

LIGHT HAWK

Championing environmental protection through the unique perspective of flight.

SPRING/SUMMER 2006

Focus: Public Lands

LightHawk works primarily in western and northeastern North America and Latin America

VOLUNTEER PILOT SPOTLIGHT

Jerry Hoogerwerf Socorro, NM



A native of Detroit, Jerry grew up living in France, Holland, Argentina and New Zealand. As a child, he was fascinated by airplanes, but being

a pilot seemed like an unattainable goal. When he started taking flying lessons, in his 30's, he saw the possibility of making flying a career, first as a flight instructor, then as a charter pilot. After college, Jerry spent two years in the Peace Corps in Costa Rica. In 1979 he moved to Socorro and established a fuel base operation at the municipal airport. Since his first LightHawk flight in Costa Rica in 1988, Jerry has flown for LightHawk in Central America nearly every year, in every country except El Salvador. He also volunteers for Wings of Hope, maintaining planes the organization uses around the globe.



Ev Cassagneres Cheshire, CT

Ev has been flying for more than 60 years. He is the internationally recognized historian of Ryan aircraft, and preeminent specialist of the Spirit of St. Louis, Charles A. Lindbergh's world-famous airplane. Devoting more than 45 years to the study of both, he has produced several articles and books. His fifth and last book, *The Untold Story of Lindbergh's 1927-1928 Good Will Tours*, was just released. Ev also leads an active life as a swimmer, hiker, cross-country skier and snowshoer, and bicycle racer—retiring undefeated as Connecticut's seven-time Senior Champion. Though busy working as a consulting engineer for Yale University and running an aerial photography business, Ev has volunteered his time to LightHawk since 2001.

LightHawk Flights Help Battle Proposed "Tag Sale" of Public Lands

Sama Blackwell and Laurie Martin

LightHawk has been working with the California Wilderness Coalition (CWC) in their effort to oppose the proposed sale of more than 800,000 acres of America's treasured public lands, including more than 75,000 acres of wildlands in California. The proposal was included in President Bush's budget for fiscal year 2007 sent to Congress, but has not yet passed. To help educate the public and enable CWC to learn more about the land being put on the auction block, LightHawk volunteer pilot Saul Chaikin provided a guided flight for a *Los Angeles Times* reporter and CWC staff over the parcels in northern California offered up in conjunction with this proposal. Saul also took compelling aerial photos on the flight that later were used by *NBC Channel 11*, *KNTV* (San Jose, San Francisco, Oakland) in their coverage of the land sale.

Short-Term Plan to Replace Long-Term Assistance

By selling off public lands valued up to \$800 million (for U.S. Forest Service lands alone), the President's proposal would fund payments to counties under the Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act, commonly known as Payments to States. Though the numbers provided by the Administration have varied, the average estimate of lands up for sale is 300,000 acres of national forest land and 500,000 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land. The act originally was designed to provide transitional assistance to rural counties affected by declining revenue from timber harvests, due in part to unsustainable forestry practices, on federal lands. Since 1908, 25 percent of revenue raised through timber sales and grazing fees on public land has gone to rural communities.

These funds have been used primarily for schools and county road maintenance and were guaranteed regardless of logging revenue. The Administration's plan phases out guaranteed funding from the general treasury over five years, and instead draws funds for the program from increased timber sales and the sale of public lands.

Though this proposal follows a failed move last year to allow the sale of millions of acres of public land for mining and other development, as well as a plan by Rep. Richard Pombo (R-CA) to sell off 15 national parks, this is not a partisan debate. Democrats and Republicans alike are questioning *continued on page 2*



Saul Chaikin/LightHawk

Headwaters of Sulphur Creek, a tributary of the ecologically-critical Deer Creek, in the Ishi "B" Roadless Area. Sulphur Creek is one of only a handful of waterways remaining in the Sierra Nevada and southern Cascades that hosts imperiled salmon and steelhead trout.

Continued from page 1...

the wisdom of selling public land — a permanent asset — to generate cash to meet a short-term budgetary goal. According to a recent *Denver Post* article, Rep. Rob Wittwer (R-CO) “argued that a Bush administration proposal to auction off national forest lands to raise money for rural schools is a bad idea. ‘It just makes no sense... We only have so much of this land, and when it’s gone, it’s gone forever.’”¹ In the past, federal land management agencies have used any isolated or less-than-useful parcels in land-swap deals to acquire more valuable lands for public use. This one-time sale would eliminate that possibility.

What’s at Stake?

The Forest Service issued a 30-day comment period in March on the list of land parcels potentially eligible for sale through the President’s proposal, (though the provision included in the President’s budget must be passed by Congress). The list includes land in 35 states (with a disclaimer that these parcels are subject to change without prior notification) and contains places like the Columbia

with 85,000 acres of public land at stake. More than a quarter of all the Forest Service land put on the auction block is located in California, the Bush administration claims that these lands are “marginal” and “isolated parcels”.

LightHawk reveals true land value

A careful review by LightHawk partner group CWC of the lands proposed for sale in California tells a far different story. The group found that these tracts of land are not just odds and ends or isolated acquisitions, but instead are parcels contiguous to existing forestland. Some of the land borders scenic river corridors and at least one crucial wildlife corridor identified by federal biologists would be severed by the sale of two large tracts in the San Bernardino National Forest. Even land that has been proposed for wilderness designation by Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-CA) would be put up for sale. In the words of *L.A. Times* reporter Bettina Boxall, who flew with LightHawk for her story, “Mountain property with dramatic views, the headwaters of salmon streams, tall timber and rugged backcountry, even a cave or two — all could be sold as part of a Bush administration proposal...”²

LightHawk’s ability to shed light on an issue has helped to provide the public scrutiny needed to vet a far-reaching plan like this. Through LightHawk, *The Los Angeles Times*, *NBC 11*, and viewers and readers throughout California and beyond were able to get a first-hand view of some of the lands at issue.

The following is an excerpt of the story produced by the *L.A. Times*, which ran just prior to the Forest Service’s 30-day request for comments on listed lands:

Flying over the forest last week with LightHawk, a volunteer aviation group that arranges flights on environmental issues, wilderness proponent Ryan Henson looked down on one of them. Its wooded tabletop and canyon sides step up from the silvery curves of Deer Creek, which local forest managers have recommended for wild and scenic protection and which also is habitat for imperiled chinook salmon. Nearby is the unbroken country of the congressionally designated Ishi Wilderness.

Abutting the tract on another side is a bald, brown patch of privately owned timberland denuded by clear-cutting. “This is what we have to look forward to if the parcels get bought,” said Henson, policy director of the California Wilderness Coalition.³

WHAT’S NEW

2006 Fly-in, Monterey, California Friday, September 22nd - Sunday, September 24th

With an airstrip conveniently located and a special “Strolling Dinner” Saturday evening at the beautiful Monterey Bay Aquarium, this is sure to be a unique and memorable fly-in.

Book your lodging early! LightHawk has reserved a block of rooms for September 22nd & 23rd for the fly-in at the Portola Plaza Hotel in Monterey. The hotel is conveniently located across the street from Heritage Harbor where most of the fly-in activities will take place. It is located a brisk walk away from the Monterey Bay Aquarium and a five minute drive from the Monterey Peninsula airport. Please call the Portola Plaza to make your reservation: (888) 222-5851 (refer to group name, LightHawk.)



© Kip Evans Photography

Point Buchon, located along the California coastline between Point Conception and Pigeon Point, is one of several areas proposed for protection under the state’s Marine Life Protection Act. Fly-in flights will aid state and partner organizations in this protection effort in September.

GET INVOLVED!

PILOTS: Join our volunteer pilot team; the minimum requirement is 1000+ hours as pilot-in-command.

DONORS: A gift of \$35 or more makes you a member of LightHawk!

WISH LIST: LightHawk is in need of a GPS unit for our Cessna 206. Because the 64Q is used for flights primarily in mountainous regions of Central America, a Garmin 296, which has a terrain awareness feature, would be most suitable. If you own the 296 and plan to upgrade to the 396, please consider donating your old unit to LightHawk.

MATCHING GIFT PROGRAMS: Double your gift; ask your employer to match your gift to LightHawk.

HONOR SOMEONE: Consider giving a gift to LightHawk in honor of an avid pilot or environmentalist among your friends or family.

USFS Parcel Acreages by State

| State | Acres | Montana | 12,044 |
|-------------|--------|----------------|--------|
| Alabama | 2,822 | Nebraska | 883 |
| Alaska | 97 | Nevada | 1,986 |
| Arizona | 1,022 | New Mexico | 7,373 |
| Arkansas | 3,624 | North Carolina | 9,833 |
| California | 75,960 | Ohio | 419 |
| Colorado | 23,248 | Oklahoma | 3,541 |
| Florida | 973 | Oregon | 11,270 |
| Georgia | 4,523 | South Carolina | 4,656 |
| Idaho | 26,025 | South Dakota | 15,107 |
| Illinois | 206 | Tennessee | 2,996 |
| Indiana | 878 | Texas | 4,565 |
| Kentucky | 4,540 | Utah | 5,813 |
| Louisiana | 3,895 | Virginia | 5,721 |
| Michigan | 5,678 | Washington | 7,425 |
| Minnesota | 2,644 | West Virginia | 4,827 |
| Mississippi | 7,479 | Wisconsin | 80 |
| Missouri | 21,672 | Wyoming | 17,532 |

Total Acreage of All USFS Potentially Eligible Parcels: 301,355

River Gorge National Scenic Area in Oregon and Washington — 700 acres of the Scenic Area, including 1,300 acres along a remote and rugged river gorge with rare low-elevation old-growth forest would be up for sale. Other at-risk areas include portions of a popular recreation area in Montana—nearly 3,000 acres of land in the Cherokee National Forest is home to more than 1,500 black bear—and lakeside areas of national forest in Alabama. Unlike the Forest Service, the BLM has not identified parcels that would likely be sold, but instead has been given a sales quota and will identify sale tracts as it completes its land use plans. Between the Forest Service and the BLM, California would be hit the hardest,

¹ *Denver Post*, March 7, 2006.

² *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 28, 2006.

³ *ibid.*

AT LIGHTHAWK?

A complete schedule of events will be posted on LightHawk's web site in late July. Look for a lively line-up of lectures, presentations and entertainment followed by flights on Sunday morning highlighting LightHawk partner organization's conservation work on the California coast. We hope to see you there!

You don't have to be a pilot to volunteer for LightHawk!

LightHawk seeks volunteers to help out in many ways! Needed, commitment to LightHawk's mission, a few hours a month or more, and an interest in volunteer service. Jobs include: data entry, web site design and maintenance, organizing historical archives, English to Spanish translation, and writing articles for the LightHawk newsletter. Please contact Keri at the Lander office to learn more.

THANK YOU We wish to thank the many donors who contributed to LightHawk between February 4, 2006 and May 11, 2006 including:

Foundations Appleby Foundation, Roy A. Hunt Foundation, Island Foundation

Major Donors (\$1,000 and over) Anonymous, David I. Katzman, Eagle County Community Development, Richard Durden, Steve and Lisa Robertson

Patrons (\$500-\$999) Santa Fe Garden Club, Trillium Asset Management Corporation, Mary Ellen Bates, Butch Weaver

Contributors (\$250-\$499) Robert E. Matthews, Keith Baldwin, Willamette Riverkeeper

Volunteer Pilots Our heartfelt thanks to the many volunteer pilots who donated their time and the use of their aircraft to fly for LightHawk during this period.

STAFF DIRECTORY: Rick Durden, Executive Director • Emilie Ryan, Chief Financial Officer • Laurie Martin, Programs Director • Michele Gangaware, Latin America Program & Flight Services Director • Sama Blackwell, Program Manager, Western Region • Geri Oster, Programs & Operations Assistant • Keri Foster, Membership Manager

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LightHawk Aids Public-Private Partnership in Support of Maine's Unique National Park

Volunteer Pilot Pat Andrews recently provided a full day of flight for staff from Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT) so that they could aerially monitor and photograph the approximately 180 conservation easement properties held by Acadia National Park (ANP), as well as several additions to Park fee property. MCHT, a statewide land conservation organization dedicated to protecting land that is essential to the character of Maine, works closely with ANP's land resources program and completed this work with LightHawk as a service to the park.

Acadia is one of the few national parks created almost entirely of donated lands to the federal government. Located on the rugged coast of Maine, the park encompasses more than 47,000 acres of granite-domed mountains, woodlands, lakes and ponds, and ocean shoreline. The National Park Service (NPS) at Acadia currently holds conservation easements

on 184 properties in 18 towns, protecting more than 12,000 acres of land; all easements but one are located on islands. Congress gave the NPS the responsibility to hold conservation easements on private property within the Acadian archipelago. The park's lands program is charged with keeping records of these properties, marking and monitoring park boundaries (to ensure that activities on private property do not encroach on or damage park resources), and working together with interested landowners to protect the ecological, cultural, and scenic values of their holdings. The agency is also tasked with evaluating properties offered to the NPS as potential conservation easements, and monitoring properties to insure compliance with the terms of their conservation easement. Prior to MCHT's completed mission with LightHawk, these surveys had not been conducted since 1996.

The aerial perspective, as provided by

LightHawk, is essential to fulfilling these NPS obligations. With properties spread throughout rocky coastal terrain, it would require weeks to assess easement properties by boat, by car, or on foot. Through LightHawk, the park's easements can be comprehensively viewed and documented from an aircraft in a few days of flight, with GPS points gathered for specific areas that may be followed by selective ground visits. Though all 180 of Acadia's easements were covered through Pat's flight, follow-up flights may be conducted with MCHT this fall.



Ciona Ulbrich/MCHT/LightHawk

Acadia National Park

FROM THE FLIGHT LOG

Monitoring Continues in Support of Maya Biosphere Reserve

LightHawk continued its longstanding partnership in support of the protection of Guatemala's Maya Biosphere Reserve by flying Wildlife Conservation Society and CONAP (Guatemala's National Council for Protected Areas) staff over Laguna del Tigre National Park and the adjacent Biological Corridor. The flight executed by VP Chuck Heywood carried passengers Lic. Vinicio Montero, Regional Director of CONAP, and Julio Valle, the Director of Laguna del Tigre National Park, to monitor activities and land conditions within the park, collecting information that would be otherwise unavailable without LightHawk's assistance. The flight revealed very high surface water levels throughout the park, with a corresponding decrease in the amount of new land invasions, encroachments or illegal settlements, in the area. CONAP staff was able to confirm that areas of the park where illegal settlements previously had been evicted remained free of re-settlement. The agency also was able to prioritize field actions for the upcoming dry months, based on the detection of a few minor invasions they were not aware of prior to their flight with LightHawk.

“The help of LightHawk in order to monitor logging and areas of potential forest fires is critically important for the government and all groups working on the protection of the environment, we hope that we can continue this partnership and congratulations for your professionalism of your pilots”. – Cesar Vinicio Montero, Regional Director of CONAP *(translated from Spanish)*

Costa Rica's Natural Treasures Under Pressure

VP Andy Moffat recently flew members of FUPROVIRENA (Fundación de Protección y Vigilancia de los Recursos Naturales), a local non-governmental organization (NGO) created in 1992, over Braulio Carrillo National Park to monitor land use change within the limits of the park and to observe the state of the flora, currently threatened from extensive palmito extraction. The organization also works to address issues such as logging and illegal hunting occurring inside the boundaries of the park, and the lack of protection for the region's rivers, which provide drinking water to the towns of Barva and Santa Barbara.

LightHawk flights also assisted the Fund for Costa Rica, an NGO dedicated to preserving

and enhancing the environment, ecosystems, habitats and endangered species of Costa Rica, in their effort to protect Manuel Antonio National Park's threatened forests and surrounding lands. VP Andy Moffat provided flights over Manuel Antonio and Quepos areas, enabling Fund members to document illegal deforestation and produce a record of intact forest. Aerial shots taken with LightHawk documenting illegal development activities will compliment information presented earlier in the year to the National Environmental Secretary of Costa Rica (SETENA), the governmental entity in charge of approving and monitoring environmental impact studies. To view photos gathered through LightHawk and follow the Fund's work, visit their web blog at: www.xanga.com/MAQEnvironmentalDefense.



Manuel Antonio National Park

Isabel MacDonald/LightHawk



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Newsletter comments?

Contact Keri Foster, Membership Manager, at info@lighthawk.org

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