*Sample Comment Letter for Van Auken THP #1-16-081*

*Do not send links, write out your comments*

*Ask questions*

*The last of 3 Pre-Harvest Inspections was on Oct 12 so that should give the public 30 days to comment.*

*Send to:* [*santarosapubliccomment@fire.ca.gov*](mailto:santarosapubliccomment@fire.ca.gov)

*If you are emailing, put in the subject line: comment re THP 1-16-081HUM*

*To send via snail mail:*

*Dr Helge Eng, Deputy Director*

*Forest Practices Review Team, CalFIRE*

*135 Ridgeway*

*Santa Rosa, CA 95401*

Dr. Helge Eng and the Santa Rosa THP Review Team,

I am writing with my concerns about the proposed THP # 1-16-081. *If you are nearby the plan or live in the watershed or have some experience, tell about yourself here*. As written, this plan would have significant impacts to important tributaries of the Mattole river watershed. Please address the following concerns:

This plan would harvest over 500 acres in areas that are sensitive, contribute water and shade to salmon streams, and are just now improving from past land management practices. Even the THP states their condition as improving. But the proposed activities would reverse those improvements. This plan has management units that drain into both the Eel River and the Mattole River, both of which are struggling to maintain and increase their salmon populations. In particular, in the Mattole watershed, Van Auken, McKee, and Harris are steelhead streams that once boasted coho runs. The forests should be managed to increase forest health through thinning or selection thereby decreasing the fuel load and the water need, BUT that is not what this plan is proposing.

With the combination of 200 acres of clearcut and 100 acres of rehabilitation, there would be 300 acres cleared of cover. Some units are oversized simply because they stack a clearcut unit next to a Rehab unit. This will fragment the forest and could cause significant impacts. The Mattole already suffers from high temperatures and excessive sediment. Exposing so many cleared acres to summer heat and rain runoff could increase stream temperatures as well as the risk of sediment delivery to streams. Van Arken (or Auken in the plan) has been identified many times as an important salmon stream. In the Mattole North Coast Watershed Assessment (2003) it was listed as important refugia due to recovering instream conditions, in the Mattole Coho Recovery Strategy (2011) it was identified as a Priority 1 tributary for coho recovery and it was rated as high intrinsic potential in NOAA’s 2014 SONCC report. Currently, it is a known steelhead stream with hopes of luring returning coho. In addition, the streams provide habitat for rare amphibians and important insect populations while serving a significant contribution of water to the mainstem Mattole in the headwaters area.

There is insubstantial thought to the conservation of hardwood stands throughout the plan other than the criteria for meeting a certain size. Hardwoods offer their own ecological niche, providing food and shelter for a myriad of nesters and foragers. How will natural hardwood stands remain on the landscape?

This plan proposes the use of tractors over all the units including some stream crossings. In addition, 6700 feet of new road construction and landings in unknown locations will clear the land further with herbicide treatments planned for management. Why are these practices allowed alongside critical salmon streams? The impact of all these actions will alter this recovering landscape. The Mattole watershed has been the beneficiary of hundreds of thousands of dollars of public money to reverse the damage that logging roads and tractor logging caused to the river and its salmon populations. This plan puts at risk that incredible investment.

Finally, it has been a trend for timberland owners to harvest parcels and then sell them on the public market, which is currently booming from the cannabis farming business-with both illegal and permit-compliant purchasers. Significantly, Sanctuary Forest has started a campaign to purchase parcels for conservation in the Van Arken, Ravashoni and McKee creeks-the very properties proposed for harvest under this plan. I want to urge the Barnum/Boyle company and the agencies to wait until there is conservation money to purchase this important area of the Mattole headwaters for the future of the forests, wildlife, salmon, and so much more.

Sincerely,