



## News Release

### For Immediate Release

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## Aerial Mulching Operations to Begin in King Fire Burned Area

*Helimulching 1200 acres to reduce erosion potential*

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD) are about to begin a joint project that will drop straw mulch from helicopters over approximately 1,200 acres of Eldorado National Forest land that burned with moderate to high intensity during the recent King Fire. The purpose of the project is to protect critical infrastructure from potentially severe post-fire erosion that may occur with winter storms. The infrastructure at risk includes Eleven Pines Road, which serves as the primary route from Highway 50 to the northern end of the Eldorado National Forest, and the Brush Creek and Slab Creek reservoirs, which are integral to SMUD's hydroelectric facilities in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The project is targeted to begin the week of November 24 and is expected to take two weeks to complete, but the actual timeframe will be weather dependent. "This is a great example of the outstanding collaboration we've had during all phases of the King Fire," said Eldorado Forest Supervisor Laurence Crabtree.

A contract has been awarded to Bradco Environmental, a company based in Crestline, CA, to complete the work. Large bales of certified weed free straw, a by-product of rice grown in California, will be loaded into horizontal grinders which will chop the straw into 4 to 8 inch pieces of mulch prior to aerial application. Two medium sized helicopters will be used to drop the mulch onto slopes ranging from 15% to 60% grade, treating approximately 80 acres per day with each helicopter.

Trucks loaded with rice straw will pass through the town of Georgetown on their way to mulching sites off the Eleven Pines Road, southwest and southeast of Ellicot Bridge. The first areas to be

treated are along Eleven Pines Road. Funding provided by SMUD will be used to treat 251 acres northwest of the Brush Creek Reservoir. All of the treatment areas were identified by Forest Service soil scientists and hydrologists as sites needing immediate attention before heavy winter rains and snow arrive. This emergency erosion prevention project is designed to reduce the amount of sediment eroding off hillsides due to the loss of vegetative cover associated with the fire. Excessive sediment can block culverts and impact water quality in streams and reservoirs which could lead to flooding, road closures, decreased water storage capacity and loss of hydroelectric generation. This joint helimulching project is expected to prevent several thousand tons of sediment from eroding.

Supervisor Crabtree also noted, “All of the emergency stabilization projects we are currently doing in the King Fire burned area will help us get the fire area re-opened sooner. For now, the entire fire area will remain closed to public access due to public safety concerns. “

The public is urged to comply with the ongoing fire closure for their own safety as well as that of others, including personnel working in the burned area. All travelers are asked not to stop along Wentworth Springs Road for viewing while helicopter operations are in progress. The road is open to through traffic only.

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**\*\* MEDIA TOUR – A tour for the media is being planned for the week of November 24. Representatives from USFS and SMUD will be available for interviews and to provide an escort to sites where helimulching operations can be photographed. Details are TBA, but are expected to be announced mid-day on Monday, November 24.\*\***