

NEWS RELEASE



Sequoia National Forest and the Giant Sequoia National Monument
1839 S. Newcomb Street, Porterville, CA 93257

Date: March 20, 2009

Op-Ed – *Monumental Outlook Over the Horizon*

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Public Comment Portal Offers New Way to Make Your Voice Heard For the Giant Sequoia National Monument Planning Effort

I would like to inform you about an exciting new way to communicate and collaborate with the Forest Service, members of the scientific community, the public, and many other stakeholders! We are beginning the formal analysis to develop a Giant Sequoia National Monument Management Plan. On April 15, 2000, President William J. Clinton signed a Presidential Proclamation establishing the Giant Sequoia Monument, which is located in south-central California.

On March 18, we released the Proposed Action that outlines a framework for the Monument and begins a 45-day public comment period, ending May 4, 2009. This public scoping effort presents two new web-based applications: the portal--a new interactive communication and collaboration tool, and the Values and Interest-Based Explorer (VIBE). We are showcasing these dynamic new ways to engage you to help develop the new Monument Plan.

The first, the web portal, gives you web access to the Proposed Action and gathers your comments. From any computer with internet access, you can draft and submit comments while reading the scoping letter, access dynamic interactive maps, receive e-mail notifications, and save and share links with friends or online networks. This website presents the newest tool in our collaborative outreach efforts. On the site is an instructional site tour, my welcome video, and online help. All of the traditional tools— phone calls, letters, e-mails, faxes, and meetings—are still available.

This application also streamlines our efforts to analyze, report, and respond to your comments in a cost-effective, transparent and consistent way. You will also be able to see your comments and our responses in a timelier manner. Additional documents and maps will be posted as we move through the planning process which will give you up-to-date information 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The second, the VIBE, is a decision framework tool which allows one to apply their values to the monument planning effort. There are three pseudo-alternatives and value selections you can make on key resources in the Monument. When finished, the tool displays a chart of one's values. Please take a test drive.

I would like to invite you take the opportunity to become actively involved and share your thoughts, hopes and ideas for this new Monument Plan. Please visit our comment website at: <http://gsnm-consult.limehouse.com/portal/>, or call (559) 784-1500 for further information. Also, plan to attend upcoming meetings from 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m., on: April 14, Visalia Convention Center; April 15, Kernville Oddfellows Hall; April 16, Forest Service Headquarters in Porterville; and April 20, Hume Lake Ranger District Office in Dunlap.

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Editors Note:

Comments concerning the scope of the analysis must be received by May 4, 2009. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement is expected in September 2009, and the Final Environmental Impact Statement is expected in March 2010. Send written comments to Marianne Emmendorfer, Project Leader, Sequoia Forest Headquarters, 1839 S. Newcomb Street, Porterville, CA 93257. Attention: Monument Management Plan.

Comments may be submitted via the website at <http://gsnm-consult.limehouse.com/portal/>, or via facsimile to (559) 781-4744. Comments received in response to this solicitation, including the names and addresses of those who comment, will be part of the public record on this proposed action. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, anonymous comments will not provide the respondent with standing to appeal the subsequent decision.

For further information contact: Marianne Emmendorfer at (559) 338-2251, extension 313. Individuals who use telecommunication devices for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339, between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday.