



NORTH FORK MONO TRIBE

North Fork, Ca 93643

P.O. Box 49

Excerpt of letter to Forest Supervisor on the Sierra National Forest included in a recent report to the USFS (3-16-92) concerning chemical spraying by the Forest.

The initial reason for developing this biological report was aimed at the proposed chemical use by the Forest Service on native plants in our collection areas around North Fork on the Minarets Ranger District. The second aspect is a multiple endeavor as it will have a broad based affect on the community including the Native American, botanist, archaeologist and other professional researchers.

Since I've been compiling data on this subject matter for a number of years, I felt this was a great opportunity to accomplish two very important tasks that have been needed by professionals and Native Americans as well as prosterity itself. The compilation of a plant and food resource reference report will not only benefit the Sierra National Forest but also other governmental agencies such as California Department of Forestry and County Governments. It will also affect utility companies and the local community all of which, are involved in development, restoration and general improvements which will not only affect the ecology of the land but also the religious and cultural practices of the local Native American.

While there are many publications on botanical resources and a number of researchers have identified Native American plant and food resources, this is the first report which elaborately describes the resource by usage, gathering time and elevations. USFS Forest Botanist Joanna Clines spent many hours editing the botanical reference so this report includes the most up-to-date botanical designations.

I grew up being told by teachers and later by forestry experts and as well as anthropologist and archaeologist that Indians of this area were simple people because all their food and resource material was abundant and readily available. As shown in this report in the section on crops, the local Indians were not such simple people living in a garden of eden. In fact, they created the garden to suite their needs. Because the cultural resources of the Native American are so complex, chemical spraying is not the answer to good stewardship by the United States Forest Service.

Sincerely,

*Ron W Goode*

Honorable Ron W. Goode  
Tribal Chairman  
North Fork Mono Tribe

## Interviews with Consultants

Interviewed by ethnographic researcher: Ron W. Goode

### Norma Turner;

Is a Mono basket maker, a plant/food gatherer, an Elder with the Eagle Moiety and a spiritual leader with the Bear Clan of the North Fork Mono whose heritage also inter-relates to the Auberry Mono.

In my consultation with Norma, she gave this account of her experience with chemical spraying of native cultural resource material. Norma stated that her and Maggie Sample, a Mono from the Big Sandy Rancheria, were both affected in 1991 while they were gathering redbud along various roads in the Auberry area. Both of these Auberry Elders were affected in the same manner as the North Fork Elders. The reaction was a numbness of the mouth and a nauseating affect (Norma Turner, Personal Communication-November 1991).

Why all four of these ladies experienced numbness of the mouth is because they use their teeth to hold a section of the young shoot while splitting the Redbud stick which is to be used for binding while weaving baskets. All four strongly opposed the use of chemical spraying.

Interviewed by ethnographic researcher: Ron W. Goode

### Ulysses Goode;

Is a North Fork Mono basket maker, cultural plant/food gatherer, and Tribal Elder in the Eagle Moiety.

In an interview with Uly, he spoke of a different type of contact with chemical spraying. Uly's experience took place in the mid 1980's in the Sierra National Forest along several drainages flowing east crossed over by Mammoth Pool Road at about the 5000 to 6000 foot elevation near Gertrude Creek above North Fork in Eastern Madera County. Uly claims he felt nauseated after drinking water from these streams while gathering mushrooms. Later at home, Uly stated after cleaning and drying the mushrooms, they had a very peculiar taste.

Later on, Uly went back to this area and found spraying had been done along the Mammoth Pool Road. Uly later confirmed with Forest employees that spraying had in fact had been conducted along the Mammoth Pool Road (Ulysses Goode, Personal Communication-December 1991).

## Methodology and Maintenance Practices

### Gathering Practices:

Food and material resources were gathered throughout the year. While there are certain time elements when a resource may be prime for gathering, many factors determined the actual time of gathering. Many of the resources have multiple uses. Which creates a year-round utilization of these plant resources.

To better define this statement, a multiple use example is the sourberry shrub. The three leaf sumac's berry is used as a food, salt and for medicinal purposes while its stalks are used in basketry. Whereas the prime time for gathering this berry is the last two weeks of July and the first week of August, however, elevation and ecozone will vary the gathering time from Dunlap to Mariposa.

The food gathering time is expanded from June through August for those who prefer their berries less tart or drier and more bitter. Then for those who enjoy their berries green May and early June are the months for gathering. And finally, the food and medicine season of the sourberry is extended to early September in areas where the shrub is growing at the 4000 foot elevation from North Fork to Mariposa.

With a multi-use plant, like the sourberry, the gathering period continues to expand due to climate and taste or preference factors. In relationship to these factors the sourberrys prime gathering period expands from 3 - 4 weeks to 4 1/2 - 5 months. Added to this time element is another cultural use of the shrub. Which is the gathering of the stalks for use in basket making. Many basket makers will gather the sticks in the fall (Oct./Nov.) and in January/February and March depending on the ecozone and elevation, extending the gathering period eight months.

After the early fall gathering of the cultural material other methodological practices are placed into effect. This maintenance included the thinning of old or dead stalks. Shrubs that are too thick, are thinned because their berries tend to be small and the stalks have too many branches making for poor quality sticks for basketry.

If or when the shrub or cluster of shrubs become non-productive for either food, medicine or basketry, another methodological practice is utilized, which is fire. The use of fire has many benefits and was an important aspect of cultural resource maintenance by the local Native American.

## The Use of Fire cont.:

Old, crooked, insect-infested branches are snipped away. When the women return the following season, each shrub has been miraculously transformed into a storehouse of straight, supple, deep-colored suckers suitable for basket weaving.

"It's like pruning an apple tree to increase your apple supply," one weaver said when interviewed. "Before these tools came along," said another, referring to her pruning shears, "my grandmother used to pile brush onto redbuds, willows and sourberries and light them on fire to get the nice sprouts" (M. Kat Anderson, Gary Paul Nabhan- Wilderness, pg. 27-30, Fall 1991).

Another author, Emily Wogaman once wrote in her tribute to Mono Indians, Annie Kinsman Flores and her granddaughter, Marcella M. Flores, M.D., that the Indian people had learned how to replenish the soil and keep the delicate balance necessary for all to survive. She included in her tribute a quote by Earl M. Kidder in the Fresno Bee on April 15, 1973 which read, " For centuries, the American Indian has set fire to the dry grass and brush in the mountain wildlands in late Autumn, knowing that the following spring would see a regeneration of the succulent food needed by the deer to keep his tribe alive. Now, the Forest Rangers use this Indian burn method to keep the brush down and make it more palatable and nutritious for the deer" (E. Wogaman, Medicine Man to Medic, pg. 8, 1973).

A personal account of fire use by Indians is quoted from the Joseph Kinsman Diary. On August 7th, Kinsman wrote in his diary: "Went to Brown's. Saw 6-8 men waiting for the wagon to come in. After dinner went to Conan's camp with him, then went to my camp. On my way found the woods a fire set out by some damn Indian. Very warm." On August 9th his comments continued with: "Went to Brown's, no wagon yet. Went to Conan's camp with him, got dinner then went home. The Indians stopped the fire yesterday. Warm" (Kinsman Diary, pg. 10, 1876).

Another personal account comes from Lena Kinsman-Walker, a North Fork Mono who actively practiced agricultural methods while gathering, including the use of fire. She spoke often of how the Indians burned when productivity of a certain resource weakened or became non-useful. She constantly stated that when Indians were on their way back from gathering or from a trip over the mountain (from LeVining or Mono Lake) that they would set the underbrush of the forest on fire.

## Gathering Philosophy cont.:

### Anna Dandy, North Fork Mono

Is of the Eagle Moiety, a basket-maker and gatherer of plant/food resources.

- When asked her personal opinion and how she felt the Elders of North Fork felt about documenting where her and their gathering sites and sacred sites were, she adamantly responded with "absolutely not!" "Once you identify where you gather other people will come to where you gather, these spots are sacred to you and your people only" (Anna Dandy, Personal Communication- February 1992).

### Ron Goode, North Fork Mono

Is a soapstone carver, elderberry hand-clapper maker, gatherer of mushrooms, wild onions, sourberries, blackberries, white root, medicines, tobacco and other plant/food resources.

- Gathering areas and sacred sites are passed down in the family, clan or by the teacher. Indians of North Fork do not make public to other tribal members, outside Indians or non-Indians their special areas. This protection of their sites even extends within the family.

As an example, it was only a couple of years ago that my grandmother let me know where she gathers elderberry. My mother took me with her for years to gather white root, and always told me to never tell anyone especially my close friends where we gathered. This was also true with our acorn spots. This example also extends to my sister who gathers sourberries and never tells me where she gets them and I share my areas with only my father, wife, daughter and a special friend or under-study.

My brother was my soapstone carving teacher. He was taught techniques by our mother's grandmother, techniques she passed down from our great grandfather who passed on before any of my brothers were born. Besides carving techniques my brother took me to gathering sites he claimed our great grandfather gathered from. He told stories of how our people used to carve bowls right out of the mountain. These are our sacred gathering sites not to be owned or controlled by anyone, used by only those who will respect our resources and keep our gathering sites sacred.

## Gathering Philosophy cont.:

Ron Goode, North Fork Mono

Likewise when I approach a clump of wormwood, its not a natural resource to me because I have great reverance for this plant because of its spiritual and religious significance in our culture as well as its extraordinary healing powers. This same viewpoint is held by the basket maker, food gatherer, medicine preparer and all other cultural resource users (Ron Goode, 1992).

Ulysses Goode, North Fork Mono

Uly summed up the gathering philosophy by saying, "Long ago was different, the Indians had to work together in order to survive. Everyone in the family and tribe knew where all the main gathering areas were and those that gathered shared these areas. But the territory was ours and the management was in our control. When the white man arrived things changed. The white man inter-married with our people and integrated their philosophy into that family structure. Hence, now we have the white man's attitude of personal ownership and what you own you don't share" (Ulysses Goode, Personal Communication, Feb., 1992).

This attitude is still prevalent amongst our people as well as with the governmental agencies. In 1984 our elders was held at gun point by Sierra National Forest Law Enforcement Officers, while gathering acorn on U. S. Forest Service land which was also used as a livestock grazing area. We now have an agreement allowing us to gather any and all cultural material on the Sierra National Forest (see following document).

Until recently the Department of State Parks and Recreation felt it was a privilege for Indians to be allowed gathering rights and one has to qualify for a permit allowing access. Any damage caused and the permit will be revoked.

It's a shame that our associated professionals and governmental officials still are unable to understand the Native American. It's not all their fault, as we to, continue this untrusting attitude. Yet it's not going to be resolved overnight or in one year, because this mistrust has prevailed for 200 years in this region. So hopefully this report will inspire progressive communication instead of the communication doors closing tighter as we see our cultural resources and traditional ways continually being erased away.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
FOREST SERVICE

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REPLY TO: 2360 Special Interest Areas

OCT 12 1984

SUBJECT: Collection of Traditional Materials by Local Indians

TO: District Rangers

A representative of the local Indian community informed us today that Forest Service employees were telling Indians they would be cited if they collected acorns without a special use permit. The Indians were very upset by this since acorns are their staple traditional food. Please inform all of your employees, but especially those involved in any public contact, that it is okay for local Indians to collect traditional plant foods, medicines, and basket materials on Forest lands. We actively encourage such activity as a means of helping local Indians maintain their cultural traditions.

If you have any questions, please contact Kathy Moffitt.

*Richard L. Stauber*  
RICHARD L. STAUBER  
Forest Supervisor

cc:

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