

Laos Dam Collapse



The Muir Report: Shave the Redwoods

My friends in the nation's capital no longer refer to it as **D.C.**, they now say **B.C.** because Trump has set us back 2,000 years.

The French didn't win the World Cup, the Africans did. Funny how we always mention that blacks are disproportionately represented in jails but no one brings up their disproportionate ratios in championship sporting events, poetry slams, grammies, emmy awards, espy awards, theater, literature, music, dancing and all the associated arts. Let's not forget the automatic gear shift, elevator doors, a method for plasma separation so blood could be stored, the clothes dryer, gas heater and more humbly, the comb, ironing board and potato chips, all invented by people of color, none of which were invented while in prison.

There is a plan in the pipeline to thin out the Redwood forest, backed by environmental groups, most notably, the Save the Redwoods League, with the long term effect being the oldest trees will grow bigger, hmmm, I have two questions. "whose idea was this and who is going to profit from it"? How could these trees, which have been around, for millennia, surviving droughts, floods, warming cooling, earthquakes, famine and pestilence, survive without the help of human beings? Does anyone seriously think that a little underbrush is going to affect them? These trees have been around for 165 million years, more or less, that's 100 million years longer than the Dinosaurs and 164 million, and change, longer than humans. **Where does the hubris come from to think we know better than nature? We can see how well that's worked so far.**

Redwoods are all about competition. They are the neo-cons of the woods. They got here first, sucked up all the natural resources and killed off any competition by blotting out the sun. The name **sempervirens** comes from Latin and literally means always living, always green. The Redwood tree grows taller than the rest of the forest arbors, puts out a crown and blocks the light from everything underneath it, starving the smaller trees, eventually killing them and incorporating the rotting wood into food. Redwoods are part of an Evergreen ecosystem, which doesn't create leaves every year to re-nutrate the soil. They depend on the dead matter around them to survive. If you remove the matter, the tree slowly starves, it does not get larger.

Loggers, decades ago, sold us on the idea that they would clean out all the fallen trees and make it nicer and neater for the hikers. Of course they neglected to tell us about the damage that would cause. When trees grow in a crowded space, the roots mesh, forming a semi rigid web of stabilization, pull the trees out, the base gets weaker. Redwoods deal with stress by producing a circle of smaller trees around them, which are attached to the larger or mother tree. Once those shoots reach a height of 10 or 12 feet, the mother tree goes into a state of suspended development, where they take a nap, much like an Indian Fakir, slowing their metabolism down to almost zero as they wait out whatever is bugging them. One hundred year intervals mean little to the Redwoods. They have nothing but time. This is their method of dealing with adversity.

Why do we need bigger trees anyway. Are we "size queens"? Can't we enjoy the forest for the breathtaking beauty alone? This thinning will be done by private commercial companies and a portion of the fallen trees will be HARVESTED. God I hate that word, a euphemism for kill. The only thing they are harvesting is ignorance from a country with a sub standard education system. Why don't we call culling the smaller trees "aborting"? I also hate the term, "sustainable" logging, how can anything which has lost over 95 per cent of it's original numbers be sustainable?

How many trees will be "harvested", or where, is not quite clear. I have a suggestion, if you really want to help the Redwoods, leave them the fuck, alone. Concentrate on banning sales of "sustainably" logged burl wood for tourists trinkets and cutesy sculptures in our state and federal park gift stores. It's like selling tattoo lampshades at Auschwitz. Quit killing off the salmon in the streams with all the dams and tunnels and turn your attention to housing and feeding the poor.

The Korean storekeeper who rejected a lucrative deal to sell coffee to **Salesforce** should be commended. We all wonder what does Salesforce do to be able to build that monstrous, ugly building in San Francisco. Now we know, they make software to help separate families for ICE. Even though scores of employees and rights group protested, Benioff, the sacred CEO, says he agrees that families shouldn't be separated and even wrote the president a letter - "what a guy" - but he could not possibly cancel the contract because he has shareholders to look out for. Instead, he will donate a small percentage of his profits to the groups exposing him, and subtract it from his taxes as charity.

Do as you please, fuck anything up you like and pay a pittance to the non-profits which caught you, so, in the future, they are dependent on your money for their survival, sounds like a plan to me.

I like the idea of all these billionaire thugs taking a rocket to Mars, a nice long journey and all they have to amuse themselves is a game of Monopoly. It's the only way we can get any of them directly into jail without passing Go.

-MuirWalker

Hundreds of people are missing after a hydroelectric dam collapsed in southern Laos, destroying thousands of homes and leaving an unknown number of dead.

Five billion cubic meters of water – the equivalent of 2m Olympic swimming pools – swept through the surrounding countryside after the accident at the Xepian-Xe Nam Noy hydropower dam, which is still under construction in south-eastern Attapeu province.

The neighbouring villages of Yai Thae, Hinlad, Mai, Thasengchan, Tha Hin and Samong bore the brunt of flooding, which has reportedly destroyed thousands of homes.

Officials brought in boats to try to evacuate victims in San Sai district who were left stranded by the water. Aerial footage showed the whole region under muddy water, with only roofs and treetops visible.

Several people have been confirmed dead, and more than 6,600 are homeless, official news agency KPL reported.

The company building the dam said heavy rain and flooding caused it to collapse and it was cooperating with the Laos government to help rescue villagers.

"We are running an emergency team and planning to help evacuate and rescue residents," a spokesman for SK Engineering & Construction told Reuters.

The dam is a key component of the country's controversial ambition to become the "battery of Asia" by selling power to its neighbors. Eleven large hydropower dams on the main Mekong River, and 120 tributary dams, are planned over the next 20 years.

The 410MW project was designed to generate electricity by diverting the waters of the Houay Makchanh, Xe-Namnoy and Xe-Pian rivers on the Bolaven Plateau in the Laos province of Champasak, and then letting them flow back into the Xe-Pian River, and eventually into the Mekong.

The plan is to export 90% of the energy produced to neighboring Thailand, making it a lucrative source of income.

Laos, a landlocked and poverty-stricken country, has secured billions in foreign funds from hydropower investors.

But the country's focus on the energy source has provoked a backlash from environmental activists, NGOs and scientists for its impact on the Mekong, one of the world's longest, largest and resource-rich rivers. A report from the inter-governmental Mekong River Commission in April estimated its fish stocks would fall by up to 40% as a result of the hydropower projects.

A report by the Stockholm Environment Institute also pointed out that "changes in rainfall and extreme weather could pose a risk to Laos' hydropower-dominated electricity system".

Last year, a dam broke along Laos' Nam Ao River, unleashing a torrent of water that flooded seven villages and ruined acres of farmland.

But concerns over hydropower dams have been dismissed by the government.

The Xepian-Xe Nam Noy dam, which is estimated to be worth about \$1bn (£760m), is a joint venture between several South Korean and Laos companies. Construction began in 2013 and was due for completion by the end of this year, with plans to start operations in 2019.

The prime minister, Thongloun Sisoulith, called on government organisations, the police and the military to assist in the emergency relief effort.

The International Rivers group, which has campaigned about the risks of developing the Mekong, said the accident showed that some dam designs were unable to cope with extreme weather conditions.

"Unpredictable and extreme weather events are becoming more frequent in Laos and the region due to climate change," said a spokesperson for International Rivers.

"This also shows the inadequacy of warning systems for the dam construction and operations. The warning appeared to come very late and was ineffective in ensuring people had advance notice to ensure their safety and that of their families," it said.

Hannah Ellis-Petersen
theguardian.com

Reuters contributed to this report

CALIFORNIA CONSUMES AMAZON FOREST

Quito, Ecuador – Environmentalists occupied the lobby of Ecuador's Environmental Ministry to protest a pending environmental license inside the world-renowned Yasuní National Park.

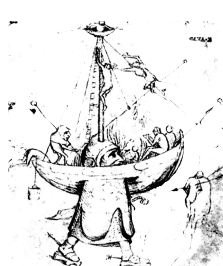
Granting the environmental permit would pave the way for the construction of some 293 oil wells and nine platforms in the southernmost part of Block 43 and overlap a newly created buffer area to the protected "untouchable zone" of the park.

Yasuní is widely considered one of the most biodiverse places on the planet, with the highest concentration of tree, insect, amphibian, bird, and mammal species per hectare in the world. It is also home to the Tagaeri and Taromenane peoples, the last two indigenous groups living in voluntary isolation in Ecuador. Violent encounters between Tagaeri and Taromenane and the outside world have spiked over the last several years as oil drilling, illegal logging, and roads have further encroached upon the areas these nomadic groups use.

Drilling began along the border of the park in 2016 at the Tiputini field. Despite pledges of minimal environmental impact and "ecological trails" instead of roads, satellite images show major swaths cut into the forest. A second well was opened in the Tambococho 2 field in early 2018. The Ishpingo field is expected to be the largest of the three, and it is the deepest inside the park.

The ITT wells have quickly become Ecuador's biggest producer, at some 70,000 barrels a day. Ishpingo is expected to add 30,000 to that, and by 2022 the three fields will have some 650 wells and will produce roughly 300,000 barrels per day – more than half of the country's existing production.

Amazon Watch research has shown that the majority of crude oil exports from the Western Amazon ends up in the United States – and most of that in California. Ecuador is the Golden State's second largest source of foreign oil, behind only Saudi Arabia.



California's consumption of this controversial crude from Ecuador's Amazon, and Yasuní in particular, is part of a 800+-organization campaign pressuring California's governor Jerry Brown to commit to phasing out California's oil production – including refining – in the run-up to the Global Climate Action Summit (GCAS) this September, where the governor will position itself as a climate leader in the face of climate change denial from Washington.

Thanks to EarthFirst! & Moira Birss amazonwatch.org