

From: [Larry Hanson](#)
To: [PlanningAgency](#)
Subject: Comment on Woodlands/Trees, Item number 2 and ORD21-0001 on the agenda
Date: November 02, 2021 11:41:34 PM
Attachments: [PastedGraphic-1.pdf](#)
[Comment Planning Commission Tree Ordinance.pdf](#)

EXTERNAL

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PO Box 506 • Forestville CA 95436 • 707.664.7060

November 2, 2021

Dear Commissioners:

We are writing on behalf of our approximately 1500 Forest Unlimited supporters. We have worked locally for over 25 years to protect watersheds from irreversible impacts of irresponsible logging and planted over 34,000 redwoods on protected properties with hundreds of volunteers.

Forest Unlimited members are participating and watching the County's current effort to update the tree protection policies. In that spirit, while the existing tree policies are reviewed and a new policy adopted, we urge the County of Sonoma to act swiftly and **cease issuance of tree removal permits to prevent further destruction of trees, woodlands, and forests**. As climate science tells us, existing trees are a large part of the climate saving equation that draw down large quantities of the harmful CO2 we continue to emit in large quantities (*Intact Forests in the United States: Proforestation Mitigates Climate Change and Serves the Greatest Good, Moomaw, Ph.D. et al*).

It appears that the current iteration for trees protection is restricted to woodlands rather than to protect both woodlands and forest ecosystems. Redwoods forests and mixed coniferous forests should be included. Redwoods, especially, have a unique ability to sequester the most carbon, be the most fire resistant, and live the longest, besides other practical benefits for communities such as an iconic draw for tourism in Sonoma County.

Science tells us that we have only ten years for making significant gains. Trees that are 10 years or older translate into time. This is the time we need to make the necessary adjustment to mitigate climate change impacts. Therefore, all trees at least 10 years of age should be preserved across the county's landscape. Protected trees will provide substantial services to the community and future generations.

Major Long-term Economic and Community Safety Considerations

* Climate change is adversely affecting our existing community, our farms, and our

watersheds. Reversing climate change is of the highest concern and effective measures to contribute to that effort must be implemented;

- Drastic reductions in emissions and drawing down carbon are critically important in that effort;
- Existing trees drawdown CO2 immediately and on a large scale;
- Existing woodlands, forests, and trees must be preserved with minor exceptions (e.g. defensible space around homes);
- Compromising our ability to drawdown CO2 should not be an option at this time;

The Protection of Trees

Currently, Sonoma County permits large numbers of tree removal proposals on a yearly basis. This is true despite the many valuable functions trees provide to the community including:

- Protecting our shared clean water supply due to how woodlands and forests store water and slowly release it throughout the year into aquifers and streams. This benefits agriculture and residents.
- Reducing soil erosion from runoff from stormwaters as well as keeping land intact with their root systems;
- Due to upper canopy development, woodlands and forests utilize shade as a mechanism for conserving water and moisture. This keeps sun from heating up the forest floor that would dry out vegetation increasing the potential for high severity wildfires.
- Mature trees are more fire resilient and sequester far more carbon than seedlings and saplings;
- Woodlands support very high levels of biodiversity which is critical to humans as well as other species;

Actions Required

- Refrain from issuing tree removal permits until such time as the County has in place a Comprehensive Tree Protection Policy that is based on the latest climate science;
- Create County policy so that mature trees are of the highest value to the health and safety of our community in the fight to rein in climate change.
- Ensure that the new policy is fairly applied with no loopholes for any business sectors.
- The County should look at narrow exceptions for creating reasonable defensible space around individual homes for fire protection (see Jack Cohen, Ph. D.);

Forest Unlimited has, and especially now, views all mature trees as highly valuable and urges

the County of Sonoma to move forward a comprehensive and climate appropriate protection policy.

We look forward to a successful update process that is based on the applicable climate science.

Sincerely,

Larry Hanson
President of the Board of Directors
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