

Collaborative Work on Forest Health and Fire Protection in California Two Chiefs' Award Winner - 2006



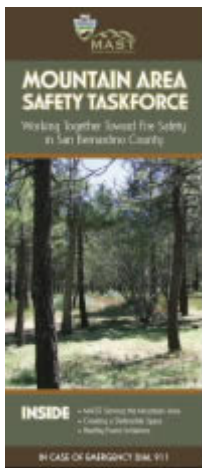
The USDA Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and San Bernardino, Riverside and San Diego counties have collaborated in a highly effective partnership across ownership lines to seamlessly ensure forest health and fuel treatments are placed in the most critical community protection and evacuation route sites. This work was accomplished in response to the catastrophic forest mortality in southern California forests in San Bernardino, Riverside and San Diego counties. The combination of a five-year drought and insect and diseases resulted in a massive area of vegetation mortality in 2003 -2004 that threatened human safety and had significant economic and ecological impacts on communities and forests. The work of these partners across the landscape has transformed these forests from an explosion waiting to happen to forests with a future.



Partnership Outcomes

- Mountain/Forest Area Safety Taskforces were formed in Riverside, San Bernardino and San Diego Counties comprised of the above agencies and many other local partners to coordinate emergency fire planning/evacuation and fuel reduction efforts on 65,000 acres of wild land urban interface and working forest areas.
- 42,000 acres have already been treated with the removal of almost a half a million dead, dying or diseased trees.
- Over 200 miles of critical evacuation route fuel treatments have been conducted along State Highways that moved back and forth across Federal, State and private property.

- Coordination and leverage of funding and sharing staff technical expertise across project boundaries to avoid duplication of effort, reduce costs and increase effectiveness of the treatments.
- Sharing environmental resource inventories, technical staff and costs related to the conduct of environmental/cultural resource assessments and onsite project monitoring requirements.
- A system of Forest Practice Act compliance that insures compliance with Federal and State environmental protection laws while reducing process time and paper work.
- Acquisition and sharing of updated aerial imagery and GIS products that improve project planning, contract documents and overall project accomplishment and accountability. They have proved invaluable to recent fire suppression and rehabilitation efforts as well.
- Establishment of an expanded forest products industry and jobs through the provision of increased raw material and low interest loans on equipment acquisition to eligible candidates.
- An expanded community cooperation and awareness of forest health and fire safe requirements of building material on the home and the vegetation around it. The Forest Care program is a prime example of cooperation between the partners and the public we serve.
- An unprecedented multi-agency cone collection effort was conducted across a huge diverse geographic area.
- White-pine blister rust resistant sugar pine stock for reforestation in southern California is being developed.



Partners

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

- Tom Schott, Area Emergency Watershed Program Coordinator, Riverside, CA
- Rick Aguayo, District Conservationist, Victorville, CA
- Robert Hewitt, District Conservationist, San Jacinto, CA
- Brian Petit, Lead Forester, Escondido, CA

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF)

- Kevin Turner, Unit Forester/MAST Chair Riverside County
- Glenn Barley, Unit Forester, San Bernardino
- Thom Porter, Unit Forester/FAST Chair, San Diego County

- Arnie White, Forest Health Enhancement Program Coordinator
- Doug Forest, Deputy Chief Predictive Services, Sacramento Headquarters
- Kathleen Edwards, Forester I, Nevada-Yuba-Placer Unit

Counties

- Peter Brierty, Assistant Fire Chief, San Bernardino County Fire Department
- Ken Miller, Fire Service Coordinator, Dept. of Planning & Land Use, San Diego County
- Kevin Turner, Unit Forester, CDF and Riverside County Fire