



The San Rafael Wilderness Proposal

And Hearing Announcement

NATIONAL WILDERNESS
PRESERVATION SYSTEM



Forest Service U. S. Department of Agriculture California

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROPOSAL

The four major objectives of the currently proposed classification are:

1. To comply with the Wilderness Act of September 3, 1964 (Public Law 88-577) which stipulates that the Secretary of Agriculture review each area presently classified as "primitive" as to its suitability or nonsuitability for wilderness and report his findings with appropriate recommendations to the President.
2. To refine the boundaries of the existing primitive area to arrive at a more workable administrative unit. This generally involves establishing boundaries along physical features such as ridges and escarpments, where topography aids in defining the area.
3. To include additional areas rich in wilderness values and to exclude areas not predominately valuable for wilderness purposes. A major purpose is to move the north boundary to include both banks of the Siquoc River. Proposed additions and deletions result in a net increase of 36,244 acres.
4. To reclassify the San Rafael Primitive Area, and rename it the San Rafael Wilderness with a net total area of about 110,403 acres of National Forest land.

HISTORY

The San Rafael Primitive Area was established by order of Chief Forester R. Y. Stuart under the authority of Regulation L-20 on January 19, 1932. The area as set up at that time contained 74,990 acres, 830 of which was erroneously reported as private land. Correct acreage was 532 acres. Neither boundaries nor total acreage has changed since that time except for Federal acquisition of some 396 acres of the private lands.

LOCATION (See map)

The proposed San Rafael Wilderness is located in the San Rafael and Sierra Madre Mountain ranges in southeastern Santa Barbara County in the Los Padres National Forest. It covers a strip about ten miles wide and 25 miles long running in a generally northwest-southeast direction.

The northeast boundary follows the breaks above the Siquoc River Canyon which are about halfway between the river and the top of the Sierra Madre Range. The southwest boundary follows Manzana Canyon southward to the vicinity of Cachuma Mountain and then follows the ridge southward to McKinley Mountain and Santa Cruz Peak until it intersects the Little Pine Mountain-Big Pine Mountain Road which forms the boundary on the southeast end. At the northwest end the boundary is the ridge below Wheat Peak which runs in a generally north-south direction.



Dotted line on aerial photos marks approximate location of proposed northeast boundary.

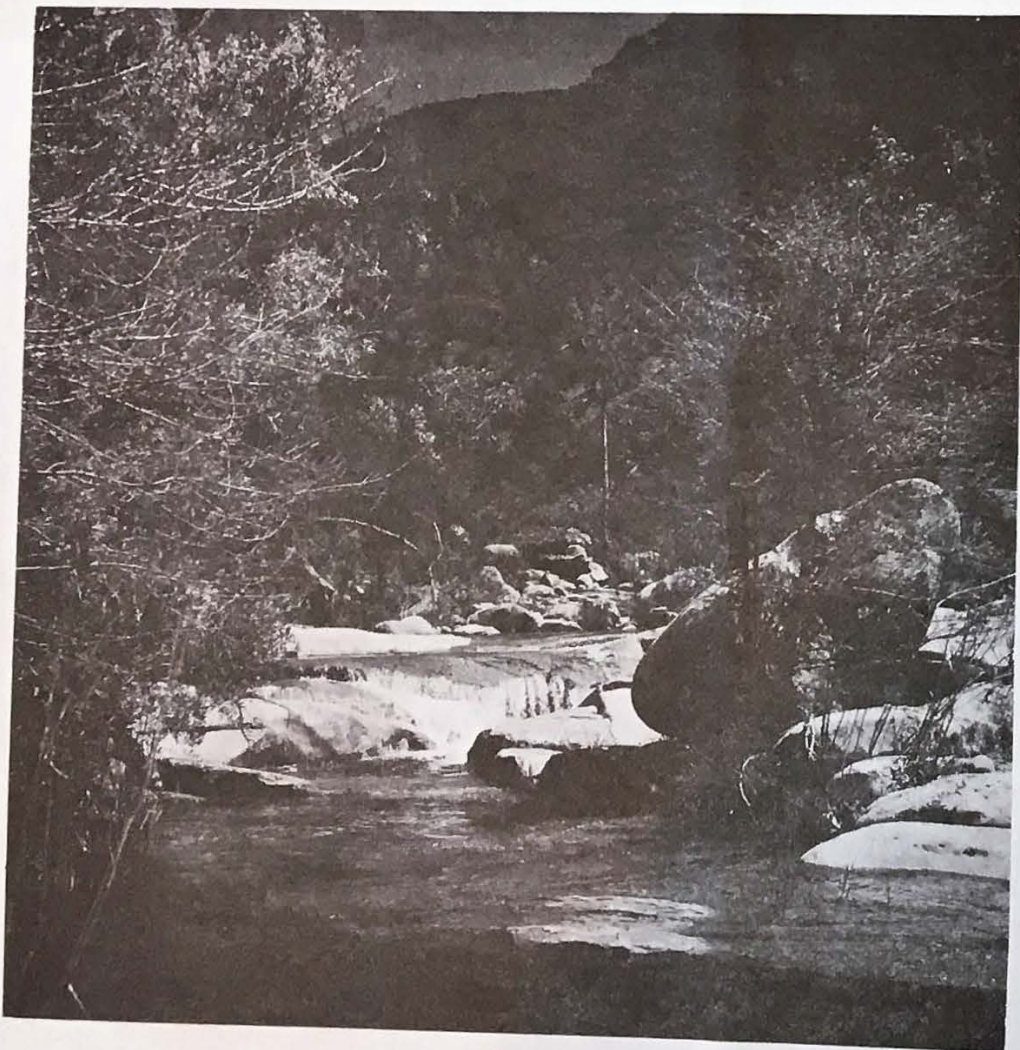


PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

Elevations range from a low of 1,166 feet near the Manzana-Sisquoc junction to a high of 6,596 feet at the San Rafael Mountain summit. Mission Pine Basin is about 5,500 feet and Hurricane Deck about 3,500 feet.

The relatively low elevation, contrasted to many of the other classified wilderness in the National Forests throughout the West, makes the proposed San Rafael Wilderness unique in both pattern of use by the public and in the measures necessary to manage the area. It is attractive in the winter and spring, when most high mountains are covered with snow, and very hot, dry, and unattractive during the summer and fall. Consequently, public use is concentrated in the winter and spring, and the area is normally closed to entry because of fire hazard in the summer and fall when high elevation areas are being heavily used. Also because of the fire hazard, facilities such as heliports, helispots, and fire lines are needed in certain locations to insure rapid control of wildfires.

As the photographs indicate, the proposed Wilderness is characterized by steep, brushy slopes and rocky cliffs. The exception is the basin-like terrain between Big Pine Canyon and Santa Cruz Peak (typified by the cover photo taken near Mission Pine Basin). Because of the rough terrain and heavy brush cover, travel, either by horse or foot, is largely limited to trails. The rugged, relatively undisturbed condition of the country is its chief attraction as Wilderness.



The Sisquoc River provides a welcome relief from the austerity of the area. The scene at left shows the falls on the Sisquoc near the mouth of Rattlesnake Creek.

The condor sanctuary borders the river about a mile below this point.

RESOURCES

About 90 percent of the proposed Wilderness is covered by brush with isolated small grassy openings (potrereros) interspersed throughout. Scattered stands of mixed conifers occur on the north slopes. These are classed as noncommercial because of the inaccessibility, small volume, and poor quality of the timber. Consequently, no measurement has ever been made of the acreage and volume involved. Species found include ponderosa, Jeffrey, sugar, Coulter, digger, and pinyon pine; big cone spruce; white fir; and incense cedar.

Deer are plentiful in the area but hunting pressure is light because of closures during the hunting season. When the fire danger lessens and the fire closures are lifted, as in 1963, hunter success is good. California mule and Columbian black tailed deer share the range.

Three significant streams flow through the area – the Sisquoc River, Manzana and Santa Cruz Creeks. Fishing is a popular activity along these streams but all three are rather limited in fish producing capacity. Periodically, a small stretch (about two miles) of Manzana Creek is artificially stocked with fingerling trout.

A California condor sanctuary of about 1,200 acres was established in 1937 south of the Sisquoc River in an effort to protect the bathing and roosting areas of this species, whose numbers continue to dwindle. Later, the 53,000 acre Sespe Wildlife Area was established near Fillmore for the protection of condor nesting areas. No nests have been authenticated in the Sisquoc Condor Sanctuary since 1902, but these big birds have been known to roost and bathe near the Sisquoc Falls.

Most of the existing Primitive Area is closed to grazing. There are, however, two allotments which use small portions along the lower Sisquoc River and along the Manzana Creek bottom.

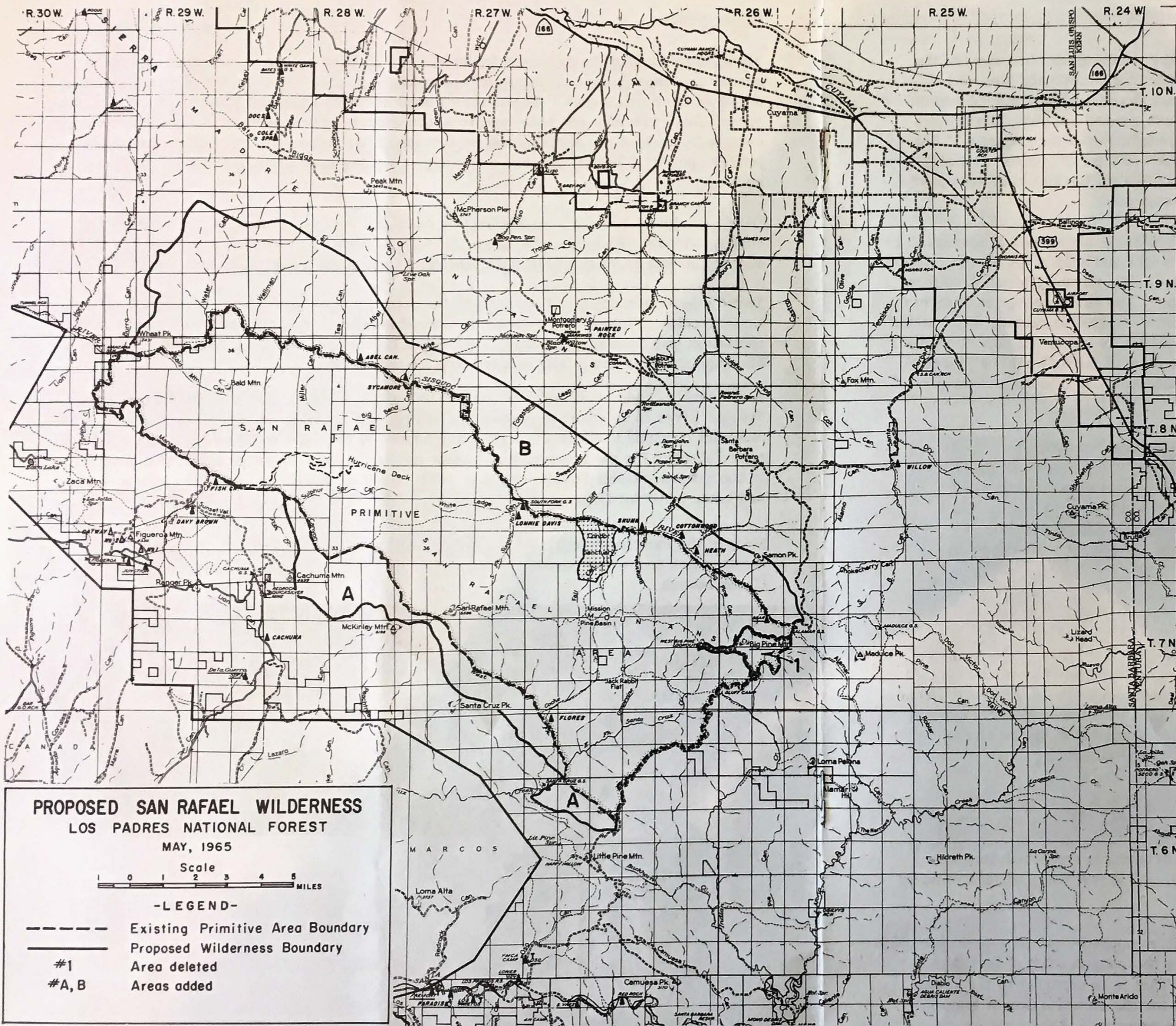


Photo by Carl Koford

ABOVE, LEFT – Bathing place of the California condor above Sisquoc Falls in the sanctuary.

ABOVE, RIGHT – A California condor in flight.

LEFT – Sisquoc Falls and the cliffs where the condors bathe and rest.



SUMMARY OF PROPOSED CHANGES

	Acres
1. San Rafael Primitive Area as of February 8, 1965	
National Forest Land	74,458
Private Land	532*
Total	74,990
2. Proposed Additions	
Unit A – Southwest Side	7,436
Unit B – North and East Side	28,808
Total Additions	36,244
3. Proposed Exclusions	
Unit 1 – West Pine Mountain	831
4. Total Proposed San Rafael Wilderness	
National Forest	110,227
State of California	40
Private Land	136
Total	110,403

A topographic map of scale 1" per mile is available for review in the offices of the Regional Forester, San Francisco and the Forest Supervisor, Los Padres National Forest, Federal Building, Santa Barbara, California.

*This figure erroneously reported February 8, 1965 to Congress. It should have been 136 acres as 396 acres were acquired previously.

PROPOSED SAN RAFAEL WILDERNESS
LOS PADRES NATIONAL FOREST
 MAY, 1965

Scale
 0 1 2 3 4 5 MILES

-LEGEND-

--- Existing Primitive Area Boundary
 — Proposed Wilderness Boundary

#1 Area deleted
 #A, B Areas added

TO SANTA BARBARA
 12 MILES

PROPOSED ADDITIONS

Unit A – This proposed addition of 7,436 acres is along the southwestern boundary of the present Primitive Area. It moves the boundary from Santa Cruz Creek and Manzana Creek to the top of the ridge which runs between Cachuma Mountain, McKinley Mountain, and Santa Cruz Peak. There is a 4-wheel drive fire access road which generally follows the ridge top and where that road is northeast of the ridge it becomes the boundary. The advantages of this change is that both sides of the drainages of the two creeks are brought within the classified area and that additional undeveloped wilderness resource, typical of southern California, will be placed under wilderness management.

Unit B – This area of 28,808 acres is proposed for addition along the north and northeastern side of the area. It moves the boundary to the "breaks" north and east of the Sisquoc River. Here the precipitous east and north slopes of the Sisquoc Canyon abruptly level off to form the relatively flat ridge top of the Sierra Madre Mountains. The sharp change in topography between the level ridge top and the steep canyon makes an ideal natural barrier which would aid greatly in future management of the area. Another extremely important aspect of this proposed boundary change is that the entire course of the Sisquoc River would be placed within the Wilderness and a buffer of about two miles placed between this area of wilderness use and the boundary.

The higher slopes of the Sierra Madre mountains to the existing fire protection road have some wilderness buffer values and were carefully studied for possible addition. They are not included in the proposal because more intensive fuel management work on the deeper soils characteristic of the area is not compatible with wilderness. Such fuel treatment by mechanical, chemical, and biological means and combinations of these is essential to reasonable fire protection of the more significant wilderness adjoining the water courses.

PROPOSED EXCLUSION

Unit 1 – This exclusion of 831 acres (the only one proposed) is designed to exclude terrain where the West Pine Lookout and Buckhorn roads already invade the area. The road forms a corridor. Classification will maintain its protection against developments incompatible with recreation use while allowing the much needed access during emergencies to the fire lookout point which may be essential to the protection of the Wilderness.

PROPOSED MANAGEMENT

If this proposal is approved, the area will be managed to perpetuate and to enhance its wilderness qualities. No roads will be built into the area, and travel will continue to be by foot or horseback.

Recreation structures such as permanent shelters will not be constructed but simple facilities will be installed as they become necessary. Materials for the construction of facilities for wilderness use will be brought in from outside the area. This is in contrast to the usual procedure in wilderness where native materials are used for the construction of simple recreation facilities. Corrals for recreation stock will be permitted if the need arises.

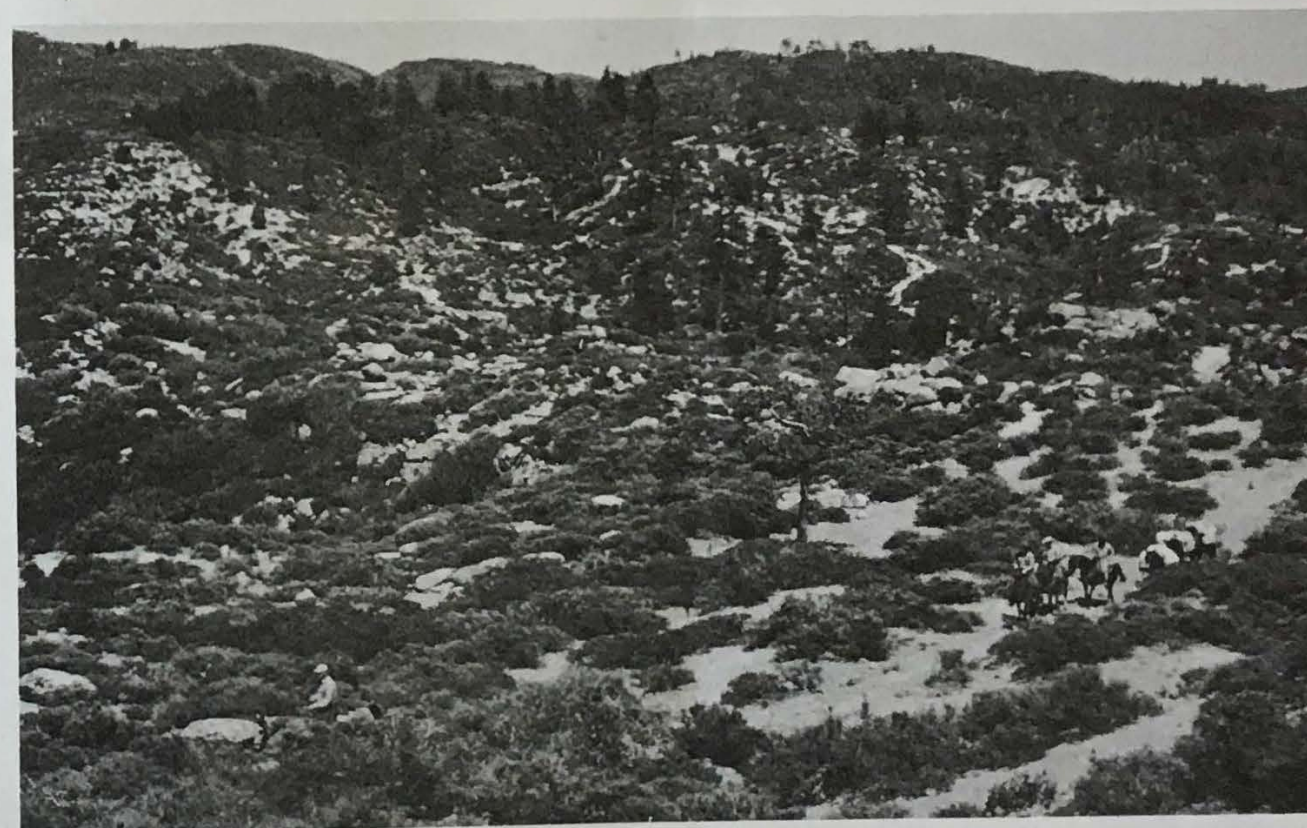
The present trail system is in need of extensive maintenance and reconstruction in some locations. This will be done and new trails will be built when needed to disperse use and to connect helispots.

Grazing of domestic livestock will continue as long as this use remains in harmony with wilderness management.

Mineral prospecting and location as permitted under the limitation of the Wilderness Act will continue. The use of motor vehicles will be prohibited. Surface rights to patents on claims filed after September 3, 1964 will be reserved and retained by the United States.

There will be no commercial timber harvesting within the proposed Wilderness. In the event of attacks by insects or disease, control measures necessary to stop their spread will be used provided no roads are built and the measures are approved by the Chief of the Forest Service.

Hunting and fishing will be controlled by State laws and regulations. Fire closures will, of course, limit such use. Management as wilderness of the area surrounding the condor sanctuary will enhance the chances for survival of this unique species. The sanctuary itself is closed to all human use except for authorized scientific study. Closure is believed to be adequate protection for possible future nesting sites.



Mission Pine Basin

The policies outlined above are identical or similar to those in use in wilderness and in primitive areas in the National Forests throughout the United States. However, the extreme fire hazards inherent in the San Rafael area, unique to southern California, make several modifications in management necessary. Among these are:



Steep slopes and dry brush typify the proposed San Rafael Wilderness. Rugged terrain such as this covers most of the area and presents many problems to firefighters.

1. Helispots (small cleared areas where helicopters can land with fire crews and equipment) will be constructed at strategic locations, well away from the condor sanctuary.
2. The telephone line from Los Prietos to West Pine Lookout is a vital link in the fire protection chain and will remain. It encroaches slightly on the proposed Wilderness along the Buckhorn road but is not objectionable.
3. The guard station at South Fork on the Sisquoc River is necessary for the administration of the area and will be maintained. The present trail to the cabin will continue to provide the only access.
4. Fire closures will be put into effect when necessary. During these periods no use will be allowed, not only to protect the area from fire, but also to avoid injury or loss of life to users. On steep, brushy slopes, such as are found here, fires burn with almost explosive speed and with extremely unpredictable behavior patterns.

INSPECTION

Anyone concerned about this proposal is urged to personally inspect the proposed wilderness. Because fire closures went into effect July 1, anyone wishing to enter the area must obtain a permit. These are available from the Forest Supervisor at Santa Barbara and the District Ranger offices at Santa Maria, Cuyama and Los Prietos.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

Persons wishing to express their views on the proposal are invited to submit written statements before November 8, 1965. A Public Hearing will be held, beginning at 9:00 a.m. November 8, 1965, in the Hearing Room of the Santa Barbara County Planning Commission Offices, Santa Barbara, California. Any questions not answered by this leaflet should be directed to one of the following:

Forest Supervisor
Los Padres National Forest
Federal Building
Santa Barbara, California 93101

Regional Forester
630 Sansome Street
San Francisco, California 94111

Statements, hearing record, and other pertinent data together with the map and proposal will be submitted by the Secretary of Agriculture through the President to Congress. The decision will be made in accordance with the provisions of Public Law 88-577, dated September 3, 1964, an Act to establish a National Wilderness Preservation System.

Forest Service
U. S. Department of Agriculture
630 Sansome Street
San Francisco, California 94111
August, 1965

