



Another Season Comes to a Close

After a long, dry summer the fall storms finally rolled over the forest in the first week of November. On November 4th our first snow fall occurred prompting the closure of Hidden Falls and Moses Gulch campgrounds. Soon after, on November 18th, the rest of the forest was closed in order to do some roadside salvage and hazard tree removal by our local loggers.

The loggers were able to take out dead and dying trees in the Hidden Falls area all the way to the top of River Road. They then moved into the areas between Tub Flat and Hedrick Pond to remove trees that were a safety concern.

As many of you know, this was a very busy camping season. Labor Day weekend found all the campgrounds full on Saturday and we had to send people away. This was the first such occurrence since we started charging fees back in 2011. Some of the smaller campgrounds filled up regularly on the weekends.

When we weren't patrolling the campgrounds, forest staff was giving the Pack Station a much needed facelift. All of the siding and trim were replaced and a new log covered deck was added to prevent snow damage. All the wood used on this project was logged and milled by the forest staff. We utilized

standing dead cedar that would have otherwise been left to rot. Besides the Pack Station, you will notice new signs at each of the campgrounds when the gates open in 2015.

Lots of upgrades are in store for the next few seasons. The forest manager has plans for installing new pipes in all of the existing campgrounds; constructing a new group campground similar to Methuselah; and possibly building some rental cabins. Additionally, we are still evaluating the construction of a "flow trail" for our mountain bike enthusiasts. We will keep you posted on these upgrades as we get closer to implementing them.

Drought Update

With the continued drought, water was no doubt a concern for most of Californians this year. Campers of Mountain Home State Forest were no exception as evidenced by the many phone calls and inquiries about water availability in the campgrounds or whether the South Fork of the Tule River was flowing. While we were able to maintain water to most of our campgrounds throughout the season and the Tule never quite dried up, the forest still felt the effects of the drought. The spring water source at the Old Mountain Home Day Use

Area went dry in July which hasn't happened for at least 20 years. Late season campers at Shake Camp were inconvenienced because of issues that we were having with the underground source. Unfortunately, we were not able to provide potable water to campers at Shake Camp and were forced to shut the supply off.

A special thanks go out to all campers who worked to help us conserve water this year and keep water available for everyone. We received some more snow in December and January but we still have a dismal

snowpack. We measured the snowpack on February 26 and found only 6.3 inches at the Enterprise Mill snow course. Winter certainly isn't over and we're optimistic for some recovery, so keep your fingers crossed and pray for snow.

In the event that Mother Nature has indeed decided that winter is over, there is a distinct possibility that our campgrounds may dry up and we cannot provide you with water. We will remain open and serve you the best we can. Please continue to be conservative with water use.

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Special points of interest:

- *What is all the logging about?*
- *Do you have a large group? How about reserving the group campground?*
- *Do you have what it takes to be a campground host?*
- *What to do with so many bears?*

Bugs in the Woods

Drought is a major stressor to trees and the prolonged effect of this stress often results in tree mortality. We have observed considerable die-back over the past couple of seasons as the drought continues to weaken trees. We have been monitoring the forest for signs of stress and the development of insect populations.

In 2013, we observed an unusually high number of adult Tussock moths when we removed the pheromone traps that we install each year. The Tussock moth further weakens the white fir trees by partially defoliating them. In order to recover, the white fir need an ample supply of water. Needless to say, this hasn't happened yet.

Visitors to the forest probably noticed that much of the foliage appeared yellow or pale in color. While some of the discoloration can be attributed to natural processes of the individual trees, the abundance of occurrences tells us that something else is happening. Various insects are taking advantage of the

drought induced stress in the forest.

We have been watching trees that appear sick eventually die. We have been observing infection from these single dead



trees spread into groups of dead trees. When insect caused mortality threatens the public or the forest infrastructure, we begin salvage logging operations.

Early estimates were thought to be between 2 to 2.5 million board feet of dead and dying timber. We have already harvested approximately 300 thousand board feet of salvage timber in November and December with a long way left to go.

Considering the amount of mortality that is occurring in the forest under natural conditions, you may wonder how you could have an impact. We want to remind campers to not bring firewood from other places to the forest when you come to visit, especially if the bark is still attached. This forest has evolved to fend off pests that occur here naturally. It has not evolved to battle some exotic insect or disease from some other environment. Could you imagine what might happen if an insect from the valley or another state hitched a ride to Mountain Home under the bark of some firewood? What would this forest eventually resemble if that particular bug found giant sequoia to be a desirable host? Firewood can be found scattered throughout the forest which is free and easy to collect. We are also planning to sell firewood that is generated from our logging and fuel reduction projects. Firewood will be sold at our forest headquarters for those who don't want to gather it. Thanks to all for your help in this area!

Registration For Next Years Camping

Got a big group that won't fit into one site? How about renting out our group campground for a weekend next year. Our Methuselah group campground is a great place for large groups to stay in a campground all by themselves. Registration opened on January 1st and there are plenty of dates still available. Methuselah is available to any group with 20 or more people. This campground has its own restrooms and trash cans along with a large stone BBQ for cooking up all the steaks you can eat.

Another not-so-well-kept secret is the ADA compliant site at Frasier Mill Campground. Site C-2 was built to accommodate wheelchairs so everyone can enjoy the forest. Reservations are required to secure this site so call ahead before you head up the hill. You can reach us at (559) 539-2855 to make your reservation.

Even if your not in one of our reserved campsites, filling out your registration form is still an important topic. Make sure that it is the first thing you do when

you choose a site. (BEFORE YOU START YOUR FIRE!) The slips are found at the entrance to each campground. Make sure that everything is filled out on the slip before you put it back in the iron ranger. The price will be the same for next year at 15 dollars a site and 5 dollars for an extra vehicle, with a 2 car limit at each site. We don't want to bother you by reminding you to register so please take an extra minute to ensure that your paperwork is done completely and in the box before we get there.

The Forestry Challenge

Are you in high school? Do you think you know what it takes to manage a forest? Would you like to learn? That is what the annual Forestry Challenge is all about. Make the forest your classroom for four days. Each year teams from high schools all over come to the forest for a few days to learn, practice and compete in various pre-selected forestry skills. This year was no different with teams competing in areas like tree identifica-

tion, the use of forestry tools like prisms and clinometers; as well as, giving a final presentation on what management technique they would choose to employ and why. The students were tested and judged by a panel of volunteers (all familiar with forestry and its practices). Think your school would like to compete this year? Contact Jim Kral at Mtn. Home Demonstration State Forest to see how your school can get involved.



2014 Forestry Challenge Participants

Camping Etiquette

Most of the visitors to Mountain Home Demonstration State Forest come here to camp so we thought it appropriate to review some camping etiquette reminders. These will make both your camping experience and those that follow you a more enjoyable one.

As mentioned, the last thing the forest staff wants to do is bother you for registration info, but this also holds true with parking, and other campground rules. When it comes to parking, please keep in mind when you are NOT camping please do not park in designated campground parking areas. Day use parking is available at Hedrick Pond, Shake Camp, Hidden Falls, Sunset Point and Old Mountain Home; as well as, the Memorial Trail and Hercules Tree. Campgrounds are limited to two cars per site. If you have more than two cars in your group be prepared to pay for another site to park your cars as no overnight parking is allowed in day use areas. Also, with regard to group camping, when notes or ribbons

are left on message boards to notify those in your group where they can find you, please remember to remove them when you leave. It is very obvious to forest staff who forgot to take their messages down since your name is usually on it. Not only does this practice make it easy for your friends to find you, it also makes it easy for us to find you as well.



Camper cutting tree in campground. Please do not wreck your campgrounds!

Please remember that ALL trash belongs in a trash can. Trash cans are provided throughout the forest in campgrounds and day use areas. Trash is emptied by forest staff regularly and we strive to keep the forest free of litter. Instead of tossing that can out the window please take a second to stop and throw it into a trash can. Also, if you're camping, don't save your trash in a bag. Dispose of it as you make to keep your site tidy and bear free. This way everyone will find the forest as nature intended it and not a dump.

Another area of concern is campfires. Please make sure your fire is out when you leave. Water is available in all campgrounds and is the recommended way of extinguishing your campfire. Please do not leave burning logs in or hanging out of the fire pit .

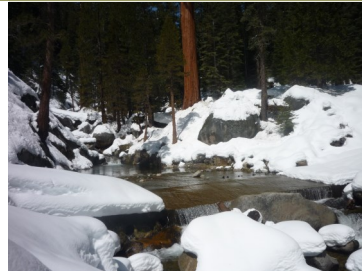
Hopefully these reminders will help to make everyone's visit to the forest a great one.

Volunteer at the Forest

Mountain Home is looking for campground hosts to fill 3 more of our campgrounds. If your looking for a way to spend a summer in the woods for free this is the perfect opportunity for you. Campground hosts get their own campsite with water hook ups to their trailers and free camping. All they are asked to do is make sure that their campers are registered and be around on the weekends to answer any questions that campers may have. This is a great way to spend the summer and get out of the heat. Currently, Frasier Mill and Shake Camp

are taken, but Moses Gulch, Hidden Falls and Hedrick pond are available to qualified hosts. If this sounds interesting to you call the forest at (559) 539-2855.

Unfortunately, we did not get to have our closing volunteer day that was mentioned in the last news letter. Sudden snow and an abundance of work at the end of the year got in the way.



We still want to make a volunteer day happen. This would consist of our guests coming to the forest one weekend before we open and trading a few hours of work for a free weekend of camping. Don't forget to bring your gloves and your favorite tools. We'll keep you informed on when and where this may happen. If you have any other good ideas for volunteering, please don't hesitate to call.

Bears

Cute little critters or dangerous animals. Well, they can be both. Last year we had numerous bears coming into campgrounds looking for a little handout of food. They will eat garbage if you leave it out or, preferably, the contents of your ice chest. When campers are not using the trash cans and food lockers properly, bears will inevitably help themselves. Bears then begin to associate food with people. This can be bad and cause big problems for campers.

The best way to prevent bear invasions is by making full use of the bear proof trashcans and the bear lockers provided at each campsite. When you have too much trash to fit in one can either flag down a Cal Fire employee or find an empty trash can to put your trash in.

If you plan on leaving your camp make sure to lock up all the food in the bear box so you don't come back to find dinner missing and your site trashed. If you

store your food in your vehicle, keep the windows up and doors locked and keep the food covered with a blanket or tarp so they can't identify it.



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My Favorite Things

*Coves, draws and gulches; meadows and swales;
Cool shady places in valleys and dales;
Sunny rock outcrops; high windy ridges;
Free-running streams that have never known bridges;
Soul filling drinks from cold mountain springs,
These are a few of my favorite things.*

*Rivers and streamlets and lakelets and creeks;
Cliffs, crags and pinnacles; snow-frosted peaks;
And once in a while a hill or a hollow
Rounded and curved like the Venus de Milo.
And winters and summers and autumns and springs,
These are a few of my favorite things.*

F.L. Otter

MHDSF Manager, 1954-1969

A Message From the Forest Manager

Well, it seems like just a few weeks have passed since I was hired on to be the Forest Manager at MHDSF. Coming from working for an industrial forest company and then owning and operating my own consulting firm, I must say that I had some trepidation about going to work for the government. However, my fears were overrun by the opportunity to actively manage an old-growth giant sequoia forest. In July, I will have been the manager here for seven years. That's hard to believe.

There is no other place on the planet where the management activities like we implement at MHDSF are done. Throughout its natural range, the giant sequoia is revered and cherished for its magnificent size, age and overall grandeur. However, one could argue that because of its grandeur, this species is being loved and eventually led to death. What I mean by that is there is a common misconception that these trees are somehow fragile and not able to respond favorably to human intervention. They can not withstand roads and trails being placed near them and won't tolerate the axe and saw coexisting in the same forest. Quite the contrary. Those of you that know some of the history of this place can attest that it is because of the management practices here that this forest is not only beautiful but thrifty. Where others struggle to achieve natural regeneration of sequoia, MHDSF has overwhelming success. In a nut shell, here is the difference.

Giant sequoia is a species that demands sunlight to thrive. It also requires bare mineral soil for the small seed to germinate and grow. Some say that this can be accomplished solely with fire, either natural wildfires or prescribed burns. Activities such as logging, remove some of the canopy to provide the necessary sunlight while, log skidding and site preparation provide the optimum soil conditions. Add a little prescribed fire to the mix to help open the cones and you have created the perfect growing conditions to produce a new cohort of healthy, young sequoia trees. Because MHDSF is managed as a forest rather than just for a single species, all of the other species benefit as well.

We harvest trees regularly at MHDSF to keep the forest healthy. These activities also protect the watersheds which ensures more clean water eventually reaches the valley. Harvesting and the wise use of prescribed fire helps protect the forest soil from becoming impervious to precipitation thus reducing the potential for erosion. Harvested areas attract wildlife by creating a variable stand structure that provides suitable nesting, denning and browse habitats for a number of avian and terrestrial species. Sensitive plant species that require disturbance in the forest can often be found in these areas shortly after harvest as well.

Please don't think for a minute that these operations are simply ordered to occur on this forest. We do a great deal of planning and research before a single tree is cut down. Typically, I go into the forest to let the forest "tell me what it needs" before I develop a silvicultural prescription for the subject area. Because white fir thrives in shade and has the ability to germinate in forest litter, much of my focus is towards thinning the fir to create better growing conditions for the sequoias and pines.

In 1946 when the Mountain Home tract was purchased by the State, white fir only made up 41 percent of the forest composition. Data collected in 2012 during our last forest inventory shows that white fir now makes up nearly 80 percent of the forest. What this means is that over the last 66 years, white fir is now dominating this forest.

These shade tolerant trees now threaten the old giants because they have grown up into the canopies of the trees. This creates a fuel ladder that reaches from the forest floor high into the forest canopy. The giants thick, fire resistant bark can fend off ground fires but the foliage found in the canopy cannot withstand crown fires. Therefore, it is my obligation to return this forest back to a condition similar to that found by the native people when they were the managers. Please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss the management of your forest.