

# The EPFW Update

Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch Newsletter

Vol. 3, No. 4 • December, 2003

## **ENORMOUS CHANGES ARE POSSIBLE RIGHT HERE**

Boise Cascade, one of the largest timber companies in the country, has taken a stunning, big, green leap. Boise has announced that from now on it will:

- Stop buying wood products from endangered forests throughout the world,
- Stop cutting virgin timber in the U.S.,
- Pressure its suppliers to follow its lead by giving purchasing preference to suppliers that provide wood and paper from independently certified operations.

(See the following article on certification.)

Boise has committed itself, in other words, to protect virgin and endangered forests, and to use its purchasing power to convince its suppliers to adopt forest practices that leave forests healthy and intact.

The environmental group Rainforest Action Network (RAN) is primarily responsible for Boise Cascade's turnabout. RAN convinced Boise Cascade customers, such as Kinko's and Lowe's, to switch to other suppliers who were more careful about the wood from which their paper is made. Kinko's and Lowe's then urged Boise Cascade to negotiate the agreement with RAN.

What is especially relevant is that RAN has now challenged another "Dirty Dozen" forest products companies, those that are the "most environmentally destructive," to match what Boise Cascade has done. Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI) is one of the Dirty Dozen. RAN Executive Director Michael

Brune has written a letter to the CEOs of each of the dozen companies, urging them to follow Boise Cascade's example. RAN says, "Although we prefer a collaborative approach, if these companies won't respond to the pleas of scientists and demands of their customers, then we are prepared to take this debate to each company's board of directors, its shareholders, its customers, and the American people."

Enormous changes are possible right here in the Sierra.

## **LOOK FOR THE FSC CERTIFICATION**

At a recent presentation by ECO Timber, a company which makes flooring from sustainably harvested trees, the representative's central message was: "What we choose to buy is what we end up with. Wood will only be sustainably harvested if there is a market for it."

Rainforest Action Network's (RAN) success in changing Boise Cascade's practices came because RAN convinced Boise's customers to demand sustainably harvested wood. We often think of activism on behalf of forests as carrying signs and sitting in trees. But our actions as consumers are critical to changing the way companies like Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI) do business.

One step we can take immediately is to start asking for certified wood when we go to the hardware or lumber store. But not just any certification! The certification to look for is FSC: Forest Stewardship Council. This is an independent body with clear standards that require sustainable growing and harvesting practices by companies. The FSC logo identifies products which contain wood from well-managed forests certified in accordance with the rules of the Forest Stewardship Council.

### **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

Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch...a forest and watershed coalition  
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The timber industry has created its own certification called SFI: Sustainable Forest Initiative. SFI is a “fox-guarding-the-henhouse” program. Whereas relatively few companies meet FSC standards, all members of the American Forest and Paper Association are considered to be in compliance with SFI standards. SFI, currently ravaging our hillsides, is SFI certified.

Here are a few differences between the two certifications. FSC standards are explicit and mandatory. SFI standards are vague and usually optional. SFI does not even require the most fundamental baseline of sustainable forestry: that logging levels not exceed growth levels. Under the “Sustainable Forest Initiative,” in other words, a forest can be liquidated.

SFI standards allow clearcuts of up to 120 acres on average. There is no protection against the conversion of forests to tree plantations or to development.

Forest Stewardship Council standards, in contrast, work to preserve the richness of forests. One of their principles states: “Forest management shall conserve biological diversity, water resources, soils, unique and fragile ecosystems, and by so doing maintain the integrity of the forest.” Consequently, “forest conversion to plantations or non-forest land uses shall not occur except in a very limited portion of the forest management unit.” SFI, which is currently converting 70% of its land to plantations, obviously does not qualify for FSC certification. Its whole approach to the land is at odds with the respectful standards developed by the Forest Stewardship Council.

So let’s start asking for FSC certified wood. Local outlets will carry it if there is a market for it. It is more expensive, by up to 10%. But the path that leads to it is full of healthy trees. A look at our own local clearcuts is incentive to pay a few dollars more. And if enough people start demanding higher standards, even the “Dirty Dozen” will have to start meeting them.

Remember the correct initials: FSC certified wood is the way to go.



## Does Certified Wood Have a Future?

Judging by responses from lumber yards in the Ebbetts Pass area, Sonora, and Stockton, there is no significant demand for FSC certified lumber in this area at the present time. But that may change as more architects and designers begin to specify it and as the public learns more about the advantages of buying certified.

“Not needed,” was a common response from those who had heard of FSC certification. “Every piece of lumber is already certified by the California Department of Forestry. CDF makes sure companies are following the law.” That from Tom Kearns, General Manager of Ebbetts Pass Lumber Company in Arnold.

FSC Certification requires that wood be monitored from its source to the final consumer to assure that what’s in the marketplace comes from environmentally sound forests. On the West Coast, SCS (Scientific Certification Systems), inspects

FSC Certification requires that wood be monitored from its source to the final consumer...

the “chain of custody” from forest to lumber yard for FSC to assure buyers that lumber has been grown in forests meeting FSC standards. Jeff Stephens, Communications Director of SCS, agrees with Kearns that logging companies operating in California meet regulatory standards set by the state. “But these are minimum standards for what a company must do,” Stephens points out. “Certification identifies landowners like Collins Pine who are meeting a higher level of responsibility. FSC certification takes into account the concerns of all stakeholders in the timber harvest process, including the public, who are invited to comment on SCS’s findings.”

Necessary as the inspections may be, some lumber yard managers view them as “more government red tape,” “another level of bureaucracy,” or simply a way to collect fees for a process that doesn’t guarantee FSC certified lumber will show up on the racks.

Part of the problem is that very little certified lumber is available in the marketplace, less than five percent according to the National Wildlife Federa-

tion. “In my experience,” Stephens notes, “the individual needs to seek out certified lumber, even at Home Depot. You have to pay attention to labels, read shelf tags, and ask questions.”

Don Woxberg of San Joaquin Lumber in Stockton thinks FSC certification is unnecessary because “Most all large timber companies already subscribe to SFI.” (The Sustainable Forestry Initiative, an industry-sponsored certification agency).

The average consumer, says Stephens, is oblivious to the difference between FSC and SFI certification. While FSC is independent, SFI is industry sponsored, established by an industry trade association. “Most industrial forest land in the U.S. has been certified to SFI standards. But how difficult is certification when almost all of the trade association members get certification?” Stephens asks.

Is there a difference in quality between FSC wood and other wood? Lumber yard owners tell Jay Francis, Forest Manager for Collins Pine, that they prefer Collins lumber because it doesn’t warp or twist like some other lumber. Francis believes Collins’ practice of selective harvesting leads to a slower-growing tree with more rings to the inch, making the resulting lumber tighter and more stable.

Tom Kearns thinks FSC certified lumber is ahead of its time. “Just now, it’s not a big issue. We’ve had requests for environmentally friendly lumber from two or three customers, but small amounts are difficult to locate.” Once customers begin demanding it, though, he expects companies such as Ebbetts Pass Lumber to carry it. Stephens agrees that customer demand will ultimately increase the availability of FSC certified lumber. “It’s already being specified by architects, interior designers, and government procurement officers, people informed enough to understand the difference between FSC and SFI certification. Now, companies such as Home

## **EPFW Board of Directors**

Bunny Firebaugh, President

Addie Jacobson, Vice President

Tami Rakstad, Treasurer

Penny Sarvis, Corresponding Secretary

Bruce Castle, Dete Kraus, Judi Goglia

Depot will have to start educating their customers about the value of purchasing FSC lumber.”

“Ten years from now, FSC certification might be the standard,” according to Murphys architect Michelle Plotnik. “Like solar panels, prices will come down as demand goes up. Trade shows, architectural and design magazines, and professional articles are all generating a buzz about certified wood. Locally, we are starting to ask clients if they would consider certified lumber and how much of a premium they would be willing to pay.”

Have you used certified lumber? If so, let us know about your experience finding a source. If there’s significant interest, we’ll publish comments in a future issue of the *Update*.

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## **Nature Books for Children Grandparents, parents—give gifts that will encourage future environmentalists.**

### **An Environmental Classic**

Seuss, Dr., 1971 **THE LORAX**, Random House, NY. A wonderfully rhymed tale of the demise of Swomee-Swans, Humming-fish, Bar-ba-loots and the Truffula trees due to people’s greed. Also available in video.

Although written in 1971, The Lorax tells what could happen to Calaveras County’s forests in the coming years: A timber company clearcuts land to make a bigger profit “I had to grow bigger. So bigger I got. I biggered my factory. I biggered my roads. I biggered my wagons. I biggered the loads. I went right on biggering...and I biggered my money, which everyone needs.”

The Lorax speaks for the trees, “for the trees have no tongues” and pleads for a healthy habitat. The book’s final words: “Plant a new Truffula. Treat it with care. Give it clean water. And feed it fresh air. Grow a forest.”

**More Books:** [www.forestwatchers.org](http://www.forestwatchers.org).

## **Contributions to EPFW Are Tax Deductible**

Contributions can help reduce your taxes. The IRS has granted EPFW a 501(c)(3) designation (tax ID 68-466959). For more information on how you can help the ongoing work of EPFW, call 209-795-8260

## Meet the Board

Tami Rakstad, EPFW Treasurer, is probably the only EPFW bride who spent her honeymoon protesting clearcutting. In June 2000, the day after her wedding to former EPFW president Ron Schaner, Tami was “at the barricades” in White Pines protesting against Sierra Pacific Industries’ (SPI) clearcutting in the USA Creek harvest.

“I was there trying to keep my stepson from getting arrested,” she says. That event was the catalyst that got Tami and Ron involved with EPFW. Tami has been a member of EPFW since her wedding and has lived in Arnold full time for four years. “I knew many of the original EPFW members,” she says. “When the USA Creek harvest began, no one knew much about timber harvest plans (THPs). And suddenly we realized that something is very wrong.”

She and Ron invited EPFW to set up a booth at their wedding reception. “I have supported many environmental groups in the past, so I guess I’ve always been a ‘tree hugger’ to my family.”

Tami works for an Arnold company. She has stayed active in EPFW because “EPFW is not just a group that protests; we are going through the proper channels to get things done.”

As Treasurer, Tami sees firsthand the kind of support EPFW has been getting. “It’s amazing the donors we have, month after month. Even if they can’t help with their time, they send donations. It’s incredible how gung ho our people are; they want to get things done.”

Tami and Ron, who is a member of the band “SpaceHeaters,” put together the hugely successful EPFW Valentine’s Dance and will host the second annual dance next February 14 at the Black Bart Theater in Murphys.

Postscript: Tami and Ron did get to go on their honeymoon eventually.

## A Letter to SPI

Do you want to know why  
We’re fighting, SPI?  
It’s because we want to freeze  
your destruction of our trees  
We all have a fear  
of forests cut so clear  
That nothing can exist  
in a desert in our midst!  
From a human perspective  
we want cutting that’s “selective.”  
We would gladly forgive  
if you’d live and let live.  
But wanton destruction  
will provoke our reaction  
and in spite of your might  
we’ll challenge and fight!  
We want your attention  
Not “variable retention.”  
You make a mistake  
if you want “the whole cake!”  
We will never be pleased  
if you leave a few trees  
while despoiling the hills  
to supply your own mills.  
If you love a clear drink  
just stop now and think.  
The trees save our water  
and S.P.I. oughter  
consider our health  
and not just your wealth!  
You cannot deny  
that you’re living a lie.  
If you love U.S.A.  
Then do as we say:  
“Give the forests a break  
For our grandchildren’s sake.  
Reconsider and give.  
Let our green forests live!”  
*Paul Fairbrook, Arnold, CA  
September 15, 2003*

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## HAVE SHOW, WILL TRAVEL

EPFW’s puppet show is ready for viewing. The 20-minute presentation of songs, puppet story, and student interaction is designed for preschool through grade three students. EPFW is eager to share this program with your school or educational program. It is a great opportunity to learn more about our mountain life. Call 209-795-8260 for information and scheduling.

*Puppeteers (l to r): Gwen Serrière, Marge Kraus, Patty Payne.*



## EPFW PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I am pleased to announce that we have been awarded another grant, this one from Agape Foundation Fund for Nonviolent Social Change. The funds will be used for expenses for our volunteers to attend the Board of Forestry meetings at various locations that require meals and lodging. We had originally requested \$1,200, but we were awarded \$2,000 after they interviewed Brynna Jacobson, who was an EPFW intern last year and is a student at UC Berkeley. Our heartfelt thanks go to Brynna for doing such a wonderful job in presenting our case.

More good news—we have received a donation of \$225 from Chaco Sandals. Sierra Nevada Adventure Co. (SNAC) had a promotion to sell their sandals during August in both the Arnold and Sonora stores. The donation was \$10 for each pair; they sold 45 pairs and they split the donation between EPFW and Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center (CSERC). Thank you Chaco Sandals and SNAC for making this happen.

Beside our usual Adopt-A-Highway cleanups some of our volunteers participated in the California Coastal Cleanup in September. Friday, with the help of children from Hazel Fischer School, EPFW cleaned up White Pines Lake and on Saturday helped with the cleanup of Beaver Creek in Calaveras Big Trees State Park.

Our field trip this quarter was to UC Blodgett Forestry Research Station on October 16. We had a tour by Rob York of the various types of silviculture stands. We were able to view selective, clearcut, variable retentions, a beautiful site of Sierra Redwoods, and diverse tree plantations. It was a worthwhile tour thanks to Rob.

On October 11 the Calaveras River Watershed Management Plan Citizen Monitoring Workshop was held at the Calaveras River. The Calaveras County Water District (CCWD) and the Stockton East Water District organized the event. We learned how to compile habitat assessment field data. It is the first of more monitoring trainings in the future. It was very informative and I am looking forward to more training.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS to everyone!

Love the Forest,  
Bunny

### Office Wish List

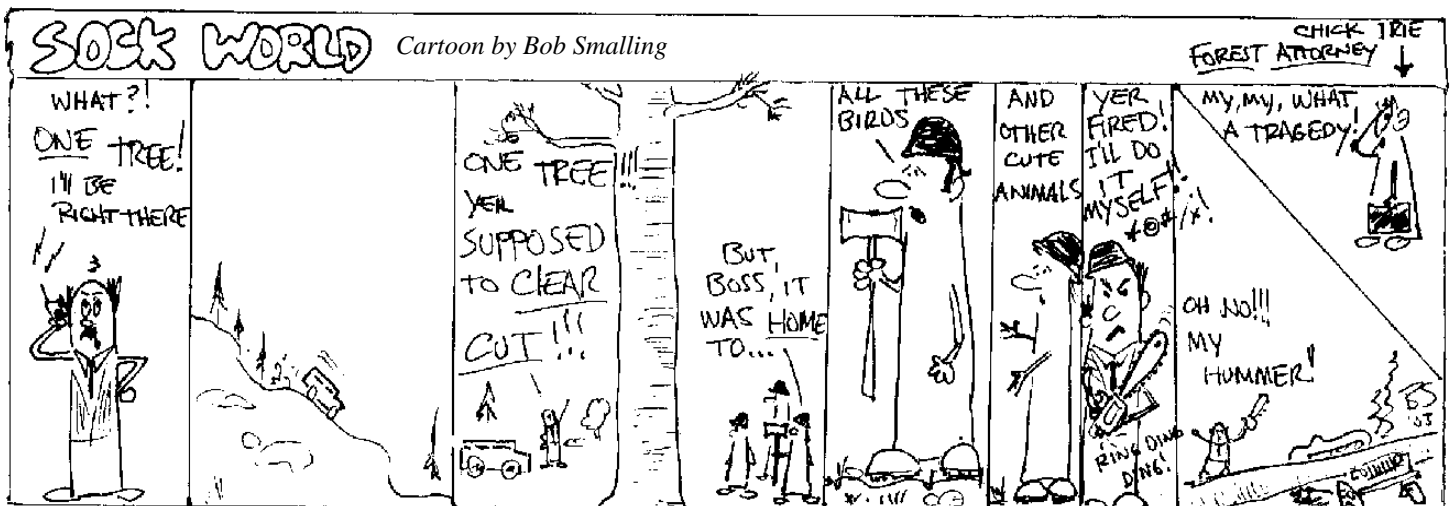
Fax machine  
8 x 11 file folders  
Portable CD boombox,  
suitable for classroom use

### HEY! WE NEED YOU!

EPFW needs your help!! We have several positions open for volunteers on a regular or occasional basis. None of these jobs takes a lot of time, but they are essential to getting our work done. We need:

- A data-entry person to help maintain our database, someone with attention to detail who can devote several hours a month to the task.
- A Recording Secretary to take minutes at general meetings once a month. The meetings last two hours and are a great way to get to know EPFW and the Board.
- Volunteers to help with mailings, Adopt-A-Highway clean up, events, and letter writing.

Come and join us. Be more active and see the results of your work! It's fun.



# 2003-2004 EPFW Calendar

## EPFW General Meetings

All at the EPFW Office above Two Rivers Trading Company, Cedar Center, Arnold.

January 5 Monday, 6:30 PM

February 2 Monday, 6:30 PM

If the weather is inclement, these two meetings may be postponed until the following Fridays from 1 PM to 3 PM. Call the EPFW office and leave a message on the answering machine to check if a meeting has been rescheduled. (209)795-8260.

## Valentine's Day Concert

February 14, 2004 7 PM to 11 PM, Black Bart Theater, Murphys  
Fundraiser for Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch

## Calaveras County Board of Supervisors

Every Monday, 10 AM, Government Center, San Andreas.

## Board of Forestry

First Tuesday and Wednesday of the month, Sacramento or other locations to be announced.

## Holiday Greetings!

We have a great holiday shopping opportunity for Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch supporters. Check out the great soaps at [www.aila-mi.com/EPFW](http://www.aila-mi.com/EPFW). Then help us wash clearcutting out of our forests by placing orders for yourselves, family, and friends.



Nonprofit Org.  
US Postage Paid  
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Arnold, CA

Ebbetts Pass  
Forest Watch  
PO Box 2862  
Arnold, CA 95223

## MEMBERSHIP/CONTRIBUTION

Help protect our forests, water, and wildlife.

Annual dues \$10—Fully tax-deductible

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.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail\* \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

If you're already a current member, please consider volunteering your time or talent.

I would like to:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer _____ hrs/month        | <input type="checkbox"/> Help fold and mail the newsletter               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Help with fund-raising           | <input type="checkbox"/> Liaise with environmental attorneys             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Help review timber harvest plans | <input type="checkbox"/> Attend Board of Forestry meetings in Sacramento |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Provide office help              | <input type="checkbox"/> Help with data management                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Help with water monitoring       |  |

Membership  \$10    Contribution  \$15     \$25     \$50     \$Other \_\_\_\_\_

Note: Your contribution includes \$10 for membership. Check here if you DO NOT want to be a member:

\*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 (209)795-8260.

Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch, PO Box 2862, Arnold, CA 95223-2862



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