

**CAL FIRE's Vegetation Management Program - A Field-Based Training**  
**Friday February 27, 2008**  
**8:30-5:30**



Meeting Place:  
Watsonville Fire Department Station #2  
372 Airport Boulevard, Watsonville, CA 95076



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**AGENDA**

- Goals:**
- 1) Participants better understand CAL FIRE Vegetation Management Program objectives, needs, and barriers**
  - 2) Agencies outline potential methodologies for collaboration in providing cost and time savings to provide for ecosystem restoration and fire safety measures**
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8:30 Overview and Introductions

9:00 Trabing Fire, Watsonville

*Incident and local response, Greg Estrada, CAL FIRE Battalion Chief*  
*Local Fire District Vegetation Management Needs, Tom Crosser, Aptos LaSelva Fire Chief*

The Trabing Fire started on June 20, 2008 and burned 590 acres before it was contained 2 days later. The fire destroyed 75 structures and damaged 12. The fire began from Highway 1 in grass and small pine trees. It quickly spread through eucalyptus stands and created spot fires ahead from torching eucalyptus tree firebrands. An estimated \$999,309.00 was spent on fire suppression.

Discussion Points: Fuels from adjacent properties destroyed otherwise well-protected structures. Widespread Eucalyptus invasion is causing habitat degradation and fire safety concerns.

- Is there a way to regulate or incentivize adjacent properties to provide neighbors' adequate defensible space?
- What are the legal/regulatory barriers to Eucalyptus removal?
- Is there a way to streamline Eucalyptus removal projects for fire safety and habitat restoration?

10:45 Martin Fire, Martin Road Fire Station

*Incident Review and Initial Response, Ian Larkin, CAL FIRE Battalion Chief and Rob Sherman, CAL FIRE Battalion Chief*

*Vegetation Management Project Review and Needs, Angela Bernheisel, CAL FIRE VMP Coordinator*

The Martin Fire began on June 11, 2008 and burned 520 acres before it was contained 5 days later. The fire destroyed 11 structures and damaged 3. An estimated \$5,869,020 was spent of suppression.

Discussion Points: A limited amount of vegetation management had occurred along Martin Road where the fire burned. There is a mix of better to unprotected properties scattered through one of the most sensitive habitats in the U.S.

- How do we best establish BMP's for homeowners to create defensible space in this fire prone and highly sensitive area?
- When would activities to achieve compliance with PRC 4291 trigger additional permits?
- How can these 2 be reconciled?

12:30 Pescadero Road, just East of Loma Mar

*Conifer Forest Shaded Fuel Break adjacent to County Park, Joe McGuire, RPF*

This property owned by the San Mateo County Office of Education was determined to be a fire risk to the Loma Mar by the landowner due to green and dead fuel accumulations along Pescadero Road. For approximately 1,200 feet along the north side of Pescadero Road a shaded fuel break was created (approximately 4 acres). No operations occurred in riparian zones or during periods of saturated soil conditions. All vegetation to be removed was designated by a Registered Professional Forester (RPF). All operations were also supervised by an RPF.

The treatment included cutting and chipping all vegetation in the treatment zone except trees marked with an orange dot. Chips were spread back on the site to a depth less than 12 inches. Remaining trees were pruned to a height of 10 feet. An old fence was removed and a new fence was constructed. The cost of the project was approximately \$6000 per acre and the work was done by a private contractor, Quality Arbor Care.

**- Lunch -**

**\*\*n.b. Bathroom facilities available nearby\*\***

Discussion Points: Affects of a shaded fuel break – fuels, vegetation, wildlife, driver safety.

- How would permitting requirements for a project like this vary between counties and within and outside of the coastal zone?
- Again, is there a way to streamline permitting processes for projects like this?

2:15 Wicklow Property, Half Moon Bay

*Fuel break/ Eucalyptus Removal, Joe McGuire, RPF*

*Current Regulatory process, Chris Detwiller, Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST)*

POST's Wicklow property is located along the wildland–urban interface in El Granada. On the property, there is a 265–acre Eucalyptus forest growing on steep slopes directly adjacent to a residential community. In 2007, POST developed the “Wicklow Fuels Management Plan,” which focused on the most pressing fire protection needs on approximately 90 acres of the property.

POST then worked to obtain the necessary Coastal Development Permit from San Mateo County for the project, with consultants' costs exceeding \$50,000. Following approval of the permit, in September 2008, POST solicited bids for the implementation of the entire project, which ranged from \$680,000 to \$1.2 million. Despite the high costs, due to the imminent threat of fire, POST moved forward with treatment of the highest priority area, a 100–foot buffer covering 15 acres. This work was completed in December 2008 at a cost of \$206,000.

Subject to the securing of funding, POST's objective is to implement the remaining fuel treatments identified in the current project, estimated to cost approximately \$700,000.

Discussion Points: Affordability of projects, especially given the regulatory requirements. Local Coastal Plans, Coastal Zone regulations and Eucalyptus removal. Development pressures, fire protection.

- How can we make “doing the right thing” less expensive?

3:30 Coral Reef Road, South of Half Moon Bay Airport  
Hazard Reduction of undeveloped parcel adjacent to subdivision – Rich Sampson

The Cabrillo Unified School District (district) owns approximately 21 acres of land adjacent to Coral Reef Avenue. The property was initially developed with streets and sidewalks in the early 1900's but residences were never constructed. The school district acquired the property prior to 1970, but no school was constructed and the property is still vacant. At some time since 1900, a windrow of Eucalyptus was planted parallel to Coral Reef. Since that time, this windrow has expanded to a 6 acre stand of dense trees. During 2007 and 2008, the residents of Coral Reef Ave have contacted the district and requested the district to clear the Eucalyptus grove behind their homes to reduce fire hazard. The district contacted the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) to review the issue. Over the past 20 years, CAL FIRE crews entered the district property and performed defensible space clearing operations on at least 2 occasions. After reviewing the property, CAL FIRE agrees that a significant fire hazard exists behind the homes on Coral Reef. The school district in cooperation with CAL FIRE proposes to create a 100 foot defensible space zone between the residential structures along Coral Reef Ave. and the dense Eucalyptus grove.

Discussion Points: Coastal Zone regulation makes providing defensible space less affective or not feasible due to the costs of a CDP.

How can agencies encourage and help with removal of eucalyptus and restoration of native vegetation?

5:30 Return to meeting place