



COMMITTEE FOR
GREEN FOOTHILLS

August 11, 2013

San Jose City Council
200 E. Santa Clara St.
San Jose, CA 95113

Re: Willow Glen Trestle

Dear Mayor Reed and Councilmembers,

Committee for Green Foothills (CGF) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the proposed action concerning the Willow Glen Trestle bridge. As an environmental organization whose mission is to protect open space and natural resources in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties, CGF has a strong interest in the environmental impacts of removing the Willow Glen Trestle bridge on Los Gatos Creek and its riparian corridor.

Removal of the bridge and its supporting trestles is a project that will require analysis under CEQA to determine the environmental impacts upon the creek and the creek habitat. Demolition of the creosote-treated wooden trestles may create a significant impact due to the possibility of newly-exposed creosote leaching from the pieces and chips of wood resulting from breaking up these massive timbers. Whether the trestles are cut off near to the creek bed or pulled up entirely, exposure of the interior of these timbers to water may result in toxic contamination of Los Gatos Creek. According to a Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) study on the toxicity of creosote-treated wood such as old railroad ties, when these old pieces of treated lumber are sawn into bits, milled, or otherwise broken up, there is a possibility of negative impacts to water quality and aquatic species. In addition to potential impacts from breaking up the creosote-treated trestles, the physical impacts to the creek bed and creek habitat from bringing heavy equipment and vehicles down into the creek bed in the course of the demolition must also be considered.

Los Gatos Creek is one of Santa Clara County's few remaining natural riparian corridors. In the vicinity of the Willow Glen Trestle, the riparian vegetation includes willow and sycamore trees, and the creek is home to fish, amphibians and invertebrates as well as providing a wildlife corridor for birds and mammals.

According to experts, these impacts to Los Gatos Creek will be significantly reduced or eliminated if the Willow Glen Trestle is restored in place rather than destroyed. We urge the City Council to seriously consider the alternative of restoring the Willow Glen Trestle in order to protect the sensitive creek habitat from the negative effects of demolition. At the very least, adequate environmental studies must be performed to evaluate these impacts and address their mitigation.

Sincerely,

Alice Kaufman
Legislative Advocate, Committee for Green Foothills