

Dear Supervisors and Staff,

I am writing to you all regarding the importance of declaring a local emergency to mitigate a inevitable catastrophic disaster from the mass tree mortality here in Lake County.

The effects from a large and destructive wildfire such as watershed degradation, the threat to rare and endangered species that attract tourism from all around the world would devastate the last of what this county has to offer. The scale of tree mortality in California as we have seen, has already contributed to a significant impact to those issues stated. Furthermore, the risk to public health and safety of Californians.

This issue I have experienced in my personal and professional life. My father and I are land owners in the community of Cobb that was impacted by the Valley Fire in 2015. Since the fire, we have conducted three 1038 Dead, Dying Disease timber exemptions to properly rid of the remaining dead and dying timber on our burned over land. Fortunately, the time we filed these exemptions, the timber market was just enough to break even for the costs to hire a Licensed Timber Operator (LTO) to conduct such operations. In today's environment, I would be lucky to even get a phone call back from a LTO. This had led us spend an extraordinary amount of money to hire and purchase heavy equipment to do THE RIGHT THING and be RESPONSIBLE landowners. Which as you all know, there is little to no enforcement of hazardous vegetation. As I know I am not the only one who takes this issue seriously, there is just to few that do.

With what seems to be a never ending issue with dead and dying trees, I have been in fire protection services ranging from local, State and Federal levels. I enlisted after highschool in 2007, when fire seasons rarely being more than six months long, to now expecting elevated fire weather conditions in mid winter. The "new normal" in my opinion is just the beginning to our vastly changing landscape and it is time to ACT NOW. Before things go from worse, to irreversible and pass this colossal nightmare to our future generations, the stage has to be set for them to take off and build off of it. Because we will have to rely on their actions in the future.

I know all of you do not like to drive home and see this browning of our hillsides and just wish it would just simply stop. But I think we all know what the real answer is, and why a declaration of emergency is vitally needed. Before it is too late.

Relying on the small fractional efforts from Firewise communities, responsible landowners like myself, and HOAs is and will not be enough to even mitigate this issue. What we need in this financially disadvantaged County is HELP. We should not have to be forced to foot this responsibility as if it were trees just losing their leaves for the fall season. We as a county can be part of leading this part of the state to start something that has never been done before, a mass treatment of our wildlands. Especially when our very own CAL FIRE Chiefs at the Capital level and renowned experts all agree this is sorely needed.

As a public safety officer and a fire victim myself, I strongly urge and plead that an emergency be declared to this issue.

Thank you,

Richie Bucher