

More dead trees are facing the ax

12-2-88

SANTA CRUZ — Another 65 dead Monterey pine trees along Highway 1 are being removed by the state. That brings the total to 635 pines that have been cut down because of pitch canker disease since last spring.

There is no known cure for the disease, which weakens and turns pine tips brown to the point that insects finish them off. Pitch canker was detected locally in late 1986, hitting thousands of pines planted along highways, especially those in the fishhook area where highways 1 and 17 meet.

Santa Cruz County Transportation Commission Executive Director Linda Wilshusen told commissioners Thursday that much of the latest work is in the fishhook area and south along Highway 1.

State Department of Transportation spokesman Jerry Oliver said later that the new cutting is just a "continuing process" that's needed because of the hard-hitting disease. "They keep on dying, and we have to deal with it," he said.

At the same time, Caltrans has finished the first-phase planting of 84 vines along Lee Street and the fishhook. A large-scale replanting plan was approved by the commission in September to replace the felled trees.

Next spring, another 889 shrubs and 282 trees are scheduled to be planted by the state. Oliver said that replanting may begin sooner "depending on the rains."