



November 5, 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. Tan oak treatment is crucial to restoring the extraordinary public and private forests in our county.

**MRC's Response to Tan Oak Treatment and Fire Safety is Extensive,  
Transparent and Science-Based**

Treating tan oak is crucial to full restoration of the forest in Mendocino County. There is a lot to know. We believe being transparent creates a forum for discussing our practices and standards to avoid the need to pass more and new laws, rules or regulations. To achieve this transparency, we are sharing more about our company:

1. 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-C005200) guidelines and has done so consistently since 2000.
2. 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.
3. MRC has reviewed its internal policies to encourage fire safety. These include procedures and processes we have used for more than a decade, such as:
  - a. Partnering with communities to place dedicated fire-water tanks, improve egress for remote neighbors and coordination of activities with local fire districts.
  - b. Working in Sacramento to encourage investment in Mendocino County infrastructure through the return of taxes paid locally and deployment of CalFire resources.
  - c. Donations of time, equipment and money to Volunteer Fire Departments.
4. MRC strengthened its 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.
5. The Board of Supervisors directed the County Executive Officer to coordinate a review of the County Fire Plan through the Mendocino Fire Safe Council to include a review of the treatment of tan oak as it relates to fire safety.
  - a. The Board of Supervisors allocated \$25,000 to the Fire Safe Council to update the county-wide fire plan. The money was delivered in July 2015.
  - b. The Fire Safe Council initiated a Working Group and invited all interested parties including citizens, students, retirees, employees and public officials to participate in this process.
  - c. The Working Group is open to all and has begun the process of reviewing fire safety.
  - d. The Fire Safe Council will provide public updates.
  - e. The Working Group brought its findings back to the Board of Supervisors for disclosure and public discussion.



6. MRC committed to support the formation of the Working Group involving all interested parties to fully study fire risk including the questions associated with the treatment of tan oak.

### **Why Do MRC and Many Other Organizations, Individuals and Agencies Support the Working Group**

From our inception we have encouraged transparency and we have consistently operated openly. We believe everyone benefits when the community engages in important forestry decisions. We have, from day one, been willing to take anyone anywhere on our property to see our practices firsthand.

We want you to be involved in these decisions. Our company, Mendocino Redwood Company, has always operated with the public's interest in mind and invites the public to participate in, and better understand, how we strive to grow healthy, productive forests. Rather than sign a petition requesting a new law or rule, you can have important and ongoing impact by participating more directly and continuously in two (2) important ways:

1. Join and participate in the Working Group. With full community participation, the Working Group process can develop real and useful answers to fire safety questions.
2. Contact Mendocino Redwood Company to come visit our property and see firsthand how the work we do benefits the community, the forest, and our economy. Meet with our Foresters who live in our communities, raise their families here, and work in the forest every day.

We are increasing our efforts of transparency by making available information and videos to help those interested see crucial and interesting forest operations at their convenience at <http://www.mrc.com/about-us/forestry-videos/>. We post these interesting short videos of activities we undertake in managing the forest and conducting forest science work at MRC. In addition to the videos there is an abundance of information on our company website at [www.mrc.com](http://www.mrc.com). And you can follow our activities on:

Facebook- Mendocino Redwood Forestry  
Twitter- @MendoForestry

We will continue an on-going conversation with the community through our website and social media. We welcome the opportunity to discuss how we manage our lands at any time.

Let me summarize what we believe:

1. All voices need to be heard. That's why we joined and participate in the Working Group. You should too.
2. There is a better way to grow a healthy forest than more rules, restrictions and laws.
3. Our commitment and our approach to improve the health of the forests we own, including the treatment of tan oak, has been careful, focused, science-based and successful.

Modern forestry is extremely interesting and vital to our economy and lifestyle. If you or those you know have questions about this letter or the company, please call me directly 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