A NEW TAX!

The Timber Tax Bill, AB 1492, was the last bill passed by our legislature in its 2012 session. It was approved by Governor Brown on September 11. It imposes a 1% tax on retail sales of lumber products and engineered wood products. The tax revenues are to be used, among other regulatory purposes, to fund the costs of the state agencies (including Fish & Game and Cal Fire) involved in reviewing timber harvest plans. AB 1492 also identifies the need for (but does not provide) standards that assess forest health and ecological performance after lumber harvesting.

Other provisions of AB 1492 are for the benefit of the timber harvesters rather than the forests, which explain the mystery of a new tax bill getting bipartisan support. Theses other provisions extend the period of timber harvest permits from 3 to 5 years, with possible 2 year extensions, and limit the liability of persons who negligently or in violation of law set fires.

CNPS did not support AB 1492 but worked with other environmentalists in getting amendments to it which inserted the provisions for a tax to boost funding timber harvest plan reviews. This was an important legislative accomplishment because inadequate plan reviews can lead to serious forest and watershed damage.