

Caring for the Land and Serving People



# Sequoia National Forest

## Giant Sequoia National Monument

### Accomplishment Report 2007 – 2008



Forest Service

Pacific Southwest Region

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# Sequoia National Forest and the Giant Sequoia National Monument

*D*ear Friends of the Forest.

Once again we bring in a new year with great fanfare, and we close 2008 with great accomplishments completed including our Centennial Celebrations of 100 Years of conservation leadership 1908-2008. I have thoroughly enjoyed each and every opportunity to expand our horizons on what we have accomplished to serve people together and care for the land. I am also extremely proud and humbled to provide the American public a quality recreational experience in your national forest to those who come to the Sequoia to sightsee, explore, hike, camp, picnic, recreate, bike, river raft, climb, fish, hunt, bird watch, view nature, or gaze at the awe-inspiring giant sequoia trees.

Once again, active, transparent, and informed public participation is a valued element of managing your national treasures. Here on the Sequoia National Forest we will continue to engage you in public policy dialogues to help create lasting programs to protect the valued resource such as, clean air and water quality, and healthy ecosystems. This year we want your help, and ideas to design our new Giant Sequoia National Monument Plan, and our Travel Management system.

In our second annual report I would like to highlight my vision for the Sequoia National Forest and the Giant Sequoia National Monument, and, our service to managing your 1.2 million acres entrusted to the Forest Service. This vision for Monumental Success looks out across the horizon to meet the challenges of 2009, with a focus on a Sierra Nevada landscape that supports healthy ecosystems, renewable resources and a healthy quality of life. Our accomplishments fall into areas of Development of the Giant Sequoia National Monument Plan, Partners for Success-*Reaching Out Our Hands to Others*, Marketing and Showcasing the Monument, and meeting our Natural Resource targets and goals.

*/s/ Tina Terrell*

Tina Terrell  
Forest Supervisor



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/s/ **TINA TERRELL**

Tina Terrell  
Forest Supervisor





## Sequoia Centennial

*This was an exciting year!* The Sequoia commemorated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary on July 1, 2008, with a series of celebrations at the Supervisors Office, District Offices and the Buck Rock Fire Lookout. Thank you for your support as we honored our past 100-years of Conservation Stewardship with displays of our rich history and culture. The open house festivities included employees in historic forest service uniforms, active displays and exhibits, videos, information booths, children's activities, and presentations were all part of the program. We also marked our Centennial Celebration by showing our appreciation for our "Partners In Time" where we awarded Certificates of Appreciation to 17 organizations. *We can't manage these national treasures without you!*

## Marketing the Monument

This year, a forest Marketing Team developed a strategy for the Giant Sequoia National Monument. The strategy is a very dynamic vision focusing on: Name recognition for the Monument, Showcasing our signage (theme, color scheme, and image), Development of marketing materials with Three Forests Interpretative Association (3FIA), and Improving Customer Service. Please stop by our offices and purchase one of the new

merchandise items such as, T-shirts, ball caps, sweatshirts, or Giant Sequoia ecology posters.



## *We Thank our Partners!*

Over the past 1-1/2 years, we have developed ten new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreements, or challenge cost-share agreements with long-term partners. This is the foundation of who we are and what we do in the future, to work with others to care for the land and promote wise land use, while protecting those very vital and important places of interest.

**Big Meadow Restoration Project** – this challenge-cost share agreement is between the Hume Lake Ranger District and many partners to restore 6,100 feet of degraded stream within the meadow, and to enhance aquatic species habitat while maintaining existing land uses including recreation and grazing. The project used a restoration technology called "pond and plug," which eliminates the existing down cut channel and redirects stream flow back into stable, historic remnant channels on the meadow surface. This project will reconnect the channel to its naturally-evolved floodplain.

**Community Services Employment Training (CSET) and WildPlaces** – Western Divide Ranger District MOU creates the Tule River Partnership. They focus funding, education, student training, and natural resource projects to restore, improve, and manage the Tule River. Their primary goal is to deliver environmental education messages to the diverse river users.

**Pacific Southwest Research Station, the U.S. Geological Survey, and Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks** – this MOU continues to develop a shared vision for the future of the Southern Sierra Nevada. The four federal partners have agreed to collaboratively develop

a program of research, resource management, and public education, to help mitigate the impacts from, and adapt to, climate change effects on the ecosystems of the Southern Sierra Nevada. The primary land base for this effort includes 1.2 million acres of the Giant Sequoia National Monument/Sequoia National Forest, and 865,257 acres in Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks.

A long-term goal of the agreement is to establish a joint Research Learning Center. The short-term goal is to develop a multi-agency adaptive research program which crosses boundaries between both Sequoia National Forest/Giant Sequoia National Monument, and neighboring Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.

**Springville Chamber of Commerce** – this MOU works with the Chamber to promote and market the Giant Sequoia National Monument in and around the community of Springville. They successfully distribute materials in the Chamber store and recruit great community volunteer support.



**Porterville Chamber of Commerce** - this MOU works with the Chamber to promote and market the Monument in and around the community of Porterville. They distribute materials in the Chamber store with volunteer support, and sell Forest Service merchandise through our current partnership with 3-FIA.

**Cyrus Canyon Partners (Off-Highway Vehicle Area)** – this MOU with Cyrus Canyon Partners is focused on remodeling, restoring, and improving the Cyrus Canyon Off-Highway Vehicle area on the Kern River Ranger District. Cyrus Canyon Partners have re-opened the area and have held several events to help restore the area as a world class off-highway track. They focus on the diversity of the people who use Cyrus Canyon for off-highway vehicle enjoyment, and have developed a new

relationship with a Native American tribe in the Kern River Valley.

**WildPlaces (Giant Sequoia Education and Tree Planting)** – this MOU is with the Western Divide Ranger District and WildPlaces. Their focus is to outreach to diverse youth who reside in the Central Valley. They provide environmental education about giant sequoia ecology, and also plant giant sequoia trees at the Trail of 100 Giants.



**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers -Repatriation** This ancillary agreement which ties to a previous interagency agreement, where the Kern River Ranger District works with the Corps to repatriate Native American remains that have been recovered and removed from the Lake Isabella area. Under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990, the Forest Service is required to repatriate human remains and associated funerary objects back to Native American tribes or organizations.

**The Nature Conservancy** – this MOU will work with the Conservancy to develop a model to analyze smoke production and changes in carbon emissions, identify fire behavior implications, and the trade-offs. (Active fuels management--thinning, prescribed burning, and wildland fire use—versus, passive fuels management and on-going fire exclusion).

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers** – this new interagency agreement with the Kern River Ranger District will undertake studies, conduct environmental analyses under the National Environmental Policy Act, and implement project(s) related to seismic and hydrologic retrofit design to respond to safety issues at the Lake Isabella Dam. This includes Main Dam, Auxiliary Dam and the Reservoir.

# Giant Sequoia National Monument Collaboration

In January, 2008, we began a year-long collaborative scoping process for development of a new Giant Sequoia National Monument Plan. A Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement was published in the Federal Register to begin this process. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) will be published for public review in the Fall, 2009. The Final Environmental Impact Statement, the Record of Decision, and a stand-alone Plan is expected to be published in Spring, 2010. Numerous collaborative public meetings and workshops will be conducted throughout the planning process. *Please plan to attend one!*

## Monument Collaboration

Our collaborative process has worked with a variety of stakeholders, to facilitate a proposal that will be taken through the environmental impact statement (EIS) process as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The new Monument planning strategy is a four-pronged collaboration effort to communicate and engage the public in the development of the new Plan. Representatives of stakeholder groups, as well as the general public, have the opportunity to be a part of defining objectives, crafting alternatives, guiding the analysis of alternatives, and ensuring that our efforts are transparent to the public and easy to understand.



## Where Do You Begin?

Visit our website or get on the mailing list! On the web you will find many documents such as the "Draft Purpose and Need and Desired Conditions". This reflects a combination of our understanding of what the Presidential Proclamation requires and the public's desires within that framework. It begins a dialog with the public. There is also a companion document, entitled "Draft Decision Framework". This is both a visual representation of the desired conditions, and the foundation for our use of multi-criteria decision support (MCDS), one of

the three decision support systems the Forest is implementing to conduct an analysis of effects and development of alternatives.

## *The NEW GSNM Public Comment Portal!*

During this planning process you will have an exciting new way to participate with internet access at the GSNM Public Comment Portal! Visit [www.fs.fed.us/r5/sequoia/gsnm](http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/sequoia/gsnm) to register and establish your own workspace and gain access to all the features. Select a topic in numerous planning documents to enter your comments or ideas, read what others posted, or review your own previous comments. You can save your draft comments or submit them. It's a breeze to use—and its available 24/7.

## Other Activities for Monument Planning

- Three different science programs and numerous workshops were held in 2008, including a Science Symposium and Fireshed Assessment.
- Dialogue with Scientists and Review of the previous Science Advisories. The forest held a "Dialogue with Scientists" workshop with the 2003 Scientific Advisory Board (SAB). They engaged in a dialogue with the public, forest employees, environmental groups, and other scientists about past science advisories and other issues that could be addressed in the new Monument Plan.
- The Forest will be initiating research projects in 2009, focused on recreation visitor use, data analysis, giant sequoia inventory, and a socio-economic analysis of how public lands affect nearby communities.

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**Next Steps:** Please stay engaged with the collaborative planning process; we want to hear from you. In March, copies of the Monument Proposed Action can be obtained on the Sequoia National Forest website or by calling the Planning Office at (559) 784-1500.  
[www.fs.fed.us/r5/sequoia](http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/sequoia).

## Southern Sierra Nevada Science Symposium



The symposium was held Thursday, September 4, 2008, at the Visalia Convention Center, Visalia, California. The day consisted of facilitated science panel presentations based on resource areas or ecosystem topics. Interested public and scientists were invited to attend and listen to the presentations/discussions. A poster session was on display as well with additional related science topics. At the end of the day, there was clarification on what research gaps and challenges face the Southern Sierra Nevada ecosystems in relation to climate change. Abstracts and visual presentations for the symposium are available on the website.

The purpose of the symposium was to explain and design the research science agenda for the future in the southern Sierras according to the recently signed MOU between USDA Forest Service-Sequoia National Forest/Giant Sequoia National Monument and Pacific Southwest Research Station; USDI, Park Service-Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks; and USDI United States Geological Survey-Western Ecological Research Center. The MOU states, "The parties to this agreement recognize and agree to collaboratively develop a program of research, resources management, and public education to help mitigate the impacts from and adapt to climate change effects on ecosystems of the southern Sierra Nevada."

The symposium was organized around broad scale environmental "agents of change" affecting the Southern Sierra Ecosystems which include giant sequoia groves. The array of topics the Program Committee established focus on five areas (agents of change): Climate change, Forest mangment, Pollutants, Fire and Invasive Species. The event was well attended.

## My Forest Summit

Sequoia National Forest is finding ways to connect youth to their forests. On Public Lands Day September 27, 2008, students from Tulare County Schools and people from the community participated in the first annual "My Forest" Summit. This event for junior high youth combined outdoor fun with environmental education and stewardship activities. This was the first outdoor event to be orchestrated by a multi-agency and partnership committee. Teams from local schools participated in Rio Limpio, a river enhancement project where volunteers and school children removed litter and graffiti from the Tule River, a popular recreation spot for locals. Also the Lindsay School Migrant Workers Program worked with WildPlaces, a private non-profit group, and planted giant sequoia seedlings at the Trail of 100 Giants in the Giant Sequoia National Monument.



## Protecting Camp Nelson

The citizens of Camp Nelson and Pier Point Springs breathe easier knowing their communities and surrounding forest are being protected by cooperative efforts of the Western Divide Ranger District and the Forest Health Monitoring Staff in the Forest Service Regional Office in Vallejo, CA. Surveys of the community and adjoining forested areas revealed vegetation composition that was highly conducive to bark beetle activity and extreme fire behavior. Approximately 90% of the forested areas were overstocked with understory trees less than six inches in diameter. Previously logged stands were dominated by an overstory

of ponderosa pine, black oak, and incense cedar. Areas that have never been logged had an average of 750 stems per acre, dominated by white fir. Mortality from recent insect infestations have significantly added to existing fuel loads. All acres in the project are located in wildland-urban interfaces, with the Tule River running through the middle.

Objectives were to improve residual tree health, provide community protection, improve human health and safety hazards, and protect critical Pacific Fisher habitat – including the only verified dens in the Forest.

Interdisciplinary efforts resulted in the treatment of over 750 acres encompassing Camp Nelson. Treatments cost roughly \$500 per acre with hand labor required in sensitive areas and difficult terrain. Current tree stand conditions are more resistant to wildfires, insects and disease. Improvement in tree health and protection of wildlife habitat, private property, and resource integrity were greatly improved. In addition to treatments directly adjacent to structures and private property boundaries, strategically placed area treatments (SPLATS) were placed beyond the immediate community as natural boundaries against wildfires. Removal of highly flammable vegetation in small, scattered pockets provides an effective fuelbreak and control area for firefighters.

All land treatments consisted of hand cutting and piling, or mechanical mastication of small trees and thick brush. This project has vastly improved tree stand conditions.



## **Kern River Ranger District The Piute Fire Restoration Project**

On June 28, 2008, the 37,026-acre Piute Fire  
February, 2009

burned in the Kern River Ranger District and on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) public lands, costing \$25 million. The fire was first reported north of Kern County Fire Station 78 in the vicinity of Piute Mountain Road. Six residences and 45 outbuildings were destroyed or damaged during the fire. At its height over 1600 personnel were assigned.

During the fire, heavy thunderstorm activity over a 3-4 day period caused flash flooding, debris and mudflows that threatened several communities, causing evacuations and some road closures including Lake Isabella Blvd. The Piute Fire/Flash Flood Phone Bank was activated by the Kern County Supervisors.

### ***We need your opinion:***

Current public input is needed to restore the health of Sequoia National Forest lands burned in the Piute Fire. Key issues include the number of dead trees needed to restore wildlife habitat, stream courses, and soil productivity, without leaving too much fuel on the ground which would carry wildfire back into the forest.

Over 50 percent of the Piute Fire area burned so intensely that tens of thousands of dead trees will fall to the ground within 5-10 years and become a tremendous fire and public safety hazard if they are not removed or treated in a timely manner. Two of four spotted owl habitat areas were burned, one spotted owl protected activity center was completely lost, and the other is being evaluated by Forest Service biologists for its ability to continue to be managed for the benefit of owls and other wildlife.

Copies of the Proposed Action can be obtained on the Sequoia National Forest website at [www.fs.fed.us/r5/sequoia](http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/sequoia) or by calling the Kern River Ranger District Office at (760) 376-3781.



## Two Fire Teams Manage The Clover Fire

The Clover Fire burned for 32 days on the Sequoia & Inyo National Forests in the South Sierra Wilderness, for a total of 13,400 acres. Wildland Fire Use (WFU) fires have been managed successfully on the Sequoia for several years. The lightning-caused Clover Fire was discovered May 31, 2008, and was managed as a Wildland Fire Use fire to benefit the ecosystem, allowing the natural fire to burn across the South Sierra Wilderness landscape.

The major emphasis throughout the management of this natural fire was to utilize wilderness suppression tactics to keep the fire from spreading toward the community of Kennedy Meadows, or toward the Sierra Nevada Crest. At its peak, 135 personnel were assigned and crews worked mainly along the southern and eastern edges to stop the fires spread. On June 8, the fire began burning an average of 200-acres for 20-days ending June 22. The fire burned nearly 4,000-acres by June 22, and on that day the fire made “a run,” an estimated 9,000-acres burned. The fire crossed the Sierra Nevada Crest onto the Inyo National Forest, burning approximately 4,000-acres down the eastern escarpment by nightfall. The Forest did not close the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) during this event but escorted hikers through the fire area.

## Community Fuel Reduction Projects



### Riverkern Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project – 75 acres

Rural Riverkern lies within Tulare and Kern Counties and is home to approximately 300 residents. The project was supported by the majority of residents. Communication efforts included community meetings, and educational flyers inserted into water bills.

The primary objectives were to create a defensible space around the community, reduce the amount of natural fuels, and threats of wild land fire from entering or leaving the community. A 300-foot shaded fuel break was constructed in two phases. To minimize impacts to visual quality, jackpot burning of heavy fuel concentrations was not done. Vegetation was cut and piled 75 feet from the forest boundary and burned. The project has been successful and is in “maintenance” mode. Twenty-five acres of piles (brush and limbs) are planned to be burned this winter. Regrowth work and fuel break maintenance will continue annually.

### Kernville Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project

The Kernville Hazardous Fuels reduction project consists of two separate parcels of Forest land adjacent to private homes in Kernville. The goal is defensible space to reduce the continuous thick fuel, by creating a patchwork of shaded fuel-breaks. The work was accomplished in brushy fuels by limbing up larger trees, and disposing of dead vegetation. Chain saws and other hand tools were used to perform the thinning.

The 33-acre **Burma** parcel is adjacent to 8 private homes. The fuel reduction work spans a 400-foot wide buffer on forest land adjacent to private homes. The 24-acre **Bowman/Luxton** parcel is adjacent to 25 private homes. The purpose of the treatments are to increase

defensible space on National Forests to protect private homes located on private property, and associated wildlife habitat resiliency.



## Winter's Solo II Fire

On December 12, 2008, The Solo II wildland fire, located in the Western Divide Ranger District burned 275 acres. The fire was discovered burning near Solo Peak on the border between the Giant Sequoia National Monument and the Tule River Indian Reservation. The fire burned in the Black Mountain Grove.

Land jurisdiction on the 275 acre fire included, 27 acres on the Reservation and 248-acres on the Forest. Approximately 70 personnel were assigned to the fire.

Rehabilitation work along the fireline consisted of installing water bars (a feature used to divert water off the fireline), and chipping some of the small trees and brush that were cleared to construct the fireline. Smoke from the fire was visible from Camp Nelson and surrounding communities. The fire was allowed to burn until the fall rains and snow put the fire out.



## Fire Safe Councils

The forest is adjacent to forty-one communities "at risk" from wildfire. Thirteen of these communities have in place Community Wildfire Protection Plans. Our mission, and our passion, is to help communities (and people) reduce hazardous fuels in or around communities that are adjacent to public lands. We provide this assistance through Fire Safe Councils. The mission of Fire Safe Councils are to preserve and enhance California's manmade and natural resources by providing leadership and support that mobilizes all Californians to protect their homes, communities and environment from

wildfires.

Since the formation of Fire Safe Councils in April, 1993, the Council has united its diverse membership to speak with one voice about fire safety, fire prevention, current legislation pertaining to fire safety, and empower grassroots organizations to spearhead fire safety programs.

The Forest Service has supported Fire Safe Councils from the beginning. We provide support by assisting in the review of community wildfire protection plans, planning and coordinating chipping days (where brush or shrubs or small groups of vegetation are removed and chipped into small pieces), or by providing financial assistance through the State Clearinghouse Grant Program.

In 2008, Fire Safe Councils were instrumental in getting Clearinghouse funds. The State awarded over 122 grant projects totaling \$13 million dollars. Some firesafe councils and resource conservation districts worthy of mention are:

- **The Kern River Valley Council** received \$99,800 dollars for the Pale Ranch Community Shaded Fuel break, \$99,600 dollars for the Bodfish Canyon Phase II Project, and \$86,900 dollars for the Piute Meadows Community Escape Route.
- **Tulare County Resource Conservation District** received \$124,491 dollars for the Crawford Fuels Reduction Project.

*Congratulations, these fire safe councils and resource conservation districts are making a difference!*

## New Information Kiosk

Under a Service First interagency agreement, the Forest is working with the Bureau of Land Management office in Bakersfield, California, to determine a place to install a state-of-the-art kiosk. The kiosk will showcase information about public lands which would allow the two agencies an opportunity to display information to the

public regarding recreational opportunities, monument lands (both agencies manage a national monument), hunting and fishing areas, viewing wildlife or plants, and accessing public lands by car or all-terrain vehicles, current natural resource projects, such as fuels treatments in or around communities, watershed surveys, or vegetation treatment projects in the urban-wildland interface.

This kiosk will display public information “24-7” on recreation fees, wild and scenic river access for the Kern River, wilderness management, wildland fire use, and events planned on public lands. Another main feature is access to recreation maps and visitor information.



## **NEW Southern Sierra Pass**

The Kern River Ranger District would like visitors to Lake Isabella to know they can now purchase the ***Southern Sierra Pass***, an Annual or Daily pass, when visiting three Lake Isabella recreation sites: Auxiliary Dam, Old Isabella Road, and the South Fork Recreation Area. These recreation sites are located in the 120-acre Lake Isabella high impact recreation area near Auxillary Dam. The ***Southern Sierra Pass*** can be purchased from Forest Service Offices, or from local vendors.

## **Motorized Travel Management Draft Environmental Impact Statement**

In recent years, the use of motor vehicles in the Kern River Ranger District and the Western Divide Ranger District, outside of the Giant Sequoia National Monument, has grown substantially. This public motorized use spiked and created miles of “user-created trails” throughout the forest. In turn, this increased visitor conflicts between motorized and non-

motorized users, increased complaints about noise from adjacent landowners, and impacts to soil, water, and vegetation conditions in some areas.

Through a series of public meetings the Sequoia collaboratively identified and evaluated these “user created routes.” The goal is to develop a Motorized Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) for visitors to utilize designated routes on the Sequoia National Forest.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was published on January 31, 2009. A 60-day comment period has begun which will end on March 31, 2009. During the comment period a series of public workshops will be held throughout forest communities in the month of February. The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) will be released by the end of May, 2009.

*Please plan to attend a workshop!*



## **West Plateau Wildlife Improvement & Hazardous Fuels Reduction**

In spring 2005, the Kern River Ranger District began a series of prescribed burns on 4,600 acres of the Kern Plateau near Big, Long, and Cannell Meadows, which implements the objectives of the Forest Plan. This five year project will improve the area’s conifer forest and associated wildlife habitat resiliency. The goal is to make the conifer forest and associated wildlife habitat more resilient to wildfire

overtime through the reintroduction of managed fire into the ecosystem, and start the process of re-establishing a more natural fire regime.

The Kern Plateau has had many large damaging wildland fires since the **1970's**, including the **1975 Flat Fire** (17,000), **1977 Bonita Fire** (7,500 acres), **1987 Fay Fire** (13,000 acres), **2000 Manter Fire** (75,000 acres) and **2002 McNally Fire** (151,000 acres). These fires burned with such intensity and severity that over 50,000 acres of conifer forest and associated wildlife habitat have been impacted for decades.

California spotted owl and the Pacific fisher depend on dense mature forest habitat which have had impacts by these fires. Fuel treatments which reduce wildfire risk compliment wildlife habitat conservation and ecosystem restoration goals.



## New District Name!

The Tule River and Hot Springs Ranger Districts were administratively combined in June, 1996. Today a new name: Western Divide Ranger District! In the 1940's the district was called the Western Divide so the name has historical significance. The Great Western Divide is a geographic feature that spans both districts, a new sense of place.



## New Interpretive Plan

The Sequoia developed a forest interpretive plan which was a goal in our "Blueprint for Change" strategies. Many employees helped develop the plan which is comprised of three parts: an interpretive strategy, a project development process, and the forest's recreation settings. The appendices aid interpretive project developers. If you are interested in a copy of the Interpretive Plan you can find it posted on the web.



## Woodcutting Permits

You requested it and now it is here! Woodcutting permits are available at the Supervisor's Office in Porterville, 1839 South Newcomb Street (near the Porterville Airport). Previously woodcutting permits were only available at Forest Service offices in Dunlap, Springville, Lake Isabella, and Kernville. You can now purchase a non-refundable, 8-month wood permit which can be used from April 1- November 30, 2009.

Wood permits are \$10 per cord with a minimum purchase of two cords per person (\$20), maximum purchase of 10 cords. With your permit you receive, a forest map and instructions about the woodcutting areas and forest policies.

## Workshops on Proposed New Recreation Fees

In 2008, numerous public workshops were held in communities to discuss four different Standard Amenity Fee Proposals: an increase in campground fees (mostly in the high country), an increase in the Forks of the Kern Reservation Fee, an increase and changes to the Lake Isabella High Impact Recreation Area, and proposed new fees and areas to charge fees.

All fee change proposals are presented to a citizen's advisory committee, called the California Recreation Resource Advisory Committee, or RRAC. Members represent a

broad array of recreation interest groups to help ensure the Forest Service is proposing reasonable and publicly acceptable fee changes, and address public issues and concerns about recreation fees. For more information on the RRAC in California or the fee program, see the website: [www.fs.fed.us/r5/passes/rrac/](http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/passes/rrac/). Of the 4 fee proposals listed above only three have been presented to the RRAC. The 4<sup>th</sup> fee proposal has not been presented as the Forest is still communicating with communities on what this proposal will entail.

The Forest is authorized to propose new fees under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) of 2005. REA allows the forest to keep 95% of fees collected to operate, maintain, and improve recreation sites and services.

## State OHV Grants

The Forest Service has had a mission for many years as being the “land of many uses”. One use is off-highway vehicle use. Last year our six grants to the State’s Off-Highway Vehicle Commission received over \$526,000 dollars to improve, repair, restore, and plan trails. We are happy to report they are:

1. **A Forest -Wide Conservation Grant (\$71,000)**. This is a two year grant to continue and expand the forest program of monitoring and protecting natural and cultural resources, as well as, development and/or implementation of soil conservation standards for the Wildlife and Plant Habitat Protection (WHPP)/Habitat Management Program (HMP) for existing off-highway vehicle routes.
2. **A Forest -Wide Facilities Operation and Maintenance Grant (\$82,000)**. This supports facilities on the Kern Plateau, Greenhorn, Piute and Breckenridge Mountains located on the Kern River Ranger District near Bakersfield. Funding would finance personnel, services, supplies and materials to accomplish facilities operation and maintenance projects directed towards maintaining health and safety standards,

upkeep on facilities and providing a quality experience for visitors.

3. **A Grant to Fund the Development of the Travel Management Environmental Impact Statement (\$82,000)**. This funding will pay salaries who will analyze changes to the existing (baseline) road and trail system on the Kern River and Hot Springs Ranger Districts (areas outside of the Giant Sequoia National Monument). Proposed changes include conversion of some authorized system roads to trails; changing the type of motor vehicle use (such as roads currently authorized for highway legal vehicles only, to all wheeled motorized vehicle use); conversion of some system roads to be closed to vehicular use; and designation of some existing user-created routes. Also the prohibition of cross-country travel (off of designated roads and trails) will be analyzed. Alternatives to the proposed action will be analyzed.

4. **A Grant to Fund Forest-Wide Law Enforcement Patrols (\$216,000)**. This grant funds patrol, incident management, signing, resource monitoring and protection, crime prevention, and restitution concerning off-highway vehicle recreation.

5. **A Grant to Fund the Eshom Staging Area Development Project (\$44,000)**. This grant will fund salaries to prepare environmental documents required to develop a staging area north of Eshom Point on the Hume Lake Ranger District (outside the Giant Sequoia National Monument). The proposal will include designating camp sites, providing Tread Lightly information and reducing impacts to natural and cultural resources in this popular off-highway vehicle use area.

6. **A Grant to Fund the Millwood Staging Area Development Project (\$31,000)**. This grant will fund salaries for personnel to prepare the environmental document required to redesign the Millwood Staging Area on the Hume Lake Ranger District (inside the Giant Sequoia National Monument). Proposal includes activities aimed to better designate camp sites, restore riparian habitat and reduce impacts to cultural resources. This site overlaps the old

town site of Millwood, and is along Mill Flat Creek which is designated as a Critical Aquatic Refuge.



## Motocross/Grand Prix Event Draws a crowd at Cyrus Canyon

On May 8, 2008 in Kernville, over four hundred spectators enjoyed the Motocross/Grand Prix on Saturday and Sunday, April 26 & 27, at Cyrus Canyon Off-Highway Vehicle track. Real Sports, a Motocross and Grand Prix company hosted the event under a Special Use Permit from the Forest. Real Sports based in San Diego, California produces approximately 15 events nationwide per year.



The event drew 160 participants competing for a First Place prize of \$2,500.00. Participants included 4 professional riders. Both riders and spectators represented great diversity in both age and ethnic background - a real plus for events in the Valley. We appreciated both the California Highway Patrol and the Kern County Sheriff's Department assistance!

Real Sports worked with Forest Service representative Bob Frenes, Assistant Recreation Officer. Their excellent coordination laid the foundation for a construction crew to start work on the track a week prior to the event!



## Cyrus Canyon Receives Improvements

On February 7, 2008, the Cyrus Canyon Partners held a workday to improve existing features at Cyrus Canyon's off-highway vehicle track (OHV). The eight volunteers removed approximately 150 feet of barbed wire replacing it with mesh wire fencing and installed three barriers along the track perimeter.

Cyrus Canyon OHV track is great for family outings, race practice and organized races. It is open for All Terrain Vehicles, quads and motorcycles. The one mile track offers a variety of challenges for the more experienced rider. A small flat area adjacent to the parking lot provides a safe place for beginners. A valid California green sticker is required, and safety helmets must also be worn.

The partnership includes: Friends of Cyrus Canyon in memory of Matt Lupercio, Stewards of the Sequoia, Friends of Jawbone, California Off-Road Vehicle Association, Kernville and Kern River Valley Chambers of Commerce, Kern River Valley Revitalization, the American Motorcycle Association - District 37, and the Sequoia National Forest.

## Scout Troop and Trout Unlimited Team Up

On Labor Day weekend in 2008, Boy Scout Troop #684 from Ridgecrest, California, along with volunteers from Trout Unlimited, the Auguabonita Flyfishing Club, and the Forest Service worked hard to install an informational kiosk, replacing a damaged one. The new three panels display California's Official State Fish, the "Golden Trout", its origins, history, and future. The panels were installed at the Blackrock Ranger Station located on the Kern Plateau in the heart of Golden Trout Country.

Blackrock sits at 8,100 feet in elevation, and is open during the summer months; greeting hundreds of fisherman each year looking to catch, and get a glimpse of the beautiful Golden Trout!

The project was coordinated by Scout Daniel Zellner as part of his Eagle Scout requirements. Dan has spent ten years volunteering for the Forest Service and the California Department of Fish and Game. Funds for the materials and signs were provided by Trout Unlimited. For more information on golden trout and volunteer projects visit: [www.californiagoldentrout.org](http://www.californiagoldentrout.org).



## Wild & Scenic Kern River Scout Clean-Up Event

In August, 2008, Scout Troop #72 from Twenty-Nine Palms, hiked 4.5 miles north of the Johnsondale Bridge, along the River Trail to remove litter. The scouts learned how they can make a difference and packed out 5 large bags of trash in the river ecosystem. They also spent several days on the Kern earning various pins and badges in backpacking, outdoor cooking,

map & compass orienteering, whitewater kayaking and gold panning.



## Student Community Service Program Celebrates 15 Years!

In April, 2008, sixty-five enthusiastic seventh and eighth grade students from South Fork Middle School in Weldon, CA, participated in an innovative, educationally focused community service program celebrating its 15th year. Scheduled from April 28 - May 2, the program is sponsored by Kern River Outfitters, Sequoia National Forest, California Land Management and Mountain & River Adventures. The program focuses on teamwork and leadership skills and introduces teens to the value and rewards of community service.

The curriculum includes student service projects (erosion control, stream restoration and trail building, hands-on science and social studies and adventure challenge/leadership activities such as river rafting and climbing). Over 1200 students have participated in the program since its inception. The program was honored with a 'Spirit of the Land' award from the U.S. Olympic Organizing Committee in 2001, and a Service Award from America Outdoors in 1998. The student work value is in excess of \$75,000 dollars.

## Wishon Cabin Honored

In June, 2008, the Wishon Cabin located on the Western Divide Ranger District within the Giant Sequoia National Monument, was selected as one of the Top 25 Unique Cabins in the United States. This selection was made by ReserveAmerica. Wishon Cabin is an excellent example of the quality recreation experiences available on America's National Forests. The

Cabin is an old Forest Service Guard Station that was refurbished through a partnership between the District and California Land Management. *The cabin is available for rent to the public.*

Previous designations included: the Quaking Aspen Cabin, the Frog Meadow Cabin, and the Mountain Home Cabin – all on the Western Divide Ranger District – were also designated as being among the Top 25 Unique Cabins in the United States. Reservations for all of these facilities may be made at [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) or by calling 1-877-444-6777.



## 10th Annual Celebrate Sequoias

On Saturday September 6, 2008, the Celebrate Sequoias Festival was held on the Hume Lake Ranger District, Giant Sequoia National Monument, at Princess Campground along Highway 180. The free event was hosted by the National Park Service and USDA Forest Service, and celebrates the giant trees through the eyes of naturalists, scientists, and artists.

The Festival included vendors, information booths, and opportunities to participate in guided walks through the lesser-known giant sequoia groves of Kings Canyon and Sequoia National Parks, and Giant Sequoia National Monument in Sequoia National Forest.

## Fairview Suspension Bridge Closed For Repairs

The Fairview Suspension Bridge, a pedestrian trail bridge located approximately 16 miles north of Kernville, California, was closed September 16- November 1, 2008. This area is in the resort/summer home area known locally as McNally's or Fairview, and is adjacent to

Mountain Highway 99, crossing the Kern River on the Whiskey Flat Trail.

Routine maintenance and a correction of a design flaw were completed. The bridge had no room for expansion on hot summer days which caused stress on the abutments and concrete supports.

*Stop by and see the great work that was done!*



## Giant Sequoia Groves

Within the Giant Sequoia National Monument there are 33 distinct groves. There has been much discussion regarding; *where* the groves are located in the Monument, *have* the groves been inventoried, *what* are the names of the groves, and the big question: *how many* giant sequoia trees are in the giant sequoia groves? Well, here are a few answers. First, the names of the 33 groves along with their approximate acreage:

1. Alder Creek – 408 acres
2. Black Mountain – 2,585 acres
3. Burro Creek – 278 acres
4. Cunningham – 32 acres
5. Deer Creek – 144 acres
6. Dillionwood – 366 acres
7. Freeman Creek – 4,182 acres
8. Long Meadow – 568 acres
9. Maggie Mountain – 64 acres
10. Middle Tule – 301 acres
11. Mountain Home – 1,299 acres

## Giant Sequoia Groves

*Cont.*

12. Packsaddle  
(Packsaddle, Powderhorn) – 528 acres
13. Peyrone – 741 acres
14. Red Hill – 602 acres  
(Evans, Lockwood, Kennedy)

15. Silver Creek – 108 acres
16. South Peyrone – 115 acres
17. Starvation Complex – 182 acres
18. Upper Tule – 22 acres
19. Wishon – 171 acres
20. Belknap Complex (Belknap, Wheel, McIntyre) – 3,083 acres
21. Abbot Creek – 25 acres
22. Agnew – 43 acres
23. Bearskin – 187 acres
24. Big Stump – 431 acres
25. Cherry Gap – 170 acres
26. Converse Basin – 4,666 acres
27. Deer Meadow – 168 acres
28. Grant – 292 acres
29. Indian Basin – 448 acres
30. Landslide – 226 acres
31. Monarch – 54 acres
32. Redwood Mountain – 989 acres
33. Evans Complex – 4,255 acres



## **Operation LOCCUST and Marijuana Eradication Efforts**

In Tulare County, CA, August 5, 2008, John Walters, the Director of the White House’s Office of National Drug Control Policy joined agency heads from the Tulare County Sheriff’s Office, California National Guard, land management and law enforcement agencies to announce Operation LOCCUST, an ongoing marijuana eradication effort being conducted

throughout Tulare County which led to 36 arrests and approximately \$1.4 billion in marijuana plants seized. Federal, state and local law enforcement agencies arrested several members of a drug trafficking organization that was involved in a large scale marijuana growing operation.

In 2007, the Tulare County Sheriff’s Office had a record year of eradicated marijuana plants, with a total of 330,693. In seven days of Operation LOCCUST, the eradicated plant count surpassed this record year (2008) with 340,685. The operation seized 138 lbs of processed marijuana, \$6,900 in cash, 27 weapons; three vehicles, 32 cases initiated, 12 search warrants served, and resulted in the arrest of 36 suspects associated with marijuana grow sites.

The progress of Operation LOCCUST can be attributed to the coordination and planning efforts involving a coalition of 14 state, local and federal agencies, dedicated to the removal of marijuana, investigation and apprehension of drug trafficking individuals. Operation LOCCUST has dedicated resources to the removal of infrastructure, hazardous material, garbage and waste left on public lands from these marijuana growers. The operation consists of over 240 personnel from the 14 state, local and federal agencies.

Beginning in November 2007, law enforcement officers from state, federal, and local agencies initiated resources for investigations into drug trafficking organizations involved in large scale marijuana grow site operations. During the course of these investigations, law enforcement officers identified 83 illegal marijuana grow sites.

Eradication and reclamation teams, along with a volunteer crew strive to remove irrigation lines, contaminants and trash from the land, streams and rivers. Removal of this material will help restore the land to its natural state and will remove the infrastructure which is imperative to deter drug trafficking organizations from reestablishing their operations. This process is the first stage of the restoration process and can typically exceed \$11,000 per acre.

To date, Operation LOCCUST has reclaimed 33% of the grow sites that have been eradicated during this operation. It has been proven that

one acre of marijuana plants has a negative environmental impact on approximately 15 acres of adjacent land. Operation LOCCUST had a goal of reaching a minimum of 40% of reclamation during the operational phase with additional reclamation scheduled for the winter months.

## Sequoia Marijuana Eradication Efforts

Here are some startling statistics about cleaning up marijuana sites on the Sequoia National Forest. You likely have heard about Operation LOCCUST (Locating Organized Cannabis Cultivators Using Saturation Tactics), where 14 agencies team up to remove marijuana plants, investigate and apprehend drug trafficking individuals, and remove marijuana-growing infrastructure on public lands.

In past efforts, when marijuana was eradicated in Tulare County, personnel and funding were not adequate to clean up the mess created by growers. Thanks to volunteers from the High Sierra Volunteer Trail Crew, supported by the Forest Service, over thirty percent of the 51 grow sites located on the Forest were reclaimed. In less than two weeks, these volunteers removed 245 bags (35,540 pounds) of trash which held 20 propane tanks, 4,195 lbs of fertilizer, 22 lbs of pesticide, 33.5 gallons of chemical, and 165,556 feet (31 miles) of irrigation line. These volunteers destroyed multiple make-shift structures that were built by the growers, including benches, tables, 2 dams and 11 reservoirs. Removal of this material will help restore the land to its natural state and will remove the infrastructure which is imperative to deter drug trafficking organizations from re-establishing their operations. These drug trafficking organizations occupy public land for months at a time, threaten public safety, cause fires, cut trees, build illegal structures, illegally kill wildlife, pollute the watershed, create massive trash problems and illegally use herbicides and pesticides.

These large sites strip the soil of its nutrients and stress local indigenous species. Forest Service law enforcement and partner agencies will continue to  
February, 2009

focus their efforts to disrupt and dismantle drug trafficking organizations that are primarily responsible for the marijuana cultivation occurring on the Sequoia National Forest and Giant Sequoia National Monument.

We continue to address resource degradation issues and the effects of marijuana growing that impact the watershed when chemicals and materials and equipment are left on the landscape.

We will be diligent in our law enforcement operations and management restoration efforts to reduce damage where marijuana growing occurs. Even though Operation LOCCUST is over, we will continue to partner with law enforcement agencies to manage and curtail marijuana cultivation and work with volunteers and others to restore areas that have been degraded.



**Sequoia National Forest  
Giant Sequoia National Monument**



## Centennial 1908 - 2008



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