

FOREST FIRST PROGRAM

The Forest First Program was created because the national forests encompass approximately 30% of the Santa Ana River Watershed's land mass and receive 90% of its annual precipitation. It is a collaborative partnership between the U.S. Forest Service and downstream stakeholders. The Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority (SAWPA) has executed two agreements with the San Bernardino and Cleveland National Forests to proactively improve the health of the watershed, the first in 2011 and the second in 2017.



Some accomplishments of the Forest First Program include the Valuation of Benefits of Forest Management Practices in the Santa Ana Watershed (2012) which quantified economic benefits from forest management actions, and acquisition of a \$1M One Water One Watershed grant (2014). Future projects include riparian invasive plant removal and fuelbreak maintenance in Cleveland NF, water quality monitoring in San Bernardino NF, and programs aimed at Shot Hole Borer removal and public-private forest management projects with funding from downstream utilities.

FOREST FUELS REDUCTION IMPLEMENTATION

After several years of implementation of the Program, the San Bernardino National Forest was successful in attaining an Integrated Regional Water Management Proposition 84 grant through the One Water One Watershed Program in 2013. By leveraging grant funds with federally appropriated dollars, the San Bernardino NF is implementing projects to reduce fire risk and improve forest health in two San Bernardino County locations: 1) The 1,600 acre Bluff Mesa project area which surrounds Bluff Lake, and 2) the 440 acre Santa Ana Unit area south of Running Springs and Big Bear. Sediment reduction will occur through improvements to two perennial and multiple intermittent crossings along four miles of Forest Service Road. On the Santa Ana Unit 3 project, 145 acres of vegetation manipulation (e.g. mastication, removal of invasive weeds, etc.) will improve the



resiliency of the forest, restore a more sustainable forest composition and structure, and limit fuel loading. The Forest Service and its partners, which include the downstream water resources agencies, will be responsible for developing and performing a monitoring program to prove that forest restoration benefits downstream customers through increased water supply, improved water quality (less sediment) and reduced O&M costs (less sediment).