

# Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR AND  
CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Darryl Von Raesfeld

**SUBJECT:** SEE BELOW

**DATE:** September 28, 2009

Approved

Date

10/5/09

Council District: City-Wide

**SUBJECT: EAST FOOTHILLS COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN**

## RECOMMENDATION

Adoption of a resolution supporting the goals of the East Foothills Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) for the area east of San José developed by the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council and authorizing the Mayor and the Fire Chief to sign the mutual agreement page of the East Foothills CWPP supporting the plan as requested by the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council.

## OUTCOME

Adoption of this Resolution will authorize:

- (a) The Mayor to sign the Mutual Agreement for the City of San José as the local government entity responsible for a part of the CWPP area.
- (b) The Fire Chief to sign the Mutual Agreement for the San José Fire Department as the primary fire agency responsible for this CWPP area.

## BACKGROUND

The California Fire Alliance, an interagency/public collaboration of local, state and federal agencies with a mission to protect and enhance the quality of life threatened by wildfire, encourages the development of Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs), as defined by the Federal Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA).

In 2003, Congress passed the HFRA to reduce wildfire risks to communities, municipal water supplies, and other at-risk Federal lands through a collaborative process of planning, prioritizing, and implementing hazardous fuel reduction projects. The HFRA addresses enhancement of efforts to protect watersheds, threats to forest and rangeland health, including wildfire and insect and disease infestation, and efforts to protect, restore, and enhance forest ecosystem components.

The HFRA also called for the preparation of Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) or comparable plans to define the wildland urban interface (WUI) and establish locally based strategic priorities for wildfire preparedness and hazardous fuels reduction work in these areas.

By the end of 2005, states, tribes, and local communities had completed some 650 CWPPs covering 2,700 communities, with an additional 600 plans still in progress. Land managers at the local, state, and federal levels are using these CWPPs to help them identify and prioritize locations and methods for fuels treatment projects in the WUI.

A CWPP identifies strategic sites and methods for fuel reduction projects and enables a community to plan how it will reduce the risk of wildfires.

In general, the objectives of Community Wildfire Protection Plans are to:

- Provide comprehensive forest planning and prioritization
- Provide a mechanism for federal agencies to give meaningful considerations to community priorities
- Open community debate regarding management of wildfire reduction options
- Provide maximum flexibility for communities to determine the substance and detail of their plans
- Merge the goals and objectives of landowners with the needs and expectations of the community regarding fire risk reduction
- Coordinate fire protection strategies across property boundaries
- Coordinate grant funding and federal program budgets to achieve the most effective results with limited funding

Founded in 2001 and incorporated as a 501(c)(3) public benefit corporation in 2002, the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council (SCFSC) has grown to include participants from the major fire agencies including the San José Fire Department (SJFD), many volunteer fire organizations, local utility companies, parks and open space organizations, city and county government representatives, neighborhood associations, and concerned individuals; all with a shared vision to educate and mobilize residents to reduce the risks of wildfires in Santa Clara County. The SCFSC has developed this CWPP for the East Foothills. East Foothills is both a Census Designated Place and a commonly used name for the foothills east of the City of San José. East Foothills and San José are designated Communities at Risk from wildfires on the California Fire Alliance list of such communities in Santa Clara County.

Specific objectives for this East Foothills CWPP include:

- Encouraging and enabling East Foothills property owners and residents to create and maintain defensible space around their homes and neighborhoods.

- Identifying fuel reduction projects that can be completed through stakeholder and community cooperation without federal grants.
- Identifying and planning fuel reduction projects for which federal grants or other funding sources are needed

Most of the area covered by the East Foothills CWPP is in unincorporated Santa Clara County, but are within the San José Fire Department (SJFD) coverage area. Only a few specific areas, such as Alum Rock Park, are within the San José city limits. In unincorporated Santa Clara County areas, SJFD provides first responder fire and medical coverage under contract to Santa Clara County. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) provides support in SJFD's jurisdiction in Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas.

Incorporated into this CWPP are the wildfire related mitigation strategies in the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) Multi-Jurisdictional Local Government Hazard Mitigation Plan adopted by Santa Clara County and other jurisdictions.

A National Fire Plan grant from the U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management through the California Fire Safe Council provided funding for this CWPP. Preparation of this CWPP followed the California Fire Alliance CWPP Planning Process and meets or exceeds the objectives for CWPPs.

SJFD and CAL FIRE personnel conducted multiple field surveys of the East Foothills to identify wildfire risks, strategic sites and potential fuel reduction projects. The two most important results of the field surveys are: 1) more than adequate field observations and surveys were completed to support the fire behavior models; and 2) a number of large and small projects were identified which will reduce the potential risk of wildfires in various areas. Two separate fire hazard assessments were conducted in the preparation of this CWPP: a Geographic Information System (GIS)-generated fire hazard overlay map and an assessment of potential fire behavior and intensity.

## **ANALYSIS**

With the approval of the East Foothills CWPP, the City will be demonstrating its continuing participation in and support of the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council. The City will continue to support Wildfire Awareness Week each spring at the start of fire season and promote wildfire prevention and education and initiate new programs whenever fiscally possible. The City will continue to support local fuel reduction and vegetation management programs, especially at the start of fire season and later in the year when grassy fuels have increased and are dry.

The Santa Clara County FireSafe Council has informed staff that it believes that the City's approval of the CWPP by the City, the County of Santa Clara and Cal Fire will increase the Council's eligibility for federal grant funding from sources such as the Department of Forestry and the Bureau of Land Management towards wildfire related mitigation strategies of fuel reduction projects. Cal Fire signed the Mutual Agreement on June 26, 2007. The Santa Clara

County Board of Supervisors signed this agreement on September 23, 2008. The final action being requested by the Council is for the City Council to approve the East Foothills CWPP and to authorize the Mayor and Fire Chief to sign the signature page as the designated representatives of the City of San José and the San José Fire Department as the local government entity and primary fire agency responsible for this CWPP area.

### **EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP**

Long-term maintenance is essential for this CWPP. The SCFSC plans to update this plan annually with fuel reduction progress, new observations and threats, and new projects to address problem areas. Updates to the CWPP will be presented annually to the City Council in an Information Memorandum.

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH/INTEREST**

- Criteria 1:** Requires Council action on the use of public funds equal to \$1 million or greater.  
**(Required: Website Posting)**
- Criteria 2:** Adoption of a new or revised policy that may have implications for public health, safety, quality of life, or financial/economic vitality of the City. **(Required: E-mail and Website Posting)**
- Criteria 3:** Consideration of proposed changes to service delivery, programs, staffing that may have impacts to community services and have been identified by staff, Council or a Community group that requires special outreach. **(Required: E-mail, Website Posting, Community Meetings, Notice in appropriate newspapers)**

The SCFSC conducted public outreach through its website, newsletters and local community newsletters, as well as community meetings and events. A Stakeholder and Community Meetings Plan and an Introduction to Community Wildfire Protection Plans were developed for stakeholder and other community meetings.

Community Outreach and Education to encourage and enable property owners and residents to create and maintain Defensible Space around their homes and communities are an important part of this project. The public outreach and education materials the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council provides for community outreach and public education include:

- SCFSC Brochure
- *Living With Fire in Santa Clara County*
- Articles such as *Defensible Space? Here's how to prepare for the upcoming fire season!* by SJFD Fire Captain José Guerrero

Other materials for community events, including material for children and seniors

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL  
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**COORDINATION**

This memorandum has been coordinated with the City Attorney's Office.

**COST SUMMARY/IMPLICATIONS**

There are no new cost implications or commitments for the City of San José with the adoption of the East Foothills CWPP.

**CEQA**

Exempt, File No. PP09-169

  
DARRYL VON RAESFELD  
Fire Chief

For questions please contact Barry Stallard, Wildland Officer, at 277-4416.

**Santa Clara County FireSafe Council**  
**East Foothills Community Wildfire Protection Plan**

The following entities mutually agree with the contents of the East Foothills Community Wildfire Protection Plan:

\_\_\_\_\_  
San Jose Fire Department  
Fire Chief Darryl Von Raesfeld

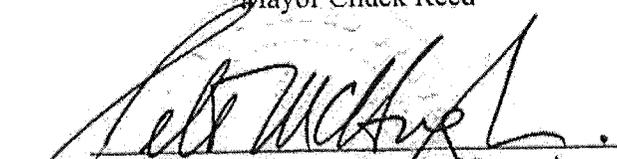
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
CAL FIRE (California Department  
of Forestry and Fire Protection)  
Unit Chief John Ellis, Santa Clara Unit

6-26-07  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
San Jose City Council  
Mayor Chuck Reed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors  
Pete McHugh, Chairperson

SEP 23 2008  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

ATTEST: Phyllis A. Perez, Clerk  
Board of Supervisors  


Maria Marinos  
Chief Deputy Clerk  
of the Board of  
Supervisors

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**ORIGINAL**

# **Santa Clara County FireSafe Council**

## **East Foothills**

### **Community Wildfire Protection Plan**



**Public Draft Version 4**  
**March 2007**

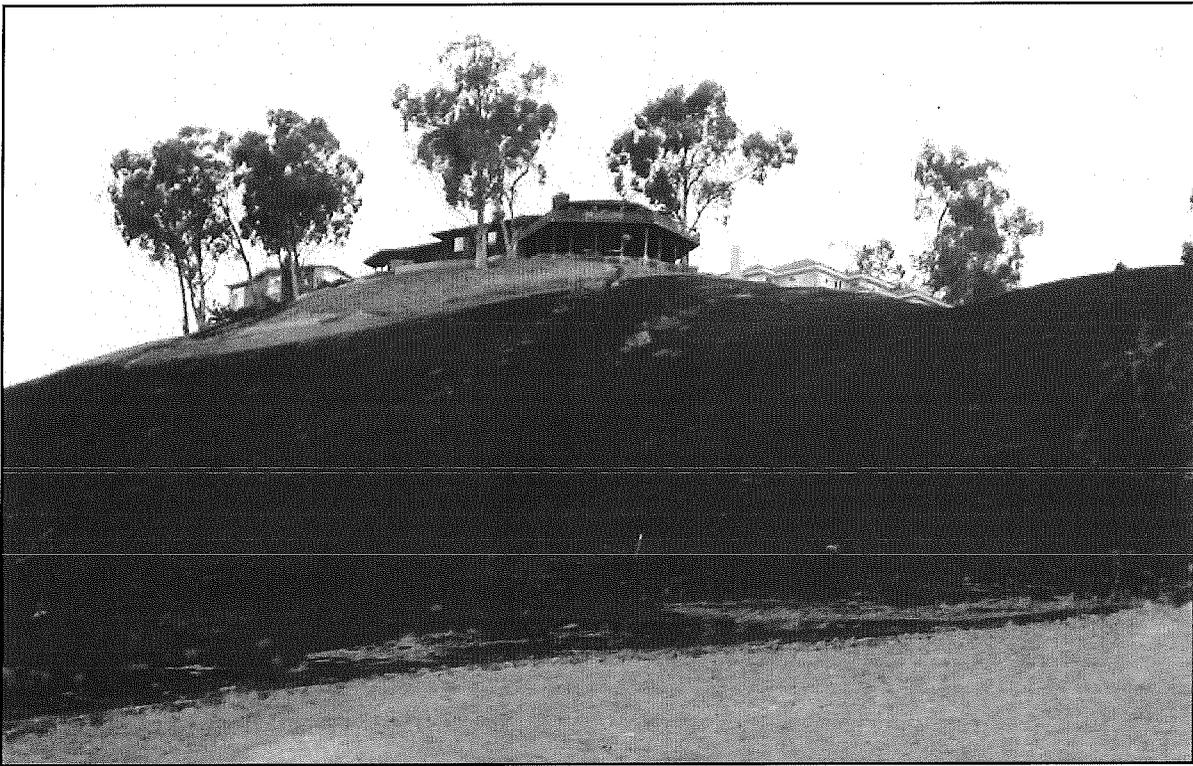


**Santa Clara County FireSafe Council**  
[www.SCCFireSafe.org](http://www.SCCFireSafe.org)

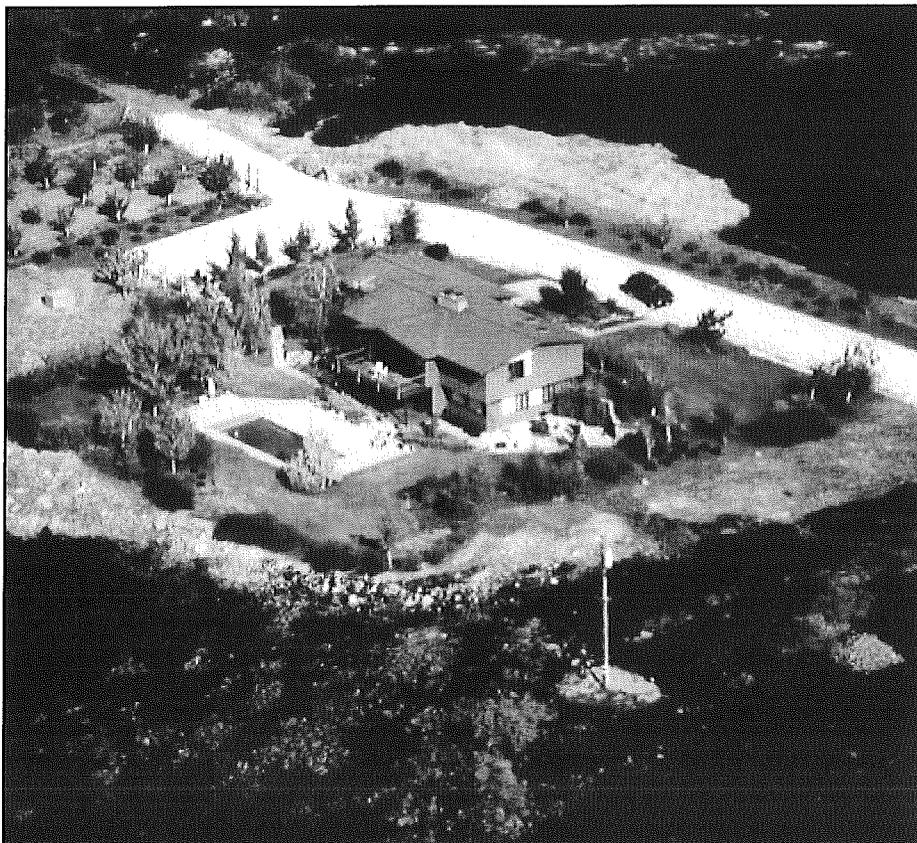
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## East Foothills Community Wildfire Protection Plan



Cover photo and photo above from the Suncrest Avenue Fire near Alum Rock Park, September 24, 2006  
(Photos by Richard Brown)



Defensible Space photo from *Living With Fire in Santa Clara County*  
published by the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council

# **Santa Clara County FireSafe Council**

## **East Foothills Community Wildfire Protection Plan**

### **Executive Summary**

A Community Wildfire Protection Plan has been developed for the East Foothills area east of San Jose. This area includes East Foothills and parts of San Jose, which are communities on the California Fire Alliance list of Communities at Risk from wildfire.

Most of the area covered by the East Foothills Community Wildfire Protection Plan is in the San Jose Fire Department (SJFD) coverage area. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF, now CAL FIRE) provides support in SJFD's jurisdiction in Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas. In unincorporated Santa Clara County areas, SJFD provides first responder fire and medical coverage under contract to Santa Clara County.

Development of this Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) was funded by a National Fire Plan grant from the U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management through the California Fire Safe Council and by local matching contributions from companies, organizations and individuals. This CWPP was prepared following the California Fire Alliance CWPP Planning Process and meets or exceeds the general objectives for CWPPs as well as the specific objectives established for this CWPP (see Section I.A.5). Dudek, an engineering and environmental consulting firm, was selected as the wildfire prevention planning consultants for this project and the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council would like to acknowledge their guidance and contributions as well as the assistance, support and participation of many organizations, companies and people in preparing this CWPP as summarized in Section I.A.8.

Six field survey trips were made and eight reports and 20 field survey forms were compiled for the East Foothills CWPP area (see Section II.G.5 and Table II-2). The two most important results of the field surveys are: 1) More than adequate field observations and surveys were completed to support the fire behavior models, and 2) A number of large and small projects were identified which will reduce the potential risk of wildfires in various areas (see Section III.A.3 and Attachment F). Two separate fire hazard assessments were conducted in the preparation of this CWPP: a Geographic Information System (GIS)-generated fire hazard overlay map and an assessment of potential fire behavior and intensity using BehavePlus software (see Sections III.B and III.C).

Community participation is essential for this CWPP and future fuel reduction projects. Please e-mail any comments to Allan Thompson at [AllanT@SCCFireSafe.org](mailto:AllanT@SCCFireSafe.org) or call (408) 272-7008.

### **Conclusions**

The five most important conclusions of this CWPP are:

- The fire history data emphasize the potential risk for these urban interface areas (areas where at least one side faces wildlands) and intermix areas (areas encompassed by wildlands), especially when considering the continually increasing possibility for human-caused ignitions. Based on existing vegetation, topography, and typical weather conditions for East Foothills, the area is considered vulnerable to wildfire. The proximity of open space to residential structures and to scenic roadways increases the likelihood of

# East Foothills Community Wildfire Protection Plan

## Executive Summary

anthropogenic ignition (i.e., caused by human activity) from discarded cigarettes, automobiles, fireworks, and electrical transmission lines, etc. Additionally, the potential for spotting (burning embers entering or blowing into unburned vegetation) is high during dry, north and northeast wind-driven conflagrations (see Sections II.G.7 and II.G.8).

- Alum Rock Park's north-facing slopes provide a good example of where the existence of small, flashy fuels beneath shrubs and trees, especially in the interface areas, increases the potential for vertical fire spread. The presence of ladder fuels and other highly combustible vegetation, specifically pepper trees and eucalyptus, pines, palms and other non-native trees near interface and intermix residential structures, increases the potential for canopy fire and structural ignition (see Section II.G.8).
- Many homes were observed in high fire danger areas with good fire resistant roofs, protected eaves and more or less adequate Defensible Space around the homes. Conversely, many homes were also observed in high fire danger areas with old, wood shake roofs, unprotected eaves, fire prone trees and little or no Defensible Space around the homes. Often these were older homes interspersed among newer, more fire resistant homes (see Section III.A.2).
- The San Jose Fire Department and CDF have very significant capabilities to fight and control wildland fires in this area. SJFD utilizes an effective "Tier" response plan (see Section II.H). Mutual aid from nearby fire departments is available when needed (see Sections II.H.3 and II.H.4). Increased fuel levels due to wet spring weather and quickly controlled wildfires have led to increased fuel accumulations and high fire danger conditions in many areas (see Section III.A.2).
- The fuel reduction recommendations presented herein are part of an overall vegetation management program designed to reduce the continuity of fuels that could promote fire spread from open space areas into adjacent residential and developed areas (see Section II.G.8).

Additional conclusions are in Section V.A. Recommendations are provided to reduce hazards within the East Foothills priority WUI areas. These recommendations are based on known procedures that are specifically implemented to reduce fuel loading, break up fuel continuity, and reduce the likelihood that fire will affect valuable resources, either from wildfires reaching residences or from residential fires escaping into wildland areas (see Section IV.D). A number of high and medium priority projects were identified during this CWPP development process (see Section IV.E. I and Attachment F.).

### Next Steps

The following priorities and next steps are recommended for stakeholders and others involved in this Community Wildfire Protection Plan. These recommendations recognize that, while fire agencies and the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council can provide education and recommendations, private and public property owners have the primary responsibility for preventing wildfire-related losses to their homes and properties.

# East Foothills Community Wildfire Protection Plan

## Executive Summary

- **Santa Clara County FireSafe Council:** Continue to enhance and deliver Community Outreach and Education programs to educate and enable property owners and residents to create Defensible Space around their homes and communities. This is the most important and effective SCFSC activity (see Section IV.E.1). While SCFSC can and should organize other projects, such as chipping programs, Community Outreach and Education is the most important and effective SCFSC activity because it is the best use of our limited federal and local funding.
- **Fire Agencies (including CDF, San Jose Fire Department and Spring Valley Volunteer Fire Department):** Continue to promote wildfire prevention and education and initiate new programs whenever possible. Continue to support Wildfire Awareness Week, which is sponsored by the CDF and the California Fire Safe Council, and supported locally by the fire agencies and the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council, each spring at the start of fire season. Participate in and support the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council and other organizations. Consider more home and property inspections for identified “at-risk” properties, such as the inspections used in other counties for WUI communities, and provide implementable recommendations that will help prevent losses from wildfires for typical WUI residents.
- **Homeowners, Homeowners Associations and Residents:** Replace wood shake roofs and create Defensible Space around homes and other structures. The most important recommendations include (see Section IV.E.1):
  - Replace wood shake roofs with Class A roofs – **This alone may save your home**
  - Create at least 100 feet of Defensible Space around homes
  - Utilize knowledgeable contractors who follow industry standards for vegetation thinning
  - Ensure that house numbers are easily visible from the street (both day and night)
  - Call local utilities, especially electric companies, to clear branches around utility lines
  - Contact your local fire agency for specifics for your area or property (see Page ix for Contact Information). Utilize the user-friendly information available from your local fire agency, the CDF, SCFSC, FireWise, and other sources to protect your home and community.
- **Large Public and Private Property Owners (including Cities, County, Open Space Authorities, Parks, Utilities and other Companies):** Follow the homeowner recommendations above and other guidelines to create Defensible Space around homes and other buildings and structures. Support and assist the fire agencies, SCFSC and others with their public outreach wildfire prevention and other programs. Continue to support Wildfire Awareness Week. Consider making local matching grants and contributions to the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council to enable the council to secure more federal grants for Santa Clara County.
- **City and County Jurisdictions:** Continue to support local fuel reduction and vegetation management programs, especially at the start of fire season and later in the year when grassy fuels have increased and are dry. Consider updates to Locally Declared Hazardous Fire Zones and other changes to recognize that more homes are being built in high fire danger areas as well as changes to promote and regulate the use of Class A roofs, enhanced

# East Foothills Community Wildfire Protection Plan

## Executive Summary

fire-resistive construction materials and techniques, and other practices that will reduce the losses from wildfires.

Continue to implement and promote the wildfire related mitigation strategies in the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) Multi-Jurisdictional Local Government Hazard Mitigation Plan adopted by Santa Clara County and other jurisdictions (see Section I.B.4).

This grant was managed under the direction of the President and other Officers and Directors of the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council. Technical direction was provided by the CDF, San Jose Fire Department and by Dudek, the wildfire prevention planning consultants.

The views and conclusions in this document are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as representing the opinions or policies of the California Fire Safe Council, the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council, local government or fire agencies, or the U.S. Government. Mention of companies, trade names or commercial products does not constitute an endorsement by the California Fire Safe Council, the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council or the U.S. Government.

**[This Executive Summary will be preceded by a Signature Page for the CDF (as the State Forester), San Jose Fire Department and San Jose City and Santa Clara County officials.]**