



File Code: 1950

Date: June 15, 2009

Dear Interested Individuals, Organizations and Agencies:

The San Gabriel River Ranger District, Angeles National Forest is seeking public comment on the proposed Crystal Lake High Value Tree Protection Project.

The Crystal Lake High Value Tree Protection Project involves approximately 312 acres of National Forest land located at Crystal Lake Campground in the Angeles National Forest (see attached map). The project is classified as Developed Area Interface in the Angeles National Forest Land Management Plan.

Project Background

During 2003 and 2004, Southern California experienced widespread tree mortality from fires, drought and bark beetle infestations. In 2004 approximately 300 high-value pine trees were sprayed with carbaryl in the Crystal Lake Campground. A post-treatment evaluation performed in February 2007 determined the preventive spraying was successful. No bark beetle activity was detected in the campground.

In June 2008, a Biological/Mortality Assessment and Recommendations Report (on file at the Angeles National Forest), prepared by the Southern California Forest Health Protection Entomologist, concluded that bark beetle-caused mortality is now occurring in campground conifers again. Fourteen high-value pine trees were found with recent attacks (2008) by bark beetles. More than 40 high-valued pines have been killed over the past four years due to attacks by bark beetles.

The Crystal Lake Recreation area is currently closed to the public but scheduled to re-open in 2011. It is a highly valued and very popular campground. This recreation site is situated in a forested area with a variety species. There are many large majestic and very old trees, mostly conifers, throughout the campground. If lost, those trees can not be easily or quickly replaced.

The preventive spray treatment implemented four years ago is no longer protecting pines in the campground. The *purpose* of the project is to prevent further tree mortality caused by bark beetles. There is a *need* to protect high-value pine trees within this developed site to improve forest health and foster recreational enjoyment of the campground.



Project Description

The proposed project involves spraying the boles of individually selected high value trees with the insecticide carbaryl. Treatment will involve the use high pressure spray equipment operated from the ground or from a crane (“cherry picker”). Approximately 350 trees are proposed for treatment within the project area. Maps displaying the proposed treatment area are attached. No new road construction is planned as a result of this proposed action.

Selected trees for treatment will meet the following criteria:

- Relatively healthy
- Accessible by equipment
- Not have evidence of existing bark beetle infestation
- Not be within 100 feet of standing water, intermittent, ephemeral or a live channel/stream
- More than 6 inches diameter (dbh)
- Of the tallest and healthiest trees in the stand
- High-value tree adding an important element to the recreational setting

Project implementation will involve:

- Tagging and inventory
- The area will be clearly posted with signs explaining that insecticides have recently been applied, what the chemical is, who to contact with questions, and when the area will be opened again. These signs will be bilingual; English and Spanish.
- The insecticide will be applied by a state-licensed pesticide applicator. A Forest Service contract inspector will be on-site at all times, including during mixing and clean-up operations to ensure all contract requirements are met.
- The contract will specify certain conditions including wind speed, wind direction, and rainfall. If those certain conditions are not present, spraying will be stopped until those conditions are present and likely to remain present.
 - Wind speeds shall not exceed 5 miles per hour on a sustained basis, as measured by standard FS “belt weather kit” procedures, and will be measured by Forest Service Inspectors. Wind direction will be monitored to assure that drift is minimized, especially in the direction of any water.
 - Rainfall must not be anticipated (forecast) for a minimum of six hours after operations are complete for the day. Six hours is sufficient time to allow the pesticide to dry in place.
- The contract will also specify that protective waterproof blankets must be laid at the base of trees prior to spraying in order provide a protective barrier for soil and collect any excess insecticide.
- Trees will be treated before the beetle flight period begins in spring. The work should be completed by late spring or early summer.
- Picnic tables, fire grates, well pumps, toilets and other improvements will be covered to avoid contamination spray drift during the spraying operations.
- Historic building sites will be identified to the project manager who will implement measures to protect these sites from the effects of the spraying such as but not limited to: no staging of project materials or activities on the site, minimize overspray, no access via the site, and treat trees on the site with spraying only as a last resort.

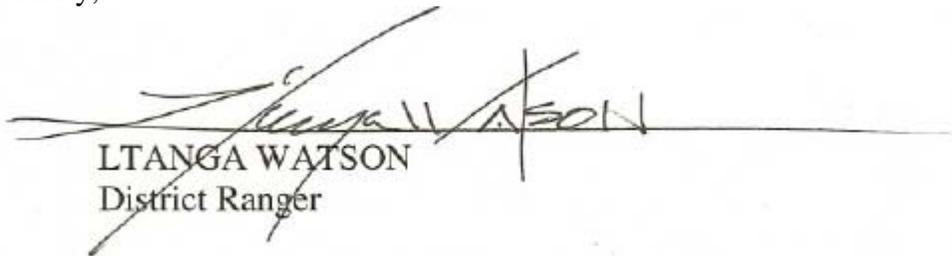
The complete project proposal can be viewed at the San Gabriel River Ranger District Office located at 110 N. Wabash Avenue, Glendora CA 91741 or on the Angeles National Forest website. <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/angeles/projects/>.

This project is consistent with the objectives and management direction of the Angeles National Forest Land Management Plan (Part 1, Goal: 1.2 - Restore forest health where alterations of natural fire regimes have put human and natural resource values at risk).

A comment period provides interested parties, including those affected by the project proposal, an opportunity to make their concerns known prior to a decision being made. Comments may be mailed to Esmeralda Bracamonte, Assistant Resource Officer, 110 N. Wabash Avenue, Glendora, CA 91741. Electronic comments can be submitted at ebracamonte@fs.fed.us. Oral comments may be provided during normal business hours via telephone by calling Project Planner Esmeralda Bracamonte at (626) 335-1251 x238. Please ensure that it is clear that your comments are for the Crystal Lake High Value Tree Protection Project. The comment period closes July 15, 2009.

This project is categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement as per Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Chapter 31.12 (item 5ii).

Sincerely,



LTANGA WATSON
District Ranger