



NEWS RELEASE

Sequoia National Forest and the Giant Sequoia National Monument

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Monumental Outlook Over The Horizon

(What's Happening on the Sequoia National Forest
Giant Sequoia National Monument)

By Tina Terrell, Forest Supervisor

Porterville, CA..... Many times when we envision pictures of a National Forest, what comes to mind are the vast open spaces, and beautiful lush mountain meadows. If you are lucky, you see yourself fishing in a stream with a deer or two browsing, and birds flying overhead. Well, here is how the Forest Service and community partners helped to make that picture a reality!

In 2003, we began partnership efforts to restore Big Meadows Creek on the Hume Lake Ranger District, (northern portion of the Giant Sequoia National Monument.) The goal was to restore 6,100 feet of degraded meadow streams, enhance aquatic species habitat, and continue recreation use and cattle grazing. The latest restoration technology--pond and plug—was used which redirects the stream back into a stable, historic meadow surface channel. The technique reconnects the channel to its naturally evolved floodplain which is a single-thread, low flow channel. The outcome will reduce water flow peaks and increases, extend summer base-flows, increase stream cover and shading, enhance aquatic and terrestrial habitat, improve water quality, and raise groundwater levels within the meadow. I know it's very technical.

Historically since the late 1800's, the Big Meadows area was used for seasonal grazing of sheep and cattle under private ownership. In the early 1900's, the area was bought by the federal government. The first recorded grazing allotment under Forest Service was in the 1960's. The initial check dams were installed at the time the allotment was issued. A 1941 map shows some gullying in the meadow. Stream gauge records from Cedar Grove (December 23, 1955), showed evidence of a rain-on-snow event, increasing the gullying in Big Meadows. This same event caused massive flooding in several valley towns.

- Several steps headed up by Jayne Ferrante, Conservation Chair for the Fresno Flyfishers for Conservation, lead to restoring Big Meadows. The Forest was successful in developing partnerships, volunteer training and project implementation. The Big Meadow Restoration project began with the development of a monitoring plan in December, 2007. A monitoring study documenting birds was completed. Numerous species such as mallards, American coots, and swallows were observed. Jeff Cordes, Wildlife Biologist and three volunteers concluded the bird community at Big Meadows was at a level, both in diversity and densities, of a healthy southern Sierra meadow. Willow thickets were planted with a very high survival rate, creating important habitat to increase the diversity and density of birds.

- Meadow Restoration Class, funded through a grant from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, the program was taught by Jim Wilcox, Program Manager for the Feather River Coordinated Resources Management Group. Jim is a nationally recognized expert in geomorphic restoration.
- Range forage conditions were established in the meadow, and cattle grazing was excluded during the 2008 season.
- Throughout the summer, the 3-5 foot pools held water and the meadow remained saturated into July, with high late-summer groundwater levels and increased water storage.
- Monitoring will continue to study the impacts.
- For more information about the Sequoia National Forest you can visit: www.fs.fed.us/r5/sequoia.

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The Collaborative Partnership included: Fresno Flyfishers for Conservation, Kaweah Flyfishers, Sierra Nevada Conservancy, California State University-Fresno, Kings River Conservation District, California Regional Water Quality Control Board – Central Valley Region, California Department of Fish and Game, Tulare County Fish and Game Commission, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Feather River Coordinated Resource Management Group (CRM), and numerous other individuals and groups. Over 75% of the funding for this project came from grants and private contributions for the planning, design, implementation, and monitoring.