

Frequently Asked Questions about Clearcutting

What is Clearcutting?

- A logging technique used by the forestry industry in which virtually all trees are removed from a plot of land, usually 20-30 acres at a time.
- After the plot is logged, the area is replanted with very few new species of trees, creating a tree plantation that resembles a cornfield instead of a forest.
- The land is then often treated with herbicides to stop any native vegetation from encroaching on the young commercial trees.

Where is clearcutting allowed?

On private forest lands in California. The state of California regulates logging on these lands.

I've driven through the Sierras and never seen any evidence of clearcutting.

Logging companies usually leave a "beauty strip" between the logged areas and the road. The devastated forest land is not visible from the road.

Why should I care about clearcutting?

Clearcutting threatens California forests, communities, water and wildlife. Clearcutting threatens our clean air and water for all Californians, can increase community fire risk and limits California's sustainable economy. This system wide degradation destroys wildlife habitat and has the potential to devastate California salmon fisheries. (See factsheets for more information.)

How does clearcutting affect me/ my drinking water?

Clearcutting threatens our clean water because of impacts to our critical watersheds. 75% of California water comes from forested watersheds. The Sierra Nevada is the source of 60% of the state's developed water supply. Clearcutting threatens the dependability of California's water supply on a statewide level.

I live in LA/SF/some California city, what happens in the California's forests doesn't affect me.

- Bay Area: The Mokelumne River provides 90% of water to the East San Francisco Bay Area. This watershed is being heavily clearcut.
- LA: Southern California receives a hefty portion of its water from the Sierra Nevada region, which is being heavily clearcut.

How does clearcutting affect fire control?

The California Department of Forestry says that the uniform high-density canopy fuel of plantation forests increases the intensity and mobility of wildfires.

How is clearcutting impacting California's economy?

- The Sierra Business Council has said that the deterioration of the area's natural assets reduces local property values as well as the quality of life for local residents.
- The Sierra Nevada Conservancy has stated that tourism and recreation based markets have become the most lucrative option within the Sierra Nevada Region. Forests need to be protected in order to support these highly profitable and sustainable industries.

What animals are affected by clearcutting?

Clearcutting negatively impacts a number of species that play a key role in the Sierra Nevada ecosystem including the California Spotted Owl, the Northern Flying Squirrel, the American Marten, the Pacific Fisher and the salmon that live along the Sacramento River.