

From: David P. Porreca
To: letters@uniontrib.com
Subject: COMMUNITY ESSAY: Scripps Ranch & Eucalyptus trees
Date: Sun, 14 Jun 2009 17:43:28 +0000

Dear Sirs:

Australia understands the relationship between gum bark {eucalyptus} trees, brush management, fire prevention, and the optimum strategies for fighting severe large scale foehn wind fires{of which Santa Ana's is just one variety}--and sadly California does not! Rigorous brush management is the key answer, but indiscriminant cutting of our eucalyptus trees could make the situation worse. Phoebe Carroll's and Scripps Ranch's anecdotal and visual evidence is supportable by both experience and science, as it took sometime for Australia to realize that these fires can only be modeled, simulated, and understood by using mathematical techniques like computational fluid dynamics. This is because these fires, like liquid or gaseous waves, are not merely about static flammable combustability but are a different phenomena.

As it turns out, in the extreme velocity and rapid approaching very high temperature formative heat wave conditions, which are the dominant east-by-southeast pattern here in San Diego County, eucalyptus trees can act as a permeable barrier. Scripps Ranch could be significantly aided by nurturing and planting eucalyptus windbreaks and firebreaks along the eastern most guardian vortices like Birch Bluff and the finger-like canyons that extend along our eastern boundaries. The primary cause of ignition of homes are the flying embers that often reach 1-2 kilometers ahead of the approaching firestorm, lodge under eaves and other portals within our homes, or ignite wooden roofs and other wooden structures. The whiplash effects of the eucalyptus trees canopies and broccoli-like leave structure in the angular-momentum driven winds, greatly reduces the embers flight range and density by sweeping them from the skies like windshield washer.

Practical experience and analytical evidence strongly suggests thinning out the healthy trees in the canyons actually increases the danger to our community by providing wind-tunnel like vortices and avenues of advance that accelerate the fire storms advance. The taller and thicker the canopy the better! Current policy is based on unsubstantiated assumption, not science. Our valiant firefighters, community, and city with limited resources deserve better! Our collective liability and expenditures will be increased and our safety greatly diminished by current attitudes, beliefs, and practises.

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{NOT a tree hugger--a scientist!}