

Quincy Library Group's two self-identified "environmentalists" are receiving payments from the timber industry and county government.

Total received : \$473,036

Sierra Pacific Industries was the largest contributor-- \$184,000

From: *Feather River Bulletin*, January 21, 2009

<http://www.plumasnews.com/>

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Quincy Library Group representatives Michael Jackson and Linda Blum appeared at the Jan. 13 Board of Supervisors meeting to update officials on the status of the group's work.

A misunderstanding in the payment of their bills seemingly fueled some of the duo's actions. Their checks were delayed for an as-yet-unexplained reason, with the supervisors as mystified as anyone as to what had happened.

Jackson also took the time to explain the merits of the Quincy Library Group cause to the board's two new members, Terry Swofford and Lori Simpson.

He began by stacking two massive piles of binders into dual pillars on either side of himself, commenting there would be more binders but some of the information was on CDs.

He gave the supervisors a short history lesson, noting the QLG fund was set up in 2001 when the Forest Service's first framework document came out and "in our opinion, destroyed the QLG program."

"So we set up this program in order to be able to bring our interest to, first, the regional forester and, second, when we didn't get satisfaction, to the federal courts."

Jackson pointed out the county had spent \$143,500 on QLG litigation since 2001, when the legal battles began.

He also mentioned the number included this year's county budget allocation to the effort of about \$35,000.

Next to Plumas, Lassen County has contributed the most, \$43,000, out of the eight QLG counties.

The attorney said the logging companies had already given their contributions for the year, based upon their individual scales of operation and interests in a positive outcome for QLG.

Over the years, Sierra Pacific Industries has been the largest contributor, spending \$184,000. Chester-based Collins Pine has contributed \$38,200.

Jackson went on to inform the board the total expenditures allocated to him from all interested parties including counties and logging groups was \$235,875, with an additional \$237,161 going to Linda Blum, who does most of the work that doesn't require a lawyer.

Jackson digressed for a moment to clarify that one stack of papers was for the framework case, with the other accounting for the Basin Sale, a single planned logging operation on the Oroville-Bucks Lake Highway.

He quipped that there were 13 more piles of binders of equal size for the other sales if the board wished to see those as well.

The attorney explained the Forest Service designed the sales, with Blum and County Forester Frank Stewart giving input during the comment period.

He added they also split time helping Forest Service foresters put the projects together in conformance with the QLG plan.

“We assume that it’s much better for that to be done at \$45 per hour than to be done at my fee, which is \$200,” Jackson said.

Jackson described Blum as irreplaceable, as no one else understands the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the history of the Forest Service as well as she does.

He also argued she had been to every major planning meeting concerning the state as a whole and understood planning on the Forest Service side.

The attorney ended his discussion on the topic by claiming no one else had that level of knowledge and would work for \$45 an hour.

He went on to remind the board this was a pilot project, meaning the idea was for the Plumas National Forest to be a testing ground for whether or not logging has a future on federal land.

He said the project would be testing particular kinds of logging like watershed restoration and wildlife-management-focused cutting.

Jackson said the amount of work proposed in the project was much greater than that accomplished “because of the litigation funded by all kinds of environmental groups all around the country who do not want logging to be an appropriate use on the national forest.”

He argued these groups didn’t want any commercial logging on federal lands and thought the government should pay if it wanted cutting done.

Jackson said they also argued against selling the logs cut to defray the costs.

He said the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals was addressing that part of the argument now and he should have new information by Jan. 27.

Who benefits

There are several parts of the project that affect the local economy, according to Jackson.

He said the Forest Service has spent \$26 million a year since 2000 on service contracts in the project area. This includes the Plumas and Lassen national forests and the Sierraville Ranger District on the Tahoe National Forest.

Service contracts were for projects where the wood wasn’t salvageable and couldn’t be sold to raise enough money to fund the work.

Jackson believes this fund allowed the Forest Service to employ two to three times as many people as it would have without QLG. He estimated the payroll in those three areas was expanded by \$18 million to \$20 million, meaning up to \$8 million was going into the local economy in Plumas County, with the rest going into the other two areas.

Jackson said the second group of projects was the one that QLG was meant to test, where commercial loggers did the work.

He said \$21 million went to timber companies, with \$5 million of that amount going to schools and roads in Plumas County from timber receipts.

Jackson said 222 million board feet of lumber were processed for that \$21 million. He estimated there were 643 million board feet in the projects that the county was fighting to continue. If the county wins the lawsuits, \$63 million, triple the \$21 million, could be headed to the county, according to Jackson.

Consequences

Jackson argued the eight biomass plants in the Northern Sierra would close if the project failed.

“Plumas County will go from a county that generated more electricity than it uses, to being someone who needs to buy electricity like everybody else.”

He said a number of the sawmills in the county would close down if there were not a future in federal land cutting, putting 1,000 people out of work.

“So the question becomes, is it worth \$35,000 to Plumas County not to have another 1,000 people or so out of work, for the businesses in Plumas County, for the fire protection in Plumas County, for the watersheds of Plumas County, do we continue?”

He continued, “We were selected by the Congress for a reason. Part of the reason was they evaluated us. Is this a county that could have a timber economy? The answer to that is yes. It’s what we used to do. It’s what the people here know how to do, and it’s what the people here want to do. I mean you probably all know men and women who like to get up at 4 o’clock in the morning, hop in the truck and work hard all day, dangerous and sweaty, and hardworking.”

Jackson followed this up with a joke: “Every time my environmental friends tell me that timber is over and I better get used to it, my response is, if the forest needs to be thinned in the face of global warming, exactly which environmentalists do you believe are going to get up at four o’clock in the morning and drive their Volvos into the forests and take out their little tiny chainsaws and attempt to thin the forests for us.”

No one in the crowd laughed.

Forester speaks

Following Jackson, County Forester Frank Stewart addressed the board, assuring it that 50 percent of the 600 million plus board feet is in Plumas County.

He also argued QLG was essential in stopping catastrophic wildfires. He hoped future QLG successes would lead its ideas to spread throughout the West, solving the problem.

Next, he seemed to suggest that some environmentalists love forest fires. “That’s why the environmental community, a certain aspect of it, has zeroed in on the QLG and (is) trying to stop us, ‘cause they realize this is a very, not just the forest restoration and socioeconomic plan, it is a strategy for stopping catastrophic fire, protecting community and protecting resources.”

He argued three fires that hit defensible fuel-profile zones, or DFPZs, created under QLG were easier to contain because of the project’s work.

He also said 250 families “got burned out” in Concow and “I’ve talked to enough firefighters, had the DFPZ been in place they would have burned off of that road to the east and would have saved the community.”

Stewart said thinning would help fight global warming too, explaining more carbon is sequestered if “you

get maximum growth on a per acre basis, 'cause carbon is nothing more than wood.”

On the legal side, he said he thought the next court decision would be “very positive.”

He said he had been meeting with some of the people suing QLG, per the judge’s orders.

New supervisor Lori Simpson asked if the county was paying to hold those meetings.

Jackson said that the Forest Service paid for the meetings, while the county paid him and Bloom to attend “because there is no way in the world that I’m going to take 12 hours every week out of my practice and go for free. I did that for Plumas County for 10 years.”

Jackson and Collins Pine Forester Jay Francis both commented QLG was on the verge of winning its biggest case.

The meeting neared its close as everyone talked worst-case scenario.

Former supervisor Rose Comstock said Secure Rural Schools would run out in 2012; in her mind that meant QLG needed to be running full steam by then.

Jackson said if QLG fails, “I think 50 percent of the population moves away.”

New board chairwoman Sherrie Thrall said, “Plan B is an unsustainable economy basically.”

The meeting ended with a discussion of how Jackson and Blum’s checks got delayed.

John Sheehan, executive director of Plumas Corporation, explained that handling the money had been dealt with through a verbal agreement.

Thrall decided she, Auditor Shawn Montgomery, Chief Administrative Officer Jack Ingstad, Sheehan, Jackson and Stewart would meet later and find a better way to handle the money.