

Oak Voter Disappointment in Napa County

Abundant, clean, fresh water depends on forested hillsides, stream buffers, and sustainable use of our water. We're dealing with the harsh realities of a mega-drought and record-breaking temperatures. This is the challenge facing all of us in Napa County. Threats to the quality and quantity of our diminishing water supply loom large... Michael Marx, quoted in a film made about the Water, Forest, and Oak Woodland Protection Initiative of 2016

The Water, Forest, and Oak Woodland Protection Initiative of 2016 would have established water quality buffer zones along streams and wetlands in the Agricultural Watershed Zoning District to prohibit tree removal within the buffer under most circumstances. [Click here for more about the Napa initiative.](#) Unfortunately, the county's residents will not have the opportunity to vote on the measure in the November 2016 election.

California Oaks Coalition member, Forests Forever, teamed up with the Water, Forest, and Oak Woodland Protection Committee in Napa County to qualify a November ballot measure to expand the county's oak woodlands protections. Forests Forever helped to gather 6,200 signatures to qualify the measure for November's election. The Napa County Registrar of Voters certified the initiative petition as having 23 percent more valid signatures than were needed to qualify for the ballot, then, a few days later, the measure stalled on a procedural technicality. The Registrar of Voters rescinded his certification and refused to place the measure on the ballot. Proponents challenged the decision in Napa County Superior Court, yet the challenge was denied. An Emergency Petition for Writ of Mandate was then filed with the Court of Appeals, and then the California Supreme Court. California Wildlife Foundation/California Oaks joined with Forests Forever, California Native Plant Society (also a member of the California Oaks Coalition), Forests Unlimited, and Corporate Ethics International in submitting amicus letter in support of the two emergency petitions. A decision was needed by August 10th in order for the measure to appear on the November ballot. Unfortunately the Court of Appeals, and then the Supreme Court, denied the petitions.

A Notice of Intent for Expedited Appeal was filed on August 22. Legal counsel expects a decision by November of 2017. If the decision were favorable then the measure would be on either the June or November 2018 ballot. Proponents are completing a short film about the initiative to raise awareness locally and beyond the county, continuing local organizing efforts, and linking with the California Oaks Coalition to broaden their reach. Committee members Jim Wilson and Mike Hackett recently met with the coalition. Mr. Hackett spoke of his granddaughter's understanding that he still needs to go to work every day for the trees.

Sixty-three hundred citizens are just getting warmed up! (Napa activist)