

**SANTA CRUZ COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE  
DEPARTMENT ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICE GUIDELINE**

Interpretation No.: SIG TREE (Significant Tree Protection Ordinance – Eucalyptus Removal)  
Effective Date: 06/07/2023  
Originally Issued: 06/07/2023  
Revised:

---

**Question**

*In what circumstances can non-native invasive trees deemed “significant trees” per SCCC 16.34 be removed via an over-the-counter permit?*

**Applicable Regulatory Section(s)**

§ 16.34.050(C)

**INTERPRETATION:**

Santa Cruz County Code (SCCC) Chapter 16.34 regulates the removal of trees in the Coastal Zone and establishes the type of trees to be protected, the circumstances under which they may be removed, and the procedures for obtaining a permit for their removal. The purpose of the Chapter is to preserve trees and forest communities within the County’s Coastal Zone as a valuable resource that lends to the scenic beauty and attractiveness of the area to residents and visitors.

SCCC § 16.34.050 provides a list of submittal requirements for a Significant Tree Removal Permit application to be considered complete. In most cases, approval of a significant tree removal request requires an arborist report to establish the tree’s health and whether the danger posed by the tree can be mitigated through proactive treatments such as selective pruning or limbing instead of full removal. In circumstances where the tree proposed for removal is a non-native invasive species, findings for removal may be made under SCCC 16.34.060(C) based on the review and approval of a restoration plan to restore native vegetation.

Property owners considering removal of five or fewer Eucalyptus trees not located in sensitive habitat may obtain an over-the-counter significant tree removal permit utilizing the following guidelines. Submittal and processing requirements as listed satisfy the requirement for a County-approved restoration plan.

**Eligibility**

Tree species: Eucalyptus

Number of trees: Five or fewer trees per parcel

Tree location: Trees located within striking distance of house or structures, and not within an area defined as sensitive habitat per SCCC 16.32, including riparian corridors as defined in SCCC 16.30.

### Application Submittal Requirements

- Site/Plot Plan that clearly illustrates: parcel boundaries, structures, major vegetation, specific trees to be removed, location/species of replacement trees, distance to drainages any and waterways. In many cases, this can be drawn on a printout from the County Geographic Information System (GIS).
- Written description of restoration activities, to include:
  - Species, size, and number of planted trees (required 3:1 native species)
  - Specifications for non-native tree removal, disposal, and eradication measures<sup>1</sup> to ensure the tree does not resprout
  - Photos of the trees to be removed
- Conditions of Approval
  - Signed owner agreement to maintain the replacement plants, replace if necessary, and submit an annual photo verifying replacement tree maintenance and success to the Restoration Coordinator for 5 years (66% success after 5 years)
  - If tree is removed between February 1 and August 15, the applicant must have a biologist conduct a bird survey prior to tree removal, and if active nests are present, removal shall only take place after young have fledged. Results of the survey shall be submitted to the Restoration Coordinator.

### Application Review & Approval

Upon receipt of a complete application, County staff will review the proposal to confirm the eligibility criteria are met through review of submitted documentation and digital means, including aerial photographs, Geographic Information System (GIS) information, and office files. If all eligibility criteria can be verified in the office, staff will issue an over-the-counter tree removal permit with Conditions of Approval. Some proposals may require a site visit to verify the proximity of proposed tree removals to sensitive habitat, including riparian features; in these cases, a non-over-the-counter permit fee will apply.

### Remedy for Violations

Failure to submit an annual photo verifying tree maintenance and success may result in a code enforcement action in accordance with SCCC 16.34.110.

### **Reason**

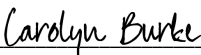
Preservation of the County's native plant populations is identified in several areas of the County General Plan, including Policy 5.1.14 "Removal of Invasive Plant Species" which encourages the removal of invasive species and their replacement with characteristic native plants, except

---

<sup>1</sup> Compliant removal, disposal and eradication measures provided in [A Plague of Plants: Controlling Invasive Plants in Santa Cruz County](#) by Ken Moore with assistance from Tim Hyland and Randall Morgan, June 1998.

where such invasive species provide significant habitat value and where removal of such species would severely degrade the existing habitat. The findings for removal of a significant tree recognize the importance of preserving native vegetation, and SCCC §16.34.060(C) specifically allows for “removal of a nonnative tree [that] is part of a plan approved by the County to restore native vegetation and landscaping to an area”.

When the subject tree is a non-native invasive species, streamlined removal and restoration of these areas serves to both support General Plan policies and address an area of concern for constituents. For residents considering a relatively small number of tree removals, preparation of a full restoration plan may prove infeasible due to the associated costs. In these cases, the above guidelines are provided to expedite over-the-counter approvals for non-native invasive significant trees not located in sensitive habitat.

DocuSigned by:  
  
B4557C443F8E431...  
Carolyn Burke, Assistant Planning Director

6/7/2023  
Date