



GOATS TO THE RESCUE



COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT

Historically, the grazing of fields by goats was used as a method of vegetation mitigation and fire fuel management. Commencing in 2006, goat services were contracted by the Los Altos Hills County Fire District (District) to mitigate vegetation for fire fuel reduction in difficult to reach terrain such as the Byrne Preserve. This effort resulted in significant decrease of vegetative mass thus creating desirable fire breaks. The District is currently developing a service plan

and timetable for goat services anticipated to commence in late spring of 2019. Due to the large amounts of rainfall experienced during the winter and spring months, greater vegetation is anticipated and planning for the areas of removal is underway.

Grazing of goats utilizes environmentally friendly techniques that are natural and enhances wildlife habitat, uses no toxic chemical sprays, requires minimal manpower with no chain saws or mechanized equipment to reduce fire fuel vegetation. Thus, the service renders no environmental hazards or loud noises that disturb residents or the environment.

Goats have proven most useful on steep or rocky hillsides where workers would have trouble walking; in wetlands and storm water management areas where mowers don't work, or heavy machinery would damage the land; and on vast ranges or state parks where mowing and spraying would be time-consuming, hazardous and costly.



Goats can each consume 4 to 10 pounds of vegetation a day and even climb into trees for food. Therefore, there will be a reduction of vegetation within the areas that are planned for removal within the Los Altos Hills County Fire District. Goats are considered superior to cows, tractors, chainsaws, weed eaters and herbicides because they will eat all the blackberry vines, thistles, nettles and poison oak they can consume. The use of goat services within the Los Altos Hills County Fire District is suitable for fire fuel reduction through vegetation mitigation by the services goats provide.

Local government agencies have utilized services for goat brush-clearing skills over the years. Tuolumne County has hired goats to graze down excess vegetation, including star thistle and other thistle varieties, at the old Jamestown Landfill. In Southern California, goats help protect the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, in Simi Valley. The Ventura County Fire Department has goats graze at two sites: The 29 acres near the Los Padres National Forest in Ojai and the 13-acre Ronald Reagan Presidential Library. Each year, goats clear the brush to make it more difficult for wildfires to spread.

The Fire District Board of Commissioners is pleased to report the utilization of goat grazing as a premier method of fire fuel reduction to the community of Los Altos Hills County Fire District.

Discover more about the goats grazing schedule and photos on the District website at www.lahcfd.org