



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-22-60
Meeting 22-13
May 25, 2022

AGENDA ITEM 7

AGENDA ITEM

Agreement with Woodside Fire Protection District / Fire Safe San Mateo County to Implement Fuel Reduction/Vegetation Management Work on District Lands Utilizing Two State Grants

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION *den*

Authorize the General Manager to execute an Agreement with Woodside Fire Protection District / Firesafe San Mateo County to utilize State Coastal Conservancy Forest Health and Wildfire Resilience Program funds and the CAL FIRE Early Action Fire Prevention Grant to conduct fuel reduction and ecologically sensitive vegetation management work at Thornewood Open Space Preserve and within multiple preserves fronting the Highway 35 corridor.

SUMMARY

The proposed agreement sets forth how the Woodside Fire Protection District (Woodside Fire) in cooperation with Fire Safe San Mateo County (SM Firesafe) will carry out fuel reduction activities within Thornewood Preserve and along Highway 35 using grant funds awarded to Woodside Fire/SM Fire Safe by the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) and CAL FIRE. The work performed under the SCC grant includes invasive species removal and expansion of an evacuation route project in Thornewood Open Space Preserve extending from Highway 84 to Espinosa Road. The CAL FIRE grant-funded project will create an evacuation route and shaded fuel break along Highway 35 that includes extensive work on Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) preserves in the Skyline region.

DISCUSSION

State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) Grant (Thornewood Preserve)

On April 14, 2021, the SCC announced the new Forest Health and Wildfire Resilience Program grant opportunity. Both the District and Woodside Fire/SM Fire Safe applied for grant funds for “ready-to-implement” projects that reduce the risk of wildfire on public and protected lands. The District was awarded \$400,000 to implement treatment on approximately 114.7 acres in 11 preserves (R-21-84). Woodside Fire/SM Fire Safe was awarded \$194,000 to fund vegetation treatment at three public park/open space sites: Big Canyon Park, Eaton Park and Thornewood Open Space Preserve (Thornewood Preserve). Big Canyon and Eaton Park are City of San Carlos parks located adjacent to Pulgas Ridge Open Space Preserve. SCC funding awarded to Woodside Fire/SM Fire Safe for Thornewood Preserve is approximately \$148,710 and is expected to be expended by July 1, 2023.

The District completed botanical surveys for Thornewood Preserve in 2021 to locate, assess, and map special status plants and sensitive natural communities along an evacuation route that

extends from Highway 84 to Espinosa Road. The District will be working to establish a 100-foot wide shaded fuel break along the evacuation route (Attachment 1). The shaded fuel break will strategically reduce density of vegetation to reduce fire spread into or through the canopy. At key locations, shrubs, small trees, and grasses will be removed or reduced in density while retaining larger diameter trees with often thick, fire-resistant bark to promote late-seral forest conditions. This work was identified as a Tier 1 project priority in the District's Wildland Fire Resiliency Program. In January 2022, District staff completed an initial 30 feet of mechanical mastication treatment along 3,700 linear feet of the evacuation route. The remaining 70 feet of treatment area along the evacuation route will be completed by District staff funded by the District's SCC grant.

In October 2021, Woodside Fire/SM Firesafe utilized SCC grant funding to remove two large Blue Gum Eucalyptus trees (24" and 40"), removed small trees less than 6" in diameter, and removed dead branches near two District residences in Thornewood Preserve to improve forest health and expand defensible space around the structures. After consulting with District staff and determining funding was available for further fuel treatment work, additional botanical surveys were secured to expand ecologically sensitive vegetation management at Thornewood Preserve for forest health and to support future evacuations and emergency vehicle access (R-22-15). With available grant funding supplied by SCC to Woodside Fire/SM Firesafe, Woodside Fire/ SM Firesafe hand crews will expand the fuel treatment area beyond the evacuation route. The proposed project will expand the District's original fuel break and increase treatment from the evacuation route out to Highway 84 and remove dead, diseased and fallen trees along the former Dennis Martin Road to reduce fuel loads and improve forest health (Attachment 1). The additional work is proposed to be completed in October of 2022 once the protocol botanical surveys are completed.

CAL FIRE Early Action Fire Prevention Grant (Skyline Boulevard multiple preserves)

On September 13, 2021, Woodside Fir/SM Fire Safe was awarded \$2,679,223 to implement the Highway 35 Evacuation Route Shaded Fuel Break project (Attachment 2). The project is designed to reduce wildfires and the resulting carbon emissions, as well as protect life, property, infrastructure, and the watershed by focusing on a Highway 35 evacuation route along approximately 22 miles of mostly forested lands. The project requires collaboration among Caltrans, Woodside Fire, and the District to reduce ignitions, rate of spread and intensity of ignitions near vulnerable communities, create a safer evacuation route, and promote wildfire resiliency.

District preserves identified for treatment include Coal Creek, El Corte de Madera Creek, La Honda Creek, Long Ridge, Miramontes Ridge, Monte Bello, Purisima Creek Redwoods, Russian Ridge, Skyline Ridge, and Windy Hill Open Space Preserves. Botanical surveys, funded by the District for all affected preserves, are currently underway to ensure the preservation of sensitive species and prepare mitigation recommendations as-needed (R-22-16). Once Woodside Fire completes the required CEQA evaluation, treatment work is planned to commence in the spring of 2023.

The Agreement with Woodside Fire/SM Fire Safe will ensure that the scope of work for each project is performed according to established District Best Management Practices (BMPs) and Mitigation Measures described in the Wildland Fire Resiliency Program Environmental Impact Report, complies with all requirements of the awarded grants, complies with District and Woodside Fire insurance and competitive bid requirements, and allows inspection and modification of the project as deemed necessary by the District.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact to the District associated with the recommendation. Woodside Fire Protection District/San Mateo County will be using their own funds and grants to perform the work on District land.

PRIOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

- June 2021: The Board approved entering into an Agreement with the State Coastal Conservancy for Forest Health and Wildfire Resilience Program funding. ([R-21-84, meeting minutes](#))
- February 2022: The Board approved entering into a contract for Botanical Services. ([R-22-15, meeting minutes](#))
- February 2022: The Board approved entering into a contract for Botanical Services. ([R-22-16, meeting minutes](#))

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

Execution of the Agreement and acceptance of grant funding are not a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Woodside Fire is the lead agency and is currently conducting CEQA review for the Highway 35 Evacuation Route Shaded Fuel Break project. District staff will ensure that Woodside Fire/SM Firesafe incorporates the associated mitigation measures and BMPs into the CEQA document, project, and the contract documents. The forest health and wildland fire management activities to be completed in Thornewood and other District preserves include mechanized, handwork treatment, and limited chemical application and were reviewed in and are consistent with the Wildland Fire Resiliency Program Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) certified by the Board on May 12, 2021.

NEXT STEPS

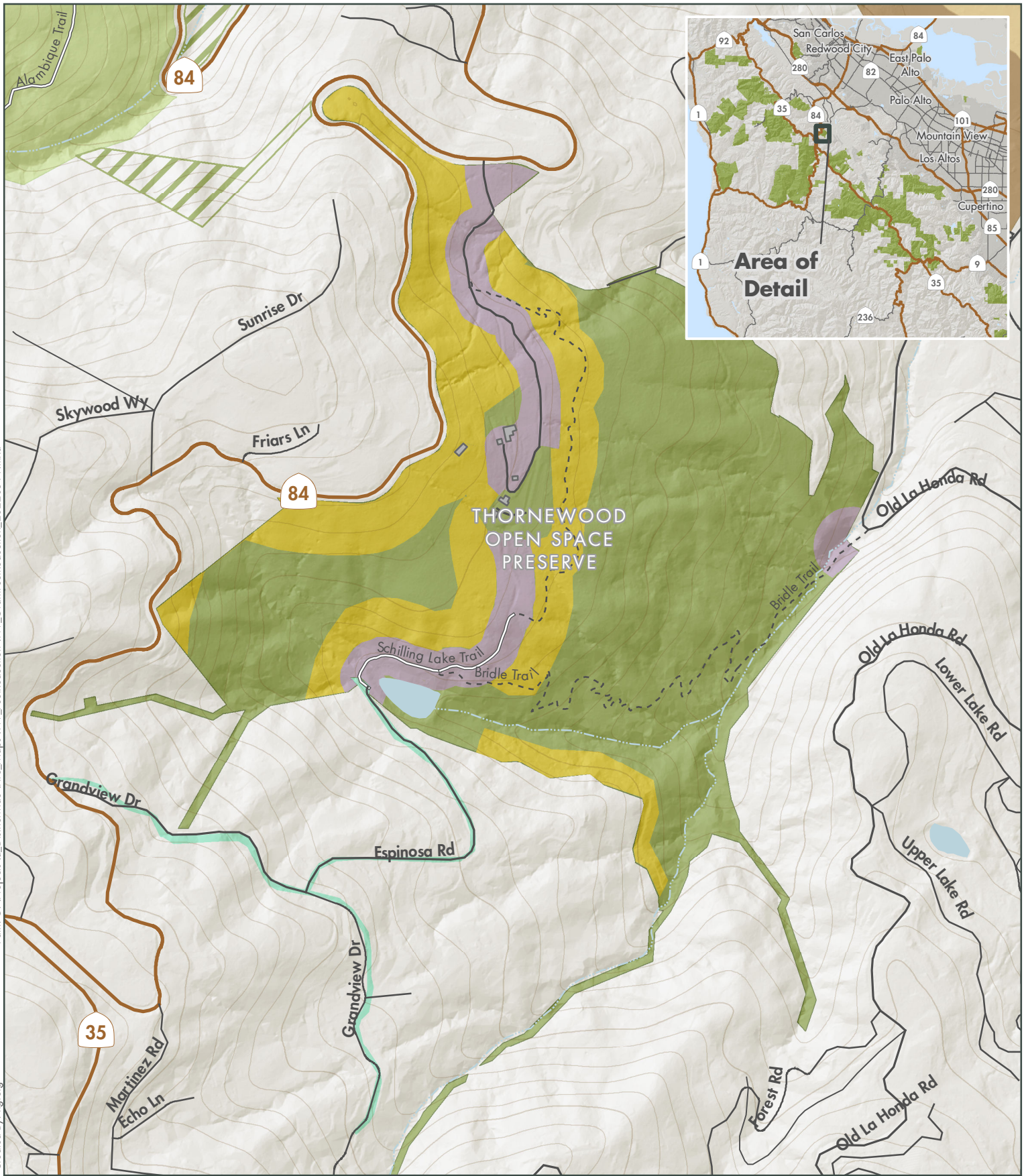
If approved by the Board, the General Manager will execute the Agreement with Woodside Fire.

Attachments

1. Map of jointly funded evacuation route at Thornewood Preserve.
2. Map of Highway 35 Evacuation Route.

Responsible Department Head / Prepared by:
Brandon Stewart, Land & Facilities

Path: G:\Projects\A. Districtwide\Fire_Maps\TW_FuelReduction\TW_GrantFuelReduction_20220511.mxd
Created By: ngreig



SCC Grant funded fuel reduction in Thornewood

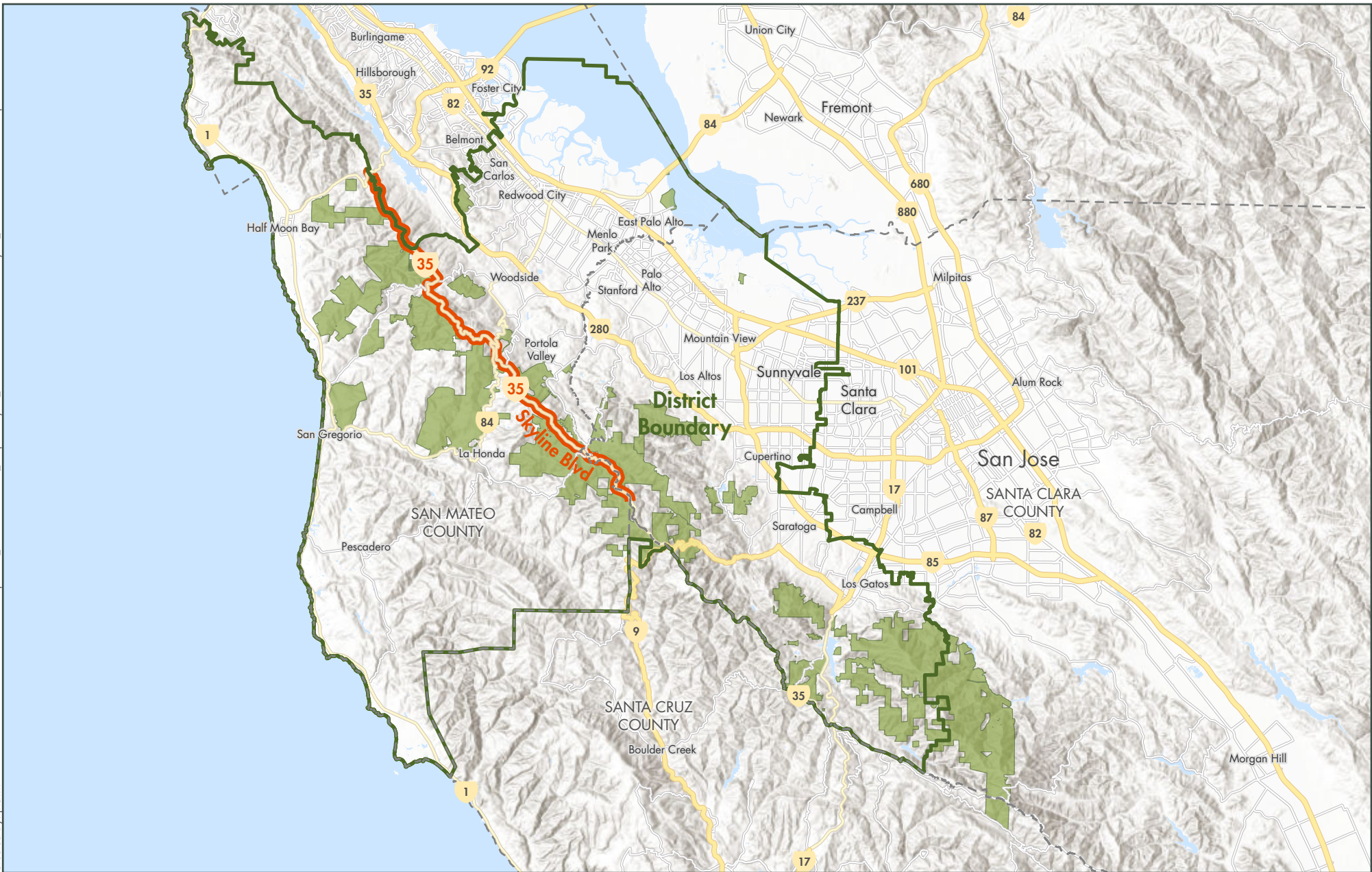
- SM Fire Safe/Woodside Fire SCC Grant
- District SCC Grant
- Thornewood Preserve
- Building
- Community Escape Route

Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District
(Midpen)
5/11/2022







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While the District strives to use the best available digital data, these data do not represent a legal survey and are merely a graphic illustration of geographic features.



Hwy 35 Critical Evacuation Route

-  Hwy 35 Critical Evacuation Route in San Mateo County
-  County Boundaries
-  Midpen District Boundary
-  Midpen Preserves

Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District
(Midpen)
1/14/2022



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