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## **P R E S S R E L E A S E**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Jesusita Fire Burn Area Hydromulching Set to Begin Sept. 15; Front Country Trail Closures Announced**

Santa Barbara County residents are reminded that aerial hydromulching is set to begin this week, weather permitting, to help stabilize hillside areas burned during the Jesusita Fire. The work is being done as part of the County's winter preparation efforts to help prevent soil erosion and allow natural vegetation to re-grow while also reducing possible downstream flooding.

During the hydromulching project, the U.S. Forest Service, the City of Santa Barbara and the County have closed the Jesusita Trail and Rattlesnake Trail beginning Monday, September 14.

The public is reminded that the Tunnel Trail and Tunnel Connector, also within the burn area, continue to be closed until further notice. It is unsafe to use the trails, especially during the aerial hydromulching. Stepping on hydromulched areas can reduce the effectiveness of the hydromulch and contribute to increased soil erosion and additional trail damage.

Cold Springs Trail, San Ysidro Trail and Romero Trail remain open, officials said.

The Santa Barbara County Flood Control District is working with City officials and a company that specializes in aerial hydromulching to do the current work, which is very similar to the hydromulching completed in the hills above Goleta after last year's Gap Fire. The project is estimated to cost \$3.4 million, of which the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service will pay 75 percent of the cost and \$50,000 in cost-sharing by the City.

The organic aerial hydromulch is applied by using several fixed-wing aircraft. Operations will be based out of Santa Barbara Airport. Helicopters may be used, but are not planned at this time. If helicopters are used, their operational bases may be located closer to the work to help reduce noise and increase productivity.

Approximately 1,050 acres will be hydromulched. The work could begin as soon as Tuesday, September 15. Depending on progress and weather conditions, the work could last for about three (3) weeks, including weekends. During this time, the public will notice increased air traffic at the airport and over or around the Jesusita Fire burn area. The work will be coordinated with the U.S. Forest Service, which plans to hydromulch several hundred additional acres.

The Jesusita Fire burned about 8,700 acres, damaging several watersheds and wildlife areas. Burned watersheds exhibit dramatically different behavior versus unburned watersheds, including increased amounts of debris, sediment, and runoff during winter rains and efforts to restore burned areas is critical to reducing the threat of downstream flooding to homeowners, commercial property and other infrastructure.

The hydromulch project is part of an overall winter preparedness plan being coordinated by the County. Other projects that are now done, or nearing completion, include stream clearing of watercourses; construction of debris racks; removal of rock deposits on Mission Creek, and clearing existing debris basins. All of the elements of the plan are scheduled to be completed by mid-October, generally recognized as the start of our rainy season.

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