2023 Vegetation Management Update & Healthy Forests Ad Hoc Committee Recommendations

Board of Supervisors Presentation

January 10, 2023

Agenda

- ❑ Healthy Forests Ad Hoc Committee Member Expectations
- ❑ Balancing Wildfire Resilience and Responsible Resource Management
- ❑ Recommendations from Healthy Forests Ad Hoc
- ❑ Programmatic and Administrative Support
- ❑ County Timeline of Activities

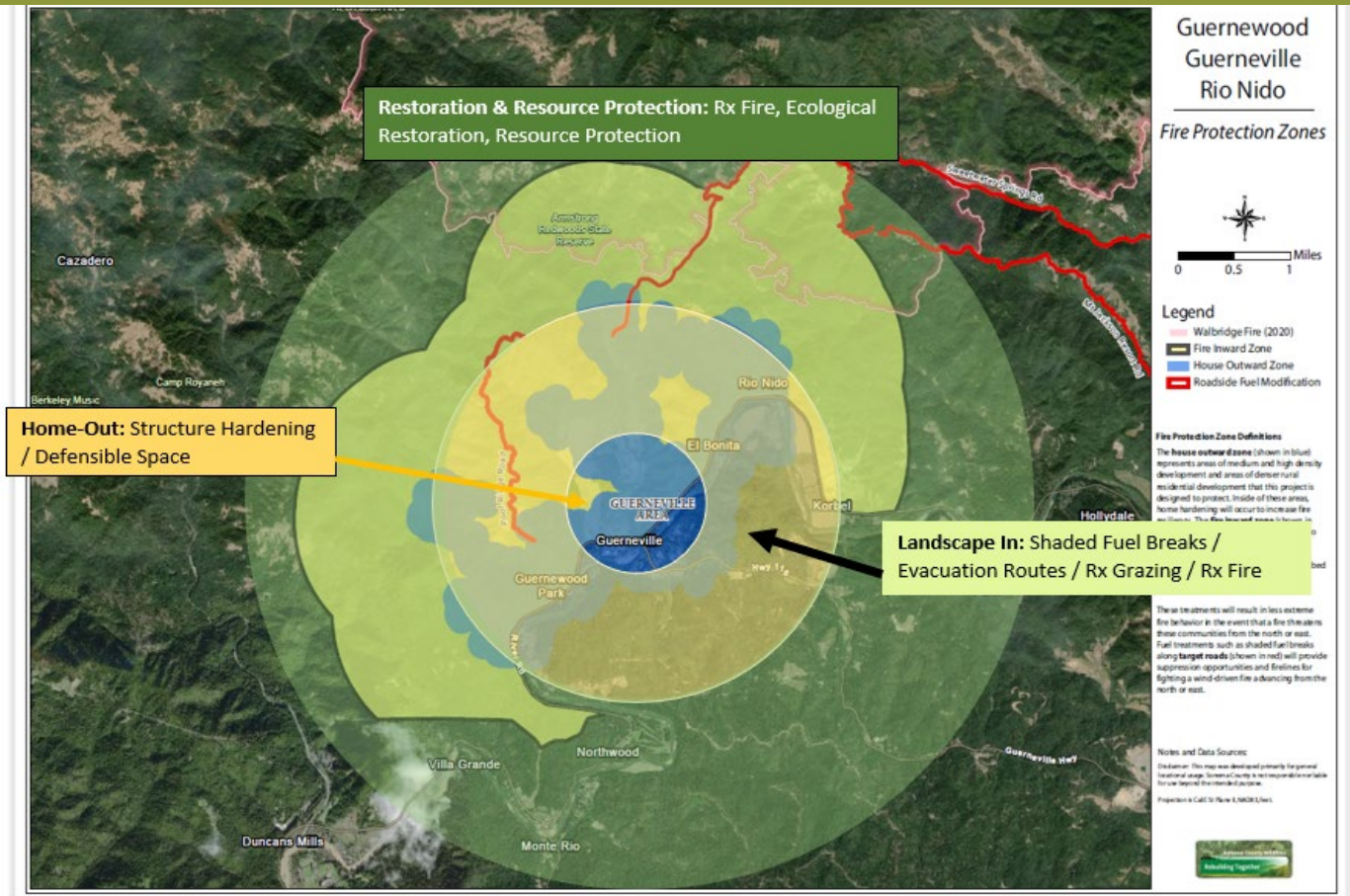
Sonoma County Vegetation Management Technical Advisory Committee

County-wide Accomplishments & Progress

- ✓ 46 Vegetation Management Grant Projects - $8.3M + $1.1M match
- ✓ 7 Regional Collaborations
- ✓ Private Sector / Public Sector Collaboration
- ✓ 9 CAL VTPs Completed or in Process
- ✓ 30+ Community Workshops / Webinars / Field Events
- ✓ Data – Data – Data
- ✓ Wildfire Resilience certificate program (SRJC) / 350 Basic Wildland Firefighters (Fire Forward) / 185 Prescribed Burns since 2017

Balancing Wildfire Resilience and Responsible Resource Management

Conceptual View of Vegetation Mgt & Wildfire Resilience



Case Study: Saddle Mountain Open Space Preserve

- Previous forest management and timber harvest
- Douglas-fir encroachment
- Biodiversity threats
- Ladder fuels
- Wildfire resiliency concerns

Glass Fire Impacts

- Human community impacts
- Extensive tree mortality in Douglas-fir dominated areas
- Ladder-fuel-driven mortality
- Compounded stress due to drought
- Invasive species response

Multi-Objective Vegetation Management

- Fuels management
- Holistic forest health/biodiversity enhancement
- Climate change resilience and carbon sequestration
- Indigenous stewardship
- Prescribed and cultural burning
- Community engagement

Saddle Mtn. Preserve - Before and After

AG + OPEN SPACE
SONOMA COUNTY

Saddle Mtn. Preserve - Before and After

Summary of CLEE Action Items and Recommendations from Healthy Forests Ad Hoc

Ad Hoc Recommendations

❑ Vegetation Management Activities

Provide funding to community-based projects to increase resilience in high-risk zones in advance of the 2021 and 2022 fire seasons, with priority for shovel-ready projects, local organizations with track records of success, multi-benefit work, and other criteria.

Recommendations:

1. Allocate $3,000,000 in funding for a 2023 Vegetation Management Grant Program - using enhanced selection process, criteria, and use of prioritization tools like the Wildfire Resilience Planner and Sonoma County Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

Mill Creek Post Fire Shaded Fuel Breaks

Rio Nido Shaded Fuel Break

LandSmart Community Grazing

Vegetation Management Grant Program Projects 2021 - 2022

Type of Treatment Funded	2021	2022
Multiple Treatments	$54,023	$1,732,305
Shaded Fuel Breaks / Calming Zones	$2,874,061	$280,220
Prescribed Fire	$72,500	$100,000
Retreatment of Burned Areas	$377,364	$26,120
Defensible Space / Roadside Treatments	$1,302,134	$338,750
Prescribed Grazing	$184,600	$530,513
Education/Outreach /Research/Planning	$269,417	$113,321
Total Funding:	**$5,134,099**	**$3,121,229**
Number of Projects Funded:	26	18
Proposed Treatment Area (acres)	1125	2000

2021	2022	Project Type
		Defensible Space / Roadside Treatments
		Education / Outreach / Research / Planning
		Prescribed Fire
		Prescribed Grazing
		Shaded Fuel Breaks / Calming Zones
		Multiple Treatments
		Retreatment of Burned Area
		Understory Thinning
		CAL - VTP

Protected Lands
- Ag + Open Space Protected Land
- Other Protected Land

Fire Perimeter
- 2020 Glass Fire
- 2019 Kincade Fire
- 2017 Sonoma Complex Fires
- 2020 Walbridge & Myers Fires

Political Boundaries
- Incorporated City Area & Urban Growth Boundary
- Supervisorial District

Cooley Ranch Prescribed Fire CAL-VTP
Northern Sonoma County JPA
Pocket
North East Geyserville Prescribed Grazing
Gualala - Russian River Fire Break
Good Fire Revival
Pine Flat - Briggs Ranch Road Collaborative
Moonraker Firetower Perimeter
Kashia Band of Pomo Indians
5th District
4th District
Walbridge
Kincade
South Big Ridge Shaded Fuel Break
Timber Cove Community Chipping Project
Mill Creek Post Fire Shaded Fuel Breaks
Pepperwood Strategic Fuel Break
Tubbs
Sweetwater-Mt. Jackson
Alert Sonoma County
Wilshire Crystal Heights
Calistoga Road Calming Zone
Devils Backbone Fire Fuel Reduction
Rio Nido Shaded Fuel Break
Coast Ridge Forest Council
Hacienda Improvement
Upper Mark West
Foothills POA
Myers
Guernewood Shaded Fuel Break
Canyon Scenic Terrace Roadside
Munitz Ranches Shaded Fuel Break IV
Odd Fellows Rec Club Calm Zone
Southside Russian Rivers Shaded Fuel Break
UCCE/SEC/Fire Safe Sonoma Veg Handbook
Mark West Estates Veg Mgt
Glass
Jenner Headlands
Summer Home Park Calming Zone
LandSmart Grazing Program
Three Camps Project
Fire Safe Sonoma WFAP
North Bay Forest Improvement Program
LandSmart Community Grazing
Resilient Landscapes Coalition
Bennett Ridge - Infrastructure Protection
3rd Dist.
Trinity Ridgeline Fuel Break
Cavedale - Trinity
Nuns
Gehricke Rd Roadside Fuel Reduction Program
Sonoma Valley Fire District
2nd Dist.
1st District
PACIFIC
OCEAN
San Pablo Bay

AG + OPEN SPACE SONOMA COUNTY

May 2022

0 1 2 4 6 8 Miles

Ad Hoc Recommendations

❑ Community Outreach and Education

Outreach and education capacity to spearhead communication with landowners, businesses, and residents on actions private individuals can take to reduce fire risk, including dollars specifically allocated for bilingual and equity-focused outreach.

Recommendations ($600,000)

1. Provide a County website/portal for landowners and resource managers highlighting grant programs, technical assistance providers, best management practices, and other resources available through the County and partners.

2. Contract with the RCDs to offer training and outreach programs to build community capacity in project development, environmental compliance, technical prescriptions for vegetation management, proposal development, and to provide funding to support Sonoma County Forest Conservation Working Group to sponsor the *Living with Fire: Sonoma County Forest Management Conference*.

Ad Hoc Recommendations

❑ Workforce Development and Capacity Building

Invest in career training programs to launch a self-sustaining skilled and dedicated workforce equipped to meet long-term vegetation management needs. Vegetation management jobs can offer a pathway to a high-quality, well-paying, local career, provide workforce training and long-term career growth opportunities to lower-income communities and communities of color, and staff vital capacities for future resilience creating a skilled workforce.

Recommendations:

1. Continue to coordinate with and support organizations working on workforce development for wildfire resiliency programs at the local level and pursue incentives to retain prescribed burn crews and vegetation management career opportunities.

Ad Hoc Recommendations

❑ Data, Prioritization, Planning and Mapping

Data, mapping, and planning efforts that expand on the County's Community Wildfire Protection Plan and other key data-collection initiatives to inform smart decision-making throughout the county.

Recommendations ($150,000):

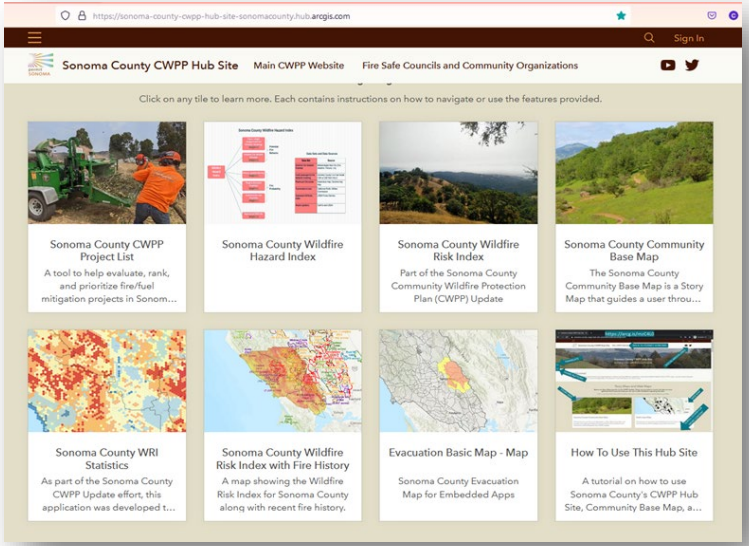
1. Using the new LiDAR dataset, update the Sonoma Veg Map and conduct a change analysis of 2013 conditions versus 2023 conditions.
2. Begin to use the new decision support tools (Wildfire Resilience Planner, Wildfire Fuel Mapper) in project planning in Vegetation Management Grant Program as well as Permit Sonoma's FEMA funded vegetation management projects.
3. Plan the next steps of data and project integration and mapping with the CWPP, VMGP and other project planners and mappers.

SONOMA COUNTY COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN UPDATE

2023 Update

CWPP - Draft One Accomplishments

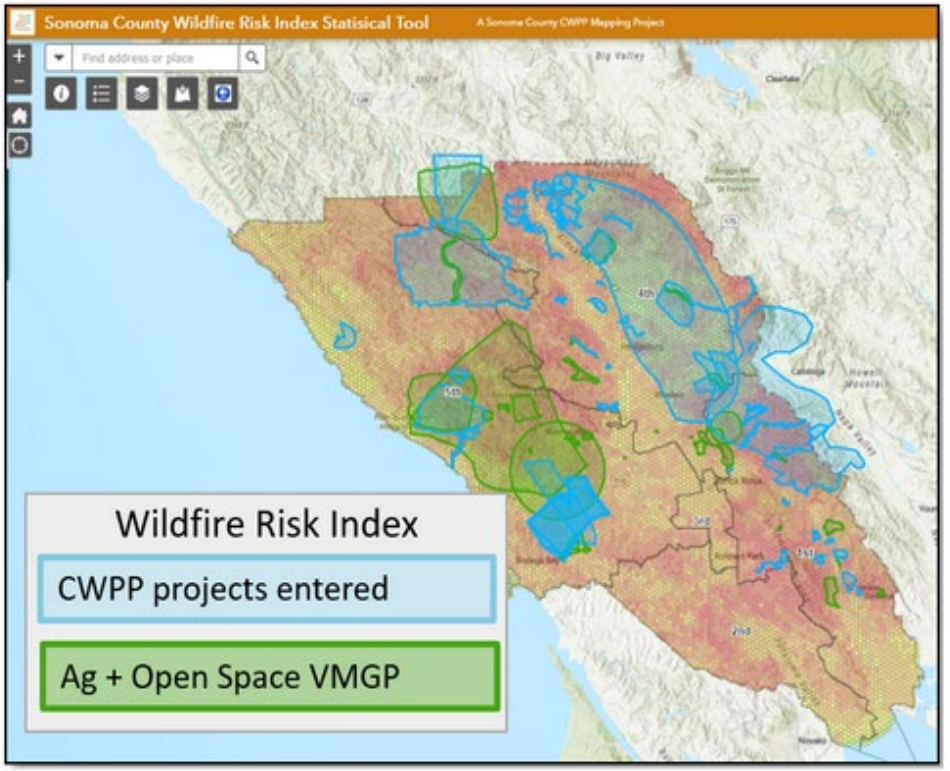
- Hazard and Wildfire Risk Indices created.
- CWPP Hub Site: WRI, Project Entry Tool.
- Meetings in all five supervisory districts.
- Draft CWPP created and reviewed.
- Changes incorporated.
- Second Draft Review in process.



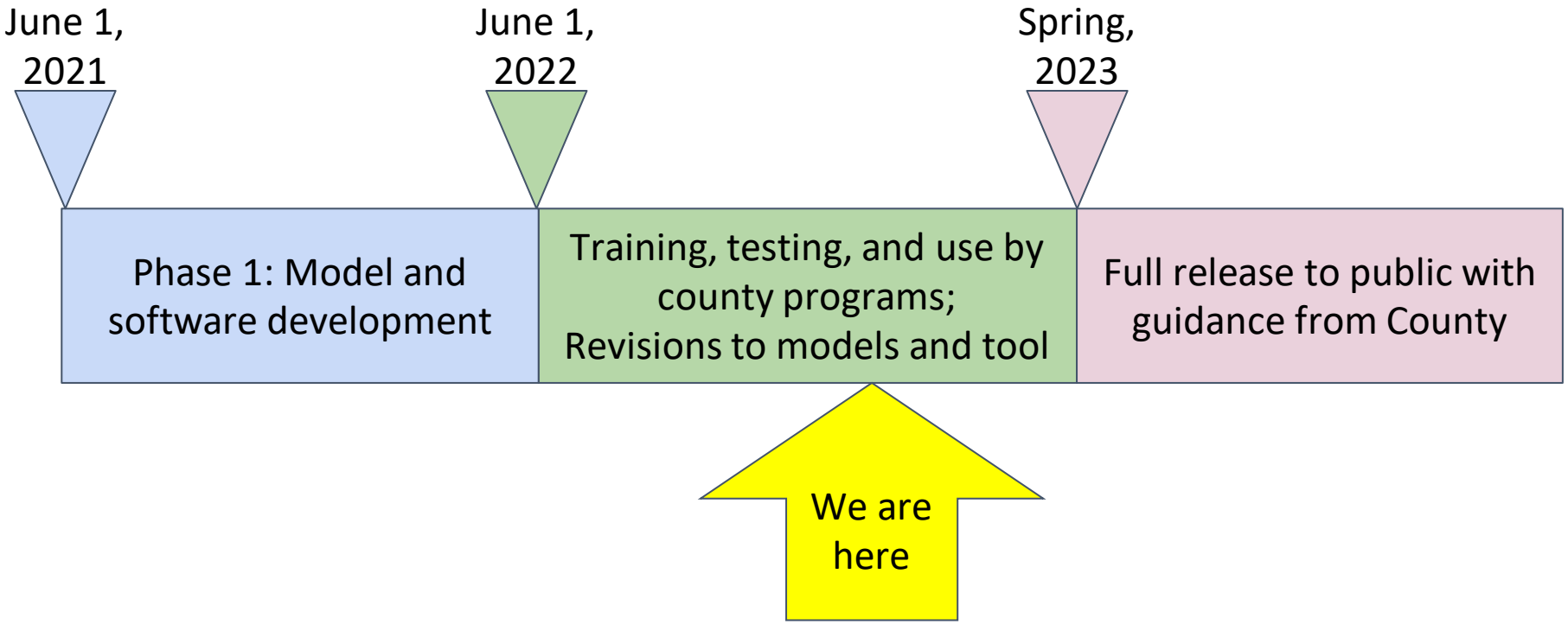
CWPP Hub Site:
https://arcg.is/mzC4L0
CWPP Web Site:
https://permitsonoma.org/sonomacountycwpp

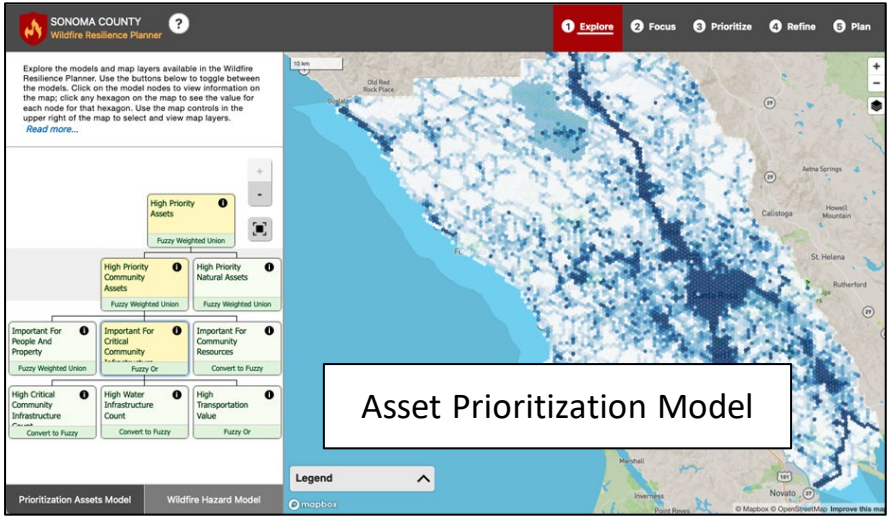
Community Wildfire Protection Plan Update

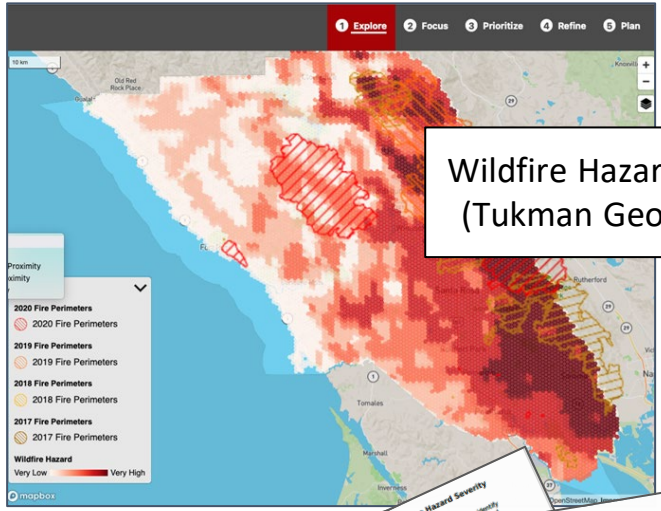
1. Complete and Approve Sonoma County CWPP Update.
2. Finalize mapping and project prioritization strategies for county-wide overview of proposed projects.
3. Create collaborative ranking panel for project review.
4. Expect to present to Board late April or early May.

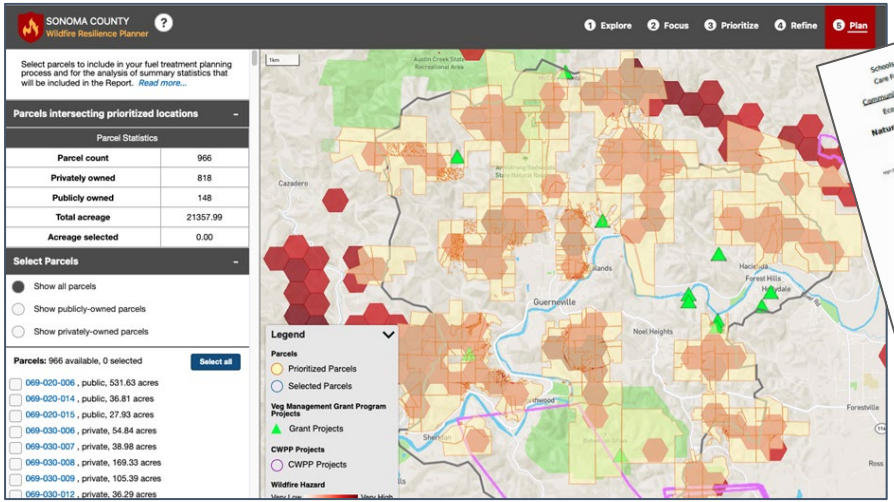


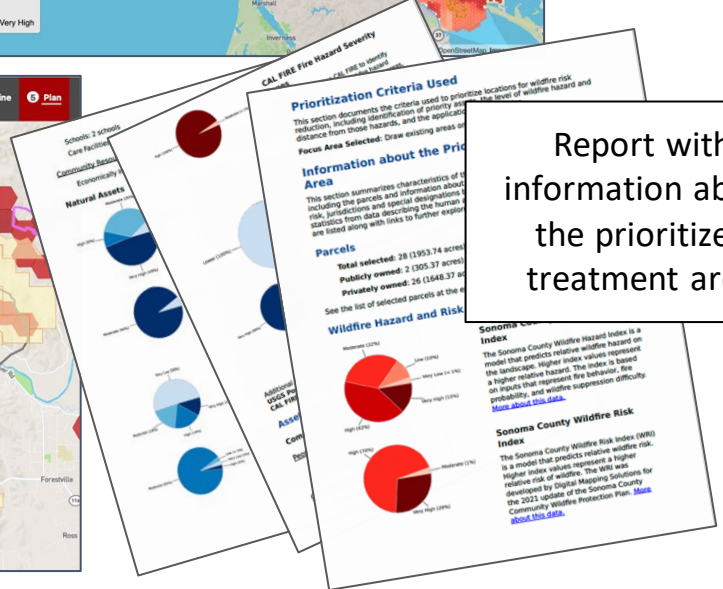
Wildfire Resilience Planner - Timeline











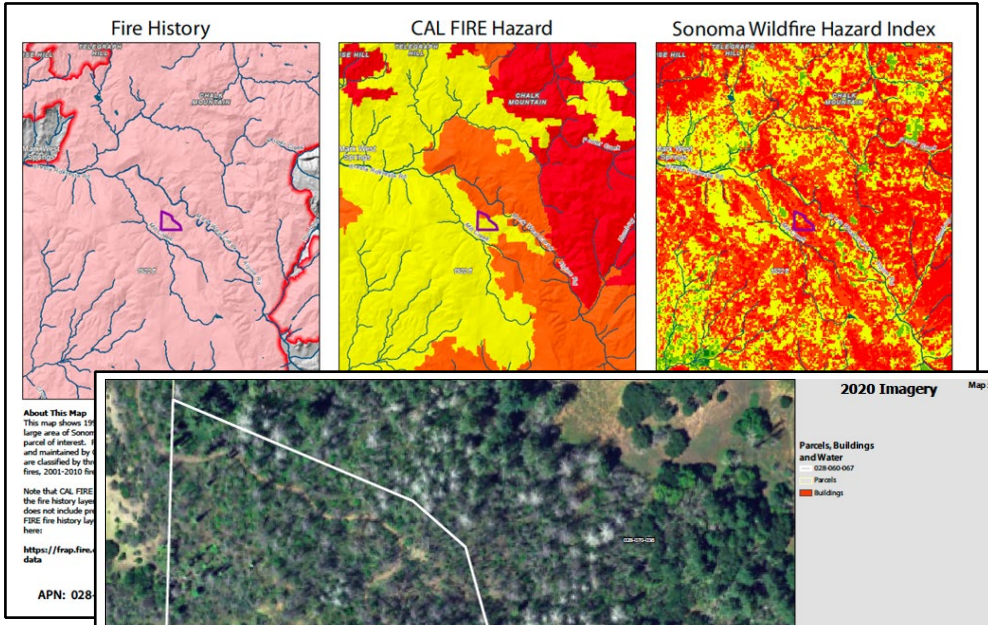
Report with information about the prioritized treatment area

The Wildfire Fuel Mapper Maps

Map Report Contents

This page provides an overview of the maps included in your map report. To view full maps and map descriptions specific to your selected parcel or watershed, continue to page 3.

DATASET	ABOUT THIS MAP
Fire History, CAL FIRE Hazard, Sonoma Hazard	Fire History: Past wildfires in the last 40 years within the parcel or watershed (**Map 1, left pane**) CAL FIRE Hazard & Sonoma Hazard Index: Areas of fire hazard and risk based on factors such as fuel, slope, fire weather, and utility infrastructure such as powerlines (**Map 1, middle and right panes**)
Street Map, Hillshade	Street Map: A simple map with an overview of streets buildings and streams (**Map 2**) Hillshade: A 3D representation of the area, illustrating the physical features of your landscape (**Map 3**)
2013 Imagery, 2020 Imagery	2013 & 2020 Imagery: These maps provide a detailed aerial view for the years of 2013 and 2020 with an overlay of streams and buildings. These two maps can be compared to one another to observe changes in your landscape over time (**Maps 4 and 5**)
Slope, Soils	Slope: Shows the slope of the ground, highlighting areas of steep terrain where fire could spread rapidly (**Map 6**) Soils: Soil types as mapped by the Natural Resource Conservation Service Soil Survey (**Map 7**)
Vegetation, Vegetation Height	Vegetation: Illustrates the different vegetation types on your property (**Map 8**) Vegetation Height: Shows the height of tree-tops, or forest canopy, across your property (**Map 9**). For a table of acreages by veg type, see the end of the report
Ladder Fuels, Fuel Model	Ladder Fuels: Ladder fuels, or near-ground vegetation that can carry ground fire into the canopy (**Map 10**) Fuel Model: Map of different classifications of surface fuels, a primary driver of fire behavior (**Map 11**). See the end of the report for more information on the fuel model.



Ad Hoc Recommendations

❑ Organizational Structure and Funding

Governance and coordination capacity to centralize county efforts, streamline permitting, gather data, and lead outreach initiatives, such as a new multi-agency working group with long-term dedicated staff.

Recommendations ($400,000):

1. Coordinate and integrate the efforts of the VMGP with the FEMA funded wildfire resiliency projects being implemented through Permit Sonoma.
2. Support staff-created County Resiliency Coordination Team to focus on collaboration and communication between County agencies and departments and State and local partners to support long-term wildfire resilience.
3. Support staff-created Technical Advisory Committees/Working Group for:
   a. ***Organizational Structure & Funding*** analysis, cost estimates & County coordination
   b. Home-hardening, defensible space, public infrastructure (***House-Out***)
   c. Landscape-level vegetation management (***Landscape-In***) – ecological monitoring, restoration and enhancement pared with wildfire resilience (existing TAC – Vegetation Management)
   d. Implementation of the Climate Resilient Lands Strategy ***(Lands Strategy Working Group)***

Ad Hoc Recommendations

❑ Organizational Structure and Funding (cont.)

Governance and coordination capacity to centralize county efforts, streamline permitting, gather data, and lead outreach initiatives, such as a new multi-agency working group with long-term dedicated staff.

Recommendations ($400,000):

4. Hire or contract for a full-time coordinator/facilitator for the Resiliency Coordination Team and its supporting TACs.
5. Test Stewardship Plan concept with RCDs to plan and prioritize regional fuel load management, fire resilience strategies, evacuation priorities, resource protection, watershed health, under a variety of different treatments.
6. Financially support consultant / technical collaborator to work with regionally identified collaborations / regional priorities and ongoing work.

People, Structures, Land Use: Reducing Risk of Wildfire Loss

Natural Resource Division

– Large-scale vegetation management

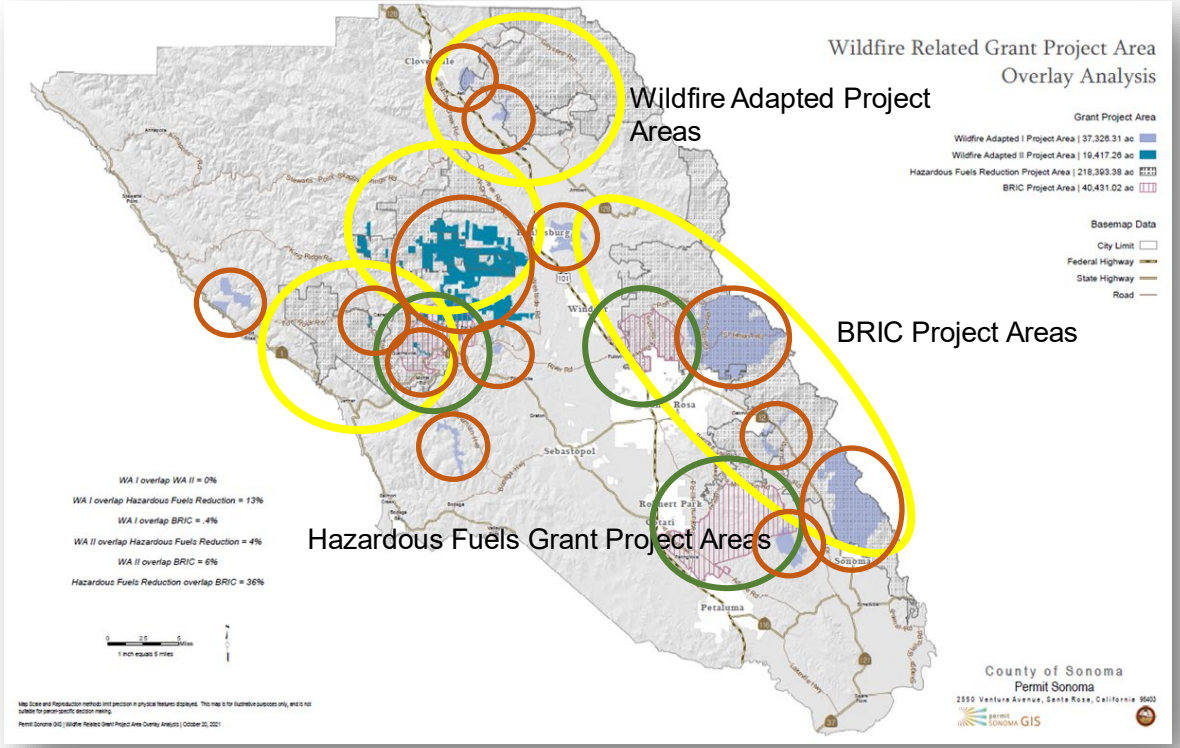
Fire Prevention Division

– Defensible space and structure hardening assessment
– Cost-share program with SCEIP

SoCo Adapts
Our Community Our Responsibility

1. **Wildfire Adapted Sonoma County**
   - Two HMGP Grants, Phase 1 completed July 2023
     - Reduce near-structure fuels, Harden structures, Increase the resilience of the whole community.
2. **Sonoma County Hazardous Fuels Management (HMGP)**
   - Phase 1 completed November 2023
   - Large-scale vegetation management projects in 4 project areas
3. **Combined approach of (1) and (2): Whole community, landscape scale wildfire resilience**
   - BRIC Grant: Three model landscapes (Award Pending, Phase 1 – 18 mos.)
     - Larkfield-Wikiup/Mark West Creek
     - Guernewood-Guerneville-Rio Nido
     - Penngrove-Sonoma Mountain

Current and Proposed Project Areas



Wildfire Adapted Part 1

Wildfire Adapted Part 2

Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project

Wildfire Resilient Sonoma County, BRIC

PROPOSED

Board of Supervisors

County Administrator's Office

INTERDEPARTMENTAL/AGENCY RESILIENCY COORDINATION TEAM (RCT)

Ag + Open Space, Permit Sonoma, Climate Action & Resiliency Division, Regional Parks, Sonoma Water, Department of Transportation & Public Works, Department of Emergency Management, Office of Equity

Technical Advisory Committee Landscape Management (Landscape-In)

Fuel Management, Ecosystem Health

Key County Depts/Agencies

- Ag + Open Space (co-lead)
- Permit Sonoma – N.R. (co-lead)
- Sonoma Water
- Regional Parks
- Dept. of Emergency Mgt

Key Partners

- CALFIRE
- UC Cooperative Extension
- Resource Conservation Districts
- Local Fire Districts
- Local Tribes *

NGOs

- Land mgt and conservation groups
- Community organizations

Technical Advisory Committee Community & Infrastructure (House-Out)

Hardening, Defensible Space, Roadside Treatments

Key County Depts/Agencies

- Permit Sonoma – Fire Prevention (lead)
- Dept. of Emergency Mgt.
- Transportation & Public Works
- Climate Action & Resiliency

Key Partners

- UC Cooperative Extension
- CALFIRE
- Fire Safe Sonoma
- Resource Conservation Districts
- Local Fire Districts
- Local Tribes *

NGOs

- Home-hardening organizations
- Public safety advocates
- Community organizations
- Low Income/Access Functional Needs

Technical Advisory Committee Organizational Structure & Funding

Current and Future Approaches to Organize Resiliency Efforts

Key County Depts/Agencies

- County Counsel (co-lead)
- CAO (co-lead)
- Ag + Open Space
- Permit Sonoma
- Climate Action & Resiliency

Key Partners

- UC Cooperative Extension
- Local Fire Districts
- RCPA
- Local Tribes *

NGOs

- Organizational structure organizations
- Long-term financial expertise

Climate & Resilient Lands Strategy – Working Group

Societal and Landscape Resiliency, Ecosystem Services and Health

Key County Depts/Agencies

- Climate Action & Res. (lead)
- Ag + Open Space
- Permit Sonoma – Planning, N.R.
- Regional Parks
- Sonoma Water

Key Partners

- UC Cooperative Extension
- Ag Commissioner
- Resource Conservation Districts
- RCPA
- Local Tribes *

NGOs

- Climate change advocates
- Environmental education organizations
- Community organizations
- Low income / Access Functional Needs

* Engagement with Local Tribes will be offered as a separate and parallel process to allow for confidentiality and to ensure individual tribal processes and procedures are respected. Tribal representatives will also be invited to participate in the larger community-based working groups should they so desire.

Ad Hoc Recommendations

❑ Long-Term Financial Sustainability

Identify and analyze long-term financial sustainability instruments to generate recurring funds for vegetation management, such as a countywide financing district, new parcel or sales tax, or resilience bond.

Recommendations:

1. Seek block grants from CALFIRE to support and maintain fuel treatments across the County.
2. Apply for funding through US Forest Service Community Wildfire Defense Grant program.
3. Engage fire services, vegetation management, home hardening and general public as future funding mechanisms.
4. Long-term financial mechanisms will be addressed by the Technical Advisory Committee – Organizational Structure and Funding.

Recommendation

❑ Programmatic and Administrative Support

Recommendations ($290,000):

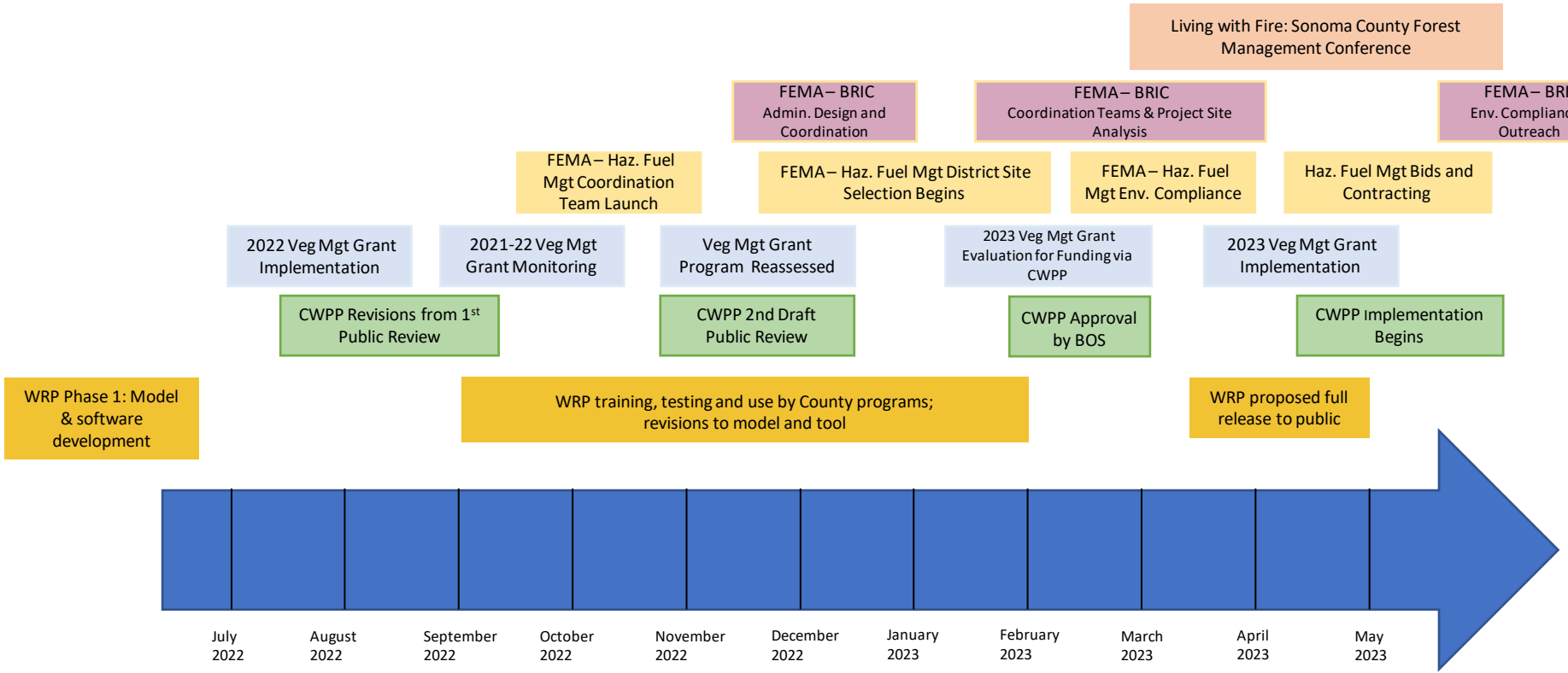
1. PG&E settlement funding $150,000 anticipated administrative and planning staff expenses and associated contractual support through FY 23/24.
2. PG&E settlement funding of approximately $140,000 for a time-limited position to provide overall program support. A separate board item will follow on January 24, 2023 with more information about the position request.
3. As the program successfully secures additional funding from other sources it will be necessary to cover administrative support to the grant program and related activities.

Summary of Ad Hoc Recommendations

- ❑ Vegetation Management Activities = $3 Million
- ❑ Outreach and Education = $600,000
- ❑ Workforce Development and Capacity Building = $0
- ❑ Data, Prioritization, Planning & Mapping = $150,000
- ❑ Organization Structure & Funding = $400,000
- ❑ Programmatic and Administrative Support = $290,000

Total Request: $4,440,000

County Timeline 2022-2023



THANK YOU

Contact info: Kim.Batchelder@sonoma-county.org
Tel: (707) 565-7355