

Aggieland Depot  
 Boot Display Cases  
 www.aggieland-depot.com  
 Culpepper Plaza • 695-1422

**Wholesale Diamonds**  
 GIA & EGL Certified

Largest Stock  
 in the  
 Brazos Valley

**John D Huntley**  
 Class of '79  
 313 B. South College Ave  
 College Station, TX 77840  
 (979) 846-8916  
 Since 1972

**5th Annual Volleyball Tournament!**

**\$500 in Cash Prizes**

**Date: Saturday, May 1st**  
**Start Time: 11:00 AM**  
**Location: Sterling Apartments**  
 117 Holleman West \* 696-5711

**\$20 per team (3 players/1 Alternate)**  
**Team Registration Due by Noon on Friday @ Sterling Leasing Office**

STERLING UNIVERSITY  
 Village

**Embrace the World**  
 USA / CANADA TOUR APRIL - MAY 2004  
**Wednesday, May 5, 7 PM**  
 MSC Room 201  
 Texas A&M University  
 www.brazosbahai.org

Sponsored by:  
 A&M Baha'i Student Association  
 Co-sponsored by:  
 Vice President of Student Affairs  
 Department of Multicultural Services

SANTANA'S Grammy winning producer  
**KC PORTER**  
 2002 New Age Jazz Top chart  
 Persian Virtuoso Violinist  
**FARZAD**  
 Colombian Vocalist  
**LEONOR**  
 CARLOS VIVES Percussionist  
**SHANGO**  
 Chinese erhu virtuoso  
**LIN CHENG**

**FREE ADMISSION**

**hastings**  
 Your Entertainment Superstore

**MOST WANTED USED TITLES**

We'll pay **\$6** IN STORE CREDIT for these titles

**MUSIC CDS**

We'll pay **\$30** IN STORE CREDIT for these titles

**VIDEO GAMES**

We'll pay **\$12** IN STORE CREDIT for these titles

**VIDEO DVD**

Buyback prices available for a limited time. All future buyback prices on these titles will be dependent on market conditions. Availability varies by store. See store for details on buyback requirements.

**Fire threat grows in California forest as trees continue to die**

By Tim Molloy  
 THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LAKE ARROWHEAD, Calif. — Five suspected arson fires this week rekindled fears among residents and forest officials already working feverishly to avoid a repeat of last fall's deadly wildfires near this mountain resort.

They have good reason to worry: The risk is even greater this year.

Bark beetles preying on drought-weakened pine trees have devastated hundreds of thousands of trees in the sprawling San Bernardino National Forest, killing nearly half the trees in some areas.

Huge sections of the forest are ripe for another catastrophic blaze.

"If these drought conditions keep up, the entire forest is at risk of dying off, and of course this is a huge risk for fires," said Jack Blackwell, forester of the Forest Service's Pacific Southwestern region.

Only a fraction of the dead trees burned last fall when two huge fires blackened more than 160,000 acres, destroyed about 1,100 homes and killed six people.

Even more trees have died in the past six months. The Forest Service and others are furiously cutting firebreaks and removing as many dead trees as possible before fire danger peaks in September.

Much of the wood is worthless because of the beetle infestation, and timber companies run up heavy expenses shipping it to the nearest mill more than 200 miles away.

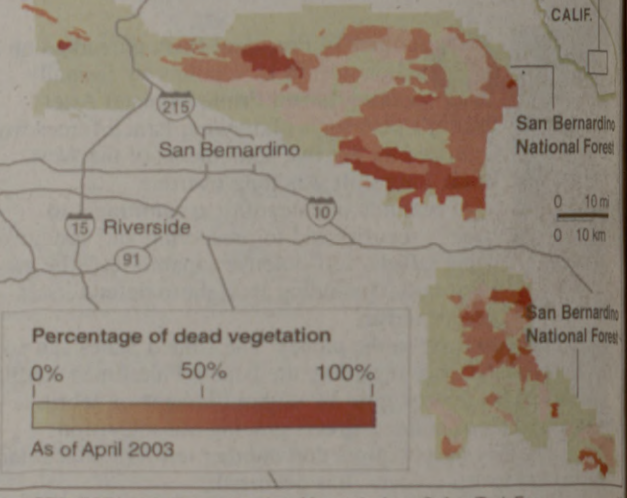
The Forest Service is also dousing insecticide on healthy trees in camping areas and conducting prescribed burns like one that went out of control at Big Bear Lake last month and turned into a 350-acre forest fire. The miscue outraged already nervous residents.

Forest dwellers were also unnerved Monday when the suspected arson fires started west of Lake Arrowhead. The blazes were quickly contained, and no arrests have been made.

The forest grew thick over the last century as residents favored the privacy and beauty of being surrounded by firs, cedars and pines. But drought in recent years weakened the trees, and warmer temperatures allowed bark beetles to repro-

**More dead wood increases fire risk**

Forest officials are working to avoid a repeat of Southern California rampant wildfires last fall. The risk is even greater now that bark beetles have devastated hundreds of thousands of trees in the sprawling San Bernardino National Forest, killing nearly half the trees in some areas.



duce in greater numbers.

The new federal Healthy Forest Restoration Act allows more timber and brush to be cleared with less environmental scrutiny.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service is distributing \$150 million to tribes, local governments and others for tree removal and other fire prevention efforts in Southern California. The Forest Service is providing another \$50 million.

In addition, the Forest Service has been given \$40 million on top of its normal budget for fire prevention in Southern California.

Forest officials said the funding is a good start but not enough to remove all the dead trees in the San Bernardino forest. Nervous homeowners, too, are rushing to join the effort.

Idyllwild resident Betty Miller and her neighbors have removed numerous trees in the past few months. But she has had to wait for a contractor to cut back an oak overhanging their home.

"He's so busy, we're on a waiting list," she said. "It's totally unbelievable the amount of trees they're cutting down. Properties that you couldn't even see, now it's thinned out. Some properties have had all the trees taken off."

Some observers contend the firebreaks aren't the best way to protect communities.

Tom Bonnicksen, a professor at Texas A&M and visiting scholar for the Forest Foundation, a nonprofit group supported by the timber industry, said there should be only strategic firebreaks and more logging deeper in the forest.

The area also needs a mill that likely won't be built until the Forest Service agrees to 10-year logging contracts that provide enough time for a company to recoup its investments, Bonnicksen said.

"Even if we remove the dead trees, we still have a very serious problem," he said. "The entire forest is at risk whether it has dead trees in it or not."

Blackwell said the Forest Service favors shorter-term contracts because the forest might not be able to sustain logging beyond that. Environmental groups have also expressed concerns about giving the timber industry a long-term foothold.

Before last year's fires, Big Bear Lake resident Gini Wilson and her husband spent months trying to get permission to remove a hollowed-out tree they feared would fall. But when she called the fire department about a dead tree a few weeks ago, it was removed immediately, along with several others.

"The next week we were out of town and a neighbor told me they were taking one down in a snowstorm," Wilson said. "He says they're on top of things."

**NEWS IN BRIEF**

**U.S., Iraqi generals reach tentative deal**

FALLUJAH, Iraq (AP) — U.S. Marines negotiated a "tentative" agreement Thursday to pull back forces from Fallujah, a deal that would lift a nearly monthlong siege and allow an Iraqi force led by a former Saddam Hussein-era general to handle security. Fresh clashes broke out despite news of a pending deal, and U.S. war-

planes dropped bombs on insurgent targets.

Ten U.S. soldiers and a South African civilian were killed in attacks elsewhere, including eight Americans who died when a bomb hit as they tried to clear explosives from a road south of Baghdad.

Negotiations were also taking place in the southern city of Najaf, where tribal leaders and police discussed a proposal to end the U.S. standoff and for followers of a radical Shiite cleric to leave the city.

**AGGIELAND**

**Don't leave a piece of your history behind**

- Pick up or purchase your 2003 Aggieland Yearbook**  
 If you ordered the award-winning 2003 Aggieland and haven't picked it up, stop by room 015 Reed McDonald Building and do so. Please bring your Student ID. If you did not order last year's Texas A&M University yearbook (the 2002-2003 school year), you may purchase one for \$40 plus tax.
- Order your 2004 Aggieland**  
 The 2004 Aggieland yearbook will be a 752-page record of the 2003-2004 Texas A&M school year. Distribution will be during Fall 2004. Stop by 015 Reed McDonald or telephone 845-0569 (credit cards only). Cost: \$40 plus tax.
- Pay a mailing fee for 2004 Aggieland**  
 If you ordered a 2004 Aggieland and will not be on campus this fall to pick it up, you can have it mailed. To have your yearbook for the '03-'04 school year mailed, stop by 015 Reed McDonald or telephone 845-0569 (credit cards only) and pay a \$7.58 mailing and handling fee. Aggielands will not be held and refunds will not be made on books not picked up within one semester of the publication date.
- Pre-order your 2005 Aggieland**  
 Order your 2005 Aggieland — the 103rd Texas A&M yearbook — while you register for fall classes. Save \$10. Cost: just \$30 plus tax.

Student Media Ad/Distribution Office, Room 015 Reed McDonald  
 Hours: 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
 Monday - Friday  
 Cash, Check, VISA, MasterCard, Discover  
 American Express and Aggie Bucks accepted.