

	1
DINGS	1
0 30X30	2
GHTS OVERSIGHT	3
N OIL LEASING	3
S	4
HTS	5
ETY FOR EVERYONE	6
	7
	7
AL	8
N IMPACT	8
	9





Jeff Kuyper **Executive Director**

ForestWatch has a new look! After fifteen years-and under the creative guidance of graphic designer Carol Gravelle, our Board and staff, and a handful of stakeholders-we reimagined our logo in a way that captures our mission and carries us forward.

With our new logo comes a redesign of this newsletter and a fresh perspective on our important work.

What hasn't changed is our commitment and our drive to protect public lands and wildlife throughout the central coast region. The pandemic has been a challenge for us all, but we are emerging stronger than ever, ready to advance our mission to protect the places we hold so dear.

Our new look-and our renewed momentum-will carry us forward as we address critical issues like protecting our local forest from commercial logging and oil drilling. Looking ahead, the central coast will play a critical role in fulfilling new initiatives to protect 30% of America's land and water by the year 2030. We're working with landowners to identify new solutions to coexist with mountain lions and other wildlife. And we're expanding our volunteer field projects and resuming our outings to inspire the next generation of public land stewards.

These are exciting (and busy) times. We are thankful to have your support, because even though we are surrounded by change, one other thing remains unchanged: the power of all of us, working together, to make a difference.

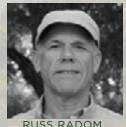
COMINGS and GOINGS



We bid a fond farewell to our former membership and gants manger Jody Brown. In addition to managing LPFW memberships, Jody led the production of Santa Barbara Wild 2020. It was no easy feat, taking the popular in-person event virtual, but Jody made it "wildly!" successful. Jody continues to support ForestWatch as a member of the Ojai Wild! 2021 Event Committee and will be returning to her roots at Patagonia Inc. as an Archives Data Analyst.



We're thrilled to announce the addition of event manager Lauren LePine to our team. Prior to joining ForestWatch, Lauren worked in Chicago as Event Manager for the Illinois Restaurant Association. where she worked on hospitality and community focused events and festivals to promote economic growth and engagement for the City of Chicago. She is excited to take everything she has learned from her previous positions to help amplify ForestWatch's mission through engaging and powerful event programming.



After eight years of service, Russ Radom is leaving the Board of Directors. While on our board, Russ served as Vice President for nearly five years while he lent his expertise in corporate leadership and his passion for public lands to propel our organization forward. Thank you, Russ, for contributing to our successes in so many ways.



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WILDERNESS



Twelve years is a long time to work for something. In 2009 ForestWatch, teamed up with The Wilderness Society and CalWild to identify lands in need of and eligible for protection on the Central Coast. This year, a bill that would add these protections to lands and rivers in the Los Padres National Forest and Carrizo Plain National Monument passed the US House and was introduced in the Senate in May by California's new senator Alex Padilla. We celebrated the bill getting this far once before, but its chances of becoming a law this time are better than ever.

But why do these lands and waters in the national forest and monument need protecting?

National forests lands have surprisingly lax environmental protections. Commercial logging, private grazing, mining, dams, and oil extraction are all allowed. All development is subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), but the law has been weakened since its enactment in 1970, and commercial projects are easier to approve and more profitable for private companies than ever. NEPA was intended to help agencies avoid mistakes, unforeseen impacts, and pressure from special interests. Over the years, loopholes have been quietly tucked into other laws that allow agencies to avoid the thorough environmental studies, consideration of alternatives, and public transparency that NEPA normally requires.

Our nation's strongest tool to permanently protect federal public lands is the Wilderness Act of 1964.

The Central Coast Heritage Protection Act would designate 290,000 acres as Wilderness or Potential Wilderness, under the law, barring future development of any kind except for trails. Horseback riding, fishing, hunting, and of course camping and hiking are all allowed in Wilderness. But the use of motorized equipment including chainsaws and bulldozers are allowed only under special circumstances, most commonly related to wildfire. Wilderness Areas are less likely to catch fire and to burn at high severity than managed forests and developed areas.

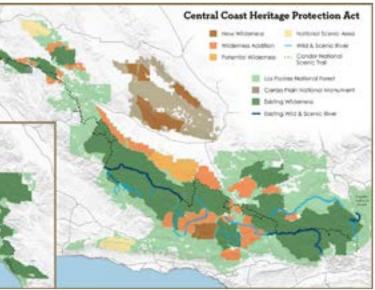
The San Rafael Wilderness was the first primitive area to be designated a Wilderness Area, but no designations have been made in the Los Padres since 1992. Granting protection to the remaining eligible wilderness is especially important on the Central Coast, a leading oil producing region in California. Los Padres is the only national forest in California with active commercial oil development. The Carrizo Plain National Monument also supports some oil drilling. In fact, the Trump administration approved the first oil well within the monument's



boundary since its designation in 2001, just at the edge of lands proposed for wilderness designation in the bill. Areas that have already been drilled for oil are not eligible to be Wilderness, but designation forever protects lands from being drilled in the future.



What gives us hope that these dozen years might finally lead to permanent protections is the change in the balance of power in Washington, as well as federal and state initiatives to protect 30% of the nation and the state's lands by 2030. Other facets of the bill are also aligned with the President and Governor's initiatives such as protecting water for frontline communities by placing 159 miles of streams under the Wild and Scenic River Act and improving access to recreation by designating a 400-mile trail across the length of the Los Padres, with access points near Santa Maria and other cities with little access to world class outdoor recreation.







OIL'S FIGHT AGAINST REGULATION

In November of 2020, we celebrated a victory—the Ventura County Board of Supervisors voted to close a loophole that allowed some oil drilling and fracking to be approved behind closed doors and without environmental review. For more than six years, ForestWatch, CFROG, Food and Water Watch attended hearings, wrote letters, retained lawyers, and grew to a coalition of 20 environmental and labor groups, all to ensure that all new oil drilling meet the same current health, safety, and environmental requirements as other projects like day care centers, renewable energy production, campgrounds, and even other oil wells.

Thousands of oil and gas wells in the county, including close to 100 in and adjacent to the Los Padres National Forest, have been drilled under "antiquated permits." This loophole allows a "zoning clearance" to be issued after submitting a short application and a \$330 fee—similar to how a backyard gazebo or air conditioning unit would be permitted. "Antiquated permits" were issued up to 75 years ago-before environmental and human health impacts were known and long before bedrock environmental laws existed. Most have no limit on the number of wells that can be drilled, have no expiration date, and do not stipulate what extraction techniques can be used. Ventura County's new amendment would have closed that loophole,

requiring new oil wells drilled under "antiquated permits" to be evaluated for their environmental impacts, and subject to public hearing and notice requirements prior to approval.

The celebration was short lived. The new rules hardly had time to go into effect before the oil industry filed multiple lawsuits against and launched a ballot initiative to recall the decision. After spending nearly a million dollars on paid canvassers and what many are calling an extensive disinformation campaign, the oil and gas industry collected enough signatures to pause Ventura County's newly-won oil and gas regulations. Given the choice between overturning the new rules and allowing the voters to decide, the Board of Supervisors sent the question to the ballot box in the June 2022 election. Until then, the loophole will again remain open in Ventura County.

"By spending so much montey just to try to avoid the rules that everyone else has to follow, the oil industry shows us-not just how much disregard it has for Ventura's communities and environment—but how dangerous and dirty its operations are," said ForestWatch director of advocacy Rebecca August.



ForestWatch is working with coalition allies to defend the county's new ordinance in the field and in the courtroom.

BIDEN'S PAUSE ON OIL

At the Department of the Interior, the change in federal leadership couldn't be more striking. Back in December 2019, the Trump administration opened 1.2 million acres of federal land and mineral estate across the Central Coast to oil drilling and fracking, ending a six-year moratorium on oil and gas leasing in California.



The action was prompted by an administration report alleging that fracking on or adjacent to school campuses, reservoirs, and national parks, monuments, and forests poses no significant environmental or health impacts --a rather shocking conclusion given the number of studies showing widespread environmental and public health impacts of fracking.

Oil and gas production on public lands accounts for about 25% of all U.S. greenhouse gas emissions.

The Trump administration refused to consider most of the one-hundred thousand letters from area residents who spoke out against the plan. Resolutions from the cities of Ojai, San Luis Obispo, and Carpinteria, and the County of Santa Barbara similarly made no discernable impression.

In early 2020, ForestWatch and allies again filed a legal action, this time joined by the State of California, for failing again to properly assess the impacts the plan would pose to communities, the environment, and the

climate. The suit did not stop the Bureau from auctioning off three parcels in Kern County to oil companies.

Then Joe Biden was elected President. In his first month of office, he signed a suite of executive orders aimed at climate protection and environmental justice including a moratorium on new federal oil and gas leasing. The order halted all BLM lease sales on the Central Coast.

President Biden's new appointee to the Department of the Interior, Deb Haaland, the first woman and first Indigenous person to lead the agency, hosted a virtual forum with Tribal representatives, environmental and social justice organizations, labor leaders, as well as the oil industry to gather information about how to improve the management of public lands toward a more "just and equitable energy future." The report is expected to be completed this summer, which will kick off an opportunity for the public to weigh in.

Secretary Haaland said "In order to tackle the climate crisis and strengthen our nation's economy, we must manage our lands, waters, and resources not just across fiscal years, but across generations."

We wait to see if the new administration will agree to conduct a proper environmental review or if the DOI's moratorium on new leasing will be made permanent. Time will tell.





LOGGING UPDATE

Last year the Forest Service announced a logging and chaparral removal project on Pine Mountain in the Ventura County backcountry. Over 16,000 comments were submitted to the agency, 99.9% of which were in opposition to the proposal. We expect the Forest Service to make a decision this fall about whether to proceed with the project under a loophole that allows the agency to forego robust environmental review.

Despite the overwhelming opposition to the Pine Mountain Project, this spring the Forest Service announced yet another logging proposal in the Los Padres National Forest, this time across nearly 1,600 acres atop Mt. Pinos in southern Kern County and northern Ventura County. The project would allow removal of mature trees up to two feet wide in diameter along with even larger trees in certain circumstances. The Forest Service intends to use another controversial loophole to bypass requirements under NEPA to conduct a detailed study of potential impacts to the area's unique ecosystems and to examine less-damaging alternatives. The use of the loophole also limits the public's ability to voice concerns and eliminates the official objection process that helps reduce the potential for litigation.

Both the Mt. Pinos and Pine Mountain proposals were announced while our legal challenges mounted

against two previously approved logging projects work their way through the courts. In 2018 and 2019, the Forest Service approved the Cuddy Valley and Tecuya Ridge projects using categorical exclusions to bypass proper environmental review. These projects are adjacent to one another (and are near the more recently proposed Mt. Pinos Project) and collectively cover nearly 4.5 square miles of mixed-conifer forest and pinyonjuniper woodland in southern Kern County.



ForestWatch and its partners at the Center for Biological Diversity, John Muir Project of Earth Island Institute, and Mountain Communities for Fire Safety filed suit against the projects in 2019. Our two cases were heard in U.S. District Court (Central District of California) in 2020. We were represented by attorney René Voss and attorneys from the Center for Biological Diversity. We were also assisted by local counsel at Chatten-Brown Carstens & Minteer LLC in Hermosa Beach. Despite our best efforts, the judge was overly deferential to the Forest Service and ultimately ruled against us in both cases.

However, our attorneys found multiple issues with the ruling, so we filed appeals to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. A three-judge panel heard our oral arguments in these appeal cases earlier this spring, and we are currently awaiting a decision.



SIXTH ANNUAL SANTA BARBARA

A BENEFIT FOR LOS PADRES FORESTWATCH and other public lands across the Central Coast.

WILD HOME! The 6th Annual Santa Barbara WILD! Virtual fundraiser in November 2020 was a huge success! With the support of our sponsors, guests, members, volunteers, and community, we raised \$100,000 to support our efforts to protect the Los Padres National Forest, the Carrizo Plain National Monument

While the event looked a little different than in past

events, we were still able to host the talented musical stylings of Ojai-based composer, singer-songwriter, and Grammy Award-winning film mixer and sound designer Todd Hannigan and Xocoyotzin Moraza, Ventura based multi-instrumental musician. The speakers included Congressman Salud Carbajal, Leah Thomas (Founder, Intersectional Environmentalist), Hans Cole (Director of Environmental Campaigns + Advocacy of Patagonia) as well as LPFW Executive Director, Jeff Kuyper, and LPFW Board President, Ethan Stone.

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. Special thanks goes out to the many sponsors who made this incredible event possible, along with emcee Geoff Green for hosting the wildlife successful evening.

MANY THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS!

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Access & Safety FOR EVERYONE

This March marked one year of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was a year of disrupted lives, shifting schedules, distance learning, remote work-or lost work-and the endless struggle to keep communities safe in order to reduce the number of new infections. Californians were encouraged to stay home as much as possible, and to mask up and practice physical distancing while out in public. Nature and the outdoors quickly became an essential need for promoting physical and mental health.

Yet, amidst the recommendations from health officials, there was a growing recognition that access to parks, much less vast wild spaces, was

not equitable. Many communities across the country have historically lacked access to green space.

> During the pandemic, when getting outdoors was one of the few recom-

mended physical activities, this disadvantage was crippling. Many cities in the United States have fewer quality parks and other public lands within walking distance of low-income residents and communities of color. When there are parks in in these communities, visitation can be low because of other existing barriers like the perception that they aren't safe, park entry fees, and perceived racial discrimination.

As COVID-19 restrictions have started to lift, ForestWatch has cautiously begun to facilitate safe outdoor events as part of it's outdoor connections and community stewardship efforts. We have been taking all precautions required by federal, state, and local

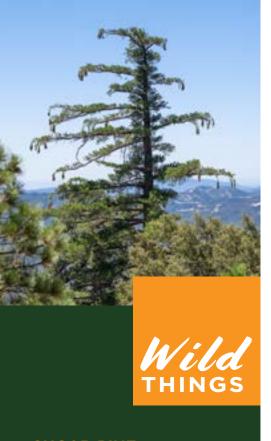
Concern over safety for People of Color is not unfounded. In February of 2020, Ahmaud Arbery, a 25-yearold Black man, was shot dead while jogging through a South Georgia neighborhood. In May of 2020, Amy Cooper, a White woman walking her dog in Central Park, called the police on Christian Cooper (no relation), a black birdwatcher, because he asked her to leash her dog. Incidents like this can discourage residents across the more vulnerable income, education, and race groups from accessing parks.

health orders to keep participants safe. But health safety is only one concern. On a recent youth hike our group was met with hostility from residents at the base of a trailhead. While the main point of contention stemmed from insufficient parking, the aggression and intimidation tactics aimed at our group cast a negative shadow over the experience for youth from the Fillmore area who had been looking forward to a much needed day outdoors.

Examining the value of public lands in a time of a health crisis has helped unearth the inequities in the kind, quantity, and quality of outdoor spaces available to residents and to determine if communities' needs, values, and priorities are being addressed. As we shift from response to rebuilding in this period of COVID-19, there is an opportunity to address the observations of outdoor inequities to improve outdoor recreational programming and access to public lands in the future.

In April and May we partnered with community groups from the South Coast for a few outdoor excursions. We will continue to expand the invitation to more groups, while also educating the public to make our trails, open space, parks, and wild places safer and more accessible for all





SUGAR PINE

The sugar pine (Pinus lambertiana) is a giant among pines... and cones. Found only in the mountains of the Pacific Coast, this species is the largest pine in the world. As if that wasn't enough, it also has the world's longest pine cones, with some growing nearly two feet long! You can find this incredible conifer in a few of the Los Padres National Forest's high elevation areas such as along Pine Mountain Ridge and on Alamo Mountain in Ventura County as well as around Big Pine Mountain in Santa Barbara County. It typically grows alongside Jeffrey pine, white fir, and incense cedar. but the sugar pine is easily identifiable by its long, drooping branches that have large cones at the end and its short needles that come in bunches of five.



THE CALIFORNIA MOUNTAIN LION

Thanks in large part to a grant from the Harold J. Miossi Charitable Trust, we have been able to kickstart a program aimed at working with rural landowners in San Luis Obispo County to help them keep their livestock protected from mountain lions-without hurting our region's most iconic predator.

Over the past several years, SLO County has unfortunately seen a very large number of mountain lions killed under "depredation permits." These are permits landowners would receive from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to kill mountain lions suspected of causing harm to domesticated animals. As part of our Room to Roam campaign to protect wildlife in and around the Los Padres National Forest, we are working to connect with landowners who may be at risk of mountain lionlivestock conflicts in hopes that lethal measures can be avoided.

Earlier this year, we hosted a virtual workshop with renowned mountain lion expert Rosemary Schiano, who gave a presentation to residents and livestock owners about how best to protect their animals using nonlethal measures such as safe enclosures and guard dogs. The program was well-received by dozens of landowners in San Luis Obispo County and the surrounding region.

It was also our jumping off point for starting a Livestock Enclosure

Assistance Program (LEAP) in the area. We are currently working with a few landowners that live near the Los Padres National Forest to install mountain lion-safe livestock enclosures on their properties. This pilot program is one of our first steps in direct action to reduce both conflicts between wildlife and domesticated animals and the number of permits issued to kill mountain lions in the region.

Even more exciting is the possibility that mountain lions along the Central Coast may receive permanent protection under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA). Last year the California Fish and Game Commission voted unanimously to grant temporary CESA protections to mountain lion populations ranging from Monterey to San Diego while a study is conducted to determine whether they should be permanently listed. We are patiently awaiting a decision that is expected later this year.

You can learn more about our Room to Roam campaign by visiting LPFW.org/roam.



Photo by Beth Sargent bethsargentimages.com

Carrizo Plain **DERELICT OIL TANKS REMOVAL**

Earlier this year, an oil company removed two unsightly oil tanks atop a prominent ridge in the

Carrizo Plain National Monument, restoring scenic views across miles of sagebrush-studded foothills at the base of Caliente Mountain, San Luis Obispo County's tallest peak. The tanks were built decades ago as part of the Morales Canyon Oil Field, a small-and now nearly defunct-oil field that was grandfathered into the Carrizo Plain National Monument when it was established in 2001.

ForestWatch discovered the deteriorating tanks while conducting field reconnaissance in the area in 2018 and lodged an inquiry with the Bureau of Land Management, the federal agency that oversees the monument. In response to the ForestWatch report, the Bureau looked into the matter and ordered the oil company to remove the tanks along with associated power lines andpoles, pipelines, an old shed, fencing, and other abandoned debris at the site. The oil company that operates the oil lease—E&B Natural Resources of Bakersfield—eventually applied for a permit to remove the tanks and restore the site to natural conditions. The project was completed earlier this year.

The area in and around the oil field was included in the boundaries of the Carrizo Plain National Monument when it was established in 2001, but the operations were allowed to continue under a more stringent set of rules. Those rules require the oil company to address a backlog of idle oil wells, and to remove oil equipment and facilities that are no longer in use.

The removal of the oil tanks is a momentous first step towards realizing the restoration potential of Caliente Mountain's western flank. ForestWatch acknowledges the Bureau and the oil company for their work in addressing these longforgotten tanks and will continue to push for the restoration of key landscapes as we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Carrizo Plain National Monument.

WAYS TO MAKE AN IMPACT

dedication to the environment than to ensure its protection for decades to come. Here are two ways you can have a direct and long-lasting impact on protecting the wildlife, wilderness, waters, and trails of the Los Padres National Forest, the Carrizo Plain National Monument, and other local public lands along the Central Coast.



Leave a Legacy: Make a Planned Gift

By establishing a planned gift for the Los Padres ForestWatch, you make protecting public lands your

There is no more extraordinary legacy. A planned gift is a pledge or contribution arranged in the present and allocated at a future date. These gifts are commonly made through a will or a trust. It is one of the most impactful ways to support Los Padres ForestWatch because it ensures our organization can protect public lands far into the future. It's monthly budget. Whether you give easy to do. And you don't have to be \$10, \$25, or \$50 each month, you a billionaire to do it. There are various will receive a tax receipt for your planned giving strategies to consider for assets, such as real estate, life insurance, or retirement accounts. Consider, for example, donating a percentage of your real estate, stocks, or other assets in return for a series of regular payments. For more information, please contact Sara-Christine@LPFW.org to discuss your planned gift options or visit our website at LPFW.org/legacy. It's visit LPFW.org/monthly.



never too late to plan for the causes you care about. We're here to help guide you through the process.

Become a Monthly Donor

Monthly giving is an automatic recurring donation transferred from your credit card or bank account for ForestWatch and is a great way to include donations in your cumulative annual contributions at the end of each fiscal year. You will also receive our Los Padres ForestWatch membership benefits. But most importantly, your monthly donation guarantees ForestWatch regular and predictable funds to protect our forests and public lands each month. To learn more and become a monthly donor, please





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PROTECTING PUBLIC LANDS IS A Big Job.

Stand with us to improve access, and safeguard wildlife, wildlands, & water for current and future generations



Photo by Bryant Baker