



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Angora Fire Rehabilitation and Recovery Effort Underway in South Lake Tahoe Governor Schwarzenegger Directs Resources Agency & EPA to Take Lead**

Preliminary ground rehabilitation work is underway at the Angora Fire by teams from the U.S. Forest Service, CAL FIRE and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Foresters, biologists, hydrologists and vegetation specialists from each agency are already combing the area to evaluate damage and prepare reports that will determine what future projects will restore the area and prevent additional wildfires or environmental degradation.

An Executive Order issued by Gov. Schwarzenegger on Monday, July 2 called for the California Resources and Environmental Protection Agencies to coordinate all state departments with responsibility, regulatory authority or expertise related to recovery efforts in connection with the Angora Fire. The agencies were directed to coordinate the full cooperation of federal and local government agencies to facilitate the mitigation of the effects of the fire and the environmental restoration of the Tahoe Basin.

"We're very grateful to have the state and the considerable expertise of the state specialists as full cooperators in this effort," said U.S. Forest Service Pacific Southwest Regional Forester Bernie Weingardt. "Along with other agencies and organizations, we will work together in a seamless and concerted manner to restore these priceless lands."

Weingardt, the highest ranking USFS official in California, said current efforts are focused on stabilizing the land before summer thunderstorms and next winter's rains, to control erosion and sediment that would otherwise cloud the lake. A long-term program to restore the area, including reforestation, will follow.

The U.S. Forest Service has dispatched its Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) team, designed to address these emergency situations. The BAER team will also determine the need for and prescribe and implement emergency treatments on Federal Lands to minimize threats to life or property resulting from the effects of fire or to stabilize and prevent unacceptable degradation to natural and cultural resources. Rehabilitation focuses on the lands unlikely to recover naturally from wildland fire damage. A BAER team started assessing the burned area on Monday, July 2 and will complete a report within seven days.

CAL FIRE has deployed staff to answer questions regarding removal of trees in the area and is working to quickly expedite the recovery effort. In addition, the Resources Agency and Cal/EPA have coordinated communication and assignment of responsibilities in a unified manner. More information will be forthcoming to assist residents and property owners. The Governor's Executive Order exempts landowners affected by the Angora Fire from filing tree removal permits; CAL FIRE regulates the private parcels affected by the fire. As a result of the Executive Order no permits or other paperwork is required by CAL FIRE before trees are cut and removed from private property located within the Angora Fire burn area.

However, if property owners intend to barter, sell, or trade the value of the dead or dying trees that are salvaged, California state forest practice laws apply to the operations. For example, if homeowners decide to sell trees to a log buyer or timber company, the salvage logging operations must be conducted by a logger licensed in the state of California (LTO) even though homeowners are exempt from having to submit a form to CAL FIRE.

The LTO must comply with all operational forest practice regulations intended to protect the environment and consult with appropriate regulatory agencies to be in compliance. A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) sheet is posted to CAL FIRE's Web site ([www.fire.ca.gov](http://www.fire.ca.gov)) and will be distributed at all town hall meetings where CAL FIRE staff will be available to answer questions from residents, property owners and merchants.

In the rehabilitation effort the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is evaluating the potential to provide Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) assistance which is one program available to help restore the damaged watershed in affected communities. Threats after fires include the potential for severe erosion, sediment/debris flows from burned areas when rains come which could damage homes and other improvements downstream. Threats can be very significant in steep terrain, on very erosive soils, and after very intense fires.

Measures to protect the water quality of Lake Tahoe could possibly be considered eligible for EWP assistance. EWP work is always done in conjunction with a public sponsor (Local, state unit of government). EWP is not a program for individuals. NRCS and the Forest Service work together as part of the BAER team to assess the potential threat after wildfires to downstream properties both public and private. EWP work on private lands may or may not turn out to be a significant part of the mitigation work done depending on all the factors related to EWP eligibility and availability of EWP funds.

Additionally, the El Dorado County Sheriff's Office has asked that people refrain from driving through the burned residential area unless they are residents or have business to conduct. The

residents of the affected area are requesting privacy during this difficult time as they begin to rebuild their homes and lives. Due to debris removal and reconstruction activities, road closures in the area will continue on and off as needed. All non-motorized trails in the Angora burn area are closed until further notice.

Extra deputies will be assigned to patrol the area on a 24 hour a day basis for the foreseeable future. Residents who have returned to the area damaged by the Angora Fire should not hesitate to ask government workers for identification. Following the lifting of traffic restrictions in the area, the El Dorado County Sheriff's Office has increased patrols in the area to make sure that only appropriate people are entering the burn area.

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