SEPTEMBER 25, 2018 - CITY COUNCIL MEETING

CITY OPEN SPACE MAINTENANCE AND FUEL MODIFICATION STRATEGIES TO MITIGATE WILDLAND FIRE RISK ON CITY OWNED PROPERTIES
Begin the discussion that may result in strategies, suggestions, and guidelines which would help guide future decisions about vegetation management.

I. Current regulatory framework
II. Existing vegetation management goals
III. Vegetation management techniques
IV. Long-term funding considerations
TONIGHT’S DISCUSSION

Acreage: 5,540 acres of Open Space within Novato, Majority owned by Marin Co. O/S Dist.

20-plus miles of fence line in Novato, adjacent to City property
EN Policy 42 Specific Use Objectives for Open Space. Protect publicly-owned open space areas in their natural state; limit uses to those with a minimal adverse environmental impact.

EN Program 42.1: Establish standards for the management and maintenance of City-owned open space.

EN Program 42.2: Establish an annual City open space maintenance and environmental needs inventory, and include a budget for open space maintenance.
REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Novato General Plan – Safety Element

SF Policy 18  Vegetation Management. Continue to implement an effective and environmentally sound vegetation management and weed abatement program.

SF Program 18.1: Continue to require the use of the following methods of weed abatement wherever possible: use of mechanical rather than chemical removal of weeds; reseeding with native bunchgrass varieties in sloping disturbed soils; and limiting weed abatement activities in areas with known endangered plant and animal species. Strongly encourage a zone system of landscaping, as per Fire District standards, for defensible space around buildings in high fire risk areas.
REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

- **Defensible Space**

  Starts with local fire **NFPD** standards for new development
REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Laws applying to Vegetation Clearance:

**Wetlands** – Clean Water Act of 1977

**Riparian lands** – CA Department of Fish & Wildlife Code

- Nesting bird habitats

*Porter Cologne Water Quality Control Act* / Section 401 of Clean Water Act

**Endangered Species Acts** – Federal and State & Migratory Bird Treaty Act

Also:

- Adopted Local Standards
- Local Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Safety Element of General Plan
- CA Fire Code / Public Resources Code
REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

- **Wildland Urban Interface:** “WUI”
- **Fire Hazard Severity Zones**
II. EXISTING VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

- **City** projects, and response to O/S tree and weed abatement complaints

- **Novato FPD** and FIRESafe Marin projects funded by Federal, State and Local **Grants**
  
  *FS Marin is clearinghouse for Federal and State grant programs*

  *FS Marin: Four year total of $1,678,673 in grants (drop in the bucket)*

- Fire Fuel Reduction **Matching Grant Program**
  
  *$ 500/residential parcel*

  *$1,500/homeowner’s association*

- **Firewise USA Program** – individual responsibility to prepare for wildfires

  *Pacheco Valle residents and Marin Mobile Country Club*
VEGETATION MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

- Protect intent of O/S in Novato
- Reduce fuels in sustainable manner
- Increase public education
- Create “Prescriptions”
- Work with stakeholders to leverage funds
- Developing “transition zones” – new
- Lessons Learned from Santa Rosa - agency coordination
RECENT “SHADED FUEL BREAKS” CREATED

- **18/19 City Budget $20k**
  - Ignacio Blvd Area / Hamilton / Central Novato
  - West Novato

- **Terry Circle – Woodland Ct in 2018**
  - TAM Fuels Crew / NFPD / City Crew

- **Presidents Area & Stone Dr in 2017**
  - $10k FireSAFE Marin Grant

- **Hamilton Pool / Gym Area in 2016**
  - $10k FireSAFE Marin Grant

- **MVMCC Fuel Break in 2016**
  - $75k Park Reserve Funds
**RECENT FUEL REDUCTION EFFORTS & COSTS – PG&E**

- **Reduction in PG&E Grants**
  - $300,000 in Marin County Requests
    - reduced to $30,000 (awarded to **Marin Valley Mobile Country Club**) in response to recent liability arising out of Napa / Sonoma fires

- **Community Wildfire Safety Program**
  - Protection of PG&E infrastructure only – not a local program
  - Community information Workshop **tomorrow**
    - 2 to 4 pm, Key Room – Homeward Bound
IV.  LONG-TERM FUNDING CHALLENGES

Other options that could be considered in the future are:

a. Increased **Grant Funding** efforts
b. Prioritize **General Funds** to perform vegetation management
c. Citywide **Assessment District**
d. Parcel Tax or District for **WUI**
e. Citywide vegetation management fund – **Bond Measure**
f. No action, maintain open space as **unmaintained** property
PUBLIC OUTREACH

- **Firewise USA:** [www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/By-topic/Wildfire/Firewise-USA](http://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/By-topic/Wildfire/Firewise-USA)
- **FIRESafe Marin:** [www.firesafemarin.org](http://www.firesafemarin.org)
- **Novato Fire Protection District:** [www.novatofire.org](http://www.novatofire.org)
RECOMMENDATION

- Receive the update on current fuel modification strategies on city owned properties, and provide direction to staff on possible future modification of City Open Space policies related to reducing potential for wildland fires, citywide.
QUESTIONS??