

For Immediate Release:
Thursday, February 14, 2008

For more information:
Josh Bridges 209-795-8260

Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch Celebrates Valentine's Day by Honoring "Businesses with a Heart"

Murphys, Ca—Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch (EPFW) is releasing results today of their ongoing business sign-on campaign, a joint effort with the international non-profit Forest Ethics, at a Valentine's Day reception and press conference. Representatives from several businesses will be honored for their commitment and leadership. The honorees will speak about the relationship of clearcutting to them and their businesses.

The event gets underway at Murphys Library at 1:00pm. EPFW a community-based organization based in Arnold, California, along with its local and statewide supporters, has been a leader since 2000 in the movement to stop the massive clearcutting being conducted by Sierra Pacific Industries across the Sierra Nevada. As part of its ongoing education and advocacy activities, EPFW and its partner Forest Ethics have been identifying businesses demanding an end to destructive logging and a return to selective timber harvest.

Hundreds have signed on so far and the number is still growing, indicating the importance of this issue to the business community. In rural Calaveras County alone, 125 businesses have joined the campaign. This includes members of a recently-organized "Builders for Responsible Forestry" group.

The timber giant Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI), the largest landowner in California, owns over 1.7 million acres across the Sierra Nevada and intends to clearcut most of those holdings. SPI also is the largest landowner in Calaveras County, owning approximately 74,000 acres of the county's forested land. "Businesses in Calaveras County and around the nation," said Ron Szymanski, Vice President of EPFW, "have shown they recognize the devastating effects of massive range-wide clearcutting in the Sierra Nevada and the urgent need to end this practice that belongs in the last century."

Rocky Bridges of Bridges Construction, declared, "As a builder I want to make clear that I will not compromise the health of our forests or communities to provide homes for California residents. We have begun working on a campaign asking builders to boycott products from SPI until they adopt a truly sustainable method of harvest."

"The intentions of SPI are clear," said Susan Shoaff, owner of Sustenance books, "a clearcut makes the timber company the most money in the shortest amount of time. This does not take into account the loss of biodiversity, fragmentation of habitat, or loss of jobs in the logging industry, all which result from clearcutting."

"As our economy becomes increasingly dependent on recreational tourism," said Jill Seale, owner of Sierra Nevada Adventure Company, "we are concerned about preserving the natural surroundings that give birth to our county's tourism industry." SPI clearcuts now diminish the scenic value along the Ebbetts Pass National Scenic Byway.

Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch and Forest Ethics are dedicated to finding solutions to destructive forest practices and helping to promote the use of sustainable forestry in California and around the world. Businesses who are interested in joining the campaign can contact EPFW at (209) 795-8260 or email joshbridges@hotmail.com