



SIERRA
CLUB

FOUNDED 1892

Redwood Chapter

55A Ridgway Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA

P.O. Box 466, Santa Rosa CA 95402

(707) 544-7651

Fax (707) 544-9861

<http://redwood.sierraclub.org>

Board of Directors
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
5705 Grant Creek
Missoula, MT 59808

March 24, 2008

RE: Bohemian Grove Conservation Easement

Dear Board Members:

The Redwood Chapter of the Sierra Club runs from Sonoma County, California, north to the Oregon border, and the Forest Protection Committee of the Chapter is concerned with forest conservation within that territory. The Forest Protection Committee understands that the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation is considering acceptance of a dedicated conservation easement of about 160 acres of forest in Sonoma County, on property owned by the Bohemian Club. We write to urge the RMEF Board not to accept this dedication, for the following reasons.

In May of 2006, the Bohemian Club submitted a Non-Industrial Timber Management Plan to the California Dept. of Forestry. That plan is currently under review by the California Department of Forestry. The plan proposes to aggressively log the Bohemian Grove property in Monte Rio, under the rubric of "a Healthy Forest Initiative" - ostensibly but very dubiously in order to reduce fire danger. (This NTMP takes an unreal approach to real fire safety: see expert comments referenced in the next paragraph). This logging plan would eventually greatly increase the historical rate under which the Grove has been logged until now; it would immediately double and eventually triple the historical rate.

The Bohemian Grove property represents one of the most remarkable remnant stands of old-growth and late successional redwood and fir forest within Sonoma County - the Redwoods on the Bohemian Grove property "...comprise one of the two finest stands of virgin timber in the lower Russian River area." (from "Walking Bohemia's Home: Introduction to the Redwoods"). As a result of its relatively pristine character, the Grove has significant wildlife habitat for threatened and sensitive species, including Northern Spotted Owl. The NTMP, though, has been criticized by forest scientists and by the California Department of Fish and Game. (For more information, please see: <http://www.redwood.sierraclub.org/sonoma/Forest.html>)

However, the old-growth section which is proposed for the conservation easement has never been in danger of being logged, for many reasons, including the fact that the Bohemian Grove is a retreat for many prominent individuals. The true purpose of the Club's proposed easement is to circumvent a legal requirement regarding Non-Industrial Timber Management Plans: that the forestland ownership cannot be larger than 2500 acres. Since the Bohemian Club forest property (it has been discovered in the course of plan review) is somewhat larger than 2500 acres, the Club is seeking to effectively reduce its forest ownership (viz a viz logging calculations) with a conservation easement in order to qualify for this particular type of logging plan, although there are other types of logging plans available to the Club. A chief feature of NTMPs, though, is that once they are accepted, they require far less Dept. of Forestry review for future logging.

The Forestry Protection Committee believes that the Bohemian Club proposal to the RMEF is not a proper use of a conservation easement, since the effect of the proposed easement would be to nominally 'protect' forest which is in no need of protection, while at the same time allowing a bad management plan to go forward far into the future. We urge the Board, therefore, to reject the easement proposal, in the interests of true, not merely seeming forest conservation. Deforestation worldwide, is the second leading contributor to human induced global warming.

Regards,

Jay Halcomb, Chair
Forest Protection Committee
Redwood Chapter, Sierra Club

CC: California Dept. of Forestry
M. David Allen, President, RMEF
Rod Triepke, Chief Operations Officer, RMEF
Bob Hammond, Lands Program Manager, RMEF