



CALIFORNIA
LICENSED
FORESTERS
ASSOCIATION

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June 19, 2003

The Honorable Don Perata
California State Senate
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95418

REFERENCE: SB 754
CLFA POSITION: OPPOSE

Dear Mr. Perata,

The California Licensed Foresters Association respectfully, but vigorously, opposes your SB 754, the Heritage Tree Preservation Act. Modeled upon a special interest initiative which failed to qualify for the 2002 ballot, SB 754 would seize private property (so-called “Heritage Trees”) while forcing forest landowners and government agencies to shoulder an expensive and ecologically questionable tree preservation scheme.

By taking private timber for public purposes, the Act surely would result in costly and unnecessary litigation and quite possibly be ruled unconstitutional.

The underlying premise of the bill – that large, old trees are scarce and must be protected in California – is a matter of perception not supported by the facts.

Actually, California leads the nation in old growth preservation. We have *millions* of acres of USDA Forest Service Wilderness Areas as well as extensive National and State Parks. In testimony given by CDF Director Andrea Tuttle on January 28, 2003 to the Senate Natural Resource Committee’s informational hearing on old growth forests in California, she stated, “Today, virtually all of the ecologically significant old-growth redwood forest is in public ownership, and it is well distributed throughout its range.”

According to CDF, 97% of California’s remaining old growth timber stands are already completely protected. The scant portion of old growth that exists on private lands is most commonly protected by mechanisms such as Pacific Lumber Company’s Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) or Collins Pine’s Forest Stewardship Council forest certification process (and decades of proven long-term stewardship).

Mr. Perata, professional foresters understand that public perceptions of timber issues are not in line with the facts, and we are doing everything we can to try to set the record straight. Unfortunately, California forestry has already suffered withering cutbacks in recent years, with dozens of mill closures and thousands of rural job losses. Now the Golden State – despite our wealth of renewable forest resources¹ – imports 80%

¹ California contains 17 million acres of lands classified by the Society of American Foresters as timberland – almost 20% of the state’s land area. Less than 25% of the wood growth that is occurring on these lands is currently harvested and utilized.

of the wood that we use from other states and foreign countries. This is wrong, and a reflection of our lack of responsible resource citizenship.

Yet another regulatory blow to forest management in California, as SB 754 represents, is exactly not what we need. We should instead be adopting laws and policies which encourage sustainable forest management in our state, nurturing a basic industry that provides good jobs and renewable building products while maintaining vast areas of California as undeveloped open space – managed forest greenbelts.

To summarize, CLFA appreciates your interest in forestry and environmental issues, but believe SB 754 to be fatally flawed. We believe that the environmental benefits offered by the legislation would be marginal, if any. The costs, however, would be absolutely enormous: more government red tape, erosion of private property rights, more job losses, the further dismantling of a basic rural industry, the accelerated loss of native California forestland by conversion and development, and an increased reliance on imported wood fiber.

Thank you for the opportunity to share the profession's views on this legislation. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you desire further information, or to arrange for a legislative woods tour with a Registered Professional Forester.

Sincerely yours,

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cc: Members, Assembly Natural Resource Committee.
Jeff Arthur, Committee Consultant.
Claudia Peterson, Senate Office of Floor Analysis.
CLFA Board of Directors.
Brad Seaberg, Chair, Northern California Society of American Foresters.

The California Licensed Foresters Association, with approximately 800 members, represents the common interests of Registered Professional Foresters in the State of California. The Association provides opportunities for continuing education and public outreach to its membership, which includes diverse professionals affiliated with public agencies, private timber companies, consultants and the academic community. Governed by an elected Board of Directors, CLFA was established in 1980 after the passage of the landmark California Professional Foresters Law.