



NEWS FROM:

Oakland Fire Department

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Oakland Regional Fuel Management Project selected as finalist in the FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program national grant competition

(Oakland, CA) The Oakland Fire Department, working in a collaborative partnership with the University of California at Berkeley and the East Bay Regional Park District has been selected as a finalist to receive a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) 2006 Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program grant.

The PDM Program provides 75% funding (with 25% matching) for projects designed to mitigate future catastrophic events. The regional approach of this project strengthens the existing relationships between the partners and promotes a shared responsibility for wildfire prevention. “Mitigation is the cornerstone of emergency preparedness and management,” stated FEMA’s press release of June 6, 2006, which announced the four potential projects in California.

“Working together as partners we can be most effective in carrying out this large project, with multiple benefits to citizens, partnering agencies, as well as the entire East Bay, because the project works to reduce the risk of wildfire and its potential impacts on the community as a whole,” stated Oakland Fire Chief Daniel Farrell.

The project is designed to remove significant numbers of the non-native, flammable eucalyptus trees in four areas in the North Oakland hills. The first phase will be environmental compliance over the coming year. Following environmental clearances and approvals, FEMA would make final determination of the project scope and funding level and then project work would begin. Long-term maintenance and efforts for conversion to native vegetation are objectives included in the grant. Potentially, the three year project is slated to be funded at 75% (\$3,000,000) with federal funds and 25% (\$1,000,000) matching funds, shared among the three partners according to land ownership, once final determination is made by FEMA.

This will be a wonderful opportunity to work together as partners to achieve a significant shared goal of reducing the fuel load in the hills. It will assist in creating and extending the ridge top fire breaks established after the 1991 catastrophic firestorm. Fire breaks both reduce the fuel load and provide staging and/or containment areas, so that in the event of a fire, it is neither as large or as fast moving as experienced in 1991.