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27,990 Trees Planted by 1,936 Volunteers

Forest Aid Exceeds 2010 Goal in San Bernardino Nat'l Forest

San Bernardino Mountains, CA – The second year of Southern California's largest volunteer effort to restore public lands has successfully completed its tree planting season. Forest Aid, a partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, the San Bernardino National Forest Association (SBNFA) and L.A.-based TreePeople planted 27,990 seedlings. This multi-year, volunteer-led effort extended from March 18 – May 21 for the 2010 season. The seedlings will help restore the fire-damaged San Bernardino National Forest.

Forest Aid was created in response to the 2007 and 2003 tragic wildfires where 185,000 acres burned in the San Bernardino National Forest. These devastating fires were driven by forest densification, drought and the subsequent bark beetle infestation. Replanting needs to occur shortly after wildfires to ensure growth. If replanting is delayed, forestland turns to brush and becomes even more susceptible to fires and devastation.

"The overwhelming support of the volunteers and partners has made this program a success," said Jeanne Wade Evans, Forest Supervisor of the San Bernardino National Forest. "The replanting efforts not only help with the ecological restoration of the forest, it also gives us an opportunity to educate and work with the public."

According to the local Forest Service, (Forest Service Assessment 2008) 1.5 million new trees need to be planted promptly on 60,000 acres of land ravaged by the wildfires, especially in high need areas. This reforestation is important to water quality and to mitigate erosion and possible landslides that could impair mountain access.

Forest Aid addressed priorities including watershed recovery, accumulated fuels in the wildlands, massive erosion and loss of forestland. This effort included community groups, business leaders and government agencies.

"We are so pleased and proud of the turnout from Bear Valley residents who joined Forest Aid to help restore their backyard," said Sarah Miggins, executive director, San Bernardino National Forest Association, "we also planted with many of our partners along with their employees who experienced a real team building event while leaving their personal legacy on our National Forest".

SBNFA partners joining the Forest Aid cause included Yamaha Motor Corporation, who doubled their record from 2009 for a grand total of 3,400 native seedlings planted by Yamaha employees. Other partners were Coldwell Banker, The Tim Wood Group; Southern California Gas Company; REI; and Keller Williams of Big Bear, to name a few. The restoration spirit transitioned from the burn areas to communities and directly onto the school campuses of Big Bear. In partnership with The Lighthouse Project of Big Bear, a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating child honoring communities, students planted Peace Gardens with the seedlings creating nativescapes designed to restore barren school properties. Now, students will have the opportunity to care for plants year-round that support the wildlife who depend on plants native to their habitats.

Fifty-six volunteer Reforestation Supervisor leaders were trained by TreePeople to ensure seedlings were properly planted. “Without these hard-working volunteers, who took the extra step of being trained to lead and support other volunteers, we would not have come close to reaching our goals,” said Jim Summers, TreePeople’s Reforestation Initiative Director. “We also want to acknowledge the very important contribution this year of SBNFA’s new AmeriCorps crew, made up of 20 young men and women from the cities of San Bernardino County. They worked alongside our volunteers, supporting them and leading them, displaying the kind of positive energy that carried each day to a successful end.”

“We’re also grateful,” added Summers, “to our friends at The Walt Disney Company, Boeing, Sempra Energy and others who provided funds to make Forest Aid possible.”

The 2011 Forest Aid planting season will begin in late February and continue through early May, pending weather and soil conditions. Interested volunteers, volunteer leaders and sponsors are welcome for the 2011 season. Please contact info@forestaid.net or www.forestaid.net for more information.

About Forest Aid: The United States Forest Service, the San Bernardino National Forest Association and TreePeople are partnering to plant 20,000 seedlings in 2009 to help rebuild a healthy San Bernardino National Forest. This partnership is based on a simple belief: That a single person planting a single tree can help revitalize fire-damaged areas, effect climate change, clean the air, capture rainwater and build a sense of community. Forest Aid’s mission is to replant and revitalize the mountains of Southern California.

About the San Bernardino National Forest Association: The San Bernardino National Forest Association, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, is committed to three initiatives addressing conservation/restoration, environmental education and responsible recreation on Southern California public lands. Through partnerships and a strong volunteer backbone network, the NFA brings communities of people, partners and funding resources to important projects and programming focused on health, stewardship and sustainability. Visit www.sbnfa.org.

About TreePeople: Founded in 1973 by teenagers, TreePeople staff and volunteers continue to plant trees and restore the pollution-damaged mountains of Southern California. TreePeople’s mission is to inspire, engage and support people to take personal responsibility for the urban environment, making it safe, healthy, fun and sustainable and to share the process as a model for the world. For more information call (818) 753-4600 or visit www.treepeople.org.

About USDA Forest Service: The mission of the USDA Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation’s forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. The Agency manages 193 million acres of public land, provides assistance to State and private landowners, and maintains the largest forestry research organization in the world.

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