



May 9, 2022

Lake County Board of Supervisors
255 North Forbes Street
Lakeport, California 95453

SUBJECT: Support for Tree Mortality Emergency Proclamation

Lake County Board of Supervisors:

The Clear Lake Environmental Research Center (CLERC) is a Lake County-based 501c3 non-profit organization working to address environmental and economic problems both locally and worldwide. Since 2019, CLERC and our partners have been striving to improve wildfire resilience and forest health in our community through the implementation of landscape-scale restoration projects, funded largely by grants from the State of California.

We've made great strides towards increasing our local vegetation management capacity to address ongoing forest health and wildfire resilience projects, however the scale of the tree die-off that's swept over the County starting last summer is unprecedented. Based on reports from the State Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) and local UC Forest Advisor, Dr. Michael Jones, we're looking at a ten-fold increase in dead trees by late summer, just in time for peak wildfire season.

The community is currently in triage mode dealing with this crisis. CLERC has received numerous requests for assistance from landowners with large dead trees and we've been working to address the highest risk wildland-urban interface (WUI) areas before the upcoming fire season with the limited flexibility that our existing funding allows. It's becoming clear that typical grants addressing fire prevention and forest health projects aren't designed to deal with the scale of tree mortality that we're seeing in Lake County. Typically grant funds are intended to address smaller, ladder fuels that build up in the understory of forests and around homes and evacuation routes. Under normal conditions, large, mature trees are kept for carbon sequestration and scenic beauty, or they'd be harvested for lumber (not using grant funds).

This tree mortality event is, in some cases, resulting in the need to remove nearly every tree in a stand with little or no commercial value. Future wind events will likely down more and more trees as the die-off continues and requests for assistance to CLERC and the County are likely to increase. While it's sad to think about losing a lot of our forests that have been untouched by wildfire, we need to start thinking about how to deal with the same number of dead trees that we dealt with after the



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Valley Fire. If we don't take the necessary steps now, then this problem will compound, options for dealing with it later will be limited, and risk to all of us from catastrophic wildfire will continue to increase.

Due to the scale of the problem and our lack of sufficient resources to address it locally, CLERC encourages the Board of Supervisors to take the necessary actions for our community to secure the resources from the state and federal government needed to address this emergency. CLERC hopes to work with the County to respond to the situation and make our community and environment safer and more fire resilient.

Sincerely,

Will Evans
Executive Director