



## NORTHERN SIERRA SUMMER HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER SPRING 2016

### *President's Message*

It is with great relief and thanks that we report that snowfall was 97 % of normal on March 30 and that we have enough water stored in the snowpack to revitalize our streams and springs. While it is melting faster than in normal years, we should have enough water in the creeks for use of the cabins without water restrictions.

While the FS has not provided us with a formal lifting of the federal curtailment order, we have requested a written notice. As we reported last year late summer, the state lifted its curtailment order for junior water rights holders but the federal agencies were less timely and we did not receive a written "all clear". Stand by for some word from the Eldorado National Forest.

As the climate warms, this is the year the foresters come to grips with the increasing incidents of mega fires. The psychological impact of the King Fire was as substantial as the impact to the landscape. The amount of forest that was released as carbon dioxide was only matched by the number of board feet of merchantable timber that went up in smoke. Our cabins are exposed to greater risk of fire every year and we must pay attention to defensible space recommendations. One normal water year will not erase the drying effect of the prior

four drought years and a warming climate will mean more fire at higher elevations.

By now, the news of the cabin fee changes should have arrived in your mailbox. As we predicted, most of the lower value cabin leases received increased lease fees and the higher value lake cabins received an abatement. There is now a real estate transfer tax imposed by the Forest Service so when you seek to pass your permit along to family or even a trust you will be assessed a fee of \$1200.00. There is no free lunch and as of the "Cabin Fee Act" both death and taxes became a bit more expensive.

Yet with spring arriving, it should be a wonderful early summer with water rushing from the high country to the great Sacramento Valley below.

### *SOFAR Collaborative Fire Safety Discussions*

Within the last year the Eldorado National Forest was awarded 5.1 million dollars to conduct a "collaborative" process with stakeholders and interest groups about possible fire control strategies on the South Fork of the American River watershed (SOFAR). While one can always support thinking ahead, the fire issue defies "good planning" as large mega fires are both facts of nature and the natural consequence of a warming climate. As the planners illustrate



## NORTHERN SIERRA SUMMER HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER SPRING 2016

with maps and timelines, the Eldorado National Forest has experienced large fires for many decades and each fire event travels further into the high country and consumes more large timber.

The real question is if any of this change can be “managed” by the government or its citizens. Yes, we can lessen the chances of cabins and small residences being consumed by these events. Yes, we must create defensible space around our cabins by removing brush and ladder fuels. Yes, we can develop water systems to protect cabins from fire. However, can the mega fire events caused by nature or man be “managed”?

This “management” issue raises an existential question for the Forest Service as we have known it, because wood removal and its use is the core function in the minds of the organization. To some, sustainable forests mean sustainable harvest (wood removal). Nothing pains a forester (or forest user) more deeply than to watch thousands of acres of timber go up in a summer fire.

So what is this collaborative discussion? In the current form it can be reduced to a discussion of how the Forest Service will remove wood before it burns up in the coming five decades. Under prevailing wisdom, there are three choices. We can renew logging, increase mechanical thinning of small diameter wood, and increase

prescribed burning of small diameter wood to save the logs for later. It will be a short conversation as the Forest Service will tell us their choices and we will agree or grumble and hope the smoke is not too bad. Some may sue on the larger logging proposals but ultimately the wood will be removed and used, somehow.

The more important conversation is how to store carbon in forests and how to stop producing so much carbon dioxide that the ice caps melt, the seas rise, and the forests burn. This is not a collaborative discussion but an imperative.

### *Fire Project Bulletins*

- Fire Safe 50 Project to remove trees north of Highway 50

Cabins on the north side of Highway 50 will be and have been impacted by tree removal in a 300 yard “buffer zone”. The project area where cabins are impacted extends along Highway 50 from just west of Strawberry to Twin Bridges. Cabins on the south side of Highway 50 have seen this project in the last two years.

- Wrights Lake Fuels Reduction Project

The approximately 75 Cabins in the Wrights Lake area will be impacted by tree removal activity.



NORTHERN SIERRA SUMMER HOMEOWNERS  
ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER  
SPRING 2016

- Caples Ecological Restoration Project

The project involves construction of fire lines for future controlled burning to reduce fuels. The details of the plan do not appear on websites available at the time of publication. Please contact your District Ranger

.....

*ENFIA Update*

ENFIA - The Eldorado National Forest Interpretive Association - has been around for over 20 years. Most of their volunteer work has been along the Highway 88 corridor with a volunteer kiosk at the Carson Pass Visitors' Center. Currently, ENFIA -in partnership with the Placerville Ranger District - is expanding its outreach to hikers and nature lovers along the American River Canyon from Echo Summit to Riverton. The ENFIA Forest Walker group now has an information kiosk stationed at the Pyramid Creek Trailhead with volunteers working every weekend between Memorial and Labor Day. We help visitors find other hiking areas, promote Leave No Trace Ethics and encourage respect of trail preservation. We sell Forest Service Wilderness maps, as well as useful items like water bottles. This year we will have a volunteer booth at Fleming Meadow

and Caples Creek. Among some of the specialty hikes are a series of bird hikes scheduled for this spring. There will also be hikes that focus on wildflowers and other native plants, riparian habitat and wildlife activity.

We always welcome new members. Individual annual fees are only \$25 (\$40 for a family) which entitles you to a t-shirt, name badge and access to our trail outings. We have a training session coming up on May 7<sup>th</sup> at the Placerville Ranger Station. If you'd like more information visit our website at: <http://www.enfia.org/> or contact Dawn King at: (916) 599-0193 or [dawn.king@comcast.net](mailto:dawn.king@comcast.net).

.....

*BOOK REVIEW*

Two books worth adding to your cabin library are:

“Write If You Live to Get There” by Mary Jo Sonntag and “A Lost and Lovely Heritage” Ellen Osborn. Both of these wonderful pieces have the distinction of being true and are written by descendants of the places they are about.

Mary Jo Sonntag is a descendant of the Phillips family, that founded the stage stop, inn and post office during the mid-1800's at that location where people turn



NORTHERN SIERRA SUMMER HOMEOWNERS  
ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER  
SPRING 2016

off today to go to Sierra-at-Tahoe Ski Resort. She and her mother discovered a chest full of family letters dating back to the 1840's and spent 20 years transcribing them and compiling them into the book.

Ellen Osborn is a descendant of John Calhoun "Cockeyed" Johnson, for whom Johnson's Pass at Echo Summit is named.

Ellen spent almost 20 years researching countless documents, files, maps and correspondence to tell this unique tale. His family ranch was located where Apple Mountain Golf Course in Camino is today (the family has to ask permission from the golf course to cross the link to visit the family cemetery located next to Tee #4).

These books are available through Amazon, the Placerville Museum near the fairgrounds and also at the Placerville Ranger Station. They are both around \$25.

Our next General Meeting is scheduled for June 25<sup>th</sup> at the Sciots Tract Clubhouse at 10 a.m. The Cody Boy Scout Color Guard will open the meeting.

-----  
Dues are still \$20 per year. Please make your checks payable to:

Northern Sierra Summer Homeowners  
Association

c/o Tony Planchon

1768 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue

Sacramento, CA 95818