



## Diggin' In: THE GIENGER REPORT

I've got to tighten up my column a bit—tried to cover too much in the last one. It's very difficult to condense multiple layers and amounts of information, when there's so much going on that requires attention. I will get into some limited details. For a closer look at the details regarding the AB 1492/Timber Regulation and Forest Restoration Program (TRFR), the Redwood Forest Foundation Inc. (RFFI), and the Usal Redwood Forest, you're going to have to go back to earlier columns that you can find at [treesfoundation.org](http://treesfoundation.org), or specifically at the Forest and River News archives at [go.treesfoundation.org/inspiring/newsletter/](http://go.treesfoundation.org/inspiring/newsletter/).

We sure are at multiple critical natural and cultural crises world-wide—and there are plenty of immediate examples in California and here on the North Coast. Jumping first to the Pope's recent tour and speech to Congress, it was very gratifying to hear him call attention to four exemplary Americans: Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr., Dorothy Day, and Thomas Merton. Most everyone of course is well versed in some regard about the stature of Lincoln and King, not so much for Day and Merton. Dorothy

Day was the cofounder of the Catholic Worker Movement and so much more. I referenced Thomas Merton a couple columns back citing his insightful analysis of the global worship of power and money. Delving into the example and meaning of Day's and Merton's lives helps bring good perspectives for our individual and collective decisions. I think that was the inspirational intent of the Pope—and to have it delivered in Congress was very powerful, regardless of your race, creed, or religion.

So how do we proceed in our region? How do we heal the damage to the land and the people on that land? Damage has been directly or indirectly inflicted over the last several hundred years. The resources have been massively depleted. There's a burgeoning population that cannot be adequately and sanely supported with the dominant paradigm colonial ownership models of constant growth and 'devil-take-the-hindmost' economic Darwinism of survival of the fittest.

Several observations and experiences show the starkness of our plight. I recently went on a tour of the Salt River Project

near Ferndale in the Eel River delta area. The project seeks to resurrect in some facsimile the natural balance of those river systems and landscape. In the later 1800s there was a seaport on the Salt River at Port Kenyon with the river 15 feet deep and 200 feet wide. Prior to the project, the seaport had diminished through massive siltation to a 3 or 4 feet deep channel, which was 6 feet wide. The presentation before the tour cited the heavy erosion of the soils in the watersheds of the Salt River by logging, ranching, and farming. The project, in concept for over 30 years, is phase by phase, restoring tidal connection—the tides had formally carried away the normal sediment inputs, keeping the channel deep and wide. The project is excavating the old channel to a fair degree. There are many construction details, like levees and tidal gates, and political issues that are integral to the effort. Just search "Salt River Ferndale CA" and check it all out. Take a tour. Little by little, that project and others in the lower Eel are trying to reestablish natural functions and balanced relationships vital to a viable future.

Have you noticed the log decks in our region? You may have to pay attention; there aren't that many anymore. You will notice that the overwhelming majority of the logs are 16 inches in diameter and smaller. That's the new 'high-grade' harvest in our depleted forests. The hoped for intelligent and creative renaissance for the Redwood Region's forests, cited as possible and necessary by Mike Fay and Lindsey Holm from their "Redwood Transect" featured in the National Geographic Magazine is surely not evident. Oh, in case you hadn't heard, the notorious media magnate Rupert Murdoch now owns "the



Downstream from Dillon Bridge over the Salt River's excavation and revegetating channel(s) project. For more info and photos on this project:  
<http://saltriverwatershed.org/projects/>



This shows a very large haul road crossing removal and daylighting of more than 100 yards of Steelhead habitat that was buried by aggraded material behind the haul road stream crossing. We're talking about 10,000 cubic yards or more removed and trucked to a stable flat at some distance away. The burying of and/or blockage of Steelhead habitat was a common occurrence during the tractor logging from 1946 and even into the early 1980s. For scale, note the people in the upper right.

PHOTOS THIS ARTICLE BY RICHARD GIENGER

Geographic”—oh, in a first step fired key staff and ‘fact-checkers.’

With the drought and this year’s (and recent past years’) many large wildland and urban/suburban wildland interface (WUI) fires, we’ve all gotten shaken up. The “Valley Fire” that swept through parts of Lake and surrounding counties this summer, destroying 1000s of acres and houses in the matter of hours and days, gave Armageddon/the fire-next-time gut-reaction in and beyond the region. The need for all communities to work together to reduce the likelihood of such disasters—and to be prepared when high winds drive fire that trumps all preparations—is more than obvious, and it is a regular part of the features in *Forest and River News*.

And speaking about working together, or not working together, we need to have a comprehensive funded program that educates people and enables landscape restoration and economic vitalization. This is way beyond the past restoration efforts and the current singular demonized focus on marijuana cultivation in rural areas. Basic measures to deal with roads, water, and forests need to be generally applied that are truly consistent with stewardship. We have a

cultural legacy of damage that has been accepted and encouraged as a precept for achieving a growth economy and social/physical dominance. The adverse impacts of the state-imposed ad valorem tax on standing timber (from 1946 to 1976 you were yearly taxed until you cut 70% of your timber) and the resulting gyppo logging era are much deeper than the adverse impacts of the so-called ‘green-rush’ of recent marijuana cultivation. They are not unrelated, and positive education with action needs to be taken that actually heals the land and provides the level of social and economic support to make that happen—and maybe even help get to a shared conservation ethic. This goes beyond sweeping it under the rug, or “we don’t need no stinkin’ warrants.”

### Quick updates:

🌿 RFFI is hiring its own staff for managing the Usal Redwood Forest. Campbell Global, hired by RFFI for management as part of the terms for the loan from Bank of America for acquisition of the Usal Redwood Forest, did some very good work, but a time for transition to a more purely RFFI-style management was due. RFFI is continuing the emphasis on restoration and is also looking to hire a Volunteer Coordinator in the next couple weeks.

## To Get Involved

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California Legislative Information  
www.leginfo.ca.gov

RFFI  
www.rffi.org

EPIC  
wildcalifornia.org

Forests Forever  
www.forestsforever.org/

The Cahto Tribe and others are becoming involved in actual stewardship on the land. See the photo of ‘day-lighted’ Steelhead habitat.

🌿 The Pilot Projects for the TRFR Program are moving ahead—with at least four projected to be done in the coming years. Of course there’s still intense issues of adequate public participation and funding to enable that participation. EPIC submitted some strong comments and suggestions, and Forests Forever continues its oversight and advocacy. Go to EPIC’s and Forests Forever’s websites for information. You can also reach out to me for really fresh perspectives and ‘haps’ updates. Public awareness and action are essential.

🌿 We all need to act to make that area between the South Fork of the Eel River and the Pacific, and the Humboldt/Mendocino County line and Highway 1 be manifested as reality for the real-stewardship conservation dream/model for future generations. Get informed, consult with all the surrounding communities, and check the RFFI website.

Much more to write, but for this column, it will have to wait until next time. 🌿

*Since arriving in the Mattole Valley of Humboldt County in 1971, Richard Gienger has immersed himself in homesteading, forest activism, and watershed restoration. Richard’s column covers a range of issues including fisheries and watershed restoration and forestry, plus describes opportunities for the public to make positive contributions in the administrative and legislative arenas as well as in their own backyards.*