

Mountain Home Demonstration State Forest

By Jill Enterline and Tracy Rogers



The 240 foot Adam Tree is definitely a point of interest on Mountain Home.

The following is the first in a series of articles that will introduce you to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's (CDF) own State Forests.

In response to a perceived decline in old-growth and inadequate management of second growth, it was determined by the state in 1947 that state-owned forests should be established in order to demonstrate economical forest management.

Now that it's 1991 this plan has been in effect for over 40 years and a second growth has been established. The forests that have been authorized for the second growth purpose are doing much more than that. There are currently eight "demonstration forests" managed by CDF. Each of the forests has been established to care for the major timber types in that area. Five of the forests are commercial timberland areas used for timber production, recreation, and demonstration of good forest management practices. The other three forests are primarily used for administrative and

public recreation.

Purchased by the State of California in an effort to conserve the huge redwoods on the Mt. Home tract, Mountain Home Demonstration State Forest (MHDSF) was the first state forest in California. It was purchased from the Michigan Trust Lumber Company in 1946 for \$550,000.

The forest is located in the Southern Sierra Nevada, 25 miles north-east of Porterville. Since that time there have been a few additions to the forest, bringing it to its current size of 4,600 acres. It has two permanent employees who keep it running smoothly, Forest Manager Dave Dulitz and Assistant Forest Manager Lloyd Stahl.

Mt. Home is specifically known for its Giant Sequoias, which are the primary focus of timber management at the forest. Specific young-growth giant sequoias are being chosen to stand alone in an effort to perpetuate them to become old growth giant sequoias. According to Forest Manager Dulitz, young-growth trees are considered to be less than 150 years old, while old-growth trees can be more than 3,000 years old.

The other surrounding timber is then managed for timber production. According to Forest Manager Dulitz, in order for the giant sequoias to be encouraged to regenerate there must be a bare mineral soil in which the seeds can germinate. The soil disturbance accompanied by the logging creates the type of soil needed.

In addition to giant sequoias, Mountain Home also manages sugar pine, ponderosa pine, white fir, red fir, and incense-cedar. All are managed for timber harvesting, wildlife habitat, watershed protection, and recreation.

Mt. Home is also the sight of the mysterious Indian Bathtubs. According to William Wallace, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at the University of Southern California,

"The rock basins are deep circular-to-oval-shaped depressions with smoothly curving sides and rounded bottoms." Peculiarly, they are only found in this section of the Sierra.

There has been much speculation as to how the basins were formed. At first it was thought that they were man-made. However, modern opinion favors their formation by a natural process. There is currently no provable answer to how or why they were formed. The "Indian bathtubs" have been a mystery for more than a century.

It is attractions such as these that have established Mt. Home as a popular recreation site. The forest has six campgrounds and maintains 96 campsites for visitor convenience. Camping is free and camp stoves are provided for campfires. Campfires are not allowed outside the camp stoves. All camping areas provide tables, stoves, pit toilets, and running water near by. The campsites are distributed on a first come first serve basis. There are no reservations accepted.

All but one small section of the forest is open for hunting and several ponds are stocked with trout. Hunting for deer, bear, squirrels, and game birds is allowed during the hunting season. The forest has designated hunting areas away from the headquarters and campgrounds. The summer recreation season runs from May to October. Mt. Home also provides a pack station with horse-back riding.

Although the roads are not plowed during winter months, there are a number of winter activities going on including snow-sledding, snow-mobiling and cross country skiing.

For more information on Mountain Home Demonstration State Forest please call (209)539-2855 in the winter and (209)539-2321 in the summer.