

Z'BERG 1965

HR
REDWOODS

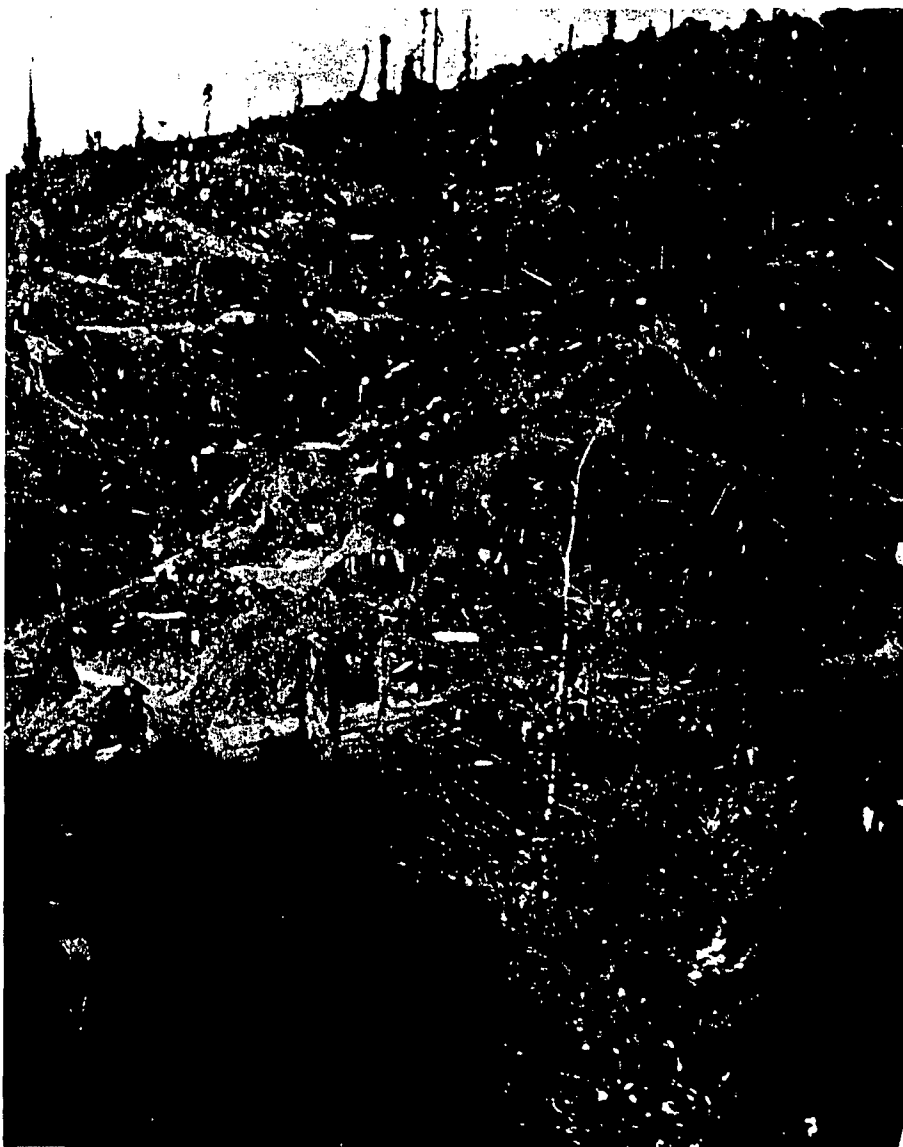
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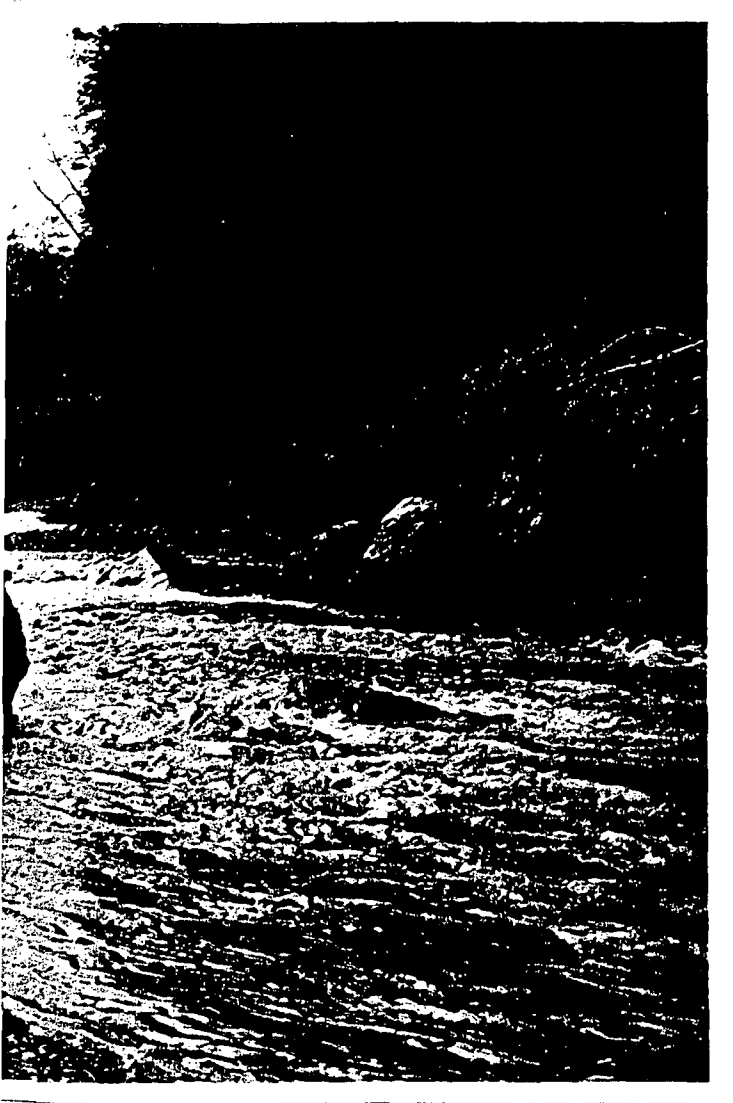
CONFLICT IN THE REDWOODS

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, PLANNING, AND PUBLIC WORKS
CALIFORNIA STATE LEGISLATURE

EDWIN L. Z'BERG, CHAIRMAN

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national park was made by the National Park Service in its 1964 study, in which it recommended three possible alternatives. It has since been supported by the Sierra Club in enlarged size, and has been introduced into the Congress with substantial support in both houses. It also has the overwhelming support of conservation organizations and news media throughout the state and nation. Subsequent to the publication of its report, the federal government disregarded its own recommendations and proposed a national park in the Mill Creek area of Del Norte County. This proposal is also currently before the Congress.

As outlined previously, a number of other proposals have been advanced for recreational uses of the redwoods, but with the exception of the Regional Redwoods Park Plan, no other

alternative proposes the additional acreage of high-quality old growth trees in an ecological unit deserving of national park status. Therefore, the final choice would seem to be between the Mill Creek and Redwood Creek-Prairie Creek areas, and although the committee feels that the determination of the specific acreages necessary and desirable for both recreational and commercial purposes in the area finally agreed upon as a park site is the proper responsibility of the federal government and landowner, it would appear that the following points should receive major consideration in the final decision.

The proposal of the administration envisions the creation of a national park by the joining of Jedediah Smith and Del Norte Coast Redwoods State Parks with a corridor of old and young growth redwoods in the Mill Creek drainage area. While this plan would create a national park of some 44,000 acres, of which some 18,400 acres would be old growth — including the acquisition of 7,800 acres of new virgin trees — no record displays are included, and as cutting proceeds in the remaining virgin watershed, the quality of the proposed acquisition deteriorates as well posing an increasing flood threat to the preserved trees, especially from the Smith River. In addition, the ecological and natural features are relatively limited in scope, and the geography of the area would tend to concentrate visitors in groves along the highway and lower Mill Creek instead of providing an opportunity for dispersal throughout the area. A final consideration is the admittedly severe impact on the local economy which would be produced by putting a major lumber firm out of business in an area in which it is the principal employer. Although the consequences have been thoroughly studied and adequate provisions appear to be included to provide for the interim tax losses and unemployment, the fact remains that creation of the park would be a serious blow to the sparse population and limited economy of an area less able to absorb its impact than other areas within the region.

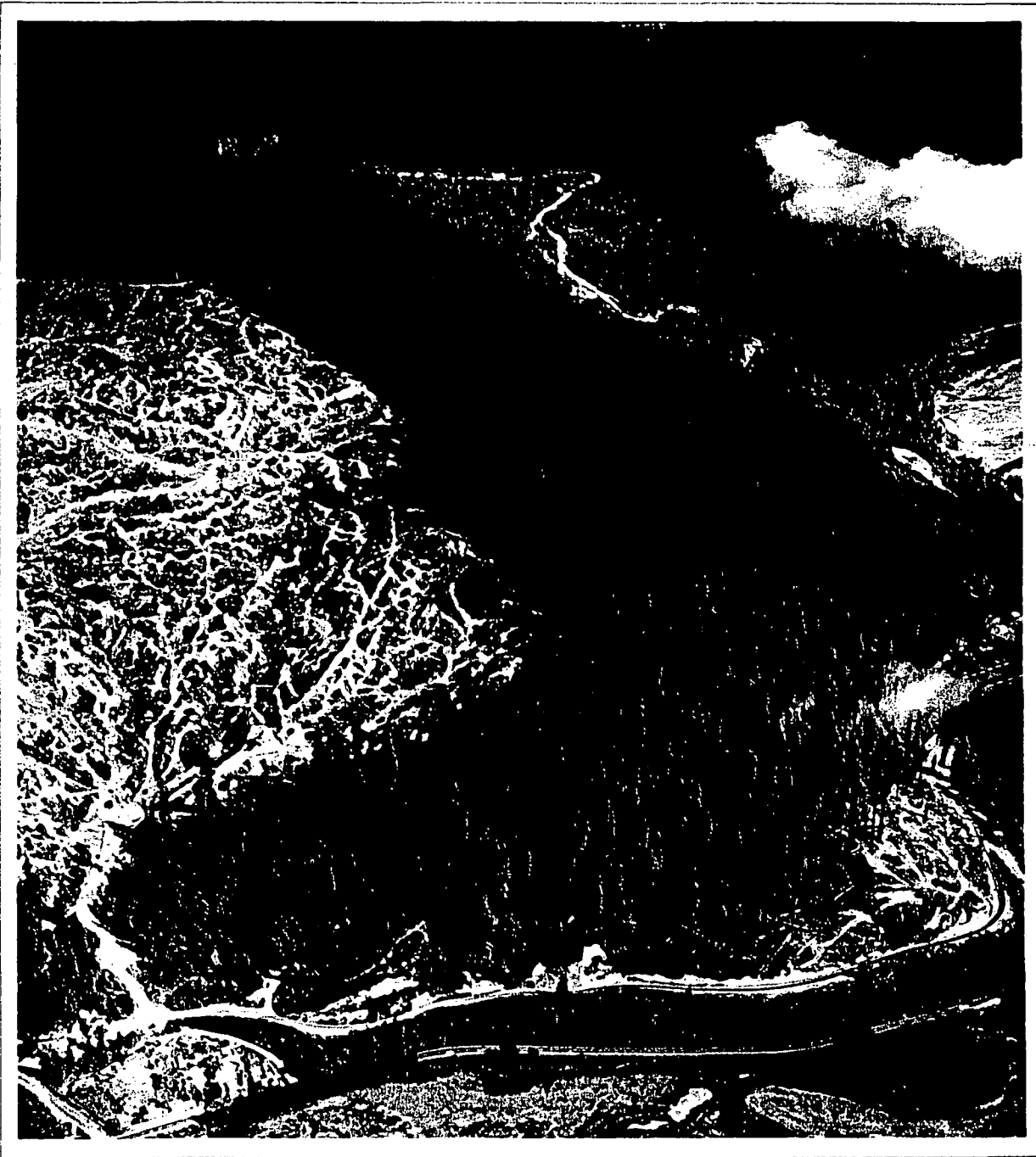
The Redwood Creek-Prairie Creek area, by contrast, provides far greater opportunities for the creation of a Redwoods National Park which meets fully the expectations of the American people, and the economic impact of which can be much better provided for and absorbed. First of all, it provides a large variety of op-

tions for both the preservation and continued commercial utilization of various portions of the watersheds. The National Park Service recommended alternatives, for example, ranging from 53,600 acres total (10,330 acre Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park plus 22,580 acres of old growth and 20,690 acres of young growth) to 31,750 acres total (10,330 acre Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park plus 11,970 acres of old growth and 9,450 acres of young growth) (See Appendix, page 48). The Sierra Club proposal extends the total to some 90,000 acres, and includes some 30,000 acres of new virgin growth.

Therefore, it is clear from the large number of alternatives which have been advanced that there should be ample opportunity to develop a compromise which will both preserve adequate old growth redwoods and also permit commercial operations on a reduced scale. Because of the virgin or relatively well-managed state of much of the watershed, the final plan should be well able to provide protection of downstream areas from erosion and flooding. **Second**, the drainages provide the largest remaining uncut block of virgin growth not preserved, and in the opinion of the Park Service certainly the most significant large block in terms of park values. Lower Redwood Creek, for example, is essentially uncut from ridge to ridge, and presents an outstanding redwood valley picture, much still unaccessible except by foot. **Third**, the area provides by far the greatest variety of ecological and natural features and consequent opportunities for the varied recreational experiences to be expected in a national park. It contains, for example, the world's tallest living things in the superlative redwoods growing along Redwood Creek, and because of the primitive character of much of the forest, it holds the most likely possibilities for the discovery of even taller record trees; the world's best example of redwood slope-type trees and associated species up to an elevation of 2,000 feet; the world's largest mountain covered with redwoods; exceptional views of Redwood Creek Valley from Bald Hills Road, of the Gold Bluffs and Gold Bluffs Beach, and of Elk Prairie; 18 miles of coastline — much remaining in a wild state; 22 miles of river frontage along Redwood Creek — usable for float trips during part of the year; herds of wild elk;

Fern Canyon; waterfalls; waterfowl areas; Klamath River fishing; and Indian artifact areas. **Fourth**, the geography and varied attractions of the park provide ample opportunities for visitor dispersal throughout the area. **Fifth**, while the extent of impact on commercial operations is subject to the final plan for a park, it can be much better absorbed within the broader economy of the area, especially with the provisions for mitigating the interim tax loss and any increased unemployment which would be included in the enabling legislation. Under this plan, the holdings of three major companies will be affected to a greater or lesser extent, but could result in the possible suspension of future operations by only one of them. Full cash compensation will of course be paid for the lands acquired, and therefore neither the company or its stockholders should suffer actual financial losses. On the assumption that the total operation of only one company is ultimately affected, one estimate is that a total of 600 persons would be directly or indirectly displaced, which would amount to only 1.5 percent of the Humboldt County work force — a percentage well within the normal fluctuating unemployment rate. In the long run, however, there seems to be a little doubt that the economic cost in terms of capital investment and temporary unemployment will be more than offset by the increase in economic activity accompanying the national park visitation. **Finally**, as in the Mill Creek area, there is an urgency that the final decision be made as soon as possible. It is not economically feasible to restrict indefinitely the logging of areas under consideration, and the more they are logged in the absence of an overall plan related to recreational uses, the less will be the value of the park ultimately created.

In summary, the committee feels that the best location for a Redwoods National Park is in the Redwood Creek-Prairie Creek area; that efforts should be made to achieve a balance in cooperative watershed management and public acquisitions which will maximize both the recreational and commercial uses of the area, consistent, however, with the purposes of a national park; and that appropriate provisions be made to offset the impact of the establishment of a park on the local economy.



*. . . Concerning the North Coast
Redwoods Master Plan*

In view of the need to maximize the preservation and utilization of existing state parks, the committee recommends that the state should proceed as rapidly as possible to acquire those designated old growth trees previously indicated as necessary to round out and protect existing preserved stands.

*. . . Concerning the Redwoods and
the Economy of the North Coast*

As outlined previously in considerable detail, the conflicting data — and interpretations of data — make impossible conclusive answers to the basic questions posed initially by the committee concerning the ecological, commercial, and recreational future of the coast redwood forest. This lack of answers is particu-