

High Country News

December 14, 1992

Vol. 24 No. 23

A Paper for People who Care about the West

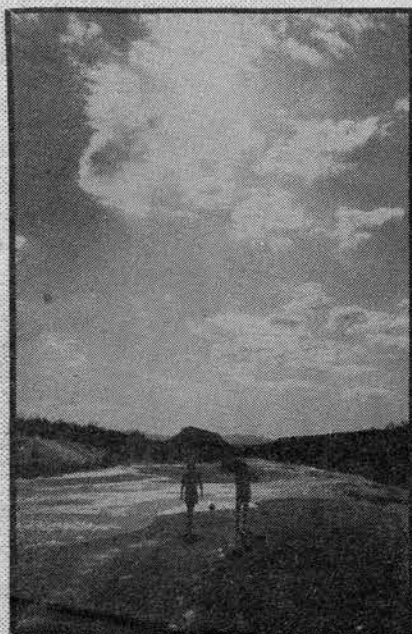
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INSIDE:

**Hopi-Navajo
land dispute
enters new
phase/3**



Lake 'Foul'/4



Virgin River

Steve Howe

**Raids
planned
to tap the
Virgin River/5**

Wilderness bills:



Montana Wilderness Association

A hiker above tree line in the East Pioneers, part of the now-dead 1992 Montana wilderness bill

What went wrong ... and is it time for a new approach?

For the second time in four years, a Montana wilderness bill has been defeated in the closing moments of a Congress. The Montana bill was in good company. Colorado's wilderness bill bit the dust at the last minute. And over in Idaho, a state with about 9 million acres of roadless land, a bill never even got to a congressional committee.

The proponents of the Montana and the Colorado bills vow to make another run at the issue in the next Congress. But it is at least possible that the traditional approach to wilderness no longer works — that while it has the momentum of past successes, it no longer has enough support to force it past its opponents.

Past wilderness creation was based on the division of roadless land into two categories: land with the potential to be logged or mined or developed for water, and land that was scenic and isolated but that lacked development potential. The land that lacked development potential was made wilderness; the land that had development potential was released to multiple use.

In Montana, that time-tested formula broke down. It broke down in part because of Western Republican

senators who so hate the idea of wilderness that they would oppose its creation on the planet Jupiter. But it also broke down because parts of the environmental community see the traditional approach to wilderness as worse than the status quo.

It is possible that traditional wilderness creation has simply hit a rough patch, and that with a new president and attitude in Washington, D.C., the bills will begin to be passed. But it is also possible that the old approach to wilderness, and perhaps the very idea that preservation is done best through creation of wilderness, has passed.

This issue of *High Country News* explores this question by examining the failure of the Montana wilderness bill. The seven articles within look at the bloodletting within the environmental community, the maneuvering in Washington, D.C., and, finally and most important, what is happening on the ground, in the national forests of the Northern Rockies, with its 30,000 square miles of still-unroaded land.

— Ed Marston

Stories begin on page 8



HIGH COUNTRY NEWS

(ISSN/0191/5657) is published biweekly, except for one issue during July and one issue during January, by the High Country Foundation, 119 Grand Avenue, Paonia, CO 81428. Second-class postage paid at Paonia, Colorado.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to HIGH COUNTRY NEWS, Box 1090, Paonia, CO 81428.

Subscriptions are \$28 per year for individuals and public libraries, \$38 per year for institutions. Single copies \$1.50 plus postage and handling. Special Issues \$3 each.

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Dear friends,

Comet Swift-Tuttle

Subscriber Hal Coyle, an astronomer from Cambridge, Mass., writes to say that Comet Swift-Tuttle, which could collide with earth on Wednesday, Aug. 14, 2126, may affect us far earlier than that date: "Watch for the Pentagon to use Swift-Tuttle as an excuse to maintain some level of funding for nuclear weapons research and production." The weapons would be used to deter Swift-Tuttle from colliding with Earth.

Coyle also writes that your chance of being killed by a collision with any comet are about the same as your chance of being killed by a plane crash.

A new subscriber from Spokane, Wash., writes that the *HCN* invoice she just received is causing her some pain: "This is very difficult. I do not want to support any Colorado business due to Colorado's vote on discriminating against gays. I can only write this check in the expectation that your business would not discriminate against gays. If I am wrong, please return my check and cancel the order."

HCN meets the writer's condition, so we cashed the check. But we hope the boycott continues and is effective, even if the paper takes some hits in the process.

No perfume here

We recently read that *The New Yorker* will no longer accept those perfume strip ads that announce the arrival of *Vanity Fair* and other glossy magazines even before you open the mail box. *High Country News*, after much soul searching, has decided to join *The New Yorker* by rejecting perfume strip ads.

While we were at it, staff voted to have nothing to do with cigarette advertising (especially Marlboro ads), four-color

auto ads that promise you a heavenly, silk-on-silk experience behind the wheel, ads for jeep-type vehicles that promise you a machine that can destroy the countryside, and ads that tell readers they can make hundreds of dollars a day at home by stuffing envelopes (this last rejection will really hurt our bottom line).

to *HCN* from the canyon country of Moab, Utah, where she worked on a guest ranch slinging everything from hot coffee to horse manure.

A native of Madison, Wis., Arden moved to Colorado in 1987, completing her bachelor's degree in English at Colorado College in May. At college she discovered a love for activism and, among other things, she organized a month-long accredited organic farm course, Earth

Week '89, and a women's film festival.

Arden says Trewartha is Cornish-derived and her first name stems from a forest in England — one Shakespeare created in *As You Like It*.



Cindy Wahling

New intern Arden Trewartha

Forest of Arden

New intern Arden Trewartha comes

times. We welcome him.

— Ed Marston for the staff

HOTLINE

A royal mess in Aspen

When Saudi Arabian Prince Bandar visits his \$17 million, 43,000-square-foot Aspen mansion, his septic system cries uncle. He and his entourage produce up to 9,000 gallons of wastewater each day from 27 bathrooms. That means sewage must be drained three times a day, at a cost of \$250 a truckload. But the prince is not receptive to the idea of water conservation, says state inspector Dwain Watson, in the Grand Junction *Daily Sentinel*. He prefers building additional sewage treatment facilities instead. To accommodate the flood of wastewater, Watson says the prince needs to build a \$1 million facility covering nearly four acres.

BARBS

The next war's gonna be gourmet.

Washington State University has been awarded nearly \$1 million by the U.S. Army to develop a tastier version of ready-to-eat meals, the food nobody praised during the Gulf War. Testing only liquids at this point, the university reports that grape juice zapped with "pulses of high-voltage electricity" stays fresh and keeps its flavor.

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WESTERN ROUNDUP

Hopi-Navajo dispute enters new phase

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. — Inside their two-room house on what the government considers to be Hopi Indian land, Navajo Mae Tso and her daughter Betty huddle in kerosene lamplight. It is midnight, and they are discussing the latest development in the 110-year-old land dispute between the two tribes. They pull out a flashlight to more closely examine a map of the proposal.

In a bold move to resolve the bitter land dispute between the Hopi and Navajo tribes, the United States government is attempting to award the Native Americans about 500,000 acres surrounding Flagstaff. Of the total, 200,000 acres is national forest, 8,000 acres is Bureau of Land Management land, 165,000 is state land, and 165,000 acres is in private hands. The Hopis would receive most of the land; the Navajos would get 35,000 acres.

The tentative plan must be approved by Congress and by about 150 extended Navajo families who have refused to move off Hopi land. These last would have the right to lease land from the Hopis for 75 years.

The agreement is the result of 17 months of negotiations among the tribes, the federal government, the families and a mediator, U.S. Magistrate Harry R. McCue of San Diego, assigned by the courts.

Both tribes approved the plan in principle late last month, as did a lawyer for the 150 or so resistant Navajo families, and the secretaries of Interior and Agriculture. But the chief of the U.S. Forest Service did not agree with his boss, the secretary of Agriculture.

Some families who would be granted 75 more years on Hopi land are also not pleased. The Tsos of Mosquito Springs — about 80 miles northeast of Flagstaff — are an example.

"I don't like the lease agreement because the land would still belong to the Hopis," Mae Tso said in Navajo as Betty translated. "The Hopi Tribe would get even more land, and that is just transferring the misery and hardship onto different people."

She is referring to the public and private land around Flagstaff that would be transferred to the Hopis. There is speculation that some homeowners around Flagstaff might be forced to move.

Conflicts between the two tribes go back to the 1500s, when the Navajos began moving into the Four Corners area. But the present dispute began in 1882, when President Chester Arthur granted a 2.4-million-acre tract to the Hopis "and other such Indians as the secretary of the Interior may see fit to settle thereon."

The Hopis, who have lived for centuries in villages atop Arizona mesas, are very different from the nomadic and expansive Navajo. In time, the 10,000 Hopis were surrounded by the rapidly growing Navajo Tribe, which now numbers 120,000 people.

After years of ignoring Hopi complaints about the Navajos, the U.S. government in the 1940s designated 600,000 acres for the Hopis and in 1962 established 1.8 million acres to be shared between the two tribes.

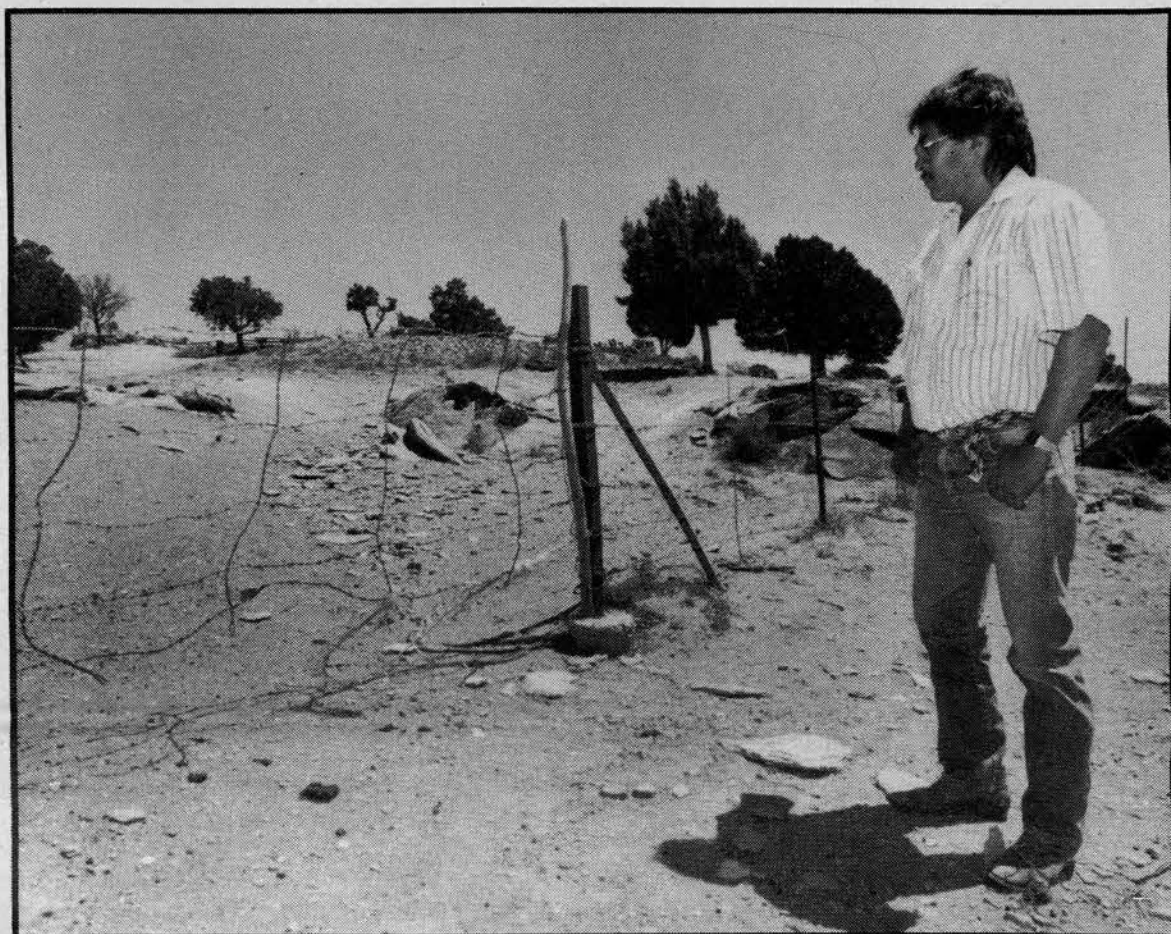
Then, after many appeals to the government from the Hopi people, the U.S.

who fear they will lose their land as part of the settlement.

"I'm appalled at the condescending behavior of our government," declared Wendell Rossman, a local architect who has property in the midst of the controversial area. "This was forged behind closed doors."

Local Forest Service staffers appear confused as to the details of the deal and how it occurred without local input.

"The most disturbing thing is that the people involved in managing the most land of all — the Forest Service — were not approached at all in these negotia-



Scott Indermaur

Mark Taylor stands in front of a gate separating Hopi lands and the Navajo Reservation

Congress in 1974 passed the Navajo and Hopi Indian Relocation Act, dividing in half 1.8 million acres of joint-use area between the two tribes. The legislation mandated the relocation of one tribe living on land granted to the other.

Since then, about 2,300 Navajo families and all 23 Hopi families have moved. But another 150 extended Navajo families refuse to leave.

Two years after a 1986 deadline, a lawsuit on behalf of the Navajo families, *Jenny Manybeads vs. the United States of America*, asked that the Navajo families be allowed to stay on the land for religious purposes. The Navajos lost in federal court in Phoenix, but an appellate court directed mediation.

"We were placed here by the creator and we are to stay here," says Mae Tso as she strokes the bare feet of her 16-month-old grandson, asleep beside her on the couch. "There are ceremonies we perform that, if we were to move, we could not perform. We need to stay on this land where I was born. The lease agreement (would) continue to be an interference and put a limit to our religion."

"I really don't know what will happen at the end of 75 years," she continued. "I will be gone, but my grandchild will be 76 years old. And then what?"

The news has also had an unsettling effect in Flagstaff. The secret negotiations were especially resented by people here

tions," said Bonnie Holmes, spokeswoman for the Coconino National Forest.

F. Dale Robertson, chief of the Forest Service, wrote in a memo that the loss of public land would be "too high a price" to pay to resolve the dispute. And Arizona Gov. Fife Symington called the plan a "land grab" and vowed to fight it.

An attorney for the Navajo families said the talk of secrecy and land grabbing is unfounded.

"This is not some secret plot to steal everybody's land," said attorney Lee Brooke Phillips. "It's ironic to me that after 20 years of forced relocation going on up on Indian land, people (in Flagstaff) are now suddenly so offended by the concept of relocation. No one asked the Navajo or the Hopi tribes if they wanted to give up their land to non-Indians — land that was stolen from them," said Phillips.

But an official at the Office of Navajo-Hopi Relocation has his doubts about the lease option. "Now there are about 100 families out there," said Chris Bavasi, executive director. "But in 75 years you can be sure there will be at least 500 families. How does a 75-year lease address that in the future?"

— Mary Tolan

The reporter free-lances in Flagstaff, Arizona.

HOTLINE

Predator research lab attacked

An animal rights group broke into a predator research lab of the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Millville, Utah, Oct. 24. They released 16 coyotes, set the building on fire and spray-painted a spiral design. They also broke into the nearby Utah State University office of Fred Knowlton, who directs the predator research project, and unsuccessfully attempted to torch it. A group called the Animal Liberation Front claimed responsibility for the break-in in a faxed statement to the *Moscow-Pullman Daily News* in Moscow, Idaho. The group charged numerous abuses at the research facility, including starving coyotes and force-feeding them radioactive and toxic poisons. Knowlton called the claims "outrageous." Of the 16 coyotes released in the incident, 13 have been recaptured, two have been killed and one remains missing. Damage from the raids is estimated at \$200,000. Federal and law enforcement agencies are still investigating the vandalism.

EPA mounts 'multi-media' attack

Brandishing a new and coordinated strategy, the EPA filed a 27-page complaint in U.S. District Court against Amoco, Oct. 14. The charges involve the company's Casper, Wyo., refinery and could cost nearly \$25 million. The so-called "multi-media" complaint is unique because it combines several minor violations from the agency's air, water and hazardous waste programs into one, more powerful complaint, says Regional Enforcement Coordinator Mike Gaydos. The violations fall under the Clean Water Act, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act and the Superfund law and involve fines that could reach as high as \$25,000 per day, reports the *Casper Star-Tribune*. The EPA says the company sent wastewater contaminated with ammonia to Casper's treatment plant without proper pretreatment and used groundwater to dilute waste flows so they met discharge standards. Amoco spokesman Jack Rigg said many violations have been resolved, and remaining claims are "minor and involve no risks to public health or the environment." Amoco closed its Casper oil refinery in 1991.

BARBS

Alaska proves that it can make an ecological fool of itself without the help of Exxon.

The state of Alaska intends to shoot hundreds of wolves from airplanes each year. The goal is to increase the number of caribou and moose available for hunting.

HOTLINE

Lumber mills recycle

As West Coast lumber mills shut down, structural beams that held them up are being recycled into new homes, reports *Econews*, in Arcata, Calif. The huge sheds, some a quarter-mile long, of the former Long-Bell Lumber Co. in Washington, are finding new life in the timber-crafted homes of the rich — including Bill Gates, billionaire founder of Microsoft Corp. Some Douglas-fir beams up to 76 feet long have been shipped as far as Chile.

Highway builders blasted

Proponents of the Book Cliffs Highway in Utah took a drubbing in Moab, Nov. 17, as almost 200 people showed up at a Bureau of Land Management public hearing to denounce the project as an economic boondoggle. Proposed by the Grand and Uintah counties' special road districts, the highway is supposed to open access to the area's thick oil shale and tar sand deposits and create an economic revival in southeastern Utah (*HCN*, 11/2/92). But local residents called the road the "supertrack to the outback" and a "paved cow-path," and attacked the 83-mile project as a waste of county revenues urgently needed for sewage, schools and hospitals. Only three people, all former county commissioners, spoke in favor of the road. The project took a similar beating at public hearings in Salt Lake City and Vernal, Utah, and BLM officials say they are swamped with mail against it. Although the public comment period ends Dec. 10, 1992, BLM officials say they will withhold the final EIS until after the new Grand County government is elected next February. The federal agency's draft EIS rejects the road plan.

Lake 'Foul'

Thanks in part to the continuing drought which lowered Utah and Arizona's Lake Powell, fecal contamination became a major problem last summer. A record eight beaches were closed and floating buoys were placed to warn swimmers away from areas high in fecal coliform bacteria. Besides a water-level drop of some 80 feet, a major culprit was the area's 3-4 million visitors last year. Many apparently dumped their toilet wastes directly into the massive reservoir or buried them in sandy beaches along the shore. Park officials are waiting to complete a year-long water study before instituting possible solutions. They may include floating "waste disposal stations," according to the *Salt Lake Tribune*. In early November, all beaches except a study area, Llewellyn Gulch, were reopened, following a drop in bacteria counts. Fewer visitors and colder water probably accounted for the cleaner water, said park superintendent John Lancaster.



Quarry turns neighbors into activists

CASPER, Wyo. — A cigarette-smoking middle-aged mother of five, Cathy Killean may not be a typical environmental activist.

Yet the Casper psychotherapist has led a fight against a controversial limestone quarry for two years, and with a recent major victory to her credit, she stands as evidence of the power of grass-roots organization.

"I never imagined I'd get into something like this," says Killean of her fight to stop limestone mining on Bessemer Mountain west of Casper in central Wyoming. "I've never had any interest in environmental fights."

But in 1989, Rissler & McMurry Co., a local company, obtained a mining permit under Wyoming's exemption law. It allows private corporations to mine a 10-acre site provided they have the permission of the landowner — in this case the state of Wyoming — and are in compliance with air quality laws.

Armed with a Macintosh computer and a desire to save the mountain which rises just west of her home, Killean and her nearby neighbors united in a common cause. They created a coalition of ranchers, professionals, outfitters, naturalists and scientists, and scientists they called the Friends of Bessemer Mountain.

The members, many of whom had never even heard of an environmental impact statement, quickly educated themselves in environmental politics, according to Killean. They held picnics and rallies and attended dozens of hearings trying to prevent the mine from happening.

But the group lost. The mine was permitted and blasting began. Rissler & McMurry took 113,100 tons of limestone from a 10-acre portion of state-owned land on the northern flanks of the juniper-clad mountain. For a year, Friends of Bessemer Mountain worked to halt the blasting, but to no avail. Then in January 1992, after nearly exhausting the supply of limestone at the site, Rissler & McMurry applied for a permit to expand the mine from 10 to 110 acres.

Once again, Killean's group went into action, testifying at hearings, writing letters to the editor, running advertisements in the *Casper Star-Tribune*. Finally, the group had its first taste of victory.

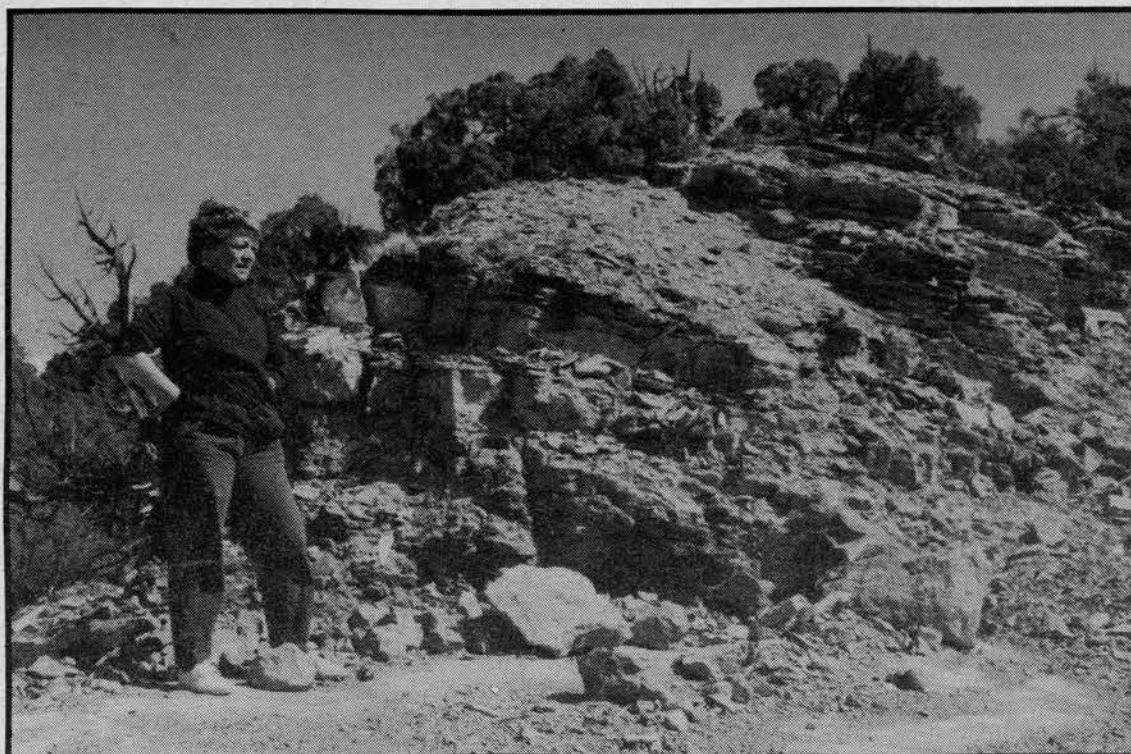
On April 24, Wyoming's Environmental Quality Council unanimously

approved a "rare or uncommon" designation for Bessemer Mountain, after testimony from Killean and several members of her group. To qualify, an area must be proven unique in one or more categories, such as historical, archeologist, botanical or surface geological. The council also looks at the wildlife habitat of an area.

Bessemer Mountain rises from the banks of the North Platte River. Huge cottonwoods line the river and bald eagles feed, roost and soar above its water. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department classifies the river as a Class I "blue ribbon" trout fishery. The mountain rises in long, sloping swells of rock and juniper from the river's banks and on its eastern edge sits its most important natural feature, the Goose Egg Spring.

At approximately 17 cubic feet per second, Goose Egg Spring is easily Wyoming's largest spring. Springs of such size are rare in a desert land of mostly rock, juniper and yucca. From the bottom of a dry gulch, the spring rushes out of the mountain into a large, crystal clear pool. After flowing through the historic Speas Ranch, the cold spring water is used by the Dan Speas Fish Hatchery, one of the state's most important hatcheries, producing 153,800 pounds of rainbow, brown and cutthroat trout each year. The spring water is also used for irrigation.

Killean and her group say that additional blasting at the mine, located only a little over a mile away, could disrupt the flow of the spring. Already, the Friends of Bessemer Mountain claim that the spring has silted up in places and its flow has decreased. The spring's importance to the area is magnified by the fact that the region is still in a drought. Snowpack for



Cathy Killean at the Wyoming limestone quarry she's fought against for two years

Tom Reed

the winter of 1991-92 in Colorado and Wyoming was well below average and area ranchers are concerned.

The spring was one of the many features that prompted the board to give the area the rare or uncommon designation. Additionally, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department has documented a total of 351 species of wildlife — mostly birds — in the vicinity of its hatchery. Because of the area's habitat diversity, it serves as host to a number of "accidental" species well outside their normal range.

Wildlife of another eon once lived in the vicinity as well. Paleontologists have identified fossils discovered near the mine site as those of the nothosaur. A large marine lizard that swam the oceans that covered the region some 230 million years ago, nothosaurs were something like the fabled Loch Ness monster, with paddle-like limbs, a lozenge-shaped body, slender neck and a tail which acted as a rudder. Ironically, the limestone in the area is not just any limestone, but Alcovia limestone, a type known for its rich paleontological treasures.

Almost immediately, the designation had an impact. A May 11 permit meeting of the environmental council was cancelled and the permitting process for the quarry's expansion sent back to the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality for further study.

"It (the rare/uncommon designation) certainly imposes another level of restrictions," says Dennis Hemmer, who directs Wyoming's environmental council. Hemmer's department will make the final decision.

Not only will Hemmer have to weigh the new designation when making the decision, but he will also take into account some 180 letters and 1,900 signatures of opposition on a petition.

The Friends of Bessemer Mountain are not ready to declare a victory yet. Several months will pass before a final permit ruling and Killean's group plans to follow the process all the way.

"We have won the third round and now we're going for the knockout punch," wrote Killean in the May/June 1992 issue of *Powder River Breaks*.

"It's very sad that it takes such an effort to make people sit and listen to you," said Killean. "The mountain is a special place and it shouldn't take this fight to bring that out."

— Tom Reed

Tom Reed is a free-lance writer in Lander, Wyoming.

HOTLINE

Truly dry skin

A graduate paleontology student looking for bones in central Utah found skin instead. While searching the Bookcliffs area for fossils last July, Brian Anderson discovered imprints of dinosaur scales dating back at least 75 million years. His find is rare: Less than a dozen skin impressions have been found worldwide, reports AP. Wade Miller, director of the Brigham Young Earth Science Museum, hopes that Anderson's discovery will aid scientists in

developing a more accurate picture of how dinosaurs really looked. "Almost all the restorations of dinosaurs are pretty much guesswork," he said. This "gives us more to go on." Miller speculates that the impressions were left by a hadrosaur, a duck-billed dinosaur measuring up to 40 feet long and weighing six tons. BYU paleontologists will begin excavating the area next spring. Along with any hadrosaur bones found, the fossilized scales will be used to reconstruct an entire hadrosaur for the university's Earth Science Museum.

Thirsty sunbelt cities target water in the Virgin River

Both St. George, Utah, pop. 50,000, and Las Vegas, Nev., pop. 800,000, have boomed in classic sunbelt style — nearly doubling in the 1980s. Although that explosive growth has tapered off recently, planners warn that water supplies will be stretched beyond their capacity soon after the turn of the century.

So now St. George and Las Vegas are competing for the same source of precious water: the Virgin River. It cuts through the slickrock canyonlands of southwestern Utah, crosses a corner of Arizona and then enters Nevada, where it ends in Lake Mead.

The Virgin River and its tributaries drain 6,000 square miles of tortuous canyons and intermittent washes on the lower Colorado Plateau. The area encompasses Zion National Park, numerous wilderness areas and state parks, a dozen towns and some 30,000 acres of farmland.

Described as a "flashy" and "erratic" source by water engineers, the river's flow fluctuates wildly from season to season and year to year. In 1984, more than 500,000 acre-feet of water churned by a gauge in Littlefield, Ariz., used to measure the river. Last year, it was less than 70,000 acre-feet.

But in recent years, water districts that supply the cities of St. George and Las Vegas, as well as a string of smaller but rapidly growing resort and retirement towns, have asserted claims. On paper they exceed even the best years on the Virgin River.

"The demands will suck the river dry," worries Ken Rait of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance. The group has taken up the cause of this little-known tributary of the Colorado River, which languished in obscurity for many years while battles raged over other, better water sources. Now it's the Virgin River's turn.

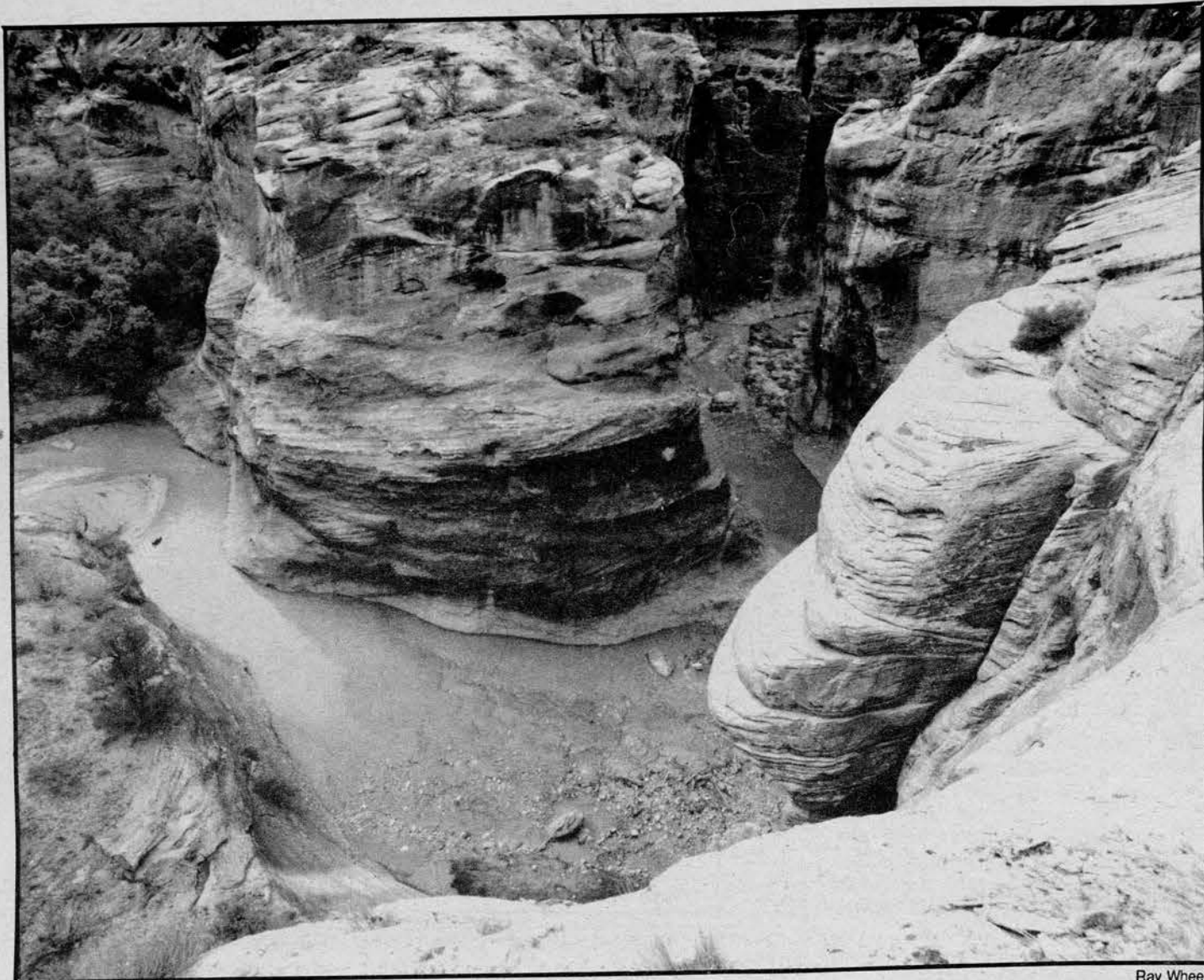
History, geography and weather have conspired to make the Virgin River the scene of one of the last major scrambles for surface water rights in the West. Plunging from headwaters at 10,000 feet, storm-flooded flash floods have eroded deep sandstone chasms, leaving little room for agriculture in the few flood plains along the river's 100-mile course. Loaded with sediment and minerals, water from the river is undrinkable in many places.

To this day, roughly half of the river's average flow remains unappropriated by farmers and townspeople. And although the river runs through three states, it has remained ungoverned by either an interstate agreement or the Colorado River compact.

In recent years, an average of 160,000 acre-feet of water each year — enough for more than 160,000 households — has flowed from the Virgin River into Lake Mead, according to a study by Marc Allred of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance. Nobody owns that water yet.

"But now everybody is in a rush to tie up their share of the rights," says Allred.

The Washington County Water Conservancy District in St. George has filed applications with the Utah state engineer for 119,000 acre-feet of water rights in the Virgin River drainage. The district has plans for as many as 15 new dams, scat-



Ray Wheeler

Dam proposed for Parunuweap Canyon would harm Zion National Park

tered throughout the basin.

Along the lower reaches of the river, the Las Vegas Valley Water District has an application with the Nevada state engineer for 70,000 acre-feet of the river's water. Sen Harry Reid, D-Nev., recently garnered funding for the Bureau of Reclamation to study building a desalinization

link hands across the defile. Hanging gardens of wildflowers cling to cracks in polished walls that rise hundreds of feet up from the canyon floor.

Park officials have urged developers to pursue alternative sources of water, so that natural flows in the park will not be affected. "Philosophically, we're against

"Negotiations, compromise and agreements. That is what is needed," says Terry Katzer, chief researcher for the Las Vegas Valley Water District.

So far, state water engineers have agreed only to "share information," says Nevada State Engineer Michael Turnipseed. A recent meeting, representa-

tives from the three states all said their plans for the Virgin River were essential to supply populations predicted to double again in the next 50 years.

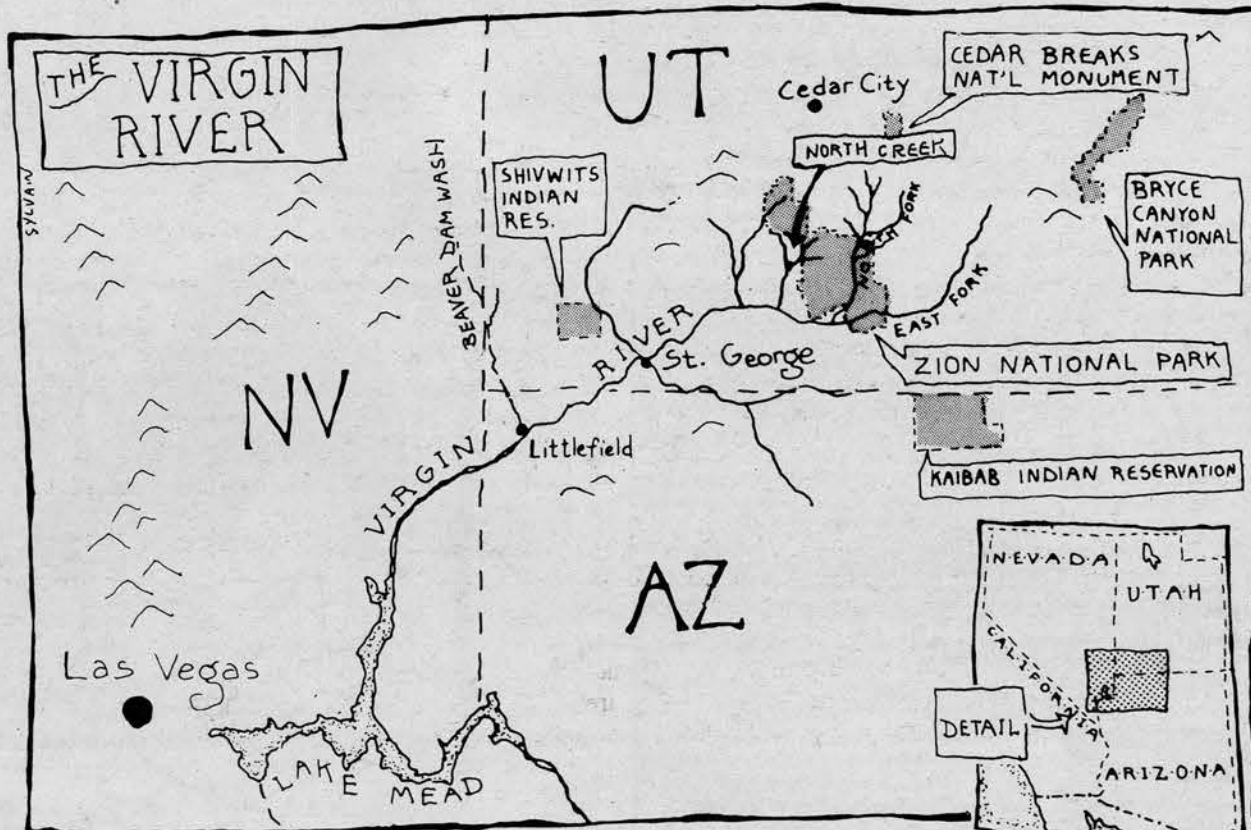
Ken Rait, the only environmentalist to attend the meeting, says that before planning to take more water from the Virgin River, cities should conserve the water they now use and purchase water from irrigation companies. These companies divert around 110,000 acre-feet of water from the river each year, 80 percent of which is used to grow fodder for cattle.

But, "we have to plan for the worst case," says St. George water manager Wayne MacArthur. "We're not sure how much people will cut back. And we're not comfortable that con-

servation will give real tangible benefits and resolve our problems."

For more information, contact Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, 1471 S. 1100 E., Salt Lake City, UT 84105; BLM Dixie Resource Center, 225 N. Bluff, St. George, UT 84770; Virgin River Fish Recovery Team, c/o Henry Maddux, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1745 W. 1700 S., Salt Lake City, UT 84104; Las Vegas Valley Water District, 3700 W. Charleston, Las Vegas, NV 89153.

— Jon Christensen



plant near Mesquite to remove natural salts from the river and pipe the water to Las Vegas.

The most controversial proposals, included in draft plans of the Utah Division of Water Resources, call for building dams in popular wilderness areas bordering Zion National Park, upstream on the North Fork and in Parunuweap Canyon on the East Fork of the Virgin River.

In 1872, John Wesley Powell named Parunuweap after a Paiute expression meaning "roaring water canyon." In some places during low water, two visitors can

things that change how nature works," says Davies. "But we can't control things outside the park." Instead, the Park Service is trying to quantify how much water should be kept in the river to fulfill the agency's mandate "to provide for enjoyment now and preserve the park for future generations."

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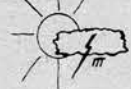
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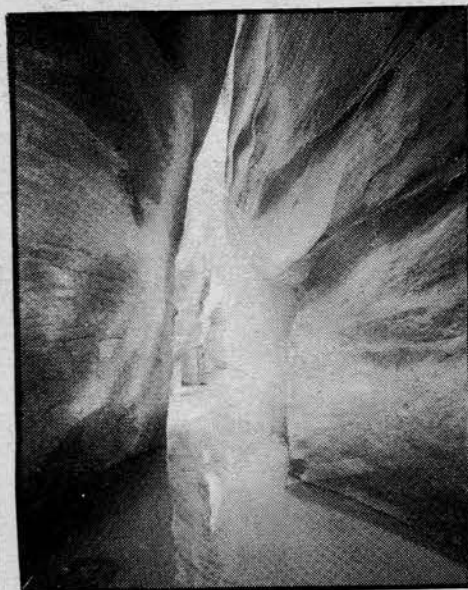
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Tactics, vision split Montana environmentalists

by Stephen Stuebner

Last month the House of Representatives passed a 1.48-million-acre wilderness bill for Montana that brought cheers from groups such as the Montana Wilderness Association, Greater Yellowstone Coalition, Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society and National Audubon Society.

But staffers of the Alliance for the Wild Rockies, a small but influential grass-roots group based in Missoula, Mont., were fuming, not cheering.

Although the Montana bill protected new wilderness, a few national recreation areas and nearly 1 million acres of wilderness study lands, it would have released about 4 million acres of pristine mountain country for development: logging, mining, oil and gas drilling, grazing and off-road vehicle use.

Four million acres was simply too much for the Alliance to give away, says Alliance Executive Director Mike Bader. "A lot of people are still in shock that these groups were supportive of it. They're going to take some heat for this."

Bader applied some of the heat by sending a stinging letter to Audubon veteran Brock Evans, vice president for national issues: "Who paid you off?" he asked.

"The letter you signed to Congress on the Montana bill is the most shameful sellout ever perpetuated by you 'Beltway Bandits' ... Your letter probably sealed our fate back here where the clearcuts and the roads will actually occur."

The bill died several days later in the U.S. Senate as Congress adjourned for the fall campaign season.

But the fracas over the Montana bill reverberates. The dispute revealed a wide gulf in the Western and national environmental community over how to protect the last remaining wildlands in the Northern Rockies, and whether an ecosystem-based, multi-state wilderness bill is politically possible.

Even if the Alliance's 18-million-acre, five-state wilderness plan — the Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act (pronounced *noreepa*) — is the most "visionary," as Bader puts it, national and regional environmental leaders have lashed out at Bader for his outburst. They warn that unless the group changes its tactics, chances of ever winning congressional support for its plan are slim to nonexistent.

"Brutally attacking and savaging your friends is a very immature way to deal with the issue," says Brock Evans, who claims he never bothered to read Bader's letter. "Given the way they're lobbying, it's a hopeless cause."

Adds David Albersworth of the National Wildlife Federation, "Their attitude seems to be a bunker mentality — if you're not with us, then get the hell out of the way. Well, to realize a vision like theirs, you have to form alliances with other groups. The course they're heading down now is doomed to failure."

Bart Koehler, a founder of Earth First! who is now with the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, called the Alliance staffers "attack-dog masters of overkill ... these guys just don't know when to quit. For a group with the first name of Alliance, they've got a lot to learn."

The November election also cast a pall over the Alliance's plan. Rep. Peter Kostmayer, D-Pa., who had been the Alliance's chief sponsor and the biggest wilderness champion in Congress, lost. Two other co-sponsors of the Alliance bill lost as well.

On the flip side, incoming vice president Al Gore is a strong supporter of wilderness, preserving ecosystems and biodiversity. Former Colorado Sen. Tim Wirth, a candidate for Interior secretary, also could help push a multi-state wilderness bill.

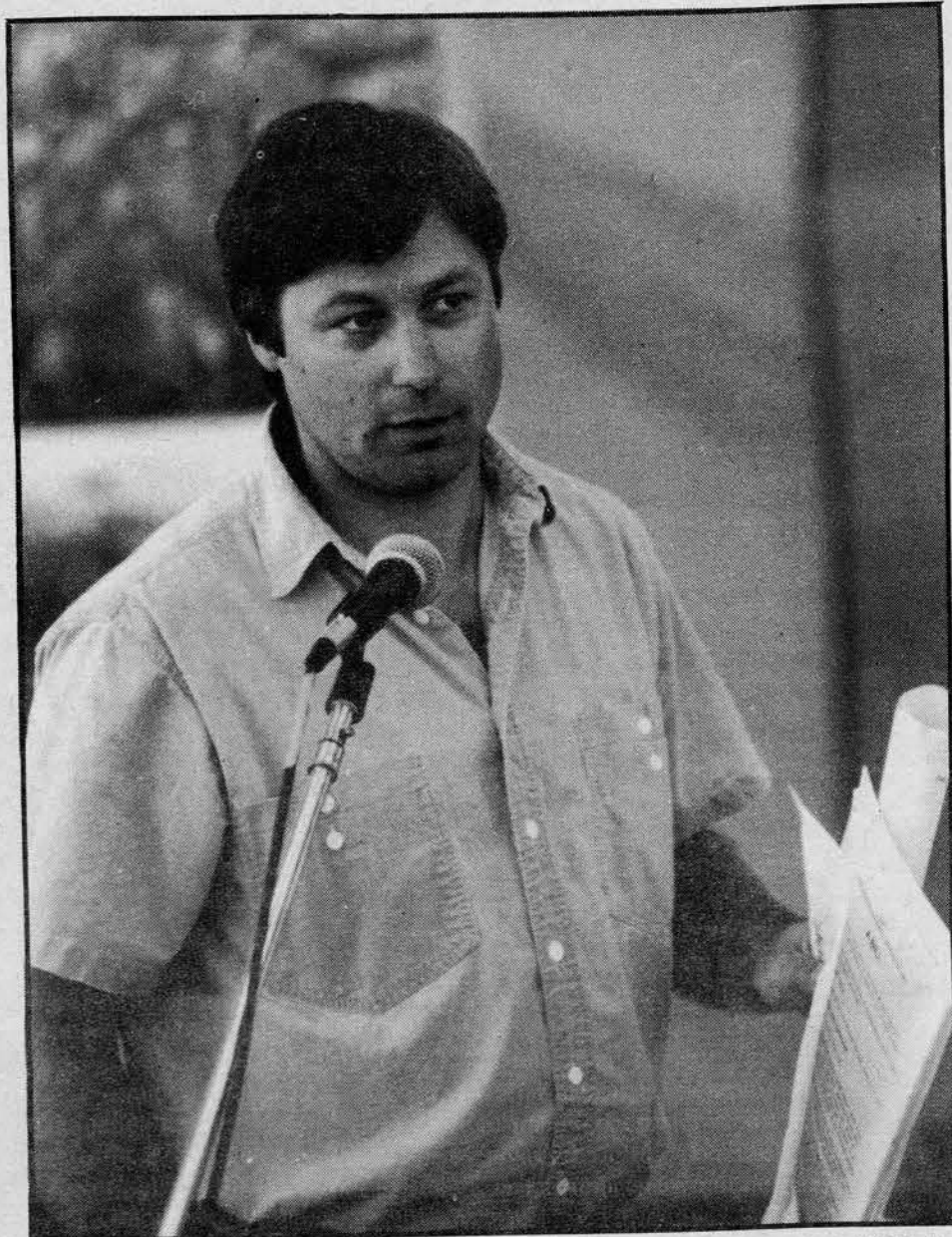
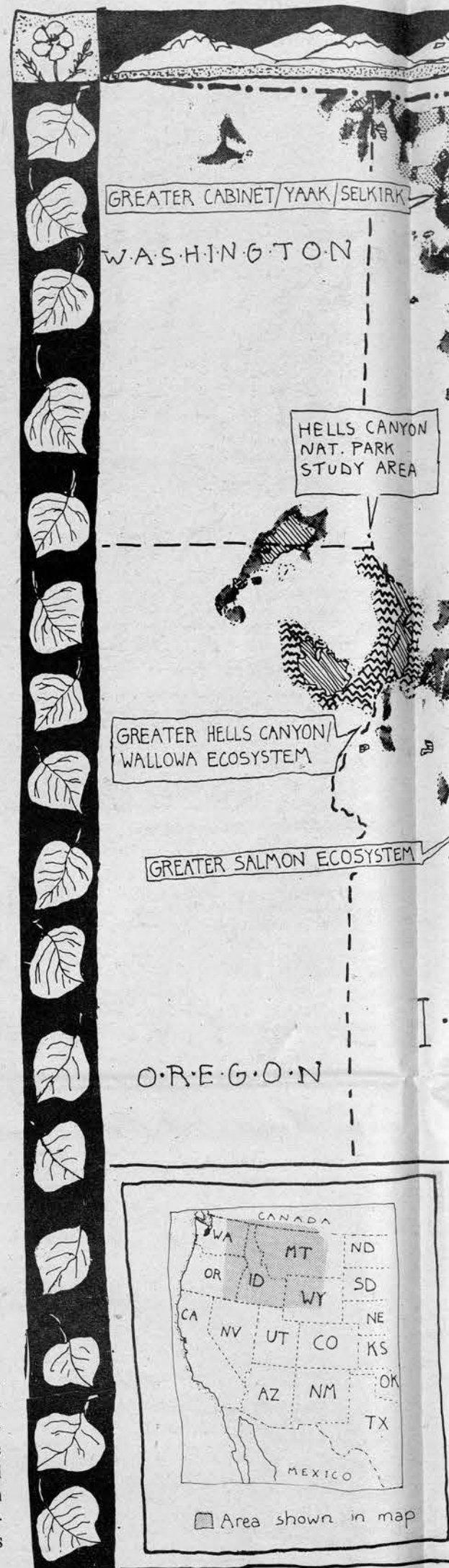
"This is a temporary setback to lose Kostmayer," Bader says. "We won't deny we're sad to see him go because he's a great wilderness supporter and he's our friend. But we're going to keep focusing on ecosystems, and we'll pick up new sponsors."

Meanwhile, the Alliance is working to broaden the grass-roots support for NREPA. A four-person "canvassing" team is working the communities of the Northern Rockies, trying to increase memberships. Greenpeace volunteers are knocking on 40,000 doors a night nationwide, and an impressive group of movie and rock stars, including the Grateful Dead, Hall & Oates, Kirstie Alley, Glenn Close, Goldie Hawn and Whoopi Goldberg, among others, have backed it as well.

Singer-songwriter Carole King, an Alliance board member who owns the Robinson Bar Ranch in central Idaho, says it's important to protect wilderness for the human spirit as well as for the earth. "I definitely feel the spiritual necessity to protect wilderness as well as the physical necessity," she says. "We're also talking about protecting the health of the planet."

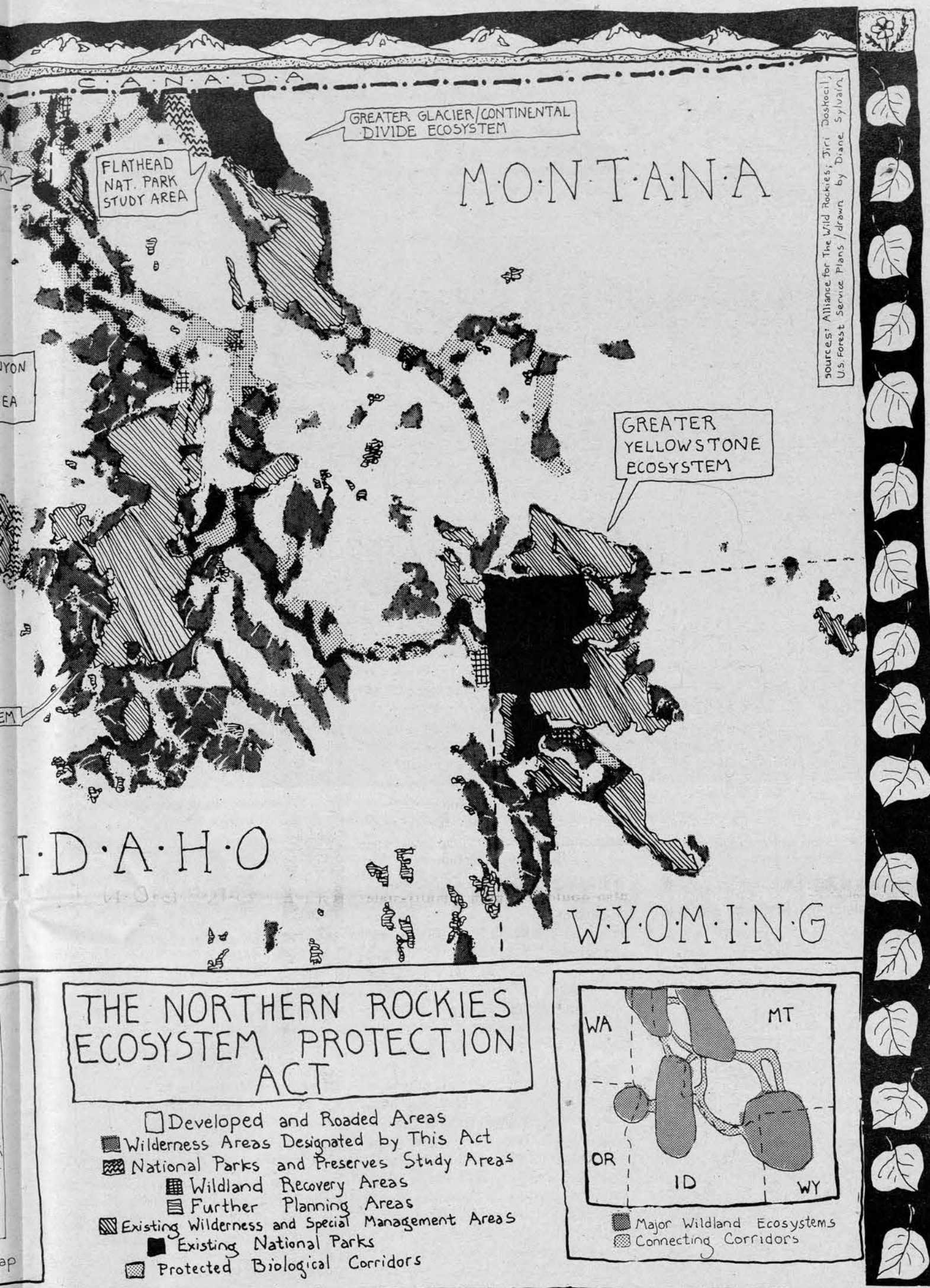
Adds the Dead's Bob Weir, "The timber barons and extractive industries have had their way with our national forests for long enough. Our ancient forests of the Northern Rockies don't belong to the industrialists. They belong to the children, to the future, to the earth itself."

By all accounts, the Alliance has hatched the most utopian wilderness, parks and wild rivers plan for saving "the best of what's left" in the Northern Rockies. It's the boldest scheme to emerge in the West since Earth First! proposed turning most of the landscape west of the Mississippi River



Mike Bader

Alliance for the Wild Rockies



Cabinet/Yaak/Selkirk ecosystem.

The Alliance plan calls for protecting lands that serve as wildlife travel corridors between the five ecosystems as wilderness or restricting development in them to a minimum. Other provisions would protect dozens of streams as federal wild and scenic rivers, launch studies of turning Hells Canyon into a national park and expanding Glacier National Park, and initiate a program to restore damaged forest lands.

The plan is an environmental wish list for preserving the last of the wild frontier. Instead of watching the high mountain slopes get carved into clearcuts, open-pit gold mines or overgrazed cow pastures, the Alliance suggests the forests would best serve America as refuges for public recreation and biological diversity.

Lee Metzgar, a professor of biology at the University of Montana, argues that

wilderness is the only way to protect key habitat for wildlife.

He notes that environmental groups often have to sue federal agencies to force them to make a decision on endangered species petitions. Even the scientific data for reviewing a petition can be manipulated by politics, Metzgar says.

"The system is failing, and, by default, wilderness is the only tool for saving species that we've got," he said. "NREPA is the only coherent plan out there."

Politics, it is said, is the art of the possible. Under the current political framework in Congress, passing something like the Alliance bill is considered impossible by national environmental lobbyists.

Brock Evans of Audubon notes that for the last 15 years wilderness legislation has been handled on a state-by-state basis. For a bill to move at all, it must be

acceptable to at least one member of a state's congressional delegation. In the case of Montana and Idaho, where most — some 16 million acres — of the de facto wilderness is located, senators and representatives have never supported bills that protect even 2 million acres of new wilderness.

Nearly all the senators and representatives from the Northern Rockies are conservative Republicans who strongly favor resource development. They also receive large campaign contributions from extractive industries.

Many politicians think Montana and Idaho have too much wilderness already, and they constantly pressure the U.S. Forest Service to log roadless areas and remove restrictions to mining, livestock grazing and off-road vehicle use.

Timber industry officials say they would support a fairly large wilderness bill if environmentalists agreed to release the remaining forests for development. But since the Alliance wants it all, indus-

try spokesman Ken Kohli says loggers have no incentive to support the plan.

"Their proposal is just too massive — it's never going to fly," Kohli says.

Given those political realities, national environmental lobbyists say a multi-state bill is nearly impossible to move.

"All it takes is one senator from one state to kill a bill," Albersworth points out. "Even if you could get even one member from the Northern Rockies interested in a multi-state bill, another member could kill it."

So unless the Alliance, Greenpeace and celebrities can rally national support for NREPA and make wilderness a national priority, lobbyists say it's futile to try to push a multi-state wilderness bill over the top of the Northern Rockies senators and representatives.

Mike Bader disagrees. "The nationals have gotten so wimpy on this issue they're just willing to go along with what Congress tells them to do. No wonder we haven't broken this iron-clad grip on wilderness. We think you have to have the courage to stick by your proposal," he says.

But will the Alliance ever protect one acre of ground with that attitude? Debbie Sease, director of the Sierra Club's public lands program, says an all-or-nothing approach could yield nothing.

"If you focus on a long-term vision, there's a big concern about what might fall through the cracks," she says. "If you go for it all, you might not get anything. But if you go for something smaller, you'll at least protect some of the critical areas, and hopefully you'll leave a latch string so you can open the door and come in again to protect some more."

As for rolling a wilderness bill over the top of Western political leaders, Sease says it's doubtful. Even the Ancient Forests campaign, which built a strong national coalition to protect old-growth forests in western Washington and Oregon, couldn't push a proposal past House Speaker Tom Foley, D-Wash.

"There's a growing perception that our forest lands are a national legacy," Sease said. "But I just don't see a scenario where a multi-state bill could be rolled over the local delegations."

That's why the national groups supported the most recent Montana wilderness bill. It protected key areas that local grass-roots groups such as the Montana Wilderness Association and Greater Yellowstone Coalition have worked to protect for years, Sease says.

"Why not protect 2.2 million acres now and preserve our options in the future?" Albersworth asks. "Let's take what we can get while we can."

During debate over the Montana bill in the House, the NREPA plan went to a vote for the first time. Kostmayer introduced a version of NREPA as a substitute to the Montana bill. National and regional groups supporting the Montana bill said that was a mistake — that the bill didn't have a chance — and they opposed it.

They were right. The Kostmayer amendment was defeated by voice vote in the House. The version favored by the national groups passed 282-123.

"It was the best Montana wilderness bill ever passed by a house of Congress," says John Gatchell, conservation director for the Montana Wilderness Association.

But even that bill perished at the hands of Montana conservative Republicans Sen. Conrad Burns and Rep. Ron Marlenee.

continued on next page

Environmentalists split ...

continued from previous page

So neither strategy actually protected any new wilderness in Montana. Meanwhile, the Forest Service, at the urging of Western congressmen and the timber industry, is chipping away at the final frontier — planning timber sales in roadless areas — despite the expense of writing an environmental impact statement for each sale and enduring lengthy delays caused by appeals and lawsuits.

Region 1 Forest Service Chief Dave Jolly pledged after the Montana bill was defeated to push ahead with timber sales in roadless areas. "We did agree in our forest plans to enter some of these roadless areas," he told *The Missoulian*.

However, Jolly adds, because many people want to protect roadless lands as wilderness he wishes Congress would resolve the issue. "It will be difficult to get the public to accept logging in roadless areas until there is a wilderness bill," he says. "As I've talked to people around the region, there is a constituency for every one of the roadless areas. When we start analyzing the effects of entering any one of them, we hear from people."

In the aftermath of the Montana bill, the Alliance, Greater Yellowstone Coalition and Montana Wilderness Association have been meeting with their members on what to do next. But Alliance backers were still so angry they refused to attend a recent wilderness strategy

session with the coalition.

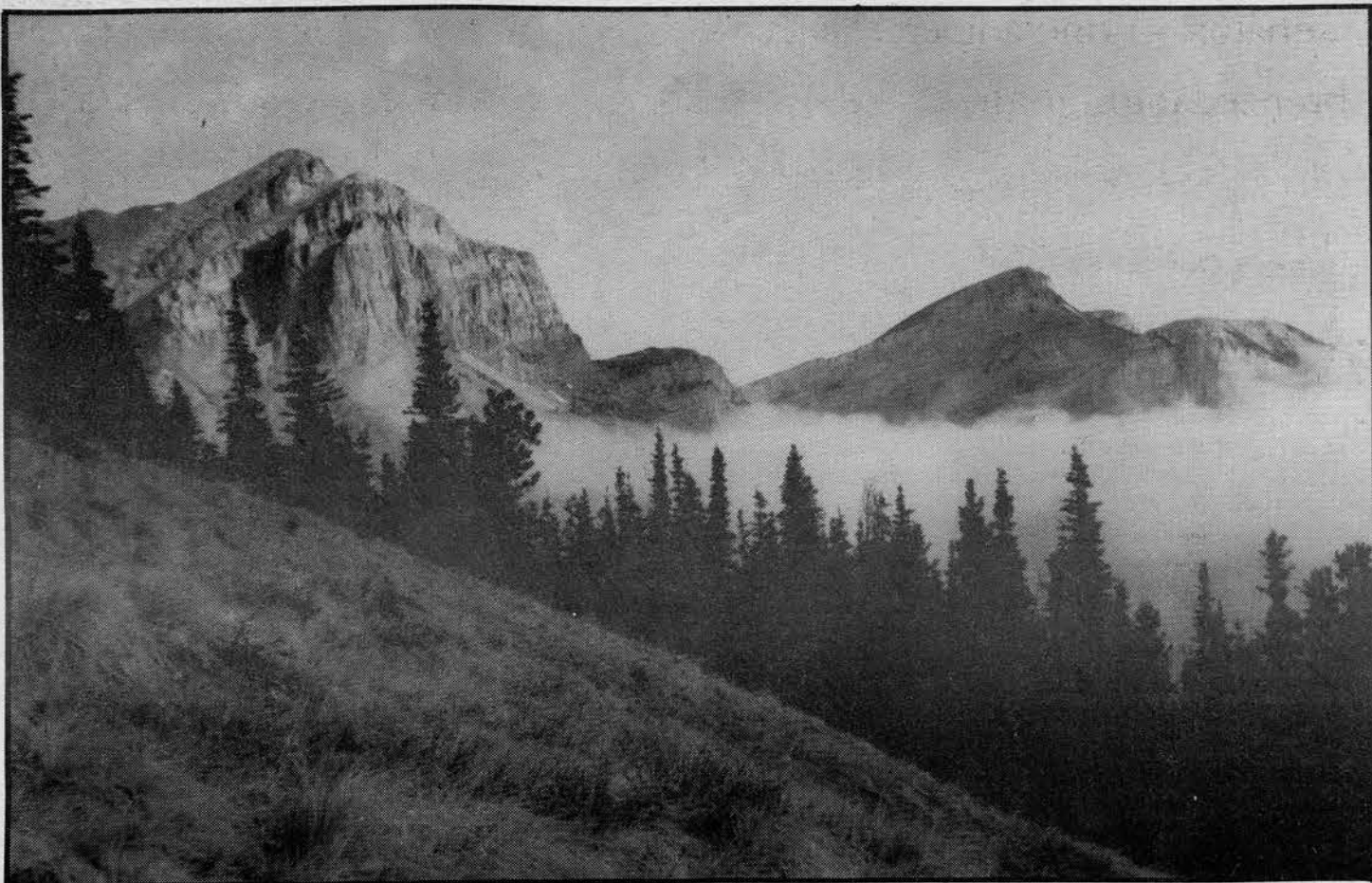
Mike Medberry, public lands director for the Idaho Conservation League, says

the Alliance ought to smoke the peace pipe with groups such as the Montana Wilderness Association, Yellowstone Coalition and national groups, and then work together on a multi-state bill. On the other hand, national environmental groups shouldn't settle for "political realities" as

defined by Congress, he says.

But most of all, Medberry says, "We've all got to pull together or we're never going to get anything done." ■

Steve Stuebner is a free-lance reporter in Boise, Idaho.



Earl Velk, Montana Wilderness Association

Looking north along Volcano Reef, proposed wilderness on the Rocky Mountain Front

Montana spawns a group that thinks big

'When people get in the way, we ask them to move,' says the president of the Alliance for the Wild Rockies.

His statement sums up why the group is at the center of debate on land protection in the Northern Rockies.

Four years ago, three Montana environmentalists worked a booth at the Montana Wilderness Association annual meeting. The trio — Mike Bader, Cass Chinske and Steve Kelly — were all wilderness advocates, but they were looking beyond the boundaries of Montana.

They pored over a map of the Northern Rockies, showing a huge expanse of unprotected, pristine forests in the western United States and Canada. "When you look at the Northern Rockies as a whole, all of a sudden the significance of the whole region jumps out at you," said Chinske, who a few years earlier played a key role in protecting the Rattlesnake Wilderness near Missoula, Mont.

Paul Fritz, a retired National Park Service superintendent who helped protect the California redwoods, stopped by the booth and was impressed. "Geez, it's about time somebody thinks big enough," Fritz said.

Several months later, Bader, Chinske and Kelly decided to leave the Montana Wilderness Association and form the Alliance for the Wild Rockies. They asked Fritz to sit on the Alliance's six-member board of directors.

Bader, who became the Alliance's controversial and outspoken executive director, had worked for eight years in Yellowstone National Park as a law enforcement officer, firefighter and resource assistant. His duties included grizzly bear management, and he fell in love with the bears. "I spent a lot of personal time watching grizzly bears," he said.

Kelly, a Bozeman, Mont., sculptor and former tree planter, and Chinske, a former Missoula city councilman, shared Bader's view that the current state-by-state wilderness debate was too confined.

"We wanted to take the ecosystem approach to wilderness," Bader said. "It seemed obvious that the statewide approach was sheer lunacy as far as trying to protect wildlife. So we had this burning desire, and we tried to work with the other groups, but we didn't think they were moving fast enough."

So in early 1989, the Alliance embarked on a mission to protect its vision of the West. Fritz, who has been pushing a Park Service study for Hells Canyon, brought in Ric Bailey, a Joseph, Ore., former logger, river guide and director of the Hells Canyon Preservation Council, as a new member

of the Alliance board.

Singer-songwriter Carole King, who owns a ranch in central Idaho, helped the Alliance grab national media attention with a news conference in Washington, D.C. King promoted a 9-million-acre wilderness bill for Idaho, which fit well with the Alliance's plan to protect nearly all wildlands remaining in the state. Brian Horejsi, a noted grizzly bear biologist in Alberta, Canada, also joined the board.

Four years later, the Alliance has about 2,700 individual and over 200 business members. It is guided by a dozen-member advisory board, including respected scientists John Craighead and Charles Jonkel, as well as Buster Yellow Kidney, a Blackfeet Indian, and Steward Brandborg, former national director of The Wilderness Society.

In October, the Alliance named a seventh member to its board of directors, Liz Sedler of Sandpoint, Idaho, who crafts string instruments and has been active in Forest Watch activities on the Kootenai National Forest.

When the Alliance first formed, a lot of people laughed at its five-state, 18-million-acre wilderness, parks and wild rivers proposal, Bader said.

But today, the Alliance's plan is increasingly seen as the most visionary wilderness proposal in the West. The key question is whether shooting for the moon is the best political tactic. "I think (Rep. Peter) Kostmayer described it best," Bader said. "Our proposal is a radical departure from business as usual."

Leaders of the Alliance, particularly Bader, have attracted media attention by blasting fellow environmental groups for being weak and conformist. During the debates over the Montana

wilderness bill in October, Bader's barbs were quoted in *The New York Times* and *Washington Post*.

Such tactics have caused major tensions in the Western environmental community. Off the record, some activists see the Alliance as a high-and-mighty group: self-righteous and contemptuous of those who disagree.

Emily Seeger, president of the Montana Wilderness Association, said the Alliance's attacks on other environmental groups hurt the cause. "There's little, if any, disagreement in the environmental community as to what we want to accomplish," she said. "We all want to protect the remaining wildlands. It's a matter of tactics, strategy and what works best."

The MWA has a policy of not attacking other environmental groups, Seeger said, and it pains her to see the Alliance personally attack veteran environmental activists. "I don't see why disagreements over tactics have to get personal, and I don't think it's effective."

Kelly said the Alliance has attacked other groups and leaders because they have compromised their goals and have not always kept their word. For instance, lobbyists tell the Alliance they will not accept release language for lands not protected as wilderness, and then they suddenly support release language, he said. "If you can't trust the people you're playing with, you've got to find new allies."

"We view this as a crisis, not a career," he said. "When people get in the way, we ask them to move. And if they don't move, you've got to go around them."

— Steve Stuebner

Wilderness and Congress did not mix in 1992

The conventional wisdom says that any Montana wilderness bill backed by two Montana senators — one a liberal Democrat and one a very conservative Republican — should have breezed through the Congress. Instead, the bill died an embarrassing death. Why? And what does its failure say about the future of land preservation in the Northern Rockies?

by Jeffrey St. Clair and Ed Marston

A last-minute attempt to push a politically charged Montana wilderness bill through Congress was killed by conservative Republicans in late October.

The defeat means over a million acres of Montana national forest land won't be protected as wilderness, and nearly 4 million acres of other roadless land won't be released to multiple-use management.

The defeated bill was supported by Rep. Pat Williams, D-Mont., who was in a close race with Rep. Ron Marlenee, R-Mont. Marlenee opposed the bill. The dynamic created by the race between the two incumbents both gave a Montana wilderness bill a chance of passage, and then finally defeated it.

The bill's near miss illustrates how legislation important to the West gets ground up by the Washington, D.C. sausage-maker. The story below, which is part speculation and deduction, may be helpful in understanding future efforts to preserve millions of acres of unprotected land in the Northern Rockies.

The Montana wilderness bill originated in the Senate as a compromise between Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont., and Sen. Conrad Burns, R-Mont. It included 1.18 million acres of wilderness with no water rights.

After approval by the Senate, the Baucus-Burns bill went to the House, where it was improved, from a protection perspective, by Williams, Rep. Bruce Vento, D-Ind., and the Interior Committee under Chairman George Miller, D-Calif. The House bill protected 1.48 million acres as wilderness and included water rights.

Both measures were traditional rock and ice wilderness bills, protecting land with little natural resource development potential. And both released to multiple use — roading, oil and gas exploration and logging — nearly 4 million of the state's 6 million acres of roadless land.

Still, Senate Republicans threatened to reject the House version. Sen. Baucus and Rep. Williams agreed to "split the difference." The final compromise included 1.38 million acres of wilderness and no water rights.

But Republicans opposed the compromise as well. While Baucus pleaded for its passage on the Senate floor, Wyoming Republican Sen. Alan Simpson, the minority whip, killed the bill by withholding unanimous consent at the request of five Western senators, including Burns and Idaho Sens. Steve Symms and Larry Craig. Burns said the two Idaho senators "had real concerns over how the Baucus bill would affect the wilderness issue in their state."

In retrospect, the fight over the Montana wilderness bill was lost by the side that made the biggest miscalculation: the conservative Western Republicans.

These Republicans — remembering that incumbent Sen. John Melcher, D-Mont., lost the 1988 election in part because of President Reagan's last minute veto of a Montana wilderness bill — hoped that killing the 1992 wilderness bill would likewise help their fellow Republican Marlenee beat Williams. So they torpedoed a bill that might have helped their timber constituency by making it easier to log roadless areas.

The environmentalists had assumed that a new wilderness act was inevitable, and so they signed on to a bill, hoping to influence it around the edges.

In the end, both sides were wrong. A bill hadn't been inevitable, and its defeat didn't beat Williams.

Williams, it is speculated, aware of what had happened to Melcher four years earlier, did not want to have to deal with a wilderness bill during the campaign. The driving force behind the bill was Baucus, who may fear that Western states are losing control of the wilderness issue to outsiders.

Baucus is a strong environmentalist when it comes to non-Montana issues, such as preservation of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and the national groups may have been reluctant to oppose his desire to push a wilderness bill through. So they supported the bill in order to influence its details — softening the release language and strengthening the water-protection language.

By historic standards, the bill should have gone through. It came to the House backed by a liberal Democrat and a conservative Republican from Montana. But their initial proposal fell apart in the House Interior Committee, and it couldn't be made acceptable enough to get back through the Senate.

So in the end,

thanks to the House Interior Committee and to Conrad Burns and his fellow Western Republicans, the status quo remains. The U.S. Forest Service can still log the 4 million acres of Montana roadless lands that have timber. But each timber sale will require an expensive, time-consuming environmental impact statement and will face certain appeal.

The bill's defeat leaves the Forest Service and the timber industry unable to meet their timber targets (see articles on pages 12 - 15). But it leaves the national and Northern Rockies environmental community in worse shape, embittered over the bruising fight over the bill and split over how to approach wilderness in the future.

The environmental community attempts to keep its fights private. But that was not possible in this case. Many groups opposed the Senate's Baucus-Burns bill and the House's Williams-

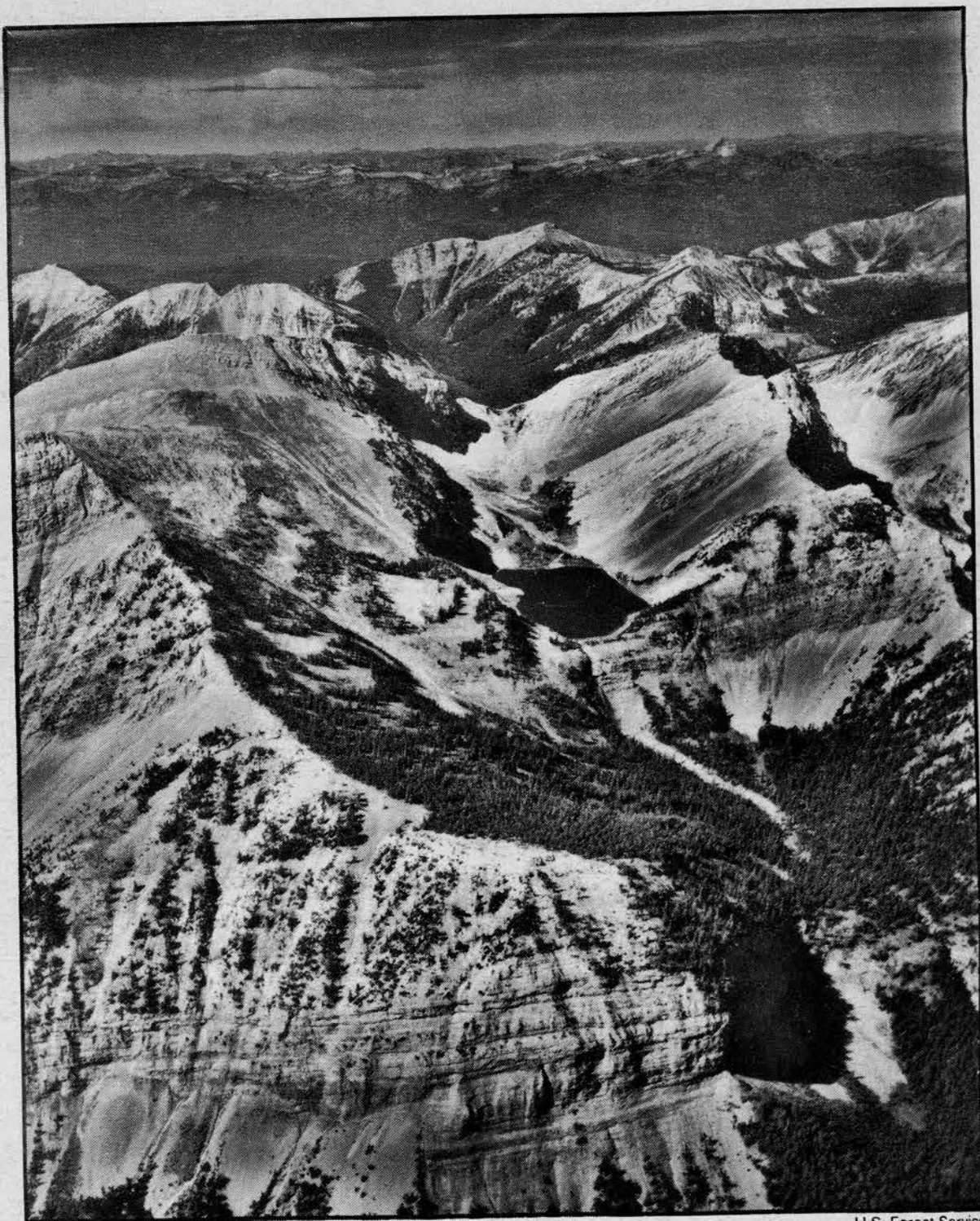
Vento version of it. But the noisiest, fiercest opponent was the Missoula, Mont.-based Alliance for the Wild Rockies.

The Alliance was angry because it had tried for two years to get a senator or representative to submit its ecosystem-based, five-state, 18 million-acre bill. National environmental groups opposed it, using their clout to convince potential sponsors that the Alliance's bill not only would never pass, but would also block state-by-state wilderness bills.

However, late in the closing session, on Sept. 15, 1992, the Alliance got Rep. Peter Kostmayer and three co-sponsors to introduce the Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act.

In addition to introducing NREPA, Kostmayer and Rep. Jim Jontz attacked the Williams-Vento bill in the House.

continued on next page



U.S. Forest Service

Our Lake in the proposed Rocky Mountain Front addition to the Bob Marshall Wilderness

Wilderness and Congress ...

continued from previous page

They tried to kill or amend it in the House Interior Committee. Blocked there, they went to the House floor and proposed what they described as a strengthening amendment. Defenders of the bill said it was an attempt to kill it.

Kostmayer's and Jontz's efforts were opposed by the leaders of three national environmental groups and two Montana conservation organizations. The groups sent a joint letter to each member of Congress that read in part:

"While we strongly support the goals of protecting additional wilderness and wild rivers in the Northern Rockies ecosystem, similar to those embodied in Rep. Kostmayer's amendment, we cannot support adopting the amendment at this time. Including such sweeping additions at this late juncture would jeopardize passage of any wilderness bill for Montana this year, leaving vulnerable wildlands without protection for an indefinite time."

The letter was signed by Michael Francis of the Wilderness Society, Debbie Sease of the Sierra Club in Washington, D.C., Brock Evans of the National Audubon Society, Bart Koehler of the Greater Yellowstone Coalition and John Gatchell of Montana Wilderness Association.

Kostmayer and Jontz, who both lost their elections a few days later, say the letter from the conservation groups doomed the chances to improve the Vento-Williams bill.

"We had a real chance to significantly improve this bill on the floor," said Kostmayer. "But politics seemed to dictate their decision. I think it was the wrong one."

Koehler disagrees. "A bill was clearly moving through the House. We wanted to make it the best possible bill. There was a move by Marlenee and others to re-attach the restrictive Senate release language to the bill. None of us saw the Kostmayer substitute until the last minute — then it proved to be flawed by leaving out crucial areas already protected in the House bill."

The battle within the environmental community revolves around the approach to be taken to land protection.

In Northern California and in Oregon and Washington, an ecosystem approach has become the dominant method of deciding which lands are to be protected.

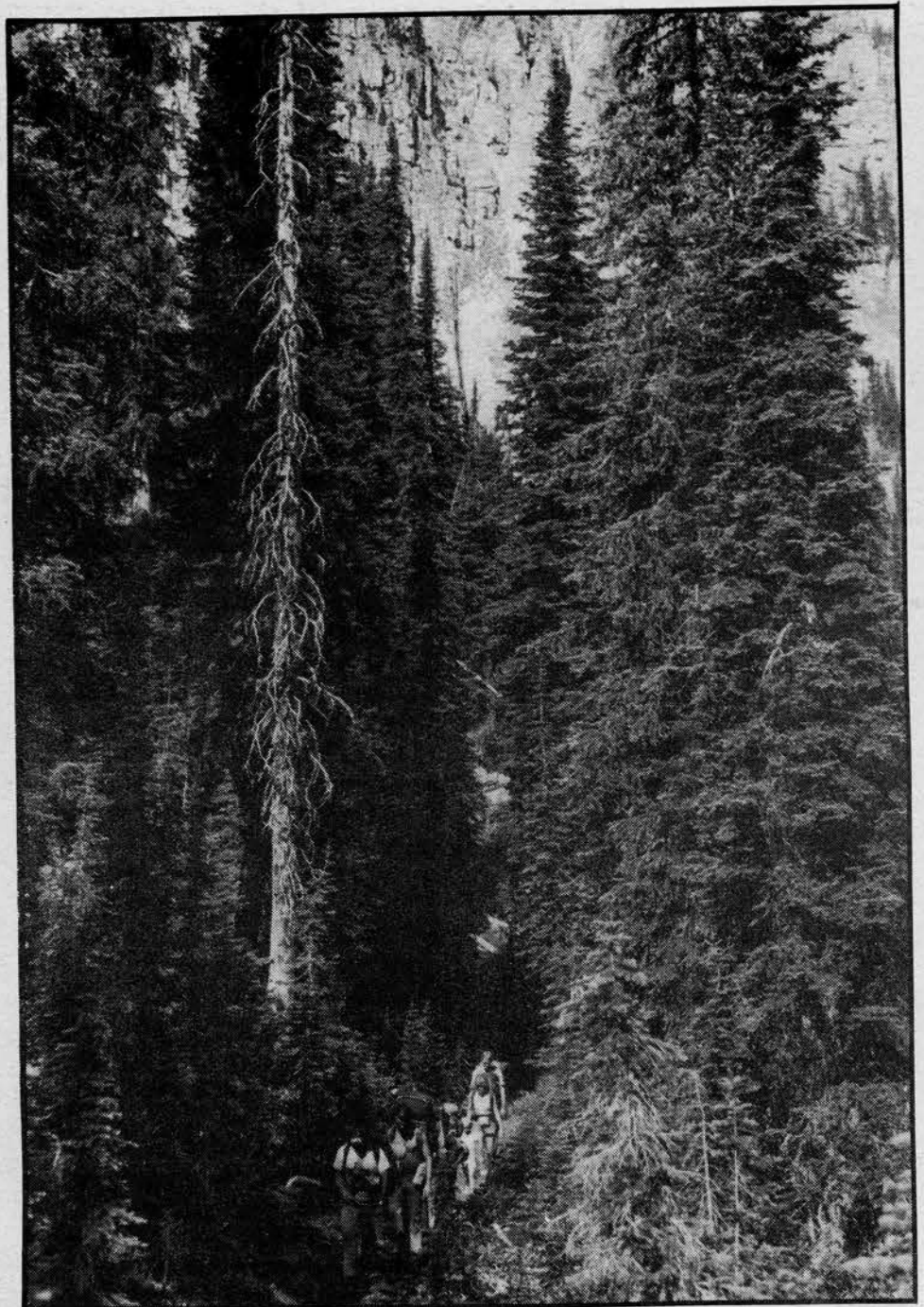
In those three states, conventional "rock and ice" wilderness thinking has given way to consideration of biological needs such as protecting the spotted owl and the marbled murrelet. Moreover, the group that was once most radical and most like the Alliance in pursuit of ecosystem-based decisions — the Oregon Natural Resources Council — is now an accepted part of the Northwest's environmental mainstream.

The situation is different in the Northern Rockies. There, the region's district courts have refused to stop timber sales to protect the grizzly bear, unlike district courts in the Northwest, which have consistently stopped timber sales to protect the spotted owl. And the congressional delegation in the Northern Rockies — including "timber Democrats" such as Max Baucus — have been very effective in forcing the Forest Service to cut as much timber as possible.

Given the situation in Congress and the courts — and the Forest Service's steady chipping away of roadless areas — the national environmental groups, the Montana Wilderness Association, the Greater Yellowstone Coalition and others decided that the best strategy is to protect whatever land can be protected today, and to come back next year for another bite.

The Alliance and its supporters have decided that it makes most sense to change the way in which the Northern Rockies looks at preservation by seeking a multi-state, ecosystem wilderness bill while fighting logging sales on the ground. While the Alliance's NREPA bill includes Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington and Oregon, Idaho is the biggest prize, with about 9 million acres of still-unroaded land.

The Alliance assumes that time, and historic trends, are on its side, and that the Northern Rockies will eventually adopt the ecosystem approach now at work in the Northwest. Sen. Max Baucus' push to pass a Montana wilderness bill in the last Congress, even at the risk of defeating his Democratic House col-



James Conner

Hikers pass through the Ten Lakes Wilderness Study Area in Montana

league, may indicate that he also thinks an ecosystem approach is a possibility. Baucus said recently that he will ask the next Congress, which will convene in January 1993, to immediately consider a Montana wilderness bill:

"The new-found interest in Montana wilderness by outside groups and Holly-

wood celebrities means that we Montanans need to buckle down and get a Montana solution before the opportunity slips away." ■

Jeffrey St. Clair is editor of *Forest Watch* magazine; Ed Marston is publisher of *High Country News*.

For more information, contact the *Montana Wilderness Association*, Box 635, Helena MT 59624, 406/443-7350; the *Alliance for the Wild Rockies*, Box 8731, Missoula, MT 59807, 406/721-5420; *Forest Service Region 1*, Regional Forester David Jolly, Federal Building Box 7669, Missoula, MT 59807, 406/329-3511; *Montana Wildlands Coalition*, Jim Richard, president, Box 508, White Sulphur Springs, MT 59645, 406/547-2289; and *Sierra Club National Wilderness Campaign Steering Committee*, Ed Madej, 1502 Peosta, Helena, MT 59601, 406/443-5271.

Forest Service can't get the cut out

by Steve Hinchman

The sprawling 2.5-million-acre Idaho Panhandle National Forest is supposed to be the key to timber production in the Northern Rockies.

The dense forest, which spreads into three states and reaches from the Canadian border south for 150 miles to Moscow, Idaho, has giant stands of white pine and other rare, high-value timber. The Panhandle's 1987 Forest Management Plan says the forest can produce 280 million board-feet of lumber a year on a sustained basis, making it the largest timber producer in the Forest Service's Region 1, and one of the few inland forests with an above-cost timber program.

Most of the towns in the area have banked on the forest for decades. How-

For the past few years, a large number of timber sales in the Northern Rockies have been successfully appealed based on Forest Service regulations designed to protect biological values or mitigate past damage. Roadlessness has played a minor role in the appeals.

ever, recently things have begun to fall apart.

"Over the last 20 years the whole Panhandle and Clearwater national forests have just been hammered by

clearcutting, drainage overcutting and overroading," says Barry Rosenberg, director of the Inland Empire Public Lands Council's forest watch program. "The fisheries are gone, there are more

threatened and endangered species than ever before, watersheds are devastated and soils have been impacted."

To prevent new damage, Rosenberg and the Spokane, Wash.-based Public Lands Council have appealed dozens of timber sales. This year the fight hit a peak, when more than 240 appeals were filed on 11 separate Panhandle timber sales.

The appeals — which push the Forest Service to uphold their own environmental regulations — have shocked the Panhandle's timber program. In 1987 and 1988, timber sales averaged 245 million board feet (mmbf). In 1992, they were 122 mmbf, or less than 45 percent of the annual target in the Panhandle's Forest Management Plan. Timber sales in roadless areas have been cut off.

"We just can't get the (timber) doc-

uments through the appeals process," says Del Mitchell, the forest's timber and fire staff officer. "A lot of times, if we are doing a timber sale in a drainage where the upper half is roadless, we'll just cut that out. We don't want to fight about it."

The Panhandle's problems are not unique. Despite a decade-long push to "get the cut out," the timber program throughout the Northern Rockies is in a shambles.

Since the mid-1980s, sales on the 13 national forests in Region 1 — spread throughout Montana and northern Idaho — have plummeted from 1 billion board-feet a year in 1987 to under 400 mmbf in 1992.

The Bush administration, Western senators and representatives and timber industry lobbyists have tried to reverse the slide by setting mandatory timber sale levels in Congress and quieting unruly Forest Service officials. In addition, a recent executive order by President Bush limited appeals of timber-sale decisions.

Despite the intense political pressure the region has missed its timber quotas and its congressionally set timber targets by increasingly wide margins. The region achieved 89 percent of its congressional timber target in 1988; 61 percent in 1990; and just 50 percent in 1992.

The situation may be getting worse. Several forests are averaging 15 to 30 percent of their timber targets, and timber sales in roadless areas have been virtually shut down.

According to many observers, the pinch is caused by the region's history of high timber harvests. Now, they say, the Forest Service can't find enough trees. And where there are trees, the agency can't maintain harvest levels without violating its regulations to protect water quality, wildlife, recreation and other resources.

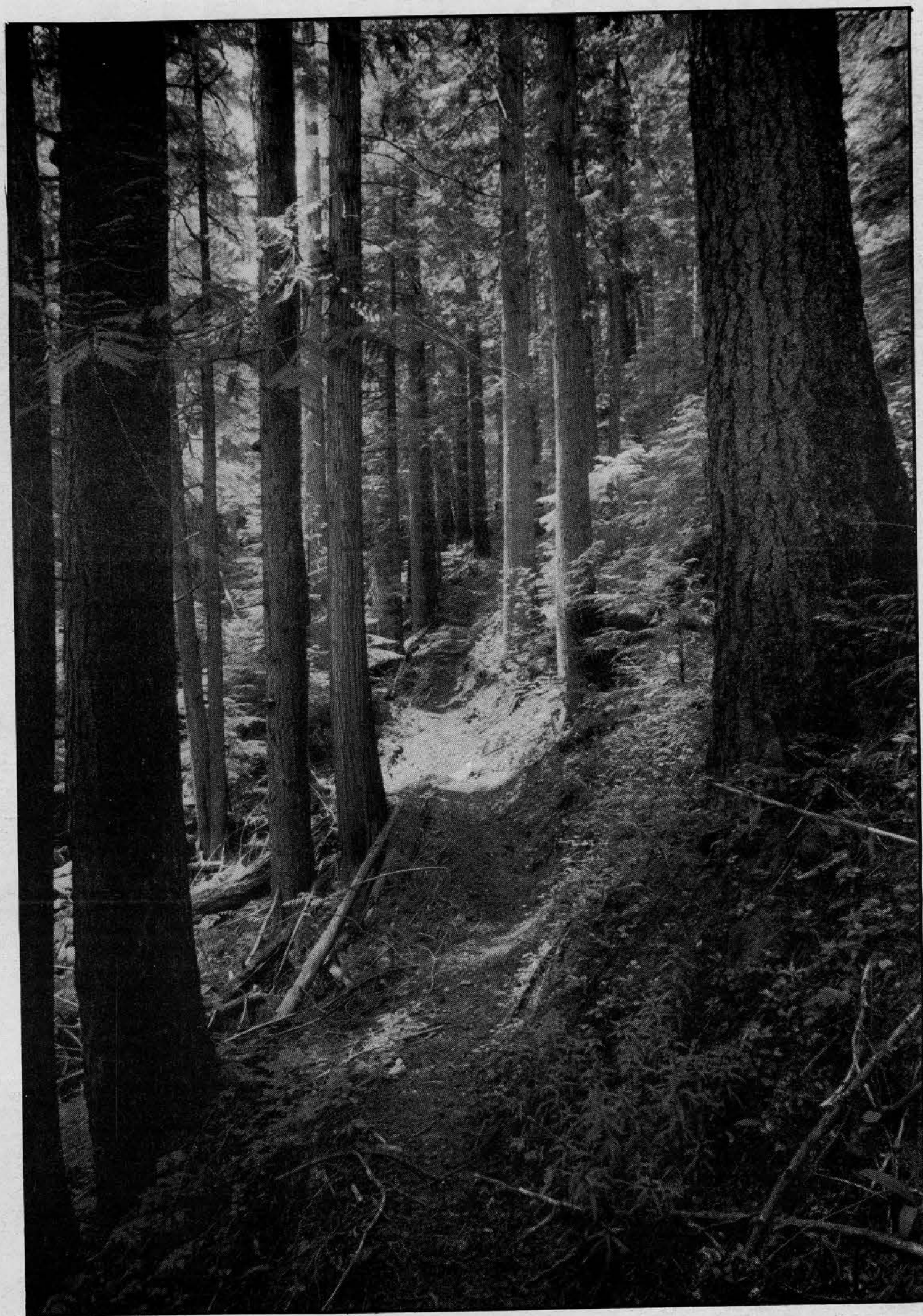
But that has not stopped the Forest Service from trying to offer timber sales. The problem is a record number of those timber sales have been appealed by environmental groups. This year, 73 percent of all Region 1 timber sales on three Idaho Forests were appealed. On the region's 10 Montana forests, 47 percent of the timber sales were appealed.

The appeals have upset the regional timber industry. "The vast majority of these appeals are frivolous," charges Charlie Johnson, the federal timber programs manager for the Intermountain Forest Industry Association in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. "The purpose is just to drag down, delay and stop the timber sale program."

But regional environmental groups say filing appeals is the only way to bring the Forest Service into line. Activist Denise Boggs of American Wildlands in Bozeman, Mont., points to the appeals record. In 1991, 71 timber sales were appealed in the region, and 42 percent of those were won by environmental groups. More were withdrawn by the Forest Service before the appeal could be heard.

Win or lose, appeals affect how the Forest Service does business. First, they create a tremendous amount of work. Administrative costs have jumped from an average of \$67 per thousand board-feet to as much as \$200/mbf in some districts. Because of that, the region has neither the time nor the money to meet its timber targets, says Don Foth, assistant director for timber management at the region's Missoula, Mont., headquarters.

Second, many forests and ranger



James R. Conner

Old trees like this, in the proposed Cube-Iron wilderness of Montana, are highly valued by timber companies

districts are trying to avoid future appeals by increasing public input, and doing more field monitoring and environmental research. But those studies then force the forest to scale back timber sales volumes.

"We are coming up against forest plan guidelines (for such issues as sedimentation, fisheries protection, wildlife cover, old growth and road densities) and finding we can't cut as much as targeted," says Bonner Armstrong, the timber sales officer for the Helena and Lewis and Clark national forests.

Supervisors of a few forests in the region have broken ranks with the head office in Missoula and said that timber quotas in their Forest Management Plans — long suspected of being politically set rather than scientifically based — are unreachable. In late 1991, for example,

Lolo National Forest Supervisor Orville Daniels announced he was reducing the forest's annual harvest from 107 mmbf to 51 mmbf, and would amend the Lolo's forest management plan accordingly (*HCN*, 12/2/91).

The numerous appeals and lawsuits have also resulted in a court order requiring that until a wilderness bill passes in either Idaho or Montana, all timber sales proposed for roadless areas must go through an environmental impact study. That can take as long as two years and cost over \$400,000, say Forest Service officials. Even then it will likely be appealed.

However, the consensus in the agency is that a wilderness act would have had little effect on timber harvesting in either roaded or non-roaded areas. Most appeals are not focused on the roading

question but on more complex issues such as biodiversity, water quality and protection of threatened and endangered species, says the Forest Service's Don Foth.

While the Forest Service — still trying to get the cut out — is expected to target more roadless areas, those and other timber sales face well organized opposition.

The only way out, says Denise Boggs, is to move to ecologically sustainable logging. "At some point, as more and more environmental groups file lawsuits, the Forest Service is going to have to do something or they will be paralyzed." ■

Steve Hinchman is a staff reporter for *High Country News*.

An Idaho forest is told: Log

by Marcia Franklin

Long plagued by criticism from outsiders, the Clearwater National Forest in north Idaho now faces controversy from inside its ranks.

The debate is over the forest's failure to meet its timber targets. Recently, Clearwater Supervisor Win Green called for an internal review of the timber problem, saying that conflicts between his office and the logging-dependent communities in and around Orofino, Idaho, were reaching crisis levels.

Green is a soft-spoken but savvy 29-year veteran of the Forest Service who has worked in five different regions. Since taking charge of this 1.7-million-acre national forest in the spring of 1991, Green has warned that the Clearwater can't sustain the timber cut called for in its 1987 forest management plan.

"No one wants to be the bearer of bad news," says Green. "But unfortunately, because of the situation the Clearwater is in right now, I have to be honest with people."

This year has been the worst ever. The maximum allowable cut listed in the Clearwater's forest plan is 173 million board-feet (mmbf) a year. Green recommended that 1992 timber sale levels be set at 55 mmbf. While Congress upped that number to 80 mmbf in their 1992 budget, the Clearwater only sold 24.5 mmbf.

Green says appeals and lawsuits from environmental groups are the main reason why things are so badly off course. "This year, for example, every one — 100 percent — of the decisions we made relating to timber sales were appealed. And about half of those were sustained."

He says another problem is that the forest's watersheds are not recovering well from the effects of past logging.

These problems were also identified by previous Clearwater Supervisor Fred Trevey. When Trevey told the regional office that the timber targets could not be met he was transferred after less than two years on the job.

So this time, Green asked for an unprecedented internal review. "I had a hope," he says, "that they would come to the conclusion that yes, there were changed conditions that would merit a change in the (timber harvesting) plan."

But the review, completed in October, places the blame back on Green and his staff.

"Constant in-fighting and posturing," and a lack of clear direction from the supervisor's office are the main reasons why the forest has missed its timber targets, the report concludes. In addition, the report says that monitoring has been inconsistent and that the Clearwater staff hasn't tried hard enough to enter roadless areas.

The internal conflicts on the Clearwater apparently lie between natural resource specialists who often feel that timber targets were set too high as a result of political manipulation, and the timber staff, which tries to maintain the old targets. The review spotlights a growing problem. As the Forest Service brings more wildlife and fisheries biologists on staff, turf wars increase between them and the timber specialists.

In a strongly worded section, the report recommends solving the internal debate by making the supervisor and his executive staff "collectively account-

The debate over timber sales in the Northern Rockies not only causes rifts in Montana and Idaho communities. It also makes life difficult within the Forest Service. Idaho's Clearwater National Forest, for example, has gone through three supervisors in the last four years.

able" for meeting timber targets.

That threat has conservationists seething. "What you have here, I am afraid, is an attempt to kill the messenger," says Dennis Baird of the Idaho Environmental Council. "They missed the true point, which is the plan doesn't work, can't work and needs amending." Baird and others are concerned that Green could lose his job.

Deputy Regional Forester John Hughes, however, says that while the review is candid, it hasn't jeopardized the region's view of Win Green's performance. "I think there is a little paranoia going on from the holdover of John Mumma," he says. "Some people seem to be using the review to further their own causes."

Mumma is the former regional

forester for the Northern Rockies area who took early retirement last year after, he says, he was reassigned to a desk job for failing to meet timber quotas. He was also Green's boss and recommended him to head the Clearwater. The two are still close, and Mumma says he is "very disturbed" by the review.

"They've identified a bunch of symptoms, but not addressed the real problem, that the forest plan was politically motivated," Mumma says. He adds that if he were still regional forester, he wouldn't have accepted the review.

For representatives of the timber industry, however, the document confirmed their long-held position that the maximum allowable cut of 173 mmbf can still be met.

"The argument that it was politically

driven is really hard to substantiate," says Mike Sullivan of the Podatch Corporation, which logs in and around the Clearwater. "Attaining that should not be an impossibility."

Green has prepared a response to the review, which is being evaluated by Regional Forester Dave Jolly and was not available when this article was written. In the meantime, Green is starting to sound more conciliatory. While he maintains that the forest will not be able to reach the maximum cut, Green recently announced that he will offer a much higher level of timber in 1993 — around 90 mmbf. The wood would have to come increasingly from unroaded portions of the forest.

That has made some of his environmental supporters cautious. "Our support has been based on what he has done thus far," says John Osborne, head of the Inland Empire Public Lands Council in nearby Spokane, Wash. "Thus far his record has been one of stewardship, but it looks like he may be caving in. He knows that is not an achievable target."

Brian Hunt, lead organizer of the Association of Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics in Eugene, Ore., says, "This is a sign of open retreat. He has cracked under pressure."

Marcia Franklin makes documentaries for public television in Boise, Idaho.



Loggers push cut trees off sandbars along Idaho's Clearwater River

Idaho Department of Commerce and Development

The Bighorn's fatally flawed forest plan

A national forest plan promised a Wyoming mill trees.

But they couldn't be cut without damaging the environment.

Now the Bighorn National Forest and local communities must make some hard choices.

by Michael Riley

SHERIDAN, Wyo. — The ink was scarcely dry on the Bighorn National Forest's long-term management plan when the bad news began.

Signed in 1985 and designed to govern management on the Wyoming forest until the end of the century, the plan predicted an annual timber harvest of nearly 15 million board-feet. Just two years later, monitoring reports began to show that something had gone wrong.

Guidelines meant to protect things like water quality and elk habitat began to scuttle sale after potential sale, and a forest-level review found that the plan had overestimated the sustainable harvest by some 500 percent. An annual cut of 2.7 million board-feet was a more realistic target.

Although few national forests in the northern Rockies face problems this dramatic, the Bighorn's situation is hardly unique. As forest managers here move to fix the original plan, they're being carefully watched by the environmental community and the timber industry — both looking for indications of how the agency will deal with other national forests struggling to get the cut out.

Early this spring, officials on the forest released an environmental impact statement (EIS). It says the agency must either drastically cut back the amount of timber coming from this northern Wyoming forest — a move that would almost certainly close down a Sheridan-based sawmill — or weaken planning guidelines meant to protect everything from scenic vistas to wildlife habitat.

The result has been a hot debate over the economic future of local communities, especially Sheridan, as residents and community leaders sort out what this town of 14,000 wants and needs. It's a debate economists say will repeat itself as communities along the northern Continental Divide try to cope with a shrinking supply of timber from public lands.

A high-speed stud mill in Sheridan rates as one of the county's top employers — directly creating 100 manufacturing jobs in the mill and keeping another 100 or so contractors busy cutting and hauling trees.

The closure of Sheridan County's last coal mine in 1988 eroded its tax base. Although growing tourism promises to take up much of the slack, those jobs pay less and produce big seasonal swings in the economy.

As a result, Sheridan County commissioners are pushing hard to keep the mill alive. At a July meeting, the commissioners pressed the Forest Service to continue current harvest levels; they repeatedly referred to the 1985 plan as a promise they expected the agency to keep.

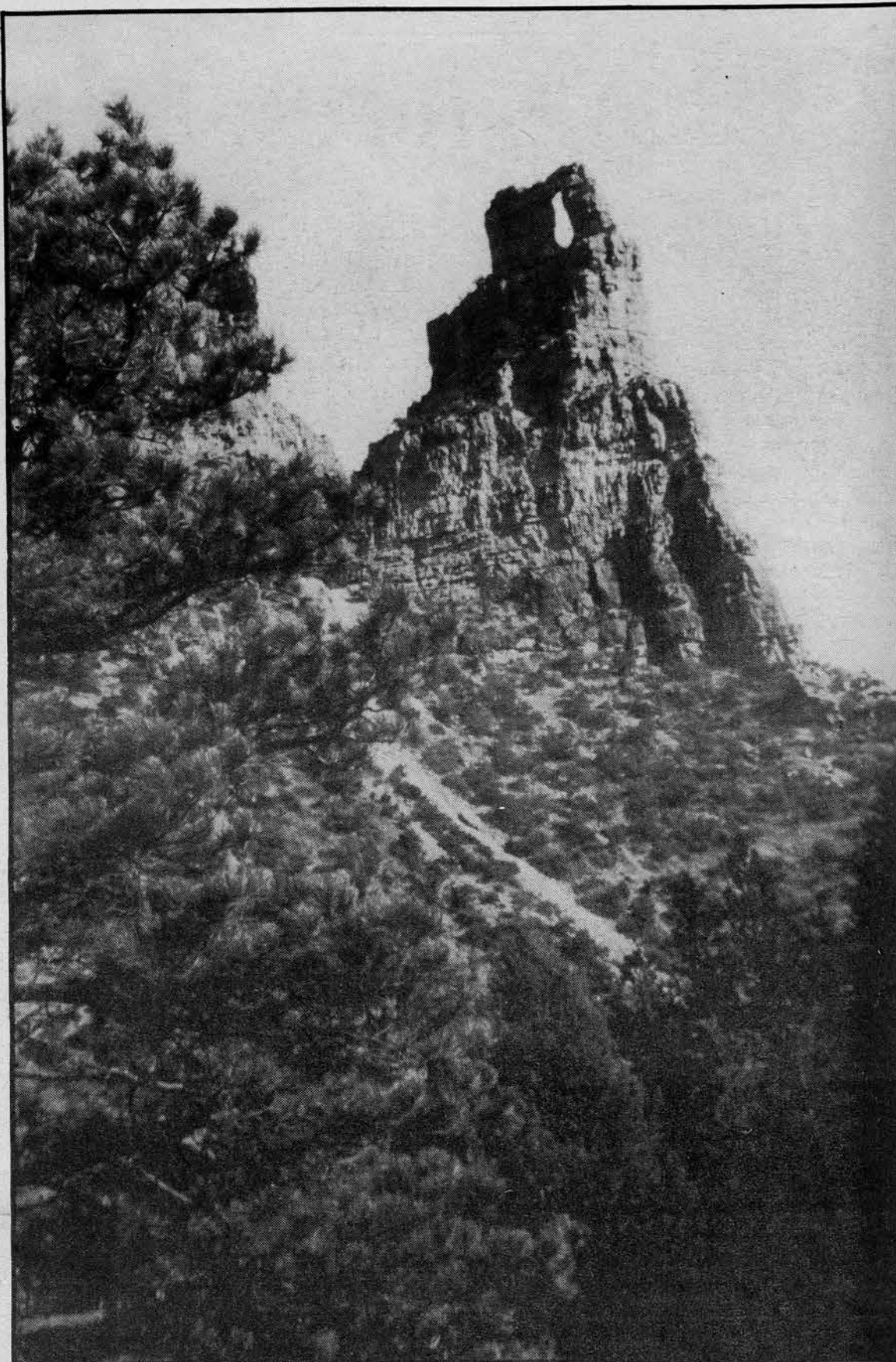
"I'm not about to go down to the sawmill and tell 200 people that they're out of a job," Commissioner Garey Ketcham told the meeting.

County officials have found support from Wyoming's powerful Republican Sen. Alan Simpson. In a letter to the Wyoming Wildlife Federation, Simpson said the supposed 500 percent error in the Bighorn's 1985 plan was neither acceptable nor believable.

Despite the skepticism of officials like Simpson, the agency says that the error really happened. After the 1990 study confirmed initial fears, managers tried to explain the error, pointing to technical problems in early planning models that didn't take into account the dramatic effect of plan guidelines like one requiring 40 percent hiding cover for elk.

Forest Service documents show that restriction alone knocked out a large number of potential timber sales the agency had counted on to meet its quota. Yet according to Bob Lee, a planner for the agency's Rocky Mountain Region, a more accurate model was available at the time the Bighorn was drawing up its plan. But for some reason was never used.

Local environmentalists use that example to suggest that in a way, Simpson is right. There was no error. Instead, the timber harvest in the Bighorn's plan was a political decision, rather than an ecological one.



Window Rock in Tongue River Canyon, Bighorn National Forest

Kirk Koepsel

Whatever the cause, the resulting debate has opened a rift between Sheridan-area residents and their elected representatives. The majority of residents here, at both a public meeting and in the 1,000-plus written comments, said they were not willing to sacrifice quality of life to keep the mill open.

At the public forum after the EIS was released, a parade of speakers told Forest Service officials that they chose to live and work in Sheridan for reasons connected with its environment — hunting opportunities and scenic values — not because it has a sawmill.

"I make my living selling lumber, but I don't support what's going on in the Bighorns," Brad Johnson, a city councilman for the nearby town of Ranchester, said at the meeting. "We have a quality of life that's second to none. We have the last of the best there is. I think it's up to us to conserve that." Only two speakers out of dozens defended a high cut and the need to maintain manufacturing jobs.

Residents got a surprise boost from the Department of the Interior and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which recently sent letters to the Forest Service asking for further cuts in the Bighorn's harvest levels. "The recreational values of this forest ... should not be compromised for a few years of high timber products output," the Interior Department wrote.

Sheridan and surrounding communities are not alone in their struggle. "I don't think there's a mill town in the West that isn't wrestling with this issue," according to Ray Rasker, a Montana-based economist. "There's a completely new economic climate out there. The question is: Who is going to survive in that climate? What type of industries? Every sector of the economy in Montana and Wyoming is growing — except logging, ranching and mining."

The choice the Forest Service makes likely won't become public until late next year. In its proposed forest plan amendment, local managers took the unusual step of choosing two preferred alternatives. One will keep standards and guidelines in place but likely close the mill; the other will keep the mill but cut back protection of other resources.

Agency officials admit that this is a decision largely about values. "I don't know as I've ever been involved with anything that is this nebulous," said Bighorn Forest Supervisor Lloyd Todd. He retired in April as the EIS was going to the printers.

Normally you have some sense of what the outcome will be, Todd said. "But with this one, we have to get the facts to the public and get their feedback. Then we'll know what the decision is." ■

Michael Riley is a reporter based in Sheridan, Wyoming.

The view from Idaho

An Idaho conservationist tells what the battle over Montana wilderness looks like from his state, and speculates on a multi-state, ecosystem approach to wilderness in the Northern Rockies.

by Mike Medberry

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity....*

from "The Second Coming"
William Butler Yeats

Yeats might have had the Idaho and Montana wilderness debates in mind when he wrote "The Second Coming." Conviction and passionate intensity about wilderness abound in the Northern Rockies, and wilderness rhetoric is delivered with evangelical fervor.

Each advocacy group throws money and slogans into media campaigns, goes to court, and turns out dozens of half-informed activists at hearings to parrot position statements. The result is an anarchic land-use policy, and decisions based on political expediency. Politicians wisely avoid the issues and, without decisive leadership, natural resource policy continues to float on the strongest gust.

This is a shame, because a great deal is at stake. There are more than 9 million acres of undeveloped forests in Idaho and around 6 million roadless acres in Montana. But perhaps not for long. For example, in Idaho, the Forest Service proposes more than 200 timber sales in roadless areas over the next five years.

The Montana-Idaho-Wyoming portion of the Northern Rockies has by far the largest block of nearly natural land in the lower 48 states, including the two largest designated wilderness areas south of Alaska: Idaho's Frank Church River of No Return and Montana's Bob Marshall wildernesses. The Northern Rockies is also one of the only areas in the country which retains a full complement of native species. The region contains wild country as spectacular and ecologically significant as any place in the world.

A Montana wilderness bill was defeated in the Senate during the last hours of the 1992 Congressional session after a vicious debate in Montana and both Houses of Congress. At its worst, the issue has been reduced to jobs versus wilderness. But even within the conservation community, there was more uncertainty and disagreement than consensus. According to the Aug. 10, 1992, *Bozeman Chronicle*, Alliance for the Wild Rockies president Steve Kelly went so far as to accuse other Montana environmental groups of "selling out the ecosystems they claim to care about in exchange for political favors and some job security."

After the Montana wilderness bill was killed in the U.S. Senate, Earth First! and the Alliance claimed its demise as a victory, although the right-wing opponents of wilderness actually killed the bill. Perhaps the "victory" they were thinking of was over other conservation groups, including the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, The Wilderness Society, Sierra Club and Montana Wilderness Association, which had signed a letter supporting a compromise bill.

In Idaho, wilderness negotiations between timber industry representatives and conservationists fell apart early in 1992, and an Idaho wilderness bill never got to the Congress.

Partially as a response to the demise of negotiations, Idaho conservationists filed more timber sale appeals and lawsuits in 1992 than ever before. The Forest Service's response has been to offer more timber sales in roadless areas.

Neither a cool head (to understand release language) nor a steady hand (to draw wilderness boundaries) have had a chance in the Idaho and Montana wilderness debates. The idealism and innocence which many of us brought to the debate have been reduced to cynicism, anger and frustration. Cooperation, even among friends, has turned to backstabbing. The unify-

ing principle that "in wilderness is the preservation of the world" got trampled somewhere between the Bitterroot Valley and the august halls of Congress.

Conventional wisdom has it that with a new president and an improved administration, the climate for wilderness legislation will improve. Don't count on it. Montanans will have another shot at wilderness legislation in 1993. Rep. Pat Williams, D-Mont., plans to offer legislation early in the next congressional session. The Clinton administration and Montana's senators will probably support some version of it, but the legislation is unlikely to differ significantly from what nearly passed this year. Old feuds and internecine fighting within the conservation community will almost certainly flare up as the legislation takes shape.

Idaho Rep. Larry LaRocco, a Democrat, is likewise eager to pick up where last year's Idaho wilderness negotiations left off. LaRocco intends to hold meetings in his district in December and to introduce a bill in March 1993. But Idaho's two senators are strongly anti-wilderness, and the bill is unlikely to go anywhere.

If the chances for statewide wilderness bills are uninspiring or nonexistent, what possibility is there for a broader approach?

During the last congressional session, Rep. Peter Kostmayer introduced a bioregional wilderness bill that would have designated wilderness in Idaho, Wyoming, and Montana. Kostmayer offered the bill as an alternative

inspire grass-roots advocacy. The hammerlock conservative Western senators have on Western wilderness designations must be defeated and this will take a campaign of many years.

The Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act, crafted by the Alliance for the Wild Rockies and introduced by Rep. Kostmayer in 1992, is a good start, but it should be refined to more honestly integrate the principles of conservation biology.

Land-use conflicts are, first and last, disagreements among people about values. If the conflicts are not approached with some sophistication about people — their needs, dreams, and expectations — then we will watch the places we love continue to suffer the death by a thousand cuts. Without solidarity among conservation organizations we will lose our effectiveness at protecting land.

Solidarity will require some give on both sides. The Alliance for the Wild Rockies has the vision, and it can be used to capture people's attention. Protecting ecosystems is the wave of the future. The mainstream groups have to accept that it's a good idea and run with it. At the same time, if the Alliance doesn't come down from its ivory tower and work with the regional and national groups, its proposal will perish.

But wilderness legislation should be only one part of a strategy to protect wildlife habitat and biological diversity. Biological reserves and wildlife migration corridors should be established, either administratively or through legislation, to protect important habitat for wildlife falling outside of designated wilderness.

Another component is involvement in forest planning, which requires intensive public education about agency decisions, long-term participation in an arduous process, political savvy, and knowledge of the local landscape. Finally, when all else fails and individuals have established a long-term commitment to a particular area, civil disobedience — in the non-violent tradition of the Boston Tea Party and Mahatma Gandhi —



Already lost: a heavily logged national forest in Idaho

Idaho Conservation League

to the Montana wilderness bill championed by Montana Sens. Baucus and Burns. Unfortunately, the Kostmayer bill failed to slow the Montana bill and drew harsh criticism from Idaho's delegation. Worse yet, Kostmayer lost his congressional seat in the 1992 election.

A multi-state, ecosystem-based wilderness and biodiversity bill is the logical way to raise the Northern Rockies wilderness issue to national stature. If the proposal is to be taken seriously, however, it must be supported by scientific data: mapped critical wildlife habitat, occurrence of rare plant assemblages, vertebrate species migration routes, measures of species diversity, water-quality data, and recreation-use figures.

The legislation must be credible enough to gain congressional supporters and visionary enough to

should be an option.

Ultimately, however, a local, vocal and informed constituency is needed for every area that conservationists want to see protected. Developing those constituencies is the real work of conservationists.

Only with a unified conservation movement, one whose individual actors effectively communicate their strategies and tactics to one another, can we avoid a disastrous second round of conflict, in which passion for wild places works against protection of the land we all care about. ■

Mike Medberry is conservation director for the Idaho Conservation League in Ketchum.