



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

For Immediate Release

Date: November 21, 2008

Contact: Leigh Ann Maze
Communications Specialist
650.691.1200 x566

MROSD invites public input on wildfire management policy at Dec. 4 workshop

--District, neighbors must work together to prevent wildfires--

Los Altos, CA [November 21, 2008] – The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District invites public input on its draft wildland fire management policy at a workshop to be held:

**Thursday, Dec. 4 at 7 p.m.
Shoup Park Garden House
400 University Avenue
Los Altos, CA. 94022**

A draft of the policy and more information at:

http://www.openspace.org/plans_projects/wildlandfire.asp



The District's board of directors will discuss the policy and welcome questions and public feedback. It is critical that the District and public work together to prevent and prepare for wildfires due to the proximity of residential communities to wildlands in the Bay Area. The devastating fires that raged through California this year have underscored the need for responsible management of wildlands and private property to reduce the risk of fire and the threat it poses to public safety, property and the environment.

A workshop held last November on the District's fire policy provided input from the public and fire professionals that has been incorporated into the current draft.

The District already uses many fire-safe land management practices including partnerships with fire agencies and the maintenance of disc lines and emergency access roads. Their active vegetation management program reduces fuel loads through brush clearing, weed eradication, conservation grazing and prescribed burning. While the District owns some firefighting equipment and trains its staff to fight fire, suppression is the responsibility of CalFire and local fire departments that have the resources, training and equipment.

The District's new policy will build upon its existing wildfire management practices and clarify their role in fire response. For example, the new policy calls for the development of detailed fire response plans for each of the District's 26 open space preserves and for collaboration with preserve neighbors to create fire clearances.

Fire is a natural part of California's ecosystem. Many plants have evolved to withstand fire and some have come to depend on it to release or germinate their seeds. Native Americans in the Bay Area understood the importance of fire in the environment and used it as a tool to manage the plants and grasslands which they, and the animals they hunted, depended on for food.

The arrival of Europeans brought intense land development, logging and eventually widespread fire suppression. One example of the impact of these practices is the replacement of ancient, fire-resistant forests with dense, younger forests that carry high fuel loads in close proximity to metropolitan areas. This is one of many fire management challenges which the District hopes to address in its new policy, expected to be complete by Spring 2009 before the start of the next fire season.