

**Sonoma County Vegetation Management Program
Background and Fiscal Year 2018-19 Activities**

April 19, 2016

Effective date of Ordinance No. 6148, Requiring the Abatement of Hazardous Vegetation and Combustible Materials, adding Chapter 13A to the Sonoma County Code.

2017 Pilot Inspection Program, Fitch Mountain and Mayacamas Volunteer Fire Service Areas

Completed 988 first, second and third inspections on improved and unimproved parcels before the project was interrupted by the 2017 wildfires. Inspections were shown to be an excellent incentive to remove hazardous vegetation. On Fitch Mountain, 96% of improved properties cleared up violations on their own by the end of the program. Compliance was less consistent for unimproved parcels, as 37% remained out of compliance.

May 19, 2018

Ordinance 6148 became enforceable in the entire unincorporated County.

July 1, 2018

The Board allocated \$500,000 to support the County's existing vegetation management inspections. Funds were available as of October 29, 2018.

October 23, 2018

The Board authorized the Director of Fire and Emergency Services to enter into agreements with local Fire Protection Districts to implement a Vegetation Management Inspection Program in partnership with the Sonoma County Fire Prevention Division to reduce vegetation fuel loads and enhance public safety, as funding permits, not-to-exceed \$500,000 in Fiscal Year 2018-19; any remaining funds to carry over to Fiscal Year 2019-20.

November 2018-February 2019

- Established a detailed 2019 Inspection Program Deliverables and Budget:

Inspection Program Costs and deliverables:

Estimated cost per inspection (1.5 hours @ \$53/hour)	\$79.50
Total Number of district inspections for \$316K	4,541
Number of inspections in each of 19 districts	239
Number of inspections per district per week for 10 weeks	24

FY 2018/19 Budget:

Fire District Reimbursement for Inspections in LRA:	\$228,000
Fire District Reimbursement for Inspections in SRA	\$133,000
Abatement Cost-Recovery Fund	\$64,000
Outreach, Engagement and Education	\$25,000
Annual Notices: printing and mailing	\$5,000
Program Management and Admin	\$45,000
TOTAL	\$500,000

- Developed contracts with fire districts to address complaint-driven inspections within their jurisdictions to begin Spring 2019. Met with districts to coordinate to identify areas with highest risk for wildfire losses as a focus for inspection efforts. Coordinated with CAL FIRE's Defensible Space Inspection Program.
- Integrated Fire and Emergency Services Department, Fire Prevention Division staff and functions into Permit Sonoma.
- Established a Sonoma County Vegetation Management Working Group (January 2019) with representatives from Fire Districts and began regular internal coordination meetings between County Agencies.
- Developed procedures and materials for collaborative inspection program.
 - Outreach materials for notification to affected parcels regarding upcoming inspections and education.
 - Completed documents and letters for notification of violations and other enforcement steps, and training materials for County and districts' staff.
 - Procedures for data management, notification of violations, hearings, abatement, and liens.
- Worked with ISD to complete an inspection tool that uses the ESRI Collector App GIS platform. Collector App allows inspectors to compile inspection data, maps, and photographs of violations in one record in the field.
- Re-inspection of Fitch Mountain parcels found to be out of compliance in September 2017.
 - Notices of Violation have been sent.

REMAINING PLANNED 2018/19 ACTIVITIES

March 2019

- Reinspect non-compliant Fitch Mountain Properties.
- Execute contracts with Districts, including communications, reporting and deliverables

April 2019

- Deliver trainings for district inspectors
- Mail Notification of Upcoming Inspection informational flyer
- Continue to coordinate inspection areas with Districts and CAL FIRE
- Education and outreach in collaboration with Districts and community groups.

May 2019

- Initiate abatement process for remaining non-compliant Fitch Mountain properties.
- Begin First Inspections in the identified 2019 areas.
- Permit Sonoma and District staff perform ongoing data management and reporting.
- Education and outreach in collaboration with Districts and community groups.
- Coordinate with districts to track inspection progress, problem solving, ongoing
- Continue seasonal administration and operation of the curbside, by request Chipper Program services, weather permitting.

June 2019 to October 2019 (weather and budget permitting)

- Education and outreach in collaboration with Districts and community groups.
- Continue additional First Inspections
 - Make Second Inspections of violations (beginning 30 business days after first inspection).
 - For properties that fail their second inspection, Final Notice of Violation and Right to Request Hearing are mailed to property owner. Property owners have 15 calendar days to request a hearing
 - If no hearing requested, parcels moved to abatement after 15 days
 - If hearing requested, approximately 60 days wait to begin abatement
- Permit Sonoma and District staff perform ongoing data management and reporting.
- Continue seasonal administration and operation of the curbside, by request Chipper Program services.

November 2019 (dependent on weather and fire activity)

- Convene a debrief meeting with the Vegetation Management Working Group:
 - Number of inspections completed
 - Summarize inspection status and enforcement statistics
 - Evaluate cost/benefit and efficiencies
 - Challenges and solutions for integration in ongoing program
- Potentially conduct abatements as needed, weather permitting