

We need your help

The Hills Conservation Network has been working for the past four years to prevent public agencies in the Bay Area from using taxpayer funds to implement large-scale native plant restoration projects on public lands.

In recent history our primary focus had been on The University of California's plans to use FEMA Pre Disaster Mitigation funding to remove ALL the eucalyptus, pines, and acacias from the 100+ acres that UC owns in the Berkeley/Oakland hills. As we were working this issue it became apparent that UCSF had similar ideas about using FEMA funds to cut eucalyptus trees on Mount Sutro.

The good news is that it appears that we have prevailed. FEMA has decided that a comprehensive Environmental Impact Study would be required before funds would be released for these projects. Based on this, UCSF elected to walk away from FEMA funding of the Mount Sutro project and UCB will likely be forced to modify its radical tree removal projects to be more species-neutral and less destructive. We look forward to participating in discussions with FEMA as the EIS process moves forward over the next year and a half.

HCN has made a point of avoiding litigation to the maximum extent possible, not only because of the expense, but because we simply don't believe this is the best way to resolve differences. In the case of the FEMA grants this approach has been largely successful.

We are now faced with an even greater challenge. East Bay Regional Park District passed a parcel tax assessment in 2005 called Measure CC. This Measure is intended to fund maintenance and safety enhancements to 19,000 acres that the Park District owns on the ridgeline from Castro Valley to Pinole.

Unfortunately, this project has been hijacked by the native plant restoration community, with the result that it is far more about removing eucalyptus, pines, and acacias than about reducing fire risk. We have been working closely with EBRPD staff on the EIR for this project for several years, but it's clear that they aren't listening, and intend to move forward with the largest tree removal project this area has ever seen.

How large? How about 1 million trees? This project would result in the largest release of sequestered carbon the Bay Area has ever experienced. It would decimate raptor habitat. It would result in the need to apply Garlon herbicide in enormous quantities over a 10 year period. It would dramatically increase erosion and slides.

Hills Conservation Network has proposed an alternative species-neutral plan that would achieve at least similar, and possibly more effective, fire risk mitigation while incurring only a small fraction of the environmental costs the EBRPD plan would inflict, and at a

substantially lower pricetag. But the District isn't interested. Why? Because our plan is about fire risk mitigation, not native plant restoration.

So, we find ourselves in a position where opportunities for rational discussion have run out. We are now entering the legal domain, not because this is what we wanted, but because EBRPD has left us with no choice.

This means we need to pay for lawyers. We can win this...we will win this, but not without your support. We ask you to donate what you can as quickly as you can so that we can fund a law suit against EBRPD to prevent the EIR from going forward as planned.

If we can't make this happen this area will never be the same. We will lose a million trees that provide habitat for animals of all kinds, birds and insects. Because many of these trees act as windbreaks and maintain fog-drip moisture, our local climate may change, and we will experience a huge loss of carbon sequestration that will lead to an increase in greenhouse gases that are damaging the atmosphere of our planet.

Please send your tax deductible contributions to:

Hills Conservation Network
P.O. Box 5027
Berkeley, CA 94705

Although your cancelled check is a valid tax deductible receipt, please include your email address so we can send you further confirmation of your generous contribution.