



September 17, 2015

Dear Colleagues, Friends and Neighbors in Mendocino County,

In recent months, a public conversation was begun by a group of local residents regarding the practice of treating tan oak in the forest. The treatment of tan oak occurs throughout Mendocino County to restore the redwood and Douglas fir trees across public and private land. Our company, Mendocino Redwood Company (MRC), has been treating tan oak in the forest since we acquired the forestlands in 1998.

Earlier this year this group of residents came before the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors to request the County consider imposing a voluntary moratorium on the treatment of tan oaks. The request and reasons for the moratorium were discussed vigorously and publicly. County Supervisors voted against the moratorium idea and instead supported, with specific funding, a community-driven effort to explore the issue in the form of a Working Group.

More recently, a petition has been created to place an initiative restricting the treatment of tan oak on a future ballot. The stated reason for the initiative is to reduce fire danger. As you will read in this series of letters, current tan oak treatment is crucial to restoring the extraordinary public and private forests in our county. With input from the Working Group, plus guidance and regulation by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire), all fire concerns will be properly addressed.

Rather than signing a petition, there is a better way; by participating in the open and transparent process recently established and funded by the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors. You can contact the Fire Safe Council at [www.FireSafeMendocino.org](http://www.FireSafeMendocino.org) or email [FireSafe@Pacific.net](mailto:FireSafe@Pacific.net).

### **How and Why We Treat Tan Oak Trees**

Beginning in 1998, when MRC was established, we spent several years on a variety of methods to treat tan oaks (including an ill-fated and expensive effort to make tan oak flooring). After much effort, we concluded the most effective way to bring back a healthy conifer forest in our lifetime was to treat tan oak, selectively, carefully, in the woods, literally tree by tree.

Treating tan oak involves using herbicide (about two cups per acre) that is injected directly into the trunk of tan oak trees, following a cut made in the bark. The treatment results in trees dropping most leaves in six to nine months (depending on the time of year), and beginning to fall down within three to four years. After several years, the treated trees largely decompose and their biomass is added to the duff layer of the forest. The treatment of tan oak reduces competition for sunlight and water allowing redwood and Douglas fir trees to thrive.

Treating tan oak encourages the emergence of a healthier forest by restoring the health of redwood and Douglas fir trees.

### **A Better Way to Improve the Health of the Forest**

Mendocino Redwood Company's original stewardship objectives from its founding 15 years ago remain the same:

1. Restoring a healthy redwood and Douglas fir forest, managed selectively
2. Continuously maintaining and improving critical stewardship activities including:
  - a) Measurable improvements in aquatic and upslope habitat
  - b) Old growth protection
  - c) Clean water
  - d) Transparent business practices
  - e) Long-term sustainable timber supplies



MRC, from our inception, has sought to demonstrate it is possible to be good stewards of the land and have a successful business. Our hope is to create a positive, economically successful example of how private forest management can protect and restore the ecological attributes of an active forest landscape.

You may be asking, what has caused all of this interest in tan oak treatment today? We believe the answer relates directly to current concerns about fire safety and practices of prior operators on Mendocino County forestlands.

Harvest practices over many decades predating the formation of Mendocino Redwood Company in 1998, left the forest with an imbalance of tree species. Tens of thousands of acres, once healthy redwood and Douglas fir trees, were left untreated after harvest, allowing the landscape to become overwhelmed by tan oak.

Tan oak is found in most redwood forests as a minor player among the various trees competing for light and nutrients. Tan oak overwhelming the forest can delay by decades, and perhaps even permanently inhibit, restoration of a healthy redwood and Douglas fir forest.

In our next letter we will talk about how our commitment and our approach have been careful, focused and successful.

We work to be transparent and publish enormous amounts of information about our company including our inventory and many other details of our forest management practices on our website, [www.MRC.com](http://www.MRC.com). We have a publicly-stated, long-standing policy of taking anyone anywhere on the property to see our practices firsthand. For some who may find visiting our forest challenging we will provide assistance. We also post video of activities and forest science work at <http://www.mrc.com/about-us/forestry-videos/>. And you can follow our activities on:

Facebook- Mendocino Redwood Forestry  
Twitter- @MendoForestry

We welcome the opportunity to discuss how we manage our lands in Mendocino County. If you have any questions about this letter or the company, please call me personally at the number below. If you would like a tour of the property, please call 707-463-5113.

Sincerely,

Bob Mertz  
Chief Executive  
707-467-3385