

Land Letter

SHORT TAKES: Endangered Species, Superfund, Development (03/27/2008)

Group protests FWS plan for development in Southern California

The Center for Biological Diversity harshly criticized a Fish and Wildlife Service proposal to develop areas in Southern California. The development would harm and harass the endangered California condor as well as 33 other rare species, the group contends.

"No corporation should ever request, no government agency should ever consider and no person should ever approve a permit like the one proposed today," said Adam Keats, director of the Urban Wildlands Program of the Center for Biological Diversity. "This 'license to kill' would be a knife to the heart of the California condor and would destroy California's rich natural heritage by enabling more urban sprawl to be dumped in Southern California's most valuable remaining wild areas."

At issue is development plans for Tejon Ranch, which covers more than 270,000 acres of wilderness at the crossroads of Northern and Southern California. The Tejon Ranch Co. is seeking permission to develop parts of the ranch area, but conservationists say development would pose serious disruptions to the area's ecosystem.

Besides the California condor, Tejon Ranch is a refuge for a host of wildlife and plants threatened by the proposal, CBD says. There are five species declared by the state of California to be "fully protected": the bald eagle, American peregrine falcon, golden eagle, white-tailed kite and ringtail. Other species in the permit request include the least Bell's vireo, southwestern willow flycatcher, Valley elderberry longhorn beetle, western yellow-billed cuckoo, Tehachapi slender salamander, little willow flycatcher, tricolored blackbird, California spotted owl, Tehachapi pocket mouse, burrowing owl, yellow-blotched salamander, western spadefoot, purple martin, northern goshawk, coast horned lizard, Cooper's hawk, yellow-breasted chat, prairie falcon, northern harrier, long-eared owl, two-striped garter snake, round-leaved filaree, Fort Tejon woolly sunflower, Kusche's sandwort, Tehachapi buckwheat, American badger, striped adobe lily and Tejon poppy.