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**FIRESAFE MARIN RECEIVES \$1 MILLION GRANT FOR WILDFIRE  
EVACUATION ROUTE CLEARANCE IN CENTRAL MARIN**

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**San Anselmo, CA, - April 18:** As California expands efforts to prevent devastating wildfires, CAL FIRE announced on April 16 over \$43 million in grants awarded to 66 local fire prevention projects across the state. In Marin county, FIRESafe MARIN was selected to receive \$993,500 to help fund a \$1.3 million project aimed at improving the safety of evacuation routes in seven central Marin communities.

The grant provides funding to seven hillside neighborhoods along the eastern slopes of Mt. Tamalpais. In order to improve evacuation routes there, vegetation will be reduced along more than 55 miles of roads, improving access and egress, and strategically dispersing fuel reduction over a 3,000-acre geographic area with a long history of wildfires. The project locations were selected based on priorities identified in the 2017 Marin Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP - [www.firesafemarin.org/cwpp](http://www.firesafemarin.org/cwpp)).

The project is a cooperative effort between FIRESafe MARIN and more than a dozen partners, including the Towns of Corte Madera, Ross, San Anselmo, and Fairfax, the City of Larkspur, County of Marin, along with Central Marin Fire Department, Kentfield Fire Protection District, Ross Valley Fire Department, Marin County Fire Department, and Marin County Parks.

Neighborhoods where work will occur include: Sarah Drive in Mill Valley, Christmas Tree Hill in Corte Madera, Madrone Canyon in Larkspur, Kent Woodlands in Kentfield, Bald Hill in Ross and San Anselmo, Deer Park, Cascade Canyon, and Manor Hill in Fairfax, as well as fire roads on Marin County Parks lands extending more than six miles from Mill Valley to Fairfax. FIRESafe MARIN anticipates work to begin in late 2019, with completion by the summer of 2020.

Each of the neighborhoods impacted by this project are nationally recognized Firewise USA communities ([www.firesafemarin.org/firewise](http://www.firesafemarin.org/firewise)), or are in the process of seeking this important recognition. "These sites are ideal locations to pursue a large vegetation management project, due to the high levels of community involvement and support for wildfire preparedness efforts," says Todd Lando, Executive Coordinator at FIRESafe MARIN. "These are high risk neighborhoods that are already organized and participating in our Firewise program."

The grant-funded work will improve evacuation safety, provide alternate

means of ingress for firefighting resources, and reduce hazards near 47,000 residents, 9,000 residential structures, and municipal infrastructure, including power lines, water storage and distribution, and natural resources in the Mt Tamalpais watershed.

Work will focus on roadside vegetation that is ten feet from road edges and 14 feet overhead. Clearing these areas will not only improve fire engine access, but will also reduce the amount of heat that evacuating residents might be exposed to during a fire, improve visibility, and expand the usable width of roadways on narrow hillside streets.

“It’s important to remember that property owners are required to maintain the vegetation between their parcels and roads,” Lando said. “Unfortunately, deferred maintenance has left many of our streets barely passable, with vegetation overgrowth impeding passage and potentially exposing evacuating residents to flames and heat during wildfires. The North Bay Fires in 2017, and the Camp Fire in 2018 showed us the importance of rapid evacuation. This project aims to improve the situation in many of Marin’s most at-risk communities.” Lando points out that much of the work to be done is already required by law, so this will help property owners along critical evacuation routes bring their roadside vegetation into compliance with the Fire Code, and give them a head-start on long term maintenance. “The work we’ll be doing needs to be maintained, in perpetuity,” he said, “or as long as people live in these fire-prone, hillside communities.”

Fire Chief Jason Weber of the Ross Valley and Marin County Fire Departments illustrates the collaborative nature of this project. “It’s great to see state funding for a large project like this that will bring together so many partners. This will engage towns, fire departments, public land managers, Firewise USA© sites, and individual residents to work towards the common goal of making their neighborhoods safer.”

Fire engine and other first responder access is critically important on narrow streets, which are all too common in Marin. Fire Chief Scott Shurtz of Central Marin Fire Department emphasizes, “We’ve long been concerned that during a major wildfire, fire engines might not be able to access hillside neighborhoods while residents are evacuating. We’re excited that this grant helps address the problem by improving access and vegetation along key fire roads. When completed, we anticipate having the option to send firefighters up nearby fire roads to respond to some of our most difficult-to-access neighborhoods during a major fire. We can’t do that now because of overgrown vegetation and maintenance issues. In this one critical area, it will help keep paved streets leading out of the community open for evacuating cars going downhill, while some fire trucks could go up the fire road. Evacuating cars can get out more efficiently and safely on the paved roads.”

FIRESafe MARIN’s grass-roots “Firewise USA” program ([www.firesafemarin.org/firewise](http://www.firesafemarin.org/firewise)) has grown dramatically in recent years,

and this program will bring needed work to several nationally recognized Firewise USA sites. Rich Shortall, President of FIRESafe MARIN, explains, “In 2018, Marin was the fastest growing county in the nation for the Firewise USA program. We’ve seen the number of recognized sites in Marin expand from nine in 2016 to 36 as of today. This growth,” Shortall says, “has fueled unprecedented demand for action. As this program grows exponentially, so does the need for funding and capacity to help engaged residents tackle the many challenges of living in fire-prone communities.”

In 2019, FIRESafe MARIN will offer additional education seminars, increased assistance, and more coordination than in previous years. “A grant like this will not only help by improving evacuation safety, but will allow us to reach many more people about potentially lifesaving education on wildfire preparedness,” says Shortall.

Cascade Canyon, Manor Hill, and Kent Woodlands are already recognized nationally for their participation in Firewise USA. Christmas Tree Hill, Madrone Canyon, Bald Hill, and Deer Park are each already working towards this recognition.

**About FIRESafe MARIN** ([www.firesafemarin.org](http://www.firesafemarin.org))

FIRESafe MARIN is a non-profit organization dedicated to reducing wildland fire hazards and improving fire-safety awareness in Marin, fostering community involvement by building partnerships, and providing community resources for mitigating fire danger. Formed in the aftermath of the “Tunnel Fire” in the Oakland/Berkeley hills in 1991, FIRESafe MARIN promotes fire safety and stimulates communities to collaborate when solving problems related to wildland fire protection. Members include Marin fire departments, homeowners associations, neighborhood groups, community service organizations, emergency management agencies, insurance companies, public land managers, large landowners, and utility companies. FIRESafe MARIN was the second “fire safe council” in the nation.

FIRESafe MARIN’s primary objectives are: promoting adoption of the Firewise USA framework and assisting communities seeking recognition; seeking and administering wildfire hazard reducing grants; informing groups interested in vegetation management; sponsoring educational programs for professionals; coordinating vegetation reduction projects; and developing technical tips for reducing structural ignitability and managing vegetation. FIRESafe MARIN’s award winning website provides Marin residents with tools, information, and guidelines for wildfire and evacuation preparedness, creating defensible space, and building wildfire resistant structures ([www.firesafemarin.org](http://www.firesafemarin.org)).

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**About the CAL FIRE Fire Prevention Grant Program**

“As our crews are busy right now performing fuel reduction work and conducting defensible space inspections, funding these projects will add significant fire prevention efforts to combat California’s severe fire risk,” said Chief Thomas Porter, CAL FIRE Director and California’s State Forester. The Fire Prevention Grants will enable local organizations like fire safe councils to implement activities that address the risk of wildfire and reduce wildfire potential to communities. Funded activities include fuel reduction, wildfire planning, and fire prevention education. These projects all meet the goals and objectives of California’s Strategic Fire Plan adopted in 2018, as well as the recommendations of CAL FIRE’s “Community Wildfire Prevention & Mitigation Report” to Governor Gavin Newsom, submitted in April 2019. Over \$33 million of the funds will be provided by the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund for California Climate Investments (CCI), with an additional \$10 million coming from funding from CAL FIRE’s Community Wildfire Prevention Program. CCI is a statewide program 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.

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