

CABIN CREEK: Minimum Tool Ignored

In April Wilderness Watch filed an appeal with the Krassel District of the Payette National Forest. Last year the Ranger for this District announced that the Forest Service was considering using some 150 members of the Idaho National Guard, plus a "variety of equipment," to relocate one cabin from Cabin Creek in the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness(FCRNR) to the Taylor Ranch also in the Frank Church. This project was scheduled for 2 weeks in July 1990 and would result in periodic closures of two airstrips while heavy lift helicopters transported the dismantled pieces from Cabin Creek to the Taylor Ranch.

District Ranger, Earl Kimball, issued a "Decision Memo" in February of this year that essentially said there would be no significant impact by allowing the Idaho National Guard to fly into the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness(FCRNR) with electric generators,

Photo: K. D. Swan, courtesy US Forest Service

rough terrain forklifts, chainsaws, and other power tools to dismantle and move to another location within the FCRNR three Forest Service cabins. The decision memo stated that this project fell under the category of routine administrative or maintenance actions.

Wilderness Watch considers any proposed action in Wilderness by a managing agency to be significant, and therefore requiring the minimum NEPA process of an environmental assessment.

Some of the language in the decision memo was striking as it indicates to us that the Forest Service is continuing to pay lip service to the Wilderness concept. The memo talks about "enhancing the Forest Service image;" "(b)y providing additional projects in the area, the Forest is taking advantage of available resources to benefit the Forest users;" "no extraordinary circumstances exist that might cause significant effect;" and "recreation

enhancement." The Forest Service seems to think that the presence of 150 National Guard personnel with their attendant motorized equipment is not particularly unusual in a Wilderness. Nor do they seem to realize that the role of the Forest Service with regards to Wilderness has little to do with providing "projects" for anyone, especially for enhancing the image of the agency. Nowhere do they discuss enhancement of the Wilderness resource.

This same decision memo discussed road improvements on the Smith Creek Road to "provide better access to the users of this road." This road accesses the Wilderness. Providing better access to an already detrimentally impacted resource is absolutely contrary to any understanding of Wilderness management. It appears that the Krassel District is suffering under the myth that it is the Wilderness itself that needs management, not the (ab)users that degrade such a resource.

There were several other smaller projects that would occur on the border of the FCRNR included in the memo. We have appealed all of them because of their potential to have a significant impact on the adjacent Wilderness, and therefore NEPA should be invoked. Furthermore, we feel that the major action proposed on Cabin Creek is in direct violation of the Wilderness Act of 1964. Whatever happened to the minimum tool concept? There was no discussion in the memo of an alternative that would call for burning the cabins, or any other action for that matter. There were, in fact, only two alternatives mentioned: 1) No action; and 2) The proposal cited above.

The relief Wilderness Watch is requesting in this appeal is, quite simply, that the District Ranger's decision be reassessed using the NEPA process with documentation in an EA as a minimum. This would include full public involvement. We were denied at the first level of appeal under the new CFRs and have progressed to the second level. The appeal is now in Regional Forester Stan Tixier's office waiting for a decision. His address is: Intermountain Region 324 25th Street Ogden, Utah 84401.



CANYON CREEK FIRE New Research for an Old Policy

When the phrase "untrammeled by man" is used in defense of wilderness, we generally are targeting an evil such as a badly used trail, an encroaching road, or the thump of a seismic blast. Some research within the Lolo National Forest, however, is pointing toward "damage" to the Bob Marshall Wilderness complex that could greatly escalate the scope of the wilderness debate. To further complicate the issue, this problem is a product of a well-meaning policy that plays to the human bias for live trees.

The bottom line is this: nearly a century's worth of fire suppression in the Northern Rockies has made the "Bob" a very different place. From the time of the retreat of the glaciers until the beginning of this century, the Bob was a sweep of open, grassy hills, about 5 percent timbered, according to a survey completed in 1899. Now the same place is more than 80 percent timbered.

This radical change, however, means far more than just a few more trees. The entire system of plants and animals evolved in a world controlled by fire. Those species now must adapt--- some of them poorly---to a world of trees more suited to the Pacific Northwest.

Ironically, the realization of this situation is growing from fire itself. During the summer of 1988, a massive fire percolated through the Scapegoat Wilderness on the south edge of the "Bob". Finally, as that summer's scorched August burned into September, the fire stood up and roared for Augusta, eventually searing more that 250,000 acres of wilderness.

Jack Losensky, the Lolo Forest's ecologist, has spent the past two years trying to understand the fire's effects on that ecosystem. The evidence he has assembled has shown a fire ecology quite different and even more important than the Forest Scrvice expected when it developed the natural fire policy in the 1980's.

The policy to allow naturally caused fires to burn in wildernesses assumed the result would be gentle with small fires that would gradually reshape the wilderness to the state it enjoyed before Smokey the Bear. The massive Canyon Creek fire, however, undermined those expectations. As a result of that fire and other blazes that same summer in Yellowstone National Park, the Forest Service has begun rewriting the fire policy in the belief that "abnormal" fires such as Canyon Creek have to be prevented. In the meantime, the natural fire policy has been suspended.

What Losensky has been discovering, however, is that fires such as Canyon Creek were indeed normal and occurred about every 40 years throughout the history of that piece of land. His early research showed that many species of plants were thriving in the fire's aftermath, and some rare plants not seen in decades were popping up. "Fire appeared as the

guardian of the area's bio-diversity."

But the most intriguing bit of evidence in the investigation is some old research Losensky uncovered. The 1899 survey was completed by H.B. Ayres in preparation for including what is now the Bob Marshall complex in the system of National Forest Reserves in 1900, before the Forest Service existed. Ayres had walked through the Bob and had prepared a detailed, color-coded map showing the area's vegetation.

The unmistakable conclusion from the survey is the "Bob" was mostly open country. Losensky said Ayres' account of fire scars and subsequent research show that the "Bob" had been open country since the Ice Age.

This research fuels a compelling argument. If we are to honor the spirit of the Wilderness Act, then we ought to do what we can to leave wilderness in a natural state. Given the physical record, "natural" for the "Bob" appears to be the open country left by free-ranging fire.

Left to its own devices, in fact, fire undoubtedly would return the area to that natural state in the matter of a few generations, Losensky said. That however, raises the question of whether the Forest Service is willing to take the political heat a natural fire policy would generate. This is not merely an academic question. The four Forests that manage this particular wilderness complex---the Lolo, Lewis and Clark, Helena,

and Flathead---are at the moment cooperating to write a new fire policy for the area. The review is expected to be completed in the spring.

------Richard Manning



HATS OFF TO DARBY DISTRICT!

We would like to congratulate the Darby Ranger District on the Bitterroot National Forest for filling a long vacant Wilderness Ranger position. The Darby District is responsible for management of some of the most beautiful and rugged areas on the East side of the Bitterroot divide in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. For two years there has been virtually no agency presence in this portion of the Selway-Bitterroot and meanwhile Wilderness Watch members have reported that private parties have been building trails, including chainsaw use, into some of the remote pristine areas of the Wilderness. Hunting camps with permanent structures and caches have also been reported. Hopefully these problems can be eliminated with the welcome return of a Wilderness Ranger on the Darby District.

EMIL KECK A Wilderness Legendary Lost at 77

Emil Keck, died March 23, at the age of 77 three months after a debilitating stroke. He was an institution in Idaho's Selway country, and at one time in the U.S. Forest Service. His passing is no small event to the many people fortunate enough to have heard his stories, or been taught or cussed out by him.

From 1961 to 1988, Emil worked for Moose Creek Ranger District, in the heart of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, living yearround after the mid-1960's at the district's remote headquarters, 25 miles from the nearest road. He started out chasing forest fires, then moved to trail work and bridge building, adhering strictly to the Rube Goldberg credo of the gyppo logger, which he once was. Give him a handwinch and cable and he'd move a 100 foot span of bridge. Make him mad and he'd try to move and agency.

He lectured to district rangers. They listened. He told upper-level Forest Service managers where to go. And they went. In 1975, he and his second wife, Penny, received one of the U.S. Agriculture Department's highest awards for their work on wilderness trails and bridges. Emil went to Washington D.C., attending the ceremony in his everyday work clothes of stagged-off logger jeans and jungle boots. He wasn't impressed by powerful

people.

Although known throughout the Forest Service for his skill at building bridges, he excelled best at motivating people. His leadership, albeit harsh and cranky at times, inspired more than two decades of seasonal workers. Year after year, the same people returned to Moose Creek to work for him and Penny (who still works for the Forest Service at Idaho's Selway Ranger District). He was curious and well-read, and he loved young people, often holding court for hours with groups of young trail workers. He'd sit there, barrel-chested with that characteristic shock of thick gray hair, jawing and cursing among the snatch blocks, cables and beat-up saddles that cluttered his cabin porch. Hikers, rafters, back-country pilots and reporters sought him out when they hit Moose Creek. He loved it. He was the Pope.

If indeed there are pearly gates out there, I'm sure Emil Keck is in front of them right now arguing with the guy who operates them, jabbing the poor soul with that finger and convincing him he couldn't tell a good gate hinge from a side of bacon. At least I hope he

--Bruce Farling



Cache Issue Report

At this time Forest Service Chief Dale Robertson has not issued a final decision on outfitter caches in the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness.(FCRNR) In 1987, Chief Robertson once again failed to stand up for the Wilderness resource, ruling against the management plan and the decision of the forest supervisors and regional foresters of Regions One and Four, former Chief Max Peterson, and against the advice of his Washington staff. He appointed a task force that studied the issue in depth for a year and they recommended no caches for any Wilderness users, including the Idaho outfitters operating in the FCRNR. Seemingly unwilling to rule against commercial operators, he has delayed his final decision on whether Pack it in-Pack it out does apply to all Wilderness users. There have been hundreds of written comments supporting equal treatment for all users submitted to the Chief's office.

But, the Idaho Outfitters and Guides
Association has been applying heavy pressure
in Washington D.C.. They hope to be the first
special exception to the long standing Forest
Service Pack it in-Pack it out policy. Your
card or letter to the Chief can still help protect
the Wilderness Resource. Simply ask the Chief
to apply the Pack it in-Pack it out to
everyone in a similar manner. Address your
comments to:

Mr. F. Dale Robertson Chief US Forest Service Box 96090 Washington D.C. 20090-6090

IDAHO'S PILOTS SUPPORT WILDERNESS: WW Salutes them!

In December of 1986 Senator James
McClure of Idaho ordered the Nez Perce Forest
to open the long closed Shearer Airstrip on the
Moose Creek ranger district in the SelwayBitterroot Wilderness. This airstrip had been
closed for a number of years for safety reasons.
Elk and deer in search of salt had pawed large
holes in the runway creating an unacceptable

safety hazard at an already risky Wilderness airstrip. The order to open the airstrip came while the Selway-Bitterroot Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) task force was just getting under way, and many people felt that Senator McClure had taken the airstrip issue out of their hands. Bobbie Hoe, a member of that task force, filed an appeal contesting the reopening of Shearer Airstrip in the spring of 1987. The concern was that the task force would have no meaning and no force if a senator legislate such an opening without proper analysis or public input. This amounted to an overriding of both NEPA and the LAC. Five Valleys Audubon, from Missoula, Montana, intervened on Bobbie's behalf.

In attempting to solve the appeal without litigation, it was agreed that, among other things, the issue of Wilderness airstrips would be dealt with by a sub-task force of the LAC task force already dealing with the recreational management of the Selway-Bitterroot. sub-task force was made up of the appellants and representatives of the Idaho Pilots Association, Idaho Bureau of Aeronautics, the Moose Creek district ranger, and other interested persons from the main LAC task force. It was an educational experience for all The overriding concern seemed to be parties. what is the purpose of the Wilderness airstrips and one of the recommendations was to educate pilots on the appropriate use of Wilderness airstrips. To that end, two articles were printed in the spring 1990 Idaho Aviation Report. Wilderness Watch is pleased to reprint those two articles, as well as the following comments from Bureau of Aeronautics Chief Bill Miller. But first, Wilderness Watch would like to extend an extra special thanks to Larry Hipler, the Idaho Bureau of Aeronautics representative to the Selway-Bitterroot LAC, for the time and effort he has taken to both educate us and himself on this important topic.

Chief's Brief

by Bill Miller (excerpted)
Wilderness Airfields

Congress has designated a large portion of Idaho as wilderness. Our wilderness features pristine forests, rugged canyons, spectacular peaks, and abundant wildlife. Aviators visiting Idaho's wilderness airfields are very fortunate, because generally, the nation's wilderness areas are for non-motorized use. As public awareness and use of our wilderness

As public awareness and use of our wilderness increases, it is important for aviators to accept and respect other's right to enjoy this precious recreational resource. Many aviators are growing concerned that air access to our wilderness may be restricted or reduced.

Proper use and etiquette is essential if we are to preserve our access.

Wilderness and the Pilot

by Joe Corlett

Aviators visiting Idaho's wilderness airfields are very fortunate, because generally, the nation's wildernesses are for non-motorized use. As public awareness and use of our Wilderness increases, it is important for aviators to accept and respect others' right to enjoy this precious recreational resource. Many aviators are growing concerned that air access to our wilderness may be restricted or reduced.

Proper use and etiquette is essential if we are to preserve our access.

Idaho is blessed with some of the finest backcountry airstrips in the world. While most do not conform to general airport standards, many of them do provide access to one of the most beautiful places on earth, the Idaho Wilderness.

We, as pilots, have an advantage over the many non-pilots with respect to ease of access. We have a responsibility to protect that privilege. There are those who believe that airports are not compatible with the intent of the wilderness, and, as such, should be closed or severely limited.

As a group, we think we can educate our fellow pilots and airport users rather than be victims of unwarranted restrictions or closures. One of the basic tenets we can all agree on is "respect the wilderness." We can reflect on this by thinking what we can do to minimize our presence when we do fly the Wildernesses.

First of all, is the trip really necessary, or could you use one of the nearby non-wilderness airstrips. Time and time again we see practice takeoffs and landings at wilderness airstrips with one pilot making 3-5 landings in one short time period. Why not practice on a

nearby non-wilderness airstrip for pilot proficiency. Then do an actual landing at the wilderness airstrip for familiarization and ultimate checkout at that airstrip. You will then have reduced the activity at the wilderness airstrip severalfold.

Another potential problem is th incidental visitor. This is the pilot who lands on the wilderness airstrip, stays a few minutes or hours, then departs. Most management plans recommend against this, since the airstrips are intended to be access points for wilderness use-not airport use. We should endeavor to use state or other non-wilderness airstrips for short picnics or scenic tours. There are going to be occasions for pilots and their passengers to use wilderness airstrips that do not conform to a specific management These plans are guidelines, and by general adherence tend to provide the most harmony with airport users and those other interests in the wilderness. We believe that we all have a common goal to preserve and perpetuate the wilderness we will find our compatibility with potential regulators and others users of the wilderness will be enhanced Here are some questions we should ask before using the wilderness airstrips.

1) Is it necessary, or could I use a nearby

non-wilderness airstrip?

2) Could I camp nearby or hike a ways from the airstrip?

3) Does my flight potentially detract from another's enjoyment of the wilderness?

4) Is this the busy season for the strip? In conclusion, as pilots, we should attempt to improve our image with those who feel the airplane has no place in the wilderness. This can be accomplished by some introspection and self-criticism of the ways we conduct ourselves and our flights in the wilderness areas. To lose this privilege would be devastating to those of us who have grown to love this wilderness at our backdoor here in Idaho.



NON-WILDERNESS AIRPORTS. AN **ALTERNATIVE**

by Larry Hipler

As suggested in "Wilderness and the Wilderness Airports have been allowed to exist by Congress in order to provide user access to Idaho's wilderness areas.

Idaho has a number of non-wilderness airports which should not be overlooked by the flying public. Many of these airports provide the same recreational opportunities as the

Wilderness Airports.

In addition, there are activities and facilities not available at Wilderness Airports, such as access to historic mining towns, lake fishing, lodging, meals, and improved family-

style camping facilities.

Many non-wilderness airports have physical characteristics similar to the Wilderness Airports. Therefore, the opportunity exists for pilots to test and improve their backcountry flying proficiency at airports of varying levels of difficulty.

The U.S. Forest Service operates the

following Non-Wilderness Airports:

Priest Lake Landmark Cayuse Ck. Upper Loon Ck. (use at own risk) Dixie Graham Warren Idaho City Krassel

The State of Idaho provides the

following:

Cavanaugh Bay TwinBridges Magee Henry's Lake Big Creek Pine Johnson Ck. Smith's

Prairie

Warm Springs Slate Ck. Bruce Meadows Garden Valley Smiley Ck. Copper Basin

Pilots should also consider some of our Community Access Airports. These airports are excellent training grounds for beginning (and sometimes intermediate!) backcountry pilots.

They also provide local amenities such as restaurants, shops, local historical points of interest, and friendly folks. Here's a suggested list:

> New Meadows Stanley Kooskia Orofino

Elk River St. Maries
(Use at own risk)
Shoshone Co. (Kellogg)
Atlanta Donnelly
Kamiah Dixie Post Office
(Use at own risk).

NO TRACE OUTFITTING

Oxymoron? Not to Dave Hettinger who runs Selway-Bitterroot Outfitters of Ovando Montana. The Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association(IOGA) has presented a White Hat award to outfitter Dave Hettinger who operates on the Moose Creek district of Idaho's Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. He was nominated for the award by the Moose Creek District Ranger Dennis Dailey. Dave will be bringing the Wilderness experience back into outfitted hunting trips and practicing No Trace outfitting by operating out of undesignated spike camps during the Fall hunting season. Using 9' X 12' canvas pop-up tents with aluminum poles that can be set up quickly upon arrival Dave eliminates special trips for set-up and cutting of green poles. This type of low-impact approach is also evident in other camp practices he uses in his spike camps and base camp. It will be a challenge to both Dennis and Dave to make this work. Wilderness Watch supports this type of commercial Wilderness operation and hope that Dave will be setting the example for others to follow .----10GA Newsletter.

Wilderness Outfitting Returns to the SBW:

Caches going at last!

The last legal cache in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness(SBW) is finally being phased out and will be gone at the end of the 1991 season. It seems to have taken a long time to eliminate these unnecessary intrusions in the Wilderness but the objective of total elimination is being met. Chief Dale Robertson should take a good look at this example of positive management action on the Nez Perce Forest and see that unless objectives are very specifically defined within a time frame they

will never be met. We would like to give a special thanks to District Ranger Dennis Dailey for his strong position on caches in Wilderness, and a thanks to his Supervisor, Tom Kovalicky.

Soldier Creek Wilderness: "What Now?"

The July 1989, lightning caused Fort Robinson Fire burned over 48,000 acres of forest and rangeland in one of the largest fires ever recorded in Nebraska. Of these 48,000 acres, 9600 were on the Nebraska National Forest in Northwest Nebraska. This included the entire 7,600 acre Soldier Creek Wilderness designated by Congress in the Nebraska Wildemess Act of 1985. Very few acres were left untorched with over 90% of the pine forest reported burned. However, many creek bottom shrubs and hardwoods are sprouting from stumps and roots and will survive. The pines must grow from seed and most pine seed sources in the Wilderness appear to be gone. Specialists have estimated that it could take 250 to 450 years for nature to "recover" the Wilderness to pre-fire appearance. Pressure is being applied to have the Forest Service replant the pine trees. Although not specifically prohibited by the Wilderness Act, it is not Forest Service policy to replant trees in Wildernesses.

District Ranger Marvin J. Liewer of the Pine Ridge Ranger District is scoping the question of "What Now?". Three possibilities were outlined. They are as follows:

- Do no planting and let the area restore itself naturally.
- 2. Plant potential seed source trees in sites most likely to promote continued natural regeneration of pine trees. All planting in the Wilderness would be accomplished by non-mechanized methods.
- Replant pine trees in all burned pine forest area. Trees would be planted by nonmechanized methods and spaced to appear "natural".

Although the choice appears obvious, the decision is not an easy one for a district ranger to make when local constituencies want their trees back as soon as possible. The (Continued on back page)

WELCOME!

It's the start of the 1990 summer field season. We'd like to say welcome to Watch to all the returning Wilderness veteran field workers and all the new seasonal field workers whose job includes working in and for Wilderness. This includes the lookouts, trail workers, rangers, packers, field biologists and anyone whose work provokes an image of care for wildness, even the office workers. We hope to reach as many of you as possible with this issue of the Wilderness Watcher. Welcome also to all seasonal workers whose job does not provide for work on the wild side, but whose mind or free time is spent exploring the different reaches of Wilderness or Wild and Scenic Rivers. We would also like to say "Welcome" to all the line officers and their staff who share some responsibility for the management of these wild lands. With the summer work season comes the heavy recreational use season. We welcome all private and outfitted Wilderness users to Wilderness Watch. We hope this issue reaches as many floaters, stock users, hikers, and commercial operators as possible.

The 1990 summer field season is the second one since Congressman Bruce Vento, Chairman of the Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands, called for a revolution in Wilderness management. In this issue we will examine some of the actions that James Overbay addressed in response to that Wilderness revolution challenge.

The 1990 summer field season is also the second field season since Wilderness Watch was founded. As we start this new season we bring a new potential to our organization with the hiring of an executive director and the opening of a workspace/office on the third floor of the Union Hall in downtown Missoula. This will help us to pursue our goals and objectives through education, information networking, and public participation more efficiently and more aggressively. This summer we will be working on a Wilderness Education program in a partnership with the U.S. Forest Service. Some of us will be going into the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness to record impacts in the Wild river corridor. We will also be trying to expand our membership network to include Wilderness Watchers for every Wild and Scenic River and unit of the Wilderness system. To do this we ask you to join Wilderness Watch now and pass this copy along to your friends and fellow workers. If you know of someone who would be interested in Wilderness Watch, let us know and we will send them information. If you have concerns or knowledge of issues effecting a specific Wilderness, let us know about them. Only through the active participation of our friends and members can we operate at maximum efficiency and expect positive results. Have a good summer, go light on the land, and pack it in-pack it out everyone.

Salmon River Resort Update

As Wilderness Watch was preparing to challenge in court Forest Service Chief Dale Robertson's decision that resorts were acceptable on Wild rivers we were offered another alternative. The Salmon Forest supervisor offered to do a full Environmental Impact Statement regarding the level of development and tenure of the hunting camps on the Salmon River within the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness(FCRNR).

Wilderness Watch is challenging a full blown resort built without a permit and on verbal permission twenty six miles inside the FCRNR Wilderness on the main Salmon River. Chief Robertson ruled that while procedural law (NEPA) had been violated, the resort that includes a lodge and three or more cabins could stay. This resort represents a serious degradation of the wild character of the Salmon River and the "essentially primitive" environs described in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Wilderness Watch is currently negotiating the scope of the EIS. If done properly, the EIS will be better than litigation because it will address all of the camps on the river. It remains to be seen how far the Forest Service is willing to go with this, and whether the agency will enforce the results.

WILDERNESS BUDGET

An important issue the famous Overbay letter (see Wilderness Watcher Vol. 1 No. 1) addressed was funding: "The final fiscal year '89 budget brings an increase of \$2 million nationally for wilderness management, with guidance to use the additional funds for

advantages and disadvantages of each alternative are being discussed in a flier available from the Pine Ridge Ranger District. Wilderness values that would be lost or altered with implementation of the different alternatives are necessary to the discussion.

The potential and perceived economic values are also discussed for each alternative. The agency has included involvement of local civic groups, employing local tree planters, and recovering tree-cover dependent recreation opportunities. There was no mention in the scoping flier of the fire history of the area and it is quite possible this area has grown to be timbered in much the same way that the Bob Marshall has become a forested Wilderness: through the heavy hand of fire suppression. (See "Canyon Creek Fire")

Wilderness Watch believes that the no action alternative is the only reasonable option. The Wilderness values must predominate. A unique opportunity exists in the Soldier Creek Wilderness for "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man,... that has recovered its primeval character and influence, ... and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions,...and generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of For more information contact: nature." Marvin J. Liewer, District Ranger Pine Ridge Ranger District Nebraska National Forest HC 75, Box 13A9 Chadron, NE 69337



BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
MISSOULA, MT
PERMIT NO. 74