



FAST TRAX

Forest Area Safety Taskforce • Hotline: 1-866-402-6044 • www.sdcdpw.org/tree • JANUARY 2006

PARTICIPANTS



California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



California State Parks



County of San Diego



Fire Safe Council



Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego



San Diego Gas & Electric



USDA Forest Service



USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service



Community Organizations and Interested Stakeholders

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS GET FAST UPDATES

By Joan Wynn, USFS

In October, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors held a meeting to provide an update on the progress made in the county since the 2003 fires. Members of the Forest Area Safety Task Force (FAST) had the opportunity to provide highlights of actions taken by FAST over the last two years.

Thom Porter, of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF), gave an update on how FAST was started, and went over current projects; Tom Schott, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), briefed the board on upcoming tree removal projects and results from their cooperation with County Resource Conservation Districts and other cooperators. Chuck Maner, CDF, discussed actions that have been completed by CDF, this includes training for additional helicopter pilots for the Sheriff's Department and local military; changes in operating procedures since the fires, and CDF staffing levels.

Rich Hawkins, USFS Cleveland National Forest, gave an update on fuel reduction projects on National Forest System land in the county, staffing levels, fire prevention program, and efforts of San Diego County Fire Safe Councils to increase the number of councils in the county and reduce

fuel in and around the communities. The County Land Use and Environment Group presented information on the county accomplishments since the fires: streamlining the building permit process, clearing of brush and trees from the back country areas, and the status of community protection planning.

The Board was provided with briefing packages assembled by FAST and San Diego Fire Safe Council.



From left to right: Rich Hawkins, USFS Cleveland National Forest; Tom Schott, NRCS; Thom Porter; Chuck Maner Dave Hillman, CDF.

ALPINE COMMUNITIES AWARDED GRANTS

By Robin Kinmont, Fire Safe Council

The Carveacre and the Ranches of Palo Verde Fire Safe Councils have received grants of more than \$132,000 to help protect them from wildfire.

The award of \$62,300 to Carveacre is its third from the US Forest Service, and the results are noticeable. "When we began our fuel reduction project three years ago, our Forest Service mentor joked that the best advice he could give us was to move away. Now he feels confident that Carveacre can be defended against a wildland fire," says Wende Cornelius, Carveacre Fire Safe Council facilitator.

Next Page

NEWSLETTER ANNOUNCEMENT:

HAPPY NEW YEAR!
From everyone at the Forest Area Safety Taskforce.



The new year brings some changes:

Starting this January issue, FAST TRAX will be sent out quarterly.

For more information, or to request an issue of FAST TRAX, please contact the editor at karla.vega@ca.nacdnet.net

FAST TRAX

The Ranches of Palo Verde were awarded \$70,589 to establish a fuel break on property that borders Cleveland National Forest and to thin fire-prone brush in some of the steep canyons that course through both Ranches. According to the project coordinator, Sal Casamassima, “The brush removal and fuel break are designed to not only protect homes in the Ranches but also to prevent the spread of wildfire into the rest of Alpine.”

Neville Connell, chair of the Alpine Health and Safety Committee, comments, “The Carveacre and Ranches projects are a vital component of our overall plan in Alpine to reduce the risk of wildfires.” Connell adds “our goal is to have a coordinated system of wildfire prevention and protection in which government and the community are on the same page.”

CDF COLLECTS CONES

By Lynette Short, CDF

Over the last five years we have seen thousands of acres of conifer trees destroyed by a combination of bark beetle infestation exacerbated by several years of drought and topped off by devastating wildfires in 2003. To deal with the tree loss, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) is currently involved in collecting seed cones to supplement their inventory of native tree seed. CDF is mandated by the Public Resources Code to annually survey, collect, and have adequate supplies of native conifer tree seed in order to maintain a statewide inventory of regionally appropriate tree seedlings. This is done in order to provide replacement trees for areas devastated by disease, drought, fire or other statewide reforestation projects.

The forests in the mountains of San Diego, Riverside and San Bernardino counties are currently being harvested for cones,



The Southern California Sugar pine cone holds seeds that are currently being examined by researchers for a natural genetic resistance to the “Blister Rust” disease.

and CDF has targeted 1,000 bushels of cones for collection within these areas. Conifer trees have naturally occurring cycles of cone production but are not necessarily annual. Some species yield cone seeds every three to six years. It is important to track these events and to move rapidly to collect the cone seeds when the opportunity arises. Collection teams are currently in the beginning phase of such an opportunity, which is expected to last about four weeks.

Another reason for seed collection is the apparent ability of the Sugar Pine in southern California to avoid the “Blister Rust” disease that has destroyed thousands of acres of Sugar Pine trees in other regions of the state. The Sugar Pine is currently going through a heavy cyclic cone crop that has not been seen in many years. Researchers are very interested in examining Southern California Sugar pine seeds to see if they possess some type of natural genetic resistance to the “Blister Rust” pathogen.



A helicopter removes logs in a tree removal project area.

HELICOPTER REMOVES TREES IN CUYAMACA

By Bill Polick,
County of San Diego

Faced with a need to remove dead, dying and diseased trees from Cuyamaca State Park to reduce wildfire risk, the County’s contractor, Phillips & Jordan, decided

using a helicopter to haul logs from the forest to a staging yard was the best way to complete the job.

With a large number of trees inaccessible to heavy logging equipment and with a risk of damaging environmentally-sensitive areas, Phillips & Jordan opted to utilize the helicopter that grabbed downed trees with a claw, lifted and moved them to a staging yard where they were loaded on logging trucks for transport.

The vertical logging is part of the Fire Safety and Fuels Reduction Program (FSFRP). FSFRP and the Watershed Recovery Project are cooperative efforts between federal, state and local agencies as well as community organizations and other interested stakeholders. The \$45 million program is funded by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Forest Service, County of San Diego and others. More information is available on the Internet at www.sdcdpw.org/tree or by calling the toll-free hotline at (866) 402-6044.

GOATS FIGHT FIRE THREAT

By Karla Vega, NRCS

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is using 200 goats to clear brush on 120 acres along the mountainside of State Park Road on Palomar Mountain, throughout the month of December and into January, in order to reduce the threat of fire.

The mountainside being treated separates the Bailey Meadows community at the top of the mountain, from the La Jolla Indian Reservation at the bottom. Standing at a steep slope, the treatment area makes for a difficult and dangerous terrain for hand crew workers and their equipment to enter. "The benefit of using goats for brush reduction is that they can roam on steep terrain and eat all the plants that other grazing animals cannot survive on" says Kelly Strecker, NRCS Forester. "In many places, goats have also proven to be more cost-effective than using hand crews or masticators for brush removal."

The goats are gathered, lead into a section of the project area and enclosed within electrical fencing. Large appetites compel the goats to feed on the shrubs, brush and weeds that continue to serve as a fuel source on Palomar Mountain. The

electrical fencing is then rotated throughout different sections to complete the project area.

For more information on the goats or other projects, please contact the NRCS offices at 760-233-9507.



Goats roam along the steep slopes of Palomar Mountain, feeding on brush that is a fire threat to nearby communities.

TREE REMOVAL STATUS REPORT AS OF DECEMBER 2005

FAST Agency	Trees Removed (Cumulative Total)*
CDF	854
County of San Diego	172,320
Fire Safe Council Palomar	163
NRCS	3,793
SDG&E	12,307
Sierra Cedar	22,117
State Parks	9,491
USFS	19,249
Cumulative Tree Total:	240,294
Cumulative Brush (acres):	8,401.92
Brush (cu.ft.)**:	248,404,775

* Some numbers may not be up to date
** Numbers do not incorporate every agency

ADDITIONAL FAST PARTICIPANTS:



American Red Cross
<http://www.sdarc.org>



Bureau of Land Management
<http://www.blm.gov/>



Bureau of Indian Affairs
<http://www.doi.gov/bureau-indian-affairs.html>



CA Department of Fish & Game
<http://www.dfg.ca.gov>



California Highway Patrol
<http://www.chp.ca.gov/>



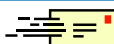
Caltrans
<http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist11/>



Office of Emergency Services
http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/oes/oes_home.html



People for Trees
www.peoplefortrees.org



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