

Explore the Watershed

Friends of Sausal Creek

Newsletter April 2020

Sudden Oak Death Blitz Opportunity



In California *Phytophthora ramorum* causes crown symptoms and tree mortality.

If you've ever come to volunteer at FOSC's native plant nursery, you've taken steps to prevent the spread of Sudden Oak Death (SOD). All visitors to the nursery spray down their shoes with alcohol to kill the fungus threatening oaks across California and beyond, *Phytophthora ramorum*.

Aside from protecting our native plant nursery from SOD contamination, FOSC has also been partnering with scientists at UC Berkeley to identify SOD in the watershed since 2009.

Taking into account COVID-19 guidance, the SOD Blitz will be happening again this year on May 2 and 3, and Matteo Garbolotto of the UC Berkeley Forest Pathology and Mycology Lab is looking for volunteers to participate! Read on for more information.

First discovered through the mysterious death of many tanoaks in 1995, SOD has spread throughout the state and is now known to span the coastal region between Monterey and Humboldt counties. Sudden Oak Death poses a threat to the many species of oak that are crucial to many of California's varied habitat types. The Sausal Creek Watershed is home to many species of oaks, primarily coast live oak, and a few occurrences of interior live oak, canyon live oak, tanoak, and one lone oracle oak, a hybrid plant, all of which are potentially threatened by the spread of SOD.

Sudden Oak Death also affects other plant species, which are both impacted and can spread the pathogen. Bay laurel is one of the main hosts of the pathogen, and as well as one of its main transmitters. Sporulation from host plants can spread the infestation via fog drip and leaf litter to oak species. Identifying SOD in bay laurel as well as other species while it is still in its beginning stages is key in keeping oak populations healthy and stopping the spread.

FOSC volunteers Karen Paulsell and Lin Barron (active in Montclair RR Trail restoration), both participated in the 2009 SOD Blitz, unbeknownst to each other. Karen sees the experience as important for monitoring the health of our watershed and building a long-term data set on SOD through citizen science.

“The SOD Blitz is one of the largest and longest running citizen science efforts on the planet, and anyone can download the data set from the lab’s website. You can display or turn off data for each year to see the patterns of FOOSC’s coverage and the spread of SOD. The data collected in the SOD Blitzes informs forest pathology science”, Karen summarized. In a SOD Blitz, you sample leaves off of bay trees, since their leaves show leaf discoloration and the most visible signs of SOD, whereas oaks show no symptoms until they are close to death.

Given the disease -- COVID-19 -- that’s also spreading among the human species, SOD Blitz organizers are taking special care to make sure participants can still follow all guidelines to social distance. Trainings are being offered online and sterile sampling materials are available for pickup in closed containers at the Blitz locations in UV radiated packaging. For the East Bay, pickup is a kiosk on the UC Campus near University and Oxford.

To get involved, with the SOD Blitz, follow these steps by April 30:

1. Go to www.sodblitz.org and read the COVID-19 SOD Blitz guidelines
2. Complete the online PowerPoint and video training on www.sodblitz.org
3. Register for the [SOD Blitz 2020 at this link](#) and make sure to select “East Bay” as your location
4. Send an email to Jackie at education@sausalcreek.org to let us know you will be participating, and we will coordinate your location with the rest of the FOOSC Blitz Team to avoid duplicate efforts.

For more information, including treatment options, visit [SOD Blitz Website Here](#).

For more information about the lab and Blitz, and for the most recent updates, visit [the Forest Pathology Lab BioBlitz Website Here](#)