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[National Monument Proposals] [1]

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112

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5-23-00

JP
can you do?
PS

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Podesta



CHIEF OF STAFF TO THE PRESIDENT

Steve Reich



WASHINGTON

Antiquities Act Opportunities

AZ	Ironwood Forest - Tuscon	100,000 acres	unanimous support of the county supervisors
CO	Canyons of the Ancients	164,000 acres	Campbell has withdrawn his legislation in anticipation of a proclamation
OR	Soda Mountain - Ashland	52,000 acres	Kitzhaber supports; the delegation is not opposing
WA	Hanford Reach	58,000 acres	Sen. Murray insists that now is the time
DC	Sailors and Airmen Home		Lincoln's summer residence

17 National Monuments created by Teddy Roosevelt

11 National Monuments (including the above) created or expanded by William J. Clinton

*more to come - These 5 are ready now!
Time is short -*



CHIEF OF STAFF TO THE PRESIDENT

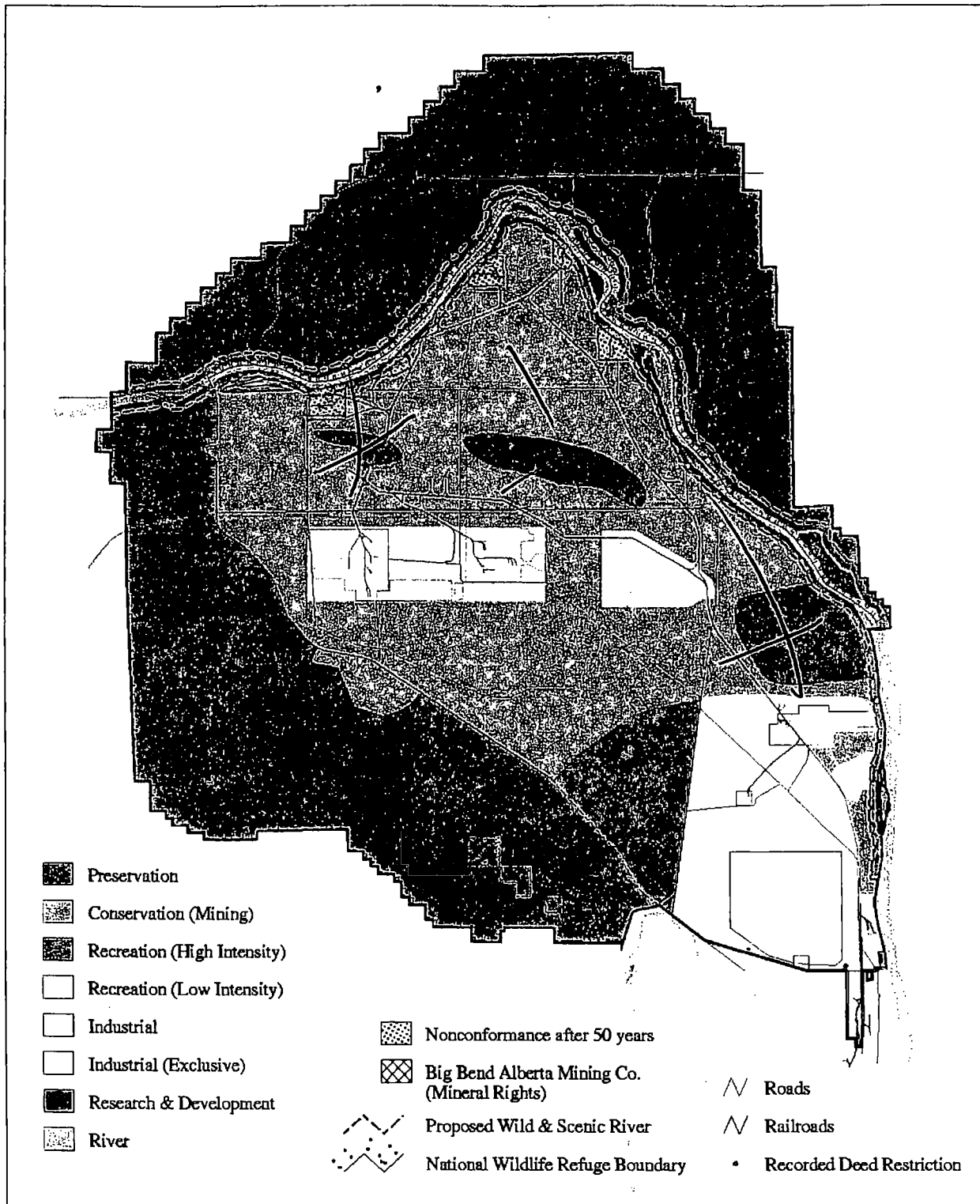
Karl -

here's the stuff -

Michèle 6-1783

Proposed Hanford Reach National Monument

Figure S-10. DOE's Preferred Alternative.



BH:rupp 04/23/98 clup/prefalt.aml Database: 25-AUG-1999



NEWS SUMMARY

U.S. Department of the Interior

Office of Communications

PICK-UP IN ROOM 1063

WEDNESDAY, MAY 17, 2000

seattle **PI.com** Northwest

Babbitt backs Hanford Reach, but locals want control

Wednesday, May 17, 2000

By JOEL CONNELLY ☒

SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER NATIONAL CORRESPONDENT

RICHLAND -- Pledging that the Clinton administration will "have closure" on long-running Western land battles before it leaves office, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt yesterday toured the Hanford Reach of the Columbia River and came away committed to its preservation.

Later in the day, however, Babbitt stood in a crowded Richland hotel ballroom and heard officials from three counties argue that local control is a better way of protecting the wild stretch of river than having President Clinton designate it a national monument.



Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt discusses the Hanford Reach, a 51-mile stretch of the Columbia River near Richland, yesterday with Thomas Morning Owl of the Umatilla Indian Tribe.

AP photo

The good-natured crowd, by its applause, appeared evenly divided on the monument proposal. Babbitt argued the intricacies of water law, showed a detailed knowledge of Hanford's history, joked about bureaucracy and promised that mid-Columbia residents would have a major say in managing a monument if he recommends that path to the president.

"I will make every provision I reasonably can to be responsive" to

local concerns, Babbitt pledged. "What you want these places to be is assets to the community."

Babbitt described as "overwhelming" and "staggering" the 51-mile stretch of undammed river, where hawks and falcons swoop down from chalk-white bluffs on one side of the river, and deer and elk browse amid shut-down nuclear reactors of the Hanford Nuclear Reservation.

"This really is the last wild place on the Columbia River to tidewater," he said.

"What I see out there is a fabulous salmon spawning ground unequalled in North America."

He declined to say whether he will recommend designating the Hanford

05/24/00 00:10
Seattle Times, 5/21

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The Seattle Times

May 21, 2000, Sunday Final Edition

SECTION: EDITORIAL; Pg. B8

LENGTH: 700 words

HEADLINE: Uniting behind a plan to save Hanford Reach

BODY:

INTERIOR Secretary Bruce Babbitt's proposal to protect the Hanford Reach by having President Clinton declare it a national monument is a disappointing necessity.

This approach is less desirable than locally inspired legislative solutions that were routinely blocked in Congress.

The last free-flowing stretch of the Columbia River is a regional asset of national significance. It is best protected through federal oversight with local consultation and involvement.

The desire to protect the Hanford Reach is universal among the contentious parties in Benton, Franklin and Grant counties. What has been at stake all along is the local role in writing and implementing a management plan for the federal property. The most fearful may have blown their best chance for sustained local involvement.

Sen. Patty Murray tried for years to win congressional designation of the Hanford Reach as a wild and scenic river. Her attempts were obstructed by Sen. Slade Gorton and Rep. Doc Hastings, among others.

Local officials, prodded by Gorton and Hastings, have grave doubts about the federal government's ability to fairly manage the Hanford Reach or protect existing land uses, water rights and recreational access.

Legitimate questions are roiled by distrust and election-year politicking.

Fifty-one miles of the Columbia survived unscathed because of its proximity to the Hanford Nuclear Reservation. Protecting America's nuclear secrets also protected chinook spawning grounds. Attempts to dam and dredge the Hanford Reach were turned back by security and environmental considerations.

This past winter, a panel representing county, city, labor and environmental interests put together a

framework for a 12-member commission to help manage the Hanford Reach. This effort fell apart when county commissioners pulled their representatives out of the talks. What happened?

Most finger-pointing is at Sen. Gorton's office. Others blame environmentalists and Murray for trying to steal the limelight. Even untimely changes in key staff positions in congressional offices might have foiled a budding compromise.

Murray's plan would have designated the Hanford Reach as recreational under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. This least-proscriptive approach respects existing uses, leaves private property alone and provides access to the river. Combined with the locally conceived 12-member commission, that could have been an effective management vehicle.

Unfortunately, that approach was scuttled.

Designating the Hanford Reach a national monument should come as no surprise. It is an executive option under the federal Antiquities Act, used by every president since 1906 to protect unique federal lands. Management is supposed to be in consultation with local interests, as Babbitt has promised.

Babbitt must address several issues if he wants to bring peace to the bickering and salvage local confidence.

Tackle water rights and allocation directly. This is at the bottom of many fears. With groundwater pollution from the nuclear reservation, surface water is key. Will existing water diversions be maintained as they were in Murray's bill? Will federal monument status usurp local water rights or related issues?

Irrigation canals are a boon to agriculture and attractive to wildlife. But are unlined canals behind erosion problems? Instead of leaping to the worst-case fears about irrigation, look at reducing infiltration. The abandoned proposal called for such studies.

Babbitt has to be forthright about continued river uses and access.

Naming the Hanford Reach a national monument is a less desirable way to protect the river and surrounding land than legislative alternatives that can be tailored and revisited. But this is what bickering beget.

When something like this happens, one can hardly be smug about obvious opportunities squandered on the main stem of the Columbia River over the past 60 years; mistakes taxpayers have paid \$3 billion to try to correct.

The same people who helped sink a better option now call the administration high-handed. Ignore them. The Hanford Reach must be protected and the president can act appropriately to see that it is.

Yakima Herald-Republic, 5/21

It's Time for Action on Hanford Reach Issue

It's not the way we would have wanted it, but given the years of delays and frustrations we'll reluctantly throw our support behind Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt's recommendation that the Hanford Reach and adjacent lands be declared national monuments.

We've always supported continued federal protection for the last free-flowing stretch of the Columbia River, which flows through the Hanford Nuclear Reservation from Priest Rapids Dam to McNary Pool north of Richland. We've also advocated similar protection for lands known as the Wahluke Slope that have served as a security buffer zone for the Hanford operations.

After all, it's because of the federal control of Hanford that the Reach is still free flowing and the adjacent lands have evolved into a natural laboratory of flora and fauna. As the mission of Hanford changes and the mess of war-time plutonium production is cleaned up, the Reach and adjacent lands should come under renewed federal protection to keep them in their present states.

We would have preferred that the issue be hashed out in the congressional arena, with local and state input, rather than by executive fiat. But instead of definitive congressional action, we've seen stalemate for seven years, caught between the poles of federal protection backed by U.S. Sen. Patty Murray and shared local, state and federal stewardship championed by 4th District Congressman Doc Hastings.

That leaves the monument declaration as a viable alternative that can lead to conclusive action in the near future.

Babbitt is expected to propose that virtually all of the Hanford reservation lands, not just the river

corridor, gain the additional federal protection under an executive order signed by President Clinton.

That's reasonable. Last year, Clinton set the precedent by announcing that the existing 31,000-acre Saddle Mountain National Wildlife Refuge will be expanded by another 57,000 acres with the addition of the Wahluke Slope. The move ensures the slope lands will not be developed and will be left in a natural state that has slowly evolved over half a century.

We've been highly critical lately of the "search for a legacy" that is so evident in Clinton's 11th hour environmental moves -- from banning snowmobiles in national parks to banning roads in national forests. Those complex issues deserve more than last-minute, slam-bam consideration to make the president look good and, frankly, we couldn't care less about Clinton's legacy, or lack thereof.

But with the Reach and surrounding lands, it's a different situation. This protection issue has been languishing for years and there's really nothing on the horizon to indicate it will change with a new Congress taking over in January after the November elections.

However, the new Congress, or at least our state's delegation, can play a needed oversight role in the management plan for the Hanford areas that would have to be developed to implement the national monument designation. That plan is expected to take at least a year to complete and will be developed by Babbitt's successor, since a new presidential administration takes office in January.

It does no good to lament what might have been or could be with all the other foundering attempts to address the control issue. It's time for an action plan, and the monument declaration heads things in that direction.

granted a brief, chilly audience to the area's county commissioners, who urged him to support management by a commission of Northwest residents and officials.

That approach has been the subject of detailed planning and negotiations. Unfortunately, a settlement to those negotiations may not coincide with Clinton's political timetable. Clinton has only a few more months to rehabilitate his image. He wants to designate several more federal preserves. This, he hopes, will be a legacy. He's right. It appears to be a legacy of arrogance toward Americans who live outside the nation's capital.

Still, there is a better path to a better legacy. Babbitt could create a new model for federal land stewardship, one that gives local people an effective voice so that management policies can be enlightened by the knowledge, the ingenuity and yes, the love for natural beauty, of the Americans who are closest to the land.

John Webster/For the editorial board

Locals' priorities subject to change
From both sides: How should federal government protect the Hanford Reach?

Fern Christenson - For the editorial board's dissenters

Read another viewpoint on this issue.
Like a rare antiquity hidden in Grandma's attic for decades, the Hanford Reach remains intact. It's the silver lining in an otherwise dark cloud of nuclear development and pollution. But no matter how its preservation came about, Washington is very lucky to harbor the last free-flowing section of the Columbia River in as close to pristine condition as is possible in this century. That 50-mile stretch also contains prime salmon spawning habitat -- of immeasurable value, given the precarious state of the species.

Short of locking this "find" under glass, the strongest measures must be taken to protect and preserve it for now and forever. There must be no chance

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whatsoever that this treasure will ever end up paved, civilized, polluted or trampled to any degree.

Sen. Patty Murray has been tenacious in her efforts to achieve permanent protection status for this gem. President Clinton is pursuing an effort to designate Hanford Reach a national monument. Some say it's almost a certainty after Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt's recent tour.

Let's hope so.

Imagine that -- Hanford Reach a national monument! Washingtonians should be proud and honored by the prospect of gaining another star on our state's list of environmental assets. Visitors roaming about with wads of tourist dollars do pay attention.

Fortunately, preservation is not at issue here. Even the locals agree on that point. But they want a big say in how the reach is managed, when in truth it should be managed as little as possible. Their efforts at collaboration are noteworthy. But can any group of local authorities, fleetingly temporary power holders in the long run, be trusted in a matter of this magnitude? No one can predict the priorities of local powers-that-be in years to come. The definition of "preservation" does tend to shift and expand, maybe even collapse, under economic pressures.

Babbitt waved a big plum when he said monument status would create a "powerful incentive" to make Hanford cleanup a higher national priority. We need this focus as much as we need for the neighboring reach to be preserved.

For more than five years Congress has wrangled over what to do with Hanford Reach. Enough, already.

As Murray says, giving permanent, federally controlled protection to the Hanford Reach really is "a no-brainer."

Fern Christenson/For the editorial board's dissenters

It should also be of concern to Gov. Gary Locke, who needs to weigh in on this major development in his own state.

Babbitt, whose notoriety as an enthusiastic dam-breacher makes his standing in the Mid-Columbia tenuous at best, suggested national monument status for the Reach could offer opportunity for the Mid-Columbia.

First, he theorized, the urgency of protecting an adjacent national monument might strengthen support for Hanford cleanup.

Second, during meetings Tuesday and Wednesday, Babbitt made a number of promises. He vowed to protect existing property rights, including water rights; hinted there might be room for new water rights; promised to make allowances for economic activities at Energy Northwest and in north Richland; and said he was as concerned about ensuring public access to the Reach as he was about protecting the 51-mile stretch of undammed river and adjacent land.

Those promises, however, are little comfort for a community that grew up near the Hanford nuclear reservation and is used to seeing bureaucracy-level follow-through fall far short of cabinet-level pledges.

Babbitt encouraged those skeptical of his impending action to look to the successful management plan established for the 1.7 million-acre Grand Staircase National Monument. Babbitt said he promised the governor and the commissions of the three affected Utah counties that the management plan would not be implemented until it met their approval. After two years, he said he had fulfilled that promise.

For all Babbitt's promises about the Reach, he won't be signing any Hanford Reach management plan or shaking hands with county commissioners in mutual agreement.

Rather, it would be his successor - a new administration's secretary taking on an agency burdened by the raft of national monument declarations President Clinton - struggling to salvage some kind of positive

Tacoma News Tribune, 5/16

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The News Tribune

May 16, 2000, Tuesday

SECTION: Pg. B10

LENGTH: 357 words

HEADLINE: Hanford Reach needs protection; Salmon-recovery mandate makes it more crucial than ever to safeguard the Reach

If it takes a stroke of President Clinton's pen to break an impasse and extend effective protection for the Hanford Reach, so be it.

That's the reason for Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt's scheduled visit to the reach today. At Clinton's behest, Babbitt is exploring the possibility of protecting the reach - the last free-flowing stretch of the Columbia River - under the federal Antiquities Act. Clinton has ample cause to invoke the act and administratively extend protection to the reach by declaring it a national monument.

Congressional action informed by public input would have been the better way to protect the Reach. But Congress had its chances and dropped the ball. Over the years, U.S. Sen. Patty Murray has been stymied in her efforts to have Congress declare the Reach protected under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Wild and scenic status would have limited development and uses to those compatible with a free-flowing river.

Chances for a wild and scenic designation broke down - apparently for good - earlier this year when environmentalists and officials from Franklin, Grant and Benton counties failed to agree on a management agreement to present to the state's congressional delegation. The break was along a predictable line: County officials wanted more input and local control over development issues, while environmentalists favored a strong federal management role.

The Hanford Reach is a jewel worthy of federal protection on its own ecological merits. But now there's an added reason to extend immediate protection: the Endangered Species Act's mandate to state and local governments to rebuild threatened or endangered salmon and steelhead runs. The Reach is home to the Columbia River's healthiest stock of wild chinook. Protecting existing, healthy runs by protecting their habitat is one of the essential components of fish recovery.

Whether the Reach receives protection in the near future is a more important issue than how it comes about. In the absence of congressional action, the president would do well to extend permanent protection to a state and national treasure.

03/24/00 00:11
Seattle P-1, 5/15

Preserve Hanford Reach

Monday, May 15, 2000

SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER EDITORIAL BOARD

President Clinton should bite the bullet and designate the Hanford Reach a national monument before he leaves office.

It's the right thing to do. With all the taxpayer money being spent on salmon protection, it makes no sense to invite degradation of the most healthy and productive wild salmon habitat left on the Columbia River.

Local county commissioners, agribusiness interests and irrigation districts have opposed federal protection for the reach, and years of effort to get legislation to protect it have failed in Congress.

There's not much left of the dammed Columbia that qualifies for protection under the U.S. Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Miraculously, this 51-mile stretch does. Being free of dams, it's where the last healthy wild chinook run on the river comes home to spawn.

The adjoining White Bluffs ought to be part of the designation. Development or agriculture would pose an unacceptable runoff and erosion risk to the salmon nursery below.

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt will visit the reach tomorrow. His message to Clinton should be to resolve this impasse by presidential edict.

Columbian, 5/15

Copyright 2000 The Columbian Publishing Co.
The Columbian (Vancouver, WA.)

May 15, 2000, Monday

SECTION: Opinion; Pg. a10

LENGTH: 937 words

HEADLINE: HANFORD REACH,
MISSION OF MERCY

BYLINE: Columbian editorial writers

BODY:

Bruce Babbitt should impose protection for last untamed stretch of Columbia River

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt has thick political calluses after years of slashing attacks by Republican lawmakers opposed to his conservationist bent. The thick skin picked up additional layers last week as Babbitt took shots for the federal policy that allowed fire to rage through Los Alamos.

The calluses will get another rub-up if Babbitt carries through on the broad hints that he's coming to Washington state on Tuesday to put the 51-mile Hanford Reach of the Columbia River under federal protection as a national monument.

For half a century the atom-bomb industry hogged that section of river. So it was left untamed while the rest of the Columbia from Canada to Bonneville was being turned into a series of power pools behind hydroelectric and flood-control dams.

Now that the nuclear plants are on the way out, a lot of people think the river should be kept wild, perhaps by declaring it a wild and scenic river.

'We cannot wait'

Proponents of that course of action wouldn't or couldn't promise last week that it would really happen this coming Tuesday. Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., would say only that Babbitt will be looking at the river to "consider a variety of administrative options."

As an avid proponent of federal protection, however, Murray couldn't hide her sentiments. "We cannot wait any longer," she said. "At a time when our region faces tough choices on salmon runs, the Hanford Reach is a no-brainer. We've gotten to a point where obstructionists were ready to wait this out. If we

05/24/00 00:27
are going to ask others to sacrifice for salmon protection, the federal government must do its part first."

As word of Babbitt's visit got around last week, the entrenched Republican and local opposition to federal protection of the river stretch began to fire.

Cynthia Bergman, press secretary to U.S. Sen. Slade Gorton, R-Wash., denounced the prospect as reflecting "a total distrust of local communities' ability to govern their own affairs. If the Clinton-Gore administration goes into Eastern Washington and takes over its back yard, this is only the tip of the iceberg. Under an Al Gore administration, we will see more of the same."

Similar sentiments were heard from the direction of U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., who hopes to carve up responsibility for the reach and its environs among four adjoining counties and several irrigation districts.

That political argument will continue to play out, particularly this fall as Democrats try to oust Gorton and win a majority of seats in the House of Representatives and push Gore ahead of Texas Gov. George W. Bush for the presidency.

Although voters may make their individual choices for a lot of reasons having little to do with basic political philosophy, the partisan difference is clear in the case of the Hanford Reach. Should national assets such as the wild river be managed nationally? Or can they safely be trusted to local interests? On the Hanford Reach the question is whether an irrigation district is more likely to consider survival of a race of salmon or the success of next year's wheat harvest.

Babbitt should declare the river reach a national monument and asset, because that's what it is.

D. Michael Heywood, for the editorial board

Tri-City Herald, 5/14

Mid-Columbia should have say in future of Reach

If the jolting news that the Clinton administration is considering appropriating the Hanford Reach as a national monument has any effect, it should be to convince elected officials, both local and federal, to revive negotiations quickly about how to protect the Hanford Reach in the long term.

The future of the 51-mile stretch of the undammed Columbia River that skirts the Hanford nuclear reservation should be decided, at least in part, by the local community. It would be tragic if this wonderful asset to the Mid-Columbia was commandeered by a troubled president trying to weave a positive environmental legacy during the last year of his administration.

No urgency exists to resolve its fate. The Reach remains a free-flowing, prime salmon-spawning area without imminent threats to its viability.

Nevertheless, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, apparently with the encouragement of U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, is expected to visit Richland on Tuesday in consideration of whether the Reach should be protected as a national monument. After touring the Reach, Babbitt will hold a public meeting from 6 to 7 p.m. at the Red Lion Hanford House, 802 George Washington Way.

Clinton has asked Babbitt to look at more areas worthy of possible protection under the 1906 Antiquities Act. Clinton has protected other areas despite strong opposition from local officials. In 1996, over fierce objections of local officials, Clinton created the 1.7 million-acre Grand Staircase National Monument in Utah. Recently, Clinton designated the 355,000-acre Sequoia National Forest in California a national monument.

The Hanford Reach should not be next. Negotiations must be allowed another try - and Murray ought to get behind them.

Last week, Murray expressed understandable frustration over the failed negotiations. Indeed, it is shared by many in

our community, including the Herald editorial board.

Murray, a Seattle Democrat, introduced legislation, which the Herald endorsed, that would have designated the Reach a "wild and scenic" recreational river. Meanwhile, U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings, a Republican whose district includes the Reach, proposed legislation that gave elected officials in Benton, Franklin and Grant counties more of a say in how the Reach would be run. Neither of the dueling congressional bills passed out of committee.

Attempts at negotiation between the two camps have failed, most recently in February, although both sides made some movement. And, since its initial endorsement of Murray's bill, the Herald has urged a reasonable compromise.

All along, Murray has said she supported a regional solution but hinted she had the influence with the White House to move without it. And apparently, that's what she's decided to do.

She certainly has captured the attention of the three counties' commissioners, who jointly invited Clinton to visit the Hanford Reach and consider an arrangement that permits shared authority among federal, state, tribal and local officials. They are willing - and perhaps in light of last week's announcement, eager - to talk. Murray and the administration should be, too.

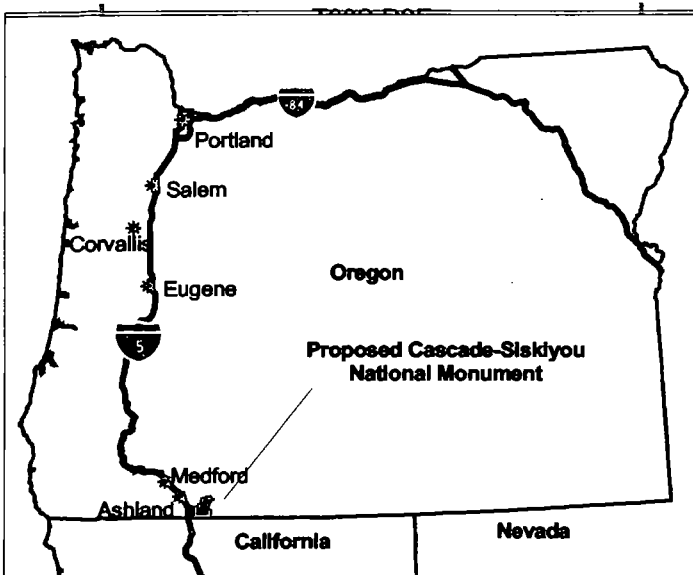
A regional solution can, and must, be found. A unilateral presidential one should be avoided.

Proposed Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument
(Soda Mountain)

T38S R3E

Howard Frank Lake

T38S R4E



Hyattsville

T39S R4E

66

66

Pinehurst

T40S R2E

T40S R3E

T40S R4E

* Siskiyou

Proposed Cascade-Siskiyou
National Monument

T41S R2E

T41S R3E

T41S R4E

Draft
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Proposed NM

Land Status

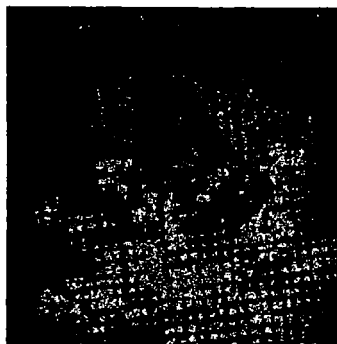
- BLM
- USFS
- Private

4/6/00

Oregon

California

Save Soda Mountain!



We urge President Clinton to create a Soda Mountain National Monument..

Mr. President, please save Soda Mountain *now.*

A priceless southern Oregon landscape of high ridges and steep canyons shelters one of the great treasure-troves of life in the West. The Soda Mountain area embraces trout streams, ancient stands of pine and fir, flower-strewn meadows, towering volcanic cliffs, and rich grasslands dotted with majestic oaks. Scientists have long recognized this area for its amazing array of plant and wildlife diversity.

But all of this is in danger. Abuse by cattle, off-road vehicles, logging, and fragmented public land management could push Soda Mountain's ecological integrity to the brink.

Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt says Soda Mountain is "ripe for consideration" to become one of our nation's next National Monuments. Newspaper editorials in the statewide *Portland Oregonian* and local *Ashland Daily Tidings* and *Medford Mail Tribune* have strongly urged National Monument status for Soda Mountain.

President Clinton now holds the key to Soda Mountain's future. We applaud his protection of other

World Wildlife Fund
Soda Mountain Wilderness
Rogue Valley Audubon Soc
Native Plant Society of Ore
American Lands Alliance
The Wilderness Society
Oregon Natural Resources
Audubon Society of Portlan
Klamath Basin Audubon S
Lane County Audubon Soc
Salem Audubon Society
Kalmiopsis Audubon Socie
Umpqua Valley Audubon S
Siskiyou Audubon Society
Rogue Group Sierra Club
Earth Ministry
Juniper Group Sierra Club
WaterWatch of Oregon
Klamath-Siskiyou Informati
Siskiyou Regional Educat
The Larch Company
Headwaters
Southern Oregon Universit
Wilderness Adoption Tea
Ecology Center of the Siski
Conservation Biology Instit
Wild Hope
Klamath Siskiyou Wildland
Friends of the Greenspring
Oregon Natural Desert Ass
Siskiyou Action Project
Friends of Elk River
Northcoast Environmental
Citizens for Better Forestry
Southern Oregon Forest Co
Deer Creek Valley Natural R
Conservation Associatio
Save-the-West
Western Fire Ecology Cent
Oregon Wildlife Federation
Klamath Forest Alliance
Concerned Friends of the W
Native Forest Council
Pacific Rivers Council
Hells Canyon Preservation
Blue Mountain Biodiversity
Oregon Student Public Inter
Research Group (OSPIR)
Central Oregon Forest Issue
Cascadia Fire Ecology Educ
Friends of the Kalmiopsis
Western Environmental Law
Southern Oregon Nature Ex
Trillium Community Land Tr

For more information contact:

Soda Mountain Wilderness
Council at: sodamtn@mind.net
or
World Wildlife Fund at:
dellasal@wwfks.org
541-482-4878

www.takeaction.worldwildlife.org

please save Soda Mountain *now.*

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Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt says Soda Mountain is "ripe for consideration" to become one of our nation's next National Monuments. Newspaper editorials in the statewide *Portland Oregonian* and local *Ashland Daily Tidings* and *Medford Mail Tribune* have strongly urged National Monument status for Soda Mountain.

President Clinton now holds the key to Soda Mountain's future. We applaud his protection of other public lands as National Monuments. On behalf of those who treasure Oregon's wildlife and wildlands, we ask President Clinton to create a Soda Mountain National Monument.

You can send a free message urging President Clinton to create a Soda Mountain National Monument now by going to:
www.takeaction.worldwildlife.org

Together, we can save Soda Mountain!

**For more
information
contact:**

Soda Mountain Wilderness
Council at: sodamtn@mind.net
or
World Wildlife Fund at:
dellasal@wwfks.org
541-482-4878

www.takeaction.worldwildlife.org

the wilderness society
Oregon Natural Resource
Audubon Society of Port
Klamath Basin Audubon
Lane County Audubon S
Salem Audubon Society
Kalmiopsis Audubon Soc
Umpqua Valley Audubon
Siskiyou Audubon Socie
Rogue Group Sierra Clut
Earth Ministry
Juniper Group Sierra Cl
WaterWatch of Oregon
Klamath-Siskiyou Informa
Siskiyou Regional Educa
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Native Forest Council
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Oregon Student Public I
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Friends of the Kalmiops
Western Environmental
Southern Oregon Natur
Trillium Community Lan
Threatened & Endanger
Applegate Valley
Dakubetede Environmer
Education Programs
Wild Wilderness
Target Earth
Forest Service Employe
for Environmental Et
Umpqua Watersheds, In
Deerfield Learning Assc
Trek, Inc.
Earthjustice Legal Defe
Oregon Trout
Mazamas
Oregon Chapter Sierra
Oregon League of Cons
And many others...

Exceptional in its biodiversity, the area is home to rare plants and animals.



Plants growing above the colored deposit, Soda Mountain.

THE MANY SPECIES AT STAKE

The Clinton administration has put Soda Mountain on a short list of sites that could be named national monuments before the president leaves office in January. Those pushing for the monument designation say Soda Mountain deserves the special distinction because of its rich biological and ecological diversity. About 50,000 acres of public land being studied by the federal Bureau of Land Management are home to:

- ◆ More than 100 of species of butterflies. They include the rare dark anglewing and migrating monarch.

- ◆ Rare and threatened plants. They include the millaria centret, a member of the lily family recently



The Bureau of Land Management acquired 222 acres to protect the rare Governor's wharfedale fly.

listed as endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

- ◆ Rare and threatened fish and wildlife. They include the northern spotted owl and the giant klamath small-scale sucker fish.

Cascade/
Siskiyou
Ecological
Emphasis
Area



Scotch Creek area.
Designated: 1990, by President George H.W. Bush.
Defining feature: Pilot Rock, a volcanic cone, stands nearly 1 mile above the valley floor.

OREGON'S NATIONAL MONUMENTS

1 Oregon Caves
Designated: 1908, by President William Taft, 400 acres.
Defining feature: A natural marble cave above ground in an old-growth forest.
Visitors: 90,000 in 1995.

2 John Day Fossil Beds
Designated: 1974, by President Gerald Ford, 14,000 acres.
Defining feature: Fossils of plants and animals spanning more than 40 million of the 65 million years of the Cenozoic era.
Visitors: 100,000 in 1995.

3 Newberry National Volcanic Monument
Designated: 1990, by President George Bush, 55,500 acres.
Defining feature: The Big Obsidian Flow, created 1300 years ago, covers 700 acres.
Visitors: 60,000 in 1995.



The gray ground Pilot Rock, elevation 5,900 feet, is of "critical environmental concern," the BLM says.

FRANK LANG/BLM

STEVE COWDEN/THE OREGONIAN

Soda Mountain gains renown as natural rarity

Federal officials are making fateful choices to protect the biologically rich landscape in Southern Oregon

By MICHELLE COLE
THE OREGONIAN

ASHLAND — Butterfly hunter Erik Runquist began his 5-mile trek along a rutted road. Soon he headed down a steep slope beside Scotch Creek, through dark old conifer forests toward islands of sunlight and sage.

Just before he left the trees, he spotted a flash of orange and black. It was a dark anglewing, a butterfly about 2½ inches wide wing to wing.

Incredible, he thought. One of the rarest butterflies in Oregon, and here it was, in a region maintained by the federal Bureau of Land Management. Perhaps more incredible was that Runquist found two other rare species of butterflies that same day last summer.

It might come as no surprise, however, to those who treasure this piece of Southern Oregon called Soda Mountain, known by scientists worldwide for its biodiversity. The Clinton administration knows it well, too.

On Friday, the Bureau of Land Management will issue its long-awaited plan for managing public lands on and around Soda Mountain. Many expect that the White House will soon follow with a plan of its own: creating a new national monument.

The fate of Soda Mountain has been a subject of sometimes bitter contention in these parts for years.

Butterflies, in a sense, created this scenario.

Want to find out how varied the plant life is in any given place? Count the butterflies.

They're often the best measure of biological diversity, scientists say, because many butterfly larvae eat only one type of plant. The presence of monarch butterflies, for example, indicates there's milkweed nearby. Other butterflies have different preferences.

Runquist estimates that at least 100 different species of butterflies live on Soda Mountain, which the BLM has designated the Cascade/Siskiyou Ecological Emphasis Area. It is neither as majestic as Sequoia National Park nor as breathtaking as the Grand Canyon, yet it teems with rare plant and animal life supported by fragile ecosystems.

If President Clinton declares Soda Mountain a national monument, "it will be a monument to biodiversity," said Dominick DellaSala, a forest ecologist with the World Wildlife Fund.

Please see **SODA**, Page A14

Clinton sends Congress a measure on trade with China

The president says WTO status will undermine the communists

By DAVID E. SANGER
NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON — President Clinton

nization.

He then opened a new front in the debate on the subject in his own party, arguing that opening up China's markets will undermine Communist Party control.

In a speech at the Johns Hopkins University's foreign affairs graduate school

the wisdom of the legislation, and he said little about Taiwan, whose relations with China have been flaring up.

But he made an argument that opening up China's economy amounted to a poison pill for China's communist leaders.

"In the new century, liberty will spread

lobbyists and many members of Clinton's cabinet, who are now calling members of Congress daily about the issue.

When China joins the trade organization, the president said, it will be obliged to make "the tools of communication even cheaper, better and more widely

The Oregonian - March 9, 2000

Soda: Likely change in uses of land generates opposition

Continued from Page One

Botanists have known about Soda Mountain for at least 50 years. But the area has only recently been identified as having global significance because of its geological age, soil types and transitional climate zones.

In 1995, the BLM drew a jagged boundary around about 53,000 acres of Oregon public land bridging the Cascade and Siskiyou mountains. The agency designated the knot of mountains, steep canyons and grasslands an Ecological Emphasis Area, a label the government had never used before and hasn't used since.

In 1997, the World Conservation Union identified the region as one of the 50 areas of "global significance" for plant diversity in North America. Two years ago, the World Wildlife Fund decided to locate one of its five North American regional offices in nearby Ashland.

Variety of wildlife

The landscape is home to the northern spotted owl as well as creatures of lesser fame, such as the Pacific giant salamander and the dwarf Klamath small-scale sucker. Jenny Creek, on the east side of the Ecological Emphasis Area, is a mecca for mollusks, including nine snails thought to be found nowhere else in the world.

The vegetation ranges from old-growth Douglas fir to scrubby Cali-

fornia chaparral to the fragile mariposa lily.

"People ask me whether these things can't be found growing in other places," said Frank Lang, a botanist who taught at Southern Oregon University for 30 years before going to work for the BLM. "I answer, 'Yes. But you don't find them growing all together anywhere else.'"

Some Southern Oregon residents and local government officials think the best thing the government can do to protect the area is to continue managing it as it has been, allowing logging and grazing and building and maintaining roads. Logging has been suspended.

But Lang and others doubt Soda Mountain can take more of the same. Lang offers as evidence the increasing prevalence of yellow star thistle, a non-native plant that sneaks into an area in livestock droppings, in wheel wells and on rubber soles. The invader is choking out native species, he said.

Soda Mountain "absolutely" deserves the attention it would gain as a national monument, Lang said.

3 monuments in Oregon

The 1906 Antiquities Act gives presidents the power to protect places of special historic or scientific interest as national monuments. More than 100 national monuments have been declared in

the past 90 years. Oregon has three: the Oregon Caves, the John Day Fossil Beds and Newberry National Volcanic Monument.

But the list might soon grow. With Clinton's days in office dwindling and his legacy still to be defined, the administration has identified 4 million acres in the West thought to be threatened by logging, livestock grazing, urban development or recreation.

In a speech the day before his visit last month to Southern Oregon, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt outlined a new system of national landscape monuments intended to transform the BLM

— long derided by critics as the "Bureau of Livestock and Mining" — into an agency that promotes resource conservation.

Babbitt said the administration would wait to make its decision about Soda Mountain's monument status until the BLM released its draft environmental impact study Friday, outlining how recreation, logging, grazing and other activities could be managed. But op-

ponents and proponents alike say they expect Soda Mountain to be designated a national monument this year, possibly as early as next month.

Those who oppose the move aren't giving up. A hand-lettered sign at the entrance to a cattle ranch just outside the BLM lands carries a message to Babbitt:

"People ask me whether these things can't be found growing in other places. I answer, 'Yes. But you don't find them growing all together anywhere else.'"

FRANK LANG,

A BOTANIST WORKING FOR THE BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

"Leave our Soda Mountain alone," it says. "Get the hell out and go home."

Commissioners voice opposition

On Feb. 29, the Jackson County Board of Commissioners unanimously adopted a resolution opposing monument designation for Soda Mountain

and Steens Mountain, an area in Southeast Oregon also mentioned prominently as a candidate for presidential protection.

Although a monument designation doesn't preclude roads or grazing, Commissioner Jack Walker thinks it's inevitable that the federal government will eliminate grazing and logging and limit public access to lands he hunted with his father more than 40 years ago.

"They don't listen to local governments," he said. "They don't listen to anybody after that designation is made. They just lock it up."

David Lexow doesn't care what label the federal government attaches to the Soda Mountain area. He cares very much about whether a monument designation would close roads that motorcycles and other off-highway vehicles use.

"It's critical access to major territory that can't be gotten to in any other way," said Lexow, legislative affairs director for the Motorcycle Riders Association. "It's like taking away your driveway."

Instead of closing public roads and trails, he said, the government should find ways to help off-highway recreationists coexist with rare plants and wildlife. Most people will follow the rules, he said. "I'm an off-road cyclist. I'm also an environmentalist. That's not a contradiction."

Papers back protections

Both local newspapers, the Medford Mail Tribune and the Ashland Daily Tidings, have published editorials supporting a monument designation for Soda Mountain. A recent survey by the National BLM Wilderness Campaign, financed by an \$800,000 grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts, also suggests that Oregonians support further protection of public land in the state.

The survey, conducted among 500 Oregonians, indicated that 66 percent support protecting as much as possible of BLM-managed land from mining, oil development and road vehicle use.

"The devil or the argument is in the details," said Willis, chairman of the Mountain Wilderness group, which would like to see Soda Mountain national monument encompass 70,000 acres, including 38,000 acres that Congress later designate as wilderness.

"What we want is to prevent mining or logging," Willis said. "We want to close all the public lands and as a result, we want to promote all forms of recreation, including hunting. We want the government to require private holding sellers."

What conservationists want are visitor centers and country restrooms.

"The Siskiyou area is an ark of botanical diversity," Willis said. "It's a time to get on the ark."

You can reach Michel at 503-294-5143 or by e-mail at chellecole@news.oregonian.com.

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NewsFlash

UP-TO-THE-MINUTE AP NEWS REPORTS

Babbitt on verge of recommending two more national monuments

By MATT KELLEY
The Associated Press
4/24/00 6:30 PM

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt indicated Monday he is on the verge of recommending that President Clinton declare new national monuments in Colorado and Oregon.

A swath of canyons dotted with American Indian ruins in southwestern Colorado and ecologically diverse Soda Mountain near the Oregon-California line are "ripe for consideration" to become the fifth and sixth monuments created by Clinton this year, Babbitt said.

Clinton has created two new monuments each in California and Arizona this year, prohibiting mining and logging in sequoia groves, the Grand Canyon watershed, an arid Arizona mountain valley and hundreds of small islands in the Pacific.

Babbitt has discussed recommending the Colorado and Oregon monuments before, and they are now "at the top of the list" as the Clinton administration works to fill out its environmental legacy, Babbitt said in a telephone interview.

He would not say precisely when he would ask Clinton to declare the new monuments.

The 1906 Antiquities Act gives presidents broad power to create monuments and decide what uses should be restricted there. Clinton's monument designations have banned mining and logging, restricted off-road vehicle use and allowed grazing.

Both proposals win cheers from environmentalists and opposition from some local residents.

"It could eliminate all of the multiple uses -- grazing, timber harvest, recreational vehicles -- anything but hiking," said Sue Kupillas, a county commissioner who lives near Soda Mountain. "If this area is so valuable today, and we've had multiple use all these years, why

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should we change it now?"

Western Republicans have repeatedly criticized Clinton for creating national monuments, saying the president has ignored the wishes of Congress and local officials to lock up federal lands.

"This is not about the environment. It is about the constant abuse of power by the Clinton-Gore administration," said Rep. George Radanovich, R-Calif., the chairman of the western caucus in the House.

Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber, a Democrat, supports the Soda Mountain plan. Babbitt has been openly talking about monument recommendations to officials and residents in two areas for at least a year.

"In every case, we're spending a great deal of time searching for consensus, trying to work on stakeholder concerns," Babbitt said.

That process broke down in Colorado, however.

Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell, R-Colo., introduced a bill earlier this year aimed at heading off a monument designation in the area dubbed "Canyons of the Ancients." Instead of a monument, Campbell's bill would have created a 164,000-acre national conservation area including many of the restrictions Babbitt wants.

Campbell abruptly dropped the plan last month, saying his bill faced criticism both from environmentalists who said it was too weak and local landowners who said it was too strong. The bill's failure made a monument designation inevitable, said the area's representative, Republican Rep. Scott McInnis.

"I think it's an abuse of the Antiquities Act, but it's happening and I think we should face reality," McInnis said. "Those counties down there are real dependent on multiple use (of federal land), and a monument really locks the gate on those lands."

Babbitt said Monday he would have preferred congressional action to protect the area, but "it's the protection that's important, not the label."

Local officials in southwestern Colorado had supported Campbell's bill and now worry they could get burned if Clinton creates a monument and Congress takes offense.

"If they designate it and Congress isn't forthcoming with appropriations, it could be the worst of all possible worlds," said Cortez Mayor Joe Keck, whose town of 8,100 is near the possible monument. "You'd have the monument bringing people in to visit and no way to keep it up."

Keck said local officials also worry that a monument could restrict one of the area's biggest businesses -- drilling for carbon dioxide. Oil companies use the gas to help boost production at their oil wells elsewhere.

Babbitt said the carbon dioxide operations have been "carried out in a responsible way. It's a use that I think should be allowed to continue.

"The real issue," Babbitt added, "is strip mining." He said he wants to block any mining in the area.

TOP

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Good
morning

TUESDAY

April 25, 2000

MEDFORD, OREGON

Mail Tribune

SOUTHERN OREGON'S MORNING NEWS SOURCE

Soda Mountain area tops list

By PAUL FATTIG
of the Mail Tribune

Soda Mountain has risen to the top of the list for national monument recommendation, said Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt.

The ecologically diverse area a dozen miles east of Ashland near the California border, along with a cluster of canyons dotted with American Indian ruins in southwestern Colorado, are "ripe for consideration" to become the fifth and sixth monuments created by President Clinton this year, Babbitt told The Associated Press Monday.

They are at "the top of the list," he said, although he would not say precisely when he

Babbitt says it's ripe for monument status

would ask the president to declare the new monuments.

His recommendation would lock up national monument status for the area, agree varied interests concerned about the future of the mountain. But they do not agree on what is best for the land.

Under the 1906 Antiquities Act, a president can designate national monuments to protect certain historic or scientific values.

Soda Mountain is part of an area considered by many scientists as one of the most biolog-

ically diverse in the country.

"We are very grateful that Secretary Babbitt is listening to the thousands of Oregonians, both local and statewide, that have asked him to protect nationally public land in the Soda Mountain area," said Dave Willis, president of the Soda Mountain Wilderness Council.

"The highest and best use of the national public land and resources here is to protect them for generations to come," added Willis, who has been working to promote protection of the area since 1983.

Dave Hill, executive secretary of the Southern Oregon Timber Industries Association, disagrees.

"I hope Secretary Babbitt will not dismiss the public review process now underway," Hill said, referring to public comments coming in concerning the Bureau of Land Management's draft management plan and draft environmental impact statement for the Cascade Siskiyou Ecological Emphasis Area (CSEEA), which includes most of the Soda Mountain region.

"I hope that process will run its course before any national monument decision is made," Hill said, adding that he is concerned

see SODA, Page 12A

from Page 1A.

about the fate of thousands of acres of private land within the proposed monument.

The BLM will continue its planning process for the CSEEA, said Karen Perault, spokeswoman for BLM's Medford District. Deadline for public comments on the CSEEA is June 14, with a final decision expected this fall.

"We understand a decision is imminent," she said of monument status. "We don't know what size, guidelines or restrictions may be included."

The agency's preferred alternative calls for increasing the area by nearly 10,000 acres — to 40,975

acres — while further restricting timber harvest and cattle grazing,

Hill and others, including the Jackson County Board of Commission, are concerned that monument designation will change how the land in the area is managed, further restricting timber harvests, off-road vehicle use and other multiple-use activity.

Others, including Gov. John Kitzhaber, have supported the monument proposal, saying the diverse ecology of the area must be protected.

Babbitt has visited the Rogue Valley twice in the past six months, including hiking on Soda Mountain late last fall.

Loading dock for the ark

Teeming with rare plants and animal life, Oregon's Soda Mountain warrants protection as a national monument

Oregon's Soda Mountain area should be named one of America's new national monuments.

This land, 70,000 acres on the southern border of Oregon and spilling into California, deserves the status, the protection, of a national treasure.

U.S. Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt soon will decide whether to recommend to President Clinton that he use his authority under the 1906 Antiquities Act to designate Soda Mountain as a monument. An announcement could come as soon as next month.

If that happens, as it should, Oregonians ought to cheer the long-overdue step to more thoroughly protect one of their state's unique landscapes.

The Soda Mountain area is a still-wild land of rare plants, at least 100 species of butterflies and a winter haven for deer and other wildlife. Scientists say the Soda Mountain area is a land bridge linking the Cascade and Siskiyou mountains. They describe it as a "knot," an exceedingly rare and critical place where mountains, canyons and grasslands all come together.

It isn't a visually stunning place, in the same sense as the Grand Canyon, or the jagged peaks of the Olympics, or even Oregon's Crater Lake. Soda Mountain is special, not spectacular.

It should have national protection not because it would be a terrific place for families to bring their kids and tool around on paved roads and look at half-tamed elk, geysers or lava flows.

It should be a monument because it is one of the most ecologically diverse places in North America. And that alone

is worth preserving, even if it means putting new limits on cattle grazing, or requiring off-road vehicle riders to use some of the other thousands of miles of roads and trails in Southern Oregon.

Soda Mountain raises few of the difficult issues surrounding the proposal to create a Steens Mountain monument. This is a far smaller plan — 70,000 acres compared to 1.2 million acres on and around the Steens — that would affect far fewer private landowners. Nearly all of the Soda Mountain area already is in public hands, and the only four ranchers who run cattle there seem willing to accept a government buyout of their grazing leases.

The federal Bureau of Land Management has made a sincere effort to preserve the Soda Mountain area. The BLM released Friday a commendable proposal that would further limit logging, grazing and off-road use of the area.

Yet this local protection is not enough to ensure the future of an area of national ecological significance. Eventually, the core of the Soda Mountain area ought to be federally protected wilderness. That would require congressional action — something more likely once the land wins monument status.

Dave Willis, a leader of the Soda Mountain Wilderness Council, which has pressed for more protections for the region for many years, describes the Siskiyou as the Noah's ark of botanical diversity in the West. Soda Mountain, Willis says, is "the loading dock for the ark."

Soda Mountain is one of Oregon's special places. It should be one of the nation's national monuments.

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The Oregonian

Babbitt leans toward protecting Soda Mountain

The Southern Oregon area could be named a national monument even without congressional approval

Friday, March 31, 2000

By Jeff Barnard of The Associated Press

MEDFORD — U.S. Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt said Thursday he is leaning toward recommending that President Clinton protect Soda Mountain, identified by scientists as one of the most ecologically diverse regions in North America.

The area could be designated a national monument under the Antiquities Act, which gave the president the power to create national monuments without Congress.

Following a one-hour video conference call with local interest groups, Babbitt said from Washington, D.C., that he would take the next couple of months to consider an environmental study.

"I am leaning toward making a recommendation to the president that he consider using the Antiquities Act to designate and protect this area," Babbitt said. "The issue will be not so much the label on the land as the prescriptions that go with it.

"The real issue will be undeniably the ecological importance of this area."

As he approaches the end of his presidency, Clinton has been creating an environmental legacy, designating new national monuments and proposing to ban logging and other development on 50 million acres of national forests.

The conference call marked the third time Babbitt has met with local interest groups since touring the Soda Mountain area in October to consider whether it should be included in a series of national landscape monuments designed to preserve important ecosystems, rather than scenery.

The meeting was the first since Babbitt,

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environmentalists, motorcycle riders, cattle ranchers, native plant enthusiasts, the timber industry and Jackson County have been able to examine the Bureau of Land Management's draft environmental impact statement on management of the Cascade Siskiyou Ecological Emphasis Area, which includes Soda Mountain.

The BLM is considering protection for between 31,000 acres and 41,000 acres. Environmentalists would like a national monument covering twice that area.

The area is south of Medford and east of Interstate 5 along the California border where the Siskiyou Mountains press against the volcanic upheavals of the Cascade Range.

Scientists have identified it as one of the most biologically diverse areas in North America, home to 100 species of butterflies and eight species of bats. The mix of conifer forests, scattered oak grasslands, and chaparral is created by the intersection of the dry Great Basin, high-altitude Cascade Range and wet Coast Range ecosystems.

Babbitt did not say whether he was inclined to allow logging, grazing and motorcycle riding to continue within the area, saying his recommendation was likely to "mix and match" a range of alternatives proposed by BLM in the draft statement. The area will be restricted to the Oregon side of the border.

Babbitt noted that he had never seen so many places within one area that had been already designated for special environmental consideration, and that it would make sense to manage them as one.

Dave Willis of the Soda Mountain Wilderness Council, who has been working to protect the area since 1983, welcomed Babbitt's comments, but he questioned why it has taken so long to recognize the importance of protecting ecosystems.

Jackson County Commissioner Sue Kupillas and Bill Drewien of the Jackson County Stockman's Association urged Babbitt to continue to allow grazing to maintain a tradition of multiple use and give land managers the tools to protect the landscape from catastrophic fire.

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Thursday, March 9, 2000

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The Oregonian

THE FULL STORY

Soda Mountain gains renown as natural rarity

With a federal land plan due Friday, some are pushing for monument status for the biologically rich setting

Thursday, March 9, 2000

By Michelle Cole of The Oregonian staff

ASHLAND -- Butterfly hunter Erik Runquist began his five-mile trek along a rutted road. Soon he headed down a steep slope beside Scotch Creek, through dark old conifer forests toward islands of sunlight and sage. Just before he left the trees, he spotted a flash of orange and black. It was a dark anglewing, a butterfly about 2 1/2 inches wide wing to wing.

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Friday, March 9, 2000

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"Leave our Soda Mountain alone," it says. "Get the hell out and go home."

Commissioners voice opposition

On Feb. 29, the Jackson County Board of Commissioners unanimously adopted a resolution opposing monument designation for Soda Mountain and Steens Mountain, an area in Southeast Oregon also mentioned prominently as a candidate for presidential protection.

Although a monument designation doesn't preclude roads or grazing, Commissioner Jack Walker thinks it's inevitable that the federal government will eliminate grazing and logging and limit public access to lands he hunted with his father more than 40 years ago.

"They don't listen to local governments," he said. "They don't listen to anybody after that designation is made. They just lock it up."

David Lexow doesn't care what label the federal government attaches to the Soda Mountain area. He cares very much about whether a monument designation would close roads that motorcycles and other off-highway vehicles use.

"It's critical access to major territory that can't be gotten to in any other way," said Lexow, legislative affairs director for the Motorcycle Riders Association. "It's like taking away your driveway."

Instead of closing public roads and trails, he said, the government should find ways to help off-highway recreationists coexist with rare plants and wildlife. Most people will follow the rules, he said. "I'm an off-road cyclist. I'm also an environmentalist. That's not a contradiction."

Papers back protections

Both local newspapers, the Medford Mail Tribune and the Ashland Daily Tidings, have published editorials supporting a monument designation for Soda Mountain. A recent survey by the National BLM Wilderness Campaign, financed by an \$800,000 grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts, also suggests that Oregonians support further protection of public land in the state.

The survey, conducted Feb. 3-6 among 500 Oregon respondents, indicated that 66 percent favored protecting as much as 6 million acres of BLM-managed lands from mining, oil development and off-road vehicle use.

"The devil or the angel of a monument is in the details," said Dave Willis, chairman of the Soda Mountain Wilderness Council. The group would like to see a Soda Mountain national monument encompass 70,000 acres, including 38,000 acres that Congress might later designate as wilderness.

"What we want is no grazing, mining or logging," Willis said. "We want to close all the jeep trails on public lands and as many nonresidential public roads as possible. We want to permit but not promote all forms of wilderness recreation, including hunting. And we want the government to acquire private holdings from willing sellers."

What conservationists don't want are visitor centers and back-country restrooms.

"The Siskiyou are the Noah's ark of botanical diversity in the West," Willis said. "This is the loading dock for the ark."

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Babbitt pins Soda Mtn. pick on release of study

MEDFORD (AP) — Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt says he will wait for an environmental study and talk with interest groups once more before deciding whether to include Soda Mountain in President Clinton's environmental legacy.

Babbitt flew on Friday over the Soda Mountain area of southern Oregon, considered by many scientists the most biologically diverse place in the country because it connects ecosystems of the Great Basin and the Coast Range, and spent an hour talking to interest groups at the U.S. Bureau of Land Management district office.

"I came away deeply impressed by the ecological issues," Babbitt said after his flight. "I do not intend to make a recommendation of any kind until I've had a chance to look at the draft EIS coming out March 10."

BLM is finishing up a draft environmental impact statement on 35,000 acres of federal land on the Oregon side of the border that the agency is considering for special protection due to its unique biological diversity.

Environmentalists have been pressing to include 70,000 acres of federal land straddling the Oregon-California border where the Siskiyou Mountains abut the Cascade

Range as part of a string of National Landscape Monuments, intended to protect environmental values rather than attract visitors.

Motorcycle riders, the timber industry and cattlemen told Babbitt they were concerned that more federal land would be put off-limits to them.

Rancher Dalton Straus conceded that the area is not very productive for grazing, and people holding grazing permits would be willing to consider buyouts.

Environmentalists said it was important to protect the area, because it serves as a corridor for wildlife moving between the Siskiyou and the Cascades, and is home to a wide range of plant species.

"It needs to be managed based on what is best for the land, not what is best for the bottom line," said Dominick DellaSala of the World Wildlife Fund.

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No decision on Soda Mountain yet, Babbitt says

Could come soon after March 10 impact statement

By PAUL FATTIG
of the Mail Tribune

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt was quick to observe there would be no announcement at Friday's roundtable discussion over the future of Soda Mountain.

"Despite rumors to the contrary, I am here not to make a decision, not to announce a decision," Babbitt told the diverse group gathered at the Bureau of Land Management district office in Medford. "I am here to continue the discussion."

Having made that point, Babbitt, who had visited Soda Mountain late last fall, then hinted that a decision is not too distant. He intends to "bring closure in the reasonably near future," he said.

The debate, which featured environmental activists and representatives of county government, the cattle and timber industries and off-road-vehicle users, is over whether the Soda Mountain area should be protected as a national monument or as a wilderness or whether management should remain largely unchanged.

The BLM will release a draft environmental impact statement on March 10 concerning some 40,000 acres in the region as part of its Cascade Siskiyou Ecological Emphasis Area. But environmentalists led by the Soda Mountain Wilderness Council have been press-

ing for additional protection of up to 70,000 acres of federal land in the area southeast of Ashland where the Siskiyou Mountains abut the Cascade Range.

Off-road motor vehicle users, the timber industry and ranchers are worried that such a move would be unfair to those who have historically relied on the resource.

During the roundtable discussion, those opposing Babbitt's visit protested outside.

Babbitt came at the behest of 2nd District Congressman Greg Walden, R-Hood River,

who said he wanted to be sure everyone who cared about Soda Mountain was heard before a decision was made on whether to include it in the National Landscape Monuments President Clinton wants to create as his environmental legacy.

Babbitt and Walden flew over the Soda Mountain area before the discussion.

"I came away deeply impressed by the ecological issues," Babbitt said. "I do not intend to make a recommendation of any kind until I've had a chance to look at the draft EIS coming out March 10."

Moreover, the EIS process will continue no matter what decision is made, he stressed.

Although Babbitt would not indicate which direction his decision may go, Dave Willis, chairman of the Soda Mountain Wilderness Council, was optimistic after the meeting.

"I don't think the secretary of the interior visits the Rogue Valley area twice in a few months if he doesn't want to protect the

land here," said Willis, who has been working on protecting the Soda Mountain area since the early 1990s.

"We just hope it involves real protection and isn't just 'monument-like,'" he added.

During the session, David Lexow, representing the Motorcycle Riders Association, said creating a monument wasn't appropriate.

"None of us deny that it is beautiful," he said. "We are environmentalists, also. We care for the land, also."

"But what you are proposing here is to make it nonaccessible to virtually all of the American public," he added. "If you don't ride a horse or are not capable of taking a week off to backpack, you are not going to see it."

Jackson County Commissioner Jack Walker, noting his father first hunted in the area nearly half a century ago, observed that past use has done little to destroy the uniqueness of the area.

"We all agree it's something special," Walker said. "But my guess is it's something special because of the way we've allowed cattle to graze in there, the way we've allowed the public to go in there and enjoy recreation in there, the way we've allowed cutting in that area."

Longtime Jackson County rancher Dalton Straus was worried that ranchers will soon have no public land where their cattle can graze.

"We as an industry feel overwhelmed by what we feel are assaults on our way of life," he said. "We're concerned about how much more we have to give up in southwest Oregon as far as wilderness areas."

However, he noted that those with federal grazing permits for the Soda Mountain area may be willing to consider buyouts.

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Environmental activists said it was important to protect the area, because it serves as a corridor for wildlife moving between the Siskiyou and the Cascades and is home to a wide range of plant species.

The area is considered by many scientists to be the most biologically diverse place in the country because it connects ecosystems of the Great Basin and the Coast Range, said Pepper Trail, consulting biologist for the Rogue Audubon Society.

"It's not just any old 70,000 acres," Trail stressed.

The land is an "ecological melting pot," said Dominick DellaSala, director of the World Wildlife Fund's Klamath-Siskiyou region.

"It needs to be managed based on what is best for the land, not what is best for our bottom line, or our favorite jeep trail or our county revenue base," he said. "Soda Mountain provides a second chance for humans and nature to coexist, rather than squabble over the last remaining features of an ever-shrinking natural landscape."

Outside the building, more than 50 members of a property-rights group from California, People for the USA, picketed with signs such as "Access Yes, Clinton's Legacy No," and "Babbitt Go Home Leave Soda Mt. Alone." One referred to Babbitt as the "anti-Christ."

"People who are farming, ranching or trying to log are taking it in the shorts," said Les Stewart, an unemployed logger from Happy Camp, Calif. "You can't make a living anymore."

Stewart, who didn't expect to be able to talk to Babbitt, had a message for the interior secretary.

"Just leave us alone," he said.

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Babbitt drags feet on Soda Mountain

By Jeff Duewel
of the Daily Courier

MEDFORD — U.S. Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt said Friday he'd wait for the Bureau of Land Management process to run its course before he made a decision about the controversial Soda Mountain area east of Ashland.

Babbitt met with Oregon's 2nd District Congressman Greg Walden and seven others representing cattlemen, environmentalists, the timber industry and county government at BLM headquarters in Medford.

Babbitt has named the Soda Mountain area as a possible national monument, along with Steens Mountain in Eastern Oregon. He took a tour of the area, located east of Ashland along the Oregon-California border, last November.

Pickers outside on Friday held signs saying "Protect our grazing rights" "Babbitt go home, leave Soda Mountain alone," and "Access yes, Clinton's legacy no."

"The federal government isn't even supposed to own land," said Les Stewart, a carpenter from Happy Camp, Calif. "It's already hard enough to make a living. This is great for people sitting at home at their keyboard making a lot of money from the stock market. But a guy trying to make a living from natural resources — farmers, loggers and miners — is taking it in the shorts."

Babbitt said even if the president names the area a national monument by executive decree, the normal process of the BLM will run its course, with public input taken.

"I'm not here to announce a decision," Babbitt said. "I'm here to continue the discussion. I don't intend to make a decision of any kind until I get a chance to look at the (BLM's) environmental impact statement on March 10."

The BLM officially calls the Soda Mountain area the "Cascade Siskiyou Ecological Emphasis Area," which covers more than 40,000 acres of land known for its biological diversity.

About 6,000 acres around Soda Mountain has been looked at for nearly 10 years as a national wilderness area. Opinions for management range from full protection as a wilderness, to managing for recreation including off-highway vehicle use, to providing for grazing and timber harvest use.

Babbitt's promise to hold off on a decision came a day after he announced in Denver a new plan for National Landscape Monuments, which would be operated by the BLM. He wants Congress to act on his suggestions, but President Clinton could declare the land monuments by proclamation.

"We have room in the West to protect the landscape," Babbitt told the Associated Press on Thursday.

The Soda Mountain debate is just one of many between landowners and the government in the West, much of the land is federally owned.

Protesters say Babbitt and President Clinton are taking away

constitutional property rights with the Lands Legacy policies, which include a plan to add 50 million acres of roadless areas this year.

"The World Wildlife Foundation set up an office in Ashland just to turn this into a biosphere reserve," said Richard Gierack of Happy Camp, of the Property Rights Congress, a new group fighting for property rights. "Babbitt is just helping them implement it. This is just one phase. We have to do something."

Dave Willis, chairman of the Soda Mountain Wilderness Council, praised Babbitt's efforts, directing his comments to Walden.

"It seems like Babbitt wants to do the right thing for the land," Willis said. "We'd like you to help, too."

"I don't think there's any dispute that this is an ecologically important area," Walden said. "But we also care about the economy and property values."

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65 percent like Clinton's 'Land Legacy'

Support big for more national monuments

By Jeff Duewel
of the Daily Courier

Few issues in the West provoke more heated responses than those dealing with protection of forests.

While many lawmakers and officials from the timber industry have decried President Clinton's "Land Legacy" policies of the past few months, a national poll released this week shows broad support for his efforts.

The poll was conducted nationwide from Jan. 28 to 30 by the Washington, D.C., firm The Mellman Group, on behalf of the National BLM Wilderness Campaign.

Of the 1,000 people surveyed, 65 percent supported the President's creation of three new national monuments in California and Arizona, totaling more than 1 million acres.

"The poll shows the vast majority of Americans — regardless of age, sex, income or political party —

support President Clinton's actions to protect public lands," said Elise Jones, executive director of the Colorado Environmental Coalition.

Furthermore, a congressional delegation headed by Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., this week urged the president to continue his efforts to protect roadless areas on national forest lands.

In a letter, 20 senators congratulated the president for "making an excellent first step toward keeping logging, mining, and other industrial activities out of national forest roadless areas," according to the Heritage Forests Campaign.

Congressman Greg Walden, R-Ore., represents the 2nd District and is a

staunch opponent of Clinton's plans. He has bitterly fought for those industries mentioned by the senators.

Walden butted heads with Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt over another possible national monument today in Medford. Babbitt has shown interest in making the 40,000-acre Cascade-Siskiyou Ecological Emphasis Area east of Ashland — better known

locally as Soda Mountain — a national monument, along with Steens Mountain in Eastern Oregon.

"It's Soda Mountain, the Steens, the Owhee Canyon," Walden said last fall when Clinton announced his plans to set aside 50 million in roadless areas on national forest lands. "Pretty soon you can connect the dots. They've got a real agenda to lock up, shut down, and exclude people and commerce from any federal lands."

Walden also assailed the plan's exclusion of congressional action.

"They're trying to accomplish these sorts of policies through regulation as opposed to through legislation, which is a dangerous precedent," Walden said. "When you exclude people in local areas and their elected representatives in Congress, what kind of a system are we living under? Not the democracy we're supposed to be living under."

According to the Heritage Forest Campaign, the vast majority of public comment in more than 200 meetings nationwide have shown support for Clinton's plan.

To Dave Hill, vice president of Southern Oregon Timber Industry Association in Medford, the poll reflects a lack of understanding and a bias from the urban eastern United States.

"To someone living in the eastern United States, it's easy to say you're supporting protection of forest lands," Hill said. "Two-thirds of the population lives east of the Mississippi River."

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Soda Mountain: Now is the time

Since 1984, a citizens group has called for the establishment of a wilderness area in the Soda Mountain and Pilot Rock area east of Ashland. Today, more than anytime since that proposal was first made, the possibility that a sizeable portion of the so-called Klamath-Siskiyou Bioregion might see perpetual protection from the harmful effects of human development seems a reality.

Backers of the wilderness proposal now are pushing for President Clinton to create a 70,000-acre national monument in the Soda Mountain area, with a 37,500-acre "core" as wilderness. Much of the protected area would be in northern California's Siskiyou County. The proposal would outlaw off-road vehicle use, as well as logging and the construction of roads in the area.

While it takes an act of Congress to designate a wilderness area, under the 1906 Antiquities Act the president has the legal authority, at the stroke of a pen, to designate national monuments. If Clinton designates a Soda Mountain National Monument, wilderness backers would then move to have Congress designate the wilderness area within it. We support such designation.

On Friday, Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt and Rep. Greg Walden will meet with a handful of Southern Oregon representatives to discuss Soda Mountain. The group includes Jackson County Commissioner Jack Walker; Dave Hill, executive vice president of the Southern Oregon Timber Industries Association; rancher Dalton Straus; David Lexow of the Motorcycle Riders Association; Dave Willis, chairman of the Soda Mountain Wilderness Council; Dominick DellaSala, director of the Klamath-Siskiyou region for the World Wildlife Fund; and Pepper Trail, consulting biologist for the Rogue Audubon Society.

We hope Babbitt will take away from Friday's meeting a clearer understanding of the importance of the proposed monument designation. And we hope he and Walden will come to understand how much community support there is in this region for the monument and wilderness.

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Off-road vehicles do tremendous harm to our forest lands. Logging has stripped millions of acres of Old Growth forest. Western Oregon has a miserly .65 percent of its 2.35 million acres designated as wilderness, along with one tiny wilderness study area.

Southern Oregon anticipates tens of thousands of new residents moving into the region in coming decades, some of them with off-road and all-terrain vehicles. It is important that we act today to designate this critical mountain habitat as off-limits to the worst effects of that population growth. We don't want the land to be off-limits to people, only to ORVs, ATVs, and log trucks, along with cows.

Babbitt has visited the Soda Mountain area, and also has seen the proposed monument in the Steens Mountains of southeastern Oregon. The differences between the two regions are monumental: Many Steens area residents are strongly opposed to such a designation. That's not true of the Soda Mountain proposal.

Still, those most effected by any Soda Mountain proposal will be ranchers who for decades have run cattle on summer range rented from the Bureau of Land Management. Those ranchers have a point that if there is a monument or wilderness designation, they should be compensated. We urge Walden to work toward a legislative remedy. A monument designation is the best solution for the land and the majority of people in the region. But the ranchers' rights need to be protected, too.

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Soda Mountain an ideal choice for national monument

Many environmental debates are philosophical in nature. But a proposal to protect an area encircling Soda Mountain in Southern Oregon and Northern California can be decided in a very practical manner: The costs are minor; the benefits are significant.

U.S. Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt was in town recently to discuss Soda Mountain's future.

Among the possibilities is that President Clinton will declare a national monument encompassing some 70,000 acres.

Mr. Secretary, we urge you to urge the president to create a national monument in the Soda Mountain area. It just makes sense.

The land under consideration centers around a Bureau of Land Management study area called the Cascade-Siskiyou Ecological Emphasis Area.

That area that could be included in a national monument stretching from near Interstate 5 and Pilot Rock on its western flank to Jenny Creek on the east, from several miles south of the Oregon-California border and north to an area near Highway 66.

At its deepest points, it measures about 11 miles by 16 miles.

The BLM describes it as a region of "great ecological diversity."

It serves as a high elevation land bridge between the Siskiyou Mountains and the Cascades and includes species from both as well as from the Great Basin and local valleys.

The benefits of protecting the area are obvious. The costs are relatively few: It is not a significant source of timber production.

Only four ranchers graze cattle there and they say they would be agreeable to a buyout of their grazing rights.

Off-road vehicle users have their eyes on the prize, but there are already thousands of miles of forest roads elsewhere in the region they could use.

Whether 70,000 acres is the right amount to include for protection is beyond our knowledge. But certainly a significant portion of that should be included.

The creation of a national monument does not put the land off-limits.

But it does set boundaries within which the BLM must carefully assess how best to ensure that the essential nature of the area is preserved for future generations.

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Commission: Keep Soda Mountain open

Jackson County board opposes movement to declare BLM area a national monument

By PAUL FATTIG
of the Mail Tribune

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners declared Tuesday its unanimous opposition to creating a national monument for the Soda Mountain area.

The resolution concludes that creating a national monument on the Bureau of Land Management area a dozen miles southeast of Ashland would decrease or eliminate grazing allotments, restrain recreational and logging use, restrict public access and severely limit public access to the disabled.

And contrary to assertions by those supporting a monument, the board believes the impact of humans on the land caused the area to be ecologically unique, said Commissioner Jack Walker in an interview after the meeting.

"If man's use for 100 years has been so detrimental, then why is it so unique and diverse ecologically?" he asked, then answered, "The development up there has made it what it is."

Although supported by many attending the commissioners' meeting, the commissioners' stance was rejected by the environmental community, which backs protection of the area. Environmentalists say the area needs to be protected from grazing, motor vehicle use and other ground-disturbing activity before its unique plant life is gone forever.

While the debate continues, the BLM plans to release a draft environmental impact statement on March 10 concerning some 40,000 acres in the region as part of its Cascade Siskiyou Ecological Emphasis Area.

Environmentalists led by the Soda Mountain Wilderness Council have been pressing for protection of up to 70,000 acres of federal land in the area where the Siskiyou Mountains meet the Cascade Range.

Off-road motor vehicle users, the timber industry and ranchers have said creating the monument would leave high and dry those who have historically relied on the resource.

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt visited the Rogue Valley in mid-February, meeting with Walker and others to hear concerns about the future of Soda Mountain. He also hiked Soda Mountain last fall.

The commissioners, who are also concerned that monument status will interfere with management practices that reduce fire danger, believe the process is a "top-down" federal government decision, Walker said.

"This administration has not really taken local government and local people's concerns into consideration," Walker said, noting he had made that point when meeting with Babbitt in February.

Walker, a lifelong Rogue Valley resident, said the area has changed little since he first camped on Soda Mountain nearly half a century ago.

"Forty years ago it was the same as you see it today," he said.

When fellow county commissioners Sue Kupillas and Ric Holt travel to Washington, D.C., today on county-related business, they will lobby members of Congress about the need to protect the status quo on Soda Mountain, he said.

"We hope that it will make a difference," Walker said. "But we also know a stroke of the pen by the president can erase all of that."

Ashland resident Dominick DellaSala, a forest ecologist who is director of the Klamath-Siskiyou program for the World Wildlife Fund, wasn't surprised by the board's resolution.

"The commissioners have decided to plunge us back into the dark ages by continuing the practice of degrading the lands and promoting past practices instead of leaping forward with some visions that addresses the ecological needs of the region," he said. "... It's clear the commissioners have decided to entrench themselves rather than come to the table and talk about alternatives."

Dave Willis, chairman of the Soda Mountain Wilderness Council, appeared to agree.

"This isn't the kind of creative leadership that's going to get this county where it needs to go," Willis said. "We can't keep electing commissioners with all six feet mired in a gone-for-ever public land exploitation past if the future here is going to be one we want to leave for our kids — for anybody's kids."

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Soda Mountain: Protection plan draws less controversy than most

No one really knows what to call the strikingly picturesque area around Soda Mountain in Southern Oregon.

It is not really a wilderness, although here is a Soda Mountain Wilderness Proposal. It is not really a recreation area, although a poorly built, stream-damaging eep trail runs through it. It is not really a wildlife refuge, although California's Department of Fish and Game manages much of the southern portion for deer winter range. It is not really good timberland, although timber companies own some cutover land in the area. It is not really ranching country, although the Bureau of Land Management leases grazing rights to a few ranchers in an increasingly marginal business.

The working name for the area — The Cascade-Siskiyou Ecological Emphasis Area — is tongue-twistingly bureaucratic and tells you little about the land. The area around Soda Mountain is worthy of preservation in its natural state because it is an ecologically significant corner of the Klamath Knot.

To a geologist, a knot is a place where geological formations of different ages come together and overlap. The Klamath Knot is the meeting place of the ancient Klamath Mountains and the younger Cascade, Siskiyou and coastal mountain ranges. The Yolla Bolly Mountains and the Eel River on the California coast anchors the southern end of the Klamath Knot. The rest of this unusual geological formation is bound by Gold Beach and the Rogue River on the Oregon Coast on the northwest and the Greensprings, east of Ashland on the northeast.

This jumble of rocks creates the most diverse plant habitat in the American West. Habitats not normally near one another, including, oak savannah, Douglas fir, white pine and juniper, are just around the corner in the Klamath Knot. Some 70,000 acres around Soda Mountain are among the most biologically diverse in the entire Klamath Knot. It survives mostly intact

largely because of isolation and benign neglect.

The highest and best use of the Soda Mountain area is as a laboratory for plant and wildlife

observation and for ecosystem protection and rehabilitation experiments that can be tested for use in other damaged environments.

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt is proposing a new category for such previously unrecognized places — National Landscape Monument.

Advocates would like Babbitt to name the area the Soda Mountain National Ecological Preserve even if it is officially designated a national monument.

Efforts to preserve the area around Soda Mountain began in the late 1970s when the ubiquitous Andy Kerr, then with the Oregon Wilderness Coalition, urged the Bureau of Land management officials to consider the area for wilderness protection.

A Southern Oregon consulting biologist, Bruce Boccard, founded the Soda Mountain Wilderness Council in 1984 to advocate protection for the area. Boccard died in 1987 at the age of 33. In an unprecedented gesture, his friends and allies persuaded the U.S. Geographic Names Board to name a rock outcrop overlooking the area after him. Boccard Point is still one of the best places to get an idea of the size and majesty of this landscape.

Marc Prevost, an environmental activist turned government staffer, took up the cause after Boccard became terminally ill. Prevost urged the BLM to put the Soda Mountain area on the administrative map

as a place worthy of special attention. Prevost died of cancer in January at the age of 46.

Greensprings outfitter Dave Willis became director of the Soda Mountain Wilderness Council when Prevost's duties at the Rogue Valley Council of Governments demanded more attention. It is Willis who quietly troled designation of the Soda Mountain area by Babbitt when it became know the Interior Secretary was in the market for national monuments that President Bill Clinton could designate under the Antiquities Act before his term of office expired.

There is more compromise in the air than news accounts of the meetings between Babbitt and the usual suspects might suggest. Quietly, spokesmen for ranchers are saying it is better to buy out a few grazing leases than spend money on barbed wire and lawyers. The Soda Mountain Wilderness Council is willing to consider something less than wilderness designation for much of the 70,000 acre management area provided protection and rehabilitation of a 38,000 acre core is sufficient to eventually be officially designated wilderness by Congress. Perhaps because most of the Soda Mountain area is already

Russell Sadler



Commentary

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in public ownership, one of the largest private timber owners in the area is already trading land with the BLM around Pilot Rock and another appears willing to sell or trade more.

A handful of protesters from California's Siskiyou County stood outside the Medford BLM office during Babbitt's visit on Feb. 18. A portion of the Soda Mountain area crosses the state line into that county. The deer who winter on the California Department of Fish and Game's Horseshoe Ranch from as far north as Chiloquin do not recognize the border, of course. But the state line definitely separates a state of mind. One California protestor, despairing of actually meeting Babbitt, was asked by reporters what message he had for the Interior Secretary.

"Just leave us alone," he said.

That is not likely. The rugged isolation that has protected the militant loners in Siskiyou County is feeling the population pressure that transformed the West Coast after World War II. More than 75 percent of all the people who live west of Denver, live in a strip about 50 miles wide along each side of Interstate 5 from San Diego to Bellingham. The area between Redding and Ashland has been the most sparsely populated stretch of the Pacific Slope. No more.

As more people move into the Klamath-Siskiyou region's remote mountain vastness they put more pressure on public land. If an ecologically significant corner of the Klamath Knot is to be protected for its unique geological and biological diversity it must come soon, before competing claims on public resources make it politically impossible.

Veteran columnist Russell Sadler teaches journalism and environmental studies at Southern Oregon University in Ashland.

**Proposed Canyons of the Ancients
National Monument**

Four Corners Region

Denver *

Moeab *

Utah

Colorado

Proposed Canyons of the Ancients
National Monument

Cortez *

Arizona

Farmington *

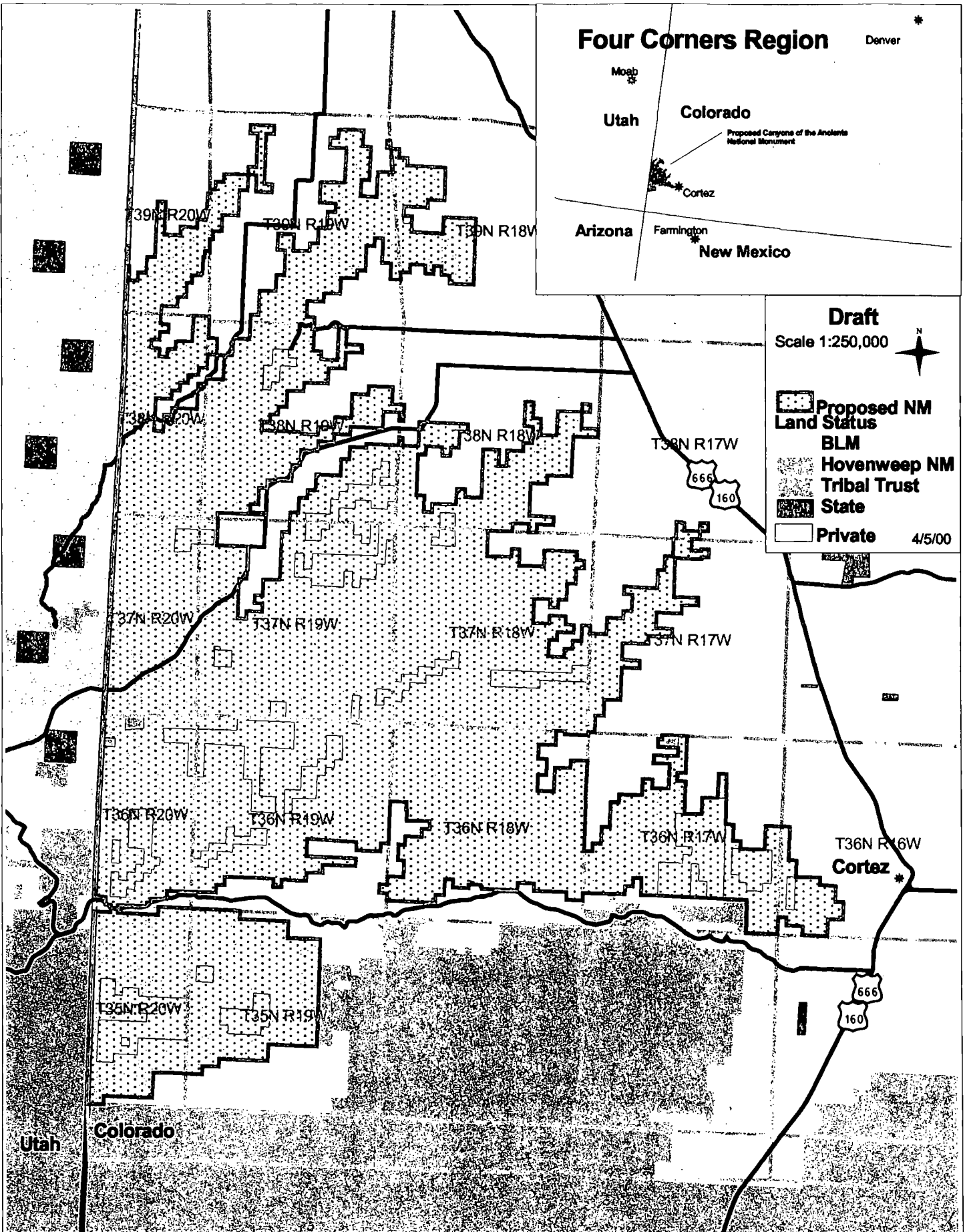
New Mexico

Draft

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-  **Proposed NM**
 -  **Land Status**
 -  **BLM**
 -  **Hovenweep NM**
 -  **Tribal Trust**
 -  **State**
 -  **Private**
- 4/5/00



Babbitt holds the cards

Campbell's fit of pique is likely to lose the game for Montezuma County

When Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt announced that he and the president wanted to increase protection of the McElmo Dome west of Cortez, a group of vociferous locals objected on the premise that they were sure the move was intended primarily to protect the BLM lands from them.

Others objected to Babbitt's plan for different reasons. They, too, were sensitive about limits on multiple use, and they also worried that a change in management status would bring more traffic to the land, without a balancing increase in resources to solve the problems that created. They believed that some change was inevitable, though, and they were convinced that the only way to tailor that change so that it was less than disastrous for the local area was to participate in management decisions.

A third group, farther along the spectrum, argued for even more restrictions, pointing out abuses created by past uses of the land and advocating strict protections for future generations.

In politics, the extremes usually define the center, and the most likely conclusion of this political process was that the extremes would cancel each other out and we'd end up with Plan B — not perfect but workable. That's the way the game has played.

For a while we thought Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell understood that. After all, he's no political neophyte; he's watched the machinations for many years. When he proposed a bill that would have safeguarded most of the rights locals were most concerned about, we thought he'd made the best of the situation that had been foisted upon all of us.

We didn't expect him to chicken out.

There's no way around the fact that Campbell has screwed up, either one end or on the other. If the national conservation area was the best plan when he proposed it, it's still

the best plan. He can't have heard anything more than what he knew when he proposed it: none of the arguments are new. If he's acknowledging that it was a mistake all along, that's a sign that he didn't perform sufficient research before he proposed it.

Campbell might have underestimated the depth of sentiment a change in land use inspires and, with an eye to becoming Secretary of the Interior for George W. Bush, decided he didn't want to risk being considered in league with Babbitt and the president. That's politics. Unfortunately, he's left the residents of Montezuma County twisting in the wind.

Some landowners believe that Campbell has called Babbitt's bluff. They're forgetting an all-important point: Babbitt's threat to create a national monument was not an idle one. Clinton has the power to do it, and the authority to manage public lands as he sees fit. Campbell knows Babbitt holds those cards.

By yanking his bill, seemingly in a fit of temper, Campbell has monkeyed with the odds, and he certainly hasn't improved them. He did it without consulting Rep. Scott McInnis, who was left with few options because he knew his own national conservation area bill couldn't pass without Campbell's support.

Politics is rarely straightforward. Favors are traded, compromises are hammered out, alliances are forged, and eventually, we hope, we manage to balance the needs of all concerned. Campbell emphasized that reality when he said he wanted to 'emphasize that in developing balanced land-management plans, everyone has to be prepared to give up something.' It's a shame he didn't have the courage to follow his convictions, because now he — and more seriously, we — may have absolutely no say in the matter. As Babbitt has very clearly stated, 'Doing nothing is not an option.'



CORTEZ

JOURNAL

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CORTEZ, COLORADO (USPS 350-960)

VOLUME 110, NUMBER 129

Monument's impacts worry locals

BY GAIL BINKLEY

In 1995, the year before the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument was designated in southern Utah, recorded visitation to the BLM-managed area via its northern entrance was 444,000.

In 1999, visitation was 1.14 million, according to a spokesperson for the BLM/Forest Service Inter-agency office in the town of Escalante.

Whether tourism will jump similarly in Montezuma County if a new national monument is designated here is uncertain, but local leaders expect to see a surge in visitors — and they

aren't sure the area is prepared for it.

The possibility of a national monument being created in the near future jumped dramatically Thursday when Sen.

Ben Nighthorse Campbell dropped legislation he had been

sponsoring to create the Canyon of the Ancients National Conservation Area on 164,000 acres west of Cortez. A hearing that had been scheduled on the bill April 13

has been canceled.

Rep. Scott McInnis, who is sponsoring a companion bill in the House, has not pulled his bill, but no hearing has been set on it and the congressman won't be pushing it, according to his press secretary, Josh Penry.

"We're not going to push the issue, but at the same time we're not giving up on it," Penry said Monday. "We're going to continue our dialogue with the affected parties."

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt has stated repeatedly that the area's numerous Ancestral Puebloan ruins need greater protection, either through a national monument

designation or as a national conservation area.

The former, more restrictive designation can be applied by the president under the 1908 Antiquities Act, while the latter is created through congressional legislation.

Members of the Southwest Colorado Landowners Association, a multiple-use advocacy group which is opposed to either designation, welcomed Campbell's announcement and have vowed to fight any presidential action.

However, some other locals fear the demise of Campbell's bill means an automatic national monument — and worry about the ramifications

of such a status change for the remote, rugged terrain.

Carla Harper, the county's assistant federal-lands coordinator, said the county has concerns about how the local roads will handle increased traffic if a monument is created. Over the years, the county has had many problems maintaining the road to Hovenweep National Monument.

"It could be a benefit if the feds are going to start keeping the roads up more," she said. "But a lot of times you still have to go over a county road to get to the public lands."

"Our road budget is going to be the same, but the roads will need more upkeep."

Cortez Mayor Joe Keck said Monday he believes a national monument designation would bring "substantially more people."

"I would think we'd get a boost in tourism," he said. "One of my concerns was, at whose expense? We have a little diversity in our economy now, with agriculture, grazing, and CO2 — which is pretty critical to the tax base of the county."

"If they don't allow those kinds of activities, we'll probably get an increase in tourism and a decrease in agriculture over time."

Studies done at the
See IMPACT on Page 16A

Impact

Continued from Page 1A

University of Colorado have shown that locals begin to resent tourism if it comprises 30 percent or more of their economy. Keck said. A study done recently for the county found that tourism constitutes approximately 17 percent of the local economy.

"You get sort of a backlash because the local residents can no longer do the things they enjoy doing on public lands," he said. "Traffic and congestion get worse."

"I think the NCA provided a chance to reach some sort of balance where you could do a little more resource-protection while allowing multiple uses. Maybe a national monument can, but I'm kind of scared of presidential proclamations."

Babbitt has said that carbon-dioxide extraction and cattle-grazing would be compatible with a BLM-managed national monument. However, CO2 officials worry that they might not be allowed to drill new wells within a national monument, and some locals fear losing their historic uses of the land.

Lynn Dyer, tourism coordinator for the local Umbrella Tourism Committee, agreed that a national monument will lure many new visitors.

"I think if it's a monument or a national park, it's going to have a lot more publicity than if it was just a conservation area," she said. "It probably would draw a lot more attention and a lot more visitation. It certainly seems to have done that to the town of Escalante."

"The good news is we'll see more business. The bad news is, if the community isn't ready for it, it can have a negative impact on the visitor experience."

Although it's too early to know what will happen, she emphasized, if a national monument is declared, planning will be critical.

"My biggest concern is to make sure if it's declared a national monument, that there is a plan in place not only for the way it's administered, but on the part of the county and towns to make sure they're ready to handle the impact of the increased visitation."

The vast majority of Montezuma County's visitors rate their experience here as very positive, Dyer said. They find local people friendly, helpful and non-pretentious.

"If we get in a situation where we're overwhelmed with visitation, some of that, without proper planning, might go away," she said.

Another concern will be designing the monument — if one is created — so it offers recreational opportunities to all types of visitors, she said. The McElmo Dome area, like the Grand Staircase-Escalante, is sprawling and rugged, without many "centerpieces" to focus visitor interest.

"A lot of Escalante is pretty isolated," Dyer said. "People go and see it and realize there isn't much they can do unless they want to do it for a pretty long time."

"We need to make sure we're going to have within our area places where your average tourist, if there is such a thing, can find something to do. Not everybody is going to want a real remote experience."

Headline on column was misleading

Dear Editor:

The Cortez Journal printed a guest column in my name on Thursday, March 23, in which the title of the article and some wording was changed dramatically. I asked a staff member why my article was changed and I was informed that they have to get people's attention so they will read the articles. Are these actions "freedom of the press"? The same identical article appeared on the same day in the new local newspaper and it was written word for word the way it was submitted.

To clarify this issue, I do not prefer or support a national monument or a national conservation area, but I would like to applaud Senator Campbell on his recent decision to suspend his bill. Hopefully the senator's actions will help

unite our community in a common goal in regards to future public-land redesignations.

Rick Keck

Editor's note: Titles (headlines) are written for columns according to the size of the space that they occupy, and frequently are different from any possible titles suggested by the writer of the original article. The headline on Mr. Keck's article was indeed meant to attract readers, not to misrepresent his views. No wordings were dramatically changed in Mr. Keck's article; some minor editing was done for grammar and clarity, and two paragraphs about the lynx were removed because the rest of the article was about the conservation area issue and they seemed to be irrelevant to that theme.

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Protect ancient wonders

It's a shame that U.S. Sen. Ben Campbell is dropping a proposal to create a national conservation area in southwestern Colorado. His decision makes it very likely that Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt will ask President Clinton to declare the area a national monument, precluding opportunity for public comment.

At stake are 160,000 acres of U.S. Bureau of Land Management property near Cortez. The area is rich in artifacts from the Ancestral Pueblo Indians, the same culture that built the famed cliff dwellings at Mesa Verde National Park. Unlike the ancient wonders in the national park, however, the BLM treasures get no special protection and remain vulnerable to theft and vandalism. These archaeological resources deserve greater protection.

After visiting the area last year, Babbitt said he might ask Clinton to declare the area a national monument using the Antiquities Act. But the Interior Department chief, whose jurisdiction includes the BLM, wisely delayed action after local residents complained that he was ignoring their concerns.

Campbell, Colorado's senior sena-

tor, and U.S. Rep. Scott McInnis, who represents the district and co-sponsored Campbell's proposal, reasonably tried to address local concerns in the legislation. The bill offered ample opportunities for opponents and supporters to help fine-tune the plan, such as where the boundaries would be drawn, what access roads would be used and what, if any, restrictions would be placed on use of the land.

But Campbell says some opponents of the proposal refused to compromise. When Campbell did the political calculus, he figured the measure's chances for success were near zero, especially because few days are left for Congress to accomplish any real business during this election year.

Campbell's decision is disappointing. It almost assures that Babbitt will ask Clinton to declare the area a national monument. And, given that Babbitt's primary interest is protecting the archaeological resources, a presidential declaration likely will be far more restrictive of motorized and commercial use than Campbell's bill.

But if Babbitt does ask Clinton to declare a national monument, he should consider the public comments that have been gathered to date.

COLORADO

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Desert lands to be monument?

By Bill McAllister
Denver Post Washington Bureau Chief

WASHINGTON — Interior Department officials have begun studying whether President Clinton should declare 164,000 acres of mesas and desert lands in southwestern Colorado a national monument to protect a vast array of pre-Columbian artifacts, a department spokesman said Friday.

SOUTHWEST
COLORADO

Tim Ahern said presidential action once again is being considered by officials here after the demise of legislation that would have declared the lands a national conservation area. Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell, R-Colo., on Thursday suddenly dropped legislation changing the area's status, declaring he could not bring warring factions together over his proposal.

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt has visited southwestern Colorado four times and has declared he "wants to

Bill's failure may spur designation

add additional protections" to the federally owned lands, Ahern said. Babbitt was in the West on Friday and unavailable for comment on Campbell's action.

"It took us by surprise," Ahern said, noting that Babbitt earlier this year had deferred any possibility of presidential action on the Colorado project to Congress. The department has been considering monument status for several areas in the West, and Clinton in January declared three new national monuments in California and Arizona.

With the death of Campbell's legislation, less than two months after he introduced it, Ahern said the department is "looking at the options." There is no set timetable for when Clinton, now in the final year of his presidency, would have to act. He could wait until his last day in office, Ahern said in response to a question.

If the president decides to invoke a provision of the Antiquities Act and declare the lands a national monument,

one of the same groups that fought Campbell's legislation vowed Friday to take the president to court.

"We're not going to let them have it without a fight," promised Chester Tozer, president of the Southwest Colorado Land Owners Association.

Tozer's group was one of the strongest opponents of changing the lands' status. "We've just won the first step of it," said Tozer, saying his group now would have to focus its attention on fighting any presidential action.

Jeff Widen, associate director of the Colorado Environmental Coalition, said Campbell's action may have made presidential action necessary.

"He pulled out the only alternative to a national monument," Widen said. "And if we have a national monument there, we'll have Chester Tozer and Senator Campbell to thank for it."

In a statement Thursday, Campbell blamed environmental groups for saying his legislation "does not go far

enough" and property-rights groups for saying "it goes too far." Campbell acknowledged that his decision would increase "the risk" of presidential action and that Clinton might give local landowners less access to the federal lands than would Campbell's legislation.

Widen said his group was not opposed to Campbell's proposal and that the "tabid" opposition of groups opposed to federal landownership may have undermined the legislation.

Environmental groups wanted to see the Campbell legislation expanded to give wilderness status to 20 percent of the lands affected, Widen said. For his part, Widen said the Campbell legislation did "very little on the ground" to most of the lands that would have been placed in what the senator had designated as the "Canyons of the Ancients."

Campbell would have limited the off-trail use of motorized vehicles in the new conservation area but would have allowed the Bureau of Land Management to have written most of the rules for the management of the area, Widen said.

Campbell drops plan to save lands

By Bill McAllister
Denver Post Washington Bureau Chief

WASHINGTON — Less than two months after he introduced legislation calling for the creation of a federally protected preserve in southwest Colorado on land believed to be filled with ancient Indian artifacts, Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell, R-Colo., abruptly dropped the plan Thursday.

The only Native American in Congress, Campbell said he was abandoning his proposed "Canyons of the Ancients" because of "the total absence of local consensus" behind his plan for a national conservation area. He also blamed backers of his idea for the 164,000-acre preserve, saying they have "been silent" since he announced his plan Feb. 3.

"Since the bill was introduced, environmental groups have complained it does not go far enough, while property rights groups claimed it goes too far," Campbell's office said. "Until these diverse groups can get together and come to an agreement on the best way to protect these historic artifacts, I will not move this bill."

Suzanne Jones, assistant regional director of the Wilderness Society, expressed surprise at Campbell's decision. "He must be using us as a scapegoat," she said. "We'd love to see that area protected. If you care about archaeology, this place is a treasure trove and should definitely be protected."

Jones said her group had written to Campbell expressing support for his bill but had never heard from him. A Campbell spokesman said several other envi-

ronmental groups had complained.

Shortly after Campbell announced his decision, a spokesman for Rep. Scott McInnis, R-Colo., who was planning to push the bill in the House, said he, too, would back away from the measure.

"We've got our own plate of public-land issues," said Josh Penry, a spokesman for McInnis.

When Campbell introduced the legislation, he said he acted at the request of Montezuma County officials who feared President Clinton might designate the area a national monument and impose severe restrictions on the lands, which are owned by the federal government. Campbell warned that presidential action is still a risk.

The senator had said that his bill would take "priceless public lands" and preserve them in "the most farsighted and balanced manner possible."

He said that the lands were home to a rich civilization that thrived in desert lands and mesas before the Western World had discovered the Americas.

"It is imperative we protect these lands now in a reasonable manner, to recognize the historical, archaeological and cultural value they hold," Campbell told the Senate on Feb. 3.

He promised to fast-track the legislation and a hearing had been set on his legislation for April 13. He asked that the hearing be canceled and said he would not act on the bill.

With about 100 legislative days left in the Senate's session and more than 50 of his bills pending, Campbell said there is not enough time to work out the contradictory objections to the bill.

3/24/00

Babbitt's warning

Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt gave members of Colorado's congressional delegation fair warning last week: Protect critical areas in Colorado legislatively or he and President Clinton will do so administratively.

Legislative efforts are in the works for the three areas Babbitt is concerned about, including 3rd District Rep. Scott McInnis' plan for a national conservation area west of Colorado National Monument.

But the best-laid legislative plans can get brushed aside during the heat of an election year, when every action by either party is carefully calculated for its effect on voters.

In that regard, creating a national conservation area for Black Ridge and the accompanying canyons ought to be a no-brainer.

To begin with, there is near unanimity on the need to protect the area, even to creating wilderness for some of the area. Babbitt said he is willing to "cast in bronze" language that will ensure Colorado's water rights are protected.

Also, Babbitt declared that any protection of the area must recognize the need for continued hunting and grazing.

In short, Republicans can burnish their environmental credentials by supporting this designation, without threatening any of their traditional constituencies.

But if Congress does not act to protect the area, Babbitt indicated he will recommend creating a BLM-administered monument under the federal Antiquities Act, the same law that has allowed presidents since 1906 to create national monuments.

Legislative action is nearly always to be preferred over single strokes of the executive pen when it comes to major changes in public-lands management, and this case is no exception. But Babbitt is working hard to ensure there is community support protecting Black Ridge in some manner. No one should be surprised if he and Clinton take action if Congress dawdles.

Daily Press
February 15, 2000
Montrose, Colorado

Campbell draws fire for public lands plan

CORTEZ, Colo. (AP) — Environmentalists are criticizing a plan by Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell to protect public land near Cortez as too "bare-bones" to do much good.

The federal legislation by the Colorado Republican is a response to pressure from Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt to preserve the 164,000 acres in southwestern Colorado that encompass ancient ruins and artifacts.

Babbitt threatened to make the area a national monument if

Colorado's congressional delegation did nothing to protect the area. Campbell's bill, introduced Feb. 3, could create a national conservation area.

A national monument is designated by presidential decree. Congress creates a national conservation area.

The problem with Campbell's plan, environmentalists contend, is that it does not spell out protections for the site.

"It's a pretty bare-bones bill. There isn't much in the way of enhanced protection," said Mark

Pearson, chairman of the Rocky Mountain chapter of the Sierra Club.

Campbell's office didn't return a message seeking comment.

The Sierra Club and the Colorado Environmental Coalition, which has 52 member groups, say the bill needs more detail on how gas and oil development, livestock grazing and recreation would be managed and how undeveloped areas would be protected.

Jeff Widen, the coalition's associate director, said new oil and gas exploration should be banned.

Otherwise, "It's like an open door to the oil and gas industry," he said.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management oversees the land, where Shell Oil Co. has 61 wells.

Pearson and Widen said about 20 percent of the area, or 30,000 acres, should be designated as wilderness. Restrictions on use of wilderness are more stringent and include bans on motorized vehicles.

Area residents oppose making the area a national monument, in part because they don't want tourism to increase.

The area includes 20,000 known sites of Ancestral Puebloan settlement.

The prehistoric Indians' well-preserved past has made neighboring Mesa Verde National Park an international tourist destination.

The area also corresponds to a massive geological formation, the McElmo Dome, the site of extensive production of carbon dioxide and natural gas.

Sunday 02-06-2000

THE DENVER POST, Colorado

McElmo Canyon's circular drama

By John Sutcliffe

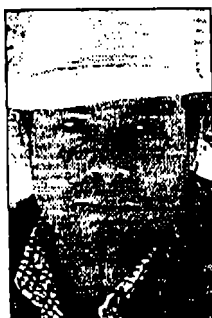
McELMO CANYON — By the time this article is published, Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt and his retinue may have already made McElmo Dome a national monument. And as the skeptics always said, the interminable meetings the Department of the Interior had called were simply paying lip-service to their current principal of local input.

So again McElmo Canyon returns to World Stage, not this time as the escape route for a bunch of cop-killers, but as one of President Clinton's final attempts to leave a legacy other than his sophomoric philandering.

The proposal, or more accurately the plan, is to create a national monument amongst the deep, arid canyons that drain into McElmo Creek, as well as the lower slopes of the Sleeping Ute Mountain — possibly as much as 186,000 acres rich in pre-history, which need protection.

Without getting permission to cross private land, access to this area from McElmo Canyon road is limited. One exception lies immediately north of my ranch. Two acres of flat slick-rock, sold to the BLM some years ago, leads up to a fortified Anasazi settlement, Sand Canyon and the surrounding country. A few years ago, a fine Sunday in the spring or fall might find three or four local cars parked there. It was, and to some degree still is, a wonderland of ledges and crevices, ocher cliffs, blood-red sand and exotic ruins. After a rain, myriad rock-pools punctuate the glistening slick-rock; and in the

Colorado Voices



Sutcliffe

spring, shrubs and flowers explode in scented color. But things have changed. First came a well-intentioned, if naive, group, under the BLM's guidance, to lay trails through the fragile back-country. The busloads of visitors from Crow Canyon, a local archaeological center, started to descend on the place, as did student groups from surrounding schools. Everyone seemed eager to spread the word about this magical place. Trailer loads of dude horses, minivans bristling with mountain bikes, many of them operated by companies just as commercial as Crow Canyon, joined the invasion. From my upper meadow, I have watched mountain bikers hurtle down the final slope to their vehicles. I sense that they would be just as happy hammering around an equally testing course in Central Park. We are not talking "wilderness experience."

Fragile is how environmentalists and archaeologists have described this country, and motorized access and grazing permits were terminated long ago. Puzzling that it was too fragile for ranching

but not too fragile for this new influx of recreationists. There are now 30 cars a day parked here, seven days of the week, 10 months of the year.

Ironically, more damage had been done by commendable curiosity, passion for fitness and horse nostalgia than in the previous 100 years by cowboys and hikers. Time for Babbitt to act.

Crow Canyon realized, if not acknowledged, that it had played a significant role in this dramatic increase in visitors, but paying guests are largely how it funds its research center. Crow Canyon should have known, better than anyone, that more sites are degraded by the sheer number of visitors than by willful vandalism.

The BLM became the other major contributor to the problem, by promoting its new multi-use recreation area (Multi-use, buzz word, heard in every subsequent meeting). What it failed to do, predictably, was make any provision for the inevitable increase in the number of visitors. In fact, the agency admits to having had insufficient staff to maintain the area, even before it was promoted.

Now, somewhat surprisingly, Crow Canyon and the BLM have taken the lead in urging Secretary Babbitt to address the problems they have themselves created.

The meetings were that magical blend of banality and pomposity that only officialdom can attain. More in two weeks, watch this space.

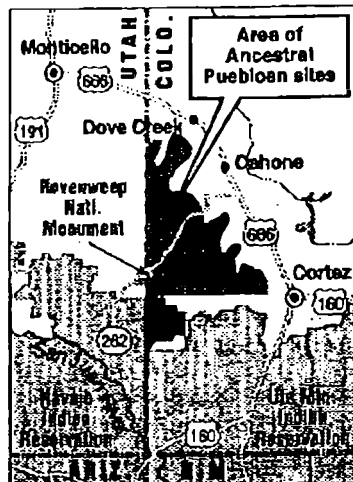
John Sutcliffe farms hay and wine grapes 12 miles from the Utah line. Applications for the next "Colorado Voices" panel are now open.

COLORADO

Campbell sets sights on desert conservation

Safeguarding history

Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell has introduced a bill in the Senate to make 160,000 acres in the Four Corners a national conservation area. Rep. Scott McInnis will carry the bill in the House.



The Denver Post

By Electa Draper

Denver Post Four Corners Bureau

DURANGO — To forestall designation of a national monument in the southwest corner of Colorado by the Clinton administration, Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell, R-Colo., introduced a bill this week that would make 160,000 acres of desert canyons and mesas rich in ancient Indian artifacts a national conservation area.

Campbell said Friday in a press release that his "Canyons of the Ancients National Conservation Act" would protect the archaeological riches of the region without restricting grazing, recreation and other activities in Dolores and Montezuma counties.

DURANGO

If President Clinton were to designate the area a national monument under the Antiquities Act, such a decree could severely restrict public uses of the lands, Campbell said.

"It is imperative we protect these lands now in a reasonable manner to recognize the historical, archaeological and cultural value they hold," Campbell said. "But I do not believe we should lock these lands from the public. When public lands are suddenly grabbed away by executive decree, it creates ill feelings and distrust."

Campbell said that, in contrast to creation of a monument by presidential decree, his bill would create a local advisory board and require public hearings involving everyone with ties to the land, from ranchers to recreational users to local elected officials.

"The hardest hit are those people who live near the land, know it the best and whose livelihoods are most connected to it," Campbell said.

Rep. Scott McInnis, R-Colo., is carrying the bill in the House, his office said Friday.

Campbell's spokesman said Friday that the senator's bill, introduced Thursday, already has drawn wide support.

1. Pick A Category!

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City



← BACK TO NEWS

Babbitt: Ranchers, ruins can coexist

By Electa Draper
Denver Post Four Corners Bureau

August 20 - DOLORES - Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt wants to save southwestern Colorado's spectacular ancient past from an uncertain future, and that could mean redefining what national monument status means in this country.

Babbitt told local advisers in Dolores Thursday he understood the apprehension area residents feel about his proposal to increase federal protection for a trove of ancient Indian ruins and artifacts on roughly 160,000 acres of public land in the southwest corner of the state. But he believes he can find some common ground with them.

Babbitt accepted a report Thursday on local viewpoints compiled by members of the Southwest Resource Advisory Council during six public meetings in July and August. After Babbitt read a summary of the 4-inch-thick bound volume, he said he interpreted public sentiment about him this way: "If you believe that ranching, oil and gas production and (recreation uses) are absolutely appropriate, why are you here? Why don't you just pack up and leave us alone."

He responded that even the best-kept secrets get out, and the residents of southwestern Colorado may not have the landscape all to themselves for long.

"What I heard is you don't want a lot of change . . . but things never stay the same," Babbitt said.

And enhanced preservation of cultural resources doesn't necessarily mean excluding current uses, he added.

Babbitt conceded that national monuments, with virtually no exceptions, have been the transition phase for lands destined to be part of the national park system, and the Park Service is not in the business of multiple uses and sharing resources.

"I think there's a different course," he said. "The National Park Service is not the presumptive heir to this landscape. I believe that the Bureau of Land Management is the appropriate permanent partner on this landscape."

His vision of multiple-use monuments was the reason he went to President Clinton a few years ago on the 2 million-acre Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in southeastern Utah, controversial as it was, he said. Clinton designated the area as a national monument under the 1906 Antiquities Act without involving Congress.

"It was the first national monument in American history to be given to the BLM," Babbitt said.

He said he did not care about the national monument label itself, but rather about securing funding for preservation of cultural resources. He said Congress could act to designate a national conservation area with legislation tailored to meet local needs that would accomplish his objectives. However, the Colorado congressional delegation has shown no inclination to do so, he said. Monument designation was the one option open to the Clinton administration.

"I've got 18 months to work out this problem," he said of the remaining days of the Clinton administration. "I want to get it done on my watch."

Babbitt said he was "really impressed with the insight and quality" of the local residents' comments, and he would try to provide an equally thoughtful written response soon.

While ranchers, oilmen and recreationists are concerned monument status could mean heavyhanded restrictions on land use, environmentalists have other worries. Advisory group member Mark Pearson of Durango said not all conservationists are enthusiastic about national monument designation for an area in the middle of a big oil and gas field. He said there was a problem with inconsistent policies toward mineral extraction from one monument to the next.

"What I saw I liked," Babbitt said of carbon dioxide and natural gas facilities in the area, mostly Shell Oil Corp.'s, which generate \$8 million a year in federal royalties. "This is heresy in some places, but properly conducted oil and gas development is a lot less threatening to wildlife, heritage and cultural resources than the degradation that comes with widespread, uncontrolled uses on the ground (such as various recreation vehicles)."

The 160,000 acres at stake, which roughly coincide with a massive geological formation called McElmo Dome, hold grazing permits that are a critical part of 30 ranching operations.

One of those ranchers, Chris Majors, asked Babbitt to remember that, if the area still holds worldclass archaeological sites, four and five generations of ranchers and farmers have helped keep it that way.

COLORADO

Site preservation plans blasted

By Electa Draper
Denver Post Four Corners Bureau

Few area residents have expressed much interest in Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt's desire to preserve and enhance the amazing assortment of artifacts and ruins left by prehistoric Indians in southwestern Colorado.

On Wednesday night, amid flare-ups of fear and distrust, the public process by which local residents might influence Interior's plans to increase protection of the vast archaeological resources lurched forward. It was the fifth meeting in a series of seven sponsored by the Bureau of Land Management to tap grassroots opinion.

Prominent was the recurring theme that the livelihoods and customs of the living shouldn't be sacrificed to protect the remnants of an ancient culture.

Straw votes taken showed that attendees overwhelmingly want to preserve all existing rights and uses on the roughly 160,000 acres of desert at stake, a massive land formation called the McElmo Dome.

Foes resist federal land controls

It appears that what Babbitt called "world-class archaeology" during his May visit here seems old hat to many locals.

BLM law-enforcement agent Lannie Wagner single-handedly patrols 800,000 acres of rugged desert in the region to protect against vandalism and theft. The odds are against him in the field, where he might issue only four to five citations a year — the few offenders he can catch. So he goes into classrooms to teach children respect for cultural resources.

When he asks how many of them have walked away from sites with pot fragments, called shards, for a little souvenir, half the children typically will raise a hand, he said.

"There's been generation after generation handing down information about where to look for specific (types of artifacts)," Wagner said. Many homes

around Cortez have ancient pottery displayed on a mantle or shelf.

Collection of artifacts, except human remains and funerary objects, is legal on private land.

It's impossible to gauge how many people casually engage in small raids on sites or how many serious and commercial pot hunters ransack ruins, he said. He just knows that the landscape he monitors changes perceptibly over time. Interesting artifacts eventually will disappear from a place.

"A lot of people are sort of intrigued and take a shard home with them, and they throw it in a drawer," without realizing the cumulative impacts of such behavior, said LouAnn Jacobson, director of the Anasazi Heritage Center. However, she does not think that feelings of entitlement to pillage sites are behind the opposition to Babbitt's proposal, which could encompass possible

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designation as a national monument or conservation area.

"I get the sense that most of the concern here is fear of the federal government taking away private property and ... shutting down multiple use and closing off public lands," Jacobson said.

The groundswell of opposition that is shown in the BLM meetings is "fear of change, especially change people can't control," Durango-based BLM Manager Cal Joyner said.

People are plain afraid of being displaced from lands they prize for many reasons, he said.

"Tonight is not the night to get on your soapbox and be against the government," mediator Ed Zink, a Durango businessman, told the roughly 70 people attending. "I think we have the opportunity to reinvent what it means to be a national monument."

Residents feel right at dome

BLM urged to keep status quo at McElmo

by Electa Draper
Denver Post Four Corners Bureau

7/10/99

CORTEZ — Wary and passionate, some 40 residents of the extreme south-west corner of Colorado demanded Thursday night to know what Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt and the Bureau of Land Management have in mind for 160,000 acres of desert near to their hearts.

They said they like the unfettered access they have to a land of silence, solitude and spirituality. It's their hidden treasure, some said. They don't want to be locked out, and they don't want it overdeveloped and overrun by outsiders.

Babbitt made it clear during a May 24 visit that he wants more intense federal management and greater protection for world-class archaeological sites that are so dense in places you can't walk 100 feet without tripping over one. Vandallism and other abuses are taking too high a toll, he said.

The area at issue forms a messy ink-blot when drawn on a map. It lies west of Cortez and runs to the Utah state line. Its ragged borders are loosely contained by McElmo Canyon Road and the Ute Mountain Ute Reservation to the south and by Dove Creek and U.S. 666 to the north.

The area corresponds to a massive geological formation, the McElmo Dome, where extensive production of carbon dioxide and natural gas already has proven compatible with preservation of cultural resources, Montrose-based BLM regional manager Mark Stiles said Thursday.

Locals don't want another Mesa Verde National Park, one unidentified man said at the BLM forum. Most of Mesa Verde's ancestral puebloan sites are closed to every body but archaeologists.

CORTEZ

"It's elitist," he said. Another man said that the few sites on public display have a theme-park atmosphere. More than 600,000 tourists from around the world jam the park each year.

"We're living in the shadow of Mesa Verde," said area resident Brad Finch. "This land is an example of the other end of the spectrum."

In May, Babbitt told the BLM and its citizen liaison, the Southwest Resource Advisory Council, to spend the summer querying residents about their interests and concerns before the federal government reshapes the landscape. Babbitt said the lands deserve designation as a national monument or conservation area because of the abundant ancient Indian ruins and artifacts, but he did not see a national park there or exclusion of gas production and grazing.

At Thursday's meeting, the first of seven planned to get the public's input, residents, from ranchers and natural gas producers to hikers and campground owners, spoke little about a need to enhance cultural resources. They prize the land for other reasons.

Fourth-generation rancher Gail Alexander said she wanted grazing rights and her way of life preserved. A sizable contingent from a local horseback riding group and other backcountry trailblazers said they also like the status quo.

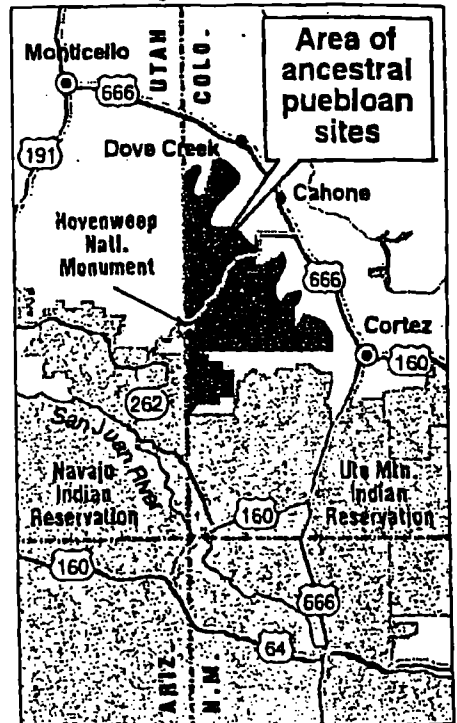
"There's something for everyone out there, and I'd like to keep it that way," one man in the audience said. "Everybody gets along, for the most part."

Residents expressed skepticism about whether their participation in the series of meetings would have any real influence with Babbitt, or whether it was political window dressing.

"Has he already made up his mind? Is the agenda already set?" one man asked.

Land Battle

Residents who spoke at a meeting in Cortez were against a plan to increase federal management of 160,000 acres of desert rich with archaeological treasures.



The Denver Post

"Are we being used and fooled? Are we wasting our breath?"

Ed Zink of Durango, a member of the resource advisory council, said the best hope of making a difference would be vigorous public participation ending in a cogent, well-written report to hand to the interior secretary at summer's end, when Babbitt promised to return.

Campbell and ruins

Opposition to saving ancient sites is inexplicable

Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell's outrage at Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt's ban on mining 160,000 acres of federal land in Southwest Colorado is perplexing. Worse, it detracts from what is actually at stake.

The real issue involves the preservation of America's heritage, and respect for those who came before us. It is about how to safeguard the past for posterity - not how Campbell and the Clinton administration feel about each other.

Mesa Verde is certainly the most famous reminder that we are not the first to inhabit the Four Corners, but it is not the only one. The area affected by Babbitt's action contains at least 20,000 known ancestral Puebloan sites. It is an intriguing place of canyons and ancient evidence of a long-ago civilization. Sometimes referred to as the "Great Sage Plain," it may have the highest density of archaeological sites in North America.

And, how all that should be protected is about to become the subject of some debate.

In denouncing Babbitt's move, Campbell said of the Interior Department, "They want the lands just for hikers and bird watchers, but other people ought to be able to use public lands, too." Leaving aside the question of what is wrong with hikers or bird watchers, his application of the word "use"

is puzzling.

What actually happened is that the land has been temporarily withdrawn from consideration for mining claims. No new claims - whether for hard-rock mining or gravel operations - will be accepted for two years. During that time the administration will take public comment on long-term plans for protecting the area.

That's it.

The region already supports considerable oil and gas production, which won't be affected. A number of grazing permits are active there, too. Those will be unchanged. Babbitt's action did nothing to limit hunting, recreation, tourism or agriculture.

It didn't even directly affect any mining operations. There are only a couple of mining claims still current in the area, and their status isn't changed. There aren't even any claim applications whose progress could be impeded by this "ban."

The only practical effect is to keep those who oppose federal protection for the area from using mining claims - authentic or politically motivated - as a way to obstruct preservation efforts.

That leaves open the question as to what "use" so concerns Campbell. More to the point, if the senator dislikes Babbitt's plan, perhaps he should explain how he would protect this national treasure.

Saving ancient ruins

Clinton, Babbitt visits signal new federal interest

Suddenly, it seems, the preservation of Southwest Colorado's ancestral Puebloan ruins has become a high priority for the Clinton administration.

We were treated over the weekend to a visit by first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, who announced \$1.7 million in private funding to accompany a \$1.5 million federal grant to stabilize the crumbling cliff dwellings at Mesa Verde National Park. Clinton's visit to our area was an honor. The grants she announced were welcome news for all who care about preserving humankind's past.

Then, on Monday, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt toured an area north of the Ute Mountain Ute Reservation and disclosed that he will seek federal money to help protect 156,000 acres of public land where ancient sites are threatened by vandalism, pottery hunters and careless visitors. Babbitt called the area "the most important archaeological landscape in the country."

Babbitt's proposal may be less well-received than Clinton's grant announcements. He has not provided specifics, so we

don't know how much money or how much control he's talking about. Babbitt declined to say if he has in mind a national monument or some lesser degree of protection. His apparent plan is to float a trial balloon now and then follow it with more specifics as the public reacts.

The incremental strategy may be a response to U.S. Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell's charge that Babbitt was considering a monument designation without sufficient public comment. Campbell criticized as "heavy-handed" President Clinton's designation of 1.7 million acres in Utah as the Grand Staircase-Escalante Monument two years ago. Babbitt acknowledged the criticism when he said, "We learned some lessons in Utah — the need for getting on the ground and talking to people, and making sure there is a better understanding of what needs to be done."

Obtaining public comment on the future of that historic land is certainly a good idea. We await with interest Babbitt's explanation of "what needs to be done."