The California Firewood Task Force

A multi-agency response to the forest health threats posed by movement of firewood

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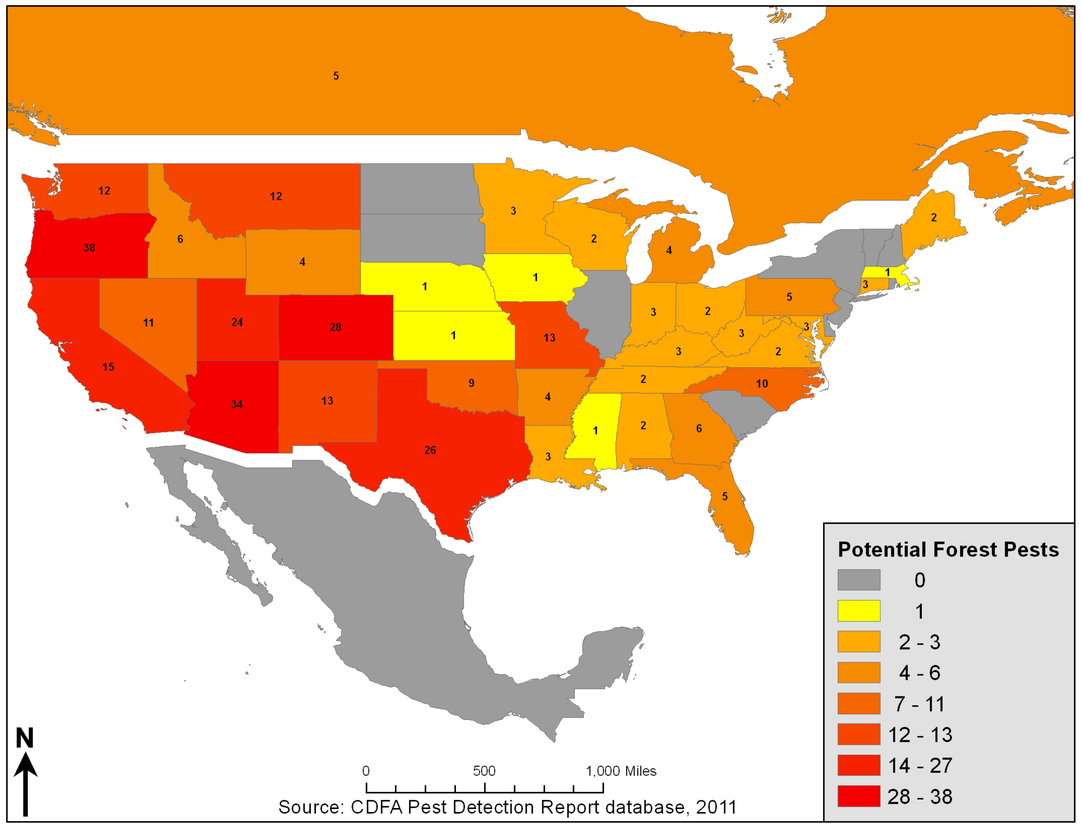
A growing list of invasive forest pests have become established in the United States, resulting in huge environmental and economic losses. Recognizing that many of these pests and pathogens can be spread by long-distance movement of firewood, the California Forest Pest Council established the California Firewood Task Force in November 2010. This multi-agency group collaboratively works to protect native and urban forests from the threat of invasive forest insects and diseases that are moved on firewood - through education and outreach to wood consumers, wood cutters, firewood dealers, outdoor recreationists and industries, the media, and the general public.

Data Analysis

Data collected by the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) at its sixteen border protection stations were analyzed to determine the threat posed to California's forests by firewood movement. In 2011:

- almost 23 million pounds of firewood entered the state in vehicles
- firewood was brought to California from 46 other states, Canada, and Mexico
- almost 350 individual forest pests were intercepted in firewood brought to California from 38 other states (map below)
- firewood bearing pests was being taken to over 120 different locations within California, including every major urban area and Yosemite National Park

In July 2010, firewood containing emerald ash borer (*Agrilus plannipennis*) was intercepted at a CDFA border station in an RV that had traveled across the country from Michigan.



Public Education and Outreach

The Task Force adopted the successful "Buy It Where You Burn It" educational outreach campaign developed by Oregon, Washington, and Idaho (below, left) with assistance from The Nature Conservancy's "Don't Move Firewood" campaign. Outreach materials included campground posters, frequently-asked-question sheets, playing cards with photos of invasive forest pests and diseases, and Frisbees. These materials were distributed to state, federal, and local campgrounds and other visitor facilities statewide. Outdoor recreationists were surveyed in two key locations and 85% of initial respondents said they found the campaign effective in educating them about the risks of firewood movement.

Photo Credit: Lisa Serrano, California Dept. of Food & Agriculture

A children's activity using "passports" and insect stickers to illustrate the dangers of moving firewood over long distances was developed. This activity has been offered at multiple public events and thousands of children have participated (above, right).

The goldspotted oak borer (GSOB; *Agrilus aurogutattus*) is a serious emerging forest pest in San Diego County. Native to SE Arizona, the species was almost certainly introduced into California via infested firewood. The Task Force and the multi-agency GSOB Steering Committee share many members and coordinate all of their efforts.

Visit the Task Force on the web:

firewood.ca.gov

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