

Editorial

Vigilance needed in land trade

The Board of Supervisors has done the right thing with its recent action that could lead to creation of a 1,000-acre community forest near Weaverville. The acreage is Bureau of Land Management property that is part of a proposed land exchange with Sierra Pacific Industries.

The supervisors, at their last meeting, agreed to submit comments that are critical of the environmental analysis prepared by BLM to evaluate the impacts of the proposed exchange. The board also voted, 4-1, to ask the BLM to keep the 1,000 acres in public ownership for three years while the Weaverville community and interested public entities explore acquiring title to the land as a community forest.

The Weaverville Community Services District has expressed interest in acquiring the land to manage as a community forest. The district already owns a 250-acre tract in the East Weaver Creek drainage that has been logged three times for revenue, and there have been no complaints about the management of the tract.

The BLM's 1,000 acres on the southwest side of the Weaverville basin—on Oregon Mountain above the Timber Ridge subdivision—are part of a larger trade involving approximately 2,500

acres from Sierra Pacific for 2,700 acres of BLM land through an exchange that's been pending for about seven years.

Many people here are concerned about the trade because of possible logging near residences, visual blight in that part of the basin, ground stability, and water quality if SPI were to treat logged areas with herbicides.

The county planning department has found conflicts between the exchange and the Weaverville Community Plan, adopted in 1990. That plan says timber management within the basin needs to be monitored for compatibility with visual standards.

The Bureau of Land Management now is expected to revise its environmental analysis to reflect more alternatives, including consideration of constraints on timber harvesting methods and land development rights.

Meanwhile a citizens' group that advocates creation of a community forest is continuing its evangelism. All of us should heed what is going on with this 1,000 acres. The land is literally on top of Weaverville; its future use can benefit or harm our county seat forever.