

PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACT:

Ara Marderosian
Executive Director
Sequoia ForestKeeper
(760) 376-4434

Carl Ross
Director
Save America's Forests
(202) 544-9219

Paul Hughes
Executive Director
Forests Forever
(415) 974-3636

Chief of the Forest Service Gives False Testimony at Congressional Hearing

On Thursday, March 9, 2006, Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth made false statements about recent logging in the Giant Sequoia National Monument while testifying at a Forest Service budget hearing before the House Appropriations Interior Subcommittee (Transcript of statements from *Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations for 2007, Hearings Before A Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, One Hundred Ninth Congress, Second Session, Subcommittee on Interior Environment, and Related Agencies, Part 6, U.S. GPO, Washington : 2006*). Chief Bosworth was responding to questioning by Representative Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) about logging in the **Trail of 100 Giants**, the very spot where President Clinton announced the establishment of the National Monument. In this latest “public safety and fire prevention” logging debacle, the Forest Service took more than 200 trees including ancient sugar pines, many of them over three centuries old.

Bosworth's falsehoods included:

- **stating that the cut trees were a fire threat** (“Any projects done there would be to do things like I'd explained earlier, to remove the ladder fuels, to allow fire to play a more natural role.” – page 277, but the large trees cut that we photographed in the area were without lower branches that could carry fire into the canopy - they were not ladder-fuel trees, but were fire-resistant giants, including sugar pines and other non-sequoia species),
- **insisting that an environmental study was done before the project began** (“There would have been either an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement” – page 277 and when asked by Representative Hinchey if he would provide a copy of that environmental assessment or the EIS, Bosworth said, “Yes.”, but the Project File for the Trail of 100 Giants Hazard Tree Project contained no EA or EIS - No NEPA documents and no compliance with the Monument Plan occurred – after the hearing, Bosworth provided no EIS or EA, only a decision memo), **and**
- **denying that the value of the timber was the reason the trees were cut** (“The means of removal was sale as opposed to burning, which was infeasible” – page 419, but no memo in the Forest Service file indicates that the cut trees were to be sold as a “means of removal” - indeed, the Decision memo to the internal file states only that the wood would be used for camp fires and/or chipped and mulched – whereas many of the trees cut and sold were giant sugar pines, trees with the most commercially valuable wood).

“Those trees survived fires in that grove for centuries. The only threat to their survival was the Forest Service, which killed them solely for the financial benefit of their cronies at the local sawmill,” stated Martin Litton, president of Sequoia ForestKeeper.

In April, 2000, President Clinton, under the authority of the Antiquities Act, established the 327,769-acre Giant Sequoia National Monument, stating that the trees and other natural, cultural and historic objects within its boundaries were to be protected. *The Trail of 100 Giants* logging project -- which was announced by the Forest Service through an informal public phone notification process -- was justified as a small project to protect public safety by removing dead trees, but resulted in a timber sale in the spring of 2005. Sequoias are the largest trees on earth, and are found naturally only in a small region on the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada range in California.

The public was excluded from the process

The Forest Service attempted to conduct this logging under the public’s radar screen, refusing to do a written project announcement, and producing no environmental documents for the public to review,” said Ara Marderosian, Executive Director of Sequoia ForestKeeper. “The Forest Service also lied to us orally before the *Trail of 100 Giants* was logged. They said only 138 small trees would be cut and none sold, but they removed more than 200 large-diameter trees, some of them that had lost their lower branches many decades ago. Many of those were sold. Also, hundreds of small trees were cut, chipped, and scattered.”

Paul Hughes, Executive Director of Forests Forever, added “Californians, as well as all Americans, are being robbed by outrageous logging in the Giant Sequoia National Monument. Transfer of control of the Monument to the Park Service, where the world’s largest trees will finally be protected, is long overdue. For instance, 3.6 million board feet is currently being logged right now within the boundaries of the Monument. Also, the Federal District Court recently ordered the Forest Service to stop logging four other commercial cuts, slated to remove 19 million board feet of trees from the Monument, because of the questionable legality of those projects.”

“Fortunately, there is legislation pending in Congress which will transfer the Giant Sequoia National Monument into the national park system with its unmistakable duty to protect all of nature’s treasures in its care,” stated Carl Ross, Director of Save America's Forests. “That legislation, *The Act to Save America’s Forests*, also will end logging on millions of acres of ancient and roadless forests in the national forests, and will require the Forest Service to attempt ecosystem restoration of the areas damaged by decades of abuse.” The *Act to Save America’s Forests*, sponsored by Representatives Anna Eshoo (D-CA) and Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), is supported by many of the world’s leading scientists, including Dr. E.O. Wilson, Dr. Jane Goodall, and the Union of Concerned Scientists, as well as over 100 members of Congress.

***Sequoia ForestKeeper's** mission is to protect and restore the ecosystems of the southern Sierra Nevada – including both Sequoia National Forest and the Giant Sequoia National Monument – through monitoring forest conditions, awareness of laws, education, and litigation. By acting as the eyes, ears, and voice of the forest, SFK seeks to improve land management practices, to promote land stewardship, to enforce existing laws and regulations, to implement public awareness programs, to offer assistance to local land management agencies, and to save natural forest ecosystems.*

***Save America's Forests** is a coalition of citizens, groups, scientists, and businesses dedicated to research, education, and advocacy for the protection and restoration of the world's disappearing wild forest ecosystems and native biodiversity. Founded in 1990, our primary goal in the U.S. is to establish new policies to protect the last wild areas in our national forests, including Ancient and roadless forests, and to permit only ecologically sustainable forestry outside those core areas. Internationally, we are working to protect rare, biodiverse tropical rain forests, as well as the rights of the indigenous people who live in those forests.*

***Forests Forever** is a state-wide California environmental group, whose mission is to protect and enhance the forests and wildlife habitat of California through educational and legislative activities; and to recruit, educate, and train articulate and effective organizers in the skills needed to convey our position on the state's forests and wildlife habitat to the citizens of California.*

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