

High Country News

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A Paper for People who Care about the West

One dollar

Overgrazing: Feds move to end it

Ranchers fight back in court as political clout fades

by Lisa Jones

Joe Gray arrived in western Colorado in 1886. When he was six, his father gave him a horse and 90 head of cattle and pointed him toward the desolate Uncompahgre Plateau. "He left in May and came back in November," chuckles his son, Nick. "As far as I know, he didn't lose one of them."

Nick Gray, along with three of his brothers and a couple of nephews, have picked up where Joe left off. A spry 72-year-old, Gray earned his weathered skin and shock of white hair in a life outside as a rancher and builder.

But this year he is fighting a battle indoors. Like many Western ranchers these days, he is facing a cut in cattle numbers on a federal grazing allotment he leases. He says the cut would destroy his family's way of life. That's why he's ready to fight in court.

The Forest Service says that parts of the Big Cimarron grazing allotment on the Uncompahgre National Forest are chronically overgrazed. While the forest plan considers portions of the 22,000-acre area suitable for livestock, it says the bulk of the area should be managed for recreation and the protection of its rivers and lakes. The three forks of the Big Cimarron River plunge out of the San Juans to their confluence with the river's main branch there. It is also home to a reservoir and two ponds stocked with trout, three campgrounds, part of a scenic road loop and two trailheads giving backpackers access to the Big Blue Wilderness Area.

The Big Cimarron allotment's management plan, however, was written in 1965, before either the reservoir or the campgrounds were developed, and prior to the designation of the Big Blue Wilderness Area.

"It was your average grazing allotment," says Forest Service range conservationist Jamie Watts. But now thousands of campers, hikers and fishing enthusiasts flock there each summer, and the agency is working on a new allotment management plan to reflect the change.

"You just fall in love with the place," says Forest Service volunteer Don Guisinger, who has spent the last six summers there as a campground host. Gray maintains that cows and visitors almost never clash. Guisinger, however, says a day rarely passes that he doesn't receive a complaint from campers who have to chase cattle from their campgrounds or spend restless nights amid cows mooing for their calves.

"People don't generally go to that kind of remote location to camp with cows," he says. Some irate hikers once suggested the Big Blue Wilderness be



Bob Lorimer photo courtesy of Idaho Department of Commerce and Development

After a round-up on Idaho's mountain grazing lands, cowboys drive a herd of beef cattle home

renamed "The Big Blue Barnyard."

In his brick bungalow on the outskirts of Montrose, Colo., Gray sits next to a dining room table piled with legal correspondence and delivers what he considers the bottom line: "They want me off the range," he says. "Not just me, but everybody."

Nick Gray's dilemma is just one of the growing number of livestock controversies erupting all over the 270 million acres of public range in the West. After decades of

neglect (HCN, 3/12/90), some federal land managers are taking steps to rehabilitate badly damaged federal rangelands. And two congressional bills are threatening to more than quadruple grazing fees.

Faced with the dual threats of cuts in cattle numbers and increases in fees, much of the public lands livestock industry is crying foul. "I'd say we're probably under more of a threat now than we've been in 15 years," says Jon Doggett, associate director of the Wash-

ington, D.C.-based Public Lands Council, which represents the 26,000 ranchers who graze livestock on public lands. Ranchers are appealing grazing cuts, hiring lawyers, pressuring politicians more than ever and launching public information campaigns.

Conservationists also have turned up the heat, pressuring federal land managers to enforce laws that have been on the books for decades. With several

Continued on page 10



HIGH COUNTRY NEWS

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Dear friends,

April Fools

March in Paonia was a classic lion-and-lamb month, with gray days and wind and respectable snow blankets that melted away by late morning; sometimes with pale sun on one side of town and hail on another. But Easter weekend brought sudden spring, and April Fool's Day was nice too. Speaking of which, we got a call from *Harper's* magazine asking if Manual (sic) Lujan's remarks about trilobites in last issue's "HCN Lite" were accurate.

Please phone home

Nancy Banks, Steve Fuller, Patricia Guthrie, Carol Snow and John Tobias, we are looking for you! The post office hasn't been able to deliver the checks we sent for your recent contributions to the paper. Please call Diane at 303/527-

4898 with your new address or leave a message with any of us.

Letters

"The good folks at the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund's Denver office gave me a gift subscription to *HCN* after I finished a wonderful year with them," Rolf Asphaug writes from Denver. "Now I'm a lawyer for a public agency, and when the walls of bureaucracy start to close in I draw inspiration from your paper."

A postcard we were glad to get from Paul Cienfuegos of Bellingham, Washington: "I'm the fellow who wondered why native people were unmentioned in your PR. Thanks for your letters, plus the selection of back issues. I'm quite impressed with your native coverage and with the paper in general. And I really appreciate the non-computer responses I

received to my criticism."

"So where is the recipe for the 3-yr award winning vegetarian chili?" demands Louise Seeley, of Seattle. "If I send plans for our extremely efficient and pleasingly inexpensive solar box cooker, would you send it to me?" You bet, Louise! And thank you for the intriguing plans showing how to build a cooker, paint pots black, put food inside without even any water and pop pots in the box till dinnertime. A quote from the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization says, "Over 1.5 billion people are affected by fuelwood shortage. The numbers will grow to 2.4 billion by the year 2000." The international organization to which Louise belongs hopes to teach those 2.4 billion people to cook with solar energy. For more information write to Solar Box Cookers Northwest, 1922 15th Ave. East, Seattle, WA 98112.

—Larry Mosher and Mary Jarrett
for the staff

HOTLINE

Unocal will end oil shale operations

Unocal has announced it will close its commercial oil shale plant in Parachute, Colo. Citing financial losses and insufficient production, the company said March 26 that it will shut down operations beginning June 1, according to the *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*. Unocal employs 480 people. Since 1986 Unocal has relied on \$115 million in government price supports to make up the difference between the market value of shale oil and the cost of producing it. The plant was designed to produce 3 million barrels of oil annually but has never produced more than 1.5 million a year. The company has committed \$100,000 to Mesa County to help minimize the impact of the plant's closure. County residents are no strangers to economic busts, having witnessed the shutdown of Exxon's Colony oil shale plant in 1982.



Jackson Hole Guide

Potato truck wreck by Snake River

Teton citizens oppose highway plan

The Wyoming Highway Department's proposal to upgrade the Snake River Canyon road, U.S. 26-89, has met near-unanimous opposition. The proposal to modernize the road would require resurfacing, straightening and widening by up to 40 feet in places. At a meeting in mid-March, the *Casper Star-Tribune* reports, citizens expressed general agreement over the need to improve the safety of the road, whose accident rate is 2.3 times the state's average for similar roads. "We are concerned for safety, but feel the safety should be considered equally with wildlife and scenic values,"

said Dail Barbour, representing the Teton County Commissioners. Beyond its scenic value and its wildwater value for rafters, the canyon provides critical winter habitat for elk, deer and moose, as well as a nesting area for osprey and bald eagles. Highway department District Engineer Gene Roccabruna calls the public opinion "hard to ignore," but says the department has to work within the Federal Highway Administration's standards in order to receive government funding. The department will decide what steps to take after reviewing written public comments, which will be welcomed through mid-April.

Tucson settlement larger than Love Canal's

Compensation is on its way to 1,620 Tucson residents who suffer from the effects of a cancer-causing solvent that contaminated area drinking water for some 30 years before wells were shut down in 1983. The solvent, trichloroethylene, or TCE, was used by Hughes Aircraft Co. to clean airplane parts and other equipment. Believing the solvent would evaporate, the company dumped it into pits, ponds and arroyos (*HCN*, 5/5/87). Instead, the substance seeped into aquifers and wells that supplied drinking water to residents of Tucson's south side. In February, the Dallas law firm representing the plaintiffs announced the \$84.5 million settlement that put an end to the five-year-long lawsuit against Hughes. In a separate settlement against the City of Tucson and the Tucson Airport Authority, also responsible for dumping TCE in the area, plaintiffs were awarded \$35 million, *The Arizona Republic* reported. The suits represent the largest groundwater contamination settlements in U.S. history. One of the plaintiffs, James Navarro, told *The Associated Press*, "Fourteen hundred people shared \$20 million at Love Canal. Here, sixteen hundred will share \$120 million."

Mishandled wastes sent to illegal Utah dumps

The Environmental Protection Agency's Denver regional office has brought six counts of mishandling hazardous wastes against Western Lighting Standards Inc. of Perris, Calif. The company is accused of violating the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act requirements for strict tracking of wastes by wrongly classifying its wastes on shipping documents and by failing to label the wastes as hazardous. The company sent its wastes to Mountain Refin-

ing and Mountaineer Equipment and Desert Oil Co., two Utah facilities that the EPA had ordered to stop accepting wastes last year, *The Associated Press* reported. "Generators are responsible for insuring that firms they hire are legitimate," said Robert L. Duprey, EPA's Waste Management Division director in Denver. A spokesperson at Western Lighting Standards Inc. declined to comment on the six counts and the proposed \$150,000 penalty.

States face cut in mineral royalties

Wyoming, New Mexico, Colorado, Utah and California could be hit the hardest by a Bush administration proposal to decrease federal mineral royalty payments to pay for the Mineral Management Service's administrative costs. The service, part of the Interior Department, disburses royalties for minerals extracted from federal lands. States receiving mineral royalty payments have been paying 50 percent of the mineral service's administrative costs. The proposal would increase this to 75 percent. Wyoming, the state receiving the largest royalty payments, would suffer the most. Last year Wyoming's mineral royalties came to more than \$186 million and supplied 8.3 percent of the state's total income. The royalties go to the state's highway fund, local governments and schools. Wyoming currently contributes \$13.3 million to help cover the mineral service's costs. With the additional 25 percent burden, the state would have to contribute another \$7.5 million. Jim Zoia, a spokesperson for Rep. Nick Rahall, D-W. Va., chairman of the Interior and Insular Affairs Subcommittee on Mining and Natural Resources, says the committee is adamantly opposed to the proposal. Zoia called the proposal "a poorly disguised deficit-reduction measure that is unfair to states," the *Casper Star-Tribune* reports.

Prickly sentences

Seventeen persons charged with poaching saguaro cactus plants in Arizona have been sentenced to up to 12 months in prison and fined as much as \$21,680. The saguaro cactus requires 50 to 75 years to reproduce and is extremely difficult to cultivate. In announcing the sentences, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Director John Turner said they resulted from the largest federal case involving protected plants, and "show that the pilaging of our wonderful and unique natural desert heritage will not be tolerated."

WESTERN ROUNDUP

Heli-skiing forces review of Utah's Wasatch Range uses

The central Wasatch Mountains jump abruptly upward from the eastern edge of Salt Lake City, squeezing deep powder snow from storms that sweep across the valley below. They create a unique playground for the nearby metropolitan area of some 1 million people. Nowhere in the West do so many have such immediate access to an area so perfect for skiing.

And that's the problem. Too many people are now competing to use too small a space. "The use level up there is similar to Yellowstone Park," says Dr. Howie Garber, of Ski Helicopter Area Reduction Effort.

Every year, about twice as many people visit the Wasatch-Cache National Forest's Salt Lake district as visit Yellowstone National Park, says Mike Sieg, the district ranger. He says the Salt Lake district, which is one-tenth of the size of Yellowstone, gets a total of 5.7 million visits a year, including some 2 million "skier visits" of which 90,000 are backcountry visits.

Backcountry skiers will walk thousands of vertical feet up the area's steep ridges for the thrill of plunging down through the "champagne powder." Heli-skiers, on the other hand, pay as much as \$300 a day to be delivered to the top by helicopter.

Since 1972, two jointly owned helicopter companies, Wasatch Powderbird Guides and Utah Powderbird Guides, have enjoyed a shared monopoly on the five-year permits issued by the Forest Service. The Powderbirds fly to the best runs on the best days of the year. This displeases the growing number of "gorp" skiers who make their way into the backcountry on the ground.

Cabin and business owners in the area also are angry about the growth in heli-skiing. The Powderbirds crisscross the mountains to pick up skiers and shuttle them to their next run. This keeps the helicopters overflying houses, businesses and cabins set on inholdings and leased national forest land. The noise of whacking helicopter blades, often at low altitudes, has become increasingly unwell-

come to those who thought an escape to the mountains would bring solitude.

Now local activists are opposing the renewal of the Powderbirds' special-use permit, which expires this October. In an attempt to resolve the controversy by mid-summer, the Forest Service hired a mediation team last fall and is collecting public comments now while skiing interest is still high.

At a meeting to organize the mediation effort, angry cross-country skiers told of avalanches loosed by landing helicopters and of being "cut off from above" by a helicopter just as they were about to reach a favorite run. They also complained of noise, visual disturbances and excessive snow bombing by the Powderbirds to protect skiers from avalanches.

District Ranger Sieg admits that past permits are now "an embarrassment" because of the way they were drawn. For example, the current permit "covers 1,000 acres" but also lists maps showing areas allowed for heli-skiing that exceed 50,000 acres.

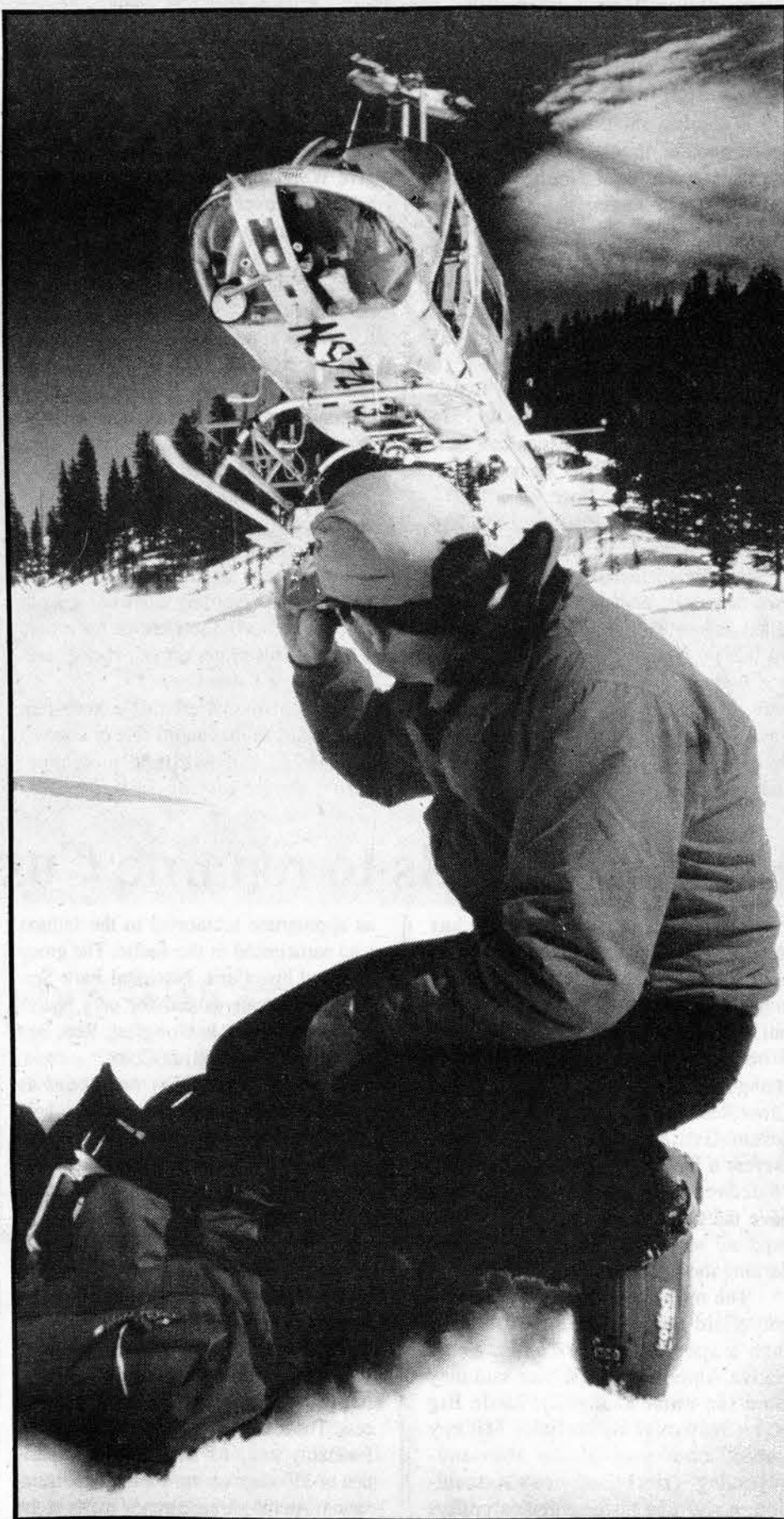
The mediation effort ended recently without success. Opponents expect the Forest Service to issue another permit, but they believe the Salt Lake District may impose new restrictions on the Powderbirds, such as avoiding areas with cabins, flying only at certain times and on certain days, and possibly having to stay out of the Silverfork area, one of the three most popular canyons.

The future of the entire Wasatch Range is being debated. Some, with an eye to the 1998 Winter Olympics, would like to build more lifts and trails to create an Alps-style skiing system. But backcountry skiers, in particular, want a less developed future.

"The pressures to continue development are going to be strong," says Sieg. "But we haven't yet identified what our vision is for the canyons. When is enough enough?"

— Scott Dissel

Scott Dissel is a free-lance writer based in Salt Lake City.



U.S. Forest Service

A Powderbird helicopter deposits a skier in the Wasatch Mountains

Yellowstone Park bison to be killed for research

Almost the same day that Montana decided to rescind its controversial hunt of Yellowstone bison, National Park Service officials announced a plan to shoot as many as 25 bison to promote scientific research.

The plan, immediately condemned by animal-rights activists, calls for uniformed rangers to kill bison inside the park and then turn the carcasses over to researchers who will perform a battery of tests. If the shooting is allowed to proceed early this month, the kill will total more than two times the number of bison (11 bulls) taken by hunters outside the national park in Montana this winter.

The Montana hunt, mandated by the state Legislature in 1985 to protect cattle interests, was repealed in March following years of negative publicity and protests by The Fund For Animals. D.J. Schubert, an activist in the fund's Washington, D.C., office, said his group will try to stop the shooting in the park. But Yellowstone Superintendent Bob Barbee defended the proposal to kill bison, claiming it will answer key questions about the risk brucellosis actually presents to cattle.

"Nobody here enjoys the prospect of having to destroy these bison to do research," Barbee said. "We're trying to come down on the side of science. This

brucellosis question has been no small part of the bison-management saga. There's as much myth surrounding the disease as there is reality."

In 1989, after 569 park bison were shot, blood samples collected from over 540 animals showed that 50 percent tested positive for brucellosis. But Barbee and his staff argue there is dissent in the scientific community over how infectious the bison actually are. Animals that test positive may not actually be infected with the disease or be capable of spreading it to other animals.

For years, livestock experts in Montana have claimed that brucellosis can be passed along by bison that come in close contact with cattle, though this theory has never been proved. Yet it has served as the state's justification for killing bison that migrate beyond the park boundary into surrounding national forests and private lands.

Don Davis, a renowned veterinarian with the Brucellosis Research Program at Texas A&M University, said the use of specimens removed from Yellowstone will mark the first time that extensive testing has focused exclusively on wild bison herds.

"We asked the Park Service several months ago to let us have access the next time bison are killed," Davis said. "Tak-

ing tissue and sero [blood] samples from the animals will give us a lot better handle on a realistic risk analysis."

Among the questions that need to be answered is whether the strain of brucellosis in bison is the same one that infects cattle, elk and a dozen other species of wildlife. By gleaning information from 35 tissue samples and blood and urine removed from each bison carcass, researchers at four laboratories will determine the genetic makeup of Yellowstone bison and the effect that brucellosis has on pregnant bison cows.

The livestock industry in the United States has spent millions of dollars to render states "brucellosis-free" because the disease causes pregnant cows to abort their fetuses and may present a health risk to humans.

Findings from the tissue experiments will figure prominently in an Environmental Impact Statement slated for completion next year. The document, which will form the basis for a long-term bison management plan, will list several potential options. They include reducing bison numbers by killing animals inside the park, shooting animals that leave the park, and taking no action, which Barbee said is unrealistic.

National Park Service Director

James Ridenour has asked experts in his agency to coordinate a possible swap of grazing rights on the lands surrounding Yellowstone. Despite opposition from the livestock industry, this plan is designed to reduce conflicts with ranchers and open more range to bison, which, of course, do not recognize the artificial boundary of the national park.

Whether Ridenour's plan can be implemented will depend largely on the outcome of a brucellosis risk analysis coordinated by Davis and officials with both the state and Yellowstone. Still lingering, too, are the threats from animal-rights activists to challenge the shooting and have it stopped. Park spokeswoman Joan Anzelmo said groups concerned about the welfare of bison should recognize the research is being done "in the best interest of the species."

"One minute animal-rights activists say there's not enough information to make good management decisions, the next moment they're trying to shut down this project," Anzelmo said. "Our message to them is make up your mind."

— Todd Wilkinson

Todd Wilkinson is a free-lance writer who lives in Bozeman, Montana.

State Solons decide Wyoming is no 'nation' of 'Sheep'

Wyoming should secede from the Union, rename itself "Sheep," pave Yellowstone National Park, execute "traitorous tree-huggers like Smokey the Bear" and seize all federal lands. The land of Sheep would be ruled by a king and a court jester, and "gazing into one's own belly button" would be the national sport.

This was the sarcastic proposal offered by state Rep. Chris Plant in response to a sagebrush-rebellion frenzy that gripped the state capitol during Wyoming's legislative session last January and February. Plant's amendment, of course, died on the floor.

The lawmakers Plant satirized had considered a variety of bills to reverse the increasing restrictions on grazing and other uses of public land. It resembled the so-called Sagebrush Rebellion of the Reagan era that promoted resentment toward outside interest in nationally owned public lands. One of the rebellion's ultimate goals was to transfer those lands to state ownership so they could be used for local financial gain and not be subject to natural

resource conservation.

One resolution urged Congress to give Wyoming "ultimate management authority" over the federal lands that cover almost half of the state. It said Wyoming was unfairly "required to disclaim the right and title to unappropriated federal lands forever within its boundaries at the time of statehood," and that the state could now manage that land better than the federal agencies. National forests, parks and even the F.E. Warren Air Force Base near Cheyenne would be included.

Sponsors said the symbolic measure, which easily passed the rambunctious House but died without a vote in the Senate, would send an important message to Washington: Wyoming does not want to conform to national sentiments. "We want to tell the feds to get off our backs," said Rep. Marlene Simons.

Opponents called this a knee-jerk response to an inevitable tide of concern for wildlife and wildland protection. "What we are feeling in the West is

other Americans in other places reclaiming their lost legacy, the public lands," Plant said. "We can't wish that away, so we are trying to do it in this bill. We live in a larger union."

Wyoming's new sagebrush rebels also said that state water should be developed for "recreation, agriculture, ranching, mining and timber production," and that people recreating on private lands should be required to buy a \$10 permit. They also would restrict "regulatory takings" — the taking of a right, such as grazing permits.

None of these measures passed, but they got a lot of support.

Following in the footsteps of other states, the Legislature did pass one bill that will bar any actions that would "disturb" hunters or game animals. But unlike other states, Wyoming's bill also levies a \$10,000 fine (\$50,000 for second offenses) on any organization that "counsels or solicits" people to disrupt hunts, which many animal-rights groups now do.

The Fund for Animals has called the

act a blatant violation of freedom of speech and the press. Officials said they now plan to begin interfering with hunts in Wyoming to challenge the law's constitutionality. They suggested the law would bar activists from simply asking a hunter not to kill an animal.

Legislators also passed resolutions condemning plans by federal agencies to preserve the "naturalness" of the Yellowstone region, to reintroduce wolves to the Yellowstone area and to publish a new Forest Service planning guide that puts a greater emphasis on non-consumptive resource use.

"We're just damn tired of people on the East Coast telling us how we should run our state, when we can run it best," said Simons, a longtime sagebrush rebel and sponsor of several of the measures. "It might be federal land, but it's there for us to use."

— Michael Milstein

Michael Milstein covers Wyoming for the *Billings* (Mont.) *Gazette*.

Pressure builds to rename Custer Battlefield Monument

Rep. Ron Marlenee, R-Mont., has reintroduced a bill to establish a memorial at Custer Battlefield National Monument honoring Native Americans. The bill would also create an administrative process to study a proposed name change for the battlefield, located on the Crow Reservation. Montana's other representative, Democrat Pat Williams, prefers a bill that would authorize both objectives simultaneously, rather than have the Interior Department conduct a separate series of public meetings concerning the name change.

The monument is our only national battlefield named after a person rather than a specific site or battle. Some Native American groups have said they want the name changed to Little Big Horn National Battlefield. Mickey Pablo, chairman of the Montana-Wyoming Tribal Chairmen's Association, noted that his organization prefers Williams's approach. "We feel it should be done in one bill," he said. "We don't need to spend any more dollars studying whether it needs a name change."

A meeting of Native Americans is planned for April 4 and 5 in Wolf Point, Mont., to discuss the nature of the memorial and the name-change issue. Those favoring the changes won a moral victory in February, when the Montana Senate Education Committee passed a resolution supporting both.

Chauncey Whitright, a resident of the Fort Peck Reservation, told *The Billings Gazette* that the meeting was called at the request of Indian tribes, particularly the Sioux, who felt they had been left out of the planning process. "Lots of people think the politics is getting out of hand," Whitright said. "The name change has always been on the agenda, but the memorial is most important."

Created by executive order in 1940 and administered by the National Park Service, the 765-acre national monument commemorates the 1876 battle of the Little Big Horn, where an overwhelming force of Indians defeated Gen. George Custer and the 7th Cavalry. An eight-foot-tall memorial to Custer and his soldiers was erected on Last Stand Hill in 1881.

Three years ago Indian activists placed a home-made plaque next to the Custer memorial. The Park Service removed the plaque and put it in the monument's visitor center. The following year a task force was formed to study

an appropriate memorial to the Indians who participated in the battle. The group included historians, National Park Service representatives and the only Native American serving in Congress, Rep. Ben Nighthorse Campbell, D-Colo.

The Park Service, on record as favoring a memorial, is prepared to hold a design contest with the theme "Peace Through Unity." But the agency has taken no official position on a name change for the battlefield, other than to express a preference for resolving the two issues separately.

In contrast to the fragmented situation at the Custer Battlefield, a new proposal to establish a national historic park at Wounded Knee, S.D., will fully involve Native Americans in every step of the process. The Park Service plans to conduct a feasibility study for the possible acquisition of 330 acres on the Pine Ridge Reservation. An old shrine already exists at the site, and some Lakota tribal members have expressed a desire to rebuild the church and a trading post.

The area was designated an historically significant national landmark in 1965. Indians have observed the anniversary of the battle of Wounded Knee for many years, but there are no public facilities or interpretive programs at the site. A national historic park commemorating the December 1890 conflict between the Sioux and U.S. Cavalry troops would be man-

aged jointly by Native Americans and the Park Service. Only one other area in the park system, Canyon de Chelly National Monument on the Navajo Reservation, currently functions under such a cooperative plan.

Denis Galvin, Park Service associate director for planning and development, observed that the proposals for Custer Battlefield and Wounded Knee are examples of a changing perspective on our history. There is a "larger trend into which this fits," he said. "Congress has expressed an interest that the Park Service re-evaluate how we interpret and portray American history, involving a broader spectrum of citizens, not just emphasizing a few famous people or events."

As Jack Utter points out in his paper "Lest We Forget — The Wounded Knee Centennial," the old conflict continues to be shrouded in modern controversy. What the military has characterized as a battle, Native Americans contend was a massacre. "Of the 350 Indians present, two-thirds were women and children, and a portion of the adult males were old men," Utter writes. Three hundred Indians were killed; 25 of the 500 soldiers died, some from the crossfire of their compatriots. The tragedy was the last major con-

flict in the Indian wars, and the event helped mark the "closing of the American frontier."

John Echohawk, executive director of the Native American Rights Fund, hopes that the proposed memorials represent a long-term change of attitude. "It's something valuable, worthwhile, not the history of an enemy to be looked upon with disdain."

Campbell, who attended the centennial observance at Wounded Knee last December, wants to hold meetings at Pine Ridge with other interested parties. He has also introduced two bills pertaining to Custer Battlefield — one authorizing a memorial and the other calling for a name change.

"For many years Indians have been negatively stereotyped, especially in Hollywood movies," Campbell said. "These stereotypes have built up a lot of resentment. In the past 20 years, based in part on several new books, there has been a growing awareness about Indians and a resurgence of Native American pride. This has led to a new sensitivity toward Indian people and the problems they face."

The Wounded Knee study and proposed changes at Custer Battlefield National Monument still need to struggle their way through the bureaucratic process. The true significance of these events may be that they represent a broader recognition of Indian culture within the full historical context of what led up to these battles — that Native Americans were fighting for their way of life.

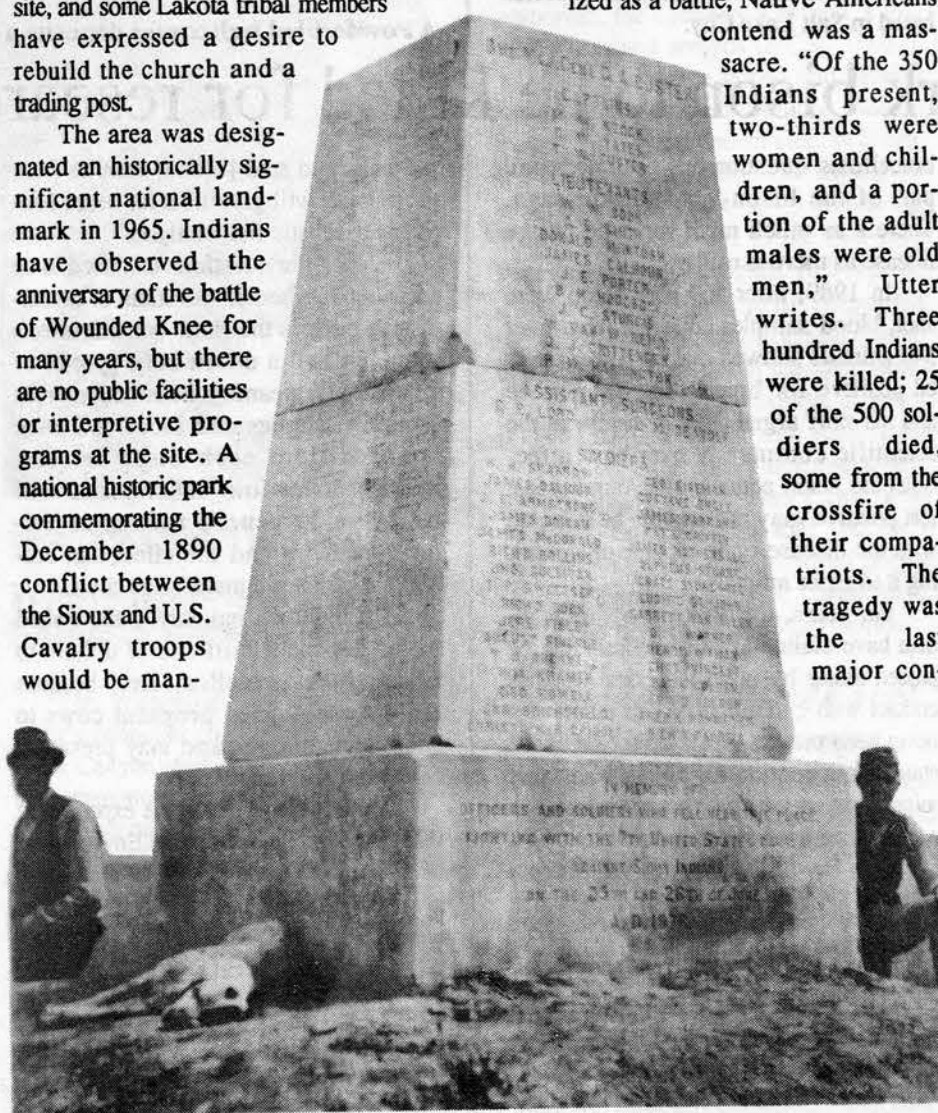
— Michael Bencic

Former HCN intern Mike Bencic works at Guadalupe Mountains National Park in western Texas.

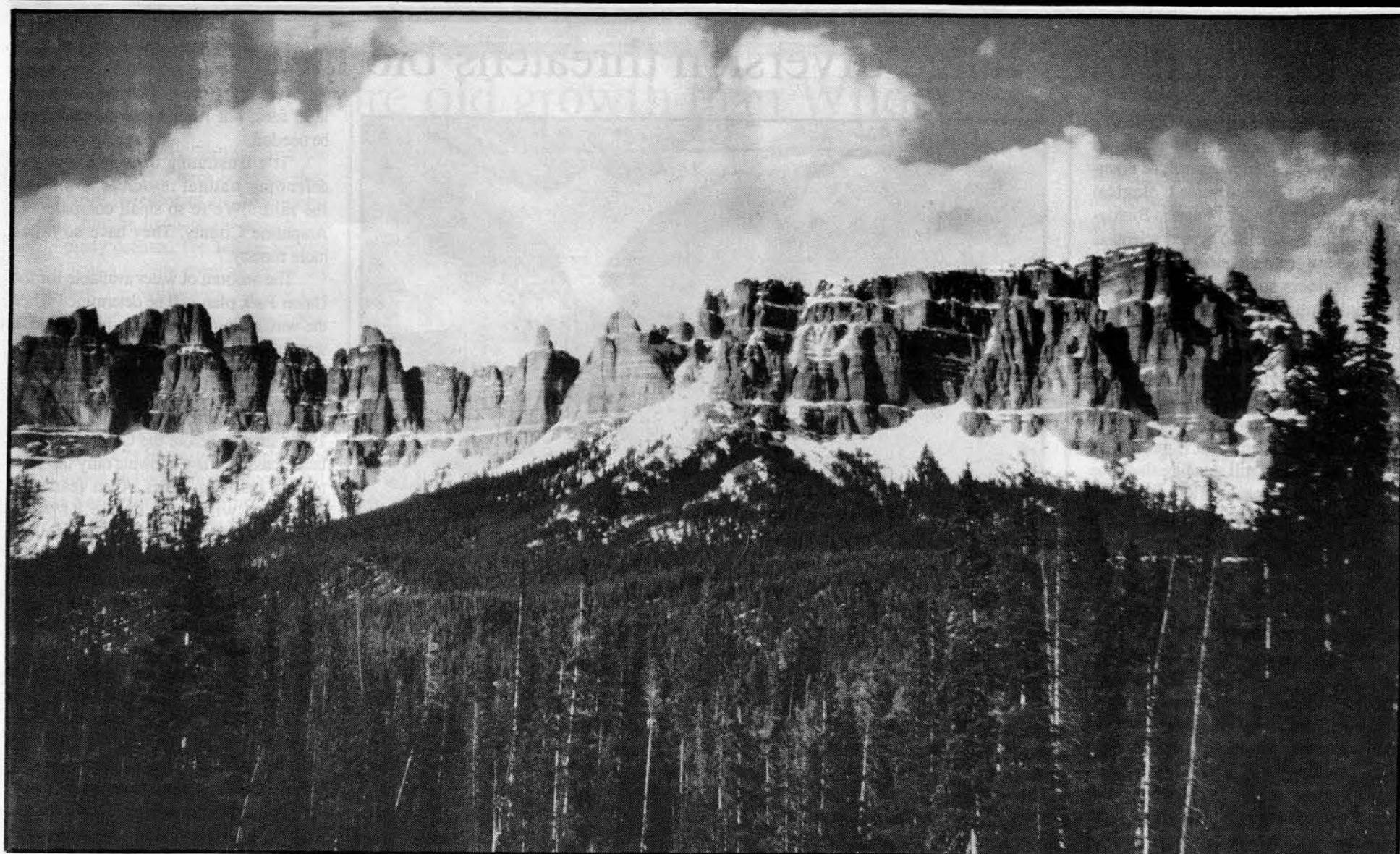
BARBS

Pretty please, with sugar and a free ride on top?

When the Montana Audubon Society wanted to divert state funds from snowmobile trail grooming to environmental mitigation, Montana snowmobilers decided to host 50 state legislators and politicians for a ride through the mountains and a trailside lunch. The Cut Bank Snoggers say the ride was offered "in appreciation of the Legislature's past support, not to win votes in the future."



A turn-of-the-century photo of the memorial to George Custer and his soldiers



John Horning

The Pinnacles near the area proposed for oil and gas drilling

Forest Service allows drilling near Wyoming's Brooks Lake

The decision to allow oil and gas leasing on Forest Service land in the mountains north of Dubois, Wyo., has environmental groups in an uproar.

The decision allows the Bureau of Land Management to auction off seven parcels of land totaling 11,435 acres near Brooks Lake and Lava Mountain later this year. Opponents have vowed to appeal the decision administratively. Both Exxon and Conoco have filed application to drill.

The Brooks Lake region "should be withdrawn from any lease consideration," said Don Bachman, program assistant for the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, because it is ecologically and visually sensitive. The area is important grizzly bear habitat and also is a popular recreation destination for sportspeople and outfitters, he said.

Meredith Taylor, of the Wyoming Chapter of the Sierra Club, said the final lease proposal was 300 percent larger than an earlier proposal announced last September. She said the Shoshone National Forest has not adequately addressed how the increased development would affect the habitat of the grizzly and other animals and recreational use.

But Gary Carver, the Shoshone National Forest's minerals officer, said that stipulations included in the Environmental Analysis will protect wildlife habitat and mitigate concerns about the scenic qualities of the leased area. He said the most sensitive areas were not leased.

Dave Henry, wildlife program manager for the Shoshone National Forest, said the Forest Service originally planned to lease less land because of concern for grizzly habitat. But information collected from other agency specialists and the Bridger Teton Forest indicated they could lease land with No Surface Occupancy (NSO) restrictions and not cause adverse impacts to wildlife. Henry said they increased the acreage to be more consistent with other federal agencies in the Greater Yellowstone area.

An NSO stipulation means that no

surface drilling can occur in the zone, but directional drilling from outside the zone can be used to explore under these areas. Claire Moseley, public lands consultant for Rocky Mountain Oil and Gas Association, said that if the Forest Service had denied leasing on much more land, they would have had to amend their forest plan.

The lease states that areas withdrawn from leasing had already been identified in the Shoshone Forest Plan, and that all acreage, except land in the Dunoir Special Use Area, "is administratively available for leasing."

The proposal announced last September allowed leasing on 407 acres north of Pinnacle Buttes and east of Brooks Lake, and 2,601 acres leased as NSO. It denied leasing on 8,667 acres. The final proposal increased the NSO area to 7,518 acres and denied leasing on only 1,798 acres. There was no change to the lease proposal on nearby Lava Mountain, a less controversial site, where 2,540 acres are available for standard leasing, and 828 acres are restricted to the NSO stipulation.

Because the acreage to be leased increased so dramatically, the Fish and Wildlife Service requested a "formal consultation" with the Forest Service to discuss the impact of all phases of oil and gas development on the endangered grizzly bear, said Steve Torbet, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist. Theoretically, there is no difference in wildlife protection between denying leasing and leasing with NSO stipulations, he said. But since "you can't change the lease terms" once a lease is approved, "you have to make [environmental guidelines] as tight as possible" when setting up leasing parameters.

Torbet said his agency made sure it would be included in all future environmental decisions regarding leasing, exploration and development, and is confident they can prevent undue impact to the endangered bears. But Taylor and Bachman are still concerned that NSO stipulations won't hold if significant

reserves of oil or gas are discovered. Forest Service oil and gas leasing guidelines allow companies to request waivers of NSO stipulations, Taylor said.

Bachman said that in protecting sensitive areas or wildlife habitats, "NSO is like a plastic baseball bat: it doesn't have much clout."

Forest Service and oil industry officials, however, have sought to allay such fears. The Forest Service "made a decision [to allow leasing] based on information and the belief that NSO means NSO," the Shoshone National Forest's Henry said.

"I don't think that [waiving NSO stipulations] should be a concern; they don't really waive stipulations very often," said the Rocky Mountain Oil and Gas Association's Moseley. She said the BLM had documentation that requests for NSO waivers had been denied on other lease sites in the past.

The lease includes several mitigation measures to protect grizzlies and

other wildlife, such as excluding permanent work camps, limiting "moderate and intensive human disturbance" in areas frequented by bears, and consulting with the Fish and Wildlife Service and Wyoming Game and Fish when additional activities are planned.

Despite these stipulations, the Sierra Club's Taylor says that the cumulative impacts of other area leases have not been considered, and that impacts of development on this lease are not adequately addressed.

"There's nothing in this Environmental Assessment about where roads are going to be," she said, noting that human-grizzly interactions are inevitable with development. "It's obvious that bears will be at least temporarily displaced" by oil and gas activities.

— Marit Sawyer

Marit Sawyer is a free-lance writer based in Lander, Wyoming.

HOTLINE

Victory for owls and forests

In what one environmentalist called "a tremendously significant victory," U.S. District Judge Thomas S. Zilly in late February ordered the U.S. government to submit a plan identifying critical northern spotted owl habitat by March 15. In the year since the owl was listed under the Endangered Species Act, the government has failed to designate those areas in which it is illegal to threaten the bird's existence by altering or destroying its habitat. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Assistant Regional Director David C. Klinger says the agency has already compiled technical data on area totals and boundaries, and is conducting an economic analysis of the effects of such habitat protection, principally on the timber industry. The agency will release its report by April 29. According to The

Associated Press, a panel of government scientists estimates that the order may lead to the prohibition of logging on more than 3 million acres of Northwest forests.

Decreased sheep predation

Sheep predation in Idaho by coyotes, bears and mountain lions is being reduced by non-lethal means, according to the *Idaho Mountain Express*. Ketchum District Ranger Alan Pinkerton attributes the decline — from 400 sheep killed in 1987 to 31 in 1990 — to the presence of guard dogs around the sheep, and also to an increased number of rodents for predators to feed on. Pinkerton reports that although the coyote population, too, is "at an all-time high," lethal methods of predator control, such as aerial hunting, are on the decline. The Forest Service used aerial hunting in three areas in 1989, but will use it in only one area this year.

Colorado Front Range diversion threatens bio lab

In a subalpine meadow in Colorado's Elk Mountains, spring's thaw brings to life an array of wildflowers and the country's foremost high-altitude biological field station. The Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory (RMBL) attracts scientists and students from around the globe who spend summers studying the area's pristine, high-altitude habitats.

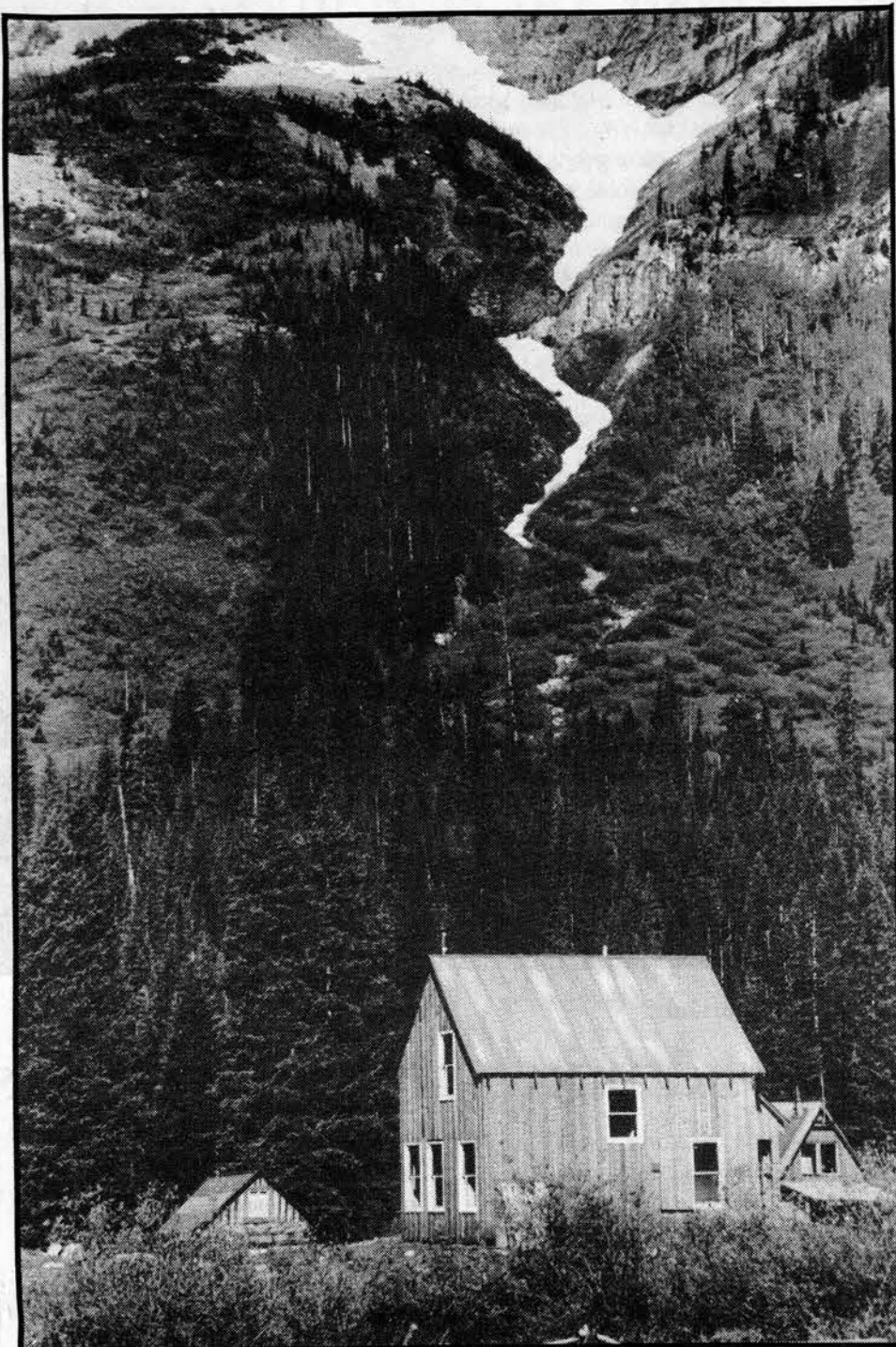
In 1928 the ghost town of Gothic was chosen as a safe, remote site for RMBL's long-term research. Surrounded by 13,000-foot peaks, Gothic sits nine miles up the East River from the town of Crested Butte. Log cabins, outhouses and an old saloon, still standing since the silver-mining boom of 1880, give the place an air of history.

The size and appearance of Gothic have not changed much since the 1880s, but pressure from the outside world has moved closer. RMBL's ecological integrity is threatened by the Union Park water project proposed by Arapahoe County (*HCN*, 2/25/91). The county's original plan to use water from the Taylor River basin to fill a 1 million-acre-foot reservoir was amended last November to include diversions from the East River drainage. This amended plan would alter the natural flows of the East River and Copper Creek, which are integral to RMBL's ecosystem.

A diversion structure on the East River would be built three feet upstream of RMBL's property line on Forest Service land; the Copper Creek diversion site would be on RMBL property. Tunnels would take this water to the Union Park reservoir near the Continental Divide. Up to 60,000-acre-feet annually could then be pumped through the Collegiate Range, under the Arkansas River, over the Mosquito Range and into the Denver metropolitan area.

"This is a serious threat not only to the laboratory, but to the valley, to ranchers and farmers and to tourism," said RMBL director Susan Allen. "But our members are passionate and committed to seeing the laboratory survive. If a bulldozer shows up at Gothic, I have no doubt there will be researchers, students and locals of Crested Butte showing up here in civil disobedience."

As unaltered environments become more and more rare, Allen is protective of the knowledge nature has to offer. "If we destroy these environments, we could possibly lose some important answers to world life systems," she said. "This is one of the oldest, most successful and secure places for field biology. The research has tremendous benefit to scientists across the world. If we want to know how to fix something in the



Mark Reaman

The Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory in Colorado's Elk Mountains

future," she added, "we better study it before it is broken."

Arapahoe County Commissioner Tom Eggert said that the county's goal in filing the amended plan was to benefit the most people possible while doing the least harm. Eggert believes the Union Park project will allow for future growth in Arapahoe County and benefit the Western Slope's people and environment.

"There are now 1.8 million acre-feet of water running out of the state. We had better figure out a way to conserve it to provide for everyone in Colorado," said Eggert. "Having a big bathtub at 10,200 feet can provide necessary water to both slopes during drought years."

Eggert believes that because Colorado gets 80 to 85 percent of its revenue

from development, industry and services, water should be ensured for Front Range growth. But in letters to the Arapahoe County commissioners, some members of RMBL expressed the view that increased growth is not inherently good and may lead to decreased quality of life.

Paul Ehrlich, Bing Professor of Population Studies at Stanford University and a RMBL member since 1959, wrote: "It is high time that the Denver metropolitan area established a program to limit its population growth and greatly increase its efficiency of water use, rather than plunging on to its own destruction."

On Jan. 28, RMBL filed a statement of opposition to the amended Union Park plan and is preparing for a legal battle. About \$13,500 has been donated for

legal fees, but Allen thinks \$50,000 will be needed.

"It's frustrating that the burden of defending natural resources is on us," she said. "We're so small compared to Arapahoe County. They have so much more money."

The amount of water available for the Union Park plan will be determined when the water court resumes in June. RMBL was granted instream rights to 46 cubic feet per second in the East River and 90 cubic feet per second in Copper Creek. The rights were granted in 1973 and 1976, shortly before the Colorado Legislature passed a law allowing only the state to own instream flows. Allen fears that Arapahoe will try to negate RMBL's instream water rights or claim rights to surplus water.

But the Gunnison Valley's united efforts to fight transmountain diversions had a success on March 7 when the City of Aurora, located in Arapahoe County, withdrew its filing for the Collegiate Range project. (See story below.)

"This gives hope to other small communities in the West threatened by big-city water grabs," said Gary Sprung, president of the High Country Citizens' Alliance in Crested Butte. "It's possible to win. We expect Arapahoe to face an equally tough battle."

But according to Dave Miller, president of the Natural Energy Resource Co., the defeat of Two Forks and now Aurora's withdrawal will benefit Arapahoe County's project, since metropolitan Denver is searching for an alternative. Miller's company developed the Union Park project and will earn \$2.2 million if it is built. Miller said that in order to solve the state's critical water problems, "all of Colorado now needs to unite behind this highly efficient and environmentally enhancing Union Park water conservation project."

Water conservation and water sharing among city districts are more sensible solutions to water problems, according to Butch Clark, president of a Gunnison-based group called POWER — People Opposing Water Export Raids. Clark believes that RMBL and the Gunnison Valley will have greater success by communicating directly with residents of the Front Range.

"Rural communities will have to appeal to the conscience of urban residents," Clark said; and get them to understand how rural areas are affected physically, socially and economically by diversion projects.

—Beth Jacobi

Beth Jacobi, a former *HCN* intern, is a free-lance writer in Crested Butte, Col.

Aurora gives up on Gunnison River water scheme

In a surprise move, the City of Aurora announced last month that it was abandoning its giant Collegiate Range water project. The suburban Colorado city's decision to withdraw its water rights application from state water court sent shock waves through Colorado's water development community, still reeling from the veto of Two Forks dam.

Aurora spent five years and over \$2 million on the trans-basin diversion project, which would have pumped 73,000 acre-feet of water a year from the headwaters of the Gunnison River to the Front Range city east of Denver (*HCN*, 2/25/91).

But the project was plagued with numerous environmental and economic problems, and besieged by powerful grassroots opposition. In 1990 the city lost two big decisions in state water

court, and its attempts to pass bills reversing those losses quickly died in the 1991 state Legislature. Meanwhile, project costs were going up and the city still faced several more years of litigation.

Aurora Mayor Paul Tauer said the city council finally "decided it's time to stop throwing money down the drain in legal fees," *The Denver Post* reported.

Many observers view the decision as a direct repercussion of the Two Forks veto. "Some developers were clinging to the hope that Two Forks was an anomaly," says Chris Meyers, a National Wildlife Federation attorney who fought the Aurora project. "Now that a second major project has hit the skids, even people that don't want to are going to be forced to believe that we are in a new era."

Other factors cited in the decision to

pull out were the lack of expected population and economic growth in Aurora, reduced need for new water, and the availability of cheaper and less politically damaging alternatives for a long-term water supply, such as conservation and reuse.

Aurora's decision was greeted with subdued glee in Gunnison County, which is still fighting Arapahoe County's equally massive Union Park water diversion project.

"It shows what unity can produce," says Butch Clark, president of Gunnison POWER, "but we still have a sense of caution." POWER, along with about 40 other groups and individuals, has been fighting both projects for several years.

Arapahoe County's Union Park project would divert 60,000 acre-feet of water to the Front Range, and a mutual contract between Aurora and the county

may allow it to buy out parts of Aurora's abandoned project. Arapahoe County must decide what parts it wants by April 15; the water case re-opens next June.

When it does, attorney Chris Meyers says Aurora's decision may make that fight a little easier. The project's opponents have always argued that Aurora never needed the diversion, says Meyers. "Now, after spending \$2 million Aurora says, 'We don't need this project at all.' Our credibility has been enormously increased by this action and [Arapahoe] County is facing an uphill battle to prove to the court that it needs the project."

Arapahoe County officials say they will proceed full steam ahead.

—Steve Hinchman

Steve Hinchman is the associate editor of *HCN*.

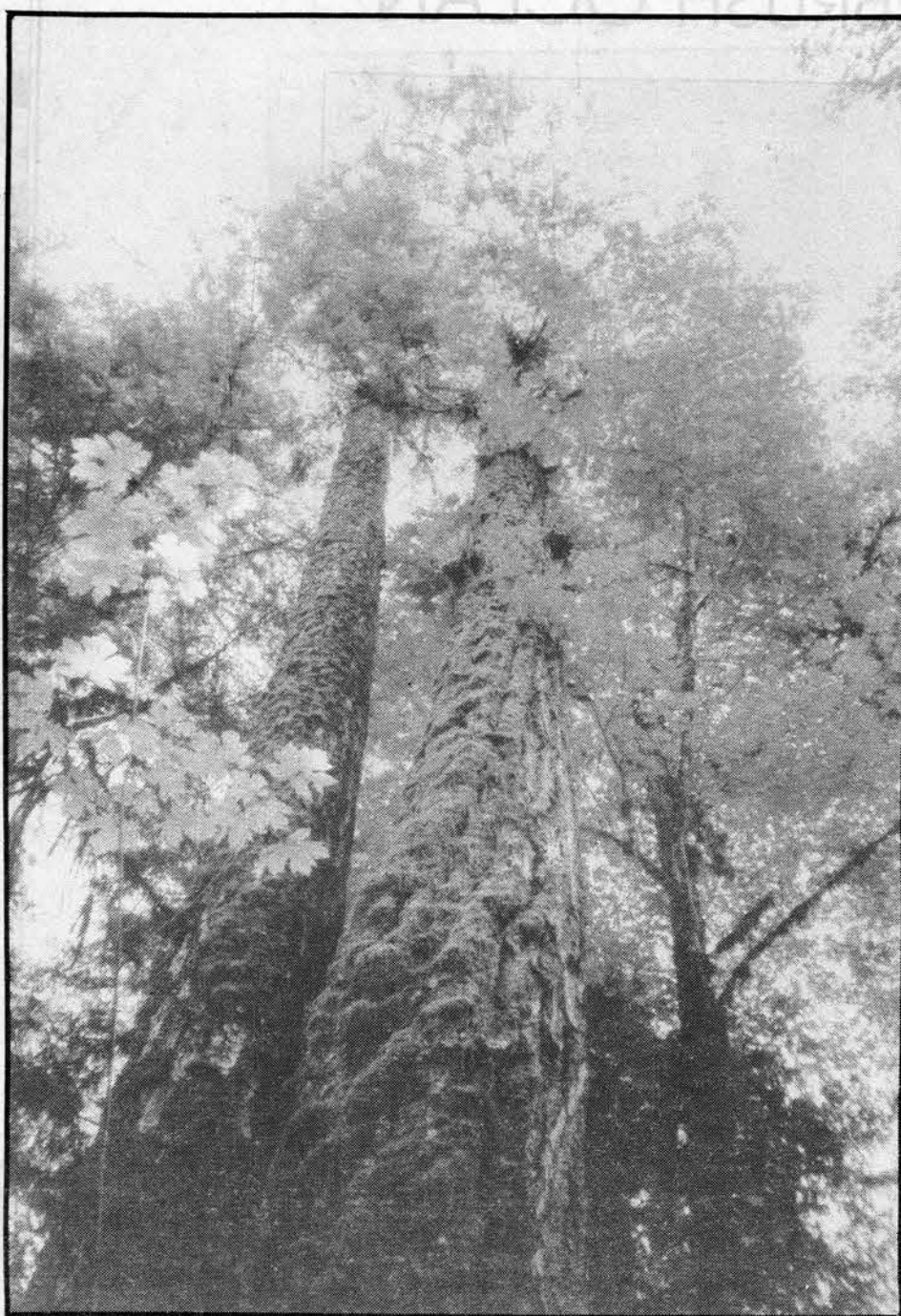
USFS finds more old growth than Wilderness Society

The Wilderness Society and the U.S. Forest Service have released their respective inventories of Northwest forests, but the findings are unlikely to settle many debates. The Forest Service found half a million more acres of big trees than The Wilderness Society did, and the figures in the various categories differ wildly. The major agreement is that most of the old growth is gone.

Using EOSAT satellite images, aerial photographs, and field plot information, The Wilderness Society mapped 12 national forests in western Washington and Oregon and northern California (Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie, Olympic, Gifford Pinchot, Mt. Hood, Willamette, Siuslaw, Umpqua, Rogue River, Siskiyou, Klamath, Six Rivers and Shasta-Trinity). The society identified 3.8 million acres of ancient forest remaining of an estimated 25 million that once covered the region. About 2 million of those acres meet the Forest Service's scientific "PNW-447" definition of old growth (at least eight trees per acre that are at least 32 inches in diameter at breast height; 15 tons or more of downed logs per acre; four large snags per acre). The rest is forest that's younger but still provides valuable habitat for old-growth-dependent species.

The ancient forest that is left, the society reports, is "highly fragmented" and subject to damage at the edges from "windstorms, human intrusions, and other disturbances." Only 25 percent of the remaining ancient forest is protected. Most of that is the thin hemlock and silver fir forest of the high elevations. Of the big-timbered, lush Douglas-fir groves, 699,000 acres remain (424,000 acres in Oregon, 156,900 in Washington and 118,000 in California). Of those, only 70,000 acres — about one year's worth of logging — are preserved in wilderness or other congressionally protected areas. "The scarcity of ancient forest at low elevations is particularly significant to biological diversity in the Pacific Northwest," the society concludes.

Proposed spotted owl Habitat Conservation Areas (HCAs), the society reports, will preserve less than half the



Jim Stiak

Old-growth trees

remaining ancient forest. Almost 60 percent of those forests, including a "handful" of low-elevation, "relatively intact stands," lie outside the HCAs. In fact, 640,000 acres of the land inside the HCAs are at elevations above the normal range of the spotted owl. This underscores the fact, the society reports, that

HCAs are not intended to protect all species, biological values or ecological benefits associated with old growth.

The Forest Service mapped the same 12 forests as The Wilderness Society as well as the Mendocino in California. Using LANDSAT satellite imagery supplemented by aerial photographs, the agency iden-

tified 4.3 million acres that meet the PNW-447 definition of old growth. This, according to John Nunan, a forest planner in the Forest Service's Region 6 office, is about 18 percent more than the amount identified in the forest plans.

Nunan's figures show 966,000 acres of old growth in wilderness areas. Of those, 213,780 are in the Douglas-fir zone, rather than the higher hemlock and silver fir zones. In addition, Nunan says, 1,464,260 acres are in areas protected by forest plans. The agency says there are also 607,000 acres of old growth in national parks. This leaves 1,158,000 acres open to logging. As Ross Mickey of the Northwest Timber Association put it, "There are lots and lots of acres with old trees on them."

Although Nunan says the agency's maps were spot-checked on the ground and found to be 80 percent accurate, they differ markedly from The Wilderness Society's maps. The Forest Service found more than twice as much as "PNW-447" old growth, and more than three times the amount of Douglas-fir old growth in wilderness areas.

"We both used satellite images, but we also used innovative techniques," explains Melanie Rowland of The Wilderness Society. "Our preliminary analysis is that the Forest Service's definition of old growth was more liberal than ours. We also believe there may be a conceptual flaw in their analysis. We're disappointed. Our first appraisal is that their maps won't be much help."

The results of their mapping project, reads The Wilderness Society analysis, show that "remaining low elevation lands and the relatively few large stands of ancient forest should be top priorities for congressional protection." In addition, some fragmented areas should be restored and combined with large intact stands to "ensure the biological integrity of the protected areas." The society supports the Ancient Forest Protection Act, known as the Jontz bill, as a way to achieve those goals.

— Jim Stiak

Jim Stiak is a free-lance writer in Eugene, Oregon.

Forest Service spends wilderness money on logging

Government Accounting Office (GAO) findings that the Forest Service spent nearly 40 percent of money allocated for wilderness in other areas — including recreation and timber — have led environmentalists and a key congressman to call for sweeping changes in the agency's structure.

Over the last four years Congress has increased appropriations for wilderness by nearly 80 percent because the Forest Service said it could not manage wilderness properly without more money. Rep. Bruce Vento, D-Minn., and environmentalists went to bat for the agency, only to discover now that the Forest Service used the money for other activities.

"Outside pressure for budget increases has been a great benefit to the agency, and this [misuse] is almost a breach of faith," said Jay Watson of The Wilderness Society. "It is evidence of a deep-seated problem."

The diversion of funds happened because the structure of the Forest Service undervalues wilderness, a Vento staffer explained. For example, he said, the wilderness program has no director, although every other Forest Service program does. Consequently, no one is protecting wilderness funds.

"Would the director of range let funds divert out of his program?" the staffer asked.

Bill Worf, president of the advocacy group Wilderness Watch, says the agency diverted much of the money to landscape management and cultural resources, programs that support logging. He says the Forest Service broke no laws in the diversion because wilderness technically shares the same budget line allocation with landscape management, cultural resources and recreation.

His organization, along with The Wilderness Society and Vento's office, has called for wilderness to have its own budget line. He says the Forest Service will "resist that with everything they have because they don't want to get in a position where they are legally bound."

But he added that if wilderness does not win its own budget line, his organization will turn up the pressure to ensure that the money is spent as Congress intended.

Wilderness Watch is in part responsible for the GAO study. Worf is a retired Forest Service employee who spent the better part of his career on wilderness issues. In his retirement, he is using that knowledge to monitor the agency.

Worf started with Region One (the Northern Rockies), where he found that the Forest Service spent only 49 percent of the money earmarked for wilderness in 1990, despite a nearly 100 percent increase in allocations from 1988. This led him to investigate all the regions,

where he found similar problems. He turned his findings over to Vento's office, which called for the GAO study. Vento is chairman of the House Interior and Insular Affairs Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands.

"I am both pleased and disappointed," Worf said. "I am pleased that the audit got Forest Service attention and disappointed that the agency I used to work for was so careless about their use of money."

But carelessness may be too simple an explanation. Steve Morton, a wilderness specialist in Region One, said he cannot account for where the money went. He said the money was not used strictly on wilderness because such spending would not help meet what the agency calls "hard target" goals. Forest Service employee performance reviews look at "hard targets" like board feet cut and numbers of animals grazed, but wilderness has no such standards.

Joe Flood and Kari Gunderson, wilderness rangers in Montana's Mission Mountains, said the GAO study belies the agency's claim that it is committed to wilderness. They said the agency is most concerned with logging, and that wilderness rangers are frequently criticized for advocating attention to the backcountry. Staff officers in wilderness management are generally recruited from timber pro-

grams, a practice that undercuts good wilderness management, they said.

Accountability is another major problem in the Forest Service structure, according to a Vento staffer. Forest Service line officers are not rated on their performance in managing wilderness. Thus they are not likely to give it the attention it needs to remain pristine.

Most wilderness areas are subdivided between forests and ranger districts, the staffer added. If each forest or ranger district has only a small piece of a wilderness area, it is unlikely to get sufficient attention.

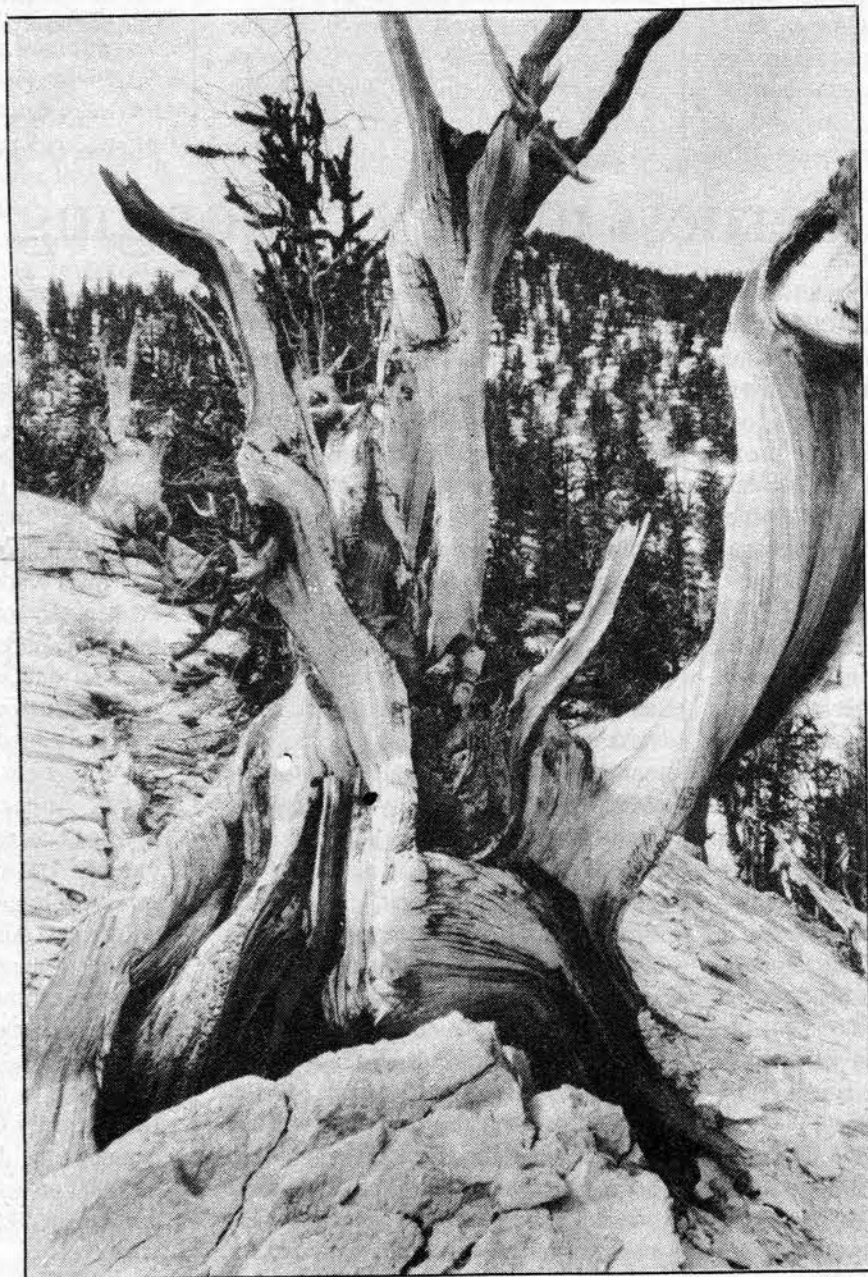
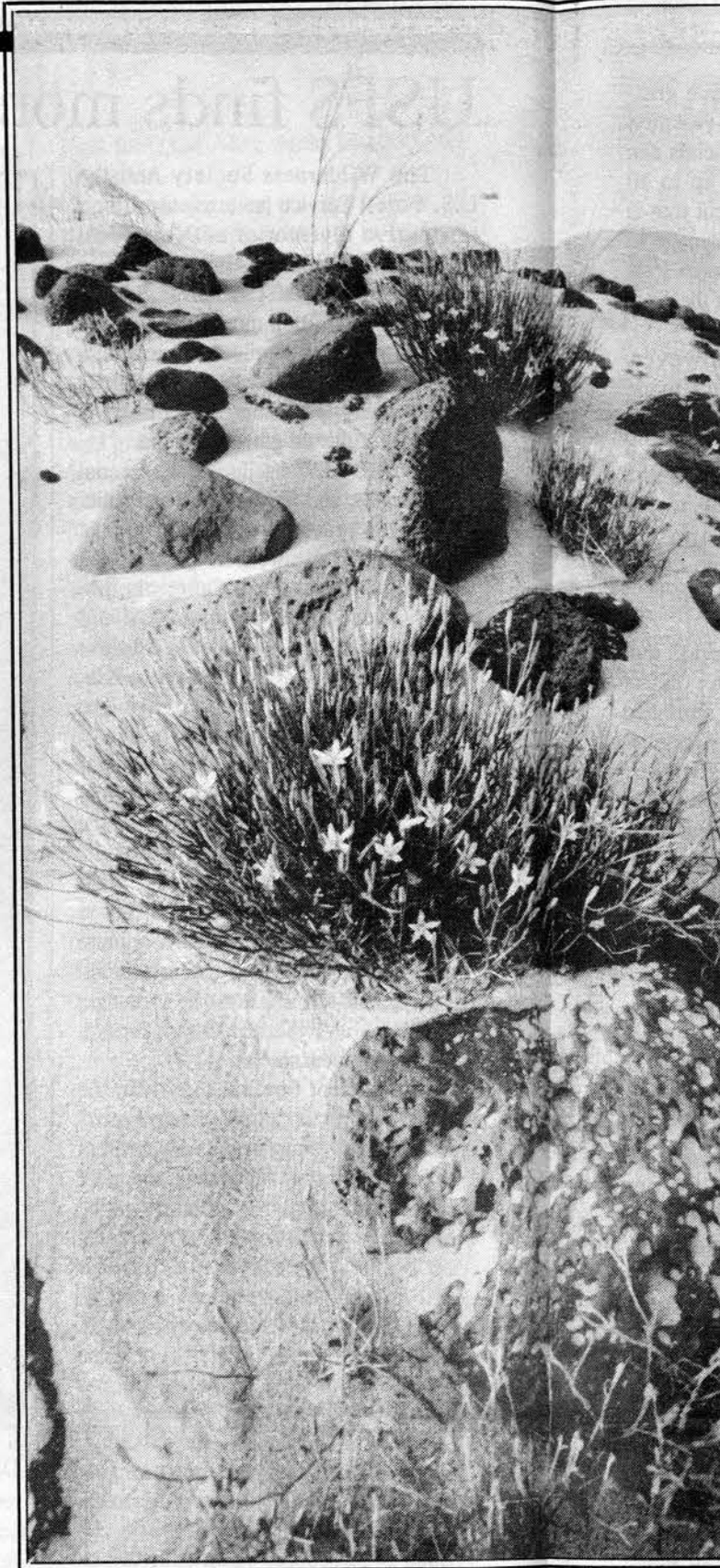
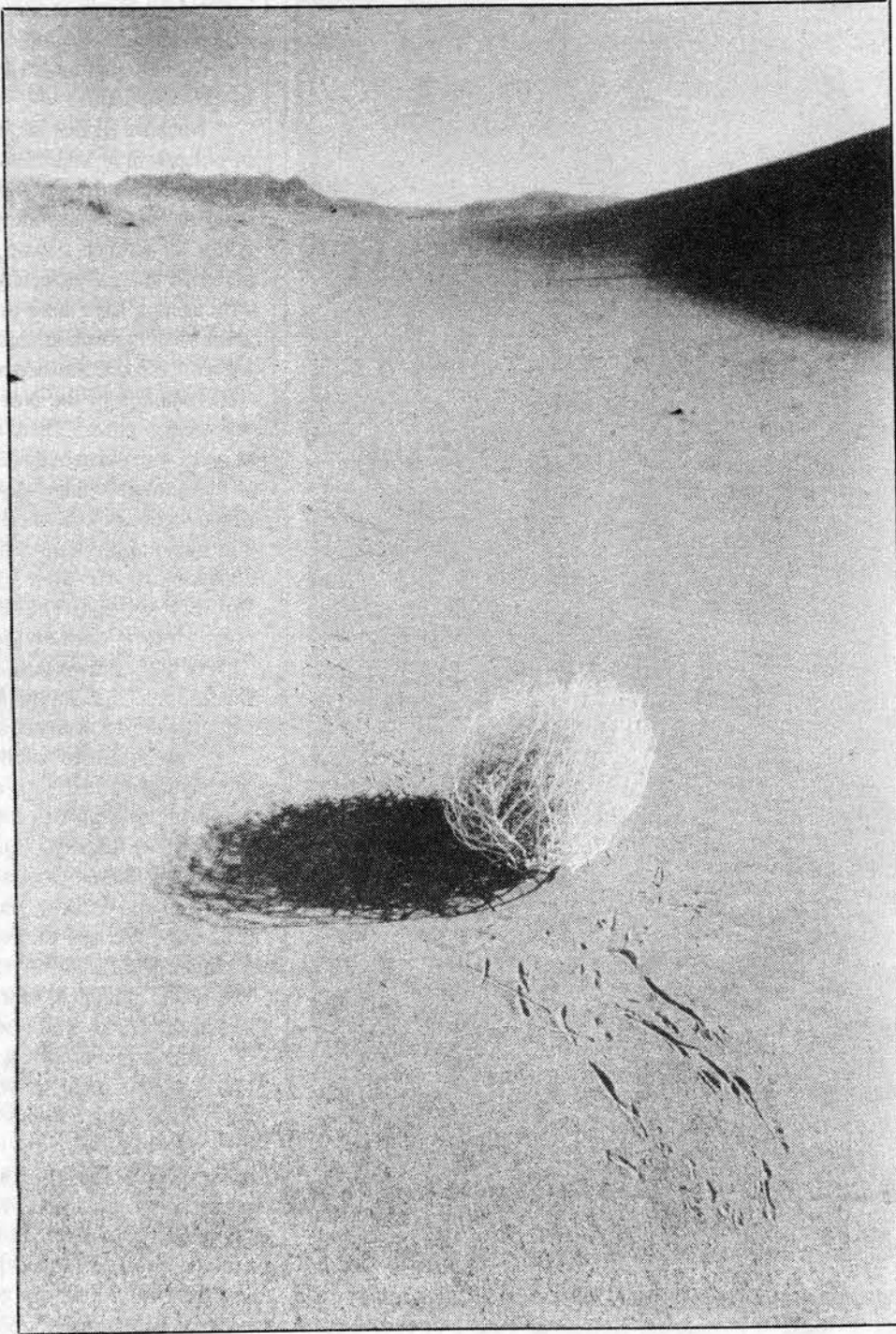
An agency report to Congress accounting for the discrepancies between allocations and spending said that all regional foresters now must ensure that each forest supervisor receives a specific allocation for wilderness. Also, regional foresters will provide a quarterly status report on its wilderness spendings, which will be used in their performance evaluations.

This should produce more money for wilderness in the field. In the Beartooth District of the Custer National Forest, for example, the district ranger must spend \$65,000 on wilderness this year, compared to the \$4,000 spent last year.

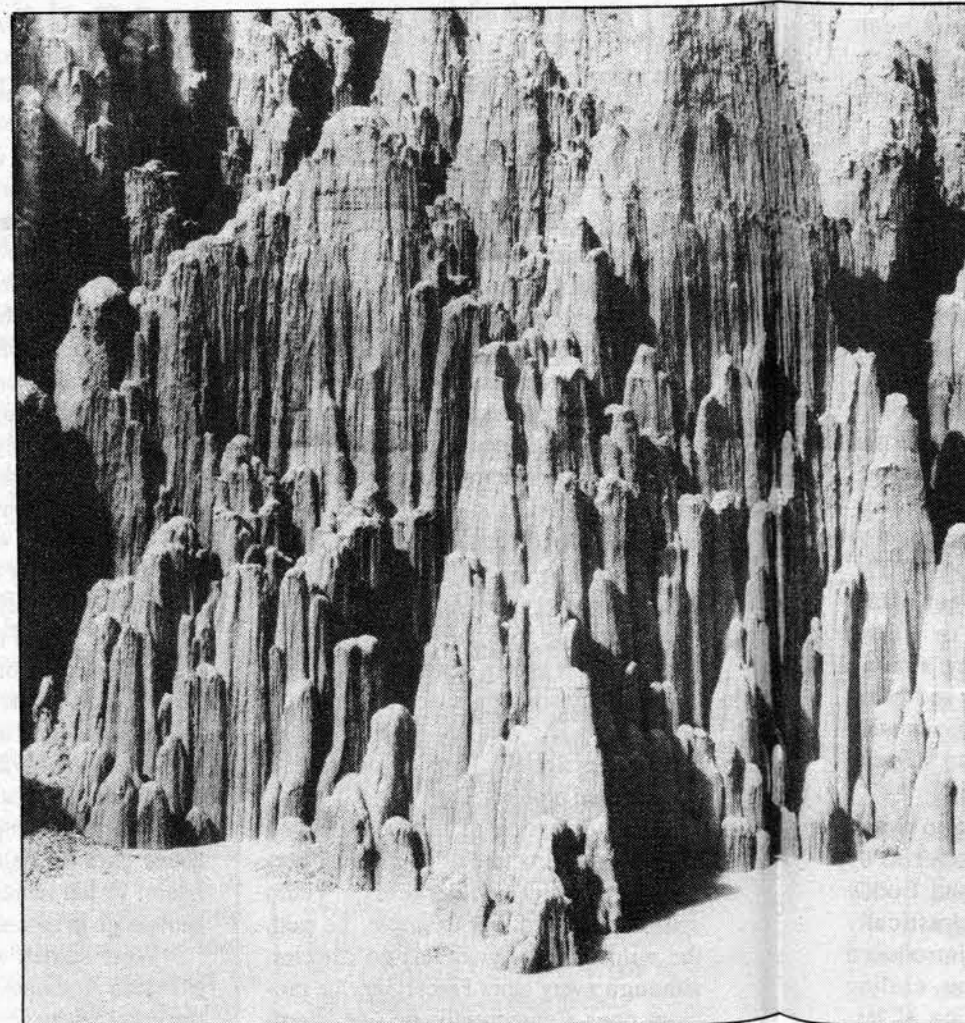
— Tracy Stone-Manning

Tracy Stone-Manning is a free-lance writer in Missoula, Montana.

THE SAGEBRUSH OCEAN

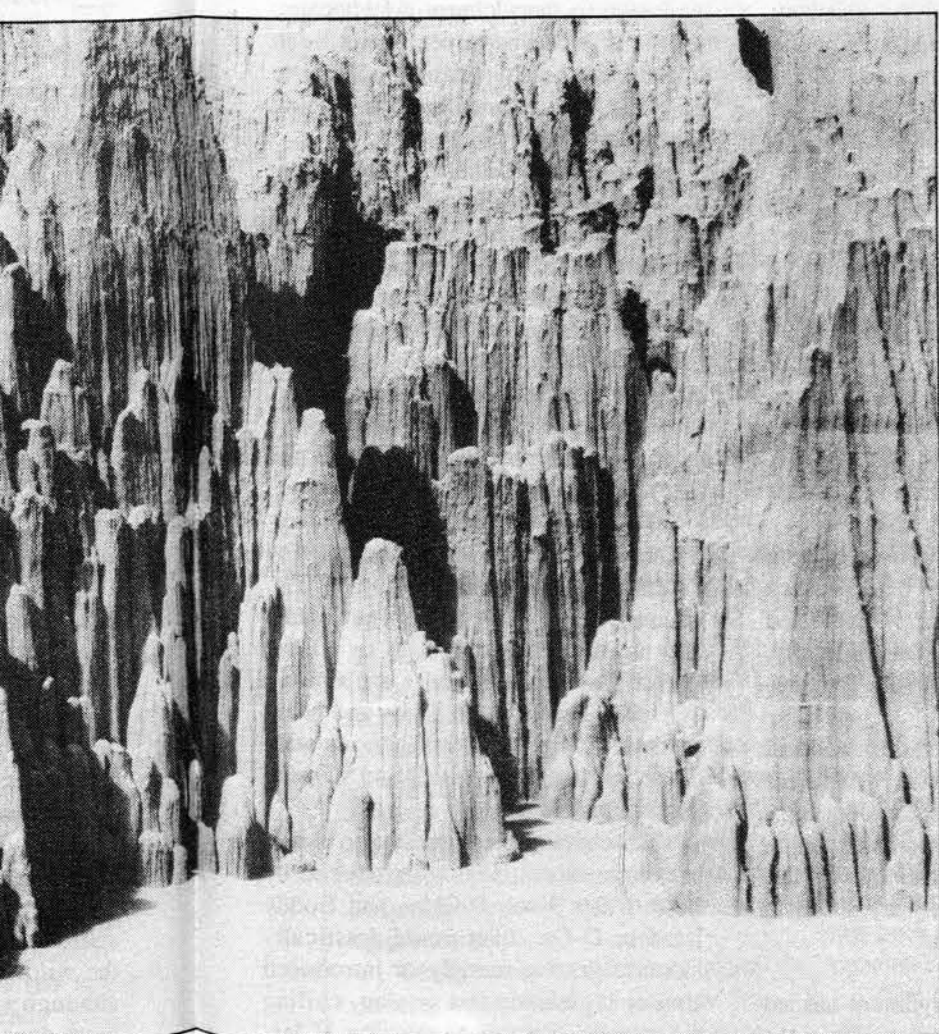


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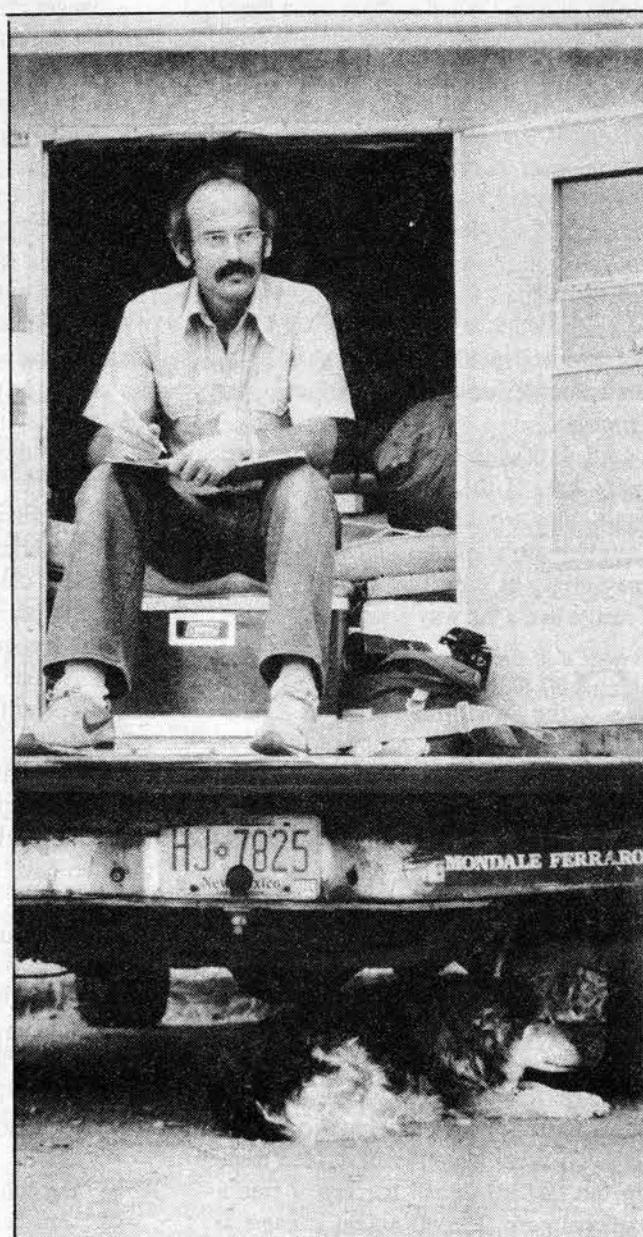




History of the Great Basin



Stephen Trimble



A vast and subtle stretch of North America lies east of the Sierra Nevada, south of the Snake River, west of the Wasatch Range, and north of the Mojave Desert. Much of [this Great Basin Country] is virtually unknown to most Americans....

This huge and lonely country the author has made his own, from four-thousand-year-old bristlecone pines entrenched on high mountain ridges to iodine bush growing along the edges of sun-baked playas. Chapter by chapter, as he discusses climate, paleoecology, and the biology of various Great Basin species, Stephen Trimble opens this landscape up for our enjoyment and edification. The role of the Pinyon Jay and Clark's Nutcracker in shaping the Great Basin forests, the stunning changes in species makeup that have taken place in the Great Basin grasslands, and the remarkable Holocene history of water here are all part of his elucidations....

— from the foreword by Barry Lopez

The Sagebrush Ocean, text and photographs by Stephen Trimble; University of Nevada Press. Cloth-bound: \$34.95. 248 pages. Illustrated with color and black-and-white photographs, drawings and maps. This is a remarkable book, packed with information, limpidly written and intensely beautiful to look at.

Overgrazing ...

(Continued from page 1)

closely watched controversies escalating and heading for court, observers say the viability of public lands ranching is now at stake and will be decided over the next few years.

Don Oman, an outspoken district ranger in Idaho's Sawtooth National Forest whose efforts to improve the range made national headlines last year, puts it this way: "My area was just one of the hot spots. This is going to keep hot-spotting until the American people wake up and realize they own these rangelands."

The Toiyabe National Forest in Nevada is the site of one of the key contests. The Nevada Land Action Association and other ranching groups are suing over the forest plan, charging that it contains an "arbitrary bias against commercial uses of the forest."

At the center of the controversy is Forest Supervisor Jim Nelson, who is variously described as "a bulldog," "a breath of fresh air" and "a maverick." Ranchers who graze livestock on the Toiyabe have a lot of other names for him. Nelson's efforts over the last eight years to protect the range have caused ranchers to file some 75 administrative appeals, and now a lawsuit.

Nelson has overseen cuts of as much as 100 percent on grazing allotments. But despite the huge number of protests from ranchers, the Forest Service has backed Nelson on all of them.

"When I got to the Toiyabe and realized how serious a problem I had, I got my superiors from the regional and federal level and we toured the place to see what the problems were," Nelson says. "I told them what we wanted to do, and they supported me."

"Ten or 15 years ago people like me trying to get a job done on the ground would have probably been transferred. Now we have strong support from Washington on down.... There's a feeling from on top we've got to get those ecosystems in good condition, and we don't have much more time to do it."

"We've got damaged resource, we've got dirt in the creek, and I'm damn sick of it," he says. "If we're going to maintain grazing as a legitimate use, we've got to get good management out there."

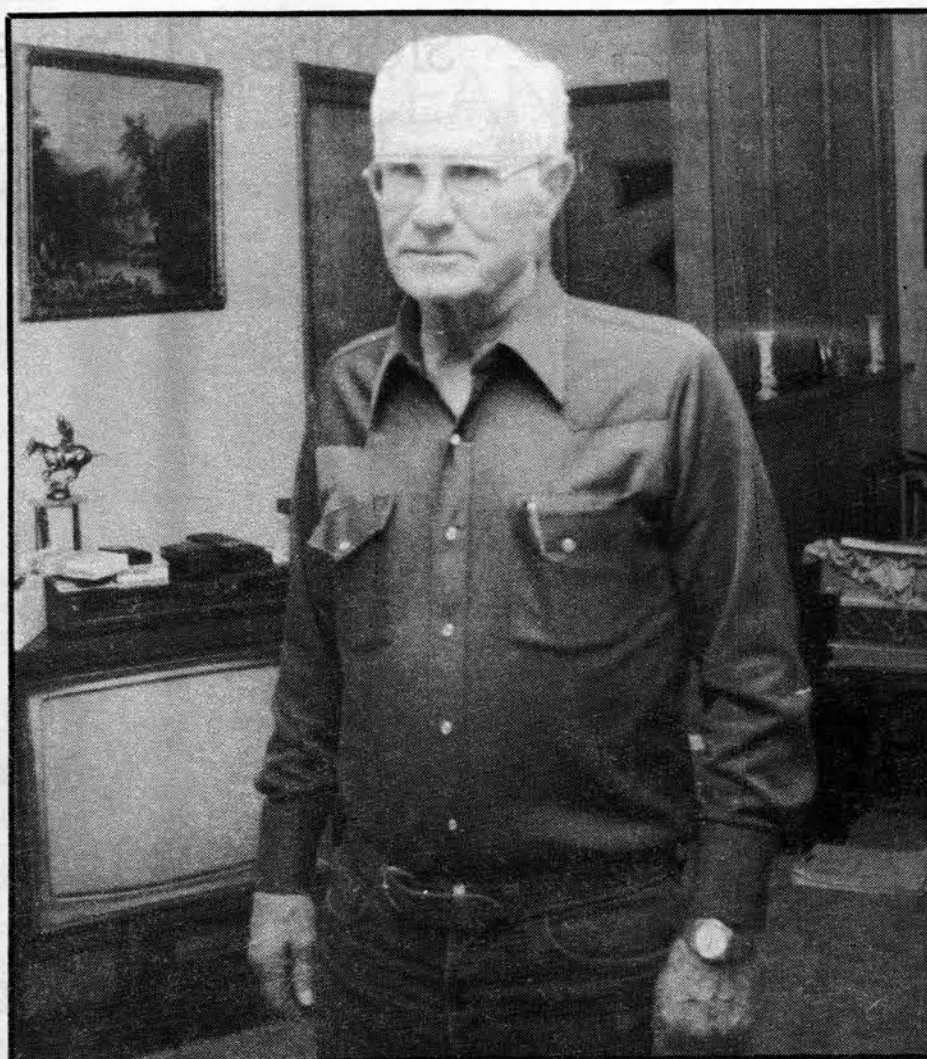
There's a lot of dirt in the creek. Although the forest staff has whipped up more changes in rangeland management in eight years than had been done in the previous few decades, change on the ground is painfully slow.

"Probably 60 to 70 percent of the allotments would be classified in poor condition, with very few allotment management plans in place working," Nelson says. "Ecosystems, especially in the riparian areas, are in low developmental stages.... If the ranchers had been taking records they'd have seen nice, beautiful riparian areas turning into nice, beautiful gullies. It's not all [the ranchers'] fault. We've been managing this land for 80 years and it's not in good shape."

While the forest plan calls for significant grazing reductions over the next decade, it foresees an increase in cattle capacity when the land has recovered.

The Forest Service has a rare array of allies in the lawsuit: the National Wildlife Federation, the National Resources Defense Council, the Sierra Club and other environmentalists who have intervened on the agency's behalf.

"The bottom line was, here was a forest doing the right thing," says Oregon-based National Wildlife Federation lawyer Roy Elicker. "Here was a ranger



Montrose, Colorado, rancher Nick Gray

and staff willing to make some changes. They weren't satisfied with 'Columbus management' — letting the cows out in the spring and going to see where they'd got to by the fall."

Elicker, who spends a lot of time opposing decisions the Forest Service makes, often asks in his appeals against other national forests that the Toiyabe's standards and guidelines be adopted.

"The grazing issue is ripening by the day," he says. "I think the next decade is an extremely important one. Grazing is where we were on the old-growth forest campaign about 10 years ago. Now people are asking, 'What's going on in these lands where we have to close our eyes when we drive through them?'"

The Toiyabe is spread out over three different areas in Nevada. At close to 4 million acres, the forest is second in size only to Alaska's Tongass National Forest. Nelson administers the forest from an industrial zone in the city of Sparks. But his support for his field staff, some of whom work 80-hour weeks without overtime, is steadfast. Four years ago, for example, one of his rangers was threatened.

"I dealt with it promptly," he says, rapid-fire. "I told them if they did it again, they would be arrested. Second, their permits would be taken. And third, they might as well call me next time, because that's the way I was taking it."

Carl Pence is the area ranger for the Sawtooth National Recreation Area in southern Idaho. A 25-year Forest Service veteran who grew up with many of the ranchers in the area, Pence and his staff recently recommended a 66-percent grazing cut on the Stanley Basin Cattle and Horse Allotment. Eight ranchers run about 1,500 head on the allotment's high valleys beneath the Sawtooth Mountains. "The proposed cut means only a few of the ranchers will survive," he says.

The recreation area is considered the most beautiful piece of public land in Idaho. Twenty attempts have been made in the last 80 years to turn it into a national park. The allotment is home to 70 miles of streams that are spawning grounds for sockeye and chinook salmon — both candidates for endangered species status because they are threat-

ened by a succession of dams downstream on the Salmon and Columbia rivers. In Stanley Basin, grazing is the primary cause of stream bank instability. Sediment from erosion smothers fish eggs and interferes with spawning, reports the Forest Service.

The ranchers argue that they are being singled out to pay for the damage caused by the dams: Less than 1 percent of either species even make it to Stanley Basin's streams. "In the 1930s there were twice as many cattle in the basin and a thousand times as many salmon," one rancher observed glumly.

Ranger Pence, however, counters that the downstream obstruction now makes the spawning grounds in Stanley Basin even more important to restore. Thus the 1987 forest plan requires that the streams be rehabilitated to 90 percent of their capacity for fish production. An inventory of 21 of the streams in and around the allotment, he says, showed that 18 provided marginal or unsuitable habitat.

After five years of negotiations, the ranchers want about \$2.5 million in compensation for the cut so they can either buy or lease new land. But the Forest Service refuses, maintaining that grazing is a privilege.

"It's a right," insists Bob Piva, a fourth-generation rancher whose grandfather ran cattle in the Stanley Basin. "Grazing permits are bought and sold. They're recognized by the IRS. They're taxed. No one else can graze my land or sell my permit but me. It's mine."

Piva says the reduction of grazing rights will slash the value of his "ranch unit" — his private property combined with his grazing permit. In his family, the two have been inseparable for three generations.

"This country is based on individual rights, and one of the most important individual rights is the right to own property and to have it protected from confiscation," Piva argues. "Which is what this amounts to — taking away my ability to use the property, or sell it."

The confiscation argument has led ranchers who graze cattle in the piñon- and spruce-covered hills of southern New Mexico's Gila National Forest to promote an unusual defense. Last summer they prevailed upon the Catron

County Commission to make certain grazing cuts by the Forest Service a violation of civil rights. Forest Service officials can be fined \$10,000 and jailed for up to 10 years if they order an allotment cut that is not related to permit violations, damage to resources or drought-caused resource loss. An effort to pass a similar law at the state level failed last month.

The county ordinance, however, may never be applied. "I haven't made any arrests on it," says Sheriff Larry Cearley. "I haven't and I won't. Say a guy's got too many cows out there and the Forest Service guy is trying to get them off, and I go and pick him up. That's not good law enforcement. I'm surprised they passed it. I'm surprised they even discussed it."

Attorneys for the Forest Service told the county officials that they can't dictate what the Forest Service does, and reminded them that they could be arrested on kidnapping and false arrest charges if they attempted to enforce the ordinance. What the Catron County action does show, however, is the lengths ranchers and their political allies are now willing to go to defend their perceived rights.

"They have nothing left to lose," explains Karen Budd, a Cheyenne-based lawyer who drafted the county ordinance and represents ranchers in six Rocky Mountain states. "It's all basically the same issue as Nick Gray's [in Colorado]. They can't really give up more animal unit months (the amount of forage needed to support a cow and calf for one month). They have nothing left to give up but the whole idea of being ranchers."

Indeed, ranchers last year filed more than twice as many administrative appeals with the Forest Service over grazing permit reductions than the year before.

"It's a battle; it's a range war," says Joe Stringer, an Agriculture Department attorney who represents the Forest Service in Utah, Nevada, southern Idaho and western Wyoming.

Budd believes what many ranchers have come to assume: Grazing on federal lands is a right, not a privilege. The reasoning behind the Catron County ordinance, explains Budd, is that while a grazing permit doesn't give a right to the land, it does confer a property right to the forage on the allotment. And because the right to own property has been defined in the courts as a civil right, unjustified cuts in cattle numbers amount to a breach of civil rights.

University of Colorado law professor Charles Wilkinson, however, disagrees. "To call that a civil right really demeans what a civil right is," he says. "I think it would be rejected by the courts in a fairly mundane way."

"A person could understand why ranchers would think they have a right," he continues. "It certainly has come to seem like a right. It comes with the ranch. But it's not a right."

The 1934 Taylor Grazing Act, which established government regulation of cattle on BLM lands, says: "The issuance of a permit ... shall not create any right, title, interest in or to the lands." Forest Service rules are similar. The 1976 Federal Land Policy and Management Act gives federal agencies wide discretion to cancel, modify and suspend grazing leases.

Ranchers also are reacting to a pair of congressional bills — introduced by Reps. Mike Synar, D-Okla., and Buddy Darden, D-Ga., that would drastically increase grazing fees. Synar introduced similar legislation last session, calling the currently subsidized situation of less than \$2 per animal unit month a "below-cost feeding frenzy." Although the measure died in a House-Senate conference committee, the fact that it sailed through

the House of Representatives by a margin of nearly 100 votes before it was stopped chilled the blood of public lands ranchers.

"It was a wake-up call," says the Public Land Council's Doggett. Realizing the livestock industry had a public relations problem of massive proportions, the council, the National Cattlemen's Association and other industry groups launched a fund-raising drive among its members last month to do what environmentalists have been doing for years — educate the public.

The short-term goal of the campaign is to prevent a grazing fee hike. The long-term aim is to show "that [ranching] is an activity done in an ecologically sound manner that's important to the nation and particularly to the West," says Doggett. "If [the public] doesn't understand and we're not talking to them, we're going to get run over."

The Forest Service plans an 11 percent cut in animal unit months over the next decade or two to help bring the 27 percent of its rangelands diagnosed in unsatisfactory condi-

tion up to par. Some 50 million acres of Forest Service rangelands currently support about 9.6 million animal unit months per year.

"There is change occurring," the Forest Service's range management director, Robert Williamson, acknowledges. "It's going to happen whether they [the ranchers] like it or want it. I'm not out to remove livestock grazing from the public lands. I think we can do a lot with livestock grazing. But I can't defend unsatisfactory range conditions and improper grazing."

Such a statement from a top federal land manager would have been unthinkable only a few years ago. The Forest Service, in particular, has started cracking down on errant ranchers because of both internal reformers and outside pressures. Some rangers talk about the change in public attitudes toward the national forests. "We used to view riparian areas as sacrifice zones," says the Sawtooth National Recreation Area's Carl Pence. "Then — I've gotta be honest — we began hearing from the public about their concerns."

"The public," of course, also means

the environmentalists, who admittedly have been late to focus on the overgrazing issue. Rose Strickland, who chairs the Sierra Club's national committee on grazing, explains:

"There is a growing feeling among conservationists that we have to deal with livestock management on the public lands now because it affects all our resources. I can't think of any conservation group that's not now willing to turn up the heat on grazing."

The Natural Resources Defense Council's Johanna Wald, however, has been plugging away on the grazing issue for 15 years. In 1976 she won a court victory against the Bureau of Land Management, forcing it to begin preparing Environmental Impact Statements (EISes) on grazing for each district. And she's still at it, with nine appeals now pending on BLM lands in Nevada.

The BLM's efforts to upgrade its management on the ground have lagged behind the Forest Service's. A 1988 study by the General Accounting Office, Congress's investigatory arm, found nearly 60 percent of BLM's rangeland in unsatisfactory condition. BLM has

announced increased grazing cuts for the coming season because of drought conditions, and says it intends to recover 75 percent of its damaged riparian areas and wetlands by 1997. But Wald is still skeptical.

"The goals are lofty," she says. "But I do not yet see the BLM on an agency-wide basis getting tougher on grazing abuses. The BLM believes the data they don't have will always be better than the data they do have."

The Forest Service, moreover, has a long way to go to comply with laws that have been on the books for years. These include not only the 1970 National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA), which calls for assessments of the environmental impact of federal actions, but also the 1976 National Forest Management Act, which requires management plans for the nation's forests.

The Forest Service issued its first forest plan in 1983, and now has plans in place for all its forests. Their standards and guidelines govern the management of grazing allotments. But the Forest

Continued on page 12

Cutting the grazing allotment on the Upper Ruby

by George Wuerthner

District Ranger Ron Stellingwerf is not a popular man in Sheridan, Mont., a town of 700 people. Since he came to the Sheridan district on the Beaverhead National Forest in 1984, two petitions to have him transferred have been circulated. At a nearby county fair parade, a red wagon filled with cow manure made its way down the street under a sign that read "Forest Service." And if you listen to the bar talk around town, there are people who, after getting a few beers in them, want to kill Stellingwerf.

In a move that is considered heresy, Stellingwerf and his staff recently recommended a 44-percent cut in cattle numbers on the nearby Upper Ruby Cattle and Horse Allotment. Their reason: to protect its creeks and streams.

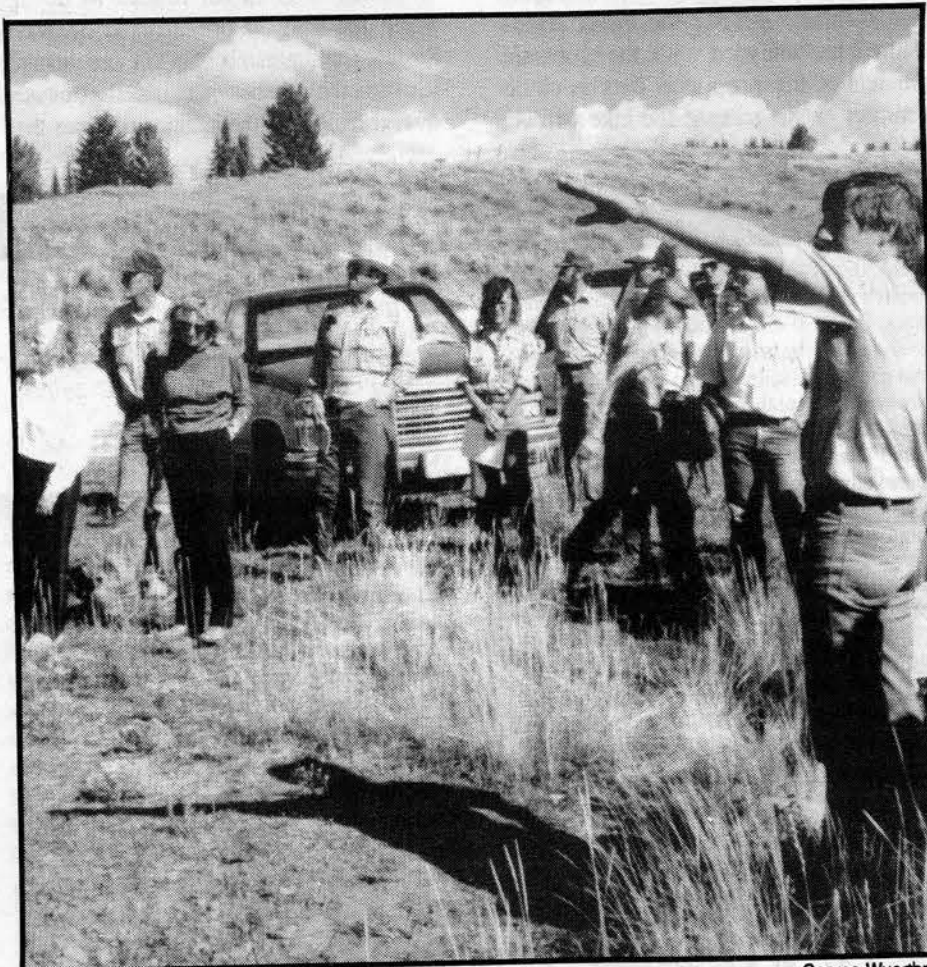
The controversy, which includes the route the Forest Service has chosen to resolve it — preparing a full-scale Environmental Impact Statement rather than an Environmental Assessment or nothing at all — has attracted attention from all over the region.

"The other district rangers are watching to see what happens," says Beaverhead National Forest hydrologist Pete Bengyfield. "The Sheridan district is breaking new ground."

Eleven ranchers graze about 3,000 head of cattle each summer on the Upper Ruby, which lies in southwestern Montana, 50 miles from Sheridan between the Gravelly and Snowcrest mountain ranges. Its sage, aspen and lodgepole pine-covered hills are considered one of the better elk hunting areas in the state. There were four verified grizzly sightings in the Gravelly Range last summer.

The allotment has been grazed for 100 years and overgrazed for at least 70, according to the Forest Service. About 80 percent of its creeks and rivers are reported to be in poor to fair condition. Willow and aspen populations have dropped drastically, and sediment in the Ruby River continues to degrade the river's fisheries. Seeps, springs and wet meadows are heavily trampled.

Despite numerous references to deteriorating range conditions in Forest Service records, the 1970 allotment management plan, which is still in effect, increased livestock numbers. Rangers



Ranger George Weldon (pointing) discusses the Upper Ruby Grazing Allotment with a group including Ron Stellingwerf (with baseball cap in back)

during the 1970s agreed to anything the ranchers wanted, according to Stephanie Wood, who has worked as a range technician in the Sheridan district for 10 years. When Stellingwerf showed up, the ranchers expected things to remain the same. But they haven't.

"After 100 years of abuse, we're having to look at our management," says Stellingwerf. "We're recognizing the value of riparian areas we didn't see before." But he and his staff face a solid wall of opposition from the ranchers and other local residents.

"I don't think there's any need for the cut at all," says Ruby Valley Stock Association President Jay Barnowski. Stockmen favor a regimen of additional fencing and more range riders to keep the cattle out of the river, he adds. However, range riders generally have not been able to keep cows out of the riparian areas.

The Forest Service is attempting to align its management plan for the 43,000-acre allotment with the 1986 Forest Plan, which directs the agency to

protect riparian habitat, water quality and fisheries, and to reduce livestock numbers if necessary to achieve those goals. Last year the Forest Service required the permittees to take their cattle off the allotment early to meet Forest Plan standards.

But efforts to arrive at a long-term solution have been mired in controversy for nearly a decade. The Forest Service has been trying to address the area's environmental problems since 1982. Then, in 1989, some of the cattle that graze the allotment escaped during an early fall storm.

"There was mud up to their knees," said Stellingwerf. "There was a tremendous amount of damage. I realized something had to be done."

The National Wildlife Federation also had run out of patience. It threatened to file an injunction against any grazing on the allotment unless the Forest Service started to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

The Forest Service then initiated an EIS, which requires far more public

involvement and scientific research than an Environmental Assessment; the Forest Service often even skips the EA in allotment management planning. The Upper Ruby now is one of only two Forest Service grazing allotments in the West that is undergoing an EIS. The other is on Idaho's Sawtooth National Recreation Area, where grazing is degrading the spawning grounds of two types of salmon that are candidates for endangered-species listing. Stellingwerf says the EIS is now "our best shot to get things done."

The draft EIS analyzed eight alternatives, including a "no grazing" scheme that would have the greatest recovery rate for the ground. It also would generate money from an increase in hunters in the region. The Forest Service, however, recommended a 44-percent cut in cattle numbers.

This spurred a new wave of resistance. Ranchers blasted the document as biased and full of errors. Invoking a seldom-used Memorandum of Understanding between the Forest Service and the state of Montana, the permittees asked for a group of outside experts to review the draft study. This report is expected by mid-summer. Meanwhile, the Madison County Commissioners have asked for a two-year moratorium on any grazing cuts.

So Stellingwerf is facing another grazing season on the Upper Ruby with nothing yet changed. It's likely that the agency will do what it did last year — require the permittees to come off the allotment early. But it will be someone else's job by then. Stellingwerf has been granted a transfer that he requested because of an illness in the family. While he is confident the EIS process will lead to "the best long-term decision we can come up with," he still predicts the issue will end up in court.

"It's a microcosm of what's going on all over the West," said one observer. "Thirty years ago it didn't matter what was happening on the Upper Ruby or anywhere, because no one was watching except the locals." But now a lot of people are watching. Clearly, grazing on the Upper Ruby will never be the same again.

George Wuerthner is a free-lance writer and photographer in Livingston, Montana.

Overgrazing ...

(Continued from page 1)

Service has lagged in requiring EISes or even Environmental Assessments (EAs), a less rigorous analysis. Last year, however, a threat by the National Wildlife Federation to halt all grazing on a Montana allotment forced the Forest Service to begin preparing EISes for its grazing allotments there (see story on Page 11).

"Very few EISes and EAs have been done," admits one Forest Service official. "And a lot of allotments still don't have management plans. We don't have enough range conservationists to do it all. If the environmentalists wanted to lock up grazing, they could do it with a few well-placed lawsuits, because grazing is still way out of sync with NEPA."

Sharper publicity on the grazing issue also is helping to bring about change on the public range. Last year this newspaper chronicled the efforts of one district ranger in Idaho's Sawtooth National Forest to do his job (HCN, 5/7/90). Don Oman's attempts to combat overgrazing had earned him threats of violence from ranchers and suggestions from his superiors to apply for a transfer. The Don Oman story was then picked up by *The New York Times* (HCN, 9/10/90), *Audubon* magazine and even *People*, Time Inc.'s airy newsweekly.

The publicity got Oman an unexpected ally — President Bush — and some 2,000 letters of support. It also made him immune from the traditional cowboy political clout that has muzzled so many federal land managers in the past. Last December, Oman's red-faced agency assured him his job was secure.

When the article on Oman came out in *People* last November, *Western Live-stock Journal* called for a complete boycott of the magazine, its parent company and all of its stockholders. *People's* circulation is 3.2 million; *Western Live-stock Journal's* is 27,000. About 26,000 of the 250 million people in the country are federal lands ranchers. Numbers like that, coupled with the increasing amount of public furor over the state of the range, are leaving less and less room for ranchers to defy public priorities.

"The rules have changed," says the Agriculture Department's Stringer. "I think the ranchers are going to have to recognize that, and they're going to have to play by the rules, or they're going to lose the whole ballgame."

Some ranchers reason that there's not much reason to play by rules that are going to run them straight out of business. While neither the National Cattlemen's Association nor the Public Lands Council has analyzed what the economic impacts of the proposed cuts in cattle numbers or the grazing fee hike will be,

there is little doubt that they will put some ranchers under.

If the public range were in better condition, however, both of these threats would lose a considerable amount of steam. Are there, then, ways for ranchers to improve the range and not go under?

Absolutely, says Olin Sims, a Wyoming rancher who has increased his profits since 1989, when he started implementing Holistic Resource Management, which combines intensive grazing with strict rotation. At least 5,000 people have been trained in the method. Sims runs about 450 cattle on his McFadden, Wyo., ranch and adjoining BLM land. Two years ago, the range conditions were "overgrazed and over-rested at the same time" — cattle were eating their favorite plants and ignoring the others. As the favored plants regenerated, the shoots were nibbled down, while the rest of the plants became too big to eat.

Sims's herd now spends most of the summer being rotated in a single group through a series of 24 fenced pastures. They eat everything in sight for a few days and are then moved on, which allows for even plant regeneration. The rotation system mimics the movement of the buffalo that used to roam the plains and stick together as a defense against predators.

"We're using our fences to do the same job that the predators did," says Sims. "Cutting numbers is not the answer; it's not the number of cattle that causes overgrazing. It's the amount of time they

spend on the plants."

Installing a system like Sims's takes both money and planning — two things that have been conspicuously absent from the public range. Federal range programs — especially those administered by the BLM — are chronically under-funded. Even on the Toiyabe National Forest, "we've got about half the money we need to do a good job on grazing," says Forest Supervisor Nelson. And observers bemoan the fact that some ranchers would rather spend money fighting changes in court rather than fund better management on the ground. "A lot of ranchers treat the range like a babysitting service," said one official. "They drop 'em off in the spring, and pick 'em up in the fall."

But ranchers are looking at a variety of ways to improve the range. In Oregon, which one rancher described as "the green area that keeps the cement of San Francisco away from the cement of Seattle," some ranchers have agitated for a surcharge on the grazing fee to fund ecological improvements on the range. Groups of volunteers have rehabilitated riparian areas there.

Even in Nick Gray's back yard, change is at hand. At a recent meeting on the Big Cimarron allotment, several of the assembled ranchers were involved with Holistic Resource Management. Gray, however, wasn't even there.

Lisa Jones is a staff writer for HCN.

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Vanishing LOBO

The Mexican Wolf and the Southwest



JAMES C. BURBANK

SAVING THE WOLF IN US

The disappearance of the wolf from the West parallels the taming of this once-wild land. With fewer than 40 Mexican wolves in existence today, we edge ever closer, writes James Burbank, to a time when "the moon howls and the wolves are silent." Burbank's *Vanishing Lobo: The Mexican Wolf and the Southwest* draws from history, anthropology, psychology, folklore and philosophy to examine how various peoples have responded to wilderness and the wolf. His book presents an impassioned plea to re-embrace the wolf before it vanishes, not only from the wild but also from within ourselves. "If we can be the other," writes Burbank towards his close, "if we can be like wolves, we can understand what it means to live as wolves live and we can seek then reconciliation with and not victory over Nature."

Johnson Books, 1880 S. 57th Ct., Boulder, CO 80301. Hardcover: \$18.95. 224 pages, illustrated with 12 black-and-white photos.



GLACIER NP TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The final transportation plan for Glacier National Park has been released. The plan recommends improving Going-to-the-Sun Road, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a significant cultural resource. A second major concern addressed is the need for an expanded shuttle-bus system to reduce traffic along the 70-year-old scenic route. This plan is the result of an environmental assessment process begun in 1987. Copies can be obtained from the Superintendent, Glacier National Park, West Glacier, MT 59936, or by calling 406/888-5441.

PREDATORS AS PREY

There is painful irony in the fact that ranchers, such powerful icons in the romanticized myth of the West, have also been so destructive of the Western landscape and its natural inhabitants. As Donald Schueler documents in *Incident at Eagle Ranch: Predator as Prey in the American West*, the livestock industry and its policing agency, Animal Damage Control, have pursued both legal and illegal activities to remove predators. In spite of laws prohibiting the killing of eagles, one ADC employee drily stated, "I like eagles. I think they're a beautiful bird. But in sheep country I think they should be removed. One way or another." Although Schueler's book begins with a federal investigation of eagle killing in south Texas, it is evident that the predation of eagles, both in Texas and throughout the West, is in many ways a paradigm for the larger predatory controversy. In his investigation of ADC work in the Southwest, the author discovered a brazen and violent disregard for all predators, regardless of their actual threat to livestock. This book was first published in 1980, but its message is still an extremely timely one.

University of Arizona Press, 1230 North Park, #102, Tucson, AZ 85719. Paper: \$17.95. 315 pages.



THE OTHER OIL AND GAS WAR

In 1980, Congress exempted wastes from oil and gas exploration and production from the restrictions of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. And in 1988, the Environmental Protection Agency claimed that the federal Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water acts provided sufficient control of the "not excessively risky" waste. Now, another oil and gas war is being waged here on the home front, reports Chris Shuey in his feature article, "At War in the Oil Patch," written for *The Workbook's* fall 1990 issue. Citizens' groups around the country are now questioning the EPA's ruling, citing actual EPA data. The groups claim the EPA inadequately investigated the toxicity of the waste and ignored a number of cases of oil-field waste contamination in order to protect the petroleum industry from production-damaging federal hazardous-waste regulations.

The Workbook, a quarterly journal providing people with sources of information on environmental and social problems, is published by the nonprofit Southwest Research and Information Center, P.O. Box 4524, Albuquerque, NM 87106.

HELLS NEWS

The Hells Canyon Preservation Council has begun publishing a quarterly newspaper as part of its effort to protect the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area. The *Hells Canyon Falcon* offers readers up-to-date information on Forest Service activities, legal issues and the continuing effort to turn the recreation area into a national park. Subscribers become members of the preservation council and receive discounts on its fundraising video and posters. A year's subscription costs \$20. For information write HCPC, P.O. Box 908, Joseph, OR 97846.

CHERNOBYL: 5TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION

The first international conference on nuclear power and alternative energy issues since 1983 will be held in Washington, D.C. from April 26-28. Workshops will cover nuclear power issues such as reactor safety, radioactive waste and nuclear proliferation, as well as energy efficiency and renewable energy. There will be workshops on tactics for local activists working to achieve a nuclear-free future. Participants are expected to adopt a new national energy strategy focusing on safe, environmentally sound energy sources. For more information, contact the Nuclear Information and Resource Service, 1424 16th St. NW, Suite 601, Washington, D.C. 20036; 202/328-0002.



NEW BEAR FOUNDATION

Doug Seus, trainer of Bart, the big bear with leading roles in *The Bear*, *Clan of the Cave Bear* and *White Fang*, has founded a new environmental organization called the Vital Ground Foundation. In its mission to "secure and protect precious lands needed for survival of grizzly bears" and other threatened animals, the foundation unites a unique blend of Hollywood stars and producers, "hard core" environmentalists, researchers and scientists. "Bart has been with us for many years. He has helped me make a good living," says Seus. "All of our animals have provided us years of enjoyment ... and now we want to give something back."

For more information, write or call the Vital Ground Foundation, P.O. Box 447, Heber City, UT 84032-0447; 801/654-4747.

GRIZZLY PROTECTION

Delisting of northwestern Montana's grizzly bears as a threatened species is several years away, says U.S. Fish and Wildlife Regional Director Galen Buterbaugh. Before the grizzly loses federal protection, thorough study and planning to ensure its healthy recovery will take place. The announcement relieved growing concerns about the grizzly's imminent loss of federal protection. When and if a formal proposal for delisting develops, the Fish and Wildlife Service promises to ensure public participation through notices and hearings.



ENVIRONMENTALISM WITH SPIRIT

An environmental stewardship conference, "The World in Our Hands," will be held April 12-14 in Lakewood, Colo. The conference will include workshops for adults, youths and children on a variety of environmental issues. Workshop titles include "Caring for God's Earth," "Can We Blame Adam and Eve?" and "Water: Our Life Blood." Tours of the Metro Waste Water Reclamation District Facility, the Rocky Mountain Arsenal and other sites will be provided. The conference is sponsored by the Rocky Mountain Conference of the United Methodist Church and its Board of Church and Society. Costs range from \$15 to \$45, depending on the age of the participant, and child care is available. For more information call John Hale at 303/935-8475.

RECREATION & DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

A conference entitled "Recreation Trends and Mountain Resort Development" will be held April 18-21 in Vail, Colo. Sessions will focus on tourism, preservation and development issues in rural and resort communities. The cost is \$75 for students and \$145 for non-students. For more information call Rudi Hartmann in Vail at 303/830-0159.

EARTH RESTORATION CONFERENCE

The Front Range Bioregional Project will host a conference entitled "Rediscovering Home" on April 19-21 in Boulder, Colo. The focus will be on the restoration of the earth and revitalization of local places and cultures. A free lecture by Wes Jackson on sustainable agriculture will be presented. The cost is \$15 and workshops for kids will be available. For more information call the CU Environmental Center at 303/492-8308.



NOT MUCH

What do tourists do when they visit a national park or monument? Not much, according to a 15-page Northern Arizona University study. At the Wupatki National Monument in Arizona, anthropology professor Robert Trotter found the average tourist visited for less than 30 minutes, even though it is an 18-mile drive to the site. Tourists stopped in at the visitors' center and went on to the pueblo ruins that make up the monument, Trotter found, but some didn't even make it that far. They used the restroom, bought souvenirs, asked directions and then left. While the researcher had no suggestions for encouraging people to stay longer, he recommended ways to enhance short visits. One proposal was to remove some signs on the self-paced tour since most visitors preferred reading brochures. For a copy of the report, *Summary: Results of Wupatki National Monument Summer Ethnographic Field School*, send 75 cents to the Anthropology Department of Northern Arizona University, Box 15200, Flagstaff, AZ 86011.

OREGON NATIONAL PARK ASSOCIATION

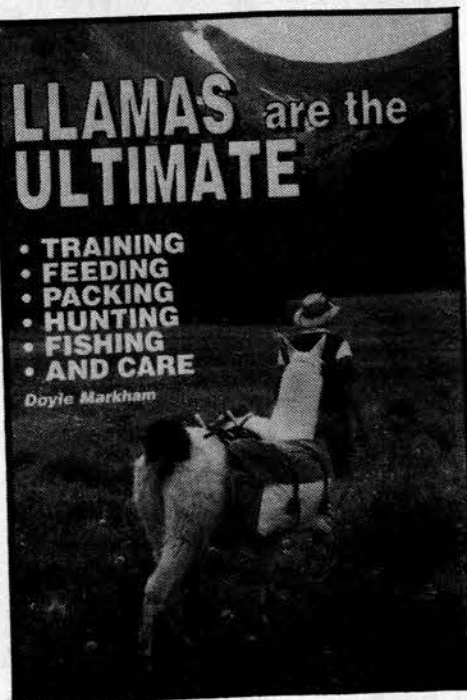
The Oregon National Park Association has formed to coordinate three ongoing national park campaigns. The three sites — Hells Canyon, Klamath-Siskiyou and Steens Mountain — are remote, sparsely settled areas controlled primarily by the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. One of the principal aims of the organization is to increase public understanding of the need to protect the ecological integrity of each region, as opposed to protecting individual species. The association hopes to establish large national parks with connecting corridors that would preserve a "minimum dynamic area" and allow migration of both animal and plant species. Oregon now has only one national park, Crater Lake.



THE A-B-C'S OF LLAMAS

Anyone interested in llamas as pets, pack animals or farm hands should read *Llamas Are the Ultimate* — it just might convince you that you need one. This easy-to-read book contains all the information you could ever want about raising, training and caring for the versatile animals. You can learn things like llama first aid, how to find your runaway llama, or flying or jet-boating with your llama, and even how to earn a 20 percent annual return on your llama investment. Author Doyle Markham explores the many uses of llamas as packing, hunting and fishing companions, vigilant sheep guards, bearers of wool, and faithful friends. But the best reason to have one, writes Markham, is that "llamas are just plain fun to own."

Snake River Llamas, 7626 N. 5th West, Idaho Falls, ID 83402. 208/524-0330. Paper: \$16.95 postpaid. 286 pages. Illustrated with black-and-white photographs.



LETTERS

WATER LAW

Dear HCN,

I always find your articles on water issues interesting and informative. However, I disagree with your statement in your February 25, 1991 issue, on a new era relating to water rights in Colorado, that "only holders of valid existing rights can protest the creation or transfer of another's rights, and then only if they are on the same stream." Colorado Revised Statute §37-92-302(1)(a) states in part that any person who wishes to file a statement of opposition to a water rights application may do so. §37-92-304(2) provides that any person who wishes to file a protest to a water referee's ruling (thereby appealing the case to the water judge) may do so.

Although I do not think that the case law construing these statutes must be interpreted to mean that every person has standing in every situation to file a statement of opposition, or lodge a protest to a referee's ruling, I am not aware of a single case in which a person was denied the opportunity to do so for lack of ownership of a water right.

While it is true that the standard for creation of a new water right or transfer of an existing one is still basically prevention of injury to the vested water rights of others, there are other avenues of opposition one who does not own a water right can pursue. As was pointed out in the accompanying article on Aurora's Collegiate Range Project (known as "CRAP" to its opponents), one can raise the issue of whether the applicant "can and will" develop the project within a reasonable time. Similarly, in an application for a finding of reasonable diligence to keep an existing conditional water right valid, a non-owner can file a statement of opposition and present evidence that the applicant has not diligently worked toward applying the water to a beneficial use, and that the conditional water right should therefore be forfeited. Given the right set of facts, there are undoubtedly other theories upon which non-owners could rely to successfully oppose the approval of an application to create or transfer a water right.

Hank Worley
Colorado Springs, Colorado

POPULATION GROWTH
AND WATER PROJECTS

Dear HCN,

Like many environmentalists, I was delighted with the federal veto of Two Forks ("Colorado Enters a New Water Era," HCN, 2/25/91). However, I feel the veto is only a reprieve if environmentalists don't address the issue of population growth.

While I believe that conservation measures can provide for Denver's water needs for the next 20 to 30 years, I have little doubt that as the population of Colorado increases by millions of people, conservation will prove inadequate for the metro area's water needs. Denver will then, inevitably, build Two Forks, take water from agriculture, implement more transmountain water diversions, etc.

It is easy to assume that population is not an issue here in the West. Compared with the dense population of the eastern United States, we still have great miles of wide-open spaces. But many Americans wrongly believe that the United States has gotten its population problem under control.

Ironically, many scientists consider the United States one of the most overpopulated nations in the world because of its high standard of living and the resulting heavy toll on the environment. In addition, the United States has the highest population growth rate of any industrialized nation, because of a rising birth rate and recently liberalized laws on immigration.

The U.S. Census Bureau projects a U.S. population of upwards of 500 million people — double our current population — by the year 2080. Colorado, meanwhile, will gain roughly a million people in only 30 years (a 25 percent increase), just from its birth rate.

Thus, as population mushrooms in Colorado, California and every other state in the West, pressure will increase to build Two Forks and hundreds of other projects like it. That makes population growth very much an issue in the West. Only by educating Americans to the importance of limiting family size can we hope to permanently put such projects to rest.

Kathleene Parker
Denver, Colorado

OLD TIMES ALONG THE MISSOURI

Dear HCN,

Your story on the Missouri River water squabbles (HCN, 3/11/91) brought back memories of the boyhood days I spent along that turbulent,

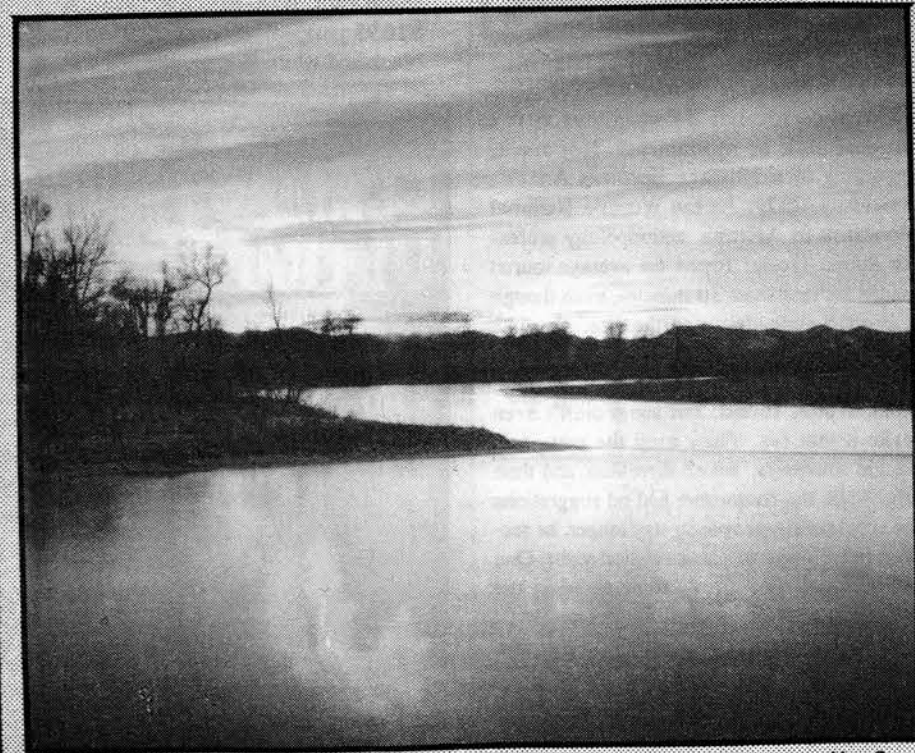
evocative river. My parents would often take us down to the Missouri from Sioux City for an evening or Saturday of fishing. We would catch channel catfish from the river (taking care to

avoid the sandy, crumbling cutbanks) and sauger and crappie from the river's sloughs and backwaters.

Evenings along the Missouri were magical: the swish and boil of the sandy current; the full moon rising over the cottonwoods; the occasional beat of drums carrying across the river from the Winnebago Indian Reservation. We would build a fire from driftwood, roast hot dogs and try to pick out the constellations when night fell. In the fall we would build a windbreak from driftwood and watch the skeins of migrating geese fill the sky from north to south.

By the early 1960s, the Corps of Engineers dams and channelizations were markedly changing the river. The sloughs no longer flooded annually and began to fill in. Alligator-like gar fish, predatory and indestructible, drove out the sport fish. The margins of the reservoirs themselves were treeless, hot and stinking. My family moved away in 1963, and I am glad I am no longer there to witness the various economic factions argue over how to carve up a dead river.

Fred Swanson
Salt Lake City, Utah



Confluence of the Madison and Jefferson rivers where the Missouri begins

Marc Gaede

When Coyote Releases the Ghost Forest

everything will become awkward
pencils impossible to grasp
paper invulnerable to ink
toothpicks taking root
and furniture, unfriendly.
At the site of every stump
specters will rise up
like braided rain
climax barricades spreading
photosynthetic infections.
Even Coyote couldn't lift his leg to pee
without sprouting leaves.

José
Moab, Utah

(from *Coyote Meets Kafka*, Compost Press, 1983.)

JEEPS AND SHEEPS

Dear HCN,

In your March 11 issue, Gene Nodine, Moab District Manager of the BLM, was quoted as saying with regard to the Jeep Safari, "The environmental groups created the problem, so they can take all the credit for any damage." Nothing could be further from the truth.

It was not the environmental groups that wrote the pitiful environmental assessment for the permit. The BLM's EA failed to consider that many of the 28 ORV trails to be used by 1,900 Jeeps enter critical bighorn sheep habitat. The BLM's rangewide and statewide bighorn sheep management plans stress the importance of "putting to bed" trails in critical bighorn habitat which serve no real purpose.

The bighorn is just one of several species that could be harmed by the Jeep incursion. Others include the endangered

peregrine falcon, which is known to suffer a great deal of stress from loud noises above and in back of eyries — precisely where Jeeps drive along cliff faces. The BLM failed to carry out category 1 and category 2 species surveys prior to issuing the Jeep Safari permits, and therefore cannot prove the event does not cause any significant impact to sensitive plant and wildlife species.

The BLM also failed to carry out cultural resource surveys along the proposed trail routes. The BLM's failure to comply with the National Historic Preservation Act may result in the loss of irreplaceable archaeological resources at Fremont and Anasazi sites.

The appeal by the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, Sierra Club and Wilderness Society was an attempt to regulate the Jeep Safari event to protect resources which the BLM is mandated to protect under the Federal Lands Policy and Management Act. With more than 1.2 million of the 1.8 million acres in the Grand Resource Area designated as "open" to ORVs (meaning there are no travel restrictions), environmentalists' demand for moderation to protect public resources is far from unreasonable.

Ken A. Rait
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
Salt Lake City, Utah

FLORA AND FAUNA

Dear HCN,

The article by John Horning (HCN, 2/25/91) was an interesting description of the flora and fauna of the Cave Creek canyon area near Portal, Ariz. However, he provided no evidence that the proposed mineral exploration would disrupt anything except maybe the somewhat idyllic lifestyle of the human residents and migrants. It was obvious, on the other hand, why the Portal Mining Action Coalition is not building their case for "preserving the area" on just one species: None are threatened. Instead, they just don't want the mining company activity near the community, which is reason enough to oppose it.

Dusty Snow
Tucson, Arizona

CHANCES TO CHANGE ADC

Dear HCN,

Michael Milstein did a superb job of investigating the predator-control issue (HCN, 1/28/91). To federally subsidize the slaughter of wildlife is a national disgrace with which this country needs to come to terms. Milstein has given us the ammunition to go to war.

The ground rules for the first battles are being written now. Contrary to what Milstein reported in his article, there is an opportunity to reform the ADC program. As he stated, the Draft EIS of the federal government's predator control activities has been released; but the Final EIS is being reviewed right now.

Animal and Plant Health Inspection System (APHIS) Assistant Deputy

Administrator Gary Larsen said the document will contain changes from the alternatives listed in the Draft EIS. The Final EIS is scheduled for public review this summer. If it doesn't incorporate the changes urged by many of the 1,500-plus commentators, conservationists should consider an appeal of the document. This may be the last chance we have for a long time to reform the federal predator-control standards.

However, there is yet another opportunity to change this wanton waste of wildlife. The Worland District Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and APHIS are doing a review of the current predator-control program about which Milstein wrote so vividly. The agencies have received many complaints about the indiscriminate killing of coyotes, black bears, mountain lions, bobcats and many

"non-target" birds and animals. The BLM/APHIS Environmental Assessment is an attempt to reduce the latitude of the ADC by imposing more restrictive controls on the ADC's predator-control activities.

Even our "environmental president" disapproves of the mass slaughter. President Bush and the Office of Management and Budget have proposed a 40 percent cut in ADC funds, noting that it is counterproductive to spend millions of dollars on wildlife enhancement programs and then spend millions to kill wildlife.

It is obscene that more federal money is spent on reducing the numbers of wildlife via the ADC program than the BLM has to enhance wildlife habitat. It is offensive that the Wyoming Game and Fish Department doubled their bud-

get this year to contribute \$100,000 to the Department of Agriculture's predator control program. At the very least the BLM and ADC should require public land permittees to use good husbandry practices, regular herders, and guard dogs instead of indiscriminately lethal methods.

I urge anyone concerned about this serious problem to submit comments to the BLM requesting no more non-target animal killing; no M-44 baits, 1080 or other poisons; and no aerial shooting in key wildlife areas. Send comments to Jim Roseberry, BLM, Box 119, Worland, WY 82401.

Thanks again for providing yet another high-quality article for your readership.

Meredith Taylor
Dubois, Wyoming

Voices from the range

My grandfather, Andrew Little, came from Scotland in 1890; he got off the stage near Boise with three bucks in his pocket, hiked out to a ranch, and went to work herding sheep.

He took his wages in sheep for several years, and one thing led to another, and before he finished, they tell me he was the biggest sheep producer in the world. Some companies were bigger, but Granddad had in excess of 100 bands himself — between 110 and 120 thousand sheep — scattered around the range between eastern Oregon and western Montana. He didn't own much land, of course, just sheep; the land was public domain and couldn't be bought. The only way to get some land was to homestead it — a quarter-section to a family; you used the dry old range for free.

The thing about those old-time range outfits, from what I hear, the cattleman was king. He told the old sheepman, said, "If you want water, you buy water. you're not usin' places where we water cattle."

And so sheepmen like my grandfather went around and bought up homesteads because, of course, homesteads were all settled on water. So when the Taylor Grazing Act came along in 1934, dividing up the public domain into grazing districts and allocating permits for its use, why, the cattlemen looked up and found that the sheepmen owned most of the deeded land and controlled lots of water, and got most of the grazing. That was the way it was around here, anyway.

At that, there wasn't much land worth owning, just homesteads checkerboarded here and there. There's lots of Taylor land around that has no value by itself because it's just dry range. If the Bureau of Land Management, which manages it today, came to us and said, "Here, we'd like to give you this Taylor land," we probably wouldn't take it. It wouldn't pay the taxes; that's the kind of ground it is. And, by the time the Great Depression hit, my grandfather was broke, and the bank would have taken the whole "empire." There was just one thing that stopped 'em: they knew they couldn't run it any cheaper.

—James A. Little, Emmett, Idaho, rancher



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My great-grandfather, Henry Sieben, worried about the range 100 years ago and later bought the ranch his cattle found near the Hole-in-the-wall. My brothers and I still own that ranch today. One day, in the late seventies, I was invited to a demonstration of rest-rotation grazing, and I was thoroughly impressed with what I heard and saw. I scratched my head and thought, maybe this is what we're looking for; maybe this could help preserve good range and heal old scars. That was the day I first met Gus Hormay.

Henry Sieben ran sheep on this ranch for many years. He didn't really like 'em, but that's where the money was; at one point he had ten or twelve bands, roughly a thousand to a band. The ranch was almost exclusively in sheep until good lambing help got scarce in the 1960s; that's when the ranch switched over to cattle.

Now, our range has a rich variety of grasses, but it's primarily Rough fescue country, and — odd as it may seem, considering our success — sheep don't really like Rough fescue. They use it last. As a result, we had fabulous old fescue stands, *underused* and stale; range like that is not very productive. I believe cattle and sheep complement each other on this range; they prefer different plants. Sheep like short, tender grasses and forbs; cattle can use coarser stuff. And, in this mountainous country, you've got to fight cows out of the creeks to get 'em on the ridge tops, and you've got to fight the sheep to get 'em off the ridges. You can see how two species might be more than twice as good as one, as I believe they are. When I took over in 1976, I went back to sheep; in 1987 we sheared 1,300 or 1,400 head.

There's another problem caused by following continuous grazing patterns year after year. We have to get the cattle off our hay meadows early so the hay can grow; so, we take 'em to the mountains. Then we have to pull 'em out of the mountains to wean and ship the calves early in the fall, even though there's plenty of grazing left up in the high country. That's been going on for years. It leads to overgrazing certain areas and underusing others; neither is good management. That's some background: when I met Hormay, I was sensitive to range deterioration and looking for a better way to handle it.

When I saw what Gus was doing, I asked if he would visit me at Hound Creek. He wasn't interested at first, but after a while he decided he'd come. He made himself familiar with the lay of the land and with our strengths and weaknesses, and he helped design a classic rest-rotation program that went into place on our forest allotment in 1981.

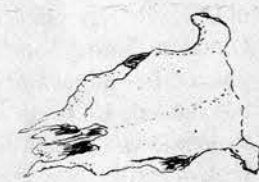
By arranging things so every pasture gets two out of three full growing seasons of rest, we've been able to increase cattle numbers; heavier stocking removes the stale old fescue. I'll admit that when we leave a pasture after a full and heavy season it looks tough — especially the lower range near the water. We know, though, that it's going to have two full growing seasons

of rest; it'll be in great shape before it's used again. And we're seeing lots of new growth: little Idaho fescue shoots, new Bluebunch wheatgrass plants coming in on old bare sites.

After our first experience with rest-rotation grazing, we liked it so much we put in a second system on our deeded land; we'll be using it on all our summer-grazing areas eventually. Rest-rotation grazing is simple — almost fool-proof. Design a plan to fit your ranch; then, when the time is right, just open the gates and turn the cattle in. That's it — not much capital required. Old Henry Sieben would have liked it.

Allan Savory's Holistic Resource Management (HRM) is more sophisticated and philosophical. I attended HRM school in Great Falls a couple of years ago, and the quality of instruction was impressive; I'm sure HRM can give you maximum performance if you thoroughly understand it, but — like a highly tuned Ferrari in the hands of a twelve-year-old — it has the potential for a major wreck if anything goes wrong.

— Chase Hibbard, rancher, Helena, Montana



Decorations by Diane Sylvain

You know, city people will believe almost anything you tell 'em. One time I was at a convention in Detroit, and a fellow asked me what were these [deer horn tips] hanging from my homemade necktie. I said, "They're grizzly teeth."

"Grizzly bear?"

"Yeah."

"Why, how'd you get 'em?"

"Well," I says, "I'll tell ya. Us cowboys all wear spurs, you know, and they're not only to ride horses with. We also use 'em to get grizzlies."

"How do you do that?" he asks, and his eyes get big!

I says, "Like I got these. First I had to find a bear up on a mountain. Then I set somebody to makin' lots of noise down in the valley to get the bear's attention; while he's looking down, he don't notice me up here."

"So, I puts on my spurs and sneaks up behind him, quiet like. I got a knife, but I don't wanna kill that bear 'cause he's an endangered species, so I just jump on his back, and sink my spurs into his belly. Then, while he's tryin' to bite, I reach around with one arm and get busy collectin' teeth."

"When I'm finished, I give that bear a kick in the ass with my spurs, and he rolls down off the hill with a terrible roar. I'm always careful to let 'em get away, because they grow more teeth, ya know."

By damn, I think that fellow really believed me [Billy chuckles].

— East Glacier Park, Montana, rancher William F. Big Spring

Quotations from *The Range*, an oral history by Sherm Ewing. Mountain Press Publishing Co., P.O. Box 2399, Missoula, MT 59806. Paperbound \$12.95, clothbound \$24.95, plus \$2 shipping. 300 pages. Illustrated with photographs.

OTHER VOICES

Why subsidize the recovery of the wolf?

by Tom Skeele

Hank Fischer tells us that Defenders of Wildlife's wolf depredation compensation program removes the only effective argument livestock interests have for opposing wolf recovery in the Northern Rockies. Others feel it sets a bad precedent, and on four intertwining counts, they're right.

First, the program's existence makes the statement that livestock ranching is a necessity we must defend and wolves are a luxury we must justify — both with "environmentalist" dollars. Let me remind Mr. Fischer, Defenders and the rest of us that wolves, unlike domestic livestock, *earned* their right to be here merely by being native to North America. No amount of money is needed to justify their presence.

Second, the program places the burden of recovery on wolf advocates. By doing this, Defenders neglects to remember that it was livestock interests who blessed the gray wolf with its endangered status to begin with. This is analogous to making advocates of an endangered fish pay for pollution-control measures, to insure that companies that spew toxic waste into the waters don't suffer economic hardship.

This misplaced responsibility — third — also lets the federal government off the hook for having done a pathetic job thus far in assisting wolves in their return to the Northern

Rockies. Mr. Fischer has stated that we shouldn't wait for the federal government to do its job when we can do it ourselves. I tend to disagree. Rather, we should be



Erika Zavaleta

demanding that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and others do their job, which is to act upon the voice of the people. In 1973, the American public, via the congressionally approved Endangered Species Act, mandated the recovery of all endangered plants and animals — including wolves. Seventeen years later, almost no significant progress has been made on behalf of wolves.

Lastly, pro-wolf advocates have already shown willingness to pay for wolf recovery by cooperating with the federal taxation program. Those taxes are meant to support such efforts as the implementation of recovery plans under the Endangered Species Act.

There's \$100,000 sitting in a bank waiting to be paid to ranchers who already get far too many subsidies. If Defenders and its supporters want to do something new and worthwhile for the wolves of the Northern Rockies and North America, they should consider calling the government to task in any and all ways available (including a "ram-it-down-your-throat" legal approach). They should work to limit, not enhance, the power of the livestock interests, and push for more equitable solutions such as a mandatory insurance policy for ranchers to compensate them for "acts of God," including depredation.

Tom Skeele works with the Earth First! Wolf Action Network in Bozeman, Montana.

afield

The San Juans: rugged but wild no more

by Stephen R. Wenger

Something was wrong; something was missing. It wasn't scenery. We were amidst the towering walls of the Grenadier Range, high in the Weminuche Wilderness of Colorado. It wasn't people that was missing. Colorado Outward Bound had "40 people in the region at any given time, all summer long," as one of them proudly proclaimed. It couldn't be adventure that was missing, looking down Wham Ridge from the summit of Vestal Peak or getting blasted by the weather at 12,200 feet.

What was missing was subtle. It nagged at me for days, for a part of me knew all along what my mind had yet to acknowledge. It surfaced, as such things often do, in a statement. Jeanne and I were sitting on a rocky knob, scanning the alpine tundra. We seemed to be looking for something. It was an activity too familiar to ignore.

"I want to see a grizzly," I said, my voice and my heart suddenly heavy with the weight of loss. I would never see a grizzly here. This was a tamed land.

I've been around the San Juan Mountains all my life and am fond of them. I've always thought them rugged and wild. Now the land seemed humbled.

People say you can't miss what you've never had, that ignorance is bliss. This much is certain: Once you know, you can never forget. When I was first seeking the mystical wilderness experience, eager to learn on a gut level, I sensed that the grizzly was a critical element. I craved my first grizzly sighting. I wanted firsthand knowledge, the important stuff you can't get from a book or a picture. Only your stomach can know the tightening knot of anticipation. Your muscles remember the surge of adrenaline. Your nose recognizes the pheromone that shouts — BEAR.

So I traveled north. What I found drew me back time and again. The grizzlies I encountered became part of me. Now I feel like an amputee, here where the grizzly is no more. Sure, there are still grizzlies up north, but it's little solace. There's a phantom pain in my chest that eludes definition.

Grizzlies are sensitizers. You become keenly alert when you feel like prey. When you are in grizzly country, you rarely quit thinking about them. You may pretend you're admiring the lupine or concentrating on route-finding or awed by the sheer granite walls above you, but the grizzly is always there, stalking on the fringe of your thoughts. Your gaze sweeps down from the peaks and across the tundra: scanning.

Try to ignore grizzlies when following their waist-

high trails through alder, or stepping over their mammoth piles. Meals become an event. You pick a knoll where you can survey your surroundings. You never see what you're eating. Of course you make light of it with your companions. You refer to grizzlies as "the B-word." You avoid saying, "Let's bear left." But you still circle your campsite with scent posts.

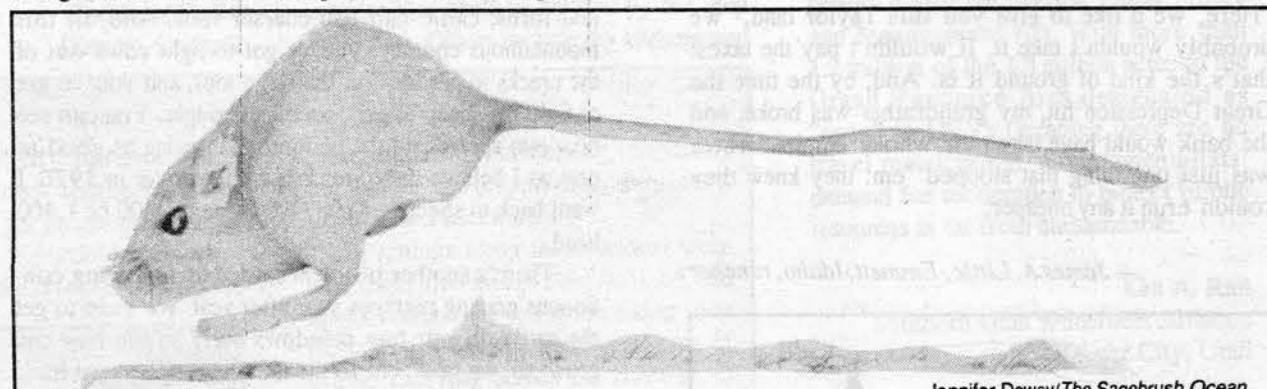
Meeting a grizzly evokes more than adrenaline. It's you, the bear, and the distance in between. You may even have what Barry Lopez called "the conversation of death," in which the outcome is decided in a look. Whatever happens will be unique, and the afterimage is burned into your memory in exquisite detail.

I once claimed to have a primal fear of bears. I've carried guns, I've carried "bear repellent," I've carried pencil

flares, sometimes all at once. I claimed it was to help me sleep. I've since learned that peace comes from within.

It's easy to fear the unknown, and grizzlies are ultimately unknowable. They add an element of uncertainty and danger to the wilderness that is irreplaceable. You can count on rain, you can count on brush, you can count on rivers to ford, but you can never be sure what an individual grizzly will do. Grizzlies are wilderness incarnate. They are the stuff of myth, for they trigger in man what is natural and wild. To know just a little of them is to know what is important, and to know what is missing.

Stephen Wenger is a free-lance photographer and writer. He lives in Fruita, Colorado.



Jennifer Dewey/The Sagebrush Ocean

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