

April 23, 1973

Andy vs. the Bureaucratic Deadwood

BY MICHAEL SEILER
Times Staff Writer

Andy Lipkis, a 19-year-old college freshman very much into ecology, had this idea a couple of years ago: The trees in the San Bernardino National Forest are dying from the smog that drifts east out of Los Angeles, so find some smog-resistant trees and replant them there.

After all, Lipkis thought, the experts say the forest in the Big Bear-Lake Arrowhead-Barton Flats area could be dead in as little as 20 years if nothing is done.

A pure case for a bit of individual initiative, right? One young man could get the ecological bandwagon rolling.

It wasn't quite that easy. There were some complications along the way. Like the bureaucracy of the California Division of Forestry.

Lipkis discovered a few months ago that the division had 20,000 smog-resistant Sierra redwoods and sugar pines, all under a year old, growing in its tree nursery up near Davis.

Andy told the forestry people his plan. They said that it was a nice idea, but rules are rules, and the division does not give its baby trees away. If they're not sold, they're plowed under.

They cost two-and one-half cents per tree and Andy wanted all 20,000 trees.

Tight Student Budget

Which is more money than a kid on a tight college-student budget can handle.

He went to a few of the bigger corporations that talk a good ecology game. But Andy, an environmental studies major at Cal State Sonoma, had no luck in coming up with the \$500 needed to buy the trees.

And while he was making the rounds, time was slipping away.

"They (the forest division administrators) said I had to get the money by March 16 or they'd kill the trees," Andy said.

"They were going to plow them under to replant

Please Turn to Page 7, Col. 1



ROOTS IN ECOLOGY—Andy Lipkis with a few of the 8,000 smog-resistant trees he plans on replanting. Times photo by Harry Chase

Andy vs. the Bureaucrats

Continued from First Page
they seed beds so they could grow another crop of the same trees for next year.

A spokesman for the Division of Forestry confirmed Lipkis' story, but said the trees are "very, very seldom" plowed under.

Usually, he said, most are sold. Those that aren't are uprooted late in March to provide room for next year's crop. He said the law forbids the giving away of state property.

"It's one of those bureaucratic things," Andy said. "They said it was good business not to give the trees away be-

cause normally they sell them to nonprofit groups or farmers, say, who will plant them for erosion control."

Lipkis checked back with the forestry division the following Monday and discovered they'd already plowed under 12,000 of the trees I wanted."

Andy, an admitted novice in pulling bureaucratic strings, sought assistance. Calls were made to politicians and newspapermen.

In turn, calls were made to Sacramento and questions asked. Headlines were imagined—headlines like "Young Ecologist Foiled by Tree-Killing Forestry Division." Sec-

ond thoughts were had all around.

That's what Andy figures anyway, because suddenly while week- ending in his parents' West Los Angeles condominium, he was besieged by forestry officials.

"One flew down from Sacramento; another came up from San Diego," Andy said. "They told me, 'Everybody in Sacramento knows about your project and loves it and we want it to succeed.'"

"They said they would make it a demonstration project and they could give me the trees free. They said it was a lot larger than any demonstration project they've had

before but it was a good idea."

Unfortunately, Andy's problems weren't over yet.

"The Division of Forestry trucked the trees to me in Sonoma in bunches and told me I had a week to plant them before they died," Lipkis said.

He got a local milk company to donate 8,000 milk cartons, paid \$60 for a truckload of topsoil, and then talked a Sonoma land developer into paying for another load of soil.

Then with 15 friends from the college plus a Boy Scout troop, Andy Lipkis went at it with trowel in hand. They had all 8,000 baby trees planted in the milk cartons within a week. The trees are being kept on the seven-acre grounds of a home

Andy rents with others near Sonoma.

The next phase of Lipkis' project—three years in the planning—is to plant the trees on 20 summer camp sites scattered throughout the Big Bear region in the national forest.

He has the camps lined up. Kids and advisers will help in the planting this summer as well as join in a general antilitter campaign in the area, cleaning up public campgrounds and trails.

Lipkis still needs \$4,000 for the project this summer to cover the cost of renting a truck for two months, obtaining tools and mulching materials, and paying \$250 a month salaries for two full-time trained assistants. He asks that anyone willing to

help out contact him at 1745 Selby Ave., Los Angeles, 90024.

"I've given up trying to get money from big business and now I'm trying to take it to the people," he said. "If each person just contributed 50 cents for one tree, we could get it done. That's all it costs."