

From: [Asher Budnik](#)
To: [Wiles, Derek](#)
Subject: Re: Ed Biery
Date: Wednesday, August 28, 2024 9:43:33 AM
Attachments: [1.png](#)

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Hi Derek,

The forest within the Biery property is defined entirely as *Sequoia sempervirens* Forest and Woodland Alliance (S3/G3). No other conifer species were observed, and the canopy composition was close to 100% coast redwood. The stand itself is a second growth stand that, by my estimate, could not be more than 80 years old due to its stand density, lack of structural complexity, and visible evidence of historical logging operations (e.g. skid trails).

Definitions:

Coastal Act Section 30107.5 labels ESHA as "any area in which plant or animal life or their habitats are either rare or especially valuable because of their special nature or role in an ecosystem and which could be easily disturbed or degraded by human activities and developments."

Coastal Act Section 30240 states:

- Environmentally sensitive habitat areas shall be protected against any significant disruption of habitat values

In response to the definition outlined in **Section 30107.5**, this forest type is incredibly common throughout the North Coast, with upwards of 1.5 million acres of second growth coast redwood forest. The location in question is surrounded by other areas of nearly identical coast redwood forest, and the McKay Community forest contains large areas of redwood forest to be preserved in perpetuity under conservation easements. In the case of this property, any human disturbance will likely serve to improve the structural and ecological heterogeneity of the forest through the creation of broken tree tops, the infiltration of light to the forest floor, and the associated creation of otherwise absent niches in the areas surrounding this small timber harvest. To summarize: this location contains no rare or especially valuable resources and will not face disturbance or degradation due to this small-scale project activity. The forest present is not ESHA.

In response to section **30240**, the area being harvested consists of a very small number of redwood trees located within 20 feet of an existing lawn nestled within the forested parcel. These marginal trees contained no structure that could serve as prime habitat to any listed species, as they lack crown complexity due to their age. The current state of the forest understory within the stand is fairly dismal due to historical logging practices, with little to no understory being present on account of the dense, closed-canopy present throughout the stand. Any harvest in the margins of this stand will create canopy openings that would have otherwise taken decades if not centuries to occur naturally, thereby allowing for a proliferation of understory species such as *Trillium ovatum*, *Polystichum munitum*, and *Oxalis oregana*. In summary: there will be no significant disruption of habitat values associated with this small harvest.

In addition to the responses above, it should be noted that more than 300 million board feet of coast redwood lumber is harvested annually in Humboldt County, much of which comes from areas within or adjacent to the Coastal Zone. These harvests are often clear cuts in excess of 15 acres in size or selection harvests that can be hundreds of acres. This small harvest will not damage the ecological character of the forest given the retention of more

than 95% of the canopy within the parcel, far more than the 80% retention mandated in salmonid-bearing streams in the Coastal Anadromy Zone of California under the Forest Practice Rules. This harvest will have no negative effect on the forest in the Biery parcel or the ecological characteristic thereof.

Mitigations for the harvest of ESHA in the Coastal Zone typically entail the replanting of trees at a 3:1 or 6:1 compensatory replanting ratio for each stem removed, however, any replanting that occurs on this property will likely fail due to the canopy closure within the surrounding forest, which is currently undergoing "stem exclusion". At this phase in the forest's disturbance cycle, smaller trees are being outcompeted and larger trees are achieving canopy dominance, thereby creating a diverse canopy structure that will, over time, evolve into an ecologically diverse forest with the ability to harbor rare and especially valuable resources. Any planted trees that survive will simply prolong the process of creating these habitat niches by exploiting limited light resources and further shading an already light-deprived understory. While well-intentioned, these mitigations would hinder the ecological processes at play in the parcel.

Lastly, in my conversation with Mr. Biery during the field visit, he demonstrated a deep understanding of the nature of the forest and a desire to improve stand conditions through management of invasive species. I noted dozens of places in which he had pulled, piled, or chopped English ivy vines or uprooted cotoneaster in the pursuit of a more ecologically sound forest. That is to say that this forest is being managed on a trajectory that favors ecological diversity, and this small project will only serve to aid in the forest's recovery from historical logging practices.

Thank you,

Asher Budnik

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---- On Wed, 28 Aug 2024 08:32:32 -0700 **Wiles, Derek** <dwiles@co.humboldt.ca.us> wrote ---

Hi Ash,
Thank you for taking the time to speak with me.
Kindly,



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