

To the Members of the BPUD Board;

About the Bolinas Eucalyptus Project's proposal:

First it must be said that in the wake of last winter's storm havoc even those of us who love the eucalyptus have acknowledged that some cutting of trees bordering Mesa Road must be done to make that road safe. But we believe that a major removal of a large part of that forest—a forest that is a majestic historical feature of our topography, an important part of the unique beauty of Bolinas—is excessive and unnecessary.

And—simple as this sounds—we have to begin with a reminder that a eucalyptus tree is a living creature, and quite a magnificent one. David Ainsley's multi-page ranting in the Hearsay News about what he calls "the Mesa Road weed patch"—a rant that is reminiscent of the early American selective genetics movement that inspired Adolph Hitler—is a much exaggerated form of a common dismissal of the eucalyptus as merely an invasive foreigner, a nuisance and a "widow-maker"—a dismissal that ignores the special beauty of these tall graceful creatures.

So, just a reminder about the beauty of eucalyptus in general. They are the tallest trees around us, here within Bolinas. Their tall, slender poles, the big clusters of their high boughs, their dark bushy profile against a sunset, the way their crescent leaves glitter in the breeze in the last light of late afternoon—they have a unique and majestic beauty.

Commonly in discussions like this, aesthetics and beauty are given a polite nod as we go right on to the matter of safety. And definitely, we'll discuss safety here. But those of us who oppose massive cutting of the BPUD forest do have to underline this—that we are talking about a beautiful living creature.

And, remember, we are talking about radically changing the look and feeling of Bolinas—the look and feeling that we have known and loved for a lifetime. We should at least pause and consider whether we want it so changed. This maverick town, Bolinas, will never look the same.

And what about safety? Well, obviously there's a good argument for offing the trees that threaten the safety of drivers or threaten blocking emergency access on Mesa Road. But that doesn't require removing a whole forest. We can protect the road with much less cutting than is proposed. And as to the bicycle path, nobody is likely to traverse the path in stormy weather—the odds of someone being hit by a falling tree are very small. Dozens of trees fell across the paths in the Point Reyes Seashore last winter (not eucalyptus, either) and nobody is proposing to cut all the trees along those beloved and much travelled paths!

If you love trees, you just have to accept a certain degree of danger—balancing the safety measures you take against the beauty of having trees around you. All kinds of trees fell last year—not just eucalyptus—due to the special combination of drought and "atmospheric rivers". Still, the risk of being hit by a falling tree, on Mesa Road or elsewhere, is so much less than the risk we all take driving on the freeways!

As to the BPUD forest as a fire danger, here too we think the Bolinas Eucalyptus Project has exaggerated the danger. They have projected a scary image of embers from a park fire turning the eucalyptus grove into a giant torch that then sets the town ablaze. Well—aside from the fact that there are innumerable other trees and clumps of trees around Bolinas that could catch fire—we question this giant torch image. The veteran forester Ray Moritz, whom the BPUD entrusted with assessing the danger of the BPUD forest, has told us that the way the grove might catch fire from wind-bourn embers would not likely be from the crown catching fire—the

danger would be from accumulated debris on the ground below the trees; and the BPUD has done an excellent job of keeping the ground clear beneath these trees. We also think that the space between Bolinas and the park forests make the prospect of a catastrophic town fire unlikely—not impossible, but unlikely.

Weighed against the (we think) exaggerated dangers of the BPUD forest, we need to consider the important service a big grove of trees serves, in this time of global warming, in filtering carbon from the air, cooling and cleaning the air around us. The eucalyptus forest also serves as a major windbreak for the town, and prevents erosion of that hillside. Yes, a planted oak forest would eventually do similar service, but not for decades.

And then there is the service the BUPD forest has historically served in being a habitat for our much loved Monarch butterflies. The Bolinas Eucalyptus Project has cited surveys indicating that a very small percentage of the Monarchs In Bolinas have used the BPUD grove, but those surveys were from recent years, when the Monarch flocks had greatly declined. We remember when, in the 70's, those trees were covered with thousands of Monarchs. And Monarchs are creatures of habit—they have continued to come to that grove, and with their numbers now increasing there is the prospect of them returning to that grove *en masse* as they—like the pelican—rebound from the threat of extinction.

In short, we hope the BPUD board will think long and hard before approving the removal of a living forest that has been a beautiful, unique feature of the Bolinas landscape, a great asset in a time of climate change, and a refuge for the endangered Monarch.

Dale Polissar
(a resident of Bolinas these past fifty years)