

**An overview of the proposed timber harvesting plan at the YMCA Camp Jones  
Gulch, Loma Mar, San Mateo County**

**8/06 LLR**

**What is proposed?**

A logging plan has been submitted to CDF by the San Francisco YMCA, owners of the Jones Gulch camp, near Loma Mar. The Nonindustrial Timber Management Plan (NTMP) proposes to log 733 acres of redwood and Douglas fir forest on the 907 acre property, cutting 60% of the trees 18 inches in diameter or larger, on slopes of 5% to 80%. An NTMP is a plan for logging in perpetuity. The plan anticipates successive logging cycles every 15 years. Herbicides are proposed to kill hardwoods, principally tanoaks, by the “hack and squirt” method. Herbicides are also proposed as one treatment for a 40 acre plantation of non-native Monterey and ponderosa pines. The proposed logging during the initial logging cycle (First Entry) would entail ten truckloads per day for 8-10 weeks. Winter harvesting would be allowed. Several exceptions to the state forest practice rules are proposed.

**Problems with this NTMP:**

**1. Logging in Perpetuity.** An NTMP is a plan for commercial logging in perpetuity. The only opportunity for the public to comment is now. NTMPs can be, and frequently are, amended, without public review or comment. If people do not speak up now, there is no second chance.

**2. Unsustainable harvesting.** The plan proposes to log to the maximum permitted under the state rules. It allows cutting 60% of the coast redwoods and Douglas fir trees 18 inches in diameter and greater, and 50% of the trees between 12 and 18 inches in diameter. New cycles of logging may occur every 15 years. This is not a sustainable plan for this area, and is not good stewardship. Other timber harvest plans in San Mateo County have proposed less severe harvests. The YMCA claims they do not plan to harvest to the maximum allowed, but their Plan says otherwise.

**3. Old Growth protection not guaranteed.** There is one grove of old growth trees on the property, identified in the NTMP as “Jones Gulch Old Growth”. This grove is part of a larger grove in Pescadero Creek County Park to the South. There are other scattered old growth trees on the property as well. The old growth grove is occupied habitat of the marbled murrelet, listed as federally threatened, and state endangered. Although the plan does not propose logging within the old growth grove, a road is proposed through part of the grove, which has the potential to adversely impact the murrelets through introducing a corridor with human activities that could attract corvids (ravens and jays). Aside from the murrelet impacts, there is no permanent guarantee that old growth trees will remain uncut. In fact there is an exception (page 10) that allows cutting to “reduce fuel loading and fire hazards” within the old growth grove immediately adjacent to Pescadero Creek County Park. This exception is overly broad and could permit extensive cutting, since all forests have inherent varying degrees of fire hazard. The Jones Gulch Old Growth grove should be protected permanently with adequate buffer areas to ensure nesting murrelets are not jeopardized. A mechanism for doing this would be for an agency such as

Peninsula Open Space Trust or Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District to acquire the grove, or a conservation easement.

**4. Mature Second Growth also not protected.** The McCormick Creek area of the property west of Pescadero Road, proposed for repeated rounds of harvesting contains late seral (mature second growth) redwood and Douglas fir trees. These large trees are potential habitat for the marbled murrelet. Given the precarious status of the murrelet in this most southern area of their range, this area should be managed for protection and enhancement of murrelet nesting habitat. This would mean leaving the mature second growth trees.

**5. Impacts to Pescadero Creek and Marsh.** Pescadero Creek has been listed as Impaired for sediment under Section 303d of the Federal Clean Water Act. McCormick Creek and Jones Gulch Creek are tributaries to Pescadero Creek. The proposed logging would include areas rated as Severe Erosion Hazard. This NTMP proposes road construction during winter, winter operations within the Watershed and Lake Protection Zone (WLPZ) areas (including heavy equipment), locating nearly one-half mile of road in the WLPZ, cross-falling of trees over Class II watercourses, mechanical site preparation on slopes with a High Erosion Hazard Rating (EHR), and skid trails on steep slopes, including over 50% slopes. The downstream impacts from these logging practices on Pescadero Creek and Pescadero Marsh are unacceptable.

**6. Layouts (clear-cutting of areas to create “soft” landings for trees) are proposed.** This practice is not customary in San Mateo County, and would result in greater disturbance to the land, adding to erosion and sedimentation impacts.

**7. Pesticides and Herbicides:** Hazard reduction for cutting of the Monterey and Ponderosa pines on the 40 acre plantation includes treating with pesticides, burning, and burying of the cut material. For trees that have no commercial value, such as Tanoaks, the plan proposed to use Roundup in a “Hack and Squirt” method, whereby a cut is made into the tree trunk, and the herbicide applied into the cut. Then the tree is left to die. These practices can create impacts beyond the usual timber harvesting impacts.

**Is there an Alternative to Logging?** Yes! Committee for Green Foothills strongly urges the YMCA to withdraw this Plan, and pursue the Alternative Proposal outlined below.

#### **Alternative Proposal:**

Stewardship Plan: The YMCA should develop a Stewardship Plan that will manage the property for forest health, reduction of fire hazards, and recreation. Smaller, weaker trees and fast growing fire-prone shrubs such as brooms, ceanothus, and tanoaks should be thinned on a regular basis. Some larger trees, where the forest is overcrowded, may also need to be thinned. The Jones Gulch Old Growth grove should be managed for protection and enhancement of murrelet nesting success. Special management of the mature second growth forest as restoration opportunities for marbled murrelet habitat should be part of the Plan. Roads necessary to camp operations should be maintained regularly to reduce erosion. Other unnecessary roads should be retired and monitored. Non-forested areas

such as grasslands and coyote brush should be managed for fire reduction; one option is by grazing. Fire breaks along Pescadero Creek Road and maintenance of the State required 100 foot defensible space around the buildings, and shaded fuel breaks within the next 200 feet would be important methods to effectively reduce fire hazard. A forest ecologist or similar professional would be a suitable resource for developing such a plan.

**Conservation Easement or Purchase of Forested and Environmentally Important Areas:** Understanding that the YMCA needs revenue to upgrade its dilapidated buildings, as well as carry out a Stewardship Plan, there are sources of revenue that can help the YMCA achieve both objectives. The Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) and the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MROSD) are both potential sources of financial assistance. They could purchase Conservation Easements that would keep the entire property in YMCA ownership, while protecting the Old Growth and Mature Second Growth areas, or they could purchase in fee simple part or all of the property, with provision for continuation of the YMCA camp in perpetuity.

Committee for Green Foothills and other groups would be interested in helping achieve these goals, and offer our assistance.

For more information, please contact:

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