

Investigation of Policies Regarding Fire Hazards in Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Introduction

The large plume of smoke from the Paradise Valley fire in 2002 provided Santa Cruz County residents a dramatic visual reminder that we live in fire country. Through interviews with local fire officials, the Grand Jury determined that ladder fuels, (see finding #4), were a major problem. The Grand Jury learned that there is a conflict between fire officials and environmental officials on how to clear ladder fuels in environmentally sensitive areas.

Scope

The Grand Jury investigated a threat of a large uncontrolled fire similar to the Oakland Hills and Lexington Reservoir Fires in the 1980s and early 90's. The investigation focused on the problem of ladder fuels in environmentally sensitive areas.

Fieldwork

1. Interviewed:
 - Aptos/La Selva Beach Fire Chief
 - Boulder Creek Fire Chief
 - California Department of Forestry Fire Chief and Educational Officer
 - Principal Planner for the Environmental Section of the Santa Cruz County Planning Dept
 - Director of Emergency Preparedness
2. Reviewed County Ordinances on Sensitive Habitat Protection – Chapter 16.32
2. Viewed various videos of Oakland Hills fire and other fires provided by Aptos/La Selva Fire Department
3. Read:
 - Santa Cruz Sentinel- article dated April 17th, 2003 volume 106
 - Scotts Valley Times- article dated May 2003.
 - Living With Fire in Santa Mateo County booklet

Findings

1. Santa Cruz County has not had a major, extended-day fire, since the 1948 Pine Mountain Fire. Fire officials report that the potential for a very large and damaging fire on the scale of the Oakland Hills and Lexington Reservoir fires in Santa Cruz County is high.

Response: Aptos/La Selva Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

While there is the potential for a very large damaging wildfire in this area, the statement that Santa Cruz County has not had a major extended day fire since 1948 is incorrect. Santa Cruz County lands have been involved in several extended day fires since 1948.¹ For example, in 1984 the Rocha Ranch Fire lasted several days and burned 1,240 acres, and in 1980 a multi-day fire in Big Basin State Park destroyed 377 acres. There were also several extended fires in the late 1950's through the 1960's including the 1959 Newell Creek Fire (which burned 1,327 acres), the 1962 Lincoln Fire (which burned 3,236 acres), and the 1964 Crocker Fire (which burned over 1,500 acres). Additionally, numerous extended days fires that originated in Santa Clara County have burned over the county line, destroying hundreds of Santa Cruz County acres and homes. These fires include the 1985 Lexington Fire and the 1961 Austrian Fire.

Response: Aromas Tri-County Fire District PARTIALLY AGREES

There have been other large fires, including but not limited to: Rocha Ranch in 1984; Big Basin State Park, 1980; Newell Creek, 1959; Crocker, 1964. There have been several fires that originated in Santa Clara County and burned into Santa Cruz County, including Lexington, 1985; and Austrian Gulch, 1961.

Response: Ben Lomond Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

While there is the potential for a very large damaging wildfire in this area, the statement that Santa Cruz County has not had a major extended day fire since 1948 is incorrect. Santa Cruz County lands have been involved in several extended day fire since 1948.¹ For example, in 1984 the Rocha Ranch Fire lasted several days and burned 1,240 acres, and in 1980 a multi-day fire in Big Basin State Park destroyed 377 acres. There were also several extended fires in the late 1950's through the 1960's including the 1959 Newell Creek Fire (which burned 1,327 acres), the 1962 Lincoln Fire (which burned 3,236 acres), and the 1964 Crocker fire (which burned over 1,500 acres). Additionally, numerous extended days fires that originated in Santa Clara County have burned over the county line, destroying hundreds of Santa Cruz acres and homes. These fires include the 1985 Lexington Fire and the 1961 Austrian Fire.

Response: Boulder Creek Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

While there is the potential for a very large damaging wildfire in this area, the statement that Santa Cruz County has not had a major extended day fire since 1948 is incorrect. Santa Cruz County lands have been involved in several extended day fires since 1948.¹ In 1984, the Rocha Ranch fire lasted several days and burned 1,240 acres, and in 1980, a

multi-day fire in Big Basin State Park destroyed 377 acres. There were several extended day fires in the 1950's through the 1960's including the 1959 Newell Creek Fire that burned 1,327 acres, and the 1964 Crocker Fire that burned over 1500 acres. In addition, many extended day fires that originated in Santa Clara County have burned over the Santa Cruz County line and destroyed hundreds of Santa Cruz acres and homes. These fires include the 1961 Austrian Fire and the 1985 Lexington Fire.

Response: Branciforte Fire Protection District AGREES

Response: Central Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

While there is the potential for a very large damaging wildfire in this area, the statement that Santa Cruz County has not had a major extended day fire since 1948 is incorrect. Santa Cruz County lands have been involved in several extended day fires since 1948.¹ For example, in 1984 the Rocha Ranch Fire lasted several days and burned 1,240 acres, and in 1980 a multi-day fire in Big Basin State Park destroyed 377 acres. There were also several extended fires in the late 1950's through the 1960's including the 1959 Newell Creek Fire (which burned 1,327 acres), the 1962 Lincoln Fire (which burned 3,236 acres), and the 1964 Crocker Fire (which burned over 1,500 acres). Additionally, numerous extended days fires that originated in Santa Clara County have burned over the county line, destroying hundreds of Santa Cruz County acres and homes. These fires include the 1985 Lexington Fire and the 1961 Austrian Fire.

Response: Felton Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

While there is the potential for a very large damaging wildfire in this area, the statement that Santa Cruz County has not had a major extended day fire since 1948 is incorrect. Santa Cruz County lands have been involved in several extended day fires since 1948.¹ For example, in 1984 the Rocha Ranch Fire lasted several days and burned 1,240 acres, and in 1980 a multi-day fire in Big Basin State Park destroyed 377 acres. There were also several extended fires in the late 1950's through the 1960's including the 1959 Newell Creek Fire (which burned 1,327 acres), the 1962 Lincoln Fire (which burned 3,236 acres), and the 1964 Crocker Fire (which burned over 1,500 acres). Additionally, numerous extended days fires that originated in Santa Clara County have burned over the county line, destroying hundreds of Santa Cruz County acres and homes. These fires include the 1985 Lexington Fire and the 1961 Austrian Fire.

Response: Pajaro Valley Fire District Station PARTIALLY AGREES

While there is the potential for a very large damaging wildfire in this area, the statement that Santa Cruz County has not had a major extended day fire since 1948 is incorrect. Santa Cruz County lands have been involved in several extended day fires since 1948.¹ For example, in 1984 the Rocha Ranch Fire lasted several days and burned 1,240 acres, and in 1980 a multi-day fire in Big Basin State Park destroyed 377 acres. There were also several extended fires in the late 1950's through the 1960's including the 1959 Newell Creek Fire (which burned 1,327 acres), the 1962 Lincoln Hill Fire (which burned 3,236 acres), and the 1964 Crocker Fire (which burned over 1,500 acres). Additionally,

numerous extended days fires that originated in Santa Clara County have burned over the county line, destroying many Santa Cruz County acres and homes. These fires include the 2002 Croy Fire, the 1985 Lexington Fire and the 1961 Austrian Fire.

Response: Santa Cruz County Fire Department PARTIALLY AGREES

While there is the potential for a very large damaging wildfire in this area, the statement that Santa Cruz County has not had a major extended day fire since 1948 is incorrect. Santa Cruz County lands have been involved in several extended day fires since 1948.¹ For example, in 1984 the Rocha Ranch Fire lasted several days and burned 1,240 acres, and in 1980 a multi-day fire in Big Basin State Park destroyed 377 acres. There were also several extended fires in the late 1950's through the 1960's including the 1959 Newell Creek Fire (which burned 1,327 acres), the 1962 Lincoln Hill Fire (which burned 3,236 acres), and the 1964 Crocker Fire (which burned over 1,500 acres). Additionally, numerous extended days fires that originated in Santa Clara County have burned over the county line, destroying many Santa Cruz County acres and homes. These fires include the 2002 Croy Fire, the 1985 Lexington Fire and the 1961 Austrian Fire.

Response: Santa Cruz Fire Department AGREES

The City of Santa Cruz agrees with this finding as it relates to the potential for a very large and damaging fire.

Response: Scotts Valley Fire Protection District AGREES

Response: UC at Santa Cruz Fire Department PARTIALLY AGREES

While there is the potential for a very large damaging wildfire in this area, the statement that Santa Cruz County has not had a major extended day fire since 1948 is incorrect. Santa Cruz County lands have been involved in several extended day fires since 1948.¹ For example, in 1984 the Rocha Ranch Fire lasted several days and burned 1,240 acres, and in 1980 a multi-day fire in Big Basin State Park destroyed 377 acres. There were also several extended fires in the late 1950's through the 1960's including the 1959 Newell Creek Fire (which burned 1,327 acres), the 1962 Lincoln Fire (which burned 3,236 acres), and the 1964 Crocker Fire (which burned over 1,500 acres). Additionally, numerous extended day fires that originated in Santa Clara County have burned over the county line, destroying hundreds of Santa Cruz County acres and homes. These fires include the 1985 Lexington Fire and the 1961 Austrian Fire.

Response: Watsonville Fire Department PARTIALLY AGREES

While there is the potential for a very large damaging wildfire in this area, the statement that Santa Cruz County has not had a major extended day fire since 1948 is incorrect. Santa Cruz County lands have been involved in several extended day fires since 1948. For example, in 1948 the Rocha Ranch Fire lasted several days and burned 1,240 acres, and in 1980 a multi-day fire in Big Basin State Park destroyed 377 acres. There were also several extended fires in the late 1950's through the 1960's including the 1959

Newell Creek Fire (which burned 1,327 acres), the 1962 Lincoln Fire (which burned 3,236 acres), and the 1964 Crocker Fire (which burned over 1,500 acres). Additionally, numerous extended days fires that originated in Santa Clara County have burned over the county line, destroying hundreds of Santa Cruz County acres and homes. These fires include the 1985 Lexington Fire and the 1961 Austrian Fire.

Response: Zayante Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

While there is the potential for a very large damaging wildfire in this area, the statement that Santa Cruz County has not had a major extended day fire since 1948 is incorrect. Santa Cruz County lands have been involved in several extended day fires since 1948.¹ For example, in 1984 the Rocha Ranch Fire lasted several days and burned 1,240 acres, and in 1980 a multi-day fire in Big Basin State Park destroyed 377 acres. There were also several extended fires in the late 1950's through the 1960's including the 1959 Newell Creek Fire (which burned 1,327 acres), the 1962 Lincoln Fire (which burned 3,236 acres), and the 1964 Crocker Fire (which burned over 1,500 acres). Additionally, numerous extended days fires that originated in Santa Clara County have burned over the county line, destroying hundreds of Santa Cruz County acres and homes. These fires include the 1985 Lexington Fire and the 1961 Austrian Fire.

2. Lack of fire has contributed to an increase of ladder fuels.

Response: Aptos/La Selva Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

A lack of fire is only part of the equation leading to the increase in ladder fuels. Due to bug infestation, drought kill, and lack of brush removal or maintenance, ladder fuels have been allowed to increase.

Response: Aromas Tri-County Fire District PARTIALLY AGREES

Lack of brush removal or forest maintenance has also contributed to the increase of ladder fuels.

Response: Ben Lomond Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

A lack of fire is only part of the equation leading to the increase in ladder fuels. Due to bug infestation, drought kill, and lack of brush removal or maintenance, ladder fuels have been allowed to increase.

Response: Boulder Creek Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

Lack on fire is only one part of the eqation leading to increase in ladder fuel. Bug infestation, drought kill and lack of brush removal or maintenance have led to ladder fuel increase.

Response: Branciforte Fire Protection District AGREES

However that is just one element that contributes to the increase in ladder fuels. Just one other example is the large amount of dead trees due to sudden oak death.

Response: Central Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

A lack of fire is only part of the equation leading to the increase in ladder fuels. Due to bug infestation, drought kill, and lack of brush removal or maintenance, ladder fuels have been allowed to increase.

Response: Felton Fire Protection District AGREES

Response: Pajaro Valley Fire District Station PARTIALLY AGREES

When wildland fires do not regularly reduce ground vegetation, this leads to an increase in ladder fuels in fire-dependent ecosystems.² Santa Cruz County's redwood, pine, and fir stands, and its various brush and chaparral areas, are in fire-dependent ecosystems. But a lack of fire is only part of the equation, as failure to otherwise manage the vegetation also contributes to overgrown ladder fuels.

Response: Santa Cruz County Fire Department PARTIALLY AGREES

When wildland fires do not regularly reduce ground vegetation, this leads to an increase in ladder fuels in fire-dependent ecosystems. Santa Cruz County's redwood, pine, and fir stands, and its various brush and chaparral areas, are in fire-dependent ecosystems. But a lack of fire is only part of the equation, as failure to otherwise manage the vegetation also contributes to overgrown ladder fuels.

Response: Santa Cruz Fire Department PARTIALLY AGREES

There are other conditions that tend to create or allow vegetation to remain in proximity to trees. Ladder fuels can also be reduced or eliminated using mechanical means or by hand. The City of Santa Cruz would not necessarily allow naturally occurring fire or managed vegetation burning in areas with significant ladder fuels.

Response: Scotts Valley Fire Protection District AGREES

Response: UC at Santa Cruz Fire Department PARTIALLY AGREES

A lack of fire is only part of the equation leading to the increase in ladder fuels. Due to bug infestation, drought kill, and lack of brush removal or maintenance, ladder fuels have been allowed to increase.

Response: Watsonville Fire Department PARTIALLY AGREES

A lack of fire is only part of the equation leading to the increase in ladder fuels. Due to bug infestation, drought kill, and lack of brush removal or maintenance, ladder fuels have been allowed to increase.

Response: Zayante Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

A lack of fire is only part of the equation leading to the increase in ladder fuels. Due to bug infestation, drought kill, and lack of brush removal or maintenance, ladder fuels have been allowed to increase.

3. Ladder fuels are combustible material, close to the ground such as grass or weeds merging with brush or vines, which climb into the trees creating a ladder for fire. The amount of ladder fuel is one of the factors that helps fires spread.

Response: Aptos/La Selva Fire Protection District AGREES

Response: Aromas Tri-County Fire District AGREES

Response: Ben Lomond Fire Protection District AGREES

Response: Boulder Creek Fire Protection District AGREES

Response: Branciforte Fire Protection District AGREES

Response: Central Fire Protection District AGREES

Response: Felton Fire Protection District AGREES

Response: Pajaro Valley Fire District Station AGREES

Response: Santa Cruz County Fire Department AGREES

Response: Santa Cruz Fire Department AGREES

Response: Scotts Valley Fire Protection District AGREES

Response: UC at Santa Cruz Fire Department AGREES

Response: Watsonville Fire Department AGREES

Response: Zayante Fire Protection District AGREES

4. Ladder fuels are a problem throughout the county.

Response: Aptos/La Selva Fire Protection District AGREES

Response: Aromas Tri-County Fire District AGREES

Response: Ben Lomond Fire Protection District AGREES

Response: Boulder Creek Fire Protection District AGREES

Response: Branciforte Fire Protection District AGREES

Response: Central Fire Protection District AGREES

Response: Felton Fire Protection District AGREES

Response: Pajaro Valley Fire District Station AGREES

Ladder fuels are a problem in the areas that may be classified as fire-dependent ecosystems, as discussed in the response to finding #2, supra.

Response: Santa Cruz County Fire Department AGREES

Ladder fuels are a problem in the areas that may be classified as fire-dependent ecosystems, as discussed in the response to finding #2, above.

Response: Santa Cruz Fire Department AGREES

Response: Scotts Valley Fire Protection District AGREES

Response: UC at Santa Cruz Fire Department AGREES

Response: Watsonville Fire Department AGREES

Response: Zayante Fire Protection District AGREES

5. Vegetation is denser than it was in the 1960s due to increased landscaping and development that encroaches on rural areas.

Response: Aptos/La Selva Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

New development has increased the threat of a fire in the wildland urban interface; however, landscaping per se does not significantly increase the occurrence of a wildfire, when done properly by planting native fire resistive plants, having proper clearances to structures and the landscaping maintained. Proper landscaping can provide protection and clearance for those structures in such a rural setting thus increasing the defensible space. The type of vegetation, plant cover materials, location of plants in relation to structures, and other plantings both native and imported are other factors in influencing defensible space.

Response: Aromas Tri-County Fire District PARTIALLY AGREES

Proper landscaping can provide protection and clearance for those structures in such a rural setting thus increasing the defensible space. Fire suppression efforts themselves have contributed to this problem. As more fires are extinguished at a very small size, the vegetation has grown to the point that fires are becoming more difficult to control. It is only a matter of time when a large damaging fire will occur in Santa Cruz County.

Response: Ben Lomond Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

New development has increased the threat of a fire in the wildland urban interface; however, landscaping per se does not significantly increase the occurrence of a wildfire, when done properly by planting native fire resistive plants, having proper clearances to structures and the landscaping maintained. Proper landscaping can provide protection and clearance for those structures in such rural setting thus increasing the defensible space. The type of vegetation, plant cover materials, location of plants in relation to structures, and other plantings both native and imported are other factors in influencing defensible space.

Response: Boulder Creek Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

While development has increased the threat of fire in the wild land urban interface, landscaping itself does not significantly increase the occurrence of a wildfire if done properly by planting native fire resistive plants, having proper clearances to structures, and the landscaping is maintained. The right landscaping can provide protection and clearance for rural structures. The type of vegetation (both native and imported), plant cover materials and location of plants also play a part in creating defensible space.

Response: Branciforte Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

Landscaping done properly can actually help hinder the spread of fire.

Response: Central Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

New development has increased the threat of a fire in the wildland urban interface; however, landscaping per se does not significantly increase the occurrence of a wildfire, when done properly by planting native fire resistive plants, having proper clearances to structures, and maintaining landscaping. Proper landscaping can provide protection and clearance for those structures in such a rural setting thus increasing the defensible space. The type of vegetation, plant cover materials, location of plants in relation to structures, and other plantings both native and imported are other factors in influencing defensible space.

Response: Felton Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

New development has increased the threat of a fire in the wildland urban interface; however, landscaping per se does not significantly increase the occurrence of a wildfire, when done properly by planting native fire resistive plants, having proper clearances to structures and the landscaping maintained. Proper landscaping can provide protection

and clearance for those structures in such a rural setting thus increasing the defensible space. The type of vegetation, plant cover materials, location of plants in relation to structures, and other plantings both native and imported are other factors in influencing defensible space.

Response: Pajaro Valley Fire District Station PARTIALLY AGREES

Generally, the vegetation in this County is denser than it was in the 1960's. But this is not automatically attributable to either landscaping or development that encroaches on rural areas. Both are addressed in turn below.

While some landscaping may add to the fuel-load and otherwise be more volatile than natural fuels, other landscaping reduces the fuel-load. It can reduce the fuel-load and resulting fire hazard when it enhances the defensible space around structures by replacing dense non-native vegetation with native fire resistive vegetation and by maintaining landscaping as part of a greenbelt.³

Similarly, development can improve the fuel-load because it typically results in clearing or thinning specified areas and because required access routes serve as further clearances and fuel breaks. This is not to say that development in the rural areas has decreased the fire danger. Statistics show that approximately 90% of fires in wildland areas are caused by people.⁴ Accordingly, the influx of people into developing rural areas increases the likelihood that a fire will occur in these areas. That said, the increase in vegetation density is more accurately ascribed to a lack of fire in fire-dependant ecosystems (as discussed above in the response to finding #2) and reductions in timber harvesting (as discussed below in the response to finding #6).

Response: Santa Cruz County Fire Department PARTIALLY AGREES

Generally, the vegetation in this County is denser than it was in the 1960's. But this is not automatically attributable to either landscaping or development that encroaches on rural areas.

While some landscaping may add to the fuel-load and otherwise be more volatile than natural fuels, other landscaping reduces the fuel-load. It can reduce the fuel-load and resulting fire hazard when it enhances the defensible space around structures by replacing dense non-native vegetation with native fire resistive vegetation and by maintaining landscaping as part of a greenbelt.

Similarly, development can improve the fuel-load because it typically results in clearing or thinning specified areas and because required access routes serve as further clearances and fuel breaks. The increase in vegetation density is more accurately ascribed to a lack of fire in fire-dependant ecosystems (as discussed above in the response to finding #2) and reductions in timber harvesting (as discussed below in the response to finding #6).

Response: Santa Cruz Fire Department PARTIALLY AGREES

Typically, native vegetation is denser in areas which have not been exposed to periodic naturally occurring fire episodes. Non-native vegetation tends to be denser than native vegetation, because it tends to flourish in our climate with a characteristic of aggressively displacing native vegetation.

Response: Scotts Valley Fire Protection District AGREES

Response: UC at Santa Cruz Fire Department PARTIALLY AGREES

New development has increased the threat of a fire in the wild land urban interface; however, landscaping per se does not significantly increase the occurrence of a wildfire, when done properly by planting native fire resistive plants, having proper clearances to structures and the landscaping maintained. Proper landscaping can provide protection and clearance for those structures in such a rural setting thus increasing the defensible space. The type of vegetation, plant cover materials, location of plants in relation to structures, and other plantings both native and imported are other factors in influencing defensible space.

Response: Watsonville Fire Department PARTIALLY AGREES

New development has increased the threat of a fire in the wild land urban interface; however, landscaping per se does not significantly increase the occurrence of a wildfire, when done properly by planting native fire resistive plans, having proper clearances to structures and the landscaping maintained. Proper landscaping can provide protection and clearance for those structures in such a rural setting thus increasing the defensible space. The type of vegetation, plant cover materials, location of plants in relation to structures, and other plantings both native and imported are other factors in influencing defensible space.

Response: Zayante Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

New development has increased the threat of a fire in the wild land urban interface; however, landscaping per se does not significantly increase the occurrence of a wildfire, when done properly by planting native fire resistive plans, having proper clearances to structures and the landscaping maintained. Proper landscaping can provide protection and clearance for those structures in such a rural setting thus increasing the defensible space. The type of vegetation, plant cover materials, location of plants in relation to structures, and other plantings both native and imported are other factors in influencing defensible space.

6. Ladder fuels are a particular problem in environmentally sensitive areas, because clear-cutting and controlled burns are generally not allowed in these areas.

Response: Aptos/La Selva Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

The problem with this statement appears to be nomenclature. Clear-cutting is a timber harvesting term and prescribed burns have historically been a part of the County's vegetation management plan (i.e., Pogonip Property, UCSC Property, Wilder Ranch Property and Big Basin State Park).

Response: Aromas Tri-County Fire District PARTIALLY AGREES

Fire departments are not directly involved with clear-cutting, which is a term used in the timber industry. Control burns continue to be just one tool in the tool box for vegetation management for fire departments.

Response: Ben Lomond Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

The problem with this statement appears to be nomenclature. Clear-cutting is a timber harvesting term and prescribed burns have historically been a part of the County's vegetation management plan (i.e., Pogonip Property, UCSC Property, Wilder Ranch Property and Big Basin State Park).

Response: Boulder Creek Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

Clear-cutting is a timber harvesting term and controlled burns have historically been a part of the County's vegetation management plan (such as Big Basin State Park, the Pogonip Property, UCSC Property, and Wilder Ranch Property).

Response: Branciforte Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

Response: Central Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

The problem with this statement appears to be nomenclature. Clear-cutting is a timber harvesting term and prescribed burns have historically been a part of the County's vegetation management plan (i.e., Pogonip Property, UCSC Property, Wilder Ranch Property and Big Basin State Park).

Response: Felton Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

The problem with this statement appears to be nomenclature. Clear-cutting is a timber harvesting term and prescribed burns have historically been a part of the County's vegetation management plan (i.e., Pogonip Property, UCSC Property, Wilder Ranch Property and Big Basin State Park).

Response: Pajaro Valley Fire District Station PARTIALLY AGREES

The first problem with this finding is largely one of nomenclature. Clear-cutting is a term that means completely stripping trees from a portion of land. Obviously, this would decrease the ladder fuels that are stripped along with the trees. Clear-cutting is not permitted anywhere in this County.

Selective harvesting, however, is permitted in certain areas. Selective harvesting thins-out overcrowded stands and thereby serves as an effective method to reduce ladder fuels and other vegetation likely to increase the hazard of a wildland conflagration. But current Santa Cruz County Ordinances prohibit commercial selective tree harvesting on all parcels except those deemed to be within Timber Production Zones (“TPZs”), Parks/Recreation/Open Space lands (located outside the coastal zone), and mining zones.⁵ There is a fire hazard exemption permit available, which allows residents to clear within 150’ of their homes in residential areas that are not within TPZs. Notwithstanding the nomenclature problem, the Grand Jury’s intimated conclusion is accurate, as the selective harvesting areas typically do not overlap with environmentally sensitive areas.

The “controlled burns” reference is also slightly flawed since prescribed burning has been, and continues to be, used to manage vegetation in various areas throughout the County. For example, Santa Cruz County Fire Department, in conjunction with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and other local fire agencies, has been involved with prescribed burning at Pogonip, UCSC, Wilder Ranch and Big Basin State Park.⁶ In fact, a prescribed burn is currently being planned for next month. As for the conclusion that burning is not generally allowed in environmentally sensitive areas, that is too sweeping. Much of the prescribed burning is specifically conducted within environmentally sensitive areas to restore and enhance the native growth, while ridding the lands of harmful non-native species. Accordingly, the PVFD believes that prescribed burning can serve as a convergent solution that addresses both environmental and fire safety concerns.

Response: Santa Cruz County Fire Department PARTIALLY AGREES

The County partially agrees, with the following clarifications. Clear-cutting means completely stripping trees from a portion of land, which does decrease the ladder fuels that are stripped along with the trees. Clear-cutting is not permitted anywhere in this County.

Selective harvesting, however, is permitted in certain areas. Selective harvesting thins overcrowded stands and thereby serves as an effective method to reduce ladder fuels and other vegetation likely to increase the hazard of a wildland conflagration.

Prescribed burning has been, and continues to be, used to manage vegetation in various areas throughout the County. Much of the prescribed burning is specifically conducted within environmentally sensitive areas to restore and enhance the native growth, while ridding the lands of harmful non-native species. Prescribed burning can address both environmental and fire safety concerns.

Response: Santa Cruz Fire Department DISAGREES

Ladder fuels are a concern in the City. However, they are not necessarily a problem due to the lack of clear cutting and controlled burns. Controlled burns are not used in the City of Santa Cruz’ urban setting. The activity termed as clear cutting is a method used by large scale timber harvesting. The City does not

conduct clear cutting. The City of Santa Cruz has successfully reduced fuel loads at one of its greenbelt properties (DeLaveaga Park) by selective cutting of non-native eucalyptus trees and the replanting of native plants. The City plans on expanding this program to other greenbelt properties, especially in areas adjacent to development.

Response: Scotts Valley Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

The Scotts Valley Fire Protection District agrees that ladder fuels are a problem in environmentally sensitive areas, however we do not agree that this is because clear-cutting and controlled burns are not allowed in these areas. Clear cutting is not a practical method of controlling ladder fuels and would not be recommended in any area except for the formation of a firebreak. Controlled burns are not practical in populated areas due to the risk of losing containment and control of a burn. Because of the high density of vegetation in many areas in California, controlled burns have become problematic under even the best circumstances, and there are several recorded incidents of controlled burns that got away. For most of Santa Cruz County, it is already too late to use controlled burns in any area.

Response: UC at Santa Cruz Fire Department PARTIALLY AGREES

The problem with this statement appears to be nomenclature. Clear-cutting is a timber harvesting term and prescribed burns have historically been a part of the County's vegetation management plan (i.e. Pogonip Property, UCSC Property, Wilder Ranch Property and Big Basin State Park).

Response: Watsonville Fire Department PARTIALLY AGREES

The problem with this statement appears to be nomenclature. Clear-cutting is a timber harvesting term and prescribed burns have historically been a part of the County's vegetation management plan (i.e. Pogonip Property, UCSC Property, Wilder Ranch Property and Big Basin State Park).

Response: Zayante Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

The problem with this statement appears to be nomenclature. Clear-cutting is a timber harvesting term and prescribed burns have historically been a part of the County's vegetation management plan (i.e. Pogonip Property, UCSC Property, Wilder Ranch Property and Big Basin State Park).

7. In Santa Cruz County there are numerous environmentally sensitive areas, which are habitats for endangered species (e.g. the Santa Cruz Tar Plant and the Mount Hermon June Beetle). Many of these habitats are located in high-risk fire areas.

Response: Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Cruz AGREES

8. Currently, county fire officials and the US Fish and Wildlife Service are developing a Habitat Conservation Project (HCP) plan that identifies where environmentally sensitive and high fire risk areas overlap. The HCP describes how to deal with brush in environmentally sensitive areas.

Response: Aptos/La Selva Fire Protection District DISAGREES

The County fire officials and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services are not developing a Habitat Conservation Project (HCP) plan. The California Department of Forestry, the Santa Cruz County Planning Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Game and California Native Plant Society are producing two GIS data layer maps to assist with locating those areas that are either environmentally sensitive or susceptible to a high-risk fire, or in some cases both. The first map will show where the urban wildland interface is and the second will show the known sensitive habitat areas of the County.

The HCP does not describe how to deal with brush in environmentally sensitive areas because it does not exist.

Response: Aromas Tri-County Fire District

Aromas was unaware that an HCP plan was being developed.

Response: Ben Lomond Fire Protection District DISAGREES

The County fire officials and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services are not developing a Habitat Conservation Project (HCP) plan. The California Department of Forestry, the Santa Cruz County Planning Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Game and California Native Plant Society are producing two GIS data layer maps to assist with locating those areas that are either environmentally sensitive or susceptible to a high-risk fire, or in some cases both. The first map will show where the urban wildland interface is and the second will show the known sensitive habitat areas of the County.

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Response: Boulder Creek Fire Protection District DISAGREES

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habitat areas of the County. The HCP does not describe how to deal with brush in environmentally sensitive areas because it does not exist.

Response: Branciforte Fire Protection District DISAGREES

This statement is not correct.

Response: Central Fire Protection District DISAGREES

The County fire officials and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services are not developing a Habitat Conservation Project (HCP) plan. The California Department of Forestry, the Santa Cruz County Planning Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Game, and California Native Plant Society are producing two GIS data layer maps to assist with locating those areas that are either environmentally sensitive or susceptible to a high-risk fire, or in some cases both. The first map will show where the urban wildland interface is and the second will show the known sensitive habitat areas of the County.

The HCP does not describe how to deal with brush in environmentally sensitive areas because it does not exist.

Response: Felton Fire Protection District DISAGREES

The County fire officials and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services are not developing a Habitat Conservation Project (HCP) plan. The California Department of Forestry, the Santa Cruz County Planning Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Game and California Native Plant Society are producing two GIS data layer maps to assist with locating those areas that are either environmentally sensitive or susceptible to a high-risk fire, or in some cases both. The first map will show where the urban wildland interface is and the second will show the known sensitive habitat areas of the County.

The HCP does not describe how to deal with brush in environmentally sensitive areas because it does not exist.

Response: Pajaro Valley Fire District Station PARTIALLY AGREES

County fire officials and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services are not developing a Habitat Conservation Project (HCP) plan. The Grand Jury is likely referring to a grant funded effort to produce two G.I.S. data layers for maps to assist with locating those areas in the County that are either environmentally sensitive or susceptible to a high-risk fire, or in some cases both.⁷ The first map will show where the urban-wildland interface is and the second will show the known sensitive habitat areas in the County. This is the first phase of an effort to be coordinated by the County Office of Emergency Services to develop an HCP that addresses fire protection efforts in sensitive areas. No local fire agencies are involved in this effort. The agencies that are involved include: the California Department of Forestry, the Santa Cruz County Planning Department, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Service, the California Department of Fish and Game, and the California Native Plant Society. Local fire agencies may be consulted at a later date if the grant funds are renewed for future phases.

Response: Santa Cruz Fire Department

This finding does not apply to the City of Santa Cruz. However, the City of Santa Cruz is currently developing its own HCP.

Response: Scotts Valley Fire Protection District DISAGREES

The Scotts Valley Fire Protection District does not agree that county fire officials are participating in this effort. The Habitat Conservation Plan is a responsibility of, and in the area of expertise of, the county and federal environmental agencies and not the fire services. We are also of the belief that any guidelines for dealing with brush in environmentally sensitive areas that are produced in the HCP will probably not incorporate fire safety concerns. This is also a concern in that it will only complicate the process of establishing fire safety in residential areas.

Response: UC at Santa Cruz Fire Department DISAGREES

The County fire officials and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services are not developing a Habitat Conservation Project (HCP) plan.

The California Department of Forestry, the Santa Cruz County Planning Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Game and California Native Plant Society are producing two GIS data layer maps to assist with locating those areas that are either environmentally sensitive or susceptible to a high-risk fire, or in some cases both. The first map will show where the urban wildland interface is and the second will show the known sensitive habitat areas of the County.

The HCP does not describe how to deal with brush in environmentally sensitive areas because it does not exist.

Response: Watsonville Fire Department DISAGREES

The County fire officials and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Services are not developing a Habitat Conservation Project (HCP) plan. The California Department of Forestry, the Santa Cruz County Planning Department, U.S. and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Game and California Native Plant Society are producing two GIS data layer maps to assist with locating those areas that are either environmentally sensitive or susceptible to a high-risk fire, or in some cases both. The first map will show where the urban wildland interface is and the second will show the known sensitive habitat areas of the County. The HCP described how to deal with brush in environmentally sensitive areas because it does not exist.

Response: Zayante Fire Protection District DISAGREES

The County fire officials and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Services are not developing a Habitat Conservation Project (HCP) plan. The California Department of Forestry, the Santa Cruz County Planning Department, U.S. and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Game and California Native Plant Society are producing two GIS data layer maps to assist with locating those areas that are either environmentally sensitive or susceptible to a high-risk fire, or in some cases both. The first map will show where the urban wildland interface is and the second will show the known sensitive habitat areas of the County.

The HCP described how to deal with brush in environmentally sensitive areas because it does not exist.

Response: Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Cruz AGREES

The County agrees with this finding, with the following clarifications. County fire officials and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services are not developing a Habitat Conservation Project (HCP) plan. The Grand Jury may be referring to a grant funded effort to produce two G.I.S. data layers for maps to assist with locating those areas in the County that are either environmentally sensitive or susceptible to a high-risk fire, or in some cases both. The first map will show where the urban-wildland interface is, and the second will show the known sensitive habitat areas in the County. This is the first phase of an effort to be coordinated by the County Office of Emergency Services to develop an HCP that addresses fire protection efforts in sensitive areas. No local fire agencies are involved in this effort. The agencies that are involved include: the California Department of Forestry, the Santa Cruz County Planning Department, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the California Department of Fish and Game, and the California Native Plant Society. Local fire agencies may be consulted at a later date if the grant funds are renewed for future phases.

9. Local fire departments can issue citations to homeowners for not clearing brush, a violation of fire regulations.

Response: Aptos/La Selva Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

The fire service can issue citations for not clearing brush and maintaining the required clearances; however, many of the departments do not currently have the resources to cite homeowners for not clearing brush.

Response: Aromas Tri-County Fire District PARTIALLY AGREES

Unfortunately, not all departments (Aroma included) have the resources to make inspections in 100% of the fire district.

Response: Ben Lomond Fire Protection District DISAGREES

Ben Lomond Fire Protection District does not currently have the resources to cite homeowners for not clearing brush.

Response: Boulder Creek Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

Fire departments can issue citations for not clearing brush and maintaining the required clearances; but many of the departments do not have the resources to cite homeowners for not clearing brush.

Response: Branciforte Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

The departments have the authority but a small department like Branciforte does not have resources to do so.

Response: Central Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

The fire service can issue citations for not clearing brush and maintaining the required clearances; however, many of the departments do not currently have the resources to cite homeowners for not clearing brush.

Response: Felton Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

The fire service can issue citations for not clearing brush and maintaining the required clearances; however, many of the departments do not currently have the resources to cite homeowners for not clearing brush.

Response: Pajaro Valley Fire District Station PARTIALLY AGREES

The fire service can issue citations to homeowners for their failure to clear hazardous vegetation. Many of the departments, however, do not currently have the resources to cite homeowners for not clearing brush. The Pajaro Valley Fire District has access to a full-time peace officer who works for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. But this peace officer is currently the only person within these agencies' jurisdictions that has the ability to issue citations for vegetation clearance violations. And the peace officer presently gets involved only when the owner has failed to comply with three warnings issued by engine company personnel.⁸ To enhance present enforcement capabilities, the Pajaro Valley Fire District is currently working on getting more staff qualified to issue citations for fire code and ordinance violations.

Response: Santa Cruz County Fire Department AGREES

The County agrees with this finding, with the following amplification. The fire service can issue citations to homeowners for their failure to clear hazardous vegetation. Many of the departments, however, do not currently have the resources to cite homeowners for not clearing brush. The Santa Cruz County Fire Department has access to a full-time peace officer who works for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection,

but this is the only person within these agencies' jurisdictions that has the ability to issue citations for vegetation clearance violations. The peace officer currently gets involved only when an owner has failed to comply with three warnings issued by engine company personnel. To enhance present enforcement capabilities, the Santa Cruz County Fire Department is currently working on getting more staff qualified to issue citations for fire code and ordinance violations.

Response: Santa Cruz Fire Department AGREES

The City of Santa Cruz agrees with this finding as it relates to the City.

Response: Scotts Valley Fire Protection District AGREES

Response: UC at Santa Cruz Fire Department PARTIALLY AGREES

The fire service can issue citations for not clearing brush and maintaining the required clearances; however, many of the departments do not currently have the resources to cite homeowners for not clearing brush. At UCSC we emphasize public education and awareness and do not cite homeowners as a matter of enforcement.

Response: Watsonville Fire Department PARTIALLY AGREES

The fire service can issue citations for not clearing brush and maintaining the required clearances; however, many of the departments do not currently have the resources to cite homeowners for not clearing brush.

Response: Zayante Fire Protection District PARTIALLY AGREES

The fire service can issue citations for not clearing brush and maintaining the required clearances; however, many of the departments including the Zayante Fire Protection District do not currently have the resources or process to cite homeowners for not clearing brush.

10. Fines for violating fire regulations for not clearing brush range from \$100 to \$250. Fire officials report such low fines lead to a lack of compliance.

Response: Aptos/La Selva Fire Protection District DISAGREES

This statement is misleading and not the crux of the problem. The fines associated with the Fire Code as adopted within Santa Cruz County range from \$170.00 to \$1,700.00. Violations of the Health & Safety Code typically are \$1,000 and/or six (6) months in the county jail. Violations of the Public Resources Code can range from \$1000.00 and or six (6) months in the county jail to \$10,000 for a willful violation.

Response: Aromas Tri-County Fire District DISAGREES

The fines associated with the fire code, adopted within Santa Cruz County range from \$170 to \$1,700. Public Resources Code violations can range from \$1000 to \$10,000 for willful violations.

Response: Ben Lomond Fire Protection District DISAGREES

This statement is misleading and not the crux of the problem. The fines associated with the Fire Code as adopted within Santa Cruz County range from \$170 to \$1,700. Violations of the Health & Safety Code typically are \$1,000 and/or six (6) months in the county jail. Violations of the Public Resources Code can range from \$1000 or six months in the county jail to \$10,000 for a willful violation.

Response: Boulder Creek Fire Protection District DISAGREES

This statement is misleading and not the crux of the problem. The fines associated with the Fire Code as adopted within Santa Cruz County range from \$170 to \$1,700. Violations of the Health & Safety Code typically are \$1,000 and/or six months in the county jail. Violations of the Public Resources Code can range from \$1000 or six months in the county jail to \$10,000 for a willful violation.

Response: Branciforte Fire Protection District DISAGREES

Education and cooperation works much better than fines. Additionally the money from the fines does not go back to the district to help offset the cost to issue them.

Response: Central Fire Protection District DISAGREES

This statement is misleading and not the crux of the problem. The fines associated with the Fire Code as adopted within Santa Cruz County range from \$170.00 to \$1,700.00. Violations of the Health & Safety Code typically are \$1,000 and/or six (6) months in the county jail. Violations of the Public Resources Code can range from \$1000.00 and or six (6) months in the county jail to \$10,000 for a willful violation.

Response: Felton Fire Protection District DISAGREES

This statement is misleading and not the crux of the problem. The fines associated with the Fire Code as adopted within Santa Cruz County range from \$170.00 to \$1,700.00. Violations of the Health & Safety Code typically are \$1,000 and/or six (6) months in the county jail. Violations of the Public Resources Code can range from \$1000.00 and or six (6) months in the county jail to \$10,000 for a willful violation

Response: Pajaro Valley Fire District Station DISAGREES

This statement is misleading and not the crux of the problem. The Public Resources Code imposes fines for failure to comply with clearance requirements as follows: \$100 to \$500 for the first offense; \$250 to \$500 for the second offense, and \$500 or the cost of forced abatement for a third offense.⁹ In addition, the Santa Cruz County Code provides

penalties in accordance with the County bail schedule, ranging from \$170 to \$1,700.¹⁰ The County Code also states that each day may constitute a separate offense and that a fine may be treble the cost of forced abatement.¹¹ Finally, the Health and Safety Code allows fines of up to \$1,000 for a willful violation.

Response: Santa Cruz County Fire Department DISAGREES

The Public Resources Code imposes fines for failure to comply with clearance requirements as follows: \$100 to \$500 for the first offense; \$250 to \$500 for the second offense, and \$500 or the cost of forced abatement for a third offense. In addition, the Santa Cruz County Code provides penalties in accordance with the County bail schedule, ranging from \$170 to \$1,700. The County Code also states that each day may constitute a separate offense and that a fine may be treble the cost of forced abatement. Finally, the Health and Safety Code allows fines of up to \$1,000 for a willful violation.

Response: Santa Cruz Fire Department DISAGREES

The amount of a fine alone does not encourage compliance. A property owner's refusal to follow corrective actions issued by the court, or the court's failure to issue such actions, are also significant reasons why there is a lack of compliance.

Response: Scotts Valley Fire Protection District DISAGREES

The Scotts Valley Fire Protection District does not support the conclusion that the low fines lead to a lack of compliance. Generally homeowners want to comply with fire safe practices. For the occasional situation where there is a lack of compliance, the fire services also have the ability to contract for the work to be done and have a lien placed on the property to recover the cost. This is more effective than a fine in that it results in getting the work accomplished.

Response: UC at Santa Cruz Fire Department DISAGREES

This statement is misleading and not the crux of the problem. The fines associated with the Fire Code as adopted within Santa Cruz County range from \$170.00 to \$1,700.00. Violations of the Health & Safety Code typically are/or six (6) months in the county jail. Violations of the Public Resources Code can range from \$1,000.00 and or six (6) months in the county jail to \$10,000.00 for a willful violation.

Response: Watsonville Fire Department DISAGREES

This statement is misleading and not the crux of the problem. The fines associated with the Fire Code as adopted within Santa Cruz County range from \$170.00 to \$1,700.00. Violations of the Health & Safety Code typically are/or six (6) months in the county jail. Violations of the Public Resources Code can range from \$1,000.00 and or six (6) months in the county jail to \$10,000.00 for a willful violation.

Response: Zayante Fire Protection District DISAGREES

This statement is misleading and not the crux of the problem. The fines associated with the Fire Code as adopted within Santa Cruz County range from \$170.00 to \$1,700.00. Violations of the Health & Safety Code typically are/or six (6) months in the county jail. Violations of the Public Resources Code can range from \$1,000.00 and or six (6) months in the county jail to \$10,000.00 for a willful violation.

11. Conversely, the County Planning Department has the ability to red tag a homeowner for clearing brush in an environmentally sensitive area.

Response: Santa Cruz County Planning Department AGREES

12. In the past, Santa Cruz County had a fire safety committee that included fire officials, environmental groups, and homeowners whose purpose was to have a community fire safety educational program. Internal conflicts and ineffectiveness caused the group to disband.

Response: Aptos/La Selva Fire Protection District AGREES

The proper title of the committee is the Fire Safe Council. The Fire Safe Council was established per the recommendation of the California Fire Plan. The group did disband, but prior to disbanding, it was instrumental in obtaining funding for a large wood chipper, education materials, and support on some fuel modification projects within the County.

Response: Aromas Tri-County Fire District PARTIALLY AGREES

The correct term for the committee is a Fire Safe Council, which should be comprised of fire officials, environmental groups, insurance industry members, elected government officials, representatives of utility companies, home owners, and anyone interested in reducing the overall costs and losses from wildfire in California.

Response: Ben Lomond Fire Protection District AGREES

The proper title of the committee is the Fire Safe Council. The Fire Safe Council was established per the recommendation of the California Fire Plan. The group did disband, but prior to disbanding, it was instrumental in obtaining funding for a large wood chipper, education materials, and support on some fuel modification projects within the County.

Response: Boulder Creek Fire Protection District AGREES

The proper title of the committee is the Fire Safe Council. The Fire Safe Council was established per the recommendation of the California Fire Plan. The group did disband, but prior to disbanding, it was instrumental in obtaining funding for a large wood

chipper, education materials, and support on some fuel modification projects within the County.

Response: Branciforte Fire Protection District AGREES

Response: Central Fire Protection District AGREES

The proper title of the committee is the Fire Safe Council. The Fire Safe Council was established per the recommendation of the California Fire Plan. The group did disband, but prior to disbanding, it was instrumental in obtaining funding for a large wood chipper, education materials, and support on some fuel modification projects within the County.

Response: Felton Fire Protection District AGREES

The proper title of the committee is the Fire Safe Council. The Fire Safe Council was established per the recommendation of the California Fire Plan. The group did disband, but prior to disbanding, it was instrumental in obtaining funding for a large wood chipper, education materials, and support on some fuel modification projects within the County.

Response: Pajaro Valley Fire District Station PARTIALLY AGREES

Santa Cruz County formed a fire safety committee pursuant to a recommendation set forth in the California Fire Plan. The committee, the Santa Cruz County Fire Safe Council, did disband due to internal conflicts. The only portion of this finding we disagree with is the inference that the group was wholly ineffective, as prior to disbanding it was instrumental in obtaining funding for a large wood chipper, education materials, and support on some fuel modification projects within the County.

Response: Santa Cruz Fire Department AGREES

Response: Scotts Valley Fire Protection District AGREES

Response: UC at Santa Cruz Fire Department AGREES

The proper title of the committee is the Fire Safe Council. The Fire Safe Council was established per the recommendation of the California Fire Plan. The group did disband, but prior to disbanding, it was instrumental in obtaining funding for a large wood chipper, education materials, and support on some fuel modification projects within the County.

Response: Watsonville Fire Department AGREES

The proper title of the committee is the Fire Safe Council. The Fire Safe Council was established per the recommendation of the California Fire Plan. The group did disband, but prior to disbanding, it was instrumental in obtaining funding for a large wood

chipper, education materials, and support on some fuel modification projects within the County.

Response: Zayante Fire Protection District AGREES

The proper title of the committee is the Fire Safe Council. The Fire Safe Council was established per the recommendation of the California Fire Plan. The group did disband, but prior to disbanding, it was instrumental in obtaining funding for a large wood chipper, education materials, and support on some fuel modification projects within the County.

Response: Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Cruz AGREES

The County agrees with this finding with the note that the Fire Safety Council was instrumental in obtaining funding for a large wood chipper, education materials, and support on some fuel modification projects within the County.

13. San Mateo County has created a fire safety committee organized by the fire chief's association. This fire safety program is considered by fire experts to be very successful.

Response: Aptos/La Selva Fire Protection District AGREES

The above-referenced committee was what the Santa Cruz County Fire Safe Council was patterned after.

Response: Aromas Tri-County Fire District AGREES

Response: Ben Lomond Fire Protection District AGREES

The above-referenced committee was what the Santa Cruz County Fire Safe Council was patterned after.

Response: Boulder Creek Fire Protection District AGREES

The above-referenced committee was what the Santa Cruz County Fire Safe Council was patterned after.

Response: Branciforte Fire Protection District AGREES

Response: Central Fire Protection District AGREES

The above-referenced committee was what the Santa Cruz County Fire Safe Council was patterned after.

Response: Felton Fire Protection District AGREES

The above-referenced committee was what the Santa Cruz County Fire Safe Council was patterned after.

Response: Pajaro Valley Fire District Station AGREES

(It should be noted, however, that this was the model for the Santa Cruz County Fire Safe Council, which disbanded as discussed in the responses to finding #12 and recommendation # 4.)

Response: Santa Cruz Fire Department AGREES

Response: Scotts Valley Fire Protection District AGREES

Response: UC at Santa Cruz Fire Department AGREES

The above-referenced committee was what the Santa Cruz County Fire Safe Council was patterned after.

Response: Watsonville Fire Department AGREES

The above-referenced committee was what the Santa Cruz County Fire Safe Council was patterned after.

Response: Zayante Fire Protection District AGREES

The above-referenced committee was what the Santa Cruz County Fire Safe Council was patterned after.

Response: Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Cruz AGREES

The County agrees with this finding, noting, however, that this was the model for the Santa Cruz County Fire Safe Council, which disbanded as discussed in the responses to finding #12 and recommendation # 4.

Conclusions

1. A major fire in Santa Cruz County is a probable occurrence.
2. The completion of the Habitat Conservation Project is needed to establish fire safety guidelines and procedures for environmentally sensitive areas.
3. Because of an inherent difference in concerns between fire safety procedures and environmental regulations, homeowners receive conflicting brush clearance instructions.
4. The current fines for violating fire regulations are too low to ensure compliance.

5. A fire safety committee is needed. The fire safety committee should be modeled after the San Mateo County Fire Safety Committee.

Recommendations

1. The Santa Cruz County Fire Districts and the Office of Emergency Preparedness should complete the Habitat Conservation Project.

Response: Aptos/La Selva Fire Protection District

This recommendation will not be implemented because the requirement for a Habitat Conservation Plan to allow for fire-safe vegetation management for existing residences is unreasonable. At the time of construction of these homes, the fire protection standards were required to be maintained as a condition of development, and those conditions are still applicable. Recently developed and more restrictive environmental standards are driving the increased restrictions on private property. As these restrictions are put in place, the expectation is that fire protection clearances will somehow be changed in light of findings in a Habitat Conservation Plan. Fundamentally, the need for clearance of flammable vegetation around structures has not changed for many years and is not expected to change in the future.

The existence of structures and roads in areas of critical fire hazard suggests that the impact has already occurred. Requiring a Habitat Conservation Plan will not change the need for the removal of flammable vegetation around homes and along roadsides if these are to be safe.

Furthermore, requiring that a Habitat Conservation Plan be completed by the County's fire districts would cause an expenditure of public funds to produce a plan that will not have a material effect on the requirements for flammable vegetation management. The time and money expended on such an analysis will simply divert resources from what should be the true work effort reducing the potential of life-threatening conflagration in the wildland/urban interface areas of the county.

If a plan is to be completed, it should be completed by those agencies with enforcement authority for the environmental regulations, much like the fire protection agencies work with property owners to develop fire safety vegetation management plans.

Response: Aromas Tri-County Fire District DISAGREES

If a plan is to be completed, it should be completed by those agencies with enforcement authority for the environmental regulations, much like the fire protection agencies work with property owners to develop fire safety vegetation management plans.

Response: Ben Lomond Fire Protection District

This recommendation will not be implemented because the requirement for a Habitat Conservation Plan to allow for fire-safe vegetation management for existing residences is

unreasonable. At the time of construction of these homes, the fire protection standards were required to be maintained as a condition of development, and those conditions are still applicable. Recently developed and more restrictive environmental standards are driving the increased restrictions on private property. As these restrictions are put in place, the expectation is that fire protection clearances will somehow be changed in light of findings in a Habitat Conservation Plan. Fundamentally, the need for clearance of flammable vegetation around structures has not changed for many years and is not expected to change in the future.

The existence of structures and roads in areas of critical fire hazard suggests that the impact has already occurred. Requiring a Habitat Conservation Plan will not change the need for the removal of flammable vegetation around homes and along roadsides if these are to be safe.

Furthermore, requiring that a Habitat Conservation Plan be completed by the County's fire district would cause an expenditure of public funds to produce a plan that will not have a material effect on the requirements for flammable vegetation management. The time and money expended on such an analysis will simply divert resources from what should be the true work effort reducing the potential of life-threatening conflagration in the wildland/urban interface areas of the county.

If a plan is to be completed, it should be completed by those agencies with enforcement authority for the environmental regulations, much like the fire protection agencies work with property owners to develop fire safety vegetation management plans.

Response: Boulder Creek Fire Protection District

This recommendation will not be implemented because the requirement for a Habitat Conservation Plan to allow for fire-safe vegetation management for existing residences is unreasonable. At the time of construction of these homes, the fire protection standards were required to be maintained as a condition of development, and those conditions are still applicable. Recently developed and more restrictive environmental standards are driving the increased restrictions on private property. As these restrictions are put in place, the expectation is that fire protection clearances will somehow be changed in light of findings in a Habitat Conservation Plan. Fundamentally, the need for clearance of flammable vegetation around structures has not changed for many years and is not expected to change in the future.

The existence of structures and roads in areas of critical fire hazard suggests that the impact has already occurred. Requiring a Habitat Conservation Plan will not change the need for the removal of flammable vegetation around homes and along roadsides if these are to be safe.

Also, requiring that a Habitat Conservation Plan be completed by the County's fire districts would cause an expenditure of public funds to produce a plan that will not have a material effect on the requirements for flammable vegetation management. The time and money expended on such an analysis will simply divert resources from what should

be the true work effort reducing the potential of life-threatening conflagration in the wild land/urban interface areas of the county.

If a plan is to be completed, it should be completed by those agencies with enforcement authority for the environmental regulations, much like the fire protection agencies work with property owners to develop fire safety vegetation management plans.

Response: Branciforte Fire Protection District

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is unreasonable.

If a plan is to be completed, it should be completed by those agencies with enforcement authority for the environmental regulations, much like the fire protection agencies work with property owners to develop fire safety vegetation management plans.

Response: Central Fire Protection District

This recommendation will not be implemented because the requirement for a Habitat Conservation Plan to allow for fire-safe vegetation management for existing residences is unreasonable. At the time of construction of these homes, the fire protection standards were required to be maintained as a condition of development, and those conditions are still applicable. Recently developed and more restrictive environmental standards are driving the increased restrictions on private property. As these restrictions are put in place, the expectation is that fire protection clearances will somehow be changed in light of findings in a Habitat Conservation Plan. Fundamentally, the need for clearance of flammable vegetation around structures has not changed for many years and is not expected to change in the future.

The existence of structures and roads in areas of critical fire hazard suggests that the impact has already occurred. Requiring a Habitat Conservation Plan will not change the need for the removal of flammable vegetation around homes and along roadsides if these are to be safe.

Furthermore, requiring that a Habitat Conservation Plan be completed by the County's fire districts would cause an expenditure of public funds to produce a plan that will not have a material effect on the requirements for flammable vegetation management. The time and money expended on such an analysis will simply divert resources from what should be the true work effort reducing the potential of life-threatening conflagration in the wildland/urban interface areas of the county.

If a plan is to be completed, it should be completed by those agencies with enforcement authority for the environmental regulations, much like the fire protection agencies work with property owners to develop fire safety vegetation management plans.

Response: Felton Fire Protection District

This recommendation will not be implemented because the requirement for a Habitat Conservation Plan to allow for fire-safe vegetation management for existing residences is unreasonable. At the time of construction of these homes, the fire protection standards were required to be maintained as a condition of development, and those conditions are still applicable. Recently developed and more restrictive environmental standards are driving the increased restrictions on private property. As these restrictions are put in place, the expectation is that fire protection clearances will somehow be changed in light of findings in a Habitat Conservation Plan. Fundamentally, the need for clearance of flammable vegetation around structures has not changed for many years and is not expected to change in the future.

The existence of structures and roads in areas of critical fire hazard suggests that the impact has already occurred. Requiring a Habitat Conservation Plan will not change the need for the removal of flammable vegetation around homes and along roadsides if these are to be safe.

Furthermore, requiring that the County's fire districts complete a Habitat Conservation Plan would cause an expenditure of public funds to produce a plan that will not have a material effect on the requirements for flammable vegetation management. The time and money expended on such an analysis will simply divert resources from what should be the true work effort reducing the potential of life-threatening conflagration in the wildland/urban interface areas of the county.

If a plan is to be completed, it should be completed by those agencies with enforcement authority for the environmental regulations, much like the fire protection agencies work with property owners to develop fire safety vegetation management plans.

Response: Pajaro Valley Fire District Station

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is unreasonable. The propounded purpose of the HCP is to identify and reconcile potentially incompatible environmental and fire safety clearance regulations. While the PVFD supports protecting the environment in Santa Cruz County, it does not have any interest in compromising the current fire safety laws. As such, there is an inherent conflict of interest if PVFD participates in preparing a countywide plan that proposes lessened defensible space requirements due to environmental concerns.¹² While the conflict makes PVFD a stakeholder in the process, and to that extent PVFD would like to be consulted, it would be wholly inappropriate and unreasonable for PVFD to be a party to creating a plan that may undermine its ability to enforce currently mandated fire safety laws.

Response: Santa Cruz Fire Department

This recommendation will not be implemented because the City is not involved in an HCP project with the County. As noted above, the City is developing its own HCP. Moreover, the City of Santa Cruz Fire Department, Planning Department, and Resource Ecologist are already conducting a coordinated review of areas within the City where high fire hazard and environmental issues coincide. The City's General Plan update process will also involve a review of these aspects. Two examples of current projects on City property

which use this approach are the DeLaveaga Park demonstration project and a fuel modification and vegetation reduction plan for Meder Canyon.

Response: Scotts Valley Fire Protection District

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is unreasonable.

In the spirit of cooperation with other government agencies, the Scotts Valley Fire Protection District has already participated in discussions regarding Habitat Conservation Plan preparation. However we have not taken an active role since that is not our area of primary responsibility or expertise. If a plan is to be completed, it should be completed by the agencies with enforcement authority for the environmental regulations, much like the fire protection agencies work with property owners to develop fire safety vegetation management plans.

Fundamentally, the need for clearance of flammable vegetation around structures has not changed for many years and is not expected to change in the future. The requirement for a Habitat Conservation Plan to allow for fire-safe vegetation management for existing residences is, in itself, unreasonable. At the time of construction of these homes, the fire protection standards were required to be maintained as a condition of development, and those conditions are still applicable. Recently developed and more restrictive environmental standards are driving the increased restrictions on private property. As these restrictions are put in place, the expectation is that fire protection clearances will somehow be changed in light of findings in a Habitat Conservation Plan.

Although the Scotts Valley Fire Protection District does not wish to create additional negative impact on the environment, the existence of structures and roads in areas of critical fire hazard suggests that the impact has already occurred. Requiring a Habitat Conservation Plan will not change the need for the removal of flammable vegetation around homes and along roadsides if these are to be safe.

Furthermore, requiring that a Habitat Conservation Plan be completed by the county's fire districts would cause an expenditure of public funds to produce a plan that will not have a material effect on the requirements for flammable vegetation management. The time and money expended on such an analysis will simply divert resources from what should be the true work effort: reducing the potential of life-threatening conflagration in the wildland/urban interface areas of the county.

Response: UC at Santa Cruz Fire Department

This recommendation will not be implemented because the requirement for a Habitat Conservation Plan to allow for fire-safe vegetation management for existing residences is unreasonable. At the time of construction of these homes, the fire protection standards were required to be maintained as a condition of development, and those conditions are still applicable. Recently developed and more restrictive environmental standards are driving the increased restrictions on private property. As these restrictions are put in place, the expectation is that fire protection clearances will somehow be changed in light of findings in a Habitat Conservation Plan. Fundamentally, the need for clearance of flammable vegetation around structures has not changed for many years and is not expected to change in the future.

The existence of structures and roads in areas of critical fire hazard suggests that the impact has already occurred. Requiring a Habitat Conservation Plan will not change the need for the removal of flammable vegetation around homes and along roadsides if these are to be safe.

Furthermore, requiring that a Habitat Conservation Plan be completed by the County's fire districts would cause an expenditure of public funds to produce a plan that will not have a material effect on the requirements for flammable vegetation management. The time and money expended on such an analysis will simply divert resources from what should be the true work effort reducing the potential of life-threatening conflagration in the wildland/urban interface areas of the county.

If a Habitat Conservation Plan is to be completed due to unavoidable obligations established by the Federal Endangered Species Act, it should be completed by those agencies with enforcement authority for the environmental regulations, much like the fire protection agencies work with property owners to develop fire safety vegetation management plans. At the same time, any HCP effort must involve the Fire Districts and any HCP planning requirements must be responsive to Fire District concerns. The HCP must avoid making implementation of fire safety measures unduly difficult and/or costly.

With respect to UC Santa Cruz, an HCP is not likely to be needed for fire management purposes because the fire prone areas where vegetation management is needed for fire control purposes currently do not contain Federally protected species. UCSC is preparing an HCP for other specific areas of the campus (not for fire management purposes). If a campus-wide HCP is pursued in the future, fire management considerations would be built into the plan.

UCSC is well aware of the substantial costs associated with preparation of a Habitat Conservation Plan. Therefore any decision to pursue an HCP should be made with full understanding of the cost implications of that decision. Take avoidance strategies should be considered as an alternative to preparing an HCP, if feasible.

Response: Watsonville Fire Department

This recommendation will not be implemented because the requirement for a Habitat Conservation Plan to allow for fire-safe vegetation management for existing residences is unreasonable. At the time of construction of these homes, the fire protection standards

were required to be maintained as a condition of development, and those conditions are still applicable. Recently developed and more restrictive environmental standards are driving the increased restrictions on private property. As these restrictions are put in place, the expectation is that fire protection clearances will somehow be changed in light of findings in a Habitat Conservation Plan. Fundamentally, the need for clearance of flammable vegetation around structures has not changed for many years and is not expected to change in the future.

The existence of structures and roads in areas of critical fire hazard suggests that the impact has already occurred. Requiring a Habitat Conservation Plan will not change the need for the removal of flammable vegetation around homes and along roadsides if these are to be safe.

Furthermore, requiring that a Habitat Conservation Plan be completed by the County's fire districts would cause an expenditure of public funds to produce a plan that a plan that will not have a material effect on the requirements for flammable vegetation management. The time and money expended on such an analysis will simply divert resources from what should be the true work effort reducing the potential of life-threatening conflagration in the wildland/urban interface areas of the county.

If a plan is to be completed, it should be completed by those agencies with enforcement authority for the environmental regulations, much like the fire protection agencies work with property owners to develop fire safety vegetation management plans.

Response: Zayante Fire Protection District

The Zayante Fire Protection District does not believe it is within our prevue nor Responsibility to find nor commit limited staff resources to subsidize a County and Federal responsibility.

This recommendation will not be implemented because the requirement for a Habitat Conservation Plan to allow for fire-safe vegetation management for existing residences is unreasonable. At the time of construction of these homes, the fire protection standards were required to be maintained as a condition of development, and those conditions are still applicable. Recently developed and more restrictive environmental standards are driving the increased restrictions on private property. As these restrictions are put in place, the expectation is that fire protection clearances will somehow be changed in light of findings in a Habitat Conservation Plan. Fundamentally, the need for clearance of flammable vegetation around structures has not changed for many years and is not expected to change in the future.

The existence of structures and roads in areas of critical fire hazard suggests that the impact has already occurred. Requiring a Habitat Conservation Plan will not change the need for the removal of flammable vegetation around homes and along roadsides if these are to be safe.

Furthermore, requiring that a Habitat Conservation Plan be completed by the County's fire districts would cause an expenditure of public funds to produce a plan that will not have a material effect on the requirements for flammable vegetation management. The time and money expended on such an analysis will simply divert resources from what should be the true work effort reducing the potential of life-threatening conflagration in the wildland/urban interface areas of the county.

If a plan is to be completed, it should be completed by those agencies with enforcement authority for the environmental regulations, much like the fire protection agencies work with property owners to develop fire safety vegetation management plans.

Response: Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Cruz

This recommendation is being implemented. The County Office of Emergency Services is the lead agency in coordinating the development of the HCP in collaboration with local fire agencies, the California Department of Forestry, the Santa Cruz County Planning Department, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the California Department of Fish and Game, the California Native Plant Society, and affected property owners.

2. The Santa Cruz County Fire Districts, the Office of Emergency Preparedness, and the Environmental Section of the Planning Department should agree upon policy and create written instructions based upon the policy to be given to homeowners by all governmental agencies.

Response: Aptos/La Selva Fire Protection District

This requires further analysis with an explanation, scope, parameters and a time frame for completion.

We believe that a cooperative approach with other government agencies is generally in the public interest, and would be particularly valuable in this instance.

The fire protection districts in Santa Cruz County currently have adopted a uniform fire code, which leads to a standard policy approach. The fire safety regulations are very clear and have not changed in a number of years. Written instructions on fire safety practices have been provided to homeowners for years, and we would welcome the opportunity to work with other, allied agencies to incorporate their concerns into those instructions in the interest of fire safety and cooperation.

The District has developed fire safety vegetation management plans for specific neighborhoods with the cooperation of property owners based on their unique and individual situations. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Native Plant Society, County Planning and other agencies have been provided opportunities for review and input in those plans. It should be noted, however, that a "one size fits all" policy in an environmentally diverse county such as Santa Cruz is not feasible. There is a variety of topographic, weather, and vegetation variations that lead to a need for individual review based on specific conditions.

Response: Aromas Tri-County Fire District PARTIALLY AGREES

A cooperative approach with other government agencies is generally in the public's interest.

Response: Ben Lomond Fire Protection District

This requires further analysis with an explanation, scope, parameters and a time frame for completion.

We believe that a cooperative approach with other government agencies is generally in the public interest, and would be particularly valuable in this instance.

The fire protection districts in Santa Cruz County currently have adopted a uniform fire code, which leads to a standard policy approach. The fire safety regulations are very clear and have not changed in a number of years.

Response: Boulder Creek Fire Protection District

This requires further analysis with an explanation, scope, parameters and a time frame for completion. We believe that a cooperative approach with other government agencies is generally in the public interest, and would be particularly valuable in this instance.

The fire protection districts in Santa Cruz County currently have adopted a uniform fire code, which leads to a standard policy approach. The fire safety regulations are very clear and have not changed in a number of years. Written instructions on fire safety practices have been provided to homeowners for years, and we would welcome the opportunity to work with other, allied agencies to incorporate their concerns into those instructions in the interest of fire safety and cooperation.

The District has developed fire safety vegetation management plans for specific neighborhoods with the cooperation of property owners based on their unique and individual situations. The US Fish and Wildlife Service, Native Plant Society, County Planning and other agencies have been provided opportunities for review and input in those plans. It should be noted, however, that a "one size fits all" policy in an environmentally diverse county such as Santa Cruz is not feasible. There is a variety of topographic, weather, and vegetation variations that lead to a need for individual review based on specific conditions.

Response: Branciforte Fire Protection District

This requires further analysis with an explanation, scope, parameters and a time frame for completion.

We believe that a cooperative approach with other government agencies is generally in the public interest, and would be particularly valuable in this instance. It should be

noted, however, that a “one size fits all” policy in an environmentally diverse county such as Santa Cruz is not feasible. There are a variety of topographic, weather, and vegetation variations that lead to a need for individual review based on specific conditions.

Response: Central Fire Protection District

This requires further analysis with an explanation, scope, parameters and a time frame for completion.

We believe that a cooperative approach with other government agencies is generally in the public interest, and would be particularly valuable in this instance.

The fire protection districts in Santa Cruz County currently have adopted a uniform fire code, which leads to a standard policy approach. The fire safety regulations are very clear and have not changed in a number of years. Written instructions on fire safety practices have been provided to homeowners for years, and we would welcome the opportunity to work with other, allied agencies to incorporate their concerns into those instructions in the interest of fire safety and cooperation.

This District does have a weed abatement program that sends initial abatement notices to over 240 homeowners requiring them to abate the hazard. In addition, this District mails fire safety brochures to an additional 1200 residents that reside in the urban interface area. It should be noted, however, that a “one size fits all” policy in an environmentally diverse county such as Santa Cruz is not feasible. There are a variety of topographic, weather, and vegetation variations that lead to a need for individual review based on specific conditions.

Response: Felton Fire Protection District

This requires further analysis with an explanation, scope, parameters and a time frame for completion.

We believe that a cooperative approach with other government agencies is generally in the public interest, and would be particularly valuable in this instance.

The fire protection districts in Santa Cruz County currently have adopted a uniform fire code, which leads to a standard policy approach. The fire safety regulations are very clear and have not changed in a number of years. Written instructions on fire safety practices have been provided to homeowners for years, and we would welcome the opportunity to work with other, allied agencies to incorporate their concerns into those instructions in the interest of fire safety and cooperation.

The District has developed fire safety vegetation management plans for specific neighborhoods with the cooperation of property owners based on their unique and individual situations. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Native Plant Society, County Planning and other agencies have been provided opportunities for review and input in

those plans. It should be noted, however, that a “one size fits all” policy in an environmentally diverse county such as Santa Cruz is not feasible. There are a variety of topographic, weather, and vegetation variations that lead to a need for individual review based on specific conditions.

Response: Pajaro Valley Fire District Station

This recommendation requires further analysis. As discussed above, PVFD does not think it is appropriate to promulgate any policy that lessens its ability to enforce currently mandated fire safety laws. Nonetheless, we believe that a cooperative approach with other government agencies is generally in the public interest, and we would willingly participate in formulating joint instructions to homeowners to ensure uniformity throughout the County. This type of cooperative approach is currently used by the fire districts, which collectively develop written fire safety instructions for homeowners. In that same vein, PVFD would welcome the opportunity to work with other allied agencies to provide instructions to homeowners, as long as those instructions are compatible with current fire and life safety requirements.

As requested in the instructions, here are the recommendations for the further analysis: (1) determine what actual conflicts exist between environmental restrictions and state and local laws addressing fire and life safety requirements, (2) determine the legal hierarchy of these conflicts, (3) assess whether a single set of instructions can be implemented on a countywide basis or whether a case-by-case review is preferable, and (4) decide upon the parameters and scope of any joint instructions. This further analysis could be conducted within six months upon agreement of all the fire districts, the Office of Emergency Services, and the environmental section of the planning department, but it may prove more efficient and beneficial to wait until the G.I.S. layers (discussed in the response to finding #8) have been completed.

Response: Santa Cruz Fire Department

The City of Santa Cruz will need to conduct further analysis of any broad-based policy and instructions developed for suburban and rural areas to see if their implementation will complement or be in conflict with our efforts within the City.

Response: Scotts Valley Fire Protection District

This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but should be implemented. The time frame is unknown pending completion of the Habitat Conservation Plan.

The District believes a cooperative approach with other government agencies is generally in the public interest, and would be particularly valuable in this instance. To do so will first require the Habitat Conservation Plan be completed, after which the Fire Districts could participate in the development of the instructions along with the environmental agencies.

The fire protection districts in Santa Cruz County currently employ a standard fire code, which leads to a standard policy approach. The fire safety regulations are very clear and have not changed in a number of years. Written instructions on fire safety practices have been provided to homeowners for years, and the District would welcome the opportunity to now work with other, allied agencies to incorporate their concerns into those instructions in the interest of fire safety and cooperation.

The District has developed fire safety vegetation management plans for specific neighborhoods with the cooperation of property owners based on their unique and individual situations. The US Fish and Wildlife Service, Native Plant Society, County Planning and other agencies have been provided opportunities for review and input in those plans. It should be noted, however, that a “one size fits all” policy in an environmentally diverse county such as Santa Cruz is not feasible. There are a variety of topographic, weather and vegetation variations that lead to a need for individual review based on specific conditions.

Response: UC at Santa Cruz Fire Department

This requires further analysis with an explanation, scope, parameters and a time frame for completion.

We believe that a cooperative approach with other government agencies is generally in the public interest, and would be particularly valuable in this instance.

The fire protection districts in Santa Cruz County currently have adopted a uniform fire code, which leads to a standard policy approach. The fire safety regulations are very clear and have not changed in a number of years. Written instructions on fire safety practices have been provided to homeowners for years, and we would welcome the opportunity to work with other, allied agencies to incorporate their concerns into those instructions in the interest of fire safety and cooperation.

The District has developed fire safety vegetation management plans for specific neighborhoods with the cooperation of property owners based on their unique and individual situations. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Native Plant Society, County Planning and other agencies have been provided opportunities for review and input in those plans. It should be noted, however, that a “one size fits all” policy in an environmentally diverse county such as Santa Cruz is not feasible. There is a variety of topographic, weather, and vegetation variations that lead to a need for individual review based on specific conditions.

Response: Watsonville Fire Department

This requires further analysis with an explanation, scope, parameters and a time frame for completion.

We believe that a cooperative approach with other government agencies is generally in the public interest, and would be particularly valuable in this instance.

The fire protection districts in Santa Cruz County currently have adopted a uniform fire code, which leads to a standard policy approach. The fire safety regulations are very clear and have not changed in a number of years. Written instructions on fire safety practices have been provided to homeowners for years, and we would welcome the opportunity to work with other, allied agencies to incorporate their concerns into those instructions in the interest of fire safety and cooperation.

The District has developed fire safety vegetation management plans for specific neighborhoods with the cooperation of property owners based on their unique and individual situations. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, Native Plant Society, County Planning and other agencies have been provided opportunities for review and input in those plans. It should be noted, however, that a “one size fits all” policy in an environmentally diverse county such as Santa Cruz is not feasible. There are a variety of topographic, weather, and vegetation variations that lead to a need for individual review based on specific conditions.

Response: Zayante Fire Protection District

This requires further analysis with an explanation, scope, parameters and a time frame for completion.

We believe that a cooperative approach with other government agencies is generally in the public interest, and would be particularly valuable in this instance.

The fire protection districts in Santa Cruz County currently have adopted a uniform fire code, which leads to a standard policy approach. The fire safety regulations are very clear and have not changed in a number of years. Written instructions on fire safety practices have been provided to homeowners for years, and we would welcome the opportunity to work with other, allied agencies to incorporate their concerns into those instructions in the interest of fire safety and cooperation.

It should be noted, however, that a “one size fits all” policy in an environmentally diverse county such as Santa Cruz is not feasible. There are a variety of topographic, weather, and vegetation variations that lead to a need for individual review based on specific conditions.

Response: Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Cruz

This recommendation is being implemented. The County agrees that clear direction should be given to property owners involved in vegetation management projects. Currently, local fire agencies, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, and local resource specialists collaborate to develop best practices for individual vegetation management projects pending the completion of the HCP and federal approval of the overall vegetation management program. Ultimately, the best management practices developed

in the HCP process and as included in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife permit for fuel reduction projects will determine the policies and practices to be followed by property owners under the direction of local fire agencies. Once these policies have been determined, consistent written instructions can be provided to homeowner.

3. The Santa Cruz County Fire Districts should create stiffer penalties for homeowners who do not comply with fire clearance regulations.

Response: Aptos/La Selva Fire Protection District

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is unreasonable.

Better coordination and a more focused abatement program would have a more positive outcome than would the issuance of citations. Clear concise direction would be the preferred means of obtaining compliance. Further, in recent years, the insurance industry, (a stakeholder) has taken steps to also reduce its losses from wildfire through property inspections and in some cases have dropped insured properties because of previous fire history, location of property, etc. It has been our experience, that most homeowners generally want to comply with fire safety regulations in an effort to protect their families and property, and have cooperated with our staff in that regard.

The real issue is the imposition of new environmental regulations on existing properties that are in conflict with existing fire safety regulations without guidance as to how to comply. Property owners are caught in a regulatory cross fire trying to maintain fire safety under the weight of new environmental regulations. What is needed is technical advice on how to appropriately comply with the regulations without sacrificing fire safety. Increasing penalty fees will not have a material effect on this issue and will only further frustrate homeowners

Response: Aromas Tri-County Fire District DISAGREES

Prosecution for violations is sometimes the only remedy, but the District has found that education and information have a more positive outcome for compliance. Most homeowners want to comply with fire safety regulations.

Response: Ben Lomond Fire Protection District

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is unreasonable.

Better coordination and more focused abatement program would have a more positive outcome than would the issuance of citations. Clear concise direction would be preferred means of obtaining compliance. Further, in recent years, the insurance industry, (a stakeholder) has taken steps to also reduce its losses from wildfire through property inspections and in some cases have dropped insured properties because of previous fire history, location of property, etc. It has been our experience that most homeowners

generally want to comply with fire safety regulations in an effort to protect their families and property, and have cooperated with our staff in the regard.

The real issue is the imposition of new environmental regulations on existing properties that are in conflict with existing fire safety regulations without guidance as how to comply. Property owners are caught in a regulatory cross fire trying to maintain fire safety under the weight of new environmental regulations. What is needed is technical advice on how to appropriately comply with the regulations without sacrificing fire safety. Increasing penalty fees will not have a material effect on this issue and will only further frustrate homeowners.

Response: Boulder Creek Fire Protection District

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is unreasonable. Better coordination and a more focused abatement program would have a more positive outcome than would the issuance of citations. Clear, concise direction would be the preferred means of obtaining compliance. In recent years, the insurance industry, (a stakeholder) has taken steps to also reduce its losses from wildfire through property inspections and in some cases have dropped insured properties because of previous fire history, location of property, etc. It has been our experience, that most homeowners generally want to comply with fire safety regulations in an effort to protect their families and property, and have cooperated with our staff in that regard.

The real issue is the imposition of new environmental regulations on existing properties that are in conflict with existing fire safety regulations without guidance as to how to comply. Property owners are caught in a regulatory cross fire trying to maintain fire safety under the weight of new environmental regulations. What is needed is technical advice on how to appropriately comply with the regulations without sacrificing fire safety. Increasing penalty fees will not have a material effect on this issue and will only further frustrate homeowners

Response: Branciforte Fire Protection District

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is unreasonable.

Better coordination and a more focused abatement program would have a more positive outcome than would the issuance of citations. Clear concise direction would be the preferred means of obtaining compliance. What is needed is technical advice on how to appropriately comply with the regulations without sacrificing fire safety. Increasing penalty fees will not have a material effect on this issue and will only further frustrate homeowners.

Response: Central Fire Protection District

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is unreasonable.

Better coordination and a more focused abatement program would have a more positive outcome than would the issuance of citations. Clear concise direction would be the preferred means of obtaining compliance. Further, in recent years, the insurance industry (a stakeholder), has taken steps to also reduce its losses from wildfire through property inspections and in some cases have dropped insured properties because of previous fire history, location of property, etc. It has been our experience that most homeowners generally want to comply with fire safety regulations in an effort to protect their families and property, and have cooperated with our staff in that regard.

The real issue is the imposition of new environmental regulations on existing properties that are in conflict with existing fire safety regulations without guidance as to how to comply. Property owners are caught in a regulatory cross fire trying to maintain fire safety under the weight of new environmental regulations. What is needed is technical advice on how to appropriately comply with the regulations without sacrificing fire safety. Increasing penalty fees will not have a material effect on this issue and will only further frustrate homeowners.

Response: Felton Fire Protection District

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is unreasonable.

Better coordination and a more focused abatement program would have a more positive outcome than would the issuance of citations. Clear concise direction would be the preferred means of obtaining compliance. Further, in recent years, the insurance industry, (a stakeholder) has taken steps to also reduce its losses from wildfire through property inspections and in some cases have dropped insured properties because of previous fire history, location of property, etc. It has been our experience most homeowners generally want to comply with fire safety regulations in an effort to protect their families and property, and have cooperated with our staff in that regard.

The real issue is the imposition of new environmental regulations on existing properties that are in conflict with existing fire safety regulations without guidance as to how to comply. Property owners are caught in a regulatory cross fire trying to maintain fire safety under the weight of new environmental regulations. What is needed is technical advice on how to appropriately comply with the regulations without sacrificing fire safety. Increasing penalty fees will not have a material effect on this issue and will only further frustrate homeowners.

Response: Pajaro Valley Fire District Station

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. Creating stiffer penalties is not likely to motivate homeowners who fail to comply with fire clearance regulations. PVFD believes that most homeowners who do not comply, fail to do so because they are not aware of the existing laws and/or hazards, or they are confused by the seemingly conflicting directions they get from public officials with regard

to vegetation clearance. Admittedly, there are those property owners who will blatantly disregard any attempt by a government official to regulate the owner's private property. But even for these people, better solutions exist.

Increasing enforcement capabilities and public education efforts would better solve the problem. Additionally, a countywide weed-abatement program modeled after other successful programs in neighboring counties may prove useful, as would tracking the current insurance industry movement towards conducting its own property inspections prior to renewing insurance policies in rural areas. Together, these could lay the foundation for a county ordinance that allowed a fire official to report the hazard directly to the insurance company. This type of ordinance amendment would prove far more effective than increasing the fine for what is currently classified as a misdemeanor. Because the penalties already in place are not used due to a lack of qualified enforcement personnel and because there are more effective solutions, we believe that this recommendation is unwarranted.

Response: Santa Cruz Fire Department

The City of Santa Cruz will not implement this recommendation, as it uses the County Court bail schedule for violations. The City would rather gain compliance and improve the overall community fire safety by engineering, enforcement, and education.

Response: Scotts Valley Fire Protection District

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.

The Scotts Valley Fire Protection District has not had a need to impose a fine for lack of compliance with fire clearance regulations for over twenty years. Homeowners generally want to comply with fire safety regulations in an effort to protect their families and properties and have cooperated with our staff in that regard.

The real issue is the imposition of new environmental regulations on existing properties that are in conflict with existing fire safety regulations without guidance as to how to comply. Property owners are caught in a regulatory cross fire trying to maintain fire safety under the weight of new environmental regulations. What is needed is technical advice on how to appropriately comply with the regulations without sacrificing fire safety. Increasing penalty fees will not have a material effect on this issue and will only further frustrate homeowners.

Response: UC at Santa Cruz Fire Department

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is unreasonable.

Better coordination and a more focused abatement program would have a more positive outcome than would the issuance of citations. Clear concise direction would be the preferred means of obtaining compliance. Further, in recent years, the insurance industry, (a stakeholder) has taken steps to also reduce its losses from wildfire through property inspections and in some cases have dropped insured properties because of previous fire history, location of property, etc. It has been our experience that most homeowners generally want to comply with fire safety regulations in an effort to protect their families and property, and have cooperated with our staff in that regard.

The real issue is the imposition of new environmental regulations on existing properties that are in conflict with existing fire safety regulations without guidance as to how to comply. Property owners are caught in a regulatory cross fire trying to maintain fire safety under the weight of new environmental regulations.

What is needed is technical advice on how to appropriately comply with the regulations without sacrificing fire safety. Increasing penalty fees will not have a material effect on this issue and will only further frustrate homeowners.

Response: Watsonville Fire Department

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is unreasonable.

Better coordination and a more focused abatement program would have a more positive outcome than would the issuance of citations. Clear concise direction would be the preferred means of obtaining compliance. Further, in recent years, the insurance industry, (a stakeholder) has taken steps to also reduce its losses from wildfire through property inspections and in some cases have dropped insured properties because of previous fire history, location of property, etc. It has been experienced, that most homeowners generally want to comply with fire safety regulations in an effort to protect their families and property, and have cooperated with our staff in that regard.

The real issue is the imposition of new environmental regulations on existing properties that are in conflict with existing fire safety regulations without guidance as to how to comply. Property owners are caught in a regulatory cross fire trying to maintain fire safety under the weight of new environmental regulation. What is needed is technical advice on how to appropriately comply with the regulations without sacrificing fire safety. Increasing penalty fees will not have a material effect on this issue and will only further frustrate homeowners.

Response: Zayante Fire Protection District

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is ineffective.

Better coordination and a more focused abatement program would have a more positive outcome than would the issuance of citations. Clear concise direction would be the

preferred means of obtaining compliance. Further, in recent years, the insurance industry, (a stakeholder) has taken steps to also reduce its losses from wildfire through property inspections and in some cases have dropped insured properties because of previous fire history, location of property, etc. It has been our experience, that most homeowners generally want to comply with fire safety regulations in an effort to protect their families and property, and have cooperated with our staff in that regard.

The real issue is the imposition of new environmental regulations on existing properties that are in conflict with existing fire safety regulations without guidance as to how to comply. Property owners are caught in a regulatory cross fire trying to maintain fire safety under the weight of new environmental regulations. What is needed is technical advice on how to appropriately comply with the regulations without sacrificing fire safety. Increasing penalty fees will not have a material effect on this issue and will only further frustrate homeowners

4. The Santa Cruz County Fire Districts should reestablish a fire safety committee based on the San Mateo County model.

Response: Aptos/La Selva Fire Protection District

This requires further analysis with an explanation, scope, parameters and a time frame for completion.

The issue of fire protection in the wild land urban interface is a significant issue in Santa Cruz County and should remain in the forefront of concerns. However, due to demographics, some thought should be given to forming sub-committees for a given geographical area, rather than a countywide council.

An example for a county wide Fire Safe Council would be the make up of the Fire Department Advisory Commission. All stakeholders would be represented, the demographics and geographic differences can be expressed, and all interests (stakeholders) would have an equal representation.

Further exploration should be given to find other Fire Safe Councils to find a model that better represents the challenges and uniqueness of Santa Cruz County.

Response: Aromas Tri-County Fire District AGREES

Response: Ben Lomond Fire Protection District

This requires further analysis with an explanation, scope, parameters and a time frame for completion.

The issue of fire protection in the wildland urban interface is a significant issue in Santa Cruz County and should remain in the forefront of concerns; however, due to demographics, some thought should be given to forming sub-committees for a given geographical area, rather than a countywide council.

An example for a countywide Fire Safe Council would be the make up of the Fire Department Advisory Commission. All stakeholders would be represented, the demographics and geographic differences can be expressed, and all interests (stakeholders) would have an equal representation.

Further exploration should be given to find other Fire Safe Councils to find a model that better represents the challenges and uniqueness of Santa Cruz County.

Response: Boulder Creek Fire Protection District

This requires further analysis with an explanation, scope, parameters and a time frame for completion. The issue of fire protection in the wild land urban interface is a significant issue in Santa Cruz County and should remain in the forefront of concerns. However, due to demographics, some thought should be given to forming sub-committees for a given geographical area, rather than a county wide council. An example for a countywide Fire Safe Council would be the make up of the Fire Department Advisory Commission. All stakeholders would be represented, the demographics and geographic differences can be expressed, and all interests (stakeholders) would have an equal representation. Further exploration should be given to find other Fire Safe Councils to find a model that better represents the challenges and uniqueness of Santa Cruz County.

Response: Branciforte Fire Protection District

Further exploration should be given to find other Fire Safe Councils to find a model that better represents the challenges and uniqueness of Santa Cruz County.

This requires further analysis with an explanation, scope, parameters and a time frame for completion.

Response: Central Fire Protection District

This requires further analysis with an explanation, scope, parameters and a time frame for completion.

The issue of fire protection in the wildland urban interface is a significant issue in Santa Cruz County and should remain in the forefront of concerns; however, due to demographics, some thought should be given to forming sub-committees for a given geographical area, rather than a countywide council.

An example for a county-wide Fire Safe Council would be the make up of the Fire Department Advisory Commission. All stakeholders would be represented, the demographics and geographic differences can be expressed, and all interests (stakeholders) would have an equal representation.

Further exploration should be given to find other Fire Safe Councils to find a model that better represents the challenges and uniqueness of Santa Cruz County.

Response: Felton Fire Protection District

This requires further analysis with an explanation, scope, parameters and a time frame for completion.

The issue of fire protection in the wildland urban interface is a significant issue in Santa Cruz County and should remain in the forefront of concerns; however, due to demographics, some thought should be given to forming sub-committees for a given geographical area, rather than a countywide council.

An example for countywide Fire Safe Council would be the make up of the Fire Department Advisory Commission. All stakeholders would be represented, the demographics and geographic differences can be expressed, and all interests (stakeholders) would have an equal representation.

Further exploration should be given to find other Fire Safe Councils to find a model that better represents the challenges and uniqueness of Santa Cruz County.

Response: Pajaro Valley Fire District Station

This recommendation requires further analysis. Fire protection in the wildland-urban interface is a significant issue in Santa Cruz County. Re-establishing the Fire Safe Council would ensure that the issue remains at the forefront, but modeling it after the San Mateo County Fire Council has already proved ineffectual. Instead, some thought should be given to creating a different model designed to address the challenging and unique demographic, topographic, and political diversities within Santa Cruz County. For example, the new Fire Safe Council could be modeled after the County Fire Department Advisory Commission, or it could be regionally based instead of county-based. These are just a couple of ideas that could be explored, although they do not begin reflect the myriad of options that may be available. Further research is definitely warranted.

As requested in the instructions, here are the recommendations for the further analysis: (1) find or create an appropriate model for a Fire Safe Council that would be effective within this County, (2) determine the scope and parameters of the new council, (3) develop a start-up timeline for the council. Preliminary action could be taken by the Fire Chief's Association of Santa Cruz County to appoint a team to create a workable model. This could be completed within six months.

Response: Santa Cruz Fire Department

The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, as the City of Santa Cruz was a participant in the previous fire safety council and recognizes the value of this cooperative effort. However, the re-establishment of this committee will require better leadership, management, and support from the parent (or hosting) agency (CDF) if it is to be successful.

Response: Scotts Valley Fire Protection District

This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. We estimate the time required would be about one year.

While the San Mateo County model is considered good, there are other models, including a California State model that should be considered as part of this process so that the best approach for Santa Cruz County can be determined. We also feel that the best approach would be to take an advisory approach rather than a regulatory approach to avoid the types of conflict that cause the prior effort to become ineffective.

Response: UC at Santa Cruz Fire Department

This requires further analysis with an explanation, scope, parameters and a time frame for completion.

The issue of fire protection in the wildland urban interface is a significant issue in Santa Cruz County and should remain in the forefront of concerns; however, due to demographics, some thought should be given to forming sub-committees for a given geographical area, rather than a countywide council.

An example for a county-wide Fire Safe Council would be the make up of the Fire Department Advisory Commission. All stakeholders would be represented, the demographics and geographic differences can be expressed, and all interests (stakeholders) would have an equal representation.

Further exploration should be given to find other Fire Safe Councils to find a model that better represents the challenges and uniqueness of Santa Cruz County.

Response: Watsonville Fire Department

This requires further analysis with an explanation, scope, parameters and a time frame for completion.

The issue of fire protection in the wildland urban interface is a significant issue in Santa Cruz County and should remain in the forefront of concerns; however, due to demographics, some thought should be given to forming sub-committees for a given geographical area, rather than a countywide council.

An example for a county-wide Fire Safe Council would be the make up of the Fire Department Advisory Commission. All stakeholders would be represented, the demographics and geographic differences can be expressed, and all interests (stakeholders) would have an equal representation.

Further exploration should be given to find other Fire Safe Councils to find a model that better represents the challenges and uniqueness of Santa Cruz County.

Response: Zayante Fire Protection District

This requires further analysis with an explanation, scope, parameters and a time frame for completion.

The issue of fire protection in the wild land urban interface is a significant issue in Santa Cruz County and should remain in the forefront of concerns. However, due to demographics, some thought should be given to forming sub-committees for a given geographical area, rather than a countywide council.

Further exploration should be given to find other Fire Safe Councils to find a model that better represents the challenges and uniqueness of Santa Cruz County.

¹ Information obtained from Santa Cruz County Fire Dispatch Records.

² California's I-Zone – Urban/Wildland Fire Prevention and Mitigation, Chapter 13, State of California (1996).

³ Id. at Chapters 8 and 13; Fire Safe Guides for Residential Development in California, State of California (1993).

⁴ Information obtained from Karen Terrill, public affairs information officer, CDF Sacramento

⁵ See Santa Cruz County Code § 16.52 *et. seq.*

⁶ Information obtained from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Vegetation Management Program Coordinator for Santa Cruz and San Mateo counties.

⁷ Information obtained from the Office of Emergency Services Administrator and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Pre-Fire Engineer for Santa Cruz and San Mateo counties.

⁸ Information obtained from California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Peace Officer assigned to Santa Cruz County.

⁹ Cal. Pub. Res. Code § 4291.1.

¹⁰ Santa Cruz County Code 7.92.310; see also Santa Cruz County Bail Schedule.

¹¹ Santa Cruz County Code §§ 1.12, 1.14, 7.92.300 *et seq.*

¹² See e.g., Pub. Res. Code § 4291, Cal. Fire Code § 1103.2.4 and §16 of Appendix II-A.

Response Required

Entity	Findings	Recommendations	Respond Within
Aptos/La Selva Fire Protection District	1-6, 8-10, 12, 13	1-4	60 Days (Sept. 2, 2003)
Aromas Tri-County Fire District	1-6,8-10 12,12	1-4	60 Days (Sept.2, 2003)
Ben Lomond Fire Protection District	1-6, 8-10, 12, 13	1-4	60 Days (Sept. 2, 2003)
Boulder Creek Fire Protection District	1-6, 8-10, 12, 13	1-4	60 Days (Sept.2, 2003)
Branciforte Fire Protection District	1-6, 8-10, 12, 13	1-4	60 Days (Sept.2, 2003)
Central Fire Protection District	1-6, 8-10, 12, 13	1-4	60 Days (Sept.2, 2003)
Felton Fire Protection District	1-6, 8-10, 12, 13	1-4	60 Days (Sept.2, 2003)
Pajaro Valley Fire District Station	1-6, 8-10, 12, 13	1-4	60 Days (Sept.2, 2003)
Santa Cruz County Fire Department	1-6, 8-10, 12, 13	1-4	60 Days (Sept.2, 2003)
Santa Cruz Fire Department	1-6, 8-10, 12, 13	1-4	60 Days (Sept.2, 2003)
Scotts Valley Fire Protection District	1-6, 8-10, 12, 13	1-4	60 Days (Sept.2, 2003)
UC at Santa Cruz Fire Department	1-6, 8-10, 12, 13	1-4	60 Days (Sept.2, 2003)
Watsonville Fire Department	1-6, 8-10, 12, 13	1-4	60 Days (Sept.2, 2003)
Zayante Fire Protection District	1-6, 8-10, 12, 13	1-4	60 Days (Sept.2, 2003)
Santa Cruz County Planning Department	7-9, 11, 13	2	60 Days (Sept. 2, 2003)
Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Cruz	7, 8, 12, 13	1-2	60 Days (Sept. 2, 2003)

Note: Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors responded for the Santa Cruz County Fire Department and the Santa Cruz County Planning Department.

