

3 November 2015

Michael Brune, Executive Director
Sierra Club
San Francisco, CA

Aaron Mair, President
Board of Directors
Sierra Club

Dear Mr. Brune and Mr. Mair,

We are writing to ask for a meeting with you. We are requesting a meeting with the national leadership of the Sierra Club, rather than the local chapter, for several reasons. The science which informs our opposition to projects in the San Francisco Bay area, which are destroying healthy trees and using herbicides has national, indeed international, significance. Support for these projects contradicts the mission of the Sierra Club and jeopardizes the long-term success of your organization. We have tried for many years to influence the leadership of our local chapter without success. Our enclosed petition to the national leadership describes some of the efforts we have made. The local chapter is unwilling to discuss the issues.

We speak as environmentalists who are very concerned about the direction the Sierra Club has taken. The seemingly innocuous support for native plants, and the fight against so-called invasives has seen the Club stand up for the felling of thousands of trees, the destruction of well-loved landscapes and naturalized habitat used by birds and animals, and the use of toxic pesticides that have been recognized as human carcinogens.

This is not the Sierra Club we knew and supported.

The Club's support for these obviously and visibly destructive projects gives environmentalism a bad name and turns away would-be supporters. People love the trees and landscapes they see and visit. When they learn that the Club not only supports their destruction but is actually suing for more destruction they react with shock and horror.

Indeed, we had expected Sierra Club support in our fight to preserve trees and naturalized areas, to save habitat, and to stop the use of toxic herbicides in so-called "restorations" that seek (and usually fail) to restore patches of wild lands to a "native" landscape prior to the Europeans. We were astounded to learn that it was quite the opposite.

As climate change becomes a growing threat, trees are a crucial store of carbon. Besides actually reducing emissions (an initiative we and the Sierra Club support), the only way to fight climate change is to preserve the trees we have and to plant more of them. Mature trees sequester more carbon than small young ones. Cutting down thousands of trees is anti-environmental.

And as we learn more about the accumulation of toxic herbicides in the environment - and there is growing evidence of their toxicity - we think it is unconscionable for the Sierra Club to take a neutral or supportive position for the use of these chemicals.

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All these years, the Club could take positions pushed by small portions of the leadership within it with impunity. People who disagreed would merely drop their memberships. But this is the age of the Internet and no secrets. The Sierra Club's positions are becoming widely known.

We urge you to read this petition, and in particular, the comments from people who are - or were - Sierra Club members. Surely the Club does not want to alienate its base over an issue that is locally important and goes against everything it stands for? This is also an environmental justice issue. The people most affected are the ones who are least able to stand up for their trees.

We would like to have a meeting with the national leadership of the Club. We have attached a brief outline of our presentation to you. The purpose of our presentation is to provide you with the documentation which informs our opposition to the pointless and damaging destruction of our urban forest. We do so in the hope that we may be able to support the Sierra Club again in the future.

Sincerely,

Mary McAllister, representing Million Trees

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Dee Seligman, representing San Francisco Forest Alliance

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Presentation to the Sierra Club

Critique of Invasion Biology*

- Evidence that biodiversity is increased by introduced plants and that many animals are now dependent upon introduced plants.
- Evidence that evolution and adaptation occur rapidly in a rapidly changing environment.
- Evidence that climate change requires plants and animals to move in order to survive. The concept of “native plants” has become meaningless in a rapidly changing climate.
- Evidence of the ecological functions performed by introduced plants.
- Evidence that the goal of ecological “restorations” is unattainable.

Critique of Specific Projects in San Francisco Bay Area

- Documentation of quantities of pesticides used by native plant “restorations” and the toxicity of those pesticides.
- Evidence that fire hazards are increased by destruction of the urban forest in San Francisco Bay Area.
- Specific criticisms of Sierra Club’s suit against FEMA regarding projects in the East Bay Hills.

Conclusion:

- What we are asking for to address these important issues.

*Empirical studies published in peer reviewed journals will be provided.