

From: [Colin Baptie](#)
To: [BOS](#)
Cc: [Doug Bush](#); [John Dunlap](#)
Subject: Tree Protection Ordinances
Date: Sunday, November 26, 2023 12:59:01 PM

EXTERNAL

Subject: **Urgent Need for Tree Protection Policies**

Dear Sonoma County Board of Supervisors,

We are writing in advance of your meeting on Tuesday Nov 28 to urge you to adopt the **updated Tree Ordinance and the new Oak Protection Ordinance.**

As residents and stewards of this beautiful region, we are fortunate to be surrounded by the natural splendor of Sonoma County, characterized by its diverse ecosystems, scenic landscapes, and rich biodiversity. However, the ongoing threats to our environment, including deforestation and urbanization, underscore the pressing need for comprehensive tree protection measures to safeguard our natural heritage.

Specifically, our oak woodlands are under severe threat and it is crucial to prioritize their protection for the following reasons:

Biodiversity Hotspot: Oak woodlands play a pivotal role in supporting a diverse array of plant and animal species. These ecosystems are home to numerous native flora and fauna, many of which are dependent on the unique conditions provided by oak habitats. Preserving these woodlands helps maintain biodiversity and ensures the survival of these species.

Carbon Sequestration: Oak trees are renowned for their ability to sequester carbon dioxide, mitigating the impact of climate change. By protecting oak woodlands, we contribute to carbon sequestration efforts and promote a healthier environment for current and future generations.

Water Quality and Conservation: Oak woodlands contribute to the maintenance of water quality by acting as natural filters. Their root systems help prevent soil erosion, and the trees themselves play a role in the water cycle. Preserving oak woodlands is crucial for ensuring a sustainable and clean water supply for our communities.

Cultural and Aesthetic Value: Beyond their ecological significance, oak woodlands hold cultural and aesthetic value for our community. These landscapes contribute to the

identity of Sonoma County, providing recreational opportunities and enhancing the overall quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

Considering these factors, we urge the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors to take proactive measures in establishing and enforcing strong tree protection policies. By instituting robust tree protection measures, we can strike a balance between development and conservation, ensuring a sustainable and resilient future for Sonoma County. We appreciate your attention to this matter and trust that you will consider the long-term benefits of preserving our natural heritage.

Thank you for your dedication to the well-being of Sonoma County and its residents.

Sincerely,

Colin Baptie and John Dunlap

3568 Southridge Drive,

Santa Rosa, CA 95403

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Doug Bush

From: Jerry Bernhaut <j3bernhaut@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 2:31 PM
To: BOS
Cc: Kimberly Burr; Larry Hanson
Subject: Tree protection ordinances

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

EXTERNAL

I am writing to respectfully encourage the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors to adopt the two tree protection ordinances approved by the County Commissioners., which are coming before the Board on November 28. One is a general tree protection ordinance, the other is specific to oak woodlands.

As an environmental attorney and long time climate activist I urge you to consider the critical role of forested land for carbon sequestration.

Thank you for your attention.,

Jerry Bernhaut
23 Woodgreen St.
Santa Rosa, CA 95409

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November 20, 2023

Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

575 Administration Drive

Room 100 A

Santa Rosa, CA 95403

To the Honorable members of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, Susan Gorin, David Rabbitt, Chris Coursey, James Gore, Lynda Hopkins:

I am a long time resident of southern Mendocino County in the Lake Sonoma Watershed. I once lived in and around the Cotati/Petaluma area of the county. My husband grew up in the McDonald neighborhood of Santa Rosa. Oak woodlands are and always have been, an integral part of our lives. We take great care to manage our 25 acre parcel to maintain the health of our oaks. We have numerous paintings of the oak studded hills of Sonoma County by Bill's mother, local artist Marjorie Jaffrey. We have watched with great sadness as too many majestic oaks and their young replacements have been removed to make room for housing and vineyards.

Oaks are California's primary old growth resource, yet they do not receive adequate protections in many areas of the state. Unlike conifers, which are afforded comprehensive protections through the Forest Practice Act, most oaks are not commercial species, and thus are not subject to the legislation. California relies on counties and other local jurisdictions to protect oaks. Unfortunately, oaks and their associated ecosystem services, are diminished when protections are not adequate. For example, the *Forests and Rangelands 2017 Assessment* summarized water quality conditions in non-federal timberland compared to rangelands, which are not subject to the Forest Practice Act, finding 62% of forest streams in good condition compared to 34% for rangelands, with 21% of rangeland streams in poor and 21% in very poor condition."^[1]

Keeping Sonoma County's oaks standing will protect watersheds and also sustain culturally important landscapes, support the county's biodiversity, and continue to sequester carbon in oak trees, understory, downed woody material, and soil.

Please, please support "Article 67. OAK Oak Woodland Combining District and VOH Valley Oak Habitat Combining District" as proposed by the Planning Department when it comes up for a vote on November 28, 2023. I further urge you to support the other proposed changes that would strengthen the county's existing native tree protection ordinance. We can no longer afford to favor development over native habitat. We risk losing too much.

Sincerely,

Kathy Borst and Bill Cook

PO Box 191

Yorkville, CA 95494

PS We may not be part of your voting constituency at this time, but county borders are artificial, man-made artifacts. For all intents and purposes, for the purposes of the oaks, we are in the same neighborhood.

[1] Ferkovich, RL et al. *California's Forests and Rangelands 2017 Assessment*.
<http://frap.fire.ca.gov/assessment2017>.

Doug Bush

From: Mackenzie Brown <mbrownpt555@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, November 11, 2023 10:43 AM
To: BOS
Subject: Tree Support

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

EXTERNAL

Hello!

Please support the planning commission's tree protection plans at your meeting this November!

Thanks,
Mackenzie Brown
6th street, Petaluma

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November 24, 2023

Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
Doug Bush, Robert Aguero, Planners
County of Sonoma, Permit Sonoma
Re: Comprehensive Tree Ordinance Update

Dear Supervisors,

The Sonoma County Chapter of Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF), appreciates staff's continued work on updating the Tree Protection Ordinance and the sorely needed Oak Woodland Protection Ordinance. We have requested increased protection for our native trees for many years and submitted comments to the Planning Commission in May 2021, August 2022 and twice in August of this year. We feel the proposed ordinances are a strong step in the right direction and generally support them.

CAFF promotes ecological farming techniques, including practices that sequester carbon, improve soil organic matter content, reduce erosion and sediment loss, enhance nutrient cycling, increase soil water holding capacity and infiltration, support and sustain biodiversity, and increase resiliency to drought and weather extremes. **Native trees provide all of these functions and are a critical part of healthy agricultural ecosystems.**

We strongly support the maximum protections for oaks, oak woodlands and regenerating young oaks with **extremely limited exemptions for agricultural "maintenance"** or other land uses that could involve tree clearing or the disruption of native trees including oak regeneration. Oaks are the most resilient of our native trees and provide valuable shade, habitat, soil stabilization and water infiltration that are essential for healthy farm ecosystems.

We are concerned that the exemptions for "Agricultural maintenance" seem redundant and potentially misleading. The proposed ordinances already exempt clearing of diseased, dying and hazardous trees and only applies to removal trees larger than 6" DBH and designated "oak woodlands". The TPO states: *"Agriculture uses exempt from the tree protection ordinance would be limited to existing agricultural crop cultivation and maintenance of existing access roads, drainage, planting, seeding, fertilizing, weeding, tree trimming, irrigation, and harvesting. Expansions of cultivation areas into land not currently used for crop production and cultivation and which involve tree removal, would be subject to the provisions of this section."*

"Maintenance" should not include removal of a healthy native tree larger than 6 DBH.in a cultivated area. This is not a "maintenance" activity; it is tree removal.

The stress on crops and livestock from heat extremes around the country have demonstrated the value of trees in agriculture. Considerable Federal, State and local funding is being offered to encourage the planting of more trees on agricultural land to achieve the ecosystem benefits mentioned above. It makes no sense at all for public funds to be spent on planting trees on farms at the same time as they are allowed to be removed. Shade from trees can be crop and life-saving during heat spells, their roots hold soil and water, leaves provide organic material



and of course they capture carbon and clean the air. We need trees in agriculture as much as we need them in other locations. Tree removal in both existing agricultural land and new crop production areas should be strictly restricted just as there should be protections for the regeneration of young native trees.

If the ag exemption is included, clarification is needed on which properties and types of “agriculture” the ordinance pertains to. Are these parcels with these practices in primary ag zones? Parcels in all land use zones with commercial agriculture? What about pastures, livestock and horse ranches? Are non-commercial, ie. home vineyards, orchards and pastures also exempt? We ask that any exemptions in all of these categories be strictly limited or eliminated.

CAFF shares many of the concerns noted by the Milo Baker Chapter of California Native Plant Society including:

- Use of the Council of Tree and Landscape Appraisers (the Guide) valuation method (OWO and TPO) is insufficient for several reasons. Oak trees and woodlands are different from developed landscapes and the Guide is not adequate to develop realistic restoration or replacement costs for an oak tree or woodland. This method focuses primarily on the anthropogenic values.
- An arborist evaluation is required at a minimum to evaluate loss of trees (TPO) but arborists do not take into account ecosystem service values or wildlife values. As a result, a full biological assessment is required to discuss the entirety of the biological values.
- The Guide does not take into account the value for wildlife associated with woodlands or individual trees (OWO and TPO). Not only are the values of the oak woodlands themselves lost but the location and spatial context of the woodlands is lost. Wildlife occupancy and use should be added to the evaluation of the oak woodland value. A wildlife movement corridor associated with a woodland cannot be moved to a different location. These natural valuations are not captured/expressed in the Guide.
- The cost should be based on the acreage lost and the applied mitigation ratio. The Healthy Lands & Healthy Economies Initiative (Sonoma County Ag + Open Space 2018), states that the benefits provided by 12 ecosystem services and calculates their annual value on working and natural lands across Sonoma County range between \$2.2 billion and 6.6 billion (at 2015 \$ values). Of these services Habitat and Nursery Ecosystem Service provides between \$4M and \$43M worth of value. An ecosystem evaluation and mitigation should be required rather than a cost per tree removed as grown in a nursery. **The fees should be a deterrent not a cost of doing business.** Undeveloped oak woodland areas that are purchased for vineyards range between \$80K to \$120k per acre in Sonoma County.
- It's important to recognize that replacement plantings will take 30 to 100 years to be effective at sequestering carbon as well as replacing other lost ecosystem services.
- The Board of Forestry does not regulate oak woodlands (Giusti and Merenlender 2001 USDA Forest Service Gen Rep. PSW-GTW-184) because they are not a commercial



species. As a result, relying on the Forest Practice Act and Timber Harvest Plans to mitigate for loss oak woodlands is not applicable. Forestry Activities should not be exempt (OWO).

- Transparency will be needed for in-lieu fees, such as where, when and how many trees will be planted (TPO).
- If fees for plantings are to be attributed to Sonoma County Regional Parks, then a plan should be developed by them detailing proposed locations for plantings and available for public viewing and comment. We do not feel that mitigation trees should be planted as part of the landscaping for Regional Parks, rather they should be planted for habitat.

In addition, we are concerned about the proposed exemptions from the required zoning permit to remove a protected tree if the tree provides a hazard or is in the “defensible space” of the home. Time and time again buildings are constructed too close to trees, then a few years later the tree is deemed to be a hazard and removed. More must be done to restrict the building of structures close to protected trees so the structures don’t become excuses to remove the trees.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Wendy Krupnick

Vice president, CAFF Sonoma County



California Wildlife Foundation/California Oaks, 201 University Avenue, H-43 Berkeley, CA 94710, (510) 763-0282

November 22, 2023

Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
575 Administration Drive
Room 100 A
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Transmitted via email c/o Doug Bush: Doug.Bush@sonoma-county.org

RE: Letter in support of Sonoma County oak protections

To the Honorable members of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors:

The California Oaks program of California Wildlife Foundation works to conserve oak ecosystems because of their critical role in sequestering carbon, maintaining healthy watersheds, providing plant and wildlife habitat, and sustaining cultural values. California Wildlife Foundation/California Oaks (CWF/CO) sends this letter in support of the oak ordinance that will be considered on November 28th.

We commend Mr. Bush and Mr. Aguero for their thorough and inclusive work in developing a protection regime for Sonoma County's oaks. Oaks are California's primary old growth resource, yet they do not receive adequate protections in many areas of the state. County protections are vital measures to protect the cultural and habitat values of oak woodlands and oak-forested lands. Further, keeping Sonoma County's oaks standing is essential for the county to reach its climate goals and maintain resilience. Researchers who authored an article published in *Nature Climate Change* observed: "Global carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from land-use change (primarily deforestation) represented around 12% of global emissions for 2007 to 2016, while the terrestrial carbon sink stored around 28% of emissions over the same time period."¹

If we wish to leave a world that is habitable to future generations, we must shift our focus to the ecosystem level, valuing and protecting the natural environment.

Thank you for the consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

Janet Cobb
Executive Officer, California Wildlife Foundation
jcobb@californiawildlifefoundation.org

Angela Moskow
California Oaks Program Director
amoskow@californiaoaks.org

¹ Seddon N, et al., 2019. Grounding nature-based climate solutions in sound biodiversity science, *Nature Climate Change*, Vol. 9.

From: [Susan Gorin](#)
To: [BOS](#)
Subject: Fwd: I am writing to you today urging you to support the upcoming Oak Woodland and Tree Ordinances
Date: Sunday, November 26, 2023 4:57:06 PM

Susan Gorin | 1st District Sonoma County Supervisor
575 Administration Drive, Room 100A
Santa Rosa, CA. 95403
Office 707-565-2241 | Cell 707-321-2788

From: Susan Gorin <Susan.Gorin@sonoma-county.org>
Sent: Sunday, November 26, 2023 4:56 PM
To: dalechaffin@comcast.net <dalechaffin@comcast.net>
Subject: Re: I am writing to you today urging you to support the upcoming Oak Woodland and Tree Ordinances
Thanks Dale for your comments.

Susan Gorin | 1st District Sonoma County Supervisor
575 Administration Drive, Room 100A
Santa Rosa, CA. 95403
Office 707-565-2241 | Cell 707-321-2788

From: dalechaffin@everyactioncustom.com <dalechaffin@everyactioncustom.com> on behalf of Dale Chaffin <dalechaffin@everyactioncustom.com>
Sent: Friday, November 24, 2023 6:56:50 AM
To: Susan Gorin <Susan.Gorin@sonoma-county.org>
Subject: I am writing to you today urging you to support the upcoming Oak Woodland and Tree Ordinances
EXTERNAL

Dear Supervisor Susan Gorin,

I am writing to you as a deeply concerned resident of Sonoma County, compelled by the urgent need to protect the natural treasures that define our region's beauty and ecological health. The upcoming vote on the Tree and Oak Ordinances presents a crucial opportunity for our community - an opportunity to safeguard our environment, uphold our responsibility to future generations, and reinforce our commitment to sustainable development.

In Sonoma County, our woodlands and forests, particularly our majestic Oaks, are more than just scenic backdrops; they are vital components of our ecosystem. These trees are the lungs of our landscape, sequestering carbon dioxide, providing habitat for wildlife, and contributing to the overall health of our environment. Yet, alarmingly, they lack the legal protection necessary to shield them from indiscriminate felling and the pressures of development.

The science is unequivocal: mature forests, like ours, are critical in combating the escalating climate crisis. They are the most effective, low-cost solution for sequestering large amounts of carbon dioxide, thus playing a pivotal role in mitigating the adverse impacts of climate change. This is not just an environmental issue but a matter of public health and community well-being.

Our community has witnessed the devastating impacts of climate change, notably through the increasing severity and frequency of wildfires. Protecting our trees is not only about preserving natural beauty but also about adopting a forward-thinking approach to fire management and community safety. Clearing and thinning forests have shown to be less effective compared to the strategic management of the land immediately surrounding our homes and communities.

As stewards of this land, we have a responsibility to make decisions that reflect not only the best available science but also the values we hold dear as a community. The proposed Tree and Oak Ordinances are a step in the right direction. They offer a balanced approach, blending the need for development with the imperative of environmental conservation. By voting in favor of these ordinances, you will be sending a clear message that Sonoma County places a high value on its natural heritage and is committed to a future where development and nature coexist in harmony.

I urge you, as our elected representatives, to listen to the voice of science, the voice of your constituents, and the silent yet profound voice of nature. Please vote in support of the Tree and Oak Ordinances. By doing so, you will be safeguarding not just our Oaks and forests but the very essence of what makes Sonoma County a remarkable place to live, work, and thrive.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued service to our community.

Sincerely,
Dale Chaffin
4737 Montgomery Dr Santa Rosa, 95409-4252
dalechaffin@comcast.net

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November 18, 2023

Submitted via Email: Doug.Bush@sonoma-county.org

Subject: Tree Protection and Oak Woodland Ordinances

Dear Chair Coursey and members of the Board of Supervisors,

Climate Action Healdsburg strongly supports a “Yes” vote on the proposed Tree Protection and Oak Woodland Ordinances.

CAH is a growing grassroots movement that was a driving force behind Healdsburg’s recently-adopted Climate Mobilization Strategy. *CAH* and the City of Healdsburg cohosted the successful Climate Fest at the Plaza in April 2023 (55 booths). We currently have local teams working on transportation emissions, water stewardship, the urban “forest,” and greener energy sources with climate justice. *CAH* will soon join the 350 Bay Area team, <https://350bayarea.org/>, to strengthen our ability to influence climate policy.

Please pass these ordinances as is. Dedicated staff members devoted many hours – over years – to these two ordinances. Public support has been strong and passionate. The ordinances have been carefully vetted in two Planning Commission meetings.

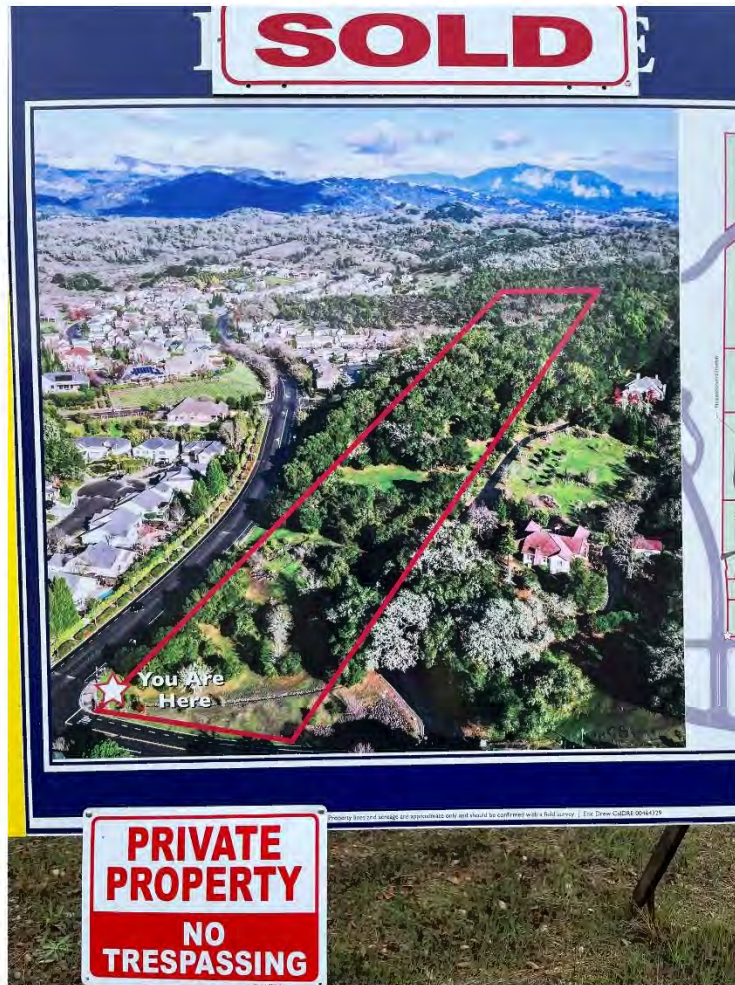
Both ordinances are important for our future.

The Ordinance protecting individual native trees is a nature-based climate solution. Trees and their root systems store carbon for free. Trees play a key role in ecosystems, providing many benefits including biodiversity, habitat, cooling, water retention and erosion control. They are also emblematic of Sonoma County’s history and astounding scenic beauty.

The Ordinance protecting oak woodlands is long overdue. Oak woodlands in Sonoma County are akin to a “keystone species.” They support literally thousands of species and provide uncountable benefits. A huge component of our natural carbon sequestration is in these woodlands. Yet they continually face the threat of conversion for development. The proposed Ordinance would protect this vital resource and its iconic role in Sonoma County’s natural beauty and ecosystems.



Native trees need protection for their ecosystem benefits, carbon sequestration, historic and scenic value. 2023 photo, Alexander Valley



**Conversion of Oak Woodlands affects climate resilience and ecosystems.
2023 photo, Healdsburg**

Thank you for considering this comment.

Sincerely,

Climate Action Healdsburg



November 24, 2023

Board of Supervisors – County of Sonoma
bos@sonoma-county.org

Doug Bush – MCRP Planner III, County of Sonoma
Doug.Bush@sonoma-county.org

RE: Public hearing on Amendments to Sonoma County Code Chapter 26 (File ORD21-0001)

The Milo Baker Chapter (Sonoma County) of the California Native Plant society is dedicated to protecting native plants and their habitats in Sonoma County. Trees are important ecological components that enhance critical ecosystem functions like groundwater recharge, climate moderation and prevention of topsoil erosion. Most importantly, trees provide habitat for many species, both below ground and above ground.

We are writing in response to the Amendments to the Sonoma County Code Chapter 26 (Sonoma County Zoning Regulations) including technical changes and updates to the Tree Protection Ordinance, and the Oak Woodland Ordinance (November 13, 2023). We provided earlier comments on the draft ordinances on August 3 and October 2, 2023.

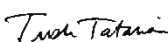
We agree that the two ordinances should facilitate resource management, and it must be part of a community's larger, comprehensive, natural resource management strategy. The staff, Doug Bush and Robert Agüero, have done a great job in evaluating the potential concerns, making changes to the ordinance and we support the work they have conducted to date. However, there are a few exceptions that still need to be addressed and are outlined below per the Oak Woodland Ordinance (OWO) and the Tree Protection Ordinance (TPO).

- We understand that all trees in the woodland will be protected and that oak regeneration areas are considered in the ordinance (OWO) and trees starting at 6" or greater are used for determining the existing boundaries of a woodland (OWO), but the language does not allow for the natural expansion and protection outside of the woodland.
- We disagree with the use of the Council of Tree and Landscape Appraisers (the Guide) valuation method (OWO and TPO). Oak trees and woodlands are different from developed landscapes and the Guide is not adequate to develop realistic restoration or replacement costs for an oak tree or woodland. This method focuses primarily on anthropogenic values. We recommend discussing this evaluation further to create a detailed evaluation method.
- We agree that an arborist evaluation is required at a minimum to evaluate loss of trees (TPO) but arborists do not take into account ecosystem service values or wildlife values. As a result, a full biological assessment is required to discuss the entirety of the biological values.

- The Guide does not take into account the value for wildlife associated with woodlands or individual trees (OWO and TPO). Not only are the values of the oak woodlands themselves lost but the location and spatial context of the woodlands is lost. Native plant presence and wildlife occupancy and use should be added to the evaluation of the oak woodland value. A wildlife movement corridor associated with a woodland cannot be moved to a different location. These natural valuations are not captured/expressed in the Guide. If the Guide is to be used based on a lack of other suitable valuations, then a Natural Valuation shall be included in the overall arboreal valuation and is based on a biological assessment of the site.
- Chart 1, under the Section E. Required mitigations for removal of protected trees (TPO), needs to remove the following words: **Removed Only in the Development Areas**. Chart 1 should refer to all trees being removed on a site.
- Table 1: Allowed Uses in OAK Combining District (OWO) Individual Tree Removal should have a CUP (Conditional Use Permit). Remove **E (Exempt Use)** and replace with CUP, as is clarified under bullet item 6. Similarly, item 9 under B. Exemptions (TPO), should have a Conditional Use Permit which is the Oak Woodland Combining Zone.
- The cost should be based on the acreage lost and the applied mitigation ratio. The Healthy Lands & Healthy Economies Initiative (Sonoma County Ag + Open Space 2018), states that the benefits provided by 12 ecosystem services and calculates their annual value on working and natural lands across Sonoma County range between \$2.2 billion and 6.6 billion (at 2015 \$ values). Of these services Habitat and Nursery Ecosystem Service provides between \$4M and \$43M worth of value. An ecosystem evaluation and mitigation should be required rather than a cost per tree removed as grown in a nursery. The fees should be a deterrent not a cost of doing business. Undeveloped oak woodland areas that are purchased for vineyards range between \$80K to \$120k per acre in Sonoma County.
- It's important to recognize that replacement plantings will take 30 to 100 years to be effective at sequestering carbon as well as replacing other lost ecosystem services. We agree with the Mitigation requirements item 6 (OWO).
- The Board of Forestry does not regulate oak woodlands (Giusti and Merenlender 2001 USDA Forest Service Gen Rep. PSW-GTW-184) because they are not a commercial species. We understand that the exemption is intended to apply to non-commercial forestry activities but we feel that Forestry Activities should not be exempt (OWO).
- We agree that transparency will be needed for in-lieu fees, such as where, when and how many trees will be planted (TPO) and we understand this will be developed in the future with public review.
- If fees for plantings are to be attributed to Sonoma County Regional Parks, then a plan should be developed by them detailing proposed locations for plantings and available for public viewing and comment.

In summary, the Milo Baker Chapter of the Native Plant Society believes that these amendments will increase protections for trees and forests throughout the County. Our organization is looking forward to working with you on the oak woodland ordinance.

Regards,



Trish Tatarian, Co-Conservation Chair

Milo Baker Chapter of the California Native Plant Society

Doug Bush

From: alevine@mcn.org
Sent: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 12:45 PM
To: BOS; Doug Bush
Cc: kimlarry2@comcast.net
Subject: Trees and Oak Woodlands & Proposed Ordinance
Attachments: 041_Giusti(1).pdf

EXTERNAL

Hello Supervisors and Planners

Oak woodlands, and trees, provide important habitat (species habitat) and water quality values.

In fact, oak woodlands are the most productive of habitat values in the County and the whole State.

In addition, trees as part and parcel to oak woodland habitat values and water quality soil maintenance and filtration values are a significant part of the carbon cycle (where the County is supposed to have in place viable policy for GHG and carbon retention policies.

Thus, retention of trees and oak woodlands is vital. Note: such retention does not rule out thinning of small stems and other fire safe issues in wildland management.

The Board of Forestry has (historically) been concerned about this subject. And...has applied much study to this subject. However, the Board of Forestry felt that they had no authority (under the Forest Practice Act) to take action as this discussion is not about merchantable trees and commercial harvesting. Thus, the Board of Forestry concluded authority and regulation on this subject must rest with the Counties.

Please review the attached document discussing this subject.

Thank you

Sincerely, Alan Levine for Coast Action Group

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From: [Bill Krawetz](#)
To: [BOS](#)
Subject: Comprehensive Tree Ordinance update scheduled for Nov 28th
Date: Thursday, November 02, 2023 10:59:12 AM

EXTERNAL

Dear Board of Supervisors

On November 28, 2023, you will hear the Planning Commission recommendations to adopt proposed ordinances for native trees and oak woodlands. I urge the BOS to approve language that will effectively preserve our remaining trees and woodlands. With constant march of residential and agriculture growth and now climate change, these native trees provide a natural barrier and remedy.

Thanks
Bill Krawetz
Sebastopol

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From: [Laura Morgan](#)
To: [BOS](#)
Subject: Comprehensive Tree Ordinance Update should be strong
Date: Sunday, November 05, 2023 2:55:04 PM

EXTERNAL

Esteemed Sonoma County Supervisors,

We care deeply that Sonoma County's trees are protected maximally under the Comprehensive Tree Ordinance. We have been witness to many instances of neglectful treatment of our dwindling forest cover, as well as that of mature individual trees.

We strongly urge you to adopt an updated Ordinance that provides maximal protection for the priceless gift of beautiful forests that we have here in Sonoma County.

Sincerely,

Laura Morgan and Jim Seward
Sebastopol

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From: [Ann Shippey](#)
To: [BOS](#)
Subject: Comprehensive Tree Ordinance Update
Date: Wednesday, November 01, 2023 9:59:22 AM

EXTERNAL

To Whom it May Concern,

I believe this is mostly directed towards the S.C. Supervisors, and also the S. C. Planning Commission,

The CNPS, (Calif. Native Plant Society) that being the local Chapter, Milo Baker, has alerted its members to the need to write and support the Proposed Tree Ordinances coming up for implementation in Nov. 28, 2023. The ordinance is supported by Sonoma County Staff members Doug Bush, and Robert Auguero. These two men are working to draft changes to tree protections; there are two parts, One: to cover many native tree species and plants, and the other that targets Oak Woodlands. I am writing with a deep concern and belief that our Native California. Trees and many varieties of plants need more protection, and urge you to please vote for this Ordinance! As a native Californian myself, and a Native Plant gardener, I know that protecting California's Biodiversity is absolutely essential to our state, considering Calif. to be a biodiversity hotspot, unique in the world, mainly because of the existence of our native flora. I also support the 30x 30 initiative signed into law by Gov. Newsom, which would be obvious in line with this important tree ordinance, Thank you, if you care for our state, and the needs for continued tree protection, that being the way Native Trees and plants help with the current crisis of Climate Warming, It seems easy and obvious to support the New Tree Ordinance,

Thank you

Ann Shippey

Voting Democrat and resident of Santa Rosa, Ca, 95405

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From: [Claire Etienne](#)
To: [BOS](#)
Subject: County Tree Protection Ordinances
Date: Wednesday, November 01, 2023 9:15:40 AM

EXTERNAL

Greetings,

Two proposed ordinances are to cover many native tree species and also to protect oak woodlands in particular.

The California Native Plant Society conservation committee has worked with staff members to help draft reasonable changes that will improve protections for our native trees and forests

Please approve language that will effectively preserve our remaining trees and woodlands.

Thank you,

Claire Etienne
Sebastopol CA

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

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From: [Susan Gorin](#)
To: [BOS](#)
Subject: Fwd: I am writing to you today urging you to support the upcoming Oak Woodland and Tree Ordinances
Date: Sunday, November 26, 2023 4:58:45 PM

Susan Gorin | 1st District Sonoma County Supervisor
575 Administration Drive, Room 100A
Santa Rosa, CA. 95403
Office 707-565-2241 | Cell 707-321-2788

From: Susan Gorin <Susan.Gorin@sonoma-county.org>
Sent: Sunday, November 26, 2023 4:58 PM
To: marshad@sonic.net <marshad@sonic.net>
Subject: Re: I am writing to you today urging you to support the upcoming Oak Woodland and Tree Ordinances
Thanks Marsha.

Susan Gorin | 1st District Sonoma County Supervisor
575 Administration Drive, Room 100A
Santa Rosa, CA. 95403
Office 707-565-2241 | Cell 707-321-2788

From: marshad@everyactioncustom.com <marshad@everyactioncustom.com> on behalf of Marsha Dupre <marshad@everyactioncustom.com>
Sent: Friday, November 24, 2023 12:00:11 AM
To: Susan Gorin <Susan.Gorin@sonoma-county.org>
Subject: I am writing to you today urging you to support the upcoming Oak Woodland and Tree Ordinances
EXTERNAL

Dear Supervisor Susan Gorin,

I am writing to you as a deeply concerned resident of Sonoma County, compelled by the urgent need to protect the natural treasures that define our region's beauty and ecological health. The upcoming vote on the Tree and Oak Ordinances presents a crucial opportunity for our community - an opportunity to safeguard our environment, uphold our responsibility to future generations, and reinforce our commitment to sustainable development.

In Sonoma County, our woodlands and forests, particularly our majestic Oaks, are more than just scenic backdrops; they are vital components of our ecosystem. These trees are the lungs of our landscape, sequestering carbon dioxide, providing habitat for wildlife, and contributing to the overall health of our environment. Yet, alarmingly, they lack the legal protection necessary to shield them from indiscriminate felling and the pressures of development.

The science is unequivocal: mature forests, like ours, are critical in combating the escalating climate crisis. They are the most effective, low-cost solution for sequestering large amounts of carbon dioxide, thus playing a pivotal role in mitigating the adverse impacts of climate change. This is not just an environmental issue but a matter of public health and community well-being.

Our community has witnessed the devastating impacts of climate change, notably through the increasing severity and frequency of wildfires. Protecting our trees is not only about preserving natural beauty but also about adopting a forward-thinking approach to fire management and community safety. Clearing and thinning forests have shown to be less effective compared to the strategic management of the land immediately surrounding our homes and communities.

As stewards of this land, we have a responsibility to make decisions that reflect not only the best available science but also the values we hold dear as a community. The proposed Tree and Oak Ordinances are a step in the right direction. They offer a balanced approach, blending the need for development with the imperative of environmental conservation. By voting in favor of these ordinances, you will be sending a clear message that Sonoma County places a high value on its natural heritage and is committed to a future where development and nature coexist in harmony.

I urge you, as our elected representatives, to listen to the voice of science, the voice of your constituents, and the silent yet profound voice of nature. Please vote in support of the Tree and Oak Ordinances. By doing so, you will be safeguarding not just our Oaks and forests but the very essence of what makes Sonoma County a remarkable place to live, work, and thrive.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued service to our community.

Sincerely,
Marsha Dupre
3515 Ridgeview Dr Santa Rosa, 95404-2633
marshad@sonic.net

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Doug Bush

From: Denise Ellestad <denise.ellestad@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, November 05, 2023 10:21 AM
To: BOS; Lynda Hopkins
Subject: Tree Ordinance

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

EXTERNAL

Dear Ms. Hopkins and the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors,
I live in Sebastopol and am a member of the California Native Plant Society. I fully support their efforts to protect native trees, especially oak woodlands. It is my understanding the BoS is reviewing reasonable changes to the Tree Protection Ordinance that will improve protections for our native trees and forests. I hope you will vote in favor of these changes.
Thanks,
Denise Ellestad
Harrison Grade Place, Sebastopol

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Doug Bush

From: Lucy Fairweather <le.fairweather@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, November 13, 2023 9:25 AM
To: David Rabbitt; BOS
Subject: Tree Ordinance support

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

EXTERNAL

Dear Supervisors,

I'm a Petaluma voter and I wanted to express my utmost support for the Tree Ordinance update and Oak Woodland Ordinance. I love that our county is putting in the time and understanding into protecting our local environment and native trees.

Thank you so much.

Warmly,
Lucy Fairweather

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November 21, 2023

Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

575 Administration Drive

Room 100 A

Santa Rosa, CA. 95403

To the Honorable Members of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors:

Friends of Gualala River thanks you for the opportunity to comment in support of the proposed Oak Woodland Protection Ordinance, a critically important step in saving our wild oaks, one of Sonoma County's most iconic natural resources.

Friends of Gualala River (FoGR) is an independent non-profit grassroots watershed protection organization formed to share common concerns and research regarding the welfare of the Gualala River, its estuary and habitat. FoGR's goal is to protect the Gualala River watershed and the species living within it.

Oaks have been an important wild resource to people in the Gualala watershed for millennia. The watershed is the ancestral land of the Kashia Pomo whose traditional foods included acorns from the abundant tan oaks and oaks growing here. Oaks are known to be keystone species in many of the most biodiverse ecosystems in California. In our watershed the oak savannas that stretch to the north, east, and south, especially in the basins of the Wheatfield and South Gualala Forks, are an essential component of the watershed biodiversity. A drive east along Skaggs Springs Road affords spectacular views of these beautiful oak-studded grasslands which were originally stewarded by the Kashia. Today they are principally cattle ranches and vineyards.

With few paved roads and 98% private ownership, the vast interior of the watershed was largely terra incognita until quite recently. But a new era of interest in conservation began as a result of the acquisition of large tracts of land by The Conservation Fund, now the largest landowner in the watershed. These lands became the Gualala Forest and the Buckeye Forest. A surprisingly high diversity of oak species were discovered when botanical field surveys were done. Some 12 species of oak and oak hybrids were found within the Buckeye Forest property. Fortunately these oak woodlands will be protected under TCF's Buckeye Forest Integrated Resource Management Plan. (https://www.conservationfund.org/images/Buckeye__IRMP_3_6_17_Final_reducedsize.pdf)

Elsewhere, intensive field botanical surveys have not been done on other lands because of private property ownership. However, the entire watershed was aerially mapped through LiDAR in a



county-wide project called Sonoma Vegetation Map completed in 2017, showing more detail in the extensive oak woodlands in the Gualala watershed and providing data for further study. (<https://sonomavegmap.org>).

Shortly thereafter, the Sonoma County Ag and Open Space undertook the Vital Lands Initiative to help set priorities for different land uses in the County. The Vital Lands Interactive Map shows that the oaks woodlands in the Gualala River watershed are a Priority Area for Wildlife Habitat and Movement, a regional concern. The map also shows that Priority Croplands (i.e., vineyards) are often intermingled with the oak woodlands, a condition that leads to inevitable conflicts in land use without protections for oaks.

(<https://sonomaopenspace.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=4e93808b8ea245bfa739cacddb0169fe>).

Finally, the Sonoma Land Trust also maintains an interactive map which shows areas in the County that have fallen under some form of protection. The map demonstrates how few oak woodlands have been protected thus far in the Gualala River watershed. (<https://sonomalandtrust.org/interactive-map/>).

Adequate comprehensive conservation planning for the Gualala watershed has yet to be undertaken. However, Sonoma County residents everywhere want to see oak woodlands protected. And the County has demonstrated its interest in mapping its resources over the past decade as a key step in the right direction. It seems like the natural next step is to put in place legal protections for oaks and oak woodlands.

On behalf of the over 750 supporters of Friends of Gualala River who endorse protections of the watershed and its natural resources, including its oaks, we urge the Board of Supervisors to pass the Oak Woodland Protection Ordinance.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Nathan Ramser

President of the FoGR Board

From: [Norman Fujita](#)
To: [BOS](#)
Subject: Two Proposed County Tree Ordinances
Date: Saturday, November 18, 2023 5:15:55 PM

EXTERNAL

Dear Sonoma County Board of Supervisors,

I recommend that you vote for the two new tree ordinances to protect many of the native trees and oak woodlands. It is extremely important to maintain our native flora to keep the integrity of our ecosystem especially in a time of climate change.

Norman K. Fujita
717 Brown Street
Healdsburg, CA 95448

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From: [Karina Garcia](#) on behalf of [Susan Gorin](#)
To: [BOS](#)
Subject: FW: trees
Date: Monday, November 13, 2023 11:41:51 AM

Karina Garcia

Office of Supervisor Gorin | 1st Supervisorial District
Karina.Garcia@sonoma-county.org | 707.565.1776

From: Jeffrey Roden <thebigtreemusic@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, November 11, 2023 12:53 PM
To: Susan Gorin <Susan.Gorin@sonoma-county.org>
Subject: trees

EXTERNAL

please vote to approve both the update to existing tree ordinances and the Oak Woodland Ordinance.

it is essential for our county to preserve and increase the number of trees.

thanks

jeffrey and shelley roden

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From: [Sherri Oster](#)
To: [BOS](#)
Subject: Fwd: Please Protect Our Trees
Date: Saturday, November 11, 2023 4:17:14 PM

EXTERNAL

Hello:

I understand that the Sonoma County Supervisors will be voting on two tree ordinances at the November 28 meeting.

I urge you to vote to protect our trees and oak woodlands. Trees are vital to the health of our community, and the planet.

Thank you,

Sherri Oster
A Petaluma Voter

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From: [christine hoex](#)
To: [BOS](#)
Subject: Oaktree Ordinance
Date: Thursday, November 23, 2023 8:12:00 AM

EXTERNAL

Dear Sonoma County Supervisors,

I am writing in support of the proposed Oak Tree protection Ordinance. While the proposed language is not ideal, these changes do increase protections. That is what I support. What is most important is that you understand that tree protections are important to me and I hope you take every opportunity to protect them. Please approve language that will effectively preserve our remaining trees and woodlands now and in the future.

Thank you for your attention to this,
Christine Hoex
330 Horn Ave
Santa Rosa Ca

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From: [Angelica Jochim](#)
To: [BOS](#); [Doug Bush](#)
Subject: kimlarry2@comcast.net
Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 8:54:01 AM

EXTERNAL

Hello,

Please support the planning commission recommendations for the updated Tree Ordinance and the new Oak Protection Ordinance.

I support both of these.

Thank you,

Angelica Jochim

Forestville, CA

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November 20, 2023

Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
575 Administration Drive
Room 100 A
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

RE: Letter in support of Sonoma County oak protections

To the Honorable members of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors:

I am writing as a member of Sonoma Mountain Preservation, and the Grove Street Fire Safe Council and active with various committees at Jack London State Historical Park, and the Sonoma Ecology Center all of whom are deeply concerned with the health and vibrancy of the environment, and the flourishing of the biome in the diverse Oak Woodlands of Sonoma County. The local Oak Woodlands have been under attack from a number of sources including sudden oak death, drought, fire, agriculture and development. As Oak Woodlands underpin a number of assets the County relies on such as reduction in climate change threats, the tourist industry that relies on our beautiful viewsheds for attracting visitors, the value of real estate due to the beauty of the Oak Woodlands, the maintenance and diversity of the local biome due to the multitude of habitats found in Oak Woodlands, and a weather impact regulator in slowing winds, increasing groundwater retention, reducing erosion, and providing shade. Once removed it would take centuries to replace them, mitigation alone is insufficient protection.

Oaks are California's primary old growth resource, yet they do not receive adequate protections in many areas of the state. Unlike conifers, which are afforded comprehensive protections through the Forest Practice Act, most oaks are not commercial species, and thus are not subject to the legislation. California relies on counties and other local jurisdictions to protect oaks. Unfortunately, oaks and their associated ecosystem services, are diminished when protections are not adequate. For example, the *Forests and Rangelands 2017 Assessment* summarized water quality conditions in non-federal timberland compared to rangelands, which are not subject to the Forest Practice Act, finding 62% of forest streams in good condition compared to 34% for rangelands, with 21% of rangeland streams in poor and 21% in very poor condition.”¹

Keeping Sonoma County's oaks standing will protect watersheds and also sustain culturally important landscapes, support the county's biodiversity, and continue to sequester carbon in oak trees, understory, downed woody material, and soil.

Sincerely,

Nancy Evers Kirwan

1920 Grove Street

Sonoma CA 95476

¹ Ferkovich, RL et al. *California's Forests and Rangelands 2017 Assessment*. <http://frap.fire.ca.gov/assessment2017>.

Doug Bush

From: Michael Krikorian <thekriks@sonic.net>
Sent: Tuesday, November 14, 2023 3:46 PM
To: BOS
Cc: kimlarry2@comcast.net
Subject: tree ordinances

EXTERNAL

Dear Board Members,

I am writing to express my support for the Updated Tree Ordinance and the Oak Protection Ordinance that are soon coming before you for approval. As a resident of Sonoma County now for over 50 years, I feel more strongly than ever that it is the tree cover native to our area that gives this county the natural beauty and wildlife refuge that distinguishes us from other areas of California. I have watched how over the last 25 years the reproduction rate of oaks, especially, is declining. Now, more than ever, we need to protect the native trees we currently have. It takes a long time for an oak or a redwood to mature and gain large size. Even when mitigating tree removal for development by planting young trees elsewhere, many many years will be needed to replace that tree being cut. And it is the fully mature trees that are the most efficient at capturing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Approving these tree ordinances is a step in the right direction.

thank you, Michael Krikorian

738 Willowood Way

Windsor, CA 95492 (707) 495-0736

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Chris Riezenman
Director at Large

Dear Board of Supervisors, bos@sonoma-county.org
November 7, 2023

The League of Women Voters of Sonoma County has an interest in maintaining the biodiversity of Sonoma County and recognizes that the rich species diversity of native trees is an important contributor to the health, prosperity, and beauty of our local ecosystems. Furthermore, the League is very concerned about climate change, because trees and soils are major agents of carbon sequestration. We encourage sustainable management of native trees of Sonoma County for the benefit of all residents and beneficial uses.

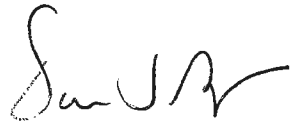
The Sonoma County League of Women Voters, therefore, supports the proposed Comprehensive Tree Ordinance of Sonoma County and recognizes it is a considerable improvement over the existing ordinances. We ask, however, that the Board of Supervisors consider making the ordinance stronger with provisions to stop the annual loss of trees to maintain the health, beauty and tourist economy of our environment.

- The first priority must be to discourage tree removal in the first place with measures such as establishing fees that must be paid before a tree is removed. If this fee is high enough the property owner will be motivated to protect the trees. The priority must be the preservation of trees. Instead, the proposal emphasizes tree mitigation and the replanting and monitoring the new trees for seven years. Because new tree growth will take decades to establish the environmental functions that the original trees provided, emphasis in the ordinance must be the protection of existing, mature tree communities.
- When a fee would be a burden on the property owner, the County can provide grants to mitigate tree removal in cases where an owner wishes to remove mature trees for reasons other than safety. Planners could work with the landowner to design a solution that would save the trees.

555 Fifth Street, Suite 300 O, Santa Rosa, CA 95401
(707) 546-5943 www.lwvsonoma.org

- To maintain biodiversity, the Comprehensive Tree Ordinance must include all native trees in Sonoma County including Douglas fir, California bay, and toyon. These trees are interspersed with oak trees and are an important part of the biodiversity of Sonoma County. The entirety of the ecosystem must be protected. A large variety of trees provides many benefits to residents and all beneficial uses in Sonoma County. They are part of our cultural heritage and aesthetics, important for the environment for carbon sequestration, air purification, wildlife habitat and water quality.
- Future generations of trees will be lost if small trees in areas outside the tree canopy remain unprotected. Expansion of protection beyond the drip zone provides a chance for the next generation of trees to survive. We recommend expanding protections to include variation in the ages and succession of trees to assure continued habitat diversity through all growth processes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donna Roper". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "R".

Donna Roper, President, League of Women Voters of Sonoma County

From: [neilh20](#)
To: [BOS](#)
Cc: [Doug Bush](#)
Subject: Letter in support of oak woodland protections, 2023 Nov 28 Item 52
Date: Wednesday, November 22, 2023 10:52:10 AM

EXTERNAL

Dear Sonoma County Supervisors

I'm a resident of Sonoma County, and as I travel around Sonoma County I really appreciate the diversity of Oak Woodlands. I'm surprised at the number of conversions to vineyards. Often it seems to me that the furrows run down the hillsides and not along the hillsides. What happens when there are heavy rains, with subsequent soil erosion, and this sediment is all channeled into the local creeks.

I urge you to support stronger protections for Sonoma County's oak woodlands.

Oaks are California's primary old growth resource, yet they do not receive adequate protections in many areas of the state. Unlike conifers, which are afforded comprehensive protections through the Forest Practice Act, most oaks are not commercial species, and thus are not subject to the legislation. California relies on counties and other local jurisdictions to protect oaks. Unfortunately, oaks and their associated ecosystem services, are diminished when protections are not adequate. For example, the Forests and Rangelands 2017 Assessment summarized water quality conditions in non-federal timberland compared to rangelands, which are not subject to the Forest Practice Act, finding 62% of forest streams in good condition compared to 34% for rangelands, with 21% of rangeland streams in poor and 21% in very poor condition."

Keeping Sonoma County's oaks standing will protect watersheds and also sustain culturally important landscapes, support the county's biodiversity, and continue to sequester carbon in oak trees, understory, downed woody material, and soil.

Sincerely

Neil Hancock

Sonoma County Resident.

--

~~~~~  
Neil Hancock

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**From:** [Cheryl Iantorno](#)  
**To:** [Doug Bush](#)  
**Subject:** Letter in Support of Sonoma County Oak Protection  
**Date:** Saturday, November 18, 2023 4:49:28 PM

---

**EXTERNAL**

Cheryl Iantorno  
5914 Anson Drive  
Santa Rosa, CA 95409

November 18, 2023

Sonoma County Board of Supervisors  
575 Administration Drive  
Room 100A  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

**RE: Letter in support of Sonoma County Oak Protection**

To the Honorable Members of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors:

I am a citizen volunteer living in an oak woodland area, and am writing to support Sonoma County putting in place the ordinance to protect the oak woodlands.

As we know, although oaks are California's primary old growth resource for carbon sequestration, they are not protected by the Forest Practice Act. California relies on counties to protect them, as 80% of oaks are on private lands, many of which do not have adequate protection.

Oaks deserve excellent stewardship as they support more life forms than any other North American plant genus. In addition, oak woodlands improve soil and control erosion, retain groundwater and are fire resistant.

Thank you for your attention to this vital matter.

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**From:** [Larry Modell](#)  
**To:** [Doug Bush](#)  
**Subject:** Letter in support of Sonoma County oak protections  
**Date:** Monday, November 20, 2023 5:17:42 PM

---

## EXTERNAL

Sonoma County Board of Supervisors  
575 Administration Drive Room 100 A  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

*[Mr. Bush: Please forward to all five Sonoma County Supervisors. - LM]*

Dear Sonoma County Board of Supervisors:

Through my decades-long volunteer work with Sonoma Mountain Preservation, Friends of Lafferty Park, and LandPaths I have developed a deep love for Sonoma County's natural landscapes, and for its oak woodlands in particular.

Oaks are California's primary old growth resource, yet they do not receive adequate protections in many areas of the state. Unlike conifers, which are afforded comprehensive protections through the Forest Practice Act, most oaks are not commercial species, and thus are not subject to the legislation. California relies on counties and other local jurisdictions to protect oaks. Unfortunately, oaks and their associated ecosystem services, are diminished when protections are not adequate. For example, the *Forests and Rangelands 2017 Assessment* summarized water quality conditions in non-federal timberland compared to rangelands, which are not subject to the Forest Practice Act, finding 62% of forest streams in good condition compared to 34% for rangelands, with 21% of rangeland streams in poor and 21% in very poor condition.

Keeping Sonoma County's oaks standing will protect watersheds and also sustain culturally important landscapes, support the county's biodiversity, and continue to sequester carbon in oak trees, understory, downed woody material, and soil.

Sincerely,

Larry Modell

1705 Brompton St. Petaluma CA 94954

[larrymod@comcast.net](mailto:larrymod@comcast.net)

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**From:** [Judith Smith](#)  
**To:** [BOS](#)  
**Cc:** [Doug Bush](#)  
**Subject:** Letter in support of Sonoma County oak protections  
**Date:** Friday, November 24, 2023 1:40:12 PM

---

## EXTERNAL

To the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors;

I am a frequent visitor to Sonoma County for hiking and birdwatching and a lover of oak trees and oak woodlands.

I SUPPORT PROTECTING OAKS! This oak woodland ordinance is being proposed in addition to changes that would strengthen the county's existing native tree protection ordinance, something we need to do now. And here is why we need to do this.

- <!--[if !supportLists]-->A. <!--[endif]-->Sonoma County has no ordinance or regulation in place to specifically address the clear-cutting or removal of oak woodlands, thus leaving them vulnerable to removal without county oversight or regulation and creating the potential for denuded hillsides, destabilized soil, silted, and polluted streams, die-offs of birds, mammals, fish, and other animals, and loss of extensive ecosystem services (itemized in paragraph F).
- <!--[if !supportLists]-->B. <!--[endif]-->80% of oak woodlands occur on private lands and have no legal protections from the State of California.
- <!--[if !supportLists]-->C. <!--[endif]-->Sonoma County's oak woodlands are a beautiful, quintessential, and irreplaceable component of the character and cultural history of our region.
- <!--[if !supportLists]-->D. <!--[endif]-->Sonoma County's oak woodlands have largely untapped ecotourism potential.
- <!--[if !supportLists]-->E. <!--[endif]-->Oaks support more life forms than any other plant genus in North America.
- <!--[if !supportLists]-->F. <!--[endif]-->Oak woodlands improve soil, retain groundwater, improve surface water quality, control erosion, slow wind (and, by extension, fire); provide shade for fish-bearing streams, moderate climate extremes, improve air quality, and sequester carbon.
- D. Oaks are California's primary old-growth resource for carbon sequestration.
- E. Oaks survive low- to medium-intensity fires and provide shade, moisture, and mycelium that assist other species in repopulating burned areas.
- F. Oak woodlands improve quality of life and property values by providing serene and lovely landscapes for walking, hiking, biking, picnicking, camping, swimming, birding, wildlife watching, and stargazing.
- G. Oak woodlands provide essential food and nesting habitat for native pollinators and honeybees, which have significant commercial value to local agriculture.

- H. Oaks leaves are the most important food in North America for caterpillars, and caterpillars are essential food for most baby songbirds. As mature oaks disappear, so do birds and the birdsong we love so much.
- I. Oak woodlands support the greatest animal biomass found in any terrestrial habitat type in California.
- J. Old-growth oaks and other native trees sequester exponentially more carbon and provide homes and food to vastly more animal species than young trees. These ecosystem services cannot be replaced for hundreds of years by newly planted seedlings.
- K. Mature oak woodlands are refugia for oak- and oak woodland-dependent species, many of which are suffering population declines statewide.

Keeping Sonoma County's oaks standing will protect watersheds and also sustain culturally important landscapes, support the county's biodiversity, and continue to sequester carbon in oak trees, understory, downed woody material, and soil.

Sincerely,

Judith Smith  
2712 Grande Vista Ave  
Oakland, CA 94601  
judithsmith313@gmail.com

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**Warning:** If you don't know this email sender or the email is unexpected, **do not** click any web links, attachments, and **never** give out your user ID or password.

**From:** [Leslie Lihou](#)  
**To:** [BOS](#)  
**Subject:** Support for the oak woodland ordinance  
**Date:** Friday, November 24, 2023 11:46:02 PM

---

EXTERNAL

Dear Sonoma County Supervisors,

As a member of CA Native Plant Society and Citizens Climate Lobby, I ask you to support the proposed Oak Woodland Ordinance to promote the resilience of this native ecosystem through the onslaught of climate change. Current regulations mostly neglect oak woodlands. These ecosystems harbor flora, fauna, fungi and microbes in relationships that promote soil health, recharge and purify groundwater and enhance air quality as the woodland ecosystems act as carbon sinks to ameliorate effects of global warming. Mitigation replanting and restoration efforts cannot duplicate the benefits of mature decades old woodlands. If we are to prevent extinctions, we must curtail destructive human activity. The safe guards in the Oak Woodland Ordinance provide for protection for woodlands and for environmental review of impacts of development on these ecosystems. When the ordinance is considered by the Supervisors, I urge you to vote for its passage.

Sincerely,  
Leslie Lihou  
Santa Rosa

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**From:** [Steven Cozza Real Estate](#)  
**To:** [BOS](#); [Susan Gorin](#); [David Rabbitt](#); [district3](#); [district4](#); [district5](#)  
**Subject:** Message from Steven Cozza - Petaluma  
**Date:** Wednesday, November 15, 2023 12:54:08 PM

---

## EXTERNAL

Dear County Supervisors and Planning Supervisors,

I and most Sonoma County residents ask that you support the Planning Commission's two proposed tree protection ordinances at their meeting on November 28th. Tree preservation is important to me, my family, my friends, the planet Earth, and all the animals that now rely on our trees.

Please stand by and support the two proposed tree protection ordinances at Planning Commissions meeting on November 28th.

Kind regards,

Steven

### **STEVEN COZZA | Founder and Lead Agent**

#### **Cozza Team | Compass in North Bay | Sonoma + Marin Counties**

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[scozza@cozzahomes.com](mailto:scozza@cozzahomes.com) | [cozzateam.com](http://cozzateam.com)

Steven 707.328.9766 | DRE #01915699

Jeanette 707.328.4405 | DRE #01521384

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**From:** [Sally Mullen](#)  
**To:** [BOS](#)  
**Subject:** Tree and Woodland protection ordinance  
**Date:** Sunday, November 26, 2023 1:54:51 PM

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EXTERNAL

I strongly support the Planning Commission's recommendations for ordinances to protect our trees and Woodlands. I am looking forward to hearing that you support them as well.

Sally Mullen

Sent from my iPhone

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DEBORAH C. NITASAKA, M.A.  
*Science-Minded Thinker & Freelance Writer*  
P.O. Box 1054, Glen Ellen, California 95442-1054  
707.996.8620; 707.318.7214 (mobile); [delaire77@gmail.com](mailto:delaire77@gmail.com)

24 November 2023

Sonoma County Board of Supervisors  
575 Administration Drive  
Room 100 A  
Santa Rosa, California 95403

Transmitted via email c/o Doug Bush: [Doug.Bush@sonoma-county.org](mailto:Doug.Bush@sonoma-county.org)

RE: Letter in support of Sonoma County oak protections

To the Honorable members of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors:

I am writing today as a 71 year old native Californian and as a member of the California Oaks Coalition who has witnessed the wholesale destruction of our state's natural resources for decades. Standing by as healthy, magnificent oak trees are ripped, roots and all, from the earth remains among my most shattering experiences. When, many years back, I asked Sonoma County officials to stop the slaughter, I learned that this county's oak tree ordinance had no teeth and pertained to virtually none of the trees standing in harms way. So now, after watching, for 30 years, nearby property owners obliterating the native treasures that are these mighty oaks – might we finally enact some protections for what remains.

Oaks are California's primary old growth resource, yet they do not receive adequate protections in many areas of the state. Unlike conifers, which are afforded comprehensive protections through the Forest Practice Act, most oaks are not commercial species, and thus are not subject to the legislation. California relies on counties and other local jurisdictions to protect oaks. Unfortunately, oaks and their associated ecosystem services, are diminished when protections are not adequate. For example, the *Forests and Rangelands 2017 Assessment* summarized water quality conditions in non-federal timberland compared to rangelands, which are not subject to the Forest Practice Act, finding:

- \* 62% of forest streams in good condition compared to
- \* 34% for rangelands, with
- \* 21% of rangeland streams in poor and
- \* 21% in very poor condition.

Keeping Sonoma County's oaks standing will protect watersheds and also sustain culturally important landscapes, support the county's biodiversity, and continue to sequester carbon in oak trees, understory, downed woody material, and soil.

I hope you will take this opportunity to protect what is left of Sonoma County's oak woodlands. Better still, put in place whatever is needed to assure the public that this regulation will be upheld!

With warm regards,



Deborah C. Nitasaka

***Power concedes nothing without a demand. - Frederick Douglass***

November 21, 2023

Michael J. Noel  
29 Long Rd  
Petaluma, CA 94952

Sonoma County Board of Supervisors  
575 Administration Drive  
Room 100 A  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

*Transmitted via email c/o Doug Bush: [Doug.Bush@sonoma-county.org](mailto:Doug.Bush@sonoma-county.org)*

RE: Letter in support of Sonoma County oak protections

To the Honorable members of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors:

Landpaths: Lafferty Park Docent program, Michael Noel Supports California Oaks Coalition.

Oaks are California's primary old growth resource, yet they do not receive adequate protections in many areas of the state. Unlike conifers, which are afforded comprehensive protections through the Forest Practice Act, most oaks are not commercial species, and thus are not subject to the legislation. California relies on counties and other local jurisdictions to protect oaks. Unfortunately, oaks and their associated ecosystem services, are diminished when protections are not adequate. For example, the *Forests and Rangelands 2017 Assessment* summarized water quality conditions in non-federal timberland compared to rangelands, which are not subject to the Forest Practice Act, finding 62% of forest streams in good condition compared to 34% for rangelands, with 21% of rangeland streams in poor and 21% in very poor condition."<sup>1</sup>

Keeping Sonoma County's oaks standing will protect watersheds and also sustain culturally important landscapes, support the county's biodiversity, and continue to sequester carbon in oak trees, understory, downed woody material, and soil.

Sincerely,

Michael J Noel

---

<sup>1</sup> Ferkovich, RL et al. *California's Forests and Rangelands 2017 Assessment*. <http://frap.fire.ca.gov/assessment2017>.

**From:** [Janus MATTHES](#)  
**To:** [BOS](#); [Doug Bush](#)  
**Subject:** Nov. @8th hearing on Tree Ordinance & Oak Woodlands Protection  
**Date:** Tuesday, November 14, 2023 3:37:11 PM

---

## EXTERNAL

November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023

RE: Tree Ordinance and Oak Woodlands Protection

To Board of Supervisors, Doug Bush

Wine and Water Watch is a local organization of over 250 citizens concerned with ethical land use, climate change action, conservation of our water resources and social justice issues. WWW works to create a healthy and vibrant world for future generations.

We are writing you today in response to the long overdue protection of mature native trees and especially our oak woodlands. For far too long in the name of progress we have allowed our climate cooling, habitat sanctuaries, watershed restoring and carbon sequestrating abilities to be cut down for vineyards and track homes. Permit Sonoma has allowed mitigation by planting saplings that will take years before any societal benefits are realized.

Please approve this small step forward in the protection of these species. Mature oaks should never be allowed to be felled; they are a keystone species with over 100 species using this resource to survive. We urge you today, please consider future generations and pass the two new ordinances.

Sincerely,

Wine & Water Watch Board

Janus Holt Matthes, Pamela Singer, Charlotte Williams, Deb Preston, Merrilyn Joyce

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**From:** [Leah Halper](#)  
**To:** [BOS](#); [Doug Bush](#)  
**Subject:** Nov. 28 and protecting trees  
**Date:** Tuesday, November 14, 2023 5:42:31 AM

---

## EXTERNAL

Dear Lynda Hopkins and other Sonoma county supervisors,

I strongly support the two tree ordinances approved by the county Planning Commission and on your Nov. 28 agenda. Both are of great importance to our future as a county with a healthy environment that builds climate resilience:

—Ordinance protecting individual trees—critical for carbon sequestration, combatting heat islands, habitat, and other irreplaceable functions

—Ordinance protecting oak woodlands, which support literally thousands of species and provide uncountable benefits.

Please vote yes on these appropriate measures. I would appreciate a response from my supervisor, Ms. Hopkins.

Sincerely,

Leah Halper  
Santa Rosa voter

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**From:** [Jenny Blaker](#)  
**To:** [BOS](#); [Doug Bush](#)  
**Cc:** [Kimberly](#)  
**Subject:** November 28, 2023, Agenda item #52: ORD21-0001& ORD23-0004 Modernizing Tree and Woodland Protections  
**Date:** Friday, November 24, 2023 2:41:47 PM

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EXTERNAL

Dear Supervisors Gore, Hopkins, Gorin, Rabbitt and Coursey

I urge you to support the Tree Ordinance and Oak Woodland as proposed, to enhance protections for individual trees and oak woodlands throughout Sonoma County to the greatest extent possible.

Oaks are iconic, with cultural and historical significance in Sonoma County. As we face the twin crises of the changing climate and extinction of species, we should do all we can to protect these beautiful and vital ecosystems that clean the air, protect our watersheds, provide shade, protect soil, sequester carbon and provide homes to so many creatures below as well as above ground. Indeed, we haven't even begun to fully understand the significance of the processes and interactions involved in, for example the mycorrhizal networks and their interactions.

Sincerely

Jenny Blaker

Cotati resident

--

Jenny Blaker : New email [jennyb2323@sonic.net](mailto:jennyb2323@sonic.net) also [jennyb01@wLLw.net](mailto:jennyb01@wLLw.net) still works.

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**From:** [Dan Silver](#)  
**To:** [Doug Bush](#)  
**Subject:** Oak ordinance - Support  
**Date:** Tuesday, November 07, 2023 9:43:28 AM

---

**EXTERNAL**

Nov 7, 2023

Doug Bush, MCRP  
Comprehensive Planning, County of Sonoma  
2550 Ventura Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95403

**RE: Oak ordinance**

Dear Mr Bush:

Endangered Habitats League is a regional conservation group based in Southern California. We *support* strengthening oak protections as proposed in the ordinance. These are resources of statewide importance.

Thank you

Dan Silver

Dan Silver, Executive Director  
Endangered Habitats League  
8424 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite A 592  
Los Angeles, CA 90069-4267

213-804-2750  
dsilverla@me.com  
<https://ehleague.org>

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**From:** [Wendy Jacobs](#)  
**To:** [David Rabbitt](#)  
**Cc:** [BOS](#)  
**Subject:** Oak Woodland Ordinance and Tree Protection Ordinance  
**Date:** Saturday, November 11, 2023 10:00:31 AM

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EXTERNAL

Dear Supervisor Rabbitt,

I write to express support for the two tree protection ordinances which I believe you will vote on at the end of November. I am a Petaluma resident and highly value our Sonoma County trees for all the benefits they provide.

Recently I have become more aware of the rather severe air pollution we experience in Petaluma, according to State mapping studies, thanks to the traffic on Highway 101 and the prevalence of agricultural chemicals and exhaust fumes from local traffic. Mature trees provide meaningful protection from this air pollution, as well as from stormwater run off pollution. They also help to cool our environment. They provide many other benefits too. Our Oak Woodlands are a priceless heritage which we really must preserve for our present and future well being.

Please vote in favor of these two ordinances, which I believe were carefully studied, at length, by the Planning Department, and are not extreme in any way.

Sincerely,

Wendy Jacobs  
Petaluma

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**From:** [Jim Freeman](#)  
**To:** [Susan Gorin](#); [David Rabbitt](#); [district3](#); [district4](#); [district5](#); [Planner](#); [Doug Bush](#); [Tennis Wick](#)  
**Subject:** Oak Woodland Ordinance Opposition and Recommendations  
**Date:** Friday, November 24, 2023 10:47:28 AM

---

## EXTERNAL

Dear Board of Supervisors and County Staff,

I write to voice my opposition and provide specific recommendations for changes to the draft Oak Woodland Ordinance.

I certainly agree with the intention to protect and preserve oak woodlands. However, the proposed Ordinance does not strike the appropriate balance with other important priorities including housing, commercial and industrial uses, and agricultural preservation.

As drafted, the proposed ordinance will create an Oak Woodland Combining District and rezone over 12,000 parcels to include the Oak Woodland Zone. On these parcels proposed regulations will add large costs and permitting timelines for currently by right housing and other small scale development. In addition, the ordinance will undoubtedly be weaponized to stop housing through the CEQA review process. It will present yet another barrier to housing, which is unnecessary and contradicts priorities to streamline and incentivize housing development. It also represents unnecessary government overreach.

My understanding is that the primary driver for this ordinance is outcry over conversion of oak woodland to vineyards. I agree with this concern and hate to see major conversions of woodland and other natural habitats. However, this ordinance goes too far and severely restricts minor by right development, I recommend the Board revise the draft ordinance to address large scale conversion of oak woodland, but exempt small scale by right uses.

I'm also dismayed at the lack of public outreach and press on this issue. How was this not an item of "significant public interest"? Why is there not a publicly available map to see where the Oak Woodland District is mapped and what parcel are included? Why was the ordinance package only made public review six days prior to hearing and during the Thanksgiving break? For this impactful of an ordinance, there needs to be a more public outreach, a map, and a longer review period!

### Questions:

<!--[if !supportLists]-->1. <!--[endif]-->Is there a publicly available map that shows the proposed Oak Woodland Combining District and parcels that will be re-zoned? I asked Permit Sonoma, and their response was that "a list of parcels is included with the Board package". A list of parcels IS NOT ADEQUATE for public review. The public deserves the right to review the mapped oak woodland areas to verify their accuracy and understand the implications of this ordinance on their property and to

the County.

<!--[if !supportLists]-->2. <!--[endif]-->How many parcels are proposed to be rezoned in each base zoning district?

<!--[if !supportLists]-->3. <!--[endif]-->How many acres of oak woodland is mapped in each base zoning district?

<!--[if !supportLists]-->4. <!--[endif]-->Would submitted permits that are currently in review, but have not yet been issued, subject to this new regulation?

<!--[if !supportLists]-->5. <!--[endif]-->Each “undeveloped” parcel is allowed a one-time conversion 0.5 acres of with a Zoning Permit

<!--[if !supportLists]-->a. <!--[endif]-->What is the basis of 0.5 acres of allowed one-time conversion? What is the average developed area for a rural parcel with an primary residence, garage, ADU, average garden, driveway, primary septic area, and reserve septic area?

<!--[if !supportLists]-->b. <!--[endif]-->What is an “undeveloped” parcel?

<!--[if !supportLists]--> i. <!--[endif]-->Is a parcel with a barn but no residence developed?

<!--[if !supportLists]--> ii. <!--[endif]-->Is a parcel with agricultural uses but no residence developed?

<!--[if !supportLists]-->c. <!--[endif]-->What is a “one-time conversion”?

<!--[if !supportLists]--> i. <!--[endif]-->Does this mean for undeveloped parcels only one permit to implement all development that may impact oak woodland is allowed without a Use Permit? All subsequent development, regardless of size, that impacts oak woodland would then require a Use Permit?

<!--[if !supportLists]-->6. <!--[endif]-->Under the proposed ordinance:

<!--[if !supportLists]-->a. <!--[endif]-->How many currently by right permits are estimated to now require a Zoning Permit or Use Permit each year?

<!--[if !supportLists]-->b. <!--[endif]-->What is the average cost (permits + studies) and timeline for a Zoning Permit or Use Permit?

<!--[if !supportLists]-->c. <!--[endif]-->How many additional County staff will be needed to process these permits?

**Exemptions – 26-67-030 and 040:**

<!--[if !supportLists]-->1. <!--[endif]-->Additional exemptions that should be added:

<!--[if !supportLists]-->a. <!--[endif]-->Maintenance of all existing development (not just residential and agricultural sites).

<!--[if !supportLists]-->b. <!--[endif]-->Renewable energy development for roof mount solar.

<!--[if !supportLists]-->c. <!--[endif]-->Maintenance of existing private utilities (not just public utilities).

<!--[if !supportLists]-->d. <!--[endif]-->Hazardous dead, dying and or diseased tree removal should be exempt, and should not require a zoning permit. Note, required studies of zoning permit (cultural resources, biotic...) will cost thousands of dollars.

<!--[if !supportLists]-->e. <!--[endif]-->All by right uses within urban service areas (not just residential uses). The few areas with urban services must be prioritized for housing AND other compatible urban development.

<!--[if !supportLists]-->f. <!--[endif]-->All by right uses on parcels with base zoning of commercial or industrial uses. There is very little land that is zoned for these uses, it needs to be prioritized for these economically vital uses.

<!--[if !supportLists]-->g. <!--[endif]-->All by right uses on parcels with agricultural base zoning (LIA and LEA). Lands zoned for agriculture should continue to be used for agriculture, and expansion should be allowed in these zones in order to keep them economically viable.

<!--[if !supportLists]-->h. <!--[endif]-->All by right housing development. Housing in rural areas is restricted by density and parcel size, further restrictions are NOT warranted. What analysis shows that rural residential development presents a real threat to Oak Woodland? There is a housing crisis, no new barriers to housing should be adopted unless absolutely necessary.

## **Zoning Permit - 26-67-030 and 050**

<!--[if !supportLists]-->1. <!--[endif]-->A zoning Permit should allow for conversion of up to 0.5 acres of development after the effective date of the ordinance. Development should not have to occur at one time. Many owners develop slowly for economic reasons, and they should not be forced to rush.

<!--[if !supportLists]-->2. <!--[endif]-->A conversion through a zoning permit should be available to both developed and undeveloped parcels, as was originally

recommended by staff to the Planning Commission.

<!--[if !supportLists]-->3. <!--[endif]-->Requirements for a cultural resources study and biotic study should be removed, these studies cost thousands of dollars.

<!--[if !supportLists]-->a. <!--[endif]-->The grading ordinance currently has reasonable standards for protection of cultural resources.

<!--[if !supportLists]-->b. <!--[endif]-->A 1.0 acre limit to conversion is a reasonable biotic protection of Oak Woodland.

### **Use Permit Requirements 26-67-060**

<!--[if !supportLists]-->1. <!--[endif]-->Discretionary review should be limited to large projects only. As written, many very small development projects will require a Use Permit. This is unwarranted, unfair from an economic perspective, and will result in neighbor wars. The County should be striving to reduce discretionary permitting, not the opposite.

### **Use Permit Findings for Approval 26-67-070**

This section should be entirely stricken or made much less prescriptive to allow the decision making body appropriate discretion to approve or deny a project based on all relevant considerations. Of specific concern are the required findings of:

<!--[if !supportLists]-->1. <!--[endif]-->There is no feasible less environmental damaging alternative.

And

<!--[if !supportLists]-->2. <!--[endif]-->Any proposed Oak Woodland to be removed will not result in creation of (2) of more separate oak woodlands ...

These **required** findings may be untenable for many sites. These required findings appear to limit the discretion of the decision making body to prioritize other values and public benefits. The required findings section should either be entirely stricken or modified to require *consideration*, but not the requirement to make these specific findings.

Thank you for your consideration and service,  
Jim Freeman, Santa Rosa

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**From:** [Monica Schwalbenberg-Peña](#)  
**To:** [BOS](#)  
**Subject:** Oak Woodland Ordinance VOTE YES!  
**Date:** Monday, November 20, 2023 1:07:53 PM

---

EXTERNAL

Dear Supervisors Gorin, Hopkins, Gore, Rabbitt and Coursey,

Please vote in favor of the Sonoma County Oak Woodland Ordinance on November 28th. Not only are oaks emblematic of Sonoma County, they are a critical part of our habitat for wildlife, waterways, and woodlands, as well as for carbon sequestration.

Sincerely,

Monica Schwalbenberg-Peña  
6136 Batesole Drive  
Santa Rosa, CA 95404  
fieldsketcher@gmail.com  
707-542-8107

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**From:** [bobhasenick@att.net](mailto:bobhasenick@att.net)  
**To:** [Susan Gorin](#); [BOS](#)  
**Cc:** [Doug Bush](#)  
**Subject:** Oak Woodland Ordinance  
**Date:** Wednesday, November 22, 2023 8:32:23 PM

---

## EXTERNAL

To County of Sonoma Board of Supervisors:

I strongly support the proposed oak woodland ordinance, about which you're expected to review & vote on during 28 Nov meeting.

Please heartily approve this for the health of our county's ecosystem.

Thank you,  
Bob Hasenick  
Proud owner of land with several healthy oak trees

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**From:** [Kirk Lumpkin](#)  
**To:** [BOS](#)  
**Subject:** Oak Woodland Protection Ordinance  
**Date:** Monday, November 20, 2023 1:14:42 PM

---

EXTERNAL

Hello Sonoma County Board of Supervisor members:

Thank you for considering the Oak Woodland Protection Ordinance which I support you passing. I am not a Sonoma County resident, but this ordinance is something that you can do to lead the state of California as whole. Be bold and lead on!

Sincerely,

Kirk Lumpkin  
P.O. Box 67  
Willits, CA 954f90

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**From:** [Adriane Nicolaisen](#)  
**To:** [BOS](#)  
**Subject:** Oak Woodlands  
**Date:** Monday, November 20, 2023 11:18:16 AM

---

EXTERNAL

Dear Sonoma County Supervisors Gorin, Rabbitt, Coursey, Gore and Hopkins

What would California be without its Oak Woodlands? Along with the Redwoods, the Oak Woodlands are the very definition of California.

There are others who can speak to the intricacies of life in these wild places better than I am able to do. We have lost so much of our native Redwood forests and now to think the Oaks are under threat is heartbreaking.

Please stand with Marin County where the planners have worked with the over-riding principle of keeping much of its landscape intact.

Please vote to preserve the Oak Woodland eco-system.

Respectfully,  
Adriane Nicolaisen  
Fort Bragg CA

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Jan O'Brien  
12975 Chalk Hill Road  
Healdsburg, CA 95448  
November 20, 2023

Sonoma County Board of Supervisors  
575 Administration Drive  
Room 100 A  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Transmitted via email c/o Doug Bush: [Doug.Bush@sonoma-county.org](mailto:Doug.Bush@sonoma-county.org)

RE: Letter in support of Sonoma County oak protections

To the Honorable members of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors:

We love the oak woodlands that cover most of our 36 acres. Our land burned in the Kincaid fire and we were devastated. Our house was up to WUI code and was fine, but the trees were blackened. After experiencing the joy of seeing many of the mature trees come back to life the next Spring and the flush of wildflowers in the clearings; I am clear that the native oaks can survive the fires that climate change may test us with. Sonoma can remain lovely if we protect our oak woodlands.

Oaks are California's primary old growth resource, yet they do not receive adequate protections in many areas of the state. Unlike conifers, which are afforded comprehensive protections through the Forest Practice Act, most oaks are not commercial species, and thus are not subject to the legislation. California relies on counties and other local jurisdictions to protect oaks. Unfortunately, oaks and their associated ecosystem services, are diminished when protections are not adequate. For example, the Forests and Rangelands 2017 Assessment summarized water quality conditions in non-federal timberland compared to rangelands, which are not subject to the Forest Practice Act, finding 62% of forest streams in good condition compared to 34% for rangelands, with 21% of rangeland streams in poor and 21% in very poor condition."<sup>1</sup>

Keeping Sonoma County's oaks standing will protect watersheds and also sustain culturally important landscapes, support the county's biodiversity, and continue to sequester carbon in oak trees, understory, downed woody material, and soil.

Sincerely,

Jan

---

<sup>1</sup> Ferkovich, RL et al. *California's Forests and Rangelands 2017 Assessment*. <http://frap.fire.ca.gov/assessment2017>.

**From:** [Bruce Hagen](#)  
**To:** [BOS](#)  
**Subject:** please protect our native trees and oak woodlands  
**Date:** Monday, November 13, 2023 10:19:23 AM  
**Attachments:** [The Mei Tree by Bruce Hagen - v15 \(3\).pdf](#)

---

## EXTERNAL

Dear David (and Susan, Lynda, Chris, and James)

Like the oaks that have surrounded me for 71 years, I am a native (northern) Californian, and a four-decade resident of Sonoma County. My family members and I have planted and nurtured dozens of native oaks on the public open space behind our Petaluma home. Some of them, planted by my then-five-year-old son and I, are now thigh-thick and house-high.

Please enact **STRONG-AS-AN-OAK** ordinances to protect our native trees and oak woodlands. With climate change and associated loss of species, existing trees need our help... your help.

Thank you so much.  
Bruce

PS: I have also attached my manuscript for a children's picture book story that was inspired by my family's Petaluma tree-caring work. A young girl, stricken by the Sudden Oak Sickness of her ancient tree-friend, dreams she lives the long life of a Live Oak, and awakes to a miracle of hope and regeneration.

Bruce Hagen  
[Safe Streets Petaluma](#)  
[brucekeyofh@gmail.com](mailto:brucekeyofh@gmail.com)  
707-338-7363



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**From:** [Heather Haley](#)  
**To:** [BOS](#)  
**Subject:** Please support tree protection ordinances on November 28th  
**Date:** Saturday, November 11, 2023 10:02:02 AM

---

## EXTERNAL

Dear Supervisors,

I am a resident, homeowner, business owner, and voter in Petaluma. I am very concerned about the lack of protection of mature and native trees in Sonoma county. I have seen many native and mature trees cut down for no good reasons and I am concerned for those remaining. They need more protection for our health, the health of our land and animals and rivers and ecosystems, our community and our planet.

Please reflect the views of the majority of Sonoma County voters and support the Planning Commission's two proposed tree protection ordinances at their meeting on November 28th.

THIS IS SO IMPORTANT!

Thank you,  
Heather

Heather Haley  
pronouns: she/her/hers  
[wholebeinghealingarts.com](http://wholebeinghealingarts.com)

We shall be known by the company we keep,  
By the ones who circle round to tend these fires.  
We shall be known by the ones who sow and reap  
the seeds of change alive from deep within the Earth.  
It is time now.  
It is time now that we thrive.  
It is time to lead ourselves into the well.  
It is time now.  
And what a time to be alive.  
In this great turning we shall learn to lead in love.  
In this great turning we shall learn to lead in love.  
-MaMuse

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**From:** [Julie Sloway](#)  
**To:** [BOS](#)  
**Subject:** Please Take Care of Our Trees  
**Date:** Saturday, November 11, 2023 2:46:32 PM

---

**EXTERNAL**

Hello,

We are Sonoma County voters urging you to please care for and keep our native trees and beautiful oaks healthy as they support people, wildlife, and the planet.

Thank you,  
Allan and Julie Sloway

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**From:** [Jessica Holten-Casper](#)  
**To:** [BOS](#); [Susan Gorin](#); [David Rabbitt](#); [district3](#); [district4](#); [district5](#)  
**Subject:** Protect the Trees  
**Date:** Wednesday, November 15, 2023 1:48:06 PM

---

## EXTERNAL

Dear County Supervisors and Planning Supervisors,

I ask that you support the Planning Commission's two proposed tree protection ordinances at their meeting on November 28th. Tree preservation is important to me, my family, my friends, and the planet Earth.

Please stand by and support the two proposed tree protection ordinances at Planning Commissions meeting on November 28th.

Kind regards,

--

Jess Holten-Casper



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**From:** [Mary Abbott](#)  
**To:** [BOS](#); [Doug Bush](#)  
**Cc:** [Kimberly Burr](#)  
**Subject:** Protecting trees and Oak tree ordinance  
**Date:** Tuesday, November 21, 2023 10:14:51 AM  
**Attachments:** [Outlook-kyj24hac.png](#)

---

**EXTERNAL**

To the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors:

Please support the Planning Commission recommendations regarding the two tree ordinances before you on November 28.

Thank you!

Mary Bates Abbott  
444 Vine Ave  
Sebastopol, CA 95472

Sent from my toaster oven.



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**From:** [Stephanie](#)  
**To:** [Doug Bush](#)  
**Subject:** Public Comment for Modernizing Tree and Woodland Protections, Agenda Number 52  
**Date:** Saturday, November 25, 2023 9:56:42 AM

---

EXTERNAL

Dear Sonoma County Board of Supervisors,

I write to share my full support of the new Tree Ordinance for Sonoma County. As a certified arborist and home owner, I believe the value of trees as ecosystem services to retain ground water, clean the air, and cool homes, and also as habitat for songbirds and local fauna is under stated and must be preserved and retained.

This ordinance protects trees of smaller sizes, and the rare oak woodland, which have large monetary value for aesthetic reasons. Woodlands are also facing Sudden Oak Death, and in my three years of field work as a utility forester, I have seen tan oak wiped out in Western Sonoma County, and large, historic coast live oak with SOD in Santa Rosa and the surrounds. I believe that arborists can make the oak forest healthier and prevent SOD by removing bay trees in a predominantly oak woodland as well as a good practice.

It is encouraging that Sonoma County is making protections for oak woodlands and redwoods, as they all improve the value of our homes and region in countless ways. Thank you for developing this tree ordinance and I encourage you to pass it as is.

Kind Regards,  
Stephanie Wade  
21676 Monte Vista Terrace, Monte Rio

ISA Certified Arborist WE-13764A  
Tree Risk Assessment Qualified

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**From:** [Jim Freeman](#)  
**To:** [Susan Gorin](#); [David Rabbitt](#); [district3](#); [district4](#); [district5](#); [Planner](#); [Doug Bush](#); [Tennis Wick](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Oak Woodland Ordinance Opposition and Recommendations  
**Date:** Sunday, November 26, 2023 10:20:07 PM

---

## EXTERNAL

Dear Board of Supervisors and County Staff,

I'm writing again, but this time about the proposed amendments to the Tree Ordinance.

I agree with the intention to protect and preserve native trees. However, like the Oak Woodland Ordinance, the proposed amendments to the Tree Ordinance do not strike the appropriate balance with priorities for housing, agriculture, and basic private property rights. As drafted, the proposed amendments expand the Tree Ordinance application to all by right and ministerial permits, including tree removal for single family residential development and apparently even associated uses that don't currently need a permit like home gardens and minor landscaping. These proposed changes typify unnecessary and burdensome government overreach.

Of particular concern is the proposed fee methodology that, per the example from the staff presentation, would require mitigation fees of more than \$20,000 for a single medium sized oak tree with a diameter of 28 inches. Development of a single family home in a forested setting could easily require removal of 10 or more trees. Removal of just one tree results in a prohibitively expensive fee for many projects. The Ordinance does allow for replacement planting, which would likely be less expensive than the fee. However, on-site replacement plantings at required ratios of 1:6 to 1:36 may not be feasible, particularly on smaller urban residential and commercial sites.

Let's imagine four medium sized trees, each with a diameter of 28 inches, are removed on a 1.0 acre parcel for development of an ADU and new septic system. The replacement tree mitigation would require replanting 96 five-gallon trees or 32 fifteen-gallon trees. The owner could opt to pay the in lieu fee of about \$80,000 dollars. Both of these options are completely unreasonable!

In addition, the ordinance appears to outright prohibit replacement planting on residential lots smaller than 1.5 acres. Thus, for residential lots smaller than 1.5 acres the only mitigation option could be in lieu fees of tens of thousands of dollars.

I'm also dismayed at the lack of public outreach and press on this issue. How was this not an item of "significant public interest"? Why have I not seen an article in the Press Democrat presenting the potential impacts of this Ordinance? Why was the ordinance package only made public six days prior to hearing and during the Thanksgiving break?

Below are specific recommendations for changes that in my mind would make the ordinance reasonable and acceptable.

## **26-88-080(M) A – General Provisions**

<!--[if !supportLists]-->1. <!--[endif]-->Protected tree diameter should be 12”, the proposed 6” size is very small and does not warrant protection.

<!--[if !supportLists]-->2. <!--[endif]-->The requirement for a Use Permit for large trees is excessive. Is this designed to create neighbor wars? A ministerial process, or at most a design review process as is common to other jurisdictions is appropriate for very large trees.

## **26-88-080(M) B - Exemptions**

<!--[if !supportLists]-->1. <!--[endif]-->Additional exemptions that should be added:

<!--[if !supportLists]-->a. <!--[endif]-->Maintenance of all existing development (not just agricultural sites).

<!--[if !supportLists]-->b. <!--[endif]-->Renewable energy development for roof mount solar.

<!--[if !supportLists]-->c. <!--[endif]-->Maintenance of existing public and private utilities.

<!--[if !supportLists]-->d. <!--[endif]-->Habitat restoration projects, trails, and facilities for public access.

<!--[if !supportLists]-->e. <!--[endif]-->All by right uses within residential zoning (R1, R2, R3, RR). Residents of Sonoma County enjoy trees and will replant and landscape their property voluntarily. Residents should be allowed to landscape how they see fit, which may include the removal of trees for all sorts of legitimate reasons. The proposed regulation in residential settings is complete government overreach!

<!--[if !supportLists]-->f. <!--[endif]-->All by right uses on parcels with base zoning for commercial or industrial uses. There is very little land that is zoned for commercial and industrial uses, it needs to be prioritized for these economically vital uses. Replanting may not be feasible and the proposed in-lieu fees could result in added development costs in the tens of thousands of dollar per tree!

<!--[if !supportLists]-->g. <!--[endif]-->All by right housing development. There is a housing crisis, no new barriers to housing should be adopted unless absolutely necessary. Replanting may not be feasible, and the proposed in-lieu fees could result in added development costs in the tens of thousands of dollars per tree!

## **Section 26-88-080(M) - E. Required mitigations for removal of protected trees.**

As noted above, the method to calculate in lieu fees presented by staff results in exorbitant fees in the tens of thousands for medium sized trees. The prescribed

appraisal method was not made available for review or even summarized in the supporting materials of the Board package. I attempted to look it up online but it was only available for purchase at a cost of over \$100. The public should have the opportunity to review the proposed appraisal methodology, assumptions, and intended use.

My understanding is that the proposed appraisal method represents the value of a tree for real estate purposes and is commonly used in urban settings. The proposed appraisal value does not represent the value of the tree to the general public for ecosystem services which is the basis of the ordinance. It also does not represent the cost to mitigate tree removal through replacement planting by the County. I do not believe the proposed appraisal method is appropriate, and it is likely to result in litigation.

If residential uses are not entirely exempted, then the minimum parcel size for replacement planting of 1.5 acres is problematic. The following is stated:

"Replacement trees may be located on residentially zoned parcels of **at least one and one-half acres** and on any commercial or industrial zoned parcel, regardless of size, where feasible"

It unclear why residentially zoned parcels must be 1.5 acres in order to qualify for replacement planting. If residential parcels are not entirely exempted (as I recommend above) then this minimum parcel size criteria will force residents to pay the absurdly high in lieu fees based off an inappropriate appraisal method.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Jim Freeman, Santa Rosa

On Friday, November 24, 2023 at 10:47:21 AM PST, Jim Freeman <jimjfreeman@yahoo.com> wrote:

Dear Board of Supervisors and County Staff,

I write to voice my opposition and provide specific recommendations for changes to the draft Oak Woodland Ordinance.

I certainly agree with the intention to protect and preserve oak woodlands. However, the proposed Ordinance does not strike the appropriate balance with other important priorities including housing, commercial and industrial uses, and agricultural preservation.

As drafted, the proposed ordinance will create an Oak Woodland Combining District and rezone over 12,000 parcels to include the Oak Woodland Zone. On these parcels proposed regulations will add large costs and permitting timelines for currently by

right housing and other small scale development. In addition, the ordinance will undoubtedly be weaponized to stop housing through the CEQA review process. It will present yet another barrier to housing, which is unnecessary and contradicts priorities to streamline and incentivize housing development. It also represents unnecessary government overreach.

My understanding is that the primary driver for this ordinance is outcry over conversion of oak woodland to vineyards. I agree with this concern and hate to see major conversions of woodland and other natural habitats. However, this ordinance goes too far and severely restricts minor by right development, I recommend the Board revise the draft ordinance to address large scale conversion of oak woodland, but exempt small scale by right uses.

I'm also dismayed at the lack of public outreach and press on this issue. How was this not an item of "significant public interest"? Why is there not a publicly available map to see where the Oak Woodland District is mapped and what parcels are included? Why was the ordinance package only made public review six days prior to hearing and during the Thanksgiving break? For this impactful of an ordinance, there needs to be a more public outreach, a map, and a longer review period!

#### **Questions:**

1. Is there a publicly available map that shows the proposed Oak Woodland Combining District and parcels that will be re-zoned? I asked Permit Sonoma, and their response was that "a list of parcels is included with the Board package". A list of parcels IS NOT ADEQUATE for public review. The public deserves the right to review the mapped oak woodland areas to verify their accuracy and understand the implications of this ordinance on their property and to the County.
2. How many parcels are proposed to be rezoned in each base zoning district?
3. How many acres of oak woodland is mapped in each base zoning district?
4. Would submitted permits that are currently in review, but have not yet been issued, subject to this new regulation?
5. Each "undeveloped" parcel is allowed a one-time conversion 0.5 acres of with a Zoning Permit
  - a. What is the basis of 0.5 acres of allowed one-time conversion? What is the average developed area for a rural parcel with an primary residence, garage, ADU, average garden, driveway, primary septic area, and reserve septic area?
  - b. What is an "undeveloped" parcel?
    - i. Is a parcel with a barn but no residence developed?

ii. Is a parcel with agricultural uses but no residence developed?

c. What is a “one-time conversion”?

i. Does this mean for undeveloped parcels only one permit to implement all development that may impact oak woodland is allowed without a Use Permit? All subsequent development, regardless of size, that impacts oak woodland would then require a Use Permit?

6. Under the proposed ordinance:

a. How many currently by right permits are estimated to now require a Zoning Permit or Use Permit each year?

b. What is the average cost (permits + studies) and timeline for a Zoning Permit or Use Permit?

c. How many additional County staff will be needed to process these permits?

**Exemptions – 26-67-030 and 040:**

1. Additional exemptions that should be added:

a. Maintenance of all existing development (not just residential and agricultural sites).

b. Renewable energy development for roof mount solar.

c. Maintenance of existing private utilities (not just public utilities).

d. Hazardous dead, dying and or diseased tree removal should be exempt, and should not require a zoning permit. Note, required studies of zoning permit (cultural resources, biotic...) will cost thousands of dollars.

e. All by right uses within urban service areas (not just residential uses). The few areas with urban services must be prioritized for housing AND other compatible urban development.

f. All by right uses on parcels with base zoning of commercial or industrial uses. There is very little land that is zoned for these uses, it needs to be prioritized for these economically vital uses.

g. All by right uses on parcels with agricultural base zoning (LIA and LEA). Lands zoned for agriculture should continue to be used for agriculture, and expansion should be allowed in these zones in order to keep them economically viable.

h. All by right housing development. Housing in rural areas is restricted by density and parcel size, further restrictions are NOT warranted. What analysis shows that rural residential development presents a real threat to Oak Woodland? There is a housing crisis, no new barriers to housing should be adopted unless absolutely necessary.

### **Zoning Permit - 26-67-030 and 050**

1. A zoning Permit should allow for conversion of up to 0.5 acres of development after the effective date of the ordinance. Development should not have to occur at one time. Many owners develop slowly for economic reasons, and they should not be forced to rush.
2. A conversion through a zoning permit should be available to both developed and undeveloped parcels, as was originally recommended by staff to the Planning Commission.
3. Requirements for a cultural resources study and biotic study should be removed, these studies cost thousands of dollars.
  - a. The grading ordinance currently has reasonable standards for protection of cultural resources.
  - b. A 1.0 acre limit to conversion is a reasonable biotic protection of Oak Woodland.

### **Use Permit Requirements 26-67-060**

1. Discretionary review should be limited to large projects only. As written, many very small development projects will require a Use Permit. This is unwarranted, unfair from an economic perspective, and will result in neighbor wars. The County should be striving to reduce discretionary permitting, not the opposite.

### **Use Permit Findings for Approval 26-67-070**

This section should be entirely stricken or made much less prescriptive to allow the decision making body appropriate discretion to approve or deny a project based on all relevant considerations. Of specific concern are the required findings of:

1. There is no feasible less environmental damaging alternative.

And

2. Any proposed Oak Woodland to be removed will not result in creation of (2) of more separate oak woodlands ...

These **required** findings may be untenable for many sites. These required findings appear to limit the discretion of the decision making body to prioritize other values and public benefits. The required findings section should either be entirely stricken or modified to require *consideration*, but not the requirement to make these specific findings.

Thank you for your consideration and service,  
Jim Freeman, Santa Rosa

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**From:** [creek shade](#)  
**To:** [BOS](#); [Doug Bush](#); [Kimberly Burr](#)  
**Cc:** [creek shade](#)  
**Subject:** Sonoma Co. Tree Protection Ordinances: Agenda item #52: ORD21-0001& ORD23-0004 Modernizing Tree and Woodland Protections  
**Date:** Friday, November 24, 2023 4:41:09 PM

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## EXTERNAL

Dear Supervisors Gore, Hopkins, Gorin, Rabbitt and Coursey,

Thanks very much for this opportunity to comment on Agenda item #52: ORD21-0001& ORD23-0004 Modernizing Tree and Woodland Protections, and for your attention to protecting trees within Sonoma County. Keeping your incredibly busy schedule in mind, please do take a few points into consideration as you prioritize actions related to the ordinances:

1. Please incorporate all points brought forward by Forest Unlimited;
2. Please do not grant exemptions that would render either or both of the ordinances ineffective in protecting trees with DBH >6 inches.
3. Please take this opportunity to review the 2021 letter to you all from Dr. Shaye Wolf, asserting that, "logging and thinning are ineffective for protecting communities during wildfire, and can even make wildfires burn hotter and faster. Logging and thinning release carbon, worsening the climate crisis and extreme fire weather, and degrade wildlife habitat;"
4. With the above in mind, please do not grant tree removals outside evacuation routes and defensible space zones around homes and communities;
5. Please keep in mind that the removal of trees using mechanical equipment removes soil carbon and dries out the soil;
6. Please utilize the sixth assessment report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which finds that protecting natural-forest ecosystems is a priority for reducing greenhouse-gas emissions. Therefore, please implement ordinances that establish clear standards for keeping our trees where they are, and take actions to prevent fuels reduction projects that selectively extract the largest trees;
7. Please do not promote actions that essentially convert mature stands to young stands, as that will result in a considerable loss of carbon stocks and a decrease in carbon sequestration;
8. Please implement accurate carbon accounting in any actions that remove trees within the County.

Many thanks for your time,  
Maya Khosla  
Senior Biologist

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**From:** [heidi stewart](#)  
**To:** [Doug Bush](#)  
**Subject:** Sonoma County Oak protections  
**Date:** Wednesday, November 22, 2023 9:13:58 PM

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**EXTERNAL**

11/22/23

Sonoma County Board of Supervisors  
575 Administration Drive  
Room 100 A  
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

*Transmitted via email c/o Doug Bush: [Doug.Bush@sonoma-county.org](mailto:Doug.Bush@sonoma-county.org)*

RE: Letter in support of Sonoma County oak protections

To the Honorable members of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors:

As a longtime Sonoma County resident I applaud the effort of the Supervisors to protect oaks. As a Native Plant Society member, Master Gardener, and former Laguna de Santa Rosa docent, I know how important oaks are to the native ecosystem here and through most of California. I urge you to vote for this measure.

Oaks are California's primary old growth resource, yet they do not receive adequate protections in many areas of the state. Unlike conifers, which are afforded comprehensive protections through the Forest Practice Act, most oaks are not commercial species, and thus are not subject to the legislation. California relies on counties and other local jurisdictions to protect oaks. Unfortunately, oaks and their associated ecosystem services, are diminished when protections are not adequate. For example, the *Forests and Rangelands 2017 Assessment* summarized water quality conditions in non-federal timberland compared to rangelands, which are not subject to the Forest Practice Act, finding 62% of forest streams in good condition compared to 34% for rangelands, with 21% of rangeland streams in poor and 21% in very poor condition."

Keeping Sonoma County's oaks standing will protect watersheds and also sustain culturally important landscapes, support the county's biodiversity, and continue to sequester carbon in oak trees, understory, downed woody material, and soil.

Sincerely,

Heidi Stewart

Sebastopol

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**From:** [jkrshop@comcast.net](mailto:jkrshop@comcast.net)  
**To:** [BOS](#)  
**Subject:** Sonoma County Oak Woodlands Ordinance  
**Date:** Monday, November 20, 2023 4:42:24 PM

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## EXTERNAL

Dear Susan Gorin, David Rabbitt, Chris Coursey, James Gore, and Lynda Hopkins,  
I am writing to urge your support for the Sonoma County Oak Woodlands Ordinance. Our oak woodlands provide critical habitat for Sonoma County's native plants and animals. They keep vast amounts of carbon out of the atmosphere to help fight climate warming. They are resilient forests to resist mild to moderate fires.

They play a critical role in helping our watersheds create subsurface water, which will be a critical resource in the very near future. I live at Sea Ranch and during the last year of the recent drought the flow of the Gualala River was not enough to allow our water company to refill the year's supply *even in winter!* Most of the rain that did fall ran quickly out of the depleted watersheds to the sea, leaving too few days that water could be legally pumped out. Please protect Sonoma County's remaining oak forests and our vital water supply.

Thank you,  
Kenyon Rupnik  
37955 Sentinel Close  
The Sea Ranch

0

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**From:** [Martha Hunt](#)  
**To:** [BOS](#)  
**Subject:** Sonoma County Tree Ordinance  
**Date:** Sunday, November 12, 2023 10:14:57 AM

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## EXTERNAL

To the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors,  
I am writing in support of establishing a county-wide tree ordinance that will effectively preserve our native trees and woodlands.

Native trees and woodlands create essential habitat that supports native insect and wildlife populations that are threatened by climate change, habitat loss, light pollution, pesticides and invasive species. Just one native oak tree can support over 4,000 different species of insects and animals, more than any other tree. Our woodlands and forests constitute some of the county's most treasured wildlands, and it is imperative that they be protected for future generations by establishing enforceable county ordinances.

Please vote to support a tree ordinance that will protect these vital natural resources.

Martha Hunt  
Healdsburg, CA  
CA Native Plant Society  
Climate Action Healdsburg

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**From:** [Jeff Oster](#)  
**To:** [BOS](#); [David Rabbitt](#)  
**Subject:** Sonoma County upcoming vote to protect (or not) our mature trees  
**Date:** Saturday, November 11, 2023 5:07:35 PM

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**EXTERNAL**

**To All The Sonoma County Supervisors,  
Please, Please support the Planning Commission's two proposed tree protection  
ordinances at your meeting on November 28th.**

**Tree preservation is so important to me, my family and my friends.**

**Jeff Oster**

**I'm a Sonoma County voter**

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**From:** [Trisha Brown](#)  
**To:** [district4](#); [BOS](#)  
**Subject:** Support for the two upcoming tree ordinances before the Board November 28th  
**Date:** Saturday, November 11, 2023 7:01:25 PM

---

**EXTERNAL**

I am a voter in the 4<sup>th</sup> District of Sonoma County and tree preservation is important to me, my family, and my friends. I am urging you to support the two proposed tree ordinances that will come before the Board on November 28th. These ordinances proposed by the Planning Commission have been carefully researched to provide necessary protections missing from our current Tree Ordinance and to create new protections for oak woodlands. They will both have positive effects on our ecosystem. It is critical for Sonoma County to protect its existing native trees through these two ordinances, for the good of both our county and our planet.

Thank you,

Trisha Brown  
930 W. Starburst Ct.  
Windsor, CA 95492

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**From:** [ameckert09@gmail.com](mailto:ameckert09@gmail.com)  
**To:** [David Rabbitt](#)  
**Cc:** [BOS](#)  
**Subject:** Support for the updated Tree Ordinance + Oak Woodland Ordinance  
**Date:** Sunday, November 12, 2023 12:56:14 PM

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## EXTERNAL

Dear Supervisor Rabbitt (and esteemed colleagues on the Board),

I am a voter living in Petaluma, and I'm writing to express my eager support for the updated Tree Ordinance and the Oak Woodland Ordinance. I believe they can help us protect our county's fragile and beautiful ecosystems, which are an integral part of our community's appeal.

As a garden educator, farmer, and conservation activist, I am passionate about Sonoma County's nature. We must preserve it for the benefit of the people, plants, and animals who will continue to live here into the future. Protecting our existing native trees will go a long way to support biodiversity, habitat retention, and human enjoyment in your jurisdiction.

I'd like to thank ReLeaf Petaluma for raising my awareness of these critical pieces of legislation, and I hope we can count on your support of healthy Sonoma County ecosystems. Thank you for your consideration of my message.

Sincerely,  
Allison Eckert

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**From:** [Carla Grady](#)  
**To:** [BOS](#); [Doug Bush](#)  
**Subject:** Support for updated Tree Ordinance & Oak Protection Ordinance  
**Date:** Friday, November 24, 2023 10:43:24 AM

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## EXTERNAL

Dear Sonoma County Board of Sups,

Thank you for considering these important developments regarding tree protection in Sonoma County. I am writing to ask that the board accept the Planning Commission's recommendations and approve both ordinances.

If you are unfamiliar with the following environmentalists' adage, let me bring a bittersweet smile to your face: when asked the best time to plant a tree, we reply "10 years ago". But more realistically, we should amend that to 20 years ago; I've been saying it for at least 10 years now! I probably don't need to explain the gravity of our moment in history: at this point in the climate crisis, growing conditions are increasingly unpredictable and precarious. To grow healthy, huge trees might be a phenomenon of days gone by, when the climate could support such growth. Likewise, existing old trees are among the best carbon sinks we can count on to help alleviate our carbon footprints that contribute to the climate crisis.

Failing to protect existing trees is thus environmentally irresponsible, given the current disruption in natural growing conditions. Existing old trees and woodlands are **literally irreplaceable**. They just can't grow like that again if they are destroyed. Of course some new growth can occur, but the majesty of what grew when conditions were ideal for their development is indeed something that we will not witness unfold again in our lifetimes.

Also, healthy old large trees in Sonoma County are being destroyed rapidly by PGE's misguided policy of removing those beneath their transmission lines. Rather than spending all that tree removal money on more viable solutions of upgrading their transmission systems and by putting lines underground, they are just chopping. And chopping. And chopping. So many trees have come down all over the county in their wasteful effort to avoid further blame and legal battles after future wildfires.

Please help protect existing healthy trees that we depend on for soil & erosion control, watershed protection, wildlife habitats, and cooling shade benefits, as well as their beloved, iconic Sonoma County beauty.

Thank you so much for your consideration and for reading this whole letter!

With appreciation,  
Dr. Carla Grady

--

***Become an anti-racist.***  
***Until justice is real,***  
***Carla***

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**From:** [Robert Hall](#)  
**To:** [Doug Bush](#)  
**Subject:** Support Sonoma County Oak Protections  
**Date:** Tuesday, November 21, 2023 12:14:16 PM

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EXTERNAL

Oaks are a long-lived species that don't get the protections other species get. They store carbon, provide forage for wildlife, enable indigenous cultural activities, keep watersheds pure and, all too often, supply firewood. Way too much firewood. The expansion of development tends to get priority and the fallout ends up in the fireplace. We need the county to step and protect oaks. We can't let this living legacy of oak woodlands become a wasteland or rare for future generations to experience. Oaks are a powerful part of the California story. We mustn't give this story a bad ending.

Please support Sonoma County oak protections,

Robert Hall  
1946 Grove St. Apt. 6  
San Francisco CA 94117

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**From:** [Diana Corvelle](#)  
**To:** [David Rabbitt](#); [BOS](#)  
**Subject:** Supporting Tree Protection  
**Date:** Sunday, November 12, 2023 1:42:59 PM

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**EXTERNAL**

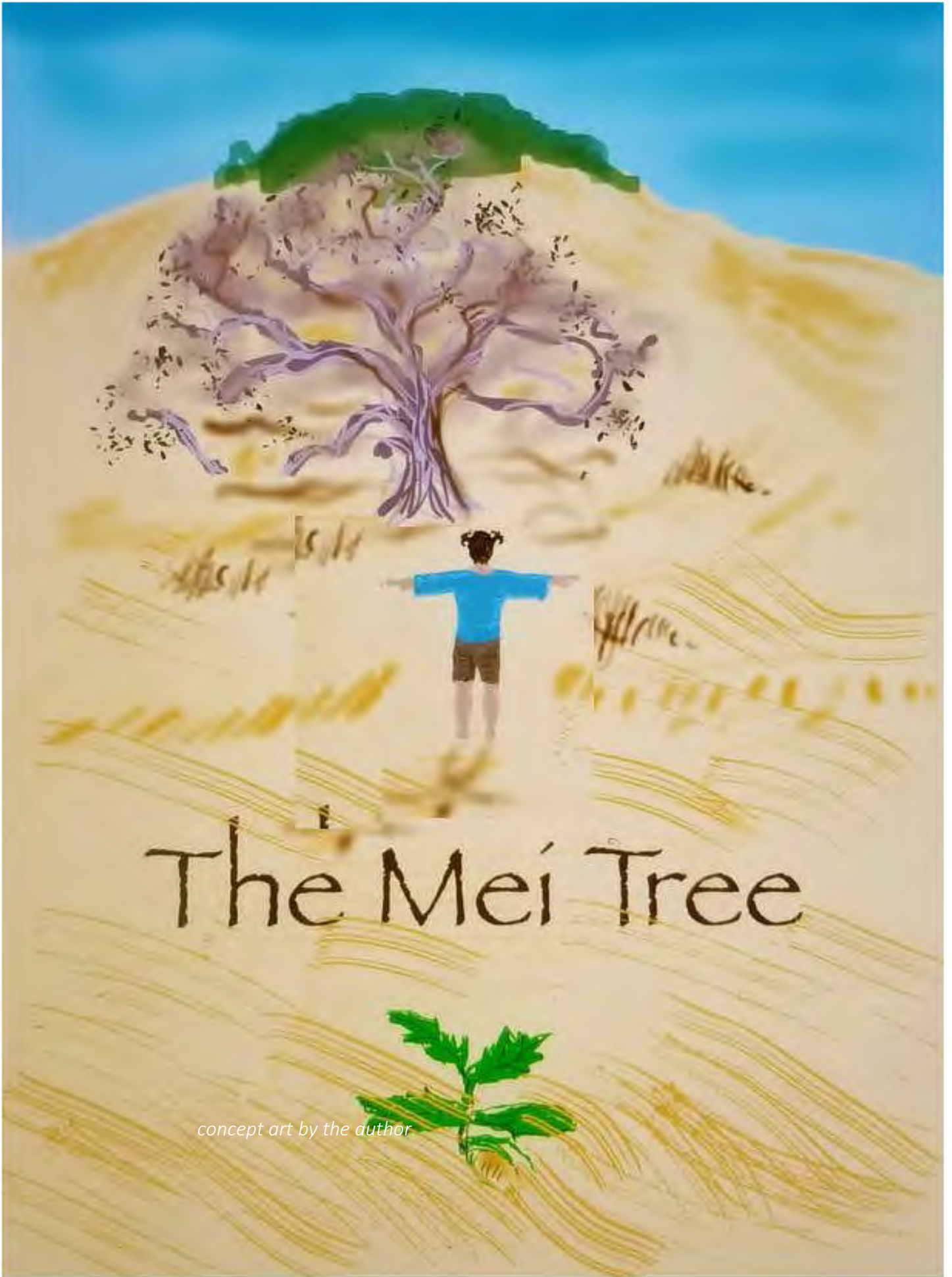
Hello,

I am writing to ask for your support of the Planning Commission's two proposed tree protection ordinances on November 28th. My family lives across the street from Bond Park in Petaluma, and even helped with the local ReLeaf tree planting and monitoring effort there. It is so important that we continue to protect these new trees, give them every opportunity to thrive, as well as protect older, existing trees in our area. Thank you for your time and attention on this!

Yours,  
Diana Corvelle

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# The Mei Tree

*concept art by the author*

## The Mei Tree

By Bruce Hagen ©2022

[brucekeyofh@gmail.com](mailto:brucekeyofh@gmail.com)

2239 words

It was 1:37 in the afternoon of August 25, in Petaluma, California, USA.

"Hooh-hooh, hooh hooh-hooooooooo!"

It was no time for an owl to be awake.

" Hooh-hooh, hooh hooh-hooooooooo!"

Mei dropped her spoon into her applesauce, spinning in her seat to face the window. Nose on glass, she squinted at the hillside beyond the back fence.

"Gramma!" she whispered sharply. "Did you hear that owl?"

"Um-hmm" said her grandmother.

"Uh, Gramma... it's *daytime!*"

Mei unlatched the window, pushed it open wide, and listened.

" Hooh-hooh, hooh hooh-hooooooooo!" came the call from up the hill.

"GRAMMA! Did you *hear that? She's calling ME!*"

"Mei-chan, it's for yooooou!" the owl repeated, quite clearly this time.

A mother quail and her dozen peepers quietly scurried across the patio, right under Mei's nose. Any other day, a quail family would have commanded her attention. Today, they might as well have been invisible.

"Gramma... why would that owl be awake *now?*" *And how would she know my name?*

Mei blinked at the bright summer sky, thinking. Then she decided. "Gramma, I'm going up the hill... okay?" she called out as she pushed opened the screen door, headed for the back gate.

"No nap today?"

"Later... okay?"

Grandma smiled and nodded. "Be back by dinner. Your mother is making hotpot!"

Mei took short steps up the steep and well-worn path. She weaved her way through the tall grass stalks, their seed heads tapping her head as she passed. Crispy gray thistles crunched beneath her sandals as she made straight for the fat twisty oak tree halfway up the slope.

Mei knew this tree as "Greenbeard, the Last of the Giants." Greenbeard was extremely old, covered with whiskers of Spanish moss. Gramma said that long ago he was part of a forest covering the whole mountain. Today he stood alone.

Mei had known Greenbeard only for a few years, but she could imagine what a life he must have lead! Now he's enjoying old age, relaxing and sunning himself as he leans back on his many arms and elbows. The animals loved him; he fed them acorns and bugs. He sheltered them from driving winter rain and blazing summer sun.

If you could climb or fly, Greenbeard gave you a place in his arms to safely hide away, waiting for dinner. Daytime it was a popular place for Mei, and the red tailed and white tailed hunter birds. And at night, the owls.

Greenbeard's front arms formed an arched doorway into the leafy room surrounding his huge trunk. As always, Mei came to this door with slow careful steps, pausing for a deep breath before stepping inside.

She loved this place like home. It was always shady and green, quiet and cool, even in summer. Good smelling, like the soil in Gramma's garden. For years she had enjoyed her visits with Greenbeard; first with Jiji, then on her own. But recently, as again today, it made her strangely sad.

Greenbeard was a Coast Live Oak. He should always be wearing a coat of dark green leaves. But last summer those leaves began dropping, one by one, like a slow dry rain. Now, most of his leaves lay quiet on the ground. Those still clinging to their twigs were the color of ashes and dust.

Gramma said Greenbeard did not like the warming climate. He had Sudden Oak Sickness. SOS, like a call for help, Gramma said. Now Mei could hear that call, and she worried, *who would answer?*

"Hellooo, Mr. Greenbeard!" Mei bowed, then approached him for a hug. Hugging Greenbeard wasn't easy. It was like hugging the side of a house. But she did it anyway. "Where are you hiding your owl today?"

"Hoo-hoo, hoo hoo-hoooooo!" came the answer... from very close by. Then a tiny acorn rattled down through the branches and tapped Mei on the top of her head.

"Huh?" she said, looking up. And as she did, another tiny acorn dropped directly on the tip of her tongue. She gasped and gulped.

The acorn disappeared.

Did it bounce into that gopher hole between her feet? Or did she swallow it?! A twig snapped overhead. Mei watched the owl jump into flight, then flap silently west, just under the faint blue sliver of the moon.

Where'd that acorn go? Mei remembered how Jiji teased her about swallowing watermelon seeds. "You might grow a watermelon in your tummy!" But Mei was smart about science, especially trees. *An oak tree could not grow in my tummy*, she told herself.

With the mysterious owl gone, and her being overdue for her nap, Mei bowed goodbye to Greenbeard, turned, and started back down the hill. In the distance, Gramma with her green apron and orange sunhat looked like a giant poppy flower against the brown rows of garden soil. *Poppies...*

Suddenly, a wave of sleep washed over her like the warm wind. *Maybe I could have my nap here?* she thought. She sat down on soft dry grass and slipped off her sandals. *Sure I could.* She stretched and yawned like Hermione, her cat. Then she laid down, and closed her eyes...

*But no*, she remembered, *I have my naps at home.* Mei pulled herself up, onto to her bare feet...

...and as she stood up, the sleepy warmth was washed away by a cool whirlwind of sparkling energy. It swirled up inside her, from her heels and toes to her fingers and nose. It made her head spin.

Mei opened her eyes wide as blooming sunflowers. All around her everything glowed like the sun was shining on the world from the *inside*.

Slowly... Mei stretched her arms. *Beautiful live oak leaves there in my hands*, she observed.

No...

Wait.

Oak leaves. Glowing green. *Growing... from my fingertips!*

Before Mei had time to think about this, she saw that her *three* arms were covered with a skin of scaly gray bark. *What is going on?!*

Then she remembered *the acorn*.

Mei thought this should be scary, but she wasn't scared. Not at all. She felt *wonderful*. That acorn came from Greenbeard, her best friend. She looked for Gramma, and her home. Wow, she could see forever! And there, down the hill, was her butter-colored house. There was Gramma in the garden—she looked up at Mei and waved with her weeder.

Mei looked for Greenbeard. There he was, right beside her, but no longer gray. Green like before the SOS. And he was smiling. *Without even a face to smile with!* Reassured of her safety, she smiled back. And wondered, what would happen next.

The sun sank quickly into the fog wave that was spilling over the western hills. But not quickly for Mei-Tree.

Time. Slowed. Down. Minutes and hours and days became weeks and months and years.

The grass grew taller, and golden. The West wind blew it into waves that rolled below her. Mei was a dancer. Mei-Tree moved her arms with the breezes, swaying to the quiet slow music. And each evening, when the wind grew still, her arms were pointing the tiniest bit more at the place where the wind had gone.

The last full moon of summer rose and poured cool air down the quiet slope. It swirled around Mei-Tree's legs, while her head and arms floated above, still bathing in the afternoon heat.

But the next morning, she woke up with alarm. Her yellow house was gone! All the houses... gone! *What is happening to me? My feet are so cold.*

Then she laughed. During the night, a blanket of fog had been pulled across the valley, from her knees to the slopes of the eastern mountains.

Mei-Tree explored her new senses. She saw deep into the steady eyes of the Kites as they hovered above, searching for their next meal. She heard every singing bird for miles around. She learned their songs: "Watch Out, Danger!" and "Come Get Some Food" and "Will You Be Mine?"

Mei-Tree soon had tree companions of all kinds, trees beyond counting. She loved new these neighbors like a family!

Mei-Tree had a big appetite, but she was still growing up, and her leafy hands could not catch much sun-food. Yet she never went hungry. Her elder relatives and neighbors cared for all the tree children at their feet. They shared food and water and medicine through their huge tangle of roots, with help from the tiny creatures who lived in that dark moist world. She felt the warning messages from the Mother Trees, preparing their defense against attack.

One spring morning she felt a tickling on her leafy fingertips. She was alarmed to see some of her leaves wrapped with sticky white tents, and to feel the nibbling of tiny caterpillars. They quickly spread to cover all her leaves.

*I'm doomed*, she thought.

But then the birds came. Not only were they happy to eat the bugs, but they looked familiar. These were the same birds who collected and planted her baby acorns. "*I can live with this*", she smiled to herself.

Mei-Tree had people friends, too. In the Autumn, they would collect some of her acorns to eat during the winter. Every few years, they would light small fires. These were frightening at first—like the caterpillars—but she learned that the fires burned back the shrubs at her feet, shrubs that were eating and drinking her food. The fires toasted her bark skin a bit, but when the fires went out, there was more food for her.

Winter brought storm after storm after storm, flash floods of clouds racing over and down from the crest of the hill. Wind whipping her arms wildly, rain soaking the soil around her feet. Nearby, the land was sliding, leaving gushing rust-red gashes in the green. Mei-Tree gripped the earth tight with every one of her thousand toes.

Spring again. *More birds this year*, Mei-Tree observed. Nests, eggs, and babies. Tickling her skin, picking the insects from her now countless arms.

No hurry now. Nothing to say, everything to hear: the scree of a hawk on an autumn morning, circling a rising fountain of air. Water gurgling through gopher tunnels after a spring downpour. The nightly chorus of crickets and frogs. On summer evenings, the click of bats zig-zagging for invisible bugs. And deep into a midwinter night, the hootings of the owls.

No hurry now. Nowhere to go, everything to see: another May sunset full of insects rising in clouds, golden light in their fluttering wings and in the drifting, shimmering spiderwebs.



Mei-Tree observed the slow circling of suns and moons, planets and comets, wondering, *Am I more tree, or more girl?* Could an oak tree smell the Bay leaves wet by the first November rain? Could a tree smell the perfume of tarweed in September heat? Could a girl smell a winter storm from three days away?

Nothing passed by Mei-Tree unnoticed. When the cloudburst rolled down the slope, she heard each raindrop slapping every blade of dry grass as the downpour raced toward her outstretched fingers... and quenched the fire in her parched throat. She saw every bead of dew strung on the spiderwebs of late summer, and in each delicate bead the image of every other. She witnessed the hunting mountain lion, the death and birth of deer.

And she wondered, *where are the baby oaks?* When humans came with cows and weedy grasses, baby oaks would sprout up for a year or two, then disappear. Her forest family and friends grew old and grey; one by one they laid down to slowly disappear into the grass, melting into tree food. With no babies to feed.

Moss now hung low from her long, twisting branches. Mei-Tree was stiff; she could no longer bend with the wind. A violent January storm knocked her down to one knee, but she kept her arms held high. Spring came, full of the fast-growing grasses and hungry cows.

*Where are the baby oaks?*

The beetles, the mushrooms, and the winds were bringing Mei-Tree back to a gentle and loving Mother Earth -- a finger here, an arm there. In autumn, she sprinkled acorns at her feet, and yet...

*No baby oaks.*

One quiet moonless winter night, Mother Earth earth rumbled, then roared. She rose up, whipping the ground in waves. It snapped Mei-Tree's old body into the sky, pulling her feet loose from the soil. She fell to the ground, and was gently rocked before she was released, into a mother's quiet embrace.

Then, finally, Mei-Tree settled quietly down for the long rest, beginning a dream of emerald green emerging from golden brown...

"Meiii-chan, dinn-ner!

Mei opened her eyes, yawned, and stretched her arms. Her mother stood just downhill, hand shielding her eyes against the setting sun. Mei got to her feet.

Solid.

She began to walk. Steady. Back home.

But something held her back. Did she leave one root gripping the ground? Mei stopped, shook the sleep from her head. She turned around and looked down into the flattened grass where she had slept. A bed of wind-combed gold, and something else...

“Mom... you didn’t do this. Did you?” Mei pointed back at the ground. Her mom shook her head no.

Two tiny bright green leaves poked through the grass where Mei had slept.

“It’s a baby”, she smiled. “A baby oak.”

“A Mei tree”, smiled her mother.

It was the first of many more.

**From:** [Gavin Waters](#)  
**To:** [Doug Bush](#)  
**Subject:** Tree ordinances  
**Date:** Monday, November 20, 2023 5:02:39 PM

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**EXTERNAL**

Doug,

I am writing to express my support for the two ordinances recommended by the Sonoma County Planning Commission for the protection of native trees and oak woodlands.

I do not support this: "allowing the removal of up to .5 acre of woodland on undeveloped parcels to balance development and conservation". Conservation must be prioritized at all costs. Development should increase density in already developed areas.

Thanks, Gavin Waters  
Sebastopol

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**Tree Protection**  
**Comments from Kids**

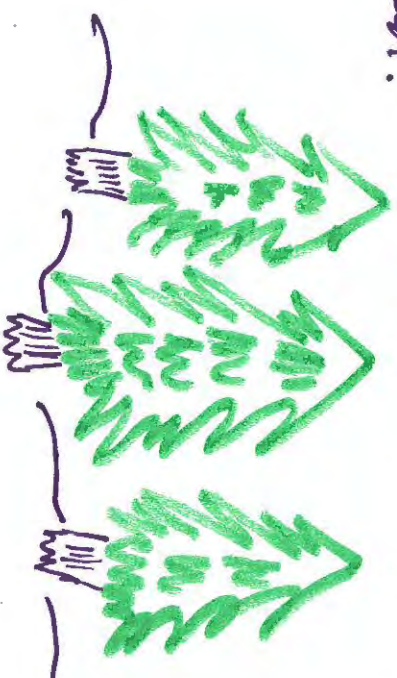
*November 2023*



*High School*



Hi, it would mean a lot to me if we  
had more protections in place for the trees.  
The forest is a great escape from the urban  
world.



Some of  
Hampshire  
11 grade

November 15th, 2023

Dear Supervisors and staff,



Some of my best memories take place in Sonoma Counties trees. Let the future kids make the same beautiful memories.

November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Dear Supervisors & Staff,

Please cease issuance of tree removal permits to prevent destruction of Sonoma County's forests, woodlands, and trees.

In simple words...

please stop killing our forests!!!

I've lived in California all of my life and have spent my entire childhood under the redwoods.

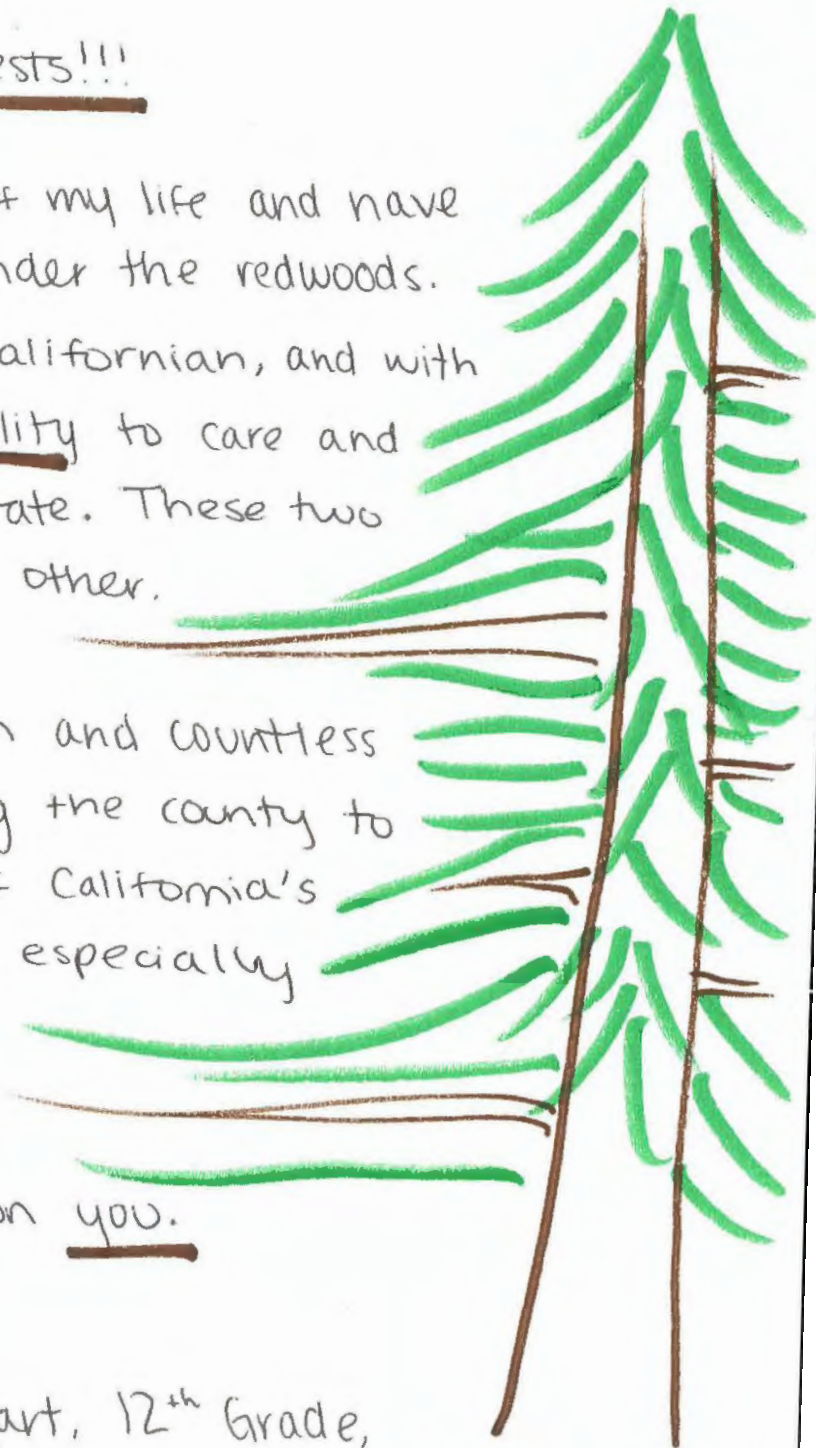
I am proud of being a Californian, and with this pride comes responsibility to care and maintain this beautiful state. These two cannot exist without the other.

I, along with Mother Earth and countless other people, are begging the county to prevent the destruction of California's trees for any purpose, especially agriculture.

We're counting on you.



Charlotte Taggart, 12<sup>th</sup> Grade,  
Analy High School, Sebastopol, CA







Hi Board of Supervisors!

I've grown up in Sonoma County my whole life, immersed in the Norcal beauty. Addressing climate change is massively important and is directly related to these policies. Save the bee's and protect the trees!

Thank you,

Ella (17) Analy Hs

# OUR FORESTS

MATTER !!!

Dear board of supervisors,

My name is Sabine Wolpert and I am a 11th grader at Anady Highschool. Please vote to protect our forests.

This resource is valuable beyond measure. IF I could vote in favor of my environment and future I would in a second, but since this is all the power I have as part of the younger generation, I strongly urge you to stop the destruction of our world.

I've lived in Sonoma County my whole life and the forest has been a large part of that life.

Please keep them safe and prevent more unnecessary destruction of forests

-Katherine Hartman  
Junior at Analy HS





Dear district of supervisors,

My name is Aziza Greer, and I'm an 18 year old voter from Sebastopol. Please protect the trees of Sonoma County from agricultural development. Not only do these trees provide comfortable memories and lovely adventures for all, but they are important to help mitigate climate change, help our rivers & ecosystems, and protect our air from serious air pollution. If Sonoma County is deforested, there will be detrimental effects for every citizen of your county.

Sincerely, Aziza Greer

Dear Supervisors and Staff,

My name is Zoëlie Kim. I'm 18 years old and I go to Anady High School in Sebastopol. On behalf of the community at Anady, my family, and myself

We urge you to vote to protect our trees!  
We want to be able to bring my baby cousins to see our beautiful trees, and

some of my favorite childhood memories come from my father bringing me to the local forests. Our trees are also so important for the well-being of the planet!

As deforestation continues to happen across the globe it is so important to save what we have left. We are so blessed in Sonoma County to have so many beautiful trees.

Please help to preserve them & make our planet happy!!! 😊

- Zoëlie Kim

I'm Zoey and I'm a 9<sup>th</sup> grader at  
Analy high school. I've been a Sonoma County  
member for my whole life and I believe that  
we need to protect our trees. I love to hang  
out in and under the trees with my friends  
or by my self. Without the trees I can't  
hold these memories. Protect the trees  
for future generations to come. Keep  
the trees, Protect our Earth!



# Protect the Trees!

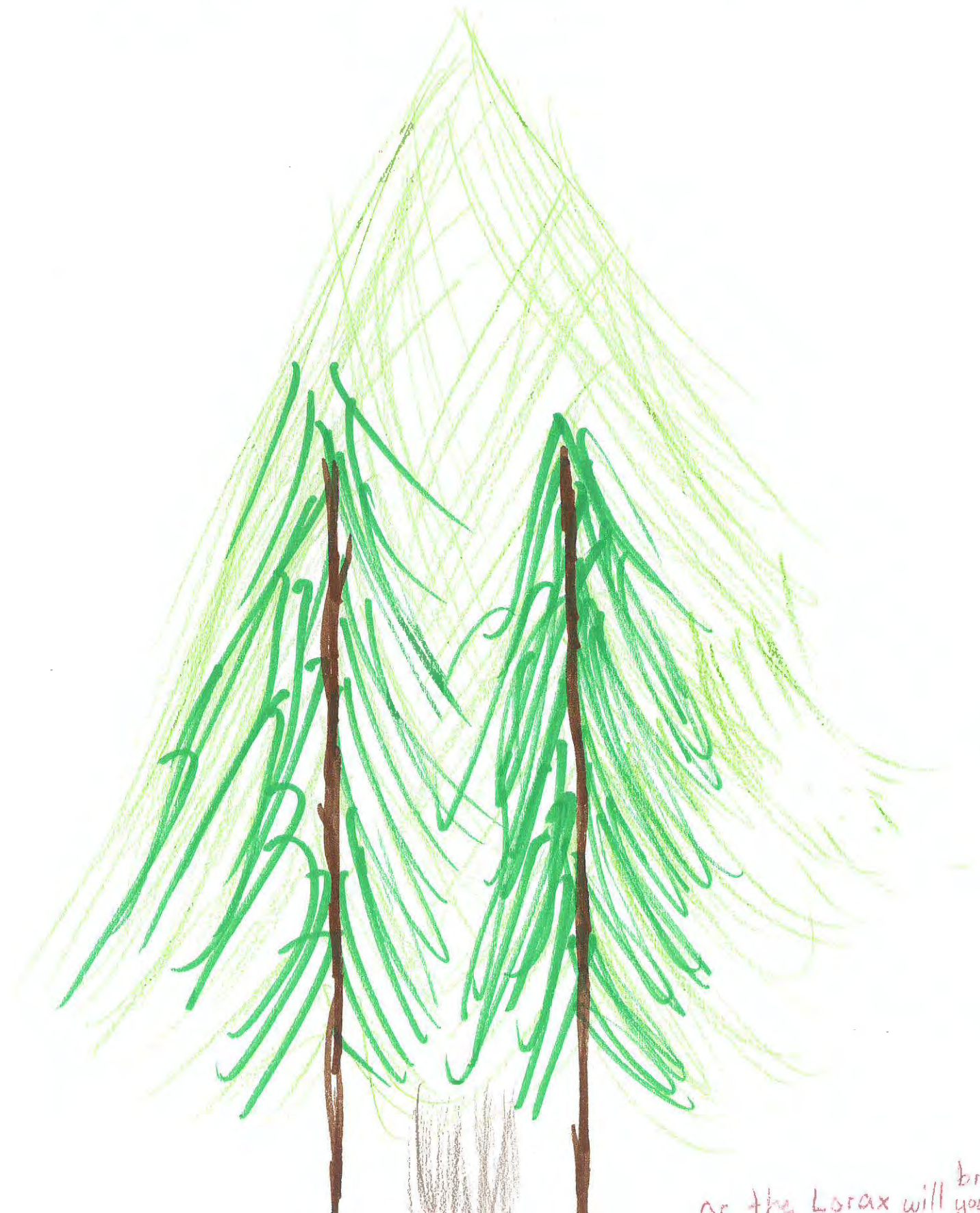


Vote to keep  
the trees!





Protect the

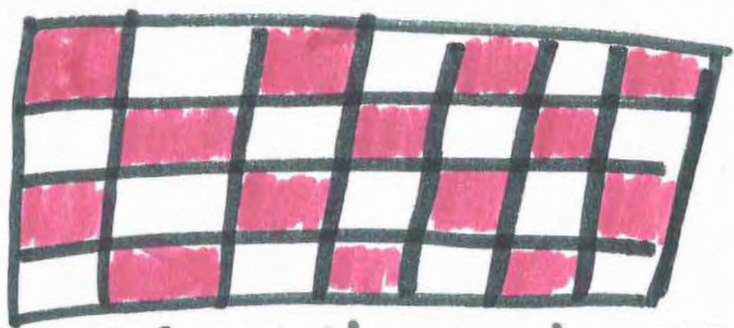


as the Lorax will break your knee





I've always loved climbing and hanging around trees. Please save them Adrim Ruiz!!



12th grader, 17





November 11th, 2023

Dear Supervisors and staff,

I'm writing this letter because I am concerned with the future of our forests. They are a huge pride of Sonoma County and are loved by everyone in our community. These trees should not be cut down, not just because we love them, but also because they can filter out our polluted air.

Please consider this and stop permitting the forests to be cut down!

Thank you for your time,  
Veronique (12th grade student at Analy)

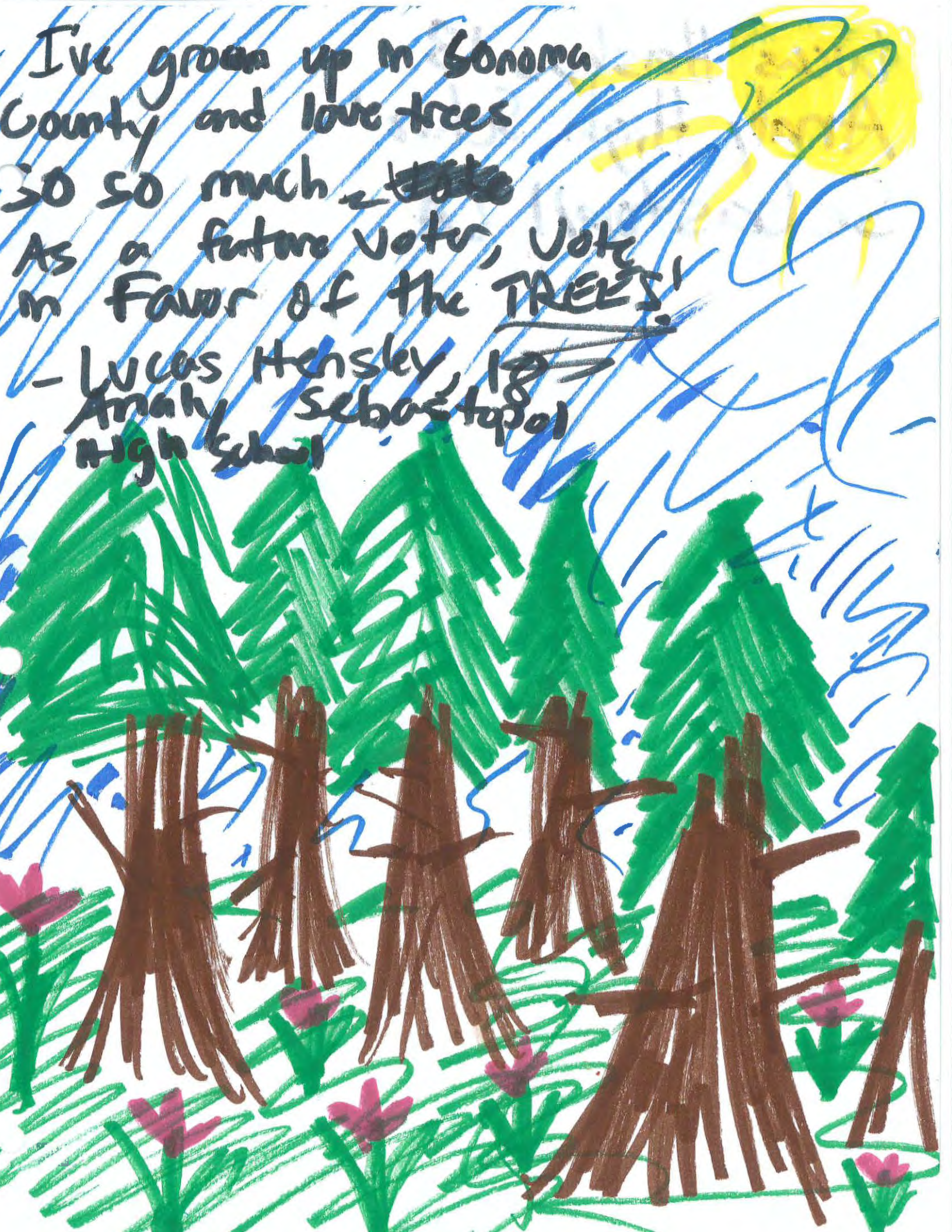




I've grown up in Sonoma  
County and love trees  
SO SO much ~~to~~

As a future voter, Vote  
in Favor of the TREES!

- Lucas Hensley, 18  
Anahy Sebastopol  
High School





Wesley High School  
18  
Castroville, CA





Dear Supervisors;

Please keep our trees alive, they've been around before us and will outlive us. For this reason I think we should do what we can to keep the trees that have driven their roots just as deep into the ground as the families and communities here. The trees and our communities are one and having a vineyard bring it to the floor for some profit is completely unreasonable.

Sincerely,

Analy High Student





Trees, and

the landscape of SC, hold core memories for so much youth here. Protected Spaces like Grove of the Old Trees are so special. Vote to protect our trees! - Keira, 910, Sebastopo



*Elementary*



Y.V.H. 11/14/23/











Sophie



Save  
the  
forests



Every single tree is important to my future, please don't take them away.

by: Mia  
age: 13  
Ruggiero





Save  
Our  
Forests



Miles  
Ruggiero Age: 10













Juliette





cond 11/14  
123







11/14/23  
1:22 P.m.













LITIG



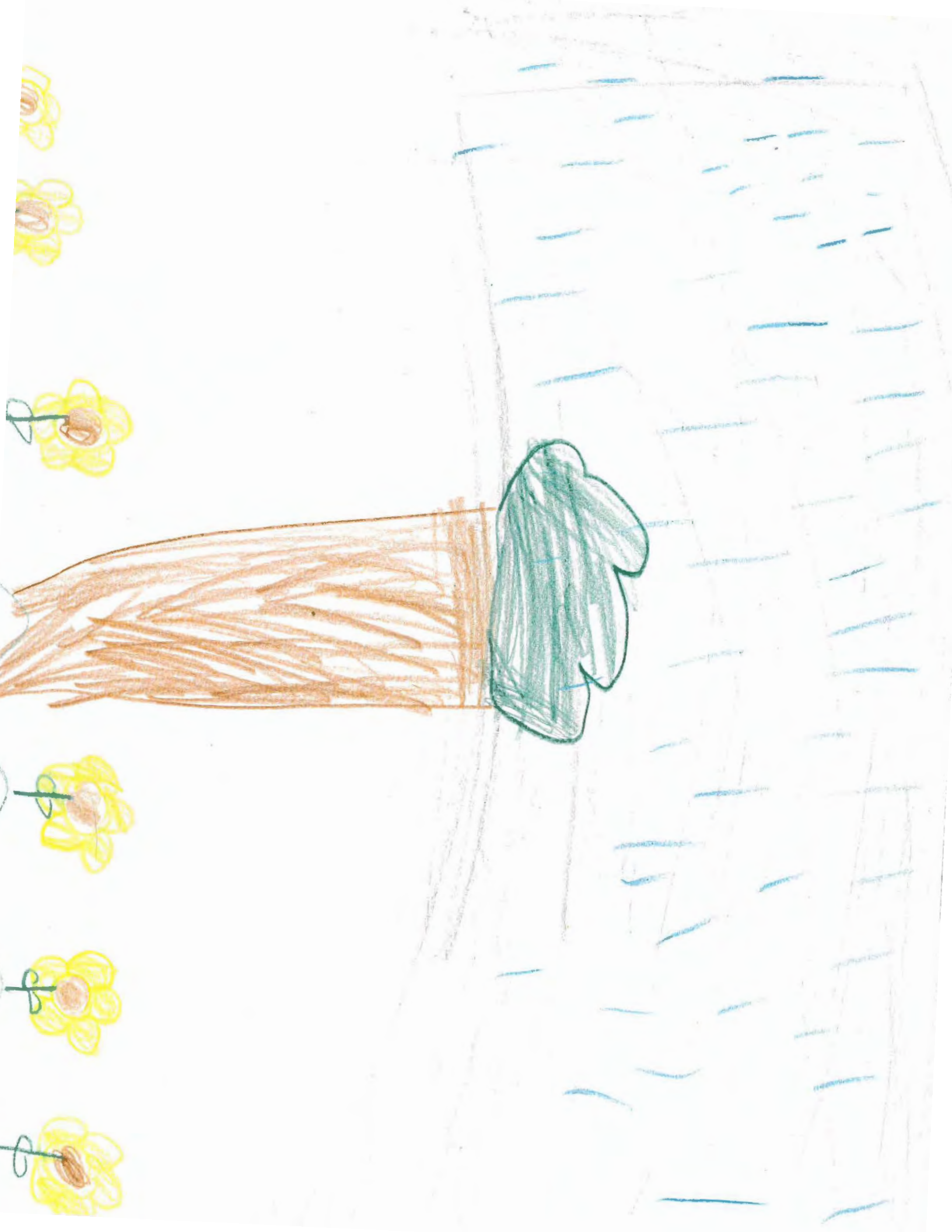
WV 2023





ROWAN

























19/2



11/14x23

apple tree





