

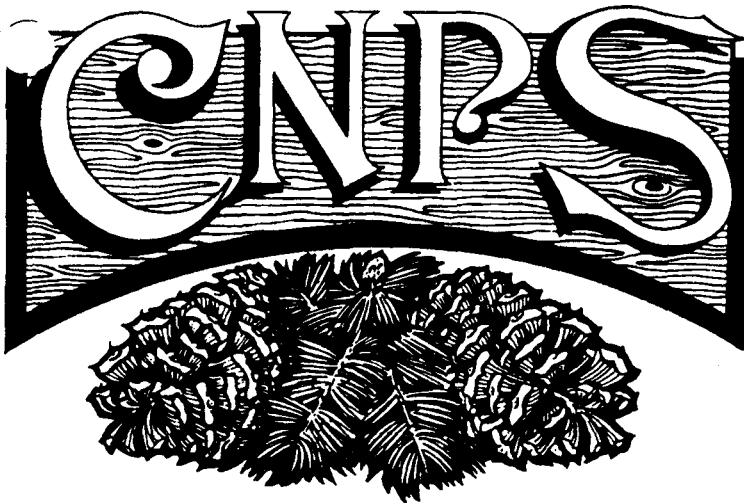
DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF THE CALIFORNIA NATIVE FLORA

BRISTLECONE • CHAPTER

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 9, No. 4

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NEXT CHAPTER MEETING
September 26, 7:30 pm, at the White Mountain Research Station on East Line Street. Robert Holland of the Dept. of Fish & Game's Nongame Heritage Program will speak to us on "Wetland Communities in Inyo County, their inventory and Preservation". Come to be informed on this vital and timely issue.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

The citizens of the Owens Valley have been arguing with the City of Los Angeles about water exports since the early part of the century. The loss of surface waters from streams and springs was bad enough but when pumping began in earnest by the City in the early '70s to fill a second aqueduct, the Valley began to dry up. Court actions followed back and forth between the County and the City as each sought to gain or retain the advantage. The litigation seemed as if it could be endless.

So the City and the County decided that it was time to at least make the effort to fashion a water management agreement that would provide the City with water (not an unlimited amount) and yet preserve what was left of the Valley, if not gradually restore it to a semblance of its former self.

This process involved many years of technical studies which it is believed will help enable both agencies to evaluate soil water loss for vegetation and to agree upon a yearly pumping program and volume of export that will not stress the plants on the valley floor to the point of extirpation.

There are those in the Valley who would stop in its tracks this process to achieve an agreement, and urge reinstatement of the court battles as they do not believe the County is capable of matching the City's wits in joint management of our water. However, this process to achieve an agreement has been underway now for some six years. Much money, time, work, soul searching, etc. has been expended to arrive at a workable agreement. The draft EIR is soon to be issued for public review and comment. The public can soon make an intelligent decision as to whether the proposals are viable, how to improve them, or even stop the process if necessary. But to throw away the last six years work without even doing this is being arbitrary and shortsighted. We urge that we spend six months more to look at what is presented and then decide what to do.

If the process is stopped now the City can go back to court and say "Look, we tried, but the County doesn't even want to work with us. We tried in good faith and look what happened." Then the City could plead hardship as it has done before in a drought and likely get what it wants without our having any persuasive input.

Let's continue with the agreement efforts first, then litigate if necessary.

. Vince Yoder

FIELD TRIPS

AUGUST 11: Alabama Hills riparian area. Leader: Vince Yoder. Meet at 9:00 am on Lubkin Creek Road at its intersection with Hwy 395. This is about 4.5 miles south of the center of Lone Pine. Bring the usual lunch, water, and a change of shoes. This can be a wet, muddy walk. Also bring a copy of the plant list in the November, 1989, issue of the Newsletter. The general public is most welcome. There will be flowers.

SEPTEMBER 15: Tioga Pass-Saddlebag Lake area. Leader: Mark Bagley. There are many interesting hikes in this area. Our exact destination will depend on late scouting reports. Although September is late for wildflowers we'll try to see as many as we can and compensate by enjoying the magnificent scenery. This will be an easy to moderate hike of 2 to 4 miles round-trip, at elevations above 9,000 feet. Bring a day pack with water, lunch, clothes for hot or cold, sunscreen, and walking shoes. Meet Saturday at 9:30 am at the junction of Tioga Pass Road (Hwy 120) and the turnoff to Saddlebag Lake.

NOTE: Field trip chairman, Doris Fredendall, would welcome ideas for an October trip. Do you have a favorite place for a fall trip?



FIELD TRIP REPORTS

MAY 26, Joshua Flats, Inyo Mountains.

A group of about 15 of us had the opportunity to spend a fine, cloudy morning in the magnificent Inyo Mountains.

Heading east on the Death Valley Road we particularly enjoyed finding the Austin penstemon (*Penstemon floridus* var. *austini*) and three hearts (*Tricardia watsonii*). On a stop overlooking a flat of winterfat (*Ceratoides lanata*) Mary DeDecker called attention to a barren strip parallel to the road across the flat from which vegetation had been removed without a permit from the Forest Service. It was an example of the County Road Department's frequent overuse of equipment at the expense of native plants. An effort was being made to set up an appointment with the Director of Public Works to discuss the problem.

Arriving at Joshua Flats we climbed up a slope through the Joshua Woodland, where we found a good flower display. There was an abundance of small Englemann cacti (*Echinocereus engelmannii*) with brilliant magenta flowers, deep orange desert mariposas (*Calochortua kennedyi*), and perky little gold buttons (*Erigeron aphanactis*) among a variety of blooms.

Judging by the abundance of flowering shrubs, cacti and herbs, we realized that the Inyo Mountains continue to support a wide variety of plant life even in drought years. Our leader, Doris Fredendall, knew just where to find them. It was a delightful day.

..... Kathy Duval, Bishop

June 23, Wyman Canyon, White Mountains

A group of seven in four 4-wheel-drive vehicles assembled at Schulman Grove in the White Mountains for a trip down Wyman Canyon. We had decided to make it a one-day trip rather than an overnighiter. The group was led by Paul and Mary in their sturdy Toyota which negotiates desert canyon roads like a mountain sheep.

Beginning at elevation 10,100 feet, Wyman Canyon descends to 6,800 feet where it exits onto the fans of Deep Springs Valley. The gorge provides a fascinating transect of the eastside White Mountains flora. The road is fairly gradual and high clearance is needed only at a couple of the many stream crossings in the lower portion of the canyon. We noted that there was surface flow in the stream starting at elevation 7,900 feet and continuing down to the fanhead. There was a flow of at least 100 GPM for most of the stream reach below 7,900 feet. Some of the more interesting discoveries were:

<i>Trifolium monoense</i> (Mono clover)	10,100 ft.
<i>Stipa comata</i> (Needle and thread grass)	8,800 ft.

- Pteryxia petrea* (Rock pteryxia) 8,500 ft.
- Eriogonum rupinum* (Limberpine buckwheat) 8,500 ft.
- Townsendia scapigera* (Ground-daisy) 8,500 ft.
- Salvia dorrii* var. *clokeyi* (Clokey blue sage) 7,900 ft.
- Penstemon floridus* var. *austinii* (Austin penstemon) 7,900 ft.
- Potentilla saxosa* (Rock potentilla) 6.800 ft.

Mary noted a very large mountain mahogany in side canyon. The group estimated its girth at over 8 feet. Doris Fredendall is familiar with the canyon and showed the group some very interesting habitats. Even though some species were missing from the canyon , probably due to the drought, it was a most productive trip.

..... John Gibson, Fresno

NATURAL AREAS AND YOSEMITE: FOR THE FUTURE

**A Global Issues Symposium Joining the 17th
Annual Natural Areas Conference with the
Yosemite Centennial Celebration.**

October 13-14, 1990 Yosemite National Park

**October 14-19, 1990 Sheraton Conference Center,
Concord, California**

**October 19, 1990 San Francisco Hilton Hotel
San Francisco, California**

This conference, to take place at the above locations, promises to be an inspiring series. Outstanding speakers will be featured. For brochures or further information call Jerry Edelbrook, Symposium Cooprinator at (415) 556-1009.

RATIONAL PROTECTION FOR OWENS VALLEY, continued.

by Greg James, Inyo County Counsel and Water Director

The environmental effects of this proposed agreement and all significant adverse impacts will be described in an environmental report (EIR) now being prepared by EIP Associates of San Francisco, together with Los Angeles and Inyo County. This EIR must identify a mitigation measure for each past and future significant environmental impact. The content of this EIR must be acceptable to the County, and Inyo will only accept a document that is in full compliance with all laws and court orders.

Once a draft EIR is completed, it will be made available for public review and comment for a 90-day period. Several public meetings on the draft will be held during this period. Following this review, a final EIR will be prepared which will address all comments that are received.

Only after completion of the final EIR, and after the public meetings on the EIR and the agreement, will the Board of Supervisors consider approval of the agreement. A final decision probably will not be made until near the end of 1990.

One of the strongest safeguards the agreement offers is that it will be an enforceable final court judgment. Because of this, the goals which are the heart of the agreement will be extremely difficult to change or disregard. While the paramount goals will be protected from change, there must be an ability to revise the methods of achieving the goals whenever they can be improved. Thus, if conditions, studies, or research indicate that the methods should be changed to better attain the goals, the agreement contains provisions for their modification or replacement. Moreover, if there is disagreement over the need for studies or a change in methods, the agreement provides for rapid and binding dispute resolution.

Among the methods for protecting vegetation are provisions for turning off wells if soil water available to vegetation is projected to fall below the estimated needs of the vegetation. These were developed using the best available information from the studies. Their purpose is to prevent damage to the valley floor vegetation. Since 1988, many wells have been turned off under these provisions, and through agreement, many more have been turned off in an attempt to further protect vegetation.

Even with these wells off, due to the drought, water tables lowered by pumping on some areas have not recovered sufficiently to replenish the soil water available to valley floor vegetation. This has occurred at a time when precipitation, the vegetation's primary source of water, has been inadequate during the past three years to supply the water needs of the vegetation. The effects of this lack of precipitation are obvious to all who observe the valley floor or the alluvial slopes which rise from the valley to the mountains.

Except for an area of approximately 300 acres near Five Bridges, the effect on vegetation of groundwater pumping during the past three years are not as obvious. Therefore the County is, has, and will continue to make every effort to document whether or not the degree of decrease or change in vegetation in areas affected by groundwater pumping has been greater than in vegetation affected only by the drought. If decreases or changes have occurred due to groundwater pumping that are inconsistent with the goals of the agreement, the County will do everything possible to seek restoration of the affected vegetation through mitigation.

Also, in an attempt to avoid a recurrence of these conditions, the County has invoked the provision of the proposed agreement that allows for modification of methods of achieving its primary goals. The County is seeking a more conservative approach to future groundwater management. It has called for management to allow water tables to recover to the rooting zones of vegetation, and be maintained there until extensive studies have determined whether groundwater pumping has, or has not, resulted in decreases and changes in vegetation.

The County's position is that if no such decreases or changes have occurred, operation of the existing well turn-on and turn-off provisions can resume. However, if decreases or changes inconsistent with the goals of the agreement are documented, the well turn-on and turn-off provisions must be permanently modified or replaced to avoid a recurrence of such vegetation damage. The County will approve the agreement only if it contains this policy or

some acceptable variation of it.

Without doubt, there is much uncertainty and many challenges facing both Inyo County and Los Angeles in the coming months, but I believe that it just doesn't make sense to renounce the agreement and submit the valley's fate to the courts at this time.

I can't predict the future, but Los Angeles' willingness to turn off wells and abide by other provisions of the agreement during this prolonged drought, recent changes in the water management hierarchy in Los Angeles, and a growing awareness of the value of our global environment, all give cause for hope that a comprehensive, legally adequate EIR, and a strong environmentally protective agreement can be realized.

If these accomplishments are not satisfactorily achieved through discussion and negotiation in the coming months, the time will be right to once again enter into battle. If, however, there is success, long-term protection of the valley will be virtually guaranteed and a costly, protracted legal and legislative fight with an uncertain outcome for the valley's environment can be avoided.

NOTE: The above was taken from the WATER REPORTER, VOL. 3, NO. 3, APRIL 26, 1990, by the Inyo County Water Department.

TENSE TIMES IN INYO

The above-mentioned EIR is expected to be released for public comment near mid-August. This EIR is to satisfy a request by the appellate court that Los Angeles prepare an EIR on its water gathering project for the second aqueduct. That request was made in 1973. In the meantime, Los Angeles has submitted two EIR documents to the court. Both were rejected as inadequate. The court has allowed a long delay since then to allow negotiations to proceed between the two parties. Part of the proposed agreement has been that the EIR would be prepared jointly by Inyo and Los Angeles.

The Bristlecone Chapter, along with most long-standing environmentally oriented individuals and organizations have strongly encouraged the negotiation process. We have made our wishes known as to what an agreement should cover, and we expect to participate in the EIR hearings. Inyo negotiators have responded to our concerns.

On the other hand, there is aggressive opposition to **any agreement with Los Angeles**. Several groups have organized under the high sounding names of "Eastern Sierra Environmental and Water Conservation Association", "Friends of the Eastern Sierra", and "People who love Owens Valley". Their chief objective is to prevent any agreement, so they attack anyone who supports that effort. It seems that it is easier, or more fun, to plant suspicion than to give positive input. These people have succeeded in getting 25% of the affected supervisorial district voters to sign recall petitions against the three supervisors who were not up for reelection this year. So recall elections will be held in November. Their primary objective is to get rid of Greg James and his highly qualified staff

In The Water Department. The dissenters insist that the only solution is to go to court to achieve control of our water. The fact is that this agreement, if adopted, will have to be approved by the court to be valid.

Whatever happens, it is a turning point in the history of Owens Valley. To those of us who have been pushing for a reasonable solution after most of a century of conflict, it seems like a never ending nightmare.

CONSERVATION CORNER

We agree with the Eastern Sierra Chapter of the Audubon Society that the City of Bishop and the County of Inyo should recognize wetlands as being special and worth saving in our desert environment. The Bristlecone Chapter has been recording and speaking up for wetland habitats for a long time, so we are glad to see this push to protect them.

Audubon is protesting development of acreage on the edge of Bishop. There are plenty of already disturbed, vacant, dry parcels around and near the local communities which could be developed. Let's work toward their use first and save our wetlands for their biological values and the natural beauty that they inherently have

.....Vince Yoder

CHEERS TO OUR NEW MEMBERS:

Barrie Freeman, Lee Vining
Lyn and Ralph Haber, Mammoth

A NEW EXOTIC IN THE INYO MOUNTAINS

It took a visitor, Nigel Hancock of Las Alamos, to discover a strange little "Ranunculus" at a spring on Santa Rita Flat. It turns out to be *Ceratocephalus testiculatus* (Cranz) Roth, also known as *Ranunculus testiculatus* Cranz. Munz lists it in his supplement. It is a tiny annual, 4 to 7 cm tall, a tuft of leaves which are divided into narrowly linear parts. The minute petals are yellow and the distinctive achenes have a beak twice the length of the body.

The species has been introduced from the Old World, apparently reaching Inyo by way of Lassen and Modoc counties and the Walker River in Mono County. We hope it will not become a nuisance plant.

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY - Membership Application

The California Native Plant Society is an organization of lay persons and professionals united by an interest in the plants of California. It is open to all. The Society, working through its local chapters, seeks to increase understanding of California's native flora and to preserve this rich resource for future generations. Varied interests are represented.

Name _____ P.O. or Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

Membership Category:

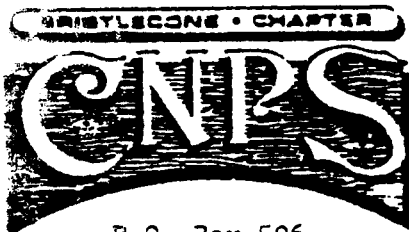
_____ Life, Couple	\$500	I wish to be affiliated with the
_____ Life, Individual	450	Bristlecone Chapter _____
_____ Supporting	50	Other _____
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_____ Individual or Library	18	Please make check payable to:
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GIFT contribution: Where most
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California Native Plant Society



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