



MEMORANDUM REPORT

Meeting Date: April 19, 2022

TO: Board of Commissioners of the Los Altos Hills County Fire District

FROM: J. Logan, General Manager

SUBJECT: Moody/El Monte Roads Evacuation Route Project Final Reports

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive Moody/El Monte Roads Evacuation Route Project Final Reports

BACKGROUND

The Los Altos Hills County Fire District (District or LAHCFD) 2021/2022 Strategic Plan, Goal 3, Attachment 1, aims to mitigate fire risks and build community resiliency through integrated hazardous fuel reduction (IHFR), protection and prevention programs, Attachment 2. These programs are based on fire science, the LAHCFD CWPP (Community Wildfire Protection Plan) Annex 4 and the expenditures as allocated in the annual District budget. IHFR projects are designed to enhance community resiliency, educate District residents, and reduce community fire hazards. In accordance with Goal 3, staff identified high fire risk areas and initiated collaborative solutions with regional partners and with the Santa Clara County Central Fire Protection District (Fire Department). The projects targeted roadside hazardous vegetation reduction on major transportation corridors such as Page Mill Road - Phase I and Phase II in 2020 and 2021, and Moody/El Monte Roads in 2021. The fundamental goal of these projects is to provide greater protection for life safety and to reduce property losses in event of wildfire.

Santa Clara County FireSafe Council (FSC) was the project manager for the Page Mill Road, Phase I and Phase II projects designed to remove hazardous vegetation from the roadside and thereby create an evacuation route for ingress and egress in event of a wildfire incident. The LAHCFD Page Mill Road Projects complemented the City of Palo Alto Page Mill Road hazardous vegetation removal project completed on its portion of the Page Mill Road corridor. Thus, a regional effort resulted in greater public safety along the Page Mill Road corridor in event of wildfire.

Building on the success of the LAHCFD Page Mill Road Project, and after input from the Fire Department and fire crews, staff determined the next project would be the Moody/El Monte Roads Evacuation Route Project. This project was more complex and loaded with deep and dense roadside

hazardous vegetation. Trash and dumping of refuse were uncovered during the vegetation reduction work and removed or reported to responsible landowners. Creeks, and certain environments and biological species were marked and protected from project activities. There was increased coordination with regional, Town and local partners as well as 122 property owners along Moody and El Monte Roads. The project offered high rewards to enhance public safety if completed successfully.

DISCUSSION

The Santa Clara County FireSafe Council provides its Final Report for the Moody/El Monte Roads Evacuation Route Project, Attachment 3. The District provides this Report and its summary of costs for the project, Attachment 4. The Moody/El Monte Roads Evacuation Route Project resulted in many successes and provided numerous insights. LAHCFD will utilize the processes, community outreach and project planning results for the next evacuation route project that will be along the Altamont Road corridor.

Successes

- LAHCFD had 49% resident participation rate in this project, considerably higher than the typical rate of about 10 - 15% experienced by FSC in other jurisdictions. This high rate of participation was likely due to the extensive outreach conducted by the project team, Commissioners, Santa Clara County FireSafe Council, and the Town of Los Altos Hills and Town Councilmembers.
- Recognition and gratitude from the community and agencies for the public safety benefits of the project were received.

Recognition by the Management Audit Division final report to the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors - *Based on our review of invoices, as previously noted, the Fire District is providing hazard-reduction services, such as brush chipping, through the Santa Clara County Fire Safe Council. Beyond this, the District has continued to focus on high-risk areas for mitigation efforts. The effort to target fuels along the Moody-El Monte evacuation route is exactly the sort of focused effort the audit team was hoping would come of the recommendation we made. As such, the District has fully implemented this recommendation.*

- Recognition that the insurance industry is now incentivizing the high value of hazardous vegetation management programs to reduce the threat of wildfire and property losses. LAHCFD efforts strongly support the Office of the Insurance Commissioner's Initiative for the insurance industry to recognize wildfire mitigation efforts as a benefit to the insured.
- Appreciation is expressed for the strong support of the LAHCFD Board of Commissioners, the Fire Department, Town of Los Altos Hills, Santa Clara County FireSafe Council, Foothill College, Santa Clara County Roads and Airport and the vendors involved in the success of the project.
- The Moody/El Monty Roads Evacuation Route Project provides needed experience for improvement of future evacuation road projects. Future projects will seek more community input to guide the upcoming road evacuation route designs.

Insights/Lessons Learned

- Importance of flexibility and adaptation of the project design and timeline as the project was under construction. Examples - decisions were made during construction to adjust the vegetation removal depending on the vegetation conditions and extending the days of construction for the increased benefits to public safety.

- Benefit of a well-prepared project team during construction of the evacuation route, i.e., District staff, FSC staff, skilled contractor personnel that were all working at the same time, daily, as a team.
- Importance of preparation, outreach, education of residents along the route by door knocking, flyers, roadside signage, website dedicated to the project, staff, Commission and Councilmember involvement to engage and educate residents on the value to public safety that results from the evacuation route construction and the mitigation of hazardous vegetation.
- Extensive planning, project design, pulling of permits, meetings with regional and local agency partners for discussion and understanding of the project occurred.
- High value and contributions by all staff to ensure the success of the project for public safety and benefits to the community were achieved.
- Understanding that residents who did not participate in the Moody/El Monte project are now aware of the value and may participate in the future when Moody/El Monte Roads receives maintenance services for future vegetation mitigation.
- Recognition that community outreach and education efforts are important to develop and support neighborhoods and communities to engage in dialogue and seek to preserve and protect the native wildlife and environment and recognize cultural significance of the native earth.

As a result of the collaboration and coordination between LAHCFD and its partners, the Moody/El Monte Roads Evacuation Route Project was successful and provided a public safety benefit to the community in the event of a wildfire or emergency incident. LAHCFD thanks the staff, Commissioners, community members and partner agencies for their contributions to this project.

Attachment(s):

1. LAHCFD 2021-2022 Strategic Plan Summary Chart of Six Goals
2. LAHCFD Chart of Services, V11, 3/15/2022
3. Santa Clara County FireSafe Council Final Report: Moody/El Monte Roads Evacuation Project
4. Exhibit A – LAHCFD Cost Summary



Goal	1. Engage Community and partners to review and update the LAHCFD Community Wildfire Protection Program (CWPP) Annex 4 and Addendum for Residents Annex 4 is our local CWPP which describes wildfire hazards and mitigation measures to meet our community's unique local, social and ecological characteristics. We are updating these guiding documents periodically to conform to current fire science knowledge and capture lessons learned from increasingly severe wildfire occurrences.	2. Align District operations with County-wide fire protection goals and County recommendations As a Dependent District of the County, the LAHCFD operates within parameters established by the County and participates in the County and LAFCO County-wide fire protection studies as a regional partner.	3. Mitigate risk and build community resiliency through integrated hazardous fuel reduction, protection and prevention programs As illustrated in the Forward Looking Resiliency Chart , fund, create and implement programs based on fire science, CWPP/Annex 4 and the annual budget to enhance community resiliency, educate District residents and reduce community hazards.	4. Develop policies and processes for management of District's water systems of hydrant and hydrant infrastructure for protection of property, life-safety & support of fire suppression systems Continually improve community fire protection through District's water system of 540 hydrants and infrastructure; develop a studied approach to issues related to District-owned hydrants and hydrant infrastructure.	5. Deliver community services that support emergency response and build programs of outreach, communication, education and regional benefits Collaborate with regional partners to strengthen community resilience, transparency and effectiveness of local government programs. Continue to identify opportunities to use District resources to benefit a broader regional area in support of common interests.	6. Adapt organization and allocate resources to promote stability and sustainability of the District to continue its operations as a valued local Special District. Optimize organizational structure to align with the District's Mission and Goals; utilize available resources and adapt to a regional approach for community resiliency.
Objectives	a. Develop a timeline for action steps for a public process with stakeholders and community members b. Identify experts and resources to be consulted during this process c. Research and hold meetings with experts	a. Reporting process to County: Adhere to County Mgmt Audit recommendations, prepare & deliver monthly reports to County Committees and Mgmt Audit Division b. Participate in LAFCO county-wide fire services review and	a. Identify high fire risk areas; initiate collaborative solutions with regional partners and SCCFD - Target roadside fuel reduction - Target open space fuel reduction - Enhance vegetation management b. Continue to partner with regional organizations to support Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) surveys of properties and provide action	a. Develop policies and guidelines for hydrant and infrastructure location, replacements and additions; and evaluate pipeline resiliency when opportunities for improvements occur in coordination with County Central Fire,	a. Explore joint projects with neighboring agencies that affect our overlapping and adjacent service areas to provide resilience from wildfire and other disasters b. Support, encourage and revitalize Los Altos Hills Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program c. Support, encourage and revitalize Amateur Radio operator activities	a. Participate in LAFCO county-wide fire protection services review and County comprehensive review of fire services study; evaluate structure in context of these proceedings b. Provide resources to maintain a sustainable



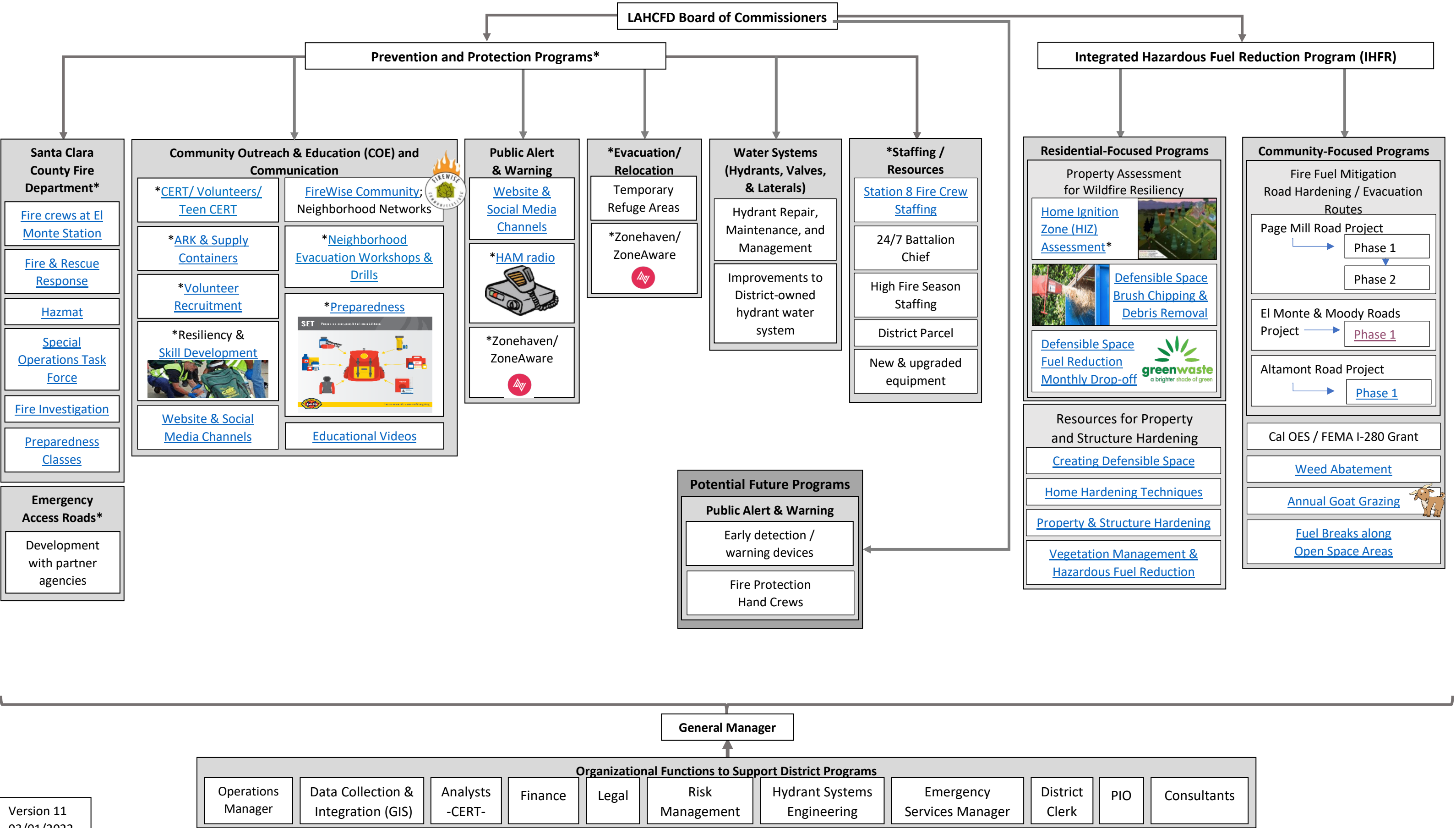
	and resources to identify current best practices for CWPP d. Collaborate with Central Fire Dept personnel to align Annex 4 CWPP with County regional fire protection plan e. Upon completion of CWPP Annex 4, revise Addendum Guide for Residents f. Create a communication plan for residents and stakeholders to educate those who live in and work with the District to understand the revised CWPP Annex 4 g. Obtain updated maps, integrate into GIS mapping	County comprehensive review of fire services c. Establish District records in a manner consistent with County policies and procedures for record management systems and retention schedules d. Work with County Counsel to identify District parameters for capital expenditures and any other requirements for allocation of District resources • Conform to County procurement policies, procedures and State requirements under the public contracting codes	items for life and property fire safety c. Consider incentives, consistent with CWPP and County Mgmt Audit, to reduce fire fuel load and to motivate property hygiene and home hardening against fire danger d. Create certificate of completion for HIZ participants to provide to their homeowner’s insurance carrier e. Use technology to strategically target fuel mitigation program delivery (GIS for brush chipping, shaded fuel breaks) f. Seek resident, vendor, staff and volunteer input for continuous improvement feedback to create, enhance and expand programs	engineering consultants and water purveyors b. Develop hydrant and infrastructure mapping and asset identification system utilizing GIS c. Supplement local and regional fire suppression capabilities through funding of portable pumper vehicle	d. Support and maintain the ARK and emergency supply containers and equipment e. Plan and host evacuation drills f. Continue using existing communication tools, including social media, while evaluating new technology and regional resources to educate community and align outreach communications with neighboring agencies g. Expand outreach by evaluating new opportunities to drive community to website to find current updates and critical information h. Continue to assess early notification advisories and ways to improve participation by District residents	administration to meet District operational needs c. Develop efficiencies for administration through utilization of County Departments to augment staff expertise and capacity d. Create succession plan to support continuity in staffing e. Ensure budget decisions are consistent with Strategic Plan and fiscally sustainable f. Identify adequate space for training, District meetings and District assets g. Explore opportunities for grant funding to augment District services h. Repurpose use of District parcel to expand fire protection response capability for local and regional benefit
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LEGEND
*Indicates programs are delivered in collaboration with partner agencies
Underlined text indicates a clickable link

LAHCFD Chart of Services
Built on Fire Science & LAHCFD-CWPP Annex 4
Guided by Strategic Plan 2021 – 2022 – Resourced by FY Budget

ATTACHMENT 2

For more information on LAHCFD Programs and how to participate, please visit: www.LAHCFD.org
An interactive version of this chart can be viewed here: www.lahcfd.org/governance/ForwardLookingCommunityResiliency





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FINAL REPORT

Moody Rd / El Monte Rd. Evacuation Route

December 6, 2021

Introduction:

In cooperation with Los Altos Hills County Fire District (LAHCFD), the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council executed an Evacuation Route on Moody Rd / El Monte Rd to Page Mill Rd, located in Los Altos Hills, California. This Evacuation Route can potentially be utilized for evacuation during a wildfire incident. The project implementation will enhance fire resiliency by reducing ladder fuels, reducing roadside fire ignition opportunities, reducing invasive species, and improving evacuation routes. This project will add to Santa Clara County's developing shaded fuel break system and provide opportunities to protect or manage watersheds in the event of future wildfires. Additionally, reducing competition in the understory and treating hazard trees where feasible will create a healthier and more vigorous forest. The treated area serves multiple mountain communities and many residences travel along this path every day.

Cooperators:

There are multiple agencies, contractors, property owners, and organizations that contributed to the project; Santa Clara County FireSafe Council, Los Altos Hills County Fire District, Statewide Safety Solutions, Bay Area Tree Specialists, Santa Clara County Roads and Airports, and the Town of Los Altos Hills to name a few.

Goals For This Project:

1. Remove ladder fuel vegetation on the ground, limb up trees and remove accumulated dead fuel build up along the roadway.
2. Remove previously downed smaller trees that may pose a fire hazard during drier months.
3. Conduct hazardous fuel reduction up to 10'- 30' from the road edge to help provide a fuel break and safer evacuation route in the event of an actual wildfire.
4. Removal of hazard trees; dead, dying, under-slung and overhanging that may fall on the roadway during extremely windy conditions.
5. No live trees (either native or non-native) that are large enough to require a tree removal permit are removed.
6. Prune live trees amounting to less than 25% of the canopy.
7. Trimmings and chips from trees and brush are broadcast back onto the roadside.
8. Chipped material spread over the treatment area.





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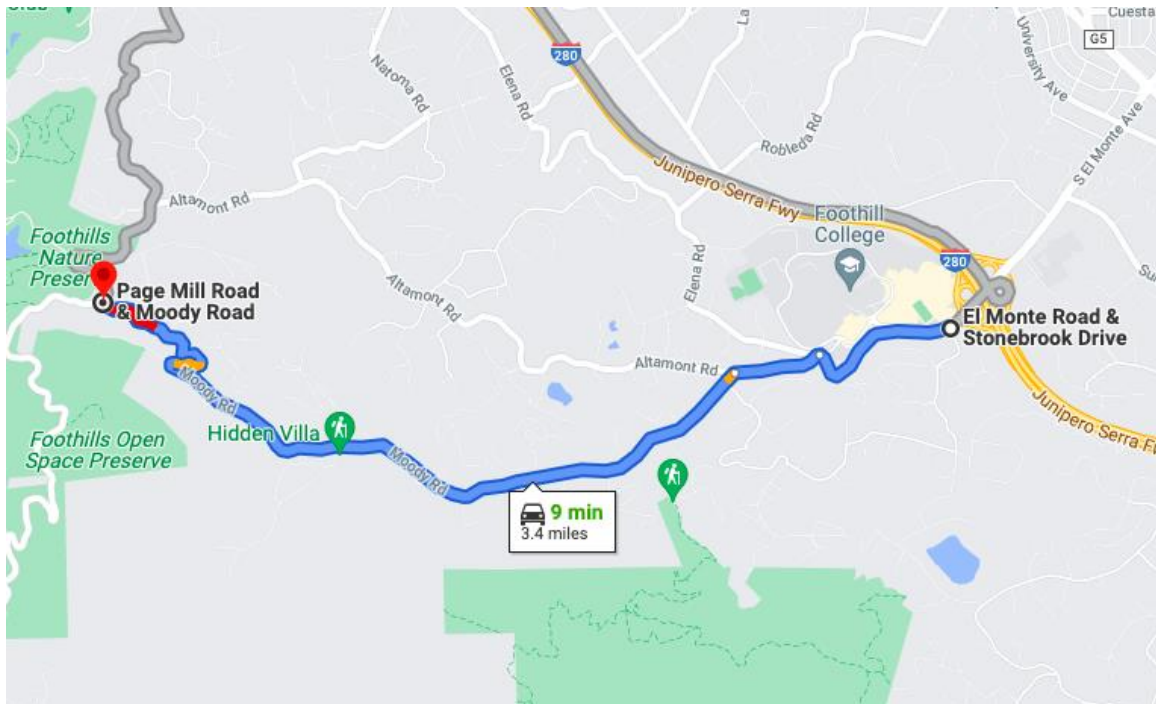


9. Remove Dead trees in close proximity to the roadway.
10. Utilize a masticator to remove poison oak along El Monte Rd.

Project Site:

Treatment of vegetation was on the Town of Los Altos Hills right of way (15ft from the road) and properties along Moody Rd. that submitted Right of Entry permits received 20-30 feet depth. The starting point was at Stonebrook Dr and El Monte Rd by Foothills College. The end of the project was at the intersection of Page Mill and Moody Rd.

Mid Page Mill Road Escape Route (Project Location)



Permissions:

One of the biggest challenges in these types of projects is getting permission to treat the properties. During the planning of the project we conducted an extensive public outreach effort to get the permissions needed. It included mailers, newspaper articles, door-to-door visits, and a social media campaign. We were able to include 60 of the 122 parcels involved. This represents 49% participation for the complete the project. We always strive for 100 percent participation, but every project has a few property owners with





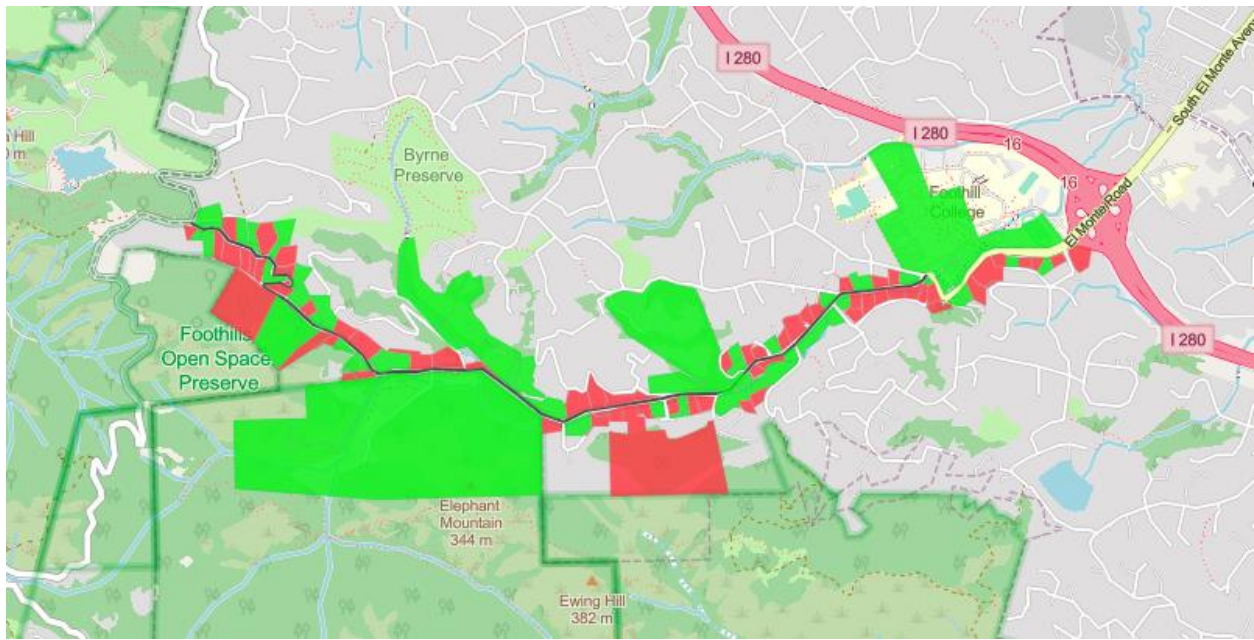
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reservations. Some parcel owners did not respond and at least one property owner turned in permission after the deadline and was unable to be treated.

Mid Page Mill Road Escape Route Project (Parcel Map)



Biological Precautions:

As with all of our projects, protecting the biodiversity of the area is a high priority. A Biological Survey was conducted the week before the project started by Dudek. The biologist identified and flagged wood rats nests within the treatable area. Heritage trees were identified during the field verification stage and were not included in the work plan. Finally, a buffer of 25 feet was implemented along stream beds and seasonal waterways.

Project Duration:

The project started on Monday, November 8, 2021 and completed on Wednesday, November 24, 2021. We did not work Tuesday November 9th due to rain or Thursday November 11th because of the holiday.





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Jurisdictions And Funders Involved:

Santa Clara County Fire Safe Council, Los Altos Hills County Fire District, Santa Clara County, Santa Clara County Roads & Airports and Town of Los Altos Hills

Contractor Selected:

Bay Area Tree Specialists was the contractor selected for multiple reasons; capacity to finish the project in the time given, the availability of reserve equipment in case of a breakdown, and large group of employees. They provided a masticator and operator to remove the poison oak along El Monte Rd.

Project Photos:



In this single photo, the upper area on the right is before mastication and the lower area on the left is after poison oak mastication.





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Before	After
	

By The Numbers:

- Area treated – 3.4 miles going NW on Moody Rd / El Monte Rd and 3.4 mile going SE on Moody Rd / El Monte Rd, for a total of 6.8 total linear miles. Most of which was treated 15 to 30 feet from the edge of the road.
- Acres treated = 13.16 with an average of 1.3 acres treated per day.
- Poison oak masticated - 0.43 acres- 3 days of mastication - Avg 0.14 acres per day
- 11 days of treatment conducted by Bay Area Tree Specialists.

We overcame many challenges to complete this critical part of growing the evacuation route and shaded fuel break system in Santa Clara County. This project also supports goals in the LAHCFD CWPP annex as well as the overall Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

We would like to acknowledge the contribution made by Bay Area Tree Specialists and Statewide Safety Systems. Both entities were committed to assisting Santa Clara County





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Fire Safe Council with the project from start to finish. Statewide Safety Systems provided 3 traffic control personnel as needed, every day to make sure that the work could be done in a safe manner. In addition, Bay Area Tree Specialists provided hand-held radio to the project managers and traffic control personnel each day to ensure maximum communication capabilities in an effort to provide complete safety coverage for the crews working and additional personnel on site. I'm happy to report, with Statewide Safety Systems traffic control coverage and the safe working practices of Bay Area Tree Specialists, we were able to finish the project with no reported injuries. In addition to that, Hidden Villa and Foothill College allowed us to use their property to stage the equipment, saving the costs associated with moving the equipment back and forth every day.

We would like to thank all the cooperators and property owners for all their support. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to direct them to:

Irene Armstrong – Project Manager

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Integrated Hazardous Fuel Reduction Project**Moody/El Monte Roads Evacuation Route and
Road Hardening Project 2021
Los Altos Hills County Fire District Cost Summary**

Contractor/Staff	Service	Project services completed (2021)	Amount
SCC FireSafe Council	IHFR Project management	July-Dec	\$22,971.95
Bay Area Traffic Control	Traffic control plan	August	\$500.00
Bay Area Tree Service	Hazardous fuel reduction and biomass disposal	Nov-Dec	\$96,600.00
Statewide Traffic Safety & Signs	Project traffic control	Nov-Dec	\$11,750.00
Dudek	Environmental survey and report	Nov	\$3,316.18
Folger Graphics	Mailers, Postage, Banners, Signage	Aug-Sept	\$1,537.39
Zoom Media	Mailers, Banner, Signage Design	August	\$1,300.00
Jackson Ricketts	Videographer Services	Nov	\$500.00
David Barnett	Field project management (3.5 days)	Nov-Dec	\$1,680.00
Denise Gluhan	Field project management (13 days)	Nov-Dec	\$5,720.00
Total Moody/El Monte Roads Evac. Route Hardening Project Cost Total:			\$145,875.52