

Complimentary Copy

# High Country News

October 14, 1985

Vol. 17 No. 19

A Paper for People who Care about the West

One Dollar



Upper Bull Valley Gorge, Utah, dropped from the BLM wilderness inventory

## Last Stand for the Colorado Plateau

by Ray Wheeler

July 18, 1985

“Can we get the rest of these lights out?”

A familiar moment. People groping in a dark room. An empty slide projector banks its blazing rectangle of light off a screen in the corner of the room.

“I think you're OK there, Mo.”

Where I come from, out West in Utah, the “slide show” is an old and honored tradition. I don't know anybody who doesn't own a projector, and doesn't love to show slides. It's Saturday night, and your friends come over, and you look at pictures.

Almost always, they are pictures of Utah. Pictures of the land. That last hike in Canyonlands. That Lodore Canyon river trip. That weekend in Zion National Park. There is an endless supply of such pictures; yet no one I know ever seems to tire of looking at them. How come? Because there is something out there in the dark, something out there beyond the pale of the projector beam, something so ingeniously diverse, so infallibly mysterious, so complex and intriguing that it will be impossible for any of us, in a lifetime, to see enough of it. It has many names. Canyon Country. Color Country. Hoodoo or Hondu Country. Sinbad Country. The Colorado Plateau.

Someone trips over the projector cord, and the light fails.

People are snickering -- a slide show tradition. Another pedestrian steps on the cord, and the projector coughs back to life.

As we get underway, I realize with a shock of recognition that the pictures are familiar. I've been to these places... these are my friends. There's

Mt. Ellen, a forested dome floating like a cloud over the blue and grey and gold desert badlands that surround her. The complicated redrock canyon system of Indian Creek. The cool, dark narrows of White Canyon. The perfectly formed, 500-foot-deep symmetrical hairpin meanders of Labyrinth Canyon.

I'm dreaming of swallows. A flock of them, falling together like rain, skimming down the face of a cliff toward the floor of Labyrinth Canyon. And the canyon floor itself, being a river, is moving too -- carrying with it, in the horizontal, the mirror image of that cliff, and those same falling swallows... Thus two flocks of swallows, each falling into the other, their glidepaths two perfect matching parabolic arcs...

The pictures are familiar, but the place and the people are not. I'm two thousand miles from home, in a hearing room in Washington, D.C. The man showing slides is Rep. John Seiberling, D-OH, chairman of the House Subcommittee

on Public Lands and National Parks. Sitting here with me in the dark are maybe 150 people, among them Mo Udall, D-AZ, chairman of the House Interior Committee and Donald Hodel, Secretary of the Interior.

“Slide number three,” Seiberling is saying, “shows the same area, which was among the most dramatic that I recall seeing in Utah. These badlands are entirely natural, have no development, and in my opinion at least, are eminently qualified for wilderness.”

This is a congressional oversight hearing. Its subject: the Bureau of Land Management's wilderness program. Such hearings, like slide shows back home in Utah, have become something of a ritual on Capitol Hill. There have been five during the past three years.

“When we first initiated these hearings in December 1982,” Seiberling recalls in his opening statement, “I believe it's fair to say that the BLM program was in more or less of a shambles.”

(Continued on page 10)

# Dear friends,



## High Country News

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Ray Wheeler, whose "Last Stand for the Colorado Plateau" dominates this issue (and whose Part II will dominate the next issue), tells us he trained for freelance writing by working as a cab driver in Washington, D.C., as a bicycle messenger in San Francisco, and then as a boatman in California, Idaho and Utah. Less to the point, he also has a degree in English Literature from the University of Missouri at Columbia.

Wheeler is now a space planner at the University of Utah -- a "nebulous bureaucratic job" which he says would take another 6,000-word article to describe. Wheeler, we have discovered, writes only in quanta of 6,000 words. As a result, he has had some bad experiences with editors who chopped away at his material and changed his suggested headlines.

But we here at *HCN* appear to have been kicked by the same mule as Wheeler -- "Last Stand for the Colorado Plateau" is his headline, and when he sent us a pared-down version of this article, we put back in material he had cut.

It is appropriate that we mention,

in the midst of our annual Research Fund appeal, that writers such as Ray are among *HCN's* largest contributors by virtue of the low pay they are willing to accept from us. Ray makes time for his writing by working only three-quarters time at the university, using his three months of unpaid vacation to explore the areas he writes about.

His second article, to appear in the October 28 *HCN*, will cover environmental politics in the Beehive state. In an off-the-cuff comment, Ray described Utah as the "Lebanon of the environmental movement." The 2,000 Utah residents who have received complimentary copies of this issue may wish to subscribe, so as to receive Wheeler's Part II.

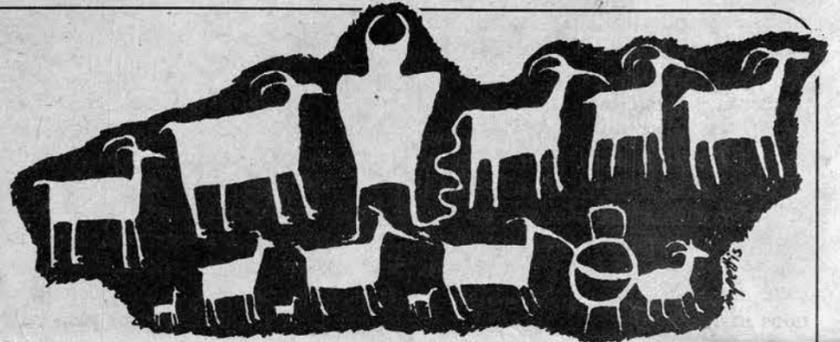
Although summer is over, both by the calendar and by the weather, people who know that fall can be the best time in the Rockies are still on the road. Ted Wood, assistant editor of the magazine *Defenders*, stopped in for a visit. He's on a leave of absence, travelling to Alaska, Colorado, et al, with the help of an ancient VW that looks like a cartoon car, and that attracted much attention in downtown Paonia.

--the staff



Ray Wheeler

Thanks Moab,  
thanks Tempe,  
thanks Olathe,  
thanks Eugene...



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## WESTERN ROUNDUP

### Few mourn demise of great land swap

The gigantic land swap proposed by the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management has been buried on Capitol Hill with little chance of being resurrected.

That's the assessment of spokesmen for two members of Wyoming's congressional delegation, Sen. Alan Simpson, the Senate majority whip, and Rep. Dick Cheney, chairman of the House Republican Policy Committee.

"I think that Sen. Simpson would agree that it's without life," said the senator's press secretary, Mary Kay Hill. "However, he has pointed out all along that it couldn't be accomplished overnight."

"I'd say it's dead in its current form," agreed Patty Howe, press secretary for Cheney. "The two agencies might be able to salvage pieces of it, but the House already has passed a bill that would prohibit them from spending any money to implement the plan, even if it should pass."

The proposal was advanced last June by the Reagan administration as an effort to reduce paperwork, streamline administration of federal lands, cut the bureaucracy and save \$105 million over five years.

The swap of 34 million acres of land between the Interior Department's BLM and the Agriculture Department's Forest Service would have eliminated overlapping jurisdictions in 13 Western states.

But an idea which, on the face of it, seemed calculated to have wide appeal ran immediately into opposition from such diverse groups as ranchers, miners, oil executives and environmentalists.

After touring Western communities last month, Secretary of Interior Donald Hodel conceded in an interview with *The Washington Post* that the land swap was in serious trouble.

"Everyone wants to reduce the federal bureaucracy until you start talking about doing it in their backyard," Hodel said.

John Moeller, BLM director of management and resources, and one of the men who drew up the land swap, says the two agencies will proceed with it, submitting a final proposal to Congress sometime this fall.

But he admitted that public comment this summer provides little hope that the measure will survive. More than 90 percent of the responses to the plan were negative, he said (*HCN*, 9/30/85).

The proposal would close 49 government offices, reducing the number of Western towns with both Forest Service and BLM offices from 71 to 22.

This would permit cutting 700 to 800 jobs and saving \$30 million or more. While it would cost \$45 million to implement the swap, the plan still

could produce a net savings of \$105 million over five years.

But, said BLM Director Robert Burford, all these benefits crumbled before the "turf-protection instinct."

Not entirely, according to Howe. The two federal agencies did a poor job in presenting the plan to Congress, she said.

"They rushed up here for a briefing -- the entire delegation's staffs were briefed in our office -- and that was the first any of us had ever heard of it."

"The proposal dropped right out of the sky," Howe recalled. "Somebody leaked it before the Forest Service and BLM were ready, and it caught them off guard."

"I remember that they had only one map, and they couldn't leave it with us because they had to take it to a briefing in the Senate."

Hill noted that another problem is that the two agencies keep making changes in the proposal, and that makes it difficult to develop a position on it.

There's also a suspicion that neither the Forest Service nor the BLM has its heart set on the plan.

"The gossip around town is that neither agency came up with this idea," said Howe. "The talk is that it was forced on them by the Office of Management and Budget."

--Ray Stephens  
Jackson Hole Guide

## HOTLINE

### Burfords tangle with police



Robert Burford, the Reagan-appointed director of the Bureau of Land Management, faces a court hearing Oct. 16 for driving while intoxicated and refusing to take a Breathalyzer test. Two hours after his arrest in Arlington, Virginia, Burford's wife, Anne, was arrested and charged with being drunk in public. The sheriff at the detention center where Robert Burford was being held said Mrs. Burford clawed and cursed at a woman guard. Anne Burford resigned two years ago as chief of the Environmental Protection Agency amidst charges that the EPA was not conscientiously enforcing environmental laws.

### Antelope roundup



Dick Randall, Defenders of Wildlife

Although Wyoming Game and Fish officials originally planned to shoot a herd of 25 pronghorn antelope stranded on a hill in Rock Springs, the public outcry from some residents this summer changed their strategy. Rock Springs Game Warden Allen Round says that his department will now try to recruit townspeople to help trap and move the animals this winter. Round wants to move fast. Given the number of new does, the herd's current size of 24 or 25 could increase to 40 or 45 by next spring. Although the most outspoken Rock Springs residents are those who opposed shooting the herd, Round noted that other residents have complained about antelope urinating on their lawns and eating shrubs.

## HOTLINE

### Fontanelle Dam decision near

Fix the leaks or cut a hole in the dam "to allow the river to flow freely." Those are the two alternatives for Wyoming's Fontanelle Dam, now being studied in detail by the Bureau of Reclamation.

The 20-year-old earthen dam, situated on the upper stem of the Green River, has been plagued by excessive seepage since shortly after it was completed. In May, worried BuRec engineers ordered the partial draining of the reservoir when instruments showed that a dam failure was possible.

The Bureau prefers to fix the structure, and is currently testing a

concept which calls for pouring a thin concrete wall inside the entire mile-long length of the dam. The repair cost won't be calculated until after the tests, but earlier estimates by agency engineers place the price tag at \$52 million.

An environmental assessment now being prepared on the proposed project will also review the alternative of simply cutting a hole in the dam and walking away from it. Both the assessment and a "modification report" that BuRec needs to answer congressional questions are due to be released in October.

--Paul Krza

### Synfuels aid is moribund

Under a page one headline, "Another nail in oil shale's coffin," the Oct. 6 *Denver Post* reported that Energy Secretary John Herrington says there is no economic justification for federal support of synthetic fuels.

He also came out against the Synfuels Corp. committing an extra \$500 million to Unocal's oil shale project. Herrington said the \$800 million Unocal project near Parachute, Colorado, uses "an unproven and failed technology." The plant was completed in fall 1983, but is yet to operate.

The House of Representatives has voted to abolish the Synfuels Corp., but the quasi-independent body is stronger in the Senate. The Synfuels Corp. is racing ahead with plans to sign contracts with corporations, including Unocal, committing the

federal government to spend several billion dollars on synfuels projects. Herrington's interview with *Post* reporter Gary Schmitz may be intended as a signal to the Synfuels Corp.

Herrington is also faced with the disposal of the Great Plains Gasification Project at Beulah, N.D. The Department of Energy now owns the \$2.3 billion plant due to defaults by five companies on federal loans.

Montana Gov. Ted Schwinden, D, has urged Herrington to keep the plant operating. Its closure would cause electric rate increases in eastern Montana because Great Basin Electric Power Cooperative would have to raise its rates to make up for the loss of the gasification plant's business.

--Ed Marston

### Forester raps coalition



USFS

Jim Torrence, Rocky Mountain regional forester, came close last month to declaring a moratorium on all aspen cuts in Colorado. Torrence said his staff has been besieged by appeals that cause too much paperwork and block planned sales. The coalition Torrence was referring to is Western Colorado Congress, which has appealed three aspen cuts. WCC director Teresa Erickson says a fourth appeal is imminent unless the Forest Service agrees to do a thorough analysis of aspen cuts. So far, she says, the only benefit from aspen cuts is to Louisiana-Pacific, which shreds the trees into waferboard, a plywood-like product.

## BARBS

Helena, Montana, suffers a muscle drain.

The Helena School Board's decision that a C average is necessary

to play football and other sports led to an unsuccessful lawsuit by parents of affected students. When they lost the suit, some parents moved their students to nearby communities, which adhere to the D average standard common to Montana.

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**HOTLINE****Nine suicides**

Almost 30 suicide attempts, nine of which were successful, have struck the Wind River Reservation in central Wyoming. The victims were all young men, and they all killed themselves by hanging within the past two months. The two-million-acre reservation is home to 6,000 Indians of the Shoshone and Arapahoe tribes. It is also home to the alcoholism and unemployment which is endemic on many reservations. The reservation is near the towns of Lander and Riverton.

**Goring is gory**

**WARNING**  
NEARLY A DOZEN VISITORS  
HAVE BEEN GORED  
BY BUFFALO THIS SUMMER.

Bison can weigh 2000 pounds and can sprint at 30 mph, three times faster than you can run.

All animals in the park are wild, unpredictable and dangerous.

Stay in or near your car and do not approach wildlife.



A simple but graphic flyer given to visitors entering Yellowstone National Park late this summer may have helped prevent some painful confrontations. The yellow flyer's headline read: "WARNING: nearly a dozen visitors have been gored by buffalo this summer." A line drawing below shows a person impaled on the horns of a charging bison. Greg Kroll at Yellowstone's public affairs office says that "once the flyer was distributed, we had no more gorings. (That) doesn't mean it was why, but we believe it helped." The most serious bison-inflicted injury of the summer was a woman who had her pelvis broken.

**Emissions admission**

President Reagan's representative on acid rain told governors of six New England states last month that industrial pollution causes acid rain. The envoy, Drew Lewis, said: "It seems to me that saying sulphates do not cause acid rain is the same as saying that smoking does not cause lung cancer." Lewis was also quoted in *The New York Times* as saying that the President "solidly backed" that position. A week later, however, White House aides said Reagan was waiting for Lewis' formal report before recommending any action.

**Old unfaithful**

After almost a century of sleep, Excelsior Geyser in Yellowstone National Park burst into life for a short time last month. Inactive since 1890, the powerful geyser shot steam and water 55 feet into the air and caused surface waves up to 30 inches high. Formerly one of the strongest of Yellowstone's geysers, with rock and water explosions up to 300 feet, Excelsior raged briefly from September 14-16. Although Excelsior's activity came as a surprise, Park officials say sporadic eruptions of this kind aren't uncommon to Yellowstone.

**The Rockies set dismal records in 1985**

This was the summer for fire in the West. An abundance of forest undergrowth and grasses from the past three wet years combined with one of the driest springs recorded and numerous electrical storms to cause major burning from southern California to northern Idaho and Montana.

The Forest Service's Intermountain Region of Utah, Nevada and southern Idaho reported 875 fires this summer, 14 of them major "project" fires. Dick Pine, from the region's Ogden, Utah, headquarters, says a project fire is a large "threatening fire that needs to be aggressively suppressed" and cannot be controlled using only local firefighters. Highly skilled specialists are called in to combat the big blazes.

According to Pine, over \$20 million was spent battling fires over 124,972 acres, only 6,412 acres of which were caused by man and not lightning. The average amount of land charred each year from 1980-1984 was only 38,968 acres.

In the Northern Region of Montana, northern Idaho and North Dakota, fire coordinator Charlie Rodgers says some 1,180 fires this summer burned 40,500 acres. Although Rodgers says costs haven't yet been figured, he estimates that 20-25 of the fires were serious project fires. One relatively small 6,500-acre blaze in South Dakota's Black Hills National Forest caused \$1.2 million in damage and over \$250,000 to control.

This summer's fires were not



discriminating. There was damage to private property as well as to national parks, forests, wilderness areas and other public lands. In July, more than 17,000 people battled fires that burned over 1.2 million acres in the western United States and Canada.

Arnold Hartigan, Forest Service public affairs officer in Boise, Idaho, tries to keep track of what's going on in all regions. What was different this summer was the extraordinary number of range and brush fires in Idaho, Nevada and Oregon, he says. They damaged watersheds as well as doing some "nasty things to wildlife.

They're just as serious as timber fires."

Hartigan says it will take two years to round up costs of fighting fires since each of the many agencies has its own system of reporting. "What we also don't have is one computer to handle all the fire information," Hartigan notes.

Although scattered forest and range fires continue to pop up in Washington, Wyoming and other western states, cooler temperatures and winter storm patterns have finally brought an end to a summer of smoke.

--David Havlick and staff

**Groups hope to drown Arizona dam**

The Bureau of Reclamation's proposed Cliff Dam on Arizona's Verde River near Phoenix has mobilized some formidable opposition.

With a combined membership of more than 5 million people, 12 national and local conservation groups filed suit against the dam September 19 in U.S. District Court in Phoenix. The groups include the Sierra Club, National Audubon Society, Friends of the Earth, Wilderness Society, National Parks and Conservation Association, Arizona Wildlife Federation, Friends of the River, American Rivers Conservation Council, Prescott Audubon Society, Environmental Policy Institute and the National Wildlife Federation.

The suit charges that the Bureau of Reclamation failed to consider alternatives to the dam as required by the National Environmental Policy Act, and neglected to inform the public or allow for proper comment. Robert Witzeman, a Phoenix resident and member of the Maricopa Audubon Society, also a party to the suit, said his group considers the dam wasteful both ecologically and economically. Each acre of floodplain protected by the new dam would cost taxpayers \$800,000, he says.

Saying it's "a pity taxpayers have to take the federal government to

court," Witzeman says the dam would also harm the small population of bald eagles found in the Southwest (*HCN*, 6/24/85). According to Witzeman, four of the only 13 pairs of Southwestern bald eagles with young would be seriously threatened by Cliff Dam. Witzeman's opinion differs from an August 16 report by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The report concluded that the dam can be built without jeopardizing eagles as long as strict building and operation guidelines are followed. The Bureau of Reclamation requested the study after a pair of eagles was found one mile from the dam site in 1984.

The Bureau of Reclamation planned the dam in 1982 after intense flooding of the Salt River, which is fed by the Verde just upstream of Phoenix. In 1978 and 1980, floods in downtown Phoenix wiped out all but two of the river's bridges and forced closure of the Phoenix airport.

But Witzeman says the dam is unnecessary now because measures have been taken, such as installing 15 "flood-proof" bridges and deepening the riverbed to protect airport runways. Witzeman adds that statistics from the Bureau of Reclamation's environmental impact statement back up conservationists' objections to the dam. The EIS projects 70 percent of

the dam's flood control benefits would be for "enhancement" of land, opening it up for development, while only 30 percent would act to reduce damage. With real estate prices in downtown Phoenix reaching as high as \$200,000 per acre, Witzeman says financial incentives are high for reclaiming 2,071 acres in the Salt River floodplain.

Plans for a \$1 billion riverbed development scheme called Rio Salado have already been drawn up by a development district. Rio Salado would create housing for 36,000 people as well as commercial, industrial, and recreational space.

--David Havlick

**BARBS**

Some communities have no gratitude.

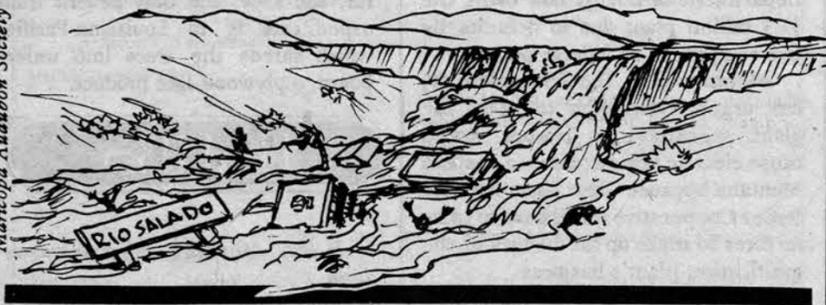
Duchesne, Utah, is not overwhelmed by the impact mitigation the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is giving the town for hosting Central Utah Project construction workers. In fact, city manager Alan Grindstaff suggests calling the "free" bowling alley Pork Barrel Lanes.

Yes, we know how it is.

When asked whether the sinking of Greenpeace's Rainbow Warrior by the French was terrorism, Vice President George Bush, head of a presidential task force on terrorism, said, "I'm not going to go into that. You know how it is, you know how it is."

We could all starve to death.

The fast-food restaurant industry is having trouble finding employees, even when they raise wages above the \$3.35 minimum, according to *The New York Times*.



# BULLETIN BOARD

## MORE WYOMING CO<sub>2</sub>

It's time to comment on plans to build a gas processing plant in south-central Wyoming and CO<sub>2</sub> pipelines from there to oil fields in Wyoming, Montana and North Dakota. Exxon, Shell Pipe Line and Amoco Production are the companies planning the projects; the Wyoming Bureau of Land Management, Montana's Custer National Forest and the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation have finished a draft environmental impact statement. The document examines the companies' proposal, as well as a highway-transport alternative, a single pipeline alternative, and a no-action alternative. Construction of the pipelines and the plant near Bairoil, Wyoming, would begin in the spring of 1986. Hearings on the draft EIS will be held at 7 p.m., Oct. 22, in the Natrona County Library in Casper, Wyoming; Oct. 23 in the library basement in Baker, Montana; and Oct. 24 in the Gate City Building Community Room in Dickinson, North Dakota. To testify at a hearing, contact Janis VanWyhe at the Division of EIS Services, 555 Zang St., First Floor East, Denver, CO 80228 (303/236-1080). Copies of the draft EIS can be obtained from the Denver address or from several BLM and Forest Service offices in the project area.

## COLORADO AIR HEARING

Comments about Colorado air pollution sources, problems and possible remedies can be aired at a public hearing in Denver on Oct. 16. Also, questions concerning rules, regulations, administration and enforcement of the Colorado Air Quality Control Act will be answered by the state's Board of Health and Air Quality Control Commission, the joint hosts of the hearing. The meeting starts at 1:30 p.m. in Room 412 of the Colorado Department of Health Building, 4210 East 11th Ave. in Denver.

## BLACKLEAF OIL AND GAS WORKSHOPS

State and federal agencies are courting input on the consequences of continued oil and gas exploration and development along the Rocky Mountain Front 20 miles northwest of Choteau, Montana. The Montana Bureau of Land Management, Lewis and Clark National Forest and Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks are beginning an environmental impact statement on development in the Blackleaf area, and are currently holding a series of public workshops. You can still catch a workshop at the Choteau Public Library in Choteau on Oct. 16 or the Ponderosa Inn in Great Falls on Oct. 23. Both meetings start at 7 p.m. For more information, contact Bill Bishop, team leader, Great Falls Resource Area, P.O. Drawer 2865, Great Falls, MT 59403.



## WILD HORSES

Beginning in mid-October, about 160 wild horses from southwestern Colorado will be available for adoption. The Bureau of Land Management, in its first wild horse roundup in the region, is looking for area residents, who must meet a few simple guidelines and pay \$125 to join the Adopt-a-Horse program. For an application packet or more information contact Bob Stanger, BLM, 701 Camino del Rio, Durango, CO 81301 (303/247-4082) or Johnny Riel, BLM, 2465 S. Townsend, Montrose, CO 81401 (303/249-7791).



## GRAND CANYON MANAGEMENT PLAN

Grand Canyon National Park is seeking public review of the park's Backcountry Management Plan. A public meeting will be held Oct. 31 in Phoenix followed by a 30-day public comment period. Copies of the backcountry plan are available at Grand Canyon's Backcountry Reservations Office; for comments or inquiries write Grand Canyon National Park, Backcountry Reservations Office, Box 129, Grand Canyon, AZ 86023 (602/638-2474).

## DIRECT MAIL CHEAP

It is difficult to imagine anyone writing about direct mail in a way both scrupulous and charming. But Bruce P. Ballenger has done it in a 24-page pamphlet written for the Northern Rockies Action Group, or NRAG, and titled, "Direct mail on a shoestring." Unlike the "here's the sun and the moon" direct mail letters you receive weekly, Ballenger is honest and conservative. He does not paint the technique as a cure-all for an organization's empty coffers or thin membership rolls. But he does say it can be a useful gun in the arsenal, and he gives practical advice on how much to spend for ammunition and where to point the thing so as to maximize its effectiveness. Moreover, Ballenger's enthusiasm for his "art" manages to lift direct mail out of the basement and halfway to the first floor. To see for yourself, send \$7.50 to NRAG, 9 Placer St., Helena, MT 59601.

## EXAMINING THE INTERNATIONAL WEST

A new organization has been formed to look at major issues affecting the Pacific Slope of North America. The Institute of the North American West describes its domain as the mountains and the inland and coastal lands between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Ocean in Canada, the U.S. and Mexico. The group's director of programs is E. Richard Hart, who for seven years headed the Institute of the American West in Sun Valley, Idaho. Under Hart, the Sun Valley institute was well known for its summer meetings on public lands, Indians and other western issues. (HCN, 10/1/84). It appears that some of the approaches he developed at Sun Valley will continue at the new institute. The first project will focus on the cleanup of the Puget Sound/Strait of Georgia inland water system. The Institute of the North American West is a nonprofit membership organization. It can be reached at: Box 1224, Hailey, ID 83333.

## TEN TIMES WORSE THAN FAMINE

Lack of family planning, ignorance of how children should be weaned and polluted water kill ten times as many Third World children as the present well-publicized famine. Worldwatch Paper 64, "Investing in Children," says that many of the 17 million children who die each year succumb to diarrhea. The solution, writes author William U. Chandler, is education of mothers. A chart on page 16 of the study shows a direct relationship between female literacy and infant mortality. Education would help African mothers understand that to nurse a child until he or she is 18 months old, and to then suddenly wean that child to adult foods they cannot chew or digest, often leads to death. The study is encouraging because it describes relatively simple steps that can improve the situation, and cites many nations, including China, which appear to have solved the child-death problem. Worldwatch Paper 64 is available for \$4 from the Worldwatch Institute, 1776 Mass. Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20036.

## HOTLINE FOR SPORTSMEN

The Wyoming Wildlife Federation has organized a hotline for hunters to call if they're blocked from public land. State officials have estimated that up to 15 percent, or five million acres of the state's public lands, aren't accessible to the public. Sportsmen can call 307/637-5433 to report access problems.

## ALTERNATIVE ENERGY IN MONTANA

The Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO) will hold its annual meeting this Saturday, Oct. 19 at Fairgrounds Building Number 1 in Helena, MT. In addition to a "made in Montana" barbecue dinner and a barn dance, the meeting will feature various workshops, including ones on superinsulated housing, the Northwest Conservation Act Energy Plan, and Montana's agricultural situation. Child care is available. For information, call AERO at 406/443-7272, or write: 324 Fuller, Room C-4, Helena, MT 59601.

## WASTE HOTLINE

There's a new hotline to answer your questions about toxic or hazardous wastes. Set up by the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the Sierra Club, the hotline also offers reports on contaminated sites and illegal dumping. In addition, the Chapter's Hazardous Waste Committee is looking for more persons knowledgeable in the field to serve as information sources. The Hazardous Waste Information Line number is 303/572-1997.

## HELP PLAN WYOMING'S FUTURE

In a joint venture sponsored by the state of Wyoming and the non-profit Ucross Foundation, a "town meeting" will be held on Oct. 18-19 in Casper, Wyoming. Part of an effort called the Wyoming Futures Project, the Casper meeting is intended to be a statewide gathering of Wyoming citizens concerned about the future of their state. For a modest registration fee of \$6, participants can enjoy a reception, dinner and the conference itself. Send inquiries or registration to Wyoming Futures Project, 232 2nd Street, Suite 201, Casper, WY 82601.

## HIGH COUNTRY FIRST AID

From altitude sickness to shock and heat stroke, *Mountaineering First Aid* by Marty Lentz, Steven Macdonald and Jan Carline tells you what to do and in what order of importance. This new, third edition is a smart addition to any backpack. Our own caveat is that the section on giardia -- and how to guard against the parasite -- is sketchy.

The Mountaineers, 306 2nd Ave. West, Seattle, WA 98119. Paper: \$4.95. 112 pages.

## COLORADO RURAL CRISIS HOTLINE

A network of trained rural volunteers now exists to address the financial and emotional crises facing rural Coloradans. Recently dedicated by Gov. Richard Lamm, the Rural Crisis Hotline is open weekdays from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. to make referrals to financial, legal, emotional, and job training resources throughout the state. To contact the hotline center in Yuma, Colorado, call 303/848-5382, 848-5383, or 848-5384. For more information, call hotline director Bill Glover at 303/848-5382.

## MONTANA WILDERNESSES

A public review and comment period is now open for the draft recreation management plan in the 1.5 million-acre Bob Marshall, Great Bear and Scapegoat wildernesses. The wilderness draft plan was developed by a task force consisting of managers, researchers, environmentalists, outfitters, and other wilderness users. A summary of the plan is available at the supervisors' offices on the Flathead, Lolo, Helena, and Lewis and Clark national forests. Written requests for summaries and comments, which are due by Dec. 1, should be sent to Forest Supervisor, Flathead National Forest, Box 147, Kalispell, MT 59901.

## NATURAL BRIDGES PLAN

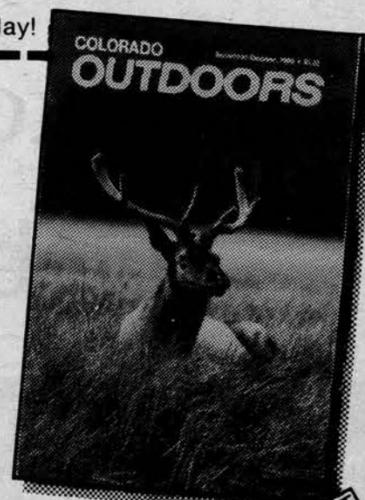
A draft natural resources management plan for Natural Bridges National Monument in Utah is available for public review and comment through November 1. The plan also includes an environmental assessment for the monument and will serve as a guide for using the area's spectacular rock formations and archaeological sites. For a copy of the draft or to send comments, write to Superintendent, Canyonlands National Park, 125 West 200 South, Moab, Utah 84532. (Canyonlands, Natural Bridges and Arches all share the same superintendent.)

## AIRCRAFT OVER GRAND CANYON

The growing use of aircraft over Grand Canyon National Park will be discussed at public meetings organized by the Park Service in San Francisco on Oct. 24, Las Vegas on Oct. 25 and Phoenix on Oct. 30. The conflict between sightseeing tourists and grounded folks seeking quiet and solitude in the canyon has recently come to a head (HCN, 7/8/85). Representatives from air-tour companies, environmental organizations and public agencies have been meeting since November 1984 to work out the air noise problem, but the October sessions will provide a chance for the public to comment. To receive an information packet write to Grand Canyon National Park, Box 129, Grand Canyon, AZ 86023.

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6-High Country News -- October 14, 1985



## Exxon Corporation has put the boom back in Wyoming

by Paul Krza

ROCK SPRINGS, Wyo. -- Fast food outlets are proliferating, half-naked girls are dancing, schools are bulging and cash registers are ringing. The long-awaited Exxon boom has arrived in southwest Wyoming, bringing with it a mixture of wealth and dismay.

The familiar catalog of boom growth effects now developing is the result of a decision by Exxon to construct what ultimately will be one of the largest gas processing, or "sweetening," plants in North America. As of early October, about 6,200 workers were laboring on the first phase of the planned \$2.2 billion project.

The plant is designed to process and separate natural gas drawn from the 14,000-foot depths of the Riley Ridge wellfields in southwestern Wyoming, which until only recently were considered unattractive because of the "impurities" in the gas. Ironically, it is one of the impurities, carbon dioxide, that helped make the project worthwhile. Carbon dioxide makes up about 70 percent of the Riley Ridge gas, and has a new-found value in resuscitating aging oil fields.

About one-half of the workforce is employed at the Shute Creek plant site, located in a sparsely populated area on the borders of Sweetwater and Lincoln counties in southwest Wyoming. The balance of work is further to

the north, and includes the drilling of 18 deep wells which will supply the plant when it goes into operation next year.

The mayors of the small towns located nearest to it have so far generally given Exxon good marks for the way the company has handled the project, crediting Wyoming's industrial siting laws for the advance preparations required to ease its impact. There have been some problems, they say, but not the major difficulties associated with the free-wheeling 1970's Jim Bridger power plant construction boom in Rock Springs that prompted passage of the siting laws.

"It hasn't been bad for us yet," said George Knoll, mayor of Opal, a

town of about 200 closest to the Shute Creek construction site. "I may change my mind six months down the road."

Already the workforce is larger than the 5,500 persons Exxon originally anticipated it would need to build both the first phase and start on the now-delayed second phase. And the peak employment level, predicted for late summer or early fall, now has slipped to November or December, when the number of workers could rise to 6,500, according to company spokesman Steve Kettelkamp. The state's Industrial Siting Council didn't set a number cap on the workforce, but instead gave Exxon the option of using busses to move workers from the work camps or cities like Rock

Springs where housing is more available.

Roughly half of the workers live in two construction "man camps," one located at Big Piney near the wellfield and the other at Shute Creek. For \$20 a day, single construction hands (no families allowed) can live in a 10-foot by 12-foot room and eat three meals at the self-contained modular camps.

The surrounding array of nearby small towns and cities absorbed the remainder of the workforce, or contributed to its numbers from among the unemployed.

The predictable squeeze on housing wiped available rentals off the market in the towns and pushed workers into motels and campgrounds intended for tourists. For some workers who brought families, camping on public land in tents and trailers along the Green River near the town of LaBarge was the only option left.

The number of these so-called "squatters" increased to an estimated 50 to 100 persons during the summer. Finally, in late August, health officials, alarmed at overflowing garbage and the possibility of human wastes contaminating the river, pressured Exxon to have the people moved and the area cleaned up.

A variety of other impacts have also materialized. Bars are doing land-office business, and as a result, local law officers have their hands full making alcohol-related arrests. Fights have broken out at the man camps, and one man was stabbed to death there. School enrollments are up 20 percent in Big Piney and LaBarge, and traffic is so heavy in Big Piney during rush hour that officials in the small town are contemplating installation of a traffic light on the main street.

The boom has wrought other

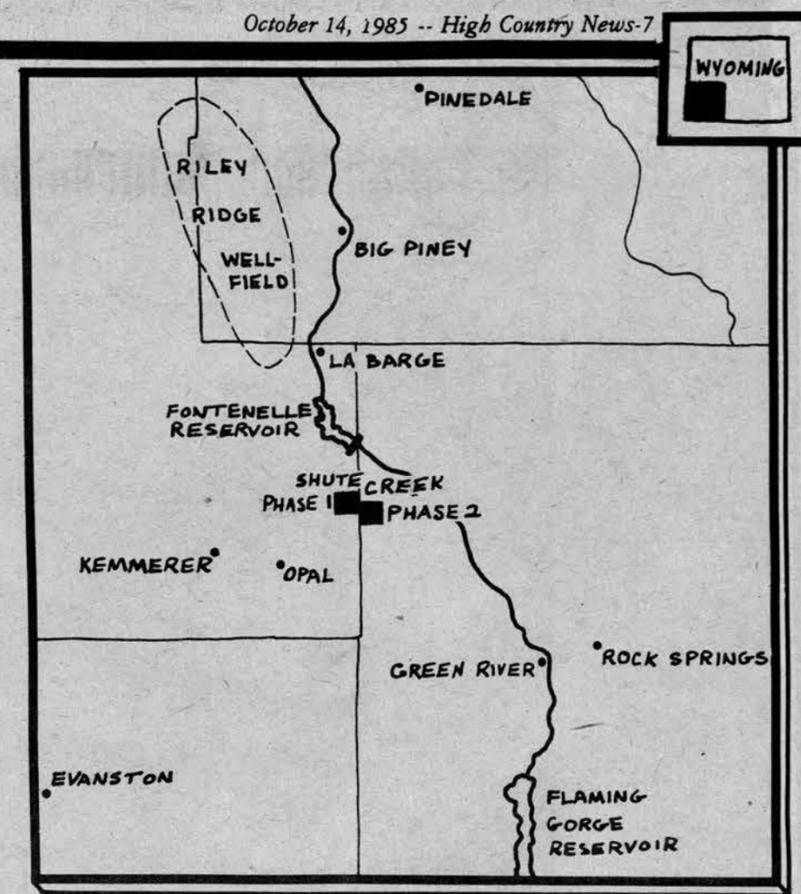
changes, which in large cities would go largely unnoticed but are traumatic for the small rural communities. There is chagrin in Opal over the transformation of what was a general store into a go-go bar, which thirsty Shute Creek workers crowd on weekends to watch as dancers from Salt Lake City grind and strip down to g-strings.

In LaBarge, former Mayor Don Studt says he is wary of "turning the kids loose to walk home at night." And in Big Piney, there have been reports of hookers, supposedly luring workers in front of the bank with come-on offers of cut-rate magazine

Overall, though, the disruptions are still at the tolerable level. The most likely explanation is the economy and the general prevailing scarcity of jobs elsewhere, which makes for a ready supply of labor to tap. Coupled with long hours at the construction site, the threat of losing one's job keeps potential trouble-seeking and carousing workers from getting carried away. Knowing that jobs can be filled quickly by unemployed folks literally waiting outside the construction site gates tends to moderate behavior, the workers themselves admit.

"They're going to the banks, making out big money orders and sending it home, not just throwing money away," Big Piney Mayor Dick Holgate said. "If them guys were keeping their paycheck and blowing it... then they think they own (the town). After spending all that money, that's where you have trouble."

The second phase of plant construction, which was to have begun this year and would have added another 1,000 workers, now seems to be slipping further into the future. Exxon steadfastly maintains that the



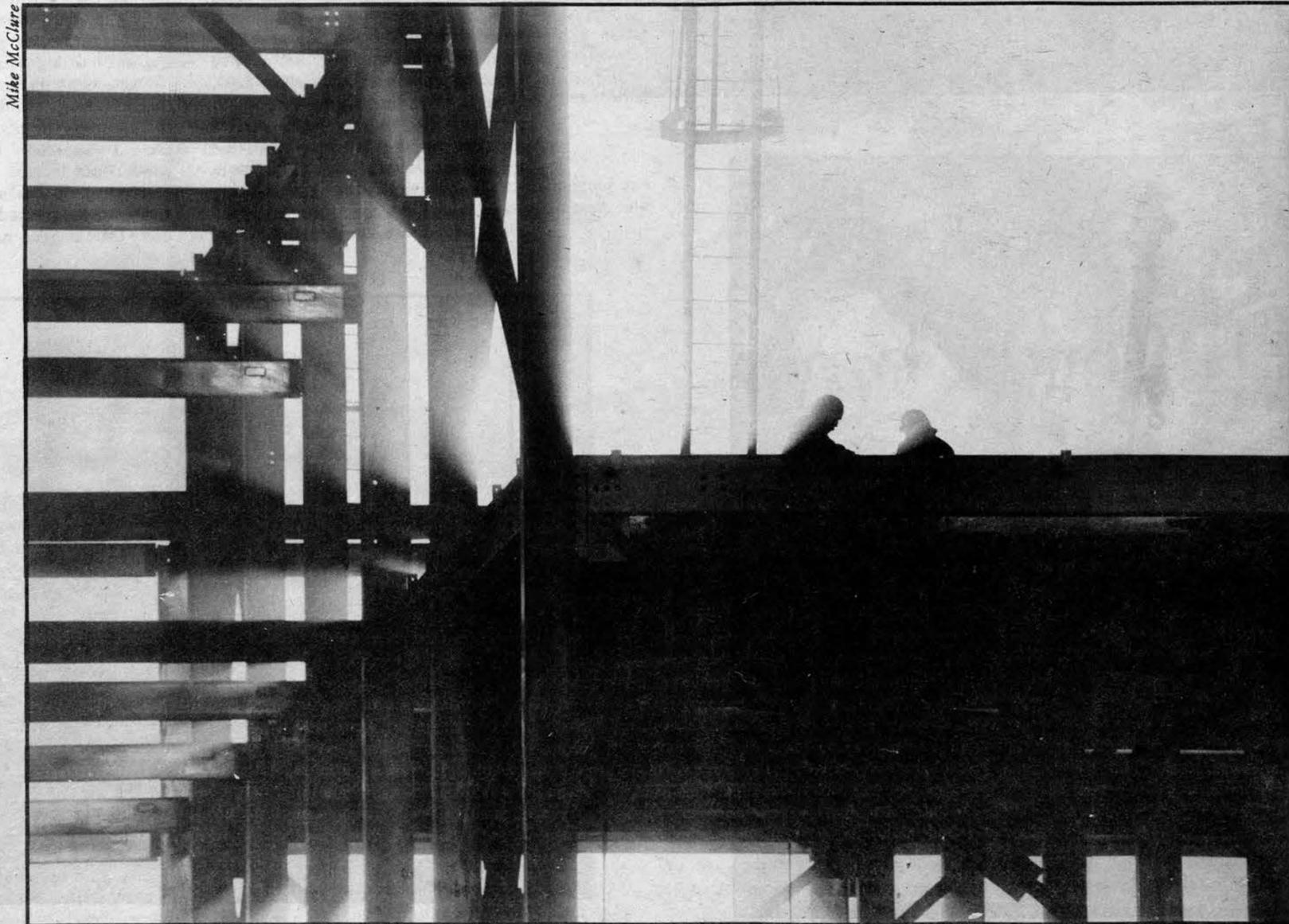
addition is dependent upon both getting the required governmental permits and developing markets for the methane and carbon dioxide production.

The company gained ground on the permit front in September, when the Wyoming state Department of Environmental Quality issued an air quality permit for the second phase. But new restrictions designed to curb acid rain-producing sulfur dioxide emissions from the plant have Exxon officials upset, and there are hints the provisions might prompt a time-consuming appeal.

The company is especially incensed with a requirement to deal with

and curb SO2 emissions during initial start-up or when breakdowns occur. Exxon's Kettelkamp said the firm feels singled out for an unprecedented restriction that could have unknown economic effects.

The Wyoming Outdoor Council pushed for the more stringent stipulations. They recalled pollution control equipment malfunctions at another gas processing plant in southwest Wyoming in 1983, which sent thousand of tons of SO2 into prevailing winds. The wind blows toward the nearby Wind River Mountains, where thousands of sensitive lakes are situated in wilderness areas.



Mike McClure

Iron workers at the Shute Creek Plant

High Country News -- October 14, 1985



# RENDEZV

Story and photos  
by Peter Anderson

"Welcome Blackpowder Shooters," said the sign outside a restaurant in rural Westcliffe, Colorado. "Special -- Rocky Mountain Oysters -- \$6.95."

West of town, at the base of the Sangre de Cristo Range, blackpowder enthusiasts and "modern day mountain men" were gathered for an annual rendezvous sponsored by the Colorado Springs Muzzleloaders.

At first glance the rendezvous looked more like a Good Sam jamboree with all the Airstream trailers and Winnebagos crowded into a parking lot. But on the other side of the creek, in the "primitive camping area," tipis and lean-tos reminiscent of the old-time trappers' rendezvous were clustered.

Decked out in buckskins, beads, moccasins and Hudson Bay blankets, men and women were throwing tomahawks, firing off their muzzleloaders and swapping tales with families gathered around campfires. "At this rendezvous, there are both modern and primitive camping areas," explained Charlie Judge, a blackpowder enthusiast.

"Some rendezvous are only primitive -- no plastic, no watches, no vehicles and no spectators. At those rendezvous you need to have a complete outfit, and that can get expensive. Those fox hats they're selling over there go for about \$200, and some of these guys have about \$1200 in their outfits," Judge said.

Back in the 1820s and 30s, the yearly rendezvous was a high point in the isolated lives of early day trappers and mountain men. In his book *Rendezvous Country*, Donald Pike

wrote, "The festive debauchery stood in stark contrast to the compelling reality of living from August through June in a wilderness that sometimes seemed deliberately malevolent... The lonely streams and mountains were his livelihood and life. He was a mountain man and there was nowhere else for him to go."

Today, almost 150 years after the end of the fur trading era, some of the old-time mountain traditions are kept alive at rendezvous such as the one in Westcliffe.

Over by the creek, a buckskin-clad trader who went by the name of Rich the Ridgerunner was selling his wares -- glass beads from the Crow Reservation, abalone shells, bear claws buttons made from deer antlers and "Superfine Black Rifle Powder."

"During the summer months, I usually hit about 40 of these rendezvous," he said. "Last year I wintered with the Apache; usually it's the Crow or the Sioux. The Indians call me the crazy man. I trade with them for beads and other things that I sell at these rendezvous... been making a living at it since 1947."

Over on the west side of Taylor Creek was a sign pointing to the "primitive range" where muzzleloaders were gathering for the mountain man race; an event that includes throwing a hatchet, shooting at several posted targets, throwing a lance, shooting an arrow, setting a trap and building a fire.

"Shooting with a muzzleloader is a real challenge," said Ron Melchert, of Colorado Springs. "There are lots of variables involved. Your powder load is real important. The best load isn't necessarily the biggest, and you need to load the same way every time. A good muzzleloader can

be deadly accurate.

"I love this," said Bill Garb. "When I was a kid, I remember seeing a mountain man in the morning getting dark, and I was into it since I noticed the time."

"Now do you have a next target?" George Bennet, who was in on the man run.

"Target? There is the day of the contest."

"You run it, take you a minute, your heart pounds, you could see someone else."

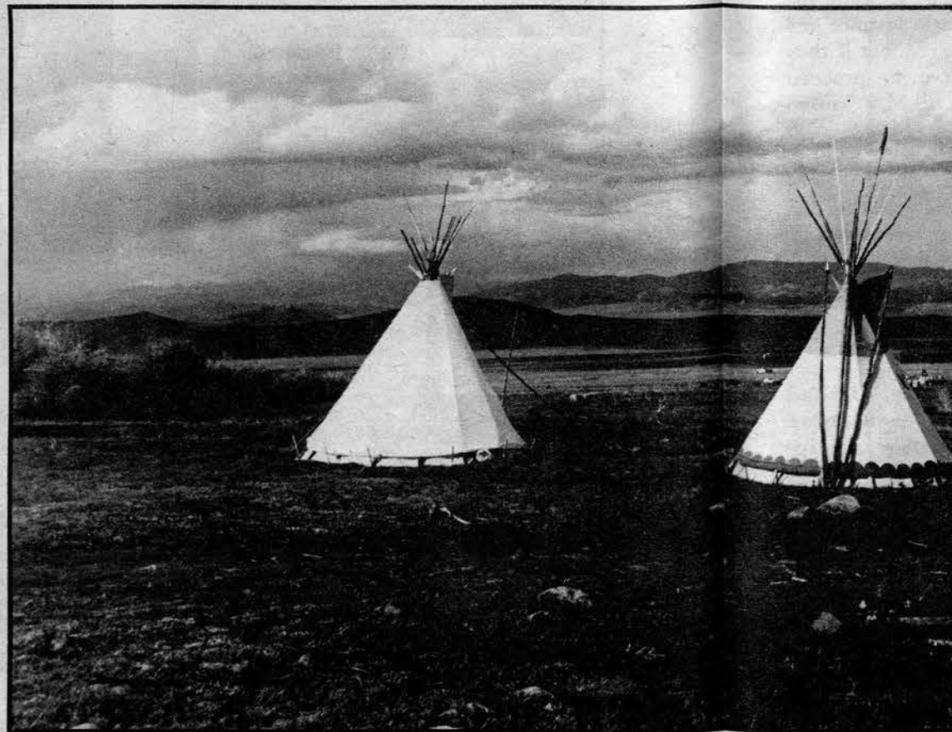
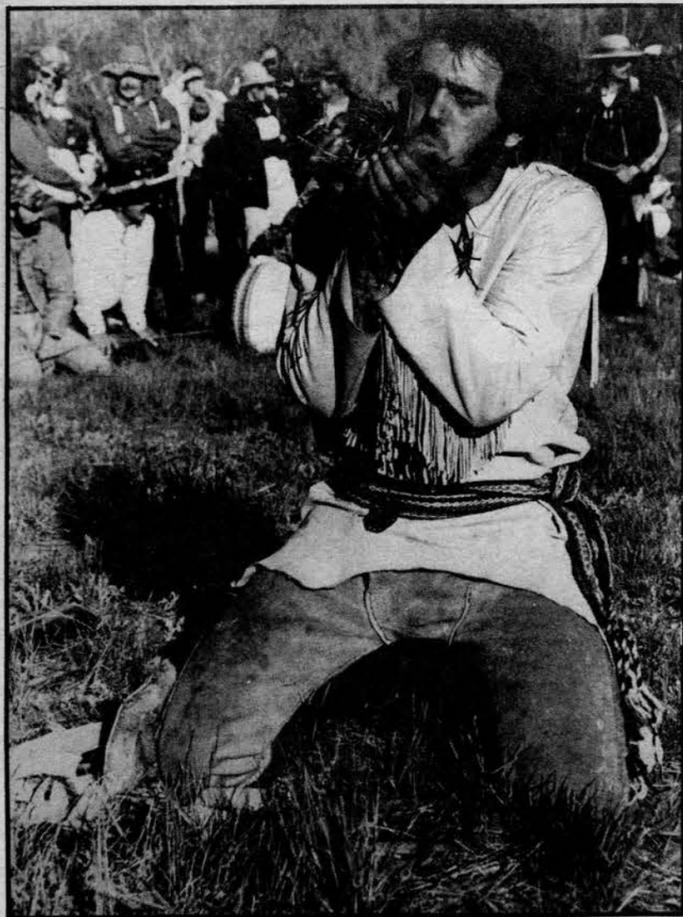
"How come we're all going?"

## Tips for

If you're a mountain man haven't lived a rendezvous, allow those who are enthusiasts to allow those who are camp in a mountain visit camp drive of primitive camping.

The best of buckskinning is Black Powder. The Buckskin Timber, Mountain several similar.

If you want



# RENDEZVOUS

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be deadly accurate at 100 yards."

"I love this mountain man stuff," said Bill Garbo of Colorado Springs. "When I was a kid I had this fascination with throwing knives. Then I got into throwing tomahawks... I remember once at a rendezvous in Cripple Creek, I started throwing early in the morning, and by the time it was getting dark, I was still throwing. I was into it so much that I hardly noticed the time go by."

"Now does everybody see that next target up on the hill?" asked George Bennet of Colorado Springs, who was in charge of the mountain man run.

"Target? Hell, all I can see up there is the damn mountain," said one of the contestants.

"You run too hard up that hill, it'd take you a minute and a half to get your heart pressure down to where you could shoot straight," said someone else.

"How come I get the feeling that we're all gonna be huffin' and puffin'

by the time we get through this?" said Don Brush of Monte Vista, who was sporting buckskins and a homemade skunkskin hat.

Like most of the participants in the mountain man run, Brush had taken a lot of time to put together an authentic outfit. "I made most of this stuff myself," he said. "The skunk I shot when I saw it sneaking into my chicken hutch one night... figured it'd make a pretty nice hat."

Soon clouds of gunsmoke were drifting out over the crowd of spectators, as the first of the men made their way through the course. "Not bad," a "real" mountain man might have said. "Not bad at all for the twentieth century."

□

Peter Anderson is a freelance writer who lives close to the Continental Divide in central Colorado. He also took these rendezvous photos.

## Tips for buckskinners

If you're a buckskinner at heart but haven't lived your fantasy, there are rendezvous and clubs-for black powder enthusiasts almost everywhere. Most allow those who are not yet outfitted to camp in a modern area as long as they visit camp dressed in some semblance of primitive clothing.

The best way to get educated to buckskinning ways is by reading *The Black Powder Report*, published by The Buckskin Press, P.O. Box 789, Big Timber, Montana 59011, or one of several similar magazines.

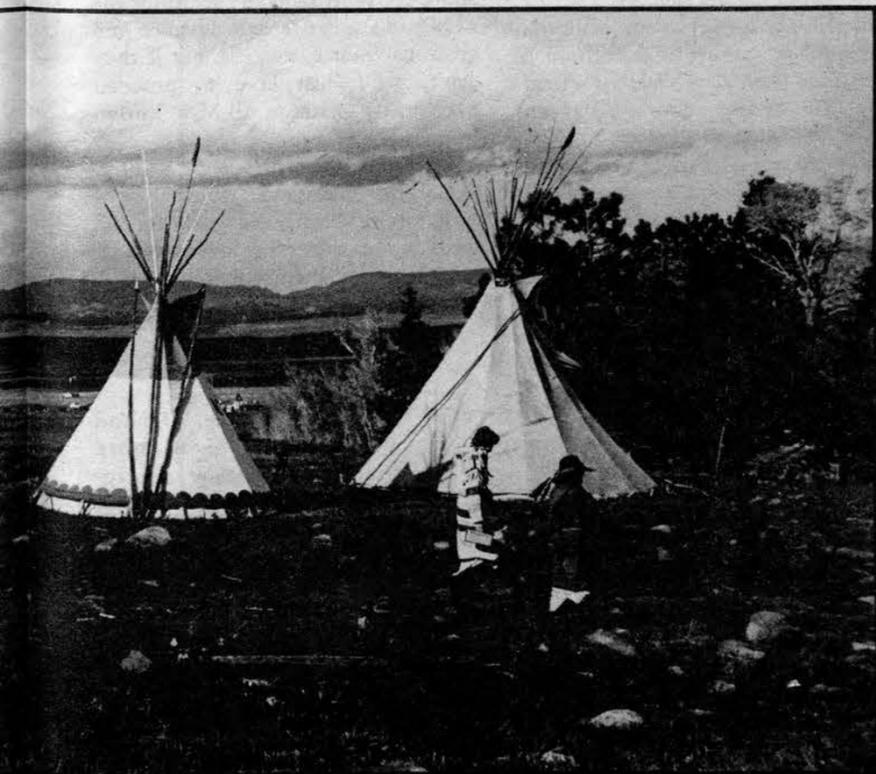
If you want a tipi, suppliers can be

located in buckskinning periodicals. The best source of information about tipi life is *The Indian Tipi, Its History, Construction and Use*, by Reginald and Gladys Laubin, published by University of Oklahoma Press, and referred to by most buckskinners as "the book."

--Linda Hasselstrom

□

Linda Hasselstrom, a rancher and poet in Hermosa, South Dakota, is a dedicated buckskinner.



10-High Country News -- October 14, 1985

## Last Stand...

(Continued from page 1)

At that first BLM wilderness oversight hearing, Seiberling recalls, he had shown former Interior Assistant Secretary Gary Carruthers "numerous examples of inadequate wilderness inventories... initial BLM wilderness recommendation decisions that were prompting strong public criticism, and substandard wilderness reviews." From the beginning, Seiberling says, he had tried to convince the Interior Department "that it would be better to conduct a thorough initial wilderness study... than to perform a hasty, superficial one that would be fraught with endless appeals and litigation."

That advice fell on deaf ears. Within weeks, Secretary Watt had ordered the BLM to drop from its wilderness review all areas of less than 5,000 acres, and any "split estate" lands (where the subsurface mineral rights were not owned by the federal government) -- 1.5 million acres in all. The Sierra Club promptly filed suit.

For conservation leaders in Western states, where the BLM has identified 24 million acres of wilderness study areas, the "Watt Drops" were only the latest debacle in a BLM wilderness review repeatedly marred by controversy and scandal.

In June of 1984, Seiberling scheduled a new round of BLM wilderness oversight hearings in Congress. The results were spectacular. Rather than placating conservationists, the hearings seemed to have the opposite effect. The BLM's wilderness review was evoking protest from all over the West, and at each new round of hearings the charges became more serious, more specific and better documented.

Testimony quickly focused on two species of grievances. First, conservationists charged, the BLM wilderness inventory (the initial selection process in which wilderness "candidates" were identified) had been -- at best -- draconian. In some states, entire natural areas -- huge chunks of pristine land -- had been "arbitrarily and capriciously" dropped from the wilderness inventory. Elsewhere, the original roadless areas had been mysteriously reduced in size, giants pared down to midgets.

Second, conservationists charged, the BLM was so biased against wilderness that it had actually been allowing development inside areas that had been selected as wilderness candidates. That was a violation of the agency's legislative mandate to provide "Interim Management Protection" (IMP) to all roadless lands under study for wilderness designation.

Reports of such "IMP violations" were pouring in from all over the West. In California, BLM allowed a thousand dirtbikers to race across the Soda Mountains Wilderness Study Area. In Idaho, BLM approved the construction of a 20-mile pipeline along the boundary between two wilderness study areas so as to introduce livestock grazing on a plateau whose prime wilderness values are its virgin bunchgrass and its herd of rare California bighorn sheep. In Oregon, BLM proposed to increase livestock grazing allotments in 12 wilderness study areas.

Even these complaints, however, paled alongside those emanating from

the state of Utah. In the June 1984 hearings, two Utah conservationists presented 50 pages of detailed testimony documenting 57 Interim Management violations inside BLM wilderness study areas in Utah -- 42 exploratory oil holes and 15 seismic or mining operations, with attendant roads and surface damage -- and identifying nearly 3 million acres of qualifying roadless lands that had been arbitrarily dropped from the BLM wilderness inventory in Utah.

Three million acres?

"In most of the other Western states, there were some differences of opinion," says Sierra Club Washington staffer Debbie Sease. "In Utah, the BLM wilderness inventory was shoddy."

For Jim Catlin, conservation chair for the Utah Chapter of the Sierra Club, the word "shoddy" is too polite. He prefers "massive abuse."

The "inventory" was only the first phase of the agency's two-stage wilderness review process. The purpose of the inventory was to identify all roadless units that had wilderness characteristics. Once those units had been identified, the wilderness potential of each "Wilderness Study Area" would be weighed against non-wilderness uses -- such as mining -- in developing the final recommendation to Congress.

According to BLM policy, simply being "roadless" and "natural" weren't good enough to qualify an area for wilderness study. In addition to meeting a minimum size requirement, all qualifying areas had to supply at least one or two "wilderness characteristics" defined in the Wilderness Act of 1964 -- either "outstanding opportunities for solitude," or "outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation."

Debbie Sease toured BLM roadless areas with Utah BLM State Director Gary Wickes while the inventory was in progress, and was appalled by what she found. "We stood on the edge of -- far as the eye can see -- incredibly beautiful, utterly wild land. Miles and miles and miles



Debbie Sease

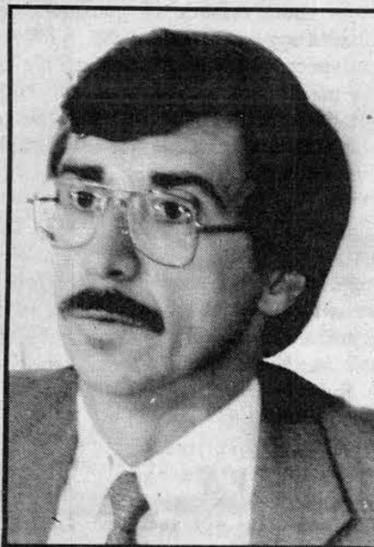
of beautiful Utah scenery. And I would say, 'Gary, why are you eliminating this?' And he'd say, 'Because there are no outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation.' And I'd say, 'And there's no opportunities for solitude, either?' And Gary would say, 'You're right. You can have solitude here, but it's not outstanding solitude.'"

Since 1980, a steady flow of politicians, bureaucrats, conservation leaders and journalists have taken the same tour.

Terry Sopher, then national director for the BLM's wilderness program, says he began hearing ominous rumors about the Utah BLM wilderness inventory in 1979. In the summer of 1980, as the inventory was nearing completion, Sopher visited Utah to investigate.

A single overflight, Sopher says, was sufficient to convince him that "what the BLM was trying to do was totally absurd." Flying over Labyrinth Canyon, he recalls, "you were looking down on the ground, and one side of the river was said to have outstanding characteristics, and the other side was said not to have, and they both looked identical... Based on what we had seen, there was an egregious violation of the policies."

Sopher rushed back to BLM headquarters in Washington, D.C., to report his findings to BLM Director Frank Gregg. Sopher's recommendation: "The director should intervene



Terry Sopher

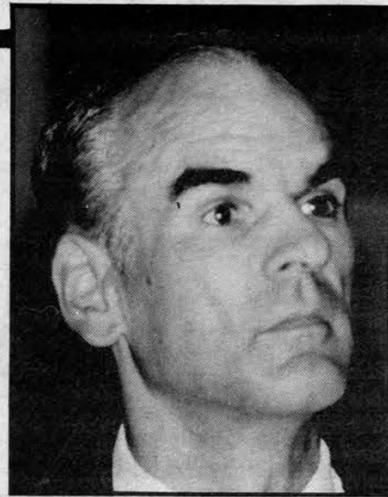
and take steps to stop the current direction of the inventory, to require it to be done over." Sopher fought vigorously to block the Utah inventory, he says, but was overruled by Gregg.

"In 1980, the Sagebrush Rebellion was at the height of its popularity and public presence," Sopher explains. "If the BLM national director had stepped in before the state director had reached a final decision... it would have fit the image of Washington bureaucrats telling local professional managers what to do. So the director at the national level decided that he could not take further action until the state director issued a final decision."

But the Utah state director's final wilderness inventory decision was not published until November, 1980, simultaneous with the election of Ronald Reagan. Before anything could be done to correct the BLM inventory, Reagan took office, Watt was appointed Secretary of Interior, and Robert Burford replaced BLM Director Frank Gregg. Sopher blasted the Reagan administration in a press conference. Then he resigned in protest.

Back in Utah, the situation looked grim indeed for Utah conservationists. After four years of unsuccessful protests and appeals, they might have been expected to throw in the towel. Instead, in April of 1980, they launched an omnibus appeal with the Interior Board of Land Appeals. Running to 1,500 pages and covering nearly a million acres on 29 separate roadless units, the appeal was the largest in the history of the IBLA.

The sheer size of the action sent a shockwave of alarm all the way to Washington, D.C. In 1982, Seiberling



Donald Hodel

traveled to Utah for the well-worn tour of roadless areas cut from the inventory.

Seeing is believing.

"They've left out areas that obviously qualify for wilderness," Seiberling told *High Country News* in an interview, "and I've seen a lot of them. I mean, their position is absolutely absurd where they've said that they dropped a particular area because it didn't give opportunities for solitude."

In April of 1983, the IBLA handed down its decision on the Utah appeal: in 21 of the 29 appealed units, the BLM's inventory decisions were in error. Almost 90 percent of the appealed acreage was either remanded for reinventory by BLM -- or simply reinstated outright to wilderness study status.

BLM's second inventory of appealed units took a predictable course. Just over half of the remanded acreage was reinstated, and the rest, once again, was dropped from the inventory. When the dust settled, BLM had identified about 3.2 million acres of wilderness study areas in Utah -- barely half of what conservationists thought should be studied.

...The slide show is over. All showed portions of roadless units that, although entirely natural, were dropped from the BLM wilderness inventory. Seiberling gets straight to the point.

"If you look at these conservationist wilderness proposals in Utah, you'll find that they're all roadless and certainly have outstanding wilderness values... The Congress is going to end up, I am sure, taking a look at these, and it certainly would be helpful if the BLM had studied them in advance and given us their evaluation. But if they don't, we'll just have to proceed eventually without BLM's knowledge."

Would Secretary Hodel be willing, Seiberling asks, to review BLM inventory problems, and to add certain areas to the wilderness inventory?

Seiberling, the romantic...

July 16, 1985

Two days earlier, I had witnessed an even more compelling display of romanticism. Pale sun, and a slight breeze, under the great old pine trees in Salt Lake City's Liberty Park. Standing at an improvised podium, Clive Kincaid is reading a quote from Edward Abbey. Two television cameras peer down at him, over the shoulders of a dozen reporters and onlookers sitting in folding metal chairs.

There is nothing like it elsewhere in this world. There are greater mountain ranges in Asia,

South America, and Africa. There are vaster deserts. There are longer and deeper and more powerful rivers. There may be, somewhere, exposed rock formations equal in color, variety of form, mass, extent, and grandeur... and there might be, though I've yet to hear of them, canyons as profound and labyrinthine as those of southern Utah and northern Arizona. But where? This much we may assert with dogmatic confidence: nowhere on planet earth can all of these features... be found within one geographic region, except in the canyon country of the American Southwest.

Kincaid, representing the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, is here today along with representatives of four other conservation groups to announce a *five million acre* BLM wilderness proposal for Utah.

Local reporters sit grim and still in their metal chairs, and one can hear them thinking: "Where do these hairball environmentalists get the gall? Do they actually believe they will ever get away with this? Don't they know that Utah's public lands belong to Utahns, and not to tree-hugging, waffle-stomping, carpetbagging, Marxist-Leninist and possibly even New York or California-based environmentalists?"

When the speeches are over, the questions begin. The tone is incredulous: "You're asking for 141 *separate* wilderness areas in Utah, is that *right*?"

Correct. A mere 141 wilderness areas will do the job.

"Do you think Utahns want to see the San Francisco and New York conservation groups heavily involved in determining the future of Utah lands?"

"I'm a Utahn," says Jim Catlin, with an edge in his voice. "And I'm a member of the Sierra Club. It's my club. It's not San Francisco's club."

One has to wonder at the temerity of these conservationists. What is it about this particular country, the high desert, the mesas and plateaus and canyons of Utah, that inspires such idealism, such passion and such faith?

"Anyone who knows southern

Utah at all," says Clive Kincaid, "knows that there's something that's unique... possibly, to the world. It's vast, it's extraordinary, it's difficult for a single person to assimilate it's so big."

When these Utah conservationists talk about wilderness, they're not talking about individual areas. They are talking about something much bigger: the "integrity" of entire regions. "I'm not so damned concerned about a 40,000-acre Little Rockies Wilderness Area or a 10,000-acre Negro Bill," says Kincaid. "I'm interested in seeing the protection of the core of the Colorado Plateau. And wilderness is only an avenue, an approach to that."

Without question, the Colorado Plateau is the most charismatic of Utah's astonishingly diverse landscapes. Roughly oval in shape, its borders sharply defined by a ring of Mesozoic lava extrusions, the Plateau covers 130,000 square miles of Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona and Utah. Like much of the Southwest, it is a world of high desert, a world where the land itself is constantly in motion, simultaneously rising with the thrust of the continent and being eaten alive by erosion. Yet while the Rockies to the east and the basin and range country to the west were being thrust, warped and splintered into being, the Colorado Plateau earned a name for itself simply by remaining structurally intact -- a neat, round little sandwich cookie of sedimentary strata afloat in a sea of orographic distress.

**H**alf of Utah -- and the vast majority of its BLM wilderness candidates -- lies on the Colorado Plateau. Its scenery is unfailingly spectacular, and its topography is a window into the earth. "You can't find the kinds of canyons, the kinds of stone, the kinds of plateaus and mesas, and you can't find the pinon-juniper forests together with miles of twisting rivers, and you can't find the kinds of hanging gardens and wildlife -- all with this incredible geology that's laid naked throughout the Plateau -- none of that is combined together in natural form anywhere else," says Jim Catlin. "It's

the wholeness of it that is its special value."

In recent years, says Catlin, development has been accelerating throughout southern Utah at an exponential rate. "New coal mines. New reservoirs. New drill pads. New roads. Off-road vehicle use increasing... Every time I visit one of these areas, I find some new development going on. The Colorado Plateau is becoming a thing of the past. If we don't act now, it won't be there."

"The majority of the Colorado Plateau is BLM lands," Catlin adds. "The wholeness of it -- the integrity of it -- relies upon large amounts of BLM land."

July 18, 1985

Back to Seiberling's hearing room, Interior Secretary Hodel steps to the witness stand. A former assistant to Interior Secretary James Watt, Hodel is the antipode of his blunt and controversial predecessor. He is poised, articulate, polite, conciliatory and above all adroit.

Yes, Hodel tells Seiberling, it is true that an Interior Department investigation recently revealed there had been 281 instances of "unauthorized activity" on BLM wilderness study areas during the past five years. Not to worry, however. According to the BLM, "not one of those did they recall as having had the effect of causing the area to become unsuitable for wilderness designation."

What Hodel has neglected to mention is that, according to conservationists, there have been some 1,600 instances where BLM has authorized surface disturbances inside wilderness study areas. It is the authorized activities, say conservationists, which are the most alarming.

"They have defined 'nonimpairment' in a way that the law never intended," says Terry Sopher, still angry two days after the oversight hearings. "They have defined nonimpairment to mean that you can go in and destroy wilderness values, just so long as you don't destroy them in toto. And I think that's just the worst kind of hypocrisy and the worst bastardization of the law that I've ever heard."



Rep. John Seiberling

It is Rep. Jim Weaver's turn to ask questions.

"We've got an agency out there," Weaver begins, "and people in it that don't like wilderness. They don't like the idea, they don't like the policy and they're going to do everything they can to subvert it." Wearily, Weaver recites the nationwide litany of IMP violations: "Increased grazing... illegal wood cutting... illegal road building... illegal mining... ORV (off road vehicle) races..."

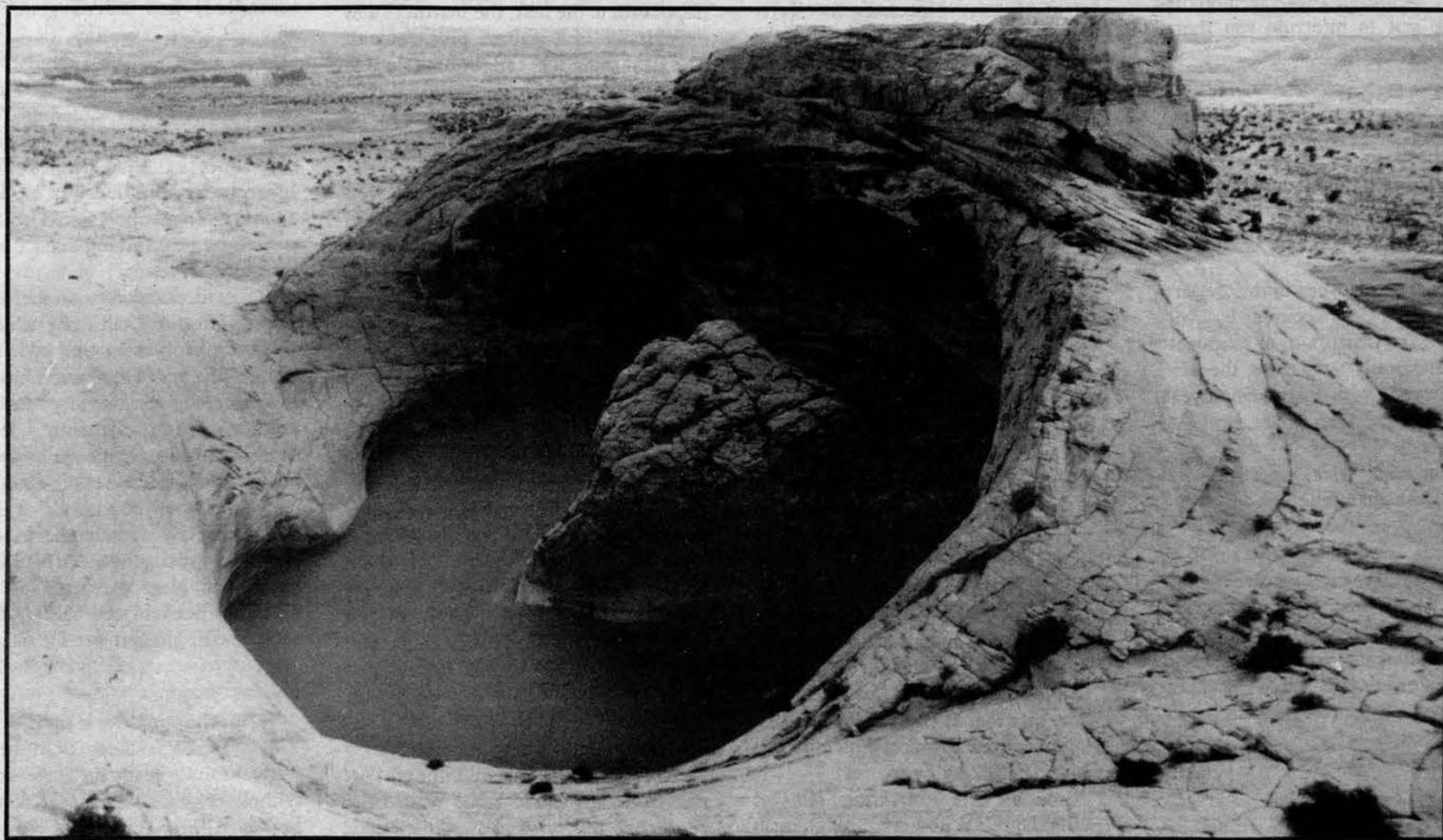
Weaver represents Oregon, a state that takes environmental protection seriously. Since 1982, he has sat through five BLM oversight hearings, watched three Interior Secretaries come and go and heard the same promises. Weaver's voice is rising in pitch. He is a man who has run out of patience, and he is about to ask a question so perfect and simple and obvious that it runs down the spine like a small sliver of pain:

"...Would you, in keeping with what you told this committee earlier, send a directive to the BLM... to leave these wilderness study areas alone?"

"The employees have been sent directives, Mr. Weaver, which make plain that they are to manage, pursuant to the law, in a way which does not impair the suitability of the land for wilderness designation..." Hodel replies.

There it is again -- "nonimpairment" -- the magical concept. Roadbuilding, motorcycle races, oil and gas wells, mining... is there any

(Continued on page 12)



Sinkhole and monolith in Navajo Sandstone, North Escalante Instant Study Area

12-High Country News -- October 14, 1985

## BLM moved quickly on the Salt Wash wilderness study

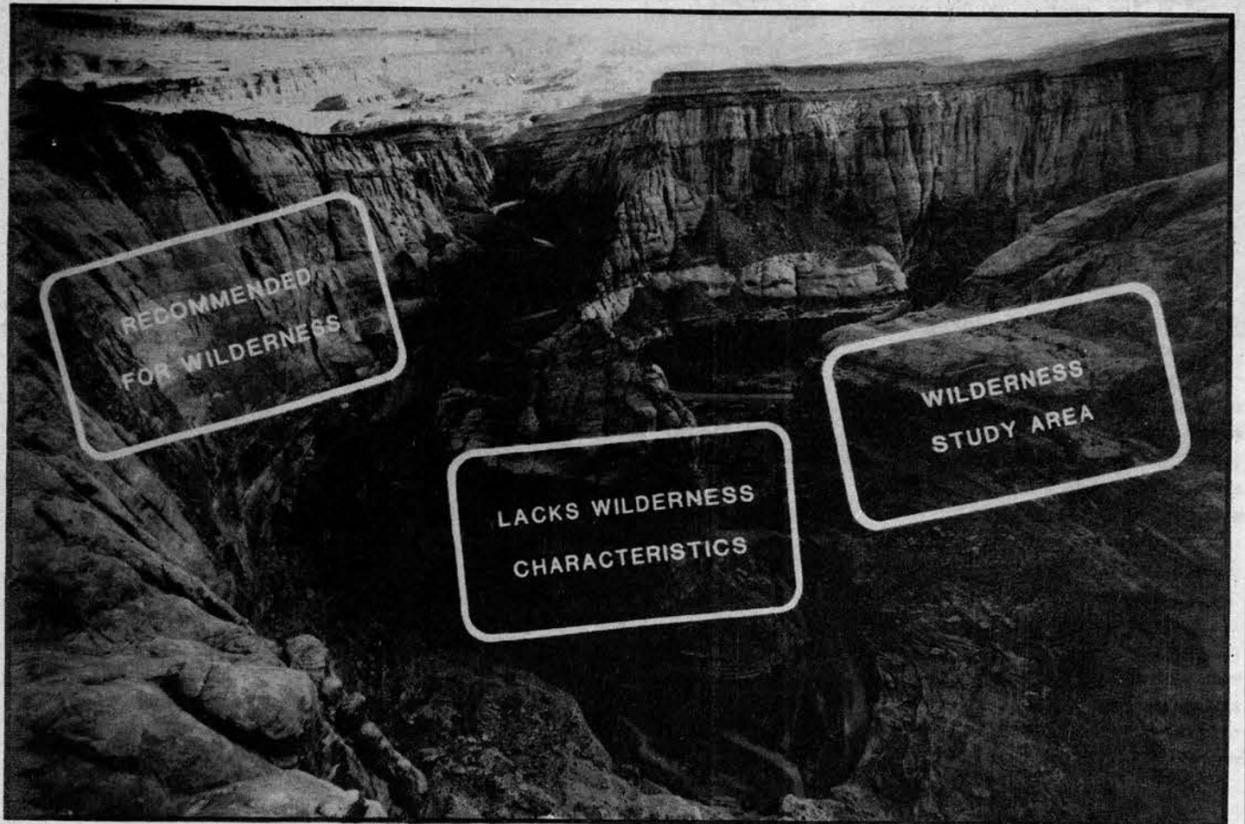
In 1978, Intermountain Power Project planners targeted remote Salt Wash, near Reef National Park, as the primary site for a proposed new coal burning power plant. It was billed as the largest in the nation.

Since the Salt Wash site lay in the heart of the second largest BLM roadless area in Utah, and since the law required that the area be protected from development while under study for wilderness designation, the BLM launched a special accelerated wilderness inventory for the area surrounding the site and related railroad and powerline right of ways.

The country surrounding the IPP site harbors some of the most unusual landforms in the United States. The northern portion of the 268,000-acre roadless area reaches into the heart of the San Rafael Swell -- a 1,000-foot high, 40-mile wide dome of arched sedimentary rocks which towers over the surrounding desert like a medieval castle. Ringed by steeply tilted sandstone formations, the center of the Swell has been excavated by two major streams, both of which flow for many miles through exquisitely deep and narrow canyons.

South of the Swell, Muddy Creek emerges from its canyon into a desert world of rainbow-colored and silica-littered badlands, a landscape of sweeping vistas punctuated by elegant, sculptured buttes, knifelike volcanic dikes, red, orange, grey and gold cliff lines, and narrow, curving sandstone "reefs" that ripple the desert floor like ocean waves.

Upon completion of the accelerated inventory, BLM designated just 31,360 acres, centered over specta-



*The photograph shows a hairpin meander in the 1,000-foot deep canyon cut by Muddy Creek through the southern wall of the San Rafael Swell. Using an old jeep trail in the bottom of the canyon as a boundary, BLM divided the area into two separate*

*units, one a WSA and one dropped from wilderness review.*

*As a result, the west side of the gorge [center] was described as "clearly and obviously" lacking wilderness characteristics, while the east side [foreground, left and right]*

*was retained as a wilderness study area and later recommended as suitable for wilderness designation.*

*The portion of the roadless area that was dropped contained the proposed IPP power plant site, railroad and powerline rights-of-way.*

cular Muddy Creek Gorge, for wilderness study, claiming that the remainder of the roadless unit failed to supply outstanding opportunities for solitude and recreation as required by the Wilderness Act.

Excluded from the resulting wilderness study area: the power plant site, the powerline and railroad rights-of-way and 99 percent of the 60,000 acres of mining claims within the original roadless unit.

Ironically, after public protest, the power plant was eventually constructed at a different site 100 miles to the northwest.

--R.W.

## Last Stand...

(Continued from page 11)

activity which isn't "nonimpairing?"

Weaver's voice rises another notch.

"Mr. Secretary, let me interrupt you. I've got to interrupt you there, because that's the problem..."

Hodel: "Mr. Chairman..."

Weaver: "Mr. Secretary, they're interpreting impairment..."

Now both voices are raised. For the briefest instant, Hodel looks flustered. Then a strange light seems to spring into his eyes, and he bears down into the microphone.

"Career employees of this department have been accused by Mr. Weaver, Mr. Chairman, of purposely and intentionally subverting the law. My experience with federal employees does not support that kind of accusation..."

It is a neat trick, effortless and smooth. Pass that generous helping of blame along to the rank and file -- those loyal, dedicated, hardworking, infinitely well-meaning career employees. Then, with blinding alacrity, spring to their defense.

"We political appointees come and go, Mr. Weaver, but those that keep this system working take seriously their responsibilities..."

No doubt about it, Hodel is quick. On this particular occasion, however, it appears

that he has been slightly too quick. Apparently no one has informed the Secretary that the most detailed and damaging indictments of the BLM wilderness program have repeatedly come from former career employees of the Bureau of Land Management.

One of those witnesses was Terry Sopher, former national director of the BLM wilderness program and an eight-year veteran with the Department of Interior. Sopher himself wrote much of the Interim Management Protection policy.

Another was Clive Kincaid. During his four years with the BLM Kincaid rose swiftly through the professional ranks, working first as a planning coordinator, then managing an ambitious district-wide range inventory, and finally earning two outstanding achievement citations for managing one of the agency's first complete district-wide wilderness reviews.

When Kincaid left the agency in 1981, he was approached by representatives of the Sierra Club. Reports of IMP violations were flooding in from all over the West. Would Kincaid be willing to spend a couple of weeks investigating violation in the four corners states?

Kincaid packed up his truck and set out on a tour of BLM district offices in Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado and finally, Utah.

Crossing over into Utah, Kincaid recalls, he felt a powerful magnetism radiating from the land. "I started dropping off that plateau in Monti-

cello, and out into this redrock dome country... and I said, oh, wow, isn't this wonderful country!"

Kincaid was not the first conservationist to examine the Moab district wilderness inventory files, but he brought something new and important to the task: the instincts and experience of a trained professional. The first thing that caught his eye was a boundary map for the Indian Creek unit, a spectacular redrock canyon system bordering Canyonlands National Park.

The eastern boundary of the unit was like no other wilderness area boundary Kincaid had ever seen. "It was absolutely squared off," he recalls. "And there would have been no policy application that could have provided for that kind of a boundary."

Intrigued, Kincaid drove out to the Indian Creek unit and spent four days wandering through its maze of canyons and sidecanyons. "It was some of the prettiest country I'd ever seen," he recalls, "all land just like what was in the (Canyonlands) National Park."

In the field, the unit's eastern boundary looked even stranger than it had on the map. BLM policy was clear: wilderness study area boundaries must be drawn along the perimeter roads that define a "roadless" unit, deviating only where necessary to exclude a major human impact. Yet this boundary sliced right across the center of the original roadless unit, straight as an arrow, miles from the nearest roads or human impacts. More

than two-thirds of the original unit had been dropped from the WSA.

Back in the Moab district office, Kincaid began examining other inventory maps. To his astonishment, dozens of them contained similar boundary anomalies. Something, he concluded, had indeed gone wrong with the Utah inventory.

"I knew much of the BLM wilderness study lands in Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado," says Kincaid. "And I was looking at landscape in Utah, which for no apparent justification was eliminated -- and improperly so -- that outweighed everything that I'd seen in the other states."

Kincaid decided to do a thorough investigation of Utah BLM wilderness inventory problems on his own. It was a huge project. There were hundreds of wilderness inventory units in southern Utah. Patiently, Kincaid began examining them one by one. He bought a complete set of topographic maps and spent thousands of dollars copying documents in the inventory files. Commuting between his home in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and BLM district offices in southern Utah, he stayed with the project for an entire year.

Perhaps Hodel is right, I muse. Perhaps these BLM professionals really do "take seriously their responsibilities." Asked why he was willing to spend a year of his life and some \$5,000 of his own money on the project, Kincaid says he felt

# Conservationists say Mt. Ellen WSA was gerrymandered

The nearly 200,000-acre Mt. Ellen roadless unit is a masterpiece of biological and topographic diversity. The mountain, a forested "laccolithic" dome of arched sedimentary rocks, rises to 11,615 feet and is visible from nearly anywhere in southeastern Utah.

Deer, coyote and cougar roam on Mt. Ellen, along with the nation's last free-roaming herd of wild buffalo. Though roads and other human impacts have been carved into the southern and eastern flanks of the mountain, to the north and west lie nearly 100,000 acres of unroaded intricately sculptured mesas and desert badlands.

While BLM immediately recognized that the mountain itself should be included in its wilderness inventory, it has taken a dim view of the surrounding desert.

The agency initially proposed a tiny 24,000-acre wilderness study area centering on the forested portion of the mountain. After receiving 42 letters protesting the decision, the agency added another 34,000 acres to the north.

Even after adding the additional acreage, the BLM had still excluded -- by its own admission -- at least 50,000 acres of pristine landscape to the west and northwest. Since the agency's own written policy clearly requires



The Blue Hills Badlands, cut from the Mt. Ellen Wilderness Study Area by the BLM

that all contiguous pristine lands must be included within a WSA, Utah BLM State Director Gary Wickes requested a special exception to the policy from the national director of the BLM. In addition to 50,000 acres on Mt. Ellen, Wickes requested permission to drop another 164,000 acres in eight other units, stating that in each case there

was "a high degree of character change within the unit," and that "portions of the units contain outstanding characteristics, while other parts clearly do not." The request was approved.

Former BLM wilderness coordinator Clive Kincaid says that the western boundary of the WSA

corresponds with mining claims and known deposits of recoverable coal for a distance of 28 miles, zigzagging across the badlands to eliminate 98 percent of the 30,000 acres of mining claims and 100 percent of the 20,000 acres of recoverable coal.

--R.W.

driven by "the injustice of it all, as much as anything. I'd probably never felt like I stopped working for the Bureau, actually."

What the Utah BLM had done, Kincaid came to believe, was to manipulate wilderness inventory boundaries wherever possible so as to exclude lands containing mineral leases, known mineral deposits or other potential resource development conflicts. "It wasn't accidental. It wasn't something that was happening coincidentally," he says. "It was a manipulation, a well thought-out, systematic plan."

To test his theory, Kincaid spent 10 weeks in the Utah BLM state office mapping the exact location of every mining claim on dozens of BLM roadless units with boundary anomalies. He came away with a mountain of documents, a \$300 copying bill -- and a conviction that he had solved the mystery.

Kincaid testified before Seiberling's committee in March, 1985, four months prior to Hodel's appearance before the same committee. A walking arsenal of maps, photographs and documents, Kincaid was a formidable witness. Patiently, he outlined five case studies of BLM wilderness inventory "violations" in Utah, while Seiberling helpfully sketched in wilderness study area boundaries on large color photographs. In the San Rafael Swell area, said Kincaid, BLM had slashed 80,000 acres from the huge Muddy Creek unit by simply adopting a county line as the boundary. In the Henry Mountains, BLM had dropped more than 100,000 acres of spectacular, rugged, pristine mesas and badlands. Elsewhere in Utah, the agency had dropped entire areas, including a 37,000-acre canyon system near Natural Bridges National Monument, and huge Mancos mesa, variously estimated at 60,000 to 100,000 acres of critical desert bighorn

sheep habitat. (See accompanying stories.)

These omissions, Kincaid said, were only a few examples of what had happened throughout the inventory. He had highlighted five case studies, but was prepared to do the same for at least 25 more.

"In my personal professional opinion," he concluded, "the entire Utah BLM wilderness review process has been so fraught with improper practices from its inception that there should be nothing less than a congressionally mandated or court-ordered review of the public lands in Utah."

Why, one must wonder, do conservationists feel so strongly about the inventory? To begin with, conservationists say, lands dropped from the inventory are far less likely to be considered by Congress for wilderness designation. What if an area has high mineral values -- but even higher wilderness values? Dropped during the inventory stage, the area's wilderness values would never be reported to Congress.

But there is another, even more compelling dimension to the inventory.

A federal law passed in 1976 required the BLM to protect all of its roadless lands from development as long as they were under study for wilderness designation. While lands dropped from the inventory were immediately released from the moratorium on development, lands that survived the inventory remained "locked up" until their fate could be determined by Congress. The history of wilderness bills has been that as much or more land is "released" as is designated wilderness. If some of that land has high potential for mineral or other resource development, there is a powerful incentive for industry to cooperate in getting wilderness legislation passed.

A spectacular demonstration of the importance of that incentive came with the enactment of the Arizona Strip Wilderness Bill of 1984 (HCN, 4/2/84). The Strip is a land of volcanic mountains, enormous canyon systems, and high, forested plateaus

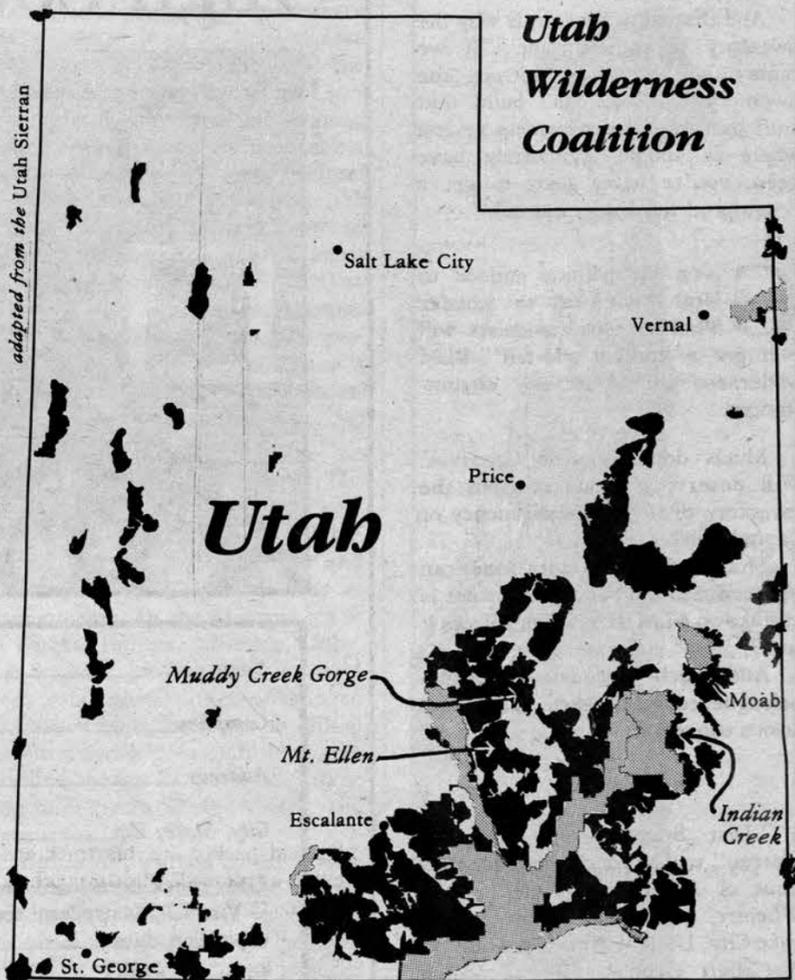
reaching from the Utah border to the brink of the Grand Canyon.

Although BLM identified 750,000 acres of wilderness study areas on the Strip during its inventory, its final recommendation to Congress was a

(Continued on page 14)

## BLM Wilderness Proposals,

Utah  
Wilderness  
Coalition



The Utah Wilderness Coalition's proposed BLM wilderness is in black, national park system lands are shaded.

## Last Stand...

(Continued from page 13)



pathetic 30,000 acres. Yet even as Utah and Arizona conservationists began gearing up for a long legal and administrative battle, they discovered a virtually omnipotent ally. That ally was none other than Energy Fuels Nuclear, a huge uranium exploration company with interests on the Arizona Strip.

Since many of the Strip's most promising uranium deposits were located inside BLM wilderness study areas, the company had decided to save years of delay by negotiating directly with conservationists. The result: wilderness designation for an area 10 times larger than the BLM's recommendation.

"That Strip bill was a landmark," says Clive Kincaid. "It proved that what counts is one thing only -- do you have them by the balls, or don't you? Have you locked up Exxon, Gulf, Kaiser, and everybody else -- just like Energy Fuels was locked up on the Strip -- or haven't you?"

In Utah, says Kincaid, the BLM was able to achieve precisely the opposite result by systematically removing lands with high mineral development potential from its wilderness inventory.

And that, says Kincaid, is why the inventory is so important. "If we cannot go back and correct the inventory... if you can't build that stuff back into the wilderness review where it should legitimately have been, you're never going to get a decent and fair wilderness bill."

Given the political outlook in Utah, one has to wonder whether conservationists will ever get a "decent and fair" BLM wilderness bill under any circumstances.

Much depends upon Congress. Will deserving areas cut from the inventory ever find a constituency on Capitol Hill?

Much depends upon the American public. Does the public know what is at stake on BLM lands in Utah? Does it care?

And much depends upon Utah's beleaguered, embattled, and tenacious conservationists.

□

"Last Stand for the Colorado Plateau" will be concluded in the next issue of HCN. This article by Ray Wheeler, a freelance writer in Salt Lake City, Utah, was made possible by the High Country News Research Fund. Article and photos Copyright 1985 by Ray Wheeler.

## BLM calls wilderness charges overblown

Roland Robinson served as assistant regional solicitor for the Department of Interior in Salt Lake City for five years before his appointment as BLM state director in 1981.

A Utah native, Robinson created a stir among Utah conservationists by his frankness. In 1982 he told a television reporter: "We have approached the wilderness situation in Utah from the standpoint that, to the extent possible, we would like to leave those mineral-bearing lands that are susceptible to development open for that purpose."

Did the BLM systematically excise lands with potential for mineral development from the wilderness inventory?

"I find it very difficult to respond to that," says Robinson. "All of that inventory activity occurred before I got here. The whole issue was before the Interior Board of Land Appeals at that time. I have essentially taken the situation as it was handed to me, and gone on from there. I suppose that some might argue, as they have, that decisions were made that excluded some mineral-bearing lands at the inventory stage. I personally have no knowledge of that because I was not involved."

After reviewing allegations made in recent BLM oversight hearings, Robinson says, "...Our people tell me that largely there's much more smoke than there is fire, and these allegations are overblown and exaggerated."

"But," he adds, "I would not want

to say to you that some of those allegations don't have substance. But, I would suspect when you're talking about five million acres -- and that's a heck of a lot of acres -- that there undoubtedly were some mistakes made. Some errors in judgment made. But I would think that they were the exception, rather than the rule."

Asked if Moab District wilderness coordinator Dianna Webb, who has been accused of using her position to help a firm her husband worked for, did in fact have a conflict of interest, Robinson carefully draws a distinction between "actual conflict of interest" and "an appearance of a conflict of interest." "If you say to me, 'Did Dianna do something that clearly was in favor of her husband, and was clearly opposed to the interests of wilderness?' -- well, I don't know. But I don't think that's ever been proved or demonstrated."

Why did BLM allow Gulf Minerals Resources to build 30 miles of roads on Mancos Mesa while it was still under study for wilderness designation?

Gulf's exploration proposal came just one month after the enactment of legislation initiating the BLM wilderness review, Robinson says, and at that time "there were no BLM regulations in place, covering treatment of lands that were potential wilderness study areas at that time. The district manager attempted, however, to stop that activity until the regulations were placed in effect. But the matter was referred to the solicitor, and the solicitor determined that the company had preexisting



Roland Robinson

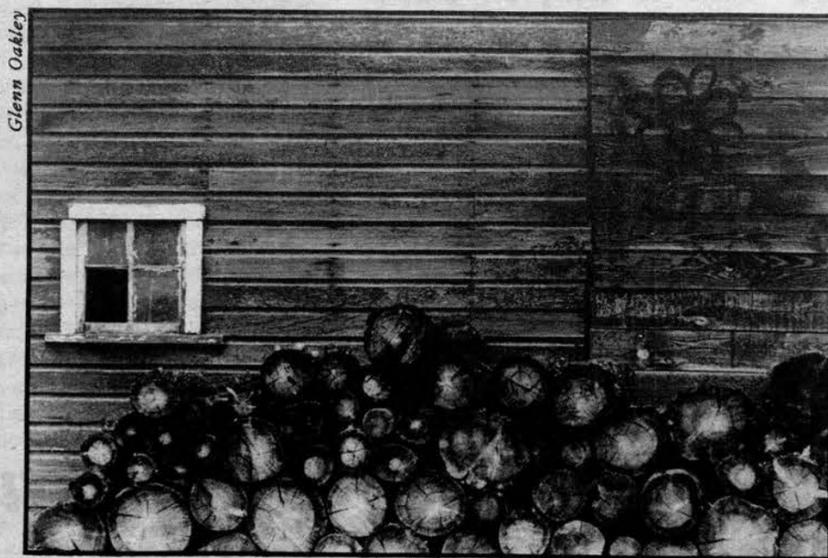
rights which had to be honored.

"The BLM asked for rehabilitation," says Robinson, "lacking authority to require it... and the company did agree to rehabilitate the pads. It did not agree, apparently, to rehabilitate the roads."

Although some mistakes may have been made during the inventory, Robinson says, those mistakes have largely been rectified. "Opponents of what occurred at that time have had opportunity to lodge their appeals. And their appeals have been heard and decisions have been made... We've got a substantial amount of wilderness acreage before us for consideration, and I would just like to get on with it."

--R.W.

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BOOK NOTES

Two books on a vanishing breed

*Lookouts: Firewatchers of the Cascades and Olympics*

Ira Spring, Byron Fish. Seattle, Washington: The Mountaineers, 1981, 208 pages, paper.

*Fire Lookouts of the Northwest*

Ray Kresek. Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1984. 412 pages. \$24.95, cloth.

Review by Don Scheese

Acrophobiacs beware: these are works whose subject is the inhabitants of the high country -- fire lookouts. Once upon a time there were plenty of them, over 3,000 alone in the Pacific Northwest. Their origins, proliferation, decline and recent renaissance are chronicled in both these works, with anecdotes and photographs enough to satisfy even the most die-hard lookout buff. Both books match the mountains and the lookouts who lived upon them.

Dates differ on the appearance of the first fire lookout, but Kresek, a 30-year veteran of forest and structure fires, makes a good case for Bertha Hill as the site of the first forest fire lookout. After the epic Yacolt Burn in southwestern Washington in 1902, the manager of a timber company in the Clearwater Mountains of northern Idaho decided that the camp cook, Mable Gray, should add to her duties by riding horseback twice daily to the top of Bertha Hill, where a seat 15 feet high on the limb of a dead hemlock was fashioned for her. This crude crow's nest became the progenitor of a colorful and romantic tradition in the history of forestry.

The heyday of lookouts occurred during the Civilian Conservation Corps years when, Kresek reports, more than 5,000 crow's nests were built across the nation. As Steve Pyne has pointed out in his monumental study of wildfire, *Fire in America* (whose only defect is the lack of attention paid to the role, symbolic and real, played by lookouts), many of the military tactics and hardware developed during World War II were applied to firefighting. Lookouts on the West Coast even served year-round as part of the Aircraft Warning Service system, designed to detect the approach of Japanese bombers. Later, with the development

of "helicopter surveillance, transistorized radios, smoke jumpers, fire retardant bombs, (and) infra-red heat sensors" write Ira Spring and Byron Fish, firefighting was revolutionized. Thus was initiated the decline of the lookout system.

Undoubtedly during the 1930s too many lookouts had been constructed and "manned" (an unfortunate but seemingly ineradicable faux pas -- since many lookouts were and are women). Witness the heroic though insane efforts of the Forest Service to build lookouts atop some of the major volcanoes of the Cascades -- Mt. St. Helens, Mt. Hood and Mt. Adams. The Adams lookout during its three-year tenure in the 1920s earned the distinction of being the highest lookout -- 12,276 feet above sea level -- in the nation.

Starting in the late 1950s, federal and state agencies began to decommission, abandon and eventually destroy most lookouts. Contributing to this folly was the passage in 1965 of a federal law which held that a citizen, regardless of fault, could sue the government for injuries suffered on government property. Consequently, government officials joined civilians in vandalizing lookouts, the difference being that the former's actions were sanctioned, and thus more systematic and thorough in their destruction. In the northern portion of the Idaho panhandle, for example, only 15 of the original 127 lookouts are still in service.

These vandals were apparently unaware that they were destroying valuable cultural artifacts and archaeological remains. From the archives of the Forest Service the authors of both books have unearthed classic photos to provide a visual history of the evolution of lookout architecture. The crow's nest was followed by a pitched tent atop the mountains; then came the first actual lookout structure, the D-6 cupola of the 1920s. It in turn was followed by the shuttered L-4 cabin with a shingled roof in the 1930s and 40s. In the 1950s the style which still prevails today appeared: the R-6 flat cabin. The last, Kresek concludes, is the least aesthetic and functional. But by the time of its development, lookouts themselves had become a low priority in wildfire fighting strategy.

Yet from these towers thousands of fires were spotted. These books tell in vivid prose not only of lookouts but of fires as well -- the Yacolt Burn of 1902, the Tillamook Fire of 1933, the Sundance Fire of 1967, and -- the fiery equivalent of The Flood -- the 1910 Idaho Fire. The last raged through and over three million acres (an area four times the size of Rhode Island) along the Idaho-Montana border, cremating 85 people and consuming entire towns which had been abandoned well in advance of the oncoming inferno.

Relatively speaking, there were few enough casualties among the lookouts themselves. Spring and Fish in their study of Washington lookouts remark that "No one we talked to knew of a lookout who was killed by lightning." Even if accurate, Kresek proves the case was otherwise in other states. In the early days especially, when structures were not properly grounded, numerous lookouts did not live to tell about lightning storms. And

there were the inevitable casualties of falls from the tall towers -- some as high as 100 feet -- upon which the cabins were situated.

There isn't space enough here to recount even a significant fraction of lookout lore in both books, so only a few choice stories will have to suffice. Both authors tell of Three Fingers lookout in north-central Washington, where a cabin was built in 1932 atop three rock promontories that formed the summit of a 6,800 foot mountain. It was 15 miles from and 4,000 feet above the nearest trailhead.

Pete Miller's treehouse in the Olympic National Forest was a 7 x 7 foot cubicle erected on top of a 152 foot tree stump. How did the lookout manage to ascend to his perch? Easy: he climbed a spiral ladder strung from bottom to top. And in Idaho, the equivalent of Three Fingers was Wylie's Peak (a picture of which graces the cover of Kresek's book); its summit too had to be blasted away to accommodate the building of a cabin. But, once constructed, what a view of the Selway-Bitterroot Mountains along the Continental Divide, and, for its relatively short tenure of eight years, of countless lightning strikes, one of which sparked the infamous Pete King fire of 1934. Its smoke was so voluminous that street and car lights had to be turned on at three in the afternoon in Missoula.

These books are, then, informal histories. Each contains an inventory of lookouts, with their locations, capsule histories, and present status; and the Spring and Fish book even has a short chapter on lookouthouses. Yet these books are something more than histories: they are eloquent pleas for preservation. Both works lament the passing of wilderness and lookouts, and the two are not unrelated. Much has been done to preserve wilderness and much needs to be done to save what remains of lookouts and the lookout system.

Attempts are in fact underway. Contract and volunteer lookouts are a recent trend on some Idaho national forests, in part a response to Reaganomics; as a result, lookouts are now manned which would otherwise go unmanned for lack of funds. The Forest Service in Idaho and Montana has also begun rent-a-lookout programs, allowing visitors to stay at a lookout for a time at reasonable rates.

Private groups and individuals have finally come to recognize the historical significance of lookouts. The Mountaineers of Washington have worked out an arrangement with the Forest Service to maintain and preserve Three Fingers lookout at their expense. In the Montana towns of Eureka, Helena, Missoula, Libby, and Superior, lookout museums have been established. Registering aged lookouts in the Northwest as official historical sites is proving to be another possible means of protecting these structures from abandonment and destruction.

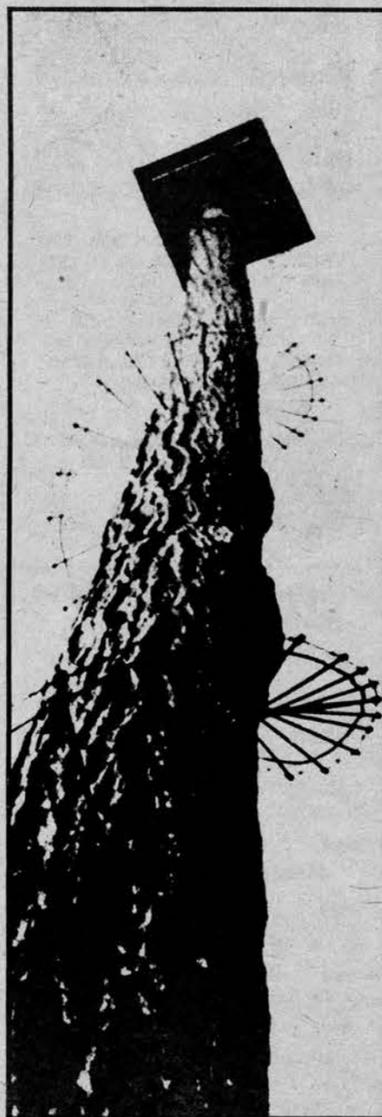
No one has worked harder to keep lookouts off the endangered species list than Ray Kresek. He volunteered his services atop numerous peaks in Idaho and Washington, and provided maintenance of the lookouts at his own expense to boot. The excerpts from his 1981 log atop Mallard Peak in



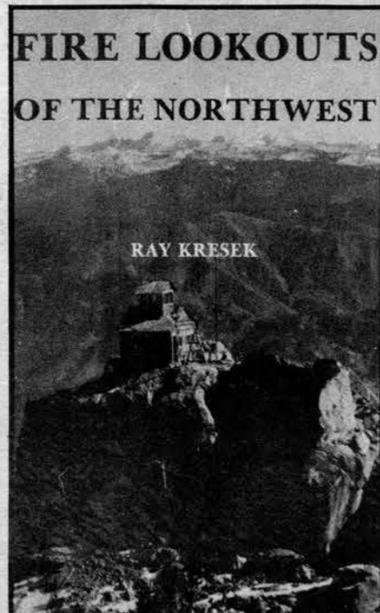
northern Idaho document his reputation as a lookout preservationist, wilderness devotee and humanist.

Numerous writers -- Martha Hardy, Jack Kerouac, Phil Whalen, Gary Snyder, Ed Abbey, Norman Maclean -- have given us literary accounts of the life of a fire lookout. Now we have two works of nonfiction which express in a different form that same solitary, euphoric and sometimes terrifying way of life. All these works celebrate the poems of geography that are the Western landscape, and the lives of the poets who, for a time, inhabited them. To the poetry of the placenames -- Mt. Setting Sun, Thunderbolt Mountain, Arctic Point, Desolation Peak, Icicle Ridge -- has been added the poetry of experience.

During the summers Don Scheese lives in a glass house atop an old volcano somewhere in northern Idaho.



Pete Miller's treehouse. Forest Service photo in Lookouts.



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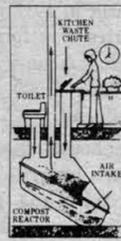
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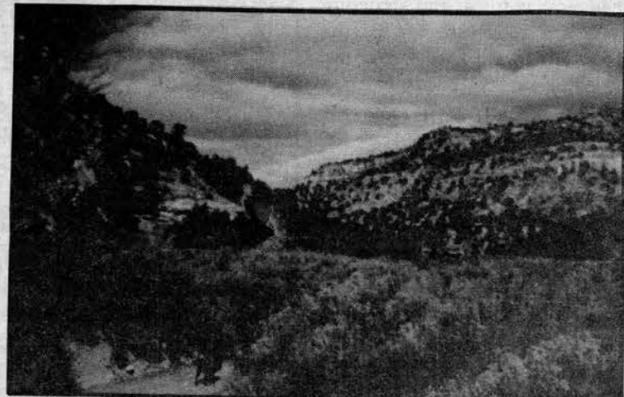


Photo by Pat Heidenreich

**HELP PROTECT Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, like scenic Leslie Gulch in Oregon**



Photo by Charles Callison

**HELP PREVENT overgrazing and restore ruined riparian zones, like this abused stream in Humboldt National Forest, Idaho**

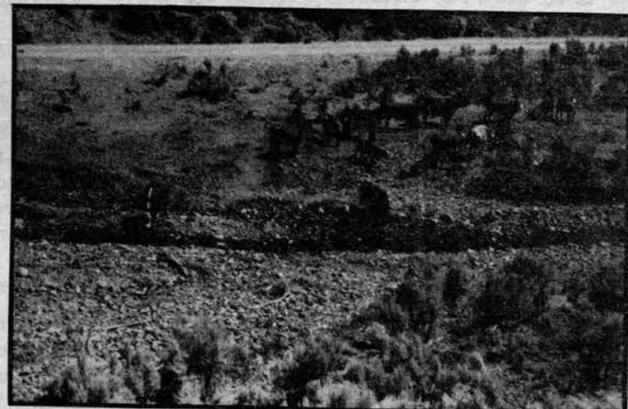


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