



LOS PADRES FORESTWATCH

PROTECTING WILDLIFE AND WILD PLACES ALONG CALIFORNIA'S CENTRAL COAST

.....
HUASNA ROAD ■ PRONGHORN ■ FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT ■ SLOPE EVENT

MANZANA KAYAK ■ SESPE FRACKING ■ MARIPOSA LILIES ■ BIG SUR FUELBREAKS ■ OJAI WILD!

SPRING 2013



Keyhole Rock at Pfeiffer Beach, Big Sur Coast

Brian Sorensen





East Fork Lion Canyon, Sespe Wilderness

Craig R. Carey



BASE CAMP



Jeff Kuyper,
Executive Director

When asked about our region's most defining natural feature, many people point to the coast.

Indeed, its beaches and waves are why many of us live here on the Central

Coast, but I tend to point in the opposite direction, to that wild green vastness of our local backcountry called the Los Padres. While I love the ocean, the scenic landscapes, free-flowing rivers, and centuries-old forests of the Los Padres have relentlessly tugged at me since I first explored its hidden treasures decades ago.

Here in the Los Padres, the sandy beaches are found along river banks. Its largest animals are not whales, but mountain lions. California condors fly overhead, not albatrosses or pelicans. Its kelp forest is the chaparral, its waves are breezes through the trees, and its sunsets are equally spectacular.

Nowhere else is the connection between land and sea as dramatic as it is here. Water – the very essence of our survival – begins its hydrologic journey in the Los Padres, flowing downstream, passing through our farms and communities, and eventually emptying into the ocean.

Thankfully, our forests and oceans have groups of citizens who are committed to defending these special places for future generations to enjoy. ForestWatch is one such group, and we work tirelessly every day to protect the Los Padres, from the Big Sur coast to the interior.

We're proud to play such an important role in maintaining our region's open spaces. And we're proud that you – our members and supporters – are right here with us, every step of the way.

For the forest,

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On the Cover: Every year around the winter solstice in December and January, the sun sets at just the right angle that its rays streak through the hole in Keyhole Arch at Pfeiffer Beach along the Big Sur Coast. As the sun nears the horizon, the light takes on an orange hue, reflected by airborne water droplets from the surrounding surf.

COMINGS AND GOINGS

Join us in welcoming two new Board members to Los Padres ForestWatch: **Patricia Krout** of Santa Barbara, and **Michael Shapiro** of Ojai.



Patricia is a Santa Barbara County native and a CPA, and now serves as treasurer of the organization.



Michael is a longtime Ojai resident and screenwriter who has spearheaded several efforts to protect the Ojai Valley.

Welcome!

We also wish to thank the following directors whose Board terms concluded in 2012: **Ruth Lasell** (Ojai), **Jeri Edwards** (Westlake Village), and **Louis Andaloro** (Santa Barbara).

We appreciate all that they accomplished during their terms, and wish them all the best in their new endeavors.

FORESTWATCH LAUNCHES EFFORT TO RESTORE ACCESS

For nearly a century, the public has enjoyed access to thousands of acres of national forest land at the eastern end of a remote valley in southern San Luis Obispo County. But a neighboring landowner has blocked a public road that serves as the only access route into the area, prompting ForestWatch, local residents, and forest users to band together in a massive effort to keep the route open.

The road – known as Huasna Road – begins in Arroyo Grande and passes through 25 miles of private farmland, ranches, and an historic townsite before reaching the Los Padres National Forest. The area has been described in several hiking and mountain biking guidebooks and federal maps. But today, public access to the area is blocked by Messer Land & Development Company before the road enters the national forest. Messer is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Queen City Investments in Long Beach, a corporation with assets exceeding \$4 billion.

Since the 1940s, Messer and other landowners in the area have installed a series of gates across the road to restrict public access. Various forest user groups, along with the Forest Service, the County of San Luis Obispo, and members of Congress, have tried unsuccessfully to negotiate a long-term solution with the landowner.

To restore public access to the area, Los Padres ForestWatch is building a case in the event that a mutually-agreeable resolution cannot be reached with the landowner. Under longstanding California law, a public right-of-way can be established by showing five years of continuous public use prior to 1972.

The County of San Luis Obispo declared Huasna Road to be a public road in 1896, and has assumed maintenance responsibility for the road since. The Forest Service rebuilt the road in the 1930s using CCC crews, who set up a formal camp near Stony Creek. A civil defense post – the Avenales Observation Point – was constructed in the 1940s, accessed via Huasna Road. USFS campgrounds have dotted the area since the 1930s, and the road has appeared as a publicly-open road on nearly every Forest Service map

produced since that time. The Forest Service regularly maintained the road inside the forest boundary.

“This road was built and maintained with taxpayer dollars for more than a century, and provides critical public access to lands owned by the American people,” said Jeff Kuyper, executive director of Los Padres ForestWatch. “We are all entitled to continue to enjoy this beautiful corner of the great outdoors.”

When a gate was installed across a County-maintained portion of Huasna Road, the San Luis Obispo County Road Department ordered the gate removed. In 1966, the Messer Land and Development Company filed a lawsuit to bar the County from removing the gate. The Court ruled in favor of the landowner, and the gate remained.

Access battles flared again in the 1980s when Messer requested the County abandon a 12-mile segment of Huasna Road that passes through the ranch. If the County abandoned the road, it would no longer be obligated to maintain it, and the public’s right to travel along the road would end. After receiving significant public testimony, the County Planning Commission unanimously denied the request. The Forest Service attempted to acquire a permanent public easement in the area, but Messer rejected the idea, stating unequivocally that “it is not in our

best interest to grant such an easement.”

In 1995, the USFS announced that the landowner had installed another gate, blocking vehicular access to Stony Creek Campground. Three years later, the landowner posted a “No Trespassing” sign on the gate and eliminated all public access to the area. Most recently, Messer installed another makeshift fence across the road with “No Trespassing” signs, barring the public from even more of the area.

ForestWatch hopes to negotiate a mutually-agreeable permanent right of public access to the Avenales Observation Point, the former Stony Creek campground, and the trailhead leading into the southern Garcia Wilderness. But if these negotiations fail, we and a coalition of longtime trail users are willing to go to court to uphold the public’s longstanding rights to access this area.

People who have accessed this area prior to 1972 should contact ForestWatch. Old maps, photos, and other evidence showing public use prior to 1972 is also helpful. Also please consider making a donation to our Huasna Access Fund today. This is a long-term effort that will require a significant investment of time to research, negotiate an easement with the landowner, and potentially file a lawsuit if we’re unable to reach agreement.



ForestWatch is working to ensure that the public can once again enjoy this beautiful view of Pine Ridge and the Stony Creek watershed in the Los Padres National Forest.



CRITTER CORNER

Standing roughly four feet high, with tan-brown bodies, and unique two-pronged antlers, pronghorns easily embody the playful description of the classic Home on the Range. Pronghorns are the world's second fastest land mammal, but are not adept at jumping. As such, when humans construct fences on open plains, pronghorn habitat is effectively eliminated. The animals cannot cross fence lines and so are often prevented from reaching food and water sources.

While pronghorn had historically existed across the Carrizo Plain, by 1910 they had been completely eliminated from San Luis Obispo and Kern Counties.

Between 1985 and 1990, 239 pronghorn were translocated from northeastern California to the Carrizo Plain and adjacent lands. Unfortunately, the population did not immediately thrive and by 2002, the herd had declined to only 44. The two largest threats to the Carrizo Plain pronghorn – at the last count there were 84 present on the Plain – are competition with ranch animals where the Plain meets private lands and the widespread fences crisscrossing the Plain, which are remnants of the early settlers.

Since 1998, volunteers working in coordination with land managers have removed or modified more than 150 miles of fence in the monument to meet pronghorn passage standards. ForestWatch volunteers have contributed more than 1,000 hours of labor to the effort.

On the Plain, land managers hope to establish a self-sustaining herd of 250 pronghorns. To reach this goal, they will employ a diverse array of ecological management tools aimed at improving fawn nesting areas, forage abundance, and water access. ForestWatch will continue to work with land management agencies to restore pronghorn habitat on the Carrizo Plain.

WILDERNESS UPDATE AND FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT

In February, the U.S. Forest Service proposed long-awaited changes to the management plan for the Los Padres National Forest. The proposed changes do provide stronger protections for many areas of the forest, prohibiting motorized vehicles across more than 300,000 acres of forest land – a good first step. However, in issuing the proposed changes, the Forest Service failed to recommend *a single acre* for formal designation as “wilderness,” the highest level of protection afforded to federal public lands.

ForestWatch is now working with a coalition of forest users, local business leaders, elected officials, scientists, and other stakeholders to demand permanent wilderness protections for thousands of acres of forest land in the Santa Barbara, Ventura, and San Luis Obispo backcountry.

The Wilderness Act of 1964 is America's strongest land conservation tool, and has permanently protected more than 109 million acres of federal land across the country – only about 5% of the entire United States land base. When national forest lands are formally designated as wilderness, they are forever protected from road building, development, and resource extraction. Camping, hiking, horseback riding, fishing, and hunting are all allowed in wilderness.

During last year's initial public comment period, thousands of local residents, wilderness advocates, forest users, and outdoor enthusiasts – including ForestWatch – urged the Forest Service to recommend several new areas for wilderness designation. It was an overwhelming show of support, demonstrating how we all value protected wilderness areas for the benefits they provide to our local communities.

But the Forest Service failed to make any changes to its proposal, and last month released a Draft Environmental



Eldon M. Walker

Impact Statement (DEIS) with additional details. Forest officials are accepting comments on the proposal and DEIS until May 16.

Forest officials are also hosting two public hearings. The first is scheduled for April 9, from 4:00pm to 7:00pm, at the Mt. Pinos Ranger District Office, 34580 Lockwood Valley Road, Frazier Park (in northern Ventura County). The second is scheduled for April 10 in Goleta, from 4:00pm to 7:00pm, at the Southern California Edison Building, 103 David Love Place.

Help us show the Forest Service that our communities demand the strongest level of protection for our pristine roadless areas. Here's what you can do to help us send a strong message to the Forest Service:

Attend one of the public hearings on April 9 or 10. Come speak about why you think it's so important to add to the rich wilderness legacy in the Los Padres National Forest.

Send a letter to the Forest Service today. Visit our website at www.LPFW.org for a sample letter that you can send with the click of a button.

ForestWatch continues to lead the call for strong, permanent protection of our forest's last remaining unprotected areas. Join us and let your voice be heard!

REDWOODS TO CHAPARRAL

A SLOPE art event to benefit Los Padres ForestWatch

Picture this...on a warm Saturday afternoon you arrive at a historic ranch situated on 50 acres of oak and manzanita woodland nestled in the hills between the Pacific Ocean and the Edna Valley wine growing region of San Luis Obispo county. As you stroll toward the ranch house, you hear the high lonesome sounds of a fiddle and banjo, you're greeted with a glass of local vino or suds, tempted with some tasty appetizers, and you see a display of the most beautiful paintings of the most spectacular areas of the Los Padres National Forest, from Big Sur to the Santa Barbara Backcountry and Carrizo Plain. Sounds like the perfect picture for a perfect afternoon. Join us!

Come enjoy the work of renowned Central Coast plein air artists at a SLOPE art show and sale to benefit Los Padres ForestWatch on Saturday, May 18th from 1-5 pm at the Tiber Canyon Ranch in San Luis Obispo.

San Luis Outdoor Painters for the Environment (SLOPE) is a group of professional artists who create artworks depicting the beauty and uniqueness of

California's Central Coast. Their goal is to use their art to draw public attention to this area and generate funds for preserving local lands for open space, wildlife, and ecologically respectful recreation, ranching and farming. SLOPE is generously donating 40% of the proceeds from the "Redwoods to Chaparral" art event to ForestWatch.

Along with great art, live music, and local food and drink, guests will be treated to Tiber Canyon Ranch olive oil tasting, raffles, and a silent auction. For more information or to get tickets, contact Diane at 805-617-4610 ext 2 or visit www.LPFW.org.

Our thanks to the following sponsors: SLOPE, Tiber Canyon Ranch, Ventucky String Band, Saucelito Canyon Vineyard, and Figueroa Mountain Brewing Co.

The Tiber Canyon Ranch is located at 280 W Ormonde Road in SLO.

"Big Sur Coast" by Dennis Curry (giclee print will be raffled at the event)



HELPING HANDS

JULIE MANSON

Dedicated is a good word to describe ForestWatch volunteer and friend Julie Manson. Her focus to her family, her work, the world around her, and to ForestWatch is a prime example of what dedication is all about.

A California girl, Julie grew up in Pasadena, but has spent the majority of her adult life surrounded by the beauty of Ojai, where she is currently an Admission Associate/Advisor at The Thacher School. Before joining the Thacher faculty in 1988, Julie taught preschool for twelve years in Ojai. It's here she and her husband of 35 years, Bo, raised their 4 children, bringing them up with a keen appreciation for the outdoors. The family has spent a lot of their time camping, and hiked much of the Los Padres, particularly the hills above The Thacher School over the years.

Julie was introduced to ForestWatch by former Board member Ruth Lasell – and it was a good fit. For the past four years, Julie has overseen the hiking program associated with ForestWatch's Ojai Wild! benefit event. Each year ForestWatch has offered naturalist led hikes before the start of Ojai Wild!, and Julie has made it happen – leading hikes, arranging for and orienting naturalists to the Thacher trails, setting up trail signs, and inspiring so many while sharing the beauty of the Los Padres. ForestWatch could not have established this wonderful hiking program without her.

"ForestWatch is such a great organization and doing such important work in our backyard. At Thacher we really believe in the outdoors and all ForestWatch does to protect it. We are hiking "tramping" all over New Zealand right now ... loving it! " Bon voyage Julie! We look forward to your return and continued dedication to helping protect the great outdoors.

NORTHERN LOS PADRES



BIG SUR WILDERNESS FUELBREAK

The Forest Service announced a proposal to construct and maintain more than 24 miles of fuelbreaks in and adjacent to the Ventana Wilderness. ForestWatch submitted a detailed list of comments and recommendations to the agency in February, urging officials to consider alternatives that would protect the wilderness and more effectively protect communities from wildfire. (PAGE 9)

DEFENDING PUBLIC ACCESS

ForestWatch launched a new program to defend and restore public access to Stony Creek and the southern Garcia Wilderness. A large landowner in the area recently installed a gate across Huasna Road, blocking public access to the area. The public has accessed the area since the 1930s. (PAGE 2)

UP MANZANA CREEK WITHOUT A PADDLE

This issue's "Backcountry Journal" column features a piece by Matt Stoecker documenting his thrilling descent of Manzana Creek with a kayak. The adventure takes an exciting twist after his paddle breaks in two. (PAGE 7)

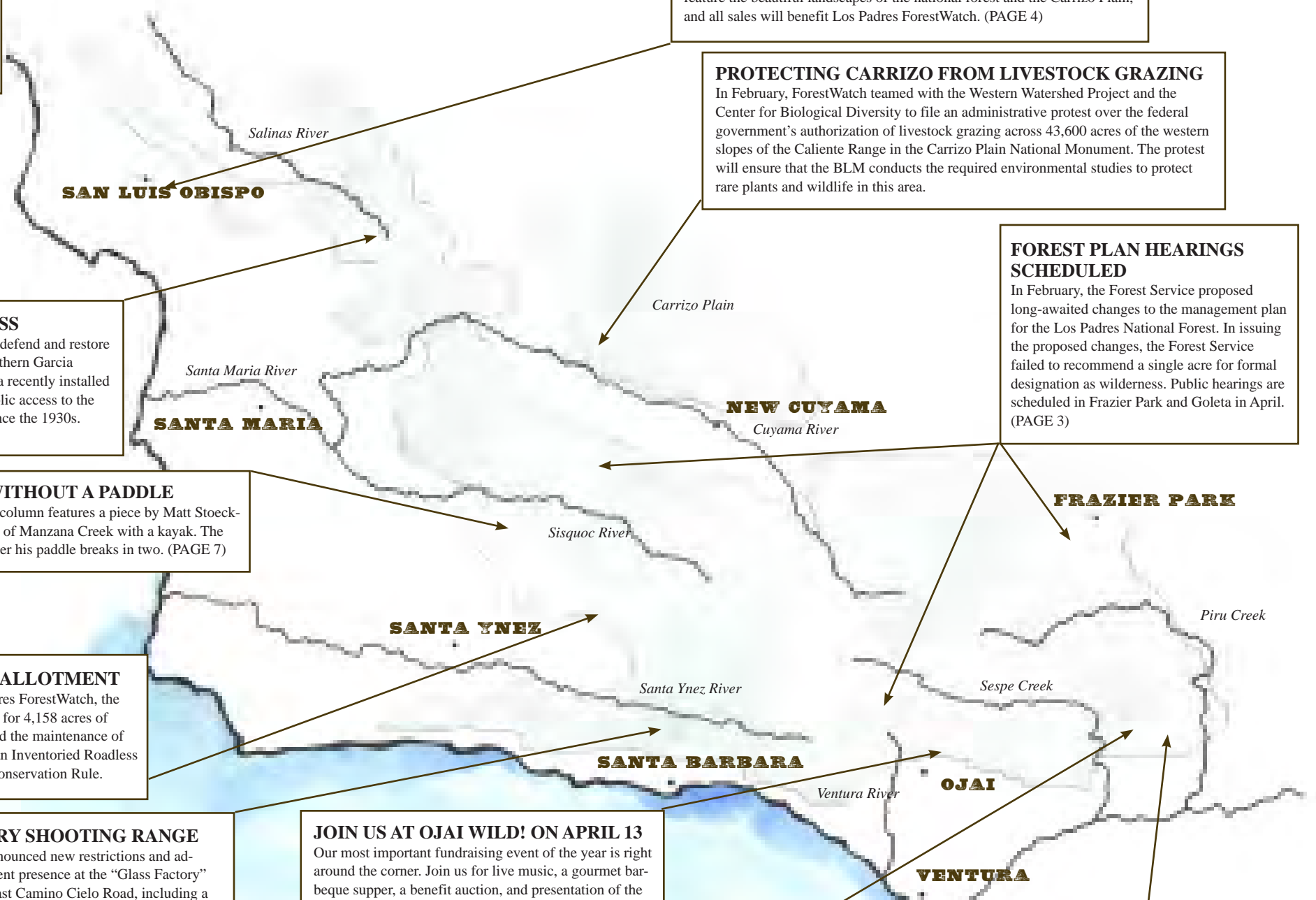
HAPPY CANYON GRAZING ALLOTMENT

In response to an appeal filed by Los Padres ForestWatch, the Forest Service withdrew a grazing permit for 4,158 acres of national forest land. The permit authorized the maintenance of 16 miles of informal dirt roads inside of an Inventoried Roadless Area, in violation of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule.

GLASS FACTORY SHOOTING RANGE

The Forest Service announced new restrictions and additional law enforcement presence at the "Glass Factory" shooting area along East Camino Cielo Road, including a zero-tolerance policy for irresponsible shooters who leave behind their trash or endanger public safety.

SOUTHERN LOS PADRES



SLOPE ART SHOW BENEFITS FORESTWATCH

Join us on Saturday, May 18 at the Tiber Canyon Ranch for an art show and sale by San Luis Outdoor Painters for the Environment. Paintings will feature the beautiful landscapes of the national forest and the Carrizo Plain, and all sales will benefit Los Padres ForestWatch. (PAGE 4)

PROTECTING CARRIZO FROM LIVESTOCK GRAZING

In February, ForestWatch teamed with the Western Watershed Project and the Center for Biological Diversity to file an administrative protest over the federal government's authorization of livestock grazing across 43,600 acres of the western slopes of the Caliente Range in the Carrizo Plain National Monument. The protest will ensure that the BLM conducts the required environmental studies to protect rare plants and wildlife in this area.

FOREST PLAN HEARINGS SCHEDULED

In February, the Forest Service proposed long-awaited changes to the management plan for the Los Padres National Forest. In issuing the proposed changes, the Forest Service failed to recommend a single acre for formal designation as wilderness. Public hearings are scheduled in Frazier Park and Goleta in April. (PAGE 3)

JOIN US AT OJAI WILD! ON APRIL 13

Our most important fundraising event of the year is right around the corner. Join us for live music, a gourmet barbeque supper, a benefit auction, and presentation of the Wilderness Legacy Award to Yvon & Malinda Chouinard and Patagonia. (PAGE 10)

MORE OIL WELLS FRACKED IN SESPE

Following our investigation last year revealing widespread fracking in the Sespe Oil Field, a Texas-based oil company fracked three more wells in the Sespe Creek Watershed in late 2012. The controversial practice of fracking is resulting in what the oil industry is referring to as the "next California gold rush," placing thousands of acres of the Los Padres National Forest at stake. (PAGE 8)

REGIONAL WILDLIFE CORRIDOR STUDY

ForestWatch submitted comments to the National Park Service in January, urging the agency to work collaboratively with landowners and other stakeholders to connect large wildlife habitat areas in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, the Los Padres National Forest, the Angeles National Forest, and state and local habitat areas. Facilitating and encouraging these habitat linkages would better protect our region's wildlife, particularly for wide-ranging wildlife such as mountain lions and California condors. (PAGE 9)

LOOKING ACROSS THE FOREST

AN UPDATE ON HOW WE'RE PROTECTING YOUR REGION

BACKCOUNTRY JOURNAL

Matt Stoecker is down Manzana Creek ... without a paddle

“CRAAAACK!” The sound was like a gunshot and it instantly tore my focus away from the next rapid. Staring with disbelief at the now disconnected blades of my kayak paddle, I was suddenly powerless. The life-preserving triangle formed by my two arms and the paddle had been shattered.

The flow quickened and I was sucked faster down the wilderness creek toward a mess of boulders, tangle of willows and downed tree trunks. “Strainer!” My internal alarm snapped me back to reality. “Get to shore, now!”

I dug one of my paddle blades into the water, leaned right and scratched furiously for the streambank. The downstream rapid pulled on my small white-water boat like a magnet. Barely managing to grab hold of a bankside boulder, I dragged myself from the current.

Garrett, my paddling partner, had managed to eddy out along the opposite bank of Manzana Creek. We exchanged nervous smiles and raised eyebrows. Miles from anyone, committed to floating another 25 miles downriver, and without a spare paddle, this trip had just become a lot more exciting.

Four years before, in 2006, a crew of us had loaded an obsolete backcountry dam with explosives and watched it disappear with a bang. It had taken five long years working alongside government agencies and environmental groups

before we were able to trigger that blast. Several seasons followed with scant rain and minimal creek flows, leaving most of the sediment that had been trapped behind Horse Creek Dam solidly in place. We knew that with sufficient rain, high waters would break loose the sediment, restoring a free-flowing Horse Creek and opening the door for the first time in four decades to endangered steelhead trout returning from the sea to spawn in the Sisquoc River watershed.

Garrett and had I pushed off from the frosty banks of Manzana Creek, near Nira Campground in the Los Padres National Forest, on the morning of December 23, 2010, spurred on by high stream flows from a winter storm. Along with wanting to paddle this normally un-boatable backcountry stream, we’d come to check out river restoration in action.

The creek’s greenish-brown water had bounced us quickly downstream with few pauses amid Class II and III rapids, with occasional Class IV boulder cascades and several impassable logjams that required a portage. It was around mile seven on our first day when my paddle snapped in half on a submerged log as I braced through an S-turn rapid.

Using alder and willow branches, parachute cord and medical tape, we MacGyvered the paddle back into a crude but semi-usable form. Back on the creek, with night approaching, we dropped a long cascade and merged with the larger, rumbling Sisquoc River. Eddying out, we built a fire and slept under the stars.

The next morning we slid our boats into the Sisquoc. Rounding a bend a few miles ahead, the river turned left instead of right, as I had remembered from earlier steelhead snorkeling sur-



veys. Since my last visit, Horse Creek had unloaded a huge pile of silt, cobbles and boulders into the Sisquoc River channel and was creating a massive delta that pushed the river 200 feet to the south.

We swung our kayaks to shore beside Horse Creek and stepped out onto the new delta, marveling at the change. Where Horse Creek Dam once stood, I stared at a creek reborn and free. The dam’s wall of impassable sediment had washed away, allowing the creek to dig comfortably into its new, unobstructed channel. Soaking up the scene in front of me, I was transported back in time to those black and white photos and old-timer stories of “the way it used to be.”

It’s exciting to live in a time when we can (and are beginning to) undo some of man’s damage. It’s amazing to witness the transformation of river and its habitats back to the way they ought to be.

Floating silently through the remote beauty of this wild place, we saw bobcats, a golden eagle, kingfishers, bear and cougar tracks – and not a single person. As we bobbed downstream to our take out at the Tepusquet Road bridge, I looked at the clumsy stick-reinforced paddle in my raw hands and a smile spread across my face sparked by the knowledge that a steelhead trout carrying 10 pounds of ocean nutrients could now be finning its way beneath my boat toward a newly revived creek and past the fading memory of a broken-down dam.



Garrett standing at the exact location of the former Horse Creek Dam

LOS PADRES: THE NEXT OIL BOOM?

Controversial fracking technology places national forest lands at risk

The Los Padres National Forest and its easterly neighbor – the Carrizo Plain National Monument – may lie at the center of what the oil industry is hailing as the next California oil boom. Oil companies are quietly buying up mineral rights and conducting preliminary exploration activities in a “black gold rush” that could yield more than 15 billion barrels of oil.

The oil lies deep beneath the Monterey Shale formation, a vast reserve stretching from the middle of the state to Los Angeles County – including hundreds of thousands of acres beneath the Los Padres National Forest and the Carrizo Plain. It is being tapped using a controversial drilling technique known as hydraulic fracturing or “fracking,” where large amounts of water, sand, and a cocktail of chemicals are injected deep beneath the surface to stimulate oil production.

The technique has come under increasing scrutiny due to concerns with groundwater contamination, surface water pollution, and public health. Hundreds of fracking chemicals are known to be toxic, and several are known to cause cancer.

Despite these concerns, the oil industry is moving at full throttle to obtain the technology to extract large volumes of oil from the Monterey Shale. “In the next

couple of years ... you’re going to see another giant boom,” said a representative of one international oil company that owns mineral rights beneath the Carrizo Plain. “We’re just getting started, really. There will be as much drilling as they possibly can do.”

The Los Padres National Forest lies at the center of the Monterey Shale, and is the only national forest in California with commercial quantities of oil and gas. Oil development has historically been concentrated in Ventura County’s Sespe Oil Field and in Santa Barbara County’s South Cuyama Oil Field.

But in 2005, the Los Padres National Forest approved a plan to allow the expansion of oil drilling across 52,075 acres of the national forest, including several areas far away from these existing oil fields.

The plan was temporarily halted when ForestWatch teamed with our conservation partners – the Center for Biological Diversity, and Defenders of Wildlife – to challenge the plan in federal court. That case is still pending, and is the only remaining line of defense against the expansion of oil drilling and fracking in the Los Padres National Forest.

ForestWatch will continue to protect the Los Padres National Forest and the Carrizo Plain from the expansion of oil drilling. With your continued support, we’ll serve as a powerful voice for these lands, attending hearings and reviewing draft regulations to ensure that adequate safeguards are in place to protect water quality and the environment.



An oil well is drilled as part of a fracking operation in the Sespe Oil Field this summer



THANK YOU

One of the highlights at ForestWatch’s Ojai Wild! event each year has been great live music. Everything from soulful blues to bluegrass harmonies has entertained our guests. But have you ever wondered how this is possible in oak woodland nestled against the Los Padres National Forest, where an electric power outlet is nowhere to be found?

Well the good folks at California Solar Electric (CSE) of Ojai make it all possible with their Solar Roller. A generator powered by the sun within a portable trailer, the Solar Roller has become an important fixture of Ojai Wild! and one that makes this event the best it can be – powering our PA system and other electrical equipment.

CSE is dedicated to providing the latest most efficient solar electric technology on the market, focusing on both residential and commercial solar projects, along with powering electric vehicles using solar power. It is their intention to serve the Central Coast as a catalyst for a sustainable future with education, promotion and installation of clean, renewable power from the sun.

CSE’s owner, Don Campbell, understands and appreciates the importance of solar energy now and into the future. “I’m doing it for our children’s sake,” he says. “Sustainable business and energy practices are the only way our world is going to make it.”

California Solar Electric is dedicated to community outreach and education regarding renewable energy and energy efficiency, shining light on the vast possibilities of solar energy powering our future.

Our thanks to CSE for their important work and for their dedication to the work of Los Padres ForestWatch and Ojai Wild! – let the music play!



Marc Kummel

CRITTER CORNER

Mariposa – or “butterfly” in Spanish — is a fitting name for these colorful flowers that thrive in harsh environments despite their delicate appearance. Of the 67 different species of mariposa lilies in the world, 45 are found in California, including twelve different species found throughout the Los Padres National Forest. The flowers bloom in late spring or early summer and have three colorful petals with long hairs on the surface. In the fall, the flowers shed their seeds which germinate following winter rains. Several years may pass before a bulb reaches maturity and produces a flower.

The fact that the mariposa lily grows from a bulb gives it some interesting qualities, including the ability to survive wildfires. Because the bulb is buried deep enough underground, the plant can survive most fires even when its above-ground portion is burned. Following wildfires, these bulbs produce greater numbers of flowers than in average years, taking advantage of the nutrient-rich soil and the lack of competition from other plants. This trait has contributed to the success of the mariposa lily in fire-prone environments. Historically, the bulbs were used as a food source by Native Americans living in the area.

Despite the fact that these flowers are hearty, five species of mariposa lily in the Los Padres National Forest are classified as “sensitive” because their population levels are declining, threatening the species’ ability to survive. Mariposa lilies are threatened by grazing, development, road construction and maintenance, off-road vehicle trespass, invasive plants, vegetation clearing, and fire suppression in the Los Padres. ForestWatch has protected known mariposa lily locations from vegetation clearing projects by requiring the Forest Service to leave buffers around plants and to limit the amount of clearing that occurs. With your support, we will continue to do our best to ensure that these beautiful flowers persist within their native habitat in the Los Padres National Forest.

MASSIVE FUELBREAKS PROPOSED FOR BIG SUR WILDERNESS

ForestWatch Demands Strong Protections for Ventana Wilderness

Late last year, the U.S. Forest Service announced plans to construct and maintain more than 24 miles of fuelbreaks in and adjacent to the Ventana Wilderness, in the Monterey Ranger District of the Los Padres National Forest.

The work would be completed over a ten-year period using a combination of chainsaws, hand and machine piling, pile burning, and mastication. The fuelbreaks would range between 150 and 300 feet wide and would extend along the coastal ridgelines from Botcher’s Gap south to Anderson Peak, and along the interior ridgelines from Hennickson’s Ridge south to Tassajara Road.

Several miles of fuelbreaks would be cleared inside the boundary of the Ventana Wilderness, a 234,000-acre protected area and the largest wilderness area in the Los Padres National Forest. While the construction of fuelbreaks is permissible in wilderness areas pursuant to the Wilderness Act of 1964, they must be constructed in a way that best protects wilderness values. ForestWatch and other wilderness advocates emphasized this requirement in comment letters submitted to the agency in February 2013.

Significant scientific controversy exists surrounding the effectiveness of fuel breaks, particularly under the extreme weather conditions that accompany most large fires in southern California. For example, Jon E. Keeley, a Research Ecologist with the U.S. Geological

Survey and one of the foremost experts in chaparral fire ecology and the effectiveness of vegetation management techniques, has concluded that “fuel breaks are of questionable value in preventing the spread of fire under severe fire weather conditions.”

A growing consensus of fire experts agree that the most effective way to protect communities from wildfire is to create defensible space immediately around structures; to encourage the use of fire-safe building materials; and to promote local zoning regulations that restrict new development in fire-prone areas. ForestWatch is urging the Forest Service to consider these cost-effective, light-on-the-land alternatives.

In our letter, we also asked the Forest Service to take certain precautions to protect rare plants and wildlife in the path of the fuelbreaks, including a prohibition on vegetation clearing during the bird nesting season to comply with federal and international law. We also suggested ways to minimize the spread of invasive weeds, which often proliferate in fuelbreaks and other disturbed areas.

The Forest Service plans to release a Draft Environmental Impact Statement on this proposal later this year. ForestWatch will continue to track this project to ensure the protection of wilderness values, and to ensure that the Forest Service uses its limited fire prevention resources in a cost-effective and environmentally responsible manner.



Joe Spurr

CELEBRATING THE WILD!

This is our sixth year of bringing Ojai Wild! to the central coast and we thought it might be fun to take a look back at the humble beginnings of this important event compared to the Ojai Wild! of today. In doing so, we discovered a couple significant differences, but more importantly we realized that a lot of what makes Ojai Wild! so great has survived the test of time.

There were just 55 people at the first Ojai Wild! in 2008 – and this included staff and volunteers. Last year our attendance topped off at 248 guests. 3 live auction items were available for bid at the first Ojai Wild!, and there was no silent auction. Our 2012 event offered 11 live auction items to the highest bidder, and 87 silent auction items offered a little something for everyone.

The goal of Ojai Wild! is to raise critical support for our protection efforts, and our first event generated just \$7,600. Last year we were able to raise \$38,000. This year we are hoping to increase that figure by twenty-five percent – and you can become part of this Ojai Wild! history.

Ojai Wild! has grown to be the largest gathering of outdoor enthusiasts along the central coast, and as it has grown it has continued to provide a rare mix of the great outdoors in combination with great food, great music, and great company.



So what has stayed the same over the years? Location, location, location. Los Padres ForestWatch has been fortunate to have the support of The Thacher School. Their Diamond Hitch Camp, nestled against the Los Padres National Forest, with its creekside oak covered picnic area, has served as the perfect location for Ojai Wild! year after year.

The gourmet barbecue supper served by Richard Maxwell and crew of Bon Appetit from Thacher has received rave reviews since 2008. And the live music at Ojai Wild! is the icing on the cake, starting that first year with the Iron Mountain Boys, then last year with the Ventucky String band, and coming this April, Big Tweed. We've had everything from soulful blues to country twang ... there's always a toe tappin' at Ojai Wild!

Now we invite you to the 6th Annual Ojai Wild! This is Los Padres ForestWatch's most important fundraising event of the year – and each year we try to bring the best experience possible to our guests while they celebrate our local forest protection efforts and help raise critical support for our work. We hope you'll join us this year – and help make this our best Ojai Wild! ever!

See the back cover of this issue for more information.



STELLAR SUPPORT

RACHAEL AND GRIFFIN BARKLEY

California natives, Rachael and Griffin Barkley were raised in different parts of the state, but their roots are now firmly planted in Ventura, where the beauty of the natural world around them never goes unnoticed or unappreciated.

Growing up in San Diego, Rachael's parents taught her and her siblings from a young age to value nature and to take care of it, a value she hopes to pass on to her children. Griffin, an Oxnard native, spent a lot of time in the ocean and in the forest. With two small children (ages 2 & 4), the Barkleys think Ventura is a perfect place to raise a family. "The ocean, the mountains, the national forest ... so much of nature is so close at hand," said Rachael.

So there was a natural connection with ForestWatch when the Barkleys were introduced to our organization back in 2009 while visiting the Goodwin Ranch in the Carrizo Plain (an Ojai Wild! auction item) with their family. The Barkleys said that "it was there, on the Carrizo, talking with ForestWatch Executive Director Jeff Kuyper and Ranch Manager and LPFW Board member, Pat Veasart, that we saw first-hand what wonderful work LPFW is doing."

Since then, the Barkleys have become ardent supporters of ForestWatch as their focus on conservation continues to grow. They are also looking forward to the day when the kids are bigger and they can participate as a family in a ForestWatch volunteer clean-up day. ForestWatch is grateful for their support and friendship and for their continued dedication to making the world around them a better place.



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 Printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper

JOIN US! UPCOMING EVENTS

Screening: *The Condor's Shadow*
March 28, 2013 • Santa Barbara



Join us at the Fleischmann Auditorium for a special screening of *The Condor's Shadow*, a new documentary film on the recovery of the endangered California Condor.

Beautiful and poignant, *The Condor's Shadow* will make you appreciate the challenges faced and the passion brought to the task of pulling the condor back from the brink of extinction. A post-screening Q&A session with local condor biologists and the filmmaker will follow. Proceeds benefit LPFW.

Tickets are \$8 members/\$10 nonmembers. For tickets, contact Diane at 805-617-4610 ext.2 or visit www.LPFW.org/tickets

6th Annual Ojai Wild!
April 13, 2013 • Ojai



Gather with family and friends for our Sixth Annual celebration at Diamond Hitch Camp along the foothills of the Los Padres National Forest. Enjoy a gourmet barbeque supper under the oaks, live music, nature walks, and a live and silent auction.

The annual Wilderness Legacy Award will be presented to Yvon & Malinda Chouinard and Patagonia. Join us in celebrating the coming of Spring and our region's wild places and wildlife. See you at Diamond Hitch!

Visit www.ojaiwild.org to purchase tickets or contact Diane at (805) 617-4610 ext.2 or diane@LPFW.org

SLOPE Art Benefit Event
May 18, 2013 • San Luis Obispo



Come enjoy the work of renowned Central Coast plein air artists at Redwoods to Chaparral, a SLOPE art show and sale to benefit Los Padres ForestWatch! This event will take place from 1-5 pm at the beautiful Tiber Canyon Ranch.

Along with great art, live music, and local food and drink, guests will be treated to olive oil tasting, raffles, and a silent auction.

For more information or to purchase tickets, contact Diane at 805-617-4610 ext 2 or visit www.LPFW.org.

