



Environmental Protection Information Center
Annual Report 2014



epic

Keeping Northwest California Wild Since 1977



Because Life Depends on Healthy Forests

EPIC advocates for science-based protection and restoration of Northwest California's forests

Together we protect forests

The northern coast of California, a vast, tangled knot of mountains and rivers, shelters a dizzying complex of wild country, forest, and rare and unique species. Stretching from the San Francisco Bay Area north to the Oregon border, and from Mt. Shasta to the east and to the wide Pacific shore—this globally significant region is our focus; nearly 11 million acres of forest, a mix of private industrial timberlands, public forests and protected state and national parks. These landscapes, if properly protected and restored, are capable of serving as a refuges in a changing climate, providing essential life support for natural communities, including the roughly 300,000 people who call this place home and the visitors who find solace in the forests and rivers. We represent our membership in the tireless pursuit of this vision: to advocate for the science-based protection and restoration of northwest California's forests.



Forest Watch Program

Our Forest Watch Program improves science-based forest management practices through a variety of both proactive and defensive tactics such as advocating for permanent protective land-use designations for high-ecological value forests; developing Endangered Species Act listings; working with timber companies to develop site-specific management practices; watchdogging state and federal agencies, and legislators as rules and regulations are developed and implemented; and, if necessary, litigating projects that fail to comply with environmental law.

We work to empower the public by ensuring access to information—we track, review and disseminate information and comment on projects that would negatively impact public and private forestlands. EPIC submits comment letters on behalf of our membership and because agencies know they're being closely monitored, our government is held accountable to the law and public. In 2014, our staff submitted comments on eighteen national forest projects, fifteen private-industrial timber harvest plans and forty other projects of concern. (That's a lot of comments!)

Connecting Wild Places

In 2014, we launched *Connecting Wild Places*—which seeks to permanently protect and connect habitat areas across both public and private industrial forestlands. To kick off the campaign we sent 50,000 people's signatures to high-ranking leaders in the U.S. government alerting them of the importance of well-connected landscapes.



Northern Spotted Owl

After nearly three years of effort we are getting closer to accomplishing our goal of increasing protections for the northern spotted owl under both state and federal Endangered Species Acts. In 2014 we completed an independent scientific review to provide a counter-balance to the timber industry's "science." We expect the California Fish and Game Commission will make its decision by late 2015. On a parallel track, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service determined that our petition to reclassify the northern spotted owl from "threatened" to "endangered" included enough information to warrant further study and consideration. If listed as threatened, the owl will be afforded greater protections on both private and state lands and be more protected from political meddling.

Pacific Fisher

Much like the northern spotted owl, Pacific fishers, a ridiculously cute member of the weasel family, depend on old-growth forests for survival and thus, not too surprisingly, are threatened with extinction. The small, slinking fisher is in quite a predicament; unlike owls, the fishers cannot fly away when their habitat is threatened. Because it requires more canopy cover, fewer clearcuts and rat poison-free food, the fisher needs our help. EPIC was one of sixteen environmental groups who in 2000 petitioned to list the fisher as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act, and in October 2014, the USFWS proposed listing the fisher. We submitted over 1,200 public comments supporting the decision.

From the Executive Director

This was EPIC's year of the phoenix. A symbol for rejuvenation, the phoenix is a mythical bird known for its ability to rise from the flames to begin anew. In 2014, we underwent our own renewal process in a quest to become a strategic, sustainable and modern environmental advocacy organization. With a commitment to strengthen our effectiveness, we took bold steps and made deliberate decisions to redefine our organization.

We are getting back to our roots and relishing our role as the forest protection advocacy organization for Northwest California. We narrowed our scope of work, updated our mission, and developed a five-year strategic plan and roadmap to accomplish three goals: permanently protect and connect forestlands by 2020; and ensure science-based management of public and private industrial forests. This is not a strategy to do less; it is a strategy to be more focused, rigorous and stable.

By focusing our energy we are able to pick up where our conservation predecessors left off and take the lead in California with an emerging coalition of partners to realize permanent protection and restoration of two of the most ecologically significant and carbon dense forest ranges in North America: California's North Coast and Klamath-Siskiyou eco-regions. Our *Connecting Wild Places* campaign will take advantage of the upcoming Northwest Forest Plan Revision process to ensure forest policy is developed using the best available science, the overwhelming majority of which points to the need to protect and connect forests to maintain biodiversity and create "climate refugia"—essential habitat to support natural communities in the face of human development and climate change.

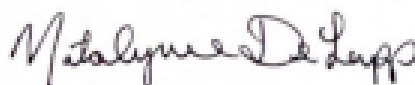
Increasingly, we turn to collaboration and partnerships to move landscape level projects forward. The *Western Klamath Restoration Partnership* is an example of how we are working with agencies and communities in the Mid-Klamath region to return to a natural cycle of wildfire. These "fire-shed" strategies increase "pyro-diversity" through prescribed and cultural burning and wild land fire use. Over time these efforts will allow fire to safely return to its natural role as a renewal agent in our forest ecosystems.

While we make our best effort to work collaboratively with agencies to develop resource-protective projects, sometimes that is not enough. When the government fails to respect its own laws, EPIC is there to step in. Since 1977, we have filed more than 80 lawsuits on behalf of imperiled species and their habitat, and many of our victories have established important legal precedents and led to the permanent protection of old-growth forests, such as the Sinkyone Wilderness, Headwaters Reserve and Gilham Buttes.

We maintain our position as the regional watchdog over government agencies, focusing our advocacy efforts on impacting projects that would negatively affect identified high ecological value forest. For example, the current Forest Supervisor at the Klamath National Forest is trying to exploit last summer's wildfires to push an extreme logging proposal. This project, ironically named the *Westside Fire Recovery Project*, calls for clearcutting old-growth reserves in a habitat corridor that links the Red Buttes, Russian and Marbled Mountain wilderness areas. In 2015, we will hold the Forest Service's feet to the fire to ensure forests are managed by science not politics.

In the coming year, we will continue to put plans into action, make major shifts in policy and practice to conserve our wildlife and wild places; remain vigilant ensuring environmental laws are upheld and not undermined for the benefit of corporate interests and timber volume targets; and inform and mobilize public support for lasting ecosystem protection.

EPIC is changing, but our dedication remains the same. We have an exceptionally competent staff, including two new attorneys, and support from a community of people who dare to think the world can be a better place. I ask that you stand with us as EPIC embarks on a new era for forest protection. Thank you; you are the force that keeps us strong and healthy.



Natalynne DeLapp, Executive Director



2014 EPIC Victories!

Caltrans Hits a Roadblock in Richardson Grove

Our legal team continues to defend the ancient redwoods that line Highway 101 through Richardson Grove State Park from Caltrans' misguided highway-widening project. Both federal and state courts have validated EPIC's legal claims, prohibiting the agency from rushing through its poorly thought-out plan. After years of getting beat in court by EPIC, Caltrans rescinded approvals for the project and has agreed to redo its environmental review. The agency estimates new environmental assessment will be available for review in fall 2015. EPIC is keeping a close eye on Caltrans.



Northern Spotted Owl Habitat Protected

For more than a decade we have defended northern spotted owl habitat from destructive road building and logging on the Garden Gulch Trail, which serves as a gateway to the Marbled Mountain Wilderness. Most recently, EPIC and plaintiff partners successfully negotiated with the U.S. Forest Service to prevent post-fire logging on 345 acres of old-growth forest in the Klamath National Forest. EPIC turned back Big Timber's push to log off-limit areas, preserving the commitments of the federal Northwest Forest Plan and protecting high-quality northern spotted owl habitat.

California's Gray Wolves Protected

As gray wolves disperse from Oregon and begin to repopulate California, they will be protected under state law. In February 2012, EPIC and conservation allies petitioned to list the gray wolf under the California Endangered Species Act. On June 4, 2014, the Fish and Game Commission voted to move forward with listing. Recovery and management of the wolf will be guided by the statewide conservation policies developed in part by the California Wolf Stakeholder Working Group, which we have been part of since 2013.

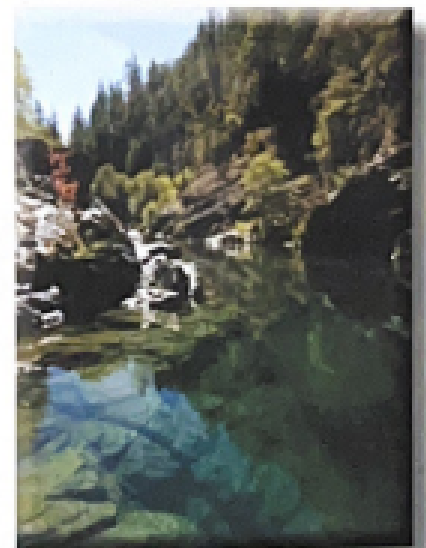


Rat Poison Banned

Owls, raptors and other wildlife are safer now that "second generation" anti-coagulant rat poisons (SGARs), such as d-Con, have been banned in California—due in part to EPIC's advocacy. We developed a bold public education campaign that included high-profile billboards and radio advertisement to educate the public about the impacts of rat poison on wildlife. Remember: use non-toxic alternatives, rat poison kills more than rats!

Wild Coho Salmon Given a Chance at Recovery

As a result of two federal lawsuits, the Trinity and Mad River Hatcheries have been ordered to bring operations into compliance with the federal Endangered Species Act. Wild Coho salmon were threatened by antiquated management practices that allowed hatchery populations to interbreed with, and prey on, wild fish. Both hatcheries remain open and are working with the National Marine Fisheries Service to develop Hatchery Genetic Management Plans.



Smith River—Still Wild and Scenic

Caltrans has been ordered by a federal court to reassess the impacts of its highway-widening project on the Wild and Scenic Smith River and its resident endangered Coho salmon. The agreement prevents Caltrans' construction activities until the agency completes consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service under the Endangered Species Act and Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation Act. The state case is on hold pending the federal case.

Looking Ahead

2015-2016

EPIC is embarking on our *Connecting Wild Places* campaign, which seeks to secure protected corridors between large intact blocks of habitat. This is a big undertaking, but in the next year we will take a number of important first steps, including:

- Developing and leading a broad coalition, including public land management agencies and tribes, to champion landscape-level conservation planning.
- Identifying high-value ecological linkages across north coast and Klamath-Siskiyou ecoregions using best available science;

It has been over 20 years since the National Forests in the Pacific Northwest have revised their management plans and change is long overdue. A coalition of environmental organizations, including EPIC, has banded together to develop guiding principles that unify organizational concerns and visions for the proposed updates. We are the primary environmental voice for California in the proposed revisions, and with over 5.5 million acres of California National Forests under our stewardship, we will be a key player in forest plan revisions.

EPIC will continue our work to enhance the resilience of mid-Klamath watersheds, wildlife, and human communities through our participation in the *Western Klamath Restoration Partnership*, a diverse working group interested in developing science-based plans for restoring fire-adapted landscapes.

We will continue to do what we do best: watch-dogging resource agencies' enforcement of existing laws and regulations by developing sound and strategic comments; utilizing administrative appeals where applicable; and litigating, as necessary, with an emphasis on conservation of endangered species habitat, roadless areas, old-growth forests and priority wildlife corridors. The outcomes of EPIC's work will include:

- Dramatically altering the Klamath National Forest's Westside Project—one of California's largest post-fire logging projects—by reducing its scope and severity.
- Preparing for another go-round in Federal Court to protect Richardson Grove State Park and the Smith River National Recreation Area (197/199 Project) from Caltrans' proposed highway-widening projects.

EPIC will promote protection and restoration of Northwest California's wild forests and the critters that depend on them by strategically utilizing the federal and state Endangered Species Acts. EPIC will continue to advance our on-going listing petitions, including: (1) Reclassifying the northern spotted owl from threatened to endangered under the federal Act and listing the owl under the California Act; (2) listing the Humboldt marten under the California Act; (3) listing the Pacific fisher under the federal Act and supporting its listing under the California Act; (4) challenging the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's decision to not list the Humboldt Marten under the federal Act. We will also fight to prevent political rollback of hard won gains.

Lastly, we will continue to work with Humboldt Redwood Company to ensure its management plans adequately protect and restore two high-ecological value watersheds, Mattole and Elk River.

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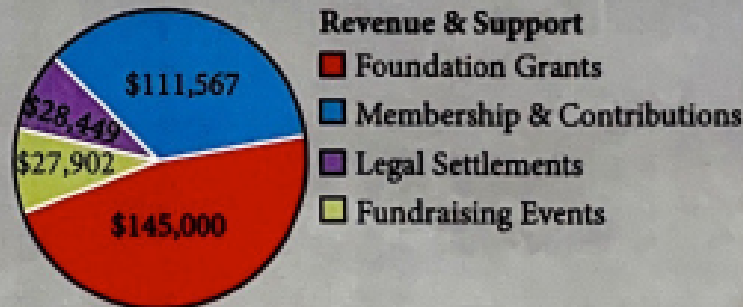
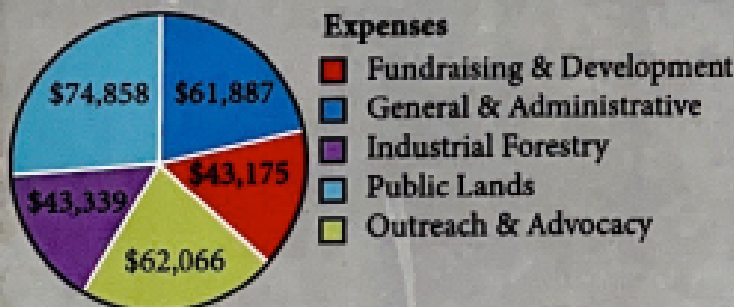
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~For complete financial report visit wildcalifornia.org~



Contributing Foundations

California State Parks Foundation, Environment Now, Firedoll Foundation, Lisa & Douglas Goldman Fund, Guacamole Fund, Humboldt Area Foundation, Norcross Wildlife Foundation, Patagonia Environmental Grants Program, Vincent J. Coates Foundation, Weeden Foundation & Wild Woods Foundation.

1% for the Planet

We are a proud member of 1% for the Planet, a program that connects businesses, consumers, and non-profits, to empower positive change. Thank you to Humboldt Pet Supply, which gives 1% of its profits to helping to protect our forests. If you have a business, and you would like to give, visit onepercentfortheplanet.org.



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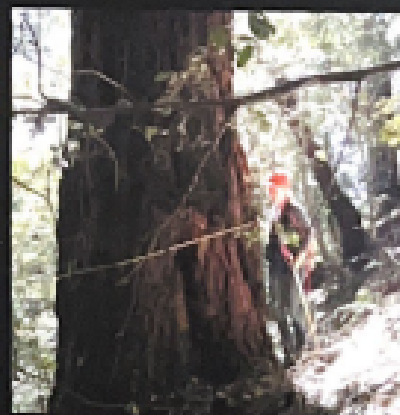
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