



**Office of Emergency Services
County of Tuolumne**

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Costa Hearing*

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Needs going forward

1. WE need a 10 to 12 year Extension of the Power Purchase Agreement with Pacific Ultrapower Chinese Camp Bio-Mass Plant in Tuolumne County and similarly with other Bio-mass plants in California. If they get these short term 3 month style extensions like is currently happening on a case by case basis, they cannot invest in the plants, because they cannot guarantee a return.
2. WE need a Presidential Proclamation for State of California-Tree Mortality. This problem is much too big for small rural Counties to deal with on a 25% matching program. Even at a 6.25% under a presidential declaration, the local money will run out long before the problem is solved.
3. Financial Assistance for Private Landowners: Right now, there are no programs for private landowners to obtain financial assistance. Many of these are senior citizens living on Social Security and other fixed income sources. WE simply have to recognize that there will be significant loss of property and potentially lives if we do not get the diseased trees down in our subdivisions.
4. Approximately 77% of the 1,458,121 acres of land in Tuolumne County are public lands. The Stanislaus National Forest encompasses approximately 42% and Yosemite National Park accounts for about 30%.
 - a. In all of the impacted Counties, we need to provide budgetary ability and flexibility for U.S.F.S to remove dead and dying trees and vegetation along property lines directly adjacent to U.S.F.S. property
 - b. Congressional action is required to consider Wildfire Suppression like we treat other natural disaster funding like hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, etc. Right now it comes out of the USFS operating budget and has grown from about 9% in the mid-1990s to well over 50% of their budget today
 - c. Congressional action to expand the USFS authority to do the "no brainer" activities like removing most of these dead and dying trees as hazards. Use wider authority for categorical exclusions so that they are not delayed by doing the very painful, costly and time consuming NEPA process for virtually

everything. It often takes up to two years before they can deal with the obvious issues with the clear solutions.

- d. As a start, Congress needs to pass HR 2647, The resilient Federal Forests Act of 2015. Last year, it had bipartisan support in the House including Congressman Costa. We as a country need to get serious about managing and thinning what is left of our green forests, certainly on the publicly owned forests, while we still have green forests to manage.
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5. There is an increasing loss of available infrastructure (ex.: Sawmills, biomass plants, etc.) and supporting resources (ex. Licensed Timber Operators, Tree fallers, laborers, equipment operators, etc.). WE need to expand this critical resource and guarantee them a decent supply of raw material from our overgrown public forests so they can invest in this critical need. A strong market exists for wood products in the Country and in the State. The Country is either number 1 or number 2 importer of Forest Products in the world and the State of California imports about 75% or more of its consumption.
 - a. WE have a local investor who is interested in building a plant in the Southern Sierras if he can get the raw material to support his production and maybe some tax credits to get started.
 - b. Right now the Counties south of Tuolumne County have virtually no infrastructure at this time (One small sawmill near Terra Bella and that is it.).
 6. WE must be prepared to deal with this issue for years to come and support the solutions with funding. In Colorado, a similar problem persisted for about 12 years (1996 -2008) until the bark beetle had little or no trees left to attack. This will expand from the existing 6 priority Counties and the recently added 4 emerging Counties.