NEWS RELEASE
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Dominican to host Sudden Oak Death public meeting on May 1

Free session designed to educate, train community on SOD symptoms, collection

(San Rafael, CA) Dominican University of California will host an informational public meeting on Sudden Oak Death (SOD) on Saturday, May 1, as part of a series of "SOD-Blitzes" throughout the San Francisco Bay Area from mid-April to mid-May.

Dr. Matteo Garbelotto, a University of California Cooperative Extension specialist on forest pathology and mycology, will speak, answer questions and train residents to collect samples at the free session, which will start at 10 a.m. in the Creekside Room on the Dominican campus.

"The most interesting point about a SOD blitz in Marin County is that it highlights the fact that SOD is dynamic and that infestation levels change every year in severity and distribution," Dr. Garbelotto said. "Thus an accurate picture of the situation can only be achieved with a current survey, rather than relying on old data."

Dr. Garbelotto said Marin has been identified as one of the two places in California where the disease became established. Most of the damage, he said, was well under way when scientists understood what was causing SOD.

Researchers recently have discovered that *Phytophthora ramorum*, the pathogen that causes SOD, spreads most often on infected California bay laurel leaves. It is threatening the survival of tanoak and several oak species in California. Currently, SOD has been discovered in 14 coastal California counties from Monterey to Humboldt.

SOD-blitzes inform and educate communities about Sudden Oak Death, gets locals involved in detecting the disease and trains them to collect samples for testing and data to help produce detailed local maps of disease distribution. Maps then can be used to identify those areas where the infestation may be mild enough to justify proactive management.

The goal of SOD-Blitz public meetings are:

- Train participants to identify SOD symptoms on California bay laurel and other hosts.
- Explain the details of the sampling/collection process (number of samples, bagging, storing, tagging, distance between sampled trees).
- Explain how to record the sample location (address, GPS, etc.).
- Explain how to fill out the collection form.
- Define collection areas for each participant.
- Distribute necessary materials to participants (forms, bags, markers, GPS units, laminated pictorial identification cards).

Once leaf samples are collected by the individual participants in Marin following the May 1 SOD-Blitz, samples and accompanying forms then will be turned in at a central location on the Dominican campus by Sunday night, May 2.

The UC Berkeley diagnostic laboratory, at no charge, will analyze each collected sample through microscopic and DNA analyses to determine the presence or absence of *P. ramorum*/Sudden Oak Death. Once all samples have been tested, a map will be generated highlighting the areas sampled, and the presence or absence of the disease at each location.

One to four months later (dependent upon workload and number of samples collected) a follow-up community meeting may be organized. At that meeting, results will be presented, and management options discussed.

Dr. Garbelotto, thanks to funding from State and Private Forestry through the U.S. Forest Service, has organized six SOD-Blitzes in the Bay Area to inform and educate community about Sudden Oak Death. Dominican is in the process of establishing the first research site – the National Ornamentals Research Site at Dominican University of California (NORS-DUC) -- in the United States dedicated to the study of diseases of ornamental plants in a simulated nursery setting. NORS-DUC is being created with a $1 million grant from the United States Department of Agriculture through the 2008 Farm Bill.

Scientists from the national and international research community soon will conduct studies at NORS-DUC focused on understanding and controlling *Phytophthora ramorum* and ramorum blight on nursery stock.

For more information, contact Sarah Gardner, Dominican's Director of Research and Communications, at (415) 485-3239 or sarah.gardner@dominican.edu. Or log onto the NORS-DUC website at www.dominican.edu/norsduc or the SOD-Blitz Announcement page at http://nature.berkeley.edu/garbelotto/english/sodblitz.php.