



# Redwood Forest Foundation

Fall 2013

## Welcome

by **Kathy Moxon**,  
*Chair, RFFI Board of Directors*



Fall has always been my favorite time of year, and it is upon us! I keep thinking the RFFI work will slow down, but no—so much to do and so little time. Having Mark Welther, our new President/CEO, aboard has been great; please

get to know him. He comes to us, most recently, from the Golden Gate Audubon Society. We are hoping to build on his relationships to help increase RFFI's visibility in the Bay Area. As usual, there are lots of projects in play. It is a relief to have someone to orchestrate our efforts and keep us on task.

Of great interest is the launch of our Biochar Demonstration project. It was a little slow getting out of the gate, but the contract for fabrication of the machine has been signed. We are partnering with Humboldt State University (HSU) for testing the machine and the qualities of the product itself. Read the article by Judy Harwood, who RFFI has hired to spearhead that project.

Two related projects that have been slowly moving along are the creation of a comprehensive stewardship plan for Usal and our Forest Stewardship Certification process. Several facets have yet to be tackled. Work on our forest management plan includes: vegetation management policies (see Greg Giusti's article on page 3); development of Safe Harbor agreements with the Department of Fish and Wildlife and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration that address habitat enhancements for owls and for aquatic

## RFFI Thanks You - We Met the Challenge!

Thank you so much for your timely gifts. Your support helped us meet our generous benefactors' \$5,000 Challenge by Sept. 10, 2013. Your gift will now be doubled! We sincerely appreciate your support.

species; and the creation of a comprehensive restoration plan (visit [www.RFFI.org](http://www.RFFI.org) for photos and videos).

Last but not least, RFFI has been working to support Humboldt County's efforts to acquire approximately 1,000 acres of forestland from Green Diamond for a community forest on the edge of the city of Eureka. That purchase could close as early as the end of 2013, which is coming at us like a freight train!

## President's Report

by **Mark Welther**  
*President and Chief Executive Officer*

My introduction to RFFI has been both exhilarating and enlightening. In my first month, I met dozens of RFFI supporters; two impressions astonished me.

First, the diversity of the people: loggers, foresters, environmentalists, bankers, lawyers, marijuana growers, sheriff's deputies, public officials, biologists and business owners. These same groups were locked in combat in the early '90s.

Equally astonishing is that today this diverse group holds a shared vision of our redwood forests. Looking 100 years ahead, most see



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## Embarking on Phase 3

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mature forests of uneven-aged mixed conifers and salmon-filled streams flowing to the ocean as they did before industrial logging. They envision forest stands that support a complex ecosystem of flora and fauna, while providing places for people to learn, camp, fish and live off the land. They also see the forest providing a steady flow of wood products and jobs in their community. This vision evolved as a group of local leaders worked together to move beyond the 'timber wars' to a commitment to sustainable forest management. One result was RFFI, founded in 1997, followed by the purchase of Usal Redwood Forest in 2007. I refer to this as Phase 1.

In 2011, Phase 2 came with the sale of a conservation easement on Usal Forest. California's largest private working redwood forest easement prohibits subdivision and development, guarantees a 2.9% harvest limit, requires certification by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), and prescribes a transition to uneven-aged management over the next 60 years.

Now comes Phase 3, growing the forest we envision. While there is broad agreement on the vision, there is, inherently, much disagreement about how to achieve it.

### **This year, you can expect RFFI to:**

- Develop a 5-year strategic plan with your input;
- Work with partners to develop a sustainable Stewardship Plan as part of FSC certification;
- Fulfill our current financial obligations to the Bank of America, who made the Usal purchase possible, from income generated by 5 currently-approved timber harvest plans that employ both variable retention and selection harvesting methods;
- Protect 20 Usal "activity sites" for the threatened Northern Spotted Owl (NSO) by developing an NSO Recovery Plan in cooperation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service;
- Experiment with the use of manual vegetation management to remove fast-growing tanoak that dominates about 40% of the Usal Forest, choking out the redwoods.

RFFI has placed a 3-year moratorium on herbicide use;

- Kick off our biochar demonstration project (see page 3) to develop a marketable excess-biomass product;
- Actively pursue registration to sell carbon credits;
- Work with the National Marine Fisheries Service on restoration plans for coho and chinook salmon and steelhead in Usal Creek and the South Fork of the Eel River; and
- Continue to involve the community in RFFI planning and programs.

RFFI hired me to help the organization become stronger and more sustainable. I am doing this through planning, outreach, fundraising and board recruitment.

### **Here's how you can help:**

1. Get involved, including financially. RFFI is a small organization with a big job.
2. Be patient. Our young forest requires tough decisions and will take generations to mature.
3. Hold onto your vision. That's what will unite and inspire us to make the vision a reality.



## **October is RFFI Membership Month! Join, Renew or Give a Gift Membership Today.**

Please join RFFI! Redwoods grow in only one place in the world, the northern California coast, and 95% of the ancient trees are already gone. Your RFFI membership will help to ensure the future growth of this magnificent species. RFFI offers a range of membership levels from \$35 (individual) and \$50 (family) on up. Please contribute from the heart to sustain the heart of the forest. An envelope is enclosed for your convenience. Or join online [www.RFFI.org](http://www.RFFI.org); select "Join RFFI".

## Vegetation Management for Usal Redwood Forest

by Greg Giusti

When I lecture at the UC Berkeley or Davis campuses on the topic of forest management, I often talk to the students about the lingering legacies from past decisions and actions that continue to influence forest development and ecology. These legacies can linger both in the environment and in society and can affect how people view the forest environment and their actions towards it.

The issue of herbicide use in forests is an example of how environmental and social legacies continue to dominate the conversation. Past decisions and uses of herbicides have left a legacy of skepticism in people's perception of how chemicals are used on the landscape. The image of helicopters dropping liquid from the sky is etched in many people's minds. Though such practices are in the past, their social legacy persists. These concerns and fears are real and are not taken lightly. The debate today centers on very real health and environmental concerns and the "hard science" that cites the absence of empirical data suggesting that modern materials and application techniques limit their impacts to the application site.

Historical management decisions regarding the Usal Forest left an environmental legacy of nearly 31,000 acres in which tanoak and other non-conifers are choking out the conifers, competing with them for nutrients and light. To address the social and environmental aspects of community forestry, the RFFI Board has elected to not use forest herbicides to manage competing vegetation for the next three years. Instead it will use more costly non-chemical techniques, i.e., manual cutting, mastication, etc. Over the course of the three years, RFFI will evaluate the costs and effectiveness of these methods of arresting competing vegetation. Evaluation criteria will most likely include worker safety issues, costs, and seedling response (growth). Herein lies the greater social and environmental struggle of the North Coast as the past continues to haunt the forest condition and the minds of those attempting to right the wrongs of the past.

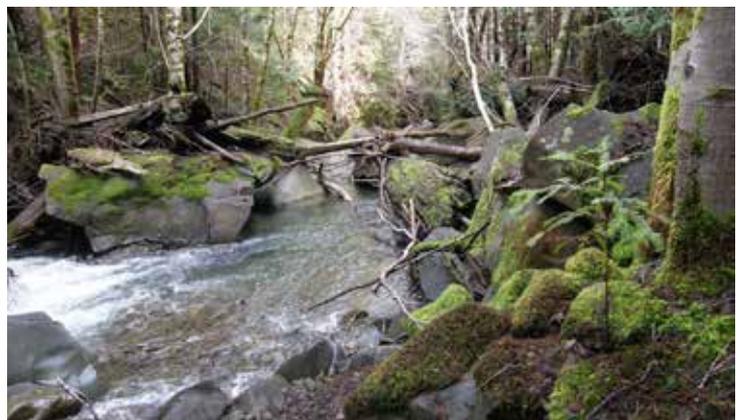
*Greg Giusti is the UC Forest Advisor for Mendocino County, chair of the Usal Forest Management Committee and an ex-officio member of the Board of Directors.*

## The Biochar Demonstration Project by Judy Harwood

The Biochar Demonstration Project is making significant progress as RFFI formalizes its partnership with Humboldt State University. We are purchasing a mobile Thermal Conversion Unit that converts woody biomass into biochar, a carbon sequestering soil amendment. RFFI will remove woody biomass from overcrowded forest stands in the Usal Redwood Forest, convert it into biochar and sell the biochar locally as a soil amendment. Funding to purchase the machine comes through the North Coast Integrated Regional Watershed Management Plan. Once fully operational the revenue will cover the operational costs of the project. The goal is to create a regional model for 3-E (economy, ecology, equity) biomass removal that can be replicated by other forestland owners.

HSU's Schatz Energy Lab will test the T-1000 Thermal Conversion Unit at Humboldt State University. The testing will add another component to the project timeline. According to the revised timeline, the biochar conversion unit will be operational in or near the Usal Redwood Forest by early fall 2014. While the partnership testing delays the start of production, it brings other benefits. It allows for demonstration tours in Humboldt County in addition to those in Mendocino County. It provides a vehicle for sharing project results throughout the region, facilitating future replication.

Finally, RFFI has just received additional funding through a Conservation Innovation Grant from the Natural Resource Conservation Service for marketing, sales and project replication. Warren DeSmidt will be working closely with project manager Judith Harwood to implement these elements of the biochar project.



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## RFFI Dedicates Majestic Redwoods to Honor Founders

On June 12, 2013, RFFI dedicated five majestic old redwood trees in Founders' Grove deep in the Usal Forest to four organizations and two individuals, honoring them as Founders. These honorees join RFFI Founders - Henry Gundling and Giles Mead. The term 'Founder' and the dedication of old growth redwoods is reserved for those whose significant financial support and guidance have played an absolutely crucial and fundamental role in helping the foundation to achieve its important mission of acquiring and conserving California's redwood forests. Read more at [www.RFFI.org](http://www.RFFI.org).



## Create a Legacy

Gifts to the Redwood Forest Foundation create a legacy by virtue of the enduring impact of the work they support. Please consider joining RFFI's donors, who make planned gifts and bequests, in order to extend the impact of their generosity into the future. We welcome the opportunity to discuss such a legacy gift with you. Please contact RFFI President Mark Welther: [Mark@RFFI.org](mailto:Mark@RFFI.org) or 510-459-1131. We also encourage you to contact your professional tax or legal advisor prior to deciding on a bequest or planned gift. RFFI is a tax-exempt 501(c)3 Non-profit organization.