

Fire and Forest
Buy Local Firewood – Keep Pests off the Hill
by Chris Kramer
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Around the house we can always find pests that are more of a nuisance in our everyday life than they are damaging. Irritants like ants on the kitchen counter, cobwebs in the corners, flies and even that moth flying around the dinner table light at night. No harm is done. We live with them and then go about our business.

Recently the Mountain Communities Fire Safe Council co-hosted a Community Meeting at the Idyllwild Nature Center to bring current information from several specialists on the topic of the Goldspotted Oak Borer (GSOB). Since this pest was first found in our area in 2012 some 62 infested trees have been identified and removed.

This pest is more than a minor nuisance to oak trees. It has killed or caused over 80,000 trees to be removed in San Diego County. This kind of damage to the oak trees in the Idyllwild/ San Jacinto Forest area would be devastating.

And, as if this threat to the oaks weren't bad enough, the continuing drought we are experiencing has allowed the Bark Beetle to re-infest the stressed pine trees. This is becoming visible in these trees by the browning of the pine needles from the top of the tree downward. Tree

mortality will begin to affect all of us both visually and financially when we start having to pay to have dead trees on our property removed.

One thing the scientists and other specialists agree on is the theory that the GSOB was more than likely introduced to our community in transported firewood from outside the area. This is probably the single most important thing we can be a part of, to prevent the spread and further harm to the oaks in this area.

So, in your conversations with neighbors, visitors and others, remind them not to bring firewood from off the hill. . With all of us generating this discussion it might have an impact on the future of local oak trees. Encourage them to buy seasoned (dry) firewood from a local vendor. "Buy it where you burn it" should be everyone's motto.