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High Country News

May 31, 1993

Vol. 25 No. 10

A Paper for People who Care about the West

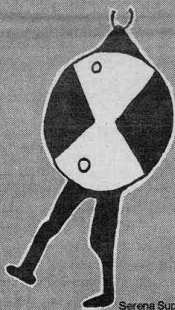
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Salmon advocates say: the quiet slaughter continues

Some salmon grow quite large. But even the largest are tiny compared to what they have been pitted against: the Northwest's giant dams, aluminum mills, hundreds of square miles of irrigated cropland, and skyscrapers full of various experts and special interests.

In four articles and essays, this issue of High Country News describes an increasingly desperate struggle to keep the wild salmon from extinction.

by Stephen Stuebner

Millions of endangered juvenile salmon will ride in "iron coffins" to a watery grave in the dam-studded Snake and Columbia rivers, Northwest fish advocates lamented this week.

Fish are collected at the uppermost dams, Lower Granite and Little Goose, piped into a sorting station and pumped into the barges for transport to a point below the Bonneville Dam.

Attorneys for a coalition of Northwest salmon advocates tried to persuade a U.S. District Court judge twice in the last two weeks to halt the barging of endangered juvenile salmon and make the Snake and Columbia rivers safer for fish passage.

But District Judge Harold Marsh denied a motion for a temporary restraining order on barging, and then, a week later, rejected a motion for a preliminary injunction.

Marsh, who might be described as the Northwest "fish czar" because of the many salmon lawsuits pending in his court, ruled that the scientific pros and cons of barging were too much in dispute for a mere judge to separate them out.

Environmentalists argued that 15 years of barging have shown no benefits for dwindling numbers of Snake River wild chinook salmon. "Barging will be



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Barging salmon past dams to the sea may kill more fish than it saves, critics charge

revealed as one of the biggest scientific hoaxes of all time," said Northwest fish champion Ed Chaney of Eagle, Idaho.

Chaney said it's unfortunate that Marsh didn't call on common sense to notice that Snake River chinook have declined as the number of barged fish has increased. "It's like Groucho Marx said, 'Who are you going to believe — what I tell you or what you see with your own two eyes?'"

John McKern, a fish biologist for

focusing attention on the eight dams and reservoirs that block fish in the mainstem Snake and Columbia rivers. Advocates blame the "killer dams" for wiping out more than 90 percent of the wild chinook each year.

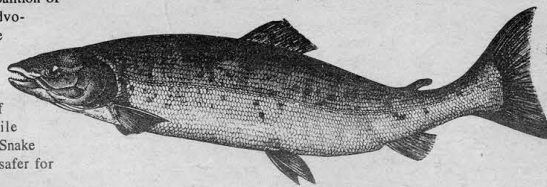
Partly due to dam-related mortality, three species of Snake River chinook have been listed as threatened, and Snake River sockeye have been listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

"It's really unfortunate that the judge didn't address the legal issue of whether the Endangered Species Act allows the Army Corps to operate the river in a manner that's lethal to the fish, then take the fish out of the river to 'save them,'" said Dan Rohlf, Eugene, Ore., attorney for salmon advocates.

Marsh's decision doesn't bode well for a half-dozen other lawsuits now pending on salmon. Fish biologists working for industry groups, federal agencies, Indian tribes and state agencies disagree on many aspects of the salmon "problem" in the Columbia River Basin.

If Marsh and other judges aren't willing to sort out the confusion, the region could be mired in scientific quicksand for years while the fish die off.

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the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, disagrees that the barging program should be ditched. "I don't think you can say that fish transportation isn't working, but it isn't going to solve all the problems, either," McKern said.

He noted that fish also die from ocean harvest, bacterial kidney disease and predators. "Something's happening out there in the ocean," McKern said.

Marsh's ruling was a blow for salmon advocates, who had pinned their hopes on ending the fish-barging program in 1993, as a first step toward



HIGH COUNTRY NEWS

(ISSN/0191/5657) is published biweekly, except for one issue during July and one issue during January, by the High Country Foundation, 119 Grand Avenue, Paonia, CO 81428. Second-class postage paid at Paonia, Colorado.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to HIGH COUNTRY NEWS, Box 1090, Paonia, CO 81428.

Subscriptions are \$28 per year for individuals and public libraries, \$38 per year for institutions. Single copies \$1.50 plus postage and handling. Special Issues \$3 each.

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Dear friends,

Sweeping the sidewalk

The traditional small-town merchant arrives 15 minutes before opening each morning for the ritual sweeping of his or her sidewalk. That is generally the work of a few minutes since most frontages are 25 feet. Unfortunately, *HCN's* frontage, counting a driveway and storage building, is 90 feet.

So, whether it needs it or not, we try to sweep the sidewalk every other week, in step with our publishing cycle. Unfortunately, even such diligence does little good because the town washes the street in front of our office at least weekly, sending gravel and dirt squirting up onto the sidewalk.

It took us months to realize why our sidewalk was always dirty. When we finally figured it out, we walked down the street to town hall to complain, only to be told that every shopkeeper in town had been in to complain months ago. Nevertheless, the town said it had no choice. The street sweeper is broken beyond repair, and washing is the alternative. Summer visitors to *HCN*, therefore, should be aware that the gritty sidewalk is not totally our fault.

But where it counts, we are good housekeepers. Staff has finally got its recycling act together, pushing our production of garbage down to a bag or two a week for 15 or so people. The town noticed the reduction, and cut our utility bill by \$10 per month.

Flood alert

Our worries about gravel on the sidewalk may prove academic, thanks to a huge snowpack perched on the mountains above Paonia. Should hot weather send that snowpack down in a rush, Paonia's main street may turn into a riverbed for a few days.

Thus far, the North Fork of the Gunnison River has behaved itself. It sounds like an express train, and it is running bank full. But cool, rainy afternoons have held back the snowpack and prevented flooding. The river has been nibbling away, in a playful sort of way, at a few

homes near the sewage treatment pond. But those homes were built during the last energy boom, in 1980, literally in the bed of the river, and no one except the buyers, who must have bought in August, when most of the river's water is in irrigation ditches, will be surprised if they are swept away.

Small towns are always exciting, but they're especially exciting when a natural disaster threatens. Every evening now people gather down by the river to exchange predictions and folklore and lies, and to wonder how long it would take a person who fell into the water to reach Delta, which is 35 miles away by road.

The conversations always turn into competitions, both with each other and with the river. We hold our own back to 1978, our first flood, when the Third Street bridge was taken out by the river. And we remember the 1983 flood, which weakened the main bridge into town. (A day or so after it was closed, the bridge was tested by a runaway coal truck, which came tearing off the Stevens Gulch road, smashed through the barricades closing the bridge off, and roared across the bridge and down the town's main street.) And if we have the right audience, we describe how the floods of 1983 almost ate a hole through the Glen Canyon Dam spillways, releasing Lake Powell (see photo page 14).

But for the most part, we listen. One person swore he'd seen a big cottonwood come floating down the river, upright, thanks to the rocks and soil still held in its roots. Its stately passage down river was finally foiled by a bridge.

Another person told us that contrary to common belief, snow melts from the bottom up, rather than from off the top. That is why, he said, snow crushes fence rails — the top snow drops down on the rails as the bottom snow flows away. There must be something in nature that doesn't like a fence.

While nature may not like fences or bridges, it uses riverbeds as efficiently as possible. If all the snow came off at once, the North Fork River would flood almost every year. But the watersheds run at different times. Hubbard and Terror creeks, just outside of town, peak in early spring, while the Muddy and the Anthracite, which drain more distant and higher mountains, kick in after the lower creeks have done their worst.

BARBS

All clear on the radioactive front.

Sen. Bennett Johnston, D-La., recently sought to reassure the American Nuclear Energy Council that there is no reason for gloom about the industry's future. The Clinton administration's anti-nuclear attitude is more rhetoric than real, he said, and the Yucca Mountain waste dump is "light years ahead of where we were last year." But Johnston blasted the EPA for setting health standards that would have required spending \$3.2 billion on waste-storage casks to limit radioactive leaks from Yucca Mountain. The cost is overblown, Johnston said, because "radioactivity ... does not cause cancer. I mean people who live in Colorado are exposed to twice as much cosmic radiation as people who live in (a) swamp (but they) don't have twice as much cancer. Indeed, they have less cancer. Maybe it's because skiing is good for them or the lifestyle is good for them."

Visitors

Speaking of snow, John Marshall of Silverton, Colo., came by with a large carrot cake for the staff. It was his thank you for a centerspread *HCN* published in its Dec. 28, 1992, issue on his book *Living (and Dying) in Avalanche Country*. That centerspread, by staff member Cindy Wehling, boosted sales so much that a hardcover edition has just been issued. It is available for \$25 by calling 800/456-5376.

Ted Butchart of Gila, N.M., and Seattle came through searching for land suitable for permaculture.

Allen Best, an editor with the *Vail Trail* in Vail, Colo., stopped by while on vacation to say hello.

Kate Shore of Tucson, Ariz., couldn't visit, but wrote to say that she resented the term "Phoenix-Tucson" used in the April 5, *HCN* on small communities. The two places are 110 miles apart, she wrote, and Tucson "is quite distinct, both physically and culturally, from Phoenix Most Tucsonians don't even want to visit Phoenix, much less have their city hyphenated with it."

Former intern Peter Donaldson wrote that he is now a reporter with the *Lynden* (Washington) *Tribune*. He takes photos, writes, edits and works on layout. Five nights a week, he also works as a sushi chef. "All this work is summed up by a corny rhyme: 'I owe, I owe, so it's off to work I go.'"

Congratulations to law professor Joseph Feller on receiving the Sol Feinstein Environmental Award for his work on grazing and the Bureau of Land Management. The award is administered by the State University of New York, College of Environmental Science and Forestry, Syracuse, New York. Although it is prestigious, not everyone is impressed. One of Joe's colleagues at Arizona State University asked: "Who's Sol Feinstein, your uncle?"

Charles Callison

We were saddened to hear of the death of Charles H. Callison, who helped create the Environmental Defense Fund, was executive vice president of the National Audubon Society, founded the Public Lands Institute in 1977, and was a strong supporter of the Nevada Outdoor Recreation Association. He was born in Alberta, Canada, in 1913, to homesteader parents, and died on Feb. 23, 1993, in Missouri.

— Ed Marston for the staff

HOTLINE

Down but not out

The Army Corps of Engineers in April torpedoed a controversial water project planned for Colorado's Gunnison River, marking one of the first environmental vetoes under the new Clinton administration. The proposed AB Lateral project would have diverted water from the Gunnison into the Uncompahgre River near Montrose, Colo., creating 42 megawatts of power on the way. Project sponsors won a permit from the Bureau of Reclamation in 1992, despite opposition from the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management and several environmental groups. Opponents argued that the power scheme was too destructive, saying that it would dewater the Gunnison River through the Black

Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument and the Gunnison Gorge Wilderness Study Area, and flood wetlands and riparian habitat along the Uncompahgre. In April the Army Corps agreed and denied the project a Clean Water Act permit. The Corps said despite Reclamation's earlier approval, it found holes and mistakes in the project field studies. The decision drew cheers from the Montrose-based environmental group Western Colorado Congress. "I hope that with the end of this six-year battle, the community can now focus on bills in Congress to designate the Gunnison a Wild and Scenic river," said member Fred Wetlauffer. However, project sponsors and local irrigators, who own the water rights, say they will redo the research and reapply for a permit.

WESTERN ROUNDUP

Texas congressman stirs up New Mexico

WASHINGTON, D.C. — He's either a selfless defender of the nation's resources or a meddlesome agitator, but there's no question that Mike Andrews is developing a name for himself in a remote corner of New Mexico.

What's a Houston congressman doing in a place like that?

Andrews says he's trying to protect a "gorgeous" piece of ancient geology for the enjoyment of future generations. But that's not how it's being viewed in Carlsbad, N.M., where residents are circulating petitions to oppose the Texas Democrat's plans to put part of their backyard off-limits to hunting and grazing.

Andrews' idea also has raised the ire of the local congressman, Republican Joe Skeen. He's threatening to propose "a huge park system in the middle of Houston" in retaliation. Skeen is a member of the powerful House Appropriations Committee and, while he seems to be kidding, one can't be sure.

At the heart of the controversy is a 25,000-acre parcel of land that lies between the Guadalupe Mountains National Park in far west Texas and the Carlsbad Caverns National Park in New Mexico.

Andrews thinks the 25,000 acres should be turned over to the National Park Service so as to create one big park that would straddle Texas and New Mexico. It would also protect the entire length of the celebrated Capitan Reef, a 250 million-year-old outcropping that the congressman describes as "spectacular."

According to Andrews, the area was admired by the late Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, who visited the area and wrote an essay about it.

Douglas was an avid hiker, and Andrews himself is no slouch. The congressman, an amateur athlete who looks far younger than his 49 years, took a trip only 25 or so other hardy souls venture each year when he backpacked into North McKittrick Canyon, near the northern end of the Guadalupe Mountains Park two

years ago.

He was so impressed with what he saw — and the fact that the "delicate ecology" bordered land in New Mexico that was open to development — that he approached Skeen soon afterward with his idea for joining the Guadalupe and Carlsbad parks. Andrews figured the mission would be easy to accomplish because the land already belongs to the federal government.

Skeen is underwhelmed.

"I understand the intensity of his desire to protect something he's found to

"We appreciate all these saviors but we can take care of our own," said Skeen.

The New Mexico congressman has enlisted the support of Texas Republican Henry Bonilla, whose Texas district includes Guadalupe Mountains National Park. A bigger park would mean a need for more rangers at a time when the government is trying to cut spending, the congressman from Texas reasoned.

"I don't think we need to be doing this right now," Bonilla said.

But Andrews argues that turning two parks into one could save money by streamlining management. And he argues that the issue is bigger than anyone's local constituency.

"We're talking about an important natural resource," he said. "I think every American should be interested."

This is not the first time Andrews has picked a fight on another politician's home turf.

Several years ago, in what came to be called the Third Battle of Manassas, Andrews led a congressional charge to prevent a shopping center from being built on part of

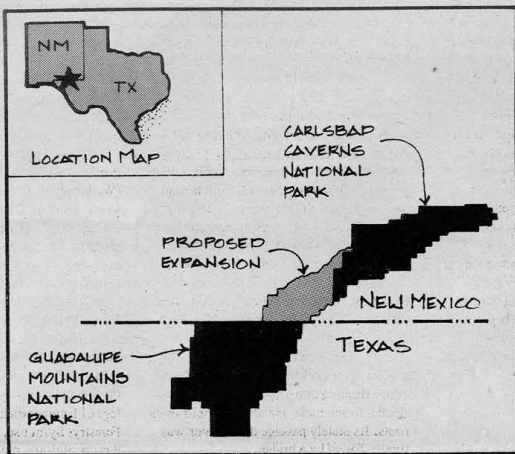
the celebrated Virginia battlefield, where two important Civil War engagements occurred.

Though local county supervisors — and one area congressman — favored the developers, Andrews' arguments persuaded Congress, which enacted legislation allowing for a federal "taking" of the disputed property.

That victory is clearly in Andrews' mind. Asked whether he thought he has any realistic hopes of expanding a park in Skeen's district if Skeen opposes it, the Texan replied: "Well, we did pretty well with Manassas."

— Kathy Kiely and Karen MacPherson

Kathy Kiely is Washington bureau chief for the *Houston Post*; Karen MacPherson is Washington correspondent for the *Albuquerque Tribune*.



Lisa Cook

be of great beauty," the New Mexican said of Andrews. But he added: "We think we're doing very well, thank you, taking care of it now."

At the moment, the parcel of land Andrews has his eye on is controlled by the National Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. Both agencies permit grazing and hunting, activities which would be prohibited if the land becomes part of a national park. That has New Mexicans up in arms.

Skeen claims Andrews' proposal "impacts the heck out of my district," even though there are only four grazing leaseholders in the area. "We're talking about fewer than 200 cows," protests Andrews.

But in New Mexico, where more than 60 percent of the land is government-held, the idea that the locals might lose control over another piece is political dynamite.

The Northwest turns wet again

While record snowpacks threaten the interior West with spring floods, the Pacific Northwest has only just emerged from a severe drought. Oregon Gov. Barbara Roberts lifted the drought declaration on May 4 in all but 18 of the state's counties. Those 18 counties will remain under drought declaration until the end of this year.

After one of the driest Februaries in the state's history, an unusually wet spring refilled 10 of the state's 25 reservoirs to normal levels. The rainy spring comes from a late arrival of the normal winter weather pattern, according to Chris Karafotis, meteorologist for the

Bonneville Power Administration. A change in the upper-air flow in early March caused storm after storm to dump its Pacific moisture over the Northwest, raising dangerously low reservoirs to normal levels, he said.

But the recent precipitation has not altered plans of Bonneville Power Administration managers, who intend to raise electricity rates partly due to water shortages. While storms pummeled Portland and the lower Columbia River Basin, they missed the upper Columbia River Basin, where the majority of BPA's hydropower facilities are located. Full reservoirs in Portland will pro-



vide drinking water to residents in the Lower Columbia Basin but don't give BPA leverage to produce more power, said BPA spokeswoman Dulcy Mahar.

"She (Gov. Roberts) is dealing with rain basins; we're dealing with snow basins," Mahar said. "Half of our hydropower storage lies in British Columbia and eastern Washington." There the snowpack is still only 70 percent of normal.

— Peter Mali, HCN intern

HOTLINE

Salt Caves not licked yet

The federal government could deal the controversial Salt Caves hydroelectric project in southern Oregon a fatal blow. Oregon Gov. Barbara Roberts recently asked Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt to designate a 15-mile stretch of the Klamath River "Wild and Scenic." That would end the city of Klamath Falls' 10-year campaign to build a \$100 million dam close to the Oregon-California border (*HCN*, 8/29/88). The city, which has spent \$17 million on the project since 1985, says a dam would improve river conditions by regulating erratic flows caused by dams upstream. Opponents say a federal study in 1990 found the river stretch worthy of protection, and in 1988, the state had voted to ban development on the Klamath. Three state agencies have also told the city that a dam is a bad idea. Klamath Falls plans to promote economic development with the sale of electricity from the project.

Sturgeon listing is imminent

A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist says his agency will soon list the giant Kootenai River sturgeon as threatened or endangered in order to pry more water from the dam that is causing the fish's demise. "Listing is imminent," says field supervisor Chuck Lobdell, who is based in Boise, Idaho. "We're going to win this one." Lobdell says listing the fish, which inhabits the Kootenai River in northern Montana and Idaho, is the agency's only option since an interagency task force failed last month to come up with a viable recovery plan outside the Endangered Species Act (*HCN*, 11/30/92). That task force, led by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, disbanded after two of its members, the Bonneville Power Administration and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, refused to release the amount of water from Montana's Libby Dam that biologists say the fish need to spawn. State and federal biologists say the sturgeon need at least 35,000 cubic feet per second flowing past Bonners Ferry, Idaho, from May through July. The corps and BPA said they could release only 20,000 cfs for two weeks this June. The sturgeon, which can grow 10 feet long, have not successfully spawned since the dam's construction in 1974. Eighty percent of the estimated 1,000 adult fish are over 20 years old, says the Fish and Wildlife Service. The federal agency, which was petitioned by environmentalists last year to list the sturgeon, has until June 12 to make a decision.

BARBS

This sounds like a taking as well as interference with this guy's "custom and culture" of hustling.

An entrepreneur has been denied permission to scoop up the ground the Pope walks on during his visit to Colorado, reports AP. The man intended to package and sell the dirt as souvenirs.

HOTLINE

Navajo leader sentenced

Former Navajo tribal chairman Peter MacDonald will spend at least the next 12 years in tribal and federal prisons. U.S. District Judge Robert Broomfield sentenced MacDonald to 14 years and seven months for his role in a riot at the tribe's administration building July 1989 that left two people dead. MacDonald was found guilty of conspiracy to commit kidnapping and burglary of tribal buildings. Federal court officials said MacDonald, 64, will probably serve his time in a minimum security facility or a special prison for the elderly in Wichita, Kan. The judge also granted MacDonald's request to serve part of his sentence in a tribal jail. During sentencing, Broomfield told MacDonald his decision was a very hard one, reports the *Navajo Times*. "You are a leader of extraordinary talents," he said. "You offered much."

Bird killing hatches new rule

A squeeze that killed a songbird has resulted in a new rule. Last summer Jim Trochet caught and killed a yellow-green vireo during a bird collecting expedition near Carlsbad Caverns National Park, N.M. (*HCN*, 10/19/92). Because federal regulations prohibited him from catching the rarely seen bird on park land, he recorded its song and lured the bird outside the park. There he captured and asphyxiated it. After a witness complained to the authorities, the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish launched an investigation. Now the agency's new regulation says scientific researchers must carry out their work "in a humane, judicious, sensitive and otherwise appropriate manner, and failure to do so will be grounds for punitive or other actions by the Department of Game and Fish." Jim Trochet has paid a \$100 fine and apologized for strangling the vireo.

Poaching prehistoric fish

Fossil poachers have left an area on the sagebrush plains of Wyoming looking like a pockmarked lunar landscape. "This could have been an Air Force bombing range from World War II," said Randy Porter, a BLM geologist, in the *Idaho Falls Post Register*. "Poach holes" have been bulldozed 70 feet across and from a few inches to several feet deep in the area near Farson, known for 50 million-year-old fish. Legislation introduced by Max Baucus, D-Mont., would impose penalties for fossil poachers of up to 10 years in prison and a \$5,000 fine but BLM rangers say enforcing the law won't be easy on the millions of acres under the agency's control. BLM officials hope education will encourage people to turn in poachers. They will continue to keep secret the locations of fossil-rich sites.



Wyoming Travel Commission

Hikers help snare rock-art vandals

Hikers in Canyonlands National Park last year witnessed a startling sight: two boys scrawling graffiti on pictograph-covered rocks while adults looked on. Finally, the hikers confronted the boys and their father, Gordon Black, a faculty member at Ricks College in Rexburg, Idaho, according to Tony Schetzlsle, chief park ranger at Canyonlands.

Black's response was "flippant," the hikers said.

Luckily, Park Service ranger Bob Vance was patrolling the canyon that day. The hikers told Vance what they had seen, and he documented the damage and put together a felony case, Schetzlsle said.

Wayne Dance, assistant U.S. attorney for Utah, charged the juveniles with nine counts of violating the federal law that prohibits defacing archaeological resources in a national park.

The older boy who did most of the damage pleaded guilty to six counts and received a \$600 fine, according to the *Federal Archeology Report*. The younger boy was charged with three counts and fined \$300. Their father received the stiffest punishment, a civil penalty costing him \$1,364 to pay for restoring the pictographs, damaged April 25, 1992.

Unfortunately, conservators could not completely restore the site to its prior con-

dition, the report says. Using charcoal, the boys had scrawled their names and a variety of designs on the Alcove Site in Horseshoe Canyon. This world-class rock-art area in Canyonlands is also believed to have religious significance for the Zuni, Hopi and Puebloan people.

Schetzlsle said he believes the case may be the first successful prosecution of rock-art vandalism in the country.

For more information, contact Walter Dabney, superintendent of Canyonlands National Park, 125 West 200 South, Moab, Utah 84532 (801/259-3911).

— Peter Mali, HCN intern



Kit Miller

On cui-ui day, Pyramid Lake fisheries technician Mark Mix helps visitors measure a spawning sucker

Restored habitat revives cui-ui

PYRAMID LAKE, Nev. — After six years of drought, the Truckee River has come rushing back to life. Spring snowmelt has swollen the river on its 80-mile run from Lake Tahoe in the Sierra Nevada to Pyramid Lake, which rests like an azure apparition in the desert 30 miles northeast of Reno. Stirred by the cold flow, thousands of cui-ui, an endangered native fish, are struggling back upriver to spawn. And an ancient cycle is renewed.

The cui-ui (pronounced KWEE-wee) is a gray-brown sucker fish that grows up to eight pounds. The fish evolved in the prehistoric lake that covered the Great Basin 2 million years ago. It is found nowhere else in the world and was nearly driven to extinction.

Since 1905, more than half of the Truckee River has been diverted to irrigate crops in the Newlands project, the nation's first desert reclamation project in nearby Fallon. Because Pyramid Lake dropped 80 feet, a sand bar blocked spawning and native fish populations plummeted. The lake's native strain of Lahontan cutthroat trout disappeared.

But the cui-ui is well adapted to survive drought, often living up to 45 years, which may be just long enough for the species to survive from the reclamation era to a new era of restoring ecosystems.

In 1967, the cui-ui became one of the nation's first species slated for protection under a precursor to the Endangered Species Act after the Pyramid Lake Paiute

Indian Tribe, whose reservation surrounds the lake, sued the government to save the fish.

In early May, the Pyramid Lake Paiutes — who call themselves "Kuyuidokado," the cui-ui eaters — celebrated the return of the survivors with prayers, songs and dances. Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt stopped by for "cui-ui day" with Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev. Reid spurred a negotiated settlement in 1990 that promises to bring more steady flows to the lake in the future. After years of fighting over the water that brings life to the desert, people may have begun to cooperate.

— Jon Christensen, HCN Great Basin editor

HOTLINE

Hage confined to home

Rancher Wayne Hage has been confined to his home for two months for illegally cutting pinyon and juniper trees along an irrigation ditch on the Toiyabe National Forest in central Nevada. An advocate of private rights on federal lands, Hage claimed a right-of-way of 50 feet on each side of the ditch that supplied water to his remote

ranch. But a jury found Hage and a hired woodcutter guilty of injury to government property. U.S. District Court Judge Howard McKibben also sentenced Hage to a six-month suspended prison term, three years on probation, 200 hours of community service and a \$2,500 fine. Under the terms of home confinement, Hage is free to leave his Tonopah residence for up to 12 hours each day to tend to his ranch about 65 miles north of town. But Hage's lawyer,

Mark Pollot, claimed the detention would hinder his client's ability to organize and raise money for his multimillion-dollar "takings" lawsuit against the U.S. Forest Service, which is expected to go to trial this summer. In that case, Hage claims that government regulation of his grazing allotments put his ranch out of business and constituted "a taking of private property" for which compensation is due under the fifth amendment to the Constitution.

Bomb testing may resume in Nevada

According to the May 15 *New York Times*, President Bill Clinton is expected to order resumed underground nuclear testing in Nevada. If the *Times* is right, atomic blasts could rock the desert as early as January 1994, ending more than a year of worldwide silence on the nuclear testing front (HCN, 11/2/92).

But while the *Times* article treated a resumption of testing as a fait accompli, other sources say that the debate has fractured the administration at the highest levels.

The nine-month moratorium, ordered by Congress in a law passed in fall 1992, and signed by President George Bush, expires July 1. The law allows, but does not require, up to five blasts a year after July 1 to test the "safety and reliability" of weapons until 1996. At that time, a total halt is required so long as no other nation sets off an atomic blast. The law also orders the administration to negotiate a comprehensive test ban treaty by 1996.

The *Times* article, quoting unnamed administration sources who favor testing, reported that a decision was reached in mid-May among representatives of the departments of State, Energy and Defense to continue testing. But there was opposition from those who warned that France and Russia, which have been observing the moratorium, would resume testing if the United States did.

Meanwhile, as of this writing, there is no definitive word from the White House even though Clinton on May 17 visited the laboratories where the first nuclear bombs were built at Los Alamos, N.M. He did promise \$20 billion to retrain defense workers and to help Pentagon contractors shift to civilian work, but he said nothing about the possibility of testing weapons that have been the lab's economic mainstay for the past 50 years.

The next day, a congressional deadline (contained in the moratorium law) for a decision to resume testing this year came and went with no action by the administration. Behind the scenes, however, the debate is said to continue.

Pressure is also coming from the outside. "This is one of the biggest disappointments with Clinton," said former Interior Secretary Stewart Udall, speaking from his home in Santa Fe, N.M. Udall represents uranium miners and "downwinders" seeking damage claims against the government. "If we're going to move into the post-Cold War era, testing has to stop," he said. "We're setting a bad example for other members of the nuclear club. Testing isn't needed. Unfortunately, Clinton seems to feel it's another thing he has to compromise on."

"It's unfortunate they're sending this signal," said Daryl Kimball of Physicians for Social Responsibility, a Washington, D.C.-based group. "And it's a dangerous diplomatic move. Not only should we stop testing for world security and environmental reasons, but it's an unjustifiable waste of taxpayer money for weapons research and development to remain at Cold War levels."

As the deadline imposed by Congress passed for planning any atomic blasts this year, Stan Norris of the Natural Resources Defense Council was more optimistic. Norris has worked to promote test ban verification techniques and lobbied Congress for the moratorium. He said he has detected a "shift" in Washington and that those who want to resume testing are in a difficult position.

"We've finally got them in a box and they can't figure out how to get out. As Russia has stopped and France has stopped, the feeling about whether it's worth it to do it and what that would mean has altered the situation. We've gone eight months now without a test. Once you're in a moratorium, the question becomes: Who's going to be the first

to do it? Is it really worth starting again?"

Norris said even the Pentagon was divided over nuclear testing under the moratorium law now in effect. The "safety" tests that are allowed might indicate that expensive improvements are needed for nuclear missiles that the armed services assert are safe enough already. With its budget under great pressure already, "The Pentagon doesn't want to be linked to having to pay for anything," said Norris. "This is the Department of Energy and the labs scratching to continue testing."

Early on in the debate, proponents of continuing the nuclear testing floated a proposal to create a special exemption from the moratorium and from the test ban that is to be negotiated by 1996 for blasts of less than one kiloton. But the scheme was shot down by Sen. George Mitchell, D-Maine, Mark Hatfield, R-Ore., and James Exon, D-Neb., who sponsored the moratorium legislation last year. They wrote to Clinton that allowing underground nuclear blasts of any size "would not be consistent" with the law.

Nonetheless, Peter Zavataro, director of the Nevada Test Site contractors association, was upbeat about the news from Washington. Although the test site has laid off around 1,000 workers since the moratorium began, contractors expect few new job losses in the near future. The administration has requested \$368.9 million for testing next year. "I was not surprised," said Zavataro. "It was the right decision. We were expecting it for months. We have a program laid out and we're working on it. If we know we're going to test, it gives us perspective for the future. Secretary of Energy Hazel O'Leary has said she believes it's necessary to resume testing to maintain our stockpile. I can't believe she would say that without it being the administration's view."

Reacting to the news of Clinton's support for any atomic testing, even under the program allowed by the current moratorium, Bob Fulkerson of the Nevada group Citizen Alert said, "It's no surprise. But it's bad news. It's not the comprehensive test ban he promised in the campaign."

—Jon Christensen, HCN Great Basin editor

HOTLINE



Jerg Kroemer

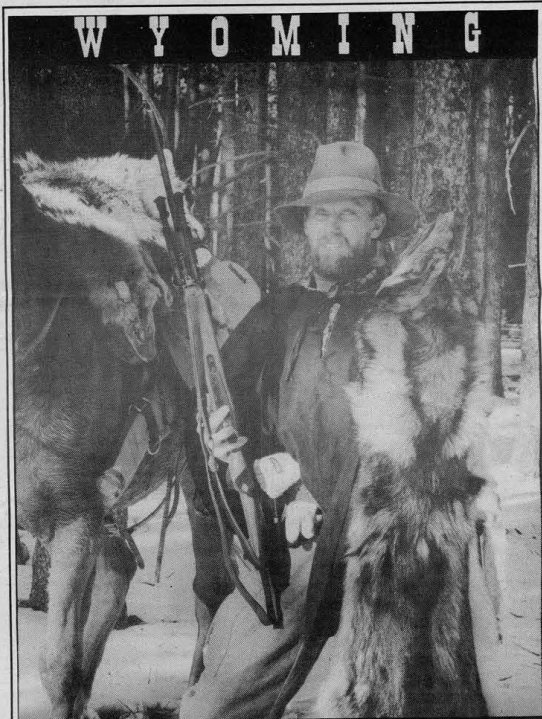
Rocky Mountain bighorn

Bighorns and tourists

From a small town's search for economic alternatives comes the National Bighorn Sheep Interpretive Center, due to open July 2 in Dubois, Wyo. With the Louisiana-Pacific sawmill's closing in 1988, the town of 900 sought to capitalize on its rich wildlife resources in nearby Whiskey Basin, a 27-square-mile area managed for bighorn by the Wyoming Department of Game and Fish, Forest Service and the BLM. The center seeks to teach the public about bighorns, from their migration across the Bering land bridge to the expansion and survival of the species throughout western North America. Since 1,000 bighorn spend the winter on the slopes above Dubois, tourists who come at that time may have the opportunity to see the wild sheep up close. The center received financial support from the state, Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. More than 32 other partners, including The Nature Conservancy, the Wyoming Wildlife Federation and the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, also contributed to the project.

He loves to log

When Jill Bailey's children brought home a coloring book and a cassette tape they picked up at school in Kuna, Idaho, near Boise, she thought it was innocuous kids' stuff. But when she opened the book and listened to the tape, the hero turned out to be a hard-hat-wearing "Timbear" who liked to turn forests into logged trees. Bailey told the *Idaho Conservation League's* newsletter that the coloring book and tape were filled with pro-logger propaganda: "He guards our forest with the greatest care," a voice on the tape sings. "Well, he cares for you and he cares for me, and he loves our country and its big tall trees. Timbear, Timbear." Bailey called the Idaho elementary school her boys attend to protest but found hers was the only complaint. "Timbear" is the creation of Common Sense of Sweet Home, Ore., a group affiliated with the wise use movement, which distributed the material.



Remember —
There ain't no wolves in Wyoming,
Clinton won't raise your taxes,
And Elvis lives in Jackson Hole.
—Jerry Kysar

Does Elvis live in Jackson Hole?

Jerry Kysar, the hunter who mistakenly shot a wolf in Wyoming, has become an active participant in the debate about returning wolves to Yellowstone National Park. Kysar and photographer Steve Torrey have produced a poster (above) urging the federal government not to restore wolves to the area on the premise that wolves are making a comeback on their own. The poster features Kysar standing next to a horse and holding a wolf hide borrowed from a local taxidermist. The poster says, "Remember

— There ain't no wolves in Wyoming, Clinton won't raise your taxes, and Elvis lives in Jackson Hole." So far the \$5 poster has sold close to 5,000 copies. "It's fun and it takes a stab at the federal government and some of their policies and fallacies," Kysar told the *Billings Gazette*. Biologists determined one 92-pound animal Kysar shot last fall was a wolf related to packs in Montana. For more information about the poster contact Steve Torrey Photography, Rt. 1, Box 3, Worland, WY 82401 (307/347-2791).

BARBS

All the noise but none of the stars.

When the Navy announced plans to move its prestigious Top Gun fighter-pilot training school from San Diego, Calif., to Fallon, Nev., activist Grace Bukowski reminded local residents, "We will get more sonic booms and low-level jet overflights but we're not going to get Tom Cruise."

BULLETIN BOARD

A NEVADA BIODIVERSITY CENTER

The University of Nevada, Reno, a land grant college that has historically catered to mining and ranching, may be changing course. With federal funding secured by Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., and help from a host of other local sponsors including casino owner Steve Nightingale, the university is establishing a \$10 million "biodiversity center" to survey and preserve the state's biological diversity. Home to some 150 threatened and endangered species of animals and plants, many of them species found nowhere else in the world, Nevada ranks fourth in the nation, behind California, Florida and Hawaii, in the number of imperiled species facing possible extinction. The UNR biodiversity center will be run by conservation biologists Peter Brussard of the University of Nevada and Dennis Murphy of Stanford University, in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Nevada Department of Wildlife. The center will compile available information about the ecosystems of the Great Basin on a computer-mapping system and conduct surveys on the ground to fill in the gaps, "so everybody is reading off the same sheet," said Brussard. Sen. Reid said the center will look ahead to "blow the whistle to avoid train wrecks" between the environment and economy, such as those caused by the spotted owl and desert tortoise. "Instead of reacting to problems, we will prevent them," said Reid. "It's incredible we don't really know what is in the Great Basin." For more information about the biodiversity center, contact Dr. Peter Brussard, chairman, Department of Biology, University of Nevada, Reno, NV 89557 (702/784-6188).

—Jon Christensen

NEW DEN FOR GRIZZLY RESEARCH

Two veteran grizzly bear researchers are making Jackson Hole, Wyo., their headquarters for studying bears in the greater Yellowstone ecosystem. Steve and Marilyn French, who have studied Yellowstone's grizzlies for 11 years, intend their Yellowstone Grizzly Foundation to include an interpretive center with displays, literature and films that will reach millions of visitors each year. "It just seemed obvious to us intuitively that this was the right place," says Steve French. "All these people who flow through Jackson are here for a reason, and one of the reasons is to learn about bears and this area," adds Marilyn French. Crescent H Ranch will host a fund-raising dinner for the foundation June 11 and a grizzly conference June 12. The dinner costs \$75, \$50 of which is tax deductible. Several grizzly experts are set to appear at the conference, as well as wildlife artist Bev Doolittle. For more information contact the Yellowstone Grizzly Foundation, 355 S. Millward St., Jackson, WY 83001 (308/733-3808).

TROUBLED WATERS

Water pollution and depletion plague the country's national parks, warns a National Parks and Conservation Association report, *Park Waters in Peril*. Causes include development outside and upstream of park boundaries plus the lack of political will to protect parks, say authors Terri Martin, Rocky Mountain regional director for NPCA, and William J. Lockhart, University of Utah law professor. Their 126-page study puts water problems in context by examining parks in deserts, wetlands and glaciers, and they examine the threat geothermal development poses to the nation's first park, Yellowstone. "We run the very real risk of turning off Old Faithful," says the park group's president Paul C. Pritchard. The study also says runoff from agriculture, mining, drilling and residential areas contaminates water in Yellowstone, Dinosaur and Everglades national parks. The report includes surveys of Olympic National Park in Washington, Death Valley National Monument in California, and Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument in Arizona. "Secretary of Interior Babbitt has said that he wants the national parks to be the flagship of America's environmental efforts," says Pritchard. "If that is so, then this report is an SOS from the Titanic." For a copy of the report contact the National Parks and Conservation Association, 1776 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20036 (202/223-6722).

—Greg Peterson



CUTTING TREES FOR THE FOREST

Oregon State University will sponsor a workshop in the central Oregon town of Sisters June 22-24, focusing on cutting trees of varying ages to enhance ecosystems. Oregon State forestry Professor Bill Emmingham says the course will focus on two methods of managing forests for diversity. Single-tree selection requires foresters to choose which trees to cut and which to leave alive depending on their role in the ecosystem. The goal is an old-growth kind of forest with a multi-layered canopy. The other method, group selection forestry, chooses one-quarter to whole-acre lots for harvest. Emmingham says this "mini clear-cut" is small enough for a forest to recover naturally. Instruction at the conference is divided between formal lectures and field trips to the Ponderosa pine and mixed-conifer forests of the Deschutes National Forest. Contact the conference assistant for the Uneven-aged Management Workshop, Oregon State University, College of Forestry, Peavey Hall 202, Corvallis, OR 97331-5707 (503/737-2329).

WATER AND THE CHANGING WEST

The Natural Resources Law Center of the University of Colorado School of Law will hold a three-day conference, "Water Organizations in a Changing West," June 14-16. Speakers include Duane Georgeson, assistant general manager of Southern California's Metropolitan Water District, and Wayne Bossert, manager of the Northwest Kansas Groundwater Management District. For more information, contact Katherine Taylor, Conference Coordinator, Campus Box 401, Boulder, CO 80309-0401 (303/492-1288).

DUNE THE RIGHT THING IN OREGON

Off-road vehicle users in the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area could be barred from half the land now open to them. The Forest Service's *Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area Management Plan* outlines eight alternatives, ranging from increasing commercial development to managing a preserve closed to all vehicles. But the agency's preference is to decrease by half the area currently available for ORVs. Public Information Officer Cheryl Walters says that approach would shorten a few roads and add about 25 miles of non-motorized trails to the 25 miles that now exist among the 26,835-acre dunes on Oregon's southern coast. It would also create a research area, designate two stretches of rivers as Wild and Scenic, and manage 4,330 acres intensively for wildlife habitat. Conservationists aren't convinced, however, that further restrictions on ORV use will produce greater security for fragile areas. Wendell Wood, conservation director of the Oregon Natural Resources Council, says that vehicles have continued to enter areas even after they have been restricted. He advocates a total ban on motorized vehicles. To comment by July 15 or to order a copy of the Draft EIS, contact Michael Harvey, Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area, 855 Highway Ave., Reedsport, OR 97467 (503/271-3611).

TOUCH THE EARTH

A Montana Indian reservation and an environmental group are hosting a program to bring small groups of visitors onto the reservation this summer. Visitors will spend several days on Montana's Fort Belknap Reservation, working with tribal artisans, harvesting and eating native foods, visiting both Assiniboine and Gros Ventre camps, and sleeping in teepees. The "Touch the Earth" pilot program to be held in the Little Rockies consists of seven five-day sessions in June, July and August. All profits will go towards the Touch the Earth Traditional Education Center, intended to familiarize Assiniboine and Gros Ventre youth with their cultures. For information and cost, contact Cheri Briggs or Vance Martin, Touch the Earth, c/o The WILD Foundation, 211 W. Magnolia, Ft. Collins, CO 80521 (303/498-0303).



Dennis Davis

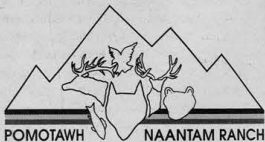
Visitors to Yellowstone watch Old Faithful erupt

Unclassifieds

MEET NEW FRIENDS, West, Northwest, and nationwide. Outdoor Singles Network, established bi-monthly newsletter, no forwarding fees, \$35/1-year, \$7/trial issue and information. OSN-HCN, Box 2031, McCall, ID 83638. (6x2-eoi)

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CLOUD RIDGE NATURALISTS offers a wide variety of Field Discovery Seminars. Now in its 14th year, the organization has provided over 2,000 people with high-quality natural history education. Classes are small, the food is good, and each instructor has first-hand research or working experience with the subject. Upcoming courses include "Pollination Ecology," July 29-Aug. 1, and "Intruders at the Nest," June 25-27, which examines how species like the cowbird deposit their eggs in other birds' nests to be nurtured by the host. Contact director Audrey Benedict, Cloud Ridge Naturalists, 8297 Overland Road, Ward, CO 80481. (303/459-3248 or 303/443-8204. (1x10c)

LETTERS

TAOS RESISTS RITZ

Dear HCN,

I was interested to read your recent article on "Small towns under siege" (HCN, 4/5/93) since Taos, N.M., is just one of those towns victimized by Gucci pioneers. But a flash of hope occurred recently. A planned large-scale development called Las Sierras was beaten back by a groundswell of local resistance of the grass-roots variety. Geared toward drawing the very affluent from other areas, this development was cut off at the knees. To give an example of the kind of money we're talking about, raw lots were to be sold for an extremely high figure, with the median being about \$125,000 — in an area where the average income is one of the poorest in a very poor state.

The project was killed by two forces: (1) a protracted legal battle by people already living in Taos, and (2) a ruling from the state engineer that a dubious water transfer requested by the Las Sierras people was not acceptable. Acting partly on a new law that seeks to preserve "quality of life" as a criterion for projected developments, a momentary victory was won. I think this may be a model for other areas to develop in the ongoing battle to help keep greedhead developers of this variety in check.

It buys time for intelligent development to bring in economic opportunity and affordable housing, as opposed to increasing the economic inequities to which an area like this is increasingly vulnerable.

Virginia Sturges
Ranchos de Taos, New Mexico

DON'T BLAME ASPEN

Dear HCN,

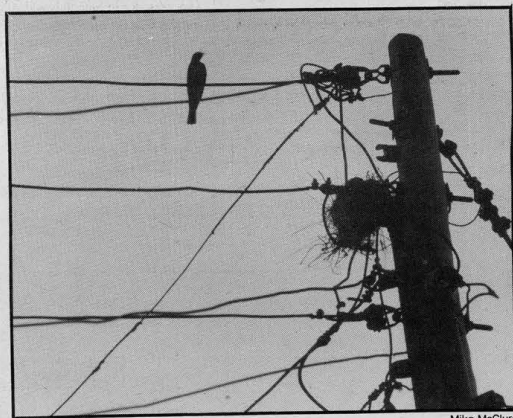
Considering Aspen's extremely high number of active volunteer and charitable organizations — even several coordinating councils that were formed to keep volunteers from running over each other — a case could be made that Aspen is even more of a bona fide community now than it was 20 years ago (HCN, 4/5/93). At least community spirit, both progressive and misguided, is not lacking.

A major part of Aspen's dilemma is that, although it is the seat of Pitkin County, its fortunes are often dictated by contradicting policies of the other two counties in the Roaring Fork Valley — Eagle and Garfield. What is only infrequently reported and seldom editorially supported by the local press are the political efforts to make this relationship harmonious and mutually beneficial.

Failed efforts in Aspen and Pitkin County to solve this problem are as much to blame as the divergent courses of Eagle and Garfield counties. It would have been helpful if writer Hal Clifford could have employed his reportorial expertise several years ago to present emerging ideas for valley-wide cooperation as well as he did in outlining the current problems.

George Madsen
Aspen, Colorado

The writer is a former Pitkin County commissioner and former chairman of the six-county Northwest Colorado Council of Governments, which includes Pitkin, Eagle and Garfield counties.



Mike McClure

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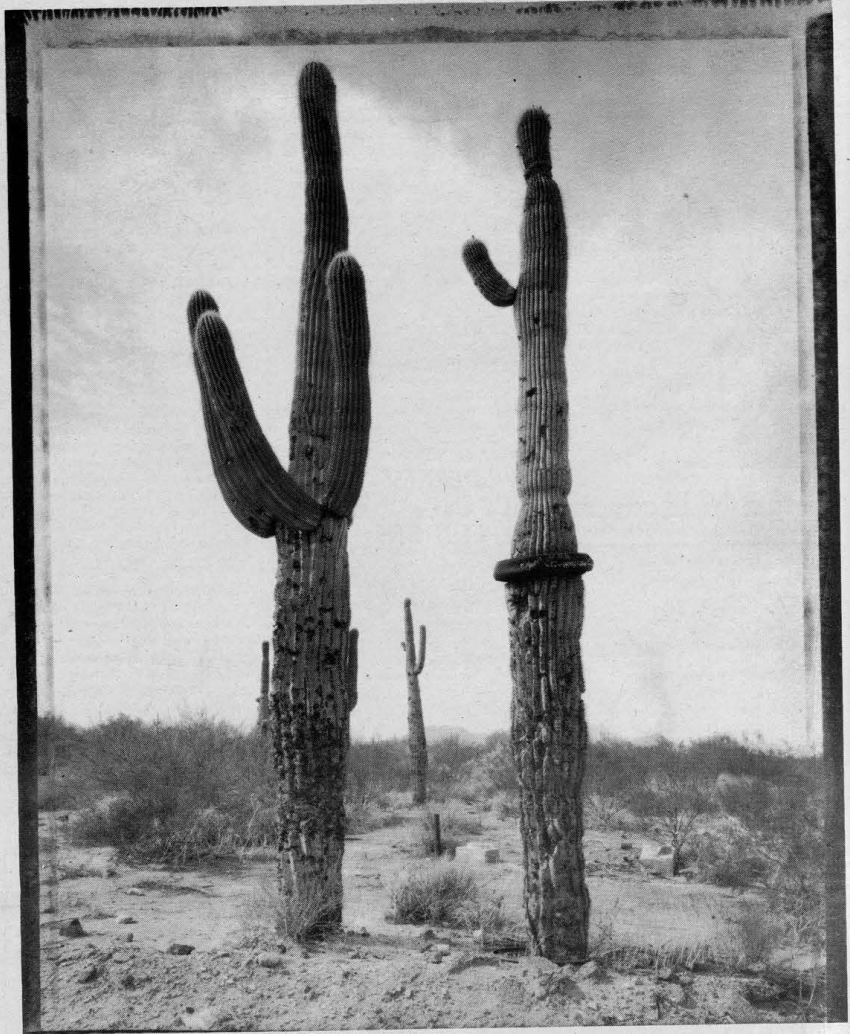
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REVEALING TERRITORY

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK KLETT



ROADSIDE VETERANS, ROUTE 84 NEAR STANFIELD, ARIZONA, 10/26/85



TURN RADIUS INTAGLIO, KOFA RANGE, ARIZONA, 1/14/87



BROKEN FRIEZE: ERODING SCULPTURE, DRIFTWOOD CHARLIE'S CAMP,
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LAST LIGHT ON THE ECHO CLIFFS, NAVAJO RESERVATION, 9/4/89

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Quiet slaughter ...

Continued from page 1

"If this kind of reasoning prevails, of course the fish are doomed," Chaney says.

Just one small fish, named Lonely Larry by state biologists and environmentalists, returned to Redfish Lake to spawn last year. A captive breeding program is under way in an Idaho hatchery. Thus far, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the federal agency charged with saving the salmon under the act, has yet to order any changes in the dams.

All parties await the next key decision by NMFS, whether it will make a "jeopardy" or "no-jeopardy" opinion under Section 7 of the act regarding the safety of fish passage in the Snake and Columbia rivers. The decision, due April 15, is now expected any day.

The agency ruled last year that the hydro system posed "no jeopardy" to the fish, even though only one-tenth of 1 percent of about 20 million juvenile fish headed for the Pacific Ocean survive to return three to five years later.

Regional director Rollie Schmitt hinted last year that 1992 would be the last year the NMFS would allow the status quo to prevail. The word behind the scenes is that NMFS scientists in the Northwest have recommended a "jeopardy" opinion, but utility, aluminum and irrigation lobbies in Washington, D.C., are trying to strong-arm the agency's top officials to rule "no jeopardy" and leave the hydro system alone.

Idaho Democratic Gov. Cecil Andrus, a former Interior secretary who has talked to President Clinton about the need to save the salmon, lobbied Congress during a national governors' meeting last month.

"He (Andrus) is telling them that there's a powerful constituency in the Northwest that's trying to kill off the fish," said Andrus spokesman Scott Peyron. "It's his understanding that the internal debate in NMFS is between scientists and politicians, and the voice of the scientists is being drowned out by the politics of the question."

Regardless of how NMFS rules on the "jeopardy" question, nearly all of the key decisions have been made for how chinook salmon will be managed this year in terms of the hydro system, fish harvest, hatchery management and improving habitat.

One potential bright spot for migrating fish this year is that Snake River

runoff will rise to the highest level since 1986. When the river reached a level of 100,000 cubic feet per second in mid-May, about 30 percent of the spring migrants spilled over the dams and were left in the river to swim to the ocean. In the past, fish survival increased markedly in years of high runoff.

"Thank God they won't be able to capture all the fish this year," Chaney said. "For once, the weather is on our side."

Harvest of all chinook stocks on the Pacific Coast has been increased from 60 percent of the average catch (based on the 1986-1990 time period) last year to 90 percent of the average. If commercial, tribal or sport anglers accidentally catch a Snake River chinook, it's considered an "incidental" impact, officials said. NMFS has ruled that the 1993 harvest level poses "no jeopardy" to the overall survival of Snake River chinook.

"The reason the fish are disappearing is due to the passage problems in the hydro system and the loss of habitat in the basin, not fish harvest," said John Coon, a salmon staffer for the Pacific Fisheries Management Council, the organization that sets salmon harvest limits for the coastal fisheries.

"There's the concern that if you shut down all the fishing, you could potentially lose a constituency for saving the fish," Coon added.

The annual catch for all types of fishing in the Columbia River is scheduled to be about 8 percent of a total run of at least

100,000 fish. No seasons are allowed on summer chinook. Harvest of fall chinook, considered the prime "hogs" by anglers because of their immense size, is scheduled to be about 28 percent of the total spawning population destined for Hells Canyon, or 440 fish out of 1,616. Another 700 fall chinook are expected to be killed trying to ascend the dams.

Hundreds of development activities in the Snake River Basin that potentially may affect wild chinook spawning grounds in central Idaho are under scrutiny by NMFS officials. Merritt Tuttle, a NMFS biologist in Portland, said the agency has reviewed 74 projects informally and 21 formally, with 49 pending. Many projects have been consolidated to reduce the work load.

"On each consultation, we have to show that we're stopping the downward trend and that there's going to be some improvement in fish survival," Tuttle said. "So far, we haven't turned anybody down ... it's a matter of fine-tuning activities to reduce resource damage."

NMFS officials have been far tougher on the standards set for livestock grazing, logging and even rafting, than it has been on the hydro system. NMFS is currently review-

ing the Sawtooth National Forest's recommendation to cut livestock grazing by 58 percent in the Stanley Basin, including the closure of grazing along streams where salmon spawn.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation has been trying to coerce Upper Snake River farmers to sell portions of their irrigation water to boost the amount of water released downstream for migrating salmon. Bureau officials are seeking 427,000 acre-feet of water from the Upper Snake this year. So far, not a single farmer wants to sell.

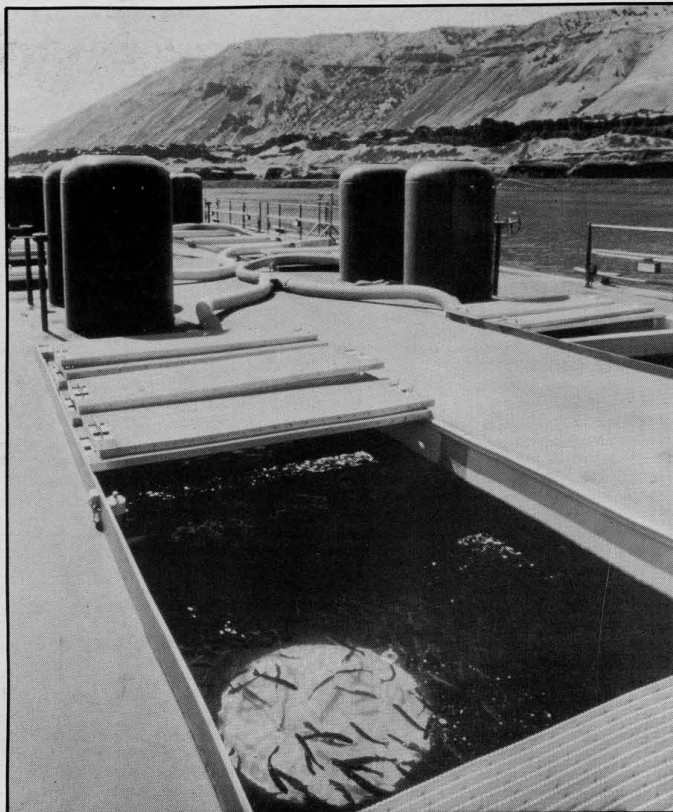
If the price is right, farmers might change their minds. Bureau Regional Director John Keys said no fixed price has been set except the "red face test." Water normally sells for between \$2.95 and \$9 per acre-foot from the Upper Snake. But last year, when the Bureau offered up to \$60 per acre-foot from the Boise River water bank, no one took the offer.

Andrus, Idaho farmers and state water officials felt burned last summer when the state released about 600,000 acre-feet of water down the Snake to speed up the river's velocity for migrating salmon, only to find out that the Bonneville Power Administration held the water hostage for power production below Lower Granite Dam.

In other words, the BPA canceled out the effect of the Idaho release and produced power instead. BPA officials have apparently told Idaho officials that they will not do that again this year.

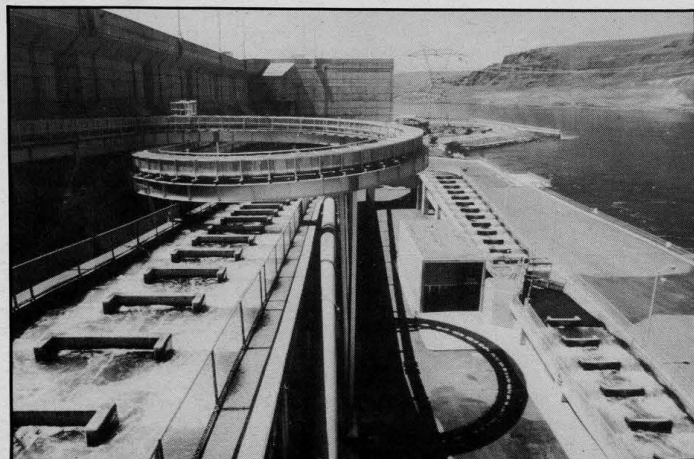
All of these actions taken together still will not cause any dramatic upswing in the imperiled salmon runs, according to Ed Chaney.

"The Endangered Species Act is only as strong as the agency that's implementing



Salmon spotlighted inside a barge ready for transport

Dave Ails



The newest thing in fish ladders, "Lynns Loop," was completed at Little Goose Dam in 1990

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Four dams must go, activist says

BOISE, Idaho — At first glance, Reed Burkholder, a 45-year-old Boise native, doesn't seem particularly radical. He gives piano lessons and composes music for a living. He's married, expecting a third child, and goes to church on Sunday. He belongs to no environmental groups.

But when it comes to discussing the plight of the imperiled Snake River wild salmon runs, Burkholder says he has researched the issue and reached a radical conclusion: Remove the four Lower Snake River dams.

Though that notion has entered the minds of several salmon advocates, Burkholder may be the first citizen in the Pacific Northwest to make the proposal public.

"I honestly don't think you can have salmon recovery without removing the dams. Everyone assumes the dams are necessary, but when you find out what we're getting from the dams, you discover that we really aren't getting many benefits at all," he says.

Burkholder has concluded that:

- In 1991, the four Lower Snake dams produced about 8.4 million megawatt-hours of electricity, about 4 percent of all the hydropower produced by the Bonneville Power Administration that year. The BPA exported all of that power and more to Southern California that year as surplus electricity.

- Irrigation interests, which oppose the drawdown of the Snake River reservoirs, use only one of the four reservoirs for water, Ice Harbor pool. The others could be drawn down or removed without any impact on irrigators. Thirteen farmers draw water from Ice Harbor pool to irrigate 34,924 acres.

- Fewer than 3.6 million tons of products, mostly grain, were shipped down the Lower Snake River from Lewiston to Pasco, Wash., in 1989, or about 8 percent of the total tonnage of products shipped below Bonneville Dam. Shipping by barge is about 15 cents per ton cheaper than transporting

products by truck or rail from the Port of Lewiston. But Burkholder says barge service is artificially cheap — subsidized by the government on the backs of the dying salmon runs.

- The proposed drawdown of the four Lower Snake dams to speed up the river for migrating salmon won't pack enough punch, compared to removing the dams altogether, Burkholder says. Historical river flow data indicates that the Lower Snake moved at 8.19 feet per second under free-flowing conditions at a flow of 140,000 cubic feet per second. With Lower Granite Reservoir drawn down 40 feet, the river's velocity would increase to 8 feet per second near Lewiston but to less than 2 feet per second some 10 miles from Lower Granite Dam. However, under free-flowing conditions, the Lower Snake never dropped below 5 feet per second during the spring fish migration, Burkholder discovered.

Today's migration conditions feature velocities "that these fish have never seen in the history of salmon," he says. "That's got to take its toll."

At this point, Burkholder is a lone ranger. Even fish advocates aren't willing to call for removing the dams, saying the drawdown should be tried first. Bonneville Power Administration spokeswoman Dulcy Mahar says that losing any power sources in the Northwest would pinch the region's ratepayers because the BPA is reeling financially from a six-year drought.

"To lose any of our

power sources right now would be devastating," Mahar says. "We're in a dire situation in which we're taking emergency measures to get by."

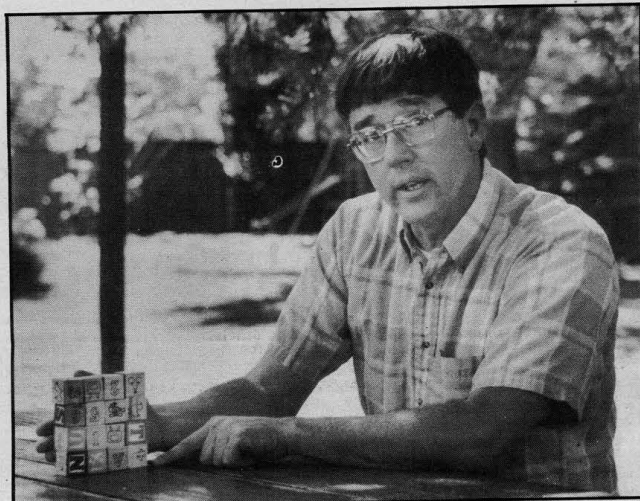
A more likely alternative than removing the dams is a scheme in which the corps would punch a huge hole in the dams, providing a free-flowing river option during the fish migration season. "If we want scientific certainty, the best thing to do is to knock a hole in the dams," said Ed Chaney of Eagle, a key fish advocate in the region. "If we can't get that kind of modest change, then let's go ahead and take out the dams."

Saving the salmon is a "gut issue" for Burkholder. As a youngster, he saw his first king salmon near the Yankee Fork. "It was a great big chinook. He was in perfect condition; he had pink gills and a greenish body. Boy, I thought

he was just beautiful." A few years later, in 1963, he caught two summer chinook on the South Fork of the Salmon River. "I was the only kid that caught a salmon that day," he recalls. "And today, you can't do that anymore. I think that's really sad."

On a religious level, Burkholder, a Mennonite, believes that God expects man to act as steward toward the earth. "We do, indeed, have dominion and the power of life and death over every creature on this planet," he says. "Are we going to choose to be benevolent or hold tyrannical reign over God's creations?" To him, the salmon is like his neighbor, fitting the commandment, "Honor thy neighbor as thyself." "To me, a neighbor is my salmon brother," he says.

— Steve Stuebner



Reed Burkholder uses blocks to demonstrate the way a dam changes the flow of a river

Salmon spawn a swarm of lawsuits

Challenging habitat protection

- Pacific Rivers Council et al. vs. Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman national forests, Bureau of Land Management, Baker District.

Environmentalists are challenging the agencies' attempt to bypass Endangered Species Act review of timber harvest and livestock grazing levels that affect spawning chinook salmon on the Umatilla, Grand Ronde and Imnaha rivers. The suit does not challenge individual projects, but the agencies' standards and guidelines for the protection of riparian areas.

The case is pending in U.S. District Court in Portland.

- Idaho Conservation League vs. Sawtooth National Forest.

Environmentalists sued the Sawtooth forest for failing to issue a final decision on its proposal to curtail livestock grazing in the Stanley Basin by 66 percent. Recently, the Sawtooth released a final environmental impact statement calling for a grazing reduction of 58 percent, possibly making the lawsuit moot.

The case is pending in U.S. District

Court in Boise.

- Idaho Sportsmen's Coalition vs. Payette National Forest.

Environmentalists are challenging the Payette forest's decision to pave a 35-mile dirt road adjacent to the South Fork of the Salmon River, home to spawning summer chinook salmon. The concern is that the paving project would cause too much sediment to flow into the South Fork, harming spawning habitat.

The case is pending in U.S. District Court in Boise.

Challenging hydroelectric dam operations

- Northwest Resources Information Center et al. vs. National Marine Fisheries Service, Bonneville Power Administration, Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation.

Environmentalists challenged the federal agencies' decision last year to declare the hydro system posed "no jeopardy" to Snake River salmon.

The case is pending in U.S. District Court in Seattle.

- Pacific Northwest Generating Cooperative, Alcoa and Public Power Council vs. Ronald Brown (secretary of Commerce) et al.

Utility and aluminum industries challenged National Marine Fisheries Service's biological opinion on hydro system operations for 1992, saying the agency went too far in making concessions for salmon. U.S. District Court Judge Harold Marsh in Portland ruled against the plaintiffs, saying they had no standing. Marsh concluded in part, "To permit these plaintiffs to proceed with their claims under the Endangered Species Act would be akin to permitting a fox to complain that the chickens have not been fed — sure, he has an interest in seeing that the chickens are well fed, but it's just not the same interest the farmer has, nor is it an interest shared by the chickens."

Challenging fish-barging

- Northwest Resources Information Center, Yakima Indian Nation, American Rivers, Oregon Natural Resources Council and Sierra Club vs. National Marine Fisheries Service

and Army Corps of Engineers.

Fish advocates requested a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction to stop the Army Corps from barging salmon through the gauntlet of eight dams in the lower Snake and Columbia rivers.

U.S. District Court Judge Harold Marsh denied the motions. No appeal is planned as yet.

Challenging the Northwest Power Planning Council

Both fish advocates and industry groups have challenged the council's Phase III save-the-salmon program, with environmentalists saying it is too weak and industry groups saying it is too aggressive. Petitions for review of the council's Phase III program are pending in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco. The Northwest Power Planning Council was created in 1980 by Congress to give fish equal standing with hydropower in the Columbia River Basin. Fish advocates argue the council has neglected to fulfill its legal mandate.

— S.S.

Quiet slaughter ...

Continued from page 10

it wants it to be," he said. "NMFS is trying to kill off the fishermen, and they're trying to kill off the ranchers ... They're doing everything but taking on the guys who are responsible for this mess."

Chaney was referring to the dam builders and hydropower brokers, the Army Corps of Engineers and the Bonneville Power Administration. Peyron said Andrus is "continuing to work on purging the Republican appointees" in charge of the two agencies. ■

Steve Stuebner writes in Boise, Idaho.

Set your salmon watch

A coalition of Idaho fishing and conservation groups is again sponsoring a Salmon Survival Watch to monitor the number of adult salmon returning up the Snake River and juvenile fish returning to the ocean. "Mid-April through June is the critical period each year for our wild salmon," explained Charles Ray of Idaho Rivers United. "This is the time when our young salmon are migrating from Idaho over 800 miles down to the ocean, and our adult salmon are returning to Idaho." Measurements are taken weekly and publicized on a regular basis. As of May 13, 10,505 spring chinook had reached Lower Granite Dam, and

15,820 adult fish had passed Ice Harbor Dam on the Snake River, compared to the 10-year average of 16,150 salmon. "Our goal is to keep these fish from going extinct," said Trish Klahr with the Idaho Conservation League. "We hope a weekly reminder of their plight will keep Idahoans determined not to let these amazing creatures vanish." For more information contact Charles Ray, Idaho Rivers United (208/634-3584) or Bud Knickerbocker, Sierra Club (208/345-6429).

Call for cooperation

A Northwestern tribal leader says a monumental effort in cooperation is needed to create a salmon recovery

plan for the Columbia River system.

Elwood Patawa, chairman of the Umatilla Tribal Board of Trustees, told the Northwest Power Planning Council in April that salmon recovery should start by fixing the "concrete fish killers" that have stopped the river's free-flowing water. "Let us quit fooling ourselves," Patawa told the *Kennewick Tri-City Herald*. "Constructing the dams as they stand today and developing the river as it stands motionless today was a mistake ... the Columbia and Snake rivers should flow again. Or we should stop this exercise called recovery."

—Greg Peterson, HCN intern

Fish-killing dams may be razed

by Paul Koberstein

A super race of wild chinook once swam the upper Elwha River in its steep, narrow canyon on the north side of Washington's towering Olympic Mountains. These 100-pound fish, fattened by seven or eight years at sea, were among the largest stocks of Pacific salmon, possessing the physical strength to reach the Olympic's highest mountains, many thousands of feet above the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

It took one thoughtlessly constructed dam, Elwha, erected in 1911, only a few years to wipe most of them out. Glines Canyon, a second dam built in 1926, strengthened the barrier between the chinook and 40 miles of pristine habitat inside Olympic National Park and Olympic National Forest.

These dams, located some 70 miles northwest of Seattle, were built with a full complement of hydropower producing hardware: stiff concrete faces, penstocks, turbines and transformers. But the dam builders forgot to include fish ladders, as did many in that era, ignoring an 1890 Washington law requiring them.

Now the federal government is on the verge of correcting nearly a century of wrongs against these fish. On June 1, the National Park Service will complete a study that its author, biologist Brian Winter, says will recommend dam removal as the best and perhaps only way of reviving this marvelous strain of salmon.

Congress authorized the removal of the two Elwha dams at the end of its 102nd session last October. At the same time, it commissioned the Winter study to examine the biological benefits of dam removal and several alternatives, including the installation of fish ladders. Ultimately, Congress must appropriate the estimated \$135 million it will cost to get rid of these dams.

"It's going to be a battle getting the money," says Maureen Finnerty, superintendent of Olympic National Park. "It will make a big difference if the administration is behind it."

The goal, in keeping with the Park Service's mission, is restoration of this once marvelous riverine ecosystem to the extent possible. The Elwha drains 268 square miles, almost all within the national park. It is the park's largest watershed.

The Park Service estimates that the

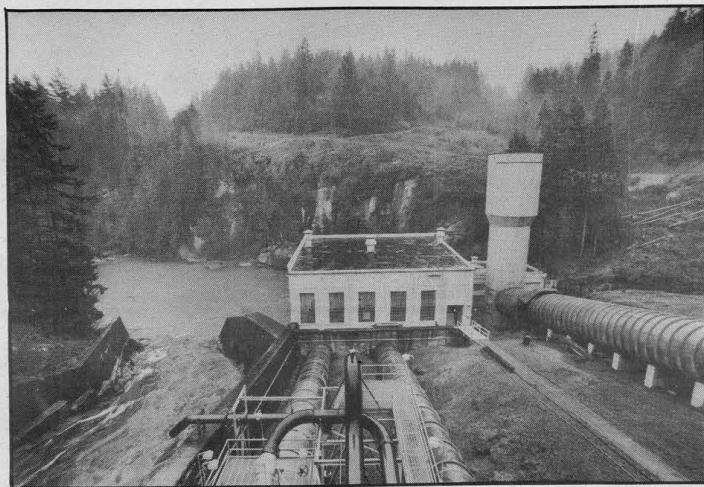
Elwha could produce as many as 250,000 salmon for harvest and spawning. Moreover, the runs would support a variety of 22 different species of birds and animals that would feed on the salmon carcasses. These species are plentiful in the Queets drainage, a neighboring river system unimpeded by dams, but scarce in the Elwha. The salmon runs would arrive in summer months, when food is often limited, Winter says.

The genetic keys to this recovery are locked within the cells of a remnant chinook run that makes do with the diminished spawning habitat still available in the five miles downstream from the lowest dam. Only time will tell whether the 100-pounders will be seen again. But Winter contends there is reason to believe the huge salmon can be revived.

"It's our belief that the genetic material of that stock is still present in the existing chinook stock," Winter says. "Given time, if we let nature take its course, we should see that fish return. It might take several cycles."

A cycle is equal to a salmon's life span. Most salmon spawn at age 5, but the Elwha chinook lived up to eight years and some may have lived 12 years, according to Bruce Brown's 1982 book, *Mountains in the Clouds*, a critique of failures to protect wild salmon on the Olympic Peninsula and in the Pacific Northwest.

Today, the remnant run consists of about 7,000 chinook of hatchery and wild origin, and they are considered at risk of extinction. Recent years of drought have reduced river flows while increasing summertime temperatures. Parasites deadly to salmon thrive in these conditions, and nearly wiped out runs in 1987 and 1992, according to the Wash-



Washington's Elwha Dam, which Interior Secretary Babbitt hopes to dynamite

Jimi Lott/Seattle Times

ington Department of Fisheries.

Finnerty says never before have two dams on a single river been removed together for the purpose of restoring salmon. But in at least one instance, a single project has been taken out.

In the early 1970s, Idaho Gov. Cecil Andrus triggered the dynamite that brought down Lewiston Dam at the mouth of the Clearwater River. In the two decades since, aggressive restocking and hatchery programs have revived chinook and steelhead in the Clearwater.

Elwha Dam is a 105-foot structure built seven miles from the river's mouth at Port Angeles. Its owners never obtained a federal license for the project. Glines Canyon Dam, which at 210 feet is as tall as the tallest Douglas fir in the Olympic rainforest, was raised in 1926 some 12 miles upstream from Port Angeles. Its license has been up for renewal by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

When Congress established Olympic National Park in 1937, it allowed the dams to remain, one inside park boundaries and the other just outside.

The dams, owned by the James River Co., a pulp and paper producer, supply about 20 megawatts of power for the Daishowa America pulp mill in Port

Angeles. The mill, built by Crown Zellerbach and later owned by James River, relied on cheap power from the dams — less than 1 cent per kilowatt hour.

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt last month told a House committee that he would relish the opportunity to be "the first secretary to preside over not building a dam, but blowing up a dam." And during an April visit to the Elwha, he said dam removal presents an "enormous opportunity" to restore a national park ecosystem.

Removing the dams won't be so simple as merely blowing them up and removing the rubble. First, the reservoirs behind Glines Canyon and Elwha dams must be drained. Then, the rivers must be given time to carve channels through the sediment.

The Park Service plan for the Elwha Dam's removal will be open for public comment this summer. A final plan is due next January.

Readers wanting more information can call Maureen Finnerty at Olympic National Park, 206/452-0310 and Shawn Cantrell, staffer with Friends of the Earth, 206/633-1661. ■

Paul Koberstein writes about natural resource issues in Portland, Oregon.

BPA: the Northwest's sugar daddy

Essay by Dan Rohlf

The engine powering the Northwest's economy is plugged into the nation's cheapest source of electricity — huge federally owned dams on the Columbia and Snake rivers. While these dams have enabled the region's industries and residents to enjoy the nation's lowest electric rates, they are also the primary reason why the Columbia Basin's once bountiful salmon runs have drastically declined or become extinct.

The Bonneville Power Administration, the federal agency which markets power from the dams, and regional utilities have long resisted steps to make the system less lethal to fish. They claim such reform would inflate electric rates and trigger economic catastrophe.

At the same time, the Northwest's ongoing drought has exacerbated economic pressures in the region. BPA, which earlier this year proposed an 11 percent increase in its wholesale electric rates, now projects a jump of up to 20 percent. In addition to poor water conditions, BPA cites fish conservation efforts as a principal cause of the jump.

The prospects of a substantial rate increase have not gone over well. BPA's utility and industrial customers have demanded that the agency look for ways to reduce the rate hike. Responding to this pressure, BPA has rejected comprehensive measures to protect the salmon — such as reservoir drawdowns or changing dam operations — and instead proposed dramatic cuts in its fish and wildlife funding. If enacted, these cuts would make it difficult or impossible for BPA to meet its responsibilities to salmon under the Northwest Power Act and the Endangered Species Act.

A closer look at BPA's finances reveals that the blame placed on salmon is mainly smoke and mirrors. First, even a 20 percent rate hike would only increase wholesale rates from 2.33 cents per kilowatt-hour to about 2.8 cents/kwh. That is an average increase of less than \$6 a month in residential utility bills and leaves Northwest customers paying far less than the national average. New Yorkers, for example, pay 13.7 cents/kwh.

Second, BPA's financial crisis has little to do with protecting salmon. Bonneville this year earmarked \$26 million to help threatened and endangered salmon stocks, and claims it will spend \$260 million on fish and wildlife overall (a figure many salmon advocates dispute).

By comparison, the agency will spend about \$775 million this year on debts and operating costs of the three Washington Public Power Supply System (WPPSS) nuclear plants in Washington. Only one of the problem-plagued plants works; BPA has finally

decided to dismantle the other two after spending countless millions over the last decade to keep them in mothballs.

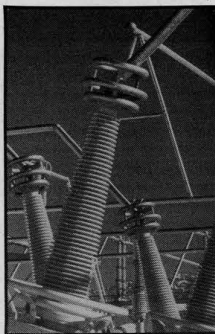
Third, while Bonneville's large customers advocate cutting fish protection to soften rate increases, they have called in armies of lawyers and lobbyists to protect their own sweetheart deals with BPA.

For example, Direct Service Industries, a group of aluminum, titanium and chemical producers which purchases power directly from BPA, consumes almost one-third of the electricity sold by BPA. Rising power rates, increased global competition, and the recession of the early 1980s left Northwest aluminum companies in serious financial trouble. However, DSI several years ago convinced BPA to help them out by tying their electric rates to the world price of aluminum. Now, when the price of aluminum goes down, so do DSI's electric bills.

Since DSI members buy so much power from BPA, the ongoing slump in aluminum prices has substantially cut BPA revenues. Depending on the aluminum market, up to one-third of BPA's double-digit rate increases over the next two years will likely go to offset this revenue loss. In other words, electric consumers will soon see their utility bills increase in order to keep DSI's electric rates artificially low — by up to the same amount their bills will increase to pay for salmon protection.

Like DSI, farmers who irrigate crops in the Columbia Basin have also convinced BPA that they deserve special treatment. Citing "the uncertain long-run economic health of irrigated agriculture," BPA provides irrigators with a \$12 to \$15 million a year discount on power used to run irrigation pumps. BPA must recoup this lost revenue by increasing the bills of other ratepayers in the Northwest.

BPA's irrigation discount has other undesirable side effects. Cheaper pumping costs discourage water conservation. A recent study by the Franklin Conservation District in southeastern Washington concluded that local irrigators annually apply four inches of excess water a year on a quarter-million acres, in part due to



cheap pumping costs. Excess irrigation accelerates groundwater depletion and increases water pollution through runoff of fertilizers and pesticides. Over-irrigating also lowers stream flows, harming salmon and aquatic ecosystems. In addition, streams carrying less water produce less hydroelectricity, lowering BPA revenues and further contributing to rate hikes.

The Columbia Basin Institute estimates that excess irrigation in Franklin County alone deprives the region of nearly \$3 million in hydropower revenues a year. Yet BPA wants to increase irrigation discounts over the next two years.

Finally, an agreement involving BPA and most major Northwest electric utilities contributes to BPA's revenue shortfall. The Pacific Northwest Coordination Agreement, signed in 1964, often obligates BPA to supply extra electricity to utilities to enable those utilities to meet their loads. BPA has consistently capitulated to utility demands to supply this so-called interchange energy at bargain-basement prices.

In addition, utilities want BPA to assume the costs of unexpected or emergency salmon protection measures that become necessary after the year's hydroelectric operations are already planned and budgeted.

Although it doesn't hesitate to dish out ratepayers' money to powerful political interests, BPA drags its heels in considering rate design changes that could benefit both salmon and energy conservation. Bonneville's rates currently do not reflect the true environmental costs of the product it sells. Storing spring-runoff to meet winter peak demand kills salmon. BPA should therefore charge significantly higher rates for winter power and lower rates for electricity in the spring and summer, which would help realign the region's demand for power with the salmon's need for water.

The agency could also employ so-called tiered rates, which encourage conservation and efficient use of existing resources by making new increments of electricity more expensive. While BPA avoided this issue for years, it finally scheduled a process to address tiered rates under pressure from the Northwest Conservation Act Coalition.

The days of BPA energy surpluses and dirt-cheap electricity are over. It is time to fundamentally re-think how Bonneville does business. The agency should invest in measures to ensure the long-term health of the Columbia Basin's imperiled salmon runs, in part by creating rate structures which are fair to all and make environmental and economic sense. ■

Dan Rohlf is the senior advocacy fellow at the Northwestern School of Law's Northwest Policy and Water Project in Portland, Oregon.

How BPA is ruining the Northwest

Essay by Perry Swisher

You have to be taught to hate. I hate the Bonneville Power Administration. Who taught me? BPA, nobody else.

I estimate that virtually 75 percent of Idaho households are served by private electric utilities. It's a historical accident — not because of rate differences — that recent growth has been mostly in the private companies' service areas. So the ratio is up from 70 percent when I went on the Idaho Public Utilities Commission in 1979.

BPA is the wholesale supplier to publicly owned utilities. As it turns out, no BPA power is sold in the Boise area, which is also Idaho's media center. Idahoans therefore get far too little information about the biggest player in the Northwest's energy supply.

But BPA was on all our front pages in the run-up to congressional passage of the Northwest Power and Conservation Act in 1980. Electric rates were rising as new coal plants — expensive compared to hydroelectricity — were built. Both private and BPA forecasters warned of a power shortage.

BPA headquarters are in Portland. In league with private utilities in Oregon and Washington (two of them serving most of northern Idaho), BPA and its customer utilities were pushing for construction of five

mammoth nuclear power plants. Although only one was ever completed — at many times the original estimated cost — that arrogant and unrealistic venture added billions to the regional power bill.

Not surprisingly, the political heat hit the messengers, the regulatory commissioners who pass costs on to the people. Our Idaho commission was the first to notify the private utilities that no more costs for those stymied nuclear plants could be booked, and then worked with the utilities to start energy conservation programs. And to buy industrially co-generated and non-utility small hydro output in place of erecting more giant power plants.

BPA still stiff-arms "co-gen." In carrying out the conservation mandate in that Northwest power act, BPA does it in a way that still creates new and unnecessary electric load. More and bigger is the BPA goal. Cost and environment are a distant second and third.

The glaring example here in Idaho: Since our current housing and population surge began in 1987, approximately 85 percent of the new housing is heated by natural gas. That's because high-tech gas furnaces recover well over 90 percent of the energy in methane. Before gas furnaces were high-tech, only 60 some percent of the energy was recovered. But in Idaho Falls, fewer than 20 percent of the new homes use gas. In Boise, 96 percent do.

Why? With a municipal power system, Idaho Falls is a preference customer of BPA. And BPA shells out big bucks to developers and individual home builders to get them to install electric heat.

When our boom started, BPA would pay \$2,800 if the new home met its insulation and weatherization standards. In temperate Portland, such incentives are important; double-glazed windows and R-39 insulation are a novelty. But Idaho Falls is sub-arctic compared to Portland. You couldn't sell a new house in Idaho Falls that ignored the buyer's heating bill.

As the incentive payment was massaged down to \$1,900, I thought BPA might finally be cleaning up its act. But now it has a new set of standards and proposals. If they are met, BPA would contribute another \$2,000 for the erection of the all-electric home.

Nearly \$4,000 to acquire another electric heating customer? I hope the region's power council, which in theory has some say over BPA policy, shoots that down. I'm not counting on it.

With scant new exploration, because of a prolonged glut, known national gas reserves extend out 60 years. As always, BPA makes no sense. ■

Perry Swisher is a former Idaho state legislator, Public Utilities Commissioner and newspaper editor. He lives in Boise, Idaho.

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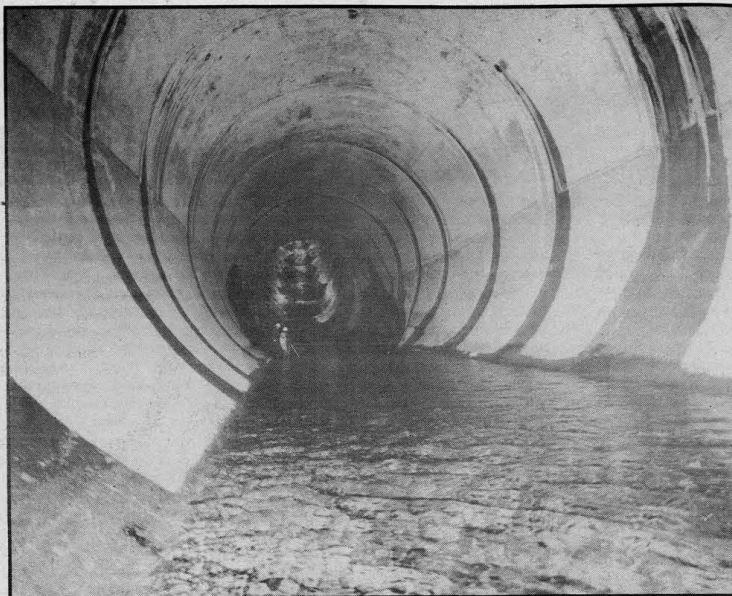
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Bureau of Reclamation/Tom Fridmann

On August 9, 1983, within the left spillway tunnel of Glen Canyon Dam, workers assess damage from weeks of heavy spring runoff. Water pounding through the two spillways came close to destroying the dam.

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Wolf recovery needs our help

Essay by Renée Askins

Since the announcement on March 18 that the large canid shot last September just south of the Yellowstone National Park boundary was indeed a wolf, many people have lost track of the real goal of wolf recovery efforts — a “recovered” population of wolves for Yellowstone National Park.

“Recovered” means enough animals to ensure the long-term survival of the population. This means a large enough population to provide sufficient genetic diversity to prevent negative inbreeding effects over time and a large enough population to survive natural and human-induced mortality. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined this would require 10 breeding pairs of wolves. One wolf, a dead wolf, is a far howl from wolf recovery.

Despite this, the dead wolf has altered many people’s perception of the value of wolf reintroduction. Some opponents are indeed delighted with the dead wolf, and not just because it is dead.

The dead wolf, they assert, demonstrates that a process of natural recolonization is under way, and all this reintroduction nonsense can stop.

With a wink they say to each other, “Natural recolonization has worked just great for 50 years!” Meaning they can shoot, shovel, and shut up faster than *Canis lupus* can disperse to Yellowstone.

So opponents are claiming that wolves are already in Yellowstone and thus we should abandon reintroduction and endorse natural recolonization (i.e., wolves migrating to Yellowstone on their own) as a means of recovery. What’s going on here? Have wolf opponents become wolf protectors overnight?

No. What people now face is a cunning strategy that is intended to further confuse and divide an already confused and divided public.

The opposition has created a fog of misinformation to stall, subvert, and sabotage the Endangered Species Act, the Gray Wolf EIS, and the goal of wolf recovery. In the midst of opponents’ claims, rhetoric, and perhaps well-meaning (if misguided) biology, the public is distracted from the central question: What will produce a recovered population of wolves in Yellowstone?

Let’s look at the facts objectively now: There is no



Michelle Mara

question that single wolves or wolf hybrids, perhaps even pairs of wolves, have been present in the Yellowstone region over the last 50 years. Some may have been released pets, some may have migrated naturally. Wolves can disperse over great distances. However, given the rudimentary facts of wolf ecology and behav-

ior, it is absurd to assume that a population of wolves could survive undetected in the Yellowstone region.

Wolves are large canids; they leave large tracks, large scat, and extensive scent marks. Their howls carry a considerable distance. Wolves are territorial and their use of these territories is predictable. Wolves kill large ungulates (hooved animals) to survive, especially in the winter, and kill sites are very visible. Furthermore, ungulates are concentrated during the winter months, and Wyoming thoroughly monitors its ungulate population.

In short, wolf presence would be obvious.

People have taken the dead wolf as evidence that wolves can recolonize Yellowstone without our assistance. Natural recolonization may sound almost automatic, but it offers, at best, a drawn-out and highly uncertain way to bring back the wolf.

After 14 years, fewer than 50 wolves have reached Montana from Canada, even though healthy wolf populations exist fairly close to the Canadian border.

By comparison, Yellowstone is separated from northern Montana by 300 miles of major highways and heavily developed agricultural lands. In addition, biologists working with the Montana wolves have determined that that population remains extremely vulnerable.

If we wait long enough, wolves possibly could make it to Yellowstone. And if enough of them survive the bullets, poison, traps and cars on the way, then, once in the region, they might engender a viable population. How long would it take for Montana’s small, harassed, vulnerable population to disperse into a permanent and stable wolf population for Yellowstone, 300 miles away?

Some biologists say up to 30 years, some say 50 years, some say never.

Let’s recognize this situation for what it is — another ploy by opponents to sabotage wolf recovery. If we do nothing, we may very well end up with no reintroduction, no natural recolonization, and ... no wolves.

We owe it to the wolves, to our home, and to ourselves to act now. ■

Renée Askins is director of The Wolf Fund, Box 471, Moose, WY 83012. Her essay first appeared in the *Jackson Hole News*.

LETTERS

MAKE GROWTH PAY ITS WAGE

Dear HCN,

Your issue of April 5 dealt in detail with the problems of small Western towns that are being ravished by big-time developers, who are generally from out of state. There is one argument that protectionists can use that the developers are reluctant to oppose. Don’t come out opposing growth. Instead, one should insist that the growth pay for itself.

For example, it costs around \$10,000 per pupil to construct a new school. In new subdivisions, the number of new pupils per home is probably in the range between .5 and 1. So for every new home, taxpayers of the school district must pay school construction costs of between \$5,000 and \$10,000.

Electric utilities plan for about 1,000 watts of electric generating capacity per person, and it costs around \$150 per watt to purchase new electric generators. Thus each new person requires the electric utility to pay somewhere around \$1,500 just to purchase the electric generating capacity needed by that person. This cost, and the other costs associated

with enlarging the utility distribution system, must be paid for by the ratepayers. If the population of the service area of an electric utility increases by 2 percent, then every person in that service area must pay extra charges of 2 percent of \$1,500, or \$30.

There are many other areas where it can be shown that growth does not pay for itself. One proof of this came many years ago when I was talking with a legislator. At one point he said, “Al, we could not stop Boulder’s growth if we wanted to!” I agreed and said, “Then let’s tax the growth so that it pays for itself!”

He fairly shouted, “You can’t do that, you’d slow down our growth!”

**Albert A. Bartlett
Boulder, Colorado**

WESTERN SENATORS WERE RIGHT

Dear HCN,

Despite the alarm in the environ-

mental community (*HCN*, 4/19/93), I believe Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell and other Western Democratic senators were right in persuading President Clinton to defer grazing and other reforms until Congress and the administration can look at the specifics later this year.

Establishing a “fair market value” for federal grazing fees is not that easy. Federal grazing permits can involve different requirements and conditions

than private land leases, and forage values are inconsistent from region to region. That is why numerous agency and congressional studies over the years have come up with widely varying options (and price levels) for setting a “market value” fee.

Setting fees must also be done carefully to avoid fee levels which could drive good land stewards out of business. In the final analysis, a political solution is likely. Items reportedly being considered as part of such a solution include phasing in fee increases to lessen hard-

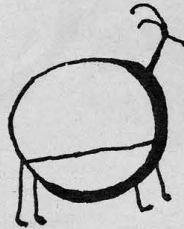
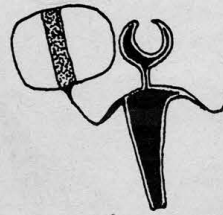
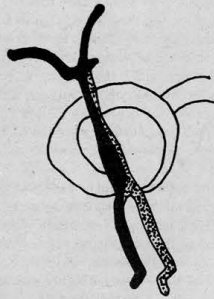
ship on permittees, granting a reduced fee to smaller ranchers or those whose primary income derives from ranching, providing fee breaks for permittees who take good care of the land, and averaging forage values to make a formula simpler.

Imposing arbitrary levels for gross federal grazing receipts in the budget process is a “cart before the horse” approach which could severely limit Congress and the president’s flexibility to utilize some or all of these tools to achieve fairness.

Environmental groups need not despair, however, because the handwriting on fee increases is on the wall. House of Representatives’ attempts to increase the fee in recent years have only narrowly been thwarted by Presidents Reagan and Bush, coupled with Western senators’ filibuster threats. If Western senators do not negotiate in earnest this time around, however, Clinton and Babbitt have full legal authority to *unilaterally* impose any fee level they wish. It should also be noted that Babbitt’s Interior Department is now loaded with political appointees at all levels who believe that some type of grazing fee increase is long overdue.

**Andy Wiessner
Denver, Colorado**

**Coming June 14:
Readers react to the HCN
special issue on Denver.**



Serena Supplee

Opinion by Debra Thunder

Local custom and culture. That phrase has become a mantra for county governments in Western states seeking to exert joint control over federal land and resource decisions.

Wyoming attorney Karen Budd is a leader of the local custom and culture movement sweeping Western states. She argues that counties can wield additional power over federal resource agency decisions by defining their local custom and culture, and claiming for it the protection of federal law.

The federal government would thus have to give more recognition and protection to existing land uses important to the economy of ranching communities — things like grazing, timbering and mining.

County governments in at least six states have jumped on Budd's bandwagon by passing resolutions and land-use plans to make county economic concerns a priority in federal land management. Environmentalists and others say the county mandates attempt to weaken federal laws that protect land, resources and animals.

Central to Budd's untested proposition is the idea that grazing permits are "intangible" property of the permittee. Reducing the number of livestock on federal lands reduces the value of a ranch and amounts to an unconstitutional "taking" of property, supporters of local custom and culture tenets say.

Budd has also told county officials in Wyoming that local custom and culture is too important to be left to "the federal agencies to define it as Indians and dinosaur bones."

*** Indians and dinosaur bones?**

Normally, I would dismiss such talk, but Budd is a self-described "fifth-generation rancher." And here in Wyoming, fifth-generation ranchers are the closest thing we have to royalty, except for U.S. Sen. Malcolm Wallop, who's related to the Queen.

At first, I thought references to "Indians and dinosaurs" was a way for Budd to play to the sense of entitlement that many whites feel — the same sense of entitlement that brought floods of homesteaders to Indian homelands and reservations, where they claimed tribal resources in the name of God and civilization.

But the Uintah County commissioners in Vernal, Utah, told me the settlers were innocent.

"The government forced the tribes onto reservations, not the settlers," they wrote in response to a recent column I wrote for the *Salt Lake Tribune*.

Moreover, they continued, Indians should now join forces with the descendants of those who forced us off the land.

"If the predominant economic base of the county is timber, oil, gas, mining and grazing, then that is also your predominant custom and culture that you better be willing to defend whether you like it or not," the Uintah County commissioners wrote.

I hope they tell the Bureau of Indian Affairs that

Cowboys ain't Indians; buffalo ain't cows

I'm not a member of the Northern Arapaho Tribe after all. I'm really an enrolled rancher.

Walter Echo-Hawk, a leading Indian attorney, said he would "dispute the notion" that ranchers in the West could be the dominant culture, as Budd and others say.

The Native American Rights Fund staff attorney told the *Casper Star-Tribune*, "The ranchers haven't been here in the American West long enough to establish a set of cultures or customs within the meaning of federal laws that are intended to protect culture.

"Furthermore, the grazing and timbering special interests are being rapidly supplanted by changing American values — environmental and recreational. So it's impossible to say what local culture (in the West) may be, because it's in a period of rapid social change," said Echo-Hawk, who belongs to the Pawnee Tribe.

In Wyoming, a majority of people — three out of five — are not native to the state, according to the 1990 census. My home county — Fremont County, Wyo., which includes much of the Wind River Indian Reservation within its boundaries — in 1990 began the process of codifying local custom and culture laws.

Fremont County Commissioners link "custom, culture and economic well-being." But nowhere do they define "local custom and culture" or its link to economic well-being.

By describing local custom and culture in purely economic terms, the movement's proponents preclude the West's numerous, but poverty-stricken Indian tribes. For example, Fremont County has the largest ranching population in Wyoming — 1,862 of the county's 33,632 residents, according to 1990 census data. Even so, the county's 6,222 Indians greatly outnumber ranchers.

If Fremont County officials are elected to represent all citizens, how can they justify giving priority to the economic concerns of certain special-interest groups while most Shoshone and Arapaho people suffer desperate poverty?

And in a county where the resident Indian tribes have unique languages and political, religious, social and judicial systems, what special characteristics give an occupation like ranching status as a culture?

If many Indian people have sacrificed their lives to perpetuate tribal cultures, how can a culture's value be reduced to dollars and cents?

Even in counties where there are few minorities and where ranching, mining and timbering are economic mainstays, there may be disputes between those special-interest groups. For example, in Campbell County, Wyo., ranchers are fighting with coal companies over mining's effect on groundwater.

These questions point to a major weakness in the theory of local custom and culture — the West is not the romanticized, homogeneous world imagined by Budd and others.

Another letter writer chided me for not understanding the plight of distressed special-interest groups in the West. Imagining a revisionist's camaraderie with tribal people, the gentleman wrote: "The rancher, miner and the logger are now the Indian, and the federal government is trying to remove them from the land."

Sorry, but cowboys ain't Indians, and cow ain't buffalo. If supposed similarities are so evident, why were Indians and buffalo either destroyed or herded onto reservations and national parks to make way for cowboys and cows? It is because they represented a way of life and a culture that could not be tolerated.

And still today, the powerful agriculture, timber and mining industries are subsidized by the federal government, and favored by federal policies and Western states' legal and political systems, often at the expense of Indian tribes.

Federal, state and county governments continue to trample tribal cultural and spiritual beliefs when the economic interests of ranching, mining and logging communities are considered to be threatened.

For example, my tribe's reservation has been reduced several times by the federal government — once for gold miners at South

Pass, another time for homesteaders who gained title to the land, but not the water they used. Sacred sites like the Black Hills, the Medicine Wheel and Devils Tower are threatened by timbering and tourism.

The state of Wyoming violates our cultural beliefs and ignores our U.S. Supreme Court-affirmed priority water rights by allowing non-Indians to drain the Wind River dry during irrigation season. Instead of becoming infuriated at this blatant "taking" of tribal property and violations of our "custom and culture," the Fremont County Commissioners sided with the non-Indian irrigators.

Sacred things continue to be sacrificed on the altar of consumerism — prayers, words, ceremonies, the land, sky and water, and nations of people, birds, fish, animals and plants.

How, I wonder, can a nation that claimed this sacred and beautiful land in the name of God love the Creator, but not the creation? How can a "culture" survive when its very existence is defined by the consumption of the finite resources that give it identity? ■

An earlier version of this article appeared in the *Salt Lake Tribune*. Debra Thunder is a reporter for the *Casper Star-Tribune*.