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Planning Commission  
Santa Cruz County  
Meeting Date: Wednesday, October 11, 2023

Subject: Concerns Regarding Rezoning Proposal 231042 to Rezone Parcels APN 089-121-82 and 089-121-83

Dear Members of the Planning Commission,

I am a dedicated community member of Santa Cruz County (over 30 years in the Santa Cruz Mountains) and a resident of Bear Creek Estates in Boulder Creek (for 20 years), directly adjacent to the parcels proposed for rezoning (APN's 089-121-82 & 089-121-83). I urge you to withhold approval for Timber Production rezoning until comprehensive risk assessments and mitigation plans are provided.

Specifically, I want to highlight significant concerns for the residents of Bear Creek Estates:

**Hydrology Concerns:** The property's elevation, ranging from 600 to 1,300 feet, combined with our residences' location, creates a significant risk of water runoff. A single redwood tree can transpire up to 500 gallons of water daily. Harvesting these trees would mean an alarming increase in runoff that directly threatens our homes, which lie downhill from these Special Use parcels but uphill of the water's destination in Bear Creek. This very band of redwoods largely mitigated the 2023 storms during which our homes were at risk, taking heavy damage and requiring substantial disaster relief. The proposed rezoning overlooks these critical hydrology issues entirely and offers no effective mitigation solutions.

**Wind Protection:** The existing redwood trees are a natural barrier against strong winds. Removing these trees poses an immediate threat, as the proposal needs a detailed strategy to manage increased wind exposure to our properties.

**Unclear Tree Removal Routes:** Tree removal logistics from these parcels are opaque and problematic. The potential routes to significant arteries like Bear Creek Road and Highway 9 are primarily residential and frequently used by our children and families (as are Bear Creek Road and Hwy 9). Both roads are still recovering from recent storm damage. Introducing logging trucks without a clear plan or commitment to infrastructure improvement is irresponsible and inconsiderate. I want to emphasize our county's Infrastructure and Safety Standards. Roads like Bear Creek Road and Highway 9, already in a recovering state, may need to be redesigned to withstand the weight and frequency of heavy logging trucks. This poses a risk to the road's

longevity and the safety of its daily users. Residents are acutely feeling the impacts of debris removal and storm damage on these vital routes; it's hard to overstate the cumulative impacts.

Removal of a Buffer Zone: This region is a buffer zone between residential and industrial harvesting. Such buffer zones are standard practice in zoning ordinances to ensure that residential areas are shielded from the immediate impacts of industrial operations. The rezoning proposition places residential and potentially hazardous industrial operations side by side.

While I acknowledge the merits of sustainable timber harvesting, the current proposal appears rushed. It must be mindful of vital concerns impacting the Bear Creek Estate Community. Please reconsider this rezoning until these risks are comprehensively addressed and appropriately mitigated.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns and your commitment to the well-being of Santa Cruz County residents.

Sincerely,



Ray Esquerre