

There Has Never Been A ‘Timber War’

Greg King, *Siskiyou Land Conservancy*

There has never been a ‘Timber War’ in California. Rather, in the redwoods there has been an ongoing one-sided assault against the forest, and against activists who, in modern times, have risked their liberty and their lives in large part to enforce state and federal laws. This essay is an attempt to demystify the history of this assault and the citizenry’s response to it.

To start, it’s important to keep in mind that crimes against activists and public trust resources (water, wildlife, fisheries) have almost always been treated with indifference, or complicity, in California by police agencies, elected officials, and regulators. Beginning in the mid-1980s, violence against activists was regarded as inconsequential, even desirable. Perpetrators of violence enjoyed an unspoken impunity that environmentalists could never hope to achieve.

For a war you have to have violence on both sides. This was no war. When someone detonated a pipe bomb under the driver’s seat of Judi Bari’s car in 1990, severely injuring her and Darryl Cherney, rather than investigate the attack the FBI and Oakland Police arrested the pair for ‘transporting’ the bomb. The police agencies would later lose a \$4.4 million lawsuit against the pair for violating their constitutional rights. A few months earlier, when Bari reported to the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors that she had received dozens of death threats, including the latest, an illustration of a rifle-scope superimposed over her face, Supervisor Marilyn Butcher said, “You brought it on

yourself, Judi.” A few months before that, Judi’s car was rammed from behind by the same logging truck she had blockaded the previous day. Her young daughters were in the backseat. The car was totaled. When she reported the attack to the Mendocino County Sheriff’s office a deputy told her, “If you turn up dead then we’ll investigate.”



Figure 1. Judi Bari at a rally in San Francisco, 1995 (photo provided by author)

In 1989 the owner of a Humboldt County log hauling company, whose truck full of Pacific Lumber (PL) logs was blockaded by activists at the intersection of Highway 101 and Highway 36, struck a protester who was trying to take his picture. A Humboldt County Sheriff’s Deputy stood a few feet away and witnessed the assault, but he did nothing.

In 1997, David “Gypsy” Chain died under a tree felled by a logger who previously had been videotaped threatening to kill activists. The Humboldt County Sheriff’s Department and District Attorney’s office did nothing.

ing about it. Between September 25 and October 16, 1997, the Humboldt County Sheriff's Department three times responded to peaceful protests by swabbing activists' eyes with Q-tips soaked in pepper spray. One of the activists was just sixteen years old. Amnesty International called the attacks "cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment ... tantamount to torture."

The pattern of assaults leveled against activists mirrored the ongoing attacks against the forest itself, which was the greatest crime of all. Overseeing and sanctioning assaults against the forest were the California State Board of Forestry and the state Department of Forestry. The *de facto* role of these agencies was to facilitate decades of illegal activity by the timber industry. Had state officials actually done their jobs, had they enforced the provisions of the 1973 Z'Berg-Nejedly Forest Practices Act and the important court decisions of the 1980s, we would today be enjoying a much different conversation. We would be celebrating the sustained economic growth created by maintenance of low-impact, low-yield forestry in production of a consistent inventory of high-quality forest products. There might very well still be a commercial salmon fishery rather than salmonid extinctions. We could be smiling warmly at that fair town of Scotia, still 'paradise with a waiting list' full of multi-generational timber families rather than its current status as a newly realized real estate market, stripped of historical and cultural relevancy.

It is difficult for me to write about redwood logging without falling into a form of trenchant, black-and-white prose. When it comes to timber workers, there is a lot of gray. Give people good paying jobs that don't require the obliteration of forest life — as the 'old' Pacific Lumber did before being bought out by Houston-based Maxxam Corp., in 1985 — and they will be more than satisfied. In fact, on November 17, 1985, when the Maxxam takeover was not yet a done deal,

nearly five hundred courageous PL employees — more than half the work force — signed a full-page newspaper advertisement opposing the takeover. Looking at what happened thereafter, however, the contrast increases.

After the ad ran, Maxxam's notorious CEO Charles Hurwitz dropped into Scotia to deliver his infamous 'golden rule' speech, which reminded workers that "he who has the gold, rules." Hurwitz and his army of lawyers then put this kingly maxim into effect by ordering PL's President John Campbell and Public Affairs Manager Dave Galitz, among others, to ferret out and quiet any workforce agitators. In this respect, at least, those two were good at their jobs. In 1989, after I was attacked by a chainsaw-wielding logger, Galitz sent a memo to Pacific Lumber President John Campbell that said, "As soon as we find the fellow who decked Greg King he has a dinner invitation at the Galitz residence."

It's worth noting that only in modern times has California even had forest practice laws. They were fairly late in coming. During the mid-1800s the post-European migration across North America brought to the West settlers and businessmen who would 'discover' the most extraordinary forest ever known, only to methodically begin cutting every accessible tree. These individuals included my ancestors, four King brothers who, in the 1870s, emigrated from Ontario, Canada — where they and their Irish grandfather had logged the great pines for English ship masts — to Sonoma County to cut and mill the fabulous ancient redwoods along the lower Russian River. Some saw it coming. In 1852, California Assemblyman Henry A. Crabb proposed legislation to keep all of the state's redwoods in public ownership, as they then were. The measure failed, and soon enough 160-acre federal land grants were being acquired by 'entrymen' — usually loggers, miners, and sailors — and then consolidated by middlemen who then sold 'batches' of land to industrial timber interests. This consolidation

continued for decades, such that today the timber empires of Green Diamond and Humboldt Redwood Company/Mendocino Redwood Company together own more than half of the commercially available redwood inventory that remains in the two-million-acre redwood biome.

The felling of the redwoods was swift. In Humboldt County logging began just one year after the Gregg Party stumbled on Humboldt Bay, in 1849. The first Guerneville redwoods fell in 1865, and the old growth trees were gone well before my grandfather was born there, in 1903. In 1870 East Bay Area industrialist W.G. Alban remarked, “A thousand years of unceasing toil, even with the increased facilities for making lumber, cannot seriously mar this forest.” Nonetheless, in 1879 U.S. Secretary of the Interior Carl Shurz asked Congress to set aside 50,000 acres of ancient redwoods for a preserve, but he was ignored. Over the next two decades, activists fought to create a park at Big Basin, north of Santa Cruz. There, in 1902, the state accepted 2,500 acres of ancient redwood for California’s first state park. Six years later, in what the national *Journal of Education* called “one of the most unique petitions ever sent to Uncle Sam,” fourteen hundred Eureka school children sent a petition to the U.S. Forest Service asking for creation of a Redwood National Park. The *Journal* noted that “the children give good reasons for the establishment of the national park. It has only been a few years since the redwood trees stood thick around the larger towns of Humboldt county (sic), but now all the readily accessible timber has been removed, and the people see the time when the redwood groves will have disappeared.”¹

The Humboldt County Federation of Women’s Clubs, which had instigated the

children’s petition, in 1913 asked Congress to create a Redwood National Park. But it wasn’t until a cadre of well-connected *men* got involved that the idea of a redwood park on the North Coast gained traction. When the male-dominated Save-the-Redwoods League was established in 1918, a hefty 1.4 million acres of the two-million-acre redwood biome still stood. The Eureka women remained a force in the campaign, even going so far as to physically blockade logging in what is now Rockefeller Forest, where they frequently enjoyed picnics.

The U.S. Congress passed its first Redwood National Park Act in 1920 and created a committee to determine the best place to establish one, but nothing came of it — at least not for forty-eight more years. In between, more than one million acres of the remaining ancient redwood forest was decimated.

California’s first significant statute to address abusive logging was the state Forest Practice Act of 1945. According to *Ecology Law Quarterly*, the legislation was “primarily the product of the timber industry lobby. ... No attempt was made to provide for any public interest beyond that in the continuous production of timber.”² The timing was no coincidence. After World War II, timber companies embarked on a retooling and modernization binge, in anticipation of what by the 1960s would become the fastest redwood logging in history (more than 1 billion board feet per year). Tractors developed for use in warfare found new applications in the redwoods. Steep and previously inaccessible groves suddenly became fair game, and it was now much easier to bulldoze streams into haul roads. Understanding what was at stake, and watching state officials serve timber in-

¹ Trustees of Boston University, publishers. 1908. “Educational Intelligence.” *Journal of Education* 67(10):278. Quotes from p. 278.

² Lundmark, Thomas. 1975. “Regulation of Private Logging in California.” *Ecology Law Quarterly* 5(1):139-188. Quote from p. 141.

terests, in 1945-1946, California Congresswoman Helen Gahagan Douglas wrote legislation to create a 2.8 million-acre "Franklin Delano Roosevelt National Forest" that would include all of the redwood lands from Sonoma County to the Oregon border. The California Legislature voted 60-9 to oppose the bill, with several lawmakers calling it 'socialistic,' an irony given that the lands had belonged to the federal government in the first place. The bill did not pass Congress.

By the time Congress finally created a Redwood National Park, in 1968, approximately 300,000 acres of ancient redwood remained standing. By this time the catastrophic floods of 1955 and 1964 — exacerbated by immeasurable loads of logging slash and hillside rock — had severely damaged the park's Redwood Creek, as well as streamside redwoods in protected habitats such as Bull Creek in Rockefeller Forest.

Activists, particularly at the Sierra Club under David Brower, wanted a 'ridge to ridge' Redwood National Park to prevent just this sort of devastation. What they got was a long, narrow riparian zone of redwoods (including three of what were then considered to be the world's tallest trees) that they ruefully called 'the worm,' along with a promise to expand the park once Arcata Redwood Co., Miller-Rellim, Simpson Timber, and Louisiana Pacific were done logging the hillsides.

This was the point at which California officials understood that it was up to them to reign in destructive, unregulated logging practices — or at least to convince an increasingly horrified public that they were doing so. With passage of the 1973 Forest Practices Act, private timber owners were now required to create Timber Harvest Plans (THPs) drawn up by Registered Professional Foresters. A THP had to be reviewed and approved by the California Department of Forestry (CDF) before logging could commence. Overseeing CDF was the state Board of Forestry, which was charged with developing

logging rules. Other agencies, notably the California Department of Fish and Game and the regional Water Quality Control Boards, could also provide input, though CDF was not required to abide by any of their recommendations.

Importantly, in 1976 the California Secretary of Resources certified the THP as the 'functional equivalent' of an Environmental Impact Report under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). A key provision of CEQA is that project managers must consider any "significant, cumulative, adverse, environmental effects" of a plan — in this case a THP — not only as it stands alone, but when viewed in conjunction with any "past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future" plans adjacent to or near the plan in question.

Finally, after more than a century of unregulated and wholly destructive logging throughout the ancient redwood biome, laws existed to prevent further damage. But it turns out that these laws were meaningless, because they were never enforced. What happened next was revolutionary, and leads us, finally, to the reason that North Coast communities experienced tree-sits, road blockades, mass protests, and arrests during the 1980s and 1990s.

During the 1970s and into the 1980s, Georgia Pacific Corp. was busy liquidating the last old-growth redwood forests along the Sinkyone Coast, in northwestern Mendocino County. Logging from the ridgetop downward, GP was clear-cutting its way through Little Jackass Creek, a five-hundred-acre watershed that drains to the Pacific Ocean. By 1983 the company had taken every last tree in Little Jackass Creek except a seventy-five-acre 'plug' at the bottom of the watershed. When I first visited Little Jackass Creek, in March 1986, I hiked through this tiny grove — named for Sally Bell, one of the last Sinkyone Indians who lived in the area — and

paused at what activists had named the ‘Medicine Tree.’ Prayer flags and trinkets festooned the old behemoth redwood that grew magically from the edge of a knoll, overlooking the confluence of three tributary streams. I kept hiking until I emerged into an amphitheater of devastation that surrounded Sally Bell Grove. The contrast between the small thumbnail of living, thriving forest and the destruction all around it was clear enough. In that year of record rains, newly denuded slopes dumped entire hillsides of topsoil into the small tributaries of Little Jackass Creek, in some places damming the streams.

In 1983, when Georgia Pacific submitted, and CDF approved, a six-page checkbox THP to clear-cut Sally Bell Grove, the nascent Environmental Protection Information Center (EPIC) sued Georgia Pacific and CDF, charging that logging would violate CEQA’s cumulative impacts clause. Georgia Pacific immediately sent in loggers, who headed straight for the Medicine Tree. Dozens of North Coast activists stormed the grove, one of whom draped his body across the logger’s arms as the giant chainsaw ripped into the ancient conifer. Stunned, the logger turned off his saw, and logging ceased until a judge could hear the case.

The lawsuit, *EPIC v. Johnson*, contended that Georgia-Pacific’s THP failed to “comply with all provisions of CEQA [that require] GP to analyze the cumulative impacts of its combined old-growth logging projects in the Sinkyone coast.” In 1985 the California Appellate Court agreed. EPIC won the case, which set statewide precedent.

Just a few months later, Houston-based Maxxam Corp. bought out Pacific Lumber, which brings us to the final chapter of ancient redwood liquidation. Maxxam CEO Charles Hurwitz and his platoons of attorneys adeptly researched California timber laws and, more importantly, the individuals charged with enforcing them, and saw clear sailing ahead. Elected officials were also soft

targets. One of many examples, Congressman Doug Bosco regularly carried water for Maxxam; when he was finally voted out of office, in 1990, he went to work for Hurwitz.

Virtually no one at the county, state, or federal level saw anything to oppose when a Houston company enlisted a trio of soon-to-be convicted financial felons to float nearly \$800 million in junk bonds, illegally ‘park’ stock to bolster Maxxam’s bid, and wrest control of Pacific Lumber from its stockholders. Maxxam came into Humboldt County with a well-deserved, and well known, reputation for buying companies, liquidating their assets, and then discarding the corporate carcass through bankruptcy. There was no mystery as to where this was all heading.

At the time of the takeover, Pacific Lumber’s holdings included six major groves totaling eight thousand acres of un-entered, pristine old growth redwood, or about 10 percent of all such remaining forest. Crucially, PL also owned fifty-six thousand acres of ‘residual’ old-growth redwood, stands that were left when the ‘old’ PL selectively cut only about half the trees. Most of this un-entered and residual old growth redwood inventory was contained in a single contiguous expanse of more than fifty thousand acres that blanketed the Yager/Lawrence Creek watershed and the headwaters of Elk River. Here was the richest, most ecologically viable redwood habitat in the world, more than twice the size of the next largest old growth redwood island (in Humboldt Redwoods State Park).

Maxxam got to work. In 1986 Maxxam submitted THPs proposing to log nearly ten thousand acres of old growth, double PL’s 1985 total. The company also changed its silvicultural system from selection to clear-cutting. Maxxam addressed EPIC’s Appellate Court victory in *EPIC v. Johnson* by amending PL timber harvest plans with the following disclaimer: “There

THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A 'TIMBER WAR'

are no other existing or planned land use activities, including but not limited to other THPs in the area of the proposed THP which may combine with the effects of this timber harvest to cause significant adverse cumulative environmental effects.”

At the same time, the State Board of Forestry drafted a four-member ‘task force’ – consisting of a Board staff counsel, a private Mendocino County registered professional forester, a senior attorney from the right-wing Pacific Legal Foundation, and a timber industry lobbyist – to address cumulative impacts. Soon after, the Board included Maxxam’s cumulative effects disclaimer as a final question at the end of the check-box THP: “Are there any other existing or planned land use activities including but not limited to other THPs in the area of the proposed THP which may combine with the effects of your timber harvesting operation to cause significant adverse cumulative environmental effects? ___ yes ___ no.”

Whereas Maxxam felt like its disclaimer was enough, the state, in the form of CDF, sought to bolster its approval of what was, under CEQA, clearly an illegal juggernaut of coming cumulative impacts. Throughout 1986 and into 1987 CDF supplied the following comments on Pacific Lumber THPs, startling examples of state fealty toward timber interests.

CDF Comments on Proposed 125-acre Clear-cut of Un-entered Ancient Redwood, South Fork Yager Creek:

“Tractor logging and new road construction will contribute to surface soil erosion, but it is unlikely to be significant at this time. Mass soil movement may happen but to say that it will be significant is to (sic) early. New road construction and tractor logging may somewhat decrease water quality but only for a short time period. It cannot be judged at this time if it will be significant. This stand of old-

growth timber has direct access to the public, however it cannot be judged at this time if aesthetics would be significantly impacted. No endangered species were noted during the inspection. Old-growth timber has been noted to shelter all types of plants and animals. Unless one observes these species it cannot be judged if any significant impact would occur.”

CDF Comments on Proposed 40-acre Redwood Clear-cut on Stitz Creek:

“Several adjacent timber harvest plans are currently active in the Stitz Creek drainage basin and there will be new plans submitted in the future. What cumulative impacts these combined plans would have on the Stitz Creek drainage is difficult to judge. It is certainly an issue to study and evaluate over time. Erosion from all logging activities could result in some significant cumulative impacts, but it is not likely to be adverse.”

CDF Comments on Wildlife Habitat

Perhaps most astounding was CDF’s treatment of wildlife in the ancient redwoods. Here the state was most creative, as evidenced in several proposed operations:

- “A general short-term improvement for wildlife habitat is seen from this plan.”
- “Wildlife habitat may be improved.” “Possible minor improvement to wildlife habitat.”
- “Some deer habitat will be improved.”
- “No special wildlife areas were observed.”
- “Generally speaking old-growth timber will support some rare, threatened, or endangered species. However, none were observed during the inspection.”

Reading through CDF records in 1986, one Maxxam THP stood out. It proposed clear-cutting ninety-six acres of un-entered old-growth redwood at the mouth of Thompson Creek, where it flows into the Eel River. Along with the usual justifications for approval, a CDF forester, in an unusually divulging revelation, had written, "This is the last piece of virgin timber in this area. The timber stand is very impressive and 'park like' in appearance."

This was the last of PL's 'old school' flat groves alongside the Eel River, three miles upriver from Founders Grove in Humboldt Redwoods State Park. Several trees were over 350 feet tall and close to two thousand years old. Perhaps most unbelievable about this THP, aside the fact that Maxxam would so cruelly target it for liquidation almost immediately after the takeover, was the response of California's wildlife agency, then called the Department of Fish and Game. Because an osprey nest was found in one of the trees, the state asked PL to preserve a few redwoods around the tree until after nesting season, then the trees could be cut. In his evaluation of the logging plan, Fish and Game wildlife biologist John Hummel wrote, "The Pacific Lumber Company foresters have done a commendable amount of work to ensure retention and protection of this important wildlife site. The clear-cut silvicultural method will result in a reasonably undisturbed and natural appearing condition by the second season."

I spent much of 1986 and 1987 attending excruciating 'review team meetings' at the CDF office in Fortuna, during which state officials discussed PL's proposed timber harvest plans. Normally these meetings included PL's chief forester Robert Stephens, flanked by anywhere from two to four enormous henchmen who looked like they'd just come from the front lines of a professional football game. During the first couple of

years after the takeover, before the lawsuits started flying, agency representatives never found anything inappropriate with the PL logging plans. That is until one day, in early May 1987, when, inexplicably, Stephens and company failed to show up.

Up for discussion were three of the most destructive logging plans that Maxxam had ever devised, including the proposed clear-cutting of two hundred seventy-four acres in the heart of three-thousand-acre Headwaters Grove, at the time the largest single ancient redwood island remaining outside of parks. Naturally CDF's Stephen Davis had concluded that the THPs would have "minimal impacts" on wildlife. "Some wildlife may benefit," he said.

Incredulous, and with tape recorder running, I asked Davis if he really believed that clear-cutting the last of the world's ancient redwood habitat would 'benefit' wildlife.

"I don't think there's a cumulative effect on those," he said.

"You don't think so. You don't think that by eliminating old-growth in general, old-growth dependent species will also be eliminated?"

"There's plenty of habitat out there," said Davis.

In desperation I turned to John Hummel. You're a wildlife biologist, I said. Please tell me that Davis is wrong. In the clearest come-to-Jesus moment I've ever personally witnessed, Hummel completely changed the tune he'd been whistling for more than a year. He said:

You have specific species of wildlife that are dependent upon old-growth stands, and they could vary from mammals, birds, insects, amphibians, and non-aquatic species. If their habitat is taken away from them you're going to lose a significant number of the population of certain species. They don't

have the ability to move from one spot to another unless the habitat is the same. If you take this particular stand out of circulation by cutting it down, those species don't move next door. This is an ecological concept that was understood many, many years ago. The population is going to decrease. You'll lose it. There's no question about that.

Shortly after Hummel spoke, CDF review team chairman Dave Drennan recommended that the three Maxxam plans be approved, and they were. EPIC sued, citing Hummel's comments (published in *The Humboldt News Service*), and won.³ During the trial EPIC's attorney asked Hummel why he had never before spoken out against proposed THPs. Hummel said that he often felt intimidated and even physically threatened by company *and* state foresters. The judge's ruling not only condemned CDF's 'rubber stamp' approval of clearly illegal THPs, but acknowledged the dangers of intimidation that state and private foresters regularly leveled against analysts from the Department of Fish and Game and the state Regional Water Quality Control Board.

On May 18, 1987, two weeks after the review team meeting, Humboldt County Earth First! staged its 'National Day of Direct Action' against Maxxam at five locations: Wall Street, Maxxam's corporate headquarters in Houston, another Maxxam office in Los Angeles, the Pacific Lumber sales office in San Francisco, and the company's Fisher log deck in Carlotta, where hundreds of people gathered to protest logging. At the same time, six would-be tree sitters were caught trying to climb redwoods in an active PL logging operation. While Earth First, in 1986, had staged three protests against Maxxam, the National Day of Direct Action inaugurated a coordinated and ceaseless response to

Maxxam's assault on the forest. It would become the most sustained direct-action campaign against any single company in the history of environmental activism, and it occurred precisely because state and federal officials refused to do their jobs.

While the physical bulk of each timber harvest plan ballooned to the size of a Los Angeles phone book, little of substance changed after EPIC's victory. Maxxam continued logging its two hundred eleven thousand acres at an unprecedented rate. In 1988 and 1989 the company proposed three more THPs to cut the heart of out Headwaters Grove. When EPIC sued on these plans Maxxam responded by illegally carving a two hundred-foot wide road one mile into the center of Headwaters Grove. The company called it a 'wildlife study trail.' The new road flanked the fragile Little South Fork Elk River and clogged the pristine stream with forty centimeters of silt.



Figure 2. Darryl Cherney and Earth First! plant trees in a PL clear-cut, 1988 (photo provided by author)

³ EPIC v. Maxxam I. *Humboldt News Service*, May 11, 1987.

Every year in Mendocino, Humboldt, and Del Norte counties, industry submitted, agencies signed off on, and CDF approved hundreds of illegal THPs. There was simply no economic or energetic means of bringing lawsuits against more than a few of these plans, and this equation clearly informed the corporate decision-making processes at Maxxam and other timber companies such as Louisiana Pacific, Georgia Pacific and Simpson (now Green Diamond). No wonder people climbed trees and blockaded roads. What else was left?

Perhaps most infuriating was Maxxam's endgame. The hubris rose all the way to the top, to the Clinton Administration. President Bill Clinton appointed California Senator Dianne Feinstein to arbitrate a 'deal' to 'save' Headwaters Grove – but only that three-thousand-acre island and a small buffer of cutover land. (Feinstein's husband, Richard Blum, was a business partner of Charles Hurwitz.) For this Maxxam received \$480 million in taxpayer money, plus another \$500 million in tax credits; in total, more than Maxxam paid for all of Pacific Lumber. The 'deal' brought Maxxam's profits from Pacific Lumber to somewhere around \$3 billion. Maxxam was not required to pay down the debt incurred with the PL takeover, which still hovered at around \$800 million. The court decisions did convince CDF to finally do its job, as Maxxam would soon rack up more than two hundred violations of the Forest Practices Act. Then, in 2007, PL declared bankruptcy.

Here was a classic corporate Ponzi scheme from beginning to end. The bankruptcy was predictable, being a Maxxam specialty. Indeed, the whole scheme was prearranged. In 1988 Maxxam contracted with the Emeryville, California company Pacific Meridian Resources to analyze possible outcomes of the takeover. In a remarkable secret report issued to Maxxam eleven years before Headwaters Forest was finally protected, and

nineteen years before Pacific Lumber declared bankruptcy, Pacific Meridian identified four "management alternatives [for] feasible timber management regimes available to the Pacific Lumber Company." Three of the four alternatives imagined a twenty-year process of redwood liquidation; the fourth option was to maintain PL's "pre-1985 harvest levels." Obviously Maxxam chose the heavier cut, settling on the option to "continue ... the current regime [of 1986-87] harvesting between 250-280 mmbf [million board feet] per year for 20 years ... except a 3000-acre tract of virgin old growth redwood is preserved."

This was a well-planned and viciously executed assault. There was never a 'war,' though the collateral damage was huge. Timber workers went from multi-generations of sustainability to a shattering of their communities. Activists were jailed, assaulted, pepper-sprayed, bombed, and murdered for doing the jobs of cowed and corrupted regulators and elected officials. And the forests – old growth and second growth redwood alike, from southern Mendocino County to the Oregon border – were treated like fields of corn, as if there was no such thing as wildlife habitat.

In March 1987, when I made the first activist hike through what I would later name Headwaters Forest, I exited the grove into a very fresh Maxxam clear-cut, on the south side. Inside the grove I'd experienced an arboreal wonderland unlike I'd ever seen or felt. The redwoods were immense – later I would find a behemoth measuring twenty feet in diameter – but that wasn't the most compelling aspect of this grove. It wasn't just grand, monolithic, breathtaking, and unreal. It was *peaceful*. The forest was peace itself. The stillness, the quiet, the living beings that had stood for two millennia, the patience and fragility of the place: these were otherworldly characteristics.

THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A 'TIMBER WAR'

When I reached the clear-cut I was stunned by the heat, the devastation. Indeed, it looked like a war zone. I was more sad than angry, and I told myself I would dedicate my life to protecting what was left. As I walked up through the caked mud out of Salmon Creek, I noticed everywhere on the logging road, and scattered throughout adjacent slopes, hundreds and eventually thousands of desiccated yellow-spotted millipedes. I'd seen a few of these delightful creatures crawling around inside the forest, where they would capture my gaze for minutes on end. In this wasteland the tiny arthropods had no chance of survival. They were everywhere, like soldiers in those Civil War battlefield images. As I walked past and upon the millipede carcasses, I felt as if I was witnessing the future of humanity. Through the years I have never shaken that feeling, it has only gotten worse.

Greg King is an award-winning writer and photographer who began investigating redwood logging as a Sonoma County reporter in 1985. King is a descendent of a pioneer California family that during the 19th century owned one of the largest redwood mills in Sonoma County. The King Range Mountains in Humboldt County, and the King Ranch and Kings ridge in Sonoma County, are named for his family.



Figure 3. Greg King during a tree-sit in All Species Grove (PL land), 1987 (photo provided by author)
