



COUNTY OF SONOMA

575 ADMINISTRATION
DRIVE, ROOM 102A
SANTA ROSA, CA 95403

SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 6/2/2026

To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): County Executive's Office

Staff Name and Phone Number: David Guhin, Yvonne Shu 707-565-2431

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisorial District(s): All

Title:

Wildfire Resilience Coordination Project

Recommended Action:

- A) Receive consultant recommendations related to wildfire resilience coordination.
- B) Approve staff recommendations or direct staff on next steps.

Executive Summary:

The Wildfire Resilience Coordination Project examines how Sonoma County can move from fragmented wildfire resilience efforts toward a more coordinated and effective system. Building on prior recommendations, including those from the Berkeley Center for Law, Energy and Environment (CLEE) in 2021, this item proposes the next steps to formalize and further establish the partnerships and infrastructure needed to improve wildfire resilience outcomes. While developed in the context of wildfire, this approach is designed to support broader climate resilience efforts over time. Funded in [January 2023 <https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5985375&GUID=738AAB45-BC1C-4BA6-9721-C30F051E0821&Options=&Search=>](https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5985375&GUID=738AAB45-BC1C-4BA6-9721-C30F051E0821&Options=&Search=>), key elements of the Wildfire Resilience Coordination Project were incorporated as part of the County's Climate Resilience Comprehensive Action Plan (Climate Plan) near-term measures. This item is a follow-up to these prior actions.

Discussion:

In 2020, the Board allocated \$25 million from Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) settlement funds for vegetation management, the majority of which has been used for vegetation management grants and related staffing. CLEE's recommendation in 2021 to use some of the funding to establish a governance model for wildfire resilience led to a basic project structure, approved by the Board in January 2023. On February 27, 2024, the Board approved a contract with consultant, Eastern Research Group (ERG) to conduct an exploration of organizing frameworks, with two key project objectives:

1. Create a near-term framework for improved coordination and collaboration within the "County family" of departments and agencies, which will also then improve coordination and collaboration between the County and other entities and organizations; and
2. Develop and propose to the Board of Supervisors a long-term framework for institutionalizing these efforts and how a proposed structure can best meet the needs of wildfire resiliency in Sonoma County.

Input was informed through coordinated engagement with County departments and agencies, technical experts, and community partners. Four Technical Advisory Committees (TAC)-Climate Resilient Lands,

Landscape Management, Wildfire Risk Mitigation, and Organizational and Funding-provided subject matter expertise and identified barriers to implementation. A Resilience Coordination Team composed of leadership from nine County departments and agencies helped to define internal coordination needs. Community-based organizations, including Gold Ridge and Sonoma Resource Conservation Districts, Sonoma Ecology Center, Fire Safe Sonoma, and Los Cien, contributed community perspectives through focus groups and ongoing participation. Additional input came from interviews with wildfire experts and review of existing County plans. A list of all partners that participated in the project can be found in Attachment B.

Across these efforts, consistent themes emerged: coordination is fragmented; data is dispersed; funding is not strategically aligned; and implementation capacity is limited. A complete report of the background research and project input is provided in Attachment B. ERG's analysis and findings confirmed that Sonoma County's wildfire resilience efforts are constrained by structural gaps and identified the following core functions to meet these needs:

- Centralized coordination and policy alignment
- Community engagement and messaging
- Sustainable funding
- Technical assistance
- Workforce development
- Data portal and analytics

Consultant Recommendations

ERG's recommendations incorporate the needs outlined above as well as a phased, collaborative approach to strengthen wildfire resilience in Sonoma County. The consultant's detailed findings and recommendations can be found in Attachment A and are summarized as follows:

1. Align County departments and agencies. Improve coordination and alignment across County departments and agencies working on wildfire resilience and climate.
2. Form a Wildfire Resilience Working Group supported by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Establish a Working Group to align resilience strategies, including County departments and agencies, Fire Safe Sonoma, Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District (RCD), Sonoma RCD, and Cal FIRE.
3. Create a countywide Climate Resilience Collaborative managed by Sonoma County Transit and Climate Authorities (SCTCA). Leverage the Regional Climate Protection Authority's (RCPA) designation as a Climate Resilience District to form a Climate Resilience Collaborative that coordinates efforts across the County, cities and partner organizations. The Collaborative would address multiple hazards, with the Wildfire Resilience Working Group serving as a component of this structure. (Note: RCPA and the Sonoma County Transportation Authority are now collectively known as SCTCA.)
4. Form a Climate Resilience Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). Establish a TAC to provide subject matter expertise and incorporate perspectives from community-based organizations. SCTCA would oversee and manage the TAC as part of the Collaborative. □
5. Phased implementation. Implement these actions in phases to build capacity, establish resources, and allow for ongoing evaluation and adaptive management.

New Developments since Start of Project

On March 5, 2024, Measure H, the “Improved and Enhanced Local Fire Protection, Paramedic Services and Disaster Response Initiative” passed successfully, enabling a one-half cent sales tax on the sale and use of tangible property within Sonoma County, including incorporated and unincorporated areas, to supplement existing funding for wildfire prevention and preparedness, paramedic services, and emergency and disaster response. The new sales tax became operative as of October 1, 2024; the FY 2024-25 Measure H annual report is on today’s Board agenda.

Fire Safe Sonoma signed a five-year services agreement with the Sonoma County Fire Chiefs Association (SCFCA) in early 2025, supported by Measure H funding. Under this agreement, Fire Safe Sonoma is tasked with, among other responsibilities: operating as the countywide Fire Safe Council; wildfire prevention and safety education and outreach; designating which projects are to be implemented with Measure H-funded vegetation management crews; and pursuing grants and leveraging Measure H-funded crews as match. SCFCA Measure H funding also supports the salary of a full-time executive director at Fire Sonoma; Ben Nicholls was hired for this position in February 2026.

Fire Safe Sonoma, Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District (RCD), and Sonoma RCD, all participants in the Wildfire Resilience Coordination project, have recently built on the project’s momentum by beginning the process of developing a Sonoma County wildfire collaborative with a memorandum of understanding (MOU). While similar to the consultant’s recommendation #2, this iteration has Fire Safe Sonoma as the lead. Their working group, which includes fire districts and some County staff, is focused on coordinating and prioritizing countywide, community-driven mitigation projects. As their collaborative and MOU becomes solidified, it is anticipated that the County working group, outlined below, would bring broader County perspective to the discussion.

Broader Climate Coordination

The wildfire resilience coordination project was an initial foray into broader climate coordination. (Note: Sonoma Water and the Department of Emergency Management completed a [Flood Risk Management Assessment <https://www.sonomawater.org/flood-risk-management>](https://www.sonomawater.org/flood-risk-management) in 2024 which also highlighted the need for greater collaboration and communication.) Bridging the gap between wildfire resilience coordination, which is at its beginning stages, and broader climate hazard coordination will require time and further discussion. The project identified SCTCA as best positioned to convene on broader climate coordination. County staff will collaborate with SCTCA as appropriate when a clearer timeline and approach are defined for a proposed countywide climate collaborative or working group.

Staff Recommendations

This project underscored the continued interest and need for greater wildfire resilience coordination. The following staff recommendations incorporate elements of the consultant’s recommendations while considering the specific role and capacity of the County.

1. Establish an internal County working group for wildfire resilience. Consistent with Consultant Recommendation #1 above, strengthening coordination among County agencies and departments will improve the way the County supports the work of others and mitigates potentially redundant efforts. The quarterly, internal climate convenings organized over the past year by the CEO have increased internal project awareness and spurred thoughtful discussion. Staff recommends a similar model for wildfire

resilience, initially led by CEO staff, that could be the first step toward regular coordination, with discussion focused on specific issues, such as the potential need for a portal for wildfire resilience data, which was a point of discussion in the consultant’s report.

- a. Develop a work plan with detailed scope for a County wildfire resilience data portal. One area of discussion in the consultant’s report was the opportunity for the County to bring together data that is currently housed across a variety of platforms and ensure that the relevant data layers are operational. While the exact scope of work will require further discussion and validation with the County working group, preliminary discussions have indicated a need for consistent, parcel-level vegetation and fuels data, including updating vegetation-related layers using 2022 LiDAR (light detecting and ranging) data; incorporating fire behavior modeling that is updated and regionally consistent; integrating project datasets from County departments and agencies; and maintaining a layer that records vegetation management projects. The County working group would explore these needs and ongoing management.

It should be noted that Fire Safe Sonoma is working toward a prioritized list and eventual map of community wildfire mitigation projects expected to occur in the next few years, mapping Measure H efforts and vetted community projects. Community project data from Fire Safe Sonoma could potentially be documented as a layer in the proposed data portal.

- 2. Explore a pilot project for sustainable funding with the Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs). Sustainable funding for wildfire resilience efforts is a persistent need; the County lacks the resources to consistently and strategically apply for and manage relevant funding. One possible solution is to work with the Resource Conservation Districts. Gold Ridge and Sonoma RCDs have secured over \$12.2 million since 2018 to support a range of technical assistance and planning efforts, in large part by leveraging dollars from other sources to bring in additional funding. County staff recommends exploring a potential pilot initiative with the RCDs, led by CEO staff, to develop a specific, time-bound, and metric-driven plan for the RCDs to turn start-up investment support from the County into an ongoing, self-sustaining funding source for wildfire resilience.

Strategic Plan:

This item directly supports the County’s Five-year Strategic Plan and is aligned with the following pillar, goal, and objective.

Pillar: Climate Action and Resiliency

Goal: Goal 1: Continue to invest in wildfire preparedness and resiliency strategies

Objective: All

Racial Equity:

Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?

Yes

Prior Board Actions:

[9/10/24 <https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6847082&GUID=2FDE916D-FA11-41CA-85EF-862A1FA994DE>](https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6847082&GUID=2FDE916D-FA11-41CA-85EF-862A1FA994DE) - approval of climate plan, including a wildfire measure (WF-CO-1) to “implement the sustainable wildfire resilience project”

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[2/27/24 <https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6519226&GUID=5FB7741D-8B6D-44F4-AA89-0FEAB310867B&Options=&Search=>](https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6519226&GUID=5FB7741D-8B6D-44F4-AA89-0FEAB310867B&Options=&Search=>) - approval of consultant agreement
[1/10/23 <https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5985375&GUID=738AAB45-BC1C-4BA6-9721-C30F051E0821&Options=&Search=>](https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5985375&GUID=738AAB45-BC1C-4BA6-9721-C30F051E0821&Options=&Search=>) - approval of funding for consultant
[3/23/21 <https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4854781&GUID=C0EDE6DC-B9E3-4326-9DF9-E5FCC352D3C0&Options=&Search=>](https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4854781&GUID=C0EDE6DC-B9E3-4326-9DF9-E5FCC352D3C0&Options=&Search=>) - acceptance of CLEE recommendations for the PG&E settlement funds, including potentially establishing a governance structure for wildfire-related efforts
[10/6/20 <https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4657018&GUID=CCAE6027-82DA-4745-AF59-1B762A2BB423&Options=&Search=>](https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4657018&GUID=CCAE6027-82DA-4745-AF59-1B762A2BB423&Options=&Search=>) - PG&E settlement funds - community feedback, preliminary allocation discussion

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY25-26 Adopted	FY26-27 Projected	FY27-28 Projected
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures			
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
General Fund Contingencies			
Total Sources			

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

N/A

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

- Attachment A - ERG report
- Attachment B - ERG background research
- Attachment C - Equity analysis

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Presentation

Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:

None