

Santa Clara County FireSafe Council

East Foothills

Community Wildfire Protection Plan



Version 1
October 2009



Santa Clara County FireSafe Council
www.SCCFireSafe.org

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East Foothills Community Wildfire Protection Plan



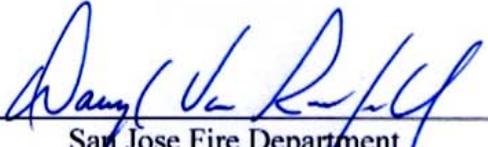
Cover photo and photo above from the Suncrest Avenue Fire near Alum Rock Park, September 24, 2006
(Photos by Richard Brown)



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

Santa Clara County FireSafe Council
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The following entities mutually agree with the contents of the East Foothills Community Wildfire Protection Plan:



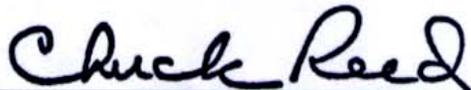
 San Jose Fire Department
 Fire Chief Darryl Von Raesfeld

10/26/09
 Date



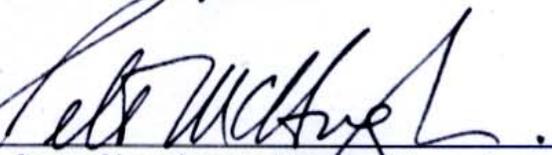
 CAL FIRE (California Department
 of Forestry and Fire Protection)
 Unit Chief John Ellis, Santa Clara Unit

6-26-07
 Date



 San Jose City Council
 Mayor Chuck Reed

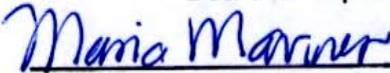
10/23/09
 Date



 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

East Foothills Community Wildfire Protection Plan

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 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

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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.1 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.

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- **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

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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 Community Wildfire Protection Plan has now been approved by the San Jose Fire Department (as the primary fire agency for this area), CAL FIRE (as the State Forester and a fire agency responsible for this area), the San Jose City Council and the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors. The content of this version (Version 1) is the same as the last Public Draft.