

RESTORING RIPARIAN ECOSYSTEM FUNCTION AND DIVERSITY THROUGH COST-EFFICIENT HAZARDOUS FUEL REMOVAL. Sarah Godfrey, Center for Natural Lands Management. 27258 Via Industria, Suite B, Temecula, CA 92590. sgodfrey@cnlm.org, 760-300-3187

The Center for Natural Lands Management (CNLM) owns and manages a nature preserve (Copper Creek Preserve) in San Diego County, California, that had been severely impacted by non-native species including eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus globulus*) at the time of acquisition. Over a ten-year period, eucalyptus in the upper watershed were removed, resulting in a diverse riparian area with thickets of willow, cottonwood, mature sycamore trees, and tule reeds that support terrestrial animal species in this important wildlife corridor.

In 2012, CNLM acquired another parcel along the creek infested with thousands of eucalyptus trees with little understory or native component. The trees were suffering mortality from the eucalyptus longhorned borer (*Phorocantha recurve*), and woody debris was filling the creek, further prohibiting native species growth or wildlife movement, as well as increasing hazardous fuel load. Increasing risk of wildfire as an indirect result of climate change and increasing rarity of this habitat type in southern California created a sense of urgency for restoration that would not be satisfied by the previous gradual approach, but budgets were limited. CNLM staff worked with California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CALFIRE) and their program using California Department of Corrections' inmates for conservation projects. By utilizing CALFIRE camp crews, CNLM has commenced removal of eucalyptus from Copper Creek in a cost-efficient way using all hand removal. One of the great successes is that native flora and fauna have already returned to the site, and the stream shows great promise for restoration.