

Timber Cutting

SIERRA CLUB LEGAL DEFENSE FUND

2044 Fillmore Street, San Francisco, California 94115

April 18, 1985

Dear Supporter,

If the Forest Service's new plans are enacted, millions of trees will fall in our national forests, and you and I, if we hear them, will have nothing to say about it.

Imagine the shock to thousands of hikers whose autumn is highlighted by the brilliance of changing oak trees in the George Washington National Forest along Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains, when inspiring vistas are blighted by clearcuts.

Imagine the permanent loss of autumn colors when 50,000 acres of old growth hickory and oak are cut and replanted with pine -- because it is quick-growing and easily cut.

Imagine the hardships faced by species of hardwood-dependent wildlife, including black bears, which will not likely survive in the converted pine forest.

The time to listen for those trees and take action to insure responsible management of our forests is now. Please let me explain.

In 1985 and 1986, the Forest Service will release 50-year plans for almost every national forest in the country -- plans that in too many cases actually plot a course of forest destruction, and in a way that the Forest Service hopes will immunize many of its abusive practices from future legal challenge.

In the eight years in which I have specialized in forestry issues as an attorney with Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund, our national forests have never faced a more pervasive threat -- or one with such lasting legal ramifications. Other attorneys with the Legal Defense Fund -- Lauri Adams in Juneau, Karin Sheldon in Denver, Howard Fox in Washington, D.C. -- are joining me to fight these plans. We are working overtime, and spending over budget -- just to help local groups preserve the national forests throughout the United States.

Here are just two examples of what we face:

* For New Mexico's Santa Fe National Forest, the Forest Service proposed logging at a rate much faster than the forest could possibly replace itself. The flaw was immediately apparent to local citizens, who know the forest intimately. Yet it required lawyers, experts familiar with the Forest Service's own computer models and a full-scale legal challenge before the Forest Service issued a subdued statement that it had discovered a "mathematical error" and was starting from scratch on a new plan.

* The plan for Alaska's Chugach National Forest also calls for an increase in logging -- an increase of 550 percent! The plan is rationalized by assuming inflated timber prices -- prices that haven't been seen in a decade -- and is further skewed by an incorrect method of measuring timber yield. Ultimately more serious, however, is the failure of the Forest Service to obtain current, accurate data on wildlife populations in the Copper River

(over, please)

Citizen enforcement suits are extremely expensive.

Costs of the four suits we've filed on San Francisco Bay alone could run as high as \$130,000 -- for legal staff, technical research, outside consultants, expert witnesses and other court costs.

And that's just four out of the many more that will have to be tried. We think it's worth it, however, because, unlike officials at the EPA and the Department of Justice, the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund has not waived from the national goal -- established by Congress -- of totally eliminating water pollution in America's lakes, rivers and coastal waters in our lifetime.

To date, the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund and its allies have been very successful. Victories in over a dozen cases have forced major polluters to clean up their operations in compliance with the law and put others on notice that they can no longer dump their toxic wastes, heavy metals and other refuse into the public's waters.

The high success rate of the first citizen enforcement suits -- and the threat of further action -- has up until now persuaded many other polluters to seek cooperative settlements in advance of costly court battles.

Unfortunately, that's not true any longer. The anti-regulatory atmosphere in Washington is now encouraging corporations to fight these costly court battles -- even in the face of their own corporate records of Clean Water Act violations!

Which is why your support is so crucial for us today. What is an almost unnoticeable business expense to Shell Oil, Union Oil, and Alcoa is financially debilitating to SCLDF and our public interest allies.

That's why I'm urging you to send as generous a contribution as you can to the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund today. Your previous gifts have helped us win some critical, precedent-setting cases. But now the big polluters are raising every conceivable (and some not-so-conceivable) factual contention to escape the law.

Your next gift will help us beat them in court. And it will serve notice to the polluters that -- to you -- the Clean Water Act means just that: clean water.

I know I can count on you. My deepest thanks.

Sincerely,



Vawter "Buck" Parker
Coordinating Attorney

VP:sf

P.S. Your contribution is tax-deductible.