

Logging exhibit irks lumber firm

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SANTA CRUZ — Officials at Big Creek Lumber Co. are unhappy with a display at the downtown Santa Cruz library which shows a portion of a tree they cut down.

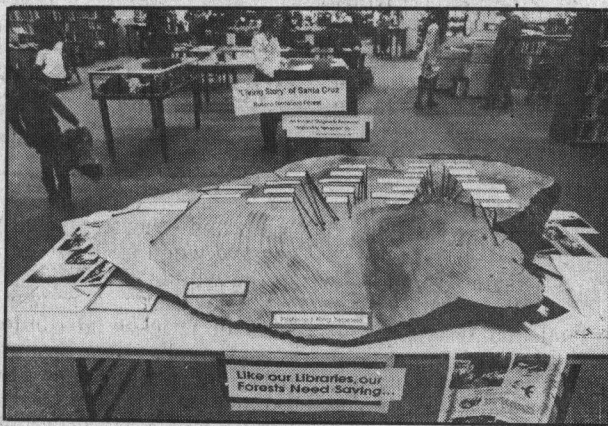
The item is a cross-section cut of a 400-year-old redwood tree, shown by Friends of Butano, a group advocating protection of ancient trees and an end to logging that hinders natural reforestation.

The display is biased, Big Creek officials said. Library officials confirmed Friday that Big Creek will display its side of the story in the next few days.

"Our viewpoint is that it's a local social-political issue and we're here to make information available to the public," said Fred Ulrich, manager of the central branch library.

Mike Jani, a Big Creek forester and new president of the county Farm Bureau, calls the display "an attempt to discredit what we're doing."

The Friends of Butano's cross-section comes from a tree in Pescadero, an area logged by Big Creek Lumber, but it is a misleading portrayal of the company's logging practices, Jani said.



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

The downtown library display shows the cross-section of a redwood tree.

The Pescadero property was a pristine forest before it was logged heavily in the 1950s, after the Pacific Lumber Co. sold timber rights to it in 1952. With 50 to 100 trees per acre, all but a handful were cut, Jani

said, according to clear-cutting practices used at that time.

Now, a second-growth forest is flourishing in that area. Big Creek bought the land from Pacific Lumber in 1990, and is removing some of the original, or so-called "seed trees" on 1,000 acres.

"It's been advertised as the clear-cutting of an ancient forest," said Jani.

There is no dispute that the cross-section of tree came from a Big Creek Lumber harvest. But "they are cutting ancient redwoods as well as their regular harvest," said Ken Pelter, a Friends of Butano member.

He called the area in question "clearly the last unprotected area of old-growth forest in the Santa Cruz Mountains. These trees have more value to our inheritance, to future generations than any short-term profits made by a company. These trees have no right to be cut. It's like (saving) the whales. But unlike the whales, certain trees will be cut."

Santa Cruz County has the toughest logging regulations in the country, Jani said, and its selective harvesting methods are used as a model for other counties.

Sentinel staff writer Roberto Robledo contributed to this report.