

Opinion: Clear-cuts help keep forests healthy

By Daniel Tomascheski

Katherine Evatt isn't the only one who can't see the forest for the trees. It's not surprising that many people are alarmed to see good forest practices at work. A few acres of downed trees don't square with their notion of what a healthy forest is supposed to look like.

Ironically, it's what they don't see that tells the real story. They don't know that the robust stands of foothill conifers nearby, filled with wildlife and natural wonders, are themselves the product of decades of sound forestry practices – including commercial harvesting.

The debate over cutting trees has raged for generations, often without facts to back up either side. Few people had ever bothered to actually go into a forest to study it in place over time. But Sierra Pacific Industries has done that now for nearly two decades – with rigorous monitoring and assessment of commercial forestry practices, water quality, wildlife habitat, archaeological resources and native plants.

As an example, SPI has maintained permanent water quality monitoring stations within Shasta County's Battle Creek watershed – following EPA-approved protocols and testing by an EPA-certified laboratory – taking measurements for temperature and turbidity every 15 minutes, every day for the past nine years. Independently verified data from those stations and testing for the presence of herbicides demonstrate that water quality there can support salmon, trout and other fish species.

Daniel Tomascheski, vice president of resources for Sierra Pacific Industries, is responding to the Nov. 29 guest column.

Read the whole story