



MEMORANDUM REPORT

DATE: January 20, 2026

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

FROM: Robleda – Burke Project Team,
Ryan Cronin, Technical Analyst/Project Manager
A. Harmon, Field Manager
Eugenia Woods, Programs, Planning and Grants Manager

SUBJECT: Robleda – Burke Evacuation Route Maintenance Project Final Reports

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive Robleda - Burke Evacuation Route Maintenance 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 (attachment 1).

The LAHCFD Chart of Services v.20 (attachment 2), 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 remove hazardous wildfire fuels to provide safer egress for evacuees and ingress for emergency responders.

Our strategic partnerships have remained strong. They include 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, we are grateful for the dedicated support of the LAHCFD Board of Commissioners, who make these projects possible.


An inspection of the Robleda-Burke secondary evacuation route that connects neighborhoods to primary evacuation routes, last treated in November 2023, revealed maintenance was needed. The Robleda-Burke evacuation route remains critical as one of the four I-280 underpasses of the 3.3-mile stretch between Page Mill Road and El Monte Road. These underpasses provide citizens of the southwest neighborhoods of Los Altos Hills access to Foothill Expressway. If the I-280 interchanges at Page Mill Road and El Monte Road become congested, these evacuation routes will be critical for surviving a fast-moving wildfire.

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

DISCUSSION

The Santa Clara County FireSafe Council Final Report for the Robleda-Burke Evacuation Route maintenance project is included (attachment 3). Jackson's Drones Post Treatment Report is included (attachment 4). Please note that the drone report covers the maximum potential area provided in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) exemption, the Scope of Work (SOW) and the maximum projected area for Right of Entry (ROE) permits. This District report provides the actual areas treated which can be lower than projected acres treated due to ROEs received, slope, fencing etc. It also provides project insights as well as a summary of costs for the project. The Robleda-Burke Evacuation Route project was successful in attaining the goal of reducing hazardous fuel to provide for a safer evacuation route.

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS and EXPENSES

Robleda - Burke Evacuation Route Maintenance 2025				
	Date	Cubic Yards	Distance (Miles)	Area (Acres)
	Monday, November 3, 2025	37.5	1.1	2.67
	Tuesday, November 4, 2025	35.7	0.9	1.64
	Wednesday, November 5, 2025	60	0.9	2.18
	Thursday, November 6, 2025	40	1.2	3.35
	Friday, November 7, 2025	50	1.3	3.62
	Total	223.2	5.4	13.45

Robleda - Burke production data

Volume is cubic yards of chipped material

Costs directly associated with the Robleda - Burke Evacuation Route Maintenance Project.

Robleda - Burke Evacuation Route Maintenance 2025					
Project Cost Breakdown					
Service Description	Contractor	Completed	Amount	Notes	
IHFR Project Management	SCCFSC	Jul - Nov 2025	11,638.57		
Personnel Mileage	SCCFSC	Oct & Nov 2025	217.00	includes 25% uplift	
Project Supplies					
Project Supplies Reimbursement (LAHCFD)	Credit Card purchases		496.13	Signage & PPE (can be split over projects?)	
Traffic Control Plan	City Rise	Aug-25	2,240.00	\$2,000 + 12% uplift	
Traffic Control Contractor	Statewide	Nov-25	34,832.00	\$31,100 + 12% uplift	
Fuel Reduction	Davey Tree Expert	Nov-25	65,200.80	\$58,215 + 12% uplift	
Biological Survey	Dudek	Oct & Nov 2025	5,234.10	\$4,973.30 + 12% uplift	
Postcard, Cover Letters, & ROE Mailers	Folger Graphics	Sept, Oct, Nov 2025	1,331.42	\$241.50 (Postcard), \$840.03 (ROE), \$249.89 (Post Postcard)	
Pre-Project UAS Flyover/Data	Jackson's Drones	Aug-25	2,175.00		
Post-Project UAS Flyover/Data	Jackson's Drones	Nov & Dec 2025	6,675.00		
Total Project Cost			130,040.02		

Successes

Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) were again used for effective image telemetry. Jackson's Drones was contracted to provide aerial photos and to identify treatment areas, overhead utilities, fire hydrants and quantitatively measure hazardous fuel reduction. Imaging technologies can assess treatment of low, medium and high vegetation. This is specifically promising for identifying plant species for future treatments. This information will be of great assistance when working with invasive and non-native species.

As noted, the UAS volume measurement is for all vegetation treatment. This is different than the post treatment measurement of hauled chipped volume due to vegetation clearing methods.

The reported volume changes indicate successful reduction of low-lying fuels. Low vegetation, grasses and weeds, were reduced and left in place. The District is promoting chipping and hauling to facilities that have the RCI certification designation [Certified Facilities/Lines – RCI – Recycling Certification Institute, Recycling Facility Certification Program](#) as ground mulch levels have reached capacity. With this, medium fuels were reduced, chipped and hauled. They are no longer contributing to the low-level post-treatment vegetation measurement. Therefore, low-level vegetation shows the greatest reduction.

The CEQA Notice of Exemption (NOE) was filed through the Office of the Santa Clara County Clerk when initial treatment was conducted in 2023. The exemption is valid for ten years provided there are no significant changes to the SOW.

Appreciation is expressed to the newly utilized vegetation contractor, Davey Tree Expert Company. Their work was exemplary, professional and very thorough. Likewise, AWP Safety provided traffic control. Again, we utilized a crew of six to have ample coverage for the many driveways and side streets along the project. A pre-project meeting was held with all contractors as is our best practice. Safety briefings were held every morning. The District's commitment to safety is very much appreciated. Thank you to our Fire Commissioners for supporting this initiative.

Community Outreach

LAHCFD staff promoted this project, and the other programs of the District, through several outreach activities. As standard practice, the Robleda – Burke Evacuation Route project utilized an early-notification postcard mailing. This mailing coincided with the posting of A-frame message boards strategically placed at entry points along the project route. The postcards alerted residents to the subsequent project letter and ROE request. The letters and ROE requests were mailed to all property owners along the project route. They were offered the opportunity to make inquiries, and have their property participate in the vegetation management efforts. LAHCFD staff walked the project route, door knocking, and spoke with residents about the project, made ROE requests, and promoted other District programs.

During these community contacts, recognition and gratitude from the community and agencies for the public safety benefits of the project were received.

While door knocking on the Robleda-Burke maintenance project, a new issue was identified, caused by the previous treatment. Evacuation Route treatment includes limbing up trees and reducing the height of bushes, shrubs and hedges to eliminate ladder fuels and reduce the spread of a ground fire into tree canopies. Two evacuation routes have experienced homeowners discovering uncovered ground below limbed up trees and planting fast-growing screening hedges below the trees. This produces new ladder fuels, negating our efforts.



Before treatment the hedge rises to the lower limbs of the tall redwood trees.



After treatment the hedge does not reach the lower limbs of the tall redwood trees.

A new campaign, **AVOID THE LADDER**, Vertical Fire Spread, was launched. Getting people to change their concerns towards fire safety, requiring new ideas for privacy screening, is challenging. We are stressing education over enforcement to gain gradual compliance. While not ideal, compromise is progress

AVOID THE LADDER

Vertical Fire Spread

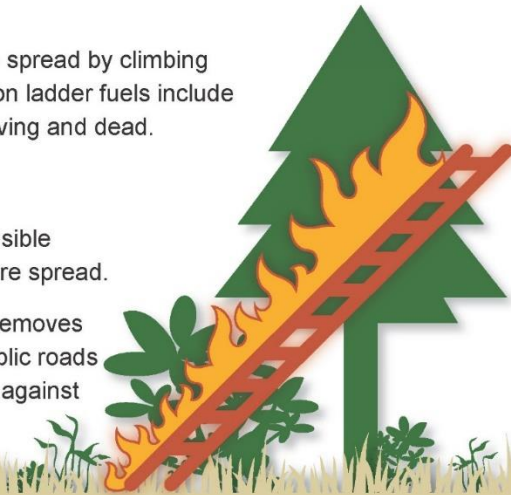
WHAT Are Ladder Fuels?

Ladder fuels are vegetation that enables fire to spread by climbing up from ground cover to low branches. Common ladder fuels include tall grasses, shrubs, and tree branches, both living and dead.

WHY Avoid Ladder Fuels?

Removing ladder fuels is part of creating defensible space, making your property resilient against fire spread.

Los Altos Hills County Fire District (LAHCFD) removes ladder fuels in the public right-of-way along public roads during Evacuation Route treatments to protect against roadside ignitions and fire spread.



HOW to Avoid the Ladder

Maintain vertical separation by pruning or removing ladder fuels, limbing up nearby trees, and avoiding re-planting ornamentals taller than 3ft near trees.

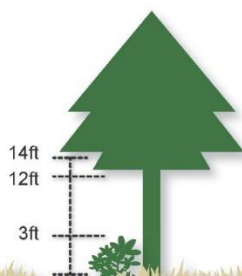
Compliance with fire safety regulations advises a minimum six-foot clearance and vertical separation of three times the shrub height between a shrub and overhanging tree branches.

(LAH Town Code § 4-2.116 & Regulation 14 CCR 1299)

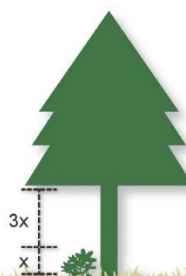
LEARN MORE:



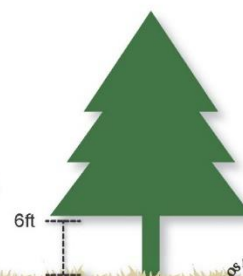
lahcfcd.org/vegetation



LAHCFD will limb up public right-of-way up to 12ft
Ordinance requires 14ft over roadways



Best practice:
Vertical separation 3x shrub height



Encouraged:
Minimum 6ft clearance



Educational material, in English and Spanish, were produced, published and distributed. [How to Prevent Vegetation Fires and Maintain Defensible Space - Los Altos Hills County Fire District](#)

Post-treatment, postcards were mailed and Project Completion A-frame signs were posted along the route to catch the attention of the public to the work that was completed. This new practice has been successful in bringing awareness to our evacuation projects.

Insights/Lessons Learned

Community engagement remains the most challenging aspect of successful Evacuation Route Hardening projects. The District has gained experience and developed many best practices for the mechanics and process for completing these projects. The volume of fuel removed is consistently impressive. Immediately following significant event, the windstorms of 2023, with Los Angeles fires of 2025, community attention to risk reduction is high and the District has leveraged this, especially for Home Ignition Zone assessments.

As the District Firewise USA® neighborhoods expand, as homeowner's insurance issues continue, and as our strategic partner relations develop, greater community engagement should follow.

Attachment(s):

1. [LAHCFD 2023-2027 Strategic Plan, Goal 1](#)
2. [LAHCFD Chart of Services, V20, 01/07/2026](#)
3. Santa Clara County FireSafe Council Final Report: Robleda-Burke Evacuation Route Maintenance project
4. Jackson's Drones Post Treatment Report



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FINAL REPORT **Robleda - Burke Evacuation Route**

December 8th, 2025

Introduction:

The Robleda and Burke Roads in Los Altos Hills, California, represents a significant thoroughfare for the Los Altos Hills Community. This road is a primary means of egress and ingress in case of an emergency evacuation. To secure this egress/ingress' integrity, Los Altos Hills County Fire District and Santa Clara County FireSafe Council proposed a roadside treatment of fuels.

Cooperators:

There were multiple agencies, contractors, property owners, and organizations that contributed to the project; Santa Clara County Fire Safe Council, Los Altos Hills County Fire District, Dudek, Davey Tree Expert Company, AWP Safety, the County of Santa Clara, and the Town of Los Altos Hills.

Goals For This Project:

1. Trim woody vegetation and weed whip grasses and weeds adjacent to the road.
2. Remove dead or dying woody debris of less than 8 inches DBH.
3. Reduce ladder fuels around larger trees.
4. Remove dead, diseased, or damaged trees smaller than 8 inches DBH posing a hazard.
5. At street corners where vegetation is thick and blocks visibility, trim and remove to meet standards of shrubs less than 3 feet high and trees limbed up to at least 6 feet above ground. Per Los Altos Hills Municipal Code Title 10-Zoning, "shrubs and plants shall be pruned to a height not to exceed three (3') feet above the road level at its nearest point in an area bounded by the center line of intersecting roads or easements for vehicular access, public or private and a straight line joining points on such center lines eighty (80') feet distant from their intersection. All side limbs of trees in such an area shall be pruned to a height of not less than six (6') feet above the road surface."
6. Clear all vegetation for three (3) feet around the circumference and ten (10) feet above fire hydrants. Advise property owners and the fire department of any other obstruction that cannot be mitigated.



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Project Site:

The Robleda - Burke Evacuation Route Project provided hazardous fields reduction and defensible space treatments along six key evacuation corridors in Los Altos Hills: Robleda Road, Chapin Road, Fremont Road, W. Edith Avenue, Burke Road, and Old Altos Road.

The project began at its southwest most point at the intersection of Elena Road and Robleda Road, proceeded northeast along Robleda Road until reaching its intersection with Chapin Road, treating approximately 0.8 linear mile (1.6 treated miles).

Chapin Road was treated to the intersection with Burke Road, a distance of approximately .2 miles (.4 treated miles).

From this intersection, work continued east along Burke Road, covering approximately 0.6 linear miles (1.2 treated miles) to the junction with Old Altos Road. Old Altos Road was treated to Fremont Road then Fremont Road was treated back towards the intersection of Burke Road. Burke Road was treated on the north side back to Chapin Road, treating approximately 0.5 linear miles (1 treated mile). The project then started at the intersection of Chapin Road and Robleda road, traveling North until Fremont Road, treating approximately 0.6 linear miles (1.2 treated miles). The route continued treating Fremont Road until Old Altos Road and circling back along Fremont Road to encompass West Edith Road until Cypress Drive, treating approximately 0.1 linear miles (0.2 treated miles).

Overall, the Robleda - Burke project successfully treated approximately 5.8 miles of critical evacuation routes, improving the roadway defensibility and community wildfire safety.

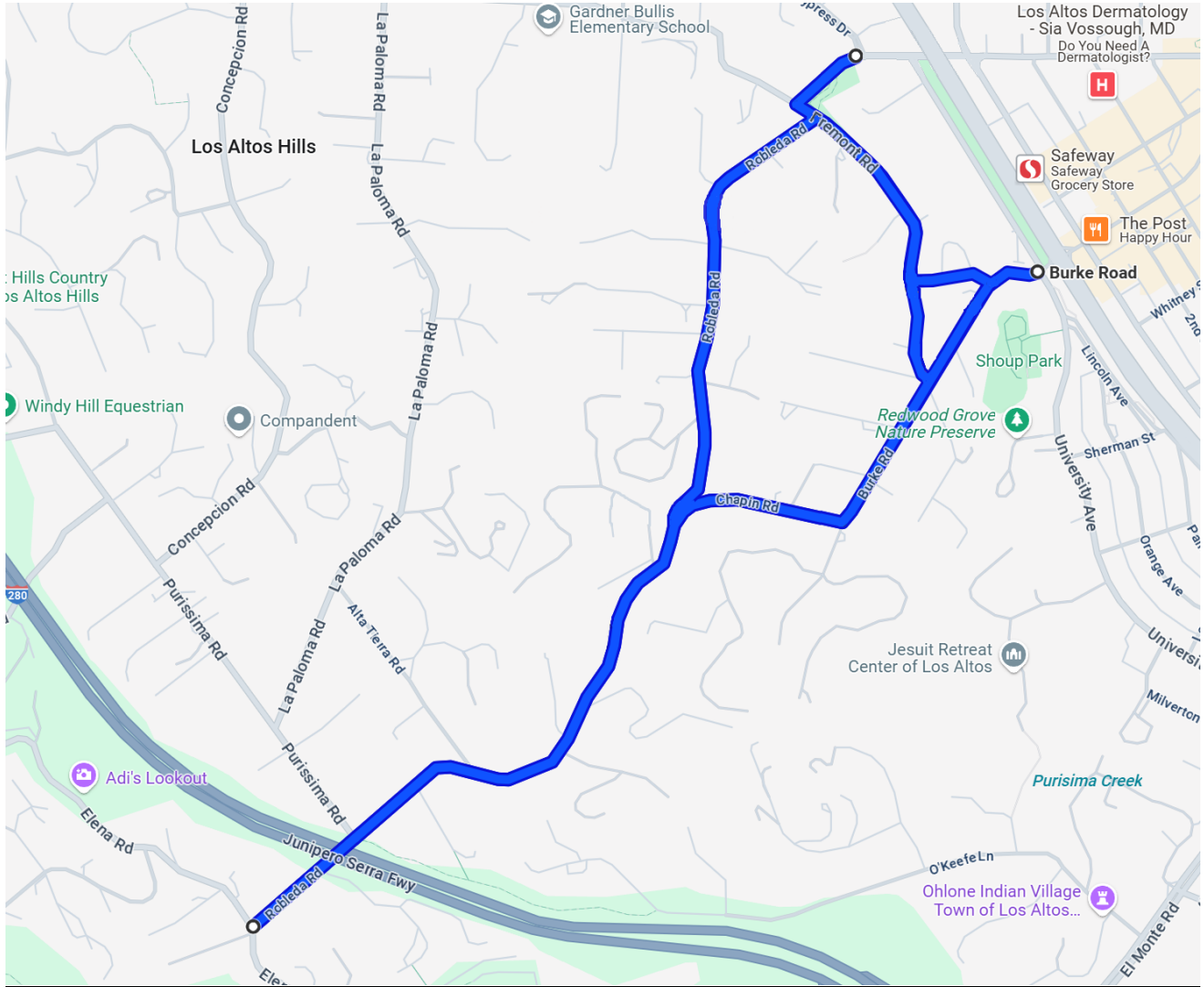


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Robleda - Burke Evacuation Route Project Map



Permissions:

One of the biggest challenges in these types of projects is getting permission to treat the properties. During planning of the project, we conducted an extensive public outreach effort to get the permissions needed. It included postcards, mailers, roadside message boards, newspaper articles, door-to-door visits, and a social media campaign. We were able to include 7 of the 108 parcels involved. Prior to the project, LAHCFD staff conducted a survey of the area to identify key parcels within the project scope. SCCFSC's timeframe for



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ROE forms to be returned was 14 days with a due date of September 19, 2025. LAHCFD and SCCFSC Staff went out to conduct door knocking 2 weeks prior to project start date.

Biological Precautions:

As with all of our projects, protecting the biodiversity of the area is a high priority. A Biological Survey was conducted on October 16, by Dudek, 18 days before the project started. The biologist identified and flagged wood rats' nests, no active birds' nests, drainages, and any habitats within the treatable area. The biological review was completed outside the nesting season. Heritage trees were not 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 3, 2025, and was completed on Friday November 7, 2025. A total of 5 Days. We encountered 0 red flag days.

Jurisdictions And Funders Involved:

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

Contractors Selected:

Dudek was selected for this project due to availability and competitiveness of the bid.

Davey Tree Expert was selected due to their availability, expert service, and ability to complete the project within the requested time frame.

AWP Safety provided a traffic control plan and provided six flaggers and traffic control for project duration.



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Project Photos





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By The Numbers:

- Area treated – 5.78 miles total area treated for both sides were treated during this project. Most of which were treated 15 to 30 feet from the edge of the road unless marked for riparian area. On ROE properties treatment extended 30-50 feet from the edge of the road if needed. The daily average was approximately 1 mile per day.
- Acres treated = approximately 5.78 acres
- No poison oak was treated during this project.
- 5 days of treatment on the project itself was carried out by Davey Tree Expert.

We overcame many challenges to complete this critical part of growing the evacuation route and vegetation treatment 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 Huertas Tree Service, Dudek, and AWP Safety. All entities were committed to assisting Santa Clara County FireSafe Council with the project from start to finish.

AWP Safety provided six traffic control personnel throughout the project to ensure that the work could be done in an efficient and safe manner. All roads worked on are commuter roads with multiple driveways, high bike and foot traffic routes; the traffic control personnel were necessary for the safety of the tree crews, SCCFSC staff, LAHCFD staff, general traffic, pedestrians and bicyclists in the Los Altos Hills area. I'm happy to report, with AWP Safety traffic control coverage and the safe working practices of Huertas Tree Service, we were able to finish the project with no reported injuries or incident reports. In addition to that, Los Altos Hills County Fire District granted permission for the project crew to use their parcel for a staging area.

Safety briefings were held by the safety officers Andrew Harmon and Barbara Gonzalez each morning before start of work to discuss traffic control, personal protective equipment (PPE), local emergency services, environmental hazards, and weather conditions.



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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:

Barbara Gonzalez -

Project Manager

e-mail: bgonzalez@sccfiresafe.org

Phone: (408) 444-0711

Amanda Brenner-Cannon -

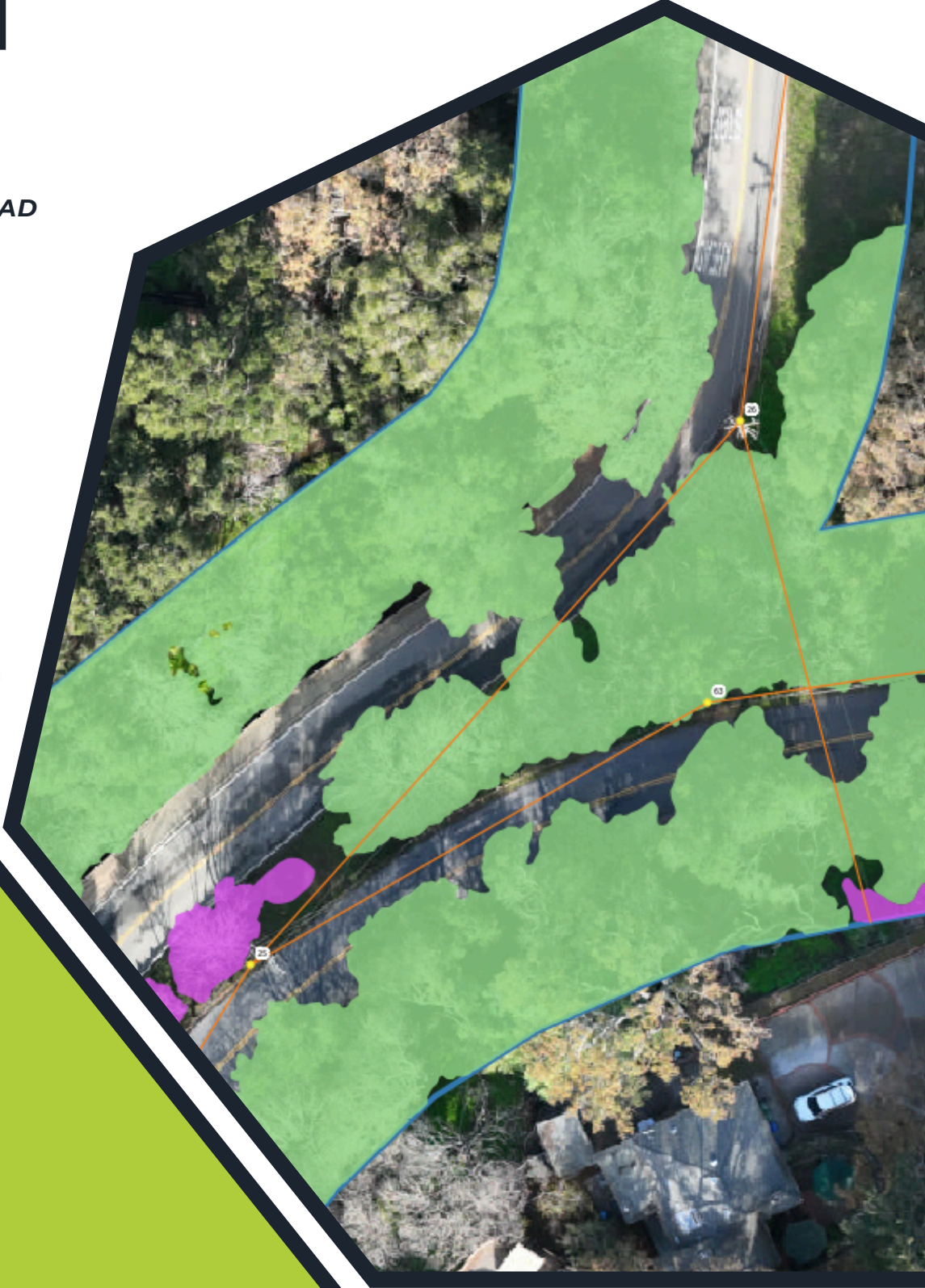
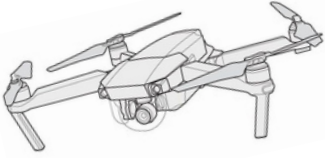
Program Director

e-mail: abrennercannon@sccfiresafe.org



POST TREATMENT REPORT

*ROBLEDA ROAD
CHAPIN ROAD
BURKE ROAD
WEST FREMONT ROAD*



NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



30 acres



2.66 mi



November -
December 2025



5,040 images



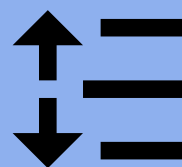
77x



Moisture level
analysed

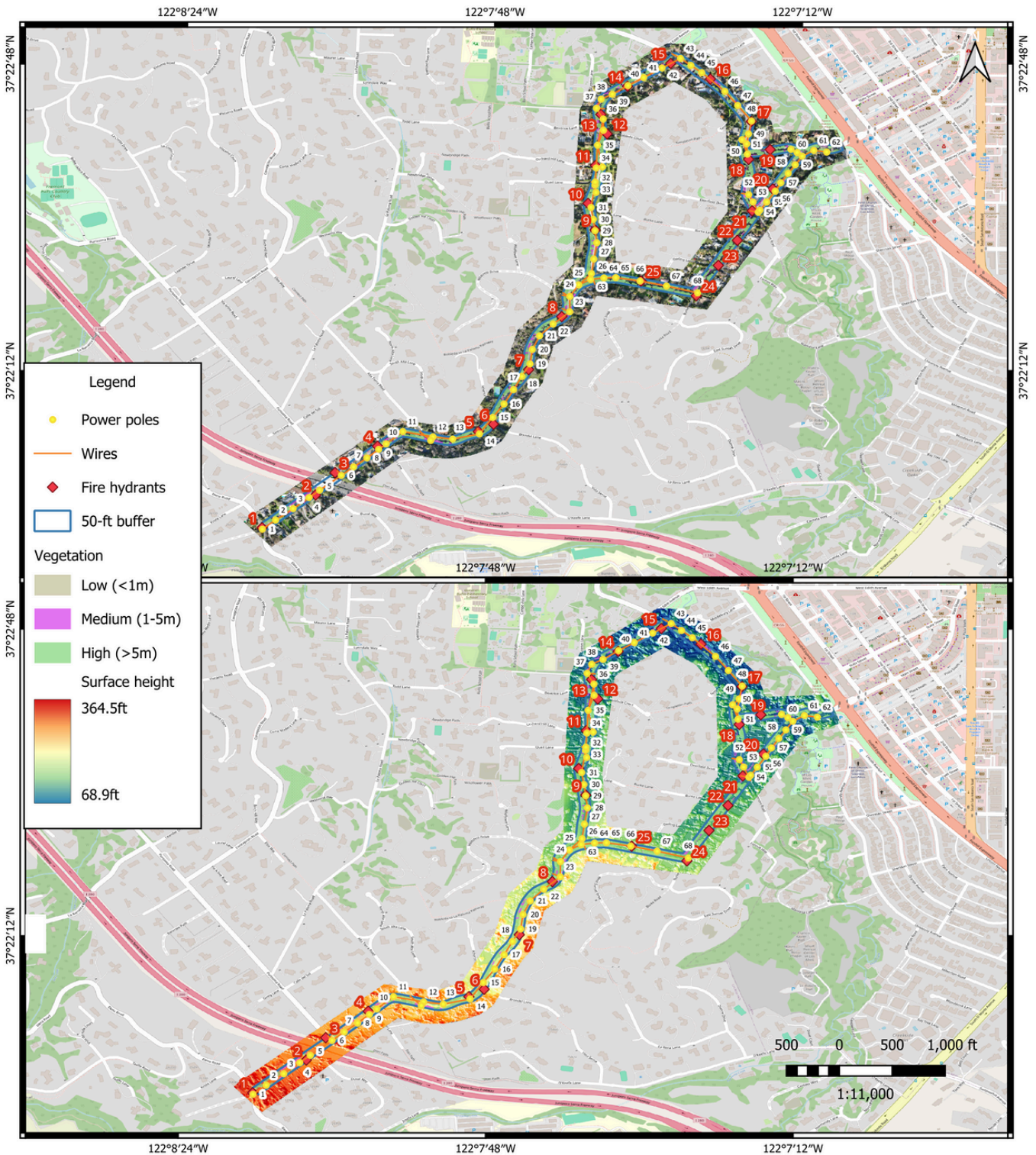


Health status
analysed



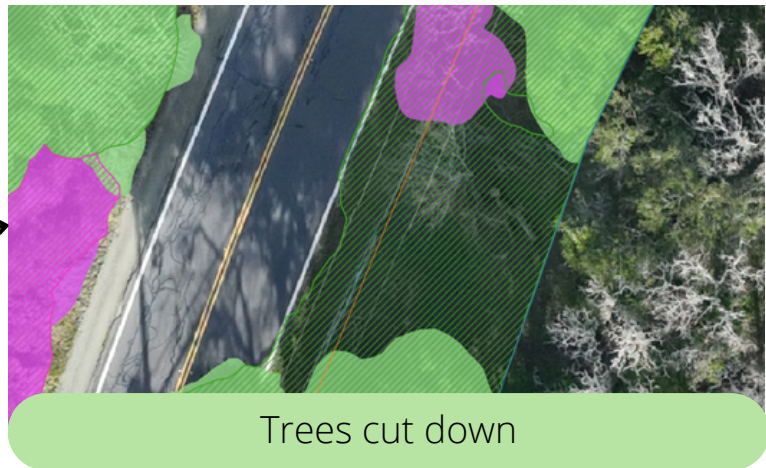
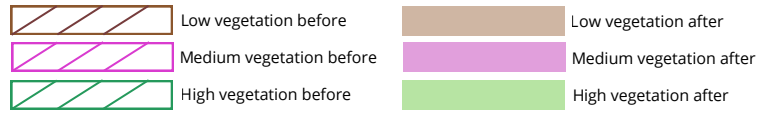
Vegetation height
groups

OVERVIEW

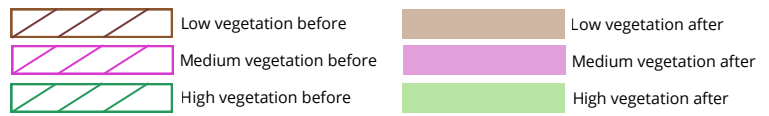


CHANGES: BEFORE (NOV) - AFTER (DEC) (1ST MILE)

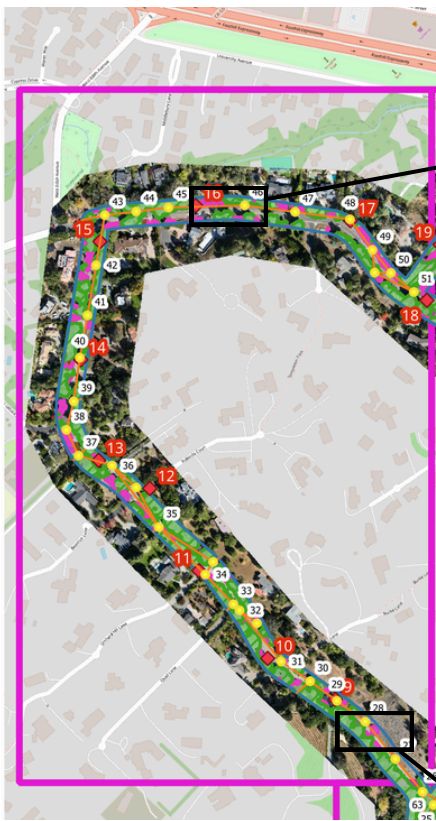
1st mile



CHANGES: BEFORE (NOV) - AFTER (DEC) (2ND MILE)

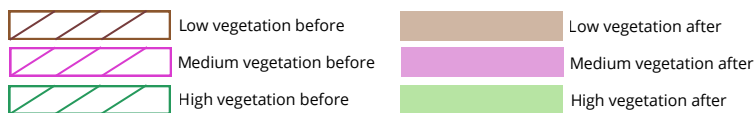


2nd mile

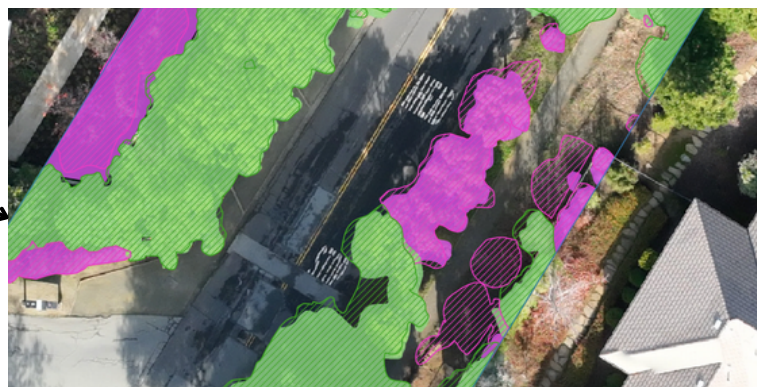


CHANGES: BEFORE (NOV) - AFTER (DEC) (3RD MILE)

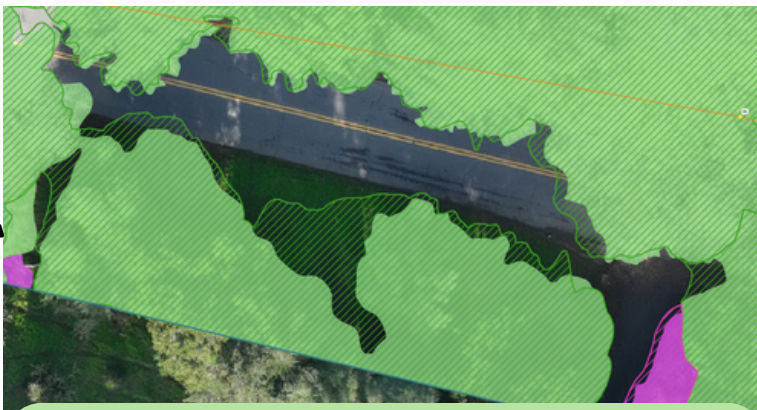
3rd mile



Trees trimmed



Bushes cut down

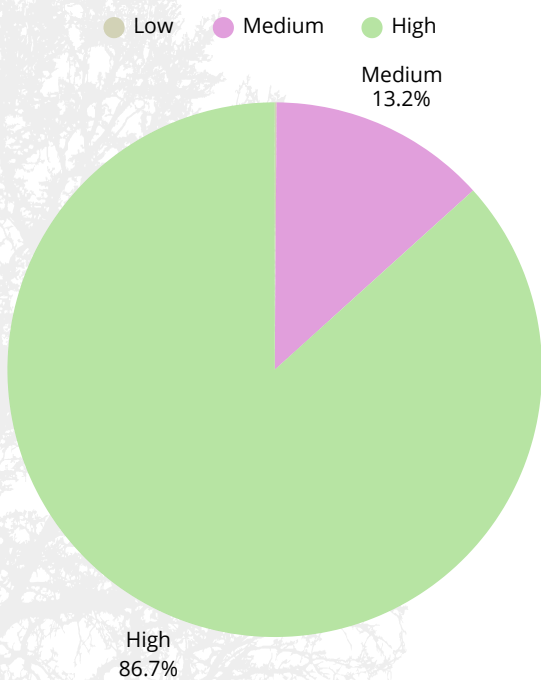


Trees trimmed

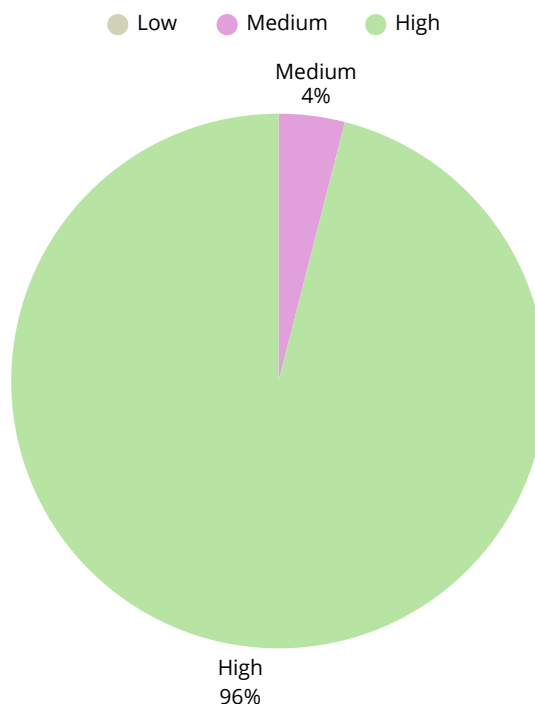
SHAPSHOT OF VEGETATION PROFILE

A primary goal of an evacuation route treatment is to reduce low height vegetation such as grasses and medium height vegetation such as shrubs and saplings that are ladder fuels. Finally the retention of a healthy tree canopy in the high height provides shade and cooler temperatures.

Vegetation area, %

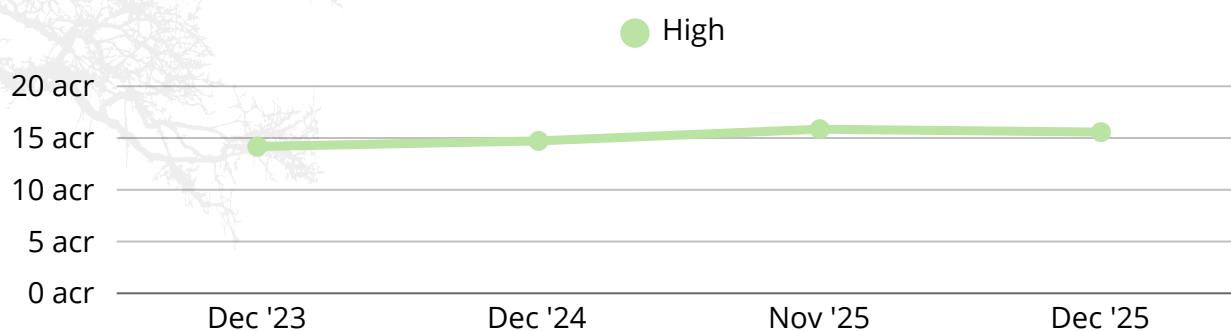
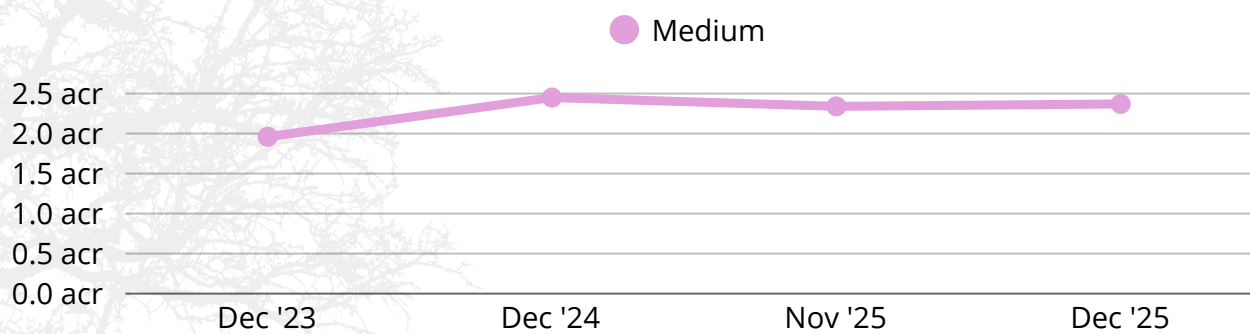
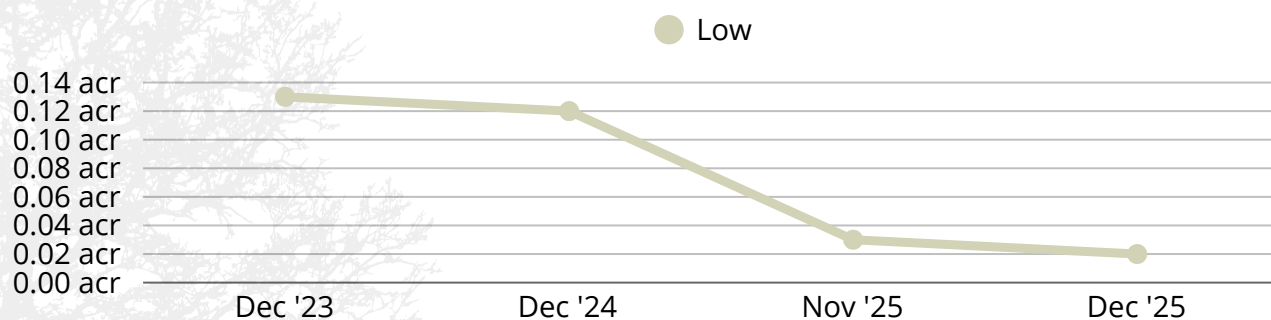


Vegetation volume, %



SHAPSHOT OF VEGETATION PROFILE

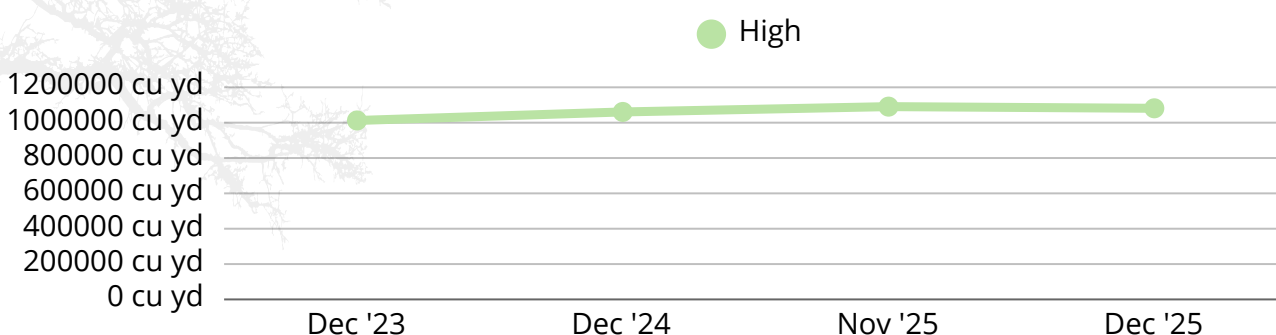
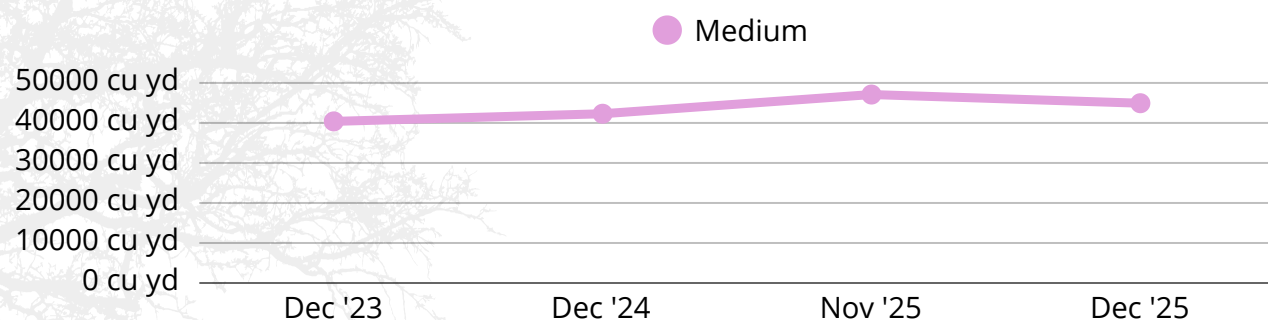
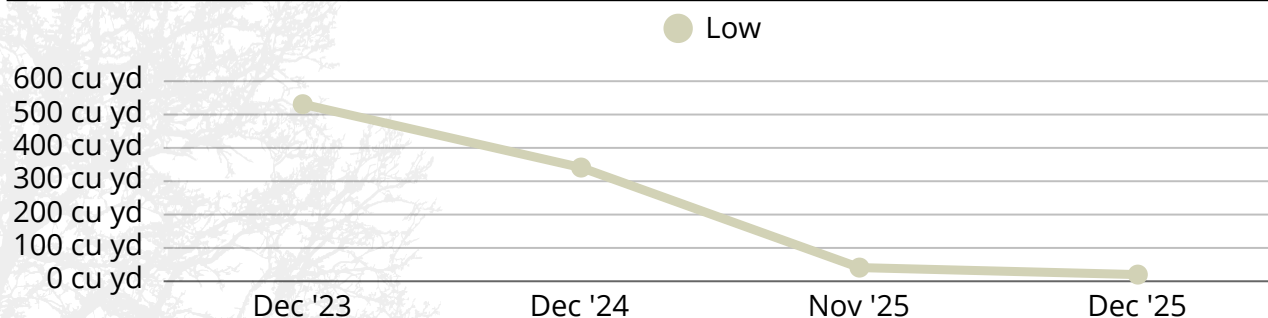
Vegetation height/ Areas (acres)	Dec '23	Dec '24	Nov '25	Dec '25	Acreage change
Low (up to 1 m)	0.13	0.12	0.03	0.02	-36%
Medium (1-5 m)	1.96	2.45	2.34	2.37	+2%
High (more than 5 m)	14.18	14.72	15.85	15.57	-0.6%



SHAPSHOT OF VEGETATION PROFILE

Volume is another way to measure a primary goal of an evacuation route treatment. Again the goal is to reduce low height vegetation and medium height vegetation. Retention of high height vegetation creates a shaded fuel break effect.

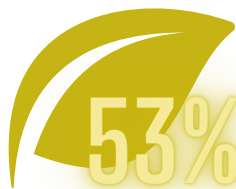
Vegetation height/ Volume (cubic yards)	Dec '23	Dec '24	Nov '25	Dec '25	Volume change
Low (up to 1 m)	531	341	41	20	-51%
Medium (1-5 m)	40,386	42,297	47,096	44,949	-5%
High (more than 5 m)	1,012,393	1,060,690	1,090,773	1,081,294	-1%



VEGETATION HEALTH STATUS (NDVI)



Very stressed

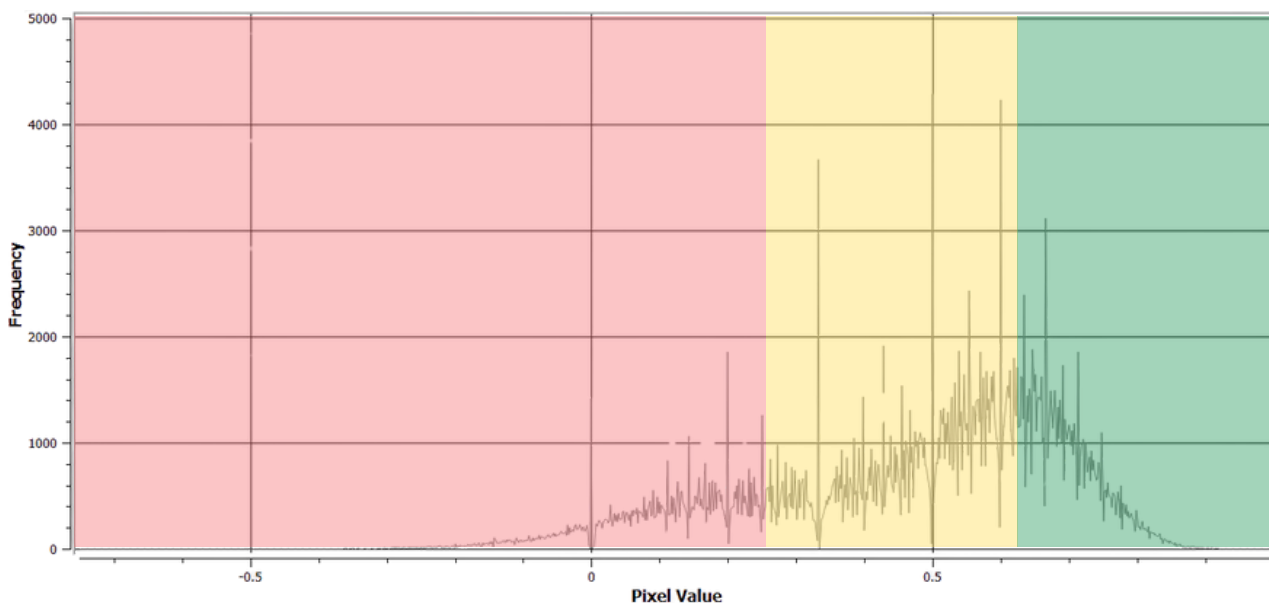


Moderately stressed



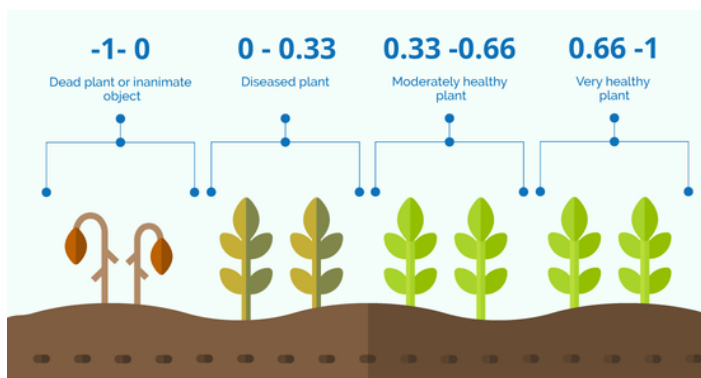
Low stressed

NDVI Distribution Chart



NDVI, or Normalized Difference Vegetation Index, is a numerical indicator used to assess the presence and health of vegetation by analyzing how surfaces reflect light at specific wavelengths. It is calculated using the formula $(NIR - Red) / (NIR + Red)$, where NIR stands for near-infrared reflectance and Red refers to red light reflectance.

The NDVI values range between -1 and +1. Values closer to +1 indicate dense, healthy vegetation, such as a forest canopy or thriving crop field. Moderate values (around 0.3 to 0.66) suggest sparser or less healthy vegetation like grasslands or shrubs. Values near zero or negative values typically represent diseased or dead plants.



MOISTURE CONTENT (GNDVI)



Water stressed



Low level of water content

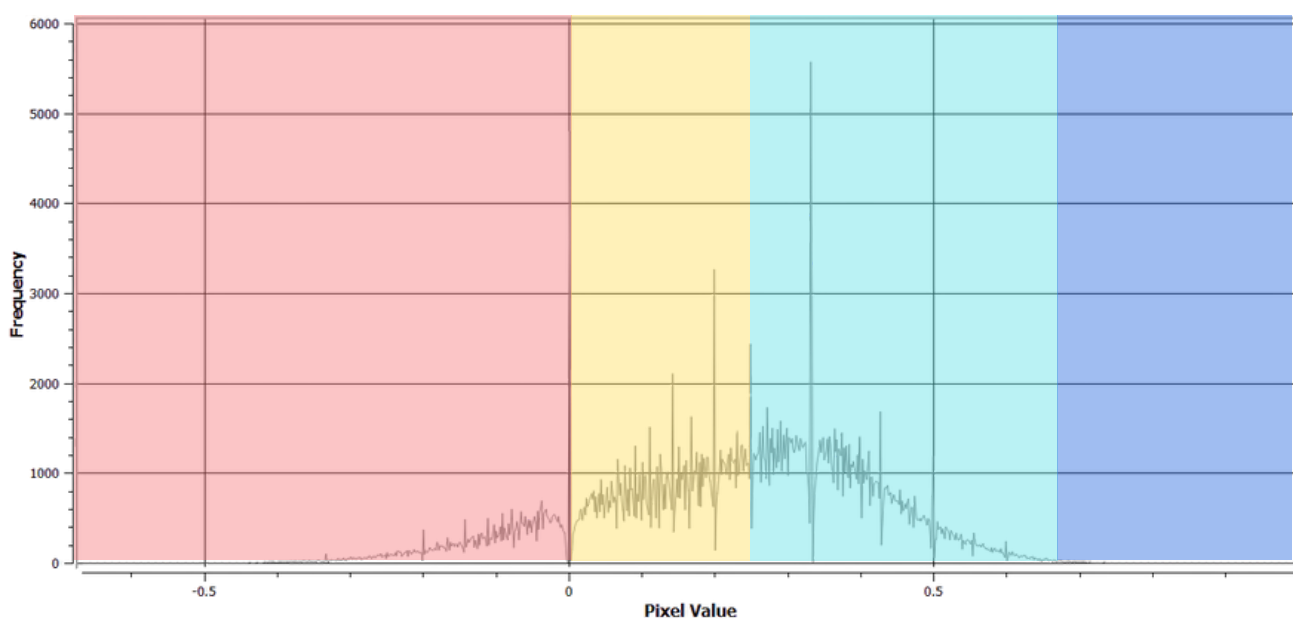


Medium level of water content



High level of water content

GNDVI Distribution Chart



GNDVI, or Green Normalized Difference Vegetation Index, is a vegetation index similar to NDVI but it uses the green band instead of the red band. It is particularly sensitive to chlorophyll content in leaves and is often used for assessing plant water stress, nitrogen content, or overall plant vigor, especially in crops with high chlorophyll concentrations.

The output values range from -1 to +1, just like NDVI. Higher values indicate high level of moisture in plants, while lower or negative values suggest sparse and water stressed vegetation. Compared to NDVI, GNDVI may be more sensitive to early signs of water or nitrogen deficiency, since green reflectance changes earlier in response to plant stress.