

# Healthy Forests Ad-Hoc Committee Quarterly Update

January to March 2023

## Purpose and Scope

The purpose of the Healthy Forests Ad Hoc is to consolidate and coordinate the efforts of County departments/agencies to reach collective goals that protect and improve the conditions of our forests and natural landscapes while reducing the risk of wildfire throughout the county. The Ad Hoc will recommend actions for full Board consideration that can be taken in vegetation management, land protection and ecosystem services to ensure the ecological functions of our forested and natural landscapes are stable and improving over time. The Ad Hoc will provide input on department/agency activities such as the Vegetation Management Grant Program, Federally-funded wildfire resiliency efforts, parcel and landscape level planning tools, and strategic approach to protect communities and better manage our natural resources using the best available data to support these goals.

The Ad Hoc Committee will propose specific strategies to leverage and utilize the remaining funds from the PG&E Settlement Funds to best protect our communities and landscapes from large scale wildfires and improve the health of our natural resources. This Ad Hoc presented its recommendations for full Board review on January 10, 2023. The Board approved the recommendations and has authorized the Healthy Forests Ad Hoc Committee continue to work through March 31, 2023.

## Ad Hoc Members

Supervisor James Gore  
Supervisor Lynda Hopkins

## Attendees

### County Staff

- Ag + Open Space (lead)
- Permit Sonoma
- Sonoma Water
- Regional Parks
- Climate Action and Resiliency Division
- UC Cooperative Extension
- County Administrator's Office
- County Counsel
- As-needed subject matter support may also be provided by other departments and staff

## Meetings Held

1/10/2023 –The Healthy Forests Ad Hoc and Staff presented recommendations to the Board of Supervisors and all recommendations were approved.

3/9/2023 – The Healthy Forests Ad Hoc committee met to discuss advances on the approved items and to discuss future of the Ad Hoc committee.

## Status

The work of the Vegetation Management Technical Advisory Committee in support of the Healthy Forests Ad Hoc committee was the basis of the January 10, 2023 presentation to the full Board of Supervisors. ([Board Summary](#)) This presentation represented a summary of the progress that has been made towards the original recommendations by the CLEE report approved by the Board in March 2021. Also, it offered recommendations that would enhance the efforts of the County to address the threat of wildfires, coordinate and communicate among all departments and agencies, and improve public engagement and collaboration with the many partner organizations throughout the County.

The Ad Hoc Committee and staff proposed providing \$3M for 2023 Vegetation Management Grant cycle to fund community organizations, fire districts, resource managers and landowners to improve the conditions of their forested landscapes and manage fuel loads. Funding was approved for capacity building and community outreach and education to better connect landowners and the public with the need for fuel treatments and how they can proactively participate in protecting our communities. In particular, \$100,000 was approved to support the efforts to host the *Living with Fire: Sonoma County Forest Conservation Conference* on June 23-24, 2023.

The Board of Supervisors was briefed by Ad Hoc Committee staff on the progress of a proposed organizational structure whereby County departments and agencies can better coordinate their efforts. By using the success of the Vegetation Management Technical Advisory Committee, staff recommended a continuation and enhancement of additional Technical Advisory Committees (TACs) that can focus on structure hardening and defensible space, future organizational structure and long-term funding mechanisms, and climate change. Staff is recommending a third-party consultant to help facilitate and coordinate these TACs so that clear deliverables are presented to the Resiliency Coordination Team (consisting of departments heads and designees) that will ultimately report to the CAO and Board of Supervisors. Staff is drafting a Request for Proposals to share with CAO and County Counsel for review.

The Healthy Forests Ad Hoc committee meeting on March 9, 2023 was aimed at providing an update to actions taken by staff to implement the recommendations approved by the full Board and to review progress on implementation and timing of upcoming events. Ad Hoc members confirmed their support of the on-going work.

<b>Upcoming Meetings</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No immediate meetings have been scheduled.</li><li>•</li></ul>

<b>Fiscal Update</b>		
<b>Project</b>	<b>Board Date</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Allocate \$25M PGE Settlement Funds to Vegetation Management	10/6/2020	\$25,000,000
2021 Community Grants for Vegetation Management	3/23/2021	-\$3,725,494
Santa Rosa Junior College Funding – Professional Development Program	3/23/2021	-\$500,000
Vegetation Management Coordinator Salary & Benefits (3 years)	3/23/2021	-\$660,000
Permit Sonoma staffing for CEQA support	7/13/2021	-\$300,000
Conditionally Approved Projects (\$3,000,000 set aside only \$2,000,000 needed to fund Grant Agreements)	7/13/2021; updated 4/19/22	-\$2,000,000
Community grants for Vegetation Management - 2022	4/19/2022	-\$3,300,000
Technical & Planning Assistance for community grants	4/19/2022	-\$500,000
<i>2023 Vegetation Management Grant program</i>	<i>1/10/2023</i>	<i>-\$3,000,000</i>
<i>Community Outreach and Education</i>	<i>1/10/2023</i>	<i>-\$600,000</i>
<i>Data Planning Mapping and Prioritization</i>	<i>1/10/2023</i>	<i>-\$150,000</i>
<i>Organizational Structure and Funding</i>	<i>1/10/2023</i>	<i>-\$400,000</i>
<i>Programmatic and Administrative Support</i>	<i>1/10/2023</i>	<i>-\$290,000</i>
<b><i>Vegetation Management Allocations To Date:</i></b>		<b><i>-\$15,425,494</i></b>
<b><i>Remaining Balance:</i></b>		<b><i>\$9,574,506</i></b>