



TUOLUMNE UTILITIES DISTRICT

18885 NUGGET BLVD • SONORA, CA 95370
(209) 532-5536 • Fax (209) 536-6485
www.tudwater.com

DIRECTORS

James Grinnell
Kent R. Johnson
Ronald D. Kopf
John Maciel
Ron W. Ringen

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 19, 2016

Contact: Lisa Westbrook
Public Relations
(209) 532-5536, x501

TUOLUMNE UTILITIES DISTRICT TO RECEIVE STATE FUNDING FOR HAZARDOUS TREE REMOVAL

SONORA, CA: Tuolumne Utilities District (TUD) has been approved to receive partial reimbursement of funds from the California Disaster Assistance Act (CDAA) to help combat the tree mortality issue facing the District.

Dead or dying trees pose a significant threat to TUD water infrastructure by falling onto or around TUD facilities including water tanks, buildings and TUD's 71 miles of ditch system which delivers water to most of the population in Tuolumne County. Falling trees will significantly damage water tanks, water treatment plant buildings and completely block open ditches causing severe erosional damage or uprooting of ditch berms causing ditch failure, system damage and water outages.

This week the District received notification from the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) that its CDAA application has been approved to fund 75% of total eligible costs related to the hazard tree removal efforts. In the next several months TUD will be contacting property owners whose property may be adjacent to the District's ditch system or water tanks so that a certified arborist can inspect and mark or tag potential dead or dying trees and then consider if and when the tree hazard would need to be removed.



Aerial view of bark beetle damage in the Sierra Nevada region
(photo courtesy of CalFIRE)

On December 8, 2015, the Board of Directors for the District issued a Proclamation and Resolution that a State of Emergency exists in the District due to pervasive tree mortality.

TUD has developed a Hazard Tree Management Plan to confront an estimated 1,000 dead or dying trees located along our ditch system including trees that potentially threaten some of the District's water treatment facilities. Even if drought conditions improve, experts predict that mortality will continue for several years, so the full extent of the number of trees that will be

affected is not known. The cost to remove the trees could range from \$250 per tree up to \$2,000 depending on the location and accessibility for the removal.

Previously, on November 17, 2015, the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors Adopted a Resolution Declaring a Local State of Emergency in Tuolumne County due to pervasive tree mortality and requested the State of California to assist in the coordination of resources to assist in the removal of dead and dying trees due to drought and bark beetle infestation. The County received approval of its CDAA application from Cal OES in November.

In October 2015, Governor Jerry Brown, declared a State of Emergency and is stated as saying "it's the state's worst epidemic of tree mortality in modern history." The Proclamation and Declaration signed by Governor Brown includes provisions to expedite the removal and disposal of dead and dying hazardous trees. The State has funding through its California Disaster Assistance Act (CDAA) for counties, cities and special districts to receive funding for the removal of dead or dying trees that may threaten infrastructure or facilities.

"We appreciate the crucial efforts of TUD to develop a plan that focuses on mitigating one of the significant public safety challenges we face as a result of the state's historic drought," said Mark Ghilarducci, Director of the Governor's Office of Emergency Services.

"Any assistance the District can receive from the State is a benefit to the District and our rate payers. This is a huge undertaking for not only our agency, but for our community partners. The District looks forward to working cooperatively with property owners in removing the hazardous trees that could damage our facilities," states Thomas Haglund, General Manager. Haglund added, "The District is the first agency to receive approval for funding under the CDAA program."

TUD has been an active participant in the Tuolumne County Hazard Tree Task Force (HTTF) with planning meetings that include Tuolumne County OES, Cal OES, Cal Fire and other utilities including PG&E and Twain Harte Community Services District.

###