



MEMORANDUM REPORT

DATE: July 15, 2025

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

FROM: Page Mill Maintenance Project Team,
Ryan Cronin, Technical Analyst/Project Manager
A. Harmon, Field Manager
Eugenia Woods, Programs, Planning and Grants Manager

SUBJECT: Page Mill Maintenance Evacuation Route Project Final Reports

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive Page Mill Maintenance Evacuation Route Project Final Reports

BACKGROUND

The Evacuation Route Hardening projects conducted by the Los Altos Hills County Fire District (District or LAHCFD), with the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council (SCCFSC) as the project manager for these projects, are in their fifth year of execution. They continue as an initiative to serve the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan Goals & Strategies, specifically Strategic Goal 1 Prevention, Protection, Resiliency.

The LAHCFD Chart of Services identifies the Community-Focused Evacuation Route Hardening projects as one of the Integrated Hazardous Fuel Reduction (IHFR) programs. The IHFR programs are designed to enhance community resiliency, educate District residents, and reduce community fire hazards. The fundamental goal of these Evacuation Route Hardening projects is to provide greater protection for life safety and to reduce property losses in the event of catastrophic wildfire by providing safer egress for evacuees and ingress for emergency responders.

As these projects mature, and the District gains experience, the process and results are improving. We have enjoyed greater coordination with strategic partners including the Town of Los Altos Hills, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (Midpen), Santa Clara County Fire Department (SCCFD), Santa Clara County Roads and Airports, Purissima Water District and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). Most importantly, these projects are only possible with the dedicated support of the LAHCFD Board of Commissioners.

Primary transportation corridors are now on a maintenance schedule that is being conducted on a two-year cycle, or when inspections warrant something different. Secondary and tertiary roadways that connect neighborhoods to primary evacuation routes are being added to the projects.

Community awareness and participation is increasing and represents the greatest opportunity for improved effectiveness of maintenance projects.

Information about this project, and other District projects can be found on the Department website at <https://www.lahcfd.org/community-projects/>.

DISCUSSION

The Page Mill Maintenance Evacuation Route project was successful in attaining the goal of hazardous fuel reduction and providing a safer evacuation route.

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS and EXPENSES

 The logo for Los Altos Hills County Fire District. It features a shield with a yellow sunburst at the top, a blue mountain range in the middle, and a yellow and red striped fire hose at the bottom. The text "LOS ALTOS HILLS" is written in a red arc above the shield, and "COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT" is written in red below the shield. COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT	Page Mill Maintenance Evacuation Route 2025			
	Date	Cubic Yards	Distance (Miles)	Area (Acres)
	Monday, April 28, 2025	40	0.9	2.18
	Tuesday, April 29, 2025	35	1.1	2.00
	Wednesday, April 30, 2025	95	0.8	1.94
	Thursday, May 1, 2025	35	1.7	4.74
	Friday, May 2, 2025	30	0.6	1.53
	Total	235	5.1	12.39

Page Mill Maintenance Evacuation Route data.



Page Mill Evacuation Route

Project Cost Breakdown

Service Description	Contractor	Completed	Amount	Notes
IHFR Project Management	SCCFSC	Feb - May 2025	14,033.32	
Personnel Mileage	SCCFSC	Apr & May 2025	755.13	\$604.10 + 25% uplift
Project Supplies				
Project Supplies Reimbursement (LAHCFD)	Credit Card Purchases	Mar-25	278.85	
Traffic Control Plan	City Rise	Feb-25	1,120.00	\$1,000 + 12% uplift
Traffic Control Contractor	City Rise	Apr & May 2025	35,291.57	\$30,473 traffic + \$1,037.33 signage + 12% uplift
Fuel Reduction	Denali Tree Service	May-25	64,624.00	\$57,700 + 12% uplift
Biological Survey	Dudek	Apr-25	4,893.95	\$4,369.60 + 12% uplift
Postcard, Cover Letters, & ROE Mails	Folger Graphics	Mar - Apr 2025	988.05	
Pre-Project UAS Flyover/Data	Jackson Ricketts	Feb-25	3,000.00	
Post-Project UAS Flyover/Data	Jackson Ricketts	May-25	2,175.00	
Total Project Cost			127,159.87	

Costs directly associated with the Page Mill Maintenance Evacuation Route Project.

Successes

- There were no injuries or near misses on this project. The District is not complacent with this achievement. Safety is always the highest priority for these projects. Thoughtful measures are taken to promote a safety mindset. Additional traffic control technicians are standard for LAHCFD projects. Bilingual safety briefings are conducted daily so all may clearly hear the safety message in their native language.
- By proactively communicating with other managers of projects being conducted on Page Mill Road, there was good coordination to avoid conflicts. PG&E contractors were working on an overhead power project at Altamont Circle. The City of Palo Alto was conducting storm drain clearing from Foothills Park. Purissima Water was connecting an underground waterline at Baleri Ranch Road. We were able to schedule our work in the areas of these projects by coordinating break times.
- UAS observations continue to accurately measure the increased regrowth of native understory vegetation. These observations also identify where invasive species are spreading, prompting targeted treatment, revised treatment and removal.
- 2025 begins the enforcement of the Town of Los Altos Hills ordinance for **Leaf Blower Noise Limitations**. Leaf blowers must not exceed 65 dB at a 50-foot distance. Effectively, this required leaf blowers to be electric powered. This is a significant commitment for fuel reduction contractors as a commercial quality blower with battery supplies capable of running for a day's work cost \$4,200.00! Fuel reduction contractors for this project have made the investment and had success with the new tool on this project.



- Environmental Conservation Measures for Nesting Bird Protection were successful. Since vegetation removal occurred during bird nesting, a pre-project survey was conducted. Additionally, contractors were looking for, and discovered, active bird nests. The nests were flagged and avoided.

- Maintenance does not require as much large brush or tree limbing. This provided additional time for deeper or more extensive treatment.
 - a. Impressive clearing was conducted on the inside curve of Page Mill Road across from Country Way. This increased visibility around the curve as well as reduced roadside ignition fuels.



- b. The Page Mill Road intersection with Paseo Del Roble received treatment that included limbing and beautification of two Pepper trees. Tall grass was also reduced, improving visibility and reducing flashy fuels.



- c. The inside corner of Page Mill Road and Matadero Creek is a drainage that promoted heavy vegetation growth. Tall grass and weeds were reduced. Scrub brush was removed, and mature trees were limbed up to reduce ladder fuels that could result in crown fires. The results are impressive.



Community Engagement

Increased community awareness yielded Right of Entry (ROE) permission for deeper and effective treatment.

- 28000 Block Arastradero Road: Oak trees and brush were limbed up to just below the wall surrounding the property, maintaining privacy while reducing ladder fuels. This fuel reduction provides improved visibility when looking south on Page Mill Road from Arastradero Road. This is an important intersection for vehicle and cyclist interactions. The homeowner was very supportive of our work and provided the District a ROE and is considering requesting an HIZ.



- 12100 Block Page Mill Road: Permission from homeowner to limb up Italian Cypress trees, Olander and other ornamental vegetation along the roadway. The Homeowner has a large accumulation of downed oak limbs in the yard. Information was shared about the Defensible Space Brush Chipping program and the HIZ assessment program.



- 11000 Block Page Mill Road: Many large, downed oak limbs extracted from a gully. This geological formation would act as a chimney during a wildfire, funneling a torch of fire across Page Mill Road.



- 11800 Block Page Mill Road: This property is directly across from the entrance to Foothills Park, Palo Alto. From as early as 2007, Google Street View has shown that a large accumulation of cut logs has covered the lot and has become a landmark. New owners purchased the property in February 2023. At the Town Picnic that year the new owners spoke with the District about options to remove the logs. At the time the Defensible Space Brush Chipping program could only accommodate logs up to four inches in diameter. With equipment advancements, the District contacted the homeowners about this evacuation route project and obtained a ROE and permission to remove this large volume of hazardous roadside fuel. Chipping the logs yielded 50+ cubic yards of quality mulch. The fuel reduction contractor repurposed this mulch to reduce and slow weed grown at another Los Altos Hills property.



- 27900 Block Via Ventana Way: The homeowners of this property are active CERT and repeat ROE participants. Their property, on the outside of a sharp turn that has a significant upslope to their residence, has the potential for a vehicle accident and fire. This enhanced ROE fuel mitigation provides additional protection for their home. It is an honor to provide improved safety for these contributing community members.
- 13900 Block Page Mill Road: This ROE provided the opportunity to remove dead vegetation from the far side of a creek. Crews were careful not to disturb the embankment or encroach upon the riparian area. Oleander bushes were reduced in height and volume, maintaining privacy and successfully reducing fuel load.

Insights/Lessons Learned

- A-frame message boards, strategically placed at entry points along the project route, announced the project and include a link to the District website project page. Since project awareness is greatest after the work is completed, the District will evaluate post-project messaging, including A-frames, postcards and letters.
- The District has established the best practice of conducting daily safety briefings. On this project, all anticipated vectors, ticks, snakes, poison oak, rats, mice, heat and poor drivers, were encountered and avoided or mitigated. This reinforces the previously stated commitment the District has for safety awareness.
- An afternoon traffic influx at Alexis Drive suggested an after-school activity at the Palo Alto Hills Golf & Country Club. While the District has always considered local schools, evacuation routes should be surveyed for other traffic generators.
- Maintenance of the District parcel was included in this project, as it will be for all Evacuation Route projects.



Attachment(s):

1. [LAHCFD 2023-2027 Strategic Plan, Goal 1](https://www.lahcfd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/LAHCFD-2023-27-Strategic-Plan.pdf)
(<https://www.lahcfd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/LAHCFD-2023-27-Strategic-Plan.pdf>)
2. [LAHCFD Chart of Services, V15, 3/09/2023](https://www.lahcfd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/ChartOfServices-SP2023-27_V15.pdf)
(https://www.lahcfd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/ChartOfServices-SP2023-27_V15.pdf)
3. Santa Clara County FireSafe Council Final Report: Arastradero Maintenance Evacuation Route project
4. To follow: Jackson's Drones Vegetation Assessment Report