



News Release

FIRST SUDDEN OAK DEATH BLITZ IS A SUCCESS

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Contact: Katie Palmieri
Public Information Officer
(510) 847-5482

CARMEL—The first ever Sudden Oak Death (SOD) Blitz, planned and implemented by the Santa Lucia Conservancy in cooperation with Dr. Matteo Garbelotto, UC Berkeley, and the California Oak Mortality Task Force (COMTF), was held at the Santa Lucia Preserve May 4, 2008. Attended by 67 homeowners, Preserve staff, and arborists, the Blitz was intended to develop a detailed survey for the disease as well as educate the community. Led by a coordinating group of 14 Preserve landowners serving as Neighborhood Captains, the six-hour survey effort resulted in approximately 250 CA bay laurel leaf samples being collected from private property as well as conservation land.

“The Sudden Oak Death Blitz was the logical next step for us,” said Jim Sulentic, executive director of the Santa Lucia Conservancy. “The Santa Lucia Preserve community, as demonstrated by their participation in the Blitz, is one of the most knowledgeable and motivated when it comes to SOD. Aided by the results of the Blitz, and in consultation with the COMTF and Dr. Garbelotto, the goal of the Santa Lucia Conservancy is to develop and implement a Preserve-wide management plan for SOD. It is part of the Santa Lucia Conservancy’s mission and the results will add value to our understanding of this forest disease in Monterey County.”

A community-centric outreach effort, SOD Blitz participants were trained to identify SOD symptoms, correctly sample symptomatic plants, and document sample locations. Samples from the Preserve Blitz have been taken to the UC Berkeley Garbelotto lab where they will be analyzed to determine the presence or absence of *Phytophthora ramorum*, the pathogen that causes SOD. Laboratory results will be used to generate a map of disease distribution on the Preserve. The map will then be used for developing a comprehensive management plan for SOD on the Preserve, as well as for targeting locations for fall 2008 preventative treatment training sessions.

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“The Santa Lucia Preserve SOD Blitz is a perfect example of what can be done when a community decides to become involved and take an active role in a local issue. Citizens were educated about SOD and performed a valuable service for researchers. Being well-informed, participants can continue to be on the lookout for early symptoms in areas that they frequent but aren’t yet known to have the disease. Identifying outbreaks early and alerting officials will give us the best odds for successful disease containment,” said Mark Stanley, chairman for the CA Oak Mortality Task Force.

SOD, a serious exotic disease, is threatening the survival of tanoak and several oak species in California. Currently it is found in the wildlands of 14 coastal California counties, from Monterey to Humboldt. While patchy in distribution, with each passing year, the areas of infection continue to become more contiguous. Researchers have discovered that *P. ramorum* spreads most often on infected California bay laurel leaves. Symptomatic bay leaves are often the first sign that SOD has arrived at a location, and generally precedes oak infections. Some management options are available (sanitation, chemical preventative treatments, selective bay removal), but they are effective only if implemented before oaks and tanoaks are infected; hence, timely detection of the disease on bay laurel leaves is key for a successful proactive attempt to slow down the SOD epidemic.

Four Additional SOD Blitz locations are scheduled this spring, including: San Mateo County, East Bay Regional Parks, and Mendocino and Humboldt Counties. Targeted Blitz locations were those believed to have low to intermediate levels of disease. Funding for the SOD-Blitzes was provided by the USDA Forest Service.

For more information on the Santa Lucia Conservancy SOD Blitz, contact Cheryl McCormick at (831) 626-8595 ext. 102. For information on upcoming SOD Blitz activity, or for information on Sudden Oak Death, contact Katie Palmieri at (510) 847-5482.

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