

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS LINDSEY P. HORVATH AND KATHRYN BARGER

Defending LA County’s Oak Trees from the Invasive Goldspotted Oak Borer

[Oak trees are a keystone species in Los Angeles County, supporting biodiversity by providing food and shelter to hundreds of species, especially to insects which form the foundation of many food webs that support birds, mammals, and other wildlife. Oaks also hold cultural significance for local Tribes, including as a traditional food source. Oak trees in the County face several threats, including stress from heat and drought caused by climate change and destruction and habitat loss due to development. LA County’s oak forests now face a new existential threat, an invasive pest called the Goldspotted Oak Borer (GSOB).

GSOB, (*Agrilus auroguttatus*) is typically fatal to the oak trees it infests, which include mature Coast Live Oaks, California Black Oaks, and Canyon Live Oaks. Native to southeastern Arizona, GSOB was detected in San Diego County in 2008 and can slowly spread to new locations through flight. It also spreads very quickly from human activity, such as through the transportation of infested firewood across long distances.

The GSOB situation has become urgent with the recent discovery of a new infestation site on land managed by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), at Rice, East, and Whitney Canyons, in the Fifth Supervisorial District of Los Angeles County. This new infestation is near communities with significant oak forests, such as unincorporated Chatsworth,

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and is just 14 miles from the Santa Monica Mountains, a biodiverse ecosystem area that is heavily based on oak trees. A GSOB infestation in the Santa Monica Mountains could cause widespread oak tree mortality, which would have severe impacts not only to habitat and wildlife but also to defensible space for wildfire risk.

In 2019, the Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains (RCDSMM) developed an invasive tree pest Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) plan for a proactive, coordinated, and efficient approach to monitoring, detecting, and responding to invasive tree pests to contain their spread and save trees, funded by Supervisorial District 3. The plan outlines the importance of “early detection,” such as through proactive surveying and trapping and through clear channels of communication, as well as “rapid response,” which is context-specific but can include tree pruning, tree removal, or treatment with pesticides. The EDRR plan included consideration of GSOB as well as another important tree pest, the Invasive Shothole Borer (ISHB) *Euwallacea fornicatus* and *Euwallacea kuroshio*.

In 2021, the Board passed a motion directing the Chief Sustainability Office (CSO), the LA County Fire Department (LACoFD), Agricultural Commissioner/Weights and Measures (ACWM), and other relevant Departments to coordinate around a plan to protect County trees as detailed in the EDRR plan. In response to the motion, County departments provided a report-back identifying next steps and associated budget needs for a proactive County response to invasive tree pests. Some recommended actions were funded through state grants which have been fully expended and the County has been unsuccessful renewing.

A report on GSOB prepared by LACoFD in 2018 named a potential GSOB infestation in the Santa Monica Mountains as the “worst case scenario for Los Angeles County.” We must move with urgency to protect our oak forests and the Santa Monica Mountains from this invasive species, and to implement recommended actions from the EDRR plan.]

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors [

1. Direct the Chief Sustainability Office with the assistance of LA County Fire Department, Agricultural Weights and Measures, Department of Regional Planning, Office of Emergency Management, Chief Executive Office, and other relevant County departments and external partners to immediately:
 - A. Explore the possibility of declaring a local or state emergency related to the risk of the spread of Goldspotted Oak Borer (GSOB) in the County and to the Santa Monica Mountains.
 - B. Explore funding options to fulfill the staffing need of LA County Fire Department for one Deputy Forester and two Forestry Assistants, including through contractor services.
 - C. Explore options for Agricultural Commissioner/Weights and Measures, or other relevant departments to assist with the monitoring, treatments and reforestation efforts required to respond to and mitigate the spread of GSOB.
 - D. Collaborate with CALFIRE on funding opportunities to meet needs related to GSOB, including staffing, contractor needs, technical and data needs, mapping

needs, tree removal and treatment needs, and reforestation.

2. Direct the Chief Sustainability Office, with the assistance of LA County Fire, Agricultural Commissioner/Weights and Measures, Regional Planning, County Counsel, and other relevant County departments to report back within 180 days on the following next steps:

A. Develop recommendations for an ordinance to regulate the movement of firewood to prevent the spread of invasive tree pests, including identifying associated education and engagement needs.

B. Develop recommendations for reforestation following invasive pest infestations, including potential funding opportunities.]

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