



Firewood Pest Passports

A Youth Activity on the Risks of Moving Firewood

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In 2006, the goldspotted oak borer (*Agrilus auroguttatus*, GSOB) was identified as the cause of increased oak die off that had been occurring in San Diego County (CA) since at least 2002. This invasive pest was likely brought to California via firewood imported from Arizona. Other damaging forest pests, such as the Sudden Oak Death pathogen (*Phytophthora ramorum*), are also present in California and have the potential to travel long distances through the movement of firewood.



In spring 2011, we developed an activity to help educate youth and their families about the risk that moving firewood poses to our forests. Working closely with the “Don’t Move Firewood” campaign, we created a “firewood pest passport,” highlighting four parks around the country. We piloted the activity at Marin County’s Farm Day, where *more than 500 youths and adults learned how moving their camping firewood could unintentionally spread pests to their favorite parks.*

The activity was then reproduced in San Diego County with a specific GSOB focus, and delivered to more than 3,000 youth and adults. “The passport program was a super hit with the kids and parents,” according to Tracy Ellis of the San Diego County Department of Agriculture, Weights, and Measures. *“The kids really loved the participation, the passports, stamps, and stickers, and the parents could pick up a GSOB brochure along the way. Everyone gave the project a big thumbs up!”*



Modified versions of this activity are taking place at Fall Fest at the Mt. Hough Ranger District, Plumas National Forest (CA) in October 2011 and at the Bay Area Science Festival in November 2011. Additionally, the activity has been translated into an interactive animated module and posted online at the California Firewood Task Force website.

For more information: www.firewood.ca.gov

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THE ACTIVITY

As participants arrive, they’re given a passport and told they’re on a summer camping trip. They then travel to various “parks” around the activity space to get visitor stamps in their passport.



At each park, they leave behind a small bug sticker as a sign of their visit. Over the course of the activity, each park receives more and more stickers, signifying numerous pest introductions into each forest.

After a visitor stamp has been collected for each of the parks in the passport and all of the bug stickers have been used, youth return to the main table to get a prize, while adults receive additional information on specific pests and ecological threats. In this way, both youth and adults are able to visibly see the effects that moving firewood could have on their favorite campgrounds and forests.

