

The article below “*Mendocino Redwood Company re-certified as sustainable over objections of environmentalists*” was published by Glenda Anderson in the Press Democrat online November 23, 2015.

Mendocino Redwood Company believes that readers of this article would benefit from some clarifications and commentary, which are presented on the right side of the page in green italics. Substantial factual information on Mendocino and Humboldt Redwood forests and their practices is available at [www.mrc.com](http://www.mrc.com).

Text of Article <i>Text of article begins below, spaces placed to allow facts to line up with text of article.</i>	<b><i>Facts about Mendocino Redwood Company</i></b>
<p>Mendocino Redwood Company has been re-certified as using sustainable forestry methods, despite an outcry over its practice of poisoning oak trees and leaving them standing, a timber-management approach some fire district officials and others say increases fire hazards.</p>	<p><i>Mendocino Redwood Company (MRC) embraces third party review and verification of our activities. The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) stands out in the field of forest certification for the rigor and review required to achieve certification. FSC standards go beyond other certification protocols to include the important review of social impacts and community involvement. Furthermore, we are regulated by seven (7) state and federal agencies. That is a lot of transparency and oversight.</i></p>
<p>A group of rural Mendocino County residents attempted to sway the Rainforest Alliance’s decision to label the timber company “sustainable,” but the nonprofit certifying agency dismissed their concerns and re-issued the stamp of approval last week.</p> <p>“The Rainforest Alliance interviewed many individuals with decades of fire suppression experience — their expertise indicated that the dead and dying tan oak does not significantly impact fire hazard,” Stefan Bergmann, the Rainforest Alliance’s associate manager of forest management, said in an email.</p>	<p><i>The author quotes the certification expert in the next paragraph explaining how <u>concerns were heard</u> rather than “dismissed.” (author’s word) FSC standards go beyond other certification protocols to include the important review of social impacts and community involvement.</i></p> <p><i>The Rainforest Alliance is a FSC authorized organization qualified to verify an applicant’s performance against standards established by the FSC. FSC Forest certifications are performed by third party organizations.</i></p>
<p>[ARTICLE CONTINUES]</p>	

Bergmann said information provided to the alliance about recent fires on Mendocino Redwood Company lands showed “there was not a notable difference in fire behavior in adjacent stands treated vs. not treated with herbicides.” In addition, the certification report states: “the chemicals are applied according to the laws and regulations of the state of California including taking precautions to protect the health of forest workers and the public.”

Mendocino Redwood declined to comment but said it expects to issue a statement about recertification some time this week.

Environmentalists criticized the certification, which notes the timber company plans to continue the practice for 20 to 30 years — the time it has estimated will be needed to restore conifer domination to its forests, which stretch across 228,852 acres in Mendocino and Sonoma counties. Its affiliate, Humboldt Redwood Company, owns an additional 209,300 acres.

Els Cooperrider, a spokeswoman for Citizens for Fire Safe Forests, said the Rainforest Alliance is not credible and is helping Mendocino Redwood “greenwash” its products.

“MRC pays to get certified and are getting their money’s worth,” said Cooperrider, a former Ukiah organic brewery owner and a leader in the successful ballot effort that in 2004 banned genetically modified crops in Mendocino County.

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*From our inception we have worked with the local community to talk about how to successfully restore our forest from historical activities and to run a successful business. To that end, we have emphasized an exceptional level of transparency in how we operate our business; opening our property to take anyone to the place of their choosing to see firsthand our practices and results. In addition we publish enormous amounts of data, other information and videos on our website: [www.mrc.com](http://www.mrc.com)*

*MRC uses herbicides to treat previous owners’ legacies on the ground which resulted in, among other things, tan oak unnaturally dominating our forest. The treatment of tan oak will return our forest to a mixed redwood and Douglas fir conifer forest in a time that matters to people alive today.*

*Mendocino Redwood Company (MRC) embraces third party review and verification of our activities. The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) stands out in the field of forest certification for the rigor and review required to achieve certification. FSC standards go beyond other certification protocols to include the important review of social impacts and community involvement. The Rainforest Alliance is a FSC authorized organization qualified to verify an applicant’s performance against standards established by the FSC. FSC Forest certifications are performed by third party organizations.*

The amount Mendocino Redwood pays annually to be certified was not readily available, but in 2015, the Rainforest Alliance collected almost 25 percent of its revenue from certification fees, about \$12.7 million, according to financial statements posted on its website. Other sources of funding include donations, fundraising and grants, Bergmann said. He said the agency stands by the certifications. The alliance's independent auditors check timber companies' practices against rules created by the Forest Stewardship Council, he said. The nonprofit council is affiliated with the Rainforest Alliance.

The agency's criteria are "recognized internationally as extremely rigorous social and environmental sustainability standards," Bergmann said.

Certification is designed to promote sustainable forestry and agricultural practices by rewarding companies who follow a set of rules with seals of approval that can boost their business. The seals help eco-minded consumers choose products that use sustainable production methods, supporters say.

The Rainforest Alliance generally is well regarded, but some environmental groups have accused it of certifying timber and farming corporations that are not sustainable. The alliance was sued last year by a Seattle nonprofit — Water and Sanitation Health, or WASH — which alleged the alliance engaged in unfair marketing over its certification of Chiquita farms as sustainable. WASH alleges the farming company is not sustainable. A trial date was scheduled for early next year.

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*Mendocino Redwood Company (MRC) embraces third party review and verification of our activities. The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) stands out in the field of forest certification for the rigor and review required to achieve certification. FSC standards go beyond other certification protocols to include the important review of social impacts and community involvement. We think the redwood region would benefit if all forest owners sought FSC certification as we have for 15 years.*

Citizens for Fire Safe Forests is hoping to have better luck convincing Mendocino County voters to take a stand against Mendocino Redwood's tree-poisoning practices.

*MRC has a long standing policy to take anyone anywhere on our forest to the place of their choosing. Since the recent conversation began around our treatment of tan oak over 200 people have taken us up on the offer. Rather than "take a stand against" MRC (author's words), these people are taking part in the conversation with MRC to help inform our decisions about forestry. And, rather than signing a petition, there is a better way; by participating in the open and transparent process recently established and funded by the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors, by contacting us [www.mrc.com/online-contact-form/](http://www.mrc.com/online-contact-form/) to come see the results in person, or if you are unable to make it to field go to: [www.hrcllc.com/about-us/forestry-videos/](http://www.hrcllc.com/about-us/forestry-videos/) and see videos of our activities on our forest.*

They expect to submit signatures for a ballot measure in early January that, if approved by voters, would condemn the "hack-and-squirt" practice as a nuisance and limit its use.

*Earlier this year a group of residents came before the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors to request the County consider imposing a voluntary moratorium on the treatment of tan oaks. The request and reasons for the moratorium were discussed vigorously and publicly. County Supervisors voted against the moratorium idea and instead supported, with specific funding, a community-driven effort to explore the issue in the form of a Working Group. More recently, a petition has been created to place an initiative on a future ballot. The stated reason for the initiative is to reduce fire danger. Rather than signing a petition, there is a better way; by participating in the open and transparent process recently established and funded by the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors, by contacting us [www.mrc.com/online-contact-form/](http://www.mrc.com/online-contact-form/) to come see the results in person, or if you are unable to make it to field go to: [www.hrcllc.com/about-us/forestry-videos/](http://www.hrcllc.com/about-us/forestry-videos/) and see videos of our activities on our forest. With input from the Working Group, plus guidance and regulation by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire), fire concerns will be properly addressed.*

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The practice is aimed at restoring conifer forests by killing hardwood trees that compete with redwood and fir trees. The hardwoods were able to take root because of the over-cutting of conifer trees under prior ownership of the land. Mendocino Redwood officials have denied the practice creates a fire safety issue. The trees are somewhat more flammable for a year or two but become less so over time and eventually can actually reduce fire danger, the company says. The practice has been used for decades, but critics say its use has escalated in recent years, with an estimated 1 million trees being killed annually on Mendocino Redwood land, exposing rural residents and firefighters to increased danger.

The proposed initiative declares that trees taller than 5 meters — a little more than 16 feet — that are poisoned and left standing for more than 90 days are a nuisance.

*The treatment of tan oak occurs throughout Mendocino County to restore the redwood and Douglas fir trees across public and private land. Our company, Mendocino Redwood Company (MRC), has been treating tan oak in the forest since we acquired the forestlands in 1998. Earlier this year a group of residents came before the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors to request the County consider imposing a voluntary moratorium on the treatment of tan oaks. The request and reasons for the moratorium were discussed vigorously and publicly. County Supervisors voted against the moratorium idea and instead supported, with specific funding, a community-driven effort to explore the issue in the form of a Working Group. More recently, a petition has been created to place an initiative on a future ballot. The stated reason for the initiative is to reduce fire danger. Rather than signing a petition, there is a better way; by participating in the open and transparent process recently established and funded by the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors, by contacting us [www.mrc.com/online-contact-form/](http://www.mrc.com/online-contact-form/) to come see the results in person, or if you are unable to make it to field go to: [www.hrcllc.com/about-us/forestry-videos/](http://www.hrcllc.com/about-us/forestry-videos/) and see videos of our activities on our forest. With input from the Working Group, plus guidance and regulation by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire), fire concerns will be properly addressed.*

ABOUT MRC:

*Mendocino Redwood Company (MRC) was created in 1998 from lands purchased in Mendocino and Sonoma counties with the publicly declared mission to be good stewards of the forest and at the same time run a successful business. We have made significant progress in that regard:*

1. *Adopting policies to make MRCs forestlands FSC certified (since November*

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2000);

2. *Adding more than 1 billion board feet of redwood and Douglas fir trees by lowering the rate of harvest;*
3. *Defining of old growth down to the level of an individual tree, along with implementation of a policy to protect all individual old growth trees across our property;*
4. *Elimination of traditional clear cutting from our property;*
5. *Long term investments to improve habitat for fish across the property by controlling or holding back more than 1 million cubic yards of sediment (more than 100,000 dump trucks of dirt) from the coastal streams flowing through our forest;*
6. *Removal of more than 36 long time fish barriers, increasing fish bearing streams by more than 20 miles.*
7. *Operating as an open and transparent business; including an open invitation to take interested individuals anywhere in the forest;*
8. *Completing a substantial rebuild of our Ukiah sawmill, assuring that Mendocino County will have infrastructure in the processing of wood products for many years to come; and*
9. *Employing about 300 skilled employees in Mendocino County earning family-level wages and benefits.*

*From our inception we have encouraged transparency and we have a publicly stated policy of taking anyone to anywhere on the property to see our practices first hand. Additionally, we post our inventory and other forest facts on our website. Find more at: [www.mrc.com](http://www.mrc.com)*