



FORESTS FOREVER

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Keep Chainsaws out of the Monument

Bill would put Sequoia Monument under Park Service

A timber sale of more than 1000 acres in a forest that was supposed to be protected forever from logging was halted by judicial decision last week. It was the latest in a series of rulings affecting the U.S. Forest Service's logging plans in the Giant Sequoia National Monument, home to more than half of the world's remaining giant sequoia groves.

“Rather than bat these projects down in court one by one, we should take the monument out of the Forest Service's hands for good,” said Paul Hughes, executive director of Forests Forever, an environmental organization in San Francisco dedicated to protecting the forests of California.

A new bill recently introduced in Congress would do just that. The Act to Save America's Forests (S. 1897) would take the monument away from the Forest Service entirely and put it under the management of the National Park Service.

S. 1897 was introduced by Sens. Jon Corzine (D-NJ) and Christopher Dodd (D-CT) on Oct. 19. A companion bill will be introduced soon in the House by Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-CA).

The 327,769-acre Giant Sequoia National Monument was established by President Bill Clinton's proclamation in 2000.

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On Monday, Nov. 14, a federal judge put a stop to the Ice Project in the southern Sierra monument. Altogether, four recent court decisions have put limits on the Forest Service's logging plans there.

Yet other logging projects in the monument, such as the White River and Frog sales, are waiting in the wings. According to the Forest Service, these sales were planned before the monument was established, and are not subject to the provisions of the proclamation.

In stopping the Ice Project, U.S. District Court Judge Charles R. Breyer ruled that the Forest Service has ignored research on the project's potentially harmful effects on wildlife. This decision was similar to his Sept. 9 ruling that halted the Saddle Fuels Reduction Project in the monument. In that decision Breyer cited the Forest Service's failure to incorporate new findings on threats to the Pacific fisher into its logging plan.

The Forest Service claims that logging is needed to thin the forest and "preserve the ecosystem" in the monument. Yet the Park Service, which manages the adjacent Sequoia National Park, has been using prescribed fire to maintain its sequoia groves very successfully.

"The big trees seem to be doing quite well, even without the Forest Service's chainsaws," said Hughes.

In addition to placing the monument under the Park Service, S. 1897 would end clearcutting on all federal lands and stop logging and roadbuilding in the last wild roadless forests. It would require federal forest agencies to restore native biological diversity on our national forests.

Forests Forever strongly supports S. 1897.