

The EPFW Update

Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch Newsletter

December, 2002

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Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch...a forest and watershed coalition
POB 2862, Arnold, CA 95223 ♦ (209)795-8260 ♦ www.forestwatchers.org

Even-Age Management: Turning Sierra Forests into Tree Farms

Seven and a half square miles of forest. That's how much Sierra Pacific Industries has proposed cutting thus far this year, just in Calaveras County.

The timber harvest units are scattered all through the upper elevations of the county in an area north and east of a line between Arnold and West Point. These 4,944 acres of proposed timber harvests are in addition to the hundreds of timber harvest units from previous years. Many of these areas have already been cut. Many are approved and waiting to be cut.

About 482 acres are slated for clear-cutting. On another 1,221 acres just a few trees will be left ("variable retention"). **Virtually all the cutting will pave the way for even-age management. Most of the acres will be replanted with trees of the same species, growing to the same height at the same rate in that unit. The result will disfigure the Sierra landscape, replacing the mixed, diverse forest profile with a crazy quilt of same-size, same-type patches of trees.**

Is there anything Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch is doing about this? Yes! Is there anything you can do? Most certainly yes! Read on.

When a logging company wants to harvest trees, it has to submit a timber harvest plan, or THP, to the California Department of Forestry (CDF). This plan describes the cutting to be done and has to address the impacts upon water, wildlife, aesthetics, soil, etc. (see related article, "Responding to Timber Harvest Plans"). The public can comment on these plans and influence the degree of

environmental protection built into them.

EPFW comments on many THPs and is also litigating against the Department of Forestry because we believe that CDF is

not considering the cumulative impact of the cutting SPI intends to do, nor is it considering the intensity of that cutting (for example clearcutting).

Remarkably, CDF can look at more than 4,900 acres of proposed cuts, more than seven and a half square miles in one county

Our Mission

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

in one year and conclude that there will be no cumulative impacts. We are challenging that conclusion!

How you can help:

1. Make a donation to EPFW. Mark it "THP fund" to help pay for THP copies and provide funds for a consultant as we design our comments.
2. Join the team commenting on THPs.
3. Order a color copy of the THP area where you live. We have maps of all the THP areas like the map in this newsletter. For \$2.00 we'll send you a color copy of your area. Show it to everyone. Let them know what's going on and why they should be concerned.
4. Email, snail mail or call us to tell how SPI's activity is affecting you. It is important that we document the impact, and not remain silent. Contact us at epfw@goldrush.com; PO Box 2862, Arnold 95223; or 785-8260.
5. Call Bruce Castle at 728-2771 for more information.

by Penny Sarvis

The Crisis in THPs: Action, Contributions Needed

THPs (or Timber Harvest Plans) are where the rubber hits the road in forest management. Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch members and other like-minded groups work in many ways to get the word out about sustainable forestry practices. But the THP process is where we can take direct action to stop destructive harvesting practices. In the THP process, timber companies file their plans with the California Department of Forestry and the public has the opportunity to respond.

THP review and comment is a vital part of our effort. Currently there is a backlog. EPFW should be responding to several

THPs, but we don't have the staff to do the work. EPFW plans to hire a qualified person to read and respond to THPs. But first, we need contributions to pay a salary until grant funding can be found to support the position.

Qualifications for the position

6. Wildlife or plant biologist or Certified Forester preferred, but a degree in English or Communications is suitable if the person has qualifications described below.
7. Experience in responding to Timber Harvest Plans in accordance with the California Forest Practice Rules.
8. Knowledge of the California Forest Practice Rules, Endangered Species Act, California Environmental Quality Act.
9. Ability to articulate concerns in letters to appropriate agencies such as the Regional Water Quality Control Board and Fish and Game regarding each THP.
10. Ability to read maps and their relationship to land, water, plants and wildlife.

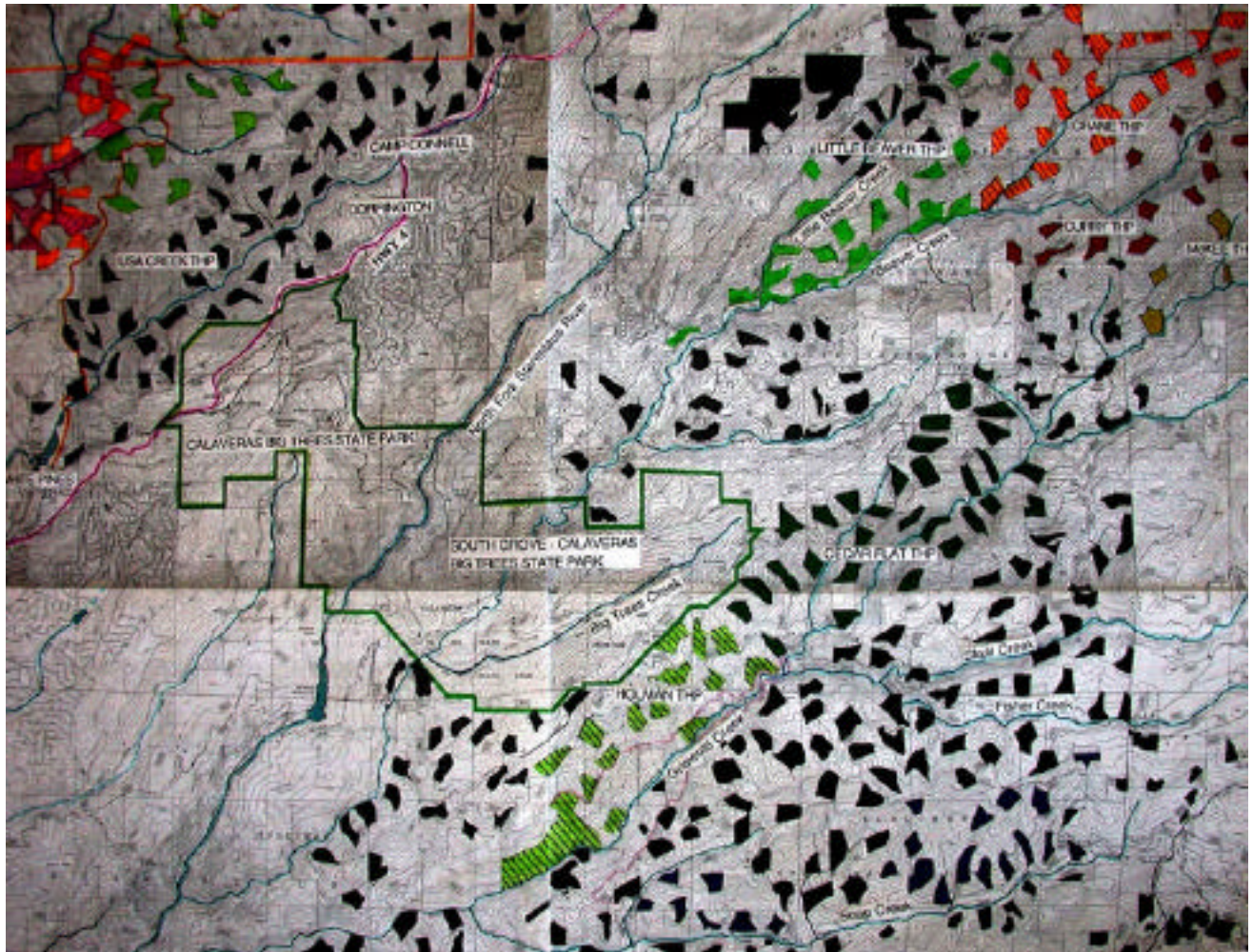
According to EPFW member Bruce Castle, seven current THPs deserve public comment: Mokey, Airola, Long Gulch, Gale and North Menzies (all in Calaveras County) plus Little Beaver and Crane (in Tuolumne).

"It may be too late to respond to some of these, but by hiring professional help EPFW can be more responsive in the future. Grant funding can be found, but until then, contributions are essential," said Castle.

To contribute, please send a check to Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch, PO Box 2862, Arnold, CA 95223.

Seeing the big picture...

The map on the right shows the approved and pending THPs in the vicinity of Calaveras Big Trees State Park. Color maps showing THPs in your area are available for \$2.00 each. Call Bruce Castle at 728-2771.



Responding to Timber Harvest Plans: A Finger in the Dike

Timber Harvest Plans (THPs) must be filed before logging can begin on private land. The public has a chance to comment on each THP, but as you will see, the process allows only a brief period for public input. Furthermore, THPs are long and complex, requiring close attention to determine potential impacts on watersheds and wildlife. Agencies such as the Water Quality Control Board and the Department of Fish and Game are allowed to comment on THPs. However, budget cutbacks have reduced staff time for reviewing THPs, and only a few sites are visited each year.

EPFW is very concerned about the cumulative effects of clearcutting and has

filed suits against the Department of Forestry for ignoring cumulative effects when approving THPs. But to file suit on a THP, we must first respond to it during the public comment period.

EPFW is sticking a figurative finger in the dike each time it responds to a THP, attempting to stop the flood of destructive clearcutting that has already begun to disfigure our area and threatens to get worse with each passing year. It's a big job. It takes time, expertise, and money. But it's crucial if we are to protect the forests in our area.

What follows is a simplified description of the THP process. Be aware that even this simplified version may be slow going if you've never heard of THPs before. And if you decide you want more information, check out the sources listed at the end of this article.

What is a Timber Harvest Plan (THP)?

Logging on private and corporate land is regulated by Forest Practice Rules and a politically-appointed Board of Forestry to oversee their implementation (see related article, "Davis Names Botanist to Forestry Board"). The California Department of Forestry (CDF) works under the direction of the Board of Forestry to approve logging plans and enforce the Forest Practice Rules.

How Does a THP Work?

To log on private or corporate land, a Registered Professional Forester prepares a Timber Harvest Plan (THP) outlining the proposed logging operations. The Registered Professional Forester is legally and ethically bound to serve the financial interests of the timber company paying for his or her services, and the THP reflects this.

The THP has two functions: (1) providing information for the CDF director to determine if the proposed logging conforms to the rules; (2) providing direction to logging operators who carry out the THP. These documents are the equivalent of an Environmental Impact Report and are supposed to evaluate and mitigate potential impacts of the logging plan.

Although the Forest Practice Rules require CDF to disapprove any plans that would cause significant, long-term environmental damage or the taking of a threatened or endangered species, **CDF approves 99% of all submitted THPs**, according to the Environmental Protection Information Center.

Once a THP is submitted to CDF, a notice is sent to interested parties, and a first review is done by a multi-agency team that includes CDF, the California Department of Fish and Game, the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, the California Division of Mines and Geology, and other agencies as needed.

When the THP is deemed complete, it is officially "filed."

EPFW monitors the CDF website and orders a copy of every THP affecting our area. **We have as few as 30 days to respond in writing, including the time it takes to order a copy of the THP from Fresno.** These complex documents can be more than 100 pages long and cost ten cents a page. Currently, EPFW volunteers attempt to review and comment on all THPs, but this project is proving to be too much for volunteer help. We have concluded that reviewing THPs in the brief period of allotted time and making substantive comments will require the attention of a paid professional (see related article "The Crisis in THPs").

Within 10 days of the Notice of Filing: a review team may make a Pre-Harvest Inspection of the proposed logging site. The review team includes a representative from CDF, and may include a representative from other agencies (e.g. Department of Fish and Game, Water Quality, etc). However, these agencies participate only on a very small fraction of THPs because they are underfunded and understaffed.

For example, staff has been cut from four Environmental Scientists to two at the Rancho Cordova office of Fish and Game. These two employees are responsible for all timber harvests in our 12-county area. **Whereas Fish and Game used to do 60-70 Pre-Harvest Inspections a year, they are now able to do only 20-30.**

Calaveras County also has the right to send a representative to these on-site inspections, but there is no provision in the county budget for such inspections. The sole person designated to represent the county is also head of the Planning Department, a position already loaded with heavy responsibilities.

Within 20 days of the Pre-Harvest Inspection: A second meeting is held by the review team in Fresno to discuss the Pre-Harvest Inspection reports and to finalize any recommendations or changes needed

for the THP. These meetings, although not considered a formal public hearing, are open for interested members of the public to attend and make comments.

Even though the public comments are not recorded, they do demonstrate that someone is watching. Because of a shortage of volunteers, EPFW has not been able to attend these meetings.

Thirty days after the Pre-Harvest Inspection: The public comment period ends. However, the public comment period may be extended to allow time for all agencies involved in the THP process to complete their reviews, or for additional study on a specific THP issue.

Final recommendations are sent to the Registered Professional Forester for response. Then, the THP goes to the CDF Director, or her representative, who has 15 days to approve or deny the THP.

For more information on THPs, see:
<http://www.fire.ca.gov/ResourceManagement/THPReviewProcess.asp> or:
www.wildcalifornia.org/THP/gen/thp_intro.html.
 You can check the status of THPs at
<http://www.fire.ca.gov/ResourceManagement/THPStatusUpload/THPStatusTable.html>.

Davis Names Botanist to Forestry Board

Governor Davis has appointed a biological consultant with specialties in habitat conservation planning and endangered species to the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection. Susan Britting, President of the California Native Plant Society, is a director of the American River Conservancy and works with the Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign. Her appointment must be confirmed

by the Senate. EPFW applauds the appointment of this highly qualified person to the board that provides policy leadership for the future of the state's forests.

Voices

Following three Peterbilts hauling
 logs just cut from the mountains
 my Subaru in low labors
 to pass
 to leave
 these limbless bodies
 to not see
 the nine round faces
 some huge
 some small
 to not see the smirk on one
 furrow on another
 astonishment on all
 shredded bark waving
 like auburn locks
 gouges white with shock
 I am grateful for only one thing:
 our straining motors
 drown out
 the weeping
 of these broken forest maidens.

The Numbers Game

How precise the numbers—
 board feet, harvest plans, acres—
 but no one counts the homeless,
 measures sterility, computes
 the depth of death

by Arlene Mueller

Can Green-Certified Lumber Make It?

by Jane Braxton Little

High Country News, June 24, 2002

BRANSCOMB, Calif.—Art Harwood spent several million dollars and many months in the mid-1990s to certify his sawmill for producing “green” lumber from responsibly managed forests of redwood and Douglas-fir. It was an investment he believed would yield financial returns later.

“Later’s come, but the returns haven’t,” Harwood says now.

He’s one of many sawmill and forest owners across the country who are wondering when they will reap economic advantage from opening their woods, mills and pocket-books to the systems of forest certification. So far, most have not earned higher prices for their products.

“It’s done nothing but cost us money,” says the president of Harwood Products, which employs about 270 people, turning out 130 million board-feet of lumber per year, in the coastal hills north of San Francisco. “I suppose someday there may be some economic benefits, but I don’t know that.”

Despite the dearth of direct financial returns, forest certification is booming. Since 1993, when the Forest Stewardship Council began promoting responsible forestry in the United States, 92 forests—totaling nearly 9 million acres—and 452 sawmills have passed the program’s rigorous standards.

Two groups, Scientific Certification Systems and SmartWood, use FSC standards to certify land management, and chain of custody practices once the logs reach the sawmill. The FSC-certified forests range from small plots in private ownership to Pennsylvania’s 2.1 million acres of state forest.

To be FSC-certified, forest management must be “ecologically, socially and economically sustainable,” says Ian Hanna at the Certified Forest Products Council office in Portland, Ore.

That means forest owners must pay for teams of experts to review their timber harvests, soil and water quality, make allowances for wildlife, biodiversity, and planning for sustained employment. Sawmill owners must pay for reviews of their practices and show they keep logs from certified forests separated from other logs.

A parallel certification system developed by the timber industry—the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, sponsored by the American Forest and Paper Association—has put its stamp of approval on at least 45 million acres in the United States. Although the industry standards are still not as high as those set by the FSC, they have toughened somewhat and they indicate certification has become a prerequisite to survival, says Richard Donovan, former director of SmartWood. “We’re not tilting at windmills anymore,” Donovan says. “People are talking about it everywhere.”

More than one-tenth of the 500 million acres of commercial forest land in the U.S. is now certified by one of the two leading systems. There has been progress gaining recognition in the marketplace, though only an estimated 2 to 5 percent of all wood products in the country is now FSC-certified, Hanna says.

Since 1999, when Home Depot, the country’s largest wood products retailer, began giving preference to FSC-certified lumber, the number of certified companies supplying Home Depot has jumped to two dozen, says company spokesman John Simley. Other major retailers giving preference to FSC-certified products include Lowe’s, the second-largest home-improvement chain, and Andersen Corporation, the leading manufacturer of wooden windows and patio doors.

Read the full article at http://www.hcn.org/servlets/hcn.Article?article_id=11301

Also, see the next article, about Collins Pine, the first FSC-Certified forest in the country.

Membership Renewal, Contribution

Help protect our forests, water, and wildlife. Join EPPFW or renew your membership today. Annual dues are \$10 (July 1-June 30).

Stopping the rampant destruction of forests in the Sierra Nevada costs money. Every day, more acres are clearcut, treated with herbicides, and turned into tree plantations. Your additional contribution beyond the annual dues will help bring an end to this practice. Lend a helping hand to Mother Nature. It feels good.

Bring your talents and join a dedicated, energetic group of local volunteers as we work to educate the public about responsible forest management. We need people to help staff phone trees, raise funds, help with this newsletter, review timber harvest plans, and more.

Please call Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch at 795-8260. Thank you for your support!

To renew your Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch membership, please complete the following form and return it with your member dues and whatever additional tax-deductible contribution you can afford.

Membership _____ \$10

Contribution _____ \$15 _____ \$25 _____ \$50 _____ \$Other

Name: _____

Address _____

Phone _____

E-mail* _____

*Help us save trees and money. We prefer to communicate with you via e-mail if you have it.

If you would like to be removed from our mailing list, please leave a message at 795-8260. All donations are tax-deductible. Please complete and mail to

EPPFW, PO Box 2862, Arnold, CA 95223

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EPFW Activities

Another Visit to Collins Pine

EPFW Board member Bruce Castle organized another trip to Collins Pine, an environmentally responsible timber company in Chester, California. Participants included Wayland Ezell, a member of the local press; Merita Callaway Second District County Supervisor; Bill Craven, staff member of the California Senate Natural Resources and Wildlife Committee; Mike Liang from The Northern California Council of the Federation of Fly Fishers; Sierra Club members Peter Elias and Don Rivenes; and Steve Wilensky from the West Point area. Bruce is planning yet another trip to Collins Pine this spring. If you're interested, call him at 728-2771.

Members Help Keep Hwy 4 Clean

It's official. Caltrans has posted a sign at Dorrington recognizing EPFW's commitment to keeping a stretch of Highway 4 clean. Our October pick-up was the last one for this year. If you would like to join us in early spring for a morning of fresh air, good company, and a great lunch, leave a message at 785-5095.

Speakers Available

Mary Tamraz is going to run another workshop in speakers' training for members of EPFW December 14, 10:00—3:30. We already have some graduates of Mary's workshop ready to take the EPFW PowerPoint show on the road. Let us know if you have a service group, homeowners' association, or other group that is looking for a speaker. For more information, call Penny Sarvis at 728-0710.

THP Workshop Held

Rick Coates, Executive Director of Forest Unlimited, led a three-hour workshop on THPs on November 2. Participants learned about the content and structure of a THP, how THPs relate to the Forest Practice Rules, when it makes sense to challenge a THP, and how to make cogent public com-

ments that will have a realistic chance of being incorporated into the final plan.

EPFW+MRFW+SYRCL

Not a bowl of alphabet soup, but a joint meeting with Mokelumne River Forest Watch (MRFW) in San Andreas November 3. After a brown bag business meeting devoted to working on strategies for cooperation between the two groups and developing a wider membership base, Janet Cohen of South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL) shared her experiences in helping build a very successful environmental group in northern California.

Arnold Craft Faire a Big Success

This annual event during the last weekend of August drew a large number of people to watch our PowerPoint presentation on clear-cutting, to pick up literature, sign on as members, and buy EPFW tee shirts and sweat shirts. Thanks to all the folks who helped out.

Our Office Wish List

Money and volunteer help are important, but we also need items for our new office in Arnold's Cedar Center. If you haven't seen it yet, stop by. Just call 795-8260 to make sure someone is there. We need:

- Recycled copy paper
- Three-hole punch
- File folders
- Rolodex
- Power strip
- Fax machine
- Folding chairs

And thanks to all the folks who contributed file cabinets, photocopy machine, computer and printer, books, and office furniture.

Help Wanted

- **THP Respondent:** (see "The Crisis in THPs" for qualifications).
- **Recording Secretary:** Attend monthly general meetings and special meetings. Take minutes and distribute them via email.

Party Time

We have a great Valentine's Day fundraising party shaping up for February 15 at

the Black Bart Playhouse in Murphys. Live music concert, dancing, beverages, snacks. Keep an eye on your email and the local papers for more information. Ron Schaner is organizing the event and could use some help. Give him a call at 795-3530.

Fire Safe Council Volunteers Needed

The U.S. Forest Service and CDF are helping establish a Fire Safe Council composed of citizens from the Highway 4 corridor from Copperopolis to Bear Valley. A coordinator from the State Fire Safe Council will help organize the council and work with it for several months, helping to gain non-profit status, applying for grants to cover equipment and expenses, and working to reduce fuel loading, build fire breaks, and otherwise make our communities fire safe. Volunteers are needed now. The next meeting is Wednesday December 4, 6:00—8:00 p.m. at the Murphys Volunteer Fire Department. Call Bruce Castle, 728-2771 for more information.

Donate, Reduce Your Taxes

Because Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch is a nonprofit tax-exempt organization, donations are tax deductible. Your donation helps us achieve our goal of promoting sustainable forestry practices through environmental education. No donation is too small or too large. Here's how you can help:

Cash Donations. Your check is always welcome!

Donations of Appreciated Assets. Giving long-term appreciated securities or other property is a great way to donate to Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch and reduce your income taxes. You may claim an income tax deduction for the value of the asset at the time of the donation. In addition, you are not taxed on the capital gain that would result if you sold the asset.

Estate Planning. Bequests to Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch qualify for the estate tax charitable deduction. You can make a gift to Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch in your will or living trust, or designate Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch as a beneficiary of a retirement account, financial account or insurance policy.

EPFW is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All contributions are tax-deductible.

This information is not intended as tax or legal advice. Always consult a tax or estate planning professional who is familiar with your situation. Thank you for your support.

Meet the Board: Bunny Firebaugh, President

Bunny Firebaugh moved to Arnold in 1994 to retire. Her life since then seems to be anything but "retiring."

In addition to serving as EPFW President, Bunny is a board member and docent at Big Trees State Park, is an active member of the Quilters, and serves as a Volunteer in Prevention (VIP)—checking homes in Blue Lake Springs for brush clearance in the spring. When she has free time she is busy in her garden and often involved with children and grandchildren. She has two daughters in Palo Alto, a son in Danville and five grandchildren.

Bunny worked for 20 years at Stanford University Medical School as a Medical Analyst for the Faculty Practice Program. She had been coming to the Arnold area for several years and decided to retire here partly because of the "wonderful trees." In May 2000 she saw an article in the newspaper about SPI clearcutting in the San Antonio Creek area and heard about the then-fledgling EPFW organization.

"I started helping with special events and town meetings," Bunny says. "I really enjoy working with the EPFW members; we have the same goals and aspirations. It is a great group to work with."

Many EPFW members are aware of the effort Bunny has put in over the last two years at public events. Usually it is Bunny who sets up a booth at a fair, sells tee shirts, or explains clear cutting and THPs to visitors. She has been EPFW's most visible member

at public events and has been responsible for much of EPFW's public presence.

Bunny's enthusiasm and dedication infuse EPFW's meetings and set the mood for positive action. Her attitude and spirit are infectious. "I want everybody in EPFW to find their niche and to help out in any way they can. We need many volunteers for all our tasks. So spread the word to everyone. We have a lot to do," she says.

EPFW Calendar

EPFW General Meetings

Monday, December 2
6:00 p.m. Potluck, Pinebrook Lodge, Arnold

Monday, January 6
6:00 p.m. EPFW office above Two Rivers Trading Co, Cedar Center, Arnold

Monday, February 3
6:00 p.m. EPFW office above Two Rivers Trading Co, Cedar Center, Arnold

Valentine's Day Concert

Saturday, February 15
Time and ticket information TBA
Black Bart Theater, Murphys

EPFW Board of Directors

Bunny Firebaugh, President
Ron Schaner, Vice President
Penny Sarvis, Corresponding Secretary
Tami Rakstad, Treasurer
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