

Public Comment of Timber Harvest Plans THP 1-20-00193 (Mitchell Creek) and THP 1-20-00173 (Little North Fork)

My name is Priscilla Hunter and I am a tribal elder of Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians. I also serve as the Chairwoman of the Intertribal Sinkyone Wilderness Council consisting of ten local tribes who have purchased 3,900 acres on the Mendocino Lost Coast in order to preserve the forest there and save it from a third clear-cut. Our view of a sustainable forest is a forest that sustains our culture, values and way of life, not one that is managed in order to be cut for profit. As such, we placed a wilderness easement on our Intertribal park lands in order to prohibit in perpetuity any commercial logging there. The Jackson Demonstration State Forest generates millions of dollars of profit every year from logging operations on lands previously ravaged by clear cuts. In this time of climate change, it is time to preserve and protect the growth of redwoods on these lands, rather than cut them down in massive numbers, and let the forest heal for the benefit of future generations. This is the Peoples' forest, not a timber company's forest.

The members of my Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians Tribe are Coast Yuki and Northern Pomo. We are intimately connected to the Coastal redwoods, the oaks, madrones and pepperwood trees from thousands of years of respectful interrelation with them. We are the original peoples of the land now called Mendocino County with strong ancestral connections to the trees, plants and critters that inhabit this region. In the past our Ridge runners ran the Mendocino coastal ridges with great speed and spiritual power and continue to protect us from these ridges. When in prayer, we can see them. Our ancestors from time immemorial gathered acorns throughout the coastal range, fished for salmon in the rivers and gathered food, basket weaving materials and medicinal plants from the coastal forest. We lived in harmony with the forest, only using redwood trees that fell down.

Our ancestors would be unable to comprehend measuring the value of a forest by the amount of merchantable board feet it can produce for sale. To us, the redwoods are sacred guardians of our ancestral territory that we turn to in prayer. Therefore I and the 10 member tribes of the Intertribal Sinkyone Wilderness Park, are dedicated to their preservation and would prefer they not be cut at all. The Intertribal Sinkyone Wilderness Council has placed a wilderness conservation easement upon the park lands they manage north of the Jackson Demonstration State Forest on Mendocino's Lost Coast. This conservation easement prohibits the commercial harvesting of redwoods in perpetuity and provides for the natural recovery of the forest.

The forest helped "sustain" us for thousands upon thousands of years and we never cut down the redwoods. Now, the timber industry and Jackson Demonstration State Forest managers define "sustainability" in a manner completely at odds with our Indigenous world view. "Sustainability" to them means being able to cut down redwood trees that can live for thousands of years and replant them in order to keep continuing cutting the trees every few decades. The primary motivation for their sustainability model is money and job creation, not forest health. In their rush to cut redwood trees, they fail to honor the vital life giving force of these forests that are the very lungs of Mother Earth.

Devastation of our ancient redwood forest has paralleled the devastation inflicted upon my Coast Yuki and Northern Pomo ancestors by the brutal invasion of our territory by non-Native settlers. The non-Native settlers' clearcutting of the forest occurred simultaneously with the rape, murder and enslavement of my ancestors. My ancestors had to flee to the Redwoods and hide in order to save themselves from death at the hands of the settlers. When I speak today for the redwoods, I do so with the cries of my ancestors in my heart and with

the future generations ahead of us in my mind and prayers. We Indian people in Mendocino County are the remnant survivors of a state sanctioned genocide, as the coastal redwood trees are the remnant survivors of massive amounts of clearcutting by non-Native settlers and their descendants. We Indian people feel a heartfelt kinship with the slaughter that the redwood trees faced just like our ancestors faced at the hands of non-Native settlers.

Mother Earth is bleeding and barely breathing as the Rain Forests are cut down from here to the Amazon and up north to Alaska. Climate change is wrecking great damage on our local community with forest fires raging all around us due to drought. For the health of the forest and the critters within it, for the wellbeing of my people both spiritually and culturally, and for the fresh air and carbon sequestration that large redwoods provide, the coast redwoods in Jackson Demonstration State Forest should be protected. They should be allowed to grow to become ancient trees, sustained in a family circle of madrone oak trees, pepperwood trees and manzanita and huckleberry bushes.

Our forest family since time immemorial here in the Redwood Rain Forest region and in our Coast Yuki/Northern Pomo ancestral territory has always consisted of the following trees living together in a mutually sustaining interactive community. I shall designate these trees with their Northern Pomo names in order that their spirit enters these pages: k'asilxale (redwood tree); k'abat' xale (madrone); bihemxale (pepperwood); shik'o (willow); kaye (Manzanita tree); xawa' xale (fir tree); jomxale (grey pine tree) and a variety of oaks. The acorns from oak trees provided and continue to provide an essential traditional food source for the members of mine and neighboring Tribes. Before the forest was clear-cut by non-Native settlers these trees lived in a mutually sustaining circle of life which also helped sustained both physically and spiritually the Indian people of this region and

restoration efforts should include their preservation in a mutually sustaining circle of life.

The Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians have initiated Government to Government Consultation with Cal-Fire and the Forest Manager of Jackson Demonstration State Forest. The Jackson Advisory Group contains the head of the timber company that wants to cut the 60 to 90 year old redwoods that have managed to grow on the State Forest's clear cut lands. This is a conflict of interest at the forest management level. He represents private industry, not the public trust. Redwood trees can live for 1,500 to 2000 years, cutting 60 to 90 year old redwoods as currently proposed by the managers of the Jackson Demonstration State Forest is cutting them in their virtual infancy.

Another conflict of interest is the timber company's foresters who are given the ultimate say in identifying the perimeters of and determining whether our ancestral archaeological sites are deemed worthy of protection. The government to government consultation my Tribe has initiated with the Jackson Demonstration State Forest, CAL FIRE, the CA Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, and the CA Department of Resource Management may be difficult as we as Indians look upon the forest in such a different manner than logging companies and consider our ancestral cultural sites to be sacred and worthy of protection and not merely troublesome obstacles to be overcome in logging plans. To the extent that the mission of the Jackson State Demonstration Forest is to protect the forest rather than merely commercially harvest it, the Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians urges the State to restore this forest to the fullest extent possible by reintroducing all of our tree relations that previously thrived together in the forest and nurturing the growth of them all, not just promoting the growth of redwoods at their expense.

I was truly shocked to hear that the Management Plan for the Jackson Demonstration State Forest contains so much emphasis on and even allows for extensive commercial harvesting of redwood trees on this land. I thought as a State Park the forest there was protected.

The drafters of the Mission Statement for Jackson Demonstration State Forest looked at a forest in terms of how many board feet could be extracted from it for profit. This view leads to a disrespect of the forest as a whole and the failure to see the interrelation and mutual collaboration of the diverse tree family members who previously lived all together, sustaining each other in our ancestral territory and offering us the beautiful and generous gift of being the lungs of Mother Earth that sustain our very breath. They give us the gift of breath and thus they should be cherished as our relatives. For we could not live without them as they, as the earth's lungs, sustain our very existence.

Sustainability should not be measured by how many years loggers must wait to recut a previously ravaged forest and then how many years they must wait to cut them once again.

Forests should be restored to live as actual forests and not as a patchwork of single species tree farms. I beg the State to follow the model of the Intertribal Sinkyone Wilderness Council and simply let the forest heal. [Please reference the following scientific research articles that support this indigenous restoration perspective: *Restoration of Coast Redwood (Sequoia Sempervirens) Forests through Natural Recovery*, Will Russell, Jeff Sinclair, Kristen Hageseth Michels, Department of Environmental Studies, San Jose State University (2014) and *Stand Development on a 127 year old Chronosequence of Naturally Regenerating (Sequoia Sempervirens) (Taxodiaceae) Forests*, Will Russell and Kristen Hageseth Michels, Department of Environmental Studies, San Jose State University (2010).

Of further and particular alarm to Pomo people is the killing of thousands upon thousands of oaks by timber companies through the spraying of Imazapyr and Glyphosate and other herbicides in order to promote the growth of merchantable timber. This is a travesty that cuts to the heart of Pomo culture because of our reliance on acorns as an essential food source. I therefore strenuously object to the hack and squirt poisoning of oak trees or the foliar spraying of herbicides in any of the THPs proposed for logging at Jackson Demonstration State Forest.

Thank you for your attention to these heartfelt concerns

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