

Hi Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

Old growth Redwoods in our State Parks are being severely damaged and weakened by the removal and theft of the burls. According to State Park officials, this type of theft is increasing with very few arrests being made. Not only are the fallen trees, with burls, defaced but now the thieves have taken to the standing trees as well. One newspaper article stated that these valuable burls are being stolen to sell and support someone's "habit". Where is the outrage? There was some news coverage that went nationwide and a number of environmental organizations have offered rewards for the information and arrest of the culprits. One suspect has been arrested since the news releases, with hopefully more arrests to follow. Not too many years ago, with logging companies doing their best to harvest timber under the laws of the land, demonstrators used all kinds of tactics to interrupt and discourage the harvesting of trees. They came from far and near and declared that they were here to "save our trees". They lay down in front of logging trucks, chained themselves to gates, built platforms in the trees and damaged logging equipment. All of this cost the tax payer big dollars and clogged the local justice system. The rights of private property owners were completely ignored and trampled upon, all this being done for "the sake of the trees". Now, where are all these "righteous people"? The damaged trees are being reported as on State and/or Federal property, supported by your taxpayer dollars. Could it be that there is no interest as private property owners are not involved? Could it be that there is no interest by certain organizations in gathering a force to demonstrate their outrage locally so no money is offered to pay demonstrators to come forth? I believe that, in the past, demonstrators were paid and equipment, ropes, climbing gear and specially designed locking devices were furnished to the demonstrator at no charge. By whom, most of us will never know. The State Parks people complain that they have only twelve law enforcement officers in the area and that they are spread too thin to effectively combat burl theft. The local sheriffs' office and some city law enforcement organizations welcome volunteers and effectively use them as reserve officers. Is the State above this sort of thing? There are many people, with the love of the outdoors, who would jump at the chance of serving their fellow man and to help preserve our parks. Redwood burls are not only intrinsically valuable; they are the source of new growth which is seriously needed to continue the species. Burl removal in state and federal parks not only defaces, it damages and will ultimately destroy the trees involved.

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