

# Redwood Nation Earth First!

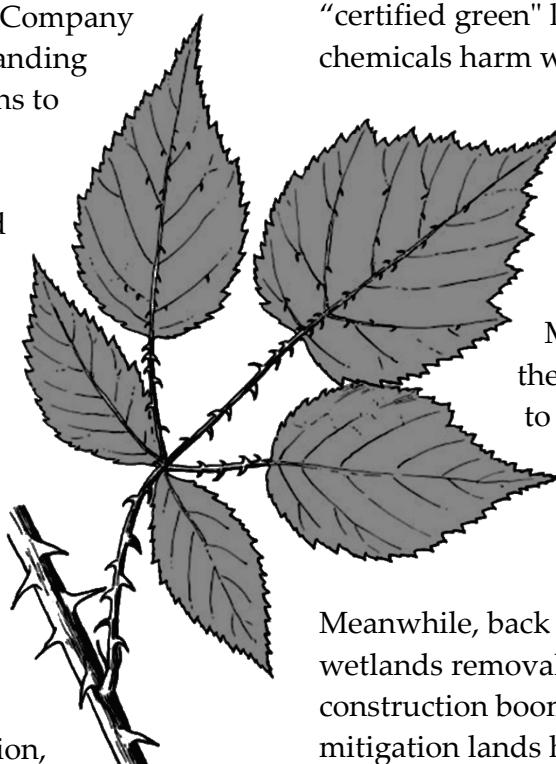
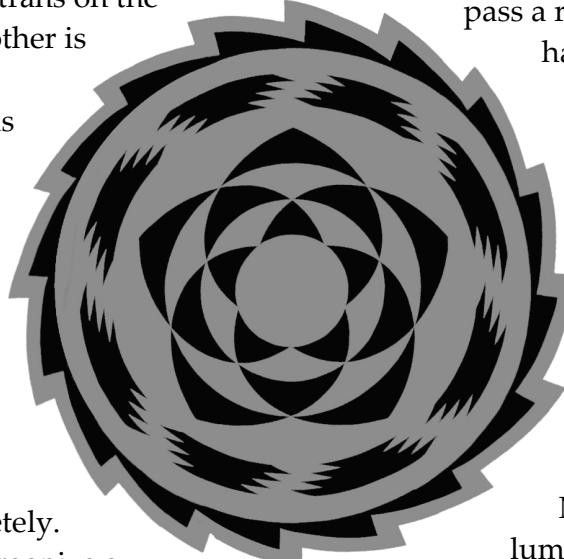
Dear Supporters,

Every time I promise to write a newsletter, more stuff keeps happening! We've been waging two separate but related campaigns this year. One is protecting Native American cultural sites and opposing herbicide use by Caltrans on the bypass mitigation lands. The other is challenging the Mendocino Redwood Company's insidious 'hack'n'squirt' attack on tan oaks on thousands of fire-prone forested acres in drought stricken Mendocino County.

No sooner did we utter the words: "herbicide campaign" than one materialized. Like magic, right? Well, not completely. We've catalyzed and helped organize a county-wide movement to Get Poisons Out of our watersheds by calling mass meetings, holding nonviolence trainings, and forming local forest defense groups to monitor and prepare for direct action should the spray trucks start to roll.

Outrage is rising in Mendocino County over the dead trees Mendocino Redwood Company (MRC) is intentionally leaving standing on its forest holdings, and its plans to "treat" thousands more acres in future years. The hack'n'squirt process - euphemistically dubbed "frilling" by the Company - involves, you guessed it - workers slashing a gash in the tree's trunk and injecting an herbicide into the wound. This is often Monsanto's glyphosate aka Roundup, now linked to cancer by a World Health Organization study. The systemic poison causes the cells to run amok, killing the trees.

From Willits to Comptche to Albion, great swaths of dead hardwoods stand like torches in tinder, increasing fuel loads as forest fires already rage. Not only is this scary as all heck for humans, it's a tragedy for the oaks, trees held sacred by the valley's original inhabitants who cultivated them as a staple food source.



Causing an insane risk of catastrophic fire and exposing all life forms in the watershed to poisons is apparently not a problem for the wealthy Fisher family, owners of MRC, Humboldt Redwood Company, The Gap, and Banana Republic. Billionaire scion Robert "Bobby" Fisher is also a member of the powerful State Committee on Sustainable Development, appointed by Governor Brown.

In May, we put out a call to pack the hall urging the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors to pass a resolution requiring MRC to halt hack'n'squirt. Concerned citizens filled the main room, overflowing into a second.

Despite piercing public outcry about the practice that has already introduced thousands of pounds of toxics into the forest environment, the Supervisors failed to pass even this mild request.

MRC sells "Certified Sustainable" lumber at Home Depot, milled from ever dwindling stocks of conifers, the species they are supposedly favoring by killing the hardwoods. An Earth First!-spawned group called Hack'n'Squirt Alert! holds weekly informational "Boycott MRC Wood" demonstrations in front of the Ukiah Home Depot. They explain why the MRC claim to a "certified green" label is a fraud because toxic chemicals harm workers and the environment, so the wood is no good.

As you read this, MRC's certification board, headed by Rain Forest Alliance, will have convened in Casper to review MRC's certification. We're going there to protest hack'n'squirt and to gather signatures for a County Initiative outlawing the leaving of dead, standing trees on forestlands.

Meanwhile, back at the Willits Bypass, the largest wetlands removal in California since the construction boom of the 1970's, work on the mitigation lands has commenced. The Clean Water Act requires Caltrans to compensate for lost wetlands. To do this, Caltrans is "creating" wetlands, gouging out and stripping bare huge areas of well-functioning, existing seasonal wetlands, under a so-called Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (MMP) administered by the North Coast Water Quality Control Board aka the Water Board.

The MMP has significant impacts of its own on both the biological and cultural heritage of the valley. It may look okay on paper to bureaucrats in offices but on the ground it's an unmitigated disaster. The contractor is scraping off truckload after truckload of rich topsoil and thick vegetation on hundreds of acres across unsurveyed ancestral sites full of cultural artifacts. The soil is then dumped at another location. Tragically, some has even been used as fill to build the gigantic berm at the northern interchange.

Caltrans had dragged its feet on the MMP for over two years, never planting so much as a blade of grass, lollygagging until the Army Corp of Engineers yanked its operating permit in July 2014 for noncompliance with the terms upon which initial approval had been wrangled. The permit was reinstated after Congressman Huffman stepped in and brokered a deal offering Caltrans a choice between downsizing the northern interchange to reduce impacts (our proposal) or getting their D-8s in gear.

Caltrans being Caltrans, they chose to rev up. This decision caused even more corner-cutting, including the bending beyond recognition of the laws and protocols protecting cultural sites. Forty-four sites eligible for registry by the National Registry of Historic Places and over a thousand artifacts have been discovered post construction. Caltrans continues to discover and destroy more sites 'by bulldozer' and has arbitrarily downgraded professionally accepted archeological standards to make sure nothing "significant" is ever found!

Now Caltrans claims it must sacrifice protection of archeological sites entirely in order to meet to its' quota for biologic mitigation credits. If this sounds crazy, it is. But that's not all it is.

In a July 15, 2015 letter to Coyote Valley Tribal Chairman Hunter, Mike Bartlett, Environmental Project Manager for Caltrans, called the destruction of cultural sites "an unfortunate circumstance of the situation." The Tribal Council responded that "We consider this to be not just an unfortunate circumstance but a violation of the law." With all the agencies passing the buck, Hunter concluded, "Caltrans is pointing the finger at the Water Board, saying their requirements mandate them to side step CEQA and NHPA requirements to avoid ancestral sites."

Backing up a spate of letters from Coyote Valley and Save Our Little Lake Valley we made public comment and held protest rallies at Water Board meetings in Santa Rosa, getting the attention of the agency responsible for overseeing the mitigation plan and garnering coverage on Bay Area KGO channel 7 TV.

Also in the name of speed, Caltrans announced in June it would break its long standing promise not to use poisons on the bypass, allowing contractors to apply for a special aquatic use permit for herbicides to eradicate Himalayan blackberries along the creek beds.

This was too much even for the Supervisors, who voted unanimously to ask Caltrans not to use herbicides on the mitigation lands. The Willits City Council voted 4-1 likewise, after which the Water Board told Caltrans they had to hold a public meeting. We were all fired up to make our own presentations and protest with blackberry pies gathered from the mitigation lands.

Two days before its scheduled August 13 meeting, Caltrans cancelled, announcing they would not use herbicides—for now—to eradicate blackberries and other riparian species along creeks. Caltrans spokesperson Phil Frisbee revealed the contractor had submitted a plan to use mechanical means only and would rather "take the risk of not meeting the deadline than face the potential for bad publicity." Frisbee said they "might have to use spot applications on some areas."

Although non-toxic, mechanical removal increases the risk of disturbing unsurveyed ancestral sites.

Therefore, we are calling for a halt to further earth moving activities until the agencies, Tribes and Caltrans meet and agree on proper protection for the ancestral sites. A well-attended public meeting was held without Caltrans, to celebrate this partial but important victory.

Your contributions are vital and greatly appreciated. We are still facing off with bulldozers and herbicides. Our pockets are empty. With so many people protesting we spent it all on training and supporting volunteers. Together we'll continue to stand in the way.

With love and solidarity,



Naomi Wagner

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