



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-18-137
Meeting 18-40
November 28, 2018

AGENDA ITEM

AGENDA ITEM 4

Resolution of the Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
Supporting the Prohibition of Industrial Clearcutting in California Forests

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a resolution supporting the prohibition of industrial clearcutting in California forests.

SUMMARY

The Forest Protection Committee of the Sierra Club's Loma Prieta Chapter has requested the adoption of a resolution supporting the prohibition of industrial clearcutting in California forests. Clearcutting of forests has significant negative impacts on watershed health, local habitats, fire resiliency, and greenhouse gas emissions. Although industrial clearcutting practices are banned in Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, and San Mateo counties; watershed health, habitat protection, fire resiliency, and climate impacts are concerns that do not follow county or regional boundaries. For these reasons, the General Manager is recommending that the Board adopt this resolution.

The request was reviewed by the Legislative, Finance, and Public Affairs Committee (LFPAC) on June 27, 2017, which unanimously agreed to refer the request to the full Board for consideration. The delay in bringing this item to the full Board was a result of competing priorities and then subsequently, loss of visibility and tracking. Since June 2017, no legislation has been proposed to prohibit statewide clearcutting. Adopting this resolution will express the District's support for the introduction and passage of a bill to ban clear cutting in California.

DISCUSSION

On June 27, 2017, at the request of the Sierra Club, LFPAC reviewed a presentation and proposed resolution to request that the state legislature and Governor prohibit the use of clearcutting as a timber harvesting practice in California. This request is part of their Stop Clearcutting California campaign, which promotes selective logging techniques that are less destructive to habitats and landscapes, increase fire resiliency, and reduce fire risk.

According to Sierra Club-supplied studies, forests absorb up to 30% of human caused carbon dioxide¹. Conversely, 15% of all greenhouse gas emissions originate from deforestation².

¹ Rasmussen, Carol. (2014, Dec. 29). NASA Finds Good News on Forests and Carbon Dioxide. *NASA Earth Science News Team*, Retrieved from: <https://www.nasa.gov/jpl/nasa-finds-good-news-on-forests-and-carbon-dioxide>

² Scheer, R., & Moss, D. (2012, Nov. 13). Deforestation and its extreme effect on global warming. *Scientific American*, Retrieved from: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/deforestation-and-global-warming/#>

Proponents of this resolution also assert that widespread industrial clear-cutting commonly involves the removal of virtually all trees in 20-30 acre tracts and requires broad, repeated application of toxic herbicides that can potentially enter waterways, all of which increase the potential risks of wildfires, landslides, soil erosion, pest invasions, tree diseases, and loss of biodiversity. Clearcutting is prohibited in Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, San Mateo, San Francisco, and Marin Counties. However, it is still allowed on private land elsewhere in California. California forests are valuable resources that sequester carbon, release oxygen, cool streams, prevent flooding and siltation, and host recreation supporting the economy of mountain communities, and provide food, shelter and migration routes for wildlife.

In light of back-to-back years of catastrophic fires in California, the fire hazard created by clear-cutting is of significant concern. While clearcutting reduces fire danger in the short term, the long-term impact is the growth of forests prone high intensity fires. Clear-cutting removes mature, fire resilient trees with thick, protective bark from the landscape and creates a new environment of dense, even-aged stands of young trees that are much more flammable and vulnerable to catastrophic fire events. In contrast, selective thinning, prescribed fires, strategic management of natural fires, and other fuels management practices promote fire resiliency and healthy forests while reducing future fire risk.

Nearby cities have taken action at the behest of the Sierra Club. The Cities of Saratoga and Cupertino both wrote letters to the Governor stating their opposition to clear-cutting, while the City of Sunnyvale has placed the issue on their list of desired legislation. The cities of San Francisco, Monte Sereno, Menlo Park, Brisbane, Berkeley, Daly City, and Davis have passed similar resolutions.

Board Policy 1.11 “Positions on Ballot Measures and Legislative Advocacy” states:

The Board may consider taking a position on the measure/proposition if the measure/proposition:

- i. Would directly impact the District’s finances, responsibilities, legal authority, or operations; AND
- ii. Is in line with or inconsistent with the District’s mission and/or commitment to preserve open space within its boundaries and sphere of influence.

As a statewide ban, this proposal would cover District lands, even though it would not change the current practice in this area. In addition, this action is consistent with Board Policy through its direct impact on statewide habitat landscapes that ultimately link to District lands and affect the sustainability and protection of District resources.

FISCAL IMPACT

None.

BOARD COMMITTEE REVIEW

LFPAC reviewed this item on June 27, 2017 and unanimously agreed to forward the item to the full Board for consideration.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act. No additional notice is required.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

This item is not a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act.

NEXT STEPS

If the Board decides to adopt a resolution in support of a statewide ban of clearcutting forests, the District will transmit a copy of the resolution to its state legislative delegation for consideration.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Resolution of the Board of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District in support of a statewide prohibition of industrial clearcutting.

Responsible Department Head:
Cydne Bieber, Acting Public Affairs Manager

Prepared by:
Joshua Hugg, Governmental Affairs Specialist

RESOLUTION NO. 18-__**RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE
MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT SUPPORTING
THE PROHIBITION OF INDUSTRIAL CLEARCUTTING IN
CALIFORNIA FORESTS**

WHEREAS, our forests provide 75% of California's clean water supply by capturing snow, rain, and fog, and then storing, filtering, and gradually releasing water throughout the year; and this process increases humidity and rainfall, cools temperatures, and helps protect us from extreme weather; and

WHEREAS, our forests continuously remove carbon dioxide from the air and store it in trees, roots, and forest soil, and this natural process is significant in the fight to reverse the climate crisis; with intact forests absorbing up to 30% ¹ of human caused carbon dioxide releases; and, conversely deforestation causing 15% ² of all greenhouse gas emissions, and

WHEREAS, our forests provide other essential environmental services as they release oxygen, prevent flooding and siltation, and support a wide diversity of plant and wildlife; and

WHEREAS the forests of California generate tremendous social, cultural, and economic value from recreation, tourism, sport and commercial fishing, and wood products; and

WHEREAS, the widespread industrial logging method called clearcutting commonly involves the removal of virtually all trees and vegetation on large tracts that are then cultivated with crop-like plantations of even-aged trees of limited species (usually only one species), with the repeated broad application of toxic herbicides to prevent other tree and plant species from growing; and

WHEREAS, clearcutting destroys many benefits of forests as it contaminates our water supply with herbicides and sediment, greatly increases greenhouse gas emissions for many decades, and promotes drought, catastrophic wildfires, soil erosion, landslides, pest invasion, and other tree diseases; and

WHEREAS, within the counties of Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, San Mateo, San Francisco, and Marin, and in most public forests, the outmoded practice of clearcutting is prohibited; and

WHEREAS, selective logging and modern forest management methods, which are practiced widely and successfully throughout California, have the potential to promote fire-resilient, productive forests with trees of multiple ages and species that can produce a sustainable supply of wood and forest products, and stable long-term jobs.

¹ Rasmussen, Carol. (2014, Dec. 29). NASA Finds Good News on Forests and Carbon Dioxide. *NASA Earth Science News Team*, Retrieved from: <https://www.nasa.gov/jpl/nasa-finds-good-news-on-forests-and-carbon-dioxide>

² Scheer, R., & Moss, D. (2012, Nov. 13). Deforestation and its extreme effect on global warming. *Scientific American*, Retrieved from: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/deforestation-and-global-warming/#>

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District calls on the state legislature and Governor of California to prohibit the practice of industrial clearcutting in the forests of California, and require forest management methods and selective logging that maximize carbon sequestration and forest health.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District on _____, 2018, at a regular meeting thereof, by the following vote:

* * * * *

AYES:

NOES:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

ATTEST:

APPROVED:

Secretary
Board of Directors

President
Board of Directors

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

General Counsel

I, the District Clerk of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, hereby certify that the above is a true and correct copy of a resolution duly adopted by the Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District by the above vote at a meeting thereof duly held and called on the above day.

District Clerk

Exhibit A: *Selective Logging*. Note the difference between this practice and clear-



Exhibit B –*Industrial Clear-cut Logging*

