



Santa Clara County FireSafe Council

Mobilizing the people of Santa Clara County to protect their homes, communities and environment from wildfires

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For immediate release

Santa Clara County FireSafe Council is about to start work on a CALFIRE funded wildfire prevention project to create a fuel break along Highway 17 near Redwood Estates.

The vehicle fire on Monday that escaped into the forested slopes below dozens of homes was exactly the scenario that residents in the area and firefighters feared.

In 2014, Redwood Estates homeowners wrote to Caltrans and CALFIRE to raise concerns about the fire hazard along the highway due to many dead trees that have been accumulating on the hillsides, as well as frequent car fires.

Since then, the FireSafe Council has been working with CAL FIRE to fund and develop the project, coordinating with Caltrans, the California Conservation Corps, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, Santa Clara County Parks, Redwood Estates Services Association, and others.

The project will create a fuel break by removing combustible vegetation above the southbound side of the highway, such as invasive broom as well as over 100 dead trees.

In April, the FireSafe Council was awarded a \$99,000 grant from the State Responsibility Area Fire Prevention Fund. Work will start in July.

The grant funds are to help residents who live near the highway between Bear Creek Road and Summit Road with their fuel reduction work. The FireSafe Council will coordinate Caltrans to do dead tree and brush removal in the highway right-of-way below the homes.

"This project is needed to address significant tree mortality due to bark beetles, sudden oak death, and drought stress. We look forward to working with the FireSafe Council and our partners in Caltrans and the CCC to help mitigate the risks of wildfire in this very vulnerable area," said CAL FIRE Unit Forester Ed Orre.

"It is urgent we get started," said FireSafe Council Programs Manager Patty Ciesla. "So much attention is going to the Sierras where pines are dying in huge numbers but we are also vulnerable here. We are all worried about dead trees locally and this fire has our attention. Our Lexington Hills area manager had to evacuate her home in Redwood Estates, which was only a short distance from the flames," Ciesla said.

Advocating on behalf of the grant to fund the project were several legislators including state Senator Jim Beall, whose district includes Redwood Estates.

"The FireSafe Council's project will be a big step toward preventing a potential catastrophic wildfire that could destroy homes and wildlife," Beall said. "I am glad that I could play a role in urging CAL FIRE to approve the grant funds for our area."

An informational workshop will be hosted by Senator Beall on July 26th in Redwood Estates. Project information will be available at www.sccfiresafe.org. For more information, contact Patty Ciesla, Programs Manager, at 408-354-7279 or programs@sccfiresafe.org

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