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# Forest Communiqué

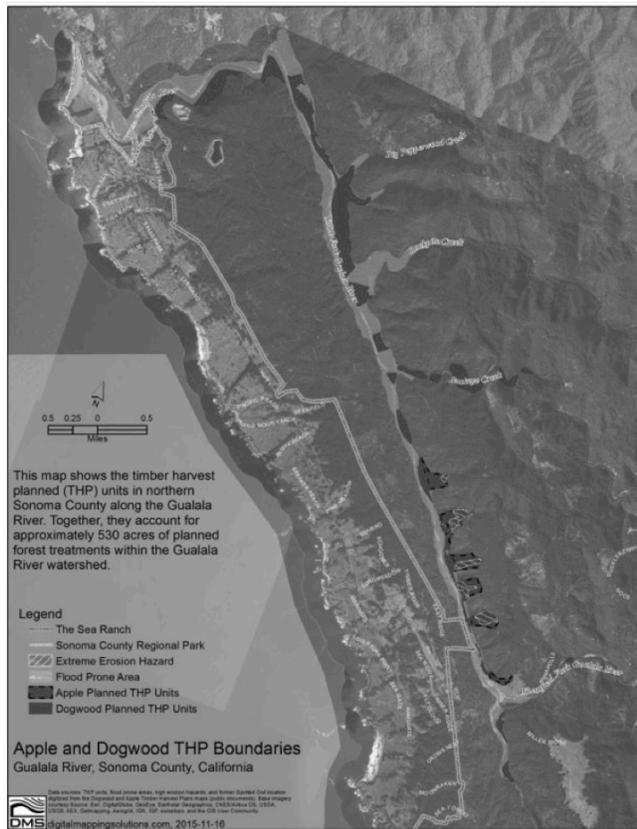
The Voice of Forest Unlimited

Spring 2018

## Dogwood 2–Gualala River

Friends of Gualala River (FoGR) and Forest Unlimited are taking legal action against the resubmitted Timber Harvest Plan “Dogwood.” The logging plan would log in the floodplain of the already impaired Gualala River. Dogwood contains the largest tracts of mature redwoods in the floodplains. The plan extends from the boundary of Gualala Point Regional Park’s campground and goes up river over 5 miles.

These floodplains are special riparian habitats that are part of the river, which naturally occupies the floodplain when it flows over its banks. It's a potent natural sediment trap, or "sink" for the silt and clay that runs off of the eroding slopes and landslides above it. When its vegetation is flattened, the floodplain loses its capacity to trap sediment. **This THP, in effect, logs the river, since the river includes its floodplains.**



The Dogwood plan is comprised of the dark areas in the Gualala River floodplain extending for more than five miles

## Felta Logging Update

Will the trees in the upper Felta Creek watershed fall? The Fox Meadows logging plan STILL threatens the critical habitat of endangered Coho Salmon.

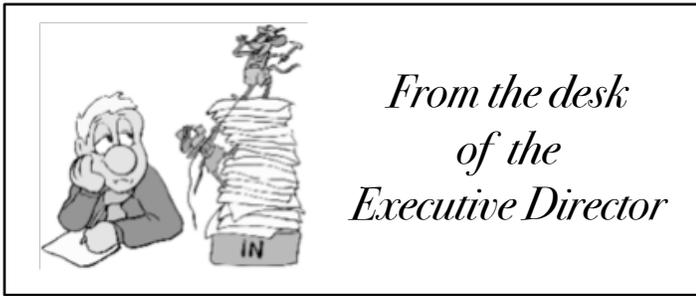
### BACKGROUND

Baby salmon must stay in a tributary that has year round cold clean water in order to find adequate food, survive the hot summer, learn to evade predators, and grow strong enough to make their way back down the creek and then down the bigger Russian River to the estuary. And there they wait until the river delivers them to their ocean habitat. After growing in the ocean, the salmon will attempt to return to their stream and watershed and lay eggs again. Imagine, only a few handfuls of salmon make it back up to this watershed, and after their long arduous and risky journey, they find a mate, make a nest, or a redd, and lay eggs in cold oxygenated water. If the creek goes dry if, after all this, the watershed is damaged, the eggs will perish as well as the hopes of efforts to recover these critically endangered salmon for another long year, at best.

Cont'd on page 7

### What's Inside

- ✓ Our Summer Dinner BBQ, Sat. June 30th
- ✓ Measure C: Protecting woodlands in Napa
- ✓ Report on our annual redwood tree planting
- ✓ Fire and PG&E: Are trees to blame?
- ✓ Wine Country = Wired Country
- ✓ Mighty Oaks Need Protection
- ✓ Coast Action Group: Statewide Lawsuit
- ✓ New Board Member



## Measure C: Protects Woodlands

Protecting oak woodlands is a particularly challenging task. The legal tools at our disposal are minimal because, strangely, oaks are not considered "commercial" species in spite of their obvious economic value as firewood. Without that designation, cutting them is not regulated by Cal Fire. Likewise, most riparian trees lack protection.

In Counties like Sonoma and Napa with a heavy invasion of large multi-national corporate farmers, oaks are considered a nuisance and requiring adequate riparian zones only limit productivity of croplands.

What is left out of this equation, however, is the protection that oaks and river front forests provide to watersheds. By slowing, spreading and sinking rainfall and providing shade, they allow water to sink to the aquifer. They cleanse the water of toxics, hold precious topsoil, and prevent erosion. Local family farmers want these free services.

Local farmers want productive farms and a reliable water source to hand off to their children. That is why local long-term grape growers in Napa County have teamed up with local environmental groups to shore up Napa's Agricultural Preserve zoning. They gathered signatures to place on the ballot, Measure C: The Water, Forest and Oak Woodland Initiative. In spite of interference by their own Supervisors who served the interests of the developers and the corporate wine interest above those of their constituents, Napa citizens will get a chance to vote on the initiative June 5th.

This Initiative creates policies and zoning requirements for the Agricultural Watershed zoning district. These changes would establish buffer zones along streams and wetlands. It would also strengthen existing General Plan oak woodland remediation requirements. For each mature oak removed, it would require replanting of three oaks for preservation of oak woodland habitat.

National and local environmental groups including the League of Women Voters of Napa County, Growers/Vintners for Responsible Agriculture, Sierra Club, California Wildlife Foundation, Forests Forever, California Native Plant Society, Corporate Ethics International, Center for Biological Diversity and,

of course, Forest Unlimited have all endorsed the measure.

A number of longtime Napa Valley winemakers and grape growers also support the measure.

## Tree Planter to Board Member

Harlie Rankin is the newest board member to Forest Unlimited. New to Sonoma County, Harlie is from Seattle, Washington, but relocated to this area to serve as Sonoma Program Coordinator for the organization Global Student Embassy (GSE).



She works with local high school students using school gardens as a basis to teach about environmental issues such as food systems, environmental justice, and climate change. Last year, Harlie spent many months in coastal Ecuador with the same organization leading groups of students on environmental service projects and reforestation of tropical dry forests.

She is passionate about forest conservation, sustainable agriculture, and waste management. Harlie is excited to be on the board of Forest Unlimited to learn more about local issues and involve the future generation in reforestation efforts.



[www.forestunlimited.org](http://www.forestunlimited.org)

Forest Unlimited is a 501 (c)(3) organization whose purpose is to protect, enhance, and restore forests and watersheds.

Forest Unlimited educates the public about logging plan review, forestry law, and regulation.

### **Board of Directors**

Richard Coates, Executive Director, Treasurer  
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 Harlie Rankin, Restoration Committee

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## Mighty Oaks Need Protection

It's been seven years since Sonoma County appropriated over \$32,000 to produce an Oak Woodland Management Plan. Kudos to the County for embarking on this journey. Soon after the funds were appropriated, work began in earnest over at Ag and Open Space. Then it stalled.

A state reviewed County oak plan is required before the County is eligible for state mitigation funds to preserve oaks from development. To date, however there is still no completed plan from Sonoma County that the state can even review.

Although a draft plan was prepared with photos and maps with the assistance of scientists knowledgeable about Sonoma County's important oak trees, that work has not seen the light of day and needs to be completed.

Meanwhile many oaks have been obliterated in our county and on our collective watches. Forest Unlimited plants approximately 1500-trees per year with the help of many hard working and hopeful volunteers. And it is possible, that net gains in shade canopy, in habitat, increased carbon sequestration, and groundwater recharge could, therefore, be more significant if the County finishes the plan. The County is in a position to save trees from destruction by simply completing what they started, the **Oak Management Plan**.

We urge the Supervisors to direct completion and submission of a county Oak Management Plan this year.



*This oak woodland is located on West Piner Road. It could be cut down tomorrow in the absence of tree protections.*

*"The creation of a thousand forests is in one acorn." –Ralph Waldo Emerson*

## Wine Country = Wire Country

Many months out of the year the landscape occupied by wine grape growing interests is pretty stark. When the tourists go home, the local residents including wildlife are left with these structures for the rest of the fall and winter and into the spring.



There is balance and limits to everything, but when some have "too much of a good thing", this lack of balance creates problems. Here in Sonoma County alone, there are approximately 60,000 acres of wired vineyards and much of it near creeks—one of the last refuges for wildlife.

The environmental cost of wine includes thousands of acres of open space and former woodlands that are criss-crossed by thousands of miles of thin wires, metal supports, and high fencing. In some locations, the wire seems to go off as far as the eye can see—interrupting wildlife corridors, reducing their foraging areas and disconnecting open spaces where the last wild things are trying to survive.

People who value the wild likely find these sights an insult and tragedy, yet they keep spreading.

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## Green for Green

Here's a useful and free way to support forest preservation and tree plantings! You can sign up for **eScrip** and select Forest Unlimited as your non-profit.

By so doing, you will allow Forest Unlimited to focus more on helping local watersheds rather than spending time on fundraising. This is a virtually painless means by which to cover some ongoing expenses. Please check out **eScrip.com** to sign up to earn green for Forest Unlimited. Participating merchants are listed on the site. Many hands make light work, and many nickels make stronger non-profits. Thank you for all you do!

# Tree Planting, 2018



*Analy High students, Paisley and Olivia*

This past January, Forest Unlimited hosted its 21st annual Redwood Tree Planting in Occidental. Forest Unlimited volunteers, board members, community members, and a group of high school students with Global Student Embassy came together to plant 800 redwood seedlings over the course of two days on protected land.

With a bucket of trees in tow, volunteers trekked up through the forest to hunt for the blue flags that signified a tree was needed there. In pairs, volunteers dug, planted, watered, and gave thoughtful words of encouragement so that these trees will grow and be there for many years to come.

We are grateful for the volunteers that helped make this event possible and for the opportunity to give community members the chance to get their hands dirty and make an impact in the reforestation of our Sonoma County forests.

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## Conservation Biologist to Speak

Chad Hanson co-founded the John Muir Project in 1996. He first became involved in national forest protection after hiking the 2,700-mile length of the Pacific Crest Trail from Mexico to Canada in 1989. During this hike, he witnessed firsthand the devastation caused by rampant commercial logging on our National Forests in the northwest.

Chad earned his Ph.D. in Ecology from the University of California at Davis with a research focus on forest and fire ecology. He has published an impressive list of scientific research papers on forest and fire ecology, wildlife use of burned forest, and fire history and trend.

This past year he and Dominick DellaSala, Ph.D. co-edited and authored several chapters in a new book entitled, *The Ecological Importance of Mixed-Severity Fires: Nature's Phoenix*.

# Summer Dinner BBQ Under the Redwoods

Please join us on **Saturday, June 30th, 3 to 6 pm** at Anderson Hall in Camp Meeker

For the requested donation below, we are serving **grilled wild salmon** or **grilled portobello/veggies**. There will be side salads, appetizers, and desserts.

Music by **Whitebear** doing acoustic music of Love for the Earth

Our speaker is **Dr. Chad Hanson**, Director and Chief Ecologist of Earth Island Institute's John Muir Project and author of *The Ecological Importance of Mixed-Severity Fires* will talk on **fire ecology**.



*Anderson Hall, Camp Meeker*

**Tickets:** \$50 salmon/\$35 portobello/veggie **before** June 15. Tickets are \$60 /\$45 veggie after Jun 15.

**Mail check to:** Forest Unlimited, PO Box 506, Forestville CA 95436. Write "**dinner**" in Memo Line.

Or pay online at [www.forestunlimited.org](http://www.forestunlimited.org) using PayPal on the sidebar and indicate "**dinner**."

**For more information**, call 707-887-7433

*We've lost nearly two-thirds of the world's wildlife since the first Earth Day 48 years ago."*

*—The Nature Conservancy*

# Are Trees to Blame?

What I am about to write should in no way demean the brave and hardworking PG&E employees who worked under terrible conditions to restore power to our community. The fires were certainly not their fault. They are heroes and sheroes.

However, critics are blaming PG&E management for several of our devastating fires. If PG&E started the Tubbs fire, it would not be their first such fire in Sonoma County. In the past, a downed wire started a fire near Bodega Bay and electrocuted a Sonoma County fireman working to put it out. The last large fire on the Jenner Headlands is officially known as the PG&E Fire!

PG&E was not directly responsible for the terrific winds that whipped the fires into fast moving infernos. But we do know that global warming enhances the frequency and severity of winds. We also know that the burning of fossil fuels is the cause of global warming. And we know that PG&E still sells electricity generated by burning fossil fuels. Indeed, it also sells a fossil fuel: natural gas.

Critics are quick to blame PG&E for a “lack of maintenance” of power lines. Their solution to the danger posed by power lines is to trim and **cut more trees** near the lines. But we have seen many fires started when lines are blown down by high winds even when there were no trees nearby. Remember, these trees absorb the excess carbon dioxide which causes global warming. Do we really want to cut down more trees and make global warming worse?

In addition, who will monitor a corporation like PG&E to make sure they keep limbs away from power lines and replace rotting poles? History has shown that we cannot depend on the Public Utilities Commission to make PG&E behave. The Commission failed to require proper inspection of gas pipelines. The PUC actually tried to minimize the cost to PG&E when their poorly maintained pipeline in San Bruno blew up, burning homes and killing people. And now they are trying to minimize the costs to PG&E from the recent fires.

Additional “maintenance” doesn’t address the other social and monetary costs associated with poles. They are a traffic hazard and a target for drunk drivers.

They are vulnerable to wind and lightening. They are a hazard to construction crews.

It is time to realize that power lines strung on poles are inherently ugly, unreliable and dangerous. The real solution is clear: power lines should be safely placed underground.

PG&E will, of course, scream that it is too expensive to underground lines. In the short term maybe, but in the long term, PG&E may save money on maintenance, insurance, lawsuits and PUC fines. But PG&E’s expenses are but a tiny fraction of the full costs.



*Mature trees marked with X's slated to be cut after Santa Rosa fires, October, 2018 (Larkfield, CA)*

Who is accounting for the lives, homes, jobs and billions of dollars lost by the public due to fires? Who pays the cost of limited communication and interrupted power when fires burn down poles, melt power and telephone lines and destroy cell towers? Who is calculating the costs of decimating whole forests and important habitats for power poles? What about those lightening strikes on transformers perched atop those poles?

PG&E’s corporate management routinely offloads costs to the public that rightfully belong to PG&E. Why? In order to increase short-term profits for its investors and its CEO’s salaries. The corporate system is designed that way by our lawmakers. Why indeed, should a private, for-profit corporation hold a monopoly on infrastructure so vital to the public?

Perhaps it is time for public ownership of the grid. Let PG&E rent the lines just as Sonoma Clean Power does. With the rent money, start a program to underground old power lines and all new lines and save trees.

The latest news is that PGE, instead of trimming problematic branches, is beginning massive clearcutting around powerlines in residential and forest areas, cutting trees that are not dead including habitat trees. This apparently is statewide.

Please contact your State Legislator and ask him or her to require that California’s utility company immediately stop clearcutting around power poles and begin a process to underground their power lines.

## Dogwood 2 *(cont'd from page 1)*

The Gualala River's floodplain supports extensive seasonal wetlands. Salmon and steelhead feed and fatten on the floodplain, including its wetlands, during those special flooding events such as we had in early April.

Among the environmental reasons and legal basis for the lawsuit to protect the Gualala River are:

- Gualala Redwoods Timber (GRT) essentially re-filed the same unacceptable GRI. Dogwood THP, without substantively addressing public comments.
- GRT dismissed public concerns, and disregarded meaningful "reduced project" alternatives.
- GRT dismissed the existence of seasonal wetlands in the floodplains, which is not credible.
- GRT disregarded CAL FIRE's own scientific guidance on how to assess riparian redwood logging plans. They didn't assess the effects of winter 2017 flooding of the floodplain on the part of Dogwood they did log (lower Buckeye Creek) or compare it with logged areas to validate their predictions of how benign their floodplain logging plan is. If they were serious about environmental protection, they would have at least monitored to verify their predictions and assurances. They didn't.
- GRT didn't assess the endangered red-legged frog adult impacts during the non-breeding season, when they move away from breeding ponds and into floodplains to feed at night and hide out under cover by day. They treated frogs impacts as though they were in a hot, arid inland climate (inactive or close to ponds in the dry season) rather than on the more humid coast (where they move overland in foggy, cool weather and at night). And the THP still says the nearest known occurrences of red-legged frogs are 21 miles away, contradicting added information that they are present in the THP area! Careless and confusing contradictions show how sloppy the RPF and CAL FIRE are in preparing a revised THP, even after losing last year's CEQA lawsuit to FoGR, Forest Unlimited and the California Native Plants Society.
- GRT didn't even do a cumulative IMPACT analysis of the floodplain logging. They just tallied up cumulative PROJECTS: total THP acreages of different silvicultural treatments in other THPs, and didn't even distinguish acreages of floodplain from slopes, or wetlands from non-wetlands. So, there was no assessment of the cumulative environmental effects of those projects on fish, wildlife, floodplains, wetlands, plants, etc.
- The THP acknowledges that the river "regularly floods its banks," but omits any reference to the special salmonid feeding habitat it provides when it does, or the

impacts of disturbing the floodplain soils and habitat with skid road use, logging, and hauling. That's why there are special scientific guidelines and rules for assessing THPs that venture into floodplains.

- GRT and CAL FIRE either disregards them or asks for "exceptions" to the rules. We refuse to allow this. GRT and CAL FIRE really didn't fix anything in the old THP. They made minor technical amendments that still dismiss the public's legitimate concerns.

FoGR and Forest Unlimited will continue their fight against this egregious logging plan, which would harm the river, its floodplain, and the wildlife in or beside it. Logging in the floodplain is a terrible idea that needs to be stopped before it inflicts damage on the Gualala River.

Logging of Dogwood is set to start on May 15, 2018. Litigation will take place before that date. Please help us in our fight by donating to Friends of Gualala River or Forest Unlimited. Look for updates.

[www.gualalariver.org](http://www.gualalariver.org) and [www.forestunlimited.org](http://www.forestunlimited.org)

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## Coast Action Group Lawsuit

Alan Levine of Coast Action Group headed up a lawsuit against the Board of Forestry's attempt to subvert the Forest Practice Act (FPA) by passing a "Working Forest Management Plan". Basically, it is a forever logging plan that avoids participation and scrutiny by the public and other responsible agencies. This could have ended Timber Harvest Plans (THPs) which are the functional equivalent of Environmental Impact Reports under the California Environmental Quality Act. Although the equivalency may be debatable, the current THP process definitely does have its protections. One of the big problems is that Cal Fire does not follow the FPA and allows logging that creates significant adverse impacts.

On April 20th, there was a hearing challenging the WFMP in Superior Court. CAG's attorney, Sharon Duggan, was very well prepared and thorough in her presentation on the issues, and CAG has a positive feeling about the case so far.

Sharon Duggan presented at a previous Summer Dinner and spoke about a landmark case, Our Children's Trust, where children are suing the government for not providing for their future in the wake of climate change impacts. That case is ongoing.

The CAG ruling might be out by the time you receive your copy of this newsletter. Watch for it.

## Felta Creek *(Cont'd from page 1)*

Dewatering events now happen in most sub-watersheds in our county. All the tributaries are officially listed as "impaired" by some kind of pollutant. Despite the many changes and damages that have occurred to our creek systems, Felta is one of the last that provides a chance to protect the coho.

### LEGAL HISTORY

Based partially on permission to cross a neighbor's property with very large trucks, low boys carrying earth movers and full logging trucks, Cal Fire approved this logging plan. This was done over the well articulated concerns of the Friends of Felta Creek, the elementary school children who study the salmon and who will be impacted by logging traffic, Forest Unlimited, and by many concerned about the damage to the forests, the critical fishery, and health and safety.

Now approved, legal action against Cal Fire is the only avenue available to protect this fragile and rare creek. Legal papers were filed outlining the concerns about impacts to the school, the children, climate change, the creek, and it's protected inhabitants.

The concerned public seeks to find a conservation solution to this conflict and the logging's threat to the endangered species. Although many have expressed concern and appreciation for the creek, no one has made an offer to buy land from this willing seller.

The concerned public is not giving up! While all ideas are

A realty advertisement:

*"Enjoy your very own Redwood Sanctuary only minutes from the Healdsburg Plaza. Felta Creek meanders through this stunning, secluded 160 acre parcel. Majestic redwoods and beds of clover and ferns blanket around this year round creek offering numerous viewing areas to enjoy the natural beauty and wildlife."* ZILLOW

being pursued to protect the land and the creek, something unexpected has occurred.

### UNEXPECTED CHANGE OF HEART

Although he had previously agreed to let some truck traffic cross his property to facilitate the logging, one neighbor changed his mind. This, according to Cal Fire, rendered the logging plan infeasible. Great news for the watershed.



*An example of a loaded logging truck rolling off a road into a creek, (March 24, 2014–NE Oregon)*

The logging interest now has to forego logging or use Felta Creek Road, a small one lane dirt residential road with small old bridges crossing over Felta Creek. Making this route feasible could be difficult, but despite their interest in selling this property and moving on, the logging interests persist in their plan to log this important watershed.

The Friends of Felta Creek will be in court on May 16th at 3 pm, to try to stop them. (Courtroom 18, located at 3055 Cleveland Aveme). If attending, check the Superior Court site (Case number SCV 261561) in case there are changes.

If you know someone who might purchase a relatively undisturbed parcel, protect endangered salmon, and be a part of history, call 887-7433 or contact Friends of Felta Creek ([friendsoffeltacreek@gmail.com](mailto:friendsoffeltacreek@gmail.com)) as soon as you can.

In addition, you can make a donation by check or PayPal to Forest Unlimited with Felta Creek in the Memo line.

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**Return Service Requested**

**Save the Date: Summer Dinner under the Redwoods, Sat., June 30**

**Sign up for eScripts!** at Olivers Market in Santa Rosa and Cotati, Fircrest Market in Sebastopol, and Lucky markets. Ask them to direct donations to Forest Unlimited.

Or go to this link and sign up: <http://www.escrip.com/wheretoearn/merchantsearch.jsp>

***Clip and mail back with your check in the envelope provided. Thank you!***

**Become a Member of Forest Unlimited**

Your tax-deductible contribution will help fund forestry education programs and forest preservation, protection, and enhancement projects. Members receive newsletters and notification about special events, workshops and logging in their watersheds.

**YES! I would like to join Forest Unlimited to further your work!** (Dues are tax-deductible as permitted)

\$200     \$100     \$50     \$35    Other \$

Name

**Email** (for alerts & treeless newsletters)

Your watershed

Your address

City, State, Zip