

Ventana Wilderness Watch

Ventana Wilderness Alliance www.ventanawild.org

Volume 4 Number 3 Fall 2003

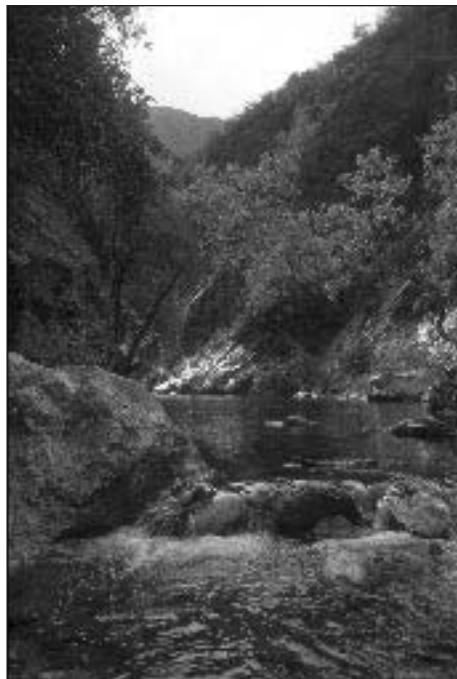
Ventana Wild River Campaign Launched

Support Needed

Hidden within the wild back-country of the northern Santa Lucia Mountains and along Monterey County's spectacular Big Sur coast, are a hand full of free flowing rivers and streams that retain the same wilderness character enjoyed by the native Salinan and Esselen peoples centuries ago. These rivers should be preserved in their wild free-flowing state because they provide clean water, recreation opportunities, scenic enjoyment, cultural resources, and are essential for the survival of countless species of native plants and animals.

Unfortunately, these free-flowing rivers remain at risk of being degraded with dams, diversions and other developments to serve our ever growing population. Only one local river, the Big Sur River, is fully protected with both federal Wilderness designation and by inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System. However, other local wild and free-flowing rivers, even those within federal Wilderness

Areas, are at risk of development because they are not part of the National Wild and Scenic River System. Such rivers can be dammed and developed by Presidential Executive Order. One only needs to consider the Bush



Arroyo Seco River by Jim Rose

administration's record of systematically dismantling 35 years of environmental preservation to understand that our local unprotected rivers are at risk.

To protect these rivers and streams, the Ventana Wilderness Alliance has teamed up with the Ventana Chapter of the Sierra Club and Friends of the River to launch the Ventana Wild Rivers Campaign. The initial effort of the campaign is to increase local awareness and to ask the public to communicate their support for the protection of these remaining free-flowing rivers. To facilitate this communication a reply email box is available on the VWA web site. Please take a minute and visit: www.ventanawild.org/projects/rivers/ and send your email in support of the Ventana Wild Rivers Campaign. These emails, along with similarly worded petitions, and post cards will be presented to our local elected representatives as the campaign unfolds. So send your email today to help save our wild rivers. 🌲

Grazing EA's Expected Soon

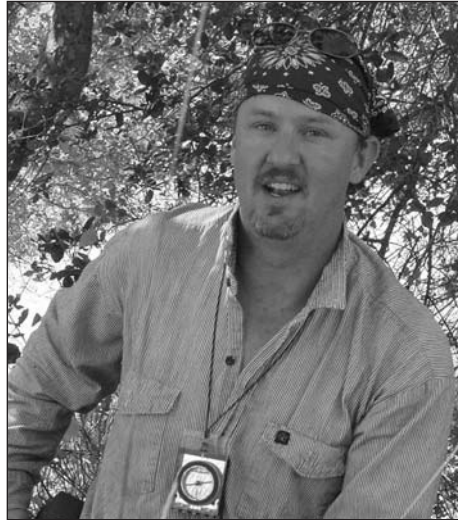
Begun by the Forest Service in the Summer of 1999, the long process of preparing, issuing, retracting, and re-preparing the Environmental Analyses for the 8 Big Sur coastal grazing allotments (Torre, Twitchell, Gorda, Alder Creek, Buckeye, Salmon Creek, Rocky Cove and San Carpoforo) is slowly moving forward. The latest word from the FS is that the new and improved coastal grazing allotment EAs will

be released for public comment by the end of the calendar year, and the VWA Grazing Committee looks forward to an in depth review of the new documents as well as offering up some commentary from the public's point of view. Anyone interested in the effects of commercial cattle grazing on the public lands of the Big Sur coast is encouraged to get involved. Contact Boon Hughey at boon@ventanawild.org. 🌲

VWA Volunteer Profile

Webmaster Phil Williamson

Now residing in the Puget Sound area of Washington, Phil spent nearly two decades in close touch with the northern Santa Lucia. He first became involved with the VWA early on as one of the founding editors of the Double Cone Quarterly, and has since expanded his involvement to include responsibility for the entire VWA website through his professional business, Zigzag Creek Web Works. Phil was in town for a week just last month, and we caught up to him in Lost Valley for a little Q&A.



VWW: When was your first visit to the Ventana, Phil?

PW: Family camping trips to Arroyo Seco and the Wagon Caves area when I was a child - my earliest memories of these trips date back to when I was 8 years old or so, right around the early 1970s. I didn't take my first backpacking trip here until I was in college, probably about 1981 or '82. I went from Bottchers Gap to Little Pines. After that, I was all over the northern section of the wilderness for years.

VWW: Any areas of the Ventana that you call favorite?

PW: Without doubt my favorite areas now are in the southern part of the wilderness - the area bounded by Arroyo Seco, Lost Valley/Indian Valley, and the Marble Peak trail in particular. I have a real soft spot for Vicente Flat and the Stone Ridge trail as well.

VWW: Where do you spend your trail time now, up in Washington?

PW: Although I hate no longer being within driving distance of the Ventana, I'm fortunate to live in an area - Central Whidbey Island, Washington - with a number of

State parks with ample dayhiking trails nearby. I'm particularly fond of the Bluff Trail at Ebey's Landing SP, only 5 minutes drive from where I live - sweeping views encompassing Seattle and Mt. Rainier to the south, Vancouver Island to the north, and Puget Sound and the Olympic mountains to the west. On occasion from this trail I've seen orcas plying up and down Admiralty inlet and bald eagles swooping down to grab fish. Not too bad!

For backpacking, I love the trails in the Olympic mountains. Next year I plan to do a big chunk of the 50-mile coastal trail that runs down the Pacific beaches of the Olympic Peninsula.

I have to say, though, that beautiful as this area is, it has little of the magic of the northern Santa Lucia and Big Sur. And I really miss the fragrance of sage and bay and yerba santa which to me is the signature of the Ventana.

VWW: Being a professional webmaster now, why do you feel a website is important to a non-profit such as the VWA?

PW: The web has become the universal medium for information exchange and any organization with a message to get out is cheating

itself if it doesn't establish a strong web presence. This is especially true for nonprofits, and perhaps for conservation nonprofits in particular. The nature of web communication not only allows organizations with limited financial resources to get their message out and distribute and share information widely for a small investment, it also gives rise to organic "virtual communities" of like-minded organizations and individuals which, by linking to one another's web pages, create ever-expanding networks of related information which not only increase the visibility of individual organizations, but

continued ⇨

Ventana Wilderness Alliance

Post Office Box 506
Santa Cruz, CA 95061
Phone/fax 831.423.3191
Email: vwa@ventanawild.org

Officers:

President, Jon Libby
jon@ventanawild.org

Vice President, Gordon Johnson
gordon@ventanawild.org

Secretary, Boon Hughey
boon@ventanawild.org

Treasurer, Tom Hopkins,
tom@ventanawild.org

Board members at large:

Nikki Nedeff,
nikki@ventanawild.org

Kelsey Jordahl,
kelsey@ventanawild.org

The Ventana Wilderness Alliance is an IRS 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. Dues and donations are tax deductible.

Newsletter Production:

Design, Chad Jordahl
Printing, Pilot Printing,
Santa Cruz, CA

⇒ Volunteer Profile

increase the impact and reach of the conservation and environmental movement as a whole. The web, by empowering individuals and small organizations to operate on a level playing field with big-money national organizations, has given new impetus to environmental activism at all levels. The VWA is a good example of this.

VWV: So what is it about the VWA that brings out the volunteer in you?

PW: Well, there's a lot to like - I could talk about the VWA's achievements in protecting one of the most beautiful places on Earth, of course, for which the folks who do the hard work of

conservation activism (as opposed to sitting in front of a computer monitor struggling with code) have all my respect and admiration; I could talk about all the activities and services the VWA offers its members and the community at large - trailwork trips, archeological site stewardship, etc. etc. - but I think what I like best about the VWA is that it's composed of some of the coolest, smartest, biggest-hearted and most committed people around - I'm proud to be associated with such a fantastic bunch of folks!

Oh, and I really like the t-shirts, too.

VWV: Anything about the VWA website you'd like to share with us?

PW: The VWA website is an ongoing project, continually being fine-tuned and expanded. I'm always happy - nay, thrilled - to receive communication from people about the site, whether it's a bug report, a suggestion for new content or improved usability, or whatever. I spend a good deal of time with the website, tweaking it, updating it, tracking performance, etc. - but I have no way of knowing how people like it, or what they'd like to see added or changed or taken out, unless they tell me. So don't hesitate to give me feedback - I can always be reached at phil@ventanawild.org or webmaster@ventanawild.org.

VWV: Thanks, Phil. As always, we appreciate your time. 🏡

Strategic Planning Grant Received

VWA Thinking Ahead

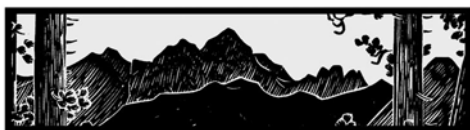
This Fall, the Resources Legacy Fund Foundation awarded the VWA a \$13,600 grant to support the development of a Strategic Plan that will chart our growth, prioritize projects, and identify future opportunities. The grant also earmarks funding for Board training to strengthen organizational and program activities. The VWA plans to hire a professional facilitator to help guide the Board through a planning effort that identifies our organization's strengths, weaknesses and needs. A five-year plan will be developed to guarantee the continuity of our organization's tremendous success in safeguarding public wilderness resources.

Last Spring, the VWA Board conducted a day-long "Project Planning" session with dedicated volunteer Terry Hallock. Terry's professional expertise as a meeting facilitator allowed the Board to brainstorm in a constructive way about the many diverse issues affecting public lands in the northern Santa Lucia Mountains. It became clear during this initial "Project Planning" meeting that the VWA needed to become more focused on organizational development issues like fundraising, outreach, staffing and communications. The Board realized there's an awful lot of work to do in the northern Santa Lucia Mountains, as well as in neighboring, underserved public lands where wilderness values are being compromised. The all-volunteer VWA Board of Directors has so far provided adequate leadership and governance, however we realized that the effectiveness of the VWA in protecting public resources could be increased with careful planning and capacity building.

A funding proposal was developed and forwarded to the Sacramento-based Resources Legacy Fund Foundation (RLFF), which promotes land conservation and environmental protection. The RLFF awarded the VWA a grant from their "Preserving Wild California" program to develop a 5-year strategic plan and build our effectiveness as a regional public lands advocacy group. The first strategic planning session is proposed for this coming Spring, so stay tuned for more information about this exciting new VWA project. 🏡

VWA Vice President Receives Award from Farr & Boxer

Ventana Wilderness Alliance founder and vice president Gordon Johnson was recently presented with a signed copy of the Big Sur Wilderness and Conservation Act for his vision and tireless work which was instrumental in getting this legislation developed and passed. Senator Boxer and Congressman Farr presented Gordon with the award at the California Wilderness Coalition's annual award ceremony in San Francisco on November 6. The CWC presented Boxer and Farr with the inaugural Philip Burton award for their work enacting this important legislation. The reception was attended by many VWA members and other wilderness activists from around the state. 🏡



Ventana Wilderness Alliance

Post Office Box 506

Santa Cruz, CA 95061

Address Service Requested

www.ventanawild.org



Ventana Wilderness Alliance

Don't Miss the
Double Cone Quarterly

VWA's quarterly on-line journal is due out on the Winter Solstice. Take a look at it, and all past issues, on our website.

Trailwork reports/updates.

The all-volunteer VWA Trail Crew made three work trips into the wilderness this fall, with Vince Manning leading an energetic crew on the Little Sur Trail in honor of National Public Lands Day and Mike Heard leading two productive trips onto the Vicente Flat Trail and Stone Ridge Trail in the Cone Peak area. More trips are in the works for the rainless weekends this winter, including a new project in cooperation with the US Forest Service to rebuild the Buckeye Trail between Buckeye Camp and the Cruikshank environs in the beautiful Silver Peak Wilderness. This very picturesque and historic trail was once the main access route to the Los Burros goldfields from the south, but has been deteriorating ever since the Buckeye Fire of 1970. Anyone interested in volunteering for this endeavor either as day trips or overnights at Buckeye Flat should get in touch with Boon Hughey at boon@ventanawild.org. 🏠