



City of  
Oakland



## **Oakland Fire Department, Vegetation Management Plan**

### **Stakeholder Briefing Summary**

**Meeting Date/Location:** Wednesday, March 29, 2017, 5:00-7:00 pm

Dunsmuir Hellman Estate, 2960 Peralta Oaks Ct., Oakland, CA

Thursday, March 30, 2017, 5:00-7:00 pm

Richard C. Trudeau Conference Center, 11500 Skyline Blvd., Oakland

#### **City of Oakland Fire Department Representatives:**

Chief Mark Hoffman, Oakland Fire Department

Angela Robinson-Pinon, Oakland Fire Department

#### **Project Consultant Team:**

Ken Schwarz – Horizon Water and Environment

Allison Chan – Horizon Water and Environment

Scott Eckardt – Dudek

Rebecca Nicholas – Nicholas Communication

Chief Mark Hoffman opened the meeting by providing an overview of the purpose and need for a Vegetation Management Plan (Plan) for city-owned parcels in the Oakland hills.

Project Manager Ken Schwarz (Horizon Water and Environment) provided an overview of the Plan goals, which include:

- Evaluating vegetation management practices to reduce fire hazard;
- Identifying vegetation management techniques for vegetation types and site-specific conditions; and
- Considering environmental effects and opportunities to enhance ecological conditions on City-owned sites.

Mr. Schwarz also provided an overview of the Plan area, which covers more than 1,400 acres of City property, and treatment areas along approximately 300 miles of roadside (approximately 30 miles are high priority segments that are currently treated every year).

Scott Eckardt (Dudek) provided an overview of Plan development, which includes:

- Identifying and confirming City parcels

- Reviewing current and on-going vegetation management actions
- Conducting on-the-ground field evaluations and fuel assessment
- Conducting biological resource surveys
- Considering vegetation management approaches and options for specific sites
- Preparing the Vegetation Management Plan based on information gathered
- Preparing the Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

Mr. Schwarz provided an overview of the EIR that will be developed to evaluate the potential effects of the Plan on several resources, such as air quality, climate change, and biological resources, to name a few. Both the Plan and the EIR will be made available for public review and comment.

Angela Robinson-Pinon (Oakland Fire Department) provided an overview of the project schedule, highlighting the fact that the Plan will cover a ten-year timeframe. Ms. Pinon provided an overview of a community survey made available to obtain public input on Plan development, as well as the ways the public can stay involved, including email alerts, website updates, social media, and upcoming public meetings.

A summary of public comments and questions are provided below.

## **Public Comments**

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### **March 29, 2017**

- Opposition to herbicide and pesticide use and concern about potential effects on human health and ecology.
- Living trees help reduce fire through the moisture that they provide; houses start wildfires, not trees.
- The problem is not the presence of eucalyptus trees but fire access is terrible and needs to be improved.
- Grazing is conducted carefully in areas where native grasses are present to ensure goats do not affect roots of native grasses.
- Principle goals of the Plan should be developed around these three questions: (1) what is the best way to reduce risk of fire and danger of fire, (2) what is ecologically sound, and (3) what is going to be fiscally sustainable in the long-term?
- The Sierra Club, with input from Golden Gate Audubon Society, the California Native Plant Society, and Claremont Canyon Conservancy, developed a document referred to as the “3Rs”: remove, restore, reestablish plan. Natives should be planted as understory and allowed to restore habitat for Alameda whipsnake.
- Grasslands will feed firestorms.
- Eucalyptus trees are not a monoculture, and provide habitat for nesting raptors, birds, and monarch butterflies.
- Eucalyptus tree thinning creates an opening for wind, which increases fire hazards.
- Recommends Consultant team review “Death of a Million Trees” blog.
- A lot of the native trees are dying (e.g. due to Sudden Oak Death (SOD)) from infestation and drought. Eucalyptus are at no risk of infestations.

- With the rainy season we had, commenter is concerned about fallen trees and related erosion effects and effects on public trails.
- The Oakland VMP should dovetail with City's Climate Action Plan. (Consultant team agreed that this plan would be taken into consideration)
- The Oakland VMP should create an opportunity for volunteers to participate.
- The Oakland VMP should be species-neutral. There should be no preference for native vegetation over non-native vegetation.
- Encourages use of the term "enhancement" for restoring habitat.
- Interested in reviewing plans for understory enhancement, and would like to see native plants used in understory.
- Encouraged active communication between Oakland Fire Department and organizations that have knowledge about natural resources in the Oakland hills.
- Most fires are caused by humans – how will plan address that issue?
- There is no scientific data supporting the fact that native plants are less likely to burn than non-native plants.
- Referring to the 1991 fire is misleading because the Oakland Fire Department was not equipped or ready to fight that fire. Since then, the command structure of the Fire Department has changed and there are mutual aid agreements.
- Wildfire is weather and topography driven.
- The Oakland VMP should be GIS-based and should be geographically focused.
- GIS should be used to record the treatments applied.
- East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) doesn't have enough water storage to fight a fire such as the one in 1991. It would take \$1billion to accommodate the type of fire we had in 1991. Suggest coordination with EBMUD.

**March 30, 2017:**

- The FEMA EIS is an excellent source of information.
- Recommends that eucalyptus tree removal occur along the ridgeline.
- Eucalyptus trees create a fuel ladder. When winds blow during a fire, they blow embers for miles.
- GIS is needed and should be used to its fullest extent.
- The urban fire risks should not divert attention away from wildland-urban interface fire risks.
- Hopes the Oakland VMP will not destroy healthy, mature trees or involve use of pesticides.
- Thinning forests does not reduce fire risk.
- Suggests that project team establish a partnership w/ UC Berkeley School of Forestry, UC Berkeley students, public-private partnership.
- Supports a plan that reduces fuels and establishes greater plant diversity in the Oakland hills. Consider planting more fire-resistant plants that require low maintenance.
- The scope of work says that consultants are to rely on FEMA EIS for conclusions, which is inappropriate given that it was sued by the Hills Conservation Network.

- The contract includes identification of areas for native plant restoration – this has nothing to do with fire prevention.
- Respect Article 5 of the Paris Agreement; encourages protection of wildlife and trees.
- Against use of pesticides, and concerned about their health effects on residents.
- Trees are important and provide moisture and other benefits to the environment.
- After tree thinning, the stumps will grow overtime.
- If we had a dozen fires since 1923, that’s about one fire every 10 years. We haven’t had one in 25 years so the Oakland Fire Department has gotten better at stopping fires.
- Many native trees are dying due to infestations like SOD. Eucalyptus and Monterey Pine trees are more likely to survive.
- Nesting eagles have been found in eucalyptus trees in Moraga. Eucalyptus trees also provide habitat for Monarch butterflies and hummingbirds.
- Once the Plan is developed, the public can make informed choices and decide how they want vegetation to be managed.
- The first and foremost goal of the Plan should be: protection of human life and reducing fire hazard risk.
- The roads (up in the hills) haven’t changed since the 1991 fire. More people live up in the hills. The Oakland Fire Department should also consider preparing transportation/traffic management and evacuation plans in the event of another wildfire.
- The Plan should be structured by geographic area. In some areas, there are many canyons that are more wind prone.
- GIS is fundamental for organizing the Plan.
- Vegetation clearance needs to be completed in a timely fashion.
- Is there a “SeeClickFix” method to show where trees have fallen (similar to application used to report potholes, graffiti, etc.)?
- Encourages Consultant team to look at some native plant restoration areas.
- Volunteers that manage restoration areas need Best Management Practices and recommended current practices for nursery plant grown materials.
- There should be some coordination with other City departments and non-city agencies.
- How will these fire roads and trails be addressed in the Plan? Will they be removed or improved?
- Believes that there’s a lot that people can do to reduce fire risk (e.g., moving cars off constrained roads for improved access; maintain defensible space around homes).
- Asked how the Plan will address carbon sequestration effects (due to tree removal).
- Prefers converting the landscape to native vegetation but would like to see available science and evidence in other vegetation management plans.
- Oakland has a vibrant and active group of volunteers. There are regular volunteers that work on City-owned parcels that will be covered by the Plan. Consider what role they can play as part of the Plan.

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