



PRESS RELEASE

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Dec. 16, 2021

County launches second grant funding opportunity for vegetation management projects to reduce wildfire risk

Additional funding will support projects to manage fuel loads, increase public safety for vulnerable communities

SANTA ROSA, CA – The County of Sonoma will open another grant funding opportunity on Dec. 16 to support local fire districts, homeowners associations, nonprofit organizations, licensed foresters and community groups in making the county safer and more resilient in the face of future wildfires. Up to \$4 million in grant funding will be available for vegetation management projects throughout Sonoma County to help reduce fire risk ahead of the 2022 wildfire season and beyond.

Along with the opening of the grant application process for this round of funding opportunities, county officials will be hosting a series of informational workshops for interested applicants.

Last summer, the board approved more than \$3.7 million for 19 distinct projects throughout the county. These grants supported improved emergency access and evacuation routes, shaded fuel breaks adjacent to vulnerable communities, prescribed burn projects, and training and workshops on eco-friendly defensible space and how to protect your home. In addition, another seven projects in the Russian River area were conditionally approved for future funding pending the completion of outstanding project design and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) work.

This grant cycle will aim to support long-term vegetation treatments that can be accomplished with the proposed budget, that have a balanced ecological approach, and that are strategic in preventing or suppressing large-scale fire

events. As a publicly funded grant, all projects must be CEQA compliant. This second round of grants is targeted for long-term vegetation management projects that will be more sustainable and consistent with the protection of watersheds and biodiversity, while also sequestering carbon and protecting against wildfires. The grant program will support multi-beneficial projects in the areas most vulnerable to wildfire. Projects such as prescribed burning, targeted grazing, and shaded fuel breaks along important ridgelines will need to address how they will protect watersheds, sustain biodiversity or enhance wildlife corridors.

“We are pleased to be able to offer another round of funding to support critical vegetation management efforts across the county,” said Supervisor Lynda Hopkins, Chair of the Board of Supervisors. “Helping our communities adopt innovative, long-term approaches to reduce fire risk through shaded fuel breaks, prescribed burns, and wildfire safety education is of utmost importance as we continue to build resilience against future wildfires.”

The funds for the 2021 grants and this current cycle are derived from the PG&E settlement awarded to the County of Sonoma as a result of the 2017 Sonoma Complex Fires lawsuit. In 2020, the Board of Supervisors voted to allocate \$25 million of the \$149 million settlement toward vegetation management activities.

Priority in awarding grants will be given to projects that will help to reduce fire risk and help create landscapes that are healthier and less vulnerable to large-scale wildfire events. Grants will be awarded to projects that are well-planned, demonstrate organizational capacity to execute the project, and where CEQA analysis has been completed or is close to completion.

The grant application period will open on Thursday, Dec. 16 and close on Jan. 23, 2022. County officials will host two workshops to provide potential applicants an overview of the application process and respond to questions. The workshops will be conducted in English with live Spanish interpretation, and participation is voluntary. The workshops will be hosted via Zoom from 5 – 6:30 p.m. on the following dates:

- Wednesday, Jan. 5, 2022
- Thursday, Jan. 13, 2022

More information about the Vegetation Management Grant Program, including details of the January Zoom workshops, will be posted online at sonomaopenspace.org/our-impact/vegmanagement/. Vegetation

Management Coordinator Kim Batchelder is also available to answer specific questions at kim.batchelder@sonoma-county.org.

For an overview of how various departments of the County of Sonoma are working on vegetation management visit sonomacounty.ca.gov/vegetation-management/.

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