



Winning by a trunk

A speedy pachyderm edges out a tusked competitor at the Circus Vargas elephant races, held Monday afternoon at the Gateway Mall in Springfield. The circus will be shown again today at 4:30 and 7:30 p.m.

Photo by Vince Ramirez

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Vandalism at Earth First! protest

CAMP NELSON, Calif. (AP) — Earth First! demonstrators vandalized equipment and a road as they took their "Redwood Summer" anti-logging protest to Sequoia National Forest on Monday.

None of the logging machinery that protesters clambered on and decorated with banners and branches was destroyed.

But some of the estimated 100 people who hiked nearly an hour to reach the remote site let all the air out of six tires on a Caterpillar tractor parked across the road.

Other demonstrators wearing bandannas over their faces so they wouldn't be recognized found a thick cable on the ground and wrapped it around a yarder used to haul logs to the access road. They stuck one end of the cable inside the machinery near the engine.

Logs and boulders were rolled into the dirt road all along the three-mile stretch, creating a cleanup headache for lumber company workers.

The vandalism drew sharp criticism from the logging industry, which kept its employees out of the area to avoid a confrontation.

"Earth First's actions today were more about petty vandalism and political theater than responsible forest management," said Dave Fogarty of Californians for New Forestry.

Demonstrators declared their event a victory because the local logger, Sierra Forest Products of Porterville, wasn't doing any harvesting on Monday.

"They've shut down all logging sites for miles around in anticipation of our being here," said Kelpie Wilson, an Earth First! spokeswoman.

The demonstration went forward even though other environmental groups, including

the Sierra Club, reached an agreement with the U.S. Forest Service July 19 on the extent of logging that will be allowed in the Sequoia forest 150 miles northeast of Los Angeles.

Wilson said the Audubon Society and Earth First! did not support that agreement which she charged "allows 20 percent more cut."

But Fogarty said the agreement, which settled a lawsuit, actually reduces the timber harvest by 25 percent.

He added that it also calls for a 70 percent reduction in clear-cutting on the Sequoia, a key target of Earth First!

And the agreement bans logging of Giant Sequoia trees, which were not being harvested anyway, Fogarty said.

The Giant Sequoias of the southern Sierra Nevada are cousins of California's North Coast redwoods which have been the focus of a series of summer protests against clear cutting. Wilson said more demonstrations are planned in the redwoods.

Earth First! held this event in a national forest to emphasize that logging is allowed on public as well as privately owned land.

The demonstrators seemed in a holiday mood after tramping more than three miles to the end of the logging trail near the 7,000-foot elevation.

Some banged out a beat on huge pieces of equipment.

Others, including a woman dressed as a spotted owl, chanted slogans such as "Forest Service, you can't hide, we charge you with ecoside" or put banners on the equipment, including one that proclaimed "Sustainable Logging Saves Jobs and Forests."

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