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Jack London's majestic oak saved from the ax



Jack's Oak, A heritage oak tree on the grounds of Jack London State Park in Glen Ellen has decay issues and will have to be taken down within the next 10 years, Monday Dec. 23, 2013. The tree, slated for removal this past November has had several reprieves from the chain saw. (Kent Porter / Press Democrat)

By DEREK MOORE
THE PRESS DEMOCRAT
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Jack London's ailing oak tree to undergo more tests



Jack London's ill oak tree gets native blessing

A majestic oak that stands outside Jack London's cottage in Glen Ellen has been given a reprieve now that further lab tests reveal the tree is healthier than once thought.

"In this season of joy, what a gift!" Tjiska Van Wyk, executive director of Jack London Park Partners, wrote in an email.

Officials were planning to cut the tree down in November 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 is more than 300 years old, is infected with a pathogenic fungi and is dying.

A subsequent test confirmed that the tree has significant decay. However, park officials believe it can remain standing for awhile longer.

The iconic tree has for 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 out the window of his office. 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 subsequently were trimmed off.

The park hosted several events this year as a way of saying good-bye to the

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tree. Those included a Native American blessing and schoolchildren harvesting acorns from the tree for re-planting in the area.

The latest analysis of the tree was conducted by Matteo Garbelotto, a UC Berkeley professor and principal investigator for the Forest Pathology and Mycology Lab. He told park officials that the tree likely will have to come down sometime in the next decade, if not sooner.

Park officials are taking further measures to reduce the risk of the tree causing injury or property damage. They include new parking restrictions near the tree, pruning and close monitoring of the tree's condition.

The \$2,000 cost for the test was shared by the Valley of the Moon Natural History Association and California State Parks. Garbelotto offered to conduct more tests every two years, or sooner if needed, at no cost.

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