



Ventana Wilderness Watch

Ventana Wilderness Alliance www.ventanawild.org

Volume 5 Number 2 Summer 2004

Draft Forest Plan Published

Little Sur River needs your help!

The Forest Service has published their Draft Land Management Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Los Padres National Forest and three other southern California forests. The final forest plan, when it is issued, will guide management of the four forests for the next decade and beyond. The complete text of the draft documents is available for public comment at the USDA Forest Service forest plan revision website (<http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/scfpr>).

The forest plan is a broad document that provides a framework for future project-level management. It makes recommendations for land use designations, special management areas, and Wild and Scenic River designation. Some of these recommendations, including new Wilderness and Wild and Scenic River designations, would require an act of Congress to implement.

The forest service's preferred action is to implement Alternative 4, which emphasizes recreation. The strongest conservation option considered was Alternative 6, based on a Conservation Alternative submitted by a coalition of advocacy groups including the Ventana Wilderness Alliance. Alternative 6 would set biological diversity and the health of the ecosystem as primary goals, and manage other uses of the forests to minimize negative impact on the environment.

On issues specific to the Monterey Ranger District, the

draft forest plan recommends Wild & Scenic River status for the Arroyo Seco River, and against Wild and Scenic designation for the North Fork of the Little Sur and San Antonio Rivers. The upper Carmel River and the South Fork Little Sur, which had



The North Fork of the Little Sur River

previously been considered eligible, were not considered for suitability at this time. It also proposes a 9,948 acre Milpitas Special Interest Area (including the Indians) and two Research Natural Areas, Ventana Cones and Valley Oaks (near the Indians adjacent to Fort Hunter Liggett). These would join the existing Cone Peak Gradient Research Natural Area and Alder Creek, Lion Den Spring and Southern Redwoods Special Interest Areas. There are no new recommendations for wilderness designation in the Monterey Ranger District, though a number of Wilderness additions are recommended in other districts of the Los Padres National Forest.

The failure of the forest service to recommend the Little Sur River for Wild and Scenic status is particularly disappointing.

The Little Sur has unique scenic, wildlife, geological and botanical values that qualify it for designation. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement issued with the draft forest plan documents find only the Dudley's Lousewort as an

Continued ⇨

One Giant Step Closer

Strategic Planning Effort Moves Forward

Over the June 12-13, 2004 weekend, the VWA Board of Directors met with consultant Amy O'Connor for a Strategic Planning retreat in downtown Monterey. Amy is a nationally recognized consultant who works with non-profit groups throughout the country to increase their organizational strength and effectiveness. The Strategic Planning program was initiated with help from a grant received in Fall 2003.

Amy facilitated two days of intensive discussion about the growth of our organization and helped us identify our strengths, weaknesses and needs. It was pretty clear after the weekend sessions that the VWA has been incredibly effective as a young, start-up organiza-

tion, but that we may need some help as we move into "adolescence". The Board recognized that to continue the VWA's success in safeguarding public Wilderness resources in the northern Santa Lucia Range, we need to upgrade our outreach, membership development and fund raising programs. There is a lot of Wilderness work still to do, both in our local ranger district AND in nearby areas where wilderness values are being compromised! The VWA Board identified many opportunities for building the organization into a self-sustaining public lands advocacy group and we hope to share this vision with you in the coming months. 🏠

Stay tuned.

Willow Creek Cleanup Makes Progress

Volunteers Still Needed

Through mid-June, 24 individual VWA members have contributed over 360 hours working in the new Willow Creek addition to the Silver Peak Wilderness Area cleaning up trash and machinery from abandoned mining claims. Over 150 back pack loads are now stockpiled for removal from the wilderness at the end of July.

Following a two year Forest Service permit process, the project got underway in April with VWA members clearing existing use trails to access the project area. Then, fifteen compressed gas cylinders were packed into the project area and used by two volunteer welders to cut old machinery to sizes that could be removed from the wil-

derness on back packs. On follow up outings, VWA members have moved these loads to a staging area, filled over 100 bags of loose trash and tested a Tyrolean traverse that will bring much of the trash and machinery across Willow Creek for the final removal from the new Wilderness Area.

Volunteers are still needed for outings scheduled for June 26-27, July 10-11 and for the final outing to pack the material out of the wilderness July 30- August 1. If you would like to volunteer and be part of this remarkable and important project, please contact Tom Hopkins at tom@ventanawild.org or 831-429-9010. 🏔️



Kenny at the torch

VWA Annual Gathering

On a beautiful Sunday afternoon in early May a large group of VWA members and supporters convened at the Garland Ranch Regional Park for the VWA annual gathering. Thanks to the generosity and wonderful cooking skills of Nikki Nedeff's husband, Kevin, everyone was well fed and ready for a wonderful afternoon with

special guest speaker, Sara Barth, Western Regional Director of the Wilderness Society and formerly aide to Senator Barbara Boxer. Sara shared with us her experiences with Senator Boxer, particularly the passage of the Big Sur Wilderness Act of 2002. Other activities included hiking, silent auction and wilderness slide show.



Chef Kevin at the grill

Ventana Wilderness Alliance

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

Newsletter Production

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Santa Cruz, CA

Call for Volunteers, Donations

The VWA can always use more help. Currently we are in need of:

- People who can table at events like Farmer's Markets and at trailheads.
- Someone on the Monterey Peninsula who has some space to store the VWA display.
- Donation of a canopy to cover the display and volunteers at events.

Contact: kelsey@ventanawild.org

Adventure Pass No Longer Required on Monterey Ranger District

In response to public pressure the USFS no longer requires that users of the Monterey Ranger District, which includes the Ventana and Silver Peak wilderness areas, display an "Adventure Pass" when parked at trailheads.

More info: www.ventanawild.org/news/adpassnews.html

VWA Trail Crew

Since January 1, 2004, 28 members of the all-volunteer VWA Trail Crew have contributed 625 hours of pleasantly exhausting and delightfully rewarding work toward keeping the trails of the Ventana and Silver Peak Wilderness Areas safe and clear.

People who have lately traveled the upper Pine Ridge Trail, the Gamboa Trail, the Black Cone Trail or the Buckeye Trail have enjoyed the results of the crew's recent efforts. But brush never sleeps, and in the wake of the 1999 fires dead trees are coming down across Wilderness trails faster than they can be counted. There's still

lots of work to do, and will be for years to come. But for all the ardent members of the VWA Trail Crew, this means volunteer job security!

We're up to the task, although we could always use (and would certainly welcome) more help. We hope you'll come join us on a trailwork trip this fall when the weather cools a little, and experience for yourself just how much fun we have (and how well we eat!) while doing our part for the Wilderness trail system.

For more information -
boon@ventanawild.org. 🏠



Trail crew members Dave Knapp, Mike Heard and Art Simon clearing deadfalls on the upper Gamboa Trail. Photo by Robert Parks.

Mark Your Calendar 📅

Brazil Ranch Gathering

Thanks to the generosity of the Forest Service the VWA is planning a special fall gathering at the Brazil Ranch (aka Funt Ranch or Bixby Ocean Ranch) on the Big Sur coast on Saturday, October 30. This will be a special opportunity for VWA members to visit and hike on this beautiful ranch. The details are still being ironed out but every indication is that this event will be very special.

Chuck Haugen Conservation Committee Picnic

The VWA will have our display set up at the Chuck Haugen picnic on Sunday July 18 somewhere on Fort Ord. No details are available at press time but will be forthcoming on the website calendar and via the VWA Listserv.

VWA Speakers Now Available

Several VWA board members have developed a Power Point slide show and talk about the VWA program for the continuing preservation of the northern Santa Lucia Mountains. If you are active in other groups that would like to have the slide show and talk presented at a membership meeting, please contact Kelsey Jordahl at kelsey@ventanawild.org or 831-646-3157.

⇒ Forest Plan

Outstandingly Remarkable Value of the North Fork of the Little Sur. Dudley's Lousewort is an uncommon riparian species of which the largest known population, consisting of over half of the estimated number of individual plants of the species in existence, occurs on the Little Sur River. The Little Sur River is also the premier habitat for the threatened Central Coast steelhead.

The headwaters of the Little Sur originate in the very heart of the Ventana Wilderness, and drain the north slope of the Window, the famous notch in the ridge near Ventana Double Cone from which the entire wilderness derives its name ("Ventana" is Spanish for "window", and legend has it that the Window was once topped by a rock arch). The two forks of the Little Sur River straddle the massive limestone mountain Pico Blanco, one of the most distinctive topo-

graphic and geologic features on the Big Sur coast.

The 90-day public comment period on the draft land management plan began May 14 and runs through August 11. Comments may be made online at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/scfpr> or by mail to:

*Southern California Forest Plan Revisions
Los Padres National Forest
USDA Forest Service
Content Analysis Center
P.O. Box 22777
Salt Lake City, UT 84122*

Sending a copy of your comments to the VWA helps us keep track of the support from our membership. Send a copy by email to kelsey@ventanawild.org or by mail to PO Box 506, Santa Cruz, CA 95061.

More information on the VWA's positions and comments on the forest plan revision process may be found at <http://www.ventanawild.org/projects/forplan/>. 🏠

- Action Items -

▶ Thank the USFS for their recommendation for Wild & Scenic status for the Arroyo Seco River. Urge them to recommend Wild designation for the segment between Escondido Camp and the Horse Bridge.

▶ Urge the USFS to complete suitability studies and make recommendations for all other eligible streams in the final forest plans, as required by law, agency guidelines, and initial SoCal Forests planning direction. These include the upper Carmel River and Tassajara Creek.

▶ Ask the USFS to study the eligibility of the other rivers that have been nominated by the public and supported by the VWA, including Willow Creek, the Nacimiento River, and San Carpoforo Creek.

▶ Support eligibility findings and designation recommendations for the Little Sur River (both forks) and San Antonio River.

▶ Support Alternative 6, which provides the strongest protection for rivers and land designations.



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Date	Event
July 10	Willow Creek Cleanup
July 18	Chuck Haugen Picnic
July 31	Willow Creek Cleanup
Aug. 7	VWA Board Meeting
Sept. 18	National Public Lands Day
Oct. 30	Brazil Ranch Fall Gathering
See www.ventanawild.org/events for details.	

VWA Listserv

A "must do" to get all VWA announcements

Members in good standing of the Ventana Wilderness Alliance are invited to join a private, yet unmoderated, environment where issues, questions, comments, ideas, and procedures pertaining to the expansion, management and protection of the Ventana and Silver Peak Wilderness Areas, as well as concerns of the northern Santa Lucia Range, are discussed in a forum setting via email. It is oriented towards those who are actively involved with these issues. Additionally, it serves to inform members of Ventana Wilderness Alliance activities. And, it is spam free! 🌲

More details: www.ventanawild.org/vwalist.html
To get on the list email: gordon@ventanawild.org