

# Memo

To: City Council

From: Robert Lieber, Council Member

Date: September 20, 2010

Re: Resolution No. 2010-47

---

Council Member Lieber recommendation: Approve Resolution No. 2010- 47 – A Resolution of the Albany City Council in Opposition to the Highway 101 Project that Endangers the Richardson Redwood Grove.

## Save Richardson Grove site

On June 30, the California Transportation Commission approved the funding of the widening and straightening highway project through [Richardson Grove State Park](#) (to the tune of \$7 million), approved by Caltrans in June with the release of the final EIR. (For background, see [EPIC's website](#) and the Coalition's [Save Richardson Grove site](#).) Arcata-based EPIC, the champion of north coast forests, filed suit against Caltrans in June using the [California Environmental Quality Act](#), and were joined by the [Center for Biological Diversity](#), Californians for Alternatives to Toxics and several individuals.

The destructive highway widening project threatens to destroy one of the few remaining stands of irreplaceable ancient redwoods--in a state park! Underlying the intent of the expensive, boondoggle project are economic interests, as the argument is based in the "need" to allow oversize trucks to travel up [Highway 101](#), from LA and the Bay Area to [Humboldt](#) and [Del Norte Counties](#). But exemptions already exist to allow these larger trucks on 101 (they just have to slow down going through the Avenue of the Giants area). Some trees that are not old growth would be cut down, but most importantly, the root systems of at least 72 ancient redwoods would be carved up and moved out of the way, compromising the survival of those trees directly.

The active Coalition campaign in [Humboldt County](#) has generated thousands of letters, gotten support from local businesses, lobbied the County Supervisors and has people preparing for direct action if and when the bulldozers start running. But these ancient trees are part of California's precious biological heritage and home to diminishing populations of wildlife, and the campaign needs to bust through the Redwood Curtain and grow in the Bay Area!

Those who stand to gain want you to believe that this project will be good for the local economy and harmless to this irreplaceable ancient redwood grove. While their claims of not removing any old growth trees are true, CalTrans proposes to cut the roots of an undetermined number of trees

and remove 87 other trees that surround old growth trees, and to erect a 300 foot long retaining wall. These acts will have a huge impact on the unique ambiance of the grove and its endangered wildlife.

As to the economics, only a few will directly benefit from this project, and open the door wide to more big box development at the expense of local businesses. Exemptions already exist to allow oversized trucks...they do it every day. Why do irreparable damage to a resource that belongs to the public for the benefit of a few?

The Richardson Grove widening project is bad for our economy, bad for the grove and bad for all Californians who own and enjoy this irreplaceable State Park. The project will open Highway 101 to large diesel trucks transporting goods, and servicing large franchise stores, along routes to Redding, Santa Rosa/San Francisco Bay Area and Medford/Portland, transforming our rural feeling highway 101 into a bustling transit hub.

Since Caltrans approved the project despite this massive show of public opposition, the campaign has shifted to California's state government--specifically Gov. Schwarzenegger. It is time for us to speak up and protect our beautiful State Park