For Immediate Release

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Santa Clara County FireSafe Council Awarded $217K Community Wildfire Defense Grant

Funding supports continuing the County Coordinator Program engagement on the Santa Clara County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)

May 20, 2024, Saratoga, CA—The Santa Clara County FireSafe Council (SCCFSC) announced today it has been awarded a 2024 (Round Two) Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG). Projects developed by communities, Tribes, states, nonprofits, and Alaska Native Corporations were eligible for grant funding. Communities received priority for this program if they are either a low-income area, recently impacted by disaster, or in a high or very high wildfire hazard potential location.

The USDA used the three priorities outlined in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to identify the communities in greatest need. These priorities included communities impacted by severe disaster, high or very high wildfire hazard potential, or are low income. The agency then worked with application reviewers made up of state and tribal partners to evaluate and rank the quality and effectiveness of the proposals. Applicants were required to demonstrate the wildfire risk or hazard within their application. Various tools and assessments were used to assess applicants, ranging from national wildfire risk models to specific regional and state wildfire hazard assessments.

According to Seth Schalet, CEO of Santa Clara County FireSafe Council, “We are grateful to have won this highly competitive grant. We were originally awarded funding for our County Coordinator program in early 2022 through a CAL FIRE funded program administered through the California Fire Safe Council, and that grant will expire at the end of this year. This new funding enables us to continue essential work as the County Coordinator, and support the continuing development of the Countywide Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). It’s a testament to the excellent work of the FireSafe Council team.”

According to Amanda Brenner-Cannon, Program Director of Santa Clara County FireSafe Council, "We are thrilled to have secured the funds through this grant program to continue to support this important project. Collaborating on this scale with so many different partners is an exciting and large effort. As the County Coordinator managing the community wildfire protection plan update, working with our local Annexes to update these documents has been a great experience and we are making great strides in collaboration countywide."

About the Community Wildfire Defense Grant Project:
In 2022 with initial funding by CAL FIRE, the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council began working with partners to update the County's 2016 CWPP. Significant updates include making the community wildfire protection plan (CWPP) more transparent and user-friendly, using a new digital format (story map and project tracker). While the update for the countywide document has been published, and the digital platform developed, Santa Clara County FireSafe Council continues working with partners to update local Annexes. Funding from the CWDG grant will allow us to continue engaging with key partners and public agencies, supporting them through the process of drafting or updating their Annexes. Santa Clara County uses an Annex structure to bring project development and prioritization to the local level. By incorporating Annexes into the higher level countywide document, we strengthen the strategic wildfire plan. By having local Annexes connected to a countywide plan and incorporating tools like our CWPP Project Tracker, we can work collaboratively, connecting projects throughout different agencies, organizations, and landowners/managers across the county.
https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire/grants/cwdg

About Santa Clara County FireSafe Council:
As a 501(c)3 nonprofit with a 20-year history, Santa Clara County FireSafe Council's core mission is to mobilize the people of Santa Clara County to protect their homes, communities, and environment from wildfires. As a trusted partner across the government, fire service, corporate and WUI residential communities, SCCFSC has led some of the most complex hazardous fuel reduction projects in the region. With a board and advisory council that has a deep expertise across the wildfire ecosystem including wildfire and environmental research, academia, emergency management, regional planning, technology products and wildland firefighting leadership, Santa Clara County FireSafe Council is uniquely positioned to lead cross-sector collaborations, government-private partnerships in Silicon Valley, Santa Clara County and beyond. For more information, visit www.sccfiresafe.org

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