



June 9, 2003

To: Gabrielle Rowan

San Mateo County Planning and Building Division
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re: PLN2003-00249: Removal of 60” dia. eucalyptus tree and proposed thinning of eucalyptus grove on four adjacent parcels.

Cc: Susan Casey, Applicant
Dave Holbrook, Senior Planner
Terry Burnes, Planning Administrator
Sandy Emerson, MCC Chair

Gabrielle:

After our site visit last week and review of the situation at our Planning and Zoning Committee regular meeting of 06/04/03, we had the following comments:

1. We agree with the removal of the large eucalyptus with the beehive in it. The tree is old and damaged, and the bees could be put to better use somewhere else. An appropriate tall growing species should be planted as a replacement, preferably a 15 g – 24” box specimen. Because of the protection of the grove down the hill from prevailing winds, this may a good location to plant a coast redwood or other tall conifer (Bishop pine, Douglas fir, red cedar, etc.) or taller deciduous coastal species (Alder or Maple).
2. We also agree with the plan to thin out the adjacent eucalyptus grove for both fire safety and habitat health, and to do so in a way that would be protective of the resource and not exceed what might be considered significant removal of vegetation as defined by the Local Coastal Program. The thinning would decrease the danger of fire spreading through the grove, preserve the mature trees, promote more spreading growth from younger trees, and open up the floor to establishment of native vegetation. From our discussion on site with the applicant, we feel this could be done in the following manner:
 - a. Initial work would involved removal only of trees up to 3” in diameter and any loose branches and debris on the ground. From the visual survey we could do last week, this would clear out most of the mid level fuel load and open up the area for further assessment. Small trees in this size range that appear healthy, are not crowded together and have the room to mature should be left standing.

- b. After the initial work, the property would be assessed for any further small tree removal by the applicant, tree service personnel, and representatives from County Planning and the MCC. Any further tree removal should be limit to specimens 8” in diameter or less.
- c. All eucalyptus removed should have their roots pulled up or ground out to prevent re-sprouting. Disturbed areas of the hillside should be smoothed out and mulched with chip from the operation. Consideration must be given to preventing any erosion problems from the next winter’s storms. If larger areas are disturbed, it may be necessary to install erosion control materials and revegetate with native bunch grasses, reeds or small shrubs.
- d. The project should be monitored for effects on wildlife habitat (bird and mammal nests, both in the trees and on the ground) and for possible problems from rodents and small mammals being forced out into neighboring residences. We think this is unlikely because of the large undisturbed parts of the grove on either side of the project, but we have seen it happen in other clearing operations and think it should be watched for.
- e. Property boundaries should very clearly marked and defined to avoid unintentional disturbance of other properties, and property owners in the area should be notified of the project.

We’d like to thank the applicant and the County for their cooperation in this project, and hope that this can be the start of developing a model for this sort of work. The potential danger from overgrown and fuel-loaded eucalyptus groves is an extensive situation throughout our community. To develop methods to decrease this danger while overall improving the health and habitat of the groves would be very positive progress. Thank you for your help, and please keep us informed of any further developments, redesigns, hearings, approvals or appeals concerning this application.



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