

Summary of Meeting #3

Wildfire Hazard Assessment, Potential Treatment Areas, Vegetation Types, Fuel Reduction treatments and Resource Considerations

December 12, 2007

Prepared by Cheryl Miller, Amphion

Attendees

Steve Abbors
Laura Baker
Ron Barkley
Jerry Baer
Michael Bond
Geoffrey Carter
Bill Capps
Casey Cleve
Afton Crooks
Joanne Drabek
Robert Faber
Teresa Ferguson
Bill Gilbert
Barbara Goldenberg
Marilyn Goldharber
Dan Grissetti
Martin Holden
Clayton Hoover
Lyn Hovland
John Hovland
Jerry Kent
Tom Klatt
Beverly Lane
Norman LaForce
Bill McClung
Mary Millman
Mathew Mitchell
Barry Pilger
Gary Piermattei
Peter Rauch, CNPS
Pedelope Rink
Bob Sand
Peter Scott
Lewis Voils
Tim Wallace
Allene Warren
Dick White
Roger Wong

EBRPD

Beverly Lane, Board Member
John Sutter, Board Member
Brian Wiese, Chief Planning/Stewardship/GIS Services
David Amme
Ken Blonski, Fire Chief
Joe DiDonato, Stewardship Manager
Brad Gallup, Fire Captain
Ed Leong, Park Supervisor
Shelly Lewis, Public Information
Anne Scheer
Jessica Sheppard, Resource Analyst
John Swanson, Assistant Fire Chief
Jeff Wilson, Park Operations Unit Manager

Consultant Team

Judy Malamut, Project Manager 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. Brian Wiese welcomed participants and provided an overview of the planning effort. The participants introduced themselves.

Overview of Project. Judy Malamut provided background of the project goals and work program. A summary handout of the goals was provided (posted on the EBRPD website 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 update of the work program:

1. Expansion of study area to include all Measure CC Parks.
2. Additional in depth analysis of District facilities at risk, existing fuel management areas (FEMA areas) and high hazard eucalyptus.
3. Preparation of an additional programmatic wildfire risk reduction plan component.

Presentation of Fire Hazard Assessment Process. 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 wildfire professionals.
- ❑ Included site visits to “field truth” the high hazard areas.

Carol explained the decision process used to determine potential treatment areas. The fire-modeling program FLAMMAP provided information about potential fire behavior. FLAMMAP uses 11 data layers to model potential fire behavior and provides outputs in terms of flame length and the potential for crown fires. Carol showed how the information from detailed EBRPD vegetation surveys was 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 crown fires.

The decision process identified areas for initial treatment and continued maintenance. These areas were either:

- ❑ Within 200 feet of private/ public structures outside of district lands,
- ❑ Within 200 feet of District high value facility at risk
- ❑ High hazard eucalyptus
- ❑ FEMA project areas that are completed
- ❑ Frequent ignition locations
- ❑ Fire suppression strategic safety zones

The hazard assessment includes identification of the areas and the justification for why they were identified. Maps of the results of the potential treatment areas were displayed. The group took a break to review the maps in closer detail and ask questions.

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

- Under extreme conditions all trees throw embers. Why does the plan focus on eucalyptus? There appears to have been a lack of attention to Monterey pines that are just as bad as eucalyptus. *Monterey pines have also been evaluated and identified for treatment.*
- What evacuation routes have been identified as a part of the fire suppression strategic safety zones? *The Team is continuing to work with District to map routes. They include major roads such as El Toyonal and Skyline Boulevard.*
- Don't penalize polygons that went from high risk to low risk due to former fuel treatments. The speaker wanted to see eucalyptus in Claremont Canyon removed and asked that the team not neglect that area for treatment.
- There seems to be a single focus on eucalyptus. Flame lengths of other trees can be higher than eucalyptus. Some experts recognize eucalyptus as fire resistant trees. Fuel management of duff should be the focus and not tree removal.
- Speaker prefers trees to remain with fuel management of understory to include thinning of eucalyptus, leaving mature eucalyptus overstory in place and provision of adequate fire fighting access to eucalyptus areas.
- Speaker from Hills Conservation Network cited a study from Spain on the caloric power of tree types and the most flammable species. Study outcome summarized 9 types of vegetation - Blue gum eucalyptus were not the most flammable (number 6 out of 9).
- Speaker expressed concerns regarding fire hazard associated with eucalyptus including: amount of duff; cutting these trees makes them grow up more thickly; on-going maintenance of stumps is required to prevent re-sprouting.
- Speaker requested study include presentation of data on flammability of different vegetation types.
- Why is 200-foot used as the distance from structures for treatment when State law identifies 100-foot fuel break? *Recommendations are not for uniform fuel breaks, but for areas with varying intensity of treatment. The fire behavior goal is to have 8-foot flame at the park boundary line. Some areas may need than 100 feet to achieve the 8-foot flame length due to topography or vegetation type.*

Presentation of Vegetation Types, Fuel Reduction Treatments and Resource Considerations.

Judy Malamut, LSA, provided a summary of the team's preliminary recommendations of the vegetation treatment program. Carol Rice described the potential treatment methods. Four handouts were available for review and discussion.

- *Draft Vegetation Types for the Fuel Reduction Program* identifies how the 200 EBRPD vegetation types were distributed into the 14 plant communities used to develop potential fuel treatments (posted on the EBRPD website).
- *Draft Summary Table – Fuel Reduction Methods* provides an overview of the method, specialized techniques, advantages, disadvantages and timing considerations for six key methods: hand labor, tree removal, mechanical treatments, prescribed burning, grazing, chemical and alternative treatments. This summary table will be revised based on comments from the meeting.

- *Draft Potential Treatment Areas* maps the locations of the potential initial treatment areas and maintenance areas. Each area is labeled with a unique identifier (posted on the EBRPD website).
- *Draft Vegetation Treatment Program* identifies the 14 vegetation types and their associated fuel hazard rating, ignition index, key resource considerations, potential fuel treatments and treatment cycle. This summary table will be revised based on comments from the meeting.

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

- In the fuel reduction treatment options to manage weed invasion should be considered under each vegetation type.
- How are the fuel reduction work and resource management being integrated? What are the resource management plans for various areas and what is overall goal for resource management? The plan looks to be developing a preferred alternative. The speaker believes that there shouldn't be just one preferred alternative. The plan should analyze various alternatives for various situations. What are the overarching management goals? *The fuel reduction plan takes into account resource management goals. The programmatic approach deals with development of various options with its emphasis on pre-treatment assessment to address how habitat changes over time. Post-treatment restoration and habitat management are part of plan.*
- It appears that the plan is on the right track in incorporating resource management. However the evening's presentation was missing this information. There should be another summary table focusing on plants and animal. *The team is preparing a baseline conditions report. The Plan will look closely at resource management goals and areas where there are conflicts of resources and fuel reduction treatments.*
- The plan should note that even without management, the landscape is changing due to climate change. One of the missing elements appears to be information regarding carbon sequestration for the various options and how to reduce this impact; e.g. carbon release of controlled burns, option to bury cut trees to stabilize landslide, etc.
- What happens while program is being developed? Does district do anything to reduce fuels now? *The District is currently spending approximately \$1M annually for fuel treatment using Measure CC funds and FEMA money. This work is being done in project areas that have environmental clearance. Most areas under analysis in this plan are not yet cleared under CEQA.*
- Does District ever plant trees? Other cities have tree planting programs. Urban forests are beneficial to air pollution. This plan appears to be a contradiction in promoting cutting trees while other programs are trying to grow trees. *The District does plant trees.*
- The vegetation type "Broom Scrub" is designated for treatment annually on the summary table. Doesn't it take longer for the broom to mature, flower and produce seed? *Annual treatment is recommended to manage the seed bed and continual new broom sprouts.*
- The Environmental Assessment assumes a negative effect if trees are left standing. The speaker has an issue with the District cutting trees down while others are planting trees. Wants District to consider the future of planet and impact of future generations. The speaker echoed concern over carbon sequestration: burning trees releases the carbon. Suggests the plan look at other approaches to using trees.