

Relaxed quarantine planned for pines

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Along with removal of dead and dying trees, a "relaxed" sort of quarantine may soon be in effect to help stop the spread of pitch canker, a fungus disease affecting thousands of Monterey and other pines in Santa Cruz County.

Lenord L. Craft, the county agricultural commissioner, called the potential quarantine "relaxed" when he described it to the Board of Supervisors at its meeting today.

Craft was outlining the recommendations of a state task force that has been studying the outbreak of pitch canker since January. The disease was first spotted in Santa Cruz County early last summer. It causes branch-tip dieback, pitch-soaked wood and pitch-running sores on the trunks of affected trees.

The quarantine, Craft said, would be against moving affected pine seed, pine firewood, and nursery and Christmas tree stock out of the county. He said his office would be in charge of inspecting and certifying pine products so that they could be taken outside the county if they were found not to have the disease.

Other measures recommended by the task force, which is made up of officials from the state departments of forestry, transportation, parks and recreation, and food and agriculture, the U.S. Forest Service and scientists from the University of California, as well as Craft himself, included the following.

— Caltrans should develop a comprehensive plan for all their landscaping that will include planting density, fertilization and irrigation. Scien-

tists have said that one of the reasons trees along the highway seem to be more severely affected is that they are planted too close together.

— Caltrans and the state parks department should remove dead and dying trees in accordance with policies already in place for dealing with such trees. Trees taken out because they are dead or dying from pitch canker, however, should be disposed of in a way that would minimize spread of the disease. Chipping up the wood or burning are considered effective ways to dispose of the wood safely.

— Information should be made available to private parties as to how to take care of affected trees on private property.

— Experiments and research into treatment should be carried out with the help of grants from the state department of forestry.

— The state forestry department should survey for affected trees outside the known area of infection. The disease has been identified so far in Santa Cruz, Monterey, Santa Clara, Alameda and San Mateo counties.