

***A presentation at the Sierra Club,
Sonoma Group
Environmental Forum, June 15,
2005***

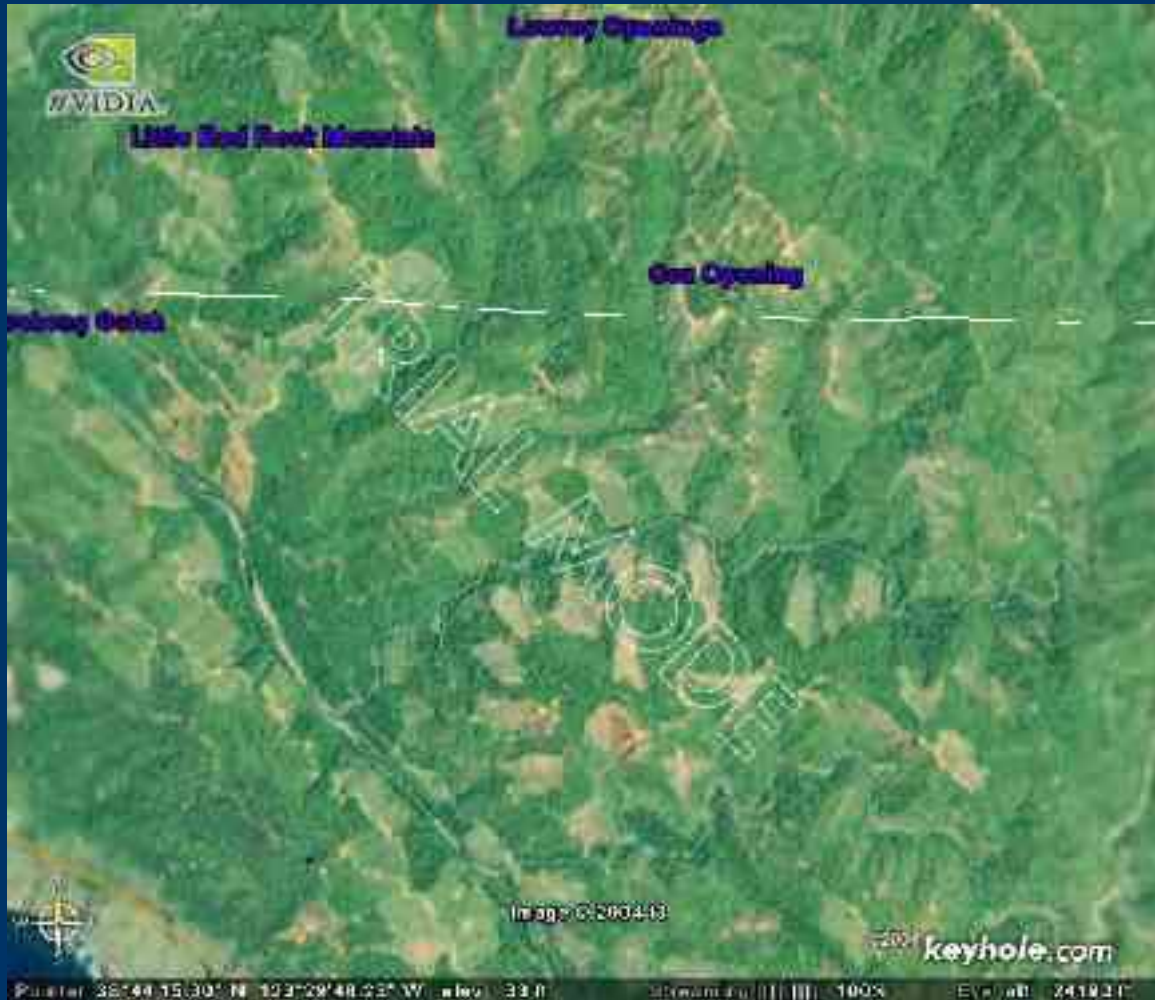
***A County timberland ordinance?
What are we talking about, really?
What's so special about forests?
What is the status quo?
Is there a problem about conversions?
What are the options?
What is the BEST option?
What's next?***

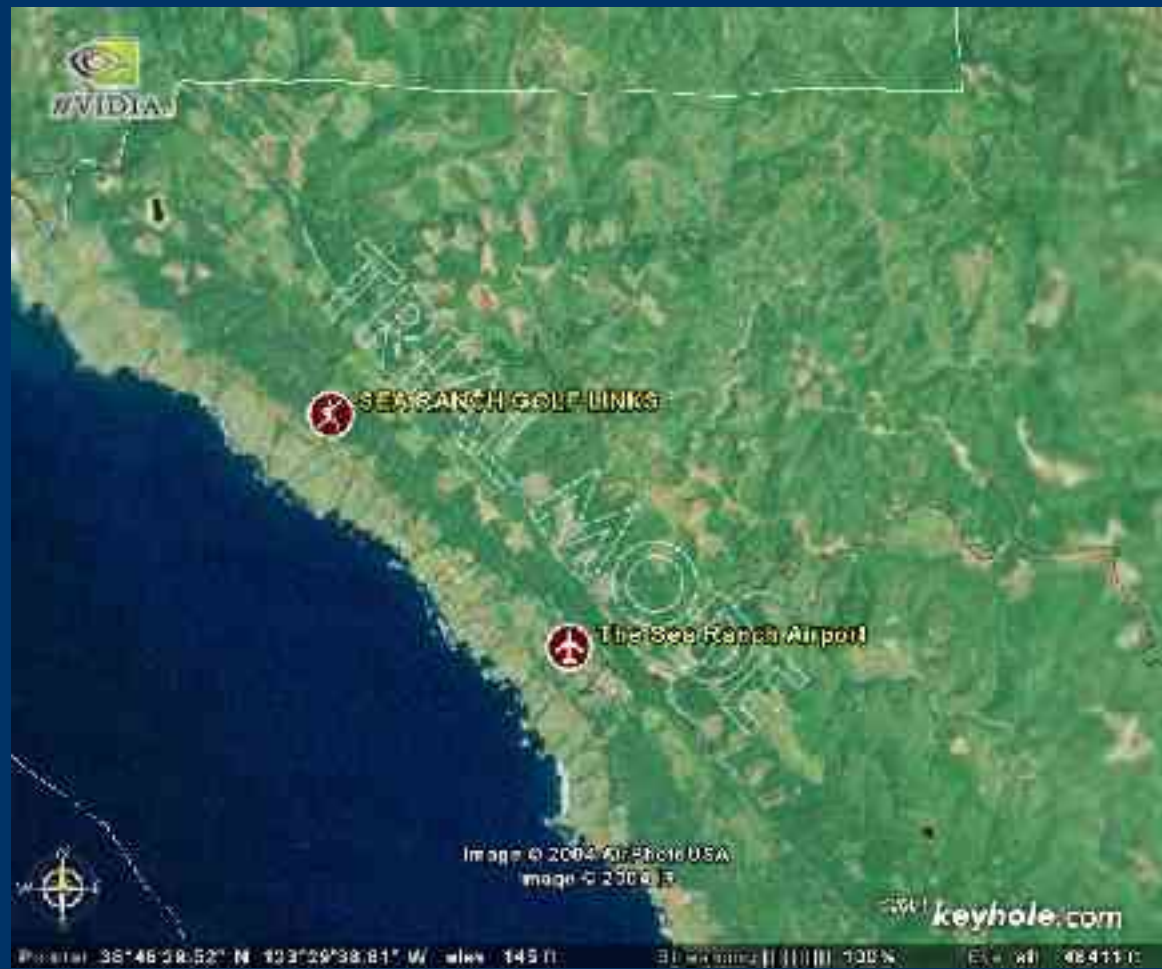
What are we really talking about, anyway?

We are talking about **FOREST** around Annapolis and in the Gualala watershed, a **watershed already hammered by industrial logging**, and **listed for both sediment and temperature** impairments by the State Water Quality Control Board, and which **badly needs to recover**. Biologists and ecologists agree that conversion of forest to intensive agriculture causes fundamental changes in ecological and physical processes that maintain wildlife and the vital qualities of water, land, and air.



**Red outline: One project on 19,000 acres,
with a 2,000 acre *vineyard conversion*
planned – coming SOON.**













What's so special about forests, anyway?

"The world's forests provide many important benefits: *Home to more than half of all species living on land, forests also help slow global warming by storing and sequestering carbon. Forests are sources of wood products. They help regulate local and regional rainfall. And forests are crucial sources of food, medicine, clean drinking water, and immense recreational, aesthetic, and spiritual benefits for millions of people.*

Yet, in many parts of the world, *forests are being rapidly cleared for agriculture or pasture, destructively logged* and mined, and degraded by human-set fires. The *clearing and destructive logging of forests is the single greatest cause of species extinction worldwide*. It is also the source of one-fifth of humankind's annual emissions of carbon dioxide, the most important greenhouse gas. Under current trajectories, *most of the world's remaining large tracts of intact, biodiversity-rich forests -- from the Amazon Basin and Indonesia to Maine and Alaska -- will be gone by mid-century.* " Union of Concerned Scientists -- Restoring Scientific Integrity..

What is the Status Quo?

Do vineyardists need forestland? Much of Sonoma County is already zoned Ag. What's the crying need for high end Pinot Noir wineries in forestland? Where's this coming from?

Currently, CDF handles conversions. Some of us think they don't do it as appropriately as they might, but we'll let CDF explain what they do.

Is there a problem about forestland conversions?

“There is significant evidence to indicate that the grapes grown in the coastal areas are considered premium and that there is interest and desire on the part of multiple large and small timberland owners to retain the option to plant vineyards on timberland. The Agriculture Commissioner has indicated they receive 3 to 5 applications per year for new vineyard installations on converted timberlands. The acreage of conversion requests currently pending at CDF in 2005 is greater than all the conversions approved over the last decade” - PRMD.

Conversion of forests to intensive agriculture causes fundamental changes in ecological and physical processes that maintain the quality of water, land, and air. These include: a) disruption of wildlife corridors and habitat fragmentation b) groundwater depletion c) downstream flooding d) pollution to fresh water sources caused by pesticides/herbicides, fertilizer, and sedimentation e) sub-surface hydrologic flow changes f) water diversions g) re-contouring of slopes h) deep soil disruptions i) increased peak flows in streams, causing stream bank failure and mass wasting of land j) microclimate changes affecting plants and animals k) endangered species are harmed and their habitat depleted l) aesthetic impacts m) increased infrastructure needs and costs n) the contribution of this deforestation to global warming.

What are the Options?

Option 3 – prohibits conversion of forest to vineyard

Option 5- allows conversions, but sets up a swapping scheme for 'rehabilitation'

Option 1 – no change in current practices

Option 7, similar to Option 3, possibly dubious legally – we won't know for a while



Problems with Option 5

The **Devil** is in the details.

Mitigation banking = “***Nowhere near no net loss***”

Option 5 would put the forests and wildlands needing protection at even more risk than they in now. Rather than preventing large-scale conversions of forest to vineyards, the "No Net Loss" Option 5 will *actually facilitate forest destruction*. We are fortunate to live in a county with a good balance of city, agriculture, and forest; we need to protect that diversity. We don't want the county to be paved or plowed, so we need to protect Sonoma's remaining forestland.

Nowhere near no net loss

"For example, a permit is granted to fill a 10 acre wetland and 20 acres of existing wetlands are acquired and donated to a park district as mitigation. The database would show this as a 10 acre net gain, when in ***actuality, this results in a net loss of 10 acres*** of wetlands. Additionally, the data does not account for the fact that even wetland restoration and creation may not result in gains because of ***the high failure rate of such projects***... Study after study shows how unlikely efforts to date to restore wetlands result in fully functioning systems, and to date, ***there is no plan to ensure that the functions and values restored are in any way equivalent to those lost.*** "

What are the prospects?

"Due to failures of mitigation requirements, '... the Section 404 permitting process *has been fostering an 80 percent net loss of wetlands.*' R. Turner, A.M. Redmond, and J.B. Zedler, 2001. Count it by Acre or Function: *Mitigation Adds up to Net Loss of Wetlands.* National Wetlands Newsletter 22:6"

... and wetlands are MUCH easier to restore, in much less time, than forests are!

Scary scenarios

1. An acre of old-growth is cut down, in exchange for 2 acres of poorer forest 'preserved'
2. An acre of old-growth is cut down, in exchange for 2 acres planted with seedlings, which might or might not produce some forest in 30-70 years or more. In the meanwhile, real forest values and habitat are lost.

What does 'rehab' mean? Restoration, reclamation, reforestation, afforestation?

Problems with Option 1

In our eyes, CDF allows too many conversions now, and doesn't require EIRs when it should.

On the other hand, to give the County the ability to comment to CDF on conversions *might* be useful, but *only if* the County can and would do its homework on conversions and rehab. Is this feasible? Does the County have the time, staff, and expertise to properly monitor long-term rehabilitation projects?

Chainsaw Wine??? Or ... ?







What is the BEST Option?



Save
ALL
our Forest
with
OPTION 3!

<http://redwood.sierraclub.org/sonoma>
or call 544-7651

What's next?

The Sierra Club wants *strong* forestland protection.

This issue goes next to the *Board of Supervisors*.
What can *you do?* --

Please contact your Supervisor to let him or her know that the "No Net Loss" (Option 5) proposal is unacceptable. 'No Net Loss' = 'No Net Protection'. Tell them to support Option 3. It is especially important to contact Supervisor Mike Reilly because his district encompasses most of Sonoma County's forests: 707-565-2241 Mike Reilly: mreilly@sonoma-county.org Valerie Brown: vbrown@sonoma-county.org Mike Kerns: mkerns@sonoma-county.org Paul Kelley: pkelley@sonoma-county.org Tim Smith: tsmith@sonoma-county.gov
