

September 27, 2016

## **Governor signs Oak Woodland protection bill**

A press release from the Northcoast Regional Land Trust:

On Saturday, Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. signed AB 1958 by Assemblymember Jim Wood updating the Forest Practice Act to allow for restoration of Northern California's oak woodlands.

“Under our current policies, we are losing historic oak woodlands on the North Coast at an alarming rate,” said Asm. Jim Wood. “This bill will provide a new resource for private landowners to manage their land and preserve these valuable habitats.”

The loss of oak woodlands to conifer encroachment is a major conservation concern in northwestern California and across much of the Pacific Northwest, resulting in associated losses of wildlife habitat, cultural uses, biodiversity, stream flow, and other ecosystem services. Without regenerative fires that historically occurred more frequently on the landscape, Douglas-fir trees and other conifer species invade and quickly out-compete mature oak trees, eventually killing them.

“Prior to the bill's signing, landowners using any state approved harvest plan to manage conifer encroachment into oak woodlands were required to replant conifers, effectively making it impossible to protect oak woodlands from conifer encroachment,” said Yana Valachovic, Forest Advisor with the University of California Cooperative Extension whose research helped in the bill's development. “AB 1958 eliminates that requirement and provides a restoration exemption, allowing landowners to remove and sell the conifers in order to make conservation, protection and maintenance of oak woodlands more effective and affordable.”

This bill was sponsored by the Northcoast Regional Land Trust and The Buckeye, two local organizations committed to helping conserve working landscapes.

Northcoast Regional Land Trust Vice President Mike Miles said, “This new legislation advances the state's Forest Practice Act by further recognizing forest diversity and providing landowners with necessary tools for good stewardship. This is an important step forward for oak woodland conservation here on the North Coast and elsewhere in the state. We are very appreciative of

Assemblymember Wood's leadership on this issue.”