FOREST UPDATE, March 2014

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1. Boulder Creek THP 1-13-082SCR draws neighbor opposition

This 112-acre THP was submitted to CalFire in September 2013. It underwent full review, then was recirculated in January 2014. Sometime during the following 30-day review period, neighbors along the proposed haul roads learned of the plan and submitted letters to CalFire opposing use of both Bloom Grade and West Hilton. The latter goes through the Boulder Creek Golf and Country Club, as well as winding its way through a sub-division with approximately 40 homes. Approximately 80 loaded log trucks are anticipated to haul along lower Bloom Grade and West Hilton Drive.

Complaints run the gamut from potential damage to asphalt paid for by property owners on an unimproved county road (Bloom Grade), unstable segments of road that could fail (West Hilton), unimproved segments (upper Bloom Grade), lack of county right-of-way (county disputes this), and public safety issues. CalFire has received 60 letters from concerned neighbors. Neighbors have also contacted their Supervisor and had a meeting with his aid (the Supe was out of town).

CalFire has requested that the RPF, Joe Culver, prepare an Alternatives Analysis for all possible haul routes. Once this is received by CalFire, a public meeting (not an Official Public Hearing) will be set up by Supervisor MacPherson’s office to give the public a chance to discuss the issue.

2. THPs currently under review

1. **1-13-082 SCR**; Peterson, Keedy, Kaylor, Gurrier, Rhoades, McCraw; Peterson, et al THP; 121 acres; Boulder Creek; J. Culver, RPF.
   Awaiting new haul route Alternatives Analysis from RPF.
   [ftp://thp.fire.ca.gov/THPLibrary/North_Coast_Region/THPs2013/1-13-082SCR/](ftp://thp.fire.ca.gov/THPLibrary/North_Coast_Region/THPs2013/1-13-082SCR/)

2. **1-13-107 SCR**; City of Watsonville; Grizzly Flat THP; 130 acres; Rattlesnake Gulch, Shingle Mill Gulch; C. Vaughan, RPF & J.Culver, RPF.
   Second Review was conducted March 12, 2014
   [ftp://thp.fire.ca.gov/THPLibrary/North_Coast_Region/THPs2013/1-13-107SCR/](ftp://thp.fire.ca.gov/THPLibrary/North_Coast_Region/THPs2013/1-13-107SCR/)

3. **1-14-009 SCR**; Pelphrey, Lana, Wilder; Pelphrey, et al THP; 58 acres; Hester Creek; J. Culver, RPF.
   RPF responses to PHI Recs posted 3/14/14
ftp://thp.fire.ca.gov/THPLibrary/North_Coast Region/THPs2014/1-14-009SCR/

4. **1-14-016 SCR**: Long; Long THP; 124 acres; Love Creek; J. Hildreth, RPF.
   RPF responses to 1st RTQs posted 3/12/14
   ftp://thp.fire.ca.gov/THPLibrary/North_Coast Region/THPs2014/1-14-016SCR/

5. **1-14-020 SCR**: Novagratsky Rev. Trust; 43 acres; Corralitos Creek; J. Culver, RPF.
   Returned 3/7/14. Among a dozen errors and omissions, the Domestic Water Inquiry noted the wrong
   distance (by some 30 miles!), the plan does not note whether any landings will be constructed, and says
   that cable yarding will be proposed, but does not include such in the Alternatives Analysis.
   ftp://thp.fire.ca.gov/THPLibrary/North_Coast Region/THPs2014/1-14-020SCR/

6. **1-14NTMP-002**: Land Trust of Santa Cruz County; Star Creek NTMP; Pescadero Creek (Aromas); 341
   acres; C. Vaughan, RPF.
   RPF responses to 1st RTQs posted 3/19/14
   ftp://thp.fire.ca.gov/THPLibrary/North_Coast Region/NTMPs2014/1-14NTMP-002SCL-SCR/

7. **1-12-014 SCR Major Am #2**: Howell Rev Trust, SDSF; Spanish Ranch THP; add 300’ of truck road, new
   watercourse crossings, etc.; Soquel Creek, Fern Gulch; H. Tranmer, RPF.
   RPF responses to PHI Recs posted 3/10/14
   ftp://thp.fire.ca.gov/THPLibrary/North_Coast Region/THPs2012/1-12-014SCR/Amendments/Maj%20Am%20%232/

3. It’s Back!! Another attempt to alter regulation of NTMPs

Non-industrial timber management plans (NTMPs) were developed back in the late 1980s, early 1990s,
as a way of providing regulatory relief to small timberland owners who were willing to develop long-term
management plans for their forests. One of the give-aways was that the rules at the time of plan
approval would apply throughout the life of these plans, which never expire. Additionally, no further
multi-agency or public review would be required in perpetuity.

Over time, these landowners and other ‘small’ timberland owners have continued to complain that
regulation is too stringent and costly. In recent years, we’ve seen at least one failed attempt to increase
the acreage size allowed under NTMPs from 2500 acres to 5000 acres. Last year, AB904, created
Working Forest Management Plans for small landowners with up to 15,000 acres. Language was also
inserted into AB904 to provide more regulatory relief for small landowners with up to 320 acres.
However, that language was inexplicably removed before the bill was approved. As readers of these
reports will remember, in the eleventh hour, all the provisions of AB904 were excluded from the
southern sub-district, thanks in large part to the efforts of Senator Jim Beall.

Now, however, a new rule packet is under development at the Board of Forestry to create Modified
Nonindustrial Timber Management Plans (MNTMPs) for landowners with no more than 320 acres ‘on an
individual contiguous ownership’. Folks interested in shaping the outcome of this new rule package can
plan to attend BoF committee meetings to make their voices heard on this latest industry effort. The
next such committee meeting will take place in Sacramento, April 8. The agenda for the meeting will be
posted here: http://bofdata.fire.ca.gov/board_business/meeting_agendas/
4. Bridge failure THP 1-10-080SMO

Oops. Big Creek’s attempts to fix a legacy problem on the Butano lands they purchased years ago from Pacific Lumber failed.

As part of the approved THP, Big Creek planned to replace an old 36-inch diameter culvert that was located just above a 25-foot high waterfall, and where originally a Humboldt crossing had been constructed back in the 50’s or 60’s. There may have also been an old wooden culvert at that location at some point. According to Rich Sampson, CalFire, legacy practices conducted on that land included putting large amounts of fill into streams on very steep slopes. Humboldt crossings and wooden culverts were the style of the day. The ‘Silver Bullet’ THP was originally prepared by Matt Dias, now staff to the Board of Forestry.

According to a post-failure report by Thomas Spittler, engineering geologist for the state, the rusting culvert was replaced by a free span bridge as part of THP 1-10-080 SMO. The crossing design included pulling the banks back to a 1-1/2: 1 slope and establishing a five-foot wide channel that “mimics upstream conditions”. “The THP was revised to include information on the final channel grade through the crossing site, but was not clear on how the final grade was to be maintained.”

But the new crossing failed during the December 2012 storms and “downcutting of the newly constructed stream bed during the storm was threatening to undermine the bridge and contribute sediment to the Class II tributary to Butano Creek. During the storm Mr. Bud McCrary installed a redwood flume under the bridge and stopped the undercutting.” (According to personal conversation with Rich Sampson, CalFire, Big Creek noticed sheeting in the channel immediately, and took quick measures including use of plastic and installation of the flume, to prevent significant sediment mobilization.)

“Based on site conditions it appears that the major factor contributing to channel downcutting and the partial collapse of the bridge abutments is the lack of stabilizing structure in the channel between the top of the bedrock fall and the downstream end of the reconstructed channel.” (According to Sampson, none of the multiple applicant and agency geologists involved in the original plan review recognized how deep the fill was in the creek channel. As a result, it was not fully excavated, was available for mobilization, and, therefore, the footings were not properly anchored.)

Originally, during the review of the plan, Water Quality recommended that “If not already completed, Big Creek Lumber Company shall prepare a comprehensive road inventory and maintenance plan for all roads within their Butano Creek and Pescadero Creek Watershed holdings. The inventory shall include, but not be limited to, a thorough road erosion assessment inventory and an erosion prevention treatment plan.”

In addition, the Regional Board staff lamented that the RPF did not retain the services of a Certified Engineering Geologist to help “characterize the geologic setting of the THP and to provide mitigation recommendations with respect to tree removal and landsliding/slope stability, roads, watercourse crossings, and related issues.”

The failing bridge was replaced by a 7’ arch culvert in August 2013 placed in the creek on top of the old fill. The adjacent landscape in the area is 90-100% slopes, too steep for placement of a culvert. The culvert intake is on bedrock, but the outfall rests on the old fill. According to Sampson, all of the review team agencies gathered, including the Regional Waterboard staff currently undertaking development of
a TMDL for the stream, and reviewed the site and agreed upon the culvert replacement. Sampson feels confident that due to quick action on the part of Big Creek, no more than ½ yard of fill washed out at the bridge failure site.

Butano and Pescadero Creeks are both 303(d) listed as impaired for sediment. And efforts to repair Pescadero Marsh can only be hampered by additional sediment inputs from upstream activities.

5. Settlement Agreement Protects Endangered Murrelets, Keeps Big Basin State Park Campgrounds, Facilities Open

“SACRAMENTO, Calif.—The California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) has settled a lawsuit brought by the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) that will strengthen protection of the marbled murrelet in Big Basin Redwoods State Park. The settlement agreement calls for State Parks to continue with many existing programs and implement additional ones in the areas of garbage management, public education, signage, corvid (raven, crow, jays, etc.) management, and active monitoring and research. State Parks will also monitor the scarce birds and the management of corvid impacts, which will allow park managers to implement management practices based on findings.”


“Good news for endangered seabird. After months of legal posturing, the state and environmentalists have found common ground on bolstering protections for the endangered marbled murrelet in Big Basin State Park, paving the way for a makeover of the 112-year-old park. The deal actually takes aim at another bird; by cutting down on the excessive number of ravens and blue jays in the park's visitor and camping areas — the birds often gather to pick through trash or pick up table scraps but also prey on the eggs of murrelets — it should help the rare seabird that builds nests high on the branches of old-growth redwoods and has lost most of its habitat to logging.

“State Parks already is taking steps to implement the pact, which calls for better signs, as well as food lockers and indoor dishwashing stations for campers. It also calls for trash pick-ups through weekends, when garbage can overflow from bins, creating regular feasts for ravens and jays. The deal should mean a better experience for park visitors and a better chance for the several hundred marbled murrelets remaining on the Central Coast.”

And for a more detailed discussion (mostly about murrelets):

6. Townsend’s Big Ear Bat Listed – CDFW seeks Public Comment

These bats live in coastal redwood forests, in addition to other areas. This recent listing decision has already begun to have an impact on local logging operations.
Townsend’s Big-eared Bat received protection under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) in response to a petition from the Center for Biological Diversity. In June 2013, the California Fish and Wildlife Commission named the bat a candidate for protection.

“Candidate status provides immediate protection to the bat, which occurs across much of the state but is widely threatened by human disturbance and habitat destruction.”

“Townsend’s big-eared bats are found throughout most of California, including deserts, coastal redwood forests, and forests and woodlands in the Coast Ranges and Sierra Nevada, but are concentrated in areas with caves and cave-like roosting habitat, such as mines, buildings, bridges and basal hollows in big old-growth trees. They are highly sensitive to human disturbance of their roost sites, abandoning caves or other structures following human intrusion.”


From CAL FIRE: “Given the candidacy, COTO now receives the same legal protections under CESA as a threatened or endangered species, including the general prohibition on “take” of such species, and all THPs must reflect this change in status.”

COTO is short for Corynorhinus townsendii.

Now the California Department of Fish and Wildlife is seeking public comment on a proposal to list the Townsend’s big-eared bat as an endangered or threatened species:

“As part of the status review process, CDFW is soliciting public comment regarding the species’ ecology, biology, life history, distribution, abundance, threats and habitat that may be essential for the species, and recommendations for management of the species.”

Comments, data and other information can be submitted in writing to:

California Department of Fish and Wildlife  Nongame Wildlife Program  Att: Scott Osborn  1812 9th Street  Sacramento, CA 95811. Comments may also be submitted by email to: scott.osborn@wildlife.ca.gov.

All comments received by May 1, 2014, will be included in a CDFW report to the commission. Receipt of the report will be placed on the agenda for the next available meeting of the commission after delivery and the report will be made available to the public at that time. Following the receipt of the CDFW report, the commission will allow a 30-day public comment period prior to taking any action on CDFW’s recommendation.

CDFW’s petition evaluation report for Townsend’s big-eared bat is available at: www.dfg.ca.gov/wildlife/nongame/publications/

7. San Francisquito Watershed Tour, April 12

“Please Join Committee for Green Foothills on our informative tour of the San Francisquito Watershed! Tour will be held Saturday April 12, from 8:30am – 4:00pm.”
“Slip on your hiking shoes and don’t forget your hat and camera. We invite you to join us as we explore the unique San Francisquito watershed along with knowledgeable speakers from various backgrounds. We will travel along the creek, stopping at significant points where the speakers will share their insights and knowledge of the numerous issues currently facing this important watershed and its inhabitants.

“For more information or to register, please visit the [San Francisquito Watershed event page](#) on our calendar of events. Fee for this tour is $35 for non-members, $25 for members. Lunch and transportation are included.

“Space is limited and this tour is filling up fast, so register now!”

I hope to see you there,

Elizabeth Sarmiento
Program Coordinator
elizabeth@greenfoothills.org / 650-968-7243 ext. 340

8. Indian man single-handedly plants a 1,360-acre forest

“A little more than 30 years ago, a teenager named Jadav "Molai" Payeng began burying seeds along a barren sandbar near his birthplace in northern India’s Assam region to grow a refuge for wildlife. Not long after, he decided to dedicate his life to this endeavor, so he moved to the site so he could work full-time creating a lush new forest ecosystem. Incredibly, the spot today hosts a sprawling 1,360 acres of jungle that Payeng planted — single-handedly.”


9. Community meeting, March 26, Cemex Redwoods Access

6:30p, Hotel Paradox, 611 Ocean St, Santa Cruz. Sponsored by Land Trust of Santa Cruz. Registration required. See link in box below.

**Hiking, Biking and Frisbee Golf?**

**CEMEX Redwoods Access**

*This article originally appeared in our newsletter, Landmarks, Winter 2014*

In the fall we started asking people what they wanted to do in the former CEMEX Redwoods Forest. We expected that a lot of people wanted to hike and bike and that some wanted to ride their horses, others walk their dogs, and some camp. We didn’t expect to hear from people who wanted to play frisbee golf – but we did.

We got that request (and many others) from more than 1,200 people who responded to our online survey. Almost half those responding to the survey (including ten or so frisbee golf players) also added comments, which pleased us greatly. We want to hear what people want to do – and don’t want others to do.

This fall and winter our staff also sat down with a wide variety of people to get an in-depth understanding of their wants – and concerns – about public access. These meetings, the community meeting in March, and the online survey are part of a year-long effort to understand what our
community wants to see on our county’s newest, and one of our largest, protected lands. Our goal in all of this is to develop the access plan in such a way that after the process, when asked “Were your concerns and preferences heard and addressed in a reasonable manner?” a strong majority of those involved will say yes.

We will be taking online survey responses until the end of April 2014. The column below summarizes some of the results.
You will also have the opportunity to make your voice heard at a community meeting on Wednesday, March 26th at 7pm at the Hotel Paradox in Santa Cruz.

After the March meeting we will sit down with our CEMEX partners and our consultants to look at the opportunities for – and the constraints on – public access. The property’s 70 miles of roads and potential connections through Coast Dairies to the coast are an obvious opportunity. The impact of traffic, the sensitivity of the habitat, security and safety issues, and cost are some of the constraints we will be studying.

Our consultants, along with our CEMEX Conservation Partners, will take all this input and develop a draft plan that will include detailed maps, plans for recreational and educational use, and research use on the property. We will also look at cost and funding projections, and outline implementation steps. This draft plan will be presented at a second community meeting in early summer and finalized by the partners afterwards.

By next fall we hope to have a plan and then we anticipate it taking a year or so to get permits, go through environmental review, and get ready for the day when you can walk – or maybe ride – through the open gates!

Funding for the development of the CEMEX Access Plan comes from the California Coastal Conservancy and Land Trust members.

You can check out the summary of the CEMEX survey reports at this link: [http://www.landtrustsantacruz.org/downloads/CEMEX_Access_140314.pdf](http://www.landtrustsantacruz.org/downloads/CEMEX_Access_140314.pdf)

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