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# NEWS RELEASE

**USDA Forest Service**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Are 4,000,000 Trees Enough for the Olympic Torch?**

**Davis, CA, July 2, 2004** – On August 13, 2004 the Olympic torch will light the flame to officially begin the Athens 2004 Summer Games. It will have traveled 50,000 miles through 32 cities and five continents before the commencement. During its 3-month odyssey, the Torch will be accompanied by an entourage of 100-200 people. They will provide security and logistical support to the torchbearers. In each city, the torch will be transported from the airport to the staging area. Approximately 100 torchbearers will each run 0.4 km (0.25 mile) along the route, escorted by police motorcycles. Members of the entourage also will lead and follow the runners along the route.

Because of its commitment to preserving the environment, the Athens Environmental Foundation commissioned the Center for Urban Forest Research in Davis, California to calculate the number of trees it would take to offset the emissions from transport of the Olympic Torch. Prior to contacting the Center, the Foundation joined with the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) to promote tree planting as way to improve local environments, strengthen community, and enhance quality of life in every city that the torch visits. The Foundation and ISA’s outreach efforts have already resulted in

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pledges for more than 4,000,000 trees to offset emissions from the transport of the torch. But is that enough?

The Center for Urban Forest Research conducted calculations to estimate the emissions of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) associated with transport of the torch during its global journey, and calculate the number of trees required to offset these emissions on an annual basis. Using numerical models, aircraft emissions were found to be most important, totaling 3,017 metric tones (t) CO<sub>2</sub> and 17.6 t NO<sub>2</sub>. Aircraft cruising activities accounted for about 95% of the emissions. Motor vehicle emissions were estimated to total 116 t CO<sub>2</sub> and 0.04 t NO<sub>2</sub>. Planting 122,000 trees would produce average annual uptake of NO<sub>2</sub> equivalent to emissions associated with aircraft and motor vehicle transport of the Torch Relay entourage in 2004.

Average annual uptake of CO<sub>2</sub> would be 5,445 t, or 75% greater than the estimated release of 3,133 t. These average annual benefits are estimated to accrue over a 40-year period after planting, and assume that 25% of the trees will die. If judiciously selected, properly planted, and regularly maintained, these trees could provide a host of other benefits, and serve as a living legacy to the Athens 2004 Olympic Games. The 4,000,000 trees are more than enough to offset emissions from the Torch Relay and are a tribute to the people and the countries where they will be planted and maintained for future generations.

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