



clearcut-type logging just within those two counties, with thousands of additional clearcut acres being denuded elsewhere in the mountains.

That widespread clearcutting by SPI has created a checkerboard of highly visible bare patches across the middle elevations of the mountains -- sparking severe criticism of their plans from a number of Sierra Nevada communities. In response to the public outcry, SPI has steadfastly maintained that the company's timber harvest plans were legal and that their chemically treated, heavily-managed tree plantations produce lumber faster than natural, diverse forests stands.

Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch and the Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center challenged the legality of the three disputed plans, contending that impacts to water quality and other concerns were not legally or adequately addressed. The court's ruling determined that CDF abused its discretion and was prejudiced toward approval of the plans in violation of state law.

"We could have filed lawsuits against all of SPI's logging plans," pointed out John Buckley, CSERC's executive director, "but we wanted to be sensitive to the needs of millworkers and loggers. By targeting these three THPs with this lawsuit, we're hopefully steering SPI and CDF towards better legal compliance and a reduction in environmental harm, without stopping all SPI logging or shutting down mills."

One of the plans that the court has now ruled as being illegal was the Cedar Flat timber harvest plan that proposed over 400 acres of clearcut-type logging in 26 separate logging units to the east of Calaveras Big Trees State Park. Some units were laid out to within 200 feet of the Park boundary. The Curry Timber Harvest Plan, further northeast from the State Park, would have straddled Beaver Creek, so any sediment washing downslope from the denuded hillsides would potentially run into the Park. The third THP, called Base Camp, was located north of Beardsley Reservoir. It would have allowed more than 300 acres of clearcut-type logging.

Addie Jacobson of EPFW shared concerns over ongoing approval of clearcutting by the California Department of Forestry (CDF). "CDF is responsible to protect the citizens and public trust resources of the State. Consistently approving clearcutting timber harvest plans to accommodate timber companies has put our resources at risk. This legal decision helps set CDF back on course to protect us all. A timber company such as SPI does not need to stop logging; they just need to do a gentler job that will cause less harm to water, wildlife and scenic values."

Calaveras County Supervisor Merita Callaway noted that water is the single most valuable economic resource that comes from the forested lands of the Sierra Nevada. "When CDF follows the court's direction, cumulative impacts will be more appropriately addressed and that will benefit our local forests' watersheds. That means everyone wins, since we all depend upon clean water."

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