

5-1-1990

Hawaiians Fight for the Rainforest

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Recommended Citation

Faulstich, Paul. Hawaiians Fight for the Rainforest. *Earth First! Journal*, 10(5): 1/7, 1990.

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EARTH FIRST! JOURNAL

May 1, 1990

Vol. X, No. V

IN DEFENSE OF WILDERNESS & BIODIVERSITY

THREE DOLLARS

Hawaiians Fight for the Rainforest

Geothermal Development Threatens Largest Remaining Stand in U.S.

by Paul Faulstich

On March 25, 141 were arrested as part of the largest demonstration yet against the drilling of geothermal wells in the Wao Kele O Puna Rainforest on 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 dubbed "True's Berlin Wall," constructed in front of the drilling site two days before the action. In honor of those arrested, for trespassing or obstructing police, the remaining protesters tied green ribbons and Hawaiian Ti leaves on the fence.

Complete with Jamaican drums, Native Hawaiian prayers, and "Reclaim the Rainforest" banners hanging from bamboo poles, the demonstration was also a celebration. Singing "We shall overcome," and chanting "Hey TRUE We're Talking to YOU, Get OUT of Hawaii," protesters let it be known that we

won't stop until the rainforest is safe!

The Big Island Police Chief Victor Vierra wants each of the arrested protesters to be assessed \$400 in addition to their other fines in order to cover police and National Guard expenses for "keeping peace" at the protest. Vierra claims that their operation cost the state and county over \$55,450. The three dozen armed police — some flown in from the neighboring island of Oahu — were unnecessary since the demonstration was intended to be non-violent.

The True geothermal project is planned as 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. Some 95% of all plant and animal species in the area are found in Hawaii and nowhere else.

The active volcano Kilauea rises gently above the lush Wao Kele O Puna (meaning "the Rain-belt of Puna") forest. This is a successional rainforest; periodic lava flows have created a unique ecosystem. Plants and animals have developed in a complex synergism with volcanic activity.

The geothermal wells and power plants would be major pollution sources. Geothermal wells produce hydrogen sulfide, a toxic gas that, when mixed with air, becomes sulfuric 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 others fear that the toxic emissions would drive off birds and insects that pollinate the great Ohi'a trees. This pollination is essential for the reseeded of areas inundated by lava. Hawaii is in one of the world's most geologically unstable areas. One substantial earth movement could destroy pipelines, thereby dispersing toxins into the air and soil.

Noise pollution is another factor with unknown effects on wildlife. Because of the enormous pressure created by the surfacing of underground gases, the geothermal wells need periodic venting, a process with a decibel level of a 747 taking off.

To produce the 500 MW of electricity, at least 140 geothermal wells would have to be drilled. These wells would produce vast quantities of toxic brine containing arsenic, 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. Reinjecting the brine back into the earth has been suggested, but might not be

possible because of the unique lava tube ecosystems in this region. Lava tubes are underground corridors formed when molten lava flowed through the area; they are habitats for rare fauna, including spiders and insects that live only in these formations. The reinjection of toxic brine could destroy these unknown ecosystems.

While 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 acreage would be distributed throughout the forest. Fragmentation makes the forest vulnerable to invasion of harmful non-native species. Hawaii contains over half the Endangered Species of plants and animals in the US.

Prior to 1985, the Wao Kele O Puna Rainforest was a natural reserve set aside to protect native wildlife. In 1985 this land was opened for development through a state-organized land swap. Over 27,000 acres of "public trust" land in the Puna Forest Reserve was traded for 25,000 acres of adjacent private land at Kahauale'a. This adjacent land

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A Day of Action for Temagami

Earth First! Eastern Canada recently decided to make its presence known. Many of the local EF!ers had been active on the Temagami issue (see March EF!) so we held a Temagami Day of Action: March 26

0400 - Activists hang a banner on the Ontario Provincial Premier's Constituency Office in London Ontario. The banner demands a halt to logging in n'Daki-Menon (Temagami), land claimed by the Teme Augama Anishnabai.

0730 - National radio announces that today is to be a Day of Action aimed at the Provincial Government. The report discusses Civil Disobedience and the group responsible — Earth First!

0900 - Twenty activists rally at the office of Bernard Granmaitre in Vanier; 3 of them blockade the door in support of the Teme

Augama. Two other groups of EF!ers, finding their targets closed, roam Ottawa: crimes looking for a place to happen.

1000 - Activists gather outside the offices of Cabinet Minister Richard Patten; 12 peacefully occupy the office. Nine activists occupy the offices of Hans Daigeler in Nepean. In Toronto people rally outside the offices of the Ministry of Natural Resources. 1030 - From the Toronto rally, 23 people move around the corner to the Provincial Legislature, leap the barricades and rush inside the building to block the main stairway; 9 lock on to the stair railing. Across the province radio stations give regular bulletins as news of actions come in.

1100 - In Kingston, Guelph, Hamilton, St. Catharines, Thunder Bay, Ottawa, London, Stratford, and Kitchener over 1000 people gather to march on the Offices of their MPP's with the same demand: Stop Logging Native Land! In many cities people came out despite high winds and cold weather. Those who had the foresight to do civil disobedience are warm and comfortable in various offices.

1200 - Rallies and marches are in full swing. Demands and petitions are presented, thousands of leaflets and information packages distributed, and dozens of press interviews are aired across the province. Police and security remove the protesters from the steps of the Legislature and fine those who locked on.

1230 - In Kingston 7 are arrested as they chalk slogans on the office of Kenneth Keys. Thirteen more enter the office and 2 lock on.

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Photo by Karen Pickett

To protest the "timber pact" between state politicians and timber executives in Northern California, 20 activists ambushed a truck carrying old growth logs in mid-February. Five people climbed onto the logs and chained themselves in place, stopping the truck for most of the afternoon and thereby backing up traffic for 18 miles. The traffic jam included a long line of log trucks coming out of a Pacific Lumber log deck.

FREEDOM RIDERS NEEDED TO SAVE THE FOREST

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 and retirees are being summoned to northern California to non-violently put their bodies on the line in defense of the most famous ecosystem in the world.

Response has been tremendous. Protesters 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 Judi Bari of Ukiah Earth First! "The eyes of the nation will be watching us."

'Non-violence' will be the password for all participants. "All activists will be required to take non-violence training," said EF! 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 campsites or lodgings. "We've had 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, which EF!ers call speciesism. "Many humans see the Earth and other species as something to be conquered and enslaved," said Darryl Cherney 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 for human profit."

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 volunteering their services to both help activists who are arrested and ensure 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 workers and environmentalists, it's between giant logging corporations and our community," said Bari, who organized labor unions for seven years and is currently the driving force behind IWW Local #1, an NLRB recognized Wobbly union which includes both millworkers and EF!ers. "Our goal is to slow the timber companies down to sustained yield. For every day we shut down a logging operation, that's another day the workers can collect a paycheck."

Northern California residents assisting with Redwood Summer are rife with political experience. In the last four years, there have been over 100 direct action protests in Humboldt, Sonoma and Mendocino Counties. Said EF! co-founder Mike Roselle, "Redwood Summer promises to be the biggest national mobilization of EF! activists ever."

The conflict has intensified recently with two forest-saving initiatives well on their way to being eligible for the November statewide ballot, and two bills in the US House of Representatives, both introduced by Representative "Pete" Stark (D-Alameda), causing heartburn amongst industry execu-

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DISSENSION WITHIN THE RANKS

Forest Supervisors Come Out Of The Closet

by Paul Hirt

When Ronald Reagan appointed John Crowell to the post of assistant secretary of Agriculture in charge of the National Forests, this former timber corporation lawyer announced that his goal for his first four years was to double timber harvests in the National Forests. This announcement came after years of unsustainable levels of timber harvesting in the National Forests under previous administrations. Since then, environmentalists have mounted an increasingly ardent campaign to reform both the Forest Service bureaucracy and timber management practices.

But many of us critics, from conservative economists with The Wilderness Society in Washington, D.C. to radical tree sitters in the Pacific Northwest, have wondered why employees of the US Forest Service have not themselves rebelled against this political assault on the integrity of the National Forests. Why has the agency willingly conspired to wipe out the ancient old growth forests of the Northwest? Why have they continued to build million-dollar-a-mile roads into roadless areas to access more timber when there is a glut of timber on the market and a shortage of wilderness? Why are they turning our Southeastern forests into monocultural tree farms and overgrazing our forests in the Great Basin and Southwest?

All kinds of theories have been floating around: The system has corrupted them all...the local level managers have been "captured" by the local industries that they serve...professional training at the nation's universities and the values within the agency itself are dominated by agriculturalists and engineers who want to farm forest "products" and build things...foresters are simply acting "rationally": by meeting outrageous timber targets they get rewarded with enhanced budgets, salaries, and prestige for their forest or region...the Forest Service is a victim and it is really Congress's fault for setting the budgets the way they do. All of these are correct to a degree; but even more is involved.

An in-house poll of Forest Service employees last year revealed another angle to this question of why people who work for the agency have not rebelled against the direction the Forest Service has been going in the past decade. A broad selection of employees from the head mucky-mucks in the Washington office to entry level folks at the districts were asked to identify from a list of values those that they felt the Forest Service rewarded MOST, those that the agency rewarded LEAST, and those that they themselves felt the agency ought to reward the most. Here are the results of the survey:

The five MOST rewarded FS values are:

- #1 Loyalty to the agency
- #2 Meeting timber and other commodity targets
- #3 Promoting a good FS image
- #4 Following rules and regulations
- #5 Teamwork

The five LEAST rewarded FS values are:

- #1 Independence
- #2 Caring for the family (?)
- #3 Innovation and risk taking
- #4 Caring for future generations
- #5 Caring for the welfare and development of others

The top five values that respondents felt should be rewarded MOST are:

- #1 Professional competence (only 47% said the agency rewarded this most)
- #2 Caring for healthy ecosystems (7% said rewarded this most)
- #3 Caring for future generations (4% ...)
- #4 Innovation and risk-taking (13% ...)
- #5 Caring for the welfare and development of others (8% ...)

There is a strong, clear message here about a values conflict between the bureaucracy and those who work for it — as well as a message that the agency rewards those who serve the bureaucracy rather than those who serve the land. This poll proves that not all FS employees have been "corrupted by the system," while it underscores the contention that the reward system needs reforming. But this still does not explain why these people have been so silent and accommodating — except for reasons of job security.

Fortunately, rather than continuing to search for the answer to this question, we can now take heart that this complacency and complicity are apparently on their way out. Significant changes may be coming. Forest Service employees have begun to speak out in the past few years, and as their solidarity has grown, so has the strength of their mes-

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sage. In fact, we appear to be in the midst of a major, historic revolt within the Forest Service, the first such rebellion in the history of the agency. This development is important for two reasons: First, the Forest Service has always been obsessed with presenting a "united front." Visible dissent within the organization is rare. You can see that this is still true today considering that in the poll just cited, employees ranked "independence" as the least rewarded value and "loyalty to the agency" as the most rewarded value. Second, reforms will be easier and more successful if Forest Service employees actively support them.

What is the evidence for this "rebellion," besides an opinion poll? It began with an in-house publication put together mainly by two FS employees in Region 6 (Pacific Northwest) called *The Inner Voice*. Almost as principled and daring as *Earth First! Journal*, this newsletter represented a radical statement of protest against the values and practices of the agency. The masthead of the newsletter announced the formation of a group called the Association of Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics (AFSEE). These activist/reformers were flooded with letters of encouragement from agency employees all over the country. Mind you, this is an in-house newsletter. The authors decided that they could best reform the system from within and that only FS employees could belong to AFSEE. The movement is growing rapidly.

More recent evidence of accelerating demand for change was a Forest Supervisors conference held in Tucson, Arizona, 14-16 November 1989 (called "Sunbird"). The tenor of the meeting was extraordinary. Several "Memos to the Chief" evolved out of Sunbird with statements like: "Public values and personal values of Forest Service employees, including Forest Supervisors, are changing.... Many members of the public and many of our employees no longer view us as leaders in environmental conservation. Past and present forest practices do not meet the high quality land management expectations of the public and our employees...there is a growing concern that we have become an agency 'out of control.'" They went on to say that the Forest Service was cutting way too much timber; that soil, water, wildlife, and recreation were insufficiently emphasized; and that too many forests were overgrazed and too few riparian areas were in a healthy condition. These quotes were taken from a memo signed by the supervisors of 63 National Forests in Regions 1, 2, 3, and 4! And they noted that their sentiments reflected those expressed by the supervisors in Regions 5, 6, and 10!

It might be advisable at this point to put a little caution into this analysis. There is a difference between complaint and reform, and before anyone puts too much stock in this "revolt," it would be well to remember the great capacity of bureaucracies to dilute and coopt reformist impulses. Nevertheless, it is important that we realize the uniqueness of this event and try to take advantage of it.

Following are a few more observations from the Forest Supervisors' conference that should provide valuable fodder for anyone interested in capitalizing on this sudden revolt of conscience. There are many ways to capitalize: a letter of support to your local forester; calls or letters to your congresspersons about changing National Forest funding priorities; a letter to the editor to help "get the word out" so that everyone begins to think of this as a real movement; an organized campaign by local activists to move their local foresters in this new direction; etc.

Here is a rather obvious statement of fact about the Forest Service which is nevertheless remarkable in that it is taken from an "Open Letter to the Chief" written by the Region 1 Supervisors: "Many people, internally as well as externally, believe the current emphasis of National Forest programs does not reflect the land stewardship values embodied in our forest plans. Congressional emphasis and our traditional methods and practices continue to focus on commodity resources. We are not meeting the quality land management expectations of our public and our employees."

A summary of the findings of the Sunbird conference included this choice statement: "Our timber program has been 35 percent of the National Forest System (NFS) budget for the last 20 years while recreation, fish and wildlife, and soil and water have been 2 to 3 percent each." While the supervisors cautiously acknowledged that recent

budgets have funded amenity values a little better, they stated flatly that "...change must come faster."

They also rejected the traditional agency response to criticisms of the timber program: "public challenges to the timber program cannot be overcome by additional funding to timber management, nor by simply improving documentation of the NEPA process"; and then after charging that the "allowable sale quantities" for many Forests "are unrealistic even with full funding," they suggested that the Forest Service simply cut fewer trees.

Interestingly, the supervisors noted that "during the first half of this century, we operated in an environment of rural values. We are now operating in an environment where about 5 percent of the population relates to a rural setting." The implication is that the agency currently maintains outdated values and serves an irrelevant popula-

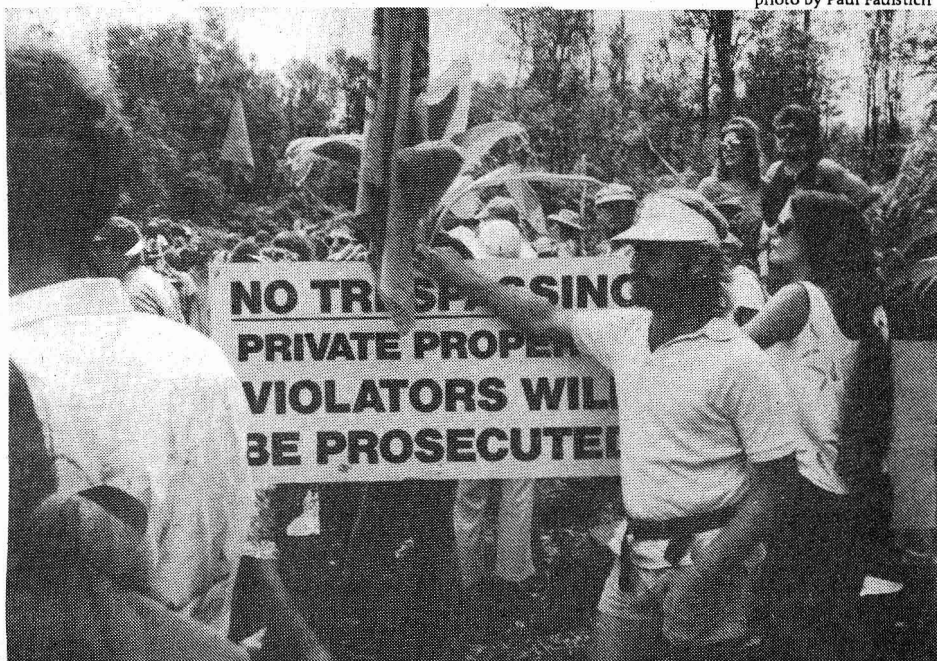
tion.

On this subject of changing populations and values, the supervisors also noted a huge turnover of supervisors in the last 5 years and projected 70% retirement in the next 5-8 years. With this change in leadership and influx of new blood, the supervisors felt that significant bureaucratic reforms were both in order and possible. Remarkably, they recommended slashing the Washington office staff, redefining and redirecting the "middle management positions" and pumping more of the budget into the districts where management actually takes place.

We'll have to wait to see where this all leads — but don't be a passive observer.

Paul Hirt is a former conservation chair for the Sierra Club in Arizona. He is presently writing a dissertation on the history of the Forest Service.

photo by Paul Faulstich



1500 protesters opposed to geothermal development in Hawaiian rainforests gathered in March at the edge of the Wao Kele O Puna forest. Arguing that the forest is public land, critical habitat for a huge variety of wildlife species, and necessary for native Hawaiian religious practices, they refused to recognize True Geothermal Company as the 'owner' of the forest. 141 people were arrested in the action.

Hawaiian Rainforest . . .

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ivate land at Kahauale'a. This adjacent land was slated for geothermal development until it was partially covered by a fresh lava flow; 12,000 acres of Kahauale'a are now covered with lava, and 1200 acres have been wood chipped.

There was no public input or legislative vote on this land swap. Development immediately began in the rainforest, even without preparation of environmental impact statements. The plan has been to develop fast, so that by the time the public gets onto the scheme it will be too late.

Native Hawaiians and the Pele Defense Fund are challenging the land swap in court, but meanwhile destruction continues daily. The Pele Defense Fund argues that the state illegally bypassed due process through the land swap, and illegally streamlined the geothermal permit process to discourage public debate.

Pele, the Hawaiian volcano goddess, is manifested in Kilauea and surrounding areas. Native Hawaiians believe that geothermal development will injure Pele and that she will retaliate. They are fighting destruction of the Wao Kele O Puna Rainforest on religious grounds. Destruction of the rainforest will also deny the rights of Hawaiians who gather medicinal plants in the forest.

The 500 megawatts would be used for more overdevelopment in Hawaii, of course! The power plant would produce more than 3 times as much electricity as the Big Island currently uses, and any excess power would be transmitted to neighboring islands via an underwater cable. This cable would pass through prime breeding grounds of Humpback Whales. Studies show that electromagnetic fields disorient dolphins and whales, and can cause them to become stranded on beaches. Overland, 9-story-high powerlines would carry electricity across an area that contains more than 350 archaeological sites.

Electricity would also be used for expanded resort development, a missile launching facility, and a metals smelting plant on the Big Island. The smelting plant would be the on-the-ground consequence of stripmining the ocean floor.

With the money already spent on research alone for the underwater cable, solar panels could have been installed for every residence on Oahu, Hawaii's most populated island. All of Hawaii's energy demands can be met through efficient and clean alternatives: solar and wind power, along with conservation measures.

The campaign to destroy the rainforest has been aided by lies and misrepresentation. Geothermal has been called a "renewable" energy source, which it is not. It is no more renewable than oil or coal, and it is widely agreed that the life of a geothermal well is only 20-30 years. In addition, geothermal development will not reduce Hawaii's dependency on imported oil; 66% of the oil consumed in Hawaii is used for transportation. The oil used to generate electricity is residual oil, the stuff left over after refining crude oil for transportation fuel. Therefore, the limiting factor in Hawaii's oil usage is transportation, not electricity. In fact, Hawaii produces more residual oil than is used here, and the remainder is exported.

In 1989 True Geothermal Co. bulldozed almost twice the area "approved" for development, but paid only a token fine. Perhaps the greatest irony, though, was when pro-development factions called anti-geothermal activists "wealthy outsiders"; True Geothermal is based in Wyoming! Moreover, this fight transcends geographical boundaries — it truly is a global issue. If the US can't protect its own rainforests, how can we expect Third World countries to listen to our pleas for protection of theirs?

WHAT YOU CAN DO: Please write immediately to Hawaii's governor and insist that he reconsider his position on geothermal development. Tell him the rest of the country is watching. Ask him to pursue environmentally sound alternatives.

*Governor John Waihee, State Capitol, Honolulu, HI 96813

If you are coming to the Pacific, contact Hawaii Earth First! (see Directory) to join anti-geothermal protests.