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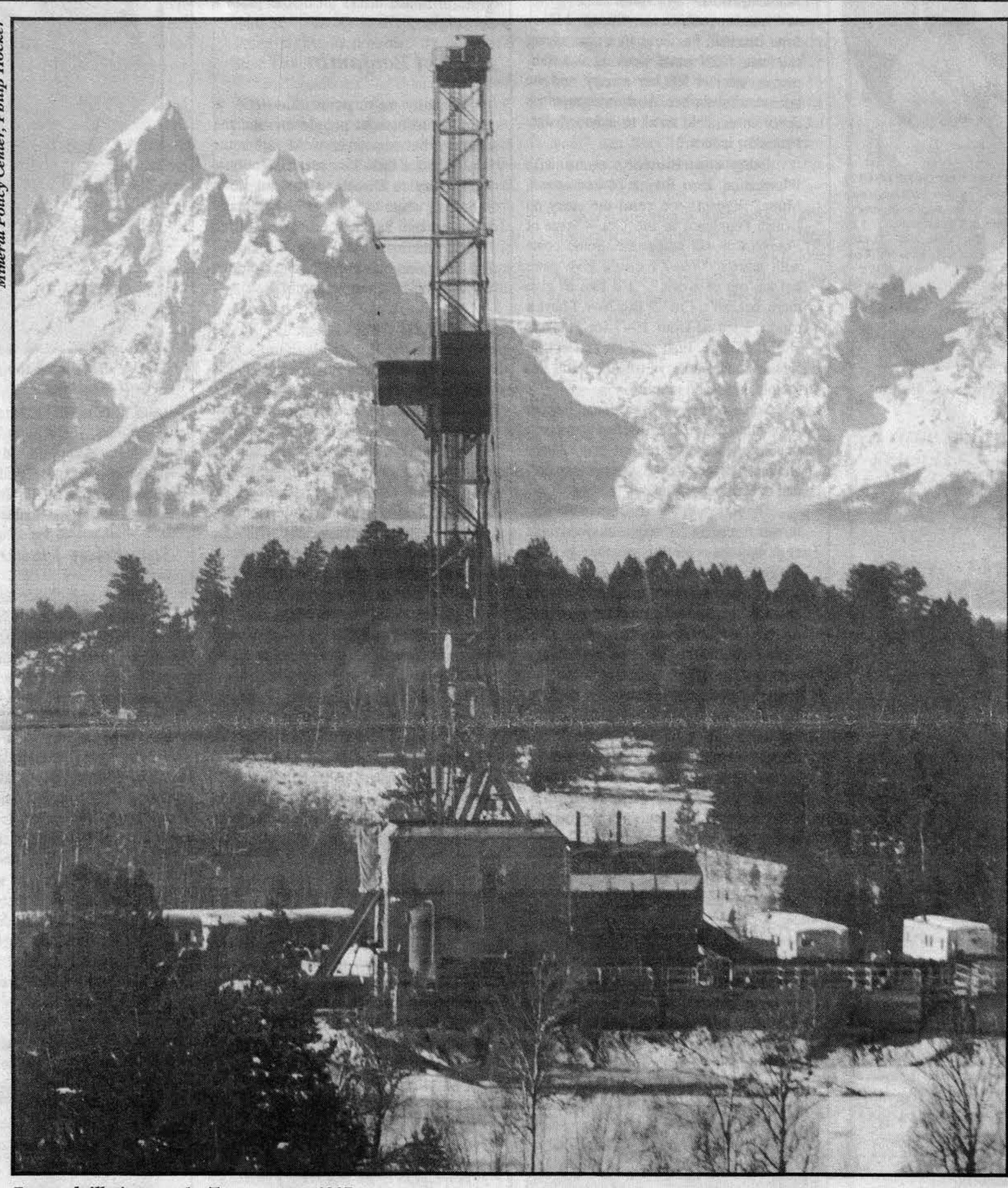

Mineral Policy Center, Philip Hocker

Exxon drill rig near the Teton range, 1987

Oil industry rolls over opponents

by Steve Hinchman

Jackson Hole environmentalists and local government suffered two big defeats recently in the ongoing war over oil and gas leasing on Wyoming's Bridger-Teton National Forest.

The first defeat came in October, when top Forest Service officials cleared the way for the $3 million Sohare Creek oil and gas exploratory well. It will be drilled 28 miles northeast of Jackson in the nearly pristine Mt. Leidy Highlands.

That loss was quickly followed by a worse defeat. In November, Bridger-Teton officials announced that the soon-to-be-released Bridger-Teton Forest Management Plan will open nearly every non-wilderness acre of the forest to oil and gas leasing.

Federal oil and gas leasing laws have long been a target of reform for environmentalists, and the Bridger-Teton has been one of the key battlegrounds. This fall's rout in Wyoming may be a sign that environmentalists have little chance of winning reforms in oil and gas leasing in the near future and may be losing the war.

The news has not been well received in Jackson Hole. Environmentalists call the Mt. Leidy Highlands area of the Bridger-Teton forest the "missing link" in the chain of wilderness areas, national wildlife refuges and national parks surrounding the resort town of Jackson Hole. Jackson sees its future as recreation and wildlife, and residents and government have opposed drilling in the Mt. Leidy Highlands and other sensitive areas on the B-T as a threat to that economic future.

To reach the Sohare Creek drill site in the highlands, Amoco will build a road through an area the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has designated critical grizzly bear habitat. The road will also cross sensitive soils on slopes of up to 45 degrees. The well site itself is in the midst of an unprotected 85,000-acre roadless area.

Amoco Production Co.'s permission to drill did not come easily. The proposal

(Continued on page 10)

Dear friends,

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Notes from readers

The greening of the West due to this summer's fires is a reality here. Reader Beth Schaefer sent in a gift to the Research Fund and a note: "It is part of the money that I earned while fighting fires in Yellowstone. I figure it's a way of recycling nutrients back into the environmental field."

Another contributor, Chrissy Maney from Bluebell, Pa., sent in a note saying she found *HCN* while working as a waitress; a customer left her a copy, and she became a subscriber. And an anonymous donor wrote, "No need to acknowledge. I consider it dues."

Other contributions come with information. Don Boyer of Lewistown, Mont., suggests we read the story on British Petroleum in the Oct. 4 issue of *Financial World* magazine. Some come with regrets: "Wish I could give more but am out of work." "I'd like to give more, but can't. I'm 89 this Nov. I have a cancer. I served from 1947 for 16 years with the Game, Fish and Parks Dept. in S.D. I brought turkeys to S.D.... But I'm too old now to do much."

Some come with praise: "Recent Reopening of the West series is reopening my eyes to the recent past history and our present plight," wrote Coby Jordan of Hurricane, Utah.

The Research Fund drive is the way in which readers, through tax-deductible contributions, vote on whether to keep 19-year-old *HCN* around for another year. The once-a-year drive provides about 40 percent of the paper's income and covers all editorial costs.

Approximately 20 percent of subscribers contribute each year to the Research Fund. Others choose to help the paper by buying gift subscriptions. Richard Kemnitz of Fairbanks, Alaksa, recently bought subscriptions for 10 friends scattered around the country. Although *HCN* does an annual direct mail campaign, we much prefer to gain subscribers by having readers introduce others to the paper, as happened to waitress Chrissy Maney and is about to happen to 10 friends of Richard Kemnitz.

The Research Fund

Pictured elsewhere on this page is circulation manager CarolBeth Elliott with a jumbo stocking stuffed with *HCN*s. The colorful wool stockings have been donated by Cindy Owings Designs of Bozeman for Research Fund contributors.

Fred Hirschmann

Wilderness Patterns engagement calendar

Also pictured is one of the photos from "Wilderness Patterns" engagement calendars, also available to Research Fund contributors. Subscribers who have not yet contributed to the Research Fund will soon receive a second letter containing information on the gifts and the Research Fund.

This is the time of the year when we emphasize the Research Fund. But as always, the staff and board of *HCN* is grateful to and thanks all of the paper's subscribers.

It's not Benjamin

Usually we're proud that *HCN* is read by influential people around the country, but sometimes we'd rather the paper had a little less reach. National Park Service Director William Penn Mott Jr., wrote to say that he generally enjoyed our Sept. 26 editorial, titled "Fires illuminate our dark side." But he did have one problem: "Please note the name is William, not Benjamin."

Internal angst

HCN is between projects at the moment, with the four special issues behind us and the next major effort still in the preliminary stage. As a result, we have turned our attention inward, and are examining the way we are organized, the way we budget our time and money, the quarters we occupy and how we communicate (or don't communicate) with each other.

Interestingly enough, it was a little thing — the fact that the paper's car can no longer haul our press run over McClure Pass — that inspired us to reexamine the operation. We are, for example, thinking of having the papers addressed in and mailed from Glenwood Springs, so they don't have to be hauled back over the mountain. That possible change — small in itself — led to ideas for other changes. This place is so small, and people do so many different kinds of jobs, that it is hard to change one thing without changing several other things.

In the meantime, suggestions have been coming in on the vehicle question. Within a few days of each other, we got two suggestions to look at trailers. Phil Briggs of Beckville, Texas, said he and his father used a small trailer on a hunting trip to Colorado (no road hunting), and it performed admirably.

Bob Solomon of Gilbertsville, Pa., sent in his trailer suggestion with his Research Fund contribution. In Pennsylvania, at least, he said the registration fee is only $6, there is no extra insurance charge, and he guessed that the *HCN* Tempo could pull a small trailer. He ended with a P.S.: "If I lived closer, I'd make a trailer and donate it to the paper."

Becky Rumsey

C.B. Elliott and the Research Fund stocking

Saturday visitors

Kate and Scott Bischke of Fort Collins, Colo., came through the Saturday after Thanksgiving, bikes and skis on car, fresh from some cross-country skiing on nearby Black Mesa. They report that there is lots of snow on the mesa. The couple, who are writing a book about their year-long bike trip through New Zealand, followed our tracks in the snow to the side door we use on weekends. "We thought we'd find you here."

Right now, we finish our production cycle on Monday evening, which requires some weekend work. As part of the above-mentioned reorganization, we hope to finish the production cycle on Friday at 5 p.m., so that when visitors do come by on a weekend, they will either find no one at the office or will find us playing video games.

— *Ed Marston for the staff*

HOTLINE

Navajos get Superfunds

Arizona's Navajo Indians recently became the first tribe to receive federal Superfund money for cleaning up toxic waste, reports the Navajo *Times*. In the past, the Environmental Protection Agency awarded Superfund money only to states, which distributed and supervised its use on reservations. The 1987 re-authorization of the Superfund Act made tribes eligible to run their own programs. Under the agreement between the EPA and the Navajos, $230,000 will fund preliminary studies at 32 Superfund sites on the reservation, and $250,000 will be used to run a Superfund office in Navajoland. Between 400 and 500 other hazardous waste sites on the reservation may also qualify for Superfund aid. Tribal chairman Peter MacDonald says the tribe will now have a say in determining which sites qualify and in what order they will be cleaned up. The first toxic slated for clean up is toxaphene, which was used in the 1920s and '30s as a sheep dip against fleas and flies. But most sites are from uranium mining in the 1950s and '60s.

Landfills in the West

A final-hour bill that sailed through Congress and President Reagan signed into law Nov. 10 allows the Bureau of Land Management to provide waste disposal land to Western communities. The law rids the BLM of a self-imposed moratorium on selling or leasing lands for use as waste disposal sites. Created over a year ago, the moratorium was designed to limit federal liability if areas leased to local governments became illegally contaminated. The new bill, primarily sponsored by Senator Malcolm Wallop, R-Wyo., and Morris Udall, D-Ariz., will allow communities to purchase waste disposal land for as little as $2.50 an acre from the BLM, while limiting the federal government's liability if toxic wastes are later discovered at the sites. Currently, Western communities must purchase waste-site land for as much as full market value, an expense some communities cannot afford.

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WESTERN ROUNDUP

Congress is no help on reserved water fight

Congress is sending conflicting signals westward on the touchy subject of federally reserved water rights in wilderness areas.

In late October, Congress passed three public lands bills affecting Montana, Washington and Idaho. Each speaks differently of federal reserved water rights.

The struggle was kicked off last year by a Colorado district court, which ruled that wilderness designations carry a reserved water right sufficient to fulfill the purposes of the wilderness. Western Republicans, seeing a threat to state control of water, convinced the Justice Department to oppose that decision. The Interior Department also announced it would not claim any such rights in ongoing water adjudications. The Colorado case is under appeal to the 10th Circuit Court, and The Wilderness Society and Sierra Club have filed a separate lawsuit to force Interior to claim reserved wilderness rights where it can.

Congress will be of no help to the courts. "There's no consensus here, either," says a congressional staff member involved in the bills. "So rather than hold up every public lands bill indefinitely, we're going to see water rights language separately negotiated in every bill."

The first example is Montana's long-awaited statewide wilderness bill, which President Reagan just vetoed. The bill's water language worked out by the state's delegation reads:

"Congress finds that the waters within the Wilderness Areas designated by this Act are headwaters. The designation of such areas as wilderness shall have no effect on downstream appropriation of waters, and nothing in this Act shall be construed to affect valid existing water rights as provided by Montana State Law."

In "colloquies" — floor debate that then becomes part of an act's legislative history — key congressmen who supported this language gave three versions of what it means. Idaho Republican Sen. James McClure said it meant no federal reserved water rights exist. Rep. Morris Udall, D-Ariz.; George Miller, D-Calif.; Bruce Vento, D-Minn.; and Rep. Pat Williams, D-Mont., said it neither affirmed nor denied reserved water rights.

The second example is a Washington national parks wilderness bill passed about the same time. It seems to support reserved rights: "... within areas designated by this Act, Congress expressly reserves water rights for the purposes for which these areas are designated." Again, the state's delegation worked out the language.

Finally, the Idaho bill, which creates Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument and City of Rocks National Reserve, has a third version. After finding that "unique circumstances" exist for the water resources at each area. Congress "recognizes that there is little or no water or water-related resources that require the protection of a federal reserved water right. Nothing in this act...shall constitute either an express or implied reservation of water or water rights for any purpose."

This language was negotiated by Sen. McClure and Rep. Bruce Vento, chairman of the House Subcommittee on Public Lands. A subcommittee staffer said Vento reads the language to "recognize that there are federal reserved water rights, even if not in this special case." But McClure has said several times since that the language recognizes no reserved rights.

Karin Sheldon, a Wilderness Society attorney active on this issue, says judges with reserved water rights cases before them will probably conclude: "The greater the confusion in the legislative history, the less likely the courts will consider it relevant to their decisions."

Ironically, reserved wilderness water rights are not a practical issue in the bills that passed. The real target of the maneuvering is the round of Bureau of Land Management wilderness bills which may start moving through Congress in the 1990s. Some of those bills will contain areas where farms, ranches and, perhaps, cities and industries exist upstream.They could be affected by water claims made by wilderness areas lying downstream.

What we see right now is a fight to set precedent.

— Pat Ford

Park Service gains two toeholds in Idaho

Idaho has its first contribution to the National Park System since 1924. In early November, President Reagan signed legislation creating the City of Rocks National Historical Reserve and the Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument.

These south-central Idaho areas were two of several park proposals to surface in the state since last year, reversing decades of strong resistance to parks (*HCN*, 10/10/88). Legislation creating them was guided through the Senate by Idaho Republican Sen. James McClure and through the House by Democrat Rep. Richard Stallings.

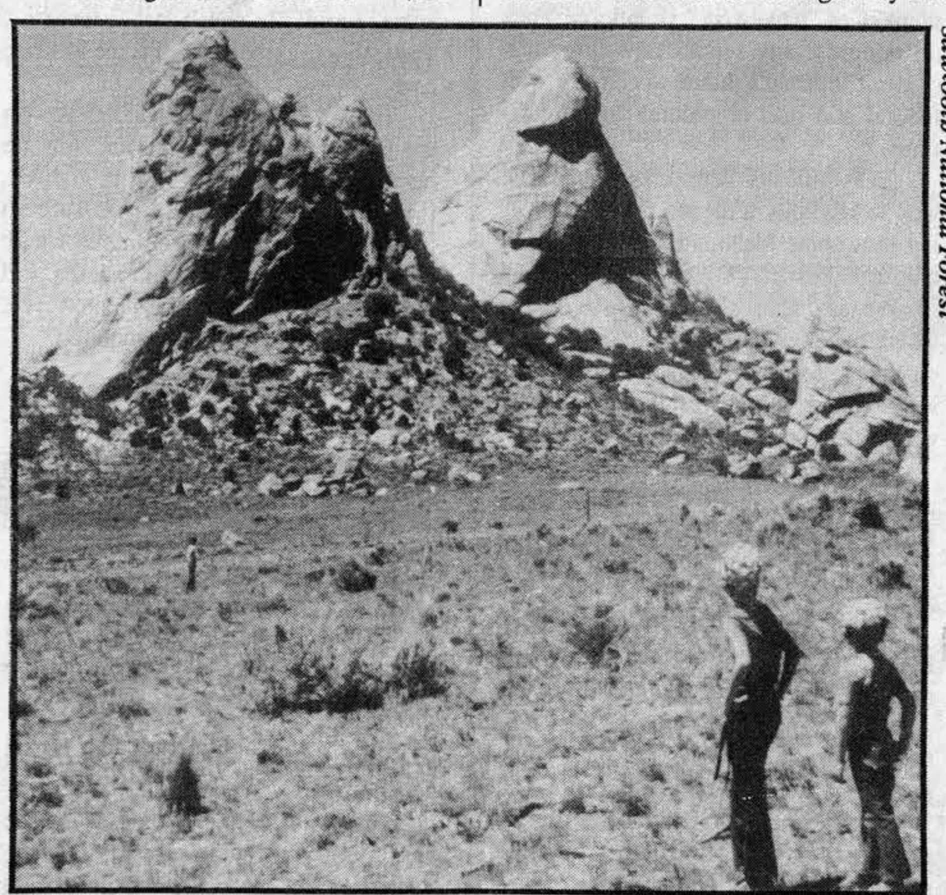
The Hagerman Monument — 4,934 acres of bluffs sloping down to the Snake River — is the most complete known site of Pliocene mammal remains in the world. The law transfers the area from the Bureau of Land Management to the Park Service and appropriates $5 million for management and purchase of a few hundred acres of state land within the boundaries.

The 14,320-acre City of Rocks Reserve protects both a spectacular assemblage of 2.5-billion-year-old granite pinnacles, monoliths and portals and the historical remnants of four emigrant routes which crossed the area during white settlement of the West. The Reserve will first be managed by the Park Service and the Idaho Parks Department. Eventually the state will be sole manager with Park Service oversight.

Both areas had strong bipartisan support, but the legislation had been held up for months by a dispute over the federal water rights language Sen. McClure included. McClure and key House Democrats finally reached a compromise on that language (see related story above).

The new law has one major omission. The Hagerman Monument only contains the fossil beds themselves. Local backers had urged the inclusion of a strip of irrigated private land above the beds to reduce water seepage. Last March, a 600-foot bluff at the site collapsed into the river, undoubtedly taking fossil remains with it. Archaeologists working the site say irrigation seepage is undermining the already unstable soils of the beds.

— Pat Ford



Sawtooth National Forest

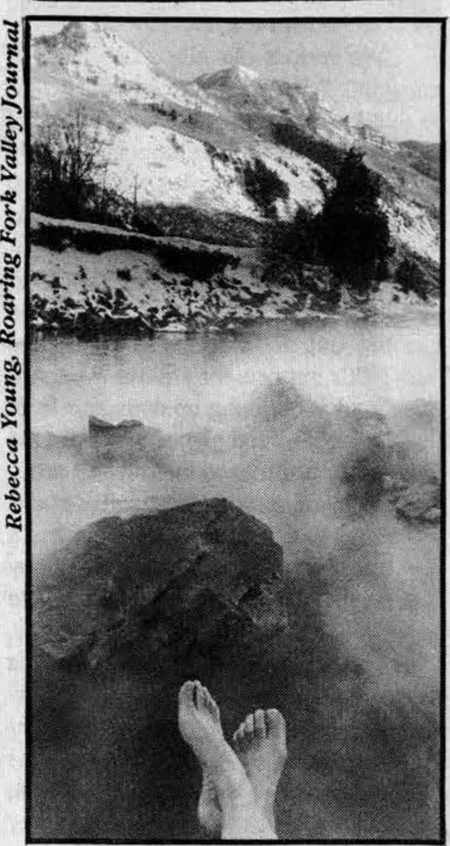
City of Rocks, Idaho

HOTLINE

Sinkhole is a mystery

A giant sinkhole in a wheatfield near Macksville, Kan., has state officials scratching their heads over who is responsible. At over 400 feet wide and 200 feet deep, the hole has nearly doubled in size since its discovery in late July by area farmer Ronald Miller. The site was apparently formed by the collapse of an abandoned oil field brine disposal well, says *U.S. Water News*. As officials begin what promises to be a long and arduous investigation, the sinkhole — filled with oily, briny water — continues to crumble away. The water has been tested at 33,000 parts per million chlorides, a high enough concentration to require cleanup once the sinkhole has stabilized.

HOTLINE



Rebecca Young, Roaring Fork Valley Journal

Penny Hot Springs – and feet

A little help from Friends

After months of negotiations, Pitkin County commissioners in western Colorado have agreed to buy the controversial Penny Hot Springs. The purchase was urged by a local group, Friends of Penny Hot Springs, after an irate neighbor convinced the highway department, which owns the land, to sell the site (*HCN*, 10/24/88). The neighbor, Irwin Grange, hoped to purchase the springs so he could prevent nude bathing. But state law requires that state property must be offered for sale to government agencies before the public. The commissioners decided to buy the land after seeing a management plan that the Friends created. The plan calls for moving the springs at least 200 feet downstream out of sight of Grange, constructing a grouted rock pool and employing a caretaker, says the Carbondale *Valley Journal*. The final hurdle before the sale is complete is approval by the State Highway Commission, expected in December.

Coyote killer escapes

A friendly coyote called Zeke was shot by a poacher near the entrance of Natural Bridges National Monument in Utah. The coyote was named after the monument's first custodian, Zeke Johnson, and was a favorite with park rangers. He often appeared during the day at the visitor center and had become something of a mascot, a ranger told the *Deseret News*. The last of his visits proved fatal; a white male about 30, wearing jeans and a yellow jacket, drove up in a pickup and shot the animal. When witnesses tried to intervene, he dumped the animal in his vehicle and drove away. Park officials say the killer was probably a pelt hunter. Witnesses did not get the pickup's license number, but they say the truck had Utah plates.

70,000 dead fish

Nebraska officials say a prime suspect in the deaths of 70,000 shad fish in the South Platte River is stagnant waste released from a Colorado feedlot. Colorado Wildlife officials are currently testing the contaminated water to identify the pollutant, in hopes of then tracing it to its source. If a feedlot was involved, the Division of Wildlife will fine it, says the *Steamboat Springs Review*. The October die-off occurred between Julesburg, Colo., and North Platte, Neb.

HOTLINE

Brown skies in Denver

"We've lost our blue skies and you know that," Denver Mayor Federico Pena told business leaders recently. He and Gov. Roy Romer have announced they want to reduce the city's air pollution 50 percent by the year 2000. To do this, they propose a new set of controls, including bans on wood burning on high pollution days in the metro area and phasing out all wood burning by the mid-1900s, reports the *Denver Post*. Another goal is cleaning up emissions from the city's coal-fired plants, which are the largest contributors to the dirty-air problem. Pena suggests converting the plants to natural gas, while Romer supports a new scrubbing technology that works by injecting acid-neutralizing minerals into the plant's smokestacks. But former Gov. Dick Lamm says more drastic action is required. At a recent air quality conference in Denver, Lamm said better planning is needed to reduce urban sprawl and unnecessary highway construction, such as the planned C-470 beltway around Denver. Warning that constructing C-470 will turn Denver into another Los Angeles, Lamm said, "It's not a matter of growth versus no-growth. We're talking about planning or no planning."

Tribes blast the BIA

A congressional committee investigating the Bureau of Indian Affairs heard some strong words recently from the chairman of the White Mountain Apaches in Arizona. According to the *Arizona Republic*, Chairman Reno Johnson said the agency "still acts as if this was 1960. It acts like it should decide everything. But we are living in 1988." Joined by chairmen of the Yakima, Omaha, Colville, Standing Rock and Sioux Indian nations, Johnson said an entire rewriting of the trust relationship between the federal government and the tribes is needed. The Bureau of Indian Affairs manages everything on Indian reservations from education and natural resources to criminal justice. Last year Congress appropriated $864,000 for a special Senate committee to look into alleged failings of the Interior Department agency.

Will marble re-emerge from Marble?

Two Denver oilmen plan to put an historic marble quarry back into production in Colorado after 47 years of inactivity. The developers obtained a 70-year lease from Vermont Marble Co. and intend to reopen the quarry near the town of Marble, Colo., next summer says the *Denver Post*. Early in the century, Marble was the source of stone used in the Lincoln Memorial and the Colorado Capitol. By 1945, however, a series of disasters closed the mine and cut the town's population (*HCN*, 8/29/88). The mayor of Marble, the Colorado Division of Mined Land Reclamation and Forest Service support the reopening, saying it will produce little noise or toxic waste while rekindling the area's history. The oilmen, Stacy Dunn and Greg Faith, say increasing domestic demand for marble makes the quarry feasible.

Hodel reverses board on Idaho road closure

Top government officials in Washington, D.C., have intervened for the second time in a long standing and bitterly contested fight over the Egin-Hamer gravel road in southeastern Idaho.

Last month, Interior Secretary Donald Hodel overrode a preliminary decision by the Interior Board of Land Appeals and ordered the 8.8 mile farm-to-market road to remain open in November and April. He announced his action in a letter to the local Bureau of Land Management office dated Nov. 8.

"I take this action in my supervisory position over the board on the grounds that the board has substituted its judgment for that of the responsible agency," Hodel wrote.

Following Hodel's decision, the BLM removed barriers on the road and let it remain open to traffic until the Dec. 1 winter closure date specified in earlier negotiations on the road.

The controversial Egin-Hamer road is a short cut for Idaho potato farmers in Fremont County to markets in Jefferson County. The road, however, crosses critical habitat used by about 2,000 head of elk that migrate every winter to the high desert between the towns of Egin and Hamer in search of food and shelter.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, county officials several times unsuccessfully petitioned the local BLM office to build the road. Instead, the agency designated the land an Area of Critical Environmental Concern. However, in 1987, after top Idaho leaders lobbied Department of Interior officials in Washington, the state BLM director personally took over the case and awarded the counties a right-of-way (*HCN*, 2/2/87).

The permit stipulated that the road would remain closed from Dec. 1 to March 31. This fall the winter closure was extended by the Interior Board of Land Appeals to include November and April. The board acted in response to an appeal of the right-of-way decision by

Cindy Quinton

Elk

the Shoshone-Bannock Indian tribes and environmental groups.

Fremont and Jefferson county officials then complained to Sen. Steve Symms, R-Idaho, about the extended closure, calling it a hardship to area farmers and ranchers. Hodel agreed to intervene in the case on Nov. 3, at Symms' request.

"It never should have been closed," says James Siddoway, Fremont County commission chairperson.

The battle is not over. Marvin Osborne, who chairs the Shoshone-Bannock tribal council, said the tribes were looking at ways to challenge Hodel's decision, which he said was a political move.

"What's the sense in having policy and laws when somebody in Washington will override the local people in the West?" Osborne said.

The tribes appealed the right-of-way because they said it threatened treaty hunting rights. They were joined by several environmental groups.

Symms' aide Trent Clark applauded Hodel's decision. He said the Appeals Board was out of step.

"What they didn't take into consideration was that the Idaho Fish and Game and Fremont County had already built in a buffer zone in their original proposal," Clark said. "We feel the elk herd will be adequately protected."

The week the road reopened, Don Watson, manager of the Idaho Falls BLM Medicine Lodge area, said about 300 elk had already moved in but were not hanging around the road. Siddoway said he expected the road would get a lot of use before Dec. 1.

— Rocky Barker

EPA, Idaho residents bump heads over dump

GRAND VIEW, Idaho — Despite citizen efforts to shut down a hazardous waste dump west of here, it appears the Environmental Protection Agency will soon grant Envirosafe Services of Idaho long-term authority to operate the dump.

Numerous southwest Idaho citizens voiced opposition to the dump at a public meeting and hearing last month. But EPA and state officials say they are obligated to grant Envirosafe a permit unless someone points out a substantial deficiency in the dump's operations.

Witnesses such as Jim Huntley of Marsing told authorities that citizens have raised plenty of doubts about the dump's practices and safety record. Groundwater contamination, off-site migration of toxic liquids and release of toxic fumes are the main issues nearby residents have raised.

"We're the people who live here, we're the ones who have to drink the water, we're the ones who have to breathe the air," Huntley said at the public hearing.

Noting Envirosafe has been cited with 83 violations amounting to about $400,000 since 1981, Huntley said, "How many times does a dog have to bite you before you hit it with a stick?"

Federal and state officials maintain that Envirosafe's record has improved substantially since it bought the waste dump in 1981. In ESI's first five years of operation, it was fined repeatedly for failing to conduct proper groundwater tests and failing to treat and dispose of waste in a timely manner. The firm also inherited a few hot potatoes from previous owner Western Containment, which stuffed liquid and solid hazardous waste in old Titan missile silos.

But in the last two years, officials say, Envirosafe has been cited only for a number of "paperwork" violations. They do not pose any serious environmental risk but indicate a failure to comply with federal and state procedures and regulations.

EPA officials' defense of Envirosafe was so rigorous at the meeting and hearing that some Idaho citizens questioned whether the firm's application would receive an impartial review. Envirosafe, which has been operating under a temporary permit since 1981, is one of the few waste dumps in the West that can accept waste from Superfund cleanup projects.

"I'm more afraid of the EPA at this point than I am of ESI," said June Davies of Marsing. "The key word here is protection. I don't think I'm getting any."

Robie Russell, administrator of the EPA's Region 10 office in Seattle, bristled at the charge. "We don't have a stake" in the approval or disapproval of the permit, he said. "It's not EPA's disposal facility. We're not promoting it."

Russell said the EPA has an obligation to issue the permit if Envirosafe meets federal requirements. "We wouldn't be going through this process if we were not satisfied that the operation has displayed the appropriate actions and responses to our concerns," Russell said.

Asked whether the waste dump's storage bins will prevent leaks into groundwater for the next 150 years, the EPA's Catherine Massimino said, "We can't tell what's going to happen in 150 years. Landfills won't last forever ... The technology being used is the best we have."

EPA officials say a final decision on the Part-B permit application will be made before the year's end. If granted, the permit would allow Envirosafe to handle and dispose of hazardous waste for the next 10 years and to handle and dispose of PCB wastes for the next five, before new applications are required.

— Stephen Stuebner

BARBS

No editorializing, please.

Pitkin County in Colorado has established "some of the most strident land use regulations anywhere," says the *Aspen Times*.

Does anyone know what the Hunts have been doing lately?

The price of copper soared to the $1.60 per pound range on news that the amount of the metal in warehouses had plunged to a few thousand pounds.

e Target LRT-BE4-V2

A classic Western confrontation in Nevada

In the Nevada desert, a local fight over a dam has turned into a major battle between Anglos and Indians.

Two years ago, commissioners of northern Nevada's Lander County proposed building a dam and reservoir on desolate Rock Creek, 30 miles north of Battle Mountain, the county seat. The long-coveted reservoir was thought perfect for fishing and recreation. Although not a rich county, Lander passed a $2 million bond levy and hired an engineer to build the project.

Last April, after a draft environmental assessment was readied and much of the county's money spent, a delegation of Western Shoshone Indians came to a commission meeting. They protested that the dam site was directly in the center of their band's religious and burial grounds. The delegation's words were heard in stunned silence, reports the Battle Mountain *Bugle*.

"There is no way you people are going to desecrate our burial site," said Benson Gibson, who spoke for the religious elders of the White Knives band of the Western Shoshone. "We need that water for our religious practices. Too many of our ancestors are buried there for a 3,000-acre dam. We're holding tight on Rock Creek."

The site is called Towsawhi in Shoshone, named for the white stone knives the band members chip from nearby rocks. Gibson says his great-great grandfather, who was a tribal shaman, is buried there, and so are many tribal artifacts from the last century. It is still used for sweat lodge ceremonies and vision quests today. Turning Towsawhi into "a playground for the non-Indian" is more than his people can stand, says Gibson.

Although a decentralized tribe, the Western Shoshone National Council has backed the White Knives band. The council has objected to the dam project and threatened litigation, saying it violates both the tribe's First Amendment rights and the Ruby Valley treaty of 1868. At a second county commission meeting, the *Bugle* reports, White Knives leaders promised if that doesn't work and a dam goes up, they will "tear it back down."

In Nevada, which is in the midst of a gold mining and oil and gas boom (*HCN*, 10/10/88), the Rock Creek problem seems doomed to repeat itself over and over again. Nearly 4,000 Western Shoshones live in Nevada, grouped in six bands, which in turn are divided among many family groups. By the Ruby Valley treaty, the bands were placed on tiny reservations — or colonies — across the state. However, unlike most Western tribes, the Western Shoshone never signed away the remaining land. They retain aboriginal rights to use all public land in the state not claimed for mining or municipalities.

On those lands are hundreds of family medicine sites, says Felix Ike, leader of the Te-Moak band of Western Shoshone and designated spokesperson for sensitive religious matters. Centered around sacred springs, rock formations or other natural phenomena believed to bring good medicine, the sites are used for vision quests, sweats and ritual cleansing, healing ceremonies, burials and clan gatherings. Because the medicine is powerful, Ike says, family elders keep the sites secret, even from other bands.

More importantly, secrecy keeps out the vandals and treasure-seekers who have trashed so many other Native American religious sites. It also has kept government officials from cataloging those sites in order to plan for future developments such as Rock Creek dam.

After Gibson first testified about his people's concerns, Lander County Commission chair Ray Williams responded, "I think it is very sad when we're right on the verge of building a dam, that you people are just now protesting."

Gibson explained that information on the project had been sent to the local band of Western Shoshone, which have separate religious sites.

Ike says maps and copies of project proposals mean nothing to elders and religious leaders who don't know much English or recognize English place names. Plans for a Rock Creek dam were discovered accidentally — one of the White Knives elders saw a photograph of the dam site and the band's distinctive eagle-shaped medicine rock in a local paper.

Even then the band approached the Bureau of Land Management, which controls most public land in Nevada, with caution. The group contacted a trusted University of Nevada professor, who passed the word on to the BLM. Agency archaeologist Stanley Jaynes says he invited the group's elders to a meeting, but it took several months to win their confidence and gain a tour of the site.

Government officials were taken on a "step-by-step tour of the whole ceremony" to see the site, says Ike. They didn't understand it, says Gibson. The band's medicine rock had been classified as a hunting blind in the project environmental assessment. The rock would be blown up to make way for the dam.

The dam would also flood a spring the White Knives use for bathing, sweat lodges, drinking and to doctor the sick, as well as the graves of their ancestors, says Gibson. "We told them don't bother the dead, and don't bother what happened thousands of years ago," says Gibson.

For now, the Rock Creek project has run out of money because of a water rights battle and engineering changes. That has delayed a full confrontation with the Western Shoshone, who are now being advised by attorneys with the Native American Rights Fund in Boulder, Colo.

In the meantime, Towsawhi, which has been well-publicized in the Nevada press, has been vandalized.

—Steve Hinchman

Did Yale club steal Geronimo's skull?

Geronimo's skull may have been on display for 70 years inside the Yale University's exclusive Skull and Bones Society.

Ned Anderson, a member and former chairman of the San Carlos Apache Tribe in Arizona, says that a Skull and Bones member — who insisted on anonymity — told him the story in 1986. He said the famous Apache leader's skull had been hanging on the clubhouse wall since 1918. According to the official history of the club, member Prescott S. Bush, the father of President-elect George Bush, broke into Geronimo's tomb in 1918, took the skull and brought it back to the club's chambers in Connecticut.

Anderson has tried repeatedly to recover it, reports the *Arizona Republic*, and in 1986 he met with the society's attorney and with member Jonathan Bush, brother of George Bush.

He says they offered him a skull and then presented a document that said the skull had belonged to a child, not Geronimo. The document also required Anderson to agree to a ban on publicity.

Anderson says he refused the skull and refused to sign the document but kept a copy of it and the club's history. Anderson says that the skull they offered him in 1986 did not match a photograph he had previously obtained of the skull that is on display. He calls the switch and accompanying legal document "insulting to Indians."

Skull and Bones Society lawyer Endicott P. Davidson said Sept. 26 that the history of Prescott Bush's grave robbery in 1918 is an official document but that the paper and skull were merely a "hoax on the membership."

Anderson now wants Ariz. Rep. Morris Udall, D, to initiate a congressional hearing to clear up the mystery. Udall has sent the matter to the Senate Indian Affairs Subcommittee, and a Udall aide says a congressional hearing will be conducted if the skull actually turns out to be Geronimo's.

On Nov. 8, however, Anderson said in an interview that the Udall office had not yet contacted him or directly responded to his request. "I have ample and convincing evidence," Anderson said. "If Congress is going to hold hearings on the Yellowstone fires, they can have a hearing for this."

— Kevin Lee Lopez

HOTLINE

Judge lifts Burr Trail injunction

A federal judge has lifted his injunction banning construction on Utah's scenic Burr Trail. In a decision that brought another setback to Utah environmentalists, U.S. District Judge Aldon J. Anderson ruled that Garfield Cunty can begin widening and grading a 14-mile stretch of the 66-mile road in southern Utah (*HCN, 12/21/87*). Anderson issued the injunction halting roadwork in 1987, when conservationists said surrounding public lands were protected under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1976. Construction has been stopped twice pending the filing of appeals, but after a Nov. 14 hearing Anderson said work could begin immediately on sections of the road not bordering wilderness study areas. Environmentalists criticized Anderson's decision, saying no construction should take place until the Bureau of Land Management completes its environmental assessment in mid-December. Terri Martin of the National Parks and Conservation Association, one of four groups that fought the road work in court, says her group's next move is uncertain, since legal technicalities may prevent them from appealing the latest decision.

HOTLINE

Robert Bower

Great Fountain Geyser

Yellowstone attracts the curious

The summer fires in and around Yellowstone National Park boosted tourism this fall. More than 175,000 people visited the park in October for a 50,000-person jump over last year. Park officials said the draw was probably a mix of curiosity and warm, sunny weather. Summer tourism, however, was down 15 percent in the park and even more in the gateway tourist towns. Recent tourists "were not of the same ilk as the usual throng of Instamatic snapshooters," reports the *Idaho Mountain Express*. Crowds were Western, coming mostly from Wyoming, Montana and Idaho, and their chance of seeing wildlife was improved as animals moved to find new homes. *AP* reports, however, that 254 animals — mostly elk — were killed in the fires.

Navy drafts dolphins

Without a public hearing, and despite two dozen letters in opposition, the Army Corps of Engineers has granted the Navy a permit to build 16 pens for bottlenose dolphins at the Trident nuclear submarine base in Bangor, Wash. The Navy trains dolphins to detect mines and frogmen. The pens, said a Corps spokesman, may also be used for other marine mammals.

A wild recommendation

After 10 years of study, the Bureau of Land Management has released a revised draft environmental impact statement on wilderness designation in the Rock Springs, Wyo., district. The EIS recommends about one-half the acreage under consideration for wilderness designation in four southwestern Wyoming counties. The agency rejects eight out of 13 wilderness study areas, with partial or full wilderness proposed for the remaining 105,347 acres. After a 90-day public comment period, the BLM will release its final proposal and schedule hearings in Rock Springs. Photographer and environmentalist Dick Randall says he is pleased with the EIS, which represents years of struggle between oil and gas interests, off-road vehicle enthusiasts and environmentalists. Randall says it will protect several vital land parcels, including an elk calving area in Wyoming's famed Red Desert. The draft EIS is available from, and comments should be sent to, the Rock Springs District Bureau of Land Management, P.O. Box 1869, Rock Springs, WY 82902.

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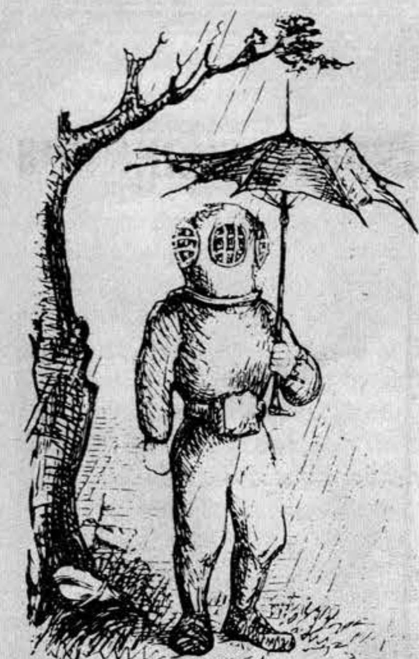

PLANET IN PERIL

A conference called "A Planet in Peril: Restoring the Balance" will be held Feb. 3 - 5 at the University of Colorado in Boulder. Conference topics include the greenhouse effect, ozone depletion, deforestation, fossil fuel dependency and international economics, and speakers include Sen. Tim Wirth, D-Colo., and Stanford University biologist Paul Ehrlich. Representatives from the Environmental Defense Fund, World Resources Institute, Sierra Club and Friends of the Earth will also speak. The cost is $18 plus meals. Write CU Environmental Center, Campus Box 207, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309 (303/492-8308).

WINTER TRACKS

The two-print paw trail of a weasel in winter shows where it slowed and disappeared under the snow. Drag marks show where it reappeared with a captured vole. Animal tracks can tell stories, and snow often records them superbly. But tracking mammals and birds in snow requires different techniques than mud, sand or dirt. Thanks to Louise R. Forrest's new book, *A Field Guide to Tracking Animals in Snow*, you can now learn the techniques. The guide identifies more than 55 animal tracks, from kangaroo rats to cougars; for each animal, a map shows distribution in North America and what its scat looks like. The book includes a section on preserving tracks as well as sample photographs of tracks for the reader to identify.

Stackpole Books, Cameron and Kelker Streets, P.O. Box 1831, Harrisburg, PA 17105. Paper: $12.95. 192 pages. Illustrated by Denise Casey; maps, drawings and photographs.

Denise Casey

COOPERATION UNLIMITED

Idaho's Snake River Chapter of Trout Unlimited recently demonstrated that cooperation helps conservation. In 1984, the Forest Service failed to reauthorize the rebuilding of a collapsed 50-year-old earthen dam on a tributary of the South Fork of the Snake River in Idaho. That left only a ranch irrigation ditch between South Fork cutthroat trout and seven miles of spawning habitat. If fish could gain access to this stretch of water, it would provide them with good habitat and give anglers new fishing waters. Trout Unlimited, Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service got together and negotiated with the landowner, who agreed to let them build a 200-foot fish ladder around his diversion. In June 1986, Idaho's Fish and Game Department and Idaho Falls BLM provided money and equipment, Targhee National Forest gave rip-rap to build fish ladders, and Trout Unlimited provided labor to build the ladder. The project was a success, and in two following summers the group worked on other projects near the old dam, reducing stream bank erosion and slowing the flow of silt downriver. For more information on Trout Unlimited's activities, contact Mike Ruskey, P.O. Box 1289, Sandpoint, ID 83864

POEM ON THE RANGE

More than 300 cowboys will converge on Elko, Nev., Jan. 25-28 for the fifth annual Cowboy Poetry Gathering sponsored by Northern Nevada College and the Western Folklore Center. Cowboys and ranchers will recite original poetry and down-home classics at the Elko Convention Center. There will also be arts and crafts exhibits, videos, films and music throughout the weekend. Saturday night features a country dance. Daytime poetry and music sessions are free, and participants can also sign up to perform. A $5 guest pass covers the opening reception, matinees, special music sessions and a complimentary program. For more information about evening performances, ticket prices or lodging, contact Tara McCarty, Cowboy Poetry Gathering general manager, P.O. Box 888, Elko, NV 89801 (702/738-7508).

WATER IN NEW MEXICO

At last, a single volume about New Mexico's tangled history of water development. Ira G. Clark, in *Water in New Mexico: A History of Its Management and Use*, has written a comprehensive investigation of the Western state with the longest history of water use, abuse, and competition. Naturally, this is not a slim volume. But at 839 pages, illustrated and with both subject and case indexes, it will tell you almost everything you ever wanted to know about the subject. What Clark lacks in verve is made up for in clarity as he treats such issues as land-grant water rights, the effects of coal and uranium mining on water quality, the allocation of ground water, federal-state conflicts over land and water, Indian water rights, and the sometimes-unique New Mexican solutions to water problems. Competing demands for scarce water have been at the root of development in New Mexico since before the arrival of Europeans; those demands are not likely to diminish, in fact, the competition grows more fierce every day. Clark's narration of such contemporary conflicts over water, including the fight between the city of El Paso and the state of New Mexico over El Paso's demand for water from New Mexican aquifers is balanced, though happily not neutral. Clark's analysis of the role of the State Engineer in New Mexican water development is very useful and again, objective but not neutral.

University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, NM 87131. Cloth: 839 pages. Illustrated with case and subject indexes. $50.

--*Patricia D'Andrea*

NEW WELCOME AT THE PARK

Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado will now get a new center at its west entrance thanks to a successful campaign to raise $227,885. Retired Denver attorney Bryant O'Donnell contributed the final $5,000 to complete a fund-raising drive that began in July 1987. The 16-month effort was led by Curt W. Buchholtz, executive director of Rocky Mountain National Park Associates, after Park Superintendent Jim Thompson said there was no chance of obtaining federal funding for the project. Other major contributors included Grand Lake residents, the Morrison Trust Fund of Denver and Boettcher and Gates foundations. The new 1,930-square-foot visitors' center is expected to be finished by Sept. 1989. Contributions for furnishings and exhibits in the new Kawuneeche Education Center can be sent to Curt Buchholtz, c/o Rocky Mountain National Park Associates, Rocky Mountain National Park, Estes Park, CO 80517 (303/586-2371).

ENDANGERED OLD ONES

America stands to lose one of its most valuable resources just as it begins to be understood. At one time, old growth forests covered the Pacific Northwest coast from Alaska to San Francisco. Today, the timber industry has reduced the forest's domain to a few million acres, and stands of 250- to 1,000-year-old conifers continue to be logged, even as scientists study the unique ecosystem based on live trees, standing snags and fallen logs. In *Secrets of the Old Growth Forest*, photographer Gary Braasch and writer David Kelly weave photos, history and description into a book that reveals the rich past and uncertain future of the forests. Kelly, a freelance writer in Oregon, has interviewed scientists, forest managers and historians to chronicle the ecosystem's uniqueness and its vulnerability in the face of logging interests and mismanagement.

Gibbs Smith Publications, P.O. Box 667, Layton, UT 84041. Hardcover: $29.95. 99 pages. Illustrated with photographs.

THE PRESSURE IS ON WILDLIFE

A group appointed by Colorado's Democratic Gov. Roy Romer says the state's wildlife is in trouble. The group, called Wildlife 21, is composed of community leaders and businessmen who reported to the Division of Wildlife that population growth is the culprit. The number of people living in Colorado is expected to double by the year 2025, and roads and services built to accommodate new people will encroach on wildlife habitat. Already three acres of Colorado land are being developed every hour, and the group says more money than is now available from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses is needed to develop ways to protect wildlife. The Division of Wildlife has produced a videotape, slide show and brochure to educate the public about the problem. They suggest that Colorado use new means to raise money for wildlife, such as creating a general one-eighth percent sales tax and putting a five-cent deposit on beverage containers, with unredeemed deposits going to wildlife. For a free copy of the report write to Dale Lashnits at the Colorado DOW, 6060 Broadway, Denver, CO 80216.

Lorraine Mintzmyer

KUDOS TO MINTZMYER

A woman who began her career with the National Park Service as a clerk-stenographer in 1959 has been awarded the Interior Department's highest honor. Lorraine Mintzmyer, Rocky Mountain Regional Director of the National Park Service, recently won the Distinguished Service Award for her management of 41 parks in the Rocky Mountain states, including Yellowstone, Glacier, and Grand Teton national parks. Mintzmyer, the second woman in the history of the Park Service to receive the Distinguished Service Award, was regional director of the Southwest before being appointed to her present position in 1980. The first woman to hold a regional director position, she is credited with a variety of programs, including revitalizing the Interagency Grizzly Bear team, upgrading concessions in the parks and establishing several historical parks in the Southwest.

WANDERING IN THE WALLOWAS

Tucked away in the most northeastern county of Oregon is some of the most spectacular yet little-known backcountry in North America. So say the authors of a new book, *Hiking the High Wallowas and Hells Canyon: 18 Hikes in Northeast Oregon*. Edited by Frank Conley and members of the Wallowa Resource Council, the book describes in detail points of interest, recreation and access to trails. "This is a place where a person can find the time and the space to think beyond the tip of his or her nose."

Pika Press, P.O.Box 457, 203 E. Main, Enterprise, OR 97828. Paper: $7.95. 80 pages. Illustrated with maps and photographs.

HIKE THE GILA

Designated as the nation's first wilderness area in 1924, New Mexico's Gila Wilderness contains cliff dwellings of the ancient Mogollan Indian culture and battlegrounds of the Apache and U.S. Cavalry, along with common and exotic animal species such as the jaguar, ring-tailed cat and pronghorn antelope. A new book called *Gila Wilderness: A Hiking Guide*, by John A. Murray, explores the natural and human history of the area and describes 24 of the more popular trails in detail. The book also includes a section on backcountry travel which covers weather, hazards, photography and river rafting.

University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque. Paper: $13.95. 243 pages. Illustrated with maps and photographs.

GREEN MANURE

More than 20 farmers and researchers will talk about growing "green manure" crops at a regional soil-building conference on Dec. 7-9. Co-sponsored by Montana State University and the Alternative Energy Resources Organization, the conference will feature workshops, panels and discussion groups on the economic feasibility of crop rotation for soil regeneration. Speakers include Karl Ohs, president of Montana Ag Producers Inc., and Dr. David Bezdicek, agronomy professor at Washington State University. About 300 participants are expected at the Yogo Inn in Lewiston, Mont. Registration is $48, with discounts available for groups and AERO members. For more information or to register, contact AERO, 44 N. Last Chance Gulch, Helena, MT 59601 (406/443-7272).

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Searching Wyoming for a creature that may not be there

by Lynn Kinter

A tunnel of light shoots out through the darkness. Back and forth it sweeps over the grass and sagebrush, bobbing to the rhythm of my walk. Alone, I patrol a sleeping prairie dog town.

Two glowing orbs appear in the emptiness at the far end of my light. I recognize them as eyes — just the kelly green shine I'm looking for. I squint through the binoculars to identify the creature behind the eyes; too far yet, although they seem to be the right height — about a foot high. Holding the beam steady, I stride toward the green shine. In a few moments I could have the answer to 20 years of searching by numerous individuals in several organizations. My heart pounds, my hands shake, and my eyes won't focus through the binoculars. I'll have to get closer still.

Now just 25 feet from this small creature, I force my hand to steady while I look for a tell-tale black mask, slender body and black feet. It is "masked" and just the right size and shape to be a young black-footed ferret. "Damn," I whisper in the dark. "It must be ..." In a flash of disappointment, I see the white feet and realize I've only discovered a long-tailed weasel.

So began one of my first evenings of searching for black-footed ferrets. I've been fooled enough times since by weasels, badgers and fawn antelope that my hands don't shake any more as I scope on the eyeshines. But I still begin each night's work believing, "They're here. I'll find them this time."

As a biologist aide with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, I have the exciting task of following up on all ferret reports in the state. This year alone, over 40 people have contacted me claiming to have seen the rare species. At present, the only documented black-footed ferret population is in captivity at the Sybille Canyon Wildlife Research Center in eastern Wyoming. I hope to find another population by searching the areas where ferrets are reported.

Sightings come in from all parts of the state, including a few around Meeteetse, where the last known wild ferrets lived before they were decimated by distemper. Some of these sightings are likely animals that resemble ferrets: long-tailed or short-tailed weasels, minks, badgers, marmots, prairie dogs or domestic European ferrets. It's often hard for me to guess just what the observer has seen when their description doesn't match any species.

Many of the observers get only a glimpse of the animal as it bounds across the highway, and they swerve to miss it. When I get a report like that, I'm tempted to say, "Why didn't you just hit it? Then we'd know for sure." But of course that's not an approved method of identifying an endangered species.

Since this past spring, the New York Zoological Society has offered a $5,000 reward for any black-footed ferret report that leads to a confirmed sighting. Occasionally, someone calls in who wasn't wearing his glasses when he saw the ferret but can still give a description good enough for a field guide. He then wants to know when his check will be arriving. I explain that we have to see either a photograph or the ferret first.

From the 47 sightings that have come in this year, I must pick the most likely ones for thorough surveys. In a few cases, there are two or three unrelated sightings in the same area. These get top priority. If a prairie dog town lies within a few miles of a probable sighting, I like to spend at least three full nights spotlighting among the burrows.

Historically, ferrets have been found in black-tailed and white-tailed prairie dog colonies. They live in the burrows and feed primarily on prairie dogs. Ferrets, especially mothers with kits, are most active above ground from mid-July to late September, although they will continue to surface through the fall and winter. Because they rarely come above ground in the daylight and can stay underground for four or five days, ferrets are not easy to spot. My task, then, is being at the right place at the right time — the part of the dog town (which may be 2,000 acres or larger) for the 20 minutes or so when the ferrets surface.

My work usually finds me alone in some of the most remote and scenic parts of Wyoming: the Oregon Trail, the Shirley and Great Divide basins, and plains along the Ferris, Seminoe and Pedro mountains. I spotlight from dusk till midnight, then nap in the truck for two or three hours. In the middle of the night, I drag myself awake and continue the search until dawn. By parking my truck facing northeast and sleeping right along the west edge of the frame, I have shade from the rising sun until midday — a luxury in a land where the tallest shadows are cast by sagebrush.

Going for months without finding a ferret can be discouraging. Fortunately, other night creatures make the searches interesting. When I spot a single green eye staring blankly at the light, I know I've found a resting antelope. Red eyes are cottontails or jackrabbits; pink eyes belong to nighthawks that go winging off into the darkness from their roost on the ground. Orange eyeshines are skunks that run away with their tails cocked. And yellow eyes may be the coyote that was wailing and yipping on the ridgetop earlier.

Some animals react with curiosity to the light. Once, as I was walking with the battery pack on my back, I heard hooves clattering over the rocky soil, then saw an antelope fawn bearing down on me. It veered off at the last minute.

Another time, I spotted a pair of silvery-green eyes on a far burrow. Through my binoculars, I saw a small badger turn and start toward me. As it charged full speed into the light beam, I wondered if it would run right into me. When it was within 10 feet of my toes, I called, "Hey, little badger." It stopped as quickly as if it had run into a wall, lifted its nose inquisitively, then ambled back toward the burrow where it had been digging.

Weasels are my favorite find. One night when three friends had joined me, we spotted the green eyeshine characteristic of all Mustelids (weasels, ferrets, minks). As we approached with the spotlight, this particular short-tailed weasel was running around a series of burrows and popping in and out of connecting holes.

We stopped about eight feet from her, and in a few minutes, she came quite close. The top half of her head and body was the smooth brown of light chocolate, and her tail was the same color with a black tip. She was no more than 15 inches long, including the tail, and 2 1/2 inches in diameter. As the little weasel stood up on her hind legs, I could see her heart pounding beneath her sleak, creamy belly fur. Her delicate body and tiny paws quivered as she sniffed at the four huge creatures behind the light. Several times, she bounded around us, then off into a burrow, then back to us again.

In addition to wildlife, my work affords me a chance to meet outdoor-loving people across the state. Ranchers, trappers, wildlife artists and oilfield workers have all helped me with their reports. One rancher in the southeast part of the state initially asked me what I would do if I found ferrets on his place. Would they be overrun with biologists?

I explained that I'd try to get a picture of it, because I'd probably never be believed otherwise, and that any research on private land would be in keeping with the landowner's wishes. This rancher and his family then offered me a place to stay while I worked there, joined in for a night of spotlighting and fixed me up with zucchini bread to snack on.

Now, as the end of spotlighting season nears, I'm thinking about winter, when snow tracking begins and I can sleep nights. Although ferrets are less active in the winter, they will dig out hibernating prairie dogs and leave characteristic trenches of dirt around the burrows. If the wind isn't too bad, I might even find tracks. In the meantime, I'm spending these last few weeks fervently spotlighting.

A full moon floats in and out of thick clouds as a few snowflakes wander down. The wind is picking up from the east, and I'm strolling through the dog town with a 30-pound battery pack on my back. This could be the night. I really think this place has ferrets — it feels like ferrets.

❐

Lynn Kinter lives in Atlantic City, Wyoming. She has also studied whooping cranes and trumpeter swans for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department.

BULLETIN BOARD

A WATER ALMANAC

Perhaps because there are so many of them, this 124-page almanac published by Colorado's water establishment left out its most influential group: the water lawyers. However, the Colorado Water Congress' *Colorado Water Almanac and Directory : 1988 Edition* does list names, addresses and phone numbers of all the state's water conservancy districts, water user associations, environmental groups, irrigation districts, water authorities, water districts, sanitation districts and 208 water-quality management agencies in Colorado and several other states. The almanac also includes a calendar of water-related events and a glossary of water terms. CWC is a private nonprofit organization, dedicated to the protection, conservation and development of the states' water resources. Copies cost $25 and are available from the Colorado Water Congress at 1390 Logan St., Suite 312, Denver CO 80203 (303/837-0812).

FIRE SALE

Trees damaged by this year's fires in Wyoming will be sold this winter. The Forest Service has approved the sale of up to 3.5 million board-feet of timber in the Shadow Mountain area of the Bridger-Teton National Forest, 20 miles northeast of Jackson Hole. The trees were killed or severely damaged by August's Hunter Fire. According to Bridger-Teton officials, private firms can bid for the timber rights in December and then must follow the Forest Service's regulations on where and how to cut the trees through the winter. An environmental assessment has been approved for the proposed Hunter Fire timber sale and is available from the Forest Supervisor, Bridger-Teton National Forest, Box 1888, Jackson, WY 83001. For further information, contact Fred Kingwill or Mark Van Every at 307/733-2752.

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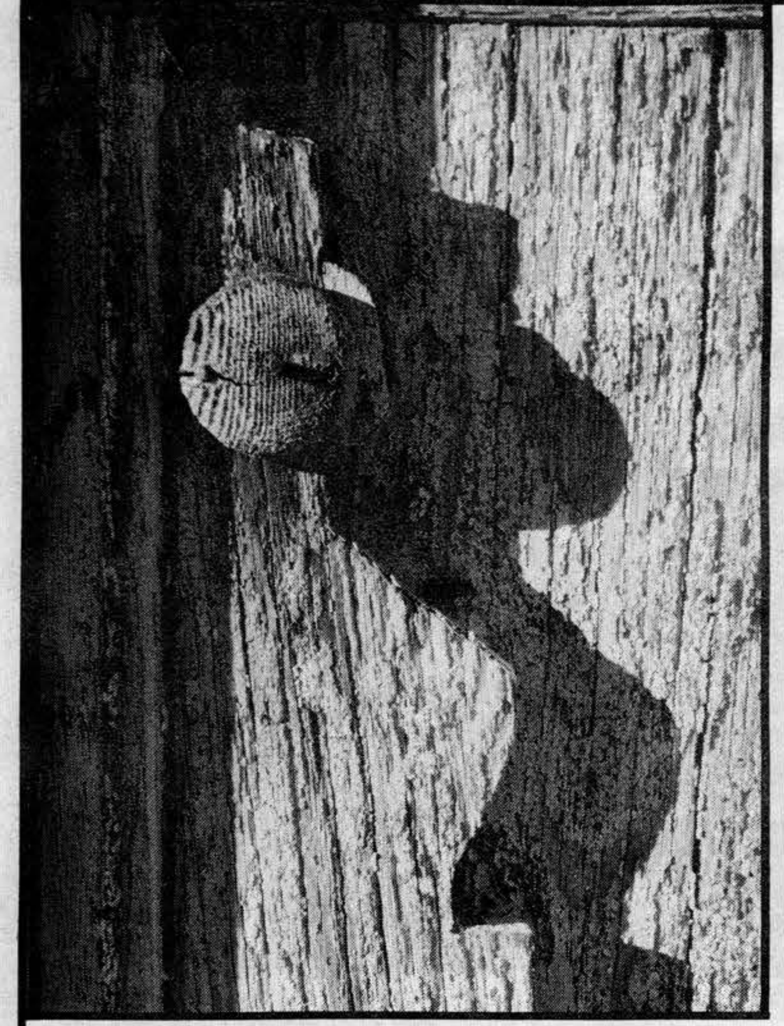

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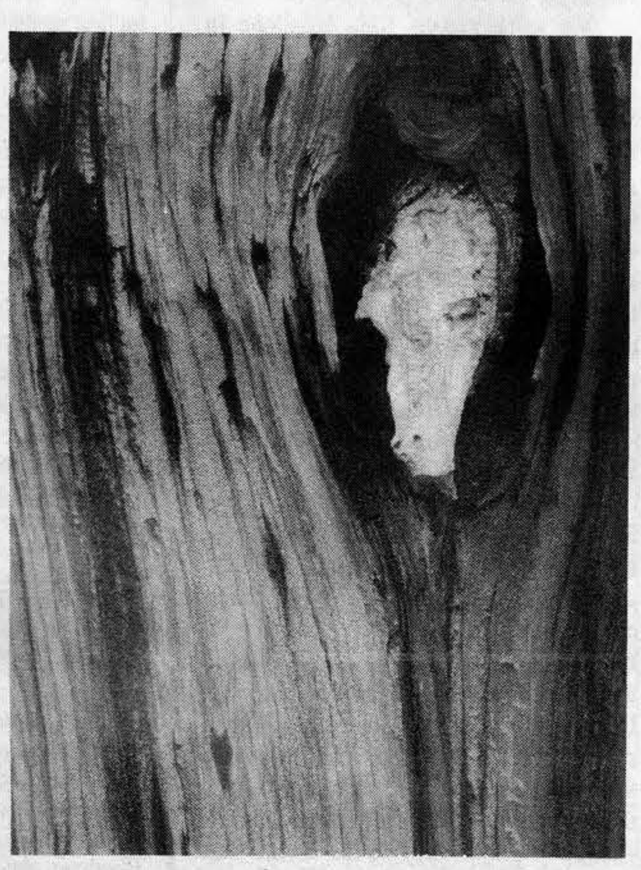

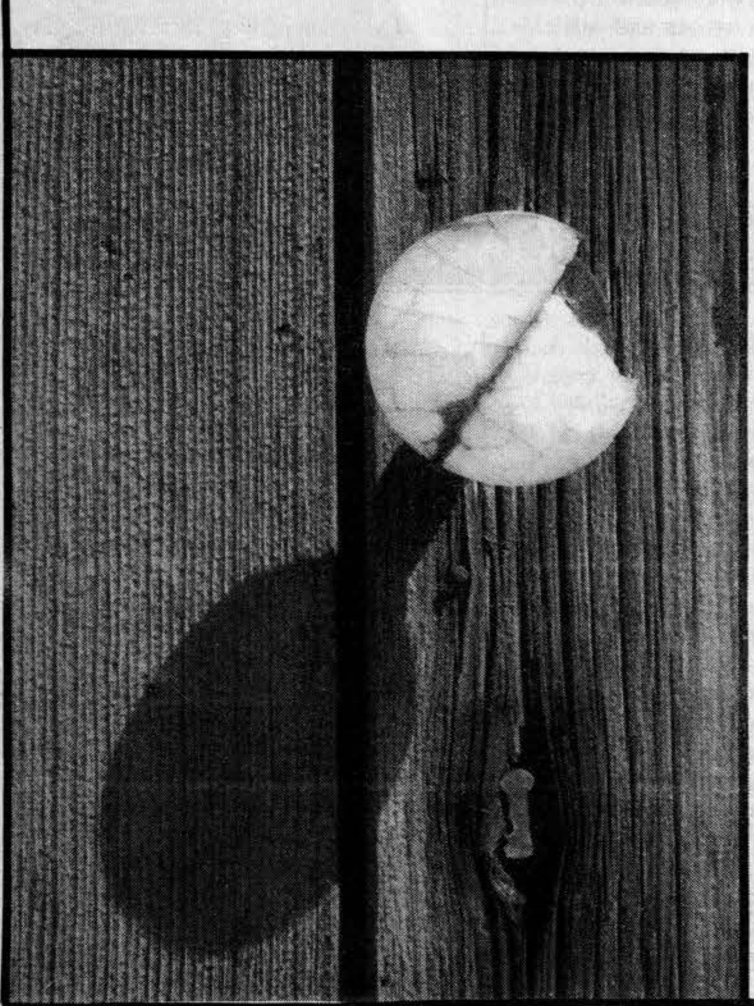

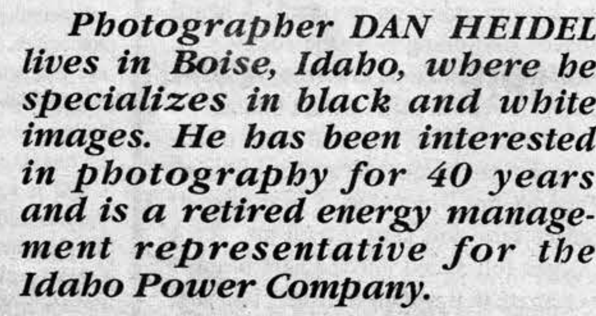

Photographer DAN HEIDEL lives in Boise, Idaho, where he specializes in black and white images. He has been interested in photography for 40 years and is a retired energy management representative for the Idaho Power Company.

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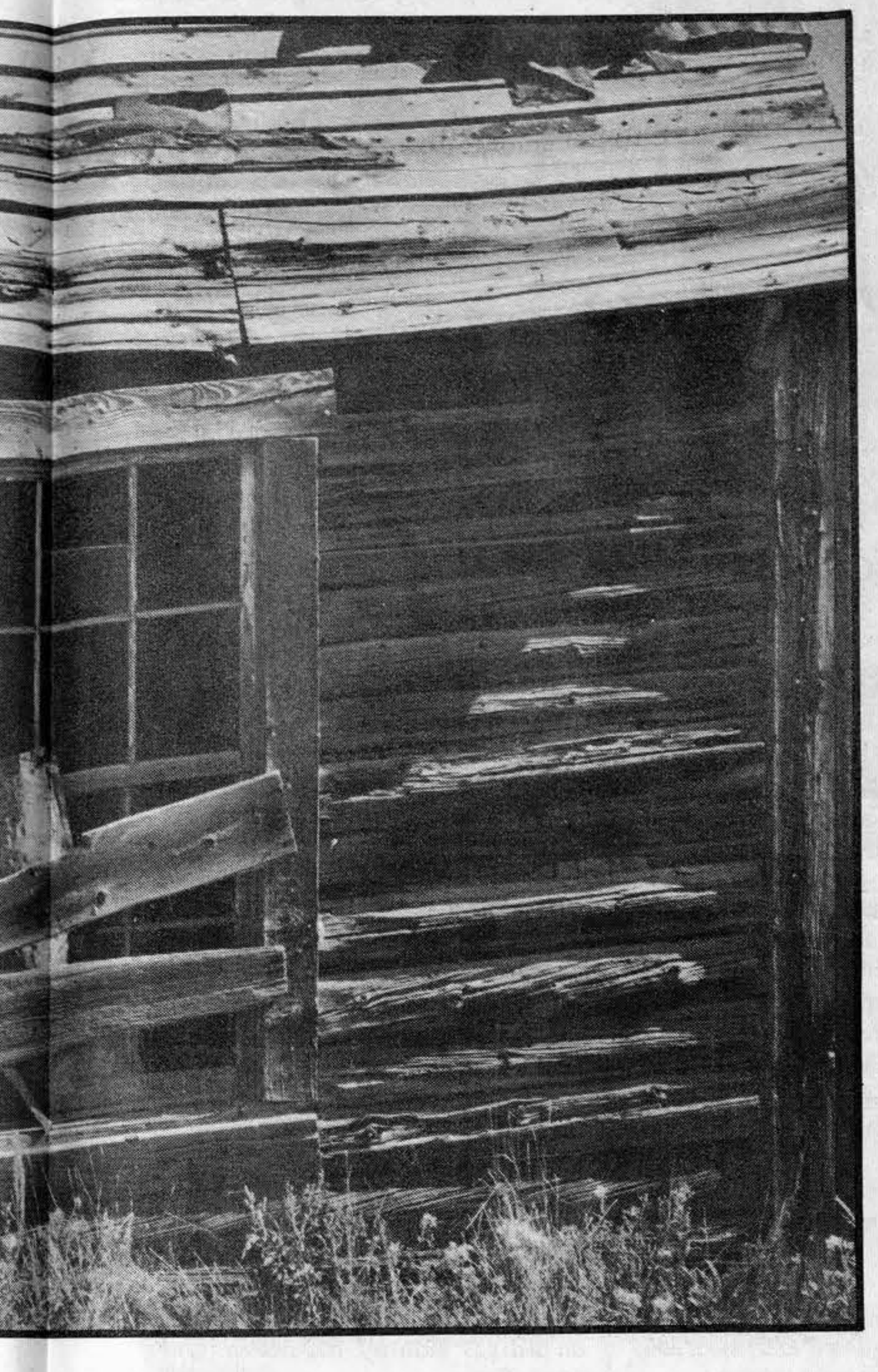

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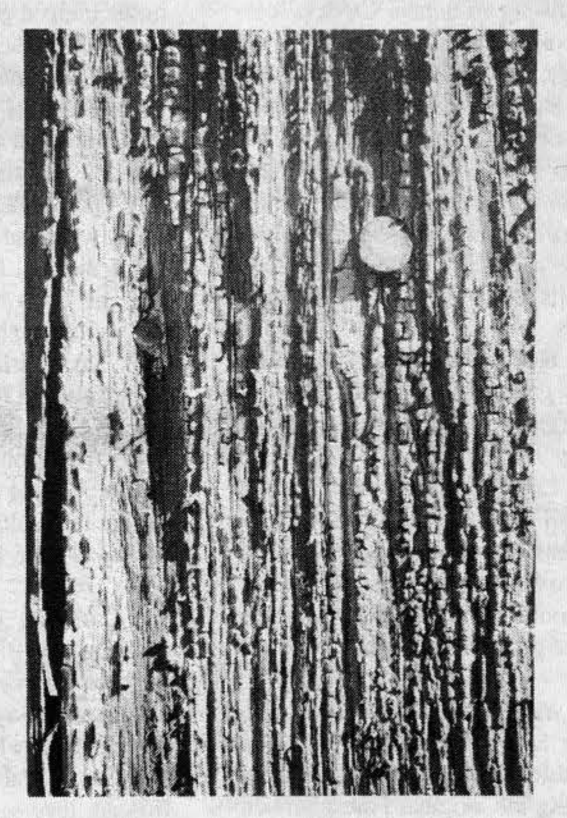

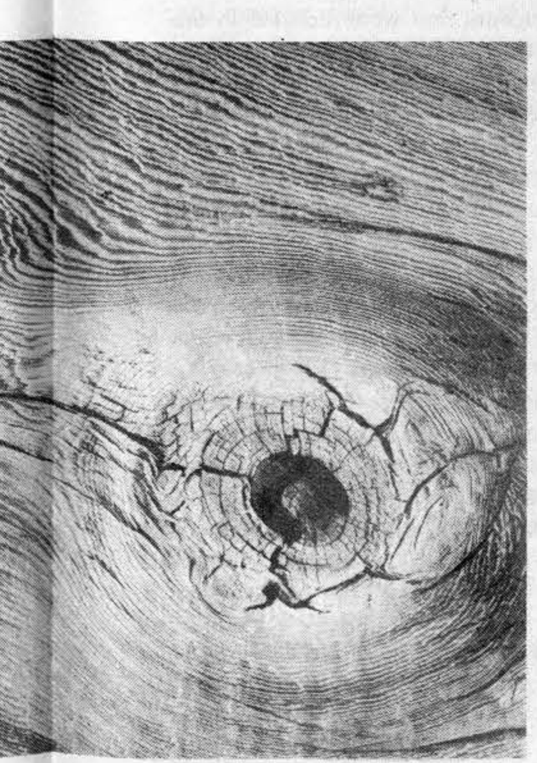

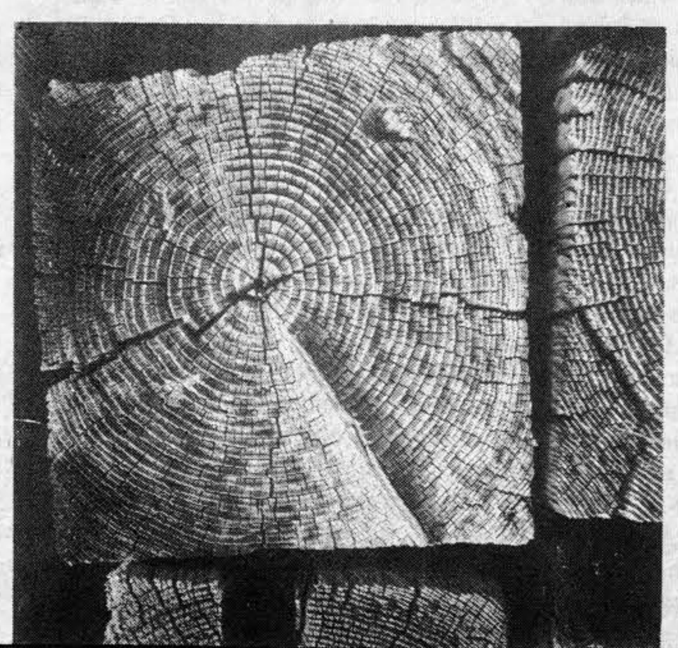

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Oil...

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was fought tenaciously from the start by environmental groups and Jackson's local government, which joined together several times to appeal Amoco's permits.

Final defeat for the five allies — the Sierra Club, Teton County Board of Commissioners, Jackson Hole Alliance for Responsible Planning, Greater Yellowstone Coalition and Wyoming Outdoor Council — came in separate rulings by the Department of Interior's Board of Land Appeals and the U.S. Forest Service.

Both upheld Amoco's right to drill an exploratory well in the Sohare Creek drainage based on a 12-year-old lease and a recently completed environmental impact statement and mitigation plan. Following the ruling Amoco announced it would begin road building and drilling early next summer.

"It's not much of a victory, but we kept them out of there for another year. In the fullness of time it amounts to nothing," said Len Carlman, the new director of the Jackson Hole Alliance for Responsible Planning, one of five groups that fought the well.

It's not much of a victory, but we kept them out of there for another year. In the fullness of time it amounts to nothing.

The drilling in Sohare Creek is serious, environmentalists say, because of the fragility and beauty of the area and because it damages land long coveted for protected or wilderness status. But the loss is also symbolic of a national fight environmentalists have waged in vain over the past decade. In general, oil and gas drilling has its way on the West's public lands despite its effect on other land values.

It has been a frustrating fight. Environmental groups have tried Congress, the courts and the administrative machinery of the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to attempt to limit oil and gas exploration and development. They have been blocked on all three approaches, and Sohare Creek (pronounced so-hair) illustrates many of the problems they face.

The main struggle has been with the federal agencies. The five entities that fought Amoco began by appealing the original Forest Service and BLM permits. They argued that the agencies had not protected the grizzly bear or elk migration routes, as required; had violated their own standards for roads on steep slopes; and, most importantly, had failed to adequately consider what would happen if oil and gas were discovered at Sohare Creek.

The last is the core of the conflict: if a discovery is made, Amoco will almost certainly apply for permission to build a large well field, with more roads, structures and traffic in the now-roadless area. Environmentalists say the Forest Service consistently refuses to consider the potential long-term impacts of granting permits for exploratory wells in recreation areas or ecologically sensitive zones.

The Bridger-Teton is one of the most visited forests in the nation and an integral part of the region's multi-million-dollar tourist economy. The B-T is also a key unit and one of the healthiest parts of the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem.

Says Carlman, "With the exception of the wolf and possibly the fisher (a carnivorous mammal related to the weasel), all of the species native to this area are still present (in the B-T) and in a relative state of abundance."

Louisa Willcox of the Greater Yellowstone Coalition adds that the B-T includes 17 percent of the grizzly bear habitat in the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem — more than any other forest in the ecosystem.

There are also assets below ground. In the southern half — the old Bridger National Forest — lies the Wyoming overthrust belt, a geologic formation that holds trapped gas and the state's largest well fields, such as LaBarge and Riley Ridge. The northern half — the old Teton National Forest — also contains geologic areas such as the Spread Creek anticline that attract oil companies.

The Spread Creek anticline is six miles wide and 20 miles long, and runs from the Mt. Leidy Highlands to the edge of Teton National Park. So far, 25 dry wells have been sunk into the formation. Says Carlman, "For Amoco to be committing $3 million to this project means it's the best one they have in this area. Every time another oil company comes into the Jackson Hole area, with better technology and more analysis, they will have better prospects for success."

Carlman, Willcox and others say despite the glaring incompatibility between the two uses of the forest, federal oil and gas regulations don't allow for discussion of where oil and gas development is desirable and where it is not. Instead, they say, the step-by-step leasing process allows development everywhere.

There are three stages, each independent of the next. First, leases are issued, usually for 10 years at a time. Then leaseholders must apply for a permit to drill an exploratory well. If a discovery is made, the company must apply again for permission to construct a multi-well operation. Leases and permits are approved by the Forest Service, but issued by the BLM, which controls all oil and gas leasing on all federal lands. Generally each stage includes an environmental analysis that looks at potential impact of that stage only.

Sometimes conditions on future developments are attached to leases, but those can be waived in an environmental analysis at one of the drilling stages. Sohare Creek is a case in point.

Amoco bought its Sohare Creek oil and gas lease 12 years ago. Like most others in the area, the lease carried a "no surface occupancy" stipulation. The NSO is a legal contradiction in terms. It leases a company the rights to subsurface minerals but not the right to occupy the surface to get at them. According to B-T officials, those stipulations were attached to protect unstable soils, steep slopes and critical grizzly and elk winter habitat. Carlman adds that they were also meant to assure environmentalists that the Forest Service would protect the region's other resources.

However, Sohare Creek's NSO stipulations were waived last year in an environmental impact statement. Says Bridger-Teton Forest Supervisor Brian Stout, "(The study) proved to our engineer's satisfaction that Amoco can build a road to the site, maintain it and reclaim it."

To compensate for impacts to grizzlies, 12 miles of road in nearby "situation one" bear habitat will be closed or restored. Situation one habitat is land the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service considers critical to the continued existence and recovery of an endangered species.

Stout adds that the Sohare Creek permit is for a single well only, and before Amoco can build a full-field development it must go through another environmental analysis and get new permits from the Forest Service.

Phil Hocker, a former Jackson resident who is founder of the Mineral Policy Center in Washington, D.C., calls the step-by-step decision making process, with its built-in promises of protection and re-evaluation at the next stage, deceptive.

As it turns out, NSO stipulations have never been enforced, Hocker says. The stipulations allay the public's concerns, he says, but the Forest Service will not enforce them if a company wants to drill. When asked, forest officials in Wyoming and Washington, D.C., were unable to cite a case where they enforced a no surface occupancy stipulation against the wishes of an oil and gas company.

However, B-T Forest Planner Jim Caplan did say that companies often drill right on the NSO boundaries, or slant drill from outside the boundaries. In every case where the stipulations were waived, Caplan adds, the Forest Service conducted an environmental impact study.

The Sohare Creek EIS didn't protect the area's unique values, Hocker says. Likewise, he adds, the environmental analysis Stout says is required before Amoco could build a full field development will offer no real protection for Sohare Creek either. "They've never denied a full field development once a discovery is made. Why should we expect them to be any different here?" Hocker asks. "If they intend to protect this area as grizzly bear habitat then there is no point in drilling the exploratory well. It's simply inviting the oil company to waste its money."

Hocker, a former national treasurer of the Sierra Club, has been involved in the B-T's oil and gas wars for years. Last year he took the fight to Washington, founding the Mineral Policy Center to work on reforming federal oil and gas laws. He charges that, under cover of confusing regulations and its steadfast refusal to plan, the Forest Service is giving the forests away to the oil and gas industry.

This is not a new argument. For the past five or six years, in their effort to reform federal oil and gas policies, environmentalists have focused primarily on the need for comprehensive planning. But the Forest Service, with help from oil and gas industry, has side-stepped those efforts.

Unable to change the agency internally, environmentalists went to Congress. In 1987, after a long fight, the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act came just shy of requiring an environmental impact statement to gauge potential impacts of full-scale development before any forest lands could be leased to oil and gas companies. That requirement was included in the House version of the bill, but was removed in the Senate under pressure from Western senators and industry (*HCN*, 2/29/88).

Reforms that were included in the act have yet to pan out. The BLM issues all oil and gas leases on public lands, and operates by a written policy to lease everything. The reform act gave the Forest Service authority to veto BLM oil and gas permits if drilling would impact other resources the Forest Service deemed more important. That provision was one hope of environmentalists in the Sohare Creek case, but the agency has yet to exercise the veto.

The act also gave the Forest Service six months to draft regulations governing its leasing program. Four months past that deadline, the agency has yet to publish the first draft of those regulations.

The judicial route hasn't done much better despite a series of environmental court victories dating back to 1983. Those cases — Sierra Club vs. Peterson; Conner vs. Burford; and Bob Marshall Alliance vs. Hodel — were won in several federal district courts.

All held that a federal oil and gas lease constitutes a major federal action with potentially significant impacts to public resources. The courts also agreed with environmentalists' arguments that,

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because of that potential impact, a full-scale environmental impact statement must be done to consider long-term effects of all possible developments. including a field of several producing wells.

In the lead case, Sierra Club vs. Peterson, the Washington, D.C., district court ruled: "The decision to allow surface-disturbing activities has been made at the leasing stage, and under the National Environmental Policy Act this is the point at which the environmental impact of such activities must be evaluated."

That should have set a precedent requiring long-term planning before leases are granted. However, the courts left the oil and gas companies and the Forest Service a loophole. The courts ruled that if leases are granted with "no surface occupancy" or other stipulations, then those leases do not have to be accompanied by an environmental impact statement or long term planning. The reasoning was that an NSO prevented surface impacts, therefore there was nothing to study.

The courts added that if an oil company later requested that stipulations on its lease be removed, then the Forest Service must conduct an environmental impact study.

Hocker says the Forest Service has used the loophole to avoid in-depth planning and continue, as in the Sohare case, with its deceptive step-by-step permitting process. Leases are now regularly issued with NSO or other stipulations, he says, and those stipulations are regularly lifted in a later EIS. Although resources are limited, Hocker says environmental groups are sifting through upcoming oil and gas leases and will challenge the worst in court.

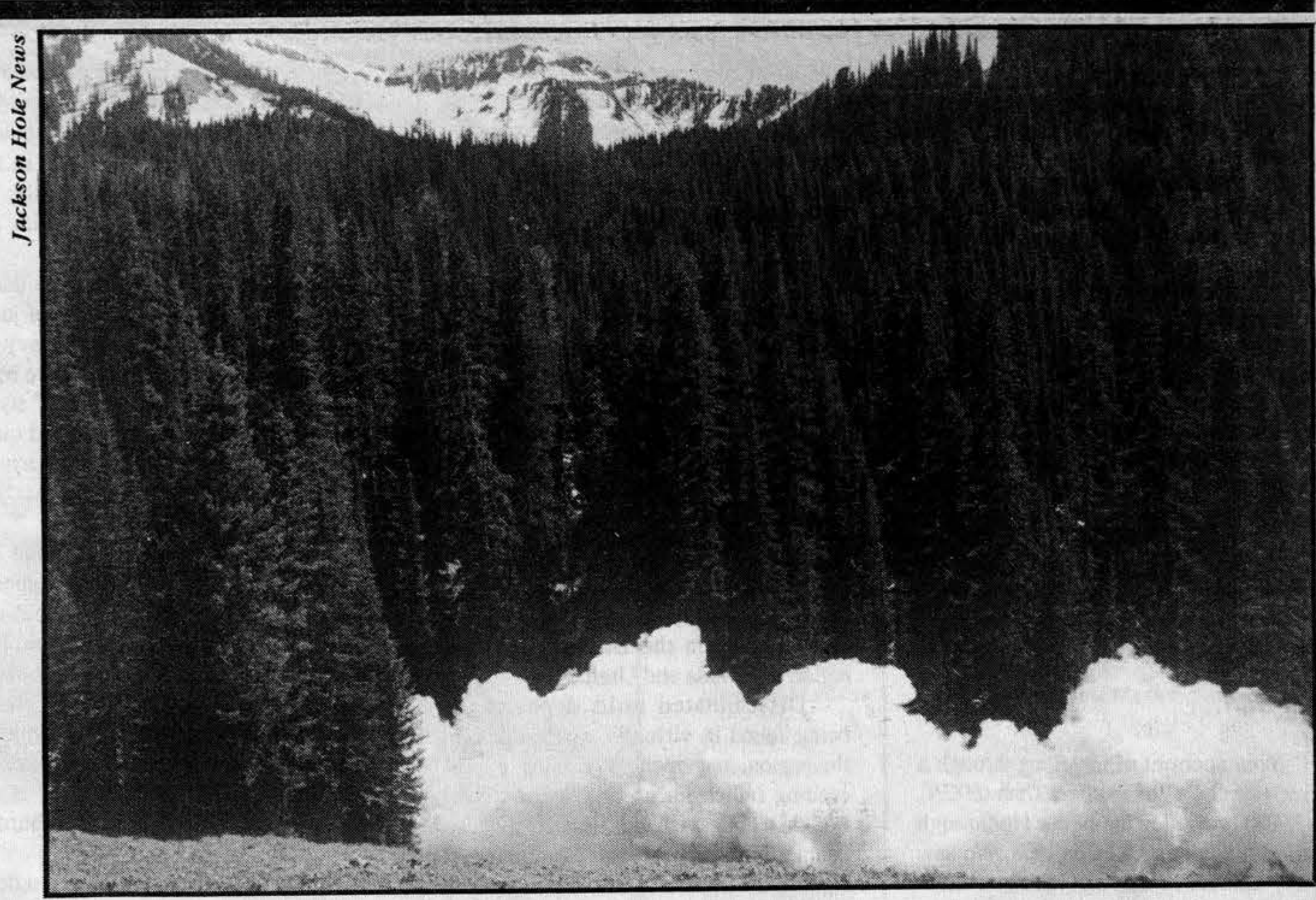
The coming release of the Bridger-Teton Forest Management Plan this winter epitomizes the oil and gas leasing situation. Environmentalists and the public in general have been involved in the planning for this key forest at every step of the way. Thousands of comments on the plan have come in from every state in the union except Rhode Island.

And the planning has been hailed for several accomplishments. The agency has frankly confronted its dilemma on logging, reducing the allowable cut despite lawsuits from the logging industry and intense political pressure (*HCN*, 10/10/88). Moreover, most observers agree that the planning has been competent and detailed — except for decisions on oil and gas leasing.

Again, Hocker says, problems with oil and gas leasing in the new B-T plan are hidden behind a complex of regulations. The plan has perhaps the most sophisticated approach to oil and gas leasing of any forest.

According to B-T forest planner Caplan, the new managment plan divides the forest into 30 planning zones. For each zone, the agency has written a development scenario for a full well field. Leases will be made based on those scenarios, and each of the 30 zones is broken down into acreage that is not available for leasing, acres with non-waivable NSO stipulations, acres with waivable NSO stipulations based on site specific concerns, and acres with no stipulations.

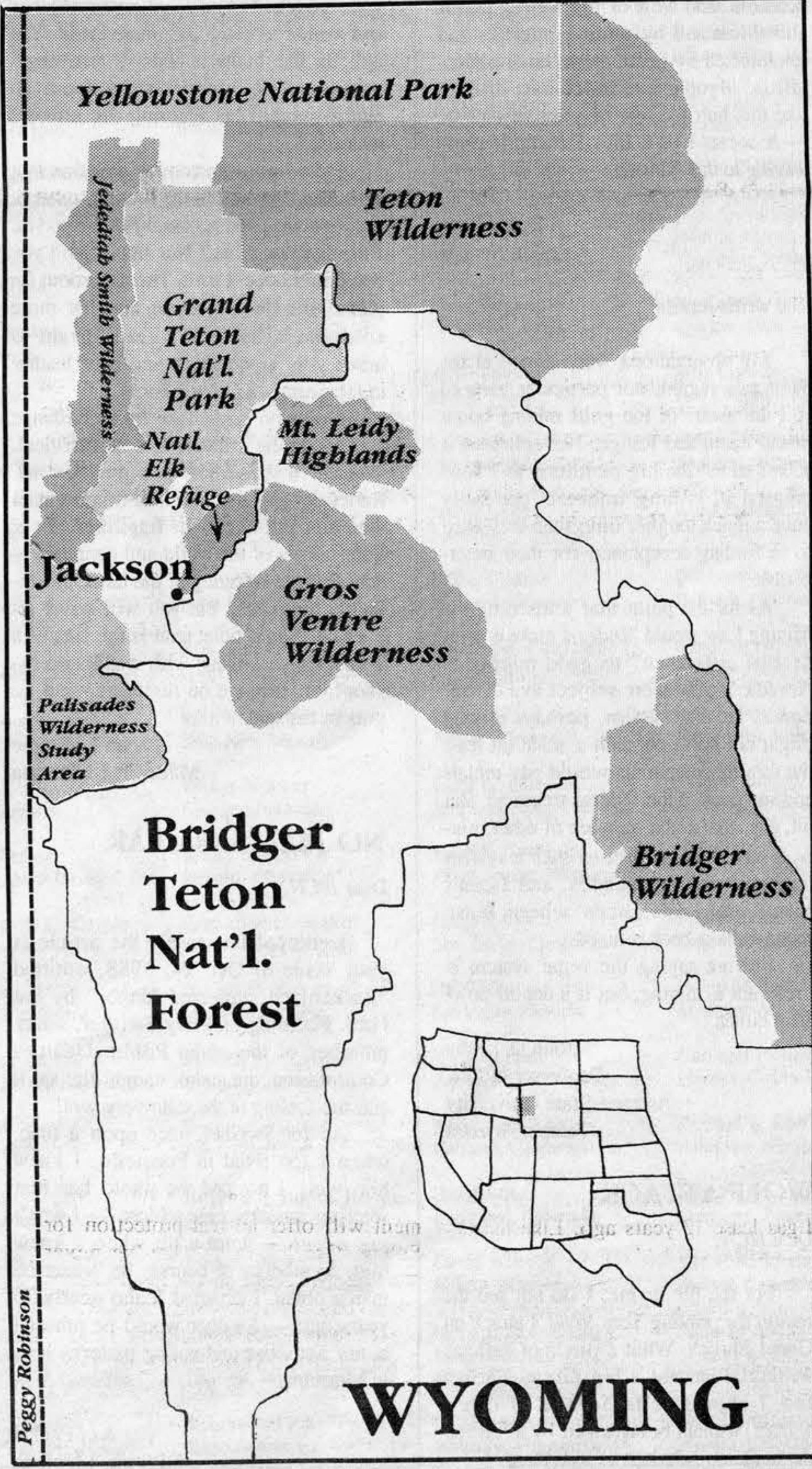
While environmentalists have a long list of areas that should be off limits to full scale development — highway corridors and scenic roads in the Jackson Hole area, grizzly bear situation one habitat, Mount Leidy Highlands, borders of the National Elk Refuge and elk migration corridors, the Snake River



Seismic blast inside the Mt. Leidy Highlands

Canyon and lower slopes of the Grand Tetons — the Forest Service has identified no areas where full-field oil and gas development would be considered incompatible with management for other resources.

According to Stout and Caplan, the only places that will be made off limits to oil rigs are developed campgrounds, narrow riparian corridors, lake shores and a set of periodic springs. Moreover, assistant forest planner Paul Arndt says even though some of the protective stipulations attached to oil leases will be called non-waivable, elsewhere in the B-T forest plan it says that all leasing stipulations are waivable within the standard EIS process. Forest officials announced recently that the plan is now on the way to the printer.



Hocker fumes at the way the B-T forest plan has turned out. In the draft plan released in late 1986, the Forest Service had identified several areas where oil and gas development would be off limits. Those included grizzly bear situation one habitat, the Jackson Hole ski area and highway corridors south of Jackson Hole. Hocker says public comment on the draft was overwhelmingly in favor of protecting even more of the forest from leasing.

"In response to that they said: 'We'll lease all of it,'" Hocker says. "It just makes mockery of the public input process."

He adds that the Forest Service is proving itself to be much like the BLM: "There's simply no direction, but the unwritten rule is to follow the BLM's direction and the BLM leases everything. The Forest Service hasn't even had the honesty to write up (its own policy) and have it open for public discussion. It's a real cop-out."

Forest Service minerals and geology chief Buster LaMoure at the agency's Washington headquarters says national policy, as dictated by Congress, is to make all suitable areas of the forests available for leasing. LaMoure rejects the notion that the Forest Service should be required to do advance planning for oil and gas development, because he says it is impossible to know what scale of development to expect. "Not even the oil and gas companies know that," he says.

Instead, LaMoure says, the agency will continue to evaluate each case as it comes up, balancing environmental concerns against the national need for oil and gas.

Carlman says that is wrong. "To paraphrase Newton Drury (the former chief of the Forest Service)," he says, "We are not yet so poor a nation that we must exploit every last wild acre, nor are we so rich a nation that we can afford to."

Willcox adds, "The issue is a lot larger than the Sohare Creek oil well or a single road proposal... The issue is whether or not the Forest Service is prepared to manage this area for the public trust. We'll continue to raise the issue administratively, in litigation and on the streets. We'll do it in Congress. But we are not going to give up."

□

LETTERS

Susan Thomas

NO PROGRESS

Dear *HCN*,

Your account of travelling through a "free-fire zone" in southern Utah (*HCN*, 11/7/88) reminded me of our trip through northern Utah in October 1958. We saw many hunters in moving vehicles clutching their rifles, poised to spring out at the sight of an unwary deer. Upon rounding a curve, we encountered a hunter standing in the road 100 feet away, his rifle pointed directly at us.

Then, to our consternation, three deer ran between him and us. Fortunately he held his fire until the deer reached the other side of the road. It appears that autumn travelers are no safer on Uinta roads than on LaSal roads and that in 30 years the Utah laws have failed to modify the behavior of Utah hunters.

John H. Whitmer
Tacoma, Washington

AUTHORS ANSWER

Dear *HCN*,

We were struck by several points in Lon Reukauf's letter (*HCN*, 10/24/88) about our article, "The Fate of the Plains," in the Sept. 26 issue. He criticizes us and two authorities we cited — Robert Scott and Bret Wallach — for excessive pessimism about the future of the Great Plains. At the same time, he admits that Plains farming "is about half a disaster," which is essentially our argument. That is, we turn out to agree.

We also agree with Mr. Reukauf that the Agriculture Department's Conservation Reserve program could help restore much of the Plains' grasslands, although it would be useful if the proviso that the Reserve can cover no more than a quarter of any one county were lifted. The Reserve and Buffalo Commons we proposed may, in fact, converge over time.

Yet Mr. Reukauf also argues that the only relevant professional background for studying or dealing with the Plains are "biology, soil or range sciences," as conducted by people who live in the Plains. We believe that this approach is somewhat parochial. It slights the contributions of such fields as history, economics, climatology and mining, among many others. Moreover, Mr. Reukauf's approach would disqualify the contributions of past giants such as John Wesley Powell (who lived mostly in Washington, DC), Hugh Hammond Bennett (Washington and North Carolina), Walter Prescott Webb (East Texas), or Frederick Jackson Turner (Wisconsin and Massachusetts). An impractical standard.

We admire the flinty Plains independence and the hard-headed Plains civic-mindedness of Mr. Reukauf's letter. He is clearly a person who will survive under nearly any Plains conditions and thrive under most. But we still think that the region is in deep trouble, as is the bulk of its rural population. Dismissing all but a few backgrounds and anyone who lives elsewhere is not the answer.

Deborah Epstein Popper
Frank J. Popper
Rutgers University
New Brunswick, New Jersey

SURPRISED

Dear *HCN*,

I received your sample copy (*HCN*, 10/24/88) on the "Western Frontier," and was a little surprised to read about "mining's diminished future," wherein John Leshy asserts that "the golden age of Western mining has passed." Apparently Leshy is unaware of the current gold-mining boom in the Basin and Range region of Nevada and Utah.

Disseminated gold deposits are being found in virtually every range in the region, and open-pit mining is proceeding full-steam ahead. I won't belabor this note with details (Leshy can contact any Chamber of Commerce in Nevada if he wants to know particulars), but mining interests once more run the show in this region, and "whether the Mining Law of 1872 is formally jettisoned" would *indeed* make a great deal of difference.

I got the impression that Leshy thinks the West comprises the ski-retirement resorts of the Rockies, where vein-type deposits were exhausted and replaced with recreation industries. Please inform him that there is a lot of beautiful land west of the Divide that is still threatened by mining interests and unprotected by fashionable environmentalists. Myopic and inaccurate articles like this hurt the rest of your newspaper — it seems like a lot of *bullshit arm-waving* to this Nevadan!

D. Madigan
Elko, Nevada

The writer replies:

My observations were aimed at the West as a region, not particular parts of it. I am aware of the gold mining boom in the Basin and Range. Nevertheless, it seems to me the big picture is as I have painted it; mining interests generally have a much tougher time than they used to in finding acceptance for their enterprises.

As for the point that jettisoning the Mining Law would "*indeed* make a great deal of difference" to gold mining in Nevada: If gold were subject to a discretionary leasing system, perhaps mining might not occur on such a scale (at least the mining companies would pay rentals and royalties to the federal treasury). But oil, gas, coal and a number of other minerals have been subject to such a system for nearly seven decades, and I can't recall many instances where lease requests have been refused.

I'm not saying the legal system is irrelevant to mining, but it's not all-powerful either.

John D. Leshy
Professor of Law
Arizona State University
Tempe, Arizona

WOLF ATTACK

Dear *HCN*,

For the life or me, I do not see the reason for printing Tom Wolf's attack on Gretel Ehrlich. What a piece of garbage writing! I am not a big Gretel Ehrlich fan. I enjoyed *The Solace of Open Spaces* without being awed by it but felt the book as a whole was overrated.

Wolf has one major hangup, besides being terribly condescending, he secretly wishes he could go back to Pinedale, Wyoming, take that cowboy out in the street and kick his ass. Evidently, he can't, so he does his bullying with the safety of his pen.

This is not the type of article that I like to see run as a normal piece of journalism. It is an editorial piece, heavy on one man's opinion, and should have been balanced in a "point-counterpoint" style. It is not that Wolf is not astute and quite often correct, it is that he is as narrow-minded and self-righteous as the Wyomingites he attacks.

As a Montana rancher I have labored hard to preserve the environment and the wildlife in my area. I could use the insight and knowledge of people like Tom Wolf, but the man's methods — as judged by this one article — stink. Wolf's biggest mistake: being hostile to jerks like himself makes no one necessarily hostile to nature. Tom Wolf is not "nature" personified and can hardly speak for it.

Please understand that I have a deep and abiding love for the land. I am outraged by some government and private actions concerning agriculture. But I am just as outraged by self-righteous environmentalists who cloak thenselves in religious fervor and never once criticize or laugh at their own foibles.

If *High Country News* is to succeed it must first of all adhere to the tenets of strict journalism. Just the facts, m'am. If it is opinion, let's label it as such. Otherwise you will soon have no credibility and venue to reach the uncoverted. You will be like many of today's televangelists, sending information to those already seduced but ignoring the affected masses.

How foolish to convey a notion that agriculture is dead in the West. Undergoing a serious and necessary change, yes. But, dead or dying? Not likely, and you had better hope it isn't. There is room for plans like the Big Open and for more wilderness, but it still takes grain to make your granola bars and beef leather to fabricate your hiking boots.

Come on guys. Take on a challenge and let us be a little more self-critical. You need grassroots people like me. Ranchers and merchants and sportsmen who are sensitive to the fragilities of our little corner of the world and desperately ache for the suffering of the land, the animals, the plants. But you will never attract us if your point man is the like of a Tom Wolf, someone with a chip on his shoulder, revenge on his mind, and no guts in his soul.

John L. Moore
Miles City, Montana

NO MAN'S COLLAR

Dear *HCN*,

I enjoyed immensely the article in your issue of Oct. 24, 1988, entitled "Balkanized, atomized Idaho," by Pat Ford. Focusing on Perry Swisher, senior member of the Idaho Public Utilities Commission, the author caught the spirit and the feeling of the state very well.

As for Swisher, once upon a time, when I too lived in Pocatello, I knew him well. I noticed the photo has him wearing a necktie. He seldom — I won't say *never* — wore a tie when I knew him. Symbolic, of course; he wears no man's collar. I departed Idaho nearly 20 years ago — Swisher would be amused at my activities and voting patterns here in Montana.

Jim Phelps
Billings, Montana

A RESPONSE

Dear *HCN*,

I count Andy Melnykovych among the best writers in the nation on public lands issues, but even the best sometimes go astray to make a point. Such was the case in his recent article "Let's start seeing Joe Winnebago as a potential ally" (*HCN*, 8/1/88).

Andy somewhat grudgingly acknowledges that The Wilderness Society's recent "Ten Most Endangered Parks" report gained wide national public attention, that it made an impact on park funding by Congress, and that the park threats identified in our report are not only real but are "in urgent need of correction."

But he suggests that we see park visitors as problems rather than allies in the battle for park protection. The basis for this claim? What he perceives as a lack of emphasis in a recent Society fundraising appeal on maintenance of national park roads and other visitor facilities; and the "seeming low priority the conservation community had placed" on interpretive exhibits and services in the national parks.

The Wilderness Society has worked hard to encourage Congress to appropriate much more money for interpretation. Earlier this year in testimony before two different congressional committees, The Wilderness Society went to bat for interpretation in a big way. Quoting from that testimony:

"...the ranger ranks are overworked, underpaid and unable to allocate the necessary time to visitor contact. Morale problems abound. And, it is the visitors who are the real losers. Without a ranger to interpret the resources, visitors rarely develop on their own that deep appreciation for the history of our nation, that relationship to our land and resource heritage, and that pride and patriotism inspired by scenery unmatched anywhere in the world."

We then went on to recommend an ambitious funding program for interpretation, including an increase of $28 million to the base appropriation for interpretive programs and staffing, and a three-year, $20 million per year program to bring all interpretive facilities up to standard. What we do behind the scenes on park management and appropriations issues may not be that visible to most people, but I think it deserves more credit than back-of-the-hand criticism. We are doubling the size of our parks program this month, and we would be delighted to give Andy a briefing on our priorities for 1989.

We believe the national parks are among the very best tools available to build a constituency for the public lands and wilderness. But the National Park Service Organic Act says that the Service should conserve resources so as to leave them *unimpaired*, and unfortunately the Service is not now meeting that mandate. Given the threats to park resources and the reality of inadequate funding for the parks across the board, we say patch the potholes and save the gold plating for another day. After all, what good is a perfect road through an imperfect landscape?

George T. Frampton, Jr.
President
The Wilderness Society
Washington, D.C.

Ground squirrel nibbles on an antler at Rocky Mountain National Park

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R.P. Higgins
Detroit, Michigan

Guy A. Swenson, Jr.
Francestown, New Hampshire

Kate West and Alan McKnight
Saugerties, New York

Glenn and Dixie Meagher
Mill Valley, California

REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

Will Westerners ever measure up to the West?

by Liz Caile

Looking back on the history of the American West, some historians are moving away from the frontier thesis of Frederick Jackson Turner. No longer is the forward march of history described in terms of brave white males conquering a land inhabited by dangerous animals and natives who had the bad fortune to get in the way of civilization.

Now it is described in terms of the competing needs and inherent value of many forms of life and of many different cultures. Underlying this redefinition is a concern that life in the West may be threatened by outworn patterns of behavior and values.

An all-day symposium held Oct. 19 at the University of Colorado, Boulder, focused on the future of the West, but a great deal of time was spent on understanding its past and defining its present problems for the audience of 500.

The symposium was titled "A Society to Match the Scenery," words taken from Wallace Stegner's book *The Sound of Mountain Water.* Participants agreed that the scenery was a worthy yardstick for any society, but were reluctant to predict such a society in the foreseeable future.

The first speaker, historian Patricia Nelson Limerick, a co-organizer of the symposium with CU law professor Charles Wilkinson, set the tone:

"The West may be going to hell in a handbasket, but in that basket the conversation is going to be great."

"Make the conversation probing and painful, tragic and comic," recommended Limerick, and maybe the direction of society in the West will change for the better. Limerick decried the "Have a Nice Day" school of Western history, but later took on the apocalyptic wing of Western thought, when an Earth First!er asked if violence were ever justified against environmental wreckers. "No, come talk to me ... I've seen enough bodies in my study of Western history."

Utah author, story teller and naturalist Terry Tempest Williams told the audience that stories were the "umbilical cord" to the past, present and future. Her hands danced as she illustrated her story about a Japanese settler who could tell, from its touch and taste and smell, where any handful of Utah soil came from — what valley, what butte. The man was later interned as a dangerous alien.

She then told about Indians who cautioned white land managers that if they killed all the prairie dogs, there would be no one to cry for the rain. The managers shrugged and poisoned the prairie dogs. Without the burrowing creatures, the earth settled into an impervious hardpack, and the Indians mourned — there was no one to cry for the rain.

But Williams ended on an optimistic note. "We are involved in a renaissance of thought and action," she said. "There is a new subculture in our midst — a coyote clan, who quietly goes about being subversive on the part of the land."

Attorney David Getches said the success of Indians at surviving in the West despite persecution is fortunate for the West, as well as for the Indians. Most of us who are in the region now have fled our roots, and the messes our ancestors made. Getches said indigenous people are our surrogate ancestors, and we are in an adolescent stage of accepting their wisdom.

Coming to the microphone after lunch, Sally Fairfax of the University of California, Berkeley, an expert on federal natural resources policy, played the role of the uninvited fairy at Sleeping Beauty's christening party. Her predictions were laced with vitriolic humor — some pointed towards herself, some aimed at male egos, some at the very idea of the symposium.

She asked if a regional-perspective, the "geo-emotional" setting she'd been hearing about, wasn't about to be diminished by larger problems in the world.

"I'm not sure this conversation has a real subject. Public lands have been receding from the center of the national stage for most of our history," Fairfax said. Their retreat matters because it is the public lands that gives the West its coherence.

Part of the reason for their loss of importance, she said, is there are so many other, more important problems confronting the nation — problems having to do with people rather than land. She objected, for example, to the term raping the land as a denigration of the rape of women.

More technically, she said the federal government no longer has the funds to manage its vast holdings or the expertise to make multiple-use work.

Politically, she said, "The constituency for 'Smokey knows best' is dying," and single use legislation — for wilderness, scenic rivers or the protection of mineral deposits — and land consolidation on the state level are the wave of the future.

The West's future society, concluded Fairfax, must take into account climatic cycles and perhaps the greenhouse effect. The Colorado River compact, divvying up Western water, was signed in the year of the river's highest flow since the time of Christ? By all accounts, said Fairfax, the scenery and society of the future West will have less water and a less docile climate to succor it.

Succeeding speakers argued that aridity was a unifying feature of the West. Behind the podium a large map of the United States was titled "Beyond the 100th Meridian," and a straight black line cutting the West off from the conjunctions of great rivers represented this line of demarcation. "That's where rainfall starts to decline," said Tess McNulty from the audience, and "the West is where everyone is suing everyone else over water."

One feature of the map were the purple squares representing land belonging to Native Americans. When John Echohawk came to the microphone, he reminded the audience that 3 percent of the land in the United States is held by sovereign Indian tribes.

From the perspective of tribes around the country — Echohawk heads 17 lawyers in the nationally-active Native American Rights Fund — the notion of disparate subcultures coming together for mutual good in the American West is unlikely.

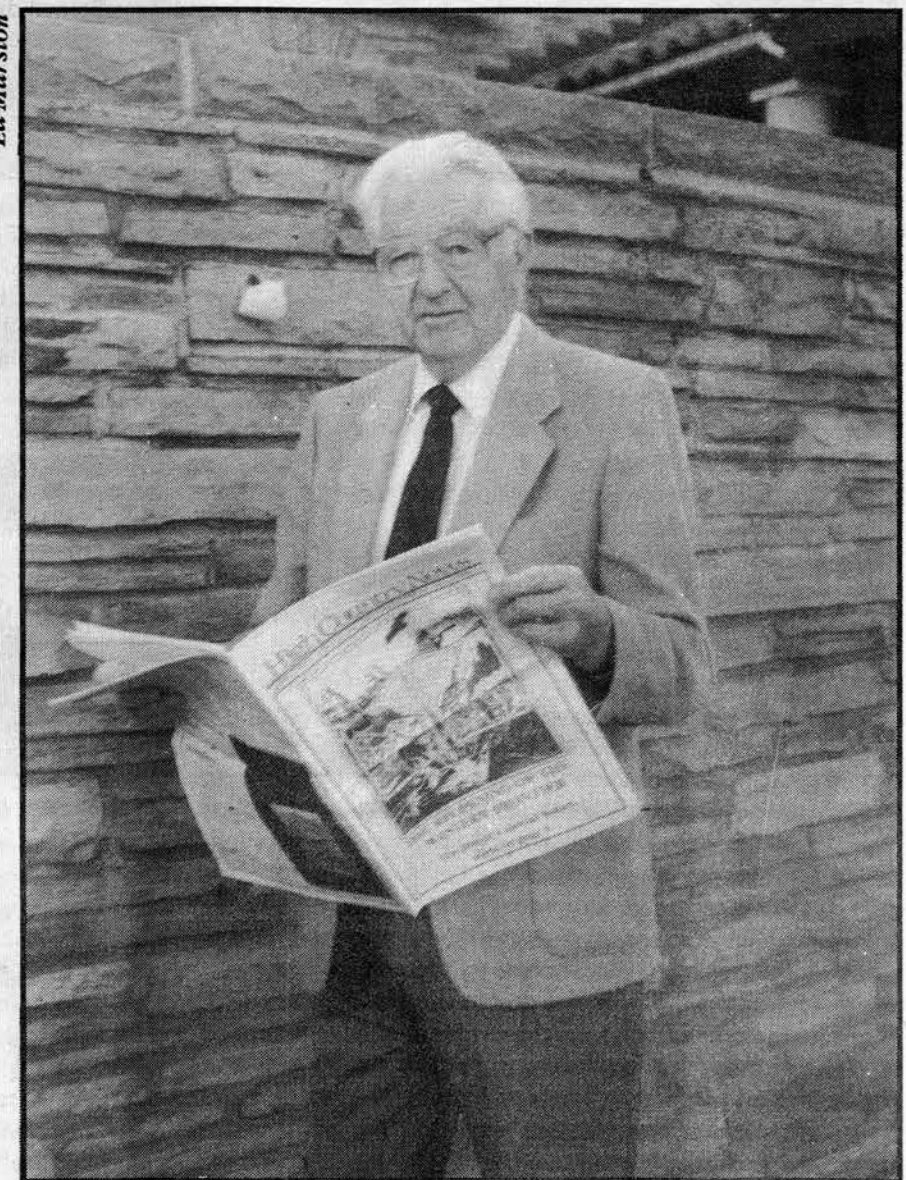
Indians have always been left out, he said. While they are now on Western agendas, tribal leaders are skeptical of their new status. For Indians, the memory of legislation introduced just 30 years ago to eradicate tribes reamains strong.

The conversation continued with point and counterpoint. Adrian Bustamante, an historian from Santa Fe Community College in New Mexico, observed that Santa Fe had been "artsy-craftsied to death," with affluence tending to exclude long-time residents from their community.

Bustamante favored restoration and reclamation of the Western landscape, seconding the remarks of *High Country News* publisher Ed Marston.

In contrast, *Denver Post* editor William Hornby talked about a predominantly urban West, suggesting that it could protect itself from exploitation by the rest of the country only by gaining enough population to hold its own electorally.

Ed Marston



Wallace Stegner glances at High Country News

I've been shaped by the West, and I've been on the lathe for quite a long time.

In the evening, eyes turned towards Wallace Stegner, author of 30 books and teacher of writers such as Edward Abbey, Ken Kesey, Scott Momaday and Tillie Olson. His voice was measured, almost sad: "I was shaped by the West, and I've been on the lathe quite a long time."

Stegner ridiculed the notion of Western water "augmentation" projects, asking, "Why should the desert be asked to blossom in roses? Deserts have their own kind of life, their own blossoms, and there is no reason Isaiah should tell us what to do." The West, he emphasized, has a low growth-ceiling.

He talked about the transience of Westerners, which has the consequence that few towns are "deeply lived in." Recalling the beautiful places he had known, he proposed sharing visions of them with bureaucrats.

"I could do something with dreams," said Stegner. "I could suggest how to live without damaging the land. And if you say dreams are empty, why is the continuing dream of the West, the dream of bonanza, so persuasive, so compulsive?"

Stegner predicted that the West will continue to suffer from growth. There will be booms followed by busts and damage that can't be healed. But there will also be a core population of "stickers, who want not a fat living from the West, but a good life," he said.

Those "stickers" will be the salvation of the region if just 51 percent care enough to change the way people do business.

Stegner concluded optimistically by picking up Terry Tempest Williams' theme:

"The coyotes will eventually triumph."

□

Liz Caile is a freelance writer in Nederland, Colorado.

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ESSAY

Wallace Stegner: The transcendent Western writer

by Ed Marston

Novelist and essayist Wallace Stegner spent two days in October at a University of Colorado symposium whose title, "A Society to Match the Scenery," was taken from his own work.

Stegner, now 79, gave a formal talk on Wednesday evening and spent most of the following day answering questions put to him by students at two seminars. He revealed himself at those seminars as both giving and forgiving. One student, for example, asked him how he had lost a finger on his left hand. Rural Westerners rarely notice or remark on missing digits. Because of physical work, long distances to medical care and harsh climate, missing fingers are all too common.

Stegner, who by this time had been going for two days, could have chosen to be irritable. He was there to talk about his ideas and work rather than his anatomy. Instead, he told how as a 15-year-old he had been playing street football — he was going out for a pass — in Salt Lake City. Instead of hooking the pass, a passing truck hooked and mangled his hand. When it healed, he was left with a dangling, useless finger, which was amputated.

That anecdote was part of the picture he painted for his listeners over the course of the day. He told how he had spent his first years on the northern plains, while his father struggled to prove up a homestead. Stegner guesses his father missed proving up by just two inches of rain. The failure drove the family to Salt Lake City, and to that glancing interaction with the truck. Overall, however, Stegner said Salt Lake City was a joy.

"When we got to Salt Lake, I fell into the Mormon Church — I joined the Boy Scouts, played basketball... For once, I belonged. The Mormon Church was open and kind. Those middle-class streets in Salt Lake City became utilitarian — stability and community."

The compassion, he said, was part self-interest and part common interest. "The future of the West involves expanding that common interest."

A child born and raised in Salt Lake City would have taken its society for granted. To Stegner, it was a miracle. Until his middle teenage years, he had been a plains dweller. "I grew up in isolation. The only unit was the family."

Although the plains lacked society, it did not lack cooperation. Among the stories Stegner told was that of a human chain organized during a 1916 blizzard to reach children trapped for over a day in a school house. He also told of running several miles to get help from a neighbor when a family horse was badly cut in an accident. And he quoted Bernard DeVoto on the classic Western scene: a group of Western co-operators on one end of a rope, a Western individualist dangling from the other end.

What the plains and then Salt Lake City gave Stegner was his sense of the two Wests, which he has merged into a whole. "The West is oasis towns and a lot of empty space. That's what satisfies me spiritually."

If Stegner is a Western chauvinist, it didn't come out at his seminars. The implication was that a region is important the way a person's skin is important — because it fits, and not because one region, even the inland West, is better than another. "Regionalism gives you a place to stand: The view from here will be different from the view from anywhere else."

The terms "regionalism" and "regional writer" are often used as put-downs, but not by Stegner. Regional literature, he said, is fine if it is judged by the standards of Shakespeare and Balzac and if certain dangers are avoided.

"Regionalism so often springs from puffery. You want those places that ignore your writing to take notice, so you have a symposium and pat each other on the back."

There has been a tendency in the West, he said, to think that "literature happens outside. For a while, the only kind of literature was Louis L'Amour." It was Colt revolver literature, made up of interchangeable parts. "The West has always been far off from seats of culture — a sort of Siberia. The West is so cluttered with misconceptions and myths, it is hard to have serious intellecutal discussion. Plus, there is plain Eastern snobbery. It is easy to dismiss a culture you don't know."

As a result, he continued, writers once had to go to the East, for the agents and editors. "It is not as necessary today." But it is still not easy to get national recognition. The United States, he said, is shaped like a dumbbell, with New York on one end, Los Angeles on the other, and United Airlines in between. But New York, he told the students, is just another part of the United States, and its literature is also regional, like that of the West and South.

Stegner told the students: "You write about what is intimate and important to you. Life here is as important as life anywhere else."

For the most part, the only surprises were Stegner's endurance and the way in which he offered up striking images and wonderful phrases. It is dangerous for a writer to spend too much time near Stegner. His view of the West is so clear and his images so striking that it is easy to conclude that he has already said, or will soon say, everything worth saying about the West.

Nor does Stegner seem to put up barriers to those who would become derivative of him. His mind seems to produce much more than he can use. Perhaps that is because he has such high standards; what looks to other writers like gold are throwaway lines to him.

Perhaps Stegner doesn't need to stake out his territory because he, like the plains dwellers he admires, is contantly on the move. His recent novel, *Crossing to Safety*, has nothing to do with the West. Set in the Midwest and New England, it is not just the geography that is strange. *Crossing* is a novel of academe — a setting one expects from Mary McCarthy or Saul Bellow rather than Stegner.

Not surprisingly, Stegner is a perfectionist. After listening to the speakers who preceded him at the Wednesday symposium, he returned to his room to rework his talk, so it would fit in better with the day. Listening to it, you would have thought the talk had gone through five drafts.

In most hands, aridity is a cliche. In Stegner's, aridity reveals the West. By making impossible the kind of homesteads that settled the Midwest, he said, aridity guaranteed that the West could not have a Midwestern-type agrarian frontier. Instead of the Midwest farmer, we got the cowboy, or rather the myth of the cowboy. Stegner said we got transformed swineherds — the alchemist was Owen Wister and his *Virginian*.

We also received a landscape. But in the case of the landscape, exaggeration and romanticization were unnecessary. In fact, the landscape defeated those who would describe it, let alone exaggerate it. Every Western writer, he said, has tried his hand at the Grand Canyon, and produced the equivalent of "Oh, gee!" Unfortunately, the West may be more describable in the future. "The West looked inexhausible; now it looks exhausted."

Perhaps because he is 79 and almost spans the century, and perhaps because the West's arid climate reveals to him past ages, Stegner's clock runs at a different pace than everyone else's. He sees so far ahead that even the landscape is different.

He sees the West's dams not as they are now, with the boosters' sparkling blue reservoirs behind them, but as they will be in the next century or two. "We'll get the river back with a waterfall," as the reservoirs fill with silt and become alluvial valleys.

Stegner's geologic sense is closely tied to his social sense. He quoted historian Donald Worster: Irrigation societies are shortlived — no more than a few centuries or so. And when a student from Montana asked what that state should do to avoid its coming loss of one congressman — Montana needs 50,000 more people to retain its second congressman — he responded with an analysis based not on economics or social classes, but on climate.

"The West is over-represented in the U.S. Senate. I'd hate to see Montana recruit 50,000 people to hold on to a congressman who probably wouldn't be very good. Montana is blessed with a climate that chases people away. It is left only with the people fit to live there — the best people in the world."

He then propounded the relationship between aridity and a state's congressional delegation. The nation's driest state, Nevada, has had the worst congressional delegations. But Nevada is given a close race by Utah, the next driest state, and by Arizona. The need to tap the U.S. Treasury for water projects has produced these deplorable delegations, he said.

Because of his sense of the relationship between climate and Westerners, and because he understands that the future of the West will be worked out over centuries rather than over congressional sessions, he is not panicked when environmental groups send him appeals stating, "This is the last chance to save Alaska." Stegner believes Alaska will be saved by 60-degree-below-zero temperatures that will choose who will stick and who will flee. And it is the stickers who will, everywhere in the West, ultimately determine its future.

Over the course of the two seminars, curious although not surprising relationships appeared. Edward Abbey was one of many Western writers who took Stegner's writing class at Stanford. Stegner mentioned that Abbey was working on *The Monkey Wrench Gang* while he took the course. But, Stegner said, the novel was discussed only as a literary problem and never in terms of its ideas. When someone asked about teaching environmentalism, Stegner said he never brings propaganda into his classroom or novels. The novels, he said, grew out of people, places and situations, never out of ideas. Novels based on ideas, he said, are arid things, and in this case aridity is no virtue.

He did say, however, that he envied photographer Ansel Adams. "Every photograph can be both art and be used as propaganda. He didn't have to divide himself. We're not that lucky in writing."

Had Abbey and Stegner discussed the novel's ideas, Stegner would have said: "I don't think spiking trees is the way to protect them. Violence begets violence. Patience is a hard lesson for me to learn. I'm not sure I have learned it. But I can talk it."

It is no surprise that Stegner has his roots deep in the inland West; the surprise is the extent to which his roots are also elsewhere. He taught at Harvard and spent much time there with poet Robert Frost.

"Frost was a father figure to me. He was to Benny (historian Bernard DeVoto), too, but Benny was a rebellious son."

Stegner's biological father also contributed to his literature, but in a different way. In a discussion of mindless optimism, Stegner said, "My father was a dupe of the people who invented 'rain follows the plow.' " It was hard to tell, in listening to Stegner, at whom he was angriest: the boosters and boomers or the people like his father who bought their line.

At the same time, Stegner understood the need for a certain amount of optimism. "We shouldn't allow ourselves to be rendered inert, like the octopus that couldn't decide which leg to use, so he sat in the middle of his legs and drowned." Stegner prefers the frog who found himself trapped in a bowl of milk. Against all reason, the frog kept swimming, until the milk had turned to butter and allowed him to climb out.

The problem, of course, is to distinguish between the mindless optimism of the homesteaders who thought that plowing and train smoke would turn the plains humid and that of the frog, who symbolizes Stegner's beloved "stickers." Such distinctions can be made only out of an understanding of the region, and throughout his hours of answering questions Stegner provided guides to living in an arid land.

"Don't deny or make over aridity — adapt to it, like the plains animals, with their good eyesight and mobility... It gives people the virtue of scarceness."

Amidst this talk of aridity and the inland West, the presence of the ultimate New Englander, Robert Frost, appeared as an anomaly. Frost came up because a student had noticed Frost's influence on *Crossing to Safety*. Stegner said, "Frost simply soaked into me, and I ooze Frost." Stegner may ooze Frost, but he is not a blind worshipper. "He taught me quite a lot about how greatness and pettiness can inhabit the same skin. There is no such thing as a pure spring."

It is not surprising that Stegner should have been attracted to the nation's greatest writers. His are world-class standards. He cares deeply about the envi-

(Continued on page 16)

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Stegner...

(Continued from page 15)

ronment, but the impression in the two seminars was that his duty to art goes deeper. That duty led him out of the inland West. He makes his home in Silicon Valley, a result of his teaching at Stanford, and he summers on a farm he owns in Vermont.

So, like DeVoto, Stegner has chosen to live and work outside of the inland West. That is no accident. Stegner said several times that writers can now live and work in the West. It was clearest in his answer to several questions, when the careerist in Stegner, on the lookout for economic niches, said: "There is a field for you." He plainly had seen no such fields in the inland West when he was establishing himself.

Nevertheless, it is not clear how much things have changed. Has the West — its communities, its institutions, its economy and its willingness to give artists the room and conversation they need — changed enough to allow the region to retain its best talent?

Stegner spoke highly of Montana writer Ivan Doig — he lives in Washington state — and of historian Donald Worster — he teaches at Brandeis University in Massachusetts. I don't want to load the dice — he also spoke of Edward Abbey, James Welch, the Missoula writers and others. On the symposium stage was Patricia Nelson Limerick, who is reshaping what is meant by "Western history" and who teaches at the University of Colorado. She and CU law professor Charles Wilkinson, recently returned to Colorado from Oregon, organized the symposium.

The geographic removal of Stegner from the inland Western landscape he helps us see says a great deal about the past state of this region. But we do not yet know whether the forces that led him out of the region are artifacts or persisting conditions. ❐

LETTERS

PRAISES UTAH GROUP

Dear *HCN*,

In his article, "Stroke and counterstroke" (*HCN*, 9/26/88), Raymond Wheeler charges that the Utah Wilderness Association is too accommodating to nonwilderness parties and as a result is ineffective. I believe this is a wrong appraisal of the UWA's role in wilderness preservation in Utah.

The UWA has been in existence for 10 years, and for roughly the first five years was nearly alone in its defense of Utah wilderness. During those early years it was the UWA's dogged groundwork that brought the Utah Forest Service wilderness bill to passage. This was a remarkable achievement in a state which, at that time, had probably the most anti-wilderness political climate of any state in the nation. The UWA did it with a grass-roots organization that simply overwhelmed political opposition.

The UWA was the first organization to come up with a detailed, researched and defensible proposal for wilderness for BLM lands. The UWA challenged the Bureau of Land Management's pronouncement on Wilderness Study Areas. Through an appeal, the UWA forced the BLM to reinstate 800,000 acres of BLM lands back in the WSA column. The UWA document for this appeal had over 1,000 pages. This appeal was successful because of the detailed, on-site study that the UWA had done at each and every WSA. No other organization could have won that appeal because no other organization knew the land like the UWA did.

The North Slope of the Uinta Mountains, in northern Utah, is now under attack by industrial interests. The UWA is alone in its defense of these beautiful lands. The UWA has been successful in stopping or moderating a number of timber sales, and is leading efforts to stop encroachment of oil wells and roads into unroaded areas on the North Slope.

On grazing issues, through the UWA's quiet lobbying, the Forest Service has retired several livestock grazing allotments in the High Uintas Wilderness Area. I visited one of these areas this summer and, with the absence of domestic sheep, it was brimming with elk and moose. The UWA documents grazing mismanagement in the Uintas and elsewhere in Utah and steadily lobbies the Forest Service and BLM decision makers to reduce the damage caused by grazing.

The essence of the UWA's approach to wilderness preservation is communication and education. The UWA has good relations with political, BLM and Forest Service people throughout the state.

On many issues the UWA goes straight to the decision-makers for a hearing. They can do this because they already know these people personally and have a working relationship with them. This personal communication is a key reason for the UWA's successful lobbying efforts. In education, the UWA regularly makes presentations to civic and business groups. This gets the pro-wilderness message out to influential people who would otherwise not hear it. Through its education efforts the UWA has helped bring about the dramatic growth in public support for Wilderness in Utah.

I am a member of the UWA, Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society and the Audubon Society. I have lived in Utah for 13 years and during that time have followed the local conservation scene. I believe that for the local Utah scene the UWA is the most effective organization for the preservation of wilderness.

Roger W. Arhart
Salt Lake City, Utah

NOT EMPTY

Dear *HCN*,

Thank you for being one of few to recognize that if the environmental community hopes to achieve success ("The Land is Not Empty," Nov. 7), it must educate what *Denver Post* columnist and *High Country News* writer Ed Quillen refers to as the "red-white-and-blue constituency — red neck, white trash, and blue collar."

We environmentalists, I feel, are often deserving of accusations that we are elitists. The arguments against destroying the land are so obvious to us that we forget our obligation to educate others. My personal frustration is environmentalists' inability to effectively influence the news media. While major corporations expend tremendous effort educating and pressuring the media in order to subsequently influence public opinion, environmentalists often seem to consider the press inconsequential or are willing to tolerate news coverage unfavorable to environmental causes. But how can we, just as an example, gain funding for family planning when the news media has so misled the American public that most people wrongly believe our nation has achieved zero population growth?

In recent years I have repeatedly seen the news media, from small town newspapers to major news organizations, give the environmental viewpoint short shrift. If we want to set aside wilderness or promote other environmental causes, grass-roots support will be essential. How can we hope to gain that support without effective use of the media?

Kathleene Parker
Denver, Colorado

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ACCESS

GROUPS

LONG HOURS, HARD WORK tends to make a difference: The Jackson Hole Alliance for Responsible Planning is hiring a public lands coordinator to work on issues regarding Grand Teton National Park, Bridger-Teton National Forest, the National Elk Refuge and diverse and abundant wildlife. Submit resume and writing samples by Jan. 1, 1989, to P.O. Box 2728, Jackson, WY 83001. Interviews after New Year's Day. Job starts March 1, 1989. $12,000 - $16,000. For more information, call 307/733-9417. (1x22b)

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