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### President's Message Happy Anniversary

Dear Volunteers, Contributing Members, and Friends of SGWA

This year marks the fortieth anniversary of the Wilderness Act which established a National Wilderness Preservation System for the permanent good of the whole people. The Wilderness Act set aside 9 million acres of National Forest lands, including 35,000 acres around San Gorgonio.

It is poetic that the world's greatest industrial giant saw wisdom in preserving pockets of undeveloped nature. By becoming the law of the land, the Wilderness Act secured for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness.

The Wilderness Act preserved portions of the landscape beyond the reach of man to dominate, where man is but a visitor who does not remain. Significantly, it established the National Wilderness Preservation System, which removed the decision to preserve or develop these national lands out of the hands of government agencies and into the hands of our elected representatives.

Last summer, the SGWA Board of Directors issued a call to the public to design a fitting logo to commemorate the forty year anniversary of the San Gorgonio Wilderness. In October, the

Board had the challenging task of selecting only one winner from the many powerful entries submitted. The winning logo was submitted by local artist **Anna Hendrickson**. SGWA will use this logo throughout 2004 to commemorate this important San Gorgonio milestone!

I wish to thank **Borhan Ahmed, Bill Ahrens, Aaron Fetner, Genaro Gascón, Tom Lewis, Bill Marshall, and Sayon Syprasoeuth** who also participated in the contest. Each design brought a unique interpretation of San Gorgonio's anniversary.

Throughout this year I encourage all Volunteers, Contributing Members, and Friends of SGWA to renew your appreciation of Wilderness. Commemorating a milestone should be more than simply observing the passage of time. By observing where we've come from we can plot the direction we are heading.

The battles of wilderness preservation fought during 1964 are in the past, but there can be little doubt that future battles lie ahead for it is man's natural inclination to dominate his landscape.

Happy Anniversary!  
Jarome Wilson President SGWA

### Thank You For Your Support!!

Many who know the great value of our forest and wilderness areas may not have the time but have the monetary resources to help the SGWA continue to "Serve, Protect, and Educate." Recent contributing members to whom we and forest visitors owe many thanks are:

**Individual** (\$25)  
**Family/Dual** (\$35)  
**and Student/Senior Members** (\$20)

*Frances Nguyen, David Eck,  
Dean Stewart*

**Trail Blazers**  
(\$50 or more annually)  
*Robert Coleman*

**President's Summit Team**  
(\$100 or more annually)  
*Harry Krueper, Ted Sledzinski  
Christine Zink*

### SGWA Wish List

To enable us to better serve the public we wish we had the following items. If you know of someone who would like to donate these items, new or used, please let us know. Tax deductions are applicable.

- High density molded plastic folding tables for Forest Festivals, volunteer training, Fish Festival, and other activities.
- Heavy duty security screen for volunteer work camp kitchen door.
- Self-focusing slide projector with timer for nature talks.
- Folding metal chairs.
- Copy machine for Barton Flats Visitor Center.
- Digital Image Projector
- Late model computer
- 2-EZ-up portable canopies for interpretive presentations

### Wishes Come True

We thank the following very much for their donations. Their generosity will benefit the public greatly.

- Danny and Val Silva – Propane stove/oven for Barton Flats Visitor Center.
- Mira Costa High School (Mark Alstrom) – Metal Cabinet
- Ganahl Lumber Co. – Two loppers

### Thank you, Ideal Graphics!

Printing of The Dispatch newsletter is contributed in part by Scott Watson, Ideal Graphics, Ontario, CA. A big thanks goes to Scott and his staff for their service and consideration



# San Gorgonio Wilderness Survives Through the Ages

A history outline condensed by John Flippin primarily from *The San Bernardinos*, and *San Gorgonio, A Wilderness Preserved*, both by John Robinson

The San Gorgonio Wilderness (SGW) was designated as such 40 years ago by the September 3, 1964 Wilderness Act signed by President Lyndon Johnson. Of course the SGW had already been a wild area for tens of thousands of years. That the SGW survived a very recent couple hundreds of years of development attempts and became a federally protected wild area is a small miracle we owe to many dedicated souls.

Of course the Native Americans were first to enjoy gazing up upon its lofty heights – including the highest point in southern California, San Gorgonio Mt. at 11, 502 feet. Like many high places, the Native Americans looked upon the high peaks of the area with a mixture of reverence and mysticism. There is no evidence of Native Americans going to the upper most peaks of the wilderness, although they certainly lived in the flanking foothills and hunted in the upper canyons and meadows of the area. However, given the long summers on these peaks, I would bet a few Native Americans did explore the upper peaks including San Bernardino Peak at 10,624' and perhaps San Gorgonio Mt. itself, but chose to not send a press release to the Old World Press.

The Luisenos Indians had a tradition that the two peaks of "San Gorgonio" and "San Jacinto" were brothers and among the first born of the Earth Mother, from whom all living creatures evolved. That's about as far back in history as I could get. They called San Gorgonio Mt. *Pewipwi*, meaning, "white on top."

Then after thousands of years, in the early 1800s the Spanish established a mission cattle ranch named Rancho San Gorgonio after a Christian martyr of the third century, AD. The ranch was in the area of San Gorgonio Pass along Interstate 10 today on the way out to the desert and Palm Springs. That, of

course, is the origin of the present day name for San Gorgonio Mt. and the wilderness area surrounding it. And then the volume of recorded history begins to accelerate –

The first recorded penetration of the San Gorgonio high country by white men was in 1852. It was then that Colonel Henry Washington of the US Army Corps of Engineers and a survey crew established an initial point on San Bernardino Peak from which an east-west base line and a north-south meridian could be established for surveying all of southern California. In his notes, Col. Washington recorded a "bald mountain about 5 ½ miles distant, apparent height above the initial point 500 feet." This was apparently the first official record of today's San Gorgonio Mountain.

Twenty years later, two men struggled slowly up a steep slope, the tough climbing made difficult by the loose granite talus and slippery snowfields. Now over two miles high, they stopped often to regain their breath. Nothing shielded them from the biting gusts whirling around the bare ridges. At 10:30 am, after two days of hiking off trail, Watson Goodyear with the California State Geological Survey and Mark Thomas a mountain guide from San Bernardino, completed the first recorded ascent of San Gorgonio Mt. known popularly then as Old Gray Back on June 2, 1872.

Later in the summer of 1872, a Mr. Hayward narrowly escaped death near South Fork Meadow on the northern slopes of the San Gorgonio area when he was charged by an enraged grizzly. A fortunate shot between the eyes killed the beast – not so fortunate for the grizzly. By 1895 the grizzly was almost extinct in the San Bernardino Mountains.

Ascents of "Old Grayback" became common by the late-1870s.

The San Bernardino Forest Preserve was established in 1893, the first forest guard for the preserve appointed in 1897, and five rangers – two for the San Gorgonio area – hired in 1898.

Although there were a few popular beaten footpaths to the summit, the first real trail to the summit of San Gorgonio Mt. was constructed in the summer of 1898 – the Vivian Creek Trail. This effort was backed by the proprietor of Forest Home Resort to attract more attention to his new resort in Mill Creek Canyon and allow his guests to go up the mountain on horseback. The trail crew was led by a young lad from Yucaipa, Albert Vivian.

Also in the late 1890s, there was construction of two tunnels and a long flume across the southern flanks of the San Gorgonio area in an attempt to develop hydroelectric power. After tremendous effort by developer C.G. Baldwin, employees John and Will Dobbs (Dobbs Cabin Camp), and construction crews, a short period of drought and competition from valley electric companies brought an end to that development.

Then in 1910, several Redlands businessmen proposed a "Grayback Mountain Automobile Toll Road" to the summit of San Gorgonio Mountain with a restaurant on top. The American Automobile Association assured promoters that 5000 autos would use such a road annually.

It became evident by the mid-20s that strong steps would be necessary to prevent development of the San Gorgonio high country.

The Western Rangers was a Los Angeles-based outdoors boys group led by Canadian-born filmmaker Harry James. During one of their annual trips (by 185 boys) to the summit of San Gorgonio Mt., the idea of preserving the high country was born. In 1925, a delegation of Western Rangers went to Washington D.C. to present thousands of signatures and letters asking Calvin Coolidge to preserve the San Gorgonio high country. This prompted the Forest Service to adopt a recreation plan in 1925 that banned roads and cabins in the area.

In late 1926 the Forest Service Chief requested a list of potential primitive areas,

and the San Bernardino National Forest submitted three areas including the San Gorgonio Mountain area. In 1929, Chief Forester Greeley issued Forest Service Regulation L-20 – a landmark in conservation history – providing for the establishment of Primitive Areas. The Forest Service now had a viable, clearly defined wilderness policy. In accordance with Regulation L-20, the Chief designated the San Gorgonio Primitive Area in 1931.

The most extensive period of trail building in and around the SGW occurred from 1933 to 1940, primarily by the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Also in the 1930s, skiing became very popular in the San Gorgonio Primitive Area. The good news was there were no lift lines. The bad news, for many, was there were no lifts. So, an application to construct winter sports facilities was made in 1937 by a syndicate of Hollywood movie people. The application was denied, but the Forest Service promised to study the feasibility of ski area development. The FS held a public hearing in 1942 on a proposal to develop an all-weather road to South Fork Meadows, build a resort there, and construct ski lifts part way up the mountain. The hearing triggered a major battle, and a decision was deferred until after the WW II.

In late 1945, before the skiing issue was revisited, a permit was issued for a high frequency radio transmission site on top of San Gorgonio Mountain. The test site included two firmly anchored cabins and would have become the main television transmission station for Southern California if not for the problems of keeping the summit-living technicians supplied by a 65-horse pack train during the summer and air drops during the winter. A tramway to the summit was proposed but the test site was abandoned in late 1946 and removed in 1947.

Another public hearing for ski development was held in 1947, which was so contentious that the Chief denied ski area development within the Primitive Area, but deleted 1,400 acres just above Barton Flats from the Primitive Area to allow construction of a road to Poopout Hill, making San

Gorgonio accessible for wilderness skiing and touring.

In 1956 the San Gorgonio Primitive Area became the San Gorgonio Wild Area. This allowed the removal of unauthorized structures such as ski shelters inside the Wild Area.

In the early 60's, skiing interests – aware the San Gorgonio would be protected forever in a wilderness act being considered by Congress - lobbied hard for ski area development. In response, a local grass roots organization, The Defenders of the San Gorgonio Wilderness was formed to represent the views of preservationists. The Forest Service denied a permit for a ski area, and the ski area proponents lobbied hard in Congress to overturn the decision. After many public hearings and a lot of back and forth political maneuvers, Congress produced the Wilderness Act that was signed by Lyndon Johnson on September 3, 1964 and included the San Gorgonio Wilderness.

Still, the Defenders of the San Gorgonio Wilderness, had to fight off three more attempts by the skiing industry to have portions of the San Gorgonio Wilderness carved out for development – the latest attempt being made in 1971 but quickly abandoned when skiing interests learned that the Defenders were still active and ready to defend.

Starting about 1969, something dramatic occurred that no one could have foreseen. Popular interest in hiking and backpacking abruptly skyrocketed, resulting in a five-fold increase in summer use of the Wilderness. Although the San Gorgonio Wilderness was protected from ski area development, it became threatened by overuse from hikers. The Forest Supervisor implemented the wilderness permit system in 1971.

Several wilderness trails or trail extensions and camp areas were added between the late 60s and the late 70s, much of the work being done by Boy Scouts primarily from Redlands and Long Beach.

In the mid-70s, as FS wilderness personnel dwindled from eight to five to three and finally to one plus a summer seasonal, the

FS began using FS volunteers to help manage the wilderness.

In 1984 another 21,500 acres were added to the Wilderness under the California Wilderness Act, mostly in the Whitewater watershed and the Raywood Flats area southeast of the old boundary – bringing the total acreage to 56,749. And in 1989, the road to Poopout Hill was closed to move the trailhead back a couple miles and prevent more damage to the fragile South Fork Meadows.

The latest trail, the Lost Creek Trail, was completed in 1990 as the San Gorgonio Wilderness Association was formed to help the Forest Service educate the public in wilderness ethics, help manage the volunteers (about 60 at that time), and help maintain trails and serve the public.

Then, federal budget cuts eliminated the last full-time permanent wilderness manager dedicated solely to management of the San Gorgonio Wilderness in the mid-1990s.

In 1998, the Forest Supervisor, Gene Zimmerman approved several new or changed wilderness rules resulting from several years of public hearings under the Limits of Acceptable Change Process. These new rules included a requirement for dogs to be on leashes, a reduction of group sizes from 15 to 12, a reduction of number of pack stock from 12 to 8, and elimination of campfires.

In the summer of 2003, some excellent budget work by Front Country District management enabled us to get a FS Wilderness Ranger back on the ground in the wilderness accomplishing, among many other things, actual enforcement of rules – the first significant enforcement of regulations within the wilderness in almost 10 years

So here we are today, the Forest Service and the SGWA working hard to provide millions of people access to low cost recreation essential to their mental, physical, and spiritual health in the most heavily used per acre wilderness area in the US – urban wilderness, if you will, where we are challenged to ensure in accordance with the Wilderness Act that citizens can find an area untrammelled by man with outstanding opportunities for solitude.

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