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# Jack London's ailing oak tree to undergo more tests



At Jack London State Park in Glen Ellen, Saturday August 10, 2013 a small group of park visitors, including docents and state parks officials held a ceremony and prayer for a large oak tree, foreground, that will be taken down in front of Jack London's cottage due to the tree being diseased. (Kent Porter / Press Democrat)

By DEREK MOORE THE PRESS DEMOCRAT October 11, 2013, 4:54 PM

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Jack London's ill oak tree gets native blessing



Plans to fell a majestic oak tree that stands outside Jack London's cottage in Glen Ellen are on hold pending the outcome of more tests.

Officials were planning to cut the tree down next month amid concerns that one of its branches could fall and damage London's cottage, or possibly injure someone.

Three arborists had determined that the tree, which has been rooted in the same spot for more than 300 years, is infected with a pathogenic fungi and is dving.

# Jack London State Park Oak Tree

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that will be taken down in front of Jack London's cottage due to the tree being diseased.(Kent Porter / Press Democrat) 2013

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But officials have agreed to one more test at the urging of a woman who volunteers at Jack London State Historic Park, where London's home is located.

"We are just waiting now," said Tjiska Van Wyk, executive director of Jack London Park Partners, which operates the park.

The iconic tree over several centuries provided sustenance for Coast Miwok Indians and later nurtured the famous author's artistic spirit.

The oak was what London saw when he looked outside the window of his office. On days when the weather was good, he sat in the shade of the tree's massive branches, notebook in hand, and wrote.

In December 2012, a large branch that faced away from the cottage crashed down during a storm. More limbs that faced the building were subsequently trimmed off.

The park has hosted several events in recent months as a way of saying goodbye to the tree. That included a Native American blessing and schoolchildren harvesting acorns from the tree for re-planting in the area.

The current analysis is being conducted by Matteo Garbelotto, a UC Berkeley professor and principal investigator of the Forest Pathology and Mycology Lab.

Based on his initial observations, which he shared in an email to Van Wyk, Garbelotto concluded that the tree "does not show symptoms that would be diagnostic of a terminal decline," but that a third of its canopy may be subject to "mechanical issues."

Van Wyk said lab tests will determine whether an organism is rotting away the tree's root cellar or trunk.

"If there is a substantial amount of that, we'll probably have to take the tree down," she said.

If not, the tree could live on for several more years, depending on future conditions.

The \$2,000 cost for the test is being shared by the Valley of the Moon Natural History Association and California State Parks, Van Wyk said.

(You can reach Staff Writer Derek Moore at 521-5336 or derek.moore@pressdemocrat.com. On Twitter @deadlinederek.)

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