



City of
Oakland



Oakland Fire Department, Vegetation Management Plan

Public Meeting Summary

Meeting Date/Location: Thursday, June 29, 2017, 5:30-7:30 pm

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

City of Oakland Fire Department Representatives:

Angela Robinson-Pinon, Oakland Fire Department

Erik Logan, Oakland Fire Department

Maria Sabatini, 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

Angela Robinson-Pinon (Oakland Fire Department) opened the meeting and welcomed guests.

Ken Schwarz (Horizon Water and Environment) provided an overview of the meeting purpose, and discussed the goals of the Vegetation Management Plan (Plan), which include:

- Reducing fire hazard on City-owned land and along critical access/egress routes within the City's designated Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone;
- Reducing the likelihood of ignitions and extreme fire behavior to enhance public and firefighter safety;
- Implementing practices to avoid or minimize impacts to natural resources; and
- Maintaining an active role in regional efforts to reduce fire hazard in the Oakland hills.

Rebecca Nicholas (Nicholas Communication) provided an overview of the community survey results, which included feedback on preferred vegetation management plan techniques, and environmental concerns, among others.

Mr. Schwarz provided an overview of the Plan area and priority roadways, and discussed the developed outline of the Plan. He also provided an overview of the hazard assessment methodologies, which include field assessments, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) analysis, fire behavior modeling, and research. Next, Mr. Schwarz provided an overview of the biological mapping taking place to inform Plan development. Mr. Schwarz and Scott Eckardt (Dudek) discussed several example sites where biological mapping has been conducted, including Grizzly Peak, Shepherd Canyon, and Skyline Boulevard.

Mr. Schwarz provided a schedule update on the Plan and Environmental Impact Report (EIR) development. Mr. Schwarz reviewed the resource areas being considered in the EIR.

Ms. Nicholas reminded the attendees of the ways to stay engaged with the project, including email alerts, website updates, and social media, as well as future public meetings.

A summary of public comments and questions are provided below.

Public Comments

- California's Mediterranean climate creates a landscape that is fire adapted and fire dependent.
- The 1991 fire was caused by unique conditions.
- Questioned how the VMP will differ from the plan described in the FEMA EIS.
- Questioned where tree removal would occur and whether pesticides would be used.
- The majority of the community prefers that less invasive vegetation management techniques be employed.
- Fuel vs. biomass: trees with high moisture content are not a fuel but a dead, dying tree is considered fuel. Removing mature healthy trees (with high biomass) does not achieve fuel reduction. Fire fuels, including trees with a diameter of 3" or less, are more likely to burn in the event of wildfire.
- FlamMap was used in the FEMA project, which was not appropriate. Recommended that VMP team consider using Vesta model, which was used in Australia and targets eucalyptus environments.
- Recommends that computer models be used so that firefighters can predict wildfire movement based on winds.
- Eucalyptus trees have been blamed for the 1991 fire. Noted that other vegetation died in the fire as well including native vegetation like coyote brush.
- WPAD established an arbitrary amount on tax bills without having a good understanding about how much vegetation management work would cost (e.g. goat grazing, French broom removal).
- Recommended that drones be used for vegetation/parcel mapping.
- The vegetation in the hills continues to grow and is still a wildfire threat.
- Previously worked for UC Berkeley. This institution is self-insured and we'll lose it if it burns.
- Supports eucalyptus tree removal.
- The 1991 fire happened because the fire was not extinguished properly.
- Blaming eucalyptus trees is not right; eucalyptus trees can co-exist with native vegetation.
- Urban fire threat (e.g., Ghostship warehouse) should be higher priority.
- Arson is another problem.
- Landslides are another big issue. The eucalyptus trees help with erosion control.
- Supports development of a VMP that is based on scientific information. This should include enough information so that the Oakland Fire Department can make decisions.

- The CEQA document should include enough information to support any future grant application work.
- Asked whether the Plan will show presence of state and locally protected plants. Noted that Clarkias have been mowed down before they go to seed and are not a big fire threat.
- Asked what type of vegetation will be planted in areas that get cleared? Where will funding come from for this revegetation effort?
- What criteria are being used for establishing high priority treatment areas? Will the plan include options and different methods for reduce fuel load?
- If goal is to reduce vegetation, how do you decide what to remove?
- Notes that in some situations eucalyptus trees co-exist with native vegetation and in other situations, eucalyptus may be dominant.
- Requests that the VMP team evaluate everything carefully.
- Interested to see what the VMP team recommends for each park area.
- Asked how much will it cost to conduct recommended treatments.
- Interested in seeing proposed vegetation management prescriptions for Joaquin Miller Park.
- Requests that the Plan protect rare plants in Sausal Creek.
- Would like to see on-staff ecologist from City Department or Oakland Fire Department help run the Plan.
- Concerned about potential loss of large extents of native habitat, protecting streams, and aesthetics.
- Expressed concerns about GIS. Requests that the public has access to an online GIS tool that shows where maintenance has occurred in real-time.
- Noted that not much tree removal has occurred in the past. Most vegetation management work has involved weed whacking, mowing, and grazing.
- Expressed support for preserving recreational values.
- Cameras should be used by the Oakland Fire Department to spot wildland fires.
- Supports vegetation management.
- Noted that the VMP only covers 1,400 acres of City-owned parcels. Everything outside of the Plan area is private property and other publicly owned property managed by Caltrans, and the Department of Public Works.
- Interested to see the restoration recommendations for VMP parcels.

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