



JEFFREY PINE **journal**

CARING FOR THE PUBLIC LANDS OF THE EASTERN SIERRA

SPRING/19

IN THIS
ISSUE

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| *We the People Can Protect*

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NEW STAFF MEMBERS



Bryan Hatchell, Desert Lands Organizer

It took 6 months of stewardship for these lands to capture me. As a 2016 member of the American Conservation Experience trail crew based in South Lake Tahoe, I became, quite literally, a boots on the ground conservationist. I was fortunate to serve month-long projects in Golden Trout Wilderness and Devil's Postpile National Monument. I think some of the dirt I got in my teeth still hasn't come out. After this work, I quickly made my way to a third mountain region: The Rockies. Boulder, Colorado offered me a new home and an opportunity to further my career; a chance at a masters degree. This time sped by and only 3 months ago, I became hooded and turned my tassel.

On January 14th 2019, I joined Friends of the Inyo as the Desert Lands Organizer, leading our Conglomerate Mesa coalition and doing my part to ensure the integrity of the DRECP. I work closely with local advocacy groups, Tribes, businesses, and government to drive home our campaign goals. Bishop is my new home and Inyo County is my playground. Outside of work, I climb, snowboard, make music, play board games, and much more. It's an honor to be a part of this organization and community. Expect great things.



Kyle Hamada, Communications Director

As far back as I can remember, I have been visiting the Eastern Sierra with my family. Over the years, I found myself driving up and down the Owens Valley year-round to snowboard, backpack, fish, and climb. When I was a student at CSU Long Beach, I interned with the Bureau of Land Management surveying Wilderness areas, including White Mountain Wilderness. And, during my last semester at school I was contracted to survey proposed off-road routes throughout the western Mojave. I only grew to love the Eastern Sierra more and more through these years.

After graduating, I followed my passion for photography, working for nearly three years as a producer at a large advertising agency. I joined Friends of the Inyo as the Communications Director in November of 2018. It is my goal to use my wide range of skills and experience to help the organization be even more effective in its mission to protect and care for the Eastern Sierra's public lands. When I'm not working, I love to camp, climb, and cook with my beautiful soon-to-be-wife, Alexandra.

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Friends of the Inyo is dedicated to the preservation, exploration, and stewardship of the Eastern Sierra's public lands.

COVER PHOTO:

Sunset over the newly-designated Alabama Hills National Scenic Area. PHOTO: Kyle Hamada



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Summit of Koh-i-Tundi, 6100 m, Hindu Kush. From Left to right: Ken Boche, Jeff Dozier, and Michael Cohen (author of *The Pathless Way*, and *Garden of Bristlecones*) is on the right.
PHOTO: Dennis Hennek



PHOTO: Jeff Dozier

JEFF DOZIER

New Board Member Profile

Friends of the Inyo is thrilled to welcome climbing and environmental science legend, Jeff Dozier, to its Board of Directors. We know Jeff will make invaluable contributions to the protection and management of the Eastern Sierra.

I retired last July from the University of California, Santa Barbara after teaching there for 44 years. My formal title now is Distinguished (a code word for “old”)

Professor Emeritus. In 1994, I founded the Bren School of Environmental Science & Management at UCSB, and served as its first dean for six years. The Bren School develops interdisciplinary solutions to environmental problems, trains environmental leaders, and works for a sustainable future. During my time at Bren, my research and teaching covered snow hydrology, earth system science, remote sensing, and information systems.

My current work focuses on snow, water, and ice in the Sierra Nevada and High Mountain Asia, where more than a billion people depend on snowmelt for their water resources, and where the austere surface infrastructure requires that most of the analyses come from remotely sensed data. I am a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the American Geophysical Union, a member of the American Alpine Club for more than 50 years, and a Distinguished Scientist at the Chinese Academy of Sciences. My study

of snow’s optical properties let me help Disney animate snow for the film *Frozen*, which was awarded the 2014 Oscar for Best Animated Feature.

I began hiking with my family in the Sierra Nevada when I was a young child. As I grew, my activities expanded to skiing at Mammoth Mountain and in the backcountry, mountaineering, and rock climbing. I led six expeditions to Hindu Kush range in Afghanistan where, in 1967 in the highest villages, no one had heard of America. I made a few first ascents and first free ascents in Yosemite National Park, including those on what is now called Dozier Dome in Tuolumne Meadows. I had tried to name the dome something else, but the alliteration of the combination of the two words was too attractive to the climbing fraternity of the early 1970’s. At the time, I was embarrassed about the name, but now I confess that I like it.

Having retired from the University, I now live full-time in Mammoth Lakes. I joined the Board of Directors of Friends of the Inyo to help the group achieve its important mission of protecting and caring for the public lands of the Eastern Sierra. One reason this is

important to me is that I want my children, grandchildren, and their grandchildren to enjoy the benefits of an outdoor life in a remarkable environment.

Another reason I joined FOI’s board is that I want to contribute to the management of the Eastern Sierra’s water in ways that support the goals that I share with the organization.

My main expertise lies in knowledge about water. I know that climate change and interannual variability affect the suite of chemical, biological, physical, and socioeconomic processes that shape the water system of the Sierra Nevada and the Owens Valley. Further, a warming climate increases the chance of co-occurring warm temperatures, a lack of precipitation, and precipitation in the headwaters that will fall increasingly as rain instead of snow. Even further intensifying the situation, climate change will continue to cause snow to melt earlier in the spring which will increase rates of evapotranspiration. I hope to be able to use my expertise about water to help Friends of the Inyo help manage our water as the effects of climate change continue to affect this area that I care so much about.

A Partnership with Death Valley National Park

BY ALEX ERTAUD

In October of 2018, Friends of the Inyo and Death Valley National Park entered into an agreement to do work on the Racetrack Playa, effacing vehicular trespass. As you may remember from last year's Spring issue of the Jeffrey Pine Journal, we started with a volunteer event at the Racetrack last February, and now have a formal agreement with the park to have our crews do great work restoring the area from now until 2022!

This year, due to the government shutdown, we were unable to coordinate a volunteer event out on the Racetrack, but we will definitely do more. We look forward to helping Death Valley National Park take care of this truly one-of-a-kind landscape, and restore it to its natural splendor for many years to come.

Volunteers work to remove vehicle tracks on the Racetrack Playa, Death Valley National Park.
PHOTOS: Joanne Hihn





Kevin Mazzu exploring the place he loves so deeply.
PHOTO: Kevin Mazzu

An Interview with Kevin Mazzu about the new Alabama Hills National Scenic Area

BY WENDY SCHNEIDER

Friends of the Inyo's Executive Director, Wendy Schneider, spoke with Kevin Mazzu—board member of the Alabama Hills Stewardship Group and driving force behind the designation of the Alabama Hills National Scenic Area—on the afternoon of Tuesday, March 12, 2019, only hours after the 2019 John D. Dingell Jr. Conservation, Management and Recreation Act was signed into law. Friends of the Inyo is proud to be counted as a partner to the critically effective Alabama Hills Stewardship Group.

WENDY: So this must be an extremely exciting day for you?

KEVIN: Not as exciting as it was satisfying. I find it poignant, that a process that began 10 years ago with a pen—recording local community input about the future of the Alabama Hills—ends today, with a pen, signing the Alabama Hills National Scenic Area into law. Though disappointed we could not attend the bill signing ceremony in Washington DC, what's important is, the bill was signed. It is now law and the Alabama Hills National Scenic Area officially exists.

W: So what happens now?

K: Now the planning process starts. The managing agency, the Bureau of Land Management, will lead a new management plan process. The idea is that it will be a collaborative effort, characterized by extensive stakeholder participation, as was the decision to seek National Scenic Area status.

W: So how did you come to be a resident of the Eastern Sierra?

K: I moved here with my wife, Lis, in 2004. I had retired from my

corporate career with McDonald's (where I had been the West Coast Director of Marketing) and Lis and I wanted to move to a small town in the West, with opportunities for hiking, backpacking, fly fishing and skiing. We really love this area. In fact, we had backpacked the Rae Lakes loop on our honeymoon. Some McDonald's restaurants became available and we took over ownership. In addition to being able to run our own business, we were searching for an area that would be ideal for raising a family and allow for community involvement. And we found that unique combination in Bishop.

W: So you relocated to Bishop, and found that special place to raise a family that you were searching for. How did you come to be so passionate about the Alabama Hills?

K: Well I guess first, we got involved with the Alabama Hills Stewardship Group (AHSg).

W: How did that come about?

K: When we heard about the Alabama Hills Stewardship Group, we had not spent much time in the Hills, but had traveled through there when Lis and I first climbed Mt. Whitney. On that trip she thought she was suffering from altitude sickness, but it turned out she was pregnant! So, our oldest daughter, Mackenzie, now 13, summited Mt. Whitney in vitro. Since moving to the Eastern Sierra, my wife and I who both love the outdoors, had been interested in becoming deeply involved in the community, so we heard about this group and went to a meeting. There we met Chris Langley and Mike Prather and an intense relationship began. I soon joined the board in 2008.

The Alabama Hills soon became an important place in my family's life. We started taking our three daughters on stewardship projects when they were toddlers. And we did frequent hikes and family camping trips with our dog. One year my Mom visited us during a wildflower bloom. Mackenzie was two years old and together they went on a wildflower tour. I have a picture of the two of them admiring a fragile flower, the "greatest generation" and the "newest generation," both enjoying this

unique landscape. So, my passion for the Alabama Hills arose because the area became increasingly special to my family. I wanted it to be protected for many more generations to enjoy.

W: I'd love to hear the story of the journey of the Alabama Hills National Scenic Area from an idea to reality.

K: It's a good story. I guess I would begin it in 2007. That year a nationally prominent landscape photographer, David Muench, who is very passionate about the Alabama Hills, wrote a letter to Senator Dianne Feinstein requesting that she introduce legislation to make the Alabama Hills a national park or monument. In the spirit of Ansel Adams, who had been a close friend of David's father, he supported his request with his photographs. We became aware of this request when Senator Feinstein's office reached out to the Alabama Hills Stewardship Group about it. She made us aware of the request and indicated that she would like to consult the community about it. So, in August of 2008, the AHSG invited Senator Feinstein's staff to come out to the Alabama Hills for a visit. As part of this visit, two of her legislative staff made a presentation to the AHSG board, letting us know that the Alabama Hills had many characteristics necessary for it to receive a high level of protection. They also indicated that Senator Feinstein would not support any legislation unless the request for the designation came as a grassroots effort from the local community.

W: How did you personally feel about securing a federal designation for the Alabama Hills?

K: At that time it would be correct to say that I was "open" to more protection for the area but saying that I was "in favor" of a national designation would be too strong. I could see that the area was receiving a steadily increase in use and visitation, and that at least some of that use and visitation was irresponsible and therefore negatively impactful. But I also felt a national designation could potentially restrict recreation too severely.

W: So what happened next?

K: The AHSG decided to set up a "designation subcommittee" and Chris asked me to head it up. I had led some strategic planning processes during my corporate career so I knew how to be methodical and systematic. The operating principles our committee adopted was to move slowly and involve everyone, with the process intended to take 18 to 24 months. We decided to consider seven different designations ranging in protection levels from "outstanding natural area" to "national park." Included in these were, "national scenic area," which eventually won out. We also considered "no designation" as an option.

We wanted to make sure that we involved as many groups and individuals as we could in this process. We ended up consulting with and gathering input from about thirty stakeholder groups and forty user groups. Instead of holding large public meetings with canned speeches and group-think, we decided to reach out one-on-one and in small groups, so that we could have relaxed conversations. We felt in this way, we were more likely to get candid opinions and honest feedback. We asked questions like: What do you most like about the Alabama Hills? What are your concerns? Do you want the area promoted for recreation? What should be the balance between protection and access? What should the future look like?

These conversations led to the clear conclusion that additional protection and management was desired by almost all stakeholders. People were seeing an area they loved getting negatively impacted by irresponsible use. One commonality in the feedback was that people also wanted to protect access for all current users. Another theme that emerged: people believed that economic benefit to the area would result from the increased prestige that a designation would bring. And universally, our stakeholders wanted control to stay local and to partner

with the BLM.

While we were soliciting input from stakeholders, we were also gathering information about the proposed boundary. Over an eight-month period, we made maps and revisions to those maps based on input from the entire community.

Finally, we benchmarked other areas that had successfully sought increased levels of protection. One area we studied was the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument near Palm Springs. Like the Alabama Hills they needed to work with a wide variety of diverse stakeholder groups. Another area we studied was the Piedras Blancas Light Station. One thing we really liked about what they did was to set up a research library. The Alabama Hills have an extensive and multi-faceted history, with many stories to tell including the geologic, Native American, mining, and film history. The Alabama Hills are the birthplace of the American Western Film genre. In the future, we hope to set up a research/reference library on the Alabama Hills, inside the existing Lone Pine Film History Museum.

W: Why did you eventually decide that National Scenic Area was the best designation to seek?

K: We chose a National Scenic Area designation because it perfectly describes the Alabama Hills. It is an area of national importance for many reasons, including its Native American and mining history, geology and Western films. Additionally, it is incredibly scenic. The National Scenic Area designation was the perfect choice because it allows the desired balance between conservation and access.

W: Can you tell us a little about the legislative process?

K: After completion of the stakeholder conversation/mapping/benchmarking process, at the end of 2010, Mike Prather drafted our proposed legislation and we sent it to Senator Feinstein's office. She sponsored the bill in the United States Senate and then in 2013, when Congressman Cook was elected to represent our district, he sponsored the bill in the United States House of Representatives. After eight years

“Go slow. Be thoughtful. Be inclusive. Don't exclude any groups... Remember that public lands belong to everyone.”

POLICY

in the legislative process, the Alabama Hills National Scenic Area bill was passed by both the House and Senate in February 2019 as part of a larger public lands bill (now called the John D. Dingell Jr. Conservation Management and Recreation Act) which was signed into law today!

W: How did you feel about the process of getting the legislation passed?

K: Concerned about losing control and frustrated by the glacial speed at which legislation moves forward. But, at the same time, extremely proud that we stood our ground and pushed back at the right moments (with our stakeholders support) thus preventing any major changes from occurring in our legislation and strengthening the bill over time. Some adjustments we made included adding a tribal land transfer of culturally sensitive sites to the Lone Pine Paiute Shoshone Reservation, adding a clause to allow recreational prospecting in the historic mining area, and continuing to allow commercial permits for special activities such as motion picture filming, guided horseback riding and rock climbing instruction. Best of all – over time, our coalition got broader, deeper and stronger. That allowed our legislation to emerge from the “sausage factory” looking like filet mignon!

W: Was the coalition happy with the eventual outcome?

K: Yes, very much so. It was key that the result included no restrictions of current activities (except for commercial mining, which was a restriction supported by all) and that local stakeholders could also provide input into the new management plan. We feel we ended up striking the perfect balance between conservation and access.

W: What advice would you give to someone who wants to make sure a special place is managed/protected as it should be?

K: Steel yourself...It's a long and painful process. Make friends with people that love the land and rely on those relationships to sustain you. Start with an open mind; do not have an agenda. Have lots of relaxed, honest conversations. Go slow. Be thoughtful. Be inclusive. Don't exclude any groups... Remember that public lands belong to everyone. Be strong and be passionate, so you can control the outcome, not national organizations or federal bureaucrats. And never doubt that “we the people” are in charge!



The greatest generation and newest generation both enjoying this unique landscape. PHOTO: Kevin Mazzu



Who wouldn't love finding a manatee-shaped rock in the hills? PHOTO: Kevin Mazzu

DESERT BILL WINS

Highlights of the 2019 Dingell Act

BY JORA FOGG

The John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management and Recreation Act (formerly known as the Natural Resources Management Act) was signed into law on March 12, 2019. It is the most significant land conservation law in California since 2009 and is a rare example of successful bipartisan legislation. The Senate overwhelmingly approved the bill by a vote of 92 to 8 and the House passed it by a vote of 363 to 62. For more than a decade, elected officials, business owners, Tribes, veterans, hunters, anglers, and conservationists alike have come together to protect this unique place and preserve our desert heritage for generations to come.

From rugged mountain ranges with hidden springs to world-famous wildflower blooms and iconic wildlife such as bighorn sheep and desert tortoise, the multi-colored beauty of California's Mojave is a story of our collective American histories. Building upon the legacy of the California Desert Protection Act of 1994, we have been granted a special gift to protect, enjoy and steward these spectacular stretches of desert in California. Collective protections for conservation and recreation in the new Act number in the millions of acres, here we highlight a few places from the California Desert portion of the bill within Friends of the Inyo's working area.



The sun sets behind Lone Pine Peak over the Alabama Hills.
PHOTO: Kyle Hamada



A panoramic view can be had of the Avawatz Mountains Wilderness to the south, Axe Head Wilderness and Bowling Alley Wilderness to the west, and Ibex Wilderness to the north. PHOTO: Kyle Hamada



Looking over Saddle Peak Hills northeast into the Ibex Wilderness. PHOTO: Kyle Hamada

Ibex Hills Wilderness Additions

The Ibex Hills are in the southeast corner of DVNP. They contain rugged mountains, remote canyons, tranquil desert washes, and habitat for the threatened desert tortoise. This wilderness addition connects the small, isolated Saddle Peak Hills Wilderness with the larger Death Valley Wilderness to the west, providing habitat and landscape connectivity.

Bowling Alley Wilderness

On the extreme southern boundary of Death Valley National Park, there is a narrow strip of land between the Park and Fort Irwin known as the "Bowling Alley." This remote area features rugged mountains and deep canyons, separated by open valleys, bajadas, and pristine dry lake beds.

There is one permanent spring, Quail Spring, in this area. It provides a rich riparian area that attracts a variety of birds. Owl Hope Spring also provides intermittent water and a green oasis. Sparse rainfall may drain into Owl Lake or Lost Lake – dry lakes that see water just a few days a year, or not at all. The geological history of the Bowling Alley dates back nearly two billion years, and the earliest human inhabitants appeared about 5,000 years ago. This vast, rugged terrain offers opportunities for solitude, primitive recreation, and geological, archaeological, and ecological research.

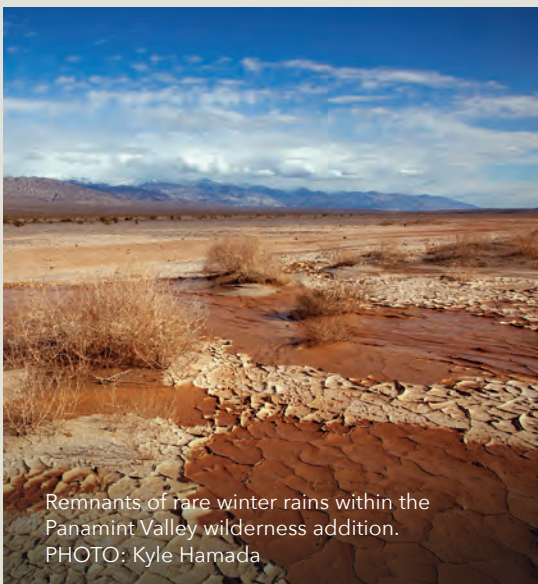


Panamint Valley Wilderness

Death Valley's sister valley lies to the west and is deeper and narrower than the namesake of the Park. At a higher elevation than Death Valley, it offers access to two distinct mountain ranges, the Panamint and Argus with endless opportunities for camping and exploration. The valley's alkali flats and associated wildflower blooms of rare species are exemplified in this wilderness addition to the Park. Easy access is just off of highway 190, the Death Valley Scenic Byway, as you travel through the Park. Watch for this area to fill with water after spring and fall rains, bringing wildlife and photographers alike to its tranquil pools.



Looking northeast across the seasonally wet playa into the Panamint Range.
PHOTO: Kyle Hamada



Remnants of rare winter rains within the Panamint Valley wilderness addition.
PHOTO: Kyle Hamada

Axe Head Wilderness

A triangle-shaped area in the extreme southern part of Death Valley NP, the Axe Head consists of low hills, desert washes, and prime habitat for the threatened desert tortoise. To the south, this proposed wilderness addition would be contiguous with the Bowling Alley wilderness addition.



A look upon Axe Head Wilderness and into the "Bowling Alley."
PHOTO: Kyle Hamada

Alabama Hills National Scenic Area

The Alabama Hills will now be a National Scenic Area and will accordantly be managed to "conserve, protect, and enhance for the benefit, use, and enjoyment of present and future generations the nationally significant scenic, cultural, geological, educational, biological, historical, recreational, cinematographic, and scientific resources" of the area. It will be the most recent addition to the National Landscape Conservation System, the nation's newest form of protected lands managed by BLM. Existing uses such as vehicle use, commercial filming, hunting, climbing, and rockhounding will be preserved. A management plan will be written with guidance from the local community to create a clear vision for the Alabama Hills into the future.

Excerpts were taken from fact sheets available at californiadesert.org



Looking south in the Alabama Hills. PHOTO: Kyle Hamada



Photo by Ken Miller



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ADVENTURE PHOTOGRAPHY:

Social Media's Impact on the Eastside

BY ANDREW POTTER

The right picture at the right time can strike a flame of awe and wonder. If you love the outdoors, you have most likely seen an image of a stunning natural landscape online, in a magazine, or on social media, and thought to yourself, "Wow, where is that?!" As a kid, I remember scouring National Geographic magazines for that very purpose, reading more photo captions than articles, spinning a globe to see if I could pinpoint exotic places. There is nothing wrong with being awestruck, but in an age where social media proliferates these images and their exact locations to millions for marketing purposes, we need to gauge the impact adventure photography is having on the environment and assess these photos beyond their stylistic merit.

Hashtags like #adventuregram provide an endless stream of photos, which inevitably leads to a commodification of the outdoors. In the same way people

take home a t-shirt to prove they have been somewhere, experiencing the outdoors is commodified by an image standing in front of a viewpoint. Behind most popular shots of supposedly wild places, however, there is a line of photographers who saw the photo online, mapped the location, and showed up at sunrise or sunset to catch the best light. Most often the reality is less of an adventure wherein the individual participates with nature, but a procession of parked cars and a snapshot that conveys the experience. While more people than ever before are visiting our natural wonders, fewer are engaging with and learning from the environment.

These photos are so popular-garnering hundreds of thousands of likes and launching the careers of Instagram photographers-that large outdoor brands frequently post photos from popular "influencers". The influencers

have a pool of followers that brands are trying to reach, so it is a savvy marketing strategy for companies to repost images taken by popular adventurers, regardless of whether they practiced proper outdoor ethics to get the shot.

Recently, a nationally known outdoor clothing brand posted an image of a truck camper parked five feet from the edge of Hot Creek in the Inyo National Forest. The beautiful image, with fading light igniting clouds over the Sierra and reflecting on the creek as the subject set up the campsite, was extremely popular. It took about two weeks for residents of the Eastside to note some glaring problems. There are no roads that lead that close to the creek, only small, single-track trails, meaning the truck had driven across a sensitive meadow; in this case at least a quarter mile to get there. The photographer and their team probably didn't camp there, which would be prohibited so close to the

Leave No Trace Principles for Social Media

You are probably familiar with Leave No Trace's 7 principles for enjoying the outdoors responsibly. Here are four simple principles that they recommend considering when posting to social media:

TAG THOUGHTFULLY – avoid tagging (or geotagging) specific locations. Instead, tag a general location such as a state or region, if any at all. While tagging can seem innocent, it can also lead to significant impacts to particular places.

BE MINDFUL of what your images portray – give some thought to what your images may encourage others

to do. Images that demonstrate good Leave No Trace practices and stewardship are always in style.

GIVE BACK to places you love – invest your sweat equity into the outdoor spaces and places you care about. Learn about volunteer stewardship opportunities and get involved in the protection of our shared lands.

ENCOURAGE AND INSPIRE Leave No Trace in social media posts – given the millions of social media users in the world, think of the incredible potential that social media has to educate outdoor enthusiasts – first

timers to seasoned adventurers – about enjoying our wild lands responsibly."

© 2018 by the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics: www.LNT.org.



water, but this type of setup for a shot is extremely common. Tents are hastily constructed in dramatic places where people do not actually camp, which conveys aspects of adventure and danger that viewers love. The problem, though, is that the average person does not understand this, and it's not only extremely harmful to delicate landscapes, but it can be dangerous. In a sad case on Mt. Hood in Oregon this past summer, two young girls were killed when they fell from a cliff near a cascading waterfall. They had tried to set up their tent as close to the edge as possible, presumably for a photograph.

After one person commented on the popular brand's photo with a negative reaction, informing them of the sensitivity of the area and asking that they take better care not to promote a lapse in ethics for the sake of a photo, a litany of harsh comments ensued, prompting them to remove the photo and send apologetic replies and messages to those who had reached out. The apologies were sincere, but if we are honest with ourselves about the state of our society, it is safe to assume that the majority of brands

will choose increased marketing exposure over ethics. Even with National Park Service representatives publicly stating that location-tagging and fake camp setups are harmful, photographers do it to promote their personal success, and brands continue to post the most popular images, often regardless of whether their product is actually in the shot.

Sadly, this type of marketing proves that it is only the idea of an experience that matters in our society, which means we are missing out on the real experience of being in nature, the experiences that mold us into better stewards who understand the delicacy of the natural world. Leave No Trace principles are taught at outdoor schools and summer camps, but not in inner-city schools where the majority of young people are growing up. To most of us it is imperceivable how someone could cut down a Joshua Tree and drive off-road over sensitive soil to camp where camping is prohibited, but during the most recent government shutdown it happened, and it is quite possible it was for a photo.

In National Parks with ranger presence,

these problems are being addressed more and more, which hopefully leads to increased individual safety and environmental protection. On public lands adjacent to National Parks, however, the increased traffic is more difficult to manage and educate. The Bishop bouldering scene, for example, has seen a large growth in visitation within the last few decades. As exposure continues to increase, once quiet places like the primitive hot springs outside of Mammoth Lakes are becoming more crowded. And residents and admirers of the Eastside have to be willing to adapt their strategies for preservation. Active measures may also be necessary, like increasing signage adjacent to popular, but sensitive areas, and organizing volunteer stewards who spend holiday weekends in popular areas. For residents who care about the Eastside, this also means more awareness when out on our own excursions, more difficult conversations, and a willingness to speak out and hold even the most prestigious and well-known brands and individuals accountable for their actions. It might not be easy, but doing the right thing rarely is.



Visitors of popular areas such as the volcanic tablelands may encroach near sensitive resources such as petroglyphs sites.
PHOTOS: Andrew Potter







“

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

—MARGARET MEAD

GET OUT!

Skiing into Glass Creek Meadow and up White Wing Mountain

BY ALEX ERTAUD

Below the Sierra Crest, a drainage over from the hustle and bustle of the June Mountain Ski Resort, sits Glass Creek Meadow. A quiet whisper of a stream trickles through a lush meadow in the summertime, but come winter, the place is truly silent, (hopefully) covered in an abundance of snow. In late December, Executive Director Wendy Schneider, her dog Ace, and I headed from the 395, around the north side of Obsidian Dome, to ski White Wing Mountain, which makes up the southern flank of the valley the meadow sits in. Our group had chosen the peak as our objective for the day for the moderately challenging ski, the beautiful views of the Glass Mountains, and the story behind the Wilderness character of the place. It being early season, we were kept off the summit by low-tide snow levels exacerbated by winds stripping our uphill (north-east facing) slope—classic Eastern Sierra!

GETTING THERE:

The roadside put-in makes for relatively easy access and logistics. Park on the west side of the 395 and Obsidian Dome Road (just past Deadman's Summit coming from the south). Head southwest on the obvious snow-covered dirt road. Continue as you wrap around Obsidian Dome, taking in this truly odd geologic formation, the product of an eruption around 1350—a mere decade or two into the Hundred Years' War between my Gallic ancestors and the English. But back to Obsidian Dome; continue around its south side to the Glass Creek Meadow (summer) trailhead. From there, head west along Glass Creek up to the meadow. You will soon enter the Owens River Headwaters Wilderness, which was designated as such as part of the 2009 Omnibus Bill. Friends of the Inyo was part of a coalition to lend local support to a Wilderness designation for the area, so it holds a

special place in our organizational hearts.

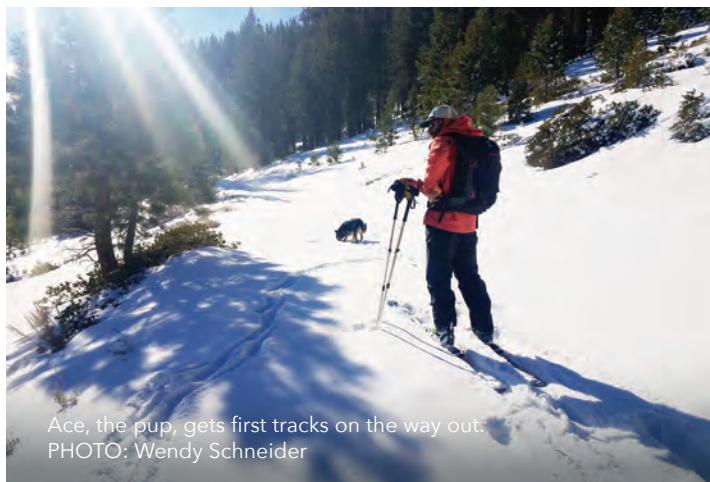
From the meadow, head up the northwest-facing slope, as it is the most gradual, with the pitch staying under 30 degrees. At the top, rip the skins and pick your descent! Options for skiing down abound—with varying degrees of spice—so pick the one where the snow looks best and shred those turns; you earned 'em! Then, retrace your skin tracks back to the 395.

BEING THERE:

As alluded to, Glass Creek Meadow and White Wing Mountain are in the Owens River Headwaters Wilderness. In the wintertime, the Wilderness character is out in full force, with creeks muffled by snow, birds away for the season, critters hiding away to survive the harshest season they will see, and nary a human in sight. Though rare to see any critters or signs of life firsthand in the winter, it is always a treat to inspect the track the local fauna leave behind in the snow, preserved until the first big thaw. Always fun to play naturalist and try and differentiate the hare from the kangaroo rat from the vole. Bring along your field guide to be sure to have a good time.

Finally, the views from White Wing are tremendous, stretching into Nevada. You will be able to see the Sierra Nevada give away to the Great Basin, alpine give way to high-desert. This convergence of biomes is what makes life out here in the Eastern Sierra so unique, and quite a treat to see from up on high!

TRIP DATA: 7 mi., w/ 2,700 ft of elevation gain (one way). A moderately athletic group accustomed to mountain travel can expect a 6-7 hour outing. Enjoy!



Ace, the pup, gets first tracks on the way out.
PHOTO: Wendy Schneider



Breaking in new boots doesn't always feel good. Alex tries to ease the pain with a short break. Photo: Wendy Schneider

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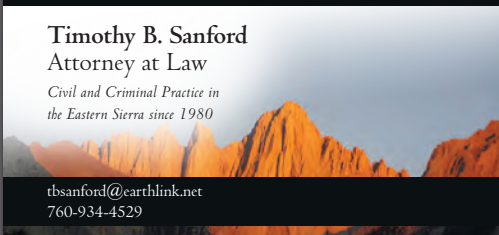
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