

ACTION PLAN

Unit Operations, Program staff and existing stakeholders continue to explore, develop and implement fuel management projects within those geographical areas with the potential of a disastrous wildfire.

The projects listed below are either ongoing, in the planning stage or are waiting funding.

The *Las Cumbres, Indian Trails and Bonny Doon Ecological Preserve/Pineridge Subdivision* have been funded by a grant from the US Fish and Wildlife Service through the National Fire Plan. Lack of Ben Lomond YCC fire Crew strength has pushed the completion date for the Las Cumbres and Indian Trails projects to spring of 2005. Alternative crew work is being explored through the State Contract process. The Bonny Doon Project is moving forward with a Fuels Management Plan cooperatively written by the California State Fish and Game, an ad hoc group from the Bonny Doon Community Fire Safe Committee, Unit Vegetation Management and PreFire staff as well as the local Battalion Chief. The plan is to be completed by fall of 2004 with actual groundwork beginning in summer of 2005.

The *Santa Cruz County Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)/Critical Fire Hazard GIS Layer Development* is near completion. This first phase of the HCP was funded by a grant through CDF. Project goals were to identify those critical fire hazards within the Wildland Urban Interface areas of the county. The resulting product would assist county planning staff in developing "Best Management Practices" for use in critical fire hazard areas that have endangered species or are listed as a sensitive habitat.

The *San Mateo County Parks/San Bruno Mountain Park Habitat Conservation Plan (Fire Management Plan)* is currently being updated with staff from San Mateo County, Thomas Reid and Associates (San Mateo County contractors) and Unit Vegetation Management and PreFire personnel.

The project is a portion of the HCP in need of revision. It includes a comprehensive matrix that identifies management units within the Park boundary and how to best manage the overgrown and invasive vegetation.

Release of the final product will be in no later than September 2004.

Santa Cruz County Urban Wildland Interface Codes

On April 10, 2003, the Fire Chiefs Association of Santa Cruz County directed its Fire Prevention Officers Section ("FPOs") to prepare an urban-wildland interface ("UWI") code adoption position paper. The FPOs responded by inviting all agencies in the FPO group to participate in a subcommittee that would conduct a study and develop recommendations for the position paper. The following agencies participated in the subcommittee discussions: Aptos-La Selva Fire Protection District, Zayante Fire Protection District, the California Department

of Forestry and Fire Protection, Santa Cruz County Fire Department, Santa Cruz County Planning Department, Central Fire Protection District, and Scotts Valley Fire Protection District.

The subcommittee was able to reach a consensus on the general recommendations to the Fire Chief's Association. This paper provides those recommendations and sets forth the attendant pros and cons discussed throughout the consensus-reaching process.

The process involved exploring four core UWI components (emergency access, water supply, defensible space, and ignition resistant building materials), two collateral implementation issues (hazard assessment and threshold for compliance), and a sunset provision. The resulting recommendation for each of these seven elements is summarized below.

- Emergency Access: make no changes.
- Water Supply: increase storage requirement from 4,000 to 10,000 gallons with a provision for offsets to this standard through enhancements of other core components and specify private hydrant requirements.
- Defensible Space: make no changes.
- Ignition Resistant Materials: adopt UWIC sections 504-506, imposing IR-2 construction as the default.
- Hazard Assessment: impose the heightened water and ignition resistant requirements on homes in specified areas, utilizing the SRA map layer with amendments by individual jurisdictions.
- Threshold for Compliance: impose the heightened water and ignition resistant requirements on new single-family dwellings and on residential remodels that qualify as "replacement construction."
- Sunset Provision: include an automatic sunset clause that triggers if and when the State of California enacts conflicting or more restrictive legal provisions addressing the four core UWI components.

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B. THE ISSUE

Residential development has and continues to spread into Santa Cruz County's rural areas, thereby increasing the danger to life and property should a fire occur. Current laws address some but not all of the concerns posed by the growing interface.¹ Thus, the issue is whether the current requirements provide

¹ The term *interface* is now used interchangeably with *intermix*. Initially, the former referred to a barrier between rural areas and the encroaching urban development, while the later referred to development within these rural areas.

adequate protection to those residing in the UWI areas in the County, or whether fire and building officials should attempt to adopt more stringent regulations within these areas.

B. RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS – FROM ADDENDUM

The Fire Chiefs Association of Santa Cruz County advocates that the following recommendations be codified in a stand-alone ordinance² that will add heightened fire protection and life safety measures in designated urban-wildland interface areas throughout the County, to be adopted at-will by each fire agency within the County in accordance with their own ordinance adoption procedures:

1. Make no changes to the current emergency ingress/egress provisions;
2. Increase the minimum water storage requirement from 4,000 gallons to 10,000 gallons;
3. Adopt the language set forth in section 16 of Appendix II-A from the California Fire Code, with a statement indicating that the Fire Chief is applying this provision not only in “hazardous fire areas,” but also in all urban-wildland interface areas designated on the hazard assessment map;
4. Adopt UWIC sections 504-506 imposing IR-2 construction as the default in areas that do not fall within the agriculture exception, and impose IR-3 construction as the default in areas that do fall within the agriculture exception;
5. Impose the heightened water and ignition resistant requirements on homes in specified areas, utilizing the State Responsibility Area map layer (as amended by individual jurisdictions), and review the HFHA map upon completion to determine if it is better suited to perform the hazard assessment function;
6. Impose the heightened UWI requirements on new dwellings and on residential remodels that qualify as “replacement construction”; and
7. Include an automatic sunset clause that triggers if and when the State of California enacts legal provisions addressing the specifics of the four core UWI components, but which allows the County to retain compatible requirements that are more restrictive.

² At the next code cycle, the stand-alone ordinance may be incorporated into the body of the fire prevention code.

San Mateo County Urban Wildland Interface Ordinance Proposal

A subcommittee of the San Mateo County Fire Prevention Officers has been tasked with developing Wildland Urban Interface Standards. The first meeting was held in June 2004. This meeting produced a very rough draft of areas to be covered at future meetings. The next meeting's (July 2004) agenda topic will be to review existing codes from various fire departments and neighboring counties.

Purpose and Goal

Provide a common urban wildland interface ordinance for all unincorporated San Mateo County areas.

Areas to be reviewed and addressed

Wildland Urban Interface (designated areas)
Emergency vehicle access
Water supply
Ignition Resistant Construction
Defensible space
Definition of Wildland Urban Interface terminology

“Living with Fire in Santa Cruz County” is currently being printed through funding from the Santa Cruz County Resource Conservation District. This widely successful document is being used throughout several counties in California.