

CAMBRIA FOREST COMMITTEE

TO CONSERVE AND MANAGE THE NATIVE FOREST OF CAMBRIA



Auten Resource Consulting
116 Martinelli Street, Suite #8
Watsonville, CA 95076

June 29, 2021

Dear Mr. Auten

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the proposed Covell Ranch Forest Health Fuels Reduction Project in Cambria, CA.

We have reviewed the draft CalVTP Project Specific Analysis and the Coastal Vegetation Treatment Standards in Attachment F. We support the project goals of improving the health of the Monterey Pine forest on the Covell Ranch, and we have the following suggestions to improve the long-term results of the project.

The proposed removal of 70 to 80 percent of Monterey Pines and Live Oaks less than 8 inches DBH is excessive. Smaller, younger trees are the most resilient to changeable climatic and soil moisture conditions, and they are the large trees of the future. Healthy oaks should not be removed to achieve any arbitrary ratio of oaks to pines and the removal criteria for all tree types should be adjusted to retain the maximum number of live trees.

Standing dead trees or snags are an essential habitat for numerous bird and related wildlife species. Except for hazardous trees next to roads, the maximum number of snags should be left in place.

There is a statement in Attachment F. that the removal of trees and understory vegetation will allow more sunlight to penetrate the forest floor. Unfortunately, this will result in the proliferation of invasive non-native vegetation including French Broom and annual grasses which are more flammable than the existing native vegetation.

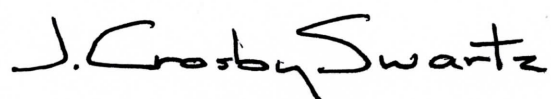
The proposed use of mechanized mastication on an estimated 634 acres of Monterey Pine

forest is troubling. The resulting extensive disturbance of existing native vegetation and animal habitat is not justified by any forest health or fire safety rationale. Selective use of hand crews can achieve project goals very effectively with less collateral damage.

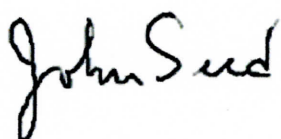
A related issue is that extensive mastication of understory vegetation in combination with pruning or limbing up of a majority of trees can increase the speed and intensity of fire by allowing the wind and embers to blow freely under the forest canopy.

We request that the draft PSA and Attachment F. be modified as necessary to best achieve the project's long term forest health and fire safety goals.

Yours truly,



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