



CALIFORNIA OAK MORTALITY TASK FORCE

News Release

SAVE TREES – KEEP FIREWOOD LOCAL

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BERKELEY, CA—People across the country are currently engaging in a centuries-old tradition of acquiring firewood for the holidays and winter season. In a recent poll conducted by The Nature Conservancy, one in twenty Americans said they moved firewood long distances (more than 50 miles). However, moving firewood can increase the risk of introducing invasive pests and diseases into an area that may kill trees. To help prevent the spread of these pests, buy locally cut firewood, preferably within the same county or region where it will be burned.

Most insects and diseases cannot move far on their own; however, when the firewood that harbors them is transported long distances, they are able to become established and cause infestations in areas far from their known range. Past invaders have devastated beloved species of trees such as the American elm and American chestnut- tree species, which have been part of American forests and city streets for centuries prior to invasion of foreign pests.

“Results from a recent Nature Conservancy poll tell us that when people learn why they shouldn’t transport firewood long distances, the vast majority are willing to buy it where they burn it,” said Leigh Greenwood, The Nature Conservancy *Don’t Move Firewood* campaign manager. “People have the power to save their trees. They can help stop the spread of destructive pests by not moving firewood and communicating this message to others.”

The poll results indicate that only 34 percent of the respondents that use firewood have heard that they should not move it long distances; however, once they are aware of the problem, 80 percent would be willing to buy the wood in the area where they plan to burn it. In regions of the country hardest hit by invasive pests, the number of people who have heard the message to not move firewood has increased from 38 percent in 2007, when the poll was previously conducted, to 59 percent in this year’s poll results.

“California’s forests and trees are some of the most diverse and cherished in the nation, and really, one of the most simple and proactive measures we can take to protect them is to not

move firewood long distances. By doing so we will help protect oaks throughout California from issues such as Sudden Oak Death and the goldspotted oak borer, both of which are invasive species killing thousands of our trees,” said Susan Frankel, Sudden Oak Death Research Program Manager, USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Research Station.

In Southern California, the goldspotted oak borer has killed thousands of native oak trees in San Diego County. This invasive insect most likely was transported into California on infested oak firewood. Authorities are concerned it will continue to spread throughout Southern California’s forests and possibly the state. The loss of these trees would damage wildlife habitat, potentially increase fire severity, and alter the natural beauty of the landscape.

Consider using the following firewood recommendations from the *Don’t Move Firewood* campaign:

- Obtain firewood no more than 50 miles from where you will burn it
- Don’t be tempted to get firewood from a remote location just because the wood looks clean and healthy - it may still harbor tiny insect eggs or microscopic fungal spores that could start a new and deadly infestation
- Commercially kiln-dried wood is a good option if you must transport firewood
- If you have already moved firewood, burn it soon and completely (rake storage area and burn debris) for safe disposal
- Tell your friends and others about the risks of moving firewood

To learn more about how to prevent forest pests from destroying forests, log onto www.dontmovefirewood.org. For information on Sudden Oak Death, go to www.suddenoakdeath.org, on the goldspotted oak borer, go to www.gsob.org, or contact Katie Palmieri at (510) 847-5482 regarding either pest.

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