



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ONE MILLIONTH DISEASED TREE REMOVED FROM SAN BERNARDINO FOREST

Felling of One Millionth Tree marks progress in combating the bark beetle infestation and symbolizes MAST's shift in focus to the promotion of healthy forests by thinning live trees

SAN BERNARDINO — The One Millionth Tree in the Mountain Area Safety Taskforce's five-year effort to combat the bark beetle infestation and restore the health of the Angeles and San Bernardino forests was removed today as county and fire-protection agency officials lauded the fire-safety program.

The roughly 100-foot-tall pine had died as a result of bark beetle infestation, increasing the fire danger in an area already suffering from seven years of drought and rated as an extreme fire hazard. The tree was located at Santa's Village near Lake Arrowhead, an area hit hard by bark beetles. It was felled by a crew from West Coast Timber.

"The removal of this tree is a significant milestone in our effort to gain an upper hand on the bark beetle infestation and reduce the risk of devastating wild fires like the Grand Prix and Old fires in 2003," said Chairman Paul Biane, San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors.

MAST and its member agencies have used funds from a number of local, state and federal agencies, including a \$70 million grant from the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), to remove the trees from public and private property to reduce the risk of a catastrophic wildfire.

"Today's event also marks our transition from the removal of dead, dying and diseased trees to the thinning of live trees to restore the health and vigor of our mountain forests," said Supervisor Dennis Hansberger. "A thinned forest is a healthy forest."

MAST's program focus is shifting from removing dead trees to thinning live trees, or "green fuel," to promote a healthy forest and further reduce the potential for a catastrophic fire.

The deadline for property owners to get trees marked for removal by the County's Hazardous Tree Removal Program is June 30, 2007. Interested property owners should contact the Program office at (909) 867-1240.

The problem fire protection officials face is that the forest is overstocked, with 100 to 200 trees per acre, where a healthy forest has 40 to 60 trees per acre. To achieve this goal, low-value live trees need to be removed. Removing live trees also helps property owners create a defensible space around their homes, where trees should be about 20 to 30 feet apart, depending on the ground slope and other factors.

Today's event also serves as a reminder to property owners that public funds for tree removal and tree thinning are expected to expire by the end of this year, which means property owners must assume more responsibility for creating defensible space around their homes and other structures. Licensed foresters are available, at no charge, to help property owners devise a plan for thinning trees on their property.

Property owners may be eligible for reimbursement of up to 75 percent of the cost of implementing a qualified forest care plan under a grant from USDA Forest Service. Call 1 (888) 883-THIN or complete the form online at: <http://www.sbnfa.com/forestcare.php>

ABOUT MOUNTAIN AREA SAFETY TASKFORCE

MAST is a coalition of local, state and federal government agencies, private companies and volunteer organizations in San Bernardino County that are concerned with public safety in the mountain areas of their respective jurisdictions. For more information about MAST, visit www.calmast.org.

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