



MENDOCINO COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE

# NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: Tom Mitchell, Chief Executive Officer 707/463-4441

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## *Local Rally to Save Branscomb Lumber Mill*

**Ukiah, California... October 24, 2008**

Mendocino County Supervisor John Pinches is supporting a grassroots effort to save the lumber mill in Branscomb. The mill, formerly known as the Harwood Mill, has been a major employer and key contributor to the regional economy for over 50 years.

A recent debt-reorganization attempt failed, and the mill is now under the control of Wells Fargo Bank. The financial giant is planning to liquidate the assets in a two day auction beginning November 16, in an attempt to recover approximately \$2.9 million in secured debt.

Last night, a meeting of timberland owners, mill operators, foresters, and others concerned with retaining this local industry filled the room to capacity. Topics of discussion were wide-ranging, but centered on the fact that this region produces a significant amount of fir logs, and the cost to process those logs can become prohibitive without this mill. "Once that mill is gone, it is gone", stated one of the meeting participants. "A piece of equipment that could be auctioned for a scrap value of \$2,000 would cost \$2 million to replace".

The Mendocino County Board of Supervisors has authorized a letter, in part urging the bank to consider the ramifications of the loss of employment and decreased timber yields if this mill is dismantled. With the auction date looming, and no time for potential site operators to develop a plan, it was determined the immediate required action involves asking Wells Fargo to slow the process. For those concerned with supporting our local economy, further action involves contacting Senator Diane Feinstein, Senator Barbara Boxer, and Congressman Mike Thompson, ensuring they are aware of the fast-track approach being taken with the disposition of this mill, and urging them to speak with Wells Fargo about delaying the auction. In the words of Supervisor Pinches, "It's a grim situation, but you're not beat 'til you can't get up, and we're still standing".