Support SFK

If you shop at Amazon.com you can support Sequoia ForestKeeper with no expense to you. Amazon.com donates 0.5% of every purchase to SFK if you use the link: smile.amazon.com and name Sequoia ForestKeeper as your charity.

Sequoia ForestKeeper sponsors a community concert

Laurie Lewis & Kathy Kallick: "Laurie & Kathy Sing the Songs of Vern & Ray" (with Tom Rozum, Patrick Sauber and Cary Black). December 6, 2015 - 6 p.m. potluck - 6:45 p.m. concert - $15.00 at the door – must RSVP by Wednesday, December 2, 2015. Attendance limited to first 50 people. Pine Cone Inn - 13383 Sierra Way - Kernville, CA

Summary of 2015 Intern Program

Sequoia ForestKeeper was privileged to host some very fine interns this summer. While most of our past intern work has focused on the above ground conditions, the foundation of ecosystems lays in the earth, and was the focus of the 2015 intern work. Sequoias require sufficient soil moisture and friable soil for establishment and growth, while logging and mechanical management impact their foundation via soil compaction, displacement of the top soil, and changes to the understory, which impact the moisture and chemical composition of soil. The 2015 interns designed a protocol to determine soil moisture, bulk density, and the soil profiles for comparing logged, unlogged, and meadow soils. The results were interesting as they measured in logged versus unlogged areas in sequoia groves, where logging has been prevented for 25 years. The soil profiles showed very little difference in bulk density but a greater difference in soil moisture. We thank James Dickinson of Guernsey, UK and Angela Vaughan of Washington for their tremendous service and Andy Liang of southern California. We will have more on their projects in our next newsletter.
Wildlife Camera Monitoring

SFK cameras recorded black bear, bobcat, California ground squirrel, coyote, Douglas squirrel, gray fox, mule deer, Pacific fisher, raccoon, California spotted owl, and spotted skunk in the Greenhorn Mountains. Every camera recorded wildlife but the drier areas had fewer species. Pacific fisher were recorded on six different occasions at three different locations all near water and all within Forest Service proposed logging projects. One large fisher was photographed at two different locations approximately five air miles apart. This demonstrates that the fisher forest habitat is already disturbed and that the territory covered is 1.7 times larger than researchers have documented in the southern Sierra Nevada.

Pacific Fisher in Peril in Sequoia National Forest

Sequoia National Forest documents define the habitat Pacific Fisher prefer.

“Fishers prefer a continuous, unfragmented forest; they are found in mature conifer and mixed hardwood conifer forests. They like a high canopy closure and a continuous overhead cover. They also prefer habitats with many hollow trees and downed logs for dens and resting sites.”

But the Kern River Ranger District staff will leave none of that special habitat for the fisher in the Greenhorn Mountains: it is all going to be logged. The Greenhorn Mountains that Pacific Fisher call their most southern home are being logged like there is no tomorrow. The Shirley...
Salvage project is currently being cut, the Ice Logging project was completed last year, the Greenhorn Mountain Park fuels reduction, the proposed Rancheria, and the proposed Summit Projects are destroying what remains of old-growth habitat in the name of fuels reduction.

Tell the District Ranger to stop cutting down Fisher habitat.

Alfred Watson, District Ranger
p: 760-376-3781 x610
c: 760-371-2889
awwatson@fs.fed.us

Shaving Greenhorn Mountain

Ice, Shirley, Frog, Tobias, Summit, Rancheria; so many logging projects, so little habitat! Sequoia National Forest has completed or is proposing projects on more than 19,000 acres of California Spotted Owl and Pacific fisher habitat.

The latest proposal is the 10,600-acre Summit Project which encircles and is north of the community of Alta Sierra in the Greenhorn Mountains in the Kern River Ranger District. The stated purpose is “to provide defensible space around the community of Alta Sierra and nearby structures, improve forest health and provide for ecological restoration.” The Forest Service proposes to sell timber “as a tool to improve efficiency and reduce overall costs to achieve its fuel reduction and restoration goals.” Most of the northwestern portion of the Summit Project area burned in the 1990 Stormy Fire, which was heavily salvaged and is far from recovering.

The recently completed Ice Project included 3,500 acres of “restoration” treatments (fuel reduction thinning & prescribed burning) and overlaps the Summit Project. Adjacent and within the Ice Project area is the Shirley Salvage Logging Project, which, while only 142-acres, was where Sequoia ForestKeeper (SFK) verified two Pacific fisher with two sightings immediately adjacent. The Forest Service sold 535.3 thousand board feet for just $4,846.00.

The proposed 10,900-acre Tobias Project area is just north of the Summit Project in the Western Divide Ranger District and covers portions of the Stormy Fire area, which was not burned by the fire or logged. It also is mapped inside a roadless area and the Baker Point Botanical Area. The Frog Logging Project is in the Scarlett, Tobias, and Davis Creek drainages and covers 5,100 acres. The Rancheria Logging Project is 5,880 acres and is also where SFK has documented Pacific fisher, California Spotted Owl, and Northern Goshawk as well as several species of rare plants.
All of these projects combined will affect roughly 81% of the fisher habitat around Alta Sierra over a 20-year time-frame. This comes to a 4.1% (81%/20 years) treatment average of the fisher’s habitat per year, greatly exceeding the threshold of 2.6% area disturbance that researchers have determined is the most that fisher can tolerate.

All of these Forest Service projects work to thin and masticate their non-desirable species in favor of commercially valuable “Jeffrey and sugar pines, oak, and other shade intolerant, fire and drought tolerant species, to restore the historic species composition.” Since SFK has found cedar stumps exceeding 8 feet in diameter, the supposition that cedar and fir are not part of the “historic” ecosystem is just hogwash. Mastication adds a very flammable layer to the forest floor newly exposed to high solar radiation. The heat dries the soil while the wood chips cover the soil inhibiting germination of herbaceous and woody plants.

In light of climate change, if droughts continue to deepen, especially with loss of snow pack, cedar and fir are dying out and removal of any tree species is not favored. Removal of fir living or dead in particular will impact many of the sensitive species that rely on fir for food and nest/den cavities. For example, spotted owls rely on fir for its dense branching, which allows the owl to escape larger predators.

Also in light of climate change, the Forest Service must consider and account for the loss in carbon due to logging. Even burned forests store more carbon than is released by logging. These Forest Service logging projects enable timber companies to avoid paying for the loss, to the atmosphere, of the stored carbon in trees and forest soils, and force the public to pay the costs of fighting the projects and restoring the damaged lands. The loss of stored carbon is another reason why logging on public lands should cease.

The Forest Service states that resilience is a goal, but it is important to understand that resilience is not a process. Instead, it is a characteristic, which results from the continued perpetuation of natural processes, including competition. The perpetuation of the forest ecosystem is not the same as the perpetuation of the lives of all of the larger trees in that ecosystem. This means that some of these large trees need to die at a rate that can sustain certain wildlife species. Competition mortality will result in large snag recruitment beyond what silviculturalists may want in a forest that is “managed” to produce maximum growth.

The purpose of these projects is to “provide defensible space around the community of Alta Sierra and nearby structures,” supposedly to stop the fire and protect the homes in the community. Defensible space is a place where firefighters can be safely stationed in the path of the advancing fire. And although the Forest Service proposes large Wildland Urban Intermix (WUI) areas to supposedly treat, cutting down trees beyond 200 to 300 feet from homes to create defensible space for firefighters to battle the wall of flames that might be approaching and to protect the homes from the fire will place firefighters in danger and will cause unnecessary resource damage. Logging these large WUI areas will eventually result in forest areas that will become more flammable because of the subsequent growth of more flammable bushes and grasses, which carry fire quickly to the base of the remaining trees, than existed prior to logging, when the forest canopy was left intact.

In our comments we asked the following questions: “Does the Forest Service have research to document the percentage of “defensible space” that is actually used before it is overgrown with bushes and must again be treated? What percentage of these logged, so-called “defensible space” areas is actually used by firefighters during wildfires? What percentage of these logged “defensible space” areas is not accessed by firefighters because the fire is too fast-moving and too dangerous for the agency to drop firefighters into the path of the fire?”

Making the treatment area be the Home Ignition Zone, the 200 to 300 feet surrounding homes, and immediately using that treated Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) as the defensible space from which prescribed fire is anchored and allowed to burn into the surrounding forest in a mosaic burn would be less costly and more effective than mechanical treatments beyond the HIZ.
All of these Forest Service projects are making our heads spin, but we will be commenting, conducting field surveys, and working very hard to keep the forest a forest and not let the Forest Service turn our public space into a barren park only for the benefit of one timber company.

Frog - http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=34863
Ice - http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=33542
Rancheria - http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=33846
Shirley - http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=45422&exp=overview
Summit- http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=45951&exp=overview
Tobias - http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=40890

California Spotted Owl to be Listed by the USFWS

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) just closed its 90-day comment period to list the California spotted owl under the federal Endangered Species Act. In 2006, the USFWS decided against overwhelming scientific evidence not to list the species but has now reconsidered. The Forest Service is currently working on writing a conservation strategy for the California Spotted Owl expected to be completed on March 31, 2016.

The Forest Service is escalating its fuel treatments in the Sierra Nevada defending the policy by saying they are helping owls and fishers by reducing the threat of fire in their habitat. Twenty years of data has proven this logging policy wrong; there is a 50% range-wide decline in California spotted owl abundance and occupancy on all Forest Service-managed lands. Forest Service fuels treatments reduce canopy cover affecting spotted owls by reducing the suitability of the habitat but wildfire especially low and moderate severity burned forests maintain essential habitat characteristics and do not affect occupancy. Even high severity burned forests remain part of the owls foraging territory.

The California Spotted Owl is fairly rare but found in most of the western Sierra Nevada, Peninsular Range, Transverse Range, and the Southern Coast Range as far north as Monterey County. The California Spotted Owl requires dense forest with multiple layers that help the bird avoid larger predators. The owl is a cavity nester and is frequently found in rotted firs or in harder wood trees that have lost limbs.

With a 50% reduction in the population under negotiated conservation strategies, we have little confidence that the species or its habitat will be protected under any Forest Service plan. The Protected Activity Centers have been reduced since 1990’s. No new habitat is being set aside for fledged young. Climate change is also taking a
toll as the preferred roost and nest white and red fir trees are dying rapidly from drought and firs are a Forest Service targeted species to remove for forest “restoration” efforts.

The habitat in the most southern part of the Sierra Nevada in Sequoia National Forest and the Giant Sequoia National Monument continues to be degraded in this relic forest where the agency tries to apply a status quo logging effort that is ill-suited in this region of low rainfall.

Read more here: http://www.sierraforestlegacy.org/FC_SierraNevadaWildlifeRisk/CaliforniaSpottedOwl.php

Good News

Bobcat trapping is now illegal in California as of November 20, 2015. This was a great day for wildlife. Sequoia ForestKeeper supports protecting the circle of life from excessive human disturbance. From overuse of pesticides, to logging, to development in pristine habitat, and removal of surface and groundwater that affects ecosystems to benefit short-term profit. Nowhere are human activities more heinous than killing a top-predator to use its fur to decorate clothing or to put the mounted head on a wall.

This situation came to light when the people around Joshua Tree National Park noticed traps that were baited and used musk to trap bobcats right at the border of the National Park. The park was protecting these beautiful animals only to have trappers take advantage of those protections. Top predators are very susceptible to baiting and trappers knew this. The trapped animals are killed and their pelts are mostly sold to China for ever increasing amounts of money. We thank Assemblymember Richard Bloom for introducing the Bobcat Protection Act of 2013 (AB1213).

Read more about this here: http://www.kcet.org/news/redefine/rewild/commentary/bobcat-trapping-ban-finally-official.html

Rough Fire in Giant Sequoia National Monument

The lightning-caused, 151,623-acre Rough Fire burned more than 30 miles on both sides of the Kings River in that huge rocky chaparral-covered gorge.

Huge sums of money were spent by the Forest Service “protecting” the Giant Sequoias from the flames from the fire. Twelve groves burned and
twelve groves survived. The monarchs through the ages, are a testament to nature’s resilience, Giant Sequoias have literally withstood thousands of years of wildland fires.

John Muir observed a fire in the Kaweah River watershed of which he wrote in 1901:

"In the forest between the Middle and East forks of the Kaweah, I met a great fire, and as fire is the master scourge and controller of the distribution of trees, I stopped to watch it and learn what I could of its works and ways with the giants. It came racing up the steep chaparral-covered slopes of the East Fork cañon with passionate enthusiasm in a broad cataract of flames, now bending down low to feed on the green bushes, devouring acres of them at a breath, now towering high in the air as if looking abroad to choose a way, then stooping to feed again, the lurid flapping surges and the smoke and terrible rushing and roaring hiding all that is gentle and orderly in the work. But as soon as the deep forest was reached the ungovernable flood became calm like a torrent entering a lake, creeping and spreading beneath the trees where the ground was level or sloped gently, slowly nibbling the cake of compressed needles and scales with flames an inch high, rising here and there to a foot or two on dry twigs and clumps of small bushes and brome grass. Only at considerable intervals were fierce bonfires lighted, where heavy branches broken off by snow had accumulated, or around some venerable giant whose head had been stricken off by lightning.

... There was no danger of being chased and hemmed in, for in the main forest belt of the Sierra, even when swift winds are blowing, fires seldom or never sweep over the trees in broad all-embracing sheets... Here they creep from tree to tree with tranquil deliberation, allowing close observation, though caution is required in venturing around the burning giants to avoid falling limbs and knots and fragments from dead shattered tops. ... the ground-fire advancing in long crooked lines gently grazing"

The lesson in this is when fire strikes, by all means protect archeological sites and human infrastructure, but let nature clean up the rest. The McGee Fire in 1955 taught the National Park Service that their non-logging prescribed fire program was the best way to protect the sequoias and most likely saved the Grant Grove once again. Both fires burned intensely in chaparral, where back fires were lit, and in logged areas, and because Giant Sequoia National Monument has been logged of its biggest most fire-resistant trees long ago, there were many forested areas within the Monument that burned severely. The flammable thickets of smaller trees interspersed with a few 100-year old trees that comprise the oldest part of the canopy caused extreme fire intensity. Because Penny Pine Plantations are among the most overplanted and most flammable areas, as far as we have been able to tell, the McGee Fire plantation succumbed to the Rough Fire. The forest needs to recover naturally from the devastation of logging, but the Forest Service continues to design timber projects disguised as “hazard tree,” or “ecosystem restoration.” Felling hazard trees that truly are a hazard and leaving them for habitat and to catch and hold flood waters from the E1Nino rain and summer thunderstorms will protect the public in many ways. The Forest Service needs to allow the occasional naturally caused fires to remove
the litter and duff that exposes mineral soil, so germination of closed-cone conifers, including sequoias, can follow.

Our role in monitoring the aftermath has been difficult because the Forest Service District Ranger closed the area to the public and anyone interested in discovering the true nature of the fire and its effect on the ecosystems of the Sierra and Sequoia National Forests. Kings Canyon National Park reopened their areas within the Rough Fire as soon as the fire was no longer active in public areas. As soon as access is allowed again, we will visit the area to make sure the Forest Service follows all of the legal guidelines set forth by the National Environmental Policy Act to protect the wildlands from the destruction that their ecosystem management practices enable.

With the area now refreshed with nutrients from the Rough Fire, spring wildflowers should be magnificent and wildlife abundant, courtesy of nature.


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Isabella Dam plans

Lake Isabella dam is being reconstructed with a timetable of completion by 2022. Isabella Reservoir is down for two reasons: the most important is the persistent four year drought and the other reason is the maximum pool level was lowered to 360,00 acre-feet to protect communities downstream from catastrophic dam failure until the dam can be reconstructed. In the interim the north and south forks of the Kern River have re-emerged creating significant riparian habitat for Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Southwestern Willow Flycatcher. Sadly, very little habitat has been created upstream even after the acquisition of non-habitat lands upstream and the troubling sale of Onyx Ranch to Rosedale-Rio Bravo Water Company, which has no interest in protecting people or habitats from its water diversions/extractions.

The spillway for the new dam is going to destroy the current Sequoia National Forest Isabella Ranger Station and a new building has been proposed to take its place. The community has expressed interest in building a tiny visitor center at the Bob Powers Gateway Preserve that has been set aside for its ecological values including the alkali mariposa lily. SFK believes the mostly empty South Fork Elementary School on Fay Ranch Road in Weldon would be perfect for an Interagency Visitor Center and to welcome visitors to the valley without disturbing more land.
and spending tens of millions of tax dollars on new buildings. The effectiveness of this facility was proven as it was the command center for the multi-agency task force that searched for the Jawbone Killer in August of this year. SFK would love to see the pastoral valleys of the north and south fork returned, but we realize that will never happen, so we will work with the Army Corps of Engineers to make sure that native species and habitats are protected.

[Website]

**Bark Beetles Wrongly Convicted of Creating Firestorms**

Bark beetles have been blamed for causing increasingly severe wildfires throughout the country. While the bugs invade forests and scar the trees they feed on, a new study in Colorado reveals the bark beetle infestation is not linked to the an increase in forest fire severity. Since the mid-1990s, outbreaks of voracious bark beetles have devastated more than 27,000 square miles of forests in the Rocky Mountains. But, contrary to popular belief, the standing dead trees don’t inevitably pose an increased fire hazard. The politically based policies of thinning of beetle-killed and drought-killed trees is not based on science, but baseless fear foisted upon an unsuspecting public by the logging industry and Forest Service.

[Website]

[Website]

**Interesting News around the Net**

**Coast Redwood Historically was not the Tallest Tree in North America – 465’ Tall Douglas Fir Trees were LOGGED**

[Website]

**Future coastal climate not cool for redwood forests**

[Website]

**Research indicates that air pollution, drought, and heat from climate change are impacting trees, including sequoias in the Sierra Nevada.**

[Website]

[Website]

**Methane and Global Warming Impacts the Forest**
The impacts to federal public forestlands is not just from ozone. Methane emissions in the Central Valley (presumably from high livestock emissions) are the second largest methane concentration “hot spot” plume in the United States. Methane is very efficient at trapping heat in the atmosphere and, like carbon dioxide, it contributes to global warming.


### Mapping Giant Sequoia Groves

Giant Sequoias grow naturally only on the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada from Placer County to Tulare County. Sequoia ForestKeeper® loves all sequoias but our primary area of interest is the 40 or so groves found within the Giant Sequoia National Monument. Several groves have multiple land owners. The map will continue to evolve and it pinpoints the locations of all of the named Sequoia groves from the southernmost grove, Deer Creek Grove to the northernmost, Placer County Grove. [https://goo.gl/yoRvJc](https://goo.gl/yoRvJc)

Most groves on the map are accompanied by descriptions and, if you click on a grove, you can get exact directions to the grove from your location. For example, here is the description for the Starvation Grove.

#### Powderhorn Grove - Giant Sequoia National Monument

This mini grove is many times included in the Starvation Grove and is sometimes called the East Starvation unit. Near Windy Creek, this decadent grove of sequoias is the best known example of a climax sequoia grove with 10 truly giant sequoias (DBH 80” to 237”) and 84 seedling to large trees. Our interns surveyed this grove in 2009 and found 2 seedlings and 14 saplings (under 6” diameter) in this grove, about which publications had previously said had no reproduction. The last known California Condor nest in the Sierra Nevada was found in this grove. Powderhorn Grove is located due south of Powderhorn Meadow near Forest Route 23S64 off Tulare County Road Mountain 50, aka Parker Pass Road.

### Adopt a Sequoia

For only $100 for a single tree and $2,500 for a stand of sequoias* you can give to yourself or those you cherish a gift that will last for generations! All proceeds will be used to continue our work to protect and preserve the giant sequoias and their ecosystem.

*Adoption of sequoia does not indicate legal ownership

**Sequoia Adoption includes:**
- A beautiful certificate of adoption
- GPS coordinates of your adopted sequoia
- A map so you can visit your tree or stand of trees
A lovely 8x10 color photo of your tree or stand

CLICK HERE TO ADOPT A SEQUOIA – If you pay online, please add the $5 processing fee so Sequoia ForestKeeper can expedite your gift.

SFK's Internet Presence

Are you on Facebook? So is SFK. Is Twitter your style, SFK is there too! We have a presence on Google Plus, YouTube, Pinterest, and LinkedIn as well. Follow us to learn about what is going on around the Southern Sierra Nevada. We post information, including timber sale notices, special events, victories, photos, and other relevant information. We hope to see you on the net!

Please Support Sequoia ForestKeeper®

Help us protect tomorrow’s legacy by supporting SFK with a membership today. CLICK HERE FOR OUR SECURE DONATION PAGE HERE

Visit our website, join us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, view us on YouTube, and most importantly contact us to take a walk with us in your forest.

Donate now to support our work.

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