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RE: Management of the Giant Sequoia National Monument

Dear Kern County Supervisors:

By way of introduction to my letter, I hold the title of Distinguished Professor of Biology at the University of California, Los Angeles, with my field of expertise the ecology of California plant species and communities and in particular that of conifer forests in the Sierra Nevada. My work with the ecology of giant sequoias and my familiarity with the Giant Sequoia National Monument date back more than 40 years to the late 1960s, and this interest continues. I have published numerous papers in peer-reviewed journals on the ecology and conservation of giant sequoias, with fire management as a major theme.

Because of my interests and concern for linking the best available science with resource management, I have and continue to follow the history of the Giant Sequoia National Monument including the current proposal to transfer its management to the National Park Service. I believe very strongly that such a transfer would be in the best interests of preserving and restoring the natural resources by taking advantage of the significant experience of the National Park Service in managing giant sequoia groves. The National Park Service has the benefit of a long and notably successful history of informed natural resource management of sequoia groves in Yosemite, Kings Canyon, and Sequoia National Parks. This management has greatly enhanced these resources and made them more available and more attractive to the general public.

While the US Forest Service has good intentions, their management of the Giant Sequoia National Monument has not been effective nor has it benefited from the depth of staff experience in giant sequoia management and restoration that the National Park Service has acquired over decades. I feel sincerely that not only would the resources be improved under National Park Service management, but that this management would benefit the public use of the national monument and through this the local economy.

Given the obvious benefits in informed management and effective public interactions present in the National Park Service, I was dismayed to be sent a copy of Supervisor McQuiston's ill-informed letter. Contrary to his assertions, the US Forest Service after many years of dogmatic refusal to adopt the best practices of fire management first developed by the National Park Service now uses these same principles for the Giant Sequoia National Monument. Moreover, this letter seriously misrepresents changes in public use and access that would occur with National Park management.

All of my experience makes me feel very strongly that the interests of the Giant Sequoia National Monument and of Kern County will be best served by National Park Service management.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Philip W. Rundel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Philip W. Rundel  
Distinguished Professor of Biology