Hawaiians Fight for the Rainforest

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IN DEFENSE OF WILDERNESS & BIODIVERSITY

THREE DOLLARS

Geothermal Development Threatens Largest Remaining Stand in U.S.

By Paul Fishluch

On March 25, 143 were arrested as part of a demonstration against the drilling of geothermal wells in the Wai Kolo O Pane Rainforest in the Big Island of Hawaii.

The geothermal project, undertaken by True Geothermal Company and endorsed by Hawaii's governor and other high-powered, short-sighted people, has already invaded the largest intact tropical lowland rainforest in the United States. The demonstration drew over 1500 protesters, representing more than 30 groups concerned with social and environmental issues, including Earth Firsters from Hawaii and the mainland.

The peaceful protest was staged in front of a 12 foot high fence erected in July. "It's a Berlin Wall," constructed in front of the drill site two days before the action. In honor of those arrested, for resisting or obstructing police, the remaining protesters tied green ribbons around the fence.

Complete with Jamaican drummers, Native Hawaiian drummers, and Mauna Kea singers, "The True's Wall" was a celebration. A ring was drawn around the wall, and chanting "Hey TRUE WE're Talking to YOU, GET OUT of Hawaii," protesters let it be known that they won't stop until the rainforest is safe.

The Big Island Police Chief Victor Vann wants each of the arrested protesters to be assessed $600 in addition to other fines and costs. Protesters do not pay court-ordered fines for "keeping peace" at the protest. The True Geothermal is planning to be the biggest energy project undertaken in Hawaii. The 27,000 acre rainforest slated for development is the only refuge in Hawaii where native birds have developed immunity to exotic avian malaria.

The active volcano Kilauea rises gently above the lush Wao Kele O Pane (meaning "Rain-Sea of Punu") forest. This is a rain forest of towering redwood trees with periodic lava flows. The forest is a unique ecosystem. Plants and animals have developed in this complex synergism with volcanic activity.

The geothermal wells and power plants would be major polluters. Sources indicate geothermal wells produce hydrogen sulfide, a toxic gas that, mixed with becomes sulfurous acid (one of the main components of acid rain). Typical of Hawaii's lax environmental policies, the state has no air quality standards for hydrogen sulfide.

Biologists and other fear that toxic emissions would drive off birds and insects that pollinate the great Uli's trees. This pollination is crucial to the reproduction of native Hawaiian vegetation. Without this, human energy development could destroy pipelines, thereby dispersing toxins into the air and soil.

Norse pollution is another factor with unknown effects on wildlife. Because of the enormous pressure created by the surfaceing of underground gases, the geothermal wells need periodic venting, a process with a decibel level of a 247 siren. Lava would reproduce the 500,000 volts of electricity. At 140 geothermal wells would be to have simultaneous eruptions.

These wells would produce tons of toxic brine containing anionic, lead, mercury, manganese, and cadmium along with other heavy metals and toxic chemicals. Soil and groundwater contamination, from settling ponds filled with this brine would be difficult to avoid and hard to detect. Restoring the bogs into the earth has been suggested, but might not be possible because of the unique lava tube ecosystem. Once the lava tubes are underground condons formed when molten lava flowed through the area, they are habitable for a wide range of species, including birds that live only in these formations. The replacement of the natural bores could detect these unknown ecosystems.

With only about 1% of the rainforest (300 acres) would be directly destroyed by bulldozing, the whole area would be subject to fragmentation by a network of roads, pipes, and powerlines. The area would be divided throughout the forest. Fragmentation makes the forest vulnerable to invasion of harmful non-native species. Hawaii contains over half the endangered plants and animals in the U.S.

A Day of Action for Te managi

Earth First! Eastern Canada recently decided to make its presence known. Many Earth First! groups across Canada have already organized activities. Earth First! organized a Day of Action in June.

March 26

- 100 - Activists hang a banner on the Ontario Provincial Premier's Constituency Office in London Ontario. The banner denounces the bias to halt logging on the Deka-Menazeri (Te managi), land claimed by the Teme Naushishshas.

- 6730 - National radio announces that tomorrow will be a Day of Action, aimed at the Provincial Government. The report discusses Civil Disobedience and the group responsible. tune 1000.

- 900 - Twenty activists rally at the office of John Gormaszewski in Vancouver. 3 of them blockade the door in support of the Te managi.

Mississippi Summer in the California Redwoods

Following in the footsteps of the brave civil rights activists of the 1960s, Earth First is calling for a Mississippi Summer in the California Coast Redwoods. Thousands of students, activists, artists and writers are being summoned to northern California to nonviolently put their bodies on the line in defense of the most famous ecosystem in the country.

Response has been tremendous. Protests will begin to arrive in May and continue coming into September, to blockade logging roads, climb giant trees, and peacefully picket logging corporations. It's going to be a long hot summer," said Judd Hart of Utah Earth First! "The eyes of the nation will be on us, not the locals!"

"Non-violence" will be the password for all participants. "All activists are encouraged to take non-violence training," said EAF activist Greg King. "Any participant not in full agreement with non-violence as the principal concern during the actions will not take part in Redwood Summer." The non-violence code will include prohibiting property destruction and physical or verbal threats to loggers or police.

Incoming Freedom Riders will check in at hospitality houses and then be sent to an incredible response from people opening their doors and their land," said Pam Davis of Sonoma County EF.

Forest activists believe the comparison to Mississippi Summer is accurate because of both the tactic of calling for outside help and the battle against a form of bigotry, while EFN call specist. "Many humans see the Earth and other species as something to be conquered and enslaved," said Darryl Cherry of Garberville EF. "We believe that the Earth deserves civil rights the same as people do. A redwood, a spotted owl, a black bear all have a right to exist for their own sake, irrespective of what value they may have to others."

But there is another kind of bigotry: Prejudice against environmental activists. Last summer, there were three incidents of violence against protesters [see related article]. Two teams of attorneys are challenging the police who arrested more than 100 activists for their actions. The court is still deciding that discriminatory law enforcement doesn't occur.

Redwood Summer organizers don’t want bigotry toward timber workers either. "The battle is not between the timber worker and environmentalist. It's between great logging corporations and our community," said Bart, who organized labor unions for 10 years and is currently the driving force behind HWF Local #1, an NLRB recognized union which includes both logging and timber companies down to sustained yield.

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To protest the "timber pact" between state politicians and timber executives in Northern Californi,

"The day is in the blood of old-growth loggers in mid-Valleym. Five people glued onto the logs and chained themselves in place, stopping the truck for most of the afternoon and thereby blocking up traffic for 18 miles. The traffic jam included a long line of log trucks coming out of a Pacific Lumber log deck.

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Significant changes may be coming. Forest complacency are apparently on their way out. This poll proves that not all serve the bureaucracy rather than those who said rewarded this most)

There is a strong, clear message here regarding priorities; a letter to the editor to help...