

May 26, 2009

Forest Concepts sends aid for Jesusita Fire environmental recovery in Santa Barbara

Today Forest Concepts along with Mt. West Helicopters delivered a donated full truckload of their innovative wood-strand erosion control material to Rick Tomassini, Superintendent for the County of Santa Barbara, for use by the homeowners in the areas burned by the recent Jesusita Fire.

Conventional straw mulches and erosion control materials do not work well on the steep slopes and windy ridges burned in the typical southern California wildfire. The big issue this early in the season is that erosion materials need to control blowing ash and dust from now until the rains come in November, and still work then to prevent mud flows into the city.

WoodStraw® wood-strand erosion control material was developed by Forest Concepts in cooperation with the US Forest Service and the US Department of Agriculture specifically for these extreme types of situations. Since the research and development was completed in 2005, more than 5,000 tons of WoodStraw® mulch has been used after wildfires across the West, including the Angora Fire in Lake Tahoe.

This innovative material looks like hay straw from a distance and is baled like hay for ease of handling. Woodstraw® ECM outperforms straw mulches for erosion control and lasts several years to support revegetation. Since it is made from wood, there are no risks for seeds of invasive weed species, and in baled form, the material is easy to deliver to the critical areas where it is needed and easy to spread by hand, blower or helicopter.

The WoodStraw® ECM bales being delivered to Santa Barbara will be used near the homes and in canyons that drain directly into Santa Barbara. Since the WoodStraw® mulch greatly reduces blowing dust and ash, it will likely be used above neighborhoods to improve air quality.

WoodStraw® mulch is made from recycled scrap veneer that is a byproduct from small veneer mills that supply plywood and engineered wood beam manufacturers. It is a bit ironic that some of the small diameter logs that are turned into WoodStraw® mulch may have been removed from Northwest forests to reduce the fire danger here.

Mike Perry, Forest Concepts CEO, explained their donation this way. "Santa Barbara is recovering from their third major wildfire in two years. We were not in a position to supply their needs in the previous two fires. This year we have WoodStraw® bales in stock and with our partner Mountain West Helicopters of Utah are pleased to make this donation to the people of Santa Barbara and wish them a fast and safe recovery."