

## Summary of Meeting #2

### Review of Preliminary Fire and Resource Data; Priority Treatment Areas

June 6, 2007

Prepared by Cheryl Miller, Amphion

#### Attendees

Steve Abbors  
Bill Capps  
Marilyn Goldharber  
Leroy Griffin  
Dan Grasseti  
Howard Hatayama  
Martin Holden  
Jerry Kent  
Tom Klatt  
Norman LaForce  
Bill McClung  
Rich McClure  
Mary Millman  
Matt Mitchell  
Mathew Morse  
Peter Rauch  
Penelope Rink  
Bob Sand  
Peter Scott  
Manuel Uribe  
Allene Warren  
Dick White

#### EBRPD

Brian Wiese, Chief Planning/Stewardship/GIS Services  
David Amme,  
Ken Blonski, Fire Chief  
Joe DiDonato, Stewardship Manager  
Jack Kenny, Chief of Park Operations  
Ed Leong, Park Supervisor  
Jessica Sheppard, Resource Analyst  
Jeff Wilson, Park Operations Unit Manager

#### Consultant Team

Judy Malamut, Project Manager, LSA  
Steve Granholm, LSA  
Cheryl Miller, Process Coordinator, Amphion  
Carol Rice, Wildland Resource Management  
Richard Nichols, Biological Resource Mgr., LSA  
Hannah Young, Project Planner, LSA

**Purpose and Overview of Meeting.** Cheryl Miller welcomed participants and provided an overview of the evening with a review of the agenda.

**Overview of Project.** Judy Malamut provided an overview of the project goals and work program. A summary handout of the goals was provided (posted on the EBRPD website [www.ebparks.org](http://www.ebparks.org)). Handouts were provided of the Fires in the East Bay Hills and of the Chronology of Fuel Management Planning in the East Bay Hills (posted on the EBRPD website).

**Overview of Work Program Updates.** Judy Malamut provided an overview of the work program updates:

1. Expansion of study area to include all Measure CC Parks.
2. Programmatic CEQA approach to Wildfire Plan.
3. Analysis of District facilities at risk, existing fuel management areas (FEMA areas) and high hazard eucalyptus.

Questions related to the overview included: *EBRPD and Team responses are in italics.*

- Are you taking into consideration the efforts of other large landowners in managing their lands for fire hazard reduction? Will they be included in the cumulative impacts? *The programmatic plans of adjacent agencies are being taken into consideration and will be addressed in the Baseline Conditions.*
- Can we get a copy of the PowerPoint from the meeting? *The Power Point will be made available on the website [www.ebparks.org](http://www.ebparks.org).*
- Why are shoreline parks included in the plan? *These parks are within the Measure CC boundary and some are identified for the expenditure of Measure CC funds for fuels management.*
- Where can we send written comments? *Send written comments or concerns to project outreach coordinator Cheryl Miller at [cmiller@amphiondesign.com](mailto:cmiller@amphiondesign.com). She will circulate information to the consultant team and update the summary of issues on the website.*
- What is the difference between the added FEMA areas and other fuel management areas? *The FEMA areas have been previously covered by a NEPA (federal) environmental review process). Some of these areas have already been managed as part of fuel breaks; some have not yet had their initial treatment. All of these FEMA areas will be incorporated into the plan.*
- Are insurance companies amenable to reducing premiums related to the fire planning efforts? *Not sure; not a part of the project.*
- How are native vs. non-native plants considered in the fuel type classifications? *The native vs. non-native distinction is not considered in the hazard assessment. The critical factor in the hazard assessment is the fuel type associated with the vegetation characteristics and not if the vegetation is native or non-native. Sensitive and native resources will be considered in the resource evaluation.*

**Presentation of Fire Hazard Assessment Process and Priority Areas.** Carol Rice presented the fire hazard assessment methodology which:

- ❑ Used the fire behavior modeling program “FlamMap” to identify potential flame length and crown fire.
- ❑ Confirmed model results with experienced field personnel.
- ❑ Included site visits to “field truth” the high hazard areas.

Carol explained that the computer program FlamMap uses 11 data layers to model potential fire behavior. Topography: slope steepness, aspect and elevation. Weather: wind direction, speed, relative humidity, temperature, initial dead fuel moistures and foliar moistures. Fuel: fuel models that describe the vegetation, in terms of biomass volume, tree height, height to live crown (ladder fuels), crown density and canopy cover. She showed how the information from detailed EBRPD vegetation surveys were translated into fuel characteristics for the model. In particular the team will focus on flame length and crown fire potential.

- ❑ Flame length relates to the ability of a firefighter to safely attack a fire. Flame length is most closely related to structure damage and loss. Flame lengths greater than 8 feet cannot be suppressed using direct attack by fire personnel.
- ❑ Crowning potential is crucial because as fire spreads into tree crowns, thousands of embers are produced and lofted into the air creating new fires that can overwhelm fire

suppression personnel. A detailed analysis of the eucalyptus groves was done to identify those groves with high potential for ember production and distribution.

- The assessment will incorporate the expanded work program and look at facilities at risk, existing and planned fuel management areas, eucalyptus hazard assessment and major evacuation routes

Maps of the results of the wildfire hazard assessment were displayed. Criteria for the selection of priority treatment areas were as follows:

- Flame length greater than 8 ft. within 200 ft. of homes and other values at risk.
- Torching / crown fire potential to spread embers (pine and eucalyptus).
- Continuing maintenance of previously treated areas.
- Major evacuation routes
- Professional judgment on location and fuel conditions and wildfire potential.

The team will continue to refine this information with input from the Hills Emergency Forum and other agency partners.

Questions regarding the fire hazard assessment included: *EBRPD and Team responses are in italics.*

- Does the model take into account micro-climates and fire history? *FlamMap does not model the funneling of winds in canyons. However, wind behavior, history of ignitions and past fires, were included by incorporating the judgment of local fire professionals.*
- There are few weather stations in the area. What are the sources of the weather data used by the model? *There are two weather stations in the Oakland hills with data available through the California Data Exchange Center at [www.cdec.water.ca.gov/](http://www.cdec.water.ca.gov/). The assessment used the Oakland North (ONO) data since the Oakland South (OSO) station is in a more protected location. Fuel moisture content is an important factor, but is not available in the weather data. The moisture content was customized in the model based on experience and local knowledge. For example, fuel moisture levels were adjusted in specific vegetation types where the vegetation has typically higher moisture levels to better reflect actual conditions.*
- Are the fuel model polygons the same as the 1995 report? *The vegetation has been classified into fuel categories that created new polygons. Can the PowerPoint presentation go on line? Yes the team will post the PowerPoint's on the website [ebparks.org](http://ebparks.org)*
- How conservative is FlamMap? *The model can over and under estimate, which is why the team is ground truthing and requesting the technical advisors and professional fire personnel to provide input to confirm the modeling results.*

### **Presentation of Biological Baseline Conditions.**

Judy Malamut, LSA provided an overview of the team's baseline conditions findings. The baseline conditions presented are "in progress" and being used as study tools. They will form the "Existing Setting" section of the Resource Management Plan and EIR/EA. The baseline conditions considered include: biological resources, hydrology, geology, land use, cultural resources, climate, air quality and visual resources. The team is mapping these resources using the District's GIS. They are evaluating the high value resources.

Richard Nichols, LSA provided an overview of the Biological Resources baseline conditions. To identify vegetation and habitat types the LSA team utilized EBRPD data, information from the FEMA treatment areas and LSA generated information. The LSA team has summarized the 200 vegetation categories from the EBRPD database into 14 fuels categories. Team members are also looking at keystone species and indicator species for habitat types per Stebbins (1996). The keystone species will be analyzed because so many other species are linked to them. The indicator species similarly are tied to specific habitat. Richard showed samples from the baseline conditions showing biological resources, special status plants and animals.

Questions regarding this overview included: *EBRPD and Team responses are in italics.*

- Eucalyptus, rare and endangered species are getting a lot of attention. What about the grassland and shrubland flora and fauna? How will they be addressed? *The grasslands and shrublands will receive equal attention.*
- In terms of wildlife species, what about other species of local concern that are valuable in the area. Will the team be addressing common species? *The team will be addressing common species especially where fuel treatments may impact their habitat. Many of these common species will be picked up by the keystone and indicator species.*
- How were the 200 vegetation categories from the EBRPD database reclassified into 14 categories? Do these categories relate to ecological management or fire behavior? *The team used the 14 classifications to be consistent with those described in the Biological Resources Section of the FEMA EIS. They related to both ecological and fire issues. Most plant communities are named in accordance with the classification system in the List of California Terrestrial Natural Communities Recognized by the California Natural Diversity Data Base (September 2003 edition) as outlined in the Manual of California Vegetation (Sawyer-Keeler-Wolf 1995). Other communities that are locally distinct such as mesic scrub are named in accordance with the FEMA EIS and other locally relevant documents, because they best describe the unique character of these communities. Most of the 200 polygon categories related to the fire assessment are not relevant for the biological resource assessment and were lumped into categories that make more sense for the biological discussion. For example, 28 of the EBRPD categories such as “children’s play area”, 3 staging area classifications, 3 types of golf course landscape, several parking lots and structures, swimming pools etc. were combined into the one category of “developed.”*
- When the team is developing treatment options will common species be considered? *The treatment evaluation will look at minimizing impacts, even if special species are not present.*
- Are the vegetation polygons the same as the 1995 report? *No they have been updated and refined.*
- **Additional Comments and Concerns**
- What is the status of public comments from previous meetings? *An issues tracking chart is available on the website. All the issues and public comment are forwarded to the LSA team to incorporate into their work. The comments will not be given individual responses.*
- How will we understand if the issues have been addressed? *The plan is a work in progress and will continue to incorporate concerns and new information. Bring concerns to meetings or provide written comments to the project outreach coordinator at [cmiller@amphiondesign.com](mailto:cmiller@amphiondesign.com).*

- The speaker would like more information prior to meetings so attendees can come prepared to ask questions. Also requests less formalized interaction and would rather not have to wait until the EIR review period to comment. *The meetings are the forum to review progress and share information on the planning process and consider public comments. The meetings are designed to be as informal and interactive as possible, while providing information to the attendees. Updates, meeting notes and issues discussion will be put on the District's website.*
- Is there a priority ranking for the priority treatment areas? *Some priority areas will justify higher priority than others. The ranking of the areas will be assigned as the plan progresses, considering factors such as resource sensitivity, treatment feasibility and costs.*
- The primary benefits of the plan relate to fuel hazard reduction; however, the speaker hopes that habitat and species will also benefit. *The first priority for the plan is fuel reduction to mitigate the spread of catastrophic wildfire. The second is resource management and habitat enhancement. The planning team believes both these values can be achieved in concert.*
- Will there be activities that have unavoidable impacts for which there are no mitigation measures? *No unavoidable impacts are anticipated. Options will be created to reduce fuel load and minimize impacts. Mitigation measures will be incorporated into the treatment prescription for areas where conflicts between fire hazard reduction and resource management may result in impacts. The plan should realize many beneficial impacts to habitat.*
- Concern that CEQA is a cookie cutter process often used to justify destruction. The speaker hopes for a different approach in this EIR? *The real issue and intent of the process is to create a sustainable, low-hazard landscape. This may include removing exotic plants in favor of native species. For example, the problem of eucalyptus management is the continued maintenance costs. The intent of the project is to minimize future maintenance needs.*
- The speaker questioned the purpose of the funding (Measure CC) for anything other than fuel reduction. Loves Kennedy grove and doesn't want it to be cut. *The plan doesn't eradicate the eucalyptus, but intends to make the fuels management as sustainable as possible.*
- Claremont Canyon has steep slopes, where some areas have been treated and some areas have not. How does the fire model map such an area? *The FlamMap Model gives fire behavior prediction for each approximately 30' by 30' square (10 meter square) of the canyon. A fire growth model can be run for the canyon area to observe how treatments slow fire growth and ember generation.*
- Based on the 30' by 30' small areas, how do you summarize such a large amount of data to make the fire analysis useful? *The FlamMap model aggregates these areas so that high flame length or vegetation expected to create and distribute embers are highlighted.*
- Please provide access to information related to project. *The information presented will be put on the Park District's website.*
- Within the urban/wildland interface (represented as a thin blue line on the map), it seems impractical to assign treatment based on the 30-foot squares? *Treatment options are not assigned on the 30-foot squares. These are aggregated instead to a larger area.*

*Vegetation types and knowledge of the area are brought to bear on the assignment of priority treatment areas.*

- *Interested in seeing restoration of habitat and eradication of eucalyptus? The LSA team is developing a plan that balances the competing and conflicting risks. The highest priority is given to risk of a Diablo fire coming from the EBRPD lands onto private properties. Additional considerations are habitat and maintenance. A critical component is to incorporate adaptive management strategies and performance standards that the treatment will try to achieve.*
- *How is cost factored into the plan? The EBRPD Fire Department is tracking all costs associated with treatment types. This data will inform the decision about treatment priorities. Costs will be incorporated into the plan alternatives after treatment prescriptions and priorities are evaluated.*
- *Importance of recording decisions and rationale for rejecting alternatives or developing options. This information should be public. Transparency of decisions is important. Comment noted.*
- *Provide sample locations where wildfire hazard reduction and a change in habitat has occurred. Angel Island and Pt. Reyes are examples of eucalyptus removal.*
- *How is herbicide used for fuel reduction? It is one of the tools in the treatment toolbox and has very limited applications. For example, EBRPD currently hand- treats eucalyptus stumps to prevent re-sprouting. Uses of herbicide are very focused and a well-documented part of the District's integrated pest management (IPM) program.*