



County of Sonoma Wildfire Resilience and Climate Change Planning and Coordination

BACKGROUND RESEARCH AND FINDINGS

March 2026



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OVERVIEW

This report contains the following sections:

- 🍃 **Technical Advisory Committees (TACs) Summaries and Recommendations Memo:** This memo outlines the members, key documents, and meetings for each TAC, as well as key recommendations and outcomes.
- 🍃 **Resilience Coordination Team (RCT):** This memo outlines the members, key documents, and meetings for the Resilience Coordination Team (RCT), as well as key recommendations and outcomes.
- 🍃 **Program-Wide Technical Advisory Committee Meetings:** This summary provides an overview of the two program-wide TAC meetings held as part of the Wildfire Resilience and Climate Planning effort. These meetings brought together members from all four project TACs: Landscape Management, Climate Resilient Lands, Wildfire Risk Mitigation, and Organizational Structure and Funding.
- 🍃 **Previous Outreach and Engagement Key Findings Memo:** This memo presents key findings across the ten plans and four focus groups. It also compares these findings to identify priorities and issues shared across the efforts.
- 🍃 **Organizational Structure and Funding Interview Findings Memo:** This summary presents synthesized findings drawn from analysis across all interviews.
- 🍃 **RCT Departments: Key Activities and Capacities Related to Wildfire Resilience:** This document summarizes existing wildfire resilience efforts across departments and agencies represented on the Resilience Coordination Team (RCT). Its purpose is to inform upcoming meetings between the Core Team, RCT members, and department and agency staff by highlighting relevant actions, initiatives, and capacities already in place within RCT agencies.
- 🍃 **Organizational Structure Models and Examples Memo:** This document summarizes the types of organizational models identified as relevant to Sonoma County and the work of the Organizational Structure and Funding TAC. For each model type, we provide examples of entities analyzed for governance structure, staffing, funding, and participatory elements.

TAC SUMMARIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS MEMO



Climate Resilient Lands TAC

TAC Process

This section provides an overview of the TAC and links to key documents and meeting materials.

Members

- Allison Schichtel, Sonoma Ag and Open Space
- Anya Starovoytov, Sonoma RCD
- Caitlin Cornwall, Sonoma Ecology Center
- Chris Grabill, County of Sonoma
- Christine Kuehn, Sonoma RCD
- John Mack, Permit Sonoma
- Eamon O’Byrne, Sonoma Land Trust
- Jonathan Warmerdam, North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Patricia Hickey, Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District
- Rob Bamford, Northern Sonoma County Air Pollution Control District
- Sasha Ponomareva, Sonoma County Water Agency (Sitting in for Molly Oshun)
- Stephanie Larson, UC Cooperative Extension, Sonoma County
- Temra Costa, Regenerative Forest Solutions
- Tom Gardali, Audubon Canyon Ranch
- Tori Norville, UC Cooperative Extension, Sonoma County

Key Documents

- [A Portrait of Sonoma County 2021 Update](#), Measure of America
- [California Forest Carbon Plan](#), Forest Climate Action Team
- [California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan](#), California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force
- [California’s Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy](#), California Natural Resources Agency and the California Air Resources Board
- [California’s Strategic Plan for Expanding the Use of Beneficial Fire](#), California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force
- [County of Sonoma Climate Action and Resiliency Division Five-Year Strategic Plan](#), County Administrator’s Office, Climate Action and Resiliency Division

- [Pathways to 30x30 Strategy](#), Administration of Governor Gavin Newsom; California Natural Resources Agency
- [Sonoma County Climate Resilient Lands Strategy](#), County of Sonoma Climate Action and Resiliency Division and Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District
- [Sonoma County Multijurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Update 2023](#), Permit Sonoma
- [Sonoma County RCPA's Climate Mobilization Strategy](#), Sonoma County Regional Climate Protection Authority
- [Sonoma County Veg Map](#), Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District and the Sonoma County Water Agency
- [Sonoma County Vital Lands Initiative](#), Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District
- [Sonoma County Wood Recovery & Utilization Project: Assessing the Viability of Wood Recovery and Utilization in Sonoma County](#), Regenerative Forest Solutions
- [The County of Sonoma Climate Resilience Comprehensive Action Plan](#), County Administrator's Office, Climate Action and Resiliency Division

Meetings

The meeting purpose and dates are listed below with a hyperlink to a folder with materials for each meeting.

- Meeting #1 (12/9/24): [Kickoff meeting](#)
- Meeting #2 (2/13/25): [Capabilities and Capacities](#)
- Meeting #3 (4/17/25): [Programmatic Recommendations](#)

Vision and Goals

This section provides an overview of the final vision and goals agreed upon by the TAC.

Vision

Recommend conservation, restoration, and stewardship strategies that aim to enhance the biodiversity and natural functions of our ecosystems and optimize multiple benefits for wildfire, flood, drought, and heat resilience.

Goals

1. Identify investments for landscape scale climate resilient, wildfire resilience treatments.
2. Ensure projects are designed, sited, and implemented to achieve climate resilience and mitigate wildfire and coordinated to maximize multiple benefits, including ecological, community, and risk reduction.
3. Increase available workforce for wildfire and climate resilience through funding and training.

4. Develop a program that engages, educates and empowers through funding and technical assistance community members and landowners on land management solutions that reduce risk, improve health, and provide benefits to communities and landowners.
5. Ensure the design of the program is supported by coordinated county policies and regulatory requirements.
6. Conserve, restore, and steward lands to adapt to future conditions by implementing Climate Resilient Lands Strategy recommendations.

Key Findings

This section provides an overview of the key challenges and opportunities associated with promoting wildfire resilience in Sonoma County. These findings were developed through a review of the key documents and TAC member input during meetings. The bullets underneath each challenge and opportunity summarize the recommendations from TAC members about how to address each challenge and opportunity.

Finding 1: Challenges

1.1 Inconsistent, short-term funding and limited private investment weaken long-term climate resilience.

- There is a need for stable, long-term funding to support climate resilience efforts, and for diversifying funding sources beyond grants, which can be unpredictable and restrictive for sustained action.
- Private landowner investment can be a reliable funding stream. Successful models, such as Napa Firewise, demonstrate effective approaches to accessing private funds. Private contributions, when structured properly, could provide steady financial support that grants alone cannot sustain. Creating a meaningful role for private businesses in resilience efforts is also important, as they have the capacity to invest in outreach and implementation beyond what government and nonprofit organizations can achieve.
- Proposition 4 is a potential new funding source.
- If Measure H funding is to be a key component of future efforts, additional engagement will be necessary to ensure alignment with long-term resilience goals.

1.2 Fragmented coordination and unclear roles hinder efficient, cross-boundary land management.

- Geographic coordination is important for implementing fuel treatments across property boundaries. The PG&E settlement funds serve as a case study, where linked efforts among private property owners have demonstrated the value of cross-jurisdictional collaboration.
- The large number of organizations involved in resilience work within Sonoma County can make it difficult to determine the right points of contact for collaboration. Improved communication and a clearer organizational network could help streamline coordination efforts and reduce duplication of work.

1.3 Workforce and technical expertise gaps and inadequate infrastructure constrain implementation at scale.

- Education and workforce development efforts present key opportunities for strengthening the resilience sector. One example is [Trabajadores de la Tierra](#), which has successfully brought 72 workers into fire and resilience work through a just transition program, effectively doubling the wages commonly associated with this work. Formalizing and scaling these pathways could be beneficial, with Measure H identified as a funding source to expand crews and provide strong compensation.
- Existing initiatives, such as Fire Forward’s prescribed burn training, have had a beneficial impact, but efforts need to be strengthened and expanded countywide to ensure a sustainable pipeline of trained professionals.
- There is a need for more milling in the county to process woody biomass and to triple the county’s workforce. Small diameter trees can be effectively milled to create products but it cannot be done at scale yet. There is a group of partners working with the state and looking into how treatments can be more financially viable and recently published a [report on this work](#). The county can promote sustainable wood products markets to support these forest management efforts.

1.4 Gaps in outreach and capacity limit meaningful engagement with underserved and Tribal communities.

- While many underserved communities do not directly control large tracts of land, they are among the most affected by climate change. Insights from environmental justice components of local planning efforts reinforce the need to prioritize engagement with these communities to incorporate their perspectives and ensure equitable access to resources and resilience strategies.
- Tribal communities are key sources of knowledge on land stewardship practices. Departments and organizations should prioritize learning from and partnering with sovereign Tribes to improve land management strategies.
- Capacity and outreach challenges need to be addressed through improved translation services, clearer communication strategies, and more intentional outreach to Latino communities. These communities have demonstrated a strong commitment to climate resilience—both in their willingness to invest in solutions and in their heightened vulnerability to climate impacts—making their engagement essential to the success of resilience efforts.

1.5 Complex permitting and regulatory requirements delay critical wildfire mitigation efforts.

- The Governor recently issued an [emergency proclamation](#) that allows projects to skip certain state regulations to speed up fuels reduction efforts.

1.6 Gaining landowner support for land management projects is challenging due to limited awareness of funding, the need for trust-building, and difficulties in securing access and agreements across public and private lands.

- Ag & Open Space relies on partners to create relationships and build trust for land acquisition and have had positive results with the Vegetation Management grant. Including RCDs has been an essential component of this success and they are often the point organization for landowners.
- CAL FIRE has had success through getting landowners who have implemented the work to be test cases and ambassadors in their communities. They invite neighbors over with someone from the county or RCDs to see what change has been done on their land and what it looks like and how it has benefited them.
- Developing financial support such as rebates or incentive programs to reduce barriers for landowners, particularly for elderly residents, to undertake preventative actions could be an important solution.
- There is a need to reduce the cost of making parcels wildfire resilient. Currently, many landowners struggle to afford the cost of treatments or are unsure of the range of costs associated with increasing wildfire resilience on their lands. One strategy could include developing a program where homeowners can opt to have a chipper come to their house and help do their defensible space for them. This would reduce the challenge of finding the right contractor to do the work and ensuring that the work will be done.
- Landowners are interested in how their land stewardship can contribute to the climate crisis, they just need to be presented with strategies that are framed to inform and educate them.
- There are barriers to equity and accessibility. Time and dollar resources, language barriers, and status as renters and/or immigrants hinder wildfire resilience efforts for vulnerable communities.

Finding 2: Opportunities

2.1 Build on conservation easements and integrate adaptive land-use planning with sustainable practices.

- Conservation easements can be written to support wildfire resilience and adaptive land-use planning, but some existing easements restrict active stewardship, limiting landowners' ability to implement necessary management practices. Ensuring that future easements explicitly allow for stewardship activities that enhance resilience and provide for adaptation is important. Easements could also be considered for property owners and land that provide climate resilience benefits for the local community.
- Updating multiple easements at once could facilitate broader change. Efforts are already underway to revise conservation easement templates to better acknowledge the importance of active stewardship that provides for adaptations.

- While existing easements may not be easily altered, future agreements could integrate resilience-focused provisions. The concept of "resilience easements," as used in Napa County, is a promising model.
- Land conservation can be used to diversify and provide topographic range for species to migrate to differing habitat conditions.

2.2 Leverage cross-sector partnerships and innovative funding mechanisms to support wildfire resilience efforts.

- Private landowners and the private sector play a critical role in advancing wildfire resilience efforts particularly since a significant percentage of land in Sonoma County is privately owned. Better coordination of funding, particularly if it reduces reliance on grants, could reduce administrative burdens and maximize impact. A more strategic and centralized approach to managing these funds could help align efforts and achieve multiple benefits.
- There is a need to develop a structured yet flexible funding model. While top-down prioritization— potentially led by the County—could help guide efforts strategically, implementation and funding could be more effectively managed through private-sector involvement. This approach would require strong evaluation standards to ensure high-quality work while maintaining adaptability in resource allocation.
- Leveraging the strengths of Tribes, local organizations, agencies, landowners, and farmers through collaborative partnerships is a key wildfire resilience strategy. These efforts can scale up climate action, build trust, and ensure shared benefits across the county.

2.3 Continue inclusive outreach and targeted interventions to empower vulnerable communities.

- Broader outreach efforts are important to empower all communities, while targeted interventions are necessary for those most at risk. Tribal engagement should be explicitly included.
- Effective outreach should be inclusive and accessible, ensuring that everyone—regardless of risk level—has the knowledge and resources to act.
- In wildfire resilience, factors such as living in the wildland-urban interface (WUI) or residing in older homes contribute to vulnerability. Recognizing these distinctions can help refine outreach strategies and ensure interventions are tailored to community needs and risks.

2.4 Expand support for prescribed burns and culturally informed fire stewardship.

- Efforts are underway at the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to improve the permitting process, though challenges remain.
- Balancing prescribed fire efforts with air quality regulations is crucial to address ongoing air quality and smoke challenges, and there needs to be a way to discuss and address the concerns of vineyard managers worried about grape taint.
- It is important to minimize negative ecological impacts of wildfire resilience efforts and use precise language that reflects multiple objectives, including land health and stewardship.

- Exploring ways to establish or strengthen liability protections for practitioners will help encourage the use of prescribed burns.

2.5 Streamline agency collaboration and integrate wildfire resilience into broader policy frameworks.

- A clear prioritization process is needed, including how to leverage existing mapping efforts to assess feasibility and maintenance of treatments. Weak coordination across jurisdictions leads to duplicated efforts instead of strengthening existing programs. Expanding the scope beyond neighboring counties is critical for effective regional collaboration, as well as for learning what has been effective in other parts of the state.

2.6 Leverage community engagement and past disaster experience to build support for wildfire resilience efforts.

- Develop a public education campaign to raise awareness about the benefits of beneficial fire, as well as other wildfire resilience activities such as defensible space and home hardening.

Bringing a Climate Resilient Land Focus to the Program

This section summarizes feedback from the TAC as to how to bring a climate resilient lands focus to the wildfire resilience program, and uses the recommendations from the [Sonoma Climate Resilient Lands Strategy](#) to organize TAC input. This information provides context to the types of organization who should be involved in this work and the topical expertise needed.

- **Make the County a “Sponge”**
 - Restore wetlands, headwaters, coasts, and bays to boost natural water storage and flood protection. Nature-based solutions in aquatic systems also strengthen ecosystems and buffer climate extremes.
- **Conserve and Manage Forests for Fire Resilience**
 - Protect existing healthy forests and restore degraded ones using climate-resilient management that mimics natural ecological patterns. This supports wildfire risk reduction, habitat connectivity, and the ability of species and ecosystems to adapt to changing climate conditions.
 - Using more prescribed burns to reintroduce the role of fire in managing our landscapes is part of the balance of climate adapted communities.
 - Urban tree planting can bring substantial carbon sequestration and resilience benefits.
- **Scale Up Regenerative Agriculture**
 - Promote regenerative practices in croplands and vineyards to improve soil health, sequester carbon, and reduce water demand. These practices enhance climate resilience while supporting biodiversity, food security, and rural livelihoods.
- **Restore Native Grasslands**

- Regenerative rangeland management can restore native grasslands, increase carbon sequestration, and reduce water use. These actions also support sustainable grazing and enhance resilience to flooding, wildfire, and extreme heat.
- **Expand and Connect Conserved Lands**
 - Increase the amount and connectivity of conserved lands to reduce habitat fragmentation and support species migration. Tools like conservation easements and carbon planning can help achieve large-scale ecological resilience.

Suggested Organizational Structure

This section summarizes TAC comments about potential organizational structures for the program.

- If the program includes the development of a new entity:
 - It is important that the new entity has clear functions that aren't replicating the functions of existing agencies.
 - If the program includes coordinating among existing agencies:
- Local fire districts could serve as the core organizational structure and the primary drivers of wildfire resilience efforts.
 - There is a need for a joint planning process to coordinate priorities and projects across existing structures (e.g. FireSafe Sonoma, CalFire, local fire districts).

Landscape Management TAC

TAC Process

This section provides an overview of the TAC and links to key documents and meeting materials.

Members

- Adriana Stagnaro, Gold Ridge RCD
- Brian Peterson, Audubon Canyon Ranch
- Calypso Austin, Kashia Band of Pomo Indians
- Chief Ben Nicholls, CAL FIRE
- Clint McKay, Pepperwood Preserve
- Ely Scott, Kashia Band of Pomo Indians
- Hattie Brown, Sonoma County Regional Parks
- Jason Mills, Ecological Solutions
- Jason Wells, Sonoma RCD
- Joe Plaughter, Sonoma Land Trust
- John Mack, Permit Sonoma
- Kim Batchelder, Sonoma Ag and Open Space
- Kyle Pinjuv, Sonoma Land Trust
- Lauren Claussen, Sonoma Ecology Center
- Michael Gillogly, Pepperwood Preserve
- Misha Bailey, Permit Sonoma
- Misti Arias, Sonoma Ag and Open Space
- Monica Delmartini, Sonoma Ag and Open Space
- Nina Hapner, Kashia Band of Pomo Indians
- Robert Aguero, Permit Sonoma
- Roberta MacIntyre, Fire Safe Sonoma
- Ryan Klausch, California State Parks
- Sasha Ponomareva, Sonoma County Water Agency
- Tori Norville, UC Cooperative Extension

Key Documents

- [A Portrait of Sonoma County 2021 Update](#), Measure of America
- [California Forest Carbon Plan](#), Forest Climate Action Team
- [California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan](#), California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force
- [California's Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy](#), California Natural Resources Agency and the California Air Resources Board
- [California's Strategic Plan for Expanding the Use of Beneficial Fire](#), California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force
- [County of Sonoma Climate Action and Resiliency Division Five-Year Strategic Plan](#), County Administrator's Office, Climate Action and Resiliency Division
- [Pathways to 30x30 Strategy](#), Administration of Governor Gavin Newsom; California Natural Resources Agency
- [Sonoma County Climate Resilient Lands Strategy](#), County of Sonoma Climate Action and Resiliency Division and Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District

- [Sonoma County Community Wildfire Protection Plan 2023 Update](#), Permit Sonoma
- [Sonoma County Multijurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Update 2023](#), Permit Sonoma
- [Sonoma County RCPA's Climate Mobilization Strategy](#), Sonoma County Regional Climate Protection Authority
- [Sonoma County Veg Map](#), Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District and the Sonoma County Water Agency
- [Sonoma County Vital Lands Initiative](#), Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District
- [Tending the Land](#), Sonoma Ecology Center, Occidental Arts & Ecology Center, and Pepperwood Preserve
- [The County of Sonoma Climate Resilience Comprehensive Action Plan](#), County Administrator's Office, Climate Action and Resiliency Division

Meetings

The meeting purpose and dates are listed below with a hyperlink to a folder with materials for each meeting.

- Meeting #1 (11/14/24): [Kickoff meeting](#)
- Meeting #2 (1/23/25): [Capabilities and Capacities](#)
- Meeting #3 (3/13/25): [Programmatic Recommendations](#)

Vision and Goals

This section provides an overview of the final vision and goals agreed upon by the TAC.

Vision

- Sonoma County's natural and working lands are fire adapted and capable of withstanding a major fire, mitigating risk of loss of life and major property damage while protecting multiple other environmental benefits. The Landscape Management TAC contributes to this by advising on stewardship, timber management, and funding opportunities. In addition, the TAC supports relevant educational opportunities and shares them with landowners. The TAC collaborates with landowners to identify site-specific treatments that meet the varying needs of the county's ecology while also sharing funding opportunities and providing comprehensive education to the community to further galvanize wildfire resilience.
- The TAC galvanizes the county and landowners to take actions on their landscapes that will promote wildfire-resilient landscapes.

Goals

1. **Coordinated Programming:** Ensure landscape management projects in Sonoma County are designed, sited, and implemented with contributions from a range of experts and their progress is monitored through a clear set of metrics and indicators

2. **Accessible and Informed Processes for Treatment Implementation:** Design decision-making and project prioritization metrics and selection processes for treatment implementation projects that are easy to understand and informed by wildfire experts, tribes, and community members.
3. **Streamlined Compliance and Permitting:** Support both county and state-level processes that streamline compliance and other permitting processes to further expedite implementation of projects.
4. **Comprehensive Implementation for Climate Resilience and Healthy Biodiverse Landscapes:** Develop multi-benefit projects and management practices that are designed, sited, and implemented to mitigate wildfire, support healthy ecosystems, preserve and enhance biodiversity, and adapt to future conditions to ensure benefits for Sonoma County well into the future.
5. **Engagement, Education, and Workforce Development:** Engage and educate community members and landowners on fire safety and land management solutions that reduce risk, improve ecosystem health, and provide benefits to communities and landowners. Identify workforce development strategies to support training, technical assistance and career pathways in landscape management implementation.
6. **Sustainable Funding:** Assist in the development and implementation of a long-term sustainable finance structure that can fund vegetation management, like cost incentive programs for landowners, and other recurring needs in perpetuity.

Key Findings

This section provides an overview of the key challenges and opportunities to promoting wildfire resilience in Sonoma County and were developed from a review of the key documents and TAC member feedback during TAC meetings and the TAC Capabilities and Capacities survey. The bullets underneath each challenge and opportunity summarize the recommendations from TAC members about how to address each challenge and opportunity.

Finding 1: Challenges

1.1 Insufficient and fragmented funding for implementation and internal coordination capacity.

- Funding for wildfire resilience efforts remains inconsistent and overly reliant on grants, which often come with complex application processes that are difficult for every organization, but especially smaller NGOs to navigate. The lack of a comprehensive, countywide funding strategy results in missed opportunities for sustained, scalable work across varying timelines and community needs. Without staff dedicated to coordinating and prioritizing efforts, there is a risk of duplication and inefficiency.
- Develop a comprehensive funding strategy that involves diverse partners and reflects multi-scale project timelines and community needs.

- Adapt successful funding models from neighboring counties, such as Napa Firewise’s grant success and Marin’s landowner investment match program, to Sonoma’s context.
- Build partnerships to support smaller NGOs with grant writing and project design expertise, reducing barriers and increasing capacity to pursue and manage funds.
- Invest in a centralized coordination role or team to streamline communication across agencies and organizations, avoiding duplication and maximizing resource use.
- Launch a countywide marketing campaign to highlight wildfire resilience successes and raise awareness among policymakers, funders, and the public to build broad-based support.

1.2 Limited education and outreach to private landowners, constraining adoption of land stewardship practices.

- Efforts to engage private landowners in wildfire resilience remain uneven, with many landowners unaware of risks and/or resistant to prescribed fire and other interventions. Current outreach does not consistently reach diverse or working adult populations, limiting behavior change and adoption of mitigation measures.
- Expand and diversify outreach using multilingual materials and multiple platforms, including social media, to reach a broader demographic beyond traditional audiences.
- Increase opportunities for private landowners to witness successful local projects and prescribed burns firsthand, which has proven effective in shifting attitudes toward acceptance and participation.
- Promote consistent, scheduled “Learn and Burn” days or similar events to build momentum and familiarity with prescribed fire and other management techniques.
- Support pile burning initiatives as a lower-barrier entry point for community acceptance of smoke and fire, especially in more developed or sensitive areas.
- Coordinate outreach efforts to align messaging about climate risks, defensible space, and land stewardship across programs to provide clear, unified guidance.

1.3 Challenges in engaging vulnerable populations and overcoming community resistance to prescribed fire.

- Vulnerable and high-risk communities often lack tailored outreach and preparedness programs, while public resistance to smoke and fire—despite its ecological necessity—hinders large-scale prescribed fire implementation. Efforts to educate about the scientific rationale and benefits of prescribed burns are met with skepticism, and signage and educational materials are vulnerable to vandalism, undermining trust and engagement.
- Develop targeted outreach and education initiatives focused on vulnerable populations in high-hazard zones, emphasizing culturally appropriate messaging and accessible communication channels.
- Use community-based organizations and trusted local leaders to build trust and foster participation in preparedness and mitigation programs.

- Implement public education campaigns explaining the benefits of prescribed fire, normalizing smoke as a necessary trade-off and alternative to catastrophic wildfire.
- Start with pile burning near developed areas as a steppingstone to larger prescribed burns, using these smaller-scale projects to demonstrate safety and effectiveness.
- Improve the durability and visibility of educational signage and materials, incorporating community feedback and stewardship to reduce vandalism and enhance local ownership.

1.4 Lack of centralized coordination and clear communication channels for vegetation management.

- Efforts across Sonoma County suffer from fragmented coordination, with other jurisdictions and agencies unclear about points of contact for cross-jurisdictional work. This confusion contributes to inefficiencies, redundancies, and missed opportunities to share resources and knowledge.
- Establish a single, well-publicized point of coordination for all vegetation management activities, staffed adequately to manage inter-agency communication and partnerships.
- Designate a clear communication lead or liaison role to streamline information flow between agencies, NGOs, and community groups.
- Create protocols or systems to facilitate sharing of best practices, data, and project updates across jurisdictions and sectors.

1.5 Insufficient integration of mapping, data, and science-driven planning tools.

- While existing tools like the Sonoma Fuel Mapper provide valuable data, there is no centralized, accessible platform that integrates wildfire risk mapping, treatment tracking, and funding data across public and private lands. Privacy concerns and limited NGO capacity further complicate data sharing and coordination.
- Develop a centralized, county-level platform that integrates mapping data from various sources, allowing agencies and organizations to track treatments, assess risks, and plan strategically.
- Address privacy concerns by aggregating data at the census tract or block level rather than pinpointing individual properties.
- Provide resources and funding to NGOs to support their participation in coordinated data collection and mapping efforts, avoiding overburdening them.
- Ensure quality control and regular updates of mapping tools through dedicated staffing and partnerships with agencies conducting data collection.
- Expand data layers to include private funding and maintenance planning, offering a fuller picture of wildfire resilience progress.

1.6 Workforce development gaps limit local capacity for vegetation management and wildfire resilience work.

- There is a shortage of trained local labor skilled in vegetation management, heavy equipment operation, and prescribed fire techniques. Current workforce development programs show promise but need expansion and better integration with educational institutions and community priorities.
- Expand training programs for youth and adults that build skills in chainsaw operation, vegetation management, and other relevant tasks, emphasizing local hiring to retain economic benefits in Sonoma County.
- Scale successful initiatives transitioning workers from agriculture or construction to ecological jobs, ensuring inclusive outreach to diverse populations.
- Partner with local colleges and high schools to develop vocational programs and apprenticeships modeled on traditional trades like woodshop, including pathways to heavy equipment operation.
- Invest in training for specialized skills such as prescribed fire implementation and equipment operation to create career ladders within the resilience sector.

Finding 2: Opportunities

2.1 Leverage successful funding and partnership models to increase financial resources and coordination capacity.

- Sonoma County can learn from nearby programs with high grant success and innovative match funding models. Expanding partnerships between public agencies and NGOs will help smaller organizations better navigate funding systems and build grant writing expertise.
- Adapt proven funding strategies from Napa and Marin counties to Sonoma’s needs, emphasizing multi-sector involvement and long-term sustainability.
- Develop collaborative grant writing and project design teams to support smaller NGOs and reduce barriers to funding.
- Create centralized coordination roles to unify efforts and facilitate efficient use of funds across the county.

2.2 Build trust and expand outreach through consistent, localized education and demonstration projects.

- Efforts like the Prescribed Fire Association and Good Fire Alliance have made meaningful progress engaging landowners and the public. Continued investment in accessible workshops, demonstration burns, and multilingual outreach can deepen community understanding and participation.
- Increase “Learn and Burn” days and pile burning events to provide consistent, tangible examples of fire management in practice.
- Utilize local success stories and demonstration projects to shift perceptions and foster neighbor-to-neighbor collaboration.

- Expand marketing and outreach campaigns, including social media efforts targeted at working adults and diverse populations.

2.3 Strengthen targeted outreach to vulnerable and high-risk populations with culturally appropriate programming.

- Tailored programs that address the specific needs and concerns of vulnerable communities can improve wildfire preparedness and resilience equity. Partnerships with trusted local organizations are key to delivering effective messaging and support.
- Design outreach campaigns with input from vulnerable populations to ensure relevance and accessibility.
- Leverage community-based organizations to co-create and deliver preparedness initiatives.
- Use educational materials that normalize prescribed fire and emphasize benefits, helping to overcome resistance.

2.4 Create a centralized, accessible platform for mapping and data integration.

- The upcoming county-level fuel treatment mapping website presents a critical opportunity to unify data, support strategic planning, and improve transparency. Including privacy protections and funding support for NGOs will enhance participation and utility.
- Launch and promote the county-level mapping platform as the single source of data and information for wildfire resilience data.
- Integrate private and public data layers to inform comprehensive treatment planning and evaluation.
- Provide training and resources to ensure participating agencies and organizations can effectively use the platform for planning and grant applications.

2.5 Expand workforce programs to develop a skilled, local labor force dedicated to wildfire resilience.

- Existing training programs can be expanded and linked with educational institutions to create clear career pathways. Focused efforts on heavy equipment training and vocational apprenticeships will support local economic development while building resilience capacity.
- Partner with junior colleges and high schools to scale vocational programs in fire and vegetation management.
- Develop apprenticeship and certification programs aligned with local labor market needs.
- Promote inclusive hiring practices to ensure diverse participation and benefit to underserved communities.

Suggested Organizational Structure

This section summarizes feedback from the TAC about potential organizational structures for the program.

Finding 3: Key Attributes of an Effective Wildfire Resilience Program

Across discussions of structure, TAC members highlighted several foundational elements that a successful program must deliver, regardless of whether it is new or embedded within existing structures:

3.1 Dedicated Capacity

- Permanent, full-time staff are essential to provide stability and support implementation. Term-limited and project-based positions have hindered continuity of Sonoma Counties past and current efforts.

3.2 Clear Roles and Accountability

- Current efforts are often fragmented, duplicative, or unclear. An effective program should assign responsibilities and accountability for coordination, implementation, and oversight with mechanisms to ensure follow-through.

3.3 Countywide Coordination and Planning

- A unified strategy is needed to prioritize efforts, allocate funding efficiently, and reduce competition among local actors. A countywide plan and centralized project tracking system were repeatedly suggested.

3.4 Flexible, Community-Centered Funding

- Current funding structures often force organizations to change projects to fit eligibility criteria, sidelining local needs. Flexible, multi-year funding would allow communities to lead, with technical and financial support.

3.5 Tribal and Community Representation

- Tribal governments, CBOs, and grassroots efforts like COPE must have meaningful roles in decision-making, not just in implementation.

3.6 Support for Environmental Compliance

- Many nonprofits and smaller groups struggle with CEQA and permitting. The program should help fill this gap, either by taking on lead agency roles or providing funding and technical assistance for reviews.

3.7 Emphasis on Equity and Workforce Development

- The program should support living-wage jobs, career pathways, and inclusive engagement across all Sonoma County communities.

Finding 4: A New County-Level Wildfire Resilience Entity

Several TAC members expressed interest in creating a new standalone countywide agency or entity dedicated to wildfire resilience, which could consolidate leadership and oversight while supporting community-driven action.

4.1 Advantages and Opportunities

- Centralizes leadership, planning, and accountability in one place.
- Could house dedicated staff and funding, enabling greater continuity and specialization.
- Better positioned to develop and manage a countywide plan, monitoring systems, and project evaluation tools.
- Could assume CEQA lead agency responsibilities, addressing a key bottleneck for partners.
- Broadens coordinated participation and improves existing partnerships.

4.2 Design Considerations

- Should be grounded in equity and environmental justice, including Tribal and community representation in governance.
- Must balance centralized oversight with decentralized implementation to preserve local innovation and trust.
- Needs stable, multi-year funding to be effective—possibly via new bond measures, local taxes, or long-term state/federal grants.

4.3 Suggested Hosts or Models

- A new standalone countywide agency or entity. Organizations such as Fire Safe Sonoma, the fire districts, the Resource Conservation Districts, and the County were repeatedly mentioned as key to success of any effort.

Finding 5: Embed Within or Expand Capacity of Existing Entity

Some members recommended enhancing the capacity and mandate of an existing County department, such as Permit Sonoma, County Planning, or Department of Emergency Management, to lead wildfire resilience efforts.

5.1 Advantages and Opportunities

- Builds on established infrastructure and relationships.
- May streamline alignment with County permitting, land use, and hazard mitigation planning.

5.2 Design Considerations

- Would require significant new investment in staff and leadership focused solely on wildfire resilience.

- Clear internal accountability structures would be needed to avoid dispersing focus across competing priorities.
- Could designate specific divisions or liaisons to coordinate with external partners and provide technical support.

5.3 Potential Functions to Strengthen

- Project scoping and prioritization.
- CEQA/permitting assistance for partners.
- Data integration and centralized tracking.
- Countywide communication and engagement.

Finding 6: Strengthened Cross-Entity Coordination Model

Many TAC members emphasized that rather than standing up a new agency or expanding an existing County department, a more distributed model might be better, if backed by meaningful coordination mechanisms and leadership commitments.

6.1 Advantages and Opportunities

- Builds on existing momentum and collaborative culture in Sonoma County.
- Respects local autonomy while encouraging alignment and shared goals.

6.2 Design Considerations

- A designated coordination hub or lead facilitator would still be needed—potentially housed in a County department or trusted third-party nonprofit.
- Must include shared tools, such as:
 - Countywide plan and project pipeline.
- Centralized data system for tracking progress (e.g., Firewise Sonoma, CWPP maps).
- Regular convenings or TAC structures to assess effectiveness and adaptively manage programs.

6.3 Supporting Elements

- Regional implementation teams or “hubs” that reflect watershed boundaries or sub-county geographies.
- Integration with existing efforts like the RCDs, FSCs, and UCCE, with support for those best positioned to lead on specific components (e.g., TA, implementation, community engagement).

Wildfire Risk Mitigation TAC

TAC Process

This section provides an overview of the TAC and links to key documents and meeting materials.

Members

- Adriane Garayalde, Sonoma Public Infrastructure
- Caerleon Safford, Permit Sonoma
- Dori Estrella, County of Sonoma, (County Administrator's Office)
- Enrique Sanchez, Kashia Band of Pomo Indians
- Ivan O'Neill, Wuuii
- Johannes Hoevertsz, Sonoma Public Infrastructure
- Marshall Turbeville, CAL FIRE
- Roberta MacIntyre, Fire Safe Sonoma
- Sam Wallis, Department of Emergency Management (DEM)
- Sashi Sabaratnam, PG&E
- Steve Akre, Sonoma Valley Fire District
- Steve Mosiurchak, Permit Sonoma

Key Documents

- [Sonoma County Community Wildfire Protection Plan \(CWPP\)](#)
- [Sonoma County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan](#)
- [Sonoma County RCPA's Climate Mobilization Strategy](#)
- [Firewise USA Program Toolkit](#)
- [Suburban Wildfire Adaptation Roadmaps](#)
- [A Portrait of Sonoma County](#)
- [Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network Resources](#)
- [Priorities for Sonoma County's Wildfire Settlement Vegetation Management Funds](#)
- [California Department of Insurance Safe from Wildfire Programs](#)
- [Wildfire Resilient Sonoma County \(Permit Sonoma Program\)](#)
- [West County Defensible Space Project \(Fire Safe Sonoma Program\)](#)

Meetings

The meeting purpose and dates are listed below with a hyperlink to a folder with materials for each meeting.

- Meeting #1 (2/14/25): [Kickoff Meeting](#)
- Meeting #2 (4/8/25): [Challenges and Opportunities](#)
- Meeting #3 (5/29/25): [Programmatic Recommendations](#)

Vision and Goals

This section provides an overview of the final vision and goals for this TAC.

Vision

Provide recommendations to design and implement a program to better coordinate wildfire resilience work across Sonoma County in order to protect human life, communities, and infrastructure.

Goals

1. Share existing wildfire resilience work that Sonoma County should build on.
2. Identify programmatic priorities for each phase of wildfire resilience, including pre-fire risk mitigation and preparedness, response, and recovery.
3. Provide experiences and insights that highlight the challenges and opportunities of doing wildfire work in Sonoma County.
4. Share insights on how to build a coordinated wildfire resilience effort across the county.

Key Findings

This section provides an overview of the key challenges and opportunities associated with promoting wildfire resilience in Sonoma County. These findings were developed through a review of the key documents and TAC member input during meetings. The bullets underneath each challenge and opportunity summarize the recommendations and considerations from TAC members regarding each challenge and opportunity.

Finding 1: Challenges

1.1 Duplication of work and low coordination between groups causes inefficient use of funds and time, and it can result in confusion among residents and communities.

- A central coordinating entity would reduce duplication. Such an entity could be modeled after a regional authority or watershed council where many groups are included in the decision-making process, but there is also an executive board to make faster decisions when necessary.

1.2 Capacity and funding are limited or sometimes difficult to acquire.

- The County, partnering with NGOs and other groups, could provide grant writing support and technical assistance to communities and organizations that are seeking wildfire grants.
- The County could also provide technical assistance or staff to improve GIS capabilities, mapping, project management, and other specific needs.
- There is a need for stable, long-term funding to support wildfire risk mitigation.
- While Measure H creates a new funding source, the funding is limited and there is minimal control over the funds.
- Measure H funding for Fire Safe Sonoma (FSS) should help to build capacity at that organization.

- There should be a collection of projects that are ready to be funded that have been designed by communities so when a funding or grant opportunity presents itself, it can be applied for and implemented effectively, efficiently, and with community support.

1.3 There is a lack of trust in County-led wildfire programs, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

- The County should partner with a non-governmental organization like Fire Safe Sonoma that already has community relationships.
- Projects should be derived from community specific needs instead of designing them to fit grant proposals.
- A focus on supporting community groups with a trusted community member as a “champion” is necessary for effective relationship building, communication, and implementation.

1.4 Wildfire-related codes vary across jurisdictions and are inconsistently adopted and enforced.

- The group recommended creating a standardized countywide wildfire code that covers building, landscapes, and land use, potentially modeled after floodplain regulation systems.
- Enforcement could be tied to designated fire severity zones, and property owners could be encouraged to comply through incentives such as reduced insurance costs or financial support for home hardening.

1.5 Regulatory requirements like CEQA and cultural review often slow or block wildfire risk management projects.

- To address regulatory issues, including CEQA, the County could support organizations by facilitating compliance reviews. Coordination across county organizations could also help reduce the compliance burden by distributing the load and better organizing projects and subsequent compliance work as a result of alignment and less duplication.
- The county and other agencies could work closely with tribal governments to co-develop cultural review protocols.

1.6 There are inspection gaps, and some inspection practices vary across agencies.

- Inspections are an important touch point with the community, and inspectors can and should be educators as well. They can provide direct communication to landowners.
- There should be one unified inspection practice across the county.

Finding 2: Opportunities

2.1 The priority of the wildfire entity should be to save human lives, properties, and the environment in that order.

2.2 Public concern for wildfires is high. This awareness and concern should be leveraged to implement projects, acquire funding, and educate people about the importance of doing home hardening and defensible space work.

2.3 Building and creating partnerships between organizations, the county, and communities can create a more efficient and effective wildfire risk mitigation system.

- The County should partner with Fire Safe Sonoma to support Fire Safe Sonoma’s needs for capacity building and funding, while simultaneously building trust in the County and getting support for community-based wildfire projects.
- Rather than forming an entirely new group, coordination efforts should strengthen and connect with what already works.

2.4 There was agreement among TAC members that creating a collaborative group would help align priorities and ease capacity issues for currently overburdened entities.

- Having a centralized entity or partnership that coordinates organizations, supports grant writing, has community trust, supports education and outreach, and can be a hub for information would improve the state of wildfire risk management in Sonoma County.
- This entity would not supplant grassroots work but support it through possible County-NGO partnerships.

2.5 Leverage cross-sector partnerships and innovative funding mechanisms to support wildfire resilience efforts.

- TAC members are interested in policies that could incentivize landowners to do work on their properties, such as low/no interest financing, and/or tax breaks.

2.6 Invest in community level organizations to carry out projects, lead planning, outreach, and influence decision-making.

- Supporting local capacity creates more durable, long-term resilience from the ground up and can help address the difficulties in getting HOAs and other communities to participate in home hardening and defensible space.

2.7 There was agreement among TAC members that near-home work is most important, and to support this work, grassroots support and landowner education by organizations such as Fire Safe Sonoma is key.

2.8 The County of Sonoma CWPP should continue to the guiding document and the primary wildfire resiliency tool that is updated and utilized throughout the program.

Suggested Organizational Structure

This section summarizes TAC comments about potential organizational structures for the program.

- The TAC suggested that there be a “hub and spoke” model where a collaboration between the County and an NGO was the hub that provided coordination, planning, funding sources, and technical support. This support would be provided to the “spokes,” which would be other county and community organizations who do wildfire risk mitigation work.
 - There was TAC-wide support in Fire Safe Sonoma being the NGO with whom the County partners. Specifically, Fire Safe Sonoma should be the leading entity, and should continue to receive Measure H funding as well as additional support from other entities, including the County of Sonoma.
- If there were to be a new entity, the structure should include a range of organizations but still be nimble enough to respond quickly to challenges or opportunities.
 - An executive board made up of a few members that could react and make quick decisions.
 - A technical committee that includes the wildfire resilience organizations in the county to support long term planning and provide technical assistance if needed.

Organizational Structure and Funding (O&F) TAC

TAC Process

This section provides an overview of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and links to key documents and meeting materials.

Members

- Amy Ricard, Sonoma Ag + Open Space
- Ben Nichols, CAL FIRE
- Christel Querijero, County Executive's Office
- Cory O'Donnell, County Counsel
- James Cameron, Sonoma County Transportation and Climate Authorities (SCTCA)
- Jeff Duval, Department of Emergency Management
- Melanie Parker, Sonoma County Regional Parks
- Roberta McIntyre, Fire Safe Sonoma (FSS)
- Ryan Pedrotti, Sonoma Water
- Sashi Sabaratnam, Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E)
- Tanya Narath, SCTCA

Key Documents

- [California's NWL Climate Smart Strategy](#)
- [Climate Ready Sonoma County Climate Hazard and Vulnerabilities](#)
- [County of Sonoma Five-Year Strategic Plan, Climate Resiliency Pillar](#)
- [Pathways to 30x30 Strategy](#)
- [Sonoma County Climate Resilient Land Strategy](#)
- [The County of Sonoma Climate Resilience Comprehensive Action Plan](#)

Meetings

The meeting purpose and dates are listed below with a hyperlink to a folder with materials for each meeting.

- Meeting #1 (6/24/25): [Kickoff Meeting](#)
 - Establish TAC and review roles and responsibilities.
 - Provide an overview of project progress.
 - Review organizational and structure findings and recommendations.
 - Discuss organizational structure and funding options for a reorganization of existing wildfire resilience departments and programs or a new structure.
- Meeting #2 (8/20/25): [Straw Proposal](#)
 - Share high level findings from focus groups and input from the first TAC program-wide meeting.

- Share revised draft straw proposal for approach to improve alignment, coordination, and outcomes on wildfire and climate resilience.
- Engage in discussions on revised straw proposal elements to inform the second program-wide TAC meeting and the second RCT meeting.
- Meeting #3 (1/23/26): [Programmatic Recommendations](#)
 - Review Sonoma County strengths, priorities challenges, opportunities, and early organizational structure options identified by ERG based on literature review, engagement with the Landscape Management, Wildfire Risk Resilience, and Climate Resilient Lands TACs, one on one interviews, and participation from focus groups.
 - Share an overview of the updated ERG recommendations.
 - Discuss ways to strengthen and refine the existing recommendations.

TAC Purpose

The Organizational Structure and Funding (O&F) TAC supported the development of a coordinated and effective countywide climate and wildfire resilience approach by examining organizational structures and funding options, reviewing updates and findings from the other TAC meetings to ensure consistency across efforts, and refining draft recommendations to strengthen them and improve alignment.

Key Findings

This section provides an overview of the themes discussed in O&F TAC meetings to promote climate and wildfire resilience in Sonoma County.

Finding 1: Building trust is critical and still needs work.

- There is tension between a centralized County-led model for strengthening climate and wildfire resilience coordination and a decentralized model led by non-County entities (e.g., nonprofits, public-private partnerships). There are pros and cons to each approach. It will be critical for the entity leading these efforts to have the trust of its partners, especially with Tribal communities and among private landowners.
- There is widespread fatigue and skepticism about the formation of new Joint Powers Authorities (JPAs) and special districts or creating new governmental entities without a clear, compelling benefit. While forming a legal entity to strengthen coordination on wildfire and climate resilience would help provide access to additional funding mechanisms and support a coordinated approach to seeking funding, past efforts in Sonoma County have shown that creating a new structure does not guarantee access to resources or success.

Finding 2: Leveraging existing efforts and structures will be important for efficient use of resources.

- Sonoma County’s landscape is highly fragmented and dominated by private lands, unlike neighboring regions with land use and ownership patterns that may support a more centralized land management approach. Regional differences within Sonoma County may require that different parts of the county have different organizational and coordination approaches. Due to the mosaic of landownership, a public-private partnership model may be an important option to explore.
- Existing efforts in the County occur surrounding similar topics—e.g., flood and drought coordination, the Hazard Mitigation Plan update process, and the General Plan Safety Element update. Other models present an opportunity for lessons learned related to cross-agency collaboration and could offer opportunities to further leverage and align climate and wildfire resilience efforts with other county processes.
- A new structure for climate and wildfire resilience should only be established if there is a clear and specific objective and the new structure has the potential to improve outcomes (e.g., better public engagement and outreach, increased landowner participation, reduced competition and increased alignment, efficient use of resources, limiting redundancy).

Finding 3: Strengthening organizational capacity is needed for this effort.

- Many organizations have strong networks and expertise in wildfire and climate resilience but lack sufficient capacity for undertaking additional activities, while others have more staff and financial capacity but lack strong networks and may have less direct climate and wildfire resilience expertise.
- FSS and Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs) have frequently emerged as key, trusted organizations that have built strong relationships with both agencies and landowners. However, both lack the capacity to meet current and anticipated demands, even with existing funding sources like Measure H.
- Successful coordination among multiple organizations requires dedicated staff. There is a need to identify funding sources (e.g., 3-year funding for 1.5 FTEs) to support backbone functions of a new structure, acknowledging that coordination efforts will not advance without adequate resources.
- There is a need to exert caution and ensure that a new model is not dependent on time-limited grants or administrative cycles (e.g., federal funding sources that will not be continued). The goal is to build lasting structures and collaboration that can weather shifts in funding and leadership.

Finding 4: Phasing implementation is necessary.

- Building trust within new or strengthened partnerships is necessary and phasing implementation will aid in trust building.
- County of Sonoma departments and agencies share common goals but often operate in silos. A phased approach to developing a new structure for a coordinated effort could

create a clear opportunity to better coordinate across departments and agencies to align goals, maximize impact, and reduce redundancy.

- Phasing will provide additional information on what is truly needed—whether a less or more formalized structure is necessary to achieve desired outcomes and whether the right organizations are involved. Phasing would provide an opportunity to test structures and then manage adaptively and make changes as needed.

Feedback on Final Recommendations

This section summarizes TAC input on ERG’s recommendations on organizational structures for the program.

Recommendation 1: Align County departments and agencies to improve wildfire support.

- The County should serve as the central coordinator and curator of key data and mapping (e.g., Sonoma Veg Map), but not necessarily the owner or decision-maker over the data and mapping. Clarifying this distinction in the recommendation is important to avoid misunderstandings.
- The County could act as a “one-stop shop” for wildfire and climate-related data. Some of this data may be hosted by the County while other data would be accessible by links to where the data is hosted by other organizations. This would help ensure consistency and visibility across platforms.
- Central Information Systems Department (ISD) is a critical partner for long-term data hosting and continuity, especially during staffing transitions in individual departments. Additional County departments and agencies may also need to be involved depending on the specific initiative.
- SCTCA should participate in Recommendation 1 and join in the County coordination efforts to strengthen alignment with climate resilience work and Recommendation 3. The County agreed and said that this was already being discussed and would reach out about adding SCTCA to ongoing quarterly convenings.
- For early implementation, monthly inter-department/agency coordination meetings will be needed to establish roles, responsibilities, and workflows to support and improve wildfire and climate resilience.

Recommendation 2: Form a countywide Wildfire Resilience Collaborative supported by an MOU.

- The O&F TAC broadly agreed that this recommendation should move forward and that it aligned with activities already being advanced by some of the recommended participants including Fire Safe Sonoma, the County, and the Resource Conservation Districts.
- It was broadly noted that the success of Recommendation 1 is necessary for Recommendation 2 to be effective.

Recommendation 3 – Leverage Climate Resilience District to broaden coordination on climate issues and form the Climate Resilience Working Group (with the lead taken by SCTCA) to oversee and guide the Working Group.

- SCTCA is enthusiastic about leading this work as it aligns well with its mission and ongoing initiatives. However, additional resources will be needed to support this expanded role.
- Adding RCDs to the Board would require legislative changes that are time-consuming and are likely unnecessary for the RCD’s to effectively participate as members of the Climate Resilience Working Group. It was felt that an MOU is a more practical mechanism for including all partners.
- The Climate Resilience Working Group is currently the least defined governance structure among the proposed bodies. It was recommended that ERG make a recommendation and develop details on this issue, whether it be an MOU or a charter that is used to form and advance the group.
- This group should be referred to as a “collaborative” rather than a “working group” to better reflect the structure and spirit of the effort.

Recommendation 4: Establish a TAC to provide climate and wildfire subject-matter expertise.

- The TAC should have a balanced and cross-hazard expertise membership similar to the North Coast Research Partnership (NCRP) model but scaled down to focus specifically on Sonoma County.
- This TAC could become the primary group where work happens in a more coordinated way, allowing some of the existing TACs and coordinating committees to dissolve and align with this effort. There should still be flexibility to bring in key experts as needed for those that are not part of the TAC. Meetings of the TAC should have a consistent backbone- such as quarterly or biannually, with meetings of subcommittees working together on issues happening more frequently. This TAC should be designed to serve as a stable group that should reduce the need to convene new TACs for each project and initiative. A group that consistently provides support to Sonoma County climate resilience initiatives and is flexible enough to allow additional participants when needed for specific projects, programs, or other initiatives.

Recommendation 5 – Phase implementation, evaluate, and adapt as needed.

- These recommendations will depend on the resources available, including funding, staff, and the reaction of the Board of Supervisors so phasing the work to match available resources will likely be important.

- It is important that Sonoma County not wait to implement the initial actions for each of the recommendations or this effort will lose momentum. To build on the current momentum the recommendations include initiation of actions to occur in the first three to six months of the implementation timeline.

RESILIENCE COORDINATION TEAM (RCT) MEMO



Resilience Coordination Team

RCT Process

This section provides an overview of the RCT meetings held to-date.

Members

- Bert Whitaker, Sonoma County Regional Parks
- Brad Sherwood, Sonoma Water
- Christel Querijero, County Administrator's Office
- Cory O'Donnell, Sonoma County Counsel's Office
- Jeff Duvall, Sonoma County Department of Emergency Management
- Melissa Valle, Sonoma County Office of Equity
- Misti Arias, Sonoma County Agriculture and Open Space District
- Steve Mosiurchak, Permit Sonoma
- Trish Pisenti, Sonoma Public Infrastructure

Meetings

The meeting purpose and dates are listed below with a hyperlink to a folder with materials for each meeting.

- Meeting #1 (4/9/25): [Kickoff Meeting](#)
 - Review project purpose and objectives.
 - Confirm RCT roles and responsibilities.
 - Review and respond to findings regarding Sonoma County's strengths, challenges and opportunities.
 - Review and respond to early findings on organizational effectiveness.
- Meeting #2 (12/2/25): [Roles and Recommendations](#)
 - Review and discuss ERG's findings to date from engagement with the technical advisory committee meetings and focus group engagements, and draft recommendations on an approach to improve outcomes for wildfire and climate resilience in Sonoma County.

- Receive RCT input on the proposed roles, responsibilities, and possible resource needs of County departments and agencies in relation to ERG’s recommendations.
- Meeting #3 (to be held on 3/26/26)
 - Review and discuss ERG’s final recommendations on an approach designed to improve outcomes for wildfire and climate resilience in Sonoma County.
 - Discuss draft roles and responsibilities of County departments and agencies in the efforts next steps, including the presentation to the Board of Supervisors in April 2026.
 - Identify additional opportunities or challenges related to implementing the recommendations after the Board hearing.

RCT Purpose

This group of executive directors and agency leadership served as a strategic body to provide advice and direction in the development of an approach to improve outcomes for climate and wildfire resilience in Sonoma County. Members provided strategic policy and technical expertise to guide development of the structure and direction of the approach, particularly within the context of existing department programs and activities. To inform its engagement and ensure a coordinated approach, the RCT received input from and provided guidance to the TACs.

Key Findings

This section provides an overview of the key findings resulting from and confirmed by the RCT meetings.

Finding 1: Wildfire resilience in Sonoma County is fragmented and there is a need for improved coordination.

- There is significant fragmentation—multiple plans, many organizations, inconsistent communication, and unclear roles. There is a need for a model that better aligns and coordinates communication, planning, engagement and outreach, and prioritization across departments, partners, and communities.
- The County needs to understand the roles and responsibilities of departments, agencies and organizations, as well as the purpose and desired outcomes of existing efforts and plans to understand what is already working, identify gaps, and determine where coordination, not new bureaucracy, may be the solution.
- Sonoma County needs improved coordination, clearer leadership, and a more unified approach across departments, agencies, and organizations, and uncertainty remains about whether a new authority is necessary or if the existing participants could be aligned under a shared framework.
- In addition to County departments and agencies, significant work is being done by other organizations. There is a need to coordinate with these organizations and include those

with the capabilities to advance climate and wildfire work in the governance and decision-making needed to improve wildfire and climate outcomes.

- Given current constraints and uncertainty about the need for a formal authority, a non-legal coordinating structure may be the best option in the near term with an evaluation of the structure on an annual basis.
- Sonoma County faces climate risks beyond wildfire; including flooding, extreme heat, drought, and sea level rise. These risks need to be aligned as well.
- Any new structure must strengthen and coordinate engagement, outreach, and support to communities, landowners, Tribal governments, and under resourced community members, ensuring representation and meaningful participation in understanding and communicating the risks, and decision-making and prioritization.

Finding 2: There is a need to build long-term capacity and sustainable funding.

- There is a need for stable and consistent staffing, technical expertise, equipment, workforce development, and funding that reduce administrative burdens and help the County and local organizations implement wildfire and climate resilience work over the long term.
- Wildfire resilience efforts need to be better integrated with FEMA programs (including 404 and 406 funding opportunities), land use planning and landscape management decisions, and the upcoming Hazard Mitigation Plan update to ensure that Sonoma County's wildfire and climate work aligns with countywide resilience goals and objectives.

Finding 3: The Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) plays a foundational role and other plans and efforts should be aligned with the CWPP and used to organize Sonoma County's approach to wildfire resilience. Future updates would benefit from new and coordinated structure across departments, agencies, and organizations.

- The CWPP is one of the County's foundational documents for establishing priorities, coordinating grant applications, and avoiding duplication among agencies. However, the CWPP Hub Site is underutilized due to limited capacity and maintenance challenges.
 - A new coordinating entity should provide the leadership, resources, and accountability needed to operationalize the CWPP, priorities actions, lead updates to the CWPP, align other planning efforts (e.g., Hazard Mitigation Plan updates, climate action and adaptation plans of individual agencies and departments), and keep the Hub Site active and updated.

Feedback on Draft Recommendations

This section summarizes the RCT discussion regarding the draft recommendations to improve wildfire and climate outcomes.

Recommendation 1: Align County of Sonoma departments and agencies to improve wildfire support.

- The RCT agreed with this recommendation and had no further comments.

Recommendation 2: Form a countywide Wildfire Resilience Collaborative supported by an MOU.

- There was agreement that the County should not lead the Collaborative; instead, the Collaborative should be a partnership of equals (including CAL FIRE, Fire Safe Sonoma (FSS), the RCDs, and relevant County departments and agencies) working together under a shared MOU. There was agreement that the Collaborative needed a coordinator that would support the administrative work and guide the work of the Collaborative (e.g., meeting agendas, scheduling and holding meetings, coordinating with members on meeting topics, speakers, priorities). This structure is meant to integrate on-the-ground wildfire expertise (e.g., FSS, CAL FIRE) with County-level functions such as engagement and outreach with the community and voters, planning and policy making, state coordination, data coordination and alignment with broader county priorities.
- This model differs from more centralized structures like Napa Firewise or the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority but given Sonoma County's opportunities and challenges, a light-touch, MOU-driven Collaborative is the best starting point to determine the level of structure necessary to achieve the desired outcomes. This structure should be evaluated for effectiveness after a year to determine if a more formalized structure is needed. Additionally, Sonoma County should assess the opportunity to use the Climate Resilience District as an alternative to a JPA or other special district, if a more formalized structure is determined to be necessary.

Recommendation 3: Establish a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to provide climate and wildfire subject matter expertise to the Wildfire Resilience Collaborative and the Climate Resilience Working Group.

- The Collaborative should set criteria and oversee a transparent selection process for TAC members, ensuring participation from organizations with diverse expertise, including wildfire, climate resilience, community engagement, and equity.
- This TAC would be developed for the Climate Resilience District (Recommendation 4) and a subset of that TAC with wildfire expertise would support the Wildfire Collaborative as a sub-

committee of the larger TAC. This structure allows deep expertise while also enabling cross-hazard analysis of co-benefits and potential conflicts.

- Recommendations should include stipends and resources to support TAC members where needed, working with the Office of Equity and the County to ensure inclusive and compensated participation.

Recommendation 4: Leverage the Sonoma County Climate Resilience District to broaden coordination on climate issues.

- Sonoma County’s Regional Climate Protection Authority (RCPA) was grandfathered in as the Climate Resilience District in recognition of its role supporting regional climate coordination in the county. Currently, Climate Resilience Districts have no dedicated funding attached to the designation, which is made by the State of California. The designation provides a mechanism for countywide collaboration without forming a new Joint Powers Authority, and there are initiatives underway that are working to strengthen the role of Climate Resilience Districts to increase the resources and benefits associated with aligning and coordinating through the CRD mechanism.
- Participants throughout the effort strongly indicated the need for both hazard-specific structures (like wildfire resilience) and a cross-hazard coordination body. It was recognized that while climate risks such as flood, drought, wildfire, and heat require different specialized expertise, it is important to coordinate across these risks to increase effectiveness, ensure benefits, reduce unintended consequences (e.g., increasing flood risks while implementing wildfire risk reduction strategies), and improve efficiencies.
- While the RCPA/SCTCA is supportive and plays an important climate-coordination role, it does not have sufficient wildfire-specific expertise to serve as the central coordinator for wildfire resilience. However, it does have a role in climate action and adaptation planning and includes members, such as representatives from the cities within Sonoma County, that are necessary when planning and implementing climate efforts. This recommended structure ensures that wildfire work receives dedicated focus, cross-hazard issues are integrated at the Climate Resilience District level, and could provide the same benefits as the creation of a JPA or other formal district without the additional administrative requirements.

Recommendation 5: Phase implementation, evaluate, and adapt as needed.

- The RCT agreed with the recommendation to phase implementation of the recommendations and evaluate at key points to ensure effectiveness or adapt as needed.

PROGRAM-WIDE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS



Program-Wide TAC Meetings

Meeting Process

This section provides an overview of the two program-wide Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings that were held as part of the Wildfire Resilience and Climate Planning effort. The program-wide meetings combined members of all four of the project's TACs—Landscape Management, Climate Resilient Lands, Wildfire Risk Mitigation, and Organizational Structure and Funding.

TAC Member Attendees

- Adriana Garayalde, Sonoma Public Infrastructure
- Adriana Stagnaro, Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District
- Allison Schichtel, Ag + Open Space
- Anya Starovoytov, Sonoma Resource Conservation District (RCD)
- Ben Nicholls, CAL FIRE
- Benjamin Gomez for Christina Rivera, County Executive's Office (CEO)
- Brent Edwards, for Hattie Brown, Sonoma County Regional Parks
- Brian Peterson, All Hands Ecology/Fire Forward
- Brittany Jensen, Gold Ridge RCD
- Caitlin Cornwall, Sonoma Ecology Center
- Chris Grabill, County District 4
- Christel Querijero, CEO
- Christine Kuehn, Sonoma RCD
- Claire Burrow, Fire Safe Sonoma
- Cory O'Donnell, Chief Deputy County Counsel
- Dori Estrella, CEO
- Hattie Brown, Sonoma County Regional Parks
- Jason Mills, Ecological Solutions
- Jason Wells, Sonoma RCD
- Jeff Duvall, Department of Emergency Management (DEM)
- Jennie Hernandez, Fire Safe Sonoma
- Joe Plaughter, Sonoma Land Trust
- John Mack, Permit Sonoma
- Katharine Gabor, CAO
- Kim Batchelder, Ag + Open Space
- Lauren Claussen, Sonoma Ecology Center
- Marshall Tuberville, Norther Sonoma County Fire District

- Michael Gillogly, Pepperwood Preserve
- Molly Oshun, Sonoma Water
- Monica Delmartini, Ag + Open Space
- Representative for Calypso Austin, Kashia Band of Pomo Indians
- Robert Aguero, Permit Sonoma
- Roberta MacIntyre, Fire Safe Sonoma
- Ryan Pedrotti, Sonoma Water
- Sashi Sabaratnam, Fire Safe Sonoma/PG&E
- Scott Orr, Permit Sonoma
- Shane Walsh, DEM
- Sydney Moraca, Fire Safe Sonoma
- Tanya Narath, Sonoma County Transportation and Climate Authority (SCTCA)
- Temra Costa, Regenerative Forest Solutions
- Yvonne Shu, CEO

Meetings and Purpose

The purpose of each meeting and the date of each meeting are listed below with a hyperlink to a folder with materials for each meeting.

- Meeting #1 (7/23/25): *Kickoff Meeting*
 - Share key findings from each of the TACs, the focus groups, individual interviews, and the literature, data and information review. Discuss draft recommendations.
 - Workshop how recommendations form a framework for a wildfire resilience program.
- Meeting #2 (10/29/25): *Recommendations Review*
 - Review and discuss ERG’s recommendations for an aligned approach to advancing wildfire and climate resilience in Sonoma County.
 - Provide input and suggested changes to the recommendations in order to address current challenges.
 - Inform ERG’s recommendations in advance of the Resilience Coordination Team meeting on December 2nd, 2025.

Key Needs for an Aligned Approach

This section provides an overview of input from TAC members on organizational needs to better align wildfire resilience efforts.

Authorities & Capabilities

Discussion question: What key authorities and capabilities are needed?

- There is a need for strong goal-setting, metrics tracking, and accountability so that an aligned approach to climate and wildfire resilience can prioritize projects effectively and communicate progress to the public and decision-makers.
- Establish best practices for field-based wildfire resilience implementation projects and align and communicate those practices among implementers.

- Coordination and co-governance with Tribes should be improved, including structured representation and the integration of Tribal knowledge and cultural priorities.
- A central data and information repository should be developed to reduce duplication, unify planning, and strengthen partnerships.
- There is a need for coherent, aligned public communication, supported by dedicated engagement staff who can translate technical information into accessible messages.
- Work on private lands should be improved, including incentive programs, clearer regulations, consistent enforcement, prioritization tools, and coordinated support from trusted community organizations.

Organizations with Authorities & Capabilities

Discussion question: Are there any edits or additions you would make to the organizations identified as sharing a lead role?

- Sonoma Water should play an expanded role in leading coordination, oversight, and capacity-building for climate and wildfire resilience.
- Fire Safe Sonoma has a critical role in Measure H implementation, private-landowner engagement, and community wildfire safety.
- University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) can lead research across its existing programs.
- County departments have the authority and capability to integrate resilience into planning documents, permitting, standards, and ordinances.
- Sonoma County Regional Parks can plan, design and implement wildfire and climate projects on their lands and coordinate with State Parks to align work and increase impact.
- The CEO's Strategic Initiatives Division should have an elevated role in coordination, policy alignment, grant strategy, and support for countywide priorities.
- The RCDs are key implementers with strong community trust and the capacity to expand their wildfire and forest resilience programs if they had the needed resources.

Programmatic Needs & Functions

Discussion question: What components can be decentralized?

- Project implementation can remain decentralized if planning, design, and funding are supported at a countywide program level.
- Community and landowner engagement is often most effective when done locally by trusted organizations, though messaging should be aligned centrally.
- Technical assistance should be delivered locally but grounded in countywide standards to maintain consistency while allowing site-specific adaptation for local conditions.

Discussion question: Are there any remaining gaps?

- Any new entity or structure for alignment needs clearer integration of all climate hazards, not just wildfire.
- The Sonoma County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) should serve as a foundational guiding document, and the program should be designed to support its implementation and updates.
- Additional planning efforts, such as the Fire Adapted Landscape report, CAL FIRE Unit Plan, Measure H, and FSS’s ongoing efforts, should be fully leveraged.
- A transparent and data-driven framework is needed for project prioritization, including cost-effectiveness and alignment with agreed upon goals.
- Grants will remain essential, and the administrative burden of grant writing and management should be reduced through shared staffing and centralized support.
- Building community trust around funding use is essential and the County’s role should be supportive—coordinating, connecting, and helping secure and distribute major funding rather than taking over existing work.
- More diverse engagement methods are needed, including listening sessions and on-the-land meetings.
- A standardized approach to project development and design is needed to ensure alignment, best practices, and clear progress measurement.
- Current project tracking is insufficient; implementers need accurate, detailed geographic and technical data on treatments.
 - The CWPP Hub Site could fill information-coordination gaps but requires clear roles, governance, technical staffing, and GIS capacity to be effective.
- County policies and permitting need updates to better support resilience work.

Additional feedback.

- Some current wildfire resilience work in Sonoma County is currently effective even though it is decentralized, but there is agreement that improved coordination, shared priorities, and a countywide framework could strengthen outcomes and support access to larger funding sources.
- Building community trust around the use of funding and projects being implemented is important and promotes transparency.
- It is important to acknowledge the significant capabilities of the RCDs, including their strong community relationships and ability to access and manage diverse funding sources.
- The County’s post-2017 Office of Resilience and Recovery was a success and could be a model for the County to replicate that level of collaboration in a pre-disaster environment.
- New funding must be brought into the County to support this work, and the County should pursue funding strategies once recommendations are finalized.
- County data systems should be centralized into a coordinated data hub to reduce duplication and improve efficiency.

- The County has the capacity and capability to serve in a coordination role, but they are not always able to act on it due to funding constraints and the political environment.
- The County should aim to build trust gradually, consistent with ERG’s recommended phased approach, with the County serving as a connector rather than a controlling authority.
- Coordination is still critical during low-funding periods to prepare for future funding opportunities. Coordination capacity should be framed as an investment that would help the County compete for and secure major funding, enabling partner organizations to operate at their highest impact.
- Building on existing in-county expertise rather than reinventing structures or systems will be more efficient for developing an aligned approach.

Participation

Discussion question: Does continuing the TAC structure seem like the best approach? Either in its current format or with different TACs?

- TAC membership should be streamlined and expanded to fill representation gaps, especially Tribal partners, private landowners, and community members.
- Some believed the Climate Resilient Lands and Landscape Management TACs should merge; others favored keeping them separate due to differing scopes.
- Subcommittees could address specialized technical topics such as biomass utilization, workforce development, and invasive species.
- Some felt the TACs are not always effective for setting priorities and that alternative structures may better support decision-making and progress.
- Alternative participation models could include a county-run project review advisory group or a representative governance structure with defined decision roles.
- Decision-making roles should be clearly differentiated from advisory roles, with clarity on when broader participation is appropriate.
- Outreach can feel overwhelming to communities, but alignment across organizations could transform this into a strength.
- Trusted implementers, including RCDs, FSS, the County, and CAL FIRE, should continue leading community engagement.
- Workers and workforce development need to be intentionally included in engagement strategies.
- Program participation must consider property-owner incentives and reduce redundancy by clarifying roles across organizations.

Entity Options

Discussion question: What types of entities, specific organizations, roles, and responsibilities are needed for an aligned climate and wildfire resilience approach to be successful?

- Joint Powers Authorities (JPA) have had limited success statewide, lack inherent funding, and carry the risk of slowing progress.
- An MOU is flexible, fast, and a less bureaucratic framework than JPAs and can evolve as new climate hazards and funding opportunities emerge.
- A climate collaborative could work if supported by a formal charter that defines roles and responsibilities across multiple climate-hazard committees.
- A new, unbiased coordinating entity could organize partners, communicate progress, centralize data, manage grants, and simplify alignment with state agencies and funders.
- A capable entity must be able to manage significant, sustained funding (e.g., \$20M+).
- A hybrid “octopus” model with a small central collaborative and distributed staff embedded across departments and partner organizations could be a preferred approach.

Phasing

Discussion question: How could phasing be used to balance the identified needs with the concerns related to more formalized structures?

- Each phase should begin by clearly identifying the specific problems the program is designed to solve, ensuring it scales appropriately over time.
- Other climate hazards should be phased in after initial wildfire-focused work.
- Phasing should align closely with CWPP and FSS prioritization processes and support the CWPP update.
- Early steps should include confirming county financial commitments, the hiring of a staff coordinator, and the establishment of an MOU for the newly formed Wildfire Resilience Collaborative. Additional staffing would be added as efforts are initiated and the initial phase transitions to a formalized cadence of meetings of the Collaborative.

Draft Recommendations

This section summarizes TAC input on draft recommendations. These recommendations have since been updated. There was generally agreement with each recommendation with any additional comments or feedback recorded below.

Recommendation 1: Form a countywide Wildfire Resilience Collaborative supported by an MOU

- The County could sign an MOU with FSS and RCDs around the work already happening. There is room for the County to be involved in the FSS board. FSS already has a common board member between FSS and SCTCA. FSS is currently in the process of finalizing their strategic plan update and will be hiring an executive director.
- There is tremendous value in having an overall coordinating committee in place. There is a need to have better collaboration at SCTCA and reach out to more CBOs and NGOs to be part of this process. This structure would be very valuable.

Recommendation 2: Align County of Sonoma departments and agencies to improve wildfire support

- A better coordinated and organized County would allow the County to be a more effective partner on wildfire resilience efforts and participate more effectively.
- There needs to be alignment across the fire department, CAL FIRE and the County because of the crossovers between everything. NGOs and others can plug into other parts with an MOU or TAC, but there is a need to have fire professionals in the planning and coordination phases.

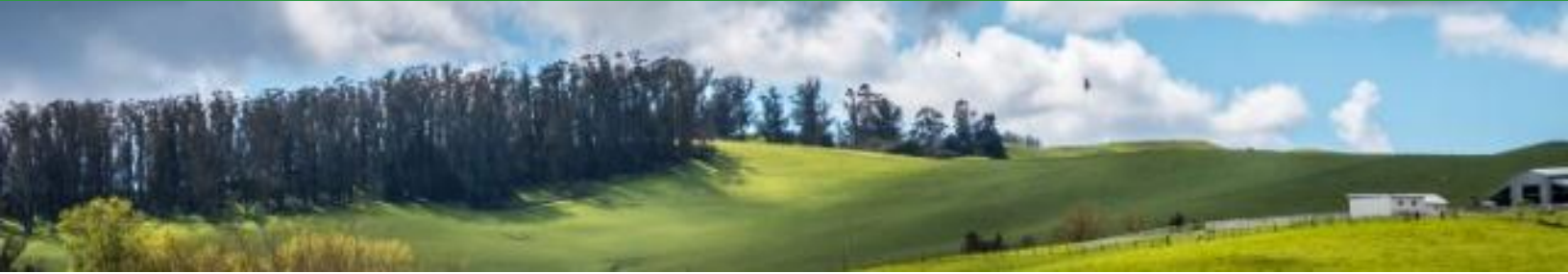
Recommendation 3: Establish a Technical Advisory Committee to provide subject matter expertise to the Collaborative

- There are two types of expertise needed on the TAC: community/people expertise (e.g., communications, cultural competency, local connections) and technical expertise.
- An objective, non-County TAC would ensure there is independent input to County departments and the Board of Supervisors.

Recommendation 4: Phase implementation, evaluate, and adapt as needed

- Should leverage existing, widely supported tools for communication, education, and engagement such as [Resilient Landscapes Coalition](#) and [Tending the Land](#).

OUTREACH KEY FINDINGS MEMO



As part of the Sonoma County Wildfire and Climate Resilience Planning and Coordination project (the project), the ERG Team led an outreach and engagement process that consisted of four different focus groups. To inform the project, the team reviewed ten relevant plans and processes that have occurred since 2017 to help develop material for the four focus groups that were part of the project.

This memo includes key findings across the ten plans and the four focus groups, while also comparing/contrasting the key findings against one another to identify the priorities and issues that were shared across all the efforts.

Past Outreach Efforts Literature Review

Overview

The ERG team reviewed the following ten plans:

1. Priorities for Sonoma County's Wildfire Settlement Vegetation Management Funds (Center for Law Energy, & the Environment (CLEE, 2021)
2. The Vital Lands Initiative (Ag + Open Space District, 2021)
3. Sonoma County Resilient Lands Strategy (Climate Action and Resiliency Division (CAO, 2022)
4. Sonoma Climate Mobilization Strategy (Regional Climate Protection Authority, 2021)
5. Sonoma County Community Wildfire Prevention Plan (Permit Sonoma, 2023)
6. Sonoma County Regional Parks Climate Adaptation Plan (Sonoma Parks, Draft TBD)
7. Sonoma Water Climate Adaptation Plan (Sonoma Water, 2021)
8. Department of Emergency Management PSPS Plan (DEM, 2021)
9. Department of Emergency Management Community Warning and Alerts (DEM, 2021)
10. Department of Emergency Management Hazard Mitigation Plan (DEM, 2017)

Key Findings

The sections below describe the key findings identified across the ten plans. Following these sections, Table 1 provides an overview of the issues and priorities that were identified most

frequently, and which issues and priorities were identified in each of the reports. Appendix A includes specific details related to each plan.

Coordinated Governance

Seven out of the ten plans articulated the need for the County to strengthen coordination across federal, state, and local agencies. This included both coordination among County of Sonoma departments and agencies, as well as a need to better coordinate across the Tribes, nonprofits, and community-based organizations involved in wildfire and climate resilience. The actions that were most identified as needing improved coordination included management and planning of vegetation treatment, permitting, engagement and outreach, funding, and the analysis and application of research findings.

While some of the reviewed plans go beyond wildfire resilience, the need for coordination is evident throughout the comments and input provided by those who were engaged to inform the writing of the various plans. For example, in the Annex of the Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS Report), it identifies the need to better establish clear responsibilities regarding which departments will coordinate with impacted local jurisdictions in the event of a PSPS. The Priorities for Sonoma County's Wildfire Settlement Vegetation Management Funds Report (CLEE Report) identified Sonoma County's need for a more centralized vegetation management governance structure to coordinate improved engagement, participation and communication; to scale up treatment planning; to streamline permitting and approval authorities; to attract funding; and to integrate relevant research and information. The CLEE Report states that Sonoma County leaders should consider new coordination structures to address the fact that Sonoma County had not successfully established the capacity for sustained design, funding/financing, permitting, or implementation of county-wide vegetation management at scale in its current structure and approach, and this recommendation is a key driver for the current wildfire resilience project. The concern for improved coordination was found across five of the other plans as well.

Clear Roles and Responsibilities

Three plans identified the need for both County departments and agencies, as well as other organizations, to define responsibilities and to create frameworks to plan and implement resilience projects. In addition, these plans identified a need for organizations within the County to engage in partnerships on a recurring basis to identify opportunities, redundancies, and challenges—and to ensure that partners are given the resources they need to participate fully. For instance, PSPS Report found a need to more clearly establish responsibilities at the County in the event of a PSPS. The Sonoma County Climate Resilient Lands Strategy received input on the need for local Tribes and Tribal representatives to be included early in project development and to be given roles to identify critical assets and issues related to natural land resilience. The County's Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) stated a need for the County to create guidelines with clear roles and responsibilities to help guide the efficient and effective formation and implementation of wildfire resilience collaborations. While these three plans had different focuses regarding wildfire

efforts, they each received input on the need for more defined roles and responsibilities to ensure more clarity and impact moving forward.

Diversified & Sustainable Funding Sources

Five out of the ten plans received feedback through the plans' engagement processes that identified the need for both County departments and agencies, as well as other organizations, to explore long-term funding mechanisms like local sales or parcel taxes, carbon-offset reinvestment programs, and forest resilience bonds to ensure consistent, stable funding. Suggestions included ways to maximize local tax revenue by securing matching grants, external funding, and legislative support to increase stable funding for wildfire efforts. While input on the need for more diverse and sustainable funding was not an explicit focus in the climate adaptation plans and emergency management plans reviewed, engagement regarding the need for diversified and stable funding was expressed frequently. For instance, input received on the Sonoma Climate Mobilization Strategy included the need for long-term funding, such as a local sales tax or reinvesting local carbon-offset funds through a "sequester local" program. Input provided for the CLEE Report included consideration of a forest resilience bond or a local sales or parcel tax to fund vegetation management activities. Another need articulated in the Climate Resilient Lands Strategy was the development of clear prioritization processes to allocate money to strengthen resilience of natural and working lands.

Sustainable Workforce & Implementation Capacity

Three out of the ten plans received feedback regarding the need for investment in multi-year career training programs to build a long-term, skilled workforce and to ensure consistent capacity for wildfire efforts. Input provided during the CLEE Report process, for instance, stated that funds through the County of Sonoma should be dedicated to three to five years of career training programs to meet immediate and long-term wildfire resilience needs, such as vegetation management, land management, and animal use to mitigate fire risk. The CWPP engagement suggested that North Bay Jobs with Justice could potentially develop a training support system, especially for agriculture workers who already have technical skillsets for wildfire resilience related work.

Transparent Communication & Public Involvement

All ten plans identified the need for increased transparency through shared work plans and reports, consistent messaging, ongoing communication, and active community participation in wildfire resilience efforts. While all ten plans included different wildfire resilience elements, all plans received the input that better communication is needed and that there is a desire for more community opportunities to provide input. The Climate Resilient Lands Strategy received input that the County should provide more public outreach to increase the understanding and the importance of protection and management of natural and working lands—in addition to including the public in planning and decision-making regarding new open space and trails. The CLEE Report included comments that the County could coordinate efforts to explain to residents what the County's

vegetation management goals are; why vegetation management is needed; and how they can participate as property owners, renters, businesses, workers, and members of the public.

Those that were engaged during the Department of Emergency Management’s Community Warning and Alerts Annex stated that the County should incorporate social equity measures to ensure the ability to reach individuals with access and functional needs and consider establishing a Joint Information System to share alert messaging with. Input to the Sonoma Climate Mobilization Strategy included comments that community-based organizations and local jurisdictions should be key partners in developing and implementing equity impact assessments. Lastly, comments provided on the Vital Lands Initiative noted that the County could increase transparency and share successes and planned work with the community through more frequent outreach.

Integrated Land & Resource Management

Six out of the ten plans to promote and prioritize regenerative agriculture, fire-safe landscaping, grazing, and biomass utilization while protecting critical habitats, wildlife corridors, and Tribal cultural resources. Input on these efforts varied, reflecting a range of priorities, from policy-level strategies to technical implementation. The CLEE Report input included ideas around biomass and its benefits, such as the development of a biomass or other wood product facility as a viable way to repurpose debris from fuel reduction efforts. The Climate Resilient Lands Strategy received input to consider regenerative agriculture and agroecological practices as innovative techniques for advancing resilience of agricultural lands. Lastly, the input received during the CWPP process suggested the County to create a single Defensible Space Ordinance that can provide identical standards for State or Local Responsibility areas countywide.

Table 1. Summary of Key Findings Identified by Plans

	Coordinated Governance	Clear Roles & Responsibilities	Diversified & Sustainable Funding Sources	Sustainable Workforce & Implementation Capacity	Transparent Communication & Public Involvement	Integrated Land & Resource Management
Priorities for Sonoma County’s Wildfire Settlement Vegetation Management Funds	x	x	x	x	x	x
The Vital Lands Initiative	x		x		x	x
Sonoma County Resilient Lands Strategy	x	x	x		x	x
Sonoma Climate Mobilization Strategy	x		x	x	x	x
Sonoma County Community Wildfire Prevention Plan	x	x	x	x	x	
Sonoma County Regional Parks Climate Adaptation Plan					x	x
Sonoma Water Climate Adaptation Plan					x	x
Department of Emergency Management PSPS Plan	x				x	
Department of Emergency Management Community Warning and Alerts					x	
Department of Emergency Management Hazard Mitigation Plan	x				x	

Impact of Previous Engagement on Focus Group Approach

A central purpose of analyzing recent engagement efforts was to determine the needs and approaches for engagement in the Sonoma County Wildfire and Climate Resilience Planning and Coordination project. There were a range of approaches originally considered by the ERG team and the County—from broader community meetings throughout Sonoma County, to tabling at local events, to attending existing meetings of community organizations to present the project, to more focused and intentional outreach, such as focus groups. Based on the ERG team’s analysis of recent engagement efforts and in partnership with the County, ERG designed the engagement to be more focused and intentional rather than broad and general. This decision was based on:

- The amount of engagement on climate and wildfire resilience efforts and similar topics conducted recently¹ seemed significant. There was a concern that it would be confusing and frustrating to broadly and generally engage on this topic at this time.
- Findings from recent engagement on similar efforts demonstrated that the input from these engagements was similar in nature and consistent. From project to project, people were raising similar issues, had similar priorities and concerns, and shared similar perspectives. It was thought that going out to broad audiences again would result in similar input.
- The ERG team felt more focused and intentional engagement would allow smaller groups of participants and teaming partners to represent broader communities and to provide more detailed and actionable input.

The ERG team collaborated with teaming partners to facilitate four focus groups during the Spring and Summer of 2025. The role of the teaming partners was critical in the preparation of the focus group. By working with teaming partners, the ERG Team was able to extend its engagement to invite the most relevant partners to the focus groups to participate and provide valuable perspectives that will inform program design. Teaming partners each helped design and lead one focus group with identified community-based organizations (CBOs), industry and business organizations, and landowners, as well as select individuals and leaders within the county. In addition, teaming partners worked with the ERG Team to co-design and provide feedback on the framework and content of focus group agendas and discussions. The following table identifies each teaming partner organization and contact person, and the target groups that participated for each focus group.

Table 2. Teaming Partners and their Focus Groups

No.	Group(s)	Teaming Partner Organization	Teaming Partner Contact
1	Large Landowners and Agriculture	Gold Ridge RCD	Adriana Stagnaro

¹ Within the last four years.

No.	Group(s)	Teaming Partner Organization	Teaming Partner Contact
2	Conservation and Labor	Sonoma Ecology Center	Caitlin Cornwall
3	Firewise communities, local fire safe councils, and COPE Groups	Fire Safe Sonoma	Roberta MacIntyre
4	Underrepresented groups, Access and Functional Needs (AFNs)	Los Cien	Herman G. Hernandez

The ERG team developed material regarding priorities, key issues, and perspectives on issues related to wildfire resilience and asked for confirmation and refinement from focus group participants.

Findings from previous engagement informed the structure of the focus groups: 1) large landowners and agriculture; 2) conservation and labor; 3) Firewise communities, local fire safe councils, and COPE (Communities Organized to Prepare for Emergencies) groups; and 4) underrepresented groups, access, and functional needs.

The focus groups elicited the themes described below. Table 3 on the following page illustrates which focus groups discussed the identified themes. (For more detailed information regarding the focus groups, please see the focus group summaries provided to the County on 9/3/25.)

- Coordination and capacity building:** Some participants emphasized the need for a unified, ecologically informed approach to wildfire resilience that protects both natural ecosystems and communities. Others stressed the need to prioritize life safety and property while considering the environment and ecology. Both groups shared the perspective that a more coordinated approach to resource allocation and priorities is necessary across Sonoma County. Focus group participants perceive that current efforts are fragmented and lack clear leadership, with confusion over responsibilities and priority setting—especially regarding activities like vegetation management. Across focus groups, participants recommended a central coordinating body to improve communication, prioritize issues, and distribute resources effectively, balancing top-down strategy with local input.
- Funding:** The lack of sustainable and accessible funding is a major barrier that focus group participants cited, particularly for small and lower-income landowners. Participants described the grant funding system as fragmented, short-term, and overly complex, with high administrative burdens that discourage and limit participation. They called for a county-wide centralized hub to support to help identify, apply for, and manage funding, and emphasized the need for equitable distribution of and simplified processes for funding for wildfire resilience efforts.
- Workforce development:** Focus group participants expressed concerns over the shortage of trained and local workers to implement wildfire resilience projects. Participants stressed the importance of creating career pathways with consistent training for local workers, fair

wages, and professional development opportunities. They recommended certification programs and implementer lists, and urged investment in a stable, full-time workforce—not just relying on youth and volunteers and out of the area contractors.

- **Engagement, education, and communication:** A common theme across the focus groups was that effective wildfire resilience requires meaningful community engagement and clear, accessible communication. Participants noted that many landowners are overwhelmed or uninformed about forest and land management, funding, and regulations. They advocated for aligned and consistent education efforts, inclusive outreach strategies, and the involvement of community organizations to build trust and motivate action.
- **Equity:** Language justice and inclusive disaster planning were highlighted as essential factors to consider in relation to wildfire resilience. Participants called for multilingual communication beyond English and Spanish, using diverse formats like text and radio, and hiring more staff for translation and interpretation. They also stressed the importance of including undocumented families and marginalized communities in planning and resource distribution and avoiding inaccessible formats like PDFs for public information.

Table 2. Key Findings Identified by Focus Groups

	Coordination and Capacity Building	Funding	Workforce Development	Engagement, Education, and Communication	Equity
Focus Group 1: Large Landowners and Agriculture	x	x	x	x	
Focus Group 2: Conservation and Labor	x	x	x	x	
Focus Group 3: Firewise Communities, Local Fire Safe Councils, and COPE Groups	x	x		x	
Focus Group 4: Underrepresented Groups, Access and Functional Needs	x	x			x

Comparing Key Findings between Focus Groups and Past Outreach Efforts

Key Finding Similarities

The common key findings identified in a cross cutting across both the focus groups and recent outreach efforts address the needs for more coordinated governance, sustainable and equitable funding mechanisms, and education and outreach to community members and landowners.

Coordinated Governance

Both the previous engagement efforts and input from the focus groups demonstrated a strong need for a streamlined approach to address wildfire and climate resilience in Sonoma County and help coordinate wildfire resilience efforts. Additionally, both the previous engagement efforts and focus groups described a need for a shared and clear set of principles agreed upon by multiple organizations within Sonoma County to minimize confusion and improve coordination and alignment among organizations, reduce redundancies, and strengthen partnerships. As both previous engagement and the focus groups emphasized, a “clearinghouse” or data hub could help mitigate confusion and redundancy. For example, a participant from the Sonoma Ecology Center led focus group stated that “between programs, resources, and planned prescribed burns, it is not clear who to reach out to learn more.”

Sustainable Funding Mechanisms and Funding Allocation

Both the previous engagement and the focus groups indicated that there is a need for a more strategic approach to fund wildfire resilience activities in Sonoma County in perpetuity. There is further agreement that the reliance on grants is inefficient, inequitable, and insufficient to meet Sonoma County’s needs. It was widely recognized by participants in both previous engagement and the focus groups that when funding is available, many organizations are competing against each other for funds and effectively taking work away from one another. In the Fire Safe Sonoma led focus group, for instance, it was noted that motivation for landowners to perform wildfire risk reduction work on their properties remains low, partly because they feel they lack resources to complete the needed tasks. There is concern that without sufficient stable funding and government support, the necessary work will not be done.

Education for Community Members and Landowners

Both the previous engagement and the focus groups described a need for more wildfire resilience related education programs and campaigns to build trust, provide more clarity, and motivate progress. Example education programs that were shared represent a wide range of topics, including climate risks in the region, wildfire preparedness planning and safety planning, the health effects of smoke and measures residents can take to protect themselves from exposure. In addition, education programs for landowners to better understand forest and land management

practices, funding options, and regulations were stated in both the focus groups and the previous engagement efforts to support landowners who feel overwhelmed by the tasks they have to treat their land and property and compel progress.

Key Findings Differences

There were also differences across the focus groups and the past outreach efforts analyzed by the ERG team. For example, workforce development was a significant key finding during the focus group but not frequently raised in the previous engagement efforts described in the plans. In addition, how equity can be centralized in a wildfire resilience effort was not a key finding across all the focus groups and plans but was of very high significance in the Los Cien led focus group and heard in a small number of previous engagement efforts. Lastly, while improving and aligning education to landowners and the public is a common finding across the focus groups and previous engagement, there were differences regarding what the challenges are, what the barriers are to improving education, and what the roles of different entities play in successfully implementing education campaigns and programs. More details on each of these areas of difference are described below.

Workforce Development

Participants in the Gold Ridge RCD and Sonoma Ecology Center led focus groups shared that even with available funding and willing landowners, there are not enough trained workers to achieve implementation needs. Participants shared that the workforce bottlenecks are stalling progress on critical wildfire resilience projects. During previous engagement efforts, it was only engagement on the CLEE Report that identified workforce development as an element to consider as part of a more comprehensive wildfire resilience program. Most of the engagement occurred in and/or around 2021, before the County of Sonoma and other Sonoma County entities received significant funding via PG&E settlement funds, federal funds, or state funds, nuanced understanding of how implementation of large-scale projects could work in real time was still evolving. Given the focus groups were held in 2025, with four years of context to see how the funding and implementation work together, it is likely that participants were able to see the capacity challenges only once the funding to implement projects at a larger scale was available.

Equity

The Los Cien led focus group's discussion was the only one that yielded specific detail and considerations around equity as a critical component when designing a wildfire resilience effort. Specifically, Los Cien focus group's articulated the need for comprehensive community engagement, language justice, and providing both family and undocumented community support. While previous engagement and focus groups also identified the importance of equity, the Los Cien led focus group was able to provide specific examples. For instance, there was unanimous agreement that the County and its partners should integrate comprehensive community engagement into upcoming wildfire resilience efforts and that trusted community-based organizations (CBOs) should be leading outreach efforts as they are the people doing the

community engagement effectively. In addition to equitable community engagement, the Los Cien led focus group participants underscored that resilience planning also needs to include how to best take care of families, children, and undocumented communities during disasters. More specifically, an aligned approach to wildfire resilience should create systems that, upon deployment during a disaster, help families and undocumented people receive basic resources, like supplies and cribs for babies.

Education

While there was unanimous support for more comprehensive, aligned, and strategic education programs and campaigns between all of the focus groups and previous engagement efforts, there were key differences in how the different focus groups discussed entities and organizations already leading educational programs, what the Program would need more of, and who should and who should not lead it.

In the Fire Safe Sonoma led focus group, CAL FIRE's role and capacity to handle things like education and community engagement were questioned by participants who did not feel that their level of engagement was at the scale necessary to address the need. The Los Cien focus group described the need to bring in organizations that regularly work with landowners and the community, including CBOs, the RCDs, and nonprofits. A Gold Ridge RCD focus group participant shared that, while Fire Safe Sonoma is a valuable resource and a nexus of information for things like defensible space and wildland management, their education efforts need to scale up to meet the Program's needs.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND FUNDING INTERVIEW MEMO



Background

As part of Sonoma County’s effort to evaluate approaches to improve wildfire and climate resilience, ERG conducted fourteen 60-minute interviews with experts in wildfire and climate resilience from across California. Interviewees represented a wide range of organizations, including local and regional fire agencies, County and city departments, non-profits, regional collaboratives and state agencies, both within Sonoma County and from other fire-prone counties such as Marin, Lake, Napa, San Diego, and Nevada.

The interviews were designed to ensure a range of perspectives were considered and to augment the project’s literature review, TAC meetings, and survey by exploring five key objectives:

- Strengthening near-term coordination within and beyond County of Sonoma departments.
- Informing a long-term governance framework for wildfire resilience.
- Gathering lessons from other counties’ coordination structures.
- Identifying sustainable funding mechanisms.
- Broadening participation from landowners and community members.

Together, these conversations offer valuable perspectives to inform the approach for a governance and funding model that meets Sonoma County’s unique needs and builds on best practices from across the state. The following summary presents synthesized findings drawn from analysis across all interviews. The full interview guide is included at the end of this document as Appendix A for reference. Note that the findings presented within this memo represent the perspectives of the fourteen interviewees and thus may not always accurately capture current wildfire resilience activities that are happening within and beyond Sonoma County.

Opportunities for a New Wildfire Resilience Program

ERG asked Sonoma County respondents interview respondents about barriers and opportunities for countywide wildfire coordination. Key themes that emerged include:

Finding 1: Coordination challenges among County of Sonoma agencies involved in wildfire activities

Internal coordination across County departments is a key concern, with interviewees noting persistent gaps, redundancies, and unclear roles that complicate wildfire-related work:

1.1 Fragmented authority and competing priorities: County of Sonoma (hereafter referred to as “County”) agencies often collaborate through working groups or informally, but formal coordination is limited due to each agency reporting to different Boards or leadership, with their own priorities and directives. Without centralized leadership or a unifying mandate, it is difficult to coordinate consistent, countywide wildfire mitigation efforts.

1.2 Administrative complexities and liability concerns: Efforts to coordinate among County agencies are frequently hindered by administrative red tape, including complex contracting requirements and professional service agreements. In particular, concerns about legal liability, such as which agency would be held responsible if a joint project leads to property damage or other unintended consequences, can create hesitation. Even when there is shared interest in collaborating, these issues often slow momentum or cause delays.

“We’re on the same page about getting things done—you can see that in how we passed and implemented the Fire Code. But we each have to go back to our own agencies, boards, and leadership, with different priorities and staffing. Without top-down direction, it’s hard to make processes consistent.” — City Staff, Sonoma County

1.3 Unclear roles and lack of a central coordinating entity: There is confusion or disagreement about which agency or organization should lead wildfire coordination. Some respondents noted that while organizations beyond the County family, like Fire Safe Sonoma, play some role in coordination, there is still a need for greater clarity and increased collaborative approaches.

Finding 2: Coordination challenges between County agencies and other organizations in the county involved in wildfire activities across the county

Beyond internal County dynamics, respondents pointed to significant challenges in how County agencies interface with other county partners:

2.1 Mismatched jurisdictional boundaries and responsibilities: Wildfire does not respect boundaries, leading to the need for coordinated multi-jurisdictional approaches. However, unclear

jurisdictional boundaries, especially at the interface of city and unincorporated lands, create confusion and inconsistent practices (e.g., weed abatement). These mismatches complicate collaboration and require constant partner communication just to manage basic activities.

2.2 Limited capacity and uneven commitment across jurisdictions: Even when regional coordination models or shared plans exist, many jurisdictions lack the staff capacity or political will to participate fully. This inconsistency weakens regional efforts and stalls promising initiatives. County agencies often lead coordination efforts but struggle to maintain consistent momentum when partners or other jurisdictions lack the capacity or political support to engage at the same level.

2.3 Lack of dedicated funding and implementation mechanisms for climate and wildfire resilience: Unlike transportation planning, which has dedicated revenue streams and implementation tools, wildfire and climate resilience efforts lack sustained funding. This limits the County’s ability to incentivize or provide resources to support collaboration with cities, special districts, and nonprofits, even when plans are in place.

Finding 3: Reflections on how current coordination challenges might be addressed or overcome

Despite these challenges, interviewees shared ideas for how coordination could be strengthened:

3.1 Establish clear roles for wildfire resilience work: To avoid duplication and confusion, there needs to be clarity around who leads, who participates, and how coordination is expected to work for wildfire resilience efforts.

3.2 Create shared tools and standardized processes across jurisdictions: Developing countywide tools, such as streamlined service agreements, shared deadlines, or templates, can ease interagency coordination. A unified co-developed wildfire vision, shared by the entity’s partners, for the lead coordinating entity and the organizations participating in the new program could serve as a reference point for consistent action across different agencies and land ownerships, supporting coordination at a countywide scale.

3.3 Increase opportunities for face-to-face collaboration and joint planning: Getting the right people in the room, including fire chiefs, community-based organizations, and public agency staff, could help build trust and shared understanding, thus paving the way for strengthened coordination on wildfire resilience efforts.

3.4 Invest in local capacity and incentivize participation: Collaboration requires time and staffing. Supporting cities and other partners with resources to support their participation could make coordination more feasible. Incentives could help demonstrate to

“Everyone should be on the same playing field and receive equitable benefits—we’re not all the same size. There will always be challenges across districts, cities, and jurisdictions, but getting everyone in the same room to align missions and services will help.” — City Staff, Sonoma County

communities and partners alike “what’s in it for them” and reduce concerns about control or liability.

Finding 4: Collaboration strengths and opportunities that could inform the creation or expansion of a countywide entity

Several participants emphasized that Sonoma County is not starting from scratch—existing relationships and successful collaborations offer a foundation to build upon:

4.1 Build on existing structures and relationships: Fire Safe Sonoma is already coordinating with fire departments, Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs), Ag + Open Space, and local jurisdictions. Interviewees emphasized that the County could enhance coordination by strengthening and investing in Fire Safe Sonoma rather than building a new coordinating entity.

4.2 Build on the momentum and mandate of Measure H:

Measure H’s passage reflects strong public support for wildfire prevention. Some see this as a potential funding source for wildfire resilience coordination, even if allocations remain unclear. Others caution that Measure H has already “filled the space” for a countywide wildfire investment, making it politically challenging to propose new entities or funding mechanisms perceived as overlapping or duplicative.

4.3 Build on County infrastructure and local expertise: The County has both strong internal infrastructure, particularly for communications, emergency coordination, and administration, and a network of active organizations already engaged in wildfire resilience work. A new entity or an expanded existing entity could leverage the County’s systems to streamline regionwide coordination and reduce the burden on smaller jurisdictions. It could also serve as a convener and backbone for local groups supporting alignment, scaling, and shared impact without duplicating existing efforts.

“Coordination is going to be key—how do we consistently leverage one another’s needs to put together the best grant applications, with the right staffing in place to assist agencies and manage those grants?” — Fire District Staff, Sonoma County

Finding 5: Existing collaborations in Sonoma County related to wildfire resilience, emergency management, and climate adaptation

These existing collaborations reflect a strong base of knowledge, experience, and momentum that could support broader, more integrated action:

5.1 Existing partnerships span local, regional, and state levels: Organizations are engaged with a mix of local partners, including Fire Safe Sonoma, faith-based organizations (FBOs), and county groups like the Emergency Managers Working Group and County Fire Prevention Officers. Some respondents also mentioned collaboration with state agencies such as CAL FIRE and the Governor’s Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES).

5.2 Fire Safe Sonoma plays a central and growing role: Multiple interviewees referenced Fire Safe Sonoma as a key partner, noting its increasing focus and evolving structure. Recent developments include efforts to expand board representation, bringing in elected officials, utility representatives, and fire officials, and support for the Measure H implementation working group.

5.3 Innovative strategies like targeted grazing leverage diverse strengths: Several organizations are working together to advance strategic grazing as a tool for wildfire resilience. This approach brings together land managers, conservation groups, and agricultural partners to connect resources and knowledge, demonstrating how collaborative efforts can create new opportunities for landscape-scale wildfire mitigation while leveraging shared strengths.

5.4 Opportunities remain to deepen engagement across sectors: While some collaborations are well-established, a few interviewees expressed a desire to become more actively engaged with key groups, such as local fire departments, community organizations, and resilience-focused networks, suggesting ongoing potential to strengthen coordination across wildfire, resilience, and adaptation efforts.

Finding 6: How the County could build on existing efforts to improve internal coordination and explore the development of a new or expanded existing wildfire resilience entity

Building on these existing efforts, interviewees offered concrete suggestions for improving internal coordination now while laying the groundwork for longer-term structural change:

6.1 Establish a clear mission, vision, and goals to guide collective action: Interviewees expressed that it could be critical to establish an explicit purpose and shared objectives for a new or expanded entity, something that local partners, agencies, and jurisdictions can align with and buy into.

6.2 Design a structure that supports cities and encourages participation: Not all cities in Sonoma County are equally aligned on wildfire resilience efforts, and some local governments are facing significant budget challenges. To secure city buy-in on any county-wide efforts, interviewees suggested that a future entity could:

- Offer a clear value proposition that minimizes demands on city staff.
- Create opportunities for cities to meaningfully shape project priorities and plans.
- Promote collaboration without imposing top-down mandates.

“If whatever they’re working on is coming from County government—or even perceived as coming only from County government—it will fail. There’s massive distrust from cities. You need a structure where everyone has equal weight.” — Wildfire Leader, Outside Sonoma County

Finding 7: How a new, coordinated entity could help address the key needs in Sonoma County related to wildfire and climate resilience

Many participants saw value in creating or expanding a coordinating entity that could provide structure, legitimacy, and capacity for more unified action across the county and provided recommendations:

7.1 Support cross-jurisdictional coordination and project alignment: A coordinated entity could reduce duplication and improve service delivery by bringing jurisdictions, departments, and organizations together to align missions, plans, and implementation efforts, especially for multi-jurisdictional projects like evacuation routes and fuels treatments.

7.2 Strengthen funding access and ensure coordinated approaches: The entity could help pool capacity and expertise to pursue large-scale funding opportunities (e.g., climate bonds), support joint applications, and ensure that resources are equitably distributed across communities.

7.3 Improve communication, transparency, and situational awareness: Enhancing systems for tracking and sharing project status, preparedness levels, and resource needs (e.g., dashboards) would provide a clearer picture of ongoing efforts and readiness across the county.

7.4 Create a forum for inclusive collaboration: Including nonprofits, community-based organizations (CBOs), and funders alongside local governments can build more holistic, community-centered strategies that recognize and elevate the roles of diverse partners, including those working with marginalized communities.

“There’s no one-size-fits-all solution. We spent a year building trust with our community before finalizing our wildfire resilience plan. We were out at community meetings, schools, and night markets—people knew our faces and names. That made all the difference.” — Wildfire Leader, Outside Sonoma County

Finding 8: Concerns related to the development of a new wildfire resilience entity

While many were supportive of the idea, interviewees also raised thoughtful concerns about governance, equity, effectiveness, and implementation, along with strategies to address them:

8.1 Risk of redundancy and inefficient use of resources: Interviewees emphasized the importance of not duplicating efforts or creating a structure that competes with existing initiatives like Fire Safe Sonoma or Measure H implementation. The new entity must clarify its unique role and coordinate closely with ongoing efforts.

8.2 Equity in participation and benefit: Concerns surfaced about whether cities, especially those contributing significant tax revenue, would receive proportional benefits and meaningful representation within a new or expanded entity. Any new entity should ensure fair representation, transparency in resource allocation, and mechanisms to address diverse community needs.

8.3 Capacity and burden on already stretched partners: Several interviewees expressed that adding a new entity could strain overextended staff and organizations unless it is well-resourced, clearly structured, and designed to support (not burden) participants.

8.4 Clarity around scope and mandate: Questions were raised about whether the entity should focus strictly on wildfire or broader climate resilience. Clearly defining the mission, goals, and alignment with existing programs will help avoid confusion and fragmentation of efforts.

Finding 9: Types of organizations that should be represented in a wildfire resilience entity

Inclusive representation emerged as a strong theme, with interviewees highlighting the need to involve a wide range of voices, perspectives, and expertise in any new structure:

9.1 Broad, cross-sectoral representation: Suggested participants include County and city agencies, Tribal governments, fire districts, planning departments, vegetation and technical specialists, CBOs, NGOs, Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COADs), and funders. The inclusion of climate-focused actors was emphasized by interviewees who noted the importance of integrating expertise beyond wildfire alone, to address broader resilience and adaptation challenges.

9.2 Organizations with community ties and operational roles: Groups managing volunteers, working with marginalized communities, or supporting disaster response at the neighborhood level should be at the table. Entities with both technical knowledge and community trust can help ensure the work is grounded in lived experience and practical needs.

9.3 Flexibility to adapt as priorities evolve: Some noted that representation should be guided by the entity's mission and may evolve over time, depending on goals and project types.

Finding 10: Organizations and agencies within Sonoma County best positioned to administer a new wildfire resilience entity

Some interviewees pointed to specific organizations that already have trusted relationships, administrative capacity, or relevant expertise to potentially house or lead a new entity:

10.1 Fire Safe Sonoma: Fire Safe Sonoma was frequently named due to its existing relationships, cross-jurisdictional engagement, and technical expertise. Interviewees noted its ability to connect with fire representatives, elected officials, and community partners, and suggested strengthening its role further under Measure H funding.

10.2 County of Sonoma: Some identified the County as a logical lead for managing communications, signage, and emergency protocols, but cautioned that cities must be equitably engaged and see direct benefits, particularly if County-led initiatives rely on shared tax revenue.

10.3 Regional Climate Protection Authority (RCPA): RCPA was suggested as a potential lead due to its climate focus and existing intergovernmental structure. However, concerns about limited funding and staffing would need to be addressed to ensure it had the capacity to take on wildfire resilience efforts.

10.4 Need for alignment with existing efforts: Across suggestions, respondents emphasized the need to avoid confusion or overlap with current programs and to ensure any lead agency is well-positioned to align goals, support inclusive governance, and build long-term capacity.

Lessons Learned from Other Counties and the State

ERG asked interview respondents from outside Sonoma County to reflect on lessons from their own regions and experiences that could inform the development of a coordinated wildfire resilience program in Sonoma County. Key insights included:

Finding 11: A countywide approach could strengthen state alignment and local coordination

Interviewees suggested that a unified wildfire resilience strategy in Sonoma County could help align with state priorities, improve coordination with outside agencies, and clarify local roles. A central entity could enhance funding competitiveness and support more consistent outreach, while embedding resilience into County systems and balancing community protection with landscape-scale restoration:

11.1 Centralized coordination enhances state

alignment and funding access: A unified county-level approach can act as a central point of contact for state and federal agencies, enabling clearer communication, more strategic investment, and streamlined reporting. It would make Sonoma County more competitive for large-scale funding by demonstrating capacity and alignment.

“Counties are ideally sized to aggregate fire safe councils and fire departments into one framework—so we can issue block grants and build accountability, instead of having dozens of organizations competing for the same dollars.” — Wildfire Leader, State

11.2 Stronger local collaboration reduces

redundancy and builds trust: Coordinated frameworks help local organizations clarify roles, reduce competition, and align project efforts, leading to more successful grant applications and on-the-ground outcomes. Building on existing relationships strengthens the system without duplicating efforts.

11.3 Consistent public engagement and outreach are still lacking: Residents and landowners face inconsistent messaging and complex program requirements. A coordinated approach could improve clarity, support consistent outreach, and better engage the public in wildfire preparedness.

11.4 There is a need to embed resilience in county systems while balancing broader

landscape goals: Some participants noted that counties are well-positioned to coordinate protection-focused work, such as zoning and emergency response. Embedding a new entity or expanding an existing entity within the County could help integrate resilience into these existing systems. However, interviewees also flagged that counties may not have the capacity or expertise to lead on landscape restoration, ecological planning, or conservation. A successful approach

would need to balance both community protection and landscape-scale restoration to align with the most fundable and comprehensive statewide plans.

Finding 12: Regional models highlight strategies for multi-jurisdictional coordination

Interviewees discussed initiatives that show how strong leadership, cross-sector collaboration, and adaptive management can support shared planning, funding, and implementation across jurisdictions:

12.1 Clear coordination supports regional impact and funding access: Across regions, interviewees emphasized that successful wildfire resilience efforts rely on a central coordinating body that can work across jurisdictions while supporting local implementation. These structures help identify shared priorities, streamline planning, and make it easier to pursue large-scale funding opportunities that individual jurisdictions may not be positioned to access alone.

“We’ve been able to divvy up funding... We support each other’s applications instead of competing. That coordination allows us to define and refine projects and tap into different funding streams.” —
Open Space Manager, Outside Sonoma County

12.2 Effective collaboration depends on defined roles and trusted relationships: Interviewees noted that coordinated efforts tend to be most successful when roles and responsibilities are clearly established and supported by strong cross-sector relationships. Leadership, intentional alignment, and mutual trust were seen as critical ingredients for avoiding duplication, sustaining momentum, and enabling partners to work together across agency and jurisdictional lines.

12.3 Statewide or multi-regional coalitions can expand impact: Southern California coalitions and multi-county efforts (e.g., across wine country) show how broader alliances can leverage shared challenges and strengthen advocacy for funding.

12.4 Education and adaptive management are essential success factors: Successful programs include components that support community education and evolving land management strategies. For instance, in areas like the southern Sierra, land managers are adjusting practices in response to ecological changes (e.g., seed shortages for ponderosa pine), highlighting the need for flexible, informed approaches.

Funding Mechanisms

Interviewees shared a range of insights about potential funding sources and the challenges Sonoma County faces in securing sustainable, long-term financing for wildfire resilience efforts. Their perspectives highlight opportunities to build a stable financial foundation while addressing barriers to consistent funding:

Finding 13: Potential funding sources and related challenges

Respondents recommended various funding mechanisms Sonoma County could consider for a new or expanded wildfire resilience program. They also identified key obstacles that may complicate efforts to establish reliable and ongoing funding streams:

13.1 State programs are essential but often difficult to navigate: Cal Fire’s Fire Prevention Grants and Forest Health Program were frequently mentioned, but respondents noted barriers such as complex applications, shifting priorities, and tight timelines. Some interviewees felt state programs lacked long-term consistency and funding continuity.

13.2 Local tax measures and parcel fees can be powerful tools but face challenges in the current context:

Interviewees cited Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority and Napa County’s Measure L as successful examples of regionally coordinated funding that provide stable, flexible resources. However, several respondents noted that since Sonoma County’s Measure H recently passed, there is limited appetite among voters for additional taxes. Concerns were also raised about potential confusion regarding how a new tax would differ from Measure H and what specific benefits it would provide. Strong public trust and clear, accessible communication would be essential to overcome these challenges.

“We’re literally building something to coordinate wildfire efforts across the county for Measure H. How will this new effort align with Measure H? How are these two things supposed to function side by side? It could be confusing—to the public and to fire agencies.” — City Staff, Sonoma County

13.3 Regional and county funding is inconsistent and often limited: In many areas, especially rural counties, interviewees described a lack of dedicated public funding streams. Where funding existed, it was often one-time or grant-based, making it difficult to support long-term stewardship.

13.4 Private philanthropy plays a niche but important role: Some groups rely on philanthropic funding to support coordination, outreach, or planning, especially where public funding falls short. However, this funding is typically small-scale and less reliable for implementation.

13.5 Federal programs are underutilized or hard to access: Although programs like FEMA’s BRIC or NRCS grants were mentioned, few interviewees reported directly accessing them. Capacity constraints and matching requirements were key barriers. Given the changing federal landscape (e.g., the end of the BRIC program), federal funds are unlikely to provide a consistent source to support Sonoma’s efforts.

Finding 14: Considerations for identifying and building support for new funding mechanisms

Interviewees shared important considerations for selecting funding options and strategies to build broad-based public and political support:

14.1 Clear messaging about shared risk and collective benefit: Interviewees emphasized framing wildfire resilience as a countywide issue that affects everyone, including urban and rural,

renters and homeowners. Messaging should highlight the interconnected nature of landscapes, infrastructure, and communities to build broad-based support.

14.2 Transparency and accountability are critical to trust: Respondents stressed the importance of showing how funds will be used, where they will go, and what outcomes will be achieved. Ideas included annual public reports, citizen oversight committees, and maps or dashboards that demonstrate tangible progress.

14.3 Demonstrating early wins can build momentum: Several interviewees recommended piloting visible, high-impact projects in the near term to show the value of investment. Success stories and trusted messengers can help shift public perception and build a case for long-term funding.

14.4 Tailoring outreach to diverse communities and values: Messaging should reflect the specific concerns and priorities of different audiences, whether safety, ecology, economic stability, or recreation. Outreach must go beyond general public campaigns to include community-based engagement, especially with groups that have historically been left out of resilience planning.

“Invest in communications and marketing. Find out what the community needs are early on—people don’t like to be told what is good for them. Build credibility.”
— City Staff, Sonoma County

14.5 Leverage existing local support and champions: Some interviewees pointed to the County’s history of environmental stewardship and disaster response as a foundation for building trust. They encouraged identifying respected community leaders, landowners, and fire professionals who can serve as ambassadors for the effort.

14.6 Stability and longevity of revenue: Sustainable funding sources, such as dedicated taxes or special assessments, were favored over episodic grants, which may not support long-term planning and operations.

“Any amount of staffing money that’s not tied to grants is ideal. If a new entity is formed under a JPA, get financial commitments from partners from the start.” — Climate Resilience Leader, Outside Sonoma County

14.7 Flexibility to support a range of needs: Interviewees noted that effective funding should be able to cover diverse costs, from staffing and coordination to on-the-ground work and public education, rather than being restricted to narrowly defined activities.

14.8 Public acceptability and political feasibility: Respondents stressed the importance of gauging what the public is likely to support at the ballot box, and what elected officials can champion. Options with visible benefits and lower perceived burden may be more viable.

14.9 Equity and affordability: Several interviewees urged the County to assess how funding tools affect different income groups and geographies, ensuring that lower-income households aren’t disproportionately impacted and that all communities benefit from investments.

14.10 Ability to leverage or match other funding sources: Mechanisms that can unlock state or federal matching funds, or incentivize private investment, were seen as particularly valuable.

Finding 15: Critical funding challenges and risks to anticipate

Interviewees shared important lessons from past efforts, highlighting key funding challenges and risks Sonoma County should proactively address to build a resilient and sustainable wildfire program:

15.1 Avoid fragmented or duplicative efforts: Interviewees cautioned against creating overlapping structures or narrowly scoped funds that do not align with regional strategies. Without coordination, funding can be spread thin, creating inefficiencies and competition rather than collaboration.

15.2 Do not rely too heavily on short-term or project-based funding: Many noted that grants are time-limited and often fail to support the sustained staffing and operational capacity needed for long-term resilience. Programs built on one-time funding risk collapse once funds run out.

15.3 Overpromising without delivery erodes trust: Interviewees emphasized that promising large-scale benefits without clear plans or the ability to deliver can undermine public confidence and future support. Managing expectations and demonstrating accountability are essential.

“My advice is always: build the governance model first, then start seeking funding... Once you have a solid governance model, it becomes attractive to grants and philanthropy. Outside traditional taxes, look at industries like wine that are heavily impacted—there could be opportunities there. In this environment, grants are scary.” — Wildfire Authority Leader, Outside Sonoma County

15.4 Neglecting equity in funding design can widen disparities: Some respondents warned that mechanisms like parcel taxes or cost-share programs can unintentionally burden low-income residents or exclude under-resourced communities unless equity considerations are built in from the start.

RCT DEPARTMENTS: KEY ACTIVITIES AND CAPACITIES RELATED TO WILDFIRE RESILIENCE



This document summarizes existing wildfire resilience efforts as of June 2025 across departments and agencies represented within the Resilience Coordination Team (RCT). Its purpose was to inform meetings that occurred during the project period between the Core Team, RCT members, and department and agency staff by highlighting relevant actions, initiatives, and capacities already in place within RCT agencies related to wildfire resilience. The summary draws on three primary sources: the literature reviews developed for each of the four Technical Advisory Committees (TACs), responses from the TAC survey, information shared during TAC meetings, and supplemental desktop web research. While this summary is intended to be comprehensive, may not capture all efforts led or supported by RCT departments and agencies related to wildfire resilience.

RCT Departments and Agencies:

- 9 Ag + Open Space
- 10 County Administrator's Office
- 11 Department of Emergency Management
- 12 Office of Equity
- 13 Permit Sonoma
- 14 Regional Parks
- 15 Sonoma Public Infrastructure
- 16 Sonoma Water

Ag + Open Space

Sonoma County Ag + Open Space supports wildfire and climate resilience through its land conservation and stewardship efforts, which include vegetation management, ecological monitoring, and funding for projects that reduce fire risk. They bring technical capacity in spatial data analysis and maintain long-term relationships with landowners and conservation partners, allowing staff to support landscape-scale planning and collaborative management. While wildfire is not its primary focus, Ag + Open Space plays a supporting role in advancing resilience through both direct program investments and partnerships across the region the county.

Technical Tools & Expertise

- Co-led the [Sonoma Veg Map](#) initiative with Sonoma Water, producing over 30 publicly available datasets. These resources support fire resilience planning, conservation prioritization, and climate adaptation strategies.
- Uses advanced GIS tools to assess fire risk, prioritize land conservation, and monitor ecological changes over time.
- Provides in-depth knowledge on fire behavior, forestry planning, and ecological management to inform vegetation and land stewardship strategies to various partners involved in wildfire resilience work including local and regional fire districts, Resource Conservation Districts, homeowner associations and nonprofit organizations, as well as Tribal entities and resource managers.

Collaborations & Partnerships

- Participates actively in groups such as the [Sonoma Valley Wildlands Collaborative](#), [Upper Mark West Watershed Collaborative/Fire Safe Council](#), and [Coast Ridge Community Forest](#).
- Engages with [Northern Sonoma's Communities Organized to Prepare for Emergencies \(COPE\)](#), [Fire Safe Sonoma](#), and [Safer West County](#) to promote community-based wildfire resilience efforts.
- Collaborates with Sonoma State University on research initiatives and worked alongside CAL FIRE, Permit Sonoma, and other agencies to develop and implement the [Sonoma County Community Wildfire Protection Plan \(CWPP\)](#).

Programs & Initiatives

- [Vegetation Management Grant Program](#)
 - Administers a grant program that has allocated over \$11 million to 65 projects, reducing fuel loads on nearly 49,000 acres through methods like prescribed burns, grazing, and vegetation removal along evacuation routes.
- [Community Spaces Matching Grant Program](#)
 - Supports urban open space projects, including the development of parks and greenways in fire-impacted areas like the Mark West Community Park, fostering community resilience and ecological restoration.
- [Resilient Forests & Watersheds Workshops](#)
 - In partnership with Regenerative Forest Solutions and Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District, launched workshops aimed at enhancing wildfire resilience and forest health across the Russian River watershed.
- [LandSmart Grazing Program](#)
 - Funds local Resource Conservation Districts to implement targeted grazing on rural properties, reducing invasive species and fuel loads to mitigate wildfire risks.
- [Conservation Easements](#)

- Maintains relationships with landowners to manage over 124,000 acres of conserved land, integrating wildfire resilience into land management practices whenever possible.

Community Engagement & Education

- Develops educational content, such as the [Tending the Land website](#), to inform the public about fire-safe practices and ecological stewardship.
- Provides resources and guidance to landowners and community groups on wildfire preparedness, vegetation management, and conservation strategies.

Department of Emergency Management

The Sonoma County Department of Emergency Management (DEM) plays a central role in wildfire resilience through its role in preparedness, response, and recovery, including the development of the Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, coordination of emergency response, alert and warning systems, and recovery planning. While its focus spans all hazards, DEM contributes to wildfire preparedness and response by facilitating cross-agency coordination, supporting operational readiness, and engaging with the public and emergency partners through trainings and planning efforts.

Technical Tools & Expertise

- Expertise in emergency response coordination, alert and warning systems, and post-disaster recovery.
- Operational leadership for incident preparedness and response across multiple hazard types, including wildfires.

Collaborations & Partnerships

- Actively participates in or leads key groups such as the [Sonoma County Emergency Council](#), [Emergency Coordinator's Forum](#), Access and Functional Needs Committee, Alert and Warning Committee, and the Emergency Transportation Committee.

Programs & Initiatives

- Co-led the development of the [2021 Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan \(MJHMP\)](#), which assesses wildfire risks and outlines mitigation strategies across the county.
- Currently the County is updating the Plan for the [2026 update](#)
- Organizes the annual Pre-Fire Workshop for first responders to support coordination and readiness.
- Leads a Pre-Flood Workshop, which while not wildfire-specific, reflects their broader preparedness planning.

Community Engagement & Education

- Facilitates cross-sector communication and coordination before, during, and after emergencies.
- Engages with communities through outreach efforts related to alerts, warnings, and emergency procedures.

Sonoma County Regional Parks

Sonoma County Regional Parks contributes to wildfire resilience as a major public landowner, particularly in areas along strategic ridgetops and in the wildland-urban interface. Through stewardship of parklands and with dedicated staff focused on implementing forest management work, the department undertakes land management practices that support forest health, climate adaptation, and wildfire resilience.

Technical Tools & Expertise

- Maintains [maps and documentation](#) of their active and completed projects, which often include ecological restoration and infrastructure improvements.
- Contributes to the [RCD Project Tracker](#), a voluntary database designed to warehouse conservation and restoration projects and plans from resource conservation districts (RCDs) across California. Have contributed to efforts involving stream corridor restoration and native plant installations.
- Manages extensive parklands situated in fire-prone regions, serving as active land stewards in the wildland-urban interface.
- Provides on-the-ground models of land management strategies for wildfire resilience, including grazing and forest health treatments.
- Employs dedicated staff for ongoing forest management, including ecologically appropriate tree and brush thinning, targeted mowing, and road clearing to improve emergency vehicle access.
- Constructs shaded fuel breaks in collaboration with CAL FIRE and local fire districts to reduce low-to-the-ground fuels while preserving larger trees for shade and wildlife habitat.

Collaborations & Partnerships

- Participates in multiple CWPP efforts by collaborating with partners like CAL FIRE and local fire agencies to implement wildfire resilience projects, such as fuel reduction, shaded fuel breaks, and infrastructure hardening. The department also participates in countywide planning and manages vegetation across its 15,000-acre park system to reduce fire risk to both parklands and nearby communities.
- Member of the [Sonoma Valley Wildlands Collaborative](#) (SWWC). The SWWC is a group of six conservation organizations and land management agencies that is coordinating the management of 18,000 acres of natural lands in the Sonoma Valley. The Collaborative aims to maintain and improve ecosystem health, increase resilience to wildfires and climate change, and reduce future impacts of wildfire to communicate.
- Collaborates with [Fire Forward](#) and the [Good Fire Alliance](#) to implement prescribed burns across its parklands, aiming to reduce wildfire risk, restore native ecosystems, and build community resilience. These partnerships facilitate fuel reduction projects, such as those

conducted at [Shiloh Ranch](#) and [Carrington Coast Ranch Regional Park](#), and provide training opportunities for local residents to participate in safe, ecologically beneficial fire practices.

- Collaborates with Santa Rosa Junior College's Wildfire Resilience Program by providing hands-on training opportunities for students in wildfire mitigation practices.
- Participates in the [Sonoma County Forest Conservation Working Group](#), partnering with landowners, nonprofits, and agencies to promote sustainable forest stewardship and community wildfire resilience.

Programs & Initiatives

- Developing a [Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan \(CARP\)](#) to prepare parks and natural resources for climate impacts such as wildfire, drought, flooding, and extreme heat. The plan will also address ways to reduce climate pollution and protect the region's cultural and ecological assets. The plan is currently in development; completion timeline is to be determined.
- [Hood Mountain Regional Park and Preserve](#) has undergone significant recovery efforts following the 2017 Nuns Fire and 2020 Glass Fire. Restoration projects have included replacing bridges and culverts, clearing hazard trees, repairing trails, and stabilizing roads to ensure safe public access. Ongoing work continues to address storm damage and improve resilience against future wildfires.
- [Restored after the 2017 North Bay fires](#) several Sonoma County Regional Parks, which underwent extensive repairs to address fire and fire suppression damage. Restoration efforts, completed in July 2020, included replacing damaged infrastructure and clearing hazardous trees.

Community Engagement & Education

- As part CARP's development, [community input](#) is being gathered through surveys and in-person outreach to help inform and shape the final plan.
- Organizes guided public programs and field hikes to educate the community on nature's recovery post-wildfire and the importance of resilience.

Permit Sonoma

Permit Sonoma plays a key role in Sonoma County's wildfire resilience efforts by providing technical expertise in permitting, environmental review, and land use planning. The department supports wildfire mitigation through various programs and collaborates with other county departments and agencies, FireWire communities, and state and federal partners. By managing grants, offering technical tools, and engaging the community, Permit Sonoma helps enhance wildfire resilience and align local efforts with broader resilience goals.

Technical Tools & Expertise

- Provide expertise in permitting, environmental review, and land use requirements for wildfire resilience, ensuring compliance with regulations.
- Manage FEMA wildfire grants, including the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant, to fund resilience projects.²
- Develops and maintains tools like the [Wildfire Risk Index](#) and [Wildfire Hazard Index](#) to assess and communicate wildfire risks.

Collaborations & Partnerships

- Partners with other county departments and agencies to coordinate wildfire resilience efforts. Key partnerships include working with CAL FIRE, local fire agencies, and Fire Safe Sonoma to develop and update the CWPP.
- Collaborates with FireWire communities, FEMA, California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES), and other state and federal agencies to administer wildfire resiliency grant programs such as the [Sonoma County Wildfire Adapted Program](#) and the [Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project](#).
- Work with local and regional partners to develop and implement land use policies that align with wildfire resilience goals by incorporating fire risk reduction strategies into General Plan updates and the CWPP. It also collaborates on initiatives like the [Forest Resource Ordinance](#) to protect and steward the beneficial uses of forest and tree resources for Sonoma County.

Programs & Initiatives

- Plays a central role in the [CWPP](#) by leading its development, coordinating engagement, and integrating wildfire risk reduction strategies into county planning efforts. The CWPP is a collaborative strategy that identifies wildfire risks and outlines prioritized actions to reduce those risks and enhance community resilience.

² The federal government has officially terminated the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program, a key FEMA initiative that provided grants to help communities prepare for natural disasters like floods, wildfires, and earthquakes. This decision, announced on April 4, 2025, was part of a broader shift in [FEMA's priorities under the Trump administration](#).

- Develops and maintains the [CWPP Hub Site](#), a resource for residents to learn about wildfire risk and access risk reduction projects.
- Contribute to land use policy development by leading long-range planning efforts, including updates to the County General Plan, that support the creation of more resilient communities, particularly in areas at high risk for wildfires.
- Administers the [Wildfire Resilient Communities](#) (WRC) project, funded by the BRIC grant, to enhance wildfire mitigation in developed and natural landscapes. In natural landscapes, the WRC project focuses on identifying sites for large-scale vegetation management, such as prescribed burns, grazing, and thinning, to reduce hazardous fuel loads and improve ecosystem resilience.
- Leads the [Sonoma County Wildfire Adapted](#) program, offering defensible space assessments, home hardening guidance, and rebates for risk-reduction measures.
- Operates the [Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project](#) to reduce vegetation that contributes to wildfire spread.
- Provides a free [curbside chipper service](#) to residents creating defensible space around their homes.
- Offers [expedited permitting](#) for property owners who have lost or damaged property due to major wildfires.

Community Engagement & Education

- Engages with communities and stakeholders to promote wildfire resilience and ensure that planning efforts reflect the needs of the public and vulnerable populations. The General Plan Sonoma update process includes a comprehensive community engagement plan that features centralized and virtual workshops, online surveys, and in-person meetings in local communities, with a focus on underserved populations.

Sonoma Public Infrastructure

Sonoma Public Infrastructure plays a vital role in responding to and managing the impacts of wildfires on Sonoma County’s critical infrastructure. The department has crews available to address road repairs and road clearance and other infrastructure needs during and after a fire. Additionally, Sonoma Public Infrastructure manages communications equipment crucial for emergency response coordination. The department is also involved in grant management, supporting wildfire resilience funding. They collaborate with fire departments, CAL FIRE, Fire Safe Councils, and communications tower partners to ensure infrastructure needs are met during and in the aftermath of a wildfire and to support broader community resilience and fire prevention efforts.

Technical Tools & Expertise

- Has crews for responding during and after a fire to handle road repairs, clearance, and infrastructure restoration.
- Maintains roads and bridges to ensure the accessibility and safety of evacuation routes and emergency response.
- Provides communications equipment for emergency response and coordination.
- Houses grant management expertise to support wildfire resilience funding, particularly through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). This program, overseen by the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES), allocates federal funds to projects aimed at reducing the impacts of future natural disasters, including wildfires.

Collaborations & Partnerships

- Collaborates with fire departments and CAL FIRE for wildfire response and mitigation.
- Partners with Fire Safe Councils to address fire prevention and resilience needs.
- Works with communications tower providers to maintain critical infrastructure during emergencies.

Programs & Initiatives

- Portable Solar-Powered EV Chargers
 - Invests in portable, solar-powered electric vehicle charging stations and emergency backup power trailers to ensure continuity of operations during emergencies.

Sonoma Water

Sonoma Water plays a pivotal role in Sonoma County's wildfire and climate resilience efforts by safeguarding critical water infrastructure, advancing technical tools, and fostering strategic partnerships. The agency integrates wildfire risk considerations into watershed management, supports vegetation management activities, and leads initiatives to enhance regional preparedness. Through its leadership and collaboration with local, state, and federal entities, Sonoma Water contributes significantly to the county's overall resilience.

Technical Tools & Expertise

- Leads efforts to protect Lake Sonoma, a critical county asset for water supply and fire suppression, through GIS, research, monitoring, vegetation management, and weather forecasting.
- Helped bring regional fire cameras and drone technology online to enhance fire detection and situational awareness.
- Developed and supports the [Wildfire Resilience Planner Tool](#) to guide planning and prioritization of wildfire resilience strategies.

Collaborations & Partnerships

- Partners with public, County, State, and Federal entities to coordinate efforts protecting critical water infrastructure and advancing wildfire resilience.
- Collaborates with [Ag Innovations](#) on a Bureau of Land Management-funded grant to support wildfire-related planning and watershed health.
- Engaged in the Sonoma County Woody Feedstock Pilot through the [North Coast Resource Partnership](#) funding.
- Supports and contributes to the Watershed Resilience Plan and participates in the Flood Risk Management Partnership (focused on flood but related to broader resilience goals).
- Participates in and helps lead strategic convenings with cross-sector partners to align wildfire resilience priorities.

Programs & Initiatives

- Convenes forums, tours, and workshops, internally and externally, focused on wildfire, watershed resilience, and protection of key infrastructure. Sonoma Water's [Water and Energy Education Program](#) is a publicly funded initiative that provides free educational resources to schools in Sonoma, Mendocino, and Marin counties. The program hosts the [Climate Resilience in the North Bay Teacher Workshop](#), a five-day professional development event that equips TK-6 grade teachers with knowledge and resources to address climate change topics in the classroom.
- Advances projects that integrate monitoring, planning, and vegetation management to reduce wildfire risk in key watersheds like the [FireSmart Lake Sonoma project](#).

- Leverages partnerships and funding mechanisms to implement multi-benefit resilience projects that protect water supply, ecological health, and public safety. A key initiative is the [Santa Rosa Plain Drought Resiliency Project](#), which utilizes a "conjunctive use" strategy to enhance drought resilience.

Community Engagement & Education

- Hosts and facilitates public-facing events and workshops to build awareness of wildfire risk and the role of watershed protection.
- Engages local communities and decision-makers in collaborative planning to strengthen regional resilience to wildfires and climate threats.
- Promotes education on the importance of protecting water infrastructure and natural systems as part of broader wildfire resilience efforts.

County Executive's Office

The Sonoma County Executive's Office (CEO) plays a central coordinating role in advancing wildfire and climate resilience through strategic planning, regional collaboration, and public engagement. The CEO supports partnerships to expand local capacity and delivers resources and tools to inform vegetation management and fire preparedness. These efforts align with broader county goals to protect communities, ecosystems, and infrastructure from climate-driven risks. In collaboration with departments and agencies, the CEO leads implementation of the [County's climate plan](#), a strategic roadmap aimed at achieving carbon neutrality by 2030 and enhancing the county's resilience to climate impacts. Finally, the CEO supports resilience efforts by coordinating applications for state and federal funding.

Office of Equity

The Sonoma County Office of Equity does not directly lead wildfire or climate resilience efforts but plays an important supporting role by helping ensure these initiatives are equitable and inclusive. Through its collaboration with other departments and community partners, the Office works to embed equity into countywide planning, decision-making, and program implementation, including those focused on wildfire and climate-related challenges.

Technical Tools & Expertise

- Helped develop and implement the [Racial Equity Toolkit](#), [Community Engagement Plan](#) (as part of the Sonoma County General Plan), and [Language Access Policy and Implementation Plan](#) to ensure equitable and inclusive engagement in county initiatives, including those related to wildfire and climate resilience.
- Contributed to the [Sonoma County Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment](#), providing critical feedback on social sensitivity indices and identifying populations made sensitive by systemic inequities, thereby informing risk reduction planning for wildfire and other hazards.

Collaborations & Partnerships

- Collaborated with Permit Sonoma and other county departments to integrate equity-focused strategies into the General Plan Sonoma update, ensuring that the needs of traditionally underrepresented and marginalized communities are addressed in land use and hazard mitigation planning.
- Participated in the formation of the Equity Working Committee, an advisory group comprising community members invested in developing climate adaptation and environmental justice solutions tailored to the diverse communities in Sonoma County.

Programs & Initiatives

- Integrated equity considerations into the [Climate Resilience Comprehensive Action Plan](#), ensuring that community engagement strategies are inclusive and that the voices of climate justice communities are incorporated into resilience planning.
- Supported the development of the [Community Vision Phase](#) of the General Plan update, emphasizing the importance of engaging a broad spectrum of community members to inform policies that address climate change and wildfire resilience.

Community Engagement & Education

- Leads efforts to ensure that community engagement activities, such as town halls and workshops, are accessible and inclusive, particularly for populations that have been historically underrepresented in county decision-making processes.

- Advocates for compensating community members for their participation in engagement activities, recognizing the value of their time and expertise in shaping equitable climate resilience strategies.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE MODELS AND EXAMPLES MEMO

To inform the work of the Organizational Structure and Funding (O&F) Technical Advisory Committee, ERG assessed existing or proposed program organizational structures. The ERG team started by reviewing foundational documents and organizational models cited within those documents. See the Appendix for a full list of foundational documents; examples include the Climate Resilient Lands Strategy, Sonoma County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), and the California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan. We identified relevant models and programs related to wildfire and climate resilience and reviewed associated websites and organizational documents for additional details. For each program, we analyzed its mission; goals, priorities, and activities; and governance structure, including board membership and bylaws. Staffing analysis included the number of staff and their roles, whether staff were full- or part-time, whether staff were agency-based or shared across agencies, and the number and type of contractors. We also reviewed program partnerships to determine the presence of coordinating bodies and whether coordination was formal or ad hoc. Community participation and engagement were assessed based on the presence of advisory groups or standing committees, the proportion of the budget allocated to engagement, stated equity principles, and whether engagement efforts had a decision-making component. Finally, we reviewed each program’s funding, including financing mechanisms and the overall operating budget.

Below are the types of models we found to be relevant to Sonoma County and the work of the O&F TAC. For each model type, we provide examples of entities identified and analyzed for governance structure, staffing, funding, and participatory elements.

Special District

A government entity created for a specific purpose – such as water, fire, or transit – that has its own governing board and operates independently from city or county governments.

Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs)

The [Sonoma RCD](#) and [Gold Ridge RCD](#) focus on land conservation, resource management, and sustainable agriculture practices in Sonoma County. Gold Ridge RCD, founded in 1941 as the first RCD in Sonoma County, covers 134,000 acres of west Sonoma and north Marin. Sonoma RCD, founded in 1946 by local farmers, now serves approximately 85% of Sonoma County. RCDs are

created under Division 9 of the California Public Resources Code. Division 9 defines the state's framework for conducting the business of resource conservation within California. A central component of Division 9 is its authorization for RCDs to be formed for the purpose of addressing local resource conservation needs. RCDs are governed by a local, independent Board of Directors.

- **Governance:** [Sonoma RCD](#) is governed by a 7-member Board of Directors that meets monthly. [Gold Ridge RCD](#) has a 9-member Board, including seven directors and two associate directors. Directors serve two-year terms and are appointed by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors based on recommendations from RCD staff. Board members in both RCDs represent non-profits, local government, agriculture and viticulture interests, and natural resource management organizations.
- **Staffing:** Sonoma RCD employs 19 staff (not all are full time), while Gold Ridge RCD has 18 full-time staff.
- **Funding:** Sonoma RCD is funded through a combination of county property taxes, investment interest, intergovernmental grants and contracts (both district and subawards), foundation grants, fees for service, donations, landowner cost shares, and agricultural education school payments.
 - Gold Ridge RCD receives funding from property taxes, government agencies, fines and penalties, donations and contributions, private foundations, and fund transfers from other government sources.
- **Participatory Elements:** Gold Ridge RCD hosts formal working group meetings once or twice a month for the Sonoma County Forest Conservation Group—a network of local forest landowners, land managers, watershed councils, nonprofits, government agencies, researchers, and educators that brings expertise to the public. The Sonoma County Forest Conservation Group and Gold Ridge RCD Board meetings cover topics such as forest stewardship, watershed health, wildfire resilience, habitat restoration, and native seed collection, often featuring expert guest presentations, community engagement opportunities, and updates on collaborative conservation efforts and program funding. The Gold Ridge RCD also hosts monthly Board meetings open to the public via Zoom, which involve discussion of a wide range of topics including wildfire resilience planning and implementation, streamflow monitoring, habitat enhancement, native seed collection, cooperative agreements with conservation partners, and budgetary and staffing decisions.

Sonoma County Fire Protection District

The [Sonoma County Fire District \(SCFD\)](#) is a special district that provides fire protection, rescue, and emergency medical services to about 75,000 residents across 160 square miles.³ The SCFD was formed in April 2019 through the consolidation of Bennett Valley Fire Protection District, Mountain Volunteer Fire Department, Rincon Valley Fire District, and Windsor Fire Protection District. It has since consolidated with three more Fire Protection Districts – Russian River,

³ While SCFD is the largest Fire Protection District in Sonoma County, other Fire Protection Districts in the County include Northern Sonoma, North Sonoma Coast, Timber Cove, and Cloverdale.

Forestville, and Bodega Bay. Through these consolidations, the SCFD aimed to create a unified fire protection system in Sonoma County.

- **Governance:** The SCFD is governed by a seven-member Board of Directors elected by the public to serve four-year terms. The Board meets monthly, with additional special meetings scheduled as needed. A Finance Committee, composed of board members, meets quarterly to review financial matters.
- **Staffing:** The district has a total staff of 150, including a Fire Chief, 3 Deputy Chiefs, 4 Division Chiefs, and 3 Battalion Chiefs. Operational personnel include 25 Captains, 24 Engineers, 6 Firefighters, 27 Firefighters/Paramedics, and 3 Apprentice Firefighters. Additional staff include 5 in Prevention, 4 in Administration, a Logistics Specialist, and 44 Volunteers who support emergency response and community services.
- **Funding:** For FY 2024–2025, the district’s funding primarily comes from taxes—including secured, unsecured, residual, supplemental property taxes, direct taxes, and special taxes—which make up 62% of total revenue. Intergovernmental revenues such as state and county grants, tax exchange agreements, and federal funding account for 23%. Additional income sources include charges for services (7%), miscellaneous sources like tribal funds and reimbursements (6%), and less than 1% from interest and rentals.
- **Participatory Elements:** The Finance Committee has formal quarterly meetings.

The Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (Ag + Open Space)

[Ag + Open Space](#) is an agency focused on agricultural and open space preservation, including promotion of healthy working lands practices, in Sonoma County. It was formed in 1990 after county voters passed Measure A & C, creating the district.

- **Governance:** The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors serves as the Board of Directors, overseeing decisions related to the Expenditure Plan, long-term stewardship of District-owned land and easements, and overall District operations. The General Manager reports directly to the Board, which consists of five Directors, one for each district.
- **Staffing:** The district is managed by one General Manager and supported by 35 full-time staff across areas including Acquisition, Finance and Administration, Stewardship, and Community Resources.
- **Funding:** The district is funded through a voter-approved sales tax (\$40 million), state, federal, and other government revenues (\$5 million), as well as additional department revenue, such as donations (\$600,000).
- **Participatory Elements:** The district holds biweekly public meetings, providing members of the public with opportunities to get involved and share their input

Regional Climate Protection Authority (RCPA)

The [RCPA](#) is a special district established in 2009 through locally sponsored state legislation to coordinate countywide climate protection efforts among Sonoma County's cities and county agencies. In 2022, the California Legislature enacted the Climate Resilience Districts Act, which designated the RCPA as the first Climate Resilience District in the state.

- **Governance:** RCPA is governed by a 12-member Board of Directors, including one representative from each of the nine incorporated cities or towns in Sonoma County and three members from the County Board of Supervisors. The Climate Action Advisory Committee (CAAC) advises the Board, staff, and consultants on the development and implementation of climate action programs.
- **Staffing:** RCPA has five full-time equivalent staff members, including a Climate Change Program Specialist, Water Upgrades \$ave Program Manager, and BayREN Program Specialist.
- **Funding:** The RCPA is funded through a combination of grants, contributions from RCPA member governments and partner agencies, and an agreement with the Association of Bay Area Governments to implement Bay Area Regional Energy Network (BayREN) programs in Sonoma County.
- **Participatory Elements:** The Climate Action Advisory Committee (CAAC) provides guidance to the Board, staff, and project consultants during the design and implementation of climate action initiatives. RCPA hosts regular coordination meetings with staff from member governments and partner agencies on topics related to climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience.

Public Agency Programs and Committees

A program run by a government agency that delivers public services or implements policies, often housed within a broader department and funding through government budgets.

Healthy Soils Program (HSP)

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) and the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service collaborate on the [HSP](#) to promote soil health and sustainability. Its Incentive Grants provide financial incentives to farmers and ranchers that implement practices to improve soil health, Demonstration Grants fund on-farm conservation management practices, and the Block Grant Pilot funds local organizations to assist agricultural producers more effectively.

- **Governance:** The HSP, part of California’s Healthy Soils Initiative, is governed by the CDFA
- **Staffing:** The HSP is primarily staffed by the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) and does not have dedicated staff of its own. Support also comes from partners such as the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), RCDs, universities and non-profits. Non-profit organizations, such as the Solana Center for Environmental Innovation, also provide technical assistance to grant awardees through this program.
- **Funding:** The HSP is funded by the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, the State General Fund, and Parks and Water Bond of 2018 (Prop 68).
- **Participatory Elements:** The HSP prioritizes funding of projects in disadvantaged communities. It provides demonstration project funding to educational institutions, conservation districts, and nonprofits that collaborate with farmers, ranchers, and Tribal governments.

North Bay Forest Improvement Program (NBFIP)

The [NBFIP](#) supports planning and implementation of projects on private forested lands to reduce risks of wildfire and promote forest health, including providing financial incentives to landowners to conduct this work. It is a partnership between RCDs in Sonoma, Mendocino, Napa, and Lake Counties; the Clear Lake Environmental Center; and Rebuild North Bay Foundation. These local partners formed NBFIP 2020 as a response to the 2017 North Bay fires to incentivize non-commercial forest improvement activities and educate private landowners about forest management practices.

- **Governance:** The NBFIP is run by the Executive Directors of participating RCDs.
- **Staffing:** Staff from participating RCDs support project planning and implementation.
- **Funding:** The NBFIP has received CAL FIRE Grants, including a \$1.5 million the Proposition 68 Wildfire Resilience and Forestry Assistance grant in 2020 that provided three years of funding to develop and manage an incentives program to mitigate wildfire risk and improve forest health in the region.

- **Participatory Elements:** At least 20 percent of the program dollars will benefit disadvantaged communities identified in the 2010 census as earning median incomes less than 80% of the state median.

Mariposa Fire Advisory Council (MFAC)

The [MFAC](#) is a committee formed by the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors in 2019. The MFAC convenes local agencies, nonprofits, and stakeholders to collaboratively prioritize and coordinate wildfire resilience projects. Though it lacks its own funding or staff, MFAC plays a key role in aligning project proposals with the County’s Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) and reducing competition for grant funds.

- **Governance:** The MFAC is an appointed advisory committee under the Board of Supervisors, with voting members from the public and non-voting representatives from agencies like PG&E and Caltrans; it operates under formal bylaws and reports monthly to the Board.
- **Staffing:** The Council has no dedicated staff and relies on volunteers and agency representatives; the chair, a County Fire staff member, also serves as the steward of the CWPP.
- **Funding:** The MFAC has no direct funding and cannot receive grants as a committee; this limits capacity and has prompted discussions about the need for a dedicated wildfire resilience organization with financial resources.

Nevada County Office of Emergency Services (OES)

[Nevada County OES](#) is a county department, established in 1997, that is responsible for planning, preparedness, response, and recovery for all types of emergencies, with a strong focus on wildfire resilience. The office plays a central role in coordinating across jurisdictions, agencies, and communities to implement strategic wildfire mitigation and preparedness initiatives. The Nevada County OES has grown rapidly since the Camp Fire, becoming a driver of emergency readiness and a hub for vision-driven, community-centered resilience efforts.

- **Governance:** The Nevada County OES coordinates with three local towns, federal and state agencies (e.g., USFS, BLM, State Parks, and CAL FIRE), nonprofits, and neighboring Placer County; it serves as a strategic leader for wildfire mitigation across the county and acts as a fiscal sponsor for wildfire resilience projects (e.g., for local non-profits working on wildfire mitigation with funding limitations due to eligibility like the Sierra Foothill Forest Climate Resilience Project; Nevada County OES manages the project's finances and ensures the project is compliant with all relevant regulations)).
- **Staffing:** The Nevada County OES employs 10 full-time staff and 1 Sheriff officer, organized into response/recovery and planning/mitigation teams with additional roles for enforcement and specialized programs (e.g., green waste, winter storms).

- **Funding:** County general funds, federal and state grants, NGO grants (e.g., Fire Safe of California), PG&E distributions, and voter-approved propositions support the Nevada County OES.
- **Participatory Elements:** The Nevada County OES developed a community-driven wildfire resilience plan following a year-long outreach effort that reached thousands through events and direct contact. Other ongoing participatory projects include the Sierra Foothill Forest Climate Resilience Project, which will consult with 85 private landowners to treat 625 acres of forest for improved resilience to pests and climate risks; Firewise Community Grants which provide resources and services, such as wood chippers for rent or contractors, to community members; and Defensible Space Assistance for Seniors and People Living with Disabilities, which provides free defensible space clearing services within 100 feet of their homes.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

A formal but not legally binding agreement between two or more entities that outlines how they will work together on shared goals or projects and can serve as the first step to formal contract or legally binding relationship. MOUs often facilitate collaboration or coordination without creating a new legal entity. An MOU outlines a general understanding between parties of their roles and responsibilities, whereas an MOA describes how parties will work together in more detail, such as specific tasks, timelines, and deliverables.

North Coast Resource Partnership (NCRP)

The [NCRP](#) is a nonprofit collaboration, launched in 2004-2005, among over 2,000 partners – including Northern California Tribes, counties, and other stakeholders – for resource management, regional planning, and project implementation. The NCRP requires partners to sign onto their Memorandum of Mutual Understanding ([MOMU](#)) to confirm their commitment to NCRP principles and processes.

- **Governance:** The NCRP is governed by a Leadership Council comprised of elected representatives appointed by each County’s Board of Supervisors and three Tribal Representatives appointed by North Coast Tribes. It is also supported by a staff team and technical peer review team. Humboldt County serves as the fiscal lead and offers administrative oversight.
- **Staffing:** There are seven staff available to support the work, including a Tribal Engagement Director, Tribal Technical Assistance Coordinator, and Natural Resources Planning Manager as well as in-kind staffing support from Sonoma Water. NCRP also coordinates with up to 50 subcontractors in order to provide a wide range of services and keep the core staff team small.
- **Funding:** The NCRP receives base funding from Sonoma Water of approximately \$150,000 and leverages this amount to secure millions of dollars for the work it does to support its member agencies. It has received \$13 million over five years from sources including Proposition 50 and Department of Conservation funds . Humboldt County retains a small administrative fee for acting as the fiscal agent.
- **Participatory Elements:** Community engagement occurs through public quarterly meetings, workshops, climate conferences, listening sessions, surveys, and partnerships.

Public/Private Partnership

A cooperative or collaborate agreement between one or more government agencies with private-sector entities to work toward shared goals.

Tahoe Central Sierra Initiative (TCSI)

The [TCSI](#) is a partnership between the following state, federal, nonprofit, and private partners committed to science-based land management: California Tahoe Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), U.S. Forest Service (SFS), CalForests California Forestry Association, Sierra Nevada Conservancy, and National Forest Foundation. It was established as a pilot project under the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program between 2017-2018 with the goals of meeting state and federal mandates for forest and watershed restoration, improving wildfire resilience and creating a restoration economy.

- **Governance:** The TCSI is a partnership of state, federal, environmental, industry, and research representatives established by a Memorandum of Understanding.
- **Staffing:** Two staff support the TCSI – a TCSI coordinator and a TCSI Project Management & GIS Specialist – through collaboration with partners and development of innovative approaches to restoration goals.
- **Funding:** TCSI partner agencies secured over \$32 million in California Climate Investment funds for implementation of 28 TCSI priority projects covering over 20,000 acres on federal, state, and private lands and to support Science Foundation research efforts. Additional funding has come from state bonds, the Wildlife Conservation Board, USDA Forest Service, and other partners.
- **Participatory Elements:** The TCSI created a Project Tracker and the TCSI [Blueprint](#), a set of strategy maps that can be used by partners and others in the region, such as land managers, across the Sierra Nevada region to identify and prioritize opportunities for forest management projects.

Redwoods Rising

The [Redwoods Rising](#) project, launched by Save the Redwoods League in 2018, is a partnership with the National Park Service and California State Parks to restore formerly logged forests in Redwood National and State Parks.

- **Governance:** Save the Redwoods League is governed by a Council of volunteer members who serve as ambassadors, vote on organizational matters, and elect the Board of Directors. The Board sets policy, elects officer, approves budgets, and authorizes all land acquisitions. The Leadership Team, headed by the President and CEO, manages day-to-day operations, and the League is accredited by the Land Trust Alliance Accreditation Commission to ensure its accountability and standards.

- **Staffing:** The Save the Redwoods team includes 67 staff across the Leadership Team, Conservation Program, Development, Finance, HR & Operations, Legal, and Marketing & Communications.
- **Funding:** Save the Redwoods League revenue comes from individuals, foundations, corporations, government agencies, and investments.
- **Participatory Elements:** Redwoods Rising conducts outreach programs and projects and targets communities that have been historically underrepresented, such as indigenous tribes, rural redwood communities, women, people of color, and youth. Redwood Connect Grants support equitable access to parks, mostly through school field trips.

Nonprofit Collaborative

A partnership of nonprofit organizations (and sometimes public agencies) working together on shared objectives, often driven by mutual goals rather than formal governance structures.

Napa Communities Firewise Foundation (NCFF)

The [NCFF](#) is a nonprofit formed in 2007 to address wildfire risks across Napa County through education, fuel reduction projects, and community engagement. Originating from a 2004 initiative by fire professionals and local leaders, NCFF coordinates countywide wildfire resilience efforts and administers large-scale funding streams.

- **Governance:** The NCFF operates as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a board, foundation staff, and 22 affiliated Fire Safe Councils that help identify local priorities and maintain community wildfire protection plans (CWPPs).
- **Staffing:** The core administrative and technical staff manage grant writing and project implementation, supporting mostly volunteer-run Fire Safe Councils while working closely with CalFire, the County, and local landowners.
- **Funding:** Over the last 10 years, NCFF has secured more than \$255 million through a combination of county taxes (\$75 million), federal sources such as FEMA and BRIC (\$78 million), grants from organizations like CalFire, PG&E, and SCC (\$35 million), and private or fee-for-service funding (\$35 million).
- **Participatory Elements:** The NCFF engages residents through Fire Safe Councils and collaborates with government agencies, landowners, and industry stakeholders, including vintners and grape growers, to ensure that projects reflect community priorities and support regional coordination.

Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy

The [Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy](#) is a nonprofit organization that has served as the primary philanthropic and community engagement partner to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) since 1981. The Conservancy supports park operations and improvements, fosters volunteerism, and promotes inclusive access to national parklands in the Bay Area. In addition to leading capital and ecological restoration projects, the Conservancy helps coordinate wildfire resilience and land stewardship efforts across jurisdictions through its partnerships and role in initiatives like One Tam.

- **Governance:** The Conservancy operates as an independent nonprofit with an MOU to serve as convener for regional partnerships like One Tam, allowing it to coordinate cross-jurisdictional work and serve in an administrative role without acting as a lead agency.
- **Staffing:** The Park Projects and Conservation team plans and implements capital and resilience projects, working closely with land managers and partner organizations.

- **Funding:** The Conservancy is supported by a diverse mix of grants, philanthropy, memberships, endowments, public-private partnerships, and earned income from retail and visitor services—providing financial stability and flexibility.
- **Participatory Elements:** Collaborations with land management agencies, fire protection districts, RCDs, NGOs (e.g., SFEI), and stewardship councils across the Bay Area allows the Conservancy to facilitate landscape-scale coordination and planning.

Joint Powers Authorities or Agreements (JPA)

A Joint Power Agreement is a legal agreement between two or more public agencies to jointly exercise the powers they share. This agreement may form a new legal entity, a Joint Powers Authority, with its own board and budget, distinct from its member agencies but with the same authorities of its member agencies.

Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority (MWPA)

The [MWPA](#) is a JPA created after the 2017 North Bay wildfires to implement coordinated, countywide wildfire resilience strategies. The JPA structure allows Marin’s many small jurisdictions to work together while maintaining local control. MWPA leads wildfire mitigation, planning, and compliance efforts across 17 member agencies to implement large-scale projects, share resources, and secure funding.

- **Governance:** The JPA has 17 Board members, each representing their member agencies. Its dual-majority voting structure is designed to preserve local control while enabling unified regional efforts.
- **Staffing:** Staffing varies by agency; some rely entirely on MWPA staff for implementation, while larger agencies use MWPA funding to support dedicated wildfire mitigation staff.
- **Funding:** The MWPA is funded primarily through a parcel tax (\$0.11/sq ft on buildings; \$75/unit for multifamily; variable for unimproved parcels), generating about \$22 million annually, plus about \$6 million in state and federal grants
- **Participatory Elements:** All member agencies participate, with larger departments more engaged directly. MWPA staff implement projects for smaller departments. Broad engagement supported by shared tools, defensible space evaluations, and centralized CEQA compliance.

Lake County Community Risk Reduction Authority (RRA) Joint Powers Agreement (JPA)

The [Lake County RRA](#) was formed by the County of Lake in 2018 to coordinate wildfire and climate risk reduction across jurisdictions. It brings together county officials, fire departments, water systems, special districts, cities, and Tribal nations under a shared governance structure to implement mitigation programs and share resources. A Joint Powers Agreement is a legal arrangement that allows two or more public agencies to jointly exercise powers. When such an agreement leads to the creation of a new, separate government entity, that is referred to as a Joint Powers Authority. While the term “Authority” is in Lake County RRA’s name, it is a Joint Powers Agreement rather than an Authority because its member agencies retain their independence and serve together for specific purposes under the agreement.

- **Governance:** This county-initiated entity has directors who vote and make decisions, while partner organizations (e.g., BLM, USFS, local NGOs) attend meetings to provide reports and

feedback; structured to support cross-agency collaboration and functions under California Brown Act public meeting requirements.

- **Staffing:** The Lake County RCD provides part-time staff to support administrative and ongoing work, activities like grant writing, special projects, and project implementation require outside support.
- **Funding:** Support includes limited membership fees of \$5000 per member entity, grant funding (e.g., state adaptation planning grants), and discretionary cannabis tax revenue. There is no stable, long-term funding, such as parcel tax, which has hindered expansion and the ability of the RRA to implement projects and provide broader support and services. The RRA is currently exploring options for longer-term sustainable financing to help expand its role and the services it provides in the county.
- **Participatory Elements:** Members engage in monthly meetings and online town halls.

Sonoma County Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD)

Sonoma County COAD is a collaboration of community agencies with a mission to foster more effective service delivery to those affected by disasters in Sonoma County throughout the disaster cycle – mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.

- **Governance:** The Sonoma County COAD is governed by formal Bylaws and two leadership teams: the Governance Team and the Operations Team. The Governance Team is composed of elected officers, including a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Treasurer, and Secretary, while the Operations Team includes committee chairs and liaisons from key agencies such as the Department of Emergency Management and the North Bay Chapter of the American Red Cross. The COAD also serves as the sole liaison to the County Emergency Operations Center (EOC), representing community groups and coordinating support and resources during disasters.
- **Staffing:** The Sonoma County COAD is primarily volunteer led, with a Governance Team of four elected officers and an Operations Team that oversees day-to-day functions. Staffing includes leads for the Access and Functional Needs group, five committees (each with one to two leaders), three liaisons, and two individuals dedicated to long-term recovery efforts.
- **Funding:** No info found.
- **Participatory Elements:** The Sonoma County COAD fosters active community participation through regular meetings and committee involvement. The Operations Team meets monthly, while membership meetings occur every other month, and committees and project teams convene as needed. Formal committees include Communications, Volunteer & Donations, Emotional Spiritual Care, Food Access, and Preparedness.

APPENDIX A: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND FUNDING INTERVIEW GUIDE

Approach

Conducting interviews with experts in wildfire and climate resilience from within and beyond Sonoma County will help inform the assessment of options for developing a new Wildfire Resilience Program. Interviews will also help fill gaps in relation to findings from TAC meetings, the TAC survey, and the literature review. ERG will collaborate with the County Project Manager (CPM) to identify interviewees for up to 15, 60-minute interviews and develop an initial outreach invite to send out to each interviewee.

Objectives

- **Objective 1:** Create a near-term framework for improved coordination and collaboration within County departments and agencies to improve coordination and collaboration between the County and other entities and organizations.
- **Objective 2:** Develop and propose to the Board of Supervisors a long-term framework for institutionalizing wildfire risk reduction efforts and how a proposed structure can best meet the needs of wildfire resilience in Sonoma County.
- **Objective 3:** Gather insights from other counties, including the organizational structures they have used to coordinate wildfire resilience efforts.
- **Objective 4:** Identify and discuss sustainable funding mechanisms used by other entities that could be used to support a new wildfire resilience entity.
- **Objective 5:** Identify strategies for broadening participation from landowners and community members.

Opening Script

My name is _____, I am [*position title*] with ERG. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today; your thoughts and opinions will be very valuable to this project. To give you a bit of background on this project, as you may know, in 2023 the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors approved an effort to design a comprehensive Wildfire Resilience Program that would align the work, identify stable resources to support it, and increase engagement and education across the county. The project includes an evaluation of organizational structures to improve work across agencies and external partners and increase stable funding. The County of Sonoma hired ERG to help conduct this work, in coordination with a Resilience Coordination Team composed of County department heads, and four Technical Advisory Committees that ERG is helping facilitate.

Overall, the project will result in 1) creation of a near-term framework for improved coordination and collaboration within County departments and agencies to improve coordination and collaboration between the County and other entities and organizations and 2) development and proposal to the Board of Supervisors of a long-term framework for institutionalizing wildfire risk

reduction efforts and how a proposed structure can best meet the needs of wildfire resilience in Sonoma County. In today's interview, we are interested in hearing your perspective on [see objectives; interviewer will adjust based on if we're speaking from respondents within or outside of the County].

We expect the interview to take approximately **60** minutes. Your answers will be confidential, and we will only report data in group form so that no one will be able to identify you from your answers, unless you give us express permission to do so.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Section 1: Background (*all respondents*)

1. How long have you been with [**organization name**], and could you describe your role there?
2. How does your role relate to wildfire resilience and climate change coordination and planning?
3. [**For interviewees within Sonoma County**] Does your organization collaborate on wildfire mitigation work with organizations within and outside of Sonoma? If yes, which ones?
4. [**For interviewees outside of Sonoma County**] Has your organization worked with Sonoma County on wildfire resilience efforts? If so, how and are you familiar with Sonoma County's current wildfire mitigation efforts?

Section 2: Opportunities for a new Wildfire Resilience Program (*Sonoma County respondents*)

- **Objective 1:** Create a near-term framework for improved coordination and collaboration within County departments and agencies to improve coordination and collaboration between the County and other entities and organizations.
- **Objective 2:** Develop and propose to the Board of Supervisors a long-term framework for institutionalizing wildfire risk reduction efforts and how a proposed structure can best meet the needs of wildfire resilience in Sonoma County.
- **Objective 5:** Identify strategies for broadening participation from landowners and community members.

[Note that this section will only be asked of those working with the county or with strong knowledge of programs within Sonoma County.]

5. A key outcome of this project will be to recommend to the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors a long-term framework for a new wildfire resilience entity that strengthens coordination on wildfire resilience within County agencies and departments and improves alignment and participation from other partners (i.e., Sonoma cities, fire districts, other counties, the state, landowners). Based on your experiences in Sonoma County, what challenges or barriers exist for enhancing coordination:
 - a) Among County of Sonoma agencies?

- b) Between County agencies and other organizations working on wildfire resilience within and beyond Sonoma County?
 - c) How might those challenges be overcome?
 - d) What opportunities or strengths could the County draw upon to help develop a new, countywide wildfire resilience entity?
6. Considering your work within Sonoma County, what are the collaborations/partnerships your organization is involved with that directly/indirectly focus on wildfire resilience, emergency management, community resilience, and/or climate adaptation?
 - a) How can the County leverage these existing efforts in considering the near-term objective of improving internal coordination and the longer-term objective to develop a new wildfire resilience entity?
 7. How could a new, coordinated entity help address the key needs in Sonoma County related to wildfire and climate resilience?
 8. Do you have any concerns related to the development of a new wildfire resilience entity in Sonoma County? If so, how could those concerns be addressed?
 9. What types of organizations (e.g., County agencies/department, cities agencies/departments, Tribal governments, NGOs, CBOs, funders, etc.) do you think should be represented in a new entity?
 - a) For each type of organization described, do you have thoughts regarding the roles and responsibilities of the different organizations? [*Interviewer to probe for each type of organization listed.*]
 10. Is there an organization or agency within Sonoma County that is best positioned to administer a new wildfire resilience entity? If so, please indicate which organization and describe why you think they would be well-positioned to administer a new wildfire resilience entity.

Section 3: Lessons Learned from Other Counties and the State (*Respondents external to Sonoma County*)

- **Objective 3:** Gather insights from other counties, including the organizational structures they have used to coordinate wildfire resilience efforts.

[Note that these questions will only be asked of those who have experience with specific programs outside of Sonoma County, e.g., with other counties or regions.]

11. We'd like to learn more about [**organization name**]. Could you briefly describe the organization, including:
 - a) Its structure?

- b) Its role and function?
 - c) Who participates and how they participate?
 - d) How it's funded?
12. Considering the formation of [**organization name**], could you describe why the organization was formed and the factors that led to the selection of this organizational structure?
- a) What are the unique benefits of this organizational structure and how does the structure contribute to the outcomes?
13. Thinking about coordinating the wildfire resilience efforts in your [**county/region**], what benefits has this organization provided that would be difficult without it?
- a) Which actions or activities have been possible that were more challenging prior to the formation of the organization?
14. What have been some of the greatest lessons learned or advice you would give to Sonoma County as it works to form a new entity to increase wildfire resilience?

[The following questions will be asked of any respondents who work for state agencies or initiatives.]

15. Could you describe how a new, coordinated approach to wildfire resilience in Sonoma County could help the county better align with statewide goals and initiatives related to wildfire resilience?
- a) Are there specific ways in which a new entity would help the County better coordinate with the state or other partners on wildfire resilience efforts?
16. From a statewide perspective, could you describe any disadvantages or challenges you see (if any) with developing a new wildfire resilience entity in Sonoma County?
17. Through your work with [**agency name**], could you describe any other programs from counties or cities that you think could serve as good models for Sonoma County?
- a) Please describe why you think these programs could be a good model for Sonoma County.
 - b) What factors made these programs successful and what are the outcomes?

Section 4: Funding Mechanisms (*all respondents*)

- **Objective 4:** Identify and discuss sustainable funding mechanisms used by other local and regional entities that could support a new wildfire resilience entity.
18. What types of funding mechanisms or funding opportunities (e.g., bonds, taxes, special district creation, fees, etc.) should the County consider as a source of stable funding to support a new wildfire resilience entity?
 - a) [**For interviewees from other counties**] What are the most common types of funding sources and mechanisms used by your organization to support wildfire and climate resilience activities?
 19. [**For interviewees with knowledge of Sonoma County**] What current opportunities within Sonoma County could be leveraged to provide long-term financing and/or access to new funding sources (e.g. partnerships, capacity, community or political support, private funding etc.)?
 20. [**For interviewees with knowledge of Sonoma County**] What types of organizations do you think would be important to include in the new wildfire resilience entity to help increase access to new funding mechanisms and sources?
 21. What other strategies should the County evaluate when considering stable financing for a new wildfire resilience entity?
 22. What are the potential benefits and beneficiaries of a new wildfire resilience entity? Are there opportunities to generate funding from any of these benefits?

Section 5: Wrap Up (*all respondents*)

That brings me to the end of my prepared questions.

23. Is there anything we have not yet discussed that you think would be important for us to know related to the development of a new Sonoma County wildfire resilience entity?
24. Based on the topics we discussed today, is there anyone else you recommend we speak with?

Thank you again for taking the time to speak with me today and for your time and valuable insights. If you have any additional information that you'd like to share, please feel free to contact me via email. Thanks, and enjoy the rest of your day!

APPENDIX B: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED TO IDENTIFY POTENTIAL ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE MODELS

This appendix includes an initial set of documents reviewed to identify organizational structures models and example programs that could be relevant to or replicated in Sonoma County. These sources were selected based on their relevance to climate resilience, regional collaboration, and financing strategies. ERG reviewed additional documents and sources later in the process, including materials identified through interviews, TAC meetings, and further research into specific model types. Most information related to the specific model examples was found through the entities' websites and related documents; see the hyperlinks for each entity in the memo.

1. California Governor's Forest Management Task Force. (2021). California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan: Recommendations of the Governor's Forest Management Task Force.
2. California Natural Resources Agency. (2021). Nature-Based Climate Solutions: Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy.
3. State of California. (2022). Pathways to 30x30 California: Accelerating Conservation of California's Nature.
4. Berkeley Law Center for Law, Energy, and the Environment (CLEE). (2021). Priorities for Sonoma County's Wildfire Settlement Vegetation Management Funds: A Report to the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors.
5. County of Sonoma. (2022). Sonoma County Climate Resilient Lands Strategy.
6. County of Sonoma. (2023). Sonoma County Community Wildfire Protection Plan 2023 Update.
7. Permit Sonoma. (2021). Sonoma County Multijurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2021.
8. Sonoma County Vital Lands Initiative & Ag + Open Space Sonoma County. (2021). *The Vital Lands Initiative: A Vision for Land Conservation in Sonoma County*.