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## California's wildlands

I have commented before on this page that one of our basic resources, essential to the support of human life, is land. But when we think about land use, most of us are inclined to consider only intensive uses, such as crop and animal production or urban, residential, and industrial development.

Of California's 100 million acres of land, only about 13 million have been placed under these intensive uses. An additional 22 million acres are desert, and the remaining 65 million acres—nearly two-thirds of the state—comprise the varied region we call wildlands.

As the demand for food, fiber, water, shelter, and recreation increases, this huge area—six times the acreage occupied by the state's pasture and cropland—will increase in importance.

Wildlands are the primary water source areas of California. Watersheds produce more than 97 percent of the state's available water supply, are the most strategic areas for flood prevention and control, and supply a large part of our electric power.

Our forested wildlands are the source of many products used in our daily lives. The 1975 California timber harvest yielded 4.3 billion board feet, which was converted into building lumber, plywood, wood fiber, and paper products valued at \$1.4 billion.

Much of our livestock industry depends on grazing provided by the state's wildlands. The forage from these vast areas, valued at more than \$200 million annually, is a significant factor in producing the state's top agricultural cash commodity—cattle and calves—valued at more than \$1 billion annually.

California's wildlands include mountains, foothills, upland valleys, canyons, lakes, rivers, and sea coasts. Because wildlands are so varied and have many potential uses, competition for these uses often compounds the difficulty of using them effectively. Recreational activities in our wildlands—fishing,

boating, hunting, hiking, camping, and winter sports—are expanding at a more rapid rate than any other wildland use.

Although not as well known as our research and extension activities in traditional production agriculture, the Division's long-time programs in such areas as forestry and forest products and watershed, range, and wildlife management have made important contributions in upgrading the use and management of our wildlands. However, as competition for wildland resources increases, our scientists face demands for information on a new scale and for new kinds of information well beyond the scope of current research efforts.

Our finite wildland resources can be managed to provide more goods and services and more enjoyment for more people. We know that the rate of timber growth could be increased, watersheds could yield more water, grazing lands could produce more meat, recreation potential could be much greater, and wildland losses totaling millions of dollars from wildfire, insects, and diseases could be greatly reduced with much more knowledge than we now have. We need new research information to enable a society with changing values to choose among options for future development and management, to weigh production options against environmental concerns, and to implement recent state and national legislation concerning forest practices, rangeland resources, environmental protection, and endangered species.

I have recently appointed a Wildlands Task Force to define our wildland program, identify our research needs, rank their importance, and develop a plan of attack. Because of the enormous resource potential in California's wildlands and the predicted dramatic increase in demands upon them, there is no time to waste in building an adequate base of knowledge for long-range planning and sound management of this vital two-thirds of our state.