Changes to Vegetation from 1983 to 2018
Associated with the Yellowjacket and Sally Jacket Place,
North Fork Eel River Watershed, Trinity County, California

Thomas S. Keter
Three Rivers, California
www.Solararch.org

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Introduction

This paper discusses the changes to the vegetation growing on the Yellowjacket and Sally Jacket Indian Allotment historical site since it was first recorded in 1983. It is based on observations made during a field trip to the North Fork Eel River watershed in June of 2018. The purpose of the visit was to view the effects to the environment at nearby Raglan Flat from the 2017 Dutchman Fire. Participants included scientists, individuals from a number of environmental organizations, and Forest Service employees (See Appendix 1 for a list of participants).

After visiting Raglan Flat, (see *Effects to Vegetation and the Ecosystem Resulting from the 2017 Dutchman Fire at Raglan Flat, Trinity County, California*, Keter 2018a), we hiked into what the locals and USGS and Forest Service maps refer to as "Yellowjacket's place" (Image 1). For an overview of the cultural resources found on the site refer to *Protohistoric and Historic Native American Sties within the North Fork Watershed* (Keter 2017).

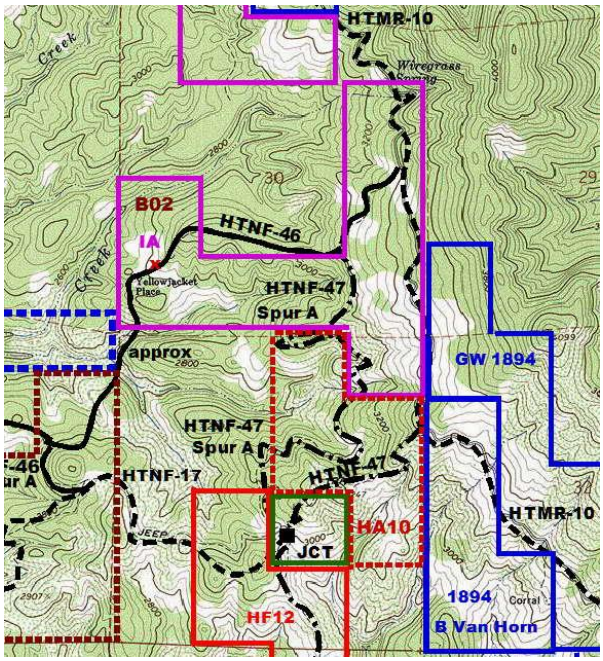

Image 1
The "Yellowjacket Place" is shown on USGS maps.
The 320 acre Indian Allotment is labeled B02.
(Keter 2017b: A1)

On my previous visit to this site in April of 2004, I was still working for Six Rivers National Forest. At that time, I was accompanied by Coyote Fred Downey and Ernie Merrifield. Coyote is a resident of Hulls Creek, and a direct descendant of the Wailaki who inhabited the North Fork Eel River watershed prior to the historic period. His great grandmother was born at Soldier Basin less than two miles from the site. He also indicated that it is likely that Yellowjacket was a distant relative (personal communication: 2018). Ernie Merrifield, who is also of Wailaki descent, has family connections to this region as well. At the time of the 2004 visit, he was a member of the Round Valley Indian Reservation Tribal Council.

For additional environmental contextual information regarding the historical environment, and a description of the vegetation associations found within the North Fork Eel River watershed refer to the Raglan Flat paper (Keter 2018a), *Environmental History and Cultural Ecology of the North Eel River Basin, California* (Keter 1995), and *Growing the Forest Backwards: Virtual Prehistory on the North Fork of the Eel River* (Keter and Busam 1997).

Background

This historic cultural resources site was originally recorded in October of 1983, by the author and Walt Schalger, the Six Rivers National Forest Mad River Ranger District archaeologist. It is located in a small saddle dividing two sub-drainages of Cox Creek. The site consists of the remains of the Yellowjacket and Sally Jacket historic homestead.

When first visited in 1983, the Yellowjacket homestead had been abandoned for just under 50 years (cultural resources properties generally must be at least 50 years old to qualify for the National Register of Historic Places). Over the ensuing decades, the site has been visited several more times—the last visit was in the spring of 2004,

In the late 19th century, Yellowjacket and Sally Jacket settled on this 320 acre tract of land in the remote upper North Fork Eel River watershed. The 1915 Trinity National Forest Map (Image 2) shows the tract of land as two 160 acre Indian allotments (Keter 2017 Compendium: A2: 28). The land was acquired under the Dawes General Allotment Act (also called Dawes Severalty Act) of 1887).

Yellowjacket and his wife were among the few full-blooded Wailaki and Wintun still living in the region during the late 1800s to have survived the genocide (or in more contemporary terms "ethnic cleansing") perpetrated by the Euro-Americans against Native Americans throughout northwestern California during the "Indian Wars" of the early 1860s (see *Settlement and Conflict [1854 to 1865]: The Refuge Period and Historic Settlement in the North Fork Eel River Basin*; Keter: 1990).

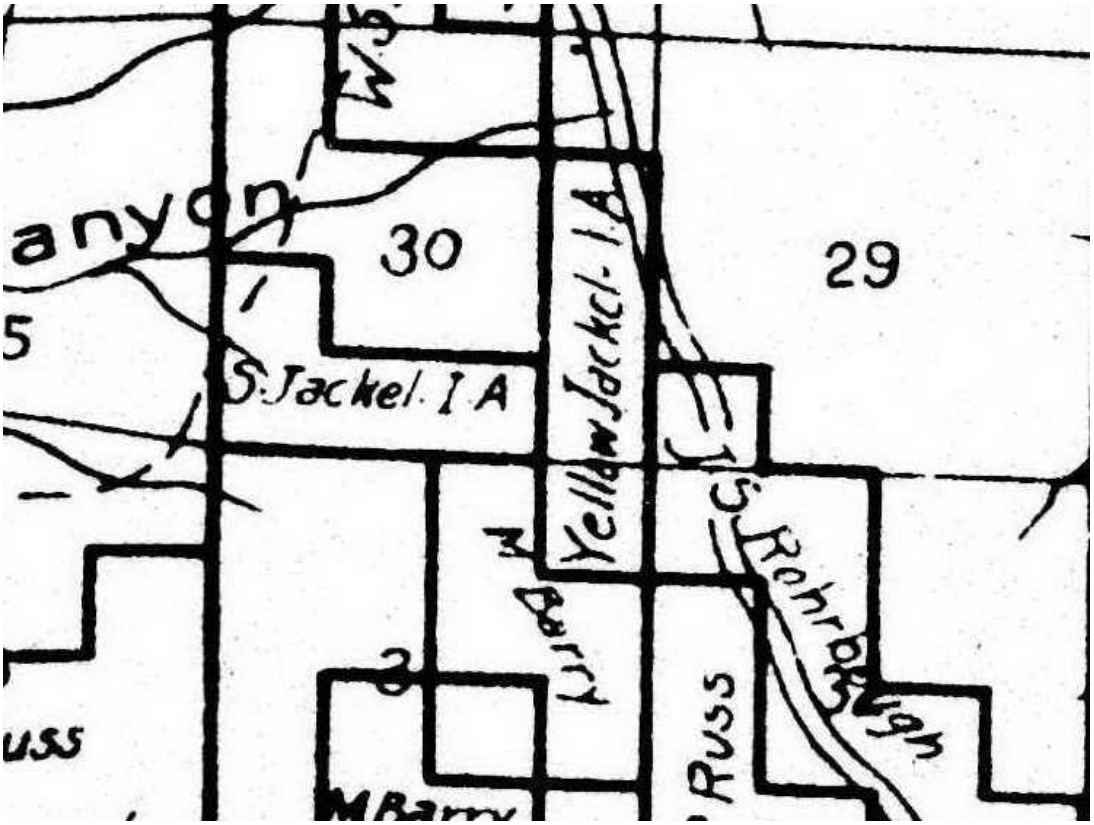

Image 2
1915 Trinity National Forest Map showing the two Indian Allotments.
(Keter 2017 Compendium: A2: map 28)

Yellowjacket (listed in the census records as Jack French) and Sally Jacket settled on this tract of land sometime in the mid to late 1890s and lived there continuously until the early 1930s, when Sally Jacket died. After her death, Yellowjacket moved to Round Valley where he passed away in 1936. For a biography and census records refer to the TCHS Compendium (Keter 2017b: B02).

When the historic site was recorded, it was located on national forest lands. It is not known, conclusively, how the Forest Service acquired these two tracts of land. Six Rivers National Forest maps indicate that it was sometime after 1977 (see Keter 2017b: Appendix 2: Map 21b). As noted for the Raglan Flat tract, it is possible that this tract of land was part of a land exchange between the Forest Service and the Twin Harbors Lumber Company. This information may be available in the Lands Office at Six Rivers National Forest.

Their homestead was only accessible by trail. The closest place to get supplies was either Blocksburg to the west, or Covelo to the south; both about 30 miles away. The original trail (Keter 2017b: trail HTNF-46)—probably dating to the prehistoric period--led down to the homestead from the Rock Creek Trail before it was overlain by a rather primitive wagon road (Keter 2017b: trail HTMR-10).

Today, Forest Service road 3S34 roughly follows the original route of the trail from Wiregrass Spring south for about 300 meters. From this point, the trail turned west and dropped down to the homestead by following the well-defined ridge between two sub drainages of Cox Creek. In the late 1980s a "spur road," FS# 3S34A was constructed along the ridge to access a timber sale unit for the Yellowjacket Timber Sale.

The Yellowjacket Homestead 1983 to 2018

At the time the site was recorded, in 1983, a timber harvest unit for the Yellowjacket Timber Sale had been proposed for an area just to the east of the homestead. Refer to Image 3 for the specific locations cited in the text. All images were taken by the author unless otherwise indicated.

A proposed access road (FS road 3S34A) to the unit, about one-half mile in length, roughly followed the original trail along the ridge west--ending about 275 meters to the east of the homestead. The access road was constructed and the unit logged sometime in the late 1980s during the Yellowjacket Timber sale.

Perhaps the most surprising observation on this recent visit, discussed in more detail below, was the fact that, as compared to the significant changes in the distribution of species of vegetation at Raglan Flat, on the Yellowjacket homestead little has changed over the last 35 years. Here, the grassland savanna openings and areas dominated by brush and gray pines (*Pinus sabiniana*) remain about the same on the small flat where the main component of the historic site is located (Image 3: #2), and surrounding the small flat just to the northeast; where there is a small pond containing water and some old fruit trees that are still alive (Image 3: #1).

In the recent past, cattle have often congregated in this area during the late summer and fall. With no apparent way for a tractor to access the site it is not clear just when the pond was constructed or who built it. A review of air photos dating from the 1940s, on file at Six Rivers National Forest, might answer this question. .

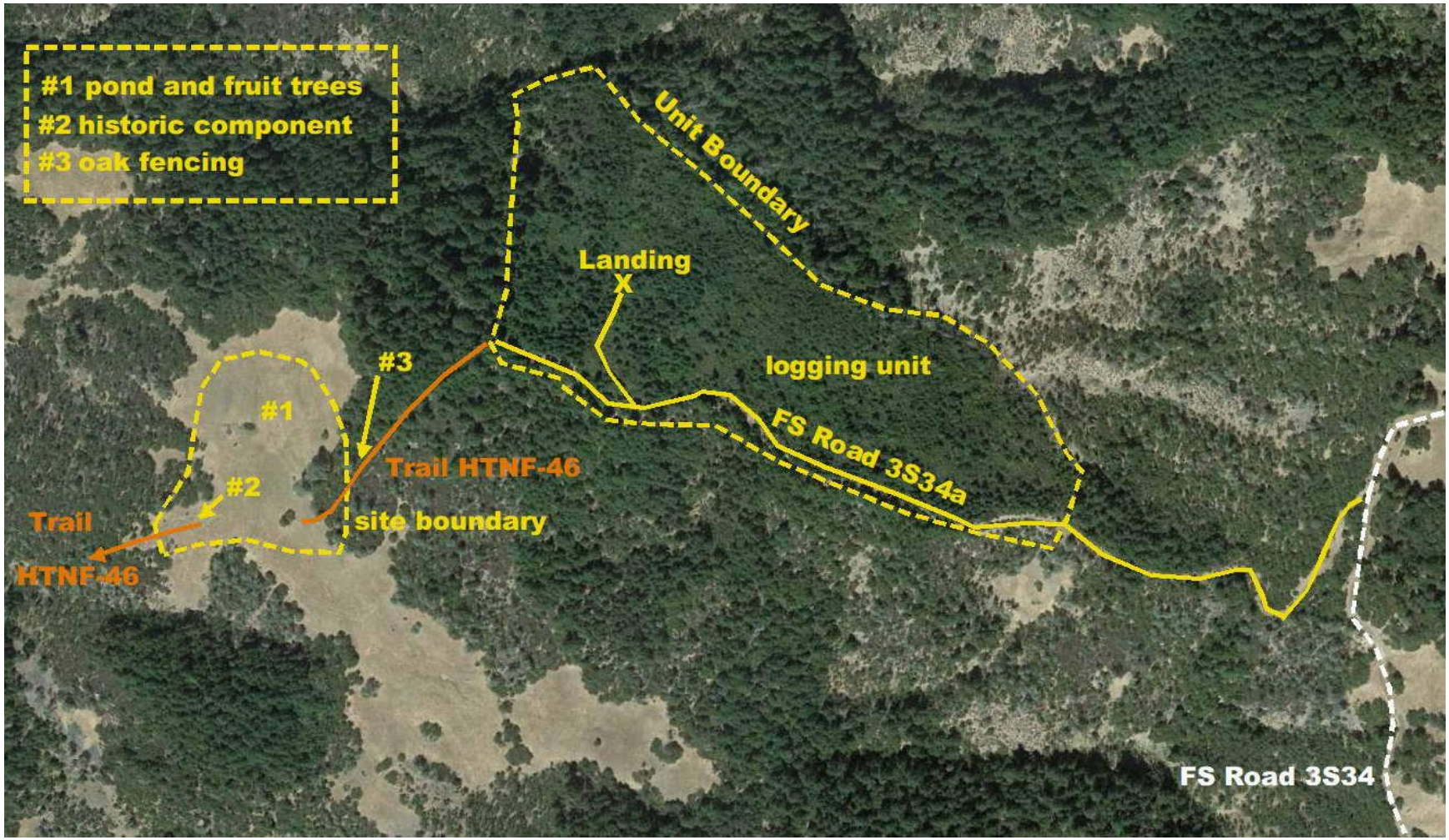

Image 3
The Yellowjacket homestead and the area to the east of the homestead
sites of timber harvesting and road building activities.
(Google Earth August, 2017)

Historical Site Overview

Image 4, taken in 1983, is a view northwest towards the homestead (Image 3 Location #2) from just to the west of where to trail enters the opening from the east above the homestead--note that are no Douglas firs in this entire area. A 2004 photo of the same area—Image 5-- shows that in the intervening years there had been little change to the vegetation growing on the site. Image 6 taken in 2018 again shows little change in the vegetation growing on the site since it was abandoned about 85 years ago.

Unfortunately, over the years there has been extensive illegal theft of historic artifacts from the site. The most notable theft was an old horse-drawn sickle-bar mower (most likely removed by a helicopter when an active timber sale on private property was occurring in the area during the 1990s: personal observation). Theft of artifacts from a site is a violation of the Archaeological Resource's Protection Act. Subsequent to our 2004 visit, law enforcement was notified and visited the site to investigate the theft of artifacts. Unfortunately, there was evidence during our recent visit indicating that the theft of historic artifacts from the site has continued.

Image 4

October 1983: Note the gray pine, oaks, and lack of Douglas fir even on the north-facing slope. The structure was located in the small saddle in the center of the photo. Note that a section of the oak fencing (lower left) was still standing. A horse-drawn sickle-bar mower can be seen just to the left of the fencing

Image 5
Same view 2004; note that little has changed in the distribution of the vegetation. By this time, the hay mower had been stolen from the site and the fence was no longer standing.

Image 6
Same view during the 2018 visit. Little has changed here since the first visit in 1983. (Pat Higgins 2018)

Fruit Trees and Pond (Image 3 Location #2)

Image 7, taken in 1983, shows the area where the fruit trees and pond are located. Image 8 taken of the same area in 2018 shows some of the fruit trees have died but that little else has changed.

Image 7
View to NW in October 1983; note that there is still water in the pond.

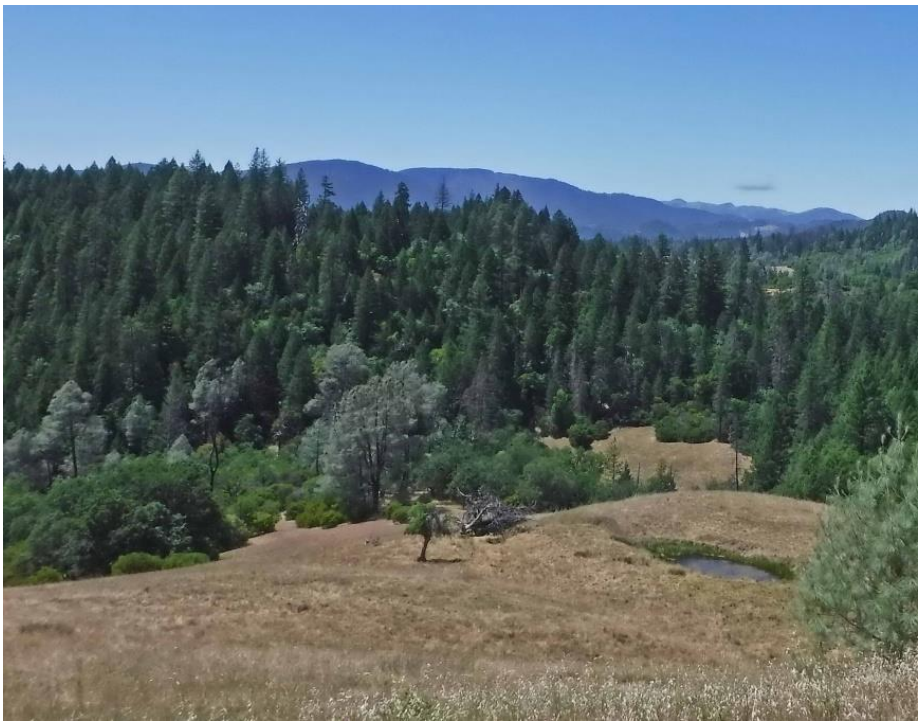

Image 8
Some of the fruit trees have died, but virtually no vegetation has invaded the site.
(Pat Higgins 2018)

Homestead (Image 1: Location #2)

Image 9, taken in 1983, shows the opening where the historic trail enters the meadow from the east. Image 10, taken in 2018, shows that, as elsewhere on the site, there has been little encroachment of manzanita or conifers into the opening along the eastern boundary of the historical site. For more details on the integrity of this trail, see the section below.

Image 9
View east in 1983 from location #2. The trail enters from the east just above the manzanita in the upper center of the image.

Image 10
Same view in 2018; there has been virtually no change to the vegetation in this area. (Susan Nolan)

White oak fencing (Image 3: Location #3)

One of the most interesting cultural features remaining on the site in 2018 was a short section of white oak fencing that once surrounded much of the homestead. It was located just to the north of the trail before it entered the clearing from the east. Image 11 was taken in 1983. By that time, manzanita had already overgrown much of the fence line along the edge of the opening that had been recorded as the eastern boundary of the historic site. It is clear that in 1983, when the photograph was taken, the manzanita had already been encroaching on the fence line for many years.

Image 12 was taken in 2018. It shows a small section of the old fence in the same area still remains standing. This fencing is now probably about 85 to 100 years old (proof of why white oak was the choice of homesteaders for fencing).

Given that the brush in this area has grown for another 35 years since the site was first visited, it is clear that the fuel load in this area due to the increased density of the manzanita as it ages has greatly increased.

Image 11
White oak fencing to the north of trail HTNF-46: 1983.

Image 12
Same fence line 35 years later in 2018.

Historic Trail HTNF-46 (Image 3)

When the site was recorded in 1983 access to the area was still via the original trail (Image 1: trail HTNF-46). At that time, the trail was still in excellent condition and was used by both cowboys and their cattle during the summer and fall to travel between the old abandoned Yellowjacket place where there was a water source, and the upper Mad River Ridge--used for summer grazing. As noted earlier, a timber access road (3S34A) constructed in the late 1980s, now overlays most of the old trail to the east of the homestead (Image 13). On a visit to the site in 2004 the access road to the unit was still open to vehicles. From the end of the spur road a section of the historic trail, about 250 meters in length and still in relatively good condition led southwest downslope to the site.

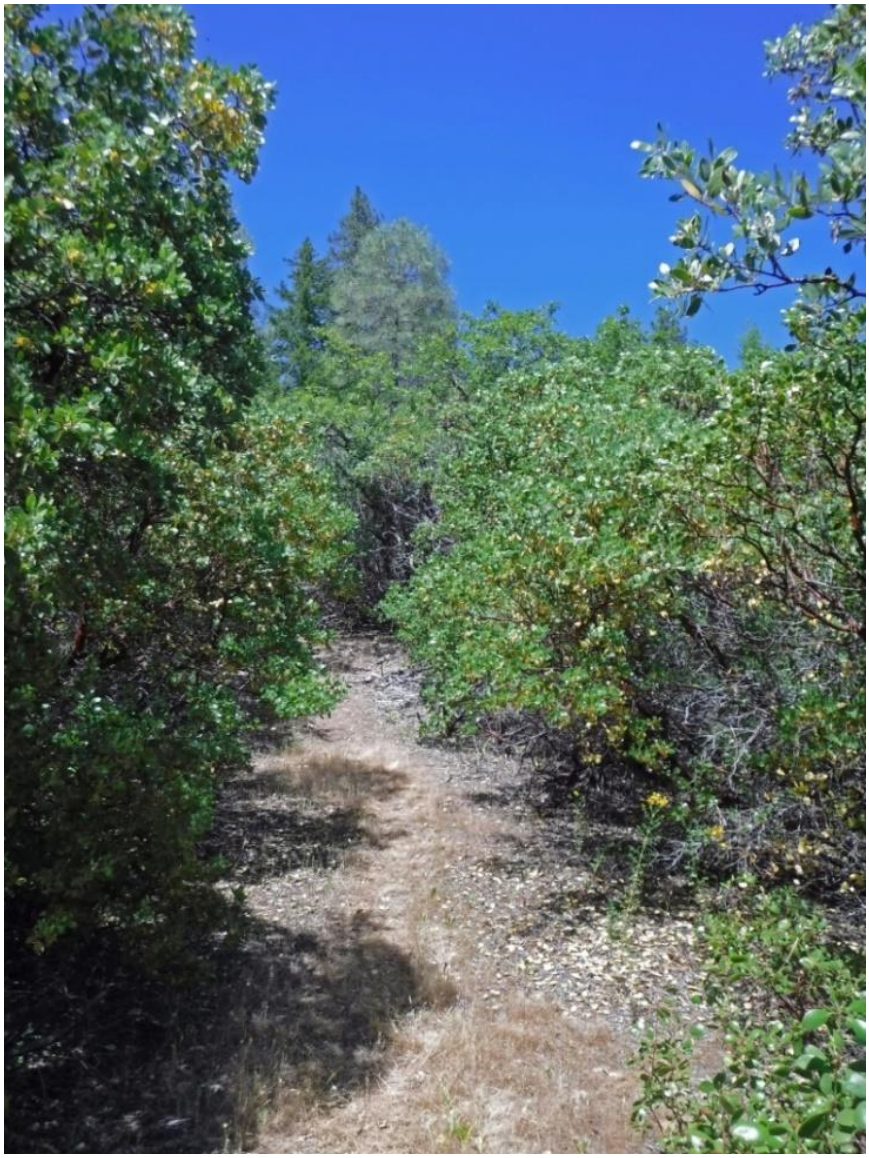

Image 13
June 2018: view west along the spur road just before it ends in a timber sale unit near the eastern boundary of the historic site.
(Pat Higgins)

Forest Service Spur Road 3S34A (Image 3)

It appears that Forest Service Access Road 3S34A was put to bed sometime between 2004 and 2010 (see Image 19 for comments). The first section of the old spur road, paralleling 3S34 and located downslope just to the west, remains relatively open (Image 14).

Image 14
View to the SW of the old logging road as it heads downhill from near its eastern terminus with the main haul route 3S34.
(Pat Higgins 2018)

As the road turns west, it follows along a narrow ridge dividing two sub drainages of Cox Creek, before reaching the eastern edge of the timber sale unit (Image 3) where brush and Douglas firs have begun to aggressively encroach on the original road bed. Then, just before the junction of the logging road and the remaining section of old trail that leads down to the historic site, brush has completely overgrown the spur road and it is so dense it is almost impenetrable. To access the trail junction from this point, it was necessary to hike along the south facing slope just below the ridgeline in the young stand of Douglas firs that now dominate that area (Image 22) and circle back to the point on the ridge near where the road ends and the remaining section of trail leads to the homestead begins. This old section of the trail, from the logging unit to the homestead, is still in fair condition--although Manzanita is beginning to grow across the trail in a few places (Image 15).

Image 15
View to the west along trail HTNF-46 below
the junction of the trail and timber access road.

Effects to the Vegetation as a result of Logging and Road Building

The most obvious and surprising thing observed on the 2018 visit was the aggressive encroachment of manzanita into the old roadbed since the last visit to the site in 2004. The unit itself was not inspected due an almost impenetrable barrier of dense brush in that area.

At some point subsequent to our last visit and before 2010 (see Image 19) the road was "put to bed." That is, it was permanently closed. It is not unusual in this area to close a spur road to a logging unit after it has been logged. Sometimes an earthen barrier or gate is used—here, the area where the access road left the main haul route FS road 3S34 was obliterated and the right-of-way was recontoured to conform to the original slope.

The following Google Earth air photos (Images 16 to 21) show the Yellowjacket place and the surrounding area in a series of shots taken between 1993 and 2017. Note that the lines shown on these maps to depict the historic trail and logging road are drawn to closely parallel these features rather than directly on them so that they can be easily seen on the photos.

Refer to the next section for comments on changes in the distribution of vegetation on the site based on the air photos and photos taken by the author on previous visits.

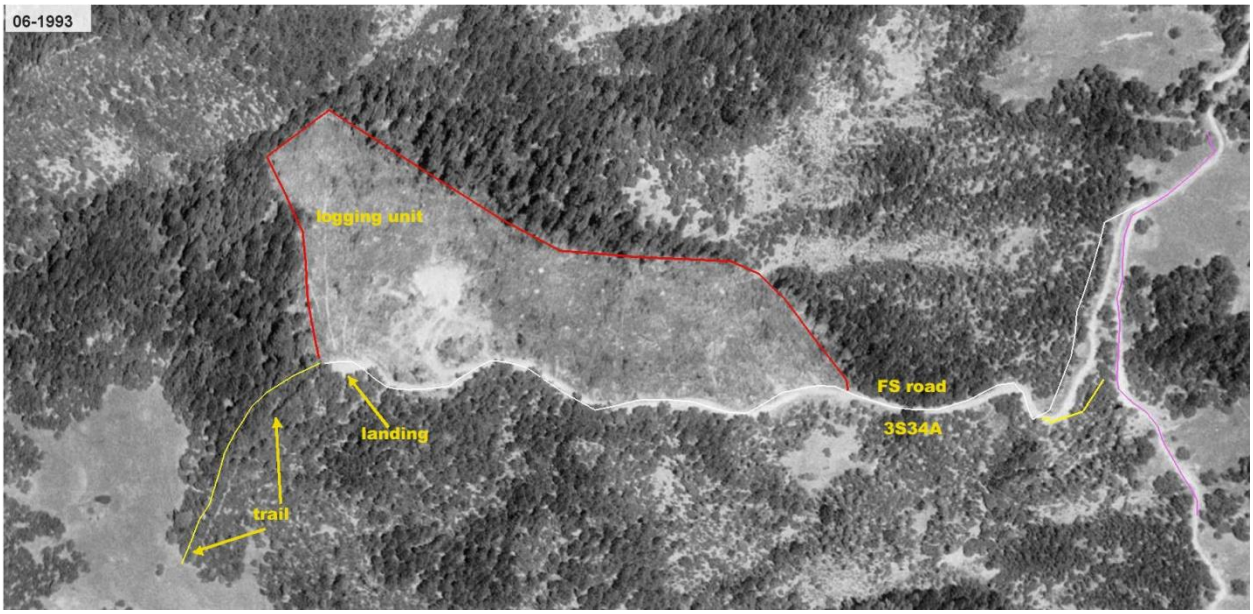

Image 16
(Google Earth June, 1993)

This photo was taken in June of 1993 about 5 to 7 years after the unit was logged. The lack of standing Douglas firs in the unit indicates this was probably a clearcut unit. The trail leading to the east from the historic site is still well-defined.

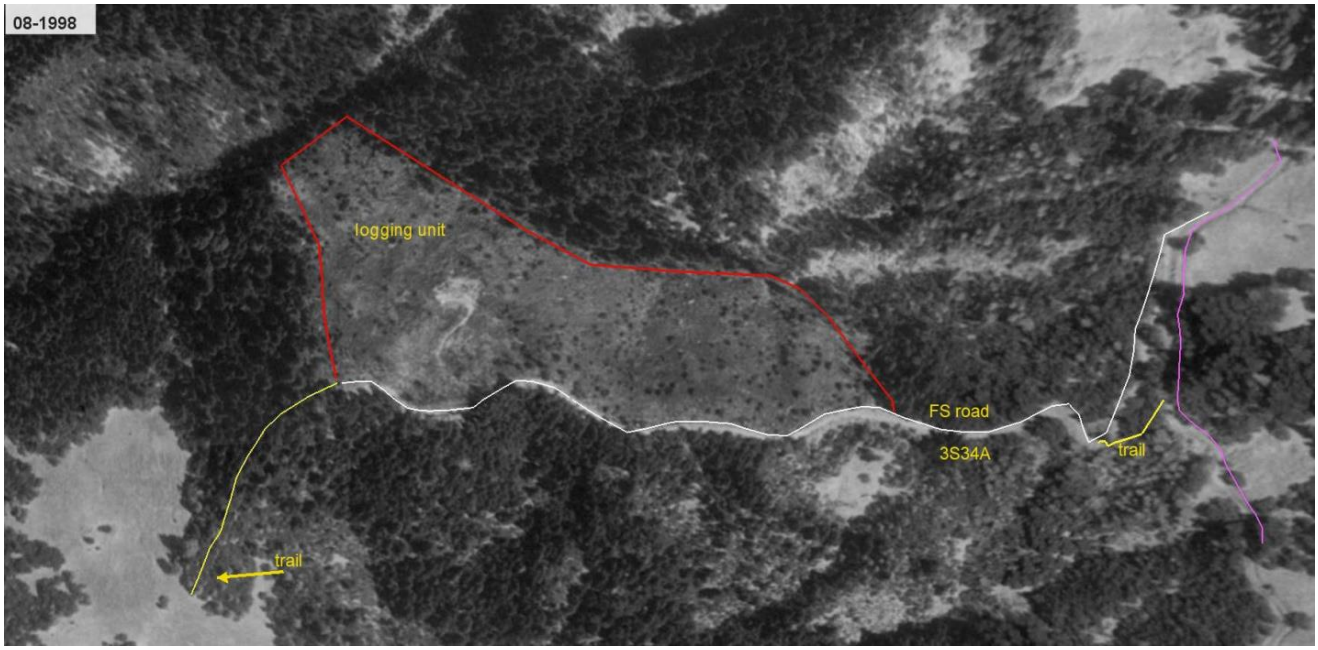

Image 17
(Google Earth August, 1998)

This photo was taken in August of 1998--about a decade after the unit was logged. Some brush was beginning to grow in the clearcut. Note that the conifers growing on the south facing slope of the ridge below the new road are beginning to close in the canopy in some places.

Image 18
(Google Earth December, 2005)

This photograph was taken in 2005; by now brush clearly dominates the old logging unit. The remaining section of trail to the historic site can still be seen in this photo.

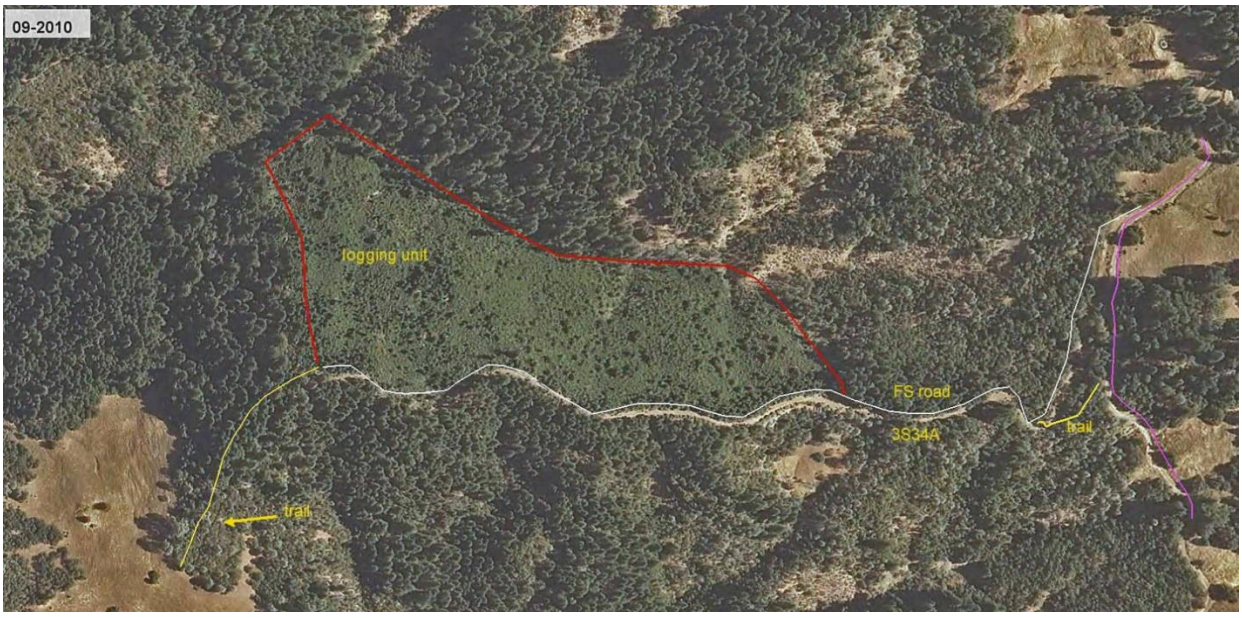

Image 19
(Google Earth September, 2010)

By 2010 it appears that some trees or larger shrubs were growing within the unit. At this time there is no data to indicate if the unit was replanted although it is quite possible. A closer view of this image shows that by now FS 3S34A had been closed and put to bed.

Image 20
(Google Earth May, 2014)

By 2014, Douglas firs were beginning to shade-out a section of the access road near its western end. It appears the few trees are growing within the old logging unit.

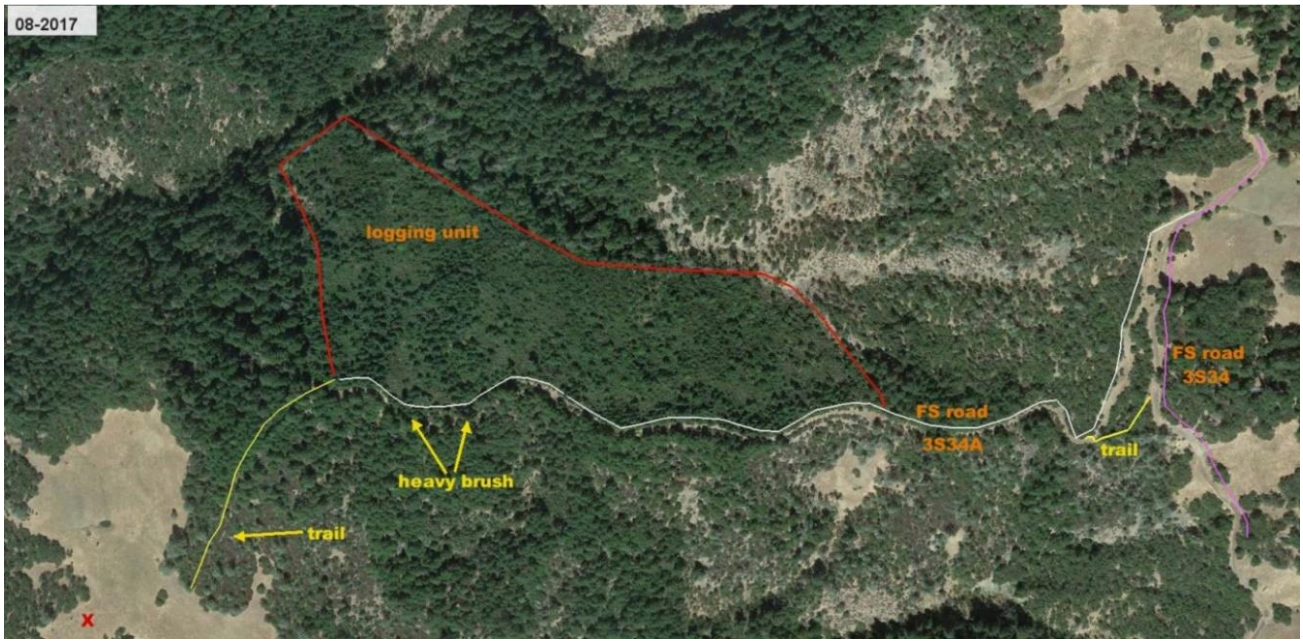

Image 21
(Google Earth July, 2017)

On our visit in 2018, one section of the spur logging road was so overgrown (noted as heavy brush on Image 21) that it was necessary to avoid the nearly impenetrable brush by hiking along the edge of the even-aged Douglas firs (Image 22) that were shading out the oaks and brush and were

now dominating the south facing slope in this area. Note the closed canopy of even-aged Douglas firs in this photograph as compared to the 1993 air photo (Image 16). In this area, dead and dying oaks littered the forest floor resulting in a significant buildup of fuels. As a rough estimate, based on past experience, these trees--given the poor growing site--are between about 40 to 60 years old.

Image 22
On the south facing slope just below the access road
Douglas firs were encroaching on oak woodlands
(Pat Higgins 2018)

Some conclusions related to changes in the distribution of vegetation 1983 to 2017

When the Yellowjacket homestead was first visited in 1983, it had been abandoned for almost 50 years. Since then another 35 years has passed—a not insubstantial amount of time to provide for some perspective on the changes that have taken place over the years.

It is clear that the greatest effects and changes over the last several decades to the vegetation growing on this 320 acre tract are associated with the timber harvesting activities that took place

in the late 1980s; including a logging unit, construction of an access road, and a landing to yard the timber.

The photos taken of this area from 1983 to 2018 cited earlier, as well as the Google Earth air photos (Images 23 and 24), clearly show that the opening where the historic homestead was located has maintained its integrity. As noted earlier, this is likely due to a combination of slope, aspect, and soil types conspiring to make this a rather xeric area. Also contributing to this conclusion is the presence of gray pines scattered throughout the area. In the North Fork Eel River watershed they are often found growing on poor soils (often containing serpentine) and at more xeric locations that lack the proper conditions (high soil moisture content to establish seedlings) needed for Douglas fir to become established.

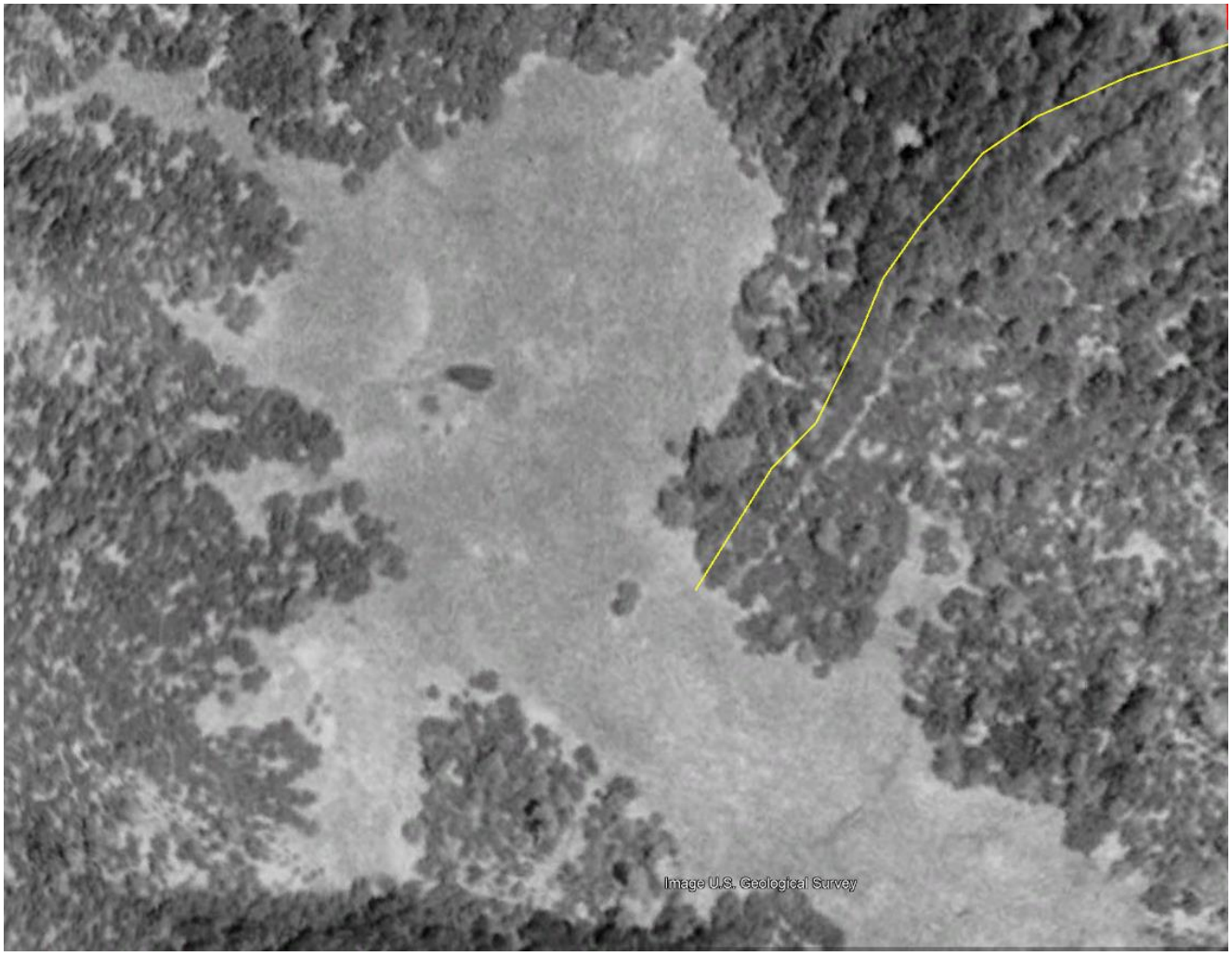

Image 23
Photo taken in August of 1993; note that the pond still has water.
(Google Earth 1993)

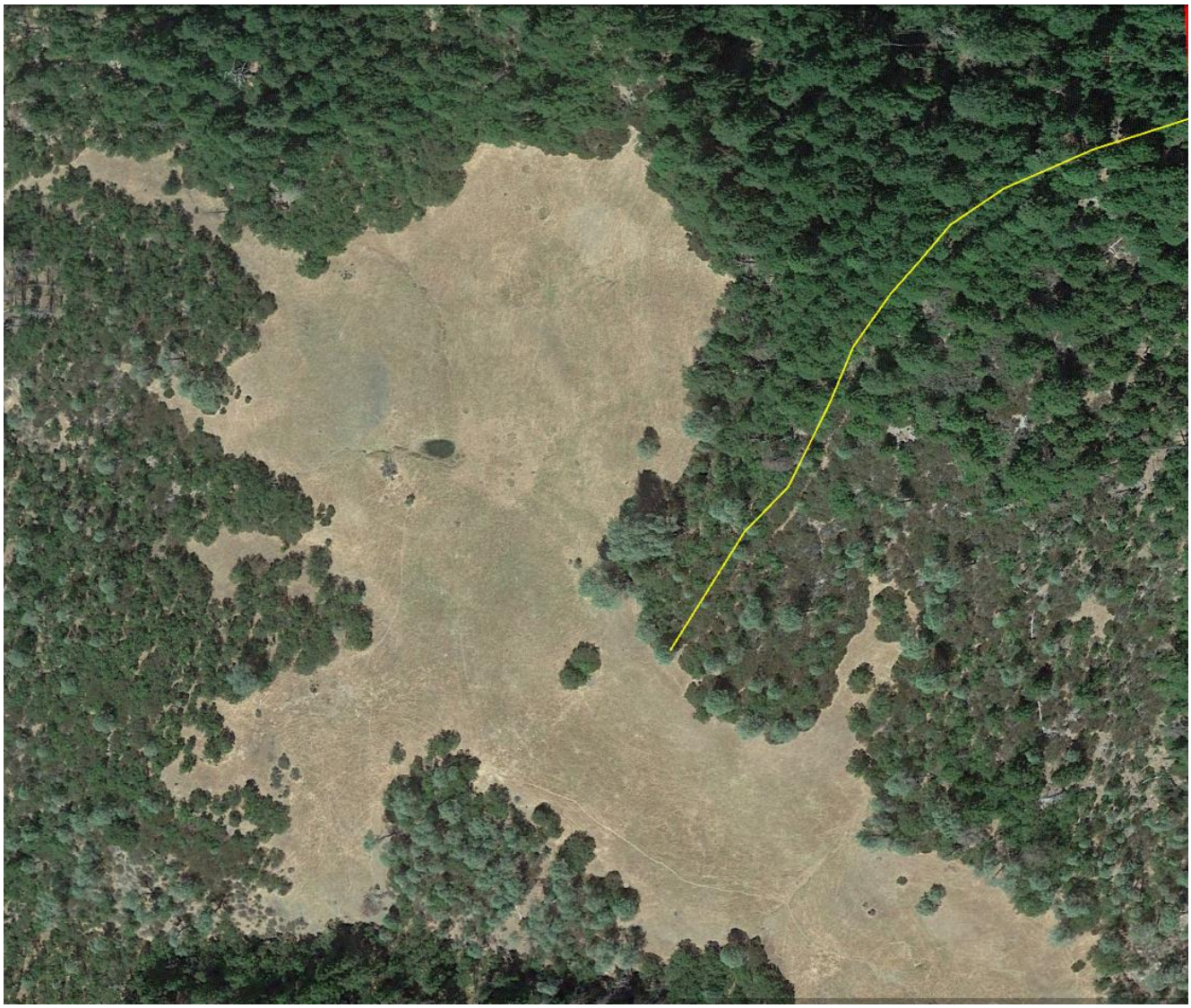

Image 24
Taken in August of 2017, this photo shows there has been virtually no change in the distribution of vegetation since the homestead was abandoned over 80 years ago. (Google Earth 2017)

References Cited

PDFs for all of the articles and the book cited in this paper are available www.solararch.org

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1997 [First author. Second Author: Heather Busam)
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2017a Protohistoric and Historic Native American Sties within the North Fork Watershed.
Paper presented to the Society for California Archaeology. Fish Camp, Ca. March 11, 2017.

2017b Trinity County Historical Society Compendium.
On file Trinity County Historical Society, Weaverville.

2018a Impacts of the 2017 Dutchman Fire to the Environment and Cultural Resources at Raglan Flat,

Appendix 1

Field Visit June 20, 2018

Participants

Fred Bauer: Eel River Restoration Project (EERP)
Brandy Clark: Archaeologist (USFS)
Pat Higgins: Managing Director Eel River Recovery Project
Bill Eastwood: Director, EERP
Imil Ferrerra: ERRP Forest Health Coordinator
Richard Geinger: Environmentalist and KMUD environmental program host
Jeff Hedin - Wilderness Committee Co-Chair
Phil Hoskins - ERRP Wilderness Coordinator
Doug Parkinson: EERP
Ben Schill: (Avocational anthropologist and linguist)
Susan Nolan: avocational botanist studying forbs and grasses
Kitty Lynch: personal friend and environmentalist
Angelique Russell: Six Rivers National Forest, Mad River RD staff
Lulu Wacks: Consultant on communities, ecology and economy of North Coast
Walker Wise: EERP