

everybody's business

Woodsman' drafts forestry policy

by J. Tayloe Emery
The Record

Amid the solitude of the towering conifers, high above Briceland meadows, Michael Evenson sits perched over his laptop computer working on projects that may determine the future of logging and timber practices on the North Coast for the next 25 years.

Evenson describes himself as a "woodsman," but his many years of ecological involvement around Humboldt County have placed him in a unique situation: drafting proposals and providing consultation for local and national politicians.

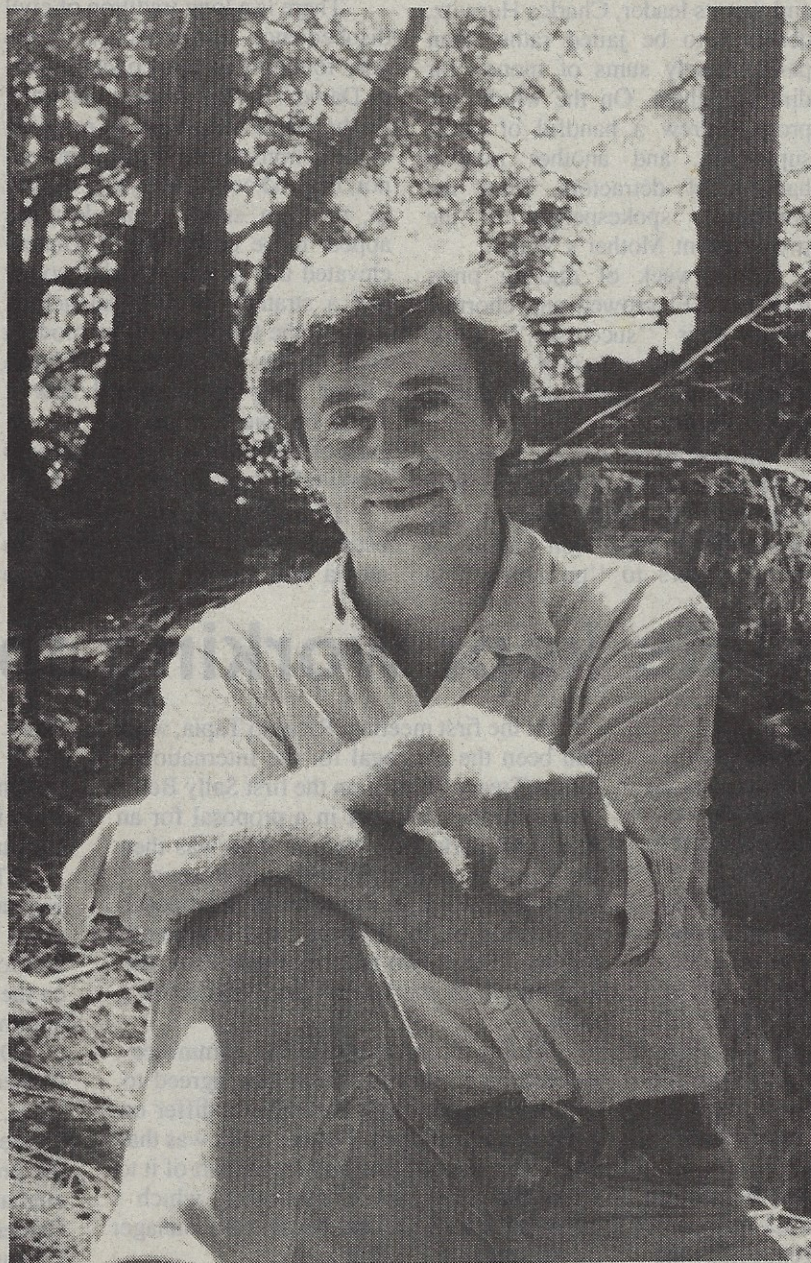
In November 1992, Evenson and the Trees Foundation were approached by Rick Klein, director of Ancient Forests International in Berkeley, with the proposal to hold an international conference on sustainable forestry prior to President Clinton's Northwest Conference.

As a director of the Trees Foundation, Evenson enthusiastically agreed to work with Klein. Their efforts produced an exciting and formidable plan known as Vision 2020: Restoration and Ecosystem Management.

The proposal seeks to combine the efforts and skills of "practitioners of sustainable forestry with Native Americans and U.S. Forest Service personnel to draft an Ecosystem Management Strategy for the 52,000 acre Bluff Creek watershed."

The tract lies entirely within the Six Rivers National Forest in northern Humboldt and Del Norte counties. Included in the proposal are plans for forest restoration, the harvest of timber and other non-wood products, and "traditional Native American uses" until the year 2020.

Evenson says that many different watersheds were considered for his plan. Factors included areas



Michael Evenson

Photo by Alicia Hill

that had clearcuts and plantations of different ages. "With over 95 percent of the forests that have been cut being in a plantation or some managed state," says Evenson, "the future of forestry depends on how we deal with these plantations."

It is agreed then by the differ-

ent parties involved that the ancient preserves need to be left alone. Evenson believes that sustainable wood production can be achieved by planning uses for land that has already been managed.

Interestingly, the Vision 2020 plan does not rely on one person or sole foundation for its ideas. Com-

munity involvement around Six Rivers National Forest has been overwhelming.

The Native Karuk tribe has taken a particular interest. Evenson has met with them often and he utilizes the knowledge the tribe has gained from 10,000 years of forest planning. Other parties involved now include The Institute for Sustainable Forestry, The Northcoast Environmental Center, and the Bureau of Land Management.

Vision 2020 has many unique plans to manage Bluff Creek headwaters. Timber products harvested in the area will be marketed with ecological forest product certification. An idea "at the forefront of the prevailing political/economic climate, (it) will stimulate an appreciation for the unique nature of forests and forest products."

Perhaps the most important part of Vision 2020 is the model it provides for National Forestry plans. After President Clinton's summit earlier this year, Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt was in touch with Evenson, seeking ideas.

Evenson said discussions with the Secretary went very well and Babbitt likes the idea of partnerships and communities being responsible for their forests. Babbitt also believes that forests can still sustain communities with proper management, that will satisfy an ecological future for all species. Vision 2020 may be the very model that the U.S. government has been searching for to end timber conflicts.

Tucked away in the hills of Briceland, Evenson is aware that he is at the tip of the solution and that years of hard work await him and Vision 2020. Through his own small recycled lumber business, Evenson has determined sound ecological alternatives to clearcutting old growth forests. Next for Evenson and Vision 2020 will be an international conference held on the North Coast in May 1995.