

Marin County Forest Health and Fire Resilience Public Works Plan (PWP) Frequently Asked Questions

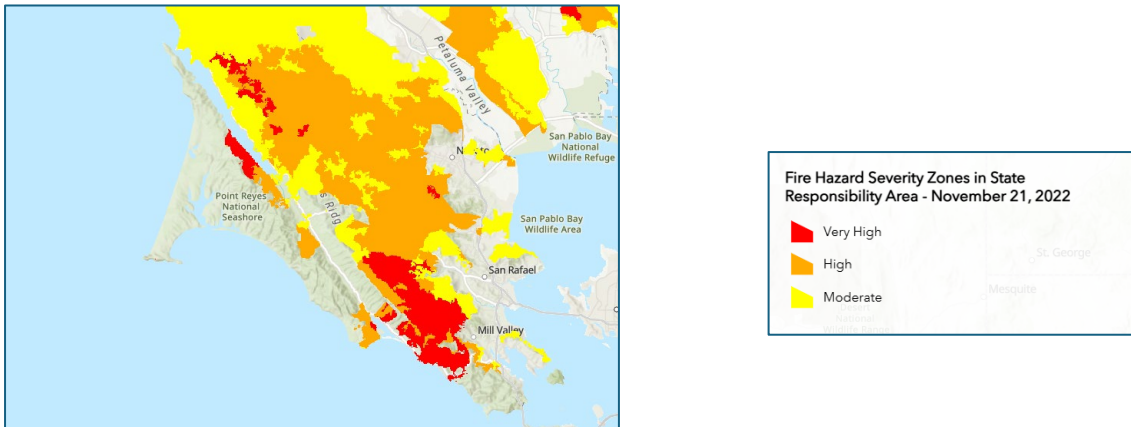
Updated 09-11-2025

Why is vegetation management needed in Coastal Marin?

Much of Coastal Marin has a long history of frequent low intensity fire, both cultural burning and wildfire, that provided ecological benefits and reduced the buildup of vegetation on the landscape. In fact, coastal grasslands likely burned every 1-3 years and coastal redwoods likely burned every 10-30 years according to the [Point Reyes National Seashore](#). These low intensity frequent fires have been largely eradicated through the outlawing of cultural burning and efficacy of modern fire suppression efforts. Additionally, with European settlement, highly flammable non-native invasive plants have become prevalent on the landscape, often crowding out native species. Without frequent low intensity fire, vegetation builds up on the landscape making fires more intense and more dangerous to people and ecosystems.

This buildup of vegetation on the landscape, coupled with a changing climate, contributes to wildfire risk in Coastal Marin. In fact, CAL FIRE's recent update to hazard maps for the State Responsibility Areas shows a marked increase in High (orange) and Very High (red) Fire Hazard Severity Zone Areas in Coastal Marin over previous hazard maps. (See Figure below.) Coastal Marin has a history of wildfire, including the [1995 Vision Fire](#), during which 44 homes were lost, serving as an example of the vulnerability of coastal Marin communities.

Figure 1. CAL FIRE Fire Hazard Severity Zones in State Responsibility Areas, Updated November 21, 2022. Note: Fire Hazard on Federal and Local Responsibility Areas is not identified in the map below.



Source: <https://calfire-forestry.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=fd937aba2b044c3484a642ae03c35677>

Working with experts to both reduce unnatural fuel buildup and restore native plant communities can reduce the intensity and severity of future wildfires and reduce the likelihood that they could destroy forests, burn down homes, and risk the lives of residents. Only a combination of strategic vegetation management, home hardening, defensible space, and public education can make our communities and landscapes wildfire resilient.

Vegetation management projects for wildfire resilience typically target understory vegetation and not live, healthy, mature trees. This includes dead and down woody debris, non-native invasive shrubs and trees (such as [French broom](#), [gorse](#), [acacia](#), [echium](#), etc.) which out compete native understory plants and act as ladder fuels as well as diseased and otherwise hazardous trees (like dead trees if they pose a hazard to nearby homes). These understory plants compete for water and nutrients. Without this competition, mature native trees thrive, sequester more carbon, and are more resilient to future droughts and fires. Removing excess understory plants acts as a

surrogate for fire that would otherwise occur naturally. These activities have ecological benefits as well as wildfire resilience benefits and help create landscape conditions that more closely resemble those before widespread fire suppression and invasion of non-native species.

What is a Public Works Plan (PWP)?

It's a document that sets up a process to get a permit under the California Coastal Act for doing certain kinds of projects (like shaded fuel breaks) in coastal areas.

Does a PWP identify specific projects?

No. A PWP only outlines requirements for future project permits and describes the kinds of activities that could be done in the future. It is not a permit nor a project because it does not propose or allow specific projects in Coastal Marin. Those will be proposed in the future with opportunities for more public comment.

Why does the PWP Program Area map show such a big area?

The PWP Program area map shows generally all of the areas where Marin Wildfire would need a permit from the Coastal Commission if a project were proposed there in the future. Only a tiny fraction of that area would ever be prioritized for treatment (generally in very targeted locations near homes and evacuation routes).

Why does the PWP only discuss vegetation? Why not home hardening and defensible space?

A PWP is not a comprehensive wildfire strategy document. It is limited to describing activities that the Coastal Commission would permit, such as shaded fuel breaks. The document only addresses Coastal Commission regulatory requirements.

Marin Wildfire's strategy for Coastal Marin and throughout its jurisdiction includes public education, home hardening and defensible space inspections, grants to residents, free chipping for residents doing their defensible space work, evacuation and alert planning, and many other projects and programs in addition to vegetation management in very specific locations, such as next to neighborhoods and along evacuation routes.

Does this open the door to logging along the coast?

No. Tree removal is not the target of these projects. No logging would take place as part of Marin Wildfire's work. Logging focuses on removing large economically valuable trees. In contrast, our work keeps mature native trees on the landscape and, instead, removes dead and down woody debris, non-native invasive shrubs and trees, lower branches of trees, and some very targeted overcrowded, diseased or otherwise particularly hazardous vegetation.

What about herbicides?

Non-native, invasive plants are common throughout Marin County. These species reduce biodiversity, crowd out native plant species, and increase wildfire risk. Marin Wildfire and its Member Agencies use manual or mechanical methods to remove non-native, invasive shrubs (such as French broom and gorse) or trees (such as eucalyptus or acacia) first and, in certain limited locations, supplement this work with targeted herbicide application. For example, herbicide may be hand painted onto cut stumps. In these cases, signs are posted before use.

What happens after the PWP is approved?

Following Coastal Commission approval and once the PWP is in place, any proposed projects still require:

- CEQA compliance,
- Notice of Impending Development (NOID), and
- Coastal Commission approval.

Future projects would focus on work directly adjacent to homes and evacuation routes as well as in locations where Coastal Commission staff recommends for forest/ecosystem health purposes.