

CITY OF OAKLAND
AGENDA REPORT

2010 OCT 14 PM 2:13

TO: Office of the City Administrator
ATTN: Dan Lindheim
FROM: Gerald A. Simon, Fire Chief
DATE: October 26, 2010

RE: REPORT ON THE 2009–2010 VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PROGRAM FOR THE FIRE DEPARTMENT AND THE FIRE PREVENTION ASSESSMENT DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE APPROVAL AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2011–2014 WILDFIRE PREVENTION ASSESSMENT DISTRICT VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PLAN AND AUTHORIZING THE USE OF ASSESSMENT DISTRICT FUNDS TO PAY FOR RELATED ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEWS

SUMMARY

This report outlines the vegetation management and hazardous fuel reduction projects of the Fire Department/Fire Prevention Bureau/Vegetation Management Unit and the Wildfire Prevention Assessment District Citizens' Advisory Committee.

Staff is requesting that the City Council approve the 2011-2014 Vegetation Management Plan for implementation and authorize the use of assessment funds to pay for required environmental reviews.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no direct fiscal impact from City Council action on this report. However, City Council action does affect the process for assessing and collecting revenues from the Wildfire Prevention Assessment District (WPAD) with Council approval of the adoption of the WPAD Engineer's Report presented by the Budget Office. The cost of preparing the Preliminary Annual Report is included in the contractual agreement with Francisco & Associates, Inc., approved by the City Council.

The City anticipates revenues of approximately \$1.7 million annually from benefit assessments collected for the WPAD. WPAD revenues are used to fund wildfire prevention and preparedness services and programs in the Oakland hills. Funding for the WPAD is made available in the Budget Office as part of the adopted budget and departmental budget request for the WPAD fund (#2321) in the Office of the Fire Marshal (org # 20311), program code PS23.

Each fire season the Goat Grazing Program is a key component of the WPAD's fuel reduction strategies. This eco-friendly process of fuel reduction in some cases may cross fiscal years. This

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occurs as a result of weather conditions, specifically, precipitation which affects vegetation growth rate. The result of these weather pattern changes means that in some years the expenditure for the goat grazing contract may be within normal limits or increased depending on the fuel growth (vegetation) cycle.

BACKGROUND

The mission of the Wildfire Prevention Assessment District and the Oakland Fire Department is to reduce the risk of fire in the Oakland Hills. The 10-year goal is to establish and implement a strategic, cost effective, sustainable, and environmentally-sensitive fuel management plan. By removing the build-up of non-native vegetation from the canyons throughout the high fire hazard area, strategic fuel breaks are created. These fuel break systems can be used to compartmentalize and dampen fire progression patterns across large expanses of wildland, thus transforming them into more manageable fire control areas.

The result is the creation of a fire-resistant community and defensible spaces (places that are less prone to burn because of precautions taken ahead of time). Information is provided to the property owners and community, on how to abate their properties, and how they can replant their vegetation with less maintenance and less flammability.

The WPAD and OFD have two primary goals:

- Provide education, inspection, and, if necessary, enforcement of non-city owned properties within the WPAD (private, nonprofit, institutional, other agency)
- Provide funding for vegetation management on city-owned properties within the WPAD

Prior to the task of formally prioritizing the work that is undertaken in the WPAD, the Citizens' Advisory Committee and FPB staff agreed on the following components for determining risk assessment and risk management:

- Public safety – protection of lives
- Protection of structures
- Egress and ingress routes
- Slope and terrain
- Diablo wind corridors, natural chimneys
- Fuel load
- Population density
- Social factors and human behaviors

KEY ISSUES AND IMPACTS

ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2004–2010

Property Inspection Program
 Vegetation Management Inspections

2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Improved: 22127 total	Improved: 21740	Improved: 20968	Improved:21759	Improved: 21958	Improved 21719	Improved: 21187
21181 - In Compliance 946 - Not in Compliance	20508 - In Compliance 1232 - Not in Compliance	20918 - In Compliance 50 - Not in Compliance	19690 - In Compliance 2069 - Not in Compliance	19284 - In Compliance 2314 - Not in Compliance	20963 - In Compliance 756 - Not in Compliance	19394 - In Compliance 1793 - Not in Compliance
Unimproved: 2881 2422 - In Compliance 459 - Not in Compliance	Unimproved: 2748 2115 - In Compliance 633 - Not in Compliance	Unimproved: 3856 3575 - In Compliance 281 - Not in Compliance	Unimproved: 1936 1473 - In Compliance 463 - Not in Compliance	Unimproved: 1986 1625 - In Compliance 361 - Not in Compliance	Unimproved 4278 4419 - In Compliance 158 - Not in Compliance	Unimproved: 4777 4419 - In Compliance 358 - Not in Compliance
City Properties						
			275 Contracts	239 Contracts	222 Contracts	137 Contracts
Chipping						
			35 requests	267 requests	287 requests	144 requests so far

- 100% of all improved and unimproved properties were inspected
- Up to 94% compliance achieved by season's end
- No major wildland fire occurred within the WPAD.
- Inspectors continue to issue parking citations for vehicles that block narrow roads and streets within the WPAD.
- Joint inspections by Fire Prevention and Firefighters in the Engine Companies
-

Roadside Treatment

- Roadside treatment conducted on more than 80 linear miles of roadway located in the WPAD
- Because of the late rains, several roads had to be treated twice

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Chipping Program

- Contracted with Civic Corps to provide chipping services
- Over 873 homes requested the chipping services
- Estimated cost: \$150 per request

Goat Grazing

- City Council approved multi-year goat grazing contract with Ecosystems Concepts to provide more than 3,500 goats for hazardous fuel removal in six City of Oakland open spaces and parklands.
- Developed ten year grazing plan for Joaquin Miller Park in collaboration with Friends of Sausal Creek and Parks and Recreation staff that promotes the protection of native and endangered plants. Staff is currently working to develop similar plans for the King Estates and Knowland Park Open Space areas.
- Goat grazing has cleared hazardous fuels on more than 400 acres annually in the WPAD.

Public Outreach and Wildfire Prevention Education

- Added Public Outreach Coordinator to Fire Prevention Staff
- Redesigned the Wildfire Prevention Assessment District website
- Multiple articles appearing in the media regarding the fire prevention efforts of the WPAD

SUCCESS SPOTLIGHTS

Large land owner agreements: FPB is working closely with EBMUD and other large public entity property owners, such as CalTrans, PG & E and East Bay Regional Parks to reduce fuel loads, create emergency vehicle access if needed in the event of a fire, and maintain roadside clearance around the property perimeters.

Shepherd Canyon

We worked with the Shepherd Canyon community groups, Civic Corps and Parks and recreation to build a trail in the upper Canyon. Staff is working to develop an environmental and fire hazard reduction plan for the Shepherd Canyon Open Space.

Private Contract Work – UC Berkeley / WPAD partnership projects:

- Removal of eucalyptus re-growth
- Removal of invasive non-native brush
- Use of a fuel management strategy that promotes a natural forest conversion
- In 2004 - 2010, 7,000 + eucalyptus stems were removed and 104 acres were treated

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- Strawberry Canyon Vegetation Management Projects 1 and 2
- Frowning Ridge Vegetation Management Projects 1 and 2
- Fuel/Fire Break Project
- Gwinn Canyon
- Claremont Canyon Conservancy
- California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
- Remote Automatic Weather Station Project

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Wildfire Prevention Assessment District was created to:

- Establish and implement a strategic, cost-effective, sustainable, environmentally-sensitive fuel management plan.
- Have knowledgeable and involved property owners, developers, and the public-at-large in fire safe practices.
- Enhance cooperation and communication with the community, City, other agencies and neighboring districts.
- Establish and refine policies, procedures, and regulations that improve fire safety.

FY 2011-2014 GOALS

- To continue the process to create strategic fuel break systems that can be used to compartmentalize and dampen fire progression patterns across large expanses of wildland, transforming them into more manageable fire control areas. This is accomplished by working with community groups to promote the neighborhood defensible space programs, hazardous fuels management projects and vegetation management inspections.
- To remove the build-up of non-native vegetation from the canyons throughout the high fire hazard area. This would be achieved by working collaboratively with other large property stakeholders including the East Bay Regional Parks District, UC Berkeley, PG &E, Oakland Unified School District, CalTrans, and East Bay Municipal Utility District.

2011 - 2014 PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Inspection

- Early in Spring (April) conduct inspections on city-owned parcels

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- Early in Spring (May) conduct inspections on un-improved properties
- Early in Spring (and throughout year) work with large property/public entity partners to determine parcels to be treated, treatment level, and schedule
- Follow up on inspection process year round
- Respond to complaints and customer issues year round
- Increased pressure on the “non-compliant”
- Enforce codes and ordinances
- Utilize “the eyes and ears of the community” as assets; develop relationships and utilize “each one, teach one” training approaches.
- Reduce the number of repeat visits to properties
- Increase the compliance rate

Administrative

- Maintain all records so current information is complete, thorough and timely; and so historical record exists from year to year as a coherent history of issues and actions
- Address citizen concerns and problems with personal contact and written response
- Utilize all forms of technology to their utmost – database, Magic Help Desk, Hotline, etc.
- Increased attention and importance of timelines, goals, assignments, and follow through – with the necessary authority to responsible party (if you are tasked with an item, you are responsible for it to completion, and you have authority to take action on it)
- Increased communication among all members in unit: to reduce overlap, increase responsibility, to increase our ability to learn from each issue
- Define measurable deliverables so as to increase effectiveness
- Increase ability to be proactive and less reactive

Ongoing

- Reduce the risk of fire, loss of life and property
- Reduce the danger of a major firestorm – less intensity, fewer fires, contained more rapidly, move more slowly – via defensible space, fuel reduction, fire breaks, etc.
- Offer public education to help create fire safe and fire resistant communities
- Enhance and maintain partnerships with large property owners/ public entities
- Act in observance and compliance with environmental issues and concerns
- Take action on violations and implement lien procedure as necessary
- Increase public awareness and understanding ensuring that the entire decision making process makes sense to property owners – and is based on our goals to protect lives and structures
- Enhance the existing fuel/fire break

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The combined efforts described above are being improved for 2011-2014. The most important aspect for OFD and the WPAD is the extremely positive relationship that has been established with the community and the large parcel owners within the Wildfire Prevention Assessment District.

The creation of the 2011-2014 Vegetation Management Plan will serve as a road map for the Fire Department and the Wildfire Prevention District Advisory Committee as it continue towards it goal to make the Oakland Hills fire safe.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Economic

There are no direct economic impacts associated with this report.

Environmental

The management strategy proposed by this project promotes a forest conversion: the emerging native forest of California bay, Oak, Maple, Buckeye, Redwood and Hazelnut will be retained and the existing eucalyptus-dominated exotic canopy forest will be reduced.

Native species produce either considerably lesser fuel loads or are most fuel-productive well before the peak of the regional fire season.

Social Equity

A fire safe and healthy environment benefits the entire city.

DISABILITY AND SENIOR ACCESS

There are no ADA or senior citizen access issues contained in this report.

RECOMMENDATION

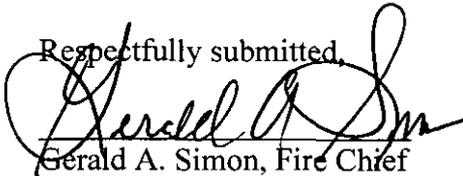
The Fire Department continues to work with the WPAD Board to improve fire safety in the Oakland Hills. The 2011-2014 Vegetation Management Plan details strategies for continuing to reduce fire risk in district.

Staff recommends that the City Council accept this report and approve a resolution adopting the 2011-2014 Vegetation Management Plan.

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ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

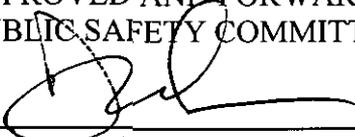
Staff requests that the City Council approve a resolution and adopt the 2011-2014 Vegetation Management Plan.

Respectfully submitted,

Gerald A. Simon, Fire Chief
Fire Department

Reviewed by:
Nina S. Morris, Assistant to the Director
James A. Williams, Deputy Chief/Fire Marshal

Prepared by:
Leroy Griffin, Assistant Fire Marshal
Fire Prevention Bureau

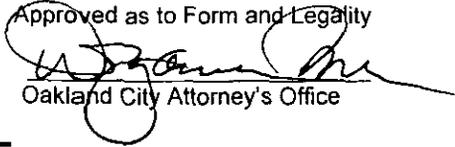
APPROVED AND FORWARDED TO THE
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE



Office of the City Administrator

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FILED
OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
OAKLAND

Approved as to Form and Legality

Oakland City Attorney's Office

OAKLAND CITY COUNCIL

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Resolution No. _____ C.M.S.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE APPROVAL AND IMPLEMENTATION OF 2011-2014 VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE CITY OF OAKLAND WILDFIRE PREVENTION ASSESSMENT DISTRICT AND AUTHORIZING THE USE OF ASSESSMENT DISTRICT FUNDS TO PAY FOR RELATED ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEWS

WHEREAS, the City of Oakland Wildfire Prevention Assessment District (WPAD) was established on January 20, 2004 under the authority of the Oakland Fire Suppression, Prevention and Preparedness District Ordinance of 2003 (Ordinance No. 12556 C.M.S.0), and the City of Oakland requires the preparation of a Vegetation Management Plan to address hazardous fuels conditions on public and private properties within the district boundaries; and

WHEREAS, the Oakland City Council shall cause a Vegetation Management Plan to be prepared and filed with the Office of the Clerk of the City of Oakland, and a written report containing a description of each of the locations subject to this Vegetation Management Plan, and a description of the proposed hazardous fuel treatments; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the Oakland City Council approves and authorizes the implementation of the 2011-2014 Vegetation Management Plan for the City of Oakland Wildfire Prevention Assessment District, and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED: That the Oakland City Council authorizes the City Administrator and the WPAD Advisory Board to reallocate funding program areas to address time sensitive vegetation management needs, to adjust the WPAD budget when tax assessment allocations are lower than projected, and to re-allocate prior year project funding or carry forward funds; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED: That the Oakland City Council authorizes the City Administrator to conduct the appropriate environmental review of the Vegetation Management Plan for the City of Oakland Wildfire Prevention Assessment District to address the requirements as defined in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and authorizes the City Administrator to use assessment district funds to conduct this review.

IN COUNCIL, OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA, _____

PASSED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES - BROOKS, DE LA FUENTE, KAPLAN, KERNIGHAN, NADEL, QUAN, REID, AND PRESIDENT BRUNNER

NOES -

ABSENT -

ABSTENTION -

ATTEST: _____
LATONDA SIMMONS
City Clerk and Clerk of the Council of
the City of Oakland, California