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## PRESS RELEASE

### NON-LOCAL UNTREATED FIREWOOD POSES THREAT TO PACIFIC NORTHWEST FORESTS

Thirty-five percent of firewood is brought from another location, increasing risk of invasion from forest pests

SALEM, Oregon— As winter arrives, people across the country engage in a centuries-old tradition of buying or gathering firewood to fuel home fires. In a recent poll conducted by The Nature Conservancy, one in 20 Americans said they moved firewood long distances (i.e., more than 50 miles, a distance widely accepted as moving it “too far”).

Moving firewood can increase the risk of introducing new invasive species that kill native trees. To prevent the spread of these pests, the states of Idaho, Oregon, and Washington launched a tri-state outreach campaign in 2010 to inform the public about the dangers of moving firewood to Pacific Northwest forests. The campaign, funded by the United State Department of Agriculture, closely followed the messaging of a national *Don't Move Firewood* campaign, which recommends buying firewood that was cut locally, preferably within the same county or region of where it will be burned ([dontmovefirewood.org](http://dontmovefirewood.org)).

“When we see the level of destruction that wood-boring pests moved by firewood like the Asian longhorned beetle and emerald ash borer have caused in eastern and Midwest states, we realize just how much Oregon and the Pacific Northwest states have to lose if these pests are introduced,” said Oregon Invasive Species Council Chair Sam Chan. “We know that an informed public will make good choices about cutting and burning firewood locally to prevent spreading invasive species that might hitchhike on firewood—we can protect our forests and stimulate woodcutting jobs in local communities. It’s a win-win for everyone.”

Transporting firewood can potentially lead to new infestations of invasive insects and diseases, which can lurk in firewood. These tree-killing pests cannot move far on their own, but when people move the firewood that harbors them, they unwittingly enable these pests to start a new infestation. These types of invaders have devastated native species of trees such as the American chestnut, hemlock, and the American elm— species, which have been part of American forests and streetscapes for centuries.

“In Idaho, we realize the value of prevention in dealing with invasive species. Keeping these insects and diseases out of the region will benefit our forests, agriculture and the environment,” said Celia Gould the Chair of the Idaho Invasive Species Council.

Recent studies conducted by both The Nature Conservancy and Oregon State University demonstrate how willing the public is to make behavioral changes relative to buying firewood if they understand the issues.

“These poll results tell us that when people learn why they shouldn’t transport firewood long distances, the majority are willing to buy it where they burn it,” said Leigh Greenwood, Don’t Move Firewood campaign manager, The Nature Conservancy. “People have the power to save their trees. They can help stop the spread of destructive pests by not moving firewood and communicating this message to others.”

Oregon State University student Damon Runberg is completing his Master’s Thesis on “Pacific Northwest Campers Awareness, Knowledge, and Beliefs regarding Firewood as a Vector of Invasive Species.” He shared preliminary results with participants attending a recent Oregon Invasive Species Council-hosted statewide summit in November of 2010. His results support The Nature Conservancy’s findings.

“After becoming informed about the issue, many campers were willing to change their current camping practices to prevent the spread of invasive species,” said Runberg. “A total of 54% of campers that saw outreach materials on the dangers of moving firewood stated that they had changed their camping practices. Of those campers willing to change their camping practices, 70% said they now only buy firewood where they are going to burn it.”

Following are tips to help protect Pacific Northwest forests:

- Obtain firewood near the location where you will burn it – that means the wood was cut in a nearby forest, in the same county, or at a maximum of 50 miles from where you'll have your fire.
- Don’t be tempted to get firewood from a remote location just because the wood looks clean and healthy. It could still harbor tiny insect eggs or microscopic fungal spores that will start a new and deadly infestation of forest pests.
- Aged or seasoned wood is not considered safe to move, but commercially kiln-dried wood is a good option if you must transport firewood.
- If you have already moved firewood, and you now know you need to dispose of it safely, burn it soon and completely. Make sure to rake the storage area carefully and also burn the debris. In the future, buy from a local source.
- Tell your friends and others about the risks of moving firewood – no one wants to be responsible for starting a new pest infestation.