

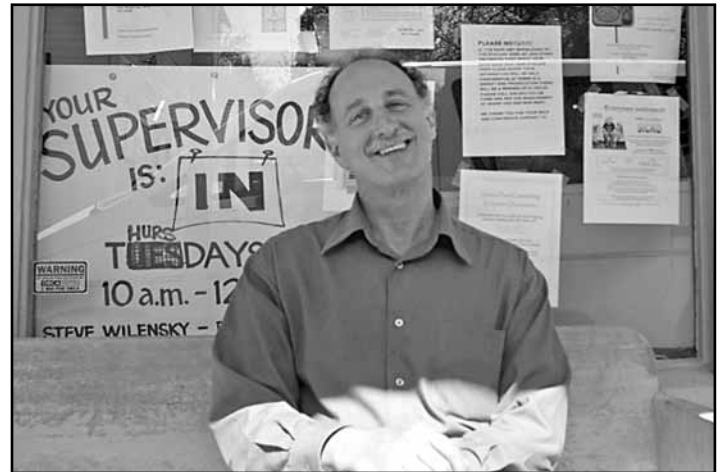
Forest[↑]Watcher

Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch News

Nol. 9, No. 1 ■ Summer/Fall 2009

Calaveras Collaboration

Supervisor Steve Wilensky, who represents District 2 in Calaveras County, testified before the House Resources Committee in Washington in May on "The Future of the Forest Economy." His presentation focused on how groups and individuals can work together on forest issues by focusing on what they have in common, rather than on their differences. Following are excerpts from his testimony.



"We should have known better.

But we failed to learn the lessons of the very history that defines our area. We should have learned about boom and bust from the Gold Rush. And we should have learned about stewardship from our native Mi-wuk people, who have lived on this land for thousands of years. But we didn't. Instead, we just kept doing boom and bust over and over. After the gold was gone, we

shifted to logging, and then we looked to real estate development. None of it was sustainable. Our area was filled with sawmills in the building boom after the Second World War. Now they're all gone. And as you know all too well, the real-estate bubble has burst, too, taking those jobs as well.

The net result for us has been economic catastrophe and grinding rural poverty. Eight out of ten kids in our community are eligible for school lunch support. Eight out of ten.

AMADOR CALAVERAS CONSENSUS GROUP

Sparked largely by Supervisor Steve Wilensky, the Calaveras Consensus Group convened early in 2009 to promote partnerships between private, non-profit and government agencies that have a common interest in the health and well being of California's forested lands.

The grouping is now called the Amador Calaveras Consensus Group and is working to decrease the risk of catastrophic fire while providing economic benefit. There are plans to use small diameter brush and slash piles as biomass in a co-generation facility and also to build a sustainable,

small wood and forest byproduct economy. The project aims to address the danger of catastrophic wildfire, high unemployment, threats to watersheds, waste or forest material, air quality impacts, renewable energy generation and Native American Heritage sites.

Among the participating groups are the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, California Department of Fish and Game, Cal Fire, the CHIPS project, Sierra Forest Legacy, the Sierra Nevada Alliance, Sierra Business Council, Foothill Conservancy, Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch and others.

The Blame Game

Some people lay the blame for this at the feet of yet another round of greed-based resource extraction, come to its inevitable demise. Some people think our plight is the fault of the spotted owl. Still others think it's just the ebb and flow of a relentless and unforgiving market. I hear people in Washington spend a lot of time debating these points of blame. Truth is, for those of us who live in the midst of it, the cause matters not. In fact, arguing about yesterday's issues is not very informative to what we do now, where we go from here.

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Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch ... a forest and watershed coalition

P.O. Box 2862, Arnold, CA 95223 ■ (209) 795-8260 ■ www.forestwatchers.org

Meet the Board

New EPFW Board members were elected at the June Annual meeting. We welcome three outstanding additions to our ranks.

BOB DEAN

Bob is a busy man. He serves as an elected official on the Calaveras County Water District but finds the time to serve on the boards of the Mother Lode Land Trust, the Central Sierra Resource Conservation and Development Council, the Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Council, Community Action Project (CAP), CHIPS, and Mountain Oaks Charter School. As a CCWD official, Bob also is a member of several water-related associations and agencies. In addition, he finds time somehow to serve on the board of the California Native Plant Society, Mother Lode Chapter. Bob brings many years of environmental experience to the Board along with a wide network of contacts and colleagues throughout the region. He lives in Mokelumne Hill and has been a Calaveras County resident for 20 years.

STEVE ELIAS

Steve has been active with the Sierra Club for many years. He has represented Calaveras and Tuolumne counties at conservation meetings in Sacramento and has worked on land use issues at the local and state level. He got involved in land use issues in the late 80s when Amador County was trying to build a major dam on the Mokelumne River. Steve was also a founding member of the Foothill Conservancy and has served on their board. He joined EPFW's Board because he believes EPFW, being a small organization, has some advantages. "I want to try to contribute towards putting an end to clearcutting on all lands in the Sierra," he said. Steve lives in Glencoe and has been a Calaveras County resident for 30 years.

PENNY SARVIS

Penny has lived just outside of Murphys since 1998. She loves the sweeping view from her deck and the quiet and beauty of foothill living. Penny is an ordained United Church of Christ minister and, prior to moving to this area, she served with San Francisco Network Ministries, in the city's Tenderloin area, for nine years. In 2000, alarmed by news of 800 acres of planned clearcuts near Arnold, she attended the first public meetings where SPI's intentions for the region became known. She became a member of EPFW and served on the Board as Secretary for several years. She has written for the EPFW newsletter and participated on the committee that produces the Wild & Scenic Environmental Film Festival every year. After a few years off the Board, she is pleased to rejoin it this summer.



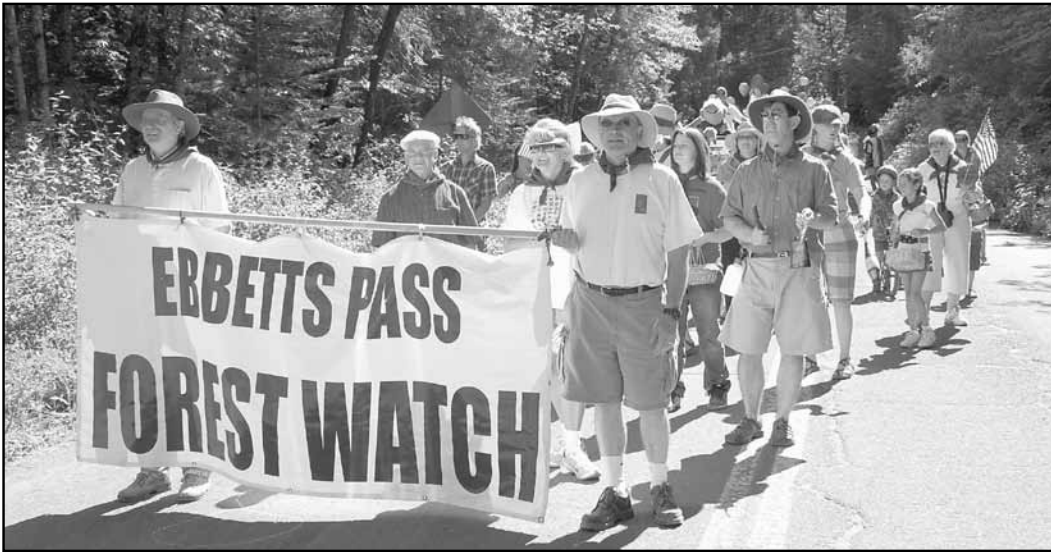
Statewide Coalition a Focus in 2009

Statewide, we are at the nexus of a coalition of environmental groups that is trying to constrain or eliminate clearcutting as a standard practice. Given the power of timber interests, especially SPI, the David vs. Goliath image is apt, but we are at last creating a beefier David.

Our outreach, both locally and across the Sierra and the state, has really intensified. We've deepened our knowledge of the effects of clearcutting, especially those related to climate change; we continue to submit comments on timber harvest plans and have arranged for maps of local Timber Harvest Plans to appear in the *Calaveras Enterprise*; and we still do have fun, with the annual Love the Forest Concert, the Wild & Scenic Environmental Film Festival (at five venues this year), and our participation in Arnold's July 4th Parade.

Our local outreach included tabling more than thirty times at various businesses and at county events, presenting a wide range of information on the clearcutting that is chewing its way through our forests. It's great not only to provide handouts, but to be able to talk and answer questions person to person. We also made presentations at Big Trees Park, to various homeowners associations, on local public access TV, and to county supervisorial candidates prior to the last election.

The focused, statewide effort is essential. Change will need to happen at that level. But local pressure is what will sustain the wider effort. It is in our back yards that the devastation is happening. Together we need to continue our financial support, our letters to the editor, our participation in events, and our ongoing dedication.



It's Patriotic To Be Green

Far left: Sierra the Chickaree hitches a ride in the 2009 Arnold July 4th parade.

Left: Parade participants this year included drummers, a juggler, adults of all ages and kids on bikes and scooters.

Future Forestry *from page 1*

But it is informative to look around and figure out where we are. We all agree that our forests are not in a healthy state. One hundred years of fire suppression has resulted in dog-hair thickets of trees and massive growth of flammable underbrush. And there are thousands of acres of tree plantations on the public lands that have gone without any stewardship for decades. The unhealthy forests and fuel buildup threaten our towns and homes in the forest interface, and the very lives of those who live in them. Catastrophic fire isn't just a theoretical construct in our area. We've had several, the last of which burned 17,000 acres of the watershed that supplies drinking water for 1.2 million people downstream....

In addition, as we learn about carbon sequestration and climate change, we can see that the things we have done — and things we are not now doing — portend an even harsher future, not just for those of us who live here, but all of our downstream neighbors as well. Meanwhile, as we deal with what all this means to people, to families, to communities and to our environment, we see politicians in Washington focusing on what group or what policy or what law is to blame. The problem with that kind of macropolitics is that on the ground, it leads us to set upon one another with no result. Even though our community agrees on 90 percent of the possibilities for our future, partly with Washington's inspiration, we've spent most of our time over the last 30 years focused on the 10 percent of issues on which we disagree, motivated by the blame game.

Cooperative Approach Works

Six years ago, the Blue Mountain area of Calaveras County, which I represent, decided that we'd had enough of this....

We embarked on an ambitious plan to get our unemployed neighbors who know how to work in the woods back into the forest doing fire-safe work and watershed restoration. Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions (CHIPS) began by training truck drivers for transportation, equipment operators for field crews and purchasing equipment to do the work. Public and private contracts were completed in the ensuing couple of years, and we now stand poised to take this effort to the next level. We've created the Calaveras Consensus Group to help bring that about.... [*See box on page 1.*]

I'm not a scientist, but I know that well-managed forests are important for carbon sequestration. The forests of the Sierra Nevada are massive carbon sinks. If we protect those forests from catastrophic fire by removing ladder fuels and brush, and work on growing large, old trees instead, we can help the effort to slow climate change. Conversely, if we allow those forests to burn up because we invest elsewhere, we'll see the carbon released into the atmosphere one fire at a time. Or if we continue clearcutting our private lands, we'll see the carbon released from related soil disturbance.

It's clear that getting this right does matter outside our small Sierra community. It's much, much bigger than our small towns or our watershed or even our mountain range or state."

Our Mission

The mission of Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch is to protect, promote and restore healthy forests and watersheds to maintain quality of life in the Sierra Nevada.

EPFW Calendar

■ **EPFW General Meetings:** Second Monday of each month, September 14 from 9 AM to 12 PM; October 12, November 9, December 14 from 12:30 to 3:30 PM, at EPFW Office, 1232 Oak Circle, Cedar Center, Arnold

■ **Scenic Byway Celebration:** Saturday, September 12, Highway 4, Arnold to Markleeville

■ **Tools for Grassroots Environmental Activists:** NoCA Environmental Fund, Friday, October 9 from 8:30 AM to 6 PM, Sacramento

■ **Harvest Home Festival:** Saturday and Sunday, October 10 and 11, from 10AM to 4 PM, Ironstone Vineyards, Murphys

■ **Sierra Nevada Alliance Conference:** Friday through Sunday, October 16 to 18, Kings Beach, Lake Tahoe

■ **Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Festival:** Saturday, October 31, Black Bart Playhouse, Murphys

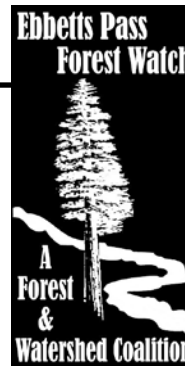
■ **Water Monitoring:** Saturdays at 10 AM, September 19, October 10, November 14, December 12. Meet at the Dorrington Hotel.

■ **Adopt-A-Highway:** Thursdays at 10 AM, September 17, November 19. Meet at the Dorrington Hotel. Lunch follows at the Lube Room.

■ **Board of Supervisors:** Every Tuesday 9 AM, Government Center, San Andreas

■ **Board of Forestry:** First Tuesday and Wednesday of the month, Sacramento

For information on any of these activities, call 795-8260.



Contribute and Save More Than Forests

Contributions can reduce your taxes. The IRS has granted EPFW a 501(c)(3) designation (tax ID 68-0466959). If you wish, you may direct that your contribution be used for a specific purpose. If you work for a company that has a matching funds program, please let them know about your contribution to EPFW. For information on making a bequest to EPFW, or how you can help our ongoing work, call (209) 795-8260. You can use PayPal to donate and renew membership at our website: www.forestwatchers.org.



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