FOREST SERVICE CONSIDERS RESTORING SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC ACCESS TO LA BREA CANYON

In 2017, the Forest Service announced plans to reopen La Brea Canyon near the Carmel Valley. The area was previously closed for decades due to safety concerns following a number of Mudslides. In the spring, a group of forest stewards removed trash and some abandoned furniture from the area. This fall, we cleaned up West Cuesta Ridge as part of county-wide Coastal Cleanup Day efforts. Read more about recent volunteer projects on Page 6.

NEW OIL WELL PROPOSED IN THE CARRIZO PLAIN NATIONAL MONUMENT

For the first time since it was designated a national monument in 2001, the Bureau of Land Management has approved a new oil well and pipeline on the Carrizo Plain. The approval was in violation of several laws, so ForestWatch and the Center for Biological Diversity filed an appeal challenging the project. Over the summer, ForestWatch staff argued our case in front of the Bureau of Land Management state director in Sacramento. We are still waiting for the final decision on this precursor-setting proposal. You can read more about this and other issues affecting local public lands on Page 4.

ENDANGERED CALIFORNIA CONDOR FOUND SHOT AND KILLED

The Fish and Wildlife Service announced that a 9-year-old California condor had been found shot and killed just outside of the Los Padres National Forest near Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge. There is an ongoing investigation with a $15,000 reward for any information that leads to an arrest. The shooting of Condor #526 is a terrible tragedy and a reminder that these endangered birds are still at serious risk. Read more on Page 4.

VOLUNTEERS CLEAN UP SESPE CREEK & PIEdra BLANCA

In September, a group of volunteers ventured out along Wild & Scenic Sespe Creek to clean up trash left behind at popular swimming holes before heading out into the Sespe Wilderness to remove trash around Piedra Blanca. Altogether they removed 40 pounds of trash from the area. We’re glad to see that this number is down 20 pounds from our cleanup at the same site one year ago. Read more about recent volunteer projects on Page 6.

11TH ANNUAL OJAI WILD! ANOTHER SUCCESS!

This year’s Ojai WILD! was spectacular as usual. Over 250 conservationists attended this event to help us raise funds to support our efforts to protect the Los Padres National Forest, Carrizo Plain National Monument, and other public lands from new fracking and logging proposals. See Page 9 for more details about the event.

11TH ANNUAL OJAI WILD! ANOTHER SUCCESS!

This year’s Ojai WILD! was spectacular as usual. Over 250 conservationists enjoyed a beautiful afternoon at The Thacher School in Ojai as we raised funds to help protect our local public lands. Read more about this great event on Page 5.

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Facilitating Outdoor Connections

Over the summer we began hosting bilingual hikes for our Latino community, reaching out to underrepresented groups, working with youth, and fostering outdoor connections that promote an appreciation for wildlife, wilderness, and stewardship. Research shows that the Latino population is one of the fastest growing demographics. They are also among the most underrepresented groups in conservation, outdoor recreation, and environmental organizations. You can read more about our efforts to expand access and support outdoor exploration on Page 6.

Volunteers Clean Up West Cuesta Ridge

ForestWatch volunteers have gone out to West Cuesta Ridge near San Luis Obispo twice this year to remove over 100 pounds of trash in the spring, a group of forest stewards removed trash and some abandoned furniture from the area. This fall, we cleaned up West Cuesta Ridge as part of county-wide Coastal Cleanup Day efforts. Read more about recent volunteer projects on Page 6.

1.6 Million Acres of Central California Public Land and Mineral Estate to be Opened Up to Drilling and Fracking

The Bureau of Land Management has re-initiated the process to open up 1.6 million acres of public land and mineral estate across six counties in central California to new oil drilling and fracking. Hundreds of thousands of acres along the Central Coast, including lands adjacent to the Los Padres National Forest and Carrizo Plain National Monument as well as near schools and reservoirs, could be opened to fracking as part of this proposal. Read more on Page 2.
FRACKING PUBLIC LANDS ALONG THE CENTRAL COAST?

Plan to potentially open up 1.6 million acres of public land and mineral estate to drilling and fracking

The Trump Administration is seeking to open nearly 273,000 acres of federal land and mineral estate across San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura counties to fracking and oil drilling. The areas slated for drilling are part of a regional study—launched in early August—evaluating the environmental and public health impacts of fracking across 1.6 million acres in six counties in central California.

The BLM published a blurry map showing which parcels could be opened to drilling and fracking. The poor quality of the map prompted ForestWatch and its partner the Center for Biological Diversity to request access to the GIS parcel data that BLM used to produce the map. The BLM provided the data nearly two weeks after receiving the requests and halfway into the public comment period.

ForestWatch converted the BLM’s GIS data into an easy-to-use online interactive map. This map allowed the public to quickly understand exactly which lands were considered open for drilling and fracking. It also revealed several lands slated for drilling and fracking that were not visible on the BLM’s original map. This was yet another example of how groups like ForestWatch can provide critical information to the public and inspire them to act.

**Split Estate Parcels and Leasing**

Many of the lands slated to be open to drilling and fracking are known as “split estate” parcels because the surface owner is different than the holder of the underlying mineral rights. The BLM did not notify the surface owners of the public comment period, and many were unaware of it until ForestWatch requested the data from BLM, analyzed it using mapping software, and notified the property owners.

Under federal law, once its study is complete, the BLM can auction off the drilling rights to these parcels for as little as $2.00 per acre, possibly giving oil companies the right to construct roads, oil wells, pipelines, and other infrastructure on these privately-owned parcels.

**Impacts To Schools, Parks, And Preserves**

The BLM’s data indicated that thousands of acres of land and mineral estate are marked as “open” to oil leasing are on or near schools, state parks, nature preserves, and other public and private lands. In Ojai, the plan could potentially open an area on The Thacher School’s property and the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy’s Enivnos Preserve to fracking. Part of a 160,000-acre parcel of land immediately adjacent to the Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge are also marked as open to leasing.

In Santa Barbara County, thousands of acres across the county are adjacent to the Sierra Madre Mountains at the edge of the Los Padres National Forest were designated as open for leasing. A parcel of land in Carpinteria marked as open for leasing is within 2,000 feet of the Cate School.

Land directly across the street from Los Oso Middle School in San Luis Obispo County could also be opened to drilling and fracking under the proposal. The BLM even marked Morro Rock and mineral estate below Montana De Oro State Park as open. Other lands that could be opened in the future are adjacent to and below wilderness areas proposed through the current Central Coast Heritage Protection Act introduced by Rep. Carbajal and Sen. Harris.

**Overwhelming Opposition**

One of the first steps we took when the BLM issued its notice was to create an online portal for the public to use to easily submit comments. Normally, large proposals have a similar comment portal set up through a government website, but not this one.

Over 3,000 comments were submitted through our online portal—all of them in opposition to drilling and fracking near schools, along trails, and across other public lands. As the proposal gained significant media attention, the BLM likely received many more comments as well.

**Next Steps**

The BLM will now draft the results of the fracking impacts study. We believe this draft will be released sometime in early 2019. At that point, there will be another public comment period—the last opportunity for the public to speak out about the proposal. We will continue to do everything we can to stop new oil drilling and fracking on public lands in our region.

Stay tuned for more updates on this issue at LFPSW.org
**Recent Legislation:**

**The Good, the Bad, & the Ugly**

*A review of recent bills from Congress and the California legislature*

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**The Good:**

- **SB 1260: Prescribed Burns**
  - Driven solutions that protect communities.
  - ForestWatch and its allies lobbied Senator Jackson’s office include language to ensure that if a prescribed burn is conducted in these ecosystems, it will not result in or exacerbate “type conversion” to non-native grasses and weeds.

**Land and Water Conservation Fund**

- The LWCF has provided critical funding for more than 41,000 parks and projects across the country that protect and restore water and land, establish and maintain campgrounds, playgrounds, ball fields and trails, and enable public access to the outdoors.
- Congress lets the LWCF expire on September 30.

**Omnibus Appropriations Act**

- This bill funds the federal government for the remainder of the year, including several disastrous forestry management provisions.
- It exempts 3,000 acre fuel reduction projects from the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), reduces endangered species protections, and facilitates the construction of fuelbreaks and the reconstruction of roads on remote public lands.

**SB 901: Wildfire**

- ForestWatch and its allies lobbied Senator Jackson and Assemblymember Limon to focus their authored fire legislation on science-based solutions that protect communities.
- These bills do just that. Jackson’s SB 465 helps property owners finance wildfire safety improvements and her bill, SB 281, allows publics to quickly and easily send letters to elected officials to keep protections in place.

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**The Bad:**

- **Oil Waste Injection Into Sepea Aquifer**
  - ForestWatch continues to monitor the Sepea aquifer exemption currently under consideration by the state and the U.S. Forest Service.

**Oil Waste Injection Into Sepea Aquifer**

- The Sepea Aquifer is within the Los Padres National Forest and adjacent to the Sepea Condor Sanctuary, and is a few thousand feet from the City of Fillmore’s only water source. It was one of more than a thousand protected aquifers across California, identified in an EPA audit, that has been injected with oil wastewater by DOGGR in violation of the Safe Drinking Water Act.

**New Oil Drilling on the Carrizo**

- We have made it easy for Cal Fire to conduct prescribed burns, Chaparral and coastal sage scrub ecosystems already burned so frequently that their ability to regenerate is compromised, and prescribed fire can make that worse.

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**The Ugly:**

- **SB 1260: Prescribed Burns**
  - Promotes the construction of fuelbreaks and the reconstruction of roads on remote public lands.

**SB 901: Wildfire**

- ForestWatch and the Center for Biological Diversity maintain that the development would harm threatened and endangered wildlife, endanger species, and violate the Endangered Species Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and the monument’s resource-management plan.

**BLM**

- The BLM disregarded most of the concerns raised by conservation groups including its own, and chose to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

**Wild Things**

Condor #526

In September, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced that an endangered California condor had been found shot and killed just outside of the Sespe Wildlife Management Area near Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge. An investigation into this cruel and tragic killing of the bird known as Condor #526 is ongoing.

The life of #526 started when she hatched on May 4, 2009 in a cliff-side nest near Agua Blanca Creek in the Sepea Wilderness of the Los Padres National Forest. Her mother was bird #192, who sadly was found dead from lead poisoning in 2015, and her father was the famous bird #21 or AC-9—the oldest condor in the wild at the time. When biologists captured the remaining 22 condors in the 1980s, AC-9 was the last to be taken from the wild. Unfortunately, he also went missing in the wild in 2016 and his status is unknown.

The tragedy that has afflicted this family of condors demonstrates just how tough it is for endangered condors to survive in the wild.

Condor #526 was like many other condors from the Southern California flock—half of her time in the Sespe Wilderness and Sepea Condor Sanctuary, as well as Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge, and the Santa Ynez Mountains. She even took occasional jaunts as far north as Sequoia and Sierra national forests.

The BLM has been keeping a close watch on the site since 2005 and has been monitoring the site. They have been doing this for over a year. The last roosting bird was in September 2017. Her father, #21, also roosted along the ridge before going missing.

While the recovery of California condors has been mostly a story of success, the death of #526 and other birds over the years shows that the species is still not fully safe from extinction. New, more than ever, we must be vigilant in our work to protect this imperiled and magnificent species that truly defines our region.

**End in peace, #526.**
11 Years Running!

Our silent auction was a big hit this year (top), some attendees hit it big at the live auction (bottom).

11th Annual Ojai WILD! with 11th annual fundraiser in Ojai!

The 11th Annual Ojai WILD! on Sunday, June 3 was another wild success! With the support of our sponsors, guests, members, volunteers, and community, we welcomed nearly 300 people who came out and raised over $100,000 to support our efforts to protect our local public lands.

We are honored to host this event each year at The Thacher School’s Upper Field, which provides a beautiful backdrop with views of the Los Padres National Forest and the Ojai Valley. The school’s support of this event for eleven years (and counting) is truly amazing.

The food, as always, was delicious. We were treated to a fantastic dinner and appetizers from Seasons Catering, followed by a wonderful dessert and coffee reception by White Sage Catering and Beacon Coffee. Our thanks also go to Ampelos Cellars, Beckmen Vineyards, Tropa Mountain Winery, and Figgins Mountain Brewing Co. for serving their local wine and beer at the event.

Ventura Rental Party Center provided the tenting to make the day’s heat a little more bearable. DSR Audio generously provided our sound and event production. Deeir Brown expertly emceed the program, auctioneer Zan Aufderheide orchestrated the auction, and The Bryan Titus Trio provided the perfect soundtrack for the evening.

Carol Gravelle’s stellar graphic designs, Ashley Lee’s beautiful program, and photographer Luke Butcher’s images all provided a classic touch.

Our deep appreciation goes to our tireless event committee whose members contribute months of their time and talents to bring this event to life—Rachael, Jon, Alex, Terr, Michelle, Ian, and Barry—we salute you! And we are truly grateful to our volunteers who ignite the event with their enthusiasm, energy, hard work and willing contribution of their precious time. Ojai WILD! would not be possible without them.

With the momentum generated at this event, we are prepared to forge ahead with even more might and determination to protect and defend our local backcountry!

Special thanks go out to the many sponsors who made this incredible event possible:

- Condor’s Hope Dry Farmed Wines & Olive Oils
- Pine Mountain Sponsors
- Ventura Rental Party & Events
- Carol Gravelle Graphic Design
- Delicate Productions, Inc.
- Dick & Marilyn Mazess
- Pamela Sheldon Johns
- Bill & Jill Shanbrom
- The Thacher School
- Anonymous Donor
- Yvon Chouinard
- Ampelos Cellars
- Patagonia
- Ventura Rental Party Center
- DSR Audio
- Figueroa Mountain Brewing Co.
- Slaughter, Reagan & Cole, LLP
- Santa Barbara Christian Church
- White Sage Catering
- PIEDRA BLANCA SPONSORS
- Beacon Coffee
- Bluestar Parking
- Browneside/Vindriksa Family
- Craig Carey
- Mary Looby
- Doug & Angela Parker
- SCBA Insurance Services, LLC
- Tropa Mountain Winery
- MATILJA FALLS SPONSORS
- Beckmen Vineyards
- Ruth Axel & Robert Bonsenitz
- Scott & Ela Brinting
- Doug & Lee Backchannel
- California Solar Electric

We spend a lot of time out in the Los Padres National Forest collecting data, at the office creating maps and educational materials, and at important meetings around the region. Between all of those activities, we are also heavily involved in the local community. Below are just a few ways we’ve been engaging the public along the Central Coast.

Facilitating Forest Connections

Last month we hosted hikes for our monolingual Spanish-speaking community in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties. This is an effort to expand access to our forest, provide an outdoor experience that is culturally relevant, and promote the many health benefits the Los Padres Forest provides to our communities.

In Santa Barbara, we visited a section of the Jesusita Trail and discussed the medicinal properties of plants along the trail, while participants engaged by sharing personal stories of connections to the land. In Ojai, we hiked up Horn Canyon through the Big Dipper before stopping at Thacher Creek to examine the river ecosystem. Several hikers expressed a long-standing interest in getting more acquainted with our public lands that stems back to childhood, but language and cultural barriers have prevented them from engaging. For some, it was their first time on the trail and the hikes left them ready for more exploration.

the Latino population is one of the fastest growing demographics in the United States. They are also among the most underrepresented groups in forest conservation, outdoor recreation, and environmental education organizations. ForestWatch is taking additional steps to address this disparity by building new relationships and seeking partnerships with groups we may have unintentionally left out in the past. As an organization we believe that our supporters and stakeholders should reflect the communities we serve.

Over the summer we also partnered with a few youth focused organizations to support outdoor exploration in the Los Padres. Field trip helps provide positive experiences in our forest that foster an appreciation for wildlife, wilderness and stewardship, and it is imperative that we work towards creating equitable access for children of all backgrounds.

Visit LPFW.org/outreach to read more about our work facilitating outdoor connections.

Participation in Local Events

ForestWatch strives to participate at events along the Central Coast in order to educate the public, to help facilitate our national forest and other public lands, and to encourage people to take action and let their voice be heard.

Over the summer and fall, we had a booth at the Santa Maria Pride Celebration and Resource Fair, Conejo Valley PRIDE, the Wild and Scenic Film Festival in Ojai, Ojai Valley Mexican Fiesta, Santa Barbara Solstice Festival, Boys and Girls Club of Santa Barbara, and Lagerfest in Buellton. We had a great time being a part of these wonderful events, and we look forward to participating at more community festivals throughout the year.

Visit LPFW.org/outreach to learn how to get involved in community engagement.

Visit LPFW.org/ambassador to learn how to help us staff a booth at an event as a ForestWatch Ambassador.

Forest Steward Projects

So far in 2018, nearly 200 volunteers have helped us remove more than 4,000 pounds of trash from nine different sites across the Los Padres National Forest!

Between all of those activities, we are also heavily involved in the local community. Below are just a few ways we’ve been engaging the public along the Central Coast.

The intense summer heat brings a short break to our stewardship projects, but we were able to team up with the American Alpine Club, Black Diamond, and the Santa Barbara Rock Gym for a trash and graffiti cleanup at Wheeler Geese in June that was attended by over 70 volunteers!

This fall, we’ve led a team of volunteers at West Cuesta Ridge as part of California Coastal Cleanup Day, cleaned up Sisquoc and Piedra Blanca in the Ojai Backcountry, and removed over 150 pounds of trash from Santa Paula Canyon.

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Participation in Local Events

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The testy nature of those congressional hearings, during which Santa Barbara conservationists assisted by staff members of The Wilderness Society and Sierra Club won a precedent-setting victory for all local wilderness-advocacy groups in the future, was not to the chairman’s liking. On the Forest Service’s, for that matter, because the agency’s wilderness boundary recommendation had been ignored. The Santa Barbara conservationists’ more expansive boundary recommendation, that included grazzy ridgeline potters.

Ever afterward—as the National Wilderness Preservation System grew from 9 million acres to 110 million acres—it was the San Rafael Wilderness precedent that empowered local wilderness committees to have their “citizens’ proposals” given at least equal consideration with those of the land-administering agency, be it the Forest Service, the National Park Service, or the Fish and Wildlife Service, at wilderness-classification congressional hearings. The inside story of how legislation was passed to re-classify the San Rafael Primitive Area as statutory wilderness, including the blow-by-blow account of relations between Forest Service and Wilderness Society staff members—“Your (San Rafael) proposal is as phony as a three-dollar bill,” said Bill Woff of the Forest Service to Stewart Brandenburg and Rupert Cutler of The Wilderness Society— is worthy of recounting on that legislation’s 50th anniversary. Dr. Rupert Cutler is the recipient of the 2018 Wilderness Legacy Award for his efforts to protect the San Rafael (see below). He will be receiving the award and speaking at two events in San Rafael in October (see Pages 8-9).

Thank you, Rupert, for a lifetime working to preserve wild places.

We have two upcoming events in Santa Barbara celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the San Rafael Wilderness! Rupert was instrumental in helping us conduct various volunteer projects. Alex Irvin—Our Conservation GIS Intern for the past two years, and former intern from local colleges. Since spring, we have worked often overlap. As our Conservation Intern for the Spring and Summer Quarters, she worked on a number of projects, including helping us conduct various volunteer projects.

Juliet Bachtel—Our Conservation Intern for the past two years. Juliet, who studied computer science to develop a code that analyzes endangered California condor tracking data to determine where these special birds are roosting throughout the Los Padres National Forest. Now we have the most detailed dataset of condor roost locations in Southern California. This will be key to our efforts to protect condors from detrimental actions. Alex will finish his M.S. at UCSB’s Bren School in 2019. Special thanks to Alex Bachtel and Carolyn Cogan for funding his internship.

We are delighted to welcome Dr. Rupert Cutler all the way from his home in Virginia to speak at the 50th Birthday Bash for the San Rafael Wilderness! Rupert was instrumental in securing passage of the San Rafael Wilderness Act of 1968. Enjoy beer from Figueroa Mountain Brewing Co. as well as local wine and appetizers as we hear from Dr. Rupert Cutler about the 1960s-era fight to get the San Rafael Primitive Area officially designated as Wilderness in order to be preserved forever. He will be speaking about the history of the area, the community-led campaign to protect it, and the tough political battles he and others faced at the time. His efforts became a model for other Wilderness campaigns around the country.

This event will take place on the beautiful Club & Guest House’s terrace overlooking the lagoon at UCSB. Tickets are $10 and include 2 drink tickets and appetizers. Register for this event at LPFW.org/bash. This event will take place at the beautiful Playing Fields at the Garden Street Academy. See Page 9 for more details about this event. Reserve your seat today at sbwild.org.
MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS TODAY!

FOURTH ANNUAL SANTA BARBARA WILD!
A BENEFIT FOR LOS PADRES FORESTWATCH

Sunday, October 21
3:00 – 6:30 PM
Garden Street Academy’s Playing Fields
Santa Barbara

Reservations & information: sbwild.org

Featuring:

Delicious Appetizers and Gourmet Dinner
- Sweet potato tempura with brown butter dashi
- Organic grilled chicken with chili-cumin butter
- Wild coho spiced crusted salmon with cucumber salad

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Local Hand-crafted Wines
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Exciting Live & Silent Auctions
- 5-Night Stay at Casa Puesta Del Sol in Punta Mita, Mexico
- Culinary Glamping Weekend at Blue Sky Center
- 20-Person Farm-To-Table Retreat at Sonoma Broadway Farms
- 2-Night Stay for 8 at Solminer Wine Co. in Los Olivos
- Blue Water by Internationally-acclaimed Artist, John Millei

Live Music
Chris Fossek