



3333 California Street
Suite 102, Box 0463
San Francisco, CA
94143-0463
tel: 415/476-3206
fax: 415/502-1368

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Dear Neighbor:

The United States Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has preliminarily approved grants for two fire mitigation projects within UCSF's 61-acre Mount Sutro Open Space Reserve.

These fire mitigation activities will be undergoing FEMA's environmental review process, including its compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

I am writing to invite you to attend an informational meeting for the projects that will occur on **Monday, May 18, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. at St. John Armenian Apostolic Church, located at 275 Olympia Way**. The purpose of the informational meeting is to give neighbors an overview of the projects and to allow for questions.

Background

The first project, referred to as the **UCSF Mount Sutro South Ridge Vegetation Management Project**, would occur in an approximately eight-acre area of the Mount Sutro Open Space Reserve where a wildfire would be particularly threatening to student campus housing located in the Reserve and to private structures within a one-half mile radius of the project site (see attached map). The second project, the **UCSF Mount Sutro Edgewood Avenue Vegetation Management Project**, would occur in an approximately six-acre area of the Reserve where wildfire poses a serious threat to campus buildings, including the Medical Center, and to a densely populated residential area on the east side of the campus.

The primary objective of these projects is to substantially reduce the amount of fuel and the potential for a fast-moving, high-intensity fire. Secondary objectives include improving the health of trees that remain, providing easier fire truck access for initial direct attack in the event of a fire, converting some of the forest to more fire resistant species, increasing biodiversity and age diversity in the forest to better resist insect infestation, preventing mass die-off, reducing the potential for fire and attract wildlife, and creating a more attractive environmental setting for hikers to enjoy.

Both project areas of the Reserve were targeted in the Mount Sutro Management Plan (EDAW, *Mount Sutro Open Space Reserve Management Plan*, September 2001) as top priority areas for forest thinning and conversion planting because of the potential for a devastating wildfire that could quickly spread to nearby residential areas. They also have the most accessible terrain, being relatively low-sloped, and forest thinning effects would be the least visible from off-site.

The intent of these projects is to remove both dead and live vegetation by means of goat grazing, mechanical clearing, hand-clearing, and chemical application. The predominant species to be removed are blue gum eucalyptus and Himalayan blackberry. The biomass would be reduced by removing approximately up to 90 percent of the brush and trees less than 12 inches in diameter, selectively removing trees larger than this only to maintain a sparse canopy of dominant trees and removing limbs, vines, and loose bark on remaining tree trunks up to ten feet from the ground.

Prior to any removal of vegetation, a survey would be conducted in each project area to determine what vegetation should be saved, primarily the few native species that are known to exist. These would be tagged or fenced off 30 days in advance of the work, and the community will be notified.

The areas will be sparsely planted with more fire resistant natives such as coast live oak, California buckeye, Pacific wax myrtle, Pacific Madrone, toyon, California coffeeberry, Monterey cypress and coast redwood. After multiple-year grazing is completed, these clearings may be seeded with native grasses and wildflowers.

UCSF would like to begin the first project this calendar year, but it may be delayed, depending on how long it takes FEMA to complete its environmental review process.

Sincerely,



Orlando Elizondo
Associate Director
UCSF Community Relations