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**Logging Stopped in Giant Sequoia  
Judge Cites Agency Carelessness, Issues Injunction**

SAN FRANCISCO - November 14 - A federal judge for the Northern District of California has blocked the U.S. Forest Service from moving ahead with a controversial commercial logging project in Giant Sequoia National Monument, criticizing the agency for its "lack of thoroughness" and for its decision to evaluate potential consequences only after logging had begun.

Judge Charles R. Breyer, in issuing an injunction for a timber sale known as the "Ice Project," explained that the Forest Service had ignored extensive research on how commercial logging would affect wildlife in the region, including the findings of its own sister-agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "At the very least, a careful scientific analysis would likely entail more than a cursory evaluation of a sprinkling of the recent publications on topic, and would include some explanation for a conclusion that directly conflicts with that of the expert federal agency in this area," he wrote.

Pat Gallagher, director of the Sierra Club's Environmental Law Program, noted that this was an important, though preliminary, victory for Giant Sequoia National Monument. "The Forest Service has not shown that it is up to the task of safeguarding Giant Sequoia despite its status as one of the world's natural wonders," he said. "There is no excuse for the carelessness the Forest Service has exhibited in allowing logging this rare forest."

In the six years since the Ice Project was initially proposed, the project area became part of the Giant Sequoia National Monument, and future commercial logging was outlawed. The Bush administration, already under fire for its broad attempts reopen Giant Sequoia to commercial logging, had tried to "grandfather" that project into the Monument boundaries, and the Forest Service began logging the area in September. Conservation groups charge that the Forest Service has not taken a hard look at the likely environmental harm that the extensive logging will cause, utilizing the significant research and analysis conducted since the project was proposed in 1999. Earlier this fall, Judge Breyer ruled that a similar timber sale, known as the "Saddle Project," was illegal because it too had relied on outdated and incomplete data.

"Rather than more broadly addressing the judge's concerns, the Forest Service simply began allowing cutting and repeating the same mistakes somewhere else," explained Gallagher.

Judge Breyer also denied the Forest Service claims that the timber sale was urgently needed for public safety reasons. In light of the fact that the timber company "has waited six years to execute the contract because of unfavorable timber prices" an additional delay of less than one year cannot be devastating."

"Citizens groups have repeatedly been forced into court to get the Forest Service to follow the law," said Deborah Reames of Earthjustice who served as co-counsel in the case. "Protecting Giant Sequoia National Monument, a real gem of America's public lands, really shouldn't require such vigilant oversight by concerned citizens."

Giant Sequoia National Monument boasts two-thirds of all the Sequoia redwoods in the world. The Bush administration's plan for Giant Sequoia as well as the Ice Project specifically includes logging of healthy trees of any species as big as 30 inches in diameter. Trees of that size can be 200 years old or more.

Joining the Sierra Club as plaintiffs for this case are the Tule River Conservancy, Center for Biological Diversity, Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign, Earth Island Institute, and Sequoia Forestkeeper. Earthjustice also served as co-counsel, along with the Sierra Club.

Read a copy of the decision here: <http://www.earthjustice.org/news/documents/11-05/IcePI.pdf>

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