



**CITIZENS' GUIDE TO**  
**Protecting the Inyo, Sierra  
and Sequoia National Forests**



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Safeguarding Our Forests.....	3
Recreation.....	5
At Risk Species.....	8
Water and Aquatic Habitats.....	11
Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers.....	14
Fire and Forest Health.....	17
Take Action for Our Forests!.....	20





## INTRODUCTION

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America boasts 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands that provide one-of-a-kind opportunities for families to recreate and spend time together outdoors. Each year, more than 170 million people visit and enjoy national forests across the United States. These visitors reap the health and stress-reduction benefits that outdoor recreation provides and their tourism strengthens the economic well-being of nearby communities. That's because the wildlife, clean water and scenery offered by our national forests are not only crucial to our way of life, they also support a multibillion-dollar outdoor recreation economy — especially in California.

National forest lands, managed by the U.S. Forest Service, cover about 20 percent of California. They provide 50 percent of the state's drinking water, support 38,000 jobs, help provide clean air by filtering out pollution, and draw millions of visitors

each year to hike, fish, ski, picnic, view wildlife and otherwise enjoy our forest lands. The importance of California's forests currently extends beyond the many benefits they provide for the state's communities, however.

Four years ago, the Obama administration adopted new planning rules to guide how America's national forests and grasslands will be managed and protected. Three national forests in California—the Inyo, Sequoia, and Sierra—were chosen by the Forest Service to be among the first in the nation to go through the new planning process. The stakes are high; what happens in California on these three forests will set the precedent, for better or worse, for how the agency manages all other national forests across the country for decades to come.

Though forest planning may sound abstract, the implications for people and the environment are very real and will be felt deeply in California and elsewhere. California is the most biologically diverse state in the nation, yet the state's wildlands and wildlife are under assault by dramatic population growth, sprawl and other threats. As a result, national forests in California provide an increasingly critical natural refuge and retreat for wildlife and people alike. All the benefits that nature provides, including drinking water, outdoor recreation, habitat for fish and wildlife, and healthy local economies will be affected by these three new California national forest plans.

It's vital that the Forest Service gets this planning right, in California and across the nation, for this generation and the next. The forest plans now being developed could be in effect for the next two decades to come. These plans, which the agency released as drafts on May 27, 2016 for public review and comment, must reflect the needs and interests of local communities and the American public at large, be based on sound science, and include monitoring measures to make sure they are effective and being implemented appropriately.

The Sierra Club and our allies have been urging the Forest Service to create forest plans that prioritize sustainable, high-quality recreation for local residents



CREDIT: JEFF HUNTER

and visitors alike and safeguard water quality by protecting and restoring mountain meadows, lakes and streams. Also safeguarded should be areas important for wildlife, including Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep and the California spotted owl; historic and cultural sites; and special natural places including new wilderness areas and wild and scenic rivers. The Forest Service also has a great opportunity to create new plans that update its approach to managing fire to better reflect advanced scientific thinking. Using fire as a natural process, instead of artificially suppressing it, would improve forest health while also better protecting human communities.

Now is our time to get it right. You can have your voice heard by attending public meetings and writing a comment letter or email to the Forest Service before the comment period ends on August 25, 2016. This guide is designed to help you be an informed advocate for stronger protections for these national forests. Let's do it!



## SAFEGUARDING OUR FORESTS

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From the snow-capped peaks of Washington’s Cascade Mountains to the subtropical swamps and rivers of Florida’s Apalachicola National Forest, and with the rich expanses of federal forests, rivers, lakes, and rangelands that lie between, America boasts a stunning array of magnificent national forests and grasslands. The beauty and diversity of these national lands likewise provide unparalleled, diverse habitat for some of our most treasured wildlife and offer Americans the chance to experience some of the most spectacular places in the world.

National forests offer natural places and open spaces where we can hike, camp, bike and fish, where we find quiet and solace, and where wildlife live and raise their young. They are the foundation of local economies, providing millions of jobs in recreation and tourism for people across the country. They are reservoirs for wildlife as well as reservoirs of

freedom—and they must be protected. With our population expanding and more than 240 million Americans already living within 100 miles of a national forest or grassland, it is vital that people are able to connect with healthy, well-managed national forests and the many benefits they provide.



By law, every national forest has a forest plan, developed by the Forest Service with the public's input and comment. The forest plans that the agency is currently writing for the Inyo, Sierra, and Sequoia National Forests will not only determine the fate of these key forests for a generation to come, they will also set a precedent, for better or for worse, for the future of all of our nation's national forests in the decades ahead. To safeguard the natural benefits of our national forests, the Sierra Club and our allies are calling for strong, science-based forest plans for the Inyo, Sierra, and Sequoia National Forests in California that will provide:

- Sustainable, high-quality recreation opportunities; healthy, beautiful natural forests provide recreation-based jobs and support local community economies.
- Protections for mountain meadows, lakes and streams that are vital to water quality and quantity, an important resource as our state faces critical drought conditions and a changing climate.
- Safeguards for habitat areas important for fish and wildlife, including iconic and/or vulnerable species such as the great gray owl, Yosemite toad, Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep, black-backed woodpecker, Pacific fisher, and California golden trout.
- Conservation of special natural places like wilderness, wild and scenic rivers and unroaded areas that can provide high quality habitat for wildlife and high quality recreation opportunities for people now and in the future.
- Significantly increased use of fire as part of the natural process to improve forest health, reduce fuels, and better protect communities.



*ANCIENT BRISTLECONE PINE*

## **INYO NATIONAL FOREST**

- The Inyo boasts over 1,200 miles of hiking trails and ample opportunities to ski, camp, picnic, hunt, fish, ride horses, and otherwise enjoy California's great outdoors.
- With over 2 million visitors a year, the Inyo anchors important recreation based economies for Inyo and Mono County communities, benefiting local businesses and providing important sales tax revenues to local governments.
- Within the 2 million acres of the Inyo National Forest are a wealth of natural wonders, from Mt. Whitney, the highest mountain in the lower 48 states, and the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest, to the more than 800,000 acres of lands preserved as Wilderness in their natural state for everyone to enjoy.
- The forest is also home to many types of rare and unique wildlife, including northern goshawks, black-backed woodpeckers, Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep and California's state fish, the California golden trout.



*GRIZZLY FALL IN SEQUOIA NATIONAL FOREST*

## SEQUOIA NATIONAL FOREST

- The Sequoia National Forest boasts over 850 miles of hiking trails and ample opportunities to ski, camp, picnic, hunt, fish, ride horses, and otherwise enjoy California's great outdoors.
- With about a million visitors a year, the Sequoia National Forest anchors important recreation based economies for Fresno, Kern, and Tulare County communities, benefiting local businesses and providing important sales tax revenues to local governments.
- Within the 1,865 square miles of the Sequoia National Forest is a wealth of natural wonders, including 34 groves of giant sequoias, and the Mineral King glacial valley.
- The Sequoia National Forest also provides habitat for many types of critical and at-risk wildlife, including the rare Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep, the Little Kern golden trout, and the endangered California condor.

## HIGH-QUALITY RECREATION

"Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves," wrote John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club. Clearly, Muir understood the rich benefits of spending time in nature.

Like Muir, many of us recognize that being in nature is good for the body, mind, and spirit. Walking through the woods, observing colorful birds and wildflowers, smelling the aroma of pine trees, and listening to a soothing running stream clears our minds and make us feel good. Study after study shows there are many health and mental health benefits for both adults and children who spend time hiking in nature, including increased attention spans and problem solving abilities as well as lower stress levels.

So it's not surprising that each year millions of Americans and international visitors come to the Inyo, Sierra, and Sequoia National Forests to hike, camp, fish, hunt, bike, ski, and otherwise enjoy their time outdoors. Each of these national forests provides a wealth of healthful recreation opportunities including hiking trails, campgrounds, lakes and streams. In turn, recreation and tourism on each of these forests supports the economies of nearby communities.

To be sure, high quality recreation in our national forests depends in part on the availability of popular recreation amenities like well-maintained trails, campgrounds, picnic areas, visitor centers, and informative interpretative signs and kiosks. Nevertheless, our ability to enjoy nature and the outdoors also depends on the health and beauty of our national forest landscapes, on clean air and clean water, and on abundant fish, wildlife and plants. Clean streams, for example, provide a healthful and inviting backdrop for a great many activities, including canoeing, hiking and fishing. Birding and wildlife viewing, two extremely popular national forest





*THREE MILE LAKE JOHN MUIR WILDERNESS SIERRA NATIONAL FOREST*

## SIERRA NATIONAL FOREST

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- Within the 1,865 square miles of the Sequoia National Forest is a wealth of natural wonders, including 34 groves of giant sequoias, and the Mineral King glacial valley.
- The Sequoia National Forest also provides habitat for many types of critical and at-risk wildlife, including the rare Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep, the Little Kern golden trout, and the endangered California condor.

activities, require safeguarded habitats that support a wide range of species. Backpackers and other backcountry visitors seek out scenic and possibly challenging natural locations, not crowded, overused areas or timber plantations.

High-quality national forest recreation benefits economies as well as people. In fact, the economic base of many communities in the western United States is shifting as older industries consolidate and relocate and as tourism and recreation uses on nearby national forests and other federal lands grow. The scenic and recreational values of our federal public landscapes also attract entrepreneurs,

new businesses, and a skilled workforce to local communities.

Expanding populations, increased visitation, and shrinking federal budgets have, however, taken their toll on our national forest landscapes and recreational facilities. As growth of retiree communities and other population shifts have created population centers close to many of our public lands, many of our national forests are seeing visitation levels that are straining visitor facilities, services, and natural settings. In too many cases overuse and poorly managed recreation has contributed to degraded facilities, damaged habitats and heritage sites, and

conflicts between users. As a result, the condition of national forest recreation opportunities have steadily diminished, resulting in a ballooning backlog of maintenance and funding needs for recreation facilities, trails, and roads.

In the face of these challenges, the Forest Service should develop new forest plans for the Inyo, Sierra, and Sequoia National Forest that protect these forests' natural, cultural, scenic and recreational environments for present and future generations to use and enjoy. In these tight-budget times, the agency can work to better monitor, maintain and protect recreational amenities by fostering strong partnerships and cooperation between Forest Service employees, local communities, non-profit organizations, businesses, and other partners. The Sierra National Forest, for example, currently provides a good illustration of the Forest Service's ability to protect the forest and provide a positive visitor experience through the use of ongoing partnerships and trained volunteers.

### **Recreation goals for our National Forests.**

The Sierra Club and our conservation allies are urging the Forest Service to develop new plans for the Inyo, Sierra, and Sequoia National Forests that promotes high quality, sustainable recreation. Specifically, we are calling on the agency to create new plans that:

1. Include measurable objectives and clear standards to assure adequate protection and maintenance of national forest recreation areas. Popular recreation spots can be "loved to death" by overuse and neglect. The new plans should hold the Forest Service accountable for carefully tracking the condition of trails and campgrounds, for example, as well as for monitoring dispersed recreation areas such as popular backcountry camping sites. The new plans should also require the agency to take action to address problems such as trash, overuse, and damage as they arise.

2. Ensure that roads and trails used for recreation and other purposes are well located and maintained so they don't damage streams or meadows or harm and fragment other sensitive areas.
3. Carefully manage and monitor all off-highway vehicle use to prevent harm to our national forest lands and waters, including: (1) damage to meadows, wetlands and wetland species, (2) severe soil erosion and compaction, (3) destruction of streambank plants and habitats, (4) conflicts with other forest users, and (5) spread of invasive species.
4. Limit cross-country over snow vehicle (such as snow mobiles) travel to areas with snow depths of at least 18 inches to avoid damaging soils and vegetation.
5. Improve Forest Service educational programs and information so that all visitors better understand how to act responsibly to prevent damage to recreation facilities and wildlife habitats and avoid conflicts with other visitors.
6. Commit to more robust partnerships with local communities, conservation groups and others to help manage and maintain trails and other recreation areas to provide a quality recreation experience that continue into the future without damaging the land.

### **What has the Forest Service proposed in the draft plans?**

The draft plans for the Inyo, Sierra, and Sequoia National Forests recognize the importance of national forest recreation and the need for sustainable recreation opportunities that can be maintained into the future without harming the land. For example, the draft plans include an important guideline that new campgrounds and designated campsites should be located away from streams, flood plains, and other environmentally sensitive

areas. The draft plans also acknowledge the key role that partnerships with local communities and groups can and must play in providing sustainable recreation uses on our national forests. Nevertheless, the plans contain few, if any, clear standards that meaningfully address how unacceptable recreational impacts to habitats, streams, and other key areas will be defined and identified. It is also not clear how the agency will monitor and maintain the condition of recreation facilities such as trails and campgrounds, or address its deteriorating road system and the associated impacts on recreational opportunities and access. As a result, it is not clear how the agency will hold itself accountable to recognizing and correcting recreation issues and impacts as they arise.

**You can help the Forest Service provide better recreation opportunities.**

The Forest Service is required by law to engage the public as it plans for the future management and protection of our national forests. Please encourage the agency to improve its draft plans for the Inyo, Sierra, and Sequoia National Forests by:

- Including clearer, enforceable standards that will hold the Forest Service accountable for managing recreation in a way that protects our national forest lands, waters and habitats from harm.
- Providing stronger requirements and incentives for Forest Service leaders and staff to develop and maintain robust partnerships with local communities, groups and businesses. Draft plans need to detail how the agency will hold itself accountable to creating and fostering the partnerships that are so vital in these tight federal budget times.
- Creating clear standards that will help the Forest Service manage and monitor national forest recreation areas and facilities so that impacts and issues can be prevented or identified and addressed as they arise.

**PROTECTING ECOSYSTEMS, ANIMALS AND PLANTS**

National forests provide homes for a rich diversity of animal and plant species. For many people the joy and wonder of seeing native fish, wildlife and plants in their natural settings is a main reason for visiting the national forests. Healthy fish and wildlife populations are also indicators of the overall health and condition of our landscapes and provide a wealth of economic and recreational benefits. Safeguarding clean water, healthy habitats, and wildlife populations on our national forests helps maintain the economies and livability of our human communities.

Many of the most popular recreation activities on our national forests depend on fish, wildlife, and plant populations and their natural habitats. Hiking, hunting, fishing, birdwatching, wildflower viewing and other plant and animal focused activities are a prime reason for national forest recreation visits and a big source of revenues for local economies.

In California, the most biologically diverse state in the nation, national forests can provide a critical refuge for important, rare, and vulnerable species in the face of the state's rapidly expanding population, urban sprawl and a changing climate. Each year, millions of people visit California's national forests, state parks and other conservation areas to enjoy nature and view wildlife, and these visits contribute millions of dollars to California's economy.

In spite of their many values and benefits, however, our national forests have in too many cases been harmed by industrial logging practices, excessive road construction, illegal off-road vehicle use, and shortsighted federal grazing and fire management policies. Such practices have damaged and fragmented landscapes, degraded streams and mountain meadows, threatened old growth and young forests as well as the plant and animal species that live there, consequently driving species to





CA SPOTTED OWL, CREDIT: KAMERON PERENSOVICH

## CALIFORNIA SPOTTED OWL

A beautiful owl that depends on old growth forests for its home, the California spotted owl is threatened by logging, uncharacteristically large high-severity fires, development and sprawl, climate change, and other factors, including competition from non-native barred owls. In the Sierra Nevada, California spotted owls can be found from the southern Cascades to Tehachapi Pass. Spotted owls primarily prey on flying squirrels and woodrats. Within the range of the California spotted owl, flying squirrels are often found in moist large conifer forests, and woodrats often live in forests that contain more oaks and shrubs.

Decades of aggressive logging of old growth forests on both national forests and private lands have destroyed millions of acres of spotted owl habitat and left this key species in a dangerously vulnerable situation, with ongoing population declines. Recent studies have found that populations of spotted owls are still dropping on our national forests, and the only stable or increasing population is in Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park where logging does not occur. The new forest plans for the Sierra and Sequoia National Forests offer the Forest Service an opportunity to help protect and restore California spotted owl populations and habitats by protecting old growth forests from damaging logging and snag removal and by restoring a more natural role for fire in our national forests.

the brink of extinction. In addition, climate change is creating additional threats to our ecosystems, habitats, and native species. In California, key species like the California spotted owl, Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep, sage grouse, American marten, Pacific fisher, California golden trout, Yosemite toad, willow flycatcher and black-backed woodpeckers are facing unacceptable risks and habitat losses.

Once finalized, these plans will govern the management of these three forests for decades to come and will determine if key species continue to decline and be lost, or if we safeguard our precious forests and wildlife for future generations to visit, explore and enjoy. The new forest plans for the Inyo, Sierra, and Sequoia National Forests offer the opportunity to set our national forests on a healthier course for the future by 1) prioritizing the protection of native plants and animals and the habitats they require in the face of climate change and other threats, 2) reducing or eliminating threats (logging, off-highway vehicles, etc.) to the health and safety of native species, including rare, unique and vulnerable species like the California spotted owl, 3) restoring damaged habitats, 4) protecting large connected areas of habitat so wildlife species have room to roam, raise their young, and live out their lives, and 5) monitoring key species and habitats so that threats and problems can be identified and addressed.

### **Ecosystem, plant and animal protection goals for our national forests.**

The Sierra Club and our conservation allies are urging the Forest Service to develop new plans for the Inyo, Sierra, and Sequoia National Forests that protect the habitats of native plant and animal species. Specifically, we are calling on the agency to create new plans that:

1. Carefully safeguard the rich diversity of life by identifying and protecting rare and vulnerable wildlife and plants that depend on Inyo, Sierra,

- and/or Sequoia National Forests. Use the best available science to determine and describe the habitat and other needs of these species and to adequately address the threats they are facing. Prioritize the conservation of these vulnerable species by significantly reducing, eliminating or mitigating threats to important habitats from off-highway vehicles, poorly managed grazing, excessive logging, herbicide and pesticide use, and other damaging practices.
2. Recognize the importance of both very young and old growth forest habitats to a wide range of vulnerable species. Protect these key habitats by eliminating post-fire salvage logging, the cutting of large trees, and the excessive removal of the snags (standing dead trees) that provide critical homes for woodpeckers, bats, songbirds, owls and other species.
  3. Maintain or establish special designations for key habitats, including old forests. Recommend wilderness protections and identify potential wild and scenic rivers to promote the protection of key wild lands, habitats, and waters.
  4. Maintain and restore the landscape connections between key habitats. Many species, such as black bears, fishers, and California spotted owls require extensive areas of high quality habitat. Large, connected areas of protected habitats allow species the room to roam to reproduce and raise their young and also to migrate in the face of changing conditions. Roads and excessive logging fragment and damage wildlife habitats and push species closer to the brink of extinction.
  5. Restore important habitats that have been damaged by past management actions, such as meadows that have been damaged by roads, trails and/or grazing.

6. Partner with other federal and state agencies and academic institutions to implement a program of habitat and population monitoring so that problems can be identified and addressed.

### **What has the Forest Service proposed in the draft plans?**

The draft forest plans for the Inyo, Sierra, and Sequoia National Forests recognize the important role that fire plays in Sierra Nevada ecosystems, supporting biodiversity by providing habitat for a range of key species. The draft plans have also acknowledged that both old and young forests are important parts of the region's ecosystems. Unfortunately, however, the Forest Service has failed to include and address the needs of several vulnerable and at-risk species including the black-back woodpecker, northern goshawk and northern pond turtle. The agency has also ignored the recommendations from scientists on a variety of other species, such as the California spotted owl, fisher, willow flycatcher, Yosemite toad, and great gray owl. Instead, the agency is proposing nothing to constrain the harmful impacts of logging and other threats to the future of these vulnerable species and their important habitats.

### **You can help the Forest Service provide better protection for ecosystems, plants and animals.**

The Forest Service is required by law to engage the public as it plans for the future management and protection of our national forests. Please encourage the agency to improve its draft plans for the Inyo, Sierra, and Sequoia National Forests by:

- Reinstating fire as the primary natural forest process that restores and maintains habitat complexity.
- Including additional protective standards and guidelines to safeguard at-risk species and their habitats from logging and grazing.

- Including protective standards and guidelines that ensure that large trees and dense mature forests are preserved.
- Following all recommendations made by scientists in the Fisher Conservation Strategy and the Interim Recommendations for California Spotted Owl.
- Limiting salvage logging to the removal of only those trees that pose hazards to firefighter safety, human life and property.
- Closing and decommissioning roads that fragment or degrade wildlife habitat.

### **AQUATIC HABITATS, WATER, LAKES AND STREAMS.**

Water is the key to all life and one of the most important benefits our national forests provide. In fact, national forest watersheds in California are the source of 50 percent of the state's drinking water. Our watersheds perform a number of other jobs as well. Besides providing drinking water for people and wildlife, a healthy watershed nurtures forests, plants, and animals, keeps soil fertile, and supports livable and sustainable local communities. A watershed's trees and plants help anchor soil and absorb rain and snowmelt, so flooding and landslides are less severe and groundwater is recharged. Vegetation also provides shade, keeping water temperatures cool and stable so fish and other aquatic life can thrive.

The lakes, rivers, streams, springs, wetlands and meadows of the national forests in the Sierra Nevada also offer many wonderful recreational opportunities and critical aquatic (meaning in or near water) habitats. In fact, most national forest recreation is associated with water – wetlands, rivers, lakes or streams. National forest waters provide homes for many amphibian and bird species, and are also great spots for bird watching, nature photography, and other recreation. Meadows, for example, are

natural wetlands that help store, filter, and purify water; recharge ground water; and provide habitat for unique species like the great grey owl, willow flycatcher, and Yosemite toad. The rivers, lakes and streams in these Sierra Nevada national forests also support important populations of key fish species, such as the Lahontan cutthroat trout and California golden trout, which are sources of many economic, cultural, spiritual and recreational values.

Yet, in spite of their critical, life-giving importance, our national forest waters and watersheds have been poorly cared for and damaged in too many ways by human use and impacts. California's rapid population growth and sprawl place huge stresses on water supplies. Other primary threats include poorly managed livestock grazing, roads and trails that are badly designed and/or located or poorly maintained, damaging off-highway vehicle travel, dams and excessive water withdrawals, herbicide and pesticide use, invasive species, and inappropriate timber harvest and tree removal, all of which are exacerbated by the effects of climate change.

The new forest plans offer the opportunity to correct past mistakes and chart a healthy course for our national forest meadows, lakes, rivers and streams and all the many species and recreational activities that depend on them. The new forest plans for the Inyo, Sierra, and Sequoia National Forests can set our national forests on a healthier course for the future by 1) prioritizing the protection of native aquatic species and the habitats they depend on, 2) reducing, eliminating or mitigating threats (logging, herbicides, off-highway vehicle use, climate change, etc.) to the health and safety of native species, including rare, unique and vulnerable species like the Yosemite toad and the California golden trout, 3) restoring damaged meadows and streams and other degraded aquatic habitats, 4) protecting key watersheds, rivers, and streams as connected habitat areas, and



5) monitoring key species and habitats so that problems can be identified and addressed.

#### **Aquatic protection goals for our national forests.**

The Sierra Club and our conservation allies are urging the Forest Service to develop new plans for the Inyo, Sierra, and Sequoia National Forests that protect streams, lakes, meadows and other wetlands on our national forests to safeguard the habitats of native plant and animal species. Specifically, we are calling on the agency to create new plans that:

1. Maintain the rich diversity of life by carefully identifying the rare and vulnerable species of plants and animals that depend on the waters, meadows, wetlands, rivers, lakes and streams of the Inyo, Sierra, and Sequoia National Forests. Use the best available science to determine and describe the habitat and other needs of these species and to understand and address the threats they are facing.
2. Prioritize the protection of vulnerable species by significantly reducing, eliminating or mitigating threats to aquatic habitats and water quality from off highway vehicles, roads and trails, herbicide and pesticide use, salvage logging and poorly managed grazing, and climate change.
3. Control overuse and damaging recreation activities near streams and meadows that harm water quality, cause over-consumption of fish, or result in the trampling or loss of vegetation, or damage to the banks of streams, etc.
4. Delineate areas within the Sequoia, Sierra, and Inyo National Forest that are critical for protecting the rich diversity of aquatic life. Identify and protect critical aquatic habitats by expanding and soundly managing large, connected areas of habitat as Riparian Conservation Areas, Critical Aquatic Refuges, and Priority Watersheds to provide safe areas where plants and animals can flourish.



*PACIFIC FISHER IN DEN TREE*

## **PACIFIC FISHER**

A close relative of the mink and otter, the Pacific fisher is a marvelous, rare, and shy predator that is an important resident of our western wildlands. Fishers live on a diverse diet that includes porcupines and other small forest animals, carrion, vegetation, fungi, and fruit. The fisher dens in rotting logs, hollow trees, and rocky crevices of old growth forests. They frequently travel along waterways and rest in live trees, snags, or logs with cavities. Each individual travels over a home range area of 50-150 square miles, even more in winter when food is scarce.

Fishers are mostly brown, with a long, bushy tail and a long, slender body with short legs. Males can be up to 47 inches in length, while females typically only reach 37 inches. Fishers run in a bounding gait, with their front feet leaping forward together, followed by their back feet. They are estimated to live up to 10 years.

Although the fisher once roamed from British Columbia to the southern Sierra, fisher populations have been devastated by a combination of historic fur trapping and logging of its old-growth forest habitats. Today, the species has been reduced to two native populations found in the southern Sierra Nevada and northern California. Even these critically important populations continue to be threatened by logging. Without protection from continued logging on private and public lands, fishers are threatened by extinction. The new forest plans for the Inyo, Sierra, and Sequoia National Forests can promote a brighter future for the fisher by safeguarding and restoring its preferred old growth forest habitats and ensuring patches of lush ground vegetation, snags, and fallen logs.



THE CALIFORNIA GOLDEN TROUT IS NATIVE TO KERN RIVER

## CALIFORNIA GOLDEN TROUT

Widely regarded as one of the most beautiful trout, California golden trout sport colorful bellies, lower jaws, and lateral lines that are a vivid red to red-orange. The Golden trout is California's state fish, and it is at risk of going the way of the state's official mammal, the California grizzly bear, which is now extinct in California. The Golden trout has fallen victim to the careless stocking of non-native fish and more than a century of overgrazing by cattle and sheep. Today, the golden trout, which once could be found across an estimated 450 square miles of watersheds and streams, only remains in a small fraction, 20 square miles, of that historic range. In fact, the Golden trout is now native to only two streams, the South Fork of the Kern River and Golden Trout Creek, just south of Mt. Whitney in the Inyo and Sequoia National Forests.

The Forest Service can help protect and restore populations of golden trout by requiring stronger safeguards and monitoring requirements for livestock grazing in the meadows and streams that provide trout habitat. For example, meadow and stream conditions in areas with livestock grazing should be routinely monitored. If unacceptable damage to golden trout habitat is occurring, the Forest Service must take action to address the problem.

5. Include direction for identifying sensitive or damaged watersheds and prioritizing needed restoration. Damaged watersheds, meadows, rivers, streams and other aquatic habitats must be restored so that they can support cleaner water and healthy fish, wildlife and plant populations. Watershed restoration can provide jobs in rural communities.
6. Partner with other federal and state agencies and academic institutions to implement a program of habitat and plant and animal population monitoring so that problems can be identified and addressed. For example, meadow and stream conditions in areas with livestock grazing should be routinely monitored. If unacceptable damage is occurring, the Forest Service must take action to address the problem.

### **What has the Forest Service proposed in the draft plans?**

The draft plans for the Inyo, Sierra, and Sequoia National Forests must be greatly strengthened if they are going to adequately protect streams, wetlands, fish, and wildlife on our national forests. While the Forest Service is creating some new Critical Aquatic Refuges on the Sierra and Inyo National Forests, the draft plans are otherwise disappointing in the way they treat important aquatic species and habitats. For example, the plans propose no change to the management of grazing, which tramples and kills grasses, willows and other important streamside shrubs and threatens a wide array of native species. Instead, the Forest Service will allow grazing damage to streambanks, meadows and water quality to continue at unacceptable levels—and will also allow grazing in meadows where damage is already clearly occurring.

### **You can help the Forest Service provide stronger safeguards for fish, wildlife and streams.**

The Forest Service is required by law to engage the public as it plans for the future management and protection of our national forests. Please encourage the agency to improve its draft plans for the Inyo, Sierra, and Sequoia National Forests by:

- Adopting the recommendations of Trout Unlimited and creating additional Critical Aquatic Refuges.
- Increasing the number of meadows to be protected and restored.
- Preventing grazing in meadows that have already been damaged by livestock or other threats.
- Adopting additional protective standards to ensure that livestock don't overgraze or otherwise damage native streamside shrubs and streambanks.

### **PROTECTING WILDERNESS AND WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS**

On September 3, 1964 President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law one of our country's greatest conservation laws, the Wilderness Act. This historic bill established the National Wilderness Preservation System and set aside an initial 9.1 million acres of wild lands for the use and enjoyment of the American people. Over the past 52 years, and as a result of America's support for wilderness, Congress has passed legislation adding nearly 100 million more acres to this unique land preservation system—in 44 states, and Puerto Rico. The 1964 Wilderness Act defines "Wilderness" as areas "where the earth and its community of life ...appear to have been affected

primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable..."

America's wild lands are among the last, safe refuges for nature's bounty. Worthy and valuable in their own right, they provide us with a flow of free natural services that are essential to the health of our families and communities. Wild lands and natural systems filter and purify the air we breathe and the water we drink, generate fertile soils, provide medicines, sequester carbon pollution, and control floods.

Four years after the passage of the Wilderness Act, Congress also wisely recognized the importance of protecting selected rivers and streams from dam construction and other damaging development and pollution threats. Congress established the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System in 1968 as the nation's foremost river conservation tool. Wild and Scenic rivers can be created by an act of Congress or, in certain situations, by the Secretary of the Interior. As of December 2014, the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System had protected 12,709 miles of 208 rivers in 40 states and Puerto Rico; this is less than one-quarter of one percent of the nation's rivers. By comparison, more than 75,000 large dams across the country have modified at least 600,000 miles, or about 17%, of our nation's rivers.

Protected wild lands and clean, free-flowing rivers and streams provide solace, peace and an opportunity for people to reconnect with nature and with each other in today's increasingly loud, hectic and disconnected world. Time spent in nature, whether in a national forest or a local park, is an opportunity to know, and feel, the value of the great outdoors.

Protecting critical national forest lands and waters as wilderness and wild and scenic rivers also provides space for plants, wildlife and fish to escape harm from unsustainable logging, oil and gas drilling, and other industrial impacts. Wilderness and wild and

**“What a country chooses to save is what a country chooses to say about itself.”**

—MOLLIE BEATTIE

*Former Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*





SEQUOIA NATIONAL FOREST

scenic river corridors offer open spaces for species to move and adapt to the impacts of our changing climate. The chances for successful migration are greatly improved by the protection of large core areas of healthy habitat linked together by connecting migration routes.

The nation's remaining natural open places and free-flowing rivers will only become more rare and precious as our nation's population grows, cities expand, and roads and development spread. America's protected wilderness and wild and scenic rivers are a living legacy that all Americans should have the opportunity to experience. As the Forest Service creates new plans for the Inyo, Sierra, and Sequoia National Forests, it has the opportunity to set the stage for the protection of both new wilderness and new wild and scenic rivers. During forest planning, the agency has both the legal authority and responsibility to identify and study potential new wilderness areas and potential new wild and scenic rivers. While wilderness can only be designated by an act of Congress, the Forest Service and other federal land management agencies have an important role to play by identifying and recommending potential wilderness areas for congressional action. Likewise, the Forest Service can

identify rivers and streams that meet the standards for inclusion in the nation's Wild and Scenic River System. Once the Forest Service recommends an area for wilderness designation or identifies an eligible wild and scenic river segment, it must manage them to protect their unique qualities until Congress can act. Likewise, once identified, eligible rivers and streams are then administratively protected by the agency until Congress may consider their future designation.

### **Wilderness and Wild and Scenic River protection goals for our national forests.**

The Sierra Club and our conservation allies are urging the Forest Service to develop new plans for the Inyo, Sierra, and Sequoia National Forests that recognize the importance of protecting our wild places, and wild rivers and streams. The Inyo, Sierra, and Sequoia National Forests each have hundreds of thousands of acres of remaining wild, roadless, wilderness quality lands and many miles of potential wild and scenic rivers. The Sierra Club and our allies have long advocated for new wilderness and wild and scenic rivers on each of these national forests. We are calling on the Forest Service to recommend all areas supported by the Sierra Club and our allies, including for example, the Glass Mountains in the Inyo National Forest, the Bright Star Wilderness Addition and Domeland Wilderness Additions on the Sequoia National Forest, and Devil Gulch on the Sierra National Forest. In addition, the Forest Service should carefully identify and protect all remaining streams and rivers that are eligible for wild and scenic designation.

### **What has the Forest Service proposed in the draft plans?**

The good news is that the draft plans for the Inyo, Sierra, and Sequoia National Forests include extensive inventories of potential wilderness and wild and scenic rivers. Nearly 1.5 million acres of roadless,

wilderness quality lands were identified by the Forest Service on these three national forests and nearly 870 miles of rivers and streams were determined eligible for potential wild and scenic river protection.

The bad news is that in spite of the many wild areas that still remain, and the importance of protecting them for future generations to use and enjoy, the Forest Service has only recommended only four relatively small additions to existing wilderness areas in these draft plans, all on the Inyo National Forest. The draft plans fail to recommend any areas on the Sierra and Sequoia National Forest and overlook other worthy places on the Inyo National Forest as well. The Forest Service also failed to recognize the wild and scenic character of some of the most iconic waterways in the eastern and southern Sierra Nevada, including Dexter Canyon and Wet Canyons on the Inyo Forest; Salmon, Trout, Brushy, and Dry Valley Creeks on the Sequoia Forest; and lower Dinkey Creek on the Sierra.

**You can help the Forest Service recommend more wilderness and protect more rivers and streams.**

The Forest Service is required by law to engage the public as it plans for the future management and protection of our national forests. Please encourage the agency to improve its draft plans for the Inyo, Sierra, and Sequoia National Forests by:

- Expanding its wilderness recommendations to include all the areas listed in “Safeguarding Our Wildlands Heritage (p. 18).”
- Recognizing the value of new wilderness protections for roadless national forest lands in the watersheds of existing and eligible wild and scenic rivers.
- Retaining the eligibility finding for all 870 miles of rivers and streams currently identified as eligible in the draft plans and consider the eligibility of other worthy streams, including Dexter and Wet



*BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKER , CREDIT: USFWS*

## **BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKER**

The black-backed woodpecker is a rare bird that typically nests in large snags (dead trees). Black-backs love to eat the wood-boring beetles that flock to large dead and dying trees following fires. The birds concentrate in recently burned forests and remain for several years before leaving as the populations of the beetles they eat for food decline. Black-backed woodpeckers hunt for insects by methodically flaking the bark off of dead trees. They can gradually remove the bark from an entire snag and they also hunt for their food on fallen logs.

The Forest Service can help maintain healthy populations of black-backed woodpeckers and other snag-loving species by creating new management plans that 1) reduce or eliminate salvage sales in prime woodpecker habitat, 2) in unburned areas, retain all trees with potential woodpecker nesting holes and maintain a variety of dead and dying snags and downed trees; and 3) limit insecticide use.

Canyons and on the Inyo National Forest; Trout Creek, Salmon Creek, and Brushy Creek on the Sequoia; and lower Dinkey Creek on the Sierra.

- Supporting the previous Wild & Scenic recommendations for segments of the San Joaquin River and its North and South Forks on the Sierra National Forest.

## **FIRE, FOREST HEALTH AND COMMUNITY PROTECTION.**

People live, work, and recreate in and around the national forests in California and many other states.

A key challenge facing the Forest Service is to design ways for people to safely enjoy the outdoors and benefit from our national forests while protecting and restoring the health of our forest ecosystems.

Wildfire is a pressing public safety concern. The protection of life and property is often foremost in the minds of those who live and work near a national forest. Ultimately, fire safety is everyone's job. It is the responsibility of the community as a whole to provide for a safe environment. Individual land owners and managers, including the Forest Service, are responsible for maintaining a fire resilient environment near homes, businesses and other structures. Forest roads necessary for travel during emergencies also need to be maintained in a condition that allows passage during fires. Recreationists, forest workers, and other forest visitors also have a responsibility to behave and work in ways that are fire-cautious and don't create a fire risk.

Protecting life and property while also safeguarding our national forest landscapes requires the understanding that fire is a natural process that has for many thousands of years played an important role in keeping forests healthy and creating and renewing wildlife habitat. Healthy forests actually require all types of fires, including low, moderate, and high severity fire. Fire helps create and restore fertility,

creates important forest habitats for a great many animal species, and allows new plants to sprout, take root, and grow. Giant sequoias, for example, need fire to open their cones and promote the regeneration and growth of new trees. The cavities left in trees, snags, and logs as a result of fires provide homes for an abundance of birds, while the shrubs that regrow first after a fire are important for animals like black bears, martens and fishers. In spring and winter, when food can be scarce, mule deer also depend on these shrubs and new plant growth.

Unfortunately, decades of well-intended but misguided fire suppression efforts combined, in some cases, with the results of a changing climate-- dry conditions, early snow melt, rising temperatures-- have increased the risk of uncharacteristically large and more dangerous forest fires. In the Sierra Nevada for example, fire suppression has produced more uniform, unnatural, and fire prone forests that have far too many small trees, and significantly reduced shrub cover, all of which have harmed important species and habitats.

In the short term, fire prevention efforts should be focused on areas where people live and work. The long-term safety of our communities relies on better forest management to ensure forests are healthy. Science has shown that the way to lessen the risks associated with forest fires is actually to allow for natural fires and purposeful controlled burns, and to proactively create defensible space around homes and other human structures. The threat of fire is not reduced by the logging of large trees. Properly managing for fire, as opposed to suppressing it, can have a range of safety and other benefits:

1. Allows the Forest Service and other government entities and agencies to focus fire prevention efforts on making structures fire safe, creating adequate defensible space around structures, establishing strategic fuel breaks near



# SAFEGUARDING OUR WILDLANDS HERITAGE

Please encourage the agency to improve its draft plans for the Inyo, Sierra, and Sequoia National Forests by expanding its wilderness recommendations to include each of these wonderful, wild and natural areas.

Inyo National Forest	Sequoia National Forest	Sierra National Forest
Piper Mountain Addition 1	Domeland Addition South	Ansel Adams Addition
Piper Mountain Addition 2	Domeland Addition 1&2 (West)	Ansel Adams Addition Granite Creek 1
South Sierra Addition East 1	Domeland Addition Fish Creek	Ansel Adams Addition Granite Creek 2
White Mountains Addition East	Bright Star Additions	Cats Head Mountain
White Mountains Addition West	Golden Trout Addition 1	Ansel Adams Addition Mt. Raymond 1
Ansel Adams Addition Northeast (Horse Meadows)	Golden Trout Addition 2 - Osa Meadows	Ansel Adams Addition Mt. Raymond 2
Inyo Mountain Addition	Golden Trout Addition 3 - Black Rock	Chiquito Creek
Excelsior	Golden Trout Addition Southwest	Graham Mountain
Deadman Canyon	Jennie Lakes Addition	Kaiser Additions
Deep Springs North	Monarch Addition (Kings River Roadless Area)	Dinkey Lakes Additions 1, 2, 3
Dexter Canyon	Monarch Addition South	Bear Mountain (Dinkey Dome)
Glass Mountains	South Sierra Addition West 1	John Muir Addition Southwest
Soldier Canyon	South Sierra Addition West 2	John Muir Addition West 2
	South Sierra Addition West 3	John Muir Addition West 1
	South Sierra Addition West 4	John Muir Addition Helms Unit
	Cannell Peak	Monarch Addition West
	Dennison Peak	Peckinpah Creek
	Hatchet Peak	North Fork Kings River
	Delonegha Creek	Devil Gulch-Ferguson Ridge
	Saturday Peak	Shuteye
	Lightner Peak-Mill Ck-Lucas Ck	Soaproot
	Long Canyon	Sycamore Springs
	Lumreau Creek	
	Lower Kern River Gorge	
	Oat Mountain	
	Slate Mountain	
	Stormy Canyon-Chico Roadless Area	
	Woodward Peak	
	Sunday Peak	

communities, and creating local land planning safeguards that prevent new homes from being built in high risk fire areas.

2. Restores and strengthens forests, enabling them to better withstand threats like insect and disease outbreaks or climate change.
3. Creates and renews wildlife habitat.
4. Improves air quality for communities by reducing longer duration smoke events that can have widespread health and economic impacts.
5. Provides important job opportunities as part of long term, dedicated burn crews.

The new forest plans for the Inyo, Sierra, and Sequoia National Forests provide an opportunity for the Forest Service to update its approach to managing fire, to move away from a focus on suppression and towards managing fire as a natural process. Re-introducing and managing for fire will help protect human communities and property while also achieving healthier forests and wildlife habitats. To accomplish this goal, the Forest Service will in some areas, such as near human communities, need to plan for the mechanical removal of trees and vegetation. Mechanical removal of vegetation needs to be carefully designed, however, to remove the vegetation necessary for reducing fire risk while maintaining sufficient habitats to support healthy wildlife populations.

### **Fire, forest health, and community protection goals for our national forests.**

The Sierra Club and our conservation allies are urging the Forest Service to develop new plans for the Inyo, Sierra, and Sequoia National Forests that better protect human communities and the health of our ecosystems by restoring a more natural role for fire in our national forests. Specifically, we are calling on the agency to create new plans that:

1. Recognize and actively manage fire as an essential process that provides important benefits and shapes the landscape in positive ways.
2. Achieve an appropriate mix of all types of fire — low, moderate and high severity.
3. Prevents the logging of large trees and snags that are critical habitat for vulnerable, at risk species like the northern goshawk, black-backed woodpecker, and great grey owl.
4. Reduce the use of post-fire salvage logging, which prevents natural forest regrowth — harming plants, wildlife habitat, water quality and overall forest health. Salvage logging destroys important post-fire habitats in both new and old forests. Direction is needed in the revised forest plans to protect these habitats.
5. Place clearly defined limits on the use of herbicides to remove native shrubs and plants from forested areas. Not only do these shrubs and plants provide important food and habitats for wildlife, but herbicides are harmful to a range of species.
6. Focus community fire and fuels protection efforts where they are most effective, immediately adjacent to communities. In all other areas, focus on reducing surface and ladder fuels and using prescribed and managed wildfire as the primary forest fuels reduction and forest restoration tools.

### **What has the Forest Service proposed in the draft plans?**

The draft plans for the Inyo, Sierra, and Sequoia National Forests will allow the use of fire across the landscape, which is an important step toward restoring a more natural role for fire in our national forests. These draft plans set goals for the use of prescribed fire and managed fire that are heading in the right direction, but need to be increased. And while the increased use of managed fire is a very

positive step forward, the agency is also proposing to double both the acreage of areas being logged and volume of timber removed without providing adequate protections for wildlife that are dependent on large trees and mature forests. Simply put, the draft plans would also permit too many large, mature trees to be logged in too many places.

**You can help the Forest Service manage fire to better protect both our human communities and healthy forests.**

The Forest Service is required by law to engage the public as it plans for the future management and protection of our national forests. Please encourage the agency to improve its draft plans for the Inyo, Sierra, and Sequoia National Forests by:

- Applying prescribed fire and managed fire on roughly 150,000 acres per year across the three
- forests to more closely follow the natural fire regime and to reduce build-up of fuels.
- Focusing restoration on removing surface and ladder fuels (small trees).
- Adopting tree diameter limits to protect large and very large trees from logging and thinning operations.
- Limiting salvage logging to the removal of hazards to human life and property.



## TAKE ACTION FOR OUR FORESTS!

The Forest Service has an important job to do to keep our national forests healthy into the future so our families can continue to enjoy and explore them.

Ensuring that whole natural systems are healthy will help them survive against new and growing threats, while also protecting clean air and clean water for our communities. And since the national forests belong to each and every one of us, we can all have our say and urge the agency to create new plans for the Inyo, Sierra, and Sequoia National Forests that protect wildlife, sustain surrounding communities, safeguard wilderness and wild rivers, and ensure clean air and drinking water for millions.

As Woody Guthrie said so well, "This land is your land, this land is my land." It is our right and responsibility to safeguard our natural heritage

for current and future generations to explore and enjoy. You can have your voice heard by attending public meetings and writing a comment letter or email to the Forest Service before the comment period ends on August 25, 2016. Comments may be submitted to the agency electronically at <https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/CommentInput?Project=3375> or via e-mail to [r5planrevision@fs.fed.us](mailto:r5planrevision@fs.fed.us). Comments may also be submitted in writing to:

Planning Team Leader, Forest Plan Revision, 1839 South Newcomb Street, Porterville, CA 93257.

## QUESTIONS? PLEASE CONTACT:

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