

**NOTICE OF PREPARATION (NOP) OF A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT
FOR THE OAKLAND VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PLAN**

PROJECT TITLE: Oakland Vegetation Management Plan

SUMMARY: The City of Oakland (“City”) is preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Oakland Vegetation Management Plan (“OVMP”) for City-owned parcels located within the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) designated Very High Fire Severity Zone (VHFSZ). The City is requesting comments on the scope and content of the EIR. A description of the OVMP and its location, together with a summary of the probable environmental effects that will be addressed in the EIR, are included herein. The City is the lead agency undertaking preparation of a Draft EIR for the OVMP. City Staff prepared this Notice of Preparation (NOP) and will hold one public scoping meeting to obtain agency and public input regarding the scope and content of the environmental analysis, including the significant environmental issues, the proposed range of alternatives, and mitigation measures that should be included in the EIR. Pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines §15063(a), the City **has not** prepared an Initial Study.

PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENT PERIOD: The City invites comments on the scope and content of the EIR in response to this NOP. The City prefers that comments be submitted via email at: arombinsonpinon@oaklandca.gov. Comments may also be submitted via mail to the following address:

Oakland Public Works Department
Attn: Angela Robison Piñon, OVMP – Scoping Comments
250 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza, Suite 4314
Oakland, CA 94612

Please reference Oakland Vegetation Management Plan (OVMP) in all correspondence.

Pursuant to State law, comments will be accepted for 30 days after publication of this notice. Responses to the NOP must be received via the above email address, mailing or e-mail address by 5:00 p.m. on December 2, 2019. Comments will also be received at the EIR Scoping Meetings to be held as noticed below.

Commenters should focus comments on potential impacts of the OVMP on the physical environment. Commenters are encouraged to identify mitigation measures that could minimize potential adverse effects resulting from the OVMP and to identify reasonable alternatives to the OVMP.

EIR PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING:

The City of Oakland Planning Commission will conduct a public scoping meeting on the EIR for the Oakland Vegetation Management Plan on November 20, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers in Oakland City Hall, 1 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza, Oakland, CA.

The purpose of the public scoping meeting is to describe the proposed project and the environmental review process, and to receive verbal input. The City will consider all comments, written and oral, in determining the final scope of the evaluation to be included in the EIR.

The meeting facilities will be accessible to persons with disabilities. If special translation or signing services or other special accommodations are needed, please contact Angela Robison Piñon at arobinsonpinon@oaklandca.gov or at (510) 238-3707 at least 72 hours before the meeting.

PURPOSE OF THE NOTICE OF PREPARATION (NOP): Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15082(a), upon deciding to prepare an EIR, the City as lead agency must issue a Notice of Preparation (NOP) to inform the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research trustee and responsible agencies, and relevant federal agencies that an EIR will be prepared. This notice is being sent to responsible or trustee agencies and other interested parties. Responsible and trustee agencies are those public agencies, besides the City of Oakland, that have a role in considering approval and/or carrying out the project.

The purpose of the NOP is to provide information describing the project and its potential environmental effects to affected agencies, so that they may comment on the scope and content of the information to be included in the EIR. CEQA Guideline §15082(b) states: "... [E]ach responsible and trustee agency and the Office of Planning and Research shall provide the lead agency with specific detail about the scope and content of the environmental information related to the responsible or trustee agency's area of statutory responsibility that must be included in the draft EIR. The response at a minimum shall identify: (A) The significant environmental issues and reasonable alternatives and mitigation measures that the responsible or trustee agency, or the Office of Planning and Research, will need to have explored in the Draft EIR; and (B) Whether the agency will be a responsible agency or trustee agency for the project." The City encourages responsible and trustee agencies and the Office of Planning and Research to provide this information to the City, so that the City can ensure that the Draft EIR meets the needs of those agencies.

Once the Draft EIR is completed, notice will be given, and the Draft EIR will be made available for review. Copies will be sent to all responsible and trustee agencies, to persons or entities who comment on this NOP, and to any person or entity that requests a copy. The Draft EIR will also be available for review at the Oakland Fire Department, Fire Prevention Bureau Offices located at 250 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza, Suite 3341, Oakland, CA.

Following the close of the public review period for the DEIR, the City will prepare a final EIR, incorporating and responding to all comments received during the public comment period, for consideration by the Planning Commission, at a date for which notice shall be provided. As required by CEQA (§21092.5), the final EIR, including written responses to the comments submitted by public agencies, will be provided to commenting agencies at least 10 days prior to certification.

PROJECT LOCATION: The areas included within the OVMP encompass City-owned parcels and the areas within 30 feet of the edge of roadsides located within the City’s Very High Wildfire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ) as designated by CAL FIRE, and defined in Section 4904.3 of the Oakland Fire Code (Oakland Municipal Code Chapter 15.12). Specifically, as shown in **Figure 1** (attached), the OVMP Area includes: 419 City-owned parcels, ranging in size from <0.1 acres to 235 acres and totaling 1,924 acres. Parcels have been divided into the following categories: urban and residential (51.2 acres), canyon areas (188.7 acres), ridgetop areas (130.2 acres), City park lands and open space (1,522.9), other areas (24.5 acres), and medians (6.1 acres). “Other areas” are developed City-owned properties in the OVMP Area that include fire stations (nos. 6, 7, 21, 25, and 28), City facilities (parking lots, police stations), paved areas, and parks and playgrounds (e.g., Montclair Park). The OVMP also includes roadside areas along 308 miles of road within the City’s VHFHSZ, which includes surface and arterial streets, State Routes 13 and 24, and Interstate 580. The parks, recreational and open space areas discussed in the OVMP are as follows: Beaconsfield Canyon, Garber Park, Dimond Canyon Park, Shepherd Canyon Park, Leona Heights Park, North Oakland Regional Sports Complex, Grizzly Peak Open Space, City Stables, Sheffield Village Open Space, Knowland Park and Arboretum, King Estates Open Space Park, Joaquin Miller Park, Tunnel Road Open Space, Marjorie Saunders Park, and Oak Knoll.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The City has determined that there are areas within Oakland that are at high risk of wildfire, and that vegetation management/fuels reduction will significantly reduce wildfire

risk. The OVMP outlines a framework for managing fuel loads and vegetation on City-owned properties and along roadways in the City's VHFHSZ to reduce the likelihood of a catastrophic wildfire, such as the 1991 Oakland Hills Fire. Implementation of the OVMP would involve thinning, pruning, removal, and otherwise modification of trees and vegetation within the OVMP area to reduce the likelihood of a wildfire occurring and to minimize/slow the spread of a wildfire, should one occur. The City has identified the following primary goals to guide preparation of the Plan and its implementation:

- Reduce wildfire hazard on City-owned land and along critical access/egress routes within the City's designated VHFHSZ;
- Reduce the likelihood of ignitions and extreme fire behavior to enhance public and firefighter safety;
- Implement practices to avoid or minimize impacts to natural resources;
- Maintain an active role in regional efforts to reduce wildfire hazard in the Oakland Hills.

The goals, objectives, and recommendations identified in the OVMP are based on a combination of evaluating existing field conditions and current vegetation and fire risk conditions at City parcels; analyzing spatial datasets of environmental and wildfire risk factors in a Geographic Information System (GIS); conducting GIS-based analysis and modeling to identify areas that may be subject to extreme fire behavior; identifying locations within the OVMP area that may present increased ignition potential or otherwise contribute to increase fire hazard; and receiving feedback and guidance from many stakeholders through various meetings, site visits, and written comments.

The OVMP describes various vegetation management techniques that may be employed depending on site conditions, including hand labor, mechanical processes (e.g., mowing), herbicide use, and grazing. Appropriate vegetation management techniques to be employed at a specific site would be identified by Oakland Fire Department personnel during annual workplan development. On an annual basis, OFD staff would conduct field assessments of vegetation conditions in the OVMP area to guide development of such annual vegetation management work plans. These plans would identify specific treatment types, area or properties to be treated, implementation timing, and other monitoring and tracking needs.

The OVMP also identifies best management practices (BMPs) to be implemented during vegetation management activities to reduce or avoid impacts to natural resources present in the OVMP area.

The revised Draft OVMP is available for public review at the following website:
<https://oaklandvegmanagement.org/#documents>.

ANTICIPATED ENTITLEMENTS AND APPROVALS: Implementation of the OVMP may include approvals from the following agencies:

- Oakland City Council
- Oakland Planning Commission
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)
- Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD)
- Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB)
- California State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
- California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)

PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS AND PROPOSED SCOPE OF THE EIR: The EIR will analyze and disclose the direct and reasonably foreseeable indirect potentially significant environmental impacts of implementation of the OVMP (CEQA Guidelines §15126.2, §15130). Where significant impacts are identified, the EIR will describe potentially feasible mitigation measures that could minimize significant adverse impacts (CEQA Guidelines §15126.4).

Topics to be analyzed in the EIR, include but are not necessarily limited to the following:

- Aesthetics
- Agricultural and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural and Historic Resources (including Tribal Cultural Resources)
- Energy
- Geology and Soils (including Geological and Seismic Hazards)
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions/Global Climate Change
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise and Vibration
- Population and Housing (including Growth Inducement)
- Public Services (including Police Services, Fire Protection Services, Parks and Schools)
- Recreation
- Transportation
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Cumulative Impacts

Potential issues and impacts to the existing environment are summarized below. These topics will be further evaluated in the Draft EIR.

Aesthetics – Vegetation management activities will impact trees in the OVMP area and will be visible along public roads, highways and parks, and open space. In some cases, vegetation management activities will be visible from private properties that abut parks and open space. In addition, some vegetation management activities will be visible from State Route 24, a portion of which has been designated by the State as a scenic highway (east end of Caldecott Tunnel). The activities proposed under the OVMP would not create a new source of substantial light or glare. The Draft EIR will evaluate whether the OVMP would adversely affect the existing visual character or quality of the Plan area and its surroundings.

Air Quality – Vehicle and equipment emissions generated by OVMP activities may impact air quality. The Draft EIR will describe the potential short- and long-term impacts of the OVMP on local and regional air quality based on methodologies stipulated by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) and will include any required mitigation measures to address air pollutant emissions generated by the OVMP.

Biological Resources – The OVMP area includes plant and animal species that are identified as candidate, sensitive or special status species (i.e. “protected species”) by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and/or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In addition, there are riparian habitats and sensitive natural communities within the OVMP area. The Draft EIR will examine the potential for substantial adverse effects on biological resources.

Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources – The analysis in the Draft EIR will assess the potential for ground disturbing activities associated with the OVMP to damage or destroy recorded or unrecorded archaeological sites and paleontological resources, and will include the results of consultation with Native American representatives. The Draft EIR will also address potential effects on tribal cultural resources.

archaeological sites and paleontological resources, and will include the results of consultation with Native American representatives. The Draft EIR will also address potential effects on tribal cultural resources.

Geology and Soils - The OVMP will result in the removal and trimming of vegetation on slopes and topsoil; however, it will not result in the construction of new buildings or facilities. Therefore, the Draft EIR will evaluate the risk of geologic hazards associated with OVMP related activities.

Greenhouse Gases (GHG) and Global Climate Change – The City published a GHG emissions inventory in 2018. The City is implementing its 2020 Energy and Climate Action Plan (updated in 2018) and is developing a 2030 Equitable Climate Action Plan. Transportation is the greatest contributor to GHGs, and the OVMP would generate some additional vehicle trips, as well as emissions from equipment used for vegetation management activities. The Draft EIR will evaluate the OVMP’s potential contributions to GHG emissions and assess the OVMP’s consistency with state, local, and regional plans and policies pertaining to GHG emissions and climate change.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials – The OVMP has identified a number of possible fuel reduction techniques, including the use of vehicles and mechanical equipment that require fueling. The Draft EIR will evaluate the potential for increased risks associated with potential uses or accidental release of hazardous materials within or near the OVMP area. In addition, the Draft EIR will identify, evaluate and propose mitigation measures to address potential hazards.

Hydrology and Water Quality – Water resources within the OVMP area includes perennial creeks and intermittent water sources. These resources may be impacted by vegetation management activities. The Draft EIR will identify the potential for vegetation management activities to alter existing drainage patterns and impact water quality.

Noise – Certain vegetation management methods proposed under the OVMP (such as the use of mechanical equipment to remove vegetation) would result in short-term generation of noise above ambient levels while those activities are taking place. The Draft EIR will consider whether the implementation of vegetation management activities will: exceed established standards in the City’s General Plan and noise ordinance, and other applicable standards; have the potential to expose people to excessive ground borne vibrations and noises levels; and result in a substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the OVMP area.

The Draft EIR will evaluate cumulative impacts of the OVMP, including the effects of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects in the vicinity (CEQA Guidelines §15130). The Draft EIR will also identify and examine a range of reasonable alternatives to the OVMP, including, but not limited to, a No Project Alternative (Guidelines §15126.6).

Date: 10/31/19 Signature: 

Title: Zoning Manager

Attachment:

Figure 1, Location Map

