



SIERRA CLUB

TEHIPITE CHAPTER

Sequoia Groves are in peril — but not from fire:

The biggest threat to groves in the Sierra is destructive, counterfeit “restoration”!

“Yes, fires raged through our Sierra forests in 2020 and 2021, burning through many sequoia groves. However, the fire was not uniform; it burned in a mosaic of low-, medium- and high-severity, and the vast majority of mature giant sequoia trees survived. Unlike most conifers, sequoia trees are uniquely adapted to fire, *requiring* fire to reproduce. As the heat from high-intensity fire rises into the forest canopy, sequoia cones dry and release millions of seeds which germinate in the rich ash created when the forest floor is burned. And sequoia seeds continue to fall and germinate even after several seasons.

It's a forest miracle! For the first time in more than a century, millions of sequoia seedlings are naturally germinating in the burned groves, some in a continuous carpet, up to three feet tall after just 16 months (see photo).

The timber industry got ahead of us! The commodity lobbyists and lawmakers they support are always alert for excuses to enter protected areas and sidestep pesky laws like the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). In the past decade they have screamed “Emergency! Must log!” at every natural event — from drought, to pine bark beetle infestations, and now fire. But logging or “thinning” makes drought-stressed forests hotter and drier, and piles of logging slash can act as an incubator for species of pine bark beetle. But facts just get in the way!

Now they have the “sequoia excuse.” With the 2021 fires still recent, a coalition was formed by state and federal agencies that manage our forests while,

simultaneously, Rep. Kevin McCarthy introduced into Congress the deceptively named “Save Our Sequoias” bill into Congress. This legislation provides for logging, dense replanting, rodent control (strychnine) and the removal of “undesirable” shrubs, likely using Roundup herbicide. The bill would even amend the Wilderness Act to allow these destructive activities in our Sequoia and Kings Canyon (SEKI) National Parks.

These sequoia trees are up to 1,000 years old, having survived the recent fires and an incredible array of conditions, and still bear cones. But instead of studying natural grove recovery processes, the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service want to bypass laws requiring the scientific study of environmental impacts, and public participation, and gallop through the sequoia groves of the southern Sierra, including some in protected Wilderness areas. They insist on planting trees despite the obvious, abundant, natural regeneration we have pointed out to them. And the public is now shut out of these sequoia groves for up to 18 months (allegedly for our safety).

Park visitors cannot remove a single rock or flower from Wilderness areas, yet SEKI is using chainsaws to create clearcuts for helicopters to land in Kings Canyon National Park. Their project began October 18 to deliver 120,000 seedlings by helicopter and mule to two Wilderness sequoia groves, at taxpayer expense! These 3- to 4-inch seedlings will be outcompeted by the healthy, native sequoia saplings, now up to 3 feet tall. Worse, this replanting is **likely to harm** the sequoia groves, as some seedlings will inevitably carry potentially deadly root pathogens. Also, the U.S. Forest Service and Save the Redwoods League have authorized commercial “salvage” logging and the sale of thousands of trees. Dead sequoia



Ara Marderosian stands in a giant sequoia grove in Kings Canyon National Park. This patch burned in a high-severity fire in 2021 and is now regenerating 2-foot high giant sequoias. No replanting required! Photo by Chad Hanson

“snags” are needed to stabilize forests slopes, and to provide cavities for homes of multiple species and nutrients for the next forest generation.

Volunteer alert: At press time, our Tehipite Chapter is awaiting national Sierra Club approval to join a federal lawsuit which has been filed against the U.S. Forest Service by Sequoia ForestKeeper and the John Muir Project of Earth Island Institute to protect Nelder Grove, a sequoia grove close to Highway 41, south of Yosemite National Park. Our goal is to halt a so-called “emergency” logging project”

“proposed last winter when ten feet of snow covered the forest floor. The project’s emergency designation would exempt this project from *environmental review* by the Forest Service.

Another federal lawsuit filed by Wilderness Watch, Sequoia ForestKeeper and the Tule River Conservancy is requesting the court to order the National Park Service to comply with NEPA and the Wilderness Act and halt SEKI’s tree cutting in Wilderness areas. Multiple sequoia logging projects are in the works and more lawsuits are likely to come, so stay tuned.”

“WHAT YOU CAN DO: The Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter welcomes volunteers for our giant sequoia protection campaign this fall season before the snows arrive. No experience is required — just a concern for the health of the sequoia groves! For more information, text or phone Gary at 559-790-3495.”

The Sierra Club Tehipite Chapter and Woodward Park Regional Library present:

Sierra Foothill Conservancy (Your LOCAL Land Trust)
Thursday, Nov. 16, 2023 at 7 PM

LIVE presentation at the Woodward Park Library, 944 E. Perrin, Fresno
Free and open to the general public.

The grasslands, foothills, and forests between Yosemite and Kings Canyon National Parks provide land for farms and ranches, a home for

native plants and wildlife, and a source of clean water. Sierra Foothill Conservancy honors our natural and cultural heritage by protecting these resources for present and future generations.

Allyson Brooks, Community Engagement manager, and Ed Hampton, docent for Sierra Foothill Conservancy, will share with us some of their success stories, talk about resources (educational, natural, and cultural) and let you know how you can access and enjoy these wonderful lands for hikes, birding, photography, and other fun activities for the entire family.