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Forest Aid Year II Launches in San Bernardino Nat'l Forest March 4 3,500 Volunteers needed to plant 25,000 trees, March 27-May 10

U.S. Forest Service and nonprofits plant in fire devastated areas, Sempra Energy donates \$50K
* Photos Available * Photos Available * Photos Available *

San Bernardino – On March 4, the National Forest Association and L.A.-based TreePeople, in partnership with the San Bernardino National Forest, launched Year II of the Forest Aid initiative to plant 25,000 seedlings and restore the burn areas of the San Bernardino National Forest. Volunteers and volunteer leaders are needed for the start of the planting season on March 27. Individuals, schools, community groups and businesses are welcome.

Forest Aid is one of Southern California's largest volunteer efforts to restore public lands and is a multi-year, volunteer-led effort. The 2010 planting season extends for seven weeks, from March 27 – May 10. In 2009, Forest Aid's first season, more than 20,000 trees were planted by more than 2,500 volunteers led by 83 volunteer Reforestation Supervisor leaders who were trained to ensure the seedlings were properly planted.

"We're pleased to be continuing this great partnership for forest restoration, bringing volunteers together from all across Southern California for this tremendous tree planting initiative," said Jeanne Wade Evans, San Bernardino National Forest Supervisor. "This commitment from the volunteers, the communities, and the sponsors benefits all who enjoy the forest now and for generations to come."

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. Planting native trees in the burned area shortly after a wildfire is vital to restoring the forest.

The Sempra Energy Foundation recently awarded \$50,000 to support TreePeople and the Forest Aid partnership. The Sempra Energy Foundation's gift is one of Sempra's largest environmental grants to support fire restoration efforts in the Inland Empire.

"TreePeople is especially thankful to our volunteers and volunteer leaders who join us in the mountains throughout the planting season to make Forest Aid a success," said Jim Summers TreePeople's Reforestation Initiative Director. "We're also grateful to our friends at The Walt Disney Company, the Boeing Company, and most recently the Sempra Energy Foundation who provided funds to make Forest Aid possible."

"The National Forest Association's Forest Aid Corps will play a major role, alongside our amazing volunteers, in the overall success of Forest Aid 2010," said Sarah Miggins, executive director, National Forest Association, "As a newly-trained Corps of urban young adults, they will focus on tree planting, supervising volunteers and logistics management while earning stipends, tuition for books and developing workforce skills to position themselves for future job opportunities."

For volunteer and sponsor opportunities, or to learn how to join Forest Aid, please contact (909) 382-2780, info@forestaid.net or www.forestaid.net.

About Forest Aid: The United States Forest Service, the National Forest Association and TreePeople are partnering to plant 25,000 seedlings in 2010 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. More information at www.forestaid.net.

About the National Forest Association: A nonprofit organization and key partner to the U.S. Forest Service, the National Forest Association is committed to three initiatives addressing conservation, education and responsible recreation through a year-round portfolio of programming aimed at reaching Southern California's inland urban and mountain communities as well as visitor populations on public lands. Through partnerships and a strong volunteer backbone network, the National Forest Association brings communities of people, partners and funding resources to important public lands projects focused on health, stewardship and sustainability. For more information, please call (951) 682-7513 or visit www.nationalforestassociation.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 the U.S. Forest Service, San Bernardino National Forest: The San Bernardino National Forest is comprised of three Ranger Districts spanning 676,666 acres in San Bernardino and Riverside counties. From the desert floor to the pristine mountain peaks, the San Bernardino National Forest offers natural environments, spectacular scenery, developed campgrounds and picnic areas, numerous recreational opportunities, and the solitude of quiet wilderness and open space for the over 24 million residents of Southern California and those visiting the area. The forest environment also provides habitat for numerous plants and animals and is crucial in sustaining drinking water, air, and soil quality. Learn more at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/sanbernardino/>.

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