



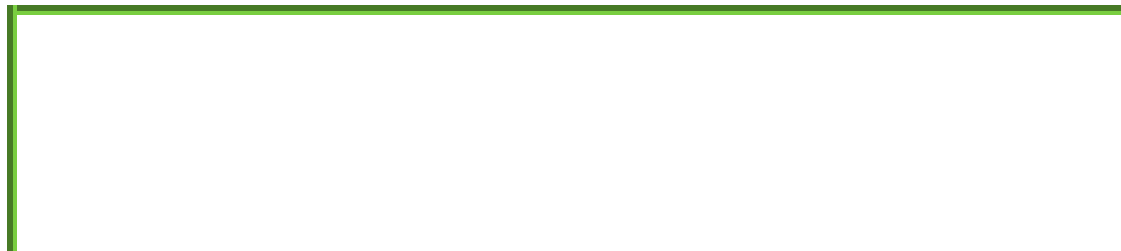
***Protecting our rural environment by promoting citizen
participation in sustainable land use planning since 2006***

The Community Action Project (CAP) administers the Calaveras Planning Coalition (CPC), which is comprised of regional and local organizations, community groups, and concerned individuals who promote public participation in land use and resource planning to ensure a healthy human, natural, and economic environment now and in the future.

Learn more at www.calaverascap.com

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In this edition of the ReCAP...

1. [Next CPC Meeting](#)
2. [BOS & PC Meetings](#)
3. [Chamber event outlines progress in the past year](#)
4. [Calaveras Local Fire Protection Tax Initiative](#)
5. [Map details where water wells are going dry](#)
6. [\\$20 million prescribed fire liability pilot program will help close insurance gaps](#)
7. [Climate change, logging collide - and a forest shrinks](#)
8. [World's largest tree wrapped in a fire-resistant blanket as wildfires threaten park](#)
9. [Sierra Nevada Conservancy Funding Opportunities](#)
10. [Poem: Rough Country by Dana Gioia](#)

Join Us!

Get a glimpse into what CPC membership is like by attending a meeting. There is no commitment, just show up and listen in!

Next Calaveras Planning Coalition Meeting

October 5, 2021 3 P.M. - 5 P.M.
New Members Welcome at CPC Meetings

Organizations, groups, and individuals (known as associate members) may join the Calaveras Planning Coalition (CPC). Prospective members may attend two consecutive meetings before making a final decision on membership in the Coalition. The membership form is a pledge to support and advocate for the Coalition's eleven Land Use and Development Principles, which you will find on our website:

www.calaverascap.com.

There is no membership fee. However, members are encouraged to donate to the Community Action Project/Calaveras Planning Coalition. Visitors and prospective members will, by necessity, be excluded from attorney/client privileged discussions.

If you are interested in membership, please email CPC Facilitator Tom Infusino, tomi@volcano.net, to receive a membership form, agenda, and the Zoom meeting connection.

To help prevent the spread of Covid-19 in our county, all CAP and CPC meetings will be held online via Zoom until restrictions are lifted by the Public Health Department.

Board Of Supervisors September 21, 2021

Agenda Upcoming

Planning Commission Meeting September 23, 2021

Cancelled

Local News

Chamber event outlines progress in the past year

The Calaveras County Chamber of Commerce hosted an uplifting “State of the County” event Sept. 8 in the San Andreas Hall with speakers Derek Kirk from the Governor’s Office of Business and Economic Development; Benjamin Stopper, Calaveras County Board of Supervisors chair; Alvin Broglio, mayor of Angels Camp, and Abby Browning from the California Office of Emergency Services. The event was sponsored by Dignity Health.

The annual address, which is usually attended by hundreds, was scaled back to approximately 30 in attendance due to COVID-19 safety precautions. The event was also available online to those who registered.

Kirk shared information about the programs and assistance offered by the Governor’s Office of Business and Economic Development. They offer a range of no-cost consultation services to business owners including attraction, retention and expansion services, site selection, permit assistance, regulatory guidance, international trade development and assistance to small businesses.

“We continue to pivot with the changes,” said Kirk. “We’re in the sixth round of nine with the Small Business COVID Relief Program. Two hundred and thirteen businesses (in Calaveras County) have received \$2.5 million in grants. We’re creating a new program, California Venue Operators, with grants up to \$25 million. Eight hundred million is going to the small business loan program, \$600 million in the Community Resilience Economic Fund and \$500 million for housing and community housing. We’re also working with the Boost Program, serving under-resourced communities.”

“We have a good partnership with the federal government,” he added. “With the unprecedented fire season, we’re working with CalFire to support forestry management.”

Supervisor Stopper spoke about natural disasters, successes and trials.

“So far we have been fortunate to not have a major fire disaster in Calaveras this year,” he said. “We thank the firefighters.”

“The Board of Supervisors is working on making great strides and honing the permitting process,” said Stopper. “Doug Oliver has made online tracking available, and we have passed updated fees for permitting. We’re bringing in timelines and making a safe plan for houses that are fire worthy.”

Speaking about the pandemic, he said “It’s been a roller coaster ride with spikes. Retail and restaurants took a big hit, but they’re finding some relief with state and federal grants. I’m now over COVID, and I can tell you, please, for your own health – get the vaccination, use your masks. COVID also gave us unexpected affects – some locals moved out of the county, while some residents from the Bay Area moved in. This caused the inflation of housing prices significantly.”

“We have an employment issue and need workforce housing,” Stopper added. “We’re implementing the General Plan and a major part of that was passing the Land Use Plan. We’re also supporting retention of the water rights that we have in Calaveras County.”

With the Strategic Plan, Stopper said, “it’s all about how to move forward with expected goals and how we meet them. We’re working on a special task force, possibly bring in a facilitator. We want to do this right.”

Mayor Broglio discussed how Angels Camp went from being in fiscal danger to keeping Angels Camp prosperous through these challenging times.

“City Gate was adopted in 2018, a five-year action plan,” said Broglio. “It gave us a reality check and confirmed that the fiscal cliff was certain. Staff salaries were 72 percent of the budget, and the city was deficit spending. In addition, we were dealing with unfunded pension liability.”

“Forty-three percent of the staff is new, and everyone is cross-trained,” he said. “The increase in Transient Occupancy Tax and city taxes have allowed us to put \$2.5 million into reserves.”

He informed the audience about sidewalk and road improvement projects, including Highway 4/49 traffic mitigation and wayfinding signage.

He recognized the city staff, “the backbone to our city and our success and protecting our small town feel with planned growth.”

Upcoming projects may include a skate park and amphitheater in Utica Park, a new shopping center behind what used to be Swendemen’s and applying for a \$5.5 million infrastructure grant for Habitat for Humanity’s workforce housing project.

Abby Browning spoke about the positive side of COVID-19 and natural disasters.

“It’s been challenging with COVID,” she said. “We have to go through it to get to the other side. California is a disaster state, but we are resilient. The chamber has KN95 masks that we donated available for any business. It’s not only good for safety but help to filter smoke.”

“The Calaveras Business Resource Center is a good example of the good that can happen from a disaster,” she said. “We use this as an example for other counties.”

The center was created by the Calaveras Chamber with help from the Office of Emergency Services after the Butte Fire.

Browning spoke about a call she received from Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook. “He wanted to donate \$25 million to the government to help healthcare workers. We wanted to concentrate on the lowest wage earners in the health care industry and were able to provide \$50,000 in gift cards through VISA, \$500 each. It was the most moving thing I’ve ever done working on public service. It’s (what) makes all the difference when you can show that you really care.”

The event ended with encouraging words from Morgan Gace, chamber executive director. She shared about the chamber’s weekly restaurant spotlights, geared to help local eateries that have seen great challenges during COVID19. She explained the “Choose Calaveras” promotion through the Calaveras Business Resource Center, encouraging residents to shop locally.

“At any point we get to make the decision to choose better,” she said. “Challenge hate by bringing love.”

Calaveras Local Fire Protection Tax Initiative

Calaveras resident Dana Nichols provided the letter below describing the new initiative to increase sales tax by 1% to support our local fire districts.

Dear friend of Calaveras County's local fire protection agencies:

The clock is ticking for us to gather enough signatures to put a 1-cent sales tax for local firefighting on the ballot in Calaveras County. But the campaign is stalled because the Calaveras Local Fire Protection Committee does not yet have enough money to print and circulate the petition. We have until late February to gather 2,161 valid signatures of Calaveras County voters. Realistically, that means we need to gather at least 3,000 to allow for any that are not valid or duplicates.

Let me break it down for you. Last year, I was the chairman for a similar campaign that won approval for a local special tax in San Andreas Fire Protection District. That campaign spent about \$4,000 for its year-long effort to win approval. That was for just one fire district. The current effort includes all ten local fire agencies in the county and about 12 times as much population. So the total campaign will likely cost roughly \$40,000 to \$50,000 for campaign signs, materials, fees and expenses such as postage. But that campaign did NOT include the cost to print and circulate a petition, which adds about \$10,000 to the cost.

That first \$10,000 is key because of the complexity of California law for citizen initiatives. For one thing, it is crucial to design the lay out of the petition pages in a way that meets all legal requirements. (Look at California Election Code 9105). I drafted a possible petition, based on my non-lawyer reading of the law, and asked Calaveras County Clerk Recorder Rebecca Turner to look at it and tell me if it was adequate. Her response was that the law does not allow her to review a petition's design until after it is turned in with all the signatures. And that, it turns out, is why so many citizen initiatives fail, because the proponents only find out after gathering the signatures that their design for the petition didn't meet the law. I have now been told by county officials, printing company representative and even attorneys who have other specialties that the committee needs to hire an election law attorney. After interviewing several election law attorneys, it is clear that we will need somewhere between \$4,000 and \$ 5,000 for such legal services in the first months of our effort to get the petition designed and circulating. And we will need about that much again to hire a printer capable of producing a very long petition. The key problem is to somehow cram in required disclosures, and space for signatures, and space for the affidavit of the signature gatherer all on the same page, while also having the proper form for the rest of the six to eight pages required to include the entire ordinance and notice of intent in the petition.

So far I've fronted about \$700 of my personal money for expenses including filing fees, envelopes, postage, and internet services required when I built a website for the campaign. I donated my hours to build the website. I have also donated \$200 to the campaign. So I am out of pocket myself about \$900, which is about the limit for a family of our means. (I'm a retired newspaper reporter. I'm married to a retired nurse.) The campaign committee two weeks ago sent out 171 fundraising letters to individuals we believe are likely to be supportive of having adequate funding to staff our local fire agencies. In response to that letter, we've so far received about \$1,300 in donations. But just the retainer to hire the legal firm and get lawyers started on laying out the petition is \$3,000. And on my desk I have a \$180 bill for the cost to run the legal notice about the petition, which is a required step toward circulating it. Meanwhile, the 180-day period for gathering signatures began on Aug. 26 when the Calaveras County Counsel provided us with her Ballot Title and Summary for the initiative. So we are almost one month into our six-month period to gather signatures and

can't yet afford to get it designed and printed!

Our local committee in the San Andreas campaign was easily able to raise \$4,000 because we live here and knew who to ask. So I need your help. I am hoping that you, in your part of the county, can ask the right people, people who value fast fire response to protect property, who value fast medical emergency response to protect life.

Right now, the countywide committee needs \$10,000 to get the petition designed and circulating. That could come as two donations of \$5,000 each, or 20 donations of \$500 each, or 200 donations of \$50 each. If we all contribute based on what's right for us, we can get this done.

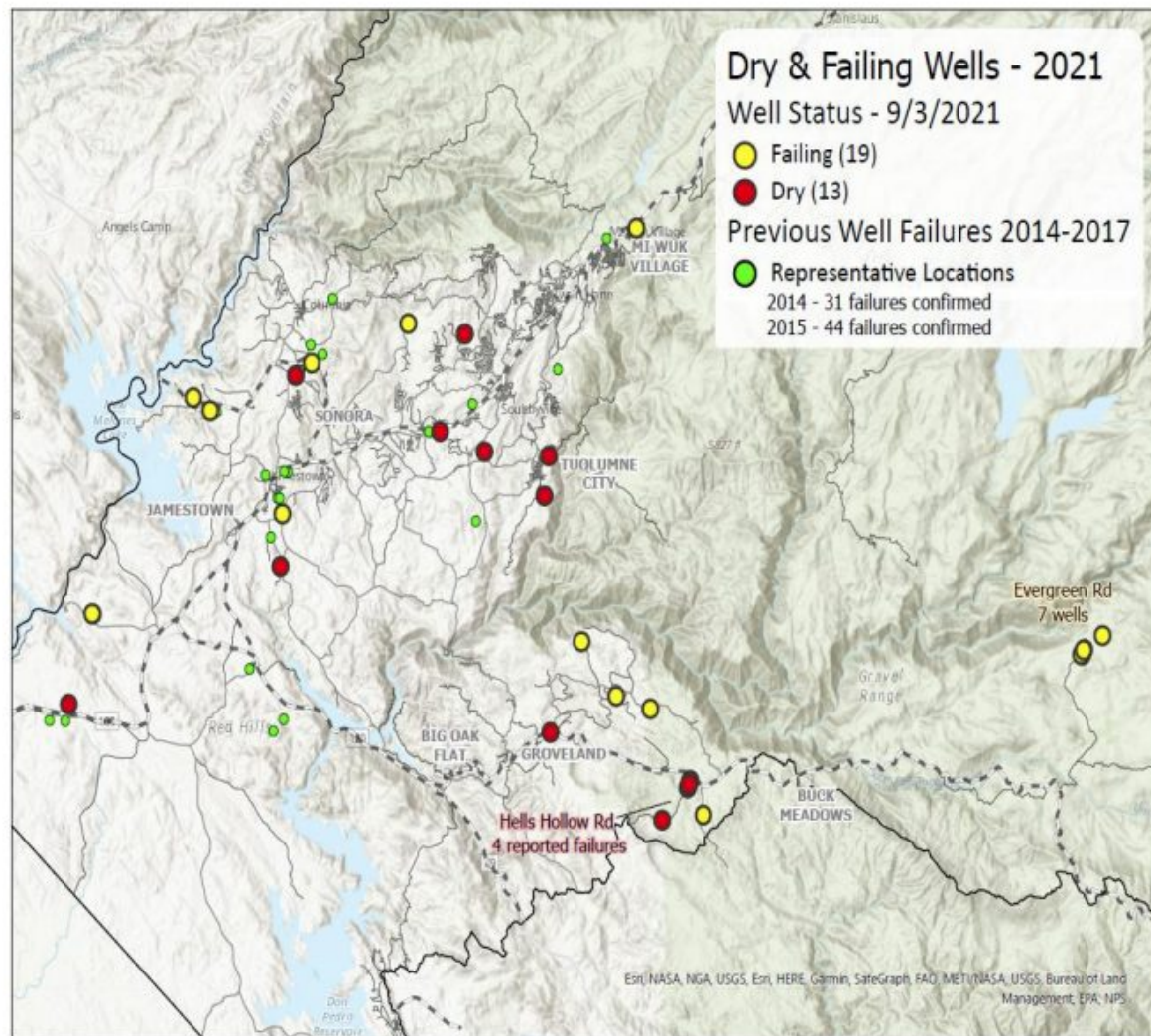
For more information on the campaign, go to calaveraslfp.org. The campaign website has forms you can get to from the Donate menu or a Contact Us button. Ask your supporters to print the form (or you can print it for them) and mail the donation to us. For those who need it, the California Secretary of State number for Calaveras Local Fire Protection Committee is 1440495.

And, of course, you are always welcomed to call me with questions.

Dana M. Nichols
209-768-9072

Map details where water wells are going dry

B.J. Hansen / mymotherlode.com / September 14, 2021



Sonora, CA — An increasing number of water wells are going dry in Tuolumne County, similar to the last significant drought experienced seven years ago.

The Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to continue a “Local State of Emergency” due to the drought.

During a presentation at today’s meeting, Office of Emergency Services Coordinator Dore Bietz noted that the county is looking into potential state grants and funding to provide potable water to those in need. She noted that many emergency water tanks still remain in place from the last drought, so they would simply need to get the water transported in those locations.

Bietz noted that there could be more challenges next year, even if there is a relatively wet winter.

Adding, “Most of the data, and most of the experts in this particular field, statewide, are saying that we may

get by, but really we are going to see the (bigger) impact next year. So, the process that we put in place to assist, and that will be up to the board about what we are willing to provide for individuals or businesses, will have to be discussed at a later date.”

For those already impacted, Community Development Director Quincy Yaley states, “If they are experiencing a well failure, or issue with their well, those applications are obviously fast-tracked. We’re moving those applications through, in an emergency sort of manner, to the front of the line.”

A map presented by Bietz at the meeting notes that so far this year there have been 19 failing and 13 dry wells. In 2014 there were 31 confirmed failures and in 2015 there 44.

Regional News

\$20 million Prescribed Fire Liability Pilot Program will help close insurance gaps

The Nature Conservancy / September 13, 2021

Science shows that prescribed fire is a critical tool in curbing catastrophic megafires in California. However, a major obstacle to increasing the pace and scale of prescribed fire is the inability of practitioners to procure the necessary liability insurance. The new Prescribed Fire Liability Pilot Program will alleviate that barrier by establishing a source of funding to pay for damages in the unlikely event that a prescribed fire escapes beyond fire lines. The pilot fund will serve as a “backstop” for the private insurance market.

The \$20 million to establish a pilot prescribed fire claims fund will increase the use of prescribed fire in California, helping to reduce growing megafire risks in the face of rising temperatures and dryer conditions due to climate change. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) applauds the leadership of Governor Gavin Newsom, Commissioner Ricardo Lara, Senator Bill Dodd, Assemblymember Laura Friedman, and Assemblymember Jim Wood.

“Returning beneficial fire to the landscape is essential to both forest health as well as reducing the impacts of megafires to our communities,” said Jay Ziegler, Director of Policy and External Affairs at TNC. “We greatly appreciate Governor Newsom, Commissioner Lara, and the Legislature for securing \$20 million to establish a prescribed fire claims fund as part of the wildfire resilience budget. This measure is critical to reducing the risks and impacts of massive and severe wildfires that are only expected to grow with climate change.”

"While prescribed fire is a top priority for reducing the risk of megafires fueled by climate change, lack of insurance is holding back local communities including tribal groups that have used fire constructively for millennia," said Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara, who strongly supported the Prescribed Fire Liability Pilot

Program in the state budget. "Creating a prescribed fire pilot program will provide data to insurance companies to write more policies and help us close the insurance gap to protect more Californians from wildfires."

"Lack of insurance has become increasingly limiting for prescribed fire in California, even while the state increases its prescribed fire commitments and investments," said Lenya Quinn-Davidson, area fire advisor for the University of California Cooperative Extension and director of the Northern California Prescribed Fire Council. "This new state-backed claims fund is a linchpin of California's future prescribed fire success, and it's the necessary complement to the liability protections afforded by SB332 (Dodd). With these policy changes, we will finally be able to effect real, positive change around prescribed fire in California."

The creation of the Prescribed Fire Liability Pilot Program is an important step towards getting more prescribed fire on the ground. By addressing the insurance barrier to prescribed burning, TNC and partners believe California stands a stronger chance of reducing the risk of megafires and promoting healthier, more resilient forests.

Climate change, logging collide - and a forest shrinks

Matthew Brown / AP / September 15, 2021

CUSTER CITY, S.D. (AP) — Looking down a hillside dotted with large stumps and nearly devoid of trees, a pair of retired U.S. Forest Service employees lamented logging policies they helped craft to deal with two harbingers of climate change — pine beetles and wildfires.

Timber production dramatically ramped up two decades ago in the Black Hills National Forest along the South Dakota-Wyoming border, as beetles ravaged huge expanses of forest and [worries grew over wildfires](#).

[The beetles left](#), but the loggers haven't — and they're now felling trees at twice the rate government scientists say is sustainable. That means the Black Hills forests are shrinking, with fewer and smaller trees.

Timber sales from federal forests nationwide more than doubled over the past 20 years, according to government data. In Washington, D.C., Republicans and Democrats alike have pushed more aggressive thinning of stands to reduce vegetation that fuels wildfires.

But critics of federal forest management say that in their fervor to do something about climate change, officials are allowing the removal of too many older trees that can actually better withstand fire.

In the Black Hills, stands of century-old ponderosa pines were thinned over the past two decades, then thinned again. In some areas, most of the remaining older and larger trees are being cut, leaving hillsides almost bare.

"Eventually you're not going to have any big trees on the whole forest," said Dave Mertz, who worked as a government natural resources officer overseeing Black Hills logging until retiring in 2017. "The timber industry is pulling the strings now. The Forest Service has lost its way."

DIRE PREDICTIONS

Across the western U.S., more trees have been dying as climate change dramatically alters the landscape and leaves forests more susceptible. Wildfires, insects and disease are the top killers, researchers say.

A sweeping government review of forest health surveys since 1993 found that the rate of trees dying increased this century and outpaced new growth in all eight states examined — Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming. Timber harvested from Forest Service lands over the past two decades also increased.

In the Black Hills, those two trends have collided. With more trees being logged and even more killed by beetles and fires in recent years, government scientists say the forest can't grow fast enough to keep up.

The timber industry and allies in Congress are pushing back against that conclusion. Timber company representatives predict dire economic consequences if forest managers sharply reduce harvest levels. And they say wildfires and beetle outbreaks would get worse.

One of the region's seven mills closed in March, eliminating 120 jobs in Hill City, South Dakota. Owner Neiman Enterprises said a recent slowdown in timber sales meant it wouldn't have enough logs.

"These companies aren't tech startups. They are multi-generational family companies that want to be there for the long term," said Ben Wudtke, director of the Black Hills Forest Resource Association of saw mills and logging companies.

FIGHTING FIRE

To counter growing havoc from western wildfires, Biden's administration wants to double the forest acreage thinned or treated with prescribed burns to 6 million acres (2.4 million hectares) annually — bigger than New Hampshire.

One method to reduce fire risk is to remove dense stands of small trees and thick underbrush that accumulated for decades as wildfires — a natural part of the landscape — were suppressed.

It's expensive, labor-intensive work, and there's little market value in small trees. When sworn in this summer, Forest Service Chief Randy Moore said combating climate change will require making it worthwhile to harvest smaller trees, such as using the vegetation as biomass to generate electricity.

"It doesn't pay for itself and we don't have markets that seem to be increasing quickly enough," he said.

The service's former deputy chief, Jim Furnish, criticized the agency as too focused on timber production and too slow to react to climate change, to the detriment of the forest.

There are signs of change under President Joe Biden, including the administration's move last month to end large-scale commercial logging of old-growth trees in Alaska's Tongass National Forest.

But other projects that include old-growth removal are pending, including in Montana's Kootenai National Forest along the Canada border, the Kaibab National Forest just north of the Grand Canyon in Arizona and Idaho's Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest.

"The Forest Service's approach to date has been to attack this as a management problem: 'We need to cut more trees,'" Furnish told The Associated Press. "You can't cut your way out of this problem."

Moore, the agency's chief, acknowledged the warming planet was forcing changes, but said he hoped to find a "sweet spot" between the environment and industry — while removing enough vegetation to reduce wildfire risk. In the Black Hills, officials said they would consider the latest science alongside economic impacts as they seek to make logging sustainable.

"We need the industry to help us," Moore said, referring to climate change. "It's not really about timber sales or cutting large trees."

"BEAT TO HELL"

The Black Hills played an outsized role in the early formation of the nation's timber policies. In the 1890s, excessive logging to feed demand for timbers for a nearby gold mine helped spur creation of the national forest system. The first regulated logging sales in forest service history took place there in 1899.

When artist and environmentalist Mary Zimmerman bought property within the Black Hills in 1988, neighboring public lands where that first timber sale took place had regrown so successfully that huge branches overhead "were like a cathedral."

The site was thinned in 1990, removing some big trees but leaving many. It was thinned more in 2016. Then logging crews returned last year and took out the remaining big trees. Cattle now graze the area.

"It's just beat to hell," said Zimmerman.

Her account was confirmed by Blaine Cook, forest management scientist for the Black Hills for more than two decades until his 2019 retirement.

EARLY WARNINGS

Cook said his monitoring began to show last decade that the forest's growth rate wasn't keeping up with aggressive logging that was a response to the pine beetle outbreak that began in 1998. The high harvest rate continued after the outbreak peaked in 2012 and even after it ended in 2017.

Cook said his warnings that the forest was being damaged were rejected by superiors who faced political pressure to provide a steady supply of logs to sawmills in South Dakota and Wyoming.

Disagreement within the agency over whether there was too much logging culminated in a report this April by scientists from the forest service's research branch that was unequivocal: Black Hills logging needs to be cut back by at least half, possibly more, to be sustainable.

The problem is that the forest changed but logging rates have not, said Mike Battaglia, one of the lead authors.

"In the late 90's, you had twice as much volume" of trees in the forest, he said. "To take out the same amount now, you're taking too much."

Forest industry representatives criticized the government's multi-year study for including only parts of the forest, saying that created an incomplete picture of how many trees are available to harvest.

They estimated up to 80% of the region's timber industry jobs would be lost if the forest service reduced logging to recommended levels. If that happens, they said the agency would have difficulty finding companies willing to do less profitable thinning work for wildfire protection.

"You have to have somebody around to do it," said the forest industry's Wudtke. "It's really critical that we keep these companies going."

World's largest tree wrapped in a fire-resistant blanket as wildfires threaten park

Gabriela Miranda / USA Today / September 17, 2021

As fire and ash spread through Sequoia National Park, fire-resistant aluminum blankets were wrapped around endangered giant sequoias, including the world's largest tree, General Sherman.

On Tuesday, the U.S. National Park Service closed Sequoia National Park after a pair of lightning-sparked wildfires, collectively known as the KNP Complex, in California's Sierra Nevada threatened the area that includes some of Earth's oldest trees.

The park remains closed to the public as firefighters "fiercely" put out the flames, NPS fire spokesperson Rebecca Paterson told USA TODAY.

Paterson said the aluminum blankets can withstand heat and flames for short periods of time and have been proven to protect homes and trees in the past.

The General Sherman Tree stands 275 feet tall and is over 36 feet diameter at the base, according to [NPS](#). In the past, NPS officials have noted that the parks' sequoia groves have shielded the giant trees from flames.

Fires across California: [Firefighters narrowly escape wall of fire while fighting California wildfire](#)

'A tipping point': [Some of world's largest trees threatened by fires in the Sierra Nevada](#)

Giant sequoias have adapted to fire and even rely on the heat from fires to release seeds from cones, according to NPS. The hope is the General Sherman Tree and others emerge unscathed from the KNP Complex.

"There's still so many areas to cover and protect, but we're crossing our fingers the General Sherman and giant sequoias make it through," Paterson said.

A crew has been sent to fight the 11.5-square-mile Paradise Fire and the 3-square-mile Colony Fire, which was closest to the sequoia grove, Paterson said. The Paradise and Colony fires comprise the KNP Complex.

The park's fires are the latest out of several this summer where various wildfires have scorched thousands of square miles and hundreds of homes.

Sierra Nevada
Conservancy
Funding
Opportunities
Newsletter
for September/
October



This is an electronic newsletter published every two months containing information on upcoming grant and funding opportunities for the Sierra Nevada region. The newsletter includes federal, state, and private foundation funders as well as additional resources and information related to grant funding. The Sierra Nevada Conservancy provides the Funding Opportunities Newsletter as a free resource under its Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program.

[Back to Top](#)



Mokelumne Peak(c) yosemitenorthphotography.com

Rough Country

By Dana Gioia

Give me a landscape made of obstacles,
of steep hills and jutting glacial rock,
where the low-running streams are quick to flood
the grassy fields and bottomlands.

A place

no engineers can master—where the roads
must twist like tendrils up the mountainside
on narrow cliffs where boulders block the way.
Where tall black trunks of lightning-scalded pine
push through the tangled woods to make a roost
for hawks and swarming crows.

And sharp inclines

where twisting through the thorn-thick underbrush,

scratched and exhausted, one turns suddenly
to find an unexpected waterfall,
not half a mile from the nearest road,
a spot so hard to reach that no one comes—
a hiding place, a shrine for dragonflies
and nesting jays, a sign that there is still
one piece of property that won't be owned.

from The Gods of Winter (1991): The Gods of Winter – Dana Gioia



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