

Subject: FW: Trees on UC Berkeley Gill Tract

Sent: Thursday, January 10, 2008 3:30 PM
Subject: Trees on UC Berkeley Gill Tract

Dear Mayor Lieber and Councilmembers,

I am writing to inform you about a serious public safety condition on UC Berkeley's Gill Tract property in Albany and the university's plans to address it.

About 180 trees on the property near San Pablo Avenue and Buchanan Street pose an imminent danger to public life safety and property damage and will be removed later this month.

A post-doctoral researcher in the College of Natural Resources' Center on Forestry and the campus arborist, in consultation with the campus landscape architect, conducted a thorough review and evaluation of each of the Gill Tract trees. They found that most of the Monterey Pines on the property are infected with pitch canker, which causes individual branches to die and leads to general decline in the health of the tree, and often death. I have attached a set of photos illustrating this.

Trees with pitch canker need to be removed because it is likely that the dead material will break and fall from the tree or the tree itself will fall. Several trees on the Gill Tract have fallen already. Our experts also determined that Monterey Pines not currently affected will also need to be removed because they become more susceptible to wind, are less stable in the soil, and more likely to fall. The project will be implemented in two phases: trees that pose an immediate danger to the safety of people and damage to public property will be removed now, and the remainder at a later time.

The area will be hydroseeded with grasses and wildflowers, essentially returning the site to its condition before the pine plantation was planted for research in the 1960s.

A more detailed factsheet is being prepared and I will send you a copy when it is completed.

The university has engaged an outside contractor to perform this work under university project management. Project details, such as work hours, use of equipment, and access are currently being worked out and we will provide you with those details as soon as they are available. As with any UC managed project, implementation safety is most important and regulations will be followed. We are particularly aware that Oceanview students pass this corner as they walk to and from school and appropriate arrangements will be made to ensure their safety.

We are also in the process of distributing information about the project to city staff, the Park and Recreation Commission, community members, and AC Transit.

Given the current condition of the trees at the Gill Tract and the ongoing effects of the winter storms, the university believes that it must urgently address this public safety issue.

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions about the project.

Sincerely,

Glenda Rubin
Assistant Director, Community Relations

cc: Beth Pollard, City Administrator
Judy Lieberman, Assistant City Administrator

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