



*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

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BACK TO NATIVES RESTORATION BEGINS POST-FIRE RECOVERY WEED SURVEY OF USFS LAND AFFECTED BY THE SANTIAGO FIRE

IRVINE, Calif., March 2, 2008 – **Back to Natives Restoration** will provide a Post Fire Recovery Weed Survey and Assessment of the affected areas of the Cleveland National Forest from the Santiago Fire. This assessment will encompass 23,000 acres within the Trabuco Ranger District. Back to Natives will be identifying and mapping possible non-native invasive plants within the fire area to help prevent the degradation of critical habitat and reduce the impact of post fire recovery on rare species found in the area.

The expansive burn area will be monitored by Back to Natives staff and a consulting biologist. Ecosystem recovery and “fire following” native plants will be recorded. Weed species will be documented, and in some cases removed with the help of community volunteers.

“This project is a great opportunity to educate the public about fire ecology,” said Back to Natives Director of Restoration, Reginald Durant. “The community will have an opportunity to do something beneficial to assist in the recovery of the habitat burned in the fire.”

After the fire, local agencies received hundreds of calls from concerned citizens, wanting to “do something.” What many did not realize is that the local ecosystems, which have adapted to fire over many thousands of years, will recover naturally with little or no help from humans. One way that people can help ecosystem recovery is by removing non-native invasive plants that attempt to establish themselves in the burn area, out competing native plants that native animals need to survive. Even so, weeds will only be removed from less sensitive areas like fire roads, bulldozer lines and their edges, so that native plant recovery will not be negatively affected.

Due to the rugged terrain and possible wash outs and landslides in the fire affected areas, Back to Natives, a 501(c)3 Non Profit organization, is seeking the donation of a high clearance 4 wheel drive vehicle.

Back to Natives is also working in cooperation with the Cleveland National Forest to provide a Restoration Volunteer Training Program. Participants attend 9 hands on training workshops over the course of a year. At completion, participants are certified by the USFS and BTN to have completed training for dry restoration practices and volunteer leadership and may, under authorization from the USFS, be eligible to lead small restoration groups in the National Forest. An orientation class will occur on Saturday, March 29, from 8AM – 12PM at the Silverado Fire Station at 27172 Silverado Canyon Rd, Silverado, CA 92676. For more information or to RSVP call 949-509-4787 or restoration@backtonatives.org. This training is free.

Back to Natives Restoration, a 501(c)3 Non Profit organization, is dedicated to the restoration and conservation of Orange County and California wildlands, though education and restoration programs featuring native plants as a centralizing theme. For more information, please visit www.backtonatives.org or call 949-509-4787.

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