



LOS PADRES FORESTWATCH

SPRING 2020

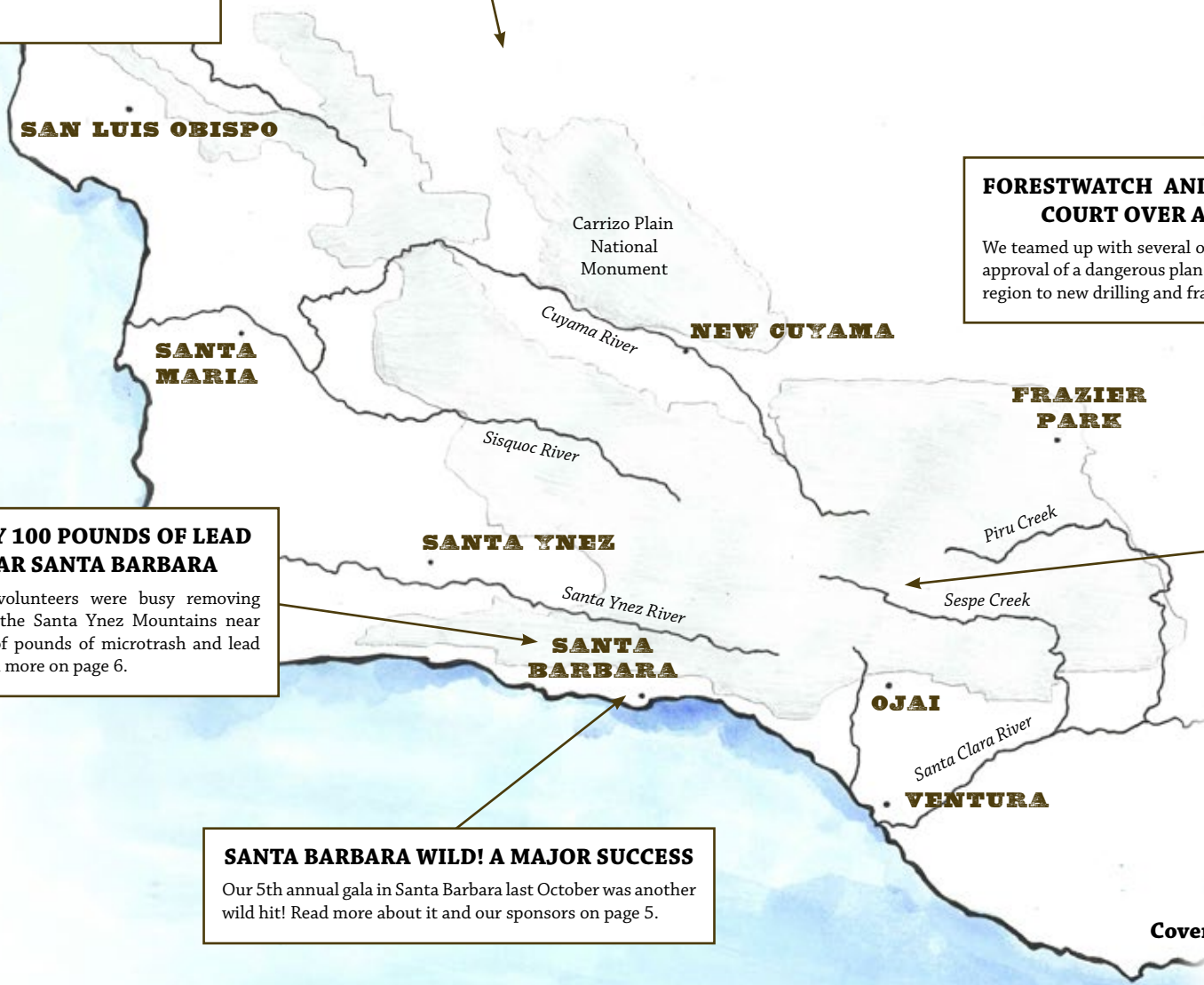




MASSIVE WILDERNESS BILL PASSES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
 For the first time in over a decade, the Central Coast Heritage Protection Act passed the House of Representatives earlier this year. The bill will add nearly 250,000 acres of new wilderness to the Los Padres National Forest and Carrizo Plain National Monument. Learn more about the types of lands that would be protected under the legislation as well as its designation of new Wild and Scenic Rivers and the Condor National Scenic Trail on page 2.

OVER 12,000 ACRES DESIGNATED AS NORTH CARRIZO ECOLOGICAL RESERVE
 In April the California Fish and Game Commission voted unanimously to establish the North Carrizo Ecological Reserve just north of Highway 58. The new reserve adds to a large network of public and private conservation lands in the area. Learn more at LPPFW.org.

MOUNTAIN LION POPULATIONS ON CENTRAL COAST RECEIVE SPECIAL PROTECTIONS UNDER STATE LAW
 Several distinct populations of mountain lions in southern California and along the Central Coast have been given candidate status under the California Endangered Species Act. Learn more on page 7.



FORESTWATCH AND PARTNERS TAKE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION TO COURT OVER APPROVAL OF DRILLING AND FRACKING PLAN
 We teamed up with several organizations to file a lawsuit against the Trump administration over the approval of a dangerous plan to open up over one million acres of public land and mineral estate in the region to new drilling and fracking. Read more about this and other legal updates on pages 3 and 4.

VOLUNTEERS REMOVE NEARLY 100 POUNDS OF LEAD FROM SHOOTING SITES NEAR SANTA BARBARA
 Before the COVID-19 crisis began, our volunteers were busy removing trash from illegal target shooting sites in the Santa Ynez Mountains near Santa Barbara. They cleaned up hundreds of pounds of microtrash and lead ammunition from these sensitive areas. Read more on page 6.

FORESTWATCH VOLUNTEERS CLEAN UP TRASH IN SESPE CREEK TRIBUTARY
 Earlier this year, ForestWatch volunteers removed over 180 pounds of trash—including 60 pounds of lead—from an illegal target shooting site along a tributary to Sespe Creek. Read more on page 6.

SANTA BARBARA WILD! A MAJOR SUCCESS
 Our 5th annual gala in Santa Barbara last October was another wild hit! Read more about it and our sponsors on page 5.

LOOKING ACROSS THE FOREST

AN UPDATE ON HOW WE'RE PROTECTING YOUR REGION

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Cover Photo: Mountain lion cub in the Santa Monica Mountains, courtesy of the National Park Service

BASE CAMP



Jeff Kuyper
Executive Director

Like many of you, I've been spending more time these days exploring parks, forests, and open space right here in our own backyard. It's given me an opportunity to think about how these lands are vital to me and my family and our friends and neighbors. It's also reminded me, in a very profound way, that we must do whatever we can to protect and defend them.

Our small but mighty staff shares this commitment as we adapt to a new work-from-home routine. From Ventura to Santa Barbara to Santa Ynez, we're doing everything we can to remain connected to each other and our shared mission. Their strength and determination inspire me every day.

I'm also moved by our supporters who continue to reach out, lend a hand, and send words of encouragement. You make our work possible and encourage us to accomplish big things. We cannot thank you enough.

One thing remains clear in this uncertain world—threats to our public lands have not stopped. Neither can we. The Forest Service is on the verge of announcing another logging project, this time in Ojai's backcountry, and the administration announced it wants to open federal lands to open-pit uranium mining. Our legal and policy teams are hard at work with seven active cases in federal court. We're attending hearings and appearing in court (by telephone), reviewing proposals, and mobilizing the public to speak out and deepen their connection to the outdoors.

I hope you're finding ways to connect with your public lands—and with us—during these unusual times. Join us for our virtual Ojai WILD @ HOME! benefit, attend one of our webinars, jump in for some online trivia or a virtual happy hour, engage with us over social media, or just check in to say hi. It's important for us to keep in touch.

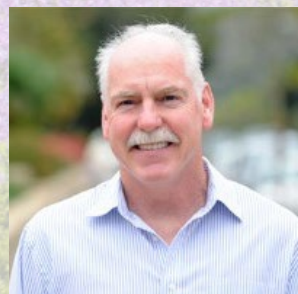
Let's all stay healthy and safe. Together, we will emerge stronger than ever.

COMINGS AND GOINGS



ALLAN MORTON

We bid a fond farewell to Allan Morton in his role as Board President where he has served for nearly eight years. Allan led the organization through significant growth, helped expand the Board of Directors, hosted several fundraisers (and numerous Board meetings!) at his home in Santa Barbara, and spearheaded our public access program. We are thankful that Allan will continue his service on the Board, sharing his considerable law experience and love and enthusiasm for our local public lands.



ETHAN STONE

We're honored that Ethan Stone has enthusiastically accepted the role as ForestWatch Board President. Ethan is an entrepreneur and business consultant, has served on the Board for two years, and helped launch our Room to Roam campaign to protect our region's iconic wildlife. He seeks to continue expanding our work in this area while helping ForestWatch navigate these challenging times and find new ways to engage the community in our important work.



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LAND BILL PASSES THE HOUSE

NEXT STOP: THE SENATE

In a historic and bipartisan vote this February, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Central Coast Heritage Protection Act to protect 245,000 acres in the Los Padres National Forest and the Carrizo Plain National Monument under the Wilderness Act. The bill would also designate 159 miles of wild and scenic rivers, 34,500 acres of specially-protected scenic areas, and a 400-mile Condor National Recreation Trail, a single through hiking route from Big Sur to the Los Angeles County line.

The vote marked a major milestone in our decade-long campaign to forward our coalition's wilderness legislation.

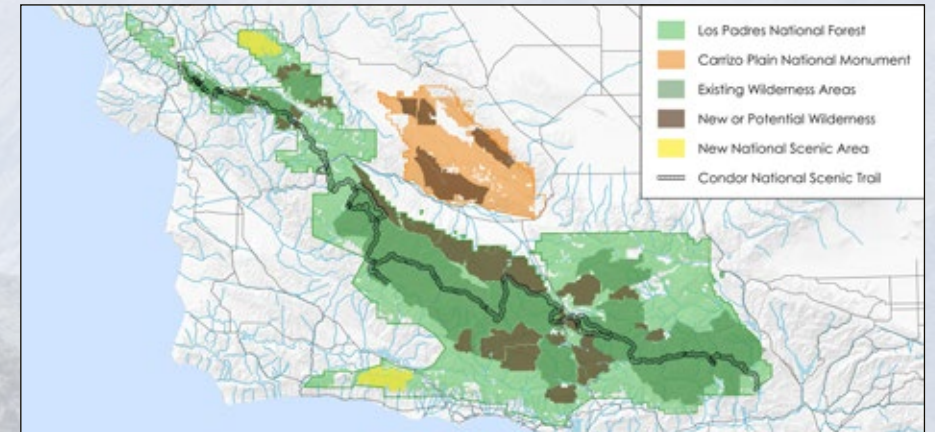
The Wilderness Act, passed in 1964, is the gold standard of land preservation—a tool for the American people to protect the nation's remaining pristine wilderness for future generations.

"A wilderness ... is an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."

- Wilderness Act, 1964



Photos featuring proposed additions to the Matilija Wilderness (background) and Sespe Wilderness (bottom) by Bryant Baker.



Wilderness designation in the Los Padres National Forest hasn't received a vote in Congress since the Los Padres Condor Range and River Protection Act of 1992 was signed into law by George H.W. Bush. Work on the Central Coast bill began more than 10 years ago, when ForestWatch teamed up with The Wilderness Society and the California Wilderness Coalition to identify other lands in Los Padres needing wilderness protection. This modest alliance evolved into the Central Coast Wild Heritage campaign and now includes more than 500 civic groups and leaders, landowners, businesses, elected officials, schools, farmers, and ranchers.

The legislation, introduced by Rep. Salud Carbajal (D-CA), will protect archeological sites and some of the region's last unspoiled wildlife habitat, preserve ecosystem services like water filtration and carbon sequestration, increase recreational opportunities across the Central Coast including in several park-poor communities, and expand opportunities for people to find solitude in nature—something that

is increasingly appreciated during the COVID-19 crisis.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, visitors already spend \$25 million annually on trips to the National Forest. Additional wilderness and a world-class hiking trail will invigorate local economies by increasing tourism in an area known for its iconic landscapes.

"Places like the Los Padres National Forest and Carrizo Plain National Monument contain some of the most stunning, unique, and diverse ecosystems found anywhere in North America.... This bill would preserve the ecological beauty and recreational opportunities available to communities in my district and beyond, as well as for future generations."

- Rep. Salud Carbajal

The House approved the bill on a 231-183 vote (with 6 Republicans voting in favor) as part of a larger package of public lands conservation bills despite a veto threat issued by the President, who cited concerns that wilderness designation "could impede future energy and mineral development."

The bill must be approved by the Senate, and signed by the President, before becoming law. Our focus now turns to the Senate, where earlier this year, U.S. Senators Kamala Harris and Dianne Feinstein introduced a companion bill, Protecting Unique and Beautiful Landscapes by Investing in California (PUBLIC) Lands Act, that includes the same Central Coast provisions as the bill passed in the House. ForestWatch is engaged with coalition partners to advance the central coast wilderness legislation when the moment is right.

PROTECTING PUBLIC LANDS IN THE COURTROOM

Challenging the Trump Administration

In January, ForestWatch returned to court with Patagonia and seven allied environmental and community organizations to again challenge the Trump Administration over its approval of a plan that allows oil drilling and



fracking across 1.2 million acres in Central California. After a separate but similar legal action was filed by the State of California, a judge ordered the twin suits to be tried as one single case.

The litigation, filed in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles, alleges that the Bureau of Land Management violated the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) by approving the plan without fully evaluating fracking's potential harm to communities, public health, recreation, groundwater, and air quality in the region as well its contribution to climate change. The plaintiffs requested that the court halt all oil leasing pending further environmental studies.

ForestWatch and our allies first took the BLM to court over the Resource Management Plan in 2015 and won a ruling from a federal judge stating that the agency violated NEPA by failing to study the impacts of fracking.

The BLM plan, which received widespread opposition, allows drilling and fracking on public lands and mineral estate across eight California counties, from San Luis Obispo County to Ventura County, and from the coast inland to the southern

Sierra Nevada. On the auction block are parcels located in or near the Los Padres National Forest, Carrizo Plain National Monument, Montaña de Oro and other iconic parks, popular beaches and hiking trails, schools, reservoirs, wildlife and nature preserves, and wilderness areas.

The environmental study was developed on an abbreviated schedule established by an executive order, and found that fracking causes no significant impact. The assertion is based on the assumption that no more than 4 wells per year are likely to be fracked, and that fracking will only take place where there is already considerable oil development. The BLM did not alter its plan to limit fracking to these locations, nor did it restrict how many wells could be fracked per year.

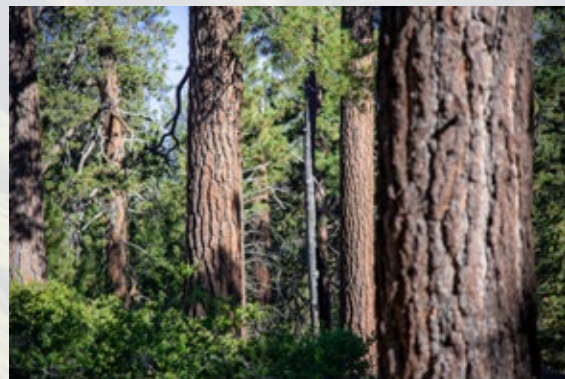
The Trump Administration has made the expansion of fossil fuel development on public lands one of his keystone campaigns. In 2018, the BLM approved 40% more oil drilling permits than the year before, and the Bakersfield Field Office approved more than 200 last year alone. According to the BLM's own records, about 90% of new oil and gas wells on public land are fracked. Nearly one-fourth of the nation's carbon emissions now come from fossil fuel production on federal public lands, the majority of which are controlled by the BLM.

We are working with our attorneys at Center for Biological Diversity and our allies to prepare our detailed legal arguments in this case. The judge could issue a decision in this case later this year. In the meantime, ForestWatch will continue to do everything we can to protect our region's public lands and downstream communities from the risks posed by fracking and oil drilling.

Fighting Commercial Logging in the Forest

In 2018 and 2019, the Forest Service proposed and approved two commercial logging projects across 4.5 square miles near Mt. Pinos without environmental review standard for activities of that size and scope. Despite our initial comments, many requests for reconsideration, and public outcry, the agency moved forward with the projects under a categorical exclusion without any official objection options—leaving us no choice but to file suit with our partners.

The first lawsuit we filed last year challenged the project on Tecuya Ridge—an area in the San Emigdio Mountains just north of Mt. Pinos. This project would involve cutting down trees of all sizes along 12 miles of the ridgeline, including in the Antimony Inventoried Roadless Area. Trees that would be cut commercially include



Jeffrey pines and white firs. Singleleaf pinyon pines would also be cut (and possibly sold as firewood), while up to 95% of sagebrush and other shrubs would be masticated. Altogether, over 1,600 acres of forest would be impacted.

One of our primary concerns with the project is its potential impacts to critically endangered California condors. Tecuya Ridge sits below an important flyway that condors use when traveling between the Sespe

region and the Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge or Tehachapi Mountains to the north. Before condors nearly went extinct in the wild, the Tecuya Ridge area was used for roosting overnight during these long flights. And since at least early 2000s, condors reintroduced into the wild have been roosting in large living and dead trees along the ridge. In fact, we used Fish and Wildlife Service tracking data (as well as the agency's own methods) to delineate 83 instances of roosting within the project area or within 0.5 miles of it since 2014. Nearly one-third of these occurred in late 2019 and early 2020—the most recently available period of data.

We filed the Tecuya Ridge project lawsuit with our partners at the Center for Biological Diversity and John Muir Project of Earth Island Institute. Three logging industry groups have also intervened in the case, claiming they had economic interests in the projects. We have received their briefs and are preparing responses to be submitted by the end of May. The hearing for the lawsuit is set for August.

The other project we challenged covers over 1,200 acres at the base of Mt. Pinos and the west end of Cuddy Valley. Similar to the Tecuya Ridge project, this would involve removing trees of all sizes, including commercial Jeffrey pine and white fir. Pinyon pine would also be cut, and up to 95% of sagebrush and other shrubs would be masticated.

We filed a lawsuit against the Cuddy Valley project with our partners at the John Muir Project of Earth Island Institute and the Mountain Communities for Fire Safety—a citizen-led organization in the area. Our main concern with the project is the potential for it to increase fire hazards by removing large, fire-resistant trees while negatively altering forest structure.

We have filed our briefs and declarations for the lawsuit, attended a hearing, and are awaiting a ruling from the judge, which we expect to receive this summer.



Protecting Steelhead

ForestWatch and our allies have been working for thirteen years to bring endangered steelhead back to the Sisquoc River in the Los Padres National Forest. The construction and operation of Twitchell Dam has devastated historic runs of southern California steelhead—the dam limits the timing and quantity of water in the Santa Maria River, preventing juvenile steelhead from reaching the Pacific Ocean and ocean-dwelling steelhead from reaching historic spawning grounds deep within the San Rafael Wilderness.

Southern steelhead are now one of the most endangered fish species in the country, and restoration of stream flows in this watershed to allow migration is central to the recovery of the southern California steelhead population.

After a decade of negotiating with the dam operators and a local water district, ForestWatch joined forces with San Luis Obispo Coastkeeper in filing a novel legal action in state court. The lawsuit seeks changes to the timing and amount of water released from the dam in order to maintain steelhead populations in good condition, as required by state law.

That suit was moved to northern California, and eventually to federal court. Our attorneys at the Environmental Defense Center (EDC) are working hard in arguing the case before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. We anticipate a decision later this year.



Late last year, we filed a second lawsuit, alleging that dam operations violate the federal Endangered Species Act. The water district and the federal Bureau of Reclamation asked the judge to dismiss the case outright, but earlier this month the motions were denied and the case



was allowed to continue. Our attorneys at EDC, with support from Aqua Terra Aeris Law Group and Sycamore Law, are now preparing to argue the case in federal court.

Both suits are based on a state-sanctioned hydrologic study completed in 2013, which found that very minor adjustments to the timing of water releases from the dam would be enough to restore steelhead populations. Some of the state's most prominent fisheries and hydrologic experts have joined our team to restore this critical fishery while maintaining reliable water supplies for farms and communities.

Maintaining the status quo in dam operations risks extinction of local steelhead populations. ForestWatch and our attorneys are working around the clock to make reasonable changes

that will give future generations the chance to see steelhead return to their historic spawning grounds deep within the Los Padres National Forest.

SANTA BARBARA WILD!

A BENEFIT FOR LOS PADRES FORESTWATCH



WILD TIMES IN SANTA BARBARA!

Our 5th Annual Santa Barbara WILD! fundraiser at the Garden Street Academy in October 2019 was outstanding! Over 300 people were in attendance, including our members, guests, sponsors and volunteers to help celebrate our mission to protect The Los Padres National Forest, the Carrizo Plain National Monument and other public lands across the central coast.

Over \$100,000 was raised to support the work of Los Padres ForestWatch. Fabulous Live Auction packages were on the block, an incredible assortment of Silent Auction items produced a friendly competition, the smooth sounds of Todd Hannigan and Sleeping Chief were thoroughly enjoyed, an extraordinary meal from Savoir Faire Catering was served, and local wines and brews and lemonade were sipped throughout the afternoon.

Many thanks and appreciation to all our vendors, planning committee, and volunteers whose help we could not do without. We are so grateful for your dedication, energy and enthusiasm for the protection of our public lands.

Many Thanks to Our Sponsors!

FIGUEROA MOUNTAIN

- Buynak, Fauver, Archbald, Spray LLP
- Yvon Chouinard
- Dick & Marilyn Mazess
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SISQUOC RIVER

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MANZANA CREEK

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Photos by Butcher Snaps Media



"Not too long ago, I went hiking for the first time and was stunned by the beautiful Central Coast scenery. I recently founded an Animal Awareness Club at my school and my peers and I work together to protect local wildlife. The Central Coast Heritage Protection Act helps ensure important wildlife protections, and that we can all continue enjoying the wilderness."

ALEXIS DEHORTA, STUDENT
PIONEER VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

#CENTRALCOASTWILD

YOUTH ADVOCATES

PROTECTING NATURE, SHAPING THE FUTURE

What if more young people wanted to be wildlife biologists or ecologists instead of professional athletes? What if they could spend more time outdoors instead of in front of a screen? What does it take to get today's youth more interested in environmental issues and civic engagement? With these questions in mind, ForestWatch has been working with several groups to get them more engaged, expand access to our public lands, support environmental education and advocacy, and create a more welcoming space for young people in the conservation sector.

This past winter we teamed up with students from Pioneer Valley High School in Santa Maria on an advocacy campaign to permanently protect public lands—The Central Coast Heritage Protection Act. The partnership initiated last year when we began leading organized hikes with a group from the school, and has expanded to include more opportunities for students to get involved in policy.



Following several hikes, students learned about wilderness designations and what it takes to pass a bill, sent letters to elected officials, and submitted op-eds to their local newspaper.

With the increasing attention on youth voices in the climate movement, youth participation in conservation can be influential in building awareness on issues and influencing decision makers. This group of dynamic teenagers are harnessing the power of their collective action while also inspiring their peers to become more engaged citizens, consider more career options, and growing to be the environmental stewards of tomorrow.



STELLAR VOLUNTEERS

Our volunteers were quite busy before the stay at home orders associated with the COVID-19 crisis. During the fall and winter, they spent a collective 300 hours removing over 1,200 pounds of microtrash from special places like the Santa Barbara frontcountry, West Cuesta Ridge, and a tributary to Sespe Creek. Incredibly, over 150 pounds of this microtrash was lead ammunition. We have been increasing our focus on removing lead bullets from illegal target shooting sites, and it has been alarming to find so much in and around streams in these areas. Thanks to these awesome people for all of their work!

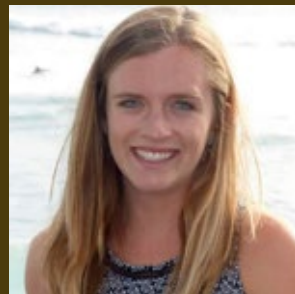
WILD THINGS

This time of year in a few locations around the southern portion of the Los Padres National Forest, lucky hikers may come across one of the most stunning plants in our region: the **Ojai fritillary** (*Fritillaria ojaiensis*)! As part of the lily family, this unique plant spends most of its time underground before springing up when the conditions are just right. While this species is considered sensitive by the Forest Service and has some special protections, we work hard to make sure known populations remain untouched. Below is a photo of one in the Los Padres by our conservation director Bryant Baker.



STELLAR INTERNS

Because of the generous support from our longtime partners at the Coastal Fund at UCSB, we are able to hire student interns from the university each quarter. These amazing students help us with a variety of projects, including making maps, analyzing data collected in the field, writing reports, creating educational materials, leading volunteer projects, organizing events, and documenting resource damage in the national forest. Thanks to the awesome interns who have worked with us over the last few quarters featured below!!



Anne Bilse
Conservation Intern
Environmental Studies, 2020



Maddie Spooner
GIS Intern
Environmental Studies, 2020



Phoebe Rogers
Conservation Intern
Psychology, 2020

PROTECTIONS FOR PUMAS & BOBCATS

Southern California and central coast mountain lion populations were recently given temporary protections under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) while state wildlife officials decide whether to give them permanent protection under the law. The California Fish and Game Commission voted unanimously at a hearing in April to designate the populations as candidates for listing as an endangered species.

The Commission received more than one thousand comments from residents throughout the central coast region in support of a recent determination by state wildlife officials that protection under the CESA may be warranted. Additional letters of support were signed by 5 state senators and assembly members as well as almost 100 environmental and wildlife organizations throughout the state.

The recent vote initiates a peer-reviewed study of these specific mountain lion populations, conducted by the Department of Fish and Wildlife, to be concluded within one year. The Commission will then host another hearing to determine whether to formally protect the mountain lions as an endangered or threatened species.

Protection under the CESA makes consideration of mountain lions part of planning decisions for projects proposed in mountain lion habitat. It would require state and local decision-makers to ensure that core habitats are protected and that vital connections between populations suffering from isolation are preserved or restored.

Listing under the CESA would also prompt a reevaluation of the widespread sale and use of second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides in puma habitat. These poisons not only kill the rodents they target, but the predator that eats the rodent. This can spread through the food web as other predators and scavengers eat contaminated animals. Biologists have found anticoagulant rodenticide compounds in 95% of local mountain lions they tested, including a kitten.



In other good news for the state's wild cats, California enacted a law at the beginning of the year that bans bobcat trapping and trophy hunting while also mandating a science-based management plan that will maintain healthy bobcat populations across the state.

Bobcats are not considered a game animal, so they are generally hunted for trophy or fur. In the last ten years, more than 8,800 bobcats have been killed in California, yet the state has not conducted a bobcat population count in over 40 years. It is unknown what impact bobcat hunting has on the health of the species in counties where most bobcats are killed, or in the state as a whole—something that is especially concerning as the animals adapt to the impacts of climate change and habitat loss.

Bobcats are considered a keystone species, which means they have a disproportionately large effect on their ecosystem relative to their abundance.

The new law adds the bobcat to the list of regulated non-game animals, which includes mountain lions, raptors, bighorn sheep, and gray wolves. The law bans all bobcat hunting and trapping in California for five years and until certain requirements are met including the development and adoption of a management plan that will ensure the maintenance of healthy bobcat populations across the state.

We continue to fight for these and other animal species across the region. Our Room to Roam campaign played a major role in the recent victories for pumas and bobcats as well as the passage of a major wildlife corridor protection ordinance in Ventura County last year.



Bobcat in the Los Padres. Photo by Bryant Baker

LEAVE A LEGACY WITH YOUR FOREST

Making a difference is important to you. Like many people, you'd like to know that the causes and organizations you care about today will continue to thrive in the future. Let your core values be known by joining the Evergreen Society and making a planned gift to Los Padres ForestWatch. Members of our legacy society are generous and forward-thinking donors who will support our long-term success and be long remembered.

It's easy to do. And you don't have to be a billionaire to do it. While cash contributions are always appreciated, there are other creative and flexible giving options that can benefit you and Los Padres ForestWatch. Consider, for example, donating real estate, stocks, or other assets in return for a series of regular payments. Many planned giving options offer generous tax benefits as well.

Whether it is naming Los Padres ForestWatch as the beneficiary of a life insurance policy or gifting other liquid or non-liquid assets, we encourage you to consult with your financial advisor to discuss the options.

Legacy society members are a special part of the Los Padres ForestWatch donor family. Please contact Jody Brown at jody@LPFW.org or 805.617.4610 x2 to discuss membership in the Evergreen Society. You may also visit our website at lpfw.org/legacy for more information. We understand giving is a very personal choice and are here to help guide you through the process.

A planned gift to Los Padres ForestWatch is a simple way to help keep the wildlife, wilderness, waters, and trails of the Los Padres National Forest protected for future generations. Inspire and influence others by letting us know about your planned gift today!



Photo by Bob Wick

FORESTWATCH CELEBRATES YOU!

MEMBER & VOLUNTEER PARTY

In January we enjoyed another fun event celebrating our extraordinary members and volunteers at Figueroa Mountain Brewing Co. This event was a great community gathering with fellow friends of the forest, local wine and beer served up by ForestWatch staff and interns, delicious appetizers by Chef Jake O. Francis, an awards presentation, and an overall wonderful evening.

Thanks to all who joined us for this special event and to everyone who continues to help us protect our local public lands!





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13TH ANNUAL
Ojai Wild!
A BENEFIT FOR LOS PADRES FORESTWATCH

No Tickets, No Dress Code!

@ HOME

MAY 22-31

**A VIRTUAL EVENT to BENEFIT LOS PADRES FORESTWATCH,
LOCAL BUSINESSES, and FAMILIES in NEED**

*Join us for an online auction to benefit our region's public lands and wildlife in
the Los Padres National Forest. The virtual event features:*

Video Presentations with Special Guests

Exciting Online Auction

Music on the Digital Stage by The Salty Suites

Every Sponsor Feeds a Family for One Month

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