

## Scripps Ranch Tree Removal Controversy

If you've heard the sound of chainsaws in our Eucalyptus Forest lately, you're not imagining it - there is serious logging in progress. The City of San Diego has instituted a new policy, in the name of fire prevention, that will eliminate mature stands of eucalyptus trees from 117 sites throughout Scripps Ranch! Four of these have already been completely or partially decimated, including: a site near the corner of Pomerado Road and Scripps Ranch Blvd; the canyon between Pinetree Drive and Ranch View Drive; the corner of Ironwood and Red Cedar; and along Glencreek Circle just off Scripps Trails. Originally started in the name of brush removal and thinning of 3" trees, the policy moved to the removal of mature Eucalyptus while leaving native brush.

The controversy over the removal of these trees from the Scripps Ranch community has dramatically escalated in the past two weeks. City officials have agreed to stop the cutting of eucalyptus trees temporarily, but to date there has been no long-term agreement reached between irate homeowners and the policy set by San Diego Parks & Recreation and the San Diego Fire Chief to eliminate the trees.

According to San Diego Fire Chief, Tracy Jarman, "Eucalyptus trees are highly flammable and contributed to the rapid spread of fire in 2003." She then went on to state that they were also a cause of the 2007 fires in Scripps Ranch. Homeowners have pointed out that there were no fires in Scripps in 2007. A homeowners group calling itself 'Save Our Scripps Ranch Trees', further stated that few trees were lost in the 2003 fires, while chaparral in the County's back country was the major cause of the rapid spread of the Cedar Fire. Photos from the community's disastrous fire show live, green eucalyptus surrounding most of the properties that were burned to the ground.

Eucalyptus trees have long been considered a community treasure in Scripps Ranch, part of what was started by E.W. Scripps on his estate there 100 years ago. Homeowner Will Lofft, head of the local committee, has pointed out, "Because of the nature of the trees, they require little water, reduce or eliminate undergrowth and brush, act in cooling the community and cleaning the surrounding air". But fire officials have received a FEMA grant of \$2.36 million for brush management, which the City matched with \$3.9 million from the general fund, and was intended to reduce the risk of future catastrophic fires in San Diego. However, they intend to use a large portion of these funds to eliminate eucalyptus trees.

Local residents are now also voicing a concern over long-term treatment options in the area. Eucalyptus trees will continue to sprout and grow from stumps that have been cut, creating additional underbrush that could provide fuel for fires. The current solution is to treat each stump with glyphosate, a highly toxic chemical that has been shown in the UK to cause spontaneous abortions, elevated neurobehavioral defects, and toxicity to wildlife.

Additional research is currently being conducted by the local committee on policies for dealing with eucalyptus trees in other forested communities, including Rancho Santa Fe. Volunteers to help with the project are welcomed.

Further information on this ongoing debate is available through the San Diego City Fire Department, San Diego City Parks and Recreation, or the Save Our Scripps Ranch Trees committee, [www.scrippscentral.com](http://www.scrippscentral.com). Communication on the progress of the controversy will be distributed as available through email distribution by signing up on the website.