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**To:** Brandon Barchi  
**Subject:** please include in 6/7/07 Board of Directors agenda packet

Please include the following in the next agenda packet for the SLVWD Board meeting of 6/7/07.

Thank you

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## As We See It: Timber harvest realities

Santa Cruz County now has the toughest logging rules in the state, thanks to a 3-2 decision by the Board of Supervisors last week.

But wait, you might exclaim. Hasn't the state Supreme Court ruled that logging rules are established by the state, and that the Department of Forestry is responsible for making decisions about forestry?

You'd be right.

Timber policies are established — and enforced — by the state. But Santa Cruz County wants different rules from the rest.

Some will see the county's feisty approach as a good thing. We don't. And neither do a number of knowledgeable people who believe in the idea of a sustainable timber crop and of the need for managed forests.

We question whether county officials and local citizen interest groups are as qualified to make decisions about the future of forests in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Supervisors went beyond even the recommendations of its own planning staff in setting up a requirement that a landowner must have more than 40 acres of land before any logging permit can be issued.

Planning staff had recommended 20.

But there is no professional forester on the county staff, and it's clear that the board's decision had more to do with a political view of logging than it did a fire-safe or scientific one.

We're concerned about the supervisors' action for two reasons. The first is that the ordinance is misleading on its face. It purports to be a zoning law, but in reality has to do with curtailing logging. It's a trick — and everyone knows it. We wonder whether a legal challenge will result in a judge's seeing through the strategy.

Perhaps a bigger problem with the ordinance is that it's not based on good forestry practices. The Santa Cruz Mountains in some cases are overgrown with second- and third-growth trees, far more than had grown in the days before the arrival of settlers. The old first-grown forests — long gone, for the most part — had a far more sparse growth than what we see today.

When the original big trees came down, five or more smaller trees around them sprouted up. That means that the forests are far more dense, not only because the bigger trees were logged, but because the naturally occurring fires are doused quickly, and the underbrush that was once burned away just piles up year after year.

Many forestry professionals will tell you that forests need management, and the thinning of trees is part of it. Yes, timber companies make a profit from the thinning, but they can also do so in a way that either doesn't hurt or actually helps the health of the forest.

Timber harvesting is, at its best, a sustainable farming activity. The industry also has the potential to be an important part of Santa Cruz County's local economy.

Of course not all of the harvesting is done well, and that's why the state Department of Forestry is on hand to regulate. That's the agency with the professional foresters — and not the politically motivated opponents of all logging.

We don't consider the decision by county supervisors to be based on sound forestry policy — or on science. We understand that the decision will be welcomed by some as a way to beat back the chain saws. But that doesn't necessarily mean that the decision is best for the economy and for the health of the forests.