Happy New Year!

As the Fire Safe Council rolls into its 5th year, I am reminiscing over past years. In 2012, it all started with a multi-agency emergency drill held in Lakehills, with over 300 personnel participating from EDH Fire, EDC Sheriff, EDC Animal Services, CAL FIRE, CHP, USFS, Red Cross and other agencies. This simulated wildfire gave the agencies a chance to work together, learn about the area’s heavy fuel and topographical conditions, and test emergency response techniques. It was also effective in motivating residents: the Fire Safe Council was formed in July. 2012-2013 saw fruit from our partnership with USBR as fuel reduction work on 16 acres of public lands adjacent to Lakehills limbed up trees, removed brush and reduced fuel. We obtained Firewise status and have enjoyed 5 annual events. A Community Wildfire Protection Plan was written with both community and agency input. Grant submittals and funding followed in 2013-2015. Educational brochures were distributed door to door. In 2014, two additional communities joined Lakehills under the Council’s organizational umbrella. The Council’s Board grew from 5 to 7. The Council worked with strategic partners including State Parks, Bureaus of Reclamation, EDH Fire and others. We arranged for speakers and sometimes even offered refreshments at our meetings. Shaded Fuel Break work on the public lands expanded to 6 additional phases—including those running behind the Southpointe area all the way to Lakeridge Oaks (43 acres). Obtaining PG&E funding in 2016 reduced risk to their assets via vegetation management activities on private lands within Lakehills and Southpointe.

This list of accomplishments required volunteers to step forward, work together and keep a common goal. Changes are coming. We congratulate Supervisor John Hidahl for his win and now representing EDH at the county level. But now, there is a vacant position on our Council’s Board. Requirements: 2 meetings/month, energy, a new year’s resolution to volunteer, enthusiasm, and a desire to do something for the greater good. Think about it!

Reflections and Changes by Peggy Willis

Shaded Fuel Break Work

Over the next several weeks time period, vegetation management work is planned in the Shaded Fuel Break (SFB) in the Folsom Lake State Recreation Area (FLSRA) to maintain the SFB and to treat areas experiencing invasive species vegetation growth.

Maintenance of the SFB is very important to keep a defensive zone in the event of a wildfire. The crews performing this work will be from the California Conservation Corps (CCC) and you may see them traveling through the area or perhaps working near your property if you share a boundary with the State Park. As we have stated before, the CCC is an outstanding youth program, not inmate crews, so if you see them please wave and/or express your appreciation for their hard work. Read about the CCC at www.ccc.ca.gov.

Our sincere appreciation to the Bureau of Reclamation, the CCC and California State Parks for the continuing partnership as we work together to protect our communities and all surrounding lands from catastrophic wildfire.
Plants of the Week - US Department of Agriculture / US Forest Service

It’s winter, it’s cold, it’s windy, dawn is late, sundown is early, but fortunately it has also been wet, so far! That made us think of the near future and we thought looking forward to Spring and the seasonal wildflowers might brighten the winter doldrums. Enjoy this article and website provided by the US Forest Service!

Thousands of wildflowers grow on our national forests and grasslands, in many shapes, sizes, and colors. A field of wildflowers or colorful plants upon a lush forest floor is a beautiful sight, but so is a single flower or scattered plants growing upon what at first glance may appear to be a dry and desolate landscape.

Each week “Celebrating Wildflowers” features a different wildflower found on our national forests and grasslands. Enjoy them here as well as throughout Celebrating Wildflowers.

The Plant of the Week descriptions are organized alphabetically by genus and species: https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/plant-of-the-week/index.php or <CLICK THIS LINK>

CAL FIRE News Release - Arbor Week Poster & Video Contest

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

CONTACT: Amy Head, Information Officer, (707) 724-3203
RELEASE DATE: December 22, 2016

Sacramento – Trees are an essential part of California’s climate and are vital to improving air quality and conserving water. To help educate Californians on the value that trees provide to building successful, healthy cities and neighborhoods, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) and California ReLeaf are announcing the annual statewide Arbor Week poster contest for students in 3rd, 4th and 5th grade. Rules and details can be found online here. In addition, CAL FIRE and California ReLeaf are also holding a video contest for students in 6th, 7th and 8th grade. Rules and details of the video contest can be found here. For each contest, students are asked to create original artwork or video based on the theme “Trees Are Superheroes!” (Los Árboles Son Superhéroes!). Also available now are lesson plans that align with Common Core Standards. Submissions are due to California ReLeaf by February 14, 2017. Winners will be featured at the State Fair, displayed on the California ReLeaf/CAL FIRE websites, and awarded cash prizes provided by CAL FIRE, the California Community Forests Foundation, and California ReLeaf.

CAL FIRE and California ReLeaf are partnering to encourage cities, nature groups, schools, and youth organizations to celebrate California Arbor Week by planting trees in their communities. California ReLeaf works statewide to promote alliances among community-based groups, individuals, industry, and government agencies working to protect the environment by planting and caring for trees and the state’s urban and community forests.

“Trees are truly earth’s superheroes,” said CAL FIRE Deputy Director Helge Eng. “They can combat the impacts of climate change and help provide cleaner air and water. Those are some real superhero powers.”

The goals of Arbor Week include educating Californians about trees, encouraging tree planting, teaching elementary school children the environmental, social, and economic benefits of trees, and protecting the state’s valuable natural resources.

“Trees are amazing superheroes for our cities and towns and perform many extraordinary feats every day to protect our communities,” said Cindy Blain, Executive Director of California ReLeaf. “They cool the air, clean the air, clean and capture rainwater, reduce our blood pressure and increase our mental concentration. All this is just another way of saying that trees keep our communities safe and make us healthier and smarter. Arbor Week is the perfect time to honor and recognize the trees - the superheroes we see every day.”

Contest rules and the new educational materials can be downloaded at http://arborweek.org/for-educators/ The contest is sponsored by California ReLeaf, CAL FIRE, and the California Community Forests Foundation.

California Arbor Week runs March 7-14 every year to mark famed horticulturist Luther Burbank’s birthday and to raise awareness of the benefits of trees in our communities. In 2011, legislation was passed to define California Arbor Week in statute. Visit www.arborweek.org for more information.
CAL FIRE NEWS RELEASE
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
CONTACT: Scott McLean, (916) 651-FIRE (3473)
RELEASE DATE: November 18, 2016

Tree Mortality Task Force Continues Efforts To Curb Dangers Of Massive Tree Die Off

Sacramento – In response to the massive tree die off across California—which the U.S. Forest Service today estimated has killed over 102 million trees since 2010—CAL FIRE is continuing its work with federal, local, and utility partners to remove dead and dying trees that pose the greatest risk to public safety.

"Although the epidemic tree mortality we are facing is devastating, it has galvanized partnerships at all levels, and focused renewed interests on forest health," said Chief Ken Pimlott, CAL FIRE director and California’s state forester. "With disaster comes opportunity, and we will continue our work to remove the dead and dying trees that pose the greatest risk to public safety and private property.”

To date, CAL FIRE and its partners have removed more than 423,000 trees in 10 counties, inspected and cleared of dead trees nearly 52,000 miles of roads and powerlines, treated more than 26,000 acres and created roughly 1,300 acres of fuel breaks.

“The number of dead trees in our state is truly saddening and another widespread impact of this historic drought we are managing in our state,” said Mark Ghilarducci, director of the California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services. “Through the Governor’s Tree Mortality Task Force, we’re actively leveraging all of our resources around California to ensure protection of lives, critical infrastructure and the environment in our wooded communities and wildlands.”

Stakeholders working through the Governor’s Tree Mortality Task Force committed to redouble their efforts in the face of an expanding epidemic of trees killed by drought and bark beetles. On November 18, the U.S. Forest Service increased its estimate of the number of dead trees in California’s forestlands from 66 million to 102 million, greatly widening the estimated scope of a die-off unprecedented in modern history. The estimated 36 million dead trees identified by the U.S. Forest Service in its latest aerial surveys will heighten the danger of falling trees and wildfire for years to come.

California has endured five years of drought, 2012-15 are the four driest consecutive years on record, based on statewide precipitation – and drought continues despite improved precipitation in Northern California last winter. Drought is a frequent and natural feature of California’s Mediterranean climate, and the state’s highest economic losses due to drought typically involve loss of timberland and wildfire damage. Healthy trees typically produce enough resinous pitch to repel bark beetles, but beetle populations can flourish among stands of trees stressed by lack of precipitation. The beetles and their larvae feed on the tree’s living tissue. Beetle-damaged trees can take down powerlines, damage homes and fuel wildfire.

Over $10 million in state funds have been earmarked in grants for local projects to help combat tree mortality, focusing on the removal of dead and dying trees around homes. Another $6 million of state funds have been used to buy equipment for removing dead and dying trees in high-hazard zones. Ten counties stretching from Placer to Kern have been identified as the highest-hazard region for tree mortality.

“Work to address this massive bark beetle epidemic began quickly a year ago, and the joint undertaking continues,” said Mariposa County Supervisor Kevin Cann. “The sheer number of dead trees is hard to imagine, but it’s real and we must continue our efforts to address the fact that this will be an ongoing issue for years to come. We have come a long way since Governor Brown first declared this emergency. It is important that we recognize the substantial progress as we redouble our efforts to deal with this ecosystem impacting event.”

In October 2015, Governor Brown signed an executive order addressing tree mortality, including the creation of a Tree Mortality Task Force. More than 80 local, state and federal agencies, as well as utilities and other stakeholders, focus on a coordinated response through the task force.

Additional information on the work of the task force to date can be found here.

For more information on how to be ready for wildfire and to learn how to make your trees healthy and prepared for bark beetles, visit www.ReadyForWildfire.org.

MEDIA NOTES
High resolution photos of tree mortality, bark beetles and education graphics:
https://calfire.box.com/s/kjq6jowwyy1s53swumg9oa76bz0zz86v

Video of crews working to remove dead trees: https://drive.google.com/open?id=0Bx_D8oAj6JzmR25BcUlwQlVJSWc

Tree Mortality B-Roll: https://drive.google.com/file/d/0Bx_D8oAj6JzmbHRvSIF2TEJZbEk/view?usp=sharing