

# **Santa Clara County Community Wildfire Protection Plan**

Prepared for  
**Santa Clara County**

Prepared by  
**SWCA Environmental Consultants**

June 2016

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# **SANTA CLARA COUNTY COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN**

Prepared for

**SANTA CLARA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT**  
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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Santa Clara County Community Wildfire Protection Plan acknowledges the efforts of the CWPP Core Team, who without their ongoing contributions, expertise and commitment to wildfire preparedness in Santa Clara County, this CWPP would not have been developed.

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Wildfire continues to be a threat to communities across the United States; in the last few years, most western states have experienced the largest wildfires in their histories. Wildfires with a broad range of sizes and locations have destroyed hundreds of homes; the cost to suppress wildfires across the nation typically exceeds one billion dollars annually.

In recognition of this threat, many communities have worked to develop Community Wildfire Protection Plans, bringing together many stakeholders to develop strategies to mitigate the occurrence and effects of wildfire. Several communities in Santa Clara County have developed such plans, demonstrating an awareness and concern for wildfire hazard which should be applauded.

Because wildfires often threaten areas much larger than individual communities, it is critically important that planning for the occurrence of wildfire occurs within communities and between communities. In recognition of the advantages of a broader scope of wildfire preparation, multi-jurisdictional agencies, organizations, and residents have joined together to develop this plan, the Santa Clara County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (Santa Clara County CWPP).

This larger scale of planning increases the level of coordination and cooperation among stakeholders which can lead to broader and more efficient wildfire risk mitigation measures. For example, the Santa Clara County CWPP can serve as the wildfire component within the Safety Element of the Santa Clara County General Plan; can help prioritize and strengthen requests for competitive funding grants to reduce hazardous fuels; and can facilitate the adoption of common standards for defensible space across Santa Clara County. Good ideas can be more readily shared with all communities within the County, greatly facilitating public education outreach efforts

The purpose of the Santa Clara County CWPP is to assist in protecting human life and reducing property loss due to wildfire throughout the planning area. The plan is the result of a community-wide wildland fire protection planning process and the compilation of documents, reports, and data developed by a wide array of contributors. This plan was compiled in 2015-2016 in response to the federal Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) of 2003. The Santa Clara County CWPP meets the requirements of the HFRA by:

- 1) Having been developed collaboratively by multiple agencies at the state and local levels in consultation with federal agencies and other interested parties.
- 2) Prioritizing and identifying fuel reduction treatments and recommending the types and methods of treatments to protect at-risk communities and pertinent infrastructure.
- 3) Suggesting multi-party mitigation, monitoring, and outreach.
- 4) Recommending measures and action items that residents and communities can take to reduce the ignitability of structures.
- 5) Facilitating public information meetings to educate and involve the community to participate in and contribute to the development of the Santa Clara County CWPP.

The planning process has served to identify many physical hazards throughout the planning area that could increase the threat of wildfire to communities. The public also has helped to identify community values that it would most like to see protected. By incorporating public and Core Team input into the recommendations, treatments are tailored specifically for the planning area so that they are sensitive to local residents' concerns. The SCCCWPP emphasizes the importance of collaboration among multi-jurisdictional agencies in order to develop fuels mitigation treatment programs to address wildfire hazards.

Santa Clara County has a very strong team of career and volunteer firefighters, who work arduously to protect the life and property of the citizens, but without homeowners taking on some of the responsibility of reducing fire hazards in and around their own homes, these resources are severely stretched. Without reduction of fire hazards by homeowners before a fire occurs, it may be impossible for firefighters to safely defend structures when wildfire threatens an area. A combination of homeowner and community awareness, public education, agency collaboration, and fuel treatments are necessary to fully reduce wildfire risk.

It is important to stress that this document is an initial step in educating the public and treating areas of concern, and should serve as a tool to accomplish these tasks. The Santa Clara County CWPP should be treated as a live document to be updated approximately every two years. The plan should be revised to reflect changes, modifications, or new information that may contribute to an updated Santa Clara County CWPP. These elements are essential to the success of mitigating wildfire risk throughout the planning area and will be important in maintaining the ideas and priorities of the plan and the communities in the future.



## DOCUMENT NAVIGATION

### STRATEGIC COUNTYWIDE DOCUMENT

This CWPP document is organized into 7 main chapters that describe overarching county level wildfire risk and hazard and recommendations for improved wildfire preparedness at the county level. This overarching document should be considered a strategic level plan for Community Wildfire Protection.

- **Chapter 1:** provides an overview of the planning area and the planning process for the CWPP.
- **Chapter 2:** outlines some of the community characteristics that relate to wildfire risk and hazard including climate and weather, vegetation, and population.
- **Chapter 3:** describes the fire environment including the description of the Wildland Urban Interface and fire response.
- **Chapter 4:** describes the development of the wildfire hazard/risk assessment that is broken down into a county scale, community scale and parcel scale assessment.
- **Chapter 5:** describes the existing and proposed community outreach that is integral to improving wildfire preparedness.
- **Chapter 6:** lays out the mitigation strategies that could be applied to address wildfire hazard and risk and is broken down into general projects, public education and outreach, structural ignitability, fire response capacity and hazardous fuel reduction projects.
- **Chapter 7:** provides recommended monitoring and evaluation strategies to help identify needed updates to the document.
- **Appendixes:** in order to improve the functionality of the main document, some extraneous detail is provided in separate appendixes and referenced in the text.

### AGENCY/COMMUNITY ANNEXES

In addition to the strategic countywide document are individual agency or community level annexes that are organized by jurisdiction. These annexes provide more specific wildfire mitigation projects that were developed through collaboration with the Core Team and the public. These annexes form the legs of the strategic document and provide projects that could be implemented at the community level, but that are tiered to the countywide strategic goals. The annexes can be updated separately from the main document providing greater utility for agencies to make changes to their project lists.

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**KML of Conceptual Treatment Projects for the following Planning Areas**

Almaden Valley  
East Foothills  
Lexington Hills  
Monte Sereno  
Morgan Hill  
Mt. Hamilton  
Saratoga Hills  
Uvas\_Casa\_Loma  
West Gilroy  
Planning Areas

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## ACRONYMS

ATV	All-terrain vehicle
BTU	British Thermal Unit
CA FSC	California Fire Safe Council
CAL FIRE	California Department of Forestry
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CERT	Community Emergency Response Team
CFIP	California Forest Improvement Program
CHR	Community Hazard Rating
CMR	Community Mitigation Rating
CVARs	Community Value at Risk
CWPP	Community Wildfire Protection Plan
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
EQ	Earthquake Clearing House
FD	Fire Department
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FHSZ	Fire Hazard Severity Zone
FPD	Fire Protection District
FRA	Federal Responsibility Area
FRCC	Fire Regime Condition Class
GHGRF	Green House Gas Reduction Fund
GIS	Geographic Information System
H	High
HFRA	Healthy Forest Restoration Act
HIZ	Home Ignition Zone
HOA	Home Owner Association
ISO	Insurance Services Office
LHMP	Local Hazard Mitigation Plan
LiDAR	Light detection and ranging
LRA	Local Responsibility Area
M	Medium
MROSD	Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
NFPA	National Fire Protection Association
NPS	National Park Service
NRCS	Natural Resource Conservation Service
OSA	Open Space Authority
PMR	Parcel Mitigation Rating
PRC	Public Resources Code
SAF	Society of American Foresters
SCCCWPP	Santa Clara County Community Wildfire Protection Plan
SCCFD	Santa Clara County Fire Department
SCCFSC	Santa Clara County Fire Safe Council
SCVHA	Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency
SCVWD	Santa Clara Valley Water District
SHMP	State Hazard Mitigation Plan
SJWC	San Jose Water Company
SRA	State Responsibility Area
SSFSC	South Skyline Fire Safe Council
TCS	Total Community Score
VFD	Volunteer Fire Department
VH	Very High
VMP	Vegetation Management Plan
WRCC	Western Regional Climate Center
WUI	Wildland Urban Interface