

Howell's Final Quote Seems So Apt Here!

An article by Judd Howell, Wildlife Ecologist with the Golden Gate NRA in San Francisco, appearing in the current issue of the George Wright Society's FORUM, deals with the natural resource values of the broader community and the roles of key individuals in opposing NPS proposals to remove the Australian Blue Gum (an alien species) from 16 locations in the Recreation Area. The paper explores the formation and mobilization of Marin County citizens into a group named POET (for Protect Our Eucalyptus Trees) and discusses a widespread public perception of federal and state agencies as "elites, with exclusive access to specific natural resource knowledge." (See Bader article, this issue).

"Knowledge shared in joint planning," Howell suggests, "can result in cooperation and in maintaining the trust in information developed by agency planning groups." One segment of Howell's final paragraph reads in part:

"... people seemed to believe that scientific knowledge sprang out of the democratic process of open debate, rather than through the exactitude of the scientific process. Too often in the public arena, scientific information was misrepresented for purposes of persuasion. (Granted that management must sometimes make decisions without all the facts,) still the facts must withstand the rigors of science. At some point in this process we must say: 'Persuade me not; before you lies the truth, bloodied but unaltered by the battle.'"