control transport of hazardous materials and provide information on such materials to the public; and attempts by pro-development interests, led by the Alliance for Colorado, to obtain statewide financing for water projects, highways and other infrastructure through an increased sales tax.

Thus far, bills prefiled by the legislators are secret, but bills recommended by interim legislative committees which met during the summer are public. Two interim committees -- one on Water and Land Use and another on Highways and Hazardous Materials -- are particularly important to environmentalists.

The Water and Land Committee's summer work yielded twelve bills. Two would fund water projects through an 0.4 percent sales tax, and will be among several bills that seek to finance infrastructure projects through sales tax. (Colorado now caps its sales tax at seven cents; the bills would raise that.) A sales tax water financing bill in the last session narrowly failed to gain backing. Now that it is clear that states must contribute heavily to projects, water interests are seeking funding to help build such projects as Animas-LaPlata and Narrows.

Other bills out of the Water and Land Committee sharply limit the liability of the state and of companies which own and operate dams. According to lobbyist Jo Evans of the Colorado Environmental Lobby, Bill 54 caps damage liability per dam failure at $500,000, with any one victim able to collect no more than $50,000.

The major bill emerging from the Highway committee is a hazardous material transport bill. Evans said such a bill is needed, but that the reported bill is "weak" and would infringe on local governments' ability to determine routes and regulations.

The Colorado Legislature has 100 members (35 in the Senate and 65 in the House), the vast majority of whom are Republicans. Each legislator can prefile up to four bills, and then file up to two bills during the 140-day session, which starts Jan. 8.

The Colorado Environmental Lobby can be reached at 303/320-0329; 1724 Gilpin, Denver, CO 80218.

--Ed Marston

High Country News

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Dear friends,

1985 has been an excellent year for *High Country News*. We go into 1986 with the highest circulation in memory (over 4,200) and a fairly good financial picture (no indebtedness and some money in the bank) thanks to the ongoing generosity of Research Fund contributors. We have a feeling that the paper has helped make the Rocky Mountain region a better place for permanent residents and visitors.

HCN's writers produced interesting stories and opinion pieces throughout 1985, but we're especially fond of two articles published this fall: Ray Wheeler's "Last Stand for the Colorado Plateau" in the Oct. 14 and 28 issues, and Ray Ring's "Indictment of Forestry in Arizona" in the Nov. 11 issue. As a result of those two articles, we now give preference to writers named Ray.

We know those articles scored because they pushed Tom Wolf's Dec. 12, 1983, piece on how the Colorado River almost undermined Glen Canyon Dam off the most mentioned list. More than a year after its publication, people we met who wanted to compliment *HCN* would invariably say: "I really enjoyed that article on the Colorado you published a while back." Now, thanks to the two Rays, they don't have to go quite so far back to cite a memorable article.

1985 will prove memorable because we kept a resolution. In the past, come March, we would remember the *HCN* index, or rather the lack of the index, and then heap 24 back issues of *HCN* on whatever poor soul happened to be the winter quarter's intern. But this year, each intern plus staff offspring Wendy Marston kept the index up to date on the computer. The result is that the index was a great research aid during the year (no more leafing through 20 old *HCN*s in search of the story on radioactive water in the Colorado River), and it will be ready for the first issue of 1986.

That issue, by the way, will not be two weeks from now, on Jan. 6. It is our custom to skip the first issue in January, thereby giving the staff a Christmas break. So the next issue will be Jan. 20, 1986. If all goes well, it will contain not only an index, but also an attempt at wrapping up 1985 and a tentative look at 1986.

We already know that 1986 will be a year of change for *High Country News* because we are on the brink of seeing staff member Mary Moran go on to different things. Mary came to *HCN* in fall 1983 as the paper's first Paonia intern. Because she had lived in Wyoming, Idaho and New Mexico in pursuit of various degrees and work in geology, she knew the Rockies better than the publisher and editor. So after three months, she went on staff, and over her two years with the paper has become more and more valuable.

She leaves us at the height of her energy and worth to the paper. It is Mary who puts together most of the photo centerspreads, who finds the photos we need to illustrate the news stories, who draws the maps, who gives the paper one of its proofreadings, who spends every other Saturday in the darkroom, who writes and mails the checks to the writers and photographers the day after the paper is printed, who maintains our photo and map files, who reads and clips her share of the newspapers which flood the office every day, who tracks a variety of issues and who does a score of other jobs.

Needless to say, Mary has not been richly rewarded in a financial sense. Also needless to say, *HCN* has been good to her in other ways, as it has been good to all of the paper's past and present staff. It is not just that she knows the Rockies better than when she came. Or that she knows how to produce a paper. Or that she has discovered what she really wants to do: obtain an advanced degree in natural history/environmental education so that she can teach courses in that subject.

Rather, it is that she discovered herself capable of learning a large number of skills and then using those skills to go through a prodigious amount of work in an orderly, calm and capable way. *HCN* has a life of its own, and no one person or group of people are essential to that life. But

Nancy Moran

Mary Moran

Mary comes as close as anyone to being indispensable and to embodying the spirit of the paper.

Mary will be replaced by a variety of people. The remaining staff will pick up some of the duties she has assumed. And her central job will be taken over by Dianne Weaver, who will move to Paonia from Eugene, Oregon, in early January. Until recently, Dianne edited and produced *Forest Planning*, which is the monthly magazine of Randal O'Toole's Cascade Holistic Economic Consultants.

Dianne takes over her position just as the intern guard changes. David Havlick of Boulder leaves *HCN* to return to Dartmouth. As an indication of his worth, he will be replaced by two people: Keith Waller of Sheridan, Wyoming, and Mike Kustudia of Missoula, Montana. Keith formerly worked for Nerco, which is a coal mining firm, first as an environmental technician and then as a public information person. Mike is a student at the University of Montana in Missoula, and an editor of the college newspaper.

We are, of course, looking forward to our skipped issue and to the vacation which goes with it. But the staff -- the new staff, the departing staff, the surviving staff -- is also looking forward to 1986. Until Jan. 20, we wish you a joyous holiday season and send you our thanks for continuing to make *HCN* possible.

--the staff

Kennecott Copper comes back from dead

The Kennecott Copper operation near Salt Lake City, Utah, which laid off all its workers in summer 1985, will come back from the dead. The operation, owned by Standard Oil Company of Ohio, which is owned by British Petroelum, announced Dec. 3 that it will spend $400 million to modernize the huge Bingham pit and support facilities, with the goal of reopening no later than 1988.

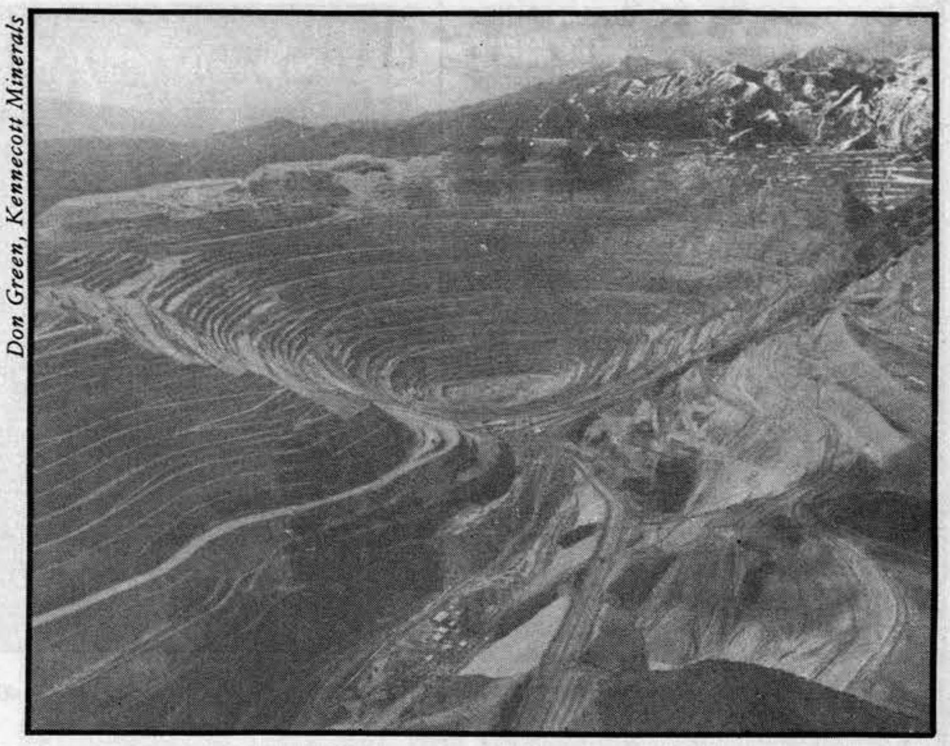
The gigantic operation, which was Utah's largest employer for almost a century, could reopen earlier. But Kennecott says that would require the 14 unions to take substantial reductions in their current average wage of $13.50 an hour and benefits of another $10 an hour. Their labor contracts expire this June. Kennecott's attempt last year to get a total cut of $6 an hour failed, and was followed by the March 26, 1985, shutdown announcement (*HCN*, 3/18/85, 4/15/85, 9/16/85).

The layoff idled 2,500 workers, and was the final blow. A June 1984 layoff had brought the workforce down from 4,600 to 2,500. Back in 1981, the *Deseret News* reported, Kennecott employed 7,400 employees and had a $250 million payroll.

The modernized Kennecott won't approach those numbers. It is expected to reopen with 2,100 employees, and produce 76,000 tons per day of ore containing something less than 1 percent copper. Its previous capacity was over 100,000 tons of ore per day.

The $400 million investment will further automate the 85-year-old operation. A crusher in the Bingham pit will crush the ore, which will then be transported by a new five-mile-long conveyor belt to a grinder. The ground ore will then be shipped in a slurry pipeline another eight miles to Magma for smelting and refining. Formerly, the ore went by rail from the pit to Magma for crushing, grinding, smelting and refining.

The conveyor belt and slurry line will cut transport costs. But Kennecott also expects sizable reductions in labor costs. If the unions will not agree to those reductions, Kennecott may seek to reopen with a nonunion workforce.



Don Green, Kennecott Minerals

Kennecott's Bingham pit mine

According to the firm, the modernization and labor savings will reduce its cost of producing copper by 20 cents a pound, and make it possible to operate in any imaginable copper market. Kennecott and other American producers compete against foreign firms with richer ores and lower labor and environmental costs.

Ores in Chile, Peru, Zambia and Zaire average 2 to 3 percent copper. Copper prices for the past several years have ranged from 50 cents to 70 cents, with the current price at 63 cents. Kennecott does not reveal its cost of copper production. But another famous copper mine, the Anaconda operation at Butte, Mt., is said to need $1 per pound to operate.

The *Deseret News* reported that laid-off Kennecott employees are "suspicious or indifferent" to the reopening. But official Wayne Holland of the United States Steelworkers, which represents many of the employees, says many want to return to work. According to Holland, while most have found jobs, "There is a great deal of underemployment -- they aren't making enough to survive." He says he expects "hard bargaining on a new contract, but I don't believe the company is out to break the union."

Holland says that while modernization is important, other factors will also affect the firm's ability to reopen. "The company has operational changes it can make which will make the existing equipment more productive." He also says passage of the textile import control bill by the next Congress would limit copper imports from Chile, and raise the price of copper. Holland guesses that because the Bingham ore has significant amounts of gold, silver and molybdenum, it was producing copper prior to this year's shutdown for about 75 cents a pound. If costs are cut by 20 cents, as the company estimates, Kennecott will be competitive even at today's prices.

--Ed Marston

A hot ski town fights Superfund listing

A proposal to add part of a Utah ski town called Park City to the Superfund National Priorities List is making local officials scramble to defend the resort's good name. Reminiscent of a case in another ski town -- Aspen, Colorado -- Park City says Superfund designation is bad for tourism (*HCN*, 3/4/85).

Prospector Square in Park City and nearby Prospector Park include a shopping mall, homes, businesses and condominiums built on or around an 80-acre tailings pond site left by an old silver mine. Heavy metals found in the tailings site caused state health officials to question the quality of the air and groundwater around Prospector Square. This past September, the Environmental Protection Agency recommended that Prospector be put on the Superfund list.

The EPA's priority list names some 860 sites nationally that could be eligible for Superfund money to study and clean up environmental hazards. According to EPA standards, to be considered for the priority list a site must score higher than 28.4 on the agency's Hazard Ranking System, which evaluates groundwater hazards, toxicity of materials, amount of hazardous waste and a variety of other criteria affecting a site. EPA rated the Prospector site at 38.4.

While EPA's study found traces of potentially dangerous silver, cadmium, lead and arsenic in the Prospector tailings, city officials say they want to clean up the site without EPA's Superfund help. They also don't agree with EPA's numbers, since an independent environmental study of the site funded by Park City reportedly found a hazard rating in the low 20s, even in a worst case scenario.

City manager Arlene Loble says Park City would like technical expertise from EPA, but that when it comes to assessing a cleaned-up area, the agency doesn't "know what right looks like." Park City businesses and residents recently spent more than $1.3 million to cover the tailings with topsoil to try to reduce the hazard from windblown dust. In addition, work has been done to ensure that Silver Creek, which runs through the area, will be protected from any hazardous runoff.

Despite the city's attempts to stave off a Superfund listing, EPA is following its standard decision-making process. After a 60-day public comment period that ended in November, the agency began sifting through testimony and data before deciding the fate of the Prospector site. Region VIII Superfund Director William Geise says the agency is also searching for responsible parties that could pay for any possible cleanup at Prospector Square.

In the meantime, Park City's Loble says the town is left in limbo and real estate prices continue to drop. Geise says no decision is likely for "at least six months." If the past is any indication, those months could stretch into a year or more. Geise says some 200 possible Superfund sites from October 1984 still await EPA decisions, including Aspen's Smuggler Mine.

--David Havlick

BARBS

Better hide your Harris Tweed.

A Wyoming sheriff's investigator told a federal judge that he became suspicious of three men (later charged with possession of 2.7 pounds of cocaine) because they were "too well dressed" to be in the Rock Springs area.

HOTLINE

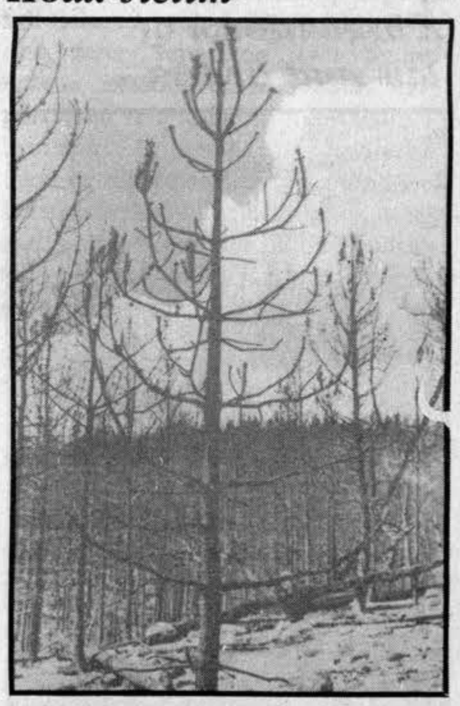
Chem-Nuclear rejects South Dakota

In a surprise announcement, Chem-Nuclear, Inc., the nation's largest low-level radioactive waste handler, said recently that none of the sites it has tested in Fall River County, South Dakota, are safe. Fractures in formations beneath the sites might allow radioactive wastes to seep into groundwater, Chem-Nuclear officials said. Last month voters defeated the establishment of a compact in South Dakota that would have permitted a regional dump to be established somewhere in the state. Chem-Nuclear said it will look again for safer burial grounds.

BuRec seeks deep water

The Bureau of Reclamation has begun a study to see if Colorado's glacial aquifers can be used as reservoirs. The mountain aquifers are usually found at just over 9,000 feet and range in size from 100 to 2,000 acres. The bathtub-shaped, underground basins were formed during the last ice age and tend to store and filter water. Most of the study sites are near the Continental Divide, scattered from the Wyoming border in the north to New Mexico's in the south. Sharing the $1 million cost of the study is the engineering and hydrological firm, CORY Company, Inc. The Bureau says if aquifers can be used as reservoirs, fewer dams will be needed. The study should be finished by 1990.

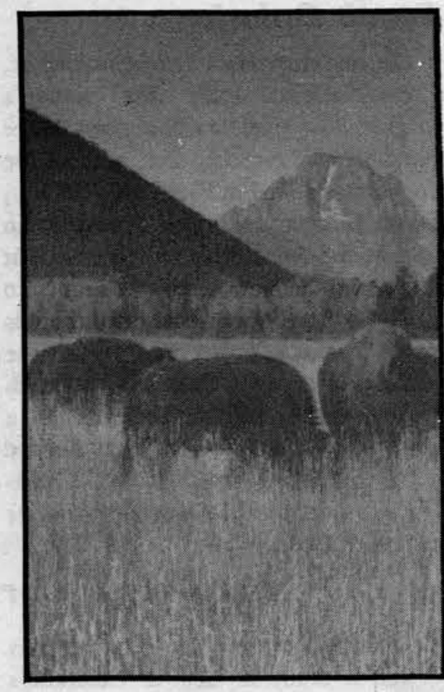
Hoax victim



A Montana judge has ruled that a U.S. Forest Service employee who set a devastating fire on the outskirts of Missoula July 12 was the victim of a hoax. The unknown perpetrator of the hoax, who called himself Lance Peterman, convinced Jim Cook in a telephone conversation that he was being hired on a freelance basis to set a prescribed burn on Mount Sentinel. The fire eventually destroyed 1,450 acres east of Missoula, and resulted in a charge against Cook of negligent arson. Cook told the *Great Falls Tribune* that after he set the fire he was confused that helicopters didn't appear to control it. When he called to check on the helicopters, and realized there was no Peterman, "The whole underpinning of my life was removed." Although the arson charge has been dismissed, Cook faces a state lasuit to recover the $1.8 million fire-fighting costs and the possibility that the Forest Service may not reinstate him in his job as economist.

HOTLINE

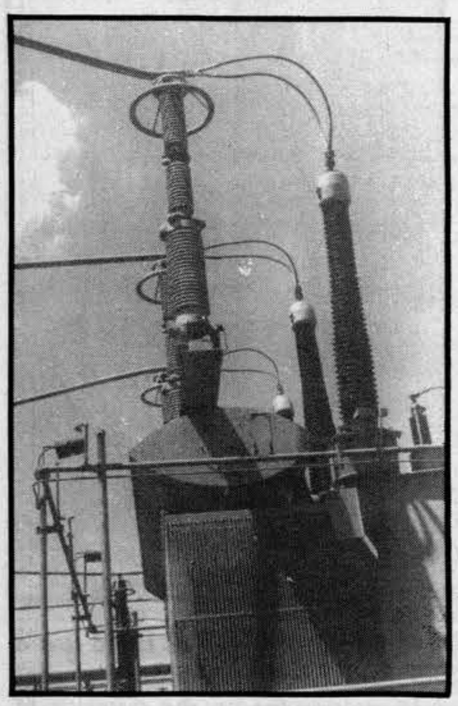
Roaming bisons



Grand Teton National Park

A U.S. district court judge has refused to order the federal government to keep roaming bison inside Yellowstone National Park, supporting a new state law that permits Montana's first buffalo hunt in over 30 years. Despite losing in court, the president of the New York-based Fund for Animals says group volunteers may head into the field to disrupt hunters and try to herd bison back into Yellowstone. Montana livestock officials say that bison outside the park can infect cattle with brucellosis, which causes cows to abort. Last year game wardens shot and killed 88 bison after they crossed the park border and entered private ranchland.

A breakdown of law and order



The electric utility and coal industries were taken by surprise a decade ago by the failure of an economic trend they thought was law: linear growth of 7 percent per year in the consumption of electricity. Now they are faced by the failure of a second economic law: the collapse of the economy of scale. A University of Tennessee study paid for by the Edison Electric Institute looked at the construction costs of 100 power plants. According to *Coal Week*, the study found that scaling up a plant produces only small per unit savings. For example, if it costs $500 million to build a 400-megawatt plant, it would cost $950 million to build an 800 megawatt plant at the same site. This study indicates it makes more sense to meet growth by building smaller plants, avoiding the risk of overbuilding.

Agency takes to the air against coyotes

A Forest Service directive that allows coyotes to be shot from helicopters in Utah's Mount Naomi Wilderness has galvanized opposition from several environmental groups.

The Forest Service says the area's recently approved management plan allows helicopters to be used to control coyotes along the Logan Front for up to three flights per year. The plan's guidelines, however, say that predator control efforts must be directed at eliminating the "offending animal," and that control efforts will be allowed only when necessary to prevent "special and serious" losses of domestic livestock.

According to the Cache Valley Group of the Sierra Club and the Utah Wilderness Association, neither guideline is being strictly observed.

The two groups claim the Forest Service can't prove sheep losses are "special" or "serious;" nor can the Forest Service prove it is targeting the "offending" coyotes.

Tom Lyon, a UWA board member, said the helicopter control work is slated for the winter, when coyotes and their tracks can be more easily spotted. But sheep are long gone, Lyon said, which means no one can tell which coyote killed a sheep months earlier.

Forest Service officials disagree. Logan District Ranger Dave Baumgartner wrote to UWA coordinator Dick Carter that experts say coyotes are extremely territorial, and that the territories can be accurately defined. By "correlating the location where sheep have been killed with what we know about the territorial habit of the coyote, we feel very confident that the offending animal or animals can be identified even months after the sheep leave the allotment," Baumgartner said.

"I'd like to see some hard data on that one," said Jack Spence, conservation chairman for the Cache Valley group of the Sierra Club. Spence said the conservation groups also can't accept the Forest Service interpretation of the "special and serious" clause in the management plan. Spence and Lyon argue that in order for losses to be considered special and serious, they must, at a minimum, equal national average losses reported for the year.

According to a Forest Service annual report on grazing, a study of eight Western states showed summer sheep losses averaged 2 percent on the national forests. The grazing allotment on the Mount Naomi Wilderness Area numbers 1150 sheep, and according to Logan Ranger District records, predator losses reported by the local permittee have averaged 16 per year for the past nine years, or approximately 1.4 percent of the sheep allotment.

Ranger Baumgartner said the "special and serious losses" clause is open to interpretation. The sheep permittee would define the terminology much differently than Spence or Lyon, and the Forest Service must base its decision on all concerned, Baumgartner said. But more important, he said, is the intent of Congress when it passed the Utah Wilderness Act in September 1984.

"We just do not believe Congress intended to disadvantage a permittee just because the permit was inside a newly named wilderness area," he said. "Congress made it clear -- predator control activities would be

Brad Justad, The Herald Journal

allowed under prescribed, reasonable regulations," Baumgartner said.

Baumgartner was referring to a passage in the Utah Wilderness Act that says designation of an area as wilderness "does not preclude a number of activities, including predator control, all of which are conducted pursuant to reasonable regulations as the Secretary of Agriculture may prescribe."

He said the Forest Service position is not in any way an attempt to go around the "reasonable regulations" clause set down by Congress. Predator control efforts are legitimate in wilderness areas, and the Forest Service is attempting to minimize the impact on wilderness of those legitimate operations by hunting at the time of lowest use -- winter, he said.

"The issue is wilderness; the regulations were designed to protect wilderness, and the coyote is a part of wilderness -- we recognize that," Baumgartner said. "The wholesale slaughter of coyotes is not our purpose at all."

Spence agrees the issue is wilderness, but added that the question is whether the Forest Service will follow wilderness management guidelines in both its Forest Service Manual and Wasatch-Cache Mangement Plan.

"His arguments are pure sophistry," Spence said. "If the standards were written ambiguously to allow any interpretation they damn well please, then the whole process was a waste of our taxpayer money."

Lyon said there are weak links in the statistical base on coyote-sheep relationships, such as apparent variability in the interpretation of the guidelines. But the important question in this case is one of values, he said. The issue of wilderness in the Mount Naomi area has been debated for many years, and now that it is finally law, will the Forest Service manage it with wilderness as the high value?

"We think it would be an extremely bad precedent if the first wilderness-management decision on Naomi were to be a loosening of the protective regulations," Lyon wrote in a letter to Baumgartner. Carter said the UWA will formally appeal any authorization of helicopter flights for predator control, and Spence said he will recommend the Sierra Club also pursue official appeal.

--Tim Vitale

Skiing in Vermont

Affluent and the effluent

A controversy in Vermont over the vast expansion of that state's ski areas provides an interesting contrast with the Rockies. The controversy, reported in the Nov. 12 issue of *The New York Times* by Fox Butterfield, is a mix of humor, bigotry and environmentalism. (See story at right.)

The central issue is the so-called off-site impacts -- the construction of massive second-home subdivisions on and near such ski areas as Killington. The controversy ignited when a Vermont state agency denied a Killington mountain subdivision permission to discharge the wastewater from a completed sewage treatment plant into a stream. The ban on such discharges came as a result of a lawsuit brought by two environmental groups, and it has paralyzed mountain home building throughout the Green Mountains.

There have been a variety of reactions. Word that Killington might use its waste water to make snow led to bumper stickers that read: "Killington: Where the Affluent meet the Effluent," as well as a variety of puns on such themes as Ski the Rockies.

The ski industry has counter-attacked vigorously, charging Democratic Gov. Madeleine M. Kunin with insensitivity to Vermont's rural poverty. The industry's *Ski* magazine in its November issue said state government is at war with resort owners:

"Gov. Kunin -- Democratic, immigrant, female, Jewish -- was elected in 1984 in a state historically not overwhelmingly fond of any of the above." The governor responded that the people of Vermont are not bigoted.

Environmental groups precipitated the civil war, but it goes beyond environmental issues. According to the *Times*, the scale of ski area development is so large it threatens to wag Vermont. Killington, for example, could have rooms for 40,000 skiers. By comparison, the state's largest city, Burlington, has 38,000 residents. State Sen. Harvey Carter said, "It raises the whole issue of what we want to be in Vermont."

Although there are always battles over the permitting of new or expanding ski areas in the Rockies, there has not been a state-wide issue anywhere since the fight over bringing the Olympics to Colorado in the 1970s. It is likely that the scale of skiing in the Rockies will never get large enough to precipitate such a struggle. Controversies over ski areas are likely to remain local, centered on such issues as wildlife and the futures of small towns located near proposed new areas.

For the sake of comparison, there are 50 million people within a day's drive of Vermont's ski areas, while Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, Montana and Idaho between them have only 8 million people.

--Ed Marston

Critics say ski areas threaten wildlife

Conflict between ski area development and wildlife is a familiar story. But on the White River National Forest in western Colorado, the intensity of the long-time struggle has escalated.

A boiling point was reached when the Forest Service recently approved expansion of the Snowmass ski area onto Burnt Mountain -- a growth in ski capacity of two-thirds. The Forest Service approval allows seven new lifts and three new on-mountain restaurants. It means Snowmass will be able to accommodate 16,000 skiers at one time, instead of the current 10,000.

Opponents of the project say expansion will block a migration corridor used by 1,200 mule deer and 400 elk. The Colorado Wildlife Federation, a citizens group, and the state Division of Wildlife have each appealed the Forest Service decision. The DOW's appeal is unusual because the two agencies are generally cautious and diplomatic in dealing with one another.

At the same time, conservation groups are keeping a close eye on two other pending decisions in the White River National Forest: a proposed expansion of the Vail ski area, and a proposed land exchange of Forest Service and private lands near Avon, a small town close to the Vail and Beaver Creek ski areas.

Each project concerns Richard Woodrow, supervisor of the White River National Forest. He says wildlife and recreation are the key resources on the forest and that both are top priorities.

"We make a lot of decisions... and they are multiple-use decisions. Unlike the Division of Wildlife, we are not a single-use agency. So a lot of times there are trade-offs for recreation, wildlife or other types of things," he says.

Perry Olson, a regional manager for the Division of Wildlife, sees the situation differently. He says it's time off-site impacts on wildlife were addressed. "The Forest Service has always been favorable in its outlook towards ski areas... We're concerned that the wildlife resource is being piecemealed out of existence. "Wildlife is just as much of a national resource as timber. The Forest Service should be responsible for it. Just because the animals have legs, and can walk off the Forest Service land, does not mean they are not a resource," Olson adds.

"We realize that wildlife has to share resources with the ski industry. But we think that we always have to give up and the Forest Service always sides with the ski areas," says Steve Bloemke, executive director of the Colorado Wildlife Federation. Bloemke and Olson both point out that Colorado hunting and fishing revenues are nearly equal to those brought in by the ski industry.

"We all agree that we need a healthy skiing economy. But in addition, we need to make sure there is a place for wildlife. That hasn't been factored into a lot of decisions the Forest Service makes," Bloemke charges.

White River National Forest spokesmen say the Forest Service spends a lot of time and money doing good things for wildlife, such as controlled burning programs to create more habitat, stream fisheries improvements projects, and programs

Kent and Donna Dannen

Ski lift at Vail, Colorado

for protecting soils and water. Forest spokesman Matt Mathes says the efforts are not necessarily "tit-for-tat" comparable to ski area use, but adds that the Forest Service, as a federal organization, must consider national needs in making land-use decisions.

Usually, the off-site impacts aren't very far off-site. Most Colorado ski areas consist of lifts and trails on a Forest Service mountain with condominiums, shops and parking areas at the base on private land. The Forest Service argues that its regulatory responsibilities end at the forest boundaries. Others say that since the permitting of the ski lifts creates the private land development, that too is a Forest Service responsibility.

Woodrow acknowledges that Forest Service land-use decisions on projects such as ski areas set up the possibility of development of critical off-site private lands. But he adds that his agency has no legal authority over what takes place on those private lands.

"We have an obligation to study those impacts, expose those impacts, and suggest mitigation through the proper agency, be it county, town or state. But I really don't feel that I have any legal obligation; and if I tried to hold up a project because of something that happens on private land, I feel they can take me to court and beat me very easily," Woodrow says.

Mathes echos Woodrow's comments. "The Forest Service lives in the real world. We know that what we do on Forest lands affects what happens on private lands. But until Congress changes our marching orders, we do not have authority on private land."

Bloemke says a lot of wildlife habitat has been lost as the result of some particular ski area decisions. "We think the Forest Service ought to take a look at the cumulative impact of their decisions on resources in the White River and other areas as well. The Forest Service really sticks their head in the sand on that. It may be the case that wildlife resources are being diminished a lot faster than they think. Burnt Mountain is a good example."

Woodrow says that the Burnt Mountain decision specifies that development be delayed until 1991 in order to allow concerned agencies time to work together to solve the migration corridor problem. The corridor is on private land, which is zoned for development.

Woodrow says, "I really believe that if there is not a united effort by all entities involved to maintain that corridor, it's going to get developed. Whether or not there's a Burnt Mountain is not going to make a hill of beans' difference."

Olson says Forest Service efforts to get everyone together to solve the problem is a positive first step. But he adds that the process is reversed -- the committee should have been organized and worked out the problem before the land-use decision was made.

The state and Forest Service tried to negotiate their differences, but talks between David Getches of the Dept. of Natural Resources and Regional Forester Jim Torrence broke down, and the appeal is now going forward.

Bloemke says the state's appeal is a good sign. He says the state has not been as effective as it should have been in dealing with past wildlife conflicts; and that all the agencies, although they saw the problems, failed to put real effort into finding solutions.

"The Forest Service blames everybody else, and everybody else blames the Forest Service. That's a heck of a way to run a railroad, for everybody to say 'that's not my problem.' It's somebody's problem, and we're going to keep pressing the issue to get not only the Forest Service, but the state and others, to deal with it," Bloemke says.

--Kathy Heicher

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Kathy Heicher is a freelance writer living in Eagle, Colorado. This article was paid for by the High Country News Research Fund.

HOTLINE

Wildlife Division bears down

Dick Randall, Defenders of Wildlife

New hunting regulations established for the next three years at November's Colorado Wildlife Commission meeting could spell partial relief for the state's black bear population. Acting largely upon recommendations from a bear management task force, the commission designated a limited license spring season to run from April 1 to June 15, but retained an open fall hunt to run concurrently with deer and elk seasons. Hunting with bait and dogs will be allowed in the spring season but not in the fall. Task force chairman Reed Kelley said although he's disappointed the commission didn't comply exactly with his group's recommendations, the new rules are an improvement on unlimited spring and fall seasons with bear baiting. The task force supported two limited license seasons, but would have permitted all existing methods of hunting. A January commission meeting will determine the number of licenses to be sold this spring, when and where licenses will be available for the fall season and specific guidelines for using bait.

Badlands development

A Bureau of Reclamation plan to decrease the salinity of the Colorado River would require development within a spectacular stretch of southern Utah badlands. The project to build large saltwater holding basins, a dozen wellheads, a power line and a new building would take place at Salt Wash, 16 miles northwest of Hanksville. This barren, rugged area is at the southwestern end of the San Rafael Reef, which has been discussed as the site of a new national park. The Bureau of Reclamation says the project would save farmers in California's Imperial Valley some $1 million a year from fewer crop losses due to salty water, but building and maintenance costs would run to $2 million a year during the project's 50-year lifetime. The Bureau is now deciding whether a full environmental impact statement is needed. Comments can be sent to Projects Manager, Bureau of Reclamation, Box 640, Durango, CO 81301.

BARBS

A warm welcome for inmates.

The site of a future La Plata County, Colorado, jail is contaminated with radioactive uranium mill tailings and will have to be cleaned up, reports the *Glenwood Post.*

Montana looks askance at a Wyoming project

by *Janelle Gray*

It's been called one of Wyoming's best water development projects. But despite official enthusiasm and state legislative allocations of $3 million, there's plenty of dissension over the Middle Fork Reservoir water project -- on both sides of the border.

Wyoming proposes to build a $49 million dam on the Middle Fork of the Powder River near Barnum, north of Casper, Wyoming. Downstream, Montana agriculturalists rely heavily on the Powder for irrigation; they worry that a dam will cause their already marginal water to deteriorate further.

Some Wyoming residents also oppose the project. They wonder if the water is really needed and who will pay for its development.

"The reservoir will undoubtedly be used for recreation," said Cheri Graves, who ranches with her husband, Ken, in Hole-in-the-Wall country near Barnum. "We're not sure we want all the extra people running around out here. Some people just can't resist taking their four-wheel drive off the road. That kind of use would ruin this area."

The debate over the Middle Fork project has brought together the two states who share the water. In 1985, both the Montana and Wyoming legislatures passed resolutions to create the Basin Management Team, also known as the Powder River Management Plan Advisory Council. This October, 10 appointees to the team from each state met in Sheridan, Wyoming, to discuss the Middle Fork project and other waters in the Yellowstone River Basin.

The meeting was unusual in that Wyoming -- the upstream state -- was willing to discuss one of its controversial water projects with its downstream neighbor. But the need for negotiation was about all the two states could agree upon. Early in the meeting they drew philosophical boundaries.

Montana and Wyoming are at odds over the priority date on Middle Fork water rights. Wyoming maintains the rights were established in the 1940s and therefore predate the 1950 Yellowstone River Compact. That compact prohibits transbasin diversions of water without the permission of other compact states. Wyoming is attracted to the Middle Fork project because the pre-compact dates would allow water to be piped out of the Powder River Basin to high-growth areas such as Gillette -- without Montana's permission. (Such a pipeline, incidentally, would add $108 million to the cost of the project.)

But Gary Fritz, of Montana's Department of Natural Resources and head of Montana's delegation, insisted that the Middle Fork is covered by the Yellowstone River Compact. "The Middle Fork is part of Wyoming's allocated flow," he said. "The compact is very clear on this."

George Christopolous, Wyoming's state engineer, disagreed, and Wyoming State Sen. Kelly Mader asked the Montanans: "Whose water law prevails on a water project in your state? If suddenly we preempt that, we invite chaos on our own system." Fritz replied that the Yellowstone River Compact is part of Wyoming water law because the compact addresses any water project *built* after 1950.

The pre-compact date will be a moot issue if Wyoming can't acquire the rights to Middle Fork water. Rights are now held by the Powder River Reservoir Corporation, a small group of irrigators in the Sussex area near Barnum. Most stand to gain additional irrigation water if the project is built.

In the 1970s, the corporation tried repeatedly to construct the reservoir. But when they could not identify a use for most of the water, they were denied necessary BLM right-of-way permits.

Then in 1983, under Secretary of Interior James Watt, the BLM abruptly granted the right-of-way permits. Ranchers in the area were dismayed at what they considered the BLM's capricious reversal. "They said it was not necessary to show beneficial use for the water," said Cheri Graves. "No public meetings were held and the landowners that would be flooded were not notified."

Last February, the Wyoming Legislature directed the Wyoming Water Development Commission to gain control of the water rights. That has not been an easy task. The irrigating corporation had borrowed over $1 million from Exxon to purchase water storage permits, land and BLM permits. In exchange, Exxon received an option on about 80 percent, or 25,000 acre-feet, of the water. Now the state is attempting to work out a three-way agreement with the irrigators and Exxon, with the state paying off the corporation's loan in return for everything the corporation got. Then the corporation will pay back Exxon and the state and Exxon will sign a new contract.

"We have reached an agreement in principle with the irrigators," announced Mike Purcell, administrator of the state's water commission, at the October meeting. Purcell said the state would begin negotiations with Exxon next. Since then, progress has stalled. Exxon said it wants more than the anticipated 15,000 acre-feet of industrial yield in order to have more water left over after fulfilling a contract with ARCO for 12,500 acre-feet. And Exxon does not want to pay a readiness-to-serve fee, a nominal charge designed to offset some of the operation and maintenance costs involved in keeping the water available for an industrial user.

Of the reservoir's firm annual yield of 27,000 acre-feet, 4,000 acre-feet would be sold to the irrigators for $3 per acre-foot, or $12,000 a year. "This water will cost the state $120 an acre-foot to develop," criticized Jacky Cahill, staff member of the Powder River Basin Resource Council, a group working closely with Wyoming ranchers opposed to the project. "The state would be subsidizng a few agricultural users at a tremendous cost to other Wyoming citizens."

Wyoming hopes to recoup the cost of the dam by selling 15,000 acre-feet of water to Exxon or another industrial user. But industry will pay for the water only if they use it. "The life span of the dam could be half over by the time Exxon wants the water," said Cahill.

Even while admitting no one has an immediate use for the water, Wyoming officials still consider the project one of the best in the state. "What will be of key significance is the industrial yield," Purcell said. "But we don't have what would be considered as a presently defined need. We are looking at the project as an investment."

Some Middle Fork ranchers consider it a poor investment. "We'd like to see someone express some definite interest in this water before the state goes ahead with the project," said Ken Graves. "Right now, there are just the 15 irrigators at Sussex who have a positive use for the water. But industry is not interested. This seems to be a real waste of state money."

At the October meeting, Wyoming and Montana also butted heads over the question of downstream water quality.

Montana believes the Yellowstone River Compact protects water quality for future use in Montana. But Wyoming interprets the compact differently. "On the question of water quality," said State Engineer George Christopolous, "we feel the compact (deals with) water quantity, not quality."

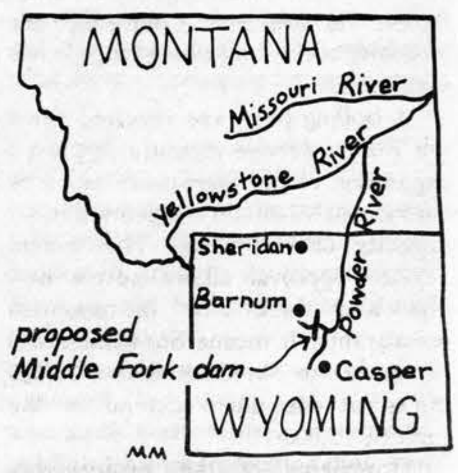
Both states have conducted water quality studies, with widely divergent results. Montana's Department of Natural Resources found that salinity in the Powder could increase during heavy irrigation months if the Middle Fork is dammed. Oil producers near Midwest, Wyoming, dump 150,000 tons of salt a year into Salt Creek, which empties into the Powder. It is normally diluted by relatively clean Middle Fork water. Storing Middle Fork water will increase the proportion of Salt Creek flowing in the Powder River and drive up the salt load, the study concluded.

Montana would like Wyoming oil producers to dispose of the salty wastewater on site. But Bill Garland, water quality administrator for Wyoming's Department of Environmental Quality, said that Wyoming doesn't have the authority to require oil producers to do this. And he pointed out that reinjecting the water would dry up Salt Creek, which is used by Wyoming stock animals and wildlife.

A Harza Engineering water quality study commissioned by Wyoming's water commission cites an effect nearly opposite that noted by Montana. The study measured salinity at Moorhead, Montana, in terms of Total Dissolved Solids (TDS). While TDS would increase overall, the report says, salinity would actually decrease in the heavy irrigation months of June to September.

Montana's Fritz cautioned the two-state team. "Don't assume that 100 to 200 milligrams per liter (of TDS) is not significant to us," he said. "Water quality in the Powder River is marginal now."

The disparity in the two studies is one issue the Basin Management Team may be able to resolve. At the October meeting, the two states agreed to exchange data before meeting again in January. "We'll be able to figure out what the assumptions were in both studies and make a determination about what the real life picture is," said State Rep. Lynn Dickey, a member of Wyoming's team.



Historical and archaeological arguments against the project are made less frequently, but they add weight to criticism of the dam. The Hole-in-the Wall country, which would be buried by water, is famous as the hideout of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. An archaeological study of the dam and reservoir site also found pictographs, rock shelters, tipi rings and other evidence of human habitation.

"We probably have in this area a record of the entire 10,000 years of human occupation," said Dr. Julie Francis, assistant director of the Wyoming State Archaeology office at the University of Wyoming, who led a study of the land. Cairns indicate that the Middle Fork was part of a major human migration pattern. Surface findings alone hint that the area could be one of the most significant archaeological sites in Wyoming. "You could spend an entire professional career working on these sites," Francis said. As a result of her study, she recommended that the Middle Fork be included in the National Register of Historic Places.

The study also pointed out the unique ecological diversity of the Middle Fork area. Bordered on one side by the Great Plains and on the other by the Great Basin, it serves as a buffer between the two. The grasslands of the Powder River Basin and the foothills of the Bighorn Mountains also meet at the Middle Fork. A dual "ecotone," the Middle Fork could provide valuable scientific data.

It remains to be seen if scientific and archaeological considerations will weigh heavily in the decision that is finally made on the Middle Fork. Wyoming's water commission is working hard to prepare a preliminary recommendation on the water project for the legislators when they convene in February. "We quite frankly see some positive things that could be done for Wyoming in terms of this project," said Mike Purcell. "Likewise there are some warts."

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Janelle Gray is a freelance writer based in Sheridan, Wyoming. This article was paid for by the High Country News Research Fund.

Montana plays 'hot potato' with its economic woes

An economically battered Montana is quarreling fiercely over the cause of its problems. Those problems are symbolized by the November announcement that a large Burlington Northern locomotive repair shop in Livingston will be closed by late 1986. The closure will wipe out work for 350 people. The $27,000 per year jobs represent top money in the rural, 7,000-person town, which also serves tourists heading south toward Yellowstone National Park.

Republicans and some business interests, including the Montana Chamber of Commerce, charge that the state's "anti-business" attitudes, fostered by Democrats, have caused the closing of several plants. Montana, whose agricultural economy was hard hit by drought last summer, is one of a handful of states whose total personal income declined recently. The state is also in the midst of an economic shift, as mining and tourism become more important and agriculture, logging and manufacturing decline.

Because the governor and the state House are Democratic (the state Senate is split), in bad times the Democrats are vulnerable to charges such as the following from Montana Republican Chairman John Brenden: "There also has been an alarming rise in the number of existing jobs which are imperiled because of these Democratic policies."

Democrats have responded to the "anti-business" charges by accusing their critics of feuding instead of cooperating with Gov. Ted Schwinden's Build Montana program. State Rep. Ray Peck, D-Havre, said: "Once again, while the Democrats are building Montana, Republicans are blaming Montana." In response to charges that the Democrats have piled taxes on BN, Sen. Tom Towe, D-Billings, has said BN paid no federal taxes on $2.8 billion in profits. In Montana, he said, BN pays lower taxes than two other utilities -- Montana Power and Mountain Bell -- even though BN has more revenue. He also said BN's property tax rate is lower than that of the competing trucking industry.

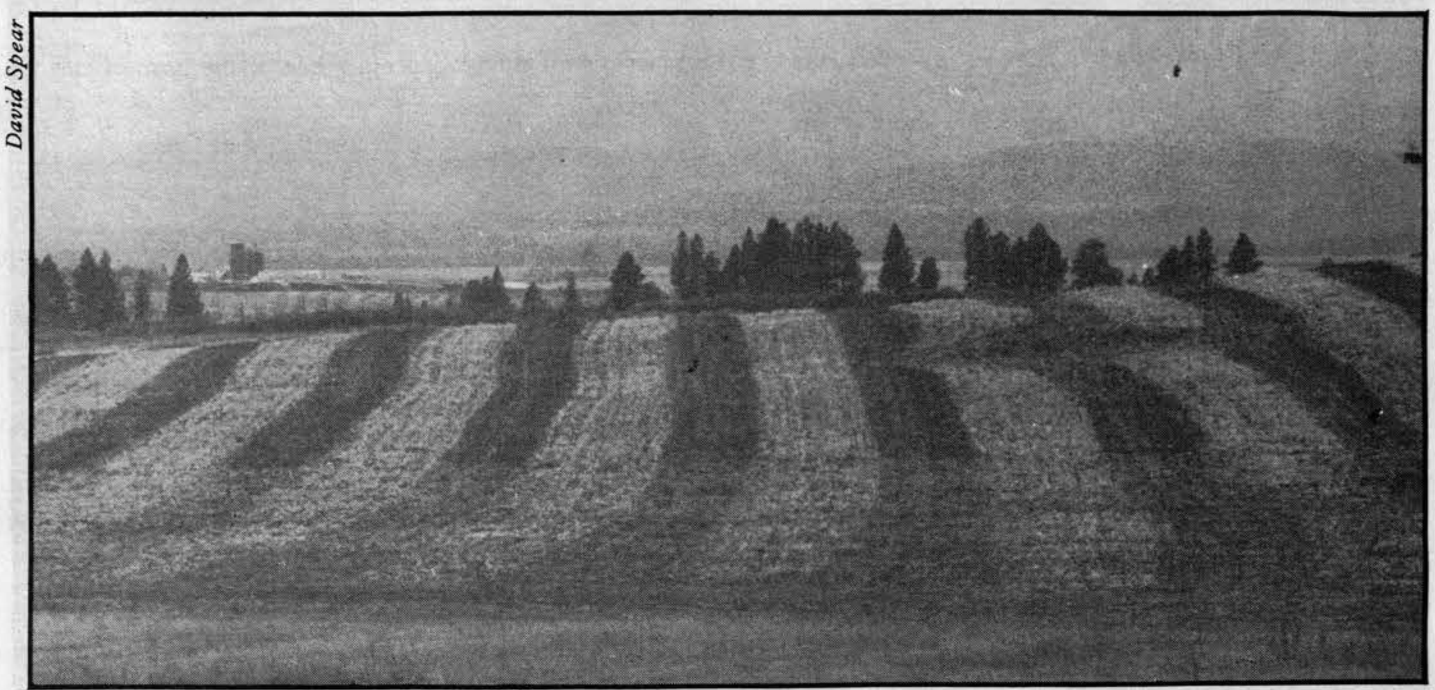
But the charge that Montana Democrats are 'anti-business' has had effect. Gov. Schwinden has offered to ask a special session of the legislature in 1986 to roll back BN's property taxes, which were doubled on the last day of the 1985 legislature.

The Montana legislature will not meet in regular session in 1986. But the BN and other closures are being used by conservatives and some Republicans to gear up for the 1986 legislative election. According to Gail Stoltz of the Montana Alliance for Progressive Politics, they are taking dead aim at the strong grip Democrats have on the towns along the BN main line.

Although the BN has wiped out 3,200 Montana jobs since 1980, several thousand remain in Havre, Laurel, Glendive and even Livingston. If Republicans can convince those towns that jobs depend on a better business climate, the state's political balance could shift.

Stoltz said the campaign goes beyond an attempt to pick up legislative seats. She says the 'Better Business Climate' approach has a long history in Montana politics, encompassing a number of goals

David Spear



Strip farming in Montana's Flathead Valley

which could change the state, starting with "union wage concessions and fewer environmental regulations." The approach, she said, calls for a sales tax to shift taxes from property and income taxes. Business generally prefers a sales tax, which hits consumption and consumers, to taxes on property and income.

Montana is known as a union state, and the campaign against unions is apparent in the fight over BN. The 350 BN workers scheduled to lose their jobs are union members, and Republican state Senator Pat Goodover of Great Falls told the *Great Falls Tribune* that AFL-CIO leader Jim Murray is a major cause of job loss in Montana. He blamed job losses at shuttered Atlantic Richfield's Anaconda Butte copper operation and potential losses at an aluminum mill formerly owned by Atlantic Richfield on union demands and strikes.

Typical of the rhetoric surrounding the battle are comments from Steve Yeakel, the executive director of the Montana Republican Party. He told the *Great Falls Tribune* that state Democrats espouse "the narrow-minded philosophy of 'get it while you can, tax it 'til it drops.' "

While Schwinden appears willing to reduce BN's taxes (the railroad says the tax increase legislation in 1985 had nothing to do with the proposed closing), other Democrats are taking a more traditional approach. The Public Service Commission, an elected body, is attempting to exercise authority over the locomotive shop to delay or stop its closure. The state's three Democrats in Washington, D.C., Sens. Max Baucus and John Melcher and Rep. Pat Williams, have appealed to BN to keep the shop or to set up impact funds. According to the *Tribune*, Williams indicates that unless BN cooperates, the Democrats will oppose federal legislation favoring BN.

Schwinden himself, while scrambling politically to cut damages, has attempted to take the long view, saying, "What's happening here is what is happening around the state and the country in traditional industries." Reflecting the declines in manufacturing, agriculture and some mining, the BN has cut its locomotive fleet from 3500 in 1981 to 2800 today. It has also closed branch lines into rural areas, further hurting agriculture.

Railroads are not the only trouble spot in Montana. An aluminum plant in Columbia Falls, in the Flathead Valley south of Glacier National Park, has been in the news since a year ago, when Atlantic Richfield announced it would either sell the 1,000-worker plant or close it. It couldn't find an outside buyer, but it did finally sell to a group headed by former ARCO vice president Brack W. Duker. Duker is now hustling to save the plant -- a save he says depends on three things:

Large pay cuts by the unionized workforce;

An $8 million economic development loan from the state; and

Lower electric rates from the Bonneville Power Authority.

The plant rescue nearly didn't get by the first hurdle, as union members -- to the amazement of almost everyone, apparently including themselves -- rejected 15 percent cuts in pay and benefits by a 325-310 vote in late November. The workers may have hoped for a better offer. Instead, Duker announced the closing of the plant. That led to a new vote on the same contract, and it passed 505-98.

However, the State Board of Investment wants more information on how the plant is to be operated and what guarantees there are that the $8 million will keep the plant open. At first, the plant was to be owned by its employees. Now the Columbia Falls Aluminum Co. is to be owned by investors, but have a generous profit-sharing plan.

The BPA's power rates may also prove tough to change, although a meeting earlier in 1985 in Columbia Falls attended by more than 3,000 people concerned about the loss of the town's only major industry did catch the attention of the power agency.

According to Tim Sterns of the Northwest Conservation Act Coalition in Seattle, the aluminum industry has been caught in an electric energy cost squeeze caused by the Northwest's disastrous attempt to build nuclear power plants, including the famous WPPSS project. Sterns said BPA's customers are paying for $7 billion worth of plants that have been either abandoned or mothballed.

The BPA, Sterns said, is considering several approaches to the region's aluminum industry, including variable rates tied to the price of aluminum. But the electric rate the new company says it needs is still lower than the BPA's tentative proposal.

The proposed closing of the BN shop and the erratic behavior of the Columbia Falls union workers may strengthen the "Better Business Climate" and anti-union forces in Montana. But other fallouts from the poor economy could aid those who favor utility regulation and unions.

Now that the courts have ruled in favor of an $80 million rate increase for Montana Power Company to pay for its Colstrip 3 coal-fired power plant, electric rates will be rising over the next eight years throughout the state.

Margie MacDonald of the Northern Plains Resource Council, a coalition of ranchers and environmentalists, said, "Colstrip will be a good organizing theme for consumers and low-income people. It lays the groundwork for presenting some statutory reforms. We happen to be having a very cold winter. Consumers will be hit hard."

The long battle over who should pay for the completed Colstrip 3 plant (the consumers will pay), and the soon to be completed Colstrip 4 plant (Montana Power will sell that plant to a group of investors, and then lease it back in the hope of selling the electricity out of state) is a product of the same economy hitting BN and other industries.

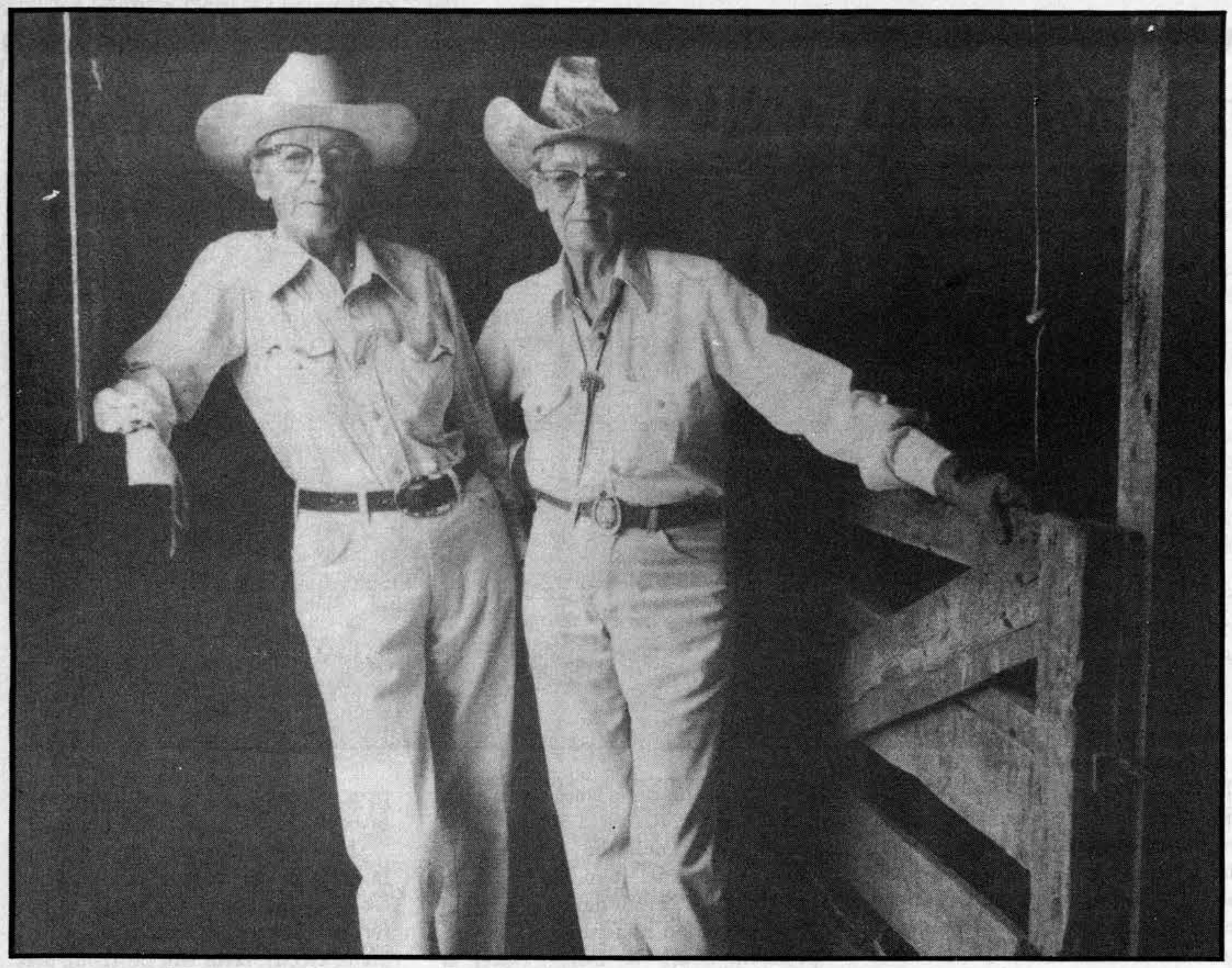
According to MacDonald, "I believe Montana Power chose to speculate on the expansion of the economy of the region."

Gail Stoltz agrees. "The Dow Jones may be at 1500, but us folks out here aren't doing well." The damaged agriculture and natural resource economies, she said, have cut BN's traffic by 20 to 30 percent, and that, more than any tax increase, has sent it in a continuing search for savings.

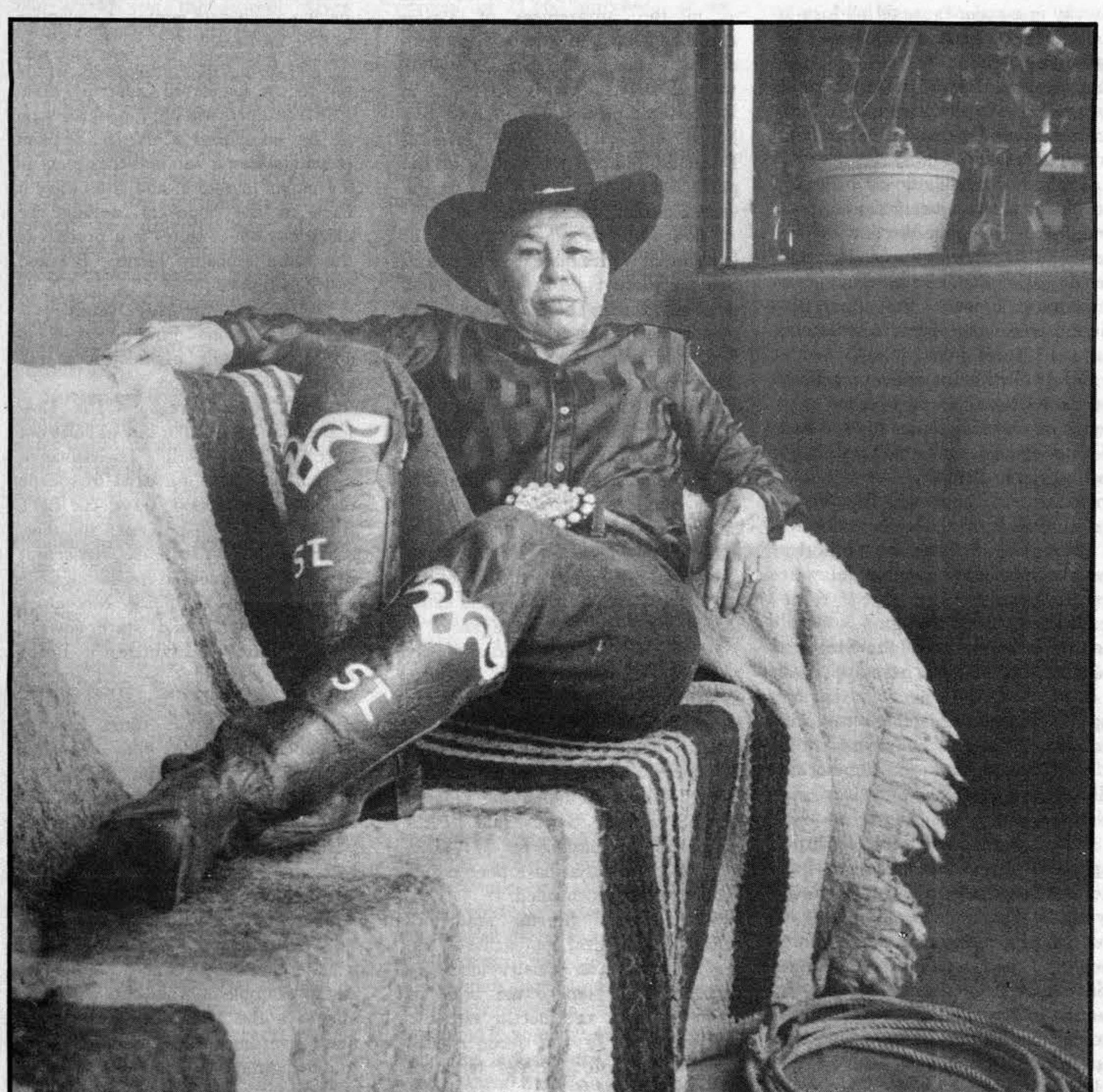
What lies ahead for Montana's economy? Stoltz said state government, under Schwinden's Build Montana program, "is still chasing smokestacks -- still trying to entice Anaconda, BN, and others back to Montana." She sees that chase as hopeless. BN, she said, had a $25 million tax reduction over the last several years. "During that same period, they cut 3,000 jobs in Montana."

MacDonald of the ranchers' group suggests that agriculture could again be a vital economic force in Montana, if state government would support it. As an example of what can be done, she says the Minnesota and Texas state governments have been effective in moving the U.S. Congress toward a rational farm bill: one which supports small agriculture, rather than paying large subsidies to a few major producers.

--*Ed Marston*



"We used to ride with the roundup, Senator John B. Kendrick's OW outfit. We were holding the herd one time while half the men had their dinner. Often, when the wagon came around, the neighbors would come for a chuckwagon dinner, and we saw a lady and her daughter drive in. Our relief came out and told us we could go eat. One of the fellers said, 'No way! I'm not going in there and eat with those women. I don't mind Amy and Elsie and the rest of the boys. But I'm not going in with those women.' "
--Elsie Lloyd (left) and Amy Chubb, sisters, on their ranch near Kaycee, Wyoming.



"I started rodeoing when I was 15 because I couldn't do anything else. I knew how to ride a horse and I wanted to prove to the world I could. My horse, Belen, was the best cutting horse that ever was, but he was a mean son of a bitch. He'd have killed me 'till the day he died. But I'd love to have another horse like him. If I ever find one, I'm going to get him, even if I have to sell the ranch to do it."
--Fern Sawyer, on her ranch near Nogal, New Mexico.

The alfalf
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"It's hard on you, I know, but I'm happy working outside. That's the main thing. And wrinkles are character. Some people say that. Sometimes I'd just as soon have a little glamour. I don't know what for,

e alfalfa plants don't care

Photographs by Teresa Jordan

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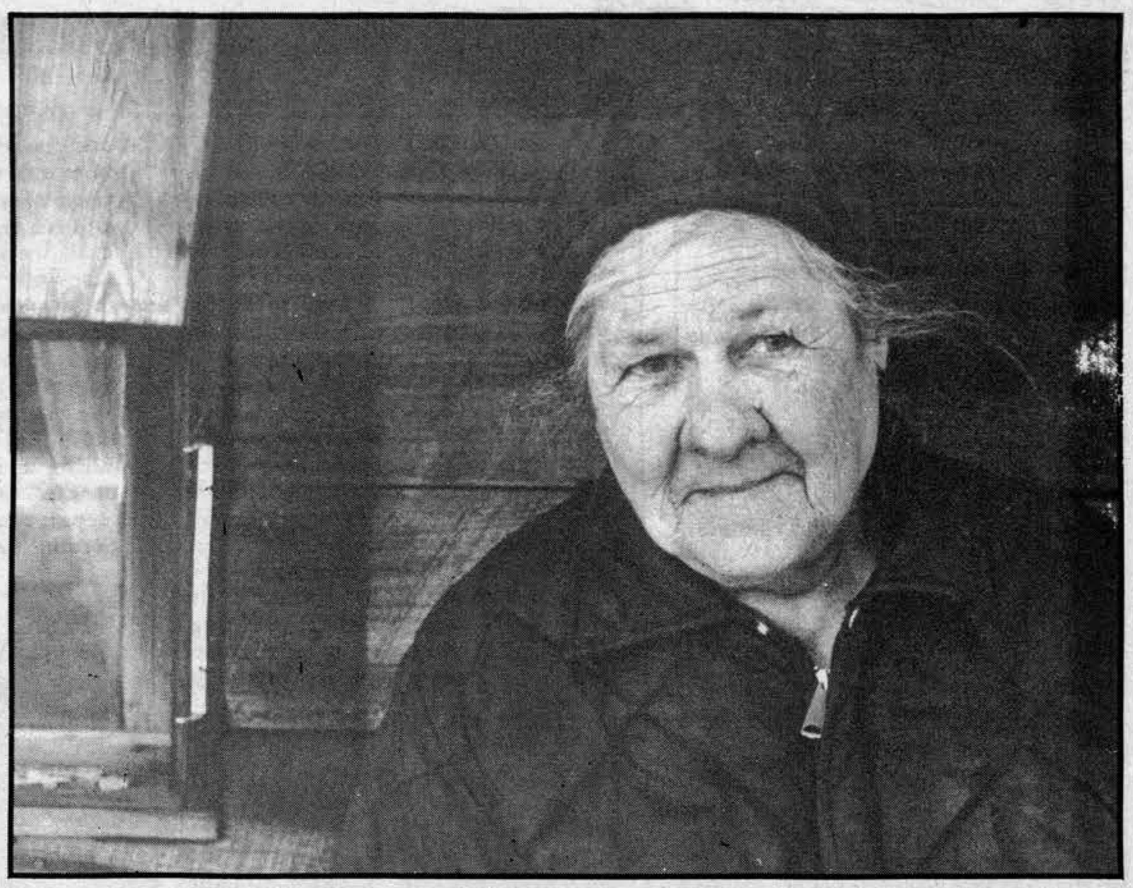
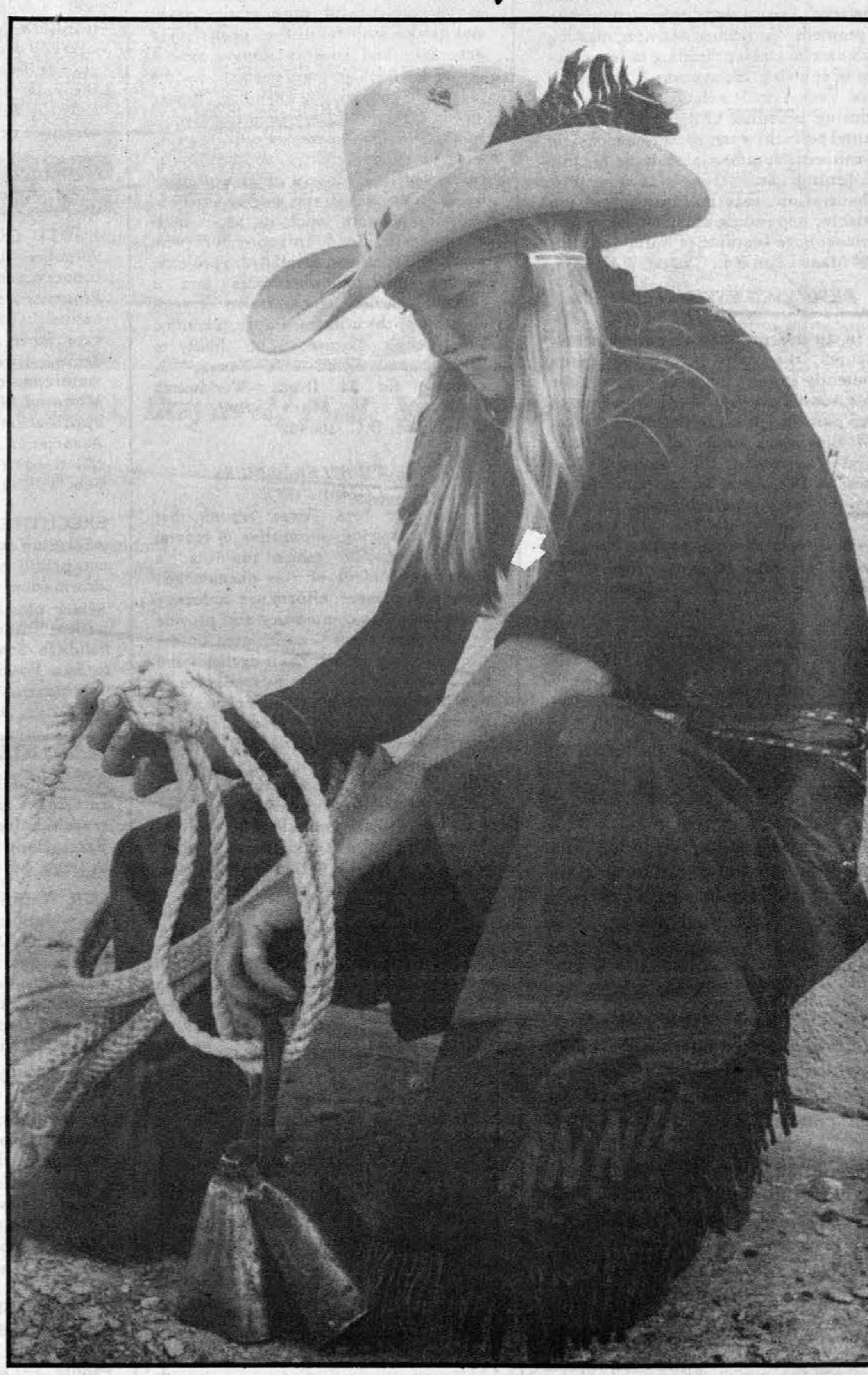
though, 'cause the alfalfa plants don't care. And my horse don't care. He knows who I am, anyway."
--Frances Bentley on her ranch near Casper, Wyoming.



"After my husband died, some kids broke in and took some of his things -- mementos, you know. A locket with some hair in it. Other things. And it got me down. I thought, what's the use of even going on. But I got up the next morning and my cow needed milking, my chickens needed fed. So I milked her and I fed 'em and I've been fine ever since."
--Loreena "Ma" Mueller, on her ranch near Custer, South Dakota.

--Annette Pollard, bull and bronc rider, at the Hereford, Texas, All-Woman Rodeo.



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Photos and quotes are from the book, *Cowgirls: Women of the American West.* Author and photographer Teresa Jordan grew up on a ranch in southeastern Wyoming, surrounded by women who worked outdoors as hard as men. She says her curiosity over whether women were as involved in the cattle industry in other parts of the West led to her travels -- 60,000 miles through 10 Western states to interview almost 100 women working on ranches and in the rodeo. The book is available for $19.95, hardback, or $10.95, paperback, from Anchor Press/Doubleday, 245 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10017. Jordan now lives in Butte, Montana.

BULLETIN BOARD

DRAFT Programmatic
Environmental Impact Statement
THE
GRIZZLY BEAR
IN
NORTHWESTERN MONTANA

Montana Department of
Fish, Wildlife & Parks
1420 East Sixth Avenue
Helena, Montana 59620

November 1985

MONTANA GRIZZLY PLAN

Montana's Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has released its draft environmental impact statement on the grizzly bear and wants citizen reaction by Jan. 1. The hefty 250-plus page draft includes management options for the bears that range from liberal year-round hunting seasons to no hunting at all. The department's preferred alternative makes use of a limited grizzly hunt to maintain or increase current bear populations. Send your comments to Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, 1420 E. 6th Ave., Helena, MT 59620.

PERMACULTURE IN OZ

The first issue of *The Permaculture Activist*, a 12-page newsletter, is titled: "Permaculture in Oz," where Oz refers to Australia. The goal of the new quarterly is to promote "individual activism, starting with careful design, leading to regeneration of evolving life systems." The group says "activism" includes seed saving, reducing personal energy use, environmental political work, socially responsible investment, commercial or home organic gardening and tree planting. For subscription information (rates are variable, depending on situation), write: Permaculture Institute of North America, 6488 Maxwelton Rd., Clinton, WA 98236.

RESOLVING ENVIRONMENTAL DISPUTES

In an era of complex environmental disputes, the most acrimonious cases frequently get the biggest headlines, but those settled through direct negotiations often gain the more lasting results, says Gail Bingham, author of a new book called "Resolving Environmental Disputes: A Decade of Experience." More than 160 cases in which negotiation was used are analyzed. The $15 book is available from the Conservation Foundation, 1717 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20036 (202/797-4300).

CONTROVERSIAL PLAN FOR THE SALMON

A proposed management plan for Idaho's Salmon National Forest would open more than 200,000 acres of roadless area for development and provide for 21 million board feet of timber to be cut from the forest each year. To harvest that amount of wood, an additional 22 miles of roads would be built annually for the next 10 years, says Salmon Supervisor Richard Hauff. Although no wilderness designations are included in the Forest Service's preferred alternative, many of the 606,000 remaining roadless acres would be managed as semi-primitive, which means motorized use would be allowed. Conservation groups have attacked the plan for its emphasis on logging. Comments should be sent by Jan. 10 to Salmon National Forest, Box 729, Salmon, ID 83467.

CALLING ALL ENTREPRENEURS

While the electric utilities engage in a secular version of arguing how many angels can dance on the head of a pin, their industry is being radically transformed. Or so says Christopher Flavin in Worldwatch Paper #61. Flavin writes that the utilities, aided by the U.S. Department of Energy, are wondering how many new coal and nuclear power plants will be needed in the 1990s. He says the argument ignores volatile demand, high capital costs and environmental problems. Those factors make the question of "how many plants must be built?" irrelevant. The real question, Flavin says, is how to cope with volatile demand, high capital costs and environmental problems while keeping the lights on. The writer believes the answers are at hand: cogeneration, small and quickly built fossil fuel plants, wind generators and conservation to control demand. But so entrenched is the industry's technology, says the 70-page booklet, that the Edison Electric Institute won't even count heretics such as wind and other new energy sources in its surveys of the industry. Flavin predicts the industry may go the way of Ma Bell, with cogenerators, such as paper mills and refineries, and entrepreneurs with wind generators and small hydro projects, feeding their kilowatt-hours into a common carrier transmission system operated by the utilities. Paper #61, titled "Electricity's Future: The Shift to Efficient and Small-scale Power," is available for $4 from: Worldwatch Institute, 1776 Mass. Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20036.

THE WHISTLEBLOWERS COMMUNITY

The New York Times reports that there is a growing community of federal whistleblowers, or "ethical resisters," a name one student of the phenomenon prefers. At present, efforts are underway to organize that community and provide new whistleblowers -- confronted by the stress of going against their agencies and faced with almost certain retaliation -- with support. Donald R. Soeken, who runs the Association of Mental Health Specialties in College Park, MD, himself an ex-whistleblower and chairman of the Whistleblowers Assistance Fund, is pulling the names of whistleblowers from the files of 6,400 whistleblower cases. Ann Martin of the Coalition to Stop Government Waste (202/546-1200), also an ex-whistleblower, says: "There's a definite whistleblowers community. We know where to go for help. There's a safety net."

OPEN-PIT MINE

A proposal to build an open-pit gold and silver mine south of Helena, Montana, would disturb 965 acres of land, some of which is winter habitat for deer and elk herds, according to the project's draft environmental impact statement. Known as the Montana Tunnels Project, the mine would produce 15,000 tons of ore per day and last for 12 to 13 years. Black bear, coyote, hawks and eagles are also known to live in or around the proposed site. Written comments about the mine's draft EIS are wanted through Dec. 30. Write to Kit Walther, Chief, Environmental Analysis Bureau, Montana Department of State Lands, Capitol Station, Helena, MT 59620.

YELLOWSTONE BIRD COUNT

Yellowstone National Park's annual Christmas bird count will screech to a start at 7:00 a.m. on Jan. 5, just one of 1,400 similar counts nationwide. Birders will convene at the Town Cafe in Gardiner, Montana, with a $3 fee being charged to cover publication costs. All the results of this year's count will appear in the July 1986 issue of *American Birds*. Call Joe Zarki at 307/344-7381, ext. 2338 for more details.

NEW HIGHS IN TRASH COLLECTION

An expedition is being planned to remove garbage from the slopes of Mt. Everest. A group of concerned mountain climbers, trekking companies and Nepalese Sherpa guides is undertaking the project. The 29,000-foot-high mountain, the world's highest, was basically free of refuse until the early 1960s when mountaineering became popular. Today, ice ladders and empty oxygen cylinders litter the higher slopes, while tens of thousands of non-degradable food containers have accumulated at the base camp. Despite regulations requiring all garbage to be carried away, the problem has continued to grow. Organizers are seeking $50,000 to fund the expedition. If you would like to contribute to the Earth Preservation Fund, a nonprofit organization, its mailing address is: Everest Clean-Up Expedition, EPF, P.O. Box 7545, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107.

STILL MORE FINAL CHAPTERS ON COAL

The Bureau of Land Management has released its "Federal Coal Management Program, Final Environmental Impact Statement Supplement," Chapters 1-7, and Appendices, Glossary and References. The bulky two-volume publication is the latest in a series of EISs which first appeared in 1979. It is an overview of the national coal leasing program, which has been controversial since the early 1970s, and, when implemented as the Powder River Basin and other coal sales by former Interior Secretary James Watt, became a subject of national debate. The present volumes evaluate the environmental, socioeconomic, cultural and other impacts of following the preferred leasing alternative. The BLM predicts its chosen alternative will lead to a substantial increase in coal production in Utah and a decrease in coal production in western Colorado. Copies of the report are available from: Andrew L. Strasfogel, Project Coordinator, Interior Dept., BLM, Office of the Assistant Director for Solid Leasable Minerals, 18th and C Streets, NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.

LETTERS

ENJOYABLE AS EVER

Dear *HCN*,

Three cheers for Ray Ring! That sort of stuff makes contributing to the Research Fund a pleasure. I have fond memories of my six years in Idaho (Moscow) and have a continuing interest in the West.

My Christmas holidays will be nonexistent, as I am doing a rush job for EPA, which wants another check on oil pollution at Port Valdez. The Alyeska Terminal Ballastwater Treatment Plant is again under investigation. Life in my 16x20 shack is as enjoyable as ever. While the Aurora flickers overhead, I stoke my cookstove with dry aspen and wish for more snow.

Happy holidays from a reader of *HCN* for ten years.

Douglas McIntosh
Fairbanks, Alaska

WORK

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LETTERS

JOE WALICKI

Dear *HCN*,

I just came across your August 5, 1985, special issue on the Wilderness Society (TWS). The purpose of the article was not to provide a complete historical perspective of the Society's grassroots organization. One person, however, must be acknowledged even in a cursory overview of the organization's grassroots work.

Joe Walicki was the Pacific Northwest representative for TWS for 10 years. Along with Bart Koehler, Dave Foreman and Jerry Mallett, Joe joined Clif Merritt's grassroots vision in 1972. They were the pioneers of grassroots wilderness organizations. Their success ultimately resulted in an extensive field network unmatched to this day by any other environmental organization -- including the Wilderness Society itself.

Clif's grassroots field team members were never lone rangers -- rather, they were catalysts, pulling people together into a unified and influential citizen force.

Joe's commitment to wilderness preservation and effective grassroots organization was instrumental, either directly or indirectly, in gaining congressional wilderness designation for over one million acres in Oregon and Washington. Many groups sprang up in both states as Joe entered communities to identify and coordinate wilderness enthusiasts.

No single person can claim absolute credit for saving our public lands from commercial exploitation. However, Joe Walicki motivated countless people to work with equal commitment and untiring devotion to secure protection for deserving areas.

After leaving TWS, Joe went back to school to earn a bachelor's degree, while continuing to work in many areas of the environmental movement. He currently serves as chairperson of the Nuclear Disarmament Committee for the Sierra Club's Oregon chapter.

Joe believes that his role in life is to introduce people to Northwest wilderness areas, both protected and undesignated, and to instill the importance and effectiveness of citizen involvement. Besides conducting Sierra Club trips, Joe has started a wilderness guide service based in Portland. Participants receive an enjoyable backpacking experience and a true sense of one person's dedication to wilderness preservation.

I understand that an article must have limits. There are many deserving wilderness activists who have worked for and with The Wilderness Society over the years. Your article, however, was incomplete by not including Joe with Clif, Dave, Bart, and the rest, among The Wilderness Society's "Outstanding Alumni."

Steve Payne
Olympia, Washington

Judy Sumner

Thank you Helen, Herb, Geof, Phyllis, Bayard, Hal, Yvon, Reed, Jack, Jill...

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Special issue on grazing fees

A search for fairness

In 1906, the Forest Service made the first attempt at correcting the serious problem of overgrazing on public lands. The Forest Service established a grazing fee of 5 cents per head -- the cost of a pack of gum -- for a cow and a calf for one month. (At that time, there was no charge for grazing on other public range lands which are now under the administration of BLM.) They also attempted to restrict the numbers of cattle and sheep permitted to graze on Forest Service lands.

Over the next 30 years, the fee on Forest Service land fluctuated between 3 cents and 14 cents per animal month. (An animal month is defined as: a month's use and occupancy of range by one weaned or adult cow, bull, steer, heifer, horse, burro, or mule, or five sheep or five goats.) During the same 30-year period, ranchers continued to get free grazing (no permit fee) on public range lands which are now under the jurisdiction of BLM.

Because of the controversy over low or non-existent grazing fees, and the devastation of public lands from overgrazing, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed into law the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934, creating the Division of Grazing within the Department of Interior.

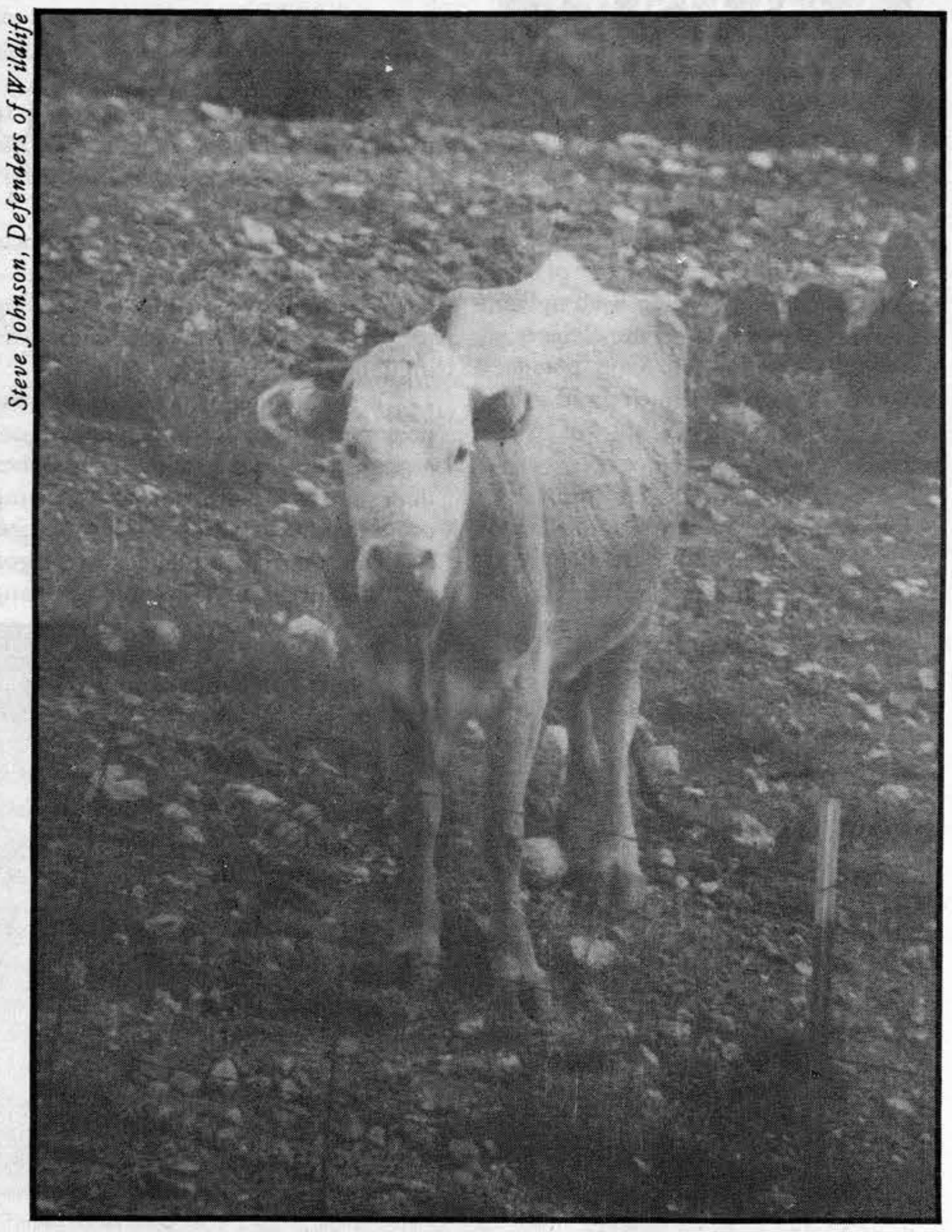
The Taylor Grazing Act called for reasonable fees to promote range conservation and to "stabilize" the Western livestock industry. Since only 5 percent of the Western livestock producers hold grazing permits, however, this was never enough for the grazing program to act as a stabilizer for the livestock industry. The Act also established grazing districts and authorized committees of local stockmen to jointly manage the grazing districts along with personnel from the Interior Department.

At the time the Taylor Grazing Act was adopted, the Forest Service was charging 14 cents per AUM. By 1936, the grazing fee had been reduced once again to 5 cents and remained at that price until 1946.

Grazing fees remained less than a dollar until 1974, when the Forest Service raised its fee to $1.11 and the BLM established a fee of $1 per AUM. The fees reached a high of $2.41 and $2.36 by the Forest Service and BLM, respectively, in 1980. From 1981 through 1984, the fees steadily fell to $1.35, the fee presently being charged by both agencies.

In 1976, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, dubbed FLPMA, was passed. This act defined "reasonable" grazing fees as those which would be equitable to both the government and the permittee through fair-market pricing. It was the first legislation that specifically defined fair market value as equity for the government.

The act also directed the Secretary of Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct a grazing fee study. Both Secretaries submitted a report to Congress on Oct. 21, 1977, which resulted in the Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978, commonly called PRIA. PRIA established a temporary fee schedule for a period of seven years based on the rancher's ability to pay and, once again, directed the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture to study the grazing fee formula and submit alternatives for new grazing fees to Congress by Dec. 31, 1985.



Steve Johnson, Defenders of Wildlife

As a result of the 1978 directive to study the grazing fee system, the Departments of Agriculture and Interior funded a $4 million appraisal of grazing practices in 16 Western states and two counties in Texas. These 16 Western states and two counties were divided into six pricing areas for study purposes. The purpose of the appraisal was to establish fair market values on private grazing lands that were similar to the public lands in each pricing area, and to equate that value to the fees to be charged on public grazing lands.

Fair market value is defined as the amount that livestock owners would pay for the grazing use if it were offered for rent or lease in the open market. In none of the six areas was $1.35 an AUM "fair;" in fact, prices ranged from $9.50 to $6.40.

A final joint-agency report is due by the end of the year, but Bobby Williamson, director of range management for the Forest Service, said the 70-page "technical report" won't be very different from the draft released this spring. What has been incorporated, he said, are comments from some 7,000 people -- "mostly ranchers."

Williamson said the agency recommendations will come in a cover letter signed by the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior, who conservationists say cannot agree on a new fee formula.

After the agencies' draft report was issued this March, the National Cattlemen's Association called in Fred Obermiller, an economist from Oregon State University, to do a survey of costs to the ranchers who hold grazing permits. Obermiller said he found that the government's low fees are more than offset by higher maintenance and predator costs. Idaho rancher Gerald Tews, a member of the Public Lands Council, a lobbying group for cattlemen, said the federal fee appraisal "violated fundamental scientific principles, accepted appraisal methods and just plain common sense."

--Phil Taylor, Betsy Marston

High Noon...

(Continued from page 1)

saying: "We support this and nothing more." That draft kept in place until 1991 the current $1.35 fee ranchers pay to graze an animal for one month and the current structure of grazing advisory boards until 1996, although two slots would be opened for "wildlife representatives."

Michieli said although those provisions remained unchanged, Seiberling suddenly added additional language to the draft. "Someone bypassed the process by going to Seiberling to put in their own amendments."

That someone is the conservation community, Michieli said, and he warned that "their persistency and adamancy will come to haunt them. Ranchers are the only steward these public lands have got; their only constituency is the livestock industry."

Michieli said one of Seiberling's last-minute additions would have banned livestock from public lands deemed "unsuitable" for grazing. "That would have invited lawsuits from NRDC" (Natural Resources Defense Council). "They would have loved that," he said. Other additions to the draft were redefining the land use planning section and putting a five-year renewal limit on the experimental stewardship program of the BLM.

Debbie Sease, a Sierra Club staffer in Washington, D.C., said Michieli's recollection of the draft bill negotiations is faulty. "The ranchers aren't standing by what they said they could live with early on. I'm angry the cowboys are taking that tack."

Dave Alberswerth, a Washington, D.C., lobbyist with the National Wildlife Federation, said the cattle growers may want to put the blame on Seiberling for killing the draft bill at the eleventh hour, but "it just ain't so." Alberswerth said conservationists may have made an early error in not contesting the cattlemen's major demands for retention of the current grazing fee, which is not tied to comparable fees for grazing on private lands, and the continued existence of "single use" grazing advisory boards.

"No one in the environmental community ever agreed to that, but Senate and House staffs told us we couldn't change that reality. We were supposed to be satisfied with other stuff," Alberswerth explained. "But the riparian section turned into mush... The suitability section was knocked out. We'd come to agreement with the cattlemen, but nothing ever turned up in a draft."

Feeling betrayed, in part by the congressional staffers who drafted the bills, Alberswerth said conservationists told Seiberling in mid-December that unless rangeland improvement language was restored, and language removed that in effect approved the BLM's opening up, in 1981, of 20 million acres to mineral development, the nine conservation groups could not back a bill. Seiberling incorporated the changes into the draft bill, whereupon the other key legislators rejected it.

In retrospect, Alberswerth said, conservationists should not have conceded on the grazing fee and grazing board issues. "I argued with Andy Weissner (former aide to Seiberling) about that. It didn't work because we couldn't get flexibility elsewhere."

Russ Shay agreed that the changes Seiberling made in the draft bill were "not greatly substantive. There were things, such as requiring grazing to be consistent with multiple use, that had dropped out of the first draft."

Although most people involved were disappointed a compromise bill wasn't achieved, Shay said a bill would still have ignored some issues. Those included ranchers blocking access to public lands by setting up private hunting clubs, subleasing grazing permits at a profit and improving morale at the BLM.

GUEST ESSAY

Wildlife is preyed on by cattle and sheep

by Randy Morris

The desert grasslands of southern Idaho once supported a vast population of antelope, buffalo, deer, elk, moose, grizzly bear and wolves before settlers moved in during the 1840s. Where is all the wildlife today?

Many conservationists say the forage has been taken by cows and sheep on the nearly 12 million acres of public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management in Idaho. A case in point is the 1,690,473-acre Jarbidge Resource Area. The BLM's recent resource management plan allocates 108,570 tons of range forage a year for cows, sheep and horses, but only 926 tons a year of food for antelope.

A thorough reading of management plans for southwest Idaho shows that livestock are routinely allocated about 100 times as much forage as antelope. Since a cow consumes about 6.15 times as much food as a deer and 9.4 times as much as an antelope, it would seem that a great deal of wildlife could be maintained on a small amount of land. Yet in southwestern Idaho's Jarbidge, the BLM allows for only one antelope (year-round) for 1,233 acres, while cows are distributed every 5.9 acres (per month). In the nearby Bruneau Resource Area, the plan allows for one antelope for every 2,428 acres.

Cows and sheep are primarily grazers of grass, while deer and antelope are primarily browsers of shrubs and forbs (i.e., small non-woody plants). This makes comparisons in forage allocations between wildlife and livestock an involved "apples and oranges" process. Conservationists have been critical of the BLM for not providing information on the wildlife-carrying capacity of various allotments in its environmental impact statements.

The BLM does document every pound of livestock forage in the form of Animal Unit Months or "AUMs." (An AUM refers to the amount of food a cow and calf will eat in a month. It has been set rather arbitrarily at 800 pounds of food a month.) Yet the BLM has been unwilling or unable to provide corresponding figures for wildlife on the public's range.

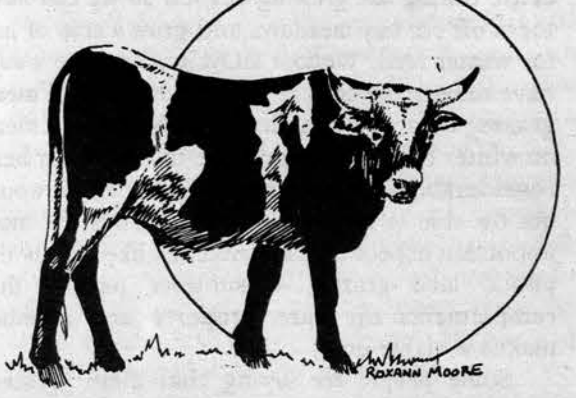
Nowhere do environmental impact statements list the "Wildlife Unit Months." Instead, the BLM indicates wildlife population "goals" which are not site specific and in no way indicate the actual wildlife potential of an area. The public is forced to accept the BLM's conclusions without insight into the agency's rationale, methods or data.

Federal law requires that wildlife be given food and habitat on the public's land (43 USC 1701), that wildlife needs be evaluated in federal land use plans (43 USC 1712), and that wildlife be given values equal in weight with livestock (43 USC 1702). It even requires that part of the grazing fees which the federal government receives for allowing private livestock on the public's land must be used for fish and wildlife habitat enhancement (43 USC 1751).

Throughout southern Idaho the destruction of the public range by past and continuing grazing abuse has had a devastating impact on wildlife. About half of the range is classed in poor condition. Only one or two percent survives in excellent condition. In the Jarbidge Resource Area, 57 percent of the crucial winter range for mule deer is in poor ecological condition. Thirty-nine percent of the antelope crucial winter range is in poor condition and an additional 23 percent has been reseeded to a monoculture of crested wheatgrass that is fine for cows, but biologically not well suited to antelope.

About half of the sage grouse nesting habitat is in poor condition, and the BLM management plan calls only for a "slower loss of nesting habitat," rather than any reversal for this rapidly dwindling wildlife resource. Sage grouse hunting has been virtually halted in Idaho in the last few years, and only two huntable populations of Columbian sharp-tailed grouse remain in Idaho.

In spite of these wildlife habitat facts, the BLM proposes major increases in livestock grazing in Idaho over the next 20 years. The Bruneau grazing district will increase livestock grazing 42 percent.



The Jarbidge will see a 66 percent increase under BLM plans. The Monument Resource Area, in south-central Idaho, will have a 48 percent grazing increase. Medicine Lodge Resource Area, southwest of Yellowstone National Park, will see a 14 percent increase in livestock grazing.

These four areas contain 6,109,633 acres, which is over half of the BLM-administered land in Idaho. These lands represent over 11 percent of the state and include some of Idaho's most important surviving wildlife resources. These areas are home to most of Idaho's California Bighorn sheep, about 8,800 mule deer, perhaps 5,550 pronghorn antelope, about 5,200 wintering elk and 200 wintering moose. About 18,700 deer winter in these four areas.

While this may seem like a lot of wildlife, these populations are scattered over six million acres. Meanwhile, 700,000 head of livestock graze on all Idaho BLM lands at some time during the year. This represents about 962,962 AUMs or 385,185 tons of forage for domestic livestock. Wildlife receive less than 25,000 tons of forage on these four resource areas, and two-thirds of that wildlife forage is concentrated in the Medicine Lodge Resource Area.

In 1985, ranchers will pay about $1.3 million in Idaho to graze on the public's land, of which 62.5 percent will return to the ranchers for the construction of range "improvements," leaving $487,500 to go to the federal treasury. Meanwhile Idaho sportsmen will pay $15 to $20 million for hunting and fishing licenses.

Conservationists are astounded at the hold a handful of ranchers have on the public resources of BLM lands. There are only 86 livestock permittees in the 1,6[illegible]473-acre Jarbidge Resource Area. There are only 79 permittees on the 2,379,014-acre Bruneau Resource Area. Yet the ranching community represents the strongest opposition to wilderness designations, designations of areas of critical environmental concern, elk reintroductions, ecological restoration (as opposed to livestock forage increases), and wildlife population increases.

Five hundred and sixteen miles of fences are to be constructed in these four resource areas, along with 320 miles of livestock-watering pipelines. Fences and pipelines are justified by the BLM as a method of distributing livestock from overgrazed ranges onto less abused areas. In most cases this means redistributing livestock onto areas that were formerly available to wildlife alone.

The BLM converts more than 20,000 acres of sagebrush into cow pasture each year throughout Idaho. Over the next 15 to 20 years the BLM proposes to alter about a half-million acres of the state. Conservationists might support these actions if they were designed to return this land to its pre-grazed condition. Instead, most of this altered land will be replanted to monocultures of crested wheatgrass, an exotic Asian grass that is not suitable for most wildlife. Large livestock grazing increases are then planned on most of the altered land -- grazing having been the cause of the degradation in the first place.

Are conservationists unmovably opposed to livestock grazing on the public's land or is compromise possible? Some would recommend the following changes:

1. Half of all forage consumed in a resource area should be allocated to wildlife. Various ratios might occur across the area if overall forage were divided equally. This division would fulfill the congressional directive of Section 103(c) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA).

2. The number of livestock on public range should be reduced to an ecologically acceptable carrying capacity. Range condition should be improved in a reasonable period of time. In the Monument Resource Area, only 20 percent of the range will move in an upward trend during the two decades of the BLM's plan while 68 percent of the area would remain in poor condition.

A careful reading of the BLM proposals indicates that almost all improvements in range condition are to be the result of vegetative manipulation (chemical spraying, burning, or crested wheatgrass seedings) or by dispersing livestock into areas that are presently in good ecological condition (i.e., wildlife areas) rather than by reducing the numbers of livestock on the range.

3. Crucial wildlife winter range must be preserved, restored and enhanced. Human settlement in Idaho has occurred in narrow bands along rivers and in mountain valleys. This has made many wildlife winter habitats unavailable. It would be useless to increase wildlife populations if winter habitat is not present to carry animals through the winter.

4. Half of all range improvement funds should be used to enhance wildlife habitat as provided under Section 401(b) of FLPMA.

5. Livestock should be moved away from riparian zones so that the streams can recover. The BLM has begun to recognize the incredible destruction of Idaho's desert streams by livestock and has begun fencing streams to protect them. Still, present plans call for protecting less than a third of the stream lengths, and after 20 years only two or three percent of the stream lengths will be back in excellent condition.

6. Soil erosion from grazing must be controlled. Grazing soil-loss rates range from about five tons of soil per acre per year to an incredible 40 tons of soil per acre per year. Tens of thousands of acres are classified as having a "severe soil loss." Perhaps 60 million tons of BLM soil is lost into Idaho's air and rivers each year. This erosion shortens the life of irrigation reservoirs, contributes to the desertification of the land, and threatens some productive farmland.

7. Native wildlife must be reintroduced into their historical ranges. Elk and bighorn sheep were virtually eliminated from many former ranges on BLM lands. Some reintroductions have been made and more are enthusiastically supported by conservationists. A proposal by Nevada Department of Fish and Wildlife to reintroduce elk into the Jarbidge Mountains has been blocked by ranchers. A few conservationists have suggested that the reintroduction of buffalo into the Upper Snake River Plain should be examined. They reason that cows, deer, elk, antelope, and moose are there now. Where are the buffalo?

Conservationists insist that the federal government must begin to act more responsibly. The sizable federal subsidy of grazing fees and federal meat import quotas cost the taxpayers many millions of dollars annually. Meanwhile, Idaho sportsmen pay 15 times more for hunting and fishing licenses than ranchers pay to graze on BLM lands. Wildlife is a valuable resource that has suffered grievously from previous overgrazing and continuing BLM management. It is past time for equity.

□

Randy Morris of Mountain Home, Idaho, is a dentist and state chairman of the Committee for Idaho's High Desert.

GUEST ESSAY

A rancher argues cattle grazing helps everyone

by Heather Smith Thomas

A number of conservation groups are taking an avid interest in public land, and this is good. We all need to be concerned about the health and future of our land and wildlife.

But the alarming thing is that many people misunderstand the role of the rancher who grazes cattle or sheep on public land. Some misinformed people are actively working to get the livestock off public lands. This anti-rancher movement is frustrating to those of us involved in range ranching -- we who love our way of life and who depend for our continued existence upon public land grazing.

Our own ranch in Idaho is typical of many small family ranches around the West. We live in a county that is 93 percent federal land. When our valleys and creeks were homesteaded during the 1880s through the 1920s, 160 to 320 acres was the size of a legal homestead. Commonly, the creek parcels contained only 20 to 30 acres level enough to plow for growing alfalfa or crops, or close enough to the creek to be irrigated for growing wild hay. The rest of the homestead was steep hillsides. In order to run enough cattle to make a living the rancher had to grow hay for winter feed on his few irrigated acres, and run his livestock on surrounding mountainous federal land for summer pasture.

On our small creek there have been, at different times, 14 different homesteads. Almost all failed due to lack of land and water. Pioneers who invested so much of their time, labor and a part of their lives into trying to create a home, "starved out" and sold their small plot to a neighbor, or were forced out because they couldn't pay the taxes; the land was sold in a sheriff's sale. Some of the homesteads reverted back to federal land. It was an era of heartbreak and shattered dreams.

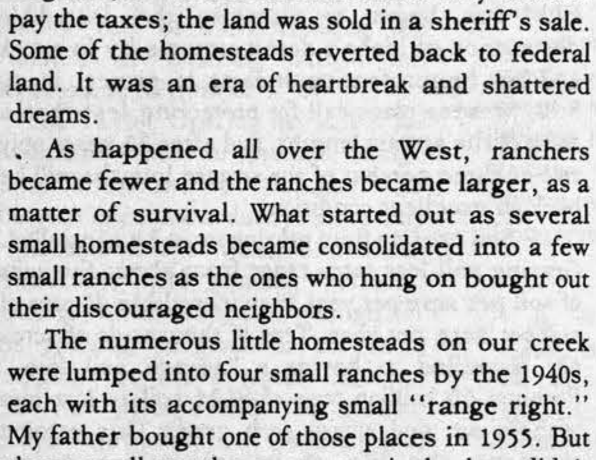
As happened all over the West, ranchers became fewer and the ranches became larger, as a matter of survival. What started out as several small homesteads became consolidated into a few small ranches as the ones who hung on bought out their discouraged neighbors.

The numerous little homesteads on our creek were lumped into four small ranches by the 1940s, each with its accompanying small "range right." My father bought one of those places in 1955. But these small ranches were marginal; they didn't produce enough feed and cattle to make a living for a family -- just not enough land.

Today my husband and I have put together three of those small ranches. And although cattle prices are low, our costs -- machinery, fuel, baling twine, fence material, veterinary supplies and services, rent and grazing fees, etc. -- have all gone up, and our income from cattle sold has not increased. We just about have a workable unit if you include our BLM summer grazing.

We actually have all the land and livestock we can handle; our children help us irrigate, put up hay, and care for our 180 cows. It's not enough cattle to quite make the payments, meet expenses and provide a living, but to get any larger would require more investment in land and labor, which we cannot afford. So we are a typical small family ranch, struggling along to survive.

Our four months of Bureau of Land Management grazing provides pasture for the cattle during the growing season so we can have them off our hay meadows and grow a crop of hay for winter feed. Without BLM grazing, we would have to keep the cows at home, which would mean grazing them in the hayfields -- which would mean no winter feed. We would have to reduce our herd considerably -- to such a small number we would not be able to continue ranching. Thus the most important aspect of many ranches like ours is the public land grazing -- summer pasture that complements the base property and together makes a viable unit.



Some people are saying that these Western ranches aren't needed, that they're only a small part of the beef industry and if they go broke it won't really matter. But that's not true.

Ranching is the major industry in a lot of Western communities, and the economic future of those communities, and by ripple effect the state and the nation, depends upon the continuity of ranching. Our economy is linked together just as our ecology is intertwined; you can't damage or destroy one segment without affecting another. This isn't just a remote situation that affects only a few Western ranchers.

Range grazing also uses a renewable resource every year -- grass -- that can be used in no other way to produce human food. That land is too steep, dry, rocky, and its growing season too short to grow any crop other than food animals.

But the aspect of the furor which bothers me the most is the accusation of so many "conservationists" that livestock grazing has "damaged" our wildlife. People who throw this kind of accusation around haven't done their homework. They haven't looked at history and they haven't taken time to go out onto the land to see for themselves. They are misleading the public and doing the range rancher a grave injustice.

Grazing is actually the natural condition for these lands. The native grasses developed under grazing by buffalo, and Plains buffalo covered most of the West. Its smaller relative, the mountain buffalo, thrived in what is now Idaho, Oregon and parts of Washington. The grasslands of this continent supported vast herds of bovine grazers for hundreds of thousands of years, and the plants evolved under those conditions.

Bones at old Indian kills (cliff sites where Indians drove the buffalo to their deaths) give evidence of buffalo that roamed our Idaho hills, and we have found numerous buffalo horn shells on our cattle range. Several of our hills still show well-worn trails made by large herds of buffalo coming down the mountains in their migrations. Our cattle water at the same ponds, fight flies in heat of summer along the same breezy ridges and graze the same mountainsides as did the buffalo a few hundred years ago.

We have merely reintroduced a grazing animal -- domestic livestock -- to fill this ecological niche. By managing our livestock and making seasonal use or rotational use of rangeland, we don't damage it any more than the buffalo did. They grazed out an area very thoroughly and then moved on.

There is much scientific evidence to show that balanced use of range by a variety of grazers and browsers is the most productive situation for both. With wildlife alone, grass increases at the expense of browse, since we no longer have the buffalo to graze the grass, and feed becomes poorer for deer, antelope and other browsers. With just livestock use, grass decreases and browse takes over. Range studies during the 1960s showed that wildlife habitat improved with good livestock range management. Balanced use stimulates the many types of plants to greater productivity.

Wildlife feed and habitat on this creek is better today than it was in presettlement times. Irrigation has increased the total feed along the creek, benefitting wildlife as well as cattle. Earlier, this creek had a little brush along the bottom, and the rest of the land was dryland grass and sagebrush. Now there is much more forage and also more wetland habitat for a wider variety of birds and non-game wildlife. Ranching and

Heather Smith-Thomas

range grazing has improved the habitat for wildlife. Increased production on ranches in this arid country has made many more tons of feed available. The Pacific Northwest has more game now than it had for the last several hundred years or longer.

The wildlife are thriving on our ranch and range pastures. One day, just off the top of their heads, our children named 36 species of mammals and 72 kinds of birds they'd seen on our place, and I'm sure there are others we've missed or can't identify.

There were no elk on our ranch or cattle range up through the 1960s (the Lemhi Valley had no elk in historic times), but in recent years an expanding elk population from the Salmon River drainage (where they were planted in the 1940s) has moved over the mountain into our area. Now our cattle share range and home pastures with six to 20 elk most times of the year.

Three pairs of golden eagles call our range-ranch home; they hunt our meadows as well as the range pastures, and we enjoy watching their nesting activities on several high cliffs along our upper canyons. We also have a lynx. Over the years we've seen bobcats, foxes, and an occasional cougar going through. We have a number of black bear that come down along the creek for chokecherries every fall -- and sometimes for apples right in our front yard -- but no grizzlies. This area never was grizzly habitat; the grizzly was originally a plains animal.

Several pairs of coyotes raise their pups on our range annually and catch mice in our hayfields. Pheasants, quail, chukkar and grouse seem to think our place is some kind of bird refuge. Pheasants by the dozens winter around our haystacks and barnyards, although the eagles get a number of them. We also have blue herons, sandhill cranes, pileated woodpeckers and several pairs of redtail hawks that nest in cottonwoods along our creek.

The range livestock industry is very compatible with wildlife, and today more than ever may be crucial for maintaining wildlife habitat and environmental values in the West. The open space required by livestock grazing maintains wildlife habitat -- much more so than condos or a lot of other uses of the land. Our range improvements, water developments and salt benefit wildlife as well as livestock, and our continuity as a livestock ranch assures that there will be a place here for wildlife in years to come.

But if ranches like ours become uneconomical, if we are forced or priced off federal lands, most of these ranches would be sold for subdivisions. Without the range permit, they are not functional as ranches, and the only market for them would be to developers who would cut them up into summer homes and "ranchettes."

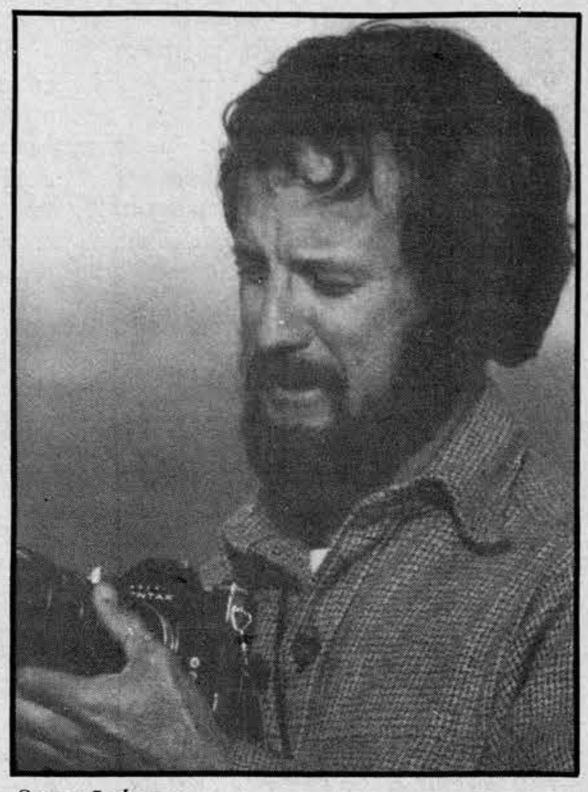
If this trend continues our wildlife will lose out, because many depend on private ranch land for part of their feed and habitat. If livestock are forced off public land and the dependent ranches are sold and chopped up, the open spaces, lush

(Continued on page 15)

GUEST EDITORIAL

BLM's grazing program is a national scandal

by Steve Johnson



Steve Johnson

Like beetles on a carcass, a mere 2 percent of the nation's cattle are consuming the Western public lands that belong to all Americans. So abused are these lands that many millions of acres are only one-tenth as productive as in pre-settlement times.

About 1.5 million cattle are spread over 307 million acres of public land managed by the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management in 11 Western states. It now takes an average of 168 acres to keep one cow alive for a year, or about nine times the average national stocking rate.

No force in modern civilization has changed the Western lands as much as livestock grazing. Water projects, power plants, stripmines, freeways and subdivisions combined are not equal in scope to the changes caused by the ever-present cow. The damage that began in the 1800s, and which continues to this day, has so changed the land that it should not be called grazing, but mining. Over vast areas of the West, the soil is gone. Viewed in the human time scale by which we measure civilizations, such soil has become a non-renewable resource. It has been mined.

While neither of the federal agencies that manage our vast heritage of land is doing a good job, the performance of the BLM is truly a national scandal. Sometimes called the Bureau of Livestock and Mining, the BLM has always been subservient to the ranchers it supposedly regulates. The condition of the land shows the results.

According to the BLM's own statistics, over 83 percent of its 174 million acres is in fair to poor condition, with the long-term trend either static or declining. For wildlife, the past 150 years of grazing abuse have been particularly disastrous. Some of the species that are harmed by the direct effects of grazing include elk, bighorn sheep, mule and whitetail deer, pronghorn antelope, all species of quail, cottontail rabbits, nearly all small birds, most fish, and many species of amphibians and reptiles.

To protect the livestock, the wolf and grizzly bear were exterminated by ranchers, and the ranks of most other predators greatly diminished. Both historically and in the present, the Western livestock industry has shown no hesitation in using the most lethal poisons. Due to their political influence, the predacide 1080 is once again legal on our public lands, to be used against our wildlife.

Federal laws require that the public lands be managed for multiple uses. In practice, however, those lands have traditionally been managed chiefly for the benefit of the approximately 31,000 ranchers that have federal permits to graze the public lands. Over the last half-century, those permits have come to be viewed by the ranchers as their private property.

When a ranch is sold, the federal land permit is also transferred to the new owner, even though the private land may be only a few acres. Most of the value of many ranches is derived from the market value of the public lands under permit. So secure is the tenure of such permits that banks routinely use them as collateral for ranch loans.

Today's permit system, and the market value of that permit in the real estate market, is the main reason that the public lands are being overgrazed. If the BLM or the USFS attempts to reduce the number of cattle for environmental reasons, the market value of the entire ranch is immediately affected, which makes allies of the rancher and his banker. Over the years, the political power of ranchers and their lenders has often resulted in the transfer, early retirement, or dismissal of many federal employees who tried to reduce cattle numbers for the protection of the land. For the BLM in particular, where Director Bob Burford is a rancher, it is a rare employee who will seek grazing reductions today. It's just not good for career advancement.

Permit value exists because the federal grazing fee is greatly underpriced. According to a recent four-year, $4 million professional appraisal of the grazing fees paid West-wide for all categories of grazing land, a rancher with a public land grazing permit pays only one-fourth to one-eighth of fair market value. During the course of the appraisal, 880 ranchers with federal permits were discovered subleasing their allotments to other ranchers at fair market value, and pocketing the difference. Because ranchers with federal land permits make up only 8 percent of the West's 360,000 ranchers, such subleasing schemes are highly profitable.

Conservationists were shocked to discover that subleasing is actually legal on BLM lands. As long as the permittee owns or controls the base property or the livestock, subleasing is legal.

The current BLM regulations allow the permittee to lease his base property, yet still retain ownership of the ranch. The lessee, who now has control of the base property, is treated by the BLM as the permittee. The permittee pays the federal grazing fee for the public lands, and pays the ranch owner an undisclosed amount of money for the lease itself. The BLM makes no effort to determine the amout paid by the lessee/permittee to the owner, calling it a "private contract." The end result is that a large (and unknown) private profit is made from the public land, while the public continues to subsidize grazing programs on federal lands.

In 1983, there was a $34 million deficit to administer the grazing program on federal lands. If fair market value for public land grazing had been charged for the past seven years, the federal government would have collected an additional $500 to $700 million, according to BLM chief appraiser Cliff Brownell.

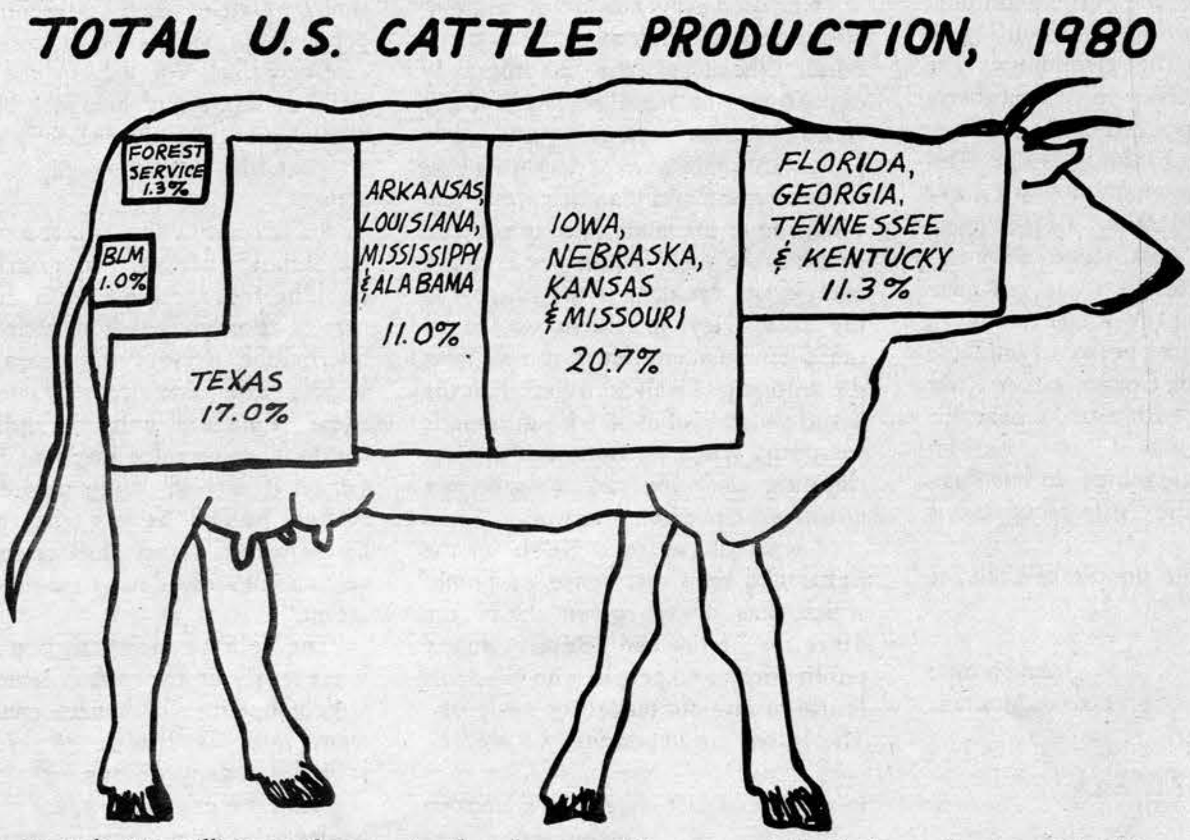
While the taxpayer subsidizes the production of only two percent of the nation's beef supply, the national beef market is in rapid decline. Consumers are reacting, perhaps permanently, to the high cholesterol content of beef, and switching to fish, chicken and other red meat substitutes.

Over the last five years, according to the National Cattlemen's Association, per capita consumption of beef declined by about 40 percent. In a declining beef market, the federal grazing subsidy that is unavailable to 66 percent of all Western ranchers is devastating. While a 2 percent level of beef production isn't much, it takes on a whole new meaning when people are eating less beef. Taxes alone on private land often amount to more than current federal grazing fees.

The real subsidy, however, is not financial, but ecological. The role of livestock grazing in the processes of soil erosion, riparian destruction and desertification is well documented. We are paying for the production of a few cattle with a currency we cannot afford -- our land, our streams, and our wildlife.

□

Steve Johnson is Southwest representative for Defenders of Wildlife in Tucson, Arizona.



Approximately 120 million cattle were produced during 1980. Numbers in the cow are percentages of total cattle production in indicated regions or on indicated public lands. Forest Service land lies within 46 states, while Bureau of Land Management land is confined to 11 Western states. When all land in the 11 states is considered, the area produces 17.8 percent of all U.S. beef. Most of this production is possible only due to irrigation.

Rancher...

(*Continued from page 14*)

meadows, healthy streambanks and comparative serenity of ranch and range land would be replaced by subdivisions, people pressure, noise, dogs, more roads and traffic, off-road vehicles, and so on. And much of the wildlife would be lost.

□

Heather Smith Thomas grew up on a ranch near Salmon, Idaho, and has been raising horses and cattle since childhood, and writing about them nearly that long. She and her husband, Lynn, have been ranching near Salmon since 1967, raising crossbred cattle and a few horses. Their teenage children, Michael and Andrea, help with the ranch work. Since 1958, she has sold more than 1200 articles to 134 different publications, and has written seven books, including *The Wild Horse Controversy* and *Red Meat: The Original Health Food.*

afield

A shot of used grass

by Linda Hasselstrom

Linda Hasselstrom, cutting cows

We named her for a racehorse years ago, this old black whiteface cow, because she was fast and suspicious.

Whenever we moved the cattle anywhere, she ran the opposite direction. If she had a calf, it galloped along in her wake, tail straight in the air just like mama's, eyeballs rolling white.

We knew she'd be trouble when we gathered cows for fall sale. I eased the horse along behind the little bunch of cattle, paying no attention to her. If all the other cattle moved ahead of the horse, she would probably follow.

The cattle were still calm when we got to the gate my husband George had opened. Quietly, I maneuvered the horse among the cows, gently cutting out the ones to be sold and moving them through the gate. Whenever you see a "cowboy" thundering along behind a herd of cattle, yelling and swinging his rope, he's either in a movie or he's not making much progress. Anyone who does that with real cows is losing money -- they can run off hundreds of pounds of saleable fat on a hot day.

Finally, every cow we wanted to sell was outside the gate. Except Whirlaway. While the others grazed quietly, she stood beside the fence, head up, alert. I walked the horse her way, as though going for a quiet Sunday ride.

She threw her head and tail up and trotted around me to join the group of cattle we planned to leave in the pasture. OK, new tactic. I gathered the bunch, and began to drive them all outside the gate. It would be extra trouble, because then we'd have to cut back the ones we didn't want, but worth it if she'd follow them quietly.

She wouldn't. She got right to the gate and ducked aside. We tried this maneuver several times, until my horse was wet with sweat. Once I got close behind her right at the gate and whooped. She raised her tail and shot out a stream of used grass, splashing green all over my horse's chest. This annoyed him. He snarled and opened his mouth to bite the cow on the hip. She raised her tail. He reconsidered and his mouth snapped shut, teeth clattering.

I decided to use another tactic that sometimes works: tiring her out. Trotting the horse, I simply followed her wherever she wanted to go, back and forth on the flat, fortunately free of prairie dog holes. Each time she got close my husband and son, on foot, would move back from the gate and I'd try to cut her toward it.

My horse is a beautiful gray part-Arab with a wonderful easy gait. But he's lazy; he gets along with as little work as possible. Only when he's really angry, hot and tired does he turn into the cutting horse his sainted mother was, slashing back and forth behind the cow, anticipating every move she makes, crowding her with his chest and teeth until she has no choice. Half an hour of trotting behind Whirlaway made him mad, and he went to work. The big fall grass was slick and treacherous. Each time he made a tight turn -- one of those where he was almost horizontal to the ground, I feared a fall, but he never made a misstep.

Then Whirlaway kicked him in the chest. He gasped, snorted and bit her tail. She kicked again just as he turned but connected with my knee with one back hoof, my ankle with the other. I was absolutely sure the ankle was broken, because of the intense pain, and I was angry, but the leg went numb after a few minutes and I kicked the horse into a gallop to pursue the cow again.

The cow made a wide circle down into a gully; then up the side. We were right behind her. When she reached the top she suddenly turned and roared down the hill, smashing her head against my horse's chest and lifting him from the ground. By this time I was yelling words inappropriate to a family magazine, but the horse slid sideways and the cow hurtled past. I've seen lots of bovine maneuvers, but never a cow clever enough to try to tip a horse over.

My husband was getting annoyed with Whirlaway by this time and came roaring up with the pickup, but the cow immediately took to rough country, forcing the pickup to go around.

When the pickup caught up with us, we began alternating driving her: when she got ahead of me, George would turn her with the truck and then I'd haze her along while he caught up. Posts, baling wire, fence stretchers and the usual collection of junk hung suspended above the bed of the pickup as it bounced from rock to rock, billowing black exhaust. Whirlaway kicked the pickup; she swung her head and smashed in a door panel. Once, with him behind and me trying to turn her, she dashed straight into a barbed wire fence. The next time she swung her head against the truck, she smeared blood from the barbed wire cuts along the door.

Finally, she slowed down, turned, and plodded steadily almost two miles back to the gate. All of us were running with sweat. The next day she seemed to have recovered completely.

No, we weren't torturing her unnecessarily. She was old and dry -- that is she wouldn't calve the next year. She had to go and if we'd let her get away we'd have had to do the same thing all over again.

Not all cows are this hard to corral, but a half day like this one isn't really unusual in the cattle business either. Whenever a city friend envies us the ranching life, and says, "All you have to do is sit around and watch those cows get fat," I think of Whirlaway. And I don't think too badly of her. After all, she helped me prove I can still cut cattle. □

Linda Hasselstrom is a rancher and poet in Hermosa, South Dakota.

LETTERS

CHARACTER ASSASSINATION

Dear *HCN*,

I find the articles in *High Country News* informative, timely and interesting. Your editorial diversity is unique. I believe the niche the paper fills is vital. This is why the recent presentation of a letter in the paper that directly and inflammatorily impugns the character of an individual is offensive and unbecoming the strong editorial tradition of the *News*. Your publication of Robert Weed's letter in the Nov. 25 issue lowers the standards of *HCN* to the ignorant level of Mr. Weed's tirade, denouncing the honest and dedicated efforts of Dick Carter, coordinator of the Utah Wilderness Association.

Without doubt, character assassination as published by you detracts from the substance of the conservation values we all strive for. The rancor Mr. Weed's letter spreads has no place in the environmental movement, and your complicity in the spread of such defamatory personal attacks raises questions of your editorial integrity. Frankly, you disappoint me.

Marv Poulson
Salt Lake City, Utah

BUREAU BOONDOGGLE

Dear *HCN*,

Your Central Utah Project article in the Nov. 11 issue is an excellent explanation of one of the biggest, ill-conceived boondoggles in the West the Bureau and its cronies have yet "cooked up." If completed, it will virtually wipe out 25 percent of the blue ribbon trout streams in Utah as well as saddle the general taxpayer with a monstrous bill. To entice the Uintah Indians, who own much of the water in the Uinta Basin, to go along with the scheme, the Bureau has built them a "recreation reservoir" with resort and all the trimmings. The Indians' water diverted to Strawberry Reservoir is supposed to be replaced with water from Flaming Gorge. This notwithstanding, there are two major problems: 1. Flaming Gorge maximum pool is 6040 feet elevation, whereas the diversions, as you point out, are at about the 8,000 foot level, leaving a large area between with little water; 2) Flaming Gorge - Green River water is laden with salt -- near the point which makes its use for irrigation questionable. In contrast, the water from the Unita Mountains is of high quality.

Let's hope the people of Utah see the light!

John Herbert
Darby, Montana

WORD FROM ALASKA

Dear *HCN*,

I now read the *High Country News* with even more interest than I did when I lived in the Rockies. Not that I didn't read it completely and with interest then; it just seems so far away now. And I guess there is the ego too: "They'll never win all those battles without me down there in the trenches with them." Of course, my rational mind intervenes and announces that both the environmental battles and the various publications recording them will continue fine without me.

Enclosed is my change of address. Other details include working as photo editor (head of the photography department at the *Anchorage Daily News*, Alaska's largest and only reasonable daily newspaper). In a land of boosterism and blatant raping and pillaging of the landscape, it is a real credit to the quality of the paper that it even exists, let alone is the biggest in the state. Hey, in Alaska you are a rabid environmentalist if you support the trapping of wolves rather than the aerial shooting of them with automatic weapons. When we came out against trapping also, you can imagine the howls were not from the wolves.

I wish you all well. Keep up the fight, and keep that sense of humor which has always given *HCN* the distance from so damn many publications and people who take this battle to save our planet too seriously. The issues are important, we aren't.

Richard Murphy
Anchorage, Alaska

Richard Murphy is a frequent contributor to *HCN* and until recently was photographer for the *Jackson Hole News* in Wyoming.

CLOCKWORK GRIZZLY

Dear *HCN*,

A recent issue of *Backpacker* featured an article on aversive conditioning of grizzly bears by blasting aggressive or inquisitive bears with plastic bullets. A recent issue of *High Country News* featured a similar article where capsicum (red pepper) sprays are being tested on captive grizzlies to achieve the same goal: avoidance of humans. Neither article questions the validity, ethics, or possible consequences of such activity.

Such conditioning will restrict the travel that is necessary for grizzlies by teaching them to avoid areas that are part of their range. Will such range restrictions prevent the bears from finding adequate food or denning sites? Will eliminating the grizzlies' naturally aggressive instincts do the same? If a bear being pelted with rubber bullets attacks the person harassing it, rather than retreating, will it be destroyed in a "management action?"

The Yellowstone grizzly population is presently on the road to extinction, largely because of human encroachment into its habitat. A crowded animal is a dangerous animal. Instead of giving the grizzly the space it needs by designating and strictly managing critical habitat, federal agencies are attempting to solve their problems by creating a "Clockwork Grizzly."

Eric Holle
Boulder, Colorado