

PRESS RELEASE

NEIGHBORS UNITE IN OPPOSITION TO LOGGING PLAN

- Hundreds of acres near Guerneville, CA to be felled for lumber. Locals fear increased fire, landslide and pollution risks -

13 November, 2020, Guerneville, CA: Locals in Guerneville, CA, have joined forces to oppose a plan to log 224 acres of Redwoods and Douglas Firs near the Russian River and Scenic Highway 116.

The proposed Silver Estates Timber Harvest Plan was filed with the California Department of Forestry (CAL FIRE) on July 9 and is currently under review. If given the green light by CAL FIRE, the plan will mean extensive logging just half a mile from the tourist town of Guerneville. It will extend across forested hillsides bounded by Neeley Road, Mays Canyon Road, the Russian River, and the Bohemian Grove. The site contains the tallest Redwood tree in Sonoma County, the Clar Tree, estimated to be 340 feet high and around 2,000 years old. It also provides habitat for several sensitive species, including the Northern Spotted Owl, bald eagle, osprey, blue heron, and the Thompson Big-Eared bat.

While CAL FIRE and various other agencies are reviewing the plan, residents and businesses in Guerneville are concerned that the logging will add to the existing serious fire risk, increase landslides, destroy habitat for endangered species, pollute the Russian River, impact tourism, and negatively alter the forested view from downtown Guerneville and Scenic Highway 116.

To raise awareness about the proposed logging and its impact, residents have created a group called the Guerneville Forest Coalition (GFC). The GFC has raised concerns with Supervisor Lynda Hopkins and prepared a report on the geological hazards. GFC has a website, guernevilleforestcoalition.org, and a Facebook Group with over 170 members.

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To date, more than 200 public comments objecting to the logging plan have been emailed to CAL FIRE at santarosapubliccomment@fire.ca.gov. CAL FIRE is the agency that will make the final decision whether to approve the plan.

GFC member Susan Joice, a homeowner on Neeley Road in Guerneville, said: “Many people assume that logging reduces wildfire danger. But the tall, fire-resistant Redwoods provide cooling canopy shade to the forest below. The leaves collect moisture from the fog and drip water onto the forest floor. Logging these natural treasures dries out the flammable smaller trees and brush and leaves behind woody debris, creating a tinderbox of fire fuels.

“With global warming, fire season is longer, hotter and dryer every year. The Forest Practice Rules that regulate commercial logging are obsolete. They inadequately cover climate change and are not strict enough about requiring clean-up of flammable fuels created by logging. The Silver Estates land is already a mess of bio-fuels left behind from previous timber harvests. Even scarier, the land is dotted with homeless camps using illegal campfires. The landowner has failed to keep the land fire-safe for the local community. Guerneville could become another Paradise if CAL FIRE does not impose stricter regulations on the logging industry.”

The GFC found that 45 of the 224 acres to be logged are on landslide areas along Neeley Road and Mays Canyon Road. It fears that taking out the large trees will increase soil erosion, run-off, and road blockages on these crucial escape routes during fires or floods.

The landowners behind the Silver Estates Timber Harvest Plan, the Roger and Michelle Burch Revocable Family Trust, and their company, Redwood Empire, have been involved in a number of environmental lawsuits, including a five-year battle to log in the Gualala River floodplain.

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