

# Mariposa County



## Office of Emergency Services Don Florence – Emergency Planner

3/15/2016

### Tree Mortality Hazard Tree Removal Plan

The Mariposa County Board of Supervisors proclaimed a Local State of Emergency due to drought conditions in February 2014 and has renewed it every 30 days as required by the California Emergency Services Act, Article 14 §8630(c). Four years of extreme drought have created cascading effects to the residents of Mariposa County such as failing wells and pervasive tree mortality. It is estimated there are over 29 million dead trees in California and this number continues to grow. As a result, the Board of Supervisors proclaimed a Local State of Emergency on September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

There are several tools Mariposa County will employ in approaching removal of hazard trees that threaten public infrastructure and public safety.

### **Core Planning Team – First meeting December 10<sup>th</sup> 2015**

Role: Assist in developing operational plans, resource sharing, regulatory oversight and facilitation.

*Participants include:*

Mariposa County OES	PG&E
Mariposa County Public Works Dept.	Cal OES
Mariposa County Planning Dept.	CALFIRE - MMU

The Core Planning team will consist of decision makers from each of the agencies listed above which will allow for the utmost efficiency when creating operational plans county wide.

### **Tree Mortality Task Force – First meeting July 7<sup>th</sup> 2015**

Role: Forum for information sharing/gathering and coordination of plans and resources. This monthly meeting will create the venue for county, city and special districts to discuss needs, concerns and resources with local, state, and federal regulators as well as the Fire Safe Councils who have the necessary expertise and experience to offer guidance throughout the process.

*Participants include:*

- Mariposa County AG  
Commissioner
- Mariposa County Public Works  
Dept.
- US Forest Service-Stanislaus NF
- US Forest Service-Sierra NF
- PG&E
- Mariposa Public Utilities District
- Natural Resources Conservation  
Service.
- Sierra Nevada Conservancy
- Mariposa County Resource  
Conservation District
- Cal OES
- South West Inter Face Team
- Mariposa County Sheriff Office
- Farm Advisor (UC Davis  
Cooperative Extension)
- BLM
- Mariposa County Office of  
Emergency Service
- Mariposa County Fire Safe  
Council
- CAL FIRE – MMU
- Sierra Foothill Conservancy
- Cal OES - Region V
- Mariposa County Environmental  
Health (APCD)
- Tuolumne County OES
- Private land owners

## **Sub-Groups**

Role: Communication, coordination and resource sharing

Homeowner's Associations

Local timber/tree falling companies

Mariposa Bio-Mass Project

Inmate crew coordination – CAL FIRE Mt Bullion Camp

These groups will be short lived and created on an as needed basis.

## **Education & Outreach**

An important role County OES fulfills is education and outreach. With regard to the tree mortality emergency, two countywide educational forums have taken place at the Mariposa County Fairgrounds. Additional community meetings have been attended by Mariposa County Fire Safe Council and Mariposa County OES.

Presentations will be made to local service clubs seeking assistance on behalf of private landowners.

A countywide webpage has been developed by staff that resides on the County portal dedicated to tree mortality. The types of information available include:

- Current County resolution proclaiming a local state of emergency
- Governor's Executive Order on Tree Mortality and authorizing CDAA
- FAQ's
- Informational brochures/handouts
- Links to essential sites
- Contact info
- Current actions
- List of Licensed Timber Operators (Tree Removal Companies)
- List of Licensed Foresters and Arborists

Additional outreach and education will take place utilizing local media outlets such as:

- Social Media updates
- Sierra Sun Times
- Mariposa Gazette

Community forums were an effective tool in communicating with residents during past emergencies and will be employed once jurisdictional plans are finalized.

## **Role of all Local Governmental Agencies**

Mariposa County must apply for CDAA independently of any other form of State funding. Mariposa County is responsible to develop its own plans based on what their governing Board of Supervisors desires to accomplish and within their jurisdictional authority. There are no other local governments in Mariposa County. It is important for the Board and the community to understand that the application for CDAA and the way it's implemented towards a countywide plan is between them and Cal OES.

## **Hazard Tree Removal on County Owned and Maintained Properties**

The County of Mariposa has been in the process of identifying and removing dead and dying trees due to drought and successful bark beetle infestation for months now. This process continues as the number of hazard trees has greatly increased. Public safety and continuity of essential services (power, water, communications, roads, etc.) are of primary concern. Therefore, County resources will be focused in the following areas:

- Roads
- County Facilities
- Major Critical County infrastructure

Mariposa County will assess all County owned and maintained infrastructures for dead and/or dying trees due to drought and bark beetle infestation within 200 feet of infrastructure. Registered Professional Foresters (and/or licensed Arborists) will inspect trees for successful bark beetle attack and designate trees for removal. Visually dead trees (brown from top to bottom) will be marked and pictures taken to document mortality. Photographs will be taken of all dead trees and a GIS mapping system is being developed utilizing GPS locators for each worksite.

The Public Works Department along with CAL FIRE is assessing all County roads (with assistance of Licensed Foresters or Arborists) and will be prioritized and categorized as outlined below:

- Priority 1 – Major Collectors
- Priority 2 – Minor Collectors
- Priority 3 – Local Collectors

Only roads in pine belts will be assessed at this time (2,000 -7,000 ft. elevation).

### **Private Property**

Hazard trees located on private property, that threaten public Right of Way or Public Infrastructure, will be assessed and removed with landowner approval

only (Right of Entry Permit to be developed at a future date). This private property element of this plan is only for future potential mitigative action and is not included in any way with this current plan being forwarded to Cal OES. In the future, if the permit is instituted, landowner would allow access and entry to property to the State of California, the County of Mariposa, and their agents, officials, employees, and/or volunteers, contractors and subcontractors, subject to all license, easements, encumbrances, and claims affecting the Premises. The owner grants County a right-of-entry (“Permit”) over the premises for the purpose of inspecting the premises for dead and/or dying trees, testing materials on the Premises, removing and/or clearing trees, hauling and/or disposing of trees, subject to the terms set forth in the Permit. No inspection, removal or clearance of trees will take place until Permit is signed. Owner would also agree and understand that the County and/or its agents may sell the felled trees and hereby waives any and all right, actions, claims, in law or equity as to the value of the said trees in exchange for the services provided pursuant to this Permit. The county may request reimbursement from Cal OES for the removal of trees from private property that potentially threaten the public Right of Way or Public Infrastructure.

### **Removal and Disposal of Trees, Slash and Wood Products**

Removal and disposal of wood products is one of the most difficult aspects of the hazard tree removal process as resources are very limited. However, there are several tools available locally to assist in the removal of trees and slash.

- Local Tree Services
- Private mills
- CAL FIRE slash removal equipment (masticators, air curtain burners)
- CAL FIRE Mt Bullion Camp
- Mariposa County Fire Safe Council (chipping)

Currently we have no facilities to accept wood products.

Per the Governor’s Executive Order on October 30, 2015, County staff is working with Cal OES and CAL FIRE in identification of equipment such as commercial chippers, masticators, and air curtain burners that can be made available for use. CAL FIRE will provide a list of locations for storage, locations for removed trees and Cal Trans is assessing their needs for woodchips and mulch that can be used locally.

Meetings with local tree removal companies and haulers has been scheduled to determine capacity for potential contracts.

The County is also in the process of developing contracts with local companies who specialize in all aspects of tree removal, inclusive of consulting on process, site management of sites designated to receive wood product, and rental of equipment.

## **Inmate Crews**

County staff has met with CAL FIRE representatives and the local work crews in an effort to contract for use of ground support crews. These crews offer a cost effective manner in which to provide labor for removing small trees, limbing trees that have been felled, bucking up logs, debris clean up, and feeding chippers and air curtain burners.

## **Request for Air Curtain Burner**

County is in the process of developing a request to Cal OES and/or CAL FIRE to obtain/use Air Curtain Burners to dispose of slash, small trees, limbs, branches and pine needles. A location will be designated to bring slash and other wood products in which local inmate crews will maintain the site and feed the wood products into the air curtain burner. Obtaining these assets would be from CAL FIRE, mission requests from Cal OES or lease agreements for the county.

## **Request for Equipment**

County has notified the Governors Resources Task Group for immediate equipment needs to expedite removal of tree waste.

## **Potential Revenues Generated by Wood Product**

Revenues generated from wood sales would be considered a credit and subtracted from the eligible amount, therefore could not be used to offset the local match. This revenue offset potentially could be outlined in a Right of Entry Permit, any and all revenues generated from wood product salvaged from private property is waived, by the landowner, in exchange for the emergency work provided pursuant to the Permit signed by the land owner.

## **Project Area Defined**

Currently through a collaborative effort of CAL FIRE and County OES, a defined project map has been created. This data specifies 12 High Hazard areas in 12 communities with combined treatment acreage of 42,000 acres and just over 46 thousand dead or dying trees. Only areas with the 200' road buffer and or the 1000' community buffer will be included for removal (1000' buffer is not currently eligible for CDAA). Additional treatment areas will be examined for federal evaluation and mitigation decisions. Due to the dynamic nature of the mortality maps they are being revised monthly. Maps of each project area are available upon request.

Produced By:  
Don Florence  
Mariposa County OES  
March 15<sup>th</sup> 2016