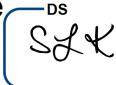




MEMORANDUM
January 25, 2023

TO: Honorable Board of Directors
Jeffrey V. Smith, County Executive ^{DS} 

FROM: Suwana L. Kerdkaew, Fire Chief

SUBJECT: Pre-Fire Management and Wildfire Resilience Program
Collaboration with the Office of Sustainability and the Division of
Agriculture relating to the Protection of Pollinators

At its May 3, 2022 regular meeting, the Board of Directors asked the Santa Clara County Central Fire Protection District's ("Fire District") to collaborate with the Office of Sustainability and the Division of Agriculture on the protection of pollinators during fire fuel management. As requested, this memorandum provides an update on the Fire District's collaboration with these departments and strategies for sustainability, communication with other agencies, and protection of the environment.

Collaboration with the Office of Sustainability

The Fire District actively participates in the Office of Sustainability's Santa Clara County Climate Collaborative-Heat and Air Quality Resilience Working Group and Sustainability Master Plan-Sustainability Working Group. At the request of the Office of Sustainability, Fire District staff began attending these Groups meetings during the 2020-2021 fires in the county to provide a wildfire-risk perspective. Attendance at these meetings allows for open dialogue and communication about sustainability as it relates to wildfire prevention, fuels management, modification and reduction as well as air quality impacts pertaining to large scale wildfires in the region.

Fire Fuels Crew

In 2022, the Fire District established a Fire Fuels Crew located in the Vasona County Park in Los Gatos, often referred to as the Vasona Crew. The Fire Fuels Crew reduces dead and dying surface fuels, which are receptive fuel beds for ignition of wildfire. These fuel beds are readily consumed during wildfires and contribute to fire spread.

It is the practice of the Fire District's Fire Fuels Crew to leave pollinator nests and habitat in place and undisturbed whenever possible. Provided below is an example of the approach taken by the Vasona Crew to avoid disturbing a pollinator habitat.



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This hive, located at the base of a branch crook, was identified, taped off and worked around to preserve the hive and pollinators during a fuels reduction project in 2022.

The Fire District's Fire Fuels Crew works to modify vertical fuels, reducing density and continuity to slow or reduce fire spread laterally and vertically into the crown. Techniques include removing ladder fuels, removing dead and down material and duff, thinning of fuel density, reducing fuel continuity, chipping and broadcasting material, and, if appropriate, using live fire. These processes provide strategic and tactical fuel break opportunities that are commonly used by responding fire agencies to keep communities and firefighters safe. They help mitigate wildfire fuel risk, assure a healthy forest floor for wildlife, flora and fauna, and sustainably support pollinators. Some fire/fuel crew projects may also be subject to environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), which requires an examination of a project's potential significant environmental effects, including impacts to pollinators and other wildlife, habitats, and watersheds.

In addition to the above methods to protect pollinator species in native habitat, commercial beekeepers, managing twenty (20) hives or more, were included in the criteria to participate in the Santa Clara County Livestock Pass Program allowing them to



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potentially obtain emergency access to care for or evacuate their hives during a wildfire disaster event.

cc: Chief Board Aides
Greta Hansen, Chief Operating Officer
James R. Williams, County Counsel
Tiffany Lennear, Clerk of the Board
Kasey Halcón, Deputy County Executive
Sylvia Gallegos, Deputy County Executive
Brian A. Glass, Assistant Fire Chief
Jasneet Sharma, Director, Office of Sustainability
Joseph Deviney, County Agriculture Commissioner
Tonya Veitch, Sustainability Analyst, Office of Sustainability

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