A NEW IDEA for clearing dried brush saves time and money, is a boon for soil conservation, and aids in fire prevention. It was developed by G. I. Morrow, West Valley Operating District superintendent for the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power.

Morrow’s weighty idea turned out to be a 3,860 pound modification of the large spiked road building rollers seen at highway construction projects.

The brushroller consists of two tandem steel plate rollers with six inch staggered spikes. Lowered by a D7 tractor down a brush-covered hillside, the roller knocks down vegetation, breaks it up and pushes it into the ground, clearing a seven foot path in one pass.

The winch then pulls the brushroller to the top of the slope and moves it for overlapping sweeps.

Rnico and Stone Canyon Reservoirs in the Los Angeles area were original testing ground for the invention. It proved effective enough to cover 8,400 square feet an hour, an impossible rate if performed by less efficient hand methods.

Another important feature of Morrow’s invention is that it eliminates having to clean up mounds of brush since the brush is pulverized and compressed. The compression aids in fire prevention and soil conservation since combustion is difficult:

the packed vegetation blocks oxygen while holding soil in place. Hand cutting can only remove some of the loose fuel that could catch fire.

Brush within 100 feet of any structure must be maintained between three and 18 inches above the ground, according to Fire Department regulations in Mountain Fire Districts. The brushroller meets these requirements best during the dry fire season when brush is easy to crush.

If dried brush is too thick for the roller under normal conditions, the roller’s tanks can hold 370 gallons of water to give a total crushing force of more than three tons.

Although this new method of brush clearing will become widespread within the Department of Water and Power, there is one limitation that makes it difficult to use in all locations. The accompanying tractor must be able to travel along a crest or use some level road for necessary balance. Most locations do, however, supply the proper conditions.

As with most inventions, the brushroller wasn’t developed without some problems. A prototype constructed earlier proved too light to be effective. Jim Malch, blacksmith at the West Valley District Headquarters, reconstructed the drums with plating twice as heavy as the prototype.