



Bearskin Grove

Sequoia National Forest

Giant Sequoia National Monument

Hume Lake ranger District



When Foresters began work at Bearskin in 1975, it marked the first time the Sequoia National Forest made direct efforts to influence the reproduction of Giant Sequoias. Now, 30 years later this grove offers the opportunity to observe the results of different management ideas.

The Problem:

Federal agencies began to aggressively fight forest fires when Giant Sequoia lands came into public ownership in the late 1800's and early 1900's. This created two problems:

1. The Sequoias depend on fire to prepare a site for new trees to grow. Giant Sequoia seeds rarely sprout in dense vegetation and young seedlings can be quickly crowded out by competing trees.
2. Fire reduces the amount of fuels among Sequoias. This protects the trees from devastating intense fires.

How Can We Recreate the Benefits of Fire?

The first attempt to answer this question came in 1975. That year the Forest Service completed a low intensity prescribed burn in the Bearskin Grove. Seedlings were abundant the following spring but they did not survive. In 1983 some white fir and pine were removed from the 17 acres in the upper section of the grove. No Giant Sequoias were cut. The Forest Service burned slash from the site in 1985 and planted 6,300 Giant Sequoia seedlings in the spring of 1986.

The Results:

A visit to the grove shows both natural and planted seedlings flourishing in the part of the grove where harvesting had taken place. In the denser sections, where no trees were removed, virtually no Giant Sequoia seedlings have survived.

What Will You See?

Along the first section of the road into the grove, most was left undisturbed. Notice the tall, dense undergrowth. This is providing "ladder fuels" that could allow a fire into the crown of the Sequoias.

Stop about 1/2 mile into the grove. Notice the relatively clear area on the right. In this section, the Forest Service used both fire and cutting to remove pine and fir trees. Both of the species are still evident around the perimeter.

Notice the young Giant Sequoias. These grew both from planting seedlings and from natural seeding. On the left side of the road, only fire was used. Very few young giant sequoias are evident and ladder fuels are again forming.

What's Next:

The Sequoia National Forest will actively preserve, protect, and restore the Giant Sequoia groves. Specific rules were developed in the Mediated Agreement for the Forest's Land Management Plan. These rules called for an inventory of all Sequoias over 3 feet in diameter, the establishment of grove boundaries and buffer zones, and future studies regarding fuel build-up within groves.

Thank you for your help in making forest visits enjoyable and safe! Plan ahead by obtaining a National Forest map at one of the following offices:

Hume Lake Ranger District
35860 East Kings Canyon Road
Dunlap, CA 93621
[559-338-2251](tel:559-338-2251)

Forest Supervisor's Office
220 E Morton Ave
Porterville, CA 93257
[559-784-1500](tel:559-784-1500)

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