

**Environmental Protection Information Center**  
**Annual Report 2015**



Keeping Northwest California Wild Since 1977





# We Speak for the Forests

Our mission is to advocate for science-based protection and restoration of Northwest California's forests.



# 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.

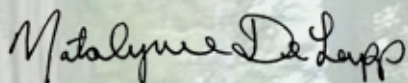
Increasingly, we turn to collaboration and partnerships to move landscape level projects forward. The *Western Klamath Restoration Partnership* is an example of how we are working with agencies and communities in the Mid-Klamath region to return to a natural cycle of wildfire. These "fire-shed" strategies 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





# *Together we Protect Wild Places*

**E**PIC advocates for science based protection and restoration of Northwest California's forests. Our vision is one of healthy, connected and wild forests with regenerative management practices. The forests of our bioregion will help buffer the impacts of climate change resulting in clean air and water, abundant and diverse native flora and fauna and the natural beauty and quality of life will be protected for generations to come.



## *Challenging Westside Post-fire Logging Project*

**Westside:** One of the largest post-fire logging projects in California's history. EPIC and Karuk Tribe filed suit to protect wild salmon and rural river communities, challenging the Klamath National Forest project that would increase fire danger, degrade water quality, and harm at-risk salmon and northern spotted owl populations. EPIC hosted community meetings, helped garner over 13,000 letters to the Forest Service asking for the project to be pulled, and developed a "guide to ground-truthing the Westside timber sale."

## *Western Klamath Restoration Partnership*

Promoting the return of native fire to the landscape. Two collaborative processes that EPIC participates on are the Western Klamath Restoration Partnership and FireScope Mendocino. The groups are developing strategies to concentrate fuel treatments around homes and communities, major roads, and with wildlife habitat and forest ecosystem health in mind.

## *Protecting Elk River Watershed*

EPIC and the Pacific Coast Federation of Fisherman's Association requested to intervene in a lawsuit to defend clean water from logging pollution; EPIC seeks to defend the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board's decision to not authorize discharges of sediment and other associated waste into waters of the Elk River watershed from logging operations by Humboldt Redwood Company.



## *Cannabis Compliance*

The past decade has witnessed exponential conversion of forestland for commercial cannabis cultivation. Because of this threat to regional forests, EPIC stepped up to participate in the development of Humboldt County's commercial cannabis land use ordinance. We succeeded in shaping the ordinance in such a way as to protect forests, wildlife and water resources. Now, EPIC is educating cannabis farmers about how to comply with the law. Working with state agencies, we developed an educational handbook and series of workshops.

## *Board of Forestry*

The California Board of Forestry is not doing its job. EPIC challenged the Board's adoption of the "Working Forest Management Plan" regulations for failure to meet standards of environmental protection, or to ensure long-term sustained yield of forest products for in-perpetuity logging plans as required by state law.

## *Smith River Canyon*

A court case still stops Caltrans' Hwy 199 /197 widening project along the wild and scenic Smith River. EPIC is committed to the legal defense of the Smith River from the unnecessary Caltrans highway widening project.



## *Richardson Grove*

Richardson Grove and Highway 101. Court cases have stopped the project. EPIC is committed the legal defense of the ancient redwood trees in Richardson Grove State Park.



# 2014 EPIC Victories!

## *Mendocino Pygmy Forest*

A rare Mendocino pygmy cypress woodland forest and marbled murrelet habitat was protected from being turned into a trash dump thanks to EPIC comments members participating in our action alert.

## *Grazing Reform*

Unmanaged cattle grazing in the Wilderness is ecologically harmful. The Project to Reform Public Land Grazing documents violations and environmental impacts and reminds government officials and stubborn ranchers that public lands belong to all of us.

## *Bobcat Trapping Banned*

Victory for California native predator- the bobcat! Outnumbering trappers and their lobbyists 10-1, dozens of EPIC members filled the Fish and Game Commission hearing in Fortuna, making thoughtful and passionate comments. The Commission voted to ban bobcat trapping throughout the state of California!



## *Northern Spotted Owls*

In response to EPIC's petition, the Department of Fish and Wildlife recommended listing of the northern spotted owl as a "threatened" species under California Endangered Species Act, citing many reasons, including impacts from habitat loss, barred owls, cannabis agriculture and exposure to rodenticides, wildfire, fire suppression, post-fire logging, changing temperature and weather patterns, climate change, and the inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms to protect the owl. Since the original listing of the northern spotted owl in 1990, EPIC has been at the forefront of advocating for habitat protections in Northwest California and beyond, we work from the micro (project-by-project-level), to the macro (listing petitions and regulations/policy changes), providing access to perspective of the voiceless northern spotted owl in the board rooms, industry and regulatory meetings to the halls of the legislatures and government, and even into the courtroom.

## *Humboldt Martens*

The bushy-tailed carnivores were once common, but now fewer than 100 of them survive in remote pockets of old-growth forest. In response to a petition from EPIC, and the Center, the California Fish and Game Commission voted to make coastal martens a "candidate" species under the California Endangered Species Act! EPIC sued the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for failing to protect the coastal marten under the federal Endangered Species Act, having first petitioned for protection for the coastal marten in 2010.

## *Gray Wolves*

EPIC worked to list the gray wolf as endangered under the California Endangered Species Act and now, the Shasta Pack, California's first wolf pack has established itself in the golden state!



## *Pacific Fishers*

Pacific Fishers: All of California's remaining fishers need protection. Since 2000 EPIC has pushed for protection of Pacific Fishers under the federal Endangered Species Act. In 2015, the Fish and Game Commission decided to protect only the Southern Sierra Nevada portion of California's rare Pacific fisher; the fisher in Northern California are left to fend for themselves.

## *Action Alerts*

Throughout 2015, EPIC developed 13 action alerts garnering 14,987 individualized messages to decision-makers to protect at-risk wildlife and wild places of the North Coast. When over a thousand people send a message, it makes a difference, often leading to the protection of a place or a species. These victories would not be possible without the participation of people like you.



# Looking Ahead

## 2016-2017

**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.



## ***EPIC Staff***

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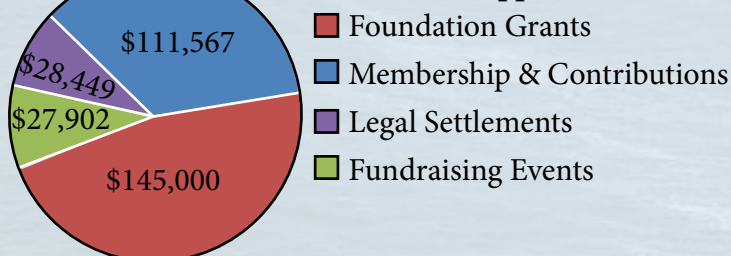
Fiscal Year January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015

~For complete financial report visit [wildcalifornia.org](http://wildcalifornia.org)~

### **Expenses**



### **Revenue & Support**



## ***Contributing Foundations***

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





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