



TOWN OF HILLSBOROUGH

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Hillsborough Fire Hazard Mitigation and Fuel Reduction Program in Town Owned Open Space Areas

May 14, 2013

Hillsborough owns approximately 259 acres of open space in Town-owned open space areas. The open space areas range from several acres to nearly 50 acres in size. These Town-owned open space areas are found in the north and south sides of Hillsborough. They create what are called “wild land urban interface areas”: areas where wild, heavily vegetated, undeveloped open space areas meet residential development. This intersection of homes and wild lands creates the risk of wildfire which can threaten properties and lives. It also requires property owners in wild land urban interface areas maintain a 100 foot defensible space zone (http://calfire.ca.gov/communications/communications_firesafety_100feet.php) around building structures.

CALFIRE maps (http://www.fire.ca.gov/fire_prevention/fire_prevention_wildland_zones.php) and Town field surveys and studies have found a risk of wildfire in Hillsborough open space areas. As such, the Town is proposing a three year project to reduce the risk of fire in Town-owned open space areas. The project will reduce fire risk by mowing ground cover, thinning shrubs and understory, and limbing-up trees in approximately 88 of the 250 acres of Town-owned open space. Live, healthy trees will not be cut down or removed. This is not a tree removal project. Tree branches lower than 10 feet may be trimmed. Saplings (<4” in diameter) and dead or mortally diseased trees may be removed as needed to meet fire risk reduction objectives.

The proposed project will reduce fire risk in certain areas in Town owned open spaces, identified by characteristics such as vegetation type, slope, wind patterns and other factors. It will also create 100 foot defensible space zones that begin on private property but end in Town-owned open space. A defensible space zone is a 100 foot buffer of moderately vegetated area where grasses are mowed, shrubs thinned and trees limbed up. The defensible space zone is required in wild land urban interface areas because it slows or stops a fire from reaching and igniting a home in the event of a wildfire. Many homes that border Town-owned open space areas are built very close to the open space property line. Where this occurs, the Town will create and manage that portion of the defensible space zone that extends into public property. The homeowner is still responsible for maintaining the portion of defensible space area that occurs on their own private property.

The Town’s Fire Hazard Mitigation and Fuel Reduction Project has been designed to minimize impacts on the environment and the aesthetics of Town-owned open space areas. Groundcover, shrubs and understory will be mowed and thinned in 88 of the 250 acres, but large trees will not be removed. Plants will be cut at ground level, but they will not be uprooted, plowed or bulldozed. Ground disturbance will be avoided to protect wildlife, and root balls will be left in place to prevent erosion. Green waste will be cut or chipped and left onsite to support

wildlife, build soil and prevent erosion. Glyphosate will be used on invasive plant species such as french broom and acacia saplings that propagate when cut. In these cases, it will be painted on freshly cut stumps to ensure only the invasive plant is affected. This will help prevent invasive plant species taking over native plant areas that support native wildlife. A 200-foot buffer around wetlands or water bodies will be created and the Town will avoid work in these areas to protect riparian habitat. A certified California Fish and Wildlife biologist will monitor any work within these buffer zones. The Town's consulting wildlife biologist will also monitor vegetation thinning work to ensure that native flora and fauna are not unduly affected by this project.

Environmental documents, including the Town's California Environmental Protection Act (CEQA) Draft Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration, are available on the Town's website (http://www.hillsborough.net/depts/pw/open_space_management.asp) for consideration and comment. The public comment period goes through June 6, 2013 and the Town will consider approving the environmental documents and the project at a City Council Meeting on June 10, 2013. Please call 650-375-7444 or email pw@hillsborough.net for more information, or visit the Town's webpage: http://www.hillsborough.net/depts/pw/open_space_management.asp.

The proposed project would have the following tentative schedule. Work would occur in all 88 acres each year during Years 1-3. Work would be done on an annual, as needed basis thereafter. Year 1 would be the initial thinning and removal of vegetation. Years 2 and 3 would be retreatment of initial thinning of vegetation. The work conducted in Years 1-3 would be partially paid for by a \$624,000 grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Project Work Periods	Dates
Year 1	August 1 – October 15, 2013
Year 2	May 1 – October 15, 2014
Year 3	May 1 – October 15, 2015
Ongoing, As Needed Maintenance	May 1 – October 15

Hillsborough will host two public meetings about the proposed project in Town-owned open spaces. The meetings will be held at Hillsborough's Town Hall at 1600 Floribunda Avenue on May 22 at 7 p.m. and May 29 at 7 p.m. to provide information and answer questions about the project.