

# Healthy Forest Ad-Hoc Committee Quarterly Update

January to April 2022

## Purpose and Scope

The purpose of the Healthy Forest 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 fire 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 County Tree Ordinance 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. It is the intention of this Ad Hoc to meet monthly and prepare recommendations for full Board review in September or October of 2022.

## Ad Hoc Members

Supervisor James Gore  
Supervisor Lynda Hopkins

## Attendees

### County Staff

- Ag + Open Space (lead)
  - Misti Arias, General Manager
  - Kim Batchelder, Vegetation Management Coordinator
- Permit Sonoma
  - John Mack, Natural Resources Manager
  - Steve Mosiurchak, Fire Marshal
- Sonoma Water
  - Brad Sherwood, Assistant General Manager
  - Susan Haydon, Project Specialist
- Regional Parks
  - Hattie Brown, Natural Resources Program Manager
- UC Cooperative Extension
  - Sashi Sabaratnam, Wildfire Vegetation Mitigation Manager
- County Administrator's Office, Climate Action and Resiliency Division
  - Barbara Lee, Division Director
  - Anna Yip, Climate Resiliency Analyst
- County Counsel
  - Cory O'Donnell, Chief Deputy County Counsel
- As-needed subject matter support may also be provided by other departments and staff

<b>Meetings Held</b>
3/30/2022 – Agenda topics: Goals and objectives, scope of work, measures of success

<b>Status</b>
<p>The Healthy Forest Ad Hoc is a new committee that held its first meeting on March 30, 2022 with the Board members and lead agency (Ag + Open Space), Climate Action and Resiliency Division, and County Counsel to set an agenda and proposed objectives and realistic outcomes prior to an April meeting of all proposed staff support teams.</p> <p>The following background information provides an overview of activities that occurred prior to the first Ad Hoc meeting:</p> <p><u>Vegetation Management Grant Program Workshops.</u> Ag + Open Space, Permit Sonoma, &amp; CALFIRE hosted a Zoom meeting on the 2022 Vegetation Management Grant Program on January 5 and 13, 2022 from 5 to 6:30pm. The focus of these workshops was to describe how to apply for grant funding, share characteristics of successful and sustainable grant funded projects, provide clarity on environmental compliance and CEQA and encourage organizations to apply for a grant. After the presentations from each subject matter expert, the participants were given the opportunity to ask questions about their proposed projects, environmental compliance, or other related topics.</p> <p><u>Virtual Town Hall: Wildfire Risk and Insurance.</u> District 5 staff, UC Cooperative Extension, Permit Sonoma, CALFIRE and representatives from insurance industry and home hardening experts hosted a Town Hall on March 10, 2022 from 5:30 to 7pm to present information about how to protect homes from wildfire through home hardening and defensible space.</p> <p><u>County Staffing.</u> Currently, Ag + Open Space hired the Vegetation Management Coordinator in September 2021 to manage the grant program and coordinate a Technical Advisory Committee to evaluate the many options to support vegetation treatments that mitigate the threat of wildfire while improving the forest health and ecological functions of our natural landscapes. UC Cooperative Extension has hired the Wildfire Vegetation Mitigation Program Manager in October 2021 to support landowners and county agencies to use planning tools like the Fuel Mapper and Wildfire Resilience Planner identify and prioritize vegetation treatments across the County.</p> <p><u>Vegetation Management Grant Projects.</u> By July 2021, the County executed 19 Grant Agreements to support vegetation treatments and educational programs to address the threat of wildfire. These projects totaled \$3.67 Million invested in projects that included prescribed burn programs, strategic fuel breaks, prescribed grazing, roadside and defensible space projects and a variety of educational programs.</p> <p>On April 19, 2022, the Board of Supervisors approved 18 new projects to receive funding for vegetation treatments, educational programs, and fuel reduction efforts in the some of the areas most vulnerable to wildfire events. Grant Agreements will support these activities through December of 2023. In addition, the Board supported the development of a micro grant program that will provide planning and technical assistance to nascent vegetation management projects aimed at reducing wildfire threats throughout the county.</p>

**Upcoming Meetings**

The second Healthy Forest Ad Hoc meeting with members and staff support teams is scheduled for April 28, 2022

**Fiscal Update**

<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
<b><i>Vegetation Management Allocations To Date:</i></b>		<b><i>-\$10,985,494</i></b>
<b><i>Remaining Balance:</i></b>		<b><i>\$14,014,506</i></b>