



County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
DISTRICT 3
File #: 22-055

Board Meeting Date: 1/25/2022

Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors
From: Michael P. Callagy, County Manager
Subject: **Measure K:** Agreement with Fire Safe San Mateo County for fuel reduction projects

RECOMMENDATION:

Measure K: Adopt a resolution authorizing an agreement with Fire Safe San Mateo County for fuel reduction projects within the unincorporated area of Emerald Hills, along Highway 35 in San Mateo County, and along Guadalupe Canyon Parkway for the term of February 1, 2022 through February 1, 2023, in an amount not to exceed \$345,000.

BACKGROUND:

Fire Safe San Mateo County has identified three fuel reduction projects that will increase community safety and wildfire resiliency in San Mateo County: in the unincorporated area of Emerald Hills, along a 25-mile stretch of Highway 35 in San Mateo County, and along Guadalupe Canyon Parkway in Daly City.

CAL FIRE has classified the unincorporated area of Emerald Hills as a Very High Fire Severity Zone, and the area has also been designated in the Federal Register as a community at risk to wildfire. The narrow, substandard roadways on steep hillsides present navigation obstacles for both residents and fire apparatus, and many portions of the roadways are only wide enough to allow one car at a time. The vegetation along much of these roads is thick and contiguous and encroaches into the paved portion of road, and includes dense tree canopy and large low hanging limbs that create additional barriers for fire apparatus. San Mateo County Fire has also prioritized roadside fuel treatments within Emerald Hills because many homes are adjacent to the County's Huddart Park. Fuel reduction will benefit both County residents and park visitors.

Highway 35, an arterial evacuation route for all of Skyline and portions of the La Honda and Kings Mountain communities, is approximately five miles from the northern perimeter of the 2020 CZU Complex Fire and is situated on extremely steep topography and surrounded by a dense conifer and oak woodland forest within the wildland-urban interface (WUI). Many sections of Highway 35 are overgrown with canopy and vegetation, making the need for fuel reduction along these 25 miles of roadway within the San Mateo County boundary readily apparent. The tree canopy is closed in some

sections and many trees are critically close to and/or overhang PG&E line infrastructure. These factors combine to create a concerning scenario for the many mountain communities located along this portion of Highway 35 in San Mateo County, including the very high wildfire risk communities of Skylonda, Kings Mountain, Old La Honda Road, La Honda, Cuesta La Honda, Rapley Trail, and Alpine Road. Highway 35 is the only evacuation route for these surrounding communities and has only one lane in each direction.

Fire Safe San Mateo County has also identified a dense eucalyptus grove adjacent and encroaching onto Guadalupe Canyon Parkway in Daly City for treatment. The proposed fuels treatment is along the boundary of San Bruno Mountain Park, across from JFK Elementary School, and neighboring the Pacifica Senior Assisted Living Facility. The eucalyptus grove is growing in size and is along a critical arterial evacuation route for many residents who live in the area. The grove is overly dense, and, if allowed to continue growing to maturity, will become a cost prohibitive project for removal and continue to be an unmitigated public safety issue for community wildfire evacuation.

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Fire Safe San Mateo County is a non-profit organization dedicated to maintaining quality of life while protecting property and the environment for citizens living in the wildland/urban-interface zones of San Mateo County through public and private partnerships for education and fuel reduction. Pursuant to the proposed grant agreement, Fire Safe San Mateo County will coordinate fuel reduction projects in Emerald Hills, along Highway 35, and along Guadalupe Canyon Parkway in Daly City.

Emerald Hills

In Emerald Hills, Fire Safe San Mateo County anticipates that the fuels treatment will take the contractor approximately two weeks to complete. All vegetation will be chipped into a truck and disposed of at appropriate recycling facilities. The following right of ways have been identified to receive fuel reduction treatments: Springdale Way, Glenloch Way, Lakeview Way, Ferndale Way, and Sylvan Way. Neighbors will receive written notification two weeks prior to the start date to explain the evacuation improvements. The notice will also provide public education on the importance of defensible space, encourage subscription to the SMC Alert system, and explain the Zonehaven evacuation system and website to residents in detail. Information provided by San Mateo County Office of Emergency Services and Zonehaven will be utilized in the neighborhood public notification.

The requested Measure K funding for the Emerald Hills fuel reduction project is \$15,000, and the project is anticipated to be completed by February 2022.

Highway 35

Along Highway 35, Fire Safe San Mateo County proposes to create safer evacuation route conditions by reducing hazardous fuels along the right of way (focusing on ladder fuels), reducing contiguous vegetation, eradicating invasive flashy fuels (such as scotch broom), removing dead and diseased trees, reducing target hazards (such as trees over power lines), and incorporating extensions of right-of-way work (up to an additional 100 feet) onto four large Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MROSD) preserves along the project route. This fuels reduction project will assist in prevention of roadside ignitions, including ignitions involving power lines, as well as dramatically reducing the rate of spread and intensity of ignitions within the project area. The fuels work within the MROSD preserves will include removing and reducing some of the most hazardous fuels in the area, which will benefit the numerous nearby homes and increase wildfire resiliency significantly.

Fire Safe San Mateo County is planning numerous community outreach activities in collaboration with the Town of Woodside, the Town of Portola Valley, the Kings Mountain Fire Brigade, and the Woodside Fire Protection District, including community meetings and notices detailing the project scope and wildfire resiliency components, and direct communication with property owners along Highway 35. Appropriate maintenance is also a critical goal of this proposal, and grant collaborators, including Cal Trans and PG&E, have identified specific fuel treatment maintenance objectives that extend beyond the award of this grant.

The woody biomass produced from the fuel reduction work will mainly be chipped back on site along the Highway 35 right-of-way, due to the large spread of Sudden Oak Death (SOD) in the area and subsequent inability to transport the material across county lines. Many biomass facilities have been closed and the few that remain open are extremely far away from the project site and would not be cost effective. Fuels mitigation within some of the MROSD preserves may include pile burning as an efficient mechanism of disposal. Mastication is suitable in some areas of the project and will allow material to be left on site which can be beneficial for forest health, per the USDA Forest Service. Grazing with goats (within certain portions of treated MROSD preserves) will also be a suitable mitigation mechanism and minimize greenhouse gas emissions associated with mitigation using mechanical methods.

The requested Measure K funding for the Highway 35 fuel reduction project is \$150,000, which Fire Safe San Mateo County will use to complete California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review for the proposed project. Environmental review is expected to be completed in February 2023.

Guadalupe Canyon Parkway

Fire Safe San Mateo County will coordinate the removal of all eucalyptus trees under 24 inches in diameter, as well as all the scotch broom, which is encroaching into the sidewalk and roadway. All vegetation will be chipped and disposed of at appropriate recycling facilities. The fuels treatment is expected to take approximately four weeks to complete. The work will include approximately 1,200 lineal feet of Guadalupe Canyon Parkway frontage by approximately 75-100 feet wide. All existing native vegetation will remain, including pines, large coffee berry bushes, and some small native shrubs. Neighbors will receive written notification two weeks prior to the start date to explain the project and the proposed evacuation improvements. The notice will also provide public education on the importance of defensible space, encourage subscription to the SMC Alert system, and explain the Zonehaven evacuation system and website to residents in detail. Information provided by San Mateo County Office of Emergency Services and Zonehaven will be utilized in the neighborhood public notification.

The requested Measure K funding for the Guadalupe Canyon Parkway fuel reduction project is \$180,000, and the project is anticipated to be completed by March 2022.

Total Measure K Request: Not to Exceed \$345,000.

The release of funds will be contingent on the execution of an agreement providing for the County's confirmation of the expenditure of funds for the purposes stated herein. The County will disburse the

funds to the following organization for the purposes described above:

Denise Enea, Executive Director
Fire Safe San Mateo County
808 Portola Rd.
Portola Valley, CA 94028

PERFORMANCE MEASURES:

Description	Target
Fuel reduction along specified roadways in Emerald Hills	complete
CEQA review of proposed fuel reduction along 25 miles of Highway 35	complete
Fuel reduction in specified location on Guadalupe Canyon Parkway	complete

FISCAL IMPACT:

There are sufficient **Measure K** funds in the FY 2021-22 Adopted Budget for this specific FY 2021-22 **Measure K** request.