'We shouldn't be taking out trees'

Wrightwood woman blocks logging crew

By JAN CLEVELAND
Sun-Telegram Staff Writer

WRIGHTWOOD — A Wrightwood resident, objecting to a logging operation on private property here, blocked access roads with her vehicles Tuesday in an attempt to stop the tree-cutting.

Mrs. Pat Utt, of 1770 Ash Street, said she plans to do the same again today and hopes to have the help of other Wrightwood residents.

Lloyd Nix, owner of the property, and a retired Los Angeles County judge, said he knew nothing about the problem although he was in Wrightwood all day Tuesday.

When told of Utt's plans, Nix chuckled and said, "she should consult her lawyer before doing that. She could save herself some money." He declined to elaborate.

Utt said she used her car to block Ash Street in front of her home, Tuesday morning as a large tractor-trailer truck approached. The truck, carrying one log, was bound for a freshly-bulldozed access road across from the Utt home, and from there to nearby mountains where 20 trees have been marked for removal.

The logging operation on 80 acres south of Utt's house is the final stage of a "sanitation salvage" program which has been taking place on Nix's Wrightwood Co., Inc., property for the past several months, said Roger A. Russell, associate forester who is supervising the logging.

"These are high-risk trees that are either diseased, dead or very susceptible to disease," he said.

"Some of the trees we're taking out are still green, but according to standards developed by the United States Forest Service in the 1950s, they are susceptible to insect infestations," the forester said.

If the trees are not removed, the insects could spread to other trees and eventually destroy the timber stand, Russell said.

He added that the loggers are operating under what he says are very stringent state laws. Each of the trees, which Nix is selling to Golden Building Products, Big Bear division, must be inspected at least twice before they can be cut down, he said.

Utt said she blocked the road because "I just feel we shouldn't be taking out trees.

"I'm concerned about ecology and feel we should try to preserve what we have left. They're just raping the land and I think it should stop," she said, sitting in the living room of her A-frame house.

Although she blocked the street, Utt did not keep the loggers from Neal Logging Co. of Summit Valley, from working in the area. By backtracking and getting permission to cross San Bernardino County flood control property, the loggers were able to approach the access road from another direction on Ash Street.

Utt said she would have blocked the access road with her motor home, but Russell parked his pickup truck in front of the motor home.

A San Bernardino County Sheriff's deputy was called and asked to two away Utt's car. But Ash Street is also owned by Nix.

Nix has allowed a public easement along the road, but it has remained private property, so Deputy Ray Woll could not order the towing. Russell said Utt was cited for blocking the road, but Utt said she wasn't. Woll could not be reached for comment.

By the time the loggers were ready to leave Tuesday afternoon, Russell had moved his truck and Utt's 16-year-old daughter blocked the access road with her car. The truckers then followed a 15-year-old logging road to get out of the area, Utt said.

Earlier in the day Russell said he did not want to use the old road, but "if we have to, we will."

"It's a potential gully, built in the lowest area there and subject to severe erosion. The ground is healing itself now and I don't want to disturb it," he said.

Russell said the new road would have "waterbars" built across it to minimize erosion.

Utt said she acted entirley on her own when she blocked the road.

"I knew people in the area were concerned about the logging. My husband said he'd like to block the road, but then he said to just let it go. But we've let so many things go, I decided to do something myself," she said.

Utt said she hadn't been up to inspect the trees being cut and didn't plan to because "it upsets me just that much more."

She said she was also concerned that the logging trucks would damage Ash Street as they traveled back and forth and that Nix, who lives in Rancho Santa Fe, would not have it repaired.

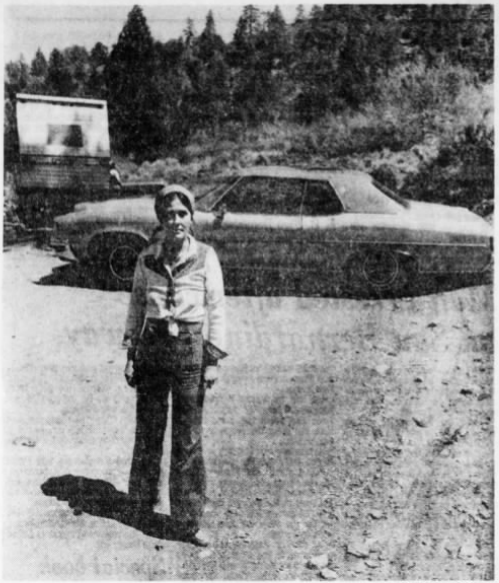
Nix said any damage caused by the loggers would be repaired by them according to the terms of a contract.

"We're doing this for the benefit of everyone. We want to preserve the forest and we're probably more concerned about it than anyone because it's our property. Everyone should appreciate what we're doing to save the forest," Nix said.

James Asher, a consulting forester and Russell's employer, said the entire logging operation will take 854 trees from 1,455 acres of land. The average tree size is 26 inches in diameter, "which is considerably below the average large tree size in that area," he said.

"I'm always very concerned when one of our programs causes controversy. If we are prevented from logging that area it will be of little consequence, but it would be too bad not to put it under management. We could greatly depreseurize the insect problem there," Asher said.

"I know people get upset when we cut trees, but man has meddled so much it's time we gave Mother Nature a little boost," he said.



Staff photo by David Rees

Pat Utt with her car across access road

Staff photo by David Rees

Pat Utt explains action

Prop. 15 supporters accused of terrorism

By WILLIAM GREENBURG
Sun-Telegram Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — A physicist Tuesday branded supporters of Pro. 15, the nuclear safeguards initiative, as a group of fanatics bent on blackmailing the people of California.

Dr. Lowell Wood Jr., a group leader at the Lawrence Livermore Laboratories of the University of California, told a luncheon meeting of Inland Action, a group of community leaders in San Bernardino and Riverside counties, that the real terrorist threat associated with commercial nuclear power generation is the advocacy of Prop. 15.

One of the requirements in Prop. 15 is that there be a reasonable assurance that nuclear waste material not escape into the environment. This requirement covers natural disasters such as earthquakes and acts of war and sabotage.

Wood said no one has ever built weapons from nuclear waste material, and added that he doubts that anyone can.

"There is a very real degree of nuclear terrorism in California," Wood said. "It is made up of very intelligent and fanatic people — demanding that each and every one of us pay $200 a head, and pay every year till the end of the century."

This was a reference to arguments by opponents of Prop. 15 that a shutdown of commercial nuclear power plants would add $200 per year per person as an added cost of generating electricity in California.

Prop. 15 requires that the state legislature make determinations about the safety of commercial nuclear plants and waste disposal. If these determinations can not be made, then present nuclear plants and those under construction will be permitted to operate only at 60 per cent of capacity. If the determinations still cannot be made, then those nuclear plants will be required to cut down capacity by 10 per cent a year until the legislature is satisfied the conditions can be met.

Prop. 15 also requires that the federally-mandated insurance liability limit of $560 million for each plant be lifted.

Wood prefaced his remarks by saying he is working in fields of long-range solutions to the nations engaged in work with controlled thermonuclear fusion the power that unleashed the hydrogen bomb), solar and wind energy.

"From this background you might think I would urge you to outlaw nuclear plants. I'm not able, unfortunately, in good conscience, to do so," Wood said.

He said that solving the long-range problem is costly and the fruits of such work will not be evident for at least 30 years.

Wood said the only way for the nation to sustain research and development of long-range energy supplies is to remain economically viable with an adequate energy supply.

He said the nuclear industry has a proven safety record and no one has been killed or injured during the operation of all the nuclear plants in the nation.

Wood said the $560 million liability limit far surpasses the $50 million limit the state of California requires for hydro-generating plants. He added that studies show there will be greater loss of life if a dam broke than a nuclear plant accident.