

# Forest Service moving forward with Angora Fire restoration

✖ By Rex Norman

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit is seeking public comment on a proposal that would allow planting of conifer seedlings in the Angora Fire area this spring.

An environmental assessment for comprehensive restoration of the Angora Fire area will be released by mid-March, and the agency has previously analyzed reforestation as part of this project. However, the Forest Service is seeking to expedite a decision on reforestation to allow for the planting of 745 acres, of which 450 could occur in April 2010.

Typically, forests place orders for conifer seedlings to nurseries about one and a half to two years before they expect to plant. Accordingly, the Forest Service submitted an order for planting in the Angora Fire area, which will be delivered this spring, before a decision on the larger project is signed. The Lake Tahoe Basin has a very short time frame in which soil moisture and temperature are favorable for planting.

In the previous two rounds of public participation, the public supported reforesting with a mix of native conifers – including Jeffrey pine, rust resistant sugar pine, incense cedar and red fir – as proposed by the Forest Service. In areas of the forest that burned at high severity, little to no natural regeneration of seedlings has occurred. In many areas, early planting will help prevent regrowth of less desirable species, such as white fir, as well as competition from shrubs.

The Forest Service plans to plant 200-250 trees per acre to account for seedling die-off, which is expected to be 30 to 40

percent within the first three years due to factors such as transport stress, storage conditions, planting technique, poor planting sites or lack of sufficient water and nutrients. While crews will plant trees in an even pattern, seedling mortality will eventually result in a mosaic of tree densities throughout the project area. Seedlings could incur higher mortality (50-60 percent, including natural mortality) in areas slated for removal of dead tree and surface logs to reduce future fire severity, although fuels reduction projects will be designed to minimize seedling damage.

To increase the seedlings' chance of survival, crews will remove competing vegetation for up to 3 feet surrounding the seedling during planting and as needed during future years. The seedlings will be 1-year-old and about 6 inches high when they arrive. The Placerville Nursery supplies the seedlings, which are collected from a seed source appropriate to the elevation and site characteristics of the fire area.

This proposal includes some changes in areas proposed for planting. The Forest Service determined that 220 acres originally included in the Angora Fire Restoration proposal could be planted under an existing Urban Lot EA.

Field assessments revealed that another 270 acres were not appropriate for planting, because they are in riparian areas, the ground is unsuitable for planting, they have sufficient numbers of live trees, or they are good prospects for natural regeneration. However, 135 acres not part of the original proposal have been identified as requiring planting.

The Forest Service requests comments on the proposal by March 22, 2010. The proposal is available at the Forest Supervisor's office at 35 College Drive, South Lake Tahoe or by clicking [here](#), then clicking on the link for land and resource management and then projects. For more information, contact Rita Mustatia at (530) 543.2677.

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