



October 8, 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 for an initiative restricting the treatment of tan oak. 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.

We are Treating Tan Oak- it is Working and it is Safe

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 dominated by tan oak.

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.

1. Over sixteen years we have surveyed for dominant tan oak stands on 65,000 acres; treating tan oak trees when necessary, carefully, by hand, one tree at a time.
2. We have probably treated more than 1 million tan oaks, individually, by hand, tree by tree. Sounds like a lot, and it is. We have done this to promote the healthy growth of more than 14 million redwood and Douglas fir trees.
3. Our inventory of redwood and Douglas fir trees has increased over 1 billion board feet (after deducting for harvest) since we began operations. For more information on the activities on the forest please see this link to our website: www.mrc.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/MRC_Data-Sheet_July-2015.pdf.

If left untreated tan oak will continue to overwhelm the forest to the detriment of restoring the redwood and Douglas fir forest in a time frame that matters to those of us alive today.

We Want All Citizens To Be Heard

To assure public concerns around this issue are heard we joined and participate in the Mendocino County Fire Safety Working Group. This Working Group was established and funded by County Board of Supervisors to review and update county-wide fire safety plans including the questions around treating of tan oak. The process is now underway, the Working Group is open to anyone wishing to participate. We encourage every interested citizen, student, retiree, employee and public officials to participate in this process. Rather than signing a petition the better way is participating in the open and transparent process recently established and funded by the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors.

The Working Group Will Improve Forest Health

With broad community participation the Working Group can develop real and useful answers to fire safety questions rather than passing new rules, regulations and restrictions. There is a better way to grow a healthy forest than more regulations, laws and restrictions.



MRC is making a major and permanent commitment to this process on a variety of fronts:

1. All voices should be heard. That's why we joined and participate in the Mendocino County Fire Safety Working Group. You should too. The County wants the Working Group to be successful in addressing questions of Fire Safety and has allocated \$25,000 to the effort. MRC and others have offered staff time and resources as well.
2. MRC is regulated by seven (7) state and federal agencies. Additionally, MRC subjects itself to third party review and verification of forest practices under the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) guidelines and has done so consistently since 2000.
3. MRC has internal policies to encourage fire safety. These include things we have done for over a decade, such as:
 - a. Partnering with communities to place dedicated fire-water tanks, improve egress for remote neighbors and contribute to the equipment purchases of local volunteer fire district.
 - b. Working in Sacramento to encourage investment in Mendocino county infrastructure.
 - c. Donations of time, equipment and money to Volunteer Fire Departments (including a \$5,000 donation to the Albion Fire Department toward a new engine recently).
4. CalFire, a Lead Agency on forest regulations, independently reviews and verifies all Timber Harvest Plans (THPs). THPs are considered a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)-equivalent Environmental Review Document. Among many things, CalFire reviews THPs for fire safety and insists on mitigations where appropriate.
5. MRC has strengthened practices to improve coordinating with local Fire Districts, Fire experts, Climate experts and CalFire on pilot projects for fuels hazard reduction and additional road access in the remote parts of the County.
6. Our commitment and our approach to treating tan oak have been careful, focused and successful.

Our next letter to the community will talk about the programs and projects MRC has undertaken to manage other important aspects of forest restoration.

We work to be transparent and publish enormous amounts of information including details of our forest practices on our website, 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