Santa Clara County FireSafe Council Awarded CAL FIRE High Priority Fire Prevention Grant

$1,456,579 Award Supports Fuel Break and Escape Route Projects

October 7, 2022, Saratoga, CA—Today, the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council (SCCFSC) announced that CAL FIRE has awarded a new $1,456,579 Fire Prevention Grant to the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council. The CAL FIRE grant supports priority wildfire mitigation and public safety projects in CAL FIRE’s Santa Clara Unit that will be conducted by Santa Clara County FireSafe Council. The projects include:

- East Dunne Avenue Escape Route Project
- Loma Chiquita Road Escape Route/Fuel Break Project
- Mount Chual Spur Road Escape Route/Fuel Break Project
- Mount Madonna/Summit Road Escape Route/Fuel Break Project

Specifically, a more detailed description of the Hazardous Fuel Reduction projects (HFR) included are:

1. East Dunne Avenue Escape Route Project. This grant provides support to complete pre-implementation of CEQA environmental compliance documents and roadside fuel treatment. The planning and environmental compliance supports the implementation of three phases of the project along East Dunne Avenue, at Holiday Drive to the entrance of Henry Coe State Park in Morgan Hill, California, with the objective to protect life and property in the Holiday Lakes Estates, Jackson Oaks, and Anderson Lake County Park, and Finley Ridge communities by reducing the risk of wildfires.

2. Loma Chiquita Road Escape Route/Fuel Break Project. This grant provides the support to complete pre-implementation of CEQA environmental compliance documents and roadside fuel treatment. The planning and environmental compliance would support the implementation of 29 acres of fuel break treatment along a total length of 3 miles. Santa Clara County FireSafe Council will begin at the intersection of Loma Prieta Road and Loma Chiquita Road heading eastward. Located in the Santa Cruz Mountains between Aptos and the southern end of San Jose near Morgan Hill, Loma Chiquita Road generally follows the watershed boundary between Llagas and Uvas Creeks and makes an effective fuel break in an area with a history of large, fast-moving wildfires. Residents will need to rapidly evacuate to prevent becoming trapped. This roadside fuel break is part of CAL FIRE’s pre-fire plan, and part of a network of ridgeline fuel breaks in the surrounding watersheds. By reducing vegetation in the corridor, Santa Clara County FireSafe Council will help prepare the road corridor to be used for fire suppression operations and to protect residential properties.
3. Mount Chual Spur Road Escape Route/Fuel Break Project. This grant request will provide the support to complete pre-implementation of CEQA environmental compliance documents and roadside fuel treatment. The planning and environmental compliance would support the implementation of 41 acres of fuel break treatment along a total length of 4.5 miles. Santa Clara County FireSafe Council will provide roadside clean-up of flashy fuels, fuel reduction treatments up to 30’ for hardening along Mount Chual Spur and a section of Loma Chiquita Road. This project connects to the project outlined in item 2 above, jointly providing vegetation management along two parallel ridgelines in this area of high fire history.

4. Mount Madonna/Summit Road Escape Route/Fuel Break Project. Funding will support the ongoing vegetation management efforts of the project. Located generally along the Santa Clara and Santa Cruz County boundary, the project is sectioned into five phases along the following roads: Summit, Mount Madonna, and Pole Line. Santa Clara County FireSafe Council has previously completed phase one and phase two, and this new grant award provides funding to support phase three. Phase three is a stretch of about 6 miles long that begins at Summit Road and Ormsby Cutoff, north of Pole Line Road. The immediate goal is to clear hazardous vegetation up to 50 feet from the road-edge removing roadside fuel that could fall and block the roadway or would make the roadway extremely hot and unsafe to travel on for safe egress in the event of a fire and reduce roadside fire escaping into the wildland. There are several key communities, tourist sites, and infrastructures that run along the road, such as the Mount Madonna Fire Station, Ormsby Fire Station, Mount Madonna Retreat Center, Mount Madonna School, Vietnamese Sangha Congregation, Sankat Mochan Hanuman Temple, wineries, and a golf course that are prioritized for protection.

Other components of this grant that Santa Clara County FireSafe Council will provide include:

- **Cost Sharing Program and Special Needs Assistance Program (SNAP).** Santa Clara County FireSafe Council’s SNAP program will provide defensible space clearing and fuel reduction to low-income and people living with disabilities. We will also educate contractors to provide landscape, tree, and home improvement services on best practices for defensible space and structural ignition resistance, so that residents can be confident that they are able to pick from a pool of qualified contractors.

- **Chipping Program.** This grant will also support the parcel level treatment of defensible space by offering free chipping for residents who clear their defensible space but have no way to process the debris. Community chipping is designed to assist residents and communities in their efforts to create and maintain adequate and defensible space by processing or disposing vegetative materials and provides many residents the opportunity for high level of cost-sharing or matching effort as they clear their own defensible space.

- **Community Outreach Education (COE) Program.** This grant will also provide COE presentations to increase public awareness of appropriate defensible space practices, wildfire risk management, evacuation preparedness, structure survival probability, and reduction of ember impact and penetration. Our COE programs create awareness and inform residents to take appropriate action. Education in the importance of defensible space vegetation clearing, Home Ignition Zones (HIZ) and home hardening improvements all improve structural resiliency and connect individual parcel management to community projects.

"CAL FIRE is excited to continue our strong partnership with Santa Clara County FireSafe Council to support these critical wildfire mitigation projects in the CAL FIRE Santa Clara Unit”, said George Huang, Unit Chief.
According to Seth Schalet, Chief Executive Officer of the Santa Clara FireSafe Council. “This is mission critical work prioritized by CAL FIRE’s Santa Clara Unit to protect property, life, and critical infrastructure in the region. With drought conditions exacerbating an already challenging wildfire environment, these proactive measures will help to ensure life and safety projects receive high priority focus, enabling Santa Clara County FireSafe Council to leverage its expertise in delivering projects successfully, on time and on budget. We are grateful for the partnership we have will CAL FIRE and its Santa Clara Unit.”

The Enhancement of Reduced Fuel Zones, Evacuation Readiness, and Community Preparedness project is part of California Climate Investments, a statewide initiative that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment — particularly in disadvantaged communities.