

The Social Impacts of Sudden Oak Death and Other Forest Diseases: A Panel Discussion¹

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Abstract

This panel aimed to discuss the intersection of biology and society; specifically, how we balance competing social and biological concerns in regards to forest pests and land management in general. Four panelists began the discussion: Janice Alexander, Sudden Oak Death Outreach Coordinator for the University of California (U.C.) Cooperative Extension, Marin County and the California Oak Mortality Task Force; Dr. Lynn Huntsinger, rangeland ecologist, U.C. Berkeley; Chris Lee, Sudden Oak Death Coordinator for U.C. Cooperative Extension, Humboldt and Del Norte Counties; and Chuck Striplen, Research Associate with the San Francisco Estuary Institute's Historical Ecology program, a Native American, and a Ph.D. student at U.C. Berkeley. Members of the audience, which included researchers, land managers, and regulatory professionals, also presented their perspectives as the discussion progressed.

Some of the topics the panel considered and discussed with the audience are listed here: individual rights/needs vs. rights/needs of the community; respecting and learning from traditional values, uses, and management; resolving disputes among neighbors, including public and private landowners and users; managing across property boundaries; environmental justice – who benefits and who loses from various policies, whose rights/needs/values are recognized and whose are not; how to cope with absentee owners; incentives versus regulations; identifying incentives that would work; how to make decisions when there are tradeoffs; gaps in jurisdictions, unclear jurisdiction; appropriate public communication; public involvement (who, when, how); and how cultural and economic values of the resource are affected.

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