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Marin Voice: Treatment of wood and forests crucial in fight against climate change



Sunlight filters through a redwood grove at Muir Woods National Monument. (Alan Dep/Marin Independent Journal)

By **BILL CALLAHAN** |

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We've all heard the phrase "waste not, want not." It simply means that if one wastes not, one will have more and want not.

Recently, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency [reported](#), “The United Nations International Resource Panel concluded that approximately half of global greenhouse gas emissions are the result of natural resource extraction and processing. And increasing recycling reduces climate, environmental, and social impacts of materials use and keeps valuable resources in use instead of in landfills.”

Today people, especially our children, are demanding a global solution to combat global warming, while our energy consumption is [rising worldwide](#) and outpacing renewables.

Meanwhile, our forests (including our urban forests) and oceans, which offer the greatest capacity for fighting climate warming, continue to be exploited and compromised, becoming even more unhealthy and deadly with each passing day. With no “silver bullet” in sight and no likelihood, there’s no more time and energy to waste. Not a second, not a watt.

Here in Marin County, tons of circular resources (aka economic capacity) are wasted daily. These circular resources consist of all the solid wood (sequestered carbon) in all mature trees that are cut down in our communities, along our streets and on public and private properties. The waste includes all the lumber and other reusable building materials falling out of new construction, reconstruction and demolition.

Much of this wood and lumber are ground into chips to make it easy to transport, dump, spread, bury or burn. All of this accelerates decomposition and produces more carbon dioxide as sequestered carbon is allowed to return to the atmosphere.

This is the opposite of what we should be doing.

If we recovered all the purposeful solid wood at its source and then put it to work, we would create many new “green” jobs, made-in-Marin products, business opportunities and circular dollars, while keeping tons of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere for a much longer time.

The local ecological, economic and social benefits of our so-called “solid waste” far exceed any imported wood or wood products, and it’s just as good and beautiful as any wood from around the world.

We are more connected to trees and wood than we realize, and we need to care for and utilize those resources far better than today. Fighting global warming and deforestation in places like Brazil’s Amazon and rainforest of Southeast Asia begins here, in Marin. Every tree put to work locally in Marin lessens the demand upon these most important forests and their trees.

The people who will benefit most from this effort will be Marin’s many arborists, architects, builders, property owners, haulers, crafters, tree growers, sawyers, trimmers, woodworkers, laborers, do-it-yourself creatives and climate scientists. That new approach would also benefit all the other individuals and businesses serving these people in their work.

In 2016, the Marin Community Benefit Cooperative was certified by Zero Waste Marin to do this essential community recovery and reuse work.

Unfortunately, at the time, MCBC lost its Creative Reuse Demonstration Center in Central San Rafael and was forced to close before its work could begin. I’m now attempting once again to begin this beneficial work by filing the cooperative’s 501c3 nonprofit application, as there are many significant grants coming available for this very important work. Time is of the essence.

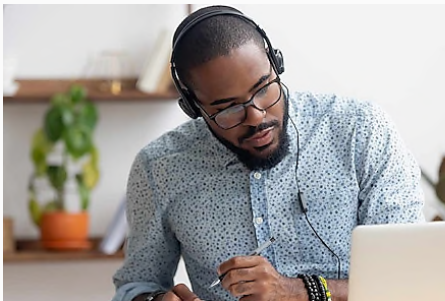
I invite you to join this community effort, even if it's only for your love of trees and wood. Your participation and support in stopping the waste of Marin's circular (green) is crucial. Its potential and capacity is important for our community's health and the planet.

Bill Callahan, of San Rafael, is the founder of OHIAS (Our Health Is At Stake), the Marin Community Benefit Cooperative and Tamalpais NatureWorks. Learn more about MCBC at bit.ly/3ohr1Rh

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