

Sonoma County Vegetation Management Program
Background and Fiscal Year 2019-20 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.

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 (now Permit Sonoma Fire Prevention Division) to enter into agreements with local Fire Protection Districts to implement a vegetation Management Inspection Program. The purpose of the program is to reduce vegetation fuel loads and enhance public safety through Defensible Space Inspections. As funding permits, not-to-exceed \$500,000 in Fiscal Year 2018-19; any remaining funds to carry over to Fiscal Year 2019-20.

April-October 2019, Contract Inspection Program

Permit Sonoma Fire Prevention district in conjunction with local fire districts performed inspections throughout the County's unincorporated areas. Contracted fire districts included: Bodega Bay FPD; Cloverdale FPD; Forestville FPD; Geyserville FPD; Gold Ridge FPD; Kenwood FPD; Monte Rio FPD; Occidental CSD; Rancho Adobe FPD; Permit Sonoma Fire Prevention; Sonoma County FD; Sonoma Valley FRA, and Timber Cove FPD. Together, these agencies inspected 2,244 improved properties and 749 unimproved properties. CAL FIRE inspectors inspected an additional 3,851 improved properties. In total, 6,844 properties were inspected. 50% of improved properties and 53% of unimproved properties were found by inspectors to be compliant with ordinance regulations. Re-inspection of properties with violations showed that property owners had brought 72% of improved and 91% of unimproved properties into compliance. District personnel and property owners were generally positive about the benefits of the inspection program, especially opportunities for property owners to learn what to do to increase wildfire resilience.

Community Outreach and education included:

- Mailing to properties selected for inspections, including URL for Spanish content online
- Press release for inspections and press release for chipper program
- Creation of video materials for chipper program posted to YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZM2XXjDTvno>
- Inspection FAQ video posted to YouTube:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHIjGrSh5j8&t=5s>

- Social media posts; including targeted Nextdoor posts for neighborhoods selected for inspections
- Numerous media interviews to educate the public about the inspections and fire prevention strategies including KSRO, NBC, Press Democrat, Northern California Public Media
- Radio spots on KZST, KFGY, and KXTS (English & Spanish) – which ran for 2 weeks/month in April and May
- Press Democrat Ads – 8 ¼-page ads and online ads with an estimated 117,070 impression
- FAQs 1-pager (English and Spanish)
- Provided social media toolkit for 15 participating Fire Districts to share the information to their contacts

November 2019 – January 2020

- Established a detailed 2020 Inspection Program Deliverables and Budget:

Inspection Program and Costs and Deliverables:

Estimated cost per inspection (1.5 hours @ \$53/hour) ----- \$79.50

Total number of district inspections for \$375k-----4,400

Number of inspections per week for 10 weeks ----- 440

FY 2019/20 Budget:

Inspections: Staff & District Reimbursement..... \$365,000

Abatement Cost-Recovery Fund \$80,000

Program Management and Administration..... \$51,000

Noticing, Outreach, Engagement and Education..... \$20,000

TOTAL \$516,000

Note: Remaining balance from FY18/19 authorized funding will be used to support the vegetation management inspection program moving forward.

2020/21 Activities

January/February 2020

- Update data collection platform
- Research ordinance modifications
- Parcel selection and mapping
- Training materials update for inspectors
- Update community outreach material
- Update annual notice

March/April 2020

- Test data collection platform
- Mail annual notice to property owners
- Initiate outreach & education campaign

May/June 2020

- Conduct inspector training
- Conduct community outreach in identified fire districts
- Begin inspections in the identified 2020 areas
- Perform ongoing data management and reporting
- Continue outreach to educate community
- Track inspection progress and resolve problems (on going)
- Operate the chipper program service

July to October 2020

- Continue outreach to educate community
- Continue first inspections
- Conduct second inspections based on violations
- Issue notices, process hearing requests, conduct hearings, as necessary, following required processes
- Perform abatements, weather and fire activity permitting
- Operate the curbside, by request chipper program

November/December 2020

- Conduct program evaluation
- Convene a debrief meeting with the Vegetation Management Working Group
- Conduct abatements as needed, weather and fire activity permitting

Community Outreach for 2020 to include

- Mail Notice to property owners included in inspection areas. Notice includes detailed information about requirements, tips to be more fire resilient, and dates of upcoming inspections
- Virtual Community Meetings will be held in collaboration with the local fire districts. Meetings will be announced along with general Inspection information as follows:
- Distribute Press releases (English and Spanish)
- Create radio spots (PSAs) for stations such as KZST, KFGY, and KXTS (English & Spanish). To run 2 weeks/month in April and May
- Press Democrat Ads – 8 ¼-page ads and online ads with an estimated 117,070 impressions.
- FAQs (English and Spanish) available on website and printed
- Nextdoor notification to be sent to inspection areas. (English and Spanish)
- Facebook & Twitter posts announcing the inspections and providing FAQ answers
- Provide social media toolkit for participating Fire Districts to share the information to contacts within their jurisdictions
- Media interviews to educate the public about the inspections and fire prevention strategies including as possible. KSRO, NBC, Press Democrat, Northern California Public Media