



PRESS RELEASE

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GUERNEVILLE LOGGING PLAN DECISION DELAYED FOR SEVENTH TIME

- Guerneville Forest Coalition calls on Cal Fire to reject plan -

Guerneville, CA: A decision to allow for the industrial logging of 224-acres of redwood trees and Douglas Firs along the Russian River in Guerneville has been delayed for a seventh time.

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Prevention (Cal Fire), which approves such plans, was meant to make a decision by February 5, 2021. Since then, it has requested an extension seven times and is now slated to make a decision by June 1.

Cal Fire claims it has needed the extra time to review more than 300 public comments opposing the plan, known as the Silver Estates Timber Harvest Plan (THP). Opponents, including the Guerneville Forest Coalition (GFC), claim that the agency is trying to find ways to cover up the flaws in the plan rather than reject it.

GFC spokesperson, John Dunlap, said: "We have highlighted numerous significant problems with this plan and Cal Fire needs to reject it rather than trying to find a work around to avoid a law suit. The fact that approval has still not been given after four months shows that there are problems."

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The area to be logged is only half a mile from downtown Guerneville, between Neeley Road, Mays Canyon Road, the Russian River, and the Bohemian Grove. Residents are concerned that the removal of large mature trees, including fire-resistant Redwoods and Douglas Firs, will create fire and landslide risks. This is of most concern to residents of Neeley Road, who have only one way in and out of the area for most of the year.

The GFC also claims that the forester and Cal Fire failed to conduct a thorough assessment of the visual impact along the Highway 116 Scenic Corridor despite the fact that 60 percent of the plan area is visible from the scenic highway.

Concerns have also been expressed by the Sonoma County Department of Transportation and Public Works. In a January letter to Cal Fire, Director Johannes Hovertsz wrote: "the County is concerned that in its current form the Silver Estates THP does not adequately mitigate all of the potentially significant impacts of the proposed timber operations, and we believe that perhaps the THP review team did not understand the County's request or the scope of CalFIRE's authority to address off-site impacts through the THP process."

Added John Dunlap: "At the end of the day, this THP is fundamentally flawed. It fails to take into account the fact that it borders a residential neighborhood that is at considerable risk for fire and landslides. In not rejecting this plan, Cal Fire is failing in its duty to protect the public."

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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