



Dear Colleagues, Friends and Neighbors in Mendocino County,

May 2, 2016

Over the past twelve 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 timberlands in 1998.

Last 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 instead supported, with specific funding, a community-driven effort to explore the issue in the form of a Working Group.

More recently, a petition was created to place an initiative restricting the treatment of tan oak on the June 7, 2016 ballot. It is known as Measure V. The stated reason for the initiative is to reduce fire danger.

As a result of this measure, MRC has decided to campaign and inform voters there is a better way than passing Measure V. Below you may read more about why it is important to maintain the ability to effectively treat tan oak to improve overall forest health.

Campaigns of this type have strict public reporting requirements. To date, we have spent more than \$50,000 to publish letters, send mail, provide information to the public and hire experts. To inform voters and interested parties about Measure V, we expect to spend and properly report more than \$150,000 between now and June 7.

A complaint was filed against MRC earlier this year with the State Fair Political Practices Commission. After a thorough review, the Commission determined we had properly followed the law. You can find the State's ruling here:

[www.hrcllc.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Fair\\_political\\_practices\\_letter\\_2016.pdf](http://www.hrcllc.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Fair_political_practices_letter_2016.pdf)

**If you plan to vote on June 7, please consider opposing Measure V in Mendocino County.**

The following is additional information on the work MRC does to improve forest health, including the management of tan oak and fire safety.

### **Why and How We Treat Tan Oak Trees: For a Better Forest**

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 timberlands.

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.

Beginning in 1998, MRC 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 is 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.

The results speak for themselves:

1. Over seventeen + 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 about our activities in the forest, please follow the link below to our website:  
[https://www.hrcllc.com/sites/default/files/inline-files/MRC\\_Fact%20Sheet\\_2018.pdf](https://www.hrcllc.com/sites/default/files/inline-files/MRC_Fact%20Sheet_2018.pdf)
4. Recent fires in Mendocino County lack correlation between high fire intensity and tan oak treatment areas. In fact, some wildland fires were stopped in areas where tan oak had been treated.

Tan Oak will continue to overwhelm portions of the forest to the detriment of redwood and Douglas fir trees, if left untreated.

To support continued improvements to forest health in Mendocino County, if you plan to vote on June 7, please consider opposing Measure V in Mendocino County.

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

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®) guidelines and has done so consistently since 2000.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. MRC has 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. Our commitment and our approach to treating tan oak have been careful, focused and successful.



## Continue Improving the Health of the Forest: Defeat Measure V

Mendocino Redwood Company's original stewardship objectives from its formation almost 18 years ago remain the same today:

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 operate 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.

We work to be transparent and publish enormous amounts of information about our company 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 <https://www.hrcllc.com/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. And, if you plan to vote on June 7, please consider opposing Measure V in Mendocino County.

Sincerely,

Bob Mertz  
Chief Executive  
707-467-3385

**Paid for by Mendocino Redwood Company, LLC**