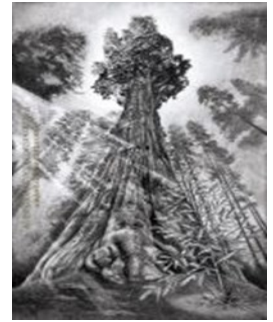




Black Mountain Grove

Sequoia National Forest

Giant Sequoia National Monument



WHY IS BLACK MOUNTAIN GROVE SIGNIFICANT?

Some of the earliest timber harvesting in giant sequoia groves was done here in the early 1970's. The harvesting was designed to improve health and vigor of the grove. It was done on a small scale with little fanfare. In 1985 similar harvesting on a larger scale helped create a national controversy on the subject of giant sequoia grove management by the Forest Service.

WHERE IS BLACK MOUNTAIN GROVE?

Black Mountain Grove is located at approximately 6500 feet in elevation on the Western Divide Ranger District. It can be reached by driving east from Porterville on Highway 190 to Springville, then drive 16 miles to Camp Nelson. At the Camp Nelson turnoff, bear right and take the Coy Flat road to Coy Flat Campground. Continue 6 miles past the campground on a rough dirt road to the cattle guard and fence marking the boundary between the Sequoia National Forest and the Tule River Indian Reservation. Continue another 300 feet and stop.

This grove itself covers more than 1,000 acres. You are welcome to explore all of it. The route is passable for ordinary passenger vehicles and travel time from Porterville is approximately 1.5 hours.

TIMBER HARVEST AND FOREST REGENERATION:

As you park in the wide spot on the right, you will notice a patch of small trees (over 40 feet tall) surrounded by scattered large, old giant sequoias and larger trees of other species. These smaller trees were planted in 1971 after timber harvesting removed slow-growing and possibly diseased white fir, incense-cedar and pine. At that time, this portion of the Black Mountain Grove was administered by the Forest Service.

In 1980 a transfer was made to the Tule Indian Reservation. Notice the young giant sequoia, white fir and incense-cedar that are present in addition to the planted Jeffrey Pine on the 3-acre "patch". All but the Jeffrey pine have become established from seed after a seed bed was prepared by removing logging debris and making bare soil available for the seed to land on.

The forest has been renewed (regenerated) on this site, and there are young giant sequoia trees present to take the place of the large, old ones when they finally die.

FIRE AND THE RENEWAL OF GIANT SEQUOIA:

Go back approximately 500 feet to the road junction. Turn left and drive 3 miles. Travel time from is approximately ten minutes.

Uphill on the left is a large open area where you can readily see numerous large, old giant sequoia. This area was subject to a timber harvesting in 1986. This is something like what the three acre patch at the 1st stop looked like in 1971 except this area is 25 acres in size rather than only three.

The harvesting was done here to help promote the establishment of young giant sequoia seedlings, to reduce the chances for devastating wildfire, and to contribute to the supply of wood products needed by the nation.

Notice the small giant sequoia and other species now beginning to appear. Some were planted by the Forest Service in 1991, and some have become established from natural seed. Most are 5 to 12 feet high. Can you imagine what this site will look like in another 20 years?

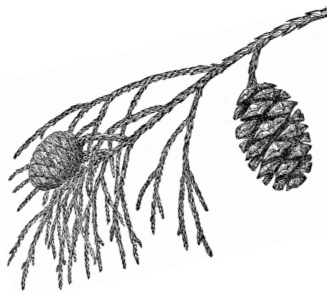
Look downhill into the uncut stand below. Notice the dense growth of trees underneath the large giant sequoias. Had the Forest Service not been successful in suppressing wildfires, some of this dense growth probably would have been burned in this century, leaving a more open appearance. The large, old giant sequoia trees can usually tolerate frequent but light fire.



Their bark is thick and their crowns are high enough to prevent them from being scorched. In fact, giant sequoia seeds need the bare soil and sunny environment created by fire to germinate and become established.

However, when undergrowth is allowed to accumulate as you see below, numerous "fuel ladders" are created so that fire can reach into the crowns of the tall tree. The large trees could now be killed in an intense fire. The harvesting on the uphill side of the road was done in part to simulate the beneficial effects that fire has on giant sequoia groves, without the harmful effects of intense wild-fire. The logging done on this site used tractors to pull the fir, pine and incense-cedar logs down to the road.

Because tractors are maneuverable, damage to some of the regenerated forest was avoided. As you will see on the steep slopes limit the flexibility we have in saving this "advanced" regeneration.



Forest management strategy that resulted in the cutting at this site was formulated more than 20 years ago in a time when people viewed National Forests, and the values expected from them, in a different way.

Increasing population, increasing public awareness, and changing social values shifted more rapidly than the Forest Service recognized, creating the controversy that erupted in the mid-1980's.

In 1990 the Sequoia National Forest entered an agreement with a wide range of interested citizens and user groups, including the Sierra Club and Save-the-Redwoods League.

The goal of giant sequoia grove administration shall be:

"To protect, preserve, and restore the Groves for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations."

As a result, all National Forest giant sequoia groves have been removed from the land base considered suitable for the sustained production of timber and other commodities.

The Forest Service has begun intensively mapping of the groves, and is currently inventorying them in to a data base. These tasks are needed to carry out the agreed upon goals. The next chapter in giant sequoia management will be the Sequoia National Forest Grove Management Plan scheduled for development in the near future.

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:

Western Divide Ranger District
32588 Hwy 190
Springville, CA 93265
[559-539-2607](tel:559-539-2607)

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



Open Season:

Mid-May to Mid-November;
Depending on weather conditions.
It is best to visit in the summer when the road is open, or in the winter by snowmobile.

Practice a Leave No Trace! Ethic.

When you leave your campsite,
Take all garbage, large and small.

PACK IT IN!
PACK IT OUT!