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TWO DOLLARS

RETURN TO BALD MOUNTAIN

The Second Battle of the North Kalmiopsis

by Chant Thomas

The vast old growth forest of the Kalmiopsis is once again being viciously attacked. The Siskiyou National Forest has reneged on an agreement to postpone logging within the North Kalmiopsis Roadless Area until the Forest Plan is completed. Now a full scale federal blitzkrieg is under way with 24 timber sales active, imminent, or planned in this world-class natural treasure.

Important chapters in the history of citizen resistance to federal forest destruction have been written here in the past, and the newest chapters in the continuing saga have now begun.

It took a place as incredibly wild, as amazingly unique, and as severely threatened as the Kalmiopsis to lure the still-embryonic Earth First! movement out of the Rocky Mountains and over to the continent's western edge in early 1983. The local Sierra Club had lost its appeals and lawsuits attempting to stop the nefarious Bald Mountain Road. A handful of Oregon's original Earth First!ers realized that the direct actions of "Mother Nature's Army" were the last hope. The second EF! Road Show came to southwestern Oregon. Radical activists from the peace movement provided non-violent direct action training sessions. People were inspired. The result was a precedent-setting series of seven direct actions. Violence unveiled its ugly visage in the third action when protesters were pushed by a bulldozer and the fourth action where Dave Foreman was run over by a logger's crummy before being arrested.

A total of 44 brave folks were arrested in the historic Bald Mountain Road Blockades in 1983. Those actions not only served as models and inspirations for later actions in the Pacific Northwest Coastal Rainforest (at Millennium

Grove, the Sinkyone, and Breitenbush), but also generated a greater awareness of the US government's forest destruction programs. Furthermore, the blockades led to a successful lawsuit by Earth First! and the Oregon Natural Resources Council (EF! and ONRC v. Block), in which the Siskiyou National Forest roadbuilding activities were declared illegal.

However, in 1984 Oregon's Senator Mark "timber pimp" Hatfield rammed his Oregon Wilderness (Destruction) bill through Congress. Hatfield's motto is "Not one more acre" of Kalmiopsis Wilderness, and his bill's language released the West's largest and most diverse old growth conifer forest to the timber beasts. Once again Siskiyou Earth First! is rising to meet the challenge.

The Kalmiopsis is a spur range of the Siskiyou Mountains in far southwestern Oregon and northwestern California. Although relatively low in elevation (from a few hundred feet in the canyons to 5000 feet on the highest peaks), the area is extremely rugged and is the least explored major mountain region in the lower 48. Running through the area are the Rogue and Illinois Rivers, both in the National Wild and Scenic River System; smaller rivers and creeks called Indigo, Silver, Chetco, and North Fork of the Smith are nominees. Most river canyons are too rugged to accommodate even a trail; vast areas of the Kalmiopsis region are trailless.

In the center of the Kalmiopsis region is the Pacific Coast's largest wilderness, covering 640 square miles: 180,000 acres of *protected* Wilderness and 230,000 acres of *unprotected* roadless area, with Bald Mountain Ridge straddling the boundary between. Only a few logging roads separate this wild core from other roadless areas, including the Wild



Bald Mountain Road. 1983.

Rogue Wilderness to the north, and the North Fork Smith Roadless Area to the south.

Annual rainfall in the Kalmiopsis is up to 200 inches, and its complex geology creates extremely varied vegetative communities. It is one of the oldest continuously vegetated regions in western North America. The plant communities have evolved for many millions of years without catastrophic interruptions such as submersion, glaciation, or volcanic devastation. Many of its plants, including *Kalmiopsis leachiana*, are plentiful here, but rare or nonexistent elsewhere.

The southern Kalmiopsis is predominantly sparsely-vegetated redrock barrens — the largest peridotite deposit (a red form of serpentine) in North America. The central Kalmiopsis, especially the Chetco watershed, is rocky with fire-induced deciduous vegetation. The northern Kalmiopsis is richly endowed with a vast old growth forest, where streams of pure water provide the base for the fabled fisheries of the Illinois and Rogue Rivers.

Forest ecologists believe conifer forests have grown here for millennia, undisturbed by the great glaciations of higher and more northern regions. Some ecologists believe this area to be one of the places where modern conifer forests first evolved and then migrated across the continent and the world.

Most of this vast old growth forest grows unprotected in the 110,000-acre North Kalmiopsis Roadless Area, and it is here where the battles will be fought between the non-violent Mother Nature's Army and the violent blitzkrieg of federal logging roads and clearcuts.

Preparations have begun. It will take an extended series of direct actions to slow the devastating progress of Reagan's Raiders, and to generate the public awareness and money to make the Kalmiopsis a national issue. Siskiyou EF! is planning several events to culminate in direct actions, including logging road blockades, old growth tree sit-ins, logging site occupations, plus sit-ins and demos at Siskiyou NF headquarters in Grants Pass, Region 6 headquarters in Portland, and in Washington, DC!

The most urgent need now is for donations of money, tree-climbing equipment, field communications equipment, vehicles, etc. Donations can be sent to Siskiyou Earth First!, POB 212, Williams, OR 97544. Also needed are Earth First!ers from around the US and the world to form or join affinity groups to participate in direct actions as potential arrestees and support people. An operations center is being created as an entry and staging area for affinity

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Kalmiopsis (cont)

groups. A peace camp in the forest is planned for launching actions and media tours. Contact Jeffree or Chant at 899-1696, Bobcat at 846-6055, Shema at 846-7525, and Steve Marsden at 474-0259. Area code is 503.

Anyone participating in an action as an arrestee or support person needs to take a non-violent direct action training session. Trainings are planned for Ashland, Arcata and EF! basecamps. Instruction in tree-climbing and sitting will also be happening.

Major direct actions are planned for Earth Day, April 20; Mother's Day, May 10; and June 17. Other actions will be coordinated as affinity groups make themselves available. The June 17 action will be the culmination of several days of events beginning with a Tree-Athalon Race on June 13-14. Races will include boating on the Illinois River, hiking races, and garbage removal from trailheads and camps at Oak Flat. The Tree-Athalon is open to all ages and abilities. Family and children's activities will be available. For info, call Freda at 503-683-1699. On June 15-16, there will be a Gathering at Oak Flat in the North Kalmiopsis with festivities, affinity group formations, and presentations by various luminaries. Bigfoot is rumored to be planning an appearance.

Meanwhile, the Kalmiopsis is included in a proposal for a Siskiyou National Park. See article this issue.



Siskiyou Earth First! marches for the Kalmiopsis.