

# **Santa Clara County FireSafe Council**

## **Croy Fire Area**

### **Community Wildfire Protection Plan**



**Version 1**  
**November 2008**



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

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Cover photo and photo above from the Croy Fire, September 25, 2002\*



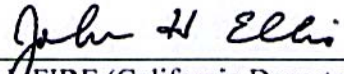
Defensible Space photo from *Living With Fire in Santa Clara County* published by the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council

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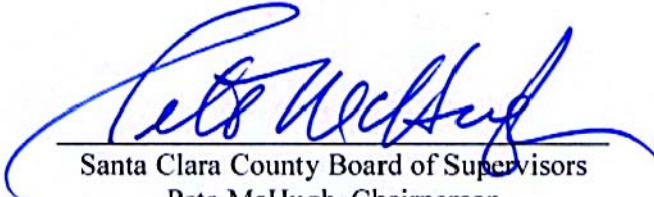
\* Photos provided by CAL FIRE. If you know who took them, please let us know so we can credit the photographers. E-mail Fire Captain Nick Ciardella at [Nick.Ciardella@fire.ca.gov](mailto:Nick.Ciardella@fire.ca.gov) or call (408) 206-3704.

**Santa Clara County FireSafe Council**  
**Croy Fire Area Community Wildfire Protection Plan**

The following entities mutually agree with the contents of the Croy Fire Area Community Wildfire Protection Plan:

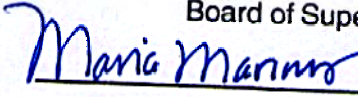
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
CAL FIRE (California Department  
of Forestry and Fire Protection)  
Unit Chief John Ellis, Santa Clara Unit

7-15-07  
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



# **Santa Clara County FireSafe Council**

## **Croy Fire Area Community Wildfire Protection Plan**

### **Executive Summary**

A Community Wildfire Protection Plan has been developed for the Croy Fire Area west of Morgan Hill. This area includes parts of Morgan Hill, Gilroy and San Martin, which are communities on the California Fire Alliance list of Communities at Risk from wildfire. All of the area covered by the Croy Fire Area Community Wildfire Protection Plan is in unincorporated Santa Clara County.

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) provides wildland fire protection in the Croy Fire Area and has mutual aid agreements with many departments in the area. The Uvas and Casa Loma Volunteer Fire Departments also respond to fires in this area. No direct structural fire protection is provided by the county or local fire departments.

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.

An important task during the development of this CWPP was on-site fire hazard risk assessments. These risk assessments provide the baseline for priority risk ranking and recommendations. Ten field survey trips were made and field survey forms compiled for the Croy Fire Area CWPP (see Section II.G.6 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 fire behavior modeling in the area, 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 E). 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 questions or comments to Fire Captain Nick Ciardella at [Nick.Ciardella@fire.ca.gov](mailto:Nick.Ciardella@fire.ca.gov) or call (408) 206-3704.

### **Conclusions**

The six most important conclusions of this CWPP are:

- **Fire History Warns of Reoccurrence of Wildfires.** Several fires have burned the Croy Fire CWPP area. The most recent sizable fire was the Croy Fire, which occurred on the west side of this CWPP area in 2002 and demonstrated the potential for large,

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uncontrollable wildfires to occur in this area. The Croy Fire started on September 23 and was not contained until September 28. This fire is on the CAL FIRE list of 2002 “Top Five Fires” with 3,127 acres burned and 34 structures lost (see Section II.G.8 and Figure II-7). Even so, it burned only a fraction of the Croy Fire Area, leaving heavy fuels and high fire risk for most of the area. The burned areas are already recovering and fuels are accumulating.

- **Fire Risk Assessment Results in Vulnerable Areas.** Based on existing vegetation, topography and typical weather conditions, the Croy Fire CWPP area is considered vulnerable to wildfire. The proximity of open space to residential structures and to scenic roadways increases the likelihood of anthropogenic ignition from discarded cigarettes, automobiles, fireworks, and electrical transmission lines, etc. Additionally, the potential for spotting (burning embers entering blowing into unburned vegetation) is high during dry, Santa Ana wind-driven conflagrations (see Section II.G.9).
- **Valuable Assets at Risk in Croy Fire Area.** In addition to people and homes, there are other important assets in or near the Croy Fire CWPP area including reservoirs, large parks and open space areas such as Calero, Chesbro Reservoir, Mt. Madonna, Uvas Canyon and Uvas Reservoir County Parks and the Santa Clara County Open Space Authority properties in this area as well as smaller parks and open spaces near Morgan Hill, Gilroy and San Martin (see Section II.G.10).
- **Fire Fighting Resources are Significant.** CAL FIRE has very significant capabilities to fight and control wildland fires in this area (see Section II.H.1). Mutual aid from nearby fire departments is available when needed (see Section II.H.4). Volunteer Fire Departments are ready to serve as first responders and to assist CAL FIRE (see Sections II.H.2 and II.H.3). However, given the uncontrollable factors such as terrain, weather, and fire behavior and how they affect fire response, fuel reduction by residents may be what ultimately saves their homes.
- **Diverse Construction Types Include High Hazard Residences.** Many homes were observed in fire prone 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 fire prone 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 mixed in with newer, more fire resistant homes (see Section III.A.2).
- **Fuel Reduction is Key to Reducing Risk.** The fuel reduction recommendations presented in this CWPP are critical fuel modification techniques that are part of an overall vegetation management program designed to reduce the continuity of fuels that promotes fire spread from open space areas into adjacent residential and developed areas (see Section II.G.9).

## 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

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recommendations, private and public property owners have the primary responsibility for preventing wildfire-related losses to their homes and properties.

- **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 CAL FIRE and Volunteer Fire Departments):** Continue to promote wildfire prevention and education and initiate new programs focused on the important fuel reduction strategies all of us can implement on our properties to reduce the fire risk. Continue to support Wildfire Awareness Week, which is sponsored by CAL FIRE 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 CAL FIRE, 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, which is sponsored by CAL FIRE 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. 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.

# Croy Fire Area Community Wildfire Protection Plan

## Executive Summary

- **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 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 CAL FIRE 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 CAL FIRE (as the State Forester and the primary fire agency for this area) and the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors. The content of this version (Version 1) is the same as the last Public Draft.