



Keep it wild...

COLORADO WILD!

Spring / Summer 2002

Analysis Paralysis, or Abusive Analysis?
Jeff Berman, Executive Director

As Colorado's fires burned, Forest Service (FS) Chief Dale Bosworth deceptively grumbled to Congressman McInnis' (R-CO) Forest Health subcommittee of "analysis paralysis". Environmental group appeals such as Colorado Wild's on the Upper South Platte (USP) project – where a portion of the Hayman fire burned – allegedly stymie efforts to reduce forest fires and protect homes. Jumping on the bandwagon, Rep. Tancredo (R-CO) similarly complained about "obstacles" raised by environmental groups, while McInnis called Colorado's 90,000-acre blaze west of Colorado Springs "the real world" consequence of the FS's procedural paralysis.

It all just amounts to finger pointing politics. Environmental groups play a critical role in keeping the FS from simply trying to *appear* to be doing something about forest fire.

With the USP project for instance, conservationists did not challenge the implementation of nearly 20 square miles of logging in roaded areas closer to communities where the FS's own research suggests efforts to protect homes are most effective. The majority of the USP Project got the go-ahead in September, 2001, yet the FS estimated it would take more than five years to implement – all the while acknowledging the project would increase short-term fire risk. The 2000 Jasper Fire on the Black Hills NF in South Dakota for

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Be Not Afraid
Jonathan Stauffer, Board Member

"We have nothing to fear but fear itself." – Franklin D. Roosevelt

This Spring we gathered in the high desert to celebrate Beltane. The rights of this ancient Celtic festival were likely celebrated at Stonehenge, so it was strange at first to see this old world festival transposed into the new. As

hands were joined and the circle cast it made perfect sense – a way of revering the Earth that is not so far removed from the ways of the Native Americans who might well have come to this same place to celebrate Spring. There was a time that we lived in concert with nature, celebrated the changing of the seasons, joining the ongoing celebration of life, death and renewal, a celebration shared with the larger community of our fellow inhabitants of this sphere.

Official history tells us that this is not so, that without the

advancements of civilization and of science, we would return to a miserable, squalid existence, one to be feared. We grow apart from Nature, viewing it as an inanimate object solely to be converted into economic gain in order that we might buy our way to safety, security and belonging. We wall ourselves into gated communities to protect ourselves. We shop in climate controlled shopping malls to escape the elements. And as the bulldozers rumble, as forward fellers buzz, and the paving machines

...See Stauffer, Page 5



The 50,000+ acre Missionary Ridge fire outside Durango. Much of the fire burned in previously logged forest, while it was started - as with most fire starts, near or adjacent to forest roads.

Forest Watch Campaign (FWC)

Working to Halt Logging Operations That Invade Roadless Areas, Sensitive Wildlife Habitat, or Old Growth Forests

Fire Risk Reduction Projects Ripe for Abuse?

After an acceptable settlement with the Forest Service (FS) on the ***Upper South Platte project*** (Fall 2001 Newsletter, pg. 3) fell apart in November, Colorado Wild and partner groups won our appeal concerning 5,000 acres of logging proposed in three roadless areas. The FS issued a new decision notice on the roadless portion, including many of the points in the almost-completed settlement, most notably a prohibition on logging of trees over 14 inches in diameter. Unfortunately, there were still problems, so we appealed again. The timber industry also appealed, claiming that the diameter limit (to protect larger, more fire resistant trees) was unacceptable. The Regional Forester not only denied our appeal but also decided that the diameter limit could be dropped. Much of the proposed project area has burned in the ***Hayman fire***, which is still burning out of control as this is being written (see Abusive Analysis..., pg. 1).

Meanwhile, the future of the ***Trout-West Project*** north of Woodland Park is in question, as the Hayman fire has also burned part of this area and may burn more. Colorado Wild has many concerns with this huge 32,000 acre project, including too much of a reduction in densities of trees (to reduce fire risk) and effects on wildlife.

Beginning this winter, Colorado Wild began reviewing ***National Fire Plan*** (NFP) projects on BLM lands statewide. Initial review reveals that some projects are not designed to reduce wildfire threats to homes or return fire to its natural role in the ecosystem as required by the NFP, but to provide forage for cattle, logs for timber mills, or other inappropriate uses of federal funding.

Should we find widespread abuse, Colorado Wild plans to publish a report on the (ab)use of this program in Colorado.

With the ***Indian Creek project*** southwest of Gunnison for instance, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) was planning a project with NFP funds on over 1,000 acres/year for the next 10-15 years. While most of the project entails prescribed fire that Colorado Wild supports, it also included almost 500 acres of "aspen enhancement treatments" and "felling of insect killed trees". These treatments would simply mimic commercial logging. Meanwhile, the BLM failed to identify the Wildland Urban Interface (where fuels reduction treatments with NFP funding should be directed), roads needed for treatment units, location of treatment units (potentially within the Powderhorn Wilderness and a Wilderness Study Area proposed by the Colorado Wilderness Network and Rep. Diane DeGette's bill for Wilderness designation), and many of other issues required under NEPA. Subsequently, Colorado Wild protested the decision. Following a field tour with the project leader, he recommended to his supervisor that the controversial portions of the project be postponed for further analysis.

Meanwhile, several projects outside of Grand Junction that have already been implemented appear to violate the intent of NFP funding, such as the ***Glade Park project*** where the BLM chained hundreds of acres to really just improve grazing for the allotment permittee there.

In February, the San Juan National Forest (NF) proposed 50,000 acres of fuels reduction activities and commercial logging northwest of Dolores with the ***Benchmark Project***. Given the size of the project, and its

I am sure you have heard by now that the [Red Creek timber sale] appeal was a success. I can't thank you enough for writing such a well researched, quality appeal... A friend of mine at the Forest Service does not think it will be implemented at all after the requisite research is conducted.

Chris Chambers,
Gunnison, Colorado



The "Wildland-Urban Interface" as defined by the BLM with the Indian Creek Project - barely a structure to be seen. Public lands management agencies' failure to define the WUI promotes fire risk reduction projects that will do little to protect homes where genuinely needed.

funding through the NFP, Colorado Wild and others wrote were critical of the scope of the project. Subsequently, we learned the project was put on hold given FS internal disagreement over (in)appropriate use of NFP funds.

Get the Cut Out Old Style Logging

In March, Colorado Wild won its appeal of the ***Red Creek timber sale*** near Gunnison (Fall 2001 Newsletter, pg. 3) on an astounding eleven claims. There are indications the FS will now not proceed with the timber sale at all. Based on some of the stronger points we won on, it is probable that the FS may at least leave wetter, steeper old growth areas near the West Elk Wilderness to nature's designs.

Colorado Wild also filed a brief appeal of the ***Hightower Porter Mountain timber sale*** near Paonia on the Grand Mesa NF, as the FS never sent us a copy of the Environmental Assessment for this large aspen timber sale. Upon receiving the approval notice in December, we immediately filed a FOIA request, subsequently learning that the Western Slope Environmental Resource Council (WSERC) was crossed off the mailing list despite their consistently demonstrated interest in aspen timber sales on that NF over the last 15 years. Colorado Wild could sue in concert with WSERC over failure to permit public participation with public lands management as required by the National Environmental Policy Act.

In the town of Norwood's watershed, the Uncompahgre NF had proposed the ***Goat Creek aspen timber sale*** for the north face

of Lone Cone mountain in November. We filed detailed comments in December, focusing criticism on the FS's wholly inconclusive water quality study that concluded that this and prior timber sales in the area aren't impairing water quality. Following our comments and local concern expressed by the San Miguel County Commission, the Uncompahgre NF put the project on hold, maybe permanently, until more adequate water quality studies are performed.

Forest Treatment Projects – The Public Interest on Public Lands?

In May, Colorado Wild joined partner groups in preparing an appeal of the ***Routt Beetle Project*** (Fall 2001 Newsletter, pg. 2) again contesting only to logging within roadless areas, notably 800 acres of futile thinning in the Dome Peak Roadless Area where logging may make the forest more susceptible to beetle kills. Unfortunately, there is strong political and internal pressure within the FS to appear to be doing ***anything*** to fight beetles. We have begun settlement negotiations with the FS.

Meanwhile, the Routt NF also proposed another large timber sale with the ***Little Snake Analysis***, which includes the northern part of the Dome Peak Roadless Area. The combined impacts of this and the Routt Beetle Project would likely destroy the area. About 2,100 acres are proposed to be "treated", including 350 via clearcut, along with eight miles of new road construction. Colorado Wild authored extensive scoping comments on this project, and will review and

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You guys stopped the Goat Creek timber sale - SOLO! Many thanks for your awesome work. Cheers.

Grace Herndon,
Norwood, Colorado

Ski Area Citizens' Coalition (SACC)

Working to Halt Environmentally Damaging Ski Area Expansions and Associated Real Estate Development

Challenging the Development Status Quo

After years of pressure from Colorado Wild, *Keystone ski resort* finally acknowledged public opposition and repeated County denials of their plan for second homes in Jones Gulch, one of only two wildlife corridors in Summit County that lead up to and may permit carnivore movements over or under I-70. However, they also requested a significant increase in parking near Jones Gulch seemingly designed to rationalize public benefits for a new lift there. Through a comprehensive Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, we learned in March that Jones Gulch holds severe landslide risks. Subsequently, Colorado Wild wrote the White River NF again pressing them to change the zoning for Jones Gulch to that for wildlife habitat preservation. We will continue working to ensure permanent protection for all of Jones Gulch, despite the White River NF plan revision's failure to adequately protect the area (see page 6).

La Plata County's March approval of 1,649 second homes and the equivalent of 2½ Super Walmarts of commercial space with the *Durango Mountain Resort (DMR) Development Plan* (Spring 2001 Newsletter, pg. 6) condoned traffic, water quality, affordable housing, and other impacts throughout southwest Colorado. Since February 2001 Colorado Wild has led the campaign to minimize impacts of the largest

development ever in La Plata County. Executive Director Jeff Berman on several occasions debated Gary Derck, DMR CEO, about concerns with the Plan. During the public hearing process, we learned that since the approval constitutes a zoning, County approval was subject to referendum with 5% of the registered voters' signatures collected.

Subsequently, Colorado Wild launched a *novel petition drive* never before attempted seeking more responsible development at DMR. In only 13 days, we gathered over 2,500 signatures with the help of 60+ volunteers. Fighting back, DMR mailed tens of thousands of letters suggesting how signers could remove their name from the petition, yet in the end less than 1% of signers did so. DMR is

spending great sums on a series of mailers and newspaper ads intended to "educate" the public about the development's ostensible benefits to the local community. At a June 4 hearing in Durango, the County Commissioners upheld their previous approval as expected; the issue will now go to a vote on August 13. Having forced a formal seat at the table though, Colorado Wild is negotiating an improved Plan to more adequately address the numerous impacts of expensive second home sprawl.

In 1998, Colorado Wild signed an appeals settlement agreement with the Forest Service (FS) requiring full environmental analysis should the owners of an environmentally fragile inholding at the base of *Wolf Creek*

In summary, there is little argument about the instability of the terrain... adding water (snowmaking) and removing vegetation are typically the opposite measures employed to stabilize landslide terrain.

White River NF Soil Scientist & Hydrologist conclusion about Jones Gulch ski area expansion, July 30, 2001, uncovered by Colorado Wild's FOIA request.

The Jones Gulch snowmaking proposal, as currently envisioned, seems to be out of step with the spirit of the [ski industry's] Environmental Charter...

Lyle Laverty, former Regional Forester, Feb. 15, 2000.



ski area seek to improve access for development. This December, the Texas inholding owners began seeking a rider on federal legislation to void our settlement. Working with both the ski area owner and the FS, we routed passage of the rider in part by prompting FS officials to correct patently false information the developer presented to his potential rider champion – Texas Congressman Combast. Colorado Wild continues to track this potential rider on other bills, and work to see the land back in public hands or placed into a conservation easement.

This winter, *Copper Mountain Resort* requested that the FS put some components of a larger delayed expansion request into a less detailed analysis process. The request included realignment of a lift to permit road construction for real estate development on private land obtained in a previous exchange with the FS, new snowmaking, and a new teaching lift and terrain to the west of the developed ski area. In March Colorado Wild commented on the proposal noting that the project is likely designed to serve the proponent's development aspirations rather than public need, and that heavy metals laden snowmaking water may pollute clean drainages.

Beaver Creek ski area has proposed a gondola from the Town of Avon, up to the western edge of the ski area adjacent to McCoy Park – an area we urged the FS to change the zoning for from future developed skiing to wildlife preservation. Colorado Wild filed comments on the proposal pointing to a lack of need for the project, and pressing the FS to wait until the completion of the Forest plan revision before taking public comment.

...Staufer

coat once fertile fields in thick tar, we somehow feel less safe, less secure and more alienated. We are a society alone and lonely, a society gripped by fear.

As result of September 11, and our fear, a questionable government has acquired the ultimate legitimacy. Bush II has used his new found power to further the anti-environmental agenda of his extraction industry supporters. To question, disagree or dissent smacks of treason and Bush II says so. We the People can make our contribution by going shopping. We will find solace in consumption. We should not think at a time that demands deep reflection.

On September 13, I was camping in Glacier National Park. Away from the media telling and retelling the event, away from the pundits analyzing it, away from the descent into jingoism, my companion and I found silence and time for reflection. The basin around Lake McDonald was warmed by the haze of a forest fire, and the cloudless night was silent, void of the planes that would normally fly overhead, billowing noise and filth into the pristine sky.

Next to an alpine lake surrounded by high peaks, I felt much the same feeling I would feel at Beltane. Describe it as intuition, inspiration, or spiritual revelation – but in both places, in the mountains of Montana and in the high desert of New Mexico, was a feeling of profound belonging, of being part of a greater whole, of being apart from it just enough to be able to observe and joy at the wondrous machinations of it. The destruction we carry out of ourselves, and of nature, the destruction wrought by fear, is pointless, meaningless and ultimately, self-defeating.

I do not know whether this was what Franklin D. Roosevelt had in mind when he spoke those words on the occasion of his first inauguration. But it seems pertinent in this time of fear to go into the wilderness and reflect upon those words, and also on these: "Be not afraid."

**Peaks to Prairie
Gala Benefit for
Colorado Wild and
the Southern Plains
Land Trust!**

**Mark Your
Calendars!**

**Friday,
October 11,
American
Mountaineering
Center,
Golden, 6 PM**

*If you have items to
donate, would like to
purchase tickets, or
volunteer, contact
Tammy Fiebelkorn,
303-651-0360,
tammyf@concentric.net.*

White River National Forest Plan Revision

Working with partner groups as the White River Conservation Coalition

Politics Trumps Both the Public Will and Wildlife

In 1999 and 2000, Colorado Wild participated in a major campaign to press the Forest Service (FS) to adopt an ecologically sound management plan for the White River National Forest (NF). Our spirited defense of the FS's proposed modest improvements engendered immense political pressure fronted by 3rd Congressional District Congressman Scott McInnis, who hired former White River NF Supervisor Dick Woodrow to draft his own plan. Unfortunately, politics trumped both FS stewardship and the public's wildlife preservation desires (demonstrated by an overwhelming majority of both detailed, lengthy comments as well as shorter post card type comments). The Final Plan adopted many of Congressman McInnis'

demands at the behest of the water development, ski area, logging, and off-road vehicle industry groups.

Logging in the next decade is now planned to rise from 8.9 million in the draft plan to 12.4 million board feet. (A logging truck will hold about 5,000 board feet, or about 2,500 logging trucks per year)! 68% of roadless areas recognized by the White River NF were allocated (i.e. zoned) to allow or encourage logging; while 49% of roadless areas identified as eligible for wilderness designation and overall 50% of the White River NF was assigned to logging-friendly zoning. Thirteen roadless areas

totaling 82,000 acres were recommended for wilderness – a considerable improvement over the draft plan's recommendation of 47,200 acres in five areas. However, that represents only 28% of the roadless areas considered eligible for wilderness designation, and only 8% of all roadless areas recognized (the Forest Service failed to recognize hundreds of thousands of additional roadless acres).

Both good and bad changes were made to **the rules** that govern logging, grazing, ski area expansions, and other proposed projects. Some were added to protect wildlife and plant species whose survivability on the White River NF is not assured; others were weakened, such as measures for slope stability evaluation and maintaining aquatic habitat; while others, such as a guideline requiring rest from livestock grazing for deteriorated rangelands in riparian areas, were eliminated altogether.

The **ski areas** of the White River NF were granted almost every acre of zoning for future ski area expansions they sought. As with the Draft, the Final plan used faulty assumptions in rationalizing that there isn't enough skiing acreage, and that skier numbers would rise significantly. Most of the ski area expansion zoning granted is higher altitude terrain, likely acknowledging the impacts of global warming. And in a complete cave-in, the White River NF acceded to Congressman McInnis' demand that **instream flows** not be protected in favor of water development interests, including ski areas likely to seek additional snowmaking with increased temperatures and a shrinking ski season. Working with partner groups, Colorado Wild will likely file an administrative appeal of the forest plan by the September deadline.



Deep Creek - recommended for Wild & Scenic River Designation under the revised White River NF plan revision - one of its few positive elements.

...From the Director

instance burned 80,000 acres, much of it in areas that had been commercially thinned in part to create fire-resistant 'park-like' ponderosa pine forests. And ultimately, it was the timber industry, not environmental groups, whose appeal overturned the USP project the second time.

Meanwhile, Colorado Wild's review (i.e. "analysis paralysis") of other projects ostensibly designed to reduce catastrophic fire risk reveals that many of them are abusing National Fire Plan (NFP) money, doing little but wasting taxpayer dollars. The Grand Mesa NF is contemplating the Ward Lake Vegetation Management Project that would in part literally protect a lake from forest fire, while commercial logging proposed nearby would increase fire risk elsewhere. Meanwhile, the BLM has already implemented projects under the NFP that mainly just improve forage for livestock for public lands ranchers.

The FS rightly asserts that 100 years of fire suppression and past logging have caused a buildup of fuels that now more often lead to "catastrophic fires". Yet it's time we also recognize that environmentalist's goals work to both minimize tragic home losses and restore more natural forest conditions. Through the EPA's Climate Action Report, the Bush Administration last month acknowledged that – yes Kyoto – global warming is happening. The report concludes that decreased precipitation in the Rocky Mountain west is likely causing "a heightened frequency and intensity of fires during the prolonged summer season." In the face of windy weather and drought likely fostered by global warming, there is little we can do to stop fire dependent ecosystems where we now live from burning.

The EPA report goes on: "Increased fire frequency would likely be a threat not only to the natural land cover, but also to the many

residential structures being built in vulnerable suburban and rural areas, and later would increase vulnerability to mudslides as a result of denuded hills." With much of Colorado to burn this summer, lives and homes at risk given the abysmal failure of local government to steer development out of naturally fire dependent ecosystems, and water quality at stake, our federal and local governments must quit endorsing policies that in the long term exacerbate these perilous trends, stop pointing fingers at conservationists, and start acknowledging that humans should be a little more humble at Mother Nature's doorstep.

...Forest Watch

critique the environmental analysis, anticipated for release this fall.

The FS has proposed yet another insect "control" project in the *Arapaho Roosevelt National Recreation Area*, near Granby where mountain pine beetles are attacking lodgepole pine stands. A small roadless area, Green Ridge, located adjacent to both Rocky Mountain National Park and the Indian Peaks Wilderness Area, will likely be proposed for treatment. Colorado Wild assisted the Citizens for the Arapaho-Roosevelt in preparing an alert, as well as by writing our own detailed comments on the proposal. Since mountain pine beetles have already infested many of the area's trees, it may be too late for thinning to be effective. However, Colorado Wild does support some removal of beetle-killed trees to reduce the fire hazard.

With co-plaintiff Aspen Wilderness Workshop, Colorado Wild sued the FS over the *Baylor Park Blowdown Project* (Fall 2001 Newsletter, pg. 2) which contains measures similar to the Routt Beetle project's so-called "preventative thinning". The issues include failure to survey for Management Indicator Species as required by law, and assessment of road construction's cumulative impacts. We expect a final decision on settlement discussions this summer.

Welcome Leisa Glass!

Leisa joined the Colorado Wild team this spring as our part time Administrative Assistant. Previously, Leisa served as petition coordinator for the DMR campaign (see page 4.)

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Colorado Wild works to protect, preserve, and restore the native plants & animals of the Southern Rocky Mountains, focusing its efforts on habitat protection of the forested high country.

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