



Robert Hilgenfeld

High Country News

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The wild horse

Feral pest or living history?

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Dear friends,



High Country News

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Tom Bell
Editor Emeritus

Ed Marston
Publisher

Betsy Marston
Editor

Judy Moffatt
Development

Marjane Ambler
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Pat Ford

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Graphics/Accounting

C.B. Elliott
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We once heard a speaker refer to his alma mater, which we remember as Sewanee College, as the Harvard of the South. He then added, "Of course, I don't think the people up in Cambridge are referring to Harvard as the Sewanee of the North."

It is in that spirit that we will henceforth describe *High Country News* as *The New York Times* and *CBS Reports* of Paonia. The reason for the strained comparisons is the 1986 George Polk Awards. *HCN* received the Polk Award for Environmental Reporting for its fall water issues. The awards, established by Long Island University in 1949, are named for a CBS correspondent who was murdered while covering the Greek civil war. With the possible exception of a Kentucky newspaper, *HCN* was the only Western media to receive a 1986 award.

The other recipients were *Newsweek* (foreign reporting) for its coverage of terrorism in the Middle East; Andrew Wolfson and Daniel Rubin of the *Louisville Courier-Journal* (national reporting) for stories on the poor safety record of military air charters; Sally Jacobs of the *Raleigh News and Observer* (local reporting) for a story on a federal prison; Alex Beasley and Rosemary Goudreau of the *Orlando Sentinel* (regional reporting) for their series debunking myths in the malpractice insurance controversy;

Peter G. Gosselin of the *Boston Globe* (financial reporting) for his exposure of fraudulent practices by the First Commodity Financial Corp.; the "Science Times" section of *The New York Times* (science reporting) for its coverage of complex topics; Richard Kluger for *The Paper: The Life and Death of the New York Herald Tribune* (book);

David Fanning and Martin Smith for the PBS documentary (international television reporting) on contra activities, "Who's Running This War?"; Bill Moyers for the *CBS Report*, "The Vanishing Family" (national television reporting); and Lee Coppola of WKBW-TV (local television reporting) in Buffalo for "A Lesson in Deceit," a probe of an unscrupulous business school. James Reston of *The New York Times* will receive a career award.

The awards will be presented at a luncheon at the Hotel Roosevelt in Manhattan on April 8, with Douglas Edwards of CBS News reading the citations, LIU President Dr. David Steinberg offering greetings and James Reston delivering remarks.

The four award-winning water issues were a team effort involving *HCN's* staff and almost two dozen writers and artists, as well as numerous photographers. The following writers and artists contributed to the series: Marjane Ambler, Allen Best, Peter Carrels, Charles Wilkinson and Daniel Keith Conner, Lester Dore, Pat Ford, Robert Gottlieb and Peter Wiley, Rose Houk, Verne Huser, Paul Krza, Lawrence Mosher, Ed Quillen, C.L. Rawlins, Hadley Roberts, Cynthia Stowell, Douglas Towne, Jose Trava, Peter Wild, and David Wilson.

We thank the 777 Fund of the Tides Foundation, which financed the four water issues, and the contributors to the High Country News Research Fund, who have been extraordinarily generous to the paper over the past few years, and have allowed the organization to concentrate on journalism rather than on the juggling of past-due bills. We would also like to thank whomever nominated *HCN* for the award, and will do so as soon as we learn his or her name.

The most satisfying aspect of the Polk Award is its recognition of the professionalism of the paper. *HCN* survives without advertising because of support from individual environmentalists and from foundations concerned with the grass-roots environmental issues in the Rockies. Despite the environmental commitment of those who support *HCN*, the paper has been free from pressure, and allowed to function as an independent journal, rather than as a newsletter or cheerleader for the conservation movement.

--the staff

HOTLINE

Stream access fight

A few weeks after the controversy over Montana's stream-access law appeared to be settled by a court decision (*HCN*, 2/16/87), the issue was back before the state Legislature. The new action was in the form of two bills that placed greater restrictions on recreational river use. So far advocates of stream access have managed to stymie both measures. One bill was tied up in a state Senate committee; the other was essentially rewritten by stream-access proponents before it was passed by the Senate. The latter bill was sponsored by Sen. Jack Galt of Martinsdale, a perennial opponent of stream access. Galt said his bill would merely delete portions of the stream-access law that were declared unconstitutional by a Jan. 15 decision of the Montana Supreme Court. But the measure actually created further restrictions on stream access. The amendments removed those restrictions and fashioned the bill to reflect the court decision.

WESTERN ROUNDUP

Game and Fish nominee stirs New Mexico

New Mexico ranchers and conservationists are headed for a legislative showdown this week over Gov. Garrey Carruthers' attempt to place an outspoken cattleman on the state Game and Fish Commission.

The rancher is Robert A. "Bob" Jones, a long-time "Sagebrush Rebellion" leader from southeastern New Mexico. As a Sagebrush rebel in the late 1970s, Jones pressed Congress to turn public lands in the West over to the states.

"Bob Jones is really a symbol of the people who would, if they could, have all public lands be theirs," contends Susan Tixier, a legislative lobbyist for the Sierra Club and the New Mexico Conservation Voters Alliance.

Jones, who grazes cattle on a ranch sprawling over both sides of the Texas-New Mexico border, has been a voice for stockmen in southern New Mexico who rail against management policies of the Bureau of Land Management. Jones supported former Interior Secretary James Watt when he tried in 1982-1984 to reduce the BLM's regulations on grazing.

"You bet," Jones responded March 4 when asked if he still believed that states should assume control over federal lands within their borders. "What that has got to

do with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, I have no idea."

Conservationists here recalled Jones' attacks on environmentalists when he was president of the New Mexico Cattle Growers Association in the early 1980s. In his defense of Secretary Watt's policies, Jones cited the "selfish and socialistic tendencies" of the National Wildlife Federation and other conservation groups. "Possibly there are a few Fidel Castros and similar Marxist supporters tied to these groups in positions of leadership," Jones wrote in the June 1982 issue of *New Mexico Stockman*, the association's magazine.

Jones also rallied ranchers to pressure the New Mexico Game and Fish Department to curtail hunting seasons, regulate camping and off-road travel, and designate mountain lions as predators that could be killed at will. He advocated forcing the department to finance its operations from legislative appropriations instead of from license fees paid by hunters and fishermen "to reduce the dependence of Game and Fish on hunting groups to the detriment of everyone else."

Carruthers named Jones to fulfill a campaign pledge that he would appoint a private landowner to the

commission, says Cattle Growers Association President Denny Gentry. But while ranchers sit on many state game commissions in the West, "I have never seen a precedent for a cattle association leader being appointed," says Tom Dougherty, Rocky Mountain regional representative for the National Wildlife Federation. "There's a clear-cut conflict of interest."

The New Mexico Wildlife Federation has taken no stand on Jones' appointment. The Carlsbad, N.M., wildlife federation affiliate, a group with strong ties to ranchers in the southern part of the state, has endorsed Jones for the commission.

The New Mexico Sierra Club and other conservation groups say the major problem Jones presents is a closed mind. "It's going to make a sham out of any proceeding before the game commission," says Brant Calkin, former national Sierra Club president and long-time New Mexico environmentalist leader.

In a telephone interview, Jones recalled that since the early 1980s, "a lot of compromises have been made, and I'm very familiar with that process. But you always start out taking a strong position."

--Tom Arrandale

Bald eagles choose a badly polluted roost

Twenty bald eagles have established a roost at one of America's most polluted Superfund sites, the Rocky Mountain Arsenal near Denver, Colo.

Their presence may change the Army's cleanup of contaminated soil and groundwater at the arsenal, which produced chemical weapons such as nerve gas and pesticides and herbicides until 1982. As members of an endangered species, bald eagles are protected from disturbances, says Jeff Opdyke of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Grand Junction, and this could limit the Army's cleanup alternatives.

The Fish and Wildlife Service recently began a three-year study of the effects of contamination on bald and golden eagles in Colorado and Utah, and they are particularly interested in eagles at the arsenal. The agency traps the birds and takes blood samples, which are analyzed for lead and other toxic substances. At the same time, the eagles are weighed and banded.

If it turns out eagles are picking up contaminants from the arsenal, the Army may have to re-focus or speed up its cleanup, Opdyke says. If contamination is not localized enough to remove in a "surgical" manner, biologists may have to discourage the eagles' use of the area, which is one of Denver's last open habitats.

"It's one big zoo out there," says Opdyke, citing the abundance of prairie dog and rabbit prey, and the

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Luther Goldman



Bald eagle

presence of other sensitive species, including raptors and migratory waterfowl.

No one knows whether the four adult and 16 immature bald eagles are using a grove of trees inside the arsenal as a temporary winter roost or as a permanent residence.

Besides arsenal contaminants the eagles also face the effects of proposed expansion plans for nearby Stapleton International Airport. Opdyke says one such plan could have planes flying 500 feet over the trees in which the eagles are roosting.

--Becky Rumsey

Mountain lions are fair game in Montana

Not so long ago, Montana paid a bounty for mountain lions. Now for the first time in parts of Montana, hunting mountain lions has been put on a quota system because of concentrated hunting pressure and too many females being killed.

The popularity of mountain lion hunting in Montana has almost tripled over the last decade: Thirteen years ago 352 lion hunters bought hunting licenses and took 91 lions. During the 1984 season 1,064 hunters took 168 lions.

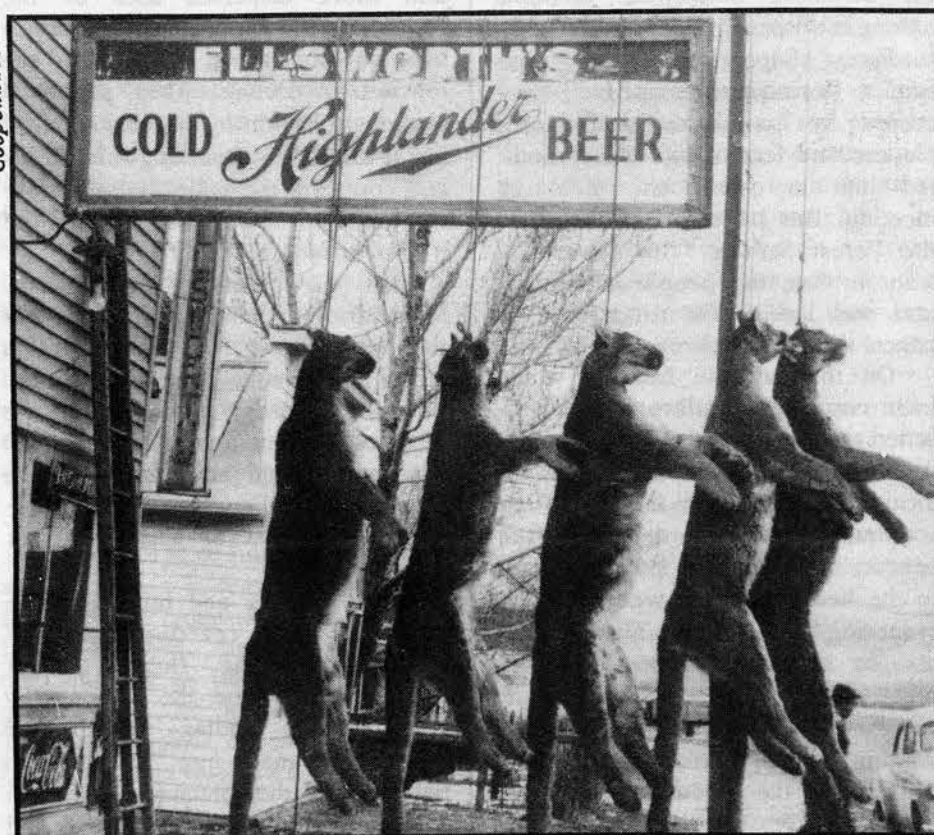
In northwestern Montana's Region One, a total of 52 lions could be killed in the region's hunting districts before it was closed for the 1986-1987 season by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. In Region Three, south of Bozeman, a total of 32 lions could be taken. In Region Seven in the eastern part of the state, the limit was three lions. There was no quota elsewhere in the state where hunting was allowed.

Quota numbers were not set to decrease the number of lions killed by hunters, says Bill Thomas, information officer for Region Two. He says the aim was to distribute the kill over a wider area and guard against the total harvest -- and the female harvest -- from increasing above the historical average.

Even though the quotas set this year were slightly higher than the kill had been in the past, many hunting districts reached their limit before the closing date of Feb. 15, 1987.

According to Thomas, some hunters assumed they had better shoot the first legal lion they saw for fear

Coopenhaver



These mountain lions were killed in the early 1950s by the Copenhaver brothers, guides and outfitters in western Montana. Lion-killing was

encouraged by the state, which paid as much as \$50 in bounty for every dead lion. There was, of course, no limit on how many could be killed.

the quota would be reached and the hunt ended.

Several state biologists have expressed concern about lion hunters -- especially outfitters -- moving from an area where the quotas had been reached and the season closed, to an area with no restrictions, causing increased hunting pressure.

The Department has been concerned, Thomas says. "But until we question lion hunters we will not be able to evaluate impacts." Thomas says no conservation groups had

asked the state to impose quotas. Instead the move came from game managers and from the Montana Fish and Game Commission.

There are many strategies to limit the number of lions taken by hunters, Thomas adds, including shortening the season and going to a limited drawing for a license. "But these would probably be a last resort." The state plans to continue the quota system during the Dec. 1 - Feb. 15, 1988 season.

--John Haviland

HOTLINE

Kent and Donna Dannen



Subdivisions ravage elk

A roving pack of dogs recently killed a yearling bull elk in a subdivision near Boulder, Colo. Just a few days before, the elk had been ear-tagged by the Colorado Division of Wildlife as part of a project to determine what effect urban development is having on the herd. DOW wildlife manager Laurie Kuelthau said 70 elk roam the area west of Boulder and north of the small town of Nederland, where dog attacks are not the only threat to wildlife. Kuelthau said new subdivisions "devour" the herd's winter range and there is no question that elk suffer when housing developments encroach on the animals' turf.

Land purchases opposed

The Reagan administration has proposed a moratorium on purchases of private lands within or bordering national parks, forests and other public lands. The administration may also ask Congress to rescind 76 percent of \$188 million already authorized in 1987 for land acquisitions, according to reports from The Wilderness Society. A coalition of 12 national environmental groups recently asked Congress to oppose the moratorium and also asked lawmakers to spend \$678.8 million next year to purchase hundreds of sites in 45 states. Money for land acquisitions comes from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which was set up in 1965 through revenues from offshore oil drilling. The fund allows for up to \$900 million in appropriations each year. A recent presidential commission on outdoor recreation recommended that Congress spend \$1 billion a year to buy land for public enjoyment.

Exemption coming

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has given notice that it will soon exempt some low-level radioactive wastes from regulatory control. Such wastes include materials with small quantities or low concentrations of radionuclides that are said to pose insignificant impacts to public health and the environment. The new policy will take some of the burden off crowded radioactive landfills, the agency says. A group opposing the move, the Nuclear Information and Resource Service, says the regulatory changes will solve waste deposit problems only at the expense of public health and the environment.

HOTLINE

Two on the stream, please

Visitors to the eight most popular national parks can now book family campsites through Ticketron, Inc. The company runs a nationwide, computerized reservation system and recently closed a contract with the National Park Service to include Western parks such as Grand Canyon and Yosemite. Vacationers can now book campsites in person at any Ticketron outlet or at National Park Service offices such as those in Denver, Colo., Washington, D.C., or Phoenix, Az. Reservations can also be made by mail through the "Family Campsite Reservations 1987" brochure, available from the Park Service in Washington, D.C., or through Ticketron, Inc., Dept. R, 401 Hackensack Ave., Hackensack, N.J. 07601. Campsite fees range from \$8-\$10 a day.

Aircraft noise bill

Legislation to limit air traffic above the Grand Canyon and other national parks was re-introduced into Congress this session. The two bills, identical to legislation that passed the House overwhelmingly last year, would permanently ban non-essential flights below the rim of the Grand Canyon and restrict flights above the rim to protect the natural quiet of the park. Sponsored by Sen. Spark Matsunaga, D-Hawaii, and Rep. Tony Coelho, D-Calif., also directs the Park Service to study and recommend minimum altitudes for aircraft over Glacier, Haleakala, Hawaii volcanoes, Mt. Rushmore and Yosemite national parks. The Sierra Club reports the bills already enjoy strong bipartisan support, with 11 co-sponsors in the Senate and 38 in the House. Interior Secretary Donald Hodel has indicated he will oppose the legislation.



Slickrock mountain-bike trail near Moab, Utah

Bikers versus bikers

The Sierra Club continues to take a tough stand against mountain bike-riding in designated wilderness areas. In a recent revision of its 1972 off-road vehicle policy, the club included mountain bikes in most of its provisions. Faced with the burgeoning popularity of bikes and complaints about trail erosion and harassment of hikers, some public agencies have classified fat-tire bikes as a form of mechanized transport. Anything mechanized is prohibited in wilderness areas. The Sierra Club says the use of mountain bikes should also be monitored in non-wilderness areas.

Angus Thuermer



Louisiana-Pacific's stud plant in Dubois, Wyoming

Explosive atmosphere snuffs out hearing

In an unprecedented move last month, Bridger-Teton National Forest officials scrapped a Dubois, Wyo., hearing to obtain comments on the forest's draft plan. Subsequent efforts to reschedule the meeting before the Feb. 28 deadline for comment failed as divisions among townspeople deepened.

Forest Supervisor Brian Stout said a "carnival atmosphere" promoted by Louisiana-Pacific employees and fear of violence prompted him to cancel the Feb. 18 meeting. But L-P's Bob Baker said the Forest Service "did not really want to face the people of Dubois and was looking for an excuse to cancel the meeting."

On the day the hearing would have occurred, circulars were distributed throughout Dubois, a community in conflict over the future of L-P's local stud mill. The flyers invited community members to enjoy free beer at the Ramshorn Bar just prior to the hearing and to wear black in mourning for lost jobs. There would also be a funeral procession, complete with pine casket, from the bar to the local high school, where logging trucks would encircle the building as the meeting progressed inside.

Baker said he had been in touch with the organizers of the proposed beer party and procession and that he approved of what they were doing. "This whole B-T planning process has been drawn out and negative," he said. "People came up with some neat ideas to change that atmosphere, such as writing their comments on two-by-fours and wheeling them in. They wanted to have some fun."

One of a half dozen listening sessions planned by forest officials in major towns close to the B-T, the Dubois hearing was the most likely to produce widely polarized views of the direction the forest should take. Mill workers, their families and L-P

officials could be expected to speak out forcefully for an increased timber cut on the B-T, so that L-P can get the 16 million board feet it says it needs to stay in business. Conservationists would advocate decreased commodity orientation of the forest and more dispersed uses of the forest's resources. Forest Service officials had earlier joked about the tension in Dubois. They proposed tossing a hat down the east side of the Wind Rivers from Togwotee Pass and counting the bullet holes before continuing the journey from the B-T's Jackson headquarters.

But no meeting took place. Speculation on what would happen at the hearing switched to speculation on what would have happened. Forest Supervisor Stout said he received information that only L-P advocates would have attended the meeting, and that other townspeople were too afraid to speak out in public.

Local leaders and officials were split in their reactions to the cancelled meeting. Dubois Mayor Danny Grubb said the actions by local people leading up to the cancellation made him "ashamed to be a part of the community." Grubb said Stout had made a "brave and

wise decision" to scrap the public session.

But Mel Furman, hired by Dubois to coordinate the town's comments on the plan, disagreed. Furman, a newcomer who owns a local motel, said, "Brian Stout wasn't really afraid to come here. Doesn't everyone know truckers and loggers take a drink now and then? The Forest Service management was maneuvered by environmentalists."

Efforts to reschedule the hearing fizzled. There was much talk around town of a "spiritual crisis," of isolation among groups, of a silent majority opposing the presence of the mill. Field ecology instructor Jim Guenther said, "People don't want to confront the lack of harmony in their community, but the problem is, we're spread out and we're not working as a group."

A local Episcopal priest took a Biblical view of the town's prospects. "This too shall pass," said Rev. Lynn Wright, who arrived in town two years ago and has already seen the mill "opening and closing on a rhythmic basis." Wright said that in spite of the "feeling of despondency and despair," the town has what it takes to survive no matter what happens to L-P.

--Katharine Collins

HOTLINE

Denver is too efficient

The city of Denver, Colo., has a problem. Beavers are chewing down trees along the banks of the South Platte River at a prodigious rate. In a recent letter to the *Rocky Mountain News*, J.M. Schell pointed out that the beavers fell the trees for food, but the city hauls away the trees before the beavers get a chance to dine on them, which leaves the beavers hungry. That makes them go right back to work cutting down more trees.

Katharine Collins



Dubois Mayor Danny Grubb



Kootenai Falls in Montana

A stricken town looks to a dam for help

Conservationists and Indians in Montana are gearing up to fight a Kootenai River dam proposal that they say will destroy a valuable trout fishery and important Indian cultural sites.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the government agency that reviews dam proposals on public streams, is now considering a permit application from the city of Libby, Mont., to build a dam seven miles north of the town on the Kootenai River.

Though the dam would not be built until the mid-1990s at the earliest, opponents are anxious to kill the proposal before it receives government approval.

"It's a stupid idea... it will totally eliminate any sport fishing opportunities in that part of the Kootenai Valley," says conservationist McGregor Rhodes. Rhodes, a spokesman for the Libby Rod and Gun Club, says many aquatic insects that are important as food to the river's trout population wouldn't survive a shift to a reservoir environment. **Rhodes also says big game, especially white-tailed deer, would lose winter range because 10 miles of the river's valley would be underwater.**

Libby Mayor Fred Brown disagrees. He supports the dam because it will pump up his town's beleaguered economy, stricken in recent years by a decline in mining and timber production. Because the water level of the dam's reservoir would not fluctuate, private land on the new lake's shore could be developed for resorts, he adds, and that would benefit the recreation industry.

"We don't feel we're destroying the river... it would still have recreational value," he says.

The 485-mile-long Kootenai is the Columbia River's second largest tributary. It begins in British Columbia, flows through northwest Montana and northern Idaho, and hooks back into Canada where it flows into the Columbia.

Because of its high-quality trout fishery, the Kootenai is classified by

the state of Montana as a "blue ribbon" stream. In recent years it has also gained a reputation as a focus for dam disputes.

In 1984, after years of opposition by Kootenai Indians from Montana, Idaho and British Columbia, a dam proposed for a site four miles downstream from the present proposal was refused a permit (HCN, 5/28/84).

The project's sponsor, the Northern Lights rural electric co-op, was denied a dam permit because more electricity wasn't needed, and the reservoir would have destroyed Indian religious and cultural sites. **Among the threatened sites was Kootenai Falls, the Northwest's last big-river waterfall not inundated by a man-made lake.** However, the proposed Kootenai Falls dam lives on because Northern Lights asked FERC to reconsider issuing a permit. The agency is expected to make a final decision on the project this spring.

In 1983, Congress refused to fund an Army Corps of Engineers' proposal to build a re-regulating dam on the site now requested by the city of Libby. The corps' proposal was cited by Congress as too costly and the project died after much controversy. The dam's major opponent was the Libby Rod and Gun Club.

Libby's proposal has resurrected an argument raised by dam opponents in the earlier battles. It is based on the existence of the Libby Dam, the only dam on the river's Montana segment. Built in 1972 and upriver of the city's proposed site, the dam has impounded enough of the Kootenai in Montana, say conservationists and Indians. They argue that the remaining 50 miles of free-flowing river in Montana should be left undammed.

Referring to Indian cultural sites inundated by Lake Koocanusa, the 90-mile-long reservoir created by Libby Dam, attorney Steve Moore says his client, the Kootenai Indian tribe, "feels like it has suffered enough."

Moore works for the Native American Rights Fund, an organization that represents Indians in natural resource issues. He says a new dam on the river would destroy more Indian religious and cultural sites.

Moore estimates that the tribe spent over \$1 million in the fight over the Kootenai Falls dam. The tribe will also fight the city's dam proposal, he says.

Economics will figure prominently in whether Libby's dam proposal becomes reality. Because the federal government won't fund the project, the city is courting communities around the Northwest for investment capital. Mayor Brown said Libby is figuring the Northwest's current electricity glut will disappear by the 1990s, **thus making the dam an attractive investment.**

The city and its critics agree that Libby could not handle alone the project's \$100 million price tag -- a figure estimated by CH2M-Hill, the Portland engineering firm that prepared the city's FERC permit application.

The Rod and Gun Club's Rhodes, however, predicts the cost will be closer to \$600 million. His estimate is based on the Army Corps' 1982 request to Congress to fund a dam on the same site. Rhodes says the city has also not considered the full cost of purchasing property and relocating stretches of highway and railroad affected by the project.

Mayor Brown said community members are silent on the dam issue, "but I think they're for it." Indian attorney Moore doubts whether the community would really want the project once it understood the dam's financial and environmental costs. The proposal is a "total hysterical reaction from the Libby Town Council on the economic depression of Lincoln County," he says. Libby is the Lincoln County seat.

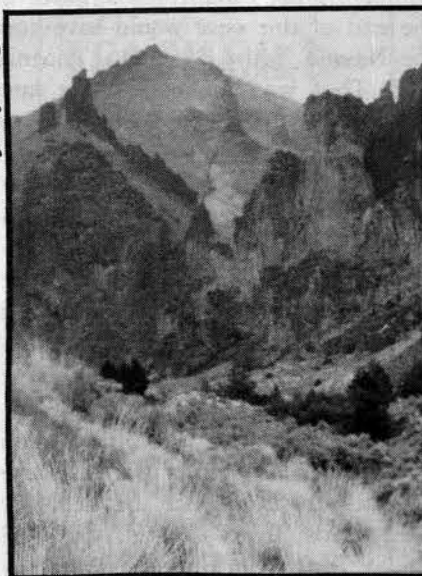
--Bruce Farling

HOTLINE

Refuge becomes death trap

The carcasses of nearly 7 million fish are floating in Carson Sink. One thousand five hundred dead birds also line the shore of the Sink, which is inside the Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge 60 miles east of Reno, Nev. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service says the birds are victims of avian cholera, and the agency speculates that the fish died from high salinity levels in the water. Cold weather and contaminants from agriculture and mining upriver may have also played a role. Steve Thompson, a biologist at the refuge, says fish populations exploded during the unusually wet years of 1982-1984, but when water levels dropped in 1985, salinity increased and killed off all the carp. This year's even higher salt levels killed the hardest of desert fish, the tui-chub. Thompson said salinity levels in the lake this winter were 22,000 parts per million, while last year's were around 8,000 ppm. The 15-by-25-mile Carson Sink is the terminus of the Carson River, which contains many pollutants, says U.S. Fish and Wildlife biologist Dick Navarre. The river carries elevated levels of arsenic and boron, which occur naturally, and mercury, which was used in silver mining. Thompson says that as many as 75 percent of birds migrating through the state on their way to Canada stop at Stillwater's 15,000-20,000 acres of marsh to rest and fatten up. The refuge, in fact, is 75 percent of Nevada's wetlands.

Jerry Magee



Oregon's Upper Leslie Gulch Wilderness Study Area

Oregon wilderness

The Bureau of Land Management in Oregon has rewritten its draft environmental impact statement for the state's wilderness study areas. A two-volume supplement corrects former Interior Secretary James Watt's illegal exclusion of lands from the BLM's 1985 inventory. After the Sierra Club and other national environmental groups challenged the "Watt drops," a federal court ordered the Oregon BLM to revamp its draft EIS. The result a year and a half later is 85 study areas and a total of 2,648,215 acres of potential wilderness. The BLM's preferred alternative for Oregon is 1,000,508 acres in 44 wilderness study areas. The public will have a chance to attend meetings and comment on the expanded EIS until April 24. For more information write to BLM, Box 2965, Portland, OR 97208 (503/231-6256).

Navajo leader MacDonald shuts reservation's newspaper

by Patricia Guthrie

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. -- Six weeks after he said, "I have returned to serve my people," Navajo Tribal Chairman Peter MacDonald shocked many of them by closing down a newspaper.

On Feb. 19 he suspended publication of the *Navajo Times TODAY*, the reservation's tribally funded daily newspaper. MacDonald then fired the news director of the tribally owned radio station, KTNN. The chairman's third controversial move was to eliminate the Navajo Education and Scholarship Foundation, a non-profit organization headed by former tribal leader Peterson Zah, who left office Jan. 13.

MacDonald cited a financial crisis when he stopped the presses at the *Navajo Times TODAY* and abruptly fired its 53 full-time employees. Attending a press conference at the chairman's office, the employees were told they were immediately terminated with three weeks severance pay. In addition, the newspaper ceased operations that day: Tribal police secured the *Times* office, preventing the printing of a final issue.

The initial announcement was handled by MacDonald's top administrative aide, who explained that a federal tax lien against the *Times* left no alternative but to close the plant. Employees' taxes from 1984 had not been paid by the *Times* and amounted to a \$185,000 tax lien, said Loyce Phoenix, MacDonald's chief administrator. Financing the paper to the end of the year would have cost the Navajo Tribe \$750,000, Phoenix said. That was an amount the new administration was unwilling to spend.

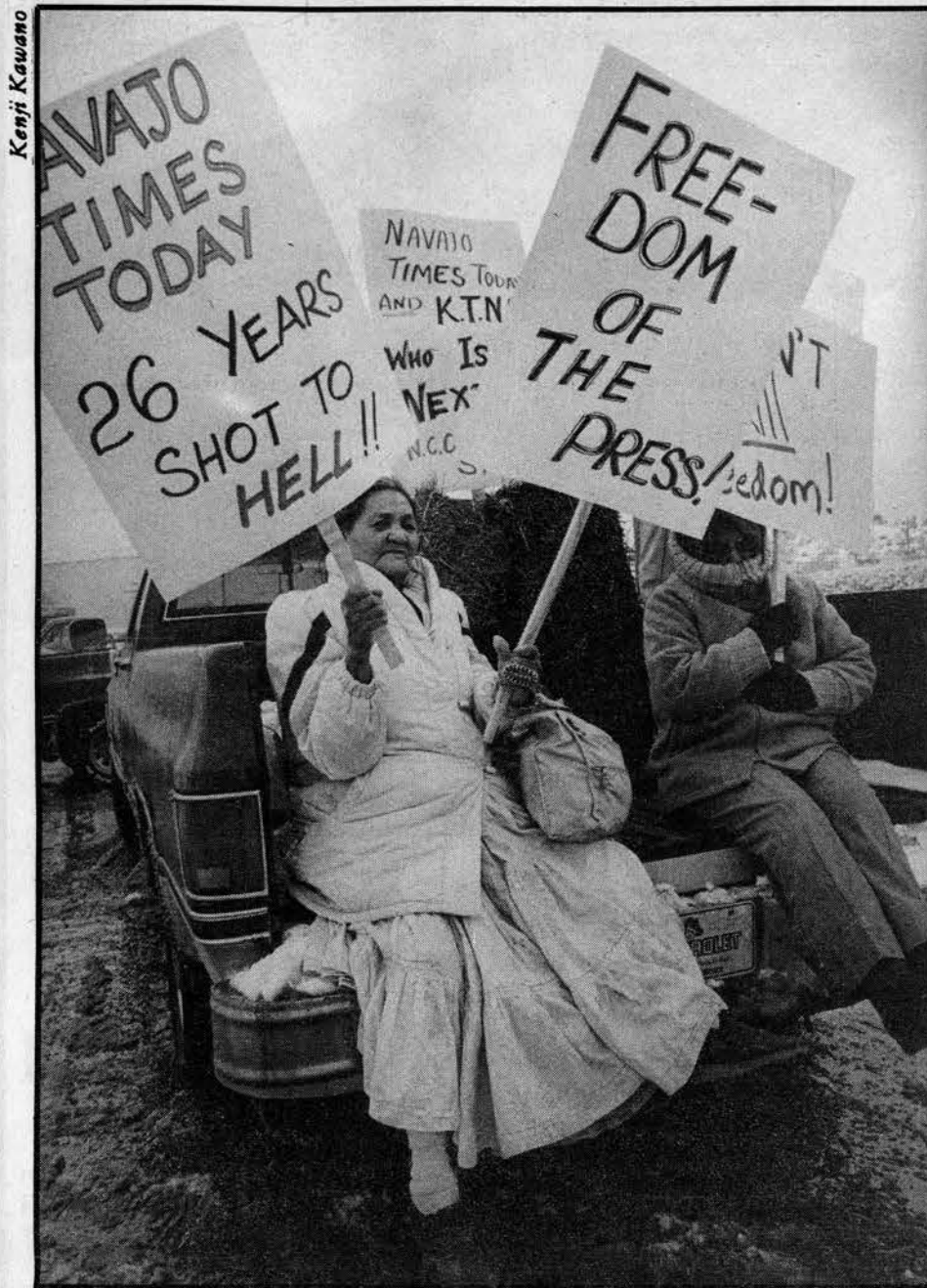
"The *Times* has been a runaway drain on our general funds, an uncontrolled hemorrhaging either ignored or tacitly condoned by the prior administration," MacDonald said in a press release.

The leader of the nation's largest Indian tribe defeated former chairman Peterson Zah by 750 votes in November. The victory put MacDonald back in the office he held for three terms, from 1970 to 1982. The *Navajo Times* became a daily publication in July 1984.

"The *Navajo Times* has consistently and increasingly lost hundreds of thousands of dollars every year since its designation as a tribal enterprise," MacDonald continued. "This loss is directly borne by the Navajo Nation and our people."

MacDonald said a 1986 audit showed the newspaper produced revenues of \$600,000 but cost \$1.3 million to operate. The chairman said the \$700,000 loss could finance 234 full college scholarships or create 85 permanent jobs.

Beginning as a monthly newsletter in 1960, the *Times* bloomed into a weekly newspaper a few years later. Named editor and publisher in 1984, Mark Trahan converted the newspaper into a Monday-Friday daily, courting a 7,000 circulation that reached all corners of the 25,000-square-mile reservation. The *Navajo Times TODAY* was the only daily Indian newspaper in the country. In 1985, Trahan was cited as "Editor of the Year" by the National Press Foundation.



Indians protest Feb. 26 against closing of the Navajo Times

On a business trip the day MacDonald stopped the presses, Trahan returned to Window Rock to find he had no job and no newspaper.

"It was a major surprise," Trahan said. "I had expected to get fired, but I never expected Chairman MacDonald to close the whole newspaper." Trahan said he had had assurances from MacDonald that the tribe would continue to support the publication, and that

none of the *Times*' employees needed to worry about losing their jobs. Trahan and two other *Times* managers offered to buy the *Times* for cash in January, but "the offer was ignored," the 29-year-old publisher said.

The chairman's office said later that the assurances were made before learning about the back taxes. But the *Times* managerial staff contends that the administration was informed in January when the Internal Revenue Service cracked down. The back taxes stemmed from 1984, when publisher Loren Tapahe failed to pay the *Times*' federal withholding taxes for employees.

Navajo Times' Managing Editor Monty Roessel speculates that a tribal check to the IRS was purposely withheld so a tax lien would force the paper's closure. "I think they are using this tax lien as a way to get their own people in the paper," Roessel said. "Whether or not they say so, it's obvious." MacDonald consultant, Samuel Pete, said the IRS was paid Feb. 19, the same day the *Times* was shut down.

Though editors and reporters have changed with tribal administrations in the past, this marks the first time in its 26-year history that the paper had been halted.

"This is the fourth time I've been fired by Mr. MacDonald," observed Bill Donovan, a one-time general manager of the *Times* and reporter for the past seven years. Donovan is one of a handful of non-Navajos serving the publication. He said he would be willing to give the chairman a fifth opportunity to sack him should the paper resume publication. Donovan said "no holds-

barred" was the editorial format of the *Times*. "We could be critical of anything, of anybody," he said. "The paper had never done that before."

Though the tribal officials first sounded as if they wanted to sell the newspaper, they soon realized that might be difficult. Credibility and respect established with both advertisers and readers "was shot to hell in one afternoon," as Roessel put it.

"It's like throwing the baby out with the bath water," said Tim Giago. He is president of the Native American Press Association and publisher of the *Lakota Times*, a weekly, independent newspaper serving 14 western Indian reservations.

The Ogallala Sioux publisher said Native American tribes view a free press as a liability, rather than an asset. "When funding gets scarce, one of the first things the tribe cuts is the newspaper because it does not provide any tangible benefits. It doesn't put food on the table. It doesn't take care of health needs."

Giago suggested, "If the paper was indeed losing money, there could have been other alternatives to closing it down... It's awfully hard, especially in the newspaper business, to regain your credibility once you've lost it."

Former *Navajo Times* editor Marty Roessel said the *Navajo Times*, read from Window Rock classrooms to Washington's Interior Department offices, provided a valuable service to the Navajo Nation. "Its worth is far greater as a service to the Navajo people than as a bottom line in a budget."

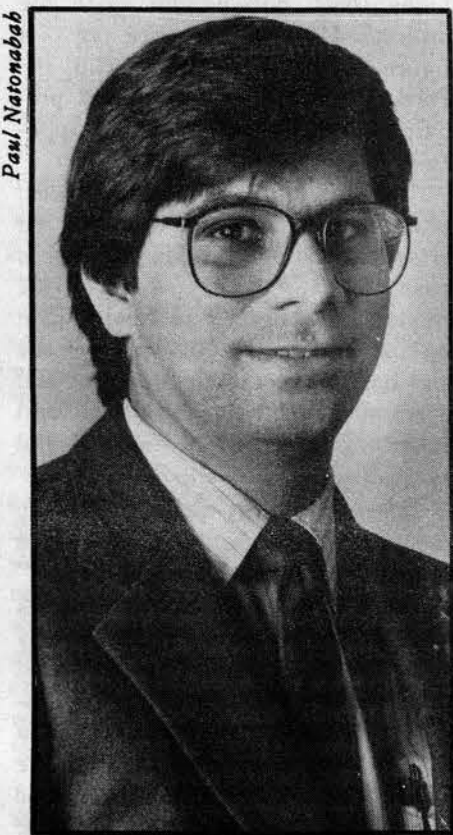
While the publication is being audited by an outside firm, a task force appointed by MacDonald is studying the paper's options. There is speculation that the paper will resume as a weekly publication conservatively budgeted by the tribe, or it will be sold to a Navajo who is a MacDonald supporter.

Since the closing of the paper, the chairman has stated repeatedly that it will return because "the Navajo people want and deserve a newspaper that speaks out fairly and fully on the issues affecting this tribe and that is no puppet of this or any future tribal government."

Navajos taking part in a demonstration one week after the paper stopped seemed to doubt MacDonald's sincerity. "With the *Navajo Times* gone, they are cutting off information to the people," said Jimmy Bitsuie. "Now they can do almost anything they please." Holding signs reading: "Is This Navajoland or MacDonald Land?" "The Navajo Nation has Become a Police State," and "MacDonald, MacDollor, MacDeficit, MacDoom," the protestors demanded that the *Times* resume publication.

"The chairman is up to something," said demonstrator Curtis Yazza, who flashed a slogan: "*Navajo Times TODAY*, KTNN Tomorrow. Others later. Watch out Navajos." After airing a critical report on the *Times*' closure on KTNN, the tribally funded 50,000-watt radio station, news director and main reporter Marley Shebala was suspended without pay. Shebala, a former *Times*

(Continued on page 7)



Former Navajo Times editor Mark Trahan. He was named 1985 "Editor of the Year" by the National Press Foundation. He is a member of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribe.

Navajo...

(Continued from page 6)

writer, said she was fired by the station's general manager under pressure from the chairman's office.

General Manager Delfred Smith denied Shebala's charge. He said the issue was a personnel action, taken after Shebala had been repeatedly warned about her reporting. "She was biased," Smith said. "We were trying to make her unbiased."

The day after Shebala's release, the Navajo Tribal Council's Advisory Committee unanimously passed a resolution dissolving the Navajo Education and Scholarship Foundation. This non-profit, private corporation was the brainchild of former chairman Peterson Zah, who headed its fund-raising advisory council for the past month. The Tribal Council replaced the foundation's 10-member board of trustees with MacDonald appointees. The new board then named Bill Cook, an Anglo, who was executive director before he was fired by the original board, back to his old job. This left Zah without an advisory council to chair.

Zah called the maneuver illegal, since the foundation had been set up as a non-profit, private entity under the Navajo Nation Corporation Code on Dec. 18, 1986. The Navajo tribal court issued a temporary restraining order blocking the Tribal Council's action, but the former chairman spent the night in his education office, protecting his turf. The next day, his telephone mysteriously went dead, the only line affected in the area.

Zah predicted that no matter where he went on the Navajo Reservation, he would be followed. "If tomorrow I should pick up some nails, a hammer and saw and go to work for the Navajo Engineering and Construction Authority, they would be out trying to kill the NECA."

"It's unfortunate the tribe lacks the sophistication that they can't allow a former chairman to use his talents for the good of the people," commented Vivian Arviso, the foundation's acting executive director, who is a member of the dissolved board of trustees.

The 12-member advisory council, consisting of local and national fund-raisers, was not told of the impending action. One member said the takeover defeated the foundation's purpose to remain immune from politics.

"Seeing it cut up in a political buzzsaw is unfortunate," said advisory member Richard Trudell, an attorney with the American Indian Training Program in Oakland, Calif. "The foundation was able to assist students who fell between the cracks," Trudell said. "The Navajo student is one who is going to suffer with this action. Donors will not want to contribute to something that is viewed fraught with politics."

Commenting on the controversy swirling around MacDonald's office for the past two weeks, Trudell added: "It was a tough political race for the chairmanship. When MacDonald took office, he said he would do his best to put the race behind him. But it sounds to me as if that is not happening."

--Patricia Guthrie

Patricia Guthrie is a free-lance writer for local and national publications in Gallup, New Mexico.

BULLETIN BOARD

DESERT CONFERENCE

Desert wilderness is the theme of the ninth annual Desert Conference April 24-26 at the Malheur Field Station south of Burns, Ore. Conservationists from Idaho, Oregon and Nevada will hear from natural resource experts and also take field trips. The isolated field station will provide room and board but participants are required to preregister. Call conference coordinator Don Tryon at 503/388-0089 or write Desert Conference IX, Box 848, Bend, OR 97709.

BOOM AND BUST

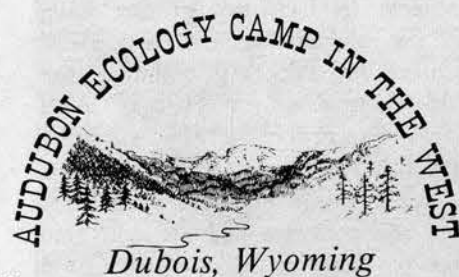
The sponsors of a symposium on boom and bust cycles in communities of the Canadian and American West are calling on humanists and social scientists to submit papers. The Aug. 19-21 conference at the University of Victoria in Victoria, British Columbia, is funded by the Canadian Embassy's Academic Affairs Office. Other sponsors include Bowling Green State University of Ohio, and Western Washington University. Session topics may include mining, lumber, and fishing communities, ethnicity, government structure in single-resource towns, and boomtown folklore. Papers that are accepted may be published and should examine historical and contemporary patterns in the lives of isolated communities of the North American West. Paper abstracts of 250 words are due by March 20 and should be sent to Andrew Gulliford, American Culture Program, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio 43403.

FREE ENERGY BOOKS

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation wants you to choose the best energy books available on cutting costs while becoming energy-efficient. Catalog titles include *Saving Energy on Montana Farms and Ranches*, *N.A.T.A.S.: A Guide to the Services of the National Appropriate Technology Assistance Services*, *Conservation for Children*, and *Fundamentals of Boiler Efficiency*. For a copy of the "Free Energy Books" catalog, write to the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Energy Division, 1520 E. Sixth, Helena, MT 59620.

A WILDERNESS DRAFT

The Bureau of Land Management's draft management plan for the Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness near Safford, Ariz., is out and comments are welcome through April 3. Send comments and requests for copies of the plan to Ken Mahoney, Bureau of Land Management, 425 E. 4th St., Safford, AZ 85546 (602/428-4040).



Audubon Wilderness Research Backpack Trips

JOIN biologists in an effort to provide information for sound ecological management of the mountain ranges of northwest Wyoming. Every two weeks, teams will explore and study the Wind River and Absaroka ranges; involved with ongoing cooperative projects with Wyoming Game and Fish, Shoshone National Forest, and the Univ. of Wyoming scientists.

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WILDLIFE FILM FESTIVAL

For the tenth time, the University of Montana in Missoula will host the Annual International Wildlife Film Festival, April 6-13. The week-long gathering is expected to draw participants from India, Pakistan, Great Britain, Japan, Sweden, New Zealand, Australia, Mexico, and Canada. This year's festival features programs examining wildlife and wildlife media in Third World countries, a Native American craft fair, photography exhibits, technical workshops and a media market for the sale and trade of films. Workshops cover everything from night filming to making wildlife films for children. Speakers include Barry Lopez, writer and naturalist, Jeffery Boswall, British Broadcasting Corp., Thomas Linkhorn, World Bank, and Thomas Lovejoy, World Wildlife Fund. Special beat-the-crowd film showings are set for April 3-4 and 7-8, and the top eight award-winning films will run April 10-11. For more information, write to International Wildlife Film Festival, University of Montana, Missoula, MT 59812 (406/243-4493).

SUMMER IN THE PARK

The Rocky Mountain Nature Association, Inc. will offer summer seminars at Rocky Mountain National Park. Weekend sessions include nature photography, drawing and watercolor workshops as well as courses in freshwater ecology, insects, mammal tracking and edible mushrooms. There are also week-long seminars on geology, ecology of the 417-square-mile park and environmental education. Participants must make their own lodging, transportation and meal arrangements, but the non-profit association can provide camping and accommodation information. For course schedules and descriptions write Seminar Coordinator, Rocky Mountain National Park, CO 80517, or call 303/586-2371, ext. 294.



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ENDANGERED SPECIES PROTECTION

Ninety-six nations that have an agreement to regulate world trade in wildlife will hold their sixth biennial meeting in Canada this July to discuss the program's effectiveness. The program establishes management and scientific agencies to keep track of shipments of designated species and products. Although a tentative agenda for the meeting on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna was published in the Federal Register Jan. 13, Fish and Wildlife Director Frank Dunkle says the public has a say in how this country should help protected species worldwide by commenting on the agenda by March 31. Public meetings will take place in Washington, D.C., in late April. Comments should be sent to Federal Wildlife Permit Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1000 North Glebe Road, Rm. 611, Arlington, VA 22201. For more information, contact David Klinger of the Fish and Wildlife Service at 202/343-5634.

A GEOLOGICAL VIEW

The Geological Society of Wyoming predicts that OPEC's recent accord will allow slightly higher oil prices in 1987, but won't stimulate much increase in oil and gas exploration. The Society's *Geo-Notes* quarterly publication also says Wyoming's production of natural gas and coal should show slight increases in 1987 that continue through 1991. *Geo-Notes* is \$1.50 per copy or \$5 for a year's subscription, and is available from The Geological Survey of Wyoming, P.O. Box 3008, University Station, Laramie, WY 82071.

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Free-roaming horses in Wyoming

Dick Randall, Defenders of Wildlife

The continuing saga of the West's wild horse

ranchers, however, are staunch defenders of wild horses. Opponents of wild horses argue that the animals are nothing more than feral animals -- strays or descendants of strays let loose on the land. Instead of being protected, they believe the animals should be removed and, in many cases, destroyed.

For many years ranchers and "mustangers" rounded up wild horses and sold them to rendering plants for glue or pet food. Things changed with the passage of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971. Claiming in the legislation that the animals were "fast disappearing from the American Scene," Congress offered the animals their first protection.

Some 15 years later, the wild horse issue is still riddled with controversy, pitting wild horse protectionists against ranchers, with the federal Bureau of Land Management mostly in the middle. Since the litigious law was passed, it has resulted in 21 wild horse-related lawsuits.

The system is supposed to work this way: When the number of wild horses is determined to be beyond the carrying capacity of the range, the BLM must round them up. Taken to corrals and processed, the horses are then offered for adoption to anyone with the desire and room for a horse. The adoption process allows someone to choose as many as four horses, pay a \$125 adoption fee per animal, then take the animal home. For one year they are subject to inspection by the BLM to make sure they are caring properly for the horse. After a year, the horse becomes the property of the foster parent.

The problem is that there are thousands more horses than there are people who want to or are able to adopt. And the number of horses on

the range doubles roughly every seven years. Surplus horses that are not adopted are kept in feedlots where they often end up staying till the end of their natural lives, all at taxpayers' expense. The BLM, ranchers and others claim the law needs to be changed to make it more workable.

Animal-rights groups, however, say it is not the law but agency mismanagement and political pressure from the livestock industry that are at the root of the problem. In fact, two groups have filed a lawsuit against the BLM claiming the agency is violating the Wild Free-Roaming Horses And Burros Protection Act by allowing some ranchers to circumvent the law and adopt large numbers of horses. Then those horses end up as rodeo stock or make a one-way trip to a slaughterhouse, they charge.

Researchers, meanwhile, with federal encouragement and help, are searching for a long-term answer to the overpopulation of horses. Veterinary researchers, for example, are testing birth control chemicals that are either implanted under a horse's hide or shot from a special rifle. But the programs are so far unproven, and many questions remain to be answered.

In the meantime a committee appointed by the BLM to study the management of wild horses and come up with a way to make it more tractable made several suggestions to the Secretary of Interior in early December -- including one very controversial recommendation.

"The last step is euthanasia for animals we can't find a home for," said John Boyles, chief of the BLM's Division of Wild Horses and Burros. If the Secretary of Interior accepts

that recommendation, the simmering debate over wild horses may come to a boil.

The Pryor Mountain horse range, just north of Lovell, Wyo., in southcentral Montana, is the focus for a different kind of controversy. Pryor is one of only two designated wild horse areas; the other is the Little Bookcliffs in northwestern Colorado. The Bureau of Land Management, which administers the site, says that the isolated horses are becoming dangerously inbred. Wild horse enthusiasts, however, believe the 120 or so horses there are nearly pure-blooded descendants of the Spanish Mustang, which came from Spain and North Africa with the Spanish Conquistadores in the 16th century. They don't want to see the blood diluted.

The first horses to walk the earth some 50 million years ago were the size of a fox, with four toes on the front foot and three toes on the rear, called eohippus. Fossil evidence indicates that during the millions of years of evolution the animal grew much larger and its toes disappeared, turning into a single hoof. The animal thrived on this continent until the Pleistocene, about 10,000 years ago, when it started a decline. About 8,000 years ago, the North American horse inexplicably disappeared, and remained absent from the continent until it was reintroduced by Spanish conquistadores in the 16th century. Eventually, the Spanish mustang escaped from its owners, rendezvoused with other horses, and before long a wild horse population had established itself. In later years, other kinds of horses were brought to the U.S., and the breeds were mixed.

by Jim Robbins

There are few things that so powerfully symbolize the unbridled freedom and the openness of the West as the sight of wild horses. A number of animal protection groups fiercely defend the wild horse, seeing it as, among other things, a last remnant of the Old West. But wild horses are not universally appreciated. Many ranchers and federal land managers see the animal as a scourge on the Western landscape, a kind of carp in a trout stream, that competes with cattle and destroys rangeland, interfering with the ability of ranchers to make a living -- especially in these economically depressed times. Some

After the first World War, motor vehicles began to replace livestock. Thousands of horses that had been raised for ranching, farming and the U.S. Cavalry in the West escaped or were turned out onto the land. Ranchers and farmers, operating on the thin margins of profitability in the semi-arid West, often turned horses out into the wild to run loose and fend for themselves. When harvest-time came and work horses were needed, they were rounded up. But many of these horses escaped a roundup and became part of the feral population. The Spanish blood became further mixed in the blood of these other kinds of horses, creating a mixed-blood horse that took refuge in remote areas of the West.

Today, the BLM estimates there are some 48,000 wild horses scattered throughout 10 Western states, with the population concentrated in the Great Basin Desert, which includes most of Nevada as well as parts of Utah, California, Idaho and Oregon. Some 30,000 animals are from Nevada, with another several thousand animals included in the other Great Basin states. This country, characterized by broad, dry, sagebrush-covered valleys, and broken by high, snow-covered mountain ranges, is ideal horse-habitat.

Few Western wild horses look like the sleek, well-proportioned animals that roam the Pryor Mountains, or horses that people raise on a ranch. Most are short, ill-proportioned creatures, with long-matted manes and tails, and scruffy long-haired coats.

Those who see wild horses as an obstruction say the animals are not really wild -- they are merely feral animals turned out by ranchers, or descendants of such animals. They argue that this bastard off-spring of the ranching industry does not deserve protection.

Protectionists claim that horses were once indigenous to the United States. And they say that after several generations, the animal has regained its ecological niche, with its life governed by the laws of nature just like any other wild animal. Moreover, they claim there is something special about horses -- as opposed to, say, cows.

"It's a cultural thing," said Pamela Willmore, an attorney who works for the animal-rights group Fund for Animals, in Reno, Nev., and an ardent supporter of the wild horse. "Cows become food, but we use horses to produce the food. They've been friends. We've ridden horses into war."

Wild horses live in a band year round, usually with a lead stallion and a harem of mares. They can weigh up to 1,000 pounds or so. Lead stallions are routinely challenged by younger stallions that live on their own and raid the herds for mares to start their own harems. Studs will engage in fierce combat for dominance, kicking and biting, usually attempting to sever leg tendons, with the winner assuming control of either the band or some mares. On the other hand, horses can be very affectionate with each other, and during courtship they tenderly nuzzle, whinny and sniff.

As wild horses multiplied, unchecked by predators in the early 20th century -- as many as a million

*Some say wild horses are not really wild,
and they argue that the bastard
off-spring of the ranching industry
does not deserve protection.*

Tom Treich



Tom Treich



(Continued on page 10)

Rounding up wild horses in Idaho

Horses...

(Continued from page 9)

wild horses once roamed the West -- they came in conflict with stockmen. Ranchers blamed feral horses for fouling water supplies, especially in the bone-dry Great Basin. Ranchers also said the wild horses competed with livestock for forage and displaced indigenous species such as deer, antelope and bighorn sheep. That led to frequent roundups by both professional "mustangers" and cattlemen, who drove the horses into catch traps at the end of canyons, and corrals, either on horseback, with motor vehicles or, more recently, with helicopters and fixed-wing craft. They then sold the horses to rodeos, or more often, to rendering plants, where they were turned into pet food and other meat products.

Roundups were often cruel for the horses, who suffered broken limbs, were shot or otherwise injured; often they were killed. A much-publicized roundup of wild horses in the 1970s did much to inflame the split between horse protectionists and ranchers.

In one instance, wild horses high in the rugged Lemhi Mountains, near Howe, Idaho, were cornered by a group of mustangers planning to take the animals to a Nebraska slaughterhouse. They claimed the animals were privately owned; others claim the horses were wild. They trapped some 40 horses on a cliff with log barricades, intending to return later. But when they came back three days later, four of the animals had escaped from the makeshift corral and plunged over a 200-foot cliff to their deaths. Two others fell into crevasses and died. As the cowboys struggled to capture the remaining frightened horses, another went over the cliff.

Unable to remove the carcasses, the cowboys chainsawed off some of the horses' legs in an effort at concealment. Later, some of the horses were found at the bottom of the blood-stained cliff with wire clips attached to their nostrils to restrict breathing and make them more manageable. The horses that survived were shipped to Nebraska.

"If a cowboy needed a little pocket change to go to a rodeo or something, he'd go out and round up a few horses and sell them for pet food," said Robert Hillman, director of field services for the Sacramento, Calif.-based Animal Protection Institute, which considers the protection of wild horses a priority issue.

The roundups were conducted with deadly effectiveness. During a two-year period in southern Montana alone, more than 20,000 horses were removed from the Big Horn Basin, where the Pryor Mountain refuge is located. By 1970, out of a million horses that once thundered across the Western range, only an estimated 17,000 wild horses were left.

Wild horses found a friend in the 1960s. Velma Johnston, a rancher from Nevada, who became known as Wild Horse Annie, observed the cruel handling of some wild horses captured on the range. Incensed, she mounted a protection effort for the animals, which resulted in the 1971 federal Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. Most critically, the act stipulated that, instead of being

rounded up and sent to slaughter, wild horses must be held until they can be adopted. At first the law mandated that the wild horse forever remained the property of the federal government; a recent change in the law gives title of the horse to the "foster parent" on the condition that, for one year, the animal is properly cared for.

Sixteen years later, the system has seldom worked right and there are serious problems with wild horses. In fact, the controversy over wild horses is at a fever pitch. Some claim it is the fault of the law; others say it is the administration.

A key question is how many horses the Western range can comfortably accommodate. Each year the BLM is supposed to determine how many surplus horses there are in each management district, and then go about gathering that number of horses. Once those animals are rounded up, they are offered to foster parents. Since the adoption program began in 1973, more than 60,000 horses have been adopted. Presently, however, horses are not being gathered, although there are many more horses on the range than the government believes is healthy.

The BLM estimates that the carrying capacity of the Western range -- a number hotly contested by animal-rights groups -- is around 25,000 to 30,000 head. There are presently some 48,000 wild horses at large. The problem is that the three BLM holding facilities -- in Muleshoe, Texas, Lovelock, Nev., and Bloomfield, Neb. -- have no vacancies, with the maximum of 3,000 horses at each.

Caring for those horses, kept in

small corrals in a feedlot, costs about \$2.36 a day, or more than \$7 million a year for all 9,000 wild horses. And some of those horses will never leave the feedlot. The total budget for the wild horse and burro program is about \$17 million.

The main problem with the present system is this: The number of people who would like to adopt horses is far less than the number of horses being rounded up. A diminishing livestock market has contributed to the problem; a good saddle horse can be purchased for less than a wild horse can be adopted.

"A registered quarterhorse can sell for \$75 today," said wrangler Lynne Taylor. "It costs \$125 to adopt a horse." Another contributing factor is the high reproductive and low mortality rate of horses. They have few natural predators and in some cases they can increase their population at a rate of 20 percent a year.

The adoption process also leaves the older, less attractive horses behind, many of which will never find a home. "What happens," said one BLM employee, "to a 15-year-old stud who's battle-scarred? Or an old mare who's foaled out?"

The BLM, by the way, has no problem adopting out burros. The animals, feral descendants of burros used by prospectors who scoured the Southwest for precious metals, look like little donkeys and are novel enough and cute enough to be in constant demand.

Another problem, BLM horse administrators say, is that there is an adoption limit of four horses per person. With such a surplus of wild horses, they argue, there should be provision for large-scale adoptions.

The BLM has attempted to get around the four-horse limit and has been slapped with a lawsuit for its efforts. Some ranchers in Montana,

for example, have apparently been obtaining power of attorney from other individuals allowing them to adopt the horses in their names. This has enabled some ranchers to control hundreds of wild horses. After the year of BLM "probation" is up, the horses become the property of the rancher who arranged the adoption.

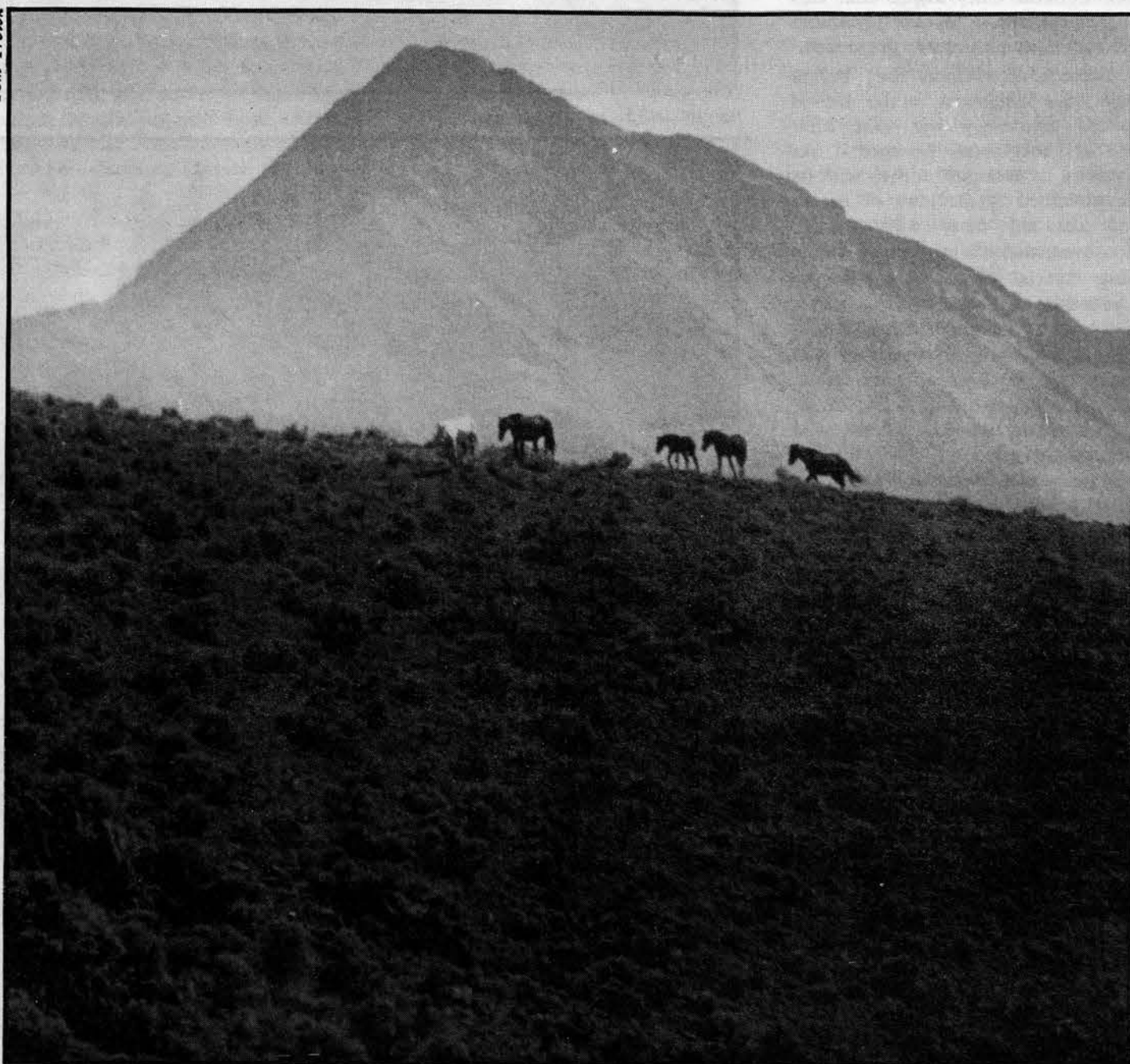
According to API's Hillman, some 1,500 horses have been adopted in this way. "They're going to slaughter," Hillman said. While horse meat now fetches around 20 cents a pound, Hillman said, it was recently as high as 40 cents a pound. "They're selling what they can to rodeos, but if a horse doesn't buck, it goes to slaughter. There's no ifs and buts about it." Many animal-rights groups oppose rodeo sales because they claim the horses are violently spurred or otherwise injured to make them buck.

The BLM refuses to comment on those allegations, citing the lawsuit against the agency. The lawsuit, which is being heard in Reno, Nev., has two major parts. The first alleges cruelty in BLM holding and processing facilities, and during roundups. That has been settled by allowing protectionists to inspect the corrals and roundups, and Hillman said conditions have improved "100 percent." The second part contends that BLM is violating the law with large-scale adoptions, knowing the animals are ending up in the slaughterhouse. A court decision is pending.

Jerome Jack, who until December was area manager for the Billings District of the BLM, which includes the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Refuge, defends large-scale adoptions, many of which he has helped process. He believes the Wild

(Continued on page 11)

Tom Treich



Wild horses in Idaho

Del Hardin, BLM



Horses in the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range in south-central Montana

Pryor Mountain horses may be a bit too pure

Our horses galloped, snorting, down a dry wash, below a ridge and out of sight of the herd of wild horses grazing quietly above us. The hooves of our horses threw bits of red clay into the air as we rode through silver-green juniper and sagebrush. Ahead of us lay the flat, timbered peaks of the Pryor Mountains, the sky above them nickel-gray.

Lynne Taylor, wild horse specialist for the Bureau of Land Management at the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Refuge in Montana, reined his horse up and tied him to a small shrub. He motioned for us to do the same. "Stay down," he said in a gravelly trail-boss voice.

Taylor is the prototype cowboy, and at 51 may have spent more time in the saddle -- either working or at rodeos -- than out of it. He's been working with wild horses in the Pryors since 1971. Stealthily we crept over a slate gray ridge, then headed up another. As we crested the second ridge we could see the horses grazing, still oblivious to us, a band of perhaps 13, led by a large black stallion. Then they saw us and spooked. Wheeling back, they galloped along the next ridge. After running for perhaps a quarter mile, they stopped at a point where they could keep a wary eye on us.

After a day on the range, our horses, anxiously nearing the corral and a bucket of oats at

the Pryor Mountain refuge, broke into a trot. Suddenly a captured wild colt, being held for a short time in a corral, appeared from behind a clump of sagebrush. Our horses jumped, spooked by the colt; the colt, even more frightened, bolted for new shelter. The skittish animal watched us from a distance. Because of its grayish-brown coloring, it's known as a grulla -- the Spanish word for mouse-color. Though the colt was a healthy-looking animal, Jerry Jack said he's increasingly worried about the offspring of the Pryor herd with every successive generation.

The Pryor country is very dry and rocky, difficult to ranch economically, and it has been sparsely settled. The geography is also extreme. The refuge itself is comprised of the steep slopes, canyons and bluffs of the Pryor Mountains, and the eastern boundary is formed by the long and cavernous Bighorn Canyon. Because of this isolation, the infusion of outside blood into the Pryor herd has been kept to a minimum, and the horses over many generations have maintained their own unique traits. Some believe their traits are the same as the Spanish mustang.

The degree of herd purity is hotly debated: Horse protectionists believe there has been precious little outside blood; the BLM says ranch horses have found their way into the refuge and subsequently the gene pool, even though Spanish mustang traits dominate. Still another point of view holds that the real wild horses here

were killed in the 1920s and 1930s and today's herd is entirely descended from ranch horses. Except for here and a few other areas, the traits of the Spanish mustangs have been much more diluted -- to a point in many cases where they're almost unrecognizable.

Because the Pryor horses are so isolated, Jack contends, they have been inbreeding to the point where there may be imminent problems. "It's like any inbred population," he said. They may have the same genetic defect and "if that one virus comes along it could wipe them out." Jack thinks the BLM has to take a look at the introduction of new studs into a herd as confined as this one. But new horses should be selected so they are similar in size, conformation and color to the ones already there, he said, so the appearance of the animals is not altered.

Dr. Oliver Ryder, a geneticist at the San Diego Zoo, has examined some of the BLM data on the Pryor Mountain herd and agrees there is potential for genetic problems. "There's no question inbreeding is going on," he said. "It's inevitable." But predictions on what problems might occur and when are a guessing game, he said. The horses may even pass through the high-risk period of inbreeding without a problem. "The conservative course would be to manage for the inbreeding," by selectively introducing some stock, he added.

The BLM has not taken steps to

introduce new genes into the Pryors because there are advocates of wild horses -- who have a resolute fondness for the Pryor herd -- who say the issue of inbreeding is a manufactured crisis.

"The BLM is a land agency. They don't know anything about animals," said Hope Ryden, the New York City author of *America's Last Wild Horses* and a fierce advocate for the Pryor horses for more than 15 years. "Inbreeding is a good thing. They do it with horses all the time. It's called line breeding. An animal becomes much more tailored to its environment."

But while Oliver Ryder agreed that "a very low level of inbreeding is desirable in a population," father-daughter inbreeding is definitely not good. "From the material given me," Ryden said, "there were father-daughter relations." The issue is clouded considerably because this kind of inbreeding is the subject of debate within the scientific community.

But Hope Ryden questions the BLM's data and remains steadfast that introduction of outside blood must not be allowed. "I wouldn't say the herd is absolutely pure, but when animals have been living together for a long period of time, you get a very special breed of horse," the horse advocate said. "Once they do that (introduce new blood) the purity of this herd is lost and we could lose a national treasure."

--Jim Robbins

(Continued from page 10)

Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act desperately needs some retooling.

"Don't incarcerate them in a feedlot for the rest of their lives," said Jack, who is now director of the Montana Stockgrowers Association, a group that represents the cattle industry. If they're not adopted "run 'em through a sale ring," he said. "Someone might not pay \$125, but they may pay \$50." Under current law, that is prohibited. The law should also allow horses to be shipped to slaughter if they cannot

be adopted, Jack added. "Elk and deer populations are controlled by hunting, but horses are moved to a corral for the rest of their lives. It's not fair to the horses to keep them out there (on the range) and let them propagate."

The current law is fine, says the Fund for Animals' Willmore. The horses suffer because the BLM has failed to find a solution to overpropagation. Instead, she charges, the BLM, in secret concert with ranchers, "sat down

and just like the thing in Iran, said, 'How can we get around this law,' and allow large-scale adoptions."

"Everyone's unhappy about seeing them standing around in corrals," Willmore said. "I can't understand why in 17 years the BLM can't come up with a management plan."

If the Secretary of Interior approves it, the BLM may have a new wild horse-management blueprint along the lines of Jack's comments, which guarantees it will not please horse protectionists. In December of

last year a BLM wild horse advisory committee issued a series of recommendations on ways to solve the problem. The crux of the study is five recommendations:

•First, adoption should continue at \$125 a horse, and \$75 a burro;

•Second, if homes cannot be found for older horses then they could be made available at a reduced cost;

•Third, older horses are currently supplied to a prison in Canon City, Colo., where inmates use them to

(Continued on page 12)



Jeffrey Clark

Horses...

(Continued from page 11)

learn handling techniques. The committee recommended the program be continued and expanded;

•Fourth, the panel commended the idea of private lands being turned into sanctuaries with private funds;

•Fifth, and most controversial by large measure, the panel recommended euthanasia for horses left after other remedies have been exhausted.

Federal law, according to John Boyles, chief of the BLM's Division of Wild Horses and Burros, allows the destruction of surplus horses. Until now the bureau has avoided such a "final solution" to surplus horses. "I don't think anyone wants to destroy them," Boyles said. "But we tried to look for alternatives and we couldn't find one." Sterility drugs are too far from reality at this point to be of much use, he said.

Animal protectionists vow not to allow euthanasia for wild horses. "We'll fight it," said Ted Crail, director of the Animal Protection Institute. "We're on the verge of the last wild horse. We want the BLM to go back to being the good legal guardian of wild horses, not the evil legal guardian."

Willmore believes the immediate solution lies in the creation of federal sanctuaries, similar to the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Refuge. "I think it's a shame that an animal that's done so much for us ends up this way," she said.

That is very unlikely, according to Boyles. He says the advisory panel specifically rejected the idea of any further federally owned and operated sanctuaries.

API spokesman Hillman says the problem of too many unadoptable horses is a relatively easy one to solve. "A lot of those horses that are unadoptable should not have been rounded up in the first place," he said. "If they would leave the horses out there that nobody wants anyway, they wouldn't be unadoptable. The problem is the contract capture crews are getting paid by the head -- so they're not selective."

Animal rights groups are not the only ones who have gone to court over the management of wild horses. Ranchers have tried to force the government to remove horses from public and private land. They want compensation for damage from the horses to the range, which they say deprives their cattle of grass. In 1984, the Denver-based Mountain States Legal Foundation, on behalf of ranches near Rock Springs, Wyo., filed a lawsuit against the BLM claiming that the agency's failure to keep wild horses off private land caused ranchers economic damage. The suit said that constituted a taking of property without compensation -- a violation, ranchers claim, of their fifth amendment rights.

Mountain States vice president and general counsel Constance Brooks, who served as an attorney in the case, said members of the Rock Springs Grazing Association were concerned when the horse herd roaming the southwestern Wyoming badlands swelled from its usual level of about 1,200 to some 6,000 animals.

Land ownership in the area is checkerboarded -- that is 640-acre sections of public land alternate with sections of private land.

"The horse were running amok, causing problems and leaving permanent trails throughout the badlands," she said. "Six months after the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act passed, the ranchers called the BLM and asked them to

remove the horses. The BLM ignored them for five years, and then began an ineffectual removal program. They stopped it in 1979."

That year Mountain States, a "conservative public interest foundation created to protect private property rights," according to Brooks, stepped in with a lawsuit challenging wild horse management.

Brooks argued that when the federal government passed the wild horse act, it assumed responsibility for the animals, unlike other wildlife, which roam at will and are considered under no one's control. The ranchers, Brooks said, are asking for compensation for the forage consumed by the government horses on private land. She did not have a precise figure for those damages.

Ranchers won on the U.S. district court level, won again before a three-judge panel from the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals, and then lost before the full 10th Circuit. In December, they asked the U.S. Supreme Court to hear the case.

Donald Carr is chief of the wildlife and marine resources section of the Justice Department, which represented the government in the case. "We're not responsible for damage they might inflict as if they were our employees or agents," Carr said. "We don't own the horses. If they eat forage, they eat forage."

If the BLM isn't doing its job gathering horses, Carr said, then a mandamus order is needed to force them to gather surplus horses. A

constitutional remedy is absurd, he added.

Carr says he finds the attitude of the ranchers ironic. "Those horses have been out there (on public land) for the convenience of ranchers for years so they didn't have to feed them. But when the Army came through and needed a ready supply of horses, the landowners could sell them."

Since the suit was first filed in 1979, the situation near Rock Springs has improved, from the ranchers' point of view. The BLM has culled the herd from 6,000 to around 1,600. But Brooks says the issue is not over.

"More horses need to be taken off, and you can't ignore the fact that every year they (horses) increase by 25 percent." The number should be reduced to 1,400, she said, and held there.

Talk about saving space on the public lands for cows rankles animal protectionists. "When you look at the fact that there's 5.6 million head of cattle on the public range and 40,000 horses, and they say horses are causing the problem, something's wrong," said Hillman. "There's too many cattle on the range -- that's the bottom-line problem."

□

Jim Robbins is a free-lance writer in Missoula, Mont., and a frequent contributor to *High Country News*. This article was made possible by the High Country News Research Fund.

Seeking ways to put wild horses on the pill

What is the answer to the controversy? Protectionists claim it is the removal of cattle from the range, and ranchers claim it is the removal of horses. The eventual answer to the issue -- on this all sides agree -- is the implanting or injection of a timed-release birth control chemical to lower the reproductive rate and reduce the number of horses on the range.

The technique has been used experimentally on a wild-horse herd in Idaho, and does show some promise. Researchers from the University of Minnesota are experimenting with the lead stallion in some Texas bands, and the reproducing mares in other bands.

In the first case, the lead stallion is anesthetized and given a simple vasectomy -- a 15- to 20-minute operation. Some biologists believe that the lead stallion is the only reproducing male in a band. But others think lesser stallions will mate as well, so the sterilization of mares is being tested in other bands.

A capsule about the size of a little finger is placed in the mares and then the wound is sewn shut. The capsule, which contains a hormone that prevents estrus, is in timed-release form, and researchers hope it will eventually last through two breeding seasons.

"We determined that we didn't change the behavior of the animals," said Jay Kirkpatrick, who is experimenting with a different approach among wild horses on Assateague Island, off the coast of Maryland. "That's very important. If you

changed the behavior of the lead stallion, the young stallions could come down and run off with the mares; then you would accomplish nothing."

Kirkpatrick, a physiology professor at Eastern Montana College in Billings, and his research partner John Turner, who teaches at the Medical College of Ohio in Toledo, are experimenting with injections of the male hormone testosterone into stallions.

"If we can put a large enough dose of this stuff in an animal, it does two things," Kirkpatrick said. "It decreases sperm production and it decreases sperm motility." Motility is the name for the wiggling

motion of the sperm. In research done in Idaho in the early 1980s, Kirkpatrick said, the procedure decreased foal production by 83 percent. The researchers are also looking at progestin injections for mares to cause sterility.

The key to making his technique viable, Kirkpatrick said, hinges on experimentation with a gun that can shoot the timed-released hormone into the animals from a distance -- on the ground or from a helicopter. Kirkpatrick estimates the procedure could eventually cost as little as \$5 per horse for an injection that could last up to two years.

--Jim Robbins

A citizens' proposal

Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture departments established a wild horse and burro advisory board last year to help solve the problem of too many horses roaming the public land or accumulating in corrals.

In its December report, the panel made 22 recommendations, including the five-step process of regular adoption, adoption at reduced rates, training by prisoners, placement in private sanctuaries and euthanasia for animals not adopted after 90 days.

The board of wildlife biologists, conservationists and ranchers found the current adoption fees acceptable but recommended that the BLM develop a more aggressive adoption policy, making use of advertising and

encouraging private sanctuaries. The panel advocated the expansion of horse training programs in prisons, but stopped short of recommending outright sale of the animals, an option hotly opposed by humane groups. BLM spokeswoman Barbara Maxfield says that having the authority to sell horses could make placement easier with people who do not want to wait a year for title.

For a copy of the report, contact Barbara Maxfield, U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Washington, D.C. 20240 (202/343-5717). Those interested in adoption can write to Adopt-A-Horse at the same address.

--Becky Rumsey

Army Corps of Engineers



Garrison Dam and Lake Sakakawea, North Dakota

1988 budget

BuRec wants to kill dozens of projects

by Steve Hinchman

The Reagan administration's proposed 1988 budget for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation means major changes for water projects in the West.

If passed by Congress, the \$6.3 billion budget would drastically cut funds for the Garrison Diversion project in North Dakota, for 50 smaller projects in the West, and for most future planning. Instead, money would be shifted to the giant Central Arizona and Central Utah projects.

The 1988 re-allocations would put BuRec's major works, CAP and CUP, on a fast track under the philosophy that the sooner water is delivered, the sooner users can begin repaying the U.S. Treasury. To accelerate work on the big projects, BuRec will dry up funds for newly authorized projects such as Garrison. Interior Secretary Donald Hodel says that by concentrating funds, the new budget eliminates costly delays that plague BuRec projects.

Staff members with several national environmental groups say they agree with Interior's strategy to bring water projects on line sooner, but argue that Hodel backed the wrong horses. Ed Osann, director of the National Wildlife Federation's water resources program, notes that both CAP and CUP are billions of dollars from completion and are currently tied up in litigation or environmental impact studies. He says the new budget allocations are a "hurry-up spending program" designed to sink money into the two water projects before the critics catch up with them.

Some members of Congress also question the selection criteria used by the Bureau. North Dakota Sen. Quentin Burdick, D, suggests the

cuts may be political retaliation -- North and South Dakota ousted Republican senators last November. "It looks to me like they are moving their money over to two Republican states," Burdick recently told the *Aberdeen American News*.

Funding for Garrison, an irrigation and water supply project in North Dakota, would drop from \$33 million this year to \$2.5 million, which Burdick's press secretary, Laurie Boeder, says is just enough money to close out existing contracts, "in essence, to shut down the program." South Dakota would lose funding for the WEB rural drinking-water supply project, down from \$21.5 million to \$2.25 million.

By comparison, the Central Arizona Project, the largest water diversion ever attempted by BuRec, will gain \$70 million over last year, to \$276 million; the Central Utah Project will get an extra \$50.7 million, to \$135 million. Together the projects would commandeer over 65 percent of BuRec's 1988 budget.

Both diversion projects capture

Colorado River water, funneling it into the cities of Phoenix and Tucson in Arizona and Salt Lake City and other Wasatch Front communities in Utah. Other big winners in the proposed budget are California's Central Valley Project and the Columbia Basin projects in Washington state. The Colorado Basin Salinity Project would lose funding.

In the planning department, funding cuts would end work on 38 of the 50 projects currently on the drawing boards, and BuRec Commissioner C. Dale Duvall reports the staff will be reduced from 875 to 200 engineers. Officially the Bureau says it is delaying planning projects for two years in order not to raise false expectations that it would start projects for which there is no money.

However, BuRec public relations officer Mitch Snow says the best new project the planning staff can come up with has a cost-benefit ratio of 1.06 to 1. According to Washington, D.C., water expert and publisher of *The Water Reporter*, Larry Mosher, "They don't have anything worth

doing whether they have the money or not."

BuRec's Snow says the agency has no intention of permanently mothballing water projects such as Garrison, but he could point to no firm re-start dates. Snow says BuRec anticipates having funds available for additional projects by 1992, but adds that by then there will be full cost-sharing programs on all water projects, including planning and engineering costs as well as construction.

The budget proposal still has to clear Congress, and the battle over appropriations might alter the BuRec proposal. The effect of Reagan's proposals might be to drive a wedge between the West's congressional delegations, putting the four states on the receiving end (Arizona, Utah, Washington and California) at odds with those that lost funding. With future planning gone, some of these states might decide there is nothing more to gain from BuRec and abandon the agency to the budget-cutters.

Audubon, NWF fight for a water project

Most Western dam projects are at some time attacked by opponents as federal boondoggles, but North Dakota's Garrison Diversion may be the first such project to be labelled an environmental boondoggle.

After more than two decades' battle over Garrison, disagreement over whether to support a reduced version of the project or fight to the finish has split the environmental opposition, unraveling the local coalition in North Dakota and severing contacts between Dakota grass-roots and national environmentalists.

Meanwhile, Garrison promoters are moving forward with a newly authorized project, and their only real opposition is not the environmental movement, but the Bureau of Reclamation, which has proposed cuts in the project's funds.

To complicate matters further, the two national environmental groups that helped resurrect Garrison last year -- a compromise that cost them most of their local support -- have spoken out against BuRec's proposed budget cuts. That move, by the National Audubon Society and the National Wildlife Federation, has

brought on renewed conflict in the environmental community.

The Garrison project, as reformulated, would divert Missouri River water to irrigate 130,000 acres and, to a lesser extent, provide for municipal and industrial water supply. Located in the North Dakota heartland, it would pump \$1.2 billion into an economically depressed farm state with only 600,000 inhabitants. It would also destroy national wildlife refuges, drain thousands of acres of

(Continued on page 14)

Garrison...

(Continued from page 13)

wetlands, and channelize the free-flowing James River (HCN, 9/27/86).

Critics of the reformed Garrison include most of the grass-roots coalition in North Dakota that opposed the water project over the last two decades, several regional officers of Audubon who resigned in protest and the Sierra Club. They charge that National Audubon, the lead organization in the controversy, jumped on the congressional bandwagon to give North Dakota a reduced Garrison as a way to rid themselves of an expensive and time-consuming issue.

Some argue, as does Ordean Ebel, a farmer and chair of the Committee to Save North Dakota -- the oldest grass-roots organization to oppose Garrison -- that Audubon is now prepared to sacrifice North Dakota to Garrison in order to save Arizona and Utah from even larger BuRec water projects. He and other critics say the result will be loss of some of the nation's critical wetlands and waterfowl-breeding grounds.

Audubon and the Wildlife Federation support their policy as the best solution anyone has yet found for Garrison. They say the project is both politically and environmentally sound. Charlene Daugherty, a lobbyist with National Audubon, says the 1986 compromise deleted 900,000 acres from the original plans. Under the new plan, the project would not encroach on the Hudson Bay drainage. The state would create a wetlands trust fund to buy up wetlands for preservation and implement a no-net-loss of wetlands policy during construction.

Daugherty adds that Audubon settled for a scaled-down project instead of opposing it in its entirety because the North Dakota congressional delegation was pressing for authorization of a larger Garrison. Environmentalists never had enough votes to kill the project, she says.

The compromise is not a giveaway, Daugherty says, pointing to major hurdles written into the bill that Garrison promoters must still clear. The reduction in size is accompanied by stricter repayment

criteria, which means fewer farmers will be paying more.

"It will bring the costs a little closer to home," says Daugherty. "It puts the project to a public test, to see who will pay for it." Because funds for Garrison were authorized in component sections and not indexed for inflation, Daugherty argues that there will be a tight rein on BuRec spending, forcing promoters to return to Congress for more money.

However, the other side of the bargain requires National Audubon and the Wildlife Federation to support Garrison in Congress. That is an unlikely position for two prominent national environmental groups, but one they say they are committed to -- and not just because they signed a contract.

Ed Osann, water resources director for the National Wildlife Federation, says BuRec made a mistake by chopping Garrison for the central Arizona and central Utah projects. "It shows a degree of contempt for reform to zero out the program that has undergone the most stringent re-evaluation."

Critics in North Dakota say the Garrison plan was a poor trade and that the national groups and two state wildlife groups caved in to North Dakota's century-long effort to land a federal irrigation project. Gary Pearson, a veterinarian and 20-year veteran of the fight to stop Garrison, says wetlands will not be adequately protected. Thus far, he charges, the state and Garrison Water Conservancy District have managed to resolve all wetlands mitigation issues in their favor.

Pearson says wetlands are being held hostage for further concessions. The conservancy district wants the environmental groups to support an expanded Garrison plus adjustments of federal swampbuster regulations to allow drainage of private wetlands. The expansion would re-insert the Lonetree Reservoir, taken out in last year's negotiations, send polluted irrigation runoff into the Hudson Bay drainage and into Canada, and inundate the Shewenne National Wildlife Refuge. "The compromise didn't resolve anything," says Pearson, "except the state got a project."

To Pearson, drainage and irrigation are linked -- they are ways to bring more land into cultivation.

Pearson believes the state's politicians will hang onto both approaches as long as possible.

Audubon and the Wildlife Federation don't understand how these projects are ingrained in the folklore of the state, Pearson says. "People think irrigation will somehow solve all our problems."

While there may be too much political capital invested in Garrison for politicians to give up the project, many farmers have already done so. According to a 1981 University of North Dakota study, only a fifth of the state's farmers now support the project, and less than half have ever supported it. Ordean Ebel says a sour farming economy has changed people. "At these prices no one can make money off irrigation. A lot of irrigation equipment is standing idle."

While Dakotans who oppose Garrison seem to agree that the national groups were co-opted, they also say the issue split their local coalition, which began nearly 20 years ago. Ebel says the \$12 million wetlands trust fund did the splitting.

One local group, the North Dakota Chapter of the Wilderness Society, agreed to end its opposition to Garrison if the state would implement a wetlands trust fund. According to Pearson, who was a

member of the society and who later resigned, the Garrison promoters went to Washington, D.C., and used the society's agreement to convince Audubon and the Wildlife Federation to follow suit.

When the directors of the National Audubon Society realized they might have a solution to the controversy, it became a matter of personal pride to bring it to conclusion, says Charles Callison. He was Audubon's executive vice president during the first 10 years the organization was embroiled in the Garrison controversy. No staff dissension was permitted, Callison says, although one regional director was fired and two resigned in protest over the reformulation agreement. Finally, Audubon's national leadership lost almost all contact with its Dakota chapters, which were built on opposition to Garrison, he says.

If there is a lesson to be drawn from the controversy, Callison says it is this: Washington, D.C.-based groups must not lose touch with their grass roots. But Callison points out that conservation groups now have a chance to change sides. Because Dakota water interests have gone back on the compromises, environmental groups also have no further obligation to support Garrison, he says. They should not be on Capitol Hill lobbying for a project that "by all their instincts, they should be fighting," says Callison.

--Steve Hinchman

Animas-LaPlata project stalls

Colorado's Animas-La Plata water project will also be hit by the Bureau of Reclamation budget cuts. Animas-La Plata is a \$512 million dam and canal system near Durango that would provide irrigation water to the southwestern part of the state and also settle a century-old controversy over Ute Indian water rights.

Currently, the project is in a precarious position. Because Animas-La Plata's cost-sharing agreement involves Indian water rights, it requires congressional approval. Until such legislation is passed, BuRec information officer Mitch Snow says there is no point in allocating money to build the project.

But funding cuts would delay

the project's 12-year completion schedule, say Colorado water officials. Any delays could threaten its complex cost-sharing agreement, which includes the federal government, Colorado, New Mexico and two Ute Indian reservations. Colorado Water Conservation Board Director Bill McDonald told the *Denver Post*: "If everything does not hold up any party can just walk away from the agreement. If that happens, we're back to square one."

BuRec has recommended \$1.9 million for Animas-La Plata in 1988. McDonald says the state will ask Congress to increase that figure by \$4 million to keep construction on schedule.

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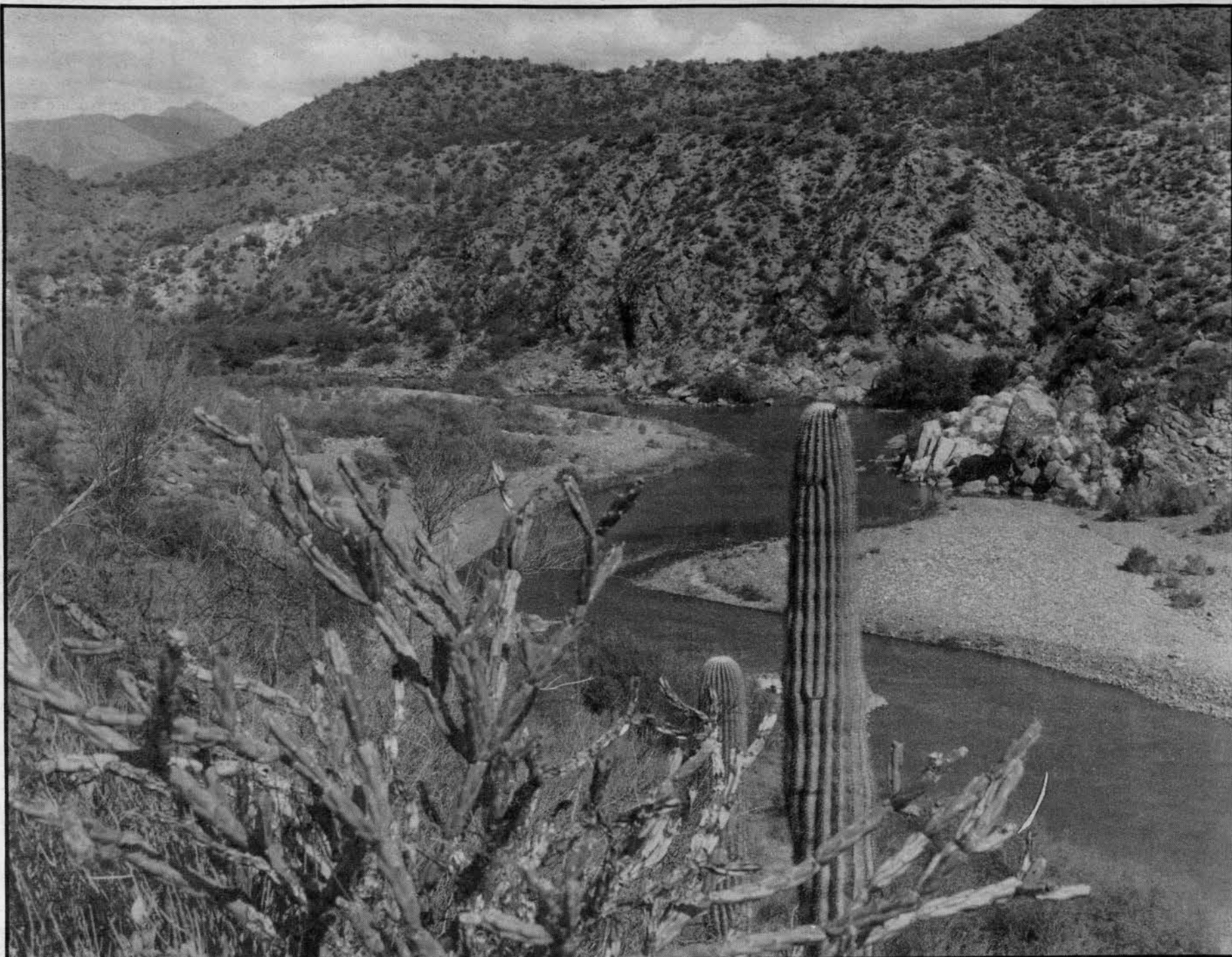
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Bob Witzeman



Site of the proposed Cliff Dam, on Arizona's Palo Verde River.

BuRec and environmentalists come to blows

The full force of the environmental movement is about to meet the full force of the federal dam-builders. The struggle between environmentalists and the Bureau of Reclamation is over the \$1 billion Plan 6 -- the largest feature yet to be built in the multi-billion-dollar Central Arizona Project.

Both BuRec and the environmentalists are putting all their eggs in the CAP basket. BuRec has abandoned scores of smaller projects as well as the giant Garrison Diversion project to concentrate its funds on a handful of projects (see accompanying story). CAP is most prominent among that handful.

In the same way, environmentalists have concentrated their forces on CAP, with one of the largest coalitions ever assembled to fight a federal water project.

The heart of the struggle is the proposed Cliff Dam on the Palo Verde upstream of Phoenix -- a \$633 million project that BuRec says is needed for municipal water supply and flood control and to ensure the safety of two other dams also on the Verde.

The environmental coalition, titled the National Coalition to Stop Cliff Dam, says the dam would destroy nesting areas and riparian habitat for a rare and endangered population of desert bald eagles. They argue Cliff Dam is essentially an urban project, designed to allow commercial development of 2,000 acres in the center of Phoenix by providing flood control.

It may be no accident that a

showdown over Western water projects is centered around an urban rather than an agricultural project. Neither the administration nor the national environmental movement seems to have the heart or resources to fight for or against Garrison, which is an agricultural project. Instead, the battlelines have been drawn over a project that will supply urban residents with drinking water and developers with flood control. The stakes for both sides are here, near Phoenix, where land values are high and environmental groups have large memberships.

The National Coalition to Stop Cliff Dam includes the local chapters of the Audubon Society, the National Wildlife Federation and the Sierra Club; the groups' regional and national offices; and other heavyweights such as the Environmental Policy Institute and the Natural Resources Defense Council.

The Arizona water interests that support BuRec, and that are parties to Plan 6's \$371 million cost-sharing contract with the federal government, include the state, the city of Phoenix and Maricopa County. The latter includes the dam site, has two million people and is the size of Vermont. Also included is the Salt River Project, Arizona's largest utility company and the fourth largest utility in the nation.

The coalition's goal is to attack Plan 6 on fiscal and technical grounds, both in Congress and in the Arizona courts. The group's Washington, D.C., staff, comprised of lobbyists, environmental lawyers and

economists who are mostly with the National Wildlife Federation, have researched the economic portion of the coalition's lawsuit. They charge that BuRec is covering up cost overruns on Plan 6 that range as high as 1,000 percent by hiding them in the overall \$5.2 billion cost of CAP. Ed Osann, water resources director for the Wildlife Federation, says BuRec must secure more local funding or go back to Congress for re-authorization to cover the higher costs.

The coalition also says BuRec is illegally spending \$100 million in dam safety funds on Cliff Dam. The coalition points to a 1986 study made by the General Accounting Office at the request of Interior Secretary Donald Hodel. The study concludes that Cliff Dam is ineligible for dam safety funds because it is a new dam. While their lawsuit is pending, the coalition has asked for an injunction to halt any further spending on Plan 6.

Secretary Hodel has countered that even though the \$1 billion Plan 6 was originally authorized as a specific unit of CAP for \$40 million in 1968, the increased costs are permissible as long as the entire project stays within CAP's total cost ceiling. However, the project will exceed CAP's authorized costs if BuRec is barred from using dam safety funds for Cliff Dam.

Meanwhile, the coalition's Arizona staff have coordinated the technical arguments against Cliff Dam for the second half of the lawsuit. They argue BuRec ignored several alternatives that would pro-

vide cheaper water and flood control, and with less environmental damage. One alternative is to store water underground rather than behind Cliff Dam, simply by letting it percolate through the river bottom to recharge groundwater aquifers. Bob Witzeman of the Maricopa Audubon Society says they used BuRec's own figures to prove the aquifers could provide three times as much water as the dam.

The environmental coalition has also presented two studies by the Army Corps of Engineers. The first concludes that Phoenix has already solved flooding caused by the Salt River by building 15 bridges that span the flood plain and by channelizing and building levees. At the same time the Corps reports the riverbed has deepened due to gravel mining, which has shrunk the flood plain and reduced hazards. The second corps study shows the dam safety problems on the Palo Verde could be solved for less than \$20 million.

The battle over Plan 6 has not been cheap. Witzeman reports litigation costs, which are shared almost evenly by the local and national groups, reached five digits in the past year alone. And that figure doesn't count lobbying and other costs already built into the budgets of the national offices in Washington, D.C., he says. Meanwhile, BuRec is fast approaching its budget ceiling, due in part to delays resulting from lawsuits and court costs absorbed in fighting off its opponents.

--Steve Hinchman and Ed Marston

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The postcard imperative

by Arthur Roth

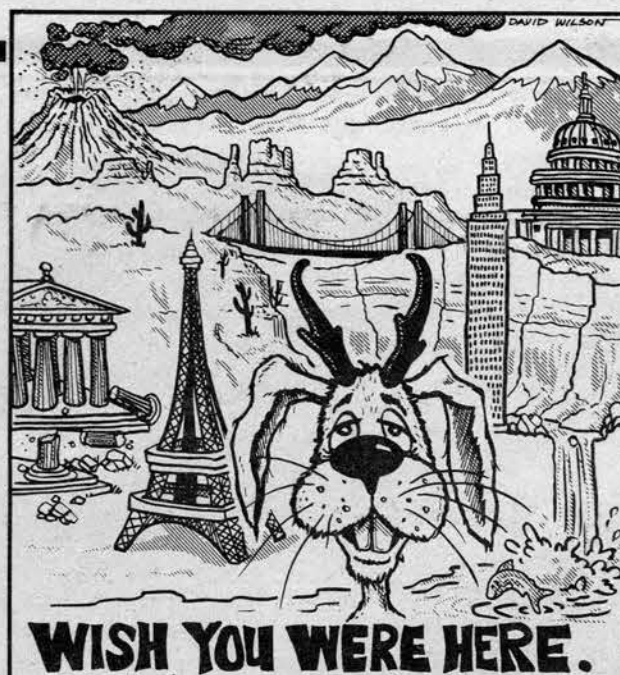
Why do we find sending postcards while on vacation to be such a chore? Who cares anyway? I mean I can never recall saying to myself, "How come old Whats-His-Face didn't send me a postcard when he went to Tahiti?" Who would miss cards if we didn't send them? Nobody, that's who. I mean the thought that you have to choose and purchase and write and buy stamps for (often in a foreign language!) and mail a dozen cards is certainly a drag to say the least, a sort of mental toothache. I'll admit it's not as big a headache as buying gifts to take home, or wondering if you'll get your laundry back in time, but it's there, a small black cloud constantly hanging over you, a luxury tax on enjoying yourself.

We seem to have an ethical or social imperative to taunt our friends with postcards when we're on holiday. Fifty years ago there was an element of one-upmanship, of envy-raising, involved in sending postcards. Back then people got to go on vacation two or three times in their lives, not two or three times a year. Back then you wanted everyone to know you finally made it to Paris, by cracky! Hence a flood of postcards. But today everybody goes everywhere so why brag? I mean, 15-year-olds trek

through the Hindu Kush, while 80-year-olds hike the Santa Fe Trail.

A friend of mine eliminates the buying stamps and mailing part of the chore by leaving his made-out postcards in the hotel room just before he takes the taxi to the airport. He neatly stacks the cards on the night table, along with a generous handful of change to cover postage, and relies on someone to pop them in the mailbox. His cards always reach their destinations, proof that even the most mercenary of hotel maids and concierges feel that moral compulsion to speed postcards on their way.

Some people are more compulsive about sending cards than others. When I lived in New York City, a professional friend of mine, whom I saw two or three times a week, once sent me a postcard of the Statue of Liberty. On another occasion I received a "Greetings from Chinatown!" card from him. I lived right around the corner from Chinatown. He once expressed shock that his favorite deli didn't have its own postcards. He's the only person I know who likes to send postcards. Actually I prefer another friend's whimsical practice of sending postcards of Parisian summer scenes from Florida in the dead of winter, or postcards of Disneyland from Medicine Hat, Alberta.



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Another reason I dislike sending postcards is that I go through a lot of anxiety trying to match up the right postcards with the right people: this lakeside view for environmentalist Sue; this native quarter shot for ethnically conscious Jane; this castle for romantic Linda; this battlefield scene for history buff Tom. But when it's time to write the postcards, back in my hotel room, I'm usually too tired to figure out who gets what and just send the cards as they come to hand, higgeldy-piggeldy, every which way.

One summer I stopped briefly in a fair-sized Texas town named Dumas (pop. 12,000) to buy a postcard to send to a friend of mine named Jerry Dumas who lives in Greenwich, Conn. I tried half a dozen places, but none had any postcards of Dumas for sale to

send to Dumas from Dumas. One saleslady apologetically explained, "Oh, we don't fuss a lot over Dumas. There's nothing much of interest here." The closest I could come was a postcard of a gorge a few miles outside town. In this hyped-up, let's-put-our-little-old-town-on-the-map modern age, my hat is off to laid-back, unpretentious Dumas, whose municipal motto surely ought to be, "Nothing Here But Us Chickens."

I may have found the answer to my who-to-send-what-to dilemma in a drugstore in Denver where they sold postcards labeled "generic" and which offered no views at all but blank space on both sides of the card, the way old penny postcards used to.

I bought a dozen, scrawled "Wish you were here!" on the message side and sent them off.

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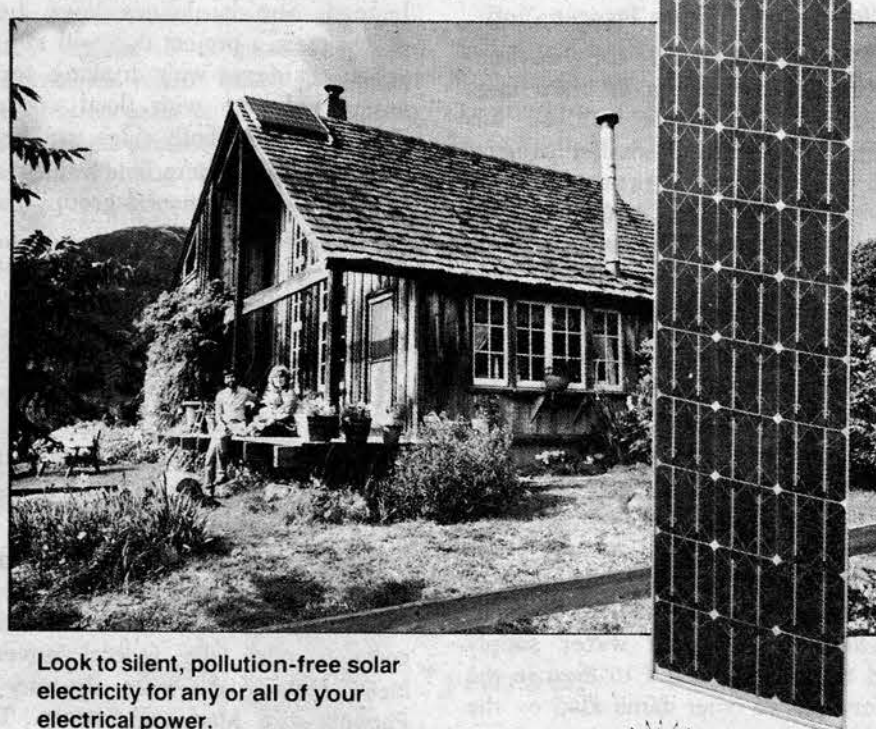
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