

NEWS RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE



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Survey Finds 18 Million Trees Died in California in 2018

Forest Health Top Priority for USDA Forest Service and CAL FIRE

Vallejo, Calif. – The USDA Forest Service announced today that an additional 18 million trees, mostly conifers, died in California since fall 2017. Over 147 million trees have died across 9.7 million acres of federal, state, local and private lands in California since the drought began in 2010. Since 2016, federal, state, and local partners have felled 1.5 million dead trees, primarily those posing the highest hazards to life and property.

While the 2016-2017 winter officially ended California’s drought, below-average precipitation recorded in 2017-2018 slowed the recovery of the state’s surviving trees. Dead trees continue to pose a significant hazard to people and critical infrastructure, mostly centered on the west side of the southern Sierra Nevada range; however, other forested areas throughout the state and at higher elevations have also been impacted.

Randy Moore, Regional Forester of the USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region, said, “The Forest Service is focused on increasing the pace and scale of ecological restoration – this includes thinning dense areas to promote healthy forests that are more resilient to wildfires, drought and bark beetle outbreaks. The Forest Service completed approximately 313,000 acres of restoration in 2018, which included over 63,000 acres of prescribed fire – the largest number recorded since the National Fire Plan was implemented in 2001.”

Thom Porter, CAL FIRE Director and California’s state forester said, “It is encouraging that the rate of mortality slowed in 2018. However, 18 million trees are an indication that the forests of California are still under significant stress. The stress of drought, insects, disease, and prolific

wildfire will continue to challenge the resilience of the state's forests. In accordance with the 2019 Strategic Fire Plan for California, CAL FIRE will continue to increase the pace and scale of fuels and forest management project work and grants. California's Forest Management Task Force will continue to coordinate the statewide multi-agency response."

The Forest Management Task Force was created in May 2018 to help combat tree mortality, increase the ability of forests to capture carbon, and systematically improve forest management between state, local, federal and tribal agencies. On January 8, during his first full day in office, Governor Gavin Newsom announced his commitment to forest health and called for a five-year, \$1 billion forest management plan in his 2019-2020 state budget proposal.

California Natural Resources Secretary Wade Crowfoot said, "California's forests offer great recreational opportunities and provide significant ecological and economic benefits. Years of drought and a bark beetle epidemic have caused one of the largest tree die-offs in state history. Our commitment to advance forest management aims to expand restoration projects and increase the pace and scale of wildfire prevention activities."

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Media Notes

[2018 Tree Mortality Aerial Detection Survey Results](#)

[Forest Management Task Force website](#)

[CAL FIRE Bark Beetle Information](#)