

Panoramic Hill Fuel Reduction Project

From early September to mid-October 2000, UC Berkeley will continue its project to decrease the threat of significant property damage from wildfires by thinning the density of woody materials on university property east of the campus in the Panoramic Hill area.

The 30-acre project area has been identified as a high-risk priority area. The condition of the brush and trees requires a higher level of treatment than the annual low brush and grass clearing by hand crews and goats. About 840 of the approximately 2,400 trees in the area are slated for removal. Most are non-native conifers (planted in the 1920s and 30s for teaching and research) that are weak, diseased, and dying. The project will be conducted in phases. Phase I is scheduled for this Fall; Phases II and III are planned to begin in Spring 2001.

The project is partly funded by the university, with a matching grant for hazard mitigation from the State of California Office of Emergency Services (OES) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The project has the support of the Hills Emergency Forum members, local government officials, and the Panoramic Hill Association.

Detailed Information

Phase I

Phase I will focus on a 10-acre area near the end of the Lower Jordan Fire Trail (see map for detail), and includes the following measures:

- Trees will be pruned or cut into lengths of 24 feet or less. There will be no clearcutting. The contractor will donate healthy wood to PAL (Protect All Life) for lumber and artistic projects. Unhealthy pines will be disposed of locally so as not to spread pitch canker to the Sierra Nevada.
- Small material will be chipped and spread to help prevent erosion.
- Disturbed soils will be seeded with indigenous grasses and wildflowers.
- The project will generate noise and dust. If warranted, the contractor will implement dust containment measures.

Project Benefits

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- Reduces fire hazards where wildlands meet residential areas.
- Reduces threat of spot fires spreading to the surrounding community.
- The resulting shaded fuel break reduces the threat of burning embers being cast into nearby residential neighborhoods and will help provide defensible space for fire crews working along the ridge between Strawberry and Claremont Canyons.
- Pruned trees reduce the threat of fire spreading by way of treetops.
- Removes diseased trees and heavy fuels.
- Returns the area to a more natural state.
- Existing wooded skyline will remain.

Phase I Schedule

- **Timeframe** First week of September- mid-October 2000
- **Work Hours** Hills area: Monday-Friday, 8:00 am-5:00 pm.
Hauling: 9:00 am-4:00 pm, to avoid peak traffic hours.

Parking and Accessibility

- The Lower Jordan Fire Trail will be closed Monday-Friday, 8:00 am-5:00 pm. It will be accessible on weekends.
- A parking lot on the south side of Centennial Road near the base of the fire trail that will be used for staging and equipment will be closed from the end of August to the end of October.

The Alameda Whipsnake

The Alameda Whipsnake (Alameda striped racer) (*Masticophis lateralis euryxanthus*) was designated as an endangered species in December 1997. The whipsnake is slender, fast-moving, and sooty black with distinct yellow-orange stripes on each side. It is non-venomous. It can reach a length of up to four feet and feeds almost exclusively on lizards. As biological studies have indicated that whipsnakes may be present in the project area, the University is working with a biological consultant to monitor their activity and measures have been included to protect and redirect them away from the affected areas.

Environmental Review

The environmental consequences of the fuel management and removal activities have been reviewed in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The University circulated a Tiered Initial Study/ Mitigated Negative Declaration for this project in Fall 1999. The campus responded to comments received and formally adopted the project on April 4, 2000. As part of the project's environmental compliance efforts, a Mitigation Monitoring Committee consisting of area residents, campus faculty and staff, and local fire protection agencies has been established to review the project during implementation.