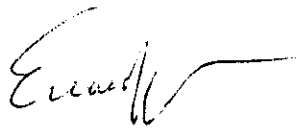


FOR INFORMATION ONLY

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION AND PARKS

November 28, 2001

TO: BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

FROM: ELLEN OPPENHEIM
General Manager 

SUBJECT: EUCALYPTUS TREES DYING IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AND
IN LOS ANGELES CITY PARKS

In May 1999, the Department of Recreation and Parks faced the arrival of a new pest, the Eucalyptus Red Gum Lerp Psyllid. The pest primarily attacked two species of Eucalyptus trees, the Red Gum and the Flooded Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, *Eucalyptus rudis*). The Department's Forestry Division arborists and pest advisors, in conjunction with the Los Angeles County Entomology Division and Los Angeles City Departments of Public Works and Zoo, approached the infestation seriously and actively.

By the end of May 1999, the Department released 1.5 million Ladybird Beetles (Ladybugs) in Valley Village Park with the hope of preventing the pest from spreading. In other parks, several infested Eucalyptus trees were selected and treated with Merit, a very expensive pesticide, with the hope of controlling the "bug".

Additionally, the Departments of Recreation and Parks, Public Works and the Zoo contributed \$10,000 each to Dr. Donald Dahlsten, UC Berkeley Entomology Professor, to research an environmentally friendly, biological control of the new pest. Dr. Dahlsten researched and imported specific parasitic wasps from Australia and has released them in the infested areas of Los Angeles over the past 24 months.

Unfortunately, the Lerp Psyllid has caused the infested trees to defoliate five to seven times, resulting in the nutritional deficiency and depletion of the trees energy. Department staff has counted over 5,000 dying or dead trees in the public visitor areas of parks that are heavily utilized by thousands of people (attachment A). It is estimated that as many as 20,000 to 25,000 additional trees are growing in undeveloped areas, which will increase the fire hazard if they die. A certified arborist evaluated these trees for safety and described the conditions to be a safety concern to park patrons. The following statement was used to describe the eucalyptus problem in the certified arborist's evaluation report:

"The trees have begun to lose their bark in large sheets. The bark on the Eucalyptus is thick in nature due to developing in arid regions of Australia. This bark is splitting and as the tree dries out from the constant attacks of the Red Gum Lerp Psyllid, the bark starts splitting on the lower trunk and spreads to the upper canopy. As this occurs, the bark breaks away from the trunk and falls to the ground in large sheets, weighing from twenty to hundreds of pounds. The bark also catches on limbs and hangs precariously. Many times the bark breaks off in jagged and pointed sections presenting a safety concern due to the locations of many of these trees in areas such as picnic areas, children play areas, equestrian trails, athletic fields, and golf courses. The Psyllid also causes checking, which is splitting of the main trunk's interior. As the tree dries out the internal structure, wood splits and twists causing the structural integrity to be compromised. This increases the potential for tree failure, thus making removal of the dead trees a safety issue for tree removal crews."

These 5,000 trees will need to be removed at a projected cost of \$350 per tree. This poses a serious concern and funding challenge for the Department of Recreation and Parks. The Department could not and did not anticipate a loss of this magnitude in such a short period of time. In a typical year, the Department would expect to encounter only 50-100 dead Eucalyptus trees in these same park areas. This means the Department is facing a workload demand for tree removal that is approximately 50-100 times greater than normal. With a staff of 35 employees engaged in tree care operations and a contractual services budget of only \$50,000, the Department is ill-equipped to handle an emergency of this magnitude without additional staff and resources.

Currently, the Department continues to participate in the University of California, Berkeley Biological Control Program, through which an additional 500 parasitic wasps, a natural predator of the Red Gum Lerp Psyllid, were released in Griffith Park on October 4, 2001. Unfortunately, the prognosis for the eucalyptus species from entomologists is grim. These scientists state that the influx of new eucalyptus pests has quadrupled in the last decade and finding safe measures of controlling the problem takes time and considerable financial resources.

On a positive note, as a result of the mild summer weather this year and the increased presence of parasitic wasps, eucalyptus trees are not dying as rapidly as they once were. However, many of the remaining trees have been compromised, thus making them more vulnerable to other pests, including four additional Psyllid species, a new species of the Longhorn Beetle, and the leaf-chewing Tortoise Beetle, some of which are present on the same trees that are still trying to fight off the initial Psyllid infestation.

There are additional safety concerns with these weakened trees. Trees that were stressed but have not died have developed new epicormic branches and pose a danger of collapsing due to weakened branch attachments. Although the trees look green to the unprofessional eye, they present a safety concern if located in areas visited by the public.

In addition to removing the dead and hazardous trees, the Department will need to sustain the City's urban forest by planting replacement trees of a more diverse assortment, that are less susceptible to mass destruction. The cost of the tree replacement planting, including manpower and the trees themselves, imposes another huge demand on the Department. In the spirit of support and cooperation, the Department of Water and Power has indicated an interest in providing up to 10,000 trees to assist this effort.

To help identify appropriate solutions to the eucalyptus problem, staff is maintaining close contact with and receiving pertinent information from other agencies that have experienced a heavy tree loss. Staff is also participating in forums at which eucalyptus tree issues and problems are discussed. The Department is seeking financial support for the removal and replacement of the dead and hazardous trees by approaching private companies, including Texaco, Toyota, and Eddie Bauer, as well as private foundations, all of which have an interest in environment issues. Staff is also working with local non-profits and community-based organizations to gain their assistance in these efforts.

Currently, the Department is pursuing a request to secure \$2,199,024 in emergency funding from the City's General Fund to address the safety and liability issues created by the dead and dying Eucalyptus trees, which, in the event of an accident may cost the City millions of dollars (attachment B). Phase I of this request was approved by the Budget and Finance Committee and has been sent to the Personnel Committee for consideration. Once the request has been acted on by the Personnel Committee it will be forwarded to the full Council for final action. Should funding for Phase I be approved by Council, funding for Phase II will be requested in the 2002/2003 Budget process.

This report was prepared by Teresa Prosciewicz, Forestry Division, Community Services Branch.

ATTACHMENT A

DEAD EUCALYPTUS COUNT

FACILITY	REGION	CD	NO. OF DEAD TREES
ANIMAL SHELTER	GM	1	30
ARROYO SECO PARK	GM	14	6
AVE 60 PARK	GM	1	8
AVE 64 PARK	GM	1	31
BOYLE HEIGHTS SPORTS CENTER	GM	14	1
DEBS PARK	GM	1	35
ECHO PARK	GM	13	3
ELYSIAN PARK	GM	13	500
GRIFFITH PARK	GM	4	1500
HAZARD PARK	GM	14	38
HIGHBURY PUMP STATION	GM		3
HIGHLAND SENIOR CENTER	GM	14	4
HOLLENBECK PARK	GM	14	6
LINCOLN PARK	GM	1	24
PROSPECT PARK	GM	14	1
RAMON GARCIA REC CENTER	GM	14	2
RUNYON CANYON	GM	4	100
SAN PASCUAL PARK	GM	14	22
BALBOA GOLF COURSE	V	11	154
BEE CANYON PARK	V	12	1
BRANFORD PARK	V	2	1
BRIDLE TRAILS AND CANYONS	V		25
CHATSWORTH OAKS PARK	V	12	33
CHATSWORTH PARK NORTH	V	12	7
CHATSWORTH PARK SOUTH	V	12	3
ENCINO GOLF COURSE	V	11	135
GRANADA HILLS REC CENTER	V	12	2
HANSEN DAM REC AREA	V	2	1
JAIME BETH SLAVIN PARK	V	2	9
KNAPP RANCH	V	3	200
LANARK REC CENTER	V	3	10
NO HOLLYWOOD PARK - NORTH	V	2	17
NO HOLLYWOOD PARK - SOUTH	V	2	22
OLD NO. HOLLYWOOD POLICE STATION	V		1
O'MELVENY PARK	V	12	8
ORCUTT RANCH	V	3	130
PANORAMA REC CENTER	V	2	6
RESEDA REC CENTER	V	3	60
SEPULVEDA GARDEN CENTER	V	11	1500
STETSON RANCH PARK	V	12	82
STONEHURST REC CENTER	V	2	5
STRATHERN GREEN BELT	V	2	1
VALLEY VILLAGE PARK	V	4	44
VICTORY/VINELAND REC CENTER	V	2	1
WEDDINGTON PARK NORTH	V	4	7
WEDDINGTON PARK SOUTH	V	4	2
WEST HILLS SPORTS CENTER	V	3	3
WOODBIDGE PARK	V	4	5
WOODLAND HILLS REC CENTER	V	3	36
WOODLEY GOLF COURSE	V	11	39
ZELZAH PARK	V	12	6

FACILITY	REGION	CD	NO. OF DEAD TREES
ANGELS GATE PARK	P	15	82
CLAUDE PEPPER SENIOR CENTER	P	10	3
HARBOR GOLF COURSE	P	15	3
LELAND PARK EAST	P	15	20
LELAND PARK WEST	P	15	5
LELAND REC CENTER	P	15	3
LOOK OUT POINT	P	15	1
PENMAR GOLF COURSE	P	6	7
POINT FERMIN PARK	P	15	8
RANCHO GOLF COURSE	P	6	28
RUSTIC CANYON	P	4	1
WESTWOOD LITTLE LEAGUE	P	6	23
WILDERS PARK ADDITION	P	15	1
TOTALS			5055

ATTACHMENT B

EUCALYPTUS TREE REMOVAL AND REFORESTATION PACKAGE

Funding is requested to fund the **Eucalyptus Tree Removal and Reforestation Package** to ensure the timely removal of 5,000 dead or dying eucalyptus trees utilizing an outside contractor including the establishment of an **Emergency Tree Removal Crew** responsible for coordinating all contractor activities and the completion of all other emergency tree removal requests; a **Tree Planting Crew** which shall oversee, coordinate and implement a 5-year tree replanting program of 10,000 trees to be donated by the DWP; and a **Tree Inventory Unit** to inventory and track approximately 1 million trees in City parks.

PHASE I FY 01/02 (Interim Jan. - June '02)

Dead Tree Removal (first 6 months)

- Removal of 1,500 of the reported 5,000 trees in the most hazardous park locations, which include play areas, picnic areas, amphitheatres, walkways, trails, and known public gathering places.
- Establishment of the Emergency Tree Removal Crew to oversee contracted activity and address daily emergency tree removal requests, leaving existing crews to address tree trimming work order backlog of over 400.
- (Sal \$73,312; Exp \$525,000)

PHASE II FY02/03

Dead Tree Removal Continued, Establishment of Planting Crew and Programming, and Establishment of Tree Inventory Unit

- Removal of the remaining 3,500 trees.
- Meet with the communities to inform them on the status of park trees and gain their input into the tree selection process, establishment of guidelines and tree replacement policies, complete studies for the best trees recommended for individual Los Angeles City parks. (First 6 months)
- Development of Tree Planting Program for all City parks with considerations for planned capital improvement projects. (Funding for last 6 months only)
- Development of tree mapping system to track down the planting program and trees already existing in our parks. (Funding for last 6 months only)
- (Sal \$262,320; Exp \$1,225,000; EQ \$115,000)

PHASE III FY 03/04-FY 07/08

Continued full year funding for Emergency Tree Removal Crew, Tree Planting Unit, and Tree Inventory Unit

- Continued full-year funding for Emergency Tree Removal Crew to address continued emergency tree removal requests without compromising scheduled removals.
- Continued full-year funding for Tree Planting Crew to plant 2,000 trees per year contingent on availability of trees through the DWP Trees for a Green LA Program, and continued tree planting program for 15,000 acres of City parks.
- Continued full-year funding for Tree Inventory Unit to track approximately 1 million trees.
- (Sal \$338,615; Exp \$0, EQ \$0)

EUCALYPTUS TREE REMOVAL AND REFORESTATION PACKAGE - Detail

Emergency Tree Removal Crew

<u>Staff</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>FY 01/02</u>	<u>FY02/03</u>	<u>FY 03-08</u>
Tree Surgeon Supervisor I (1)	\$43,992			
Tree Surgeons (2)	\$82,268			
Part-Time Hours (2,080 hours)	<u>\$20,365</u>			
Total	\$ 146,625	\$ 73,312	\$ 146,625	\$146,625
<u>Expense</u>				
Contractual Services Acct. 3040	<u>\$ 1,750,000</u>			
Total	\$ 1,750,000	\$525,000	\$1,225,000	

Planting Crew

<u>Staff</u>				
Senior Gardener (1)	\$40,110			
Gardener Caretaker (2)	\$71,534			
Light Equipment Operator (1)	<u>\$40,946</u>			
Total	\$ 152,590		\$ 76,295	\$152,590
<u>Equipment</u>				
Open Bed Truck	32,000			
Bobcat Skid Steer Tractor	45,000			
Bobcat Trailer	<u>15,000</u>			
Total	\$ 92,000		\$ 92,000	

Tree Inventory System

<u>Staff</u>				
Tree Surgeon Supervisor II (1)	\$48,257			
Part-Time Hours (3,120 hours)	\$30,544			
(Community Adm. Support Workers)				
Total	\$ 78,801		\$ 39,400	\$ 39,400
<u>Equipment</u>				
Personal Computer with Printer	\$4,000			
GIS Mapping Program	\$4,000			
GPS Data Collecting Equipment	<u>\$15,000</u>			
Total	\$ 23,000		\$ 23,000	

TOTAL COST	<u>\$2,199,024</u>	<u>\$598,312</u>	<u>\$1,602,320</u>	<u>\$338,615</u>
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