

1 PAUL V. CARROLL/121369
2 *Attorney At Law*
3 1103 17th Avenue
4 Redwood City, California 94063
5 (650) 839-8644

6 Attorney for Petitioners
7 SIERRA CLUB, BOHEMIAN REDWOOD RESCUE CLUB

8 SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
9 IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF SONOMA

10 SIERRA CLUB, BOHEMIAN
11 REDWOOD RESCUE CLUB,
12 Petitioners,
13 v.
14 CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF
15 FORESTRY AND FIRE
16 PROTECTION, and Does I through X
17 inclusive;

No.: SCV-246716
UNLIMITED CIVIL CASE
PETITIONERS' REPLY
MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND
AUTHORITIES IN SUPPORT OF
PETITION FOR WRIT OF
MANDATE

Date: November 12, 2010
Time: 2:30 p.m.

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Respondents.

Dept: 17

THE BOHEMIAN CLUB and DOES
XI through XX, inclusive,

Real Parties in Interest.

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2 **ARGUMENT**

3 **I. THE PREVIOUS VERSIONS OF THE NTMP DO NOT CONSTITUTE**
4 **FEASIBLE, LESS DAMAGING ALTERNATIVES UNDER CEQA**

5 In their opening, Petitioners argue that the NTMP’s boilerplate treatment of alternatives, and
6 Cal-Fire’s concession that the treatment was “circumscribed” violated CEQA. (Petitioners’ br. 8-
7 11, 17-20.)

8 Evidently, fearing that the boilerplate alternatives will not survive judicial review, Respondents
9 argue that there are others, what might be called “stealth” alternatives. They argue that
10 environmental review of an NTMP is a unique, lengthy, iterative process that results in prior
11 versions of the NTMP, and that these prior versions are alternatives in addition to the boilerplate
12 ones found in the NTMP. (BC br. 5, 15-16; Cal-Fire br. 16-17.) The argument is bizarre,
13 unprecedented, and wrong.

14 We will address it in two parts. We will show first that CEQA review of an NTMP is not
15 unique or especially iterative. We will then refute the claim that such review creates alternatives
16 that satisfy CEQA.

17
18 **A. CEQA Review by Cal-Fire Is Supposed to Be Streamlined and Quick, Not**
19 **Ongoing, Lengthy and Iterative**

20 Contrary to Respondents’ claims, there is nothing unusual or especially iterative about Cal-
21 Fire’s environmental review of an NTMP. In fact, such review is intended to be quicker and more
22 streamlined than an agency’s review using an EIR. This is why a certified program’s plan is called
23 an “abbreviated EIR,” the “functional equivalent” of an EIR. (*Environmental Protection*
24 *Information Center v. Johnson* (1985) 170 Cal.App.3d 604, 609-611.)

25 We demonstrate this by comparing Cal-Fire’s review as a certified program with the EIR
26 process. Once an NTMP is received, Cal-Fire has two working days to provide notice of its filing,
27 place it in a file for public review, invite public comment, and distribute it to review team agencies
28 and interested members of the public. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, §§ 1090.16-1090.17.) Cal-Fire
must then determine if a preharvest inspection is necessary; if so, it must conduct the inspection

1 within 10 days of the plan’s filing, unless it and the plan submitter mutually agree on a later date.
2 (Public Res. Code, § 4604, subd. (a).)²

3
4 If no inspection is necessary, Cal-Fire has 45 days from the date of filing to review the NTMP,
5 take and consider public comment, and approve or disapprove the plan; if an inspection is
6 necessary, Cal-Fire has 45 days from the inspection to do the same. During this period, Cal-Fire
7 shall make sure the review team has had an opportunity to review and comment on the NTMP.
8 (Cal. Code Regs, tit. 14, § 1090.18.)

9 This process is exceptionally brief. An NTMP must be reviewed and approved or disapproved
10 within 45 days from its filing or preharvest inspection, unless agreed otherwise. It hardly
11 contemplates the lengthy, iterative process that Respondents describe. Indeed, it is far quicker and
12 simpler than the CEQA procedure—the use of an EIR or negative declaration—that governs most
13 projects.

14 As to the latter, once a lead agency decides that a project requires an initial study, it must
15 consult with all responsible agencies and trustee agencies responsible for resources affected by the
16 project regarding whether a negative declaration or EIR should be prepared. (CEQA Guidelines,
17 §15063, subd. (g); § 21080.3, subd. (a).)

18 If the lead agency decides to prepare an EIR, it must send out a notice of preparation to all
19 responsible and trustee agencies, and it must consult with them regarding the scope and substance
20 of the draft EIR. (Guidelines, §§ 15082, subd. (a), 15086; § 21080.4.) The EIR shall include
21 information regarding the impacts anticipated by those agencies. (§ 21080.4(a).)

22 This process by which the lead agency determines the scope of an EIR may lead to multiple
23 meetings with the applicant, public, and responsible and trustee agencies. (§§ 21004, subd. (a);
24 21080.4, subs. (b), (d); 21083.9, subd. (a); 21153, (a)-(b); Guidelines, § 15082(c).)

25 Once the draft EIR is prepared, notice and comment must be provided. (§ 21092; Guidelines, §
26 15087.) During this period, the lead agency must again solicit comments from responsible and
27 trustee agencies, any other state, federal and local agencies with jurisdiction over the project, and
28

² Further statutory references are to the Public Resources Code, unless otherwise noted.

1 every city or county that borders on a city or county within which the project is located.
2 (Guidelines, § 15086, subd. (a); §§ 21104, subd. (a); 21153, subd. (a).)

3
4 If the lead agency adds significant new information to the EIR after the commencement of
5 public review, it must issue a new notice and recirculate the EIR for another round of public
6 comment and consultation. (§ 21092.1; Guidelines, § 15088.5.) That means it must once again
7 consult at a minimum with all responsible and trustee agencies, any other state, federal and local
8 agencies with jurisdiction over the project, and every city or county that borders on a city or county
9 within which the project is located. (Guidelines, § 15086, subd. (a).)

10 In the final EIR, the lead agency must evaluate and respond to all the environmental comments
11 it receives within the public review period, including responding to comments from other agencies.
12 (§ 21091, subd. (d)(2)(A); Guidelines, § 15088, subs. (a)-(b).)

13 In certifying the EIR, the lead agency must issue findings. (§ 21002; Guidelines, §§ 15002,
14 subd. (a)(3); 15021, subd. (a)(2).) And it must adopt a mitigation monitoring plan. (§ 21081.6,
15 subd. (a)(1); Guidelines, § 15091, subd. (d); 15097, subd. (d).)

16 One can see from the above that the EIR process is far lengthier than Cal-Fire’s process,
17 requires more consultation at more points with numerous agencies, and is more likely to result in
18 what BC calls an ongoing, iterative process. Yet nowhere in CEQA jurisprudence will this Court
19 find the notion that the modification of a project during environmental review leaves in its wake a
20 series of covert alternatives.
21

22 BC appears to argue that Cal-Fire’s review is unique because it is “two-tiered.” But it does not
23 identify either tier. (BC brief 15.) Respondents do, however, make much of the interdisciplinary
24 review team that reviews an NTMP or THP and makes recommendations if necessary. (BC br. 5,
25 14-16; Cal-Fire br. 16-17.) But under CEQA there is nothing unusual in such “other agency”
26 review. The review team requirement can be analogized to the far more onerous consultation
27 requirements that a lead agency must follow in preparing an EIR: At least three times during the
28 EIR process, a lead agency must consult with responsible and trustee agencies and seek comment
regarding whether to prepare an EIR, the scope of the EIR, and the contents of the EIR; and it must

1 solicit comments from any other local, state and federal agencies with jurisdiction, as well as with
2 contiguous cities and counties.

3
4 In short, Cal-Fire’s environmental review is not a unique iterative process. Therefore,
5 Respondents’ claim that that process creates additional alternatives fails. But even if such review
6 were intended to result in numerous, rejected iterations, the latter would not constitute alternatives
7 under CEQA. We make this argument next.

8 **B.Respondents’ Modification of the NTMP Does Not Create Additional** 9 **Alternatives**

10 On two occasions during its review, the NTMP was substantially modified. Respondents argue
11 that the two previous versions of the plan constitute reasonable alternatives under CEQA, and
12 augment the boilerplate alternatives in the approved plan. (BC br. 5, 15-16; Cal-Fire br. 16-17,
13 22.) This argument fails on numerous grounds—factual, legal, and logical.

14 **1. The Previous Versions of the NTMP Were Rejected Because They Were** 15 **Based on Factual and/or Legal Errors**

16 The lengthy review in this case and the previous versions of the NTMP that were rejected were
17 caused by Respondents’ factual oversights and/or legal errors, not by CEQA, the FPA, or the
18 Forest Practice Rules. They were “rejects,” not alternatives.

19 The first version of the NTMP was revised because BC failed to identify the significant patches
20 of large old trees and old-growth on the property outside the 106-acre Main Grove. A member of
21 the public brought this oversight to the attention of the Department of Fish and Game (DFG).
22 DFG in turn criticized the NTMP’s failure to disclose this information “[w]ell into the NTMP’s
23 review period,” and identified nine patches of mature coniferous forest that were nowhere
24 mentioned in the NTMP. (4 AR 854-855.) Two of those patches (#3 and #5) comprise the Upper
25 Bull Barn stand. As a result of this discovery, BC agreed that the Upper Bull Barn stand would be
26 off limits to any logging. (4 AR 854-855, 860, 888.) But this did not end BC’s reluctance to map
27 the old-growth on its property.
28

DFG also called upon BC to revise the NTMP with maps showing the nine patches as well as

1 residual old-growth and large old trees found throughout the property. (1 AR 855, 861.) BC
2 refused. (4 AR 886-887.) The NTMP, now in its second version, was then noticed for
3 recirculation on April 2, 2007, because of changes, including the no-harvest designation for the
4 Upper Bull Barn stand. (4 AR 898.) DFG was not satisfied. On April 19, 2007, it brought BC's
5 refusal to the attention of Cal-Fire and reiterated its demand that the NTMP disclose and map "all
6 old-growth and large old trees" on the property. (4 AR 913.) The following month, BC
7 grudgingly agreed to the mapping and disclosure. (4 AR 919.)

8
9 Still, more old-growth and large old trees were to be discovered. DFG re-inspected the
10 property in May 2007 and found another patch with old-growth trees suitable as habitat for the
11 marbled murrelet, a threatened species under the federal Endangered Species Act. And then in
12 July 2007, again as a result of information provided by a member of the public, it found two more.
13 All three patches received further protection. (4 AR 963-965, 971.)

14 To summarize: Other than the 106-acre Main Grove, the first version of the NTMP did not
15 acknowledge the existence of any patches of old-growth or large old trees. The second version
16 recognized nine and later three more, and set aside the two patches comprising the Upper Bull
17 Barn stand for no harvest. All of this was thanks to a member of the public. The recognition of the
18 Upper Bull Barn stand was particularly significant and not a little ironic. In the radical revision
19 that became the third version, the Upper Bull Barn stand—not even recognized in the first version
20 —became the old-growth model for the rest of the forest. (1 AR 127.)

21
22 The second version was then revised, because Dr. Rundel and the public discovered a
23 remarkable error. (11 AR 2365-2366; 12 AR 2595-2596.) An NTMP must demonstrate sustained
24 yield, namely that growth will equal or exceed harvest. (§§ 4593.2-4593.3.) The first and second
25 versions of the NTMP grossly overestimated the amount of timber available for logging; as a
26 result, it permitted a rate of logging that would have decimated the forest, violating the sustained
27 yield mandate. The basis of the error is easy to demonstrate.

28 The Main Grove, the 106-acre old-growth stand within BC's 2,400-acre forest, contains a full
one-third of the forest's timber. (20 AR 4848, 4851.) But that timber has never been available for

1 harvest, because BC has never intended to log its sacred Main Grove. (20 AR 4785.) Nonetheless,
2 BC included the huge volume of timber in the Main Grove in the total volume of timber available
3 for harvest. Because it overestimated timber volume, it overestimated the amount that could be
4 logged. As a result, the logging rate exceeded the rate of growth in violation of the Forest Practice
5 Act. (11 AR 2365-2366; 12 AR 2595-2596.)
6

7 BC argues that Dr. Rundel and the public were wrong. (BC br. 11.) The assertion is incredible
8 in light of what followed. After the error was brought to Respondents' attention, the second
9 version of the NTMP was abandoned and the NTMP came to a standstill for one and a half years,
10 from October 2007 until March 2009, when the final version was released. (7 AR 1334; Cal-Fire
11 br. 11.) The final version corrected the error: Timber volume in the Main Grove was removed
12 from the timber volume available for logging. (7 AR 1383, 1387, 1389-1390.) As a result, the
13 final version *reduced* the total conifer volume available for harvest by approximately a third, from
14 75,700,888 board feet to 47,906,272 board feet; and *reduced* the annual harvest during the first
15 period from 1,137,888 board feet to 699,636 board feet, somewhat more than a third. (7 AR 1389-
16 1390.) BC corrected the error by making the very change demanded by Dr. Rundel and others. It
17 had no other choice.
18

19 In its brief, Cal-Fire does not deny that BC's mistake resulted in abandonment of the 2007
20 version. In its Official Response, Cal-Fire conceded the error. In the section entitled *Harvest*
21 *Level Calculations*, it explained that during review "plan acreage was removed that affected
22 growth and yield calculations," namely the 106-acre Main Grove and the Upper Bull Barn stand.
23 (7 AR 1383.) In addition, in its responses to Dr. Rundel and others, Cal-Fire repeatedly explained
24 that the Main Grove had been removed from calculations and that the rate of harvest was
25 substantially reduced. (7 AR 1387, 1388 ["The Department has found the issues raised by Mr.
26 Rundel to have been resolved and that sustained yield will be achieved."], 1389-1390.)
27

28 Notwithstanding the above, BC asserts that the criticism by Rundel and others was not why the
NTMP's rate of harvest was reduced. But it does not explain why, except to say it happened "as
part of the NTMP review process." (BC br. 11.) BC's defense of so obvious an error leaves it

1 with little credibility.

2 In sum, the previous versions of the NTMP can hardly be called feasible alternatives. They
3 were discarded because they were factually and/or legally inadequate. The first version failed to
4 identify numerous patches of old-growth and large old trees, including the Upper Bull Barn stand,
5 which became the model for the future of the Grove; and the second version would have decimated
6 the Grove, violating the principle of sustained yield. (§§ 4593.2-4593.3.)

8 **2. The Previous Versions Are Not Alternatives Because They Were Not** 9 **Available for Public Review**

10 Under CEQA, an NTMP and its alternatives must be available for public review: “[P]ublic
11 review and comment regarding such alternatives is a crucial component of CEQA.” (*Joy Road*,
12 *supra*, 142 Cal.App.4th 656, 667; accord *Friends of the Old Trees*, *supra*, 52 Cal.App.4th 1383,
13 1403-1405; *Wildlife Alive v. Chickering* (1976) 18 Cal.3d 190, 197-198.)

14 In *Joy Road supra*, 142 Cal.App.4th 656, the First Appellate District held that Cal-Fire violated
15 CEQA when it added to a THP four pages regarding alternatives without notifying the public of
16 their insertion into the record. (*Id.* at pp. 667, 670-673.) In *Friends of the Old Trees*, *supra*, 52
17 Cal.App.4th 1383, the First Appellate District held that Cal-Fire violated CEQA where the only
18 discussion of alternatives occurred in the Official Response, and therefore was not available for
19 public review and comment. (*Id.* at pp. 1403-1405.)

20 Respondents’ argument that the prior versions of the NTMP are alternatives is defeated by
21 these authorities. The two prior versions of the NTMP were not available for public review,
22 because they were not part of the administrative record during the public comment period for the
23 final NTMP. This is because Cal-Fire did not keep previous versions of the NTMP as it was
24 amended. (See Stipulation Regarding Augmentation of Administrative Record and Order, p. 2.)
25 Indeed, the only reason that the previous versions are in the record is because Petitioners insisted
26 they be and threatened a motion to augment if they were not. To avoid such a motion, the parties
27 stipulated to augment the record with the two previous versions as they were kept by the RPF.
28 (See *Ibid.*)

1 Thus, when the final NTMP was made available for public comment from March 25, 2009, to
2 May 11, 2009, the prior versions were not in or part of the administrative record, and therefore
3 were not available for public review. (7 AR 1330, 1334 [dates of public review].)

4 This proves one of two things, both of which are fatal to Respondents' arguments: It proves that
5 the prior versions were not alternatives, since alternatives must be available for public comment.
6 Or, if we go down Respondents' rabbit hole and pretend they were alternatives, it follows that Cal-
7 Fire violated *Joy Road* and *Friends of the Old Trees*, because it considered alternatives that were
8 not available to the public for comment and criticism.

9 Without citation to any authority, BC tries to bolster its novel theory by criticizing Petitioners
10 for thinking that the final, approved NTMP should contain the complete alternatives analysis. (BC
11 br. 16.) This argument backfires. CEQA requires the "plan" to include the alternatives analysis.
12 (§ 21080.5, subd. (d)(3)(A).) The plan in this case is the final NTMP. Had the previous versions
13 constituted alternatives, they could and should have been treated as alternatives *in* the NTMP.
14 Each prior version was at one time the "plan," not an alternative to it. As soon as it became a prior
15 version, it was discarded from the administrative record. Thus, the prior versions never existed in
16 the administrative record as alternatives to a later version. They only became "alternatives" as
17 Respondents realized they needed to come up with something to compensate for the boilerplate in
18 the NTMP.

19 In addition, even if the prior versions could be said to have existed briefly as alternatives, the
20 public could not be expected to have known that. They were not called alternatives and the public
21 was never on notice that Respondents would consider them alternatives. (§ 21080.5, (d)(2)(F)
22 [certified program must notify public of plan].)

23 Nor can the public be expected to keep apprised of an ever-changing administrative record and
24 guess at what might be called an alternative at the end of the process. In *Joy Road, supra*, 142
25 Cal.App.4th 656, Cal-Fire complained that it was too burdensome to notify the public when it
26 made significant changes to a THP, and that the burden should be placed on members of the public
27 who were free to check the administrative record for changes. The Court of Appeal rejected the
28

1 argument: “In our view, placing the onus on members of the public to repeatedly review a lengthy
2 THP and determine for themselves what changes CDF has made to it is simply inconsistent with
3 the fundamental policy goals of CEQA.” (*Id.* at p. 671.)

4 In addressing Respondents’ argument, we ask this Court to reject the notion that the prior
5 versions of the NTMP were alternatives. Even if rejected, dignifying them as alternatives will
6 create mischief and confusion. CEQA review typically results in changes to a project. To call
7 previous versions of a project “alternatives” will introduce an utterly confusing concept, and will
8 undermine one of CEQA’s most important assurances of thorough environmental review.
9 (*Wildlife Alive, supra*, 18 Cal.3d at pp. 197-198.)

11 **II. THE NTMP DOES NOT CONSIDER A SINGLE, FEASIBLE ALTERNATIVE**

12 **A. The Public Is Not Responsible for the Alternatives Analysis**

13 BC defends the alternatives analysis by arguing that the public failed to provide Cal-Fire with
14 additional alternatives to consider. (BC br. 17.) This argument was rejected by the Supreme Court
15 in *Laurel Heights Improvement Assn. v. Regents of University of California* (1988) 47 Cal.3d 376.

16 There, the Regents defended the EIR’s cursory discussion of alternatives by arguing that the
17 public had not come forward with any. The Court responded: “It is the project proponent’s
18 responsibility to provide an adequate discussion of alternatives. [Citation.] [¶]...Under the
19 Regents’ view, a project proponent would never have to discuss alternatives. It would merely
20 respond to alternatives proposed by others. There is not even a hint in CEQA that the Legislature
21 intended such a result.” (*Id.* at p. 405.)

22 In any event, the public suggested obvious alternatives. Dr. Rundel was very critical of the
23 NTMP and opined that its objectives could only be met by less logging. He called for
24 consideration of alternative harvest levels: “The forest management plan would have much greater
25 credibility if it were to highlight a series of alternative harvest levels and modeled the implications
26 of these implementation plans in achieving a realistic reestablishment of the pre-European stand
27 structures and low flammability that are desired.” (18 AR 4470.) Members of the public asked for
28

1 the same. (E.g., 16 AR 3829.)

2 The public also provided Cal-Fire with the alternatives analysis that the Board of Forestry
3 recently performed for the Jackson Demonstration State Forest (JDSF) management plan. There,
4 the Board considered a range of alternatives that contemplated *less* logging than the proposed
5 project. The project contemplated cutting 70 percent of growth. The alternatives considered the
6 following percentages: Alternative A (no project); B (82 percent of growth); D (55 percent of
7 growth); E (18 percent of growth); F (42 percent). (16 AR 3841-3846.)

8
9 **B. The NTMP Was Not Required to Consider the Rejected Alternatives under**
10 ***Friends of the Old Trees***

11 BC contends that the NTMP was required to consider the boilerplate alternatives because
12 *Friends of the Old Trees*, *supra*, 52 Cal.App.4th 1383, held that Cal-Fire should consider
13 alternatives raised by members of the public. (BC br. 19.) Cal-Fire makes the same argument in
14 connection with the alternative approach to logging. (Cal-Fire br. 19-20.) To the contrary, the
15 NTMP did exactly what *Friends of the Old Trees* condemned.

16 In *Friends of the Old Trees*, the First District Court of Appeal held that “feasible less damaging
17 alternatives to the proposed harvesting project” must be considered in the THP itself. (52
18 Cal.App.4th at p. 1404.) The only alternatives discussed were raised by the public and appeared
19 for the first time in Cal-Fire’s official response to comments. There were two: a lighter harvest
20 that spared larger trees, and purchase of the grove by the county open space district. The First
21 District Court of Appeal held that these and other feasible less damaging alternatives should have
22 been considered in the THP. (52 Cal.App.4th p. 1404.)³

23
24 Far from assisting Respondents, *Friends of the Old Trees* eviscerates their position. Not one of
25 the NTMP’s infeasible, more damaging alternatives was requested by a member of the public.
26 And what the public did request—a series of less intensive harvests per Dr. Rundel and the Board
27

28 ³ The undersigned was attorney for the petitioner in *Friends of the Old Trees* in superior court
and on appeal. The purchase of the grove was considered feasible because the open space
district had expressed interest in a purchase.

1 of Forestry’s analysis for JDSF—Cal-Fire refused to consider. The NTMP thus completely
2 disobeyed *Friends of the Old Trees*. It considered infeasible alternatives that the public did not
3 request, and refused to consider feasible ones that it did .

4 Cal-Fire’s misuse of *Friends of the Old Trees* is particularly telling. As we have explained, the
5 NTMP considers only one supposedly feasible, less damaging alternative besides the no project,
6 namely the alternative approach to harvesting. But the NTMP acknowledges that it is infeasible
7 and more damaging. Cal-Fire attempts to defend this alternative by arguing that *Friends of the*
8 *Old Trees* required the NTMP to consider “infeasible” alternatives raised by members of the
9 public. (Cal-Fire br. 19-20.)

10
11 This argument contains a legal error, a factual error, and a concession: *Friends of the Old Trees*
12 does *not* require an agency to consider infeasible alternatives raised by the public. The public did
13 *not* request Cal-Fire to consider the alternative approach to harvesting. And Cal-Fire *concedes* that
14 the alternative approach is neither feasible nor less damaging.

15 **C. The Alternative Approach to Harvesting Was Not Potentially Feasible**

16 BC defends the alternative approach to harvesting by stating that it was “potentially feasible.”
17 (BC br. 21.) But there is nothing potentially feasible about it. First, it is admittedly more
18 destructive. (1 AR 199-200.) The alternative approaches are evenaged management (a type of
19 clearcutting) and clearcutting, neither of which are permitted under an NTMP, because they are
20 more damaging than unevenaged management. (§§ 4593.2, subs. (c), (e); 4593.3.) In addition,
21 the NTMP admits that the alternative would result in increased visual, noise, and sedimentation
22 impacts. (1 AR 217-218.)

23
24 Moreover, all of this was known when the first version of the NTMP was filed in 2006 and the
25 second in 2007. Both say the same thing as the final NTMP about the infeasibility and
26 destructiveness of the alternative approach. (19 AR 4718-4719; 20 AR 4942-4943.)

27 It is one thing for an environmental review document to discuss a “potentially” feasible
28 alternative, and for the reviewing agency to learn through the review process and public comment

1 that the alternative is not feasible. But that is a far cry from what occurred here. The alternative
2 approach was infeasible boilerplate from the beginning, appearing in each version of the NTMP. It
3 was never a meaningful alternative, let alone potentially feasible. “The purpose of an EIR is *not* to
4 identify alleged alternatives that meet few if any of the project’s objectives so that these alleged
5 alternatives may be readily eliminated.” (*Watsonville Pilots Association v. City of Watsonville*
6 (2010) 183 Cal.App.4th 1059, 1089.)
7

8 **D. The Use of Boilerplate in Place of a Real Consideration of Alternatives Is** 9 **an Egregious Violation of CEQA**

10 Respondents defend the NTMP’s use of boilerplate for the consideration of alternatives. (BC
11 br. 21-22; Cal-Fire br. 22.) Offering no citations to the record, BC claims that the “actual
12 comparison of the 2009 NTMP to the alternatives is not boilerplate, but specifically compares the
13 impacts from the 2009 NTMP to the No Project and alternative approach to harvesting scenarios.
14 This is also true of the alternatives considered but rejected.” (BC brief 22.) But this argument
15 assumes that there can be a meaningful comparison between the project and infeasible, more
16 damaging, boilerplate alternatives.

17 In any event, BC is wrong if its argument is that the NTMP’s comparison of boilerplate
18 alternatives with the NTMP is somehow not boilerplate. For example, the NTMP’s comparison of
19 the alternative approach to harvesting with the project (1 AR 218-219) is virtually word-for-word
20 the same as the comparison in the YMCA NTMP (14 AR 3425-3426), the Hathaway NTMP (15
21 AR 3478-3479), the Osier-Mixon THP (15 AR 3486-3487), and the Nobles THP (15 AR 3496).
22 So are the other comparisons. In short, boilerplate alternatives result in boilerplate comparisons.
23

24 Cal-Fire takes a different tack. First, it defends the boilerplate by arguing that it was dictated in
25 part by the “unique nature of the project.” (Cal-Fire br. 15.) It then defends the boilerplate by
26 stating that all logging operations are the same except for “different acreages or locations.” (Cal-
27 Fire br. 22.) Besides being contradictory, these positions beg a more important question, namely
28 Cal-Fire’s failure to consider *feasible* alternatives, even if it is true that different logging projects
may warrant consideration of similar alternatives.

1
2 **III. RESPONDENTS IMPROPERLY DEFINE THE NO PROJECT**
3 **ALTERNATIVE**

4 In their opening, Petitioners explained that the NTMP committed two errors in connection with
5 the no project alternative: It posited that the no project would be no logging whatsoever; or that it
6 would be the maximum allowed by law. (Petitioners’ opening 13-15.)

7 Without citing to any authority, Respondents both argue that Cal-Fire would have improperly
8 “speculated” to assume logging would continue if the NTMP were not approved. (BC br. 20; Cal-
9 Fire br. 18.) But that does not stop Cal-Fire from speculating more absurdly in the opposite
10 direction by assuming that years of logging and management of the Grove would come to a
11 standstill if the NTMP did not go forward.

12 Respondents both argue that since no prior logging operation was open when the NTMP was
13 submitted, they were entitled to assume that if the NTMP did not go forward, the Grove would
14 never be logged again. (BC br. 20; Cal-Fire br. 17-18.) First, Respondents’ supposition that no
15 prior logging plans were open is wrong.

16 THP 1-01-252 SON was open. The NTMP was filed on May 11, 2006. On July 28, 2006, the
17 review team noted that the stocking report for the THP had not been filed; accordingly, it decided
18 that the THP’s stocking would be evaluated during the preharvest inspection of the NTMP. (4 AR
19 761.) The THP’s “Work Completion and/or Stocking Report” was signed by Cal-Fire on
20 September 6, 2006, four months after the NTMP was filed. (4 AR 821-823.)

21 But even assuming no open plans, Respondents’ assumption that no logging would occur in the
22 absence of the NTMP violates the law and is not justified by the facts. Respondents ignore the
23 relevant provisions of Guideline section 15126.6 that Petitioners discussed at length in their
24 opening. (Petitioners’ opening 13-15.) The Guideline provides:

25
26 When the project is the revision of an existing land use or regulatory plan, policy or
27 ongoing operation, the “no project” alternative will be the continuation of the
28 existing plan, policy or operation into the future. Typically this is a situation where
other projects initiated under the existing plan will continue while the new plan is

1 developed. Thus, the projected impacts of the proposed plan or alternative plans
2 would be compared to the impacts that would occur under the existing plan.

3 (Guidelines, § 15126.6, subd. (e)(3)(A).)

4
5 The NTMP is a 100-year logging plan for the 2,400-acre Bohemian Grove. It replaces decades
6 of logging and land management using THPs. As just discussed, THP 1-01-252 SON did not close
7 until months after the NTMP was filed, and according to Cal-Fire’s official Response, another one,
8 THP 1-13-134 SON, was completed in February 2006, just three months before the NTMP was
9 filed. (7 AR 1459.) What is more, a BC 2004–2005 annual report demonstrates that in 2005 BC
10 was transitioning from THPs to an NTMP to carry out the “*continuation of our timber harvest with*
11 *the emphasis on maintaining a healthy and safe forest.*” (10 AR 1979, italics added.)

12 The transition from management by THPs to management by an NTMP falls squarely under
13 Guideline section 15126.6, subdivision (e)(3)(A). The past management of the Bohemian Grove
14 using THPs constitutes an “ongoing operation”; the NTMP constitutes the “revision of an...
15 ongoing operation.” (Guidelines, § 15126.6, subd. (e)(3)(A).)

16 Even though Respondents are wrong on the facts, for purposes of argument, we accept their
17 claim that no THPs were open when the NTMP was filed. This is not a principled distinction. It
18 ignores the basic reality that up until the NTMP was filed, the land had been logged for more than
19 two decades under a regime of successive THPs. Furthermore, even respondents concede a THP
20 closed only 90 days before the NTMP was filed (which undoubtedly means the NTMP was being
21 drafted *while* the THP was open). Why should so much hinge on 90 days? Respondents cannot
22 answer this question.

23
24 Furthermore, the NTMP argues that logging is necessary to restore the Grove to its original
25 condition and to avert the threat of fire. Are we to suppose that if the NTMP were not approved,
26 BC would abandon these goals and encourage the conditions it seeks to avoid?

27 Finally, Respondents’ position is refuted by numerous statements in the administrative record.
28 For example, Cal-Fire provides this quote from the NTMP: “The property owner has purchased
each acre of timberland and each stand of timber with the purpose of managing those acres and

1 timber stands for recreation and *timber production...*” (Cal-Fire br. 20, quoting 1 AR 215, italics
2 added.)⁴ Since BC manages its Grove *for* timber production, it is illogical to assume that such
3 production would stop if the NTMP did not go forward.
4

5 Other examples: Members of the public complained that one of the NTMP’s alternatives
6 contemplated clearcutting, which is illegal under an NTMP. Cal-Fire responded by stating that
7 clearcutting would be allowed under a THP: “[T]he option to forego seeking approval of an NTMP
8 and instead filing for a THP that includes clearcutting would not be ‘invalid.’” (7 AR 1605; accord
9 7 AR 1600.) Cal-Fire thus contemplated that in the absence of an NTMP, logging would go
10 forward under THPs. (See also, e.g., 7 AR 1528 [Official Response: “Because the property is
11 already in the second cycle of timber operations, most of the transportation system...already
12 exist.”]; 8 AR 1640 [Official Response: “The harvesting practices are to remain similar to those in
13 the past with greater emphasis on improvement of stand conditions...”].)

14 The no project alternative violates CEQA on a second ground. Having first argued there would
15 be no logging if the NTMP were not approved, in the following sentence the NTMP assumes that
16 the no project alternative would involve the maximum logging allowed by law. (1 AR 27.) “The
17 No Project Alternative would also result in greater greenhouse gas emissions over the life of the
18 NTMP than the Proposed Project because, as discussed above, the Proposed Project would result in
19 a net capture of 254,000 tons of CO₂e over the No Project baseline.” (1 AR 217.) But the “No
20 Project baseline” referenced in the above quote contemplates the maximum amount of logging
21 permitted by law—logging that essentially harvests all growth—significantly more than the NTMP
22 allows. (2 AR 397-402.) If this seems hopelessly confused, it is, because it combines a baseline
23 error, which we address *infra* at pp. 24-25, with a no project error that we address here.
24

25 What happened is this. In analyzing the project’s effects on GHG emissions, the NTMP
26 compared the project with a hypothetical that logs more and sequesters less. (2 AR 397-402.) In
27 analyzing the no project alternative, the NTMP mistakenly assumed that the no project is this
28

⁴ We note this quote is from the section on alternatives and therefore is boilerplate, but it is only fair that Respondents be held to the boilerplate they defend.

1 maximum logging hypothetical. (1 AR 217.)

2 In sum, we have shown that the no project alternative is the logging regime that preceded the
3 NTMP; it is not *no* logging nor is it *more* logging.
4

5 **IV. THE PROJECT CANNOT BE THE ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR** 6 **ALTERNATIVE**

7 One of Respondents’ strangest claims is that the approved project is the environmentally
8 superior alternative. Both argue that the approved project is an alternative to the version filed in
9 2006. BC states that the “2009 NTMP is the third alternative version of the project.” (BC br. 22.)
10 Cal-Fire states that “the current 2009 Plan can be considered an alternative to the 2006 Plan, the
11 original plan.” (BC br. 22.) These contentions are conceptually incoherent and contrary to
12 CEQA’s basic framework.

13 The NTMP must identify the environmentally superior alternative. (Guidelines, § 15126.6,
14 subd. (e)(2).) If the environmentally superior alternative is the no project alternative, the NTMP
15 must also identify the environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives. (*Ibid.*)
16 This directive, although referring to an EIR, applies to certified regulatory programs. (See
17 *Mountain Lion Foundation v. Fish and Game Commission* (1997) 16 Cal.4th 105, 135-136
18 [Supreme Court requires consideration of “no project alternative” by certified regulatory program
19 based on former Guidelines, § 15126].)

20 Under CEQA, there is a clear demarcation between the project or activity being approved and
21 its alternatives. “The term ‘project’ refers to the activity *which is being approved....*” (Guidelines,
22 § 15378, subd. (c), italics added.) A “project” is defined as “[a]n activity directly undertaken by a
23 person” that “may cause either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably
24 foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment.” (§ 21065, subd. (a).)

25 An environmental review document must describe a “range of reasonable alternatives *to* the
26 project.” (Guidelines, § 15126.6, subd. (a).) An NTMP must “[i]nclude[] a description of the
27 proposed activity *with* alternatives to the activity....” (§ 21080.5, subd. (d)(3)(A).)
28

Under these authorities, a project and its alternatives are fundamentally different: A project

1 cannot be an alternative to the project, let alone the environmentally superior alternative. The
2 project in this case is the NTMP, the only “activity which is being approved.” (Guidelines, §
3 15378, subd. (c).) The alternatives to it are those listed in the NTMP section entitled “Project
4 Alternative Analysis.” (1 AR 213, 215.)
5

6 Moreover, Cal-Fire correctly defined the project in its Official Response: “The plan considered
7 for approval by the Department is the plan that was recirculated on March 25, 2009. The versions
8 of the plan that lead up to that point may be of historical interest but only the content of the
9 recirculated plan is (sic) be considered for approval.” (8 AR 1705.)

10 Respondents do not address these authorities, nor cite to others. And we know of none that
11 conflates the concept of project and alternative. Respondents’ position leads to an absurdity: If the
12 NTMP is an alternative, there is no project.

13 The NTMP violated CEQA by failing to identify an environmentally superior alternative.

14 **V. THE NTMP VIOLATES ITS OWN STANDARD OF SIGNIFICANCE** 15 **REGARDING GHG EMISSIONS**

16 Petitioners contend that the NTMP violated CEQA because the project will reduce carbon
17 storage by the year 2020 and thereby exceed the NTMP’s own threshold of significance, resulting
18 in an unmitigated significant or cumulative effect. (Petitioners’ brief 21-24.)

19 CEQA encourages agencies to establish thresholds of significance for evaluating environmental
20 effects. (Guidelines, § 15064.7.) In evaluating a project’s impacts on GHG emissions, an agency
21 should consider whether they exceed the agency’s threshold of significance. (Guidelines, §
22 15064.4, subd. (b)(2).)
23

24 Respondents both argue that the NTMP’s threshold does not contain the 2020 deadline. (BC
25 br. 24-25; Cal-Fire br. 23-25.) But their argument is refuted by the NTMP’s plain language and
26 the Official Response. First, some background. As the NTMP explains, its threshold of
27 significance for determining whether a logging project will have a cumulative or significant
28 environmental effect in connection with GHG emissions is derived from the California Global
Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB 32): “AB 32 requires a reduction in statewide GHG

1 emissions to 1990 levels by 2020.” (1 AR 184.)

2 The heart of AB 32 is its mandate to reduce emissions by 2020 to 1990 levels. (Health & Saf.
3 Code, §§ 38550-38551.) It provides no other goals or timelines for reducing GHG missions. (See
4 Health & Saf. Code, § 38501 [Findings and Declarations].) The remaining sections of the statute
5 are intended to assist in reaching the 1990/2020 goal through a variety of means, including
6 mandates to enact regulations for reporting GHG emissions (Health & Saf. Code, §§ 38530); for
7 reducing GHG emissions (Health & Saf. Code, §§ 38560-38565); and for creating market-based
8 compliance mechanisms. (Health & Saf. Code, §§ 38570-38574.)

9
10 As the NTMP explains, AB 32 directs the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to
11 implement GHG reductions for various sources, including forests. (Health & Saf. Code, §§ 38560-
12 38560.5; 1 AR 184-185.) To that end, it directs CARB to prepare a scoping plan to achieve the
13 reductions. (Health & Saf. Code, § 38561; 1 AR 184.)

14 The CARB plan, as quoted by the NTMP, plainly states that 2020 is the target date for
15 emissions reductions, and refutes Respondents’ arguments to the contrary: “The 2020 target for
16 California’s forest lands is to achieve a 5MMTCO₂E [5 million metric ton CO₂E] reduction
17 through sustainable land management practices....” (1 AR 184, quoting CARB plan.) California
18 forests currently sequester 5MMTCO₂E. The 2020 target is to ensure that they do not sequester
19 less in 2020 than the 5MMTCO₂E they sequester today. (1 AR 184.) The CARB plan explains
20 that the 2020 goal can be achieved if forestry practices are sustainable, that is, if they do not reduce
21 current carbon stocks: “California forests are now a net carbon sink. The 2020 target would
22 provide a mechanism to help ensure that this carbon stock is not diminished over time.” (1 AR
23 184, quoting CARB plan.)

24
25 Having explained the CARB plan’s 2020 target, the NTMP then adopts it as a threshold of
26 significance for evaluating the NTMP’s emission effects: “Applying the draft Scoping Plan to this
27 project, the NTMP would have a significant impact on climate change if it were to implement land
28 use changes that reduce carbon storage, lead to diminishing carbon stocks over time, or are
inconsistent with the ‘sector-wide’ reduction target of 5MMTCO₂E.” (1 AR 185.) All of this is

1 reiterated in the Official Response. (8 AR 1648-1650.)

2 Under this threshold, a project that reduces carbon storage by 2020 will have a cumulative or
3 significant environmental effect. (1 AR 185.) Nickerson’s analysis plainly shows that the project
4 will reduce carbon stocks and storage through 2035, well past the 2020 goal; and will work against
5 the 2020 goal of maintaining 5MMTCO₂E in California forests. (2 AR 401-402.)

6 BC argues in response that the NTMP’s threshold only requires that the NTMP be “consistent
7 with AB 32,” not with AB 32’s 2020 target. (BC brief 25.) But this is contrary to the NTMP’s
8 plain language. The NTMP expressly adopts the CARB scoping plan’s reduction target date (1 AR
9 185); that date is 2020: “The 2020 target for California’s forest lands is to achieve a 5MMTCO₂E
10 reduction through sustainable land management practices...The 2020 target would provide a
11 mechanism to help ensure that this carbon stock is not diminished over time.” (1 AR 184, quoting
12 CARB plan.)

13 Furthermore, if accepted, BC’s argument would negate AB 32. One cannot miss AB 32’s 2020
14 target and be consistent with it: AB 32 *is* the 2020 target.

15 BC’s final argument is that, even though the NTMP reduces carbon storage through 2020 and
16 beyond, it begins to sequester it as 2020 approaches. (BC brief 26.) This argument is sophistic, as
17 the following example demonstrates. Say BC clearcut its entire 2,400-acre Grove in 2010, then
18 left it to regrow. According to BC, such a strategy would comply with AB 32 and the CARB
19 standard because the forest is sequestering carbon as it regrows and approaches 2020, never mind
20 that it will have *reduced* carbon stocks by that date and well beyond.

21 The simple fact, as Respondents concede, is that the project will cause *less* carbon to be stored
22 in the Bohemian Grove in 2020 (indeed in 2035), than there is today. This is contrary to AB 32,
23 the CARB standard, and the NTMP’s threshold of significance. It constitutes an unrecognized and
24 unmitigated environmental effect and therefore violates CEQA. (*Mountain Lion, supra*, 16 Cal.4th
25 at pp. 134-135; §§ 21002, 21080.5, subd. (d)(2)(A).)

26
27
28 **VI. RESPONDENTS’ REFUSAL TO IDENTIFY, MEASURE AND ASSESS
GHG EMISSIONS (PARTICULARLY GRAY CARBON) BECAUSE OF**

1 **MARKET LEAKAGE VIOLATED CEQA**

2 Petitioners complain that the NTMP does not mention, let alone identify and quantify, the
3 project’s “gray” carbon emissions, even though they can be considerable. (15 AR 3509.) In its
4 Official Response, Cal-Fire justified this omission on the ground of “market leakage.” (8 AR
5 1676-1677.) Petitioners claim that this omission and its rationale violated CEQA.

6 In a one-paragraph response, BC argues that the NTMP did in fact consider the project’s
7 emissions, citing to the NTMP’s two-page section on climate change (1 AR 184-186), and
8 Nickerson’s sequestration analysis (2 AR 397-402). (BC brief 26-27.) BC confuses different
9 issues. These sections address *only* green carbon. They conclude that over the latter two-thirds of
10 the 100-year horizon the Grove’s trees will store more carbon than they presently do. Neither
11 section addresses gray carbon.

12 Cal-Fire concedes that gray carbon was only considered for the first time in the Official
13 Response, and that the Response raised market leakage as an excuse for not identifying and
14 quantifying the project’s gray carbon. (Cal-Fire br. 27.) But it cites to numerous places in the
15 Official Response where it addressed gray carbon and concluded that such emissions are offset by
16 other factors. (Cal-Fire br. 28.) But this strategy—waiting until the Official Response to address
17 environmental effects—violates CEQA, as Cal-Fire knows, having been caught doing it on a
18 number of occasions.

19 The courts of appeal have rejected the argument that information found in the official response
20 can substitute for information required in the plan subject to public review: “We also reject CDF’s
21 contention that it adequately addressed the potential cumulative impact of future housing
22 development in its official response....[T]he official response, which is not subject to public
23 review or comment until after an approval decision has been made, cannot be utilized to fill gaps in
24 the THP itself.” (*Joy Road, supra*, 142 Cal.App.4th at p. 680.)

25 Cal-Fire committed the identical error in *Friends of the Old Trees, supra*, 52 Cal.App.4th 1383.
26 There, it argued that cumulative impacts on water supply were addressed at length in its official
27 response to public comment, even though they had not been addressed adequately in the THP:
28

1 “Certainly, the Department cannot expect the public’s access to information after–the–fact to
2 substitute for the opportunity to influence the Department’s decisions before they are made.” (*Id.* at
3 p. 1402; accord *Sierra Club, supra*, 7 Cal.4th at pp. 1228-1230, 1235-1237.)

4 The error here is particularly serious, because of the sheer amount of analysis in the Official
5 Response that is not in the NTMP. For example, the Official Response contains a 19-page
6 introduction on GHG emissions (8 AR 1646-1665) that itself is more than twice the number of
7 pages devoted to GHG emissions in the NTMP. (1 AR 184-186; 2 AR 397-402.)

8 This case well illustrates the danger of insulating environmental review from public comment.
9 In rejecting concerns about gray carbon, the Official Response relies exclusively on calculations by
10 Green Diamond Resource Company, a logging concern. (8 AR 1647, quoting from THP; 1672,
11 citing to THP.) But the public never had the opportunity to review and possibly challenge Green
12 Diamond’s calculations.
13

14 In sum, the NTMP failed to evaluate gray carbon, a potentially significant effect. (*Joy Road*
15 *supra*, 142 Cal.App.4th at p. 674, fn. 12 [addressing issue in official response acknowledges its
16 significance].) It improperly justified its failure based on market leakage. And Cal-Fire cannot
17 excuse its oversight by pointing to the Official Response.
18

19 **VII. THE BASELINE OF INCREASED LOGGING VIOLATES CEQA**

20 In their opening, petitioners complain that the NTMP violated CEQA, because it used an
21 incorrect baseline in evaluating GHG emissions. (Petitioners’ opening 27.) The NTMP posits a
22 baseline that allows the maximum amount of logging under law, far more than the NTMP allows.
23 (2 AR 397, 400.)

24 The baseline is supposed to be the existing environmental conditions, not the “the level of
25 development or activity allowed by a plan or regulatory framework.” (*Communities for a Better*
26 *Environment v. South Coast Air Quality* (2010) 48 Cal.4th 310, 321.) Where a baseline incorrectly
27 forecasts *more* development, it misleads the public and prevents analysis of a project’s actual
28 environmental effects. (*Id.* at p. 322.)

1 BC appears to concede that the NTMP used an incorrect baseline, but blames the error on the
2 Forest Protocols: “It is true that the Nickerson report also calculated an assumed ‘projected
3 growth’ scenario and compared the GHG emissions under that scenario to those under the 2009
4 NTMP. But this was a function of the Forest Protocols Nickerson used in his calculations...the
5 Forest Protocol dictated that Nickerson include a ‘projected growth’ scenario.” (BC brief 27.)
6 This argument fails. First, the baseline as defined by CEQA cannot be overridden by the Forest
7 Protocol, which is not a law. The simple fact is that the NTMP uses a blatantly incorrect baseline
8 to exaggerate the benefits of the project.
9

10 Second, BC’s argument is based on its request that the Court take judicial notice of the Forest
11 Protocol, which was not submitted as evidence during the administrative proceedings. It is
12 inadmissible under *Western States Petroleum Association v. Superior Court* (1995) 9 Cal. 4th 559.
13 Petitioners object to it. (See Petitioners’ Opposition to Request for Judicial Notice.)

14 Third, assuming the Court accepts the Forest Protocol as evidence, BC’s claim that it was
15 required to follow it is bizarre (BC br. 27), since the protocol has absolutely no bearing on an
16 application for an NTMP and BC points to none. The Forest Protocol is a framework and set of
17 guidelines that allow companies to report their GHG emissions, reductions, and emission offsets
18 and register with the California Climate Reserve as a means of advertising their “greenness.” (Cal-
19 Fire br. 24; RJN, Ex. F, p. 9.) It has nothing to do with CEQA’s baseline requirement, nor Cal-
20 Fire’s approval of an NTMP. (As far as we know, BC has not attempted to use the Forest Protocol
21 to register the NTMP and its forestry projects with the Climate Reserve. Certainly, nothing in the
22 record suggests it has.)
23

24 In sum, the NTMP errs, as even BC appears to concede, in using a baseline that contemplates
25 the maximum amount of logging, rather than existing conditions. The NTMP’s error misleads the
26 public into believing that it has sequestration benefits that it does not have. (*Communities for a
27 Better Environment, supra*, 48 Cal.4th at pp. 320-321; *Woodward Park Homeowners v. City of
28 Fresno* (2007) 150 Cal.App.4th 693, 690, 707-708.)

1 Dated: September 22, 2010

2 _____
3 Paul Carroll,
4 Attorney for Petitioners

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2 PROOF OF SERVICE BY MAIL (CCP 1013A; 2015.5)

3 I am a citizen of the United States and a resident of the County of San Mateo. I am over the
4 age of eighteen years and not a party to the within entitled action; my business address is: 1103 17th
5 Avenue, Redwood City, CA 94063.

6 On September 22, 2010, I served one true copy of: PETITIONERS' REPLY MEMORANDUM
7 IN SUPPORT OF PETITION FOR WRIT OF MANDATE, by placing a true copy thereof
8 enclosed in a sealed envelope, and postage thereon fully prepaid, in the United States mail at
9 Redwood City, California, addressed as follows:
10

11 Tiffany Yee, Esq.
12 Bradley Solomon, Esq.
13 Attorney General, Resources Div.
14 455 Golden Gate Ave., 11000
15 San Francisco, CA 94102

Ronald Van Buskirk, Esq.
Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman
50 Fremont Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-2228

16 I, Paul V. Carroll, declare, under penalty of perjury, that the foregoing is true and correct.
17 Executed on September 22, 2010, at Redwood City, CA.
18

19
20 _____
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