

## NEWS RELEASE

### USDA Forest Service

#### Pacific Southwest Region

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#### **Protect Our Forests and Trees by not Moving Firewood** *Stop the Spread of Nonnative Insects*

VALLEJO, Calif., Jun. 13, 2011—An act as simple as transporting firewood can lead to widespread devastation.

The Pacific Southwest Region Forest Health Protection staff of the U.S. Forest Service recently completed a report that will soon be published entitled, *Firewood Movement – A Threat to California’s Forests?* The report notes that since 2008 the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) has inspected and recorded details on firewood entering the state through 16 agricultural border protection stations. These stations have recorded approximately 24,062,000 pounds of firewood in over 10,600 individual loads entering the state between 2008 and 2010. Over the same three-year period, a total of 391 were prevented to over 150 named destinations (with the vast majority in California). Some of the notable species that were intercepted on firewood include emerald ash borer and gypsy moth, both of which were transported to California illegally in violation of nationwide Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service quarantines.

The report found that firewood in private vehicles was almost 10 times more likely to be denied entry into the state and/or confiscated than commercial loads of firewood. Firewood transported to California came from 45 states, Canada and Mexico. Almost 600 unique destinations were listed for firewood entering California.

Nearly every major urban area in California was represented, as well as at least five National Parks and five National Forests within the state. Top destinations to which firewood bearing potential pests was being transported were the greater Los Angeles urban area (75 forest pests), the Sacramento urban area (36), the San Diego urban area (32), Crescent City and Fresno (24 each), and the San Francisco-Oakland urban area (23).

As a single dramatic example, last July, a couple from Michigan was stopped in their RV at the Topaz border station (south of Lake Tahoe). Inside their vehicle was ash firewood containing adult and larval emerald ash borers. This is the furthest this invasive exotic species has been carried and detected from its federal quarantine area in the Northeast and Upper Midwest, where it has killed millions of urban trees and cost municipalities and homeowners billions of dollars in tree removal costs and lost property values.

Even insects native to the U.S. can become devastating pests if moved to an adjacent state. Less than half (46.6 percent) of the wood borers native to Arizona also occur in California. The gold-spotted oak borer is a wood borer native to southeastern Arizona that was introduced into San Diego County, California in the early-2000s, most likely from firewood. In its new environment this beetle infests at least four new host species of oak that have no co-evolved defense mechanisms; the result has been tens of thousands of trees killed with no known mechanism for containing the insect's spread. Any one of the hundreds of firewood-borne pests intercepted at CDFA border stations every year could be the next gold-spotted oak borer or emerald ash borer in its effects if successfully introduced into a new area. This is particularly true in California, where non-native pests could have infested over 95 percent of the state had they reached their destinations. It's worth noting that almost the entire state of California is within 50 miles of a federal or state park or forest.

#### **How you can help:**

- Leave firewood at home — do not transport it to campgrounds or parks.
- Use firewood from local sources.
- If you have moved firewood, burn all of it before leaving your campsite.

For media materials related to Emerald Ash Borer, please check out:

- <http://www.emeraldashborer.info/educational.cfm>

For photos of the effects from the Gold Spotted Oak Borer or from effects from Sudden Oak Death, etc. see:

- <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfsregion5/sets/72157626792000599/>



A Gold Spotted Oak Borer damaged tree stands near picnic grounds on a national forest in California.



An Emerald Ash Borer is found in firewood at an inspection station.