

Dear Ms Peelen,

Nearly twenty years ago my wife and I bought a small one-acre parcel in Cobb. The property was generously covered with pine, oak, fir, and manzanita. We fell in love with the property for the same reason many migrate to Lake County: love for nature and the desire to live in an environment that allows us to escape the barrage of everyday stress that we all endure. We built a home and were welcomed into a community of like-minded individuals that share our values. Lake County is our home.

Since that time, our property miraculously escaped damage from the Valley Fire only to be devastated by drought and Pine Beetle infestation of our Ponderosa Pine trees. One after another, the vibrant, healthy evergreen trees that have stood for generations turn as dry and lifeless as the blackened remnants we've become familiar with in the wake of the wildfires that have already scarred Lake and surrounding counties. Through the efforts of Supervisor Pyska, CLERK, PG&E, and no small financial investment of my own, fourteen large pines have been dropped and have been, or will be, removed from my property.

Clearly my property is merely a small fraction of the immense problem all of Lake County faces. The spread of dead or dying trees has grown exponentially and is expected to increase tenfold by August according to Dr. Mike Jones. This poses an existential threat to our region and way of life. Unfortunately, many property owners either don't have the resources to deal with the expense and labor of clearing dead and dying trees or are non-residents that may not even be aware of the problem. Moreover, the problem is clearly beyond the scope of what one individual, one community, or Lake County can handle. Acres of newly dead trees are just mounting, kindling for the wildfires that have already devastated much of the California landscape and continue to threaten the state. If this doesn't call for state and or federal disaster relief, what does?

The solution is not simply falling the trees but removing them from the forest, as well, since the logs can still be a host for the pine beetle and provide fuel for wildfires. Climate change, drought, and wildfires are now our new reality. Our choice is whether to wait and watch our county succumb to environmental degradation, loss of investment and tourism, wildlife, and habitat destruction, or do our best to mitigate the damage and learn to live in our new reality. Please, let's not lose what brought us all to Lake County to begin with.

Respectfully,

David Thiessen