

How You and Your City Can Protect Forests, Water, and Climate

By Karen Maki

So far San Francisco, Berkeley, Davis, Daly City, Monte Sereno, and Menlo Park have passed resolutions banning clearcutting. Saratoga and Sunnyvale have taken other supportive actions.

Why are a growing number of cities, where no clearcutting occurs, speaking out against clearcutting?

“Given how critical water is to all Californians and how important healthy forest ecosystems are to California's water production, we need to do what we can to protect water at its source.” stated City Councilmember Ray Mueller who initiated the Menlo Park action.

What happens in the forests is important to California cities. 75% of our water is captured, filtered, and stored in forested watersheds. In addition, US forests absorbed over 10% of US carbon dioxide emissions in 2004 according to EPA statistics.

How timber is logged can maintain, increase, or reduce the benefits of forests to the way we live.

Clearcutting is an ecologically destructive form of logging in which nearly all native vegetation is removed, soils are deep-ripped, and herbicides are applied across the landscape. It harms water quality, wildlife habitat, and exacerbates climate change. It replaces diverse forests with tree farms that can have a higher risk of catching fire.

Timber can be harvested using a less destructive method known as selective logging, which involves the removal of some trees while leaving the forest intact. Selective logging is the logging method used in San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, and Marin Counties.

Logging operations on private lands are determined by the governor and the state legislature.

The timber industry spends large amounts of money each year lobbying our legislators to maintain clearcut logging operations and weaken forestry regulations. The Sierra Club and their coalition partners don't have the money to hire legions of lobbyists, but we can educate the legislators and the public about the damage that clearcutting does to climate and water. Passing resolutions to ban clearcutting in California cities provides us an opportunity to speak out and be heard. Even though the clearcutting happens in the Sierra Nevada Mountains and the North Coast, it impacts all Californians by degrading watersheds and reducing the amount of CO₂ that is sequestered in forests.

Eight cities have supported the campaign so far. The more cities who pass our resolution, the more strength we will be able to demonstrate to legislators and the governor. We would like to get 20 cities pass a resolution calling for a ban on clearcutting by the end of the year.

How you can help

Passing a resolution in a city can be easy. No advocates even had to speak in the Menlo Park city council meeting, but the council members themselves talked about the importance of forests for cities. The process can be easy or more difficult depending on the makeup of your city council.

Here are the steps to passing a resolution:

1. We supply the [sample resolution](#).
2. Attend a city council meeting or two to get a sense of how things work in your city.
3. Make an appointment to talk to the city council member who is most likely to be supportive. Ask him/her to sponsor the resolution and what is the best way to proceed. Processes vary from city to city.
4. Meet with other city council members as needed.
5. If needed, get community groups to send letters to city council members in support of the resolution.
6. Get the resolution on city council the calendar.
7. On the night of the meeting, get 5-20 people to attend depending on your estimate of how easy it will be to pass the resolution.
8. Make sure your city council sends a copy of the resolution to their state legislators.

Should you decide to pass a resolution in your city, let us know. We can provide a sample press release and coach you through the process.

If you don't see yourself talking to city councilmembers, there are other ways to educate the public and let our legislators know we want an end to clearcutting such as [gathering signatures on our petition to Governor Brown](#), writing letters to the editor about the importance of forests for climate and water, hosting a house party to show a forest video, asking organizations you belong to support a ban on clearcutting California forests.

Contact karenmaki@lomaprieta.sierraclub.org to find out more and get started.

Start today

1. Like us at <https://www.facebook.com/StopClearcuttingCA>
2. Watch a short video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uf3yv2GMj2E>.
3. Watch a longer documentary <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dde1dv86M7Q>.

Karen Maki is the volunteer lead of the Sierra Club's Stop Clearcutting California Campaign.