



CALIFORNIA OAK MORTALITY TASK FORCE

News Release

SURVEY FINDS SUDDEN OAK DEATH INFECTION HIGH IN SOME AREAS: RESEARCHER OFFERS NEW RECOMMENDATIONS TO PROTECT AT-RISK OAKS

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BERKELEY—2015 Sudden Oak Death (SOD) Blitz survey results reveal coastal mountain infestations in areas such as Big Sur (19 % infection), the Santa Cruz Mountains (13% infection), and western Sonoma (12% infection) remain high despite an overall decline in infection rates from 4.4 to 3.7 % across California’s 15 infested counties*.

“Understanding the current disease distribution is key to preventing Sudden Oak Death spread. Citizen scientists have been an invaluable help with this task over the last decade,” said UC Berkeley Forest Pathology and Mycology Lab’s Matteo Garbelotto who organizes the Blitz effort.

Several new SOD outbreaks of note were identified during the Blitzes. Two infected California bay laurel trees were confirmed near UC Berkeley’s West Gate, a high-traffic, high-risk area with many heritage oaks. An infected California lilac shrub was found in the Presidio of San Francisco’s (part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area) southeastern quadrant. An infected bay tree was confirmed in Danville (eastern Alameda County) in an area where SOD had not previously been reported, and an urban park in Saratoga was found infested for the first time.

“In an effort to protect habitat restoration in the Presidio, we are working to strengthen Best Management Practices to prevent the spread of SOD in the park based on the Garbelotto lab recommendations. In partnership with UC, the National Park Service, and the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, we are developing a *Phytophthora* prevention, detection, and control strategy, which includes active participation in SOD Blitzes,” said Christa Conforti, Presidio of San Francisco.

Nineteen citizen science-based SOD Blitzes (largest number of blitzes to date) were held this spring, two of which were new this year – one in Trinity County and one on Kashia Band of Pomo Indians lands. The 504 volunteers surveyed nearly 10,000 trees from San Luis Obispo County, north to Mendocino and Trinity Counties. Each volunteer was trained to identify *Phytophthora ramorum* (the plant pathogen known to cause SOD) symptoms on California bay

laurel and tanoak leaves. “Blitzers” had 1 to 3 days to collect and record locations of symptomatic samples, which were then sent to the Garbelotto lab for DNA analysis to determine the presence or absence of the pathogen.

While presenting DNA findings from the Blitzes to communities, Garbelotto will also reveal his updated 3-step SOD management plan for landowners in infested areas concerned about maximizing oak tree protection. Individuals will learn how to: (1) Use the SODMap mobile app to help assess risk of oak infection (see www.sodmapmobile.org). (2) Determine if California bay laurel trees near high-value oaks should be considered for removal (using a new buffer zone new chart - http://nature.berkeley.edu/garbelottowp/?page_id=2345). (3) Apply phosphonates to high-value oak and tanoak trees to boost immunity (see updated dosages and application frequencies at http://nature.berkeley.edu/garbelottowp/?page_id=2348).

Infection on California bay laurel and tanoak leaves indicates arrival of *P. ramorum* to an area, but true oak (California black oak, coast live oak, canyon live oak, and Shreve’s oak) infection typically requires a couple of years with wet conditions after pathogen arrival. Therefore, preventatively treating oaks to help ward off infection is best done when early indicator species first show symptoms, prior to oak infection and optimal pathogen conditions (cool and moist).

Results from the spring Blitzes as well as new management recommendations for SOD will be held in four locations, September 24th (Portola Valley), November 3rd (Sebastopol), November 4th (Berkeley, and November 13th (San Rafael). For details on locations and times for each meeting, go to www.sodblitz.org.

These surveys are made possible thanks to funding from the USDA Forest Service and the PG&E Foundation as well as help from the California Native Plant Society. **For more information on the workshops, go to www.sodblitz.org or contact Katie Harrell at (510) 847-5482 or kpalmieri@berkeley.edu. For more information on Sudden Oak Death and *P. ramorum*, go to the California Oak Mortality Task Force website at www.suddenoakdeath.org or contact Katie Harrell.**

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*Alameda, Contra Costa, Humboldt, Lake, Marin, Mendocino, Monterey, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Solano, Sonoma, and Trinity Counties