

NRCS WATERSHED RECOVERY PROJECT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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PROJECT BRIEFS

Accelerating Progress

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in an attempt to accelerate dead and dying tree removal, is looking for new and innovative methods of doing so. Although progress is forging ahead at a steady rate, NRCS is working with its partners to find environmentally sound and cost effective practices to safeguard communities from the dangers of dead and dying trees that continue to pose a threat to communities. Expanding the use of licensed consultants to assist in environmental reviews, marking of trees at project sites, and project development is being evaluated. NRCS is also looking at current fire prevention procedures incorporated into contracts to see if there is a way to streamline the process.

Innovative uses for dead trees

Uses for the dead and dying trees continue to expand. One company is using the wood for a speciality product sold at large chain home improvement centers. The product is a plastic covered wood used for outdoor construction. Another company is



Removing trees with a Yarder protects habitat and minimizes soil erosion that occurs in a traditional logging operation. The Yarder, which is set up similarly to a ski lift, is a cost effective way to move trees without having to shutdown nearby roads and highways, as is the case in helicopter removals.

obtaining low grade timber to ship to China for a profit. Others uses include pallet construction, mill processing, and mulching. Small project sites around homes see nearly all of the trees turned into mulch and spread around the home to protect against soil erosion.

Bark Beetle Update

The bark beetle situation has tapered off for the time being. Although tree mortality due to bark beetles is above normal levels, it is down from last year.

This is encouraging, but as Steve Ferris from California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) said, "We're not out of the woods yet."

Project Update

To date, \$27 million has been made available to San Bernardino County to complete the removal of dead and dying trees by local contracts. 162 contracts covering 6,773 acres are either complete or in progress to remove a total of 100,390 trees.

(see Update next page)

Watershed Recovery Tree Removal Summary

Listed numbers are approximate figures based on planned and completed work.

County	Trees Removed	Contracts	Parcels	Acres Treated	Total Costs
Riverside	9,132	8	112	836	\$3,406,542
San Bernardino	100,390	162	4,182	6,773	\$12,251,482
San Diego	9,164	7	681	2,497	\$2,081,400
Totals	118,686	177	4,975	10,106	\$17,739,424

The Watershed Recovery Project, funded by the NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP), is ongoing in the three counties mentioned above. The counties participate as sponsors for the program which is currently funded 100% by NRCS. Typically, the EWP Program is a cost share that assumes up to 75% of the cost. Current exigency situations have waived the cost share amount.

Partner Highlight

**Mojave Desert RCD
Ready for Releaf**

After the devastating fires of 2003 and the effort to remove dead and dying trees, areas of the Southern Californian forests are looking like clear cutting nightmares. Many local, state, and federal



(Above) *Christie Robinson, Mojave Desert RCD, represents the Releaf effort at a Media event to kick off the beginning of the volunteer replanting in the San Bernardino Mountains.*

agencies, in cooperation with private groups are working to bring back the beauty and protection that trees provide, responsibly. The Mojave Desert RCD is playing a key role in the coordination of this effort.

The goal is to create a mixed conifer/hardwood forest with all native species spaced in a fashion that provides for a healthy forest. Benefits include providing different types of food and cover for the variety of wildlife in the forest.



(Above) *Abby Forest, a CDF Forester, demonstrates the planting of a native White Fir.*

Update continued

In Riverside County, \$7 million has been made available for both Federal and local tree removal contracts. Eight contracts totaling almost \$3.4 million, treating 836 acres, are either complete or in progress to remove approximately 9,132 dead or dying trees.

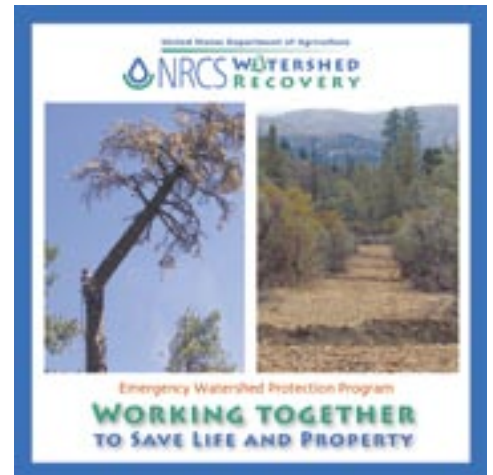
San Diego County is working to allocate \$20 million between Federal and local contracts. At this point, seven contracts, treating 2,497 acres, are either complete or in progress removing a total of 9,164 trees.

NRCS prepares environmental evaluations for all Watershed Recovery projects to insure compliance with the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) which allows partner agencies to move forward with work on assessed sites.

NRCS technical staff is available to provide technical assistance to landowners in the area of erosion control, fuel management and other critical needs after tree removal work is completed.

PROJECT VIDEO AVAILABLE ONLINE
www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ewp

A short video on the Watershed Recovery Project is available online. The video describes the NRCS's role in the monumental effort that is taking place by various agencies in Southern California to remove dead and dying trees to safeguard mountain communities and communities in the watershed below.



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