



Chipper Program Annual Report
2025

Delivered on 2/13/2026

2025 Highlights

18,700 cubic yards of vegetation removed

Highest season total in program history!

5,089 completed pickups county-wide

Another program record and 4% increase from 2024!

Increased in-person outreach and engagement

Chipper Program spotlighted at Ember Stomp and community events throughout the year.

Celebrated 5 year anniversary in July 2025!

Marin homeowners continue to show their commitment to creating and maintaining Defensible Space.



What is the Marin Chipper Program?

The Marin Chipper Program, also known as Marin Chipper Day, is a vegetation management program run by the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority (MWPA). The program provides for the curbside pickup, chipping, and disposal of vegetation material from residential properties located within the five MWPA Zones..

Purpose

Removal and disposal of vegetation is time consuming and costly. The purpose of the Chipper program is to assist Marin residents with their efforts to create and maintain Defensible Space around their homes by providing a free and convenient service for the disposal of their excess vegetation.

Impact

Curbside pickup programs, like the Marin Chipper Program, generate a wide array of positive outcomes, including:

1) Reduction of Hazardous Vegetation & Creation of Defensible Space

In a 2021 survey of residents who participated in similar program in another county, 87% of respondents cited the curbside chipper program as the reason for removing excess vegetation on their property. During the 2025 survey, this number was increased to 88%. Additionally, jurisdictions that coordinate chipping services with Defensible Space inspections continue year after year to show marked increases in the amount of hazardous vegetation removed from their communities.

2) Improved Community Preparedness

The event-based structure of the Marin Chipper Program strengthens communication and cooperation between neighbors as they work to remove fuels in preparation for their chipping event. It also increases knowledge of fire-smart landscaping techniques among residents. This enhanced neighborhood coordination is a hallmark of fire-adapted communities.

3) Minimizing Emissions

Event-based chipper programs, like the Marin Chipper Program, use large "chipper trucks" that follow optimized routes. One Chipper Truck is equivalent to seventeen small landscaper trucks in terms of volume of material that can be transported to disposal sites. The bottom line? Fewer trucks on the street and a reduction in CO2 emissions.



2025 Chipper Program

The 2025 program provided 6 rounds of chipping events for all residents within the MWPA. Additionally, MWPA Member Agencies utilized the program on an ad hoc basis for special events. Continuing the mission established at the conception of Chipper Days, the program aims to offer vegetation removal services equitably to all residents regardless of their location in the county in order to reduce fuel loads and regional fire risks.

2025 saw no significant Wildfire events in the Northern Bay Area. However, many residents expressed concern and a higher than normal motivation to reduce fuel loads near their homes due to hearing about the impacts of several significant wildfires that occurred elsewhere within the state. Throughout the season, the Marin Chipper Program continued to support residents in addressing these concerns by assisting them in reducing fuel loads on their properties and creating Defensible Space.

The program continued to utilize software developed by Fire Aside Inc., a Marin based company. The ability of the software to manage and track reservations, plan the most efficient routes, and allow crews to input pile size estimates along with pile photographs was invaluable to the success of the season.



Chipper crews working on piles in the Central Marin Zone

Rotating schedule continues to offer residents more opportunities for chipping

In 2025, program staff once again utilized the rotating pickup schedule model. As a result, all residents within the JPA were ensured a pickup opportunity roughly once every five weeks. This model gives residents many more opportunities to sign up for chipping service than in the past. Additionally, the rotating schedule and larger service areas per event drastically increases the probability that a resident is able to utilize the program as a resource to act on discoveries found on their defensible space report. In the past, it was much harder to predict if the Chipper Program would be able to assist residents in removing vegetation post-inspection within the 30-day suggested window outlined in their defensible space report. With the crews present in areas much more frequently, the need to tightly tie chipper and inspection schedules closely together was eliminated. Additionally, the number of residents who could call on program assistance within the time window increased significantly.

5 Years of Service to Marin County!

Approximately 5 years ago, in the middle of the pandemic, the Marin Chipper Program (a.k.a. Chipper Days) quietly kicked off. While local vegetation removal programs had always existed in Marin, this was the first time that a centralized, tech-fueled, “curbside pickup program” had ever been attempted county-wide. While we were excited to launch this new program and support the Defensible Space efforts taking place throughout Marin, we were unsure how it would be received by the public and what results it would generate.

Our initial concerns quickly disappeared. Residents enthusiastically embraced the program and demonstrated patience as we ironed out the kinks in Year 1. Just as important, Marin Wildfire staff and board members showed leadership and resolve. They supported us in those hectic early days and committed the financial resources necessary to grow the program and meet resident demand.

While much has changed over the last 5 years, the purpose of our program has remained the same: assist Marin residents with their efforts to create and maintain Defensible Space around their homes by providing a free and convenient service for the disposal of their excess vegetation.



PROGRAM GOALS

Over the years, the residential chipping programs throughout Marin County have subscribed to a static and recurring list of goals. Not least of which is simply the removal of hazardous vegetation and the dissemination of prevention and safety information.

The 2025 season saw the continued commitment to the goals laid out during the past seasons. Marin Wildfire strives to provide the free services of the Chipper Day Program to all residents of Marin in an equitable fashion as well as to assist in lowering the carbon footprint associated with residential cleanup and vegetation removal.

Equitable distribution of services and provide opportunity for more low income and aging residents to access the program

Reduce hazardous vegetation on residential property

Increase program participation with curbside service

Reduce environmental impact by greatly decreasing number of trips to pick up and dispose of material

Increase program visibility with improved advertising

Educate the public about the need to maintain defensible space on private property

Program Management

What does it take to operate a curbside chipping program that covers 90% of Marin & serves thousands of residents throughout the year? Let's find out!

Staff

The 2025 program was managed by Marin Wildfire's Steven Peters and Fire Safe Marin's Brendan Devlin, two Marin County residents who are passionate about serving the community and mitigating wildfire risk. Here's a "behind the scenes" peak at what is involved in planning and operating such a large and complex program.

Pre-season planning

Program planning begins in January and involves the creation of a detailed plan outlining the size, scope, and design of the upcoming year's program. Program Managers review feedback from local government representatives, fire officials, and members of the public as they begin the process of envisioning the upcoming year's program..

Once the plan is finalized, a schedule is created and program rules and procedures are updated. These are then made available to the public via the program signup page, Firewise communities, Fire Safe Marin and other community organizations. Pre-season signups are made available roughly one month prior to the beginning of the season to allow residents to begin planning their work for the year and program managers begin fielding questions and coordinating pickup details.

Chipping season activities

In addition to supervising between 1 and 5 chipper crews every day during the week, Program Managers respond to thousands of inquiries from the public throughout the season. Answering questions, handling logistical "curveballs," and solving complex problems, are all in a day's work. Behind the scenes, Program Managers handle all the necessary Finance, Compliance, and Reporting functions that come with running a public program with a \$1.4 MM budget. Program data is shared at MWPA meetings and staff responds to Board member questions throughout the year. Coordinating services with MWPA Member Agencies to support the overall mission of fuel reduction and marketing the program to Marin County residents are also key responsibilities handled by the Program Managers.



Partnership with Fire Aside continues to be invaluable for both Chipper Crews and Program Staff

Fire Aside continued to serve as a valued partner to the Marin Chipper program in 2025. Fire Aside’s “front end” software allow residents to quickly and easily register for program events and manage their event reservations. The “back end” software give chipper crews a chance to view upcoming reservations in real time, get assistance on routes/schedules, and deliver pickup results and notes to program staff.

In 2025, Fire Aside continued to roll out new features and innovations that had a positive impact on the program. In particular, the spring 2025 software update for the “Crew App” used in the field by our Chipper crews was welcomed by both Program Staff and our valued contractors. The improved UI led to a more streamlined experience for crews responsible for capturing and recording key program data. This, in turn, led to a sharp reduction in incomplete submissions and user errors that would sometimes appear during busy work periods and have to be addressed at the conclusion of the event.

The immediate effect of this key software update was a more consistent, timely, and reliable reporting flow between crew and staff. The long term impact was significant for the public as well. Staff was able to more quickly and effectively tackle resident inquiries/issues in 2025 as a result of the app update. Bottom line? Fire Aside’s continued investment in it’s software helped facilitate a smoother experience for, crew, staff, and the public.

Coordination with MCFD FIRE Foundry Program

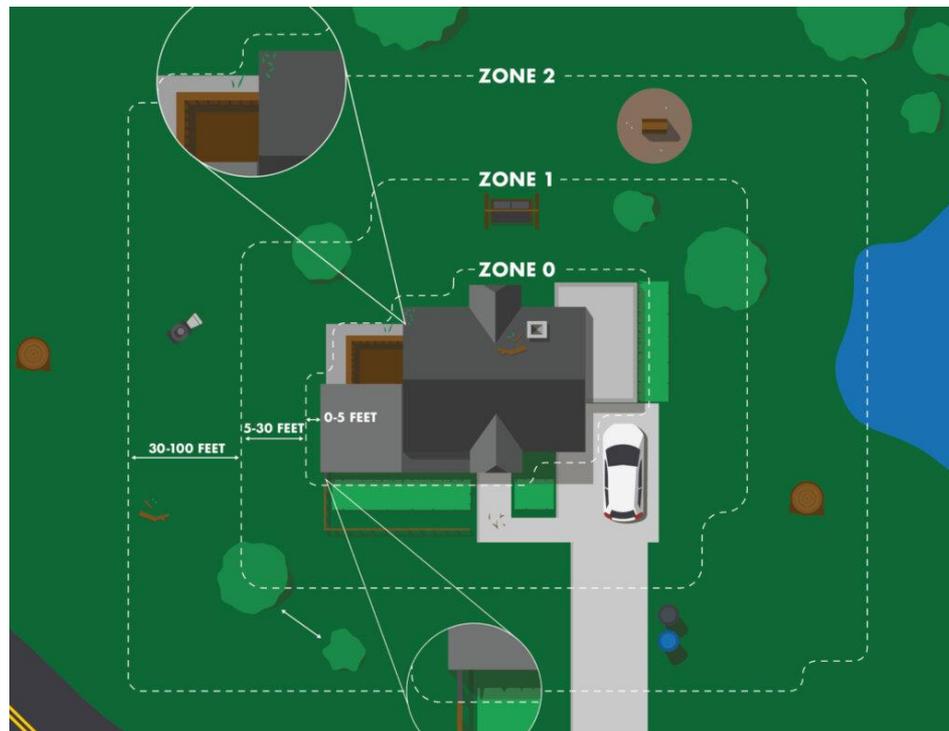
Program Staff continue to be proud to collaborate with Marin County Fire Department's FIRE Foundry program to assist in providing recruits with a variety of experiences during their time with The Foundry. For the 2025 season, Foundry crews assisted the primary chipping crews in completing residential chipper pickups as well as one community green waste drop off event during the season. During the later half of the season, Foundry crews joined Chipper crews for one day a week to assist in high reservation volume areas in each of the zones. During these days, members gained experience working in the many different communities within Marin.



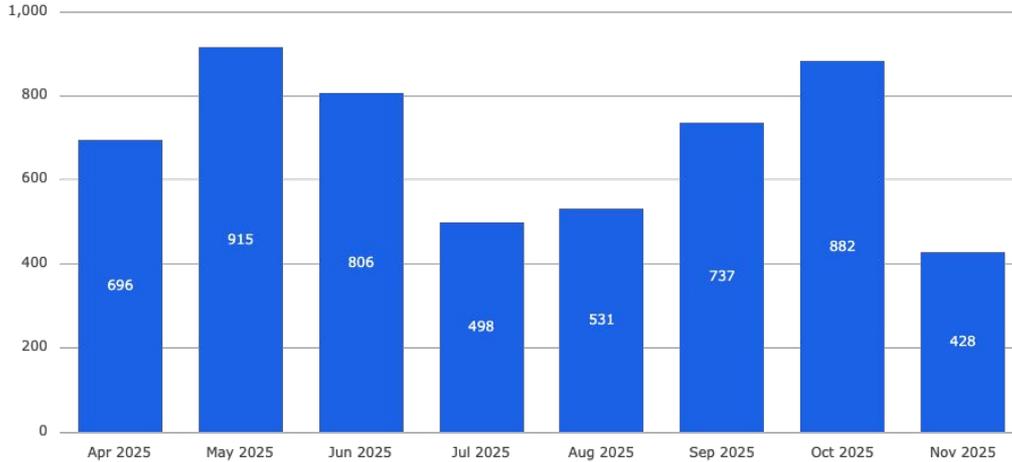
Fire Foundry crews working in Woodacre

A focus on vegetation origin

During the planning phase of the 2025 program season, an interest was identified from some of the member agencies to try to determine where vegetation was originating from within residential properties. This was in relation to the anticipated upcoming Zone 0 (0-5 feet from structure) ordinances that will be adopted. Marin Wildfire wanted to determine how much of the vegetation removed through the program was taken from the Zone 0 area of residential properties, compared to what percentage was removed from Zones 1, 2 or further out from structures. Based on resident reported survey data, it was determined that 38% of vegetation removed by the program in 2025 originated from the Zone 0 area of properties. The largest percentage of vegetation removed was from Zone 1 (5-30 feet from structure) with 69.4% of program removed vegetation originating from this area.



Completed Pickups by Month



2025 Activity Summary

During its fifth year of operation, the chipper program saw high activity throughout its seven month season. In almost every month of operation, the program completed well above 500 reservations (half months of work in July due to admin break and November due to season end). Throughout the season chipping crews worked to complete an average of 169 reservations per week.

FireWise communities were also strong participants in chipping operations, with communities contributing significantly to the total numbers of pick ups and volume of vegetation removed. Marin Wildfire's Chipper Program strives to work closely with Firewise Communities to identify area specific needs and rely on them to help engage residents who are new to our program.

	All County*	FireWise Communities
Cubic volume	18,700	11,342
Completed pickups	5,089	3,079

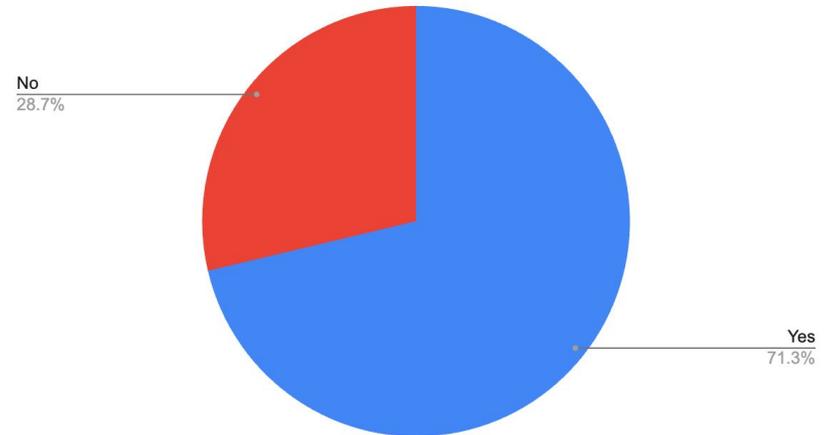
*All county refers to all MWPA participating jurisdictions (ie excludes Tiburon)



The Defensible Space Inspections program continues to motivate residents to take advantage of the Chipper Day Program

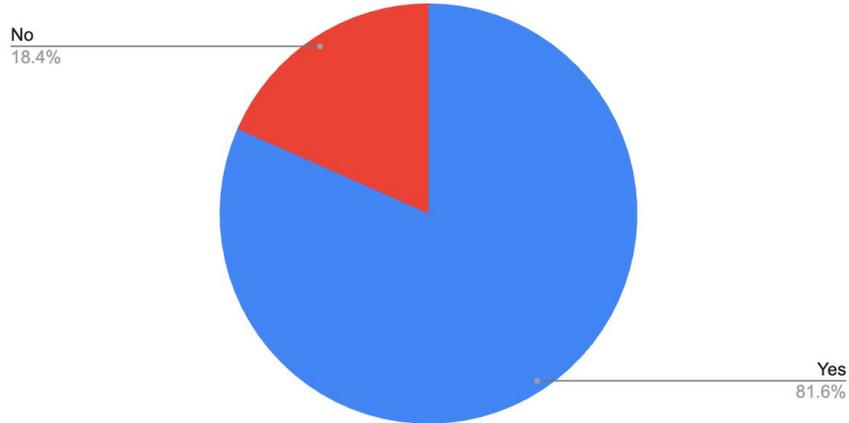
Marin Wildfire's Chipper program continues to be a resource to residents wanting to act on their Defensible Space Report. Residents are able to utilize the frequency of the program's events throughout the JPA to remove hazardous vegetation identified during inspections. The public program creates an incentive for residents to act on portions of their report that they may not have otherwise, due to cost of disposal or transportation concerns.

Have you had a Defensible Space inspection?

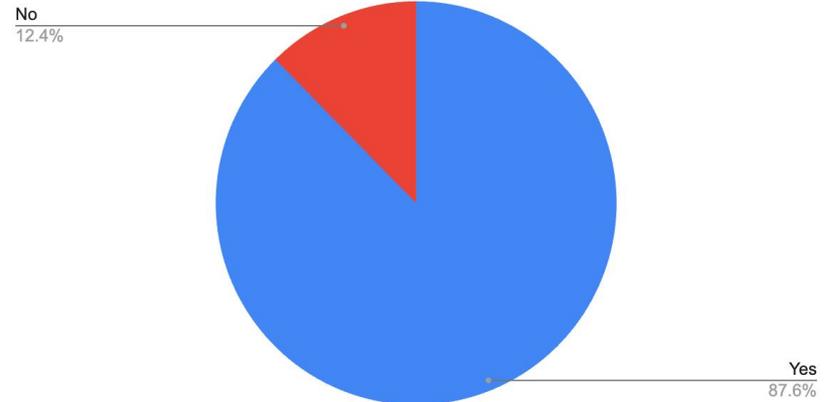


The Defensible Space Inspection program helps residents identify hazardous vegetation that can be removed by the Chipper Program

Did your Defensible Space Report help you identify hazardous vegetation to remove through the Chipper Program?



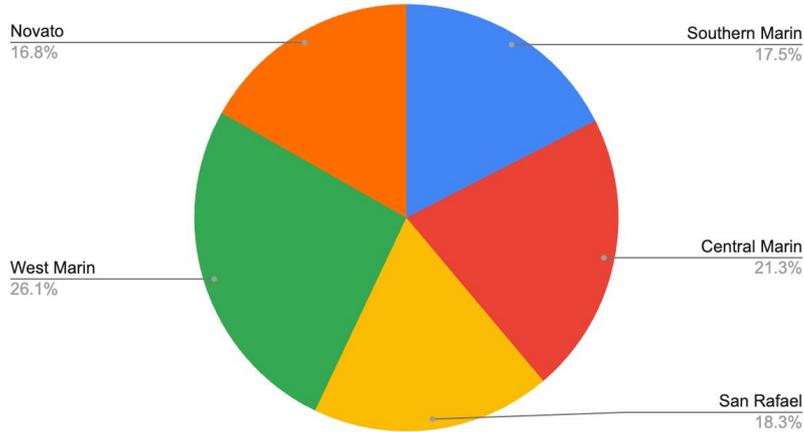
Did the free chipping program cause you to remove vegetation?



Season Pickups

Pickup data is tracked by both member agency and by each of Marin Wildfire's five service zones.

Pickups by Zone



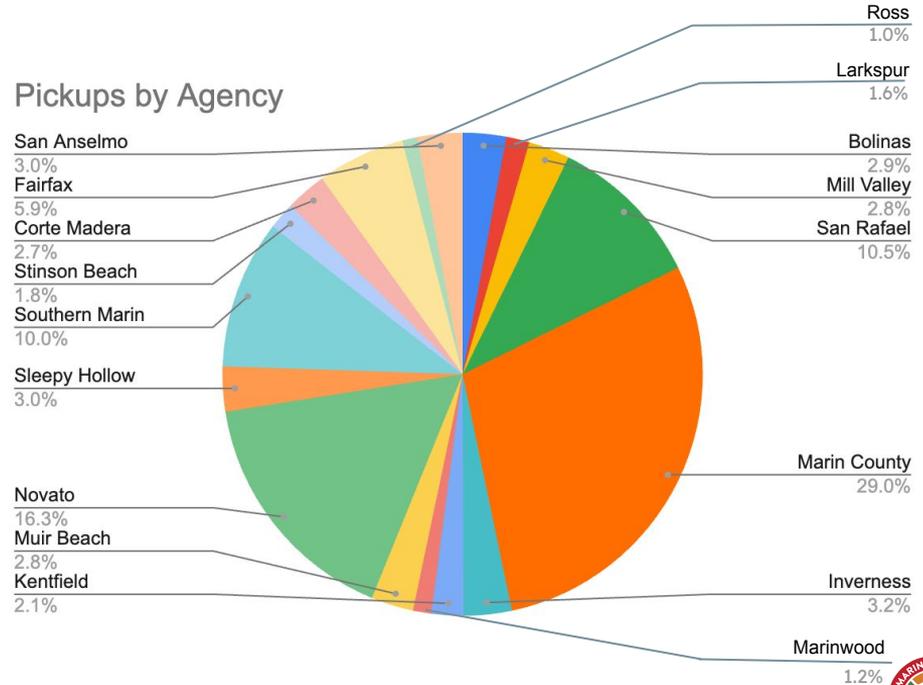
Season Stats:

Pickups: **5,089**

Cubic yardage removed: **18,700**

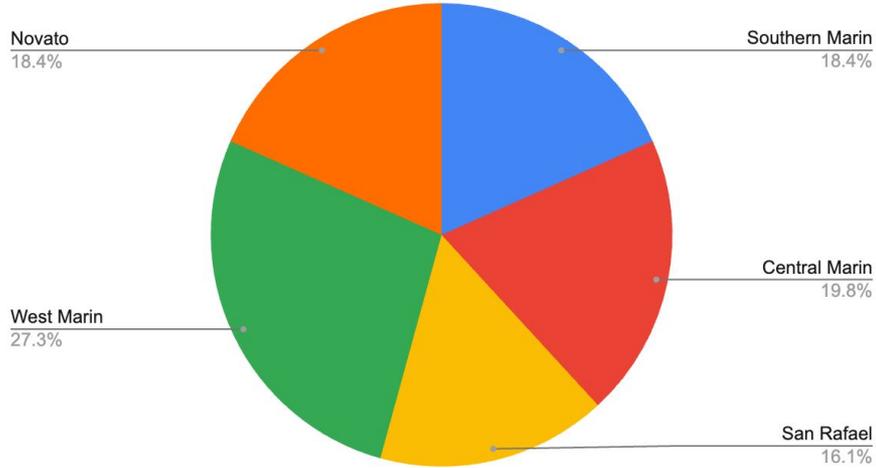
Average pile size: **3.7 cu/yd**

Pickups by Agency

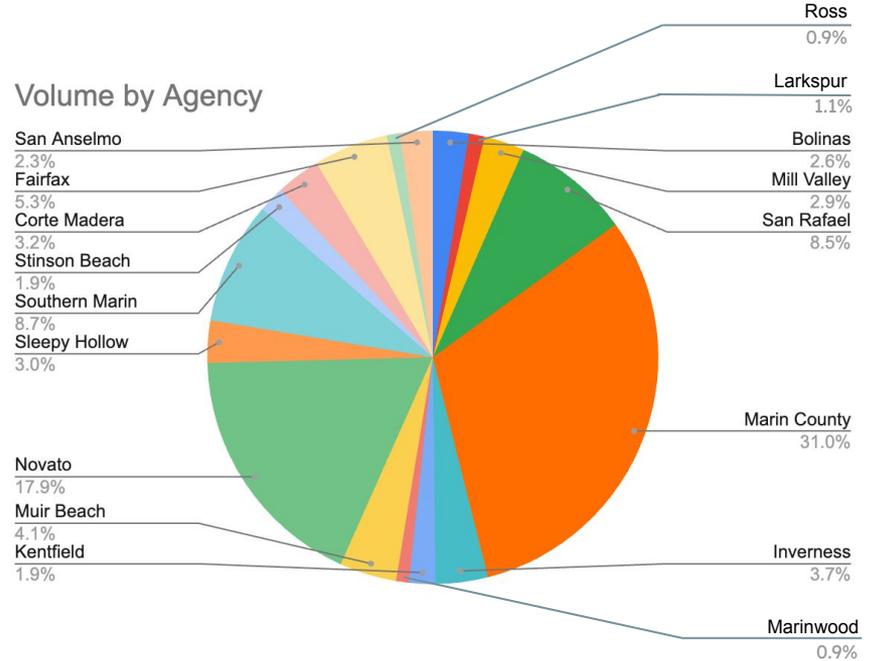


Season Volume Breakdown

Volume by Zone



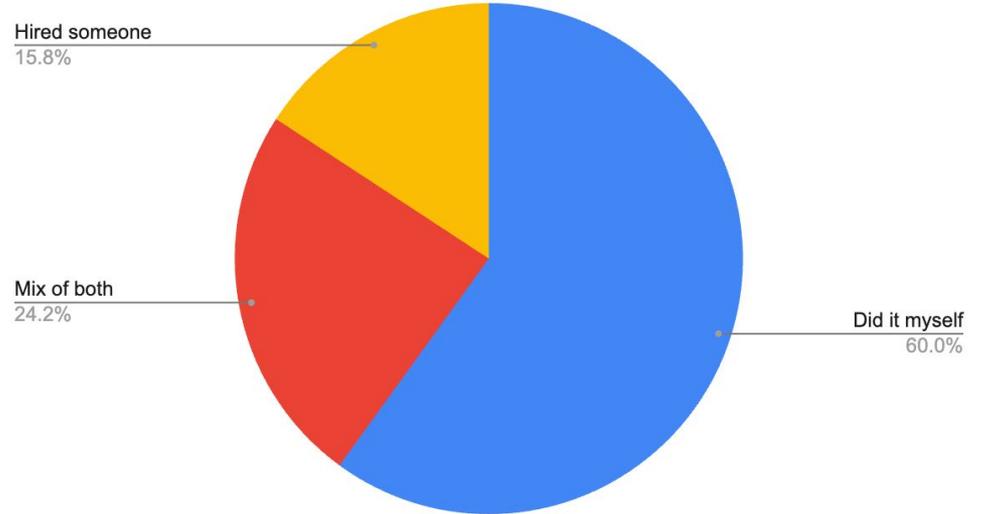
Volume by Agency



Resident investment

The Chipper Program is designed as an assistance program to help lessen the cost to residents associated with creating defensible space around their homes. While the program can absorb much of the labor and transportation costs that can be preventative to defensible space work, residents still invest time and money into their efforts to cut and assemble piles for The Program's crews to remove. During the 2025 season, program participants reported investing over \$1,517,160 and approximately 51,300 hours preparing for piles for the program.

How did you remove your vegetation and prepare your pile?



Resident investment by Zone

Zone	Hours Invested
Central Marin	12,708
West Marin	13,448
Novato	7,760
San Rafael	8,845
Southern Marin	8,540

Zone	Dollars Invested
Central Marin	\$339,068
West Marin	\$348,543
Novato	\$264,860
San Rafael	\$303,685
Southern Marin	\$261,013

Spending by zone for FY25

Marin Wildfire operates on a fiscal year that ends on June 30th. The Chipper program generally operates between April and December during a calendar year. Money allocated to the program must cover operations during the latter portion (July thru December) of the current season and the beginning of the following year's season (January thru June).

As was the case in the last FY, FY25 spending was evenly distributed among the 5 JPA zones.

Central Marin	\$267,125.40
West Marin	\$267,125.40
Novato	\$267,125.40
San Rafael	\$267,125.40
Southern Marin	\$267,125.40
Total	\$1,335,627

Highlights from the public

Great program, we participate whenever we can. We had just had an inspection which identified acacia that we weren't aware had sprouted up on the property.

It was great. It was easy to register. The pile was removed and the sidewalk cleaned of leaves and other wood debris. I was super happy with the whole process.

It's a great program! I wish more neighbors used it.

Thank you for doing a great job and helping me out I really appreciate it.



I've used the program many times and think it's great. I love remove excessive brush from our property and making it more fire safe. Thank you

I love this program and have participated since its inception. It motivates me to clear weeds and brush, while making my home safer. I look forward to participating again next year.

We love that you've increased the number of collection dates. It's caused us to do more to reduce the amount of combustible trees and brush.

This is an excellent program and has absolutely motivated us to remove our Scotch broom. Thank you!



Looking Ahead

The Marin Chipper Program will continue to utilize the 5-zone approach for its season schedule, as staff have found it to be an efficient way to increase the opportunities available to residents without long wait periods between events. Program staff believes that the 30-week chipping schedule allows the program to function for the longest time out of the year when there is still an interest in chipping and weather permits the program's operation

In the 2026 season, program staff will continue to work to improve the efficiency of the program, both in cost saving practices and tightened pickup times for residents. The 30-week model, combined with the 2.5-day pickup window has started to be expected by residents and ingrained in their prevention practices. Marin Wildfire Staff believes that this is a successful long-term model for this program.



Chipper crews working on piles in Central Marin

Thank You





In partnership and support with:

Bolinas Fire District
City of Larkspur
City of Mill Valley
City of San Rafael
County of Marin
Fire Aside
Fire Safe Marin
Inverness Public Utility District
Kentfield Fire Protection District
Marinwood Community Services District
Muir Beach Community Services District
Novato Fire Protection District
Sleepy Hollow Fire Protection District
Southern Marin Fire Protection District
Stinson Beach Fire Protection District
Town of Corte Madera
Town of Fairfax
Town of Ross
Town of San Anselmo

