

KFOI Radio - Shasta Environmental Alliance Program Nov. 14, 2018

David Ledger: Good afternoon. My name is David Ledger reporting today on KFI Radio's Shasta Environmental Alliance program. This is a weekly program that starts every Friday at 1:00 PM. Today after our news stories, we will hear from Ryan Henson of California Wilderness Coalition, who will talk to us about conserving our wilderness areas.

Shasta Environmental Alliance, or SEA, is a nonprofit organization which has 14 supporting groups. You can see our websites at ecoshasta.org and we have a Facebook page @ [facebook.com/Shasta](https://www.facebook.com/Shasta) Environmental Alliance.

Now for our first news story. A small local organization defeats Sierra Pacific. The Battle Creek Alliance has won a big victory in a timber harvest plan that would have clear cut over 1,000 acres of forested land in the Battle Creek watershed. Merrily Woodhouse, director of Battle Creek Alliance, filed an extensive 32-page comment against the Sierra Pacific Industries Timber Harvest Plan, or THP, that she found to be factually and scientifically flawed. She stated she had found much of the plan had used information from adjacent areas that did not apply to the proposed area that would be cut, among other issues.

Following her appeal or comments of the THP and several phone calls to Cal Fire Board of Forestry personnel indicating she was willing to follow through with the lawsuit, Sierra Pacific quietly withdrew their application. This is something that very rarely happens in timber harvest plans, according to Ron de Perna of Arcadia-based EPIC.

Merrily said it took her many hours of work. However, her previous experience reviewing timber harvest plans allowed her to see the cut-and-paste work done by Sierra Pacific in this plan, and because she knew the area where the cut would take place, that helped her. Usually, these issues are not noticed by the Cal Fire / Board of Forestry personnel either out of a lack of time to properly review them, a lack of concern, and/or their dependence on Sierra Pacific employees to submit factual data.

The Battle Creek watershed is a very important habitat for migrating salmon and steelhead trout. Because it has year-round cold water from deep volcanic rock in the watershed, keeping the water cool, this makes an ideal habitat for the fish. And also keeping the Creek free of sediments and herbicides from clear cuts is also important in restoring the fishery in Battle Creek, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other governmental agencies have spent millions of dollars recently removing many small hydroelectric dams on the Creek.

So a big congratulations to Merrily Woodhouse and the Battle Creek Alliance in defeating multi-billion dollar Sierra Pacific Industries in this battle. It is very rare that a timber harvest plan will be withdrawn following a complaint from the public. As I mentioned earlier, while the land could be clear cut in the future, now Sierra Pacific knows it will have to submit more relevant and scientific information in a future timber

harvest plan, and hopefully, that will protect the Battle Creek watershed. The Battle Creek Alliance is a supporting organization of Shasta Environmental Alliance and we are proud to have them as a member. If you would like to see her 32-page letter of comments, go to ecoshasta.org where we hope to have it posted next week. You heard this first on KFOI Radio.

Cat Wars

In the October and November issue of Eco News, there's an article by Gail Kenney titled *Domestic Cats are the Number One Threat to Wild Birds*. This article describes how cats are the worst threat to wild birds in the world, more than any other human-caused issue in the United States. Every year, 2.4 billion birds are killed by domestic cats. This is compared to building and glass collisions—and that is migrating birds at night that run into skyscrapers or your home window—there 675,000,000 birds are killed. And the lowest, below poisoning and electrocution, would be wind turbines at 328,000.

Using information from the scientific magazine *Nature Communications* and a book called *Cat Wars* by Peter Marra, the author found that unowned cats—and that would be barnyard cats, strays, and feral cats—account for 69% of the bird mortality. Myself, I took a conservation biology class at CSU Chico several years ago and the instructor would cite the statistics of over 2 billion birds killed every year by cats and the importance of keeping our cats indoors if you care about our native birds. And she would show on her PowerPoints every lecture a picture of a rescue cat she had that she kept indoors and would once again emphasize to students to remember that cats are a threat to wild birds.

In the Redding area, there is a problem with feral cats, especially around Turtle Bay, the Redding Arboretum, the Sacramento River Trail, and also Anderson , with many individuals leaving piles of cat food at various locations. One large feeding platform near Turtle Bay got a number of complaints. So apparently, to supplement their environmental image, Turtle Bay had the cat station moved another 20 or so feet back from where it would not be visible to the public. That is on the service road leading to the Sundial Bridge, and you can still see it if you walk about 40 feet off the pavement towards the east under the large valley oak trees. And I should mention, this was set up by a private individual, not by Turtle Bay.

Complaints by Wintu Audubon and individuals to the city of Redding about feral cats led to a meeting of about 100 people, and this was a year ago, by Redding Community Services. That's the Parks and Recreation department, and this was over the issue of these feral cats. The audience was divided about equally between feral cat lovers and the bird lovers. A representative from Haven Humane Society, which has a no-kill policy and a contract with the City of Redding for Animal Control, talked about how neutered feral cats don't kill birds. So what Haven Humane Society will do is, if you take a feral cat to them for \$45.00, they will neuter it and then give it back to you to drop off at the same place. So this representative from Haven Humane cited that feral cats aren't a problem with wild birds, without citing any scientific evidence whatsoever.

But the upshot of the meeting was that people can still build feeding platforms for feral cats along our community trails, or, for that matter, dump cat food anywhere on the trails, with the proviso that they take it in before nightfall, which any early morning walker can tell you never happens. The result is that feral cat populations in Redding continue to grow, and Turtle Bay continues to promote its environmental image while hiding the feral cat feeding station near its museum.

If you would like to learn more about the threats cats are to native birds, buy the book *Cat Wars* by researcher Peter Marra, and that's M-A-R-R-O. He will also be speaking at Godwit Days in Arcata in April of 2019. And Godwit Days is a huge birding event that is held every year in the Eureka-Arcata area, and that's where people all over the Pacific Northwest come. They have open ocean birding events on ships, or shore birding in harbor wetlands, and also in the surrounding forests.

Community Cleanups & Voting

Redding Community Cleanup Day of 2018 was a success. Redding Community Services reported that they had over 400 volunteers who picked up over 10,000 pounds of trash, 350 pounds of recyclables, and many cubic yards of invasive plants that were chipped and left on the sites. While there, I saw Mayor Kristen Schrader, Council member Francie Sullivan, Redding City Council candidate Erin Resner, as well as many friends.

The North Coast Environmental Center started the coastal cleanup in 1979 and this eventually led to a coast-wide cleanup that was sponsored by many cities and the California Coastal Commission. This year, with only three-quarters of these sites reporting, they had 57,600 volunteers who picked up 457,000 pounds of trash and 46,649 pounds of recyclables. So Redding is actually a part of that, only we don't have a coast, so we have to do it inland on the river that goes into the coast. For more information, I would recommend going to yournec.org/coastalcleanup.

Register to vote: in the last election in Shasta County, 46% of the registered voters actually voted. So that would be out of all the people in the county that could have voted, only 31% voted. In some counties, the eligible people that could vote is only about 20%. So in those counties, if you vote, you would have actually 5 votes for the other four people that are too lazy to vote or can't get down to the polls. So I urge everybody to make sure that you're registered to vote and, if you can, vote by absentee ballot. And if you know any—have any children or grandchildren, nieces and nephews, especially the younger generation—make sure you get them registered and have them vote.

OK, the return of the Salmon Festival is coming up on Saturday, October 20th, and this is at the Coleman Fish Hatchery, and that would be from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM. So that's tomorrow. And this is their 27th annual festival. And if you go there, a lot of different environmentally oriented groups are there, and they have a lot of information about what they have. Some of them have educational booths, and they're especially oriented

towards kids. And also, if you're new to the area, I would highly recommend you see the migrating salmon come up the fish ladders.

Today we have with us Ryan Henson, who is a senior policy advisor for the California Wilderness Coalition. He has worked for the organization since 1994, and he lives in Anderson. Thus far in his career, Ryan has been deeply involved in working with other groups to provide permanent protection for over 2.5 million acres of federal public land in California, ranging from the King Range Wilderness in Humboldt County to the White Mountain Wilderness Area in Inyo County. Locally, Ryan has expanded our work to expand the Trinity Alps Wilderness and the Yolla Bolly-Middle Eel Wilderness through congressional action, and that was in 2006. So welcome to KFOI radio, Ryan.

Ryan Henson: Well, thank you for having me. Appreciate it.

David Ledger: OK, umm, maybe you can start off with telling us, what is the California Wilderness Coalition?

Ryan Henson: Well, first of all, I have to set the stage a little bit that California is about 107 million acres in size and 44% of that is federal and state land. The vast majority of that is actually federal land, really. And those lands are managed by the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, California State Parks, and the National Park Service. That's who manages that 44% of our public lands.

So, um, most public lands outside of our state and national parks—most public lands are open to some kind of development, be it logging or mining or road construction or oil drilling or any number of other types of things. So that kind of sets the stage, and then CalWild is a nonprofit, non-governmental organization. We were founded back in 1976 for the purpose of watchdogging how that 44% of California is managed.

Our goals basically are to ensure that our National Forests and National Parks and Bureau of Land Management lands and State parks are well funded, well managed, accessible to all, you know, in a sustainable fashion, and are home to thriving populations of native plants and wildlife. Those are kind of our overall goals.

David Ledger: And so you do—I'm guessing your organization does a lot of lobbying of both governmental agencies and perhaps legislators. Who's that?

Ryan Henson: Yeah, I do a lot of lobbying, um, definitely reaching out to members of Congress and their staff. Because these are primarily federal lands, it's mostly members of Congress and their staff, but also from time to time state legislators. And then, as you said—and I don't really consider this part lobbying—but I definitely also have to spend a lot of time meeting with federal land managers.

David Ledger: And just for our listeners, is there like a legal definition of wilderness? I know I'm kind of jumping back to what you first said, but maybe we could set the stage for what is a wilderness, you know?

Ryan Henson: Yeah, good, good question. So, wilderness is, you know, just sort of conventionally defined as a wild place. It'd be interesting to find out what most Americans think when they hear the word. But what I mean by it, what CalWild—the organization I work for—what we mean by it is wilderness as a legally defined thing in Land Management.

So Congress passed a law in 1964 called the Wilderness Act, and it legally defined wilderness as an area of federal land, not private land. Federal land that is over 5,000 acres in size—though some exceptions are made for smaller places—but over 5,000 acres in size and, you know, primarily natural in appearance. It doesn't have to be pristine. That's a misperception that some people have. What is pristine anyway, right? I mean, the Garden of Eden. I mean, you know, there are invasive non-native plants in even the most pristine landscapes. It just has to be natural in appearance, and the practical impacts are these: you can't log a wilderness, though there are some exceptions for dealing with quote-unquote insects and diseases and stuff like that, though I've never seen those exceptions used because there's really no need for that kind of thing.

So you can't log a wilderness, you can't build roads in a wilderness. And one thing I left out earlier is these are areas that are roadless already, OK? Wilderness areas are areas that don't have roads; that's very important. So when I said 5,000 acres or larger in size, these are roadless areas. So areas without roads that are at least 5,000 acres in size.

So you can hike in them, you can hunt in them, you can fish in them, you can camp in them. You, oh, you can't ride off-road vehicles, you can't log them, you can't mine them. So you know, there are areas that are left free of development but are still open for recreation.

David Ledger: OK, you know, you do lobbying of individuals and I guess you speak to groups. What are other things that you do in your position? Although I imagine your lobbying takes quite a bit of time. Yeah, so I mean, I've seen an article you wrote once in Eco News over from the North Coast Environmental Center. I imagine you have to write articles for different organizations.

Ryan Henson: And yeah. So, what I do—since it's such a vast part of the state that we keep an eye on—umm, I spend a lot of my time interacting with citizens around the state who are keeping an eye on public lands. So we get a lot of calls for help from citizens who are concerned about government development proposals on their favorite areas of BLM land or Forest Service land. And so I spend a lot of my time triaging these threats, figuring out which of them are the most important because, you know, we aren't that big of an organization and we definitely need to be selective about which efforts we engage in.

So we do tend to focus our efforts on protecting the wildest remaining public lands in California. We definitely aren't in the business of opposing like, say, all oil drilling on

public lands in California. We don't have the resources to do that. But what we would do is oppose all oil drilling in California in lands that are suitable for wilderness protection, OK? That's a place where we draw a real firm line.

So I spend about a week a month traveling around the state, visiting public lands and meeting with stakeholders who care about those public lands or the land managers who manage them. And then, you know, the rest of my time I'm just pouring through email and on the phone. Sadly, conservation—at least in my part of conservation—is mostly office work.

David Ledger: OK. Now I know you've been working with Congressman Huffman, who has a public lands bill, which I understand would expand Wilderness Areas. One area locally is the Trinity Alps Wilderness. Can you tell us a little bit about what this bill would do? Sure.

Ryan Henson: So Congressman Huffman's bill is called HR—

David Ledger: Let me interrupt just one minute. Congressman Huffman is—he's from the coast, Mendocino, is that it? Or—

Ryan Henson: Congressman Huffman represents Trinity County, Del Norte County, Humboldt, Mendocino, and part of Sonoma. And then, I believe, all of Marin. So he has the whole coast plus Trinity, basically.

David Ledger: I see. And that used to be—who used to represent that? Trinity used to be in this Congressional District.

Ryan Henson: It used to be in Congressman Wally Herger's Congressional District, and then it got switched over to the coastal district in the last reapportionment.

David Ledger: And it was not Mike Thompson that used to be handling the coastal district?

Ryan Henson: Ohh, yes. Mike Thompson had Humboldt, Mendocino, Del Norte, Sonoma. He had the whole 707 area code, basically.

David Ledger: Yeah, but they—but they reshaped that district to add Trinity County. OK, so what would his bill do?

Ryan Henson: And for folks who don't know, he's a—he's a Democrat. He's actually from Marin, but he spends a great deal of time running up and down Hwy 101 and 299, visiting his district, including Trinity County. And his bill, called H.R. 6596, or the Northwest California Wilderness Recreation and Working Forests Act ... what it would do, like you said, it would protect 313,000 acres of federal public lands as wilderness.

It would also—and this is something we haven't talked about yet—it would also protect some of the wildest remaining streams in the congressman's district as something called Wild and Scenic Rivers. And what that is, is it's a system of protection for the wildest streams on public lands that don't have any dams on them yet, or at least the protected parts of them don't have any dams on them yet. And it would prevent the construction of new dams in the future, and it's meant to sort of balance the fact that we've dammed most of our rivers, this system of protection for our remaining wild streams.

So what the bill would do is protect 379 miles of stream as wild and scenic rivers, and the largest of them KFOI listeners are probably familiar with. That's the South Fork of the Trinity River, which you cross when you take Hwy 36 West of Red Bluff over to Trinity County. You cross over at a place called Hellgate Campground or a town called Forest Glen. You cross over the South Fork Trinity River there, and the bill, Congressman Huffman's bill, would protect the South Fork of the Trinity as a wild and scenic river.

David Ledger: Would it protect the McCloud River?

Ryan Henson: No, because that's outside his Congressional District, and I neglected to say everything his bill does is just in his Congressional District. So it's just Trinity, Mendocino, Del Norte, and Humboldt County. And what I'm going to talk about is just how it would affect Trinity since that's, you know, the closest to the listening area here.

So again, 313,000 acres of wilderness, including expanding the Trinity Alps Wilderness, as you mentioned. It would also protect Canyon Creek as a Wild and Scenic River. Some of your—some of the listeners might have hiked up Canyon Creek. It's the most popular hike in the Trinity Alps Wilderness, and it would protect that waterfall, a beautiful Creek, as a wild and scenic river.

David Ledger: Near Junction City.

Ryan Henson: It is directly north of Junction City. In fact, Canyon Creek flows through Junction City.

David Ledger: I see.

Ryan Henson: OK. Yeah, it would also—it would also authorize the construction of over 295 miles of new trails open to horses, hikers, and mountain bikes. And the closest one that would be authorized by the bill would be a trail completely around Trinity Lake. So a trail going all the way around Trinity Lake authorized in the bill. It's one of the many trails authorized in the bill.

Another kind of exciting trail that is definitely a local thing here is the proposed Bigfoot Trail. This isn't about Bigfoot; it's just named Bigfoot kind of, you know, as a marketing thing. But yes, the Bigfoot Trail starts in the Yolla Bolly-Middle Eel Wilderness just West

of Red Bluff and then heads up to the Oregon border and then goes out to the—and then kind of back in California and out to the ocean in Redwood National Park. And it connects the Yolla Bolly-Middle Eel Wilderness with the Trinity Alps Wilderness, to the Marble Mountains Wilderness, and then to the Siskiyou Wilderness, and then Redwood National Park. And what it's meant to do is highlight the amazing ecological diversity of our region, so that's really what it's about. It's not about Bigfoot.

And umm, the bill would study the feasibility of making that trail a reality because right now, parts of it are on roads, they're not actually on trails. Part of it's just a proposed trail, but part of it does exist. So, and unfortunately, it made the news recently because earlier this summer a fellow who wanted to hike on the Bigfoot Trail got lost, and some of you might have seen that in the news. So the study, by the way, for the Bigfoot Trail would help address those kinds of issues.

Now, the biggest thing that the bill would do for Trinity County is to take 700,000 acres of National Forest land and promote ecological restoration and fuel reduction in that area. So what it would do is promote the thinning of primarily small trees along roads. And these are trees that, while they're small, they will still produce, you know, some kind of economic return. And then the bill would say that any economic returns from the thinning would be returned back to the project. So within this area, any monies received would be returned to this project area for the purpose of restoration. And so within this 700,000 acres, the Forest Service would be reducing fuels along roads and around people's property and then using that money to do restoration elsewhere.

And one of the things that really needs to be restored in the area is there's a couple hundred thousand acres of land that's been clear-cut logged in the Sixties, 70s, and 80s. And that land is just in terrible shape. It is extremely thick with trees and, you know, we need to go in and do some thinning and burning and things like that. But that kind of thing costs a fortune. And so, you know, we can use some of the monies from the thinning to do that. So that's the goal of this restoration area, the 700,000-acre restoration area proposed in Trinity County. And that's why he calls it a public lands bill, not a wilderness bill, because it's got multiple features, not just, you know, wilderness and wild and scenic rivers.

David Ledger: So like the mountain bike trail part would not be in the wilderness. It would be—

Ryan Henson: Yeah, yeah. It doesn't mix that. And luckily, you know, one thing I left out when I talked about what wilderness... to me, the most important thing about wilderness is the land will remain wild in perpetuity. But, you know, one of the impacts of wilderness is that the Wilderness Act was written in 1964, but it's interpreted in such a way as to prohibit mountain bikes because they're defined as mechanized transport. So one of the difficult parts of my job is promoting wilderness protection in places that are used for mountain biking. And so I often have to find compromises with mountain bikers to maybe protect an area in another way or something like that.

But what's great about the Huffman bill is the mountain biking community is fully on board. You know, we were protecting over 300,000 acres of wilderness without really any impacts on mountain biking.

David Ledger: What is the—now, the current position or progress of the bill in Congress now? Is he just getting people to sign on to that, congressman? And where is it in Congress right now?

Ryan Henson: Yeah. Well, so the Schoolhouse Rock version of how these things happen, you know, is that a member of Congress introduces a bill, and then it gets picked up in the other house by another member of Congress who will introduce it in that House. And then the bills get committee hearings, and then they are sent to the floor for a vote, and then they're reconciled, and then they're sent to the president. And so where we are with this bill is Congressman Huffman has introduced it in the House of Representatives. And so we need a champion in the Senate. And so we're reaching out to Senator Kamala Harris, trying to get her to introduce the measure in the Senate. And then what will happen is the bills will be referred to committee, and we don't think that'll happen till next year.

David Ledger: Now, let's see. As I understand it, the Trinity County Board of Supervisors voted to oppose the bill that would expand the wilderness area, is that correct or—

Ryan Henson: Yeah, they voted 3 to 2 to oppose the bill with very, very little notice. No notice to the supporters of the bill, no notice to Congressman Huffman or his staff. It was just a real shameful display, and it was a real sneak attack, frankly, on people who support the bill, of whom there are, you know, hundreds in Trinity County. It's not a big county, but yeah.

The congressman has used an extremely inclusive and transparent process to put this bill together and to talk about it in the community. And the Trinity County Board of Supervisors—the three who voted against it—

David Ledger: Which were—which were the three that voted against it, you know, or—

Ryan Henson: Yeah, Supervisor Groves led the effort. Yeah, Groves, he represents the Northeast part of the county. He's a big Jefferson State supporter. Then Supervisor Fenley, and Supervisor—the supervisor who represents Hayfork, whose name I'm forgetting...

David Ledger: Oh, Judy Morris?

Ryan Henson: No, no... Bobbi Chadwick. And she was the most surprising, frankly, though she didn't seem to give any reasons for the vote.

And the reasons—the reasons are these. Most people who oppose the bill, including Supervisor Groves, haven't read it, and instead, they are not opposing the bill so much as a straw man. And the straw man that they oppose would take their water, take their land, close their roads, and do all that. But the bill actually does none of that. They complain consistently about things that the bill won't do, like close roads to the public, or affect anyone's water rights, or affect anyone's private land. It's only about federal public land. Now that's—that's the most of what you hear.

But here's the real reason. There are some people who—and I have a good relationship with them, and so I'm not going to name them—but there are some people who truly believe in their heart of hearts that these proposed wilderness areas need to be logged. That they should be logged for the benefit of industry and that we humans do a better job of managing forests than nature does. So these last bastions of old-growth forest just need to be logged and turned into tree farms.

David Ledger: Now, I would like to think that that area gets a lot of, you know, tourism income from the Trinity Alps and the wilderness areas.

Ryan Henson: They get an enormous amount of tourism income. And ironically, Supervisor Groves and others are constantly poo-pooing the impact of tourism and instead talk always about going back to the old days of mining and logging dominating the economy.

But here's the thing: smarter supervisors, like Supervisor Judy Morris of Trinity County, who represents Weaverville, they understand that we can have a healthy economy and good conservation policies. That we could protect the Trinity Alps and have plenty of sustainable logging opportunities. We can totally do both, and that's the most upsetting thing about what people like Supervisor Groves have done.

David Ledger: All right. Now, what are the other areas? Because people do go to the coast, and maybe are there some areas where they're going to—it's also going to protect, preserve, or make wilderness out of some areas along the coast that maybe some people in this area often go over and—

Ryan Henson: Well, actually, not even over on the coast. I'll just mention a couple of places—other places in Trinity County besides the Alps that it'll protect, and maybe some folks have visited those areas.

So one of them is the Chinkapin proposed wilderness. I mentioned the Hellgate Campground, and I'm sure some of the listeners have been there before. That's on Highway 36 on the South Fork of the Trinity River, and there's a great trail that runs along the South Fork of the Trinity. And while the trail itself would not be included in the wilderness because it's used by mountain bikes, all the land around it would become the Chinkapin Wilderness, OK? So this is South of Hwy 36, but just right on 36 basically, from there South almost to the Yolla Bollys would be something called the Chinkapin proposed wilderness. And by the way, it is right now the largest piece of unprotected

ancient forest in California, and it's right there. So that's one place that folks might have been to.

Another place that doesn't really have any trails, but it's kind of a notable landmark, is the Pattison Wilderness—or Chanchelulla Wilderness—which is right on the border of Tehama and Trinity County. The bill would expand that small wilderness. It's the headwaters, by the way, of Hayfork Creek.

And then—and then you did—you said over on the coast. One of the places that would be protected over there is almost more of a symbolic layer of protection. That's the Headwaters Forest Reserve. The Headwaters Forest Reserve in Humboldt County is a famous grove of—well, it's not all old-growth forest, but a lot of it is old-growth forest. And the old-growth heart of the forest would be protected as wilderness by the legislation as well. So that's the closest thing to the coast.

David Ledger: Now, with this bill and cleaning up public lands, is this one... I know there's a bill starting in Congress—I'm not sure if here it is—but it's to clean up marijuana. That's a big problem, not so much with marijuana, but these illegal grows on public land where they leave all the trash. Where the police go in and they take out all the illegal marijuana that's grown and burn that, and then all the trash and the fertilizer and whatnot that's left in our national parks and forests still on the ground. Is there something that this bill Congressman Huffman's proposing—or it is—

Ryan Henson: Yes. So that, as you said, is a major problem, and there are thousands of sites on our public lands that have been affected by international drug trafficking organizations. These are not local people, primarily international drug trafficking organizations that have established pot grows on public lands, 10, 12 acres at a time. They assume that half of them or more will get busted, so they plant more than they need. And they, as you said, they leave behind mountains of garbage. Remember, they're living at these places out in the woods for six months. So imagine everything you need to live for six months, they're going to leave there in the woods. And all they take with them are their weapons and their processed marijuana.

There are literally thousands of such sites where only the marijuana has been removed, and the toxic chemicals, the dead animals—by the way, that's a huge problem. The animals are killed at these sites by eating rat poison, by drinking from dammed water sources that they create and then fill with chemicals. It's just a real mess.

What the bill would do is establish a partnership charged with cleaning up the backlog of illegal grow sites that have been abandoned, but all the trash and all the poisons and stuff remains. The Forest Service estimates—I just heard this yesterday—that only 10% of the sites have been cleaned up, and they estimate that there's over 5,000 sites, OK? Each of which is about 10 to 50 acres. So, you know, we're talking about a lot of land with a lot of poison on it. This is a very chemically intensive kind of pot growing here, you know, if it's killing bears and killing deer out in the woods. And it's—it's just not a good thing to be consuming. So we're hoping to attack this on every level.

And what this bill would do is to establish a partnership to clean this up, you know, to like get money from the state or the feds and then distribute it to the tribes, to the resource conservation districts, to the nonprofits, to the others who can go out and start cleaning up these sites.

David Ledger: Now, I remember I lived in Humboldt County about a year, and I remember there were a lot of locals that would go out and they'd buy some land and do the same thing. You know, they'd have their diesel generators there, and then usually they would find the pollution, you know, downstream of that. So hopefully that can take care of some of the—

Ryan Henson: Yeah, you know, we're only going to tackle the problem on public lands with this bill. But, you know, there are efforts underway to—and I know they're not adequate yet—but there are efforts underway to try to reduce the excesses on private land as well. You know, I mean, I know they're a long way from being where we—where we need to be. But—

David Ledger: OK, that's just a public lands... OK.

Ryan Henson: Yeah, I'm sorry, this is just public lands. So anyone who thinks this is, you know, anti-pot on private land, no, that's a whole other thing and we got nothing to do with it. This—this bill is just about public land marijuana growing, which is, I assume everyone knows, completely illegal, yes, and very destructive.

David Ledger: Now, Wild and Scenic Rivers, you mentioned that part in the bill. What—what areas locally might that bill help, right? Like, let's say the Sacramento River Bend area, or would that be something separate or would that go along with this bill?

Ryan Henson: Well, the Sacramento River Bend area is a great stretch. You know, the Sacramento River, very wild. I think it would make a very worthy wild and scenic river. I know I said, you know, a Wild and Scenic River can't have dams on it, but what I mean is new dams. And so, you know, Shasta Dam would remain, obviously. But what it would mean is that that beautiful stretch of river through Bend could not be dammed. And I think that's something that the vast majority of people would agree with.

Now, on the other hand, it's in Congressman LaMalfa's district. So it's something that Congressman LaMalfa would have to either propose himself or allow another member of Congress to do for him.

David Ledger: Is he opposed? Do you think he would be opposed to that?

Ryan Henson: I don't want to assume that he would, but he does have a history of being extremely antagonistic toward public lands conservation. I see, and we'd like to change that, by the way. I'm not going to give up on him, but he has been—I won't mince words—quite hostile to protecting public lands in a sound way. And he definitely puts politics over both the land and people, sticks with a very doctrinaire far-right sort of

attitude toward public lands management, which doesn't serve our region well. We—there are people ready to get things done in the woods and really ready to compromise to get things done, and instead, he's taking kind of a far-right position.

David Ledger: All right. And then another scenic river... well, I don't—does the Pit River qualify for that? I mean the upper Pit River, let's say around Fall River Mills and that area.

Ryan Henson: Yeah, good, good question. So the Pit River Canyon, which is an extremely remote part of the Pit below Fall River Mills and above the Pit River campground, is—is just... you'd think you were in the Snake River Canyon or something. It is this extremely deep canyon with extremely high walls. It is—it is a perfect wild and scenic river candidate and a perfect wilderness candidate, by the way. It's Bureau of Land Management land, and the BLM has actually recommended it for wilderness protection. But again, it would take—Mr. LaMalfa would have to introduce legislation to make that happen.

David Ledger: So Mr. Huffman couldn't take Mr. LaMalfa's—

Ryan Henson: He could—Congressman Huffman could introduce a bill to make anything in any place in the United States wilderness, but the local member of Congress, you know, it's important that they usually agree.

David Ledger: I see. OK. What can organizations such as Shasta Environmental Alliance and individuals do to help Congressman Huffman's bill go through Congress?

Ryan Henson: Yeah, good question. Well, one thing you could do is contact the congressman and let him know that you support H.R. 6596. That's H-R 6596. OK, yeah, that's really all you need. H.R. 6596, you know, call his office and let him know you support. Or, you can't send them an email, unfortunately, unless you're a constituent. But if you do live in Trinity County, please do contact him and let him know that you support the bill, and also contact your county supervisor and let him or her know that—that you support the bill. You don't appreciate that precipitous vote the county took.

David Ledger: So would it be—would it help to send a letter to Congressman LaMalfa?

Ryan Henson: Uh, that's probably unnecessary. One—one thing that though would be great with Congressman LaMalfa is to just ask him to stand up for our public lands, you know, stand up for our public lands. You know, he—one thing he hasn't... you know, we're closing campgrounds, they're closing roads, trails are overgrowing because they're not being maintained. He should start appropriating money for our public lands to care for our public lands. And that's something he has not done and he needs to do. And it's something that Congressman Huffman and others are willing to do, but they're in the minority, so it's hard. Congressman LaMalfa is in the majority, he's got way more power, and it's time for him to stand up for our public lands.

David Ledger: Pretty well covers a lot of it. But is there anything you want to add, Ryan, before we—before we go here?

Ryan Henson: Sure. If folks want more information, they can go to calwild.org. Calwild.org to learn more about CalWild and our work, and they can figure out from there how to get in contact with me if they'd like. And I can help them out further if they want to get more involved in the management of our local public lands.

David Ledger: All right. Well, thank you very much, Ryan. We appreciate it. And we have been interviewing Ryan Henson of California Wilderness Coalition, and this is KFOI radio at 90.9 FM. And I'm David Ledger with Shasta Environmental Alliance, thank you for listening.