



**Cal OES**  
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE  
OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

## **Tree Mortality Task Force Weekly Update**

### **May 6, 2016**

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Caltrans received a response letter from the US Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in regards to their Notice of Intent (NOI) to apply for Emergency Relief reimbursement for the tree mortality work being done along Federal-aid highways in California. The letter from FHWA denied Emergency Relief reimbursement on the basis that, 1) the work being done is preventive work in anticipation of a disaster, 2) the NOI shifts potential liability of Right-of-Way (ROW) ownership and maintenance responsibilities from the state to the federal government as the tree removal efforts work to secure a safe ROW, but the debris is not within highway ROW's or damaged highways, and 3) a natural disaster is defined as "a sudden and unusual natural occurrence" and the long-term duration of the drought is not a "sudden occurrence."

### **MAIN TASK FORCE REPORT**

- The next Task Force meeting will be held on Monday, May 9<sup>th</sup> from 1:00-3:00 P.M.

### **WORKING GROUP REPORTS**

#### **Mapping and Monitoring (Mark Rosenberg/Chris Fischer)**

- The Aerial Detection Survey flight was delayed again, due to weather. The United States Forest Service (USFS) had to postpone the aerial survey flight scheduled for this last week due to poor weather. The flight is now rescheduled for the week of May 9<sup>th</sup> which will cover the low elevation forestland along the west slope of the Sierra Nevada range (below snow line), weather permitting. We anticipate having results to share with the Task Force in two to four weeks post-flight.
- FRAP is developing a web based mapping tool for agencies to capture and report tree removal projects from the various entities removing dead trees related to the Emergency Proclamation. A draft version of the application is being tested and user documentation is being developed.



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- The Mapping & Monitoring Workgroup is providing maps and analysis to support a possible application to FEMA for a potential Presidential Disaster Declaration.

### **Regulations (Matthew Reischman/Sandy Goldberg)**

- The Regulations Working Group is working on a flyer for “Affected Homeowners”. Mariposa County is leading the effort and the flyer will contain statistics on the number of homeowners affected, tree mortality concerns, tree removal issues and local contacts for more information. Once reviewed, it will be provided to the Task Force for approval and ultimately the Public Outreach Group for distribution.
- Storage Site Case Studies:
  - Tuolumne County: The Storage Site Pilot project is scheduled to start the week of May 11<sup>th</sup>. The County continues to work though issues surrounding storage site log receipts, tracking, and processing. The County is interested in possibly developing a sorting yard near Groveland, Twain Harte or Miwok. These locations would also be good for housing Air Curtain Burners. Tuolumne County will continue to work with the Task Force to facilitate the use of Air Curtain Burners.
  - Mariposa County: The County continues to work with Caltrans on locations for potential storage sites. Recent discussion involved water quality and the need to obtain stormwater permitting for storage sites. Stormwater permits are generally required when disturbance/development occurs on a site greater than one acre. There may be a need to ensure agency personnel involved with regulating storage sites are aware of the Emergency Proclamation and how it applies to storage site development.
- The Regulations Working Group continues to work on insurance issues surrounding dead tree removal prior to obtaining coverage, cancelations, and variation in underwriting policy. The group discussed issues and differences between two underwriter guidance tools involved with establishing fire insurance. They are from Verisk Analytics: the ISO Public Protection Classification (PPC) program and Verisk Insurance Solutions’ FireLine. The tools are often interpreted differently by insurance companies leading to inconsistencies and challenges for homeowners to obtain coverage. The Department of Insurance has been involved in trying to resolve these issues of interpretation and the counties are interested in assisting.



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- The Regulations Working Group identified a potential need to provide the public with information on Air Curtain Burners. Most local Air Pollution Quality Districts do not regard burners as the first and best choice in treating hazard trees. The Task Force may develop talking points for the Districts that could be posted to the website. More information can be found on [www.airburners.com](http://www.airburners.com).
- The Regulations Working Group held a meeting for the legal councils of the priority counties on May 3, 2016. This is an ongoing conference call with the various county Legal Counsel Representatives. The group discusses legal issues or needs the counties may have. The group reviewed the recent letter to Alan Abbs from the US Environmental Protection Agency regarding Title V permit requirements for Air Curtain Burners, solid waste exemptions for storage sites, and the recent guidelines for tree removal in high hazard zones. No significant issues regarding the guidelines or CEQA were identified.
- The Regulations Working Group is working on a FAQs document on Contracting for Tree Removal. The FAQs contain information on tree removal contractor license and insurance requirements, the differences in license requirements for commercial and non-commercial tree removal, and provides links that will allow homeowners to confirm their contactors are licensed and insured. The Regulations Working Group plans to have the FAQs completed by mid-May.
- The Regulations Working Group is developing a FAQs document to explain and describe the Board of Equalization Timber Yield Tax requirements. The circumstances surrounding how and when timber yield tax is paid are often confusing for landowners and vary depending on the agreements between landowners, timber owners, and contractors. Tax exemptions exist when timber values are under \$3,000 dollars. The Regulations Working Group plans to develop the FAQs to comprehensively capture and explain timber tax issues and provide landowners/timber owners needed information.

### **Prescribed Fire**

**(Nick Goulette/Craig Thomas)**

- The Fire MOU Partnership has scheduled their next in-person meeting for June 1-2 at the Hume Lake Ranger District of the Sierra National Forest. RSVP's for the meeting can be sent to either Nick Goulette or Craig Thomas.



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### **Utilization – Bioenergy (Kim Carr/Angie Lottes)**

- The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has requested an estimate of the volume of trees that will be removed over the next 5 - 10 years and associated costs. The working group is coordinating with inventory managers to provide estimates (in bone dry ton) for trees in the High Hazard Zones. Initial estimates are being vetted and cost information compiled.
- The Investor-Owned Utilities (IOUs) have filed advice letters and riders to the CPUC. These letters outline the terms of the power solicitation and are one of the first steps for CPUC to approve initiation of the RAM auction. Several comments were submitted to the CPUC on April 27<sup>th</sup> in response to the riders. The IOUs submitted reply comments on May 4<sup>th</sup>. Several issues need to be resolved and different interests are talking these through in hopes of resolving the issues informally. If this is not successful, the CPUC will need to issue a resolution which will slow the process for 2 months or longer.
- The CPUC Administrative Law Judge is drafting a decision for the BioMAT program changes for purposes of accelerating contracts for facilities that can receive feedstock from High Hazard Zones and to address interconnection issues.

### **Utilization – Market Development (Evan Johnson/Kim Carr)**

- Working group is exploring the potential to export blue stained logs to China for use as concrete form boards, as well as for chopsticks and coffins. Working group members toured two export log yards, where a significant amount is currently debarked and then shipped. One company is currently removing trees *at no cost to landowners*, and then exporting through the port of West Sacramento. This is a viable option for counties within distances to ports, generally north of the Madera/Mariposa county line, and the working group will explore ways to increase that radius. The limiting factor is shortages of trucks and drivers, as well as export restrictions.
- CAL FIRE is executing a contract for BECK Group to refine their wood product business opportunities study. The revised study will serve two purposes: 1) analysis on opportunities to expand existing wood product businesses or develop new businesses using the feedstock from the tree mortality event in an expedited manner and 2) BECK will utilize its network of forestry and forest products industry contacts to assist in identifying entrepreneurs/developers that are interested in pursuing the opportunities identified in the research phase.
- Continued work on developing an intake pathway with GOBIZ and other agencies/departments for businesses interested in pursuing opportunities related to the tree mortality event.



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- The working group continues to work with Department of Water Resources to identify opportunities for high-volume use of wood chips for dust control at Salton Sea.

### **Public Outreach**

**(Daniel Berlant/Staci Heaton)**

- The Working Group is continuing its planning efforts in developing routes for self-guided walking tours for the public. The goal for these self-guided tours is to allow the public to tour the mortality up close and at their own pace.
- The Working Group is looking at developing a webinar targeted towards the public that will allow them to learn more about the tree mortality epidemic.

## **CURRENT TREE MORTALITY CONDITIONS**

- **29,000,000 dead trees**

## **APPROVED CALIFORNIA DISASTER ACT FUNDING APPLICATIONS**

- **Approved CDAA Applications:** Tuolumne County, Mariposa County, Tuolumne Utilities District, Twain Harte Community Services District, Columbia Public Cemetery District
- **Submitted CDAA Applications:** Placer County, Madera County

## **TREE MORTALITY RESPONSE FUNDING**

- The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) announced the availability of grant funds through the Pacific Southwest Fuels Management Strategic Investments Partnership. This program is a collaborative partnership between the U.S. Forest Service and NFWF, and will award approximately \$1.9 million dollars over the next year to fuels management projects that will improve forest health and resilience. Project types are described in the Request for Proposals (RFP) posted at [www.nfwf.org/pswfuels](http://www.nfwf.org/pswfuels). Proposal submissions are due **Tuesday, May 17, 2016**.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

- **Local Emergency Proclamations:** Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Fresno, Kern, Madera, Mariposa, Placer, Tulare, Tuolumne



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- **County Tree Mortality Task Forces:** Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Fresno, Kern, Madera, Mariposa, Placer, Tulare, Tuolumne

## EQUIPMENT ALLOCATION AND TRAINING

CAL FIRE Tree Mortality Equipment Allocation:	#Delivered										
County Name (CAL FIRE Unit): >>>----->	V	Kern (KRN)	Tulare (TUU)	Fresno (FKU)	Madera (MMU)	Mariposa (MMU)	Tuolumne (TCU)	Calaveras (TCU)	Amador (AEU)	Eldorado (AEU)	Placer (NEU)
<b>Burner Module A (2):</b>											
3 Fire Box (burners)	6			3	3						
1 Track Loader	2			1	1						
1 Wheel Loader				1	1						
<b>Burner Module B (2):</b>											
2 Fire Box (burners)	4		2				2				
1 Track Loader	2		1				1				
1 Wheel Loader			1				1				
<b>Single Resources:</b>											
Masticator (2)				1	1						
Track Chipper (10)	6	1	2	2	1	1	2		1		
Tow Chipper (6)	6		1	1		1	2		1		
Sawmill (5)	1		1	1	1		1		1		
<b>Total # of New Equipment Units</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

- **Equipment Delivery/Deployment**  
All fire boxes, tow chippers, and track loaders ordered have been delivered.
- **Equipment Training**  
Training for the tow chippers will take place on Wednesday, May 11<sup>th</sup>.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- The next full Tree Mortality Task Force meeting will be held on Monday, May 9<sup>th</sup> from 1:00-3:00 P.M.
- Fire MOU Partnership next in-person meeting is scheduled for June 1<sup>st</sup> – 2nd at the Hume Lake Ranger District of the Sierra National Forest.



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## **TREE MORTALITY RELATED WEBSITES FOR MORE INFORMATION**

**California's Tree Mortality Information Clearinghouse for Stakeholders**

**[www.treetaskforce.org](http://www.treetaskforce.org)**

**California's Tree Mortality Information Clearinghouse for the Public**

**[www.prepareforbarkbeetle.org](http://www.prepareforbarkbeetle.org)**

**California's Tree Mortality Viewer**

**[egis.fire.ca.gov/TreeMortalityViewer/](http://egis.fire.ca.gov/TreeMortalityViewer/)**