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Forest Aid Launches in San Bernardino Nat'l Forest Nov. 18

U.S. Forest Service teams with nonprofits and volunteers to replant fire devastated areas

Lake Arrowhead – On November 18, the U.S. Forest Service launched a partnership – Forest Aid – with the San Bernardino National Forest Association (SBNFA) and L.A.-based TreePeople to plant 40,000 seedlings and help restore the San Bernardino National Forest. This multi-year, volunteer-led effort will extend from February 28 – April 28 for the 2009 season.

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 years of longterm fire suppression, drought and the subsequent bark beetle infestation. Experts warn that seedling and tree replanting must occur shortly after wildfires to ensure growth. If replanting is delayed, forestland turns to brush and becomes even more susceptible to fires and devastation.

According to the local Forest Service, (Forest Service Assessment 2008) 1.5 million new seedlings and trees need to be planted on 60,000 acres of land ravaged by the wildfires, especially in high need areas along Highway 18 between Crestline and Running Springs. This reforestation is important to mitigate erosion and possible landslides that could impair mountain access.

Forest Aid is a partnership to address priorities that include watershed recovery, accumulated fuels in the wildlands, massive erosion and loss of forestland. Forest Aid is a collaborative effort of community groups, business leaders and government agencies working to mobilize and train volunteers to replant fire-devastated forestlands.

“The San Bernardino National Forest Association enthusiastically welcomes TreePeople, their expertise and resources to our Forest Aid efforts,” said Sarah Miggins, executive director, whose youth leadership team, community volunteers and USFS resources began the effort under the Forest Aid initiative in the spring of 2008 planting over 10,000 seedlings in the Lake Arrowhead area. “Forest restoration is Job 1 at the SBNFA. Planning is underway to continue engaging our mountaintop and Southern California communities to leave their personal legacy on the San Bernardino National Forest by planting seedlings while learning forest ecology and water management.”

Volunteers and volunteer leaders are needed to help ensure seedlings are properly planted. “TreePeople is thankful to the teams of local and regional volunteers who are stepping forward to provide the human energy that will make reforestation possible,” says Andy Lipkis, TreePeople founder and president. “We’re grateful for the generosity of our friends at The Walt Disney Company, Boeing and others who provided funds to allow us to make major strides in healing the environment.”

Volunteers and volunteer leaders are needed for the start of the planting season in February. Individuals, schools, community groups and businesses are welcome. 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 San Bernardino National Forest Association and TreePeople are partnering to plant 40,000 seedlings in 2009 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.

About the San Bernardino National Forest Association: The San Bernardino National Forest Association (SBNFA) founded in 1993 is a key education, conservation and recreation nonprofit partner to the U.S. Forest Service creating partnerships that bridge the gap between forest visitors and nature through environmental interpretive programming and initiatives that promote forest appreciation and restoration. The SBNFA offers outdoor recreational programs that foster respect for the forest, the environment and stewardship, while providing hands-on activities for all ages. For more information call (909) 382-2796 or visit www.sbnfa.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 results as a model for the world. For more information call (818) 753-4600 or visit www.treepeople.org.

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