Miners Go To Kindergarten
BY STAN HAYE

In “All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten” Robert Fulghum says these are some of the things he learned:

Clean up your own mess. Put things back where you found them. Play fair. The rules that should embody these simple ideas for mining on our public lands are called the “3809 Surface Mining Regulations” (3809 is their number in the Code of Federal Regulations). Currently, they are being revised. Since Congress is still controlled by the rabid anti-environmental wing of the Republican party, prospects for updating the antideluvian 1872 Mining Law are very poor. So this is our best chance to prevent “unnecessary or undue” degradation of our land administered by the Bureau of Land Management. Be assured that mining corporations and their sycophants and employees will be out in force to protect their mining practices that now destroy irreplaceable scenic and cultural resources and leave unfulfilled pits, unclaimed leach and waste rock piles, and polluted water and air.

You can make a difference:

Attend a meeting; write a letter. Deadline for comments May 10, 1999.

Please see Miners on page 7

Operation Gatekeeper
BY PAMELA JAHNER

Three years ago the United States Border Patrol started “Operation Gatekeeper” in Southern California. Its aim was to move illegal immigration corridors away from the San Diego Metropolitan area into the remote and inhospitable backcountry of San Diego and Imperial counties. The Border Patrol hope was that the terrain and the extreme climate would cause people to not try crossing the border at all.

Starting at the Sea and moving eastward towards the mountains, the Border Patrol began building new fences and roads, hiring thousands of new agents for patrol, and installing new motion sensors and floodlights all along the border. This did not however, stop the illegal traffic. They simply went where the Border Patrol was not. In many places, it was too steep to build a road or a fence, and the International Border is simply too long to station Agents for 24 hours a day everywhere along it.

Much of the land in the backcountry is managed by either the Forest Service or the Bureau of Land Management. The area around Otay Mountain/Tecate Peak was the first to see significant impacts. This land, much of it proposed as a BLM Wilderness, with rare Tecate Cypress groves, soon had numerous foot paths trampled into its canyons. There was a sudden increase in wildfires, most from cooking fires. Discarded clothing, empty cans of food, abandoned vehicles and plastic water containers could be found everywhere in the canyons. Wilderness users began to stay away for their own safety. There were deaths among the border crossers from both the winter cold and the summer heat as well.

Please see Gatekeeper on page 8

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View from the Chair

By Elden Hughes

Recently Patty and I drove up the coast to show our 3 year old grandson Woody the monarch butterfly trees in Santa Barbara. The trees were magic. We camped at Emma Wood State Beach and the whole three days were magic. Woody saw an ocean, waves, dolphins, seals, and seagulls.

Here the beach is gentle and the waves were small. With my pants rolled up and Woody’s pants parked on a rock, he and I strolled hand in hand to where the gentle waves could reach us. The first wave that did so, engulfed our feet and ankles and then retreated to the sea. A little voice beside me said, “Bye, bye, water.”

Oh, if we could continue to encounter nature on that level all of our days. We can’t.

We have EIR’s and EIS’s and management plans to deal with and we occasionally have to sue the bastards, but we have something to help us. We have the outings program of our California/Nevada Regional Conservation Committee (CNRCC) Desert Committee.

Jim Kilberg and all the outings leaders have done a wonderful job of making available the desert on a personal basis. As a group these outings are important to us as we attract new activists. As individuals these outings are important to us as we renew our souls.

Activism, information, outings, and mutual support are the foundation that sustains what we do for the desert and what the desert returns.

At this time Jim Kilberg is stepping down as outings chair. Let’s be frank, Jim Kilberg’s departure creates a vacancy not easy to fill. It’s taking more than one person. So, first off, thank you Jim for so wonderfully organizing and leading the Desert Committee’s outings program.

Letty French will be the new Outings Chair. Before saying wonderful things about Letty, leaders are advised that the deadline for write ups for outings Nov 1, 1999 thru Feb 28, 2000 is JUNE 28th, 1999. We work with the long lead times which are necessary to get our outings in every chapter’s schedules and newsletters.

For twelve years Letty French was Leadership Training Chair for San Gorgonio Chapter. She and her husband Cal have been co-chairs of San Gorgonio’s Rock Climbing Section.

“OH IF WE COULD CONTINUE TO ENCOUNTER NATURE ON THAT LEVEL ALL OF OUR DAYS.”

Both are emblem peakbaggers in Angeles Chapter’s Hundred Peaks, Desert Peaks, and Sierra Peaks sections.

Letty was one of three founders of the San Gorgonio Chapter’s Wilderness First Aid Course. She is currently a leader and trainer of leaders for National Outings.

The CNRCC Desert Committee is truly privileged to have Letty French as Outings Chair.

Trip write ups should be Emailed or mailed to:
Letty French
14140 Chimney Rock Rd
Paso Robles, CA 93446-9793
Lmjfrench@tcsn.net
(805) 239-7338

Remember, the next Deadline for Articles and Outings is JUNE 28, 1999 (for Nov-Feb).

Letty will have help:
Sharon Kiel and Nick Ervin are Outings Liaisons. Sharon will be Outings Liaison to the Toiyabe Chapter and Nick Ervin, Outings Liaison to the San Diego Chapter.

This Desert Report lists 27 upcoming outings. This is awesome. Sharon and Nick are experienced outings leaders who will help Letty pull together the Leaders, Outings, and Write ups that make outings happen.

Sharon Kiel is a former outings chair for Toiyabe Chapter and writes “The Happy Hiker” column in the “Toiyabe Trails”.

Nick Ervin just stepped down as San Diego Chapter Conservation Chair. Both of these leaders are best reached by phone or fax.

Nick Ervin
4781 Mt. Saint Helens Dr
San Diego, CA 92117-3027
Home (619) 565-9582
Work/Fax (619) 667-1950

Sharon Kiel
50 Seda Wy, Reno, NV 89509
Home (775) 322-2465
Fax (775) 322-4387

ADDENDUM

There are probably as many “Desolation Islands” in the oceans as there are “Salt Creeks” in the deserts as there are “Desert Queen” mines in our Western Deserts. On our CNRCC Desert Committee we also have Desert Queens. They are a group of ladies who have been fighting the desert battles for decades. Their ages are undetermined, but they tend to think of me as the new kid. I’m thinking of Narga Sill, Harriet Allen, Mary Dedecker, Mary Ann Henry and others.

In upcoming editions of Desert Report we hope to do profiles on these marvelous ladies (and men too). The Desert Report needs reporters who will help with the interviews and the rounding up and writing of stories. If this is an area in which you would like to apply and hone your skills please contact Patty Carpenter-Hughes at 562-941-5306.
Getting our Klykxx Meeting at Zzyzx

Watering Hole of East Mojave Brings Together Regional Desert and Wilderness Committees

BY VICKY HOOVER

"The best way you could describe it would be a mosquito swamp. There were standing portions of ruins of three corners of the old fort, and there is a building which we use now as part of our dining room that the men eat in, referred to as the old jail. It had a dirt floor and the roof was made of burlap sacks and stocks. That's about all that was there."

—a description of Soda Springs at Doc Springer first saw it, 1944.

On the shores of a lake that dried up 5000 years ago, four committees of the Sierra Club met at an unlikely place called Zzyxx (pronounced "Zye-Zix"). An oasis in the desert known historically as Soda Springs, a colorful character named Doc Springer ran an incomparable health resort here for 30 years (1945-1975) until the BLM eventually caught on to his charade and forced him out. Zzyxx has now been taken over by California State University, Fullerton and used primarily as a field station for researchers studying the desert environment.

The Desert Studies Center at Zzyxx (the current official nom-de-plum) provided a unique and restorative venue for these four entities within the unfathomable Sierra Club bureaucracy. Two were the issue committees of the California/Nevada Regional Conservation Committee, more commonly referred to as CNRCC by the stylish cognoscenti who routinely acronymize multisyllabic names. First, there was the senior, solid, long-established Desert Committee under the august, jovial pontificate of the seasoned Eelden Hughes. Second, the junior upstart, the very active and very important and exciting Wilderness Committee. Thirdly, the San Gorgonio Chapter Natural History Section, led by Brian and Janice Elliott and fed by Carol Scandura. The San Gorgonio Chapter has most of the desert in its domain. They were on their annual Valentine's weekend trip (or was it 1st annual President's weekend trip?) to botanize, zoologize, socialize, gourmandize, and maybe geologize.

Fourth, or last, and even least (in numbers, that is, certainly not in importance) there was the Wild Planet Strategy Team. The Wild What? That's the national committee that coordinates various Sierra Club wheelings and dealings related to public lands protection; except that now we also have the new Wildlands Protection Campaign Planning Committee focusing on our big national campaign for more wilderness and other wildlands. What could be clearer and simpler to understand?

Melanie Griffin, director of our Washington office Public Lands Program, came as part of the Wild Planet team, and she brought with her the brand new public lands staffer in DC — Dana Wolfe — here for her first taste of the desert.

Please see Kykxx on page 5

California Desert Land Acquisition

In the 1880's Congress subsidized/encouraged the railroads to build transcontinental lines by granting land to the railroad companies. This was lots of land, every other section (square mile) for 10 miles on each side of the track.

In California's desert there are 800,000 acres of these checkerboard acres belonging to Catellus Corporation the successor to the Santa Fe and Southern Pacific railroads.

Absolutely key are the checkerboard lands in the Mojave National Preserve and eighteen Bureau of Land Management designated wilderness areas.

The Wildlands Conservancy has previously purchased the Catellus holdings within Joshua Tree National Park. Now the Conservancy has purchased for $19,000,000 an option on 485,000 acres checkerboard lands between Needles and Barstow. To complete the transaction requires that the Federal Government appropriate $36,000,000.

Please see Land Acquisition on page 10
NIFTY NAFTA NEVADA SHELL GAME

The purpose of a flim flam artist in a shell game is to keep your eyes looking in the wrong direction. Nevada is getting or giving the same game by the Federal Highway Administration.

A bridge is proposed across the Colorado. U S Highway 93 crosses the Colorado River using the top of Hoover Dam. Dams at best make narrow highways and the traffic is growing.

NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, is increasing traffic north from Mexico. NAFTA highways are proposed.

Hoover Dam is a bottleneck. A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is out for comment. It purports to give the alternatives between the available river crossings. It is deeply flawed.

The DEIS gives three bridge alternatives: above the dam, at the dam, below the dam. The DEIS ignores that a bridge 60 miles down river would be vastly cheaper to build and have far less environmental impact.

Hoover Dam is where it it is because the canyon is deep. Bridges across deep canyons are very expensive. Any crossing near Hoover Dam will be very expensive, at least $200 million. Alternatively, a crossing at Laughlin, Nevada is easy, not expensive, and not even considered by the DEIS. It's a shell game.

A further flaw in the DEIS is that it fails to consider the costs of its highways leading up to and away from its three alternative bridges. Highways clinging to canyon walls are expensive. They also impact bighorn sheep habitat and miles of the Lake Mead National Recreation Area, a unit of the National Park System. The Sierra Club comments on the DEIS have been filed by the Southern Nevada Group. The full DEIS and other information are available at:

www.hooverdambypass.org.

(This article is based on the Southern Nevada report given at the CNRCC Desert Committee in February by Howard Booth and Randy Harness)

Examination of Flawed NPS Planning Process by George Barnes

There has apparently been a deliberate change in how the National Park Service (NPS) reviews planning policy. During the recent comment process on the California desert national park draft general management plan (DEIS), including discussions with various NPS personnel, a noticeable non-compliance with the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) has become obvious. This is due primarily so that the park service will not be held accountable. The changes are particularly noticeable when compared with policy drafted since the early 1980's.

• The General Management Plan has become a more general, less specific document. Even though an environmental impact statement (EIS) will be written, there is little concrete information to comment on, except for its general philosophical direction.

• The Natural and Cultural Resources Management Plan is a list of proposed projects. This document once was a critical component at the next planning level down. Apparently no NEPA documentation is completed until one or another of the projects is funded. Perfumatory NEPA documentation is then done, however, the project "can't be stopped, because it's funded." Project definition, alternative consideration, and selection is apparently not a public process anymore.

• Environmental assessments are sometimes done, and sometimes not, depending upon how detailed the plans are at the next level down. There is occasional opportunity to provide meaningful comment on actions that are, instead, quite limited in scope.

In addition, unannounced proposed management decisions and inappropriate decrees of categorical exclusion are common. In essence, a national-level examination of the NPS planning process might reveal some interesting facts.
BLM To Gut WSA Protection
by Tom Myers

BLM regulations require that Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) be managed so as not to impair their future designation as wilderness. BLM is about to gut that part of its regulations under the guise of introducing exotic species to enhance wilderness.

The Washington office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has proposed to change existing policy governing the management of wilderness study areas by illegally implementing, without public review, that portion of their handbook governing wilderness study areas (WSAs). This interim management policy (IMP) guides BLM managers when they consider development and management proposals. The IMP is generally opposed by local BLM wilderness managers.

The primary emphasis of these changes is to allow the construction of facilities within WSAs, which includes the stocking, introduction, or transplantation of any animal or fish species desired by a fish and game agency, and to allow the state agency to do this with minimal review by the BLM and public under NEPA. It appears to serve the implied purpose of increasing hunting opportunities. In other words, it attempts to grow wildlife that can be hunted without consideration of the impacts on other species.

Since it was a joint meeting, we took over the whole joint, that is the large dining room. There were forty or fifty of us. I didn’t count, but someone kept score. The discussions were heated enough to warm everyone, and a feeble fire in the small wood stove in one corner helped too.

On Saturday we started at the civilized hour of 11 am and focused on management issues and threats to the desert. There were enough threats to talk about, both major and minor, but we started out with the really good news about landmark agreements to acquire the private lands around the Mojave National Preserve from the Catellus Company. A rousing presentation by the Wildlands Conservancy brought cheers.

Among other pithy presentations, we heard some by three BLM guests. There was Chris Roholt who works on desert wilderness. Tim Finger discussed problems with the Border Patrol down in the Oatway Mountain Area. Ahmed Mohsen talked about how use of the Internet is helping agencies provide NEPA documentation, solicit and receive comments, and go through all the hoops on planning processes in a much shorter time — and with less use of paper.

Then we came to the crux of the meeting. After a day and a half of preliminary chatter, we last talked about our new wilderness campaigns for California and Nevada. Ah, wilderness! This year is Inventory 1999, a prerequisite for Wildlands 2000. We exhorted volunteers for all the inventory trips out into the boonies that need to be done this year — and that goes for Nevada’s primo campaign too.

The meetings were over and many went on an afternoon Kelso Dunes excursion, the third highest dune system in North America. It sits in the dazzling center of the magnificent Mojave National Park-in-all-but-name, surrounded by sweeping vistas and rugged mountain ranges.

What a place to chart the saving of the earth!
The Timbisha Agreement
What We Know about It
by Eileen Hughes

A small California tribe, the Timbisha, inhabit the floor of Death Valley National Park. For three years the National Park Service (NPS) has sought to reach an agreement with the tribe. The agreement allows the Timbisha to have their own land and develop it, but it will set limits on how much can be built. The general issue involved is how to be fair and how to protect the resources. This is what we know.

The tribe will gain 300 acres of federal park land that will become Tribal Trust land. The land will be held in trust by the Secretary of the Interior as an Indian reservation. In effect, the land becomes a reservation (the creation of a reservation has required an act of Congress since 1919). The newly created reservation will contain restrictions that limit the nature and density of development. At present, discussion is centered on homes, offices, a visitor center, and possibly a motel.

The tribe will cooperatively manage 300,000 acres of Federal park land, nearly all of which is designated wilderness. The land will be divided into two parcels – high country in the Panamints and low country in central Death Valley. Recent reports suggest the tribe will have exclusive use of an additional adjacent 1,000 acres are apparently inaccurate.

The tribe will receive BLM lands - at the junction of Route 95 and Scotty’s Junction, at the junction of Route 127 and Death Valley Junction, at a place called Magruder Mountain, and in the Centennial Flat on the western side of the park. These lands will largely be dedicated to commercial ventures, in particular lands situated on the gateway into the park.

The tribe’s management’s goals include cleaning out the springs and managing the pinyon forest in order to produce a heavier and more reliable nut crop. The tribe has complained that since they had not previously been able to interact with the land, the wildlife and vegetation have suffered. Many of the springs that had been kept clean were clogged with debris, and where the tribe used to be able to clear out undergrowth, much of the vegetation died out. The National Park Service does not know yet what this will entail in terms of the nature and degree of manipulation. However, the NPS believes that it will retain veto power over any Timbisha manipulative activities. In addition, the tribe will not be allowed to hunt in the cultural and natural protection zone or will they be allowed to drive in wilderness within the zone. It remains unclear whether they will be able to use non-traditional motorized equipment to manage the forests and springs under what standard.

The National Park Service is leaning towards not following the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for this legislative proposal. NEPA, section 102(2)(C), requires an environmental impact statement (EIS) on Federal agency proposals for legislation. No one can doubt that the abrupt policy shift and extent of involved lands significantly affect the quality of the human environment. There is no explanation of the Park Service’s logic here. Though not planning to conduct scoping, pre-prepare an EIS, or hold meetings, NPS hopes to have the full text of the agreement and legislative language available to the public by early April.

Update on the Glamis Imperial Gold Mine Project
By Edie Harmon, condensed by Janet Anderson

BLM Petition for Withdrawal of Indian Pass Area from Future Mining

A new element has been added to the proposed Glamis Imperial Project in the Indian Pass area of the southwestern California desert. The proposed open-pit, cyanide heap-leach, low-grade gold ore mine is located approximately in the middle of an area now being proposed for withdrawal from mining by the BLM. Although withdrawal and segregation of this area will not stop the BLM review of the proposed Glamis/Imperial mine, withdrawal would protect the archeological and cultural resources of this area from future mining projects. BLM has until Nov. 2, 2000 to make a decision on its Petition for Withdrawal for the 9360 acres along the Indian Pass Road. The San Diego Chapter has supported the Withdrawal as an important first step toward protecting these lands and their priceless archeological, cultural and spiritual values. Any persons or groups wishing to endorse Sierra Club support should send a letter so stating to BLM, El Centro Field Office, 1661 So. 4th St. El Centro, CA 92243 and a copy to Sierra Club San Diego Chapter, 3820 Ray St., San Diego CA 92104, before the April 30, 1999 deadline.

Validity Examination of the Glamis Claim Now Being Prepared

BLM is doing a “validity exam” to determine whether the Glamis project could be profitable conducted. Validity of the claims depends, in part, on the costs of the mitigation

Please see Glamis on page 10
Ask for these simple, sensible, understandable things. Do like politicians do — ignore diversions; stay on message. The message is:

If you dig a hole, fill it up. No excuses. If you have to leave piles of dirt and rock, at least make them look nice. Recountour them to look natural and revegetate them with native vegetation. Don’t mess with the water. If in the desert, don’t use any more scarce water than is absolutely necessary, and don’t dry up natural springs. If there is too much water in your mine, don’t allow toxic water to pollute natural water sources. Guarantee enough money so that what you promise actually happens. We are tired of having to pay to clean up your messes. Be honest, candid and straightforward. We are interested in what your are doing; let us see it whenever we want. Don’t break things you can’t fix. If the land has spiritual significance or irreplaceable scenic value, and mining would destroy these values, don’t mine there. We are willing to trust, but we also need to verify. Third party monitors, not beholden to you, need to make sure you are doing what you say you are.

We own the land.

These are all simple things that anyone should do with someone else’s things. Insist that our land be treated with respect. Tell the mining industry that if they can’t treat our land right, then we can’t let you mine. You can also say that Alt. 1, no change, and Alt. 2, State enforcement of mining regulations, are unacceptable. Alt. 1 is the present situation, which fails miserably to protect our land. Alt. 2 is turning the henhouse over to the foxes. State regulation is too uneven, too poorly enforced, and usually badly underfunded, even worse than the BLM. Alt. 3, the proposed regulations, are better than what we have now, but not enough. We, the owners of the land, and the land itself, deserve no less than Alt. 4, the only alternative requiring environmental documentation for all potentially damaging mining, and requiring backfilling.

The BLM needs to hear the message. Give it to them — loud, strong, clear and often. Since the miners didn’t learn in Kindergarten to clean up their own messes, put things back and be honest, now is the time for us and the BLM to teach them.

The meetings in California are in San Francisco (Holiday Inn Civic Center) April 20, Ontario (Doubletree Hotel) April 21, and Sacramento (Red Lion Inn) April 22.

Meetings in Nevada are in Reno (Silver Legacy Hotel) March 23 and Elko (Convention Center) March 24.

Times of meetings have not been determined — for times or more information phone Larry Finfer (202) 208-6913 or Bob Anderson (202) 208-4201.

WOCComment@wo.blm.gov (include Attn: AD-22 and your name and address in the message), or write Bureau of Land Management, Administrative Record, Nevada State Office, P. O. Box 12000, Reno, NV 89520-0006

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THE DESERT REPORT

The Desert Report is published by the Sierra Club California/Nevada committee. To receive the Report send the coupon on the back cover to Desert Report, send the coupon on the back cover to Desert Report, 3435 Wilshire Blvd. #320, Los Angeles, CA 90010-1904. Articles, photos, letters and original art are welcome. Please submit them to the above address two weeks before the end of March, June, September, December. The Sierra Club California/Nevada Desert Committee works for the protection and conservation of the California/Nevada desert, supports the same objectives in all desert areas of the Southwest, monitors and works with governments and agencies to promote preservation of our arid lands, sponsors education and work trips, encourages and supports others to work for the same objectives, and maintains, shares and publishes information about the desert.

Elden Hughes, Chair 562-941-5306 elden.hughes@sierraclub.org
Joan Taylor Vice Chair 760-778-1101
Vicky Hoover, Coordinator, Northern California 415-977-5527
vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org
Mike Prather, Secretary prather@gnet.com 760-876-5807
Frank Wheat, 2nd Secretary fwheat@gdclaw.com 626-793-3749
Letty French, Outings Chair LMFrench@tcsn.net 805-239-7338
Nick Ervin, Outings Coordinator San Diego 619-565-9582
Sharon Kiel, Outings Coordinator Toiyabe 775-322-2465
Michelle Arend Ekhoff, Meetings Coordinator 562-599-3559
Dolph Amster, Data Base Administrator dolph@ridgecrest.ca.us 760-446-3104
Carl Wheat, Data Base Programmer carlwheat@aol.com 805-653-2530
Hillary Gordon, Meetings Registrar hpgordon@earthlink.net 310-478-4102
Harriet Allen, Snail Mail Distribution 619-670-7127
Patty CarpenterHughes, Newsletter Layout Editor 562-941-306
EldenPatty@aol.com

Please see Desert Report on page 9
Gatekeeper Continued from page 1

In response, a major Border Patrol access road was cut across Otay Mountain. Border Patrol Agents flooded in with 4-WD trucks, helicopters, and ATV's. They brought their own impacts. The Border Patrol staff, often on short-term details or new recruits, generally have a very poor understanding of land ethics because their Agency has no training course for it. The number of Agents positioned directly on the border increased exponentially, instead of being positioned slightly to the north at choke points such as highways. Routes which had been little more than faint trails were now driven on constantly.

Border Patrol tactics include dragging linked vehicle tires behind vehicles along washes and trails in order to identify new footprints, and driving cross-country while following tracks or in pursuit. Agents are known to leave abandoned vehicles disabled by slashing tires. These are soon vandalized until they are junk. The traffic corridor then shifted east again, to the Cleveland Forest's Hauer Canyon Wilderness, and the BLM's Hauser Mountain WSA.

When the Border Patrol responded there, the corridors moved down to the BLM's low-lying Yuha Desert and the Jacumba Mountains Wilderness in Imperial County.

In this desert, Border Patrol apprehensions rose from 66,000 in 1996 to over 200,000 in 1998. The BLM, in the middle of an extensive route signing and rehab project in the Yuha, primarily for the threatened Flat-tailed Horned Lizard and Archeological concerns, saw its closed and rehabed routes driven over and the number of illegal routes actually increase. In the Jacumba Mountains Wilderness the amount of vehicle impacts has doubled since the signing of the California Desert Protection Act, all of it a result of Operation Gatekeeper. The Federally listed Peninsula Bighorn Sheep, which use the Jacumba Mountains as part of their range, is also of particular concern, since their water sources may not be available to them any more.

What can you do?

A comprehensive review of the impacts of Operation Gatekeeper has been initiated by the Border Patrol and public input is being solicited by a private Consulting firm (Advancia) under contract. Local Governments are particularly concerned with the loss of life; the cultural resources community are concerned about the impacts to cultural and archeological sites; Recreational groups are concerned about their safety and the continued use of public land (including Off-highway vehicle users, who fear they will be blamed for the resource damage); the BLM, Forest Service, and the Fish and Wildlife Service all have strong resource protection concerns.

The US Army Corps of Engineers, which prepared the Environmental Assessment for Operation Gatekeeper, is also holding public meetings in the course of developing further Environmental Assessments for future Border Patrol projects.

Contact your local Congressional Representative for details as how to comment on either Operation Gatekeepers environmental impacts or the Corps of Engineers draft for future Border developments. Duncan Hunter (R), California 52nd District, is the US Representative for the southern California Border Area. He has offices locally in El Cajon and Imperial, CA.

Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein (D) are the US Senators for California: they have district offices in San Diego, CA.

A particular note is that the Border Patrol has no environmental ethics in its employee training courses, little experience in working with public interest groups and even other agencies with regulatory requirements, and is naturally mostly interested in its Department mission, the patrol of the Borders. It is not this mission which is the concern, but its tactics in carrying out this mission.

Thank You:

Jay Morgan for your original art work used as the clip art in this edition of the desert report.

Carl Wheat for the special custom program which is managing our data base.
Saving a Species

The Endangered Species Act is the most effective tool for stopping the bad happening to species at risk. Starting the good, recovery, has been far less effective. Below, two members of the Desert Committee express their concerns with Species Recovery Plans.

Concerns of Harriet Allen:
Are Recovery Plans endangered in the California Desert District?
- Are Recovery Plans for endangered species, like the Desert Tortoise and Bighorn Sheep, being delayed, by-passed or superseded?
- Are the District-wide Recovery Plans being split into different categories for each of the five Coordinated Management Plans plus components?
- Are there timely alternatives to seeking enforcement of Recovery Plans?
- Should the Sierra Club Desert Committee put more effort into addressing these questions?

Comments of Hermi Hiatt:
The Endangered Species Act requires preparation of recovery plans for any listed species. A recovery plan must establish recovery goals and objectives for a species, describe site-specific management actions recommended to achieve those goals and estimate the time and cost required for recovery.

A recovery plan is not self-implementing, but presents a set of recommendations endorsed by an approving official representing the Department of Interior.

A Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan for the Mojave Population was prepared by the Desert Tortoise Recovery Team and approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in June 1994. Since recovery plans are not self-implementing and are subject to political manipulations, its success depends on individual agencies and on the continuous vigilance of environmental activists.

Note; Harriet Allen is collecting anecdotes, facts, figures and recommendations regarding what is happening with recovery plans. She wants them prior to the May 15-16 meeting. Send information to 3750 El Canto Drive, Spring Valley, CA 91977.

Invasive Species from Tamarisk to Burros
compiled from e-mails of George Barnes and Steve Tabor

It was recently learned that a three day helicopter roundup of burros in the Saline Valley portion of Death Valley National Park captured 85 burros. By the end of the third day, the pilot reported that all but two animals had been taken off National Park Service (NPS) land. The pilot further noted that he did locate more than ten additional burros on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land and surmised that there could be anywhere from fifty to one hundred animals on BLM land in the Inyo Canyons alone.

Hikers on a recent Desert Survivors trip noted lots of burro damage—trampling, polluted water, chewed-down vegetation — in the upper part of Whipple Canyon in the Whipple Mountains. On two previous trips to the area in 1987 and 1991, no contemporary burro damage was evident. However, it appears that strong Spring rains in 1993 made the upper canyon springs flow, however meagerly. The flow was enough that the burros discovered this precious water source and have taken residence there ever since. Tamarisk, an invasive plant species, was also reported in the canyons.

What you can do. If you or any others have visited the Whipple Canyon area within the past two years, send a letter to the BLM Needles Office describing the burro damage.

Please see Invasive Species on page 11

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Andrea Leigh, Guest Copy Editor aleigh@library.uc.edu 818 988-2433
Jim Kilberg, Assignment Editor jimboki@aol.com 310 215-0092
Nevada Wilderness
Tom Myers 702 348-1759
tom@black-rock.reno.nv.us
Marge Sill 702 322-2867
California Wilderness
Jim Dodson 661 942-3662
jim.dodson@sierraclub.org
Vicky Hoover 415 928-1038
vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org
Imperial Glamis Mine
Edie Harmon (no phone)
edieharmon@juno.com
Mining
Stan Haye 760 375-8973
stan.haye@sierraclub.org
ORV
George Barnes 650 494-8895
george.barnes@sierraclub.org
Mojave National Preserve
Elden Hughes 562 941-5306
elden.hughes@sierraclub.org
Joshua Tree National Park
Joan Taylor 760 778-1101
Death Valley National Park
George Barnes 650 494-8895
george.barnes@sierraclub.org
Stan Haye 760 375-8973
stan.haye@sierraclub.org
Red Rock Canyon State Park (California)
Jeanie Stillwell 760 375-8973
jeanie.stillwell@sierraclub.org
Anza Borrego State Park
Harriet Allen 619 670-7127
Southern Nevada Randy Harness 702 277-9132
susnet@earthlink.net
Hermi and John Hiatt 702 361-1171

Help

THE DESERT REPORT NEEDS MORE ARTICLES/TRIP REPORTS

CONTACT PATTY CARPENTER-HUGHES 562 941-5306
Opinions to give BLM guidance prior to the preparation of the Final EIS/EIR. (Leshy is the author of the inspiring book “The Mining Law: A Study in Perpetual Motion”, which we enjoyed quoting in our comments on withdrawal.)

In addition, the Final EIS/EIR cannot be prepared until BLM receives the recommendation of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP). The ACHP will do a field visit of the proposed mine site and area proposed for withdrawal and then conduct a Public Hearing in Imperial County in early March. The

Advisory Council will be making a recommendation to BLM and the Executive Offices with its recommendation for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

To date we have not been informed of any deadline for the ACHP for written comments.

Final EIR/EIS Expected May 1999; What You Can Do:

BLM now estimates a May 1999 date for release of the Final EIS/EIR. It would be most helpful if desert lovers could write letters to the Advisory Council sharing your concerns about the importance of archeological, cultural and spiritual resources of the desert, especially in this area. Experts with knowledge of archeology or cultural resources, or first hand experiences in the Indian Pass/mine area could submit valuable expert opinion and/or impassioned pleas. Experience of direct and indirect impacts of mining operations elsewhere and concerns about poten-

The $36 million is now in President Clinton’s proposed budget. As it moves through the budget process and through the appropriation process, we can help by writing our Members of Congress and telling them what a bargain this is for the American People and telling them what the desert means to you, particularly the desert lying along I40 (Old Hwy 66) from Needles to Barstow. Tell them you favor the California Desert Land Acquisition.
Turning Owens Dry Lake into Owens a-little-bit-wet Lake
BY MICHAEL PRATHER

Well over a half century ago, the City of Los Angeles diverted all the flow of the Owens River into its aqueduct. One casualty was the demise of the river’s terminus at Owens Lake. The resulting dry lake bed has produced some of the worst dust storms in North America. The Air Pollution Control District is now forcing the City of Los Angeles to control the dust.

This past January, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP) revealed its interest in pumping up to 1600 acre-feet of water per year from under Owens Lake for use as dust treatment on the lake’s surface. Eventually the total treatment of dust will take approximately 40,000 acre-feet per year and cover approximately 15-20 square miles using water and managed vegetation. Los Angeles will need permission from the Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District (GBUAPCD) or private parties for use of some existing wells. Indications are that the Great Basin Unified APCB is resistant to granting permission to Los Angeles for the use of their wells. In addition, the DWP hopes to avoid a CEQA environmental impact report by claiming that the pumping is “research” and, therefore, an exemption under the law. Inyo County feels that this is in violation of their long-term water management agreement with Los Angeles.

The DWP hopes to begin pumping operations this fall stating, essentially, that they are under the gun time-wise to begin dust correction as soon as possible. They are under an order from the California Department of Air Resources to begin cleanup in such a manner as to meet the Federal EPA requirement and its order.

The Sierra Club has long had serious concerns regarding pumping as a means of controlling the dust emanating from Owens Lake. Pumping could result in subsidence or negative impacts to wetlands and springs that surround the lake shore. These wetlands are used by thousands of migrating shorebirds and waterfowl each year. In fact, some birds fly as far south as South America and as far north as the Arctic Circle. The Sierra Club supports use of water directly from the aqueduct or by way of the Lower Owens River due to the potential for shallow water spreading and managed vegetation to create habitat lost when the lake originally dried up. Los Angeles has committed publicly to the use of surface water, but states that it is expensive to replace. Instead, they have announced at public meetings that they hope to pump as much water as possible for their dust abatement plan.

Currently the DWP is designing the Lower Owens River Project (LORP) in order to pump water from the river into the aqueduct and out onto the lake for dust control. As part of the re-watering of 60 miles of the Lower Owens River, water would be pumped back into the aqueduct from a site near Owens Lake. In an effort to meet time requirements for dust control measures on the lake, Los Angeles plans to begin large flows into the Lower Owens River Project by the year 2001, two years ahead of schedule.

Soon we will know if Los Angeles will need to be challenged on their pumping plan by using an exemption under CEQA. The City must be carefully watched in order to avoid potentially harmful pumping practices. Wildlife public trust values at Owens Lake that were once lost must be restored. Those remaining wetlands that are so valuable must not be impacted.

To see for yourself the wonderful wetlands and wildlife around Owens Lake, join us on our field trip on Saturday, May 8th. Meet at 9 AM at the parking lot at Diaz Lake just south of Lone Pine on Hwy 395. For more information contact Michael Prather, Drawer D, Lone Pine, CA 93545. 760-876-5807. prather@qnet.com

Invasive Species Continued from page 9

BLM has not really done a burro roundup from a large wilderness area since the desert bill passed and perhaps it’s time they began to learn how to do so (within wilderness constraints, of course). In the California desert and elsewhere, federal land managers should revitalize their efforts to remove feral animals as a response to Executive Order 13112, Invasive Species, (Clinton,2/3/99) and should urge the Invasive Species Council (members are the Secretaries of State, Treasury, Defense, Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, and Transportation, and EPA Administrator; co-chairs are the Secretaries of Interior, Agriculture, and Commerce) to include appropriate sections on feral animals in the National Invasive Species Management Plan to be prepared in 18 months with public input.

The BLM Needles address: Molly Brady, Field Office Manager
Needles Field Office
Bureau of Land Management
101 W. Spikes Road
Needles, CA 92363
WALKER LAKE ARTS FESTIVAL '99
BY ROSE STRICKLAND

Conservationists in W. Nevada and E. California are joining local rural residents and artists in sponsoring an arts festival on October 2, 1999. The purpose of the first Earth celebration is to combine ART and the Earth to create awareness of environmentally-threatened Walker Lake. The festival will include performances and an exhibition and sale of original fine art by artists of the western United States. The art will represent the environment of the Great Basin Desert with an emphasis on Walker Lake.

Artists, art lovers, environmentalists, and nature lovers will all gather together with one purpose - helping to save Walker Lake. Walker Lake is one of the jewels of the Great Basin, a terminal freshwater lake whose water level has been dropping during the past several decades due to upstream water diversions. Consequently, its salt levels are going up, threatening the survival of the native fish. Located in central western Nevada, the lake is a critical stopover for many migrating waterfowl, including hundreds of common loons, and home to native Lahontan cutthroat trout. Just west of the lake, Mt. Grant towers to more than 11,000 feet and provides unique desert plant life and mountain scenery in the area. Only human intervention, primarily through the acquisition of water rights, can save the lake ecosystem from extinction. For more information on the Arts Festival, call the Walker Lake Working Group at 775 945-8243.

Earth celebration includes actors, art teachers, artistic environmentalists, basket makers, crafters, dancers, glassworkers, instrument makers, musicians, singers, painters, photographers, poets, potters, printmakers, sculptors, singers, story tellers, video and movie makers, writers, weavers, and woodcarvers.

It is our feeling that through the arts, we can build community awareness and caring for the earth - its lands, waters, flora, and fauna. Our first focus is ancient, threatened Walker Lake. Join us in learning its bittersweet story and in weaving, painting, writing, and dancing a metaphorism of its future existence from despair to hope. Call Earth celebration in Reno at 775 972-4144 to join or obtain more information.

Desert Outings

The CNRCC Desert Committee's purpose is to work for the protection, preservation, and conservation of the California/Nevada desert; support the same objectives in all desert areas of the Southwest; monitor and work with governments and agencies to promote preservation of our arid lands; sponsor educational and work trips; encourage and support others to work for the same objectives; maintain, share and publish information about the desert.

All Desert Committee activities, unless stated otherwise, are suitable for anyone who enjoys the outdoors. The average vehicle with good clearance will be adequate for most trips; however, many of the roads used are dirt and, as with all desert travel, you should come prepared. For a good guide to desert travel we recommend the Sierra Club book "Adventuring in the California Desert" by Lynne Foster.

We want you to enjoy our study trips and work parties. They are designed to help you see the desert in a way you have not seen it before. We usually have a campfire in the evenings with lots of food (potluck) and camaraderie.

Deadline for outings copy
June 28, 1999

1999 Trips
March - November

March 27-28, 1999 Sat-Sun
CNRCC Desert/Kern-Kaweah Chp
Southern Sierra Exploratory 8 mi r/t mod. x-country hike into Pine Tree Cyn, transition zone between Mojave Desert & S. Sierra Nevada. Perennial stream flows thru cyn floor strewn with Buick-sized boulders, accented by small waterfalls & framed by 1,000 ft sheer cliff walls. We usually spot golden eagle or falcon as well as high desert wildflower displays, as we make our way into the cyn. Car camp in Red Rock Cyn SP Sat night with potluck & campfire. Sun, we hope to join ranger led hike in the State Pk. Send SASE, h&l phones, carpool info to Reserv: Sandy Hare, 22601 Valley View Dr, Tehachapi, CA 93561, (805) 822-0703. Co-ldr: Georgette Theotig, (805) 822-4371.

March 27-28, 1999 Sat-Sun
CNRCC Desert/San Diego Chp
Tamarisk Removal Work Party, S Anza-Borrego Desert Hike 2 mi in, bypassing springs & thicket, to finish clean out of new growth in Jacumba Jim Cyn. Sunday, with leftover energy day hike to Cimarron Spgs & petroglyphs in Carrizo Wash. Car camp under moon & stars in Carrizo Wash. Send $10 deposit (Sierra Club)/refund at roadside, SASE, phones, e-mail to Ldr: LARRY KLAASEN, 4821 Louise Dr, SD 92115, 619-582-7407, klaassen_l@juno.com.

Please see 1999 Trips on page 13
Outings and leaders needed

Is it guilt? Is it envy? Is it a desire to learn more?
Be a trip leader!

1999 Trips Continued from page 12

April 16-18, 1999  Fri-Sun
CNR Desert/Toiyaba Chp
Celebrate Loon Days at Walker Lake, Nevada. Extraordinary annual event at a scenic, threatened Pleistocene lake just N/Hawthorne under shadow of Mt. Grant (11,245’). Rare opp to participate in wildlife spectacle—annual sprrg migration of loons, white pelicans & grebes. We hope to have an expert guest. Meet Fri eve to camp so we’ll be ready to go out in boats early Sat am. Potlucks both Fri & Sat eve. Short walks Sat afternoon & Sun am to see surrounding country. For info contact Ldr: Marge Sill, 720 Brookfield Dr, Reno, NV 89503, (702) 322-2867, msill@juno.com.

April 17-18, 1999  Sat-Sun
CNR Desert/Toiyaba Chp

April 23-25, 1999  Fri-Sun
CNR Desert/Toiyaba Chp

April 30 – May 2, 1999  Fri-Sun
SF Bay Ch/Mother Lode Chp/CNR Desert
Wall Cyn BLM WSA, NV Nevada. Wilderness boundary study trip & car camp to faraway area W of High Rock & N of Smoke Creek, just E of Calif border. Explore this truly lonesome WSA, out in middle of nowhere. Enjoy permanent streams, moderate peaks not far from famed Black Rock Desert: this is NV at its remote best. Primitive car camp. Send $13 (Sierra Club) central comissary fee, SASE, h&w phones, rideshare info to Reserves/colldr: Vicky Hoover, 735 Geary St #501, SF, CA 94109, (415) 977-5527, vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org. Co-ldr: Stan Weidert.

April 30 – May 9, 1999  Fri-Sun
CNR Desert/Toiyaba Chp/S Nevada Grp
SE Utah Car Camp. We’ll hike to ancient pictographs & interesting side cyn in the Maze Dist of Canyonlands NP (maze of narrow cns & needle like forms); next visit Arches NP (incredible shapes & sizes of arches galore separated by deep narrow cns, pictographs, etc); end trip with a few days at Natural Bridges NM (deep cns in plateau spanned by natural arch bridges). Enjoy these cns, streams, hike to ancient ruins, see ancient rock art & more. Easy-mod. hiking; camp in estab campgrounds; 2WD vehicles OK, HCV better. Send refundable reserv/deposit of $20 (Sierra Club), cmpgrd reserv fee of $15 (David Hardy), SASE, h&w phones, rideshare pref to Ldr: David Hardy, Box 99, Blue Diamond, NV 89004, (702) 875-4549.

May 8-9, 1999  Sat-Sun
CNR Desert/Toiyaba Chp/P Desert
Owens Valley Desert Study & Car Camp. Sat, with Naturalist, Mike Prather we’ll tour Owens River wetlands, Lower Owens River; learn how LA’s DWP & Inyo County plan to manage Owens Lake restoration. Area is prime location for viewing seasonal neotropical migrants, waterfowl & shorebirds. Explore site of 1872 Lone Pine earthquake fault & visit historic Alabama gates. Sat eve potluck & campfire. Sun, leaders will provide Mother’s Day breakfast. Afterwards easy-mod. hike in nearby Alabama Hills (western movie site); opt trips to E Sierra Museum, Cerro Gordo Mine above Keeler. Expect $7 per night for vehicle camp fee. Send $5.00 (Sierra Club) for ldrs expenses, SASE, h&w phones, carpool info to Ldr: Blair Kuropatkin (Antelope Vly Grp), 3760 W Ave J-14, Lancaster, CA 93536, (805) 943-2603, blair@qnet.com. Co-ldrs: Barry McCormick, Mike Prather (Range of Light Grp).

Please see 1999 Trips on page 14
May 14 -17, 1999
Fri-Mon
SF Bay Chapter/CRNCC Desert
Diamond Range Inventory &
Camp, Central Nevada Study
& mapping trip to remote area N
of Eureka. We’ll document wild
values, boundaries, impacts in this long
& narrow mtn range. Maybe attempt
backpack ascent of the highest spot,
Diamond Pk (10,614 ft) with dra-
matic cross NV views. Mixture of
x-country hiking & driving. High
clearance vehicles needed, 4WD help-
ful. Central Commissary. Send
SASE, h&w phones, rideshare info
to Ldr: Vicky Hoover, 735 Geary St
#501, SF, CA 94109, (415) 977-
5527, vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org.

May 28-31, 1999
Fri-Mon
SF Bay Chapter/CRNCC Desert
White Rock Range Inventory &
Car Camp, E Nevada Memorial Day
journey to far eastern edge of NV, SE
of Ely & NE Piute. Inventory work
to check boundaries of proposed wil-
derness. Climb White Rock Pk (9,146
ft); not in official WSA but we’ve a
hunch it deserves wilderness status.
Great Basin at its best: broad ex-
panse, wide views, snow, mud, flow-
ers, critters and more. X-country hik-
ing. High clearance vehicles needed,
4WD helpful. Central Commissary.
Send SASE, h&w phones, rideshare
info to Ldr: Vicky Hoover, 735 Geary
St #501, SF, CA 94109, (415) 977-
5527, vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org.

June 11-17, 1999
Fri-Thurs
Toiyabe Chp/S Nevada Grp
Paria River Backpack, UT-AZ.
Easy-mod. BP, mostly down cyn, mu-
ch wading in ankle deep water, 40
mi total. Main cyn is a narrow
sensously shapped 23 mi long red-
orange sculptured shape with a side
slot tributary. Optional side trips with
day pack will be available or relax in
camp. In June the normal temps,
outside cyn at Lee’s Ferry are 105F
day & 75F eve. Can be cool to cold
in cyn. Group size limit 10. Send $30
(David Hardy) non-refundable BLM
fee by 3/1, $20 (Sierra Club) refund-
fee deposit (if you go or cancel 8
days before trip). All deposits are
required for wait list and are fully
refundable if you do not go. Send
SASE, h&w phones, rideshare info
to Ldr: David Hardy, Box 99, Blue
Diamond, NV 89004, (702) 875-
4549.

July 3-5, 1999
Sat-Mon
CRNCC Desert/Toiyabe Chp
Blue Lakes/Pine Forest Mtns
WSA Backpack, NW Nevada Easy
backpack (1 mi) to basecamp at be-
tiful, spring & snowmelt-fed, high
elev. (7,968 ft) Blue Lakes located
just E of Sheldon Nat’l Wildlife Ref-
uge. Backpack of Duffer Peak (9,397
ft). Glacial moraine areas/willow,
aspen, whitebark & limber pine, mtn
mahogany forests. Wildflowers
should abound. Sun either cross-
country climb Duffer Peak or wild-
life watching at all five Blue Lakes,
Outlaw Meadows, or nearby Onion
Vly Reservoir. Birdwatch opps for
Pine Grosbeaks & Red Crossbills;
also Pronghorn Antelope & Bighorn
Sheep. Send SASE, h&w phones,
rideshare info to Co-Ldr: Sharon Kiel,
50 Suda Wy, Reno, NV 89509, (702)
322-2465. Co-Ldr: Lelia Heading,
(775) 331-5631 Lheading@aol.com.

Aug 6-8, 1999
Fri-Sun
CRNCC Desert, Toiyabe Chapter
Santa Rosa/Paradise Pk Wilderness
Area Exp Cl Car Camp, No Ne-
veda Explore little known wilderness
N of Winnemucca, NV. Car camp
Fri eve at Singas Crk trld hr Paradise,
NV. Sat am, long all-day expl
hike (11.5 mi rt, 2,100 ft elev gain,
mostly on trail). Trail passes thru
lush vegetation, alternating between
aspen/willow & grass/sagebrush
country, with panoramic views of
Paradise Vly below. Grand finale
places us on Abel Summit (8,750 ft)
for a grand vista. Wildflowers &
birds should abound in this Bighorn
sheep habitat. Sun return home after
breakfast. Send SASE, h&w
phones, rideshare info to Ldr: Sharon
Kiel, 50 Suda Way, Reno, NV 89509,
(775) 322-2465, (775) 322-4387/fax.

Aug 27-29, 1999
Fri-Sun
CRNCC Desert, Toiyabe Chapter
Inyo Mtns Study & Car Camp
Friday: estab dry basecamp at Bat-
ger Flat (8,000+ ft elev) off
Mazourka Cyn Rd, explore old mines
& surrounding pinyon/limebr/bristle-
cone pine forest, with eve potluck.
Sat: strenuous, steep up & down (8
mi rt, 1,500-2,000 ft elev gain) hike
to cowcamp inside Inyo Wilderness,
where grazer wants continued vehicle
access (assess situation) in outstand-
ing country w/typical Great Basin
flora. Potluck Sat nite. Sun: sleep in,
then slowly make way down mtns
to Independence & finish w/Owens
Vly water history, around noon. Trip
LTD to 6 vehicles. Send SASE, h&w
phones, rideshare info to Ldr:
Michael Prather, Drawer D, Lone
Pine, CA 93545, (760) 875-5907 (be-
fore 8:30 pm), prather@qnet.com.

Sept 4-6, 1999
Sat-Mon
CRNCC Desert, SF Bay & Utah Chapters
S. Central Utah Exploratory &
Car Camp, Henry Mtns Visit last
discovered mtn range (by Anglos any-
way) on Labor Day weekend. Meet
Fri eve at Penellian Pass in stand of
Ponderosa Pines overlooking canyon
lands. Most hiking moderate. Sat,
opt strenuous hike to Mt Pennell
(11,371 ft). Pennell is the central
peak in Henry Mtns. Sat eve hear
about Utah Chapter’s wilderness
adopter program. Sun, split into
groups to monitor candidate wilder-
ness areas, expl interesting corners of
range, always on lookout for buffalo.
Mon, short hikes on Tarantula Mesa

Please see 1999 Trips on page 15
Be A Trip Leader!

Contact Letty French @ 805 239-7338

1999 Trips
March - November

1999 Trips Continued from page 14

Mon, short hikes on Tarantula Mesa overlooking the Waterpocket Fold. Vicky will provide shared commissary. E-mail or send lg SASE, h&w phones, rideshare info to Reserv/co-ldr: Jim Catlin, 1120 S Windsor St, Salt Lake City, UT 84111, (801) 328-3550, jcatlin@worldnet.att.net. Co-ldrs: Vicky Hoover, (415) 977-5527, vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org & Toni Wall.

Sept 4-6, 1999
Sat - Mon
CNRCC Desert, Toiyabe Chapter
Toiyabe Range Exploratory Backpack, Central Nevada Leisurely-paced, approx 4 mi backpack to basecamp via Pablo Cyn or Wall Cyn on Smoky Valley side of Toiyabes; San Juan Cyn on Reese River Vly side or other Toiyabe location (local conditions closer to trip time will dictate route). Well pass thru beautiful cottonwood/aspen/pinyon/juniper/Bighorn sheep country & perhaps even a narrow walled cyn. Sun, hike to ridgeline for spectacular views or stay in camp to sketch, birdwatch, explore, etc. Mon, hike out enjoying beautiful riparian growth along the way. Send lg SASE, h&w phones, rideshare info to Reserv/co-ldr: Sharon Kiel, 50 Suda Way, Reno, NV 89509, (775) 322-2465. Co-ldr: Lelia Heading, (775) 331-5631, lheading@aol.com.

Sept 17-19, 1999
Fri - Sun
CNRCC Desert, Toiyabe Chapter
Explore Long Valley Caldera & Mono Basin, E. Sierra Car camp Fri night at Mammoth Lakes. Drive to numerous unique geological & volcanic sites. Discuss controversial mining proposals, water issues and man's effect on ecosystems. Easy hiking. Sat night, campfire potluck, camaraderie. For details send lg SASE, h&w phones, rideshare info to Ldr: Bryce Wheeler, PO Box 4008, Mammoth Lks, CA 93548, (760) 934-3764, brycewilma@aol.com. Asst: John Walter, (760) 934-1767, 73617.326@compuserve.com.

Sept 24-26, 1999
Fri - Sun
CNRCC Desert, San Gorgonio Chapter
Mojave National Preserve Desert Study & Car Camp Explore with geologist DAVE JOHNSON, some of the preserve's most beautiful & interesting sites. Under full moon, camp at scenic Mid-hills Cmpgrd. Hikes will be moderate, approx 5-6 mi. Points of interest will include: Tuletonia Pk/Cima Dome (1,500 ft rim ht, 75 sq mi) w/ its lg volcanic field of cinder cones & dense Joshua Tree forest; Caruthers Cyn in scenic NY Mtns (good botany & hist mining); Kelso Dunes (600 ft); Rock Spring (site of old fort & petroglyphs); hist Kelso Depot; Hole-in-the-Wall; the "old writers cabin" & mine. 2WD vehicles OK. For info send lg SASE, h&w phones, rideshare info to Ldr: Carol Wiley, 15457 Eto Camino Rd, Victorville, CA 92394, (760) 243-8734, cwiley@victor.cc.ca.us. Co-ldr: Jon Miller & Eelden Hughes.

Oct 15-16, 1999
Fri - Mon
CNRCC Desert, SF Bay Chapter
Diamond Range Inventory & Car Camp, Central Nevada Followup study & mapping trip to remote area N of Eureka. Document wild values, boundaries, impacts & finish up any areas we didn't get on first visit in May. Mixture of hiking & driving. Views from the long, high ridge are phenomenal. High clearance vehicles needed, 4WD helpful; cold nights guaranteed. Central commissary. Send SASE, e-mail, h&w phones, carpool info to Ldr: Vicky Hoover, 735 Geary St #501, SF, CA 94109, (415) 977-5527, vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org.

Oct 16-17, 1999
Sat - Sun
CNRCC Desert, San Gorgonio & Angeles Chapters
Ft. Irwin's Proposed Expansion/ Tour of Affected Lands Car camp & study trip to areas south & west of Ft Irwin. Visit Navy's Mojave Range B. Tour some of best tortoise lands in Calif Desert. Easy hikes in Rainbow Basin Natl Natural Landmark. Paleontologist/geologist will guide us. Camp in established but dry cmpgrd w/campfire & potluck. Access requires reserv w/names, addresses, social security #s, car license plate #. Send req info, lg SASE, h&w phones, rideshare info to: Reserv/Co-ldr: Carol Wiley, 15457 Eto Camino Rd, Victorville, CA 92394, (760)243-8734, cwiley@victor.cc.ca.us. Co-ldr: Jon Miller & Eelden Hughes.

Please see 1999 Trips on page 16.
Oct 23-24, 1999
Sat-Sun
CNRCC Desert, Kern-Kaweah Chapter
Little Petroglyph Cyn (China Lake NWC) & Briggs Mine Tour
Sat, we will explore restricted Little Petroglyph Cyn on the Naval Weapons Center, with guides from Matarango Museum. This canyon protects unique collection of petroglyphs. Sat night dry camp by Trona Pinnacles. Sun, we'll tour Briggs heap leach gold mine in Panamint Valley & other local desert attractions. 2WD vehicles OK, high clear pref. Group size ltd. Navy requires social security #, name, address & vehicle license#. Send reqd info, $10 (Matarango Museum), lg SASE, h&w phones, ride share info to Reserv/Ldr: Dennis Burge, 624 Randall, Ridgecrest, CA 93555, (760) 375-7967. Asst: Don Peterson, (760) 375-8599, donpete@ridgecrest.ca.us.

Oct 30-Nov 1
Sat-Mon
CNRCC Desert, S. Nevada Group
Marble Cyn Backpack, Death Valley NP Friday morning we'll drive 13 bumpy mi NW of Stovepipe Wells to our trailhead, then pack in 2 mi w/ water to our dry basecamp. Day hikes will feature peaks, colorful polished sheered walled cyns, petroglyphs, nice range from easy to strenuous. 4x4 HCV needed. Send $20 (Sierra Club) refundable resv deposit, lg SASE, h&w phones, ride share info to Ldr: David Hardy, Box 99, Blue Diamond, NV 89009, (702) 875-4549.

Oct 29-31, 1999
Fri-Sun
CNRCC Desert, Angeles Chapter
Red Rock Cyn State Park Get spoooked on a Halloween hike in Nightmare Gulch! Stalk elusive living dinosaurs, strange plants, and weird prehistoric mammals! Explore the park’s movie history by chasing the phantoms of Radar Men from the Moon, Flash Gordon, and his arch nemesis, Ming the Merciless, on the planet Mongo! Learn some geology while we lurk about Camel Rock, the Temple of Heliopolis, and Cerberus, the three-headed dog who guards the entrance to Hades! Moderate hikes of 2 to 6 mi rt each day. Ldt space due to first come/first serve cmpgrd. Goulash potluck Sat night. Send 2 SASE, car pool info, h&w phones, $10/person (Sierra Club, Natural Science Sect) camping fees to Ldrs: Bob & Maureen Cates, 140 Healy Trail, Chatsworth, CA 91311, (818) 883-2165, bobcates@ix.netcom.com.

Nov 11-14, 1999
Thurs-Sun
CNRCC Desert, S. Nevada Group
West Mojave Exploration Car Camp Explore Red Rock SP & vicinity with spectacular rock formations & colorful eroded cyn walls. Walk & drive thru one of the finest Joshua Tree forests. Explore nearby foothills & valleys west of Red Rock where desert merges into pine forest. Camp fire & camaraderie. HCV needed. Send $20 (Sierra Club) refundable resv deposit, h&w phones, ride share info to Ldr: David Hardy, Box 99, Blue Diamond, NV 89009, (702) 875-4549.

Nov 12-14, 1999
Fri-Sun
Little Hikers, Angeles Chapter/CNRCC Desert

Dec 4-5, 1999
Sat-Sun
CNRCC Desert, Kern-Kaweah & Santa Lucia Chapters
Carrizo Plain Study Trip & Car Camp, SE San Luis Obispo County Join us & Naturalist to explore, photograph & map proposed Caliente Mtn Wilderness area. Explore Soda Dry Lake (good birding, Sandhill Cranes) & San Andreas Fault zone. Trip will include: visitor center, Painted Rock (pictographs) & if conditions allow an easy hike to Caliente Mtn (5,106 ft). Early sunset will facilitate star gazing w/small telescopes, weather permitting. This BLM area has pronghorn antelope, kit fox, kangaroo rats, numerous raptors. Dry car camp w/shared hor d’oeuvres, campfire, sing-a-long. Trip extended to Monday, if enough interest. Send lg SASE, h&w phones, ride share info to Ldr: Joe Fontaine, Box 307, Tehachapi, CA 93581, (661) 821-2055, joe.fontaine@sierraclub.org. Asst: Cal French, (805) 239-7338, ccfrench@icns.net.
Trip Reports

February 1999

A WSA THAT DIDN'T MAKE IT IN 1994 - NOW LOOKING TOWARD WILDLANDS 2000

BY FRANK AND CARL WHEAT

When the opportunity came, the undersigned wasted no time in “adopting” WSA 132, the “Great Falls Basin.” Occupying part of the steep eastern Rank of the Argus Mountains not far north of Trona, its heart is a high soup-bowl “basin” filled with outcroppings of rock and at least six springs, surrounded on all sides by granite crags and spires.

Climbing one of these spires, we could see that eastward the “basin” drains into a narrow, almost vertical, impenetrable gulch, choked with gigantic fallen rocks. Below most of these rocks tiny streamlet appears gracefully, falling some twenty feet into a pool at the base of the mountain wall. We have not yet found out whether it was the immense rockfall or the minute waterfall that comes out of it which led to the name “Great Falls.”

However, even a minute waterfall in the dry, rugged canyons of the Argus Range, or in its nearby companion, the Slate Range, would deserve any superlative that might be attached to it in the mind of a parched traveler.

The streamlet manages to run for about 30 feet below the fall before it sinks into the sand.

Various BLM documents and the final House Committee Report on the Desert Bill give the WSA dimensions varying from 6000 to roughly 9000 acres. Boundary lines are all over the place on existing maps. A feasible boundary might be the line of Wilson Canyon on the south and that of Crow Canyon on the north, with the western boundary of necessity lying along the north-south border of China Lake Naval Weapons Center.

These boundaries would include Indian Joe Canyon and Spring (in the south) which sustained the Jayhawkers and other parties of ‘49ers escaping from Death Valley and helped Manly and Rogers make it back to Death Valley with a few supplies on a return trip to rescue the Bennett and Arcane families. Manly and Rogers missed Indian Joe Spring on their way out (going west up dry Wilson Canyon) and almost perished as a result.

Ironically, the “great falls,” missed by all the ‘49ers were almost directly across Searles Valley from the mouth of Isham Canyon in the Slate Range, the canyon descended by many of the ‘49ers (including Manly and Rogers) on their way west. Viewed from their route across the valley, the height of Argus Peak, which towers just behind Great Falls Basin, must have discouraged them from traveling in this direction; instead, they all went south, first to sample Searles Lake (ugh) and then to head across the Argus Range at a much lower point.

In our first exploratory foray we scrambled up the steep mountainside from the waterfall (where we had parked) on our way toward the rim of Great Falls Basin. Half way up, we found an excellent trail, the lower portion of which we’d missed. Thus, the startling topography of the Basin is easily reached about a mile and a half from the falls.

Farther north, a passable track leads a short way into Rattlesnake Canyon, narrowing to a cycle track which extends up-canyon in a northerly direction to the abandoned Mohawk Mine. Mumford Canyon, which enters Rattlesnake from the west, looked enticing. Great castles with crenelated granite walls beckon the hiker toward the head of this and several other canyons (Indian Joe included) in the WSA.

Another chance to range around in this dramatic WSA cannot come too soon for us, with an effort at mapping to follow. One thing is certain: there is wilderness quality here, in spades.

January 1999

BLM Adopt-A-Cabin Program Makes for Rewarding Experience

BY DON PETERSON

Perfect weather accompanied our Martin Luther King holiday weekend introduction to the BLM Adopt-A-Cabin program. We were headquartered at the Minnieqa Cabin located in Thompson Cyn in Panamint Valley. Twenty three people joined the outing. The area is rich in history from the late 1870’s. Nadeau Road ran from Los Angeles to here. Three stages per week continued up rugged Stone Canyon northwest to Darwin. At first, the ore was so rich it was packed by burro for processing at Panamint City which lies across the Panamint Valley. Charcoal from the ten large kilns in Wildrose Canyon were transported to the furnaces at the Modoc Mine located just above the cabin.

On Saturday, after an introduction to the program by Steve Smith, BLM Wilderness Staff Chief, we hiked up the ridge behind the cabin to the ruins of Lookout City and the Modoc Mine. The views over Panamint Valley were awesome. Saturday night, around a campfire, we had round-robin introductions and discussion of interests. Then historian Stan Haye described the history of the area. In the dark, a very bold kit fox appeared, looking for goodies.

On Sunday we hiked up Thompson Canyon into Stone Canyon where we saw remnants of retaining walls for the stage road to Darwin. We had

Please see Adopt a Cabin on page 18
lunch at Jack Gunn Spring which proved full of signs of burros that come here for water, the only water nearby. The day before we saw seven burros near Lookout City. Also within the wilderness area in Stone Canyon were signs of off-road vehicles and the absence of wilderness boundary signs. Returning to the cabin in mid afternoon we relaxed to watch the beautiful pink fading light illuminate the Panamint Range. Telescope Peak towered above all as purple shadows crept slowly up the face of the range.

En route home on Monday, we visited Kopper King Cabin which is up a secluded north fork of Shepherd Canyon. Volunteers have repaired and now maintain this cabin. We ended the outing with considerable interest in preserving the Minnietta Cabin in its beautiful setting.

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JANUARY 1999

BORDERLANDS BONANZA

BY NICK ERVIN

The border between our beloved California desert and its southern neighbor entices in more ways than one. In places, it houses the richest diversity of plant life in any desert world wide, while defining the edge between two dramatically divergent cultures. It is a place of political boundary, a barrier to many and, oddly by coincidence, the far margin of life for several important species of desert plant life. It is to this fascinating spot that 22 Sierra Clubbers have come for three days of hiking adventure.

Our camp is a flat piece of federal BLM real estate adjacent to Anza-Borrego Desert State Park with panoramic views of the jagged Jacumba and In-Ko-Pah ranges.

Day 1 offers a jaunt into the Coyote Mtns. wilderness—famous for their odd geological formations and outstanding marine fossils. We are not disappointed, except for the unusually poor clarity of the atmosphere due to winds shifted so as to blow pollution from the Imperial Valley and city of Mexicali to the east. Our group stumbles randomly upon large fossilized oysters, clams, snails and even coral impressions, all about 6 million year pasts their prime. At the top of our route we encounter badland formations of tawny yellow punctuated by gentle sandstone domes chiselled with delicate caves sculptured largely by wind over the eons. Delightful!

Around the evening campfire we savor the hike, bountiful food as varied and tasty as any commercial buffet, and stories of past desert adventures presented by that amiable raconteur and co-leader Larry Klaasen. Larry possesses the equanimity and flexibility to serve as a leader with his wife Pat when neither have actually been to our next two days’ destinations. I’m acting as guide while they provide legal cover for this trip.

Day 2 takes us smack up against the International border at the southern end of the Jacumba Mtns. wilderness. Lying in an egg shaped oval, Skull Valley nestles up to the border amidst dramatic scenes of sand dunes, creosote flats and a forest of the bizarre crucifixion thorn plant, rare north of the border. Aside from the scenery and pleasant weather we enjoy, there are disturbing signs of the traffic in human desperation which often passes this way after dart—discarded clothing, plastic water jugs and occasional heavily-travelled foot trails headed northwards. Management of an area on such a border must face certain geopolitical realities such as these. We also happen to get buzzed several times by curious Border Patrol spotter planes just for excitement.

On our final day we cross from BLM land into that portion of the Jacumbas within Anza-Borrego Desert Park’s extreme southern section.

Just a single low saddle over from the hum of traffic on busy Interstate 8 we enter a lovely bowl-shaped valley cut deeply by several arroyos with a single set of desert palms gracing its bottom. Our hiking party lunches at a high point granting long-range vistas north into the park scanning range after range of stark mountain walls fading into the receding horizon. It is a satisfying ending to a long weekend in our southern borderlands, the world of the Colorado desert.

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News Update

SONORAN NATIONAL PARK

Sought: The Arizona Daily Star 3/9 reported several prominent citizens are pushing for the creation of the Sonoran Desert National Park in southwest Arizona within the next five years. Proponents of the park include Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt’s brother, former Interior Secretary Stewart Udall, and the wife of the late Edward Abbey. Plans include merging the Organ Pipe National Monument, Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge, and the Barry M. Goldwater Air Force Range into one unit larger than Yellowstone and Grand Canyon National Parks combined.

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Proposed Ivanpah Valley Airport

Bad ideas don’t go away. In the last session of Congress we were able to stop a 20,000 land give-away for a proposed cargo airport along 115 between Las Vegas and the Nevada border at Primm. James Gibbons (R-NV) just reintroduced the bill and Handy Harness is in DC lobbying against it. A major concern is that the flight patterns will be directly over the Mojave National Preserve and will affect two other National Park units.
Senator Feinstein’s staff visits desert

Trevor Daley is the newest member of Senator Feinstein’s staff in Los Angeles. His beat is Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. For the past two years he has been the Senator’s scheduler which means he has worked very closely with her. Within two weeks of Trevor coming to work in Los Angeles we had him camping in the Desert. These pictures were taken in March at a petroglyph location in the Rodman Mountains. Senator Feinstein is very supportive of the purchase of the Catellus lands. The parcel on which this site is located is Catellus property adjacent to the Rodman Mountains Wilderness. The parcel will be purchased in the California Desert Land Acquisition now before Congress. Leading the outing was Elden Hughes. David Myers, Executive Director of the Wildlands Conservancy, completed the group. Trevor Daley grew up in Humboldt County, a land of redwoods and tall trees. It was interesting explaining to Trevor, the Jim Dodson concept for staying focused on the desert, “Don’t worry about any tree over 35 feet tall.”

AT PRESS TIME
Southern Sierra (West Side) Management Plan

It was the genius of the California Desert Protection Act (CDPA) that it did not concern itself with what agency managed the land, it looked at the land.

The Southern end of the Sierra Nevada makes the transition from high peaks to high desert. The Dome Land Wilderness of the Forest Service (FS) was designated in 1984. The CDPA designated the adjacent Domeland Wilderness managed mostly by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Five Wilderness areas were designated on this southern shoulder of the Sierra Nevada: Chimney Peak (13,700 acres), Domeland (Additions) (36,000), Kiavah (40,290 BLM acres, 48,000 FS acres), Owens Peak (74,060 acres), Sacatar Trail (51,900 acres). The Management Plan and Environmental Assessment (Draft) is just now out for review. Comments are due April 30, 1999. Hard copy is available at the BLM Bakersfield office 805 391-6120. On the Web, it is www.ca.blm.gov/bakersfield. Our lead commenters are Stan Haye, George Barnes and Joe Fontaine. This is an extraordinary corner of the California Desert. You can comment on your own or work with Stan, George or Joe. Most of us know of King Clone in the Johnson Valley, a creosote plant which has grown in the form of a ring. It is perhaps the oldest plant in the world. Carbon 14 dating of the oldest roots dates it at 10,700 years old. The size of the ring is a rough measure of age. On the Sierra Shoulder and protected within designated Wilderness is a clone ring of creosote even larger than King Clone.

Thank you Lynn Foster for your templates, fonts and offer of help. Little did I know what I was getting in to. My admiration for you has grown by leaps and bounds.

Patty Hughes, Layout Editor
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TO: Bureau of Land Management, US Army Corps of Engineers, California Regional Water Quality Control Board, and County of Imperial

Petition in Opposition to Glamis Gold's Imperial Project, a proposed cyanide heap-leach, open-pit gold mine, and in Support of Withdrawal From Mineral Entry for lands in the vicinity of Indian Pass Road in SE Imperial County, CA.

We, the undersigned, support the position of the Quechan Indian Nation, organizations, and individuals in their opposition to the efforts of a wholly owned subsidiary of a wholly owned subsidiary of Glamis Gold, Ltd., a Canadian company, which seeks Federal, State and County approvals to develop a proposed cyanide heap-leach open-pit mine to extract gold from extremely low grade ore on approximately 1600 acres on Indian Pass Road in SE Imperial County CA.

The proposed mine site is part of an extremely important archeological/cultural resource area which provides a record of 12,000 years of continuous human use continuing to present. The proposed mine site includes the intersection of a major trail system of religious significance and many sites that are sacred to the Quechan people and which they believe are essential to their religion and cultural survival.

The site is located in a major microphyll woodland wash, which is the only wildlife corridor between the Chocolate Mountains and the South Algodones Dunes. The wash system is home to the rare fairy duster, a mule deer fawning area, and its sides with large mature ironwoods and palo verde trees also provide habitat for desert tortoises, migratory birds and foraging bats.

The EIS/EIR contains errors, omissions, and incorrect information and is inadequate under the requirements for both NEPA and CEQA. Therefore, we respectfully request that (1) BLM deny the Plan of Operations, rights of way, and reject the EIS, and find the mining claims invalid (2) U.S. Army Corps of Engineers deny the requested Clean Water Act 404 Permit application, (3) County of Imperial not certify the EIR, reject the Reclamation Plan and Conditional Use Permits for water wells and other APCD approvals, and (4) Regional Water Quality Control Board deny all permit applications.

Affirmatively, we support BLM's requested Segregation and permanent Withdrawal from Mineral Entry as a first step for Permanent Protection archeological, cultural and spiritual resource values for present and future generations of all Americans and to protect sites sacred to the Quechan Nation.

Name: Print then sign Address: Street, City, County, State Tribal affiliation

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Please return by April 30, 1999 to: Sierra Club, 3820 Ray Street, San Diego, CA 92104