

The Campaign to Restore Jackson State Redwood Forest *Where We Are and Where We Came From*

The struggle to reform management of Jackson State Forest may someday serve as a textbook example of how persistent, effective public pressure can force the government to shift from narrow, parochial interests to broad public interests.

In January, 2008, the Board of Forestry approved a new management plan that contained the essential features of a consensus reached among representatives of major Mendocino County timber interests, the Campaign, and the Sierra Club. An opportunity has been created to transform 50,000-acre Jackson State Forest into a model of excellence, into a world-class demonstration forest that will bring pride to the local community,



Early Beginnings--Ukiah Rally 2002

the timber industry, the research community, and the forest managers, while providing broad public benefits in habitat, recreation, spiritual nourishment, and education. There is more to go, but we've come further than anyone could have imagined.

The road to this point has been long, often frustrating, sometimes exhilarating, and almost always maddeningly slow. It began in 1995, with protests by the Caspar Community Watershed Association (CCWA) against nearby logging plans in Jackson Forest.

Interestingly, in light of the theme of this *Branching Out* issue, the protests focused on the failure of the state to manage the public forest for the public benefit. The following quotes, from CCWA's March 1995 newsletter, *This is Your Land*, set out themes that have been echoed up to the present day:

The California Department of Forestry, CDF, is operating Jackson State Forest for its own benefit, rather than for the benefit of the people who own it -- us.

CDF has a legal responsibility to protect the public trust resources of Jackson State Forest. These resources include all parts of the forest that make up its ecology -- the many species of birds, animals, fish, trees and other plants...

A primary use of Jackson timber-sale revenue is to underwrite the cost of CDF reviews of the Timber Harvest Plans of the big logging corporations. What this means is our public forest is being liquidated to subsidize private timber owners...

The 50,000 acre Jackson Demonstration State Forest is an irreplaceable asset that could provide great benefits to future generations of Californians. Public ownership of the State Forest provides a unique opportunity to save a redwood forest from the devastation occurring in the privately owned forests that surround it...

Demonstrations escalated in the years after 1995, with activists chaining themselves to gates in hopes of preventing logging in redwood stands that had grown back untouched for nearly 100 years.

In response to the protests, CDF established a Citizen's Advisory Committee in 1997 to review Jackson management policies. Its recommendations, made after a year of hard

work, were completely ignored by CDF, which seemed concerned only with continuing the cash flow into its forestry funds. More than 60,000 trees per year were being cut, sending as much as \$15 million per year into CDF's coffers.

In 2000, the Campaign to Restore Jackson State Redwood Forest came into existence, with the stated mission of restoring the forest to old growth for recreation, habitat, education, and research. The Campaign was led by people in Mendocino County who had tried to work with the state to get reform and got nowhere. This time, they were determined to prevail.

Unfortunately, in 2000, Jackson Forest was "the forest no one knew." There was almost no awareness of Jackson Forest even within Mendocino County and none outside of it. Mounting a political campaign faced huge hurdles.

The key step, from which all further progress emanated, was filing a legal challenge in June 2000. The suit claimed that the management plan for Jackson, created in 1984, had long since expired, and therefore any logging was illegal under state law. When the case was heard, in April 2001, the court ruled in the Campaign's favor and enjoined further logging.

Following years saw various efforts by the state to evade the ruling or to satisfy the court with new management plans and environmental documents, but without ever moving away from massive industrial logging as the primary mission of the forest. Each time, the Campaign successfully challenged the state's actions, and the logging halt continued.

Almost as important as the laws and courts was the development of the internet and email communication. The Campaign combined with other environmental organizations to harness public outrage at the destruction of its redwood forest and direct it toward the Board of Forestry. Each time CDF made an attempt to gain Board approval for a new industrial logging program, the Board was deluged with many thousands of letters of opposition.

Feeling that CDF was as likely to change its spots as a leopard, the Campaign combined with the Sierra Club and Senator Wes Chesbro in 2004 on legislation to mandate that state-owned forest be managed for broad public interest. The bill, SB 1648, passed both houses of the legislature. Governor Schwarzenegger received 2,000 letters in 10 days asking him to sign the bill, but the combined opposition of CDF and the timber industry sufficed to make him veto it.

By now, though, Jackson Forest was transformed from the forest no one knew to the one that everyone in the legislature, CDF, and the Board of Forestry knew – and knew that the public was watching their every move.

The stalemate continued for more years. The state couldn't go back to logging without a legally adequate Environmental Impact Report (EIR). It was trying to create this complex document internally, but the task overwhelmed its meager resources. Begun in 2004, the EIR had still not been issued by 2006.

Then, a remarkable event occurred. A new director was appointed, not a timber person, but a fire marshal. (The Department of Forestry is part of the department that includes the much larger fire-fighting department. The overall department was recently given the short name Cal Fire to reflect its primary mission.)

In March 2006, the director, Ruben Grijalva, invited me to meet with him and his staff to explore how to resolve the stalemate. We agreed at this meeting that success would require a consensus among the environmental community, the timber industry, and CDF. Despite skepticism from others in the meeting, Director Grijalva and I agreed

consensus was possible. This meeting marked the turn from confrontation to cooperation.

Soon after this meeting, I met with several timber industry leaders, and we agreed to form a non-official "Mendocino Working Group." The group had 3 owners/managers of timber mills, one of whom managed one of the largest timber holdings in the county; the largest timber logging operator; a local, senior Sierra Club activist, and me.¹ Over the next months we worked cooperatively to resolve differences and come up with a consensus plan for resuming operation. The group issued its proposal in November 2006.

The working group's proposal arrived while the Board of Forestry and CDF, responding to the continuing outpouring of public concern, were working to develop a more environmentally conscious approach to management. The Board welcomed the proposal, as did the Director of CDF. The staff of CDF was initially resistant to the working group's suggestions, but bit by bit, they incorporated the suggestions in a new "Alternative G." Through all of 2007, the working group continued to negotiate with CDF.

In January, 2008, the Board of Forestry approved a new management plan that contained the essential features of the working group's consensus plan. With this approval, the state can now legally resume logging in Jackson State. What does this development mean for the forest and the public interest?

A new "Jackson Advisory Group," is currently being appointed. It will have a balance of people with environmental, conservation, timber, and science concerns. Its charge is to work during the next three years to develop a consensus on a long-term landscape, recreation, research, and management plan. The advisory group seems likely to draw upon local people with interests and expertise, as well as upon experts in and out of government.

During the time the public is working with the advisory group to develop a consensus management plan, until the end of 2010, all harvests in Jackson Forest will take place under strong protections "to assure that long-term planning options, particularly in sensitive areas, will not be precluded."

Protections include avoiding harvests in areas that have not been entered since 1920 or that have a significant density of large trees (with some possible initial exceptions), review of all harvest plans by the advisory group (which will provide a forum for public input), harvesting only by selection methods (no clearcuts), and retaining at least 70 percent of tree canopy (or the equivalent) and not reducing the average tree diameter in the harvested stands.

Thanks to reform legislation, revenues from harvests in Jackson Forest will only be able to be spent within the state forest system. During the first three years, harvest levels will further be limited only to those needed to finance operations of Jackson Forest. Harvest levels will be a fraction of those occurring during the late 1990's.

Before the end of 2010, the advisory group will convey its recommendations for changes in the management plan to the Board and the Director. Given the high visibility of the advisory group, rejection of its recommendations will be politically difficult.

¹ Members of the working group were: Mike Anderson, Anderson Logging; Kathy Bailey, Sierra Club; Bruce Burton, Willits Redwood Company; Art Harwood, Harwood Mills; Mike Jani, Mendocino Redwood Company and Mendocino Forest Products; Vince Taylor, Campaign to Restore Jackson State Redwood Forest.

We seem truly to be at the beginning of a revolution in management of our public forest. Though we are not yet at the end of the process, it is time to extend thanks to all of those in the community, the timber industry, the Board of Forestry, and most especially the Director of the Department of Forestry, Ruben Grijalva, and his staff, whose hard work and willingness to seek consensus brought us to the present point.

For more details on the history of the Campaign to Restore Jackson State Redwood Forest, visit www.jacksonforest.org.

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