



March, 2004



# Celebrating 40 in '04

Start chilling the bubbly - the Wilderness Act marks its 40th anniversary on Sept. 3 of this year. And to celebrate the occasion, the Wilderness Workshop is organizing a whole schedule of events under the banner "Celebrating 40 in '04."

The events will run throughout the summer and fall, peaking around the actual anniversary date, which happens to coincide with Labor Day weekend. (See sidebar for tentative lineup.)

Signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson in 1964, the Wilderness Act established the first 9 million acres of the National Wilderness Preservation System. More importantly, the Act empowers members of Congress, federal employees and - most significantly - ordinary citizens to propose new or expanded wilderness areas.

As a result, the original 9 million acres of designated wilderness has now grown to 106 million, comprising nearly 5 percent of U.S. land area. And the process of securing permanent wilderness protection for other roadless areas continues, despite

the temporary glitch of an unsympathetic administration in Washington: wilderness proposals for five states are currently before Congress, and citizens of six other states are preparing additional proposals.



One of those proposals is the Citizens' Wilderness Vision being championed by a coalition of Colorado conservation groups, including the Wilderness Workshop. This initiative, targeting some 300,000 acres of ready-to-designate wilderness, is expected to gather steam in the coming months. Several of the action areas are in our own White River National Forest - for full details, see [www.wilderness-workshop.org/future.html](http://www.wilderness-workshop.org/future.html).

The network of wilderness established in the past four decades is an incredible gift to us from an earlier generation of farsighted conservationists. Wilderness areas serve as irreplaceable biological reservoirs, and are also the foundation of our prosperity and high quality

## 40 ways (give or take) to celebrate wilderness

Our schedule of events to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Wilderness Act is still taking shape, and we're looking for folks to serve on event organizing committees and/or to volunteer at the events. The more people that get involved, the more fun it should be. If you'd like to help with any of the following, please call the contact person listed.



**May or June - Panel discussion on wilderness** with invited experts (Connie Harvey, 925-3502)

**Mid-June - Community potluck picnic** - food, entertainment, raffle prizes in a public park (Charles Hopton, 925-1511)



**July 4 - Wilderness float** in the Aspen parade (Tim McFlynn, 923-2391)

**Summer, TBD - Hunter Creek Celebration** - in association with Friends of Hunter Creek (Charles Hopton, 925-1511)

**Summer, TBD - "Stars & Shots"** - tailgate stargazing event (Mike Stranahan, 923-3437)

**Summer, TBD - "Wild at Heart"** - slide presentation(s) by local author Janis Huggins (Dawn Keating, 963-3023)

**Summer & fall, TBD -**

**Guided wilderness walks** (John Emerick, 925-4281)

**Early Sept. - "Images of Wilderness"** - second annual juried photo exhibition, pre-opening fundraising dinner and associated events (John Emerick, 925-4281)

**Early Sept. - Walk for Wilderness** - fun walk, speakers and shwag, in association with the White River Interpretive Association (John Emerick, 925-4281)



**September(?) - "Wilderness Heroes" dinner** - benefit event honoring Connie Harvey, Joy Caudill and Dottie Fox (Ginni Galicinao, 925-8699)

**September(?) - Major author lecture & cocktail reception** - we are seeking a speaker of the caliber of Terry Tempest Williams (Dottie Fox, 927-4483)

**September(?) - "Wild by Nature"** - premiere of WW-sponsored documentary (Tim McFlynn, 923-2391)



**Fall - Vote for Wilderness** - pre-election campaign in association with other environmental groups (Sloan Shoemaker, 544-0733)

**October - Candidate forum on the environment** (Sloan

Continued on next page ↗

# Fire forum a blazing success

By Sloan Shoemaker,  
WW executive director

The Healthy Forests Restoration Act makes nice noises about thinning trees to prevent wildfire, but is really about allowing more logging of big trees in the backcountry. We opposed it, and we mobilized dozens of local officials to do so too, but of course it passed anyway.

So now what?

That was the subject of a March 6 conference in Frisco organized by the Wilderness Workshop, the Wilderness Society and several other conservation groups. "Wildland Fire and the Healthy Forests Restoration Act: Where Do We Go from Here?" was a resounding success, drawing more than 50 city council members, county commissioners, fire safety officers and even some Forest Service officials from around the Western Slope.

The purpose of the conference was to educate local leaders about Colorado's fire ecology, community wildfire protection, and the nuances of the HFRA. We took a lead role in organizing the conference because we firmly believe that humans must allow fire to play its central role in keeping fire-adapted ecosystems healthy, and the only way to do that is to ensure that human communities

are also fire-adapted.

The keynote speaker was Jack Cohen, the nation's foremost researcher on community wildfire protection. Cohen works at the Forest Service's fire sciences lab in Missoula, Montana, and has demonstrated through experiments and case studies that the only way to prevent the loss of homes and communities to wildfire is to make them ignition-proof. Cohen's research shows that treatments in the backcountry (i.e., cutting down the big trees that timber companies covet) do nothing to protect communities from wildfire, and in fact divert scarce resources from the only place they can do any good. On top of that, they create a false sense of security.

Other speakers addressed the fallacies of the HFRA, how to conduct true community protection, how to use the HFRA to your community's advantage, and where to look for funding to conduct appropriate mitigation activities. Participants also left knowing that conservation groups like WW are fully engaged in seeking meaningful solutions to sustain both forest ecosystems and mountain communities.

We hope to build on this success by hosting more events like this around the Western Slope.



## Great Old Broad emeritus

*It was a media event, party and storytelling hour all rolled into one when Dottie Fox received an award earlier this month upon her retirement from the board of the Great Old Broads for Wilderness. Dottie, who remains on the Wilderness Workshop board, was one of the founding board members of the Great Old Broads, a national group dedicated to the proposition that age is no barrier to enjoying wilderness. A film crew shot the award presentation for the WW-backed documentary "Wild by Nature."*

## Activists sound off for quiet use

By Clare Bastable,  
Colorado Mountain Club

Sometimes you've gotta raise a little ruckus to keep the peace.

The first annual Quiet Commotion conference, held at Monarch Ski Area Feb. 27-29, lived up to its billing, drawing nearly 60 non-motorized recreationists and conservationists to learn how to make some noise for the "quiet use" of public lands.

The backcountry experience that we've long enjoyed on public lands in the West is becoming increasingly compromised, with the backcountry being fundamentally transformed by motorized recreation vehicles from primitive to roaded, and human-powered recreation under threat from development and growing numbers of recreational users. The conference was designed to create a regional network of quiet-use activists, and to give them the tools necessary to promote quiet use in public lands in their com-

munities. Participants came from all over the Southern Rockies region, including Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and Montana.

Speakers and workshops addressed such topics as the laws and regulations concerning quiet use; grassroots organizing; working effectively with public land managers; and talking to the media. Participants were also given opportunities to share case studies of quiet-use campaigns that they have undertaken, and lessons that they learned from their successes and setbacks.

The Quiet Commotion catalyzed the creation of a working association of quiet-use activists, enabling them to call on each other for advice and ideas and to promote regional and national quiet-use opportunities in the backcountry. If you're interested in becoming part of this effort, please contact Clare Bastable at the Colorado Mountain Club at [bastac@cmc.org](mailto:bastac@cmc.org) or 618-1341.

## 40 ways to celebrate

### ⚡ From front page

Shoemaker, 544-0733)

**Fall, TBD – John Fielder slide show** – to coincide with release of his upcoming book (Dave Reed, 544-0733)

**Fall, TBD – Kids' wilderness art & writing contest** (Susy Ellison, 963-0463)

**TBD – "Papa Bear"** – premiere of locally produced documentary (Dave Reed, 544-0733)

**TBD – Wilderness poetry reading night** (John Emerick, 925-4281)

We could also use help staffing a table at the following events: Earth Day, Glenwood (April 24); Earth Day, Carbondale (May 8); Strawberry Days, Glenwood (June 19-20); Mountain Fair, Carbondale (late July); River Days, Basalt (late August); and Potato Days, Carbondale (early Oct.).

# Court rules for wilderness in bogus mining claim case

Just before this newsletter went to press – on March 8 – the Colorado Supreme Court handed down a decision that represents a huge victory for wilderness, and that should set a powerful precedent for resolving contested mining claims in the upper Roaring Fork Valley.

The dispute goes back to the late 19th-century, when the silver ran out and Pitkin County was taking possession of claims whose taxes were in arrears. Fast-forward to 1994, when Pitkin and Eagle counties negotiated a complex land swap with the Forest Service for the El Jebel Tree Farm. For its part, Pitkin swapped 267 mining claims it had acquired title to. A group of locals, led by attorney Gary Wright, filed suit at the eleventh hour, claiming the county didn't have legitimate title to 53 of the claims and demanding that title be returned to the original owners' heirs or that they be paid the full value of the property.

When this scheme was made public, the Wilderness Workshop was outraged and quickly organized to shut it down. Poring over maps, we found that the disputed claims were scattered throughout our favorite wilderness getaways – around Conundrum Trail and Hot Springs, on the ridgeline behind Highlands Bowl, astride the trail up to Castle Peak, on the shores of American Lake, overlooking the ghost town of Independence, etc. The Workshop's founders had worked too hard to get these areas designated as wilderness, and we were not about to let these land speculators hold them for ransom.

It was up to us to make sure the county and the Forest Service vigorously defended against these bogus claims. We set about building a case to convince them of the importance of fighting these spurious speculators and worked with

Public Counsel of the Rockies to hire one of Colorado's best environmental attorneys, Lori Potter, to lead the charge.

Denied standing as a co-defendant with the county, we filed friend-of-the-court briefs demonstrating the harm that would come to our members if these land grabs were successful, and argued for the validity of Pitkin's title to these claims. We backed it all up with some strategically targeted fundraising to support Lori's efforts on our behalf. We can unabashedly state that the Wilderness Workshop was the catalyst that rallied the defense team that ultimately prevailed in the Colorado Supreme Court.

The Court's statement that it "wasn't prepared to reward a claim such as this" carries real clout, as this decision is the first in a score of similar suits. All succeeding cases will refer to this decision as the precedent, hopefully finding their arguments equally phony.

In short, the land speculators rolled the dice and lost. Underestimating the grit and vigilance of public interest groups like the Wilderness Workshop doesn't pay.

## Pitco says no to fee demo

Members of the Wilderness Workshop and the Western Slope No Fee Coalition turned out in force at a February



hearing to urge the Pitkin County Commissioners to draft a resolution opposing the user-

fee program on Forest Service and BLM lands. The effort paid off: as we went to press, the commissioners were set to formally consider the resolution, and all indications were that it would pass unanimously.

## Your WW calendar

**Tuesday, March 16** – "High Peaks & Lakes: Exploring Colorado's Wilderness," by **Katey Buster**. 7 p.m. at Zelé Music Café. Part of WW's Winter Slide Show Series, Katey's show will feature images from climbs of North Maroon, Pyramid and other Fourteeners and the hike to awesome Ice Lakes Basin.



**Thursday, March 18** – Public meeting on the state's contemplated **wolf management plan**, held by the Colorado Division of

Wildlife. 7-9 p.m., Adams Mark Hotel, Grand Junction.

**Thursday, March 25** – "Wildfire: An Incendiary Topic," by WW executive director **Sloan Shoemaker**. 7:30 p.m. at ACES. Sloan's slide show will focus on wildfire, fire ecology and community protection, featuring some spine-tingling photos of wildfire.

**Tuesday, April 13** – "Seals on Ice: Weddell Seals and Science in Antarctica," by WW board member **Susy Ellison**. 6:30 p.m. at Zelé Music Café. Susy will show slides from her two-and-a-half-month stint in Antarctica as part of a National Science Foundation research project.



**Saturday, April 24** – **Earth Day** at Two Rivers Park in Glenwood Springs. Come drop by the Wilderness Workshop display table.

**Saturday, May 8** – **Earth Day** on Main Street Carbondale. Organizers of Carbondale's belated celebration of Earth Day are planning a really big show. Again, WW will be there.

**TBD** – **Clare Bastable** will give a slide presentation in Carbondale on **alternatives to drilling on the Roan plateau**, whenever the BLM finally releases its draft management plan for the plateau.

You might expect the county to support the "fee demo" program, since user fees help pay for summertime bus service to the Maroon Bells, as well as maintenance of tourist facilities at Maroon Lake. But the commissioners were able to see that drawbacks of this "pay to play" funding system far outweigh its meager benefits.

At the hearing, WW member Annette Keller really nailed the issue when she noted that the Forest Service can't justify charging us to use our own undeveloped lands – its own surveys show this. So, if it's under pressure to raise money through fees, it will have a strong incentive to develop its lands with otherwise unnecessary facilities and activities that it can charge for. And with

their budgets tied to fee income, local districts will be motivated to produce more recreation "product" to earn more fees.

User fees may even make the Forest Service's financial problems worse. The more facilities the agency builds, the more reliant it becomes on fees to cover their maintenance. That's exactly what we're already seeing in the Maroon Valley – having built its fancy "Flintstone toilets" at Maroon Lake, the Forest Service now claims it needs user fees to clean them!

The Wilderness Workshop has long maintained that the solution to this problem is for Washington to fund the Forest Service adequately so that local managers don't have to hold a bake sale, in effect, to clean the toilets.



## Wilderness Workshop

P.O. Box 9025  
Aspen, CO 81612  
Office located in the Yellow  
Brick Building, 215 N.  
Garmisch  
Tel (970) 544-0733  
Fax (970) 544-8210  
www.wildernessworkshop.org  
info@wildernessworkshop.org

The Wilderness Workshop's mission is to protect and conserve the wilderness and natural resources of the Roaring Fork Watershed, the White River National Forest, and adjacent lands.

The Workshop is a non-profit organization that engages in research, education, legal advocacy, and grassroots organizing to protect the ecological integrity of local landscapes and public lands with a focus on the monitoring and conservation of air and water quality, wildlife species and habitat, natural communities, and lands of wilderness quality.

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Sloan Shoemaker  
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## Helicopters in wilderness

Did you know that the Colorado Army Air Guard conducts helicopter training exercises in proposed wilderness areas on the White River National Forest?

Yep, the Air Guard has a memorandum of understanding with the Forest Service and the BLM to allow its troops to fly choppers in several sensitive areas on either side of I-70, including Deep Creek and Red Table Mountain. Our thin air and tricky winds apparently simulate flying conditions in high-altitude hot spots such as Afghanistan.

Unfortunately, the flights may present a problem for getting wilderness designation for these areas. Since the FS and BLM are planning to conduct an environmental assessment or impact statement on the training exercises, we're gearing up to provide comments on behalf of the wilderness.

## Nature-writing symposium

Attention budding nature writers: the Wilderness Workshop is co-sponsoring a two-day symposium with author Gary Ferguson, as part of the Aspen Writers' Foundation's summer 2004 writing retreat.



The symposium will be held June 29-30. Cost is \$195 for the symposium alone, or \$495 for the entire four-day retreat.

Formerly an interpretive naturalist for the U.S. Forest Service, Gary Ferguson is the author of 15 books on nature and science. His titles include *Through the Woods*, winner of the Lowell Thomas Award, and *Hawks Rest*, winner of the Mountains & Plains Booksellers Award for non-

fiction.

For more information, call the Writers' Foundation at 925-3122.

## WW on the air

WW executive director Sloan Shoemaker is literally the voice of the environment on Aspen Public Radio (KAJX). With Brent Gardner-Smith, he's now co-hosting a monthly local public-affairs program focusing on environmental issues.



The program airs on the second Thursday of every month from 11:30 a.m. to noon.

Sloan is also going to be in the hot seat on Saturday, March 10, when he participates in a panel discussion on forest management appeals that's part of the spring meeting of Club 20, the Western Slope economic development group. Co-panelists will include the head of the Colorado Timber Producers Association, a Forest Service representative, and a former member of Rep. Scott McInnis' staff.

## Volunteer opportunities

If you're willing to donate some of your time to the cause, we'd love to have you. Please call or drop by the office. The main help we can use is with staging the 40th-anniversary events (see page 1). Other ideas:

- ◆ Help with mailings.
- ◆ Print out color copies of the WW newsletter on your home computer.
- ◆ Photograph our summer wilderness monitors at work.
- ◆ Help with computer, networking and database issues.

## Donor honor roll

We're deeply grateful for the following donations made between Jan. 1 and March 1, 2004:

### General operating donations

#### \$1000+

Anonymous  
Carol Racine

#### \$250-499

Anonymous  
Charles & Heather Hopton

#### \$100-249

Dawn Keating  
Chuck & Meredith Ogilby  
Hal Sundin  
Diana Tomback & Jim Knowles  
Betty Weiss  
Toni Zurcher

#### \$50-99

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#### Up to \$49

Diana Bartlett  
Loren Leigh Dougall  
Virginia & Rick Newton  
Warren Ohlrich  
Bruce Parlette  
Rebecca Price  
Trevor Washko  
Judith Wender

### Donations to "Wild by Nature"

#### \$1000+

Anonymous (2)  
Catto Charitable Foundation  
John McBride  
Hensley Peterson

#### \$500-999

Amory Lovins

#### \$250-499

David Hyman & Barbara Reid

#### \$100-249

Marty Pickett & Edgell Pyles

### In-kind donations

Paradise Bakery – cookies for WW's annual board retreat  
Debbie Falender – facilitation of the annual retreat

### WW's wish list

- ◆ Digital camera
- ◆ Digital projector
- ◆ Wall-mounted magazine rack with vertical slots